The Documentary Depth of Hadith Transmission: Audition Attendance Lists

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Abstract

*The transmission of hadith prompted substantial documentation and subsequent archiving. This article presents a recently rediscovered type of document belonging to this paper trail: audition attendance lists (*awrāq al-samāʿ*). Preceding the better-known audition certificate (*samāʿ*), an audition attendance list was sometimes used in the transmission of particularly long books in order to keep track of the attendance of sometimes hundreds of participants in audition sessions. Here we concentrate on one audition attendance list produced in the ninth/fifteenth century in Cairo for a transmission of the most famous hadith collection, the* Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. We introduce this kind of document, propose a reading of our particular sample, and discuss certain functions of audition attendance lists. We argue that these lists reveal a hitherto unknown depth in the documentary machinery of textual transmission.*

On Saturday, 6 Shaʿbān 865/May 17, 1461, more than five hundred people met in Cairo to take part in the sixteenth and final session of a public reading of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, which was by then the most famous hadith collection in Sunni Islam. The participants joined the ranks of countless men and women who had listened to the same text in previous centuries[1] and who would do so in the future. By the ninth/fifteenth century, this particular hadith collection had gained canonical status and had become a pivotal book in the cultural self-conception of Muslim societies. In the Cairo sultanate (648–923/1250–1517), it was read at the court of the Mamluk sultan in a festive setting during the holy month of Ramadan. It was commented on by a host of scholars and transmitted to an ever-increasing number of hadith collectors.[2]

The motives that led so many scholars and laypeople to attend transmission sessions of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* varied.[3] One central reason for scholarly participants was the

1. For the early transmission history of the work, see Johann Fück, "Beiträge zur Überlieferungsgeschichte von Buḫārī's Traditionssammlung," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 92, no. 1/2 (1938): 60–87.

2. Joel Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God: Hadith Commentary across a Millennium* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), esp. chaps. 3 and 5.

3. For transmission as a religiously and symbolically meaningful event, see Ruggero Vimercati Sanseverino, "'As If the Prophet Stood in Front of You': The Performative Meaning of Hadith Transmission and Its

prospect of obtaining "elevated"—that is, short—chains of transmission (sing. *isnād*) back to al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and through him to the Prophet Muḥammad. In the early centuries of hadith transmission, these chains had primarily been regarded as the safety mechanism ensuring the sound transmission of the hadith corpus. After the fourth/tenth century, once many hadiths had been written down in collections that were increasingly accepted as canonical, oral/aural transmission continued in what scholars now refer to as the postcanonical period of hadith transmission. This was accompanied by a change of the meaning of the chains, which were now regarded as a source of authority among one's peers and a spiritual connection to the Prophet.[4] This type of engagement with the hadith corpus, transmission for the sake of short chains, was particularly popular in Damascus between the sixth/twelfth and eighth/fourteenth centuries. Scholars in ninth/fifteenth-century Cairo, by contrast, prioritized producing commentaries on the canonical hadith collections.[5] The writing of commentaries took place in a competitive environment. In order to be deemed qualified to comment on a hadith collection such as the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, scholars had to be widely read in a wide range of disciplines. But the most crucial prerequisite to engaging in hadith commentary was the possession of prestigious short chains of transmission, ideally multiple chains for each hadith. In scholarly debates, these chains were not accepted as givens but meticulously scrutinized, compared, and, at times, rejected as forgeries.[6] In Cairo, postcanonical hadith transmission thus lasted at least well into the ninth/fifteenth century.

In the overall picture, then, the transmission of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in 865/1461 over sixteen sessions was not particularly unusual. The location of these sessions, the Dār al-ḥadīth al-Kāmiliyya, had been built more than two centuries earlier specifically for the purpose of transmitting hadith and had already hosted many other transmission sessions of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*. But what makes this event special is the survival until today of a little-known document that it generated. This document allows us to explore the depth of the documentary machinery at work in the transmission of knowledge.

The history of education and knowledge transmission in medieval Islamic societies has received ample scholarly attention in the past few decades. As in other fields of Middle Eastern history, many studies rely mostly on narrative sources,[7] but an increasing number of studies also use manuscripts to analyze educational practices as reflected in books.[8] Studies employing documentary sources are still few and far between, and they mostly use just one

Prophetological Background in Late Formative Sunnism," in *Beyond Authenticity: Alternative Approaches to Hadith Narrations and Collections*, ed. Mohammad Gharaibeh, 217–53 (Leiden: Brill, 2023).

4. Garrett Davidson, *Carrying On the Tradition: A Social and Intellectual History of Hadith Transmission across a Thousand Years* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

5. For hadith commentaries in general, see Joel Blecher and Stefanie Brinkmann, eds., *Hadith Commentary: Continuity and Change* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023).

6. Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God*, 99–103.

7. For a mostly narrative approach, see the contributions in Sebastian Günther, ed., *Knowledge and Education in Classical Islam: Religious Learning between Continuity and Change* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

8. Stefanie Brinkmann, Giovanni Ciotti, and Stefano Valente, eds., *Education Materialised: Reconstructing Teaching and Learning Contexts through Manuscripts* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021).

particular kind of source—namely, endowment deeds for educational facilities.[9] In the last decade or so, a further kind of document from the sphere of knowledge transmission, the so-called audition certificate (*samāʿ*), has received growing attention. These certificates were mostly generated in the transmission of hadith, and they survive by the tens of thousands. They are used to study such topics as the role of women in the transmission of hadith and the integration and participation of slaves, and to trace the reception of religious and political concepts.[10] But their potential for expanding our understanding of knowledge transmission, reading practices, and book history is only starting to be tapped into. A number of new online tools, such as the "Bukhārī Platform" of the Idārat al-Awqāf (Qatar) and the "Audition Certificates Platform" (Hamburg), enable comprehensive research based on this invaluable material.

So far, audition certificates have largely been taken as a given. It has been tacitly assumed that they were simply drawn up after a transmission session was over to certify the transmission of the book or booklet in question from one or more authorities to the participants. In this article, we explore the spadework that went into the production of some of these audition certificates. Using the audition attendance list (*awrāq al-samāʿ*), a new type of document that has only recently been rediscovered,[11] we uncover a hitherto unappreciated depth in the documentary practices that accompanied knowledge transmission.

It is important to note that the term "audition attendance list" is our modern coinage. The terms we find in medieval sources include *awrāq al-sāmiʿīn*, *awrāq al-asmāʾ*, and *awrāq al-ḍabṭ*, but strictly speaking, each of these terms denotes a particular part of the overall paper trail that we refer to as audition attendance lists.[12] However, it is only if they are read together that these sections make sense and can be fruitfully utilized.

The goal of this article is twofold. Since only one research paper, in Arabic, has been published on this kind of document, we will describe the structure and intricacies of audition attendance lists in some detail to provide future researchers and manuscript cataloguers a key for making sense of them. This part of the article is by necessity rather descriptive but will, we hope, help researchers recognize this obscure type of document and understand its documentary logic. In the second, more analytical part, we discuss the multiple functions

9. For an approach based mostly on narrative sources, paired with some endowment documents, see Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

10. Asma Sayeed, *Women and the Transmission of Religious Knowledge in Islam* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Davidson, *Carrying On the Tradition*, 152–202; Jan Hinrich Hagedorn, *Domestic Slavery in Syria and Egypt, 1200–1500* (Göttingen: V&R unipress/Bonn University Press, 2020); Suleiman A. Mourad and James E. Lindsay, *The Intensification and Reorientation of Sunni Jihad Ideology in the Crusader Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). For a critical view of Mourad and Lindsay's approach, see Benedikt Reier, "The Reception of *Jihād* Literature in the Crusading Period," *Crusades* 21 (2022): 65–90.

11. Said Aljoumani, "Wathīqa jadīda ʿan naql al-ʿilm fī al-taʾrīkh al-islāmī: Taḥqīq awrāq al-samāʿ li-Sunan al-Dāraquṭnī," *Majallat Kulliyyat al-sharīʿa wa-l-dirāsāt al-islāmiyya* 38, no. 2 (2021): 19–75. See also İsmail E. Erünsal, *Orta Çağ İslam Dünyasında Kitap Ve Kütüphane* (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, Cağaloğlu, 2008), 83–87. We cordially thank Professor Erünsal for sending us the manuscript in question.

12. Below we examine the different sections of audition attendance lists in depth.

of the list and trace its implications for our understanding of the documentary practices of knowledge transmission. But first we need to look at the written artifact itself and explain how it survived until the present day.

Material Philological Study of the Composite Manuscript

The audition attendance list at the heart of this article is today part of a composite manuscript, MS Istanbul, Millet Genel Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah Efendi 259, which is a collection of twenty-one independently produced booklets that were at some point bound together. As these booklets, both as a whole and considered individually, bear vital clues for our understanding of the audition attendance list, it is necessary to begin by addressing the material logic of this composite manuscript.

Thematically, the manuscript is held together by its focus on hadith. It consists of seventeen short hadith collections, two registers of transmission (sing. *thabat*), and the audition attendance list. The brevity of the hadith collections included in the composite manuscript made them easy to carry around and transmit in relatively brief meetings. Their unadorned appearance indicates that they were produced for use, not as splendid presentation copies. Therefore, it is possible to compare our composite manuscript to the better-known hadith books produced in Damascus in the postcanonical period.[13] These were distinguished by six material characteristics. They were thin and small, made with unremarkable paper, unbound, enclosed in protective wrappers, continuously growing through additions, and accompanied by additional title pages.[14] In the same vein, the booklets contained in our composite manuscript were thin and small; their paper was of mediocre quality, and their components were not bound immediately after their production but only at a later point. What is more, our hadith booklets, like the Damascene ones, carry several manuscript notes documenting specific engagements with the individual booklets, mostly in the form of audition certificates.

One feature that sets our composite manuscript apart from its Damascene relatives is its distinct Cairene context: most of the people involved in the production, ownership, and transmission of its components spent their lives in Cairo. For example, Yaḥyā b. Yūsuf al-Tādhifī Sibṭ Ibn al-Shiḥna (d. 959/1552) copied and owned seven of the manuscript's booklets (nos. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17). Yaḥyā was born in Cairo, where he also began his education. Following in his father's footsteps, he moved to Aleppo, where he became chief judge of the Ḥanbalī school of law. After his tenure in Aleppo, he moved to Damascus before eventually returning to Cairo.[15] Of his teachers, Yaḥyā's biographers single out Yūsuf b. Shāhīn al-Karakī Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 899/1493) as particularly important.[16]

13. Konrad Hirschler, "The Materiality of Hadith Scholarship in the Post-Canonical Period," in Gharaibeh, *Beyond Authenticity*, 281–315; Konrad Hirschler, *A Monument to Medieval Syrian Book Culture: The Library of Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), chap. 3.

14. Hirschler, "Materiality of Hadith Scholarship," 299.

15. Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Arnāʾūṭ and Maḥmūd al-Arnāʾūṭ (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1986), 10:467–68.

16. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *al-Dawʿ al-lāmiʿ fī aʿyān al-qarn al-tāsiʿ* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl,

This relationship is documented in five booklets (nos. 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16), whose audition certificates show that Yaḥyā read them to Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar in 888/1483.[17]

Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar is key to understanding the composite manuscript. He was the grandson of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449), the most famous scholar of the ninth/fifteenth century and the author of a famous commentary on the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, among other works. Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar was born in 828/1425 in Cairo and grew up in the home of his grandfather, who took him under his wing and personally saw to his grandson's education. Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar himself copied seven of the manuscript's booklets (nos. 1, 2, 3, 18, 19, 20, and 21), and his hand turns up in the pages of the composite manuscript again and again. Crucially, he also wrote the audition attendance list.

The audition attendance list is today divided between two separate booklets, 19 and 21. The part contained in the nineteenth booklet (fols. 175a–182b) pertains specifically to the sixteenth session, which marked the completion (*khatm*) of this transmission of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, and it also lists later make-up sessions. The part in the twenty-first booklet (fols. 187a–206a) covers the entire transmission, from the first session on Tuesday 11 Jumādā II/March 24 until the *khatm* on Sunday 6 Shaʿbān/May 17 in the year 865/1461. In addition, the second part includes a section listing those participants who attended only some of the sessions.

The booklet in between (no. 20) is a part of the *thabat* of Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar, in which he registered all the transmission sessions in which he had participated. In the current binding, this booklet is divided into two parts (fols. 183a–186b and 207a–216b). As the end date of its first part dovetails with the first date of the second part and the foliation of the two parts fits together,[18] we can be sure that these two parts were initially one and that they were separated only at a later point in time. The *thabat* contains entries on transmissions Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar attended between 9 Rabīʿ I 865/December 23, 1460, and 26 Jumādā II 865/April 8, 1461. We will come back to this *thabat* later.

A closer examination of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twenty-first booklets shows that they carry serial foliation in the same hand.[19] The foliation indicates, first, that the booklets have a common past, and second, that their original order was different from that of their current binding. Booklet 19 is the last part of the audition attendance list, which focused on the final transmission session. Booklet 21 is likewise part of the audition attendance list, but it constitutes the first part, as it lists all the reading sessions. Booklet 21, therefore, was originally placed before booklet 19. Booklet 18 is not part of the audition attendance

n.d.), 10:313; idem, *al-Jawāhir wa-l-durar fī tarjamat Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Ḥajar*, ed. Ibrāhīm ʿAbd al-Majīd (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1999), 3:1213–17; R. Kevin Jaques, *Ibn Hajar* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 98–99, 110.

17. MS Istanbul, Millet Genel Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah Efendi 259, fols. 127b, 140a, 146a, 149a, 154a. Daiber III MS 106 (fols. 42–62) contains a *thabat* of Yaḥyā al-Tādhifī focused on his transmissions from Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar. See Hans Daiber, *From the Greeks to the Arabs and Beyond*, vol. 5, *Unknown Arabic Manuscripts from Eight Centuries, Including One Hebrew and Two Ethiopian Manuscripts: Daiber Collection III* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 428.

18. The foliation of the first part reads *awwal min* 12 (fol. 183a), the second *thānī min* 13 (fol. 207a).

19. Booklet 18 is foliated with *rābiʿ* (?) *min* 23, booklet 19 with *thālith min* 22. Booklet 21 has two foliations, *awwal min* 20 and *thānī min* 21. It is noteworthy that the foliation of booklet 18 appears on its final page on the lower left side, not on its first page on the upper left side.

list but rather a *thabat* of Taghrī Birdī b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qādirī,[20] also produced by Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar. According to the foliation, it should follow today's booklet 19, revealing that the original order of the booklets was 21 → 19 → 18. The relation of Taghrī Birdī's *thabat* to the attendance list goes beyond its foliation and its producer: Taghrī Birdī was one of the participants in the transmission sessions of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. This is attested in the list itself (fol. 190a) as well as in the *thabat* (fol. 166b), and we will return to the link between *thabat*s and audition attendance lists later on.

When and by whom were the individual booklets brought together and bound into the manuscript as we have it today? The booklets were produced between the eighth/fourteenth century and the beginning of the tenth/sixteenth century. Their first owners were presumably their copyists. All the booklets copied by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Bukhārī (nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9) were later owned by Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Shaqbāʾī. Many of the booklets produced by Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar and by his student Yaḥyā b. Yūsuf al-Tādhifī were later owned by Sharaf al-Dīn Yaḥyā Sibṭ Shaykh al-Islām Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī (d. 1092/1681), as shown by his ownership statements on some booklets (nos. 1, 2, 3, 11, and 18). Sharaf al-Dīn was a book collector who wrote ownership statements on many books, probably all that came into his possession.[21] He is the last owner of whom we have evidence before the booklets, bound or unbound, came into the possession of the Ottoman chief mufti Feyzullah Efendi (d. 1115/1703), who built his college library in 1699. The Feyzullah Efendi Library was one of the few Ottoman libraries that had a bookbinder among its staff, and it may have been this person who bound the composite manuscript into its current form.[22]

Reading Audition Attendance Lists

Audition attendance lists have only recently gained scholarly attention. On the basis of a list recorded at twenty transmission sessions of the *Sunan al-Dāraquṭnī* in 737/1337 in Damascus, Said Aljoumani has defined them as

> bound or unbound papers, produced by an attendance officer (*ḍābiṭ asmāʾ*) who records the names of the participants of a transmission strand, specifying the title of the transmitted book or booklet, the name of the presiding authority, the name of the reciter, and the location and date(s) of the transmission. The attendance officer specifies exactly which part each of the participants heard. He also indicates whether missed passages were repeated, using signs with specific connotations. Audition attendance lists constituted the source material for the writer of the audition certificate for writing the certificate.[23]

20. Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Dawʿ al-lāmiʿ*, 3:30–31.

21. See MS Jerusalem, Khalidiyya Library, no. 616, for another autograph of Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar later owned by Sharaf al-Dīn.

22. On the Feyzullah Efendi Library, see İsmail E. Erünsal, *A History of Ottoman Libraries* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2022), 55 and 149.

23. Aljoumani, "Wathīqa jadīda," 34.

In some medieval narrative sources, such papers are indeed distinguished from audition certificates. Passages such as "his name appeared in the papers (*kurrā*s) of listeners in al-Jabal for the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*"[24] and "his name was found in the papers of the listeners (*awrāq al-sāmiʿīn*) of al-Bukhārī with Ibn al-Zabīdī [acting as the presiding authority] among those who participated partially (*bi-fawtin*)"[25] show that scholars were aware of the materially separate audition attendance list registering participants in transmission sessions.

Let us first consider the terminological distinction of different responsibilities in these sources. There appears to have been a difference between the attendance officer (*ḍābiṭ al-asmāʾ*) and the better-known writer of the audition certificate (*kātib al-asmāʾ*, *muthbit al-asmāʾ*, *kātib al-samāʿ*, *muthbit al-samāʿ*, or *kātib al-ṭabaqa*). The attendance officer was responsible for producing a detailed written list of attendees over the course of multiple transmission sessions. The writer of the audition certificate, by contrast, was tasked with writing the certificate on the transmitted book or booklet after a transmission session. The work of the writer of an audition certificate was thus to condense the much more detailed information recorded by the attendance officer. Some medieval narrative and normative sources mention the job of the attendance officer. In his book on different professions and positions, for example, Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) comments briefly on the importance of truthfulness of the attendance officer (*kātib ghaybat al-sāmiʿīn*) and the eternal punishment awaiting a careless officer.[26]

We know many writers of audition certificates by name. Often, they indicated their role in the certificates they wrote. Biographical dictionaries also frequently specify that a certain individual wrote audition certificates. Attendance officers, by contrast, mostly remain obscure, but the likelihood of finding them is greatest in audition certificates. The most promising source consists of long hadith collections such as the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*,[27] the *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*,[28] and others whose full transmission required multiple gatherings, typically attended by large numbers of listeners. However, there are also instances in which an attendance officer can be identified in transmissions of smaller collections.[29]

Chronologically, audition attendance lists preceded audition certificates, since the latter are based on details recorded in the former, such as the names of the presiding authority, the name of the reader, the names of the listeners and the exact sections they listened to,

24. Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi-l-Wafayāt*, ed. Hellmut Ritter et al. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1931–2010), 8:218. Al-Dhahabī calls them *awrāq al-asmāʾ li-sāmiʿī al-Bukhārī* in Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Muʿjam al-shuyūkh al-kabīr*, ed. ʿAlī Ḥabīb al-Hayla (Ta'if: Maktabat al-Ṣiddīq, 1988), 1:133.

25. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāmina fī aʿyān al-miʾa al-thāmina*, ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Jād al-Ḥaqq (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1966), 2:12.

26. Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Muʿīd al-niʿam wa-mubīd al-niqam* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya, 1986), 88. See also Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Naqd al-ṭālib li-zaghal al-manāṣib*, ed. Khālid Muḥammad Dahmān and Nizār Abāẓa (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Muʿāṣir, 1992), 158, where the position is called *ḍābiṭ al-asmāʾ ʿind al-musamiʿīn*.

27. See, for example, MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Wetzstein II 1326, fol. 255a.

28. Ibn Ḥibbān al-Busṭī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, ed. Aḥmad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1952), 30.

29. See, for example, MS Damascus, Syrian National Library, Majmūʿ 3755, fol. 174a; Princeton University Library, Rare Books and Special Collections, Garrett MS 1357y, fol. 3a.

the number of sessions, and the date of the transmission's completion. The link between the two can be seen, for example, in a booklet of the fifth volume of the *Amālī* of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, a series of hadith dictation sessions held in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.[30] The audition attendance list for a transmission of this volume in 675/1277 was written on a small slip of paper that was then inserted into the manuscript and remained between its folios when the manuscript was microfilmed.[31] The list on this slip, in turn, was used to write the audition certificate that appears on the title page of the booklet.[32] The audition attendance list at the heart of the present article, however, reveals a more complex story. As we show below, it was most likely used not as a template for an audition certificate but for other purposes connected to documenting hadith transmission.

What is missing from the audition attendance list of the *Sunan al-Dāraquṭnī* as well as from our audition attendance list of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* are the chains of transmission of the presiding authorities, which were recorded in many audition certificates. In other cases, a transmission statement (*riwāya*) under the title acted as a proxy. The absence of the chain in audition attendance lists might at first sight seem counterintuitive, since one of the main goals of hadith transmission in the postcanonical period was to obtain short chains. However, the alert reader can find multiple chains through which the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* was transmitted in the *thabat* of Taghrī Birdī contained in the present manuscript. As already noted, the *thabat* and the audition attendance list were not only both produced by Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar but also preserved together, and they thus make it possible to trace the chains of transmission for the presiding authorities. But the general absence of chains in audition attendance lists most likely reflects the fact that valuable chains were generally known or at least accessible to experts. Writing them down in these lists was thus superfluous, since the lists mostly served as templates.

Be that as it may, we can identify four key differences between audition certificates and audition attendance lists. The first concerns timing: audition attendance lists constituted a stage of production prior to the audition certificates, since the latter condensed and reorganized the details found in the former. The second difference lies in the differing levels of attention to detail in the two documents. The attendance officers registered all attendees, even those whose attendance was only partial, whereas the writers of audition certificates often subsumed such partial attendees under the rubric of "and others" (*wa-ākhirūn*).[33] Third, the two types of documents have different physical manifestations. We usually find audition certificates at the end of a manuscript, on a flyleaf, or somewhere inside the transmitted book or booklet itself, but audition attendance lists appear on separate sheets of paper that are materially independent of the transmitted text. The fourth difference relates to the use of signs. Whereas we do not encounter signs in audition certificates, the two audition attendance lists known so far contain a set of signs with specific meanings. As shown below, these signs were not standardized but rather were used to denote different things.

30. MS Damascus, Syrian National Library, Majmūʿ 3764/15.

31. MS Damascus, Syrian National Library, Majmūʿ 3764/15, fol. 202b.

32. MS Damascus, Syrian National Library, Majmūʿ 3764/15, fol. 203a.

33. On this, see also Aljoumani, "Wathīqa jadīda," 23–24.

Fig. 1. A sample page of section one of the audition attendance list by Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar. MS Millet Genel Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah Efendi 259, fol. 188b.

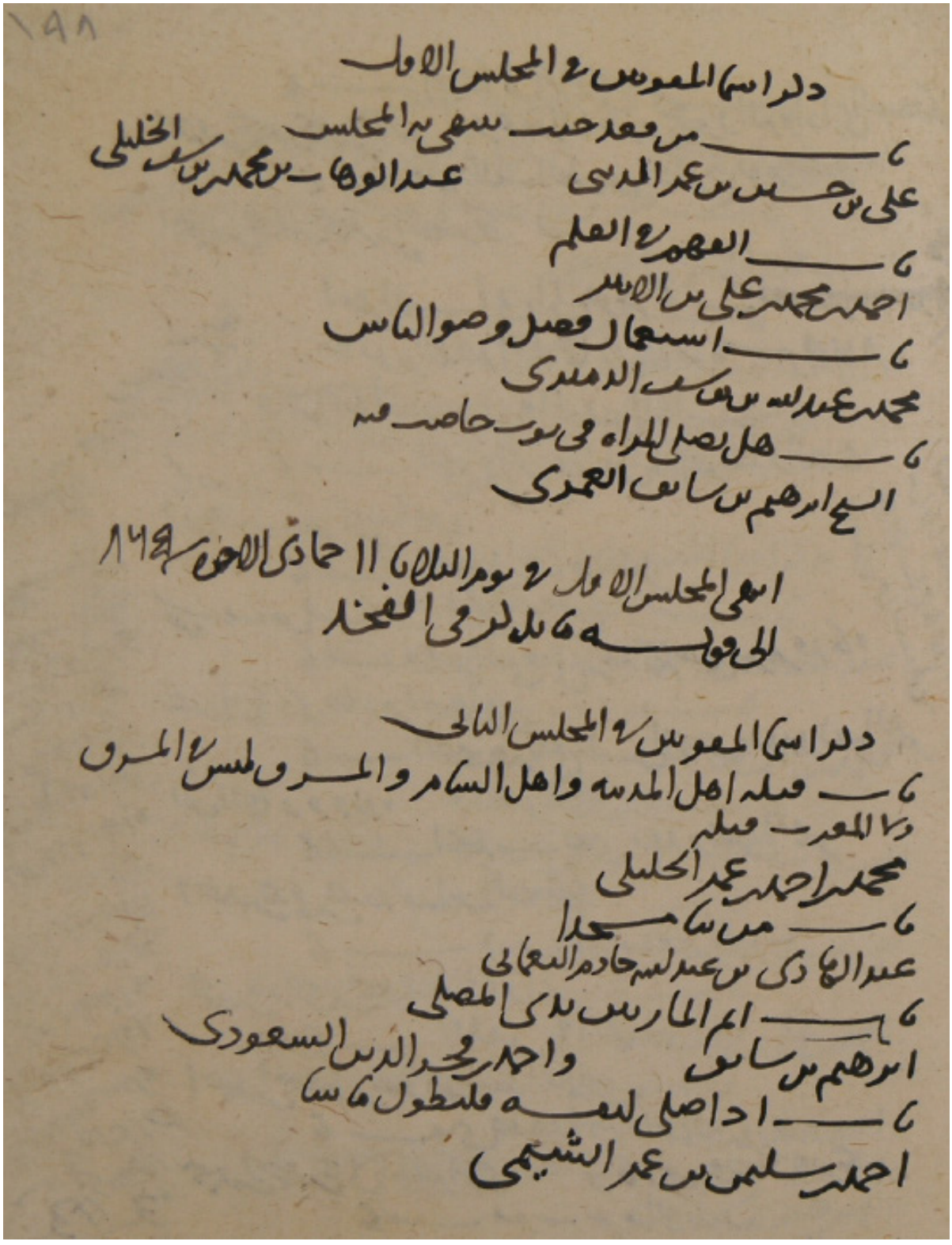

Fig. 2. The first page of section two of the audition attendance list. MS Millet Genel Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah Efendi 259, fol. 198a.

The transmission of a book as famous and venerated as the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* must have generated dozens, perhaps hundreds, of audition attendance lists throughout its history. Many of these lists have certainly been lost, but others must surely be lurking in libraries around the world, waiting to be rediscovered. The 865/1461 transmission sessions documented in the audition attendance list discussed here were organized as follows. There were two sessions per week, on Sundays and Tuesdays, at the Kāmiliyya. Most of the sessions were presided over by sixteen authorities, and the last one by twenty-six. The reciter at all the sessions was Fakhr al-Dīn ʿUthmān b. Muḥammad al-Diyamī al-Azharī (d. 908/1502).[34] The attendance officer, and thus the writer of our list, was Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar. He arranged the list into three sections. The first section lists the names of the listeners (the listeners' section), and it is divided into two parts, one covering all sixteen sessions and the other devoted solely to the final session (*khatm*). The second section names those who attended only part of a session (the partial attendance section), and the third section comprises those who attended a make-up session (the make-up section).

The listeners' section starts with the names of the sixteen presiding authorities and the name of the reciter (fols. 187a–187b), followed by a list of the attendees (fols. 187b–197b). Under the name of each attendee, Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar added a line with numbers. The numbers range from one to sixteen and represent the sixteen transmission sessions. If a listener missed a session, a circle serves as a placeholder. As we can see in Figure 1, circles appear rather frequently, indicating generally irregular attendance in the sessions. In addition, many listeners appear to have joined the transmission late. The second part of the listeners' section documents the last session, a festive occasion that attracted 220 new listeners and ten additional presiding authorities. The list names the additional presiding authorities and then the new listeners.[35]

The partial attendance section (fols. 181b–182b; see Fig. 2), which identifies listeners who left a session before its end or joined one after its beginning, covers only four transmission sessions (1, 2, 3, and 14). Here Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar recorded the exact passage in the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* during whose reading each named individual arrived or left. Each part ends with the date of the session in question as well as the passage reached at the end of the session.

The third section (fols. 181b–182b) is dedicated to make-up sessions. In order to allow listeners to catch up on missed sessions, additional transmission sessions were organized starting on Tuesday 8 Shaʿbān 865/May 19, 1461, two days after the completion of the main transmission. The section is divided into four subsections for make-up sessions 1, 2, 3, and 14, each of which begins with the number and date of the session (except for make-up session 14, which lacks the date), followed by the names of the listeners. Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar did not, however, record the name of every participant here; rather, he referred to the first section, where he wrote "he repeated" (*uʿīda*) as well as the number(s) of the make-up session(s) attended next to the relevant names.

34. Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib al-sāʾira bi-aʿyān al-mīʾa al-ʿāshira*, ed. Khalīl al-Manṣūr (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1997), 1:260.

35. For the festive nature of such *khatm* sessions, see Davidson, *Carrying On the Tradition*, 87–89.

The first noteworthy feature of the make-up section is the two-tier approach that Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar adopted for registering listeners who attended make-up sessions, using references to the first section. Second, just like the regular sessions, the make-up sessions also featured some partial attendance. Again, this was recorded in two ways. Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar included a partial attendance subsection under each make-up session, and he also indicated partial attendance with the letter *fāʾ* in the abovementioned marginal additions in the first section. For example, the third listener from the bottom in Figure 1, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Marḥūmī al-Madanī, attended three make-up sessions. Accordingly, next to his name we find the note "repeated" and the numbers 1, 2, and 3. Further, he left the third make-up session early, so there is a *fāʾ* above the number 3. That Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar chose to include as much information as possible in the first section is understandable: he probably wanted to provide as clear a picture as he could of the entire transmission in only one section. The reason he also decided to add a dedicated make-up section is probably that as some new listeners joined only for the make-up sessions, he found it difficult to squeeze them into the already crammed first section.

As noted earlier, the third section lists only four make-up sessions. However, the marginal comments in the first section show that all sessions except for 11 and 16 were in fact repeated. This part of the manuscript is not fragmentary,[36] so it is unclear why Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar chose to list only these four sessions. Further, a comparison of the first and third sections shows that some listeners are named only in the latter and are not included in the former. The list is thus selective, and a parallel reading of the sections is needed for a full picture.

Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar and other attendance officers were certainly aware of the challenges of balancing the registration of so many details with the wish to provide a clear overview. In order to make at least some of the key information easily understandable and the list easier to navigate, attendance officers resorted to certain signs. The Damascene scholar Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī (d. 842/1438) wrote a short treatise on these signs on the basis of the audition attendance list for a 630/1233 transmission of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in the Muẓaffarī Mosque[37] on Mount Qāsiyūn, next to Damascus.[38] However, if we compare Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn's interpretation of these signs with the audition attendance list of our transmission sessions as well as that of the *Sunan al-Dāraquṭnī*, we see that the signs were not used uniformly; instead, the same signs were sometimes used to denote different things.

The sign that appears most frequently in our list is the abovementioned ف (ف, *fāʾ*), an abbreviation for "missed" (*fātahu*, *fawt*). It is used in the first section and placed above the number of a session that a listener attended only partially. The sign does not, however, identify the passage or passages that the listener in question missed. For this information, we must consult the second section, where we can look up the name of the listener in

36. On fol. 182, make-up session 14 is recorded seamlessly after make-up session 3 on the same page.

37. On the importance of this mosque in the transmission of hadith, see Garrett Davidson, "Where Was Hadith Read in Damascus? Audition Notices and the Loci of Hadith Transmission in Medieval Damascus," in Gharaibeh, *Beyond Authenticity*, 316–57, at 340–41.

38. Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, "al-Intiṣār li-samāʿ al-Ḥajjār," in *Majmūʿ fīhi rasāʾil li-l-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī*, ed. Abū ʿAbd Allāh b. Mashʿal b. Bānī al-Jabrayn al-Muṭayrī, 397–419 (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2001).

the subsection for the relevant session and find out the part of the text for which the listener was present. In his treatise, Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn assigns a similar but slightly different meaning to this sign. For him, "anyone who has above his name the sign *fāʾ* missed some sessions (*wa-la-hu fawtun fī baʿḍ al-majālis*)"[39] The audition attendance list of the *Sunan al-Dāraquṭnī* has no equivalent to this sign, but it, too, indicates partial attendance: the attendance officer did not mark the names of listeners who missed part of any session with a *kāf*, denoting complete attendance.[40] We thus see the same sign used with different meanings, and the same meaning represented in different ways.

The second sign Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar used in the audition attendance list of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* is the first sign that one comes across when reading the list: ك (ک, *kāf*), an abbreviation for the word "complete" (*kāmil*), which, as already seen, was used in the audition attendance list of the *Sunan al-Dāraquṭnī* to identify participants who attended each and every session in full. Such annotation would have helped the writer of the audition certificate to list the names of listeners with perfect attendance before those of listeners who attended only some sessions.[41] For Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, by contrast, this sign denotes the opposite—namely, listeners who missed one or more sessions.[42] Neither of these two meanings corresponds to Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar's usage. In our list, *kāf* appears exclusively in section one, and only next to the names of the sixteen presiding authorities. We do not have a satisfying explanation of Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar's intention with this sign. It is possible that he, too, meant to use it to mark the listeners who completed the audition in full but that he failed to complete his plan. It would indeed have been a tedious task to cross-check every listener between the two sections.

One pitfall in recording such a high number of attendees is the variable form of premodern Arabic names, which means that Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar sometimes referred to one and the same individual in multiple ways, or to several individuals in one and the same way. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḍarūs al-Miṣrī, for example, appears in section two variously as Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḍarūs, Muḥammad b. al-Ḍarūs, Ibn al-Ḍarūs, and Ibn al-Ḍarūs al-Miṣrī (fols. 196a, 198b, 199a, 200b, and 201a). The multiple forms of the name obviously complicate the process of locating the named individual in section one. On the other hand, several participants seem to have carried the same relational name. According to section two, a certain Aḥmad b. al-Badrānī partially attended the fourth session. But the first section mentions two men named Aḥmad b. al-Badrānī (fols. 188a and 189a); to whom is Ṣibt Ibn Ḥajar referring to when he writes about the fourth make-up session that "Aḥmad b. al-Badrānī left and returned without recording [the moment when he left and the moment when he returned]" (fol. 199b)? What is worse, in section one neither of the Aḥmads is marked as having missed parts of this session, but yet another al-Badrānī, Abū Fatḥ Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Badrānī, is mentioned (fol. 194a). The form of premodern Arabic names is not only a

39. Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn, "al-Intiṣār li-samāʿ al-Ḥajjār," 405.

40. Aljoumani, "Wathīqa jadīda," 31–32.

41. Aljoumani, "Wathīqa jadīda," 31–32.

42. Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn, "al-Intiṣār li-samāʿ al-Ḥajjār," 405.

problem for modern researchers. In fact, Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar himself was aware of possible confusion. Accordingly, in section two, he added the following clarification: "There is a difference between the two sons of al-Badrānī [. . .] and they are Abū al-Wafā and ʿAbd al-Wāḥid" (fol. 181b).

In view of the number of sessions, the number of attendees, and the different pieces of paper and steps involved in documenting the transmission sessions, it comes as no surprise that a number of inconsistencies slipped into the audition attendance list. For example, Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar was not always accurate in his use of the "missed" sign (*fāʾ*), and he was also not always accurate in section two (partial attendance), where he sometimes forgot to include the name of someone who had missed part of a session: some individuals are marked with *fāʾ* in section 1 but are absent from section 2 (see, e.g., fol. 187b). What is more, it is often difficult to match the marginal additions to the intended names, as many pages of the list are crammed with names and additions. Since section one does not give an accurate inventory of everyone who heard the book nor of those attendees who missed one or more of the gatherings, the writer of the audition certificate or any subsequent reader of the audition attendance list must read the two sections simultaneously. Reconstructing the full audition record from the list is certainly a cumbersome task and, in certain cases, an inevitably unsuccessful one, as the exact passages missed by those who arrived late or left early remain unknown.

What might the writer of the audition certificate have made of all the confusion, inconsistencies, and mistakes? One possibility is that Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar himself produced the certificate; as the writer of the attendance list he would clearly have been best placed to decipher it accurately. Another possibility is that the writer of the certificate used another version of the list. This brings us to the question of the functions served by the production and use of audition attendance lists.

The Documentary Logic and Functions of Audition Attendance Lists

Let us pause here to reconstruct the sequence in which the different sections of the list came into being. We can assume that in his capacity as the attendance officer, Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar sat at the entrance of the Kāmiliyya during all the sessions to note down the names of the attendees. Although the list we have is organized alphabetically, he must have first recorded them in order of appearance, as they presumably did not line up in alphabetical order to enter the building. This is crucial, as it points to an initial, chronological list of names (let us call this phantom list 1), which remains to be found. Once the first session had begun, Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar started to work on the partial attendance section, recording those attendees who came late and those who left early. He brought this list along to all the following sessions, noting down exactly at which point in the text of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* individual attendees arrived or left. This means that he must have sat at the entrance of the Kāmiliyya for the full duration of each session. For the final session on 6 Shaʿbān/May 17, he must have repeated the procedure of the very first session, writing down the names of all the 220 new listeners who showed up that day. Again, he must have noted them down chronologically on a piece of paper we no longer have today (phantom list 2).

After this last session, Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar sat down and reorganized the two phantom lists into two new, alphabetically ordered lists. The two new lists make up section one, the list of attendees, with the first part including every attendee and the second part listing those who attended the *khatm* session. We can date the production of the alphabetically ordered list with some accuracy. Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar must have written it within two days of the final transmission session, as he brought it to the first make-up session on 8 Shaʿbān 865/May 19, 1461, and started the third section of the audition attendance list (make-up sessions) on the verso of the last page of section one. After the final make-up session (i.e. session 15, as sessions 11 and 16 were not repeated), he updated section one by adding marginal comments about repeated sessions.

The production of the alphabetically ordered list was a complex procedure that allowed some of the inconsistencies discussed above to slip in. While rearranging the phantom list, Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar must have repeatedly realized that he had missed some listeners, and these are the many names he added to the margins. An example is shown in Figure 3, where he crossed out the fourth listener on the left-hand page when he realized that the listener should have appeared earlier in the list. He then added this listener into the margin of the previous page (visible close to the spine) and inserted a note in red ink next to the crossed-out name stating, "moved to its [correct] place in the margin on the opposite page."

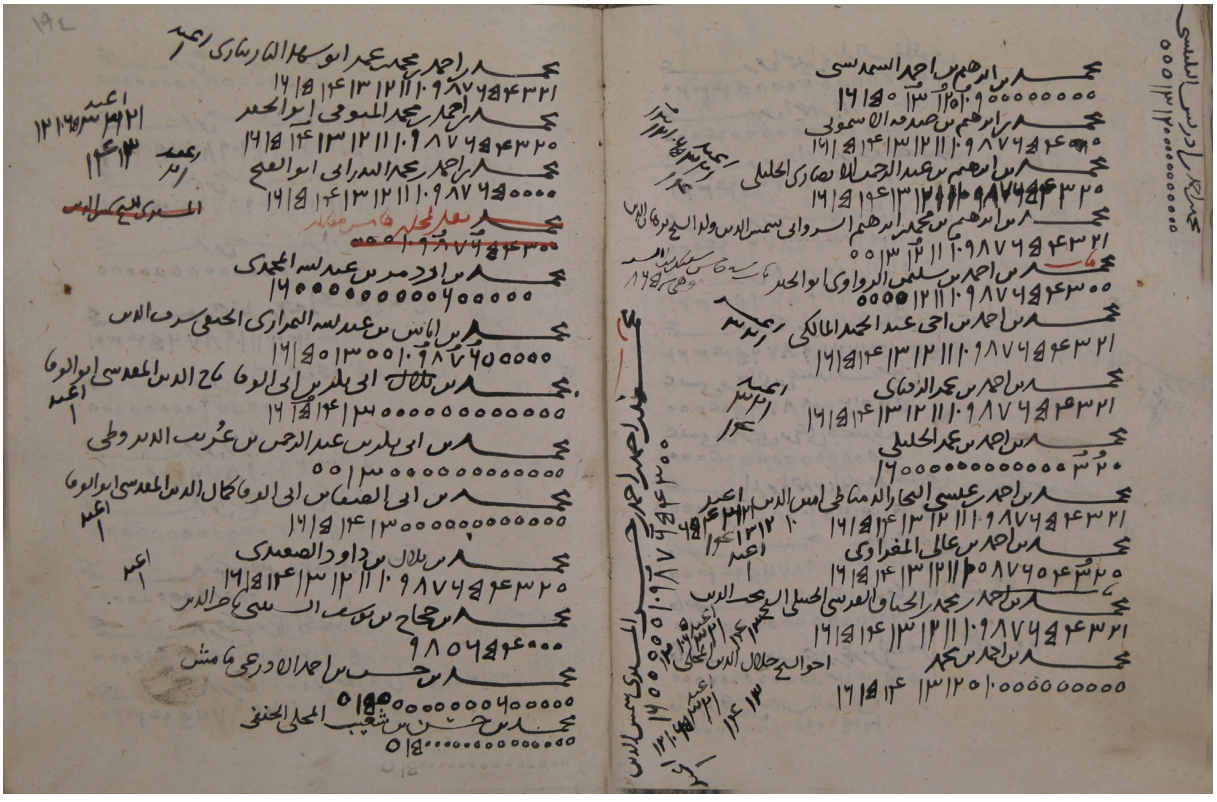

Fig. 3. Two pages from section one of the audition attendance list. MS Millet Genel Kütüphanesi, Feyzullah Efendi 259, fols. 193b–194a.

We have so far argued that audition attendance lists were mostly used as templates for audition certificates. But when we compare the typical arrangement of audition certificates to our audition attendance list, there is one striking discrepancy. Audition certificates generally contained three parts, recording the presiding authority or authorities, listeners who had been present for the entire transmission, and in some cases listeners who had attended only part of it. Within the list of listeners, the names were sometimes given in seating order.[43] It is thus occasionally possible to reconstruct the seating order at transmission sessions on the basis of audition certificates, but most often we simply do not know according to which logic the names were arranged. However, the names were never listed in alphabetical order, so an alphabetically arranged audition attendance list was thus neither required nor particularly helpful for producing an audition certificate.[44] Why, then, did Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar go to great pains to arrange the attendees alphabetically in the final list? What was the intended use of this newly ordered list? Before offering a possible answer to this question, let us consider three functions of audition attendance lists.

The main function of audition attendance lists was to serve as an aid to the writer of the audition certificate. Transmissions at which an attendance officer was employed usually stretched over multiple sessions, taking place over several days. Our transmission of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, for example, took up sixteen sessions over a period of fifty-five days. There was simply no way the writer of the certificate could have remembered who attended which meetings, who came late, and who left early.[45] In order not to lose track of the many attendees—who at times numbered in the hundreds and in some cases joined only for a moment—a tight recording regime was needed. Recording the information needed to ensure that the subsequent audition certificate did not miss any names was thus the main rationale behind audition attendance lists, and whoever organized such big transmission sessions would aim to appoint a trustworthy person to act as attendance officer.

But these lists also had other uses. A second function of audition attendance lists was to reconstruct and verify past transmission sessions in cases in which audition certificates were nowhere to be found. This is what prompted the (re)discovery of the most important transmitter of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in the eighth/fourteenth century, Abū al-ʿAbbās Ibn

43. Konrad Hirschler, "Reading Certificates (*Samāʿāt*) as a Prosopographical Source: Cultural and Social Practices of an Elite Family in Zangid and Ayyubid Damascus," in *Manuscript Notes as Documentary Sources*, ed. Andreas Görke and Konrad Hirschler (Beirut: Ergon, 2011), 78–82; Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 48–51; Tilman Seidensticker, "The Chamberlain's Sessions: Audience Certificates in a Baghdad Manuscript of al-Ḫarāʾiṭī's Iʿtilāl al-Qulūb (Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Ms. Orient. A 627)," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 11, no. 1 (2020): 70–74. For a recent argument against the derivation of seating order from audition certificates, see Said Aljoumani, "Tawẓīf al-ʿulamāʾ al-ʿarab wa-l-muslimīn li-ijāzāt al-qirāʾa wa-l-samāʿ fī abḥāth tārīkhiyya wa-ḥaḍāriyya fī al-ʿahdayn al-ayyūbī wa-l-mamlūkī," in *Social Codicology: The Multiple Lives of Texts in Muslim Societies*, ed. Olly Akkerman (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

44. This might also explain why Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar refrained from adding the *kāf* sign to the names of listeners who participated in full.

45. Though audition certificates were produced for each single session, they were often drawn up only after the entire transmission had been completed. We can infer this from the fact that the intermediate certificates often include a passage stating that the named individuals also heard "what came before and what came after." Such a statement can only be made retrospectively.

Shiḥna al-Ḥajjār, who was identified and verified as an authorized transmitter only when scholars perused an audition attendance list and found his name on it.[46] The same idea lies behind an audition attendance list copied into a manuscript that is today housed in Medina: the copyist reproduced the list in order to show how his teacher, who authorized him to transmit that very booklet, had obtained his own authorization to transmit it (see Fig. 4). This is comparable to the phenomenon of copied audition certificates that we can find on many manuscripts and that were often meant to demonstrate the route through which the copyist's teacher had obtained his or her right to transmit.[47] The copyist of the audition attendance list in Figure 4 seems to have followed the layout of his template closely by writing underneath the name of each listener the number of sessions they attended. In the colophon, he wrote: "The attendance officer is our shaykh, the judge Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Dayrī, and I have copied this from his audition attendance list (*wa-min awrāq ḍabṭihi naqaltuhu*) […]."[48]

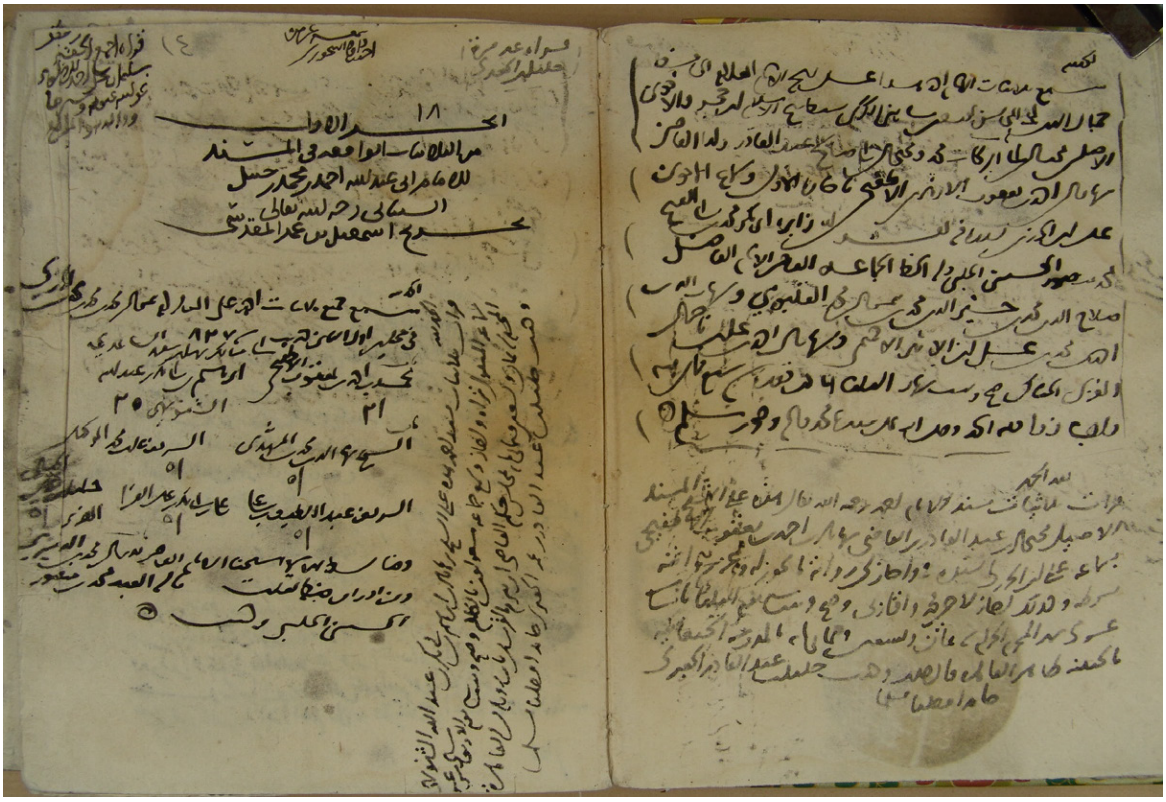

Fig. 4. The first listener in the copied audition attendance list on the title page (left) acted as one of three presiding authorities in the first audition certificate on the right. MS Medina, Majmaʿ al-Malik ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz li-l-Maktabāt al-Waqfiyya, Maktabat ʿĀrif Ḥikmat 311, fols. 13b–14a.

46. Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn, "al-Intiṣār li-samāʿ al-Ḥajjār," 407–8; Davidson, *Carrying On the Tradition*, 163–66.

47. Said Aljoumani, "Ṣuwar ijāzāt al-manqūla fī al-makhṭūṭāt al-ʿarabiyya: al-Sabab wa-l-waẓīfa," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 9, no. 1 (2018): 72–100.

48. MS Medina, Majmaʿ al-Malik ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz li-l-Maktabāt al-Waqfiyya, Maktabat ʿĀrif Ḥikmat, no. 311, fol. 14a.

The third function of audition attendance lists lies in their usefulness for the production of *thabat*s. *Thabat*s are books in which hadith collectors recorded the permissions to transmit that they had obtained throughout their careers. Often, hadith collectors themselves maintained such books; at other times, other people produced them for them. Both kinds of *thabat*s can be found in our composite manuscript, which contains a *thabat* that Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar produced for himself and another that he produced for Taghrī Birdī. The latter *thabat* contains a single entry, which relates to the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* transmission that is the subject of the present article. A closer look at this *thabat* shows that Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar must have relied on the audition attendance list when writing it, as it includes details such as the exact passages Taghrī Birdī missed (fol. 167a–b) that cannot be found in audition certificates. This again indicates that audition attendance lists typically served as sources for audition certificates. However, the *thabat* also contains chains of transmission for the presiding authorities, which cannot be found in the audition attendance lists. The *thabat* was thus based on multiple sources.

The second *thabat* in our composite manuscript, that written by Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar for himself, showcases another use of audition attendance lists, as Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar refers the reader to such lists for additional information. Over the course of the twenty-eight-page *thabat* we can find twelve references to five different audition attendance lists. The first reference appears in an entry for a transmission of the *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* (fol. 185b). Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar notes that a certain Shams al-Dīn al-Ḥakarī/al-Khujandī/al-Buḥīrī/al-Nuḥīrī produced this list. The second cited list relates to a transmission of the *Fawāʾid al-Ghaylāniyyāt* (fols. 207a and 208a), a work of hadith whose compiler possessed particularly short chains of transmission and that was accordingly highly valued by hadith collectors.[49] The audition attendance list was again produced by Shams al-Dīn al-Ḥakarī/al-Khujandī/al-Buḥīrī/al-Nuḥīrī. There are two references to an audition attendance list by an unknown author for a transmission of the *Sunan al-Dāraquṭnī* (fols. 214a and 215b), and finally, there are six instances in which Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar refers to audition attendance lists for the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Five of these relate to the transmission strand discussed in this article (fols. 214b, 215a [twice], 215b, and 216a) and the sixth points to a session presided over by Umm Hāniʾ al-Hūrīniyya on 22 Jumādā II 865/April 4, 1461, in which Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar himself acted as reciter (fol. 215b). This session took place one day before the fourth session of the transmission strand discussed above. As Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar's *thabat* ends only four days later, we do not know whether this strand continued in parallel to the other transmission. However, the fact that he started an audition attendance list for the transmission indicates that it did continue. One last reference to an audition attendance list relates to a transmission of the *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (fol. 215b). In all these instances, Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar refers to audition attendance lists to point out other listeners who took part in the respective sessions.

The close link between *thabat*s and audition attendance lists goes beyond cross-referencing. Hadith collectors took their *thabat*s along to the transmission sessions they attended and used them as their personal archives. As audition attendance lists contained information that would eventually go into these books, it is obvious that traces of audition

49. For the *Ghaylāniyyāt*, see Davidson, *Carrying On the Tradition*, 230.

attendance lists can be found in *thabat*s. An example is provided by the *thabat* of Sibṭ Ibn al-ʿAjamī (d. 841/1438), a scholar from Aleppo. One part of this *thabat* is dedicated to a transmission of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in the al-Sharafiyya madrasa in Aleppo, which consisted of twenty-six sessions that took place over the course of a month. The entry Sibṭ Ibn al-ʿAjamī devoted to this transmission in his *thabat* is not confined to recording his own participation. It covers thirty-six pages and lists the names of all participants, including partial participants, and the exact passages each listener heard.[50] As we have seen, such detailed information was not included in audition certificates, only in audition attendance lists. Sibṭ Ibn al-ʿAjamī thus copied the audition attendance list into his *thabat*.

As observed earlier, it is unlikely that our alphabetical list functioned as a template for an audition certificate. But the relationship between *thabat*s and audition attendance lists points to one possible function of our list: it is highly probable that Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar reordered the phantom lists alphabetically to provide himself with a research tool for reconstructing the exact participation of any individual participant of this transmission strand. An alphabetically ordered list would have made such reconstruction considerably easier and would have allowed him to quickly produce single-entry *thabat*s such as the one he prepared for Taghrī Birdī, presumably upon the latter's request. As the amount of work involved in reordering the names was significant, we can assume that Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar expected to use the resulting list for multiple *thabat*s. In addition, with such a tool, future hadith scholars could easily retrace the routes through which their teachers had obtained their permissions to transmit the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and determine which passages they might have missed.

Whatever the intended use of our list was, it was not produced in one go and then forgotten; at least for a while, it was actively used. Its multilayered nature can be seen most clearly in the additions made in red ink. The most prominent signs of continued use over time are the death notices added to the text. In section one, someone has added above the names of the presiding authorities and certain listeners the word "he died" (*māta*) or "she died" (*mātat*) (see, for example, Figure 3, right page, fifth name from the top and second from the bottom). These short notices reflect hadith transmitters' intense interest in death dates. For them, the deaths of their teachers meant an increase in their own value as transmitters.

Conclusion

The audition attendance list discussed in this article reveals a hitherto unknown depth in the documentary practices that accompanied the transmission of knowledge in medieval Syria and Egypt. Until now, scholars have tacitly assumed that at the end of a transmission session an audition certificate was drawn up, and that was that. We now know, however, that in at least some cases, the process was considerably more complex. The documentation of attendance at hadith transmission sessions sometimes involved registering attendees in lists that contained multiple sections and were produced in several steps. The recording

50. MS Beirut, American University of Beirut, MS 297.124:S941tA, pp. 670–706 (the manuscript is paginated, not foliated).

of hadith transmission was thus more multifaceted than audition certificates alone would suggest, and it created a longer paper trail than hitherto thought.

The audition attendance list produced in the course of the transmission of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in 865/1461 in Cairo adds two stages to the paper trail of hadith transmission. First, the attendance officer prepared initial lists of attendees, most likely to use in drafting the audition certificates. Second, he reordered the initial lists alphabetically to produce a handy research tool through which each individual could be tracked through the entire transmission strand. This second list, furthermore, is connected to another integral part of the paper trail of hadith transmission, the little-researched realm of *thabat*s.

Because only two lists have been studied in detail so far, it is too early to draw conclusions about the frequency with which such lists were produced. We consider it most likely that transmissions of multivolume hadith collections over multiple sessions commonly involved the production of audition attendance lists. But as we have seen, there are examples of sessions for smaller collections with only a handful of listeners that also generated such lists. Moreover, our list is the only one (so far) that was arranged in alphabetical order. Consequently, speculation about the frequency with which audition attendance lists were reordered to form such a research tool is mere guesswork. Our list might very well be an outlier. If the main function of audition attendance lists was indeed to be helpful to someone writing audition certificates, these lists were ephemeral by design, quickly lost their main function, and were prone to being reused or discarded, especially as they were written on independent sheets of paper and not, in contrast to audition certificates, on the transmitted books themselves.

In the same vein, it is too early to speculate about audition attendance lists as a type of document with structural coherence. We have already seen that attendance officers enjoyed some freedom in their choice of signs and the specific meanings they attributed to them. It is conceivable that future finds will yield lists with internal structures differing from those of the lists known so far. Audition attendance lists were most likely not a documentary type set in stone but a way of recordkeeping with some internal consistency and, at the same time, some design flexibility.

While audition certificates have gained prominence as a research field in recent years, with manuscript catalogs beginning to register them next to other manuscript notes such as ownership statements, endowment statements, and commendatory statements, audition attendance lists have remained mostly uncharted territory. We hope that this article will help manuscript catalogers identify audition attendance lists, understand their structure and logic, and thereby describe them properly. As these lists constitute a still largely unknown type of document, future studies will certainly increase our understanding of their intricacies, their production processes, their internal arrangement, the various signs used in them, and the different functions they had.

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