

Distinctiveness and Independence of Islamic West school in Explaining Hadith

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Abstract

This research addresses the intellectual and spiritual contributions made by the school of Western Islam in explaining Sunnah of Prophetic Mohammed (peace be Upon Him). Despite the fact that most of the exegesis of Hadith mentioned in historical sources have not reached us, what has been preserved or transmitted through later commentaries confirms the independence of this school in its overall jurisprudential nature and its service to the Maliki school of thought. It also highlights their focus on jurisprudential topics in the compilations of Prophetic traditions. Their commentaries demonstrate creativity and excellence, as they were pioneers in employing various methods to elucidate the Prophetic tradition.

Keywords: Hadith exegesis, hadith exegesis by the Islamic West, Maghreb commentaries, jurisprudential explanation of jurisprudence, commentaries on the six books

Introduction

All praise be to Allah, the All-Knowing and All-Powerful, the Ever-Living, the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone, without any partners, and I glorify Him with abundant glorification. May Allah's blessings be upon our Master Mohammad, whom He sent as a universal bearer of glad tidings and warnings to all people, and upon his family, companions, and those who follow their guidance. May there be abundant peace and blessings upon them all. As for the following:

The School of Western Islam, encompassing both the great Maghreb and Al-Andalus, had a noteworthy contribution in various aspects of the science of Prophetic tradition, both in terms of quantity and quality. However, this study will focus on a specific aspect of their efforts in serving the Hadith and sciences in service of it, namely the fruit and ultimate goal of Prophetic tradition sciences, i.e., jurisprudence, understanding, and elucidation of the meanings of the noble Prophetic Hadith, known as the science of Hadith exegesis. Specifically, it will examine their valuable contributions in the exegesis of Prophetic Hadith, encompassing the knowledge and scholarly contributions they provided. Considering that exploring the commentaries of the scholars of Western Islam up until the present day requires extensive effort that cannot be fulfilled within the scope of this study, I will confine myself to the available exegesis on the six fundamental principles of Hadith, which have been the focus of scholarly work since the emergence of Hadith commentary until the end of the tenth Hijri century.

Therefore, I will address this subject matter in two main sections:

The first part: the independence of the Islamic West School in the hadith explanation

The second topic: touches of creativity and excellence in Maghreb commentaries

The first topic: the independence of the school of the Islamic West

The scholars of Western Islam were at the forefront in explaining the Prophetic tradition through their early and extensive service to the Muwatta of Imam Malik, may Allah bless his soul. The sources mention an early Andalusian commentary/exegesis on the Muwatta, between the end of the second century and the beginning of the third centuryⁱ, titled "Tafsir al-Muwatta." Its author was 'Isa ibn Dinar ibn Waqid al-Ghafeeqi al-Talili (d. 212 AH)ⁱⁱ. Their attention to the Muwatta continued with numerous and distinctive commentaries in subsequent centuries. As for their commentaries on the Six Books, especially the two Sahihs (Al-Bukhari and Muslim), their independent nature in categorization became evident. However, the available commentaries that are within our reach, among the vast amount mentioned in the sources, may not provide a comprehensive overview of the independence observed in this school.

The explanations of the scholars of the Islamic West have been characterized by a number of characteristics that made it an independent school that has distinguished in the hadith explanation, and perhaps the most prominent thing that has been specific is its impression in its entirety of the jurisprudential character, and this feature has emerged clearly in the preserved explanations, and in the missing explanations that transferred from its texts, which indicates the interest of its owners because the most of those who dealt with the explanation are either jurists, or they combined fiqh and hadith with the emergence of most of them in fiqh more.

The commentaries of the scholars of Western Islam were characterized by a set of features that made it an independent school with its distinct influence in Hadith commentary. Perhaps the most prominent feature distinguishing it from the Eastern school is its overall focus on jurisprudence. This feature was clearly evident in the preserved commentaries, as well as in the lost commentaries from which much have been transmitted, indicating the interest of their authors in deriving jurisprudence from Hadith and giving it special attention. This is not surprising since most of those who engaged in commentary were either jurists themselves or had expertise in both jurisprudence and Hadith, with the majority of them excelling in the field of jurisprudence.

Perhaps this characteristic in the commentaries of the scholars of Western Islam during the first ten centuries can primarily be attributed to the simultaneous efforts alongside the intensive work dedicated to serving the Muwatta. The convergence of these efforts resulted in mutual influence in terms of style and formulation, despite the fact that the Muwatta is a book of jurisprudence and Hadith. As for the two authentic compilations (Sahihain), they are among the comprehensive collections that encompassed the eight major topics of the religion, in addition to their inclusion of a meticulous construction of the chain of narrators (isnad) in the Hadiths they contain. These compilations deserve a detailed explanation and clarification due to their significance in preserving and understanding the Prophetic Hadiths.

The most prominent features that show this feature are:

The phrase (jurisprudence in this Hadith) and its similarities are repeated in some of their commentaries ⁱⁱⁱ:

This phrase and its equivalents have repeatedly emerged in the transmitted explanatory texts whose original sources have been lost. They are also found in some preserved commentaries, particularly in the indirect derivations from the Prophetic texts, as a means to

extract juristic benefits from both the closely and distantly related Hadiths. We find such expressions in the works of Abu al-Zinad al-Qurtubi, al-Muhallab ibn Abi Sufrah, Ibn Battal, and perhaps others. The following are examples of their texts where they employed this phrase:

- The saying of Abu al-Zinad in his commentary on a hadith from Sahih al-Bukhari: "It is jurisprudence that if a man points with his hand or his head or with something by which he understands his signal, it is permissible for him"^{iv}.
- The saying of al-Muhallab ibn Abi Safra in his commentary on a hadith from Sahih al-Bukhari: "It is jurisprudence that it is permissible for the scholar if he is asked about something to answer him otherwise, if in his answer there is a statement of what he was asked about and specifying it"^v.
- Ibn Batal said in his explanation of the hadith of Sahih al-Bukhari: "In the hadith of Uthman of jurisprudence that he imposed on the world to communicate what he has of knowledge and share it to people"^{vi}.

Expansion of the service of the Maliki school of thought in their explanations^{vii}

The scholars of the Western Islamic school, in general, transmitted the statements of Imam Malik, may Allah have mercy upon him, and the opinions of the eminent scholars of his school, and they thought highly of them. This is natural, as all the commentators of Hadith in the Western Islamic school, alongside their engagement in jurisprudence, adhered to the jurisprudence of Malik. Some of them delved deeply into honoring and elucidating its foundations even before it became a distinct school, as Imam al-Maziri did in his book "Al-Mu'alim" with the beneficial insights from Sahih Muslim^{viii}. Some of them exhibited a strong inclination toward the Maliki school and supported it, such as Qadi 'Iyad, who often favored the Maliki school in his preference and referred to it to provide exegesis of Hadiths^{ix}.

Some of them delved deep into the fiqh disputes within the Maliki school and its intricate details, extensively exploring the branches of Maliki jurisprudence with their supporting evidence. Consequently, their commentaries became authoritative sources in Maliki jurisprudence. This became evident in the approach of Ibn Battal in his commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari, to the extent that al-Kirmānī described this commentary by saying, "Here is the book of Imam Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn Khalaf al-Mālīki, famously known as Ibn Battal. It primarily focuses on the jurisprudence of Imam Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, with much deviation from the purpose of the book."^x

This was also evident in the approach of Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabi in his commentary on Jami' al-Tirmidhi, to the extent that Abu al-Tayyib al-Sindi described it as being lengthy in its explanation of the Maliki school. Ibn al-Arabi did not delve into many of the prophetic statements that required clarification and elaboration^{xi}.

Similarly, in the approach of Ibn al-Tin al-Safaqusi in his book, "Al-Khabr al-Fasih," which is a commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari, Muhammad Makhloof described his commentary by saying, "He demonstrates an exceptional care for fiqh, intermingled with many references to the Madhhab (school) and its explanations, all while maintaining eloquent expression and graceful indications."^{xii}

Among their contributions is also their defense of the Maliki school, seeking excuses and justifications for any opposing opinions attributed to Imam Malik that deviated from explicit evidence. There are numerous examples of this, but for the sake of brevity, I will limit myself to these two examples:

- The statement of Imam Abu Ja'far al-Dawudi regarding a derived fiqh issue from a hadith in Sahih al-Bukhari: "Malik did not receive this hadith, so he held the view that the punishment should be proportionate to the sin."^{xiii}
- The statement of Imam Abu 'Abd al-Malik al-Buni regarding a particular issue: "It seems that he (Imam Malik) did not consider it authentic because it came from the people of the East,"^{xiv} referring to the strictness in narration attributed to Imam Malik from the people of the East^{xv}.

It is noteworthy here that the extensive service to the Maliki school does not imply disregarding the opinions of other opposing schools. The transmission of these opinions has been evident in varying proportions, whether in preserved commentaries or in reports about them. Moreover, the commentaries that predominantly highlight Maliki jurisprudence are the same ones that take care to convey the fiqh disputes outside the school and give weight to what the evidence necessitates, even if it contradicts the Maliki school^{xvi}.

Focusing on explaining the books of jurisprudence without other books related topics of religion:

This was evident in Ibn Battal's commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari, where he left entire books of Sahih without explanation or commentary. These were books that were not directly related to fiqh, such as the Book of Creation, Tafsir (exegesis), Virtues and Merits of the Companions, and Military Expeditions. He even mentions the chapter heading without narrating its hadiths and follows it with the statement, "There is no fiqh in it" or "There is no fiqh in this chapter."^{xvii} It is not unlikely that this approach was also followed in the commentaries that preceded him, especially those who transmitted extensively from him, such as Abu al-Zinad and al-Muhallab ibn Abi Sufra. It has been observed that he was influenced by them in using expressions like "and it includes fiqh" and similar phrases.

The overall impression that can be noticed concerning commentaries from the western Islamic region is characterized by moderation and economy in highlighting the modern isnad-oriented approach. Tracing the texts transmitted from the lost commentaries reveals that the explanatory material related to the isnad aspect is scarce compared to the fiqh and understanding of the texts and derived rulings from them. However, this result does not necessarily indicate a lack of material in those commentaries, as it is possible that the commentators did not transmit them due to not needing them or being satisfied with other sources. It also does not assert that their methodologies lack concern for the isnad industry, nor does it imply that their authors were not knowledgeable about hadith and its principles.

Indeed, in some of the lost commentaries, there may be indications of the commentators' concern for the isnads. For example, Abu al-Qasim Ibn Ward al-Mari al-Tamimi titled his commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari as "Al-Ihtiwaa 'ala Ghaayat al-Matlub wal-Murad fi Sharh Ma Istimla'a 'alaihi Musannif al-Bukhari min 'Ilm al-Matn ba'd al-Ta'rif bi-Rijal al-Isnad," which suggests that the isnad is one of the essential elements in his commentary. It is also highly unlikely that Ibn al-Qattan al-Fasi's commentary on Sunan Abi Dawood lacks a hadith-oriented approach, as he is among those firmly rooted in the principles and knowledge of hadith.

In the preserved works, the emphasis on the isnad aspect is a clear indication that Western Islamic commentators divert their attention away from engaging with the isnads in their commentaries. Apart from occasional minor isnad benefits mentioned by al-Maziri in al-Mu'alim^{xviii}, and the valuable investigations and benefits added by Judge Ibn 'Ayyad in his completion of al-, such as the book "Taqqid al-Muhmal wa Tamyiz al-Mushkil" by Hafiz Abu

'Ali al-Jayyani^{xix}, and some other instances of hadith-related content added by Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Sanusi in his completion of al-Ikmal from the explanations of Judge Ibn 'Ayyad and al-Nawawi^{xx}, and the topic of chain of transmission and men, with which Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabi opened the sections of his explanation^{xxi}, the Western and Andalusian commentaries in the first ten centuries were not competitive in highlighting the hadith industry in Sahih al-Bukhari or other works in a significant manner.

The limited emphasis on the isnad industry by the scholars of the Western Islamic region in the context of Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim can be attributed to their reliance on the efforts of scholars from other regions who have already addressed the classification of narrators and the criticism of their weak reports. Foremost among these works is the book by Hafiz Abu 'Ali al-Jayyani. Instead, they focused on the jurisprudence of the texts after accepting the authenticity of the hadiths contained within them, as this was the primary objective of their explanations^{xxii}.

I conclude this aspect by noting another characteristic that distinguished the early commentaries on Sahih al-Bukhari, which is the attention given the clarification of its titles of chapters, both in explanation and guidance. Numerous texts were transmitted in these commentaries from scholars such as Abu Ja'far al-Dawudi, Abu al-Zanad al-Qurtubi, Al-Mahlab ibn Abi Safra, and Abu 'Abd al-Malik al-Buni. Some of them, like 'Isa ibn Sahl and Ibn Ward al-Mari, reported only the titles of chapters (tarajim). Indeed, the focus of the scholars of the Western Islamic region on studying the titles of chapters was a well-known practice for them outside of comprehensive commentaries. They promptly engaged in the classification of these titles of chapters (tarajim) in separate books alongside these early commentaries. One example of this is the work of Ahmad ibn Rashaq al-Marsi, who passed away after 440 AH, titled "Sharh Tarajim al-Bukhari wa Ma'ani Ma Ashkala Minha" (Explanation of the Biographies of al-Bukhari and the Meanings of the Difficulties Found in Them)^{xxiii}.

The second topic: Distinct and Innovative Approaches in Western Commentaries on Hadith.

Western scholars of Islam did not confine themselves to providing commentaries and exegesis to Hadith for the mere purpose of writing volumes. They rather had innovative and novel methods of approaching Hadiths of prophet Mohammed that reveal their cognitive distinctiveness and methodological prowess that can be reduced as follows:

First

The preeminence lies in explanations that are followed by analysis that deal with the Isnad and text together. This became evident in the first Maghrebian explanation of Sahih al-Bukhari, where a variety of explanatory material was transmitted from Imam Abu Ja'far al-Dawudi in his book "An-Nasihah fi Sharh al-Bukhari." It encompassed various topics regarding Isnad and the Hadith explained, which cannot be found in the preceding or contemporary explanations/commentaries. Contemporary or preceding refers Ma'alim Sunnah and Distinguished scholars of Hadith, where Al-Imam Al-Khatibi confined himself to explaining the obscure aspects of the Hadith and deducing its jurisprudence^{xxiv}.

Furthermore, it should be noted that al-Dawudi's explanation may be the first comprehensive explanation of the compiler of Hadith. The transmitted texts from him included most of the books of Sahih al-Bukhari. Al-Hafid Ibn Hajar transmitted about six hundred texts from him, some of which we find in the last volume of Al-Fath and in the introduction to his explanation titled "Hadi as-Sari." It is possible that some texts were transmitted from him without explicitly mentioning his name, as is customary for many authors in their books^{xxv}. This strengthens the hypothesis that al-Dawudi comprehended all the books. If this is accepted,

then the preeminence is established for al-Dawudi in this matter, as al-Khattabi did not explain the complete Sunan Abu Dawud or Sahih al-Bukhari, even though he covered most of the books within them. His method in both was to select specific chapters for explanation and to choose one or more hadiths for elucidation, rarely encompassing all the chapters and hadiths^{xxvi}.

Second

The preeminence lies in the methodical or thematic explanation, where the commentator divides the narration (sanad) and the text (matn) into specific steps and then explains each step separately, even if it requires explaining the later part of the hadith (text) before the earlier part (sanad). The approach adopted before the emergence of this method is explanation of the topic, where the commentator addresses specific sections of the sanad or matn that they deem what is in need of explanation and clarification. They introduce these sections at the beginning of their explanation/commentary, saying "His statement" or "And his statement," then they proceed to the specific section to be explained, followed by the explanation, addressing various related issues, even if they are diverse in their subject matter^{xxvii}. This is the approach followed by al-Khattabi in his explanations/commentaries, as well as al-Mazari in "Al-Mualim" and al-Qadi 'Iyad in "Ikmāl al-Mualim."

This method was commonly used in Andalusia, where the first book was followed by explanation by topic is the model of Al-Ahwadhi by Abu Bakr bin Al-Arabi the Andalusian, who stipulated this in the introduction to his commentary, saying: "We will include hopefully according to the model: the isnad, and the strange Hadiths, grammar, monotheism, fiqh, etiquette, some wisdom, and references to interests"^{xxviii}.

Ibn al-Arabi mentioned these elements, which he considered titles suitable for him in explaining many chapters of the book, fulfilling them or limiting them to some of them, according to his knowledge and what Allah opened to him in familiarity with the benefits of hadith.

Third

One of the distinctive features of the Moroccan classification in Hadith explanation is the combination of multiple explanations within a single compilation. This allows for comparison among the most prominent interpretations in understanding Hadith and selecting the most pertinent rule. This characteristic is exemplified in the works of Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Baquri al-Marrakushi, Isa ibn Mas'ud al-Zawawi, Muhammad ibn Khalifa al-Abi al-Tunisi, and Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Sanusi al-Tilimsani. They brought together four explanatory sources: Al-Mualim by al-Mazari, Ikmāl by al-Qadi 'Iyad, Mufhim al-Qurtūbi, and Minhaj al-Nawawi. Moreover, al-Zawawi went beyond that, as mentioned by the author of al-Dibaj al-Madhhab, stating, "He explained Sahih Muslim in twelve volumes, naming it 'Ikmāl al-Ikmāl,' where he collected the opinions of al-Mazari, al-Qadi 'Iyad, and al-Nawawi, and included valuable insights from the works of Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, al-Baji, and others."^{xxix}

Fourth:

One of the innovative features that characterized Moroccan commentaries is the series of "takmilāt" (supplementary additions) through which the commentator would supplement the explanation of their predecessor. Dr. Abdul Aziz Al-Saghīr, in his book "Al-Imam Al-'Allāmah Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Sanusi and His Efforts in the Service of the Noble Prophetic Hadith," states that "In this field, it is noticeable that the Moroccan explanation/commentary of Sahih Muslim often takes the form of a series of commentaries, with one commentary building upon

on the previous one. The commentator adds to it, supplements it, makes corrections, completes what was missing, or fills any gaps that may have occurred.^{xxxv}

Those supplementary additions revolved around the first complete explanation of Sahih Muslim, which is "Mualim al-Imam al-Mazari" by al-Mazari. The benefits of al-Mazari's work were further supplemented by al-Qadi 'Iyad in his "Ikmāl al-Mualim." Then, conclusions of the latter were supplemented by Isa ibn Mas'ud al-Zawawi, Muhammad ibn Khalifa al-Abi al-Tunisi, and Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Tajani, who authored a concise commentary on Sahih Muslim, described as a completion of al-Qadi 'Iyad's "Ikmāl." Abu al-Qasim al-Sharif al-Idrisi al-Salawi also contributed to the supplementation. The completion of the completion was accomplished by Abu 'Isa ibn Ahmad al-Hindisi al-Bajai, known as Ibn al-Shatt, who passed away after the year 890 AH. He provided annotations on it. The series was concluded by Abu Abd Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Sanusi (d. 895 AH), who summarized and further supplemented the completion of the completion.

Fifth

One of the features of innovation in contemporary Hadith explanation is the selection of specific portions from the compilations of the Sunnah for commentary based on various considerations perceived by the commentators. Among these considerations is the selection of a book from the categorized compilations, such as a book on knowledge or monotheism, among others. The benefit of this specialization is to highlight the themes of the Prophetic Sunnah by delving into the hadiths of the studied book. This practice has been previously undertaken by a prominent figure in the Islamic West at the end of the fifth century, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Musa al-Shatibi al-Maliki (d. 490 AH), who explained the book of transactions from Sahih al-Bukhari and named it "Al-Majalis." Abu al-Abbas Ahmad Baba al-Takrouri praised it in his book "Nail al-Ibtihaj," saying, "It contains benefits and investigations that we cannot arrive at a full appreciation of its content."^{xxxi}

This is what was possible to collect from the innovative and staggering school of the Islamic West, although I believe that what I mentioned falls short of the whole literature on the topic. The mentioned aspects and pieces of information in this research inasmuch as their explanations and commentaries are concerned reveals the tip of the iceberg.

Conclusion

This study reached a number of results, the most important of which are:

1. The commentaries of Hadith in the Islamic West acquired a number of characteristics that made it an independent school of commentary that has its own method. Most notably focus on jurisprudence at the expense of (Isnad) hadith industry related to the sanad. in addition to taking care to explain jurisprudential/ fiqh books without the need to consider other books related to religion, such as Tawhid.
2. Islamic West introduced new approach to dealing with Hadith of prophet Mohammed. They had some unique methods that show novelty and resilience inasmuch as writing and providing commentary and explanations of Hadith are concerned, especially Sahihain 5bukhari and Muslim). They were the first to introduce analysis after commentary. They provided commentary and explanation of Hadith that focused on section of books, instead of all fiqh. They also compiled more than a single book of commentary in volumes. They also built their commentary based on preceding commentaries. They selectively chose books from the compilations in which scholars

categorized their works thematically, and meticulously provided comprehensive explanations and profound analysis.

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds

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^{xii} The pure tree of light by Muhammad Makhlof, vol. 2, p. 242.
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^{xviii} vol. 1, p. 208.
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^{xxviii} Arida al-Ahwadhi with the explanation of Sahih al-Tirmidhi, vol. 1, p. 2.
^{xxix} The Gilded brocade in the knowledge of the notables of the scholars of the doctrine, vol. 2, p. 72-73.
^{xxx} Imam Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Senussi and his efforts in serving the hadith of the Prophet, p45-46.
^{xxxi} Neil Al-Ibtihaj with brocade embroidery, p. 49.