



The Study of Ḥadīth Commentaries: Uncovering an Important Genre of Islamic Scholarship

A Workshop organized by the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures

Thursday, 30 November (room 0001)

6.00 pm | CSMC Lecture by Joel Blecher, The George Washington University
Revision in the Manuscript Age: New Evidence of Early Versions of Ibn Ḥajar's Fath al-Bārī

Friday, 1 December (room 2002)

9.00 am – Welcome & Introduction
9.30 am Stefanie Brinkmann and Ali Zaherinezhad, CSMC

9.30 am – Keynote Lecture by Joel Blecher, The George Washington University
10.40 am **Said the Prophet of God: Ḥadīth Commentary across a Millennium**

10.40 am Coffee Break

11.00 am – Misbahur Rehman, Goethe University Frankfurt
11.45 am **Dynamics of the Living Text: The Production and Evolution of Ḥadīth Commentaries**

12.00 pm Lunch

1.30 pm – Ahmad Khan, University of Hamburg
2.15 pm **Before Shurūḥ: Reading al-Bukhārī's Ṣaḥīḥ in Khurāsān, 9th-10th Centuries**

2.15 pm – Khaoula Trad, University of Hamburg
3.00 pm **Muslim's Ṣaḥīḥ in the Islamic West: Lines of Transmission as an Object of Interest in the Commentary al-Mu'lim bi-Fawā'id Muslim by al-Māzirī**

3.00 pm Coffee Break

3.30 pm – Andrew Newman, University of Edinburgh
4.15 pm **Ḥadīth Compilation as Ḥadīth Commentary in 12er Shī'ī Islam: The Ḥadīth Collections of Ibn Babawayh (d. 991)**

4.15 pm Coffee Break

4.45 pm – Ali Aghaei, Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities
5.30 pm **The Hermeneutics of al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044) in the interpretation of al-Akhbār al-Āḥād in his Kitāb al-Amālī**

7.00 pm Dinner



Saturday, 2 December (room 2002)

- 9.00 am – Samer Dajani, Cambridge Muslim College
9.45 am **Sufi Ḥadīth Commentaries and their Impact on Classic Ḥadīth Commentary Works**
- 9.45 am – Ali Zaherinezhad, CSMC
10.30 am **The Scope of Studying Paratextual Commentary Notes in a Manuscript of al-Bukhārī’s Ṣaḥīḥ**
- 10.30 am Coffee Break
- 11.00 am – Stefanie Brinkmann, CSMC
11.45 am **The Chapter of Beverages: A Comparison of Commentaries on al-Bukhārī’s Ṣaḥīḥ**
- 11.45 am – Thomas Eich, University of Hamburg
12.30 pm **Medicine in Arba‘īn-Commentaries of the 20th and 21st centuries**
- 12.30 pm Lunch
- 2.30 pm Work Session on Ḥadīth Commentaries
- 5.00 pm Discussion: Publication of Collection of Essays
- 7.00 pm Dinner

The Abstracts

Said the Prophet of God: Ḥadīth Commentary across a Millennium

Joel Blecher, The George Washington University

Although scholars have long studied how Muslims authenticated and transmitted ḥadīth, the field has yet to seriously grapple with how Muslim commentators interpreted and reinterpreted the meanings of ḥadīth over the past millennium. In this keynote lecture, Joel Blecher will offer an assessment of the current state of the field, and survey the social and intellectual history of ḥadīth commentary at three critical moments and locales: late and post-Umayyad Andalusia, Mamluk Egypt and Syria, and early modern India. Weaving together tales of public debates, high court rivalries, and colonial politics with analyses of contemporary field notes and fine-grained arguments adorning the margins of manuscripts, this talk will examine the tradition of ḥadīth commentary from a variety of methodological perspectives. Studying the rich tradition of ḥadīth commentary not only offers us fresh insights into the fields of Islamic studies and manuscript studies, it can also offer new ways of understanding cultures of interpretation across time and place. In concluding, Blecher will sketch out avenues for future research, and discuss his current work in progress.

Dynamics of the Living Text: The Production and Evolution of Ḥadīth Commentaries

Misbahur Rehman, Goethe University Frankfurt

This paper explores the dynamics behind the production of ḥadīth commentaries in classical Islamic literature by tracing the fluctuation of activity around specific books across space and time using, as an example, data about commentaries and commentators on Muwaṭṭa' and Saḥīh al-Bukhārī. Since commentarial writings are directly linked to the transmission of knowledge in Islamic scholarship, an increase or decrease in the number of commentaries tell us about the active role a book is playing in a given environment. The study explores specific points of interest where a new book is included, excluded or exchanged in the process of writing commentaries and in turn examines the role of different factors such as geography, personalities or a specific political and social environment in this process. At the broader level, it also tells us about the reception of a subject - ḥadīth for our study - in a given society at a given time.

Before Shurūḥ: Reading al-Bukhārī’s Ṣaḥīḥ in Khurāsān, 9th-10th centuries

Ahmad Khan, University of Hamburg

This paper proposes to reconstruct the history of critiques and commentaries on al-Bukhārī’s Ṣaḥīḥ from the view of the province of Khurāsān. It examines the earliest engagements with al-Bukhārī’s ḥadīth collection in the province of Khurāsān in the ninth and tenth centuries and suggests ways in which contemporary definitions of ḥadīth commentary as sharḥ do not always account for the diverse textual strategies with which medieval Muslims read ḥadīth works. In the process of documenting the first literary engagements with al-Bukhārī’s Ṣaḥīḥ, this paper seeks to establish a more precise history of regional developments in ḥadīth learning and ḥadīth commentary.

Muslim’s Ṣaḥīḥ in the Islamic West: Lines of Transmission as an Object of Interest in the Commentary al-Mu‘lim bi-Fawā’id Muslim by al-Māzirī

Khaoula Trad, University of Hamburg

In the Maghrib Muslim’s Ṣaḥīḥ has been preferred over al-Bukhārī’s Ṣaḥīḥ, not due to issues of authenticity but for reasons of contextual simplicity and clear arrangement. The present contribution intends to analyse the methodology in the commentary “al-Mu‘lim bi-Fawā’id Muslim” by the Mālikī jurist and traditionist Abu ‘Abd Allah Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Umar at-Tamīmī al-Māzirī (d. 536/ 1141). Special attention is given to the treatment of the different lines of transmission of Muslim’s Ṣaḥīḥ in the commentary of al-Māzirī, which is considered to be the first commentary on Muslim’s Ṣaḥīḥ and an important pillar on which most of its late commentaries were built upon. The analysis of al-Māzirī’s commentary intends to offer a preliminary framework for the study of ḥadīth literature in the Maghrib.

Ḥadīth Compilation as Ḥadīth Commentary in 12er Shī‘ī Islam: The Ḥadīth Collections of Ibn Babawayh (d. 991)

Andrew J Newman, University of Edinburgh

The composition of shurūḥ and hawāshī in 12er Shiism is a phenomenon that well postdates the ‘formative period’ of the faith, the years following the onset of the occultation of the last Imam in the 260s/870s. By the mid-5th/11th century a number of important collections of the Imams’ aḥādīth had been assembled, including the famous ‘four books’. While these compilations might be examined independently of each other, comparative examination of these texts across a range of key, quite distinctive theological and furū‘ matters reveals that important and characteristic developments are discernible in both. The present paper will suggest that careful study of chosen compilations of the Imām’s aḥādīth as assembled by Ibn Babawayh can identify such evolution in both theological and practical matters. It reveals the processes by which this was achieved and, finally, sheds light on the collections as reflections of their compilers’ response to changing issues of concern to the 12er community over these years. As such, Ibn Babawayh’s work stands as something of a commentary on the earlier collections.

Ali Aghaei: The Hermeneutics of al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044) in the interpretation of al-Akhbār al-Āḥād in his Kitāb al-Amālī

Ali Aghaei, Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities

This paper aims at exploring the hermeneutical approach of the prominent Imāmī scholar, Abu al-Qāsim ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044) by examining the means that he uses to interpret the prophetic aḥādīth. First, the paper will clarify the position of al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā regarding the authority of al-khabar al-wāḥid (the single transmission). Then, it focuses on the aḥādīth which are discussed by al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā in his Kitāb al-Amālī for different reasons such as their strange vocabulary, oddness or ambiguity in their meaning, or their inconsistency with the Qur’an. This paper shows that even though al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā does not accept the authority of al-akhbār al-āḥād as proofs or supports for his legal doctrines, he does not categorically dismiss them either. In his approach to akhbār al-āḥād, any probable meaning can be proposed for the ḥadīth as far as one could find the evidence for it in the Arabic language. But he rejects a ḥadīth in case it refers to something contrary to the reason (‘aql).

Sufi Ḥadīth Commentaries and their Impact on Classic Hadīth Commentary Works

Samer Dajani, Cambridge Muslim College

The strong relationship between the early Sufis and the Traditionalists has been acknowledged in several studies. However, the significant Sufī contribution to the genre of ḥadīth commentaries in particular has not been sufficiently looked at. This paper aims to shed light on the Sufī contribution to the Sunni attitude to ḥadīth in general, and some of the earliest examples of ishārī or bāṭinī interpretations of ḥadīth. Its main focus, however, is on the most important and influential works of Sufī ḥadīth commentary. A very significant finding of this paper is the degree to which these works have been quoted in some of the most authoritative classics in the field such as Ibn Ḥajar’s *Fath al-Bārī*. The paper points out that Sufī interpretations were often given more weight when the ḥadīths dealt with matters often seen as within the domain of Sufī expertise, such as issues of the heart. The study also shows how Sufis were seen as authoritative sources in other domains of ḥadīth sciences such as transmission and juristic as well as linguistic understanding.

The Scope of Studying Paratextual Commentary Notes in a Manuscript of al-Bukhārī's Ṣaḥīḥ

Ali Zaherinezhad, CSMC

This paper intends to provide a preliminary analysis of the extensive paratextual commentary notes contained in the manuscript B.or.227 of the University Library of Leipzig. Most of these notes have been recently identified as selections of two voluminous commentary works of the 14th and 15th century, namely the *Maṣābīḥ al-Jāmī* by the Egyptian scholar al-Damāmīnī (d. 1424) and the *Maqāṣid al-Tanqīḥ* by al-Kāzarūnī from Shiraz (d. 1400). The paper seeks to present the distinctive features of these two commentaries as well as the interplay between these works in the margins of the manuscript B.or.227 in terms of content, form and function. This analysis will serve as the basis for a number of tentative conclusions on the state of commentary scholarship in 15th century Shiraz.

The Chapter of Beverages: A Comparison of Commentaries on al-Bukhārī's Ṣaḥīḥ

Stefanie Brinkmann, CSMC

Ḥadīth aimed at confirming, modifying, or abolishing existing norms in the early Islamic period, thereby not only dealing with theological and historical topics but also matters of daily life such as clothing, food and drink, or hunting. This paper examines ḥadīth commentaries on the chapter of beverages in al-Bukhārī's Ṣaḥīḥ from the 10th to the 16th century. It raises the question of the importance and detail the commentator has dedicated to this subject, or topics within this subject, and compares content, structure, and methodologies. Taking the question of regional and transregional scholarly networks into account, it chooses commentaries from the Maghrib to the Persianate World and analyses the personalities and texts referred to in the commentaries.

Medicine in Arbaʿīn-Commentaries of the 20th and 21st centuries

Thomas Eich, University of Hamburg

This paper will analyze the structural developments in three commentaries on the 40 ḥadīth collection of al-Nawawī (d. 1277) which were published since 1970. For this purpose, the commentaries on ḥadīth no. 4 which relates to the unborn will be scrutinized. It will be shown that these works obviously (and probably consciously) position themselves within the tradition by incorporating elements which had become part and parcel of the history of commenting on this particular hadith. On the other hand, they provide new discussions relating to the unborn in light of modern medical technology.

The Participants

Ali Aghaei has received his MA and PhD from the Usul al-Din College in Qom (2002) and the Islamic Azad University in Tehran (2012) respectively. In his dissertation, entitled “Dating Muslim Traditions Based on Isnād and Matn: An Analysis of Premises and Methods”, he has examined the methodological premises of dating methods based on isnād and matn and evaluated the possibilities and limitations of these methods for dating ḥadīths. Since 2005, Aghaei has been a Research Fellow in the Department of Qur’an and Hadith Studies of the Encyclopedia of Islam Foundation in Tehran, contributing to entries in *Dāneshnāmeḥ-ye Jahān-e Eslām* (Encyclopaedia of the World of Islam). In 2013/14, he was a Post-Doctorate Fellow in the research program “Europe in the Middle East - The Middle East in Europe” (EUME) of the Forum Transregionale Studien in Berlin, working on a research project titled as “Polemical Usage of the Term *Isrā’iliyyāt* in Medieval and Modern Muslim Exegeses of the Qur’ān”. Since September 2014, he is working as a Research Associate in the project *Corpus Coranicum* of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

Joel Blecher (PhD Princeton) is Assistant Professor of History at The George Washington University. He is the author of *Said the Prophet of God: Hadith Commentary across a Millennium* (University of California Press, 2017) and has published in the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, *Oriens*, and several edited volumes on themes related to Islamic intellectual history, manuscript studies, the study of religion, and the digital humanities. His current research investigates the medieval and early modern Islamic commentary tradition on commerce in the interconnected worlds of trade, scholarly travel, and pilgrimage that spanned the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Stefanie Brinkmann is Acting Professor for Islamic Studies at the Asia-Africa-Institute, University of Hamburg. She finished her education of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Persian and Italian Studies in Göttingen, Teheran and Jerusalem with a PhD on the Umayyad poet al-Akḥṭal (d. 710 AD) at Göttingen University. She was lecturer at Göttingen and Leipzig University, and had an acting professorship for Islamic Studies at Freiburg University before coming to Hamburg in 2014/15. At the Center for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, University of Hamburg, she is the Principle Investigator of the project “The Leipzig Manuscript B. or. 227: Paratexts as witnesses of Islamic ḥadīṭ scholarship”. Having a special interest in manuscripts, she is member of the board of The Islamic Manuscript Association, organising an online catalogue, training courses, and a handbook for cataloguing. Her main research interests are ḥadīṭ and manuscript studies, as well as food and drink as part of daily life in the early Islamic period, hereby using ḥadīṭ as a central source.

Samer Dajani is a Research Fellow at Cambridge Muslim College. He studies the different methodologies of the Sunni schools of jurisprudence, as well as broader theories on legal diversity and the nature of the Sharīʿa. His PhD focused on the links between the legal thought of four major Sufi figures from the 3rd/9th century until the 19th centuries, as well as the influence of their ideas on later revivalist movements in the 19th and 20th centuries. He received his BA in Arab & Islamic Civilizations from the American University in Cairo, followed by an MA and PhD in the field of Islamic Studies from SOAS, University of London.

Thomas Eich is Professor for Islamic Studies at the Asia-Africa-Institute at the University of Hamburg. He earned his PhD at Bochum University in 2003 with a work on the writings and personal networks of Abū al-Hudā al-Sayyadī, a late Ottoman Sufi. Afterwards he has developed a focus on Contemporary Muslim Medical Ethics, especially beginning of life issues. Since a few years he developed this research further into the analysis of the historical development of imaginations of the unborn. His current ERC-project “Contemporary Bioethics and the History of the Unborn” is devoted to this field.

Ahmad Khan is currently a Postdoctoral Scholar at the University of Hamburg, where he is writing a second monograph on the social, political, and religious history of the early Islamic empire from the view of the province of Khurasan (and Transoxiana). In 2014-15, he was appointed Lecturer in Islamic Studies and History at the University of Oxford. His dissertation at the University of Oxford (Faculty of Oriental Studies) examined the role that discourses of heresy played in the formation of medieval Sunni orthodoxy from the eighth to eleventh centuries. In addition to his primary specialism in the field of medieval Islamic history, he has a second research interest in the history of publishing houses and modern editors in the Middle East and Indian subcontinent, which has culminated in the publication of a book he co-edited: *Reclaiming Islamic Tradition: Modern Interpretations of the Classical Heritage* (Edinburgh, 2016).

Andrew Newman is Personal Chair of Islamic Studies and Persian at the University of Edinburgh. He holds a BA in History, *summa cum laude*, from Dartmouth College, and an MA and PhD in Islamic Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles. He came to Edinburgh in 1996, having been a Research Fellow at both the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, Oxford and Green College, Oxford, whilst researching topics in the history of Islamic medicine. Newman has published books and articles on early 12er Shiism and Shīʿī history and thought and on Shiism in Safavid Iran. His most recent publication is *Twelver Shiʿism, Unity and Diversity in the Life of Islam, 632 to 1722* (Edinburgh, 2013).

Misbahur Rehman is a Research Fellow at the Institute for the Study of Islamic Culture and Religion, Goethe University Frankfurt. He has previously worked on the origins of commentarial literature in early Islam and the central role it played in later Islamic scholarship. Currently, he is working on the evolution of commentaries and their nexus with madrasa curriculum in the Middle Ages. His research interests include Islamic law and social change, orality and literacy in Islamic scholarship, Transmission of religious knowledge in Islam, and curricular reforms in South Asian madrasas.

Khaoula Trad is a Research Associate within the ERC-Project “Contemporary Bioethics and the History of the Unborn” and a PhD student working on “The Imagination of the Unborn in the Islamic West: Al-Maghrib and al-Andalus between the 11th and the 13th Centuries”. She obtained her MA of Arabic and Hebrew cultures from the University of Granada in 2014 after receiving an Erasmus Mundus Al-Idrissi scholarship. She also holds a MA and a BA in Spanish literature and linguistics from the University of Manouba where she worked as a teacher of Spanish as foreign language between 2014 and 2016.

Ali Zaherinezhad is a Research Associate in Islamic Studies at the University of Hamburg. He works in the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures and is currently analysing paratexts in manuscripts of the hadith collection *Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ* by al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870). He has been a Visiting Lecturer in Hadith Studies at the Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. He holds a Master degree in Oriental Studies from the University of Oxford and a BA (Hons) in Arabic and Islamic Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London. His research interests include Hadith Studies, Islamic Intellectual History and Islamic Historiography.