The Traveling Tradition Test: A Method for Dating Traditions

by Behnam Sadeghi

Abstract

The ṣāḥib are our main source for the study of the first 150 years of Islam. They constitute a voluminous literature with layers of early and late traditions from different cities, tribes, and sects. Determining the date and provenance of a report is a complex task that calls for the development of a variety of methods. This study presents a technique that should be added to the scholars' toolbox. It uses correlations between the contents of traditions and the cities represented in their isnāds to put a bound on the date of a tradition. The essay presents three case-studies about women's participation in group prayers.

Introduction

Preview

This essay expounds a method for probing the origins of early reports about the Prophet Muḥammad and other figures from the first 150 years of Islam. It demonstrates how one can use geographic clustering of wording, themes, or legal positions to put bounds on the dates of traditions that purportedly moved from one city to another. This method requires collecting all the traditions on a given topic, grouping them by their contents, and using their isnāds to identify regional correlations. (The isnād of a tradition is the list of transmitters who are said to have successively handed it down, one person to the next.) If an idea, word, phrase, or some other feature is thereby uniquely linked to a city, its presence in a tradition of uncertain provenance can be used to assign the tradition to that city. Once

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one knows where a tradition originated, if part of its isnād gives the impression that it moved to or from that place, then that part bears some historical information. The report can be dated approximately to the time interval spanned by the transmitters hailing from the tradition’s city of origin. One can thus put either an upper or lower bound on the date of the tradition.

Regionalism observed

A prominent feature of early traditions (āthār) is that they exhibit “regionalism,” by which I mean geographic clustering of contents. Each city has its own distinctive verbal, stylistic, and legal profiles. Traditions on a given subject from a particular city often employ narratives, vocabulary, turns of phrases, syntactic structures, or legal opinions that are uniquely or specially characteristic of that city. For example, the phrase lā a’lāmu (“I do not recognize”) is used disproportionately by Baṣrāns to express disapproval for an act as part of a legal judgement. To give another example, only Kūfān traditions use the term rukhsa to refer to permission for females in the context of ‘Īd prayers, or use certain archaic words such as mangal (shoe). Significantly, such regional patterns hold in traditions with entirely non-overlapping isnāds. In fact, sometimes one may use such features to guess correctly the birthplace of a tradition even before looking at its isnād.

The degree to which regionalism holds in the field of law can be appreciated by performing an experiment. Pick randomly a legal controversy from among the thousands represented by the chapter headings of Ibn Abī Shayba’s (d. 235) compendium of traditions, the Muṣannaf. Collect all the traditions and all variants of them on that topic from all available published sources. Then use their isnāds to identify their places. Usually, one observes a degree of regionalism. One may find, for example, that a number of traditions with completely different Baṣrān chains of transmission uphold the same distinctive point of view. Thus, the traditions bearing this opinion cluster along geographic lines, conveying a distinctly Baṣrān idea, implying that the traditions, along with their common feature, arose in Baṣra.²

Critics might object that this account naively takes *isnāds* at face value by assuming that a tradition circulated where its *isnād* implies it did. The objection misses the mark, however, since the claim that parts of *isnāds* often carry valid geographical information is not so much a premise as it is a conclusion. More precisely, it is a hypothesis that is corroborated by patterns in the data. The data corroborate this hypothesis in two ways.

The first way in which the corroboration can be formulated pertains specifically to narratives or wording. One may invoke a rule-of-thumb of textual criticism, namely that unity of distinctive contents implies unity of origin. According to this dictum, traditions with shared distinctive features are genetically related, in the sense that they derived either from one another or from a common ancestor. Now, a tradition that is an offspring of another tradition is more likely to circulate in the city of the parent tradition than in some other city, even though it may eventually travel elsewhere. Unity of distinctive contents, therefore, should often entail unity of birthplace, leading similar traditions to circulate in one place more often than not. This principle suggests the following test. If *isnāds* usually carry valid information about the city of origin, then one would expect this regionalism to be reflected in the *isnāds*: one would expect *isnāds* of traditions with shared distinctive features to often reveal their common birthplace, giving the appearance of regionalism. On the other hand, if *isnāds* do not carry any valid geographical information, then there is no reason for the appearance of regionalism to arise. Thus, the fact that the appearance of regionalism is often observed corroborates the (at least partial) validity of the geographical information embedded in *isnāds*, which in turn corroborates the reality of regionalism.

The second way in which the corroboration can be formulated assumes less by way of premises, as it does not invoke the rule of thumb employed in the first formulation. Its starting point is the need to explain a correlation that is unlikely to be due to chance. The situation is one in which the traditions bearing a distinctive feature (e.g. point of view, legal position, wording, or narrative) all have, say, Baṣra in their *isnāds*, and traditions that do not have that feature do not have Baṣra in their *isnāds*. This concurrence is unlikely to be a coincidence, especially since such correlations occur com-

K. S. B. KEATS-ROHAN, Prosopographica et Genealogica, University of Oxford, 2007, pp. 459–499. Haider gives an argument about dating, and he discusses reports with *isnāds* that switched from one city to another. However, his argument is altogether different from mine. He notes that usually contradictory opinions are not ascribed to a Companion, and that sometimes in a city the view of a Companion is cited who did not settle down in that city (see especially p. 459).
monly. The pattern thus calls for an explanation, and a common origin in Baṣra usually provides the most plausible explanation.

A critic could try to undermine my argument by devising, testing, and corroborating an alternative explanation for the patterns in the data. For example, one might try to explain geographic patterns in the isnāds as correlates of the group affiliations of transmitters from the late second century. However, it appears highly unlikely that such alternative theories can withstand the test of the data.

*Regionalism in law explained*

From the principle that unity of distinctive contents implies unity of origin, regionalism in narratives and wording is only to be expected. On the other hand, regionalism in law is not necessarily expected, and yet it demonstrably existed on a vast scale. What explains it? Legal regionalism signifies that culture in a city developed to an extent independently of other cities, although obviously not in isolation. This would not be unusual for the pre-modern world, in which long-distance communication was far less efficient than it is today. Furthermore, the situation is to be understood against the background of the weak state before the modern age.

Militating against empire-wide uniformity were the limits on the caliphs' power to control religious life. The Umayyads, relatively decentralized and continually facing rebellion and dissension, were hard-pressed to preserve their political authority over their domain. They did not micro-manage religious opinion across the empire from the center, nor would they have succeeded if they had attempted to do so. Even in the far more centralized times that were to follow under the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Maʿmūn, the attempt to fix theological dogma would prove futile. Under the Umayyads, empire-wide caliphal intervention in religious life was both rare and, when it took place, less than a complete success.³

Thus, one must speak, in the plural, of early Muslim communities, and construe this diversity in part along geographical lines. Indeed, awareness

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³) Before the Umayyads and the First Civil War, there is the example of ʿUthmān's dispatching of standard muṣḥafṣ (Qur'āns) to Baṣra, Kūfa, and Syria around 650 AD. Under the Umayyads, there is the example of ʿUmar II's promulgation of an edict regarding bathhouse etiquette. I intend to discuss the latter in another publication. For the historicity of ʿUthmān's intervention, see especially Michael Cook, "The stemma of the regional codices of the Koran," *Graeco-Arabica*, no. 9–10 (2004), 89–104.
of the existence of geographic distinctions in law is very old, almost as old as the regional variations themselves. To be sure, communication and exchange did occur, as shown, for example, by the smattering of traditions that traveled from one city to another already in the first century. In the second century the picture changed as traditions traveled far more frequently. In addition, in the second century one occasionally sees a jurist deviating from his own city's common position in favor of another city's doctrine. Yet such dilution of the differences remained limited, and overall the cities retained a measure of distinctiveness.

Regionalism utilized for dating

The fact that legal thought in the cities developed fairly independently alerts the historian to opportunities for dating ideas and traditions. That is so because the concepts of "independent" and "dating" often go hand in hand in historical research: shared quotations in two independent reports point to a third common source that is older or at least as old; an unexpected match between two truly independent reports signifies mutual corroboration; etc. In the context of early Islam, the relative independence of the cities readily suggests the following principle: the best candidates for ideas or institutions that can be dated to the period before the Muslim expansion are those that were present in all the major cities in the first century. The major locales were Kūfa, Medina, Baṣra, and Mecca. Next in terms of importance and the availability of evidence are Syria, Egypt, al-Jazīra, and Yamān. Egypt, however, must be treated as an extension of Medina rather than a truly independent locale. Its traditions seem to have been imported largely from Medina in the first century and the first half of the second century.

This essay is about a somewhat less obvious way of exploiting regionalism. It illustrates a method of dating traditions that moved from one city to another, or that purported to do so. The underlying idea is best explained using a simplified, hypothetical example, as follows.

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4) For example, there is a tradition in which Ṭāʾisha says: "O People of Iraq! You equate us with dogs and donkeys? Nothing breaks prayers!" (Abd al-Razzāq, Muṣannaf, 2:30, no. 2365). This tradition betrays awareness of the regional nature of the view, traceable to Baṣra, that if a woman walks in front of a worshiper, his prayer is invalidated.
The Traveling Tradition Test in an idealized situation

Let us consider an idealized example. Suppose many “purely Meccan” traditions, and only these traditions, adopt position M on a legal question. Here, a tradition is “purely Meccan” if the first- and second-century parts of its isnād are composed of Meccan transmitters. Suppose also that many purely Başra traditions, and only these traditions, adopt the opposite stance. Thus, in this scenario, M is the distinctively Meccan position, and its opposite is the distinctively Başra view. In this situation, the legal positions are differentiated sharply along geographic lines.

Now imagine that we find a hitherto unclassified tradition treating the same legal issue that has a mixed isnād – an isnād with Meccan figures in its first-century part and Başra figures in its second-century part. In other words, the isnād looks something like this:

Baṣra₃ – Baṣra₂ – Baṣra₁ – Mecca₂ [Follower] – Mecca₁ [Companion] – Prophet

Here, the transmitter Baṣra₃ says that he got the report from transmitter Baṣra₂, who said that he got it from Baṣra₁ etc., all the way back to the Prophet.

One may apply the Traveling Tradition Test (TT Test) by asking which position the tradition upholds, that of Mecca or Baṣra. The dating of the tradition depends on the answer to that question. Let us first consider the case in which the tradition takes the Baṣra view. That indicates that the tradition probably originated in Baṣra, and not in Mecca as suggested by the isnāds. For, if the idea truly originated in Mecca as indicated by the isnād, it is odd that that idea is not found in purely Meccan reports, and yet is amply attested in Baṣra. Rather, it appears that the Baṣra transmitter Baṣra₁ (or some other Baṣran from whom he heard the tradition) incorrectly put the Baṣra position in the mouth of a Meccan. This means that the tradition could be dated to no earlier than the time of the transmitter Baṣra₁, thus putting a lower bound on the date of the tradition, making it later than its Meccan isnād fragment.

On the other hand, if the tradition takes the Meccan view, then that indicates that the tradition indeed originated in Mecca just as indicated by its isnāds. For why would a Baṣra transmitter relate an “anti-Baṣran,” “pro-Meccan” tradition in the name of a Meccan, unless the tradition in fact came from Mecca? If, for the sake of argument, Baṣra₁ were a Baṣran maverick who wished to undermine his or her city’s position by means of a false isnād, it would have been to his advantage to cite authorities who were respected especially in Baṣra, and these would tend to be figures af-
filiated with Baṣra. Besides, such a maverick would have had no need to falsify an isnād; he could have simply cited one of the purely Meccan traditions that represented his preferred position. More importantly, if the tradition had in fact originated in Baṣra, it would be hard to explain the absence of other Baṣran isnāds for the position and the abundance of purely Meccan isnāds for it. The tradition, therefore, is probably from Mecca. That puts an upper bound on the date of the tradition. It dates the tradition to no later than the time of the transmitter Baṣra₁, confirming that he or she indeed got the report from a Meccan.

Before moving on to cases that are more complicated, I should mention that the initial judgment as to whether a view or term is, say, Meccan depends on a variety of factors. It depends not only on the number of traditions, but also on the degree of distinctiveness of any common features. For example, if several traditions take a similar position and all use a highly unusual wording (or use a rare word), or relate a story not reported elsewhere, then the shared features further confirm that the reports are genetically related and, therefore, are probably from the same city.

**The Traveling Tradition Test in more typical situations**

I found it useful to begin, in the last subsection, with an idealized case representing the simplest and most straightforward scenario imaginable. The idealized scenario strips the problem to its bare essentials, bringing into focus the assumptions at the heart of the method. If one does not accept the TT Test in the idealized situation, there is no point in proceeding, as I am about to do now, to consider the more complicated and ambiguous cases.

While scenarios very close to the idealized case do arise, in general a problem-situation may differ from the idealization in a variety of ways. For example, instead of many traditions from say, Mecca, there may be only a few. This could reduce one’s confidence in how characteristic of Mecca the traditions are. (The words “many” and “few” here are to be understood in a relative sense: three traditions with independent isnāds would represent a high number in the Jazira but would not be unusual in Medina.) However, as mentioned at the end of the previous subsection, shared distinctive features can significantly strengthen the likelihood of shared origins even for a small number of traditions.

Another fairly common deviation from the idealized situation has to do with the fact that in the idealized case the isnāds of traditions with a shared feature are completely from one city, say, Mecca. In practice, one
might find that some or all of the traditions with the shared feature have mixed isnāds, meaning that they name transmitters from more than one city. This raises a question about assigning the shared feature to a city: if the isnāds of, say, pro-M traditions are not purely Meccan, how can one assign M to Mecca? The answer is that if pro-M traditions all have partially Meccan isnāds, and anti-M traditions all have partially Başran isnāds, this is unlikely to have happened by chance. Even if such a thing could happen by chance on occasion, the fact that such concurrences appear routinely makes chance an unlikely explanation. The most plausible explanation for such a “coincidence” often is that the position M was present in Mecca and that its opposite position came out of Başra. The Meccan traditions are thus dated approximately to the periods represented by the Meccan parts of their isnāds, and the Başran traditions to approximately the Başran parts of their isnāds. However, one can make such a judgement with greater confidence in cases where the pro-M view is held not only by mixed-isnād traditions, but also by some purely Medinan isnāds. Furthermore, it is often possible to assign a mixed-isnād tradition to a city if its transmitters up to and including the common-link are all from one city.

Finally, one sometimes encounters a scenario where many pro-M traditions are associated with, say, Mecca, and many anti-M traditions with, say, Kūfa, and yet there are one or two traditions from Kūfa (with fully Kūfan isnāds) that actually fit the Meccan profile. Such occurrences must be studied on a case-by-case basis before a general theory is advanced. In general, there are two possibilities: First, the anomalous Kūfan tradition could represent an early Kūfan dissenting voice, in which case most (or all) of the isnād could be historical. Second, the Kūfan voice could be a later development, possibly inspired by the Meccan opinion thanks to increasing interactions between the cities, in which case the earlier part of the isnād would be ahistorical.

**The TT Test: A systematic procedure**

The procedure may be recapitulated as follows. After collecting all the traditions on a given topic, one may apply the TT Test in three steps:

1. Identify candidate birthplaces for each tradition.
2. Cluster traditions according to contents and assign a birthplace to each cluster.
3. Use knowledge of a traveling tradition’s birthplace to date it.

In the first step, one considers each tradition individually, either assigning it to one place or identifying a number of candidates for its birth-
place. There are different ways of pinning an individual tradition to a place. The simplest case arises when every person in the isnād is from the same city. If all the transmitters are Kūfan, then that is a Kūfan tradition. However, often traditions have “mixed isnāds.” For example, a tradition may have Meccan transmitters through part of the second century, followed by transmitters from other cities. In such a case, if the tradition has multiple variants, then each variant will have its own isnād, and these isnāds typically are the same prior to a point, namely up to a common-link after whom the isnāds diverge. For example, the sequence of the transmitters through mid-second century may be identical in the different isnāds of a report. In such a case, the candidates for the report’s city of origin are normally the cities of this shared part of the isnāds. If only one city occurs in that part, then that is the birthplace. In sum, each tradition yields one or more candidates for its birthplace.

In the second step, one considers a set of traditions with a shared distinctive feature and identifies their common birthplace. Here, “birthplace” serves as shorthand for the first city in which a prototype containing the shared features of the traditions at hand circulated. Thus, everything I say now concerns a set of traditions sharing a distinctive feature. Their birthplace, or the birthplace of a prototype with their shared feature, is the city that is a candidate birthplace for every tradition in the set, the candidates having been determined in step one. This criterion fixes the birthplace of an individual tradition for which more than one candidate was identified in the first step, assigning it to a single city. To give an example, suppose the same distinctive statement or view is found in three traditions with isnāds that are (1) Baṣran – Meccan; (2) Medinan – Meccan; and (3) Kūfan – Meccan. If the contents of the three traditions are sufficiently dis-

5) A minor caveat is in order. In cases where one suspects that the tradition could have originated after its common-link, the cities of the persons transmitting from the common-link are not eliminated as candidates for the city of origin at the initial stage of applying the TT Test. There may be reasons for believing that the tradition could have originated after its common-link and that the ascription to the common-link was illusory. One ought to reckon with this possibility if, for example, the study of the transmitters after the common-link shows that they had a habit of not naming their immediate authorities (i.e. practiced tādīs) or that they probably did not hear the tradition directly from the common-link. In practice, this caveat often is not an obstacle. For example, even if there be multiple isnāds with a common-link, one strand may be entirely from one city, pinning the tradition to that city. In addition, cities that escape elimination in this initial stage may be eliminated in the next stage as one identifies a city common to the isnāds of the larger pool of traditions, i.e. all the traditions with the shared distinctive feature.
tinctive, then they have a common birthplace. Mecca, being the only city shared by all of them, is probably that place. Note, also, that if one or more of the isnāds were purely Meccan, then one's confidence in a shared Meccan origin would increase. The same would be the case, in some cases, if some of the isnāds were purely Meccan prior to a Meccan common-link.

It may be that the set of traditions sharing a distinctive feature do not all share exactly one candidate city. In cases in which two cities are candidates for every single tradition in the set, one normally cannot choose between them; either could be the birthplace. More common are cases in which no city is a common candidate for every tradition in the set. In this situation, two special cases, should they occur, allow making inferences. The first scenario is one in which there is a small fraction of traditions such that if one disregarded them, a city would emerge as the candidate for all the remaining traditions. In this situation regional correlation would hold but for a very small number of anomalous traditions. This scenario has been treated in the last paragraph of the previous subsection. The second scenario is one in which the traditions fall into two subsets, each of which has a single common candidate city. In such a case, the traditions in each subset may be assigned to its common city. Thus, one knows that some traditions circulated in one city and some others in the other city, and the shared feature belonged to both cities; but one cannot determine the birthplace of the shared feature: either city could be the birthplace. This situation can arise, for example, if the feature spread in both cities at a very early date. If the traditions are partitioned into, say, three sets corresponding to three cities, then a similar thing could be said for those three cities. Various permutations of these scenarios are also possible.

Finally, in the third step, one dates a tradition using the knowledge of its birthplace obtained in step two. The TT Test is based on isnāds with transmitters that belong to different places. Such a case represents a "traveling tradition," i.e. one that purportedly moved from one city to another. One dates such a tradition approximately to the time interval

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6) But when can one consider their contents "distinctive"? One may do so if the contents of the traditions are sufficiently close to one another and dissimilar to other traditions, or if a common origin in Mecca fits a pattern of sharp regional variation that is corroborated by other traditions.

7) But if there is reason to believe that the tradition could have been put into circulation after the common-link by non-Meccan transmitters, then this scenario does not particularly strengthen the inference that Mecca is the birthplace.
spanned by the transmitters who belong to the tradition's birthplace: the tradition is not older than the earliest transmitter from its birthplace who is named in the isnād, meaning that the transmitters who were earlier than him did not really relate the tradition. Moreover, the tradition is not younger than the latest transmitter who was from its birthplace, or, depending on the case at hand, not younger than the transmitter reporting from him.

The rest of this essay is devoted to three complex case-studies in order to demonstrate how the method works in practice. The degree of confidence in the conclusions depends on the specifics of each case. I begin with the case that allows the strongest inference.

**Case Study I. A Forgotten Başran View about Women Breaking Prayers**

This case-study shows that the TT Test can be used, in some cases, to refute the ascription of a report to a Companion. The legal question chosen for this case-study concerns whether a worshiper's prayer remains valid if a female passerby walks in front of him. Medinans, universally, and Kūfans, overwhelmingly, held that a woman walking in front of a man does not ever invalidate his prayer. A minority focused on menstruation: Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68) and ʿIkrima (d. 105) were said to have taken the position that menstruating women break prayers. This view circulated especially in Mecca.

I am concerned here exclusively with a different and distinctive minority view, namely the position that a woman invalidates a man's prayer by walking in front of him, regardless of whether she's menstruating or not. As shorthand, I call this the "thoroughgoing minority" view. I begin by giving the isnāds bearing this view.

**The isnāds of traditions saying, without qualification, that women break prayers**

The traditions saying that women (not just menstruating women) break prayers generally include Başran names in their isnāds. Moreover, a number of these traditions have purely Başran isnāds. I shall argue, based on the TT Test, that the Medinan links in the initial parts of two of the isnāds can be dismissed as ahistorical, meaning that those transmitters did not really relate the traditions even though later Başran transmitters invoked their names.
The **classic statement** of the thoroughgoing minority view was that a dog, a donkey, or a woman breaks prayers.8 The ten **ṣināds** that carry the classic statement are as follows:


Tradition **Baṣ3.** Abū Ḥārith b. Abī Usāma (b. 186, d. 282, Baghdad) – Yaʿlā b. ʿAbbād (Baṣra, Baghdād) – ʿAbd al-Ḥakam [al-Qasmī, b. Ziyād or b. ʿAbd Allāh] (Baṣra)11 – Anas [b. Mālik] (d. 92, Baṣra) or the Messenger of God.12


Tradition **SyrBaṣ7.** ʿAbd al-ʿAlā [b. ʿAbd al-ʿAlā] (d. 189, Baṣra) – Burd [b. Sinān] (d. 135, Damascus, Baṣra) – Makḥūl [al-Shāmī] (d. 112–8, Damascus).17

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8) A typical **matn** runs: *yaqt'a' u al-salāt al-kalb wa-al-ḥimār wa-al-mar'a*. The order of the three elements varies in different variants. The tradition is short and its words non-distinctive. Therefore, we cannot conclude much about the genetic closeness of the different variants.


11) He was considered a Companion of Anas, the Companion of the Prophet, and was known for having related mostly uncorroborated traditions.


14) ʿAbd al-Razzāq, al-Muṣannaf, 2:27, no. 2351.

15) Read thus for Sālim in Ibn Abī Shayba. This transmitter is not Sālim b. Abī Allāh al-Khayyāt (Baṣra), who also transmitted traditions from al-Ḥasan.


These two traditions, too, express the idea that women break prayers, but they depart from the above-mentioned classical statement:

Tradition Baṣ11. Seventeen people – Ḥumayd b. Hilāl [al-'Adawi] (d. 105–120, Baṣra) – Abī Allāh b. al-Ṣāmit [al-Ghifārī, allegedly] (d. 72, Baṣra) – Abū Dharr [al-Ghifārī] (d. 32) – Prophet: "Unless there is something in front of him like the rear part of a camel's saddle (ākhīrat al-raḥīl), donkeys, black dogs, and women break a man's prayer ... I [that is, Abī Allāh b. al-Ṣāmit] asked, 'What difference does it make whether it is black or red?' He [i.e. Abū Dharr] answered, 'O, nephew! I asked the Messenger of God the same question. He answered, 'The [purely] black dog is a devil.'"21

Tradition Baṣ12. We have through 'Abd al-Razzāq – Ma'mar [b. Rāshid] (d. 154, Baṣra and Yemen) – Qatāda [b. Dī'āma] (d. 117, Baṣra) that women do not break the prayers, and that girls who have not reached the age of menstruation do not break one's prayer.22 It is implicit that Qatāda held that adult women break men's prayers.

Here are three traditions with variations on the classic matn. There are hints that some of them represent a secondary layer:


18) 'Abd al-Razzāq, al-Muṣannaf, 2:27, no. 2350.
19) Ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad, 2:299; Ibn Ṭabarānī, al-Muṣannaf, 2:211.
21) The variants of this tradition will be cited below.
break the prayer, but something like the rear part of a camel saddle protects the prayer.\footnote{Ibn Rāhawayh, Musnad, 1:328; Muslim, Ṣahih, 2:59; al-Bayhaqi, al-Sunan, 2:274; Ibn Ḥazm, al-Muḥallā, 4:9. The words are: yaqta’u al-ṣalāt al-mar’a wa-al-ḥimār wa-al-kab, wa-yuqta dhāliku mishlu ma’ak khkhirat al-raḥl.}

Tradition MechBāṣi14. Several people quote Mu’ādh b. Hishām (d. 200, Baṣra, Yemen) – Hishām [b. Abī Ṭabdillah al-Dastawā’i] (d. 154, Baṣra) – Yahyā b. Abī Kathīr (d. 132, Mecca) – ‘Ikrima (d. 105) – Ibn ʿAbdās (d. 68) – “I think he traced it to the Prophet”: “If one of you does not pray towards a barrier, then dogs, donkeys, pigs, Jews, Magians, and women break his prayer. But the prayer will be valid if they pass in front of you at a distance of a stone’s throw.”\footnote{Those relating from Mu’ādh are: [Muḥammad b. ‘Umar b. ‘Ali] al-Muqaddami (Baṣra), ‘Ali b. Baḥr al-Qaṭṭān [al-Baghḍādi] (d. 234, Baṣra or Ahwāz), ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd (d. 249, Transoxania), and Muḥammad b. Ismā’īl (d. 230, Baṣra). It is the version of this last that begins, anomalously, with “If one of you does not pray towards a barrier.” Also, its wording stands apart from those of the other variants. The differences in wording in the different variants are substantial, an unusual occurrence for isnāds diverging at such a late stage. It could be that Mu’ādh related the tradition from memory (on more than one occasion), or that one of the transmitters from him did so. See Abū Dāwūd, Muntakhab, p. 200; Abū Dāwūd, Sunan, 1:164; al-Ṭahāwī, Sharh ma‘ānī al-āthār, 1:458; al-Bayhaqi, al-Sunan, 2:275.} A variant of this tradition has also been related from Hishām through an isnād bypassing Mu’ādh, but it attributes the saying to ‘Ikrima. This tradition had an apparently Meccan prototype.\footnote{Abū Dāwūd expresses serious reservations about this tradition due to the presence of elements that are not corroborated in other versions (munkar, nakāra), such as the mention of the pig, the Magians, and the stone’s throw. Abū Dāwūd is troubled that he could not find anyone else who transmitted the tradition from Hishām. He reckons that the transmitter from Mu’ādh, namely Muḥammad b. Ismā’īl (d. 230, Baṣra), is responsible for the deviations. Abū Dāwūd’s judgment is erroneous, as others related the same tradition from Mu’ādh, namely [Muḥammad b. ‘Umar b. ‘Ali] al-Muqaddami (Baṣra), ‘Ali b. Baḥr al-Qaṭṭān [al-Baghḍādi] (d. 234, Baṣra or Ahwāz), and ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd (d. 249, Transoxania). Moreover, as shown in the next footnote, one isnād strand even bypasses Mu’ādh – this strand conveys some of the “uncorroborated” (munkar) elements and lacks others. Thus, Abū Dāwūd may be only partially right in his intuition about the late date of the elements he refers to.}
Tradition Syrīṣ. Abū al-Mughīra [Abd al-Quddūs b. Ḥajjāj] (d. 212, Ḥimṣ, Syria) – Ṣafwān b. Ṭāมr [b. Ḥarīm] (d. 155–8, Ḥimṣ) – Rāshīd b. Sa'd al-Maqraʾī [or Maqrīṣī] (d. 108–113, Ḥimṣ) – ʿĀ'ishah (d. 57): "The Messenger of God said that nothing breaks the prayer of a Muslim but donkeys, unbelievers, dogs, and women. ʿĀ'ishah said, 'Oh Messenger of God! We are joined with beasts. How awful!'"28 The wording of this tradition is closely related to traditions of the opposite tendency about ʿĀ'ishah that were widely circulating in Medina and Iraq already in the first century.29 This report appears to be an attempt to neutralize and co-opt the widely reported stance of ʿĀ'ishah by mimicking its wording. It does the same thing, as well, to traditions that say "nothing breaks prayers." The mention of unbelievers, too, may signify a later development, for which see the footnotes to the last tradition.

Non-Baṣrī transmitters and the TT Test

The first step in the TT Test is to assign to a city a feature shared by a set of traditions. The prominence of Baṣra in the isnāds of traditions bearing the thoroughgoing minority position is unmistakable. The number of traditions taking that position, fourteen, is high by the standards of Baṣra. Moreover, many of these traditions have purely Baṣrī isnāds. Baṣra is thus the likely birthplace of the traditions that have a Baṣrī link. Not only must the thoroughgoing minority view have been present in Baṣra, but also it must have spread early enough to allow for the proliferation of many traditions with independent isnāds over time. Indeed, based on arguments that are unrelated to the TT Test (and are hence ignored in the present essay), one may date the thoroughgoing minority idea to the

27) Ibn ʿAbbās is widely quoted to have held that dogs and menstruating women break prayers. It must be noted, however, that the opposite view has been ascribed to him as well. It is related through ʿIkrima that Ibn ʿAbbās objected when it was said in his presence that dogs and women break prayers. He cited Q. 35.10 on good words rising to God (ʿAbd al-Razzāq, al-Musannaf, 2:29, no. 2360).


29) See footnote 4 above.
first half of the first century, particularly the reign of the Umayyad governor of Bašra, al-Ḥakam b. 'Amr al-Ghifārī (d. 45–51).  

A great deal of additional evidence clinches the case for Bašra as the birthplace of the women-break-prayers traditions. It can be shown that in the earliest layer of traditions, those beings break prayers that are deemed impure for purposes of ritual. Thus, Bašra, which is unique among the cities for the idea that donkeys are impure, also stood out for the idea that donkeys break prayers. Bašra also stood out for the view that women are natural transmitters of ritual impurity, in the sense that, for example, a man should not use the leftover water of their ablution. The above-mentioned al-Ḥakam played a role in spreading these ideas about donkeys and women in Bašra. In Mecca, those who considered menstruating women as transmitters of ritual impurity also believed that menstruating women break prayers. All this shows a broad correlation, in the earliest layer of traditions, between considering something a transmitter of ritual impurity and holding that it breaks prayers. Therefore, the fact that Bašra was home to the idea that women transmit impurity further confirms the idea that it was the birthplace of the view that women break prayers.

Tradition Syr15, a purely Syrian tradition from Hims, is the only tradition that does not have Bašran links. It does not present strong evidence that the thoroughgoing view was present in Syria before it was in Bašra. Its earliest Syrian link died early in the second century. Furthermore, as discussed above, elements in its matn indicate that it belongs to a secondary layer of traditions, making it unlikely that the tradition existed in the first half of the first century.

With the origin of thoroughgoing minority motif assigned to Bašra, one may now proceed to the next step and consider individual traditions with mixed isnāds. I begin with some ambiguous cases. Tradition SyrBaṣ7 involves a Bašran chain of transmitters reporting from a Syrian who died early in the second century. There are two possibilities. First, the tradition could be authentic. In that case, the earliest Syrian figure, Makḫūl (d. 112–8), could have been stating an opinion imported from Bašra. Second, it is possible that this tradition originated in Bašra and was incorrectly ascribed to Makḫūl.

A mixed-isnād tradition like KūfBaṣ1 presents two possibilities. Either its early Kūfīan part is completely ahistorical, or the isnād reflects genuine

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30] The provenance and date of the thoroughgoing minority view is the subject of a separate essay of mine which will be published separately. In this essay, I limit myself to those aspects that relate to the TT method.

31] See the last footnote.
back-migration from Kūfah to Bāṣra after the thoroughgoing minority view had already made its way from Bāṣra to Kūfah in mid-first century. We do have other evidence suggesting a possible trickling of the Bāṣrān position to Kūfah in the first century.32

The results so far have been ambiguous. Fortunately, we are on much firmer ground with MedBaṣṣāf and MedBaṣṣāh, traditions transmitted in Bāṣra that purport to go back to Medinan Companions. In both cases, the TT Test suggests that the Bāṣrān transmitters incorrectly put the Bāṣrān view in the mouths of Medinan Companions. So, it is perhaps not a surprise that the Companions have the stock names of Abū Hurayra and Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudri, or that in MedBaṣṣāh there is a large time gap between the Companion and the next transmitter, who is Bāṣrān. Four other considerations, in addition to the TT Test, weigh against a Medinan provenance. First, both Medinan Companions were invoked by traditions that took the opposite view, namely the view that women do not break prayers.33 Second, there is no evidence that the Bāṣrān idea ever traveled to and took root in Medina in the first century: there is no purely Medinan tradition reaching back into the first century, and no other trace of the tradition in Medina in the late first century, while there is evidence from Medina for the view that women do not break prayers. Third, it is rather unlikely, if such a migration from Bāṣra to Medina took place, that it did so already at the time of the Companions. The migration of ideas and traditions displays an increasing trend over time: the earlier the time, the less frequent it would have been (with the exception of the initial Arab expansion, of course). It is a slight stretch to assume that the tradition migrated from Bāṣra to Medina and then back from Medina to Bāṣra already in the very first generation. Fourth, it is unlikely that all this occurred and yet no Medinan from the generation after these famous Medinan Companions reported the tradition. That would require that famous Companions in Medina were somehow convinced by the Bāṣrān opinion and yet subsequently were universally ignored in Medina. It is much easier to assume, simply, that some Bāṣrans put their own view in the mouths of those famous Companions.

32) Regarding passersby, the Kūfah Ibrāhim al-Nakha‘ī related the tradition of ʿĀ‘ishah against thoroughgoing view (al-Shaybānī, al-ʿāthār, pp. 190–191, no. 140). However, he believed that if a woman prays next to a man, his prayer is invalidated.

33) For Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudri, see e.g. al-Dāraquṭnī, Sunan, 1:357; Ibn Abī Shayba, Muṣannaf, 1:314, al-Bayhaqi, Sunan, 2:125, 278; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, Iṣīdīkār, 2:284; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, Tamhīd, 4:190, 21:170. For Abū Hurayra, see al-Dāraquṭnī, 1:358.
Using regional patterns to assess a transmission from a common-link

Here is one of the traditions cited above. It has a common link, Ḥumayd, from the turn of the first century from whom seventeen people related the tradition:

Tradition Baṣṭ. Seventeen people – Ḥumayd b. Hilāl [al-‘Adawi] (d. 105–120, Baṣra) – ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ṣāmit [al-Ghīfārī, allegedly]34 (d. 72, Baṣra) – Abū Dharr [al-Ghīfārī] (d. 32) – Prophet: “Unless there is something in front of him like the rear part of a camel’s saddle (ākhirat al-raḥl), donkeys, black dogs, and women break a man’s prayer’ ... I [that is, ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ṣāmit] asked, ‘What difference does it make whether it is black or red?’ He [i.e. Abū Dharr] answered, ‘O, nephew! I asked the Messenger of God the same question; he answered, ‘The [purely] black dog is a devil.’”35

34) Premodern scholars gave ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ṣāmit the nisba of al-Ghīfārī, meaning that he was from the tribe of Banū Ghīfār, and identified him as the nephew of Abū Dharr (who was also from the tribe of Banū Ghīfār). They could be mistaken on both counts. They apparently derived this information from the fact that in some of his traditions, ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ṣāmit quoted Abū Dharr as addressing him (or whoever originally was Abū Dharr’s interlocutor) as yā ʿibn akhī (“O, nephew!”); otherwise, the sources do not provide any genealogy for ‘Abd Allāh. The problem is that in other traditions we see that “Nephew!” can be used to address people who are not one’s nephews. In that way, it is similar to “Brother!”

‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ṣāmit did transmit from two other members of the Banū Ghīfār, namely the brothers al-Ḥakam b.’Amr (d. 145–51, Baṣra) and Rā’fī b. ‘Amr (Baṣra). Note that they had settled down in Baṣra; but there is no record of Abū Dharr having been to Baṣra. It could be that al-Ṣāmit heard his Abū Dharr traditions (which include details about the Banū Ghīfār) from these brothers. Moreover, the traditionists after ‘Abd Allāh who transmitted these traditions were generally not from Banū Ghīfār, pointing to the first-century origin of these traditions.

35) A few variants ascribe the first sentence of the tradition to Abū Dharr rather than to the Prophet. The transmissions from Ḥumayd are as follows: Shu’ba [b. Ḥajjāj] (d. 160, Baṣra)–Ḥumayd (Shu’ba said he personally heard it from Ḥumayd, who claimed to have personally heard it from ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ṣāmit. See al-Ṭayyālīsī, Musnad, p. 61; ‘Ali b. Ja’d, Musnad, p. 180, p. 452 (truncated, with only the last sentence given); al-Dārīmi, Sunan, 1:329; Ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad, 5:149, 5:161; Ibn Māja, Sunan, 1:306; Ibn Hibbān, 6:146; al-Bayhaqī, al-Sunan 2:274; cf. Ibn Khuzayma, Sahih, 2:20–1, which gives no maṭn); Yūnus b. ‘Ubayd (d. 139, Baṣra)–Ḥumayd (Ibn Abī Shayba, al-Muṣannaf, 1:310 (truncated), 1:315; Ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad, 5:151, 5:160; Muslim, Sahih, 2:59; al-Nasa’ī, Sunan, 2:63; al-Nasa’ī, al-Sunan al-kubrā, 1:271; al-Tirmidhī, Sunan, 1:212; Ibn Khuzayma, Sahih, 2:11 (truncated with only the first part given); al-Ṭahāwī, Sharḥ ma‘ānī al-‘Athār, 1:458; Ibn Hibbān, Sahih, 6:151–2): Hishām b. Ḥassān (d. 147, Baṣra) – [al-Ḥasan
The tradition is also related through 'Abd al-Razzāq – Ma’mar [b. Rāshid] d. 154, Baṣra and Yemen) – 'Ali b. Zayd b. Ja’dan (d. 129, Mecca, Baṣra) – 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ṣāmit – Abū Dharr – Prophet.36 One can see that in this variant, the īnād bypasses Ḥumayd. When combined with the pre-

b. Dhakwān (Baṣra) – Ḥumayd (truncated tradition, with the barrier clause omitted; al-Hasan’s name was dropped in one of the variants; see Ibn Khuzayma, Ṣaḥīḥ, 2:21; Ibn Hibbān, Ṣaḥīḥ, 6:151; al-Ṭabarānī, 8:169); Sulaymān b. al-Mughira (d. 165, Baṣra) – Ḥumayd (Sulaymān was the most devoted and prolific transmitter of traditions from Ḥumayd. For what it may be worth, Sulaymān was a client of the tribe of Qays b. Tha‘laba, to which belonged the Companion Ŭbāda b. al-Ṣāmit, to whom our 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ṣāmit may or may not be related; see 'Ali b. Ja’d, Musnad, p. 452 (truncated, with only the last sentence given); Ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad, 5:155–6, 5:158; Abū Dāwūd, Sunan, 1:164; Ibn Māja, Sunan, 2:1071 (truncated, with only the last sentence given); Ibn Hibbān, Ṣaḥīḥ, 6:156; al-Bayhaqi, al-Sunan, 2:274; cf. 'Ali b. Ja’d, Musnad, p. 180, which gives no matn); Sahl b. Aslam al-‘Adawi (d. 181, Baṣra) – Ḥumayd [al-‘Adawī] (omits the barrier clause, Ibn Khuzayma, Ṣaḥīḥ, 2:20–1); Manṣūr b. Zādhān (d. 129, Wāsit) (jointly with Yūnus) – Ḥumayd (al-Tirmidhi, Sunan, 1:212; al-Ṭahāwī, Sharḥ ma‘ānī al-āthār, 1:458; cf. Ibn Khuzayma, Ṣaḥīḥ, 2:20–1, which gives no matn); Salm b. Abī al-Dhayyāl (Baṣra) – Ḥumayd (with the barrier clause left out; see Ibn Hibbān, Ṣaḥīḥ, 6:149; al-Mizzi, Tahdhib, 11:221;2); Qatāda [b. Dī‘ama] (d. 117, Baṣra) – Ḥumayd (Ibn Hibbān, Ṣaḥīḥ, 6:144–5); Maṭar b. Ťaḥmān (d. 125, Baṣra) (jointly with Qatāda) – Ḥumayd (al-Ṭabarānī, al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr, 2:151); Habīb b. al-Shahid (d. 145, Baṣra) and Ayyūb [b. Abī Tamīma al-Sakhtiyānī] (d. 124–131, Baṣra) (jointly with Yūnus) – Ḥumayd (Ibn Hibbān, Ṣaḥīḥ, 6:150; cf. Ibn Khuzayma, Ṣaḥīḥ, 2:20–1, which gives no matn); Abū Sa‘d al-Saliṭi [al-Hasan b. Dīnār] (Baṣra) – Ḥumayd (al-Ṭabarānī, al-Mu‘jam al-saghir, 1:72); Qays b. Sa‘d (d. 119, Mecca) – Ḥumayd (al-Ṭabarānī says that Qays, and the two successive transmitters after him, were each unique in relating this tradition through this pathway). The variant lacks the barrier clause. Its wording shares a distinctive element with the next tradition, indicating cross-contamination. See al-Ṭabarānī, al-Mu‘jam al-saghir, 1:181–2); Hishām [b. Abī ‘Abd Allāh] al-Dastawā‘i (d. 154, Baṣra) – Ḥumayd (This is another uncorroborated, lone strand with the barrier clause left out. Its wording shares some distinctive element with the previous tradition, indicating cross-contamination. See al-Ṭabarānī, al-Mu‘jam al-saghir, 3:125); Quṣra b. Khālid (d. 155, Baṣra) – Ḥumayd (another uncorroborated, lone strand with the barrier clause left out; see al-Ṭabarānī, al-Mu‘jam al-saghir, 2:139); ‘Amr b. Ṣāḥib (possibly al-‘Adawi, from Baṣra, reading thus for al-‘Uddi; see al-Ijli, Ma‘rifat al-thiqāt, 2:179) – Ḥumayd (al-‘Adawi) (an abridgment, with the barrier clause as well as the question and answer left out, this is another uncorroborated strand according to al-Ṭabarānī; see al-Ṭabarānī, al-Mu‘jam al-awsat, 3:336); Sālim b. al-Zināqī (ī) – Ḥumayd (no matn given; Ibn Khuzayma, Ṣaḥīḥ, 2:20–1).
vious ones, this *īsnād* creates the appearance of two independent trans-
missions from ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ṣāmit.

However, some factors weigh in favor of considering ʿAli's tradition as
possibly a derivative of Ḥumayd's rather than being an independent ver-
sion that bypassed Ḥumayd before reaching ʿAli. (Ḥumayd's tradition
could not be a derivative of that of ʿAli, since Ḥumayd related other materi-
als from ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ṣāmit – Abū Dharr, unlike ʿAli.) In other words,
I'm suggesting that the name of Ḥumayd was possibly dropped from the
*īsnād*. The large number of the variants related from Ḥumayd can be con-
trasted with the unavailability of other *īsnāds* for ʿAli's tradition. This
means that Ḥumayd's name could have easily been mistakenly dropped at
any point in the course of the transmission of ʿAli's tradition without it
being possible for us to recognize that through comparison with other vari-
ants. In addition, there is no record of ʿAli having claimed to have person-
ally heard the tradition from ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ṣāmit. Furthermore, ʿAli is
said to have had Meccan roots, so it is possible that he was not in Başra be-
fore AH 72 to hear ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ṣāmit. He would have been rather
young anyway, assuming he had been born already. Admittedly, this does
not preclude the possibility of him having heard it from someone else
whose name has dropped from the *īsnād*.

It is worthwhile noting that the TT Test provides evidence that ʿAli actu-
ally related this tradition. We begin by observing that its contents and
wording stand apart from the other variants. In particular, it refers to
"black dogs, and (I think he said) menstruating women." The donkey,
which is an inseparable element of the classic Baṣrān formulation, has been
dropped, and "menstruating" has been added. Such features circulated
also in Mecca. Traditions ascribed to the Meccan authorities Ibn ʿAbbās
and ʿIkrima invariably do not mention donkeys, and they tend to refer to
menstruating women together with dogs. It would be too much of a coinci-
dence if the Meccan flavor of this tradition had nothing to do with ʿAli's
own Meccan roots. For this reason, one ought to assume that ʿAli related
the tradition. This is an instance of what in textual criticism is called "as-
similation of parallels." The Meccan parallels colored his memory of Hu-
mayd's tradition. He perhaps remembered what he had heard in light of
what he expected to be true, a failing to which we are all vulnerable.
Case Study II. Başra on Women Attending the 'Id Prayers

The traditions evince disagreement on whether women may attend the two 'Id prayers of al-Fitr and al-Aḍḥā. Overall, it appears that the Başrans and Meccans took a permissive position and the Medinans supported prohibition. The Kūfans either were permissive or adopted a middle ground between Medina and Başra, by permitting attendance as a concession (rukhṣa) or by permitting it only for old females. Here, I focus on Başra.

Basra traditions quoted

Başra was associated with unqualified endorsements of women's participation, as suggested by the following traditions:

Tradition 1. This is a well-known hadīth in support of permission with many variants and isnād strands, related on the authority of the Companion Umm 'Atiyya Nusayba bint Ka'b, who left Medina to settle in Başra.\(^{37}\) In most versions, the transmitter who reports from her is the female Başran traditionist Ḥafṣa bint Ṣirīn (d. 101). In some versions, it is the latter's brother, Muḥammad b. Ṣirīn (d. 110). The report circulated in Başra, as indicated by a number of purely Başran isnād strands. There is thus no doubt that this report originated in Başra. Here is a sample variant of this report, quoted by al-Bukhārī, through an isnād that is completely Başran through the mid-third century:

He [the Prophet] commanded us to come out [for 'Id prayers]. We thus brought out the menstruating women, adolescent girls, and secluded girls—"or the adolescent girls who are secluded," said Ibn 'Awān—though the menstruating women would attend the group prayers and imprecation of the Muslims while keeping away from their prayer area.\(^{38}\)


\(^{38}\) Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ, 2:10. The report is as follows: Muḥammad b. al-Muthanna [i.e. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāḥ al-Anṣārī] (d. 214–5, Başra) — [Muḥammad b. Ibrā-
Tradition 2. Several relatively late sources give several isnāds that converge on one of two persons apiece, namely (1) Duḥaym ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. Ibrāhīm (d. 245, Palestine and Syria) and (2) ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Dārīmī (d. 255, Transoxania). Both of these transmitters quote Yaḥyā b. Hassān (d. 207–8, Başra and Egypt)39 – ʿIkrīma b. Ibrāhīm al-Azdī (Mawṣil, Başra, Rayy)40 – Yazīd b. Shaddād al-Hunāʾī (Baṣra)41 – Muʿāwiyah b. Qurra (d. 113, Başra) – ʿUtba b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr b. ʿĀsh (unknown transmitter) – “my father” (d. 63–77, died in Mecca, Țaʿīf, Egypt, or Palestine) – “my grandfather” [ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀsh] (d. 42–58):

I was with the Messenger of Allāh on the day of the ʿĪd. He said, ‘Call for me the head of the Anṣār.’ They called Ubayy b. Kaʿb. He said, ‘O, Ubayy b. Kaʿb, go to the baqiʿ al-muṣallā, (the open prayer area)’ and he commanded that it be swept. Then he commanded the people to come out. When he (i.e. Ubayy) reached the threshold of the door, he turned back and asked, ‘O Messenger of God, and the women?’ He answered, ‘Yes! And the adolescent girls and menstruating women shall be behind the people, attending the imprecation.’42

Tradition 3. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā (d. 189, Başra) and Ismāʿīl [b. ʿUlayyā] (d. 194, Başra) relate through Khālid b. Mīhrān al-Ḥadhdhā (d. 141–42, Başra) – Ābū Qilīābā ʿAbd Allāh b. Zayd (d. 104–107, Başra) – ʿĀṣīha (d. 57) that at the time of the Prophet girls with grown breasts used to leave their quarters for al-Fiṭr and al-Adhā.43


41] There is no information available on Yazīd specifically, but his origin can be inferred from the fact that the hadīth transmitters with the nisba al-Hunāʾī were all Başran. See al-Samʿāni, al-Anṣāb, 5:652, art. “al-Hunāʾī.”
(d. 117, Medina) that "Abd Allāh b. 'Umar used to take out to the two 'Īd prayers anyone from his family who was capable."44

Discussion

Tradition 2 presents a counterexample to Juynboll's view of hadīths. I found this tradition only in ultra-late sources such as Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571), al-Mizzi (d. 742), al-Dhahabī (d. 748), and al-Haythamī (d. 807). The wording of the tradition is closely related to that of the first tradition, showing that the two are genetically related. The second tradition has two parts that should be discussed and dated separately, as one cannot take it for granted that they originated together: there is nothing implausible about an element being dropped or added in the course of transmission. The first part provides the setting for the Prophet's statement. It quotes 'Amr b. al-‘Āṣ and gives a prominent role to the Companion Ubayy b. Ka‘b. This part has nothing distinctive in common with Tradition 1, except for the word muṣallā. I will refer to this unique part as "the Setting." By contrast, the second part gives the exchange with the Prophet in words that are nearly the same as those found in the first tradition. I will refer to this shared element as "the Ruling."

Tradition 1 and the second part of Tradition 2, i.e. the Ruling, are so similar in wording that the point at which they split could not have been at the time of the Prophet. Two reasons may be cited for this. First, if the common source of the reports were the Prophet, that would make the fact that both versions independently ended up in Baṣra an unlikely coincidence. Second, experience indicates that traditions that originally diverged from a common source in the early first century should display far greater disparity in wording than what we find in this case (except for very short, formulaic sentences or maxims). Even variants that diverge from their common source in early second century typically differ significantly in wording. One concludes that rather than having a common source in the Prophet, one of these two reports derived from the other, probably sometime in the second or third century. This begs the question of whether the version that served as the source of the other one is authentic in substance.

One thus expects the elements shared by Traditions 1 and 2 to have circulated in the same city. As both traditions have Baṣran links, that city is the only candidate for the common birthplace of the Ruling. The Baṣran

provenance of the Ruling is strongly confirmed by the fact that Tradition 1 has a number of exclusively Baṣrī ḣisnāds. The appearance of Baṣra in the second-century part of the ḣisnād of Tradition 2 is thus not an accident: at least part of the tradition, i.e. the Ruling, did originate in Baṣra. But what about the elements in Tradition 2 that are not found in Tradition 1, namely the Setting?

The TT Test does not pin down the elements that are unique to Tradition 2, including the Setting, with remarks about Ubayy b. Ka‘b and ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ. These two names have associations with Egypt and Syria, and may have been held in high esteem by many people in those areas. ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ conquered Egypt, and Ubayy b. Ka‘b’s codex of the Qur‘ān was popular in Syria before ‘Uthmān disseminated the standard version. As both ḣisnāds include transmitters active in Syria and Egypt beginning with and subsequent to the common link, Yahyā, one should investigate whether the Setting was added by him or by somebody after him.⁴⁵ If it is found that the Setting was added by somebody after Yahyā, so that he had not really narrated it, this will not negate his having related the Ruling as suggested by the TT procedure. Resolving the provenance of the Setting requires a significant amount of research and will be postponed for another occasion, as it does not depend on the TT Test. Here, I focus on the ḣisnāds of Tradition 2 and ask how much of the ḣisnād carries valid information about the transmission of the Ruling.

Ibn ‘Asākir, in whose collection two variants of Tradition 2 are found, might have been intrigued to know that his honesty would be questioned in our time. Juynboll’s method of dating traditions would consider him as having fabricated his ḣisnāds. Juynboll would thus assign these ḣisnāds to the sixth century AH.⁴⁶ Such an approach arises from his rejection of single strands of ḣisnāds. A single strand is one whose links are not corroborated by multiple ḣisnāds converging on them. The longer such a strand is, the less probable its historicity is for Juynboll. Thus, the ultra-long strands of the second tradition must be particularly suspect. Yet, according to the TT Test, at least one of the ḣisnāds is likely to be valid at least from Yahyā b. Ḥassān onward. In other words, the two methods (Juynboll’s and the TT Test) lead to a difference in dating of some three centuries. It is not uncommon for the TT Test to conflict with Juynboll’s

⁴⁵) A significant amount of research is required for pinning down the origin of the Setting. I intend to take up the question in another essay.

views, verifying *isnāds* that he would dismiss, but in this case his method errs by a larger margin than usual.

The above-mentioned upper bound on time is not the only result to be derived from the TT Test. The test also suggests a lower bound, indicating that the ascription of Tradition 2 to the non-บาşرا figures in the first-century part of the *isnād* is incorrect. They, in fact, did not transmit the *ḥadīth*. The tradition originated no earlier than the earliest  바랍니다 transmitter named in the *isnād*.

In Tradition 4, the historicity of the ascription to ناسي is open to doubt. Further research may clarify the question, but at present two considerations may be cited against authenticity. First, another tradition from ناسي carries the exactly opposite view, and not both traditions could be credited to ناسي. Second, from the admittedly limited amount of evidence assignable to Medina, it appears that, among the cities, Medina had the least favorable attitude towards women's attendance. If that assumption is true, the TT Test weighs against Tradition 4 really deriving from ناسي. Provisionally, therefore, I assume that ناسي had nothing to do with this tradition. Further studies in the transmitters of the ناسي reports and their respective habits may result in the confirmation or refutation of this conclusion.

**Case Study III. Medina & Women-Only Group Prayers**

Consider the following tradition, which describes a statement that purportedly traveled from Medina to บาشرا. The tradition claims that the famous client of ابن ُعمر, ناسي, who lived in Medina, replied to a letter from ابن ُawn, who lived in batisra. In his reply, ناسي states that women ought not lead other women in group prayer. The prohibition is not qualified for supererogatory prayers:

"أَبُو الْحَافِضِ الْبَشَّارُ بنِ ابْنِ ابْنِ وَلِدِ البَشَّارِ: "لَمْ يَرْكُبْنَا مَنْ أَنْتَ فَلَمْ يَرْكُبْنَا مَنْ أَنْتَ، وَلَمْ يَرْكُبْنَا مَنْ أَنْتَ فَلَمْ يَرْكُبْنَا مَنْ أَنْتَ، وَلَمْ يَرْكُبْنَا مَنْ أَنْتَ فَلَمْ يَرْكُبْنَا مَنْ أَنْتَ، "(40)"

The tradition is quoted by Ibn ابْن شَايْبَة (d. 235, كوفا) and, as far as I know, by no other author. This report has not come down to us through any channel other than the above-mentioned *isnād*. It is, in other words,

not corroborated by any other report about Nāfi'. In such a situation, lack of corroboration and distrust of isolated isnād strands might lead some of the more pessimistic researchers to conclude that the compiler, Ibn Abi Shayba, fabricated this report and its isnād. However, I will argue that this tradition is authentic in its substance, though not necessarily in terms of wording. The wording of the tradition is probably mainly due to Ibn ʿAwn. Other traditions of Ibn ʿAwn, handed down through chains of transmission that are different from the one above, attest to his tendency to use the distinctive phrase lā aʿlamu to express disapproval as part of a legal opinion. This phrase was used primarily by Baṣrans; and, among them, nobody used it more frequently than Ibn ʿAwn. Its appearance in the above tradition pins the wording on Ibn ʿAwn.49 But the substance of the report, I will argue, goes back to Nāfi'.

The fact that the isnād gives the impression that information traveled from Medina to Baṣra makes the tradition a candidate for the TT Test, prompting one to check for regional patterns in the distribution of ideas. In fact, reports on this legal question congeal along regional lines.

Outside Medina, the established position was full or partial permission for women-only prayers. The traditions from Kūfa, Baṣra, and Mecca all permit female prayer leadership, either for all prayers or, in some Kūfan reports, just for supererogatory prayers.50 In Medina, the situation was different. There are six traditions supporting absolute prohibition, and their isnāds are all partly Medinan. This concurrence suggests a common origin in Medina. Medina is thus probably the birthplace of categorical opposition to women leading women in prayer. I will discuss the traditions later below.

There is an exception to the trend of pro-prohibition traditions being linked with Medina. In Kūfa, Abū Ḥanifa (d. 150, Kūfa) and his follower, Muhammad al-Shaybānī (d. 189, Kūfa), supported absolute prohibition. However, these two consciously and explicitly went against the precedent of the Kūfan Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʾi (d. 96), whose ruling they themselves quote in favor of qualified permission.51 This fact, combined with other

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49) This conclusion is based on examining every occurrence of the phrases lā aʿlamu and lā naʿlamu in a number of early sources, including Ibn Abi Shayba's Muṣannaf and ʿAbd al-Razzāq's Muṣannaf, using a searchable digital text. Admittedly, there is one other case in which Nāfi' uses lā aʿlamu, but this does not override the strong pattern observed about Baṣrans and Ibn ʿAwn in particular.

50) The permissive traditions are numerous. For considerations of space, I will discuss them in a separate publication.

Kūfan reports, indicates that the Ḥanafi support for prohibition does not represent the pristine position of Kūfa. Rather, it is a new development in the first half of the second century. It is safe to associate Kūfa, Baṣra, and Mecca with permission (full or partial). It is also fitting to assign absolute prohibition to Medina.

What is not clear is whether, in the first century, there was a permissive strand of opinion in Medina alongside the pro-prohibition stance. A few traditions about Medinan authorities have them permit women-only prayers. These include female Companions of the Prophet (ʿĀʾisha, Umm Salama, Umm Waraqa), though the evidence of isnāds shows that in the first century these reports circulated only outside Medina. Therefore, even if these women did practice women-only group prayers, it is doubtful whether tolerance for the practice spread in Medina. Two other first-century Medinans are said to have supported permission, namely ʿAmra bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 98–106, Medina) and ʿAli b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAli (d. ca. 93, Medina). However, it is difficult to evaluate the provenance of these reports since they lack isnāds.\(^{52}\)

In the second century, however, there are clear signs of a pro-permission stance in Medina alongside the pro-prohibition stance of Mālik and others. There are two permissive reports from second-century Medinan figures, one supporting permission personally, and the other citing ʿĀʾisha: The first is the favorable personal opinion of Ṣafwān b. Sulaym (d. 132, Medina), representing the sole unqualified permissive opinion from Medina.\(^{53}\) The second is a report in which Yahyā b. Sāʿid [b. Qays] (d. 144, Medina) mentions that ʿĀʾisha led women in supererogatory prayers, without naming any transmitters between him and ʿĀʾisha.\(^{54}\) He was essentially referencing a tradition about ʿĀʾisha that had been hitherto circulating widely outside Medina, without volunteering his own opinion. One wonders whether Ṣafwān, like Yahyā, was inspired by traditions now arriving in Medina from other cities.

In sum, unqualified opposition to women leading women in prayer arose in Medina in the first century, while other cities originally took a favorable view toward the practice either without qualification or at least in the case of supererogatory prayers. In the second century, certain individuals began importing ideas and traditions from cities other than their own. Thus the Kūfan Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150) and his follower, Muḥammad al-

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\(^{52}\) Al-Shāfīʿī, *al-Umm*, 1:191.


Shaybānī (d. 189), adopted the originally Medinan position, and the Medinan Ṣafwān (d. 132) adopted a position that was perhaps more characteristic of outside Medina.

I now proceed to examine the traditions that prohibit women-only group prayers, except those from Abū Ḥanīfa and al-Shaybānī. I argue that prohibition was probably a Medinan position during the first century AH. Thus, the impression given by the isnād of the above tradition of Nāfi‘ is correct.

The Traditions

Tradition 1. Mālik b. Anas (d. 179, Medina) does not allow women to lead prayers under any circumstances, even in the case of funeral prayers. Saḥnūn and Ibn Ḥazm cite Mālik without an isnād.55

Tradition 2. The same view was attributed to the Medinan jurist Sulaymān b. Yasār (d. ca. 100, Medina), again without an isnād.56 Note the early date of this figure.


Tradition 4. The tradition with which this section began, quoted again for convenience: Abd al-Wahhāb b. ‘Aṭā‘ (d. 204, Baṣra, Baghdad) – [Abd Allāh b.] Ibn ‘Awān [b. Arṭābān] (d. 150, Baṣra): “I wrote to Nāfi‘ (d. 117, Medina), asking if a woman leads women [in prayer]. He said, ‘No, I do not find that it is permissible for a woman to lead women (lā a‘lamu al-ma‘r’ a ta‘ummu al-nisā‘).’”58

Traditions 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C are three strands of an Imāmī report traced to one common-link, whose name is italicized below. This tradition stands apart from other Imāmī reports in its categorical disapproval of women-only group prayers:


57) Read thus for “Abi Dhi‘b” in Ibn Abī Shayba.
58) Ibn Abī Shayba, al-Muṣannaf, 1:537; Mālik, al-Mudawwana, 1:85.
59) Ibn Abī Shayba, al-Muṣannaf, 1:537.
60) Missing in some variants.
Hammād [b. 'Īsā] (d. 209, Kūfa, Baṣra) – Ḥarīz [b. 'Abd Allāh] (lived mid-second century, Kūfa) – Zurāra [b. A'yān] (d. 160, Kūfa) – Abū Ja'far [Muhammad al-Bāqir b. 'Alī] (d. 114, Medina): “I asked, ‘Does a woman lead women?’ He [al-Bāqir] answered, ‘No, except over a dead person [i.e., in a funeral prayer] if there is no one more fitting than her. She stands in the middle of them in the row, she does the takbīr [pronouncing Allāhu akbar], and they do the takbīr.’”


Tradition 5-C. 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. [‘Alī b.] Faḍīdāl (d. ca. 290, Kūfa) – 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Najrān (see above) – Ḥarīz – Zurāra: the same tradition as 5-A from al-Bāqir.

Traditions 6-A and 6-B. This statement has been handed down to us by transmitters of poor reputation, mostly from the North of Iraq, who offer three entirely non-overlapping Medinan isnāds down to the Prophet. But the wording is so distinct that it shows that the reports cannot all go independently back to the Prophet; one text must have been copied off the other one in the second century and supplied with a new, ahistorical isnād down to the Prophet. The study of isnāds offers good evidence for this, and

61) According to Ismā‘il Baṣhā, he died ca. 220 and he had the additional niṣba of al-Baghdādi (Ismā‘il Bāshā, Ḥadīyyat al-tarīfīn, 1:264). The date seems very late, although maybe he was just blessed with a long life. Also, I have not been able to find a corroborating of his Baghdādi status.


64) Al-Ṭūsī, Tahdhib al-akhkām, 3:326.

65) There is another tradition of Muhammad al-Bāqir which, at first sight, may appear to run contrary to one quoted above: [Aḥmad b. Idrīs] Abū ‘Alī al-Ashtarī (d. 306, Qumm) – Muḥammad b. Sālim – Aḥmad b. al-Naḍr (Kūfa) – ‘Amr b. Shirm [al-Jufī] (Kūfa) – Jābir b. Yazīd al-Ju‘fī] (d. 128, Kūfa) – Abū Ja'far [Muhammad al-Bāqir b. ‘Alī] (d. 114, Medina): “If a man is not present, then a woman advances in the middle of them. The women stand to her left and her right, with her in the middle, and she does the takbīr, until she finishes the prayer” (al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, 3:179; al-Ṭūsī, Tahdhib al-akhkām, 3:226). This, however, refers to the funeral prayer, since the inquiry as to what happens in the absence of men is usually made in relation to funeral prayers (e.g., see the tradition from al-Sādiq in al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, 3:179). In addition, note the verbal parallelism (viz. al-takbīr) with the above-quoted tradition of al-Bāqir. Once the funeral context is recognized, this tradition becomes quite consistent with the one above.
narrow the copying down to the second half of the second century. I discuss this tradition after quoting it.


Tradition 6-B. Three isnāds converge on the common-link, whose name is italicized. The isnād from the common-link down to the Prophet is as follows:


66) He is said to have been originally from Khurāsān, or from al-Jazira. Given the conflict, there is the possibility that the nisba “al-Jazārī” was applied to him retrospectively (and possibly erroneously) based on whom he transmitted from. He transmitted from the people of al-Jazira (Ibn Hajar, Tahdhib, 7:255).

67) He is said to have been originally from Mecca, or from Medina. The guess that he was originally from Medina is probably based on his transmitting mostly from Medinans. The nisba al-‘Uqayli, however, speaks in favor of al-Jazira. This nisba belonged mostly to people from Baṣra or al-Jazira. For a collection of a good many of his traditions, see Ibn ‘Adī, al-Kāmil, 7:94–98. Studying the matns of these could help determine where he got his traditions from.

68) That would be Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yaḥyā (d. 36).


The three isnād strands to the common-link, Ibn Lahī'a, are as follows:


Strand 3: Al-Ṭabarānī – Ḥārūn b. Kāmil (d. 283, Egypt) – Abū Ṣāliḥ [Abd al-Ghaffār b. Dāwūd] al-Ḥarrānī (d. 224 or 228; moved from Baṣra to Egypt in the year 161 at the age of twenty-one; heard traditions in those places plus the Jazīra and the Shām) – Ibn Lahī'a.

Al-Wāzi' is the common-link of Traditions 6-A; yet in each variant the isnād from him to the Prophet are different. There is reason to suspect that the isnād Sālim – Ibn 'Umar was attached incorrectly by al-Mughira, either deliberately or inadvertently.73 Ibn 'Adī has documented how the common-link, al-Wāzi', used to relate uncorroborated traditions, i.e. traditions not related by others. Such behavior gave al-Wāzi' a poor reputation among scholars who studied his traditions.74 Although one is not bound to accept the isnād he gives down to the Prophet, one should note

71) Ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad, 6:66, 6:154; al-Ṭabarānī, al-Mu'jam al-awsaf, 9:142. The words are: lā khayr fi jamā'at al-nisā' illā fi masjid [jamā'ah] aw [fi] jannāt qatl. The words in brackets are in one version but not the other.

72) On Ḥajjāj b. Muḥammad, see, for example, al-Mızzī, Tahdhib, 5:451. Ḥajjāj b. Sulaymān (al-Dhahabī, Mizān, 1:463, no. 1738) is an unlikely alternative for the Ḥajjāj named by Ibn Ḥanbal, although he did relate from Ibn Lahī'a. There is no instance of Ibn Ḥanbal ever naming Ḥajjāj b. Sulaymān; but there are several instances of him citing Ḥajjāj b. Muḥammad as his immediate informant, and doing so in proximity with traditions in which he names merely Ḥajjāj. This shows that Ibn Ḥanbal's Ḥajjāj stands for Ḥajjāj b. Muḥammad. The fact that al-Mızzī does not list him among the transmitters from Ibn Lahī'a does not change this judgement.

73) That was the only isnād al-Mughira used with the traditions of al-Wāzi', while other transmitters used that and other isnāds. So in this case, al-Mughira probably simply attached the isnād he used by default/habit for al-Wāzi' traditions. It is easier to imagine him substituting his default isnād by mistake or design than departing from his usual isnād by mistake or design.

74) Al-Wāzi' was accused by some scholars of consistently relating traditions that were not corroborated by others. For a number of specific examples, see Ibn 'Adī, al-Kāmil, 6:358–69. This habit of his earned him the label munkar al-hadīth.
that it is Medinan. So far, one can say, at least, that the tradition of al-Wāzi' (6-A) circulated in al-Jazīrā in the second half of the second century. I shall try to find out whether its prototype may have originated in Medina. But, first, it is necessary to examine 6-B.

Tradition 6-B has an Egyptian common-link, Ibn Lahi'a. After him, one variant (Strand 3) remains firmly in Egypt while the other two circulated in Northern Iraq/Shām. Even the purveyor of the firmly Egyptian variant, Abū Sāliḥ, had connections with Northern Iraq and the Shām. In sum, Tradition 6-B circulated in both Egypt and Northern Iraq/Shām. Note now that Tradition 6-A, too, circulated in Northern Iraq. The shared Northern Iraqi connection between 6-A and 6-B is evidence that one of them was copied off the other. The time period of the transmitters implicated in this connection means that this copying took place in the second half of the second century. Such a late date is expected from the verbal closeness of the variants; but the data of the isnāds provides additional confirmation. Further research might clarify exactly which transmitter copied the saying from which, but, for the purposes of this essay, it is not necessary to resolve that question.75

The question arises as to whether the statement carried by Traditions 6-A and 6-B, or a prototype of it, could have originated in Medina, as suggested by its isnāds, fictitious as the Medinan parts of some or all of them might be. Although this does not settle the matter conclusively, there is evidence for a Medinan root in the following tradition, which is a verbal parallel, containing as it does the words, “there is no good in their gatherings (or group prayers)”: Tradition 7. Yahyā b. Ishāq (see below) – Ḥubāda b. al-Ṣāmit (see below): “the Prophet was asked about women's group prayers. He said there is no good in their gatherings (or group prayers) except for dhikr (remembrance of God) or funerals. Their gathering (or group prayer) – when they gather – is like a sword-sharpener” the sparks of which ignite any-

75) One possible scenario may be mentioned here for the purpose of illustration, although this scenario is by no means the only plausible one. It is possible that Abū Sāliḥ related 6-B in Egypt on the authority of Ibn Lahi'a. Subsequently, al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā and Ḥājjāj heard the tradition from him, but when quoting the tradition, neglected to name their immediate informant (Abū Sāliḥ), citing Ibn Lahi'a directly. By now this saying was circulating in Northern Iraq. Subsequently, it gave rise to Tradition 6-A, with a new isnād attached down to the Prophet. In this scenario, the tradition moved from Egypt to the Jazīrā; but it is possible to construct a scenario in which it moved in the opposite direction. Further research is needed to clarify the direction.
thing they touch.\textsuperscript{76} The verbal parallelism between this tradition and Tradition 6 points to a common origin, making it useful to find the potential birthplaces of this tradition.

Certain relatively late authors quote this tradition from al-Ṭabarānī. As is their usual practice, they do not give the full isnād; but they make clear that al-Ṭabarānī did give a complete isnād. Unfortunately, I was not able to find the tradition in the works of al-Ṭabarānī. As a result, the only part of the isnād I have consists of the first two transmitters named above. Fortunately, from this available isnād fragment one may infer the name of the third transmitter. Searching the ḥadīth literature, one finds that Mūsā b. ‘Uqba is the only person who relates traditions from Yahyā b. Ishāq. The erudite Ibn ‘Adi, who knew many ḥadīth variants that have not survived to our time, makes the same observations.\textsuperscript{77} This Mūsā was from Medina and related primarily the traditions of Medinans. Thus, the isnād is most likely as follows:


It is a Medinan isnād through mid-second century.

\textit{Dating the origin of unqualified prohibition}

While traditions that permit women’s prayer leadership (either in supererogatory prayers or in general) are concentrated outside Medina, the traditions that forbid it without qualification have Medinan connections. Setting aside the rulings of Abū Ḥanifa and his student al-Shaybānī, there are seven traditions that prohibit women-only group prayers in an unqualified manner. These seven traditions all have Medinan links in their isnāds. Among these, five have purported first-century names. Of these, only two purportedly go back to the Prophet, including one with a gap in its first-century part where one would expect a Follower’s name (Tradition 7). The TT Test thus assigns the origin of prohibition to Medina, and to the late first century at the latest. This conclusion, however, is far from certain. One would feel more secure about this conclusion if there were

\textsuperscript{76} Al-Haythami, \textit{Majma’ al-zawā’id}, 10:77–8; al-Hindi, \textit{al-ummāl.}, 16:403:

The text:

\textit{لا خير في جمعة النساء إلا عند الذكر أو جنابة وإنما جماعتهن إذا اجتمعن كمثل مصيقل أدخل حديدة النار فلي أحرقها ضربًا فأحرق شرورها كل شيء} أصابت.

some purely Medinan isnāds, isnāds that were purely Medinan up to a common-link, more solid isnāds than those encountered in Traditions 2, 6 and 7, or sharper regional differentiation, i.e. fewer dissenting voices in the cities. While the resulting provenance and dating are not certain, the evidence at least indicates their probability. The remainder of my discussion takes this probable conclusion as its premise. All the subsequent results are no more probable than this premise.

In the Nāfi' report (Tradition 4), with which I began the discussion, an Iraqi quotes the view of a Medinan; and it just so happens that the contents of the tradition fit a Medinan profile, not an Iraqi one. This is unlikely to be a coincidence. If a Baṣrān is going to misquote a Medinan, why not put the Baṣrān opinion in his mouth? Why would one get this pattern unless the report is from Medina? One thus ought to take seriously the claim of the Baṣrān Ibn 'Awn that he got the report from Medina. Now, if Ibn 'Awn had simply given a Medinan isnād without having claimed to have gotten the report directly from the first person he named, i.e. Nāfi', one would wonder whether there was direct transmission. That is, one would consider whether Ibn 'Awn could have gotten the tradition and its isnād from an unnamed Medinan who quoted Nāfi'. However, Ibn 'Awn specifically states that the statement of Nāfi' was a reply to a letter he had personally sent him. Since we have independently confirmed that he got the report from Medina, one has to take his claim of correspondence with Nāfi' seriously. The indication is that this report is authentic. Incidentally, this is one of a number of traditions in which Ibn 'Awn cites correspondence with Nāfi'. These traditions are potentially promising sources of information about the first century.

A similar argument supports a Medinan provenance for Tradition 5, the Imāmi report from Muḥammad al-Bāqir, who was a contemporary of Nāfi'. This tradition is not only the sole Imāmi report forbidding women's leadership in both supererogatory and required daily prayers, but also the only report from the Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir on the subject. This tradition has an isnād that is thoroughly Iraqi but for al-Bāqir himself. Yet its contents fit the profile of Medina rather than Iraq, confirming a Medinan origin.

Incidentally, several Imāmi traditions with Kūfan isnāds state the position of al-Bāqir's son, the Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148, Medina). These traditions fit the Kūfan profile: they are divided between those that permit female leadership without qualification and those that prohibit it in the required daily prayers while allowing it in supererogatory prayers. Did al-Ṣādiq take the permissive stance as the Kūfan traditions about him consistently claim? Or did the Kūfan Shi'īs misquote al-Ṣādiq? On the one
hand, a strict application of the TT Test would support the misquotation hypothesis. On the other hand, when sectarian or tribal boundaries cross regional boundaries, one must be open to other possibilities. Thus, one may note that although al-Ṣādiq resided mostly in Medina, most of his followers were Iraqis, and it is possible that he accommodated this constituency. If so, he would fit the pattern of other figures with death dates well into the second century, such as Ṣafwān (d. 132, Medina) and Abū Ḥanifa (d. 150, Kūfa), who departed from the characteristic positions of their respective cities. Under this scenario, the traditions from al-Ṣādiq could be authentic. A full analysis of the corpus of al-Ṣādiq’s traditions should help confirm one of the two possibilities.

In sum, categorical opposition to women-only group prayers probably originated in Medina sometime in the first century. One may ask whether, in first-century Medina, this prohibitionist stance co-existed with a permissive strand of opinion. The evidence at present does not settle this question. Outside Medina, in the first century, female leadership was permitted either categorically or in supererogatory prayers. In the second century, some individuals went against their cities’ original positions. Thus, when Ṣafwān in Medina takes the permissive approach, he is sailing against the current established in Medina since the first century, and the wind in his sail probably comes from outside Medina.

Conclusion

The TT Test is an important tool for the study of hadīths and āthār that should be used along with other methods. I have shown how the test can refute the historicity of some parts of isnāds and confirm others. Shared features that correlate with a region can be dated. The part of the isnād corresponding to the birthplace of a tradition helps put a bound on its date. The method allows one to date a tradition to the period before its common-link, or to assign an early date to a tradition lacking a common-link altogether. Preliminary work, based on a larger sample than has been covered in this essay, suggests that most traditions that purport (in their isnāds) to date from the first century AH are indeed from the first century. Given the limited state of our knowledge at present, however, this observation hardly justifies dating a report to the first century without detailed analysis. Rather, extensive application of the method is required, in conjunction with other tools, to gain an understanding of how different transmitters at different times and places and in different milieus varied in terms of reliability. Furthermore, in some cases it may be justified to depart from the
conclusions suggested by the TT Test if the boundaries of tribes, sects, political factions, or matrilineal kinship groups cross those of the cities.

The method is probabilistic in nature, and therefore is expected to yield false conclusions in a fraction of cases. The strength of the inference in each case depends on a variety of factors, principally having to do with how firmly one can assign a feature to a city. The degree of confidence with which such an assignment is made depends on how distinctive the shared features are, how sharp the apparent regional divisions are, how many traditions are available from each city, whether the transmitters named in some isnāds are exclusively from one city, and whether the parts of isnāds prior to and including a common-link are from one city. If other methods or pieces of evidence link a report to a city, such information, too, must be incorporated in the analysis before the final step in which one dates the report.

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