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Language, Knowledge, and the Sacred: Al-Bukhārī's Philosophical and Linguistic Journey in Ḥadīth Compilation

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ABSTRACT:

The distinct geographical locations of the Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad after his death necessitated travelling for the acquisition of knowledge, in particular ḥadīth, which became a major topos among early Muslim scholars. Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (256/810) played a key role in recording the ḥadīth of the Prophet Muḥammad, culminating in his magnum opus, al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ. This work profoundly impacted the ḥadīth tradition and the genesis of its sciences. Beyond the empirical quest for authentic traditions, Al-Bukhārī's work can be interpreted through the prisms of linguistics and epistemology, which shaped his methodological approach to knowledge transmission. This paper explores Al-Bukhārī's journeys not only as physical travels but as intellectual and philosophical voyages, emphasizing the interplay between linguistic precision and philosophical inquiry in the authentication and preservation of sacred texts.

Keywords: Riḥla, ḥadīth, al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ, ṭabaqāt/tarājim, al-Bukhārī, linguistics, epistemology

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1. Introduction

The distinct geographical locations of the Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad after his death necessitated travelling for the acquisition of knowledge and in particular ḥadīth, which became a major topos amongst the early Muslim scholars. Among them, al-Bukhārī played a key role in travelling to record the ḥadīth of the Prophet Muḥammad which is now embedded in his magnum opus al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ. In addition, travel (riḥla) was regarded as a key component in the acquisition of this sacred knowledge. For this reason, this prompts a chronological study of the genesis of literature written on this subject, commencing from the early works of biographical dictionaries (ṭabaqāt/tarājim) along with other genres, such as those of Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (463/1002), Yūsuf b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mizzī (743/1342) and Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (852/1449) etc.¹

¹ U.Ghani, The Depiction of Al-Bukhārī's travels in classical Islamic Literature, in Journal of Quran and Hadith Studies, V.12, 1, (Quran and Hadith Academic Society, Faculty of Ushuluddin

During the Abbasid dynasty, language translation programs and centers of learning flourished. Muslim Caliphs in Baghdad and Damascus, the cultural centers of the Muslim world during medieval times, sponsored the translation of Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit manuscripts in philosophy, medicine, and other scientific works into Arabic.² Within two centuries, Turner asserted that the major works of Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Archimedes, Hippocrates, Galen, Ptolemy, and many other works were available to Muslim scholars. Muslims were able to learn paper production from the Chinese, and because of the availability of paper as a writing medium and this significant translation endeavour, great libraries were established in both the Eastern and Western centres of knowledge. Religious centres of scholarly learning were established in Baghdad, Cairo, Nishapur, Hijaz, and Fez. A science academy was established at both Cordoba in al-Andalus and at Toledo, and in the Nizamiyya and Dār-al-Ḥikma universities in Baghdad. Advances in knowledge occurred in a myriad of fields, including philosophy, social sciences, physics, mathematics, medicine, alchemy, geometrical sciences, astronomy, religious science, optics, and metaphysics. It is an undeniable fact that Medieval Muslim scientists, physicians, and philosophers contributed to global civilization in both the medieval and post-medieval eras. In addition, because of peace and political stability in the Medieval Muslim world, and encouragement from the Quran and ḥadīth, travel in search of knowledge became a phenomenon and a normative feature of Medieval Muslim education.³

The scattered locations of the Prophet Muḥammad's Companions after his death necessitated travel (ṣafar or riḥla) to acquire and verify ḥadīth. This movement laid the foundation for the ḥadīth sciences, where scholars such as Al-Bukhārī emerged as pivotal figures. His extensive travels aimed at authenticating the sayings and actions of the Prophet shaped the scholarly framework that remains vital to Islamic jurisprudence. However, Al-Bukhārī's journey also represents an intellectual exploration of linguistics and philosophy. The precision in language, the rigorous methods of isnād (chain of narration) verification, and the philosophical underpinnings of knowledge (ilm) acquisition reflect a broader inquiry into epistemology and linguistic exactitude.

The linguistic intricacies of ḥadīth transmission required mastery over the nuances of Arabic, the structure of narrations, and the subtleties of dialects and terminologies. In addition, the epistemological dimension of Al-Bukhārī's work raises profound questions about the nature of truth, reliability, and the conditions for certainty in knowledge. This paper delves into how Al-Bukhārī navigated the intersection of linguistics, philosophy, and religious tradition to compile one of the most influential works in Islamic history.

2. Theoretical Overview of the Main Concepts and Methodology

The linguistic rigor in ḥadīth compilation reflects the broader philosophical concerns of meaning, interpretation, and authenticity. Al-Bukhārī's insistence on verifying the exact words (lafdh) and meanings (ma'nā) of ḥadīth reflects an acute awareness of linguistic

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² H.R. Turner, *Science in Medieval Islam: An illustrated introduction*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 15.

³ Samuel I. Gellens, The search for knowledge in medieval Muslim societies: a comparative approach, in Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori (eds), *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, migration, and the religious imagination*, (Routledge 2013),50-65.

variability and the potential for semantic drift over time. This focus on linguistic accuracy parallels contemporary concerns in hermeneutics and the philosophy of language, where the transmission of texts is viewed through the lens of fidelity to original intent and expression.

In his travels, Al-Bukhārī engaged in extensive discussions with scholars across diverse regions, often delving into the linguistic differences that could alter the meaning of narrations. This attention to linguistic context aligns with the broader Islamic tradition, which views Arabic not merely as a vehicle of communication but as a divine language integral to understanding the Quran and ḥadīth.

Al-Bukhārī's methodological approach to ḥadīth can be seen as an exercise in epistemology—the theory of knowledge. The isnād system he employed mirrors philosophical inquiries into justified belief and the conditions necessary for certainty. By prioritizing narrators of impeccable character (thiqa) and verifying the continuity of chains, Al-Bukhārī constructed a framework that resonates with the philosophical criteria for justified true belief.

Furthermore, Al-Bukhārī's emphasis on travel (ṣafar) and direct acquisition of knowledge from primary sources reflects an empirical approach to knowledge, reminiscent of Aristotelian empiricism. His journeys across regions such as Baghdad, Khurāsān, and the Hijāz echo the classical notion of the philosopher-traveler, underscoring the belief that the pursuit of knowledge necessitates personal engagement with diverse intellectual traditions.

In Islamic intellectual history, travel (riḥla) serves as both a literal and metaphorical motif for the quest for knowledge. Al-Bukhārī's journeys exemplify the broader philosophical and spiritual dimensions of travel, where the act of movement signifies intellectual expansion and the breaking of epistemological boundaries. Paul Fussell's notion of travel as an adornment of the mind parallels Al-Bukhārī's view of travel as essential for the refinement and augmentation of knowledge.⁴

The Quranic injunction to “travel through the land and see how creation began” (29:20) reflects the synthesis of physical and intellectual journeys, suggesting that knowledge is inherently tied to exploration. Al-Bukhārī's commitment to travel, driven by the Quranic and ḥadīth imperatives to seek knowledge, reinforces the philosophical outlook that knowledge transcends temporal and spatial confines.

3. Discussion

The terms, 'ilm, ṭalab al-'ilm and ṭālib al-'ilm in Islam may roughly be translated to knowledge, the search for knowledge, and the seeker of knowledge, respectively. Rosenthal stated that every term translated is a term distorted, no matter how much care is devoted on finding the most suitable English equivalent.⁵ The translation of the Arabic

⁴ P. Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars*, (Oxford University Press, 1982), 39.

⁵ F. Rosenthal. *Knowledge triumphant: The concept of knowledge in medieval Islam*, (The Netherlands: E. K. Brill, 1970), 3.

word 'ilm is no exception. The translation of 'ilm into knowledge in English, in fact, falls short of expressing all the factual and emotional content of 'ilm, in the Arabic language and Islamic culture.⁶ Netton added that 'ilm, though translated as knowledge, should be given the meaning of learning.⁷ However, 'ilm in Islam is a concept that holds a significant importance as it impacts Muslims, intellectual, religious, political, and daily life.⁸ In fact, the concept of 'ilm has shaped Muslim civilization distinctively and uniquely. In this regard, Muslim scholars, such as Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (463/1071) and Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (463/1071) have written extensively on this topic.⁹

The Quran and ḥadīth clearly emphasize the importance and virtue for the acquisition of 'ilm, beginning with reading, as the Quran clearly mentions, with the first word that was revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad: Iqra', Read (Recite). Ṭalab al-'ilm, seeking knowledge, and Ṭālib al'ilm, the seeker of knowledge, have been mentioned in the Quran with pride and dignity, and elevated to a high status, e.g.:

“Read in the Name of your Lord Who has created. He has created man from a clot (piece of thick coagulated blood). Read and your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not”.¹⁰

Allah will raise up, to ranks those of you who believe and who have been granted knowledge. And Allah is well-acquainted with all you do.¹¹

Say (to them, O Muḥammad] Are those who know equal to those who know not? But only men of understanding will pay heed.¹²

Say: My Lord increase me in knowledge.¹³

And in the collections of ḥadīth:

The 'ulamā (scholars) are the inheritors of the prophets.¹⁴

⁶ Ibid., 1.

⁷ Ian R. Netton, *Seek Knowledge: Thought and travel in the house of Islam*, (Curzon House Press, 1996), 7.

⁸ F. Rosenthal. *Knowledge triumphant: The concept of knowledge in medieval Islam*, (The Netherlands: E. K. Brill, 1970), 2.

⁹ Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Khaṭīb, Al-Baghdādī, *Riḥla fī ṭalab al-ḥadīth*, (Maktabat 'Ulūm al-Islamiya, Damascus, Syria, 1975), 16. See also, Yūsuf b. 'Abd Allah b. Muḥammad, Al-Qurṭubī, *Jāmi' bayān al-'ilm wa faḍlih* (Mu'assasat al-Risāla, Damascus, Syria, no publishing date), 75.

¹⁰ Q 30:96

¹¹ Q 58:11

¹² Q 39:9

¹³ Q 20:114.

¹⁴ Abū Dāwūd, Al-Sijistānī, *Sunan, ḥadīth* no.3641, (Dār al-ghad al-jadīd, Cairo, Egypt, 2015), 771.

Seeking knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim.¹⁵
Regarding travel (riḥla) for the search for knowledge:

One who treads a path in search of knowledge has his path to Paradise made easy by God.¹⁶

He who follows a road seeking knowledge, God will make the path to heaven easy for him. And the angels will place their wings so as to aid the seeker of knowledge. And all in heavens and on earth, even the fish in the sea, will seek forgiveness for such a person. The status of the learned man over the worshipper is like the status of the moon over the rest of the stars. The ‘ulamā are the inheritors of the prophets. The latter did not bequeath dinārs and dirhams. Rather they left behind knowledge. He who takes it, has taken it with an abundance of good fortune.¹⁷

The verses as mentioned earlier of the Quran and ḥadīth emphasize the importance that Islam places on knowledge, its virtues, and travel in search of it. The search for knowledge as a theme and practice has dominated Islam and given Muslim Civilization its distinctive shape and complexion.¹⁸

Concerning the concept of riḥla fī ṭalab al-‘ilm, the ḥadīth literature reminds the reader that the search for knowledge is intimately tied to the physical act of travel. In this regard, several themes recur in the principal ḥadīth collections; teachers and the learned as the only valuable human beings; the high merit of seeking and spreading knowledge; travelling in order to gather it; and the possession of knowledge as a sign of grace which reduces distinctions of birth and rank among Muslims. Provided it was done for the right reasons, travel in the classical Muslim conception, to use Paul Fussell’s words, ‘was conceived to be like study and its fruits were considered to be the adornment of the mind and the formation of the traveller’.¹⁹ To elaborate even further, the verse of the Quran, which is used profoundly, and which is known as the best verse on the subject is;

“For there should separate from every division of them a group [remaining] to obtain understanding in the religion and warn their people when they return to them that they might be cautious.²⁰ From the perspective of ḥadīth, we have many examples. “One who treads a path in search of knowledge has his path to Paradise made easy by God”²¹ The verses as mentioned earlier from the Quran and ḥadīth emphasize the importance

¹⁵ ‘Abd Allah b. Muḥammad, Ibn Māja, *Sunan, ḥadīth* no.224, (Dār al-ghad al-jadīd, Cairo, Egypt, 2015), 58.

¹⁶ Ibid., 57.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Netton, *Seek Knowledge: Thought and travel in the house of Islam*, 7.

¹⁹ Samuel I. Gellens, “The search for knowledge in medieval Muslim societies: a comparative approach.” In *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, migration, and the religious imagination*, (eds) Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, (Routledge, 2013), 54.

²⁰ Q 9:122.

²¹ Ibn Māja, *Sunan, ḥadīth* no.223, 57.

that Islam places on knowledge, its virtues, and travel in search of it. Subsequently, the search for knowledge as a theme and practice has dominated Islam and given Muslim civilization its distinctive shape and complexion.²² The importance of this is clearly stressed and emphasised in the collections of ḥadīth. The compilers have devoted a chapter on the topic of knowledge (‘ilm) and its importance. As mentioned previously, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and the Cordovan Scholar Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr have devoted and written extensively on this topic.

In the realm of Ḥadīth scholarship, several notable scholars, including al-Bukhārī, recognized the profound impact of travel on the acquisition of authentic Ḥadīth. Al-Bukhārī’s journey into the world of Ḥadīth began early in his life when he committed the sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad to memory as a child. His travels, however, extended beyond mere compilation and encompassed broader domains, contributing to various critical aspects, including:

Acquisition of Ḥadīth (Tahṣīl al-Ḥadīth): Al-Bukhārī embarked on a quest to collect Ḥadīth, seeking out these sacred traditions through his extensive travels.

Authentication of Ḥadīth and its legitimacy (Al-Tathabbūt fī l-Ḥadīth): His journeys allowed him to carefully authenticate Ḥadīth, ensuring their legitimacy and accuracy.

Identification of Ḥadīth elevation in the chain of Transmitters (Ṭalab al-Uluw fī l-sanad): Al-Bukhārī’s meticulous approach enabled him to discern the position of Ḥadīth within the chain of narrators, ensuring their reliability.

Inspection of the lives of the narrators of Ḥadīth (Al-Baḥth an aḥwāl al-ruwāt) He delved into the biographies and backgrounds of the narrators of Ḥadīth, a crucial aspect of authenticating these traditions.

Discussions with researchers and scholars regarding the critiques and defects of Ḥadīth (Mudhakarāt al-‘Ulama fī naqd al-aḥādīth wa ‘ilalihā). Al-Bukhārī engaged in extensive dialogues with fellow researchers and scholars, addressing critiques and defects in Ḥadīth and their chains of transmission.²³

Al-Bukhārī’s unwavering commitment to the meticulous scrutiny of Ḥadīth during his travels paved the way for the preservation of authentic traditions and enriched the field of Islamic scholarship with his critical discernment and editorial skill.²⁴

The fervent and deeply passionate pursuit of knowledge through travel, as depicted in Ḥadīth literature, has become an intrinsic and normative element of Muslim education. Despite the influential sway of local and regional traditions on the religious and intellectual life of communities, early Muslims nurtured an unrelenting zeal for knowledge, continuously expanding their understanding beyond the confines of borders and boundaries. The result of this relentless pursuit was their mastery of the canonical syllabus of learning, which encompassed the Qur’an, Ḥadīth, tafsīr (explanation and exegesis), and qirā-a (recitation).

These scholarly journeys were not only frequent but often extended over significant durations and distances, and they held an undeniable allure. A knowledge traveller could

²² Netton, *Seek knowledge: Thought and travel in the house of Islam*, 7.

²³ Al-Baghdādī, (2016), *Riḥla fī ṭalab al-ḥadīth*, Dār al-Arqam Publishing, 18-24.

²⁴ Al-Dhahabī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad (1968), *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffādh*, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, vol. 2, 104-5.

engage in studies across various cities, seeking guidance from numerous scholars in each location, and yet, upon returning home, yearn for more such expeditions. Al-Bukhārī serves as a striking exemplar of these intrepid knowledge explorers, embodying the spirit of relentless pursuit and boundless dedication to scholarship.

Muḥammad b. Isma‘īl al-Bukhārī (256/810)

Abū ‘Abd Allah, Muḥammad b. Isma‘īl b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Mughīra b. Bardizbah, al-Ju‘fī, al-Bukhārī. A famous traditionist/ḥadīth scholar. Born in the year 194/810 and died in 256/870. Early historical sources provide us with the information that he was born in Bukhāra during the reign of the ‘Abbāsids and he began to learn traditions by heart at the age of ten, and seems to have been a very intelligent boy, for he is credited with having been able at an early age to correct his teachers. He had a remarkable memory, and companions of his are said to have corrected traditions they had written down from what he recited by heart. The most famous of his contributions in the field of ḥadīth is the book *al-Jāmi‘al-Ṣaḥīḥ* which took him sixteen years to compile and the sources indicate he selected his ḥadīth from a mass of 600,000, and that he did not insert a ḥadīth in the book without having a bath and praying two units (*rak‘a*). This collection of ḥadīth, which claims to contain only ḥadīth of the highest authenticity (*ṣaḥīḥ*), is of the classified (*muṣannaf*) type, which arranges the material according to the subject matter.²⁵ Brown beautifully describes the travel of al-Bukhārī as; when he was sixteen years old, al-Bukhārī left his hometown of Bukhāra in Transoxiana (present day Uzbekistan) with his mother and brother Aḥmad on a pilgrimage to Mecca. The small party would probably have attached themselves to one of the merchant caravans carrying luxury goods west along the Silk Road. Traversing the desert, they would have passed through the bustling garrison-city of Marv before climbing the mountains to Sarakhs and then descending into the rolling green and golden valleys of Khurāsān. They would have made a stop in the city of Naysābūr, its northernmost orchards lying against the foothills of the mountains. As they continued west along the northern edge of the Iranian desert, they would have passed through Bayhaq, the great commercial and scholarly center of Rayy, before voyaging across the Zagros Mountains and descending onto Iraq. They may have stopped in Baghdād, the “navel of the world” and a throbbing center of trade, scholarship and political intrigue. They would have continued along the caravan trail, now crowded with pilgrims, across the north Arabian deserts to the rugged mountains of the Ḥijāz. Skirting jagged ridges interspaced by yellow tracts of sand, they would have ended their journey where Islam began over two centuries earlier, in the dry and rocky valley of Mecca.²⁶

His family were wealthy landowners, and his great-grandfather had converted to Islam from Zoroastrianism at the hands of Yamān al-Ju‘fī, the Arab governor of the city. Al-Bukhārī himself lived off properties he rented out on a monthly or yearly basis. He started studying ḥadīth at a young age, learning from local Bukharan experts, and in his late teens, he began writing books on the sayings of the Companions and the Successors. His

²⁵ Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar Al-‘Asqalānī, *Faṭḥ al-Bār bi sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 13 vols. (Dār al-Ma‘rifa, Beirut, Lebanon, 1960), 6-7.

²⁶ Jonathan, Brown, *The canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim: The formation of the sunni ḥadīth canon*, (Brill, 2007), 64.

pilgrimage to Mecca at age sixteen was the beginning of a long career of traveling that connected him to the most praised ḥadīth scholars of his day. In Khurāsān he visited Balkh, Marv and Naysābūr, where he studied with Ishāq b. Rahwayh (238/853). In western Iran he stayed in Rayy and made numerous trips to Baghdād, where he studied with Ibn Ḥanbal (241/855) and Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn (233/848). In Basra, he heard from ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī (234/849), who would become one of his main teachers. He also studied in Wasit, Kufa and Medina. In Mecca he heard from ʿAbdalla b. al-Zubayr al-Ḥumaydī (219/834), and he also went to Egypt and cities like ʿAsqalān and Ḥims in greater Syria. There is some debate on whether he visited the cities of upper Mesopotamia (al-Jazīra), and it is unclear whether he reached Damascus. In his *Tārīkh Naysābūr*, al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī reports that al-Bukhārī arrived in Naysābūr for the last time in 250/864–5. Al-Bukhārī passed away in the village of Khartank a few miles from Samarqand in the year 256/870.²⁷

The earliest sources, whether they are historical sources, commentaries on ḥadīth and books relating to the transmitters of ḥadīth leave no doubt that al-Bukhārī was certainly a respected authority whose talents were widely recognized. Each genre states the virtue and status of al-Bukhārī as a renowned scholar and the praise for his compilation on ḥadīth al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ is laudable. As an example, a few statements are mentioned here. Al-Ḥākim narrates from Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Mudhakkir that Ibn Khuzayma (311/923) said, “I have not seen beneath the heavens anyone more knowledgeable in ḥadīth than Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī.” Ibn ʿAdī heard al-Bukhārī’s student Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Firabrī (320/932) say that al-Najm b. al-Faḍl had seen the Prophet in a dream, with al-Bukhārī walking behind him exactly in his footsteps. Ibn Ḥanbal says that the mastery of ḥadīth ends with four people from Khurāsān: Abū Zurʿa (264/878), al-Bukhārī, al-Dārimī (255/869) and al-Ḥasan b. Shujāʿ al-Balkhī (266/880). Ibn al-Nadīm (385– 8/995–8) lists al-Bukhārī as one of sixty-three transmission-based jurists in Islamic history. Along with others like Sufyān al-Thawrī (161/778), ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī and al-Tirmidhī (279/892), he describes them simply as experts and trustworthy narrators (thiqa).²⁸

In the examination of al-Bukhārī’s scholarly journeys and expeditions within early sources, this study prioritizes commonly referenced and widely recognized sources among biographical dictionaries chronologically. Additionally, it includes sources from various genres to ensure a comprehensive view and mitigate potential exaggerations or inconsistencies in the gathered information.

It’s important to note that there exists a multitude of sources directly related to al-Bukhārī, his works, and educational travels, spanning diverse genres and vast quantities. Consequently, this article confines itself to those sources most acknowledged, particularly those oriented toward biographical dictionaries and history (al-ṭabaqāt wa al-tarājim wa al-tārīkh). It also incorporates sources focused on ḥadīth transmitters (kutub al-rijāl) and Ḥadīth commentaries (shuruḥ al-Ḥadīth) to provide a well-rounded understanding of al-Bukhārī’s scholarly endeavors.

Biographical Dictionaries/Hadīth and its Sciences

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Ḥajar, *Al-ʿAsqalānī, Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, (Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, Cairo, Egypt, No publishing date), 47-55. See also, Brown, *The canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim*, 64.

A biographical dictionary, in general terms, can be described as a prose work that serves as a form of encyclopaedic compilation, primarily organized around a series of biographies. These biographies typically encompass various aspects of individuals' lives, spanning a wide range of characteristics such as their professions, historical context, critical assessments, and life events. These biographical dictionaries do not follow a strict chronological order but rather present biographical information as a collection of entries.²⁹

One of the most striking features of the Arabic biographical dictionaries is that they do not make their appearance until the beginning of the third/ninth century, the two earliest extant dictionaries being Ibn Sa'd's (230/845) *kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* and Ibn Sallām al-Jumāhī's (231/846) *Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-Shu'arā*. This by itself is a significant fact, for it indicates that the genre of biographical dictionaries evolved in Islamic civilization at the time when the civilization was beginning to develop a clear self-image, and when it was reaching towards formalizing its stances. It is, therefore, a genre, which is by no means 'preliminary' or 'simple'; it is one, which belongs to the age of the maturing of the civilization in which it arose. This is further confirmed by the fact that this genre was preceded by a presumably simpler genre of writing, namely that of the single biography, or monograph.³⁰ These restricted biographical dictionaries offer a more specialized and focused view of individuals who share a particular area of expertise or affiliation, providing valuable insights into specific fields of knowledge or professions within Islamic history.

On the subject matter, very brief biographies or references to al-Bukhārī appear in fourth/tenth century works such as Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī's (327/938) *al-Jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl*, Ibn Ḥibbān's (354/965) *Kitāb al-majrūhīn*, and Ibn al-Nadīm's (385–8/995–8) *al-Fihrist*. More detailed early information for al-Bukhārī's life and career occurs in sources like Ibn 'Adī al-Jurjānī's (365/975–6) two books: *al-Kāmil fī ḍu'afā' al-rijāl* and *Asāmī man rawā 'anhum Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī min mashāyikhīhī alladhīna dhakarāhum fī Jām'ī ihī al-Ṣaḥīḥ*. For al-Bukhārī, the *Tārīkh Naysābūr* of al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (405/1014) provides our earliest comprehensive source.³¹ Although now lost, this work is quoted at length by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (463/1071) in his *Tārīkh Baghdād* and by al-Dhahabī (748/1348) in his *Tārīkh al-Islām*. Fragments of *Tārīkh Naysābūr* survive in an eighth/fourteenth-century abridgement by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn Khalīfa (720/1320).³²

²⁹ Qādī, Wadad, (1995), *Biographical Dictionaries*, in George N. Atiyeh (ed), *The Book in the Islamic World*, 95.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ 'Abd Allah b. 'Adī, Al-Jurjānī, *al-Kāmil fī ḍu'afā' al-rijāl*, 7 vols. (Dār al-Fikr, Beirut, Lebanon, 1984), vol. 1, 140. See also 'Abd Allah b. 'Adī, Al-Jurjānī, *Asāmī man rawā 'anhum Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī min mashāyikhīhī alladhīna dhakarāhum fī Jām'ī ihī al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyya, Beirut, Lebanon, 1994), 47-63.

³² Brown, *The canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim*, 64-65. See also Christopher Melchert,

Furthermore, the genre, which accentuates the science of ḥadīth (Muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth), and the transmitters of ḥadīth (rijāl al-ḥadīth/kutub al-rijāl) provide detailed accounts of al-Bukhārī. The works on Muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth are strongly associated with the study of the reporters of ḥadīth (rijāl al-ḥadīth). In scrutinising the reporters of a ḥadīth, authenticating or disparaging remarks made by recognised experts, whether among the Successors (Tābi'īn) or those after them, were found to be of great help. The earliest remarks cited in the books of rijāl al-ḥadīth go back to a host of Successors and those after during the first three centuries of Islam. Among the earliest available works in this field are Tārīkh of Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn (233/848), Ṭabaqāt of Khalīfa b. Khayyāt (240/854), Tārīkh al-kabīr of al-Bukhārī, al-Jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī and Ṭabaqāt of Muḥammad b. Sa'd (320/932).

Scholars of ḥadīth made efforts specifically for the gathering of information about the reporters of the six famous collections of ḥadīth: those of al-Bukhārī, Muslim (261/875), Abū Dāwūd (275/888), al-Tirmidhī (279/892) and al-Nasāī (303/916), giving authenticating and disparaging remarks in detail. The first major such work to include also the reporters of Ibn Māja (273/886) is the ten-volume collection of 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī (600/1204), known as al-Kamāl fī asmā' al-rijāl. Interestingly, al-Maqdisī states under the biography of al-Bukhārī, the following; 'raḥal fī ṭalab al-'ilm ilā sā'ir al-amṣār, wa katab bi Khurāsān wa al-Jibāl wa mudun al-Irāq kullihā wa al-Ḥijāz wa al-Shām wa Miṣr wa warad Baghdād dafa'āt' He (al-Bukhārī) travelled to all of the cities for the acquisition of knowledge. He wrote (ḥadīth) in Khurāsān and Jibāl, in all of the cities of Iraq, Hijāz, Shām and Egypt and he came to Baghdād many times.³³ Subsequently, Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mizzī (742/1341) prepared an edited and abridged version of this work but made a number of additions and punctuation of the names, places and countries of origin of the reporters. He named it Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī asmā' al-rijāl and produced it in many volumes. Again, al-Mizzī states the same information mentioned above as his predecessor under the biography of al-Bukhārī.³⁴

Furthermore, one of al-Mizzī's pupils, al-Dhahabī (748/1347), summarised his teacher's work and produced two abridgements: a longer one called Tadhhīb Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmā' rijāl and a shorter one called al-Kāshif fī asmā' al-rijāl al-kutub al-Sitta. Being a summarized version of his teacher's work, al-Dhahabī adopts the same wording in mentioning the travels of al-Bukhārī.³⁵ A similar effort with the work of al-Mizzī was written by Ibn Ḥajar (852/1148), who prepared a lengthy but abridged version, with about one-third of the original omitted, entitled Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb in twelve shorter

Bukhārī and his Ṣaḥīḥ, in Christopher Melchert, *Ḥadīth, Piety and Law*, (Lockwood Press, 2015), 61.

³³ 'Abd al-Ghanī Al-Maqdisī, , *al-Kamāl fī asmā' al-rijāl*, (Al-Hay'at al-'āma li l-'ināya bi ṭibā'at wa nashr al-Qur'ān al-karīm wa sunnat al-nabawiyya wa 'ulūmihimā, Kuwait, 2016), v.2, 133.

³⁴ Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān, Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī asmā' al-rijāl*, (Mu'assasat al-risāla, Beirut, Lebanon, 2014), v.24, 431-491.

³⁵ Muhammad b. Ahmad, Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhhīb Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmā' al-rijāl*, (Al-Fārūq al-ḥadītha li al-ṭibā 'at wa al-nashr, Cairo, Egypt, 2004), v.8, 32-41.

volumes. In this work, Ibn Ḥajar delves into providing the status and virtues of al-Bukhārī leaving aside the travel pursuits for ḥadīth itself.³⁶ Later, he abridged this further to a relatively humble two-volume work called *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*. Being an abridged version of the above, Ibn Ḥajar suffices by stating the rank and virtue of al-Bukhārī in the field of ḥadīth and specifies his age when he passed away.³⁷

The commentaries (shurūḥ) on ḥadīth as a genre played an important role in providing systematic commentaries for the ḥadīth collections. These commentaries took the form of live lessons, oral glosses during a recitation of ḥadīth commentary, and multivolume written works for use as reference during devotional study, recitation, legal instruction, and legal practice. Commentators used live and written commentaries on ḥadīth collections to defend their positions on law and theology and to polemicize the doctrines of their opponents. The regional and temporal center of ḥadīth commentarial activity largely shifted in the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries to Egypt and Syria, where the genre of ḥadīth commentary came of age largely through the efforts of Shāfi‘ī ḥadīth scholars. In this period, commentators not only explicated the contents (mutūn) of ḥadīth collections, but also began to include systematic analyses of each ḥadīth’s chain of transmission (isnād), and even the compilations’ organization under headings (tarājim). These works often took a lifetime to complete and were embedded in a competitive culture of live performance in which patronage, prestige, and legal and theological commitments were at stake.³⁸

More specifically, there are numerous commentaries on al-Bukhārī’s ḥadīth collection al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ which, as Blecher emphasises mention the above points, yet strikingly, when it comes to discuss al-Bukhārī’s travels etc. they are silent about his pursuit of knowledge and do not provide detail. On this point, Ḥamad b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābī (388/998) was the first to compile a commentary ‘Alām al-ḥadīth on al-Bukhārī’s al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ and delve into the commentary of the ḥadīth without any discussion on al-Bukhārī.³⁹ After the work of al-Khaṭṭābī, we have the commentary *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* of ‘Alī b. Khalaf b. Baṭṭāl al-Qurṭubī (449/1057). Ibn Baṭṭāl’s work is regarded as the second commentary written on the al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ, however, between the two scholars there are three more commentaries which are not found, namely that of al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dāwūdī (402/1012), Muḥallab b. Aḥmad b. Abī Ṣufra (435/1044) and a summarised version written by his student Muḥammad b. Khalaf al-Murābiṭ al-Andalūsī (485/1092).⁴⁰ Ibn Baṭṭāl, just as his predecessor al-Khaṭṭābī have engaged into the

³⁶ Al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* v.9, 47-55.

³⁷ Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar, *Al-‘Asqalānī, Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, (Dār al-‘āsima’ li al-nashr wa al-tawzī‘, no publishing date), v.1, 825.

³⁸ Joel, Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God: Ḥadīth Commentary across a Millennium*, (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018), 9-10.

³⁹ Ḥamad b. Muḥammad, *Al-Khaṭṭābī ‘Alām al-ḥadīth fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Maktaba Jāmi‘a umm al-Qurā, Mecca, Saudi Arabia, 1988) v.1, 107.

⁴⁰ ‘Alī b. Khalaf b. Baṭṭāl al-Qurṭubī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Maktabat al-Rushd, Riyadh, Saudi

commentary of the ḥadīth without discussing anything about the compiler al-Bukhārī. Thus far, the methodology from both authors is clear, as they do not even attempt to discuss the lineage, background and the travels of al-Bukhārī. Having said that, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad famously known as Ibn al-Munīr al-Iskandarānī (683/1284) compiled al-Mutawārī ‘alā abwāb al-Bukhārī. Ibn al-Munīr’s methodology has a slight contrast with his predecessors, as he does mention a brief background of al-Bukhārī albeit very succinct and when he mentions the travels of al-Bukhārī, he quotes directly from al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī in a single paragraph.⁴¹ Subsequently, Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Kirmānī (786/1384) compiled al-Kawākib al-Darārī, and in his introduction to al-Bukhārī he states raḥal raḥalāt wāsi’a (he travelled extensively) without any specific mention of the towns and cities travelled in pursuit of the knowledge of ḥadīth.⁴² Zayn al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad (795/1393) famously known as Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī compiles *Faṭḥ al-Bārī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, does not write an introduction and obviously does not mention anything on the travel pursuits of al-Bukhārī.⁴³ The commentary of Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (852/1448), *Faṭḥ al-Bārī* is one of the most famous and popular commentaries written on the al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, and very extensive, yet apart from a brief introduction, Ibn Ḥajar does not discuss the biography and travel pursuits of al-Bukhārī. However, there is another work of Ibn Ḥajar named *Hidāyat al-Sārī*, which is exclusively devoted to the biography of this scholar in which he provides information on the travels of al-Bukhārī.⁴⁴

In addition, one must acknowledge the fact that Ibn Ḥajar has discussed the travels of al-Bukhārī albeit partially in his book *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*.⁴⁵ The contemporary of Ibn Ḥajar, Badr al-Dīn al-‘Aynī (855/1453) in his commentary *‘Umdat al-Qārī*, writes briefly regarding al-Bukhārī’s travel, quoting al-Bukhārī as saying: aqamtu bi l-Baṣara khams sinīn, ma’ī kutubī uṣannif wa aḥujj kulla sana wa arjī’ min Makka ila l-Baṣara, I stayed in Baṣra for five years compiling my books and I would perform Hajj every year and I would return from Mecca to Baṣra.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-

Arabia, 2003), v.1, 37.

⁴¹ Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Munīr, *al-Mutawārī ‘alā abwāb al-Bukhārī*, (Maktaba al-Mu‘alla, Kuwait, no publishing date), v.1, 40.

⁴² Muḥammad b. Yūsuf, Al-Kirmānī, *al-Kawākib al-Darārī*, (Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth, Beirut, Lebanon, 1981), 11.

⁴³ Zayn al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, *Faṭḥ al-Bārī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Maktaba Ghurabā al-athariyya, Medina, Saudi Arabia, 1996)

⁴⁴ Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Hidāyat al-Sārī li sirat al-Bukhārī*, (Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islamiyya, Damascus, Syria, 2011)

⁴⁵ Al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* v.9, 47-55.

⁴⁶ Badr al-Dīn Al-‘Aynī, *‘Umdat al-Qārī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Idārat al-Ṭība‘at al-munīriyya, Damascus, Syria, no publishing date), v.1, 5.

Qastalānī (923/1517) commentary *Irshād al-Sārī*, provides us with a detailed account of the travel pursuits of al-Bukhārī which Ibn Hajar et al do not do in their commentaries. Al-Qastalānī however, provides detailed accounts of the travels of al-Bukhārī similar to those provided by the Muslim historians such as al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī in his *Tārīkh*.⁴⁷

The books on Islamic history (*Tārīkh*) provide more detail and extensive information of a particular period and in this context of any scholar, especially as popular as al-Bukhārī. What is more fascinating of such a genre is that these books will list his teachers and students, his works and his date of death; but it will not report his reasons for embarking upon the study of the law or attempt to account for his professional successes and failures by referring to his quirks of personality. As far as al-Bukhārī is concerned, as I have just provided a glimpse of information from the genre of commentaries of ḥadīth (*shurūḥ al-ḥadīth*) and the books relating to the narrators/transmitters of al-Bukhārī (*kutub al-rijāl*).⁴⁸

Thus far, books in each genre provide information on his travels and some completely avoid the mention, this maybe to avoid repetition as some may argue. What is also important to emphasize here is that the information on the travel is precisely the same and each author copies the same information into their work. Moreover, the details provided on the travels of al-Bukhārī do stipulate the towns and cities he visited and wrote ḥadīth as I have discussed above. However, in terms of the activities within those towns, and what was happening in them, the genres and sources do not mention any of this and are silent about this subject. However, putting this point aside, a wealth and plethora of information regarding al-Bukhārī is mentioned. What is also unique to each genre is that every author in each genre provides his own chain of transmission (*isnād*) with relatively the same report, which strengthens and corroborates the information provided. As an example, the next few paragraphs will provide an abstract on the books on Islamic history (*Tārīkh*), and how they have highlighted the travels of al-Bukhārī.

Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (463/1071) compiled *Tārīkh Baghdād* (History of Baghdad), which is considered to be a very important work. *Tārīkh Baghdād* also reflects for us the activity of the scholars and the extent of the spread of the intellectual movement among various Islamic cities. It does so when it narrates for us the trips, which some scholars undertook in pursuit of knowledge. There is no doubt, however, that the greatest significance of *Tārīkh Baghdād* lies in the field of ḥadīth. Al-Baghdādī narrates the biographies of a plethora of narrators of ḥadīth from more than seven thousand biographies, which the book details alphabetically.⁴⁹ Under the heading of al-Bukhārī, al-

⁴⁷ Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Al-Qastalānī, *Irshād al-Sārī ilā sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Matba'at al-kubrā al-amīriyya, Cairo, Egypt, no publishing date), v.1, 31-32.

⁴⁸ Michael, Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the age of al-Ma'mūn*, (Cambridge University Press, 2000) 3.

⁴⁹ Jonathan A.C. Brown, *A Segment of the genealogy of Sunnī Ḥadīth Criticism: The Mysterious Relationship between al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī*, in Maurice A. Pomerantz and Aram Shahin (eds), *The Heritage of Arabo-Islamic Learning*, (Brill, 2016), 227-

Baghdādī after mentioning his genealogy, provides his chain of transmission and states the following on the travels of al-Bukhārī; ‘raḥal fī ṭalab al-‘ilm ilā sā’ir al-amṣār, wa katab bi Khurāsān wa al-Jibāl wa mudun al-Irāq kullihā wa al-Ḥijāz wa al-Shām wa Miṣr wa warad Baghdād dafa’āt’. He (al-Bukhārī) travelled to all of the cities for the acquisition of knowledge, and he wrote (ḥadīth) in Khurāsān and Jibāl and in all of the cities of Iraq, Hijāz, Shām and Egypt and he came to Baghdād many times.⁵⁰

Another Muslim historian, ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Hibat Allah b. ‘Abd Allah, famously known as Ibn ‘Asākir (571/1176) wrote *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq* (History of the city of Damascus). It is one of the most important books about the Islamic history of Syria, covering the life of important figures who resided in or visited Damascus. This collection is not limited to the assessment of narrators of ḥadīth ‘ilm al-rijāl, but also includes historical and political figures. When it comes to personalities, Ibn ‘Asākir endeavours to collect everything which has been written about these personalities. Now, whether the information provided is authentic or inauthentic, then that is another focus for further research. He also emphasises on providing the complete chain of narration (isnād). It also contains a huge collection of Arabic poems.⁵¹ Ibn ‘Asākir does not mention al-Bukhārī’s account as al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī. However, he specifies that al-Bukhārī heard ḥadīth in Dimashq (sami’a bi Dimashq) then he provides a list of the cities al-Bukhārī visited e.g. Mecca, Hims, ‘Asqalān, Rayy, Khurāsān, al-Irāq and Baṣra. Ibn ‘Asākir is more specific in providing the information of the cities than al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī. However, there is a report where both works exemplify al-Bukhari’s travels, for example, ‘rubba ḥadīth sami’tuh bi l-Baṣara katabtuh bi al-Shām wa rubba ḥadīth sami tuh bi al-Shām katabtuh bi Misr’, Many ḥadīth I heard in Basra I wrote in Shām and many ḥadīth I heard in Shām I wrote in Egypt.⁵² However, both works provide similar accounts with different chains of narration.

Furthermore, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm, famously known as Ibn Khallikān (681/1282) wrote *Wafayāt al-‘A’yān* a work that has been considered of highest importance for the civil and literary history of Islam and Muslims. He references al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī with the same quotation ‘raḥal fī ṭalab al-‘ilm ilā sā’ir al-amṣār’, but he provides a very minimal account of al-Bukhari’s acquisition and travel.⁵³ Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī (748/1348) compiled *Tārīkh al-Islām*, which is considered to be the

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⁵⁰ Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Khaṭīb Al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh madīnat al-salām*, (Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, Beirut, Lebanon, 2001), v.2, 322.

⁵¹ ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Hibat Allah b. ‘Abd Allah, ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Hibat Allah b. ‘Abd Allah Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 80 vols. (Dār al-Fikr, Beirut, Lebanon, 1997), 50. See also, Steven Judd, and Jens Scheiner (eds) *New perspectives on Ibn ‘Asākir in Islamic Historiography*, (Brill 2017), Introduction, 1.

⁵² Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 50-59.

⁵³ Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-‘A’yān wa anbā abnā al-zamān*, (Dār Ṣādir, Beirut, Lebanon, 1978), v.4, 188.

largest biographical encyclopaedia of Islam. Al-Dhahabī has stated the same information as al-Baghdādī but with different chains of narration.⁵⁴ Al-Dhahabī however, has compiled another two books, *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz* and *Siyar ‘alām al-nubalā’*, wherein the latter is more informative than the former in providing the names of the cities al-Bukhārī visited.⁵⁵

Furthermore, Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī (764/1363) wrote *al-Wāfī bi l-wafayāt*, which is one of the most important biographical dictionaries of Islamic and Arab civilisation. Al-Ṣafadī has copied everything from al-Dhahabī specifying the names of places where al-Bukhārī visited.⁵⁶ In addition, Ismā‘īl b. Kathīr’s (774/1373) compilation *Al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya* mentions under the section of al-Bukhārī, ‘fa aqāma bi Makka yaṭlub bihā al-ḥadīth thumma raḥal ba’d dhālik ilā sā’iri mashāyikh al-ḥadīth allatī amkanathu al-riḥla ilayhā wa katab ‘an akthar min alf shaykh wa qad dhakhal Baghdād thamān marrāt’ He (al-Bukhārī) stayed in Mecca to study ḥadīth then after that he travelled to the scholars of ḥadīth where possible and he wrote ḥadīth from more than a thousand scholars and he visited Baghdād eight times.⁵⁷ Ibn Kathīr here does not specify the details of the places al-Bukhārī visited apart from Baghdad, as we can see from the aforementioned statement. Lastly, Ibn ‘Imād al-Ḥanbalī (1089/1678) in his *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī akhbāri man dhahab* a lengthy biographical dictionary which covers the first ten centuries of Islamic history. Ibn ‘Imād uses the same quote from al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, ‘raḥal fī ṭalab al-‘ilm ilā sā’ir al-amṣār, wa katab bi Khurāsān wa al-Jibāl wa mudun al-Irāq kullihā wa al-Ḥijāz wa al-Shām wa Miṣr’ He (al-Bukhārī) travelled to all of the cities for the acquisition of knowledge. He wrote (ḥadīth) in Khurāsān and Jibāl, in all of the cities of Iraq, Hijāz, Shām.⁵⁸

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, travel, or riḥla, has held a pivotal role in shaping Islamic sciences and education since the early days of Islam. Muslim scholars, deeply influenced by Quranic

⁵⁴ Muhammad b. Ahmad Al-Dhahabī, *Tārikh al-Islām wa wafayāt mashāhīr al-islām*, (Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, Beirut, Lebanon, 2003), v.6, 140.

⁵⁵ Muhammad b. Ahmad Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz*, (Maktaba al-Haram al-Makki, Saudi Arabia, no publishing date), 555. See also, Muhammad b. Ahmad Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar ‘alām al-nubalā’* (Mu’assasat al-risāla, Beirut, Lebanon, 1983), v.12, 391.

⁵⁶ Khalīl b. Aybak, Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi l-wafayāt*, (Dār iḥyā’ al-turāth al-‘arabī, Beirut, Lebanon, 2000), v.2, 148.

⁵⁷ Ismā‘īl, Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, (Dār Ibn Kathīr, Beirut, Lebanon, 2015), v.11, 24.

⁵⁸ ‘Abd al-Ḥayy b. Aḥmad b. ‘Imād al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī akhbāri man dhahab*, (Dār Ibn Kathīr, Beirut, Lebanon, 1988), v.3, 253.

verses, and ḥadīth emphasizing the value of travel, embarked on journeys in their pursuit of knowledge. Their dedication to travel, driven by a belief in its virtuous and worthy nature, has contributed significantly to the development of Islamic scholarship.

Within this broader context, al-Bukhārī, a prominent scholar in the field of ḥadīth, stands out. His life and works have garnered substantial attention throughout Islamic history. Researchers and authors from various genres, including history, commentary, and the science of ḥadīth, have portrayed him as an intellectual and a distinguished scholar of ḥadīth.

Interestingly, the information provided by historians and commentators about al-Bukhārī's genealogy, hagiography, and travels is comprehensive and concrete. However, when it comes to the specifics of his journeys, the information is often vague, limited, and sometimes scarce. While various sources report on al-Bukhārī's travels and the cities he visited during his ḥadīth compilation, the details of his activities and experiences in those places remain largely unexplored and obscure. It's worth noting that collectors and scholars, regardless of their genre, frequently rely on one another's accounts, leading to a strong resemblance among narratives. This reliance on second-hand information raises questions about the authenticity of these accounts, diminishing their value as firsthand sources.

Moreover, descriptions of al-Bukhārī and his travels in historical and commentary genres, specifically *riḥla fī ṭalab al-ḥadīth*, vary in depth and clarity. However, a common thread is the inclusion of chains of transmission, offering a potential avenue for corroborating reports across different sources. Further investigation into these chains of transmission could enhance our understanding of the presented reports. In the realm of *riḥla fī ṭalab al-ḥadīth*, the exploration of al-Bukhārī's historical travels remains an area ripe for detailed comparative studies. Among the existing sources, *Tārīkh Baghdād* (The History of Baghdad) by Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-khaṭīb al-Baghdādī offers a comprehensive foundation for discussions on al-Bukhārī's pursuit of knowledge within the framework of this genre. Scholars who followed al-Baghdādī's work relied heavily on its materials to shed light on al-Bukhārī's intellectual journey.

Al-Bukhārī's quest for ḥadīth knowledge is not merely a historical or religious endeavor but a profound linguistic and philosophical journey. His meticulous approach to ḥadīth collection and authentication demonstrates an awareness of the philosophical dimensions of knowledge acquisition, linguistic accuracy, and epistemological inquiry. This paper highlights the confluence of these elements, positioning Al-Bukhārī as not only a compiler of ḥadīth but also as a thinker deeply engaged with the linguistic and philosophical foundations of his discipline.

Future studies can further explore the intersections between Islamic epistemology and classical philosophical traditions, drawing parallels between Al-Bukhārī's work and broader intellectual currents in medieval Islamic thought.

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