Form Follows Floor

Praying in Shoes, the Floor of the Mosque, and the Conditions of a Sunnah

A companion to the Sabbath Pond Test series

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Standpoint. The author is a Pakistani Muslim of the Hanafi school, a software engineer and not a jurist, writing from Lahore. He reads the sources as a layman who can check a reference, and offers the reading so that scholars can check it in turn. The paper arose from a village-comedy film and a popular article on the same question [1; 2]; it names no mosque, no collector, no locality and no person, judges no one's intention, and criticises no act of building, repair or cleaning. The author has no connection to any mosque committee or to the trade in carpets or flooring. The standpoint is disclosed so that the reader can weigh it.

Disclaimer. This is a research preprint prepared solely for study and academic purposes. It is not final; it is subject to correction and will be revised as the record changes. It is a scholarly examination of published texts and nothing more. It is not a fatwa, not a religious ruling, not advice to any person or mosque, not a campaign for or against any school, institution, people or person, and not a direction to anyone to do or to refrain from doing anything. Where the paper reads a text one way and a school reads it another, the paper says so and prints both. A reader with a question about his own mosque or his own prayer should ask a scholar he trusts. The author bears sole responsibility for the analysis.

Abstract

Praying in sandals is a practice of the Prophet ﷺ reported in the canonical collections, permitted by every school of law, and described as *better* (أفضل) in the Hanafi school's relied-upon text, *al-Durr al-Mukhtār*. It is also a practice that almost no Muslim performs in a mosque today. This paper asks why, and finds the answer in the sources themselves: the practice depends on the floor. The floor of the Prophet's ﷺ mosque was earth and pebbles with a small palm-leaf mat kept for prostration; the earth, by the Sunnah's own rule, purifies a sole that has trodden on filth; and the Hanafi jurists, when they suspended the practice, gave the changed floor as their reason. Ibn ʿĀbidīn wrote that the ruling stands "but if one fears soiling the mosque's furnishings, one should not, even if they are pure; the Prophet's mosque was floored with pebbles in his time, unlike in our time". The paper sets this sentence beside the Hanafi rule for purifying a soiled sandal, which expressly excludes cloth and the carpet, and beside the history of mosque carpeting, which is recent. It concludes that a mosque's floor is a condition of which Sunnahs the mosque can host: an earth or pebble floor keeps both prayer in sandals and prayer barefoot practicable, a carpet keeps only one, and the choice between them is open to whoever builds. The paper does not rank floors, does not call carpet unlawful, and does not ask anyone to pray in shoes on a carpet; it concedes the force of the objection from modern street filth and presents the Shāfiʿī view, that prayer in sandals is a concession rather than a recommended act, in full. Its proposal is modest: that a new mosque keep an earth or pebble area beside its carpeted hall.

Keywords: praying in shoes; sandals (*naʿl*); leather socks (*khuff*); mosque floor; carpet; Sunnah; Hanafi fiqh; Ibn ʿĀbidīn; *al-Durr al-Mukhtār*; purification by earth; mosque architecture; form and substance; Pakistan.

1. Introduction: the question, stated

Three earlier papers in this series used a narrative from *Sūrat al-Aʿrāf*, the town by the sea whose people kept the letter of the Sabbath while breaking its purpose, as a device for measuring the distance between the form of a rule and its substance, in Islamic banking, in criminal procedure, and in the stated aims of a war [3; 4; 5]. The present paper shares the series' interest and its method, but it is not a fourth application

of the test, and it carries no number. The Sabbath Pond Test asks whether an arrangement obtains what a rule forbids while keeping the rule's vocabulary. A carpet in a mosque forbids nothing and obtains nothing forbidden. It does something quieter: it makes a recommended act impossible in the place built for it. The four criteria of the earlier papers have no purchase on that, and the paper does not force them. What it keeps from the series is the habit of setting the stated form beside the recorded substance, and the rule that the conclusion follows the evidence.

The question is this. The Prophet ﷺ prayed in his sandals; the canonical collections record it, the jurists of every school permit it, and the text the Hanafi school relies on calls it better. Yet a Muslim who walked into a mosque in Lahore, Cairo or Riyadh in his shoes today would be stopped at the door, and the scholars of every school would, in the carpeted hall, agree with the man who stopped him. The paper asks what changed, whether what changed was the ruling or something else, and what follows if it was something else. Its answer, drawn from the jurists' own words, is that the ruling did not change; the floor did. The paper then asks the question that follows and that, as far as the author has found, no one has put: if the floor decides whether a Sunnah can be practised, then the floor is a matter of fiqh for whoever lays it, and a mosque not yet built can be floored so that both Sunnahs, in sandals and barefoot, remain possible.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 sets out the sources: the Qur'anic verses and their commentaries; the hadith on the Prophet's ﷺ mosque, on prayer in sandals, on the earth as purifier, and on coverings in the homes of Madinah; the Hanafi juristic writing, in which both the rule for purifying a sandal and the ruling on praying in one are found; the other schools and the hadith commentators; and the earlier writing, classical and modern, that has touched the question. Section 3 is the analysis. Section 4 states the counterarguments at full strength and answers what can be answered. Section 5 asks what an honest version of the paper's claim requires and what it must not claim. Section 6 concludes.

A word on method. Every text cited is on disk in the author's research library, and the paper cites it by the edition there: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* by the numbering of the English translation in the library (Krehl numbering); *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* by the running numbers of the hadith-api edition, which numbers each collection in one sequence, so that printed editions may differ; the classical Arabic works by the printed volume and page of the OpenITI corpus editions [6]; the Qur'an by *sūra* and verse with Ṣaḥīḥ International's rendering. Hadith are quoted in the editions' own English wording, and the paper keeps the words of a hadith visibly apart from any interpretation of it. Narrations graded weak by their own editions, among them the familiar promises of reward for reviving a Sunnah, are named and not used. Modern fatwas are cited by URL and the date they were read; quotations from Arabic and Urdu fatwas and from the classical jurists are the author's renderings unless the Arabic is printed beside them. Where a source could not be retrieved it is marked so.

2. The sources

2.1 The Qur'an and its commentaries

Four verses bear on the question, and none decides it. In *Ṭā Hā* Mūsā is told, "Indeed, I am your Lord, so remove your sandals. Indeed, you are in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā" (20:12) [7]. Al-Qurṭubī, under the verse, records the reasons the early authorities gave: that the sandals were of the hide of an unslaughtered animal and so impure (Kaʿb, ʿIkrima, Qatāda); that his feet should touch the soil of the

blessed valley (ʿAlī, al-Ḥasan, Ibn Jurayj); that it was humility in the presence of his Lord; that it honoured the place, as the Kaʿba is entered barefoot [8, vol. 11 p. 172]. Ibn Kathīr records the first reason from ʿAlī, Abū Dharr and Abū Ayyūb: "they were of the hide of an unslaughtered donkey" [9, vol. 5 p. 275]. The Hanafi principle, in al-Jaṣṣāṣ, is that the laws of earlier prophets bind this community unless abrogated [10, vol. 4 p. 91]; the paper therefore does not wave the verse away. It notes instead that al-Qurṭubī, in the same place, turns from the verse to the hadith of this community and finds the matter settled by them: "the scholars did not differ that prayer in sandals is permitted when they are pure and of lawfully slaughtered hide, so much so that some scholars said that prayer in them is better" (ولم يختلف العلماء في جواز الصلاة في النعل إذا كانت طاهرة من ذكي، حتى لقد قال بعض العلماء: إن الصلاة فيهما أفضل) [8, vol. 11 p. 173].

The second verse is 7:31, "O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid". Al-Qurṭubī reports the view that prayer in sandals is part of that adornment, attributed to Anas, and adds that the report "did not reach authenticity" (ولم يصح) [8, vol. 7 p. 190]; Ibn Ḥajar calls the narration "very weak" [11, vol. 1 p. 493]. The paper does not use it. The third, 9:18, describes those who maintain the mosques of Allah as people who "believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakah and do not fear except Allah"; it says what a mosque is for, not what it is floored with. The fourth, 5:3, "This day I have perfected for you your religion", revealed at the Farewell Pilgrimage, is cited in Section 4 for a principle the paper needs: that the acts of those who came after the Prophet ﷺ, however honoured, are not revelation.

2.2 The hadith

The Prophet's ﷺ mosque. ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar reports that "in the lifetime of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) the mosque was built of adobes, its roof of the leaves of date-palms and its pillars of the stems of date-palms. Abu Bakr did not alter it. ʿUmar expanded it on the same pattern as it was in the lifetime of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) by using adobes, leaves of date-palms and changing the pillars into wooden ones. ʿUthmān changed it by expanding it to a great extent and built its walls with engraved stones and lime and made its pillars of engraved stones and its roof of teak wood" [12, 446; 13, 451]. Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī reports the roof: "A cloud came and it rained till the roof started leaking and in those days the roof used to be of the branches of date-palms. Iqama was pronounced and I saw Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) prostrating in water and mud and even I saw the mark of mud on his forehead" [12, 669]. The floor had pebbles, which the worshipper was told not to keep brushing: "When one of you gets up to pray, he must not remove pebbles, for mercy is facing him"; if it must be done, once, to smooth them [13, 945, 946]. For prostration there was a *khumra*, "a small mat sufficient just for the face and the hands while prostrating" [12, 379, 381; 14, 1504], woven, as the Urdu edition of Muslim glosses it and as the lexicographers quoted by Ibn Taymiyya describe it, from palm leaves and cord [15, vol. 2 p. 68]; and it was kept in the mosque: "Get me the mat from the mosque," he said to ʿĀʾisha, and when she said she was menstruating, "Your menstruation is not in your hand" [14, 689]. Palm roof, palm pillars, palm mat, and a floor of earth and pebbles: that is the whole inventory the sources give.

Two cautions, which the paper observes throughout. The sources do not say that the floor was bare: there were pebbles, and there was a palm-leaf mat. And the sources do not say that a carpet was offered for the mosque and refused; no such report exists. What they say of ʿUthmān's rebuilding is that it was disputed in his own time, "when people argued too much about his intention to reconstruct the mosque",

and that he answered not by his own authority but with the Prophet's ﷺ words, "Whoever built a mosque … Allah would build for him a similar place in Paradise", the clause "intending Allah's pleasure" being, as the edition notes, a sub-narrator's addition [12, 450]. That hadith is about building, not adorning; and what ʿUthmān changed, in both reports, was the walls, the pillars and the roof. Neither report mentions the floor.

Prayer in sandals. Saʿīd ibn Yazīd asked Anas ibn Mālik "whether the Prophet (ﷺ) had ever prayed with his shoes on. He replied, 'Yes'" [12, 386]. ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr: "I saw the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) praying both barefooted and wearing sandals" [13, 653]. Both are therefore Sunnah, and the paper will speak of two Sunnahs and one floor. The hadith that governs the practice is Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī's: the Prophet ﷺ, leading the prayer, took off his sandals and laid them on his left; the people removed theirs; afterwards he asked why, and they said they had seen him do it. "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) then said: Gabriel came to me and informed me that there was filth in them. When any of you comes to the mosque, he should see; if he finds filth on his sandals, he should wipe it off and pray in them" [13, 650]. The instruction is to look, to wipe, and to pray in them; not to remove them, and not to wash them. A related hadith from Abū Hurayra supplies the reason the wiping suffices: "When any one of you treads with his sandal upon an unclean place, the earth will render it purified" [13, 385], the same of the *khuff* [13, 386] and from ʿĀʾisha [13, 387]. And Ḥudhayfa reports the privilege of this community: "the whole earth has been made a mosque for us, and its dust has been made a purifier for us in case water is not available" [14, 1165; 12, 335, 438].

There is one more hadith, and the paper quotes its words and then stops. Shaddād ibn Aws reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Act differently from the Jews, for they do not pray in their sandals or their shoes" [13, 652] (the Arabic has *niʿāl* and *khifāf*, sandals and leather socks). Those are the words of the hadith. The jurists read them as giving the *reason* the practice is recommended, a distinctness in the manner of worship (Section 2.4); the paper reads them no further than that, and in particular not as a command of enmity towards any people.

Coverings in Madinah. The sources show that floor coverings existed in the homes of Madinah in the Prophet's ﷺ lifetime, and that he used them. Anas reports that when prayer time came while the Prophet ﷺ was in their house, "he would order that the carpet underneath him be swept and sprayed with water, and then he would stand up (for the prayer) and we would line up behind him" [12, 6203] (the Arabic word is *bisāṭ*). Abū Saʿīd came to him and "found him observing prayer on a mat and prostrating on that" [14, 1505] (a *ḥaṣīr*, a palm-fibre mat). Fine rugs, *anmāṭ*, were not common: when Jābir married, the Prophet ﷺ asked him, "Have you got carpets?" Jābir said, "Whence can we get carpets?" He said, "But you shall soon have carpets" [12, 3631; 14, 5449; 13, 4145]. The carpets came with prosperity, and he did not speak ill of their coming. Yet the mosque's floor, in every report, stayed what it was. One further report belongs here. ʿĀʾisha hung a cloth over the door; when the Prophet ﷺ returned from a journey he pulled it down, saying, "God has not commanded us to clothe stones and clay", and the cloth was cut into two pillows without objection [14, 5519, 5520]. Use is one thing; dressing a building is another. The distinction will recur.

Building and adorning. Building a mosque is rewarded [12, 450], and the paper criticises no act of building, repair or cleaning. But the same Messenger ﷺ said, "I was not commanded to build high

mosques", and the narrator, Ibn ʿAbbās, added, "You will certainly adorn them as the Jews and Christians did" [13, 448]; and from Anas, "The Last Hour will not come until people vie with one another about mosques" [13, 449]. The Hanafi law of decoration, which the author's earlier article set out from al-Sarakhsī, is that decorating a mosque from one's own lawful money is "no harm" (لا بأس), that the school's settled view gives it no reward, "head for head", that al-Sarakhsī himself allows it may be rewarded, that the best course is to be content with what is needed, and that the mosque's own funds may never be spent on it, the trustee being liable [16, vol. 30 pp. 282–284; 2]. None of this ranks floors; the paper will not pretend it does.

2.3 Hanafi juristic writing

The Hanafi texts contain two things the paper needs: the rule for purifying a soiled sandal, and the ruling on praying in one. They are found in different layers of the literature, and the difference is itself informative.

The rule. From al-Qudūrī to Ibn ʿĀbidīn the school states one rule, refined over eight centuries. Al-Qudūrī: "If an impurity that has a body reaches the *khuff* and dries, and he rubs it on the earth, it is permitted" (وإذا أصابت الخف نجاسة ولها جرم فجفت فدلكه بالأرض جاز) [17, vol. 1 p. 20]. Al-Sarakhsī gives the reasoning. While wet, only washing purifies, "except in a report from Abū Yūsuf: if he rubs it on the earth until neither the substance of the impurity nor its smell remains, the *khuff* is judged pure, and he considered the people's hardship in this". Dry and without a body, as urine or wine, only washing. Dry with a body, as excrement or dung, analogy says washing, "and that is the view of Muḥammad and Zufar"; but "Abū Ḥanīfa and Abū Yūsuf held by preference (*istiḥsān*) that it is purified by rubbing on the earth", on the strength of the sandals hadith and of Umm Salama's "the earth purifies one part of itself by another". The reason: "the hide has a firmness that prevents the parts of the impurity entering its inside … unlike cloth or the carpet (*al-bisāṭ*), which is thin, so that the parts of the impurity enter its inside and nothing brings them out but water" [16, vol. 1 p. 81]. Al-Kāsānī, al-Marghīnānī, al-Mawṣilī and al-Zaylaʿī repeat the rule with the same split [18, vol. 1 p. 83; 19, vol. 1 pp. 706–711; 20, vol. 1 p. 32; 21, vol. 1 p. 69]; al-Marghīnānī adds that "our shaykhs" follow Abū Yūsuf's wider view, and that sand, ash or fine dust which sticks to a bodiless impurity counts as its body [19, vol. 1 pp. 710–711]. By the time of al-Shurunbulālī the wider view is the fatwa position: the *khuff* and the sandal are purified "by rubbing on the earth or dust, from an impurity that has a body, even if acquired from elsewhere … even if wet, on the view chosen for fatwa, followed by most of the shaykhs" [22, vol. 1 p. 67]; *al-Fatāwā al-Hindiyya* and Ibn ʿĀbidīn say the same [23, vol. 1 p. 43; 24, vol. 1 pp. 308–309]. And the rule is bounded on the other side in every statement of it: it is "restricted to the *khuff*, to the exclusion of cloth and the carpet" (قيد بالخف احترازا عن الثوب والبساط) [22, vol. 1 p. 67].

Two further details. *Al-Fatāwā al-Hindiyya*, in its chapter of lawful devices, gives the remedy for a wet bodiless impurity on a sandal: "the device is, while it is wet, to walk on dust or sand until some of it sticks and dries, then to rub it on the earth, and it is purified" [23, vol. 6 p. 389]. And al-Zaylaʿī records how the rule widened when the streets got worse: Muḥammad, "at Rayy with the caliph, saw the roads and the inns full of (dung) and the people in great hardship over it", and changed his view; the shaykhs extended it by analogy to the mud of Bukhara, "because people and animals walk the same way"; and Muḥammad is reported to have come over to the view that the *khuff* "is purified by rubbing" [21, vol. 1 p. 73]. The

school's reflex, when confronted with a dirtier street, was to widen the purification rule, not to abandon prayer in the *khuff*.

The ruling. The early manuals state the rule and say nothing about whether one *should* pray in sandals; the author searched al-Qudūrī, al-Kāsānī, *al-Hidāya*, *al-Ikhtiyār*, *Tabyīn al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, *Marāqī al-Falāḥ* and *al-Fatāwā al-Hindiyya* for it and found none. It appears in the later, authoritative layer. Al-Sarakhsī has it in passing, in the law of pilgrimage: "since prayer is permitted in the *khuff* or the sandals when they are pure, *ṭawāf* is all the more so" [16, vol. 4 p. 48]. Ibn Nujaym quotes *al-Tajnīs*: "whoever wishes to enter the mosque should check his sandal and *khuff* for impurity and then enter, to avoid soiling the mosque. It has been said that entering the mosque in sandals is bad manners; and Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī disliked removing the sandals and held prayer in them better, because of the hadith of removing the sandals; and of ʿAlī it is reported that he had two pairs of sandals, and when he had made ablution he put on one pair to the door of the mosque, then took it off and put on the other and entered the mosque to his place of prayer; and therefore they said that prayer in pure sandals and *khuff* is closer to good manners" [25, vol. 2 p. 36]. Al-Ḥaṣkafī's *al-Durr al-Mukhtār*, the text on which the school in South Asia relies, puts it in the *matn*: "Whoever enters should check his sandal and *khuff*, and his prayer in them is better" (وينبغي لداخله تعاهد نعله وخفه، وصلاته فيهما أفضل) [26; 24, vol. 1 p. 656].

Ibn ʿĀbidīn's gloss on that sentence is the text on which this paper turns, and it is quoted in full:

> *"'His prayer in them': that is, in a pure sandal and khuff, is better, in differing from the Jews — al-Tatārkhāniyya. In the hadith: 'Pray in your sandals and do not resemble the Jews', related by al-Ṭabarānī, as in al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaghīr, marked as sound. A group of the Ḥanbalīs took from it that it is Sunnah even if one walks in them in the streets, because the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions used to walk in them in the roads of Madinah and then pray in them. *I say: but if one fears soiling the mosque's furnishings with them, one should not, even if they are pure. As for the Prophet's mosque, it was floored with pebbles in his time ﷺ, unlike in our time, and perhaps that is the sense of what is in ʿUmdat al-Muftī, that entering the mosque in sandals is bad manners — consider." [24, vol. 1 p. 656*
>
> (قوله وصلاته فيهما) أي في النعل والخف الطاهرين أفضل مخالفة لليهود تتارخانية ... قلت: لكن إذا خشي تلويث فرش المسجد بها ينبغي عدمه وإن كانت طاهرة. وأما المسجد النبوي فقد كان مفروشا بالحصى في زمنه - صلى الله عليه وسلم - بخلافه في زماننا، ولعل ذلك محمل ما في عمدة المفتي من أن دخول المسجد متنعلا من سوء الأدب تأمل

Three things are in this passage. The ruling: better. The reason for the ruling: a distinctness in worship, with the hadith. The qualification: not where the furnishings would be soiled, "even if they are pure", with its explanation: the floor of the Prophet's own mosque was pebbles, "unlike in our time". Ibn ʿĀbidīn does not say the ruling changed; he says the floor did, and he reads the older remark about "bad manners" as a remark about floors.

The school's drift can be followed in two further passages of Ibn Nujaym. *Al-Bazzāziyya*: walking in mud needs no washing and prayer with it is valid "so long as no trace of impurity appears; but precaution in the prayer … has no limit, and therefore we said that carrying the prayer mat (*sajjāda*) is better than leaving it, in our time" [25, vol. 1 p. 242]. And on the prayer mat itself: al-Akmal held that the imam and those followed, such as the mufti, should leave the prayer mat "so as not to burden the common people", while al-Bazzāzī "applied that to their time; as for our time, it is better to pray on it, because people have

become careless about purity" [25, vol. 1 p. 336]. Sandals better; then carry a prayer mat; then do not soil the furnishings. At each step the jurist names a condition, floor, furnishings, people's care, and at no step does any jurist say that the Sunnah has lapsed.

2.4 The other schools and the commentators

The Ḥanbalī position is stated most fully by Ibn Taymiyya, in a fatwa that answers the paper's question directly. Prayer in sandals and the footwear of his day "is not disliked; rather it is recommended", on Bukhārī 386 and Abū Dāwūd 652; if known pure, no Muslim dislikes it; "but the sound view is that if the sandal is rubbed on the earth it is purified by that, as the Sunnah brought, whether the impurity is excrement or not; for the underside of the sandal is a place that repeatedly meets impurity, so it is like the two passages, whose cleansing with stones is established by mutawātir Sunnah"; and doubt about the sole does not make prayer disliked [15, vol. 2 pp. 53–54]. In a longer answer on the prayer mat he sets out four ranks of worshipper: those who pray only on a prayer mat, "the furthest of the ranks from the Sunnah"; those who pray on a palm mat but not the earth; those who pray on the earth but not in sandals that have met the roads; and those who pray in their sandals and rub off any filth with dust, "and this rank is the one the Sunnah brought" [15, vol. 2 p. 69]. He adds the point the paper rests on: "the mosque was not furnished; it was earth and pebbles" (إن المسجد لم يكن مفروشا بل كان ترابا وحصى) [15, vol. 2 p. 70]; and that prayer in sandals was done in the mosque "when they were not trodden on furnishings" (إذا لم يكن يوطأ بهما على مفارش) [15, vol. 2 p. 61]. The Prophet ﷺ and his Companions "prayed barefoot and in sandals, on dust and palm mats, without a barrier"; and of Mālik it is reported that when a visiting scholar spread something to pray on in the Prophet's mosque, he had him detained: "do you not know that this is, in our mosque, an innovation?" [15, vol. 2 p. 78].

Ibn Rajab, commenting on Bukhārī 386, finds prayer in sandals permitted "without disagreement among the scholars"; Aḥmad allowed it "if they are pure", meaning "if not known to be impure"; "the continuous habit of the Prophet ﷺ was prayer in his sandals, and the words of most of the *salaf* show that prayer in sandals is better than barefoot". Ibn Masʿūd rebuked Abū Mūsā for removing his: "are you in the sacred valley?!" Abū ʿAmr al-Shaybānī struck people who removed them; al-Rabīʿ ibn Khuthaym called the removal an innovation. Al-Shāfiʿī held removal better, "for the worshipper's toes touching the ground in prostration", and Ibn Rajab notes that "they did not reason from the chance of impurity"; street mud, in the sound view of the verifiers of both the Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbalī schools, is pure, "and guarding against impurities is only legislated in a way that does not lead to contradicting what the righteous predecessors were upon" [27, vol. 3 pp. 41–44]. Elsewhere he adds that mosques are not to be guarded from the dry dirt that feet carry: "the barefoot man enters and prays in them in the mosques, and so the sandalled man prays in his sandals, and there may be mud or other unclean things on them, and it is not recommended to guard mosques from that" [27, vol. 3 pp. 120–121].

The Shāfiʿī view is the paper's principal scholarly counter-position, and it is stated through Ibn Ḥajar. Ibn Baṭṭāl: the hadith applies when the sandals carry no impurity. Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd: prayer in sandals "is among the concessions (*rukhaṣ*), not among the recommended acts, because it does not enter into the meaning sought from prayer; and though it is among the garments of adornment, its contact with the ground, in which impurities abound, may lower it from that rank; and when the consideration of beautifying conflicts with the consideration of removing impurity, the second is preferred, because it is of the kind that wards

off harm, while the other is of the kind that brings benefit"; unless, he adds, a proof comes attaching it to what one adorns oneself with. Ibn Ḥajar replies that such a proof exists, Shaddād's hadith, "so that its recommendation is by way of the intended differing" [11, vol. 1 p. 493]. Al-Nawawī, as the modern Shāfiʿī answer reports him, held that "praying barefoot is better because it was the predominant practice of the Messenger of Allah" [28]. Al-Shawkānī, as al-ʿAẓīmābādī summarises him, reconciles the hadith of free choice, "whoever wishes to pray in his sandals let him pray, and whoever wishes to remove them let him remove them", a sound *mursal*, with the commands: the commands are turned from obligation to recommendation, "and this is the most balanced and strongest of the positions" [29, vol. 2 pp. 249–250]. Al-Khaṭṭābī draws from Abū Dāwūd 650 the fiqh that prayer with an unknown impurity is valid, that the Companions' imitation of the Prophet's ﷺ act was right in principle, and the manners of where to put a removed sandal in a row [30, vol. 1 pp. 180–181]. The Mālikī position is in al-Qurṭubī, quoted above, with his rule on impurities: those all agree on, such as blood and human excrement, are purified only by washing according to Mālik, al-Shāfiʿī and most scholars; for disputed impurities there are two views on wiping with earth [8, vol. 11 pp. 173–174].

2.5 Earlier writing

The dependence of the practice on the floor has been noticed before, and the paper claims no priority for the observation. Ibn Taymiyya tied the practice to the mosque's being "earth and pebbles" and to sandals "not trodden on furnishings"; Ibn ʿĀbidīn tied the suspension of the practice to the floor "unlike in our time". Among modern scholars, Ibn Bāz wrote that prayer in sandals is "Sunnah, a drawing near and an act of obedience, when they are clean and sound", and that "when the first mosques were gravel and sand, that did not harm them" (ولما كانت المساجد الأولى حصباء، ورمل ما يضرها ذلك), whereas the valuable carpets of today "are affected by everything" [31; 32]. Al-Albānī, as quoted by a widely read fatwa site, advised Salafīs "not to be so strict concerning this issue" (وقد نصحت إخواننا السلفيين أن لا يتشددوا في هذه المسألة), because of "the difference between the mosques nowadays which are furnished with fine carpets" and the mosque of the Prophet ﷺ, and compared it to spitting beneath one's foot, lawful on a floor "made of sand or pebbles", not on a carpet: "both cases are the same" (فهل يقولون إنه يجوز أن يبصق على السجاد؟! فهذه كتلك) [33] (the primary source is not given there, and the paper cites it as secondary). The Permanent Committee of Saudi Arabia ruled that after mosques were carpeted with fine furnishings, one who enters should remove his sandals to preserve the cleanliness of the furnishings (بعد أن فرشت المساجد بالفرش الفاخرة ينبغي لمن دخل المسجد أن يخلع نعليه - في الغالب -) [33]. Ibn ʿUthaymīn: "permissible; indeed, it is a recommended practice (sunnah)", but if hard sandals harm the neighbour in the row, "removing the harm is better than performing the recommended practice (sunnah)" [34]. Egypt's Dār al-Iftāʾ holds that the ruling "is built on the custom suited to the time and the geography of the place" (مبنيٌّ على العرف المناسبِ للزمانِ وجغرافيةِ المكان), that where custom allows it there is no harm, and that where custom does not, it is not permitted to go against the custom by which people act (فلا يجوز حينئذ مخالفة هذا العرف الذي جرى به عمل الناس) [35]; its Urdu answer adds that the concession holds only "on condition of certainty that the shoes are pure", that "because of the dirt on the roads and the public's failure to avoid it" barefoot is better, and that the concession "is not to be given as a general fatwa to the public" [36]. In South Asia, Dārul Iftāʾ of Dārul ʿUlūm Deoband allows prayer in shoes "if the shoes are entirely clean and you offer salah at your home alone" [37], and the Dārul Iftāʾ Ahl-e-Sunnat of Daʿwat-e-Islāmī holds the funeral prayer in shoes valid "if the shoe and the ground beneath it are pure", preferring removal because worn shoes, "though pure, are

usually dirty" [38]. A Palestinian professor of fiqh, Ḥusām al-Dīn ʿAfāna, writes that the prayer is valid in shoes, "indeed many of the Muslim scholars held that it is recommended", that entering carpeted mosques in shoes "is contrary to sound taste", but that in courtyards and precincts "no one should censure one who prays in his shoes, for this is established by the Prophetic Sunnah" [39]. The Ahl-e-Ḥadīth forum literature in Urdu reaches the same practical conclusion, "taking shoes onto carpets and tiles is not right", and explains the decline of the practice by "the passage of time" [40]. The Shāfiʿī answer already cited concludes that today, with carpets and furnishings, "entering with sandals is highly inappropriate" [28].

Two further bodies of writing bear on the paper. The first is the history of the carpet in the mosque. Richard Wright's survey of travellers' accounts finds mats, not carpets, on mosque floors through the seventeenth century: Sandys in 1610 saw "rewes of mats" in Hagia Sophia; Pitts, around 1685, "a plain beaten floor" spread with reed mats "but near the Emaum with Carpets"; carpets predominate only by the century's end, and Wright suggests that general carpeting may be a practice of the modern era [41]. Knysh's entry on the *sajjāda* in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* finds the word absent from al-Bukhārī, whose Prophet ﷺ prays on his clothes, a quilt or a mat, and first attested in the early tenth century, "initially equated with *khumra*" [42]; the standard studies of the prayer rug's origins are Ettinghausen's and Denny's [43; 44]. The second is the one academic paper the author found on mosque floors as a question of fiqh, from the Islamic University of Madinah, which defends the lawfulness of furnishing mosques against the Imāmī requirement of prostration on earth, arguing from the Prophet's ﷺ prostration on earth, mat, cloth and *bisāṭ* that "the ruling follows its cause" [45]. The paper does not deny its conclusion; carpet is lawful. It asks a different question.

What the author did not find is any writer who draws from the premise, that the floor decides whether the Sunnah is practicable, the conclusion that the floor is therefore a matter for whoever builds, and that a new mosque can be floored so as to keep the Sunnah alive within it. Every modern authority cited sends the practice "home or outdoors": islamqa's answer recommends "parks, beaches and out of doors" [46]; Dār al-Iftāʾ, "at home or on uncarpeted ground" [47]. The carpet is treated as given. The paper's contribution, if it has one, is to treat it as chosen.

3. Analysis: the floor as a condition of the Sunnah

3.1 Two Sunnahs, one floor

The sources establish two practices of the Prophet ﷺ, prayer in sandals and prayer barefoot, and the paper treats them as two Sunnahs throughout. It does not say that the carpet abolished a Sunnah. Prayer barefoot remains possible on any floor. It says that of the two, the carpet keeps one and makes the other impossible, and that an earth or pebble floor keeps both. This is the whole of the paper's descriptive claim, and it is not controversial in itself: every authority cited in Section 2.5, from Ibn Taymiyya to the Deobandī muftī, agrees that on a carpet the sandalled prayer must stop. The paper's interest is in what that agreement implies.

3.2 What the earth does that carpet cannot

The practice of praying in sandals is not merely permitted *on* the earth; it is made possible *by* the earth. The hadith of Abū Saʿīd prescribes, for a soiled sandal, that one "wipe it off and pray in them"; the hadith of Abū Hurayra says why the wiping is enough: "the earth will render it purified". The Hanafi rule, in every statement from al-Qudūrī to Ibn ʿĀbidīn, is a rule about leather and earth: the sole is firm, the earth takes the bodied impurity off it, and what is left is judged pure. The same statements, in every version, exclude two things from the rule, cloth and the carpet, "because they are thin and the impurity enters them". The lawful device for a wet impurity, in *al-Fatāwā al-Hindiyya*, is to walk on dust or sand until it sticks. Each of these presupposes a surface of earth under the worshipper's feet, in the mosque or on the way to it. A carpet is, by the school's own classification, the surface the rule does not reach: it cannot purify a sole, and a sole cannot be purified on it. The point is not that carpet is impure. It is that carpet is inert where the earth is active, and that the Sunnah of praying in sandals was given to a community that stood on an active surface.

The same point appears from the other side in the Prophet's ﷺ own practice with filth in the mosque. He scraped dried phlegm from the mosque wall with a pebble from its floor [27, vol. 3 p. 120]; dogs came and went in the mosque "and they did not sprinkle any of that" (citing al-Bukhārī and Abū Dāwūd) [15, vol. 2 p. 70]; he prostrated in water and mud. An earth floor absorbs the ordinary dirt of a community and dries clean, which is the view, as Ibn Taymiyya notes, of Abū Ḥanīfa's school and of one view in the schools of al-Shāfiʿī and Aḥmad, that earth is purified by sun and wind. A carpet holds what it is given. That is why, as Ibn ʿĀbidīn says, sandals must stay off it "even if they are pure": the objection to the sandal on the carpet is to dirt, not to impurity; and the dirt that an earth floor would have taken and dried, a carpet keeps.

3.3 The ruling held; the practice was suspended; the reason given was the floor

The paper's central reading is of the Hanafi sequence set out in Section 2.3, and it is this. The school never withdrew its ruling. *Al-Durr al-Mukhtār* says "better"; *al-Tatārkhāniyya* says "better, in differing from the Jews"; *al-Tajnīs* says "closer to good manners" and records al-Nakhaʿī's dislike of removal; Ibn ʿĀbidīn, writing in Damascus in the early nineteenth century among furnished mosques, as his own "unlike in our time" shows, repeats the ruling, records the Ḥanbalīs' stronger view, and then adds his own qualification in his own voice, "I say". The qualification is not that the Sunnah is abrogated, or that the ruling was wrong, or that the Companions' practice is no longer a model. It is that one should not soil the mosque's furnishings; and the explanation he gives for the older remark about bad manners is that the floor of the Prophet's own mosque was pebbles then "unlike in our time". He is explaining a change in practice by a change in floor, and keeping the ruling intact above it.

The two passages of Ibn Nujaym fill in the steps between. Al-Bazzāzī, in Central Asia four centuries earlier, had already moved from the sandal to the prayer mat, and had already given a condition as his reason: "in our time", people are careless about purity. Al-Akmal's older advice, that the imam and the muftī should *leave* the prayer mat so as not to burden the common people, is overruled by al-Bazzāzī on the same ground of changed times. Read in order, the texts show a school adjusting its advice to its furnishings and its floors, three times, and saying each time that it is doing so. The ruling, through all three, is the one in the *matn*.

This is the pattern the series has called form and substance, and here it runs the other way from the earlier papers. There, a form was kept while a substance was lost. Here, the substance of the ruling was kept in the books while its form, the act in the mosque, was lost on the ground. The jurists were candid about it. What they did not do, because it was not their office, was ask who lays the floor.

3.4 The carpet as a recent choice

If the floor is the reason, then the history of the floor matters. The sources on the Prophet's ﷺ mosque give earth, pebbles and a palm-leaf mat. Mālik, in the second century, treated a mat spread for prayer in that mosque as an innovation, as Ibn Taymiyya reports. The word for a prayer rug does not appear until the tenth century, and then as a synonym for the small palm mat. The travellers of the seventeenth century, in the great mosques of the Ottoman and Persian lands, saw floors of beaten earth and reed mats, with carpets near the imam only; carpets become the rule by the end of that century and general carpeting is, on Wright's reading of the accounts, perhaps a practice of the modern era. The floor that makes the Sunnah impossible is not an ancient inheritance which the law has accommodated for a thousand years. It is a choice of the last three centuries, made mosque by mosque, usually for the best of reasons, cleanliness, comfort, dignity, and usually without anyone's asking what the floor would make impossible. Ibn ʿĀbidīn asked, in a gloss. This paper asks in the open.

3.5 Cleanliness and custom, distinguished from purity

It is worth being precise about why shoes come off on a carpet today, because the sources are precise. Ibn ʿĀbidīn: "even if they are pure". The Permanent Committee: "to preserve the cleanliness of the furnishings". Islamweb: "even when the dirt is not an impurity" [48]. Dār al-Iftāʾ: because "custom … does not permit it". Ibn ʿUthaymīn: because hard sandals "harm those beside you". Al-Qurṭubī, quoting Abū Hurayra on where to put removed sandals: "do not harm a Muslim with them". None of these is a purity reason, and all of them are good reasons. The paper accepts every one of them for the carpeted hall and asks no one to break the custom there. Its point is that a reason of cleanliness and custom is a reason about a surface; change the surface and the reason does not apply. The jurists did not say "prayer in sandals is now disliked". They said "not on this floor". A floor on which the reason does not apply restores the ruling to its practice without touching anyone's custom, because the custom of removing shoes on carpet is not a custom of removing them on earth. No one takes his shoes off at the Eid ground.

4. Counterarguments

The paper now states, at full strength, the objections a careful reader of the Hanafi school in Pakistan would raise, and answers what the sources allow it to answer.

4.1 The Shāfiʿī reading: a concession, not a Sunnah to revive. Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd's argument is the strongest scholarly objection: contact with ground "in which impurities abound" lowers the sandal below the rank of adornment, and warding off harm outranks bringing benefit; al-Nawawī held barefoot better as the predominant practice. Against it stand Ibn Ḥajar's reply (Shaddād's hadith attaches the practice to differing in worship, so it is recommended on that ground), Ibn Rajab's "continuous habit" and "most of the *salaf*", Ibn Taymiyya's "recommended", al-Shawkānī's "the most balanced view", and the Hanafi "better". The paper does not need to win this argument. Its thesis requires only what both sides grant:

that prayer in sandals is a Sunnah permitted by all. Even on Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd's grading, a floor that makes the concession impossible is not neutral; it has removed a permitted act from the place built for prayer. The paper presents the Shāfiʿī view in full and builds on the common ground beneath it. One modern statement of the Shāfiʿī side goes further than its sources: Egypt's Dār al-Iftāʾ writes that the Prophet's ﷺ "last state settled on removing them" (ثم استقرَّ آخرُ أمرِهِ على خلعها) [35]. The texts on disk do not support this. ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr saw him "praying both barefooted and wearing sandals" [13, 653]; Ibn Rajab reports from Anas that "the Prophet ﷺ did not remove his sandal in prayer except once", on the occasion of Abū Saʿīd's hadith, and concludes that "the continuous habit of the Prophet ﷺ was prayer in his sandals" [27, vol. 3 p. 42]; and the hadith of free choice reconciles the two practices without ranking them [29, vol. 2 pp. 249–250].

4.2 The filth objection. Modern streets carry impurity of the kind all schools agree on, and more: sewage, oil, chemical waste. A wet bodiless impurity on a sole needs washing in every school but Abū Yūsuf's view. The rubbing rule reasons from leather, not from a treaded synthetic sole or a cloth shoe, which the texts would class with cloth. The Egyptian fatwa's "because of the dirt on the roads and the public's failure to avoid it" is a real description of a Pakistani street. The paper concedes all of this. It then notes what the objection assumes: that the sole is impure. The Sunnah's own rule assumes the sole *may* be impure and prescribes looking and wiping; the majority rule, in Ibn Rajab's statement, is that dry dirt and street mud are pure, and that "guarding against impurities is only legislated in a way that does not lead to contradicting what the righteous predecessors were upon"; doubt about the sole does not make prayer disliked. And the school's own precedent, when the roads of Rayy were "full of dung and the people in great hardship", was to widen the purification rule, not to give up prayer in the *khuff*. Above all, the objection, even fully granted, argues for care and for honesty about wet impurity; it does not argue for a floor on which the practice is impossible for everyone, always. The paper's proposal is an area, not a duty; the man whose sole he cannot trust prays barefoot, as the Egyptian fatwa advises, and the man who has looked, as the Durr requires, prays in his sandals on a surface that can take them.

4.3 Custom and the avoidance of strife. Dār al-Iftāʾ makes the ruling turn on custom, and forbids going against it; Ibn ʿUthaymīn ranks the neighbour's comfort above the Sunnah; the author's own article tells readers to take their shoes off on a carpet because that is today's custom and keeping it avoids offence and division. The paper holds to all of that. Its proposal is upstream of custom: how a floor not yet laid should be laid. Custom cannot govern a floor that does not exist, and a pebble courtyard beside a carpeted hall creates no quarrel in the hall. The custom of removing shoes on carpet has never been a custom of removing them on earth; the Eid ground proves it every year.

4.4 The Companions' opinion and ʿUthmān's rebuilding. Hanafi *uṣūl* gives weight to a Companion's view where no text contradicts it, and ʿUthmān, a rightly guided caliph, rebuilt the mosque in stone. The paper engages this rather than dismissing it. First, the Companions differed: "people argued too much" [12, 450]; Ibn ʿAbbās warned against adornment [13, 448]; ʿAlī, passing an adorned mosque, asked "whose churches are these?" [16, vol. 30 p. 283]. Second, ʿUthmān defended his act not by his own authority but with the Prophet's ﷺ hadith on building, and the hadith is about building. Third, what he changed was the walls, the pillars and the roof; the reports are silent on the floor, so his rebuilding is no objection to anything this paper says about floors. Fourth, "This day I have perfected for you your religion" (5:3): the acts of those who came after the Prophet ﷺ, however honoured, are not revelation, and the paper's

claim rests on his ﷺ practice and the texts that transmit it. The paper says nothing of the events of ʿUthmān's later caliphate; they are not relevant to a floor, and the sources here do not connect them to the mosque.

4.5 Dignity, cleanliness and 7:31. Carpets are cleaner, warmer and more dignified, and the Qur'an commands adornment at every mosque. The commentaries read 7:31 of clothing, and the report that makes sandals part of the adornment is not authentic. The hadith "I was not commanded to build mosques high", the warning that people will vie over mosques, and "God has not commanded us to clothe stones and clay" are the Prophet's ﷺ own words on dressing a building; al-Sarakhsī's law of decoration gives it no settled reward and counsels restraint. But the paper does not oppose the carpet in the hall and does not call it unlawful; the Madinah paper is right that it is lawful. It argues only that cleanliness and dignity have been bought, in the hall, at the price of a Sunnah, and that the trade should be seen and should be partial, not total.

4.6 The Two Mosques are carpeted. The paper names no mosque and judges none. It records what Ibn ʿĀbidīn recorded, that the floor of the Prophet's ﷺ own mosque was pebbles in his time and is not in ours, and what Mālik did about a mat spread there. The outer courts of the Two Mosques and the Eid grounds of every Muslim country are earth or stone on which the practice still lives; that supports the thesis rather than embarrassing it.

4.7 Practicality. Dust, insects, wet weather, old worshippers, prostration on grit. The Madinah paper argues that carpet protects from dirt and insects, and so it does. The Sunnah's own answers to heat and grit were the small palm mat and the spread garment [15, vol. 2 pp. 60, 68]; the pebble floor was smoothed once; and the paper proposes an area, a courtyard or an outer row, not the whole mosque and not the hall where the elderly sit.

4.8 The decline of the practice everywhere. If the carpet were the only cause, the practice would survive wherever floors are earth; yet it has faded there too. The Ahl-e-Ḥadīth writer blames "the passage of time"; al-Bazzāzī blamed carelessness about purity; Dār al-Iftāʾ records a hardened custom. The paper accepts that the carpet is not the only cause and says only what the sources say: that wherever a carpet was laid the practice became impossible, and that the jurists who kept the ruling gave the floor as their reason for suspending the act. That is a reading of the texts, with the history it rests on, not a proof of causation.

4.9 The reward of a hundred martyrs. The paper does not use it. The narrations promising that reward for reviving a Sunnah are graded weak in the author's own edition of the *Mishkāt* [49, 168, 175, 176], and the paper rests on the authentic hadith of Muslim, "He who sets a good precedent in Islam, there is a reward for him for this (act of goodness) and reward of that also who acted according to it subsequently" [14, 2351], and makes no claim beyond it.

4.10 "You are not a jurist." True, and said on the first page. The paper is a reading of texts with every reference given, so that a jurist can check each one, and it ends by sending the reader to a scholar he trusts.

4.11 "This is a Salafī position in Hanafi dress." The ruling "better" is Hanafi: *al-Durr al-Mukhtār*, *al-Tatārkhāniyya*, *al-Tajnīs*, al-Nakhaʿī. Mālik objected to mats in the Prophet's mosque. Ibn Rajab's *salaf*

were the Companions and the Successors. The paper's anchor is Ibn ʿĀbidīn, and the Salafī authorities are cited for agreeing with the premise and disagreeing with the conclusion.

5. What an honest version of the claim would require

The series has asked, in each paper, what the examined claim would have to look like to be true. Applied to this paper's own claim, the discipline yields the following.

An honest version does **not** say that an earth floor is better than marble or carpet. No text ranks floors; al-Sarakhsī allows decoration from one's own money; the Madinah paper shows carpet lawful; the Prophet ﷺ prayed on a *bisāṭ* in Anas's house. It does **not** say that the Prophet ﷺ refused carpets, that the Companions kept the floor as a matter of principle, or that the practice died because of carpets alone; the sources support none of these. It does **not** ask anyone to pray in shoes on a carpet, or impose a duty to pray in shoes anywhere.

An honest version **does** say four things. First, that praying in sandals is a Sunnah permitted by every school and preferred in the Hanafi school's relied-upon text, and that it requires a floor that can receive a sole which may carry dust and a surface on which that sole can be purified by rubbing. Second, that the floor of the Prophet's ﷺ mosque was such a surface and a carpet is not, by the Hanafi texts' own exclusion of the carpet from the rubbing rule. Third, that the jurists who maintained the ruling suspended its practice wherever a carpet lay and gave the floor as their reason, so that the floor is, in the school's own account, a condition of the Sunnah's practicability. Fourth, that the carpeting of mosques is recent, so that the condition is one that whoever builds a mosque still sets.

From these four it **does** draw one proposal, and owns it as its own inference rather than attributing it to any authority: that a new mosque keep an earth or pebble area, a courtyard, an outer row, a space beside the carpeted hall, where both Sunnahs remain practicable; that the shoe-check at the door, which *al-Durr al-Mukhtār* already requires, be the only condition of using it; and that the man who cannot trust his sole pray barefoot there, as everywhere. The proposal costs nothing to custom, since the custom is a custom about carpets; nothing to cleanliness, since earth takes dust; and nothing to those who prefer the hall. It would also make the Prophet's ﷺ instruction, "when any of you comes to the mosque, he should see; if he finds filth on his sandals, he should wipe it off and pray in them", a sentence that a worshipper in a city could once again act on in a mosque, rather than only read.

6. Conclusion

The paper asked why a practice that the sources report of the Prophet ﷺ, that every school permits, and that the Hanafi school's relied-upon text calls better, is performed in almost no mosque today. It found the answer in the jurists' own words. The ruling was never withdrawn. The floor changed, from earth and pebbles with a palm-leaf mat to carpet, and the jurists who kept the ruling in the books suspended the act on the ground, saying as they did so that the furnishings were the reason: Ibn ʿĀbidīn's "unlike in our time", al-Bazzāzī's "in our time", the Permanent Committee's "after mosques were carpeted". The paper set that sequence beside the rule for purifying a sandal, which is a rule about leather and earth and expressly not about carpet, and beside the history of the carpet in the mosque, which is a history of the last three centuries. It concluded that the floor is a condition of which Sunnahs a mosque can host, that

the condition is one its builder sets, and that a new mosque can keep an earth or pebble area beside its hall at no cost to anyone's custom, cleanliness or comfort.

The paper has been careful about what it does not claim. It does not rank floors or call carpet unlawful; it does not say the Prophet ﷺ refused carpets or that the Companions kept the floor on principle; it does not ask anyone to walk onto a carpet in shoes; it presents the Shāfiʿī view that the practice is a concession rather than a recommended act, and concedes that on a modern street a wet impurity needs water. Its claim is small and, the author believes, undeniable from the texts: that a Sunnah which needs the earth cannot be practised where the earth has been covered, and that whoever covers it, or leaves it, decides.

The earlier papers in this series found cases in which a form was kept and a substance lost. This one found the mirror image: a substance kept in every book of the school, and a form lost on every floor. The jurists recorded the loss in a gloss and a parenthesis. The paper has only read the gloss aloud and asked the question it leaves open: who lays the floor?

6.1 Limitations

The paper reads the texts on disk in the author's library and no others. Of the Hanafi literature it has al-Qudūrī, al-Sarakhsī, al-Kāsānī, al-Marghīnānī, al-Mawṣilī, al-Zaylaʿī, Ibn Nujaym, al-Shurunbulālī, al-Ḥaṣkafī, *al-Fatāwā al-Hindiyya* and Ibn ʿĀbidīn; it does not have *al-Tatārkhāniyya*, *al-Tajnīs*, *al-Bazzāziyya* or ʿ*Umdat al-Muftī* directly and cites them as Ibn Nujaym and Ibn ʿĀbidīn quote them. Of the hadith it has al-Bukhārī in English only, by Krehl's numbering, and Abū Dāwūd and Muslim by the running numbers of the hadith-api edition; printed editions number differently and the paper gives the narrator and the wording so that each hadith can be found. Three modern works could not be retrieved from the author's network and are cited from their index records: the Madinah paper on mosque floors [45], and the studies of the prayer rug's origins by Ettinghausen and Denny; Wright's survey and Knysh's encyclopaedia entry were read in full. Al-Albānī's remark on carpeted mosques is cited as a widely read fatwa site quotes it; the primary tape or book was not located. The paper found no fatwa from the Barelvī reference work *Fatāwā Riḍawiyya* on the question and does not claim that work is silent; a printed index was not available. The paper's historical claim about carpets rests on travellers' accounts of Ottoman mosques and on the lexicography of *sajjāda*; it has not surveyed the floors of actual mosques in any country, and it names none. The reading of the Hanafi sequence in Section 3.3 is the author's; the texts are quoted so that another reader can read them otherwise.

6.2 Ethics statement

The paper names no mosque, no collector, no committee, no locality and no living person. It judges no one's intention; the texts it reads let one judge a request or a floor, not a heart. It criticises no act of building, repairing, cleaning or furnishing a mosque, and calls no furnishing unlawful. It directs no one to act against the custom of any mosque. The hadith of Shaddād ibn Aws is quoted in its words and read, with the jurists, as concerning the manner of worship; the paper reads it no further, and nothing in the paper is directed at any people.

6.3 AI assistance disclosure

This paper was researched and drafted with substantial AI assistance (Anthropic's Claude: retrieval and extraction from the texts in the author's library, search of the OpenITI corpus and of the fatwa literature, tabulation of the schools' positions, structural editing, and prose drafting), following the disclosure practice of the author's earlier preprints on IrshadOS. Every quotation is to be verified by the author against the saved source before publication; the claims register in the paper's working files lists each claim with its file and page; and the reading of the sources, the proposal, and any error are the author's own.

6.4 Data and source availability

All sources cited are public. The Qur'an text and translations are from Tanzil; the hadith of Abū Dāwūd and Muslim from the hadith-api edition; al-Bukhārī from the English translation in the author's library; the classical Arabic works from the OpenITI corpus, cited by version URI, volume and page, with the download URLs and dates in the library's source register; the modern fatwas by URL and date read. The author's research knowledge base for this paper, with every source file, the fact sheet, the claims register and the Phase 1 notes, accompanies the paper's working files, and the companion article and film are on IrshadOS [2; 1].

6.5 Disclaimer

This is a research preprint prepared solely for study and academic purposes. It is not final; it is subject to correction and will be revised as the record changes. It is a scholarly examination of published texts and nothing more. It is not a fatwa, not a religious ruling, not advice to any person or mosque, not a campaign for or against any school, institution, people or person, and not a direction to anyone to do or to refrain from doing anything. Where the paper reads a text one way and a school reads it another, the paper says so and prints both. A reader with a question about his own mosque or his own prayer should ask a scholar he trusts. The author bears sole responsibility for the analysis.

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