

Al-Sarakhsī's (D. 483/1090) Ḥadīth Methodology

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Abstract

Recently, the assertion that the Ḥanafī school has its distinct *ḥadīth* methodology has gained prominence in the literature, leading to substantial academic research. Al-Sarakhsī and his *al-Mabsūṭ*, the pivotal figures in the development of the Ḥanafī methodology, have been the focus of numerous studies; however, certain aspects of them remain open to further investigation. In my ongoing PhD research, I am analysing al-Sarakhsī's *ḥadīth* methodology in *al-Mabsūṭ* from those aspects.

This study conducts a comparative analysis, focusing on two initial chapters, one from the worship (*'ibādāt*) and one from the transaction (*mu'āmalāt*) sections of *al-Mabsūṭ*, while comparing them with the theoretical framework outlined in his *al-'Uṣūl*. The current research is strengthened by incorporating Hākim (d. 334/945)'s *al-Kāfī* and al-Shaybānī (d. 189/805)'s *Zāhir al-Riwāya*, which underpin *al-Mabsūṭ*, to explore al-Sarakhsī's original contributions to Ḥanafī *ḥadīth* methodology, alongside several key *ḥadīth* sources that provide further context. In analysing his *al-'Uṣūl*, this study likewise engages with earlier Ḥanafī works, most notably those of al-Jaṣṣāṣ, al-Dabūsī, and al-Pazdawī, both to trace lines of transmission and to better identify the distinctive aspects of Sarakhsī's methodological contributions. Additionally, this research is structured thematically, categorising al-Sarakhsī's *ḥadīth* approach in *al-Mabsūṭ* from different perspectives, examining both textual and narratorial elements.

In this presentation, the scope and methodology of my research will first be outlined. Then, some of the key findings to date will be presented, with a particular emphasis on the originality of al-Sarakhsī's approach to *ḥadīth* in terms of inter-school and interdisciplinary consistency and harmony, especially within the context of the current conference theme of "building a shared future." Understanding this originality with clarity is essential to address divisive misconceptions and continue in the same direction for advancing contemporary academic works by following al-Sarakhsī's unifying and coherent approach.

Keywords: al-Sarakhsī, *al-Mabsūṭ*, *ḥadīth* methodology

Introduction

The idea that the Ḥanafī school possesses a distinctive methodology for engaging with *ḥadīth* has increasingly attracted scholarly attention. While it has been portrayed that the school is primarily reliant on rational methods (i.e. *ra'y*) and less attentive to *ḥadīth*, more recent research has challenged this assumption by uncovering a rich, albeit dis-

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there. Consistent with the broader methodological framework he outlines, marked by coherence between intellectual disposition, legal reasoning, and juristic practice, Sarakhsī also shows that the concept of sunnah takes precedence over that of ḥadīth. For sunnah, as a lived and practised tradition transmitted by successive generations and anchored in a shared epistemological foundation, carries more legal and normative weight than ḥadīth in its narrower sense as isolated textual reports. A further question explored in my doctoral research, one that supports and deepens the broader analytical trajectory, is how the terms sunnah and ḥadīth are themselves conceptualised in Sarakhsī's methodology, particularly within this layered and integrated epistemological framework.

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