BRILL

Al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī (d. 1102/1691) on Books, Knowledge Acquisition, and Manuscript Correction in the Seventeenth-Century Maghrib

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Abstract

This article examines the practices of textual transmission and correction adopted by seventeenth-century Maghribī scholars, focusing on al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī (d. 1102/1691) and his comprehensive manual *al-Qānūn fī aḥkām al-ʿilm wa-aḥkām al-ʿālim wa-aḥkām al-mutaʿallim* (The Canon on the Principles of Knowledge and the Rules for the Scholar and the Student). In this work, al-Yūsī reflects on the importance of books in the acquisition and transmission of knowledge, outlines the conditions under which it is permissible to extract knowledge directly from books and argues for the application of strategies of textual criticism developed by ḥadīth scholars. This study examines al-Yūsī's views on these practices and the role they played in rural Sufi lodges in the Western Maghrib. Examples from the library of the Sufi brotherhood Nāṣiriyya in Tamgrūt, with which al-Yūsī was closely associated, illustrate how these theoretical principles were put into practice. By shedding light on these practices, the article contributes to our understanding of scholarly methods in early modern Islamic intellectual history.

Keywords

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وصار العلم كله إلى الدفاتر، إلا قليلا، وصار العالم هو ذو الملكة في تحقيق ما فيها،

والخبرة بمظان ما يراجع منها، وأضحت الكتب آلة لصاحب العلم، عالما او كان

متعلما، وسلاحا وخزانة، ومن لم تكن له كان أعزل

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Over time, almost all knowledge, with few exceptions, was recorded
in books. A scholar is now one who has the skills to verify what is
written in them and who is familiar with the potential sources that
are referred to in them. Books have become a tool, a weapon, and
a treasure for the seeker of knowledge, whether scholar or student,
and those who do not have them are left defenseless.[1]

AL-ḤASAN AL-YŪSĪ (d. 1102/1691)

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Introduction

Writing in the mid-seventeenth-century, al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī (d. 1102/1691), one
of the most influential Maghribī intellectuals, observed that a great deal of
knowledge in his time could only be gleaned from books, and that a scholar
was now one who learned the skills that would allow him to verify what was
found in these books.[2] Al-Yūsī's statement appears in a broader discussion of
the importance of knowledge recorded in books, the proper handling of books,
and the conditions for relying on knowledge found in books. This discussion
is included in his comprehensive manual *al-Qānūn fī aḥkām al-ʿilm wa-aḥkām
al-ʿālim wa-aḥkām al-mutaʿallim* (The Canon on the Principles of Knowledge
and the Rules for the Scholar and the Student), which has been little studied,
although it offers great insights into how early modern scholars viewed the
nature of knowledge, the proper behavior of scholars and students, and vari-
ous issues related to scholarly ethics and the transmission of knowledge.[3]

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1 al-Ḥasan b. Masʿūd al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn fī aḥkām al-ʿilm wa-aḥkām al-ʿālim wa-aḥkām
   al-mutaʿallim*, ed. Ḥamīd Ḥamānī (Rabat: Maṭbaʿat Shāla, 1998), 436.

2 al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 436.

3 Justin Stearns recently examined the place of the natural sciences in al-Yūsī's *al-Qānūn*. See
   Justin K. Stearns, *Revealed Sciences: The Natural Sciences in Islam in Seventeenth-Century
   Morocco* (Cambridge; New York; Port Melbourne; New Delhi; Singapore: Cambridge Uni-
   versity Press, 2021).

Al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī was mostly educated in two of the major rural Sufi centers of the Western Maghrib, namely the Sufi lodges (*zāwiya*, pl. *zawāyā*) of the Nāṣiriyya in Tamgrūt, in the far south, and the Dilāʾiyya in the north of the country. These two Sufi brotherhoods were founded in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in rural areas far from the urban centers of Marrakech and Fez and became central to the transmission of knowledge during the seventeenth century in the Western Maghrib, today's Morocco. Here, large numbers of students, several thousand at times,[4] were taught Qurʾān commentary (*tafsīr*), prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*), Qurʾānic readings (*qirāʾāt*), theology (*ʿaqīda* or *uṣūl al-dīn*), Islamic law (*fiqh*) and legal hermeneutics (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), logic, astronomy, medicine, arithmetic, grammar, rhetoric, and literature—in addition, of course, to instruction in the Sufi paths of their shaykhs.[5] At the heart of the classes in these rural lodges stood the written text, as the lessons were organized around the reading of primary texts and their commentary. For the scholars who lived, studied, and taught in these *zawāyā*, possessing large quantities of books was a prerequisite for acquiring knowledge and passing it on to their students. Thus, they put a lot of effort and financial resources into acquiring a large number of books, including those they acquired during their travels in the Arab East.[6] In order to adequately house the vast number of books which they acquired, scholars in these Sufi lodges founded their own libraries.[7]

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4   Aḥmad ʿAmālik mentions that around 1,400 students studied in Tamgrūt. See Aḥmad b. Muḥammad ʿAmālik, *Jawānib min tārīkh al-zāwiya al-nāṣiriyya: Min al-nashʾa ilā wafāt al-Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ḥanafī* vol. II (Rabat: Wizārat al-awqāf wa-l-shuʾūn al-islāmiyya, 2006), 321. In Dilāʾ, too, it is said that there was room for about 1,400 students. At times, the rooms are said to have been occupied by two or three students at the same time, which would have meant a total of more than 3,000 students. See Muḥammad Ḥajjī, *al-Zāwiya al-Dilāʾiyya wa-dawruhā al-dīnī wa-l-ʿilmī wa-l-siyāsī* (Casablanca: al-Najāḥ al-jadīda, 1988), 74.

5   For the disciplines taught in Dilāʾ, see Ḥajjī, *al-Zāwiya al-Dilāʾiyya*, 75–79; for the disciplines taught in Tamgrūt, see ʿAmālik, *Jawānib*, 283–315.

6   This is the result of an evaluation of the manuscripts found in the library of the Nāṣiriyya today, see Natalie Kraneiß, "Wissen im Netzwerk: Die Bibliothek der Sufibruderschaft an-Nāṣiriyya in Tamgrūt, Marokko" (Master thesis, University of Münster, 2022), 77–140.

7   Al-Yūsī's shaykh, Maḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī, founded a library in Tamgrūt that was greatly expanded by his son, Aḥmad b. Nāṣir al-Khalīfa (d. 1129/1717), who ultimately had a separate building constructed to house the large collection of the Zāwiya Nāṣiriyya. The Zāwiya of the Dilāʾiyya, where al-Yūsī spent many years, also housed a large library, which was said to contain tens of thousands of volumes of manuscripts. Unfortunately, its manuscript collection was not preserved due to the destruction of the Zāwiya Dilāʾiyya by the first ʿAlawī sultan Mawlāy Rashīd (r. 1076–1083/1666–1672). See Ḥajjī, *al-Zāwiya al-Dilāʾiyya*, 74; ʿAbd al-Ḥayy b. ʿAbd al-Kabīr al-Kattānī, Aḥmad Shawqī Binbīn, and ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Saʿūd, *Tārīkh al-maktabāt al-islāmiyya wa-man allafa fī l-kutub* (Rabat: Markaz al-dirāsāt wa-l-abḥāth wa-iḥyāʾ at-turāth, 2013), 93; Mūsā al-Makkī, *al-Durar al-muraṣṣaʿa bi-akhbār aʿyān Darʿa*,

They also took a keen interest in the production of manuscripts, copying and correcting many books for their own use and that of their students.[8]

In order to better understand how al-Yūsī and his contemporaries in the Western Maghrib perceived the role of books in their intellectual endeavors, I will address the following questions: How did seventeenth-century Maghribī scholars assess the role of books in the acquisition and transmission of knowledge? Under what conditions did they consider it permissible to extract knowledge directly from books? What strategies did they use to ensure the correctness and accuracy of written knowledge?

When we speak of books in this context, we are referring to manuscripts that have been copied by hand. For centuries, scholars were concerned with how to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the knowledge that was transmitted and written down in books and developed special rules and practices for copying manuscripts (*naskh*). Closely related to this is the process of correction that ideally should follow the copying of manuscripts. It involves the correction and collation (*taṣḥīḥ bi-l-muqābala*) of manuscripts, as well as the addition of vocal signs and diacritical marks (*ḍabṭ*).[9] This study aims to contribute to the historicization of these practices and to identify their theoretical and practical configuration in the context of the Western Maghrib in the

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ed. Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb Nūḥī (Rabat: al-Muʾassasa al-nāṣiriyya li-l-thaqāfa wa-l-ʿilm, 2014), vol. 11, 682.

8   Maḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī, for example, copied several manuscripts himself, see Muḥammad al-Manūnī, *Dalīl makhṭūṭāt dār al-kutub al-nāṣiriyya bi-Tamgrūt* (Rabat: Wizārat al-awqāf wa-l-shuʾūn al-islāmiyya, 1985), 24; ʿAmālik, *Jawānib*, 11:330. In the Sufi lodges of the Dilāʾiyya and the ʿAyyāshiyya, manuscripts were also copied on a large scale, as evidenced by the numerous copies made by members of the ʿAyyāshī family and their disciples that remain to this day in the Zāwiyaʾs library. See Ḥamīd Muḥammad Laḥmar, *al-Fihris al-waṣfī al-makhṭūṭāt khizānat al-ḥamziyya al-ʿayyāshiyya bi-iqlīm al-rāshidiyya* (Rabat: Wizārat al-awqāf wa-l-shuʾūn al-islāmiyya, 2009), 10.

9   Franz Rosenthal translated into English extracts from *al-Muʿīd fī adab al-mufīd wa-l-mustafīd* by ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ b. Mūsā al-ʿAlmāwī (d. 980/1573), which also deals with the correction of manuscripts, see Franz Rosenthal, *The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1947). Adam Gacek wrote several articles about the techniques used by scholars in copying and correcting Arabic manuscripts. All of them were intended to help researchers to decipher manuscripts and their annotations. Adam Gacek, "Taxonomy of Scribal Errors and Corrections in Arabic Manuscripts," in *Theoretical Approaches to the Transmission and Edition of Oriental Manuscripts*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer and Manfred Kropp (Beirut: Orient-Institut, 2007), 217–35; Adam Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009); Adam Gacek, "Technical Practices and Recommendations Recorded by Classical and Post-Classical Arabic Scholars Concerning the Copying and Correction of Manuscripts," in *The History of the Book in the Middle East*, ed. Geoffrey Roper (London: Routledge, 2013), 103–12.

seventeenth century, for it is precisely these strategies to which al-Yūsī and his contemporaries devoted the greatest attention.

The structure of this article is as follows: To begin with, I will briefly present a biography of al-Yūsī and introduce his work *al-Qānūn*. In the main part of the article, I will firstly examine al-Yūsī's ideas on the permissibility of recording knowledge in books, secondly analyze his advice on the proper handling of books, thirdly examine his instructions on copying and correcting manuscripts, and fourthly discuss his view on the purpose of correcting them. After examining al-Yūsī's views and arguments, I will then, in the final part of this article, explore some examples of manuscripts from different disciplines to illustrate how al-Yūsī's contemporaries in the Western Maghrib put into practice the theoretical considerations and recommendations that al-Yūsī put forward in his *al-Qānūn*.

Al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī's Life and Education

Al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī was born around 1040/1631 in a Berber village in the High Atlas Mountains, southwest of Midelt in present-day Morocco. He was largely educated in the country's rural Sufi lodges, far from the country's urban centers. After the death of his mother, al-Yūsī went to the south of the country to continue his education. His travels took him to the Sūs region, to Taroudant and Sijilmāsa, then to Marrakech and Dukkāla, and finally to Tamgrūt, to the Zāwiya Nāṣiriyya. The founder of this lodge, Maḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī (d. 1085/1674), was one of the central figures in al-Yūsī's education. A long poem of praise that al-Yūsī wrote about his spiritual master and the long passages that he dedicated to him in his intellectual autobiography (*fahrasa*) bear witness to this formative influence.[10] Maḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī taught al-Yūsī Arabic grammar, Islamic law, legal hermeneutics, and Qurʾān commentary, and instructed him in the Sufi doctrine of the Shādhiliyya.[11] Here, in Tamgrūt, al-Yūsī studied the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* of al-Ghazālī (d. 504/1111), parts of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *al-Shifāʾ* of al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ (d. 544/1150) and the *Ṭabaqāt* of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1566).[12] He spent only three years in Tamgrūt,

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10   Stefan Reichmuth, "The Praise of a Sufi Master as a Literary Event: Al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī (1631–1691), His Dāliyya (Qaṣīdat at-Tahānī), and Its Commentary (Nayl al-Amānī)," in *Ethics and Spirituality in Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 504–19; al-Ḥasan b. Masʿūd al-Yūsī, "Fahrasat al-Yūsī" (PhD diss., Jāmiʿat Muḥammad al-Khāmis, 2004), 80–91.

11   al-Yūsī, "Fahrasa," 80.

12   al-Yūsī, "Fahrasa," 61–62.

from 1060–1063/1650–1653, but returned to the Zāwiya Nāṣiriyya again and again in the following years and was in regular contact with its scholars.

Another formative stage in al-Yūsī's life was his long stay at the Zāwiya Dilāʾiyya, in Dilāʾ, in the north of the country, where he continued his education from 1063/1653 and quickly became one of the most successful students of the Zāwiya. His most important teacher there was the famous expert in Arabic language, grammar and rhetoric, and grandson of the founder of the lodge, Muḥammad al-Murābiṭ al-Dilāʾī (d. 1090/1679).[13] Al-Yūsī's stay in Dilāʾ came to an abrupt end, however, when the Zāwiya was destroyed in 1079/1668 by the first Sultan of the ʿAlawī dynasty, Mawlāy Rashīd (r. 1074–1082/1664–1672). Consequently, al-Yūsī and many more local scholars were forcibly brought to Fez, where al-Yūsī began to study and teach at the al-Qarawiyyīn mosque. Here, as in the other urban centers of the country, however, al-Yūsī never seemed to gain a foothold, fleeing the cities of Marrakech, Fez, and Meknes for the countryside whenever possible. Shortly after returning from his pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, he died in his home village in 1102/1691.[14]

Al-Yūsī penned dozens of works, among them *al-Qānūn*, to which we will turn below, and his aforementioned intellectual autobiography. He also authored *al-Muḥāḍarāt fī l-adab wa-l-lugha* (The Discourses on Literature and Language),[15] and a work on aphorisms and proverbs, *Zahr al-akam fī l-amthāl wa-l-ḥikam* (The Exquisite Flowers of Proverbs and Wise Sayings). A number of al-Yūsī's poems and letters were compiled into anthologies, namely the *Dīwān al-Yūsī*, and a collection of his letters, *Rasāʾil Abī ʿAlī al-Ḥasan b. Masʿūd al-Yūsī*.[16] He also wrote various treatises, commentaries and super-commentaries in a variety of fields of knowledge, including logic, theology, Arabic language

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13   al-Yūsī, "Fahrasa," 63–66.

14   Two important sources about the life of al-Yūsī in French and English are Jacques Berque, *al-Yousi: Problèmes de la culture marocaine au XVIIᵉᵐᵉ siècle* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1958); Kenneth L. Honerkamp, "al-Ḥasan ibn Masʿūd al-Yūsī," in *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography, 1350–1850*, ed. Devin J. Stewart Lowry, Joseph E. (Wiesbaden, 2009), 410–19. For an outdated but still very useful overview of historical and modern works on the life of al-Yūsī in Arabic, see ʿAbbās al-Jarārī, *ʿAbqariyyat al-Yūsī* (Casablanca: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1981), 127–53.

15   This work has been translated into English by Justin Stearns. Al-Ḥasan b. Masʿūd al-Yūsī, Muḥammad al-Ḥajjī, and Aḥmad Iqbāl al-Sharqāwī, *Muḥāḍarāt fī l-adab wa-l-lugha*, 2 vols. (Beirut, 2006); al-Ḥasan b. Masʿūd al-Yūsī, *The Discourses*, ed. Justin K. Stearns, vol. 1, 2 vols. (New York: New York University Press, 2019).

16   al-Ḥasan b. Masʿūd al-Yūsī, *Rasāʾil Abī ʿAlī al-Ḥasan b. Masʿūd al-Yūsī*, ed. Fāṭima al-Qiblī, 2 vols. (Casablanca: Dār al-thaqāfa, 1981).

and grammar, Islamic law, and Sufism.[17] Finally, one of his sons, Muḥammad al-ʿAyyāshī (d. 1131/1719), wrote a travelogue entitled *Riḥlat al-Yūsī* about his father's pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina.[18]

Al-Yūsī's *al-Qānūn*

Al-Qānūn fī aḥkām al-ʿilm wa-aḥkām al-ʿālim wa-aḥkām al-mutaʿallim was written by al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī late in his life, when he was already an experienced scholar. He completed it in 1101/1690, at the age of about sixty, shortly before his death, while he was in exile in the ruins of the Zāwiya Dilāʾiyya by order of Sultan Mawlāy Ismāʿīl (r. 1082–1140/1672–1727).[19] In *al-Qānūn*, al-Yūsī offers his readers a detailed discussion of the nature of knowledge and the ways to attain it, coupled with many useful rules and recommendations for scholars and students, as well as entertaining and motivating anecdotes, sayings, and verses of poetry concerning the transmission and acquisition of knowledge. Al-Yūsī also provides an original classification of the sciences, briefly defining each discipline while outlining the key approaches and major areas of knowledge one must master within them.

With this work, al-Yūsī follows a centuries-old tradition of authors from the Maghrib and Mashriq who were concerned with the acquisition of knowledge, the relationship between teacher and student, and the systematic classification of the sciences.[20] His Maghribī predecessors include early representatives such as Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Laythī (d. 234/848) and ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb (d. 238/853), and later authors such as Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr

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17   For a selected list of his works, see Honerkamp, "al-Ḥasan ibn Masʿūd al-Yūsī;" for an extensive list of his writings, including letters, poems, and commentaries, see al-Jarārī, *ʿAbqariyyat al-Yūsī*.

18   Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī al-ʿAyyāshī, *Riḥlat al-Yūsī (1101–1102/1690–1691)*, ed. Aḥmad al-Bāhī (Qarṭāj: al-Majmaʿ al-tūnisī li-l-ʿulūm wa-l-ādāb wa-l-funūn, Bayt al-Ḥikma, 2018).

19   Gretchen Head, "Space, Identity, and Exile in Seventeenth-Century Morocco: The Case of Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 47, no. 3 (2016): 239.

20   These include, for example, Ibn Saḥnūn (d. 256/870), al-Jāḥiẓ (d. c. 255/868), al-Fārābī (d. c. 339/950), Ibn Sīnā (d. 427/1037), al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198). See the numerous publications by Sebastian Günther, such as Sebastian Günther, "'Your Educational Achievements Shall Not Stop Your Efforts to Seek Beyond': Principles of Teaching and Learning in Classical Arabic Writings," in *Philosophies of Islamic Education: Historical Perspectives and Emerging Discourses*, ed. Nadeem A. Memon and Mujadad Zaman (London: Routledge, 2016), 72–93.

(d. 463/1071), and Ibn al-ʿArīf (d. 526/1141).[21] According to its editor, Ḥamīd Ḥamānī, the difference between *al-Qānūn* and these earlier works is the systematic presentation and reorganization of the collected knowledge from these works into one coherent text.[22] In the chapters examined, al-Yūsī does not mention any of these earlier sources by name. However, it can be inferred from the incorporated anecdotes and verses of poetry that he extensively drew on the *Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm wa-faḍlihī* by the Andalusian scholar Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, for example.[23]

The work *al-Qānūn* is divided into three parts: The first part deals with the meaning of knowledge and offers a systematic classification of the sciences. The second part is devoted to rules of conduct for scholars and teachers (*al-ʿālim*), while the third part deals with the conduct of students (*al-mutaʿallim*). In this third part of the work, entitled *Aḥkām al-mutaʿallim* (Rules for the Student), al-Yūsī sheds light on central aspects of dealing with the transmission of written knowledge, including books. In order to better understand al-Yūsī's ideas about the acquisition of knowledge from books and the strategies for ensuring the correctness of this knowledge, these three chapters, namely chapters 13, 14, and 15, will be examined in more detail below and illustrated by translations of selected passages.

Recording Knowledge in Books

The first chapter from al-Yūsī's *al-Qānūn* we will look at is the thirteenth chapter entitled *Fī kalām ʿalā katb al-ʿilm wa-takhlīdihī fī l-ṣuḥuf* (On the Recording of Knowledge and its Preservation in Books).[24] Here, al-Yūsī provides an overview of the early Islamic debate on the permissibility of writing down the prophetic Sunna, presenting arguments both for and against the practice, before explaining why it ultimately is beneficial to write down the prophetic traditions—and knowledge in general.

Al-Yūsī begins by presenting the view of those who oppose the recording of prophetic traditions in writing.[25] He supports this view with several traditions, including a statement by the Prophet Muḥammad, who is reported to have

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21 The editor of al-Yūsī's *al-Qānūn*, Ḥamīd Ḥamānī, names further predecessor texts in his introduction. See al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 89–90.

22 al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 91.

23 al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 443, 444.

24 al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 429–36.

25 al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 429.

said: "Do not write down anything from me other than the Qurʾān; whoever has written down anything from me other than the Qurʾān should erase it."[26] Other traditions cited by al-Yūsī in support of this position come from the Prophet's Companions ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644), ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/687), and Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī (d. 74/693), as well as the ḥadīth scholar Ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/728) and Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795), the founder of the Mālikī school of jurisprudence. With this, al-Yūsī summarizes the arguments of an old debate that has long been decided in favor of writing down the prophetic tradition.[27]

Then al-Yūsī continues with the reasons why some of the Prophet's Companions and early Islamic scholars refused to write down the prophetic traditions. These reasons were, first, respect for the word of God, which should not be equated with anything else; second, fear of the loss of the power of memory and the disappearance of the practice of memorization; and third, the wish to avert possible harm that might be caused by writing down knowledge.

With regard to the first reason that al-Yūsī identified, respect (*muḥāfaẓat al-adab*) for the divine word, the Qurʾān, and the conviction that no other book should be equated with the Qurʾān,[28] he points out that there is a fundamental difference between the word of God and the word of others. The word of God (*kalām Allāh*) is absolutely trustworthy (*muwaththaq* [sic] *bihī*) and secured by an uninterrupted chain of transmission that has been reported by numerous narrators (*thābit bi-l-tawātur*), so that it can be written down without reservation. The words of others (*kalām ghayrihī*), on the other hand, are not equally trustworthy, which may stem from both the narrator and the chain of transmission (*sanad*), which is why some refused to write down their words.

The second reason to which al-Yūsī attributes the skepticism of some towards recording the prophetic Sunna is the concern that one would neglect memorization (*taḍyīʿ al-ḥifẓ*) and instead rely solely on what is written down.[29] However, true knowledge, al-Yūsī also points out, is what is preserved in the heart. To support this position, he cites various sayings and verses of poetry, including those of the Baṣran lexicographer and grammarian al-Khalīl b.

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26   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 429: لا تكتبوا العلم عني شيئًا سوى القرآن، فمن كتب عني شيئًا سوى القرآن فليمحه.

27   Michael Cook, "The Opponents of the Writing of Tradition in Early Islam," *Arabica* 44, no. 4 (1997): 437–530; Paul L. Heck, "The Epistemological Problem of Writing in Islamic Civilization: Al-Ḫaṭīb al-Baġdādī's (d. 463/1071) 'Taqyīd al-ʿilm,'" *Studia Islamica*, no. 94 (2002): 85–114; Gregor Schoeler, "Recording," in *The Wiley Blackwell Concise Companion to the Hadith* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2020), 91–112.

28   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 431.

29   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 431.

Aḥmad al-Farāhidī (d. 173/786)[30] and the poet Abū l-ʿAtāhiya (d. 213/826).[31] Further emphasizing the value of memorization, al-Yūsī quotes the poet Muḥammad b. Yāsir al-Riyāshī (d. 218/833), who speaks of his difficulty in internalizing the knowledge he had accumulated in the form of books:[32]

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أما لو أعي كل ما أسمع ... وأحفظ من ذاك ما أجمع

لم أستفد غير ما قد جمعت ... لقيل هو العالم المقنع

ولكن نفسي إلى كل فن ... من العلم تسمعه تنزع

فلا أنا أحفظ ما قد جمعت ... ولا أنا من جمعه أشبع

ومن يك في علمه هكذا ... يكن دهره القهقري يرجع

إذا لم تكن حافظًا واعيًا ... فجمعك للكتب لا ينفع

أأحضر بالجهل في مجلسي ... وعلمي في الكتب مستودع

</div>

If I could retain everything I hear
and memorize everything I collect,
and if I could profit from nothing but what I have amassed,
then it would be said: "He is the accomplished scholar."
But my soul longs for every art
of knowledge it encounters.
I have neither memorized what I have collected,
nor am I satisfied with what I have amassed.
And whoever is thus in his knowledge,
his life will regress like a backward turn.
If you do not memorize and comprehend,
then your collection of books will not benefit you.
Should I attend an assembly in ignorance,
while my knowledge lies stored in books?

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30   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 431. "Knowledge is not what the book chest contains; knowledge is what the heart holds." In Arabic: ليس بعلم ما حوى القِمَطَر ... ما العلم إلا ما حواه الصدر.

31   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 431. "Those who are given memory understand; while those who neglect what they have memorized fall in error." In Arabic: من منح الحفظ وعى ... ومن ضيع الحفظ وهم.

32   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 432.

Al-Yūsī also quotes some well-known verses traditionally attributed to Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820), the founder of the Shāfiʿī school of jurisprudence.[33] These verses serve as a prime example of a well-respected scholar who obviously attached great importance to the internalization of knowledge:[34]

علمي معي حيثما يممت أحمله ... بطني وعاء له لا بطن صندوق

إن كنت في البيت كان العلم فيه معي ... أوكنت في السوق كان العلم في السوق

> My knowledge is with me, and wherever I go, I carry it.
> In my belly it is stored, not in the belly of a chest.
> If I am at home, then the knowledge is with me in the house;
> if I am at the market, then the knowledge is in the market.

The third and final reason given by al-Yūsī for the early scholars' rejection of recording knowledge is to prevent possible harm. The critics of writing down knowledge feared, says al-Yūsī, that written knowledge might end up in the wrong hands and be distorted by lack of care. Al-Yūsī attributes this opinion to the principle of "blocking the means" (*sadd al-dharīʿa*), according to which Islamic law prohibits actions that could lead to negative consequences. Al-Yūsī seems to understand these concerns very well, as he regards the corruption (*taḥrīf*) of texts as an urgent problem of his own time:[35]

الثالث، سد الذريعة، فإن العلم ما دام في صدور الرجال، فإنهم لا يمنحونه غير أهله، فإذا صار إلى الصحف، وقع عليه من ليس أهله، وناهيك بهذا الفساد، ولا سيما في زمننا، وقد فسدت الكتب بالتحريف، وقلة الضبط، فينقل الخطأ أو يقع الفساد من كل وجه

> Thirdly, blocking the means. As long as knowledge is preserved in the hearts of men, they only pass it on to their peers. However, if it is recorded in books, it can fall into the hands of others. This in itself leads to corruption, especially in our time, because books are distorted by corruption

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33   Al-Yūsī cites the two verses in a different variant in his *Fahrasa* and in *Zahr al-akam*, see al-Yūsī, "Fahrasa," 3, n6.

34   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 432.

35   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 432.

and a lack of accuracy. The errors are copied and corruption occurs in every respect.

In the following chapters of his work, which we will look at in greater detail shortly, al-Yūsī discusses how the reader can ensure that the knowledge in books does not get distorted and that no errors are transmitted during copying—the core of his interest.

First, however, al-Yūsī outlines the position of those who consider it permissible to record knowledge in books[36]—a view that is obviously also his own. He explains that this view can be substantiated both with tradition (*naql*) and with rational arguments (*ʿaql*). Al-Yūsī begins with a series of examples from the life of the Prophet Muḥammad in which the latter explicitly endorsed the writing down of knowledge. One example of this is a letter sent by the Prophet to ʿAmr b. Ḥazm (d. 53/673?), in which legal regulations on topics such as almsgiving, blood revenge and inheritance were recorded. Al-Yusī refers to these regulations as "knowledge" (*ʿilm*), by which he emphasizes that even the Prophet had knowledge written down. In addition, al-Yūsī cites a number of statements, both from well-known scholars and by unnamed individuals, that testify that the Companions of the Prophet and early Islamic scholars were also in favor of writing down knowledge. Al-Yūsī's conclusion is: "The statements of the pious predecessors that allow writing (of knowledge), even encourage it, are also numerous."[37] According to him, the number of those who support recording knowledge is at least as large as the number of those who oppose it.

The central argument which al-Yūsī makes in favor of recording knowledge according to reason (*ʿaql*), however, is that knowledge is protected from being forgotten by being written down.[38] Similar to how writing was used in the case of the Qurʾān to ensure that no part of it would be lost, al-Yūsī writes that writing down all kinds of knowledge should be understood as a necessary precaution. As an example, he mentions that many books available to him and his readers in the seventeenth century contained knowledge of history and biography that would have been lost without written records. It is said:[39]

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36   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 432–34.

37   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 434: وكلام السلف في الترخيص في الكتاب، بل في التحريض عليه كثيرا أيضًا.

38   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 434.

39   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 434.

وأما العقل، فإن الكتاب احتياط للعلم، عن أن يضيع بالنسيان، ويموت أهله، والوجه الذي احتيط به للقرآن فكتب في الصحف والمصاحف، يحتاط بها للقرآن، ولولا الكتب المدونة لضاع كثير من العلم، ولولا التواريخ المصنفة لم تصل إلينا علوم الأقدمين، ولا عرفت تراجم الناس.

As for [the argument based on] reason, books serve as a precautionary measure to safeguard knowledge from being lost through forgetfulness or the death of its bearers. This was also the approach taken with the Qurʾān when it was written down in folios and codices in order to preserve it. Without written books, much knowledge would have been lost, and without books of history, the knowledge of our predecessors would not have reached us, and the biographies of people would have remained unknown.

Finally, al-Yūsī once again turns to those who oppose the recording of knowledge—thus seeming to address those who are not yet fully convinced by his argument. In this regard, he explains that those who rejected writing did so, first, because they belonged to the Arabs who were endowed with a special power of memory (*qad aʿṭū al-ḥifẓ*), and, second, because they belonged to the generation of the Prophet's Companions or their successors, who were distinguished by their proximity to the Prophet.[40] But they were exceptional figures with whom later generations could not compare themselves, al-Yūsī clarifies. Rather, it is of great benefit to him and his contemporaries to record knowledge in books. He writes:[41]

فلما انشرحت صدورهم بالإيمان والمعرفة ازدادوا حفظا إلى حفظهم، فلا يقاس بهم غيرهم، فالاحتياط هو الكتب، كما قيل: العلم صيد والكتابة قيده ... قيد مصيدك بالحبال الموثقة [sic] ، ومن أعطي حفظا مع ذلك كان الفضل له، ومن لا فلا يضيع عليه ﴿فإن لم يصبها وابل فطل﴾

When their hearts [i.e., those of the Prophet's Companions] were opened by faith and knowledge, their memory increased, and no one is equal to

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40   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 434–35.

41   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 435.

them in this regard. Therefore, the protection of knowledge lies in the books, as it is said, "Knowledge is a prey, and writing down is the shackling. Shackle your prey with firm ropes." He to whom, in addition, a good memory has been given, enjoys a special grace. He who does not have this, should not allow his knowledge to get lost, for "if no heavy rain falls, a drizzle is sufficient."[42]

The presentation of this debate about recording prophetic traditions and the clear, focused argument in favor of writing suggest that there may still have been voices among al-Yūsī's contemporaries skeptical of acquiring knowledge from books, whom al-Yūsī sought to convince. He concludes the thirteenth chapter with a decisive statement that mediates between the two different positions: Both a good memory and the possession of many books are worthless if one does not understand the content. He emphasizes that one should not rely on or be deceived by the sheer number of books one owns and writes:[43]

نعم، لا ينبغي لذي الهمة أن يتكل على الكتب، ولا أن يغتر بكثرتها عنده، فإنه من خانه الفهم لما حفظ، لم ينفعه حفظه، ومن خانه الفهم والحفظ، لم تنفعه الدفاتر، بل تكون في مخزنه كالزرع وسائر المتاع، ولا يكون عالما بذلك، فأي شيء ينفع الجبان سلاح محد وإلا ميل جواد معد.

> Yes, someone with ambition should not rely solely on books or be deceived by the large number of them in his possession. For he who lacks understanding of what he has memorized, his memory is of no use to him. And if he lacks both understanding and memory, the books are of no use to him; they are then in his storehouse like grain and other goods, and he does not become a scholar because of them. What use to a coward is a sharp weapon or the devotion of a noble horse, ready for battle?

In conclusion, al-Yūsī emphasizes here that it is not so much the form in which knowledge is transmitted, orally or in writing, that matters, but that it is much more important to ensure that the content is understood. For without understanding, knowledge remains useless to the scholar, like a weapon or a horse to a coward.

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42   Qurʾān, 2:265.
43   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 436.

The Importance of Books and Their Proper Handling (*ādāb al-kutub*)

In the following chapter, the fourteenth chapter in the third part of *al-Qānūn*, al-Yūsī discusses the proper use of books (*ādāb al-kutub*). The chapter is entitled *Fī dhikr ādāb al-kutub wa-mā yataʿallaq bi-taḥṣīlihā wa-ḍabṭihā wa-wadʿihā wa-naskhihā wa-naḥw dhālika* (The Handling of Books and all Matters Relating to their Acquisition, Accurate Transmission, Storage, Copying, and the Like).[44] Having explained that it is permissible to write down knowledge, even though there are traditions to the contrary, al-Yūsī begins the next chapter with a brief recapitulation of the disappearance of the practice of memorization. He summarizes that as time went on, more and more knowledge was recorded in writing—first in the case of the Qurʾān, then in the case of the prophetic traditions, and finally in all other fields of knowledge. As a result, people in his time have become dependent on books, which ultimately changed the role of the scholar. Here we also find the earlier quoted statement about knowledge in books. Al-Yūsī writes:[45]

قد علمت أن الحفظ قد انتقص، بل قد ذهب في كثير من الناس وغلبة النسيان، وأنه لا بد من تقييد العلم بالكتب، كما وقع في الكتاب، وكان ذلك في الحديث، وما يسمع، ثم صار في المصنفات، وصار العلم كله إلى الدفاتر، إلا قليلا، وصار العالم هو ذو والملكة في تحقيق ما فيها، والخبرة بمظان ما يراجع منها.

You now know that the practice of memorization has diminished—indeed, for many people, it has even disappeared entirely, and forgetfulness has prevailed. Therefore, it is necessary to preserve knowledge in books, as was done with the Book (i.e., the Qurʾān). This was also the case with the prophetic traditions and other knowledge that was transmitted orally, which eventually found its way into written works. Over time, almost all knowledge, with few exceptions, has been recorded in books. A scholar is now the one who has the skills to verify what is written in them and who is familiar with the potential sources that are referred to in them.

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44   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 436–42.

45   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 436.

The disappearance of the practice of memorization apparently began long before al-Yūsī's time. In his intellectual autobiography, al-Yūsī expresses his displeasure with this phenomenon, for he sees the decline of memorization and reliance on knowledge in books as a sign of the weakness of his generation and its predecessors. He attributes this, among other things, to the laziness and lack of aspiration he sees in his contemporaries:[46]

وكان الحفظ في الصدور، شأن الأئمة الصدور، ثم ذهب ذلك عند الجمهور منذ دهور فلم يبق اليوم إلا الحفظ في السطور، حتى ما يكاد يحصل في الأفهام إلا خطور، اكتفاءً باستبطان الدفاتر، والاتكال على كثرة القماطر، كما قيل:

إنما الصولي شيخ ... أعلم الناس خزانه
إن سألناه بعلم ... طلبنا منه الإبانه
قال يا غلمان هاتوا ... رزمة العلم فلانه

وهذه سخافة فينا معشر المتأخرين، أوجبها الإخلاد إلى الراحات، والركون إلى البطالات، والتكاسل عن على الدرجات، مع انطماس البصائر بطفوح الرعونات، والتوغل في الشهوات

Memorization once resided in the hearts, as was the practice of the leading scholars. But among the majority [of scholars] this practice has long been lost. Today, nothing remains but memorization of the written, and it seldom resides in the hearts except as fleeting thoughts. People are content with the mere possession of books and rely on the abundance of chests full of books, as it is said:

> Al-Ṣūlī is a Shaykh, the most knowledgeable of men when it comes to his library.
> When we ask him about knowledge, we demand an explanation from him.
> Then he calls out: "Oh boys, bring this bundle of knowledge from such and such a place!"

This is a folly common among us people of later generations. It results from an inclination towards comfort, the fixation on trivialities, and a

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lack of aspiration for higher ranks, while insights fade due to the preva-
lence of superficiality, and we yield to our desires.

Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ (d. 544/1149), one of the preeminent Maghribī scholars who
dealt with similar issues centuries before al-Yūsī, also addressed the declin-
ing practice of memorization. In his work *al-Ilmāʿ ilā maʿrifat uṣūl al-riwāya
wa-taqyīd al-samāʿ* (The Elucidation of the Principles of Transmission and the
Transcription of the Audition), a manual of ḥadīth criticism,[47] he justifies the
need to write down prophetic traditions, in part, on the grounds that memori-
zation has declined: "The present situation requires writing [of prophetic tra-
ditions] because of the proliferation of ways (*ṭuruq*), the length of the chains
of traditions, the lack of memorization, and the fatigue of the mind."[48]
    Even though al-Yūsī regrets the decreasing importance of memorization,
and elsewhere gives his readers advice on how to improve their memory,[49] he
recognizes the reality of his time: a large part of knowledge is now written
down in books. In the next section, he therefore emphasizes the importance of
books for both the scholar and the student. A book, al-Yūsī writes, has become
an indispensable tool for the seeker of knowledge, a powerful weapon, and a
treasure containing unlimited resources of knowledge. For this reason, al-Yūsī
encourages all students to acquire books—whether by inheritance, purchase,
gift, or loan. If they are unable to do so for financial reasons, they should copy,
or have copied, the books they need. Regarding this, he writes:[50]

وأضحت الكتب آلة لصاحب العلم، عالماكان أو متعلما، وسلاحا وخزانة، ومن لم تكن له
كان أعزل، فينبغي له حينئذ، وهو من أهم الأمور تحصيلها، إما بالملكية إرثا أو شراء أو
هبة، وهي أولى، وإما بعارية، فإن تعذر الملك، لإعواز الثمن، أو إعواز ما يشترى، فلينسخ
أو لينتسخ إن أمكن، وهو أولى.

Books have become a tool, a weapon, and a treasure for the seeker of
knowledge, whether scholar or student, and those who do not have them
are left defenseless. Therefore, it is necessary for him—and this is one of

47   Ruggero Vimercati Sanseverino, "Transmission, Ethos and Authority in Hadith Scholar-
      ship," *MIDÉO. Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'études Orientales*, no. 34 (2019): 35–80.
48   al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ b. Mūsā al-Yaḥṣubī, *al-Ilmāʿ ilā maʿrifat uṣūl al-riwāya wa-taqyīd al-samāʿ*, ed.
      Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo: Dār al-turāth, 1970), 149.
49   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 469–74.
50   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 436.

the most important matters—to acquire them, either by ownership, be it by inheritance, purchase or gift, which is preferable, or by borrowing. If ownership is not possible because of the high price or because what one wants to buy is not available, then one should copy it or have it copied, if possible, and this is preferable.

Although al-Yūsī considers books to be an essential tool for every student and scholar, he cautions his readers against the false belief that acquiring knowledge is possible only by buying and owning books. This belief could tempt the seeker of knowledge to focus first on worldly matters such as making money, thereby losing sight of his ultimate goal—the pursuit of knowledge.[51] A student should not assume that he must first earn a lot of money to buy books before he can devote himself to acquiring knowledge. Instead, al-Yūsī urges his reader to devote himself to the pursuit of knowledge from the very beginning. Especially if he lacks the financial means to buy books, he should focus on listening (samāʿ),[52] memorizing, and understanding. On this, al-Yūsī writes:[53]

فالأولى لطالب العلم في بدايته، أن يرمي بنفسه في غمرات الطلب، ولا يلتفت إلى شهوات نفسه، في مأكل ولا ملبس ولا منكح، ولا مركب ولا مسكن، ولا غرض ولا نحو ذلك، وليعوّل على القسمة الأزلية، وأن الله تعالى من فضله موصل إليه الضروري من أموره، وأن يعتمد على السماع والحفظ والفهم، لا على الكتب، متكلا على الله في أن يعلمه من فضله، وهو على ذلك قدير .

The best thing for a seeker of knowledge at the beginning of his journey is to plunge wholeheartedly into the waves of knowledge and not to succumb to the desires of his soul, whether with regard to food, clothing, marriage, means of transport, accommodation, worldly goals, or similar matters. He should trust in the fate ordained by God and that God will provide him with what he needs for his affairs out of His grace. He should rely on listening, memorizing, and understanding rather than on books, and trust that God will teach him out of His grace, for He is able to do so.

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51   al-Yūsī, al-Qānūn, 436–37.

52   That is, to receive knowledge from a teacher who conveys it orally, either by dictation (imlāʾ) or by lecture (taḥdīth).

53   al-Yūsī, al-Qānūn, 437.

However, if the student can acquire books, al-Yūsī encourages him to take advantage of them. The student should make use of the books, read them and benefit from them. It is noteworthy that al-Yūsī apparently has no reservations about a student acquiring knowledge directly from books—even without the guidance of a teacher and even from works that he does not (yet) fully understand. His advice is to focus on what is easy to grasp and leave complex or difficult content for later: "If the books are available to him (…), then he should take them and read what he can easily understand, leaving what is profound and confusing for later."[54]

Finally, al-Yūsī offers advice to those who lack the financial means to acquire books. He encourages them to sharpen their minds and turn to God with sincere hearts, asking for His help—for "to whom God gives knowledge, He will also give books!"[55] To further emphasize this, al-Yūsī adds an encouraging word of wisdom to reinforce faith in divine intervention among his readers:[56]

ويقال في مثل هذا المقام:إن الشجاع في المضايق،سلاح الناس كلها له، والفارس عند الغارات، خيل الناس كلها له، فمن نجب في العلم كتب الناس كلها له، وما أعوز منها، فالله تعالى يغنيه عنه، وأن الله تعالى إذا أراد شيئاًكان، والله تعالى من فضله حقيق أن يكفي العالم أمر الرزق، وجماعة معه، كما وعد بذلك.

In such a situation, it is said: "In difficult situations, all the weapons of man are available to the brave, and in times of raids, all the horses of man are available to the rider." Thus, the one who excels in knowledge has all the books of man at his disposal, and whatever he lacks is compensated for by God. And God, the Exalted, is truly able, in His mercy, to make it easier for the scholar and those around him to make a living, as He has promised.

Another way to gain knowledge from books, if one cannot afford to buy them, is to borrow books. Al-Yūsī adds a short but important digression in this context, in which he discusses the permissibility of lending books and the etiquette of lending and borrowing.[57] He explains that there are different views on this: some oppose lending books in order to protect them from damage or

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54   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 437.
55   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 437:وأنه إذا أعطى علماً، فسيعطي كتباً.
56   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 437.
57   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 438–39.

loss; others promote it as a form of mutual support and a communal pursuit of the good (*al-taʿāwun ʿalā l-birr*). Al-Yūsī takes a differentiated approach and advocates a moderate position between the two:[58]

وقد اختلفت أحوال الناس وأقوالهم في إعارة الكتب، فمنهم من كرهها صونا للكتب
عن الضياع، وقديما قيل: آفة الكتب العارية، ومنهم من يحض عليها، لأنها من التعاون
على البر، والحق التفصيل، فمن كان أهلا لأن يعطى ويعار، بظهور نجابة، وظهور صيانة
للكتب، فينبغي أن يعار، وفي مثله يقال: حبس الكتب عن أهلها من الغلول.

People have different views and sayings about lending books. Some dis-
approve of it to prevent the loss of books, as the saying goes: "The evil
of books is their lending." Others, on the other hand, encourage lending
because it is seen as a form of support for good causes. The truth is in the
details: Those who are qualified to receive and lend books, whether by
excellence or by proof of care in the handling of books, should be allowed
to lend books. In this regard it is said: "To withhold books from those who
deserve them is an act of misappropriation."

According to al-Yūsī's assessment, books can therefore be lent if the borrower
proves to be worthy and careful. To illustrate this, he cites examples of famous
figures such as Abū l-ʿAtāhiya and al-Shāfiʿī, which underline that one should
not refuse a request to borrow books. In return, however, the borrower is
obliged to show his gratitude, either through a prayer or by handling the bor-
rowed book with particular care. It should not be opened by force, touched
with dirty hands, or placed on the floor. Furthermore, al-Yūsī warns against
reading a book when sleepy, as it could fall out of one's hand and be damaged
by the oil of an overturned lamp. He emphasizes that books must also be pro-
tected from moisture, sun, smoke, theft, or rodents, as stated in an old poem:[59]

عليك بالحفظ دون العلم في كتب ... فإن للكتب آفات تفرقها
اللص يسرقها والفأر يخزقها ... والنار تحرقها والماء يغرقها

Hold fast to memorization, not the knowledge in tomes,
for books are plagued by pests that scatter them.

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58   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 438.
59   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 438.

> The thief may steal them, the mouse gnaws at them,
> Fire burns them, and water drowns them.

At the end of this section, al-Yūsī stresses that borrowed books should be treated just as carefully as one's own. Those who fear that they will not be able to fulfill this responsibility are not allowed to borrow books. Al-Yūsī justifies this with the religious duty to preserve property, since wasting it is forbidden (*ḥifẓ al-māl wājib wa-taḍyīʿihī ḥarām*). This loss is particularly serious in the case of books, since it is not only a question of material value, but also of wasting knowledge. Protecting books is therefore a twofold duty: to preserve both property and valuable knowledge.[60]

In the following section, al-Yūsī points out that it is necessary to inspect books that one borrows or uses as sources for one's own copies for damage or missing pages.[61] Ideally, one should compare the book with one or more reliable manuscripts, i.e., perform a collation (*muqābala*). If this is not possible, it is at least advisable to leaf through the book page by page to get an overview of its condition. According to al-Yūsī, finding any corrections in the book is a good sign: "If you see that a book contains additions (*ilḥāq*) or improvements (*iṣlāḥ*), this testifies to its correctness." And also, he states, "a book does not shine until it is darkened,"[62] meaning that the margins are filled with corrections and comments. Here, al-Yūsī differentiates between old books, the contents of which were passed on orally by teachers to their students, and books that al-Yūsī and his contemporaries work with. In view of the many errors found in these newer books, it is absolutely necessary to correct them. The extent of the distortions that al-Yūsī finds in the books of his time would even require the introduction of a supervision (*ḥisba*) over the copyists, he explains:[63]

ونحن نقول: إذا لم تر فيه إلحاقا ولا إصلاحا فاشهد عليه بالفساد، وإذا ابيضت حواشيه،
فلا بياض عنده، اللهم إلا كتب القدماء، الذين كانوا يأخذون الكتب رواية عن
الأشياخ، ويعتمدون الضبط بلسان القلم، أما اليوم فقد وقع في الكتب من الفساد،
ما لا يتدارك، لولا تفضل الله تعالى لحفظ دينه، وما أحوج الناس إلى إقامة الحسبة

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60   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 439.

61   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 439.

62   لا يضيء الكتّاب حتى يظلم

63   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 439.

على الناسخين، وقد اعتنوا بشربة لبن أن لا يزاد فيها ماء، وخبزة أن لا ينقص منها وزن
قيراط وأهملوا الكتب التي هي قوام الدين، ومرجع الأمر كله.

And we say: If you find no additions or corrections in a book, then bear
witness to its corruption. If its margins are white, there is no brightness
to be found in it—O God, help us—except in the books of the ancients,
who received their texts through transmission from their teachers and
in whom the disambiguation was carried out through the 'tongue of the
pen.' However, today, such corruption has crept into the books that it can
hardly be remedied, were it not for the grace of God, who preserves His
religion. How much the people today need the establishment of oversight
over the scribes! They ensure that milk is not mixed with water and that
bread does not lack even a gram of weight, yet they neglect the books,
which are the foundation of religion and the source of all matters.

Guidelines for Copying and Correcting Books

Another way to benefit from books without having to buy them is to copy
them oneself. Accordingly, in the following section of chapter 14, al-Yūsī gives
his reader a number of recommendations and rules to consider when copy-
ing books.[64] This includes that the copyist should be in a state of ritual purity,
keeping his clothes and writing utensils in a state of purity, and place the text
to be copied in an elevated position.[65] He also states that the copyist should
write the Basmala[66] at the beginning of the book and insert the conventional
honorifics when writing the name of God, the Prophet, his Companions, and
respected religious scholars or other righteous persons. The benediction upon
the Prophet must be written out in full—and not abbreviated—even if it
appears several times on the same line.[67] Whenever a section has been cop-
ied, al-Yūsī recommends praising God and sending blessings upon the Prophet
Muḥammad. For the sake of clarity, it should also be noted when a section
ends and a new section begins, by inserting the phrase "here ends section x,

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64   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 439.
65   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 439–40.
66   That is, the formula "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Merciful."
67   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 439.

followed by section Y" (*tamma kadhā wa-yatlūhū kadhā*) between the two sections.[68]

Such recommendations can be found in many earlier works dealing with the transmission and copying of texts, among them, for example, the works of Ibn Jamāʿa (d. 733/1333), al-ʿAlmāwī (d. 981/1573) and Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī (d. 985/1577).[69] They are to be understood, on the one hand, as efforts to standardize the process of manuscript production; on the other hand, they illustrate the close relationship between the technical process of copying and ethical ideas about the transfer of knowledge. Ultimately, they go back to the efforts of ḥadīth scholars, such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī (d. 643/1245), who discussed the modes of transmitting prophetic traditions and the rules for their transcription in his manual on the science of ḥadīth.[70]

Next, al-Yūsī explains the steps that must be carried out after copying a manuscript, namely the correction and collation of the copied texts (*taṣḥīḥ bi-l-muqābala*). These steps are crucial to preserving the integrity of the texts and ensuring the high quality of the manuscripts, and in al-Yūsī's view they should be applied both to the texts one copies oneself and to purchased manuscripts. In the course of this correction process, he writes, one should first add the diacritical dots to the letters that require them (*al-muʿjam*),[71] then vocalize ambiguous terms, and finally check and correct any misspellings (*taṣḥīf*). Al-Yūsī writes:[72]

إذا صحح الكتاب بالمقابلة، فلينقط المعجم، وليشكل المشكل، ويتفقد مواضع التصحيف، وإن أدى استصلاحه إلى استعجامه، فليكتبه في الحاشية، وليكتب عليه لفظة بيان،

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68   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 440.

69   Ibn Jamāʿa, *Tadhkirat al-sāmiʿ wa-l-mutakallim fī adab al-ʿālim wa-l-mutaʿallim*, ed. Muḥammad al-ʿAjamī (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya, 2008); ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ b. Mūsā al-ʿAlmāwī, *al-Muʿīd fī adab al-mufīd wa-l-mustafīd (Mukhtaṣar min Kitāb al-Durr al-naḍīd li-l-Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī)*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad ʿUbayd (Damascus: al-Maktaba al-ʿarabiyya, 1930); Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, *al-Durr al-naḍīd fī adab al-mufīd wa-l-mustafīd* (Giza: Maktabat al-tawʿiyya al-islāmiyya, 2009).

70   Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī, *Muqaddima fī ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Muʿāṣir, 2009), 132–80, 181–207. Precursors of this influential work included, for example, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) with *al-Kifāya fī maʿrifat uṣūl ʿilm al-riwāya* and *Taqyīd al-ʿilm* and al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ (d. 544/1149) with his *al-Ilmāʿ fī maʿrifat uṣūl al-riwāya wa-taqyīd al-samāʿ*.

71   A distinction is made between undotted letters (*al-ḥurūf al-muhmala*) and dotted letters (*al-ḥurūf al-muʿjama*). The latter include, for example, the letters ث ت ب etc. For more information, see the entries on Letter-pointing and Unpointed Letters in Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 144–45, 286.

72   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 440–41.

وإن كان محتملا من جهة الشكل أو الإعجام، فلينبه في الحاشية، أو احتاج إلى شرح،
أو تنبيه على فائدة أو تكملة، أو نحو ذلك، فليجعل ذلك كله في الحاشية، وليكتب عليه
حاشية، أو "ط" أي: طرة .

When the book is being corrected through collation, the dotted letters
should be marked with diacritical dots and the ambiguous passages
should be vocalized. One should check the places with spelling mistakes,
and if a correction would render the text unclear, this [correction] should
be noted in the margin, with the word *bayān* written above it. If there is
any uncertainty regarding the form [i.e., the addition of vowel signs] or
regarding the addition of diacritical marks, this should also be indicated
in the margin. If a comment, a note about useful information, an addi-
tion, or similar is required, all of this should be noted in the margin, with
ḥāshiya or *ṭ*, i.e., *ṭurra*,[73] written alongside it.

Furthermore, when correcting the manuscript, any surprising, incompre-
hensible or seemingly incorrect text passages that have been copied from
the source text or found in an acquired manuscript should be examined. The
result of this examination is to be noted in the manuscript margin according to
certain rules:[74]

وما كان من ذلك مستغربًا أو منكرًا وهو صحيح، في الحاشية أو في المتن، فليكتب
عليه "صح" وليجعلها صغيرة إن كانت في المتن، وإن وقع ما لا يدري، أصواب أم خطأ،
فليكتب عليه " كذا"، وإن علم أنه خطأ، ولم يكن مما يصلح، فليكتب في الحاشية "صوابه
كذا" والمحدثون يضيفون عليه، بأن يكتبوا "ضبا" .

If something seems unusual or unacceptable, either in the marginal note
or in the main text, but it is correct, one should write *ṣaḥḥ* (correct) above
it. This should be written in small script if it is within the text. If there
is something that one does not know whether it is right or wrong, one

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73   For an attempt to distinguish between the terms *ḥāshiya* and *ṭurra* in the context of
      the Maghrib, see ʿAbd al-Laṭīf b. Muḥammad al-Jīlānī, "Ṭāhirat al-ṭurar fī l-makhṭūṭ
      al-maghribī," in *Commentary Manuscripts: Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference
      of the Manuscript Center,* ed. Yūsuf Zaydān (Alexandria: Maktaba al-Iskandariyya, 2009),
      391–417.

74   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 440–41.

should write *kadhā* ("This is what it says"). If one knows for sure that something is wrong and it cannot be corrected, one should write in the margin *ṣawābuhū* … ("Correct is …"). The ḥadīth scholars add the word *ḍabbā*.

Al-Yūsī then explains how to deal with unintentional errors, such as additions, repetitions, and omissions made during the copying process or found in an acquired manuscript. For example, he explains that a word that has been added by mistake should be crossed out or a small *lā* (no) should be written above it. If a word or phrase is missing from the text, it should be added to the top right margin, with a fine line drawn through it and *ṣaḥḥa* (corrected) written above it.[75] In addition to these remarks on the execution of the correction, al-Yūsī explains that it does no harm to add comments, notes or additions to the content on manuscripts that one owns oneself—provided that they are related to the main text and the text remains legible. These notes could be an inquiry, a comment, a reference, an addition or clarification through notes, as well as supporting anecdotes or the like.[76]

  In the final sections of chapter 14, al-Yūsī gives some practical tips and recommendations on the types of highlighting and emphasis that can be used when copying a manuscript. When copying, the student should write in a nice, clean hand (*fa-l-yujawwid al-khaṭṭ*) and avoid a narrow handwriting, as he will regret it in old age and with weakening eyesight. The student should write with ink (*ḥibr*), as it is more permanent, and use a pointed pen made of hard reeds. He should also have a sharp knife with him to cut the reed and smooth the paper.[77] The copyist can highlight the title and chapter headings in color to provide better orientation in the manuscript, for example in the colors red, yellow, or green. If these colors are not available, the copyist may emphasize some phrases by thickening the font. Also, symbols could be used to signify names, numbers, etc. However, the copyist should explain these in a legend at the beginning or end of the manuscript.[78] With this, al-Yūsī concludes his practical advice on copying and correcting manuscripts, before he expands on the purpose of correcting manuscripts in the following chapter.

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75   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 441.
76   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 441: كبحث فيه أو تنبيه، أو عزُو ناقل أو منقول عنه، أو تحليته أو ضبط بقلم
      اللسان، أو حكاية تؤيد المحل، أو نحو ذلك
77   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 440.
78   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 442.

The Purpose of Correcting and Collating Books

In the fifteenth chapter of the third part of *al-Qānūn*, al-Yūsī once again returns to the subject of correcting and collating manuscripts and explains to his reader the reasons for the necessity of the correction process. It is entitled *Fī taṣḥīḥ al-kutub bi-l-muqābala wa-iṣlāḥ al-laḥn wa-l-khaṭaʾ fī l-ḥadīth* (The Correction of Books by Collation and the Improvement of Language Errors and Spelling Mistakes in the Prophetic Traditions).[79] The chapter begins with a reminder of the purpose of books, which is to derive benefit from them and enjoy their content. However, to fulfill this purpose, it must be ensured that the books are correct (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and trustworthy (*mawthūq bihā*). Al-Yūsī writes:[80]

> اعلم أن القصد من الكتب الاستفادة بالمراجعة واستطعام ما فيها كمخبر يخبر وشاهد
> يشهد فلا بد أن تكون صحيحة موثوقا بها وإلا لم تفد ويراد بالصحة أحد أمرين الأول
> أن يوافق ما في نفس الأمر معنى أو لفظا الثاني أن يوافق ما قاله مؤلفه.

> Know that the purpose of books is to derive benefit through review and to savor what is contained within them, much like a narrator who narrates or a witness who testifies. Therefore, they must be correct and trustworthy; otherwise, they are of no benefit. Correctness has two meanings: first, that the content aligns with the actual truth, whether in meaning or wording, and second, that it corresponds to what the author has stated.

The correctness (*ṣiḥḥa*) of a book thus comprises two aspects: First, the content must correspond to the actual facts; second, it must be consistent with what the author originally said or wrote. In the following, al-Yūsī explains how this correctness can be achieved and who is qualified to establish it. In order to achieve correctness in the sense that the content of the book corresponds to the facts, al-Yūsī writes, the text must be corrected (*iṣlāḥ*). This task should only be carried out by experienced scholars in that discipline (*al-ʿulamāʾ al-ʿārifīn bi-dhālika l-fann*):[81]

> فأما الأول فيكون بإصلاحه إن وجد خطأ لفظا أو معنى وإنما يكون بأيدي العلماء
> العارفين بذلك الفن فإن كان المؤلف نفسه فليصلحه حيث رأى في المتن أو خارجه

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79   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 443–44.

80   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 443.

81   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 443.

وإن كان غيره فإنما يكون إصلاحه بتنبيه في شرح يوضع على ذلك المتن أو التعليق أو
في طرة على المحل بشرط أن يعرف خطه وأنه فلان وبشرط أن يكون الكل من أهل
العلم ولا يكون الإصلاح في المتن إذ لا يؤمن الغلط أيضا على المصلح ولأن ذلك
يكون تخليطا ورفعا للثقة فلا يدري ما قاله المؤلف وما قاله غيره فالواجب أن يترك
التصنيف كله بحاله وينبه على ما فيه من خارج ليبقى الكل معرضا للنظر.

As for the former [i.e., correctness in terms of the correspondence of the content to the facts], if one finds errors in the wording or meaning, this should be corrected. Only scholars who are knowledgeable in the respective field should do this. If the author himself makes the correction, he may do so in the text itself or in the margin. If someone else makes the correction, it should be done by means of an explanatory note placed alongside the main text, in a comment, or in a marginal note, making sure that the comment is clearly identifiable and the writer is known. All those involved should be scholars. The correction should not be made directly on the text, because the corrector might make mistakes, and this might lead to confusion and a loss of trust, as it would not be clear what the author said and what he did not say. Therefore, the work must be left as it is, and corrections should be added outside of it, keeping the entire text open to independent examination.

Al-Yūsī again points out that the correction should not be made directly in the text, since the corrector could also make mistakes, which would lead to confusion. Instead, he recommends leaving the text in its original form and marking corrections with comments or notes in the margins of the manuscript.

The second aspect of correctness, i.e., correctness with regard to what the author said, should be established by collation (*muqābala*), i.e., comparison with one or more correct (or corrected) manuscripts, an *aṣl ṣaḥīḥ*. Al-Yūsī emphasizes that this correction is all the more reliable the more manuscripts are compared, as this increases certainty that the text actually contains what the author wrote. This task does not require a specialized, experienced scholar, but it should still be done by qualified individuals. On this point, al-Yūsī states:[82]

وأما الثاني فيكون بالمعارضة على أصل صحيح أو أكثر ولابد أن تكون المعارضة ممن
هو أهل، وكلما تكررت وتعددت الأصول قويت الثقة بأن هذا هو ما قاله المؤلف،

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82   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 443–44.

ويروى عن هشام بن عروة قال: قال لي أبي يا بني كتبت قلت نعم قال عارضت قلت
لا قال لم تكتب، وقالوا: الذي يكتب ولا يعارض كالذي يدخل الخلاء ولا يستنجي،
وقالوا لو عورض الكتاب مائة مرة ما كاد يسلم من أن يبقى خطأ، وهذا كما يقال إن اللوح
أو الكتاب ما يرتفع القلم عنه كالمكلف.

As for the second aspect, it should be done by collating with one or more
reliable sources. The collation must be conducted by someone qualified,
and the more often it is repeated and the more sources you compare,
the greater the reliability that this is what the author actually said. It is
narrated that Hishām b. ʿUrwa said: My father once asked me, "Have you
written?" I said, "Yes." He asked, "Have you collated?" I said, "No." He said,
"Then you have not written." It is also said, "One who writes without col-
lating is like one who goes to the toilet without cleaning himself after-
wards." It is also said, "Even if the book is collated a hundred times, it is
unlikely to be free from remaining errors." This is like the saying, "The
writing tablet or the book, once the pen has been lifted from it, is like the
one who reached the age of accountability."

Al-Yūsī emphasizes that the task of correction and collation requires utmost
concentration and is best done in complete isolation (*khalwa*) with a clear
mind. Ideally, this process should be repeated several times, since, as an old
saying goes, even a hundredfold comparison would still leave errors in the
text. He also recommends that the collation be carried out by several people
to increase reliability. It should then be noted in the text that this process has
taken place by adding the word *balaghtu* (or *bulighat*) after each section of text
that has been collated. Al-Yūsī writes:[83]

ثم إذا اشتغل بالمقابلة، ففي أي محل وقف يكتب عليه "بلغت"، أي: المقابلة، والأولى
أن تكون بين اثنين أو أكثر، وكل من تكون عينه جوالة، أو نوامة، أو غفولا، فلا يعتد به،
ومحل كل من النسخ والمقابلة والتصنيف الخلوة، والبعد عن الشواغل، فطنين الذباب
يشغل ذوي الألباب، وإن كان الشاغل باطنًا، كجوع أو خوف، أو عشق أو تفكر في شيء
ما، أو همّ ما، فلا تنفع الخلوة.

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83   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 444.

> When collating, one should note *bulighat* (reached) at all the places where one stops, i.e., the collation. It is best if the collation is done by two or more people. A person whose eye is sleepy, dreamy, or inattentive should not be considered. The best place for copying, collating, and writing is a secluded place, away from distractions, for "the buzzing of flies disturbs the wise." And if the distraction comes from within, such as hunger, fear, infatuation, thinking or worrying about something, then all seclusion is of no use.

At the end of this chapter, al-Yūsī again refers to the practices of the early ḥadīth scholars. He takes up the discussion he presented in chapter 13 and notes that there were different opinions among these scholars about how to deal with linguistic errors (*laḥn*) in prophetic traditions. Some believed that such errors can be corrected (*tabdīl*) without hesitation, while others emphasized that the text (*matn*) should remain unchanged.[84] Al-Yūsī notes that this discussion resembles the debate about whether traditions can be transmitted based on their meaning (*naql al-ḥadīth bi-l-maʿnā*). However, compared to the transmission based on meaning, the correction of linguistic errors appears to be significantly less problematic, since it does not affect the original content of the text in terms of its meaning (*al-tabdīl hunā akhaff wa-aḥsan*).

To sum up, we can observe that al-Yūsī sets different priorities in the three chapters of *al-Qānūn* examined. In chapter 13, he discusses the permissibility of writing down knowledge in books, where he mainly presents the pro and contra positions from the early days of Islam. By using the rational argument that writing protects knowledge from being forgotten, he seeks to persuade his readers that books are a valuable and permissible tool for scholars and learners. He emphasizes that it is less important in what form knowledge is transmitted than that it is truly understood and internalized.

In chapter 14, al-Yūsī remarks that the practice of memorization has been in steady decline for many centuries. Given that most knowledge was recorded in books in his time, anyone seeking knowledge, he reasons, should make use of the knowledge in those books. Books are invaluable to al-Yūsī—he refers to them as a tool, a weapon, and a treasure—and he calls on his readers to make every possible effort to obtain books for their own knowledge acquisition. The chapter provides ample advice on the proper treatment of books (*ādāb al-kutub*). For those who cannot afford to purchase books, al-Yūsī offers

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84   al-Yūsī, *al-Qānūn*, 444.

several alternatives: First, one could focus on traditional forms of knowledge transmission, namely listening (*samāʿ*) to a shaykh and memorizing (*ḥifẓ*). Understanding the content, he emphasizes repeatedly, is more important than the possession of books, even though books are undoubtedly of great value. The second and third alternatives that al-Yūsī presents are borrowing books and copying books by hand. Finally, he provides his readers with a series of practical and ethical rules of conduct and recommendations for copying and correcting books.

In chapter 15, al-Yūsī addresses the purpose and necessity of correcting books in more detail. For him, the correction of books is an indispensable step in order to be able to derive true benefit from books. Through collation, i.e., the comparison of a manuscript with as many reliable textual witnesses as possible, it should be ensured that this benefit, the acquisition of knowledge from books, can be realized. According to al-Yūsī, the correction of books should take place on two levels: firstly, on the level of form, by ensuring that the copy corresponds to what the author wrote; and secondly, on the level of content, by checking the text for correctness of content. He refers to this second step of correction as verification (*taḥqīq*). According to al-Yūsī, any form of correction must be made in the margin of the manuscript. This is to ensure that later readers can distinguish between text copied from the original source and corrections made by the copyist or a later reader.

Practices of Correction and Collation in Maghribī Manuscripts

To show how al-Yūsī's strategies for ensuring the accuracy of the transmitted text were used and documented in a manuscript's layout, we will consider three examples from the Western Maghrib. It should be noted that al-Yūsī did not invent these strategies, but rather described to his readers the textual practices that he and his contemporaries employed when dealing with manuscripts. These methods were, as already mentioned, developed in the context of ḥadīth criticism, but applied to many other types of texts through the seventeenth century. The following examples all come from the still existing library of the Nāṣiriyya in Tamgrūt, which was founded by al-Yūsī's spiritual guide and teacher Maḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī.[85]

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85   See my forthcoming article "The Library of the Sufi Brotherhood al-Nāṣiriyya in Tamgrūt, Morocco: The Formation, Organization, and Profile of an Early Modern Library" in the *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts*.

The Correction and Collation of the Ḥadīth Collection of al-Bukhārī

Al-Yūsī's teacher, Maḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī, according to his biographers, was deeply involved in the thorough study of books (*muṭālaʿa*) and the correction and collation (*muqābala*) of manuscripts—especially in the field of ḥadīth studies.[86] In his Zāwiya in Tamgrūt, he devoted himself especially to the correction of the two ḥadīth collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. At that time, the authoritative text of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in the Western Maghrib was the transmission (*riwāya*) of Ibn Saʿāda (d. 522/1128). It was based on a copy that Ibn Saʿāda had made of a manuscript that had been copied by the eminent Andalusian ḥadīth scholar Abū ʿAlī al-Ṣadafī (d. 514/1120).[87] Several hundred copies of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* can still be found in Tamgrūt today, including a complete copy in twenty volumes in the *riwāya* of Ibn Saʿāda.[88] This copy was completed between 1027/1618 and 1029/1620 by Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Sūda al-Andalusī al-Fāsī. The third volume of the manuscript was completed in 1027/1618, as can be seen from the colophon framed in red (Figure 1).

Collation

The copy shows numerous correction notes, which indicate that the copyist compared the manuscript with the source text and corrected it after completing his copy:

– Below the red-framed colophon of the manuscript, the copyist notes that he has collated and corrected the manuscript to the best of his ability (*juhd al-istiṭāʿa*) on the basis of at least two texts (Figure 1, marker A): The first text is the original from which he copied. This source was a very old and correct copy (*aṣl ʿatīq wa-ṣaḥīḥ*) of Abū ʿAlī al-Ṣadafī and contained notes in

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86   al-Makkī, *al-Durar al-muraṣṣaʿa*, vol. II:519.

87   In Tamgrūt, however, scholars and students were not limited to the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukharī* in the *riwāya* of Ibn Saʿāda. Ahmad b. Nasir al-Khalifa, the son of Maḥammad b. Nasir al-Darʿī, introduced a new *riwāya* of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari* to the Western Maghrib, known as the *Yūnīniyya*. This *riwāya* is based on a copy of the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* that was made by the Damascene scholar al-Yūnīnī (d. 701/1302) in collaboration with the grammarian Ibn Mālik (d. 673/1274) and included all the manuscript variants in circulation at the time. A copy of this work was purchased by Ahmad b. Nasir and brought to Tamgrūt. See Matthew Conaway Schumann, "A Path of Reverent Love: The Nāṣiriyya Brotherhood Across Muslim Africa (11th–12th/17th–18th Centuries)" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2020), 180.
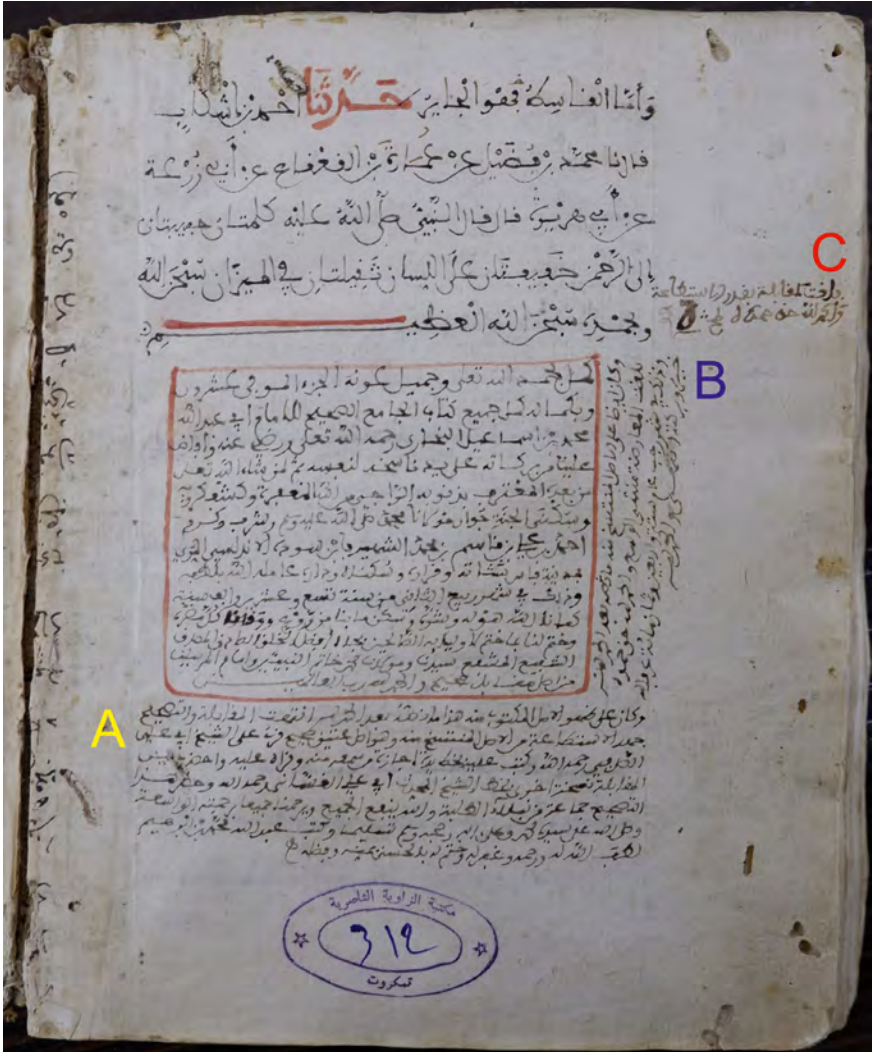
88   Khizāna Nāṣiriyya, MS 123/312.

FIGURE 1   Colophon on a copy of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* with collation note (Khizāna Nāṣiriyya,
MS 123/312)

al-Ṣadafī's own handwriting about whom he had given permission to teach
(*ijāza*) and who had read the text to him. The second text with which the
copy was collated was a manuscript by Abū ʿAlī al-Ghassānī.[89]

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89   He is probably the important Andalusian ḥadīth scholar Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad
      al-Jayyānī al-Ghassānī al-Qurṭubī (d. 498/1105).

– To the right of the colophon, the copyist notes that the original he used for
  his copy of the work (*al-aṣl al-muntasakh minhu*) had already been collated
  once in the year 846/1442 (marker B).
– In the right-hand margin of the manuscript there is a note by another per-
  son who collated al-Fāsī's copy again at an unspecified later date (marker C).
  This person is the same individual who made a note on the title page of the
  manuscript that the volume had been donated to the Zāwiya Nāsiriyya. It
  cannot be definitively determined when this happened, but it was probably
  in the seventeenth or eighteenth century.[90]

Textual Variants

The copyist of the manuscript notes several variants found in the two con-
sulted manuscripts in the margin of the copied manuscript. These include:

– The expression كَالْأُتْرُنْجَة, marked by the letter ح in the body of the text. The
  ending of the word, without the ن, is repeated in the margin, so that the
  variant reads كَالْأُتْرُجَة. In the margin, the letters ح and س are added to this
  variant, which seems to indicate that the copyist found this variant in two
  other manuscripts represented by these two letters (Figure 2, line A11).
– The expression قال أنا, marked by marked by the two small letters ص and
  س in the text. The variant is noted in the margin of the manuscript, as قالنا,
  with an additional ح (line A15). The two different manuscripts, in which
  these variants have been found, seem to be represented by س and ح, while
  the copyist considered the first variant correct and added the letter ص for
  ṣawāb, meaning "correct".
– The word الزجاجة, marked in the text by the letters ح and ه, and its variant
  الزِّجاجة noted in the manuscript margin and marked with a س (line B6). This
  indicates that the copyist found the variant mentioned in the margin in the
  manuscript represented by س.

Correction of Mistakes

The copyist made several corrections of mistakes in the text (Figure 2),
including:

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90   Later ownership and endowment notes on manuscripts in Tamgrūt are much more
      elaborate.

- The insertion of the words ممن أظلم ومن وتعالى, after ومن, marked by the small symbol ⌐ , called *ʿaṭfa*,[91] which points towards the right-hand edge of the manuscript where the correction can be found (line A6);
- the insertion of the word لهم after فقال, marked by the small symbol ⌐ pointing towards the left margin of the manuscript, where the correction can be found, together with a small صح (correct);
- the correction of the word القسطاط into القسطاس, marked by a صح in small script directly in the line, repeated in the margin with an additional ه, probably to indicate that he found this variant reading in the manuscript represented by this letter (line B14);
- the correction of the word قال, marked by a صح in small script, into يُقال, which is repeated in the manuscript margin, with an added ه, probably to indicate in which manuscript he had found this variant (line B15).

FIGURE 2   Corrections on a copy of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Khizāna Nāṣiriyya, MS 123/312)

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91   This is a well-known correction sign (*khaṭṭ al-takhrīj*), see Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 250.

Disambiguation

The copyist carefully and thoroughly vocalized the text and added diacritical marks throughout.

Commentary

The unknown person who added the endowment note in favor of the Zāwiya Nāṣiriyya on the manuscript and made a further collation of the text added an explanatory note to the text, provided with the letter ط for *ṭurra* (Figure 2, B12).

The Correction and Collation of al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ's *al-Shifāʾ*

Another work containing a large number of prophetic traditions is *al-Shifāʾ fī taʿrīf ḥuqūq al-muṣṭafā* (The Healing by Recognizing the Rights of the Chosen Prophet) by the Maghribī jurist al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ (d. 544/1150),[92] who, in addition to jurisprudence, wrote a handbook on the subject of ḥadīth criticism and the question of the permissibility of writing down prophetic traditions.[93] The Zāwiya Nāṣiriyya in Tamgrūt contains a number of copies of this work, including a manuscript that was prepared by the Andalusian judge and scholar Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿUmar al-Ghassānī, known as Ibn ʿAskar (d. 636/1238).[94] On the last page of the manuscript, which also contains the colophon with the name of the copyist, there is a note about the transmission of the work (Figure 3, marker A) and a collation note (Figure 3, marker B).

Note on the Transmission of the Text

The first note, consisting of a reading note (*qirāʾa*) and an audition note (*samāʿ*), was added by Ibn ʿAskar ("Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿUmar") himself in 624/1227 and states that he read the first part of the work to Shaykh Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Ḥajarī (d. 624/1227), also known as Ibn al-Jayyār, and that he had heard the second part of the work from Shaykh Abū al-Rabīʿ Sulaymān b. Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā al-Anṣārī, whose chain of transmission he traces back to the author of the work, i.e., al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, via Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. Ḥakam al-Qaysī[95] (d. 598/1201) (Figure 3, marker A).

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92   For a recent study of the work, see Ruggero Vimercati Sanseverino, "Theology of Veneration of the Prophet Muḥammad," in *The Presence of the Prophet in Early Modern and Contemporary Islam*, ed. Denis Gril, Stefan Reichmuth, and Dilek Sarmis (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 153–96.

93   al-Yaḥṣubī, *al-Ilmāʿ*.

94   Khizāna Nāṣiriyya, MS 18/138.

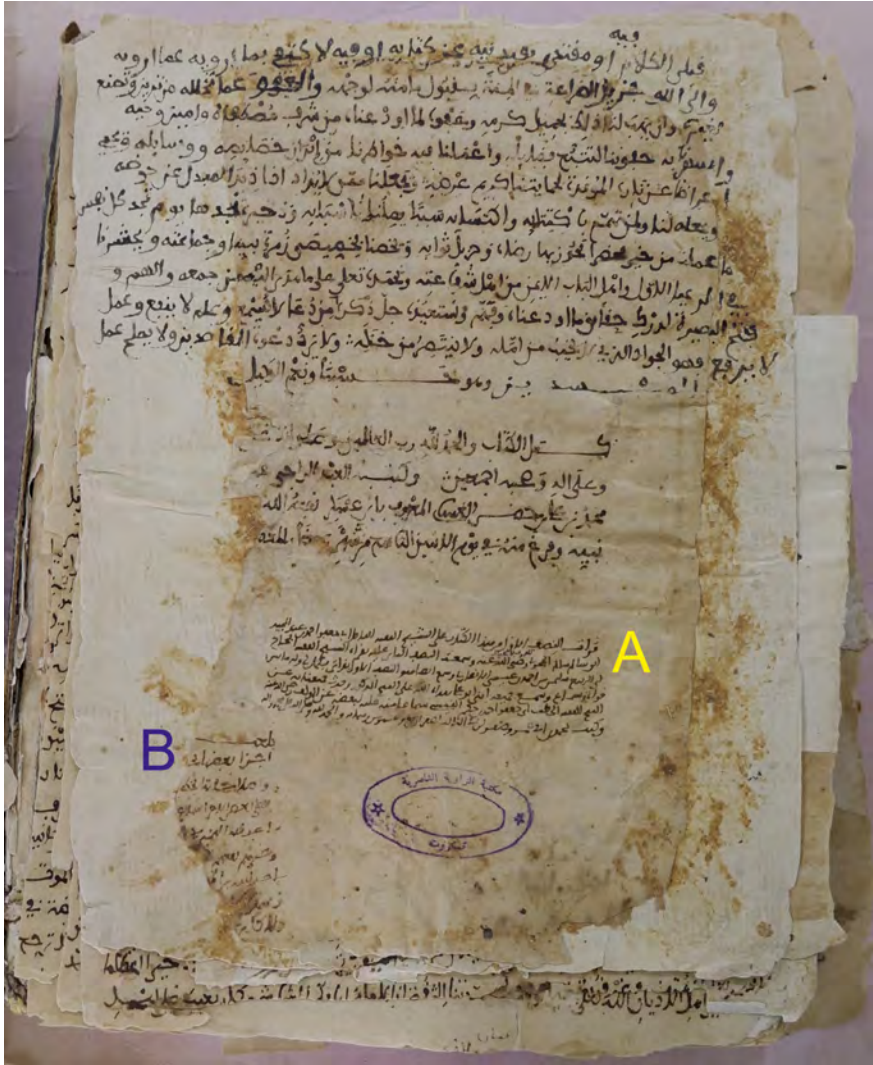95   He is probably Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Ḥakam al-Qaysī (d. 598/1201).

Collation

The collation note, clearly recognizable in a different handwriting than that
of the copyist, i.e., presumably added later, is no longer completely legible
(Figure 3, marker B). However, it does show that a later owner made a correc-
tion to the manuscript. Another indication that the collation was carried out
can be found on a page in the main text of the manuscript, where reference

is made to another text witness (*aṣl*) in which it reads الله إلى أواه (and not أواه
الله) (Figure 4, line 17).[96]

Highlighting and Structuring

In the body of the text, we find an example where a heading is emphasized by
thickening the font. In the margin of the manuscript, a subheading has been
added for better orientation, presumably by a later owner of the manuscript:
"the first part (الجزء الأول) of the fifth chapter" (Figure 4, line 4).

Correction

A sample page from the fifth chapter of the work contains a series of notes
suggesting that various correction steps, as described by al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī, were
carried out (Figure 4):

– All diacritical dots and vowel signs have been added to the text, i.e., a dis-
  ambiguation (*ḍabṭ*) of all words has been carried out. The punctuation
  of the letters that requiring dotting (*iʿjām al-muʿjam*) seems to have been
  added by the copyist himself, while the vocalization was possibly (at least in
  part) added later—during the correction and collation. This is indicated by
  the different form and strength of the vowel signs, for example in lines 6, 8
  and 26.
– One correction appears to have been made by the copyist: in line 4, the word
  جده is missing, marked in the text by the sign ⌐ (between the words الله and
  له). It points towards the left margin of the manuscript, where the missing
  word is written on the manuscript margin, along with a small ص indicating
  the corrected version of the word.[97]
– Another correction was made in the middle of the text, presumably because
  there was no more space for the correction in the margin: here, in line 15, the
  word آية is missing in the sentence, and was added directly at the appropri-
  ate place.
– On line 16, another correction is made, this time in the margin of the man-
  uscript, where the word وقرره was repeated, presumably to make it easier
  to read.

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96   فدب عليه عمه وآواه إليه وقيل آواه إلى الله
97   This sign is called *ḍabba* and, according to Adam Gacek, was originally used to mark
      unclear passages. Later, the practice of marking corrected words with this sign became
      established, as is the case here. See Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 285. Al-Yūsī mentions that
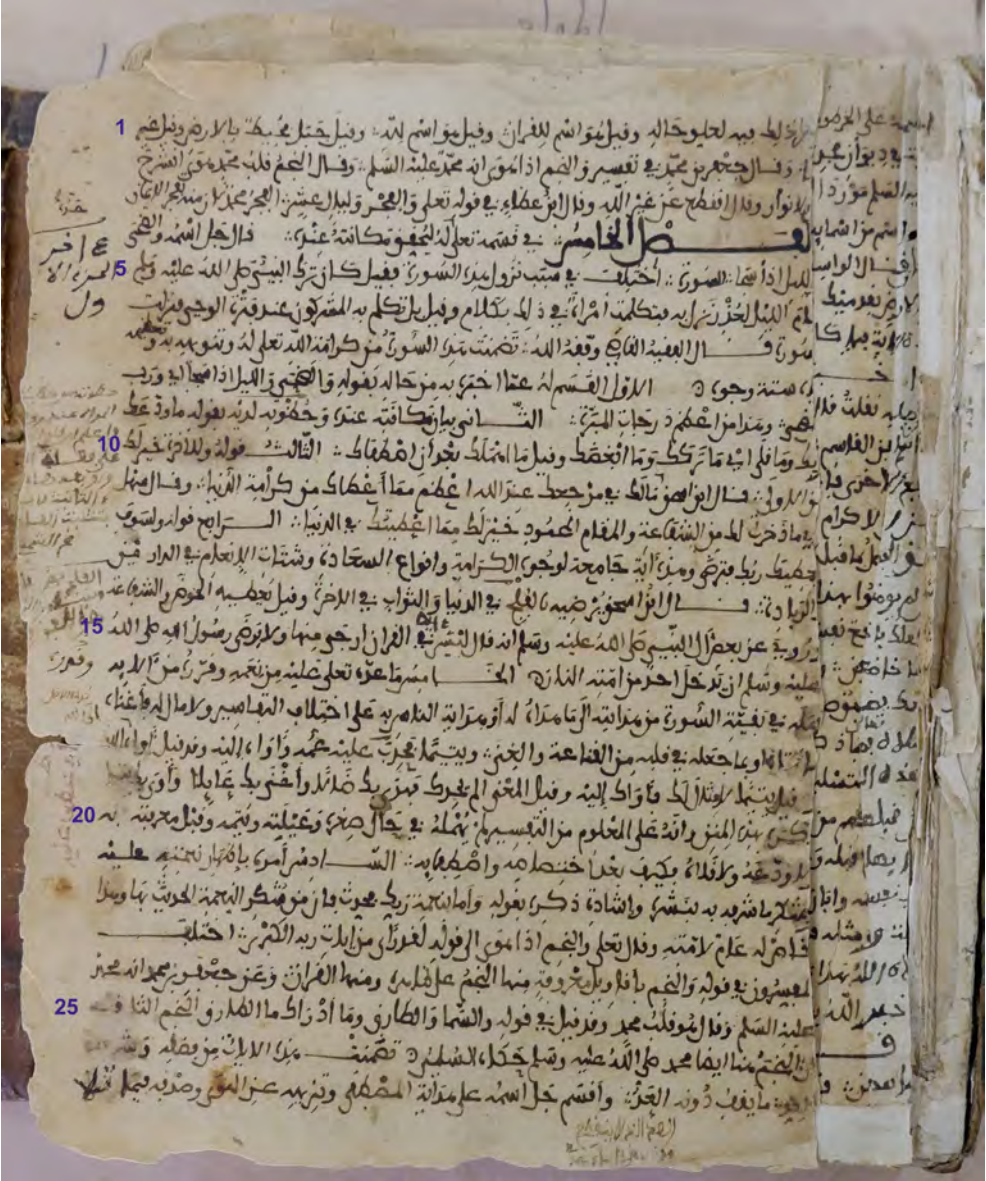   this practice is particularly common among ḥadīth scholars.

FIGURE 4   Corrections on a copy of *al-Shifāʾ fī taʿrīf ḥuqūq al-muṣṭafā* (Khizāna Nāṣiriyya, MS 18/138)

Commentary

A contextual comment was added to the margin of the manuscript, referring
to the expression وحظوته لديه, i.e. the favor that God has bestowed upon the
Prophet Muḥammad (line 9). This comment was marked in the text by the

letter ص. Finally, there is an explanation in red ink in the margin of the manu-
script for the expression *fa-ḥadaba ʿalayhī*, marked by a ط, the abbreviation for
ṭurra (line 18). According to the commentator, this expression means that the
Prophet's uncle was kind to him (*ʿaṭafa ʿalayhī*).

The Collation and Correction of the Grammatical Commentary
al-Munṣif min al-kalām ʿalā Mughnī Ibn Hishām

The last manuscript that we will consider here is a copy of the grammatical
commentary *al-Munṣif min al-kalām ʿalā Mughnī Ibn Hishām* by Aḥmad b.
Muḥammad al-Shumunnī al-Qusanṭīnī (d. 872/1468), which al-Yūsī's Shaykh
Maḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī copied in 1048/1638 as a young scholar.

Disambiguation
This text is not fully vocalized; rather, only a few words, passages and verses of
poetry have been vocalized. However, the diacritical dots have been added for
the most part.

Correction and Collation
- On the copy, there are a number of minor corrections in the margins, for
  example in line 10 in Figure 5, where it reads, *bi-l-fāʾ wa-lā fā famtanaʿa
  kawnuhū*. The note أصل ولا فاء صح indicates that a correction must be made
  here in accordance with the source text. In the body of the text, the passage
  is marked by the head of a small ص, the correction mark *ḍabba*.
- The copyist corrects himself again because he misspelled the word directly
  after the quotation from the Qurʾān, لو تزيلوا. Here he adds the word سوق in
  the margin, while in the body of the text he slightly crosses out the word
  and adds a small ص, i.e., the correction sign *ḍabba*, above (Figure 5, line 12).
- On line 20, the copyist forgot the word أما, noted it in the margin, and indi-
  cated above the words قوله وقال that the conjunction had to be inserted here.
- At the end of the section on حذف الاسم المضاف, from line 24 onwards, the
  copyist noted that the word على had been forgotten. In the running text,
  he added three vertical dots to mark the place where the word should be
  inserted.
- On line 24, he writes *Shams al-Dīn al-Sarkhasī*, but then corrects it to the
  correct name, *Shams al-Aʾimma*. However, he does seem to be unsure here,
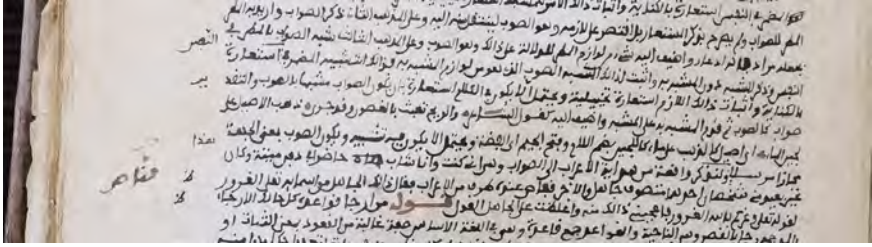 because he notes the letter ظ in the margin, probably for *ẓann* (conjecture).

FIGURE 5   Corrections on a copy of *al-Munṣif min al-kalām ʿalā Mughnī Ibn Hishām*
(Khizāna Nāṣiriyya, MS 350/637)

FIGURE 6   Corrections on a copy of *al-Munṣif min al-kalām ʿalā Mughnī Ibn Hishām*
(Khizāna Nāṣiriyya, MS 350/637)

Unclear Passages

Maḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī added the letter ظ conspicuously often in the margins of the manuscript. This abbreviation can stand for the word *ẓann* (conjecture) or *unẓur* (to be checked, to be reviewed). According to Adam Gacek, this indicates that a passage is unclear to the copyist or reader.[98] At another point in the manuscript, it becomes clear that the copyist checked the passages marked with ظ again afterwards (Figure 6). For example, he noted the abbreviation ظ in the margin next to line 8 of the text excerpt. Later, he or someone else notes that he has found a variant for the word قفاص in a different manuscript,[99] namely قناص. The word thus seems to have been unknown to the copyist, but he or someone else checked the spelling.[100]

Conclusion

We have seen that in the seventeenth century, the scholars in al-Yūsī's circle regarded books as indispensable sources for the acquisition and transmission of knowledge. In the two Sufi brotherhoods in which al-Yūsī was trained, the study of books was central. To this end, large numbers of books were purchased from far and wide, copied by hand, and libraries were established to house them. Al-Yūsī, too, expresses an enthusiasm and appreciation for books in his *al-Qānūn*. At the same time, he regrets that the traditional practice of

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98   Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, 315.
99   The variant is indicated by the letter خ , i.e., *fī nuskha ukhrā*.
100   The different spellings of the letters *qāf* and *fāʾ* in the east and west of the Islamic world may have caused confusion. In the Maghrib, the variants ق and ڢ were used for this, while in the east the variants ٯ and ف were common. The letter ن can easily be confused with an ف when used within a word.

memorization has been declining for centuries and warns his readers not to be deceived by owning many books. With his remarks, he seems to be addressing a group of people among his contemporaries who are skeptical about knowledge that is recorded in books and can be obtained directly from them, and who possibly want to preserve or revive the traditional practice of memorizing and passing on knowledge orally. On the other hand, it is clear from his remarks that there must also be those among his contemporaries who own a large number of books but—according to al-Yūsī's criticism—do not truly delve into this knowledge. This is suggested by al-Yūsī's repeated calls not to rely entirely on the knowledge recorded in the owned books, but to make an effort to understand the knowledge accurately.

Al-Yūsī makes it clear that, in his opinion, it is only permissible to take knowledge directly from books under strict conditions. He repeatedly emphasizes that there are many erroneous manuscripts in circulation, which is due to a lack of care in correction and collation, and urges his readers to thoroughly correct both their own copies and purchased manuscripts. This attitude was apparently shared by his contemporaries in the rural Sufi lodges in which he frequented and where it was customary to check and correct manuscripts afterwards. This is evidenced by the numerous meticulously corrected manuscripts found there, of which only three examples have been presented here. For al-Yūsī, the careful correction of a book was therefore a prerequisite for obtaining knowledge from it.

In order to benefit from books, al-Yūsī recommends that his readers apply the strategies of textual criticism first developed by ḥadīth scholars. These strategies were further developed over the centuries, documented by various authors, and increasingly applied to other textual genres. They involve the careful collation and correction of manuscripts by comparing them with copies that are as old and reliable as possible or that have already been corrected. The aim of this practice is not to create a new consolidated or harmonized version of the text from different variants, but to point out the differences through marginal notes, so that later readers could trace the variants themselves. Al-Yūsī's contemporaries, such as his teacher Maḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Darʿī, consistently applied these strategies, as evidenced by the corrected manuscripts in the rural libraries of the Maghrib. Al-Yūsī goes beyond the classical approaches of mere textual correction and demands that the content of a text also be verified. This verification (*taḥqīq*) was to be carried out by experienced scholars and served to ensure the correctness of the text's content.

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