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The Continent of *Sanad*: Hadith Transmission Networks and Traditions in Africa through the Nile–**Hijaz, Qayrawān**–Maghrib, Trans-Saharan, and Red Sea–Indian Ocean Corridors

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Abstract:

Historical studies of "*ḥadīth*" often position Africa merely as a recipient region, situated outside the classical centers. This research aims to map the networks of "ḥadīth" transmission in Africa—across the Nile–Hijaz, Qayrawān–Maghrib, Trans-Saharan, and Red Sea–Indian Ocean corridors—and to examine the interplay among locality, "*madhhab*" (legal school), medium, and authority. The theoretical framework integrates the study of intellectual networks with the concept of a multifaceted "*sanad*" (chain of transmission). Employing an intellectual history and area-studies approach, the research uses a descriptive-analytical method. Primary data are drawn from "*futūḥ*" (conquest narratives), "*ṭabaqāt*" (biographical strata), "*tarājim*" (biographies), "*fihrisah*" (bibliographic catalogs), "*riḥlah*" (travelogues), "*ijazah*" (licenses to transmit), and local chronicles, supplemented by secondary sources such as monographs and scholarly articles. Data were gathered through literature review and documentation, then analyzed using source criticism, content analysis, and qualitative network analysis. The study identifies four distinct configurations: "*sanad*" based on individual narrators (Nile–Hijaz); "*sanad*" centered on texts and the institutionalization of the Mālikī school (Qayrawān–Maghrib); "*sanad*" rooted in scholarly traditions and manuscripts (Trans-Saharan); and "sanad" linked to family lineages and maritime networks (Red Sea–Indian Ocean). These configurations are interconnected through "*riḥlah*" (travel for knowledge), the "*ḥajj*" (pilgrimage), trade, migration, and the circulation of texts. This comparative analysis reveals that the varying forms of "sanad" are shaped by the availability of institutions, written media, the mobility of "*ʿulamāʾ*" (scholars), and the requirements of local authorities. This model enables understanding of regional "*ḥadīth*" traditions without imposing a monolithic documentation pattern across the entire continent. Ultimately, these findings establish Africa as a producer, processor, and conduit of "*ḥadīth*" authority, while also refining the use of the term "*sanad*" to ensure that social networks are not conflated with the technical "*isnad*" (chain of narrators).

Keywords: Africa; chain of narration; hadith; Indian Ocean; Qayrawān; transmission network; Trans-Saharan.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional historiography of hadith has often focused its reading on the Hijaz, Iraq, and Syria. This conventional approach tends to cut off the dynamics of intellectual transmission in Africa after the discussion of Egypt is completed. The development of Islamic scholarship across the continent has often been fragmented into distinct regional narratives, such as the historiography of Qayrawān, Timbuktu, Sokoto, and Zanzibar. This fragmentation of thought ignores the historical reality that the African continent has operated as an intentional space since the first century of the Hijri era, connecting various centers of Islamic culture through physical and maritime corridors.

The African continent is essentially bound by a highly dynamic and interconnected network of crossings. The Nile River served as the main connector connecting Egypt with the Hijaz. Meanwhile, Qayrawān served as a strategic hub connecting Ifrīqiyah, the Maghreb, Andalusia, and even the remote Sahara Desert. A network of caravan cities distributed knowledge, continuously connecting the Maghreb with the Bilād al-Sūdān region. On the eastern coast, major ports bridged intellectual communication between Africa, Yemen, and the Middle East.ḤaḍRamat, Hijaz, and the Indian Ocean, which facilitated the migration of people along with a whole treasure trove of manuscripts, diplomas, books, and teaching methodologies.

The migration to Abyssinia around 615 CE marked the beginning of the empirical presence of Muslims on the African continent. The strengthening of the institutionalization of the hadith tradition then gained momentum when Islam entered Egypt in 20 AH/641 CE. Futū's historiographical workḤWeyesr wa al-Maghrib susunan Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥwill not only record the history of political expansion, but also present a map of human migration from Hijaz to Egypt and continuing to Barqah and Ifrīqiyah (ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, 1995). The Prophet's companions who chose to settle and carry out public duties in Egypt brought with them a treasure trove of narrations that later became the initial stepping stone for the transmission of knowledge in the region.

The dynamics of transmission in Egypt continued to grow rapidly and produced a number of important figures in subsequent generations. Key figures such as Yazid ibn AbīḤAbīb, 'Ubayd Allah ibn Abī Ja'far, al-Layth ibn Sa'd, and 'Abd Allah ibn Wahb emerged as influential compilers and critics of hadith. The presence of these scholars established Egypt as a major transit corridor for the transfer of scholarly authority from the Hijaz region to western and southern Africa. The establishment of this intellectual network in Egypt ensured the continuity of the sanad tradition through formal teaching curricula and the writing of monumental works widely recognized by the scholarly authorities of their time.

The development of the hadith tradition westward from the African continent demonstrates Qayrawān's strategic position as the center of gravity of Islamic education. Scholars from the Ifrīqiyah region consistently carried out the tradition of riḥlah 'ilmiyyah to the centers of knowledge in the Hijaz, Egypt, Sham, and Iraq to then bring back various histories, textual works, and legal doctrines. Classical literature such as Riyāḍ al-Nufūs, Ṭabaqāt ‘Ulamā’ Ifrīqiyah, as well as the Tartīb al-Madārik, confirms that the activity of hadith transmission in this region was closely integrated with the tradition of reciting al-Muwaṭṭa'. The teachings of the text ultimately formed the normative foundation for the consolidation and spread of the Mālikī school throughout the Maghrib region.

The southern Sahara region exhibits a pattern of knowledge dissemination heavily influenced by trade networks, student movements, the Hajj pilgrimage, and manuscript copying. These routes connected important centers of learning such as Timbuktu, Jenne, Gao, Walāta, Kano, Katsina, and Sokoto within a single intellectual ecosystem. Ahmad Bābā's book Nayl al-Ibtihāj successfully positioned the scholars of Bilād al-Sūdān within the broader intellectual genealogy of the Mālikī school (Baba, 2004). The writing of this biographical work not only serves as a chronological record of the transmission of history but also emphasizes the region's integration into the global network of Islamic knowledge.

The pattern of scientific transmission in the East African region is influenced by the dynamics of monsoon winds, coastal port activities, the mobility of clerical families, and the network of relationships between Ḥaḍramawt and Hijaz. The tradition of hadith teaching in this corridor predominantly moved through the Shafi'i school of thought, Sufi orders, Hajj gatherings, and the strengthening of mosque institutions. Swahili coastal communities adopted and refined this scholarly tradition into a language and local institutional framework. This vernacularization process enabled port cities such as Zanzibar, Lamu, and Mombasa to emerge as independent hubs for the spread of Islamic scholarship while remaining connected to international centers of learning (Spear, 1988).

These historical dynamics raise fundamental methodological questions regarding the criteria for reading *sanad* (translations) in Africa, particularly regarding the necessity of measuring sanad solely through individual

chains of transmission, as found in classical hadith literature. Applying such a single standard would lead to contradictory conclusions, with Egypt and the Maghreb region appearing extremely rich, while West and East Africa appear poor in hadith resources. The scarcity of local musnads in a region cannot be directly identified as a lack of hadith transmission. The phenomenon of transmission in Africa often survives in the form of sanads, diploma sheets, school genealogies, teaching curricula, manuscript margins, reading lists, and collective family memory.

The diversity of transmission methods should not be viewed as a deviation from the classical sanad principles, but rather as a functional adaptation to the characteristics of space, recording media, institutions, and the social needs of local communities. The concept of a "Sanaad Continent" serves to mark the intersection of a vast network connecting the Prophet's scholarly authority with local communities through multiple channels. The analytical emphasis on mobility corridors allows researchers to maintain the integrity of African diversity without becoming trapped in territorial divisions based on modern state borders. This approach offers a new perspective for tracing the movement of Islamic scholarly traditions in a more holistic and inclusive manner.

Studies on the historiography of Islam in Africa have actually produced a fairly comprehensive body of literature. Nehemia Levtzion and Randall Pouwels have compiled an in-depth cross-regional synthesis of the history of Islam's development in Africa (Levtzion & Pouwels, 2000). Studies by David Robinson and Roman Loimeier have also successfully outlined the structure of African Muslim society through social history, institutional studies, and anthropological analysis (Robinson, 2004). Although these works make significant contributions to mapping the periodization and historical context, their analytical frameworks do not yet make the hadith transmission network the central focus of the discussion.

Within West Africa, Ousmane Kane asserts that the intellectual dynamics of Islam should not be simplified to the scientific center of Timbuktu alone. Centers of religious study in this region are dynamically distributed and constantly shifting along with waves of migration, the development of trade routes, the dynamics of state politics, and the support of local patronage (Kane, 2016). Meanwhile, Ghislaine Lydon proves that the Trans-Saharan route functioned not only as a route for the traffic of economic commodities, but also as a space for law enforcement, the spread of literacy, the strengthening of trust, and the exchange of official documents (Lydon, 2009). Scott Reese and his contributors in The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa review the diversity of educational mechanisms in Africa, but the relationship between these networks and the consolidation of hadith authority still requires in-depth study.

In the East African context, Anne Bang has succeeded in mapping the movement patterns of clerics' families across the region. Ḥaḍramawt, Hijaz, and coastal regions of Africa (Bang, 2004). Engseng Ho explains in detail the genealogical structure and social mobility of the diaspora Ḥaḍramī, while Randall Pouwels describes the transformation of Islamic societies along the East African coast. These various literatures provide rich historical data on geographic mobility, but the position of hadith is generally viewed as merely a complementary element within the broader Islamic tradition. Therefore, a re-examination of maritime networks is necessary, specifically from the perspective of hadith transmission, the distribution of scriptures, and the scholarly authority of teachers.

Historical studies of Qayrawān and the Maghrib region have so far been dominated by discussions of the formation and institutionalization of the Mālikī school of thought. The hadith tradition in the region is usually limited to the biographies of key figures such as Sa'id al-Khattab.ḥnūn, Ibn Abī Zayy, al-Qābisī, Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, dan Ibn al-Qaṭṭān. Very limited academic studies have specifically positioned Qayrawān as a strategic node connecting the sanad (chains of transmission) from the Hijaz, Egypt, Andalusia, and the Trans-Saharan route. A similar situation occurs in the history of hadith in Egypt, which often focuses on individual figures without linking the Nile Valley and Red Sea ports as a continental corridor connecting various regions.

The novelty of this article lies in the shift in the unit of analysis, from one that initially focused on state entities and political dynasties to a focus on the corridors of scholarly mobility. This study differentiates four forms of sanad (chains of transmission) and connects the history of hadith transmission with the dynamics of legal schools, the pilgrimage, the distribution of manuscripts, trade routes, and family networks of scholars. This comparative approach provides a new framework for understanding how the prophetic tradition was maintained and disseminated across the African continent through complex social and institutional mechanisms.

The development of recent journal literature further highlights this academic gap. Recent West African historiography places the existence of manuscripts, the mobility of scholars, and the negotiation of religious authority as the primary empirical evidence for the existence of scholarly networks (Stewart, 2021; Syed, 2023; Wright, 2023). Critical readings of the Timbuktu chronicles also provide a methodological warning that historical

texts must be examined as historiographic products bound by their contemporary context, rather than treated as completely transparent historical records (Nobili, 2020; Nobili & Mathee, 2015). In the Sahara, the movement of religious authority has been shown to be closely intertwined with trade activities, the institution of slavery, expressions of piety, and structures of patronage (Esseissah, 2021; Hall, 2011). Meanwhile, on the eastern coast, the process of Islamization, the dynamics of Swahili networks, and the circulation of books demonstrate the strong agency of local communities (Becker, 2008; Noor, 2023; Raia, 2023).

In the field of hadith studies, testing the validity of a narration is no longer considered sufficient if it relies solely on the existence of a formal chain of transmission. Academic analysis demands a comprehensive critique of the categorization of news, the validity of the texts, the level of acceptance by scholars, and the context of its application in society (Abdurrohman & Mubarok, 2025). The two studies published in the Journal of Islamic Studies (JIS) possess high methodological relevance, but their discussion has not yet addressed the geographical dimension of trans-African transmission. This article aims to fill this gap by simultaneously comparing four scholarly corridors and distinguishing between technical isnād, book-based sanad, manuscript traces, and family-maritime infrastructure.

Based on the background description and the mapping of the literature gaps outlined above, this study is formulated to address four main questions. The first academic question focuses on the mechanisms by which the four mobility corridors facilitate the movement of scholars, the spread of sanad chains, the circulation of literature, and the institutionalization of hadith pedagogical traditions on the African continent. The second question aims to map the authoritative figures and monumental works that embody the main nodes of intellectual dissemination in each of these geographic corridors. The third question examines the extent to which the consolidation of the Maliki and Shafi'i schools of law influenced the reading preferences of standard texts and the forms of transmission adopted by local communities. Meanwhile, the fourth question seeks to reconstruct the diversity of historical and material evidence found in the field into a more adaptive and inclusive theoretical model of multi-form sanad.

The primary objective of this article is to reconstruct a comprehensive, systematic, and continuous map of hadith transmission on the African continent. Furthermore, this research aims to outline the typological characteristics and internal dynamics of each corridor through a critical examination of the contributions of key figures who served as nodes in the scientific network. By achieving these research objectives, this article is expected to provide a more comprehensive, objective, and fully integrated understanding of the history of hadith transmission in Africa within the broader narrative of global Islamic historiography.

Exploring four mobility corridors, from the Nile Valley, the Maghreb, and the Trans-Saharan region, to the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, demonstrates that Africa is not a peripheral region in Islamic historiography. Rather, the continent operates as a hub of scholarly dynamism, connecting diverse textual traditions with local socio-cultural realities. By articulating a multi-faceted sanad model, this study also offers a new methodological framework for interpreting the continuity of the prophetic tradition beyond the core Middle East, enabling the intellectual contributions of African Muslims to be properly appreciated within the international scholarly landscape.

METHOD

The methodological design applied in this study is integrated through a synthesis of intellectual history and area studies to holistically uncover the articulation of hadith scholarship on the African continent. The intellectual history framework is specifically utilized to map institutional dynamics, shifts in the articulation of thought, and the metamorphosis of religious authority structures throughout history (Gottschalk, 1953). Furthermore, the area studies perspective places hadith studies within the dynamic social geography of Africa, where river flows, the Sahara, urban centers, coastal ports, and pilgrimage routes are intertwined. The combination of these two analytical instruments allows the reading of religious texts to be viewed not as static sets of dogmatics, but as forms of thought in constant dialectic with the continent's spatial and ecological context.

The theoretical construct that underpins this analytical framework rests on the concept of intellectual networks. This perspective views scientific authority as neither singular nor formed simultaneously, but rather as rooted in multidirectional interactions among actors, geographic spaces, authoritative textual corpora, educational institutions, and transmission channels. To analyze the diversity of articulations of knowledge dissemination at the site level, this study proposes the formulation of "multiform sanad" as a basic analytical framework. The operationalization of this term is strictly monitored to maintain epistemological boundaries, while preventing an

unmeasured expansion of the technical isnād terminology as standardized in the rules of classical hadith criticism.

The methodological structure of this research applies a descriptive-analytical approach to produce a systematic and critical historiographic reconstruction. The collection and mapping of the primary data corpus focuses on monumental works of historiography and scholarly biographies (tarājim), including *Futūḥ Miṣr wa al-Maghrib* made by Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam (1995), *Ṭabaqāt 'Ulamā' Ifrīqiyah* karya al-Khashanī (1992), *Riyāḍ al-Nufūs* arranged by al-Mālikī (1994), *Tartīb al-Madārik* made by Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (1983), *al-Ilmā'* karya al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (1970), *Nayl al-Ibtihāj* made by Aḥmad Bābā (2004), including *Tārīkh al-Sūdān* authored by al-Sa'dī (2012). This textual corpus is combined with the excavation of supporting primary sources which include travelogues (riḥlah), documentation of scientific diplomas, as well as an inventory of religious manuscript catalogs (Morgan, 2022).

The textual data processing in this study underwent historical verification testing, encompassing in-depth external and internal criticism. External criticism was applied to test the physical validity, copying process, and dating of the documents, while internal criticism focused on the author's credibility, narrative form, religious affiliation tendencies, and the proximity of the author's lifetime to the events recorded (Garraghan, 1946). This verification step was crucial to ensuring the reliability of the textual materials before entering the substantive interpretation stage. The next step was a structured content analysis to identify teacher-student genealogies, locations of scholarly activities, titles of literature taught, and the diploma transmission formula used (Krippendorff, 2019).

Qualitative network analysis was then applied to connect the identified data points, mapping the connections between religious figures, centers of learning, religious texts, and mobility corridors (Miles, 1994). This network mapping visualizes how social networks, trade activities, and Hajj routes facilitated the circulation of manuscripts and scholarly chains. The discussion concludes with a comparative analysis across corridors to clarify differences in the nature of media, institutional forms, and patterns of authority articulation across the Nile Valley, the Maghreb, the Trans-Sahara, and the East African coast (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003). This comparative approach ensures that the uniqueness of each region is not generalized uniformly.

In examining classical biographical narratives (tarājim), this study maintains a critical distance by not directly treating normative claims as objective social facts. All genealogical data and transmission claims are cross-examined through confrontation with local chronicles, physical manuscript evidence, and contemporary principles of sanad and matan criticism (Abdurrohman & Mubarok, 2025; Romdoni, 2023). This framework clearly distinguishes family genealogies or trade networks from the technical isnād terms of hadith, while still explaining the real function of these social networks as supporting infrastructure for the transmission of knowledge on the African continent.

The secondary data corpus in this study is sourced from academic methodological references and reputable scientific monographs that specifically describe historiography, the dynamics of ulama mobility, the history of Islamic educational institutions, the book trade, and intellectual communication networks. The researcher applies a methodological framework of historical interpretation and textual criticism criteria to strengthen the analysis procedure for all collected historical documents (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). The operationalization of these methodological references serves to provide a solid epistemic foundation in treating ancient manuscripts and biographical records as accountable empirical data. The entire series of library materials collection is carried out through literature study techniques and text-based documentation in a structured and measured manner.

The data analysis process in this study was carried out through four logically interconnected and continuous stages. The initial stage was marked by the application of historical verification, which included external and internal criticism of the entire corpus of collected data. External criticism functioned to test the physical authenticity, integrity of copying, and dating of documents, while internal criticism focused on evaluating the credibility of the compiler, the character of the text, ideological tendencies or school of thought affiliation, and the temporal distance between the source author and the recorded events (Garraghan, 1946). The application of this verification was a crucial step in ensuring that the processed textual data had a high level of reliability and historiographic validity before moving on to the substantive processing stage.

The second stage in the analysis scheme is realized through the implementation of an in-depth content analysis of primary texts that have been declared to have passed the historical verification test. In this phase, the researcher identifies and classifies key variables, such as the genealogical relationships of teachers and students, the geographical distribution of teaching locations, the titles of the standard literature studied, legal school affiliations, intellectual journey routes (riḥlah), as well as variations in transmission formulas in the

awarding of diplomas (Krippendorff, 2019). A careful exploration of these variables aims to reconstruct the scientific structures established in each region, while also mapping the transmission mechanisms of hadith texts from one generation to the next through various formal and informal channels.

The third stage continued with a qualitative network analysis to connect the information nodes identified in the previous stage. Researchers mapped the interactions and connections between nodes consisting of ulama actors, knowledge centers, authoritative texts, and mobility route corridors (Miles, 1994). This qualitative network mapping clearly visualized the patterns of the dissemination of hadith traditions, thus revealing the strategic function of a city as a transit point for knowledge, the role of ulama families in maintaining the sustainability of sanad (chains of transmission), and the contribution of trade routes and Hajj pilgrimages in facilitating the circulation of manuscripts and diplomas across regions.

The fourth stage is a comparative analysis between corridors designed to compare transmission dynamics across four major regions of the African continent. This comparative analysis facilitates a detailed explanation of the diversity of media, institutional forms, and patterns of articulation of scientific authority that developed in the Nile Valley, the Maghreb-Ifrīqiyah, the Trans-Saharan region and the South of the Basin, and up to the East African coast (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003). This cross-analysis is crucial to ensure that the specific local characteristics of each corridor are not generalized uniformly, but rather are positioned as manifestations of local communities' adaptive responses to the demands of the development of Islamic scientific traditions at that time.

The processing of narrative data sourced from classical biographical literature (tarājim) strictly adheres to the principle of methodological prudence. Neither hagiographic statements nor normative narratives in biographical works are accepted as objective social facts. All claims of transmission and genealogy are cross-checked by comparing them with local historical chronicles, physical manuscript findings, modern historical research, and the application of critical criteria for sanad and matan as developed in contemporary hadith studies (Abdurrohman & Mubarok, 2025; Romdoni, 2023).

Through a critical synthesis of historical approaches, network analysis, and the principles of hadith criticism, this study consistently maintains epistemological distance. The researcher explicitly avoids equating or conflating familial genealogies or trade networks with the technical isnād of hadith within the scope of classical hadith science. Nevertheless, this analytical framework still manages to rationally explain how these familial networks and trade corridors effectively functioned as social, logistical, and institutional infrastructures that enabled the transmission of sanads, the circulation of books, and the continuation of the tradition of hadith teaching on the African continent.

This structured series of methodological procedures ensures that the resulting historical reconstruction is based on solid argumentation. The use of textual criticism and cross-reference between sources prevents the historiographical bias that often arises in a single reading of classical biographical texts. Thus, the empirical data gathered from manuscripts, travelogues, and diplomas serves not merely as raw data but as historical evidence with academic validity.

This integration of network analysis and a comparative approach across corridors ultimately confirms that the dynamics of Islamic scholarship in Africa possess a complex, non-simplifying character. Each geographic corridor exhibits unique adaptations to recording media, teaching institutions, and transmission channels. The results of this comparative analysis provide a more comprehensive understanding of how scholarly authority was maintained and disseminated across the continent through interconnected intellectual networks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Africa as a Hadith Network Space

Geography: Research results indicate that the geography of hadith transmission in Africa operates through a dynamic corridor pattern. The presence of the Nile River, the expanse of the Sahara Desert, the Red Sea region, coastal port cities, and monsoon wind patterns are determining factors that influence the travel seasons of knowledge seekers, the cost of literary mobility, and the choice of centers of Islamic education. These diverse geographic conditions directly influence the variety of heritage forms and the nature of empirical evidence in each region.

The Egyptian region inherited an abundant literary heritage, including works by rijāl al-ḥadith and a corpus of hadith books. Meanwhile, the Qayrawān and Maghrib regions left a legacy of school-based intellectual biographies along with systematic legal transmission protocols. In the sub-Saharan region, West Africa retains traces of scholarship in the form of local chronicles, manuscript collections, and curricula. On the other hand, East

Africa records traces of familial networks of scholars, Arabic-Swahili manuscripts, diplomas, and records of intellectual travels.

The diversity of historical evidence confirms that mapping the history of hadith transmission in Africa requires analytical precision to distinguish the types and characteristics of evidence in each region. Scholarly historiography should not focus solely on the quantity of local musnad compilations or rashly equate entire social networks with technical sanad chains. This correlative reading successfully presents a more objective and adaptive landscape of hadith transmission, reflecting the dynamics of Islamic scholarship on the African continent holistically.

Abyssinian Hijra: The Earliest Presence of Islam in Africa

Chronologically, the earliest Muslim presence in Africa did not begin with the conquest of Egypt in 20 AH/641 AD, but rather with the migration of the companions to Abyssinia around 615 AD. This correction is important so that the history of Islamic Africa is not solely opened by military expansion. In the sīrah narration compiled by Ibn Hishām from Ibn Isḥāq mentioned:

فَخَرَجَ عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِلَى أَرْضِ الْحَبَشَةِ، مَخَافَةَ الْفِتْنَةِ، وَفِرَارًا إِلَى اللَّهِ بِدِينِهِمْ، فَكَانَتْ أَوَّلَ هِجْرَةٍ كَانَتْ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ

> "At that time, Muslims from among the companions of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) set out for Abyssinia out of fear of tribulation and in order to save their religion for Allah; that was the first migration in Islam." (Ibn Hishām, 1955).

The quotation presents Africa as a place of refuge for the Muslim community before it became a territory of Islamic rule. Abyssinia is therefore the initial node of political and religious encounters, not just a marginal note in the history of Mecca. However, the Abyssinian migration should not be directly referred to as the formation of the African hadith madrasah. The available sources prove migration, protection by al-Najāshī, and the presence of companions, but do not show the continuity of the assembly, the local teacher-disciple layer, or the corpus of hadith passed down in Abyssinia. Analytically, this article distinguishes two beginnings: Abyssinia as the beginning of the migratory and non-conquest presence of Islam, and Egypt--Ifrīqiyah as the beginning of the institutionalization of the transmission network that is easier to trace. This distinction also prevents the equating of the existence of Muslims with the maturity of the tradition of transmission.

The Nile-Hijaz Corridor and the Formation of the Sanad of Narrators

1. Companions and Early Generation in Egypt

The conquest of Egypt brought a number of companions and early generations of Muslims to Fusṭāṭ. 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ became a major political figure, but the fabric of Egyptian history does not rest solely on him. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ for his activity in writing hadith; 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir narrated many hadiths and had a public position; Abū Bayesrah al-Ghifārī, 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Jaz', and other companions gave Egypt a layer of direct transmission.

The presence of the Companions did not automatically establish a madrasah. Madrasahs were formed when their narratives were received by the successors, taught repeatedly, assessed, and passed on to the next generation. A key figure in this phase was Yazid ibn Abī Ḥabīb. Ibn Ḥibbān places him among the Egyptian figures, while the tarājim literature acknowledges the breadth of his narrations and his role in fatwas. The line that later became known as the Egyptian sanad is al-Layth ibn Sa'd from Yazīd ibn AbīḤabīb, from Abū al-Khayr, from 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir. The mention of the best route based on the city must be understood relatively, as scholars avoid claiming one chain of transmission to be absolutely the most authentic.

Source The North African ṭabaqāt itself emphasized the historiographical order of work from the generation of companions to the local clerics. Abū al-'Arab explained his plan:

ثُمَّ أَذْكُرُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ طَبَقَةً بَعْدَ طَبَقَةٍ مِمَّنْ كَانَ بِهَا مِنَ الْعُلَمَاءِ وَالْفُقَهَاءِ

> "After that I mentioned, layer by layer, the scholars and jurists who had been there." (al-Ṣalāḥ, 1986).

This formulation is important because it demonstrates that the presence of new companions acquired network significance when accompanied by the formation of layers of local recipients, teachers, and assessors. Thus, the list of companions entering Africa should not be read as automatic evidence of the birth of a hadith center; what is crucial is intergenerational continuity and the traceability of learning relationships.

Al-Layth ibn Sa'd demonstrates that there is no subordinate relationship between Egypt and the Hijaz. He learned from Egyptian and Hijazi figures but developed his own judgments. His letter to Mālik on the deeds of the people of Madinah demonstrates that geographical proximity to the Prophet's heritage was not the sole basis for authority. He recalls the spread of the Companions across the region and the possibility of the formation of local knowledge beyond Madinah (Iyāḍ, 1998). Egypt thus accepted the Hijazi hadith while simultaneously producing a critique of claims of regional exclusivity.

2. Riḥlah, Hajj, and Two-Way Relationships

The Nile-Hijaz connection was maintained by the hajj. Pilgrims from the Maghrib and West Africa gathered in Egypt before continuing their journey by land or sea. Cairo became a place to stop, study, buy books, and obtain degrees. In turn, the scholars of the Hijaz received students from Africa. The connection was two-way: students brought books home, while teachers in the Hijaz gained a wider reach of authority.

The Red Sea route through Aydhāb and Jeddah strengthened this connection. While the Sinai land route connected Egypt with Syria and the Hijaz, the river route connected Cairo with Upper Egypt and Nubia. Therefore, the "Nile-Hijaz" is not a single line, but rather a knot with branches from the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and the African interior.

During the Mamluk period, Cairo became the world center of hadith. Its majlis, madrasahs, khanqahs, and libraries attracted scholars from across the region. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, al-Sakhāwī,, dan al-Suyūṭī was not just an Egyptian figure; their network of disciples and works reached the Maghreb, West Africa, the Hijaz, Yemen, and India. His works of syarh, takhrij, rijāl, and muṣṭalaḥ in Cairo became part of the curriculum in many parts of Africa.

The Qayrawān--Maghrib Corridor and the Formation of the Sanad of the Book

1. Qayrawān as a Node

Qayrawān developed from a military city into a center of learning. Its geographical location allowed for connections with Egypt to the east, the Maghreb and Andalusia to the west, and the Sahara to the south. Seekers of knowledge were not satisfied with local materials. They traveled to Medina, Mecca, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, returning with books and teaching methods (Al-Mālikī, 1951).

The presence of the first generation of companions in Ifrīqiyah was closely related to the expedition. In the opening Ṭabaqāt-nya, Abū al-'Arab recorded a number of figures who went to the region:

وَخَرَجَ مَرْوَانُ بْنُ الْحَكَمِ ... وَعَبْدُ اللهِ بْنُ الزُّبَيْرِ ... وَالْمِسْوَرُ بْنُ مَخْرَمَةَ

" Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam ... 'Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr ... dan al-Miswar ibn Makhramah."

Such lists attest to the entry of early figures into North Africa, but their prosopographical nature and military context warrant caution. Dukhūl, or participation in an expedition, is not synonymous with iqāmah, let alone tawattun. Therefore, claims about 'companions in Ifrīqiyah' must be tested against the duration of their stay, their teaching function, their local students, and the continuity of their transmission.

Evidence for the formation of new networks is strengthened when the book ṭabaqāt shows the layers of local scholars in sequence, the formula samā' and riḥlah, as well as the return of students who taught back in Qayrawān. Thus, the futūh phase provided initial contact and mobility, while the institutionalization of the hadith tradition emerged through intergenerational reproduction. This distinction protects the article from two extremes: ignoring the role of the Companions altogether or assuming that each of their visits automatically created a hadith center.

Qayrawān's biographies repeatedly use the expressions *raḥala ilā al-mashriq, sami'a min, kataba 'an*, and *qadima Ifrīqiyah*. This vocabulary shows that mobility is part of the identity of the ulama.ḥIt is not just a means of increasing the number of teachers, but a validation mechanism. A scholar who brings readings directly from the Eastern center gains a position to teach, issue fatwas, or become a qāḍi.

Abū al-'Arab's brief account of 'Abd Allāh ibn Abī Ghassān shows how the Qayrawān--Madinah relationship is condensed in biographical language:

سَمِعَ مِنْ مَالِكٍ، وَرَوَى عَنْهُ حَدِيثًا قَلَّ مَنْ رَوَاهُ غَيْرُهُ.

" He heard from Malik and narrated from him a hadith that few others narrated."

The value of this data lies not in the scarcity of the narrative alone, but in the three elements that constitute regional authority: direct encounter with teachers, mastery of specific material, and the ability to bring that material back to the local environment. The sami'a min formula therefore constitutes a concise trace of the corpus's journey, audition, and transfer.

'Alī ibn Ziyād al-Tūnisī was among the early carriers of Malik's knowledge to Ifrīqiyah. Asad ibn al-Furāt studied with Malik and the students of AbūḤanīfah so that he represents the meeting of Medina and Iraq. SaḥNūn then consolidated Ibn al-Qāsim's narration in al-Mudawwanah (Al-Tamīmī, n.d.). This process demonstrates that the formation of the Mālikī school did not mean the replacement of hadith by fiqh. What occurred was the organization of hadith, atsar, legal answers, and teacher authority within the school's framework.

2. Al-Muwaṭṭa' Transmission and Standardization of History

Al-Muwaṭṭa' has a special position. It is a collection of hadith, atsar, and legal opinions as well as a text transmitted through various narrations. In the Maghrib and Andalusia, accepting al-Muwaṭṭa' from a teacher means entering a certain network. Differences in history, for example the Yes pathḥyā ibn Yaḥyā al-Laythī or other paths, reflecting the history of the text's journey.

Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ in Tartīb al-Madārik, reconstructed the genealogy of the Malikites and made the teacher-student relationship a narrative structure. His work not only glorified Malik; he mapped how authority passed through students, regions, and generations. In al-Ilmā', he formulated procedures for receiving and transmitting narrations. He discussed samā', qirā'ah, munāwalah, mukātabah, and ijāzah. Thus, the Maghrib transformed from recipients of hadith procedures to producers of transmission theories.

In the introduction to al-Ilmā', Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ describes the stages of hadith science from acceptance to criticism:

فَأَوَّلُ فُصُولِهِ مَعْرِفَةُ أَدَبِ الطَّلَبِ وَالْأَخْذِ وَالسَّمَاعِ، ثُمَّ مَعْرِفَةُ عِلْمِ ذَلِكَ وَوُجُوهِهِ وَعَمَّنْ يُؤْخَذُ، ثُمَّ الْإِتْقَانُ وَالتَّقْيِيدُ، ثُمَّ الْحِفْظُ وَالْوَعْيُ، ثُمَّ التَّمْيِيزُ وَالنَّقْدُ.

"The first part of this knowledge is knowing the etiquette of seeking, receiving, and hearing narrations; then knowing its forms and from whom knowledge is taken; after that accuracy and recording; then memorization and understanding; then differentiation and criticism." (Iyāḍ, 1998).

This excerpt demonstrates that the Maghrib tradition does not stop at pride in the sanad. Authority must be established through procedures of acceptance, documentation, understanding, and criticism.

Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's explanation about al-qirā'ah 'alā al-shaykh also shows that the Maghrib inherited extensive technical debates regarding how to accept hadith. He writes:

فَمَذْهَبُ مُعْظَمِ عُلَمَاءِ الْحِجَازِ وَالْكُوفَةِ التَّسْوِيَةُ بَيْنَهُمَا، وَهُوَ مَذْهَبُ مَالِكٍ وَأَصْحَابِهِ.

"The opinion of most scholars of Hijaz and Kufa is to equate the two, and that is the school of Malik and his companions." (Iyāḍ, 1998).

What is meant is the equalization of the position of the student's reading in front of the teacher with the hearing of the teacher's words in terms of transmission ability. This quotation provides two important corrections. First, the chain of transmission of the Maghrib book is subject to the theory of taḥammul wa-adā', not just an honorary lineage. Second, Mālikī standardization does not preclude cross-regional conversation, because Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ instead records the agreement between Hijaz and Kufa in one methodological issue.

3. From Acceptance to Criticism

The Maghrib hadith tradition reached a mature level of criticism. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr refined the sanad and matan al-Muwaṭṭa' in al-Tamhīd and compares the schools in al-Istidhkār. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān al-Fāsī's Bayān al-Wahm wa al-Īhām corrects the erroneous assessment of hadith in legal texts. This work proves that the Maliki

milieu is not synonymous with passive acceptance of narrations. The use of hadith for fiqh requires examining the sanad (chain of transmission), the narrators, the disconnection, and the 'illah (god).

Ibn Rushayd al-Sabtī through the work ofḥHis account describes a journey from Sabtah to Hijaz Hijaz (Al-Sabtī, n.d.). This kind of travelogue is important because it mentions teachers, places, books, and forms of reception. The fihrisah then became a portable archive of the network. When a scholar returned, he brought with him a "map of authority" in the form of a list of teachers and books.

4. The Mālikī School as Infrastructure

The dominance of the Maliki school in the Maghreb is often understood as merely a form of homogenization of legal doctrine. From a network analysis perspective, the institutionalization of this school essentially operated as a strategic infrastructure for the transmission of knowledge. Uniform textual standards enabled scholars from Qayrawān, Fez, Sabtah, Timbuktu, and Chinguetti to have a mutually understandable academic articulation and language across regions. The teaching of key literature such as al-Muwaṭṭa', al-Mudawwanah, al-Risālah, and various summaries of fiqh grew into a common curriculum corpus. In this ecosystem, the tradition of hadith moves integrally alongside legal texts, the compilation of syar'i books, and the institutionalization of collective reading methods.

The existence of this scholarly infrastructure, on the other hand, also carries implications of limitations. The strengthening of authority over certain texts has the potential to displace other literary collections, thus filtering the transmission of hadith to suit the needs of the school of thought's codification. The dynamic nature of scholarship in the Qayrawān and Maghrib regions should not be viewed dichotomously between "pure hadith" and "fiqh" narratives. The dynamics that have developed in these regions represent a continuous negotiation between the preservation of textual history and the demands of legal standardization within the school of thought.

The Trans-Saharan Corridor and the Sanad of Manuscripts

1. Sahara as a Connector

Views from the coast often depict the Sahara as empty space. For caravanserai peoples, it consisted of wells, oases, markets, cities, and communities. Sijilmāsah, Tuwāt, Ghadāmis, Walāta, and Agadez were hubs that facilitated the movement of goods and people. Salt, gold, textiles, paper, and books followed some of the same routes.

Ghislaine Lydon shows that long-distance trade required literacy, contracts, witnesses, fatwas, and trust. Islamic law was not an accessory to trade; it helped establish credibility between distant parties (Lydon, 2009). Within this environment, scholars could serve as teachers, document writers, legal consultants, caravan leaders, or mediators. The transmission of hadith was integrated into this ecology.

2. Timbuktu and the Genealogy of Scholars

Timbuktu is known for its manuscripts, but manuscripts were not static objects. They were copied, borrowed, inherited, sold, annotated, and read aloud. Al-Sa'dī's Tārīkh al-Sūdān describes the city, mosques, scholars, families, and political connections of the Songhai. Its information demonstrates that scholarly authority rested on communities, not single buildings anachronistically called "universities" (Hunwick, 1999).

Al-Sa'dī describes Timbuktu not as a closed city, but as a node inhabited and visited by many groups:

مَأْوَى الْعُلَمَاءِ وَالْعَابِدِينَ، وَمَأْلَفُ الْأَوْلِيَاءِ وَالزَّاهِدِينَ ... وَسَكَنَ فِيهِ الْأَخْيَارُ مِنَ الْعُلَمَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَذَوِي الْأَمْوَالِ مِنْ كُلِّ قِبْلَةٍ وَمِنْ كُلِّ بِلَادٍ.

> "A place of refuge for scholars and worshippers, a gathering place for saints and ascetics... and there resided the chosen ones from among the scholars, the pious, and the owners of wealth from various directions and countries." (Hunwick, 1999)

The hagiographic language in this chronicle must be critically examined, but the accompanying list of immigrant origins—Egypt, Fazzān, Ghadāmis, Tuwāt, Dar'ah, Tafilalt, Fez, and Sus—suggests local memories of a city shaped by trans-Saharan migration. It was here that manuscripts, families, trade, and teaching converged as the infrastructure of a scholarly sanad.

Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbuktī became a crucial node. The Moroccan conquest of Songhai forced him to Marrakesh. The move was traumatic, but it also created an encounter with the scientific environment of the Maghreb. Nayl al-Ibtihāj and Kifāyat al-MuḥThe tāj inserted the West African scholar into the Mālikī biographical literature. This act of writing had epistemic significance: the scholar Bilād al-Sūdān was no longer merely an anonymous recipient, but part of a documented chain of authority.

3. Curriculum as a Carrier of Hadith

In West Africa, hadith is often transmitted within an integrated curriculum. The Qur'an, Arabic, Mālikī jurisprudence, creed, Sufism, sīrah, and hadith collections are studied in stages. Collections such as al-Muwaṭṭa', Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, al-Shifā' Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, al-Arba'ūn al-Nawawiyyah, and targhīb works can serve different purposes. Some are read in their entirety by high-ranking scholars; others appear through quotations in fiqh, sermons, poetry, and general teaching.

The presence of a book in a library list does not prove that its entire contents were taught. Conversely, its absence does not prove that a book is unknown. Therefore, research needs to combine colophons, ownership records, marginalia, diplomas, and teacher references. This approach transforms manuscripts from "collections of texts" into evidence of social relationships.

The same chronicle provides a concrete picture of the learning rhythm of a migrant teacher in the Western Sudan region:

فَأَسْرَعَ إِلَيْهِ الطَّلَبَةُ لِاقْتِبَاسِ فَوَائِدِهِ، وَفِي نِصْفِ اللَّيْلِ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ دَارِهِ إِلَى الْجَامِعِ لِنَشْرِ الْعِلْمِ، فَيَجْلِسُ الطَّلَبَةُ لَهُ يَأْخُذُونَ الْعِلْمَ إِلَى الْإِقَامَةِ لِصَلَاةِ الصُّبْحِ.

> "Students immediately came to him to absorb his benefits; at midnight he would leave his house for the mosque to spread knowledge, then the students would sit and learn from him until the iqamah for the Fajr prayer." (Hunwick, 1999).

Although al-Sa'dī does not always specify the titles of the hadiths he read, these excerpts demonstrate the existence of assemblies, teachers, students, duration of study, and institutional spaces. Such data should not be directly equated with the isnād of a hadith, but they can be used to reconstruct the ecology of transmission that enabled the study of books and narrations.

Ousmane Kane critiques the limitation of West African intellectual history to Timbuktu. The knowledge network encompassed what is now Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, and Chad. The center could shift as trade routes, power, or reform movements changed (Kane, 2016). Therefore, the Trans-Saharan corridor had multiple axes and was not entirely dependent on a single city.

4. Sokoto and Hadith as the Language of Reform

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, 'Uthmān ibn Fūdī, 'Abd Allāh ibn Fūdī, and Muḥahmad Bello founded a reform movement that later gave birth to the Sokoto Caliphate. Hadith is used to assess customs, education, leadership, worship, and the concept of sunnah and bid'ah.ḥyā' al-Sunnah wa Ikhmād al-Bid'ah shows how the language of hadith functions in social programs (Hiskett, 1984).

This movement cannot be explained as a direct import from the Hijaz. Its leaders inherited local traditions, including Maliki, Ash'ari, and Sufi traditions, while also connecting with Saharan networks. The reforms emerged through an internal selection of this heritage. The Hadith provided legitimacy, but their interpretation was shaped by the problems of Hausaland society.

Red Sea Corridor-Indian Ocean and Maritime Family Line

1. Harbors and Monsoons

The East Coast of Africa serves as the interface between continent and ocean. Monsoon winds allow ships to depart and return at specific times. This natural regularity creates a rhythm of trade and the travel of knowledge. Ports serve not only as loading and unloading points; they also serve as venues for marriages, the formation of diasporas, language translation, and the construction of mosques (Sheriff, 2024).

Ibn Baṭṭūṭah describes Zayla', Mogadishu, Mombasa, and Kilwa as Muslim communities with elites, qāḍī, mosques, and trade relations (Baṭṭūṭah, 1992). His account should be read critically, but it shows that by the eighth century Hijri coastal Islam had institutions. The Shafi'i school became dominant in many areas, along with the Yemeni network, Ḥaḍramawt, Hijaz, and India.

Description of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah about Kilwa connecting the social character of the coast with the identity of its sect:

وَهُمْ أَهْلُ جِهَادٍ لِأَنَّهُمْ فِي بَرٍّ وَاحِدٍ مُتَّصِلٍ مَعَ كُفَّارِ الزَّنْجِ، وَالْغَالِبُ عَلَيْهِمُ الدِّينُ وَالصَّلَاحُ، وَهُمْ شَافِعِيَّةُ الْمَذْهَبِ

> "They are a people who wage jihad because their land is connected to the non-Muslim Zanj region; religion and piety are prominent among them, and they are of the Shafi'i school of thought." (Baṭṭūṭah, 1992).

The testimony of a traveler is not enough to map the entire curriculum of hadith, but the mention of qāḍī, students, mosques, Arabic language, and schools provide indicators that the maritime network had an institutional apparatus. The Shafi'i school provided the corpus of jurisprudence, while the Yemen--Hijaz--coast connection provided the teachers and texts that animated it.

2. The Family of Scholars and Genealogical Authority

Ḥaḍramī Mobility Ḥaḍramī provides a strong color to the later period. Engseng Ho shows how genealogy, ancestral tombs, family documents, and migration shaped a diaspora that remained connected to Tarim (Ho, 2006). Anne Bang shows that cleric families in East Africa established authority through education, marriage, trade, Sufi chains, and connections with the Hijaz (Bang, 2004).

In such networks, the family is not a substitute for competence, but a vessel for the reproduction of knowledge. Children learn from their fathers, uncles, and local clerics, then travel to Mecca or Ḥaḍramawt. He returned with the book and the diploma. A house, a mosque, and a ribāṭ can function as educational institutions. Sanad becomes a maritime family because blood ties, teacher-student ties, and seafaring mutually reinforce one another.

3. Zanzibar as a Regional Hub

Zanzibar developed into a center of trade and learning, especially as relations with Oman strengthened. Its position as an island and port made it a meeting point for scholars from the coast, the interior, Arabia, India, and the Comoros. Ibāḍī tradition was present with the Sunni Shafi'i tradition; the encounter created competition and exchange (Bang, 2004).

Aḥmad ibn Sumayṭ was a significant figure within the Ḥaḍramī–Zanzibar network. In the twentieth century, figures such as Al-Amīn al-Mazrū'ī in Mombasa and 'Abd Allāh Ṣāliḥ al-Farsī exemplified a subsequent transformation: the utilization of print media, the Swahili language, formal schooling, sermons, and translation. Ḥadīth, which had previously circulated primarily in Arabic, entered the broader public sphere through Swahili. Translation here is not merely the transfer of words; it involves the deliberate selection of terminology, target audiences, and explanatory frameworks.

Research into the canonization of Minhāj al-Ṭālibīn among Swahili scholars reveals that Zanzibar served as a hub for academic exchange, instruction, authorship, and the production of religious texts (Noor, 2023). Although the Minhāj is a book of fiqh, its canonization process is relevant for hadith: texts became authoritative through readings by teachers, commentaries, student networks, and the needs of the courts. Hadith books moved through similar mechanisms.

4. Relationship with Hajj

The Hajj connected the maritime corridor with the Nile and Hijaz. Pilgrims from East Africa could travel to Jeddah via the Red Sea, stay to study, or meet with scholars from West Africa and the Maghreb. Mecca and Medina became global markets for Islamic commerce. These encounters created pathways that did not always pass through political capitals.

However, the emphasis on the Hijaz should not erase local agency. Returning scholars adapted their teachings to language, sectarian conflicts, family structures, and colonial conditions. Coastal East Africa transformed the knowledge received into new works, institutions, and communities.

5. Meeting of Madhhabs and Hadith Traditions

The landscape of ḥadīth in Africa is also a map of madhhabs (legal schools). Egypt served as a meeting point for the Mālikī, Shāfiʿī, Ḥanafī, and—later—Ḥanbalī schools. Qayrawān, the Maghreb, and much of West Africa were dominated by the Mālikī school. The East African coast and the Horn of Africa largely followed the Shāfiʿī school, while networks from Oman introduced the Ibāḍī tradition to Zanzibar. These madhhabs influenced the texts studied, the methodologies for issuing fatwās, and the ways in which ḥadīth were accessed.

The dominance of the Mālikī school in the West granted a privileged status to al-Muwaṭṭaʾ. Ḥadīth were frequently encountered through fiqh commentaries and the works of Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ. In the East, Shāfiʿī texts—such as Minhāj al-Ṭālibīn—shaped the demand for legal ḥadīth and their associated commentaries. This divergence does not imply that one region was more "focused on ḥadīth" than another; rather, it demonstrates that the ḥadīth corpus entered through distinct institutional gateways.

Madhhabs also facilitated mobility. A West African student arriving in Fez or Cairo could join a Mālikī majlis (study circle) already equipped with a familiar set of texts. Similarly, East African students in Mecca or Ḥaḍramawt experienced continuity through a shared Shāfiʿī curriculum. A common madhhab reduced the "cost" of intellectual adaptation. Conversely, encounters across different madhhabs opened the door to critical inquiry and the possibility of making new, independent choices.

Four Forms of Sanad

The main findings of the article can be summarized in four forms of sanad. First, the sanad of the narrators, the individual chains that dominate early Egyptian documentation. Second, the sanad of the books, the transmission of collections such as al-Muwa.ṭṭa' through samā', qirā'ah, ijāzah, and fihrisah; this form is prominent in Qayrawān and Maghrib. Third, the manuscript-scholarly sanad, namely continuity through teachers, curriculum, copying, ownership, and libraries; this form is very visible in Trans-Saharan. Fourth, the maritime-family sanad, namely a combination of genealogy, home education, migration, ports, hajj, and ijazah in East Africa.

These four forms are analytical types, not closed boxes. Egypt also has a chain of transmission; the Maghreb has a chain of transmission; Timbuktu has formal ijazas; and Zanzibar has manuscripts and hadith assemblies. The divisions simply indicate the most prominent forms of evidence and mechanisms.

Limits on the Use of the Term Sanad

These four forms of knowledge transmission do not, in essence, occupy the same epistemological level. The sanad (chain of transmission) of narrators functions as a technical mechanism to attribute a matan (textual content) to its primary source, evaluated through critical criteria such as ittiṣāl (continuity), ‘adālah (probity of the narrator), ḍabṭ (accuracy/precision), shudhūdh (absence of anomaly), and ‘illah (absence of hidden defects). In contrast, the sanad of a manuscript or text merely confirms the validity of the transmission path for a specific document or variant reading, without automatically guaranteeing the authenticity of every individual account contained therein. Meanwhile, the sanad of scholarly traditions and those rooted in maritime-familial networks possess a broader scope, illustrating social, pedagogical, and material continuity. In these latter two instances, the term "sanad" is employed analytically, rather than as a claim to an equivalent status with the technical isnād found in ḥadīth studies.

This differentiation serves as a safeguard against two methodological errors. The first is reductionism—erroneously assuming the absence of a ḥadīth tradition in regions where few individual isnād traces have survived. The second is the inflation of meaning—falsely equating various kinship networks, commercial partnerships, or ṭarīqah (Sufi order) affiliations with a ḥadīth sanad. Social networks only acquire historiographical weight when supported by empirical evidence of transmission, such as identified teacher-student relationships, samā‘ (auditory transmission sessions), ijāzah (authorization certificates), colophon notes, pedagogical curricula, or marginalia. Such evidentiary standards transform the concept of a "Continent of Sanad" (Benua Sanad) into an analytically rigorous framework, rather than merely an abstract metaphor.

This framework directs the historiography of Islamic education toward key questions: what material was transmitted, through whom, via what media and methods, and how was its authority confirmed? Such an approach prevents commercial alliances or genealogical lineages from being presented, on their own, as sufficient evidence of knowledge transmission. Comparatively, the dominant manifestation of *sanad* (chains of transmission) within each corridor is heavily dependent on regional infrastructure. The existence of centers of scholarship, the institutionalization of *madhhabs* (schools of thought), the availability of manuscripts, networks of scholarly families, the presence of ports, and the undertaking of the hajj pilgrimage do not serve as substitutes for the technical isnād; rather, they function as socio-material conduits that enable the transmission, verification, and sustained inheritance of historical accounts and scholarly literature.

CONCLUSION

This research successfully unpacks four primary issues concerning the dynamics of ḥadīth scholarship in Africa. First, four geographical corridors facilitated the mobility of scholars, the circulation of texts, and the articulation of scholarly authority through specific infrastructures: the Nile–Hijaz corridor relied on riverine travel, the tradition of riḥlah (scholarly journeying), and the ḥajj pilgrimage; the Qayrawān–Maghrib corridor leveraged a network of scholarly cities and the institutionalization of the Mālikī madhhab (school of law); the Trans-Saharan corridor depended on caravan routes, manuscript collections, and scholarly family dynasties; while the Red Sea–Indian Ocean corridor was driven by port dynamics, maritime activity, and maritime-familial networks. Second, key figures and their monumental works within each corridor functioned as intellectual nodes—selecting, teaching, transcribing, and adapting the ḥadīth tradition to the local needs of the communities.

Third, the presence of legal schools (madhāhib) served as more than just static fiqh (jurisprudential) doctrines. The affiliation with the Mālikī school in the Maghrib and West Africa, and the Shāfiʿī school along the eastern coast, acted as an institutional infrastructure that shaped the selection of texts, the development of curricula, the legitimation of scholarly authority, and the continuity of majālis al-ʿilm (study circles). Fourth, the diverse empirical evidence demonstrates that the manifestation of sanad (chains of transmission) in Africa was multifaceted—encompassing chains of narrators, chains of textual transmission, chains linked to manuscripts, and even maritime-familial chains. These categories of "social sanad" are not identical to the technical isnād of ḥadīth; rather, they point to a socio-material ecosystem that enabled the tradition of transmission to endure continuously.

The articulation of the concept of a "Continent of Sanad" fundamentally corrects older historiography, which had cast Africa merely as a passive recipient region. The African continent serves as an active space for the production, processing, and linking of scholarly authority chains on Hadith globally. Although this conclusion remains at the level of a macro-mapping, these findings open avenues for further research to examine each corridor at a microscopic level—through the physical exploration of manuscripts, prosopographical analysis, the tracing of ijazah (authorization certificates), and a critical reading of the specific transmission lineages associated with particular texts.

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