

Book Review

‘Abd al-Raḥmān Maḥjūbī, *Al-Muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīthī min khilāl Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-al-ta‘dīl li-Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (240-327 H)* [Ḥadīth terms by way of Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-al-ta‘dīl by Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī]. *Baḥṭh li-nayl al-duktūrāh fī al-dirāsāt al-islāmīyah* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1432/2011), 474 pages.

Christopher Melchert

University of Oxford

(christopher.melchert@orinst.ox.ac.uk)

This is evidently an edition of Maḥjūbī’s doctoral dissertation from around 2003, under the direction of Muḥammad al-Ṣiqillī al-Ḥusaynī, presumably in Fez. It is a highly systematic survey of hadith terminology in Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s huge biographical dictionary, *al-Jarḥ wa-al-ta‘dīl*. About half of his entries include an evaluation of the person’s hadith transmission, especially (in descending order of frequency) from his father, Abū Ḥātim (d. 277/890), Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn (d. 233/848), Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), and Abū Zur‘ah al-Rāzī (d. 264/878). Maḥjūbī takes one term after another and gives first its dictionary (non-technical) definition, then its technical meaning, its appearance in prophetic hadith, if any, then the way it is used in *al-Jarḥ wa-al-ta‘dīl*.

This study will be useful principally as a reference, so that if one comes across an odd term, one can look it up to see how it used in *al-Jarḥ wa-al-ta‘dīl*, e.g. *malī* (new to me), meaning “trustworthy.” It seems to be accurate, at least as regards hadith

terminology. Fairly often, Maḥjūbī goes beyond identifying usage in *al-Jarḥ wa-al-ta‘dīl*, as when he interprets Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn’s calling someone *ṣuwayliḥ* by means of quoting Ibn ‘Ādī, al-Dhahabī, and Ibn Ḥajar concerning the same man (134-5). The dubious underlying assumption is evidently that characterizations of men are effectively observations of fact, so that Ibn ‘Ādī and the rest must have meant exactly the same thing as Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn. Occasionally, however, Maḥjūbī does recognize change over time; for example, the concentration of ninth-century critics on *isnād* comparison to define who was *thiqah* (“trustworthy”) where critics of the High Middle Ages such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ stressed personal characteristics such as probity and precision (81). He is not so good at terminology outside the field of hadith; for example, when he quotes Ibn Ḥibbān as saying that someone was a *mujtahid* as if it were relevant to his reliability as a traditionist (129), whereas this quotation must mean rather that he

was much given to supererogatory prayer. Another example: he defines the *abdāl* as ‘the virtuous, trustworthy ones given to renunciation and worship’ (156) without reference to the theory of substitution (that each one can be said to have taken the place of another, deceased intercessor),

association with Syria, and so on. I also missed a few terms, outstandingly *laysa bi-dhāk*. In all, then, this is a workmanlike study, somewhat unimaginative but useful, still, for understanding particular expressions of early hadith criticism.