

Shāh Walī Allāh as a Central Figure between the Intellectual Centers of the Indian Subcontinent and the Ḥaramayn in the 18th Century: His Identity as a Musnid al-Hind and His Work *al-Irshād*

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Abstract

This article examines the scholarly interactions between the Indian Subcontinent and the Ḥaramayn during the eighteenth century through the musnid identity of one of the most prominent figures of the period Abū ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Quṭb al-Dīn Shāh Walī Allāh Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm b. Wajīh al-Dīn al-Dihlawī al-Fārūqī (d. 1176/1762) with particular reference to his treatise *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt ‘ilm al-isnād*. At a time when the Mughal Empire was entering a phase of political and social disintegration, Shāh Walī Allāh endeavored, on the one hand, to preserve the intellectual tradition of India, while on the other, he established direct contact with the leading ḥadīth authorities of the Ḥaramayn, thereby assuming a central role in the revival of ḥadīth scholarship in the Indian Subcontinent. During his journey to the Ḥijāz, Shāh Walī Allāh studied ḥadīth under the foremost traditionists of the Ḥaramayn, most notably Abū Ṭāhir al-Kūrānī (d. 1145/1732). Through the ijāzas and isnāds he received from them, he transmitted this intellectual heritage to India and passed it on to subsequent generations. The isnād chains of nearly all scholars engaged in ḥadīth studies in the Subcontinent ultimately trace back to him. For this reason, Shāh Walī Allāh has been referred to as Musnid al-Hind—the “Musnid of India”—or, in another expression, as madār al-isnād fi’l-Hind, “the central axis of ḥadīth transmission in India.” Although *al-Irshād* is a concise work in size, it stands as a remarkably profound source that reveals, from an isnād-based perspective, the intellectual exchange between the Ḥaramayn and the Indian Subcontinent. This study explores Shāh Walī Allāh’s life, scholarly activities, and the academic connections he established through his teacher Abū Ṭāhir in the Ḥaramayn. It also demonstrates how he served as an intellectual bridge between India and the Ḥijāz and how the transmission network shaped along the Ḥaramayn-India axis spread widely through his sons and students. Shāh Walī Allāh regarded the isnād tradition as both a scholarly and religious trust entrusted to the Muslim community. In this respect, he emerges as a pivotal figure in ensuring the continuity of Islamic learning, both theoretically and practically, and as one of the key scholars who safeguarded the transmission of authentic religious knowledge in the modern era.

Keywords

Ḥadīth, Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt ‘ilm al-isnād*, Abū Ṭāhir al-Kūrānī, Indian Subcontinent.

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18. Yüzyılda Hint Alt Kıtası ile Haremeyn İlim Havzaları Arasında Merkezî Bir Figür Olarak Şah Veliyyullah: Müsnidü'l-Hind Kimliği ve *el-İrşâd*'ı

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Öz

Bu makale 18. yüzyılda Hint alt kıtası ile Haremeyn ilim havzaları arasındaki ilmî etkileşimleri, dönemin en önemli şahsiyetlerinden biri olan Ebû Abdilazîz Kutbüddîn Şah Veliyyullâh Ahmed b. Abdîrrahîm b. Vecîhiddîn ed-Dihlevî el-Fârûkî'nin (ö. 1176/1762) müsnid kimliğini *el-İrşâd ilâ mühimmâtî* 'ilmi'l-isnâd adlı eseri üzerinden ele almaktadır. Bâbürlü Devleti'nin siyasî ve içtimâî açıdan çözülme sürecine girdiği bir dönemde Şah Veliyyullah, bir taraftan Hindistan'ın ilmî geleneğini muhafaza etmeye gayret göstermiş, diğer taraftan Haremeyn'deki hadis otoriteleriyle doğrudan temas kurarak Hint alt kıtasında hadis ilminin ihyâsında merkezi bir rol üstlenmiştir. Şah Veliyyullah, Hicaz yolculuğu sırasında başta Ebû Tâhir el-Kûrânî (ö. 1145/1732) olmak üzere Haremeyn'in önde gelen muhaddislerinden hadis tahsil etmiş, onlardan aldığı icâzet ve isnadlar vasıtasıyla bu birikimi Hindistan'a taşımış ve sonraki nesillere aktarmıştır. Hint alt kıtasında hadisle iştigal eden ne kadar şahıs varsa büyük çoğunluğunun isnadları Şah Veliyyullah'a ulaşmaktadır. Bu nedenle Şah Veliyyullah "Müsnidü'l-Hind" veya Hindistanda hadis isnadlarının kendisinde birleştiği merkez şahsiyet anlamında "medâri'l-isnâd fi'l-Hind" olarak değerlendirilmektedir. *el-İrşâd*, hacim bakımından küçük olsa da, Hint alt kıtası ile Haremeyn ilim havzaları arasındaki ilmî etkileşimi isnad temelli bir perspektifle ortaya koyan son derece derinlikli bir kaynak niteliğindedir. Bu çalışma, Şah Veliyyullah'ın hayatını, ilmî faaliyetlerini ve Haremeyn'deki hocası Ebû Tâhir aracılığıyla kurduğu ilmî bağları ele almakta; onun Hindistan ile Hicaz arasında nasıl bir ilmî köprü kurduğunu, ayrıca Şah Veliyyullah'ın Haremeyn-Hindistan hattında şekillenen rivayet dolaşımının oğulları ve talebeleri üzerinden yayıldığı geniş etki alanını ortaya koymaktadır. Şah Veliyyullah, isnad geleneğini ümmete emanet edilmiş ilmî ve dinî bir miras olarak değerlendirmekte; bu yönüyle hem teorik hem pratik düzlemde ilmî sürekliliğin temininde belirleyici bir şahsiyet olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Hadis, Şah Veliyyullah ed-Dihlevî, *el-İrşâd ilâ mühimmâtî* 'ilmi'l-isnâd, Ebû Tâhir el-Kûrânî, Hint Alt Kıtası.

Atıf Bilgisi

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Telif Hakkı & Lisans	: Yazarlar dergide yayınlanan çalışmalarının telif hakkına sahiptirler ve çalışmaları CC BY-NC 4.0 lisansı altında yayımlanmaktadır.

Introduction

The Hıjâz region, by encompassing the places where the Prophet (şallallâhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam) and his Companions lived, was among the first centers in the Islamic world where religious sciences flourished. Especially in the early centuries following the Hıjra, Hıjâz served as the foremost center of learning in the Islamic world, and it maintained this status in subsequent periods as well. Among the cities of the Hıjâz, Medina in particular emerged as the most significant center for the development of ḥadîth and fiqh sciences. Although the political center of the Islamic world later shifted to cities such as Damascus, Baghdad, and Cairo, Mecca and Medina always retained their special status. Scholarly activities in the Hıjâz continued during the periods of ‘Abbâsîd, Fâtîmîd, Saljûq, Ayyûbid, Mamlûk, and Ottoman rule. By the nineteenth century, there were seventeen madrasas in Medina and twelve in Mecca. In the Hıramayn, where lessons were conducted primarily according to the Ḥanafî and Şâfi‘î schools of law, the professors (mudarrisûn) not only instructed their students but also offered public lessons open to the wider community.

The Indian Subcontinent likewise played a significant role in the development of Islamic civilization. The spread of Islam in India began with the conquest of Sind in 710–711 by Muḥammad b. Qâsim al-Thaqafî. Subsequent conquests extended as far as Multân in the Indus Valley. The efforts of the Ghaznavids (963–1186) and the Ghurids (1000–1215) provided a favorable foundation for the spread of Islam in the region. During this period, numerous scholars and Şûfis settled in Lahore. Scholarly activity continued under the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526) and the Mughal dynasty (1526–1858), which ruled much of India. In particular, many scholars fleeing the Mongol invasions sought refuge in the Delhi Sultanate, thereby playing a crucial role in the intellectual and cultural development of the region. A number of prominent scholars trained in Delhi, Lahore, Multân, and Agra produced important works in the fields of ḥadîth, fiqh, history, and taşawwuf, contributing greatly to the advancement of Islamic civilization.¹ In light of all this information, it should be noted that the activities of the Ghaznavids in the Indian Subcontinent were primarily limited to introducing Islam to the region, and that during this period the area had not yet developed into a true center of scholarship.² Ahmet Aydın further observes that during the Delhi Sultanate period, India was still not regarded as a land that attracted the ‘ulamâ’, and he argues that the scholars of this era could not yet be considered among the foremost representatives of the learned class.³

The Delhi Sultanate period may thus be characterized as a stage in which advanced scholarly activities had not yet taken firm root in the region, though in the field of ḥadîth

1 Ahmet Aydın, while examining the region’s contributions to Islamic civilization in the intellectual, architectural, and artistic domains, categorizes the historical experience of Muslims in the Indian Subcontinent into three principal phases: the “Period of Recognition (Ghaznavids),” the “Period of Settlement (Delhi Sultanate),” and the “Period of Consolidation (Mughals).” Ahmet Aydın, *Yavana: İslam Medeniyetinin Büyük Havzası / Hint*. İstanbul: Ketebe Yayınevi, 2021), 99.

2 He even maintains the view that the region, during this period, could not yet be regarded as a true center of learning.

3 For the introduction of the related work, see Nuran Sarıcı, “Ahmet Aydın. Yavana: İslam Medeniyetinin Büyük Havzası/Hint. İstanbul: Ketebe Yayınları, 2021, 372 sayfa.”, *Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 62/62 (27 June 2022), 160.

studies, Sāghānī (d. 650/1252) emerged as a distinguished figure.⁴ Although an increase in ḥadīth-related scholarship can be observed in this era—with scholars from the Subcontinent disseminating this discipline in cities such as Gujarat, Delhi, and Agra—it may still be said that the development of ḥadīth studies in the region remained limited until the time of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Dihlawī (d. 1052/1642).

During the Mughal period, scholars such as Muḥammad b. Ṭāhīr al-Fattanī (d. 986/1578), Imām Rabbānī Aḥmad Fārūqī al-Sirhindī (d. 1034/1624), ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Dihlawī (d. 1052/1642), Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī (d. 1176/1762), and ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dihlawī (d. 1239/1824) devoted themselves to the study of ḥadīth, maintaining the traditions of transmission (riwāyah) and teaching (tadrīs), and thereby elevating this discipline to a central position within the intellectual heritage of the Indian Subcontinent. The ḥadīth teaching movement initiated by ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Dihlawī developed into a systematic revival enterprise during the era of Shāh Walī Allāh. Particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, ḥadīth education became one of the fundamental components of the curricula in the scholarly institutions of India. The curriculum devised by Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn—later known as dars-i niẓāmī—was regarded as a reformative innovation in the teaching of ḥadīth.⁵

Moreover, the intellectual exchange between the Ḥijāz and India during the Mughal period is noteworthy. From the tenth/sixteenth century onward, the Ḥijāz became a principal destination for Indian scholars pursuing ḥadīth studies. Indian ‘ulamā’ traveled to the Ḥijāz to study ḥadīth, returning with ijāzahs to renew and strengthen their transmission chains, while Arab scholars residing in India likewise contributed significantly to the dissemination of ḥadīth in the region. Thus, the science of ḥadīth attained a lasting institutional and pedagogical presence in the Subcontinent, encompassing both the transmission and instructional dimensions of the discipline. Prominent ḥadīth authorities such as Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449), Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520), al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497), and his student Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī (d. 974/1567) represented scholarly traditions that nourished the ḥadīth awakening in India. The influence of the Ḥijāz upon the ḥadīth scholarship of the Indian Subcontinent continued until the twelfth/eighteenth century, the era in which Shāh Walī Allāh lived.⁶

During the period in which Shāh Walī Allāh lived, India was confronted with two distinct forms of peril. The first was the weakening and gradual loss of authority of the Mughal Empire. The second was the tendency of society to drift away from Islamic moral and social foundations. The political turmoil, governmental weakness, and resulting moral decay of the period paved the way for the British to direct their attention toward the region. Within this context, Shāh Walī Allāh’s project of revival (iḥyā’) and renewal (tajdid) emerged and was carried forward by his followers. Although during his own lifetime the British presence had not yet become a dominant political power in the region, in the latter half of the eighteenth century they rapidly expanded their influence.

4 Aydın, *Yavana*, 147.

5 Mehmet Özşenel, *Pakistan’da Hadis Çalışmaları* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 2014), 49.

6 Özşenel, *Pakistan’da Hadis*, 50-51.

The impact of Shāh Walī Allāh was profound, particularly among the Muslims of the Indian Subcontinent. His thought and teachings offered solutions to the social, cultural, and religious challenges faced by the Muslim community of his time. The eighteenth century is often regarded as a period of both political and intellectual decline in the Islamic world. In this era, various revivalist movements emerged in different regions to reawaken Islamic society. These movements, which signaled a continued vitality of learning, often critiqued the state of the Islamic sciences, including fiqh, kalām, and taṣawwuf. Although Shāh Walī Allāh did not assume any formal political office during his life, he criticized many of the practices that he believed contributed to the state's collapse and presented advice to the rulers of his time. The intellectual and spiritual trajectory that he initiated continued to shape numerous movements and communities in the Indian Subcontinent, many of which remain active today. The enduring influence of Shāh Walī Allāh's intellectual legacy can be discerned in the thought and activities of many religious communities that continue to exist in the Indian Subcontinent today. The scholarly endeavors of Shāh Walī Allāh and his disciples laid the foundational basis for major intellectual and religious schools such as the Deoband and Ahl-i Ḥadīth movements.⁷

In light of these historical accounts, it may be stated that Shāh Walī Allāh stands as the fourth great muḥaddith produced by the Indian Subcontinent, following Sāghānī, 'Alī al-Muttaqī, and 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Dihlawī. He played a decisive role in reviving the study of ḥadīth and the Sunnah in the region. The intellectual legacy of Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī was not confined to his own writings but was transmitted through his sons and students, thereby establishing a robust tradition of ḥadīth transmission and isnād throughout India. This scholarly continuity not only ensured the preservation of his isnāds but also institutionalized his methodology of interpreting ḥadīth within the Subcontinent. The scholarly circles and isnāds of the region were thus shaped around his works and transmission chains. His academic engagement with the scholars of the Ḥaramayn established an enduring and authentic isnād bridge between the Ḥijāz and the Indian Subcontinent.

This study holds significance in demonstrating the pivotal role of Shāh Walī Allāh in transmitting the intellectual and cultural heritage of the Ḥaramayn to India. In Turkey, the existing literature on Shāh Walī Allāh extensively explores his ideas on iḥyā' (revival) and tajdīd (renewal), his mystical-philosophical thought, his approach to fiqh, and his political reflections. However there remains a clear need for specialized studies focusing specifically on his identity as a muḥaddith.

The present article aims to elucidate the methodological framework of Shāh Walī Allāh's Ḥaramayn-based scholarly network by analyzing the isnāds he acquired during his studies there, and to examine how these networks were reflected in scholarly circles, ijāzah records, and book-centered isnād chains in the Indian Subcontinent. Centering upon his work *al-İrshād*, the study seeks to uncover the isnād-based intellectual linkage between the scholarly centers of the Ḥaramayn and the Indian Subcontinent in the eighteenth century and beyond. This work, in particular, provides valuable insight into the epistemic and institutional framework that shaped Dihlawī's identity as a musnid and established him as the

7 Özşenel, *Pakistan'da Hadis*, 49.

madār al-isnād (axis of transmission) of the Indian Subcontinent.

The central research questions of this article are as follows:

1. What was Shāh Walī Allāh's conception of isnād, and by which conceptual and practical principles did he define its value?
2. Who were the figures included in his Hījāz-based isnād network through his teacher Abū Ṭāhir al-Kūrānī (d. 1145/1732) How and where did this network integrate into the scholarly circles and ijāzah practices of the Indian Subcontinent, and which individuals played an active role in this process?
3. What is the significance of *al-Irshād* within the broader tradition of ḥadīth transmission?

The study employs a dual methodological framework. The first axis is text-centered, analyzing *al-Irshād* through the teacher–student relationships it reflects. The second is network-oriented, mapping the first layer of transmission that emerged through Shāh Walī Allāh's teachers in the Ḥaramayn. Due to the scope and length limitations of this article, the focus remains primarily on the first layer (the Ḥaramayn teachers), while the second and third layers are only briefly outlined to provide contextual clarity. Further details are addressed in the author's ongoing doctoral dissertation.

Exemplary ijāzah texts and a diagram illustrating the Ḥaramayn isnāds have been appended to the study. In the diagram depicting the diffusion of Shāh Walī Allāh's isnāds across the Indian Subcontinent, a selective limitation has been applied: only his prominent students and their representatives within contemporary ḥadīth schools are included. The visual materials of the ijāzah texts are taken from the 2022 edition of *al-Irshād* and the 2021 edition of *Insān al-ʿAyn*. All historical data are presented with both hijrī and gregorian dates.

The article is structured in three main sections. The first section concisely outlines the political, social, and intellectual background of eighteenth-century India. The second section briefly discusses the life of Shāh Walī Allāh. The third section examines, through his musnid identity, the circulation of ḥadīth transmission between the Ḥaramayn and India and its reflections within the scholarly landscape of the Indian Subcontinent.

1. The Socio-Political and Religious Landscape of 18th-Century India in the Era of Shah Waliullah al-Dihlawi

1.1. Political Context

Shāh Walī Allāh was born during the final years of Aurangzeb's⁸ reign and witnessed the gradual collapse of the Mughal state. His era corresponded to the succession conflicts among the princes Muḥammad Mu'azzam, Muḥammad A'zam Shah, and Muḥammad Kam Bakhsh following Aurangzeb's death, a period marked by severe political turmoil.⁹ With the

8 Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, "Evrenzāb", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1994), 11/537-539.

9 Zaferullah Daudī, *Şah Veliyyullah Dehlevī'den Günümüze Pakistan ve Hindistan'da Hadis Çalışmaları* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1995), 97.

weakening of central authority, oppression and plundering surged across the provinces, undermining public safety and order, especially in the capital, Delhi. The state treasury was depleted due to incessant internal conflicts, and moral decay had taken root among the general populace, manifesting in intoxication, heedlessness, and a collapse in ethical values.¹⁰

Shāh Walī Allāh personally witnessed the internal strife affecting Delhi and the moral disintegration impacting society.¹¹

Perhaps the most significant political crisis that Shāh Walī Allāh experienced in Delhi occurred on 5 May 1739, when Nādir Shāh (d. 1160/1747), the ruler of Iran, invaded the region. A massive massacre ensued, resulting in the deaths of at least 30,000 people and widespread plundering.¹²

With the exception of his pilgrimage to the Hijaz, Shāh Walī Allāh never left Delhi. However, shortly before his death in 1762, Delhi was once again invaded and looted by the Afghan ruler Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī (d. 1187/1773). Persistent shifts in political power, ongoing instability, and successive changes in leadership pushed the Mughal Empire into its death throes. By the time of Shāh Walī Allāh's death, approximately twenty individuals had laid claim to the throne, with only ten actually ruling.¹³

In the final phase of his life, the British had begun to assert themselves as a political and economic force in the region, advancing from the southeastern provinces of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa.¹⁴ Thus, Shāh Walī Allāh witnessed both internal threats, such as the activities of the Marathas and Jats and Sunni-Shia conflicts, and external threats, particularly British ambitions for regional dominance. Confronted with this grave reality, he sought remedies for the deteriorating condition of India.¹⁵

Actively engaged with the political issues of his time, Shāh Walī Allāh wrote letters to Mughal rulers, administrators, and dignitaries, urging them to enact reforms in economic, administrative, and social spheres and to strengthen the state against possible external aggression.¹⁶

1.2. The Socio-Religious Climate of the Mughal Period: Intellectual Roots of Shāh Walī Allāh's Scholarship

Throughout history, the Indian subcontinent came into contact with Islam largely through the powerful influence of Sufism, and over time it became extensively Islamized. During this process, the region not only bore the profound marks of Islamic civilization but was also influenced by the mystical tendencies of Hindu thought. This mutual inter-

10 Daudî, *Pakistan ve Hindistan'da Hadis Çalışmaları*, 98-99.

11 Ahmet Aydın, *Şah Veliyyullah ed-Dihlevî ve Dihlevîlik* (İstanbul: Marmara University, Institute of Social Sciences, PhD Dissertation, 2013), 70.

12 Daudî, *Pakistan ve Hindistan'da Hadis Çalışmaları*, 99.

13 Daudî, *Pakistan ve Hindistan'da Hadis Çalışmaları*, 100.

14 Daudî, *Pakistan ve Hindistan'da Hadis Çalışmaları*, 100-101.

15 Nuran Sarıcı Doğan, "Bâbürlüler Dönemi Mezheplerüstü Bir Din Anlayışı Modeli: Muhaddis Şah Veliyyullah Dihlevî", *Yeni Türkiye Dergisi-Hindistan Türkleri Özel Sayısı* 1/135 (February 2024), 264.

16 M. Sait Özervarlı, "Şah Veliyyullah", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2010), 38/265.

action eventually paved the way for the emergence of new religious and mystical orders that incorporated both Hindu and Islamic elements. Among these, Sikhism stands out as particularly noteworthy, as it played a decisive role in the decline of the Mughal Empire in later centuries.

During the Mughal period, two distinct trends emerged in the sphere of religious thought. The first was represented by Emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605), who adopted a syncretic approach to religion. Akbar sought to create a new religious system, called Dīn-i Ilāhī, which aimed to synthesize elements of Islam, Hinduism, and other faiths, and he endeavored to make this creed the official ideology of the state.¹⁷ This attempt provoked strong opposition from the Muslim ‘ulamā’ and Sufi circles; in response, prominent scholars such as Aḥmad Sirhindī and ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Dihlawī launched a revival movement centered on the Qur’ān and the Sunnah.

The second trend appeared during the reign of Awrangzīb ‘Ālamgīr, who ascended the throne after Akbar. Awrangzīb pursued a far more orthodox and conservative religious policy, striving to govern according to the principles of the Sharī‘ah. The comprehensive legal compendium *al-Fatāwā al-‘Ālamgīriyya*, commissioned by him, not only provided the judicial and administrative framework of the Mughal Empire but also became a significant reference in the broader corpus of Islamic legal literature.¹⁸ The participation of Shāh ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Dihlawī, the father of Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, in the compilation of this work demonstrates that the scholarly tradition rooted in ḥadīth and fiqh had by then attained an institutional form.¹⁹

This intellectual and religious environment proved crucial for the formation of Shāh Walī Allāh’s thought. The scholarly activities carried out during Awrangzīb’s reign in the fields of ḥadīth, jurisprudence, and tafsīr contributed both to the revitalization of Islamic sciences and to the establishment of a transmission-centered scholarly culture across the Indian subcontinent. Within this milieu, Shāh Walī Allāh combined the scholarly heritage he inherited from his father with the intellectual experience he gained in the Ḥijāz, transforming this synthesis into a systematic understanding of isnād that would shape his later works.

2. The Life of Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī

His full name was Abū ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Qutb al-Dīn Shāh Walī Allāh Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm b. Wajīh al-Dīn al-Dihlawī al-Fārūqī.²⁰ He was born on 14 Shawwāl 1114 (3 March 1703)²¹ in

17 Dīn-i Ilāhī was a syncretic socio-religious system devised to unite Muslims and Hindus by emphasizing shared moral principles. However, it faced strong opposition from contemporary Muslim scholars, gained few followers, and soon declined into obscurity. For further details see H. Hilal Şahin, *Hindistan’da Türk Rönesansı: Ekber Şah ve “Din-i İlahi”si* (Selenge Yayınları, 2020).

18 Sadık Amber, “Bâbürlü Toplumundaki Dinî Hayata Dair Genel Bir Değerlendirme”, *Yeni Fikir Uluslararası Akademik Fikir Araştırma Dergisi International Journal of Academic Research and Ideas* 14/29 (2022), 44.

19 Ahmet Özel, “El-Âlemgiriyye”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1989), 2/365-366.

20 Mehmet Erdoğan, “Şah Veliyyullah”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2010), 38/260.

21 A. Ditta Muztar, *Shah Wali Allah a Saint-Scholar of Muslim India* (İslamabad: National Commission on Histor-

Muzaffarnagar, a town near Delhi.²² On his father's side, his lineage traces back to the Caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644), while through his mother it reaches İmām Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799). He belonged to a family that had settled in India toward the end of the 7th/13th century.²³ Information concerning his life largely derives from his autobiographical work *Anfās al-ʿArifin*.

His grandfather Wajih al-Din and father 'Abd al-Raḥīm were among the scholars of Delhi, and both had participated in the committee responsible for compiling *al-Fatāwā al-Hindiyya* (*al-ʿĀlamgīriyya*).²⁴ His mother, Fakhr al-Nisā, the daughter of Shaykh Muḥammad Puhletī, was also well-versed in the religious sciences.²⁵

Shāh Walī Allāh passed away on 29 Muḥarram 1176 (August 20, 1762) in Delhi and was buried beside his father in the Munhadiyan Cemetery in Old Delhi.²⁶

2.1. Educational Life and Journey to Ḥaramayn

Shāh Walī Allāh began his pursuit of knowledge at a very young age, memorizing the Qur'an at the age of seven. In line with the common practice of his time, his initial education was not in madrasas but under the supervision of his father.²⁷ He first learned Persian, followed by Arabic.²⁸ Alongside Arabic, he studied ḥadīth, tafsīr, fiqh, uṣūl, taṣawwuf, and philosophy. By the age of fifteen, he had mastered the sciences taught in his era, achieving a remarkable accomplishment compared to his contemporaries.²⁹

In addition to the outward sciences, he also acquired esoteric knowledge. At the age of fourteen, he completed his spiritual journey (sulūk) and, like his father, became affiliated with the Naqshbandī order. By the time he reached seventeen, his father had fallen ill and, before his death, granted Shāh Walī Allāh authorization (ijāzah) to assume the duties of spiritual guidance. Following his father's death in 1131/1719, he continued the educational activities at the Madrasah-i Raḥimīyyah. During this period, which lasted for twelve years, he successfully trained a wide circle of students.³⁰

After these twelve years, Shāh Walī Allāh traveled to Ḥaramayn, aiming to deepen his expertise in the sciences, particularly in ḥadīth. There, he received licenses (ijāzāt) in the

ical and Cultural Research, 1979), 36.

22 Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Ḥusaynī al-Nadwī, *Rijāl al-fikr wa'l-da'wa fī'l-Islām al-İmām al-Dihlawī* (Kuwait: Dār al-Qalam, 1985), 4/83-84; Muḥammad Bashīr Sialkotī, *al-İmām al-mujaddid al-muḥaddith al-Shāh Waliyyullāh al-Dihlawī ḥayātuhu wa-da'watuhu* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1999), 25.

23 Sialkotī, *al-İmām al-mujaddid al-muḥaddith al-Shāh Waliyyullāh*, 25; Ghulam Husain Jalbani, *Life of Shah Waliyyullah* (Delhi India: İdarah-ı Adabiyat-ı Delli, 1980), 5; al-Nadwī, *al-İmām al-Dihlawī*, 4/83; 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Ḥasanī, *Nuzhat al-khawāṭir wa-bahjat al-masāmi'* wa-al-nawāzīr (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1999), 3/858.

24 Jalbani, *Life of Shah*, 5.

25 al-Nadwī, *al-İmām al-Dihlawī*, 4/83.

26 Erdoğan, "Şah Veliyyullah", 38/260; Sialkotī, *al-İmām al-mujaddid al-muḥaddith al-Shāh Waliyyullāh*, 25; al-Nadwī, *al-İmām al-Dihlawī*, 4/100-101.

27 Jalbani, *Life of Shah*, 5.

28 Muztar, *Shah Wali Allah a Saint-Scholar of Muslim India*, 39.

29 Abū 'Abd al-'Aziz Qutb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Raḥīm b. Wajih al-Dīn al-Fārūqī Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawī, *al-Juz' al-laṭif fī tarjamat al-'Abd al-Ḍa'if*, trans. 'Atā' Allāh b Ḥusayn al-Salafī al-Fūjiyānī (s.n., n.d.), 2-3; Sialkotī, *al-İmām al-mujaddid al-muḥaddith al-Shāh Waliyyullāh*, 26-27; al-Nadwī, *al-İmām al-Dihlawī*, 4/84-85.

30 Muztar, *Shah Wali Allah a Saint-Scholar of Muslim India*, 41-42.

science of ḥadīth from the renowned scholar Shaykh Muḥammad Wafid Allah b. Shaykh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Sulaymān al-Maghribī and from Shaykh Abū Ṭāhir Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Kurdī al-Shāfi‘ī al-Madanī, Shaykh Taj-al-Din Hanafi.³¹

2.2. Shāh Walī Allāh’s Works³² On The Ḥadīth

2.2.1. *al-Musawwa fī Aḥādīth al-Muwaṭṭa’* (Arabic)

An Arabic commentary on Imam Mālik’s *al-Muwaṭṭa’*, where Shāh Walī Allāh seeks to reconcile the differing approaches of the Ḥanafī and Shāfi‘ī schools. While addressing the traditions in the text, he gives particular attention to the rulings of Abū Ḥanīfa and al-Shāfi‘ī, with relatively limited reference to other jurists.³³

2.2.2. *al-Musaffa fī Aḥādīth al-Muwaṭṭa’* (Persian)

A Persian commentary on *al-Muwaṭṭa’*, written with the aim of presenting a harmonized understanding of the ḥadīths suitable for various Sunni schools. Although Shāh Walī Allāh drafted it, he did not complete the final version. After his death, his disciples, including Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Ashiq and Muḥammad Amīn, prepared the manuscript, which was finalized in 1179/1766.³⁴

2.2.3. *Chihil Ḥadīth* (Arabic)

A compilation of forty prophetic traditions encompassing the essential tenets of Islam. The brevity of the reports makes them easy to memorize and circulate.³⁵

2.2.4. *al-Durr al-Thamīn fī Mubashshirāt al-Nabī al-Amīn* (Arabic)

A concise collection of ḥadīths that Shāh Walī Allāh claimed either reached him through dreams of the Prophet (pbuh) or were transmitted to him via his teachers and his father.³⁶

2.2.5. *al-Faḍl al-Mubīn fī al-Salāsīl min Ḥadīth al-Nabī al-Amīn* (Arabic)

A short treatise concerned with isnād-based chains of transmission (*musalsalāt*). It highlights specific forms of continuous ḥadīth chains as preserved by the author.³⁷

31 Muztar, *Shah Wali Allah a Saint-Scholar of Muslim India*, 50-51; Sialkotī, *al-Imām al-mujaddid al-muḥaddith al-Shāh Waliyyullāh*, 28.

32 Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Shah Wali-Allah And His Times* (Canberra: Marifat Publishing House, 1980), 221-224; Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, “Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi”, *Shah Waliullah (1703- 1762): His Religious and Political Thought*, ed. M. Ikram Chaghatai (Lahor: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2005), 51-77; Ghulam Husain Jalbani, *Teachings of Hadrat Shah Waliullah Muhadith Dehlvi* (New Delhi: Kitāb Bhavan, 1988), 37-56; Sialkotī, *al-Imām al-mujaddid al-muḥaddith al-Shāh Waliyyullāh*, 39-44; Muztar, *Shah Wali Allah a Saint-Scholar of Muslim India*, 173-190; M. Ikram Chaghatai, “Shah Wali Allah (Select Bibliography)”, *Shah Waliullah (1703- 1762): His Religious and Political Thought*, ed. M. Ikram Chaghatai (Lahor: Sang-e- Meel Publications, 2005), 695-714.

33 Muztar, *Shah Wali Allah a Saint-Scholar of Muslim India*, 178; Jalbani, *Teachings of Hadrat Shah Waliullah*, 77; Sialkotī, *al-Imām al-mujaddid al-muḥaddith al-Shāh Waliyyullāh*, 40.

34 Rizvi, *Shah Wali-Allah And His Times*, 223; Muztar, *Shah Wali Allah a Saint-Scholar of Muslim India*, 178-179; Sialkotī, *al-Imām al-mujaddid al-muḥaddith al-Shāh Waliyyullāh*, 40.

35 Chaghatai, “Shah Wali Allah”, 704; Muztar, *Shah Wali Allah a Saint-Scholar of Muslim India*, 179; Rizvi, *Shah Wali-Allah And His Times*, 223.

36 Chaghatai, “Shah Wali Allah”, 704; Muztar, *Shah Wali Allah a Saint-Scholar of Muslim India*, 179.

37 Rizvi, *Shah Wali-Allah And His Times*, 224; Muztar, *Shah Wali Allah a Saint-Scholar of Muslim India*, 179.

2.2.6. *al-Nawādir min Aḥādīth Sayyid al-Awā'il wa'l-Awākhir* (Arabic)

A work dedicated to collecting rare prophetic traditions, as suggested by its title.³⁸

2.2.7. *Sharḥ Tarājim Abwāb al-Bukhārī* (Arabic)

A commentary that critically engages with the headings (abwāb) of al-Bukhārī's *Şaḥiḥ*. The work offers interpretative notes and clarifications, providing an enriched understanding of the structure and reasoning behind al-Bukhārī's arrangement.³⁹

2.2.8. *al-Irshād ilā Muḥimmāt 'Ilm al-Isnād* (Arabic)

A concise manual focusing on the science of isnād. The book underlines the significance of transmission authorities and has been published repeatedly due to its enduring value.⁴⁰

3. Şāh Walī Allāh as a Musnid and His Work on Isnad: *al-Irshād*

3.1. Conceptual Framework: Musnid and Musnid al-Hind

The term musnid, derived from the Arabic root *s-n-d* meaning “to support” or “to rely upon,” denotes “one who transmits a report by ascribing it to its original source through a continuous chain of transmission.” In the science of ḥadīth, it generally refers to a transmitter (rāwī) who narrates a ḥadīth together with its isnād. In the early period, the term was also used for scholars who compiled ḥadīths along with their chains of transmission or authored works in the *Musnad* format. Over time, it came to serve as an honorific title for eminent traditionists recognized within particular regions, such as “the Musnid of Baghdad,” “the Musnid of Egypt,” or “the Musnid of the World.”⁴¹

Şāh Walī Allāh, in this sense, is regarded as the musnid of his time in the Indian Subcontinent. The majority of the isnād chains of scholars engaged in ḥadīth studies in the region ultimately trace back to him. For this reason, he is known as Musnid al-Hind or Madār al-Isnād fī'l-Hind—that is, the central figure through whom the ḥadīth isnāds of India converge.

3.2. Şāh Walī Allāh's Emphasis on the Science of Isnad and His Manner of Defining It

Every type of knowledge transmitted from another person necessarily requires the presence of an intermediary, that is, a *ṭarīq* (chain), between the individual and that knowledge. This intermediary may consist of a single transmitter or multiple transmitters. Each transmitter, when receiving a report from the one before him, must employ a particular method—namely, a “mode of transmission” (*ṭarīq al-taḥammul*). These modes of transmission include *samā'* (listening directly), *'arḍ* (reading to a teacher), transcription, or other similar means. If these modes and forms of transmission are explicitly stated, this is termed isnād. However, if such clarification is omitted, the transmission remains deficient and weak. The purpose of this treatise (*al-Irshād*) is to elucidate the methods through which

38 Sialkotī, *al-Imām al-mujaddid al-muḥaddith al-Şāh Waliyyullāh*, 39.

39 Muztar, *Shah Wali Allah a Saint-Scholar of Muslim India*, 180; Chaghatai, “Shah Wali Allah”, 705.

40 Muztar, *Shah Wali Allah a Saint-Scholar of Muslim India*, 180.

41 İbrahim Hatiboğlu, “Müsnid”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2006), 32/108-110.

the Prophetic ḥadīths have reached us—that is, the system of isnād. The greatest benefit of preserving isnād lies in ensuring the continuity of the revealed knowledge attributed to the Prophet (pbuh) and, through it, the Muhammadan Shari‘a, which safeguards the principles leading to felicity in both worlds. This reality becomes abundantly clear upon careful reflection.⁴²

Since we did not see the Prophet (pbuh) nor hear anything directly from him, his ḥadīths have reached us only through intermediaries. These intermediaries at times took the form of one manuscript being copied from another, at other times by listening to the narrators of the ḥadīths, or through similar means. All of these ways are, in fact, merely different types of isnād. Without such a foundation as isnād, the preservation of the Shari‘a would not have been possible. In other words, had the principle of isnād not existed, the authenticity and safeguarding of the legal rulings would not have been achievable. For this reason, the determination of reliable reports can only be secured by recognizing the transmitters, investigating their conditions and competence in transmission, and taking into account the methods by which they bore the ḥadīths. This very principle constitutes the foundation of the branch of knowledge known as ‘ilm al-isnād.⁴³

As is evident from the foregoing statements, the introduction of Shāh Walī Allāh’s *al-Irshād* provides a highly significant framework that reveals his perspective on the science of isnād. In this passage, Shāh Walī Allāh highlights “report” (khabar)—that is, knowledge acquired from others—as one of the most fundamental means of obtaining information. According to him, every form of knowledge transmitted through reports relies upon an intermediary, a transmitter, through whom the information is conveyed to its recipient. At this point, the “science of isnād” becomes indispensable, for the reliable transmission of a report requires knowing both who these intermediaries are and by what means they acquired the knowledge. Here, Shāh Walī Allāh alludes to the methods of taḥammul and adā’ (such as audition [samā’], presentation [‘arḍ], transcription [kitābah], and others), which occupy a firmly established place in the Islamic scholarly tradition. These methods constitute the technical pathways by which a ḥadīth is transmitted from one narrator to another, and they directly determine the reliability of the narration. If these pathways are explicitly identified, then a sound isnād is established, ensuring the acceptance of the narration. If they are not specified, however, the narration remains weak and may even be altogether rejected. Another essential point emphasized here is that isnād is not merely a theoretical construct but a practical necessity. In Shāh Walī Allāh’s view, in a time when a direct connection with the Prophet (pbuh) is no longer possible, his words and Sunnah reach us only through isnād. For this reason, isnād stands as the guarantor of the preservation and continuity of the Shari‘a. Were the system of isnād to collapse, the reliable transmission of the Sunnah would also come to an end, thereby jeopardizing the very viability of the Shari‘a

42 Abū ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Qutb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm b. Wajīh al-Dīn al-Fārūqī Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *Ithāf al-nabīh fīmā yaḥtāju ilayhi al-muḥaddith wa-al-faqīh*, ed. Abū al-Ṭayyib Muḥammad ‘Aṭā’ Allāh Ḥanīf al-Fūjīyānī, trans. Muḥammad Uzayr Shams (Lahore: al-Maktabat al-Salafiyya, 2003), 24.

43 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *Ithāf al-nabīh*, 25; Abū ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Qutb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm b. Wajīh al-Dīn al-Fārūqī Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muḥimmāt ‘ilm al-isnād wa-bi-dhaylihi: al-Ta’liqāt al-Jiyād ‘alā Kitāb al-Irshād*, ed. Sa‘d b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Sa‘dan (Riyadh: Dār al-Muḥaddith li’l-Nashr wa’l-Tawzī‘, 2022), 107.

itself. Indeed, Shāh Walī Allāh's statements demonstrate that he regarded the science of isnād as a carrier of religious memory. To him, ḥadīths are not merely written texts, but truths preserved and conveyed through a chain of transmission and entrusted from one generation to another. Hence, the survival of the science of ḥadīth is dependent upon the preservation of isnād, which he considered not merely as a tradition but as a necessity. From this perspective, it becomes clear that Shāh Walī Allāh did not regard the science of isnād as merely a practice of the past, but rather as a living, functional, and religiously obligatory discipline in his own time. Neglect of isnād, in his view, constitutes not only an intellectual deficiency but also a grave shortcoming in safeguarding the religion. In this respect, although his treatise *al-İrshād* is concise in volume, it may rightly be evaluated as a highly systematic and detailed work, constructed upon the meaning, purpose, and necessity of this discipline. Thus, Shāh Walī Allāh conceived isnād not only as a science but also as a trust; not only as a method but also as a mark of fidelity.

According to Shāh Walī Allāh, the report of a person who is not ṣadūq (truthful), whose integrity is not established, or who lacks ḍabt (precision) and thus does not possess the competence to transmit narrations reliably, cannot be taken into consideration. Likewise, narrations based on manuscripts that have not been verified against their originals and whose accuracy is not firmly established are also not deemed trustworthy.⁴⁴ In this context, he emphasizes that the methods of taḥammul (receiving a ḥadīth), which constitute the foundation of transmission, also vary in their levels of reliability. Some modes of transmission are based on qaṭ'i (definitive) knowledge, while others may involve an element of wahm (the possibility of error). Therefore, the determination of reliable narrations is only possible by knowing the identity of the transmitters, their moral and scholarly competence, and the manner in which they received the ḥadīth. According to Shāh Walī Allāh, this discipline is the science of isnād, and the key to the authenticity of ḥadīth lies in this knowledge.⁴⁵

Shāh Walī Allāh also presents an important chronology regarding the writing of ḥadīth. In the earliest period, the sayings of the Messenger of Allah were generally not committed to writing; the practice of recording ḥadīth began to gain significance around the middle of the first Islamic century, and systematic compilation activities emerged after the second century. This development led to the multiplication of isnāds and the diversification of transmission routes; consequently, ḥadīths were classified into categories such as mustafīḍ, mashhūr, ṣaḥīḥ, ḥasan, ḍa'if, and mursal. Such categorization, in turn, introduced various criteria for the acceptance or rejection of narrations and made evaluative standards indispensable. The entire process demonstrates that isnād is not only a theoretical necessity but also the very backbone of ḥadīth scholarship.

In this context, Shāh Walī Allāh emphasizes that isnād is a discipline unique to the Ummah of Muḥammad.⁴⁶ For such a meticulous discipline of scholarly transmission was granted to no other community. Thus, he regarded the science of isnād not only as a means of safeguarding the ḥadīth text but also as a trust and an honor specific to this Ummah.

44 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-İrshād ilā muhimmāt 'İlm al-İsnād*, 108.

45 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-İrshād ilā muhimmāt 'İlm al-İsnād*, 108.

46 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-İrshād ilā muhimmāt 'İlm al-İsnād*, 108.

3.3. The Source of Shāh Walī Allāh's Knowledge of Isnad: Abū Ṭāhir al-Kūrānī (d. 1145/1732)

During his stay in Medina, Shāh Walī Allāh stated that he had the opportunity to transmit ḥadīths from Abū Ṭāhir Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Kurdī al-Shāfi'ī (d. 1145/1733)⁴⁷, whom he praised for his scholarly excellence and about whom he remarked, "I have never seen anyone like him."⁴⁸ Sources relate such a profound interaction between Shāh Walī Allāh and his teacher Abū Ṭāhir that, when Shāh Walī Allāh was preparing to return from the Ḥijāz to his homeland of India, he went to his teacher to bid him farewell and to seek his blessings. On that occasion, Abū Ṭāhir recited the following couplet to Shāh Walī Allāh:

"I have forgotten every path I once knew, except the one that leads me to your dwelling" (نسيت كل طريق كنت أعرفه / الا يؤديني لربعم).⁴⁹

The depth of interaction and mutual affection between Shāh Walī Allāh and his teacher is reflected in Shāh Walī Allāh's works.⁵⁰ Although he acknowledged that he transmitted ḥadīths from other teachers in the Ḥaramayn during his stay in the Ḥijāz, it is noteworthy that in his autobiography he mentioned only the name of Abū Ṭāhir.⁵¹ This indicates that Abū Ṭāhir was the one who most deeply influenced his scholarly activity in the Ḥijāz and was the most authoritative figure in providing him with religious knowledge.⁵²

Shāh Walī Allāh acquired much of his knowledge concerning the science of isnād from Abū Ṭāhir, a Shāfi'ī traditionist of Medina and one of the foremost ḥadīth scholars of his time.⁵³

Shāh Walī Allāh studied with Abū Ṭāhir in the Prophet's Mosque (*al-Masjid al-Nabawī*), reading the entirety of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, al-Dārimī's *al-Musnad*, and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's *al-Musnad*, as well as portions of other major ḥadīth collections such as *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, al-Tirmidhī's *Sunan*, Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan*, Ibn Mājah's *Sunan*, and Mālik's *al-Muwattaʿ*. In addition, he studied with him works including al-Bukhārī's *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, al-Tirmidhī's *al-Shamā'il*, a section of Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's *al-Shifā'*, and al-Shāfi'ī's *al-Risāla*.⁵⁴

Some researchers, likely on the basis of Shāh Walī Allāh's study of *al-Risāla* with Abū Ṭāhir, have emphasized the juristic dimension of his scholarly activity in the Ḥijāz, sug-

47 al-Nadwī, *al-Imām al-Dihlawī*, 4/93; Sialkotī, *al-Imām al-mujaddid al-muḥaddith al-Shāh Waliyullah*, 29.

48 Jalbani, *Life of Shah*, 26.

49 Jalbani, *Life of Shah*, 29; Bashir Ahmad Dar, "Wali Allah: His Life and Times", *Shah Waliullah (1703- 1762): His Religious and Political Thought*, ed. M. Ikram Chaghatai (Lahor: Sang-e- Meel Publications, 2005), 33; al-Nadwī, *al-Imām al-Dihlawī*, 4/94.

50 Jalbani, *Life of Shah*, 29; al-Nadwī, *al-Imām al-Dihlawī*, 4/94; Sialkotī, *al-Imām al-mujaddid al-muḥaddith al-Shāh Waliyullah*, 29.

51 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Juz' al-latīf*, 6.

52 Jalbani, *Life of Shah*, 26.

53 Abū Ṭāhir was the youngest son of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī, one of the eminent ḥadīth scholars of the 17th century, who possessed profound knowledge in both jurisprudence and the Arabic language. He was born in Medina in 1670 and received his initial scholarly training under the guidance of his father. He later studied Shāfi'ī jurisprudence with the Egyptian scholar 'Alī al-Ṭulūnī, thereby consolidating his expertise in this field. Ömer Yılmaz, *İbrahim Kūrânî Hayatı, Eserleri ve Tasavvuf Anlayışı* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2005), 87-89.

54 al-Ḥasanī, *Nuzhat al-khawāṭir*, 3/859; Sialkotī, *al-Imām al-mujaddid al-muḥaddith al-Shāh Waliyullah*, 29.

gesting that in this way he gained the opportunity to acquire knowledge of Shāfi'ī jurisprudence.⁵⁵ During his sessions with his teacher Abū Ṭāhir, Shāh Walī Allāh stated that he studied *Lama'āt al-Tanqīh fī Sharḥ Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ* by 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Dihlawī⁵⁶—renowned in the Indian Subcontinent for his scholarly contributions in the field of ḥadīth—as well as *Ṭariq al-Ifāda*, his Persian commentary on al-Firūzabādī's *Sifr al-Sa'āda*, along with several other treatises whose titles he did not specify, and that he received *ijāzahs* for them from Abū Ṭāhir.⁵⁷

Shāh Walī Allāh personally studied with him the work *al-Amam li-īqāz al-himam* authored by Abū Ṭāhir's father, Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī, and transcribed a copy of it from his teacher's own handwriting.⁵⁸ He states that during the study sessions he attended with his teacher Abū Ṭāhir, he would read aloud the difficult passages of this manuscript, written in the teacher's own hand, and correct them under his supervision. Thus, he refers to a process of transmission carried out through mutual muqābala (collation), which included textual verification, clarification of problematic points, and the resolution of ambiguities.⁵⁹

It is reported that these lessons of Abū Ṭāhir were described as a process in which he himself learned the comprehension (dirāyah) of ḥadīths from Shāh Walī Allāh, while Shāh Walī Allāh, in turn, acquired from him the transmission (riwāyah) of ḥadīths.⁶⁰

In the relatively short period of lessons between Abū Ṭāhir and Shāh Walī Allāh, it is evident that the study of ḥadīth was placed at the center. Shāh Walī Allāh states that he learned from Abū Ṭāhir the science of isnād, which deals with the conditions of transmitters and the formulas of adā'/taḥammul. He further notes that he obtained from him the book *Maqālīd al-Asānīd*, and that whenever he encountered unresolved issues, he would refer to this work. In order to emphasize the importance of this discipline, Shāh Walī Allāh himself authored his valuable treatise *al-Irshād*. Information concerning the work shall be provided below.

55 Muztar, *Shah Wali Allah a Saint-Scholar of Muslim India*, 102; Jalbani, *Life of Shah*, 27; al-Nadwī, *al-Imām al-Dihlawī*, 4/156-157.

56 For the contributions of 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Dihlawī and his descendants to the dissemination of ḥadīth scholarship in the Indian Subcontinent, see Ramazan Çoban, "Abdülhak Dihlevî ve Neslinin Hint Alt-ıktası'nda Hadis İliminin Yayılmasına Katkıları", *Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 11/1 (30 June 2024), 389-412.

57 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *Ithāf al-nabih*, 134.

58 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *Ithāf al-nabih*, 20.

59 *al-Amam li-īqāz al-himam* (fī uṣūl al-ḥadīth) is a work compiled by the author in which he included reports uniquely transmitted (tafarrod) by theologians, Şūfis, historians, and traditionists. It represents the most extensive of his indexes. For these ḥadīths, he relied primarily on the early ḥadīth collections (kutub al-awā'il), from which he drew about one thousand traditions. The work also contains selected commentaries from various sources, and upon it there exists a ta'liq written by Shaykh Aḥmad Abū'l-Khayr. The author's son, Abū Ṭāhir, stated that al-Umam demonstrates the chains of transmission (aṣānid) of many ḥadīths found in widely used collections. His student, Shams al-Dīn al-Daqqāqī al-Dī-mashqī, remarked that the work was composed at a time when the practice of transmitting ḥadīths in the Muslim world with the formulae ḥaddathanā and akhbaranā had effectively come to an end. A. H. Johns describes it as one of al-Kūrānī's most important works, in which his intellectual capacity is most clearly displayed. The work was printed in Hyderabad in 1328/1910. Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt 'ilm al-Isnād*, 110.

60 Jalbani, *Life of Shah*, 27.

3.3.1. The First Layer of the Transmission Network between the Ḥijāz and India Formed through Shāh Walī Allāh's Teacher Abū Ṭāhir: Seven Prominent Scholars of the Ḥaramayn

Shāh Walī Allāh reports that through Abū Ṭāhir he was connected to seven renowned scholars of the Ḥaramayn. The chain of transmission consisting of these seven great teachers, from whom he benefited in his pursuit of knowledge, carries significant authority in terms of ḥadīth transmission both in the scholarly milieu of the Ḥaramayn and in India. Each of these figures is counted among the respected traditionists (muḥaddithūn) of their era, and they appear in the chains of transmission (isnād silsilah) of the works narrated by Shāh Walī Allāh.

The seven teachers, mentioned in *al-Irshād* in the following order, are:

1. Muḥammad b. al-‘Alā’ al-Bābilī (d. 1077/1666)⁶¹
2. ‘Īsā al-Maghribī al-Ja‘farī (d. 1080/1669)⁶²
3. Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Rūdānī (d. 1094/1683)⁶³
4. Ibrāhīm b. Ḥasan al-Kurdī al-Kūrānī (d. 1101/1690)⁶⁴
5. Ḥasan b. ‘Alī al-‘Ujaymī al-Makkī al-Ḥanafī (d. 1113/1701)⁶⁵
6. Abū’l-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Nakhli al-Makkī al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 1130/1718)⁶⁶
7. ‘Abd Allāh b. Sālīm al-Baṣrī al-Makkī al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 1134/1722).⁶⁷

In addition to the teachers of the Ḥaramayn, Abū Ṭāhir also benefited from scholars who had come to the Sacred Precincts from outside. In this context, he studied with Shaykh ‘Abd Allāh al-Lāhūrī (d. 1083/1673), a long-lived, ascetic, and Ṣūfī scholar. Through Shaykh ‘Abd Allāh al-Labīb (d. 1093/1683) who was the son of ‘Abd al-Ḥakīm al-Siyālkūtī (d. 1067/1657), al-Lāhūrī transmitted to him certain ḥadīth works of al-Siyālkūtī. ‘Abd al-Ḥakīm al-Siyālkūtī, in turn, had received these works directly from Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Dihlawī, thereby completing the chain of transmission (isnād). Thus, as a student of ‘Abd Allāh al-Lāhūrī, Abū Ṭāhir studied the works of al-Siyālkūtī and ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Dihlawī (d. 1052/1642), and transmitted them within this isnād lineage.⁶⁸

61 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimāt ‘ilm al-Isnād*, 111.

62 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimāt ‘ilm al-Isnād*, 112.

63 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimāt ‘ilm al-Isnād*, 113.

64 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimāt ‘ilm al-Isnād*, 114.

65 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimāt ‘ilm al-Isnād*, 114-115.

66 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimāt ‘ilm al-Isnād*, 115.

67 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimāt ‘ilm al-Isnād*, 116.

68 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *Ithāf al-nabih*, 291.

Figure 1: This chain represents a clear indication of the scholarly connections established between the intellectual centers of India and the Hıjāz. The transmission line shaped through Abū Ṭāhir stands as a manifest example of the scholarly bridge built between the academic milieu of the Hıjāz and that of India.

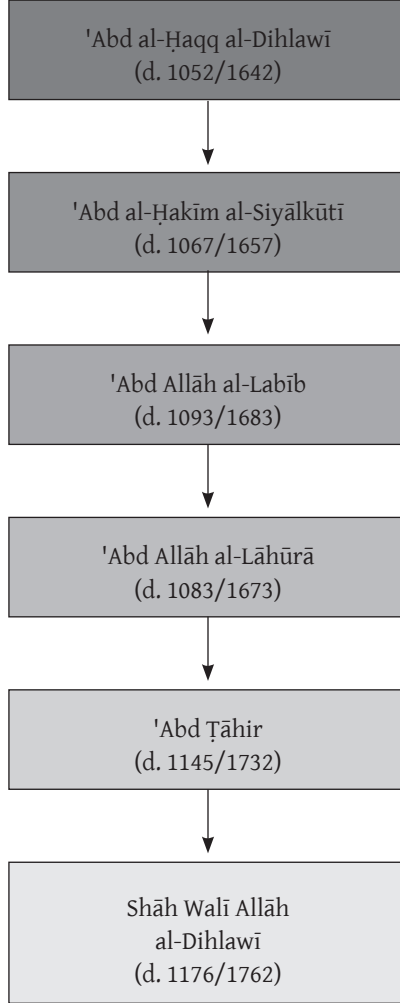
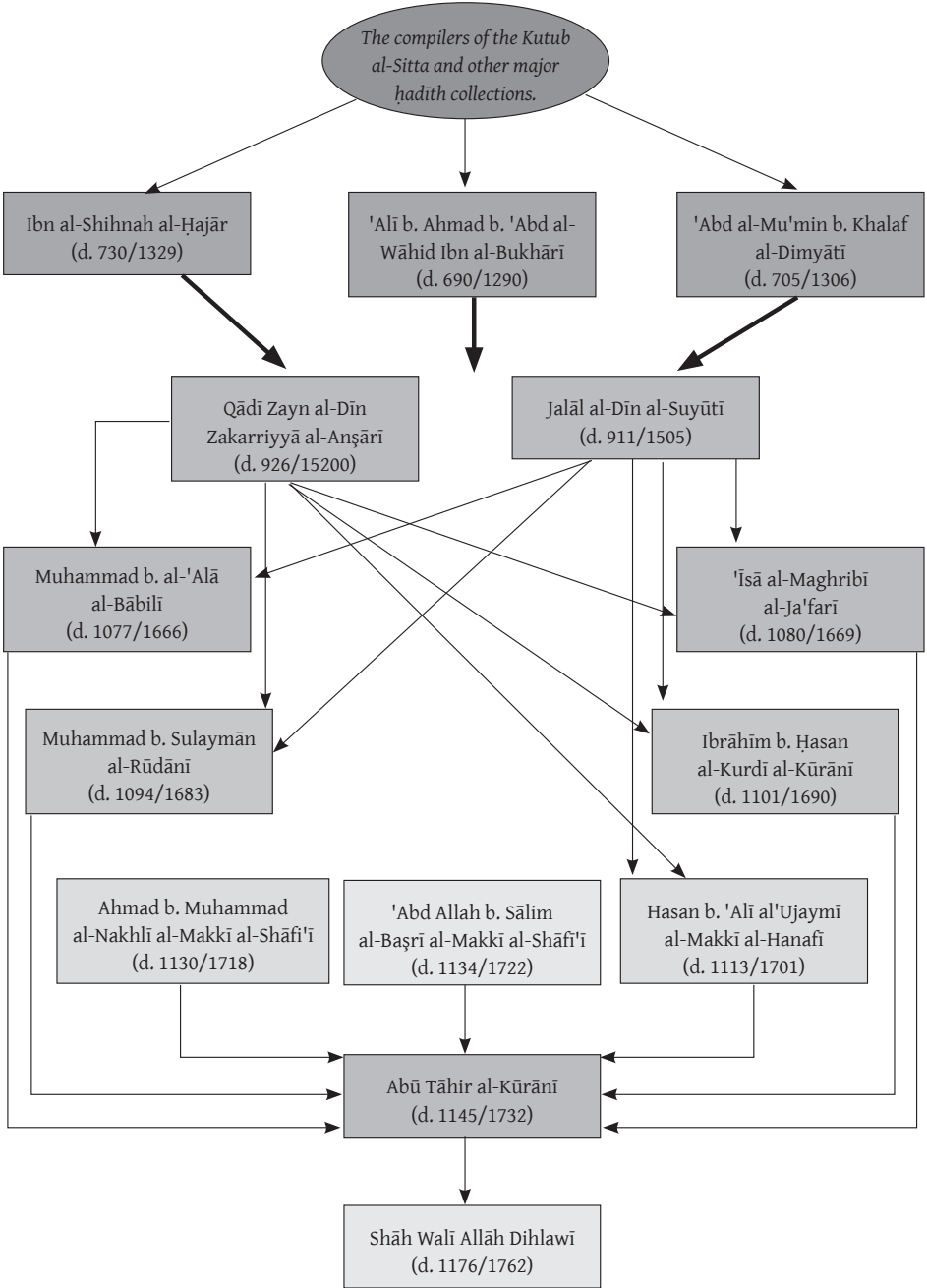


Figure 2: The First Layer of the Hījāz–India Transmission Network Formed through Shāh Walī Allāh's Teacher Abū Ṭāhir: Seven Prominent Scholars of the Ḥaramayn and the Subsequent Tiers Leading up to the Ḥadīth Compilers



3.3.2. The Second Layer of Shāh Walī Allāh's Isnād Chains

The second tier traces from these scholars back to two great Imams of the Islamic world, namely Qāḍī Zayn al-Dīn Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505).⁶⁹

3.3.3. The Third Layer of Shāh Walī Allāh's Isnād Chains

The third tier extends from these two Imams to Ibn al-Shiḥnah al-Ḥajjār (d. 730/1329), Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Wāḥid Ibn al-Bukhārī (d. 690/1290), 'Abd al-Mu'min b. Khalaf al-Dimyātī (d. 705/1306) and from them to the compilers of the *Kutub al-Sitta* and other major ḥadīth collections.⁷⁰

3.4. The Reflections of Shāh Walī Allāh's Isnād Chains in the Indian Subcontinent: Scholars Included in His Chain of Transmission

Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī played a central role in the revival of ḥadīth studies in the Indian Subcontinent. By systematizing the intellectual legacy initiated by 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Muḥaddith al-Dihlawī, he endowed it with a new dynamism at both the theoretical and practical levels. Through the ijāzas and isnāds he obtained from leading traditionists during his journey to the Ḥijāz, he transformed India into a focal center of ḥadīth scholarship. This intellectual heritage, institutionalized by his sons and students, soon became a foundational reference within the curricula of madrasas across India and Pakistan. Owing to his efforts in authentication, teaching, and transmission, ḥadīth isnāds reached a wide scholarly audience, and ḥadīth instruction acquired an established and systematic place in the curriculum of the Raḥīmiyya Madrasa.⁷¹ The journey to the Ḥijāz laid the groundwork for the adoption of an educational model in India that was heavily influenced by the scholarly tradition of the Ḥaramayn. This is evident from the fact that, in his classification of ḥadīth compilations, he placed *al-Muwatta'* at the top tier and accordingly positioned it at the beginning of the curriculum in his madrasa. He himself authored two commentaries on *al-Muwatta'*: one in Arabic (*al-Musawwā*) and the other in Persian (*al-Musaffā*).⁷²

Today, the Ahl-i Ḥadīth and Dēoband schools, which continue the ḥadīth tradition in India and Pakistan, trace their scholarly lineages directly back to Shāh Walī Allāh and regard themselves as his successors. These movements have preserved and transmitted his intellectual legacy through their isnāds and ijāza documents. Consequently, Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī is recognized as the madār al-isnād (axis of transmission) of the Indian Subcontinent and is remembered as one of the foremost traditionists who ensured the continuity of ḥadīth scholarship.⁷³

Let us now turn to the distinguished students included in Shāh Walī Allāh's chains of transmission, who played a pivotal role in the dissemination of ḥadīth scholarship throughout the Indian Subcontinent, as well as to the prominent representatives of his enduring

69 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt 'Ilm al-Isnād*, 111-122.

70 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt 'Ilm al-Isnād*, 137-144.

71 Özşenel, *Pakistan'da Hadis*, 81-82.

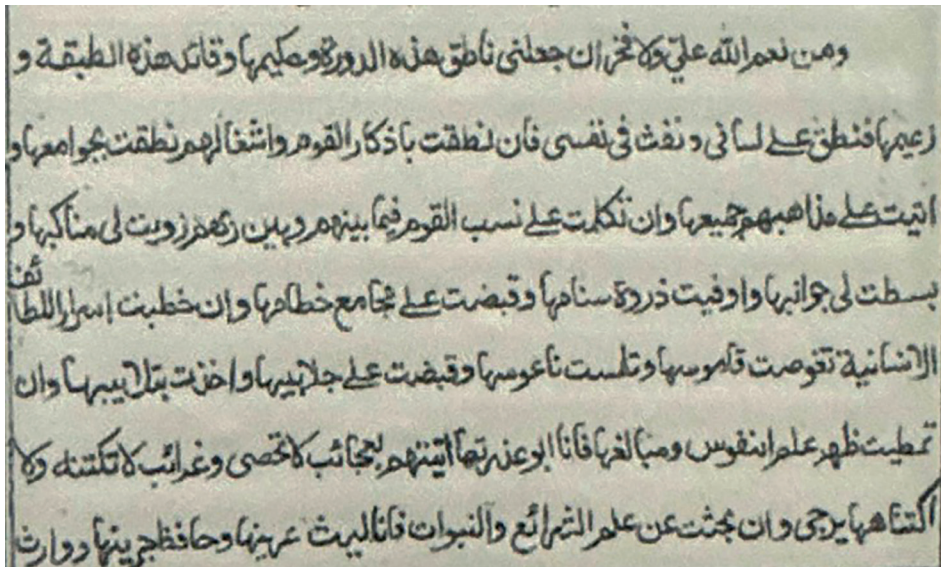
72 Jalbani, *Life of Shah*, 55.

73 Özşenel, *Pakistan'da Hadis*, 83.

ḥadīth legacy, transmitted through his son ‘Abd al-‘Azīz.

Among them, his cousin Shaykh Muḥammad Āshiq al-Puhletī (d. 1187/1773) stands out as Shāh Walī Allāh’s closest companion and most devoted disciple. He accompanied him during his journey to the Ḥijāz and benefited from him profoundly in both the exoteric (ẓāhirī) and esoteric (bāṭinī) sciences.⁷⁴ Shāh Walī Allāh’s sons completed, through him, the branches of knowledge and the spiritual grace (fayḍ) that had remained unfinished due to their father’s passing. Together with his father, ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Puhletī, he studied under Abū Ṭāhir al-Kūrānī and several other shaykhs in the Ḥaramayn. Indeed, Abū Ṭāhir mentioned his name in the ijāzah he issued for Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī.⁷⁵

Figure 3: An Excerpt from Shāh Walī Allāh’s Ijāzah Granted to Muḥammad Āshiq Puhletī



Muḥammad Amīn al-Kashmīrī al-Dihlawī (d. 1187/1773) was among the distinguished disciples of Shāh Walī Allāh. In the scholarly lineage that represented Shāh Walī Allāh’s intellectual legacy across the Indian Subcontinent, Shaykh Muḥammad Āshiq al-Puhletī occupied the first rank, while Shaykh Muḥammad Amīn al-Kashmīrī stood immediately after him. He was counted among Shāh Walī Allāh’s closest and most devoted students and took great pride in his association with his teacher, through which he became known by the *nisbah* “al-Dihlawī.” Shāh Walī Allāh composed several treatises specifically for him, and Muḥammad Amīn diligently preserved the knowledge he received from his master. After the death of Shāh Walī Allāh, his son Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dihlawī transmitted ḥadīths from

⁷⁴ He was instrumental in inspiring Shāh Walī Allāh to compose his celebrated work *Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha*. Among his own writings are *Sabīl al-Rashād*, *Sharḥ du‘ā’ al-I’tisām*, and *al-Qawl al-Jalī fī Manāqib al-Walī*. The last of these focuses on the life and virtues of Shāh Walī Allāh himself and, notably, was reviewed and approved by him during his lifetime. Sialkotī, *al-Imām al-mujaddid al-muḥaddith al-Shāh Waliyyullāh*, 51.

⁷⁵ Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Khalafalāḥ al-Firūzbūrī, *al-Nūr al-sā‘ī fī tadhkirat Walī Allāh: fī kitāb al-Irshād ilā muhimāt ‘ilm al-isnād wa bi-zaylihi al-Ta’liqāt al-jiyād ‘alā kitāb al-Irshād* (Riyadh: Dār al-Muḥaddith li-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī‘, 2022), 77.

Muḥammad Amīn and explicitly mentioned this in his work *al-‘Ujālah al-Nāfi‘ah*, considering this scholarly connection a matter of great honor.⁷⁶

Nūr Allāh al-Şiddiqī al-Burhānavī (d. 1188/1774) is mentioned as the third among Shāh Walī Allāh’s notable students. He was one of the leading scholars and traditionists of his time. For the pursuit of knowledge, he traveled to Delhi, where he attended Shāh Walī Allāh’s study circles. Even during the lifetime of his teacher, he had gained a reputation as a distinguished scholar. Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz studied ḥadīth and fiqh under him and narrated traditions on his authority. It is also reported that Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz was his son-in-law.⁷⁷

Sayyid Abū Sa‘īd b. Muḥammad Ḍiyā’ Allāh al-Ḥasanī al-Birelwī (d. 1193/1779) is mentioned as the fourth disciple and is recognized among the ‘ulamā’ al-rabbāniyyīn (God-conscious scholars). He first studied under Mullā ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Umīthawī during the reign of Aḥmad Shāh al-Dihlawī, and later traveled to Delhi to join the study circle of Shāh Walī Allāh. After the death of his teacher, he continued his studies with Shaykh Muḥammad Āshiq al-Puhletī and received ijāzah from him. The following statement appears in this ijāzah:

“I have granted him authorization to teach tafsīr, ḥadīth, and fiqh after he has studied the texts and consulted the commentaries. I have also conferred upon him the ijāzah for the works *al-Qawl al-Jalī* and *al-Intibāh ilā Salāsīl Awliyā’ Allāh*.”⁷⁸

Among the distinguished disciples of Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī was Jārullāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Panjābī al-Lāhawrī al-Madanī, who studied tafsīr, ḥadīth, and fiqh under his supervision with remarkable depth. He is known to have followed an extensive curriculum particularly in the study of ḥadīth.⁷⁹ Shāh Walī Allāh granted him authorization (ijāzah) after teaching him several of his own works, including *Ḥujjat Allāh al-bāligha*, *al-Musawwā*, and *al-Fawā’id al-kabīr*.⁸⁰ Another of his prominent students, Sanā’ Allāh al-Pānīpatī (d. 1225/1810), gained fame for his exegetical and ḥadīth scholarship, especially through his renowned work *Tafsīr al-Maẓharī*.⁸¹

Following the death of Shāh Walī Allāh, the most prominent figure who continued the tradition of ḥadīth instruction was his son, Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dihlawī (d. 1239/1824). For nearly sixty years, he taught the *Kutub al-Sitta* and authored numerous works in the fields of ḥadīth and tafsīr. His writings - *Tafsīr Faṭḥ al-‘Azīz*, *Bustān al-muḥaddithīn*, *‘Ujālah al-nāfi‘a*, and *Tuhfat al-ithnā‘ashariyya* - are regarded among the significant scholarly contributions of his era.⁸² During his formative years, Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz studied ḥadīth both under his father and under Sayyid Muḥammad Āshiq Puhletī (d. 1187/1773), who had accompanied Shāh Walī Allāh to the Hījāz and studied there, as well as under several other teachers.

76 al-Firūzbūrī, *al-Nūr al-sā‘ī*, 78.

77 al-Firūzbūrī, *al-Nūr al-sā‘ī*, 78.

78 al-Firūzbūrī, *al-Nūr al-sā‘ī*, 78.

79 Ahmet Aydın, *Şah Veliyyullah ed-Dihlevî ve Dihlevîlik* (Istanbul: Marmara University, Institute of Social Sciences, PhD Dissertation, 2013), 61.

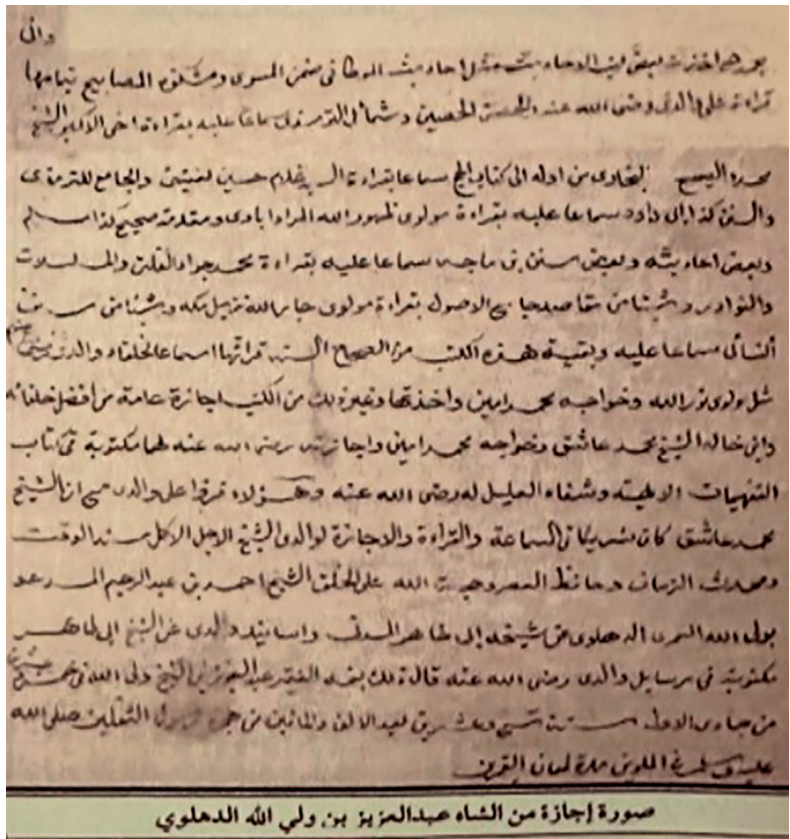
80 For the full text of the ijāzah granted by Shāh Walī Allāh to his student Jārullāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, see Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt ‘ilm al-Isnād*, 246-248.

81 Sialkotī, *al-Imām al-mujaddid al-muḥaddith al-Shāh Waliyyullah*, 52.

82 al-Nadwī, *al-Imām al-Dihlawī*, 4/268.

He obtained ijāzahs (authorizations) for various ḥadīth collections, which explains why a substantial portion of the ḥadīth transmission chains (isnāds) in the Indian Subcontinent trace back to him.⁸³

Figure 4: The Ijāzah Record of Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz



Through his numerous students, these isnāds spread across the entire Subcontinent, and during his tenure, the Rāḥimiyya Madrasa came to be known as Madrasat al-‘Azīziyya. His brothers - Shāh Rafī‘ al-Dīn (d. 1233/1818), Shāh ‘Abd al-Qādir (d. 1230/1815) and Shāh ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Dihlawī (d. 1203/1788) continued this legacy. By developing a curriculum grounded in Qur’ānic and ḥadīth-centered education, they played a decisive role in shaping the Rāḥimiyya Madrasa into the first Dār al-Ḥadīth of the Indian Subcontinent.⁸⁴

The graduates of this institution contributed significantly to the dissemination of Islamic sciences—particularly tafsīr and ḥadīth—through the new schools they established across various regions. They also preserved and propagated Shāh Walī Allāh’s intellectual heritage and transmission chains throughout the Subcontinent. Consequently, many later

83 Abdulhamit Birışık, *Hind Altkitası Düşünce ve Tefsir Ekolleri* (Istanbul: MÜ İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları (İFAV), 2019), 71.

84 al-Firūzbūrī, *al-Nūr al-sā‘ī*, 80.

scholarly and intellectual movements sought to associate themselves with the tradition represented by this madrasa in order to attain legitimacy both among the 'ulamā' and the broader Muslim society.⁸⁵

Shāh 'Abd al-'Aziz's foremost disciple and grandson, Shāh Muḥammad Ishāq al-Dihlawī (d. 1262/1846), played a pioneering role in the teaching of ḥadīth both in India and the Hījāz. After migrating to Mecca, he devoted himself to the instruction of the *Kutub al-Sitta* and granted ijāzahs to numerous scholars.⁸⁶ Among his notable students was Aḥmad 'Alī al-Sahāranpūrī (d. 1297/1880), one of the founding figures of the Dār al-'Ulūm Deoband. Aḥmad 'Alī studied ḥadīth under Muḥammad Ishāq and later established the Maṭba'at Aḥ-madiyya in Delhi, where he published critical and verified editions of major ḥadīth works such as *Şaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, and *Mishkāt al-Maṣābiḥ*, thereby setting the academic standards for ḥadīth education in modern India.⁸⁷

This scholarly chain was subsequently continued by Shaykh 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Mujaddidī (d. 1296/1879) and his disciples, who served as vital links in preserving and disseminating Shāh Walī Allāh's ḥadīth isnāds throughout the region.⁸⁸ Among the students of Aḥmad 'Alī al-Sahāranpūrī and 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Mujaddidī were two of the most influential founders of the Deoband school: Muḥammad Qāsim al-Nānawtawī (d. 1297/1880) and Rashīd Aḥmad al-Gangohī (d. 1324/1906), both of whom carried forward the intellectual and spiritual legacy of the Walī Allāhī tradition in the Indian Subcontinent.⁸⁹

By the late nineteenth century, Shaykh Nazīr Ḥusayn al-Dihlawī (d. 1320/1902) had emerged as a central figure in the continuation of the ḥadīth transmission chain inherited from Muḥammad Ishāq al-Dihlawī. Having studied with him for fourteen years, he transmitted ḥadīth through the isnāds he received from his teacher. Shaykh Nazīr Ḥusayn obtained ijāzahs from eminent ḥadīth scholars of both Indian and Hījāzī origin and trained thousands of students during his lifetime.⁹⁰ Among his distinguished disciples were notable figures such as Shams al-Ḥaqq al-'Azīmābādī (d. 1329/1911), author of *'Awn al-Ma'būd*; 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī (d. 1353/1935), author of *Tuḥfat al-Aḥwadhī*; Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Mawlawī (d. 1336/1920), founder of the *Ishā'at al-Sunna* journal; and Wahīd al-Zamān Khān (d. 1338/1919), who translated the major ḥadīth collections into Urdu.⁹¹

In conclusion, the chain of ḥadīth scholarship that originated with Shāh Walī Allāh and was carried forward by his son 'Abd al-'Aziz and his grandson Muḥammad Ishāq continued unbroken into the late nineteenth century. Through this intellectual lineage, the Deoband and Ahl-i Ḥadīth movements took shape, and this scholarly chain played a decisive role in the revival and institutionalization of ḥadīth studies in the Indian Subcontinent.

85 Abdulhamit Birişik, "Hint alt-kıtasında İslâm araştırmalarının dünü bugünü: Kurumlar, ilmî faaliyetler, şahıslar, eserler", *Dîvân İlmî Araştırmalar* 17 (2004), 100.

86 al-Firūzbūrī, *al-Nūr al-sā'ī*, 81.

87 al-Firūzbūrī, *al-Nūr al-sā'ī*, 82.

88 al-Firūzbūrī, *al-Nūr al-sā'ī*, 83.

89 Özşenel, *Pakistan'da Hadis*, 93.

90 al-Firūzbūrī, *al-Nūr al-sā'ī*, 84-86.

91 Mehmet Özşenel, "Nezîr Hüseyin", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 2007), 33/74.

Figure 5: The Ijāzah Record of Naẓīr Ḥusayn from Muḥammad Ishāq

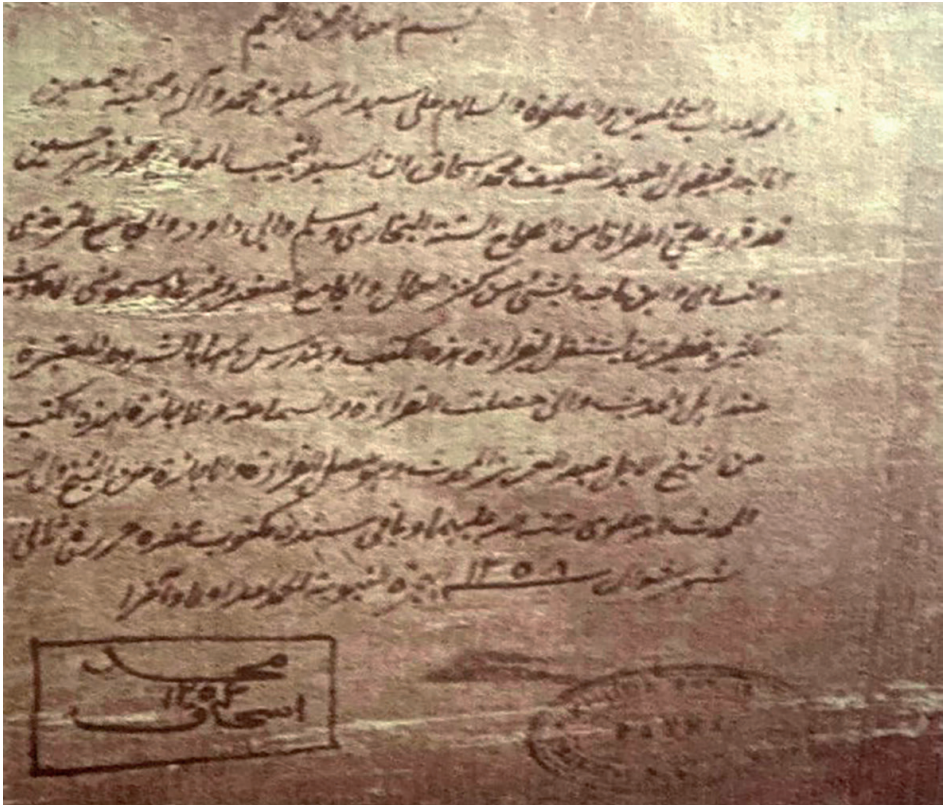
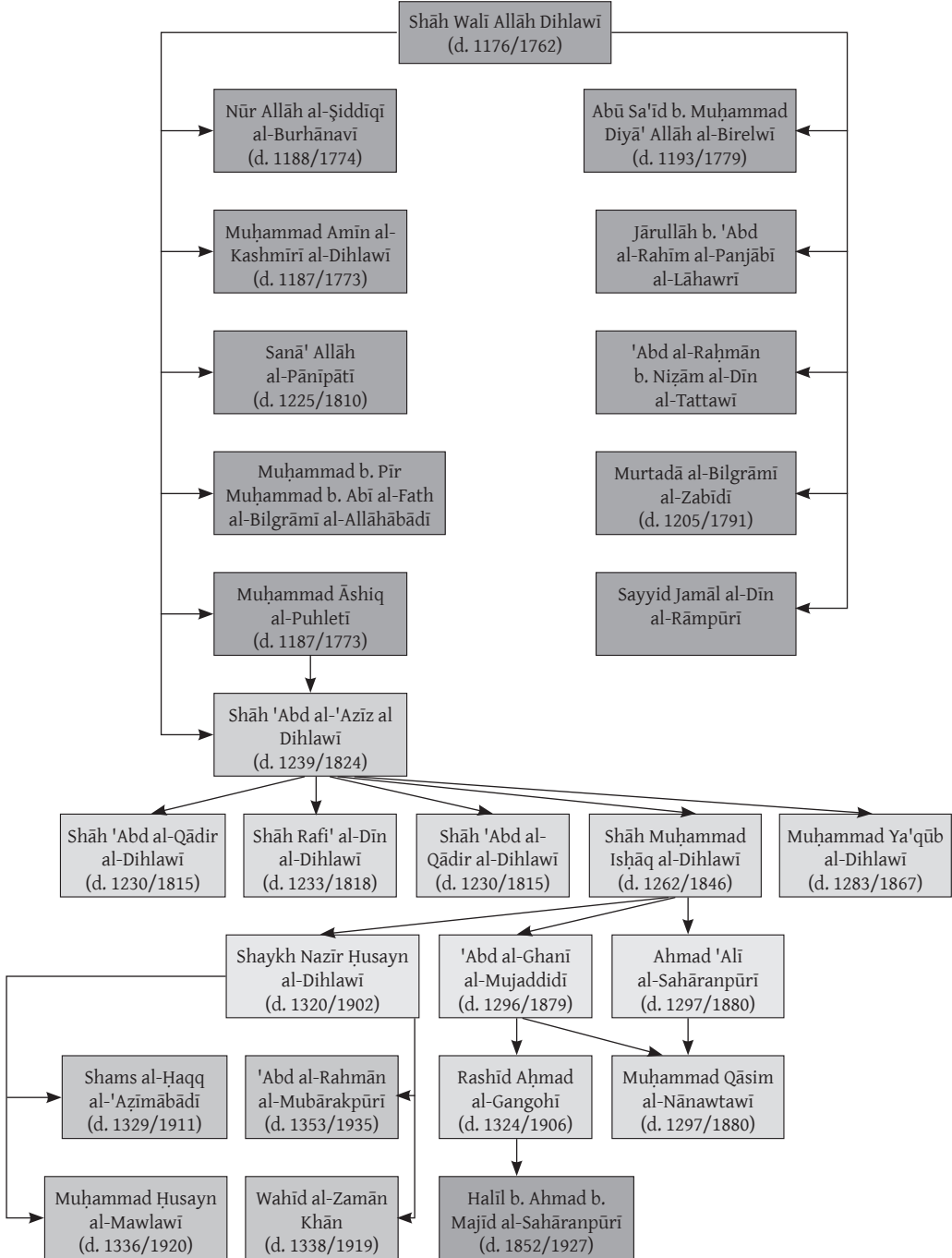


Figure 6: The General Dissemination of Shāh Walī Allāh's Isnād Chains across the Indian Sub-continent



3.5. His Work on Isnād: *al-Irshād*

3.5.1. The Purpose of Composition of the Work and Its Place within the Tradition of Ḥadīth Transmission

Every muḥaddith possessed a list of shaykhs covering his transmissions, and this system, passed down from the earliest generations, led to the compilation of works such as the musnads and jawāmi‘, thereby ensuring the preservation of the religion. Successive generations maintained this tradition, and major scholars of the second millennium of Islam continued this endeavor with great diligence.

As a common practice among muḥaddiths and musnids, it was customary to compile and record the ḥadīths they transmitted along with the names of the shaykhs from whom they had received them. These authorizations (ijāzāt) were obtained through direct encounters such as audition (samā‘ and qirā’a), through scholarly journeys (riḥla), or by means of correspondence (mukātaba).⁹² For this purpose, they composed independent treatises or larger works. In such writings, they arranged the chains of transmission (isnāds) and the sources of the traditions they narrated in an orderly manner, thereby establishing them as authenticated within their scholarly authority. These compilations also served as documentary evidence when granting permission to transmit ḥadīths to those who studied under them, attended their sessions, or requested authorization. In these works, authors would list the names of their teachers, their isnāds, the traditions they had heard directly, or sometimes the transmissions they had obtained from a single shaykh. At times, they also included the names of their fellow students and disciples, often organized alphabetically. These compilations were authored in various literary forms, sometimes under the title of asbāṭ or sabat (lists of transmissions), sometimes as mashyakhāt (catalogues of shaykhs), at times as mu‘jam al-shuyūkh (alphabetical indices of teachers), or as fahāris (indexes) and barnāmij (reading curricula).⁹³

Among the prominent ḥadīth scholar, the versatile scholar ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī (d. 1886–1962) states:

“Through careful investigation and prolonged observation, I came to realize that in earlier times, ḥadīth scholars referred to the booklets in which they gathered the names of their shaykhs and the ḥadīths transmitted from them as mashyakhah. Later, because the names of the shaykhs in these booklets were arranged alphabetically, such works began to be called mu‘jam (dictionary of shaykhs). Thus, the terms mu‘jam and mashyakhāt became prevalent. The scholars of al-Andalus referred to this genre as barnāmaj, while in later times the term asbāṭ or sabat came to be used in the Eastern Islamic lands, and in the Western Islamic lands (the Maghrib) it became known as fahrasa (index).”⁹⁴

Among the important works produced in this tradition are: *Naṭr al-Ma’āṭir fīman adrak-tuhum min al-qarn al-‘āshir* by Ibrāhīm b. Burhān al-Dīn al-Laḳānī (d. 1041/1632); *Maqālīd al-Asānīd* by ‘Isā al-Maghribī (d. 1080/1669); *Ṣīlat al-Khalaf* by Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Maghribī (d. 1094/1683); *Bughyat al-Ṭālibīn fī bayān al-mashāyikh al-muḥaqqiqīn* by Aḥmad b.

92 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt ‘ilm al-Isnād*, 14.

93 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt ‘ilm al-Isnād*, 14.

94 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt ‘ilm al-Isnād*, 14.

Muḥammad al-Nakhlī (d. 1130/1718); *al-İmdād bi-ma'rifat ʿuluww al-isnād* by ʿAbd Allāh b. Sālīm al-Başrī (d. 1134/1722), compiled by his son Sālīm b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Başrī; *al-Umam li-ıqāz al-himam* by İbrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1101/1690); *Qatf al-Thamar fi rafʿ asānīd al-muşannaḫāt fi'l-funūn wa'l-āthār* by Şālih b. Muḥammad al-Maghribī al-Fullānī (d. 1218/1803); *İttiḥāf al-funūn wa'l-āthār* by Şālih b. Muḥammad al-Kabīr (d. 1188/1774); *İthāf al-akābir bi-isnād al-dafātir* by al-Shawkānī (d. 1255/1839); *al-ʿUjālah al-nāfiʿah* by Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Dihlawī (d. 1239/1824); *Silsilat al-ʿuscud fi dhikr mashāyikh al-sinad* by Şiddīq Ḥasan Khān al-Qannawjī (d. 1307/1890); *al-Maktūb al-laṭif ilā'l-muḥaddith al-sharīf* by Shams al-Ḥaqq al-ʿAzīmābādī (d. 1329/1911); and *al-Durr al-manẓūd fi asānīd Shaykh al-Hind Maḥmūd* by Muḥammad Shafīʿ al-Diyūbandī (d. 1396/1976).

At times, such works were authored directly by the shaykh himself, while at other times they were compiled by his students or by other scholars specialized in this field. These works were transmitted through isnād to later generations, ensuring that scholars safeguarded their transmissions by means of this method. Among the valuable treatises composed in this discipline is *al-Irshād ilā muḥimmāt ʿilm al-Isnād*, authored by Shāh Walī Allāh. *Al-Irshād* is a treatise composed by al-Dihlawī upon his return from the pilgrimage (Delhi, 1889). It is also recorded that the author wrote, on this subject, a Persian treatise entitled *Risāla-i Basīṭa fi'l-asānīd*.⁹⁵

This work of Shāh Walī Allāh, which encompasses his chains of transmission (isnāds), holds a distinguished place within the mashyakha tradition. This is because the ijāzahs of scholars in the Indian Subcontinent revolve around this work, and the isnād chains of those scholars ultimately converge upon its author, Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī. Indeed, this text represents a work of great significance. As ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī remarks regarding Shāh Walī Allāh and this treatise:

“This figure, through his knowledge, practice, and reputation, was an exceptional scholar among the scholars of the later period. By means of him, his children, his daughter’s descendants, and his students, Allah Almighty revived the ḥadīth and the Sunnah in the land of India. In those regions, scholarly circles and isnāds became centered around his works and his transmission chains.”⁹⁶

In addition to Abū Ṭāhir al-Kūrānī, Shāh Walī Allāh also received and transmitted narrations from the following scholars:

Ibn ʿAqīlah, Muḥammad Wafī Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Rūdānī al-Makkī and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad al-Nakhlī—these two being among his rare teachers—as well as his teacher with the highest isnād, Tāj al-Dīn al-Qalʿī (d. 1149/1736), Sālīm b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Başrī, and several others.⁹⁷

3.5.2. The Content of the Work

Although this treatise, as its title suggests, presents a concise nature, it encompasses

⁹⁵ Erdoğan, “Şah Veliyyullah”, 38/261.

⁹⁶ Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥayy b. ʿAbd al-Kabīr b. Muḥammad al-Ḥasanī al-İdrīsī al-Kattānī, *Fihris al-fahāris wa'l-asbāt wa-muʿjam al-maʿājim wa'l-mashaykhāt wa'l-musalsalāt*, ed. İhsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-İslāmī, 1982), 178.

⁹⁷ Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muḥimmāt ʿilm al-Isnād*, 15; Dar, “His Life and Times”, 33.

numerous benefits due to its emphasis on the importance of the science of isnād and its inclusion of Shāh Walī Allāh's own chains of transmission. Nonetheless it is observed that the treatise does not engage in a methodological discussion of the science of isnād. The fact that his teacher, Abū Ṭāhir, had authored an independent work on the subject - *Maqālīd al-Asānīd* - may be considered one of the likely reasons why Shāh Walī Allāh did not undertake a separate, in-depth treatment of this field.⁹⁸

In conclusion, the treatise draws attention to the significance of transmitting ḥadīths with full chains of narration (isnād), and includes the chains he acquired during his stay in the Ḥijāz.

Shāh Walī Allāh organized the treatise into three tiers:

1. The first tier comprises his own chains of transmission linking him to the scholars of the Ḥaramayn of his time.⁹⁹
2. The second tier traces from these scholars back to two great Imams of the Islamic world, namely Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520) and al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505).¹⁰⁰
3. The third tier extends from these two Imams to Ibn al-Shiḥnah al-Ḥajjār (d. 730/1329), Ibn al-Bukhārī (d. 690/1290), and al-Dimyāṭī (d. 705/1306) and from them to the compilers of the *Kutub al-Sitta* and other major ḥadīth collections.¹⁰¹

Finally, in his work, Shāh Walī Allāh devoted a separate section to enumerating in detail the books for which he had received authorization (ijāza) of transmission from his teacher.¹⁰²

3.5.3. Methodological Approaches in the Verification (taḥqīq) of *al-Irshād* and the Manuscripts Employed

Before delving into the subject matter, the rationale behind the inclusion of this section in the present article may be stated as follows:

The central argument of this study is that Shāh Walī Allāh's identity as a musnid served as a bridge that ensured the sound and uninterrupted transmission of religious knowledge along the Ḥaramayn-India axis. This claim gains scholarly legitimacy through the documentation of relevant transmission chains (asānīd), ijāza records, audition notes (samā'āt), transcription traces, and textual variants. For this reason, it is important to provide a brief introduction to the methodology followed in the verification of *al-Irshād* and to the manuscript and printed copies utilized in the process.

Accordingly, this section may be regarded as forming a foundation for the article's central thesis by offering both evidentiary support and a framework for scholarly validation.

In the manuscript copies as well as in the author's own introduction, the title of the work appears as *al-Irshād*. However, in the printed editions, it has been recorded under the

98 Aydın, *Şah Veliyyullah ed-Dihlevî ve Dihlevîlik*, 2013, 44.

99 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt 'ilm al-Isnād*, 111-122.

100 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt 'ilm al-Isnād*, 123-136.

101 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt 'ilm al-Isnād*, 137-144.

102 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt 'ilm al-Isnād*, 145-201.

slightly different title *al-İrshād*. The first serious scholarly attempt at editing this treatise was undertaken by the late Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abduḥ al-Falāḥ al-Firūzbūrī (d. 1420/1999). He examined the work with great care and produced its first edition in 1379/1959. Later, he revised his study, prepared its typesetting, and brought it to completion. However, before he could publish the second edition, he passed away in 1420/1999. In the same year, during a visit, the editor had access to the Shaykh’s manuscripts and notes. On this occasion, he examined the work thoroughly from beginning to end, carefully reviewing the annotations and commentaries. He carried out the necessary corrections, completed the missing aspects, and reorganized the study in accordance with scholarly standards, thereby preparing it for publication.¹⁰³

According to the editor’s notes, in order to establish the text in a reliable manner, the critical edition process was based primarily on the manuscript copies. The text was carefully reviewed by collating these manuscripts, and it was further compared with the earlier printed editions as well as with the copy preserved by the author’s own teacher. In addition, the textual variations among the manuscripts were identified, explanatory notes were added where clarification was required, and thus the work was brought to completion.¹⁰⁴

When it comes to the introduction of the manuscript copies upon which the critical edition of *al-İrshād* is based, it is evident that establishing a text in a sound manner is of great importance for ensuring the reliability of the scholarly content it contains. According to the editor’s statement, the edition relied primarily on manuscript copies, with the text being carefully checked against them. Furthermore, comparisons were made with earlier printed editions, and textual variations were identified. Explanatory notes were also inserted in places where clarification was deemed necessary, and thus the process of verification was brought to completion. The principal manuscript copies on which the edition is based are as follows:

Among the manuscript copies relied upon in the critical edition, the first in importance is the Ebu’l-Khayr al-‘Attār copy. Preserved in the Library of Aligarh Muslim University in India, this manuscript is indicated in the edition with the siglum “ع” The editor considered this copy the principal basis of the edition, while also paying particular attention to the marginal notes appended to certain sections of the text. Secondly, a manuscript housed at King Saud University was examined. This copy, dating from a relatively later period, is written in an elegant naskh script. Registered under number 1369, it originates from the private collection of the Meccan ḥadīth scholar Shaykh Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sunayyī. In the critical edition, this manuscript is represented by the siglum “ح” and includes explanatory marginalia at various points. The third significant source is the copy transcribed personally by the late ‘Allāmah Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Mashshāt. Preserved in the Mashshāt Collection within the Makkah Library, this manuscript contains marginal notes in the author’s hand as well as corrections made by another scribe. Throughout the edition, it is designated by the siglum “ش”. On this manuscript, an ijāzah dated 1353 AH/1935 CE, issued by Muḥammad Idrīs al-Kandahlawī to al-Mashshāt for this work as well as for certain other texts, is also recorded. Similarly, another ijāzah granted in the same year on behalf of

103 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-İrshād ilā muḥimmāt ‘İlm al-İsnād*, 15.

104 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-İrshād ilā muḥimmāt ‘İlm al-İsnād*, 16.

al-Mashshāt by Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Bāqī al-Ayyūbī al-Madanī is included. In addition, at the end of the manuscript appears yet another ijāzah text, first written in the hand of ‘Ubayd Allāh b. al-Islām al-Sindī, and subsequently in that of al-Dihlawī.¹⁰⁵

The editor also examined a typewritten copy attributed to Muḥammad Yāsīn al-Fādānī among the manuscripts used for this critical edition. This copy appears in the author’s work *Silsilat qurraṭ al-‘ayn fī ijāzat al-ustādhayn* and, in terms of content, seems to have been transcribed from the al-Mashshāt manuscript. His conclusion rests on the fact that the marginal annotations (ta‘līqāt) present in both copies are identical, and that they are clearly attributable to al-Mashshāt himself without reference to any other source. This manuscript was designated by the siglum “ن”.

In addition, he made use of an old Indian print published at the Ahmadi Press under the supervision of Aḥmad Ḥasan Khān and at the request of Shaykh Abū’l-Ḥabīb Maḥbūb Aḥmad. This edition contains useful marginal notes signed under the name “Abū Muḥammad.” In the apparatus it was represented by the siglum “هـ”. The editor also evaluated a handwritten copy preserved in the private library of Muḥibb Allāh Shāh b. Iḥsān Allāh Shāh al-Rāshidī al-Ḥusaynī al-Sindī. This manuscript appears to have been transcribed directly from the aforementioned Indian print, since the annotations in both copies correspond exactly. This copy was given the symbol “حب”. Moreover, the editor made comparative use of two different printed editions. The first is the edition prepared by Dr. Badr b. ‘Alī b. Tāmī al-‘Uṭaybī, published by Dār al-Āfāq in 1430/2009, which was assigned the siglum “ط”. The second is the edition critically edited by Dr. Muḥammad Rafīq al-Ḥusaynī, based on the copy belonging to Shaykh ‘Abd Allāh al-Ṣiddiqī. This latter edition was transcribed directly from the manuscript of Shaykh Ḥasan al-Mashshāt. The complete agreement between the copies and the editor’s own testimony confirms this relationship. This edition was represented with the siglum “رف”.¹⁰⁶

In addition to these, the editor also made use of certain passages found in the author’s work *Ithāf*, consulting them in comparison with the present treatise. Furthermore, he obtained another manuscript copy preserved in Aligarh and collated the relevant sections with this version as well.¹⁰⁷

During the verification process, he meticulously reviewed the second copy belonging to his late teacher, Abū’l-Qāsim Muḥammad ‘Abduhu’l-Falāḥ al-Fayrūzbūrī, carefully correcting the text, making necessary emendations, and adding certain explanations into the text with the note qultu (“I said”). He also pointed out gaps he had identified in some chains of transmission, included annotations concerning isnāds, and incorporated various scholarly benefits into the study. In addition, he compiled the biographies of the personalities mentioned in the work and authored a comprehensive introduction dealing with the importance of the science of isnād. In accordance with the nature of this study, the editor also provided a medium-length biography of his teacher, Abū’l-Qāsim al-Fayrūzbūrī, highlighting his scholarly persona. Thereafter, he presented the chains of transmission that he had

105 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt ‘ilm al-Isnād*, 16.

106 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt ‘ilm al-Isnād*, 17.

107 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt ‘ilm al-Isnād*, 17.

received through this teacher as well as through other reliable authorities, arranging them according to proper isnād order. The work begins with a preface authored by the editor's teacher. Following this, a rare biography of Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī is included, covering his life, family, teachers, and students. The author titled this biography *al-Nūr al-sā'ī fī tadhkirat waliyyi Ilāhī*. Furthermore, he appended his teacher's remarks and explanations under the title *al-Ta'liqāt al-jiyād 'alā kitāb al-Irshād*. In the final section, the work contains chains of authorization (ijāzāt) extending from Shāh Walī Allāh up to the editor's own time. These ijāzāt were regarded as a highly valuable resource for establishing isnād sequences accurately and for the benefit of those who wished to engage in ḥadīth transmission. The author also personally transcribed the manuscript copies of the work and appended them to the end of the book. Along with these, he included biographical notes of certain transmitters, scholarly annotations, and illustrations related to the people of isnād. He collectively referred to all these contributions under the title *al-Izdiād 'alā kitāb al-Irshād*. In this manner, the valuable treatise was enriched both textually and substantively, thereby acquiring the status of a highly reliable scholarly source.¹⁰⁸

These ijāza records demonstrate that the value of the work lies not only in its scholarly significance but also in its importance for preserving the chains of transmission. As a result of the editor's dedicated efforts, both the most authentic version of the text has been produced and its scholarly transmission line documented.

Conclusion

Within the framework of ḥadīth scholarship, it is evident that Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī attached special importance to the science of transmission (‘ilm al-riwāya). He observed that few competent scholars remained in this field and stated that he had learned the science of isnād from Abū Ṭāhir al-Kūrānī during his stay in the Hījāz. With the aim of compiling his transmission chains, he authored a concise treatise entitled *al-Irshād*. Although the treatise does not explore the methodological aspects of the discipline in detail, it repeatedly emphasizes the significance of transmitting ḥadīths with full and reliable chains of narration. The fact that his teacher Abū Ṭāhir had already written an independent work on isnād (*Maqālīd al-Asānīd*) may explain why Shāh Walī Allāh did not pursue a separate, methodological study of the subject.

The first tier of Shāh Walī Allāh's transmission chains consists of seven prominent scholars of the Ḥaramayn: Muḥammad al-Bābīlī, ‘Isā al-Maghribī, al-Rūdānī, Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī, al-‘Ujaymī, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Nakhlī, and ‘Abd Allāh b. Sālīm al-Baṣrī. The second tier traces back from these teachers to two great imams of the Islamic world, Zayn al-Dīn Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī. The third tier extends from these two imams to Ibn al-Shiḥna al-Ḥajjār, Ibn al-Bukhārī, and al-Dimyāṭī, and ultimately to the compilers of the *Kutub al-Sitta* and other major ḥadīth collections.

Shāh Walī Allāh came to be regarded as the principal source of isnāds in the Indian Subcontinent. For this reason, he has been described as “Musnid al-Hind” or “Madār al-Isnād fī'l-Hind”, meaning “the central authority through whom the ḥadīth transmission chains

108 Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *al-Irshād ilā muhimmāt 'ilm al-Isnād*, 18.

of India converge.” During his journey to the Ḥijāz, he transmitted the ḥadīth legacy he received from Abū Ṭāhir al-Kūrānī back to India, where it spread rapidly through his sons and students. The scholarly circles and transmission networks (asānīd) of the Subcontinent gradually developed around his chains of transmission, leading to the consolidation of a Ḥaramayn-centered intellectual tradition in India. As a result, *al-Muwaṭṭaʿ* came to occupy the foremost place in ḥadīth instruction.

The chain of ḥadīth scholarship initiated by Shāh Walī Allāh continued through his student Muḥammad Āshiq al-Puhletī, his son ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dihlawī, and his grandson Muḥammad Ishāq al-Dihlawī, extending well into the late nineteenth century. Through this lineage emerged two major intellectual movements—the Dēoband and Ahl-i Ḥadīth schools. Among Muḥammad Ishāq’s students, Naẓīr Ḥusayn al-Dihlawī, ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Mujaddidī, and Aḥmad ‘Alī al-Sahāranpūrī played a decisive role in disseminating ḥadīth learning across the Subcontinent.

This scholarly lineage developed along two principal lines: Naẓīr Ḥusayn became one of the founding figures of the Ahl-i Ḥadīth movement, whose influence continues to this day. From his circle emerged such distinguished scholars as Shams al-Ḥaqq al-‘Azīmābādī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakpūrī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Mawlawī, and Wahīd al-Zamān Khān. The transmission line descending through ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Mujaddidī and Aḥmad ‘Alī al-Sahāranpūrī, on the other hand, reached the founders of the Dēoband school—Muḥammad Qāsim al-Nānawtawī and Rashīd Aḥmad al-Gangohī—who carried forward this intellectual and spiritual legacy.

In conclusion, the isnāds Shāh Walī Allāh inherited from the Ḥaramayn became a lasting intellectual legacy in the Indian Subcontinent through his sons and descendants. This legacy has endured to the present day through the scholarly and institutional traditions of the Ahl-i Ḥadīth and Dēoband schools, ensuring the continued vitality of the ḥadīth tradition that Shāh Walī Allāh so devotedly revived.

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