

“The People of my Generation are Best”: Conceptualizing Testimony in Early Islam (9th and 10th Centuries)

ABSTRACT

This article is about the development of testimony in the early years of Islam within the Muslim theology. It argues that the tradition of isnad (chain of transmitters) forms the basis of testimony during this period. To know the accurate way of Muslim life, Muslim scholars engaged themselves in a very sophisticated way of judging testimony. To extract accurate knowledge, they evolved a concept of golden past and undermined the later method of testimony. That's why the tradition of testimony became somewhat more challenging for the latter scholars, who after the 12th and 13th centuries almost gave up the idea of knowing the sayings of Prophet Muhammad through testimony. This article also highlights the problems and controversies associated with the classification of Islamic testimony (with particular reference to hadith—the sayings and deeds of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam). It suggests that the high standards of testimony led various scholars to contest the principles of testimony.

Keywords: Testimony, Islam, Hadith, Isnad, Shia, Sunni.

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