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NARRATIVE REPRESENTATIONS OF ABŪ BAKR (D. 13/634)
IN THE SECOND/EIGHTH CENTURY

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MEHMETCAN AKPINAR

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To my beloved mother, Kadriye Akpınar
and to the memory of my father, Selahattin Akpınar (1932-2015)

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TITLE: Narrative Representations of Abū Bakr (d. 13/634) in the Second/Eighth Century

NAME: Mehmetcan Akpınar

DISSERTATION ADVISOR: Wadad Kadi, Avalon Foundation Distinguished Professor of Islamic Studies, Emerita, University of Chicago.

COMMITTEE: Fred McGraw Donner, Professor of Near Eastern History, University of Chicago; Tahera Qutbuddin, Associate Professor of Arabic Literature, University of Chicago; Stefan Leder, Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Martin-Luther-University Halle/Germany.

ABSTRACT

Abū Bakr (d. 634) is regarded as one of the most preeminent companions of the Prophet Muḥammad by the majority of (Sunni) Muslims. In the Islamic tradition, he is noted for his early conversion to Islam, his close companionship to the Prophet, his service for the Islamic cause, his exemplary generosity, his participation in the major battles of early Islam, and his caliphate. Yet, all these aspects of Abū Bakr's life were not arranged into a coherent biography immediately upon his death. Rather, they circulated in dispersed (mostly oral) accounts for about two centuries. They were narrated in disparate forms, transmitted in different places, circulated in various intellectual circles, and redacted according to varying interests and needs. It was only when they found their way into the books of the 3rd/9th century that they acquired the shape(s) in which they would survive for over a millennium.

This dissertation aims to study the emergence of Abū Bakr's image as the best Muslim after the Prophet, with the superior qualities attributed to him. It is concerned with a thorough examination of the narratives that fostered the formation of Abū Bakr's image and seeks to reconstruct their earliest forms, which often began to circulate in first half of the 2nd/8th century. The analysis then traces their subsequent evolution, and identifies various redactorial efforts that gave them new shapes over the course of the 2nd/8th century.

The approach towards the narrative material comprises a combination of different methods of textual analysis: (a) *isnād-cum-matn* analysis; (b) the reconstruction of accounts from earlier sources; and (c) narrative analysis.

This methodology will be applied to narratives about three prominent aspects of Abū Bakr's life, which act as case studies. They include (1) Abū Bakr's conversion to Islam; (2) the explanations offered for the origin of Abū Bakr's title *al-ṣiddīq*; and (3) the narratives about Abū Bakr's emancipation of Bilāl. The final analysis offers a survey of the geographical distribution of the individual accounts. This manner of presentation not only allows for a comparison of the character of the narratives that circulated in the 2nd/8th century in Medina, Basra, Kufa, and Baghdad, but also shows the evolution of the accounts.

ABBREVIATIONS

- EI*² *Encyclopædia of Islam*, 2nd edition. Edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. von Donzöl, and W. P. Heinrichs. Leiden, 1960-2002.
- TG* Josef van Ess. *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra*. 6 vol. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991-1997.
- TMD* ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn ‘Asākir. *Tārīkh madīnat dimashq*. Edited by Muḥibb al-Dīn ‘Umar b. Gharāma al-‘Amrawī. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995-2000.
- TT* Aḥmad b. ‘Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī. *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*. Edited by Khalīl Ma’mūn Shīḥā. Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 1996.

INTRODUCTION

In the 3rd/9th-century polemical work *K. al-‘uthmāniyya*, the Mu‘tazilī theologian and littérateur al-Jāhīz (d. 255/868) describes Abū Bakr (d. 11/634) as the best member of the community after the Prophet Muḥammad, listing Abū Bakr’s merits as follows:

Who among them could most resemble the Messenger of God in (undergoing) great trials and in enduring hardships, and in exalted status than the one who was (a) the second of two (*thānī ithnayn*) [i.e. Abū Bakr] to advance towards Islam (*al-taqaddum fī al-islām*), (b) the second of two to summon to God and to His Messenger (*du‘ā’ ilā Allāh wa rasūlihi*), (c) the second of two to have numerous adherents and followers, (d) the second of two in the cave (*fī al-ghār*), (e) the second of two to emigrate (*fī al-hijra*), (f) and the second of two in the booth (*fī al-‘arīsh*).¹

This laudatory depiction of Abū Bakr, which highlights momentous incidents of his life prior to his caliphate, is in fact not a mere personal portrayal by one individual, al-Jāhīz. Rather, it demonstrates that in the 3rd/9th and later centuries, if not until today, Abū Bakr was regarded and revered as the most excellent person after the Prophet Muḥammad by the majority of

¹ Translated by Asma Afsaruddin in *Excellence and Precedence: Medieval Islamic Discourse on Legitimate Leadership* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 59. Abū ‘Uthman ‘Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāhīz, *Kitāb al-‘uthmāniyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1991), 54. There is a similar account listing Abū Bakr’s merits in al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawhīd wa al-‘adl*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyya li al-Ta’līf wa al-Tarjama, n.d.) 20(1):322-323, who ascribed it to Wāṣil b. ‘Atā’ (Basran, d. 131/748), one of the founding fathers of the Mu‘tazila: “The following glories (*manāqib*) can be established for [Abū Bakr]: (a) He preceded [others] in accepting Islam (*sabaqa ilā al-islām*); and has paid homage to the Prophet; (b) and assisted him with his wealth and his person (*wāsāhu bi mālihi wa nafsihi*). (c) Furthermore, he was next to the Prophet as the second in the cave (*thānī al-nabī fī al-ghār*); (d) and his companion to emigrate [to Medina] (*fī al-hijra*); (e) and his companion at the battle of Badr in the booth (*fī al-‘arīsh*). (f) He was the Prophet’s vizier and advisor in his affairs. (g) He was his commander in/for prayer during the Ḥajj festival when Mecca was conquered, (h) and led the prayer during the days of his [the Prophet’s] (last) illness. (i) He was distinguished by his title *al-ṣiddīq*. (j) He was likened to Michael among the angels, and Abraham among the prophets.” For the German translation of the passage, see Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 1991-1997), 5:154-155. Van Ess considers the ascription to Wāṣil b. ‘Atā’ problematic because of several anachronistic elements; see *ibid.*, 2:271, 5:155. For another, similar list of virtues that briefly describes Abū Bakr’s distinct qualities, see Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), *al-Fawā’id*, ed. ‘Iṣām al-Dīn al-Ṣabābaṭī (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1994), 107-108; *idem. Al-Fawā’id: A Collection of Sayings*, trans. Bayan Translation Services (Mansoura: Umm al-Qurā, 2004), 114.

Sunni Muslims. Today, these incidents are still treated as the essential components of his biography in books written for a popular Muslim audience and academic encyclopedia articles alike.²

Yet, these prominent elements of Abū Bakr's biography were not arranged into a coherent narrative immediately after his death. Rather, they emerged as elements in dispersed (mostly oral) accounts for about two centuries. They were narrated in disparate forms, transmitted in different places, circulated in various intellectual circles, and redacted according to varying interests and needs. Finally, when they found their way into the books of the 3rd/9th century, they acquired the shape(s) in which they would survive for over a millennium.

This dissertation studies the emergence of Abū Bakr's image as the best Muslim after the Prophet with the superior qualities attributed to him. It is concerned with a thorough examination of the narratives that fostered the formation of Abū Bakr's image and seeks to reconstruct their earliest forms, which often began to circulate in first half of the 2nd/8th century. The analysis then traces their subsequent evolution, and identifies various redactorial efforts that gave them new shapes over the course of the 2nd/8th century. Instead of assessing the historical validity of these narrative traditions, and discussing whether or not they truthfully reflect the historical figure of Abū Bakr, we will direct our attention to understanding how the earlier generations of Muslims perceived and portrayed him.

As we will demonstrate in more detail, Abū Bakr's deeds and personal qualities, his relationship to the Prophet, as well as his caliphate became matters of great political and

² Cf., e.g., 'Alī Muḥammad Ṣallābī, *Abū bakr al-ṣiddīq: shakhṣiyyatuhu wa 'aṣruhu*, 7th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 2009); Asma Afsaruddin, "Abū Bakr," in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Josef W. Meri (New York: Routledge, 2006), 5.

theological interest for the next generations of Muslims. Our sources indicate that Abū Bakr's succession to Muḥammad was a topic of controversy as early as the late 1st/7th or early 2nd/8th century. This controversy is indeed directly connected to the events of the first civil strife (35-40/656-661), which created the first major schism in Islam, and in its aftermath divided the Muslim community into several political and religious factions, such as 'Uthmānīs, Khārijītes, Shī'ites, and Murji'ites.³

In the period to follow, discussions about the legitimate rule of the caliphs 'Uthmān (r. 23-35/644-656) and 'Alī (r. 35-41/656-661) in particular intensified, as a growing number of references to the events of this period (the murder of 'Uthmān [35/656], as well as the battles of Camel [36/656], Ṣiffīn [37/657], and Nahrawān [38/659]) can be found in the historical literature of the 2nd/8th century.⁴ Early theological treatises dated to the first half of the 2nd/8th century also inform us that certain Shī'ite groups began to call into question Abū Bakr's succession to Muḥammad and repudiated his caliphate.⁵ The same sources contain statements attributed to the Khārijite and Murji'ite authorities of the time, who sharply rejected such

³ William Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1998), 9-61, 75-77, 119-128.

⁴ Josef van Ess, "Political Ideas in Early Islamic Religious Thought," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 28 no. 2 (2001): 154-155. There are also several treatises written by Shī'ite authors of the 2nd/8th century, which are no longer extant, but contain references to these events in their titles: *K. al-jamal*, attributed to Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. 204/819; see van Ess, *TG*, 1:301); Shayṭān al-Ṭāq (d. ca. 180/796; see *TG*, 5:66); *K. ṣiffīn* and *Nahrawān* attributed to Jābir b. Yazīd al-Ju'fī (Kufan, d. 128/745; see *TG*, 1:294).

⁵ There are two early 2nd/8th-century epistles mentioning a Shī'ite group (called Saba'iyya) who publicly denounced Abū Bakr and 'Umar and disavowed them. The first is *Kitāb al-Irjā'*, a Murji'ite text attributed to al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya; see Josef van Ess, "Das Kitāb al-Irjā' des Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya," *Arabica* 21 (1974): 20-52. The second was written by the Ibādī author Sālim b. Dhakwān (fl. ca. 82-100/701-718) against Khārijite extremism and the Murji'ites of the time; see Patricia Crone and Fritz Zimmerman, *The Epistle of Salim b. Dhakwan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 118-121, paragraph 97. The late 2nd/8th-century Shī'ite work attributed to Hishām b. al-Hakam (preserved in al-Nawbakhtī's [d. ca. 300-310/912-22] and al-Qummī's [d. 301/913] heresiographical works) provides similar pieces of information. For a translation and discussion of this work, see Sean W. Anthony, *The Caliph and the Heretic* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 148-153. Further compare Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early 'Abbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunni Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 42-47, and van Ess, *TG*, 1:308-315.

repudiations and expressed their strong solidarity with Abū Bakr by declaring him ‘the rightful successor.’⁶ The condemnation of Abū Bakr on the one side, and the strong denunciation of those views and bold endorsements on the other, possibly mark the nature of the earliest round of controversies. Around this period, we can also identify an emerging trend that possibly grew out of these controversies, which was concerned with comparing and ranking the first caliphs as well as other prominent figures of the early Islam.⁷ By the mid- 2nd/8th century, these discussions seem to have expanded, taking new directions, especially in the two centers of Abbasid Iraq, Kufa and – after its foundation in 145/762 – Baghdad, where representatives of numerous sectarian groups were in close contact with each other.

Examining the views attributed to the scholars who were active at the end of the 2nd/8th and early 3rd/9th century, we can note that the sectarian rivalry gained a more intellectual character in the subsequent stages, as issues like political and religious leadership became discussed on a more conceptual level. We can, for instance, note the emergence of distinctions between such concepts as *imāmat al-fāḍil* vs. *imāmat al-maḥḍūl*,⁸ and the introduction of more

⁶ In *K. al-Irjā'*, the author denounces the beliefs of the Saba'iyya and declares his (Murji'ite) stance as follows: “Among our leaders (*min a'immatinā*), we approve of Abū Bakr and 'Umar: we approve (*naḍḍā*) if one obeys them (*yuṭā'ā*), and we resent it (*naskhaṭu*) if one opposes them (*yuṣayā*). We are enemies of their enemies... We declare open solidarity with Abū Bakr and 'Umar (instead of *nujāhidu* read *nujāhiru fī abī bakr wa 'umar bi al-walāya*); the community neither fought (*lam taqtatil fīhimā*) because of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, nor fell into disagreement (*lam takhtalif fīhimā*), nor doubted their matter (*lam tashkuk fī amrihimā*).” See van Ess, “Das Kitāb al-Irḡā',” 23, paragraph 5. For a German translation of this passage, and minor emendations of the original text, see idem, *TG*, 5:8-9. Likewise, Sālim b. Dhakwān's epistle explains that the believers (*al-mu'minūn*), according to the Ibādīs, considered the matter when the Prophet died, and God successfully guided them to choose the most outstanding man among them, Abū Bakr, who took the Qur'ān as a guide, followed the *sunna* of the Prophet, acted rightly, and adhered to justice among them; see Crone and Zimmerman, *Epistle*, 74-77, paragraph 37.

⁷ For such comparisons, see our analysis of the tradition in which Maymūn b. Mihrān (d. 117/735) is asked to compare the first caliphs in Chapter 1, section 3.2.

⁸ E. g., two Zaydī theologians, Sulaymān b. Jarīr (*EF* s.v. “Sulaymān b. Djarīr al-Raḥkī,” [Wilferd Madelung]) and al-Ḥasan b. Šāliḥ b. Ḥayy al-Kūfī (*EF* s.v. “al-Ḥasan b. Šāliḥ b. Ḥayy al-Kūfī” [Charles Pellat]), who were active in the second half of the 2nd/8th century, are credited with statements about obedience to a less excellent imam. Also, a book with the title *K. al-radd 'alā al-mu'tazila fī imāmat al-maḥḍūl* is attributed to Shayṭān al-Ṭāq (Kufan, d. after 183/799), another Shī'ite author of this period. See van Ess, *TG*, 1:339; 5:66.

abstract concepts into the evaluation and comparison of the early caliphs. As al-Jāhīz's *K. al-ʿuthmāniyya* demonstrates, analytical categories such as precedence in accepting Islam, excellence of belief, closeness to the Prophet, efforts in the service of Islam, possession of knowledge, abstemiousness, bravery on the battlefield, etc., became essential for any comparison that dealt with the topic in a more systematic fashion.⁹

The tentative scheme of development presented here cannot give a complete picture of the exact chronology of the discussions about, or the evolving attitudes towards, Abū Bakr (nor towards the other early caliphs).¹⁰ However, it does show that a wide range of approaches towards the question of the succession to Muḥammad and the legitimate rule of the early caliphs were already emerging in the 2nd/8th century.

The same period also witnessed the rise of an immense interest and effort in collecting, recording, classifying, and disseminating information about the Islamic past, the life of the Prophet, his expeditions, the Islamic conquests, Qurʾānic exegesis, law, and genealogy.¹¹ In fact, the majority of the information that circulated about Abū Bakr in the 2nd/8th century comes to us as part of this extraordinary effort. However, those who were engaged in collecting and transmitting the historical traditions were often the same scholars who took part in the

⁹ Asma Afsaruddin, "In Praise of the Caliphs: Re-Creating History from the *Manāqib* Literature," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 31 (1999): 330-331. These lists of virtues appear especially towards the end of the 2nd/8th at the beginning of the 3rd/9th century. An early example of it is attributed to the Zaydī-Muʿtazilite theologian Bishr b. al-Muʿtamir (d. 210/825), who enumerates virtuous deeds of ʿAlī and compares them with the other companions of the Prophet. See Josef van Ess, *Frühe muʿtazilitische Häresiographie: zwei Werke des Nāṣīʾ al-Akbar (gest. 293 H.)* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1971), 56. For a German translation of the passages, see idem, *TG*, 5:325.

¹⁰ For the development of political ideas in the 2nd/8th century, cf. van Ess, "Political Ideas," 151-164.

¹¹ Gregor Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read*, trans. Shawkat M. Toorawa (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 61-84.

political and religious debates of the time.¹² Given the centrality of Abū Bakr's place in these discussions, and the complexity of the dynamics behind the wide range of attitudes towards the early caliphs of Islam, we would like to pursue the following questions, as they are crucial to understand the complex relationship between the various politico-religious context(s) and the nature of historical reporting in the 2nd/8th century. These questions are:

Which are the oldest narrative traditions that report on different features of Abū Bakr's life? To which period can we date the first rudimentary forms of these traditions with certainty? When did they gain wide dissemination? When we compare the earlier versions of these narratives with later ones, can we identify an evolutionary scheme? How similar or different are the later versions from their earlier ones? Do the evolving and changing attitudes towards Abū Bakr influence the continuously transmitted material? Do the narratives gain more elaborate and complex forms with time? Do we find any features in the stories about Abū Bakr that are being emphasized or discarded in subsequent transmissions? What do modifications, revisions, changes, additions, omissions, etc., tell us about the character of the transmission, collection, and presentation of the Islamic historical traditions in the 2nd/8th century in general?

Methodology

In our search for answers to these questions, we will pursue two types of analysis and combine them. The first type of analysis aims at establishing the earliest possible date of the traditions and reconstructing their earliest forms. Selecting from the traditions that date to the 2nd/8th century, the second type seeks to investigate the narrative quality of these traditions. We will

¹² See, e.g., Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, 49-69.

discuss what the traditions possibly signified to those who transmitted them, and what they intended to communicate to their audience.

As regards the dating of the reports, we will follow the method known as *isnād-cum-matn* analysis that compares the different versions of a tradition recorded in a variety of sources, such as chronicles, *ḥadīth* collections, biographical sources, exegetical literature, genealogical works, and books on *sīra*. As the term suggests, we will compare the lines of transmission (*isnād*) given for each variant of the tradition, while simultaneously analyzing the variations in the texts (*matn*).¹³ Through rigorous implementation of this method, we will test whether “the dependence of the *ḥadīths* [or reports] as indicated by their *isnāds* is corroborated by their texts or not ...,”¹⁴ and we will detect the basic components of the report that were present in its earlier forms and establish the latest possible date (*terminus ante quem*) for the tradition to gain wide circulation. This combined comparison of transmission lines and the content of the reports was first undertaken by Josef van Ess in his *Zwischen Ḥadīth und Theologie*, published in 1975. There, in a study that analyzed different groups of prophetic *ḥadīths* on free will vs. predestination, the analysis allowed the author to trace back the emergence and dissemination of the reports to different stages in the 2nd/8th century, when the subject became the focus of highly contentious theological disputes. Van Ess’s analysis proved to be especially effective in differentiating the earlier traditions from those which were circulated only later.¹⁵ Later, and

¹³ Harald Motzki, “The Murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq: On the Origin and Reliability of some *Maghāzī*-Reports,” in *The Biography of Muhammad: the Issue of Sources*, ed. Harald Motzki (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 170-239.

¹⁴ Andreas Görke and Gregor Schoeler, “Reconstructing the Earliest *sīra* Texts: the *Hīġra* in the Corpus of ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr,” *Der Islam* 82 (2005): 209-220.

¹⁵ Josef van Ess, *Zwischen Ḥadīth und Theologie: Studien zum Entstehen prädestinationischer Überlieferung* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1975).

specifically in the last two decades, the studies of Gregor Schoeler,¹⁶ Andreas Görke,¹⁷ and Harald Motzki applied the method more systematically¹⁸ when reconstructing some episodes from the life of the Prophet at the common link level.¹⁹ They identified the original transmitters to whom we owe the earliest forms of the reports, together with the place in which the reports originated.²⁰

One shortcoming of the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis is that it has to identify and compare a large number of versions of a *ḥadīth* in order to yield fruitful results. Thus, when a tradition is preserved only in a single-strand transmission, it becomes very hard to determine the time period in which it was brought into circulation, although it potentially contains older material. In order to overcome such shortcomings, we will expand the scope of our investigation by exploring the biographies of the various transmitters, examining their mutual relationships, and comparing traditions with similar lines of transmissions, if available. We will pursue a

¹⁶ Görke and Schoeler, “Reconstructing the Earliest *sīra* Texts,” 209-220.

¹⁷ Andreas Görke, “The Historical Tradition about al-Ḥudaybiya: A study of ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr’s account,” in Harald Motzki (ed.), *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 240-271.

¹⁸ Prior to these studies, Fred M. Donner in a short article also used a method of combined analysis, comparing the different versions of a tradition by both examining their lines of transmission and their content. See Donner, “The Death of Abū Ṭālib,” in *Love & Death in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of Marvin H. Pope*, ed. Marks and McClive Good (Guilford: Four Quarters Pub. Co, 1987), 237-245.

¹⁹ The common link is the oldest transmitter (original guarantor) in the chain of transmission from whom all other transmitters derive their information. He usually belongs to the generation of the Successors (*tābi‘ūn*) or the generation that immediately followed, which roughly corresponds to the first half of the 2nd/8th century; see Sebastian Günther, “Assessing the Sources of Classical Arabic Compilations: The Issue of Categories and Methodologies,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 1 (2005), 75-98.

²⁰ Examples of *isnād-cum-matn* analyses are: Gregor Schoeler, *The Biography of Muḥammad: Nature and Authenticity*, London/New York, 2011 (English edition of *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds*, Berlin 1996); Harald Motzki, “The Prophet and the Cat: on dating Mālik’s *Muwatta’* and legal traditions,” in *JSAI* 22 (1998), 18-83; idem, “The Murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq,” 170-239; idem, “Whither Ḥadīth Studies?” in *Analysing Muslim Traditions. Studies in Legal, Exegetical and Maghāzī Ḥadīth*, ed. Harald Motzki (Leiden: Brill 2010), 47-122 (English edition of “Quo Vadis, Ḥadīth-Forschung? Eine kritische Untersuchung von G. H. A. Juynboll: ‘Nāfi’ the Mawlā of Ibn ‘Umar, and His Position in Muslim Ḥadīth Literature,” *Der Islam* 73 [1996]: 40-80); idem, “The Prophet and the Debtors. A Ḥadīth Analysis under Scrutiny,” *Analysing Muslim Traditions*, 125-208 (English edition of “Der Prophet und die Schuldner. Eine Ḥadīth-Untersuchung auf dem Prüfstand,” *Der Islam* 77 [2000], 1-83).

similar method of inquiry for the traditions that are preserved in multiple versions and which we can date at the common link level. We will examine the nature of the relationship between the common link and his immediate informant(s) as well as those who heard the traditions from him, in order to uncover the dynamics that allowed the tradition to gain wide circulation. Additionally, our attempts to date a tradition will include the reconstruction of accounts from earlier sources which are no longer extant, but were either mentioned by title or citation in later collections. In this regard, for instance, al-Ṭābarī's monumental exegetical work, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, constitutes an important mine of information, since it cites material derived from 2nd/8th century sources. In such cases, our approach to the line of transmissions (often single-stranded) will be different. We will carefully examine the *isnād* by adducing different types of evidence to test whether or not it is possible to assume that the information stems from an earlier source.

The second method that we will pursue in this study deals with the literary dimensions of the reports. After selecting the reports from the 2nd/8th century, we will focus our analysis primarily on the formal aspects of the narratives, utilizing tools developed by Gérard Genette in his *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, such as narrative frequency, narrative duration, narrative order, narrative perspective, as well as gaps in the narrative. Through this formal analysis, we aim at understanding what the narrative traditions meant to their transmitters, and also what they wanted to convey to their audiences through them. At the same time, we seek to discover whether the messages of the traditions went through any changes, modifications or transformations, as they continued to be transmitted in various contexts. A comparative narrative analysis of various renderings of a tradition, both synchronically and diachronically, will help us detect variations related to changes in time and places.

Narrators and historians arrange narratives by making selections from countless details of a given event. They then present these selections in an (ideally) coherent way in order to make the event accessible to their audience. This complicated activity of creating a narrative about an event involves an endless number of decisions about such matters as what to include and what to omit of the story; how to order events; whether or not to explain each event at the same degree of detail; whether or not to repeat certain elements; whether to report the protagonists' speeches verbatim or to summarize them from the perspective of an eye-witness, etc. All of these questions are relevant to the creation of a narrative. Thus, when narrations are analyzed closely, these factors indicate what the designer of the narrative, or those who render it in a new form, want to emphasize in telling the story. Breaking down the narrative into units based on these factors facilitates the comparison between different versions, and thus helps us understand what each narrative signified to its audience from a literary point of view.

Through the combined analysis of the narrative traditions about different aspects of Abū Bakr's life, we will lay out the various components of his image that was in the process of formation during the 2nd/8th century. First, we will show what kind of information about Abū Bakr was in circulation and map out the dissemination of its components. Next, we will analyze the literary journey of each group of traditions by showing the changes and variations over the course of their transmission, and discuss the shifts in the narrative focus that occurred when they were introduced into new contexts or recast in new forms of presentations.

While applying these different sets of analyses, we will adopt a dynamic approach that maintains a balance between different methods. It is important to bear in mind that each

group of traditions has different characteristics, as each followed unique and complicated paths of transmission until the traditions were recorded there in a variety of written sources. By combining different sets of methods, our analysis seeks to adapt itself to the intricacies and challenges of each group of traditions, and employs the different kinds of analysis (*isnād-cum-matn*, reconstruction of accounts that existed in earlier sources, narrative analysis) at varying degrees, depending on the character of the material.

It should be noted that, although this dissertation is primarily interested in uncovering the tradition groups which contributed to the emergence of (a) certain image(s) of Abū Bakr in the 2nd/8th century, it also hopes to make a contribution to the reconstruction of early Islamic history. As it stands, research on early Islam suffers from the lack of documentary material contemporaneous to the events of the 1st/7th century. Therefore, narratives contained in the written collections from later centuries are indispensable for the investigation of the origins of Islam. As modern scholarship has repeatedly stated, the narrative material has two major shortcomings: (a) there is a 150-200 year long time gap between the events of the early 1st/7th century and the narrative traditions which purport to record them; (b) the narrative traditions have a literary quality and thus the potential to relate the events of the past in tendentious ways, mirroring the rivalries between various political and theological groups of the subsequent periods.²¹ Seen from this perspective, the available source material is often

²¹ Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1998), 95-97.

considered unreliable or spurious, and fails to show the objective precision required by the standards of modern historiography.²²

Although our study is not concerned with these particular questions of reliability and authenticity, the combined sets of analyses are capable of bringing new perspectives to both problems: (a) through detailed transmission and source analysis, we reconstruct the earliest form of the traditions, and are thus able to reduce the aforementioned time gap to 100 years in the majority of cases. Narrative analysis, comparisons between earlier and later renderings of a tradition, plus an examination of the relevant politico-religious contexts, enable us to demonstrate how and why traditions evolved. This then (b) provides a deeper insight into the various factors that shaped the presentations of the older material in new forms. While understanding ‘what really happened’ in the early period of Islam might continue to remain beyond the grasp of modern research, it is crucial to know which parts of the material are chronologically the oldest, and what kind of modifications occurred in the later phases of transmission, as this knowledge can provide a more solid base for future inquiries into the 1st/7th century.

Literature Review

The central theme of most of the scholarly literature on Abū Bakr has been focused on his caliphate and the problem of succession following the death of the Prophet. W. Madelung’s *The Succession to Muḥammad* surely stands out as the most comprehensive work on Abū Bakr’s

²² For a review of different approaches, see Harald Motzki, “Dating Muslim Traditions: A Survey,” *Arabica* 52 no.2 (2005), 204-253.

election as the new leader of the early Islamic community.²³ Madelung analyzed the various accounts on the events that took place after the Prophet's death and tried to offer a reinterpretation of the succession conflict. Much earlier, Henri Lammens had studied the same conflict in his article "Le Triumvirat Abôu Bakr, 'Omar et Abôu 'Obaida," and attempted to explain the reasons why Abû Bakr and his successor 'Umar were able to establish their leadership.²⁴ Miklos Muranyi's study "Ein neuer Bericht über die Wahl des ersten Kalifen Abû Bakr" explored the election of Abû Bakr by presenting further accounts.²⁵ Khalil 'Athamina's article "The Pre-Islamic Roots of the Early Muslim Caliphate: The Emergence of Abû Bakr" finally dealt with the same topic, analyzing the roots of the conflict from the perspective of the tribal political traditions of the time.²⁶

By offering new perspectives to understand what (must have) happened in the period following the Prophet's death, these studies seek to reevaluate the primary sources reporting the events from the time of the Prophet's death until Abû Bakr's election. However, they were neither able to explain why there were so many, often contradictory, reports, nor how this body of narrative material had been formed. They often had to take the traditions at face value and accept the image of Abû Bakr as it had developed and become standardized in post- 2nd/8th century classical sources.

²³ Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²⁴ Henri Lammens, "Le Triumvirat Aboû Bakr, 'Omar et Aboû 'Obaida," *Mélanges de la faculté orientale de Beyrouth*, 4 (1910): 113-44.

²⁵ Miklos Muranyi, "Ein neuer Bericht über die Wahl des ersten Kalifen Abû Bakr," *Arabica* 25 (1978): 233-260.

²⁶ Khalil 'Athamina, "The Pre-Islamic Roots of the Early Muslim Caliphate: The Emergence of Abû Bakr," *Der Islam* 76 (1999): 1-32.

In addition to these publications, there are two other studies concerned with Abū Bakr. The first is a long article by Eduard Sachau, written at the beginning of the 20th century, which is in fact an extensive biography of Abū Bakr.²⁷ Although Sachau did not employ any source critical analysis, his article is one of the first academic attempts to collect and present the important events from Abū Bakr's life. The second is Elias Shoufani's *Al-Riddah and the Muslim Conquest of Arabia*, which reviews the major events during Abū Bakr's caliphate, and still constitutes the most comprehensive study on the Islamic conquests and the apostasy wars between 11/632 and 13/634.²⁸

A study that differs from the aforementioned publications is Asma Afsaruddin's *Excellence and Precedence*. The primary aim of her book is to compare al-Jāḥiẓ's *K. al-ʿuthmāniyya* with a medieval Shīʿite refutation of it, namely Ibn Ṭāwūs' (d. 673/1274) *Bināʾ al-maqāla*, a text which in turn sought to establish ʿAlī's superiority over Abū Bakr. As a major contribution, her work comprehensively laid out the main areas of dispute among later generations of Muslims with regard to comparisons between Abū Bakr and ʿAlī, and showed the different contours of the debate, which was flourishing both during al-Jāḥiẓ's time and after him. Adducing numerous references to historical traditions recorded in the 3rd/9th century and after, the study also showed and discussed a wide range of narratives on different episodes from Abū Bakr's life which were not always reconcilable with each other. Our study will complement Afsaruddin's discussions on many of these traditions by demonstrating how they gained the forms they acquired in the preceding century leading up to al-Jāḥiẓ's time.

²⁷ Eduard Sachau, "Der erste Chalife Abu Bekr," in *Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin: 1903), 16-37.

²⁸ Elias Shoufani, *Al-Riddah and the Muslim Conquest of Arabia* (Beirut; Toronto, 1972).

This brief survey already suggests that Klaus Klier's observation that the biographies of the Prophet's companions have not nearly enjoyed the same amount of scholarly attention as the biography of Muḥammad²⁹ himself still holds true.³⁰ Although there are vast amounts of published biographies of the first believers, especially in the Muslim world, these works are largely uncritical and do not conform to scholarly standards. There are, however, a handful of studies which are exceptions to the rule: K. Klier's *Ḥālid und 'Umar*, N. Abbott's *Aishah: The Beloved of Mohammad*,³¹ A. J. Cameron's *Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī: an examination of his image in the hagiography of Islam*³² D. A. Spellberg's *Politics, gender, and the Islamic past: The legacy of 'A'isha bint Abi Bakr*,³³ B. Beinhauer-Köhler's *Fāṭima bint Muḥammad*,³⁴ K. Keshk's *The Depiction of Mu'awiya in the Early Islamic Sources*,³⁵ and R. Eisener's *Zwischen Faktum und Fiktion: eine Studie zum Umayyadenkalifen Sulaimān b. 'Abdalmalik und seinem Bild in den Quellen*,³⁶ as well as several

²⁹ For a review of the scholarly literature on Muḥammad's life, see Francis Edwards Peters, "The Quest of the Historical Muhammad," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23 (1991), 291-315. For earlier investigations on this topic, see Josef Horowitz, "Zur Muhammadlegende" *Der Islam* 5 (1914), 41-53; Tor Andrae, *Die Person Muhammeds in Lehre und Glauben seiner Gemeinde* (Stockholm: Kungl. Boktryckeriet P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1917); Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies* (London, 1967-71), vol. 2.

³⁰ In the introduction to his work, he states: "Mittlerweile gibt es sicherlich ein Dutzend guter Prophetenbiographien, aber es liegt keine einzige Monographie über Abū Bakr oder 'Umar vor. Von zwei kleinen Arbeiten (über Abū Huraira und Abū Darr) abgesehen, sind mir keine biographischen Werke zu einzelnen Prophetengefährten bekannt; dagegen wurden zahlreiche Sachfragen der frühislamischen Zeit sorgfältig untersucht." Klaus Klier, *Ḥālid und 'Umar* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1998), 5.

³¹ Nabia Abbott, *Aishah: The Beloved of Mohammad* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942).

³² Alan John Cameron, *Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī: an examination of his image in the hagiography of Islam* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1973).

³³ Denise A. Spellberg, *Politics, gender, and the Islamic past: The legacy of 'A'isha bint Abi Bakr* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

³⁴ Bärbel Beinhauer-Köhler, *Fatima bint Muhammad: Metamorphosen einer frühislamischen Frauengestalt* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2002).

³⁵ Khaled Keshk, *The Depiction of Mu'awiya in the Early Islamic Sources*, unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of Chicago, 2002.

³⁶ Reinhard Eisener, *Zwischen Faktum und Fiktion: eine Studie zum Umayyadenkalifen Sulaimān b. 'Abdalmalik und seinem Bild in den Quellen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1987).

publications by Avraham Hakim on the second caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb.³⁷ As critical work on the members of the first generation of Islam is thus still a desideratum, this study hopes to bring new perspectives and questions into the field to revive the research interest on the *ṣaḥāba*.

Organization of Chapters

The chapters of the dissertation provide a detailed analysis of the historical traditions related to three different aspects Abū Bakr’s life: his conversion to Islam (chapter 1); his title *al-ṣiddīq* and the occasion on which he acquired it (chapter 2); his manumission of Bilāl, an early believer, from slavery (chapter 3). The classical sources date the majority of these events to the very beginnings of Islam, i.e. the Meccan period of the Prophet’s life.

Chapter 1 is dedicated to the question of Abū Bakr’s precedence in Islam. We will first list several traditions that present him as the first believer and then examine the group of traditions that claim his foreknowledge of Muḥammad’s future emergence as a prophet. Our analysis will focus on three different traditions which we can date to the 2nd/8th century. They report Abū Bakr’s encounter with a Christian monk named Baḥīrā, who either informs him personally about Muḥammad’s future prophethood, or points out miraculous signs foretelling Muḥammad’s prophethood in the presence of some members of the Quraysh, with Abū Bakr among them. We will show how the Baḥīrā narratives came into circulation in early Abbasid

³⁷ Avraham Hakim, “Conflicting Images of Lawgivers: The Caliph and the Prophet,” in *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*, ed. Herbert Berg (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 159–77; idem, “The Death of an Ideal Leader: Predictions and Premonitions,” *Journal of American Oriental Society* 126, no. 1 (2006): 1–16; idem, “Context: ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb,” in *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur’an*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Malden et al.: Blackwell 2006); idem, “The Biblical annunciation made to ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb: The religious legitimization of the early Islamic conquests,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 42 (2015): 129–150.

Iraq, at a time when discussions on the chronological order of Abū Bakr's and 'Alī's conversions became important.

Chapter 2 is concerned with an analysis of the traditions that explain how Abū Bakr received his well-known title *al-ṣiddīq*. Although both explanations that we find in the sources connect it to Abū Bakr's belief in the Prophet, they provide two different stories. According to the most widespread one, the Meccans rejected Muḥammad's story after his return from Jerusalem on the night of the *isrā'* and turned to Abū Bakr, who then testified to the veracity of Muḥammad's report and declared his unconditional belief in the Prophet. This event then became the occasion of his endowment with the title. According to the second explanation, which we find in a late 2nd/8th century work, Ḍirār b. 'Amr's *K. al-taḥrīsh*, Abū Bakr was granted the title because of his early belief in Muḥammad's prophethood, about which he had been informed by the monk Baḥīrā. We will demonstrate that both traditions circulated in the 2nd/8th century, but that Kufa, Basra, and Medina differed in their choice of explanation.

In Chapter 3, we will investigate the traditions that circulated in the 2nd/8th century about Abū Bakr's relationship to Bilāl, a companion of the Prophet who is venerated in the Islamic tradition not only for his early conversion to Islam, but also for his firmness in belief during the torture Meccan polytheists inflicted upon him. Several groups of traditions report how Abū Bakr bought him from his previous owners, thus not only freeing him from persecution, but also from slavery. In this chapter, we will closely analyze the relationship between the two men and how Abū Bakr and his act of manumission was portrayed in various narrative contexts.

Our analysis of these three prominent features of Abū Bakr's life naturally can provide neither a full biography nor a complete assessment of Abū Bakr's image in the 2nd/8th century, especially since the latter was still in the process of formation at the time. Future research will surely complete and rectify the picture we attempted to draw. Thus, for the moment we join Klaus Klier in hoping that the lives of the Prophet's companions will eventually get the scholarly attention they deserve.

CHAPTER ONE: ABŪ BAKR'S EARLY CONVERSION TO ISLAM AND THE MONK BAḤĪRĀ

1. Introduction

The identity of the first person to accept Muḥammad's prophethood was a topic of heated debate, especially in the early centuries of Islam. In many traditions, Abū Bakr is considered as the first to believe in Muḥammad and to accept Islam. Other prominent figures of the nascent Islamic community, such as the prophet's wife Khadīja, his cousin 'Alī, and his stepson Zayd, are also referred to as the first Muslims.¹ For each of these figures, the classical sources offer several accounts describing how they embraced Islam. In the case of Abū Bakr's conversion, the sources present a rich yet diverse and confusing picture. According to some accounts, Abū Bakr accepted Islam upon Muḥammad's invitation,² whereas in several others he himself discovered Muḥammad's prophethood first. Moreover, the sources are not uniform in their contextualization of Abū Bakr's discovery. In one account, for instance, he witnessed Muḥammad's first revelation as he and Muḥammad were visiting Khadīja's cousin, Waraqa b. Nawfal.³ In another, Abū Bakr visited Waraqa b. Nawfal alone, and it was from him that he learned that an Arab prophet was soon going to appear from his own tribe. Then, upon Muḥammad's proclamation of Islam, he instantly became a believer.⁴ Apart from Abū Bakr's

¹ For an example, see Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Jabbār al-'Uṭāridī, *Sīrat Ibn Ishāq al-musammāt bi kitāb al-mubtada' wa al-mab'ath wa al-maghāzī*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh (Rabat: Ma'had al-Dirāsāt wa al-Abḥāth li al-Ta'rīb, 1976), 120, #177; [Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq, *Kitāb al-siyar wa al-maghāzī*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1978), 73-76]; see also Cameron, *Abū Dharr al-Ghiffārī*, 5-6; William Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), xii.

² Al-'Uṭāridī, *Sīrat Ibn Ishāq*, (Ḥamīdullāh), 120, #177.

³ See below, tradition n. 9.

⁴ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-khulafā'* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2003), 31.

encounters with Waraqa b. Nawfal, the sources repeatedly mention a meeting between him and a Christian monk in Syria, who informed him about Muḥammad's future prophethood and the emergence of a new religion.

In the post-3rd/9th century *ḥadīth* collections, these diverse descriptions of Abū Bakr's conversion are often presented side by side, without any attempt at harmonization or preference. However, the apparent ease with which the seemingly contradictory narratives are assembled and presented as on equal footing requires closer scrutiny. How do we explain the large number of narratives with varying plots and characters that report the occurrence of a purportedly unique event? How did these traditions find their way in to these collections? Are these traditions at all reconcilable?

The traditions focusing on the beginning of Muḥammad's prophetic career in Mecca have enjoyed special attention in Western academic scholarship since the 19th century. Many scholars developed a critical stance towards this type of material, often considering it legendary or spurious.⁵ In discussing the traditions about Muḥammad's encounters with Christian monks in Syria, for example, Patricia Crone remarked that "what the sources offer are fifteen equally fictitious versions of an event that never took place,"⁶ contending that these narrative traditions were the art-work of storytellers who did not "distinguish between true and false in the realistic sense." They simply "put their imagination ... into supernatural events."⁷ By challenging the reliability of the sources and pointing out the problems of the historical traditions, however, this approach makes no attempt at inspecting their history of

⁵ For a review of different views and approaches, see Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), 1-4.

⁶ Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 220-221.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 224.

transmission, their narrative character, or the circumstances under which the traditions came into circulation.

In this study, we will approach the problem from a different angle. Instead of primarily investigating the historical accuracy of these narrative traditions and assessing their factual validity, we will attempt to trace their evolution after they came into circulation and examine their contribution to the efforts directed at creating the historical image of Abū Bakr as the first believer. Our study will thus place greater emphasis on (a) determining the chronology of the narratives as best as possible, and (b) examining the religio-political context(s) that facilitated their wider circulation.

As the writings of the early Abbasid period demonstrate, precedence in conversion to Islam and comparisons between ‘Alī and Abū Bakr in that respect were highly attractive topics for sectarian polemics as early as the 2nd/8th century. Al-Jāḥiẓ’s (d. 255/869) *K. al-‘uthmāniyya*, which most probably dates to the reign of al-Ma’mūn (r. 198-218 / 813-833),⁸ for instance, devotes a large section to the comparison of Abū Bakr’s and ‘Alī’s respective conversions.⁹ In the opening sentences of this book, it is candidly stated that Abū Bakr was the most excellent of all Muslims because of his unequalled status in conversion to Islam. In al-Jāḥiẓ’s view, Abū Bakr is the first to embrace Islam, although some reports also name Zayd b. Ḥāritha or Khabbāb b. al-Aratt as the first believers.¹⁰ In evaluating the authenticity of these reports, al-Jāḥiẓ gives priority to the tradition which favors Abū Bakr, based on the number of its

⁸ For different dates, see Asma Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence: Medieval Islamic Discourse on Legitimate Leadership* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 22-23.

⁹ Al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-‘Uthmāniyya*, 3-27.

¹⁰ Ibid., 5.

transmitters and the soundness of its chain of transmissions.¹¹ Al-Jāhiz also adduces further evidence such as early Islamic poetry, particularly that of Ḥassān b. Thābit and Abū Miḥjan, in order to establish Abū Bakr's primacy in Islam. In the subsequent sections (ca. 20 pages in the edited version), al-Jāhiz discusses the claims that favor 'Alī as the first Muslim and rejects them on the basis of 'Alī's minor age when he converted.

A recently discovered and published work, Ḍirār b. 'Amr's (d. ca. 200/815) *K. al-taḥrīsh*,¹² presents the same topic, supporting it with traditions that come from competing camps. The work probably belongs to the 2nd/8th-century Abbasid milieu of Kufa, and is thus earlier than al-Jāhiz's *K. al-uthmāniyya*. In one section presenting the view of those who defend 'Alī's precedence, *K. al-taḥrīsh* records a tradition that asserts 'Alī was the first person to accept Islam, followed by other traditions according to which the Prophet made 'Alī his brother and appointed him as his legatee (*waṣī*) and his successor over his *umma*.¹³ In another section, *K. al-taḥrīsh* presents the opposing view, recording a conversation between al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (Basran, d. 110/728) and the grammarian Abū Bakr al-Hudhalī (Basran, d. 167/783)¹⁴ on the question of whether or not 'Alī was indeed the first to accept Muḥammad's call.¹⁵ As in *K. al-uthmāniyya*, al-Ḥasan rejects 'Alī's precedence and develops his argument on the basis of 'Alī's minor age. He states that prophets were only sent to those who have reached maturity and can

¹¹ Ibid., “*Idhā tafaqqadnā akhbārahū wa aḥṣaynā aḥādīthāhum wa ‘adad^a rijālīhim wa naẓarnā ṣiḥḥat^a asānīdīhim kāna al-khabar^m fī taqdīm abī bakr^m a‘amm wa rijāluḥu akthar wa isnāduḥu aṣaḥḥ wa hum bi-dhālika ashhar wa al-lafẓⁿ bihi aẓhar.*” For an analysis of al-Jāhiz's method of evaluating historical reports see Ignacio Sánchez, “Al-Jāhiz (d. 255/869) on Ḥadīth Criticism,” *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 2 (2015): 196-219.

¹² Ḍirār b. 'Amr al-Ghaṭafānī, *Kitāb al-taḥrīsh*, ed. Hansu and Keskin (Istanbul: Sharikat Dār al-Irshād, 2014) and a second Arabic edition with a Turkish translation, idem, *Kitābu't-Tahrīṣ: İlk Dönem Siyasî ve İtikadî İhtilâflarında Hadîs Kullanımı*, ed. Hüseyin Hansu, tr. Mehmet Keskin (Istanbul: Litera Yayıncılık, 2014).

¹³ Ḍirār b. 'Amr, *Kitāb al-taḥrīsh* (Dār al-Irshād), 51; idem, *Kitābu't-Tahrīṣ* (Litera), 30-31.

¹⁴ Aḥmad b. 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, ed. Khalīl Ma'mūn Shīḥā (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1996), 6:305, [(Beirut: Dar Ṣādir, 1968), 12:45-47] (henceforth TT).

¹⁵ Ḍirār b. 'Amr, *Kitāb al-taḥrīsh* (Dār al-Irshād), 54-55; idem, *Kitābu't-Tahrīṣ* (Litera), 31.

be held responsible for their acts. Since ‘Alī had not yet reached puberty when he converted to Islam, his conversion is considered invalid. The *K. al-taḥrīsh* also records a tradition from Ibn ‘Abbās which reports that Abū Bakr was the first to convert to Islam (*kana awwal^a al-nāsⁱ islām^{an} abū bakrⁱⁿ*).¹⁶

As these works exemplify, already in the 2nd/8th century, comparisons between ‘Alī and Abū Bakr with regard to precedence in conversion were interwoven with discussions of their ranking.¹⁷ The historical material (including the narrative traditions and early Islamic poetry) becomes the medium through which the competing claims to righteous leadership and rightful succession to the Prophet are negotiated or contested. Both Ḍirār and al-Jāḥiẓ address (the problem of) the conflicting nature of the historical material, especially in reports on the identity of Muḥammad’s first companion. Thus, while equally recording traditions in favor of both Abū Bakr and ‘Alī, Ḍirār in his *K. al-taḥrīsh* ultimately states that contradictory traditions (*ḥadīths*) are often shaped by sectarian and theological motives, and hence constitute a major problem in terms of their reliability and utility in religious matters.¹⁸ Al-Jāḥiẓ also touches upon the question of authenticity in the context of evaluating the reliability of the reports which present Zayd and/or Khabbāb b. al-Aratt as the first Muslim. Al-Jāḥiẓ’s solution is rather pragmatic, as he considers the traditions which have a larger number of transmitters and a

¹⁶ Ḍirār b. ‘Amr, *Kitāb al-taḥrīsh* (Dār al-Irshād), 54; idem, *Kitābu’t-Tahrīṣ* (Litera), 31.

¹⁷ See Afsaruddin, “In Praise of the Caliphs,” 330-332.

¹⁸ Although Ḍirār is not a Mu’tazilī, his critique of the contradictory nature of the *ḥadīth* material parallels the critical stance of the Mu’tazilīs towards the utility of *ḥadīths* in religious matters, see Josef van Ess, “Das *K. at-Taḥrīṣ* des Ḍirār b. ‘Amr: Einige Bemerkungen zu Ort und Anlaß seiner Abfassung,” in *Kleine Schriften* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). For the Mu’tazilī critique of *ḥadīth*, see idem, *Das Kitāb al-Nakṭ des Naẓẓām und seine Rezeption im Kitāb al-Futūḥ des Ḡāḥiẓ* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1972); idem, “Neue Fragmente aus dem *K. an-Nakṭ* des Naẓẓām,” *Oriens* 42 (2014): 20-94. For an analysis of a debate between al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820) and the Mu’tazilī scholar Ibrāhīm b. ‘Ulayya (d. 218/834) on *ḥadīth*, see Ahmed El Shamsy, *The Canonization of Islamic Law: A Social and Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 55-63.

wider circulation more reliable than the others. Of course, the contradictions are not limited to the question of who was the first to embrace Islam. The traditions which specifically deal with Abū Bakr's early conversion also present a diversified picture, and the accounts are hardly reconcilable with each other. Below, we will give a comprehensive list of the traditions which portray Abū Bakr as the first believer.

1. Several traditions, with different sets of transmitters, name Abū Bakr as the first to convert to Islam.¹⁹ These traditions confine themselves to stating Abū Bakr's precedence in this regard (*awwal man aslama abū bakr al-ṣiddīq*) and provide no further information about his conversion. Only occasionally, an additional remark states that he was the first among the adult men (*min al-rijāl*). In some traditions, Abū Bakr is also mentioned as the first person to pray (*awwal man ṣallā*), with his prayer serving as the most important indicator of his conversion. These traditions occur frequently in the classical sources, such as in Ibn Sa'd's (d. 230/845) *Ṭabaqāt* (3 accounts),²⁰ Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal's (d. 241/855) *Faḍā'il* (12 accounts),²¹ al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310/923) *Tārīkh* (2 accounts),²² Ibn al-Athīr's (630/1233) *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh* (1 account),²³ and al-Suyūṭī's (911/1505) *Tārīkh al-khulafā'* (3 accounts).²⁴ In the majority of these sources, Ibrāhīm al-

¹⁹ See Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, 63.

²⁰ Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ed. Sachau (Leiden: Brill, 1904-49), 3:121.

²¹ Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā'il al-ṣaḥāba*, ed. Waṣī Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Abbās (Mecca: Tab' Biḥār al-'Ilm, 1983), 1:223-227.

²² Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusūl wa al-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1879-1901), 1:1165-1168.

²³ 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, ed. Abū al-Fidā' 'Abdallāh al-Qāḍī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1987), 1:582-584.

²⁴ Al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-khulafā'*, 30-31.

Nakha'ī (Kufan, d. ca. 96/717) is the authority that articulated Abū Bakr's primacy in Islam,²⁵ while Shu'ba b. al-Ḥajjāj (Basran, d. 160/776) gave them a wider circulation.²⁶

2. A poem recorded by al-Jāḥiẓ in his *K. al-'uthmāniyya*²⁷ and attributed to the companion poet Abū Miḥjan 'Abdallāh b. Ḥabīb al-Thaqafī (d. 16/637), praises Abū Bakr for his precedence in accepting Islam:

You preceded [others] in Islam while God was a witness (*sabaqta ilā l-islāmⁱ wa llāh^u shāhid^u*).²⁸

3. Another poem, attributed to Ḥassān b. Thābit (d. 55/674), praises Abū Bakr's distinct quality of being the first person to believe in the prophets (*awwal^a al-nāsⁱ minhum ṣaddaqa al-rusulā*). Both Ḍirār and al-Jāḥiẓ quote Ḥassān's verses in the context of his precedence in Islam.²⁹ The poem occurs frequently in the classical sources, where it is generally presented in the context of a conversation between Ibn 'Abbās (Medinan, d. 68/687) and al-Sha'bī (Kufan d. 103-110/721-728) on the identity of the first Muslim.³⁰ This poem came into circulation through the transmissions of the Kufan transmitter

²⁵ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā'il*, 1:223-227. In this small sample of 21 accounts, Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī is named ten times as the main authority.

²⁶ Ibid. Shu'ba's name often appears in the traditions that go back to Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī. Out of the 21 accounts that we counted, Shu'ba is mentioned seven times as the transmitter.

²⁷ Al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-'Uthmāniyya*, 111; 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghāba fī ma'rifat al-ṣaḥāba*, ed. 'Alī Mūḥammad Mu'awwaḍ and 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1996), 3:311.

²⁸ See Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, 53, n.70.

²⁹ Ḍirār b. 'Amr, *Kitāb al-taḥrīsh* (Dār al-Irshād), 54; idem, *Kitābu't-Tahrīṣ* (Litera), 31; al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-'Uthmāniyya*, 111.

³⁰ See below chapter 2, section 2.1.

Mujālid b. Saʿīd (Kufa, d. 144/762) and his student al-Haytham b. ʿAdī (Kufa/Baghdad, d. ca. 206/821). We shall analyze it in the next chapter (see chart 2.1.1.).

In addition to these accounts, we find traditions that relate relatively detailed stories about Abū Bakr's early belief in Muḥammad's prophethood. In one group of such accounts, Abū Bakr embraces Islam upon Muḥammad's invitation at the very beginning of the Prophet's call to Islam. In one account, Abū Bakr is convinced merely by Muḥammad's recitation of passages from the Qurʾān.³¹ In another, he demands a miracle as proof. Muḥammad produces it instantly, and Abū Bakr becomes a Muslim.³²

In contrast, though, there are many other traditions which portray Abū Bakr as discovering Muḥammad's prophethood on his own. The narratives which tell the story of a Syrian monk who detects and discloses the signs of Muhammad's future prophethood offer a particularly suitable setup for Abū Bakr's own discovery and his subsequent belief. In some traditions, Abū Bakr becomes convinced in Islam through the proofs presented by the monk; while in others, Khadīja's cousin Waraqa b. Nawfal, a Christian scholar residing in Mecca, takes the place of the Syrian monk and reveals Muḥammad's prophethood to Abū Bakr.³³ In all these accounts, Abū Bakr's discovery occurs either in the period prior to Muḥammad's proclamation of Islam or during the time when the first revelations had been revealed to him. Given this chronology, Abū Bakr automatically earns his place among the earliest believers. Below, we will give a list of the traditions which present the plot for Abū Bakr's discovery of Muḥammad's impending prophetic mission and thus suggest his early conviction, or forebelief.

³¹ Al-ʿUṭāridī, *Sīrat Ibn Ishāq*, (Ḥamīdullāh), 120, #177.

³² See below, section 2.2. n. 82.

³³ See Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 162-164.

4. ʿAḍḍār b. ʿAmr's *K. al-taḥrīsh* is the earliest surviving work to include an account which mentions Abū Bakr's meeting with the monk Baḥīrā, from whom he learns about Muḥammad's future prophethood. Because of his foreknowledge, Abū Bakr is the first person Muḥammad invites to Islam upon receiving the first revelation, and becomes a believer. The 3rd/9th-century Khārijīte-Ibādī text by Ibn Sallām records an account very similar to ʿAḍḍār's. Ibn Sallām's source was the now-lost Ibādī work *K. al-radd ʿalā al-rawāfiḍ* by ʿAbdallāh b. Yazīd al-Fazārī (Kufan, d. early 3rd/9th century), who was a contemporary of ʿAḍḍār in Kufa.³⁴

5. There is a tradition which recounts a conversation between Maymūn b. Mihran (al-Jazīra, d. 117/735), a prominent scholar in Syria during the Umayyad period, and another scholar from the same region named Furāt b. al-Sāʿib (al-Jazīra, d. 2nd/8th century). Furāt asks Maymūn whether ʿAlī or Abū Bakr was the first to convert to Islam. Maymūn reports that Abū Bakr believed in the Prophet long before ʿAlī's birth, when he met the monk Baḥīrā. The tradition is transmitted by Shabāba b. Sawwār (Ctesiphon, d. 204-206/819-822).³⁵

6. The Baḥīrā story exists in two major versions, both of which circulated widely in the classical sources. In the first, recorded in various recensions of Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767) in his *K. al-maghāzī*,³⁶ Muḥammad as a young boy joins his uncle Abū Ṭālib on a trade

³⁴ See below, section 2.

³⁵ See below, section 3.

³⁶ ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *Kitāb sīrat rasūl Allāh*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen: Dieterichsche Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1858), 113-115; idem, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, trans. Alfred Guillaume (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 79-81; al-ʿUṭāridī, *Sīrat Ibn Ishāq*, (Ḥamīdullāh),

caravan to Syria. When the caravan stops near a monk's cell, the monk, whose name is Baḥīrā, comes out of his cell, recognizes Muḥammad as the Prophet of God who is going to appear in the near future, and urges Abū Ṭālib to take the boy back to Mecca. The second version, recorded in major collections such as Ibn Abī Shayba's (d. 235/849) *Muṣannaf*,³⁷ al-Tirmidhī's (d. 279/892) *Jāmi'*,³⁸ and al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*³⁹ present a very similar story, but differ from the first version by making Abū Bakr a witness to Baḥīrā's pronouncement of Muḥammad's future prophethood.⁴⁰ The first version can be dated to Ibn Ishāq's lifetime, whereas the second comes into a wider circulation only later through the transmission of Abū Nūḥ Qurād (Baghdad, d. 207/822; see charts 1.2.1 and 1.2.2).

7. In another tradition, Abū Bakr and Muḥammad travel together to Syria in a trade caravan when they are 18 and 20 years old, respectively. They take a rest, and the Prophet sits down under a *sidra* (lote) tree. A monk called Baḥīrā comes to Abū Bakr and asks him about the man sitting under the lote tree. He then exclaims that no one except Jesus has ever sat under that tree, and immediately professes that Muḥammad is the prophet of God. Upon hearing Baḥīrā's words, Abū Bakr's heart becomes filled with certainty and belief (*al-yaqīn wa al-taṣdīq*).⁴¹ The tradition is transmitted on the

53-57; [idem, *Kitāb al-siyar wa al-maghāzī*, (Zakkār), 73-76]; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1: 1123-1125. For other references, see below, section 4.1.a.

³⁷ Abū Bakr Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Muḥammad 'Awwāma (Beirut: Dār al-Qibla li al-Thaqāfa al-Islāmiyya, 2006) 20:224-225.

³⁸ Muḥammad b. 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi' al-kabīr*, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1996), 6:14-15.

³⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1:1123-25.

⁴⁰ For further references, see section 4.2.

⁴¹ For a discussion of this anecdote, see Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 51.

authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, but the sources do not provide any further information about its transmissions. Only in some accounts, ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ (Meccan, d. 114/732) is named as the scholar who transmitted it from Ibn ‘Abbās. Because of this lack of information, the tradition cannot be dated. The tradition is also attested in late exegetical sources in connection with Q 46:15.⁴²

8. In one account, Abū Bakr himself visits Baḥīrā when he is on a trade mission in Syria. He sees a dream one night, and tells it to Baḥīrā. The monk first asks him some questions about where he is from, to which tribe he belongs, and what he does for a living. Once Baḥīrā learns that he is a merchant from the Quraysh, he interprets his dream to him: a prophet will rise among his tribesmen and he will be his aide (*wazīr*) during his lifetime and his successor (*khalīfa*) after his death. Abū Bakr keeps Baḥīrā’s interpretation secret. When Muḥammad announces his prophethood, Abū Bakr goes to him and asks for a proof, whereupon Muḥammad reminds him of the dream which he had seen in Syria. Abū Bakr immediately becomes a Muslim. To my knowledge, the tradition is first attested in a 6th /12th-century source, namely in Ibn ‘Asākir’s (d. 571/1175) *Tārīkh madīnat dimashq* (TMD). Two other sources, Ibn Manẓūr’s *Mukhtaṣar* and al-Ṣuyūṭī’s *Tārīkh al-khulāfā*, copy it from TMD.⁴³

⁴² Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥāba* (Medina: Maktabat al-Dār, 1988), 3:188; Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi’ li aḥkām al-qur’ān*, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Kātib al-‘Arabī, 1967), 16:194; Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb nuzūl al-qur’ān*, ed. Kamāl Basyūnī Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1991), 395-396; ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh madīnat dimashq*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn ‘Umar b. Gharāma al-‘Amrawī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995-2000), 71:338-339 (henceforth TMD); Ibn al-Athīr, *Uṣd al-ghāba*, 1:355; Aḥmad b. ‘Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba fī tamyīz al-ṣaḥāba*, ed. ‘Alī Muḥammad Bijāwī (Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr, 1970), 353-354.

⁴³ For a full translation of this account, see Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, 65; also cf. Rubin. The account occurs in the following sources: Ibn ‘Asākir, TMD, 30:29-30; Muḥammad b. Mukarram Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar tāriḥ dimashq li-Ibn ‘Asākir*, ed. Sukayna Shihābī et al. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1979), 13:39; Jalāl al-Dīn al-

9. Waraqa b. Nawfal, Khadīja's cousin, also appears as an important figure in the narratives on the emergence of Islam. He is portrayed as a Christian scholar who can attest to the truth of Muḥammad's prophethood.⁴⁴ According to one well-known tradition, Muḥammad meets his wife Khadīja upon receiving the first revelation and explains to her what had happened. She advises him to meet her cousin Waraqa, who confirms that the revelation Muḥammad had received is genuine and that he is indeed a prophet. Several versions of this story have been analyzed by G. Schoeler.⁴⁵ In one relatively minor version, Abū Bakr also plays a role in the event. When Khadīja recommends to Muḥammad that he meet Waraqa, Abū Bakr accompanies him to the meeting. Thereby he learns firsthand about the first revelation to Muḥammad and witnesses Waraqa's confirmation of Muḥammad's prophethood. As M. J. Kister and C. F. Robinson have pointed out, Abū Bakr's presence in this version of the story seems to be a further elaboration on the narrative and aims to secure his place as one of the very first companions to believe in Muḥammad's call to Islam.⁴⁶ G. Schoeler's analysis of this version of the tradition has revealed that Abū Ishāq 'Amr al-Sabī'ī (Kufan, d. 127/745) is the common link of this tradition, which comes into circulation in Kufa in the narrations of al-Sha'bī's son, Yūnus b. Abī Ishāq (Kufan, d. 159/775), and his two

Suyūṭī, *al-Khaṣā'is al-kubrā aw kifāyat al-ṭālib al-labīb fī khaṣā'is al-ḥabīb*, ed. Muḥammad Khalīl Harrās (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1967), 1:72.

⁴⁴ See *El*² s.v. "Waraqa b. Nawfal" (Chase F. Robinson); Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 103-112.

⁴⁵ Gregor Schoeler, *The Biography of Muḥammad: Nature and Authenticity* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 38-79.

⁴⁶ M. J. Kister, "Al-Taḥannuth: An Inquiry into the Meaning of a Term," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 31, n.2 (1968): 224; *El*² s.v. "Waraqa b. Nawfal" (Robinson).

grandsons, Isrāʾīl b. Yūnus b. Abī Ishāq (Kufan, d. 160/776) and Yūsuf b. Ishāq b. Abī Ishāq (Kufan, d. 157/773; see chart 1.3.).⁴⁷

10. There is second tradition which gives an account of Abū Bakr's conversion through another encounter with Waraqa b. Nawfal. Here, Abū Bakr is the narrator telling his own story. As he was sitting in the courtyard of the Ka'ba one day, he overhears two monotheists, Zayd b. 'Amr b. Nawfal and Umayya b. Abī al-Ṣalt, saying that a prophet is awaited and would appear soon. Intrigued by their talk, he goes to Waraqa b. Nawfal and asks him if he knows anything about that. Waraqa confirms that an Arab prophet is about to emerge from Abū Bakr's own tribe, and Abū Bakr becomes a believer immediately upon Muḥammad's proclamation of Islam. The tradition is again recorded only in later works, such as Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD*⁴⁸ and al-Ṣuyūṭī's *Tārīkh al-khulafā'*, and does not find any attestations in the earlier sources.⁴⁹

Despite the wide range of differences, these diverse traditions share one common aspect: Abū Bakr becomes first aware, and then convinced of, Muḥammad's prophethood either before the proclamation of Islam or during the earliest phase of Muḥammad's revelational experience. We can thus posit that the narratives on Abū Bakr's conversion are strongly connected to the questions of his precedence in Islam.

Below, we will make a thorough examination of the traditions describing Abū Bakr's forebelief due to his encounter with a Christian sage. Our aim is to provide a chronology, and to identify

⁴⁷ Schoeler, *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 74-76.

⁴⁸ Ibn 'Asākir, *TMD*, 30:33-34.

⁴⁹ Al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-khulafā'*, 31.

the places where these traditions come into wider circulation. We shall limit the scope of our investigation to the traditions that can be dated to the 2nd/8th century, which means that the traditions nos. 8 and 10, which appear only in later collections, will not be analyzed here. Also tradition no. 7, the story of Abū Bakr's and Muḥammad's joint journey to Syria, does not provide any *isnād*, and will hence be ignored. The story of Muḥammad's meeting with Waraqa b. Nawfal after the first revelation (no. 9) has already been analyzed by G. Schoeler. We will make use of his conclusions and add them to ours, instead of analyzing the tradition anew. This leaves us with three groups of traditions to focus on: Ḍirār b. 'Amr's account (no. 4), the conversation between Maymūn and Furāt (no. 5), and the story of Abū Ṭālib's encounter with the monk Baḥīrā in Syria (no. 6).⁵⁰

2. The Tradition of Ibn 'Abbās in two 2nd/8th-century theological works: Ḍirār b. 'Amr's (d. ca. 200/815) *K. al-taḥrīsh* and 'Abdallāh b. Yazīd's *K. radd 'alā al-rawāfiḍ*

Two theological works from early Abbasid Kufa record a tradition about Abū Bakr's conversion to Islam on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās. The first is Ḍirār b. 'Amr's (d. ca. 200/815)⁵¹ *K. al-taḥrīsh*.⁵² As we have already mentioned above, the work displays a critical stance towards the

⁵⁰ Some deviating traditions report that Abū Bakr was not the first person to believe in Islam, but rather one of the first. Among these, we find a tradition which names the first seven people who converted to Islam and became persecuted because of their belief. Abū Bakr, and his freed-slave Bilāl, are named among these seven. In chapter 3, we will analyze this tradition in more detail.

⁵¹ For a discussion of Ḍirār's death date, see Josef van Ess, "Ḍirār b. 'Amr und die Cahmīya. Biographie einer vergessenen Schule," *Der Islam* 46 (1968):7.

⁵² Ḍirār b. 'Amr, *Kitāb al-taḥrīsh* (Dār al-Irshād), 53-54; idem, *Kitābu't-Tahrīṣ* (Litera), 30-31. Josef van Ess provides a tentative overview of the book in his *Der Eine und das Andere: Beobachtungen an islamischen häresiographischen Texte* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 132-140. The text and its ascription to Ḍirār b. 'Amr has not been thoroughly examined yet; see van Ess, "Why Kalam?" in *ISAM Papers: Ottoman Thought, Ethics, Law, Philosophy-Kalam*, ed. Kenan (Istanbul: ISAM Yayınları, 2013), 190-191, 250-2. Yet, after a preliminary examination,

utility of *ḥadīth/akhbār* materials and questions their reliability by presenting contradictory traditions marshaled by competing theological and sectarian groups in Kufa.⁵³ In one section, the book presents a list of the traditions defended by the Kufan Shīʿites as a proof of ʿAlī's primacy in Islam; in another, it presents the counter traditions, most likely endorsed by the Kufan Khārijites, which favor Abū Bakr's precedence.⁵⁴ For Abū Bakr's primacy in Islam, for example, the following tradition is recorded on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās :

Abū Bakr was the first of the people to accept Islam and for that reason he earned the title *al-ṣiddīq*.

Ibn ʿAbbās said:

(a) Abū Bakr received the good tidings about the Prophet from the monk Baḥīrā and he [Abū Bakr] believed him [Baḥīrā] in that [matter] (*fa-ṣaddaqahu bi-dhālika*).

(b) As God sent the [first] revelation to His Prophet, he [Muḥammad] informed Abū Bakr as the first creature of God (*awwal khalq Allāh*) about that, since the Prophet (*ṣallā allāhu ʿalayhi*) knew that the news of his prophethood [had already] reached Abū Bakr.

(c) And because of this Abū Bakr is named *al-ṣiddīq*.⁵⁵

According to this brief tradition, Abū Bakr had encountered a monk called Baḥīrā, who revealed to him the future prophethood of Muḥammad, and Abū Bakr believed him. When

van Ess expressed his belief in the likelihood of its authenticity (personal communication, May 2014). See also his forthcoming article, "Das K. *at-Taḥrīṣ* des Ḍirār b. ʿAmr: Einige Bemerkungen zu Ort und Anlaß seiner Abfassung." Supporting its ascription to Ḍirār is a report in al-Jāḥiẓ's K. *al-ʿuthmāniyya* (224) about Zubayr b. al-ʿAwwām which he derives from Ḍirār via Abū Zufar. A similar version of this report is found in Ḍirār, K. *al-taḥrīsh*, (Dār al-Irshād), 57; idem, *Kitābu't-Taḥrīṣ* (Litera), 33. For a rather negative evaluation of the manuscript's ascription to Ḍirār (before the publication of Hansu's edition), see Riḍwān al-Sayyīd, "Ḍirār b. ʿamr bayna al-taḥarrush wa al-taḥrīsh," *al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ*, August 31, 2010; accessed August 11, 2015, <http://archive.aawsat.com/print.asp?did=584698&issueno=11599>.

⁵³ See Josef van Ess, "Das K. *at-Taḥrīṣ* des Ḍirār b. ʿAmr," (forthcoming).

⁵⁴ Idem, "Das Bild der Ḥārīḡiten im K. *at-Taḥrīṣ* des Ḍirār b. ʿAmr," in *Kleine Schriften* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming); see also below, chapter 2, n. 21.

⁵⁵ The elements unique to Ḍirār's account are underlined.

Muḥammad received the first revelation, he already knew that Abū Bakr had been informed about his mission. Therefore, he invited Abū Bakr, who then became the first to accept Islam. In Ḍirār's account, Ibn 'Abbās is the only authority for this tradition, but it is to be kept in mind that *K. al-tahrīsh* generally provides no *isnāds* to its traditions.

There is a second work that offers a parallel rendering of this tradition. It is a 3rd/9th-century Khārijite text, authored by Ibn Sallām. The book recounts the events of early Islamic history and presents this Ibn 'Abbās tradition among the accounts highlighting Abū Bakr's virtuous deeds. Ibn Sallām explicitly mentions 'Abdallāh b. Yazīd al-Fazārī's (d. early 3rd/9th century) *Kitāb al-radd 'alā al-rawāfiḍ*, an earlier Khārijite text, as his source for the Ibn 'Abbās tradition.⁵⁶ This is a very important piece of information, insofar as 'Abdallāh b. Yazīd is also a Kufan theologian who is contemporaneous with Ḍirār. He is also considered an influential Ibādī scholar who engaged in many of the theological debates of the 2nd/8th century and authored several theological works.⁵⁷ The *K. al-radd 'alā al-rawāfiḍ* is not extant, but Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* mentions a book with this title.⁵⁸ Fortunately, the Baḥīrā tradition in Ibn Sallām's book is the only example of a direct quote from 'Abdallāh b. Yazīd al-Fazārī's now-lost work.⁵⁹ Al-Fazārī's account, translated here, contains an *isnād*; the deviations from Ḍirār's account are underlined.

⁵⁶ Werner Schwartz and Šaiḥ Sālim b. Ya'qūb, *Kitāb Ibn Sallām. Eine ibāditisch-mağribinische Geschichte des Islams aus dem 3./9. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1986), 72. This is the only time in the entire book that Ibn Sallām gives the title of a written source; see the editors' introduction, 17; van Ess, *TG*, 1:407.

⁵⁷ For detailed information about 'Abdallāh b. Yazīd, see Wilferd Madelung's introduction to *Streitschrift des Zaiditenimams Aḥmad an-Nāṣir wider die ibaditische Prädestinationslehre* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985), 4-9. This is a work authored by a Yemenī Zaydī theologian of the 4th/10th century, Aḥmad al-Nāṣir li dīn Allāh (d. 322/934), refuting 'Abdallāh b. Yazīd's anti-*qadar* views. For 'Abdallāh b. Yazīd's own theological writings, see Abdulrahman al-Salimi and Wilferd Madelung, *Early Ibādī Theology: Six kalām texts by 'Abd Allāh b. Yazīd al-Fazārī* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

⁵⁸ Ibn al-Nadīm records the book with the title "*K. al-radd 'alā al-rāfiḍa*." See Madelung, *Streitschrift des Zaiditenimams*, 4, n. 5.

⁵⁹ Van Ess, *TG*, 1:407.

‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd al-Fazārī said in his *K. al-radd ‘alā al-rawāfiq*:

It has reached us via Zayd via al-Ḍaḥḥāk [b. Muzāḥim (d. 106/724)]⁶⁰ on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās:

(a) Abū Bakr received the good tidings about the Prophet from the monk Baḥīrā and he [Abū Bakr] believed him in that [matter] (*fa-ṣaddaḡahu bi-dhālika*).

(b) As God sent the [first] revelation to His Prophet, he [Muḥammad] informed (*aṭla‘a ‘alā dhālika*) Abū Bakr about that, since the Prophet (*‘alayhi salām*) knew that the news of his prophecy [had already] reached him through the monk Baḥīrā

(d) when the Prophet had returned to Mecca in the company of the Quraysh before [the beginning of] his prophethood (*qabla zuḥūr nubuwwatihi*).

(e) Khadīja saw him walking on water.⁶¹

The two texts exhibit significant parallels, and the wording is almost identical in units a and b, where only minor variants occur: for instance, *rasūl allāh* versus *al-nabī*, and the formal salutation of the Prophet is phrased as *ṣallā allāhu ‘alayhi* instead of *‘alayhi salām*.⁶²

However, the two texts differ when supplying other information. Though shorter, Ḍirār’s account offers explanatory details that are missing from ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd’s account. First, Ḍirār’s narration is preceded by an explanation that Abū Bakr was the first to embrace Islam and hence deserved to be named “*al-ṣiddīq*” (*kāna awwal^a al-nāsⁱ islām^{an} abū bakrⁱⁿ wa bi-dhālika istawjaba ism^a al-ṣiddīq*). After unit c, the account again identifies Abū Bakr as the first creature (*awwal khalq Allāh*) to learn about Muḥammad’s initial revelation. All these assertions about Abū Bakr’s primacy, however, are absent from ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd’s account. There, it is merely

⁶⁰ Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 6:210-212; Claude Gilliot in “A Schoolmaster, Storyteller, Exegete and Warrior at Work in Khurāsān: al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Hilālī (d. 106/724),” in *Aims, Methods and Contexts of Qur’anic Exegesis (2nd/8th - 9th/15th C.)*, ed. Karen Bauer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 316-321.

⁶¹ For a German translation of the tradition, see van Ess, *TG*, 5:124-125.

⁶² There are also a number of minor editing or printing errors in both texts, which can be amended, e.g., *inna abā bakrⁱⁿ talaqqāhu* (read *talaqqā*) *al-bishara^{ta} bi al-nabī* (*K. al-taḥrīsh*) vs. *talaqqā* (*K. Ibn Sallām*); *fa-lammā awḥā allāh^u ilā nabiyyihi iṭṭala‘a* (read *aṭla‘a*) *‘alā dhālika abū* (read *abā*) *bakrⁱⁿ* (*K. al-taḥrīsh*) vs. *fa-lammā awḥā allāh^u ilā nabiyyihi ‘alayhi al-salām aṭla‘a ‘alā dhālika abā bakrⁱⁿ* (*K. Ibn Sallām*).

stated that the Prophet informed Abū Bakr about the revelation since he already knew that Abū Bakr had been informed about his coming prophethood earlier. Furthermore, ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd’s account records other elements (units d and e) which are missing from ʿĪrār’s. The account continues with the information that Abū Bakr learned the news of Muḥammad’s future prophethood from Baḥīrā at a time when it had not yet been made public (units b and d in ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd’s account: *qad ‘alima annahu intahā ilayhi min amri nubuwwatihi min ‘inda bujayr*⁶³ *al-rāhib ḥīna raja‘a al-nabī min rifqatⁱ quraysh ilā makka^{ta} qabla zuhūrⁱ nubuwwatihi*, instead of unit b in ʿĪrār’s account: *qad ‘alimahu*⁶⁴ *annahu qad intahā ilā abī bakrⁱⁿ min amrihⁱ*). Additionally, ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd’s account contains the enigmatic detail (unit e) that Muḥammad’s wife, Khadīja, witnessed Muḥammad walking on water, which is absent from ʿĪrār’s account.

Reviewing the similarities and differences, it becomes clear that the two accounts are two different renderings of the same tradition, especially since both accounts cite Ibn ‘Abbās as the authority who narrated the tradition. But while ʿĪrār’s text provides no *isnād*, ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd names two transmitters between himself and Ibn ‘Abbās. The names of these transmitters, however, do not help us any further, as Zayd, the alleged informant of ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd, cannot be identified.⁶⁵ Moreover, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim (d. 106/724), who is reported to have lived both in Kufa and Khurāsān, is a traditionist known for his transmissions from Ibn

⁶³ Baḥīrā’s name was written as “Bujayr” in *K. Ibn al-Sallām*’s account. It has been correctly amended to Bāḥīra by van Ess, *TG*, 5:124; n.10.

⁶⁴ The sentence should be read: “*qad ‘alima annahu intahā...*”; cf. ʿĪrār b. ‘Amr, *Kitāb al-taḥrīsh* (Dār al-Irshād), 54; idem, *Kitābu’t-Tahrīṣ* (Litera), 31.

⁶⁵ On this point see also van Ess, *TG*, 5:124, n.9.

‘Abbās, but he never met him.⁶⁶ Hence, there is, for now, no evidence to suggest that the tradition predates Ḍirār’s and ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd’s life times.

2.1. Religious and political debates organized by Yaḥyā b. Khālīd al-Barmakī (d. 190/805)

Both Ḍirār and ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd lived in Kufa, and although there is no verifiable information about their respective death dates, both of them must have died around 200/815.⁶⁷ There is, however, ample evidence that both were involved in the intellectual circles of early Abbasid Baghdad.⁶⁸ Several sources report that Yaḥyā b. Khālīd al-Barmakī (d. 190/805), the famous vizier of the ‘Abbāsīd caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–193/786–809),⁶⁹ organized theological debates at his house in Baghdad, and invited to them representatives of various sectarian groups.⁷⁰ Ḍirār, ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd, the Imāmī Shī‘īte theologian Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (Kufan, d.

⁶⁶ According to a report in Ibn Sa‘d’s *Ṭabaqāt* (6:210), al-Ḍahhāk gathered Ibn ‘Abbās’s *tafsīr* material from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr (Kufan, d. ca. 95/712) when the two met in Rayy. See also Gilliot, “A Schoolmaster,” 321–322.

⁶⁷ For an assessment of Ḍirār’s death date, see van Ess, “Ḍirār b. ‘Amr und die Cahmīya,” 6–7. For Ḍirār’s birth date, van Ess suggests the year 110/728. The death date of ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd is unknown. We do not have much information about him after his participation in the Barmakid discussions, which were held most likely in Baghdad in 179/795. In the same year, the Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd began persecuting the theologians of Baghdad, and ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd fled to Yemen, taking refuge at the local Ibāḍī community, where he must have died. See Madelung, *Streitschrift des Zaiditenimams*, 4; A. al-Salimi and Madelung, *Early Ibāḍī Theology*, 2.

⁶⁸ Both of them are of Arab descent, and may have had some tribal affinities, since Ḍirār’s *nisba* “al-Ghaṭafānī” indicates that he was from the tribe of ‘Abdallāh b. Ghaṭafān; see van Ess, *TG*, 3:32. ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd was a member of the tribe of Fazāra, which is a sub-branch of the Ghaṭafān tribal confederation; see *El*² s.v. “Ghaṭafān” (Johann W. Fück).

⁶⁹ Madelung, *Streitschrift des Zaiditenimams*, 5.

⁷⁰ Ibid.; van Ess, *TG*, 1:350, 407, 3:32–59; Heinz Halm, *Shi‘ism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 39; Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. al-Maṣ‘ūdī (d. 346/957), *Murūj al-dhahab wa ma‘ādin al-jawhar*, ed. Kamāl Ḥasan Mar‘ī (Sidon: al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣriyya, 2005), 3:306; Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Ibn Babūya, *Ikmāl al-dīn wa itmām al-ni‘ma fī ithbāt al-rajā‘a* (Najaf: al-Maṭba‘a al-Ḥaydariyya, 1970), 348–353; Muḥammad b. ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Kashshī, *Rijāl al-kashshī* (Karbala: Mu‘assasat al-‘Alamī li al-Maṭbū‘āt, 1963), 222–227.

199/814),⁷¹ and the Zaydī theologian Sulaymān b. Jarīr (d. late 2nd/8th century) are said to have been the most prominent participants.

The later Shīʿite sources are particularly interested in giving detailed accounts of these discussions, as they aim to demonstrate how the Shīʿite representative Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (d. 199/814) won over his opponents. Ibn Babūya (d. 381/991) in his *Ikmāl*, for example, gives a long account of a discussion about political and religious leadership (imamate) that took place between Hishām on the one side, and Ḍirār and ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd on the other. Instigated by Khālīd b. Yaḥyā, Hishām debates the question of the necessity of the imamate with Ḍirār, and discusses the essential qualities required for the ideal *imām* as well as the points of divergence between the Shīʿites and the Khārījites with ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd.⁷² Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā’s (d. 436/1044) *al-Fuṣūl al-mukhtāra* also gives two different accounts of these discussions, which he records from Shaykh al-Mufīd’s (d. 413/1032) *‘Uyūn al-masā’il*.⁷³ In the first account, Hishām engages in a debate with Ḍirār, and defends ‘Alī’s superiority over Abū Bakr on the basis of his

⁷¹ Van Ess discusses several death dates for Hishām as attested in different sources, and opts for 179/795, as presented by al-Kashshī, *Rijāl*, 220; see *TG*, 1:353-354.

⁷² See Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Ibn Babūya, *Ikmāl al-dīn wa itmām al-ni‘ma fī ithbāt al-raj‘a* (Najaf: al-Maṭba‘a al-Ḥaydariyya, 1970), 348-353. At the end of the account, Hishām is asked to name the best member of the community, namely the *imām* of his time. Unaware of Hārūn al-Rashīd’s secretive presence at the meeting, he names the 7th Shīʿite imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim, which leads to his dramatic demise; see *ibid.* In a similar episode in al-Kashshī’s *Rijāl*, (225-226), Mūsā is called to Baghdad and detained there because of Hishām’s unabashed statement.

⁷³ See al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Fuṣūl al-mukhtāra min al-‘uyūn wa al-maḥāsīn*, (al-Maṭba‘a Mihr, 1413/1992), 28, 50-51.

obvious qualities, such as bravery on the battlefield.⁷⁴ In the second, Hishām refutes the Khārijite claims against ‘Alī proffered by his opponent, ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd.⁷⁵

Although the recorded dialogues take a literary character, they are noteworthy for revealing the subject matter of these disputes, as they revolve around the question of the imamate – its necessity, the ranking of the first caliphs, and comparisons between them. Although it is difficult to prove the historical validity of these accounts, there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that Ḍirār’s and ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd’s own writings dealt with similar issues. In al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā’s account, for instance, Hishām quotes the Prophet’s words about ‘Alī (“You are to me like Hārūn in relation to Moses,” the well-known *ḥadīth* of *al-manzila*) as the most compelling proof of ‘Alī’s supreme status and right to succession in order to refute the arguments in favor of Abū Bakr.⁷⁶ Ḍirār is subsequently reported to give up his critique of Hishām and acknowledges ‘Alī’s superiority on the basis of this *ḥadīth*.⁷⁷

Strikingly, we also find mention of the *ḥadīth* of *al-manzila* in Ḍirār’s *K. al-taḥrīsh*. There, however, it is presented as an illustrative example of how *ḥadīths* were employed by the Shī‘ites of Kufa to defend ‘Alī’s supremacy.⁷⁸ In contrast to al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā’s account, the

⁷⁴ Ibid., 28. For a similar version of the discussion between Hishām b. al-Ḥakam and Ḍirār, see also Nūrullāh Shustarī (d. 1019/1610), *Majālis al-mu‘minīn* (Beirut: Dār Hishām, n.d.), 1:621-622; cf. van Ess, “Ḍirār b. ‘Amr und the Cahmīya,” 1, 25.

⁷⁵ See al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Fuṣūl al-mukhtāra*, 50-51; Nūrullāh Shustarī, *Majālis al-mu‘minīn*, 1:615-617. The theological controversy between ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd and Hishām b. al-Ḥakam is well documented. In his epistle entitled *K. al-radd ‘alā al-mujassima*, ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd criticizes the anthropomorphic doctrine most prominently espoused by Hishām b. al-Ḥakam; see A. al-Salimi and Madelung, *Early Ibāḍī Theology*, 146-151. Interestingly, however, Hishām b. al-Ḥakam and ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd are mentioned to be business partners in silk trade despite their theological disputes; see al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa al-tabyīn*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 7th ed. 1998), 1:46-47, van Ess, *TG*, 1:407

⁷⁶ Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Fuṣūl al-mukhtāra*, 28.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ḍirār b. ‘Amr, *Kitāb al-taḥrīsh* (Dār al-Irshād), 51; idem, *Kitābu’t-Tahrīṣ* (Litera), 26.

K. al-tahrīsh questions the validity of such *ḥadīths* by labeling them erroneous, misleading, and artificial (*al-ḥadīth al-dāll al-muḍill al-muftaʿal*).⁷⁹ The different approaches to the *ḥadīth* of *al-manzila* and its divergent evaluations demonstrate how these narrative traditions were used as arguments in the polemical debate on the question of the imamate, in which Ḍirār also appears to have participated.

The title of ʿAbdallāh b. Yazīd’s work, *K. al-radd ʿalā al-rawāfiḍ*, suggests a similar polemical context too. It is conceivable that the book addressed related questions in responding to the Shīʿite claims regarding the authority and legitimacy of the early caliphs (i.e. Abū Bakr and ʿUmar). Ḍirār is also noted to have authored a book with an equally suggestive title, *Kitāb al-radd ʿalā rāfiḍa wa al-ḥashwiyya*.⁸⁰ As ʿAbdallāh b. Yazīd’s work exemplifies, the Baḥīrā tradition appears to belong to this group of polemical writings. We can further assume that both Ḍirār and ʿAbdallāh b. Yazīd had access to a pool of narrative material relevant to these political and theological disputes.

We should also note that the Baḥīrā tradition, allegedly transmitted on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās, exists in no other source after the 3rd/9th century. Based on our discussion of the intellectual activities of these two authors, we can posit that the tradition belongs exclusively to the Kufan and Baghdadi circles of the early Abbasid period, circulated possibly during Hārūn al-Rashīd’s reign (r. 170–193/786–809), and remained within the confines of that political and religious milieu.

⁷⁹ Ḍirār b. ʿAmr, *Kitāb al-tahrīsh* (Dār al-Irshād), 52; idem, *Kitābuʿt-Tahrīṣ* (Litera), 27.

⁸⁰ Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, ed. Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid (London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2009), 1.2.:598; van Ess, *TG*, 5:230.

2.2. Narrative analysis

The main theme of the narrative is Abū Bakr's learning about Muḥammad's prophethood and his acceptance of Islam. In both ʿAbdallāh b. Yazīd's accounts, the narration is short, although it is composed of two different plots. In the first one, Abū Bakr is informed about Muḥammad's future prophethood by the monk Baḥīrā and believes it. Many details of this event are, however, missing. Thus, we are neither told about how Abū Bakr met the monk, nor how the monk instructed him about Muḥammad's prophethood. It is also not specified whether Abū Bakr received the news directly from the monk or through another medium. In the second, Muḥammad seeks Abū Bakr in order to inform him about the first revelation. Though central to the story, no details are given about the setting for Muḥammad's call to prophethood, his discovery of Abū Bakr's foreknowledge, or Abū Bakr's response. Apparently, these elements were not important to the narrative's intention.

ʿAbdallāh b. Yazīd's account offers some additional information (unit c) in that Abū Bakr received the tidings of Muḥammad's reception of his first revelation at the time when Muḥammad had returned to Mecca in the company of the Quraysh. But this information does not help to close the gaps in the story. It simply provides a chronology for Abū Bakr's acceptance of Baḥīrā's words, which, according to this information, falls in the time before Muḥammad's first prophecy. But other details, such as the Prophet's leaving Mecca and his return to it in the company of the Quraysh, remain obscure, as they do not explain how that relates to the monk's knowledge of his future prophethood.

Another such gap is Muḥammad's knowledge of Abū Bakr's forebelief in the Prophet's message. According to the narrative, Muḥammad knew that Abū Bakr had already been aware

of his future prophethood before he received the first revelation. We are not told, however, when and how Muḥammad discovered Abū Bakr's earlier acceptance of Baḥīrā's words. Obviously, it must have happened in the period between Abū Bakr's receiving the news from the monk and the advent of the first revelation. However, it is not explained whether Muḥammad himself discovered Abū Bakr's fore-knowledge intuitively, or figured it out through an external medium. Certainly it is not Abū Bakr himself who discloses his forebelief in Muḥammad, since this would run counter to the logic of the narrative. Like the other gaps in the narrative, these details are left to the audience, who are required to fill them out, either through their familiarity with similar versions of the story or through an educated guess. Clearly, these details do not pertain to the narration's main interest.

The narration rather focuses on Abū Bakr's early and immediate belief in the monk's pronouncement, the Prophet's knowledge of Abū Bakr's belief, and his gesture to disclose the beginning of his prophethood to Abū Bakr immediately after receiving his first revelation. This has two significant implications. The first is that Abū Bakr believes in Muḥammad's prophethood even before the proclamation of Islam, and the testimony to Abū Bakr's forebelief comes from the Prophet himself. The second is that Abū Bakr is (one of) the first to be invited to Islam and to accept it. Consequently, Abū Bakr's conversion happens in two stages: first, when Abū Bakr readily believes in Baḥīrā's words, and second when the Prophet informs him about the first revelation. In other words, he is a believer before the proclamation of Islam, and (one of) the first to believe in Islam after its proclamation.

The account in *K. al-taḥrīsh* articulates this point very clearly: it begins by stating that Abū Bakr was the first person to accept Islam, which earned him the title *al-ṣiddīq*. After the following

presentation of the Baḥīrā tradition, it ends with the repetition of the same piece of information (unit c). Differing from ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd’s account, Ḍirār’s account adds that Abū Bakr was the first person (*awwal khalq Allāh*) to be invited by the Prophet (unit b).

Proving Abū Bakr’s primacy in belief is indubitably also the motive for Ibn Sallām’s rendering of ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd’s account in his book. The Baḥīrā tradition is presented in a section in which Ibn Sallām identifies Abū Bakr as the first among the men of the Quraysh to become Muslim (*wa awwal^u al-nāsⁱ islām^{an} min rijālⁱ qurayshⁱⁿ abū bakrⁱⁿ*).⁸¹ Interestingly, however, Ibn Sallām first offers a different account of Abū Bakr’s conversion.⁸² The Baḥīrā tradition is then presented as additional evidence supporting Abū Bakr’s early belief.

There is, however, one puzzling detail that occurs in ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd’s account, but not in Ḍirār’s. The tradition ends with the somewhat suprising statement that Khadīja saw Muḥammad walking on water, obviously a miraculous proof of his prophethood. Why she appears in the narrative at all, and how this part of the narrative is connected to the Baḥīrā story, are questions that are not easy to answer. One line of reasoning could be that the tradition seeks to portray her as among those who believed in Muḥammad’s prophecy already before the advent of Islam, as she witnessed some of her husband’s supernatural powers. Indeed, Khadīja is often mentioned as one of the first to believe in Muḥammad’s prophethood, and her name appears frequently in stories describing the beginning of the revelations or the

⁸¹ Schwartz and Šaiḥ Sālim b. Ya‘qūb, *Kitāb Ibn Sallām*, 71.

⁸² According to this account, Muḥammad informs Abū Bakr at the beginning of his prophethood of an angel who visited and instructed him. Abū Bakr first expresses his disbelief and vows not to believe in Muḥammad’s words unless a worm-eaten branch which he sees lying on the ground will start sprouting buds. Miraculously, the branch grows shoots, and Abū Bakr declares his irrevocable commitment to Islam. This is an unusual and rare account of Abū Bakr’s conversion, which we have not been able to locate in other sources so far. See *ibid.*, 71-72.

signs heralding Muḥammad's prophethood.⁸³ However, this tentative explanation will remain conjectural until the discovery of an additional, more detailed attestation of the same tradition.

3. The tradition of Maymūn b. Mihrān

There is a second group of traditions which reports that Abū Bakr believed in Muḥammad's prophethood before the advent of Islam, and that this was again connected to his encounter with the monk Baḥīrā. The tradition is narrated in the context of a conversation between Abū Ya'la Furāt b. al-Sā'ib al-Jazarī (d. 2nd/8th century), who is the narrator, and Maymūn b. Mihrān (d. 117/735), a prominent scholar in Umayyad Syria, on whether Abū Bakr or 'Alī was the first to accept Islam. Maymūn informs Furāt that Abū Bakr was believer since the time of Baḥīrā – a time when 'Alī had not even been born.

To my knowledge, the tradition is recorded in the following sources: Abū Bakr al-Khallāl's (d. 311/923) *K. al-sunna*,⁸⁴ Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī's (d. 430/1038) *Ḥilya*,⁸⁵ al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī's *Mūḍiḥ awḥām al-jam' wa al-tafrīq*,⁸⁶ and Ibn 'Asākir's (571/1175) *TMD* (three accounts).⁸⁷ There

⁸³ Ibn Sallām's book presents Abū Bakr as one of the first men of the Quraysh to accept Islam (*wa awwal al-nāsⁱ islām^{an} min rijālⁱ quraysh*), rather than the absolute first person as in Ḍirār's account (*awwal al-nasⁱ islām^{an}*). This kind of formulation would of course allow Khadīja to have her place as the first woman believer, next to Abū Bakr. Khadīja's presence in this narrative (and her absence from Ḍirār's account) might be connected to such a consideration. But this remains hypothetical.

⁸⁴ Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Khallāl, *K. al-sunna* (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya, 1989), 2:309-10, #383.

⁸⁵ Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā' wa ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā'* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1988), 4:92-93.

⁸⁶ Al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *Mūḍiḥ awḥām al-jam' wa al-tafrīq* (Hyderebad, 1960) 2:321.

⁸⁷ Ibn 'Asākir, *TMD*, 30:42-43.

are also later sources, namely Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī’s (d. 852/1449) *Iṣāba*,⁸⁸ al-Suyūṭī’s (911/1505) *Tārīkh al-khulafā’*,⁸⁹ Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī’s (d. 974/1566) *al-Ṣawā’iq al-muḥriqa*,⁹⁰ which derive the tradition from Abū Nu‘aym’s *Ḥilya*. One of the accounts in Ibn ‘Asākir’s *TMD* is also taken from Abū Nu‘aym’s work.⁹¹ In all of these accounts, the common link is Abū ‘Amr Shabāba b. Sawwār al-Madā’inī al-Fazārī (d. 204-206/819-822); see chart 1.1.⁹² Shabāba transmits the tradition from Furāt b. al-Sā’ib,⁹³ who gives the following account of the conversation he had with Maymūn b. Mihrān:

Shabāba b. Sawwār < Furāt b. al-Sā’ib ↔ Maymūn b. Mihrān:

Furāt b. al-Sā’ib said: I asked Maymūn b. Mihrān, I said: “Was ‘Alī or Abū Bakr the first to accept Islam?”

He said: “By God, Abū Bakr believed in the Prophet at the time of Baḥīrā the monk [Abū Nu‘aym: when he [Abū Bakr] passed by him].”

He [Maymūn] hesitated between him [Abū Bakr] and Khadīja / There was disagreement as to whether he [Abū Bakr] or Khadīja [were the first to accept Islam] until she was married off [to Muḥammad] by him [Abū Bakr] (*wa ikhtalafa/ukhtulifa fīmā baynahu wa bayna khadīja ḥattā ankaḥahā iyyāhu*).

“All of that [took place] before ‘Alī was born.”⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, v:pp.

⁸⁹ Al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-khulafā’*, 30-31.

⁹⁰ Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī, *al-Ṣawā’iq al-muḥriqa fī al-radd ‘alā ahl al-bida’ wa al-zandaqa*, ed. ‘Ādil Shūsha (al-Mansoura: Maktabat Fayāḍ, 2008), 228.

⁹¹ Ibn ‘Asākir, *TMD*, 30:43.

⁹² Van Ess, *TG*, 3:7.

⁹³ Each account names a different traditionist who transmitted the tradition from Shabāba: ‘Abd al-Malik (in al-Khallāl’s *Sunna*), ‘Abdallāh b. Rawḥ al-Madā’inī (in al-Khatīb’s *Mūḍih*), Sulaymān b. Tawba (in Abū Nu‘aym’s *Ḥilya*) and Hārūn b. Ibrāhīm al-Mu’adhdhin (in Ibn ‘Asākir’s *TMD*), see chart 1.1.

⁹⁴ For another English translation see Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *The History of Khalifahs Who Took the Right Way*, trans. Abdassamad Clarke (London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., 3rd rev. ed. 1995), 9.

In all of its renderings, the tradition retains a similar structure: Furāt inquires into whether ‘Alī or Abū Bakr had precedence in Islam, and Maymūn dismisses the comparison outright. The wording of Furāt’s question and Maymūn’s answer are also similar in all versions. Variations occur mostly in Furāt’s question, where some accounts change the order of ‘Alī’s and Abū Bakr’s names. The most important difference occurs in Abū Nu‘aym’s version and in the accounts that copied it. There, we are offered a more complete rendering of the conversation, which here starts with Furāt asking Maymūn whether ‘Alī, in his opinion, was superior or, rather, Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. Maymūn detests the question and refrains from making a comparison.⁹⁵ The similarities and variations in these accounts clearly indicate that they are different renderings of the same tradition, which can be dated to the lifetime of its common link, Shabāba b. Sawwār (d. 204-206 /819-822). In order to explain our dating, however, a brief survey of the biographies of Maymūn, Furāt, and Shabāba is needed.

3.1. Vitae of Maymūn, Furāt, and Shabāba

Maymūn b. Mihrān (d. 117/735),⁹⁶ the Umayyad governor who was regarded as an ‘Uthmānī, was a highly esteemed scholar of al-Jazīra in Syria. Specifically, he was considered an authority for his comments on the early schism of the community.⁹⁷ There are several traditions

⁹⁵ The full translation of their dialogue is as follows: “Furāt said: ‘Is ‘Alī better in your view or Abū Bakr and ‘Umar?’ He [Maymūn] shook until his staff fell from his hand and replied, ‘I never thought that I would live till a time when anyone would be compared with them [Abū Bakr and ‘Umar]. Their good deeds belong to God! They were the chiefs of the community (*ra’sī al-jamā’a*).’” See *ibid*.

⁹⁶ His *nisba* is al-Raqqī; see Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 5:575-576, [10:390-394], *ET*² s.v. “Maymūn b. Mihrān” (Donner). Van Ess in *Der Eine und das Andere*, 1:26, n.110, notes that he resided mostly in Ḥarrān. He took charge of the financial administration of the al-Jazīra region when ‘Umar II (r. 99-101 /717-720) became caliph. Due to his advanced age, his son ‘Amr b. Maymūn assumed many of his administrative duties.

⁹⁷ In a report recorded in Ibn ‘Asākir’s *TMD* (39:495-497), for example, Maymūn is asked to comment on the division of the Muslim community after the death of ‘Uthmān. Maymūn lists five major groups (the party of ‘Uthmān, the party of ‘Alī, the Murji’a, the Khārijites and the *jamā’a*) and explains the respective positions of each

attributed to him, in which he is asked his opinion regarding the controversies about the protagonists and major events of the previous generation of Muslims, namely ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī, Mu‘āwīya, Ṣiffīn, and others.⁹⁸

Furāt b. al-Sā‘ib, on the other hand, is unfortunately a largely unknown figure. Except for the fact he also hailed from al-Jazīra, there is no detailed information about him in the sources. Although his connections to Maymūn and Shabāba are not denied, his name is uncertain,⁹⁹ his transmissions are often considered weak,¹⁰⁰ and his exact death date is unknown, so that all we can say is that he died in the 2nd/8th century.

The biographical literature identifies Shabāba as a Murji‘ī who left Baghdad to settle in Ctesiphon.¹⁰¹ Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) in his *K. al-ma‘ārif* describes him as a sharp critic and a fervent opponent of the Shī‘ites of his time, which might have been the reason for his leaving Baghdad.¹⁰² Shabāba died between 204 and 206 /819 and 822.

group. The account is an early description of the Muslims’ state of conflict and the religio-political divisions in the early 2nd/8th century. For its translation into German, see van Ess, *Der Eine und das Andere*, 27-28.

⁹⁸ *El*² s.v. “Maymūn b. Mihrān” (Fred M. Donner).

⁹⁹ Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī’s *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr* (Hyderabad: Maṭba‘at Jam‘iyyat Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmāniyya, 1941-58), 4.1:129, #579, names from the people of al-Jazīra a certain Furāt b. Sulaymān. In his *Kitāb al-ḍū‘afā wa al-ṣaghīr*, ed. Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 1976), 98, #298, al-Bukhārī names him differently: Abū Sulaymān b. Furāt. Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī in his *Kitāb al-jarḥ wa al-ta‘dīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1953), 3.2.:80, #454, #455, names two Furāts who transmitted from Maymūn b. Mihrān: Furāt b. Sulaymān al-Jazarī and Abū Sulaymān Furāt b. al-Sā‘ib. In Ibn al-Jawzī’s *al-Ḍu‘afā wa al-matrukīn*, ed. Abū al-Fidā‘ ‘Abdallāh al-Qāḍī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1986), 3:3 #269, Furāt is also named Abū Sulaymān.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *K. al-ḍū‘afā al-saghīr*, ed. Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 1986), 98, #298; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Jarḥ*, 3.2.:80, #454, #455; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ḍu‘afā*, 3:3 #269.

¹⁰¹ He is reported to have been originally from Khurāsān, but became affiliated by *walā’* with the tribe of Fazāra. See Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 7.2., 66; Khalīfa b. Khayyāt al-‘Uṣfurī, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt*, ed. Akram Ḍiyā‘ al-‘Umarī (Baghdad: Maṭba‘at al-‘Ānī, 1967), 320; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh madīnat al-salām*, ed. Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2001), 10:405-406.

¹⁰² Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh b. Muslim Ibn Qutayba, *K. al-ma‘ārif*, ed. Shawkat ‘Ukāsha, 4th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1971), 527.

Dating the tradition to the time when Furāt and Maymūn met, i.e. to the first half of the 2nd/8th century, proves to be difficult. If Shabāba had indeed received the account directly from Furāt, Shabāba would have been (one of) the first to hear Furāt’s story about his conversation with Maymūn. Since the account is first attested in Shabāba’s transmission, it seems safe to assume that the event had not found its way into the narrative tradition before Furāt told his story about it to Shabāba. In other words, Furāt’s narration of the story (not the event as it happened) became known only during Shabāba’s audition, and should therefore be dated to his lifetime.¹⁰³ Even accounting for the possibility that Shabāba invented the tradition by putting it into the mouth of Furāt, it would still mean that it came into circulation when Shabāba was still alive. Thus, the tradition belongs to the second half the 2nd/8th century.

The earliest author to reproduce Shabāba’s narration is Abū Bakr al-Khallāl (d. 311/923). He derived it from ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Maymūnī (d. 274/887),¹⁰⁴ who transmitted it directly from Shabāba (see chart 1.1.). Although ‘Abd al-Malik’s *nisba* (al-Raqqī al-Jazarī) indicates that he was of Raqqan origin,¹⁰⁵ he did live in Baghdad for some time, since, according to al-Khallāl, he was a close confidant of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), and spent the years 200/815 to 227/841 in his company in Baghdad.¹⁰⁶ Since al-Khallāl was a student of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, it is highly likely that Shabāba’s transmission came into circulation in Baghdad, and gained credit, at least initially, in Ḥanbalī circles.

¹⁰³ We are thus dealing with the ‘double logic of narrative’ as termed by Jonathan Culler: with an event told in a narrative, the story precedes the narration (for it happened before it was narrated), and comes into existence only after it has been narrated. See idem, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 169-87.

¹⁰⁴ He is the great-grandson of Maymūn b. Mihrān; his full name is Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Maymūn b. Mihrān al-Raqqī al-Jazarī (181-274/797-887).

¹⁰⁵ He has the same *nisba* as his great-grand father, Maymūn b. Mihrān.

¹⁰⁶ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 3:474, [6:400].

3.2. Narrative analysis

As in the accounts of ʿĪrār and Abdallāh b. Yazīd, the tradition is very short. However, it differs from them in one crucial point: it does not directly recount how Abū Bakr encountered the monk Baḥīrā, nor how he received the news of Muḥammad’s prophethood. These events are embedded in a frame story which is set in early 2nd/8th-century Syria. The narrator, Furāt, has a conversation with the prominent religious figure Maymūn b. Mihrān. He questions him about Abū Bakr’s conversion, and about whether or not he accepted Islam before ‘Alī. Maymūn answers the question obliquely by referring to Abū Bakr’s encounter with Baḥīrā. Although presented as a dialogue between the narrator and Maymūn, it is always Maymūn who speaks after this question. Still, the ‘question and answer’ format of this presentation facilitates the setup of an authority to deliver his expert opinion on a matter of discussion. Examples of this format are especially common in Muslim juridical works of the classical period, as the opinions of legal authorities are triggered by similar questions.¹⁰⁷

When referring to the Abū Bakr’s encounter with Baḥīrā, Maymūn neither gives a full version of the episode, nor does he name any authorities from whom he might have heard it. His response is concise and decisive, as if he expects Furāt – or the people listening to Furāt’s

¹⁰⁷ Ahmed El Shamsy in his *The Canonization of Islamic Law*, 155-157, and in “Al-Shāfi‘ī’s Written Corpus: A Source-Critical Study,” *Journal of American Oriental Society*, 132 n. 2 (2012): 201-202, for instance, demonstrates that an important portion of al-Shāfi‘ī’s opinions on individual points of the law (*mas’ala*, pl. *masā’il*) in his *K. al-umm* were transmitted by his students in a ‘question and answer’ format.

ʿĪrār’s *K. al-taḥrīsh* also preserves a similar format throughout the book. As different theological groups in Kufa inquire about the views of their rivals, they go to an unnamed scholar (*faqīh*), who is a fictitious character invented by ʿĪrār, and ask him about his opinion. The *faqīh* answers each group in accordance with their theological orientation, and lists the narrative traditions (*ḥadīths*) promulgated by the people who hold the opposite view. By this form of presentation and fictional setup, ʿĪrār, as the author, seeks to show that there are many traditions (*ḥadīths*) which are contradictory, and yet gain legitimate currency in religious matters. See the editor’s introduction, ʿĪrār b. ‘Amr, *Kitābu’t-Tahrīṣ* (Litera), xv-xx.

account respectively – to immediately understand his brief references. Because of that, the specifics of how Abū Bakr met Baḥīrā, or how he received the news of Muḥammad’s future prophethood from the monk, are not of interest here.

Taking Furāt’s familiarity with these references for granted, Maymūn’s answer tries to determine the temporal order of Abū Bakr’s and Alī’s conversion. The reference to Baḥīrā dates Abū Bakr’s acceptance of Islam to a period prior to ‘Alī’s birth, whence other details of Abū Bakr’s conversion become irrelevant in this context. However, the mention of Khadīja and her marriage to the Prophet are somewhat surprising. While it might seem to relativize Abū Bakr’s position as the first Muslim, it is, more importantly, yet another time marker to fix the chronology of her and Abū Bakr’s conversions before ‘Alī’s birth.

The dismissive brevity of Maymūn’s response, and the reference to events from the Prophet’s youth, not only establish Abū Bakr’s precedence, but also invalidate altogether the comparison between ‘Alī and Abū Bakr: the matter is so obvious that it is not worthy of discussion.

Maymūn’s terse reply also suggests that he – unlike Furāt – was not interested in comparing the early caliphs. In Abū Nu‘aym’s version, Furāt even asks Maymūn if he could rank ‘Alī, Abū Bakr, and ‘Umar. Maymūn rejects the question and refuses to comment further on the topic, stating that he never thought he would live till a time when people still made such futile comparisons.¹⁰⁸ Maymūn’s refusal to comment on controversial topics is exemplified in yet another tradition, which has again been transmitted by Furāt. There, he states that one should not talk about four things: ‘Alī, ‘Uthmān, the stars (*nujūm*), and free will (*qadar*).¹⁰⁹ If Maymūn’s disinterest does indeed reflect the *zeitgeist* of his time (i.e. early 2nd/8th century), at least to a

¹⁰⁸ Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilya*, 4:92-3.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 4:92.

certain extent, the ranking of the first caliphs and the comparisons between them were already part of the religious discussions, although they apparently were of greater importance to the generation younger than Maymūn's. Nevertheless, it would be misleading to establish an exact chronology and evolution of the discussion in the pre-Abbasid period solely based on these selected groups of traditions. What remains certain is that Furāt's narration relating Maymūn's opinion about Abū Bakr's conversion having taken place prior to 'Alī's birth spread and gained popularity only in Shabāba's transmission, i.e. in the second half of the 2nd/8th century.

We have demonstrated above that Shabāba's transmission must be dated to his years in Baghdad, and that in the second half of the 2nd/8th century, Kufa and Baghdad were the theological centers where comparisons between 'Alī and Abū Bakr had become increasingly popular. The question of whether Shabāba's Murji'ite orientation and his sharp criticism of the Shī'ite circles in Baghdad played a role in making Maymūn's alleged views spread into wider circles deserves further in-depth examination.¹¹⁰ However, as exemplified by the accounts of Ḍirār and 'Abdallāh b. Yazīd, Abū Bakr's encounter with Baḥīrā and its connection to the conversion of the former were topics familiar to various circles in the early Abbasid period. The story of Maymūn's conversation with Furāt merely added another layer to the picture.

¹¹⁰ One of the major disagreements between the Murji'ites and the Shī'ites of this period concerns the ranking of the first four caliphs. Although the Murji'ites do not rank 'Alī and 'Uthmān, they consider them inferior to Abū Bakr and 'Umar, who are unquestionably the best. On this point see van Ess, "Das Kitāb al-Irḡā", 23, 28-29; *EI*² s.v. "Murjī'a" (Wilferd Madelung). For instance, The Kufan Murji'ite Muḥārīb b. Dithār (d. 116/734) mentions in one of his poems that he was criticized by the Shī'ites in Kufa for placing 'Alī after Abū Bakr and 'Umar; see van Ess, *TG*, 1:168-171, 5:19-21. For an English translation of the poem; see Saleh Said Agha, "A viewpoint of the Murji'a in the Umayyad Period: Evolution Through Application," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 8.1. (1997):27-28. Al-Shahrastānī notes in his *al-Mīlāl wa al-niḥāl*, ed. Amīr 'Alī Muḥannā and 'Alī Hasan Fā'ūd (Beirut 1995) 1:162, that the Murji'ites bring 'Alī down from the first to the fourth rank, and therefore they and the Shī'ites become opposed sects, idem, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, trans. A. K. Kazi (Boston: Kegan Paul International, 1984), 119. For a critique of al-Shahrastānī's account, see Watt, *Formative Period*, 124-126; cf. Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, 19, n. 71.

4. Baḥīrā and the Abū Ṭālib story

We have demonstrated above that both in the tradition of Ibn ‘Abbās (Ḍirār’s and ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd’s accounts) and in the tradition attributed to Maymūn b. Mihrān, Abū Bakr’s belief in Muḥammad’s prophethood is connected to an incident that involves a monk called Baḥīrā. Yet, these traditions do not offer any details about this event apart from telling us that Abū Bakr received the news about Muḥammad from Baḥīrā (unit a of the Ibn ‘Abbās tradition) or became a believer during that time (the tradition of Maymūn). We have also shown that both traditions were circulated widely in Kufa and Baghdad during the early Abbasid period, i.e. the second half of the 2nd/8th century. Clearly, the Baḥīrā incident was not considered a mystery by the Iraqī intellectual circles of this period, since the sources contain several widely transmitted narratives which tell the story of a Christian monk who recognizes distinctive signs of Muḥammad’s prophethood. The setting for these narratives is usually Syria, where the monk’s cell is located, and the story either takes place during Muḥammad’s childhood, or, as in a few cases, during his adolescence; but in all instances, before the beginning of his Prophetic mission.¹¹¹

The most frequently encountered narrative is the one that tells the story of the young Muḥammad’s journey to Syria in the company of his uncle Abū Ṭālib. As the trade caravan stops near a monk’s cell and the monk comes out to meet them, he recognizes Muḥammad as the Prophet of God who is going to appear in the near future, and advises Abū Ṭālib to take the boy back to Mecca in order to protect him from the Jews and the Byzantines (*al-rūm*).

¹¹¹ For a detailed discussion of the Baḥīrā accounts in the Islamic sources, see Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Bahira: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 37-60.

There are two major versions of this Abū Ṭālib story, both of which are widely recorded in the Islamic sources. The earliest version (A) is recorded in Ibn Hishām's (d. 218/833)¹¹² and al-ʿUṭāridī's (d. 272/886)¹¹³ recensions of Ibn Ishāq's (d. 150/767) *K. al-maghāzī*. In this version, the monk is named Baḥīrā, and there is no mention of Abū Bakr.¹¹⁴ The second version (B), which is shorter than the first, is recorded in Ibn Abī Shayba's (d. 235/849) *Muṣannaf*¹¹⁵ at the earliest, and also appears in al-Tirmidhī's (d. 279/892) *Jāmiʿ*.¹¹⁶ It does not provide the name of the monk, but, more crucially, mentions Abū Bakr as taking part in the event at the end of the episode.

As our examination will demonstrate, both versions A and B are independent from one another, as is evident from their divergent transmission lines and differing textual elements (see appendix 1c). Indeed, there are only a few instances of actual textual correspondence between the two versions. The events are generally recounted in a different order, and additional events occur in both of the versions. However, what remains the same in both versions is the plot structure: Abū Ṭālib, as the guardian of Muḥammad, sets off with him to Syria. Their caravan stops in the vicinity of a monk's cell. The monk invites them in for a meal, which comes as a surprise to the men of the Quraysh. Various miraculous things related to Muḥammad happen that the monk witnesses. Then the monk notices the seal of prophethood between the shoulders of the young boy and adjures Abū Ṭālib to take Muḥammad back to

¹¹² Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 113-115; idem, *The Life of Muhammad*, 79-81.

¹¹³ Al-ʿUṭāridī, *Sīrat Ibn Ishāq*, (Ḥamīdullāh), 53-57; [idem, *Kitāb al-siyar wa al-maghāzī*, (Zakkār), 73-76].

¹¹⁴ There is also an independent group of traditions, which ostensibly have al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822) as its common link. As our analysis will demonstrate, Ibn Ishāq is also the source for this group of traditions. See the discussion below in section 4.1.b.

¹¹⁵ Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, 20:224-225.

¹¹⁶ Al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ*, 6:14-15.

Mecca. In version A, Baḥīrā is said to possess a book that had been handed down for generations by Christian monks, from which he knows the signs of prophethood. Moreover, an extended conversation takes place between Baḥīrā and Abū Ṭālib. Baḥīrā questions Abū Ṭālib about his relationship with the boy, and corrects him when he declares that he is the boy's father. These two major elements are missing in version B (cf. appendix 1a and 1b). In version B, there is a series of events towards the end of the story that deal with Byzantine soldiers who suddenly appear near the monk's cell, asking about, and searching for, the Prophet. The exchanges between the monk and the soldiers are completely missing from version A. Most importantly, only version B preserves the additional information that Abū Bakr sends Bilāl back to Mecca together with the Prophet, although Abū Bakr's and Bilāl's names had never been mentioned in the narration up to this point. Their sudden and unexpected presence does not appear to be an integral part of the original story. In the following, we will analyze why Abū Bakr makes his appearance in version B. We will also investigate whether Abū Bakr's and Bilāl's names are really later insertions into the narrative, and if so, try to understand how that happened. In order to do so, we will examine both versions in depth, starting with version A.

4.1. Version A

4.1.a. The tradition of Ibn Ishāq

Version A of the Baḥīrā tradition is, to my knowledge, preserved in 13 sources. Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767) provides information for 9 of these sources: the two recensions of Ibn Ishāq's *K. al-maghāzī*,¹¹⁷ al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*,¹¹⁸ al-Bayhaqī's (d. 458/1066) *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*,¹¹⁹ Qiwām al-

¹¹⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 113-115; idem, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 79-81; al-'Uṭāridī, *Sīrat Ibn Ishāq*, (Ḥamīdullāh), 53-57; [idem, *Kitāb al-siyar wa al-maghāzī*, (Zakkār), 73-76].

Sunna's (d. 535/1139-1140) *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*, Ibn Sayyid al-Nās' (d. 734/1334) *Uyūn al-athar*,¹²⁰ al-Dhahabī's (d. 748/1348) *Tārīkh al-islām*,¹²¹ Ibn Kathīr's (d. 775/1373) *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*,¹²² and Ibn Ḥajar's (d. 852/1449) *Iṣāba*.¹²³ The two recensions of Ibn Ishāq's work are by Ibn Hishām (d. 218/834), in the transmission of al-Bakkā'ī (d. 183/799), entitled *K. sīrat rasūl Allāh*, and the recension of al-'Uṭaridī (d. 272/886), in the transmission of Yūnus b. Bukayr (d. 199/815).¹²⁴ In both, the *isnād* does not inform us about Ibn Ishāq's source(s) (see chart 1.2.1.). The same holds true for all the other works, since they derive their information from either one of these two recensions, and thus the transmission lines stop at Ibn Ishāq. Therefore, even if we were to undertake a thorough comparative (*isnād-cum-matn*) analysis of all the variants, we would not be able to establish the date of the earliest form of Ibn Ishāq's tradition prior to his own time.

The only exception is al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*. A third and independent recension of Ibn Ishāq's *K. al-maghāzī* (in the transmission of Salama b. al-Faḍl [Rayy, d. 191/806]) was available to al-Ṭabarī (see chart 1.2.1.). Its *isnād* there tells us that Ibn Ishāq transmitted the tradition from 'Abdallāh b. Abī Bakr,¹²⁵ a teacher of Ibn Ishāq and a well-known source for many of his traditions, who

¹¹⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1: 1123-1125.

¹¹⁹ Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa wa ma'rifat aḥwāl ṣāhib al-sharī'a*, ed. 'Abd al-Mu'ṭī Amīn Qal'ajī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1985), 2:26-29.

¹²⁰ Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *Uyūn al-athar fī funūn al-maghāzī wa al-shamā'il wa al-siyar*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, 1982), 1:52-53.

¹²¹ Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām wa wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa al-a'lām*, ed. 'Umar Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1987), 1:58-60.

¹²² Ismā'īl b. 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, ed. 'Abdallāh b. 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Giza: Hujr/Hijr, 1997), 3:435-437; idem, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad: A Translation of al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, trans. Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Wāḥid and Trevor Le Gassick (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing, 1998), 1:174-177.

¹²³ Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, 1:352-353.

¹²⁴ For different recensions of Ibn Ishāq's *K. al-Maghāzī*, see Schoeler, *Genesis of Literature*, 71-72.

¹²⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1: 1123-1125.

died in 135/752, i.e. 15 years before Ibn Ishāq.¹²⁶ This additional piece of information in al-Ṭabarī's account might be explained by its independent origin. Indeed, the account in al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*, when compared with other available recensions of the *K. al-maghāzī*, displays considerable deviations.

In al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*, the account is shorter and omits the following sections: (a) Muḥammad's conversation with his uncle before he sets out on the journey; (b) the conversation between a man from the Quraysh with Baḥīrā about why he serves them food, (c) Muḥammad being left behind waiting on the caravan while others are having their meal; and (d) Baḥīrā's question to Muḥammad in the name of al-Lāt and al-ʿUzzā.¹²⁷ Although al-Ṭabarī's account is shorter than other variants of Ibn Ishāq's tradition, we cannot simply characterize it as a shortened version of the tradition. A closer look at it reveals that it occasionally exhibits different wording and a different order of events.

This confirms that al-Ṭabarī's account, as transmitted via Salama b. al-Faḍl, goes back to Ibn Ishāq independently from the other variants of Ibn Ishāq's tradition. By mentioning an *isnād* that goes beyond Ibn Ishāq and up to ʿAbdallāh b. Abī Bakr, one of the four main informants of Ibn Ishāq,¹²⁸ the story seems to have been transmitted not by two, but by three of his students. Of these, only Salama b. al-Faḍl recorded the name of Ibn Ishāq's informant, while Yūnus b. Bukayr and al-Bakkāʿī did not. Obviously, this remains hypothetical, as there is no textual support for it other than the *isnād* in al-Ṭabarī's account. However, it does suggest that Ibn Ishāq was most likely not the 'inventor' of the tradition but, rather, the transmitter of an

¹²⁶ James Robson, "Ibn Ishāq's Use of the Isnād," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 38, no. 2 (1956): 457.

¹²⁷ Cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1: 1123-1125.

¹²⁸ Robson, "Ibn Ishāq's Use of the Isnād," 457. The other three are al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742), ʿĀṣim b. ʿUmar b. Qatāda (d. 129/746), and ʿAbdallāh b. Abī Najīh (d. 131/748).

earlier source. Irrespective of whether or not ‘Abdallāh b. Abī Bakr is that source, we can still safely date version A of the Baḥīrā anecdote to the time-period around 132/750. A comparison between this version and version B could shed further light on the origins of the Ibn Ishāq tradition, as we shall see later.

4.1.b. The tradition of Dāwūd b. al-Ḥuṣayn

There is another group of transmissions that can be subsumed under version A of the Baḥīrā anecdote, and are recorded in four sources: Ibn Sa‘d’s (d. 231/845) *Ṭabaqāt*,¹²⁹ Abū Nu‘aym’s (d. 430/1038) *Dalā’il al-nubuwwa*,¹³⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī’s (d. 597/1200) *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*,¹³¹ and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s (d. 750/1350) *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā*.¹³² The *isnāds* of these accounts differ from the traditions that go back to Ibn Ishāq (see chart 1.2.1.). Ibn Sa‘d’s account cites an *isnād* with al-Wāqidī as his immediate informant. The transmission line goes back to Dāwūd b. Ḥuṣayn, who died in Medina in 135/752. We know for certain that Ibn Sa‘d was al-Wāqidī’s student and secretary (*kātib*) and that he used al-Wāqidī’s *K. al-ṭabaqāt* in his own work, which carries the same title.¹³³ Al-Wāqidī’s *K. al-ṭabaqāt* is not extant, but it is quoted by later scholars such as Khalīfa b. Khayyāt and Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (d. 463/1070).¹³⁴ While the Baḥīrā anecdote does not

¹²⁹ Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:99-101.

¹³⁰ Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī, *Dalā’il al-nubuwwa*, ed. Muḥammad Rawwās Qal‘ajī, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā’is, 1986), 1:168-170.

¹³¹ Abū al-Faraj ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Alī Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*, ed. Maḥmūd Fākhūrī (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 1975), 1:21-23.

¹³² Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā fī ajwibat al-yahūd wa al-naṣārā*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī Saqqā, 2nd ed. (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Qayyima, 1980), 193-195.

¹³³ ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Dūrī, *The Rise of Historical Writing Among the Arabs*, ed. and trans. Conrad (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 37-40; *EI*² s.v. “al-Wāqidī” (Stefan Leder).

¹³⁴ *EI*² s.v. “al-Wāqidī” (Stefan Leder).

does not seem to have been included al-Wāqidī's *K. al-maghāzī*, we can still assume that Ibn Sa'd's account owes its existence to his teacher and consider al-Wāqidī as its main source.

The other authors who recount the Baḥīrā anecdote are Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. Ibn al-Jawzī's only mentions Dāwūd b. al-Ḥuṣayn as his source, and his text is completely identical to Ibn Sa'd's. While the *isnād* of Ibn al-Qayyim's account has al-Wāqidī as the immediate source, the text is again completely identical to Ibn Sa'd's. This suggests that the text, as presented in Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt*, is as exact a replica of al-Wāqidī's account as is Ibn al-Qayyim's and, by extension, Ibn al-Jawzī's. There is a second possibility, namely that Ibn al-Qayyim copied the text from Ibn Sa'd, but omitted his name and recorded the name of his source, i.e. al-Wāqidī. In either case, we can consider these three identical texts as deriving from al-Wāqidī.

The fourth account in Abū Nu'aym's *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa* has no *isnād*. The text itself, however, makes it quite clear that it belongs to the tradition of Dāwūd b. al-Ḥuṣayn and is therefore linked either to Ibn Sa'd or to al-Wāqidī. It is remarkably similar, but not identical to, the other three texts. Insignificant variations, some actually orthographic, include minor additions (e.g., *qabla dhālika*, *dhālika annahu*), omissions (*fa-nazalū qarīban* instead of *wa nazalū manzilan qarīban*), the use of different adverbs (*falammā marrū 'alayhi* instead of *kullamā marrū*) and varying verbal forms and conjugations (*lā yatakhallafanna minkum* instead of *lā tukhallifū minkum*). There are two possible explanations for these variations: (1) that Abū Nu'aym's account was not copied directly from Ibn Sa'd, but from its source, i.e. al-Wāqidī (as al-Wāqidī's text could have exhibited minor variations from Ibn Sa'd's text); or (2) that Abū Nu'aym copied it from a later source.

At this point we need to mention another account preserved in Ibn Kathīr, which mentions al-Wāqidī as his immediate source and gives the same *isnād* as Ibn Sa'd.¹³⁵ Ibn Kathīr's account is actually a short, summarized version of al-Wāqidī's report, and therefore can help us only in establishing the fact that our common link, al-Wāqidī, was a source that was available to the later authors. As for the rest of the transmitters going beyond al-Wāqidī, we cannot determine whether the *isnād* of this group of traditions really goes back to Dāwūd b. al-Ḥuṣayn.

The account in Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt*, derived from al-Wāqidī, exhibits several close parallels to the tradition of Ibn Ishāq. The degree of similarity between the two traditions calls for an examination of the famous charge against al-Wāqidī: that he plagiarized Ibn Ishāq. A comparative analysis of the accounts of Ibn Sa'd and Ibn Hishām may help us identify the date(s) of the origin(s) of version A.

A careful examination of the two variants of the story (Ibn Hishām's recension: IH, and Ibn Sa'd's: IS) reveals that both traditions resemble each other to a great extent, especially in the general outline of the story and the pervasive use of identical wording: *fa-lammā nazala al-rakb^u buṣrā min* [IH: *arḍ*] *al-shām wa bihā rāhib^{un} yuqāl^u lahu baḥīrā*,¹³⁶ and as the two following sentences show:

IH: *fa-lammā nazalū dhālika al-‘ām bi-baḥīrā wa kāna kathīr^{an} mā yamurrūn^a bihi qabla dhālika fa-lā yukallimuhum wa lā ya'riḍ^u lahum ḥattā kāna dhālika al-‘ām;*

IS: *fa-lammā nazalū baḥīrā wa kāna kathīr^{an} mā yamurrūn^a bihi lā yukallimuhum ḥattā idhā kāna dhālika al-‘ām.*

¹³⁵ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 3:441; idem, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, 1:178-179.

¹³⁶ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 115; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:99.

The high degree of textual correspondence between the two texts is not limited to these examples. The few variants comprise the omission or change of adverbs and verbal conjugations due to the summarizing mode of the narration (IH: *kāna a‘lam ahl al-naṣrāniyya wa lam yazal fī tilka al-ṣawma‘a mundhu qatt‘^u rāhib^{un} ilayhi yaṣīr^u ‘ilmuhum* / he was the most learned of the Christians and there had always been a monk in that cell to whom their knowledge reached); IS: *kāna ‘ulāma’ al-naṣārā yakūnūn fī tilka al-ṣawma‘a* / there were usually Christian scholars in that cell). Beyond these variations, the order of the narrated events is exactly the same, and the order of Ibn Sa‘d’s narration matches the narration in Ibn Hishām’s recension almost sentence to sentence.

How can we explain the surprising degree of textual correspondence of these two traditions despite their different chains of transmissions? Two explanations are possible: either they both go back to a tradition that is older than them (i.e. a common source), or one of them has been derived from the other (in this case, al-Wāqidī’s account would have been derived from Ibn Ishāq). In the latter case, the variations can again be explained in two ways: either the text has incurred corruption in the process of transmission, or the text was changed by al-Wāqidī himself as he crafted it into his own narration. As a matter of fact, the textual comparison strongly suggests that Ibn Ishāq was the source for this account. The *isnād* in Ibn Sa‘d’s account informs us that al-Wāqidī’s tradition goes back to Dāwūd b. al-Ḥuṣayn, who died in Medina in 135/752. Even if we were to believe in the first scenario – that the two traditions go back to a common source – we could conclude that al-Wāqidī’s tradition goes back to the same time period and location (Medina) in which Ibn Ishāq would have received his information. Consequently, the Baḥīrā anecdote would seem to have been in circulation in Medina already

around 133/750, if not a decade earlier, in a form very close to Ibn Ishāq's and al-Wāqidī's renderings. However, the high degree of textual similarity between the two groups of traditions speaks against the logic of this scenario. Therefore, we might indeed be confronting an example of al-Wāqidī's alleged plagiarism.

The relationship between al-Wāqidī and Ibn Ishāq has been fiercely debated in earlier scholarship, and yet no consensus has been reached on the question whether al-Wāqidī took materials from Ibn Ishāq without identifying him as a source. The issue was first raised by J. Wellhausen in his German translation of al-Wāqidī's *K. al-maghāzī*, where he pointed out instances in which al-Wāqidī could be deriving accounts from Ibn Ishāq while mentioning other informants as his source.¹³⁷ Later, J. Horowitz followed Wellhausen's premises and demonstrated ten possible cases in which al-Wāqidī was using Ibn Ishāq as a source without citing him. The charge of plagiarism against al-Wāqidī was first contested by J. M. Jones,¹³⁸ the editor of *K. al-maghāzī*, and then by other scholars, such as P. Crone,¹³⁹ M. Lecker,¹⁴⁰ and R. Faizer.¹⁴¹ In defense of al-Wāqidī, these scholars argued that al-Wāqidī did not plagiarize Ibn Ishāq but that, rather, both derived their information from a common pool of material or from common sources. G. Schoeler, in his *isnād-cum-matn* analysis of 'Ā'isha's *ifk* episode, revisited the question and established direct links between al-Wāqidī's account and that of Ibn Ishāq.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ See Schoeler, *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 91-99.

¹³⁸ J. M. B. Jones, "Ibn Ishāq and al-Wāqidī: The Dream of 'Ātika and the Raid to Nakhla in Relation to the Charge of Plagiarism," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 22 (1959): 41-51.

¹³⁹ Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 225.

¹⁴⁰ Michael Lecker, "The Death of the Prophet Muḥammad's Father: Did Wāqidī Invent Some of the Evidence?," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 145 (1995): 9-27.

¹⁴¹ Rizwi S. Faizer, "The Issue of Authenticity regarding the Traditions of al-Wāqidī as Established in His Kitāb al-Maghāzī," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 58 (1999): 97-106.

¹⁴² Schoeler, *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 91-99.

As a response to G. Schoeler, D. Little analyzed the same episode from a thematic perspective and came to the conclusion that al-Wāqidī's treatment of the *ifk* episode is the work of a superior storyteller exemplifying an expanded type of narration with thematic unity and, therefore, the link between al-Wāqidī and Ibn Ishāq is not obvious.¹⁴³

With regard to the Baḥīrā anecdote, however, al-Wāqidī's account is not an expanded version. The text follows the Ibn Ishāq tradition in the order of narration, and in many places verbatim. In cases where there is a divergence between the two accounts, al-Wāqidī's text tends to be a summarized version of Ibn Ishāq's. In this regard, and within the premises of the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis, we can argue that Ibn Ishāq's account is the *Vorlage* (forerunner) for al-Wāqidī's account, and therefore we have to consider Dāwūd b. al-Ḥuṣayn's tradition as belonging to the Ibn Ishāq tradition.

Considering the other possibility, namely searching for a traditionist among the *tābi'ūn* from whom both Ibn Ishāq (or 'Abdallāh b. Abī Bakr) and Dāwūd b. al-Ḥuṣayn could have transmitted, and identifying him as the common source, would not help us further about the date and the form of the tradition. The questions of whether the narrations on Baḥīrā owe their existence to earlier sources, or whether there is any historical basis to the story, are questions that are beyond the interest of this chapter and will not be further investigated. It will suffice here to establish the earliest possible date and the form of the tradition, which will then enable us to compare it with version B, in which Abū Bakr plays a role at the end of the story. In this regard, we can quite confidently establish that version A of the Baḥīrā anecdotes

¹⁴³ Donald P. Little, "Narrative Themes and Devices in al-Wāqidī's *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*," in *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought*, ed. Lawson (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 34-45.

(both Ibn Ishāq's and Dāwūd b. al-Ḥuṣayn's) can be roughly dated to 132/750, and was first circulated in Medina.

4.2. Version B: the tradition of Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī

Unlike the *isnāds* of version A of the Baḥīrā – Abū Ṭālib story, the *isnāds* of version B go back to a companion of the Prophet, namely Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (d. ca. 42/662 in Kufa). Different variants of this tradition are recorded in 15 sources, three of which do not have complete *isnāds*. The remaining 12 sources are Ibn Abī Shayba's *Muṣannaf*,¹⁴⁴ al-Tirmidhī's *Jāmi'*,¹⁴⁵ al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*,¹⁴⁶ Abū Bakr al-Kharā'ī's (d. 326/938) *Hawātif al-jinān*,¹⁴⁷ al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī's (d. 405/1014) *al-Mustadrak 'alā al-ṣaḥīḥayn*,¹⁴⁸ Abū Nu'aym's *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*,¹⁴⁹ al-Bayhaqī's *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*,¹⁵⁰ Ibn Sayyid al-Nās' *Uyūn al-athar*,¹⁵¹ al-Dhahabī's *Tārīkh al-islām*,¹⁵² Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā*,¹⁵³ Ibn Kathīr's *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*,¹⁵⁴ and al-Suyūṭī's (d. 911/1505) *Khaṣā'is*.¹⁵⁵ Additionally, Ibn Ḥajar mentions the same tradition in his

¹⁴⁴ Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, 20:224-225.

¹⁴⁵ Al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmi'*, 6:14-15.

¹⁴⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1:1123-25.

¹⁴⁷ Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Kharā'ī, *Hawātif al-jinān*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad 'Abd al-'Azīz (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1989), 88-89.

¹⁴⁸ Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *al-Mustadrak 'alā al-ṣaḥīḥayn*, ed. Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2002), 2:672, #4229.

¹⁴⁹ Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī, *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*, 1:170-171.

¹⁵⁰ Al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*, 2:64-67.

¹⁵¹ Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *Uyūn al-athar*, 1:54-56.

¹⁵² Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 1:55-56.

¹⁵³ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Hidāyat al-ḥayārā*, 1:192-193.

¹⁵⁴ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 3:438-439.

¹⁵⁵ Al-Suyūṭī, *Khaṣā'is*, 1:206-208.

Iṣāba without relating its text, stating only that it was recorded in al-Tirmidhī's *Jāmi'*.¹⁵⁶ The common link in all these sources is Abū Nūḥ Qurād, who lived in Baghdād and died there in 207/822 (see chart 1.2.2.).¹⁵⁷

Ibn Abī Shayba derives his information directly from the Abū Nūḥ, and his *Muṣannaf* is the oldest collection to record the tradition. There are three other sources whose *isnāds* are only one transmitter away from the common link: al-Tirmidhī's *Jāmi'*, al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*, and al-Kharā'itī's *Hawātif*. Al-Tirmidhī transmits it via al-Faḍl b. Sahl (d. 255/868),¹⁵⁸ whereas al-Ṭabarī and al-Kharā'itī transmit it through al-'Abbās b. Muḥammad al-Dūrī (d. 271/884).¹⁵⁹ Later, al-Ḥākim al-Naysabūrī and his student al-Bayhaqī also derived this account from the same al-'Abbās b. Muḥammad al-Dūrī, who can thus be considered as a partial common link. In principle, the rest of the sources derive the tradition from these four collections (i.e. Ibn Abī Shayba's *Muṣannaf*, al-Tirmidhī's *Jāmi'*, al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*, and al-Kharā'itī's *Hawātif*). By looking at these four sources we can undertake an *isnād-cum-matn* analysis, since they have three independent tradents who directly transmit the account from a common link. Among the four, al-Kharā'itī's account presents some problems. In the original manuscript, the page reporting the Baḥīrā anecdote is missing, and only the *isnād* and the very beginning of the tradition are preserved in the original.¹⁶⁰ The editor filled the lacuna from a later source, i.e. Ibn Kathīr's *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, which mentions al-Kharā'itī as the source for this tradition.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, 1:353.

¹⁵⁷ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 3:385-386, [6:247-250].

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 4:472, [8:277-278].

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 3:82, [5:129-130].

¹⁶⁰ Al-Kharā'itī, *Hawātif al-jinān*, 87-89.

¹⁶¹ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 3:438.

This leaves us with three sources to compare in order to test if they could all go back to Abū Nūḥ Qūrād. A comparison between Ibn Abī Shayba's account with the one of al-Tirmidhī shows that the two texts are very similar to each other in terms of structure, order of the recounted events, and use of vocabulary. However, there are several variations throughout the texts, especially in their use of conjunctions, pronominal inflections, and prepositions, so the texts are far from identical. There are also additions, such as Baḥīrā's words "Look at him, there is a cloud shading him," which are missing in al-Tirmidhī's account, whereas other details have been omitted in Ibn Abī Shayba's account. In general, al-Ṭabarī's and Ibn Abī Shayba's accounts resemble each other more closely, and differ slightly from the account in al-Ṭirmidhī. This can be clearly seen in the parts where al-Ṭabarī preserves details which al-Ṭirmidhī omits.¹⁶² A contrary example to this rule is the omission of Abū Ṭālib's name at the end of al-Ṭabarī's report, which is mentioned in al-Ṭirmidhī's and Ibn Abī Shayba's accounts so as to clarify who it was that sent Muḥammad back. These are all indications that suggest that the traditions are not copied from each other, but are rather derived from a common source, i.e. the common link for all the traditions of version B. This source could be identified as Abū Nūḥ Qurād. And indeed, the form and content of the traditions must be very similar to what the common link had transmitted.

¹⁶² For example in al-Ṭabarī's and Ibn Abī Shayba's account, the exact number of Byzantine soldiers who suddenly appear on the spot is given as seven, whereas in al-Ṭirmidhī's it is nine. It is, however, possible that the difference between seven and nine occurs due to a manuscript error since two words are very similar in Arabic script when they are not dotted.

4.3. Comparison between versions A and B

This common link, Abū Nūḥ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ghazwān al-Khuzā‘ī, who is better known as Qurād, lived in Baghdād and died there in 207/822.¹⁶³ Therefore, the tradition transmitted on the authority of Abū Mūsa al-Ash‘arī can safely be dated to the late 2nd/early 9th century. This is a relatively late date when we compare it with version A of the Baḥīrā – Abū Ṭālib story, which we have dated to the middle of the 2nd/8th century: the dating of the two versions has a time difference of 60-70 years. Although there are many common motifs and other elements shared by versions A and B, they are very dissimilar in terms of narration and structure of the narrative (see appendix 1c). Despite recounting the same story, the way the story is narrated and the way the narrative elements are woven together into a coherent body of narration are significantly different. As stated above, the tradition of Abū Mūsa al-Ash‘arī is much shorter, makes no mention of the book that Baḥīrā had inherited from previous generations of Christian monks, and at the end of the narration introduces two new scenes into the story. These two new scenes include the detailed account of the Byzantine soldiers appearing all of a sudden, and the mention of Abū Bakr as taking part in the caravan and sending Bilāl back to Mecca together with the Prophet (see unit 18 in appendix 1b).

Abū Bakr’s presence in version B of the story raises several problems. According to the accounts of this version, at the time of the journey to Syria the Prophet was twelve years old—or even only nine. According to the Islamic tradition, Abū Bakr was two years younger than the Prophet. Consequently, Abū Bakr would have been either ten or seven years old. Again according to Islamic sources, Bilāl was a well-known companion of the Prophet, who converted

¹⁶³ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 3:385-386, [6:247-250].

to Islam at an early age and was bought and freed from slavery by Abū Bakr. Some sources mention that Bilāl was born around 581, i.e. approximately 10 years after the Prophet.¹⁶⁴ This means that he would not have even been born at the time of the events in Syria. In other words, it is historically impossible that Bilāl could have been present on this particular journey to Syria.

This anachronism has duly been pointed out by four Muslim historians of the 8th/14th and 9th/15th centuries. Ibn Sayyid al-Nās,¹⁶⁵ al-Dhahabī, Ibn Kathīr, and Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī¹⁶⁶ all voiced their suspicion regarding the tradition due to its historical impossibility. Al-Dhahabī said:

This is truly an unacceptable tradition (*ḥadīth munkar*). Where was Abū Bakr? He was ten years old, because he is two and half years younger than the Prophet. And what about Bilāl at that time? Abū Bakr bought him only after Muḥammad began his prophetic mission. He was not even born at the time.¹⁶⁷

Ibn Kathīr stated in a similar fashion:

The problem relates to the words: “Abū Bakr sent Bilāl along with him.” If the age of the Prophet at that time was twelve, then Abū Bakr would have been nine or ten. Bilāl’s age would have been less than that. And where was Abū Bakr at that time? And where was Bilāl? Both (being there) would be strange, certainly, unless it be said that this occurred when the Messenger of God was fully grown. This would mean that the trip took place later than it is supposed [to have done], or the statement that he was

¹⁶⁴ Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3.1:165-70.

¹⁶⁵ Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *‘Uyūn al-athar*, 1:55.

¹⁶⁶ Ibn Ḥajar considered this information a later addition, which probably belonged to a different *ḥadīth* and was incorporated into this tradition by mistake; see his *Iṣāba*, 1:353.

¹⁶⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 1:57.

twelve at the time is inaccurate; al-Wāqidī related the incident contingent upon that. Yet al-Suhaylī stated on the authority of certain sources, that the age of the [P]rophet was nine. So God knows best.¹⁶⁸

Unlike Dhahabī, Ibn Kathīr still tried to solve the puzzle about Abū Bakr's and Bilāl's presence in the incident, because he attempted to reconcile their participation in the journey by contemplating the possibility that the Prophet was older than twelve at the time when the incident was supposed to have taken place. However, Muḥammad requiring his uncle's guardianship, as well as the fact that he was made to watch over the people's luggage as they were having their meal (as in version A), clearly suggest that Muḥammad's minor age is an element necessary for the inner coherence of the story. The entire narrative in both versions is designed to emphasize Muḥammad's outstanding qualities, which could be recognized already at a very young age. Hence, the possibility that Muḥammad encountered Baḥīrā at a later age should be ruled out, otherwise the overall design of the narrative should have been very different.

Apart from it being historically impossible for Abū Bakr and Bilāl to have been present at the event in question, we have also observed that they do not play any role until the final scene, and there their names appear in a rather perfunctory manner. There is no explanation as to who they are or what they are doing in Syria. Rather, the narration assumes that the reader or the listener would recognize these two figures immediately, and infer that they were part of the caravan traveling to Syria. Hence, there is strong reason to believe that Abū Bakr's and Bilāl's names are later insertions into the narrative.

¹⁶⁸ Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, 178.

We have already established that this tradition was only transmitted by Abū Nūḥ Qurād, whom *ḥadīth* critics, almost without exception, considered a very trustworthy transmitter.¹⁶⁹ Thus, the tradition of Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī transmitted through him has not been discredited in the *ḥadīth* collections. However, it is quite obvious that the sentence “Abū Bakr sent Bilāl along with him” must be an insertion into the narrative. At what stage of the transmission this information was inserted, however, needs further exploration. Since we have already dated the first tradition (version A), which makes no mention of Abū Bakr and Bilāl, to around 132/750, we can posit that this additional element found its way into the narration sometime between 132/750 and Abū Nūḥ Qurād’s death in 207/822.

This leaves us with only two people who could be responsible for the addition: Abū Nūḥ Qurād, or his alleged source Yūnus b. Abī Ishāq,¹⁷⁰ who lived in Kufa and died there in 159/775. As a matter of fact, there are several pieces of evidence that point to Yūnus being a more likely candidate responsible for the insertion. In the biographical dictionaries, he is described as someone who often added materials (*ziyāda*) into his transmitted material.¹⁷¹ Thus, the Baḥīrā – Abū Ṭālib story would not be the only example of such an insertion. The well-known tradition of Muḥammad’s encounter with Waraqa b. Nawfal after the first revelation is a similar case in point. According to G. Schoeler’s detailed examination, there is an isolated version of this tradition, in which Abū Bakr takes Muḥammad to meet Waraqa.¹⁷² When compared with the other versions, Abū Bakr’s presence is again problematic, and it seems as if this insertion was

¹⁶⁹ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 3:385–386; [6:247–250].

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 6:266–267; [11:433–435].

¹⁷¹ This evaluation belongs to Ibn Ḥanbal; see *ibid.*; Jamāl al-Dīn Abī al-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmā’ al-rijāl*, ed. Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1992), 32:492.

¹⁷² For a detailed examination of all versions, see Schoeler, *Biography of Muḥammad*, 38–79.

designed in order to present Abū Bakr as a witness to the first revelation and Waraqa's proclamation of Muḥammad's prophethood.¹⁷³ Strikingly, this version of the tradition also came into circulation in the transmission of Yūnus and his family members. The common link is Yūnus's father, Abū Ishāq 'Amr al-Sabī'ī (Kufan, d. 127/745). Yūnus, his son Isrā'īl b. Yūnus b. Abī Ishāq (d. 160/776), and his nephew Yūsuf b. Ishāq b. Abī Ishāq (Kufan d. 157/773) then transmit the tradition further (see chart 1.3.). Additionally, Yūsuf is also reported to be an 'Uthmānī, who preferred 'Uthmān over 'Alī in discussions comparing the excellence of the early caliphs.¹⁷⁴ These points indicate that Yūsuf is indeed a highly likely candidate to have inserted Abū Bakr's name into the Baḥīrā tradition. If this is indeed the case, then we can presume that Abū Bakr's name must have been added to the story before Yūnus' death in 159/774 in Kufa.

4.4. Narrative analysis

In both versions of the Baḥīrā – Abū Ṭālib story, the monk stands at the center of the narrative as a wise man, who has foreknowledge of the divine plan, expects and foretells the coming of the Prophet, and thus verifies Muḥammad's call to prophecy.¹⁷⁵ However, whereas several miraculous events taking place during the caravan's stay in Syria announce the coming of a prophet, neither of the two versions seem to provide a coherent image of how and in what order these events might have occurred. Both versions contain similar motifs: the monk sees a cloud over Muḥammad and sees the branches of a tree bending down to provide shade for him.

¹⁷³ See Kister, "Al-Taḥannuth," 224, n.13; *El*² s.v. "Waraqa b. Nawfal" (Robinson).

¹⁷⁴ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 3:385-386, [6:247-250].

¹⁷⁵ Sindey H. Griffith, "Muḥammad and the Monk Baḥīrā: Reflections on a Syriac and Arabic Text from Early Abbasid Times," *Oriens Christianus* 79 (1995): 153.

However, the order of these events and the way they occur are puzzling. It seems that the individual miraculous elements were arbitrarily incorporated, and that their primary function was to demonstrate Muḥammad's extraordinary status. Based on these signs, the monk recognizes the boy, discloses his distinct features, and proclaims his future prophethood.

It is in this context that Abū Bakr makes his appearance at the scene. His presence implies that he witnessed Baḥīrā's proclamation and learned about Muḥammad's future prophethood. U. Rubin and B. Roggema have already pointed out the problem of Abū Bakr's insertion into the story and underlined its relevance to the discussions about early conversion to Islam in the early Abbasid period. Rubin identified the information about Abū Bakr's sending Muḥammad back to Mecca with Bilāl as an interpolation into the narration. He explained it as a residue from a separate tradition, which originally must have alluded to the early date of Abū Bakr's belief in Muḥammad's prophetic mission.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, Roggema emphasized the tendency of the Arabic sources to include the companions of the Prophet as characters in monk stories to demonstrate their early conversion to Islam.¹⁷⁷ She explained Abū Bakr's sudden appearance at the end of the story as a sign of his proto-conversion to Islam added by those who want to refute that 'Alī was the first person to become Muslim.¹⁷⁸

Additionally, Roggema suggested that Abū Bakr's presence in the story counterbalances Abū Ṭālib's role, who was 'Alī's father. Abū Ṭālib's belief in Muḥammad's prophethood and his conversion are also points of controversy in the early Abbasid period.¹⁷⁹ One of the polemics

¹⁷⁶ Rubin, *Eye of the Beholder*, 51.

¹⁷⁷ Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Bahira*, 52.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

¹⁷⁹ See Donner, "The Death of Abū Ṭālib," 237-245.

between the descendants of Abū Ṭālib (‘Alids), who were asserting their own claim to power through their ancestral proximity to the Prophet,¹⁸⁰ and the supporters of the Abbasids, i.e. the descendants of al-‘Abbās, another uncle of Muḥammad, center on the question of Abū Ṭālib’s faith and conversion. In this regard, it is indeed possible that the insertion of Abū Bakr was also an attempt at diminishing the importance of Abū Ṭālib’s presence as Muḥammad’s guardian and his being witness to the attestation scene.

Another point that requires an explanation is Bilāl’s presence in the story. Why is Bilāl the one who is mentioned as taking an order from Abū Bakr? There are several traditions which tell the story of how Abū Bakr bought Bilāl with his own money and freed the former slave. This question will be the topic of our third chapter, where we will be analyzing the narratives about Abū Bakr’s manumission of Bilāl. In the discussion of his excellent qualities, Abū Bakr is often portrayed as someone who spends all his wealth in the service of Islam, and his relationship with Bilāl is emphasized as an important example of that. Here, Bilāl’s presence might hence also be considered as an allusion to this distinctive quality of Abū Bakr’s.

While any of these motivations are possible but hard to prove, it remains clear that Abū Bakr’s later addition to the plot is hardly an accident. Rather, it is a product of the controversies about Abū Bakr’s early conversion to Islam, which in all likelihood originated from the politico-religious milieus of Kufa and Baghdad in the second half of the 2nd/8th century.

¹⁸⁰ Although ‘Alids were descendants of Abū Ṭālib, they stressed their proximity to the Prophet through his daughter Fāṭima rather than through Abū Ṭālib.

5. Summary of findings

We have analyzed three groups of traditions which relate Abū Bakr's encounter with a Christian monk named Baḥīrā. The earliest surviving source to include such a tradition is Ḍirār b. 'Amr's (Kufan, d. ca. 200/815) *K. al-taḥrīsh*. Our analysis showed that a parallel version of this account was preserved in the now-lost work of the Kharijī-Ibāḍī scholar 'Abdallāh b. Yazīd (Kufan, d. early 3rd/9th century). In both accounts, Abū Bakr's meeting with Baḥīrā is presented as evidence of his early conversion. Thus, the account in *K. al-taḥrīsh* explicitly states that Abū Bakr was the first to accept Islam based on Baḥīrā's prophecy, and that because of his foreknowledge he was the first to be informed by Muḥammad about the first revelation.

'Abdallāh b. Yazīd's account is preserved in a 3rd/9th-century Khārijī work (*Kitāb Ibn Sallām [d. 3rd/9th century]*), and it is again presented as a tradition relevant to Abū Bakr's precedence in conversion. In both accounts, Ibn 'Abbās (Medinan, d. 68/687) is the authority on whose account the tradition is transmitted, but the transmitters who took it from him are either missing or cannot be identified. Ḍirār and 'Abdallāh b. Yazīd both lived in Kufa at the same time, and they are mentioned as participants in the debates on politico-religious topics organized by the Abbasid vizier Yaḥyā b. Khālīd al-Barmakī (d. 190/805) during Hārūn al-Rashīd's reign (r. 170–193/786–809). While a borrowing from each other is possible, it cannot be confirmed. However, we can confidently date the tradition to the second half of the 2nd/8th century (possibly to Hārūn al-Rashīd's reign), and establish that this tradition was circulating in Kufan and Baghdadi circles.

The second tradition also links Abū Bakr's early conversion to his encounter with the monk Baḥīrā. Here, a conversation between the prominent Syrian scholar Maymūn b. Mihrān (d.

117/735) and his younger compatriot Furāt b. al-Sā'ib (d. 2nd/8th century) constitutes the frame story. Furāt asks Maymūn whether 'Alī or Abū Bakr was the first to accept Islam, and Maymūn replies rather brusquely by referring to the chronology of their respective conversions: Abū Bakr became a believer when he met Baḥīrā, which was before 'Alī was even born. Furāt must have related this conversation much later, most likely when the common link, Shabāba b. Sawwār (d. 204-206/819-822), heard it from him. However, unlike Maymūn and Furāt, Shabāba was not from the Jazīra region but from Iraq. According to the biographical sources, he first lived in Baghdad and then moved to Ctesiphon, where he spent the rest of his life. As the available geographical information about those who transmitted it from Shabāba hence suggests, the tradition must have come into circulation during Shabāba's Baghdadi years. Therefore, we can safely date the tradition to the second half of the 2nd/8th century or, more precisely, to the period after Baghdad's foundation in 145/762, which is where the tradition must have circulated.

Neither the tradition of Ibn 'Abbās (preserved in Ḍirār's and 'Abdallāh b. Yazīd's accounts) nor that of Maymūn b. Mihrān provides any specifics about Abū Bakr's encounter with Baḥīrā. Both assume that their audience knew how Abū Bakr met Baḥīrā prior to Muḥammad's call to Islam. However, there is a tradition that circulated in the 2nd/8th century which does offer a detailed description of the encounter between Muḥammad and Baḥīrā prior to the former's emergence as a prophet. The story is set in Syria, where the young Muḥammad joins his uncle Abū Ṭālib on a trade caravan.

Our analysis has demonstrated that the story exists in two main versions. In the first, Abū Bakr's presence at the scene seems rather perfunctory, which is why Muslim historians of the

8th/14th and 9th/15th centuries and modern scholars considered this element of the story problematic. By comparing the two versions, we have established that Abū Bakr's presence in the story is a later addition inserted into the narrative, either by the common link Abū Nūḥ Qurād (Baghdad, d. 207/822), or his alleged informant Yūnus b. Abī Ishāq (Kufan, d. 157/773). A closer inspection into the biographies and careers of these two transmitters yielded that Yūnus is the more likely candidate, as he is described as a transmitter known for his additions (*ziyādas*) to traditions. As a matter of fact, Abū Bakr similarly appears in a single marginal version of a well-known narrative relating the story of Muḥammad's encounter with Khadīja's cousin, Waraqa b. Nawfal, upon receiving his first revelation. The version featuring Abū Bakr is again transmitted by Yūnus and members of his family (see chart 1.3.). The inclusion of Abū Bakr into the Baḥīrā – Abū Ṭālib tradition was probably motivated by the desire to show that he was present at the pronouncement of Muḥammad's future prophethood, which would substantiate his status as the first believer. If indeed Yūnus was responsible for the insertion, then the addition can again be dated to the early Abbasid period, or more precisely, to the time prior to his death in 157/773.

It is thus clear that Abū Bakr's encounter with the monk Baḥīrā became a topic of interest in the Kufan and Baghdadi circles, especially in the second half of the 2nd/8th century, as is shown by the various reports on the contemporaneous discussions concerning the identity of the first Muslim or comparisons between 'Alī and Abū Bakr. In this respect, we should emphasize that the respective transmitters of these traditions who put them into circulation came from different sectarian backgrounds and hence pursued different interests. Thus, the tradition of Ibn 'Abbās seems to have been favored in Khārijī circles, whereas the tradition of Maymūn b. Mihrān gained wider currency in Shabāba's transmission, who was a Murji'ī. Moreover, in the

biographical sources, Yunūs b. Abī Ishāq is identified as an ‘Uthmanī, who expressly favored Abū Bakr over ‘Alī.

The complex picture that thus emerges demonstrates that the traditions relevant to the discussions about Abū Bakr’s precedence in Islam are far from uniform. Transmitters from a wide range of interests are involved in the transmission of these narratives. This might also explain the inflation in the number of traditions relating the story of Abū Bakr’s conversion, often in forms that are not reconcilable.

CHAPTER TWO: ABŪ BAKR’S TITLE “AL-ŞIDDĪQ”

1. Introduction

Abū Bakr is famously known by the epithet *al-şiddīq*. Although it is frequently employed in the classical sources, there is to date no uniform explanation why Abū Bakr has been called *al-şiddīq*, and what *şiddīq* originally meant. Nevertheless, a wide range of meanings and translations has been offered in English, so that the term is variously translated as ‘trustworthy, truthful, sincere, honest, veracious, one who speaks the truth, righteous, upright, loyal, faithful, one who believes, one who accepts or confirms the truth, one who testifies to the truth of something, etc.’¹ Moreover, there is a lack of clarity regarding the precise historical circumstances which led to Abū Bakr being endowed with the title.

Often *al-şiddīq* is considered – both in the classical sources, and in academic research – as being attached to Abū Bakr’s name in order to highlight his positive qualities and his elevated status in society. Indeed, Abū Bakr’s title *al-şiddīq* was a topic of polemical discussions as early as the 2nd/8th century, when the legitimacy, moral excellence, and ranking of, the first caliphs became a matter of sectarian controversy. These debates not only try to establish (or disclaim) Abū Bakr’s moral and religious primacy on the basis of this honorific title, but also create a plurality of explanations for it, thus significantly contributing to the expansion of its

¹ See, for instance, Wadad Kadi, “Abū Bakr (ca. 573-634)” in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, ed. Bowering (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 13-14; Afsaruddin, “Abū Bakr,” 5; and *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. Gibb (Leiden: Brill, 1961), s.v. “al-Şiddīq”. Also see Suzanne P. Stetkevych’s discussion of the various meanings of the terms *şidq* and *şiddīq*, occurring side by side in a verse of al-Būşīrī’s famous poem *qaşīdat al-burdā*, which she translated in *The Mantle Odes: Arabic Praise Poems to the Prophet Muḥammad* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 117 and 119. Additionally, Fred Donner proposes that *al-şiddīq* may be also translated as “the one who collects şadaqa,” i.e. the tax collector, for Abū Bakr is known to have insisted on paying the tax (*şadaqa*) to Medina during his caliphate. See his *Muhammad and the Believers at the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), 101-102.

meanings. In this chapter, we will examine all the traditions which explain why Abū Bakr was called *al-ṣiddīq* and attempt to place them in their historical context.

In modern research, the most extensive semantic analysis of the word *ṣidq* and its derivatives has been offered by Izutsu in his *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*.² Izutsu offers two sets of meanings for the word *ṣiddīq*. In the first set, the word *ṣidq* is related to concepts of sincerity, honesty, trustworthiness, and speaking the truth. *Ṣiddīq*, when understood as the intensive form (*mubālagha*) of the adjective *ṣādiq*, denotes the highest degree of *ṣidq*, thus signifying 'highly veracious,' 'who speaks nothing but the truth,' 'who never lies.'³ As a second meaning, Izutsu suggests that the word *ṣiddīq* also means 'a zealous, persevering, fearless believer,' 'who remains unswervingly faithful' to his belief. This meaning is especially clear in its Qur'ānic context, and in Izutsu's view it represents the core semantic meaning of the word.⁴ The word *ṣiddīq* actually occurs in several places in the Qur'ān, and it is used primarily in connection with the pre-Islamic Prophets, such as Abraham (Q 19:41, *kāna ṣiddīq^{an} nabiyy^{an}*), Idrīs (Q 19:56, *kāna ṣiddīq^{an} nabiyy^{an}*), Joseph (Q 12:46, *yūsuf^a ayyuhā al-ṣiddīq^u*), and Mary (Q 5:75, *wa ummuhu ṣiddīqat^{un}*). There is also the plural usage of *ṣiddīq* (*al-ṣiddīqūn*), which specifically refers to righteous believers (Q 4:69 and 57:19)⁵. In these passages, the word signifies righteousness,

² Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966), 90-92. Al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī's 5th/11th century work *al-Mufradāt fī gharīb al-qur'ān* also offers concrete examples to explain the distinct sets of meanings associated with the verb *ṣ.d.q* and its derivatives; idem, ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Kīlānī (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, n.d.), 277-278.

³ Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts*, 90-92.

⁴ Ibid., 92-94.

⁵ In a recent study, Emran El-Badawi suggested that the group of *ṣiddīqūn* mentioned in the Qur'ān represents the righteous and sincere entourage of the prophets. He further pointed out that the role of the *ṣiddīqūn* as the sincere cohort of the *nabiyyūn* described in Q 4:69 finds linguistic parallels in the Aramaic Gospels as *nabīyē wa zdīqē* (Matthew 13:17), and is expounded in Syriac Christian Literature. See his *The Qur'ān and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 87-88.

faithfulness, and piety as distinct qualities of belief rather than the veracity of the words someone utters.⁶

One of the earliest works to discuss Abū Bakr's epithet *al-ṣiddīq* is al-Jāḥiẓ's *K. al-ʿuthmāniyya*. Although different dates have been suggested, al-Jāḥiẓ's epistle belongs most probably to the reign of al-Ma'mūn (r. 198-218 / 813-833).⁷ The work devotes a large section (ca. seven pages in the printed edition) to the topic.⁸ Al-Jāḥiẓ adduces several references to demonstrate why *al-ṣiddīq* is a special epithet applied to Abū Bakr in order to distinguish him from other believers. Drawing on Qur'ānic examples, al-Jāḥiẓ argues that no creature other than the prophets and their likes are given this epithet in the Qur'ān.⁹ He further claims that Abū Bakr alone received this honorific from the Prophet personally. Thus, Abū Bakr's epithet, which has been applied otherwise only to prophets, suffices to establish Abū Bakr's superiority among all the believers.¹⁰

K. al-ʿuthmāniyya is, as is well-known, a polemical work whose primary aim is to defend the moral supremacy of Abū Bakr against accusations, most vigorously raised by the Shi'ites of the time (labeled as '*rawāfiḍ*' in the text). In so doing, the work not only presents al-Jāḥiẓ's own arguments, but also informs us about the objections which the Shi'ites raised with regard to the meaning of Abū Bakr's title. Thus, the Shi'ites argued that the names which the Prophet assigned to certain individuals do not necessarily provide any significant proof of their moral excellence. To refute this claim, al-Jāḥiẓ brings several examples that show how the Prophet

⁶ See also Arthur Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), 194-195.

⁷ For different dates, see Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, 22-23.

⁸ Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ʿuthmāniyya*, 122-129.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

assigned names to other close companions such as Ḥamza, al-Zubayr, and Ja‘far al-Ṭayyār, who actually the Shi‘ites venerate, and highly value their titles.¹¹

Al-Jāḥiẓ furthermore notes that the Shi‘ites deny that it was the Prophet who personally conferred the title on Abū Bakr;¹² in their view, *al-ṣiddīq* is a fabrication that was attached to Abū Bakr’s name only posthumously, most likely by the ‘Uthmānīs. Again, al-Jāḥiẓ presents a rich body of material and cites numerous examples from early Arabic poetry, to emphasize that Abū Bakr was called *al-ṣiddīq* from the very beginning. Indeed, he presents a considerable number of poems which use *al-ṣiddīq* as a metonym replacing Abū Bakr’s name whenever he is referred to.¹³ Interestingly, however, al-Jāḥiẓ never ventures to explain the meaning of the word *ṣiddīq*, his only concern having been to demonstrate that only elect believers, such as Idrīs, Ismā‘īl, and Mary, are distinguished by this appellation in the Qur’ān. Moreover, he does not identify the occasion on which Abū Bakr acquired his title. In short, he contents himself with proving that it was the Prophet who bestowed it on Abū Bakr, but does not inform his readers about how this happened. Considering the length and vigor of al-Jāḥiẓ’s discussion, we can posit that *K. al-‘uthmāniyya* clearly documents how Abū Bakr’s title *al-ṣiddīq* had become a matter of controversy already by the early 3rd/9th century.

As we demonstrated in the previous chapter, another work with a polemical character, Ḍirār b. ‘Amr’s (d. ca. 200/815) *K. al-taḥrīsh*, offered the earliest extant textual testimony specifically on

¹¹ Ibid., 123-124. Also see Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, 89.

¹² Ibid., 124.

¹³ Al-Jāḥiẓ quotes verses from eight different poets, most of whom, he contends, have no ideological motivation in calling Abū Bakr *al-ṣiddīq*. They are Shurayḥ b. Ḥānī’ al-Ḥārithī, al-‘Ajjāj b. Ru‘ba, al-Ḥārith b. Hishām b. al-Mughīra, Abū Miḥjan, Ṭarīf b. ‘Adī b. Ḥātim, Ḥassān b. Thābit, Ṭulayḥā al-Asadī, and al-Bāriqī. Ibid., 124-128. For detailed information about them, see Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, 90-91.

why Abū Bakr was given the title *ṣiddīq*.¹⁴ The work belongs to the last quarter of the 2nd/8th century, which makes ʿĪrār a generation earlier than al-Jāhīz.¹⁵ As we have already discussed, the work is the product of the political and theological rivalry between different groups active in Kufa in the early Abbasid period. In one section, it lists all the traditions which demonstrate Abū Bakr's supremacy, both as a proof of his legitimacy and to counter the accusations leveled against him, especially by the Shi'ites. The issue at question here is early conversion to Islam, and the debate centers on whether Abū Bakr or 'Alī was the first to believe in Muḥammad's prophethood.

The Baḥīra story, which we analyzed in the previous chapter, describes how Abū Bakr learns about Muḥammad's prophethood and becomes a believer. Here, ʿĪrār's account seeks to explain that, precisely because of his early conversion, Abū Bakr is granted title *al-ṣiddīq*. Thus, the account not only offers a semantic and historical explanation for *al-ṣiddīq*, but also demonstrates that it is an appellation which is embedded in the sectarian disputes of the late 2nd/8th century, in which his defenders aimed at proving Abū Bakr's contested primacy in Islam.

While ʿĪrār's account is the earliest textual attestation that offers an explanation for Abū Bakr's title *al-ṣiddīq*, the explanation which is favored by most of the classical sources originates in the narratives of Muḥammad's nocturnal journey to Jerusalem (*isrā'*). According to the general outline of all traditions, Muḥammad returns to Mecca in the morning, and tells the Quraysh about his journey. People then go to Abū Bakr and ask him whether he could

¹⁴ ʿĪrār b. 'Amr, *Kitāb al-taḥrīsh*, (Dār al-Irshād), 54-55; idem, *Kitābu't-Tahrīṣ* (Litera), 31.

¹⁵ For its date of composition, see above, chapter 1, section 3.

confirm Muḥammad's story.¹⁶ Abū Bakr testifies to the veracity of Muḥammad's claims and publicly declares his unconditional belief in Muḥammad's prophethood. This event becomes the occasion of Abū Bakr's endowment with the epithet *al-ṣiddīq*. In all versions of this story, there is strong emphasis on the verb '*ṣaddaqa*,' which is translated as 'to affirm,' 'to confirm the truth of someone's words/something,' or 'to testify to the veracity of someone's words/something.' Hence, in these narratives Abū Bakr's testimony and confirmation (*taṣdīq*, the verbal noun of *ṣaddaqa*) of the Prophet's report make him his faithful companion, as well as an ardent and exemplary believer. By connecting *al-ṣiddīq* to the verb *ṣaddaqa* (or its verbal noun *taṣdīq*), these groups of narratives expand the semantic range of the title, since *ṣiddīq* becomes 'the one who confirms the truth of someone's words,' rather than 'a truthful person who speaks the truth.' The *isrā'* traditions thus broaden the range of possibilities for explaining the meaning and origin of the title *al-ṣiddīq*.

Of course, explanations are neither limited to Ḍirār's account, nor to the *isrā'* traditions. There are other traditions, which, for example, assert that Abū Bakr received the title not from the Prophet but from Gabriel, and that it is therefore of divine provenance.¹⁷ Concurrently, we find traditions which refute the belief that *al-ṣiddīq* was a title first ascribed to Abū Bakr, suggesting instead that it was 'Alī who originally owned the title, and who proclaimed that he were the greatest *ṣiddīq* ('*anā al-ṣiddīq al-akbar*').¹⁸ These two traditions appear to be tainted by the later

¹⁶ See below, section 3.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:144; Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1992), 5:123. Mehmet Azimli gives a list of the accounts which relate how Abū Bakr's title was sent from heaven, and considers them as later fabrications because of the supernatural character of the event. See his *Dört Halifeyi Farklı Okumak-1: Hz. Ebu Bekir* (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 3rd ed. 2015), 29-30.

¹⁸ Ibn Qutayba, *al-Ma'ārif*, 169; al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād fī ma'rifat ḥujaj Allāh 'alā al-'ibād* (Beirut: Mu'assat Āl al-Bayt li-Iḥyā' al-Turāth, 1995), 31. For a detailed discussion of the topic, see Kister, "Al-Taḥannuth," 224-225, n. 13.

ramifications of the sectarian controversy over the title of *al-ṣiddīq*: a preliminary examination of them suggests that they are rooted in the polemics of the early 3rd/9th century.¹⁹ Although they can help us understand the development of the discussion revolving around the title *al-ṣiddīq* in the subsequent periods, these traditions need to be studied separately. Our examination in this chapter will therefore focus on traditions which originated in the previous, 2nd/8th century.

Among the multiple interpretations and explanations of the origins of Abū Bakr's title, one thing remains common: the title *al-ṣiddīq* constitutes direct proof of Abū Bakr's loyalty to the Prophet, trust in his words, and firm belief in his message. As al-Jāḥiẓ's and Ḍirār's works convincingly demonstrate, the discussions of the first caliphs' political legitimacy, ranking, and moral excellence, provide the broader framework within which the nature and quality of Abū Bakr's belief were discussed, and his title *al-ṣiddīq* is strongly connected with these debates. Considering the complexity of, and the discrepancies between, the different versions of why and how Abū Bakr was granted this title, we will subject these traditions to detailed analysis in what follows.

The chapter will focus especially on two traditions: (1) Ḍirār's account; and (2) the explanation provided in the *isrā'* traditions. Our aim is (a) to map out the web of transmissions associated with these tradition groups, especially in their earlier phases of the circulation; and (b) to reconstruct the earliest forms of the narratives in order to understand the context in which the stories were originally construed. Overall, our aim is to identify the specific nature of the

¹⁹ There is also an additional tradition in which the Prophet's uncle Ibn 'Abbās addresses 'Ā'isha after the Battle of Ṣiffīn and reminds her that he and his kin (i.e. The Prophet) gave Abū Bakr the title *al-ṣiddīq*. ("We made you a mother of faithful (*umm al-mu'minīn*) when you were the daughter of Umm Rūmān, and we made your father a *ṣiddīq* when he was the son of Abū Quhāfa." For the entire dialogue see Madelung, *Succession to Muḥammad*, 173-174. I am grateful to Prof. Josef van Ess for bringing this tradition to my attention.

different pieces of information circulating in the 2nd/8th century in different centers of Islamic learning, particularly in Medina, Basra, and Kufa.

2. ʿDirār b. ‘Amr’s account

In the previous chapter, we saw that ʿDirār b. ‘Amr’s *K. al-taḥrīsh* records the story of Abū Bakr’s early submission to Islam as having taken place during his encounter with the monk Baḥīrā. In presenting the story, ʿDirār’s account includes two explanatory sentences which connect the event with the reason why Abū Bakr received the title *al-ṣiddīq*. The first occurs in the introductory sentence: the name *al-ṣiddīq* was conferred on Abū Bakr because he was the first to embrace Islam (*kāna awwal^a al-nāsⁱ islām^{an} abū bakrⁱⁿ wa bi-dhālika istawjaba ism^u al-ṣiddīq*). The second occurs in the concluding sentence, which repeats one more time Abū Bakr was given the name *al-ṣiddīq* because of the just recounted story (*wa bi-dhālika summiya ṣiddīq^{an}*).²⁰

The story of Abū Bakr’s conversion in the *K. al-taḥrīsh* is presented in a section listing a number of traditions advocated by defenders of Abū Bakr’s primacy against those favoring ‘Alī.²¹

Alongside the Baḥīra story, Abū Bakr’s title *al-ṣiddīq* is presented as an important indicator of his early conversion. Evidently, the reasoning is etymological, since the title *al-ṣiddīq* is

²⁰ As we demonstrated in the previous chapter, Abdallāh b. Yazīd’s account records an identical version of the story of Abū Bakr’s conversion, but does not include these introductory and concluding sentences, which are unique to ʿDirār’s account. See above, chapter 1, section 2.

²¹ It is possible that the group defending Abū Bakr’s primacy in Islam are the Kufan Khārijites rather than the ‘Uthmānīs, since ʿDirār reports that those who marshaled their ideas on the basis of the traditions presented in this section became *khawārij* at the end (*wa fī naḥw hādha min al-ḥadīth alladhī ittafaqat ‘alayhi al-jamā‘a al-ma‘šūma al-ūlā fa-qabilathu al-khawārij illā annahum adānū ‘alā man qāla bi-khilāfihim fihā*). See, ʿDirār b. ‘Amr, *Kitāb al-taḥrīsh*, (Dār al-Irshād), 56; idem, *Kitābu’t-Tahrīṣ* (Litera), 32. Moreover, ʿDirār’s work devotes large sections to the Kufan Ibādīs, as it has recently been examined by Josef van Ess in “Das Bild der Ḥārīḡiten im *K. at-Taḥrīṣ* des ʿDirār b. ‘Amr”. The Baḥīra tradition presented in this section has a parallel attestation which goes back to the Kufan Ibādī scholar Abdallāh b. Yazīd, as has been shown in the previous chapter. Additionally, the account of Ḥassān b. Thābit’s poem goes back to Mujālid via al-Haytham b. ‘Adī, who is also known to have had certain Khārijite connections in Kufa. These findings suggest that ʿDirār could have made use of material that was available to the Khārijite circles of Kufa in the early Abbasid period. For al-Haytham, see below, section 2.1.

understood with regard to its cognate verb *ṣaddaqa*, which is translatable as ‘to affirm the truth of something,’ or ‘to grant trust’. The account says that, upon receiving the news of Muḥammad’s prophecy from the monk, Abū Bakr confirms the truth of Baḥīra’s words (*fa-ṣaddaqahu bi-dhālika*), and thus believes it.²² The link between the verb *ṣaddaqa* and *al-ṣiddīq* is supported further by another account, which also attests to Abū Bakr’s early belief. Below, we will analyze it in detail.

2.1. Ḥassān b. Thābit’s (d. 55/674) poem about Abū Bakr

After the Baḥīra story, the *K. al-taḥrīsh* presents verses of a poem attributed to Ḥassān b. Thābit (d. 55/674) in order to strengthen the proposed etymological connection between Abū Bakr’s title *al-ṣiddīq* and its cognate verb *ṣaddaqa* (*wa bi-dhālika summiya ṣiddīq^{an} wa fī dhālika qāla Ḥassān b. Thābit*). The verses read:

- A1 If you are grieved remembering (*idhā tadhakkarta shajw^{an}*) a trustworthy friend,
- A2 Then recall your brother Abū Bakr, remembrance of his good deeds.
- B1 For he was the best of creation, the most pious, the most upright after the Prophet,
- B2 And the most faithful in fulfilling what he was charged with.
- C1 The second, the truthful (*al-ṣādiq*),²³ may his sight (*mashhaduhu*) be praised –
- C2 The first of the people to believe in the prophets (*awwal^a al-nāsⁱ minhum ṣaddaqa al-rusulā*).²⁴

²² This detail is again unique to Ḍirār’s account, and is absent from Abdallāh b. Yazīd’s rendering of the story.

²³ Thus Ḍirār’s wording; the majority of the traditions record it as *al-thānī al-tālī* instead of *al-thānī al-ṣādiq*. See below for the discussion.

²⁴ For other translations of the poem, see al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, trans. by William M. Watt and Michael V. McDonald (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 6:84-85 [*Tārīkh*, 1:1165] (in this translation, the word *mashhaduhu* (C1) is erroneously translated as ‘his tomb’); Ibn Kathīr, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, 1: 315-6; al-Suyūṭī, *The History of Khalifahs*, 9.

The last line of Ḥassān's poem claims that Abū Bakr was the first person to believe (*ṣaddaqa*) in the prophets. The *K. al-taḥrīsh* provides no further commentary on these verses, and simply moves on to the next tradition. However, Ḥassān's poem is widely recorded in the classical sources,²⁵ albeit there, Ḥassān's verses are mostly presented in the context of a conversation taking place between al-Sha'bī (Kufan, b. ca. 40/660 – d. 103-110 / 721-728) and Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687), in which they discuss the identity of the first believer in Islam. Accordingly, al-Sha'bī asks Ibn 'Abbās about his opinion and Ibn 'Abbās answers by referring to Ḥassān's verses, considers them an irrefutable testimony of Abū Bakr's primacy in accepting Islam. The three lines from Ḥassān's poem are then quoted:

Mujālid related from al-Shā'bī that al-Shā'bī said: “ I asked Ibn 'Abbās: ‘Who was the first among the people to accept Islam?’ He said: ‘Have you not heard what Ḥassān b. Thābit said?’” [Three lines of Ḥassān's poem.]²⁶

For sources that provide an *isnād* for this tradition (see chart 2.1.1.), the common link is Mujālid b. Sa'īd al-Hamdānī (Kufan, d. 144/762),²⁷ who reports the dialogue of his teacher al-Sha'bī.²⁸ Other sources, such as al-Fasawī's (d. 277/890) *al-Ma'rifa wa al-tārīkh*, and Tha'labī's (d. 427/1036) *al-Kashf wa al-bayān*, however, provide no viable *isnād* for the tradition, and therefore

²⁵ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā'il*, 133-134; idem, *Kitāb al-zuhd*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Qāsim (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1976), 112; Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, 18:344-345, #34586; 20:253-254, #37739; al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Mustadrak*, 3:67, #4414; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh*, 16:77-78; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī'āb fī ma'rifat al-aṣḥāb*, ed. 'Adīl Murshid (Amman: Dār al-A'lām, 2002), 373-374, #1296; Abū al-Qāsim Sulaymān b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, ed. Ḥamdī 'Abd al-Majīd al-Salafī (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, 1397/1977), 12:89; Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghāba*, 3:313; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 4:70-71; al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-khulafā'*, 30; Ibn 'Asākir, *TMD*, 30:39-41.

²⁶ Ibid. For another translation of this dialogue, see Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, 208. Cf. al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 6:84-85; Ibn Kathīr, *Life of the Prophet*, 1: 315-6; al-Suyūṭī, *History of Khalifas Who Took the Right Way*, trans. by Abdassamad Clarke, (London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., 3rd rev. ed. 1995), 9.

²⁷ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 5:349-351, [10:39-41].

²⁸ His full name is Abū 'Amr 'Āmir b. Sharāḥīl, referred to as al-Sha'bī because of his affiliations with the al-Sha'b clan of the tribe of Hamdān. His student Mujālid hailed also a from this tribe. See also *El'* s.v. “al-Sha'bī” (G. H. A. Juynboll).

no common or partial common link can be identified (see chart 2.1.2.).²⁹ Al-Sha‘bī is not explicitly named in these accounts either. Rather, Ibn ‘Abbās converses with an unidentified person (*rajul*). There are also accounts which record only Ḥassān’s verses, without mentioning the dialogue between Ibn ‘Abbās and al-Sha‘bī, or providing an *isnād* for the poem.³⁰

For the tradition of Mujālid, the sources name primarily three tradents who transmit the tradition from him. The first is al-Haytham b. ‘Adī (d. ca. 206/821),³¹ who is Mujālid’s student and a major authority for transmitting Mujālid’s traditions. The second is Abū Zuhayr ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maghrā’ (Kufan).³² Ibn Maghrā’’s name appears in the accounts of Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr.³³ The third transmitter, al-Khalīl b. Zakariyyā (Basran) is named in al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī’s *Mustadrak*.³⁴ Additionally, an unidentified transmitter (a *shaykh^{un} lanā*) is

²⁹ Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb b. Sufyān al-Fasawī, *K. al-ma‘rifā wa al-tārīkh*, ed. Akram Ḍiyā’ al-‘Umarī (Medina: Maktabat al-Dār, 1990), 3:263; Abū Ishāq Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Tha‘labī, *al-Kashf wa al-bayān*, ed. Abū Muḥammad b. ‘Ashūr (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2002), 5:85. Additionally, the sources that derive the account from al-Fasawī are similar. See al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā’ (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2003), 6:600, #13096; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 4:70.

³⁰ Al-Jāhiz, *al-Bayān wa al-tabyīn*, 3:361-362. Although al-Jāhiz gives no information about his transmitters for Ḥassān’s poem, his *al-Bayān* uses the *isnād* al-Haytham – Mujālid – al-Sha‘bī in several places, eg. *ibid*, 1:242, 2:263. The other works recording this poem without an *isnād* are: Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh b. Muslim Ibn Qutayba, *‘Uyūn al-akhbār*, ed. Aḥmad Zakī al-‘Arwī (Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, n.d.), 2:151; Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi al-wafayāt*, ed. Aḥmad al-Arnā’ūt (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2000), 17:164. Additionally, Ḥassān b. Thābit, *Dīwān ḥassān ibn thābit*, ed. Walīd ‘Arafāt (London: Luzac, 1971), 1:125-126 records six lines of the poem without an *isnād*. The *Dīwān* is ascribed to Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb (Baghdad, d. 245/860), which is preserved in al-Sukkarī’s (Baghdad, 278/888) recension.

³¹ *EP* s.v. “al-Haytham b. ‘Adī al-Ṭā’ī” (Charles Pellat).

³² al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, 17:418-21, #3964; Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 3:400-401 [6:274].

³³ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā’il*, 133-134; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1:1165; Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghāba*, 3:313. In his *‘Ilal*, Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 327/938) also records the tradition with an *isnād* derived from Ibn Maghrā’ and analyzes it. According to his father’s, i.e. Abū Ḥātim’s (d. 277/890), evaluation, Ibn Maghrā’ could not have heard it directly from Mujālid, but from al-Haytham b. ‘Adī. Therefore, the tradition is considered as unreliable (*munkar*). Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *K. al-‘ilal*, ed. Khālīd b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jarīsī (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Malik Fahd al-Waṭaniyya, 1993), 6:447-448, #2657.

³⁴ Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, *Mustadrak*, 3:67, #4414. Al-Khalīl b. Zakariyyā is Basran, and is mentioned to have narrated traditions in Baghdad. Mujālid is Kufan, and died before the foundation of Baghdad. Hence, the link between the two requires further examination. See Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 2:102-103 [3:166-167].

mentioned in Ibn Abī Shayba's *Muṣannaf*, also transmits the tradition from Mujālid (see chart 2.1.1.).³⁵

A close comparison of all the variants of this tradition indicates that Mujālid can be established as the common link for this group of traditions. It is well attested that Mujālid was a major transmitter of al-Sha'bī's traditions.³⁶ Furthermore, Stefan Leder's study of al-Haytham b. 'Adī demonstrates that in the majority of cases when al-Haytham names Mujālid as his source, the account goes back to al-Sha'bī.³⁷ It is noteworthy that neither Mujālid's nor al-Haytham's transmissions are deemed reliable by the later *ḥadīth* critics. However, for the purpose of this study, this only serves to prove that the link between the two of them cannot be denied.³⁸ Indeed, al-Haytham is specifically named as circulating Mujālid's traditions in Baghdad.³⁹ Biographical information indicates that al-Haytham spent his early life in Kufa, and moved to Baghdad only after the city's foundation by the caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136-158/754-775) in

³⁵ The editor of the *Muṣannaf* suspects that the unidentified *shaykh* could be al-Haytham. He suggests that Ibn Abī Shayba refrained from explicitly naming him because of al-Haytham's negative reputation in the former's circles. Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, 18:344-345, #34586. For other attestations of Ibn Abī Shayba's account, see Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī'āb*, 373-374, #1296; Ibn 'Asākir, *TMD*, 30:39-40; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 4:70-71.

³⁶ Al-Bukhārī lists him among the weak transmitters in his *Ḍū'afā*, 116. Many other *ḥadīth* critics approach his traditions with caution, too. See Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 5:349-351, [10:39-41]. Also cf. Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, 209, fn. 47.

³⁷ When al-Haytham names his teacher Mujālid as his source for a tradition, the tradition only rarely goes back to someone other than al-Sha'bī. In certain cases, al-Haytham takes traditions directly from al-Sha'bī. See Stefan Leder, *Das Korpus al-Haiṭam ibn 'Adī (st. 207/822): Herkunft, Überlieferung, Gestalt früher Texte der aḥbār Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1991), 49.

³⁸ After recording Ḥassān's poem and the conversation between Ibn 'Abbās and al-Sha'bī, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī presents Yahyā b. Ma'īn's (d. 233/847) evaluation of the tradition. The *isnād* names a certain Hushaym (possibly a corruption of al-Haytham's name) to transmit it from Mujālid. Ibn Ma'īn rectifies this information, and states that it was al-Haytham who had heard the tradition from Mujālid. Ibn Ma'īn then remarks that al-Haytham heard many traditions from Mujālid, but the tradition should still be considered weak, because al-Haytham is not a trustworthy transmitter. See *Tārīkh madīnat al-salām*, 16:77-78.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 16:77.

145/762.⁴⁰ Like al-Haytham, Mujālid also lived in Kufa, but, unlike him, died there in 144/762.⁴¹

We can, thus, infer that al-Haytham heard Mujālid's transmissions during his Kufan years.

Combining all these pieces of information together, it can be established that Ḥassān's poem in Mujālid's transmission stems from the Kufan milieu and can be dated to the middle of the 2nd/8th century.

Ḍirār's account fits squarely into this time and place. As the earliest textual record of Ḥassān's poem, the *K. al-taḥrīsh* attests to its existence in Kufa in the second half of the 2nd/8th century.

Unfortunately, we have no clear information about the source of Ḍirār's account. However, we do know that Ḍirār was one generation younger than Mujālid, and that he was a contemporary of al-Haytham. Although al-Sha'bī's conversation with Ibn 'Abbās is missing in Ḍirār's account, the question of Abū Bakr's primacy in belief is clearly the reason why Ḥassān's verses are presented in the *K. al-taḥrīsh* in the first place. Moreover, it is interesting to note that in the immediately-preceding account of the Baḥīra episode, Ibn 'Abbās is the narrator, and it is on his authority that Abū Bakr's meeting with the monk is recorded. Ḥassān's verses thus become the second proof-text to certify Abū Bakr's early submission to Islam, and to explain how this would lead him to being granted the title *al-ṣiddīq*.

⁴⁰ In his detailed study on al-Haytham b. 'Adī, Leder proposes that al-Haytham must have moved to Baghdad as early as 146/763, when the city had just been founded, and remained there due to his attachment to his teacher 'Abdallāh b. 'Ayyāsh (d. 158/775), who belonged to the caliph al-Manṣūr's entourage. See Leder, *Das Korpus al-Haiṭam*, 292-296.

⁴¹ He is reported to have died in the last month (*Dhū al-Ḥijja*) of the year 144, i.e. in the March of 762. Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 5:359 [10:40].

2.2. Narrative analysis

The poem displays features that are characteristic of an elegy. Although we cannot establish whether or not Ḥassan's verses were actually recited at the funerary procession of Abū Bakr, the poem strictly conforms to the conventions of lamentation poetry.⁴² For instance, the poem starts by using the past tense, and addresses a male person in the 2nd person singular masculine form of the verb (A1: *idhā tadhakkarta*, A2: *fa-dhkur*). Addressing a male family member of the deceased is a well-known convention in classical elegy poems.⁴³ The poem first acknowledges the grief of this person (A), and then lists all the outstanding virtues and lifetime achievements of the deceased (B-C). Extolment of such virtues is also a central feature of lamentation poetry. The verses carry the intention of lessening the agony of the relatives by reminding them of the immortality of the good deeds which the deceased amassed in his life. Thus, Ḥassān's verses first acknowledge the grief of the addressee (A1), before reminding him of the virtuous deeds of Abū Bakr (A2 : *fa-dhkur akhāka abā bakrⁱⁿ bi-mā fa'alā*). Accordingly, the poem describes Abū Bakr as the best of the creation, crediting him with qualities of outstanding piety, uprightness, faithful conduct (B1, B2), pleasant appearance, and primacy in believing in the prophets (C1, C2). As is conventional in this genre, all these virtues are communicated in the superlative

⁴² The accounts in al-Jāhīz's *al-Bayān* and Ḥassān's *Dīwan* introduce Ḥassān's verses as a *marthiya* poem (wa *qāla ḥassān yarṯī abā bakr*): al-Jāhīz, *al-Bayān wa al-tabyīn*, 3:361; Ḥassān b. Thābit, *Dīwān*, 1:125. The poem is also recorded in Abū Zayd Muḥammad b. Abī al-Khaṭṭāb al-Qurashī's *Jamharat ash'ār al-'arab*. There, the tradition goes back to Ibn Mas'ūd, and the context is quite different. The Prophet asks Ḥassān to recite the poem he had composed for Abū Bakr in the presence of a crowd gathering around the Prophet. In the poem, Ḥassān addresses the Prophet in the second person (*idhā tadhakkarta*) and praises Abū Bakr. See Abū Zayd Muḥammad b. Abī al-Khaṭṭāb al-Qurashī, *Jamharat ash'ār al-'arab fī al-jāhiliyya wa al-islām*, ed. Alī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī (Cairo: Dār Nahḍāt Miṣr, 1967), 35-36; cf. Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3.1:123; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi al-wafayāt*, 17:64.

⁴³ *Et*² s.v. "Marthiya" (Charles Pellat).

form (*khayr^a al-bariyyati, atqāhā, a‘dalahā, awfāhā*), highlighting the exceptional status and character of the lamented.⁴⁴

Of all these qualities, ʿDirār’s account is interested in only one of Abū Bakr’s qualities: Abū Bakr is the first person to confirm, and to believe in, the prophets (C2: *awwal^a al-nāsⁱ minhum ṣaddaqa al-rusulā*). The poem thus describes Abū Bakr as the first believer, and this, according to the *K. al-taḥrīsh*, constitutes the proof text of his early conversion. Moreover, the verb *ṣaddaqa* is used to denote both ‘to confirm,’ and ‘to believe.’ Although Abū Bakr’s title is not mentioned expressly in this poem in *K. al-taḥrīsh*, the reader is expected to make the association between the verb *ṣaddaqa* and the title *al-ṣiddīq*. This is further corroborated by the fact that *al-tālī* was changed to *al-ṣādiq* in C1: While most other versions have *al-thānī al-tālī*, which fits the meter of the poem, and thus seems to constitute the original wording, ʿDirār’s version, by employing the cognate *al-ṣādiq*, inserts yet another etymological reference to *ṣiddīq*, and thus further emphasizes Abū Bakr’s claim to the title.⁴⁵

Curiously, however, Abū Bakr’s acceptance of the prophetic truth is not confined to Muḥammad’s prophethood alone, but extends to a number of messengers (*rusul*). The use of the plural, however, seems to be a rhetorical device utilized by the poet, rather than an expression of a factual reality. As in the case of conveying Abū Bakr’s virtuous character traits in the superlative, the poet aims to amplify the magnitude of Abū Bakr’s belief by extending the scope of his confirmation to prophets in general, and not only to Muḥammad. Given the hyperbolic language of Ḥaṣṣān’s elegy, we can argue that all the qualities of Abū Bakr,

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ I would like to thank Prof. Wadad Kadi for her clarification on this point. While *al-thānī al-tālī* (the second and the follower) is the most common version, some also record it as *al-tālī al-thānī*. Only the *Dīwān* of Ḥaṣṣān b. Thābit follows ʿDirār’s wording with *al-ṣādiq*. See Ḥaṣṣān b. Thābit, *Dīwān*, 1:125-126.

including his being the first to confirm/believe, are meant to create a glorified image, rather than to convey an historical truth.⁴⁶

As we mentioned above, these three verses are also preserved in the traditions which record al-Sha'bī's conversation with Ibn 'Abbās.⁴⁷ There, al-Sha'bī is the narrator who relates his conversation with Ibn 'Abbās as he remembers it. He asks Ibn 'Abbās about the identity of the first Muslim. Ibn 'Abbās replies with a rhetorical question: has he not heard Ḥassān's verses (*hal mā sami'ta mā qāla ḥassān*)? This marks the end of the conversation between the two men. Thereafter, the tradition records Ḥassān's verses (A, B, C) and offers no further commentary. Ibn 'Abbās thus does not recite these verses to al-Sha'bī during their conversation. Rather, it is the narrator, namely al-Sha'bī, who adds them to his narrative. This also proves that al-Sha'bī does know the verses.⁴⁸ According to their conversation, Ibn 'Abbās' brief reference to Ḥassān's poem suffices to resolve the issue. Al-Sha'bī's narration of it implies that it is a testimony of Abū Bakr's primacy in belief. The literary and hyperbolic mode of representation is, of course, not taken into consideration. In the narrative's own logic, al-Sha'bī understands it as a factual truth.

In summary, it can be said that in the Ibn 'Abbās–al-Sha'bī conversation, the title *al-ṣiddīq* or the verb *ṣaddaqa* do not play any expository role. The topic is exclusively Abū Bakr's primacy in belief, for which the last line of the poem, where Abū Bakr is described as the first person

⁴⁶ See *El*² s.v. "Mubālagha" (Wolfhart Heinrichs).

⁴⁷ Three verses are quite short for an elegy. The *Dīwān* of Ḥassān b. Ṭhābit adds three verses which are considered part of the *marthiya*. See Ḥassān b. Ṭhābit, *Dīwān*, 1:125-126.

⁴⁸ As a matter of fact, al-Sha'bī is reported to be an important transmitter of early Islamic poetry; see *El*² s.v. "al-Sha'bī" (G. H. A. Juynboll).

(C2: *awwal^a al-nās*) to believe in prophets, constitutes the textual foundation. While in ʔirār's account the poem preserves its function as an argument in favor of Abū Bakr's primacy, his text goes one step further. By combining it with the evidence from the Baḥīra story, the *K. al-tahrīsh* alleges that Abū Bakr's being the first to believe in Islam results in him being endowed with the title *al-ṣiddīq* (*kāna awwal^a al-nāsⁱ islām^{an} abū bakrⁱⁿ wa bi-dhālika istawjaba ism^a al-ṣiddīq*).

3. *Al-Ṣiddīq* in the *isrā'* traditions

Besides ʔirar's account, the most well-known explanation for Abū Bakr's title *al-ṣiddīq* owes its origin to an episode that takes place after Muḥammad's nocturnal journey to Jerusalem (*isrā'*). Different components of the story are conveyed in numerous traditions, such as Muḥammad's ride to Jerusalem on a steed called al-Burāq, his ascension to heaven, his meeting with Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, and his return to Mecca before the next morning.⁴⁹

There are also groups of narratives which tell the story of the Meccans who refused to believe in the Prophet's journey, and report that several of those who had converted to Islam abandoned their religion. These traditions also depict how the Prophet felt uncomfortable with the Meccans' disbelief, and how they demanded proofs to validate or to invalidate

⁴⁹ The Prophet's nocturnal journey to Jerusalem (*isrā'*) and his ascension to heaven (*mi'raj*) have been a popular topic of research since the early 20th century, and there are numerous studies examining different facets of it. The following confines itself to studies which have been published in the last decades: Herbert Busse, "Jerusalem in the Story of Muḥammad's Night Journey and Ascension," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 14 (1991): 1-40; Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (ed.), *Le voyage initiatique en terre d'Islam: Ascensions célestes et itinéraires spirituels* (Louvain-Paris: Peeters, 1996); Josef van Ess, "Vision and Ascension: Sūrat al-Najm and its Relationship with Muḥammad's Mi'rāj," *Journal of Qur'ānic Studies* 1, no.1 (1999): 47-62; Angelika Neuwirth, "From the Sacred Mosque to the Remote Temple: Sūrat al-Isrā' between Text and Commentary," in *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish, and Joseph W. Goering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 376-407; Brooke Olson Vuckovic, *Heavenly Journeys, Earthly Concerns: The Legacy of the Mi'raj in the Formation of Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Frederick S. Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey: Tracing the Development of the Ibn 'Abbās Ascension Discourse* (Albany: State University New York Press, 2008); Nicolet Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History and Legend: The Biography of the Prophet Muḥammad by Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri* (Ph.D. diss., Nijmegen, Radboud Universiteit, 2012), 113-200.

Muḥammad's journey.⁵⁰ An important number of episodes relate how Muḥammad was compelled to give detailed accounts of his journey to describe the caravans he saw on his way back to Mecca, or identify certain features of Jerusalem in order to prove the truth of his claims.⁵¹

Among these episodes, one particular scene presents Abū Bakr as engaging in a conversation with those who rejected Muḥammad's journey and confirming the veracity of his story, declaring his belief in the Prophet. The account of Abū Bakr's testimony is presented as evidence of Muḥammad's travel to Jerusalem, and portrays Abū Bakr as a steadfast believer who remained faithful to the Prophet at a time when others abandoned him. Abū Bakr's firm belief earns him the title of *al-ṣiddīq*. As in Ḍirār's account, the title *al-ṣiddīq* is associated with Abū Bakr's belief, but here it is for his being a staunch believer, not the first one.

Below, we will analyze all the existing versions of Abū Bakr's *isrā'* story with a view at demonstrating how the tradition evolved in the 2nd/8th century. We will focus on the tradition as it was recorded in Basra and Medina, thereby offering an alternative narrative to the Kufan account recorded in Ḍirār's *K. al-taḥrīsh*. In total, there are four tradition groups relating Abū Bakr's story; we will divide them into two groups: (i) the Basran traditions; and (ii) the Medinan traditions.

In the first group, we will analyze Ibn Ishāq's (d. 150/767) and Muqātil's (d. 150/767) versions of the story, detect the common elements shared by the two, and demonstrate how the early 2nd/8th century Basran exegetical traditions (more specifically al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's [Basran, d.

⁵⁰ For references, see below 3.3. – 3.5.

⁵¹ See 3.5. below.

110/728] and Qatāda b. Dī‘āma’s [Basran, d. 118/735]) appear to be the source of information for these two seemingly independent accounts.

In the second group, we will analyze the traditions that go back to the well-known Medinan authority Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742), and try to reconstruct his narrative based on its later transmissions. We will also analyze a particular tradition recorded in al-Ṭabarī’s (d. 310/923) *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, which allegedly goes back to another Medinan authority of the 2nd/8th century, namely ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam (d. 182/798).

After comparing all these different tradition groups, we will attempt to identify the earliest forms of the narratives relating the story of Abū Bakr’s confirmation of Muḥammad’s nocturnal journey, try to determine the degree to which the title of *al-ṣiddīq* is connected to this story, and detect the differences in the way Abū Bakr is represented in its Basran and Medinan versions.

3.1. The composition of Ibn Ishāq’s (d. 150/767) narration of the *isrā’*

Ibn Ishāq’s (d. 150/767) *K. al-maghāzī* is one of the earliest to record the account of how Abū Bakr met the Quraysh and testified to the truth of Muḥammad’s journey. The account explicitly states that Abū Bakr received the title *al-ṣiddīq* after his confirmation of Muḥammad’s journey – to the effect that this is ultimately the story of how he got his title. Although early, there are two major issues concerning Ibn Ishāq’s *isrā’* accounts that need to be addressed immediately.

The first is the complexity of the *K. al-maghāzī*’s sources. As we mentioned in the previous chapter, Ibn Ishāq’s work is available in two main recensions: the recension of Ibn Hishām (d.

218/834) (in the transmission of al-Bakkāī, d. 183/799); and the recension of al-‘Uṭāridī (d. 272/886) (in the transmission of Yūnus b. Bukayr, d. 199/815), which preserves only the introductory part of the *isrā’* account. There is also a third recension (in the transmission of Salama b. al-Faḍl), which was the only one available to al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923); he made use of it both in his *Tārīkh* and in his exegetical work *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*.⁵² The latter source preserves an important account from Ibn Ishāq about the *isrā’*.

Of these recensions, al-‘Uṭāridī does not help us in this investigation, since it excludes the episodes in which Abū Bakr is mentioned. For the larger part, Ibn Hishām’s recension is our main source for examining Ibn Ishāq’s narration; we will complement it with the accounts that are preserved in al-Ṭabarī’s *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*.

The second issue pertains to the way in which the names of Ibn Ishāq’s authorities are mentioned in the *isrā’* narrative. Ibn Ishāq states in his introductory paragraph to the *isrā’* episodes that he is attaching several traditions, both conflicting and complementary, to give a fuller account of what might have happened during the night of the *isrā’*.⁵³ However, in so doing, Ibn Ishāq does not always feel compelled to name his informants, confining himself to mentioning only the last source to which the account is attributed (e.g. *qāla abū sa‘īd al-khudrī*). A list of these sources (‘Abdallāh b. Mas‘ūd, Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī, ‘Ā’isha, Mu‘āwīya, al-Ḥasan, Qatāda, al-Zuhrī, etc.) is found in Ibn Ishāq’s introductory paragraph.⁵⁴ For our analysis, Ibn Ishāq’s tendency (or decision) to harmonize different narrations, and his lack of interest in specifying his transmitters, pose a considerable challenge.

⁵²For a detailed description of these recensions, see Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature*, 61-63; 71-72.

⁵³ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 264-265.

⁵⁴ This list can only be found in Ibn Hishām’s recension. Ibid., 263; idem, *The Life of Muhammad*, 181.

The episode in which Abū Bakr plays a role is not presented as an independent account, but rather forms part of a longer narrative.⁵⁵ The well-known Basran scholar, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) is named as the source for this narrative. As in other accounts of the *isrāʾ*, the attribution to al-Ḥasan bears complications, which need to be addressed. The narration is composed of several segments and episodes, and it is not clear whether al-Ḥasan is responsible for all of the individual segments of the narration. For the segment in which Abū Bakr is mentioned, the question remains open as to whether or not it is al-Ḥasan's, who is Ibn Ishāq's source. In order answer this question, we need to undertake a comprehensive and thorough examination of the transmission lines of all segments, and not only of the part in which Abū Bakr engages in a conversation with the Quraysh. Below, we will analyze each segment individually, and try to reconfigure the parts that which originate in al-Ḥasan's narration.

3.1.1. Al-Ḥasan's (d. 110/728) narration of the *isrāʾ* episodes

In Ibn Ishāq's account, al-Ḥasan's narration begins with the depiction of a scene in which the Prophet sleeps inside the Kaʿba (*al-ḥijr*).⁵⁶ The angel Gabriel appears to him, wakes him up, leads him outside of the Kaʿba, and shows him a mule-like white beast with wings. Ibn Ishāq continues the narrative with another account derived from Qatāda, in which Qatāda describes a dialogue between Gabriel and the beast, this time named al-Burāq, and convinces it to let Muḥammad mount it.⁵⁷ Ibn Ishāq then continues with al-Ḥasan's narration. The narration first tells the story of Muḥammad's travel to Jerusalem in the company of Gabriel, his meeting with Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, and his leading them in prayer (segment A). Secondly, it describes

⁵⁵ Idem, *Sīra*, 264-265; idem, *The Life of Muhammad*, 182-183.

⁵⁶ Idem, *Sīra*, 264.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

how Muḥammad is offered two cups, a cup of milk and a cup of wine, and how he chooses the right one, namely the milk one (segment B). Thirdly, the scene moves from Jerusalem to Mecca, and we are given an account of the Meccans' reaction to Muḥammad's story when he tells them about his journey (segment C). In Mecca, the plot gains new dimensions. Some Meccans go to Abū Bakr after Muḥammad's return, and ask him his opinion about Muḥammad's journey (segment D). In the following scenes, Abū Bakr goes to Muḥammad, and starts asking questions about Jerusalem. Eventually, Abū Bakr testifies to the truth of Muḥammad's words, and receives the title *al-ṣiddīq* (segment E). Al-Ḥasan's narration ends with the explanation that several of those who became Muslims lost their trust and belief and left Islam, and that God revealed the verses of the Qur'ān 17:60 about them (segment F).⁵⁸ The last four segments (C, D, E, F) of the narrative are the most relevant parts for our analysis, and we will examine them in detail. A full translation of al-Ḥasan's narration goes as follows:

[Segment A: Meeting Abraham, Moses, and Jesus]

In his narration (*fi ḥadīthihi*), al-Ḥasan said: The Prophet, accompanied by Gabriel, went his way until he arrived in Jerusalem (*Bayt al-Maqdis*). There he found Abraham, Moses, and Jesus among the company of prophets. The Prophet, as their imam, led them in prayer.

[Segment B: Two vessels]

Then he [Muḥammad] was brought two vessels, one containing wine, and the other one milk. **He [the narrator] said:** The Prophet took the milk and drank it, and left the wine. **He [the narrator] said:** Gabriel said: "You have been rightly guided to the *fiṭra*, and so be your people guided, Oh Muḥammad! Wine is prohibited to you (*ḥurrimat 'alaykum*)!"

[Segment C: Muḥammad tells his story to the Quraysh]

⁵⁸ Ibid., 264-265.

Then the Prophet left for Mecca. When morning came, he told the Quraysh what had happened. Most of them said: “By God, this is a plain absurdity! A caravan takes one month from Mecca to Syria and one month to return! Could Muḥammad go there and return to Mecca in a single night?”

He [the narrator] said: Many of those who became Muslim gave up their faith [*fa-irtadda kathīrun mimman kāna aslama*].

[Segment D: Abū Bakr’s conversation with the Quraysh]

(a) And some went to Abū Bakr (b) and said: “What is your view of your friend, Oh Abū Bakr (*hal laka yā abā bakr fī sāhibika*)? (c) He claims that he went to Jerusalem last night, prayed there, and came back to Mecca!”

He [the narrator] said: (d) Abū Bakr replied to them: “You are lying about him [the Prophet]!” (e) They said: “Surely not. Where he is telling the people at this very moment about it in the *masjid*.” (f) Abū Bakr said: “If he has said so, then he spoke the truth (*la’in kāna qālahu la-qad ṣadaqa*). (g) And what is it that astonishes you about that? By God, he tells me that communications from heaven to earth come to him in an hour of a day or night and I believe it (*uṣaddiquhu*), and that is more extraordinary than (or a greater distance from) that which astonishes you (*fa-hādha ab’ad^a mim mā ta’jabūn^a minhu*)!”

[Segment E: Abū Bakr questions the Prophet]

(h) He [Abū Bakr] then went to the Prophet and asked him: “Oh Prophet of God, did you tell these people that you traveled to Jerusalem last night?” (i) The Prophet replied: “Yes!” (j) Then he said: “Oh Prophet of God, then describe it [Jerusalem] to me, since I have been there.”

al-Ḥasan said: (k) The Prophet said: “It was lifted up so that I could see it (*fa-rufi’a lī ḥattā naẓartu ilayhi*).”

(l) The Prophet began describing to Abū Bakr how Jerusalem looked like, (m) and Abū Bakr said: “You have spoken the truth (*ṣadaqta*)! I testify that you are the Prophet of God!” (n) Whenever he [Muḥammad] described a part of it [Jerusalem], he [Abū Bakr] said: “You have spoken the truth (*ṣadaqta*)! I testify that you are the Prophet of God!” Until he completed the description. (o) Then the Prophet said: “And you, Abū Bakr, are the *ṣiddīq*.” (p) On this day he [Muḥammad] named him *al-ṣiddīq*.

[Segment F: Q 17:60]

Ibn Ishāq said: al-Ḥasan said: God sent down [the following verses] concerning those who left Islam because of this: “We made the vision that we showed you, and the tree cursed in the Qur’ān, to be but a trial for men. We put them in fear, yet it only increased them in great insolence” (Qur’ān 17:60).

This is the narration of al-Ḥasan, and what was added to it from Qatāda’s narration regarding the Prophet’s nocturnal journey (*fā-hādha ḥadīth al-ḥasan ‘an masrā rasūl Allāh wa mā dakhala fīhi min ḥadīth qatāda*).⁵⁹

Before delving into a detailed analysis of al-Ḥasan’s narration, we need to clarify two points. The first concerns Ibn Ishāq’s use of *isnād* for the *isrā’* accounts in general. As we have mentioned above, certain segments of his narrative in Ibn Hishām’s recension lack *isnāds*. Even when an authority is named, the information about the other transmitters is missing. For al-Ḥasan’s narration it is not clear whether Ibn Ishāq transmits the tradition directly from al-Ḥasan or via another informant. The second point pertains to the boundaries of al-Ḥasan’s narration. The account attributed to him is composed of several segments (A-F), but we cannot be sure whether it is a faithful reproduction of al-Ḥasan’s narration or some of its segments come from other authorities. In segment F, we are informed that parts of it are derived from Qatāda and blended into al-Ḥasan’s narration. We will clarify these two points below.

3.1.2. Ibn Ishāq’s transmission of al-Ḥasan’s traditions

As regards Ibn Ishāq’s direct transmission from al-Ḥasan, our sources do not record any meeting or direct correspondence between al-Ḥasan and Ibn Ishāq. Al-Ḥasan lived and died in Basra (d. 110/728),⁶⁰ and Ibn Ishāq (b. 85/704) was a Medinan, who moved to Iraq decades after

⁵⁹ I have occasionally modified Guillaume’s translation in order to give a more literal translation. Idem, *The Life of Muhammad*, 182-183.

⁶⁰ Van Ess, *TG*, II:41-45.

al-Ḥasan had died, during the reign of al-Manṣūr (r. 136-158 / 754-775).⁶¹ In Ibn Ishāq's work, al-Ḥasan does not appear as a common source either. Al-Ḥasan is named only four times in Ibn Hishām's recension of the work, and he is not reported to have been direct source for Ibn Ishāq. Rather, his material is recorded through other tradents. In two cases, 'Amr b. 'Ubayd (Basran, d. 144 / 761) is Ibn Ishāq's informant of al-Ḥasan's account.⁶² In the third case, Ibn Ishāq's informant is not named, but is described as someone who is a reliable authority (*man lā attahimu*).⁶³ In the fourth, Ibn Ishāq derives al-Ḥasan's account through Abū al-Zubayr al-Makkī (Meccan, d.126/743).⁶⁴

Congruent to these examples, there is ample evidence that Ibn Ishāq's source for al-Ḥasan's narration of the *isrā'* is 'Amr b. 'Ubayd. Although the names of the individual transmitters of the *isrā'* accounts are not given in Ibn Hishām's recension, al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-bayān* records the first part of al-Ḥasan's narration,⁶⁵ which describes how Gabriel came to Muḥammad as slept in the Ka'ba (*hijr*) and brought him a two-winged beast.⁶⁶ As we have mentioned above, the same account is recorded in Ibn Hishām's recension as a narration that goes back to al-Ḥasan without naming the authority from whom Ibn Ishāq heard it. It is only noted, in the passive,

⁶¹ Abū al-'Abbās Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1972?), 4:277, #612.

⁶² Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 605-606 (*qāla ibn ishāq wa haddathanī 'amr b. 'ubayd 'an al-ḥasan qāla*); *ibid.*, 663 (*qāla ibn ishāq wa haddathanī 'amr b. 'ubayd 'an al-ḥasan 'an jābir b. 'abdallāh*).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 988-989.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 722-723. Abū Zubayr al-Makkī is considered as a famous *mudallis* by the later *hadīth* critics; see Jonathan A. C. Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim: the Formation and Function of the Sunnī Ḥadīth Canon* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 285.

⁶⁵ See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-qur'ān*, ed. 'Abdallāh b. 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Giza: Dār Hujr/Hijr, 2001), 14:415-416, [15:3].

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

that al-Ḥasan is the main authority (*ḥuddithtu ‘an al-ḥasan*).⁶⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, on the other hand, provides the same account with a complete *isnād* that goes back to al-Ḥasan (al-Ṭabarī < Ibn Ḥumayd < Salama b. al-Faḍl < Ibn Ishāq < ‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd < al-Ḥasan)] (see chart 2.5).⁶⁸ Al-Ṭabarī records the account from his teacher Ibn Ḥumayd (d. 248/862) in the transmission from Salama b. al-Faḍl, as he always does in his works when he derives material from Ibn Ishāq.⁶⁹ In this *isnād*, ‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd is identified as the scholar who transmitted al-Ḥasan’s narration of the *isrā’*.

The material which Ibn Ishāq derives from al-Ḥasan displays features which are primarily exegetical in character. As we have seen, al-Ḥasan’s narration ends with al-Ḥasan’s commentary on a Qur’ānic verse (Q 17:60) that was revealed on the occasion of Meccans’ disbelief in Muḥammad’s journey to Jerusalem. Remarkably, the two other cases in Ibn Hishām’s recension of the *Maghāzī*, in which ‘Amr is named as Ibn Ishāq’s transmitter of al-Ḥasan’s material, the traditions are also somewhat exegetical in character. In the first, it is argued that the Qur’ānic verses 3:169-173 were revealed about the battle of Uḥud. In the second, the tradition tells the story of a polytheist who sought to assassinate the Prophet and claimed that Q 5:11 was revealed on that occasion.⁷⁰ The common exegetical features of these traditions attributed to al-Ḥasan may not be a matter of coincidence, but indicators of the general character of al-Ḥasan’s material, which was available to Ibn Ishāq. The classical

⁶⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 264.

⁶⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, 14:415-416.

⁶⁹ As we have discussed above, this is one of the important lines of transmission which run parallel to the two known recensions of Ibn Ishāq’s work, namely Ibn Hishām’s and al-‘Uṭāridī’s. See Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature*, 71-72.

⁷⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 605-606; 663. In the third account, in which al-Ḥasan’s account is recorded by Ibn Ishāq through an anonymous transmitter, the topic is also related to the Qur’ānic verse 4:94. Ibid., 988-989. The fourth account from al-Ḥasan via Abū al-Zubayr al-Makkī contains no Qur’ānic references.

sources report that al-Ḥasan was a renowned expert in Qurʾānic exegesis, and his name appears frequently in major commentaries such as al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*.⁷¹ There is also information that suggests that Ibn Ishāq possessed a copy of al-Ḥasan's *Tafsīr* in the redaction of ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd.⁷² It is also well known that ʿAmr was one of the most faithful students of al-Ḥasan, and is reported to have been one of the major transmitters of al-Ḥasan's material in Iraq at his time.⁷³ These indications clearly speak for a strong possibility that it was ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd, who is the missing link between Ibn Ishāq and al-Ḥasan for the *isrāʾ* accounts of Ibn Hishām's recension.⁷⁴

3.1.3. Reconstructing al-Ḥasan's original narration

The second puzzling feature of al-Ḥasan's narration concerns its composite character. Although al-Ḥasan's name appears several times in the account (like *qāla al-ḥasan*), it is unclear whether the entire narration or only some of its segments can be attributed to him. Ibn Ishāq's sources for segments D and E, which tell the story of Abū Bakr, are particularly important for our investigation. We will thus try to find out whether they are part of al-Ḥasan's original narration, or are independent accounts which Ibn Ishāq integrated into the narrative, especially in view of segment F's statement that elements from Qatāda's narrations have been

⁷¹ For a list of exegetical works attributed to al-Ḥasan, see Suleiman Ali Mourad, *Early Islam between Myth and History: Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110H/728CE) and the Formation of his Legacy in Classical Islamic Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 51. In this study, Mourad questions the authorship of several works that commonly are attributed to al-Ḥasan. Considering al-Ḥasan's exegetical works, however, he states that he has "come to the realization that the proper study of al-Ḥasan's *Tafsīr* requires a broader examination of early *Tafsīr* scholarship." See *ibid.*, 53. There is in fact one modern study which attempts to reconstruct al-Ḥasan's *Tafsīr* based on al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, *Tafsīr al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī*, collected by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥīm (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1992).

⁷² ʿAbd al-Azīz Dūrī, *Dirāsa fī sirat al-nabī wa muʿallifihā Ibn Ishāq* (Baghdad, 1965), 24; van Ess, *TG*, 2:676.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 2:297-298. *EP* s.v. "ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd" (Suleiman Ali Mourad).

⁷⁴ ʿAmr is noted for his close relationship with the caliph al-Manṣūr and resided with him in Ḥīra; see *ibid.* Ibn Ishāq is also known to have moved to Ḥīra from Medina during al-Manṣūr's reign and to have compiled his *K. al-maghāzī* upon the caliph's commission; see Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, 4:277, #612. In this regard, we can speculate that Ibn Ishāq might have gained access to al-Ḥasan's exegetical material in Abbasid Iraq.

blended with it.⁷⁵ And Ibn Ishāq often says that he combines different narrative units in one unified narrative.⁷⁶

Ibn Ishāq begins his narration (segment A) with al-Ḥasan's name (*qāla al-ḥasan*). In segments B, C, and D, the narration is interrupted each time with the phrase "he said" (*qāla*). These interjections neither specify the subject of the verb, nor make it possible to determine whether or not al-Ḥasan is the narrator. Only in segment E does al-Ḥasan's name re-appear (*qāla al-ḥasan*) in connection with the Prophet's statement "Jerusalem was lifted up so that I could see it."⁷⁷ In segment F, al-Ḥasan is mentioned for the third and last time in connection with Q 17:60, as the account connects the occasion of the revelation of that this verse with the Quraysh's disbelief in Muḥammad's journey to Jerusalem.⁷⁸ Al-Ḥasan is thus indicated as the narrator and as Ibn Ishāq's source in three cases. However, parallel attestations are needed to establish whether or not these segments originally belonged to al-Ḥasan.

For segment F, al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-bayān* fortunately records two reports of al-Ḥasan's commentary on Q 17:60. Both reports go back to al-Ḥasan through transmitters other than Ibn Ishāq or 'Amr b. 'Ubayd. The first is derived from Abū Rajā' Muḥammad b. Sayf al-Ḥuddānī (Basran, d. 130/748),⁷⁹ the Basran authority, who is said to have compiled a *Tafsīr* in which he transmitted extensive material from al-Ḥasan.⁸⁰ Much of this material (83 traditions in total) is

⁷⁵ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 265.

⁷⁶ The same method of composition is found in different sections of his work; see chapter 3, section. 2.4. See also Stefan Leder, "The Use of Composite Form in the Making of the Islamic Historical Tradition," in *On Fiction and Adab in Medieval Arabic Literature*, ed. Kennedy (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), 132-9.

⁷⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 265.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 14:642, [15:110].

⁸⁰ Van Ess, *TG*, 2:58; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 7.2:22; Omar Hamdan, *Studien zur Kanonisierung des Korantextes: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's Beiträge zur Geschichte des Korans* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 130-133.

recorded in al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-bayān* with the same *isnād* (Ya'qūb < Ibn 'Ulayya < Abū Rajā' < al-Ḥasan) (see chart 2.2).⁸¹ In the report, al-Ḥasan gives a lengthy account of how the Quraysh denied Muḥammad's journey for the impossibility of all this happening in one single night.

Al-Ṭabarī < Ya'qūb b. Ibrāhīm (Baghdad, d. 252/866)⁸² < (Ismā'īl b. Ibrāhīm) Ibn 'Ulayya (Basran, d. 193/809)⁸³ < Abū Rajā' (Basran, d. 130/748) < al-Ḥasan:

Regarding Q 17:60 [the verse] he [al-Ḥasan] said: He [the Prophet] traveled to *Bayt al-Maqdis* at night [*'ishā'an*], prayed there, and God showed him of the signs He showed to him. Then in the morning he was in Mecca (*aṣḥaḥa bi-makka^{tn}*) and informed them [the Meccans] that he had traveled to *Bayt al-Maqdis*. They said: "Oh Muḥammad, what is the matter with you (*mā sha'nuka*)? You spent the night there and in the morning you are among us, telling us that you went to *Bayt al-Maqdis* [last night]?" They were astonished about this, and some of them abandoned Islam (*hattā irtadda ba'duhum 'an al-islām*).⁸⁴

In the second report, al-Ḥasan's account is derived from 'Awf b. Abī Jamīla al-A'rābī al-'Abdī (d. 146/763), another Basran authority who enjoyed a good reputation in the city.⁸⁵ The *isnād* goes as follows: al-Ṭabarī < Muḥammad b. Bashshār < Hawdha < 'Awf < al-Ḥasan (see chart 2.2). Like Amr b. 'Ubayd and Abū Rajā', 'Awf is also a student of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, one of his oldest,

⁸¹ A report recorded in Ibn Abī Hātim's (d. 327/938) *K. al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl*, 4.1.:92 #396, describes how Abū Zur'a (d. 264/877), who was a close companion of his father, heard the entire *Tafsīr* of Abū Rajā' from Muḥammad b. al-Minhāl al-Baṣrī (d. 231/845) in two installments. For other early attestations of Abū Rajā's transmission of al-Ḥasan's exegesis, see, e.g., Abū Yūsuf, *K. al-kharāj* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa li-l-Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashr, 1979), 56-57 (Q 6:141); Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1.1:151 (Q 17:106); and Hamdan, *Studien zur Kanonisierung*, 131-132.

⁸² Ibn Hajar, *TT*, 6:234, [11:381-382].

⁸³ Ibid, 1:235-237, [1:275-279].

⁸⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 14:642, [15:110-111].

⁸⁵ Van Ess, *TG*, 2:55-56. Muslim (d. 261/875) in his *Muqaddima* names him as a student of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Ibn Sīrīn; and ascribes to him the distinct status of trustworthiness when compared with the other Basran transmitters. See G. H. A. Juynboll, "Muslim's Introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*: Translated and Annotated with an Excursus on the Chronology of *Fitna* and *Bid'a*," in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 5 (1984): 268.

having studies with him already before the revolt of Ibn al-Ash‘ath in 82/701.⁸⁶ Al-Ṭabarī’s *Jāmi‘ al-bayān* names him 109 times as a transmitter of the traditions of al-Ḥasan.⁸⁷ In a short narration, which again occurs in connection with Q 17:60, the tradition addresses Muḥammad’s journey and the Meccans’ disbelief:

Al-Ṭabarī < Muḥammad b. Bashshār < Hawdha < ‘Awf < al-Ḥasan:

Regarding Q 17:60 he [al-Ḥasan] said: The unbelievers (*kuffār*) among the people of Mecca said: “Is this not a lie produced by Ibn Abī Kabsha?”⁸⁸ He claims that he traveled the distance of two months in one night!”

A comparison of the three reports transmitted by three of al-Ḥasan’s students (see chart 2.2), – Abū Rajā’, ‘Awf b. Abī Jamīla, and ‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd – reveal that there is a common story that reflects al-Ḥasan’s own narration, which is primarily exegetical in character: The Meccans’ disbelief and their ridicule of Muḥammad is the reason why the Qur’ānic verse 17:60 “We made the vision that we showed you as a trial for men” was revealed. Muḥammad’s journey to Jerusalem thus becomes a test of the faith of the Meccans, many of whom fail. The reaction of the Meccans and their disbelief in Muḥammad’s story is based on one reason: the distance between Jerusalem and Mecca cannot be traveled in a single night: it would require, in Ibn Ishāq’s account, at least one month to travel each way (segment C).⁸⁹ In ‘Awf’s short version, traveling the two months’ distance in a single night is again the reason why Muḥammad

⁸⁶ Van Ess, *TG*, 2:55-56; Hamdan, *Studien zur Kanonisierung*, 79-84. For a more detailed analysis of information about ‘Awf b. Abī Jamīla in the biographical sources, see Michael A. Cook, “Van Ess’s Second Volume: Testing a Sample,” *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 51 (1994): 21-25.

⁸⁷ Hamdan, *Studien zur Kanonisierung*, 80-81.

⁸⁸ A mocking name for Muḥammad, making him the son of an unknown person called Abū Kabsha and depriving him of any noble origin. There are several other occasions in which the Meccan polytheists, such as Abū Jahl and Abū Sufyan, called the Prophet by this name, while accusing him of being a liar. See Stefan Leder, “Heraklios erkennt den Propheten: Ein Beispiel für Form und Entstehungsweise narrativer Geschichtskonstruktionen,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 151 (2001): 14, n.50; al-Tha‘labī, *al-Kashf wa al-bayān*, 6:111.

⁸⁹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 264.

should be considered a liar.⁹⁰ In Abū Rajā's version, the reasoning of the Meccans is identical.⁹¹ According to Ibn Ishāq's and Abū Rajā's versions, the incredibly short duration of Muḥammad's journey also explains why many of those who had initially become Muslims left Islam. (Ibn Ishāq: *fā-irtadda kathīrun mimman kāna aslama*; Abū Rajā: *ḥattā irtadda ba'duhum 'an al-islām*). 'Awf's short version differs from these two in that all the Meccans who doubted Muḥammad are initially labeled as unbelievers (*kuffār*) rather than Muslims who would soon abandon their religion.

When we broaden our comparison between Abū Rajā's and Ibn Ishāq's versions, we reach the conclusion that the common elements must have been part of al-Ḥasan's original narration. These elements can be identified as follows: (1) Muḥammad travels to Jerusalem at night; (2) God shows him certain signs; (3) Muḥammad returns to Mecca in the morning (4) He informs the Quraysh/Meccans about his journey; (5) People find Muḥammad's story incredible; (6) They reject it for the reason that the distance from Mecca to Jerusalem can only be traveled in two months' time, not in a single night; (7) Many people who had been Muslim leave Islam; (8) The verse Q 17:60 "We made the vision that we showed you ... as a trial for men" is revealed because of the people's abandonment of Islam.

3.1.4. Deconstructing Ibn Ishāq's account: Segments A and B

If limited to the above-mentioned eight elements, the boundaries of al-Ḥasan's original narration are much narrower than Ibn Ishāq's presentation of it in Ibn Hishām's recension. The main segments which cover these eight elements are primarily segments C and F in Ibn

⁹⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 14:642, [15:110-111].

⁹¹ Ibid.

Ishāq's account. Although the beginning of segment A mentions Muḥammad's journey to Jerusalem with the angel Gabriel, the story of his meeting with the other prophets (segment A), and the choice between two cups (segment B), find no parallel attestations as going back to al-Ḥasan.

In the tradition which Abū Rajā' transmits from al-Ḥasan, we have a brief and indirect allusion to the otherworldly dimensions of Muḥammad's journey: "He traveled to *Bayt al-Maqdis* at night, prayed there, and God showed him of the signs He showed to him (*wa arāhu Allāh" mā arāhu min al-āyāt*).” The tradition gives no further explanations of those signs. Both Abū Rajā' and 'Awf's versions are also silent about the two cups offered to the Prophet, and do not mention Muḥammad leading the other prophets in prayer, focusing, rather, on the reactions of the Meccans to Muḥammad's story. Ibn Ishāq's narrative, on the other hand, gives a detailed account of both how Muḥammad met the other prophets and led them in prayer, and the things he witnessed during his journey.

There are, however, several traditions which offer both the story of Muḥammad's meeting with the other prophets (segment A) and the two cup story (segment B). Boekhoff-van der Voort has analyzed both stories extensively in her PhD dissertation, and her examination helps us decide which tradition group is closest to Ibn Ishāq's account. Her study shows that, none of the parallel attestations name al-Ḥasan as the authority to narrate any of these two stories.⁹²

⁹² Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History and Legend*, 113-200.

Segment A: Meeting Abraham, Moses, and Jesus

In segment A of Ibn Ishāq's account, Muḥammad is described as having met a group of prophets in Jerusalem – specifically Abraham, Moses, and Jesus – and then led them in prayer (*fa-ammahum rasūl Allāh fa-ṣallā bihim*). Ibn Ishāq tells the story in the third person, and explicitly names al-Ḥasan as the narrator (*qāla al-ḥasan fī ḥadīthihi*).

There is a number of traditions in the classical sources which also describe Muḥammad's meeting with these prophets. Contrary to Ibn Ishāq's account, however, they do not mention Muḥammad's leading them in prayer. Rather, Muḥammad describes the physiognomy of each of these prophets in great detail, and in the first person, which again distinguishes these traditions from Ibn Ishāq's account. As a matter of fact, a large body of this material goes back to Qatāda and al-Zuhrī. Since this has been analyzed by Boekhoff-van der Voort, we will only discuss her findings.⁹³

Al-Zuhrī's version of Muḥammad's meeting with the prophets and his description of their physical appearance is interestingly recorded by Ibn Ishāq too.⁹⁴ Ibn Ishāq attributes this version to al-Zuhrī, which stands in accord with the other variants of the al-Zuhrī tradition analyzed by Boekhoff-van der Voort.⁹⁵ In his presentation, though, Ibn Ishāq employs a very peculiar expression: Instead of using a phrase like “al-Zuhrī told or narrated” (e.g. *qāla/haddathanī al-zuhrī*) in the *isnād*, he says “al-Zuhrī claimed” (*zaʿama al-zuhrī*). This expression of course diminishes the reliability of the account, suggesting that Ibn Ishāq does

⁹³ There are also a few later authorities, such as ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Ibn al-Māʾjishūn (d. 164/780) in Iraq and al-Layth b. Saʿd (175/791) in Egypt, who offer a different version of these stories that have a transmission history going back to the first generation of Muslims, which is independent of Qatāda's and al-Zuhrī's transmissions. See *ibid.*, 169, 174 and 182.

⁹⁴ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 266.

⁹⁵ Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History and Legend*, 122-135, 148-165.

not give full credence to al-Zuhrī's transmission.⁹⁶ Overall, al-Zuhrī is an important source for the *isrā'* accounts, recorded in the classical collections. Yet Ibn Ishāq names him only for this particular account, and with some reservations. To a certain extent, this account suggests that albeit Ibn Ishāq was familiar with al-Zuhrī's *isrā'* traditions, he suppressed them in favor of other traditions such as al-Ḥasan's.

There is, furthermore, a version going back to Qatāda, in which Muḥammad recounts his meeting with Moses and Jesus (Abraham is absent) on the night of his journey to Jerusalem, and gives a description of them. The Qatāda tradition is recorded in four compilations, namely in al-Nasā'ī's, al-Bukhārī's, al-Bayhaqī's, and al-Ṭabarī's works.⁹⁷ The lines of transmission show that Qatāda is indeed the common link, and that the tradition is circulated by three of his students in Basra (see chart 2.6).⁹⁸ As a matter of fact, the Qatāda tradition remains an exclusively Basran tradition, before different versions of it find their way into the written compilations of the 3rd/9th century. As Boekhoff-van der Voort's analysis shows, the versions of Qatāda and al-Zuhrī resemble each other, and they do not share any important features with Ibn Ishāq's account, attributed to al-Ḥasan.⁹⁹

All of this allows us to conclude that, neither al-Zuhrī nor Qatāda seem to have been Ibn Ishāq's source for segment A. Since Ibn Ishāq explicitly attributes it to al-Ḥasan, we can provisionally accept it as part of al-Ḥasan's narration.

⁹⁶ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 266. Both Robson and Boekhoff-van der Voort addressed the problem of this expression (*za'ama*). See Robson, "Ibn Ishāq's Use of the Isnad," 449-465; Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History and Legend*, 168.

⁹⁷ Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History and Legend*, 181-185.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 182, figure 21.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 185-189.

Segment B: The story of the two vessels

For the ‘two vessels tradition’, there are two main authorities who are responsible for their wider circulation: Qatāda (see chart 2.3) and al-Zuhrī.¹⁰⁰ A comparison of Ibn Ishāq’s account with Qatāda’s and al-Zuhrī’s versions reveals striking textual parallels. Below, Ibn Ishāq’s, Qatāda’s and al-Zuhrī’s accounts are presented, and the common expressions are marked in bold:

‘Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām (d. 218/834) < al-Bakkāī (Kufan, d.183/799) < IBN ISHĀQ < [‘Amr b. ‘Ubayd] < al-Ḥasan:¹⁰¹

(i) *thumma **utiya bi-inā’aynⁱ fi aḥadihimā khamr^{un} wa fi al-ākharⁱ laban^{un}***,

(iii) *qāla: **fa-akhadha** rasūl Allāh (ṣ) inā^a **al-labanⁱ***

(iv) ***fa-shariba** min**hu**, wa taraka inā^a al-khamrⁱ,*

(v) *qāla: **fa-qāla jibrīl^u**: “hudīta **li-l-fiṭra^{ti}** wa hudiya**t ummatuka** yā muḥammad wa ḥurrimat ‘alaykum al-khamr^u.”*

Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) < Yūnus b. Muḥammad (Baghdad, d. 208/823) < Shaybān b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (Baghdad, d. 164/780) < QATĀDA B. DĪ’ĀMA (Basran, d. 117/735) < Anas b. Malik (Medinan/Basran, d. 92/710) (see chart 2.3):¹⁰²

(i) ***fa-utītu bi-inā’aynⁱ aḥaduhumā khamr^{un} wa al-ākhar^u laban^{un}***,

(iii) *qāla: “**wa-akhadhtu al-laban^a**.”*

(v) ***fa-qāla jibrīl^u**: aṣabta **li-l-fiṭra^{ti}**.*

‘Abd al-Razzāq < Ma‘mar < AL-ZUHRĪ < Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab < Abū Hurayra:¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ In Boekhoff-van der Voort’s analysis, Qatāda is the common link for five different transmissions, which are preserved in Ibn Ḥanbal’s, al-Bukhārī’s, Muslim’s, al-Nasāī’s, and Ibn ‘Asākir’s *ḥadīth* collections (chart 2.3), see *ibid.*, 192-196. Al-Zuhrī’s ‘two cup traditions’ are mainly preserved in the transmission of his four students, namely Ma‘mar, Yūnus b. Yazīd, Ibrāhīm b. Ismā‘īl, and Ibrāhīm b. Sa‘īd. *Ibid.*, 122-168. Cf. figures 2 and 4; *ibid.*, 201, 203.

¹⁰¹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 264-265.

¹⁰² Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History and Legend*, 191, 194.

¹⁰³ The ‘two vessels tradition’ of al-Zuhrī is the most widely recorded version. Boekhoff-van der Voort analyzes 33 different versions; the account in ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s *Muṣannaf* (5:329-330) [*al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A‘ẓamī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1970-2)] is a good representative of the al-Zuhrī tradition. See Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History and Legend*, 123-124.

- (i) *wa atā [utītu] bi-inā'aynⁱ fī aḥadihimā laban^{un} wa fī al-ākharⁱ khamr^{un},*
(ii) *fa-qāla: khudh [ishrab] ayyahumā shi'ta,*
(iii) *fa-akhadhtu al-laban^a*
(iv) *fa-sharibtuhu*
(v) *fa-qīla lī: hudīta [akhadhta] li-l-fiṭra – aw: aṣabta li-l-fiṭra – ammā innaka law akhadhta al-khamr^a ghawat ummatuka.*

There are significant textual parallels between these three groups (Ibn Ishāq, Qatāda, and al-Zuhrī). The main difference is the grammatical person of the narrator. In Qatāda's and al-Zuhrī's versions, Muḥammad is the narrator of his dialogue with Gabriel. He thus speaks with the first person and quotes Gabriel's response in the third person (*qāla*). Conversely, in Ibn Ishāq's account, however, there is a third-person narrator, who describes Muḥammad's words and actions in the third-person – which is always the case in Ibn Ishāq's account. It is therefore reasonable to assume that, when this account was integrated into Ibn Ishāq's narrative, the person of the narration was adjusted to fit to his overall mode of presentation. Apart from this assimilation, Ibn Ishāq's text resembles Qatāda's and al-Zuhrī's traditions equally. Therefore, based on content alone, both traditions could be the *Vorlage* for Ibn Ishāq's account. However, since Ibn Ishāq mentions of Qatāda's name at the end of the account, Qatāda seems to be the more likely candidate.

3.1.5. Overview

Our analysis produces the following provisional picture:

Segment A (Meeting Abraham, Moses, and Jesus); al-Ḥasan

Segment B (Two vessels): Qatāda (less likely al-Zuhrī)

Segment C (Muḥammad tells his story to the Quraysh): al-Ḥasan

Segment D (Abū Bakr's conversation with the Quraysh): ?

Segment E (Abū Bakr questions the Prophet): ?

Segment F (Q 17:60): al-Ḥasan

As in segment A, al-Ḥasan is explicitly mentioned in segment E as the one who related that the Prophet said: "It was lifted up so that I could see it (*fa-rufi'a lī ḥattā naẓartu ilayhi*)" (unit k).¹⁰⁴

However, we cannot be certain that this quote of Muḥammad really goes back to al-Ḥasan. The same is true for segment D. Since there are no parallel attestations which name al-Ḥasan as the source for either of these segments, we are not able to establish with certainty that both segments (D and E) originate in al-Ḥasan's narration. And yet our findings partially confirm Ibn Ishāq's statement that he combined al-Ḥasan's material with Qatāda's in his *isrā'* accounts.

To a certain extent, it is difficult to draw decisive lines between the traditions of al-Ḥasan and Qatāda. Substantial portions of the traditions which emerged from early circles often carry the imprints of the teacher's dictation, even if they were attributed to the student. In this regard, Ibn Ishāq's narrative using an al-Ḥasan/Qatāda tradition remains the most plausible scenario. It would imply that Ibn Ishāq's account is derived from exegetical material of Basran origin. As regards the dating of the tradition, the first half of the 2nd/8th century is a plausible time frame for its composition.

¹⁰⁴ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 265.

Apparently, the tradition as recorded by Ibn Ishāq seems to have been composed of two different episodes that were joined together (segment D: Abū Bakr's conversation with the Quraysh; segment E: Abū Bakr questions Muḥammad). In order to identify segments D and E in Ibn Ishāq's narrative, we will have to analyze Muqātil's account in his *Tafsīr*, since it displays similarities with Ibn Ishāq's account.

3.2. Muqātil b. Sulaymān's (d. 150/767) account

Like Ibn Ishāq's work, Muqātil b. Sulaymān's (d. 150/767) *Tafsīr* includes the story of Abū Bakr's dialogue with the Quraysh after Muḥammad's return from Jerusalem.¹⁰⁵ In Muqātil's version, Abū Bakr asks Muḥammad about the details of his journey directly after he had talked to the Quraysh. The account is presented within the *isrā'* narrative, which covers over five pages in the Shihāta edition.¹⁰⁶ In this long narrative thread, Muqātil covers numerous topics: (1) Muḥammad is offered to drink from three rivers, carrying wine, honey, or milk; (2) Muḥammad embarks on his journey from Umm Hāni's house (rather than from the Ka'ba), and converses with her upon his return; (3) Muḥammad describes to Umm Hāni' how Gabriel brought him the two winged beast called Burāq; (4) Muḥammad wants leave Umm Hāni's house in order to tell the Quraysh about his journey to Jerusalem. Umm Hāni' tries to dissuade him because the Quraysh will call him a liar; (5) despite her warning, Muḥammad leaves her house and meets the elders of the Quraysh in the Ka'ba; he tells them his story, and the polytheists disbelieve him; (6) a man called al-Muṭ'im b. 'Adī from the clan of Nawfal calls Muḥammad a liar (*kadhdhāb*) because a journey to Jerusalem would take a minimum of forty

¹⁰⁵ Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, ed. 'Abdallāh Maḥmūd Shihāta (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma li-l-Kitāb, 1979-1984), 4:517-518, Q 17:1.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:514-519.

days; (7) Abū Bakr arrives at the scene and declares his full trust in Muḥammad's words, then begins to interrogate the Prophet about certain features of *Bayt al-Maqdis* (the temple, the walls, the Rock, etc.), and again he affirms the truth of Muḥammad's words; (8) The Muslims ask Muḥammad to describe the physical appearance of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, as well as that of the *dajjāl* (anti-Christ), and Muḥammad describes all of them in great detail; (9) a polytheist asks Muḥammad whether he had seen a caravan on his way, and challenges him to bring proof of that.

Of these nine episodes, it is segment 7 in which Abū Bakr meets the Quraysh and then goes to Muḥammad to inquire about his journey. In the following sections, the focus of our analysis will be on this segment. At the end of Muqātil's account, we are informed that Abū Bakr was given the title *al-ṣiddīq* on this very occasion. The text goes as follows:

(i) While they [the Quraysh] were like that, Abū Bakr came all of a sudden. (ii) The Quraysh said: "Oh Abū Bakr, do you not hear what your friend (*ṣāhibuka*) is saying? (iii) He is claiming that he prayed the evening prayer and the morning prayer in Mecca, and in between them he prayed in Jerusalem (*Bayt al-Maqdis*). (iv) Abū Bakr said: "If he has said that, he spoke the truth (*in kāna qāla dhālika fa-qad ṣadaqa*)!" (v) Abū Bakr said to the Prophet: "May my father and mother be your ransom (*bi-abī anta wa ummī*)! Tell me about the gate of *Bayt al-Maqdis*, its temple, its walls, the Rock, and all about it." (vi) The Prophet informed him about them. (vii) This prompted Abū Bakr to say (*fa-iltazamahu abū bakr wa qāla*): "I testify that you are speaking the truth (*ashhadu annaka ṣādiq*)." (viii) On that day he was named *al-ṣiddīq* (*fa-summiya yawma'idhⁱⁿ al-ṣiddīq*).¹⁰⁷

Muqātil's account has significant affinities with Ibn Ishāq's. Though shorter than Ibn Ishāq's, the structure of the story, and the order of events, in both versions are very similar. Both introduce two successive scenes: Abū Bakr's conversation with the Quraysh and his

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 2:517-518.

conversation with the Prophet. Most elements in Muqātil's account (units i through vii) also have close parallels in Ibn Ishāq's account (units a, b, c, f, j, l, m, p, respectively), although the wording varies.¹⁰⁸ We can, therefore, conclude that both accounts must have a common origin. Muqātil names no transmitter as his source, but a direct borrowing from Ibn Ishāq is possible. However, there are several examples which are indicative of Muqātil's sources. We will demonstrate that Muqātil actually uses Basran exegetical material for parts of his *isrā'* narrative, and that Qatāda appears there as an important authority.

3.2.1. The problem of Muqātil's sources in his *Tafsīr*

Muqātil's *Tafsīr* does not overall mention any sources; only rarely does one find references to earlier authorities.¹⁰⁹ This poses a challenge to the researcher, since the work contains a plethora of narrative traditions. Evidently, the majority of these traditions predate Muqātil, and he is not their 'inventor.' Considering the early date of the composition of Muqātil's work, however, we cannot ignore his narrative attestations, especially since our interest lies in dating the traditions. Unfortunately, modern scholarship has not approached this problem in depth, and no thorough examination of Muqātil's sources exists to date.

Some problems in Muqātil's *Tafsīr* relate to the work's transmission history, while others pertain to its composition method.¹¹⁰ The first problem concerns the lack of a standard text

¹⁰⁸ In certain cases, the expressions are very similar. Compare Muqātil (unit iv): "*in kāna qāla dhālika fa-qad ṣadaqa*" with Ibn Ishāq (segment D, unit f): "*la'in kāna qālahu la-qad ṣadaqa*."

¹⁰⁹ Nicolai Sinai, "The Qur'ānic Commentary of Muqātil b. Sulaymān and the Evolution of Early *Tafsīr* Literature," in *Tafsīr and Islamic Intellectual History: Exploring the Boundaries of a Genre*, ed. Görke and Pink (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 114-115. Sinai also offers a detailed discussion of the sources mentioned in the different manuscripts of Muqātil's *Tafsīr*: idem, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung: Studien zur frühen Koranauslegung* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), 168-71.

¹¹⁰ See Claude Gilliot, "Exegesis of the Qur'ān: Classical and Medieval" in the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, ed. Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2002) 2:106-107.

which we can unquestionably accept as Muqātil's work. Over the centuries, Muqātil's *Tafsīr* has survived in two recensions, between which there are considerable differences.¹¹¹ The first is the *Tafsīr* as we have it in Shihāta's edition; it represents the Baghdadi transmission of the text.¹¹² The second was transmitted in Muqātil's homeland, Khurāsān; fragments of this recension have been preserved in al-Tha'labī's (d. 427/1036) exegetical work *al-Kashf wa al-bayān*.¹¹³ The second problem is related to Muqātil's taking liberties in transmitting already extant material, so that in his rendering the narrative traditions do not always preserve their original character. The *Tafsīr* concurrently displays a strong tendency to harmonize quite disparate accounts in order to produce a continuous, unified narration, thereby obscuring for the researcher the identity of earlier sources.

The attention of modern scholarship to date has mostly been directed at Muqātil's hermeneutical approach and the stylistics characteristics of his work. Composed early, in the 2nd/8th century, the *Tafsīr* plays an important role in studies focusing on Qur'ānic exegesis and its historical development. In his *Qur'ānic Studies*, for example, John Wansbrough argued that Muqātil's *Tafsīr* was an example of the Haggadic type of exegesis,¹¹⁴ since he subjects the text of the Qur'ān to a narrative interpretation.¹¹⁵ More recently, Nicolai Sinai showed that Muqātil's *Tafsīr* was not merely a narrative exegesis, as there are brief explanatory glosses in it, which

¹¹¹ For the impact of the later redactory activities on Muqātil's work, see Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung*, 168-71. Gilliot mentions that the Khurāsānī edition is probably mingled with elements of al-Kalbī's traditions. Idem, "Exegesis of the Qur'ān," 2:107.

¹¹² See van Ess, *TG*, 2:516-23.

¹¹³ Al-Tha'labī frequently benefits from Muqātil's work, and names him nearly 630 times. See Mehmet Akif Koç, "A Comparison of the References to Muqātil b. Sulaymān (150/767) in the Exegesis of al-Tha'labī (427/1036) with Muqātil's Own Exegesis," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 53, no. 1 (2008): 69-101.

¹¹⁴ John E. Wansbrough, *Qur'ānic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2004), 122-145.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

are a typical feature of exegetical works from the 2nd/8th century.¹¹⁶ Another study examined Muqātil's theological views, and the degree to which his anthropomorphic vision played a role in his exegesis.¹¹⁷ In these studies, the primary focus was on the literary and hermeneutical character of Muqātil's exegetical approach, and the problem of his sources has been addressed only marginally. There are, however, two studies, in which parallels between Muqātil's *Tafsīr* and Ibn Ishāq's *K. al-maghāzī* have been highlighted.

Wansbrough identified many parallels between Muqātil's and Ibn Ishāq's versions of the story of the dialogue between the Meccan polytheists and the Medinan Jewish rabbis concerning Muḥammad's prophethood.¹¹⁸ In both works, the story is considered as the immediate occasion of the revelation of Q 18:9. Wansbrough analyzed the two versions' stylistic similarities and differences, but his main interest was to demonstrate how Muqātil and Ibn Ishāq both subscribed to a narrative exegesis, and differed only in their strategies of employing the Qur'ānic verses to fit into their respective exegetical narrative frameworks.¹¹⁹

H. Motzki applied *matn-cum-isnād* analysis to traditions considered the occasion of the revelation of Q 15:90-91.¹²⁰ The traditions recount the story of Walīd b. al-Mughīra, who, together with the other Meccans, devised a plan to defame Muḥammad during the fair season in Mecca.¹²¹ Using a large pool of material, Motzki highlighted many similarities between the

¹¹⁶ Sinai, "The Qur'ānic Commentary," 115-117.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Mun'im Sirry, "Muqātil b. Sulaymān and Anthropomorphism," *Studia Islamica, nouvelle edition* 3 (2012): 51-82.

¹¹⁸ Wansbrough, *Qur'ānic Studies*, 122 ff.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Harald Motzki, Nicolet Boekhoff-van der Voort, and Sean W. Anthony, *Analysing Muslim Traditions: Studies in Legal, Exegetical and Maghāzī Ḥadīth* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 274-276.

¹²¹ Ibid.

versions Ibn Ishāq and Muqātil of the story. While Muqātil's version is longer, more detailed, and follows a different narrative order, the two versions have more in common than the other narrations. Motzki excluded the possibility of a borrowing from each other, and suggested a common source, from which both drew their material.¹²² He also showed that Ibn Ishāq heard the tradition, datable to the beginning of the 2nd/8th century, from a Meccan *shaykh* called Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad, who was a *mawlā* of the family of Zayd b. Thābit (d. btw. 42-56/662-675). According to the *isnād*, Ibn Abī Muḥammad received the tradition from either Sa'īd b. Jubayr (d. 95/714)¹²³ or 'Ikrima (d. ca. 105/723), two students of Ibn 'Abbās who are known for their exegetical traditions. According to the *isnād* (Ibn Abī Muḥammad < Sa'īd **or** 'Ikrima < Ibn 'Abbās), Ibn 'Abbās is the prime authority to narrate the tradition.¹²⁴ Motzki considered the *isnād* suspicious, because Ibn Abī Muḥammad used the same line of transmission for all his traditions, and he never remembers from which of Ibn 'Abbās's two students (i.e., Sa'īd or 'Ikrima) he had heard the tradition. Thus, Muqātil's source for the tradition cannot be identified, and Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad remains no more than a possibility. Interestingly, though, the tradition of the story of the Meccan polytheists' dialogue with the Medinan Jewish rabbis analyzed by Wansbrough uses the same *isnād*: the transmission line again extends from Ibn Ishāq to Ibn 'Abbās via Muḥammad b. Abī Muḥammad.¹²⁵

Another tradition, which we analyze in the next chapter, also exhibits striking similarities between Ibn Ishāq's and Muqātil's rendering of the story of Abū Bakr's emancipation of Bilāl b.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ *EF* s.v. "Sa'īd b. Djubayr" (Harald Motzki).

¹²⁴ For a statistical analysis of "Sa'īd b. Jubayr aw 'Ikrima < Ibn 'Abbās" transmissions in al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-bayān*, see Herbert Berg, *The Use of Ibn 'Abbās in al-Ṭabarī's Tafsīr and the Development of Exegesis in Early Islam*, (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1996), 204-205, 209-211.

¹²⁵ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 187-188, 192-193; idem, *The Life of Muhammad*, 133, 136-137.

Rabāḥ from slavery. In both accounts, Abū Bakr exchanges Bilāl with another slave of his own, instead of paying a ransom for Bilāl. This detail clearly distinguishes the two accounts from the other tradition groups. As we shall show below, again both versions are indubitably two renderings of the same story, and they both have their origin most likely in the transmission of the Medinan tradent Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab (14-94 / 637-712).¹²⁶

Evidently, all these studies demonstrate that Muqātil records traditions which have parallels in other works, especially in Ibn Ishāq's *K. al-maghāzī*.

3.2.2. Muqātil's sources for the *isrā'* traditions.

As we have seen above, Muqātil's narrative on the Prophet's journey to Jerusalem consists of several distinct episodes. Muqātil, however, presents a single, continuous storyline, and conflates a number of accounts into one narrative. The origins of two of these accounts can be detected, namely (a) the description of the beast which Gabriel brought to Muḥammad,¹²⁷ and (b) Muḥammad's descriptions Jesus, Moses, and Abraham.¹²⁸ Boekhoff-van der Voort has already examined the second account, which we have partially discussed in the previous section. The web of transmissions she charted out in her study helps us to identify Muqātil's sources for the second account.

¹²⁶ See chapter 3, sections 2.1.1. and 4.2. Additionally, Schöller analyzed an exegetical tradition attributed to Ibn al-Kalbī, which is thought to have prompted the revelation of Q 8:56 and 59:2-16. In his analysis, Schöller demonstrates that there are several parallels between Ibn al-Kalbī's version of the story and Muqātil's – both of which, however, differ considerably from Ibn Ishāq's rendering. Unfortunately, *isnād* analysis does not play a role in Schöller's approach, and therefore there is no examination of the sources in his study. See Marco Schöller, "Sīra and Tafsīr: Muḥammad al-Kalbī on the Jews of Medina," in *The Biography of Muḥammad: The Issue of the Sources*, ed. Harald Motzki (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 31-34.

¹²⁷ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 2:516

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:518.

(a) The account that describes Burāq as a white beast, smaller than a mule but bigger than a donkey, can be identified as having exclusively Basran origins (see chart 2.4 and 2.5). In the widely recorded versions of this account, Qatāda is cited as an important source (see chart 2.4).¹²⁹ Ibn Ishāq also records a version very similar to the Qatāda traditions, but his is attributed to al-Ḥasan rather than to Qatāda (see chart 2.5).¹³⁰ A comparison with the al-Ḥasan and Qatāda traditions yields significant parallels in Muqātil's narration (segments 2 and 3). For instance, in Muqātil's account, Gabriel holds Muḥammad's hand (*wa akhadha bi yadī*), as the latter prepares to lie down in his bed (*wa qad akhadhtu madja'i*), and leads Muḥammad out of Umm Hāni's house (*wa akhrajani min al-bāb*), where Muḥammad then meets Burāq. Burāq is described as a beast somewhere between a mule and a donkey (*dābba^{tun} fawqa al-ḥimārⁱ wa dūna al-baḡhlⁱ*) which can stride towards the farthest point of its sight (*khatwuhā 'inda muntahā baṣarihā*).¹³¹

Although in Ibn Ishāq's version Muḥammad does not sleep in Umm Hāni's house but in the Ka'ba when Gabriel tries several times to wake him up, most of the subsequent elements of the story are the same, albeit described in greater detail.¹³² Thus, when Muḥammad goes back to his bed (*fa-'udtu ilā madja'i*) for the last time, Gabriel stirs him with his foot, wakes him up, grabs his arm (*fa-ukhidhtu bi-'aḡdudī*), and leads him out to the gate of the Ka'ba (*fa-kharaja bi ilā*

¹²⁹ Al-Ṭabarī offers three variants which go back to Qatāda in the transmission of Sa'īd b. Abī 'Arūba (Basran, d. 156/773): Sa'īd > Qatāda > Anas b. Mālik > Mālik b. Ṣa'ṣa'a; see *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 14:414-415. Al-Bukhārī records two versions which go back to Qatāda: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-bukhārī* (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2002), 793, #3207 (*kitāb bad' al-khalq/bāb dhikr al-malā'ika*); 951, #3887 (*kitāb manāqib al-anṣār/bāb al-mi'rāj*). Besides, Ibn Abī Shayba (*Muṣannaf*, 20:244, #37725) and Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (*Musnad al-imām aḥmad b. ḥanbal*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arnā'ūt, and 'Ādil Murshid [Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1995], 20:107, #12672 [3/164]) record the tradition with a different *isnād*, which goes back to the Basran ascetic Thābit al-Bunānī (d. 127/745).

¹³⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 264. As we have already discussed in 3.1.1, al-Ṭabarī reproduces the same account in his *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 14:415-416.

¹³¹ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 2:516.

¹³² Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 264; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 14:415-416.

bab al-masjid), where Muḥammad encounters a white beast, somewhere between a mule and a donkey (*fa-idhā dābba^{tun} abyad bayna al-baghlⁱ wa al-ḥimārⁱ ... yaḍa‘u yadahu fī muntahā ṭarfihi*).¹³³ In the traditions that go back to Qatāda, Burāq has similar features (*utītu bi-dābba^{tin} abyad^a ... fawqa al-ḥimārⁱ wa dūna al-baghlⁱ yaqa‘u khaṭwuhu* [al-Bukhārī: *yaḍa‘u khaṭwahu*] *aqṣā ṭarfihi*).¹³⁴ Although Muqātil’s narration is much more elaborate, including descriptions of the beast’s face, cheeks, mane, tail, and hooves, etc.,¹³⁵ it is clear that significant portions of his account share features that are found in al-Ḥasan’s and Qatāda’s traditions.

(b) The episode analyzed by Boekhoff-van der Voort concerns the descriptions of the physical features of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, which we discussed in the previous section (3.1.4.). The Qatāda tradition seems to be the closest to Muqātil’s version (segment 8). Boekhoff-van der Voort analyzed several groups of traditions and demonstrated that an important group of material has its origin in al-Zuhrī’s transmission.¹³⁶ Other groups of traditions go back to key authorities such as Layth b. Sa‘d (Egyptian, d. 175/791),¹³⁷ Ibn al-Mājishūn (Medinan, d. 164/780),¹³⁸ Mujāhid b. Jabr (Meccan, d. 102/720), and Qatāda (see chart 2.6).¹³⁹ Of all these groups, only Qatāda’s tradition includes a part which describes how Muḥammad saw the *dajjāl* (anti-Christ) after meeting Jesus and Moses. Like the Qatāda tradition, Muqātil’s *Tafsīr* also preserves a description of the appearance of the *dajjāl*.¹⁴⁰ Other elements shared by Qatāda and

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *al-Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, 4:415; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 951, #3887.

¹³⁵ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 2:516.

¹³⁶ Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History and Legend*, 160-165.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 174-177.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 169-172.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 181-186.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 182-183.

Muqātil include, in Muqātil's *Tafsīr*, Jesus' description as fair (*ra'aytu 'isā b. maryam rajul^{an} abyad^a*) and of medium height or tall (*fawqa al-rab'a^{ti}/al-raba'a^{ti} wa dūna al-ṭawīl*),¹⁴¹ and in the Qatāda as being of medium height, with a skin color between white and red (*ra'aytu 'isā b. maryam rajul^{an} marbū' al-khalq ilā al-ḥamra^{ti} wa al-bayād*).¹⁴² These striking parallels suggest that Muqātil is reproducing a version which is extremely close to the Qatāda tradition. However, both in the description of Burāq and Muḥammad's descriptions of the three Prophets, Muqātil expands on the account by adding details which are not found in the Qatāda traditions.

Unsurprisingly, Muqātil's *Tafsīr* does not mention Qatāda any more than he does other authorities. The ambiguity of his sources seems to be a puzzle for generations of *ḥadīth* critics and exegetes. An account recorded by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) contains a discussion about Muqātil's connection to the well-known Khurāsānī exegete Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim (d. 106/724), and whether or not the two exegetes could have ever met.¹⁴³ Muqātil is said to have enigmatically stated that a 'gate of four years' was closed to him and Ḍaḥḥāk (*ughliqa 'alayya wa 'alā ḍaḥḥāk bab^{un} arba' sinīn*). Al-Khaṭīb presents Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥarbī's (d. 285/899) harshly critical interpretation of this statement:

"By gate, he [Muqātil] meant the gate of the city (*bāb al-madīna*), which is situated in the cemetery (*wa dhāka fī al-maqābir*)." It was asked of Ibrāhīm [b. al-Ḥarbī]: "Where is Muqātil from?" He answered: "He is from Marw." Ibrāhīm said: "He never listened to Mujāhid, and he did not meet him." Ibrāhīm said: "In reality, Muqātil collected the *tafsīrs* of people, and he interpreted them without audition (*wa innamā jama'a muqātil tafsīr al-nās wa fassara 'alayhi min ghayrⁱ samā'ⁱⁿ*). If someone had collected the *Tafsīr* of Ma'mar from Qatāda, or the one of Shaybān from

¹⁴¹ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 2:516.

¹⁴² Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History and Legend*, 182-183. In al-Zuhrī's version, Jesus is described as *rajul aḥmar bayna al-qaṣīr wa al-ṭawīl*, see *ibid.*, 161.

¹⁴³ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh*, 15:211-212. Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 5:505 [10:281].

Qatāda, he should do well in creating his own *tafsīr* on (the basis of) it (*kāna yaḥsan" an yufassir" alayhi*)." Ibrāhīm said: "I have included nothing from him [i.e. Muqātil] in my *Tafsīr*."¹⁴⁴

Ibrāhīm's critical evaluation of Muqātil's use of sources, if indeed correct, confirms that Muqātil did relate material from Ḍaḥḥāk (d. 106/724), although the two had never met. Moreover, Ibrāhīm also claims that it is not extraordinary for Muqātil to transmit material from authorities he had never met; indeed this is the very character of his transmission. Interestingly, Ibrāhīm mentions Muqātil's use of Qatāda in his *Tafsīr* as a clear example of this sort of unsound transmission method, and implies that Muqātil had access to a written version of Qatāda's *Tafsīr* in two recensions: Ma'mar b. Rāshid's (Basran, d. 153/770) and Shaybān b. 'Abd al-Rāḥmān's (Basran, d. 164/781), both of whom are authorities known to have recorded and transmitted Qatāda's *Tafsīr*.¹⁴⁵ For example, 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Tafsīr* abounds with traditions from Qatāda transmitted via Ma'mar. Shaybān likewise is a transmitter of numerous Qatāda traditions, as al-Tha'labī notes in the preface to his *al-Kashf wa al-bayān*.¹⁴⁶ Since Muqātil is reported to have moved from Khurāsān to Iraq during al-Manṣūr's reign (r. 136-158/754-775), and lived until his death mostly in Basra,¹⁴⁷ it is safe to assume that he never studied with Qatāda, who died in 117/735. One plausible scenario would be that Muqātil gained access to Qatāda's *tafsīr* material in the transmission of the latter's students. Ma'mar and Shaybān are

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. The passage is translated by Gilliot in his "A Schoolmaster," 328. The translation has been slightly modified.

¹⁴⁵ For different copies of Qatāda's *Tafsīr*, which was available to his students including Ma'mar and Shaybān, see van Ess, *TG*, 2:140.

¹⁴⁶ Al-Tha'labī gives the *isnād* for Shaybān's transmission of Qatāda's exegetical material as follows: Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh b. Ḥāmid b. Muḥammad al-Iṣḥāhānī < Abū 'Alī Ḥāmid b. Muḥammad (d. 356/967) < Abū Ya'qūb Iṣḥāq b. al-Ḥusayn b. Maymūn (d. 284/897) < Abū Aḥmad al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Marwarrūdhī < Shaybān < Qatāda. See Goldfeld, *Qur'anic Commentary in the Eastern Islamic Tradition of the First Four Centuries of the Hijra: An Annotated Edition of the Preface to al-Tha'labī's 'Kitāb al-Kashf wa al-Bayān'* (Acre: Sruqy Printers and Publishers, 1984), 33-36; cf. al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa al-bayān*, 1:75. For Shaybān's transmission of the tradition including descriptions of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, see also chart 2.6.

¹⁴⁷ Sirry, "Muqātil b. Sulaymān," 53-55.

both potential candidates, as both were Basran and contemporaries of Muqātil. What makes Muqātil's method of receiving Qatāda's material unacceptable in Ibrāhīm's eyes is that he gathered and used it without audition (*samā'*). According to formal standards, Muqātil should have received it in an aural form from Qatāda, and not in a written form from Qatāda's students.¹⁴⁸ Still, Ma'mar's and Shaybān's names never appear among Muqātil's informants in his transmissions.

A 3rd/9th-century work attributed to Abū Rifā'a 'Umāra b. Wathīma (d. 289/902), *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, explicitly mentions Muqātil's transmissions as going back both to Ḍaḥḥāk and to Qatāda. In seven traditions, the *isnād* names Muqātil as the source. In five of these traditions, the *isnād* identifies Ḍaḥḥāk as Muqātil's informant, who is said to transmit the tradition from Ibn 'Abbās (Muqātil < Ḍaḥḥāk < Ibn 'Abbās).¹⁴⁹ In the remaining two traditions, Muqātil's informant is Qatāda, who transmits it from al-Ḥasan (Muqātil < Qatāda < al-Ḥasan).¹⁵⁰ These *isnāds* in Ibn Wathīma's work demonstrate that Qatāda was considered a direct informant of Muqātil already in the 3rd/9th century.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ For the importance of the transmission of a text by audition see Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam*, 36-37.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Raif Georges Khoury, *Les légendes prophétiques dans l'Islam: depuis le Ier jusqu'au IIIe siècle de l'Hégire* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1978), 25, 139, 141, 142.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 62, 129. One of the accounts which Ibn Wathīma records from Muqātil can indeed be detected in Muqātil's *Tafsīr*. Ibn Wathīma's work informs us about different interpretations of Q 2:243 "Have you not considered those who went forth from their homes, for fear of death, and they were *thousands* (*wa hum ulūf^{mn}*).". Different exegetes offer different figures for 'thousands' in the verse. Ibn Wathīma notes that in Ibn 'Abbās' interpretation (Jubayr < Ḍaḥḥāk < Ibn 'Abbās) the number is 'four thousand'. In another interpretation the number is 'eighty thousand' (Idrīs < Wab). In Muqātil's interpretation, however, the number is eight thousand people (*wa qāla muqātil b. sulaymān 'an qatāda 'an al-ḥasan kānū thamaniyat^a ālaf^{mn}*). In Ibn Wathīma's *isnād* Muqātil's source is Qatāda, who, in turn, transmits it from al-Ḥasan. See *ibid.*, 61-62. The exact number eight thousand is also found in Muqātil's *Tafsīr*, 1:202.

¹⁵¹ This probably explains why a scholar like Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥarbī, who was a contemporary of Ibn Wathīma, had such a critical opinion of Muqātil, and was not willing to accept his exegetical traditions. Ibrāhīm's critique reflects the rigorous approach to the evaluation of transmission methods advocated by *ḥadīth* scholars of

Our investigation has shown that there are striking similarities between Ibn Ishāq and Muqātil in several cases and that some segments of Muqātil's *isrā'* narrative have their origin in the Basran exegetical traditions. In these segments, traces of Qatāda's *tafsīr* material are particularly prominent. Biographical information, combined with a critical evaluation of Muqātil's exegetical activity, suggests that Qatāda was a source for Muqātil – not directly or personally, but through access to two recensions of Qatāda's exegetical material. When putting all these findings together, we can argue that Muqātil's account of Abū Bakr's conversations with the Quraysh and with the Prophet have their roots in some exegetical material from Basra. Thus, the similarities between Ibn Ishāq's and Muqātil's accounts can be explained by their common Basran origin (see chart 2.7). This enables us to attribute the original form of the story to the activity of the school of al-Ḥasan and Qatāda. We can hence date the tradition to the first quarter of 2nd/8th century.

3.3. The tradition of al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742)

The third group of traditions which give an account of Abū Bakr's confirmation of Muḥammad's journey to Jerusalem is transmitted on the authority of the Medinan scholar Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī. His tradition exists in the transmissions of two of his students: Ma'mar b.

the time. The way in which Muqātil appropriates written material does not comply with the 3rd/9th-century authentication standards of formal audition.

Apart from Muqātil's method of collecting information, there is a second aspect of his work which implicitly meets with Ibrāhīm's criticism: his composition style. He selects freely from the written material available to him and adapts various traditions to his own interpretive framework while modifying them to fit his narrative style. This means that Muqātil not only fails to offer faithful reproductions of these traditions, but disregards their atomistic character and positively distorts them – at least this is the implication of Ibrāhīm's words "he should do well in creating his own *tafsīr* on (the basis of) it (*kāna yaḥsan" an yufassir" alayhi*)." Muqātil's method of taking liberties both in transmission and composition, thus, constitute the basis for the critique leveled against him. Evidently, Muqātil fails to conform to the formal demands of authenticity set by 3rd/9th-century authorities on more than one account. On this point see also Harris Birkeland, *Old Muslim Opposition against Interpretation of the Koran* (Oslo: Dybwad, 1955), 27.

Rāshid (Basran, d. 164/780) and Yūnus b. Yazīd (Ayla, d. 152/769). Contrary to Ibn Ishāq's and Muqātil's accounts, this tradition does not include the scene in which Abū Bakr goes to Muḥammad and inquires about his journey to Jerusalem. Instead, there is an independent account which describes how the Quraysh (rather than Abū Bakr) interrogated the Prophet about his journey and asked specific questions about the city of Jerusalem, with the aim of proving him a liar. In the following, we shall analyze this account in detail.

3.3.1 The tradition of al-Zuhrī in Ma'mar b. Rāshid's transmission

Ma'mar's transmission of the al-Zuhrī tradition has a wide circulation in the classical sources. The earliest report is recorded in Ma'mar's *K. al-Maghāzī*, which is preserved in 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf* (AR I).¹⁵² The same report is also recorded in 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Tafsīr* (AR II).¹⁵³ Although the two traditions have several features in common, their wording differs substantially. In both cases, however, al-Zuhrī is named as the authority from whom Ma'mar derives the tradition ('Abd al-Razzāq < Ma'mar < al-Zuhrī). In the *K. al-Maghāzī* (AR I), Ma'mar introduces the story by saying that the Quraysh were hostile towards the Prophet and that many of those who had believed in him at first then abandoned him and called him a liar, because they did not find his journey to Jerusalem credible.

'Abd al-Razzāq < Ma'mar < al-Zuhrī: (AR I)

(A) One of the polytheists strolled (*sa'ā ilā*) towards Abū Bakr

(B) and said (*fa-qāla*): "This companion of yours claims that he has traveled this very night to Jerusalem (*Bayt al-Maqdis*) and then returned in the same night!"

¹⁵² 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 5:328; Ma'mar b. Rāshid, *The Expeditions: An Early Biography of Muḥammad*, ed. and trans. by Sean W. Anthony (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 22, 24.

¹⁵³ 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr al-qur'ān*, ed. Muṣṭafā Muslim Muḥammad (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1989), 1:380.

(C) Abū Bakr replied: “He said that, did he?”

(D) They said (*qālū*): “Yes!”

(E) Abū Bakr responded: “I testify that if he has said that, then he has spoken the truth!” (*fa-innanī ashhadu in kāna qāla dhālika la-qad ṣadaqa*)

(F) They said: “Do you believe him (*a tuṣaddiquhu*) that he went to Syria (*jā’a ilā al-shām*) in a single night, and returned before morning came?”

(G) Abū Bakr replied: “Yes, I even believe [the things which are] more extraordinary than (or at a greater distance from) that (*uṣaddiquhu bi-ab’ad min dhālika*)! I believe him about the communications from heaven [coming down] day and night (*uṣaddiquhu bi-khabarⁱ al-samā’ⁱ bukrat^{an} wa ‘ashiyy^{an}*)!”

(H) For that reason, Abū Bakr was named *al-ṣiddīq* (*summiya abū bakrⁱⁿ bi-al-ṣiddīq*).¹⁵⁴

The structure of the story and the order of units A-H are the same as in the tradition recorded in ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s *Tafsīr* (AR II). However, the two accounts are not identical. There are several differences in word choice, as in prepositions and conjunctions, and also word order (see the table below). Contrary to AR I, the report in the *Tafsīr* (AR II) provides neither introductory information regarding the context of the story, nor does it identify the people who rush to Abū Bakr after the Prophet tells them about his journey to Jerusalem. Furthermore, in AR II there is a whole group of people, rather than a single person, as in AR I, who converse with Abū Bakr.

Here is a comparison of the two texts; the common expressions are set in bold:

Table 1. The Comparison of the tradition of al-Zuhrī in ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s *Muṣannaf* and *Tafsīr*

<i>isnād</i>	AR I (<i>Muṣannaf</i>)	‘Abd al-Razzāq < Ma‘mar < al-Zuhrī
	AR II (<i>Tafsīr</i>)	‘Abd al-Razzāq < Ma‘mar < al-Zuhrī
A	AR I	<i>wa sa‘ā rajul^{un} min al-mushrikīn ilā abī bakrⁱⁿ</i>
	AR II	<i>annahum dhahabū ilā abī bakrⁱⁿ</i>

¹⁵⁴ Ma‘mar b. Rāshid, *The Expeditions*, 23, 25. The translation has been modified.

Table 1, continued

B	AR I	<i>fa-qāla: hādha šāhibuka yaz‘umu annahu qad usriya bihi al-layla^{ta} ilā bayt al-maqdis thumma raja‘a fī laylatihi</i>
	AR II	<i>fa-qālū: inna šāhibuka yaqūlu innahu qad dhahaba ilā bayt al-maqdis fī laytatihi wa raja‘a</i>
C	AR I	<i>fa-qāla abū bakrⁱⁿ: a-wa qāla dhālika?</i>
	AR II	<i>fa-qāla: a-wa qāla dhālika?</i>
D	AR I	<i>qālū: na‘am!</i>
	AR II	<i>qālū: na‘am!</i>
E	AR I	<i>fa-qāla abū bakrⁱⁿ: fa-innī ashhadu in kāna qāla dhālika laqad šadaqa</i>
	AR II	<i>qāla: fa-ashhadu la‘in kāna qāla dhālika laqad šadaqa</i>
F	AR I	<i>qālū: a-tuṣaddiquhu bi-annahu jā‘a al-shām^a fī layla^{tin} wāḥida^{tin} wa raja‘a qabla an yuṣbiha?</i>
	AR II	<i>fa-qālū: a-tuṣaddiquhu fī an dhahaba ilā bayt al-maqdis fī layla^{tin} wa raja‘a</i>
G	AR I	<i>qāla abū bakrⁱⁿ: na‘am innī uṣaddiquhu bi-ab‘ad min dhālika; uṣaddiquhu bi-khabarⁱ al-samā‘ⁱ bukra^{tan} wa ‘ashiyy^{an}</i>
	AR II	<i>qāla: na‘am innī uṣaddiquhu bimā huwa ab‘ad min dhālika; fī khabarⁱ al-samā‘ⁱ ghadwa^{tan} aw ‘ashiyya^{tan}</i>
H	AR I	<i>fa-li-dhālika summiya abū bakrⁱⁿ bi-al-ṣiddīq</i>
	AR II	<i>fa-summiya al-ṣiddīq li-dhālika</i>

The tradition has several attestations in the later sources as well (see chart 2.8). Al-Ḥākim al-Naysabūrī (d. 405/1014) includes it in his *Mustadrak*,¹⁵⁵ with an *isnād* to Ma‘mar.¹⁵⁶ Al-Ḥākim’s

¹⁵⁵ Al-Ḥākim al-Naysabūrī, *Mustadrak*, 3:65, # 4407.

¹⁵⁶ The *isnād* is: al-Ḥākim < Mukarram b. Aḥmad > Ibrāhīm b. Haytham al-Baladī < Muḥammad b. Kathīr al-Ṣan‘ānī < Ma‘mar < al-Zuhrī [< ‘Urwa < ‘Ā’isha].

report is then reproduced verbatim in al-Bayhaqī's (d. 458/1066) *K. dalā'il al-nubuwwa*.¹⁵⁷ The same report is also included in Ibn 'Asākir's *Tārīkh madīnat dimashq (TMD)*,¹⁵⁸ where two different renderings of it go back to Ma'mar.¹⁵⁹ For all these accounts, Muḥammad b. Kathīr al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 216/831)¹⁶⁰ is the common source, from which the transmission line extends back to Ma'mar (see chart 2.8). We can detect significant parallels between the accounts transmitted via Muḥammad b. Kathīr and the two reports recorded by 'Abd al-Razzāq, albeit there are more similarities with AR II. The structure of the story, the order of the units, and many expressions are identical. The comparison of 'Abd al-Razzāq's accounts with these parallel versions leaves no doubt that Ma'mar was the common source for all of the reports.

In 'Abd al-Razzāq's accounts (AR I & AR II), al-Zuhrī figures as the only authority who is named as Ma'mar's informant. Contrary to 'Abd al-Razzāq's two accounts, the traditions transmitted via Muḥammad b. Kathīr provide an *isnād* which extends beyond al-Zuhrī to 'Ā'isha bt. Abī Bakr (Muḥammad b. Kathīr al-Ṣan'ānī < Ma'mar < al-Zuhrī < 'Urwa < 'Ā'isha). The names of 'Urwa and 'Ā'isha are probably a later addition (*ziyāda*) by the *muḥaddiths*, such as al-Ḥākim or al-Bayhaqī, who preferred full-length *isnāds* over the ones that stopped at the level of 2nd- or

¹⁵⁷ Al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*, 2:360-361.

¹⁵⁸ Ibn 'Asākir, *TMD*, 30:55. For a discussion of these two accounts, see Vuckovic, *Heavenly Journeys*, 90.

¹⁵⁹ There are two other *tafsīrs*, which record the same story, but provide no *isnād* for the report. A close examination of these accounts suggests that both texts share identical features with al-Ḥākim's (d. 405/1014) report, and therefore can be considered as belonging to this group of traditions. See al-Tha'labī, *al-Kashf wa al-bayān*, 6:68; Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Mas'ūd al-Farrā' al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122), *Ma'ālim al-tanzīl*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abdallāh al-Nimr (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayba, 1988-1991), 5:65.

¹⁶⁰ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 5:249, [9:417].

3rd-generation Muslims.¹⁶¹ Therefore, the information that al-Zuhrī transmitted the tradition on the authority of ‘Urwa (< ‘Ā’isha) should be used with caution.

The comparison of the two groups of traditions, transmitted by Ma‘mar’s students ‘Abd al-Razzāq and Muḥammad b. Kathīr only helps us to establish that Ma‘mar was the source for both of them, and that the tradition can be dated to him accordingly. In order to answer the question of whether Ma‘mar heard the tradition in al-Zuhrī’s original narration, and whether it is possible to date it to al-Zuhrī, however, we will need to examine a parallel version of the tradition, this time transmitted by Yūnus b. Yazīd (d. 152/769), who is yet another student of al-Zuhrī (see chart 2.8).

3.3.2. The tradition of al-Zuhrī in Yūnus b. Yazīd’s transmission

Al-Ṭabarī, in his *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, offers a long exegesis of Q 17:1 and 17:60, which consists of several episodes describing the events that took place during Muḥammad’s *isrā’*.¹⁶² Part of the narrative is the account in which Abū Bakr discusses the veracity of Muḥammad’s journey to Jerusalem with the Quraysh.¹⁶³ The account exhibits striking parallels to Ma‘mar’s transmission of the al-Zuhrī tradition. Al-Ṭabarī provides for the entire narrative an Egyptian *isnād* that goes back to Yūnus b. Yazīd (d. 152/769), who is also a well-known student of al-Zuhrī: al-Ṭabarī < Yūnus b. ‘Abd al-A‘lā (Egyptian, d. 264/877) < ‘Abdallāh b. Wahb (Egyptian, d. 197/812) < Yūnus b. Yazīd (Ayla, d. 152/769); see chart 2.8.

¹⁶¹ The fact that many reports attributed to successors or later generations (*mawqūf*) were raised to earlier generations is a common phenomenon in *ḥadīth* scholarship after the 3rd /9th century. Both al-Ḥākim (in his *Ma‘rifat ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth*) and al-Bayhaqī (in his *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*) address this issue. See Jonathan A. C. Brown, “Critical Rigor vs. Juridical Pragmatism: How Legal Theorists and Ḥadīth Scholars Approached the Backgrowth of *Isnāds* in the Genre of *‘Ilal al-Ḥadīth*,” *Islamic Law and Society* 14, no.1 (2007): 23-25.

¹⁶² Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, 14:411-424; 641-647, [15:1-7; 112-113].

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 14:421-422, [15:5-6].

In the *isnād*, Yūnus identifies al-Zuhrī as his informant, and the transmission extends back to two tradents from Medina: Yūnus < al-Zuhrī < Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab (Medinan, d. 94/712) **and** Abū Salama b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (Medinan, d. 94/712).¹⁶⁴ At first, it seems unclear why the *isnād* names both Ibn al-Musayyab and Abū Salama simultaneously. After a brief examination, however, it becomes clear that al-Ṭabarī uses two distinct lines of transmissions for presenting the different anecdotes of the *isrāʾ*, and that he then combines them under a joint *isnād*. Accordingly, parts of his long narrative go back to Ibn al-Musayyab (Yūnus < al-Zuhrī < Ibn al-Musayyab), and others to Abū Salama (Yūnus < al-Zuhrī < Abū Salama). When beginning a new segment, al-Ṭabarī normally gives the name of either Ibn al-Musayyab or Abū Salama in order to avoid confusion.¹⁶⁵

For the story of Abū Bakr’s dialogue with the Meccans, al-Ṭabarī identifies Abū Salama as his authority (*qāla abū salama*). Therefore, it is Abū Salama, not Ibn al-Musayyab, who is al-Zuhrī’s informant for this particular segment of the narrative. Thus, the full *isnād* should be: al-Ṭabarī < Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā < ʿAbdallāh b. Wahb < Yūnus b. Yazīd < al-Zuhrī < Abū Salama.

In the *isnād*, Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā is identified as al-Ṭabarī’s informant. He is indeed one of al-Ṭabarī’s Mālikī teachers, and we frequently come across his name in *isnāds* when al-Ṭabarī derives material from Ibn Wahb.¹⁶⁶ According to the *isnād*, Ibn ʿAbd al-Aʿlā here derives the tradition from Abdāllāh b. Wahb. Ibn Wahb is a student of Mālik b. Anas, portions of whose

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ For instance, Ibn al-Musayyab is named as al-Zuhrī’s informant at the beginning of the episode in which Muḥammad gives detailed descriptions of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. This episode has been analyzed by Boekhoff-van der Voort, and her study shows that there are indeed several parallel attestations that name Ibn al-Musayyab (and not Abū Salama) as al-Zuhrī’s informant. See Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History and Legend*, 135-140, and 160-166.

¹⁶⁶ See Heribert Horst, “Zur Überlieferung im Kommentar aṭ-Ṭabarī,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 103 (1953): 305.

juridical and exegetical works are extant.¹⁶⁷ Ibn Wahb is also credited with a juridical work entitled *al-Muwaṭṭaʿ*, a namesake of Mālik's famous work.¹⁶⁸ Again, al-Ṭabarī's *isnād* identifies Yūnus b. Yazīd as Ibn Wahb's informant for this particular account. As a matter of fact, Yūnus ranks as the second most cited authority after Ibn Wahb's teacher, Mālik, in this work.¹⁶⁹ Yūnus was a resident of Ayla, and we know that he was an important source of information, especially for the Egyptian transmitters.¹⁷⁰ The traditions which he heard from al-Zuhrī are particularly renowned. The biographical dictionaries consider Yūnus as one of the two most important students of al-Zuhrī (the other being Maʿmar).¹⁷¹ Importantly, Yūnus' transmission of the Abū Bakr story, as recorded in al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, is the only example we can locate which actually goes back to al-Zuhrī, and is thus the only parallel version of Maʿmar's transmission of the al-Zuhrī tradition. Of the two other versions (AR I & AR II), which we analyzed above, Yūnus' transmission of the al-Zuhrī tradition most resembles AR I. The table below shows the differences and similarities (printed in bold) between the two accounts (see also chart 2.8):

Table 2. The Comparison of the tradition of al-Zuhrī in ʿAbd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf* and al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʿ*

	AR I (<i>Muṣannaf</i>)	ʿAbd al-Razzāq < Maʿmar < al-Zuhrī
<i>isnād</i>	Ṭ1 (<i>Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī</i>)	al-Ṭabarī < Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā < Abdallāh b. Wahb < Yūnus b. Yazīd < al-Zuhrī < Abū Salama
A	AR I	<i>wa saʿā rajul^{un} min al-mushrikīn ilā abī bakrⁱⁿ</i>

¹⁶⁷ Some parts of Ibn Wahb's *fiqh* and *tafsīr* are still extant. For parallels between Ibn Wahb's *Tafsīr* and the traditions recorded in al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, see Miklos Muranyi, 'Abd Allāh b. Wahb (125/743-197/812): *Al-Ġamīʿ, Tafsīr al-Qurʾān (Die Koranexegese)*, (Wiesbaden: Harrosowitz Verlag, 1993), 15-129.

¹⁶⁸ Idem, 'Abd Allāh b. Wahb (125/743-197/812): *Leben und Werk, al-Muwaṭṭaʿ* (*Kitāb al-muḥāraba*), (Wiesbaden: Harrossowitz Verlag, 1992).

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 206-212.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.; Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 6:276-277, [11:450-453].

¹⁷¹ Ibid. For example, an early *ʿilal* work attributed to Ibn al-Madīnī (d. 224/836) compares Yūnus' and Maʿmar's transmission of an al-Zuhrī tradition. See ʿAlī b. Abdallāh b. Jaʿfar al-Madīnī, *K. al-ʿilal*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Aʿẓamī (Beirut: Maktab al-Islāmī, 2nd ed. 1970), 83.

Table 2, continued

	Ṭ1	<i>fa-utiya abū bakrⁱⁿ al-ṣiddīq</i>
B	AR I	<i>fa-qāla: hādha ṣāhibuka yaz‘umu annahu qad usriya bihi al-layla^{ta} ilā bayt al-maqdis thumma raja‘a fī laylatihi</i>
	Ṭ1	<i>fa-qīla lahu: hal laka fī ṣāhibika yaz‘umu annahu usriya bihi ilā bayt al-maqdis thumma raja‘a fī layla^{tin} wāḥida^{tin}</i>
C	AR I	<i>fa-qāla abū bakrⁱⁿ: a-wa-qāla dhālika?</i>
	Ṭ1	<i>fa-qāla abū bakrⁱⁿ: a-wa-qāla dhālika?</i>
D	AR I	<i>qālū: na‘am!</i>
	Ṭ1	<i>qālū: na‘am!</i>
E	AR I	<i>fa-qāla abū bakrⁱⁿ: fa-innī ashhadu in kāna qāla dhālika laqad ṣadaqa</i>
	Ṭ1	<i>qāla: fa-ashhadu in kāna qāla dhālika laqad ṣadaqa</i>
F	AR I	<i>qālū: a-tuṣaddiquhu bi-annahu jā‘a al-shām^a fī layla^{tin} wāḥida^{tin} wa raja‘a qabla an yuṣbiḥa?</i>
	Ṭ1	<i>fa-qālū: a-fa-tashhadu annahu jā‘a al-shām^a fī layla^{tin} wāḥida^{tin}?</i>
G	AR I	<i>qāla abū bakrⁱⁿ: na‘am innī uṣaddiquhu bi-ab‘ad min dhālika; uṣaddiquhu bi-khabarⁱ al-samā‘ⁱ bukra^{tan} wa ‘ashiyy^{an}</i>
	Ṭ1	<i>qāla: innī uṣaddiquhu bi-ab‘ad min dhālika; uṣaddiquhu bi-khabarⁱ al-samā‘ⁱ</i>
H	AR I	<i>fa-li-dhālika summiya abū bakrⁱⁿ bi-al-ṣiddīq</i>
	Ṭ1	---

A close comparison of the accounts of Ma‘mar (AR I) and Yūnus shows that the two transmissions of the al-Zuhrī tradition resemble each other to a large degree. About three quarters of the expressions are identical. In several places, the similarities between the two accounts even exceed the similarities between the two variants of Ma‘mar’s narration (AR I

	Ṭ1	<i>fa-utiya abū bakrⁱⁿ al-ṣiddīq</i>
B	AR I	<i>fa-qāla: hādha ṣāḥibuka yaz'umu annahu qad usriya bihi al-layla^{ta} ilā bayt al-maqdis thumma raja'a fī laylatihi</i>
	Ṭ1	<i>fa-qīla lahu: ḥal laka fī ṣāḥibika yaz'umu annahu usriya bihi ilā bayt al-maqdis thumma raja'a fī layla^{tin} wāḥida^{tin}</i>
C	AR I	<i>fa-qāla abū bakrⁱⁿ: a-wa-qāla dhālika?</i>
	Ṭ1	<i>fa-qāla abū bakrⁱⁿ: a-wa-qāla dhālika?</i>
D	AR I	<i>qālū: na'am!</i>
	Ṭ1	<i>qālū: na'am!</i>
E	AR I	<i>fa-qāla abū bakrⁱⁿ: fa-innī ashhadu in kāna qāla dhālika laqad ṣadaqa</i>
	Ṭ1	<i>qāla: fa-ashhadu in kāna qāla dhālika laqad ṣadaqa</i>
F	AR I	<i>qālū: a-tuṣaddiquhu bi-annahu jā'a al-shām^a fī layla^{tin} wāḥida^{tin} wa raja'a qabla an yuṣbiḥa?</i>
	Ṭ1	<i>fa-qālū: a-fa-tashhadu annahu jā'a al-shām^a fī layla^{tin} wāḥida^{tin}?</i>
G	AR I	<i>qāla abū bakrⁱⁿ: na'am innī uṣaddiquhu bi-ab'ad min dhālika; uṣaddiquhu bi-khabarⁱ al-samā'ⁱ bukra^{tan} wa 'ashiyy^{an}</i>
	Ṭ1	<i>qāla: innī uṣaddiquhu bi-ab'ad min dhālika; uṣaddiquhu bi-khabarⁱ al-samā'ⁱ</i>
H	AR I	<i>fa-li-dhālika summiya abū bakrⁱⁿ bi-al-ṣiddīq</i>
	Ṭ1	---

A close comparison of the accounts of Ma'mar (AR I) and Yūnus shows that the two transmissions of the al-Zuhrī tradition resemble each other to a large degree. About three quarters of the expressions are identical. In several places, the similarities between the two accounts even exceed the similarities between the two variants of Ma'mar's narration (AR I

and AR II). The most important difference, however, which distinguishes Yūnus' transmission from Ma'mar's, is the absence of unit H. All variants of Ma'mar's narration end with the information that Abū Bakr received the title *al-ṣiddīq* on this very occasion (unit H). Yūnus' transmission of the al-Zuhrī tradition, however, includes no information to suggest a link between the recounted event and the title *al-ṣiddīq*. The lack of this information is important.

A comparison between Yūnus' and Ma'mar's transmissions indicates that the story of Abū Bakr's conversation with the Quraysh goes back to al-Zuhrī. The common elements between the two groups of transmissions also suggest that al-Zuhrī's original narration is not very different from Yūnus's (Ṭ1) and Ma'mar's accounts (AR I and AR II), albeit without unit H. Therefore, we cannot be certain whether al-Zuhrī's original narration was motivated by the desire to explain the origin of Abū Bakr's title.¹⁷² Unless we locate another variant of Yūnus' transmission containing the explanation of Abū Bakr's title, or a transmission of the tradition that independently goes back to al-Zuhrī, unit H needs to be excluded from al-Zuhrī's original narration.¹⁷³

The other difference between the two transmission groups pertains to the variation in their *isnād* (see chart 2.8). In al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-bayān*, Abū Salama b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 94/712) is named as the authority from whom al-Zuhrī derives the tradition. In AR I and AR II, no authority prior to al-Zuhrī is mentioned in the *isnād*. Later sources recording the tradition via

¹⁷² For a thorough discussion of stories devised as etiologies for place and personal names, see Albrecht Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study*, in collaboration with Lawrence I. Conrad, trans. by Michael Bonner (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1994), 189-195.

¹⁷³ In his *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa* 2:360, al-Bayhaqī offers a second account containing the *isnād* al-Zuhrī < Abū Salama. The account includes the information that Abū Bakr was granted the title *al-ṣiddīq* after this event (*qāla abū salama: fa-bihā summiya abū bakrⁱⁿ al-ṣiddīq^a raḍiya Allāh^u 'anhu*). It shares similar features with both Ma'mar's and Yūnus' versions of the tradition. However, no information about the other transmitters is provided.

the transmission of Yaḥyā b. Kathīr (< Maʿmar < al-Zuhrī) identify ʿUrwa as the one who informs al-Zuhrī (< ʿUrwa < ʿĀʾisha). Due to the inconsistency of the identification of al-Zuhrī's informants, the problem, for the moment, cannot be solved. We have therefore to confine ourselves to dating the tradition to al-Zuhrī.

Furthermore, Yūnus' account in al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʿ al-bayān* continues with a second tradition that goes back to Abū Salama (al-Ṭabarī < Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Aʿlā < Abdallāh b. Wahb < Yūnus < al-Zuhrī < Abū Salama < Jābir b. ʿAbdallāh); see chart 2.10. In this short tradition, Muḥammad describes how the Quraysh did not believe him and how God showed him the vision of Jerusalem to help him render an accurate description of the city. Here, it is the Quraysh who interrogate Muḥammad and demand a description of Jerusalem. Above, in Ibn Ishāq's and Muqātil's versions of the story, it was Abū Bakr who went to Muḥammad, posed questions to him, and asked him to describe various features of Jerusalem. Below, in 3.5.4, we will analyze this tradition in more detail, and demonstrate that the account can again be attributed to al-Zuhrī.

To sum up, Yūnus b. Yazīd's transmission of the al-Zuhrī tradition clearly shows that the story of Abū Bakr's confirmation of the veracity of Muḥammad's journey can safely be attributed to al-Zuhrī. We can thus date this Medinan tradition to the first quarter of the 2nd century Hijra (100-124 / 718-742).

3.4. The tradition of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam (d. 182/798)

Al-Ṭabarī’s *Jāmi‘ al-bayān* records another version of Abū Bakr’s conversation with the Quraysh in his exegesis of Q 17:60.¹⁷⁴ Al-Ṭabarī’s *isnād* goes back to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam (Medinan, d. 182/798),¹⁷⁵ and that through the same Egyptian informants: al-Ṭabarī < Yūnus b. ‘Abd al-A‘lā < ‘Abdallāh b. Wahb < ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd (see chart 2.9). This *isnād* occurs approximately 1800 times in al-Ṭabarī’s *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*.¹⁷⁶ Interestingly, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān always appears as the earliest authority, and his informants are never mentioned. Based on his analysis of this *isnād*, Heribert Horst suggested that al-Ṭabarī might have had access to an actual copy of a *tafsīr* which once belonged to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān.¹⁷⁷ In Ibn al-Nadīm’s *Fihrist*, we find two other exegetical works – *K. al-tafsīr* and *K. al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh* – which are also attributed to him.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān is mentioned as an authority who transmits exegetical traditions in the extant portions of Ibn Wahb’s *K. al-jāmi‘*, although these traditions are not as numerous as one would expect.¹⁷⁹ As a matter of fact, they are specifically traditions which ‘Abd al-Raḥmān transmits from his father Zayd b. Aslam (Medinan, d. 136/753). Zayd was a scholar of Qur’ānic exegesis,¹⁸⁰ and he is an important source for Ibn Wahb in his *Jāmi‘*

¹⁷⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, 14:644, [15:111-112].

¹⁷⁵ Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 1:38; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, ed. Shu‘ayb al-Arnā‘ūṭ and Ḥusayn al-Amad, 11th ed. (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Riṣāla, 1996), 8:309; Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 3:344-345, [6:177-178].

¹⁷⁶ Horst, “Zur Überlieferung,” 290 ff.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Ibn al-Nadīm, *K. al-fihrist*, 2.1.:85.

¹⁷⁹ Muranyi notes that al-Ṭabarī does not seem to have been familiar with the material contained in the Qayrawān manuscripts of Ibn Wahb’s *K. al-jāmi‘* (sections on *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*), that and the material covered in these manuscripts does not contain the Ibn Wahb traditions which were as available to al-Ṭabarī. See Miklos Muranyi, ‘Abd Allāh b. Wahb (125/743-197/812): *Al-Ġami‘, Tafsīr al-Qur’ān (Die Koranexegese 2, Teil I)* (Wiesbaden: Harrosowitz Verlag, 1995), 113.

¹⁸⁰ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:405-6. For the list of transmissions of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān from his father in Ibn Wahb’s *K. al-jāmi‘*, see Muranyi, ‘Abd Allāh b. Wahb: *Die Koranexegese*, 131; *idem*, ‘Abd Allāh b. Wahb: *Die Koranexegese 2, Teil I*, 115.

(Ibn Wahb derives the entire section of the *K. al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh* from Zayd).¹⁸¹ If we assume that al-Ṭabarī's account goes back to 'Abd al-Raḥmān's *Tafsīr*, then it would follow that his father Zayd was the most likely source.¹⁸² If this is correct, the tradition of 'Abd al-Raḥmān can be dated - with optimism - to the mid 2nd/8th century at the very earliest.

In this respect, the tradition does not offer anything new with respect to our overall dating scheme. The al-Zuhrī tradition would still be earlier. However, the account could constitute the only existing parallel attestation to the al-Zuhrī tradition with a Medinan provenance. Viewed from this perspective, it can facilitate our understanding of the tradition in the Medinan context of the 2nd/8th century.

Regarding the content, there are significant similarities between the traditions of 'Abd al-Raḥmān and al-Zuhrī (in both the Ma'mar < al-Zuhrī and the Yūnus < al-Zuhrī transmissions). It is evident that 'Abd al-Raḥmān's account retains essentially the same outline of events, and preserves the same units of the story (unit A - G) as the al-Zuhrī tradition. However, there is considerable variance in wording. The account of Abū Bakr's conversation with the people is

¹⁸¹ Ibn Wahb's transmitter of Zayd's *K. al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh* is a certain al-Qāsim b. 'Abdallāh from Medina rather than 'Abd al-Raḥmān. Note, however, that 'Abd al-Raḥmān is also credited with a work on abrogation (*K. al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh*) in Ibn al-Nadīm's *K. al-fihrist*. For more information about al-Qāsim, see Muranyi, 'Abd Allāh b. Wahb: Die Koranexegese, 11-13.

¹⁸² In al-Bayhaqī's (d. 458/1066) compilation of *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, attributed to al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820), there is a report going back to a certain student of Yūnus b. 'Abd al-A'lā, who relates the following: "We used to attend Yūnus' audition of Zayd b. Aslam's *Tafsīr* in Ibn Wahb's transmission..." (*kunnā nasma'u min yūnus b. 'abd al-a'lā tafsīra zayd. b. aslam 'an ibn wahb*). See al-Bayhaqī, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān li-l-Shāfi'ī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2nd ed. 1994), 1:19-20. If this information is correct, then it would mean that Zayd must have had a *tafsīr* of his own, which was transmitted by Ibn Wahb, and then taught by Yūnus b. 'Abd al-A'lā to a wider circle of students that could well have included al-Ṭabarī. As a matter of fact, Ibn Wahb was not strictly speaking a student of Zayd, since in his *K. al-Jāmi'* he narrates Zayd's traditions always via another transmitter. But al-Bayhaqī's report suggests that Ibn Wahb had access to Zayd's *Tafsīr* in one form or another, and that he was teaching it in Egypt. Given these considerations, it is not altogether implausible that, if indeed it existed, Zayd's *tafsīr* material was available to a group of scholars, and that it might have been the *Vorlage* for his son's *tafsīr* work as well. Still, the topic requires further examination, as specific examples could verify whether or not there are traditions which go back independently to both 'Abd al-Raḥmān and his father.

less specific, abbreviated, and simplified in the tradition of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. It neither specifies Abū Bakr’s interlocutors (whether they are the polytheists or the Muslims whose faith is being tested), nor where the conversation takes place. The narrative uses the indeterminate third person plural pronoun (they) to refer to this group of people. Also, in the opening line of the conversation, when Abū Bakr is asked about Muḥammad, the text obscures Muḥammad’s words, rendering them with ‘such and such’ (*‘hādha ṣāḥibuka yaqūlu **kadhā kadhā***’¹⁸³ instead of the specific *‘hādha ṣāḥibuka yaz‘umu annahu qad usriya bihi al-laylat^a ilā bayt al-maqdis thumma raja‘a fī laylatihi’* in AR I¹⁸⁴). Abū Bakr’s reply, stating his opinion about Muḥammad’s journey, is also less elaborate. He counters the query with straightforward logic: *uṣaddiquhu bi-khabarⁱ al-samā‘ⁱ wa al-samā‘^u ab‘ad^u min bayt al-maqdis, wa lā uṣaddiquhu bi-khabarⁱ bayt al-maqdis?* (I believe him about the news from heaven, when heaven is farther away than Jerusalem, so would I not believe him about the news from Jerusalem?).¹⁸⁵ In AR I, this is articulated as follows: *innī uṣaddiquhu bi-ab‘ad min dhālika; uṣaddiquhu bi-khabarⁱ al-samā‘ⁱ bukra^{tan} wa ‘ashiyy^{an}*.¹⁸⁶ These features of the text can be taken as indicators of a secondary form of narration, it constitutes a re-telling of a story that existed in a different narrative form.

Still, the tradition of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān presents two important features which are similar to Yūnus b. Yazīd’s transmission of the al-Zuhrī tradition. First, the tradition establishes no connection between the recounted story and the title *al-ṣiddīq*. This again suggests that some Medinan traditions, when telling the *isrā’* story, were not interested in explaining when and how Abū Bakr received the title *al-ṣiddīq*. Second, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s account continues with an

¹⁸³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, 14:644, [15:112].

¹⁸⁴ ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 5:328.

¹⁸⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, 14:644, [15:112].

¹⁸⁶ ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 5:328.

episode telling another story in which the people ask Muḥammad to give a detailed description of the city of Jerusalem.¹⁸⁷ This is essentially the same account which exists in Yūnus' transmission of the al-Zuhrī tradition. Below, we will analyze this second tradition in more detail.

3.5. Jerusalem is shown to Muḥammad (al-Zuhrī II)

As we saw above in the two traditions of 'Abd al-Raḥmān and al-Zuhrī (Yūnus < al-Zuhrī), al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-bayān* records an additional scene, in which God shows the Prophet a vision of Jerusalem in order to help him meet the demand of the Quraysh of a detailed descriptions of *Bayt al-Maqdis*.¹⁸⁸

The classical sources record different versions of this story, but with similar plot structures. The most interesting of these is found in the accounts of Ibn Ishāq and Muqātil, which record a similar scene (see above).¹⁸⁹ There, Muḥammad is questioned about certain features of Jerusalem as a proof of the veracity of his journey, and God aids him by showing him a vision of Jerusalem. What sets apart the accounts of Ibn Ishāq and Muqātil from the others, is the fact that there Muḥammad's interlocutors are not the Meccans, but Abū Bakr himself. This is apparently a unique feature of these two accounts, since all the other narratives lay greater emphasis on the Quraysh's disbelief and on how their persistent questioning causes the Prophet distress.

¹⁸⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 14:644-645, [15:112].

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 265; Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 2:517-518.

Putting Ibn Ishāq's and Muqātil's accounts aside, we can assign these narratives to three different groups. The first group pertains to the pool of information derived from al-Zuhrī (see chart 2.10). Yūnus' transmission recorded by al-Ṭabarī belongs to this group (al-Zuhrī II), and we will analyze it in greater detail presently. The second group can be traced back to another Medinan authority, namely 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn al-Mājishūn. It has considerable affinities with the al-Zuhrī II tradition (see chart 2.11). This tradition is quite short, and has partially been analyzed by Boekhoff-van der Voort.¹⁹⁰ In the third group, we find a lengthy tradition going back to 'Awf b. Abī Jamīla (d. 146/763), who is a Basran authority, and the tradition hence appears to be of Basran provenance (see chart 2.12).¹⁹¹ The tradition of 'Awf offers quite a different setup for the story. We are given a dramatic account of Muḥammad's dialogue with the famous villain Abū Jahl, who invites the Quraysh to deride Muhammad's fantastic story.¹⁹² As the comprehensive analysis of both Ibn al-Mājishūn's and 'Awf's tradition deserves a separate study, we will focus our analysis on the al-Zuhrī II tradition.

This tradition is widely recorded in the classical sources, not only in al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-bayān*,¹⁹³ but also in 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf*, the *Musnads* of Ibn Ḥanbal and Abū Ya'la, the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and Ibn Ḥibbān, as well as the *Sunans* of al-Tirmidhī and al-Nasā'ī.¹⁹⁴ In all these accounts, al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) is named as the main authority. Having

¹⁹⁰ Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History and Legend*, 168-171.

¹⁹¹ Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, 16:442-443, #32358; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 5:28-29, #2819, [1:309]; al-Nasā'ī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 10:148, #11221; al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*, 2:363-364; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-kabīr*, 12:167-168, #12782; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr qur'ān al-'azīm*, ed. Sāmī b. Muḥammad ibn Salāma (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayba, 1997), 5:29-30.

¹⁹² On 'Awf b. Abī Jamīla, see above, section 3.1.3., nn. 85 and 86. According to the *isnād*, 'Awf's informant is a Basran scholar named Zurāra b. Awfā (93/712) who is known for his *qaṣṣ* activity, as he is reported to have held *qaṣṣ* sessions in his house in Basra. See Lyall Armstrong, "The *Quṣṣas* of Early Islam" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2013), 365.

¹⁹³ Al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 14:422, [15:6].

¹⁹⁴ For more detailed information, see Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History and Legend*, 179-180.

analyzed these versions, van der Voort established that al-Zuhrī is the common link (see chart 2.10).¹⁹⁵ The narrative is short, and very similar in almost all recensions:

Al-Zuhrī < Abū Salama (Medinan, d. 94/712) < Jābir b. Abdallāh (Medinan, d. 78/697):

“When the Quraysh called me a liar, I stood in the *ḥijr* (*lammā kadhdhabatnī quraysh qumtu fī al-ḥijr*). God showed me Jerusalem, and while I was looking at it, I began telling them about its features.”¹⁹⁶

Yūnus’ transmission of the al-Zuhrī II tradition is not only recorded in al-Ṭabarī’s *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, but also in Ibn Ḥibbān’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*.¹⁹⁷ Apart from Yūnus, also Ma‘mar transmits the tradition from al-Zuhrī.¹⁹⁸ Two other students of al-Zuhrī, Ṣāliḥ b. Kaysān (Medinan, d. 140/757) and ‘Uqayl b. Khālid (Ayla, d. 144/761), transmit it as well, and helped the tradition gain wider circulation (see chart 2.10). Comparing all these variants, we can establish without doubt that al-Zuhrī is the main authority to whom the tradition can be attributed.

In the previous section (3.3.), we demonstrated that both Yūnus and Ma‘mar transmit the tradition of al-Zuhrī (I). There, the topic is Abū Bakr’s discussion with the Quraysh about Muḥammad’s nocturnal journey. Here, we can again establish that Yūnus and Ma‘mar transmit the al-Zuhrī tradition (II), only this time the topic is Muḥammad’s vision of Jerusalem:

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 180.

¹⁹⁷ Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Iḥsān fī taqrīb ṣaḥīḥ ibn ḥibbān*, ed. Shu‘ayb al-Arnā‘ūt (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risāla, 1988), 1:252, #55. Ibn Ḥibbān again derives Yūnus’s transmission on the authority of Ibn Wahb (Ibn Ḥibbān < Ibn Qutayba < Ḥarmala b. Yahyā < Ibn Wahb). Boekhoff-van der Voort’s chart unfortunately omits Yūnus’s account in al-Ṭabarī’s *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*. Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History and Legend*, 179.

¹⁹⁸ ‘Abd al-Razzāq records three accounts of Ma‘mar’s transmission, one in his *Muṣannaf* (5:329) and two in his *Tafsīr* (1:371, 380-381). Interestingly, none of the three accounts are identical, and they differ slightly from the rest of the traditions derived from al-Zuhrī. In the *Muṣannaf*, Ma‘mar’s text reads: “I stood in the *ḥijr* when my people (*qawmī*) called me a liar (on the night of *isrā*), until I began describing to them its features.” Boekhoff-van der Voort explains the discrepancy between Ma‘mar’s traditions and the other traditions derived from al-Zuhrī by different stages of editing al-Zuhrī’s material. In her view, Ma‘mar’s transmissions demonstrate the pre-editing stage. See Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History and Legend*, 180.

Table 3. The comparison of al-Zuhrī I and al-Zuhrī II

al-Zuhrī I	Abū Bakr's conversation with the Quraysh	Yūnus < al-Zuhrī & Ma'mar < al-Zuhrī
al-Zuhrī II	Muḥammad sees himself in the Ka'ba, and he has a vision of Jerusalem	Yūnus < al-Zuhrī & Ma'mar < al-Zuhrī

Although these two traditions are separate, they constitute parts of al-Zuhrī's narration of the *isrā'*. In Yūnus's account, al-Zuhrī I and al-Zuhrī II are presented as two successive events.¹⁹⁹ In Ma'mar's, the two traditions are presented as two consecutive but separate accounts. Our analysis shows that the *isrā'* traditions attributed to al-Zuhrī differ in many aspects from the two accounts in the works of Ibn Ishāq and Muqātil. Still, they help us understand how the stories gained their Medinan form in the earlier phases of their circulation.

3.6. Review and comparison of the *isrā'* traditions

As a result of our analysis, we can assign the *isrā'* traditions to two different groups. In the first group, there are traditions which give an account of (a) how Abū Bakr confirms the truth of Muḥammad's journey to Jerusalem, and (b) how he then has a conversation with Muḥammad, asking him details about Jerusalem. The accounts of Ibn Ishāq and Muqātil present these stories as two consecutive and connected scenes involving Abū Bakr. Our analysis of their transmission history has demonstrated that both accounts are mostly probably of Basran

¹⁹⁹ See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 14:422, [15:6].

origin, and that they seem to owe their existence to the transmissions of the Basran exegetical school of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and/or Qatāda.

In the second group, the two scenes are presented in two separate accounts, and Abū Bakr figures only in the first one. According to our analysis, al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) is the earliest authority to transmit both accounts. His narration is primarily preserved in the transmission of his most prominent students: Maʿmar b. Rāshid and Yūnus b. Yazīd. The earliest record of Maʿmar's transmission is found in ʿAbd al-Razzāq's *Tafsīr* and *Muṣannaf*;²⁰⁰ Yūnus' transmission is preserved in al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʿ al-bayān* and in Ibn Ḥibbān's *Ṣaḥīḥ*.²⁰¹ Both accounts come into circulation in Medina, and can be dated approximately to the first quarter of the 2nd century (100-124/718-742). Al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʿ al-bayān* records another tradition that allegedly goes back to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd (d. 192/798) and that has significant parallels with the al-Zuhrī traditions I & II.²⁰² There, both scenes are again presented as consecutive. While the tradition of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān is also of Medinan origin, it can, however, be dated to the mid-2nd/8th century at the very earliest. That puts it in a later time frame than the al-Zuhrī traditions.

The most notable difference between the two groups of traditions lies in their rendering of the second account. In Ibn Ishāq and Muqātil's accounts, Abū Bakr himself goes to Muḥammad and asks him questions about Jerusalem. In the Medinan traditions, Abū Bakr plays no role in the second scene. Instead, it is the Quraysh that oblige Muḥammad to describe Jerusalem in order to prove the veracity of his journey, and God, coming to his aid, shows him a vision of the city.

²⁰⁰ ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 5:328; idem, *Tafsīr*, 1: 371, 380-381.

²⁰¹ In al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, the two scenes are presented as two consecutive accounts, but Ibn Ḥibbān's *Ṣaḥīḥ* contains only the al-Zuhrī II tradition. Cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 14:422, [15:6], and Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:252, #55.

²⁰² Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 14:644-645, [15:112].

As for the identity of the people with whom Abū Bakr discusses the matter in the first account, we find a broad range of variations across the traditions. In Ibn Ishāq's account, the people who come to Abū Bakr to inquire about Muḥammad's journey are apostates, who abandoned their religion, after initially having converted to Islam (*fa-irtadda kathīrūn mimman kāna aslama wa dhahaba al-nās ilā abī bakrⁱⁿ*).²⁰³ In Muqātil's account, they are simply defined as the Quraysh.²⁰⁴ In Ma'mar's narration (in AR I only), a single person engages in a conversation with Abū Bakr, and he is designated as a polytheist (*sa'ā rajul^{un} min al-mushrikīn ilā abī bakrⁱⁿ*).²⁰⁵ In Yūnus' transmission of the al-Zuhrī tradition, the group of people is not specified, but it is clear from the larger context of the narrative that it is the Quraysh.²⁰⁶

At the end of the respective narratives, the different accounts again differ. In the accounts of Ibn Ishāq and Muqātil, they end with Abū Bakr being named *al-ṣiddīq* from that very day.²⁰⁷ Among the Medinan traditions, Ma'mar's transmission of al-Zuhrī I is unique in explaining that Abū Bakr was endowed with the title *al-ṣiddīq* on that occasion.²⁰⁸ Yūnus' transmission of the al-Zuhrī tradition is silent about this event, establishing no connection between it and Abū Bakr's title.²⁰⁹ This is also the case for the tradition of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd.²¹⁰ Due to the discrepancies in the al-Zuhrī traditions, it cannot be safely established whether Abū Bakr being called *al-ṣiddīq* because of his confirmation of the Prophet's words originates in Ma'mar's

²⁰³ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 264-265.

²⁰⁴ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 2:517.

²⁰⁵ 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 5:328; Ma'mar b. Rāshid, *The Expeditions*, 22, 24.

²⁰⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 14:421-422, [15:5-6].

²⁰⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 264-265; Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 2:517.

²⁰⁸ 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 5:328; Ma'mar b. Rāshid, *The Expeditions*, 22, 24.

²⁰⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 14:422, [15:6].

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 14:644-645, [15:112].

tradition, or rather goes back to al-Zuhrī's narration.²¹¹ This is a crucial point, as it prevents us from determining at what point in time the al-Zuhrī tradition (I) gains an etiological character by way of explaining the historical setting in which Abū Bakr was endowed with the title *al-ṣiddīq*.

Despite these differences, there is also an obvious core which is shared by all traditions. For instance, Abū Bakr's conversation with the Quraysh has the same structure in all narrations composed of four segments. (1) Abū Bakr is first asked about his reaction to the wonderous journey about which the Prophet had told the people (Ibn Ishāq: *hal laka yā abā bakr fī ṣāhibika yaz'umu...*;²¹² Muqātil: *a-lā tasma'u mā yaqūlu ṣāhibuka yaz'umu...*;²¹³ Ma'mar [AR I]: *hādhā ṣāhibuka yaz'umu...*;²¹⁴ Yūnus: *hal laka fī ṣāhibika yaz'umu...*;²¹⁵ 'Abd al-Raḥmān: *hādhā ṣāhibuka yaqūlu...*)²¹⁶

(2) In the Medinan traditions, Abū Bakr first wants to ascertain that the Prophet did indeed say

²¹¹ Though a renowned student of al-Zuhrī, Ma'mar is a Basran tradent who transmitted almost an equal number of traditions from Qatāda. Motzki notes that 28% of the Ma'mar traditions in 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf* are derived from al-Zuhrī, and 25% of them from Qatāda. See Harald Motzki, "Der Fiqh des -Zuhrī: die Quellenproblematik," *Der Islam*, 68 (1991): 4-5. For a detailed account of how Ma'mar learned traditions from al-Zuhrī while the latter resided in Rusafa (Syria) during the caliphate of Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik (r. 105-125/723-743), see Anthony's introduction to Ma'mar b. Rāshid, *The Expeditions*, xxiii-xxv. In 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf*, there is a very peculiar tradition with an *isnād* that, interestingly, names both al-Zuhrī and Qatāda simultaneously – it was evidently uncertain from which of the two authorities Ma'mar might have heard the narration ('*an al-zuhrī aw qatāda aw kilāhumā*'). The tradition is about a Jew who demands a certain payment from the Prophet, and the Prophet replies that he has already fulfilled his obligation. When the Jew asks for a proof (*bayyina*) of that, a companion named Khuzayma b. Thābit al-Anṣārī gives a testimony in favor of the Prophet. When the Prophet asks Khuzayma how he could have known about the matter, Khuzayma says: "I believe you regarding what is greater than this; I believe you regarding the news about the heaven" (*uṣaddiquka bi-a'zamī min dhālika, uṣaddiquka bi-khabar al-samā'*). Conspicuously, Khuzayma's testimony is essentially the same as Abū Bakr's when the latter was questioned about the veracity of Muḥammad's journey in the *isrā'* accounts. See 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 11:236, #20417. For a list of mistakes in Ma'mar's transmission lines, see Abū al-Qāsim al-Ka'bī al-Balkhī, *Qabūl al-akhbār wa ma'rifat al-rijāl*, ed. Abū 'Amr al-Ḥusaynī ibn 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-Rahīm (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2000), 1:364-366.

²¹² Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 264-265.

²¹³ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 2:517.

²¹⁴ 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 5:328; Ma'mar b. Rāshid, *The Expeditions*, 22.

²¹⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 14:422, [15:6].

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14:644, [15:112].

such a thing (*a-wa-qāla dhālika?*).²¹⁷ In Ibn Ishāq's account, Abū Bakr does not believe the people, and accuses them of lying about the Prophet.²¹⁸ In all these traditions, Abū Bakr's response is initially that of surprise and hesitation. (3) Once the people reply in the affirmative, Abū Bakr exclaims that if the Prophet indeed told that, then it must be true: *in kāna qāla dhālika la-qad ṣadaqa!* This exclamation is found in all traditions, with nearly identical formulation. (4) Finally, Abū Bakr declares that he confirms the Prophet's words, repeats that he has full trust in the Prophet, and even believes in the communications which are coming down from heaven. The wording of this part varies among the traditions, but the general framework of how Abū Bakr articulates his testimony remains the same.

For Abū Bakr's conversation with the Quraysh, the accounts of Ibn Ishāq and Muqātil have the same structure as the al-Zuhrī (I) tradition. We can also detect considerable philological parallels between the three accounts. Hence, a common origin is possible but cannot be proven at this point. We can only say that the structure of the conversation is very similarly preserved in all versions.

3.7. Narrative analysis of the *isrā'* traditions

We have seen that the story of Abū Bakr's conversation with the Quraysh and Muḥammad's vision of Jerusalem is part of a larger narrative recounting Muḥammad's miraculous journey to Jerusalem. Brooke O. Vuckovic analyzed all these narratives from a literary and theological

²¹⁷ 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 5:328; Ma'mar b. Rāshid, *The Expeditions*, 22; 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, 1:380; Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, 14:422, [15:6]. In the tradition of 'Abd al-Raḥmān, the expression is "*a-wa-qad qāla dhālika?*" *Idem*, 14:644, [15:112].

²¹⁸ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 265.

perspective, and grouped them under various themes.²¹⁹ As her analysis convincingly demonstrates, the narratives of Muḥammad's journey do not only describe the miraculous aspects of his experience, but also mark the sharp contrast between those who reject Muḥammad's story and those who faithfully accept it.²²⁰ Evidently, the nocturnal journey to Jerusalem is a miracle for which there is no other witness than Muḥammad himself. The unseen nature of this miracle, however, necessitates proofs to establish its authenticity.²²¹ Instead of winning even more people over to Islam, it created upheaval in Mecca and triggered apostasy. A round trip from Mecca to Jerusalem in less than a night was regarded by many as simply impossible, and people called Muḥammad a liar. In other words, they were not prepared to believe in a miracle.

There are, however, several narratives which present proofs for the veracity of the journey. In one account, Muḥammad tells the Quraysh about the caravans he passed by on his way, enumerating details such as an escaping camel, an emptied water jar, or the color of two camels leading the caravan which was soon to be expected in Mecca, and so forth.²²² In another narrative, Muḥammad describes to the Quraysh the physical features of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus in order to certify that he actually met these prophets. The scene in which Muḥammad finds himself further obliged to describe the characteristics of Jerusalem also belongs to these proof stories.

²¹⁹ See the third chapter "Communal Reaction: Trials, Betrayal, and True Belief" in Vuckovic, *Heavenly Journeys*, 73-96.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 75-77.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

²²² Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 267-268.

The account of Abū Bakr's conversation with the Quraysh thus vividly portrays how the people voice their disbelief and call for evidence. As a matter of fact, Abū Bakr's testimony to the truth of the Prophet's words constitutes yet another form of proof of its veracity. However, we have to differentiate between Abū Bakr's testimony and the other proof stories we just mentioned. Abū Bakr's vindication of the Prophet, unlike the Prophet's detailed descriptions, does not offer any convincing evidence for the Quraysh. Otherwise, one would have to suppose that Abū Bakr enjoyed a special status among the Quraysh, since consulting him and accepting his testimony as a valid proof would imply that the Quraysh valued Abū Bakr and his opinion more than Muḥammad. Doubtlessly, however, the tradition does not primarily wish to communicate an image of Abū Bakr as a trustworthy fellow of the Quraysh. Therefore, it seems more likely that – as already argued by Vuckovic – the story sets an example for a Muslim audience that heard (or read) these narrations.²²³

In the accounts of Ibn Ishāq, Ma'mar, and Yūnus, the people who went to Abū Bakr to seek his opinion about the Prophet's journey are labeled apostates who abandoned Islam. Their inquiry aims at challenging Abū Bakr's trust and trying to find out whether he would still continue to believe in the Prophet after hearing his nonsensical tale. Abū Bakr takes their challenge seriously. Before declaring his full trust in the Prophet's words, he first verifies that Muḥammad did tell the story. In this set up of the narrative, Abū Bakr's conversation with the apostates and his unconditional support for the Prophet reveal the clearcut contrast between the steadfast believer, who under no circumstances revokes his trust in the Prophet, and those who give up their belief in times of tribulation. This contrast between the believers and the apostates accords with the Qur'ānic verse 17:60, which mentions a vision shown to the Prophet

²²³ Vuckovic, *Heavenly Journeys*, 76, 86.

(*ru'ya araynāka*) as a trial for the people (*fitnat^{an} li-l-nās*). The majority of the accounts present the story within this exegetical context.

The narratives, in other words, present Abū Bakr as an uncompromising and steadfast believer who publicly declares his belief in the Prophet and the truth of the revelation sent to him, at a time when others abandon their religion. Interestingly, however, his declaration of faith and full support of the Prophet do not prompt any hostility on the side of the Quraysh. Rather, the attention is again focused on the Prophet: He faces a considerable amount of distress once he has made his story public. In the traditions that go back to al-Zuhrī, Muḥammad finds himself in a helpless position, unable to recall what he had witnessed during his journey. Mercifully, God shows him a vision of Jerusalem, which enables him to give a detailed description of *Bayt al-Maqdis*, and this fundamentally resolves the problem. In longer versions of this tradition, the narrative gets even more dramatic, as it describes how the Meccans' questioning turns into a form of humiliation and mockery, which Muḥammad has to suffer, until God shows him the vision of Jerusalem to end his misery.²²⁴

In the accounts of Ibn Ishāq and Muqātil, the narrative introduces Abū Bakr rather than the Quraysh as Muḥammad's interlocutor who questions him about the journey and, in his wish to validate Muḥammad's story, asks for a description of Jerusalem. When compared with the other traditions, the role Abū Bakr plays here is somewhat surprising, since he is presented as a cautious person, almost hesitant to accept the veracity of Muḥammad's journey without examination. Abū Bakr's subtle skepticism, however, does not last long. In Ibn Ishāq's version,

²²⁴ For an analysis of this longer version, see *ibid.*, 82-85.

he declares his full trust in Muḥammad's words immediately after the Prophet gives him a description of *Bayt al-Maqdis*, and proclaims his belief in his prophethood.

Thus, although Abū Bakr is at first portrayed as somewhat skeptical, this setup of the narrative creates an occasion for Muḥammad to prove the veracity of his words, and for Abū Bakr to declare his unswerving faith in the Prophet's sincerity. In Ibn Ishāq's narrative, Abū Bakr's public declaration of faith results in his acquisition of the title *al-ṣiddīq* on the very same day (*sammāhu yawma'idhⁱⁿ al-ṣiddīq*). In Ma'mar's transmission of the al-Zuhrī tradition, however, Abū Bakr receives the title directly after his conversation with the Meccans, and Muḥammad does not witness Abū Bakr's declaration of his belief in his prophethood. Ma'mar's account only relates that Abū Bakr received the title *al-ṣiddīq* because of his words about the Prophet. However, in these traditions it is not specified whether it was the Prophet himself, or the Muslim community in general, who named him *al-ṣiddīq* (*summiya bi-dhalika...*). Also, it is not reported whether Abū Bakr received the title on the same day, or whether the people started to call him *al-ṣiddīq* later.

4. Summary of findings

There are two different traditions which set out to explain the title *al-ṣiddīq*. (a) The earliest textual attestation available to us comes from a 2nd/8th-century theological work, namely Ḍirār's *K. al-taḥrīsh*. Ḍirār relates how Abū Bakr received his title due to his early belief, and that a poem by Ḥassān b. Thābit attests to this. (b) The other early textual attestations come from Ibn Ishāq's *K. al-maghāzī* (preserved in Ibn Hishām's *Sīra*) and Ma'mar b. Rāshid's *K. al-maghāzī* (surviving in 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaḥ*). These works explain that Abū Bakr received

the honorific *al-ṣiddīq* because of his public confirmation of the veracity of Muḥammad's miraculous nocturnal journey to Jerusalem, at a time when nobody believed it. However, Ibn Ishāq and Maʿmar identify different authorities (al-Ḥasan/Qatāda and al-Zuhrī respectively) as sources of their information.

Here is a summary of our findings in chronological order.

1. Our analysis of Ibn Ishāq's account revealed that al-Ḥasan and/or Qatāda are the most plausible candidates to be its sources, as they are quoted in the narrative. Since Ibn Ishāq, as a general rule, derives al-Ḥasan's material through ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd, this must also be the case for his *isrāʾ* account, although ʿAmr is not explicitly mentioned. At the end of his narrative, Ibn Ishāq states that he added Qatāda's material to al-Ḥasan's, producing a narration which is a blend of the two. Our analysis demonstrated that parts of the narration indeed go back to Qatāda, who is in fact one of the most well-known students of al-Ḥasan. Al-Ḥasan, Qatāda, and ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd are all from Basra, and it is conceivable that they contributed a small portion of the traditions in Ibn Ishāq's *K. al-maghāzī*. We further showed that the traditions derived from al-Ḥasan and Qatāda are exegetical in character, and predominantly associated with Qurʾānic verses, for whose revelation the story is said to relate the respective occasion. Since Ibn Ishāq moved from Medina to Iraq only late in his life, first settling in Ḥīra during al-Manṣūr's reign (r. 136-158 / 754-775), then moving to Baghdad after its foundation in 145/762, it is safe to assume that Ibn Ishāq gained access to the Basran exegetical material during his Iraqi years.

The narration which goes back to al-Ḥasan and Qatāda reports that the Prophet was transported from the Kaʿba to Jerusalem on a beast called Burāq. In Jerusalem, he met Moses, Abraham, and Jesus, was offered a cup of wine and one of milk, rightly chose the second one,

and returned to Mecca in the morning. After he told the story of his journey, several of those who had initially converted to Islam apostatized. Some of the apostates met Abū Bakr, asked him about his opinion, and Abū Bakr offered his confirmation of Muḥammad's words. Then, however, he went to the Prophet, and asked him to give specific details about Jerusalem as a proof of his journey. God showed Muḥammad a vision of Jerusalem, which enabled him to describe to Abū Bakr how *Bayt al-Maqdis* looked like. Abū Bakr declared his belief in Muḥammad's prophethood in his presence, whereupon the Prophet conferred upon him the title *al-ṣiddīq* on that very day. The account thus clearly associates Abū Bakr's acquisition of the title with his confirmation of Muḥammad's *isrā'*.

Dating this tradition to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Qatāda (early 2nd/8th century) makes it the earliest of all traditions, since al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī died in 110/728, and Qatāda in ca. 118/735. Since both are Basran, the location for the transmission of the tradition must be Basra as well. It was most probably transmitted as part of al-Ḥasan's and Qatāda's exegetical material.

2. A *Tafsīr* from the 2nd/8th century attributed to Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767) also records the story of Abū Bakr with the Quraysh. The story is told as part of a longer narrative which recounts the events of the *isrā'* within the commentary to Q 17:1. Muqātil's account explains that Abū Bakr received the title *al-ṣiddīq* after his confirmation of Muḥammad's journey to Jerusalem. According to the story, the Quraysh (not the apostates) ask Abū Bakr about his opinion of Muḥammad's journey, and Abū Bakr, without hesitation, testifies to its veracity. In the second scene, however, Abū Bakr asks the Prophet to describe to him the walls, gates, and the temple of Jerusalem. As the Prophet gives a detailed account, Abū Bakr finally affirms that Muḥammad spoke the truth. This is reported to be the very day on which Abū Bakr received

the title *al-ṣiddīq*.

Muqātil's *Tafsīr* does not name any authorities from whom the tradition is derived. The narrative structure and the order of events recounted resemble Ibn Ishāq's account most; but Muqātil generally appears to have made liberal use of his sources, adapting the material available to him so that it would fit into his narrative and interpretative framework. In this regard, he neither preserves the atomistic character of the reports, nor does he mention the authorities from whom he derives his material. Noting the similarities between the accounts of Ibn Ishāq and Muqātil, we are able to assemble substantial evidence to demonstrate how Muqātil used Qatāda's exegetical material for the *isrā'* accounts. Since there are reports according to which Muqātil had access to written copies of Qatāda's *tafsīr* in different recensions, we consider Muqātil's account as another variant of the Basran exegetical tradition of the early 2nd/8th century.

3. There is also an important group of traditions going back to al-Zuhrī (Medinan, d. 124/742) via Ma'mar b. Rāshid. Here, the story of Abū Bakr's conversation with the Quraysh is presented as having taken place after Muḥammad's journey to Jerusalem; it again serves to explain Abū Bakr's acquisition of the title *al-ṣiddīq*. The main elements of Abū Bakr's conversation are essentially the same as in Ibn Ishāq's account. There are, however, two versions of Ma'mar's narration of the al-Zuhrī tradition, which are both recorded by 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī. Although the wording varies considerably between these two versions, both report the people asking Abū Bakr whether he believed Muḥammad's journeying to Syria in a single night and return before morning. In Abū Bakr's unconditional confirmation, he professes that he is even ready to believe what is more extraordinary than the Prophet's travel to Jerusalem. Ma'mar's

transmission of the al-Zuhrī tradition ends the narrative by stating that this was the occasion on which Abū Bakr received the title *al-ṣiddīq*.

Our analysis has furthermore demonstrated that another student of al-Zuhrī, namely Yūnus b. Yazīd, transmits the same tradition, which is recorded in al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-bayān*. It contains all narrative elements, except for the explanation of how Abū Bakr received his title. Yūnus' transmission helps us to establish that the tradition indeed goes back to al-Zuhrī. However, it does not allow us to answer the question whether it was al-Zuhrī to whom we owe the explanation of Abū Bakr's honorific, or whether it was Ma'mar who added this information to the tradition.

Moreover, there is another group of traditions going back to al-Zuhrī, transmitted by both Ma'mar and Yūnus, which gives an account of how the Quraysh called Muḥammad a liar. This harsh verdict is, however, revoked when God sends him a vision of Jerusalem, which enables him to give a detailed description of the city as a proof of the veracity of his nocturnal journey. Although the story is essentially the same as in Ibn Ishāq's and Muqātil's accounts, there is one major difference. While in the latter two accounts Muḥammad describes Jerusalem to Abū Bakr, in the al-Zuhrī tradition it is the Quraysh who are the recipients of this proof.

Al-Zuhrī is a Medinan authority, and both of these traditions can be dated to the first quarter of the 2nd/8th century with confidence. However, the connection between Abū Bakr's role in the *isrā'* events and the acquisition of his title can only be dated to Ma'mar's life time with certainty. Ma'mar, originally stemming from Basra, first studied with Qatāda, and only later with al-Zuhrī, when the latter resided in Syria as a tutor of the son of the Umayyad caliph

Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 105-125/723-743).

Al-Zuhrī’s traditions help us to see more clearly in which form Abū Bakr’s story was narrated in Medina at the beginning of the 2nd/8th century. Furthermore, they enable us to detect the differences between the versions of the story we attributed to al-Ḥasan and/or Qatāda.

4. There is another tradition recorded in al-Ṭabarī’s *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, which offers both the story of Abū Bakr and the scene in which Muḥammad describes Jerusalem to a group of Meccans in order to prove his having traveled there. Al-Ṭabarī provides an *isnād* extending back to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam (d. 182/798), a Medinan authority known for his exegetical transmissions. According to our analysis, al-Ṭabarī probably derived the tradition from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s *Tafsīr*, since al-Ṭabarī provides the same *isnād* about 1800 times in his *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*. Since ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s father, Zayd b. Aslam (Medinan, d. 136/753), is known to be an important source for Medinan exegetical traditions, and is in fact more renowned than his son, we suggest that the tradition could possibly have its origin in Zayd’s exegetical corpus. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān died in 182/789, and thus this tradition can be dated to the second half of the 2nd/8th century at the earliest. This constitutes a relatively late date when compared with the al-Zuhrī tradition, which also originates from Medina.

Just like Yūnus’ transmission of the al-Zuhrī traditions, the tradition attributed to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān only recounts the story of Abū Bakr’s conversation with the Meccans, but does not include any explanation of how Abū Bakr acquired the title *al-ṣiddīq*.

5. One of the earliest textual attestations that do explain why Abū Bakr was called *al-ṣiddīq* is Ḍirār b. ‘Amr’s (d. ca. 200/815) *K. al-taḥrīsh*. Ḍirār presents the account in a section in which he

lists traditions advocated by those who defend the supremacy of Abū Bakr over ‘Alī. The account postulates that Abū Bakr was the first believer, and as such received the title *al-ṣiddīq*. First, Muḥammad’s encounter with the monk Baḥīra is presented as a proof of his future prophethood, and then Abū Bakr is said to have believed and confirmed the veracity of the Baḥīra story from the very beginning. When Muḥammad received his first revelations, Abū Bakr was already a believer, and he was called *al-ṣiddīq*. Ḍirār’s account also records a poem by Ḥassān b. Thābit, which is presented as a historical proof-text of Abū Bakr’s primacy in Islam. Our analysis of the various versions of the poem reveals that Ḥassān’s verses were originally reproduced in a tradition that recounts a conversation between al-Sha‘bī (Kufan, d. ca. 103-110/721-728) and Ibn ‘Abbās (Medinan, d. 68/687). When al-Sha‘bī asks Ibn ‘Abbās whether Abū Bakr was the first believer to accept Islam, the latter refers to the verses of Ḥassān b. Thābit as proof of Abū Bakr’s primacy. Our analysis of the al-Sha‘bī tradition, including Ḥassān’s poem, demonstrates that a student of al-Sha‘bī, named Mujālid (Kufan, d. 144/762), can be identified as the common link.

The tradition is most prominently transmitted by a student of Mujālid, namely al-Haytham b. ‘Adī (Kufan, d. ca 206/821), who was a contemporary of Ḍirār. A second student of Mujālid’s, called Ibn Maghrā’, also transmitted the tradition. According to our examination of the sources, the tradition is exclusively Kufan, and was already circulating during Ḍirār’s lifetime. Thus, it is likely that Ḍirār heard the tradition either from Mujālid himself, or from one of his students, such as al-Haytham.

Just like the al-Sha‘bī tradition, the account in *K. al-tahrīsh* explains Abū Bakr’s honorific *al-ṣiddīq* as an indication of his primacy in belief. The poem includes a line that praises Abū Bakr

as the first person to believe in the prophets (*awwala al-nāsi minhum ṣaddaqa al-rusulā*). Most probably originally composed as a *marthiya* poem, which frequently uses hyperbolic language in order to praise the deceased, the statement of Abū Bakr's primacy gained much broader relevance in the religio-political context of the second half of the 2nd/8th century, when the poem was used as a testimony of historical fact.

Ḍirār's *K. al-tahrīsh* is the earliest extant source of all, and we can date it to the second half of the 2nd/8th century. Both the work itself and the accounts claiming Abū Bakr's primacy in Islam are Kufan. When comparing the explanations for Abū Bakr's honorific, the one offered by Ḍirār clearly differs from the one current in Medinan and Basran traditions. Thus, for one thing, the *isrā'* accounts in which Abū Bakr plays a role are apparently not attested in the Kufan transmissions²²⁵ – at least Ḍirār's work suggests no connection between Abū Bakr's involvement in Muḥammad's story of the *isrā'* and his acquisition of the title. This can perhaps be explained by Ḍirār's theological background. Holding ideas resembling those of the Mu of his time, Ḍirār possibly rejected Muḥammad's *isrā'* (and/or *mi'rāj*) on grounds that a *visio beautifica* was deemed impossible.²²⁶

²²⁵ There is a work attributed to the Kufan Shi'ite scholar Hishām b. Sālim Jawālīqī (d. end of the 2nd/8th century), entitled *K. al-mi'rāj*. Ban Ess suggests that a long tradition attributed to him in *Biḥār al-anwār* is possibly derived from this work. See Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, ed. Jawād 'Alawī and Muḥammad Ākhundī (Tehran, 1956-972), 18: 319-331; van Ess, *TG*, 1:344-345. In this Shi'ite tradition, the story of Abū Bakr is missing.

²²⁶ For Ḍirār's views on the *ru'ya*, see van Ess, *TG*, 3:49-50. The observation that there is a disagreement between the traditions of Kufa on the one side, and Basra and Medina on the other, ties in closely with the results of a very recent study by Christopher Melchert. He demonstrates that in the 2nd/8th century Kufa and Basra were two opposing camps as regards the debate about whether or not Muḥammad had a vision of God. He posits that the Basrans believed in the Prophet's vision, whereas the Kufans argued against it, and that Medina usually followed Basra in this debate. See his "The Early Controversy Over Whether the Prophet Saw God," *Arabica*, 62 (2015): 459-476.

CHAPTER THREE: ABŪ BAKR AND BILĀL

Introduction

In version B of the Baḥīrā tradition, we saw that Bilāl's name appears in the narration in connection with Abū Bakr. According to the narrative, at the end of the story Abū Bakr sends Bilāl with Muḥammad back to Mecca. As we have demonstrated in detail, this piece of information was inserted into the Baḥīrā tradition in the religio-political milieus of Kufa or Baghdad in the early Abbasid period.

Nowhere in the narration is there an explanation of why Abū Bakr himself did not take Muḥammad back to Mecca, but instead ordered Bilāl to do so,¹ nor why it was Abū Bakr, and not Abū Ṭālib, who told Bilāl to accompany Muḥammad. There is also no information about the nature of Abū Bakr's relationship to Bilāl, or indeed any explanation why Bilāl is with Abū Bakr and at his service. The authoritative tone of Abū Bakr's order to Bilāl suggests a master-subordinate relationship; yet the narrative itself does not provide any details to confirm this supposition.

The Islamic tradition gives Bilāl's full name as Abū 'Abdallāh Bilāl b. Rabāḥ (or b. Ḥamāma) al-Ḥabashī.² As his *niṣba* "al-Ḥabashī" indicates, and the Islamic biographical sources unanimously report, he is considered to be of Ethiopian origin, born into slavery. According to many traditions, he was a slave of the Banū Jumaḥ clan in Mecca and one of the first to accept Islam,

¹ See, e.g., the two versions in al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1:1123-4; 1125-6.

² For the earliest biographies on Bilāl, see Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3.1:165-70, al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1959), 184-9; [ed. Yūsūf al-Mar'ashlī (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2008), 1:417-436]; Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, *Ṭabaqāt*, 17. See also *El*² s.v. "Bilāl b. Rabāḥ" (W. 'Arafat).

for which they tortured him. Several traditions relate that Abū Bakr was the one who rescued him from persecution by buying and freeing him from slavery, thus becoming his manumitter.

The Islamic tradition venerates Bilāl not only for his early and firm belief, but also because of his distinguished status as the first *mu'adhdhin* (caller to prayer) in Islam. There are reports how Bilāl recited the call to prayer as Abū Bakr led the prayer during the last illness of the Prophet Muḥammad.³ On the other hand, there are accounts which describe how Bilāl sought refuge in Syria to engage in active *jihād* after the Prophet died and refused to act as the *mu'adhdhin* under Abū Bakr. There are differing accounts of a dialogue that took place between Bilāl and Abū Bakr, in which the former asked the latter to exempt him from this duty.

In this chapter, we will explore the relationship between Abū Bakr and Bilāl and examine a wide range of traditions that primarily focus on the three distinct events: (i) Bilāl's conversion and torture; (ii) Abū Bakr's purchase of him to free him from slavery; (iii) and the dialogue between Abū Bakr and Bilāl. We find a total of six distinct transmission clusters that can be subsumed under these episodes. Below, we will analyze them one by one, and seek to determine the earliest forms of each transmission cluster through *isnād-cum-matn* analysis. We will then add a greater depth to our examination by analyzing the discursive framework for each cluster.

1. There are two groups of traditions, transmitted on the authority of 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd (d. 32/652) and Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. 104/722), that name Abū Bakr, Bilāl, and four others, who were the first to believe in God and thus – with the exception of Abū Bakr –

³ For an overview of a wide range of accounts of this episode, see Ibn Kathīr's *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 8:45-60; idem, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, 4:332-40.

became subject to persecution. Although both Abū Bakr and Bilāl are mentioned together, there is no reference to Bilāl's manumission in these traditions.⁴

2. The accounts going back to Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767) draw a very coherent picture about Bilāl's torture and Abū Bakr's emancipation of him, as they include stories of the other slaves whom Abū Bakr freed. Ibn Ishāq names Hishām b. 'Urwa (d. 147/764) as his source, who derives his information from his father 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 94/712). The *isnād* Ibn Ishāq employs for his narration (Ibn Ishāq < Hishām < 'Urwa) appears to be of exceptional character, since Ibn Ishāq's most usual source when deriving information from 'Urwa is Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) rather than Hishām. In Ibn Ishāq's rendering, different elements coalesce to form a much more complex narrative.⁵
3. A tradition, transmitted on the authority of Ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/728), also describes Bilāl's persecution at the hands of his family. In this tradition, Abū Bakr saves Bilāl by paying a certain sum of money. The account is unique in that the Prophet Muḥammad also takes part in the narrative. Ibn Sa'd's (d. 230/845), al-Balādhurī's (d. 297/892), and Ibn 'Asākir's (d. 571/1176) works preserve the different variants of this tradition. With its origins in Ibn Sīrīn's own narration, the tradition of Ibn Sīrīn comes from a period that pre-dates Ibn Ishāq or Hishām b. 'Urwa.⁶
4. There is a group of reports, transmitted on the authority of Qays b. Abī Ḥāzim (d. 84-98/703-716), that identifies the amount Abū Bakr paid to purchase Bilāl as five ounces (*ūqiyya*, pl. *awāq*). Some variants of this tradition record a dialogue in which Bilāl asks

⁴ See below, section 1.1. and 1.2.

⁵ See below, section 2.

⁶ See below, section 3.

Abū Bakr if he had emancipated him for God's or his own sake. In other variants, Abū Bakr exclaims that he would still buy Bilāl even if he costed him a hundred ounces.⁷

5. The *tafsīr* literature also records a short tradition on the authority of 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd, which relates that Abū Bakr bought Bilāl for ten ounces and a mantle. The tradition states that Abū Bakr freed Bilāl for God's sake.⁸
6. A dialogue between Abū Bakr and Bilāl is recorded in a group of traditions that is transmitted on the authority of Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab (d. 94/712). Other attestations of the same episode are found in *futūḥ* literature. The narrative describes a conflict between the two men.⁹

Although these transmission clusters are seemingly independent, significant patterns and interdependencies emerge when they are examined as part of a larger tradition complex. Our analysis will elucidate the distribution of information in different locations and the evolution of narratives over different time periods.

1. Bilāl's conversion and punishment

Conversion and persecution of the first believers at the hands of the Meccan polytheists are major themes in Islamic narratives.¹⁰ Bilāl enjoys a special place in these narratives, as he is portrayed to have endured the harshest forms of torture that the Meccan polytheists exercised on the early believers. There is a considerable number of accounts that provide vivid descriptions of how Bilāl underwent severe affliction.

⁷ See below, section 4.1.

⁸ See below, section 4.2.

⁹ See below, section 5.

¹⁰ For the theme of persecution, see Rubin, *Eye of the Beholder*, 124-66.

The first group of traditions which we will analyze names Bilāl to be among the first seven people who declared their Islamic faith publicly and were tortured by their clans. This group of traditions comes in two distinct transmission clusters, each with several variants.

1.1. The tradition of ‘Abdallāh b. Mas‘ūd (d. 32/652)

The major sources that provide a full *isnād* for this account are the following: Ibn Abī Shayba’s (d. 235/849) *Muṣannaf*,¹¹ Ibn Ḥanbal’s (d. 241/855) *Musnad*,¹² Ibn Māja’s (d. 273/886) *Sunan*,¹³ Ibn Ḥibbān’s (d. 354/965) *Ṣaḥīḥ*,¹⁴ al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī’s (d. 405/1014) *al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-ṣaḥīḥayn*,¹⁵ al-Bayhaqī’s (d. 458/1066) *al-Sunan al-kubrā*,¹⁶ Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī’s (d. 430/1038) *Ḥilya*, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr’s (d. 463/1070) *Istī‘āb*,¹⁷ and Ibn Asākir’s (d. 571/1175) *TMD* (with 6 different variants).¹⁸ All of them, with the exception of the accounts of al-Bayhaqī and al-Ḥākim, derive their information from Yaḥyā b. Abī Bukayr (Kufan, 208-9/823-4),¹⁹ who therefore is the partial common link. The line of transmission, extending from Yaḥyā to ‘Abdallāh b. Mas‘ūd (Kufan, d. 32/652), the alleged narrator of the tradition, is as follows:

¹¹ Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, 17:249-250, #32999; 20:255-6, #38848; 19:530, #36945 (short version).

¹² Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 6:382, #3832.

¹³ Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, ed. Shu‘ayb al-Arnā‘ūṭ and ‘Ādil Murshid (Damascus: Dār al-Risāla al-‘Ālamiyya, 2009), 1:105, #150.

¹⁴ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 15:558, #7083.

¹⁵ Al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:320, #5238.

¹⁶ Al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 8:362, #16897. The same report is also found in al-Bayhaqī’s *Dalā’il al-nubuwwa*, 2:281.

¹⁷ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī‘āb*, 1:81 #167.

¹⁸ Ibn ‘Asākir, *TMD*, 10:438-440.

¹⁹ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 6:119.

Yaḥyā b. Abī Bukayr – Zāʿida b. Qudāma (Kufan, d. 161/776)²⁰ – ʿĀṣim b. Bahdala, a.k.a. Ibn Abī al-Najāūd (Kufan, d. 127-8/744-5)²¹ – Zirr b. Ḥubaysh (d. 81-3/700-2)²² – ʿAbdallāh b. Masʿūd.

The two accounts recorded in al-Bayhaqī's and al-Ḥākim's works, however, follow a different transmission line that goes back to Zāʿida b. Qudāma, who is Yaḥyā b. Abī Bukayr's informant and the common link for the tradition of ʿAbdallāh b. Masʿūd.

Among those accounts that derive their information from Yaḥyā, Ibn Abī Shayba's, Ibn Ḥanbal's and Ibn Māja's accounts are the earliest. They report the tradition either directly from Yaḥyā (Ibn Abī Shayba and Ibn Ḥanbal) or through one transmitter (Ibn Māja). Ibn Ḥibbān's and Abū Nuʿaym's accounts are derived from Ibn Abī Shayba. This fact can also be observed when examining the text of the accounts. The six variants in Ibn ʿAsākir's *TMD* and Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr's account also name Yaḥyā as their informant. Each of these accounts have a distinct line of transmission going back to Yaḥyā and they display only minute textual variations. The later attestations, however, do not help in finding out the original form of Yaḥyā's transmission, since the accounts in Ibn Abī Shayba's and Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal's works record the tradition almost directly from Yaḥyā. For purposes of brevity, it will suffice to examine the earliest two reports, as well as the report recorded in Ibn Māja's *Sunan*.

ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad – his father (Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal) – Yaḥyā b. Abī Bukayr – Zāʿida – ʿĀṣim – Zirr – ʿAbdallāh b. Masʿūd:

²⁰ Ibid., 2:185.

²¹ Ibid., 3:28-29.

²² Ibid., 2:193-194.

The first seven people who declared their faith (in Islam) are: the Prophet (ﷺ), Abū Bakr, ‘Ammār, his mother Sumayya, Ṣuhayb, Bilāl, and Miqdād. As for the Prophet, God protected him with his uncle Abū Ṭālib; and as for Abū Bakr, God protected him with his clan. As for the others, the polytheists took them and clad them in iron jackets, and let them burn (*ṣaharūhum*) under the sun. There is no one (*insān*) among them who did not give in to their (sc. the polytheists’) demands, except Bilāl. His soul endured it for God(’s sake), and he showed endurance to his persecutors. They handed him over to the youth (*aṭawhu al-wildān*) and they started forcing him to parade along the piedmonts of Mecca (*shi‘āb Makka*), while Bilāl kept uttering, “One, One!” (*aḥad aḥad*).²³

A comparison between the texts of Aḥmad and Ibn Abī Shayba reveals that there are only three differences between the two accounts.²⁴ The first is the use of word *insān* in Ibn Ḥanbal’s account instead of *aḥad* in Ibn Abī Shayba’s version. The second is the use of the particle *wa-qad*, which Ibn Ḥanbal’s version omits (*fa-mā min aḥadⁱⁿ illā wa atāhum ‘alā mā arādū*). The third is the use of verb *j.‘l* in Ibn Abī Shayba’s account instead of *a.kh.dh* in the last line of the narration (*fa-ja‘alū yaṭūfūna bihi* instead of *wa-akhadhū yaṭūfūna bihi*). Apart from these discrepancies, the texts are identical. As for Ibn Māja’s account, it first agrees with Ibn Abī Shayba’s text, using *aḥad* instead of *insān*, while preserving the particle *wa-qad*, thus agreeing with Ibn Ḥanbal’s text. As regards the third variation, Ibn Māja’s text agrees again with Ibn Abī Shayba’s expression “*fa-ja‘alū yaṭūfūna*.” These minor differences constitute typical variations for texts that are derived from one common source. It therefore follows that Yaḥyā b. Abī Bukayr should be considered as the main informant for this group of traditions, and the textual content of his transmission should be very similar to any of these three accounts.

Furthermore, a comparison of the accounts going back to Zā’ida b. Qudāma, the alleged source

²³ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 6:382, #3832.

²⁴ Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, 17:249-250, #32999.

of Yaḥyā, with those that are derived from Yaḥyā can reveal whether or not Zā'ida may be considered the common link for the tradition of 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd

The *isnād* in al-Bayhaqī's account mentions al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī as the one who dictated this tradition to him (*imlāʿan*). Al-Ḥākim is al-Bayhaqī's teacher and also the source for this tradition. The rest of the *isnād* is identical in both accounts: Abū al-ʿAbbās Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb (Nishapur, b. 247/861 – d. 346/957)²⁵ – Abū al-Bakhtarī 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Shākir (Kufan, lived in Baghdad, d. 270/883)²⁶ – Ḥusayn b. 'Alī al-Ju'fī (Kufan, d. 203/818)²⁷ – Zā'ida b. Qudāma (Kufan, d. 161/776) – 'Āṣim b. Bahdala (Kufan, d. 127-8/744-5) – Zirr b. Ḥubaysh (d. 81-3/700-2) – 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd (d. 32/652).

A comparison of al-Ḥākim's text with the accounts derived from Yaḥyā indicates that the major variation in this particular version is the use of the expression *awqafūhum fī al-shams* (made them stand under the sun) instead of *ṣaharūhum*. The rest of al-Ḥākim's account is in accordance with Yaḥyā's transmission and significantly resembles the three accounts we have analyzed above.²⁸ Based on this comparison, al-Ḥākim's account bears strong indications that the entire tradition of 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd goes back to Zā'ida, rather than to Yaḥyā, whereupon we can confidently date the tradition to the early Abbasid period, namely to the last quarter of Zā'ida's life, the time between 132/750 and 161-2/776-7. Since Zā'ida, as well as

²⁵ Al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz* (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, 1958), 3:864.

²⁶ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh*, 11:281.

²⁷ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 1:595.

²⁸ As a minor variation, we note that the expression *fa-mā min aḥadⁱⁿ illā qad ātāhum kull^a mā arādū* is formulated in al-Bayhaqī's account as: *fa-mā min aḥadⁱⁿ illā waqada wa atāhum 'alā mā arādū*. See al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan*, 8:362, #16897.

his two informants, Yaḥyā and Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī al-Ju‘fī, are Kufan scholars, we can identify Kufa as the place where this tradition was first circulated.

1.2. The tradition of Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. 104/722)

There is another tradition with an independent web of transmissions that names the first seven people who convert to Islam and become persecuted upon declaring their faith in public. This tradition bears striking parallels to the tradition of ‘Abdallāh b. Mas‘ūd.

To my knowledge, this tradition is recorded in the following sources: Ibn Sa‘d’s (d. 230/845), *Ṭabaqāt*,²⁹ Ibn Abī Shayba’s (d. 235/849) *Muṣannaf*,³⁰ al-Balādhurī’s (d. 279/892) *Ansāb*,³¹ Abū Nu‘aym’s (d. 430/1038) *Ḥilya*,³² Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr’s (d. 463/1070) *al-Isti‘āb*³³ and Ibn al-Jawzī’s (d. 597/1200) *Muntaẓam*.³⁴ Al-Balādhurī and Ibn al-Jawzī mention Ibn Abī Shayba as their source for this account. The remaining three have Jarīr b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Rāzī as their common link, with an *isnād* going back to Mujāhid: Jarīr b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd (b. 107/725 – d. 188/804)³⁵ – Manṣūr b. al-Mu‘tamar (Kufan, d. 132/750)³⁶ – Mujāhid b. Jabr (Meccan, d. 104/722).³⁷ The *isnād* stops at the level of Mujāhid, who is a well-known exegete and neither connected to any companion of

²⁹ Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3.1.:166.

³⁰ This tradition appears in three different places in Ibn Abī Shayba’s work, each time with the same *isnād*. However, one of the accounts is an abbreviated version. See and Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, 17:250, #33000; 18:338, #34570; 19:521, #36913 (short version); 20:254, #37741.

³¹ Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* (Ḥamīdullāh), 185.

³² Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilya*, 1:140.

³³ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Isti‘āb*, 1:913 #3350.

³⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī tārikh al-mulūk wa al-umam*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1992), 4:298.

³⁵ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 1:427-8.

³⁶ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 5:525-6.

³⁷ *Et*² s.v. “Mudjāhid b. Djabr al-Makkī” (Andrew Rippin).

the Prophet nor to any eyewitness.³⁸ Jarīr is named to be the direct informant for both Ibn Sa‘d’s and Ibn Abī Shayba’s accounts. A comparison of the textual elements of these three accounts will show whether Jarīr is indeed the common source.

Ibn Sa‘d’s = Ibn Abī Shayba’s account

The first seven people who declared their faith (in Islam) are: the Prophet (ﷺ), Abū Bakr, Bilāl, Khabbāb, Ṣuhayb, ‘Ammār, and ‘Ammār’s mother Sumayya. As for the Prophet, God protected him with his uncle Abū Ṭālib; and as for Abū Bakr, God protected him with his clan. The others were taken and they (sc. the polytheists) clad them in iron jackets (*adrā’ al-ḥadīd*), and let them melt (*ṣaharūhum*) under the sun until the hardship reached its utmost limit (*ḥattā balagha al-jahd^a minhum kull^a mablagh^m*); then they (sc. the believers) fulfilled what they were asking for. Then their people (*qawm*) came to each of them with leather buckets filled with water (*bi-anṭā’ al-adam fihā al-mā’*) and threw them into it and then carried [each one of them] holding on both sides (*thumma ḥamalū/ḥumilū bi-jawānibihi*), except Bilāl.

When it became evening, Abū Jahl came, and started scolding Sumayya in an obscene manner, and then he stabbed and killed her. She is the first martyr that was martyred in Islam.

Except Bilāl, for his soul endured it for God (‘s sake) until they became tired [of him]. And then they tied a cord (*ja‘alū ḥabl^{an}*) on his neck and ordered their youngsters (*ṣibyānahum*) to become harsher on him along the two rouged hills of Mecca (*akhshabay Makka*) as he started uttering, “One, One!” (*aḥad aḥad*)

Ibn Sa‘d’s account is identical to Ibn Abī Shayba’s, and both texts derive their information directly from the common link, Jarīr.³⁹ This means that either both authors recorded verbatim what they heard from Jarīr, or one of them copied the text from the other without naming their actual source. Abū Nu‘aym’s account helps us to find out whether or not Jarīr can indeed

³⁸ On Mujāhid, see van Ess, *TG*, 2:640-3.

³⁹ The preposition *ilā* is missing in the fifth sentence of Ibn Sa‘d’s text, but this variation is unimportant.

be regarded as the common source. In large portions, Abū Nu‘aym’s text agrees with Ibn Sa‘d’s and Ibn Abī Shayba’s accounts, and preserves the main features of this tradition. However, significant variations occur in the last portion of the narration, since the part about Bilāl is absent, and the section about Abū Jahl is presented in a different manner:

As for others (*ammā al-akhārūn*), they clad them in iron jackets, and let them melt (*ṣaharūhum*) under the sun. Their hardship reached (its maximum) point – *mā sha‘ā allāh* – because of the heat of the iron and the sun. When it became evening, Abū Jahl, may God curse him, came to them with a spear [in his hand], scolding (*yashtumuhum*) them and chiding (*yubawwikhuhum*) them.⁴⁰

Abū Nu‘aym’s account indicates that the section about Abū Jahl is an essential part of the tradition of Mujāhid, despite the paraphrased and shortened form of its narration. By preserving the general characteristics of this group of transmissions, Abū Nu‘aym’s account offers strong evidence that Jarīr must be the common source. Jarīr died in 188/804 in Rayy.⁴¹ According to biographical information, he was born in Iṣbahān around 107/725, but grew up in Kufa, and in the later part of his life he moved to Rayy.⁴² If we look at the birth dates of his two transmitters, namely Ibn Abī Shayba (b. 159/775 in Kufa)⁴³ and Ibn Sa‘d (b. 168/784 in Basra),⁴⁴ we can assume that Jarīr must have passed this tradition onto the next generation of transmitters only in the later phase of his life. The third transmitter, Qutayba b. Sa‘īd (d. 240/854), was born ca. 149/766 in Balkh and traveled to Iraq only in 172/788.⁴⁵ The period

⁴⁰ Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilya*, 1:140.

⁴¹ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 1:427-8.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3:239

⁴⁴ *EF*² s.v. “Ibn Sa‘d” (Johann W. Fück).

⁴⁵ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 4:521-2.

between 173/789 and 188/804, i.e. the last fifteen years of Jarīr's life, therefore appears to be the only time where Jarīr could have passed this tradition on to his students. The location is again Iraq, and most likely Kufa, where Jarīr was active until he moved to Rayy.⁴⁶

1.3. Comparison of the traditions of 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd and Mujāhid b. Jabr

The traditions of 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd and Mujāhid can be dated to the second half and the last third of the 2nd/8th century, respectively. Both traditions circulated in the same location: Kufa. The two traditions not only share very similar story elements, but also contain identical expressions. Below, we will undertake a closer analysis in order to illuminate the question of a possible common origin. Ibn Abī Shayba, presenting one of the earliest written attestations, records the two traditions separately in his *Muṣannaf*. The overlapping elements, as presented below, demonstrate the points of juncture between the two traditions.⁴⁷

- (a) The first seven people who declared their faith (in Islam) are: the Prophet (ṣ), Abū Bakr, 'Ammār, his mother Sumayya, Ṣuhayb, Bilāl, ('Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd: Khabbāb / Mujāhid: Miqdād).
- (b) As for the Prophet, God protected him with his uncle Abū Ṭālib; and as for Abū Bakr, God protected him with his clan. (c) As for the others, [they] took them and clad them in iron jackets, and let them melt (ṣaharūhum) under the sun. (d) They gave in to their (sc. the polytheists') demands, except Bilāl. (e) His soul endured it for God('s sake), and showed endurance to his persecutors. (f) Their youngsters forced him to parade along the hills of Mecca. (g) Bilāl kept uttering, "One, One!" (aḥad aḥad)

⁴⁶ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh madīnat al-salām*, 8:184, #3697.

⁴⁷ See the two traditions recorded, e.g., in Ibn Abī Shayba's *Muṣannaf*, 17:249-250, #32999 and #33000.

In both traditions, the first two units (a and b) are identical in wording; the only difference occurs when Miqdād's name is replaced by Khabbāb's in the tradition of Mujāhid. Expressions such as *albasūhum adrā' al-ḥadīd, ṣaharūhum fī al-shams* are also identical. Unit e, where Bilāl's endurance is narrated, is again identical in wording. The other units match in both traditions, as the information is conveyed in similar forms of expressions. As for differences, Abū Jahl's brief role in the persecution is not mentioned in the tradition of 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd, and the part describing the believers being watered after giving in to the polytheists' demands is absent in the tradition of Mujāhid.

The significant overlap of information, the identical wording, as well as the order and structure of the storyline suffice to establish the fact that these two traditions cannot be considered as narrations transmitted independently from each other: they must have common origins. Yet, their *isnād* does not suggest an identifiable common source. Therefore, we cannot establish a link between the putative narrators of the two traditions to whom the narrations are attributed, namely between 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd (who lived in Kufa, was a companion of the Prophet and a well known traditionist, and died in 32/652) and Mujāhid b. Jabr (who was born in 21/642 and died between 100/718 and 104/722 in Mecca). Still, it is clear that the traditions were derived from a common source; possibly one to which both Zā'ida and Jarīr, or their informants, had access. Cross-copying between the transmitters (Zā'ida and Jarīr, or alternatively their informants 'Āṣim and Maṣṣūr b. al-Mu'tamar) also cannot be excluded. If so, one of the traditions must present a faked line of transmission. In any case, we can confidently state that this tradition goes back latest to the early Abbasid time period (*terminus ante quem*), the time between 132/750 and 161-2/776-7, and thus conforms to the date we have established for Zā'ida's tradition. The location in all circumstances must be Kufa.

1.4. Narrative analysis of the story of the first seven believers

To understand the narrative structure of the ‘Abdallāh b. Mas‘ūd / Mujāhid b. Jabr tradition(s), we will first concentrate on the formal characteristics of the narration. Utilizing the tools developed by Gérard Genette in his *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, our attention will focus primarily on the temporal aspects of the narrative, more particularly on frequency and duration.⁴⁸ Secondly, our analysis will dwell on the figures mentioned in the narrative, as well as on their role in the story.

Many scenes in Ibn Mas‘ūd’s / Mujāhid’s narration of the story of the first seven believers do not reproduce a full scenic narrative of the events that actually happened. There is a multitude of events happening at different levels. Events, both before and during the persecution scenes, occur in different places, and in different forms. A sense of their existence is delivered only implicitly. A good example is the public declaration of each of the individuals’ belief in Islam. They do not confess their faith collectively. Each act of public declaration happened at a different time and place, and under different conditions. This can be deduced from the fact that the narrative relates that each one of the believers declared his/her faith only to his/her own clan. A detailed account of these separate events and their settings, however, is not part of the narration, because it only constitutes the background information (or in narrative terms, the backstory). For this purpose, the events are treated collectively, gaining an iterative character, thus presenting a categorical treatment for each individual’s conversion. The categorical treatment of events and individuals serves to facilitate a more succinct narration.

⁴⁸ Mathias Voigt has applied these concepts in his analysis of the Islamic historical traditions from a literary perspective in his *Figures de califes entre histoire et fiction: al-Walīd b. Yazīd et al-Amīn dans la représentation de l’historiographie arabe de l’époque abbaside* (Beirut, Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2006).

In this way, the narrator has control over what to downplay or contract in contextualizing the story.

In the next phase, and along the same lines, the events surrounding each individual's persecution are also portrayed as having occurred at similar occasions, as if each individual's torture scene is part of one identical mode of persecution. The sentence "[They] took them and clad them in iron jackets, and let them melt under the sun" conveys a collective persecution, despite the fact that the narration also indicates that each individual was tortured by his/her own clan, and possibly in different places. Here, the narration condenses different events happening in different times and places into a single scheme of events, allowing them to be described within a single mode of expression.

Another temporal aspect of the narration relevant to our analysis is duration. One way of analyzing duration is to look at the discrepancies between the story time (the time it takes for the events to take place in its real time setting) and the narrative time (the time and textual space it takes for the narration to recount those events). At the time when the torture of each of these individuals began, no information is presented about the specifics of each individual's persecution. The details and the method of torture, as well as the extent of the harshness and length in each case are not exposed in full. Rather, they are described in two brief sentences, making the summary form of the narration ever more evident.⁴⁹

A comparison between these two dimensions of time as they blend into each other defines how the main focus of the narration is configured. As we move to the next part of the narration,

⁴⁹ For the distinction between story time and narrative time in the Genettian theory of narrative, see *ibid.*, 63-84.

which describes Bilāl's persecution, more details are provided to explicate the events particular to Bilāl's case. The reader/listener experiences an expansion in the narration in two ways. Bilāl goes through the persecution for a longer duration of time (story time), and the lengthier description of his persecution (narrative time) reflects this temporal stretch in its narration of the events. This expansion in the narration is indicative of the emphasis that is intended to be conveyed in the entire narrative. The twist in the temporal dimensions of the narration, as the summarizing tone changes into a more scenic mode, demonstrates that the emphasis is placed on the exceptional nature of Bilāl's persecution and his endurance. All the elements up to the actual scene of Bilāl's persecution are geared towards highlighting Bilāl's firm and uncompromising character in terms of his faith as well as his high status as a believer and staunch monotheist, as he keeps uttering "*aḥad, aḥad!*"

As for the names provided in the first line of the narration, they are also part of the background information. By identifying them as the very first believers, the narration sets the time frame for the events described at a very early stage of Muḥammad's prophetic mission. Apart from identifying them as the first believers, no further information is given. Aside from some information on the Prophet Muḥammad and Abū Bakr (both specified as having protection from their family/clan), as well as Bilāl, nothing specific is revealed regarding these individuals. Their names appear, rather, as a collection of names who represent the earliest believers. Another common characteristic of this group of believers is related to their social status, since they all come from the lowest strata of the Meccan society. The majority of these names appear in the classical biographical sources as strangers in Mecca in terms of their

tribal affiliation.⁵⁰ The sense of their lower status is also apparent in the narration itself. The Prophet and Abū Bakr are offered protection (*manʿa*) by their close kin as a clear indication for their better status within their social and kinship network. The other believers, on the other hand, appear deprived of any protection or form of social leverage to support them. In this regard, they should be classified not only as the first to accept the Islamic faith, but also as individuals from the lower echelons of Meccan society, therefore subject to persecution.⁵¹

Abū Bakr's name remains outside of this classification. He is expressly said not have faced any form of hardship, unlike the other believers who underwent severe torture. Yet, Abū Bakr's exemption from hardship does not cast any negative light on him. Instead, his status is maintained by the similarity of his case to the Prophet's. More importantly, the tradition names him among the first believers who accepted Islam, and therefore made him belong to this distinguished group of individuals.

⁵⁰ Bilāl, ʿAmmār (Yemenī origin), Khabbāb (Nabataean, Sawādī origin), Salmān (a Persian), Ṣuhayb (a Greek) are also mentioned among the *ahl-al ṣuffa* (the people of the vestibule), who were originally slaves. See *El*¹ s.v. "Ahl al-Ṣuffa" (Hermann Reckendorf). In addition to these, there is Miqdād, whose name appears in the place of Khabbāb in the tradition of Muḥāhid. Miqdād is also said to be a non-native of Mecca. However, the sources state that he was of Arab origin, belonging to the tribe of Bahrā, a group of the Quḍāʿa that resided in Syria. There is information that he became a *ḥalīf* (confederate) of Banū Zuhra through adoption in Mecca. See, *El*² s.v. "al-Miḥdād b. ʿAmr" (G. H. A. Juynboll). Although a slave, Khabbāb is also said to be related to Banū Zuhra, as his *mawlā* was a confederate of this tribe. The sources also state that Miqdād and Khabbāb lived together after their emigration to Medina in the house of Kulthūm b. Hidm. Moreover, the sources relate that the Prophet paired both with the same person, Jābir b. Hidm, when setting up a relationship of brotherhood (*muʾākhāt*). See *El*² s.v. "Khabbāb b. al-Aratt" (M. J. Kister).

⁵¹ In the classical sources, the first believers in Mecca are often placed among the *mustaḍʿafūn/al-ḍuʿāfa wa al-masākīn*, the weakest group, lacking economic means. See Miklos Muranyi, "The First Muslims in Mecca: A Social Basis for a New Religion?" in *The Life of Muḥammad*, ed. Uri Rubin (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1998), 7-9; and Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, 38. Similarly, Serjeant discusses various meanings of the terms *ḍaʿīf* and *mustaḍʿaf* in early Islamic society, and explains that these terms do not refer primarily to physical weakness but rather to inferiority in terms of social standing, and lack of protection for those members of the society who were incapable of defending themselves, as opposed to people (*sharīf*) who were provided with protection (*manʿa*). See R. B. Serjeant, "The Ḍaʿīf and Mustaḍʿaf and the Status accorded them in the Qurʾān," in his *Customary and Shariʿah Law in Arabian Society* (Hampshire: Variorum, 1991), 32-47. This explanation also holds true for the Prophet and Abū Bakr, since they are described to have enjoyed the protection of their clans (*manaʿahu bi ʿammihī - bi qawmihī*).

Commenting on the traditions of Ibn Mas‘ūd and Mujāhid, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (d. 463/1070) also notes the importance of Abū Bakr’s inclusion in the list.⁵² He remarks that although Muḥammad’s wife Khadīja, his cousin ‘Alī, and his step-son Zayd were also among the earliest to have accepted Islam, they were not included in this list.⁵³ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr explains their exclusion as due to their affiliation to the Prophet’s family and their consequent exemption from any persecution.⁵⁴ Although this does not necessarily explain why Abū Bakr’s name is included, it is evident that even the medieval Muslim scholars understood the traditions in the framework of the discussions on the identity of the first Muslims. Within the confines of our analysis, we can substantiate two points in connection to the inclusion of Abū Bakr’s name in the narrative. Firstly, this is one of the traditions that explicitly attests that Abū Bakr is one of the earliest to accept Islam. Secondly, the narration draws a contrast between Abū Bakr and the other believers. Abū Bakr emerges as the only freeman of a higher social status in Meccan society to accept Muḥammad’s message. Yet, the tradition(s) of ‘Abdallāh b. Mas‘ūd and Mujāhid b. Jabr do(es) not particularly underline the significance of Abū Bakr’s social status. In these groups of traditions, it is Bilāl’s persecution that is the central theme, and the focus of the narrative remains on his dedicated example rather than that of Abū Bakr.

* * *

In the next sections, we will analyze traditions that focus on Abū Bakr’s role as a free man and wealthy merchant who manumits slaves. The distinction in status of Abū Bakr and other early

⁵² Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Durar fī ikhtisār al-maghāzī wa al-siyar*, ed. Shawqī Ḍayf (Cairo: Dār al-Taḥrīr, 1966), 43-4.

⁵³ Ibid., 44.

⁵⁴ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Durar*, 44.

members of the nascent religion is more explicit in these traditions, as Abū Bakr financially supports the group of early believers and funds Muḥammad's prophetic mission. So far, the persecution narratives in the traditions of Ibn Mas'ūd and Mujāhid carry only traces of this link between Abū Bakr and the early believers of slave origin. By focusing on the persecution story of Bilāl, the traditions of Ibn Mas'ūd and Mujāhid set the stage for a wider investigation of the different aspects of Abū Bakr's activities during the persecution phase. Thus, we will examine a wider web of traditions that concern Bilāl's persecution at the hands of the polytheists and Abū Bakr's part in his rescue.

2. The tradition of 'Urwa (d. 94/712)

There is a widely circulated group of traditions that recount the story of Bilāl's persecution. In this complex of traditions, the common link is the famous Medinan tradent 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr (23-94/644 –712).⁵⁵ His tradition is carried by two distinct groups of narrations, and transmitted via two Medinan tradents: his son, Hishām b. 'Urwa (d. 147/764), and 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Abī al-Zīnād (Medinan, d. 174/791 in Baghdad).⁵⁶

2.1. The recension of Hishām b. 'Urwa (d. 147/764)

Hishām's version of the tradition is recorded in Ibn Ishāq's *Sīrā* (or, more correctly, *K. mab'ath wa al-maghāzī*), and has also been transmitted through another channel, namely Layth b. Sa'd

⁵⁵ On 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr and the corpus of material that goes back to him, see Andreas Görke and Gregor Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte über das Leben Muḥammads: das Korpus 'Urwa Ibn az-Zubair* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2008), 10-14; Andreas Görke, Harald Motzki, and Gregor Schoeler, "First Century Sources for the Life of Muḥammad? A Debate," *Der Islam* 89, no. 2 (2012): 2-59.

⁵⁶ As we will show below under 2.2.1., 'Abd al-Raḥmān could not have transmitted the tradition directly from 'Urwa, but must have transmitted it through his father Abū al-Zīnād (d. 130/748), who is another student of 'Urwa, next to Hishām.

(d. 175/791). However, it is Ibn Ishāq's account that enabled Hishām's version of the 'Urwa tradition to gain wider circulation, since we find many sources that derive their information from Ibn Ishāq.

2.1.1. Ibn Ishāq's account

Ibn Ishāq's work has been recorded in two recensions, namely those of 'Abd al-Malik b. Hishām (Basran, d. 218/833 in Egypt), via Ziyād al-Bakkā'ī (Kufan, d. 183/799),⁵⁷ and Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Jabbār al-'Uṭāridī's (d. 272/886), via Yūnus b. Bukayr [d. 199/815]).⁵⁸ There are a number of later sources, which derive their accounts from these two recensions. Ibn Asākir's *TMD*, for example, has an account with an *isnād* going back to al-'Uṭāridī from Yūnus b. Bukayr.⁵⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī's (d. 597/1200) *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*,⁶⁰ Ibn al-Athīr's (d. 630/1233) *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*,⁶¹ and Ibn Kathīr's (d. 774/1373) *al-Bidāya*⁶² also record the main constituents of the tradition, providing, however, only partial information about their source, mentioning the names of 'Urwa or Ibn Ishāq but in a perfunctory form, and presenting many of the elements in a paraphrased form.

Other than these two recensions of Ibn Ishāq and their later reproductions, there is a third transmitter, namely Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ayyūb (Baghdadi, d. 228/843), via Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd (Medinan, d. 184/800), who transmits the tradition as recorded in five different works: Ibn Ḥanbal's (d. 241/855) *Faḍā'il al-ṣaḥāba*, Abū Nu'aym's *Ḥilya*, Abū al-Qāsim Ismā'īl b. Muḥammad al-Taymī al-Iṣbahānī's (d. 535/1140) *al-Ḥujja fī bayān al-maḥajja*, Ibn al-Jawzī's *Tanwīr al-ghabash*

⁵⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 205-7; Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muhammad*, 143-4.

⁵⁸ Al-'Uṭāridī, *Sīrat Ibn Ishāq* (Ḥamīdullāh), 120-1, #179; *Sīrat Ibn Ishāq* (Zakkār), 170-1, #234-8.

⁵⁹ Ibn 'Asākir, *TMD*, 10:440-1.

⁶⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*, 1:436-7.

⁶¹ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, 1:588-9.

⁶² Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-nihāya*, 4:144-5; idem, *The Life of the Prophet Muḥammad*, 1:356-7.

fi faḍl al-sūdān, and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's (d. 852/1449) *Taghlīq al-ta'liq*. As the detailed analysis below will show (see 2.1.1.c.), the *isnāds* of the accounts in all five sources go back to Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ayyūb, who hears the narration from Ibn Ishāq's well-known Medinan student, Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd (d. 184/800).⁶³

2.1.1.a Ibn Hishām's version

Among the three different transmission groups of Ibn Ishāq's tradition (the recensions of Ibn Hishām, al-ʿUṭāridī, and Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ayyūb), the longest account is that of Ibn Hishām. It is in his *Sīra* that Abū Bakr gains a weighty role, not only by freeing Bilāl from slavery, but also by emancipating other slaves. Ibn Hishām's account is composed of several narration segments and a short introductory section providing background information that precedes them.⁶⁴

Background Information

[1] Bilāl belongs to someone from Banū Jumah, and he is one of their half-castes, an offspring of a foreign captive (*muwallad min muwalladīhim*),⁶⁵ he is a faithful Muslim. His father's name is Rabāḥ, his mother's name is Ḥamāma.

Segment A- Umayya b. Khalaf's torture

[2] Umayya b. Khalaf b. Wahb b. Ḥudhāfa used to bring Bilāl out at the hottest part of the day, [3] and throw Bilāl on his back in the open valley of Mecca (*baṭḥā' Makka*); [4] then order a huge rock to be placed on his chest [5] and

⁶³ On Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd, see Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 89.

⁶⁴ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 205-7. For the full translation of Ibn Hishām's account, see Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 143-4.

⁶⁵ *Muwallad* refers more specifically to those who were born in slavery in Arabia, raised among Arabs, but who still are not of pure Arab blood. See Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 123; Khalil ʿAthamina, "How Did Islam Contribute to Change the Legal Status of Women: The Case of the Jawārī or the Female Slaves," *Al-Qanṭara* 28, no. 2 (2007): 391; El Shamsy, *The Canonization of Islamic Law*, 31.

say to him: “It will continue like this until you die or deny Muḥammad and worship al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzāl” [6] Bilāl used to say “One, One!” (*aḥad aḥad*)

Segment B- *Waraqa b. Nawfal’s encounter with Bilāl and the dialogue with Umayya*

Ibn Ishāq – Hishām b. ‘Urwā – ‘Urwā: [7] Waraqa b. Nawfal used to pass by him and as he [sc. Bilāl] was being tortured in that way (*wa huwa yu’adhdhab bi-dhālika*) and saying “One, One!” [8] and he [sc. Waraqa] would say “One, One, by God, Oh Bilāl!” [9] then he would approach Umayya b. Khalaf and those from Banū Jumaḥ who were mistreating him: “I swear by God, if you kill him, I will make his tomb a shrine (*la-attakhidhannahu ḥanān^{an}*)”

Segment C- *Abū Bakr’s dialogue with Umayya and his rescue of Bilāl*

[10] Until one day Abū Bakr *al-ṣiddīq* passed by him as they were ill-treating him [11], Abū Bakr’s house was among the Banū Jumaḥ. [12] He said to Umayya b. Khalaf: “Are you not afraid of God regarding [your treatment of] this poor fellow? [13] He replied: “You are the one who corrupted him, so save him from [the plight] you see!” [14] Abū Bakr said: “I will do so! I have a black slave who is tougher than him (*ajlad minhu*), and more keen on your religion (*aqwā ‘alā dīnika*); I would exchange him for him [sc. Bilāl].” [15] He said: “I accept,” and Abū Bakr said: “He is yours!” [16] Abū Bakr gave his slave to him and took [Bilāl] and freed him.

Ibn Hishām’s account does not end here. It continues with the stories of six other slaves, namely ‘Āmir b. Fuhayra, Umm ‘Ubays, Zinnīra, al-Nahdiyya and her daughter, and a slave girl of Banū Mu’ammal, all of whom Abū Bakr bought and freed. By giving accounts of these slaves whom Abū Bakr emancipated, the focus of the narration moves away from Bilāl and his suffering, and shifts towards Abū Bakr. By recounting his aid to the believers, the story of each of these individuals’ rescues constitutes a different segment of the narration, as in the following:

Segment D- *Bilāl and the other slaves*

[16] He [sc. Abū Bakr] freed six [other] slaves before migrating to Medina, Bilāl being the seventh:

[17] ‘Āmir b. Fuhayra, who participated in the Battle of Badr and Uhud, and was killed at Bi’r Ma’ūna;

[18] Umm Ubays;

Segment E- *Zinnīra*

[19] Zinnīra: she lost her sight when he [sc. Abū Bakr] freed her, and the Quraysh said: “Nothing but al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā have taken her sight away!” but she said: “By the House of God (*bayt Allāh*), they lie. Al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā can neither harm nor heal!” And God restored her sight.

Segment F- *al-Nahdiyya and her daughter*

[20] And he freed al-Nahdiyya and her daughter, both of whom belonged to a woman from Banū ‘Abd al-Dār. [21] Then he passed by them, and their lady had sent them for [the grinding of] some flour of hers (*bi-ṭaḥīn^m lahā*), as she was saying: “By God, I will never set them free!” Abū Bakr replied: “Oh, Umm fulān, free yourself from the oath (*ḥill^{um}*)!” She said: “It is free, you are the one who corrupted them, so you free them (*anta afsadtahumā, fa-a’tiqhumā*).” Abū Bakr said: “For how much?” She said: “So-and-so much!” He said: “I buy them and they are both free!” [Turning to al-Nahdiyya and her daughter, he continued:] “Return her flour to her.” She [al-Nahdiyya] said: “Should we not finish it [the grinding] first and then take it back to her?” Abū Bakr replied: “As you wish!”

Segment G- *The slave girl of Banū Mu’ammal*

[22] And he passed by a slave girl of Banū Mu’ammal, a clan of Banū ‘Adī b. Ka‘b, who was a Muslim, as ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb was torturing her to make her leave Islam. At that time he [sc. ‘Umar] was [still] a polytheist and he was beating her until he was tired, then he would say: “I leave you alone, nothing but tiredness made me stop!” Then she would say: “May Allah treat you in the same way!” Abū Bakr bought her and freed her.⁶⁶

For the segments D-G no additional *isnād* is provided. In Ibn Hishām’s recension, the account of the slaves and Abū Bakr’s role in saving them is presented as if it were a single block of narration with one *isnād* going back to ‘Urwa. However, the narration does not consist of a single plot structure, but rather features a conglomerate of multiple narratives, each with a varying plot structure.

⁶⁶ On the authority of Abū al-Bakhtarī, al-Balādhurī identifies the slave-girl as Lubayna, a slave of Banū Mu’ammal b. Ḥabīb b. Tamīm; see *Ansāb* (Ḥamīdullāh), 1:195; cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, 8: 100.

The first segment [A] of the narration, which relates the account of Umayya b. Khalaf's torturing of Bilāl, resonates with the two traditions (the traditions of 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd and Mujāhid) we have analyzed above. Ibn Hishām reproduces the same account verbatim at another place in his *Sīra* inside a different tradition.⁶⁷ That tradition describes how Bilāl cries out at the top of his voice when he sees Umayya at the battlefield and calls for the latter's death. Upon Bilāl's call, Umayya is slain at the hands of the other Muslims. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf is reported to be the eyewitness-narrator of that tradition. The story of Umayya's torturing of Bilāl is embedded into 'Abd al-Raḥmān's narration as a flashback account. The flashback scene serves to describe how Umayya used to treat Bilāl when the latter became Muslim. In this way, it offers an explanation for why Bilāl acts with such rage when he encounters Umayya. This embedded description of Umayya's torturing of Bilāl is nearly an exact replica of the descriptions in segment A of Ibn Hishām's narration.

The tradition that recounts the story of Umayya's killing on the battlefield finds parallel versions in al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*⁶⁸ and Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī's *K. al-aghānī*.⁶⁹ Al-Ṭabarī provides the following *isnād* for his account: Ibn Ḥumayd – Salama b. Faḍl (d. 191/806) – **Ibn Ishāq** – 'Abd al-Wāḥid b. Abī 'Awn – Sa'd b. Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf – Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf – 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf. Ibn Hishām's version also provides the same *isnād* from Ibn Ishāq to 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf, as does *K. al-aghānī*. Without doubt, Ibn Ishāq is the common source for the accounts of Ibn Hishām, al-Ṭabarī and Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī. On the basis of these findings, we can conclude that the story of Umayya's torturing of Bilāl (segment

⁶⁷ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 448-9; idem, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 303.

⁶⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1:1326-7.

⁶⁹ Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *K. al-aghānī*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2002), 4:143.

A) is part of the material Ibn Ishāq narrated. The question of whether it was part of the ‘Urwa tradition requires further examination.

Ibn Hishām furnishes no *isnād* for segment A, and renders the *isnād* (Ibn Ishāq – Hishām b. ‘Urwa – ‘Urwa) only at the beginning of segment B. As a corollary, the tradition that allegedly goes back to ‘Urwa only starts with the story of Waraqa’s encounter with Umayya and Bilāl (segment B). There is no other *isnād* given for the entire narration, and it is not clear whether the other parts, i.e. segments C through G, can also be considered as part of ‘Urwa’s tradition. The rest of the narration in Ibn Hishām’s recension is not provided with any line of transmission; the *isnād* going back to ‘Urwa seems to comprise all the segments of the narration. The segments of the narration are, however, of varying character. When closely examined, for instance, it becomes evident that the account of Waraqa’s dialogue with Umayya (segment B) and the account of Abū Bakr’s exchange of slaves with him (segment C) are episodes that are not necessarily connected to each other. The same holds true for the other segments of Ibn Hishām’s narration, where Abū Bakr buys and frees different slaves. Each of these episodes recounts a separate incident. The varying character of these narrative segments, therefore, defies a collective treatment. Below, we will analyze each segment separately, in order to uncover whether the origins of these episodes really lie in ‘Urwa’s narration. But first, we need to detect which of the elements in Ibn Hishām’s recension are originally derived from Ibn Ishāq’s narration in order to be able to reconstruct Ibn Ishāq’s original account. The parallel recensions of Ibn Ishāq’s work will serve that purpose.

2.1.1.b. Al-‘Uṭāridī’s recension of Ibn Ishāq

The account of Waraqa’s encounter with Umayya b. Khalaf and Bilāl (segment B) is also found in Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-‘Uṭāridī’s (d. 272/886) recension.⁷⁰ Al-‘Uṭāridī’s *isnād* is as follows: Al-‘Uṭāridī – Yūnus b. Bukayr (d. 199/815) – Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767) – Hishām b. ‘Urwa (d. 147/764) – ‘Urwa (d. 94/712). In al-‘Uṭāridī’s account, there is neither any mention of Umayya’s torture of Bilāl (segment A) nor of Abū Bakr’s offer to Umayya to exchange Bilāl with a slave of his own (segment C).⁷¹ In other words, al-‘Uṭāridī’s recension of Ibn Ishāq treats Waraqa’s encounter with Umayya (segment B) as a separate tradition, and is silent about Abū Bakr’s part in emancipating Bilāl.

The other segments of Ibn Hishām’s narration, such as the stories of the other slaves as bought and freed by Abū Bakr (segments D through F), find a place in al-‘Uṭāridī’s work, but with different features. There, we have an account that names all the seven slaves, including Bilāl, who are saved by Abū Bakr (resonating with the segment D, unit 16 in Ibn Hishām’s work).⁷² The same account relates the story of al-Nahdiyya and her daughter (segment F). Although a separate account, the story of Zinnīra (segment E) is also recorded. These stories are presented in an order that differs from the one of Ibn Hishām’s presentation. Most importantly, Ibn Ishāq’s name does not appear in the *isnāds* of these accounts. Al-‘Uṭāridī’s informant, Yūnus b. Bukayr, receives the information directly from Hishām b. ‘Urwa, not from Ibn Ishāq. Although it might seem surprising, this is not an unusual feature of the *isnāds* in al-‘Uṭāridī’s work. There

⁷⁰ Al-‘Uṭāridī, *Sīrat Ibn Ishāq*, 170-1.

⁷¹ In *TMD*, Ibn ‘Asākir also derives an account from al-‘Uṭāridī, relating the story of Waraqa’s encounter with Umayya and Bilāl. The tradition also retains the poem recited by ‘Ammār b. Yāsir; see Ibn ‘Asākir, *TMD*, 10:440-1.

⁷² Al-‘Uṭāridī, *Sīrat Ibn Ishāq*, 171.

are other instances where Yūnus b. Bukayr takes Ibn Ishāq's material and joins it to reports from other authorities.⁷³ In this regard, al-ʿUṭāridī's accounts, concerning segments D, E and F, should be considered as attestations of Hishām b. ʿUrwa's narration, rather than Ibn Ishāq's. Below, we will analyze these reports more closely when discussing Hishām b. ʿUrwa's original narration.

In addition to these traditons, al-ʿUṭāridī records a further account from Ibn Ishāq that relates a poem recited by ʿAmmār b. Yāsir. Al-ʿUṭāridī's *isnād* for this account goes back to Ibn Ishāq via Yūnus b. Bukayr.⁷⁴ However, the *isnād* reaches back neither to Hishām nor to ʿUrwa. In the poem, ʿAmmār praises Bilāl and prays to God to reward Abū Bakr for the work he has done for Bilāl and his companions (*aṣḥābihi*). At the same time, he disparages Abū Jahl and Fākih for their evil enterprise against Bilāl. In the remainder of the poem, ʿAmmār keeps praising Bilāl for his firm belief in the unicity of God, his dedication to monotheism, and his readiness to sacrifice his life for it. Here is the introduction to ʿAmmār's poem, as well as the first two lines mentioning Abū Bakr:

Segment H - ʿAmmār's poem

Al-ʿUṭāridī – Yūnus b. Bukayr – Ibn Ishāq: He [sc. Ibn Ishāq] said: according to what I have heard (*balaghanī anna*), ʿAmmār recited the following, where he mentioned Bilāl, his mother Ḥamāma, and his companions, and what misfortune befell them, and how Abū Bakr freed them [sc. Bilāl and his companions] from them [sc. the polytheists] (*ʿitāqat^u Abī Bakrⁱⁿ raḍiya Allāh^u ʿanhu iyyāhum*):

For Bilāl and his companions, may God reward / ʿAtīq with goodness and abase Fākih and Abū Jahl

⁷³ See Schoeler, *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 32-3. Schoeler relates a report from Ibn Ḥajar, in which he states that Yūnus b. Bukayr used to take Ibn Ishāq's material and join it to different reports.

⁷⁴ Al-ʿUṭāridī, *Sīrat Ibn Ishāq*, 170-1.

in darkness, as they acted wickedly against Bilāl / They did not take into account [the consequences] which a man of reason would have heeded.⁷⁵

The poem refers to Abū Bakr as ‘Atīq, a name he presumably carried in the pre-Islamic period,⁷⁶ and praises him for his good deeds. Abū Jahl and Fākih, on the other hand, are named as the main villains who inflicted distress on Bilāl and his companions. There is no mention of Umayya b. Khalaf or Banū Jumaḥ in the poem. Thus, ‘Ammār’s verses probably refer to a different incident of Bilāl’s persecution. The *isnād* of al-‘Uṭāridī’s account extends back to Ibn Ishāq, not to Hishām or ‘Urwa. This suggests that Ibn Ishāq might have had access to another group of material, differing from Hishām’s or ‘Urwa’s, regarding the story of Bilāl’s persecution.

2.1.1.c. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ayyūb’s recension

A third recension of Ibn Ishāq’s work, namely that of Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ayyūb al-Baghdādī’s (d. 228/843)⁷⁷ via Ibrāhīm b. Sa‘d (Medinan, d. 184/800, lived in Baghdad),⁷⁸ helps us in reassessing Ibn Ishāq’s original narration. This version of Ibn Ishāq’s tradition occurs in five sources: Ibn Ḥanbal’s (d. 241/855) *Faḍā’il*,⁷⁹ Abū Nu‘aym’s (d. 430/1038) *Ḥilya*,⁸⁰ Abū al-Qāsim Ismā‘īl b. Muḥammad al-Taymī al-Iṣbahānī’s (aka Qawām al-Sunnā)(d. 535/1140) *al-Ḥujja*

⁷⁵ *Jazā Allāh^u khayr^{an} ‘an Bilālⁱⁿ wa ṣaḥbihi / ‘Atiq^{an} wa akhzā Fākih^{an} wa Abā Jahlⁱ // ‘ashiyyat^{an} humā fī Bilālⁱⁿ bi-su’atⁱⁿ / wa lam yaḥdhurū ma yaḥdhuru l-mar’^u dhū al-‘aqlⁱ.*

⁷⁶ By using an old name of Abū Bakr, the poem possibly tries to establish an association between his name ‘atīq (meaning ‘freed from slavery’, ‘emancipated’) and his activity of freeing slaves. On etiology, see Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, 189-95. For the explanation for Abū Bakr’s nickname *al-‘atīq*, see *ibid.*, 195, n. 27; also al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1:2133:6 – 2134:4; cf. Theodor Nöldeke, “Die Tradition über das Leben Muhammads,” *Der Islam* 5 (1914):161-2.

⁷⁷ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 1:112.

⁷⁸ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 1:142-3.

⁷⁹ Ibn Ḥanbal’s, *Faḍā’il*, 118-20.

⁸⁰ Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilya*, 1:147-148

fi bayān al-maḥajja,⁸¹ Ibn al-Jawzī's (d. 597/1200) *Tanwīr al-ghabash fi faḍl al-sūdān*,⁸² and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's (d. 852/1449) *Taghlīq al-taʿlīq*.⁸³ Ibn Ḥanbal's *Faḍāʾil*, as compiled by his son ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, is the earliest collection to record this tradition from Ibn Ayyūb, who is the direct source for ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Hanbal.⁸⁴ Al-Taymī's account is a replica of the account in the *Faḍāʾil*, as the latter is explicitly stated to be the source of the former. Abū Nuʿaym's account goes back to Ibn Ayyūb via different transmitters; and his account is, in turn, the source for the remaining two scholars, Ibn Ḥajar and Ibn al-Jawzī.⁸⁵ In this regard, the account in the *Faḍāʾil* can be taken as a representative of Ibn Ayyūb's recension, since it is directly derived from him, and Abū Nuʿaym's account as a text of parallel attestation, as it bears no marks of significant variation.

If we compare the text in the *Faḍāʾil* with Ibn Hishām's account, the results are striking. The two texts, over a page long in their edited versions, agree with each other in most details, and the few variations can be dismissed as unimportant.⁸⁶ Ibn Ayyūb's recension preserves all the segments of the narration from B through G, and in the same order as in Ibn Hishām's narration. The main difference is the absence of the episode of Umayya's torturing of Bilāl

⁸¹ Abū al-Qāsim Ismāʿīl b. Muḥammad al-Taymī al-Iṣbahānī, *al-Ḥujja fi bayān al-maḥajja wa sharḥ ʿaqīdat ahl al-sunna*, ed. Muḥammad b. Rabīʿ b. Hādī ʿUmayr Madkhalī (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzīʿ, 1990), 2: 351-3.

⁸² Ibn al-Jawzī, *Tanwīr al-ghabash fi faḍl al-sūdān wa al-ḥabash*, ed. Marzūq ʿAlī Ibrāhīm (Riyadh: Dār al-Sharīf li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzīʿ), 125.

⁸³ Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Taghlīq al-taʿlīq ʿalā ṣaḥīḥ al-bukhārī*, ed. Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Mūsā al-Qazqī (Amman: Dār ʿAmmār, 1985), 3:268.

⁸⁴ For this account, ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal does not name his father in the *isnād*. Rather, it is stated that ʿAbdallāh was told by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ayyūb (*ḥaddathanā ʿAbdallāh ḥaddathanā Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ayyūb Abū Jaʿfar qāla haddathanā ...*)

⁸⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī is known to have admired Abū Nuʿaym and made use of his *Ḥilya* as a major source in many of his works. See *EF*² s.v. "Ibn al-Djawzī" (Henri Laoust).

⁸⁶ E.g., the missing expression *bi-dhālika* after *wa huwa yuʿadhdhabu* in the *Faḍāʾil*, the missing relative pronoun *alladhī* between the words *anta* and *afsadtahu*, and *ḥurīqū* (may God let them burn) instead of *kadhabū*, *taṭḥīnānī lahā* instead of *bi-taḥīnī lahā*.

(segment A) in Ibn Ayyūb's recension. Additionally, Ibn Ayyūb's account preserves 'Ammār's poem on Bilāl (segment H).⁸⁷

The inclusion of 'Ammār's poem in Ibn Ayyūb's rendering of the episode is important for two reasons. First, in addition to al-'Uṭāridī's account, we have another attestation which proves that the poem existed in Ibn Ishāq's narration. It is only missing from Ibn Hishām's narration. Most likely, Ibn Hishām himself is responsible for the omission. In the introduction to his book, Ibn Hishām explains the underlying principles of his rendering of Ibn Ishāq's material, saying that he deliberately excluded traditions in which the Prophet has no role, and also omitted certain verses and disputable passages.⁸⁸ Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh also notes that Ibn Hishām excluded large portions of the poems and verses that came down to him on the grounds that Ibn Ishāq's ascriptions of the verses to their alleged authorities could not be certified.⁸⁹ Ibn Hishām's authorial decision thus explains convincingly why 'Ammār's poem is missing from his work and recorded only in al-'Uṭāridī's and Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ayyūb's accounts.

Secondly, the poem eliminates doubt whether we can talk about direct copying from Ibn Hishām by Ibn Ayyūb, since the two texts significantly resemble each other. Ibn Hishām's deliberate omission and Ibn Ayyūb's inclusion of 'Ammār's poem make it evident that the accounts had their origin in Ibn Ishāq's original narration.

⁸⁷ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā'il*, 120.

⁸⁸ Schoeler, *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 32.

⁸⁹ Al-'Uṭāridī, *Sīrat Ibn Ishāq*, "Introduction" ب.

2.1.1.d. Main features of Ibn Ishāq's narration

Following our analysis of the three recensions, here is an outline of how Ibn Ishāq's material is transmitted:

Ibn Hishām: A, B, C, D, E, F, G

Ibn Ayyūb: B, C, D, E, F, G, H

al-ʿUṭāridī: B, H (ascribed to Ibn Ishāq)

al-ʿUṭāridī: D + E, F (ascribed to Hishām b. ʿUrwa – no mention of Ibn Ishāq)

Segment A, the account of how Umayya tortured Bilāl by placing a huge rock on his chest, is recorded only in Ibn Hishām's recension. However, we have already demonstrated that segment A is without doubt part of Ibn Ishāq's original transmission. Ibn Hishām retains it in a separate account, embedding the descriptions of Umayya's torturing of Bilāl in a narrative that explains Bilāl's outrage after seeing Umayya on the battlefield. Apart from Ibn Hishām, al-Ṭabarī and Abū Faraj al-Isbahānī also record this tradition. They both carry *isnāds* meeting independently at Ibn Ishāq. These three accounts make it evident that the segment A is definitely part of Ibn Ishāq's narration.

As it can be clearly seen from the above, segment B is the only portion of the narrative that is commonly shared by these three recensions, and it is therefore essentially part of Ibn Ishāq's narration. As for the other segments, namely C through G, the stories of the slaves whom Abū Bakr saved including Bilāl, we must also consider them as part of Ibn Ishāq's original narration. A comparison between Ibn Hishām's and Ibn Ayyūb's recensions make this point very clear,

despite the significant variations that occur in al-‘Uṭāridī’s rendering. As for ‘Ammār’s verses, i.e. Segment H, we deem it also to be part of Ibn Ishāq’s original narration as we have discussed it above.

Ibn Ishāq’s original narration thus included all the segments preserved in Ibn Hishām’s recension; only the account of ‘Ammār’s poem must be added. This gives us the complete picture on Ibn Ishāq’s original narration.

2.1.2. The tradition according to Layth b. Sa’d < Hishām b. ‘Urwa

Now, we can take a step further and deepen our analysis to find out which of the segments in Ibn Ishāq’s narration go back to Hishām b. ‘Urwa. Fortunately, Ibn Ishāq is not the only tradent who transmitted the tradition from Hishām. There are several sources that record varying components of Hishām’s transmission. Two medieval sources, namely Ibn ‘Asākir’s *TMD*⁹⁰ and al-Dhahabī’s *Siyar ‘alām al-nubalā*,⁹¹ record a different variant of Hishām’s narration, one that particularly deals with Waraqa’s encounter with Bilāl’s torturers. The *isnāds* of these two accounts meet at Muḥammad b. ‘Umar b. ‘Alī al-Warrāq (d. 396/1005),⁹² who is the common link. There are three other transmitters, namely ‘Abdallāh b. Sulaymān, ‘Isā b. Ḥammād (d. 248/862), and Layth b. Sa’d (d. 175/791), between the common link al-Warrāq and Hishām b. ‘Urwa. Clearly, Layth b. Sa’d, not Ibn Ishāq, is named as the transmitter of the tradition from Hishām.

⁹⁰ Ibn ‘Asākir, *TMD*, 10:440.

⁹¹ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 1:129. Prior to the story of Waraqa, al-Dhahabī relates another tradition for which he gives the same *isnād* (Layth < Hishām). There, he notes that Layth has received the tradition from Hishām in a written form (*kitābatan*); *ibid.*, 128. As regards the soundness of this *isnād*, al-Dhahabī notes that he himself has a copy of this writing (*‘indī bi al-isnād al-madhkūra ilā al-layth ‘an hishām nuskhat^{un} li-man ankarahā*).

⁹² Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:268; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh madīnat al-salām*, 4:57, #1128.

Unlike Ibn Ishāq's narration, the tradition transmitted via Layth b. Sa'd is very short. It only includes the story of Waraqa's encounter with Bilāl, describing Bilāl's torture and Waraqa's consoling of Bilāl to help him endure the hardship. These narrative elements accord with the elements in Segment B of Ibn Ishāq's narration. Moreover, the description of how Bilāl is forced to suffer on the heated ground (*yulṣaqu ṣahruhu bi al-ramḍā*) bears strong affinities with Segment A of Ibn Ishāq's narration. Waraqa's oath, addressed to a group of people in the second person plural who were maltreating Bilāl (*la'in qataltumūhu la-attakhidhannahu ḥanān^{an}*) is also identical with Ibn Ishāq's account. On the other hand, Layth b. Sa'd's transmission of the account leaves the identity of Bilāl's torturers (supposedly Umayya and his clan, Banū Jumah) unspecified. As for the other segments of Ibn Ishāq's narration, i.e. C through H, they are not part of the account transmitted via Layth b. Sa'd.

On the basis of these similarities and differences, Waraqa's encounter with Bilāl and those who tortured him (Segment B) must be considered as a genuine part of Hishām's narration. Certain elements of Segment A, especially the description of Bilāl's torture on the hot ground, should be considered part of Hishām's narration as well.

2.1.3. The tradition according to 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Abī al-Zinād < Hishām b. 'Urwa

Another tradition, combining Segments A and B of the 'Urwa tradition, is found in two genealogical works, Mus'ab b. 'Abdallāh al-Zubayrī's (157 – 233/774 – 848)⁹³ *K. nasab quraysh*⁹⁴

⁹³ Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte des Arabischen Literatur* (Leiden: Brill, 1996) Suppl. I:212; Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh madīnat al-salām*, 15:138-41, #7048.

⁹⁴ Mus'ab b. 'Abdallāh al-Zubayrī, *K. nasab quraysh*, ed. Lévi-Provençal (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1953), 208.

and his nephew al-Zubayr b. Bakkār's (d. 256/870) *Jamharat nasab quraysh*.⁹⁵ Al-Zubayr b. Bakkār explicitly states that his uncle Muṣ'ab al-Zubayrī narrated the tradition to him with the following *isnād*, going back to 'Urwa: al-Zubayr b. Bakkār – Muṣ'ab al-Zubayrī – al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. 'Uthmān (d. 180/796) – 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Abī al-Zinād (100 – 174/718 -791) – 'Urwa (d. 94/712).⁹⁶

The *isnād* is problematic, as Ibn Abī al-Zinād is named as the direct transmitter from 'Urwa. However, this cannot hold true. Ibn Abī al-Zinād was reportedly born in 100/718, i.e. approximately eight years after 'Urwa's death.⁹⁷ Therefore, there must be a link between Ibn Abī al-Zinād and 'Urwa, which is lacking in the line of transmission. In both of these works, the report occurs in the biography of Waraqa b. Nawfal. Al-Zubayr b. Bakkār's biography of Waraqa has three more traditions with a similar *isnād*.⁹⁸ In all three traditions, Hishām b. 'Urwa is named as the transmitter of the tradition from 'Urwa, who passed it on to Ibn Abī al-Zinād.⁹⁹ In the majority of cases of transmitting traditions from 'Urwa, Ibn Abī al-Zinād's informant is either Hishām or his own father Abū al-Zinād (d. 130/748).¹⁰⁰ Andreas Görke and Gregor Schoeler have demonstrated that we have well attested traditions, particularly on the *hijra* of the Prophet and on the battle of Uhud, which Ibn Abī al-Zinād transmitted on the authority of

⁹⁵ Al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, *Jamharat nasab quraysh wa akhbāruhā*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-'Urūba, 1962), 412-4.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 413.

⁹⁷ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 3:340-2.

⁹⁸ See al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, *Jamhara*, 414 ff., #719, #720, #721.

⁹⁹ See, for instance, al-Zubayr b. Bakkār's *isnād* ('Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Abī al-Zinād < Hishām < 'Urwa) for the Khadīja-Waraqa story in Schoeler's analysis, *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 52-3. Schoeler analyzed the tradition within the scope of a larger web of transmissions. Al-Zubayrī's account going back to 'Urwa becomes part of his analysis only in the English translation of his *Charakter und Authentie*.

¹⁰⁰ For the *isnād* Ibn Abī al-Zinād < Abū al-Zinād < 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr, see Görke, Motzki, and Schoeler, "First Century Sources for the Life of Muḥammad," 17-8; Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 229-30.

Hishām.¹⁰¹ As the content analysis of al-Zubayr b. Bakkār’s text below will demonstrate, the tradition of Bilāl’s torture and Waraqa’s reaction also falls under the category of texts which Ibn Abī al-Zinād transmitted from Hishām.

Muṣ‘ab’s account provides no information regarding the transmission of the tradition. This is because *Nasab quraysh*, preserved only in *maghribī* manuscripts, does not contain any *isnāds* for the traditions it records.¹⁰² We, thus, need to depend completely on al-Zubayr b. Bakkār’s *isnād* and consider it representative of his uncle’s. Evidently, large portions of al-Zubayr b. Bakkār’s work depend on Muṣ‘ab as its source.¹⁰³

In addition to these two accounts, there are four other sources which record the same tradition: *Aghānī*, *Iṣāba*, *TMD*, and *al-Muntaẓam*.¹⁰⁴ These works, however, derive their accounts from al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, and their accounts are identical to his, both in text and *isnād*, failing to name Hishām as a source for Ibn Abī al-Zinād. Since these works reproduce al-Zubayr’s account verbatim, they are excluded from our analysis.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 70, 130-1. For another analysis of another ‘Urwa tradition as recorded by al-Zubayr b. Bakkār with a similar *isnād* (al-Zubayr b. Bakkār < ‘Abdallāh b. Nāfi < Ibn Abī al-Zinād < Hishām b. ‘Urwa < ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr), see Jens J. Scheiner, *Die Eroberung von Damascus: Quellenkritische Untersuchung zur Historiographie in klassisch-islamischer Zeit* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 451-6.

¹⁰² See Lévi-Provençal’s introduction, Muṣ‘ab b. ‘Abdallāh al-Zubayrī, *Nasab quraysh*, 8-11.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰⁴ Abū al-Faraj, *Aghānī*, 3:83; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba fī tamyiz al-ṣaḥāba* (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, n.d.), 6:318 (Reprint of the 1856 Calcutta Edition); Ibn ‘Asākir, *TMD*, 63:25; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 2:373. There is also a very short version of this episode in al-Balādhurī’s *Ansāb* (Ḥamīdullāh), 186. The account is derived from Hishām Ibn Kalbī (d. 204/819 or 206/821), or alternatively from his father al-Kalbī (d. 146/763), most probably from a work other than his *Jamharat al-nasab al-‘arab* (Prof. Wadad Kadi, personal communication). Al-Balādhurī says only “*qāla al-Kalbī*” in his *isnād*. Therefore, there is nothing in the *isnād* to postulate a link between Ibn Kalbī’s account and ‘Urwa. However, the account is very similar to the accounts in Muṣ‘ab’s and al-Zubayr b. Bakkār’s works, except for the fact that it is a summarized version of the episode. Accordingly, Ibn Kalbī’s account briefly relates that Bilāl was tortured to return to heresy (*kufr*) as he kept uttering “*aḥad, aḥad!*” and Waraqa passed by him and recited two lines of poetry. These two lines can be also found among the lines of the poem in Muṣ‘ab al-Zubayrī’s and al-Zubayr b. Bakkār’s accounts. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* (Ḥamīdullāh), 186.

Both Muṣ'ab's and al-Zubayr b. Bakkār's accounts relate the story of Waraqa and his encounter with those who tortured Bilāl. Although al-Zubayr b. Bakkār derives his account from his uncle, there are considerable differences between the two reports. Muṣ'ab's account is much shorter:

He [sc. Waraqa b. Nawfal] passed by Bilāl, while he was being tortured on the vehemently heated part of the earth (*ramḍā*) in Mecca and uttering "One, One!" He stopped by him and said "One, One! Verily by God, oh Bilāl!" He prevented them from [torturing] him and they did not stop. He said: "Verily by God! If you kill him, I would make his tomb a shrine! (*la-attakhidhanna qabrahū ḥanān^{an}*)," and recited [the following poem] – [8 Lines of Waraqa's poem exalting God and exclaiming His unicity].¹⁰⁵

Al-Zubayr b. Bakkār's account contains elements not found in his uncle's work:

Bilāl belonged to a slave girl [sc. Bilāl's mother] (*kāna li-jāriyatⁱⁿ*) from Banū Jumah b. 'Amr, and they used to torture him on the vehemently heated part of the earth (*ramḍā*) in Mecca and throw him on his back (i.e. forcing his back to touch the ground) on the *ramḍā*, so that he would denounce God [associate other Gods with Allāh (*li-yushrika billāh*)], and he used to say: "One, One!"

Waraqa b. Nawfal passed by him as he was in that situation (*wa huwa 'alā dhālika*), and he said: "One, One, oh Bilāl! By God, Verily by God! If you kill him, I would make it [i.e. his tomb] a shrine! (*la-attakhidhannahu ḥanān^{an}*)," as if he were saying "*la-atamassaḥanna bihi!*"¹⁰⁶

And recited [the following poem] – [8 lines of Waraqa's Poem]

Al-Zubayr b. Bakkār's narration is clearly more elaborate than his uncle's. He identifies the Banū Jumah as Bilāl's owners and relates a more graphic account of how the Banū Jumah

¹⁰⁵ Muṣ'ab al-Zubayrī, *Nasab quraysh*, 208.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, *Jamhara*, 412-4.

tortured Bilāl as they threw him on the vehemently heated ground (*ramḍā'*) and pressed his back down to make him feel the burning heat. This detail is contained in Muṣ'ab's account but in a tangential manner. Both narrations mention the *ramḍā'* of Mecca in order to designate both the location of Bilāl's torture, and its characteristics.

The description of Bilāl's persecution at the hands of the Banū Jumaḥ in these accounts demonstrates strong affinities with the accounts of Ibn Ishāq (< Hishām) and Layth b. Sa'd (< Hishām). In Segment A of Ibn Ishāq's narration, we find the expressions (*fa-yukhrijuhu ilā ramḍā' makka, ... fa-yuḍji'uhu 'alā ṣahrihi*) that accord with the wording of al-Zubayr b. Bakkār's (*yu'adhhibūnahu bi-ramḍā' makka, yulṣiqūna ṣahrahu bi al-ramḍā'*). Layth's account also describes Bilāl's torture by using similar expressions: *wa huwa yu'adhhab, yulṣaq ṣahruhu bi al-ramḍā'*. In addition to these expressions, Waraqa's oath *la'in qataltumūhu la-attakhidhannahu ḥanān^{an}* (preserved in al-Zubayr b. Bakkār's rendering, but not in Muṣ'ab's) is also identical to Ibn Ishāq's and Layth's accounts. Given these similarities, we can establish that these three groups of traditions must have been derived from a common source, more precisely from Hishām b. 'Urwa.

When compared with the other two groups of traditions, the structure of Ibn Ishāq's narration exhibits significant variants, too. Layth's account, as well as the Zubayrid accounts, treat Bilāl's torture and Waraqa's dialogue with his torturers as consecutive stages of one continuous episode. In Ibn Ishāq's rendering, these two events are presented in two separate traditions (segment A and B). When we compare the accounts of Layth and al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, it becomes evident that the description of Bilāl's torture on the *ramḍā'* (segment A in Ibn Ishāq's narration) is essentially linked to Waraqa's dialogue with Bilāl's torturers, as failing to mention

Bilāl's torture, Waraqa's conversation, and his oath would make it lose its context. They thus constitute one single unit of narration. Even Ibn Ishāq's split narration (in Ibn Hishām's recension) seeks to present a meaningful setting for the narration of his segment B by an explicit reference to segment A. In segment B, Waraqa's dispute with Banū Jumaḥ retains the expression "while he was being persecuted like that" (*wa huwa yu'adhdhab bi-dhālika*), which clearly refers to the descriptions of Bilāl's persecution in segment A. Although in separate segments, Ibn Ishāq's rendering of the episode still presents Waraqa's story in connection with Bilāl's torture. Based on these findings, we can posit that Hishām b. 'Urwa's version of Waraqa's story originally contained both the description of Bilāl's torture on the *ramḍā*' (segment A) and Waraqa's dispute with Bilāl's family (segment B) in a single narration.

The two Zubayrid accounts also reproduce a poem by Waraqa, which he recites after his dispute with Bilāl's torturers.¹⁰⁷ The verses are identical in both accounts, exhibiting but insignificant variations. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 626/1229) also records the poem in his *Mu'jam al-buldān*, and states that the verses were either by Zayd b. 'Amr b. Nufayl al-'Adawī or Waraqa b. Nawfal.¹⁰⁸ The mention of Zayd b. 'Amr may be due to the fact that in the Arabic lexicographical tradition, Zayd b. 'Amr is said to be the author of some verses.¹⁰⁹ The poem's central theme is God's unicity. In the episode preceding the poem, Waraqa is portrayed as the

¹⁰⁷ Al-Balādhurī's account, derived from al-Kalbī, also records an abridged version of this poem. See *Ansāb*, 186.

¹⁰⁸ Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977), 2:161.

¹⁰⁹ Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311), *Lisān al-'arab* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1955), 3:143; Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1790), *Tāj al-'Arūs*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Kuwait: Maṭba'at Ḥukūmat Kuwayt, 1994), 8:158. Both lexica record another couplet of the poem in the entry of "*jumud*" and ascribe it to Umayya b. Abī al-Ṣalt. They also note that Ibn al-Athīr ascribes the couplet to Waraqa. See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, 3:131-2; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, 7:521. Deriving from these lexical works, Lane's lexicon translates the two lines of the poem: (*lā ta'budūn ilāh^{an} ghayr^a khālīqikum // fa-in du'itum fa-qūlū baynanā ḥadadū*) "Ye shall by no means worship any deity except your Creator// and if you save be invited to do so, say ye, there is impediment in the way of it, or prohibition against it." Edward W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863), 523.

arch-monotheist who encourages Bilāl to endure the torture, proclaiming the monotheistic principles. The poem creates a strong association between Waraqa and Bilāl for their sincere belief in God's unicity and their steadfast resistance to the polytheists. The question of ascription cannot be resolved here, since we have no other evidence suggesting that the poem is part of Hishām's narration. We thus will not treat Waraqa's verses as part of Hishām's narration.

2.1.4. Other traditions according to Hishām < 'Urwa (segments D through G)

The traditions analyzed above offer us no further indications as to whether or not the narrative(s) on Abū Bakr's emancipation of Bilāl and the other slaves are parts of Hishām's original narration. However, there are other traditions which will help us clarify this point. Two 3rd/9th-century sources record a tradition that names the seven slaves whom Abū Bakr freed. Both of them go back to Hishām via different transmitters.

(a) The first report appears in the *Faḍā'il* section on Abū Bakr's virtues of Ibn Abī Shayba's *Muṣannaf*. Abū Mu'āwīya Muḥammad b. Khāzim (Kufan, d. 195/810) is Ibn Abī Shayba's informant according to the *isnād*.¹¹⁰ As a matter of fact, he is one of the most frequently cited sources in Ibn Abī Shayba's work, and he transmits the tradition directly from Hishām b.

'Urwa.¹¹¹ The tradition is very brief:

¹¹⁰ Ibn Abī Shayba gives the following *isnād*: Ibn Abī Shayba – Abū Mū'āwīya – Hishām b. 'Urwa – 'Urwa. See his *Muṣannaf*, 17:34, #32602.

¹¹¹ Scott C. Lucas, "Where are the Legal *Ḥadīth*? A Study of the *Muṣannaf* of Ibn Abī Shayba," *Islamic Law and Society* 15, no.3 (2008): 292.

Abū Bakr freed those seven who were being persecuted [because of their belief] in Allāh: ‘Āmir b. Fuhayra, Bilāl, Zinnīra, Umm ‘Ubays, al-Nahdiyya and her daughter, and a slave girl (*jāriya*) of Banū ‘Amr b. Mu’ammal.¹¹²

The names of the slaves whom Abū Bakr freed are the same as in Ibn Ishāq’s narration. Ibn Abī Shayba, however, provides no information about how these slaves were emancipated by Abū Bakr.

(b) The second report is similar; it belongs to Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb b. Sufyān al-Fasawī (d. 277/890). Although not recorded in the extant copy of al-Fasawī’s *al-Ma‘rifa wa al-tārīkh*, it is retained in a later source, namely in Ibn Ḥajar’s *Iṣāba*:

Ya‘qūb b. Sufyān said in his *‘Ta’rīkh*: We are told by al-Ḥumaydī, we are told by Sufyān [b. ‘Uyayna], who was told by Hishām b. ‘Urwa, from his father [‘Urwa]: Abū Bakr became Muslim when he had 40 thousand [*dirham*]; and he spent it for the cause of God and freed all of the seven [believers] who were being persecuted [because of their belief] in Allāh. He emancipated Bilāl, ‘Āmir b. Fuhayra, Zinnīra,¹¹³ al-Nahdiyya and her daughter, a slave-girl of Banū Mu’ammal, and Umm ‘Ubays.¹¹⁴

Al-Fasawī’s account is very similar to Ibn Abī Shayba’s account, except for the additional information on Abū Bakr’s exact wealth of 40 thousand *dirhams* at the time when he converted to Islam, and that he spent them in the service of his faith. Al-Fasawī’s informant for this tradition is ‘Abdallāh b. Zubayr al-Ḥumaydī (d. 219/834), who is a well-known *muḥaddith* and

¹¹² Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, 17:34. In the Cairo edition of the *Muṣannaf*, the word *jāriya* is mistakenly replaced by the name Ḥāritha. See *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Abū Muḥammad Usāma b. Ibrāhīm (Cairo: al-Fārūq li al-Ḥadītha li al-Ṭibā‘ā wa al-Nashr, 2008), 10:449, #32532.

¹¹³ In the edition of al-Fasawī’s *Ma‘rifa*, Zinnīra’s name is given as Nadhīra. This is clearly a mistake. Similar variations (Nadhīra, Zabīra) occur in the recent edition and different manuscripts of Ibn Abi Shayba’s *Muṣannaf* as well. See *Muṣannaf* (Cairo, 2008), 10:449, n. 6; and cf. al-Fasawī, *Ma‘rifa*, 3:263.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, and see Ibn Hajar, *Iṣāba*, 4:171-2; cf. *ibid.* 8:257.

an important source of information for al-Fasawī in his *Maʿrifa*.¹¹⁵ Al-Ḥumaydī is also known to have been an outstanding disciple of Sufyān b. ʿUyayna.¹¹⁶ In this connection, al-Fasawī utilizes al-Ḥumaydī in the majority of traditions which he derives from Sufyān (al-Fasawī – al-Ḥumaydī – Sufyān b. ʿUyayna). According to this *isnād*, Sufyān receives the tradition from Hishām. When we evaluate both traditions in Ibn Abī Shayba’s and al-Fasawī’s works, it becomes likely that the two traditions go back to Hishām independently. The information common to both of them makes it clear that at the time Hishām narrated the tradition to his students, Abū Bakr’s emancipation of the seven believers from slavery and the names of these slaves were essential components of his narration.

(c) Above, we discussed two traditions that occur in al-ʿUṭāridī’s work concerning Abū Bakr’s emancipation of slaves. Although al-ʿUṭāridī’s work is considered to be an independent recension of Ibn Ishāq’s *al-Maghāzī* next to Ibn Hishām’s, it should be seen as a collection of material brought together by Yūnus b. Bukayr. By deriving the major part of his material from Ibn Ishāq, Yūnus b. Bukayr supplemented it with information derived from other authorities.¹¹⁷ Thus, these two traditions fall under the category of supplementary material. As the *isnāds* of the traditions indicate, Yūnus b. Bukayr transmits the accounts directly from Hishām b. ʿUrwa

¹¹⁵ His *al-Maʿrifa* contains numerous reports, where al-Fasawī frequently names him as his source with the formula *samiʿtu*. See al-Fasawī’s *Maʿrifa*, 1: 221,223, *et passim*.

¹¹⁶ Al-Bukhārī, for instance, records 33 traditions from al-Ḥumaydī, 27 of which are transmitted from Sufyān b. ʿUyayna. See Sezgin, *Buhārī’nin Kaynakları Hakkında Araştırmalar* (Istanbul: İbrahim Horoz Basımevi, 1956), 213.

¹¹⁷ On the general characteristics of al-ʿUṭāridī’s recension of Ibn Ishāq’s work, see Schoeler, *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 32-3. For Yūnus b. Bukayr’s transmission of Ibn Ishāq, see Sadun Mahmud al-Samuk, *Die historischen Überlieferungen nach Ibn Ishāq: Eine Synoptische Untersuchung* (Ph.D. diss., Frankfurt a. M., 1978), 84; Alfred Guillaume, *New Light on the Life of Muḥammad* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1960), pp.; Miklos Muranyi, “Ibn Ishāq’s *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* in der *Riwāya* von Yūnus b. Bukayr: Bemerkungen zur frühen Überlieferungsgeschichte,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 14 (1991): 214-75. The work is also named *ziyādāt* by the later authorities. See, e.g., Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, 8:257 (*wa rawā Yūnus b. Bukayr fī ziyādāt al-maghāzī li-Ibn Ishāq*).

and omits Ibn Ishāq's name: al-ʿUṭāridī – Yūnus b. Bukayr – Hishām b. ʿUrwa – ʿUrwa (*ḥaddathanā Yūnus [b. Bukayr] ʿan Hishām b. ʿUrwa ʿan abīhi [ʿUrwa]*).

Apparently, the first part of the narration names the seven slaves whom Abū Bakr emancipated. This part bears strong affinities with the reports of Ibn Abī Shayba and al-Fasawī:

Al-ʿUṭāridī – Yūnus b. Bukayr – Hishām b. ʿUrwa – ʿUrwa: Abū Bakr freed those seven who were being persecuted [because of their belief] in Allāh: Bilāl, ʿĀmir b. Fuhayra, Zinnīra, a slave girl from Banū ʿAmr b. Muʿammal, Nahdiyya and her daughter, and Umm ʿUbays.¹¹⁸

This report shows once again that the names of those seven slaves whom Abū Bakr freed go back Hishām b. ʿUrwa. In Ibn Ishāq's narration, Abū Bakr is told to have freed seven slaves, Bilāl being the seventh of them. But instead of listing their names all at once, Ibn Ishāq's narration presents each slave individually, first giving the name of the slave, then relating the story of their emancipation.

In addition to the report mentioned above, al-ʿUṭāridī's work records the stories of al-Nahdiyya and Zinnīra. Al-Nahdiyya's story is contained inside the same tradition where Hishām names the seven slaves.¹¹⁹ In Yūnus's transmission (Yūnus < Hishām), the story varies significantly from Ibn Ishāq's version (Ibn Ishāq < Hishām; segment F). Although both versions maintain the same the outline of events, substantial differences occur both in the wording and the details of the story. First, in Yūnus's transmission, the owner of al-Nahdiyya and her daughter told Abū Bakr that al-Nahdiyya adhered to Abū Bakr's religion (*fa-innahā ʿalā dīnika*) and so it was his responsibility to set her and her daughter free. In Ibn Ishāq's version, the owner accuses Abū

¹¹⁸ Al-ʿUṭāridī, *Sīrat Ibn Ishāq*, 171.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Bakr of corrupting the two women (*anta afsadtahumā, fa-a'tiqhumā*) instead of mentioning their common belief in Islam. Additionally, both versions mention a certain grinding task, in which al-Nahdiyya and her daughter are involved. In Yūnus's transmission, the task is mentioned at the very end of the narration, where Abū Bakr asks Nahdiyya to return her owner's flour (*ruddī 'alayhā ṭahīnahā*). Al-Nahdiyya's reply demonstrates that she is keen on finishing the grinding task first (*da'inī aṭṭanhu lahā*). In Ibn Ishāq's account, al-Nahdiyya and her daughter are assigned the task already at the beginning of the narration (*wa qad ba'athathumā sayyidatuhumā bi-ṭahīnⁱⁿ lahā*). Furthermore, in Yūnus's version, Abū Bakr inquires about the prices of the two slaves with the question '*fa-bika'ayyin?*' The question is phrased as '*fa-bikam humā?*' in Ibn Ishāq's narration (both in Ibn Hishām's and Ibn Ayyūb's recensions).¹²⁰ All these textual variations strongly indicate that Yūnus's and Ibn Ishāq's transmissions of al-Nahdiyya's story were transmitted independently from each other, and that they both go back to Hishām.

(d) The second tradition in al-ʿUṭāridī's work, transmitted on the authority of Yūnus from Hishām, is Zinnīra's story:

Yūnus from Hishām b. ʿUrwa from his father, he said: Zinnīra lost her sight. She was one of those who was tortured for [her belief in] Allāh, and she did not yield (*ta'abbā*) except to Islam. The polytheists said: "Nothing but

¹²⁰ As another early attestation, al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869) includes a narration in his *al-Uthmāniyya*, relating how Abū Bakr freed seven slaves, spending his wealth. The source is not mentioned in al-Jāḥiẓ's text, and therefore the entire narration is excluded from our examination. However, after analyzing all the versions of the episode, we can quite confidently detect al-Jāḥiẓ's source. Both the structure of the narration, the unified composition of different segments, as well as the wording of al-Jāḥiẓ's account coincide to approximately 90% with Ibn Ishāq's narration in the recensions of Ibn Hishām and Ibn Ayyūb. In some cases, al-Jāḥiẓ expands upon Ibn Ishāq's text, inserting additional information about the characters and commenting on, or paraphrasing, certain sections. Despite these variations, the main body of text still accords with Ibn Ishāq's narration. Interestingly, al-Jāḥiẓ preserves the phrase *bi-ka'ayyin*, which is also found in Yūnus's transmission of Hishām. See al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Uthmāniyya*, 32-4. On different uses and meanings of *ka'ayyin*, see Ibn Hishām al-Anṣārī (d. 761/1360), *Mughnī al-labīb ʿan kutub al-aʿrīb*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, (Sidon: al-Maktaba al-Aṣriyya, 1991), 210-1.

al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā have taken her sight away!” She said: “Is that so (*kadhā*)? By God it is not like that!” And Allāh restored her sight.¹²¹

Zinnīra’s story in Yūnus’ transmission is again very similar to Ibn Ishāq’s account (segment E in Ibn Hishām’s recension). There are, however, considerable differences between the two versions. A significant one is that in Yūnus’s transmission, Zinnīra did not lose her sight when she was freed by Abū Bakr, but when she became Muslim, whence the polytheists claimed that she lost her sight because of her conversion to Islam. Zinnīra rejects their claim and God restores her sight.¹²² The report in Yūnus’s transmission does not mention how Abū Bakr bought and freed Zinnīra. Rather, the emphasis is placed on God’s favor, as He returns her eyesight to her because of her firm belief. In Ibn Ishāq’s narration, on the other hand, Zinnīra lost her sight when Abū Bakr freed her (segment E above), and Abū Bakr gained a certain share in God’s favor on account of Zinnīra. This variation in the story is also reflected directly in the wording of the two narrations. The different make-up of these two versions suffices to establish that Zinnīra’s story was also part of Hishām’s original narration, as it was preserved in the transmissions of both Yūnus and Ibn Ishāq.

Our examination here draws the outlines of a rich body of information that goes back to Hishām, with independent lines of transmissions meeting at him. If we recapitulate our findings regarding the main elements of Hishām’s original narration, we arrive at the following constellation of traditions:

¹²¹ Al-‘Uṭāridī, *Sīrat Ibn Ishāq*, 171.

¹²² It is interesting to note that the explanation for Zinnīra’s blindness and her miraculous recovery, from the perspective of both the polytheists and the Muslims, is her belief in God. In the miracle stories of late antiquity, the cause for blindness is often associated with people’s sins. At the same time, it is apparently one of the most common forms of ailments. See Raymond van Dam, *Saints and their miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 82-115.

Table 4. Hishām b. ‘Urwa < ‘Urwa:

A+B	<p>Ibn Ishāq < Hishām</p> <p>Layth b. Sa’d < Hishām</p> <p>al-Zubayr b. Bakkār < Hishām</p>
D	<p>Ibn Ishāq < Hishām</p> <p>Abū Mū‘āwīya < Hishām (Ibn Abī Shayba)</p> <p>Sufyān < Hishām (al-Fasawī)</p> <p>Yūnus b. Bukayr < Hishām (al-‘Uṭāridī)</p>
E	<p>Ibn Ishāq < Hishām</p> <p>Yūnus b. Bukayr < Hishām (al-‘Uṭāridī)</p>
F	<p>Ibn Ishāq < Hishām</p> <p>Yūnus b. Bukayr < Hishām (al-‘Uṭāridī)</p>

2.2. Yazīd b. Rūmān < ‘Urwa

There is a very short account in Ibn Sa’d’s *Ṭabaqāt* which is also recorded verbatim in al-Balādhurī’s *Ansāb*, with an *isnād* going back to ‘Urwa: [al-Balādhurī <] Ibn Sa’d < al-Wāqidī < Mu‘āwīya b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān < Yazīd b. Rūmān < ‘Urwa:

Bilāl was one of the abased believers (*mustaḍ‘af*). When he accepted Islam, he was tortured in order to leave his religion, but he never uttered the words which they [sc. the polytheists] were demanding. The one who was torturing him was Umayya [al-Balādhurī adds: Umayya b. Khalaf].¹²³

Ibn Sa’d’s report is the only parallel testimony to Hishām’s narration of Bilāl’s persecution, transmitted through an independent channel, namely Yazīd b. Rūmān. Although he plays a

¹²³ Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3.1:165; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* (Ḥamīdullāh), 185.

subsidiary role, Yazīd is one of ‘Urwa’s students who transmitted material from him.¹²⁴

Unfortunately, the report itself is very short, and only recorded by Ibn Sa’d and al-Balādhurī.

Therefore, Yazīd’s transmission offers but limited insights into ‘Urwa’s original narration, giving only a general picture of the story. There are five pieces of information that can be culled from this account: (1) Bilāl came from the lower echelons of society. (2) He converted to Islam. (3) He was tortured by the polytheists because of his conversion. (4) He did not give in to their demands. (5) Umayya b. Khalaf tortured him. The tradition relates no further information on how Bilāl was tortured, what the torturers demanded, which words Bilāl never uttered, or what Umayya’s relationship to Bilāl was like.

Within the confines of the presented information, the tradition poses no contradictory information regarding the general outlines of the ‘Urwa tradition in Hishām’s transmission. However, the paucity of information delivered in Yazīd’s transmission reduces the extent of ‘Urwa’s original narration to a scale where only the broad outlines of that narration can be drawn. Although the tradition transmitted by Yazīd introduces no new information to shake our picture, the total absence of the story of Waraqa’s encounter with Bilāl poses a much narrower frame to understand ‘Urwa’s original narration. The narration is thus composed of only those elements that highlight Bilāl’s persecution because of his faith. Additionally, the tradition identifies Bilāl’s torturer as Umayya. This is rather important, since Bilāl’s filial bonds to Banū Jumaḥ are already attested in the earliest phase of the transmission of the ‘Urwa tradition.

¹²⁴ Ibn Hishām retains no tradition in his recension of Ibn Ishāq, which utilizes the *isnād* Ibn Ishāq < Yazīd b. Rūman < ‘Urwa. However, al-Ṭabarī and Yūnus b. Bukayr occasionally record Ibn Ishāq’s material as derived from Yazīd b. Rūmān on the authority of ‘Urwa. See Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 173.

2.3. Preliminary outlines of ‘Urwa’s original narration

Yazīd b. Rūmān’s transmission constitutes the only attestation parallel to Hishām’s to have its origins in ‘Urwa’s narration. Unfortunately, it does not offer any substantial information that would shed light on the original form of ‘Urwa’s narration of Bilāl’s story. Comparing Yazīd’s and Hishām’s transmissions, we can only establish with certainty that the general framework of ‘Urwa’s original narration centered on the story of Bilāl’s persecution as a slave of Banū Jumah (or Umayya). This is essentially the same narrative structure as in the first group of traditions transmitted on the authority of Ibn Mas‘ūd and Mujāhid. In both of these two traditions, as well as in ‘Urwa’s, Bilāl figures as a slave who endured the hardship inflicted upon him. His words “*aḥad, aḥad!*” are preserved in all these groups of traditions, representing his resistance to the polytheists and his dedication to the core principles of monotheism. The original form of the tradition of ‘Urwa thus primarily recounts another version of the story of Bilāl’s persecution. Considering the extent of information and parallel versions available to us, we can authenticate only the first part of Bilāl’s story at the level of ‘Urwa.

2.4. Narrative analysis: Hishām’s narration and Ibn Ishāq’s narrative composition

So far, we have established that only the story of Bilāl’s persecution can be dated back to ‘Urwa with certainty. This means that the majority of information allegedly going back to ‘Urwa predominantly belongs to Hishām. Hishām’s narration, however, does not present a unified picture of events, but rather transmits a body of material that is comprised of several disparate accounts. First, Hishām’s narration provides the story of Bilāl’s persecution. All the variants of

the account describe his torture on the *ramḍā'*, which becomes the distinctive mark of Hishām's narrations. In Hishām's account, the persecution story is also connected to Waraqa's dispute with Bilāl's torturers. These two segments come in a single narration. In a second account, Hishām lists the names of the slaves whom Abū Bakr freed. In connection with this, Hishām relates the story of al-Nahdiyya and how Abū Bakr emancipated her and her daughter from slavery. The names of the freed slaves and the story of al-Nahdiyya constitute the second body of narration in Hishām's transmission. Evidently, these two accounts constitute two independent narrations. In addition to the disjunction between these two accounts, Hishām's narration records no account of Abū Bakr's emancipation of Bilāl. Bilāl's name is mentioned only briefly in connection with the other freed slaves. The story of Abū Bakr's encounter with Umayya and his purchase of Bilāl are totally absent from Hishām's narration. The only account that is included in Hishām's narration that is in accordance with the story of Bilāl's emancipation is the story of Zinnīra. She loses her eyesight after converting to Islam and eventually is freed by Abū Bakr.

These findings confirm that we have an adequate understanding of the material transmitted by Hishām: it presents a much fuller picture of Bilāl's persecution and Abū Bakr's emancipation of slaves than 'Urwa's. However, in Hishām's transmission, the narrative material still retains its fragmented and rudimentary character, with its accounts describing different aspects of Bilāl's persecution and Abū Bakr's manumission activities that are not necessarily connected to form a unified narrative framework, or a grand narrative. The diffuse and fragmentary character of the information also creates a narrative structure for each unit that allows the presentation of events and characters in a rudimentary fashion. The narration also lacks, for the most part, any complexity or embellishment, both of the temporal aspects of

the stories and of the characters who are portrayed in single-dimensional roles. The events follow a linear timeline and the narration does not interconnect the acts of agents from past or parallel events. The events are described in a very basic form, as the narrations deliver but the basic outlines of incidents.

The fragmented and rudimentary character of the narration in Hishām's transmission constitutes a crucial benchmark in our research, as it illuminates the important aspects of Ibn Ishāq's narration. Below, we will analyze how Hishām's narration gains a much more complex form in Ibn Ishāq's rendering. The events are no longer isolated incidents, but they are interwoven into a continuous narrative thread. The comparison between Hishām's and Ibn Ishāq's narrations will uncover the discrepancy between the narrative frameworks and illustrate the evolution of the stories in a new narrative direction.

Ibn Ishāq's narration offers a much more elaborate account of Bilāl's story. The narrative attains a full-fledged structure, and disparate segments join together to form a much more coherent framework and to communicate new thematic conceptions. As much as Hishām uses older material and recasts them in his own narrations, Ibn Ishāq uses the materials that came down to him, and gives them a new thematic orientation to accentuate a new vision of events.¹²⁵ The narrative units, segments, and scenes in Hishām's presentation of the material gain new levels of narrativity in Ibn Ishāq's re-arrangement.

¹²⁵ In a different case, Leder demonstrates how Ibn Ishāq re-arranges the older material from al-Zuhri and delivers it in a new conceptual framework. See his "The Use of Composite Form," 132-9. Moreover, Marco Schöller describes Ibn Ishāq's interest in creating his own version of the stories through the material that had been handed down to him as follows: "Ibn Ishāq schöpfte aus der Überlieferung und stellte daraus ein nach Möglichkeit zusammenhängendes Material zusammen. Ihm war es nicht an gelehrten Subtilitäten gelegen, sondern vor allem an der Schaffung einer guten Geschichte: *story*, nicht *history*." See his *Exegetisches Denken und Prophetenbiographie*.

Our detailed examination of the narrative texts and their transmission enables us to identify more precisely what Ibn Ishāq's authorial contributions are. Ibn Ishāq shifts the thematic orientation of the stories and places them on a new textual plane. Neither the story of Bilāl, as he goes through excruciating physical punishment, nor the story of the other individuals as they endure similar forms of hardship, remain isolated incidents in Ibn Ishāq's rendition. Rather, they illustrate a series of consecutive events happening in accordance with a grand narrative, one which reveals divine support for the newly emerging Muslim community.

In the following, we will analyze Ibn Ishāq's authorial involvement with the existing material derived from Hishām, especially when crafting the role(s) Abū Bakr plays in the new narrative design. We will pay attention specifically to the transitory segments of his arrangement and focus on the conjunctions and connectors, introductory sentences, and changes in tense forms.

Before analyzing Ibn Ishāq's reallocation of Hishām's material transmission, let us first delineate the different aspects of Ibn Ishāq's personal connection to Hishām. Biographical sources inform us that both of the tradents lived in Medina, until Ibn Ishāq had to leave the city for Iraq at around 134/752.¹²⁶ Before parting, the two figures are reported to have had a hostile relationship.¹²⁷ The biographical literature further states that Ibn Ishāq narrated certain material directly from Hishām's wife, Fāṭima bt. Mundhir b. al-Zubayr. To dismiss the credibility of such a claim, Hishām is reported to have rejected the possibility of a meeting

Eine quellenkritische Analyse der Sīra-Überlieferung zu Muḥammads Konflikt mit den Juden (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998), 57-8.

¹²⁶ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 7.2:67; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968-72) 4:276-7.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4:277.

between Ibn Ishāq and his wife without his knowledge.¹²⁸ Whether or not the anecdote reflects an actual historical incident, later generations reported it to illustrate the antagonism between these two prominent tradents of Medina. What is certain is that Ibn Ishāq names Hishām only very rarely in his work, especially when transmitting ‘Urwa material.¹²⁹ In most cases, he identifies Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (Medinan, d. 124/742), his teacher, as his main source for ‘Urwa’s traditions.¹³⁰ In this regard, the persecution of Bilāl and Abū Bakr’s emancipation of the slaves constitute one of the rare instances when Ibn Ishāq explicitly names Hishām as his source.¹³¹ Our examination of the ‘Urwa tradition with its multiple channels leaves no doubt that the narrations indeed reach back to Hishām, verifying the information in Ibn Ishāq’s *isnād*.

The real complication about Ibn Ishāq’s *isnād* lies elsewhere. Although naming his source, Ibn Ishāq’s narration does not clearly specify the boundaries of the material derived from Hishām. The *isnād* is only located at the beginning of segment B. Segment A clearly remains unaffected by the *isnād*. It remains ambiguous whether segments C through G can still be subsumed under the same *isnād*. As our analysis will show, the reason for the ambiguity lies in Ibn Ishāq’s style in rearranging and modifying the material that is handed down to him. Ibn Ishāq does not

¹²⁸ See Gordon Darnell Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet: A Reconstruction of the Earliest Biography of Muhammad* (Columbia: Columbia University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 6-7. Newby remarks that Fāṭima was about 40 years younger than Ibn Ishāq, and that we cannot exclude the possibility that Ibn Ishāq met Fāṭima in a mosque and she became a source of information for him.

¹²⁹ In Ibn Hishām’s recension of the *Sīra*, Ibn Ishāq records traditions on the authority of Hishām b. ‘Urwa (in all cases from ‘Urwa) seven times in total. See the *isnād* index in Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muhammad*, 810-3. Likewise, in al-‘Uṭāridī’s work, out of 473 traditions, Hishām’s name appears in the *isnāds* of 22 traditions. Interestingly, in 21 of these traditions, Yūnus b. Bukayr, not Ibn Ishāq, is the direct transmitter from Hishām. See Muranyi, “Ibn Ishāq’s *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*,” 237-8.

¹³⁰ For the major episodes from the life of the Prophet, such as the *iqrā’* episode, the Prophet’s *hijra*, the battle of Uhud, *ḥadīth al-ifk*, the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya, and the conquest of Mecca, Ibn Ishāq derives his information from al-Zuhrī, who, in turn, gets his information from ‘Urwa. See Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 23-6, 49, 60-3, 72, 138, 145 f., 193-201, 230-2.

¹³¹ On purely hypothetical grounds, we might perhaps postulate that Ibn Ishāq’s audience (i.e. his students) was already aware of the fact that the major source of information for Bilāl’s torture and Abū Bakr’s role in freeing slaves is Hishām, and that there is no justification for Ibn Ishāq to dispense with Hishām’s name.

refrain from breaking up reports, putting them in new constellations, and supplementing them with extraneous elements. The liberty Ibn Ishāq enjoys deforms the atomistic character of the traditions, which were once transmitted in separate accounts. At the same time, he gives them a novel quality, which can be identified as his own narrative artwork.

2.4.1. Narrative analysis: segments A-B

When compared with the earlier versions of these stories, it becomes clear that Ibn Ishāq's recomposition of the material exhibits more complex features. The first instance of dislocation and reallocation of older traditions occurs in the first two segments of his narration (segment A and B). Hishām's account first describes how Bilāl was tortured on the *ramḍā'*, then continues with relating how Waraqa met Bilāl and disputed with the members of his clan. These descriptions constitute a single body of narration in Hishām's original transmission. In Ibn Ishāq's narration, however, Bilāl's torture at the hands of Umayya becomes a separate entity and thus appears as a self-standing account. Now, as a pastiche of its own, Ibn Ishāq's narrative highlights Umayya b. Khalaf's involvement in the episode and underlines his name as the main villain in Bilāl's persecution. Moreover, by re-crafting the narrative composition, Ibn Ishāq gives the second part of the narration the capacity to be embedded inside another tradition, namely in the tradition in which Umayya is described as having been killed by Bilāl's fellow companions on the battlefield. In this episode, the embedded information serves to explain why Bilāl becomes outraged when he sees Umayya. By breaking up Bilāl's story of torture into two separate accounts, Ibn Ishāq succeeds in creating a portable unit of narration in which the new account easily enters the context of a third narration. Once entered, the imported information increases the density of the drama that awaits Umayya b. Khalaf as he meets his death at the hands of Bilāl's fellow companions.

There is a second indication for the bisection of Hishām's narration in Ibn Ishāq's narrative composition. In Ibn Hishām's recension, segment B has no description of Bilāl's torture on the *ramḍā'*. The entire scene of torture is replaced with an intriguing expression: *wa huwa yu'adhdhab bi-dhālika*. Obviously, the reference indicated by the demonstrative phrase *bi-dhālika* exceeds the formal boundaries of a self-contained account, and refers back to the description in the previous unit of narration. Considering the atomistic and independent character of these narrative units, an intertextual reference to a seemingly separate account is problematic in the normal course of transmission.¹³² To avoid repetition, Ibn Ishāq skillfully employs the demonstrative phrase after creating two separate segments of narration. In this new arrangement, Hishām's name as Ibn Ishāq's source becomes associated only with the second segment of the narration, and is absent from the first.

2.4.2. Narrative analysis of segment C: Abū Bakr saves Bilāl

Segment C, where Ibn Ishāq narrates how Abū Bakr bought and freed Bilāl, yields the most intriguing and crucial results for our investigation. None of the traditions at hand offer an indication that Hishām narrated or transmitted a report on Abū Bakr's emancipation of Bilāl. While it is clear that Hishām named Bilāl as the first among the seven slaves whom Abū Bakr bought and freed, he relates no tradition to illustrate how that happened. When we examine Ibn Ishāq's narration (both in Ibn Hishām's and Ibn Ayyūb's recensions), there are compelling indications that Ibn Ishāq attached the narration of Abū Bakr's story to the accounts he received from Hishām. In doing so, Ibn Ishāq created a new composition of events, offering a

¹³² For the atomistic and self-contained character of *akhbār*, see Stefan Leder, "Authorship and Transmission in Unauthored Literature. The *Akhbār* Attributed to al-Haytham ibn 'Adī," *Oriens* 31 (1988): 67-8.

more harmonized and unified thematic structure.¹³³ The transposition of Hishām's material in Ibn Ishāq's new thematic context can be observed on three levels: (a) the linguistic, occurring in transitory sentences; (b) the thematic, showing shifts in themes; and (c) the level of the characters involved.

On the linguistic level, the usage of the conjunction particle *hattā* (until) provides important clues as to how Ibn Ishāq achieves a unified narrative by connecting Abū Bakr's story to the scenes of Bilāl's persecution illustrated in the previous segments. In Ibn Ishāq's narrative, Abū Bakr is introduced to the scene after relating Waraqa's dispute with the men from Banū Jumah. In this arrangement, Banū Jumah's torture continues **until** the day Abū Bakr passes by Bilāl. Abū Bakr entry into the scene creates a rupture in the narration of the ongoing torture. With the use of conjunction *hattā*, the thematic mode of narration switches from persecution to salvation. The conjunction not only connects two disparate accounts or scenes, but also facilitates a new narrative design with a thicker plot structure. In this new plot structure, Waraqa's story and the story of Abū Bakr's manumission of Bilāl no longer stand as disparate events, but rather provide an enhanced context for each other. When read within this context, Abū Bakr's activity of freeing Bilāl gains much higher levels of referentiality and richer layers of signification. Abū Bakr overtakes the agency already defined in Waraqa's dispute with the Banū Jumah to resolve the conflict.¹³⁴ In this regard, the conjunction *hattā* establishes not only

¹³³ For an analysis of a unified and harmonized form of composition, see Stefan Leder, "The Features of the Novel in Early Historiography: The Downfall of Xālid al-Qasrī," *Oriens* 32 (1990): 72–96. Leder analyzes how Haytham unifies disparate accounts in order to communicate his own vision of the events.

¹³⁴ When concurrent textual elements in one narrative structure create a framework of referentiality for each other, the interconnectivity on the horizontal level is understood to be cotextual. On cotextuality, see Silverstein, "Metapragmatic Discourse and Metapragmatic Function," in *Reflexive Language: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics*, ed. John A. Lucy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 36–8.

a continuity in the time-line of these ostensibly unrelated events, it constructs a new narrative thread that expands into Abū Bakr's story.

Establishing both a temporal link and a continuous narrative thread between the anecdotes, the new narrative arrangement in Ibn Ishāq's design achieves a transition into a new thematic structure that no longer centers around punishment and endurance. The new thematic structure promulgates a narrative vision in which salvation becomes the prevalent theme. Persecuted believers await their salvation as part of a preordained divine plan. Abū Bakr's introduction into the story ends the phase of persecution, and announces the new phase of salvation. The episodes following Bilāl's story of emancipation also follow this theme: God rewards the persecuted slaves who believe in Him by granting them their freedom. This underlying theme brings all these narrations into a close-knit framework.

This stark shift in thematic focus is also reflected in the formal aspects of the narration. We can detect a change in the tense of the narration, once the story of Abū Bakr's encounter with Umayya is introduced. In the preceding account, the story of Waraqa's dispute with the Banū Jumaḥ was told in the past continuous tense or in the habitual 'used to' form: *kāna yamurru/ya'adhdhabu* (used to pass by, used to be tortured).¹³⁵ With the use of the particle *hattā* at the beginning of Abū Bakr's story, the tense of the narration turns from the past continuous into the simple past tense (*hattā marra bihi Abū Bakr ... fa-qāla*). The change in tense signals a clear breach in the repetitive mode of events, and heralds an unexpected turn in the course of the events that are about to happen. By the introduction of this new grammatical form, the

¹³⁵ See Fedwa Malti-Douglas, *Structures of Avarice: The Bukhalā' in Medieval Arabic Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 69.

focus of Ibn Ishāq's narrative moves suddenly to Abū Bakr's activities and his generous personality.

The inclusion of Abū Bakr's persona into the thematic focus of Ibn Ishāq's narrative design creates the dominant feature of the narrations that follow. Abū Bakr becomes the prime agent to resolve the main conflict stated in the previous narrations, and his activity of freeing Bilāl gains a paradigmatic character and an exemplary form for the stories to be told in the following. The display of Abū Bakr's character traits as the generous, benevolent companion become one of the main tenets of the narration in connection to the underlying themes of salvation and God's recompense. The important role Abū Bakr gains in the narrative also outweighs the role earlier played by Waraqa. Although Waraqa had been portrayed as a dedicated supporter of the monotheistic faith, who voiced the injustices inflicted upon Bilāl, his promise to save Bilāl from Banū Jumah's mistreatment remains unfulfilled. In contrast, Abū Bakr's fulfillment of that promise exemplifies his role in freeing the early believers. At the same time, Abū Bakr's unprecedented magnanimity in Ibn Ishāq's narrative nearly equals Bilāl's prominence in enduring hardships.

2.4.3 Narrative analysis of segments D-G

The unprecedented effort of Abū Bakr to rescue the believers from the polytheists' persecution constitutes the main theme in the remaining parts of the narrative. Hishām's account, which lists the names of the seven slaves (segment D), serves as the outer frame of Ibn Ishāq's presentation. Ibn Ishāq uses the outline of this tradition to construct the main skeleton of his presentation of the remaining parts. Instead of listing the names of the slaves in a wholesale manner, Ibn Ishāq's narrative registers a separate segment for each of these slaves to tell the

story of their persecution. In each of these episodes, Abū Bakr appears as the patron who buys the slave and frees him/her.

Abū Bakr's heroic role in emancipating the slaves becomes the main point of emphasis, providing the discursive contexts for these stories. The contextual shift in Zinnīra's story illustrates this phenomenon very well. In Hishām's narration, the story is told to underline her suffering as well as to show her miraculous recovery, while Abū Bakr is totally absent from the Zinnīra story. By shifting Hishām's narration into a new narrative context, Ibn Ishāq presents the story in connection with Abū Bakr's activity of freeing Zinnīra. In its new context, Zinnīra loses her eyesight and regains it only after Abū Bakr frees her.¹³⁶

On the basis of these analyses, it is apparent that Ibn Ishāq draws the greater portion of his material from Hishām's accounts, with miscellaneous plot-settings, varying time-lines, locations, and characters, and situates them in a narrative framework of his own design. He molds the accounts into a much more coherent sequence of events and offers more detailed, but also more idealized portrayals of the characters. Abū Bakr's deeds gain a more consistent character over a longer course of events, repeat themselves in different settings, and thus acquire a paradigmatic and symbolic nature. In Hishām's transmission, the picture of Abū Bakr does not exhibit the same degree of consistency. While Abū Bakr does free a number of slaves, he is not elevated to the iconic status of the champion of emancipating slaves. Drawing on Hishām's material, Ibn Ishāq's authorial design consciously communicates a more unified

¹³⁶ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 206.

image of Abū Bakr, which might stem from the intellectual milieus of the mid 2nd/8th century, of which he was a part. By actively engaging personally with the historical material, he shapes an evolving image of Abū Bakr. The account of Abū Bakr's manumission of Bilāl (segment C), situated at the center of his presentation, however, remains obscure in terms of its provenance, since it is clearly not derived from Hishām. In the following sections, our analysis will primarily focus on the story of Abū Bakr's emancipation of Bilāl, and examine its different expressions in order to delineate its earlier attestations.

3. The tradition of Muḥammad b. Sīrīn (d. 110/728)

There is another group of traditions, which recounts the particular narrative of how Abū Bakr freed Bilāl by purchasing him: Abū Bakr pays a certain amount of money (seven ounces; *ūqiyya*, pl. *awāq*) to free him instead of exchanging him with another slave. The tradition goes back to a successor, Muḥammad b. Sīrīn (34–110 / 654–728),¹³⁷ and occurs in Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt*¹³⁸ and al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb*.¹³⁹ Ibn Sa'd receives his information from 'Ārim b. Faḍl al-Sadūsī (Basran, d. 224/838) who, in return, reports it from Ḥammād b. Zayd (Basran, 98–179 / 716–795).¹⁴⁰ This report is also replicated verbatim in Ibn al-Jawzī's *al-Muntaẓam*,¹⁴¹ as Ibn Sa'd is explicitly named to be the source. Al-Balādhurī has also an *isnād* going back to Ḥammād, but via a different tradent, Abū Rabī' al-Zahrānī (also known as Sulaymān b. Dāwūd; Basran, d. 234/848).¹⁴² In this configuration of the *isnāds*, Ḥammād becomes the common source and the

¹³⁷ *EF*² s.v. "Ibn Sīrīn" (T. Fahd).

¹³⁸ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3.1:165.

¹³⁹ Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* (Ḥamīdullāh), 186.

¹⁴⁰ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 2:9

¹⁴¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 4:298.

¹⁴² Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 2:403.

partial common link for both Ibn Sa'd and al-Balādhurī. From Ḥammād, the *isnād* extends back to Ibn Sīrīn via a well-known Basran tradent, namely Ayyūb b. Abī Tamīma (Basran, 66-68 – 125-131 / 685-687 – 742-748).¹⁴³

The short report supplies a story comprised of three plot settings.

Ibn Sa'd:

(a) Bilāl's family (*ahluhu*) took him and stretched him [i.e. his body] (*fa-maṭṭūhu*) and threw on him [things] from the valley (*alqaw 'alayhi min al-baṭḥā'*) and cow skin (*wa jild^a baqara^{tin}*),¹⁴⁴ and they would say: "Your Lords are al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā. He would say: "One, one!"

He [the narrator] said:

(b) Abū Bakr came upon that and said: "For what [reason] are you torturing this human being (*al-insān*)?"

He [the narrator] said:

Then he [i.e. Abū Bakr] bought him for seven ounces (*awāq*) and freed him.

(c) Then he [sc. Abū Bakr] mentioned it to the Prophet (ṣ) and he [sc. the Prophet] said: "Partnership (*al-sharika*), oh Abū Bakr?!" Abū Bakr replied: "I have already freed him, oh Prophet of God!"¹⁴⁵

Al-Balādhurī's account is very similar to Ibn Sa'd's; there are only a few differences. Al-

Balādhurī uses the word *qamaṭūhu* (they tied his hands and feet together) instead of *maṭṭūhu*,

¹⁴³ Ḥammād < Ayyūb < Ibn Sīrīn. For Ayyūb b. Abī Tamīma's weighty role in Ma'mar's transmission in 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf*, see Harald Motzki, "The *Muṣannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzāq al-San'ānī as a Source of Authentic *Aḥādīth* of the First Century A. H.," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 50, no. 1 (1991): 4.

¹⁴⁴ The mention of a cow skin is a puzzling detail, which we do not see in the other versions. The editors of Ibn al-Jawzī's *al-Muntaẓam* state that, despite the original form of Ibn Sa'd's report, they chose to change the whole sentence as "*alqawhu fī al-baṭḥā' wa jaladū zahrahu*" (they threw him on the valley and lashed his back). This, however, distorts the original meaning; see Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 4:298.

¹⁴⁵ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3.1:165.

and therefore does not mention a cow skin. He also uses the expression *fa-dhakara li-l-nabī (ṣ)* *annahu qad ishtarāhu* instead of *fa-dhakara dhālika li-al-nabī (ṣ)*. These minor variations indicate that the two works reproduced Ḥammād's transmission of the tradition in quite similar a fashion.

There are three other attestations of Ibn Sīrīn's tradition in much later collections, two in Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD*,¹⁴⁶ and one in al-Dhahabī's *Siyar*.¹⁴⁷ The first report in *TMD* names seven transmitters between Ibn 'Asākir and Ibn Sīrīn, and Hishām b. Ḥassān (Basran, d. 147-148/764-765)¹⁴⁸ is named as the tradent who transmitted it from Ibn Sīrīn. The same tradition, as recorded by al-Dhahabī, does not mention any names in the *isnād*;¹⁴⁹ only Hishām's name appears as the tradent transmitting material from Ibn Sīrīn. Al-Dhahabī's account is significantly shorter and relates only the basic components of the narration; still every unit has a counterpart in Ibn 'Asākir's first report.

Ibn 'Asākir's first account gives a more graphic description of Bilāl's torture, relating how they stretched out Bilāl's body under the sun and brought burning coarse sand and put it on his chest (*maṭṭūhu fī al-shams wa ja'alū yajī'ūn bi-tilka al-sahla^{ti} al-ḥārri^{ti} wa yaḍa'ūnahā 'alā ṣadrihi*).¹⁵⁰ Moreover, in this account, the conversation between Abū Bakr and Bilāl's clients (*mawālī*) takes the form of a full dialogue, with questions and answers from both sides, as Bilāl's family offers to sell Bilāl to Abū Bakr. At the end of the account, after Abū Bakr informs the Prophet about

¹⁴⁶ Ibn 'Asākir, *TMD*, 10:442, 444.

¹⁴⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 1:352-3.

¹⁴⁸ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 6:24-6.

¹⁴⁹ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 1:352-3.

¹⁵⁰ Ibn 'Asākir, *TMD*, 10:442.

his manumission of Bilāl, there is an additional conversation, which is missing from al-Dhahabī's account. It takes place between Abū Bakr and Bilāl's family, each side offering an assessment of how much Bilāl would cost as a slave in reality.¹⁵¹

When comparing Ibn 'Asākir's account with al-Dhahabī's, in Hishām b. Ḥassān's transmission, we can detect a significant degree of overlap between the two versions in terms of the main components of the narrative, and its wording. There is also new information which is truly unique to Ibn 'Asākir's account, and introduces elaborate elements into the account. The most important commonality between these two reports is the basic outline of the events and the combination of the three plot settings. Thus, we have enough textual parallels to consider Ibn 'Asākir's account and Ḥammād b. Zayd's transmission as having a common origin. Although al-Dhahabī's account bears an incomplete *isnād*, Hishām b. Ḥassān's name lies at the juncture of the two accounts, whence it is justifiable to consider him the partial common link.

Ibn 'Asākir records a second report with a different line of transmission going back to Ibn Sīrīn:¹⁵² Ibn 'Asākir – Abū Ḥafṣ – 'Abdallāh b. Sulaymān – Shādhān – Ḥajjāj – al-Ḥakam b. 'Aṭīyya – Ibn Sīrīn. This transmission has no parallel attestations in the other sources. The narration has the same order of events, with minor variations in plot structure. As for the wording and the language of the account, it varies significantly from the rest of the Ibn Sīrīn traditions.

Abū Bakr passes by Bilāl, while the members of his family (*aṣḥābihi*) throw him on the hot ground (*alqawhu fi al-ramḍā'*) inside the skin of a cow or ox (*ammā fi jildⁱ thawrⁱⁿ aw baqara^{tin}*) and

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid., 10:444.

Bilāl keeps rolling down the valley (*fī al-baṭḥā*).¹⁵³ They ask him to believe in al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā, but Bilāl keeps uttering “One, One!” Abū Bakr interferes and asks whether they would sell him. They agree to sell him for a certain amount and Abū Bakr buys him. Unlike the other versions of the Ibn Sīrīn tradition, the amount of money is not specified here. Furthermore, the account features an additional conversation: After selling Bilāl, his family makes the following comment: “Had you refused but [to pay] such-and-such, we would have sold him to you [anyway].” Abū Bakr replies: “If you had refused but such-and-such, I would [still] have bought him!” Characteristically, this dialogue is not an element of the Ibn Sīrīn traditions, but a narrative expansion of it, as the narrative elaborates on the bargaining process. The expansion conveys how Bilāl’s value is belittled by his family and, conversely, how his status is exalted by Abū Bakr by demonstrating his willingness to sacrifice great sums of money. Though not an intrinsic element of the Ibn Sīrīn traditions, this dialogue finds affinities in another group of traditions, which we will analyze below (see 4.1.). The additional scene in Ibn ‘Asākir’s account can be characterized as an interpolation, incorporated into the narration at a much later date. Additionally, Ibn ‘Asākir’s account employs two expressions, *al-ramḍā* and *al-baṭḥā*, specifying both the place and the form of Bilāl’s torture. The word *ramḍā* does not typically occur in the Ibn Sīrīn traditions. As we have shown above, Bilāl’s torture on the *ramḍā* is a motif used exclusively in the narrations of Hishām b. ‘Urwa. A second motif, the cow skin mentioned in Ibn Sa’d’s account, appears here too, but is described as being either the skin of a cow or an ox, and Bilāl is folded inside it. All the elements that have parallels in other groups of traditions are joined together in Ibn ‘Asākir’s account. Going through a complex redactory and compositional process, the narration emerges with a multi-layered structure.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

We can thus characterize this account as a conglomerate of various narrative elements that were combined at later stages of transmission. Nonetheless, the account should be still considered as an Ibn Sīrīn tradition, since it retains all the basic components of the Ibn Sīrīn narrative.

The accounts in Ibn ‘Asākir’s *TMD* and al-Dhahabī’s *Siyar*, when taken as parallel attestations of Ibn Sīrīn traditions, offer an early date for the entire tradition complex, with their origins lying in Ibn Sīrīn’s narration itself. This would imply that we can date the tradition to a period earlier than the lifetime of Ḥammād b. Zayd (98–179 / 716–795), who is the partial common link of Ibn Sa’d’s and al-Balādhurī’s accounts. For this dating scheme, however, we need to analyze our texts in greater depth, particularly by examining the transmitters in the generation after Ibn Sīrīn.

Hishām b. Ḥassān is named both by Ibn ‘Asākir and al-Dhahabī as the transmitter of Ibn Sīrīn. The biographical dictionaries consider this Hishām as one of the well-known authorities to transmit the traditions of Ibn Sīrīn¹⁵⁴ and establish a strong historical link between the two men. Like Ibn Sīrīn, Hishām b. Ḥassān also lived in Basra, where he transmitted the report to another Basran tradent, Rawḥ b. ‘Ubāda (d. 205/820). In Ibn ‘Asākir’s second report, al-Ḥakam b. ‘Aṭīyya is named as the transmitter of the tradition from Ibn Sīrīn. Al-Ḥakam also hailed from Basra and had connections with Ibn Sīrīn.¹⁵⁵ The *isnād* of the tradition names Ḥajjāj b.

¹⁵⁴ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 6:24–6. See also Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 7.1:140 f.

¹⁵⁵ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 1:642.

Dinār, hailing from al-Wāsiṭ, as the one who derived the information from al-Ḥakam.¹⁵⁶ The earlier lines of transmissions thus reveal that the initial phase of transmission took place in Basra.¹⁵⁷ The transmitters of the accounts in Ibn Saʿd and al-Balādhurī are also Basran. Ḥammād b. Zayd is a well-known *ḥadīth* transmitter who lived in Basra,¹⁵⁸ and the source of his transmission, Ayyūb, is one of the two most well known (the other being Hishām b. Ḥassān) transmitters of Ibn Sīrīn's traditions. In other words, Ibn Sīrīn's tradition exclusively circulated in the Basran milieu.

There is a study by Ulrike Mitter that sheds further light on Ibn Sīrīn's network of transmission.¹⁵⁹ By applying *isnād-cum-matn* analysis, Mitter analyzes a tradition from Ibn Sīrīn on the question of unconditional manumission of slaves (*sā'ibatan*). In this tradition, Ibn Sīrīn narrates the story of a certain Sālim, a *mawlā* of Abū Hudhayfa, whose inheritance is returned to his original manumitter, an *anṣārī* woman, upon his death. The relevant part of Mitter's analysis is that Ibn Sīrīn's narration of Sālim's story is preserved in four sources: 'Abd al-Razzāq, Ibn Abī Shayba, Ibn Saʿd, and al-Bayhaqī. Its *isnād* in Ibn Saʿd's work is identical to the one in Ibn Sīrīn's account on Bilāl (Ibn Saʿd < 'Ārim < Ḥammād < Ayyūb < Ibn Sīrīn). 'Abd al-Razzāq's account, as well as an account in Ibn Abī Shayba's *Muṣannaḥ*, go back to Ayyūb as well. Ibn Abī Shayba records a second account that goes back to Ibn Sīrīn, but this time through Hishām b. Ḥassān rather than Ayyūb. Mitter demonstrates that Ibn Sīrīn is not only the

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 2: 201.

¹⁵⁷ The traditionists mentioned in Ibn 'Asākir's first account, such as Rawḥ b. 'Ubāda (d. 205/820) and Muḥammad b. 'Ubaydallāh al-Munādī (d. 293/905), or al-Ḥakam b. Aṭīyya in his second account, also hail from Basra.

¹⁵⁸ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 2: 9-11.

¹⁵⁹ Ulrike Mitter, "Unconditional Manumission of Slaves in Early Islamic Law: a *Ḥadīth* Analysis," *Der Islam* 78 (2001): 52, 54-5.

common link for this version of the tradition, but also the originator of all the accounts. As a peculiar feature of this tradition complex, Ibn Sīrīn does not name any companion from whom he might have heard the tradition. In all the other parallel versions of the tradition, the accounts name ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (and, in a few instances, Abū Bakr) to be the authority who issued the ruling about Sālim’s inheritance: that it should be returned to his original manumitter.¹⁶⁰ Ibn Sīrīn’s narration, however, names no authority for the decision. Since the decision was allegedly issued during the caliphate of Abū Bakr or ‘Umar, the narration lacks an eyewitness who would have been alive at the time to transmit the story to Ibn Sīrīn. Ibn Sīrīn was born in 34/654, and he is thus not considered a companion of the Prophet. It would, therefore, be expected that he should have named someone from the generation of the companions, but he is silent here. Likewise, he does not name any companion for the story of Bilāl’s persecution and manumission. In both cases, the accounts fail to name Ibn Sīrīn’s source, and he himself appears to be the narrator of the story.

In a well-known statement about *isnāds*, Ibn Sīrīn informs us that the general interest in using *isnāds* emerged only during his lifetime. J. Schacht and G. H. A. Juynboll studied this report in detail and considered Ibn Sīrīn’s words to be accurate, reflecting the actual workings of the historical transmissions at his time. In the report, Ibn Sīrīn says:

They did not ask about the *isnād*, but when the civil strife (*fitna*) arose, they said, “Name to us your men.” Those who followed the *sunna* were considered and their traditions were accepted; innovators were considered and their traditions were not accepted.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 36-7; James Robson, “The *Isnād* in Muslim Tradition,” *The Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society* 15 (1953): 15-26,

Regardless of the date of the *fitna* mentioned in the report, which remains a subject of debate among modern scholars, the report indicates that the use of *isnāds* became a means of narration during Ibn Sīrīn's lifetime. If accurate, this statement highlights an important characteristic of Ibn Sīrīn's narrations in general: mentioning a companion of the Prophet in his traditions does not appear to be of interest for him. Thus, searching for a continuous line of transmission in Ibn Sīrīn's traditions, reaching back to the earliest period of Islam, might not be a fruitful effort in this case. Another statement attributed to Shu'ba (Basran, 82–160 / 702–776) (Ibn Sa'd < 'Affān b. Muslim < Shu'ba) reflects the sense of bewilderment the next generation of *ḥadīth* transmitters experienced in this regard: Shu'ba's mother asked Hishām b. Ḥassān to tell her the names of the companions from whom Ibn Sīrīn derived his information. Hishām names 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar and Abū Hurayra.¹⁶² This report illustrates the state of uncertainty with respect to Ibn Sīrīn's sources and demonstrates how the next generation of transmitters often lacked the knowledge of Ibn Sīrīn's sources. Furthermore, the lack of clarity with respect to the transmission history of certain reports appears to be not a problem particular to Ibn Sīrīn's case, but might be a general characteristic of the traditions of the early Basran intellectual milieu. In fact, Josef van Ess notes that the proper use of the *isnād* is introduced in Basra only in the generation of Qatāda b. Dī'āma (d. 117/735), a student of Ibn Sīrīn, through the Kufan Ḥammād b. Abī Sulaymān (d. 120/738).¹⁶³

Thus, given the general transmission conventions at the time when Ibn Sīrīn engaged in his reporting activity, the absence of a source for his narration of the Bilāl story shall not be

and for a detailed analysis of this statement, see G. H. A. Juynboll, "The date of the Great *Fitna*," *Arabica* 20 (1973): 142–59.

¹⁶² Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 7.1:140 f.

¹⁶³ Van Ess, *Zwischen Ḥadīth und Theologie*, 186.

considered a defect here. Rather, there are convincing factors that allow us to consider it an instance of an authentic, and thus older line of transmission.¹⁶⁴

This closer examination of the general character of Ibn Sīrīn's transmission, solely on the basis of a transmission analysis, helps us to next authenticate the material that has been ascribed to Ibn Sīrīn. Despite the late textual attestations (particularly in the works of Ibn al-ʿAsākir and al-Dhahabī), we have compelling evidence to consider Ibn Sīrīn as the original transmitter and/or narrator of Bilāl's story. Clearly, most of the evidence speaks for, and not against, an earlier date of ascription of the tradition to Ibn Sīrīn himself.

Based on this analysis, we can establish a new dating scheme for Bilāl's story. Since Ibn Sīrīn died in 110/728, the story must have been already in circulation in Basra in the late 1st /early 8th century. This makes Ibn Sīrīn the earliest authority to narrate the story of Bilāl's torture in connection with Abū Bakr's emancipation of him. To enhance the complexity of our picture, Ibn Sa'd's biographical entry on Ibn Sīrīn states that his family had a background in slavery:¹⁶⁵ his mother, Ṣafiyya, is reported to have been a slave who was bought and freed by Abū Bakr.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, his father, Sīrīn, was taken captive and enslaved by Khālīd b. al-Walīd in the battles of Maysān (a region in southeast Iraq near Basra) or in ʿAyn al-Tamr¹⁶⁷ during the caliphate of Abū Bakr. According to the sources, Sīrīn became Anas b. Malik's (died in Basra ca.

¹⁶⁴ This conclusion agrees with Schacht's theses on the growth of *isnāds*, as he favored reports with less perfect and less complete *isnāds* and deemed them to be more authentic or of older origin. Our findings, however, do not necessarily take Schacht's premises as a point of departure for the evaluation of Ibn Sīrīn's transmission. Cf. Schacht, *Origins*, 163-75.

¹⁶⁵ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 7.1:140 f.

¹⁶⁶ Apparently, neither Hishām b. ʿUrwa nor Ibn Ishāq name Ṣafiyya among the slaves who are bought and freed by Abū Bakr.

¹⁶⁷ Van Ess, *TG*, 2:359-61

91-93/709-711) slave later on, and he was engaged in a *kitāba* contract (conditional manumission) with Anas to earn his own emancipation.¹⁶⁸ If accurate, this information makes it even more plausible to think that Ibn Sīrīn could have easily had access to stories of slavery and was informed about the legal issues pertaining to it.

3.1. Narrative analysis

Ibn Sīrīn's account is one of the earliest narrations to describe Bilāl's torture, and chronologically the earliest account to narrate Abū Bakr's emancipation of Bilāl. While pre-dating Ibn Ishāq's account (segment C), it presents a coherent narration, though containing enigmatic features regarding Abū Bakr's role in Bilāl's manumission.

By comparing all the variants, we can sort out the basic components of Ibn Sīrīn's narration as follows: (a) Bilāl's family tortures him in a various forms, specified differently in each account, e.g., by extending his body or by tying his neck and his feet together, by putting hot sand on his chest, or by covering him in an animal skin (and rolling him about on the hot ground). (b) They force Bilāl to concede and say that his Lords are al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā', but Bilāl resists their demands, exclaiming the formulaic "*aḥad, aḥad!*" (c) Abū Bakr encounters Bilāl's family and questions their motives for torturing him. (d) He buys Bilāl for seven ounces and frees him. (e) Abū Bakr meets the Prophet and tells him that he bought Bilāl. (f) The Prophet offers Abū Bakr joint-ownership of Bilāl, to which Abū Bakr replies by saying that he had already emancipated Bilāl (i.e. he is free and no longer a slave who may be co-owned by more than one person).

¹⁶⁸ On *kitāba*, see Ulrike Mitter, *Das frühislamische Patronat: Eine Untersuchung zur Rolle von fremden Elementen bei der Entwicklung des islamischen Rechts* (Ph.D. diss., Universität Nijmegen, 1999), 19-21, 101.

As can be inferred from the basic constituents of the narration, the account is composed of three different plot settings: (i) Bilāl's torture; (ii) Abū Bakr's purchase of Bilāl and Bilāl's emancipation; (iii) the conversation between Abū Bakr and the Prophet. Ibn Sīrīn's account presents the earliest report in which Abū Bakr's manumission of Bilāl is narrated in conjunction with the story of Bilāl's torture. The actual scene(s) of Bilāl's persecution vary significantly, which might suggest that the descriptions of Bilāl's persecution are not of prime importance. They are presented as background information illuminating Bilāl's state at the time when Abū Bakr freed him from slavery. These two segments appear in harmony and do not convey a sense of a fractured narrative structure. Thus, Ibn Sīrīn's account achieves a smooth transition between the scenes and presents a coherent narration.

In the third segment, the Prophet unexpectedly enters the scene and becomes involved in the transaction of Bilāl's manumission, which is unique to Ibn Sīrīn's tradition. Despite its idiosyncratic character, this segment is also well integrated into the narrative. When the Prophet reacts to the purchase of Bilāl, Abū Bakr's response creates an opportunity for the listeners/readers for evaluating Abū Bakr's act of charity. Thus, the third segment does not appear to be a later interpolation into the narration. The close-knit structure of different plot scenes makes Ibn Sīrīn's account a self-contained tradition.

As for the Prophet's words in the last section, they endow Abū Bakr's role in the story with enigmatic aspects. After Abū Bakr mentioned his purchase of Bilāl, the Prophet responds by offering Abū Bakr a co-ownership of Bilāl (*al-sharika yā Abā Bakr?*). The Prophet's response thus ascribes a certain degree of randomness to Abū Bakr's decision to free Bilāl. First, the manner in which the Prophet asks the question, or makes his proposal, reveals that he does not know

that Abū Bakr free Bilāl. On the other hand, the Prophet's proposal demonstrates that the purchase of Bilāl is an ordinary activity for Abū Bakr. By his offer, the Prophet expresses at least his willingness to have a share in the ownership. However, it is not clear what the Prophet seeks to attain by becoming a co-owner, or what would have happened if Bilāl were to remain a slave owned exclusively by Abū Bakr. By offering joint ownership, does the Prophet aim at providing some kind of a shield for Bilāl, such as releasing him under certain obligations, or is he just willing to share Abū Bakr's financial burden? Abū Bakr's concise but final reply that he has already freed Bilāl, resolves the matter completely: Bilāl is no more a slave and the Prophet does not have to concern himself with this situation any more.

Two possible interpretations can be suggested to situate the dialogue in a more comprehensible context. One is that the dialogue tries to portray the Prophet in a way that he always acts in equity and is also willing to make partial co-payment since he does not want to put any financial burden on Abū Bakr. We come across a similar pattern of response on the part of the Prophet in the *hijra* story. There, Abū Bakr buys a camel for the Prophet to ride, and the Prophet wants to pay Abū Bakr back. Or, as a second possibility, the dialogue tries to highlight the Prophet's compassion for Bilāl as he seeks to pay half of Bilāl's dues, since the offer for joint ownership would not have abolished Bilāl's slavery completely. Whatever the motive of the Prophet, his proposal becomes irrelevant as Abū Bakr informs him that he had emancipated Bilāl voluntarily. The favorable portrayal of Abū Bakr as generous, however, is slightly flawed by the obscure nature of the story, especially the dialogue between Abū Bakr and the Prophet, which suggests that the narrative is far from being polished. It seems as if at the time when Ibn Sīrīn narrated the story there was not yet a fully developed scheme of portrayal for the companions of Prophet. We note no overt attempt to promulgate certain

virtues and character traits; Abū Bakr's service to Islam does not constitute the central theme of the narrative. Yet, there are other questions that are left open by the account, such as why the Prophet did not offer to buy Bilāl, if his initial thought was to free him, or how the Prophet would have found the money to pay for the co-ownership of Bilāl.

Lacking a comprehensible discursive orientation, Ibn Sīrīn's tradition does not feature a complex form of narrative composition. Unlike Ibn Ishāq's treatment of the topic, the tradition is neither connected to a larger thematic framework, nor does it connect Bilāl's story to the manumission stories of other slaves. What makes Ibn Sīrīn's tradition especially valuable for our analysis is that it is a very early attestation of Bilāl's manumission by Abū Bakr. The tradition is short, contains enigmatic features, and does not attempt to communicate an elaborate picture of Abū Bakr's manumission activity.

The question of whether or not Ibn Ishāq was familiar with this version of the story remains unsolved. Ibn Sīrīn's tradition circulated in the Basran intellectual milieu at the end of the 1st / beginning of the 8th century. Although it is possible that the tradition could have played a precursory role in Ibn Ishāq's narration, we cannot prove it.

4. Other Traditions

Beside the traditions of Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Sīrīn, there are several, often conflicting, reports in the Islamic classical sources that account for how Abū Bakr bought and freed Bilāl. In these groups of traditions, various figures are given for the rate that is asked for Bilāl's ransom.

4.1. The tradition of Qays b. Abī Ḥāzim (d. 84–98/703–716): Abū Bakr ransoms Bilāl for five ounces

A particular group of traditions mentions Abū Bakr paying five ounces (*awāq*) for Bilāl's manumission. The story is recorded in the following sources: Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt*,¹⁶⁹ al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb*,¹⁷⁰ Ibn Abī Shayba's *Muṣannaf* (2 variants),¹⁷¹ Abū Nu'aym's *Ḥilya* (2 variants),¹⁷² and Ibn 'Asākir's *TMD* (2 variants).¹⁷³ The transmissions of six of these traditions go back to Sufyān b. 'Uyayna (Meccan, d. 196/811),¹⁷⁴ who thus becomes a partial common link, whereas the other two transmissions meet at the level of Abū Mu'āwīya Muḥammad b. Khāzim al-Ḍarīr (Kufan, d. 195/811).¹⁷⁵ Both Sufyān b. 'Uyayna and Abū Mu'āwīya are mentioned to have transmitted the tradition from Ismā'īl b. Abī Khālid (Kufan, d. 146/763),¹⁷⁶ who is the common link.¹⁷⁷ Ismā'īl's informant in these accounts is a companion of the Prophet, Qays b. Abī Ḥāzim, who lived in Kufa and died in 84–98 / 703–716.¹⁷⁸

The report is very short, and each version presents its information in varying configurations of the following units.

¹⁶⁹ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3.1:165–6.

¹⁷⁰ Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* (Ḥamīdullāh), 186.

¹⁷¹ Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, 17:251, #33002.

¹⁷² Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilya*, 1:38.

¹⁷³ Ibn 'Asākir, *TMD*, 10:443.

¹⁷⁴ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:96.

¹⁷⁵ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 5:83–5.

¹⁷⁶ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 1:244.

¹⁷⁷ In his article on the sources of 'Abd al-Razzāq, Motzki demonstrates that the number of traditions that 'Abd al-Razzāq transmits from Sufyan b. 'Uyayna amounts to four percent of his *Muṣannaf*. In turn, Ismā'īl b. Abī Khālid is one of the four most frequent sources from whom Sufyān acquires his material. See Motzki, "The *Muṣannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzāq," 4.

¹⁷⁸ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 4:538.

(a) Abū Bakr bought Bilāl for five ounces;

(a.i.) while he [Bilāl] was buried under rocks (*madfūn bi al-hijāra*).

(b) They said: “If you had refused [to pay] but one ounce, we would have sold him to you [anyway].” He [sc. Abū Bakr replied]: “If you had refused [all] but 100 ounces, I [still] would have bought him!”

(c) Bilāl said to him: “Oh Abū Bakr! If you freed me so that I become a servant (*khādim*) for you, then take me as your servant. But if you freed me for God’s [sake], then let me go and work for God’s [sake].” Then Abū Bakr wept and said: “I freed you for Allah. [Go and work for Him].”

None of the aforementioned accounts contain all of these components; the reports contain only one or two of them, in varying permutations. However, a consistent pattern emerges, as the existing combinations of information exhibit a rather systematic distribution when their lines of transmission are examined.

Ibn Abī Shayba is the earliest to record this tradition, and he has two variants. The first consists of units a and b, with the additional information that Bilāl is buried under rocks (unit a.i.). Abū Nu‘aym’s *Ḥilya*¹⁷⁹ and Ibn ‘Asākir’s *TMD*¹⁸⁰ each have an account with an *isnād* going back to Ibn Abī Shayba; their mutual source is also confirmed on textual grounds. These three accounts are composed of units a (including a.i.) and b. Ibn Abī Shayba’s account names Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna as the informant. *TMD* also records a second tradition that goes back to Sufyān, but via other transmitters. This tradition contains the same narrative components and accords with the other texts that are allegedly derived from Sufyān. The third group of traditions,

¹⁷⁹ Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilya*, 1:38.

¹⁸⁰ Ibn ‘Asākir, *TMD*, 10:443.

which mentions Sufyān as the source of information, is contained both in Ibn Sa‘d’s *Ṭabaqāt*¹⁸¹ and in al-Balādhurī’s *Ansāb*.¹⁸² Al-Balādhurī derives the report from Ibn Sa‘d and both accounts are very brief. They simply contain the information that ‘Abū Bakr bought Bilāl for five *awāq*. Although all these groups of traditions have an *isnād* that goes back to Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna, there is the question of which combination of information Sufyān included in his transmission. We are faced with two possibilities: either Sufyān’s transmission was limited to unit a (as in Ibn Sa‘d’s account) or it included the additional information in unit a.i. (as in Ibn Abī Shayba’s and Ibn ‘Asākir’s reports).

There is a second group of traditions which form part of this tradition complex. In this group, the traditions are composed of units a and c. Both Ibn Abī Shayba and Abū Nu‘aym record the tradition with these textual elements. Both accounts go back to Abū Mu‘āwīya, and they both convey the same information, except for some variation in wording. Thus, the transmission of the tradition comprising units a and c can be ascribed to Abū Mu‘āwīya. Both Sufyān’s transmission of the tradition (units a + a.i.) and Abū Mu‘āwīya’s transmission (units a + c) mention Ismā‘īl b. Abī Khālid as their source. This means Ismā‘īl is the common link for the entire tradition complex. Although the distribution of information demonstrates consistent patterns of transmission along the transmission lines, *isnād-cum-matn* analysis leaves us with only one common unit that is certainly part of Ismā‘īl b. Abī Khālid’s transmission, namely unit a: “Abū Bakr bought Bilāl for five *awāq*.” This leaves us with very little to reconstruct the original components of the tradition at the level of the common link. We should not, however, entirely disregard the possibility that Ismā‘īl b. Abī Khālid might have had all the units in his

¹⁸¹ Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3.1:165-6.

¹⁸² Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* (Ḥamīdullāh), 186.

transmission (a + a.i. + c) and Sufyān and Abū Mu‘āwīya transmitted only parts of what they heard from him (Sufyān: a + a.i.; Abū Mu‘āwīya: a + c).

The available information at the level of Ismā‘īl b. Abī Khālid’s leaves no room for wider analysis. We can only state with confidence that the information regarding Abū Bakr and Bilāl (unit a) can be dated to approximately 137/750, since Ismā‘īl is known to have died in 146/763 in Kufa. But this is no new information. As we have seen above, Ibn Sīrīn and Ibn Ishāq’s narrations presented more details about the story. Ismā‘īl b. Abī Khālid’s transmission specifies the amount of money paid by Abū Bakr as five ounces. This figure remains the central element of the tradition. The information that Bilāl was buried under rocks (unit a.i.: *madfūn bi al-hijāra*) is the only allusion to the torture of Bilāl prior to Abū Bakr’s purchase of him. The information is located only in Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna’s transmission. The dialogue between Bilāl’s owners and Abū Bakr in unit b, as the former ridicule the latter for paying so much for Bilāl’s ransom, can also be found in reports derived from Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna only. In the previous section, we have seen that Ibn ‘Asākir’s *TMD* records an account (part of the Ibn Sīrīn tradition) that contains a similar dialogue regarding the value of Bilāl as a slave. Here, Sufyān’s transmission constitutes an earlier example of the same dialogue. It can therefore be argued that Sufyān’s account might be the origin of this dialogue motif as it recurs in later traditions. As we have discussed above, the dialogue enters into Ibn ‘Asākir’s rendering of the accounts only in the later phases of the transmission. Hence, this dialogue motif seems to have a free-traveling character that migrates into different groups of transmissions.

4.2. The tradition in the *tafsīr* literature: Abū Bakr purchases Bilāl for ten ounces and a woolen cloak

There is another group of traditions in which the amount of money Abū Bakr spends in order to free Bilāl is ten ounces and a woolen cloak (*bi burdatⁱⁿ wa ‘asharat awāqⁱⁿ*). Most of these reports relate the information as follows: “Abū Bakr bought Bilāl from Umayya b. Khalaf for the amount of a cloak and ten ounces; and he emancipated him for God’s sake” (*fa‘aṭaqahu lillāh*).

Characteristically, this report only exists in the exegetical works, since it serves to explain the cause of revelation of the Qur’ānic verses 92:5-6: *fā-man a‘ṭā wa ittaqā/wa ṣaddaqa bi al-ḥusnā* (So he who gives [in charity] and fears God, and testifies to the best) with its counterpart Q 92:8-9: *wa ammā man bakhila wa istaghna/wa kadhdhaba bi al-ḥusnā* (But he who is a greedy miser and thinks himself self-sufficient, and gives lie to the best). In the *tafsīr* works of Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d. 327/938),¹⁸³ Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. 373/983),¹⁸⁴ Abū Bakr al-‘Ājurri (d. 360/970-1),¹⁸⁵ al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122),¹⁸⁶ and al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505),¹⁸⁷ the verses are understood to refer to Abū Bakr, as he spent his money to purchase Bilāl from Umayya in order to free him. In the majority of the commentaries, Abū Bakr is understood to be the God-fearing believer who

¹⁸³ Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 327/938), *Tafsīr al-qur’ān al-‘aẓīm*, ed. As‘ad Muḥammad al-Tayyib (Mecca: Maktabat al-‘Arabiyya al-Su‘ūdiyya, 1997), 10:3440, #19359.

¹⁸⁴ Abū al-Layth Naṣr b. Muḥammad al-Samarqandī, *Tafsīr al-samarqandī al-musammā baḥr al-‘ulūm*, ed. ‘Alī Muḥammad Mu‘awwad and ‘Ādil Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, n.d.), 3:484.

¹⁸⁵ Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-‘Ājurri, *K. al-sharī‘a*, ed. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar b. Sulaymān al-Damījī (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan, 1999), 4: 1827-8.

¹⁸⁶ Abū Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Mas‘ūd al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122), *Ma‘ālim al-tanzīl*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh al-Nimr (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayba, 1989), 8:446.

¹⁸⁷ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-khulafā’* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2003), 41.

gives in charity, in contradistinction to Umayya b. Khalaf.¹⁸⁸ The account in these works is reported on the authority of Ibn Mas‘ūd (d. 32/652, lived in Kufa). However, only al-Baghawī, al-‘Ājirī, and al-Samarqandī provide full *isnāds* going back to Ibn Mas‘ūd. In all these *isnāds*, Manṣūr b. Abī Muzāhim (ca.155–235 / 771–849)¹⁸⁹ emerges as the common link. The report is limited to a single sentence and is identical in all these works. With Manṣūr b. Abī Muzāhim as the common link, we have a relatively late dating scheme, since Manṣūr’s death date in the middle of the 3rd/9th century sets the *terminus ante quem*.

There are, however, earlier testimonies from the 2nd/8th century, antedating Manṣūr, that allow us to establish an association between the Qur’ānic verses 92:5-6 and Abū Bakr’s manumission of slaves. The first testimony is found in Ibn Ishāq’s work. Subsequent to the stories in which Abū Bakr is described as having emancipated slaves, Ibn Ishāq continues his narrative by relating the story of Abū Bakr’s father Abū Quḥāfa, and how he reacts to his son’s deeds. This account is preserved both in the recensions of Ibn Hishām and al-‘Uṭāridī, as well as in al-Ṭabarī’s *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, with an *isnād* going back to Ibn Ishāq.¹⁹⁰ Here, Abū Quḥāfa criticizes his son for freeing weak slaves (*du‘afā’*) instead of exchanging them with stronger ones (*juld*) who can defend and protect him (*yamna‘ūka*). Ibn Ishāq’s account continues (in all

¹⁸⁸ Some *tafsīr* works, understanding the verse within the context of Abū Bakr’s manumission of slaves, do not name Umayya, but rather Abū Jahl, or Abū Sufyan.

¹⁸⁹ His full name is Abū Naṣr Manṣūr b. Abī Muzāhim al-Turkī al-Baghdādī. He was a Turkish captive or a descendant thereof, who worked as a secretary under the Abbasids. See Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Taqrīb al-tahdhīb*, ed. Abū al-Ashbāl Ṣaghūr Aḥmad Shāghif (Riyadh: Dār al-‘Āṣima, 1995), 973, #6955.

¹⁹⁰ Al-‘Uṭāridī, *Sīrat Ibn Ishāq*, 171; Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 298-9. The *isnād* presented by al-Ṭabarī is going back to Ibn Ishāq: Hārūn b. Idrīs al-Aṣamm – ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Muḥāribī – Ibn Ishāq; see al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, 24:466. In all these three accounts, Ibn Ishāq’s informant is named as: Ibn ‘Abdallāh (al-‘Uṭāridī)/Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh b. Abī ‘Atīq (Ibn Hishām)/Muḥammad b. ‘Ubaydallāh (or ‘Abdallāh) [b. Muḥammad] b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-ṣiddīq (al-Ṭabarī)] who, in turn, narrated it from ‘Āmir b. ‘Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr.

recensions) by noting that “these verses [92:5-21] came down in reference to Abū Bakr and what his father said to him.”¹⁹¹

Contemporaneous with Ibn Ishāq, the second attestation in which Abū Bakr’s charitable deeds are associated with the Qur’ānic verses [92:5-21] occurs in the *tafsīr* work ascribed to Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767).¹⁹² There, the Qur’ānic expression *fa-man a’tā* (Q 92:5) is described to have been revealed about Abū Bakr as he spent his money to free Bilāl and other slaves. Although early, Muqātil’s account presents a much more complex picture of the characters involved in the story. For Abū Bakr’s manumission of Bilāl, Muqātil’s *Tafsīr* contains two contradictory accounts. In the first, Abū Sufyān is named as the main villain who tortured Bilāl, and from whom Abū Bakr bought Bilāl. In reference to the last verses of the *sūrat al-layl* (Q 92:18 *alladhī yu’tī mālahu yatazakkā*),¹⁹³ the second account names, this time, Umayya b. Khalaf as the opponent from whom Abū Bakr bought Bilāl.¹⁹⁴ In both of these accounts, Abū Bakr ransoms Bilāl by exchanging him with another slave of his, so no amounts of money are mentioned. Clearly, both accounts make an intriguing case for Muqātil’s exegesis, but they are not utilized by the later exegetical tradition. The second account in particular displays features similar to Ibn Ishāq’s narration, which we have analyzed above. The source for this second account in the exegetical works remains ambiguous. The Khurasanī recension of Muqātil’s *Tafsīr* is only available in fragments, as large portions have been integrated by al-Tha’labī (d.

¹⁹¹ Ibid; idem, *The Life of Muhammad*, 144-5.

¹⁹² Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, 4:721-2.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 4:723-4.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

427/1036) into his exegetical work, *al-Kashf wa al-bayān*.¹⁹⁵ As for Q 92:17, al-Tha‘labī records a tradition relating the story of how Abū Bakr purchased Bilāl from Umayya by exchanging a slave of his, who is named Naṣṭās. This is the only account, apart from Ibn Ishaq’s and Muqātil’s versions, that mentions a slave exchange. The tradition is transmitted on the authority of Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab (14-94 / 637-712), without any further information about its *isnād*. If indeed al-Tha‘labī derives this account from Muqātil’s Khurasanī transmission of the text, Ibn al-Musayyab might be the source from whom both Ibn Ishāq (segment C) and Muqātil derived their information.¹⁹⁶

Be Ibn al-Musayyab the source or not, the mention of the Qur’ānic verses in connection with Abū Bakr in the works of Ibn Ishāq and Muqātil b. Sulaymān make it clear that Abū Bakr’s manumission of slaves was understood within a Qur’ānic frame of reference. Through this association, Abū Bakr is understood to be the companion who embodies the Qur’ānic notions of sincerity and charity. Abū Bakr’s persona, viewed from a Qur’ānic frame of reference, also fits Ibn Ishāq’s thematic discourse that underlines Abū Bakr’s unyielding efforts to serve Islam. The provenance of this association, whether it is Ibn al-Musayyab or another source earlier than Ibn Ishāq’s (or Muqātil’s) period of activity, i.e. the mid-2nd/8th century, is a question that requires further investigation.¹⁹⁷ Less than a century later, al-Jāhīz in his *K. al-‘uthmāniyya*

¹⁹⁵ Al-Tha‘labī benefits from Muqātil’s work extensively and names him nearly 630 times. See Mehmet Akif Koç, “A Comparison of the References,” 69–101.

¹⁹⁶ Al-Tha‘labī, *al-Kashf wa al-bayān*, 10:219–20. In addition, the *Kashf* relates a second account, namely the story of Abū al-Daḥḍāḥ, which is also given as the occasion of the revelation of the verses *fa-ammā man a‘tā wa ittaqā* (92:5), *wa ṣaddaqa bi al-ḥusnā* (92:6) and *wa sayujannibuhā al-atqā* (92:17); see *ibid.*, 10:220–1. For a detailed discussion of how a later Shi‘ite author, Ibn Tāwūs (d. 673/1274), utilizes the story of Abū al-Daḥḍāḥ in al-Tha‘labī’s *Kashf* as a proof that these verses were not revealed about Abū Bakr, see Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, 82–3, 234–6.

¹⁹⁷ Ibn Hishām’s recension of Ibn Ishāq’s work preserves a wealth of *sabab al-nuzūl* material. Although we have no precise information about Ibn Ishāq’s activity in the exegetical field, Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh Abū al-

utilizes the same Qur'ānic reference as proof-text for Abū Bakr's divinely approved traits of generosity.¹⁹⁸ As the available material suggests, Ibn Ishāq (and perhaps to some degree Muqātil) appear to be the first to associate the Qur'ānic reference with Abū Bakr, which became common in the subsequent periods.

The works of the later *tafsīr* tradition we listed above, preserving the association between Abū Bakr and these Qur'ānic verses, relate a version that is much shorter.¹⁹⁹ Muqātil's or Ibn Ishāq's accounts are not adduced in these works (to the exclusion of al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-bayān*). Rather, it is Ibn Mas'ūd on whose authority the tradition is reported. Whether or not the account extends back from the common link Manṣūr b. Abī Muzāhim to Ibn Mas'ūd remains a question for investigation. Parallel to the question of its origin, the composition of the material in Manṣūr b. Abī Muzāhim's account requires further examination. Though brief, the account contains elements that suggest a secondary character of composition.

Ṣu'aylīk in a recent study has collected the references to Ibn Ishāq from later sources, publishing it under the title *Tafsīr Ibn Ishāq*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abdallāh Abū al-Ṣu'aylīk (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1996). Unfortunately, no study has been undertaken to examine Ibn Ishāq's sources for his exegetical material. See Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:21.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 81-2, 234-7, 253-5.

¹⁹⁹ The only exception may be the *tafsīr* work attributed to Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687). The ascription to Ibn 'Abbās is highly problematic. Rippin suggested that it must be the work of al-Dīnawarī. The history of transmission between Ibn 'Abbās and Al-Dīnawarī (al-Dīnawarī < 'Ammār b. 'Abd al-Mājid and al-Ma'mūn b. Aḥmad < 'Alī b. Ishāq al-Ḥanzalī (d. 237/851) < Muḥammad b. al-Marwān al-Kūfī (d. 189/805) < Muḥammad b. al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī (d. 146/763) < Abū Ṣāliḥ (d. 101/719) < Ibn 'Abbās) names Ibn al-Kalbī as a potential author for this text. See Andrew Rippin, "Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās and Criteria for Dating early tafsīr texts" *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 19 (1994):82-3. John E. Wansbrough has pointed out the similarities between this work and Muqātil's *Tafsīr*, and considered it the work of Ibn al-Kalbī. See Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, 131-7, 140-6. Truly, the beginning of the *sūrat al-layl* includes explanations very similar to Muqātil's commentary. See *Tanwīr al-miqbās min tafsīr ibn 'abbās* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1992), 650. As for the anecdote in question, *Tanwīr al-miqbās* confines itself to mentioning that it was revealed about an unnamed person, who bought and freed nine people who were being persecuted for being Muslim. In the next lines, the *Tanwīr* explains "*man saddaqa wa man bakhila*" (92:6) as drawing a contrast between Abū Bakr and Abū Sufyān, as the former spent his fortune (*māl*) as *saddaqa*. No further explanation is given. It seems more likely that the author of this *tafsīr* work was aware of the dialogue between Abū Bakr and Abū Sufyān and makes an allusion to it without retelling the story. Given the problematic ascription of this *tafsīr* work either to Ibn 'Abbās or Ibn al-Kalbī, we can make no firm statement about the texts' relationship to Muqātil.

Manṣūr b. Abī Muzāhim's account informs us that Abū Bakr emancipated Bilāl for God's sake using the following expression: *fa-a'taqahu lillāh*. It is, however, not clear how this information is relevant to the general context of the report. In the accounts of the manumission of Bilāl that we have analyzed above, the definition of Abū Bakr's motivation is largely absent. Though brief, the expression *fa-a'taqahu lillāh* in Manṣūr's account is neither neutral nor random. It is linked to a separate incident in Bilāl's life, to which we will turn in the next section.

5. Bilāl confronts Abū Bakr

Our analysis of the tradition of Qays b. Abī Ḥāzim (above, section 4.1.) proved that unit c of the narration can be dated to Abū Mu'āwīya's lifetime (Kufan, d. 195/811).²⁰⁰ This unit relates a dialogue between Abū Bakr and Bilāl, in which Bilāl asked Abū Bakr whether he freed him in order to make him his own servant, or for God's sake. Abū Bakr's reply affirmed that he freed Bilāl for God's sake and allowed Bilāl to go and work in God's path.²⁰¹ In Abū Mu'āwīya's narration, it is unclear at what point of Bilāl's life the dialogue took place; and what it might have signified for Bilāl. Biographical entries on him contain reports which mention a dispute between Abū Bakr and Bilāl during the former's caliphate.²⁰² According to these reports, Bilāl declined to continue to act as the caller for prayer (*mu'adhdhin*) under Abū Bakr; instead, he sought to leave Medina in order to undertake *jihād* in Syria. There are many reports regarding their conversation, exhibiting a certain level of tension between the two men. The tension

²⁰⁰ See above, section 4.1.

²⁰¹ For a recent study on the notion of *jihād* in the path of God (*fi sabīl allāh*) in early Islamic history, see Asma Afsaruddin, *Striving in the Path of God: Jihād and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

²⁰² See, e.g., Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3.1.:165.

becomes resolved when Abū Bakr releases Bilāl of any obligation to serve him and utters the statement: “I freed you for God!”

5.1. The tradition in the *futūḥ* works

A longer version of this dialogue (over a page) occurs in the *futūḥ* works of Abū Ismāʿīl Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Azdī al-Baṣrī’s (d. ca. 180/796)²⁰³ *Futūḥ al-shām*²⁰⁴ and Ibn Aʿthām al-Kūfī’s (d. 3rd/9th century or early 4th/10th century)²⁰⁵ *K. al-futūḥ*.²⁰⁶ In both accounts, Bilāl asks Abū Bakr if he could join Saʿīd b. ʿĀmir b. Ḥidhyam al-Jumahlī’s army, dispatched by Abū Bakr to fight in Syria.²⁰⁷ According to these accounts, Bilāl approaches Abū Bakr, and first utters words of gratitude to him for the role he played in his manumission. Next, he declares his unwillingness to act as a *muʾadhdhin* under Abū Bakr after the death of the Prophet, and asks Abū Bakr to release him from this obligation. Abū Bakr grants him permission, stressing that he only freed him for the sake of God, and not in expectation of any recompense (*innamā*

²⁰³ For a detailed discussion of al-Azdī’s death date, see Jens J. Scheiner, “Grundlegendes zu al-Azdīs *Futūḥ aš-šām*,” *Der Islam* 84 (2007):11–12.

²⁰⁴ Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Azdī, *K. futūḥ al-shām* (= *The Futooh al-Shām. Being an Account of the Moslim Conquests in Syria*), ed. W. N. Lees (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1854), 29–30.

²⁰⁵ For a discussion of the possible dates of Ibn Aʿthām’s death, see Jens J. Scheiner “Writing the History of the *futūḥ*: The *futūḥ*-works by al-Azdī, Ibn Aʿthām, and al-Wāqidī,” in *The Lineaments of Islam: Studies in Honor of Fred McGraw Donner*, ed. Paul M. Cobb (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012), 162–3. A recent study by Ilkka Lindstedt, however, argues that the early 4th/9th century would be the correct dating for Ibn Aʿthām’s death, based on a detailed analysis of several entries in the primary sources. The study also rectifies Ibn Aʿthām’s name as Abū Muḥammad Aḥmad b. Aʿthām b. Nadhīr b. al-Ḥubāb b. Kaʿb b. Ḥabīb al-Azdī al-Kūfī, rather than the commonly found Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Aʿthām. See Lindstedt, “Al-Madāʾinī’s *Kitāb al-Dawla* and the Death of Ibrāhīm al-Imām,” in *Case Studies in Transmission*, ed. Ilkka Lindstedt, Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, Raija Mattila, and Robert Rollinger (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014).

²⁰⁶ Ibn Aʿthām al-Kūfī, *K. al-futūḥ*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Muʾīd Khān (Hyderabad: Maṭbaʿat Majlis Dāʾirat al-Maʾārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1968) 1:116–7. Al-Balādhurī also records a similar tradition, naming al-Wāqidī as his source, which is, however, not contained in al-Wāqidī’s *Futūḥ al-shām*. See al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* (Ḥamīdullāh), 192, #504; cf. al-Wāqidī, *K. futūḥ al-shām*, ed. Ṣāliḥ Mūsā Darādka (Jordan: Muʾassasat al-Ḥamāda li al-Dirasāt al-Jāmiʿiyya, 2007).

²⁰⁷ Al-Azdī, *Futūḥ*, 29–30. Ibn Aʿthām, *Futūḥ*, 1:116–7.

a‘taqtuka li-wajhⁱ llāh ta‘ālā wa lam urid bi-dhālīka jazā^{an} wa lā shukūr^{an}).²⁰⁸ Though potentially strained, the dialogue gains an exculpatory character, as both Abū Bakr and Bilāl continue their conversation by extolling each other, finally reaching a friendly resolution. Having apologetic undertones, the narrative in these *futūḥ* works, most probably dating to the second half of the 2nd/8th century,²⁰⁹ exhibits a more elaborate dialogue, and attempts to remove any potential conflict between the two figures.

5.2. The tradition of Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab (d. 94/712)

There are other accounts of earlier provenance, which present the same conversion but convey a more tense conversation between Abū Bakr and Bilāl.

(a) The earliest report occurs in a 2nd/8th-century work, namely Ibn al-Mubārak’s (d. 181/797) *K. al-jihād*,²¹⁰ on the authority of Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab (Medinan, 14-94 /637-712): Ibn al-Mubārak < Ma‘mar (Basran, lived in Ṣan‘ā’, d. 153/770) < ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ (Meccan, d. 114/732)²¹¹ < Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab. In this account, Abū Bakr learns about Bilāl’s preparations to leave Medina for Syria and expresses his regret: “I am not used to seeing you, oh Bilāl, leaving us in such

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ The two texts closely resemble each other both in terms of wording and the general structure of the narrative. Although they employ no *isnād* for their narration, Scheiner suggests that the work that is accredited to Abū Mikhnaḥ al-Azdī (157/774), namely *Futūḥ al-shām*, is a potential candidate for the common source from which both Ibn A‘tham (probably via Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī [d. 204/819]’s *Futūḥ al-shām*) and al-Azdī could have derived their material. See Scheiner, “Writing the History of the *Futūḥ*,” 151-76. A second alternative, suggested earlier by Iḥsān ‘Abbās, postulates that Ibn A‘tham might have derived some of his material directly from al-Azdī. See Iḥsān ‘Abbās, *Ta’rīkh bilād al-shām min mā qabla al-islām ḥattā bidāyat al-‘aṣr al-umawī*, 600 – 661 (Amman: al-Jāmi‘a al-Urduniyya, 1990), 22.

²¹⁰ ‘Abdallāh Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), *Kitāb al-jihād*, ed. Nazīh Ḥammād (Jidda: Dār al-Maṭbū‘āt al-Ḥadītha, 1983), 115. Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī also records the same tradition from Ibn al-Mubārak. See his *Ḥilya*, 150.

²¹¹ *EF*³ s.v. “‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ” (Harald Motzki). ‘Aṭā’ is identified as a half-caste (*muwallad*), born in Yemen to black parents. In Mecca, he became a *mawlā* of the Quraysh, affiliated with the family of Abū Khuthaym al-Fihri. See Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 5:334-6.

circumstances. Would it that you stay with us so that you help us!” (*mā kuntu arāka yā bilāl^u tada‘unā ‘alā hādhihi al-ḥāl, law aqamta ma‘anā fa-a‘antanā.*) Bilāl gives a rhetorical response: “If you freed me for God, then let me go to [serve] God; and if you freed me for yourself, then hold me in your custody” (*in kunta innamā a‘taqtanī lillāh fa-da‘nī adhab ilā allāh, in kunta a‘taqtanī li-nafsika fa-ḥbisnī ‘indaka*).

(b) A second account occurs in ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s (d. 211/827) *Muṣannaf*.²¹² Like Ibn al-Mubārak, ‘Abd al-Razzāq derives the report from his teacher Ma‘mar on the authority of Ibn al-Musayyab: ‘Abd al-Razzāq < Ma‘mar < ‘Aṭā’ < Ibn al-Musayyab.²¹³ Abū Bakr’s reply is shorter in this account. When he learns that Bilāl is preparing to leave, he simply says that Bilāl should stay with him (*bal ‘indī*) rather than go to Syria. Bilāl counters Abū Bakr’s words with a statement similar to the one in Ibn al-Mubārak’s account: “If you emancipated me for yourself, then hold me [in custody]; if you emancipated me for God, then leave me so that I go to [serve] God (*in kunta a‘taqtanī li-nafsika fa-ḥbisnī, wa in kunta a‘taqtanī lillāh fa-dharnī adhab ilā Allāh*).²¹⁴

(c) In his *Ṭabaqāt*, Ibn Sa‘d also records a similar tradition on the authority of Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab: Ibn Sa‘d < Rawḥ b. ‘Ubāda (Basran, d. 205/820) / ‘Affān b. Muslim / Sulaymān b. Ḥarb < Ḥammād b. Salama (Basran, d. 167/783)²¹⁵ < ‘Alī b. Zayd < Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab.²¹⁶ Resonating with the previous accounts, Ibn Sa‘d depicts a scene where Bilāl stands up at a Friday prayer. As Abū Bakr ascends the *minbar*, Bilāl poses him the question: “Have you

²¹² ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 11:234.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibn Ḥajar, *TT*, 3:10-2.

²¹⁶ Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3.1.:166. There is an account in al-Balādhurī’s *Ansāb* with a similar *isnād* going back to Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab, and the text is identical to Ibn Sa‘d: al-Balādhurī < Abū Bakr al-A‘yān < Rawḥ b. ‘Ubāda < Ḥammād b. Salama < ‘Alī b. Zayd < Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab. See al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* (Ḥamīdullāh), 192, #505.

emancipated me for God or for your own sake?” (*a‘taqtanī lillāh aw li-nafsika?*).²¹⁷ Thus, all the accounts going back to Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab record a more confrontational tone in the two men’s conversation.²¹⁸

Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab is said to have been born during the caliphate of ‘Umar, so he is not an eyewitness narrator. As in the tradition of Ibn Sīrīn, none of the accounts name any companion of the Prophet from whom Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab could have heard the story. Each of these accounts illustrates Bilāl’s confrontation with Abū Bakr in a slightly different setting. Despite these variations, they all have a common basic structure formulated in a rudimentary form of narration,²¹⁹ while al-Azdī’s and Ibn A‘tham’s narrations, in contrast, resolve the conflict in a more elaborate form. There, the dialogue between Abū Bakr and Bilāl strikes a conscious tone, each side seeking the other’s consent, giving the narrative an exculpatory character.

The reports transmitted on the authority of Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab set the time for the story at the beginning of Abū Bakr’s caliphate and serve to explain why Bilāl did not continue to act as a *mu‘adhdhin* under Abū Bakr, but left Medina. They also create a context wherein Abū Bakr’s

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Aside from the traditions going back to Sa‘īd b. al-Musayyab, Ibn Ḥajar compares two similar reports with lines of transmissions going back to Ismā‘īl b. Abī Khālīd. Both texts record Bilāl’s words to Abū Bakr, asking the latter to let him go to work for God. Their *isnāds* are: (i) al-Bukhārī < Numayr < Muḥammad b. ‘Ubayd < Ismā‘īl b. Abī Khālīd < Qays b. Abī Ḥāzim; (ii) Aḥmad < Abū Usāma < Ismā‘īl b. Abī Khālīd. Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Fatḥ al-bārī bi sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ al-imām abī ‘abdallāh muḥammad b. ismā‘īl al-bukhārī*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. ‘Abdallāh b. Bāz and Muḥammad Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī (Medina: al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya, 1379 A.H.), 7:99.

²¹⁹ A similar version of the conflict, albeit without an *isnād*, can be found in Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī’s (d. 354/965) *Mashāhīr ‘ulamā’ al-amṣār*, ed. Fleischhammer (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Lujna al-Ta’līf wa al-Tarjama wa al-Nashr, 1959), 50. For other reports related to Bilāl’s career as a *mu‘adhdhin* after the death of the Prophet, see Ibn ‘Asākir, *TMD*, 10:466-71.

motive for freeing Bilāl comes under scrutiny. Abū Bakr claims that his manumission of Bilāl entails no personal interests. In al-Azdī's and Ibn A'tham's narrations, it is again this statement of Abū Bakr's that releases the tension between him and Bilāl. When noting that Abū Bakr emancipated Bilāl for God's sake (*fa-a'taqahu lillāh*), the later exegetical tradition seems to be aware of the problem posed and resolved in the earlier material. Here, Abū Bakr's words that he emancipated Bilāl only for God's sake are not presented to eliminate doubts about Abū Bakr's sincerity. Rather, the expression (*fa-a'taqahu lillāh*) aims to establish a link between Abū Bakr's zealous demeanour and the Qur'ānic notion of spending one's wealth in the path to God. Viewed from this perspective, the tradition of Ibn Mas'ūd, in the transmission of Manṣūr b. Abī Muzāhim, articulates a set of complex issues in a single report, and seeks to confirm Abū Bakr's religious motivation. Though concise, the condensed character of the narration in *tafsīr* works is a strong indication of a composition of a secondary nature.²²⁰

If Manṣūr's transmission were really a product of the 3rd/9th century, it is possible to think that he acquired and then merged the information from earlier traditions. Conspicuously, the name of a certain transmitter, Yūnus b. Abī Ishāq (Kufan, d. 159/775), appears in the *isnād* extending from Manṣūr b. Abī Muzāhim to Ibn Mas'ūd. In the next chapter, we will demonstrate that Yūnus is most likely the transmitter responsible for inserting Abū Bakr's and Bilāl's names into the Baḥīrā episode. Whether or not Yūnus b. Abī Ishāq is again the suspect responsible for the report's secondary character of composition, the accounts in the *tafsīr* literature clearly lack the originality that might have furnished further insights into the manumission of Bilāl.

²²⁰ For the traditions on the *qadar*-problem, van Ess demonstrated that there is a vertical chronology for the traditions of the late Umayyad and early Abbasid period, especially when examining the variations in the *matns*, additions to them, and new combinations thereof. Later or younger traditions displaying a secondary character gain new contexts and meanings through alterations and retouches of the older material. See van Ess, *Zwischen Ḥadīth und Theologie*, 180-1.

Summary of findings

In the first chapter, we concluded that in the second half of the 2nd/8th century an invisible hand had entered Abū Bakr into the Baḥīrā story, pairing him with Bilāl. In this chapter, we examined the narrative traditions that explicate the nature of the relationship between Abū Bakr and Bilāl, as recorded in the narratives that can be dated to the 2nd/8th century. Our study demonstrates that Abū Bakr's relation to Bilāl as his emancipator serves as the main axis of information in all the traditions we have examined. Concerning Bilāl's slavery and Abū Bakr's saving Bilāl, there are, particularly, two groups of traditions: first, the story of Bilāl's persecution, and second, the story of Abū Bakr's purchase of Bilāl. As a third group, we can add the story of Bilāl's conversation with Abū Bakr, as Bilāl seeks to go to Syria at the beginning of Abū Bakr's caliphate. In this third group, the conversation explicitly refers to Abū Bakr's manumission of Bilāl. In all these traditions, the narrative material presents more than a uniform picture about the specifics of these events. The descriptions of Bilāl's torture, the method of Abū Bakr's manumission of Bilāl, and the setting and tone of Bilāl's discussion with Abū Bakr before his departure to Syria vary considerably in each of these groups of tradition.

Below, we will summarize our findings in a diachronic form, in accordance with the chronology we have set for each tradition. Additionally, varying forms of characterizations in the narrations as well as the underlying discursive themes will be explained.

1. The earliest forms of narrations referring to Bilāl's torture as a slave can be dated to the Medinan tradent 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr (23–94 / 644–712), i.e. to the second half of the 1st/7th century. After an extensive analysis of traditions that claim to be originating with 'Urwa, we have been able to reconstruct the basic outline of 'Urwa's narration. It centers around the

story of Bilāl's persecution and describes him as a slave of Banū Jumaḥ or, more specifically, of Umayya b. Khalaf al-Jumaḥī, who tortured him because of his monotheism. The uncompromising nature of Bilāl's dedication culminates in his words "*aḥad aḥad!*" Interestingly, there is no mention of Abū Bakr rescuing him from the torment in the narrations ascribed to 'Urwa.

2. There is another group of traditions, which most likely has its origins with 'Urwa's Medinan contemporary Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab (14–94 / 637–712). The accounts contain a conversation between Abū Bakr and Bilāl with confrontational undertones, as Bilāl expresses his desire to leave Medina and go to Syria to engage in *jihād*. In the dialogue, Bilāl (rhetorically) questions Abū Bakr's motive for freeing him, whereupon Abū Bakr assures him that he had freed him for God's sake and permits him to leave Medina. Although this is a separate incident that occurred at a different stage in two men's lives, the conversation reveals that Abū Bakr is deemed to be Bilāl's original manumitter, since Bilāl has to ask him for permission to leave. We can date this information to the last decades of the 1st/ early 8th century.²²¹

3. The earliest forms of the narrations relating the actual story of Abū Bakr's manumission of Bilāl also come from approximately the same period – ca. the first decade of the 2nd/8th century – as they go back to Ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/728). In this group of narrations, we have varying descriptions of Bilāl's torture (his body being stretched out, hot sand being thrown upon his body/chest, rolled inside the skin of a cow or an ox, etc.) which emphasize the hardship Bilāl

²²¹ In 'Abd al-Razzaq's account, the discussion scene, transmitted also on the authority of Ibn al-Musayyab, is preceded by the story of how Abū Bakr freed Bilāl. Interestingly, the Prophet again appears in this account, but this time lets Abū Bakr know about his wish regarding Bilāl's emancipation. Upon hearing the Prophet's wish, Abū Bakr decides to buy and ransom Bilāl. However, instead of purchasing Bilāl personally, he sends 'Abbās, the Prophet's uncle, to purchase Bilāl on his behalf. Once 'Abbās buys Bilāl and brings him to Abū Bakr, Abū Bakr frees him. See 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 11:234.

endured and highlight his heroic dedication to the monotheistic principles of Islam. In these narrations, the identity of Bilāl's family is not mentioned. Abū Bakr purchases Bilāl from his torturers by paying them seven ounces. The Prophet also appears in the narration, offering Abū Bakr a share in Bilāl's ownership. Abū Bakr responds that he has not only purchased but freed him. In this constellation of the story, the Prophet does not appear to have expected that Abū Bakr purchased Bilāl for the sake of emancipating him, so Abū Bakr evidently freed him on his own initiative. In Ibn Sīrīn's narrative, we find no mention of the other slaves whom Abū Bakr bought and freed. Like 'Urwa and Ibn al-Musayyab, Ibn Sīrīn is a second-generation Muslim, born in 34/654, i.e. after the death of Abū Bakr. His tradition names no companion of the Prophet from whom he heard the tradition. The biographical sources identify Ibn Sīrīn's parents as slaves (his mother having been emancipated by Abū Bakr), and he also appears to be a source for other traditions that deal with the topic of slavery. The network of Ibn Sīrīn's transmission is exclusively Basran.

4. Hishām b. 'Urwa (d. 147/764), who lived in Medina, belongs to the next generation of tradents who transmitted information about Bilāl's torture and the names of the slaves whom Abū Bakr freed. Hishām relates the story of how Bilāl is tortured (specifically by a huge rock being placed on his chest with his back touching the hot ground) at the hands of the Umayya b. Khalaf. In Hishām's narrations, we can encounter a dialogue between Waraqa b. Nawfal, a Christian monotheist, and Umayya, as the former severely criticizes the latter's treatment of Bilāl. Bilāl's torture and Waraqa's criticism of Umayya constitute a single block of narration in Hishām's transmission. Next to that, there is a separate account that goes back to Hishām in which he lists the names of the seven slaves whom Abū Bakr bought and freed. Bilāl is mentioned as one of these seven slaves. There is, however, no description of Abū Bakr's actual

manumission of Bilāl in this report. Next to these, we find two accounts dating back to Hishām that tell the story of Zinnīra and al-Nahdiyya (and the latter’s daughter), whom Abū Bakr purchased and freed. In Zinnīra’s case, the narration describes how she lost her sight and gained it back after declaring her belief in Allah prior to Abū Bakr’s manumission of her. No details are given about how Abū Bakr bought and freed her, though. In al-Nahdiyya’s case, in contrast, Hishām’s narration describes the actual scene of Abū Bakr’s manumission of her and her daughter in detail.

5. It is in Ibn Ishāq’s (d. 150/767) narrative framework that we are for the first time offered a more coherent picture about Bilāl’s torture, Waraqa’s conversation with Umayya b. Khalaf, and Abū Bakr’s purchase of Bilāl from Umayya in order to free him. Although Ibn Ishāq names Hishām as his source, he adds information or accounts that are not from Hishām. He further recasts the material he derives from Hishām in such a way that it would fit his own thematic structure. Ibn Ishāq creates a rather novel narrative scheme, in which Bilāl’s persecution at the hands of his family turns into a salvation story, thereby causing a shift in the thematic orientation of the narrative focusing on Abū Bakr’s deeds of charity. In the salvation passage, Ibn Ishāq uses Hishām’s short account, which names the seven slaves, as the backbone of his narrative. Each emancipation story is then related under the name of the specific slave whom Abū Bakr freed. In this setup, Abū Bakr is portrayed as the most generous companion of the Prophet, who spends his wealth in the path to God. After enumerating Abū Bakr’s successive manumission activities, Ibn Ishāq adds another account to his narrative, in which Abū Bakr’s father, Abū Quḥāfa, criticizes his son for wasting his money on slaves that have no value. This account is cast as an additional proof to highlight Abū Bakr’s commitment to spend his wealth in the service of Islam. Ibn Ishāq claims that the Qur’ānic verses 92:5-21 were revealed in

response to Abū Quḥāfa's comments, giving Abū Bakr an uniquely exalted status, and raising his charitable deeds to a sacral level.

Within Ibn Ishāq's narrative framework, the stories of Bilāl's torture and Abū Bakr's manumission of him no longer remain as single incidents. They become interconnected series of events which reveal a divinely ordained plan. This narrativistic turn in Ibn Ishāq's treatment of the material also widens the compass of roles that Abū Bakr plays. Abū Bakr's persona not only turns into the ideal prototype of a true believer in God, who arduously works in His service; but also into that of a faithful companion of the Prophet who strives to support him by all means. When compared with the earlier forms of the narratives, this narrativistic turn in Ibn Ishāq's treatment of the subject creates a new intricate phase in the conception of Abū Bakr's relationship to Bilāl. This shift most probably corresponds to a new stage in the reinterpretation of the Islamic past.

Biographical sources inform us that Ibn Ishāq moved from Medina to Iraq (first to al-Ḥīra near Kufa, then to Baghdad after 145/762) during the caliphate of al-Manṣūr (r. 138–158 / 754–775). The new intellectual and political milieu he moved into might have been conducive to a new vision of the past, which is also conveyed through more elaborate forms of narrations.

6. Iraq in the early Abbasid period also witnessed the circulation of other reports on Abū Bakr and Bilāl. The traditions of Ibn Mas'ūd and Mujāhid, as analyzed at the beginning of this chapter, also have their origins in this time and place. The common link for the tradition of Ibn Mas'ūd is the Kufan Zā'ida b. Qudāma (d. 161/776). Our analysis demonstrated that it was him who circulated the tradition in the last quarter of his life in Kufa. The common link for Mujāhid's tradition is also Kufan, namely, Jarīr b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (d. 188/804). He must have

transmitted his information in Kufa before moving to Rayy in the last part of his life. As we have demonstrated, the traditions of Ibn Mas‘ūd and Mujāhid are not independent from each other, but of common origin. Neither of them actually reach back to their designated narrators – Ibn Mas‘ūd or Mujāhid – but come into circulation in Kufa between 132-162/750-777. Aside from the Prophet and Abū Bakr, both traditions identify five slaves, including Bilāl, as the first who accepted Islam and suffered persecution because of their belief. As much as the narration centers on the identities of the first individuals to believe in the Prophet’s message, both groups of traditions take care to describe the suffering Bilāl had to endure. Thus, the polytheists tie a cord around Bilāl’s neck and make him travel in the piedmonts of Mecca. Bilāl never gives in to their demands and keeps uttering “*aḥad aḥad!*” – an expression of his staunch monotheism, which can also be detected in ‘Urwa’s and Ibn Sīrīn’s narrations. In both groups of traditions, however, Abū Bakr’s relationship to Bilāl (as well as to ‘Āmir b. Fuhayra) as his manumitter is not mentioned, and the connection between Abū Bakr and Bilāl remains a more distant association: both Abū Bakr and Bilāl belong to the earliest group of believers. Unlike Bilāl and the other four slaves, who are said to have been persecuted and endured hardship, Abū Bakr is identified as the only believer who was protected by his clan, and thus emerges as the first free male Muslim. Therefore, the groups of traditions which name Bilāl and Abū Bakr together appear again to have considerable relevance to the discussions on the identity of the first Muslims in the political and religious contexts of the early Abbasid period.

7. The other group of traditions, which also has its origins in Kufa at this time period, goes back to Ismā‘īl b. Abī Khālid (Kufan, d. 146/763). The two transmitters from Ismā‘īl are Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna (Meccan, d. 196/811) and Abū Mu‘āwīya (Kufan, d. 195/811). The information regarding Bilāl’s burial under rocks and Abū Bakr’s rescue of him can be ascribed to Sufyān b.

‘Uyayna. Conversely, the information regarding Abū Bakr’s purchase of Bilāl for five ounces and the conversation in which Bilāl inquires about Abū Bakr’s motive for emancipating him have their origins in Abu Mu‘āwīya’s transmission. Combining different elements in a rather short report, this group of traditions provides no context for Bilāl’s torture and Abū Bakr’s rescue of him, nor does it explain Abū Bakr’s weeping when declaring that he has freed Bilāl for God’s sake. These units are articulated in crystallized forms in Ismā‘īl b. Abī Khālīd’s transmissions, since they are attested in fuller forms in the earlier groups of traditions. The concise nature of these units suggests that Bilāl’s torture, Abū Bakr’s manumission of him, and the conversation between the two men before Bilāl’s migration to Syria, must have been familiar to the Kufan milieus of the early Abbasid period.

8. We have located a very long version of the discussion between Abū Bakr and Bilāl prior to Bilāl’s departure from Medina in the *futūḥ* works of al-Azdī (Basran, d. ca. 180/796) and Ibn A‘tham (Kufan, d. 3rd/9th century or early 4th). Both accounts resolve the conflict in a much more elaborate form of narration. The dialogue between Abū Bakr and Bilāl strikes a conscious tone, with multiple explanations on both sides, as each of them seeks to gain the understanding and goodwill of the other. Al-Azdī may have been the source for Ibn A‘tham’s account, but a different source, common to the both, also remains a possibility (e.g. Abū Mikhnaḥ [d. 157/774, Kufan]).

9. In the *tafsīr* literature, we find several accounts informing about Abū Bakr’s manumission of Bilāl. The accounts go back to Ibn Mas‘ūd, although the common link of this tradition is the 3rd/9th-century Baghdadi transmitter Maṣṣūr b. Abī Muzāḥim (155–235 / 771–849). The account establishes the association between the Qur’ānic verses 92:5–6 and Abū Bakr’s manumission of

Bilāl, saying that Abū Bakr bought Bilāl from Umayya b. Khalaf by paying ten ounces and a cloak, and emancipated him for God's sake. Our analysis has demonstrated that the account bears a secondary character of composition on many levels. The association between the Qur'ānic verses and Abū Bakr's manumission of Bilāl is not new to these accounts, as it had already been established by Ibn Ishāq, and occurred in Muqātil's *Tafsīr*. But Manṣūr b. Abī Muzāhim's transmission describes a different method for Bilāl's manumission: a payment of ten ounces and a cloak. We are also familiar with the name of a particular transmitter mentioned in the *isnād* of this tradition, Yūnus b. Abī Ishāq (Kufan, d. 159/775), who appears in the second version of the Baḥīrā narrative. We have already identified him as a potential candidate to insert Abū Bakr's and Bilāl's names into the Baḥīrā story. Whether or not he again might be responsible for the make-up of this account, it remains clear that the tradition ascribed to Ibn Mas'ūd in the transmission of Manṣūr b. Abī Muzāhim exhibits a secondary character of composition.

On the basis of these findings, we are on much firmer ground to disentangle the web of the 2nd/8th-century information explicating the nature of Abū Bakr's relationship to Bilāl. Three different episodes mark the general body of information to define their relationship. The first is the story of Bilāl's persecution; the second is Abū Bakr's purchase and manumission of him; and the third is the discussion between the two men before Bilāl's departure from Medina. We find the first forms of these stories in the narrations of three successors – 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr (Medinan), Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab (Medinan), and Ibn Sīrīn (Basran) – circulating already at the end of the 1st/beginning of the 8th century. Their narrations exhibit a less elaborate character;

the story is narrated in a rudimentary form without subscription to any complex discursive references. We can also add Hishām b. 'Urwa's traditions to this cluster of narrations.

In Ibn Ishāq's new thematic narrative framework, earlier material goes through a sublimation process. The narrative composition takes a new turn by its focus on the characters, as certain religious virtues, such as precedence and firmness in belief, commitment, generosity, etc., are highlighted. The time and place of Ibn Ishāq's activity (138 –150 / 754–767 in Iraq) witness a flux of reports offering new versions of these three episodes. Groups of traditions that date back to the period between 132–164 / 750–780 particularly concentrate in Kufa. The information about Bilāl's torture, Abū Bakr's manumission of him, and their discussion, all circulate at this time period in Iraqi intellectual circles.

In the first chapter, we noted that Abū Bakr's and Bilāl's names were introduced into the Baḥīrā story in the Kufan milieu of the early Abbasid period. In this chapter, we were able to demonstrate that the early Abbasid Kufan milieu had a well-defined conception of Abū Bakr's relationship to Bilāl. This relationship, having its origins in Abū Bakr's activity of manumitting Bilāl, is articulated in narrative forms of varying structures. Still, it is now clearly conceivable why Abū Bakr's name was paired with Bilāl's in traditions from the Kufan intellectual circles of the early Abbasid period.

CONCLUSIONS

In this dissertation, we analyzed the various accounts of three major aspects of Abū Bakr's biography, and we mapped out the web of their transmission and circulation in various locations of Islamic lands in the 2nd/8th century.

The first aspect concerns the question of the portrayal of Abū Bakr's conversion to Islam. We presented a multiplicity of narrative traditions, each giving a different account of the circumstances under which this conversion happened. In this respect, we noted the tendency of the narratives to include Abū Bakr in events that took place either before the proclamation of Islam or during the earliest phase of Muhammad's reception of revelations. This chronological frame would then serve to prove Abū Bakr's status as the "first believer."

The second aspect concerns Abū Bakr's title *al-ṣiddīq*. We analyzed here narrative traditions that discuss this issue by associating its bestowal with certain historical events. These are (a) when Abū-Bakr readily believed Baḥīrā about Muḥammad's future prophethood, or, alternatively, (b) when Abū Bakr testified to the veracity of Muḥammad's report after his return from Jerusalem on the night of the *isrā'* and declared his unconditional belief in him.

The third aspect concerns Abū Bakr's relationship to another early believer, the slave Bilāl b. Rabāḥ. We examined three different groups of traditions that describe (a) how Bilāl was tortured by his owners after accepting Islam, (b) how Abū Bakr rescued him by buying and freeing him, (c) and how the two men described the matter of Bilāl's emancipation years later, when Bilāl wished to release himself of the duty of *mu'adhdhin* under Abū Bakr in order to engage in *jihād* in Syria.

These three aspects cover only a small portion of the information that was circulating about Abū Bakr in the 2nd/8th century. However, when analyzed together, they reveal several layers of narrative material, as well as the varying interests in rendering and transmitting them. We also noted that the greatest portion of information about Abū Bakr was disseminated in this period chiefly in four centers of Islamic learning: Medina, Basra, Kufa, and Baghdad (after its foundation in 145/762).

When grouping the traditions according to their geographical distribution, we arrive at a clearer picture of how the different traditions were disseminated, how (and why) the stories were presented in different renderings, what the early Muslim scholars in the different cities knew or did not know about Abū Bakr, and how the narratives eventually traveled from one location to another. Organizing our results in this way also allows for the general character of the narrations and transmissions in each of these centers to become apparent.

Medina

Our reconstruction of the narrations demonstrated that one of the earliest clusters of material can be attributed to Medinan authorities, in whose narrations/transmission the traditions came into circulation. Prominent figures here are, mainly, Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab (d. 94/712) and ʿUrwa b. Zubayr (d. 94/712), as well as ʿUrwa's students, al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) and Hishām b. ʿUrwa (d. 147/764).

Interestingly, Abū Bakr's (early) conversion does not seem to be a topic of interest to the intellectual circles of Medina. There is no tradition to suggest that Abū Bakr learned about Muḥammad's prophethood before the proclamation of Islam or during the first revelations.

Indeed, he is absent from the story about Baḥīrā and Abū Ṭālib, which Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767) recorded in his *Maghāzī*.

The explanation of the origin of Abū Bakr's title *al-ṣiddīq* also does not appear to be of special interest, since the Medinan narrations on Muḥammad's nightly journey to Jerusalem and back (*isrā'*) do not contain any references to Abū Bakr's honorific. While our analysis confirmed the results of Boekhoff-van der Voort in that al-Zuhrī was the major authority in Medina to relate information about the *isrā'*, it remains unclear whether his detailed account, which included a dialogue between Abū Bakr and the Meccans about the veracity of Muḥammad's report, established a link between Abū Bakr's verification and his title. It is only in the transmission of Ma'mar (d. 153/770), a Basran student of al-Zuhrī, that we find this additional piece of information. Another Medinan tradition, later than al-Zuhrī's, can be attributed to 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam (d. 182/798) – or perhaps even to his father Zayd b. Aslam (d. 136/753). It shares many details with al-Zuhrī's account, and like it does not provide any explanation of how Abū Bakr acquired the title *al-ṣiddīq*.

In contrast, the Medinan traditions offer relatively rich information on the story of Bilāl's torture and Abū Bakr's manumission of him and other slaves. As we attributed the story of Bilāl's torture to 'Urwa, we can date it as early as the late 1st/7th or early 2nd/8th century. The tradition in his son Hishām b. 'Urwa's narration can be reconstructed with a high degree of certainty. It includes not only details of Bilāl's torture, but also a conversation between Waraqa and Bilāl's owner, Umayya b. Khalaf. While in Hishām's account we also find information that Abū Bakr freed seven slaves, Bilāl among them, neither 'Urwa's nor Hishām's narration provide any clues as to how Abū Bakr bought and freed Bilāl.

The only possible Medinan account that describes how Abū Bakr rescued Bilāl can be found in Ibn Ishāq's *Maghāzī*. The source for his account, however, is unfortunately not clear. Muqātil's *Tafsīr* and al-Thā'labī's *Kashf* are the only two collections that offer parallel attestations. What these three accounts have in common is that Abū Bakr bought Bilāl by exchanging him with a slave of his instead of paying a certain amount of money. Among the three, only the *Kashf* names an authority who transmitted the tradition (Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab), which is a very thin evidence. If indeed both the accounts of Ibn Ishāq and Muqātil originated in Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab's narration, this would be the only Medinan tradition about Abū Bakr manumitting Bilāl.

A third tradition, for which again Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab serves as the common link, records a dialogue between Abū Bakr and Bilāl that took place at the beginning of the former's caliphate. This account indirectly reveals that it was Abū Bakr who manumitted Bilāl, as the latter rhetorically questions Abū Bakr about his earlier motives for freeing him.

This brief survey of the Medinan traditions demonstrates that they can be dated either to the late 1st/7th or early 2nd/8th century (as in the case of 'Urwa and Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab) or to the first half of the 2nd/8th century (as in the case of al-Zuhrī and Hishām b. 'Urwa). They provide the type of material that allows us to reconstruct their earliest, rudimentary, forms with a relatively high degree of certainty. Although containing valuable details, these accounts offer a comparatively fragmentary picture about Abū Bakr. First, we are given no information about his conversion to Islam, or his precedence in belief. Secondly, it is not entirely clear whether there was any interest in explaining the origins of Abū Bakr's title *al-ṣiddīq*, and if so, whether his involvement in the *isrā'* story was understood as the occasion his endowment with the

honorific. For the story about Bilāl, however, the Medinan traditions offer more details, and Abū Bakr seems to be known as his emancipator.

Basra

Like the situation in Medina, the interest in Abū Bakr's (early) conversion does not seem to have been very pronounced in the first half of the 2nd/8th century in Basra, as none of the pertinent traditions that we analyzed (apart from the one transmitted by Shu'ba b. al-Ḥajjāj [d. 160/776]) goes back to this city.

For Abū Bakr's title *al-ṣiddīq*, Basran material proves to be the earliest that established a connection between Abū Bakr's verification of the Prophet's nightly journey to Jerusalem and his acquisition of the honorific. We demonstrated that there are many traditions going back to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and his student Qatāda (d. 118/735), which are primarily exegetical in character. The story of Abū Bakr belongs to this body of material, and is presented in connection with Q 17:60. The account, however, contains a peculiar scene in which Abū Bakr starts questioning Muḥammad about the details of his journey to Jerusalem before expressing his faith in him. In this setup of the story, Abū Bakr is portrayed as a cautious person who only trusts the Prophet after thoroughly examining his account. A very similar scene is found in several Medinan versions of the story, although there it is always the Meccans who doubt Muḥammad's journey and pose such questions.

Although we could show that Ibn Ishāq had access to al-Zuhrī's traditions about the *isrā'*, he evidently chose the material from al-Ḥasan/Qatāda for his rendering of the events connected with it. This is quite unusual for Ibn Ishāq, since only a very limited portion of his work was

derived from Basran traditionists. It is quite likely that Ibn Ishāq gained access to the exegetical material from Basra during his Iraqi years, i.e. 135-150/752-767.

For Abū Bakr's manumission of Bilāl, our analysis has demonstrated that the earliest tradition on this topic that we can date with certainty comes from Basra. The source of the tradition is al-Ḥasan's contemporary, Ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/728). His narration relates that Abū Bakr bought Bilāl after he saw him being tortured by his family. In this narrative, Abū Bakr does not exchange Bilāl with a slave of his, but rather pays a certain sum of money (seven ounces). A feature peculiar to Ibn Sīrīn's narration is that, the Prophet appears and offers Abū Bakr a share in Bilāl's ownership. Abū Bakr brief reply reveals that he had not only purchased but freed him – a magnanimous act which the Prophet apparently did not expect from Abū Bakr. Ibn Sīrīn, as probably typical for his time, names no source for his account. According to the biographical sources, both of his parents were slaves, and his mother was also emancipated by Abū Bakr.

Both in the al-Ḥasan/Qatāda tradition and in Ibn Sīrīn's narration (both can be dated to the first decades of the 2nd/8th century), the Basran material provides one of the earliest and most comprehensive narratives to explain the title *al-ṣiddīq* by connecting it to the story of Bilāl's emancipation. At the same time, we find some unexpected details in both traditions, such as the scene in which Abū Bakr questions the Prophet about the details of his journey to Jerusalem, or the Prophet's proposal of a joint ownership of Bilāl. Both episodes demonstrate the importance of the role Abū Bakr plays in these events, but do not portray him in an elaborate or idealized form. This somewhat naïve lack of sophistication is also reflected in the formal characteristics of the transmission: in none of them do we find any *isnād* that names a companion of the Prophet who could have narrated the tradition. In the subsequent periods,

both traditions retain their Basran character, since they are transmitted mostly by Basran transmitters.

Kufa

A much more complex and diverse picture emerges in Kufa. In contrast to Medina and Basra, Kufa was the prime center where traditions about Abū Bakr's conversion and precedence in Islam circulated. Among the most frequently cited traditions is one that records a conversation between Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687) and al-Sha'bī (Kufan, d. ca. 103-110/721-728) on the identity of the first person to accept Islam. Ibn 'Abbās refers to Ḥassan b. Thābit's (55/674) poem on Abū Bakr as clear evidence of the latter's precedence in Islam. Our analysis has demonstrated that this tradition came into circulation in the early Abbasid period in Kufa in the transmission of al-Sha'bī's student Mujālid (Kufan, d. 144/762), and made its way into Baghdad through the transmission of al-Haytham b. 'Adī (Kufa/Baghdad, d. ca. 206/821).

We also analyzed a second tradition, again allegedly transmitted on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, which reports that Abū Bakr learned about the emergence of Muḥammad as a prophet from the monk Baḥīrā. It is recorded in Ḍirār b. 'Amr's (Kufan, d. ca. 200/815) recently edited work *K. al-taḥrīsh*, as well as in 'Abdallāb b. Yazīd's (Kufan, d. ca. 200/815) now-lost *K. radd 'alā al-rawāfiḍ*. The tradition is primarily interested in conveying Abū Bakr's awareness of the advent of the new religion and his acceptance of Muḥammad's prophethood already before the first revelations. We have demonstrated that this is an exclusively Kufan tradition, which belongs to the second half of the 2nd/8th century, possibly to Hārūn al-Rashīd's reign (r. 170–193/786–809).

With respect to Abū Bakr's precedence in Islam, the classical sources amply record Muḥammad's encounter with a Christian monk during his childhood, for which we could demonstrate that Ibn Ishāq's *Maghāzī* recorded the oldest version we can date with certainty. There, Abū Bakr plays no part in the story. A second version, however, which came into circulation in Baghdad in the transmission of Abū Nūḥ Qurād (Baghdad, 207/822), includes Abū Bakr. Our analysis has demonstrated that rather than Abū Nūḥ, his Kufan informant Yūnus b. Abī Ishāq (d. 159/775) appears to be a more plausible candidate for inserting Abū Bakr's name into the story. Relying on Schoeler's analysis of the narratives on the story of Muḥammad's first revelation, we have noted that Abū Bakr was inserted into a single marginal version of this tradition as well, and it was again transmitted by Yūnus and members of his family in Kufa. In both cases, we can identify an attempt (sometimes regardless of chronological difficulties) to include Abū Bakr in events where Muḥammad's future prophethood was being announced, which would naturally make Abū Bakr rank among the very first believers.

As for Abū Bakr's title *al-ṣiddīq*, the Kufan explanation is very different from the Basran. First, we do not find any Kufan transmission of traditions on Muḥammad's *isrā'* in the Kufan milieus of 2nd/8th century. This might be due to the theological implications of the tradition, which suggest the possibility of the Prophet's vision of God – an idea favored by Basran and Medinan scholars, but not by Kufan intellectuals. However, we do find an explanation for *al-ṣiddīq* in an account contained in the *K. al-taḥrīsh*. There, the honorific is being justified on the grounds of Abū Bakr's early belief, and both the Bahīra tradition and Ḥāssān's poem are presented as evidence of it.

In the case of the story of Bilāl's persecution, there are two similar groups of traditions (each with a different history of transmission) that come into circulation in Kufa, namely in the

transmission of Zā'ida b. Qudāma (Kufan, d. 161/776) and Jarīr b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (grew up in Kufa, d. 188/804). Again, the story is presented as connected to the question of the identity of the first believers. Apart from the Prophet and Abū Bakr, the tradition names five slaves, including Bilal, who suffered severe persecution. Because of significant textual parallels, we concluded that both traditions were probably of common origin and must have been in circulation in Kufa in the early Abbasid period.

There is also a very short account that briefly describes Bilāl's persecution and Abū Bakr's purchase of him for five ounces. Providing no significant details, this tradition goes back to Ismā'īl b. Abī Khālīd (Kufan, d. 146/763).

All these accounts show that the identity of the first person to accept Islam, and Abū Bakr's primacy in conversion, become the dominant themes in Kufa, as different types of narratives relevant to the(se) topic(s) began to circulate by the mid-2nd/8th century. In this regard, we find a multiplicity of portrayals of Abū Bakr as the first Muslim, who learned about Muḥammad's prophethood from the monk Baḥīrā, witnessed both Baḥīrā's and Waraqa's announcements of the coming prophet, acquired his title *al-ṣiddīq* due to his primacy in accepting Islam, and belonged to the earliest groups of believers, but was not – as a free man – subjected to persecution because of that. When compared with the depictions of Abū Bakr in early 2nd/8th century Medinan and Basran sources, we find almost none of these features attributed to Abū Bakr. The Kufan material is much more fluid and diverse, has a distinct thematic interests, and only comes into circulation in the wake of the Abbasid period.

Baghdad

After its foundation in 145/762, Baghdad attracts many scholars from various regions, and we witness an influx of diverse materials. Baḥīrā traditions, for example, in all its renderings became circulated in Baghdad, with Abū Nūḥ Qurād's version being particularly popular. Moreover, as we discussed above, Ibn Ishāq's version was used by al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822), albeit without naming him, and hence this tradition became available in Baghdad, too. Both Ḍirār and 'Abdallāh b. Yazīd are reported to have paid visits to the court of the caliph; thus it is likely that their version of the Baḥīrā story was also known in Baghdad. A third tradition, which reports the conversation between Maymūn b. Mihrān (al-Jazīra, d. 117/735) and Furāt b. al-Sā'ib (al-Jazīra, d. 2nd/8th century) about Abū Bakr's fore-belief, again circulated for the first time in Baghdad in Shabāba b. Sawwār's (d. 204-206/819-822) transmission. Finally, Ḥāssan's verses about Abū Bakr's precedence in belief became available to a larger audience in Baghdad, as Haythām b. 'Adī moved there from Kufa, after his teacher Mujālid had died.

For the accounts that concern Abū Bakr's verification of Muḥammad's *isrā'* and the story of the emancipation of Bilāl, we found the first attestations in the late 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th centuries, whenever authors such as al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822), Abū Bakr b. Abī Shayba (resided in Baghdad, d. 235/849), or Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) recorded these traditions in their collections. As we noted in several cases, al-Jāḥiẓ, who fervently discussed Abū Bakr's early belief, his distinguished status due to his title *al-ṣiddīq*, and his outstanding service to Islam by freeing slaves, was also an intellectual of this cosmopolitan milieu. Although originally from Basra, al-Jāḥiẓ greatly profited from the fact that, next to the Basran material he was familiar with, traditions from Medina and Kufa were now available in Baghdad, which allowed him to discuss and portray different aspects of Abū Bakr's life in a richer intellectual setting.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1a: Version A

1. Abū Ṭālib becomes the guardian of Muḥammad after the latter's grandfather dies.
2. Abū Ṭālib gets ready to set out for a business trip to Syria on a merchant caravan.
3. Muḥammad is deeply attached (as his words tell) to Abū Ṭālib. Abū Ṭālib takes pity on him and takes him with him.
4. The caravan stops at Buṣrā in Syria where there is a monk called Baḥīrā residing in his cell.
5. Bāḥīra is a learned Christian monk, possessing in his cell books that are passed on from one generation to another.
6. When the caravan stops near his cell, he prepares food for them. That had never happened before.
7. This is because, while he was staying in his cell, Baḥīrā saw Muḥammad with a cloud over him shading him as the caravan approached.
8. The people come and stop under the shade of a tree near the monk.
9. Baḥīrā looks at the cloud as it casts its shadow over the tree. The branches of the tree bend over Muḥammad until he is protected by the shadow.
10. When Baḥīrā sees this, he comes out of his cell and invites them all to eat. The people of the caravan are surprised by the invitation.

11. The men of the Quraysh gather together to eat. Only Muḥammad is left behind sitting under a tree with the luggage.
12. Baḥīrā cannot find the signs that he is looking for on anyone among the guests, and asks if anyone has been left behind. They tell him about Muḥammad, and Baḥīrā asks them to invite him too.
13. When Baḥīrā sees Muḥammad, he examines the boy's body very carefully, looking for the signs.
14. Baḥīrā wants to ask Muḥammad a question in the name of al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā, but Muḥammad refuses to swear by these gods.
15. Baḥīrā asks him about his general affairs while awake and asleep. What Muḥammad tells him corresponds exactly to the descriptions that he knew.
16. Baḥīrā looks at Muḥammad's back and sees the seal of prophethood between his shoulders.
17. Baḥīrā asks Abū Ṭālib how the boy was related to him. Abū Ṭālib tells him that he was the boy's father. Baḥīrā corrects him, saying that the boy's father cannot be alive. Abū Ṭālib confirms that, saying the boy's father had died before the boy was born.
18. Baḥīrā urges Abū Ṭālib to take the boy back to his land and guard him carefully, because if the Jews see him, they would recognize and harm him.
19. Abū Ṭālib takes Muḥammad quickly back to Mecca.

Appendix 1b: Version B

1. Abū Ṭālib sets out to Syria with the elders of the Quraysh, and Muḥammad joins him.
2. The caravan stops for an encampment in the vicinity of the monk's cell.
3. The monk comes out of his cell to meet them. This had never happened before when the caravans passed by his cell in previous years.
4. As they are unloading their camels, the monk enters the crowd, holds the hand of Muḥammad, and explicitly calls him "the Chief of the Worlds, the Prophet of the Lord of the Worlds."
5. The elders of the Quraysh asks about the monk's knowledge.
6. The monk replies that he saw all the trees and stones prostrating themselves as the caravan appeared on top of the pass (*'aqaba*). That would happen only before a prophet.
7. The monk also states that he recognizes the boy by the seal of prophethood located on his back below the cartilage of his shoulder (*ghuḍrūf katifihi*).
8. The monk goes back, and prepares food for them.
9. As he returns, Muḥammad is herding the camels, so he sends food to him.
10. Muḥammad draws near while a cloud above him shades him.
11. Muḥammad approaches the people and finds them sitting under a tree leaving no shade for him to sit under. As he sits down, the shade of the tree moves over him.
12. The monk says: "Look at the shade of the tree! It moved over him."

13. The monk urges them not to take Muḥammad to the land of the Byzantines because they would recognize and kill him.
14. Suddenly, seven Roman soldiers appear near the monk's cell, asking about, and searching for, the Prophet.
15. The monk convinces the soldiers that no man could prevent the decree of God from happening.
16. The monk asks the people to tell him who the guardian of the boy was, and they reply:
"Abū Ṭālib."
17. As the monk keeps admonishing Abū Ṭālib, the latter sends Muḥammad back.
18. **Abū Bakr sends Bilāl with Muḥammad** and the monk provisions him [Muḥammad] with cake (*ka'k*) and oil.

Appendix 1c: Comparison of Version A and B

Table 5. Comparison of Version A and B

	Version A	Version B
a	<p>2. Abū Ṭālib gets ready to set out for a business trip to Syria on a merchant caravan.</p> <p>3. Muḥammad is deeply attached (as his words tell) to Abū Ṭālib. Abū Ṭālib takes pity on him and takes him with him.</p>	<p>1. Abū Ṭālib sets out to Syria with the elders of the Quraysh, and Muḥammad joins him.</p>
b	<p>4. The caravan stops at Buṣrā in Syria where there is a monk called Baḥīrā residing in his cell.</p>	<p>2. The caravan stops for an encampment in the vicinity of the monk's cell.</p>
c	<p>6. When the caravan stops near his cell, he prepares food for them. That had never happened before.</p>	<p>3. The monk comes out of his cell to meet them. This had never happened before when the caravans passed by his cell in previous years.</p> <p>8. The monk goes back, and prepares food for them.</p>
d	<p>7. This is because, while he was staying in his cell, Baḥīrā saw Muḥammad with a cloud over him shading him as the caravan approached.</p>	<p>ca. 10. Muḥammad draws near while a cloud above him shades him.</p>
e	<p>8. The people come and stop under the shade of a tree near the monk.</p>	<p>See # 2 above</p>
f	<p>9. Baḥīrā looks at the cloud as it casts its shadow over the tree. The branches of the tree bend over Muḥammad until he is protected by the shadow.</p>	<p>11. Muḥammad approaches the people and finds them sitting under a tree leaving no shade for him to sit under. As he sits down, the shade of the tree moves over him.</p> <p>12. The monk says: "Look at the shade of the tree! It moved over him."</p>
g	<p>10. When Baḥīrā sees this, he comes out of his cell and invites them all to eat. The people of the caravan are surprised by the invitation.</p>	<p>See #8 above</p>

Table 5, continued

h	11. The men of the Quraysh gather together to eat. Only Muḥammad is left behind sitting under a tree with the luggage.	ca. 9. As he returns, Muḥammad is herding the camels, so he sends food to him.
i	16. Baḥīrā looks at Muḥammad's back and sees the seal of prophethood between his shoulders.	7. The monk also states that he recognizes the boy by the seal of prophethood located on his back below the cartilage of his shoulder (<i>ghuḍrūf katifihi</i>).
j	17. Baḥīrā asks Abū Ṭālib how the boy was related to him. Abū Ṭālib tells him that he was the boy's father. Baḥīrā corrects him, saying that the boy's father cannot be alive. Abū Ṭālib confirms that, saying the boy's father had died before the boy was born.	16. The monk asks the people to tell him who the guardian of the boy was, and they reply: "Abū Ṭālib."
k	18. Baḥīrā urges Abū Ṭālib to take the boy back to his land and guard him carefully, because if the Jews see him, they would recognize and harm him.	13. The monk urges them not to take Muḥammad to the land of the Byzantines because they would recognize and kill him.
l	19. Abū Ṭālib takes Muḥammad quickly back to Mecca.	17. As the monk keeps admonishing Abū Ṭālib, the latter sends Muḥammad back.

CHARTS

Chart 1.1. The Tradition of Maymūn b. Mihrān

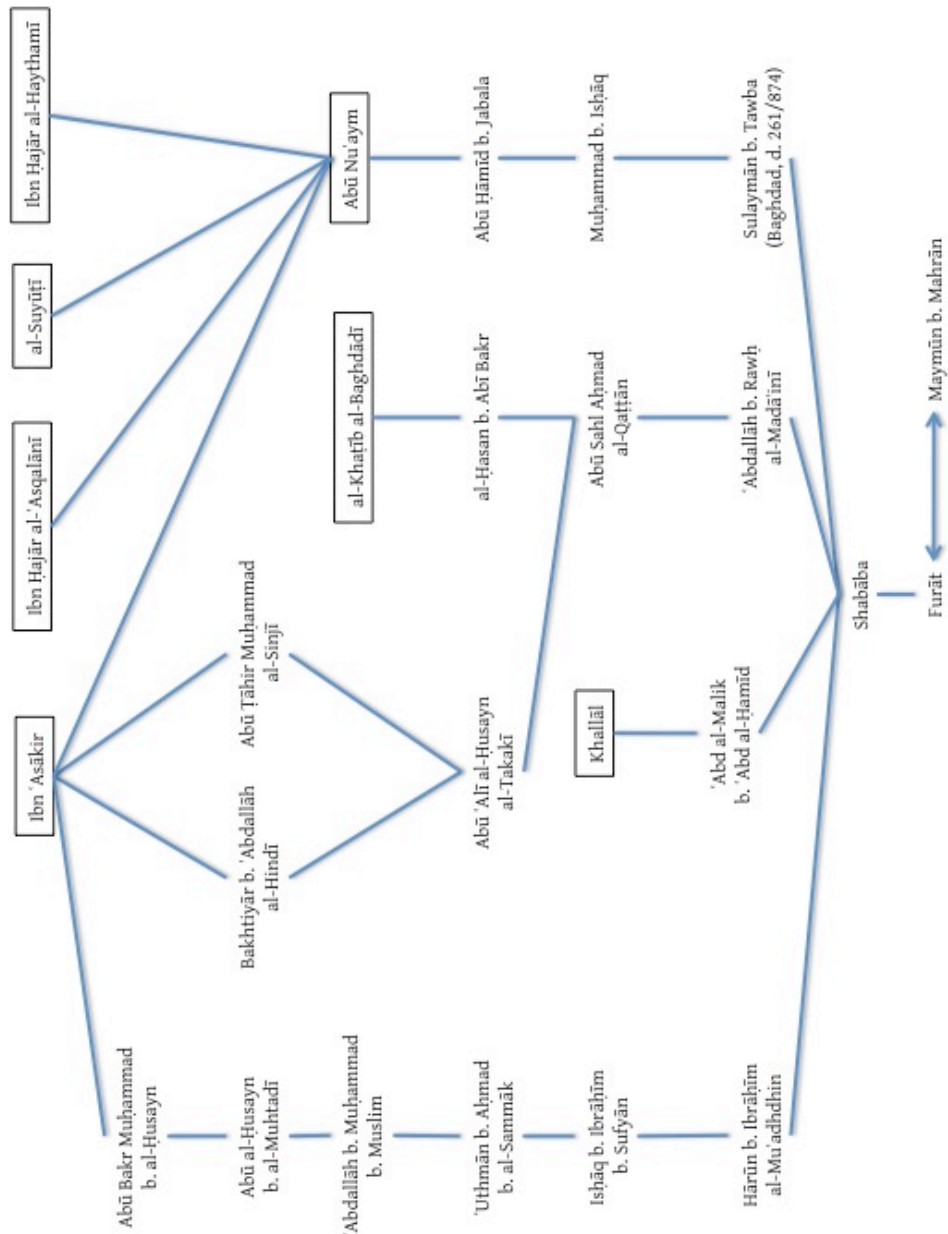


Chart 1.2.1. Version A – The tradition of Ibn Ishāq

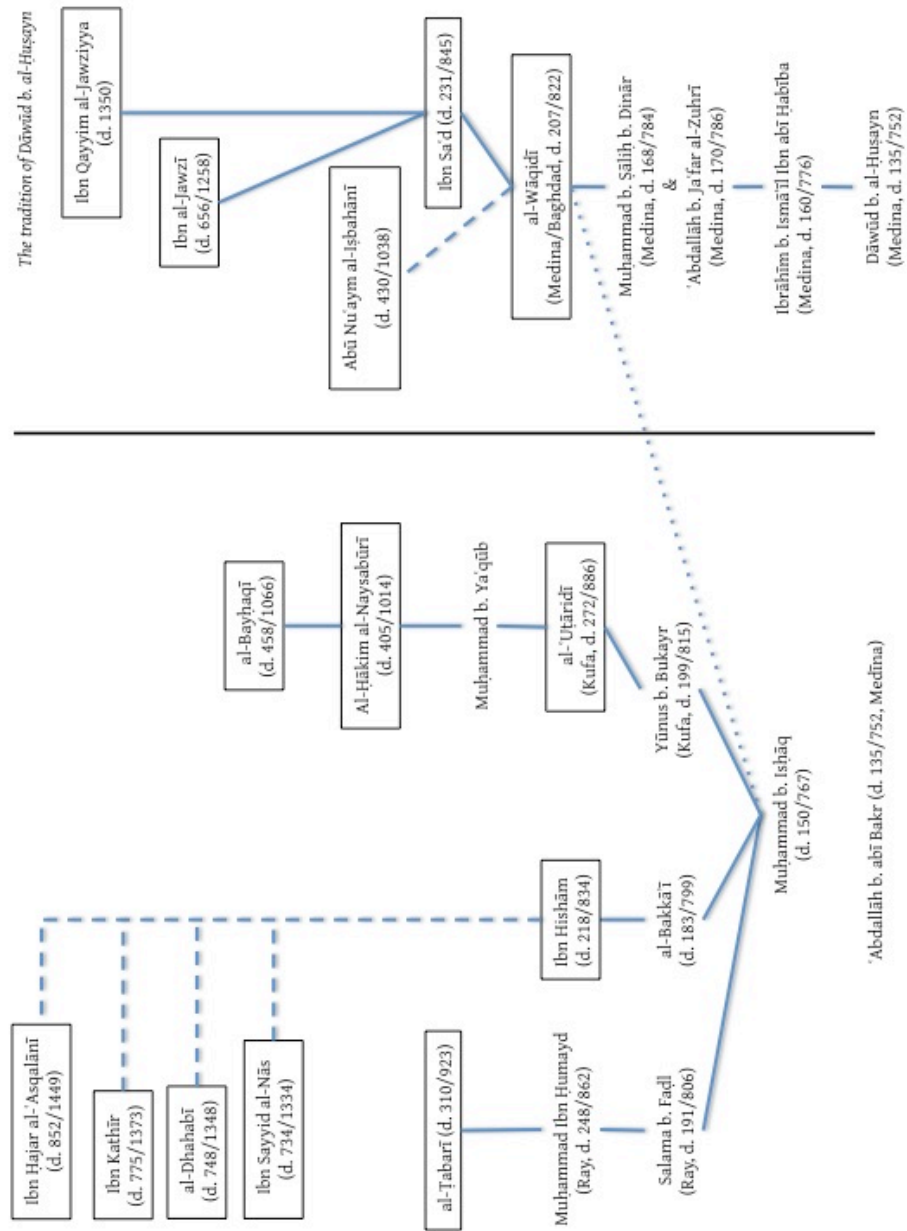


Chart 1.2.2. Version B – The Tradition of Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī

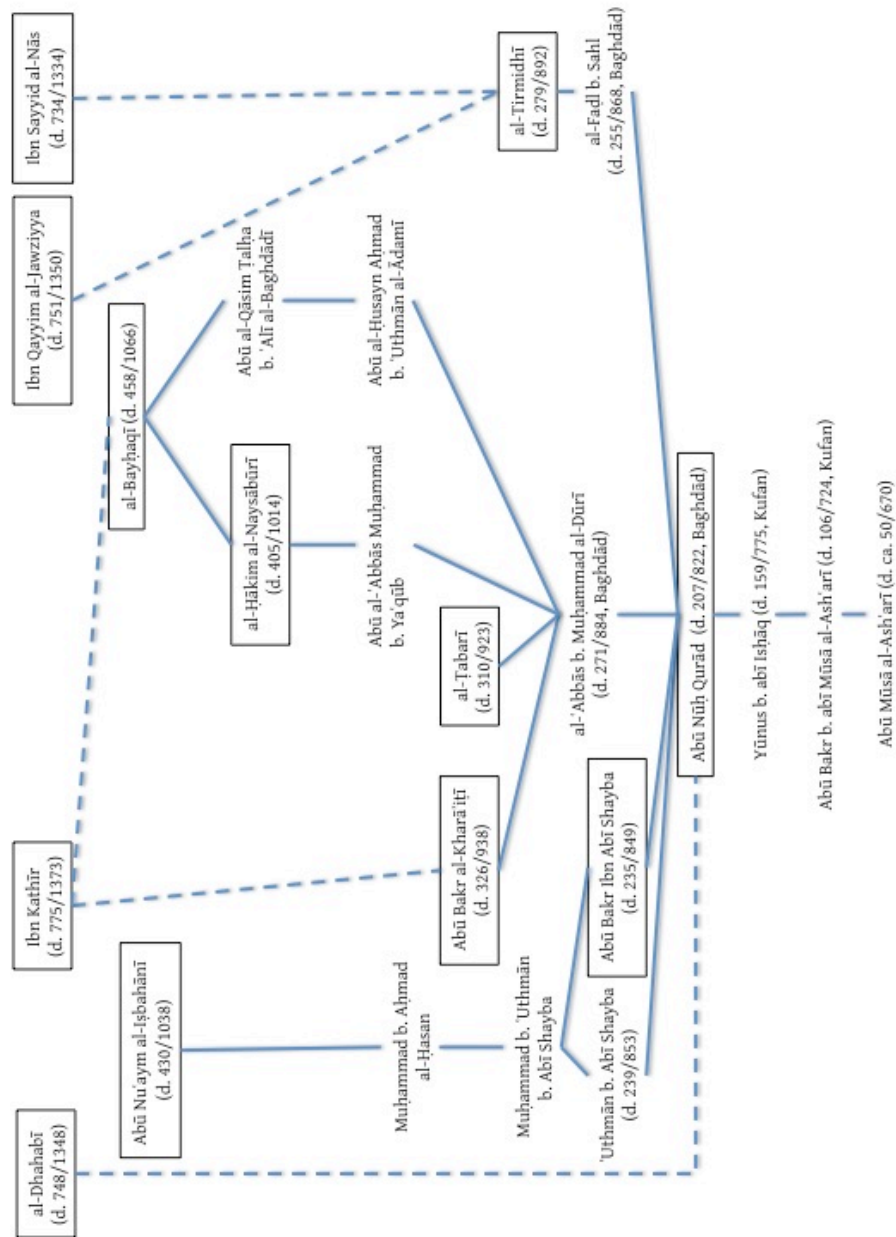


Chart 1.3. The Waraqa Story – Abū Ishāq Version

G. Schoeler, *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 75; Figure, 2.4. (slightly modified)

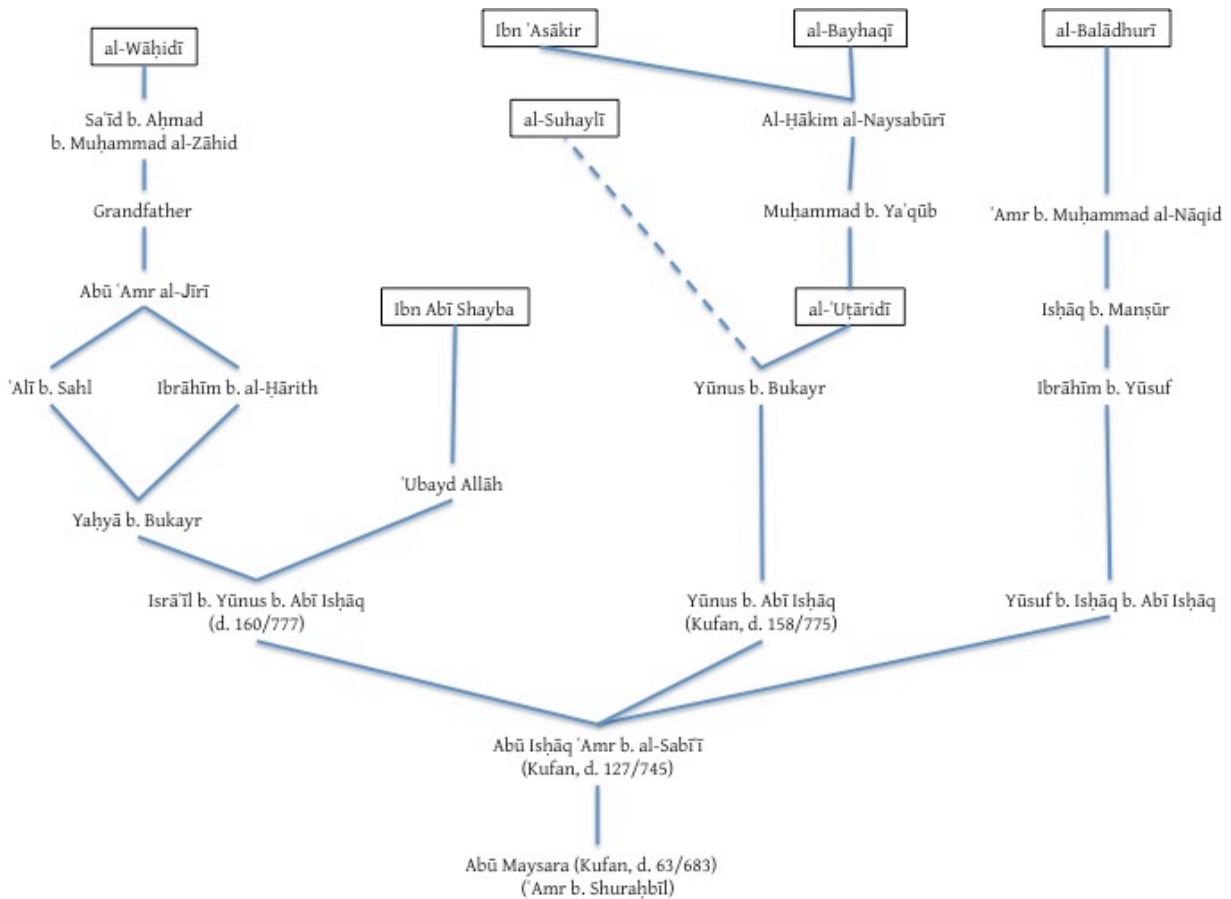


Chart 2.1.1. Ibn ‘Abbās and al-Sha‘bī dialogue – Hassān’s poem

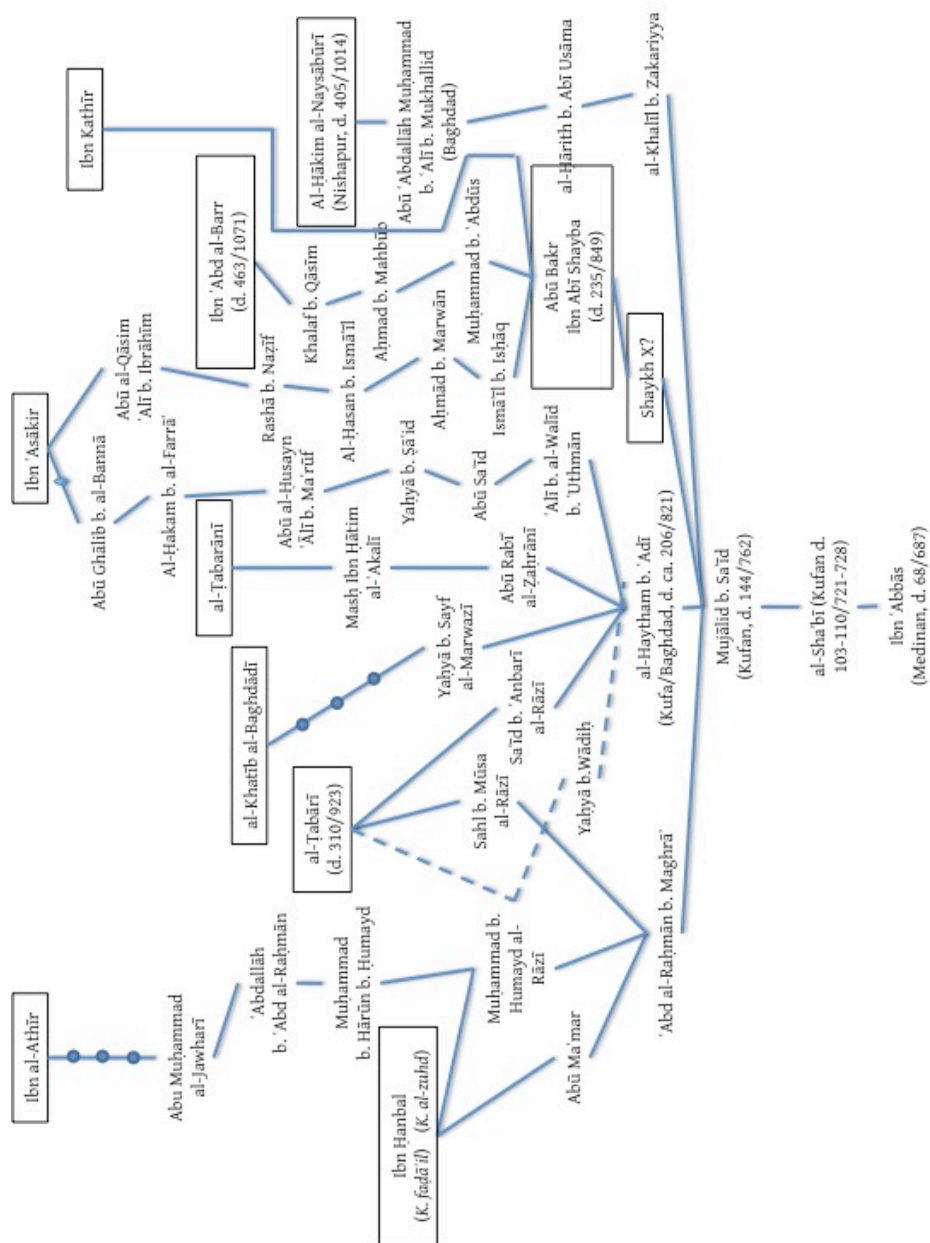


Chart 2.1.2.: Ibn ‘Abbās and al-Sha‘bī dialogue – Ḥassān’s poem

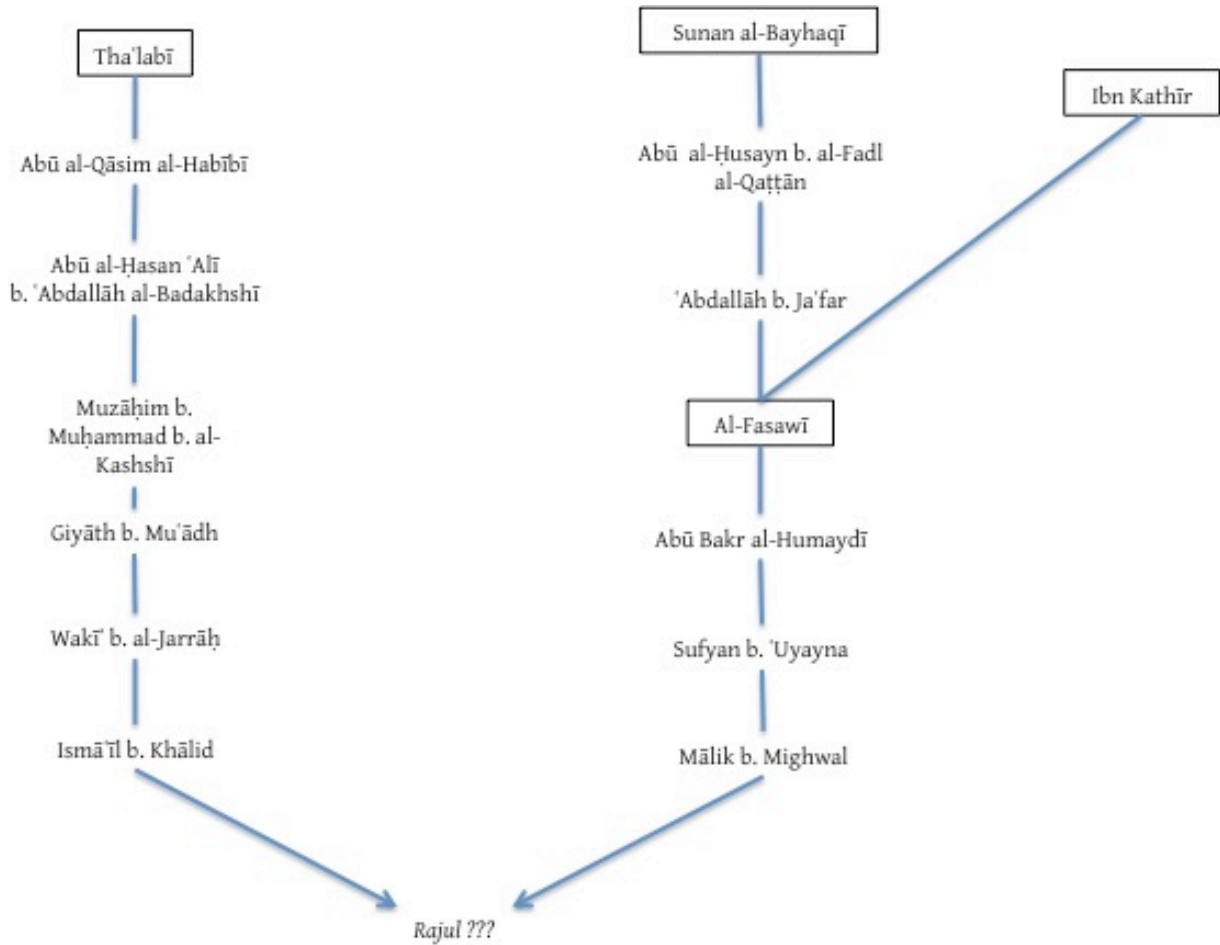


Chart 2.2. Segment F: Q 17:60

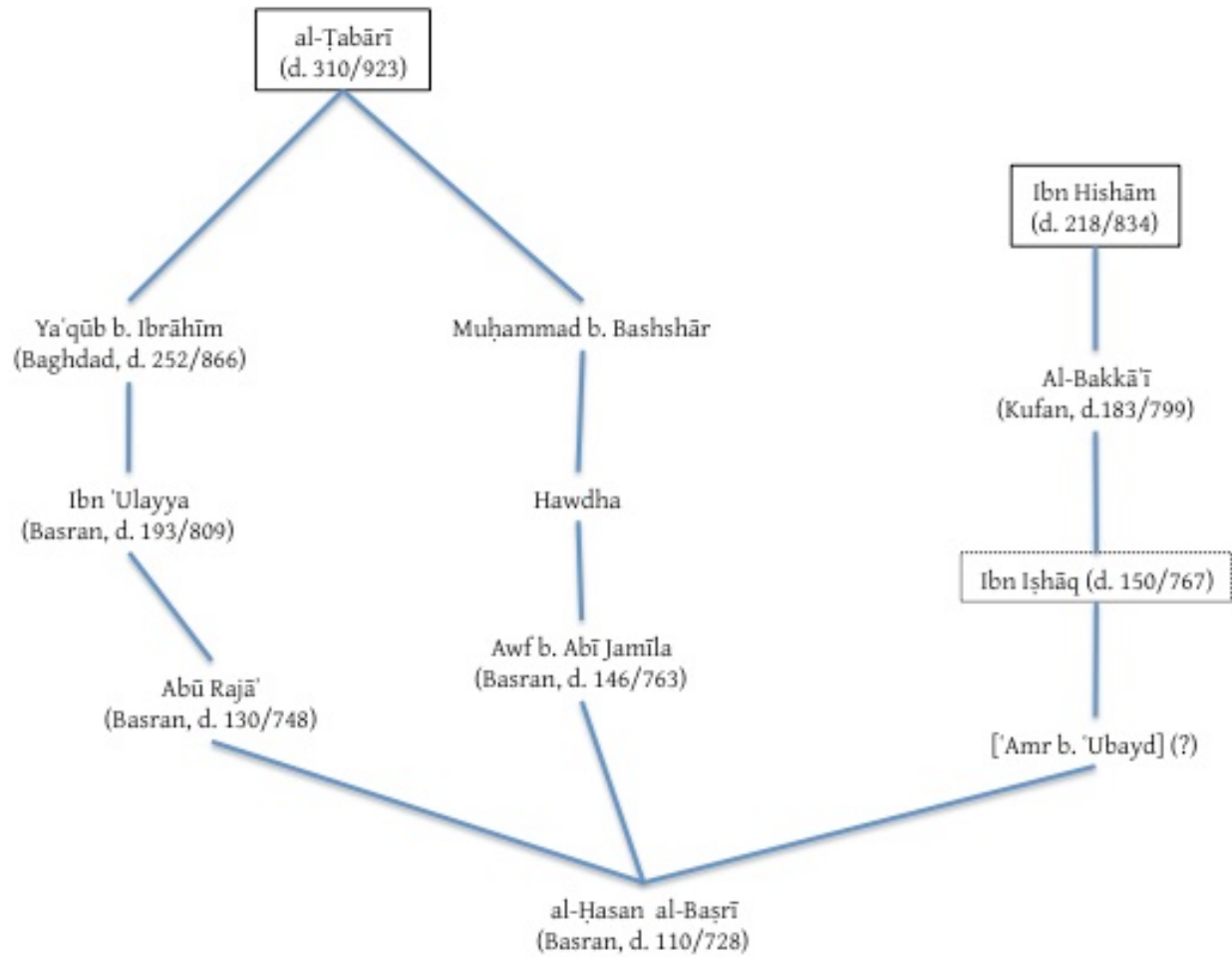


Chart 2.3. Segment B (two vessels)- the Qatāda Tradition

Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History and Legend*, 204 (Appendix 4)

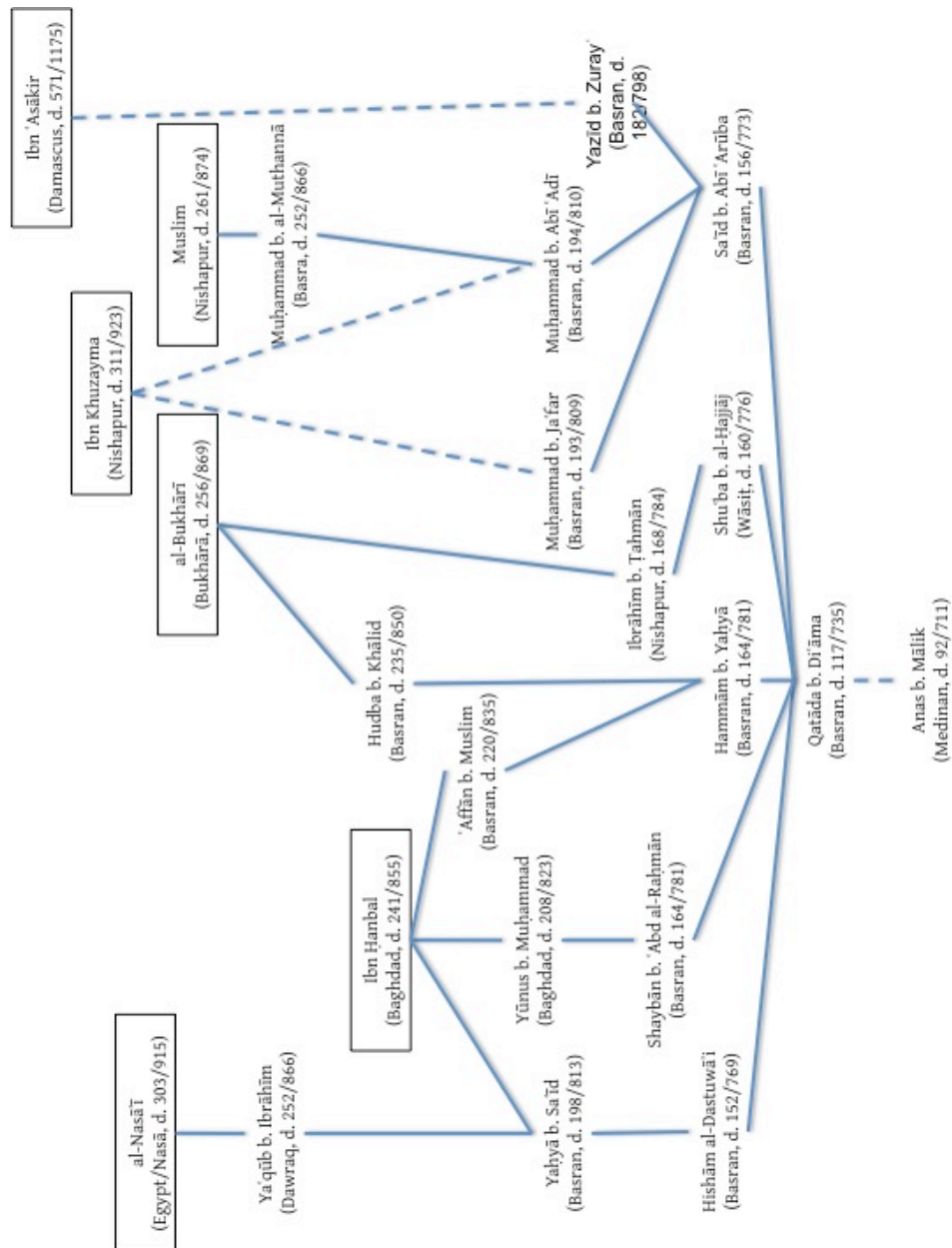


Chart 2.4. Description of Burāq I

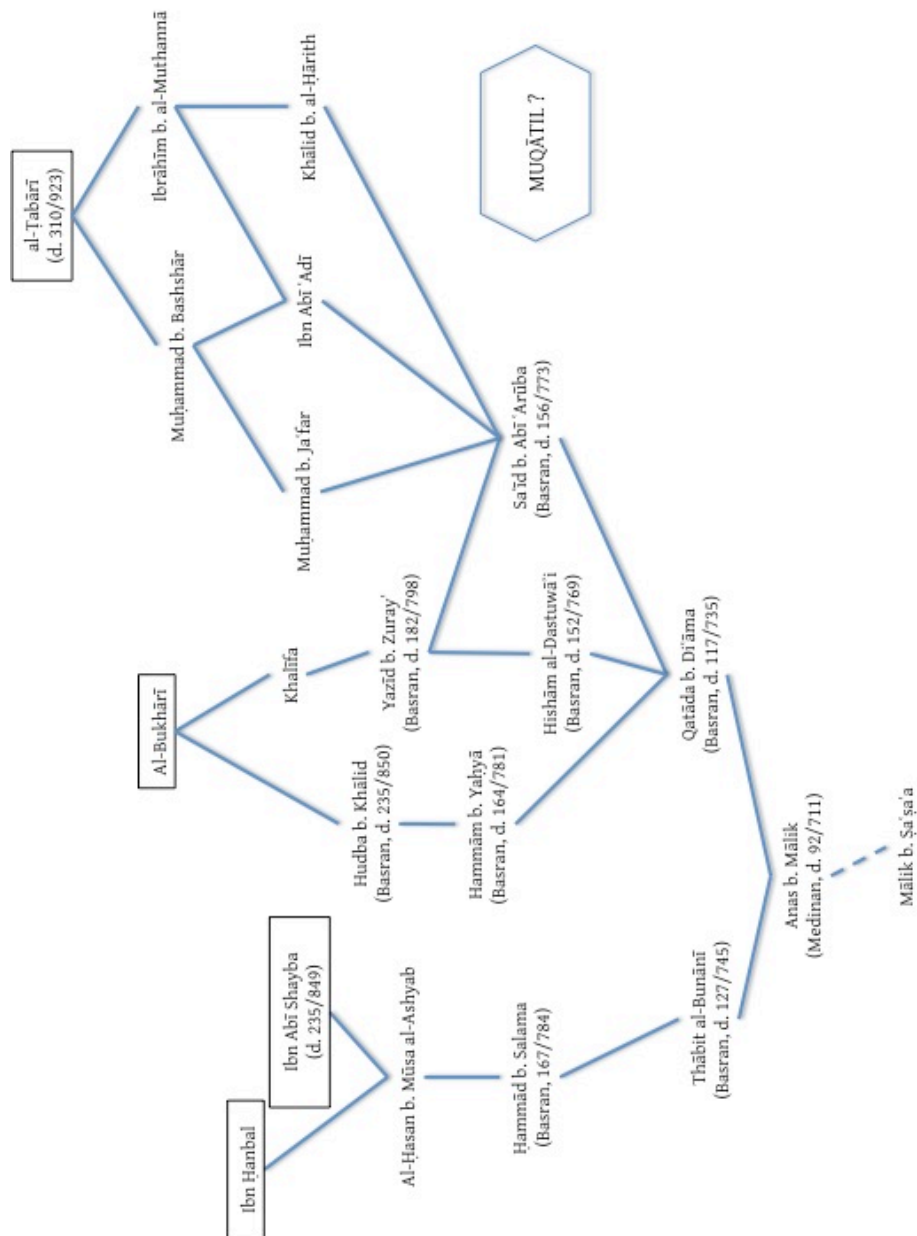


Chart 2.5. Description of Burāq II

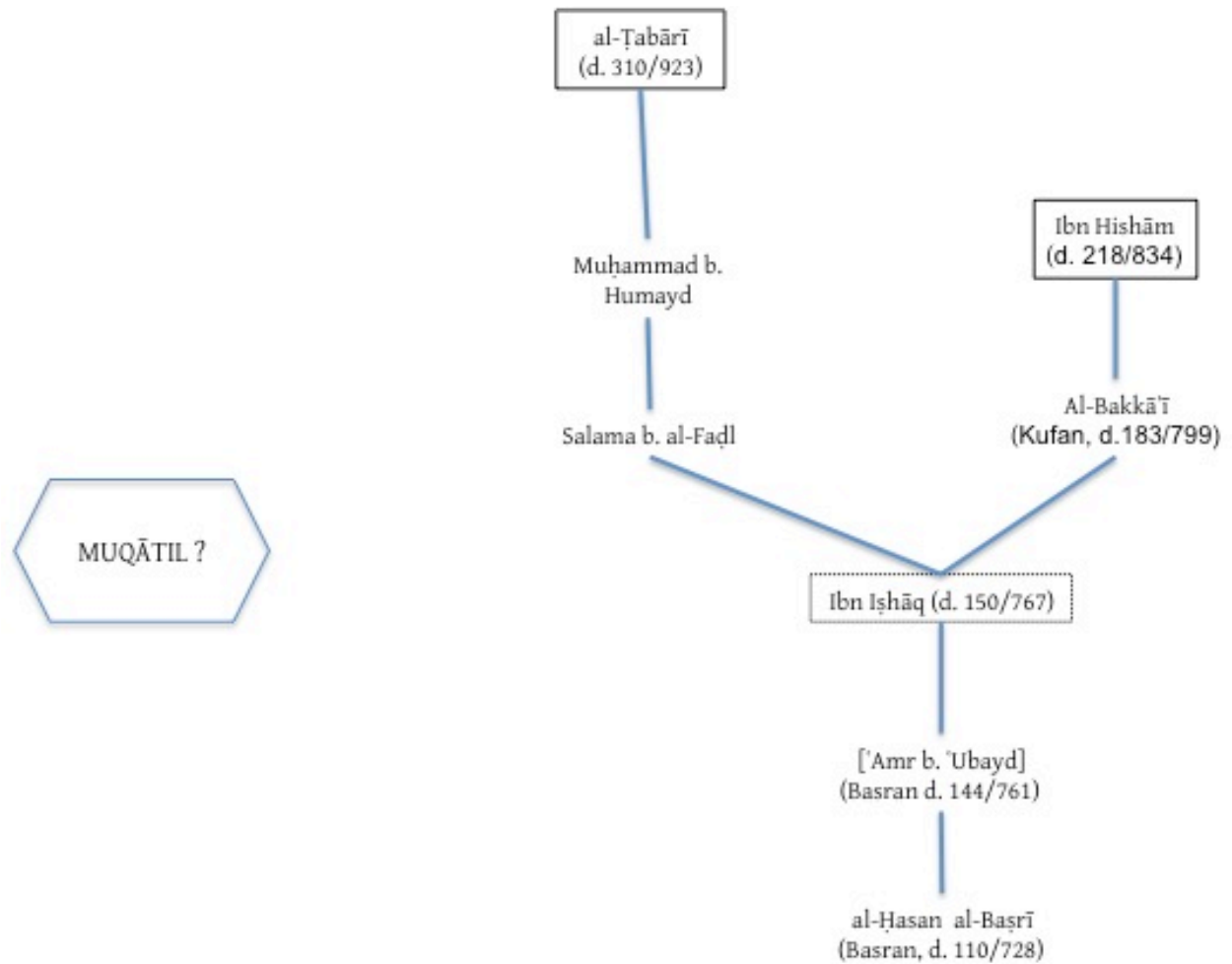


Chart 2.6: Descriptions of Abraham, Moses, Jesus – the Qatāda Tradition

Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History and Legend*, 182

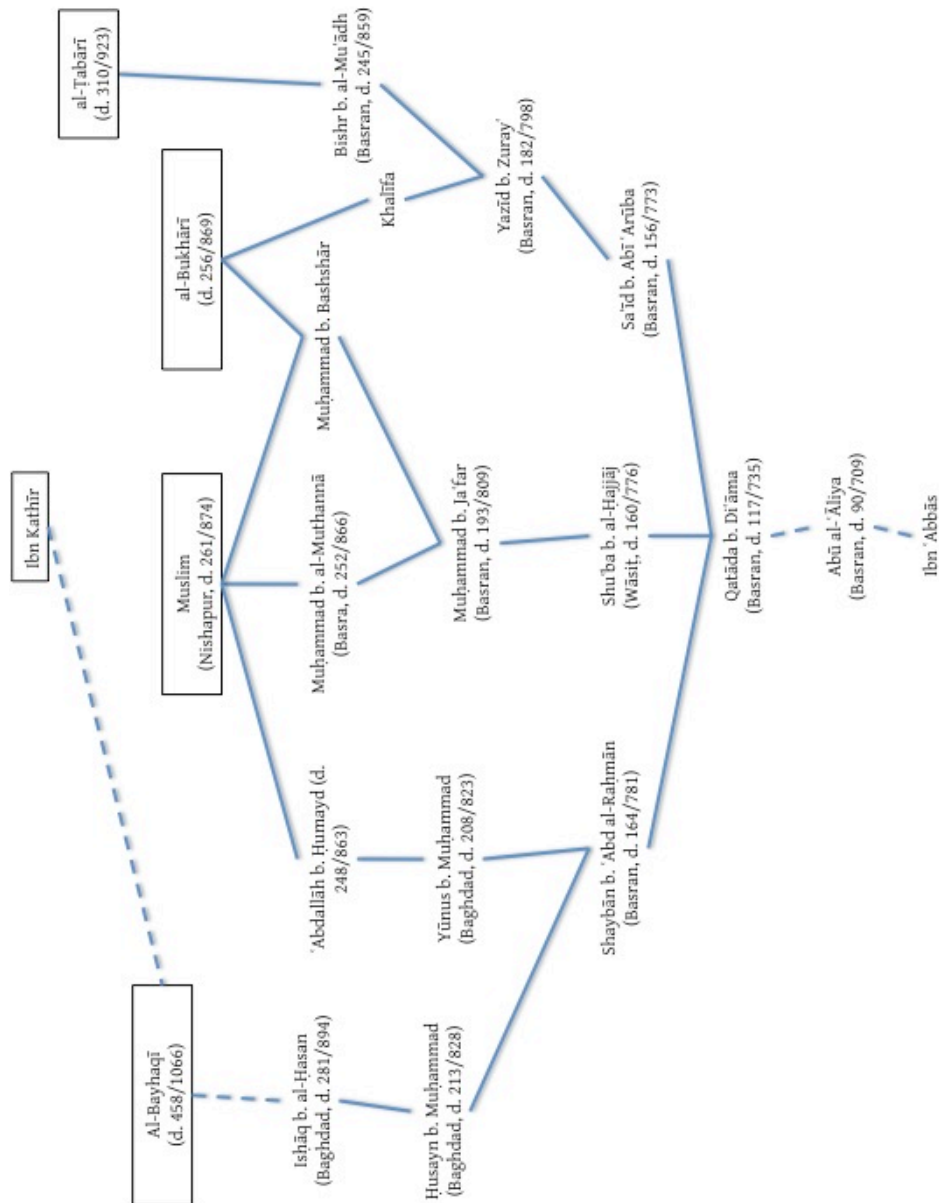


Chart 2.7. Possible connections between Ibn Ishāq and Muqātil

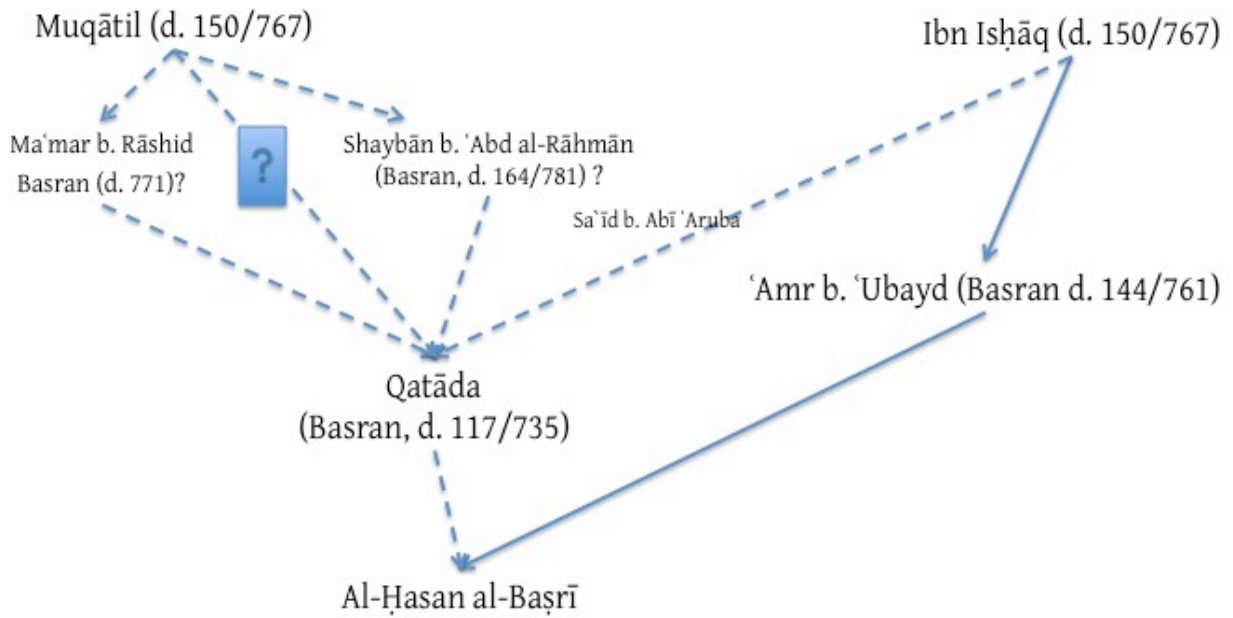


Chart 2.8. Abu Bakr and the *isrā'* – The al-Zuhrī Tradition (I)

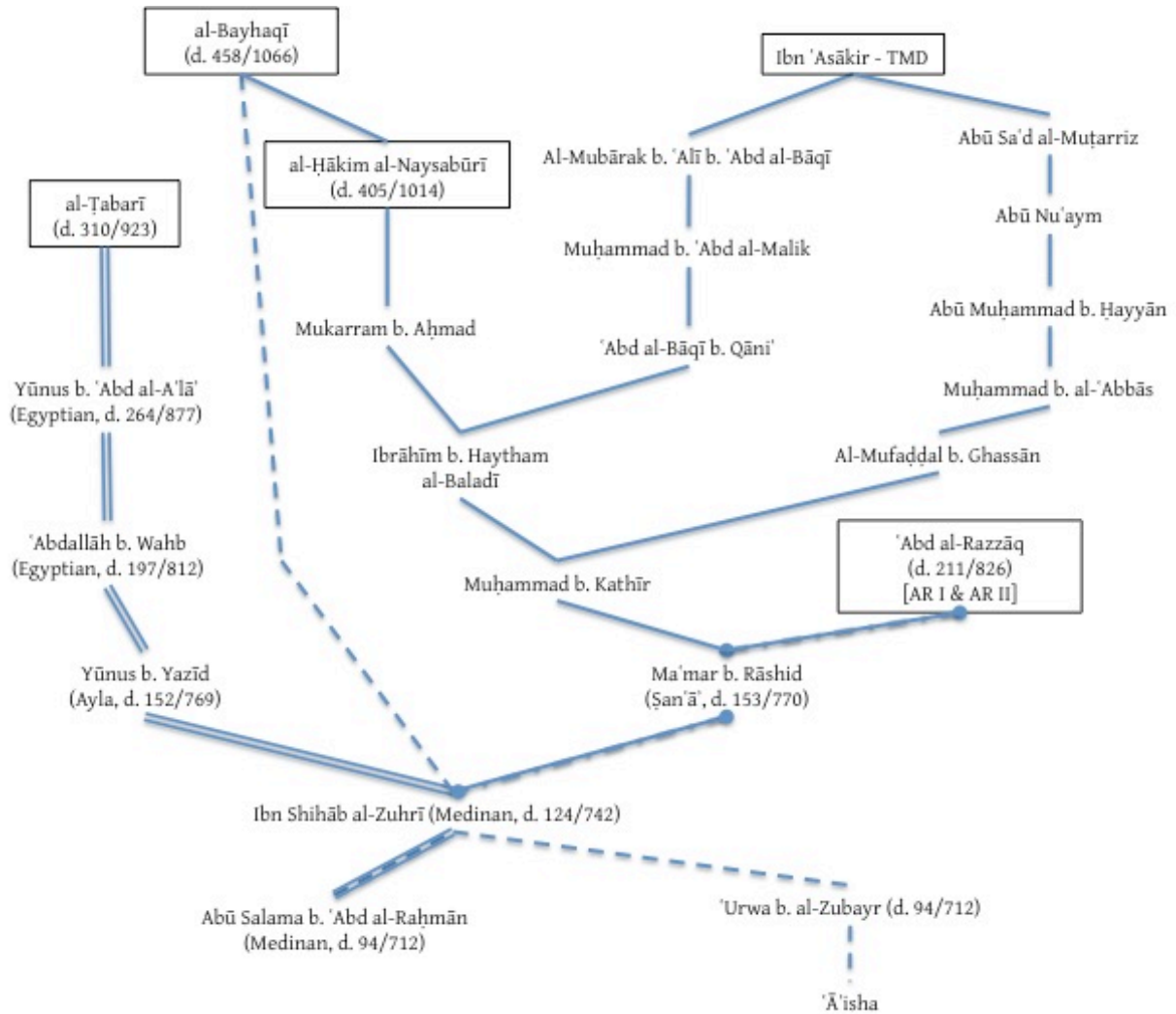
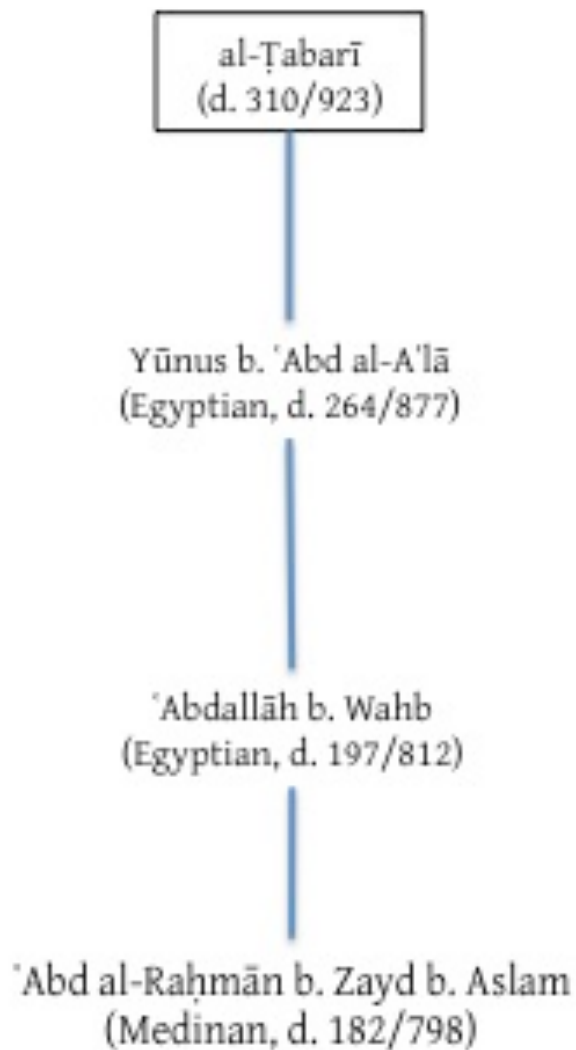


Chart 2.9. Abū Bakr and the *isrā'* – The Tradition of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd b. Aslam (d. 182/798)



Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History*, 179 (Figure 20)

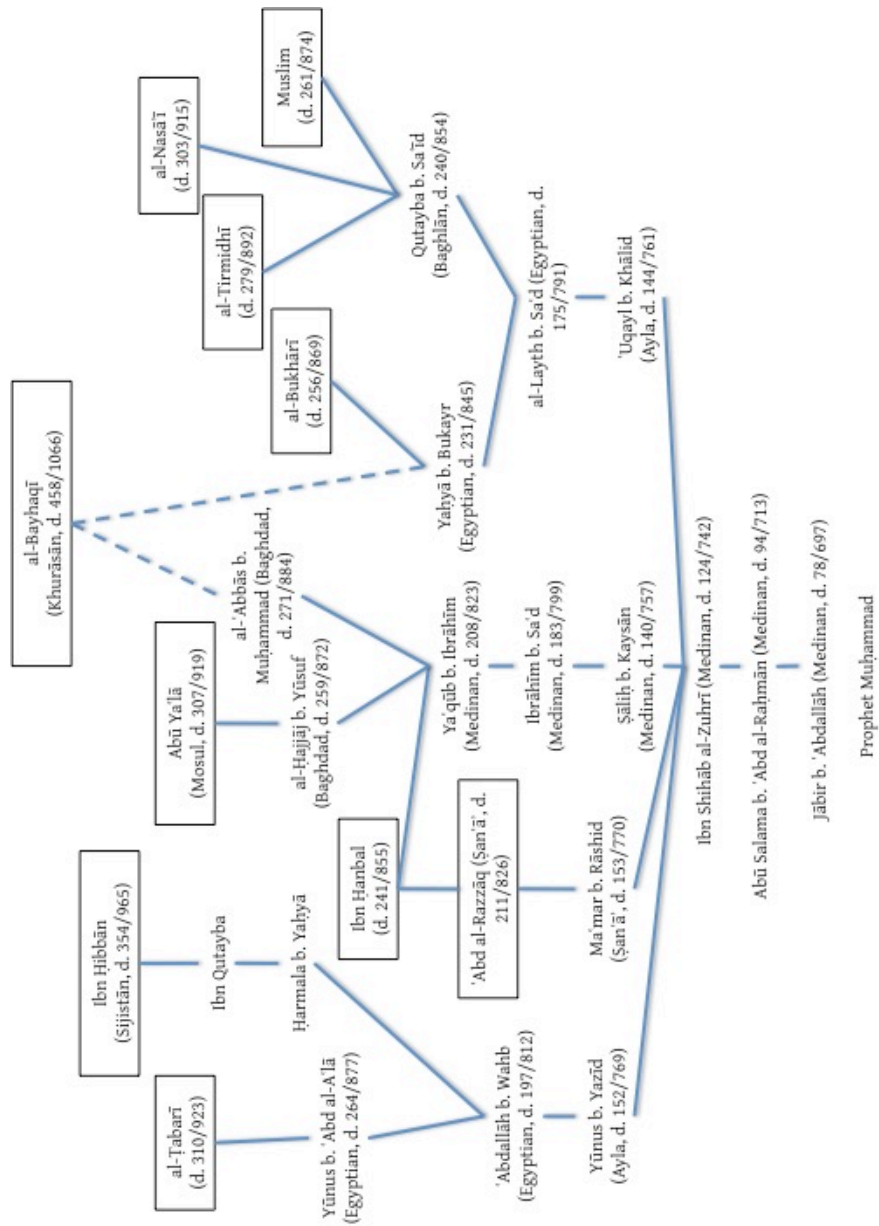


Chart 2.11. Jerusalem is shown to the Prophet – The tradition of Ibn al-Māʾjishūn

Boekhoff-van der Voort, *Between History*, 169 (Figure 17)

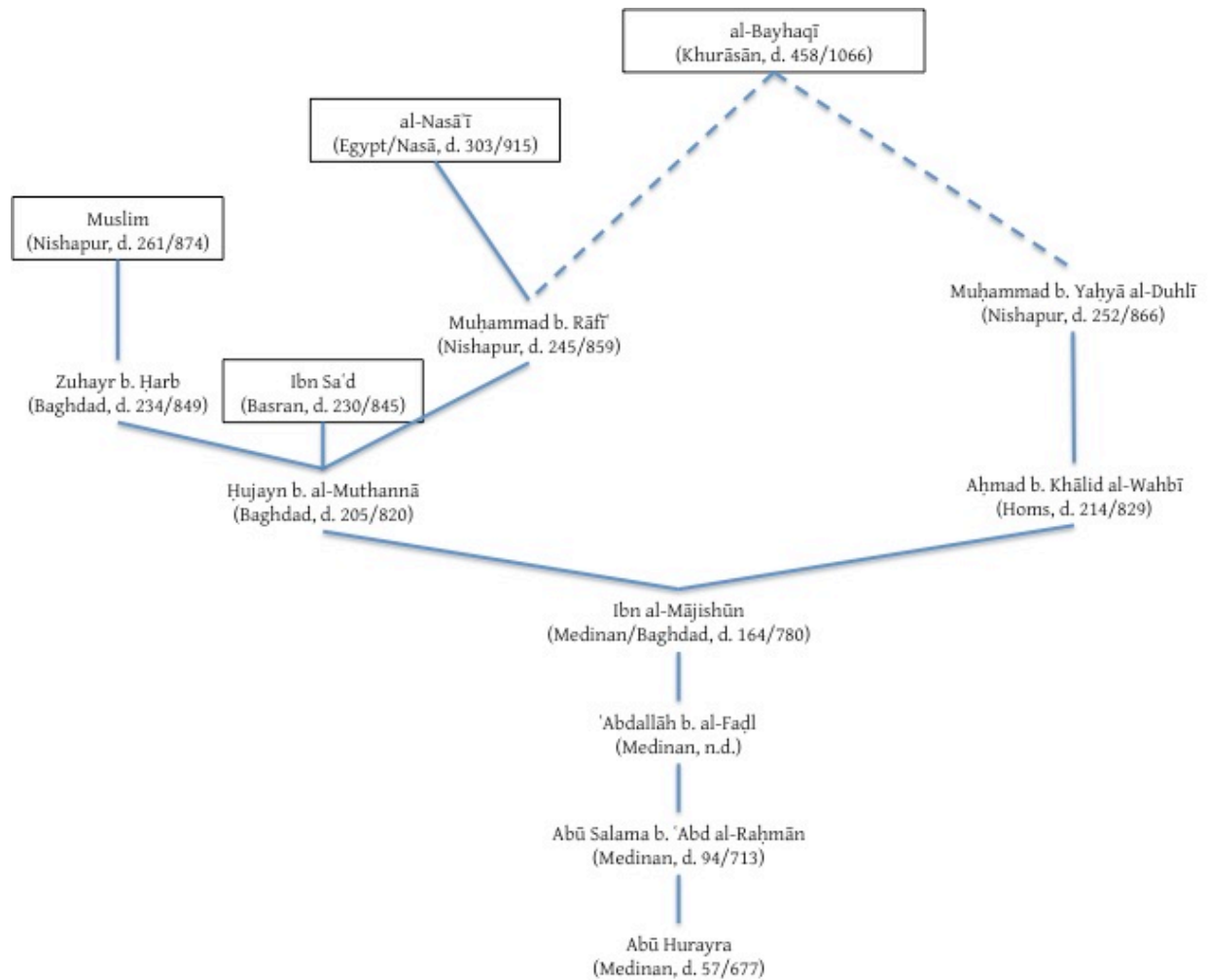
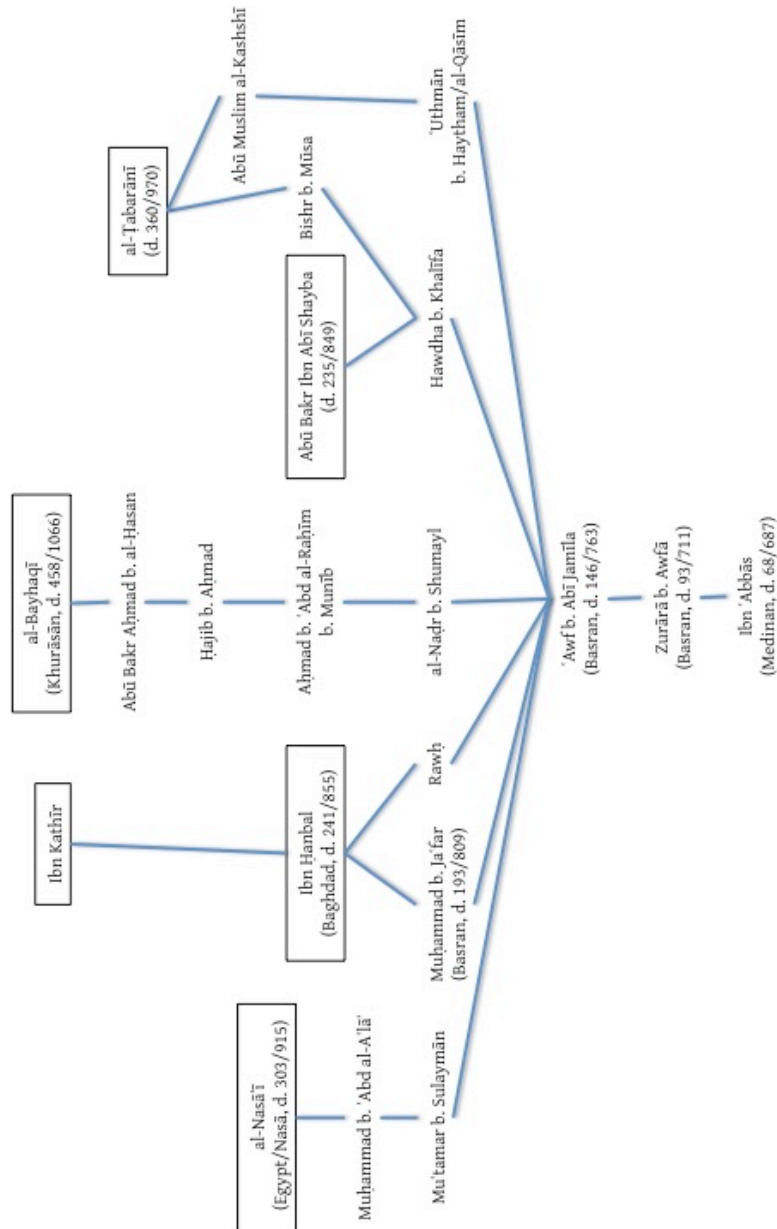


Chart 2.12. Jerusalem is shown to the Prophet – The tradition of ‘Awf b. Abī Jamīla (d. 146/763)



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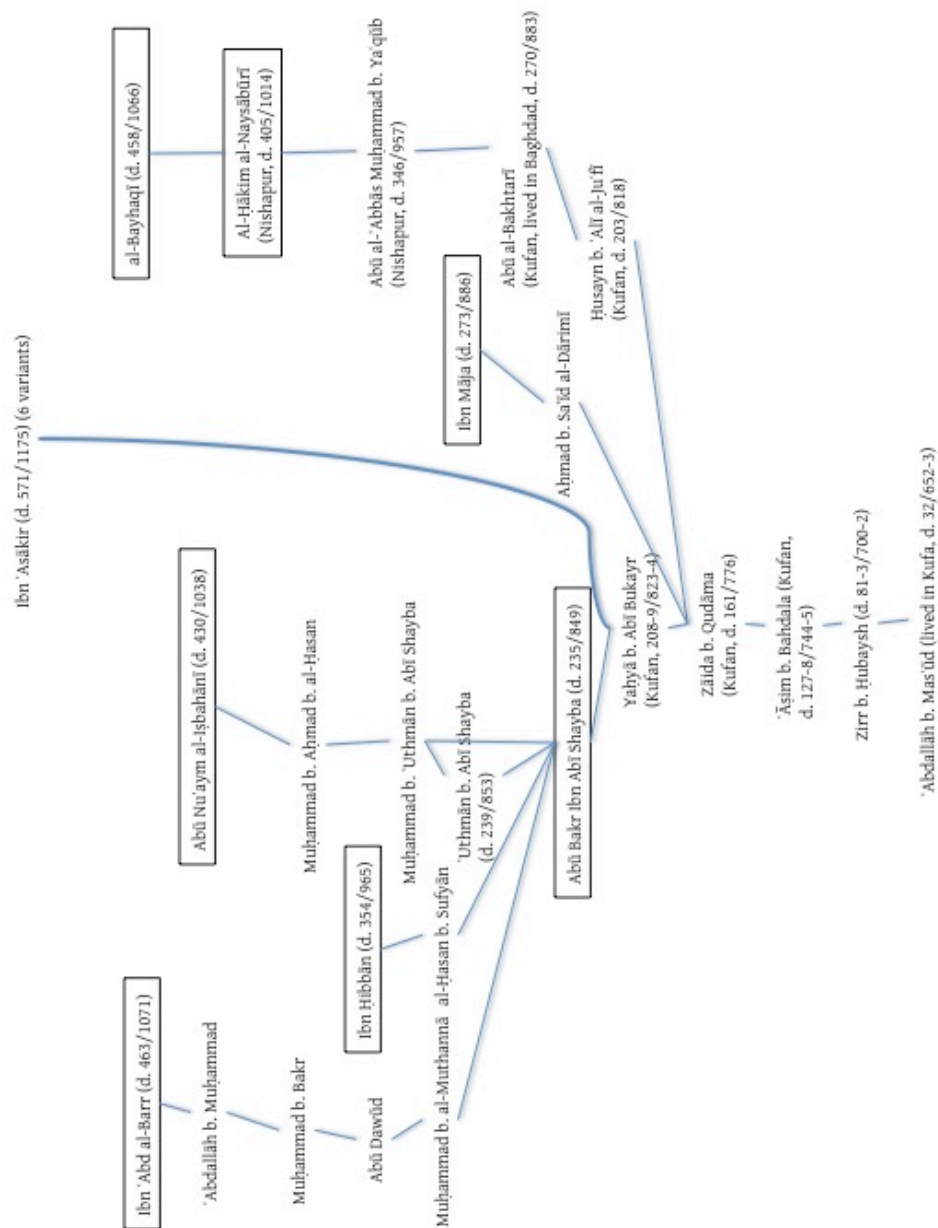


Chart 3.1.2. The Tradition of Mujāhid b. Jabr

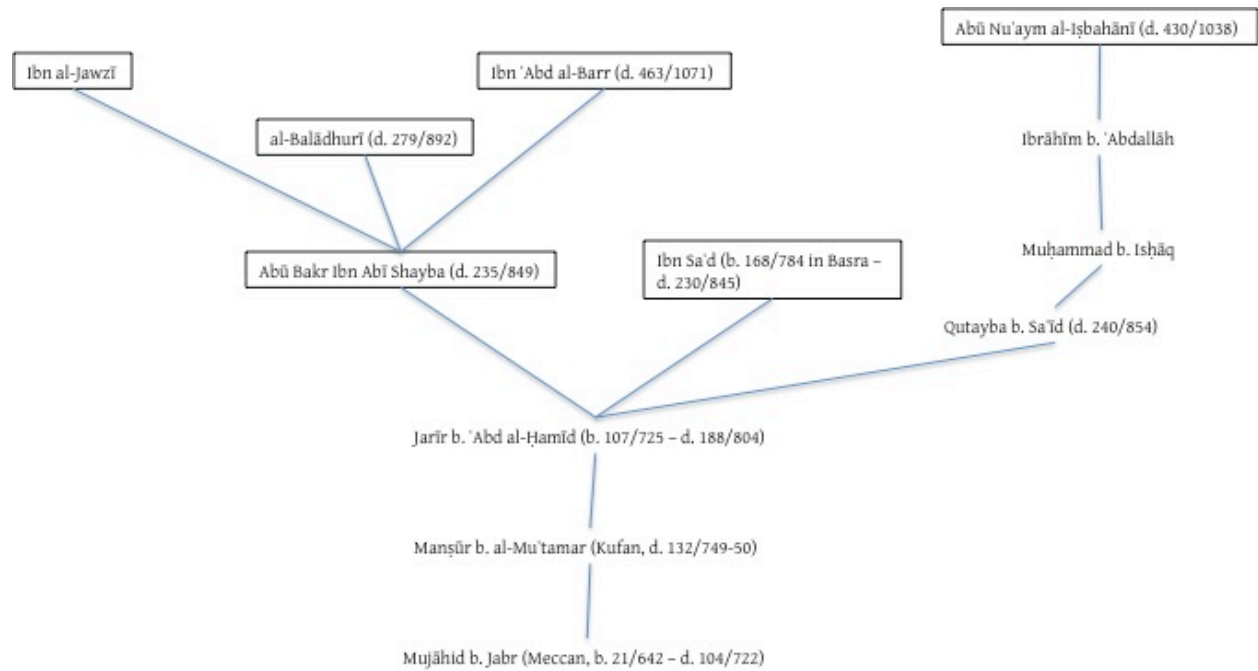


Chart 3.2. The Tradition of 'Urwa

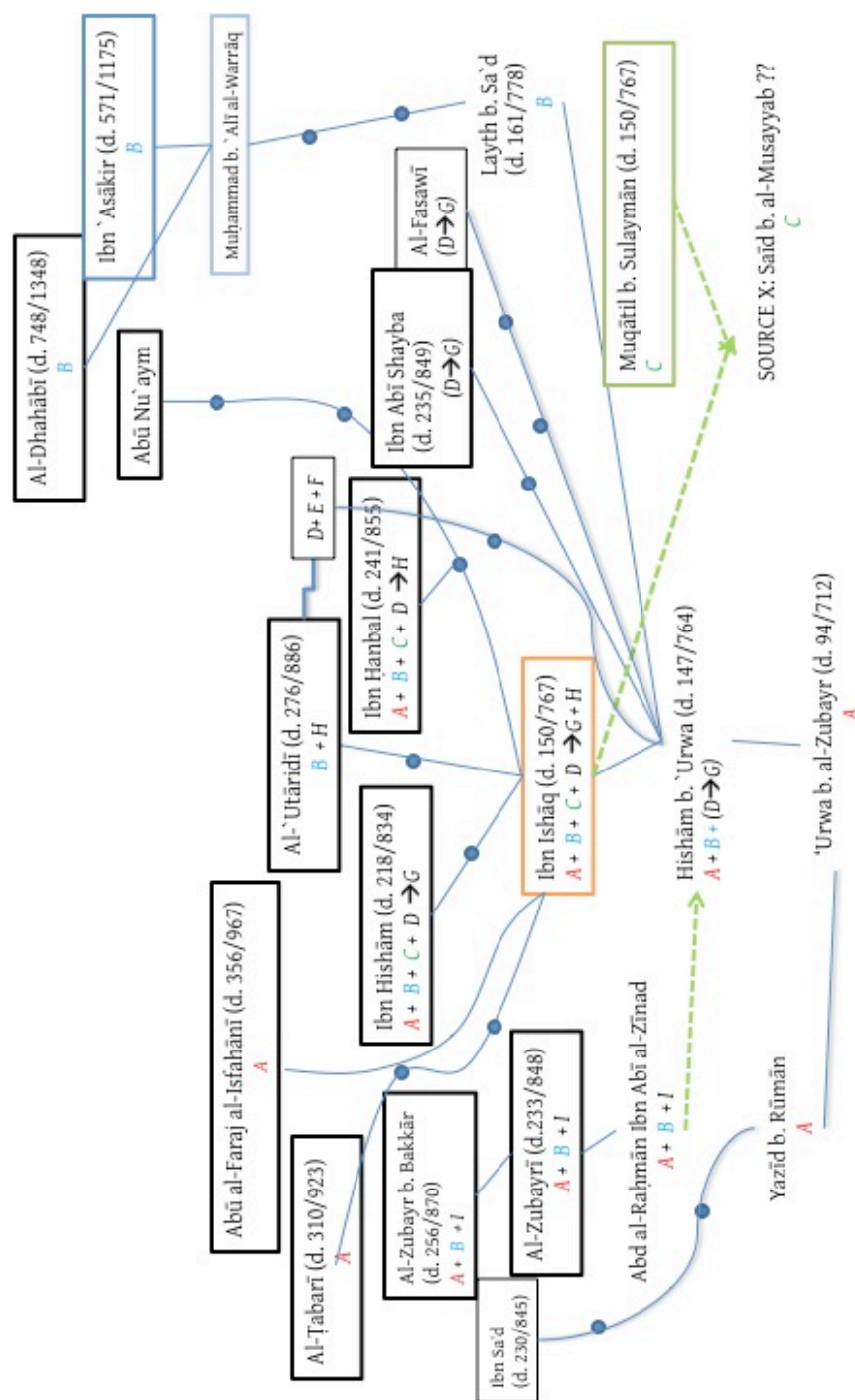


Chart 3.3. The Tradition of Ibn Sīrīn

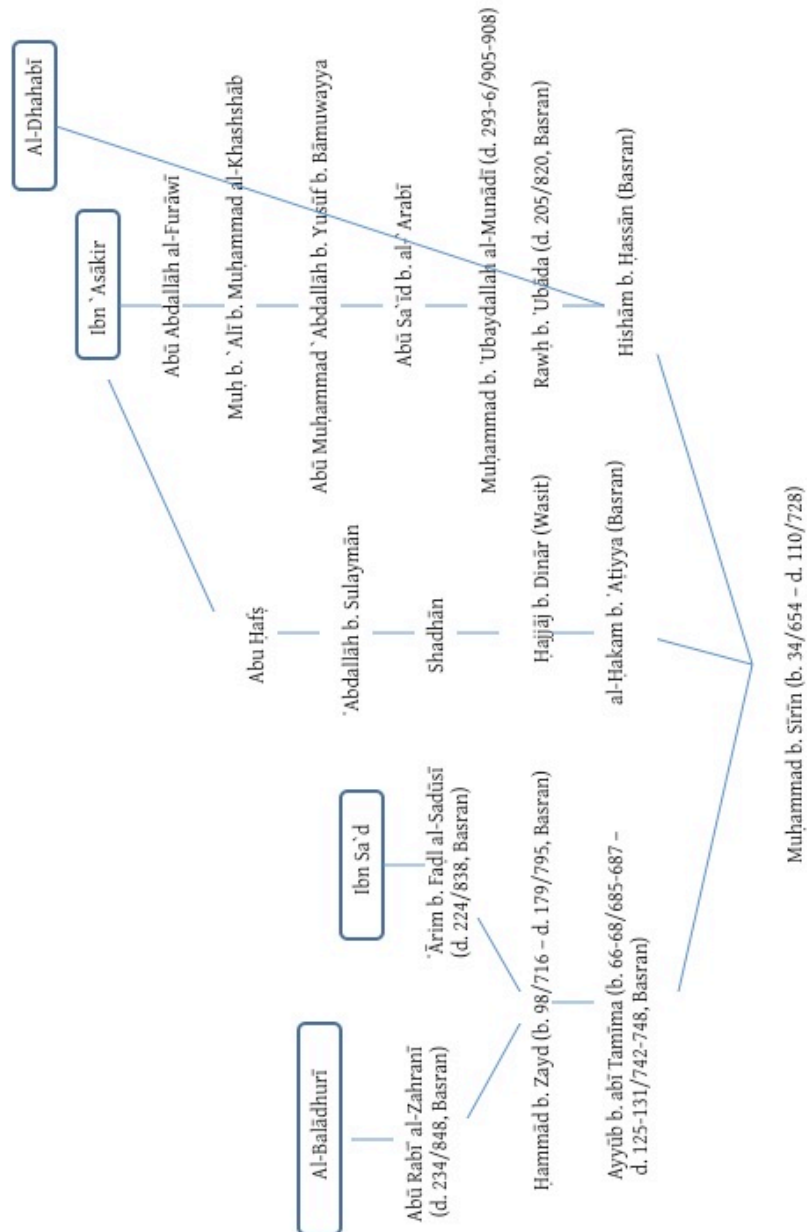


Chart 3.4.1. The Tradition of Qays b. Abī Ḥāzim

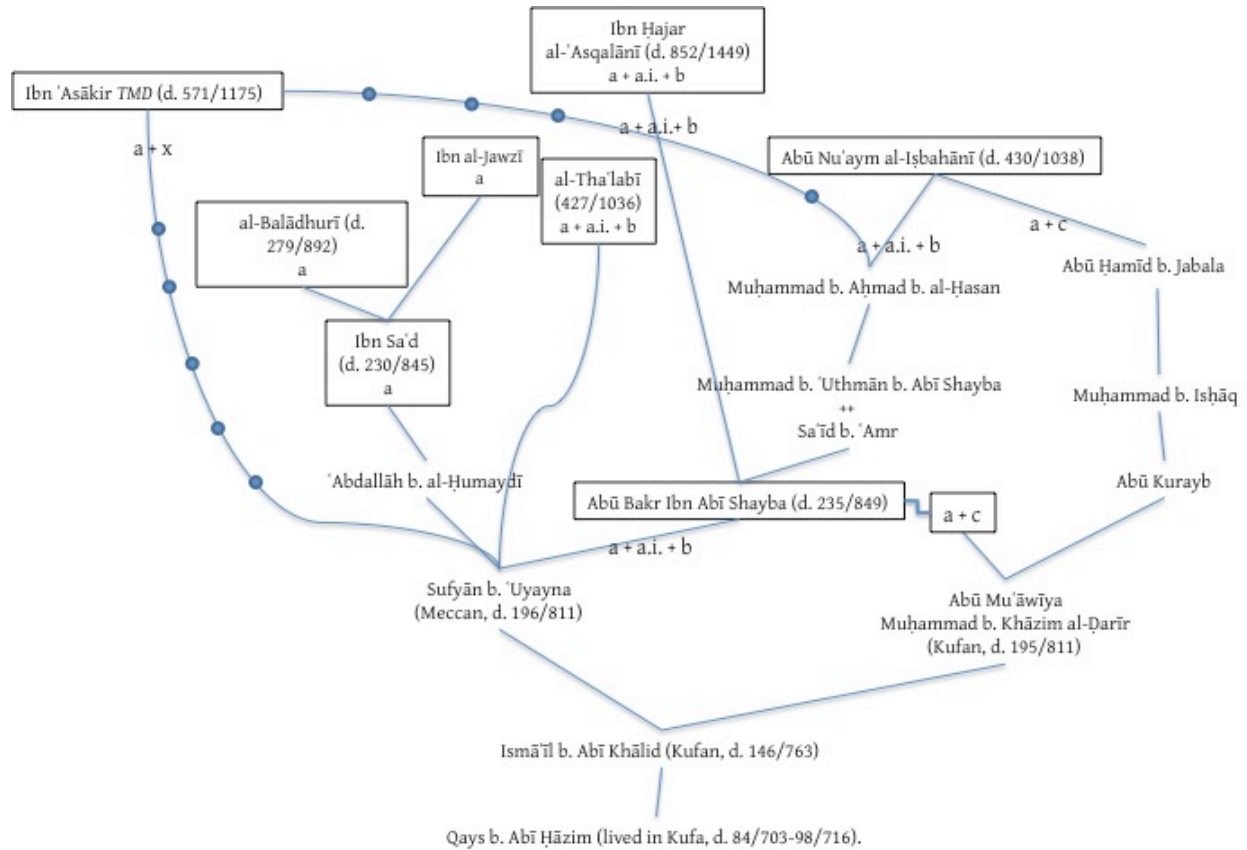


Chart 3.4.2. The Tradition in the *Tafsīr* Literature

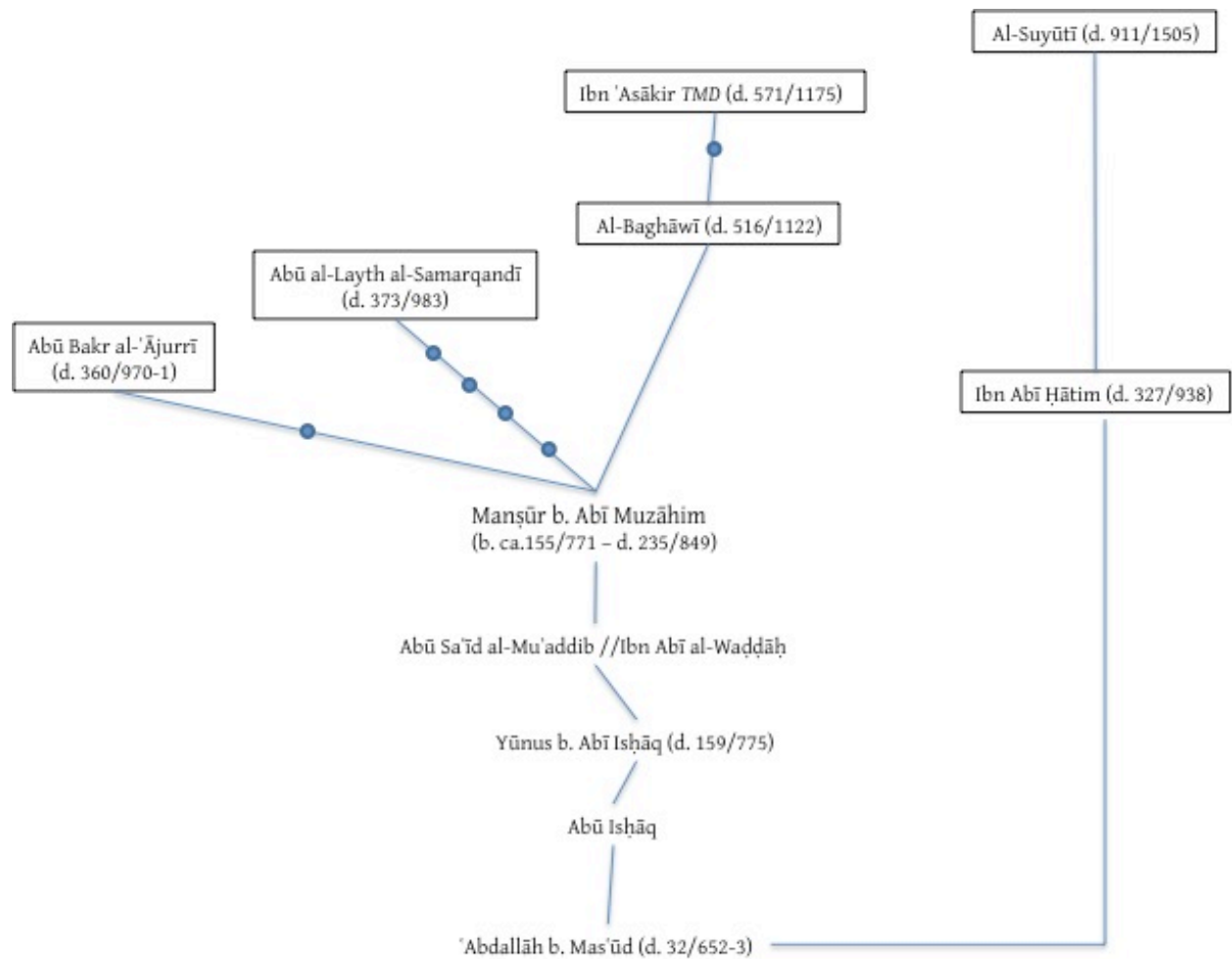


Chart 3.5. The Tradition of Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab

