Hadith as Adab: Ibn Qutayba’s Chapter on Hadith in His ‘Uyūn al-Akhbār

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Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889)1 was a versatile religious scholar (ʿālim) as well as a man of letters (adīb), who wrote seminal and voluminous works on religious and literary topics. His main books on Hadith,2 Taʿwil mukhtalif al-ḥadīth and Gharīb al-ḥadīth, are standard works in the field. Here, however, I will deal with his main work in the field of adab, indeed a seminal work of adab: his ‘Uyūn al-akhbār. This is a kind of literary anthology, characterised by Gérard Lecomte as “a large compendium of adab, on a number of apparently secular subjects”. It is true that these subjects are mainly secular, but the word “apparently” suggests that the book also contains non-secular material. And indeed, religion is by no means absent and is in fact apparent enough to any casual glance; one can safely say that none of its ten main parts, or “books”, is devoid of religious topics. The fifth of these is entitled Kitāb al-ʿilm wa-l-bayān. Bayān, “clear exposition”, refers to eloquence and fine style; the section on bayān deals with poetry and speeches, many of the latter being religious sermons. The preceding section on ʿilm is about “knowledge”, with quotations from Plato, Hippocrates, Christ, Indian and Persian sages, and Muslim worthies such as ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644); there follow brief chapters on the Qurʾān, on Hadith, on speculative theology (kalām) and heresy, after which Book Five continues with matters of language and style. But as one can expect in adab anthologies there is no sustained discussion, merely a string of anecdotes and sayings, interspersed with poetry.

1 The cut-off date for the theme of the present volume is 250AH; Ibn Qutayba, who was born in 213/828, may have composed his ‘Uyūn al-akhbār some years after 250/864, but all the material he quotes predates this date. On him see e.g. Gérard Lecomte, “Ibn Ḵutayba,” in Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed., eds. P.J. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 3:844–847; Joseph E. Lowry, “Ibn Qutaybah,” in Arabic Literary Culture, 500–925, eds. Michael Cooperson and Shawkat M. Toorawa (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2005), 172–183.

2 I write “Hadith”, with capital, for the corpus of traditions as a whole, and “hadith” for an individual tradition.
It seems appropriate to honour the memory of Gautier (or Gual, as he was known to Dutch colleagues and friends) Juynboll with a few words on this brief chapter on Hadith, seven pages in the edition of Cairo 1925–1930.\(^3\) It contains a number of sayings on Hadith, almost all of them preceded by some form of isnād, and there are ten short poetic quotations, 26 lines in all. The quoted sayings are mostly about Hadith but do not themselves contain Hadith in the strict sense of sayings going back to the Prophet or talking about him. It is difficult to say what Ibn Qutayba’s selection criteria were. Generally, he seems to have collected statements that were striking or amusing, but there are also some more puzzling ones. Here is a translation of the beginning of the section:\(^4\)

\[
\text{اِلْحَدِّيْثُ مَثَّلَ نَبِيَّ الْقُرْآنِ بِهِ بَخَمَة،} \\
\text{وَهِذَا مِنْ أَمْرِ نَحْلِيَّةٍ جِلْسَةً} \\
\text{يُوَزِّعُهَا فِيْهَا؛} \\
\text{قَالَ:} \\
\text{خَلِيلُ الْمَلَائِكَةِ.} \\
\]

Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm b. Ḥabīb b. al-Shahīd\(^5\) told me: Muḥammad b. Fuḍayl\(^6\) told us, on the authority of al-ʿAmash,\(^7\) who said: Ismāʿīl b. Rajāʾ\(^8\) used to gather the young boys in the Qurʾān school (kuttāb) and teach them Hadith, so that he would not forget his Hadith (fa-yuḥaddithuhum kaylā yansā hadithahu).

What is the point of quoting this saying? Normally the prime reason for teaching is to secure the transmission of knowledge to others, to a younger generation. One is almost tempted to change the vowels given in the edition and read kaylā yunsā hadithahu, “so that his Hadith would not be forgotten”. Young children, after all, have great retentive powers and the young are helpful in Hadith in stretching isnāds, one would think. Religious education, however, began with

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3 Ibn Qutayba, ʿUyūn al-akhbār, 4 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1925–1930), 2:134–140 (the edition used in this article); see also the edition by Mundhir Muḥammad Saʿīd Abū Shaʿr, 4 vols. (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmi, 2008), 2:160–166.
4 Ibn Qutayba, ʿUyūn, 2:334. Also in al-Basawī (= al-Fasawī), al-Maʿrif wa-l-tārīkh, ed. Akram Diyāʾ al-ʿUmari, 4 vols. (Medina: Maktabat al-Ḍār, 1410AH), 2:610, Ibn Saʿd, Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr, ed. Ali Muḥammad ʿUmar, 11 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2001), 8:435.
5 d. 257/871; see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Tārīkh Madīnat al-Salām, ed. BashshārʿAwwād Maʿrūf, 17 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ghurb al-Islāmi, 2001–2006), 7:395–396.
6 d. 195/810–811, see Ibn Qutayba, al-Maʿārif, ed. Tharwat ʿUkāsha (Cairo: Dar al-Maʿārif, 1981), 510.
7 d. c. 148/765; see also below, note 13.
8 Ismāʿīl b. Rajāʾ b. Rabiʿa al-Zubaydi al-Kūfī, no dates known; see al-Bukhārī, al-Tārīkh al-kabīr, eds. Hāshim al-Nadwī et al., 9 vols. (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1941–1964), 1:353.
Qurʾān and elementary jurisprudence, not Hadith, for young children were not considered sufficiently reliable as transmitters.\(^9\) One must assume, then, that the received vowelling is correct and the point of the saying seems to be that Ismāʿīl b. Rajāʾ’s behaviour is unusual, a case of teaching that benefits the teacher more than the taught. Ibn Qutayba, one supposes, found it odd, even amusing; a teacher who teaches primarily in order not to forget, even though his priority should be the transmission of knowledge.

It is immediately followed by another somewhat ambiguous passage:

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\text{وَحَدَّثَنِي إِسْحَاقُ الْشَّهِيدِيَّ فَالَّذِي قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرٍ بْنِ عَيْيَّاشٍ عِنْدَ الْأَعْمَشِ قَالَ: قَالَ لِيَ حَبِيبُ بْنِ أُثْدِح.}
\]

Isḥāq al-Shahīdī\(^10\) told me: Abū Bakr b. ‘Ayyāsh\(^11\) told us on the authority of al-Aʿmash, who said: Ḥabīb b. Abī Thābit said to me: If a man told me a hadith on your authority, I would not mind transmitting it on your authority.\(^12\)

—or should we translate \textit{mā bālayt un arwiyahū ‘anka} as “I would not care to transmit it on your authority”, which gives the opposite sense? There is some ambiguity in the verb \textit{bālā}, “to care, mind, be concerned”. Ibn Qutayba does not comment on this rather odd statement. Al-Aʿmash is one of the famous Hadith scholars, one of the “readers” of the Qurʾān;\(^13\) his contemporary Ḥabīb b. Abī Thābit (d. c. 119/737) was a more disputed authority and he is called a \textit{mudallis}, “a forger”.\(^14\) Assuming that he meant: “I would not mind transmitting it on your authority”, he appears to be very casual in his approach to Hadith if with “a man”, \textit{rajul}, he means “any man”. Surely this is not how a serious traditionist should proceed. This, however, is not the point here. I think the anecdote is supposed to be funny; it is a joke. For why would Ḥabīb need this intermediary person in the first place if he can have it directly from al-Aʿmash himself?

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\(^9\) I am grateful to Professor Christopher Melchert for pointing this out to me.

\(^{10}\) He is Isḥāq b. Ibrahim b. al-Shahid, see above, note 5.

\(^{11}\) d. 193/809, see Ibn Qutayba, \textit{Maʿūrifa}, 509.

\(^{12}\) Ibn Qutayba, \textit{Uyūn}, 2334.

\(^{13}\) Gautier H.A. Juynboll, “al-Aʿmash,” in \textit{Encyclopaedia of Islam THREE}, accessed 21 September 2016, \url{http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2066/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_22677}.

\(^{14}\) Ibrāhīm Sibṭ al-ʿAjami, \textit{al-Tabyīn li-asmāʾ al-mudallisīn}, ed. Yahyā Shafīq (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1986), 19–20 (where this saying is quoted). On Ḥabīb see also Ibn Saʿd, \textit{Ṭabaqāt}, 8:437–438, al-Bukhārī, \textit{al-Tārīkh al-kabīr}, 2:313–314.
Moving on to what follows we find:

حَدَّثَنِي أَبُو حَاتِمٍ عَنِ الأَسْمَعِي عَنْ نَافِعٍ عَنْ رَبِيعَةَ بْنِ أَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَانِ قَالَ أَلْفَ عَنْ أَلْفٍ خِيرٍ

من وَاحِدٍ عَنْ وَاحِدٍ إِنَّ فَلَانًا عَنْ فَلَانٍ يَنْتَزِعُ السُّنَّةَ مِنَ أَيْدِيَكُمْ

Abū Ḥātim15 told me on the authority of al-Aṣmaʾī16 on the authority of Nāfiʿ17 on the authority of Rabīʿa b. Abī ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān,18 who said: One thousand on the authority of one thousand is better that one on the authority of one. “So-and-so on the authority of So-and-so” snatches the Sunna from your hands.19

This seems clear: the hadiths called mutawātir are better, in principle, than those termed fard or āḥād.20 This is not particularly interesting and the reason for quoting this is perhaps the vivid expression “snatches the Sunna from your hands” (yantaziʿu al-sunnata min aydīkum). An amusing bit is about Suhayl b. Abī Ṣāliḥ (d. 138/755),21 who transmitted a hadith about the Prophet Muhammad to Rabīʿa b. Abī ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān (d. 136/753). When, after some time, the latter reminds Suhayl of this, he has no recollection of it. And afterwards he happily continues to transmit the hadith on the authority of Rabīʿa, putting himself in the middle of the isnād, something like “A told me that I told him that B told him ...”.22 I do not know how such a peculiar up-and-down-and-up-again can be depicted in one of Juynboll’s spidery webs.

15 Abū Ḥātim al-Sijistānī (d. 255/869), philologist.
16 ‘Abd-al-Malik b. Qurayb al-Aṣmaʾī (d. c. 213/828), famous philologist.
17 Nāfiʿ (d. between 117/735 and 120/738), mawlā of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb; major transmitter of Hadith.
18 An early legal scholar (faqīh), known as Rabīʿah al-Raʿy; see e.g. Ibn Qutayba, Maʿārif, 496, Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt al-ʿiyān, ed. Iḥsān Ṭabbās, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1968–1972), 2:288–290.
19 Ibn Qutayba, ʿUyūn, 2:34; Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, al-ʿIqdal-farīd, eds. Ahmad Amin, Ahmad al-Zayn and Ibrāhiim al-Ibyāri, 7 vols. (Cairo, 1948–1953, repr. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1983), 2:237; al-Qāḍiʿ ʿIyād, Tartīb al-madārik wa-taqrīb al-masālik, eds. Muḥammad b. Tāwīt al-Ṭanjī et al., 8 vols. (Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf, 1983), 1:46.
20 It seems that judging the value of a hadith on the basis of its isnād became dominant only after the first two centuries; see Christopher Melchert’s contribution to the present volume.
21 On him see e.g. al-Šafadī, al-Wāfi bi-l-Wafayāt / Das biographische Lexikon des Schāhād-dīn Ḥaṭīl ibn Abībak ar-Šafadī, 30 vols. (Beirut-Wiesbaden-Berlin: Franz Steiner—Klaus Schwar, 1931–2005), 16:31–32.
22 Ibn Qutayba, ʿUyūn, 2:334.
So far we have been able to discover at least some indications why Ibn Qutayba included a particular saying or anecdote. This short paper cannot discuss all the individual quotations and I should confess that there are some where I am unable to see the point. What to make, for instance, of the one that follows:

حديث البيت الراشدي قال: روى عن محمد بن إسماعيل عن مُعَتَّر قال: حديثي مُنَتَدَّ عن أيوب عن
الحسن قال: وَصْحَةً.

Al-Riyāshītold me: It is transmitted on the authority of Muhammad b. Ismā‘īl, on the authority of Mu‘tamir. Munqidh told me on the authority of Ayyūb, on the authority of al-Ḥasan, who said: Wayḥ: rahma.

—meaning something like “‘Woe!’ means ‘Pity!’” This force of the interjection wayḥ is confirmed by the lexicographers. But it is not immediately clear why this should be mentioned here; it is not a saying of the prophet Muhammad, the word wayḥ does not occur in the Qurʾān, and the quotation is not funny, apart perhaps from being one of the shortest statements introduced by a weighty isnād. It is apparently inspired by a hadith, not quoted here, in which the Prophet says “Wayṭa‘Ammār!”, upon seeing ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir exerting himself in building a mosque. Obviously, he means “Poor ʿAmmār!” rather than “Woe to ʿAmmār!”

Some items are about the teaching of Hadith. When Qatāda had taught a good hadith (idhā ḥaddatha bi-l-ḥadīthi al-jayyid) he would leave and tell another one the next day (dhahaba yajī’u bi-l-thānī ghudwan).
to let the first one sink in properly. This is followed by a saying by Shu‘ba\textsuperscript{30} on the kinds of people whose Hadith should not be accepted (\textit{yutraku hadithu}) and another by Mālik,\textsuperscript{31} on the four kinds of people whose knowledge (\textit{'ilm}) cannot be accepted. They are sensible sayings, as can be expected: the categories include unreliable, or stupid, or biased people.

There is a report about al-Ḥasan, i.e., al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), who would transmit a hadith one day, and repeat it the following day with some additions or omissions but the sense being the same (\textit{yazīdu fīhi wa-yanqūsu illā anna al-ma‘nā wāḥid}).\textsuperscript{32} This is followed, as if by way of justification, by a saying by Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān:\textsuperscript{33} “We are Arabs, who may change the order (\textit{nuqaddimu wa-nu‘akhkhīrū}), add things to it or reduce it, without intending to tell lies”\textsuperscript{34}. Then we read:

\begin{quote}
\textit{أبو معاوية قال: قال أبو إسحاق الشامى: لو كان هذا الحديث من الخبيث نقصه.}
\end{quote}

Abū Mu‘āwiya\textsuperscript{35} said: Abū ʿIshāq al-Shāmī\textsuperscript{36} said: “If this Hadith were bread it would be insufficient.”

I am not sure what this means; is he speaking of a particular hadith or does \textit{hādhā al-ḥadīth} mean “this Hadith”, meaning the whole corpus? Is there a connection, apart from the use of the verb \textit{naqaṣa}, “to reduce” or “to be insufficient”, with the sayings of al-Ḥasan and Ḥudhayfa? Perhaps one should translate “... it would diminish”, meaning that if Hadith were edible it would be depleted, whereas in fact it is not and cannot—or should not—be reduced or diminished. Without any commentary on the part of Ibn Qutayba a saying follows that condemns, if not Hadith, then all its transmitters:

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\textsuperscript{30} Shu‘ba b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 160/776), scholar and collector of Hadith; see Juynboll’s entry on him in \textit{Encyclopaedia of Islam}, (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 9:491–492.

\textsuperscript{31} Presumably Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/796), the famous jurist who gave his name to the Mālikī school of jurisprudence.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibn Qutayba, \textit{ʿUyūn}, 236.

\textsuperscript{33} Abū ʿAbd Allāh Ḥudayfa b. al-Yamān al-ʿAbsī (d. 36/656), a companion of the prophet Muḥammad.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibn Qutayba, \textit{ʿUyūn}, 236.

\textsuperscript{35} Not identified.

\textsuperscript{36} I have not found this name in the standard Arabic sources and it is clearly an error. The edition by Abū Sha‘r has, probably more correctly, Abū ʿIshāq al-Shaybānī. In Ibn Qutayba, \textit{Maʿārif}, 451, Abū ʿIshāq al-Shaybānī Sulaymān b. Abī Sulaymān, said to have died in 129/746–747, is credited with the same saying but with \textit{al-khayr} (“the good”) instead of \textit{al-khubz}. This is clearly based on a misreading (the two words differ only in their diacritic dots); it does not make more sense and is less interesting than the version of \textit{ʿUyūn}. 


Abū Usāma\textsuperscript{37} said: Misʿar said: May God make everyone who hates me a muḥaddith\textsuperscript{38}!

The point is, of course, that this Misʿar b. Kidām (d. 155/771–772)\textsuperscript{39} was himself a transmitter of Hadith. Perhaps Misʿar hints at the poverty of the average Hadith scholar,\textsuperscript{40} and the preceding quotation also suggests that being a transmitter of Hadith does not pay for one’s daily bread. The theme of Hadith as bread is then taken up again in a saying by al-Aʿmash:\textsuperscript{41}

\begin{center}
\textit{وَاللَّهُ لَنْ أَتْصَدِقَ بِكِسْرَةٍ أَحَبُّ إِلَيْ مِنْ أَنْ أُخْفِقَ بِسَبْعَةٍ حَدِيثًا.}
\end{center}

By God, if I gave a bite of bread (\textit{kisra}) as alms that would be better than transmitting sixty hadiths.

And the famous traditionist Sufyān ibn ‘Uyayna\textsuperscript{42} is quoted as saying:\textsuperscript{43}

\begin{center}
\textit{قَالَ ابْنُ عَيْنَةُ: مَا أُحِبَّ مِنْ أُحِبَّ أَنْ يَكُونَ أَحَفَظَ النَّاسَ لِلْحَدِيثِ.}
\end{center}

I would not like someone I like to be the one who has memorised most hadiths of all people.

Again, famous muḥaddithūn belittle the value of their own field of expertise. Such paradoxes are typical of \textit{adab}. One is free to take them at face value or not, and to make of them what one likes. Our compiler, Ibn Qutayba, remains silent in the background.

Hadith experts are not above joking. Once, al-Aʿmash was asked about the isnād of a certain hadith by the much younger Ḥafṣ b. Ghiyāth (d. c. 194/809).\textsuperscript{44}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{37} Identification uncertain.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibn Qutayba, \textit{ʿUyūn}, 2336; also Ibn Qutayba, \textit{Maʿārif}, 481.
\textsuperscript{39} Thus al-Ṣafadī, \textit{Wāfī}, 25:493; cf. Ibn Qutayba, \textit{Maʿārif}, 481 where he is said to have died in 152/769 and his father’s name is vowelled as Kudām.
\textsuperscript{40} A suggestion made at the conference by Professor Houari Touati.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibn Qutayba, \textit{ʿUyūn}, 2336.
\textsuperscript{42} On Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna (107–196/725–811) see Susan A. Spectorsky, “Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna,” in \textit{Encyclopaedia of Islam}, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 9:772.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibn Qutayba, \textit{ʿUyūn}, 2337.
\textsuperscript{44} On him, see Ibn Qutayba, \textit{Maʿārif}, 510, al-Ṣafadī, \textit{Wāfī}, 1398–99.
\end{flushleft}
Thereupon al-Aʿmash took Ḥafṣ by the throat, pushed him (asnadahū) against a wall and said, “This is its isnād!” A similar punning with technical terms is displayed by Ibn al-Sammāk, who was asked the same question about an isnād and replied, “It is one of al-mursalāt ‘urfā (the loosed ones in succession)!“ He is quoting the beginning of the 77th sura, entitled al-Mursalāt (translated as The Loosed Ones by Arberry), which is about winds, but he alludes, of course, to the kind of hadith called mursal, i.e., with an isnād that does not go back all the way to a companion of the prophet Muḥammad but only to the next generation.

These slightly irreverent sayings and anecdotes are offset by others that stress the status and importance of Hadith. Al-Aʿmash again: ‘When I see an old man who does not seek fiqh [which here I take to mean ‘religious knowledge’] I would like to box his ears (aḥbabtu an aṣfaʿahu)’; he also said, “But for learning all those hadiths I would be like any Kufan greengrocer.”

Several times the prose gives way to short poems. The great philologist al-Aṣmaʿi laments the death of Sufyān b. ‘Uyayn in eight lines, beginning:49

45 Ibn Qutayba, ʿUyūn, 2337.
46 Abū al-ʿAbbās Muḥammad b. Ṣāḥib b. al-Sammāk (d. 183/799), see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi, Tārīkh Madīnata-l-Salām, 3:347–354.
47 Ibn Qutayba, ʿUyūn, 2337.
48 Ibn Qutayba, ʿUyūn, 2337.
49 Ibn Qutayba, ʿUyūn, 2335; also al-Dhahabi, Siyar, 8:474–475.
50 Thus in al-Dhahabi, Siyar, rather than mustabītū as in ʿUyūn.
51 Thus in al-Dhahabi, Siyar, rather than wa-afaqīyyūna min ẓārin wa-min tārī as in ʿUyūn (both editions), which is obviously corrupt.
fa-l-yabki Sufyāna bāghī sunnatin darasat
wa-mustaḥbīnu athārātin wa-āthārī
wa-muṣṭagḥī qurba ʿisādīn wa-mawʾīžatīn
wa-wāqifīyyūna min ʿātin wa-min sāri
amsat mājālīsuhī waḥshan muʿattātalātīn
min qāṭinīna wa-ḥujjājīn wa-ʿummārī
man lī-l-ḥadīthī ʿāni l-Zuḥriyyī ḥīna thawā
aw lī-l-aḥādithī ʿān ʿAmrī bni Dīnārī
lan yasmaʿī baʿdahū man qāla ḥaddathanā l-
-Zuḥriyyu min ahli badwin aw bi-iḥdārī
lā yahnaʿī l-shāminī l-masārīna maṣrāʾahū
min māriqīna wa-min juḥhādī aqādārī
wa-min zānādīqātīn Jāhmūn yaqūdūhumū
qawdan ilā ghadabi l-Raḥmānī wa-l-nārī
wa-mulḥīdīna wa-murtābīna qad khalāṭū
bi-sunnatī llāhi ahtārān bi-aḥtārī

Let Sufyān be lamented by those who desire (to know) a sunna that has
fallen into abeyance
or who seek the explanation of what remains of past reports,
By those desiring a close isnād and an admonition
and those of the clan of Wāqīf,52 those who come and go.
The places where he sat teaching are now desolate, deserted
of dwellers, of those who come for the hajj or the lesser pilgrimage.
Who will transmit Hadith from al-Zuhrī53 now that he rests in the earth,
or the hadiths from ʿAmr ibn Dīnār?54
Now that he is gone people, whether Bedouin or town dweller, will no
longer
hear anyone saying “Al-Zuhrī told us ...”
May his death not gladden any happy gloater
from among the rebels and those who deny the divine ordainments,

52 The Banū Wāqīf were a clan of the tribe of Aws; Sufyān’s grandfather was a mawlā of a
woman of the Banū Hīlāb b. Umayya b. Wāqīf.
53 Abū Bakr Muhammad b. Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 1247/742), “one of the founders of Islamic tra-
dition” (Michael Lecker, “al-Zuhrī, Ibn Shihāb,” in Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed. (Leiden:
Brill, 1960), 1565).
54 ʿAmr b. Dīnār (d. 1267/744), religious scholar and traditionist, teacher of Sufyān b. ʿUyayn;
see Harald Motzki, “ʿAmr b. Dīnār,” in Encyclopaedia of Islam THREE, accessed 21 September
2016, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_22955.
Or from the heretics led by Jahm\textsuperscript{55} to the Merciful’s wrath and to hellfire, Or from unbelievers and those who doubt, who mix God’s Sunnah with falsehood upon falsehood.

It is not great poetry but it fits in the chapter well. The poet Ibn Munādhir,\textsuperscript{56} who also dabbled in Hadith, saw fit to give advice in verse on whom to trust in matters of Hadith:\textsuperscript{57}

\begin{quote}
wa-man yabghi l-wašāta fa-inna ‘indī wašātan li-l-kuhūlī wa-li-l-shabābī khudhū ‘an Mālikin wa-‘ani bni ‘Awnīn wa-lā tarwū aḥādītha bni Dābī
\end{quote}

Whoever wants good advice: I’ve got it, for mature men and for youths. Take from Mālik and from Ibn ‘Awn,\textsuperscript{58} but do not transmit the hadiths of Ibn Da’b.

Ibn Da’b is Abū al-Walīd ‘Īsā b. Yazīd b. Da’b (d. 171/787), of whom Charles Pellat writes that “In the field of the transmission of hadīths (…) Ibn Da’b was not very highly thought of”; some accused him of inventing them.\textsuperscript{59} Ibn Qutayba does not quote the verses that follow in a longer version,\textsuperscript{60} which mentions “false hadiths”, aḥādīth kidhāb, that are “followed by those who go astray”, a phrase

\begin{quote}
wa-man yabghi l-wašāta fa-inna ‘indī wašātan li-l-kuhūlī wa-li-l-shabābī khudhū ‘an Mālikin wa-‘ani bni ‘Awnīn wa-lā tarwū aḥādītha bni Dābī
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{55} Jahm b. Ṣafwān (executed 128/764), alleged founder of a sect that held “an extreme form of the doctrine of djabr”, i.e., predestination (William Montgomery Watt, “Djahmiyya,” in Encyclopaedia of Islam, (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 2:389).

\textsuperscript{56} Muḥammad b. Munādhir (d. 198/814), see Fuat Sezgin, Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums. Band 11: Poesie bis ca. 430 H. (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 505–506. Pious when young, he became dissolute in later life; see Ibn Qutayba, al-Shīr wa-l-shu'arā’, ed. ʿAḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1966–1967), 869 and many anecdotes in Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī, al-Aghānī, 24 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub—al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma, 1927–1974), 18:169–210.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibn Qutayba, ‘Uyun, 2338–139; cf. Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, ‘Iqd, 2:237–238.

\textsuperscript{58} Mālik is probably Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/796), Ibn ‘Awn is ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Awn (d. 151/768), see e.g. al-Ṣafadī, Wāfi, 17:389–390.

\textsuperscript{59} Charles Pellat, “Ibn Darb,” in Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill 1971), 3742.

\textsuperscript{60} al-Isfahānī, Aghānī, 18:198; Muḥammad b. ‘Irmān al-Marzūbānī, Nūr al-qabas, al-mukhtaṣar min al-Muqtabas fi akhbār al-nuḥāh wa-l-udābā’ wa-l-shu’arā’ wa-l-’ulamā’, ikhtīṣār Abī
that is taken from the famous Qur’anic verse about poets (al-Shu‘arā’ 26:224). In *Kitab al-Aghānī* it is said that Ibn Munādhir composed the lines having heard that Ibn Da‘b had said bad things about him. The point of quoting these lines is perhaps the fact that Muḥammad b. al-Munādhir was himself considered unreliable: “Yahyā b. Ma‘īn rejected his transmission, saying, ‘He knows about poetry, not about Hadith’”. It is not unlikely that Ibn Qutayba was aware of this and expected his readers to know.

Since poetry can accommodate anything, why cannot Hadith be versified? Ibn Qutayba quotes two lines by Abū Nuwās, who was, after all, well-versed in Hadith and even seems to have taught it:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{حَدَّثَنِي} & \text{ الأزْرَقُ} \quad \text{الخَدَّ} \quad \text{عُرْوَ} \text{اً بِشَرِّي} \quad \text{عَنِ البِن} \quad \text{إِبْنِ مسَعُود} \\
\text{لَا يَخْفِي} & \text{ الْوَعْدُ} \quad \text{غَيرُ كَافِرَة} \quad \text{فِي} \quad \text{الجَيْم} \quad \text{مَصْفُود}.
\end{align*}
\]

ḥaddathānī l-Azraqul-muḥaddithu ‘an ‘Amr bīn Shimrī ‘ānī bīn Mas‘ūdī lā yuḫḥīfu l-wa’da ghayru kāfiratin wa-kāfirin fī l-jahimi maṣfūdī

Al-Azraq, the muḥaddith, told me, on the authority of ‘Amr ibn Shimrī, on the authority of Ibn Mas‘ūd.

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61 al-Ṣafadī, Wāfī, 5:64; cf. al-İsfahānī, Aghānī, 18:208–209.
62 Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn*, 2340; Abū Nuwās, *Ḍīwān*, eds. Ewald Wagner and Gregor Schoeler, 7 vols. (Wiesbaden-Cairo: Franz Steiner and Berlin-Beirut: Klaus Schwarz, 1958–2006), 5:238; with accompanying anecdote, al-Marzubānī, Nūr al-qabas, 201–202, al-Sahmī al-Jurjānī, Tārīkh Jurjān, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Muʿīd Khān (Beirut: ‘Alam al-Kutub, 1987), 511–512, and Ibn Manṣūr, Akhbār Abī Nuwās, eds. Abbās al-Shirbiṇī and Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Rasūl İbrāhīm (Cairo: Maṭbaʿatal-Iʿtimād, 1924), 1151–152; attributed to an unnamed muḥaddith who was in love with a youth in Abū Maṣṣūr ‘Abd al-Malik b. Muḥammad al-Thaʿālibī, Khāṣṣ al-khāṣṣ (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Hayāt, n.d.), 70. On the poet’s knowledge of Hadith see Ewald Wagner, *Abī Nuwās: Eine Studie zur arabischen Literatur der frühen Abbāsidenzeit* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1965), 33–38.
63 Abū Nuwās, Ḍīwān: Ṭalʿa al-Aʿmashu.
64 Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn* (both editions) has kāfirihī; all other sources have kāfiratin; Abū Nuwās, Ḍīwān: lā yuadhāhu l-nāra ghayru kāfiratin.
65 Abū ‘Abd Allāh ‘Amr b. Shimrī (or Shamīr) al-Juʿfī (d. c. 160/776), see al-Ṣafadī, Wāfī, 23:241.
66 He is the famous companion of the prophet Muḥammad, ‘Abd Allāh b. Masʿūd (d. 32/652–653), see Jean-Claude Vedat, “Ibn Masʿūd,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1996).
Only an unbelieving woman breaks her promise,  
or an unbelieving man, who will be fettered in Hellfire.

The longer, four- or five-line version found in the Dīwān and elsewhere shows that the lines are addressed to a youth who had apparently broken his promise to his lover. Al-Azraq is Ishāq b. Yūsuf al-Azraq al-Wāsiṭī (d. 195/810–811), and in the anecdote that accompanies the lines in several sources he emphatically denies that he had told Abū Nuwās anything like it. Abū Nuwās actually composed a series of such poems, found in his Dīwān in a special subsection of his muğan or “libertine” poetry and entitled his “musnadāt” or “ışnād poems”. They are all unserious and a few of them are obscene. Ibn Qutayba does not quote them. He was not a prude and in his preface to Uyūn al-akhbār he explains that quoting obscenities may be justified. He did, however, not do so in sensitive contexts involving religious matters, something that he condemns in al-Jāḥiẓ.

Ibn Qutayba then drifts away from Hadith, for the following anecdote, with an epigram by Musāwir al-Warrāq and its riposte by someone else, is more about fiqh and the use of qiyyās. The chapter ends with a joke. A man hears someone cry out: “Who can find for me an old man who has lost his way (shaykh ḍalla)?” He then takes the searcher to Bishr al-Marisī and says, “Here is an erring old man (shaykh ḍāll), take him!” This Bishr, as Ibn Qutayba adds, believed in the createdness of the Qurʾān, a hotly debated issue, which by Ibn Qutayba’s time had become an unorthodox position. Again, this concluding anecdote has nothing to do with the topic of Hadith, but it provides at least a seamless transition to the next chapter, on deviant theological opinions (al-ahwā’ wa-l-kalām fī al-dīn).

As so often in adab, the section offers a medley of hazl and jidd, jesting and seriousness. It has little or no structure, the items being strung together at most associatively and virtually without commentary. Just as in Hadith itself, one

\[1971\), 3:873–875. The ışnād is not only fictitious but incomplete, in view of the time gap between the last two names.  
\[67\] al-Bukhārī, al-Tārīkh al-kabīr, 1:436.  
\[68\] Abū Nuwās, Dīwān, 5237–247.  
\[69\] Ibn Qutayba, Uyūn, 1: Preface, lām-mīm.  
\[70\] Ibn Qutayba, Uyūn, 2140; see Geert Jan van Gelder, “Musāwir al-Warrāq and the Beginnings of Arabic Gastronomic Poetry,” Journal of Semitic Studies 36 (1991): 309–327, esp. 315.  
\[71\] Ibn Qutayba, Uyūn, 2140.  
\[72\] AbūʿAbdal-Raḥmān Bishr b. Ghiyāth al-Marīsī (d. 218/833), a prominent Muṣṭṭīte theologian; see Carra de Vaux, A.N. Nader, and J. Schacht, “Bishr b. Ghiyāth al-Marīsī,” in Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 1:1241–1242.
often has to read between the lines, hoping one guesses right. System and consistency are not to be expected and perhaps not even desirable in this genre. One could speak of the “molecularity” of *adab*, a term that used to be applied to classical Arabic poetry but is perhaps more suitable for the kind of *adab* of which Ibn Qutayba was a pioneer.

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