

**BUT IF YOU DESIRE GOD AND HIS MESSENGER**



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# But if You Desire God and His Messenger

The Concept of Choice in  
Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī

by  
Sylvia Akar



HELSINKI 2006

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**But if You Desire God and His Messenger. The Concept of Choice  
in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.**

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## INTRODUCTION

### AIM AND SCOPE

The aim of this work is to study the concept of choice in the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. The question of choice is very intimately linked with the problematic of predestination and free will, which is one of the most fundamental discussions in early Islamic theology. It is debatable, however, whether the concept of free will is relevant in Muslim discourse or whether we should rather speak about our power to act and make independent choices in our lives, about the relationship of God's divine power and human power. But, then, we should also not speak about predestination, but the power of God to determine everything that happens in this world and the hereafter, the relationship of God's absolute sovereignty and human responsibility. The Islamic concept of *qadar*, which is usually translated as predestination or destiny, is central to Islamic discourse. Perhaps it is even more central than the concept of *ikhtiyār*, choice or free will. But does it mean predestination?

The focus of this book is on the concept of choice in hadith literature, and especially in the collection of al-Bukhārī. My aim is to discuss *ikhtiyār* in al-Bukhārī as such. I am not interested in looking at different possible tendencies in the collection. It might be that by comparing various transmitters by going through the available biographical material of each of them, comparing *isnāds*, and the possible common links in them and the overall distribution and development of the texts, we might be able to determine certain trends in the development of the collection. However, this is not the aim of my study. I read hadiths as pieces of reality, not as statements about reality. My starting point is the collection of texts as it exists now in its normative, established form; I am not going to evaluate the hadith reports in any comparative way. The *isnāds* are not the focus of attention, either with the purpose of determining which of the transmitters are the most or the less inclined to determinism, or to argue anything about the validity of the transmission or the authenticity of the text. Since the historical accuracy of the texts is not relevant in this analysis, it is left aside.

I have a special interest in gender studies, and my original concern when I started to do research for this work was to find out different images of women in the hadiths and the ways the concept of female is constituted in the texts. Gradually, the concept of choice became more important in my analysis, and, in

the end, is has become the main focus of this study. Nevertheless, gender has much to do with choice; one might assume that the choices men and women do and did have in their lives were quite different, and one might also assume that these differences would be present and distinguishable in hadith literature. This is one of the questions I shall deal with.

In order to have theoretical tools to base my reading on I studied the methodology of rhetorical analysis. My aim was to develop rhetorical analysis as a tool in the study of Islamic texts and I have made use of some of the terminology developed by the pioneers of rhetorical analysis, such as sensitisation and audience, inner texture and intertexture.

To give the reader who is not familiar with *‘ilm al-ḥadīth*, the science of tradition, the necessary background about al-Bukhārī and hadith literature I shall sketch out the life and work of the author and I shall provide a short history of the development of hadith literature during the early history of Islam. A short outline of the development of the concept of sunna and its identification with the Prophet Muhammad will be presented and I shall briefly discuss the collection and classification of hadiths and present a sketch of the geographical area where the most important collectors and compilers of the hadith collections lived and worked. As already mentioned, the historicity of the texts is not evaluated, but I will shortly examine the discussion about the general criteria of selecting hadiths and the personal criteria al-Bukhārī used while determining which of the hadiths he knew fulfilled the conditions, *shurūt*, of a sound or *ṣaḥīḥ* transmission.

## TERMINOLOGY AND TRANSLITERATION

I shall explain most of the Arabic terminology used in the text when individual terms first occur, but a vocabulary of Arabic technical terms is also given at the end of the book. The vocabulary has been collected during the years of my study from various sources, but I have also checked most of the terms from *Muʿjam ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth al-nabawī* by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Khamīsī.<sup>1</sup> Some terms that are not used in the text are included in the vocabulary for the sake of consistency and clarity.

I have used the words Qur’an, hadith, sunna, imam, and mufti as if they were English words. Words like *‘ulamā’* have been used in their commonest form, which in this case is the Arabic plural, but I have often chosen to use the Arabic singular with the English inflexion, such as *kitābs* for *kutub* or *bābs* for *abwāb*. The name of the Prophet is written Muhammad, but the names of all other *Muḥammads* are given with full transliteration. The term Prophet with a capital P,

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<sup>1</sup> Jidda 2000.

when used by itself, refers to Muhammad, in contrast to the same word with a lower case *p*, which refers to other prophets. I use the blessing formulas<sup>2</sup> after the names of prophets in direct citations, but not in my own text. For the English translations of the Qur'an I have on most occasions chosen to use A. J. Arberry's *The Koran Interpreted* (1955).

## THE SOURCES

My main source and research material, the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, was written in the middle of the 9th century A.D. The compiler<sup>3</sup> of this work, *Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī*, was born in Bukhārā in the year 194/810 and he died in Khartank near Samarqand in 256/870. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* is a compilation of hadiths, reports about the acts, words or silent approval of the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632) or his closest companions. It is not a holy book in the same sense as the Qur'an, yet it is one of the most significant collections of Islamic texts in Sunni Islam. Some say that it is next only to the Qur'an in sanctity. It has, along with the collection of Muslim, during the centuries of development of Sunni Islamic doctrine, become the second most important basis of Islamic faith, practice and law.

*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* is a *muṣannaḥ* type collection of hadiths, which means that the material is roughly arranged according to legal matters. The work is divided into 97 books (*kitāb/kutub*) and 3,450 Chapters (*bāb/abwāb*). According to James Robson, there are 7,397 hadiths in the collection, but only 2,762 if repetitions are excluded.<sup>4</sup> If the fragmentary hadiths that are used in the chapter headings without *isnāds* are counted, the total is 9,082.<sup>5</sup> Muhammad Abdul Rauf agrees with Robson about the total number of 7,397 hadiths, but estimates the number of repetitions to be 4,000,<sup>6</sup> whereas Muḥammad Zubayr Ṣiddīqī claims that there are 7,275 hadiths in the collection, of which 1,725 are of the *mu'allaq*, suspended, type or corroborative, which means that they are of secondary importance.<sup>7</sup>

I use the Dār al-Salām edition<sup>8</sup> of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* from the year 1997 in which both the chapters and individual hadiths are numbered and the numbering

<sup>2</sup> (s) for *ṣallā Allāhu 'alayhi wa-sallam* and (r) for *raḍiya Allāhu 'anhu*, and in English translations (pbuh) for peace be upon him, but may God be pleased with him without abbreviation.

<sup>3</sup> About the meaning and importance of authorship, see Motzki 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Robson, "al-Bukhārī," *EJ*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Guillaume 1924: 28.

<sup>6</sup> Abdul Rauf 1983: 275.

<sup>7</sup> Ṣiddīqī 1993: 56–57.

<sup>8</sup> The collection was copied and recopied innumerable times and undoubtedly underwent changes and revisions in the process. After the death of al-Bukhārī there were different

corresponds to that of Wensinck's *Concordance*. When I speak of the entire chapter I give only the number of the chapter in question, but when I speak of a specific hadith I give both the number of the chapter and the hadith.

The most important commentator on al-Bukhārī is *Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī* (*Shihāb al-Dīn Abū l-Faṭḥ Aḥmad ibn Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Kinānī al-Shāfiʿī*, d. Saturday 28th *Dhū l-ḥijja* 852/22nd February 1449). He was born in Cairo and he also died there. He was a lecturer, professor and head of college, judge and mufti. Ibn Ḥajar wrote more than 150 books – most of them in the field of science of tradition – though he was mainly admired for his work on al-Bukhārī. He was in his early thirties when he published a work on the *isnāds* of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* entitled *Taʿlīq al-taʿlīq*, but his most important work is the introduction *Hady al-sārī: Muqaddimat fath al-bārī bi-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. The work is, as the title indicates, an introduction to his commentary on al-Bukhārī's collection. The introduction was completed in 813/1410–11, and the commentary itself came into being gradually based on lecture courses extending from 817–842/1414–38.<sup>9</sup> In this work I have used the edition printed in Cairo in 1987.

Ibn Ḥajar seems to appreciate al-Bukhārī more than any other compiler, and he clearly prefers al-Bukhārī to Muslim. He does not tell us much of particular importance about the relation of these two sheikhs. It is not even sure whether they ever as much as met, since the accounts of their encounters appear to be invented.

Ibn Ḥajar defended the al-Bukhārī collection down to the last hadith report and he does not miss an occasion to put admiring words into the mouths of the other *muḥaddiths*. According to Ibn Ḥajar, Muslim acknowledged the excellence of al-Bukhārī:

The Imam of Imams Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Khuzayma said that there is no one under the sky who knows more about hadiths than Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī. Abū ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī said: "Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī knows more than anybody about defects in hadiths, *ʿīlal*, and chains of transmission, *asānīd*." Muslim said to him: "I testify that there is no one like you in this world."<sup>10</sup>

Al-Bukhārī went to Nishapur in the year 250/864 and stayed there for a while collecting hadiths, and, apparently, teaching. Ibn Ḥajar narrates Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj's report of his arrival and the people's admiration of him.

versions circulating in the Muslim world. According to A. Mingana the earliest existing manuscript, which unfortunately is incomplete, is Mingana Arab. Isl. 225. On palaeographical grounds it cannot be later than 1000 A.D. and Mingana's approximation is that it is even earlier. See Mingana 1936 and Quiring-Zoche 1998. In my work I have not taken into consideration the differences between editions.

<sup>9</sup> Rosenthal, "Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī", *EJ*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibn Ḥajar: 509.

He (Muslim) said: "I have never seen people respect another scholar the way they respected al-Bukhārī. They went to receive him from two or three day's journey out of the town. Many members of the 'ulamā' were with those people."<sup>11</sup>

Ibn Ḥajar, being the commentator on and devotee of al-Bukhārī, always portrays al-Bukhārī as the superior *muḥaddith* when he and Muslim disagree about a hadith. In his *Hady al-sārī* he reports 'Abdallāh ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī saying that he met scholars from Mecca, Medina and the Hijaz, in Damascus and Iraq, but he "never met anyone more perfect than Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl (al-Bukhārī). He is the most discerning, the most knowing and hard working of us in his quest for knowledge."<sup>12</sup>

### AL-BUKHĀRĪ: MAN AND MUḤADDITH

Who was al-Bukhārī, the man? We know very little about the historical person who wrote the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. There is a biography of al-Bukhārī at the end of Ibn Ḥajar's *Hady al-sārī*.<sup>13</sup> The work gives a clear picture of the admiration Ibn Ḥajar felt for al-Bukhārī and, without a doubt the text resembles more a hagiography than a biography of a scholar. Indeed, the biography follows the same pattern as hadith literature. It contains eyewitness reports about the incidents in al-Bukhārī's life and narrations about the excellence of his character and capabilities.

In the edition of *Hady al-sārī* I have used (al-Qāhira 1987) the biography extends from page 501 to the end of the volume, page 518.<sup>14</sup> Since I use the work of Ibn Ḥajar as my main medieval commentary to al-Bukhārī I shall keep to the brief biography of Ibn Ḥajar only. Besides, other biographies would add little if anything substantially new to the life history or characteristics of al-Bukhārī. Furthermore, my aim is to highlight the attitude of Ibn Ḥajar and later Muslim hadith experts towards al-Bukhārī and to achieve this goal the hagiographical type of life story is very convenient.

The complete name of al-Bukhārī is Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mughīra ibn Bardizba (Abū 'Abdallāh) al-Ju'fī. He was born after the Friday prayer on the thirteenth of Shawwāl in the year 194/810 in Bukhārā, which nowadays is situated in the independent Republic of Uzbekistan.

<sup>11</sup> Ibn Ḥajar: 514.

<sup>12</sup> Ibn Ḥajar: 509. Ibn Ḥajar continues: They asked al-Dārimī about a hadith and told him that al-Bukhārī had rectified it but he said: "Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl (al-Bukhārī) is more discerning than I am. He is the smartest of God's creatures, he explains God's orders and prohibitions, His book and the words of the Prophet."

<sup>13</sup> Later collections of biographies like the one by Ibn Khallikān (*Wafayāt al-a'yān*, vol. IV no. 569 p. 188–190) contain no further information about the life of al-Bukhārī.

<sup>14</sup> Numbers in square brackets refer to these pages in Ibn Ḥajar's *Hady al-sārī*.

Ibn Ḥajar titles the first chapter of his biography “His name, birth and formation and the beginning of his studies of hadith”, but the information we get from his childhood is limited. Ibn Ḥajar lets us know that the family converted to Islam three generations before Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl was born. Al-Bukhārī’s great-great-grandfather, Bardizba, professed the Persian religion,<sup>15</sup> but Bardizba’s son Mughīra was converted to Islam by al-Yamān al-Ju‘fī. Al-Mughīra came to Bukhārā and he was called al-Ju‘fī according to al-Yamān al-Ju‘fī, whose protected client, *mawlā*, he became after his conversion.

We do not know much about the father of Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, but it is said that he was a righteous man. He died when al-Bukhārī was still a boy and young Muḥammad grew up with his mother. [501–502]

It seems that al-Bukhārī’s father was a wealthy man. Ibn Ḥajar writes that the copyist of al-Bukhārī reported on the authority of Muḥammad ibn Khirāsh and Aḥīd ibn Ḥafṣ: “I went to meet Ismā‘īl, the father of Abū ‘Abdallāh when he was dying and he said: ‘Not even one dirham of my wealth have I got with forbidden or doubtful ways.’” Al-Bukhārī inherited a significant property from his father but he lost it in a shared partnership, *muḍāraba*. As a consequence of this, one would suppose, Ibn Ḥajar reports al-Bukhārī saying that he never bought or sold anything himself but ordered someone else to make his purchases. When he was asked the reason why, he said: “Since there is always surplus, and shortcoming, and confusion.” [503–504]

Ibn Ḥajar narrates one specific miracle which occurred in the childhood of Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl: Ghunjār<sup>16</sup> writes in his *Tārīkh Bukhārā* and *al-Lālakā’ī*<sup>17</sup> in his commentary of the sunna that Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl became blind when he was small. His mother saw Abraham, Ibrāhīm, the friend of God, in her dream and he said to her: “God has given back to your son his eye-sight because of the abundance of your prayers.” And so it happened. [502]

### The beginning of his interest in hadiths

Al-Bukhārī seems to have been a very precocious boy, who started to study and memorise hadiths when he was still very young. Ibn Ḥajar relates al-Firabrī’s words when he said that he heard the copyist of al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Abī Ḥātim, say that al-Bukhārī had told him that he was motivated to memorise hadiths when he was in Qur’an school. A direct question-and-answer sequence is

<sup>15</sup> *Wa-kāna Bardizba fārisiyyan ‘alā dīni qawmihi*. He was probably Zoroastrian.

<sup>16</sup> Ghunjār was the nickname of Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Bukhārī, (d. 412/1021), the writer of *Tārīkh Bukhārā*. See Ḥājī Khalīfa (d. 1067/1657), *Kashf al-ẓunūn ‘an asāmī al-kutub wa-l-funūn*, II, p. 117.

<sup>17</sup> Hibatallāh ibn Ḥasan ibn Maṣṣūr al-Ṭabarī al-Rāzī al-Lālakā’ī, died 418/1027.



typically inserted into the text: “*Qultu: kam atā ‘alayka idh dhāka?’*”*Fa-qāla: ‘ashr sinīn aw aqall.* I said: How old were you then? He said: Ten years or less. [502]

On finishing the school he started to visit al-Dākhilī<sup>18</sup> among others. Young al-Bukhārī demonstrated not only an excellent memory but also great courage in his interaction with al-Dākhilī, who was his teacher: One day while reading to people al-Dākhilī related a hadith with the *isnād* Sufyān from Abū Zubayr from Ibrāhīm. So al-Bukhārī said: “Abū Zubayr did not report from Ibrāhīm!” Al-Dākhilī scolded al-Bukhārī but he retorted to him: “Go and check in the original should you have it (i.e. the original book).” Al-Dākhilī went in (to his house) to check his information and when he came back he said: “How does it go then, lad?” Al-Bukhārī said that it was Zubayr and Ibn ‘Adī from Ibrāhīm. Al-Dākhilī took a pen, corrected what he had written, and admitted that al-Bukhārī was right. Again, a direct question of al-Bukhārī’s age is inserted to emphasise his youth: “How old were you when you opposed him?” “I was eleven years old.” And al-Bukhārī continues: “When I was sixteen I knew the books of Ibn al-Mubārak<sup>19</sup> and Wakī<sup>20</sup> by heart and I was familiar with the discussion of *aṣḥāb al-ra’y.*” [502]

The memory of al-Bukhārī was excellent throughout his life. Ḥāshid ibn Ismā‘īl said: When al-Bukhārī was still a boy he used to visit the scholars of Basra with us. He did not write anything down. After sixteen days we blamed him for that and he said: “That’s enough! Why don’t you show me what you have written?” We showed him and it was more than 25,000 hadiths. But he knew them all by heart so that we started to check our writings against his memory. [502]

Abū Bakr ibn Abī ‘Ayyāsh al-A‘yan said: We wrote from (the memory of) Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm and Muḥammad ibn al-Azhar al-Sijistānī told that he was in the mosque with al-Bukhārī and some other people. Al-Bukhārī listened (to hadiths being reported there) but he did not write anything down. Thus one of his companions was asked: “What’s the matter with him? Why is he not making any notes?” He answered: “He will go back to Bukhārā and write everything down from his memory!” [502]

### His literary work

When al-Bukhārī was eighteen years old he wrote a book *Qaḍāyā al-ṣaḥāba wa-l-tābi‘īn*, ‘Legal Cases of the Companions and the Followers’. Then he wrote *Al-*

<sup>18</sup> The identity of the person called al-Dākhilī is not known.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Mubārak (118/736–181/797) was a renowned Khurasānī hadith scholar.

<sup>20</sup> Probably Wakī ibn al-Jarrāḥ (d.197/812.)

*Tārīkh al-kabīr*, which comprises biographies of narrators and *Al-Tārīkh al-ṣaghīr* in Medina by the grave of the Prophet on moonlit nights. According to Ibn Ḥajar, al-Bukhārī said that he would have had stories to tell about each of the names in his History, but he did not want to make the book too long. [502]

According to the legend written by Ibn Ḥajar, the memory of al-Bukhārī was flawless. But his wish to avoid error, inaccuracy, and misunderstanding was even greater than the excellence of his memory. His copyist reports that when they were in Firabr,<sup>21</sup> working on the book of *tafsīr*, he saw al-Bukhārī lying down to rest. The editing<sup>22</sup> had exhausted him that day. The copyist reminded al-Bukhārī that once he had heard him say: “I didn’t accomplish anything without knowledge. So what is the use of lying down?” He answered: “I got tired today and since this is a border town, *thaghr*, I was afraid that the enemy might be up to something, so I preferred to rest a while to regain my alertness so that if the enemy suddenly attacked I would be ready!” [504]

Al-Bukhārī is described as a considerate master who did not want to demand too much of his companions. The copyist of al-Bukhārī reported that when he was travelling with Abū ‘Abdallāh they stayed in the same house. “I saw him stand up each night fifteen to twenty times. He took a flint, struck fire with his hand, lit a lamp and worked on hadiths. Then he lay his head down and I said to him: You undergo all that alone and do not wake me up! He answered: You are still young and I do not want to disturb your sleep.” [505] On the other hand, the episode illustrates the need to contrast the extreme piety and hard-working character of al-Bukhārī to the other’s normal way of life.

Al-Bukhārī was very cautious and precise when he spoke about other people so that he would not insult anyone. Al-Bukhārī said: “I hope that when I meet God nobody will hold me responsible for slander against anyone.” [504–505]

But there was a hint of arrogance in the behaviour of young al-Bukhārī, as well. According to an anecdote from Yūsuf ibn Mūsā he was in a mosque in Basra when he heard the caller, *munādī*, announce: “Attention scholars, Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī has arrived!” The narrator goes on: We all went to him and I saw a young man who had no grey hair yet in his beard. He prayed behind the columns and when he finished people surrounded him and asked him to read to them. The caller got up again and announced: “Attention scholars, Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī has arrived and we asked him to read to us and he answered

<sup>21</sup> Firabr is a town on the road to Bukhārā, a parasang north of the Oxus (Amū Darya) opposite Āmul.

<sup>22</sup> *Wa-kāna aʿaba naḥṣahu fī dhālik al-yawm fī l-takhrīj*. The term *takhrīj* used here means, according to Lane’s dictionary (sub *kharraja*), ‘resolving, explaining or rendering a saying’. Here it probably means making the final version of the text or adding the text parts, which had been omitted or correcting possible mistakes in the text. I would like to thank Professor Claude Gilliot for clarifying this term for me.

that he will give us a lesson tomorrow.” The next day thousands of scholars of hadith and Qur’an, experts of *fiqh* and other spectators were present. Before he started Abū ‘Abdallāh said: “People of Basra, I am a young man and you asked me to relate hadiths to you. I will relate to you hadiths from people of your own country. It will be useful to you.” The narrator explains that by this al-Bukhārī meant that the Basran people did not know these hadiths, *ya‘nī laysat ‘indakum*. People were astonished with his words but he started to read. [511]

### Al-Bukhārī and women

Ibn Ḥajar tells us nothing about the relationship or attitude of al-Bukhārī towards women. Nothing is mentioned about his family, we do not even know whether he was married or not. Ibn Ḥajar relates only one incident between al-Bukhārī and a woman. It is an episode between al-Bukhārī and his female slave.

‘Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣayārīfī said: I was visiting Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl when his female slave wanted to enter the house. She stumbled over an inkwell that was in front of him. He said to her: “Why do you walk around in this fashion?” She answered: “If there is no way, how can I walk?” *Qāla la-hā kayfa tamshīna qālat idhā lam yakun tariq kayfa amshī*. He spread out his hands and said: “Go, I give you your freedom.” Someone said to al-Bukhārī: “Did she make you angry!” He answered: “(Yes, but) I pleased myself with what I did, *arḍaytu nafsī bimā fa‘altu*.” [504]

This tradition might be interpreted in two ways. It might be understood as a demonstration of the self-control of al-Bukhārī and his ability to keep down his anger: al-Bukhārī got angry at his servant’s clumsiness and dismissed her. But the incident might also be interpreted as illustrating the ability of al-Bukhārī to appreciate the wittiness of his servant’s answer, which he rewarded by giving her her freedom.

The overall impression of the attitude of al-Bukhārī towards women is rather negative. The *Ṣaḥīḥ* includes numerous misogynist hadiths and they certainly exceed in number the texts that might be considered women-friendly.

Barbara Stowasser, in her groundbreaking *Women in the Qur’an, Traditions, and Interpretation* (1994) introduces the concept of “typology of pettiness”: the theme of the women’s – the wives of the Prophet in this case – pettiness was employed or abused to account for incidents that could not be explained otherwise. Stowasser observes that the bulk of hadiths which describe the Prophet’s wives as “‘ordinary women’ possessed by and motivated by petty jealousies”, is noteworthy.<sup>23</sup> This may have been fatal to the development of the status of women in the formative period of Islam, or, on the other hand it might only reflect

<sup>23</sup> Stowasser 1994: 107.

the process of the ongoing deterioration of women's legal status. Whatever the case may be, the image of the Prophet's wives transmitted by the hadiths was crucial to the institutionalisation of women's societal position, because the Prophet's wives were the best of all women. They were the Mothers of the Believers, who were supposed to be examples of virtue and models for all other Muslim women.

Barbara Stowasser further claims that although contradictory hadiths abound both in the collection of Muslim and al-Bukhārī, and often both sides of an argument are given, there is a noteworthy lack of hadiths on some women's issues; especially regarding the social status and rights of women only one side of the argument is documented, and it is without exception the restrictive side.<sup>24</sup>

One of the most important and critical experts in hadith research, and especially *isnād* analysis, G. H. A. Juynboll, takes up the very famous hadith report about the deficiency of women's religion. He makes the conclusion that al-Bukhārī included only the misogynist version of the hadith, which advises women to give alms because the Prophet had seen in a dream that the majority of people in hellfire were women.<sup>25</sup> This hadith seems to be one of the favourites of al-Bukhārī since it is repeated at least in *Kitāb al-ḥayḍ* Chapter 6, no. 304 and *Kitāb al-zakāt* Chapter 44, no. 1462 citing the whole *matn*, in *Kitāb al-ṣawm* Chapter 41, no. 1951 pointing to the fact that women do not fast during their menses, in *Kitāb al-shahādāt* Chapter 12 no. 2658, claiming that the testimony of a woman is worth half of that of a man, and, finally, in *Kitāb al-zakāt* Chapter 44 *al-zakāt 'alā l-aqārib*,<sup>26</sup> no. 1462 he uses the same story to legitimise giving alms to your own family or, in this case, to your husband and son:

Narrated Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī: Once God's Messenger went out to the *muṣallā* (to offer the prayer) of *'Īd al-aḍḥā* or *'Īd al-ḥajj*. He passed by the women and said: "Women! Give alms, as I have seen that the majority of the dwellers of hellfire were you (women)." They asked: "Why is it so, God's Messenger?" He replied: "You curse frequently and are ungrateful to your husbands. I have not seen anyone more deficient in intelligence and religion than you. A cautious sensible man could be led astray by some of you." The women asked: "God's Messenger, what is deficient in our intelligence and religion?" He said: "Is not the evidence of two women equal to the witness of one man?" They replied in the affirmative. He said: "This is the deficiency in her intelligence. Is it not true that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menses?" The women replied in the affirmative. He said: "This is the deficiency in her religion."

<sup>24</sup> Stowasser 1994: 105.

<sup>25</sup> al-Qanṭara 1989: 343–384.

<sup>26</sup> Book of *Zakāt*, Chapter about *zakāt* given to the relatives.

On the other hand, in a slightly earlier text, which Wensinck<sup>27</sup> dates to the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries, Abū Ḥanīfa claims that

works are distinct from faith and faith is distinct from works, as is proved by the fact that often the faithful is exempted from works, whereas it is not possible to say that they are exempted from faith. Thus the menstrua and the puerpera are exempted from the salat according to the word of Allah, whereas it is not possible to say that they are exempted from faith on account of the word of Allah, or that Allah has enjoined them to abandon faith. The lawgiver says to them: Give up fasting and make up for it afterwards. It is possible to say: The poor man is exempted from zakat, whereas it is impossible to say: The poor man is exempted from faith.

It is possible that al-Bukhārī was not familiar with this line of reasoning, although the Ḥanafī school spread early to the East, including Khurasan. Or, more probably, he did not wish to follow the reasoning of Abū Ḥanīfa and presented hadiths which contradicted his ideas for the obvious reason that the views of the two scholars diverge on so many points. A third, but not likely, possibility is that al-Bukhārī worked on his material, trusted his informants and included this hadith with no consideration of its ideological consequences.

However, al-Bukhārī has documented a great number of hadiths which stress the idea that a woman, although she is ritually impure, is not to be avoided during her menstruation. There is a whole book, *Kitāb al-ḥayḍ*, dedicated to menstruation in the collection. In several hadiths it is reported that the Prophet used to read the Qur'an and lean on one of his wives, most often 'Ā'isha, even though she had her period. According to other hadiths he used to pray in the presence of a menstruating wife or let her comb his hair or serve him in spite of her ritual impurity.

Al-Bukhārī also includes a hadith transmitted by 'Ā'isha, which seems to affirm that according to 'Ā'isha's judgement, the Prophet thought more highly of women than some of his contemporaries:

*Kitāb al-ṣalāt*, Chapter 105 *man qāla: Lā yaqṭa' al-ṣalāt shay'*, no. 514.<sup>28</sup>

'Ā'isha reported that people were talking in her presence about things that break prayer, and they mentioned a dog, a donkey and a woman. "You associate us with donkeys and dogs" she said, "but, by God, I have seen the Prophet in prayer while I was lying down on the bed between him and the *qibla*. And when I needed to get up and I didn't want to disturb the Prophet, I glided smoothly out of the bed.

<sup>27</sup> For the translation and commentary of this text, which is ascribed to Abū Ḥanīfa, see Wensinck 1965: 125–187.

<sup>28</sup> Book of Prayer, Chapter 105 about the one who said: Nothing interrupts prayer.

### His life, characteristics, frugality and virtues

A major part of Ibn Ḥajar's narration about al-Bukhārī's life is stories that highlight the special characteristics of al-Bukhārī. They are stories about his remarkable ability to concentrate in prayer, about his excellent memory and virtuous way of life.

One day when al-Bukhārī was praying, a hornet stung him seventeen times. When he finished his prayer he said: "What was it that tried to call my attention during my prayer?" We saw that the hornet had stung him in seventeen spots,<sup>29</sup> but he did not interrupt his prayer. [505]

We were in the mosque of Abū 'Abdallāh al-Bukhārī. A man took a speck out of his beard and threw it on the floor. Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl looked at it and the people present, and when they didn't do anything he picked the speck up from the floor and put it into his sleeve. When he left the mosque I saw him throw it away. He took care of the mosque as one takes care of one's beard. [505]

Muḥammad ibn Abī Ḥātim, the copyist of al-Bukhārī, narrated that they were in Firabr and Abū 'Abdallāh was building a hospice, *ribāṭ*, not far away from Bukhārā. Many of people gathered there to help him with the work. He carried bricks with his own hands and Muḥammad ibn Abī Ḥātim kept saying to him: "Abū 'Abdallāh, you need not do that!" But he replied: "This is useful to me." He slaughtered a cow to feed the people and when the cooking pots were ready he called for people to come and eat. There were a hundred people with him or more.

We had taken bread with us from Firabr for three dirhams. Bread was then five *manns*<sup>30</sup> for a dirham. We gave it to them and everybody ate and untouched loaves of bread were left over. [505]

This story is evidently a variant of the Islamic version of the Christian miracle of five loaves and two fishes. Al-Bukhārī had a cow and about twelve

<sup>29</sup> It is typical that the exact number of stings is reported. Accuracy in details is a common device for confirming the alleged historicity of a hadith report. The same method is used by Ibn Ḥajar in his biography.

<sup>30</sup> One *mann* (pl. *amnān*) is equal to two *raṭls*. Both *raṭl* and *mann* are quite problematic units of weight, because their value has varied so much historically and geographically. We do not know either if the units of weight used in Ibn Ḥajar's text refer to ninth century Bukhārā or to the Egypt of the 15th century when Ibn Ḥajar wrote his *Hady al-sārī*. But this time we can estimate quite easily the value of one *mann*. According to Walter Hinz (1955: 6, 18) the canonical *mann* weight (1 *mann* = 2 *raṭls* = about 5/6 kg) was used in Iran until the middle of the 14th century. In that case 15 *manns* would have represented 12.5 kg of bread in al-Bukhārī's time. But if we suppose that Ibn Ḥajar used units of weight, which were comprehensible to people of his own time we will, fortunately, end up with quite a similar amount of bread. In 15th-century Egypt one *mann* was equal to 812.5 g, so that 15 *manns* would amount to 12.1 kg. (Hinz 1955: 16, 18)

kilos of bread to offer the one hundred or more workers. The fact that the narrator mentions the exact amount of food they had and stresses that complete loaves of bread were left over, *wa-faḍalat aghriḥa ṣāliḥa*, is an indication that the narration had been influenced by the Christian miracle.

However, the Christian miracle had been Islamised earlier.<sup>31</sup> The narration is similar to the reports of miracles performed by the Prophet. The Qur'an is silent about any prophetic miracles performed by Muhammad and, indeed, reports the people's eagerness to see miracles: Why has no sign been sent down upon him from his Lord? (6:37) to which God advises Muhammad to say that ... God is able to send down a sign, but most of them know it not. (6:37)

In contradiction to the Qur'an, hadith literature reports several miracles performed by the Prophet, e.g., the production of water to drink or to perform ablutions,<sup>32</sup> making rain to revive the dry lands,<sup>33</sup> and splitting the moon.<sup>34</sup> *Kitāb*

<sup>31</sup> About Christian and Jewish informants of Muhammad, see Gilliot 1998.

<sup>32</sup> *Kitāb al-maghāzī*, Chapter 46 *Ghazwat al-Ḥudaybiya*, hadiths numbers 4150, 4151, and 4152 relate an incident during the military expedition in Ḥudaybiya. There was not enough water and the Prophet's companions were thirsty. The Prophet made water flow so that it was sufficient for all of them to drink, to make ablutions and to water their animals. No. 4152: Jābir said: "On the day of al-Ḥudaybiya the people were thirsty. God's Messenger had a pot of water in front of him and he had performed ablution from it when people approached him. God's Messenger said: "What troubles you?" The people said: "God's Messenger, we haven't got any water to perform ablution with or to drink, except what you have in your pot." The Prophet put his hand in the pot and water started to flow out between his fingers just like from a spring. We drank and performed ablution." I said to Jābir: "How many were you on that day?" He replied: "Even if we had been a hundred thousand that water would have been sufficient for us. Anyhow, we were 1500." In hadiths 4150 and 4151, the Prophet asks for a bucketful of water from a well, which had run dry. The Prophet spits in the bucket or makes his ablutions in it, says a prayer, and tells his followers to pour the water back into the well and to wait for a moment. After a while there is enough water both for the men and the animals.

<sup>33</sup> There is an entire book in al-Bukhārī called *Kitāb al-istisqā'* or Book of Praying for Rain and the Prophet seems to be able to make rain and also to make the rain stop at will. *Kitāb al-Jum'ā*, Book of Friday, *Bāb al-istisqā' fī l-khuṭba yawm al-jum'ā*, or Book of Praying for Rain in the Friday Sermon, Chapter 45, number 944, is a story of a Bedouin who tells about the drought in his lands and asks the Prophet to invoke God for rain. The Prophet raised his hands and before he had put them down again it started raining and it went on raining until, a week later, a Bedouin asks the Prophet to stop the rain as the houses began to collapse and the animals drowned because of the heavy shower. The Prophet lifted his hands and said: "Allāhumma, ḥawālaynā wa-lā 'alaynā!" ('God, (let it rain) around us, not on us!') It immediately ceased to rain in Medina. An identical hadith is reported in *Kitāb manāqib*, Chapter 25: *Alāmāt al-nubuwwa fī l-islām*, number 4582. This is one of the longest, if not the longest chapter in the collection; it contains 63 hadiths. A similar hadith can be found in *Kitāb al-adab*, Chapter no. 68: *Bāb al-tabassum wa-l-ḍahik* (Chapter on smiling and laughter) hadith no. 6093.

Reports describing the Prophet's power to make rain are numerous, but there is also a hadith which reports an incident when the Prophet used his powers to inflict drought on unbelievers. *Kitāb al-istisqā'*, Chapter 2, 1007, reports that the Prophet cursed the disbelieving people by saying: "Allāhumma sab'an ka-sab'i Yūsuf!" (God, give them seven as the seven

*al-manāqib* Chapter 25 no. 4578, *Kitāb al-aḥīma* Chapters 6 and 48, and *Kitāb al-aymān wa-l-nudhūr* Chapter 22 relate hadiths about a Prophetic miracle of multiplying the amount of food and giving people to eat. But, interestingly, al-Bukhārī does not seem to be particularly interested in the miraculous aspects of these reports. On the contrary, the chapter headings tend to stress quite commonplace things, like the amount of food that is appropriate to consume or the way people should be seated. The chapter heading of *Kitāb al-manāqib* Chapter 25 refers to signs of prophethood in Islam, *Kitāb al-aḥīma* Chapter 6 is titled “About the one who eats his fill”. It contains three hadiths, two almost identical ones and one that seems to contradict these two. Chapter 48 in *Kitāb al-aḥīma* stresses the matter that the Prophet made his companions go to the table in groups of ten.

The chapter heading of *Kitāb al-aymān wa-l-nudhūr* Chapter 22: If a person has sworn not to eat anything with his bread, but, nevertheless, eats dates with his bread, has elements of the following paragraph in Ibn Ḥajar’s text:

Al-Bukhārī fell ill and his urine was shown to doctors, ‘*araḍū mā’ahu ‘alā l-aṭibbā’*. They said that this urine looks like the urine of some Christian bishops who do not eat, *lā ya’tadimūna*, anything but bread. Muḥammad ibn Ismā’īl said that they were right: “I have not eaten anything but bread for forty years.” They asked about his treatment and the doctors answered that his treatment was to eat something with bread. But he refused until the sheikhs and men of knowledge implored him. In order to please them al-Bukhārī agreed to eat a piece of sugar with his bread, *fa-ajābahum ilā an ya’kula ma’a l-khubzi sukkara*.

### Legends about the capacity of his memory and intellect

Legends about the memory of al-Bukhārī abound in Ibn Ḥajar’s book. Their function seems to be to legitimise the claim that he indeed was able to collect, memorise and analyse such a supposedly huge number of hadith reports. It all

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(years of famine) of Joseph). An arduous drought was inflicted on the people instantaneously.

*Kitāb tawhīd*, Chapter 4, hadith no. 7379, seems to restore the theological control of these events: The Prophet said: The keys to the hidden are five and no one else knows them but God. God only knows what is in the womb, God only knows what will happen tomorrow, God only knows when it will rain, no-one knows where he will die, but God, and only God knows when the last hour will come.

<sup>34</sup> *Kitāb tafsīr al-Qur’ān sūrat iqtarabat al-sā’a (sūrat al-qamar)* Chapter 1, *Wa-nshaqqa al-qamar wa-in yaraw āyatan yu’riḍū* consists of five almost identical hadiths. No. 4861: During the lifetime of God’s Messenger the moon was split into two parts; one part (remained) over the mountain and the other part (went) beyond the mountain. God’s Messenger said: “Witness this.” No. 4867 pictures the Meccans asking for a miracle: The people of Mecca asked for a sign, *āya*, and the Prophet showed them the moon split in two parts.



builds up the legend of the great man who gave the contemporary Muslims an accurate depiction of their Prophet and the kind of Islam he purportedly advocated.

According to these legends some of the scholars in the field of hadith wanted to challenge the knowledge and memory of al-Bukhārī. Ibn Ḥajar narrates an anecdote about his exceptional memory and the way some of his colleagues tested him:

Abū Aḥmad ibn ‘Adī al-Ḥāfiẓ said: I heard many sheikhs in Baghdad say that Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī went to Baghdad and listened to *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* there. They wanted to put his memory to a test, so they took a hundred hadiths, turned over the *matns* and the *isnāds*, and fixed the *matn* of one hadith to the *isnād* of another and the *isnād* of one hadith to the *matn* of another one. Then they presented these to ten men, ten hadiths each, and asked them to narrate them to al-Bukhārī next time when they met him in the mosque.

They made an appointment in the mosque. There was a group of foreigners from Khurasan and elsewhere, as well as people from Baghdad. When the mosque was quiet, one of the ten was ready to ask al-Bukhārī about one of those hadiths. Al-Bukhārī said: “I don’t know that one.” He narrated them all to him one after the other but al-Bukhārī went on saying: “I don’t know that one.”

The scholars who were in the mosque turned to each other and said: “The man understood.” But whoever was not aware of the plot would have accused al-Bukhārī of incapacity, ignorance, and bad memory. Then another of the ten asked him about those hadiths which were turned over, but he said: “I don’t know that one.” And he asked about another. He said: “I don’t know that one.” Then the third and fourth asked him until all ten had presented their hadiths but al-Bukhārī said nothing more than “I don’t know that one”.

When they had finished al-Bukhārī turned towards the first one and said: “Concerning the first hadith, you said this but what you should have said is this, your second hadith was like this but it should have been like this.” He corrected all of his hadiths and put every *matn* back to its *isnād* and every *isnād* back to its *matn*, and he did the same to all the hadiths of the ten men. People praised his memory. However, the miracle was not the fact that he was able to correct the mistakes, but that he also remembered the false hadiths in their correct order after having heard them once only. [510]<sup>35</sup>

A similar event took place in Samarqand where four hundred transmitters of hadith were present and they tried to cheat Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl. They replaced an Iraqi *isnād* by a Syrian *isnād*, a Syrian *isnād* by an Iraqi *isnād*, and a Yemeni *isnād* by a Meccan *isnād*, but even they were not able to trick him. [511]

### His way of working

Like all the most famous hadith scholars, al-Bukhārī travelled widely in search of hadiths. According to Ibn Ḥajar, al-Bukhārī visited Damascus, Cairo and al-Jazīra

<sup>35</sup> This anecdote seems to have been very well known and important, since Ibn Khallikān quotes it in his short article about al-Bukhārī in his *Wafayāt al-a‘yān*.

(Northwest Mesopotamia) twice and Basra four times. He stayed in Hijaz for six years and visited Kufa and Baghdad countless times. [502]

Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl himself asserted that he never transmitted a hadith from the companions or the followers of the Prophet, unless he knew “their birth and their death and the place where they lived”. And he will not transmit a hadith from the companions or the followers of the Prophet, which means a discontinued hadith, unless he knows the origin of it in the Qur’an and the sunna of the Prophet.<sup>36</sup>

Al-Bukhārī said that he knows a hundred thousand sound hadiths and a hundred thousand hadiths which are not sound. His copyist heard him say one day: “I did not sleep last night until I had counted how many hadiths I have compiled and they were a hundred thousand.”

Al-Bukhārī said: “I stayed in Medina after my pilgrimage for a year to write down hadiths. I stayed in Basra five years. I had my books with me and I worked on them. I made a pilgrimage and came back from Mecca to Basra and I asked God to bless Muslims with these literary works. I did not accept a hadith until I distinguished a correct one from a bad one and I even checked in the books of *ahl al-ra’y*. I did not add a hadith to my *Ṣaḥīḥ* without first performing my ablutions and praying two *rakʿas*. I compiled the book out of 600,000 hadiths in sixteen years and I made it a proof concerning what is between God and me, *wa-jaʿaltuhu ḥujjatan fīmā baynī wa-bayn Allāh*.” [513]

Ibn Ḥajar quotes al-Bukhārī saying: “I wrote my book in the Holy Mosque and I did not add a hadith without asking God for guidance, praying two *rakʿas* and assuring myself of its truthfulness.” Ibn Ḥajar synchronises this statement by al-Bukhārī with another of his statements by explaining that the truth must be that he started the compilation, arrangement and classification of the material in the Holy Mosque but, later, he worked on the hadiths in his own country and elsewhere. “This is confirmed by the fact that he said that the work took him sixteen years, but he did not stay that long in Mecca.” It was, further, said that al-Bukhārī transcribed his chapter headings between the grave of the Prophet and his *minbar*, and for every heading he prayed two *rakʿas*. This does not contradict what happened, because it is possible that he first wrote only a draft and then he made a fair copy. [513–514]

Ibn Ḥajar relates a dream in which the Prophet not only gives his acceptance to al-Bukhārī’s collection, but also calls it *kitābī*, my book. The Prophet appears to Abū Zayd al-Marwazī in a dream. He says: “I was sleeping and I saw the Prophet (pbuh) in my dream. He asked me how long would I study the book of al-Shāfiʿī

<sup>36</sup> This, again, emphasises the importance of consensus. Al-Bukhārī, while writing his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, took part in the creation and development of the largely accepted, or canonical, sunna of the Prophet, but at the same time he studied the existing sunna to evaluate his hadith reports.

and not his (the Prophet's) book. I asked him what his book was and he said that it was the *Jāmi'* of Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl."

In this way the Prophet legitimises the book, not directly, but in way typical of the Islamic tradition. The words are not put into his mouth in real life, but in a dream. Of course, the Prophet died 178 years before the birth of al-Bukhārī, so that he could not have known about the book and a legitimisation in a dream was the only possibility.<sup>37</sup> However, dreams do have quite a significant value in the theology of Islam. The *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī includes a book entitled The Book of Interpretation of Dreams, *Kitāb al-ta'bīr*. This book begins by stating, in the *awā'il*-form,<sup>38</sup> that the beginning of the Divine Inspiration to the Messenger was in the form of true dreams. The dreams of the Prophet always came true. But the Prophet was interested in the dreams of his companions, too. According to Chapter 48 no. 7047 the Prophet used to ask his companions if any of them dreamt of anything at night, and the companions would tell him about their dreams.

Chapter no. 10 in *Kitāb al-ta'bīr* is subtitled *Man ra 'ā al-nabī (ṣ) fī l-manām*, the one who sees the Prophet in a dream. It contains five hadiths, all of which report the Prophet saying that whoever sees the Prophet in a dream sees him in reality. In other words, seeing the Prophet in a dream has the same value as seeing him in real life.<sup>39</sup>

### The dispute about created and uncreated acts

Al-Bukhārī went to Nishapur in the year 250/864 and stayed there for a while. He was constantly collecting hadiths. Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj said: "I have never seen people respect another scholar the way they respected al-Bukhārī. They travelled a two- or three-day journey from the town to receive him. Many members of the 'ulamā' were with those people, and Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā<sup>40</sup> encouraged people to go and listen to him teaching".

<sup>37</sup> There are, though, a number of hadiths which deal with future events, such as hadiths that describe the last hour.

<sup>38</sup> Curiosity about the beginnings and origins of things engendered a minor branch of Muslim literature called *awā'il* (sg. *awwal*, 'first'). They are reports about the first inventors of things or things invented or done first. Each report always follows the same formula: *awwal man fa'ala* ... or in a shorter version: *awwal* ... The oldest known representative of *awā'il* literature originates from the beginning of the 3rd/9th century.

<sup>39</sup> Quite an interesting hadith is a report in *Kitāb al-ta'bīr* Chapter 45 no. 7043: The Messenger of God said: "The worst lie is that a person claims to have seen a dream which he has not seen."

<sup>40</sup> Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī.

Once Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl came to Khūrāsān and people crowded to him so that the house and the roofs were full of people. On the second or third day a man got up and asked about the recitation of the Qurʾan. Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl said: “Our acts are created and recitation is one of our acts.” A dispute started between people. Some of them claimed that he said that the recitation of the Qurʾan is created; others insisted that he did not say so, and they started to fight about the issue until they were thrown out of the house.<sup>41</sup>

Many sheikhs have told that when Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl came to Nishapur and lots of people gathered to him, a certain contemporary sheikh was jealous of him and he said to hadith specialists that Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl claims that his recitation of the Qurʾan is created. When the council was assembled a man said: “Abū ʿAbdallāh, what do you say about the recitation of the Qurʾan, is it created or not created?” Al-Bukhārī said: “The Qurʾan is the word of God and not created, but the acts of human beings are created.” But the man provoked discord and said: “He said that his recitation of the Qurʾan is created.”

Some of the opponents of al-Bukhārī twisted his words and spread the rumour that al-Bukhārī had said that the recitation of the Qurʾan is created. But al-Bukhārī denied saying so on many occasions and insisted on having said that the acts of people are created, but the Qurʾan is the word of God and not created. “The movements, voices, learning, and the writings of human beings are created. But the Qurʾan, clearly established in the copies of the book, and kept in people’s hearts, is the word of God and not created.” Although he was explicit about the uncreated nature of the Qurʾan and the created nature of human acts, Al-Bukhārī clearly did not want to state explicitly his view about the nature of the recitation of the Qurʾan.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> There was animosity between al-Bukhārī and the scholars of al-Rayy. In 250/864 al-Bukhārī visited the city and some time after that the rumour about his opinion on the recitation of the Qurʾan started to spread. The scholars in al-Rayy could not accept this and rejected the work of al-Bukhārī totally. (Dickinson 2001: 29)

<sup>42</sup> This episode in the life of al-Bukhārī refers to the discussion of the created or uncreated nature of the Qurʾan, which reached its climax in the lifetime of al-Bukhārī, more precisely between 218/833 and 234/849. One of the attributes of God was speech, *kalām*. Since the Qurʾan was considered the word of God, *kalām Allāh*, it acquired an independent position beside God as uncreated and eternal. The Qurʾan was a divine attribute of God and the attributes of God are part of his eternal being and, thus, uncreated. But – according to most sources – from the end of the eighth century the Muʿtazilites started to oppose this view, which, they considered, challenged the notion of the uniqueness of God. Various other sects shared this view with the Muʿtazila, but Western scholars often identify this theory with them only. The Qurʾan had to be a creation of God since according to the principle of *tawḥīd*, only God had existed from eternity and nothing, not even his divine word, could be equally eternal. The Muʿtazilite theory became the official dogma and it was enforced to the point that the caliph al-Maʾmūn established an Inquisition, *miḥna*, in a letter written in *Rabīʿ I* 218/April 833. All persons in official positions, i.e. judges, teachers, those who recited the call for prayers, and hadith specialists had to affirm publicly that they believed that the

The discord about the nature of the recitation of the Qur'an resulted in the breaking off of relations between al-Bukhārī and al-Dhuhlī and almost the whole community of the al-Dhuhlī mosque. Al-Bukhārī left Nishapur and went to Bukhārā. When al-Bukhārī returned to Bukhārā tents were pitched a parasang<sup>43</sup> from the city so that people could wait for him. The people of the city welcomed him and showered dirhams and dinars on him. [517]

Everything seemed to be in order, until there was some discord between the *amīr*, Khālīd ibn Aḥmad al-Dhuhlī, and al-Bukhārī. Ghunjār writes in his *History*: The *amīr* Khālīd ibn Aḥmad al-Dhuhlī sent a messenger to Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl to ask him to take all his books to the *amīr*'s house and teach him. But Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl answered to his messenger: "Tell him that I do not de-grade knowledge and bring it to sultans' doors. If he needs to know something he is welcome to come to my mosque or to my house. If he is not pleased with this he is the sultan and may prohibit my meetings, but I will be excused on the day of resurrection because I did not hide knowledge." The *amīr* expelled al-Bukhārī from Bukhārā and he left for Baykand (Paykand).<sup>44</sup> [518]

According to another version by Abū Bakr ibn Abī 'Amr the reason for the departure of al-Bukhārī from the town was that Khālīd ibn Aḥmad asked him to come to his house and read his *History* and his *Jāmi'* to his children. But he refused to do so and said: "I cannot make a distinction between people." Khālīd made use of Ḥurayth ibn Abī al-Warqā' and other people of Bukhārā who started spreading rumours about his *madhhab*, and al-Bukhārī was expelled from the community. Al-Bukhārī invoked God against them, their families and their children. Khālīd did not send for him before at least a month had gone by. Then he sent a man on a donkey to fetch al-Bukhārī, but al-Bukhārī sent him away and thus Khālīd's order resulted in shame. As to Ḥurayth ibn Abī al-Warqā', he and his family suffered more than can be described. [518]

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Qur'an was the created word of God. As we can see, in the heat of the debate in the ninth century, theological disputes about the created or uncreated nature of the Qur'an went on to include even *lafz*, the recitation of the text. The successors of al-Ma'mūn, his brother al-Mu'taṣim and the latter's son al-Wāthiq, prosecuted the *miḥna* with different degrees of vigour and success. Al-Mutawakkil, al-Wāthiq's brother and successor as caliph, put an end to the *miḥna* in *Jumādā* I–II 234/January–February 849 by prohibiting controversy about the Qur'an. The Mu'tazilite theory was overthrown and the theory of the uncreated, eternal Qur'an became the official doctrine. Martin Hinds, however, specifies that it was not until 237/851–852 that the *miḥna* was completely annulled. According to Hinds and Melchert, the principal consequences of the *miḥna* were the consolidation of the importance of the '*ulamā*' at the expense of the caliphal power and the growing importance of the Prophetic hadith as the basis of classical Islam. (See Paret 1983: 216; Watt 1970: 170–172; Hinds in his article "Miḥna" in *Et*<sup>2</sup>; Melchert 1997: 234–253.)

<sup>43</sup> One parasang (*farsakh*) is equal to about 6 km. (Hinz 1955: 62)

<sup>44</sup> Baykand is a small town near Bukhārā.

### The death of al-Bukhārī

Al-Bukhārī went to Khartank, one of the villages in Samarqand. He had relatives there and he stayed with them. One night he was finishing his nightly prayer and he invoked God to take him, and before the month had passed al-Bukhārī died. The copyist of al-Bukhārī reports the words of al-Bukhārī's host in Khartank, Ghālib ibn Jibrīl, saying that al-Bukhārī fell ill a few days after his arrival at his house. A messenger from Samarqand came to see him and asked him to come back. Al-Bukhārī started to prepare his mount for the voyage and put on his shoes and his turban. But he was only able to take less than twenty steps with Ghālib holding his arm. "Let me go, I feel weak", he said. He said a prayer, lay down, and died. [518]

The death of al-Bukhārī has some obvious saintly aspects, especially the miraculous or supernatural events after, and during, the burial, for after his death al-Bukhārī perspired a lot. He had said earlier that after his death he should be wrapped in three burial garments with no shirt and no turban, and that is what happened. "We wrapped him in his shroud, prayed for him and put him in his grave. The dirt of his grave diffused a pleasant aroma, just like musk, and it lasted for days." Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl died on the night of *'Īd al-fiṭr*, i.e., Saturday 1st *Shawwāl* 256/1st September 870. He lived for 62 lunar years,<sup>45</sup> minus 23 days. [518]

The life history of al-Bukhārī is clearly more a hagiography than a biography. Al-Bukhārī is presented as a remarkable boy, who, at a very early age, knew more about hadiths than his teachers. He is portrayed as a talented man, who is at the same time cautious and precise. He had a remarkable ability to concentrate, he did not fear hard work, he took good care of his people and his mosque, and he was unpretentious and modest. But most of all, his memory is portrayed as exceptional, his intellect sharp and his morality and reputation stainless. He travelled widely in search of hadiths, and rather went into exile than corrupted his principles.

Ibn Ḥajar's account of al-Bukhārī's life is composed of eye-witness reports and question-and-answer sequences. The logic of persuasion is the same as in hadith literature: by reporting numerous details and repeating the same incidents and information several times on the authority of different witnesses, an illusion of historicity is created. Yet, it should not be forgotten that Ibn Ḥajar was born in 1372, more than five hundred years after the death of al-Bukhārī, and his sources, even though they go back several centuries, are not contemporary with al-Bukhārī.

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<sup>45</sup> 60 solar years.

## **PART I**





## PART I

### THE CONCEPT OF SUNNA

It has become a current set phrase in Sunni ideology<sup>46</sup> that the two main sources of Islam are the Qur'an and the sunna.<sup>47</sup> The Qur'an is the holy book of Islam. It is considered to be the Word of God, uncreated,<sup>48</sup> inimitable, comprising the knowledge of everything, a text which God revealed piecemeal to Prophet Muhammad through the Angel Gabriel. The text was first kept and memorised in

<sup>46</sup> The Imāmī Shī'ite tradition does not recognise Sunni hadith collections as authoritative. With regard specifically to al-Bukhārī's collection Imāmī Shī'ites have not considered it as anything special in the way that Sunnis have. They do not presume that whatever has been accepted by al-Bukhārī is always true. However, there are many hadiths that have been recognised by all Muslims, though there might be differences in rendering and details. The Shī'ites might agree that al-Bukhārī includes traditions that they accept, but they would not acknowledge al-Bukhārī as one who has particular authority in communicating hadiths. For the Shī'ites, the hadiths preferably come from their imams. In contrast to Sunni Islam the Shī'ite tradition accepts not only the Prophet as the source of sunna, but also his daughter Fāṭima and the twelve Imams. They possess *ʿiṣma*, an exalted spiritual position, and are protected from committing sins. In his "Abd Allāh b. ʿAbbās and Shī'ite Law" (1998) W. Madelung discusses the importance of the practice of imam ʿAlī in Shī'ite doctrine and comes to the conclusion that the imams of the family of the Prophet had no authority to change or add to the law. Their authority rested on their knowledge of the Qur'an and the sunna of the Prophet. This would explain the modest attention paid to the actual practice of ʿAlī by Shī'ite law. According to Madelung imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir explained the discrepancy between ʿAlī's practice and Shī'ite law by a kind of *taqiyya* forced on ʿAlī: he was unwilling to be accused of disregarding the practice of his predecessors. (Madelung 1998: 24) This argument would be in accord with those researchers who claim that the practice of the early caliphs was more important than the sunna of the Prophet.

<sup>47</sup> Burton differentiates between Sunna – the content or theory of tradition – and sunna – the usage described in a tradition, and, accordingly, Ḥadīth – tradition literature – and ḥadīth – an individual tradition. (Burton 1994: ix) I believe that the context makes the meaning clear enough even if we use the term sunna to cover both the connotations of the word Burton mentions, and I have chosen to speak about hadith literature and hadith reports instead of Ḥadīth and ḥadīth. I intentionally avoid using the word "tradition" while speaking of hadith or sunna because I feel that the concept "tradition" has a different sense in the English language from what is referred to by hadith in Arabic. As Marshall Hodgson argues in his work *The Venture of Islam* (1974, vol. 1), tradition implies not only a contrast to anything written, but, also, anonymity and imprecision. However, hadiths are not a matter of vague custom but of explicit texts, always naming both the transmitters and the alleged source. Hodgson proposed that we speak of *hadiths* and *hadith reporters* or *transmitters* instead of *Traditions* and *Traditionists* and a *hadith corpus* instead of *Islamic Tradition*, and I fully agree with him.

<sup>48</sup> See note 42.

oral form<sup>49</sup> and only later collected and written down by the scribes of the Prophet, and it exists today as a standardised basis for the Islamic faith.<sup>50</sup> Thus, there is only one generally accepted text that is called the Qur'an and it can easily be verified whether a verse is a part of the Qur'an or not.

When we speak of the sunna, we do not speak about a text or even a collection of texts. Sunna means the normative Islamic way of acting, being, and talking. For contemporary Muslims the right way is the way prophet Muhammad used to act. The Prophet's sunna is the ideal way of living for all Muslims. This is even in accord with the Qur'anic text which exhorts Muslims to obey God and his Messenger,<sup>51</sup> although the Qur'anic text is explicit in its picturing the Prophet as a human being and not as a divine, Godly figure, he is the best of all men and hence a good example for all mankind.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> For how long the Qur'anic verses were kept in oral form only is a question which remains still mainly unanswered. The orality of the sunna has been, and still is, a very central concept in Islamic tradition. See notes 88 and 196.

<sup>50</sup> This is the religiously accepted Islamic version of the origin of the holy book of Islam. For scientific monographs on the subject, see Th. Nöldeke: *Geschichte des Qorāns*, Leipzig: Dieterich'schen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1909–37 1. Teil: Über den Ursprung des Qorāns; 2. Teil : Die Sammlung des Qorāns; 3. Teil: Die Geschichte des Korantexts; R. Bell: *Introduction to the Qur'ān*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1953, completely revised and enlarged by W. Montgomery Watt, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977; J. Wansbrough: *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1977; J. Burton: *The Collection of the Qur'ān*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977; P. Crone and M. Cook: *Hagarism, The Making of the Islamic World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977; N. Robinson: *Discovering the Qur'an, a Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1996. The controversial work by Christoph Luxenberg: *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran. Ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache*, Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2000 has been a new starting point to re-examine the traditional views of the origin and history of the Qur'an. Rejected totally by some, greeted as revolutionary by others, it certainly is thought provoking.

<sup>51</sup> In 24:52 the obeisance to God and His Messenger is expressed as an attitude which results in a reward, and 58:20 states the contrary for those who oppose the commands of these two. In 33:21 the Prophet is described as a good example for those who look forward to meeting God on the Last Day. In 3:164 the Prophet is called a great favour to people because he instructs them in scripture and in wisdom. Obeisance to the Prophet is likewise instructed in 4:64 and 4:69. On the other hand, 48:10 declares that a pledge of allegiance to the Prophet is, in fact, a pledge of allegiance to God. This reminds us of the very basic Islamic principle that even though the Prophet was sent by God as a favour to mankind, as an example to be obeyed and followed, he is only a man and a prophet, and God is always above him, God is always unique. God and Muhammad are to be obeyed (3:132, 4:59, 64, 69, 80, 5:92, 8:20, 46, 47:33, 64:12), but Muhammad is no more than a messenger (3:144).

<sup>52</sup> We will see later on how the idea of Muhammad as the "good example for mankind" was a late development. It seems that even the Qur'anic verses exhorting the obeisance to, and good example of, Muhammad were not interpreted as referring to *sunnat al-nabī* until the middle of the 9th century. Juynboll bases his argument on the interpretation of a verse {*la-qad kāna lakum fī rasūli llāhi uswatun ḥasanatun*} (33:21) in the *Muwatta'* of Mālik (d. 795) and the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855). According to the interpretation of Juynboll the

During the years of early Islam the concept of sunna was an ambiguous one.<sup>53</sup> It was not at all clear whose acts constituted the sunna and whether the sunna was absolutely to be followed, and in what contexts it became binding. Historians of Islamic doctrine seem to agree that it was al-Shāfi‘ī who first introduced the concept “sunna of the Prophet”.<sup>54</sup>

Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī (150–204/767–819/20) is believed to have been a native of Medina. Schacht, who is credited with being the first to have paid attention to the role of al-Shāfi‘ī in the development of sunna, is of the opinion that the whole concept of “sunna of the Prophet” as well as the concept of Medina as the “true home of the sunna” had strong political motivations behind them. In his *Introduction to Islamic Law*, Schacht states that sunna “originally had a political rather than a legal connotation; it referred to the policy and administration of the caliph”.<sup>55</sup> And in his article “Sur l’expression « sunna du Prophète »” he summarises that in the year 76/695<sup>56</sup> the concept sunna of the Prophet was not yet an independent norm on the same level as the Qur’an. To follow the Prophet’s sunna meant to follow the Qur’an just as the Prophet had done. If there was an independent norm other than the Qur’an, it was not the sunna of the Prophet but the sunna of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the notion of sunna, as we understand it nowadays, was an early Islamic third century development.<sup>58</sup>

Wansbrough in his *Quranic Studies* (1977) considers sunna to be the primary instrument by which the Qur’anic revelation was linked with the historical figure of an Arabian prophet.<sup>59</sup> The development of prophetic sunna formulated the history of Hijāzī Arabs. The portrait of Muhammad emerged gradually and in response to the needs of the religious community. Wansbrough’s assessment of the emergence of sunna as *sunnat al-nabī* mirrors the same scepticism as can be seen in the writing of Schacht and, later, Crone and Hinds (1986). “The tendency

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identification of this verse with the Prophet’s sunna took place after the turn of the century. (Juynboll 1987: 101–108.)

- <sup>53</sup> For a survey of some early Islamic and pre-Islamic basic concepts see M. M. Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam. Studies in Ancient Arab Concepts*, Leiden, 1972.
- <sup>54</sup> The term sunna appears sixteen times in the Qur’an, never in the meaning of *sunnat al-nabī* or *sunnat rasūl Allāh*. It is used in association with the divine sunna, *sunnat Allāh* (33:38, 40:85, 48:23) or *sunnat al-awwalīn* (15:13, 18:55) However, the idea of Muhammad as the source of sunna is present, see note 33.
- <sup>55</sup> Schacht 1964: 17.
- <sup>56</sup> The year is significant, since the earliest authentic evidence of the usage of the term “sunna of the Prophet” is a letter addressed to the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (685–705) by the Khārijī leader ‘Abdallāh ibn Ibād. For the letter see Schacht 1963: 362.
- <sup>57</sup> Schacht 1963: 364.
- <sup>58</sup> Schacht 1949: 144–145; 1967: 3 ff. This view of the development of sunna became quite common later.
- <sup>59</sup> Wansbrough 1977: 52.

to subsume as much as possible of juridical precedent under the heading *sunnat al-nabī* was clear at the end of the second/eighth century,"<sup>60</sup> and the "[f]ormulation of the sunna as embodiment of prophetic practice/judgement cannot be dated before the beginning of the third/ninth century"<sup>61</sup> Wansbrough writes.

Nevertheless, the general view of Muslim 'ulamā' after al-Shāfi'ī has been that the Prophet's sunna, *sunnat al-nabī*, has been accepted by the Muslim community as normative already during the time of the Prophet. According to this view people were aware of other sunnas besides the Prophet's but all the other sunnas were short-lived. The concept of sunna is pre-Islamic, there were other sunnas besides the *sunnat al-nabī*, but very soon after the death of the Prophet *sunnat al-nabī* overshadowed all the other sunnas.

Juynboll, for his part, continues the discussion about the chronology of the development of the concept of sunna. He has searched through a great deal of early Islamic material, and maintains that the concept of sunna was, after the death of the Prophet, closely associated with the first caliphs and their authority was held in great esteem besides the authority of the Qur'an and the Prophet.<sup>62</sup> After the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, during the Umayyad era, sunna was still applied to people and institutions other than the Prophet. The emphasis on the Prophet's sunna was increasing but is still far from being the only accepted sunna. The concept of sunna meant the sunna of the Prophet and the normative way of *the early community as a whole*. As an example Juynboll takes up an early text by Ibn al-Muqaffa', which was probably written in the 750s. This text uses the term sunna in the formula *al-kitāb wa-l-sunna*, in which sunna means anything Islamic apart from the Qur'an.

Crone and Hinds, in their *God's Caliph* (1986), elaborate on the concept of sunna from another point of view. They allocate a whole chapter of the book to the examination of the concept of the title *khalīfat Allāh*. They assert that the title *khalīfa*, which was used of the head of state, stood for *khalīfat Allāh*, not for *khalīfat rasūl Allāh*, and, thus, the Umayyads and early 'Abbāsids regarded the caliph as the deputy of God on earth. But Crone and Hinds develop the idea even

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<sup>60</sup> Wansbrough 1977: 78.

<sup>61</sup> Wansbrough 1977: 52.

<sup>62</sup> Juynboll 1987: 98. In *Muslim Tradition* (1983) Juynboll elaborates on the role of the first caliphs as transmitters of Prophetic sunna and, on the other hand, creators of their own sunna. Abū Bakr, in Juynboll's words, "cannot be identified with *ḥadīth* in any extensive way. This may show that during his reign examples set by the prophet of his followers did not play a decisive role in Abū Bakr's decision making," (p. 25); 'Umar "was not in favour of *aḥādīth* concerning the prophet being spread ... In all there are just a few reports in which 'Umar referred to a decision of the prophet or where he explicitly followed his example". (p. 26); "...Uthmān seems to have relied solely on his own judgement" (p. 28); and "'Alī's position seems to have been similar to his predecessors" (p. 28).

further. They claim that if the caliph was *khalīfat Allāh*, God's deputy, God would manifest his will through caliphs and this would leave no room either for the *‘ulamā’* or for the *sunnat al-nabī*.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, Madelung, who relies totally on the traditional dating of material and ignores the criticism of Western scholars entirely, claims that the change in the titles took place during the reign of ‘Uthmān (23/644–35/656). According to him, Abū Bakr and ‘Umar were called *al-khalīfa min ba‘d (rasūl Allāh)* and *khalīfa khalīfatih*, respectively.<sup>64</sup> Crone and Hinds would consider these reports to be of later origin.

It is ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, known as ‘Umar II, (re. 99–101/717–20), who is usually credited as being the first to give precedence to the sunna of the Prophet above all the other sunnas. He is described as the person who gave the sunna of the Prophet the position it has had ever since as the second important source of Islamic theology and practice. But, in Juynboll's view, even he did not neglect the other sunnas of the time.<sup>65</sup> Crone and Hinds, in their *God's Caliph* take, again, an even more critical approach to the role of ‘Umar II as the propagator of the Prophetic sunna. They claim that the image of ‘Umar II was instead imposed on him by later biographers, such as al-Jawzī at the end of the 12th century. There seems to be no doubt that ‘Umar II was an exceptional Umayyad ruler, but Crone and Hinds conclude that “*sunna* in the sense of concrete rules authenticated by Ḥadīth scarcely surfaced before the Umayyads fell”.<sup>66</sup>

Crone and Hinds indeed state that the position of the early caliphs was even higher than that of the Prophet's. The caliphs were central to the faith: they were the ones who kept the community together and defended it, and they were the ones through whom Muslims were guided to the right path. Crone and Hinds quote a letter allegedly written by the famous Umayyad governor al-Ḥajjāj to the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik stating: “God held His *khalīfa* on earth in higher regard than His *rasūl* ... preferring His *khalīfa* over both angels and prophets.”<sup>67</sup> “Were it not for the caliph and the Qur’an he recites, people would have no judgements established for them”<sup>68</sup> wrote the poet Jarīr (d. 110/728), and Crone and Hinds conclude that “salvation was perceived as coming through the caliph”<sup>69</sup> and “*sunna* is assumed to be caliphal, not Prophetic precedent”.<sup>70</sup>

63 Crone & Hinds 1986: 11–23.

64 Madelung: 1997: 46, 80.

65 Juynboll 1983: 34–35.

66 Crone & Hinds 1986: 80 (emphasis mine). For a critical account of ‘Umar II's role in the development of *sunnat al-nabī*, see Crone & Hinds 1986: 73–80 and Juynboll 1983: 34–39.

67 Crone & Hinds 1986: 28.

68 Crone & Hinds 1986: 33.

69 Crone & Hinds 1986: 38.

70 Crone & Hinds 1986: 52.

Of present-day Western scholars D. W. Brown, for example, in his *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (1996) gives a more traditional picture of the history of the concept of sunna. He emphasises that the concept of sunna was well known during the *Jāhiliyya* and it already then always referred to a custom initiated by a particular person, or a defined group of persons, not the general practice of a group or tribe. “The pre-Islamic notion of sunna was almost certainly applied to Muhammad even during his lifetime.”<sup>71</sup> Brown admits that the concept of sunna might have had a different meaning in the early years of Islam, but we may be quite sure – unless we reject the historicity of early Islam and the life of the Prophet completely – that the Prophet was a very central figure in his community, and if Brown’s interpretation of the pre-Islamic use of the word sunna is correct, it would be quite surprising if it had not been applied to the Prophet. However, this does not, naturally, presume the exclusion of all the other sunnas. It does not even imply that the sunna of the Prophet would have been the most important one.

### HADITH AS A REPRESENTATION OF THE PROPHET

The debate over the basis of Islamic law and practice was intense in the eighth and ninth centuries. The main conflicting lines of thought may be categorised into three groups: *ahl al-ra’y*, *ahl al-kalām* and *ahl al-sunna* or *ahl al-ḥadīth*. The *ahl al-ra’y* recognised the sunna of the Prophet but considered it a source among many others.<sup>72</sup> As their name indicates<sup>73</sup> they emphasised the scholars’ own reasoning. It was more important for them to develop their own doctrine and a legal system based on the intellectual work of scholars than to speculate about the basis of sunna.<sup>74</sup> The *ahl al-kalām*<sup>75</sup> were more radical in their approach. They considered the Qur’an as the only authority, and according to them any Prophetic sunna might be accepted only if it was compatible to the Qur’anic text. The *ahl al-kalām* point of view in dealing with questions which had not been referred to in the Qur’an was that they had deliberately been left unregulated by God.

The *ahl al-ra’y* and *ahl al-kalām* were never very clearly defined groups. Some people were accused by the *ahl al-ḥadīth* of representing the *ahl al-ra’y*, but

<sup>71</sup> Brown 1996: 8.

<sup>72</sup> Dickinson (2001: 4) notes that both the *ahl al-ra’y* and the *ahl al-kalām* were very vulnerable to the *ahl al-ḥadīth* because they based some of their own argumentation on hadiths.

<sup>73</sup> *Ra’y* means opinion, idea or suggestion and, as a legal term, opinion which is based on one’s own individual reasoning, not directly on the Qur’an or sunna.

<sup>74</sup> For the relations between *ahl ar-ra’y* and *ahl al-sunna* see *Die Zāhiriten* by I. Goldziher, Leipzig, 1884.

<sup>75</sup> *Kalām* means speech, discussion or statement, but also speculative theology.

it seems that nobody defined himself or very keenly wished to be defined as being one of the *ahl al-ra'y*. This might, however, be a historical misconception since the party which finally won the day was the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. They were of the opinion that the Qur'an gives only the basic guidelines of religion, the details of everyday life and practice can and should be looked for in the Prophetic sunna. *Inna al-sunna qāḍiya 'alā l-kitāb*<sup>76</sup> and *al-qur'ān aḥwaju ilā l-sunna min al-sunna ilā l-qur'ān*,<sup>77</sup> are two of the most often repeated slogans of the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*. The sunna was judged essential for the correct *tafsīr* of the Qur'an and the discussion of *naskh*, abrogation.<sup>78</sup>

We may conclude that it was far from self-evident that the sunna would become the second basis of the Islamic doctrine and praxis, but neither was it self-evident what to call sunna and what would be the vehicle of the sunna. We have seen that there are different views of the development of the concept *sunnat al-nabī*, sunna of the Prophet. But we may quite safely say that by the end of the Umayyad period the sunna of the Prophet had acquired a content of its own and constituted a concrete alternative to caliphal practice. During the first 'Abbāsīd century references to the Prophet gradually became more common, and the gradual growth of the material which we refer to as the sunna of the Prophet started. The focus of this book, the collection of al-Bukhārī, was compiled right after this period of proliferation of "prophetic hadiths".

Brown sums up the development of the classical consensus about sunna in three stages: the first one is the identification of the sunna exclusively with Muhammad. Second was the identification of sunna exclusively with hadith. Finally, Brown interprets the third stage of the development as the identification of sunna as revelation.<sup>79</sup> In other words, sunna became synonymous with the concept of *sunnat al-nabī* and its exclusive representation became the hadith. Although hadiths are not holy texts in the same sense as the Qur'an, the most authoritative

<sup>76</sup> The sunna rules over the Qur'an.

<sup>77</sup> The Qur'an needs the sunna more than the sunna needs the Qur'an.

<sup>78</sup> One of the most important functions of hadiths has been to interpret Qur'anic verses. A large number of hadiths start with a Qur'anic quotation, which is then explained by a close follower of the Prophet, one of his wives, or the Prophet himself. John Burton's *The Sources of Islamic Law* (1990) is, as can be presumed by the subtitle, *Islamic Theories of Abrogation*, almost in its entirety dedicated to the discussion of abrogation.

<sup>79</sup> Two terms in Arabic are used for revelation, *waḥy* and *ilhām*. *Waḥy* usually denotes direct communication by an angel whom the Prophet can also see and the revelation is supposed to be communicated to mankind, whereas *ilhām* denotes an individual revelation, which is intended for the recipient alone. The prophet Muhammad often received revelations when people asked for his opinion about a certain matter and the answer was revealed to him. These communications are not necessarily part of the Qur'an, but appear in hadith literature. See W. Graham: *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam* (1977); Brown 1996: 6–7; Macdonald: "Ilhām", *Et*<sup>2</sup>; Wensinck [–Rippin], "Waḥy", *Et*<sup>2</sup>.

collections have acquired the status of veneration, which legitimates Brown's view. M. J. Kister, in his article *Lā taqra'ū l-Qur'āna 'alā l-muṣḥafyyīn* refers to hadiths, which claim that the words of the Prophet are on the same level as revelation. The one communicating hadith should be in a state of ritual purity and some do not even touch a collection of hadiths without attending to their ritual purity.<sup>80</sup>

According to many classical scholars but also some contemporary writers, such as an Egyptian researcher, Ḥasan Ḥanafī,<sup>81</sup> both the Qur'an and the hadith are the revelation of God. The Qur'an is a direct revelation through the Angel Gabriel, whereas the hadith is indirect revelation through the Prophet himself. The importance of hadith is in its capacity to transmit general principles into practical application in the behaviour of individuals and groups. "The Qur'an is directly present in the hadith," Ḥanafī writes. He claims that the Qur'an is primary revelation and the hadith is secondary revelation, which gives a second verification to the primary revelation by giving more details and facts about time, place, and the differences between individuals and groups.<sup>82</sup>

## THE COLLECTION OF HADITH

In his unpublished dissertation Scott Cameron Lucas<sup>83</sup> sketches out Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī's<sup>84</sup> vision of the development of Sunni hadith scholarship. Lucas's analysis is mainly based on al-Dhahabī's work *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*. Al-Dhahabī divides the development of the science of hadith into seven stages:

<sup>80</sup> Kister 1998: 141.

<sup>81</sup> Ḥanafī 1996: 140. Ḥasan Ḥanafī is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Cairo. For an analysis on his work on hadith see Campanini 2002.

<sup>82</sup> Juynboll calls attention to these words in the *Jāmi' bayān al-'ilm wa-fadlihi* by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr: ... *yā rasūl Allāh, ḥaddithnā shay' fawq al-ḥadīth wa-dūn al-Qur'ān yā'nūn al-qīṣaṣ*. These words might mean that *qīṣa* stories (pl. *qīṣaṣ*) were, according to this author, something more important than hadith reports, but it seems that these stories were quite similar to hadiths in content. These lines might have been a result of confusion in terminology. I doubt whether the terms *ḥadīth*, *qīṣa*, or *fadā'il* had become established in the terminology of early Islam. See also the *Tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī 1987: 150. It is also noteworthy that many of the storytellers (*qāṣṣ* pl. *quṣṣāṣ*), were appointed as judges, and thus it may be concluded that the knowledge the early storytellers and the early hadith transmitters (*muḥaddith* pl. *muḥaddithūn*) possessed was, if not similar, at least comparable to each other.

<sup>83</sup> Lucas 2002: 71–129.

<sup>84</sup> Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (673/1274–748/1348) was born in Damascus but he studied for a considerable time in Cairo. After his return to Damascus he became a teacher of hadith. He competed, after the death of al-Mizzī in 742/1341, for the succession to the latter's chair in the al-ʿAshrafiyya hadith school. He was, however, excluded from this because of the *madhhab* he represented. This was done on the basis of a stipulation made by the founder. (GAL S II: 46)



1. The foundation of Sunni hadith (c. 1–140/622–757), i.e., the generation of the authoritative *ṣaḥāba* and the three *ṭabaqāt* of *tābi‘ūn*. According to al-Dhahabī the transfer of knowledge from memory to books happened at the end of this stage.
2. Early compilation and criticism (c. 120–200/736–815), i.e., the age of Qur’an reciters, jurists, historians and *shuyūkh al-islām*, such as Mālik ibn Anas and Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī. This phase also witnessed the fourth *fitna*, the rise of *kalām*<sup>85</sup> and the Arabisation of Greek philosophy.
3. The age of the Six Books (c. 200–300/815–912) was the age of systematic hadith transmitter criticism and globalisation, i.e., the diffusion of hadith literature to the whole Islamic empire.
4. The triumph of Baghdad and Iran (c. 300–400/912–1009), or, more precisely, Baghdad and Nishapur. The most important scholar of this period, according to al-Dhahabī, was al-Dāraqṭnī (d. 385/995) whose student, al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī (d. 405/1014), was one of the most famous representatives of the fifth period.
5. The age of specialisation (c. 400–480/1009–1087) completes the period of original books of hadith literature and devotes attention to the compilation of biographical dictionaries. The Andalusian Sufī ‘Aṭīyya ibn Sa‘īd (d. 408/1017–18) travelled all the way to Transoxiana to hear the the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* directly from a student of the original compiler of the book, al-Firabī. Al-Dhahabī also praises the Herat-based scholar Abū Ismā‘īl ‘Abdallāh al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1088) for being a master transmitter of al-Bukhārī. Moreover, he was definitely against speculative theology and able to rise above the theological quarrels of his day. In Herat we find another important transmitter of al-Bukhārī, too. Abū Dharr al-Harawī (d. 434/1042–3) synthesised three recensions of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and he is also mentioned by Ibn Ḥajar in his *Al-Fath al-bārī*.<sup>86</sup> However, the most famous scholar of this period is the Iranian al-Bayhaqī (d. 1066). He is also considered to be the last one to compose “original” hadith books. The Baghdad-based Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Khwārazmī al-Shāfi‘ī, known as al-Barqānī, is reported to have arranged the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of both al-Bukhārī and Muslim as *musnad* books during this period.
6. Transition and the loss of the East (c. 480–600/1087–1203) was a period of relative decline in hadith scholarship. The reasons behind this might be the Seljuk institution of the *madrasa*, which supposedly harmed the traditional networks of learning. Another reason might have been the rise of *ṭarīqa*

<sup>85</sup> van Ess (1973) discusses the early stages of *kalām* in his “The beginnings of Islamic theology”. M. Cook challenges van Ess’s theory in his *Early Muslim Dogma* (1981).

<sup>86</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, vol. I: 9–10.

- Sufism. An obvious reason, also presented by Lucas, might have been that the library of hadith books had grown so large that scholars had to devote themselves to the preservation and organisation of their predecessors' work.
7. The triumph of Syria (c. 600–720/1203–1320). During this period the Mongol invasion of Central Asia and Khūrāsān probably caused hadith scholarship disappear in these areas. The fall of Cordoba and Seville in the west seems to have led to a consolidation of hadith scholarship in Syria and in Egypt. During this period there is a marked rise in the quality and quantity of books on the hadith disciplines.

Muhammad Abdul Rauf, in his chapter on hadith literature in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*<sup>87</sup> also presents a very conventional and traditional view of the history of the collection of hadith literature. His is a common way of explaining the emergence of hadith literature, but, if we accept the criticism of Juynboll, Crone and Hinds as well as other more critical researchers, we cannot accept the Muslim view of the beginnings of the documentation of hadiths. Abdul Rauf divides the development of the collection of hadith into five distinctive, though chronologically overlapping stages. The years after the death of the Prophet were distinguished by the urge to safeguard as much information as possible about the sayings and acts of the Prophet. Writing this information down was not allowed because of the feeling that the Qur'an should have a unique status as a scripture and no other divine or religious texts should exist in written form. The preservation of hadiths in writing became possible during the end of the seventh and early eighth centuries, when the Qur'an was well enough established so that there was no justifiable fear of mixing up the Qur'an with the hadiths.<sup>88</sup> Abdul Rauf calls this first stage the *ṣaḥīfa*<sup>89</sup> stage. The original *ṣaḥīfas* have not survived.<sup>90</sup> According to GAL<sup>91</sup> it was a grandchild of a Greek slave, 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Jurayj, who was the first to have the courage to write

<sup>87</sup> Abdul Rauf 1983: 271–288.

<sup>88</sup> See Michael Cook's detailed analysis of the shift from oral transmission to the writing of hadiths in his "The opponents of the writing of tradition in early Islam", 1997. M. J. Kister in his article in JSAI 1998, advocates early documentation of hadiths in writing.

<sup>89</sup> *ṣaḥīfa* pl. *ṣuḥuf* or *ṣaḥā'if*: page, leaf, sheet. The Qur'an was likewise, according to the Islamic view, collected from *ṣaḥīfas* and the early codices of the Book are known as *ṣuḥuf* or *muṣḥaf*.

<sup>90</sup> 'Abd al-Razzāq ibn Hammām ibn Nāfi' Abū Bakr al-Yamanī al-Ḥimyarī al-Ṣan'ānī has preserved 137 hadiths of Hammām ibn Munabbih in his work called *Ṣaḥīfa Hammām ibn Munabbih*. Hammām, who died 719/20/21, introduces his text with words similar to the *isnāds* of later hadith literature. It was, according to Abdul Rauf, probably written around the middle of the first Islamic century. About al-Ṣan'ānī see H. Motzki: "Al-Ṣan'ānī", *ET*.

<sup>91</sup> GAL S I: 255.

down the experiences of the Prophet. Ibn Jurayj died in Baghdad as late as 150/767.

During the second stage of hadith compilation, scholars not only wrote down hadiths but they started regrouping them according to subject matter. This *muṣannaf*<sup>92</sup> stage developed during the mid-eighth century. The earliest extant *muṣannaf* is probably the eleven-volume work, *al-Muṣannaf*, by ‘Abd al-Razzāq ibn Hammām al-Ṣan‘ānī.<sup>93</sup> The author was of Persian origin, born in Ṣan‘ā’, the Yemen, where he lived in 744–827. He was the student of Ibn Jurayj Sufyān ibn ‘Uyayna and he studied with Mālik ibn Anas. He became the most famous scholar in Yemen and he attracted students from all over the Islamic world, among the most noteworthy being Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.<sup>94</sup> But the best-known work of this stage is Mālik ibn Anas’s (d. 795) *al-Muwattaʿa*.<sup>95</sup> *Al-Muwattaʿa* is divided into sixty-one books, *kitābs*, which are arranged according to the categories of the religious law.<sup>96</sup>

*Muṣannaf* type collections were soon felt to be too much connected to debates on law only, since the texts were arranged according to legal categories. To be able to meet the needs of people who were not greatly interested in legal matters some *muḥaddiths* started to compile *musnads* (pl. *masānid*), collections, which were organised according to the first persons in the chains of transmitters. The *musnad* movement may have had a more important meaning in the development of the classical consensus about sunna than we might think, since the basic idea of a *musnad* collection was to make available hadiths which can be attributed to the Prophet himself. The collection of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal<sup>97</sup> (d. 855) is the best known of *musnad* works. The work, titled *al-Musnad*, contains a total of 30,000 hadiths, about 20,000 without repetitions. The first *musnad* type collections were created in Kufa and in Basra before the end of the first half of the ninth century.

The collection of al-Bukhārī, which is the main focus of this book, is the most famous representative of the fourth stage of the development of hadith, the *ṣaḥīḥ* movement. The *ṣaḥīḥ* collections are, like the *muṣannaf* type collections,

<sup>92</sup> *muṣannaf*: composed, classified

<sup>93</sup> Ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A‘zamī, Beirut, 1970–72; 1983.

<sup>94</sup> For a critical evaluation of ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s authorship of *al-Muṣannaf*, see Motzki 2003.

<sup>95</sup> Norman Calder in his *Studies in Early Muslim Jurisprudence*, 1993, claims that the *Muwattaʿa* was not written before around 270/883, that it in fact was written in Cordoba, Spain, and that the book is not the work of Mālik at all. See Motzki’s severe criticism of Calder’s theory in Motzki 1998.

<sup>96</sup> Motzki, “al-Ṣan‘ānī”, *EF*<sup>2</sup>. For a list of other *muṣannaf* type collections, see Juynboll’s article “*Muṣannaf*” in *EF*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>97</sup> Ibn Ḥanbal was one of the scholars who al-Bukhārī, according to his biography, asked to examine his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. All the scholars approved of the book and confirmed its authenticity with the exception of only four hadith reports. (Ibn Ḥajar, *Hady al-sārī*, p. 514)

organised in books and chapters according to subject matter or legal category. What characterises the *ṣaḥīḥ* type collections is that, unless the contrary is explicitly stated, they are supposed to contain only hadiths which most probably are authentic, i.e. hadiths which can be called *ṣaḥīḥ*, true or sound.<sup>98</sup>

### The Six Books

There are six hadith collections, which are considered by Sunnis to be *ṣaḥīḥ*.<sup>99</sup> They are usually referred to as *al-Kutub al-sitta* or *al-Ṣiḥāḥ al-sitta*. The most important of these six are the collections by al-Bukhārī and Muslim,<sup>100</sup> which are both called *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*. These two collections are also known as *al-Ṣaḥīḥān*, the two authentic ones. They have been considered to be the most important, comprehensive, and trustworthy of the hadith collections of all times. Some Muslims prefer the collection of Muslim,<sup>101</sup> some the collection of al-Bukhārī, but

<sup>98</sup> Wael B. Hallaq draws attention to the view of al-Nawawī in his *Al-Taqrīb wa-l-taysīr li-maʿrifat sunan al-bashīr wa-l-nadhīr*, according to which *ṣaḥīḥ* means sound, but not absolute certainty. He quotes al-Nawawī's words: "*wa-idhā qīla ṣaḥīḥ, fa-hādihā maʿnāhu - lā annahu maqtūʿun bihi.*" The *ṣaḥīḥ* means just that, *ṣaḥīḥ*, and does not mean that is is certain. (Hallaq 1999: 85)

<sup>99</sup> It is important to remember that the history of Sunni hadith literature and scholarship is much more than the Six books. None of the compilers of the six books worked from scratch. They based their work on a long tradition of hadith scholarship, and a very rich phase of hadith criticism started only after the compilation of the canonical books.

<sup>100</sup> Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj (202 or 206–261/817 or 821–875). Muslim's life story is quite similar to that of al-Bukhārī, which, in fact is not surprising at all, since both life stories resemble more hagiographies than biographies. Muslim started to memorise and collect hadiths when he was still very young. This is a typical method of both describing a precocious boy, and to explain an extensive knowledge of hadiths. He travelled widely in search of hadith reports in Iraq, Syria, Egypt and the Hijaz. Muslim and al-Bukhārī were contemporaries, but Muslim was about ten years younger than al-Bukhārī. He was born in Nishapur – the town from which al-Bukhārī was chased away by the governor Khālid ibn Aḥmad al-Dhuhlī – and he lived most of his life there.

According to Muḥammad Fuʿād ʿAbd al-Bāqī, the editor of the Cairo 1955–56 edition of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, the total number of individual hadith reports in Muslim's collection is a little over 3,000. The collection is arranged according to legal categories, but unlike al-Bukhārī, who scatters hadiths with the same content into different books and chapters in a seemingly haphazard manner, Muslim tends to present all the hadiths with the same content in *matn* clusters. Muslim does not repeat the same hadith in different chapters, nor does he write *tarjamas* to his chapters as al-Bukhārī usually does. Compared to the work of al-Bukhārī, Muslim seems to have accepted hadith reports from later generations, he seems to be less precise in verifying the actual transmission of the information, but he tends to give a greater number of *isnāds* to his reports and his work is easier to follow because of his use of *matn* clusters.

<sup>101</sup> James Robson (1949: 47), compares the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim and quotes al-Nawawī's *Sharḥ ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* and its criticism of al-Bukhārī's collection for his habit of giving the same hadith under several chapter headings without always repeating the complete *isnād*

the collection of al-Bukhārī is usually given priority as the most authoritative book in Islam after the Qur'an.<sup>102</sup> If a hadith can be found either in al-Bukhārī or in Muslim, or even better, in both collections, it is certainly considered authentic. There is even a technical term denoting the existence of a hadith in both collections, namely *muttafaq* (*'alayh*). According to Wael Hallaq there has been a mild controversy about this among hadith scholars after the fifth/eleventh century. Muḥyī al-Dīn Sharaf al-Dīn al-Nawawī advanced the opinion that in the case where a hadith, although *ṣaḥīḥ*, was not *mutawātir*, it could never be more than probable and cannot attain the level of certainty. Whereas Ibn al-Ṣalaḥ argued that those hadiths of the *ṣaḥīḥ* category on which al-Bukhārī and Muslim agreed, "lead to acquired, certain knowledge". This knowledge is based on the consensus of the community about the acceptance of these two collections' authority. This *ijmā'* generates certainty.<sup>103</sup>

However, there is no claim of exclusivity: if a hadith cannot be found in either collection it does not necessarily mean that it could not be authentic. Al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385/995), for example, in his book *al-Ilzāmāt 'alā al-Bukhārī wa-Muslim* and his student Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Ḥakīm al-Nīsābūrī (d. 405/1014) in his *al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, compiled hadiths which they believed satisfied both al-Bukhārī's and Muslim's selection criteria despite their absence from their collections. A special kind of method of compiling collections existed that could be labelled *ṣaḥīḥ*: the *mustakhraj*. A famous *mustakhraj*, which was based on the work of Muslim, is the collection by Abū 'Awāna al-Isfārayīnī (d. 928). As already mentioned, Abū Dharr al-Ḥarawī (d. 1042–3) compiled a *mustakhraj* work based on *al-Ṣaḥīḥān*.

Although *al-Ṣaḥīḥān* occupied a very special place among the basic Islamic texts, Muslim traditionists of the late first and early second millennium did not hesitate to criticise individual hadiths in the collections. Al-Dāraquṭnī (306–385/981–995), who was the bestknown traditionist of his generation, in his book *al-Istidrāk wa-l-tatabbu'*,<sup>104</sup> attempted to show the weakness of about one hundred of al-Bukhārī's hadiths. Some other critics have included Ibn al-Jawzī (d.

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and sometimes giving an alternate *isnād* for the same hadith, whereas Muslim gives all the lines of transmission when he mentions a hadith. Al-Bukhārī has also been criticised for having included in his collection a remarkable number of hadiths with only one chain of transmission, whereas Muslim gives many alternative chains of transmission for the majority of his hadiths.

<sup>102</sup> In 695 (1295 A.D.) a famine ravaged Syria, Egypt and the Hijaz. People read the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī in the great mosque of Damascus. The following night it started to rain and it rained for forty days. (Maqrīzī: *Kitāb al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār fī Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira wa-l-Nīl wa-mā yata'allaq bihā min al-akhbār*, vol. 1: 35, Būlāq, 1270; cited in Laoust 1939: 19.)

<sup>103</sup> Hallaq 1999: 85–86.

<sup>104</sup> Correction and consequences.

597/1201), and, most of all, al-ʿAynī. Al-ʿAynī (762–855/1361–1451) criticised Ibn Ḥajar’s commentary of al-Bukhārī and wrote an eleven-volume work entitled ‘*Umdat al-qāriʾ fī sharḥ al-Bukhārī*. In this exceptional work, al-ʿAynī examines each hadith from five points of view: he investigates the relation between the hadith and the *tarjama*, he studies the *isnād*, enumerates other chapters where the same hadith occurs, studies the literal and juridical sense of the hadith, and the ethical and juridical rules that can be deduced from the hadith.

The other collections of hadiths, which are usually included in the group of the Six are *Kitāb al-sunan* by Sulaymān ibn al-Ashʿath Abū Dāʿūd al-Sijistānī (202–275/817–889), usually known as Abū Dāʿūd,<sup>105</sup> *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* by Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī (206–279/821–892),<sup>106</sup> and *Kitāb al-sunan* by Aḥmad ibn Shuʿayb al-Nasāʾī (215–303/830–915).<sup>107</sup> The last one to be included in the set of the Six Books was *Kitāb al-Sunan* by Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Māja (209–273/824–886). Ibn Māja’s work was never as readily accepted as the other five. It was criticised because it contained hadiths which were known to be weak. Ibn Māja was born in Qazwīn, Persia, but he travelled widely in the Hijaz, Iraq, Syria and Egypt. Some scholars of his native town considered him a high authority, and gradually he became more appreciated in other regions as well. In the 12th century his work was considered to be one of

<sup>105</sup> Abū Dāʿūd travelled widely in search of hadiths but he worked mainly in Basra. His place of birth is uncertain; some say that he was born in Sijistān, in the Basra region, but Robson claims that he was born in Sijistān, Khurasan. His *Kitāb al-sunan* contains 4800 hadith reports, which are arranged according to legal categories. The work of Abū Dāʿūd was contemporary to *al-Ṣaḥīḥān* but it never succeeded in gaining the same level of admiration as they did. Abū Dāʿūd can be credited with starting the art of individual hadith criticism. If he had doubts about the authenticity of a single hadith report he indicated it in the text. (Siddiqi 1993: 61–63; Abdul Rauf 1983: 276; Robson, “Abū Dāʿūd al-Sidjīstānī”, *EF*<sup>2</sup>)

<sup>106</sup> Al-Tirmidhī was the pupil of both al-Bukhārī and Abū Dāʿūd. He was born near the town of Tirmidh, but travelled widely in the great centres of the Islamic world in search of knowledge. He collected about 4000 hadith reports and developed further the system of hadith criticism started by Abū Dāʿūd. Al-Tirmidhī presents each hadith with notes about the degree of its authenticity, and its use by jurists. Ibn Ḥajar quotes al-Tirmidhī in relation to al-Bukhārī saying: “I do not know anyone who would know more about *ʿilal* literature and the science of *isnād* than Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī.” Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Hady al-sārī*, p. 509. There is more about al-Tirmidhī in Juynboll’s article “al-Tirmidhī” in *EF*<sup>2</sup>; Abdul Rauf 1983: 276; Siddiqi 1993: 61–63.

<sup>107</sup> Al-Nasāʾī was born in Nasāʾ, Khurasan, but lived in Egypt and in Damascus. He is the only one of the authors of the six books who died a martyr. The facts about his death are not quite clear, but according to Wensinck he died as a consequence of ill treatment at Damascus or Ramla. Al-Nasāʾī was not in favour of the ʿAbbāsīd rulers because of his negative attitude towards them. The tomb of al-Nasāʾī is at Mecca. His collection is, like all the other *al-Ṣaḥīḥs*, divided into books and chapters according to legal matters, and it contains over five thousand hadiths. The titles of al-Nasāʾī are somewhat different from the other five. He includes chapters which cannot be found in the other collections, although the same reports may be found in the other collections under different titles. (Wensinck, “al-Nasāʾī”, *EF*<sup>2</sup>.)

the six *Ṣaḥīḥs*. However, in the Western parts of the Islamic world his *Sunan* was never recognised as one of the Six. Some include the *Sunan* of Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī (181–255/797–868) instead of Ibn Māja’s work among the Six Books. Al-Dārimī belonged to the North Arabian tribe of Tamīm. He travelled in Iraq, Syria and Egypt in search of knowledge. Both Muslim and al-Tirmidhī transmitted hadiths on his authority, and Ibn Ḥajar preferred his work to the *Sunan* of Ibn Māja.<sup>108</sup> Some scholars accept neither Ibn Māja nor al-Dārimī but consider *al-Muwaṭṭa’* of Mālik ibn Anas to be one of the Six.

When defining the Six books there seems to be a general consensus about five of these authors, i.e., al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dā’ūd, al-Tirmidhī, and al-Nasā’ī and some ambivalence about al-Dārimī and Ibn Māja. Among all the Six, the *al-Ṣaḥīḥān* occupy a quite particular position. Their authenticity was readily accepted and especially al-Bukhārī became almost a saintly figure in the eyes of his later supporters. It was Ibn al-Qaysarānī (d. 1113) who formally proposed the adoption of the concept of the Six Books.<sup>109</sup> Ignaz Goldziher has made efforts to determine the date which established the consensus about the position of the *al-Ṣaḥīḥān* and, progressively, the partial consensus about the Six Books. He came to the conclusion that the general acceptance of the group of the Six Books as it is known today, took shape in the 7th century (i.e., the 13th century A.D.) but he remarks that as late as the 8th century A.H. there was still some uncertainty about “the sixth of the Six Books”.<sup>110</sup>

All of the alternative or potential authors of the Six Books lived between 181–303/797–915, that is only 118 solar years. In addition to this, the compilation work was accomplished in c. 50 years between 850 and 900. Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dā’ūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasā’ī, al-Dārimī, and Ibn Māja were all contemporaries.<sup>111</sup> Geographically they come from a surprisingly small area in the northeastern part of the Empire. The North Arabian al-Dārimī is the most contested of the authors and only a minority of scholars accepts his work as trustworthy.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Fück, “Ibn Mādja”, *EI*<sup>2</sup> and Robson, “al-Dārimī” *EI*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>109</sup> Paket-Chy & Gilliot 2000: 94.

<sup>110</sup> Goldziher 1890: 243.

<sup>111</sup> It is noteworthy that Mālik ibn Anas died before the other authors of the Six were born, namely in 179/795. Mālik was closest to the Prophet not only chronologically but also geographically since he lived in Medina. However, the version of *al-Muwaṭṭa’*, which we now have is a much later compilation.

<sup>112</sup> As a matter of fact, the concept of the Six is still not totally indisputable. Some writers still speak about “the Five Books”, excluding Ibn Māja, or they include Mālik’s *al-Muwaṭṭa’* or as already discussed, the *Sunan* of al-Dārimī into the Six instead of Ibn Māja, or they speak about “the Seven Books” and include the works by Mālik or al-Dārimī without excluding Ibn Māja.

### Khurasan in the ninth century

How can this temporal and geographical concentration of the most widely recognised hadith scholars be explained? The Arabs first appeared in Khurasan in the middle of the 7th century A.D., and crossed the Oxus River in 653–4, during ‘Uthmān’s caliphate, but they were not able to defeat the local ruler of Bukhārā until 674. The Arab general Qutayba ibn Muslim al-Bāhilī, who governed Khurasan 705–715, introduced the practices of Islam into the areas beyond the Oxus River. The Arabs controlled these Eastern areas with varying success throughout the century. During the first decades of the century they started to settle down in the provinces and, probably, to intermarry with the native Persian population.<sup>113</sup>

The Umayyad caliphs treated the population of Khurasan quite harshly. In Zarrīnkūb’s words: “... there is plenty of evidence of Arab contempt for the non-Arab Muslim ... so that there is every reason to consider this assumption of superiority on the Arabs’ part a main cause of the mawālī’s dissatisfaction against them.”<sup>114</sup> The empire’s stability was threatened by the increasing dissatisfaction of not only the local people but the Arabs as well, with the ruling Umayyads. The main anti-Umayyad groupings in the society were the Khārijites and the Shī‘ite movement. The Khārijites opposed the power of the Umayyad caliphs, which they considered illegitimate because of the hereditary nature of the succession. Whereas the Shī‘a sect did not oppose the hereditary succession, they did claim that it should be based on blood relationship with the Prophet’s family directly descending through Fāṭima and ‘Alī.

Khurasani support was crucial to the rise of the ‘Abbāsids around the year 750. In 747, a great army of Khārijites, Shī‘ites, and local landowners assembled to rise up in revolt. The army of the last Umayyad caliph was finally defeated, and the caliph was killed in Egypt in 750.<sup>115</sup> However, soon after the revolution both the Khārijites and the Shī‘ites faced the fact that the ‘Abbāsids had exploited their ideologies to gain their support in their power struggle against the Umayyads. The establishment of ‘Abbāsīd power led to major changes in the social structure of the caliphate. It meant the end of the dominant position the Arabs had occupied during the Umayyad caliphate. The ‘Abbāsids introduced the idea of equal political rights to all Muslims, both Arab and indigenous.

<sup>113</sup> Bosworth, “*Khurāsān*”, *Et*²; Bosworth & Asimov 2000: 24.

<sup>114</sup> Zarrīnkūb 1975: 42. See also a colourful description of the situation in the non-Arab lands in Guillaume 1924: 56–58.

<sup>115</sup> Bosworth & Asimov 2000: 30.



The establishment of ‘Abbāsīd power did not occur without setbacks. There were several serious uprisings against the rulers, the most important of which was the four-year revolt led by Hāshim ibn Ḥakīm known as al-Muqanna‘, but the gradual consolidation of ‘Abbāsīd power in the eastern areas of the Empire led to a period of relative well-being in Khurasan.

On Hārūn al-Rashīd’s death (809) the eastern parts of the caliphate were ruled by his son, al-Ma’mūn, who became the caliph after his brother al-Amīn in 813. Al-Ma’mūn was the son of a Persian slave and, therefore, close to the Persian elite. He delegated the administration of large areas to Khurasani leaders, and appointed Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn Governor of Persia, thus establishing the Ṭāhirid rule of the area for the next fifty years.

The integration of Khurasan and Transoxania into the caliphate led to their incorporation into the wider Islamic world and to the development of a new Persian-Muslim urban culture, which started to flourish in the growing towns. The province of Khurasan prospered during the early ‘Abbāsīd caliphs. The Ṭāhirids, who governed Khurasan for the ‘Abbāsīds were Arabised Persian clients. They were active supporters of what later became “Sunni orthodoxy” and the province prospered under their rule both economically and culturally. Khurasan became a centre for Arabic literature and Sunni legal and religious scholarship. The Ṭāhirid government was overthrown in the 870s, and after some years of war at the end of the century, the province was incorporated into the Sāmānid administration.

The compilers of the Six Books were not the first hadith scholars in Khurasan and Transoxania. There were several scholars in the regions that compiled collections of hadith before al-Bukhārī already in the eighth century. It is important to remember that al-Bukhārī did not need to search in fresh regions and collect oral traditions from informants; collections of hadith existed and al-Bukhārī as well as all other compilers could work on them.

It is interesting that the most intensive period of translation from Hellenistic scientific literature into Arabic coincides with or slightly predates, the lifetime of the authors of the Six Books. There was clearly a need to emphasise the Prophetic origin of the current Islamic practices.<sup>116</sup> The open and universal atmosphere

<sup>116</sup> In her doctoral dissertation, *The Prophet’s Medicine: A Creation of the Muslim Traditionalist Scholars* (1995) Irmeli Perho has analysed one special field of hadith literature, namely the *al-ṭibb al-nabawī* literature. She found that the reasons for creating a distinct Islamic medicine, which is called the Prophet’s medicine to distinguish it from Graeco-Islamic medicine, had their roots in the Muslim scholars’ need to believe that “... the actual foundation of medical science lay in the eternal revelation and not in the texts of Hippocrates and Galen”. (p. 81.) Perho analysed the sayings of the Prophet, which dealt with illnesses and their cure in three important physicians’ work. They developed a form of medicine, which “... did not deny the merits of the established medicine but wanted to improve it by excluding non-Islamic philosophy and including the wisdom of the Prophet”. (p. 80) The way this was accomplished was, according to Perho, by transferring the medical authority

which prevailed in the Islamic empire at the end of the first millennium A.D. in general – in spite of some opposite features, which I will deal with later – was a fertile ground for the assimilation of different cultural features. But, it was also a fertile ground for the traditionalists to emphasise the importance of the Prophet's example. Against this background the rise of hadith literature and the need to compile authentic hadith collections could be seen as a reaction to the Hellenistic influence in the Islamic world, or as an indication of cultural variety and candidness in advancing both foreign and domestic sciences.

Moreover, the rivalry between the Ḥanafī school of law<sup>117</sup> and the *ahl al-ḥadīth* must have had an influence on the development of hadith studies in the eastern areas of the caliphate. The Ḥanafī school was founded in Iraq, it was favoured by the early 'Abbāsīd caliphs, and it spread rapidly to Khurasan and Transoxania. Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 767) and his *madhhab* promoted the use of *ra'y* in religious law; thus, the views of the Ḥanafīyya and the *ahl al-ḥadīth* were in total opposition. This, in turn, led to the effort of the latter to compile inclusive works on theology and law according to their own view to be able to compete with the work of the Ḥanafīyya.

### Classification of hadiths

A hadith is normally composed of two distinct parts: the chain of transmitters, *isnād*, and the text itself, *matn*. Both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have mainly based their evaluation and classification of hadith reports on the scrutiny of *isnāds*. As a general rule in Islamic hadith criticism it might be said, that a hadith has been classified as sound if its reporters were Companions of the Prophet, which is to say that they were trustworthy<sup>118</sup> and its transmitters were known to be reliable. Studying *isnāds* became an important part of *'ilm al-ḥadīth* and in most of the cases a careful study of the *isnād* was enough. The consensus principle, which was discussed above, took care of the most obvious cases of misunderstandings and outright forgery.

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from the Greek masters to the Prophet Muhammad. This was a necessary step in the context of the development of Islamic sciences. The question was whether medical treatment was legitimate or not; did acceptance of medication mean lack of faith in God? Since sciences which were inherited from the Prophet were absolutely and doubtless beneficial and recommended, nobody could have said that the Prophet's medicine would not have been permissible. Obviously, these physicians lived considerably later than the authors of the Six Books, namely between 1274–1362, and we can see in their work a logical continuation of the processes of the "prophetisation" of Islamic culture.

<sup>117</sup> For bibliography on the *madhhab*, see W. Heffening & J. Schacht, "Ḥanafīyya", *Et*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>118</sup> This applies to Sunni Islam only.

Juynboll, in his *Authenticity*, writes that *isnād* criticism was the only method practised by the traditionists for sifting the genuine traditions from the spurious.<sup>119</sup> However, it seems that in the early period in many cases the “knowledge” or preconceived attitude of the truthfulness and, thus, the enthusiasm to prove the truthfulness of the hadith was first, and this preconception determined whether the report was judged authentic or not. To prove the authenticity of a hadith, *isnād* analytical methods were used extensively, but they were used to justify a preconception more than to determine the authenticity of a hadith report.

In the case of al-Bukhārī, another point needs to be discussed. Al-Bukhārī had a reputation of making sure that the *isnāds* he accepted were proven to be correct. Yet, he is also known to have written extensive *tarjamas*, chapter headings, to the chapters of his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. These chapter headings act as introductions to the following reports; and introducing the reports, they guide the ways the reports are supposed to be understood. Clearly, al-Bukhārī had an opinion first, and I can find no contrary evidence to prove that he did not let his preliminary opinion about the hadith guide his view of the quality of the *isnād*. I would even put this the other way round: in the case of al-Bukhārī, as in the case of other collectors of hadiths as well, the end justified the means. If the message of the text was considered to be beneficial and good, even a weak hadith was rather easily accepted.

### ***Isnād* analysis vs. *matn* criticism**

The role of the *isnād* in traditional hadith criticism as it has been applied by Muslim scholars has been greatly overestimated in Western research. Indeed, many present-day general presentations of Islam, sunna or hadith literature give a very negative picture of Islamic authorities carefully scrutinising *isnāds* and their accuracy, trying to find out whether two successive persons in the line of transmission have actually met, or prying into their lives to determine the quality of their reliability and morality.

Yet, it is important to note that *isnād* criticism does not necessarily have to be contrary to the evaluation of *matns*. If a transmitter in an *isnād* is known to have had unacceptable opinions about certain questions in Islamic doctrine, if he was known to be a Qadarite, for example, the rejection of his transmission because of his alleged unreliability would have produced the same result as the rejection of the text because of *matn* evaluation. This is, of course only in cases where we believe in some consistency between the ideological background of the transmitters and what they actually transmitted – or were supposed to have transmitted.

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<sup>119</sup> Juynboll 1969: 139.

The use of *isnāds* and the necessity of an *isnād* for a hadith to be genuine was not a common practice in the early stages of hadith criticism. Schacht dates the regular practice of using *isnāds* to the beginning of the second century A.H. According to him the *isnād* was not in use at the end of the first century, but it was considered part of the religion before the end of the second century.<sup>120</sup> Juynboll dates the origins of the institution of *isnād* to "... the late seventies of the first/eighth century", which would mean nearly seventy years after the Prophet's death.<sup>121</sup> It was only gradually and for several political, religious and ethnic reasons that the *isnād* began to gain increasingly in importance. Abbott points out that it was only the *matn* which circulated among the Companions and she refers to several hadiths as proof of her statement.<sup>122</sup>

Ḥājjī Khalīfa (d. 1067/1657) divides the science of hadith into two parts: the historical, *al-ʿilm bi-riwāyat al-ḥadīth*,<sup>123</sup> and the doctrinal, *al-ʿilm bi-dirāyat al-ḥadīth*.<sup>124</sup> He defines the former as studying the "particular conditions under which the traditions are considered as reaching back to the Prophet (pbuh) regarding the accuracy and impartiality<sup>125</sup> of the circumstances, and regarding the continuity or discontinuity<sup>126</sup> of the *isnāds*". This definition emphasises the meaning of the *isnād* as the means of attributing the hadith to the Prophet. But, interestingly, in the definition of the latter part of the science of hadith, Ḥājjī Khalīfa turns his attention to the meaning of particular hadiths. "The science of understanding hadiths means studying *the meaning and the intention* of the hadith, based on the rules of the Arabic language, the canonised principles of Islamic law, and the analogy of known circumstances relating to the Prophet."<sup>127</sup>

The definition of the latter term clearly refers to the content but also to the context of the hadith, but Ḥājjī Khalīfa restricts the analysis of the meaning and the intention of the hadith to the harmonisation of the reports to the established

<sup>120</sup> Schacht 1967: 37 and note 1.

<sup>121</sup> Juynboll 1989: 354; Juynboll 1983: 5.

<sup>122</sup> Abbott 1967: 75 and notes 7–9. I accept that this kind of argument looks like circular reasoning, but it seems logical that the *isnād* developed partly as a solution to the increasing number of hadiths circulating in the early Muslim community. It must have seemed to be a good tool to verify the authenticity of the saying. Abbott gives a hadith from Ibn Saʿd, Ibn Ḥanbal and Ibn Māja's collections, which reports the Prophet's saying that "the good and conscientious believers will readily distinguish his true sayings from those falsely attributed to him". This, in turn, indicates that the authenticity of a Prophetic saying could be deduced from the *matn* itself and thus, no *isnād* would be necessary.

<sup>123</sup> The science of reporting hadiths

<sup>124</sup> The science of understanding hadiths.

<sup>125</sup> *Ḍabt* and *ʿadāla*.

<sup>126</sup> *Ittiṣāl* or *inqiṭāʿ*.

<sup>127</sup> Ḥājjī Khalīfa, vol. 3: 23 (emphasis mine).

rules of the Islamic law and, furthermore, to what is already known about the life of the Prophet.

In theory, the ultimate criterion of the quality of the report of any tradition is made up of the personal character and attainments of its reporters. Al-Tahānawī, in his *Kashshāf iṣṭilāḥāt al-funūn wa-l-ʿulūm al-islāmiyya* distinguishes several grades of traditionists. The first grade is the *ṭālib*.<sup>128</sup> “The *ṭālib* is a beginner who is eager to preserve and collect hadiths. The *muḥaddith*<sup>129</sup> is a qualified teacher of hadith, in the same sense as the *shaykh* and the *imām*. The *ḥāʾiṭ*<sup>130</sup> is a scholar who has perfect knowledge of both the *matn* and the *isnād* of 100,000 hadiths, but also of the conditions of the transmitters as to *jarḥ wa-taʿdīl*<sup>131</sup> and their history. The *ḥujja*<sup>132</sup> is a scholar who knows 300,000 hadiths.”<sup>133</sup> The *ḥujja* represents the highest possible class of authorities.

Hadith scholars of the highest category, *ḥujja*, need to manifest certain characteristics. The most important of these characteristics are *ʿadāla*, integrity or impartiality and *ḍabt*, retentiveness or exactitude. To meet the requirements of *ʿadāla* a reporter must – according to al-Jurjānī<sup>134</sup> – “be an adult, Muslim by faith, intelligent, morally faultless and stable by character”.<sup>135</sup> Al-Jurjānī continues: “The male sex is not made a condition, nor freedom, nor knowledge of jurisprudence and its peculiarities,<sup>136</sup> nor sight, nor being one of many.<sup>137</sup> The integrity [of a reporter] is determined by the statement of two men of integrity, or by common knowledge.”<sup>138</sup>

As regards the concept of *ḍabt*, al-Jurjānī defines it as consisting of alertness and accuracy. A *muḥaddith* should not be easily deceived or forgetful either when reciting or writing down a hadith. “If he recites from his memory he must know by heart, and if he recites from his book he must be accurate, and if he recites by the sense he must be able to comprehend the sense.”<sup>139</sup> According to al-Jurjānī

128 Apprentice.

129 Traditionist.

130 Fully-fledged scholar.

131 Disapproving and approving.

132 Competent authority.

133 Al-Tahānawī's text is cited in Salisbury 1862: 61–63.

134 Sayyid ʿAlī al-Jurjānī wrote a treatise on the principles of tradition. He died in 816/1413.

135 Cited in Salisbury 1862: 63. The translation is mine.

136 *Wa-lā ʿilm bi-l-fiqh wa-gharībihi*.

137 *Wa-lā al-ʿadad*.

138 Note how the writer considers the male sex to be equally important as any other laudable intellectual or physical characteristic of a person. The lines are cited in Salisbury 1862: 63. The translation is mine. Salisbury's translations are in many cases unsatisfactory or even misleading.

139 Cited in Salisbury 1862: 63. The translation is mine.

*ḍabṭ* is recognised by comparing one's report to the reports of other transmitters who are known to be trustworthy.

This passage in al-Jurjānī again stresses the meaning of consensus in determining whose words are trustworthy. Consensus is built up by accepting hadiths from conscientious people. If a reporter is a good Muslim his hadith is reliable. The choice of reliable hadiths formed Islam during the first three centuries, but the comprehension of what is right, whose memory was infallible, whose interpretation was correct, and who had the best reputation as a good believer directed the acceptance of normative hadiths.

*Isnāds* – and, subsequently, hadiths – are usually divided into three types: *ṣaḥīḥ*, usually translated as sound, is a chain of trustworthy transmitters, each of whom has actually met the preceding informant. *Ḥasan*, i.e., 'fair, good', is a term which is used to denote a slightly less reliable chain of transmitters, whereas an *isnād* classified as *ḍa'īf*, i.e., 'weak', is not trustworthy.

The Mu'tazila had their views on the authenticity of hadith literature. A Mu'tazilite scholar of the Basra school, Abū l-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. 226, 227 or 235/840 or 849) maintained that a hadith which is transmitted by less than four people is not valid, a hadith which is transmitted by five to nineteen transmitters may or may not be valid, but a hadith transmitted by twenty or more must necessarily be valid. A much later Mu'tazilite, ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 414–416/1023–1025) elaborated this even further. According to him, a hadith may either be known as true or false, or its veracity may not be known.

The first alternative, true hadiths, are divided into two types:

1. Those of which the veracity is known necessarily, i.e., hadiths that are *mutawātir*, such as hadiths reporting concrete information about countries and kings, and hadiths about the Prophet observing the five pillars of Islam.
2. Those of which it is known by reasoning, i.e., hadiths about the *tawḥīd* and the justice of God, hadiths about the prophethood of Muhammad.

According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār the minimum of transmitters for a hadith to be considered valid is five.

The category of hadiths which we know to be false can likewise be divided into two categories:

1. Those of which the falseness is known necessarily, i.e., hadiths claiming that the sky is beneath us and the ground is above us.
2. Those of which it is known by reasoning, i.e., hadiths claiming determinism or anthropomorphism.

*Āḥād* traditions are the category of hadiths of which the truthfulness is unknown. These kinds of traditions may be useful as moral guidelines, when they

are transmitted in an acceptable way, but they have no worth as bases of religious doctrine.<sup>140</sup>

### al-Bukhārī's criteria of selection

Hadith collectors all had slightly different ways of determining which kinds of *isnāds* were acceptable. They allegedly used certain conditions, *sharṭ* pl. *shurūṭ*, to select those from the great mass of hadith reports which could be accepted in the collections. However, in the light of modern research one should question the historicity of these criteria.

I depend again on the most important medieval commentary of al-Bukhārī, Ibn Ḥajar's *Hady al-sārī* for my brief description of al-Bukhārī's criteria for the authenticity of hadith. According to Ibn Ḥajar, the main principle of al-Bukhārī was to collect only valid hadith reports: *Taqarrara annahu ltazama fihi l-ṣiḥḥa wa-annahu lā yūridu fihi illā ḥadīthan ṣaḥīḥan wa-hādhā aṣlu mawḍū'ihi*. [10]<sup>141</sup>

Al-Bukhārī's criteria for validity deal mainly with two aspects of the report: the transmitters, *isnāds*, and the general suitability of the report. In evaluating the quality of the *isnād* al-Bukhārī concentrates again on two aspects: the reliability of the individual transmitters and the quality of the chain of transmission. To be an acceptable transmitter, a person had to be a Muslim of proper belief, and be trustworthy and intelligent. His reliability had to be recognised by the community, his knowledge had to originate from a well-known Companion, and his teachers had to be reliable. Al-Bukhārī also evaluated the class or generation of the transmitter with respect to the original narrator – *ṭabaqāt al-ruwāt 'an rāwī l-aṣl* – and the number of hadiths each of the transmitters had.

An acceptable *isnād* had to be unbroken, and should have no defects. Al-Bukhārī did not consider an *isnād* connected, *muttaṣil*, unless it could be established that the transmitters had actually met; being contemporaries and having possibly met was not enough for al-Bukhārī.

According to the number of *isnāds* the hadiths may be further divided into three groups: hadiths which are defined as *mutawātir* have been transmitted by so many trustworthy, preferably early generation Muslims that they can only be authentic Prophet reports. A hadith is *mutawātir bi-l-laḥẓ* if its wording is consistent; it is *mutawātir bi-l-ma'nā* if the meaning is consistent though the wording may change.

<sup>140</sup> Badawi 1972: 65–67.

<sup>141</sup> He decided the authenticity will be required and that he will introduce only sound hadiths and this is the basis of his work. (The numbers in brackets refer to the pages of Ibn Ḥajar's *Hady al-sārī*, 1987.)

A hadith is qualified as *aḥad* pl. *āḥād*, or *khābar wāḥid*, if it has only one or a few different *isnāds*, and it is *mashḥūr* if it has been *aḥad* in the beginning, but has become *mutawātir* later on.

Another way of classifying hadiths is according to the subject or occasion of the creation of the hadith: *sunna ‘amaliyya* is constituted by the actions of the Prophet, which have been recorded and become an example for all Muslims, whereas the words of the Prophet, his opinions, sayings, comments on history and future, Paradise and Hell, and moral issues, constitute the *sunna qawliyya*.

Juynboll has found that the “discussion on the authenticity” in the Islamic theological debate, “is, in most cases, restricted to the *ḥujjiyya* of *āḥād* traditions that record the *sunna qawliyya*; seldom is a voice raised against the *ḥujjiyya* of the *āḥād* that describe the *sunna ‘amaliyya*”.<sup>142</sup> The reason for this might be that the *sunna ‘amaliyya* is usually recorded in the law books, and, thus, has been above all criticism. *Sunna qawliyya* can very seldom be found in law books and it has been more accessible to critical evaluation.

Goldziher<sup>143</sup> has implied that the *Ṣaḥīḥān* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim may have excluded some traditions with a sound *isnād* due to considerations of their *matns*. He quotes hadiths from al-Nīsābūrī’s *al-Mustadrak*, the contents of which appear to be obvious forgeries.<sup>144</sup> Azami, too, in his *On Schacht’s Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* as well as in *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature*<sup>145</sup> refers to the use of content-based criteria for discarding hadiths.

Al-Bukhārī divided his reports into two categories: primary and secondary. Primary hadiths were reports which met his criteria completely. Secondary hadiths were included in cases where there were no primary hadiths suitable to the chapter in question. A secondary hadith was a beneficial report, which al-Bukhārī judged to be better than no ruling at all; this would have let people fall back on analogy – or even worse, *ra’y* – alone. According to Ibn Ḥajar, al-Bukhārī used the expression *ḥaddathanā* or *‘an‘ana* with primary hadiths only. Secondary hadiths were used in the chapter headings, without *isnāds*, and were often supported by a Qur’anic verse. [11]

While statements of various scholars about the *Ṣaḥīḥān* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim are often reported in the literature, I am not aware of a systematic study of these texts, which would specifically concentrate on revealing the precise *isnād*- and *matn*-based criteria their authors used. My impression is that al-Bukhārī in the

<sup>142</sup> Juynboll 1969: 12.

<sup>143</sup> Goldziher 1890: 250–251.

<sup>144</sup> One of the discarded hadiths tells about the encounter of the Prophet and Anas ibn Mālīk with the Old Testament prophet Ilyās. They share a meal which descends from heaven, and finally the prophet Ilyās ascends into the skies on a cloud. (Goldziher 1890: 250)

<sup>145</sup> Esp. p. 56 and 72.



first instance collected hadiths which he believed to be *ṣaḥīḥ*. Their *isnāds* consisted of uninterrupted chains of transmitters who were considered to be trustworthy. However, in some cases he discarded some *ṣaḥīḥ* hadiths on the basis that their *matns* were unsatisfactory, disadvantageous for the community or in some way unacceptable. Grounds for such content-based rejections could include, among other things, the absurdity or repulsiveness of a hadith, manifest contradictions with the Qur'an, fantastic tales, politically harmful accounts, or statements against the prevailing consensus. The outcome of this would be that hadiths existed, which, according to the *isnād* were *ṣaḥīḥ*, but due solely to their contents they were discarded from the collection. And, vice versa, that there were hadiths with imperfect *isnāds*, but which were accepted because of their valuable *matn*.

The general suitability of the report became a crucial criterion for inclusion in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*. The hadith had to be suitable for argumentation and it had to be beneficial to the community. Its contents had to be reasonable and in agreement with the Prophet's general teachings. The criteria for acceptable transmitters – he had to be a Muslim of proper belief, his reliability had to be recognised by the community, his knowledge had to originate from a well-known Companion, his teachers had to be reliable – have their basis in the general consensus. The general consensus of the Muslim community – or to be more exact, the consensus of the contemporary authorities – was a necessary condition for acceptance.

At the level of *isnād* criticism and verification of the transmitters, one could say that what in effect happened during the process of accepting or rejecting a hadith, is that if the content of a hadith was suitable, its *isnād*, ultimately, found acceptance. If the content was not suitable, it was logical to put the blame on the erring or unreliable transmitters.

## DISCUSSION OF THE AUTHENTICITY OF HADITH LITERATURE

### The question of historicity

The question of historicity and authenticity is concerned with cultural, social, and historical intertexture.<sup>146</sup> A text refers to the outside world, it tells about the life of presumably historical persons. It refers to historical and social events such as wars, peacemaking, trade, marriages, births and deaths. What can we derive from the historical intertexture concerning the historicity of a text? Does the abundance of cultural or social details provide evidence on the possible historicity of the text?

Both remembering and forgetting may be interpreted and understood as active processes in history. Hadiths form a basis for a common Islamic image of

<sup>146</sup> See the chapter on methodology.

the world and history, a version of the past, which can be agreed on. Birkeland, in his *The Lord Guideth*, talks about the “sociological facts reflected by the isnads”. People who transmitted information in hadith form really believed that the reports were in conformity with the authorities’ opinions. “Since the traditional social group always supports its opinion by the reference mentioned and believes in the correctness of this reference, the Isnads are sociological realities even if they do not correspond to historical facts.”<sup>147</sup>

Therefore, whether a single hadith report is a historically correct account of what happened or what the Prophet has said, is not interesting unless our aim is to discuss what is “authentically” prophetic and try to find out what the historical Muhammad *really* said or did. Remembering is a process of collective selection, though it is individuals, of course, as group members who remember. In the same way, the principles of accepted behaviour found in the hadith reports have become an agreed code of conduct and code of good and evil. Regardless of the factual authenticity of the reports Muslims take the hadiths to be authentic. They often recite words of a hadith without knowing from which collection it comes, what was the historical context of the events and – of course – since the texts and *isnāds* have been written down, nobody even tries to remember the chains of transmitters any more. They have no importance since the hadith has become a part of the generally accepted *sunna*.

Some Muslim modernists as the Moroccan sociologist Fatima Memissi in her *Le harem politique : Le Prophète et les femmes* (1987) have started to seriously question the authenticity of some generally accepted hadiths. Especially hadiths which are considered by contemporary feminists to be misogynist have been discussed. During the last centuries Muslims have become more aware of the Western critique of hadith literature. The reaction has been of two contrary kinds: some Muslims tend to cling at any cost to the idea of the authenticity of hadith literature, especially the collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. In cases of inconsistency or contradiction the explanation is usually that these texts are too difficult to understand. The other way to react is to at least partly reject hadith literature. This has led to a stricter adherence to the Qur’an only.

If remembering and forgetting were ongoing processes in the first Islamic centuries, what happened when the texts were written down? Historical reports describe the shared experiences of a community but are remembered and written down by individuals. As Katherine Lang suggests in her dissertation on *awā’il* in early Arabic historiography, it is impossible to separate individual transmitters and compilers from their interpretative roles. Each transmitter and compiler “... had a point of view that was contingent – in part – upon his or her social context

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<sup>147</sup> Birkeland 1956: 8.

at a specific time and place within the Islamic world and – in part – upon the fact that he or she is a unique individual”.<sup>148</sup>

Lang writes about allowing “... early Muslims an active role in the construction of their historical tradition”.<sup>149</sup> There is nothing new in admitting that the social milieu and personal circumstances of the transmitters and compilers of the hadiths have affected our sources of early Islamic history. But, Lang points out, this does not necessarily need to be taken as an apology for error.

There certainly sometimes must have been even a deliberate tendency to omit sayings which were contrary to the transmitter’s interests, or contradicted his view of what was right and beneficial to be remembered. The community controlled the role of the single transmitter and the transformation of information was and is an active and ultimately a collective process of interpretation.

However, the transmitters and later the collectors claimed to convey “objective history”. They probably had an ideal picture of a perfect early Islamic society which lived according to the direct guidance of the Prophet. But, although Muhammad would have created a perfect society for Muslims to imitate and reproduce later in history, notions of this “perfect” “original” society change and have changed constantly according to the social reality of contemporary societies. The changes need not be treated as deliberate forgeries but changes in the collective notion of the characteristics of the “perfect” “original”.

Islam is a religion which has historically accepted the idea of the co-existence of contradictory views and practices. The early Islamic community was not a homogeneous one and the existence of inconsistent or contradictory hadiths has not necessarily been seen as a burden, but as a positive feature. In fact, the existence of various traditions has made many different interpretations of Islamic law and practice possible.

My approach to hadiths is to consider them as one of the many layers of reality. Because of this approach to the text as a layer of reality, which, in itself, includes different layers, I call my reading “rhetorical”. It is rhetorical because I regard the text not only as a result of multiple discourses between people conceived to have taken place in the 7th century, but moreover, as a result of multiple discourses between the compiler, al-Bukhārī and the Islamic community of the 9th century as well as between the earlier narrators of these hadiths and their audiences. It is also rhetorical because I read the text as a part of an ongoing rhetoric. Every piece of information we have is an answer to a need, be it a real need or an imaginary one. There has been a need to know the Prophet’s opinion on a certain matter or there has been a need for passing on information of his supposed

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<sup>148</sup> Lang 1997: 9.

<sup>149</sup> Lang 1997: 10.

opinion on a matter, otherwise there would have been no sense in transmitting the information. An answer always presupposes a question, a text is an answer to a need in the community, and that is rhetorical.

The layers of reality, not only hadiths but also other more or less historical knowledge of the first Islamic centuries, are “stories” in the way that they are later reconstructions of history, not social-scientific objective descriptions of reality. The historical situation and events in the 7th century is one dimension of the story, which in itself has many different variations according to whose experience is under discussion. How the events were reported, which events were actually taken into account, which were invented and which ones were ignored, forgotten or covered up is another dimension of the truth. How the words and the content of what was reported have changed during transmission of the knowledge is the third dimension and the process of writing it down constitutes the fourth.

The majority of the hadiths in al-Bukhārī’s collection may be invented or otherwise ahistorical hadiths, but this does not really change anything. It is a fact that the hadiths are there now. This is indication enough that there has been a reason to select – or invent – them for the collection and that they have been part of the social discourse either in the Prophet’s lifetime, or later during the process of transmission and selection. Individual hadiths, even if they are invented hadiths, always reflect matters of concern in the society where they were first heard, perceived or invented, and secondly memorised, written down, and judged authentic.

### Hadith research and European Orientalism

In the middle of the 19th century the first European Orientalists started to argue that the majority of hadith literature was probably inauthentic or even deliberate forgery rather than authentic historical material. Some give the credit of being the first to the German-English Aloys Sprenger (1813–1893)<sup>150</sup> some to the German Gustav Weil (1808–1889)<sup>151</sup> At about the same time a few other European Orientalists, like the Scottish Sir William Muir (1819–1905) and the Dutch R. P. A. Dozy (1820–1883)<sup>152</sup> wrote about early Islam and they worked on primary

<sup>150</sup> Juynboll 1969: 1; Brown 1996: 84.

<sup>151</sup> Hallaq 1999: 75.

<sup>152</sup> Dozy’s main field was Islamic Spain, though. His main publications include *Histoire des musulmans d’Espagne jusqu’à la conquête de l’Andalousie par les Almoravides (711–1110)*, Leiden, 1861, among others.

sources in Arabic. They estimated that at least half of the material in the most reliable collections could be considered authentic.<sup>153</sup>

It was the Hungarian Jew Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921) who initiated the modern critical study of the authenticity of hadith literature. Joseph Schacht (1920–1969) started his article “A revaluation of Islamic traditions” in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* in 1949 by questioning whether Goldziher’s conclusions should be called “something new and unprecedented, or something old and well-known.” Schacht refers to Goldziher’s earlier discovery that the traditions from the Prophet reflect opinions held during the first two and a half centuries after the hijra are taken into account in all serious historical studies of Islam, but, Schacht claims, Goldziher’s results have been gradually neglected and ignored.<sup>154</sup>

We must, according to Schacht “... abandon the gratuitous assumptions that there existed an authentic core of information going back to the time of the Prophet, that spurious and tendentious additions were made to it in every succeeding generation, that many of these were eliminated by the criticism of *isnāds* ... that other spurious traditions escaped rejection, but that the genuine core was not completely overlaid by later accretions”. Schacht seems to claim that if we are able to cast off the concept of an authentic, historical core of hadith literature, we would be able to study the development of hadith literature, and for example date a great many traditions.

Joseph Schacht first formulated the theory of *isnāds* growing backwards.<sup>155</sup> He uses this theory as a criterion of both dating and evaluating the authenticity of hadiths. He also claims that the existence of family *isnāds* as well as the independent growth of the historical information concerning the biography of the Prophet both tend to be an indication of lack of historicity and authenticity.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>153</sup> The motives of the 19th-century Orientalists to study Islam were in many cases influenced by their belief in the superiority of the European culture. See Alan M. Guenther’s article “Response of Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Ḥān to Sir William Muir” in *Oriente Moderno* 21(1), 2002, p. 219–254. According to Guenther, Muir applied Western critical methods to hadiths and made an effort to reconstruct an accurate biography of Muhammad. But, as he was a practicing Evangelical Christian, he could not accept the message of Muhammad because it denied the divinity of Jesus. Thus, his analysis began from the principle that all the hadiths, which reported miracles performed by Muhammad had to be false. Muir did not criticize Islam or Islamic societies for being backward or irrational because of the central importance of religion in the social life. He believed that religion had to be a defining force in society; to be truly beneficial it had to be Christianity. Interestingly, Aḥmad Ḥān, who – at least initially – accepted the authority of hadith literature, also tended to reject hadiths which described miracles performed by Muhammad. Aḥmad Ḥān’s reasons for this were not theological, but a result of his general rejection of all supernaturalism and his reliance on natural sciences. (Guenther 2002: 220)

<sup>154</sup> Schacht 1949: 143.

<sup>155</sup> His view of *isnāds* is, on the whole, quite sceptical. In his *Origins*, he speaks constantly and without hesitation about arbitrary creation of *isnāds* and putting *isnāds* together carelessly

<sup>156</sup> Schacht 1949: 147–151.

From the times of Ignaz Goldziher Western researchers of Islam have been of the opinion that it is almost impossible to say which of the large bulk of hadiths even in the Six Books can be thought of as originating during the Prophet's lifetime and thus, could be considered to be the words or opinions of either Muhammad or his closest companions.

According to their approach to the texts the views of some of the most significant scholars in hadith studies<sup>157</sup> might be divided into three groups: First, the most critical ones, with Ignaz Goldziher and Joseph Schacht as their leading figures, who deny the attribution of the bulk of hadith literature to its supposed originators. John Wansbrough, Michael Cook and Norman Calder belong to this group. Second, those who maintain that the writing down of the texts started almost immediately after the death of the Prophet and continued virtually uninterrupted during the first three Islamic centuries, and, thus, the authenticity question can be examined as part of historical textual tradition. Nabia Abbott, Fuat Sezgin, Muhammad al-Azami, Gregor Schoeler and Johann Fück belong to this group. The third group consists of researchers who stand somewhere between these two camps like G. H. A. Juynboll, Fazlur Rahman, James Robson, and Harald Motzki.<sup>158</sup>

Joseph Schacht pointed out that all efforts to extract the "authentic core" of the mass of hadith literature have failed.<sup>159</sup> Schacht seems to believe that such a core exists, but does it really have any meaning if we have no way of finding out which hadiths or sections of hadiths belong to this authentic core?

Goldziher has usually been considered the most sceptical of the early European scholars of hadith literature and he is credited with being the most important nineteenth-century critic of hadith. In his *Muhammedanische Studien* (vol. II, 1890) he claims that although hadith literature will not serve as a document for the history of early Islam, it has an important function as a reflection of the tendencies which appeared in the community in its later stages of development. It contains invaluable evidence for the evolution of Islam during its years of formation.<sup>160</sup>

My own approach to the question of authenticity should be already be clear. From my point of view, it really does not matter whether the texts we read and analyse are authentic or not. What I am interested in is the fact that the editing and formulating tradition has surely happened for political, social and sometimes perhaps even for religious reasons, but it has mostly been a historical process of theological development which has moulded the corpus as we possess it today.

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<sup>157</sup> For an excellent recent evaluation of the work of the most important scholars, see Berg 2000. In this paragraph I mention only those scholars whom I take up in my text.

<sup>158</sup> Stowasser 1998: 282, note 2; Hallaq 1999: 76.

<sup>159</sup> Schacht 1967: 4.

<sup>160</sup> Goldziher 1890: 5.

### Selection of authentic hadiths

Nabia Abbott gives a good, albeit somewhat simplistic, summary of the gradual growth of hadith literature in her *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*, II (1967). She constructs a clear picture of the remarkable increase in the number of hadiths since the lifetime of the Prophet. The older Companions, *ṣaḥāba*, according to Abbott, each transmitted only a few hadiths, yet even some of the younger Companions have a large number of hadiths attributed to them. And again, the Successors were more eager than the younger Companions to collect and transmit hadiths. A few of the transmitters of the first Islamic century probably had 100–300 hadiths and some of the largest early collections included a thousand hadiths. During the second Islamic century the growth of hadith material accelerated. Numbers grew rapidly from a few thousand to tens of thousands. In the first half of the third century figures for entire collections range from several hundred thousand to a million or even a million and a half.<sup>161</sup>

Keeping this in mind it is not at all exceptional that al-Bukhārī is said to have selected the material for his *Ṣaḥīḥ* from a mass of 300,000 or 600,000 hadiths.<sup>162</sup> Given the difference in these figures it is impossible to estimate the accurate number of hadiths al-Bukhārī knew and in my opinion not even an approximate number was ever known because it did not have any significance. The information these figures – both of them – carry, is that he knew a large number of hadiths. Thus, it is only logical that serious scholars like al-Bukhārī felt the need to manage the bulk of hadith literature in some way, to organise the material, to try and sort out the authentic ones, and his explicit intention might also have been to stop the supposed exponential growth of the material.<sup>163</sup> On the other hand, we do not actually know the number of hadiths al-Bukhārī knew. In his own words,

<sup>161</sup> Abbott 1967: 65–69.

<sup>162</sup> Robson, “al-Bukhārī”, *Et*. Abbott (1967: 69) mentions the figure 300,000, of which he had memorised 100,000 of the best, but she adds that the figure 600,000 of which he had memorised 200,000 is also given.

<sup>163</sup> Abbott (1967: 72) explains the mushrooming of tradition by describing how the average Companion transmitted one hadith to two Successors and each of these two transmitted the same hadith to two transmitters of the next generation. She assumes that this series was continued so that we would get a geometric progression whose fourth and eighth terms would be 16 and 256 respectively. Abbott admits readily that these estimations cannot be counterchecked and, to my mind, they give a too simple and regular idea of the way the hadith material has grown. Abbott’s model explains the existence of multiple *isnāds* for the same hadith and different versions of the same motifs of narration, but it cannot be acceptable if we consider the common link theory of Schacht to have any accuracy, or if we consider any other types of irregularities in the *isnāds*. Abbott’s estimation does not explain the increase of information circulating among the Successors, either.

reported by Ibn Ḥajar, he “knew a hundred thousand sound hadiths and a hundred thousand hadiths which were not sound. His copyist heard him say one day: I did not sleep last night until I had counted how many hadiths I have compiled and they were a hundred thousand.”<sup>164</sup>

Ibn Ḥajar lived in the 15th century, but al-Bukhārī’s collection was recognised as one of the most authoritative collections of Sunni hadiths soon after the death of the author and, thus, the number of hadiths in the collection was a known fact by the time of Ibn Ḥajar. It may be argued that the descriptions about the huge quantities of hadiths have been formulated later with the intention of explaining the proportions of the classical collections. In addition, the fact that some chapters in the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* contain chapter headings with no hadiths at all<sup>165</sup> gives reason to think that the number of hadiths circulating was perhaps not so enormous, but also that inventing a hadith when in need of one was not an easy solution for al-Bukhārī. On the other hand, in *Kitāb bad’ al-khalq* there are chapters which comprise as many as 24 or 28 hadiths, like Chapters 8 and 11.

### The consensus principle

How important in fact was the question of historicity and authenticity in the 9th century? Barbara Stowasser presents an intriguing view of the interdependence of the notions of authenticity and consensus in her “Gender issues and contemporary Quran interpretation” (1998). She asserts that the focus of the compilers of the Six Books was not so much on the historical authenticity of the texts but the qualification of the hadiths was based on a larger concept of authenticity as “spiritually and morally beneficial to the community”.<sup>166</sup> The consensus principle, as

<sup>164</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, p. 512.

<sup>165</sup> *Kitāb al-ʿilm* Chapter 1, *Kitāb al-zakāt* Chapter 6, Chapter 19 and Chapter 29, *Kitāb al-buyʿ* Chapter 107, and *Kitāb al-ijāra* Chapter 6 contain a chapter heading only, but not a single hadith report. *Kitāb al-jihād* Chapter 60, Chapters 114 and 115 state that Jābir and Abū Hurayra have transmitted a hadith on the subjects of these chapter headings, but no hadith is presented. *Kitāb al-jihād* Chapter 118 contains a chapter heading only. Chapter 193 in the same *kitāb* does not have the appearance of a hadith report at all. It has no *isnād* and the *matn* simply answers the question asked in the chapter heading. *Kitāb aḥādīth al-anbiyāʾ* Chapter 4 recites the Qurʾān 37: 123–131 and Chapter 13 informs us about the existence of a *qiṣṣa* of Ishāq, son of the prophet Ibrāhīm related by Ibn ʿUmar and Abū Hurayra on the authority of the Prophet, but no narration is given. Chapter 51 in *Kitāb al-daʿawāt* has a chapter heading but the text only indicates that there is a hadith on the subject on the authority of Jābir. In *Kitāb al-farāʿid* there are two successive chapter headings with no hadith. The first one is numbered, Chapter 27, but the second one is not. There has probably been disagreement about at least the second one, which deals with the crime of denying paternity of a child. *Kitāb al-taʿbīr*, Chapter 24 again contains no hadiths. Thus, there are fifteen chapter headings in the collection with no hadith report at all.

<sup>166</sup> Stowasser 1998: 31–32.



Stowasser calls it, has certainly played a considerable part in the compilation work of al-Bukhārī, but how explicitly did the 9th-century compilers recognise this tendency?

Dickinson, in his more recent book, notes that various caliphs asked scholars to draw up a single code of law for the Muslim empire, which – whatever the ultimate historicity of these claims would be – bears witness to the prevalence of the ideal of legal uniformity.<sup>167</sup> All the evidence we have from Ibn Ḥajar makes the very distinct claim that the question of authenticity was the only criterion al-Bukhārī accepted as a basis for the acceptability of a hadith. Yet, on the other hand, we might deal with two, or several, distinct levels of reality. The transmitters might have intended to advance truthful hadiths only. If a hadith was invented the fabricator might have thought that the Prophet really did act in the way the fabricator imagined or assumed, or, at least, that he might have done so even if he actually did not, or if such information was not available. Moreover, al-Bukhārī might have aimed at selecting authentic hadiths only, but the consensus principle has most likely affected his views on the authenticity of the texts. Finally, Ibn Ḥajar, and his contemporaries have taken it for granted that the authenticity question was the only criterion al-Bukhārī applied in his selective work and ignored, consciously or unconsciously, the role of consensus in the process.

Nabia Abbott has been more cautious in her analysis of the consensus principle. She differentiated between hadiths which deal with the lawful and the unlawful, *al-ḥalāl wa-l-ḥarām*, and those which deal with personal morality or religious life, and points out that the latter were retained more easily on the assumption that they were good for the morality of the community than the former ones, which were subjected to stricter scrutiny.<sup>168</sup> She seems to refer to the same distinction Juynboll is making when he speaks about *sunna ḥamaliyya* and *sunna qawliyya*.

The consensus principle also explains the existence of contradictory hadiths in the same collection. Their beneficial nature has probably been agreed upon by a group of people during a period of time.<sup>169</sup> But, I would further stress that textual inconsistencies and even contradictions in early Islamic texts may correspond to the diversity of life and commitments of the time. Loyalty to the Prophet Muhammad was only one aspect of life and one level of loyalty in early Islamic societies. The eagerness to interpret contradictory or inconsistent hadiths as mistakes in historical recording might be an example of the “naturalisation” of a frame of reference.<sup>170</sup> On the other hand, one might argue that in the 7th and 8th

<sup>167</sup> Dickinson 2001: 2.

<sup>168</sup> Abbott 1967: 76.

<sup>169</sup> Stowasser 1998: 31–32.

<sup>170</sup> See the chapter about the question of historicity.

centuries, before the Prophet's sunna was given the status of the second most important basis of Islamic faith and practice after the Qur'an, there would not have been such eagerness in knowing whether a particular hadith was authentic or not as long as its morality was considered to be beneficial to the community.

In the early Islamic community consensus seems to have had the function of a final resolution on all problems. If we look at consensus from this point of view it seems logical that the concept of *ra'y* came to be interpreted as disagreement. If consensus was supposed to reign among the Companions and the Followers and consequently among the developing *umma*, and authenticity was based largely upon consensus, personal opinion became the contrary of *sunna*. Of course, the consensus of all Muslims is needed only on the essentials of life and faith; it is the consensus of scholars that matters on more detailed questions.

Consensus, as a concept, always presupposes some degree of anonymity; it reflects an average opinion, which might be provincial or more general. But it always excludes and silences minorities. Consensus as authority has the potentiality to be democratic. But when *ra'y* becomes the privilege of caliphs and scholars, it becomes at the same time a non-democratic device, unless the question whose *ra'y* can be accepted as a valid argument is democratically defined.

What, then, were the factors, explicit or implicit, expressed or concealed, that were involved in the final stage that determined the selection of traditions? The answer to this question remains equivocal. According to a traditional Muslim view, large numbers of hadiths had to be dropped because of sheer bulk, but what were the criteria of dropping or saving? Instead of asking why some reports were forgotten, we might also ask why so many repetitive hadiths were kept in the collection? Why were so many hadiths, which are practically empty of the point of view of substance, kept? Why were some seemingly unimportant ones with a weak *isnād* kept? Why were so many irrelevant or inappropriate hadiths grouped under certain chapter headings? And why did all this happen despite of the enormous bulk of material al-Bukhārī is claimed to have had?

## METHODOLOGY

I have not applied one strict method of reading in this study, but, instead, I have used several different methodological tools and conceptions. My reading has been influenced by a rhetorical approach, especially the New Rhetorics.

Rhetorical analysis has been very little used in the field of studies related to the Islamic world.<sup>171</sup> Some of the most influential rhetorical theorists are Chaïm Perel-

<sup>171</sup> In the field of Islamic studies Tuula Sakaranaho in her thesis *The Complex Other* (1998), uses rhetorical analysis to analyse the discussion around the veiling of Turkish women. She also gives a good overview of the development and use of new rhetoric in contemporary social sciences

man and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, Stephen Toulmin and Kenneth Burke. From the point of view of this book, the most important theorists of the New Rhetoric are Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca.<sup>172</sup>

It was Richard Rorty who first spoke about a “rhetorical turn” in the 1984 Iowa Symposium of the Human Sciences.<sup>173</sup> With the “turn” he referred to the change in attitudes that happened mainly in the 1950s, and it seems that this symposium set forth a school of rhetoric which is sometimes called the Iowa School. Paradoxically, the Iowa School seems to have substituted the term rhetoric of inquiry for rhetorical turn.<sup>174</sup>

### Rhetorical turn, half-turn, or two turns?

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has accomplished some very interesting work on feminist and rhetorical criticism in Biblical studies. In her “Challenging the Rhetorical Half-Turn”, she asserts that “biblical studies has become stuck in a rhetorical ‘half-turn’ ... insofar as it has barely recognised the contributions which feminist and liberationist scholarship has made to the New Rhetoric”.<sup>175</sup> But I think that the sharpest point of Schüssler Fiorenza’s criticism lies in her observation of the tendency of scholars who claim to apply rhetorical analysis, but nevertheless read the texts against a scientific explanatory background which they regard as the true context of the text. While claiming to apply socio-rhetorical analysis and to be aware of gender studies, the work of Vernon Robbins, for example, still resorts to a positivist social-scientific approach. Gender studies become involved when the writer, in Schüssler Fiorenza’s words “reinforces the rhetoric of the text’s grammatical gender system by contextualising the story within the framework of a particular construction of the Mediterranean socio-cultural sex/gender system and by then going on to “naturalise” this constructed

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with plenty of references. Sakaranaho describes the rhetorical turn as “the rediscovery of rhetoric that took place in the humanistic sciences during recent decades and which has led to the formation of the so-called new rhetoric”. (Sakaranaho 1998: 41)

<sup>172</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza points out in her “Rhetorical Half-Turn” that Olbrechts-Tyteca is a good example of how “women and their intellectual work are ‘written out’ of history”. Although *La nouvelle rhétorique* was co-authored, Olbrechts-Tyteca is hardly mentioned in the literature and her significant contributions are never elaborated. (Schüssler Fiorenza 1994: note 5)

<sup>173</sup> Simons 1990: vii; Sakaranaho 1998: 41.

<sup>174</sup> The term rhetoric of inquiry is used in all the articles in Simons’s *The Rhetorical Turn* (1990); see also Schüssler Fiorenza 1994: 29.

<sup>175</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza 1994: 29–30.

frame of reference as a scientific historical model that is said to reflect accurately the 'commonplace' ethos of the Mediterranean in antiquity".<sup>176</sup>

If Schüssler Fiorenza is of the opinion that only a rhetorical half-turn has occurred, according to Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, it appears that two "rhetorical turns", have taken place: an explicit one and an implicit one. The explicit rhetorical turn is the explicit recognition of the relevance of rhetoric for contemporary thought and the use of it as a critical way of interpreting texts. Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca are clearly scholars who have not only applied, but also theoretically analysed and promoted the emergence of the New Rhetoric. By an implicit rhetorical turn Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar refers to writers who do not apply rhetorical terminology, but whose work comprises signs of rhetorical thinking.<sup>177</sup>

### My approach

Rhetoric, to me, is about matter – not manner. At the core of rhetorical analysis is persuasion, the substance and the content of the argumentation. It is, of course, important to recognise literary features such as *topoi*, symbols, and linguistic figures as well, because they have an effect on the way the message is supposed to be understood.

Rhetorical analysis is not a precise method but, rather, a specific way of reading a text. The central questions asked are: What is the argument that is set forth? How is it argued? How is the argument justified? What does the justification of the argument reveal about the argument and the speaker? Who is the speaker addressing? How is he addressing his audience? The reader might argue that these questions are always asked while dealing with texts, and I would answer that one of the merits of new rhetoric is to make these questions explicit.

An important aspect in rhetorical reading is to try to determine the intentions, motives, and the frame of mind of the speaker. What constitutes the rhetorical situation of the argumentation? Is it the text alone; is only the information that can be derived from the text itself part of the rhetorical situation? How are we able to contextualise the text? Do we have to accept that our contextualisation is, in itself, only one of the stories we are creating?

Of course, the rhetorical tradition is nothing new. Aristotle is the author of one of the oldest extant works on rhetoric, and he heads a very modern tradition in which rhetoric is not considered a technology of manipulation, but a way of creating

<sup>176</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza 1994: 33.

<sup>177</sup> For Gaonkar's (1990) critical views of rhetoric see, "The rhetoric and its double" in *The Rhetorical Turn*, p. 341–366.

reasonable communication between both individuals and groups in society. However, until recently the term rhetoric has usually been understood as a use of language in the interest of manipulation and, in political language, as a means of acquiring power. That is why the term "rhetorical turn" is so appropriate.

Aristotle divides the means of persuasion into three interacting functions, which he calls ethos, pathos and logos. Ricca Edmondson, in her *Rhetoric in Sociology* (1984), refers to these functions as self-presentation, sensitisation and the abstract structure of the argument. Self-presentation refers to the fact that arguments tend to be seen as someone's arguments. The perceived moral, social and intellectual competence of the speaker gives additional reasons for taking notice of what is said or, in the opposite case, for disregarding it. We do, in fact, estimate arguments partly according to our views of the reliability, maturity and moral authority of those making them. Aristotle made the obvious remark that the more uncertain the subject under discussion the more influential the speaker's character is liable to be.

Edmondson's concept of sensitisation or "putting the audience into a certain frame of mind" does not refer to the manipulation of the audience or to exploiting positions of relative power. Edmondson claims that there are at least two sides to the functioning of sensitisation. First, there is the idea of Plato and Aristotle that it is not enough to argue logically if anyone wishes to communicate effectively. An influential speaker must admit that social and psychological factors are as important as intellectual ones when putting forward any argument. Second, a particular disposition may be necessary for the due consideration of a certain argument. Edmondson refers to logos or the argument itself as the abstract structure of the argument. Yet, argument, according to her, does not signify an actual piece of communication "expressed in purely cognitive terms"; it "does not occur by itself but is expressed by what is said". The way I interpret this it that Edmondson, by these rather unclear words, refers to the same idea I think is at the core of the notion of logos. The most important object of analysis is not the way thoughts are expressed; logos, as an *abstract* structure of argument, is the point the argumentation aims at proving.<sup>178</sup> Edmondson sums up the terminology she uses: "If self-presentation is the aspect of communication most concerned with the character of the speaker, and sensitisation most concerned with the hearer, logos is most concerned with the subject-matter of discussion."<sup>179</sup>

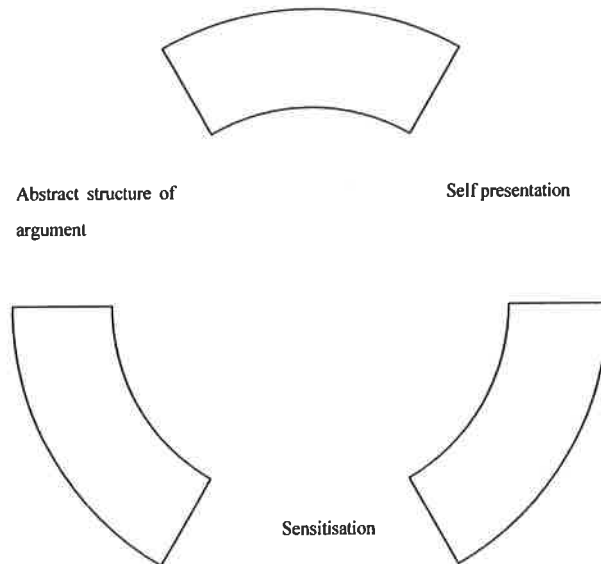
Edmondson regards logos as something intrinsically abstract, but another researcher who has greatly developed the theory of rhetoric, Michael Billig, distinguishes a rhetoric of form and a rhetoric of content. "As one passes from rhetoric of

<sup>178</sup> There is a certain irony in this argumentation, since rhetoric, as now understood in every day usage, means speech which lacks substance and meaning. To call something mere rhetoric means that it is only lip service instead of reasoning which leads to real action.

<sup>179</sup> Edmondson 1984: 19.

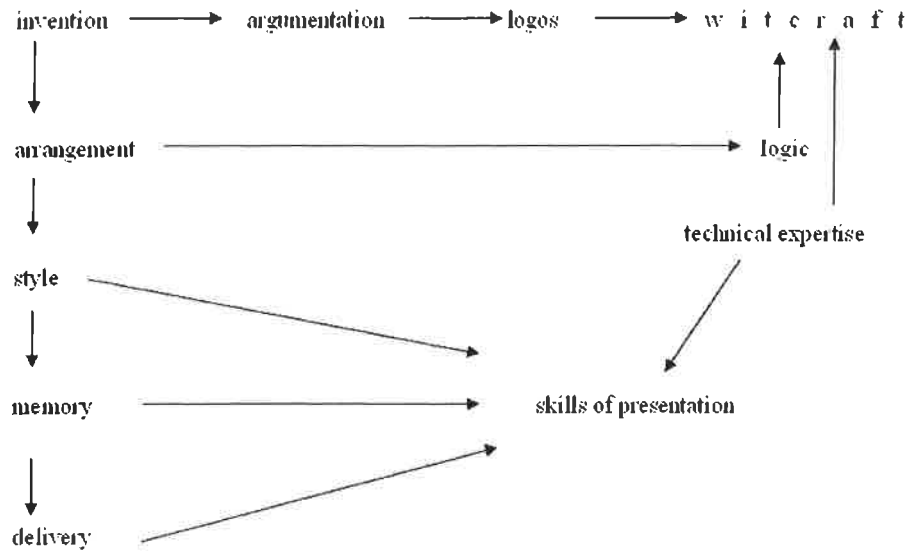
form to rhetoric of content, one is dealing with invention.”<sup>180</sup> Billig refers to invention as ‘witcraft’. Billig’s approach to rhetoric is social psychological, and he keeps the logos as the centre of interest.

In contrast to Edmondson, Billig seems to locate the logos in an interpretative chain. The chain starts from invention and goes to witcraft, through the processes of argumentation and logos. Ricca Edmondson seems to look at self presentation, sensitisation, and the abstract structure of argument as components of a simultaneous mental act:



<sup>180</sup> Billig 1987: 83. Billig, following the authorities of Antiquity, distinguishes five main branches of rhetoric: invention, arrangement, expression, memory, and delivery; see Billig 1987: 55–59.

Michael Billig tends to see it as an interpretative chain:



In Billig's analysis the logos seems to be something which leads to witcraft and witcraft, in my understanding, seems to be the most appreciated aspect of rhetoric in his way of arguing. But witcraft does not need only invention. Logic is assumed self-evidently; an illogical argument can never be witcraft. In its pure form, witcraft does not presume technical expertise, but in many cases it cooperates with necessary specialised or professional knowledge. The skills of presentation, in Billig's vocabulary, refer to the manner in which the argumentation is presented; involving language, voice, and gestures. Again, in pure witcraft, the skills of presentation should not have a considerable, if any, influence on the outcome of the debate. Pure witcraft is the outcome of invention and logic. The other aspects of arguing should have accessory meaning only.<sup>181</sup>

Another important part of Billig's argumentation that I am using in my study is his analysis of the dynamics of particularisation and categorisation. Billig does not consider categorisation as a basic mental process, but he analyses particularisation and categorisation as two opposing processes of cognition: the process of categorisation, or locating objects in the relevant feature space, presupposes the

<sup>181</sup> The above analysis of Billig's theory is based on Chapter 5, "The Art of Witcraft", p. 82-118 in Billig's *Arguing and Thinking* (1987).

ability to particularise, and particularisation, or the ability to perceive similarities and differences, is based on the ability to categorise.

One of the most interesting aspects connected with the processes of categorisation is the location of essences. In Billig's vocabulary, essence is the fittest way of speaking of phenomena, not something lying behind everyday objects. When a speaker chooses a discourse, he implies that this particular discourse will best capture the essence of the matter. Only if his way of presenting the matter is challenged, might he make the implication explicit – or, in the case of a thoughtless speaker, he might notice that his way of presenting the matter was not appropriate.

When arguing about the boundaries of the categories, whether a thing belongs to a particular category or not, the boundary might be moved so much that the essence of the category is relocated. However, Billig makes a distinction between redrawing a boundary and relocating an essence: redrawing a boundary does not usually challenge the basic values and norms, while relocation does. Relevant questions in connection with essences and boundaries, and a collection of hadiths, are abundant, and one of the most interesting ones is: do the texts tell us something about the essence<sup>182</sup> of life? Where do the texts locate the essence of womanhood? What can we say about the concept of choice in Islam according to these texts? What do al-Bukhārī's chapter headings tell us about the essences of the hadiths? Do the extant collections of hadith capture anything essential about the life of the Prophet and his early community?<sup>183</sup>

The third dimension in rhetoric, which I have adopted from Billig, is the notion of argumentative context. It is a very common assertion in the study of rhetoric that the meaning of an argument will very easily remain unclear unless its context is known. Billig develops Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's thoughts of the dangers of taking an argument out of context. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca speak of an argumentative situation (*la situation argumentative*). The notion of the argumentative situation is quite central in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's *New Rhetoric*, although they do not elaborate on the concept itself in an extensive way. But the overall argumentation in the *New Rhetoric* is based on the analysis of arguments in their context, with special emphasis on the concept of audience and the possibility of counter arguments.

Billig takes this perception even further: "The meaning of discourse used in an argumentative context must be examined in terms of the contest between criticism and justification. Therefore, to understand the meaning of a sentence or a whole discourse in an argumentative context, one should ... also consider the positions which are being criticized, or against which a justification is being

<sup>182</sup> I use the term essence in the same rhetorical meaning as Billig does.

<sup>183</sup> The above chapters on categorisation and particularisation are based on Chapter 6, "Categorization and Particularization", p. 118–155, in Billig's *Arguing and Thinking* (1987).



mounted.”<sup>184</sup> Billig’s point is that we cannot properly understand an argument if we do not know what it is arguing against.<sup>185</sup>

The criteria of remembering and authenticating the Prophet’s sayings were discussed in the previous chapter. However, in connection to the argumentative context, not only what is said and argued is noteworthy, but also the importance of what is left unsaid becomes equally crucial. Whenever the Prophet has argued – or is said to have argued – for or against something, it means that the topic has been an object of controversy. But what do the things that are not discussed tell us about the society?

### Vernon Robbins’ socio-rhetorical method

Vernon Robbins has developed an approach to literature that focuses on the text itself, but, in addition, “moves interactively into the world of the people who wrote the texts and into our present world”.<sup>186</sup> To be able to read the text from these three perspectives, the text is regarded as a “thickly textured tapestry”<sup>187</sup> woven with complex patterns and images. Robbins distinguishes five different angles to explore these various textures in a text: inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture.

#### Inner texture

Inner texture, or getting inside a text, concerns things like repetition of particular words, creation of beginnings and endings, alternation of reported speech, narration and dialogue, the way arguments are presented, reasoned and argued against, the senses, feelings and actions the text describes or evokes, alternation of

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<sup>184</sup> Billig 1987: 91.

<sup>185</sup> Billig gives a multitude of amusing examples about arguments, which become totally incomprehensible unless the social debate in which it belongs is known. One of the examples he gives is the book by Bishop Whately, *Historical Doubts Relative to Napoleon Buonaparte*, published in 1819. In his book, the Bishop argues that Napoleon, contrary to all appearances, never existed. According to him “British newspaper proprietors had conspired together to construct a French menace, which would boost flagging newspaper sales. It was absurd to believe that a single individual – a Corsican upstart at that – would achieve half of what the newspapers ascribed to Buonaparte. Besides, neither Whately, nor anyone he knew, had ever seen this alleged Napoleon.” “In point of fact ... the real target of Whately’s work had precious little to do with Napoleon ... Whately was countering the skepticism of David Hume, by suggesting that the logic of Hume’s arguments against Biblical miracles would lead to doubting obvious facts such as the existence of Napoleon.” (Billig 1987: 91–92)

<sup>186</sup> Robbins 1996: 1.

<sup>187</sup> Robbins 1996: 2.

passivity and activity, and references to time. In a written text, the inner text naturally resides in the verbal texture, the words and the language itself. This kind of analysis, I feel, takes the text out of its historical and intertextual context. It is, of course, only one primary stage in the analysis of a text, but it is a very essential one. By implementing close inner text analysis, the analyst will not only become well acquainted with the text but, paradoxically, she or he will also gain a certain distance to the text. This becomes quite important when studying religious texts or texts of which we have a certain pre-understanding in our mind.

Robbins enumerates six different kinds of inner texture. He speaks of repetitive, progressive, narrational, opening-middle-closing, argumentative and sensory-aesthetic texture.

*Repetitive* texture is created by the occurrence of words and phrases more than once in a unit. It is rarely very interesting or fruitful to look for repetitive elements as such in a text, but when the repetition develops into a *progression* the analysis becomes more valuable. The various voices through which the words are spoken produce the *narrational* texture. The voices are not always identified with a specific character; the speech of one group can be presented as one voice, only some of the characters may be allowed to speak, some do not have a voice at all, and some are not even present.

*Opening-middle-closing* texture is created by the way a section of a discourse is started, the nature of its body, and the way it is concluded. *Argumentative* texture deals with the inner reasoning, logical or illogical, in the discourse and finally, *sensory-aesthetic* texture resides in the feelings and emotions the text evokes or embodies.

An important aspect in Robbins's method is the question of who speaks the first and last word. This is one of the aspects of discourse that Billig takes up, too. In the chapter entitled "The Art of Witcraft", Billig states that the use of witcraft is linked to the search for the last word.<sup>188</sup> But what do we mean with the last word? In Billig's analysis:

one may not search for the last word to persuade the other, but to persuade oneself that one's own arguments have escaped unscathed from criticism.<sup>189</sup>

Moreover, it is not in any case uncontroversial which one of the speakers spoke the last word. We tend to remember different arguments in a discussion according to our personal interest, and, we tend to remember our own utterances better than those of our interlocutor. Thus, Billig concludes, "the result would be,

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<sup>188</sup> Billig 1987: 106.

<sup>189</sup> Billig 1987: 108.

that both sides would feel that the same argument had produced very different last words, or unanswered criticisms".<sup>190</sup>

### Intertexture

A text never exists in a vacuum. If we speak of a text, we always speak of at least a three-dimensional world, which is constituted of the writer, the reader and the text. In Ricca Edmondson's thinking this "tridimensionality" is in a central position. Edmondson speaks about author, subject and reader; the "personal existences" of these three and the ways their existence influences writing, even formal academic writing.<sup>191</sup>

These three elements of a text also interact with the outside world. The writer writes in the context of his or her individual, social, cultural, economic, ideological and political surroundings and, correspondingly, the reader reads and interprets the text in his or her own context. Intertexture is concerned with more than the study of a text itself. It is concerned with the study of a text's representation of the outside world. Vernon Robbins speaks of oral-scribal intertexture, cultural, social and historical intertexture.

Oral-scribal intertexture means using words, sentences or ideas from other texts either explicitly referring to the other text or implicitly, without reference. The text which is referred to, may be any text outside the text itself. In the case of hadith studies, it might be another hadith, it might be the Qur'an or any other text, script or saying. Robbins distinguishes five basic ways in which oral-scribal intertexture occurs.<sup>192</sup>

An interesting case of intertexture in al-Bukhārī's collection is a hadith with no chapter heading in *Kitāb istitābat al-murtaddīn wa-l-mu'ānidīn wa-qitālihim* Chapter 5 no. 6929:

‘Abdallāh said: As if I was looking at the Prophet (pbuh) while he told about a prophet (from among the prophets) who was beaten by his people. He was wiping blood from his face and said: Lord, forgive my people for they do not know (what they do), *Rabbi ghfir li-qawmī fa-innahum lā yaʿlamūna*.

There is an identical hadith (except that the prophet refers to God as *Allāhumma* instead of *Rabb*) in *Kitāb aḥādīth al-anbiyā'* Chapter 54 no. 3477, which is a long

<sup>190</sup> Billig 1987: 108.

<sup>191</sup> Edmondson 1984: 2.

<sup>192</sup> About different types and examples of oral-scribal intertexture: recitation, recontextualisation, reconfiguration, narrative amplification, and thematic elaboration, see Robbins 1996: 40–58.

chapter with 24 hadiths but no chapter heading.<sup>193</sup> This hadith clearly refers to the words of Jesus on the cross when he says: *fa-qāla Yasūʿ: yā abatāh ighfir lahum li-annahum lā yaʿlamūna mādhā yafʿalūna* (Luke 23:34).

### The audience

The most attractive of Perelman's and Olbrechts-Tyteca's abstractions is the concept of audience. It seems to be one of the most debatable and exciting aspects of their theory of argumentation.<sup>194</sup>

To be able to say anything about audience in hadith literature we should first of all determine who the speaker is and whom he is addressing. A simple and traditional view is that the speaker, in *ḥadīth nabawī*, a Prophet report, must be the Prophet and the hearer the person/people he is talking to.<sup>195</sup> Another type of *ḥadīth nabawī* is a report in which a companion describes a specific act of the Prophet or his general behaviour. In these hadiths the companion is the speaker, directly reporting about the Prophet. In those hadiths that are of the *mursal* type, the speaker is the companion or the follower of the Prophet.

In the case of an invented hadith the supposed speaker would be the Prophet and the immediate audience would be those people he addresses in the hadith. But as we shall see, the concept of audience is not as clear cut as that. If a hadith is invented, the actual speaker would naturally be the Prophet, but the inventor, and the audience would be the general public, a specific group of people concerned, or the other contemporary hadith scholars.

*Kitāb al-ḥiyal* Chapter 10 no. 6967 quotes the Prophet saying that he is only human, and, thus, his verdicts might be influenced by the verbal superiority of one of the parties in a conflict. Therefore, if a Muslim gives up a part of the compensation that the Prophet has sentenced another Muslim to pay him, his time in the hellfire will be reduced. There is a similar hadith in the *Kitāb al-maḥālim* Chapter 16 no. 2458 with a chapter heading: About the sin of the one who litigates without any ground and being conscious of it. The chapter heading emphasises the latter part of the *matn* but completely ignores the beginning, which describes the Prophet as a normal, fallible man. This hadith gives some background information to the report: the Prophet uttered these words in consequence of a quarrel he happened to hear through the door of his room. The overall impression these

<sup>193</sup> Houdas, in a footnote to his French translation of no. 6929 adds that the prophet whom Muhammad referred to was Moses.

<sup>194</sup> In the "Introduction" to Golden & Pilotta 1986 there is a section about an informal seminar with Professor Perelman in Ohio State University. Most of the questions and conversations dealt with the concept of the universal audience.

<sup>195</sup> *Ḥadīth qudsī* type of hadiths are not dealt with in this study.

hadiths give is that the Prophet did not consider all the judgments he made as binding to all Muslims in all times. He seems to be well aware of the actions and reactions of rhetoric and the influence of verbal skill on the decisions of people.

In general, Muslims consider hadiths to be the words of the Prophet. They were, according to the Islamic view expressed by Muslim hadith scholars and passed on orally for more than two hundred years. The conservation of these words in the process of oral transmission is a part of the divine miracle of the true message of Islam.<sup>196</sup> After several generations al-Bukhārī – in this case – collected the reports and selected the ones he, after a very serious research of the *isnāds*, concluded to be authentic or trustworthy enough to be included in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. As for the hearer, in many hadiths there is no hearer at all; there are texts, which simply describe the acts of the Prophet or indirectly report him saying something without any specified hearer. Many hadiths portray the companions asking the Prophet direct questions, or, the Prophet is addressing them spontaneously. In these cases, there are one or many specified hearers. On the other hand, if the hadiths are considered to be addressed to all Muslims as guidelines for correct behaviour, then the whole Islamic *umma* will, ultimately, constitute the group of hearers.

In short, the audience is *the group of those whom the speaker wants to influence by his argumentation*.<sup>197</sup> The key word here is *want*, the desire of the speaker to address his words to a certain audience. The audience is a construction of the speaker; there are no tangible criteria to define the audience of a speaker, let alone the writer, as such.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's theory sets out from the supposition that any speaker always has an idea of an audience in mind and that the way the speaker constructs the idea of his audience is more or less systematic. For the

<sup>196</sup> Some scholars, like F. Sezgin and N. Abbott, propose that the transition from orality to the written form did not happen all at once, but that Arab transmitters kept notes in writing from the beginning of the Islamic era. Sezgin (1967: 55) proposes a continuum: *kitābat al-ḥadīth* → *tadwīn al-ḥadīth* → *taṣnīf al-ḥadīth*, i.e., notes for private usage → collections of notes to a certain purpose → systematically organised books. Schæler (2002: 6–9) discusses this issue in his *Écrire et transmettre* and he refers to the distinction made by Sprenger between occasional notes, notebooks and actual books. He also makes a distinction between writing and publishing. A text might be written down, but its publication might be uniquely in oral form. The most radical approach is that of Norman Calder. According to his theory students of hadith and hadith scholars took notes from the information they heard, but these notes were extremely unreliable as to the way they reproduce what was actually said. Moreover, in Calder's words, "the owner of the notebook controlled its contents ... There is no reason to suppose that one man's *samāʿ* would be the same as another's from the same master. It is perfectly possible that two listeners at the same *majlis* would take notes on different dicta; they might record them more or less in their own words; they might even read them back to the master – these different notes – and get his approval" (Calder 1993: 173–174). This is of course possible, but Calder does not give any evidence or examples of this actually happening.

<sup>197</sup> Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1958: 25.

communication to be effective the anticipated audience, *l'auditoire présumé*, should be as close to reality as possible. If the speaker's idea of the audience is unrealistic the arguments he uses may turn out to have the opposite effect the speaker actually wanted them to have. Or, in the case of prophets or other founders or promoters of ideologies, the fact that his words will most probably – where he is successful in his mission – be used later in totally other circumstances and for totally different audiences, may alter the message a great deal.

### *Universal audience*

At the core of the concept of audience is the notion of the universal audience. The universal audience is, in principle, all humankind, or at least, all normal, adult persons.<sup>198</sup> Perelman's concept of universal audience could be defined either as an undefined audience, or any person with a judicial mind. One might claim, of course, that these two definitions embody the same idea. Any person might, rhetorically, represent the whole of humankind and the whole of humankind as an audience is, of course, absolutely impossible. Every reasonably conceived audience is always, at least to some extent, a composite audience, and the unanimity of the audience is, accordingly, relative. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca speak of a "... universality and unanimity *imagined* by the speaker ...".<sup>199</sup>

I am inclined to think that very often, in the interpretation of the hadiths, a single hearer represents the universal audience. When the Prophet addresses a single hearer, the hearer is interpreted to represent the *umma*, the universal audience. The Prophet's words to a single hearer are projected to concern the whole *umma* in the process of the development of the concept of *sunna*. Or, vice versa, in at case where we suppose that the hadith is of later fabrication, the problems of the *umma* are expressed in concrete words, and retrojected to the interlocutor of the Prophet.

According to the theory of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, it is more typical of a written dialogue than a spoken dialogue to assume that the single hearer personifies the universal audience.<sup>200</sup> This, again, emphasises the meaning of the act of writing down the oral tradition of Islam. The process of telling the events that later constituted the hadith material, the process of collecting and assessing the material, writing it down and classifying it, might be perceived as steps in the

<sup>198</sup> Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1958: 39. "Nous trouvons trois espèces d'auditoires ... Le premier, constitué par l'humanité tout entière, ou du moins par tous les hommes adultes et normaux et que nous appellerons l'auditoire *universel*."

<sup>199</sup> Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1958: 41: "Il s'agit évidemment, dans ce cas, non pas d'un cas expérimentalement éprouvé, mais d'une universalité et d'une unanimité que *se représente l'orateur*..." (Italics mine.)

<sup>200</sup> Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1958: 37.

process of the crystallisation of the *sunna* of the Prophet. The material might be a single act of Muhammad, a single utterance to one of his companions or some domestic behaviour, but it may be interpreted as the speech of the Messenger of God to all Muslims.

Philosophers, and in some cases also prophets, claim to speak to a universal audience.<sup>201</sup> They claim that their message is logically so strong that any reasonable person will have to be convinced if he reflects on the words of the philosopher or the prophet. In addition to the force of logic, prophets may claim to have the power of the divine, universal, and eternal knowledge of truth. This kind of knowledge must, by definition, both be addressed to and appeal to, the universal audience.<sup>202</sup>

### *Elite audience*

An elite audience is an audience endowed with special knowledge about the subject under debate. In the domain of hadith studies, if we ascend to the level of *muḥaddithūn* we could say that a typical elite audience for a *muḥaddith* could be, for instance, the other collectors of hadith or hadith specialists. It becomes much more complicated if we remain at the level of the Prophet.

We might distinguish the speaker at the level of the *matn* and the level of the hadith. At the level of the *matn*, the speaker is Muhammad and the audience is constituted of the early Muslims whether interpreted as single hearers, the early *umma*, or the universal audience. At the level of the hadith, the speaker is the *muḥaddith* or the potential inventor/editor of the hadith, and the audience, in the case of al-Bukhārī, the 9th-century Muslims, or, again, the universal audience. To

<sup>201</sup> Whether the concept of the audience that the Prophet Muhammad might have constructed in his mind when he started his prophetic mission was constituted of Arabs only (12:2 We have sent it down as an Arabic Koran, and 42:7 And so we have revealed to you an Arabic Koran, that you may warn the Mother of Cities and those who dwell about it ...) is the subject of another discussion. It is clear that according to the present Muslim interpretation, the Prophet's message was intended for all humankind. Mecca, the Mother of Cities, is the centre of the world and, thus, its surroundings (*man ḥawlahā*) include the whole world, not the Arabian peninsula only. Al-Bukhārī himself would be excluded from the audience if we stick to the interpretation of some Western scholars who claim that the Prophet in fact intended to bring something new to the existing monotheist religions, or create a specifically Arab religion. It is clear, though, that the interpretation of the mission of Muhammad has changed along with the growing influence of Islam in the world during the first Islamic centuries.

<sup>202</sup> James L. Golden (1986: 297) doubts the feasibility of applying the concept of universal audience to the discourse of people other than philosophers who want to convince. Legislators and religious spokesmen, according to the Golden's interpretation, generally direct their arguments to particular audiences with specific values. Golden suggests that there is a certain lack of clarity which Perelman himself also recognised. Perelman modified his notion of the universal audience in his later publications, and proposed that the universal audience could apply to other than philosophical discourse as well.

determine which of the constructions of speaker/audience relationships is more accurate and in line with the historical truth, is a question which is related to the authenticity of hadith literature, and is beyond the scope of this study.

An elite audience becomes imperative if any doubt arises among the universal audience about the "universality" of the audience. The universal audience does not always include the elite audience. When the elite are included, in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's words, "the elite is characterised by its hierarchic position, ... is considered as a model, ... and sets the norm for everybody." For those who acknowledge the role of the elite audience as example, the elite might be identical to the universal audience. For those who do not acknowledge its role, the elite are only a particular audience.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca have developed this line of thinking further. They say particular concrete audiences can validate a concept of the universal audience which is characteristic to them. But, it is the undefined universal audience that is invoked to judge on what is the concept of the universal audience appropriate to such a concrete audience. It can be said that audiences pass judgement on one another.<sup>203</sup>

The universal audience is a construction in the speaker's mind, and a speaker may address the universal audience even if he is speaking to a single person. Correspondingly, a speaker cannot exclude someone from the universal audience. If a philosopher speaks to the concrete audience of a dozen listeners his speech may be addressed to the universal audience.

This is the theoretical framework I had in mind while reading al-Bukhārī. I noticed that some of the methodological tools were not useful at all. The texts do not include enough material to be able to answer some of the questions I was interested in. Persuasion, self-presentation, and sensitisation, for example, are concepts which cannot be analysed in the light of this material. Quotations of speakers are too scarce and the texts are too fragmented to be able to say anything about the methods of persuasion of the speakers, let alone their intentions, motives, and frame of mind. The concepts of audience and intertextuality proved to be much more valuable.

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<sup>203</sup> Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1958: 44–46.



## CONCLUSION

The starting point of my analysis was a single hadith, the Hadith of Choice. The Hadith of Choice is part of an extensive *matn* cluster, a concept developed by Juynboll. A cluster is made up of the multiple aspects of one basic idea presented in several separate hadiths. It is more useful to examine a hadith as a facet of this basic idea and as part of a *matn* cluster rather than as an individual narration. In al-Bukhārī's collection the material is not arranged into *matn* clusters, as it is in the Muslim's collection. The material is scattered in various *kitābs* but, nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish clusters by searching for the same themes throughout the collection.

By gathering the hadiths I am analysing under various *matn* clusters one may solve the problem of determining whether the separately presented hadiths which are clearly fragments of the same report or different variants of it, are one and the same as the hadith which has different endings, omissions or additions in details, or whether they are separate hadiths which are in an intertextual relation with each other.

Texts have an interactive relation to other texts, but they also interact with various cultures either explicitly referring to a personage, an event or a tradition known to people on the basis of a common cultural background, or the intercultural dimension may be implicit. The text may presuppose a tradition without direct reference to it. Cultural intertexture differs from oral-scribal intertexture in that it does not allude to any actual text. In Vernon Robbins's words, it simply *points* to a personage, concept or tradition or *interacts* with cultural concepts or traditions.<sup>204</sup> The rhetorical nature of analysis and research is clearly visible when working with cultural intertexture. The question whether a particular text refers to a particular cultural phenomenon is by nature a debatable issue. If the reference is totally unambiguous, the nature of the intertextual relation is more probably oral-scribal than cultural.

In addition to cultural intertexture, texts can be analysed from the point of view of their social intertexture and their historical intertexture. Both of these deal with matters that can be studied from sources outside the text. Social intertexture refers to the meaning of institutions, social roles and identities and the way these are represented in the text. Historical intertexture refers to the historical events and the historical situation in which the text has been written and which it describes. Historical intertexture is also concerned with the historical veracity of the text and its authenticity.

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<sup>204</sup> Robbins 1996: 58–61



## PART II



## PART II

### THE CONCEPT OF CHOICE IN AL-BUKHĀRĪ

Although the Prophet Muhammad deals explicitly with the concept of choice in numerous hadith reports, al-Bukhārī as the compiler and editor of his sayings does not seem to have paid any explicit attention to the concept in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. The concept of choice is nowhere raised by the chapter headings, not even in those hadiths which refer to the most important choices the early Muslims had to make. Moreover, as one would expect, there is no *Kitāb al-ikhtiyār*, Book of Choice, in the collection.

#### Theme clusters

The central concept I began to analyse in al-Bukhārī's texts was the notion of *ikhtiyār*, choice. While looking for texts which either included the word *ikhtiyār* or described an event which comprised elements of some kind of explicit choice, it seemed a rational alternative to consider them as a theme cluster.

A theme cluster is a group of hadiths which deal with or refer to a common theme. G. H. A. Juynboll has introduced the somewhat different expression "*matn* cluster"

to indicate that the contents of a particular Islamic tradition, rather than as an individual entity, should in the majority of cases be viewed as one out of two or sometimes even ten or more facets of one basic idea, which may pertain to a particular legal or ethical concept, or which reflects the ongoing controversies regarding some point of Islamic ritual.<sup>205</sup>

I prefer to use the term theme cluster while dealing with al-Bukhārī, because the *matns* in his collection are composed of several themes and they neither have the character of an integrated narration nor do the *matns* form clusters. Each of the long *matns* might belong to several theme clusters, and only the very short, single theme *matns*, can be classified as a single cluster. Moreover, in al-Bukhārī's collection, hadiths, which might be grouped in the same theme clusters, can be located anywhere in the collection. In fact, a great part of the hadiths in the

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<sup>205</sup> Juynboll, "Muslim b. al-Ḥadīdjādī" in *Et*.

collection – it would indeed be astonishing if this did not apply to all the hadiths in the collection – are interlinked in some way. There are so many themes in the texts and the same themes are repeated in so many instances that the texts seem to produce unending chains of references. The whole collection becomes a spider's web with intertwining linkages reaching out to all of its parts.

The starting point in this analysis was the so-called Hadith of Choice. It is a very illustrative example of a hadith which is composed of many themes. Choice is not the main theme in any of the hadiths in the collection, in some reports it is referred to in passing; in some others it is a subtheme. In the report I originally entitled the Hadith of Choice, the concept of choice is one of several subthemes.

With the help of Wensinck's *Concordance* I went through the collection and looked up all the hadith reports with the words *ikhtiyār* or *khayyara*.<sup>206</sup> A theme cluster is not constituted of hadiths which contain the same keyword, although going through the material by searching for keywords proved to be a handy tool to sort out clusters. Nor do al-Bukhārī's categorisations indicate theme clusters, nor the division into *kitābs*, nor the subdivision into chapters or *bābs*.

It soon became clear that the theme cluster around the concept of choice needed to be divided into subclusters, and further subsections. There appeared to be ten subclusters, most of which are divided into two or three sections.

1. **Cluster of Choice**, i.e., hadiths that refer to the revelation of the Verses of Choice. This cluster is divided into three sections: *ikhtiyār*, *tahrīm*, and *qiwāma*.
2. **Cluster of the Prophets**, i.e., hadiths that refer to the choice given to Muhammad or alternatively to all prophets. This cluster is divided into two sections: hadiths which deal with the words of the Prophet to Abū Bakr and hadiths which report the Prophet's words in the presence of ʿĀ'isha.
3. **Cluster of Wine and Milk**, i.e., hadiths that refer to the choice Muhammad made between bowls of drink during his nightly ascension.
4. **Cluster of the Spouse**, i.e., hadiths that deal with the criteria for choosing a wife, hadiths that deal with Barīra's choice to go or not to go back to her husband, and hadiths in which a husband claims that his wife has

<sup>206</sup> I also went through hadiths with the word *iṣṭafā*, but most of these hadiths refer to the special role of Moses as the chosen one, and these same texts had earlier come up with the search with *khayyara*. There is one new and quite important hadith in terms of men-women relationships with the word *iṣṭafā*, found in *Kitāb al-jihād*, Chapter 74 no. 2893. This hadith is a report about the battle of Khaybar. The Prophet conquered the town and he heard of the beauty of Ṣafīyya bint Ḥuyayy ibn Akhṭab, whose husband had been killed while she was a bride. God's Messenger chose her, *iṣṭafāhā*, for himself and later married her.

chosen him. This cluster is divided into three sections: choice of wives, Barīra's choice, and husbands as the objects of choice.

5. **Cluster of Retaliation**, i.e., hadiths that give either to the family of the victim a choice of punishment to be inflicted on the killer, or that give the killer's family a choice to pay the blood money, to swear that they are innocent, or to be killed. Hadiths that relate to the choice the Prophet gave to a hostile tribe, and hadiths that relate to the choice given to the Prophet by a pagan chief to share power with him belong to this cluster. This cluster contains three sections: the victim, the hostile tribe, and the chief of the pagans.
6. **Cluster of Trade**, i.e., the wives of the prophet were given the choice of getting either agricultural products or land and water to cultivate; the seller and the buyer have the choice to cancel the transaction before they depart.
7. **Cluster of the *Anṣār* and the *Muhājirūn*** A group of hadiths emphasises the Prophet's affection to the *Anṣār*. Whenever the Prophet had a choice he would choose the easiest possibility, but he would rather choose a more difficult passage with the *Anṣār* than an easier one with other people.
8. **ʿĀ'isha's choice** ʿĀ'isha was given the choice of allowing or refusing ʿUmar to be buried in her house, and in the same hadith the follower of ʿUmar as the leader of the community is chosen.
9. **Cluster of the Funeral Prayer** In one cluster the emphasis is on the view that a human being – the Prophet in this case – does not have a choice: the Prophet understood that he had a choice to pray or not to pray for a dead infidel, but this choice was taken away from him by a verse from God.
10. **Moses and the Angel of Death** A group of hadiths which tell about the death of Moses and his choice to die right away rather than after some additional years.

## 1. The Cluster of Choice

Of the numerous hadiths<sup>207</sup> that form the Hadith of Choice cluster only two explicitly take up the theme of choice and one is closely linked to *Sūrat al-tahrīm*, which refers to one of the most important choices the wives of the Prophet had to make.

The cluster of choice is divided into three sub sections: *ikhtiyār*, *tahrīm*, and *qiwāma*. The *ikhtiyār* section can be considered the main category and the other two deal with themes that develop from it. Each subsection is composed of several hadiths.

### a. *Ikhtiyār*

I have chosen to call hadith number 5191<sup>208</sup> in Chapter 83/84 of the Book of Marriage, *Kitāb al-nikāḥ*, in the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* the Hadith of Choice because it is closely linked with Qur'anic verses, which are often called the *Verses of Choice* (33:28–29). The *tarjama* of the chapter is “About a man counselling his daughter for (the sake of) her husband”, *Bāb mawʿiẓat al-rajuli bnatahu li-ḥāli zawjihā*. The hadith, or parts of it, appear in twelve other chapters in the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, five times in *Kitāb al-nikāḥ*, the Book of Marriage.<sup>209</sup>

The Hadith of Choice is an account of life in seventh-century Medina and of the Prophet and his wives. It is a story of a crisis in the Prophet's household. But the narration is not only an account of the Prophet's domestic troubles; it is also a story of the relations between the *Muhājirūn*, the Meccan Muslims who migrated to Medina with the Prophet in the year 622 or later, and the *Anṣār*, the Medinan Muslims. It is a story of change in the behaviour of the Muslim women in Medina. It is also, as the chapter heading indicates, a story of the concern a father has for the marriage of his daughter and for the future. It is a story of problems that a polygamous marriage brings into a household, even the household of the most righteous man among the Muslims. It is a story of the suffering of the Messenger of God and his relative poverty compared to the leaders of other, non-Muslim peoples. It also brings up in a very characteristic way the interaction of the

<sup>207</sup> *Kitāb al-maẓālim*, Chapter 25 no. 2468; *Kitāb al-nikāḥ*, Chapter 83 no. 5191; *Kitāb tafsīr al-Qurʿān: sūrat al-tahrīm*, Chapters 1–5, nos. 4911–4916 and Chapters 92–93, nos. 5201–5203, Chapter 106, no. 5218.

<sup>208</sup> Hadith no. 4913 in *Kitāb tafsīr al-Qurʿān: sūrat al-tahrīm* is almost identical.

<sup>209</sup> The other *Kitābs* where the motifs of this narration appear are *Kitāb al-ʿIlm* (Book of Knowledge), *Kitāb al-maẓālim* (Book about Acts of Injustice), *Kitāb tafsīr al-Qurʿān* (Book of Exegesis), and *Kitāb al-libās* (Book of Clothing).



Prophet and the divine revelation. The expressed motive or occasion for telling this hadith, which is reported in the *matn*, is the desire of Ibn ʿAbbās to know who God meant in one of the verses he revealed to the Prophet. Thus, on the one hand, a Qurʾanic verse is taken as the occasion for telling the hadith, but on the other hand, the hadith indicates that the activities of the Prophet and his wives had an impact on the divine revelation, and in fact, the text might be read as a demonstration of God's eagerness to become involved even in the domestic life of his Messenger.<sup>210</sup>

The Hadith of Choice is a long, rich and manysided story, and many other themes introduced in it might be pursued, but since the scope of this study is limited to the analysis of only one aspect of the hadith, I will not follow the other possible paths through the collection.<sup>211</sup> A more careful analysis of this hadith in comparison with the others that are dealt with is presented, since this hadith is of great importance and it is also the most dramatic one in style.

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<sup>210</sup> Akar 1999: 93–94.

<sup>211</sup> Note how the question of location of essences is present everywhere. For al-Bukhārī, the essential message of this hadith was the concern of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb for his daughter's marriage with the Prophet.

*Kitāb al-nikāh* Chapter 83/84 *Bāb maw'izat al-rajuli bnatahu li-ḥālī zawjihā*, no. 5191:

Ibn 'Abbās (may God be pleased with him) said: I was eager to ask 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb about the two of the Prophet's wives regarding whom God said "If you two repent to God, yet your hearts certainly inclined" until 'Umar went on pilgrimage and I went with him.

He went aside and I went with him carrying a container. He emptied his bowels, came to me and I poured water over his hands and he performed the ablution.

Analysis:

It is typical of hadiths to open with a description of the circumstances. Details about the where, the when, and the why, connect the hadith to a specific place, time, and situation, and they are typical opening structures of a *matn*. In another version of this same hadith, *Kitāb tafsīr al-Qur'ān: sūrat al-tahrīm*, Chapter 2, no. 4913, Ibn 'Abbās says that he had been waiting for a whole year before he had a chance to ask the question which intrigued him.

The verse Ibn 'Abbās is referring to is a quotation of Qur'an 66:4 {*In tatūbā ilā Allāhi fa-qad ṣaghat qulūbukumā*} (For further discussion of the interpretation of the verse, see Mir, 1999.)

Emptying one's bowels is a typical topos in hadith reports. They usually describe the way the Prophet used to wash himself or the direction he used to face. There is often a description of someone following the Prophet or one of his Companions carrying a water container when they go to answer the call of nature. This also presents a cause for being alone with the Prophet or the Companion.

There are several hadiths where the imposition of the veil on the Prophet's wives was connected with Sawda's going out to answer the call of nature and being recognised. This hadith has been used to justify the use of the veil by women, but also to justify their right to go out at all. The need of 'Āi'sha to answer the call of nature is often reported to be the reason for the Prophet and his caravan to halt when 'Āi'sha's necklace was lost and, thus it was one of the motives of the affair of the lie or slander of 'Āi'sha, i.e., *ḥadīth al-ifk*.

I said to him: "Chief of the Believers, who were the two of the Prophet's wives regarding whom God said: 'If you two repent to God, yet your hearts certainly inclined'." 'Umar said: "Good heavens, Ibn 'Abbās, they were 'Ā'isha and Ḥaḥḥa. *Wa-'ajaban laka yā Ibn 'Abbās humā 'Ā'isha wa-Ḥaḥḥa!*" Then 'Umar went on narrating the hadith and said: "I and an Anṣārī neighbour of mine in Banī Umayya ibn Zaid from 'Awālī al-Madīna, used to take turns in visiting the Prophet. He used to go one day and I used to go the other day. When I went, I would bring my neighbour news of what had happened that day, regarding the revelation and other things, and when he went, he used to do the same for me.

We, men of the Quraysh, used to have the upper hand over our wives, but when we came to the Anṣār, we noticed that their women had the upper hand over their men. Our women started to adopt the manners of the Anṣār women. Once I yelled at my wife and she answered me back and I disapproved of her answering me back. She

said to me: "Why do you disapprove of me answering you back? By God, the wives of the Prophet answer him back and some of them may even keep away from him the whole day until the night." That frightened me and I said to her: "Whoever of them does so will be damned!"

The area was called 'Awālī l-Madīna because it was the highest ground in the immediate vicinity of Medina. Its distance from the centre of Medina and the Prophet's house was about one mile. (Ibn Ḥajar 1987, *Faḥ al-bārī* III, p. 89)

This detail of taking turns has been taken up in the chapter heading in a variant of the same hadith in *Kitāb al-'ilm*, Chapter 27 *al-tanāwub fī l-'ilm*, no. 87. (Book of Knowledge, Chapter about taking turns in acquiring knowledge)

The fundamental discord is between husbands and wives but there is also at least an implicit difference in behaviour, and perhaps even a difference in values and norms, between the Meccan and the Medinan Muslims as groups. Nothing is said about the Medinan Muslims disapproving of the behaviour of their wives. 'Umar states as a matter of fact that in Medina the women are accustomed to have the upper hand over their men ... *al- Anṣār ... qawmun taghlibuhum nisā'uhum*. The situation becomes uncomfortable to the Meccan men only when the Meccan women start to imitate the behaviour of the Medinan women.

The role of 'Umar's wife in the hadith seems to be a minor part but it is she who utters some of the most important words. Her name is not mentioned but her words to 'Umar are quoted directly.

I put on my clothes and went to meet Ḥafṣa. I said to her: “Ḥafṣa, is anyone of you on bad terms with the Prophet all day until night?” She said: “Yes.” I said: “You good-for-nothing, wastrel! Don’t you believe that God will become angry on account of the anger of God’s Messenger and you will perish? Don’t ask too much from the Prophet and don’t answer him back and don’t keep away from him. Ask me whatever you need and do not let the fact that your neighbour is more charming than you and more beloved to the Prophet mislead you.” He meant ‘Ā’isha.

In another version of the hadith in *Kitāb tafsīr al-Qur’ān: sūrat al-taḥrīm*, chapter 2, no. 4913, ‘Umar describes the incident in some more words: “Once when I was making a decision on a certain matter, my wife said: ‘What about doing so-and-so.’ I said to her: ‘What’s the matter with you? What have you got to do with anything that is my business only?’”

The other female character in the narration in addition to ‘Umar’s wife, is his daughter Ḥafṣa. She also has a surprisingly minor part in the hadith, although the discussion between her and her father and especially the advice ‘Umar gives her, has been included in the chapter heading. Ḥafṣa’s words are quoted twice: first she simply answers yes to ‘Umar’s question as to whether any one of the Prophet’s wives argues with him. ‘Umar forbids his daughter to be too demanding. The greed of the Prophet’s wives is one of the reasons why the Prophet separated himself from his wives.

‘Umar also tells Ḥafṣa not to be misled by ‘Ā’isha. “*Wa-lā yaghurrannaki an kānat jāratuki awḍa’a minki wa-aḥabba ilā l-nabī (ṣ).*” ‘Umar seems to be cautioning Ḥafṣa against joining ‘Ā’isha in her tricks and schemes. What seems to be acceptable conduct for ‘Ā’isha may not be the same for the other wives because ‘Ā’isha was the Prophet’s favourite.

Al-Bukhārī uses a part of the same hadith in a chapter which he entitles the Chapter about a man’s greater love for one of his wives than the others, *Bāb ḥubbi l-rajuli ba’da nisā’ihi afḍala min ba’ḍ*, chapter 105/106, no. 5218, where the words of ‘Umar almost have a comforting tone: “*Yā bunayyati, lā*

‘Umar said: “We were assuming that the Ghassānid tribe was planning to attack us. One day when it was his turn, my Anṣārī friend went to town and came back at night. He knocked violently at my door and asked for me. I became frightened and came out. He said: “An enormous thing has happened today.” “What is it?” I asked, “Have the Ghassānids attacked?” He said: “No, something more important and more terrible than that: The Prophet has repudiated his wives!” I said ‘Ḥaḥṣa is a good-for-nothing miserable.’ I had already thought that this would happen.

I put on my clothes and performed the morning prayer with the Prophet, and then the Prophet went to his room and stayed there alone.

I went to meet Ḥaḥṣa and found her weeping. I asked: “What are you weeping for? Did I not warn you? Did the Prophet repudiate you all?” She said: “I don’t know. There he is alone in his room.”

*yaghurrannaki hādhihi allatī aḥjabahā ḥusnuhā ḥubbu rasūli llāhi (ṣ) iyyāhā.*” (My daughter, don’t let yourself be misled by the one whose beauty evokes the love of God’s Messenger!)

‘Umar uses effectively the contrast of two calamities and, at the same time, gives us a glimpse of the social reality the hadith is supposed to refer to, by telling about the fears they had in Medina about the tribe of Ghassān. According to the version in *Kitāb al-libās* (Chapter 31, no. 5843), the Ghassānids were the only tribe nearby which had not surrendered to the Prophet. Yet another version in *Kitāb tafsīr al-Qur’ān* (Chapter 2, no. 4913) accentuates the fear of the Medinan Muslims: “We were told that he [the King of the Ghassānids] intended to attack us and we were absorbed in these thoughts.” Because of the fear of the Ghassānids, ‘Umar first thinks that it is because of their attack that his neighbour is pounding at his door at night. According to the neighbour the repudiation was more terrible than an attack by a fearsome hostile tribe: “*Lā, bal aḥḥamu min dhālika wa-ahwalu: ḥallaqa rasūl Allāh (ṣ) nisā’ahu.*” Ḥaḥṣa’s words are quoted here for the second time “*Lā adrī, hā huwa dhā muḥtazilun fī l-mashrubatī*”. In the Prophet’s house *mashruba* was situated a few steps above of the other quarters. In another version of the story (*Kitāb tafsīr al-Qur’ān: sūrat al-tahrīm*, Chapter 2, no. 4913) ‘Umar visits not only Ḥaḥṣa but also another of the Prophet’s wives, namely Umm Salama. Umm Salama does not accept the interference of ‘Umar in the family life of the Prophet and his wives and she retorts to him: “*Ajaban laka yā Ibn al-Khaḥṣāb dakhalta fī kulli shay’in ḥattā*

I came out and sat near the pulpit and saw a group of people sitting around it and some of them were weeping. I sat with them for a while but could not endure the situation, so I went to the room where the Prophet was and said to his black servant: "Announce 'Umar." The servant went in, talked to the Prophet and returned saying: "I spoke to the Prophet and mentioned you but he remained quiet." I returned and sat with the group of people sitting near the pulpit, but I could not bear the situation and once again I said to the servant: "Announce 'Umar." He went in and returned saying: "I mentioned you to him but he remained quiet." I returned again and sat with the group of people sitting near the pulpit but I could not bear the situation, so I went to the servant and said: "Announce 'Umar." He went in and returned to me saying: "I mentioned you to him but he remained quiet." When I was turning away to leave, the servant called me and said: "The Prophet gives you permission." I went to God's Messenger and saw him lying

*tabtaghī an tadhkula bayna rasūl Allāhi (ṣ) wa-azwājihi.*" (Good heavens, Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, you interfere in everything! You even want to come between God's Messenger and his wives.)

When 'Umar meets the Prophet and tells him about his meeting with Umm Salama, the Prophet finds this amusing – *fa-lammā balaghtu ḥadītha Umm Salama tabassama rasūlu llāhi (ṣ)* (When I came to the incident with Umm Salama, God's Messenger smiled.)

Three foreign tribes or people are mentioned in the hadith. The tribe of the Ghassān functions as an external threat to the community, and the Romans and the Persians are examples of non-Muslim peoples who are rich and powerful in this life but who will not gain a reward in the after-life. The Ghassānids, the Romans and the Persians constitute the opposite of the *umma*. Their opposite role is accentuated by the group of Muslims that has gathered in the mosque. They are the core of the early Meccan *umma*, worried about its leader and his family. Some of the people are even said to be weeping. This staging sets the Prophet's wives in opposition to their husband Muhammad, their families, and, implicitly, the whole *umma*. After all, it is because of them that the whole community is upset.

The dramatic effect of the central scene of the story is accentuated by 'Umar's attempts to get an audience with the Prophet, which is repeated three times in exactly the same words. 'Umar is giving up hope and turning away when the Prophet finally gives him permission to enter. And then, as an anticlimax but at the same time a great relief, the Prophet utters one single word: "*Lā*" (No).

on a mat without a mattress. The wefts had left imprints on his side and he was leaning on a leather pillow stuffed with date-palm fibres. I greeted him and while still standing, I said: "God's Messenger, did you repudiate your wives?" He looked at me and said: "No." I said: "*Allāhu akbar!*" And then, while still standing, becoming more familiar, I said: "You know Messenger of God, we, men of Quraysh, used to have the upper hand over our wives, but when we came to Medina we noticed that their women have the upper hand over their men." The Prophet smiled and then I said to him: "You know Messenger of God, I went to meet Ḥafṣa and said to her: 'Don't let the fact that your neighbour is more charming than you and more beloved to the Prophet mislead you.'" He meant 'Ā'isha.

The Prophet smiled for a second time and I sat down when I saw him smile. I looked around his house, and by God, I could not see anything of importance in his house except three leather containers, so I said: "Messenger of God, invoke God to make your followers rich, for the Persians and the Romans are rich and they have been given earthly possessions and they do not even worship God." The Prophet sat up as he had been leaning on his side and said: "Do you really think so, Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb? These people have hastily been given their rewards in this world." I said: "Messenger of God, forgive me."

Again, it is 'Umar who does most of the talking. The mood of the Prophet improves while listening to him. The changes in both the mood of the Prophet and his interlocutor are described in a very delicate way by the movements of their bodily positions. At first, the Prophet is lying down on a woven mat, which has left marks on his side. 'Umar greets him and asks, standing, *wa-anā qā'imun*, whether the repudiation has taken place or not. The Prophet looks at 'Umar, answers in the negative, and 'Umar exclaims: "*Allāhu akbar!*" The Prophet's reaction to the words of 'Umar when he explains his feelings about the change in the women's behaviour to the Prophet is worth noticing. The Prophet does not seem to take this so seriously, he does not say anything about his wives or about the Meccan or Medinan women in general. The Prophet does not say anything, he simply smiles. The smile of the Prophet encourages 'Umar to go on telling him about his earlier meeting with Ḥafṣa and the advice he had given her. The Prophet smiles for a second time, and 'Umar has the courage to sit down. He looks around in the Prophet's house and finds it a very poor household. He advises Muhammad to ask God for more wealth and compares the economic situation of Muslims to that of the Roman and Persian people who are rich and powerful but non-Muslim. The Prophet sits up and is seemingly annoyed. 'Umar asks for forgiveness.

The description of bodily positions is a typical topos in hadith literature. The Prophet standing on the *minbar* and the Prophet's head resting on 'Ā'isha's thigh are some of the most usual ones. According to Stetter (p. 15–18) the thigh symbolises the readiness to receive divine inspiration.

The Prophet kept away from his wives for twenty-nine days because of the story Ḥafṣa had told ‘Ā’isha. He had said: “I will not visit them for one month” because of his anger towards them when God had blamed him. When twenty-nine days had passed the first one whom the Prophet went to meet was ‘Ā’isha. She said to him: “Messenger of God, didn’t you swear that you would not visit us for one month, but now only twenty-nine days have passed, I have been counting them.” He said: “There are twenty-nine days in a month.” And there were twenty-nine days in that month. ‘Ā’isha said: “Then God revealed the Verses of Choice, and of all his wives he asked me first, and I chose him.” Then he let all his other wives choose and they answered the same way as ‘Ā’isha did.

As an epilogue, after the episode between ‘Umar and the Prophet, the commentator tells briefly how the crisis ended. He does not tell what happened between the Prophet and his wives, he simply states that the Prophet kept away from his wives for twenty-nine days and that the reason for his separation was a secret or a story, *ḥadīth*, Ḥafṣa had revealed to ‘Ā’isha.

After the separation, the Prophet goes to meet ‘Ā’isha. The young ‘Ā’isha’s character is a very ambiguous one. First, she greets her long-absent husband by wondering why he did not do as he had said and stayed away from his wives for the whole month, since only twenty-nine days had passed according to her calculation. In all the variations she is quickly silenced by the Prophet while he states that there are twenty-nine days in the month. And the narrator reconfirms: “*Wa kāna dhālik al-shahru tis’a wa-‘ishrīna!*” (And there were twenty-nine days in that month.) Then ‘Ā’isha is pictured as being proud of the fact that, of all his wives, the Prophet came to meet her first and the Verses of Choice were revealed in her presence and the Prophet asked her to choose first. In another version, *Kitāb maḥālim: Bāb 25 al-ghurfati wa-l-‘ulliyat al-mushrifati wa-ghayr al-mushrifati fī l-suṭūhi wa-ghayrihā*, no. 2468, a longer version of the conversation between the Prophet and ‘Ā’isha is given. According to this version, the Prophet says to her that he will ask her a question but he is not expecting an answer before she consults her parents. ‘Ā’isha knows that her parents would not advise her to leave the Prophet, so she answers: “*A-fī ḥādihā asta’miru abawayya? Fa-innī urīdu Allāha wa-rasūlahu wa-dār al-ākhirā.*” (Should I consult my parents on that? I choose God and His Messenger and the Hereafter.)



Although the Prophet is a marginal figure in the actual story, the structure of the hadith presents him as the central figure of the narration. The report is like a Russian doll: the frame story (Ibn ‘Abbās and ‘Umar on pilgrimage) reveals another frame story (‘Umar and his neighbour), which reveals a web of episodes (‘Umar and his wife, ‘Umar and his daughter, the threat of the Ghassānids, ‘Umar and his daughter for the second time, ‘Umar and the Prophet’s servant) which are like inserted scenes, small boxes in a huge box. But all these stories and sub-stories and inserted scenes lead to one tiny box at the centre of everything, and that is the box which contains the scene between ‘Umar and Muhammad. The dramatic effect of the scene is accentuated by ‘Umar’s attempts to gain an audience with the Prophet, which is repeated three times using exactly the same words.<sup>212</sup> ‘Umar is giving up hope and turning away when the Prophet finally gives him permission to enter. And then, as an anticlimax but at the same time a great relief, the Prophet utters one single word: *lā*, ‘no’.

Although power relations between men and women are a very essential substance of this hadith, they are not directly discussed. The issue is buried in the structure of the story and although it comes up in the argumentation of ‘Umar and his wife, the Prophet himself does not pronounce anything concerning the power relations between men and women. Power relations between men and women are clearly the narrative force of the hadith. Disputes between ‘Umar and his wife and daughter, and alleged disputes between the Prophet and his wives, are incidents which carry the narration forward; they act as conductors to other “boxes” of the narration.<sup>213</sup>

#### *b. Tahrīm*

*Kitāb tafsīr al-Qur’ān: Sūrat al-tahrīm* includes five chapters and six hadiths. The chapter headings take up parts of the first five verses of *Sūrat al-tahrīm* one by one. The choice which was given to the wives of the Prophet is not mentioned in any of these reports, but they clearly belong to the theme of choice. Indeed, it is noteworthy that in the first hadith of *Kitāb tafsīr al-Qur’ān: Sūrat al-tahrīm*, al-Bukhārī takes up a verse from the surah, which includes the Verses of Choice (33:28–29). Thus, he connects here, once again, the two surahs, which are related to the incident in the Prophet’s household, namely *Sūrat al-tahrīm* (66:1–4) and *Sūrat al-aḥzāb* (33:28–29). Al-Bukhārī also refers to 33:21: *{la-qad kāna lakum fī*

<sup>212</sup> Stetter calls this kind of repetition, which usually occurs in threes, schemata. Other types of schemata he identifies are the use of parallelism, the use of assonance and rhyme. See Stetter 1965: 35–122.

<sup>213</sup> The Egyptian writer Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm – among other writers – has benefited from the dramatic aspects of the Prophet’s life. Ruth Roded analyses Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm’s play *Muḥammad*, which was composed between 1934–35 in her article Gendered Domesticity (2002).

*rasūli llāhi uswatun ḥasanatun*},<sup>214</sup> and thus implies that choosing God and the hereafter means following the Prophet's sunna.

Chapter 1 no. 4911

{*Yā ayyuhā l-nabīyu limā tuḥarrimu mā aḥalla llāhu laka*} (66:1)

Prophet, why do you hold forbidden that which God has made lawful to you?

Ibn ʿAbbās said about *al-ḥarām*: forbidden, in this case things that a person has forbidden from himself or promised to abstain from

*Yukaffir* cancel, go back on your word

Ibn Abbās added: {*la-qad kāna lakum fī rasūli llāhi uswatun ḥasanatun*} You have, indeed, in the Messenger of God an excellent exemplar. (33:21)

The next hadith no. 4912 briefly relates the story of the honey, which is, as well, connected to the Verses of Choice in most of the medieval interpretations of the Qur'an and hadith. Ibn Sa'd is one of the very famous examples. In fact, this is an illustrative example of the "typology of pettiness" Barbara Stowasser speaks about in her book. Many medieval scholars claim that the episode of the honey was the reason or at least one of the reasons for the crisis described in hadith no. 5191 in the Prophet's household.

ʿĀ'isha reports: the Prophet used to drink honey in Zaynab bint Jaḥsh's house and he used to delay leaving her. Ḥafṣa and I agreed that the one who would be the first to receive the Prophet would ask him if he had eaten *maghāfir*.<sup>215</sup> because he smelled of it. The Prophet answered that he had not eaten *maghāfir* but he had drunk honey with Zaynab bint Jaḥsh. Then he swore never to drink it again and asked her not to speak about this to anyone.

<sup>214</sup> Juynboll bases his attempt to date the identification of sunna with the sunna of the Prophet on the interpretation of this verse. According to Juynboll (1987: 101–108), Mālik (d.795) in his *Muwattaʿa* clearly refers, in passing, to this verse in *Kitāb tahajjud*, when he discusses the command to pray the *witr*, but there is no further elaboration on the role of the Prophet as a model to Muslims in the collection. Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855) however, in his *Musnad*, creates a correlation between this verse and the Prophet as something that would become a universal example for all Muslims.

<sup>215</sup> *Maghfūr* is a gum of a species of mimosa, called *ʿurfuṭ*, which has a disagreeable odour. When bees eat of this gum, traces of the odour can be noticed in the honey. Pehr Forsskål (1732–1763) named the plant *Mimosa ḍrfota* in his *Flora Aegyptiaco-Arabica* (1775), which was published by his colleague, Carsten Niebuhr.

There is a more complete version of the incident of the honey in *Kitāb al-ṭalāq*. Chapter 8 {*limā tuḥarrimu mā aḥalla llāhu laka*} (66:1) number 5268. The identity of the wife who gave the unfortunate drink of honey to Muhammad is switched from Zaynab to Ḥafṣa.

‘Ā’isha reported: God’s Messenger liked sweets and honey. After performing the afternoon prayer he used to visit his wives, and draw close to one of them. He went to Ḥafṣa bint ‘Umar and stayed with her longer than usual. This made me jealous and I asked about it. He told me that a woman of Ḥafṣa’s family had sent her a small vessel of honey as a gift, and she poured for the Prophet a drink of honey from it. I said: “By God, we’ll trick him.” I talked to Sawda and said: “When he’ll visit you and draw close to you, say to him: God’s Messenger, have you eaten *maghāfir*? And he would say to you: No. Then say to him: What is that odour? (God’s Messenger could not bear smelling bad.) So he would say to you: Ḥafṣa has given me a drink of honey. Then you should say to him: The bees might have sucked *urfu*! I’ll say the same to him and Ṣafīyya; you should say this, too!” When he came to Sawda, she said, according to her own words: “By Him besides whom there is no God, because of my fear for you I almost accosted him with the words you told me to say when he was still at the door.” When God’s Messenger came near, she said: “Messenger of God, did you eat *maghāfir*?” He said: “No.” She said: “What is that odour?” He said: “Ḥafṣa gave me a drink of honey.” She said: “The bees might have sucked *urfu*.” When he came to me I said this to him. He then visited Ṣafīyya and she also said like this to him. When he visited Ḥafṣa, she said: “Messenger of God, should I not give you that drink?” He said: “I don’t need it.” Sawda said: “*Subḥān Allāh!* By God, we have deprived him of honey/made honey unlawful for him!” I said to her: “Keep quiet.”<sup>216</sup>

Chapter 2 no. 4913.

{*Tabtaghī marḍāta azwājika qad faraḍa llāhu lakum taḥillata aymānikum*} (66:1–2) You (masc. sg.) seek to please your wives, but God has permitted you (masc. pl.) absolution from your oaths.

This hadith is practically the same report as no. 5191 and it is likewise narrated by Ibn ‘Abbās. Al-Bukhārī has chosen to repeat the narration here with slight changes in the details: in the beginning of the text Ibn ‘Abbās stresses the fact that he had to wait for a long time before he had the occasion to talk to the Prophet about the crisis in his household:

For the whole year I wanted to ask ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb about a verse but I could not ask him out of respect until he went on pilgrimage and I went with him. On our way back home he went aside by the arak trees to answer the call of nature. I waited till he finished and then I walked with him and asked: “Chief of the believers, who were those two of the Prophet’s wives who conspired against him?” He said: “They were Ḥafṣa and ‘Ā’isha.” He (Ibn ‘Abbās) said: I said: “By God, I wanted to ask you about this a year ago, but I could not do so out of respect for you.” He said: Then ‘Umar said: “If

<sup>216</sup> Muslim links the trick of the honey and *tahrīm* quite explicitly. In his Book of Repudiation nos. 19 and 20 he includes the same story about *maghāfir*. When the Prophet says that he has drunk honey in the house of Zaynab bint Jaḥsh but will never do it again, the verses { *Yā ayyuhā l-nabīyu limā tuḥarrimu mā aḥalla llāhu laka*} until { *in tatūbā ilā llāh*} (66:1–4) were revealed.

you think that I know, ask me, before doing anything. For if I know, I'll certainly share the knowledge with you."

The fundamental discord between men and women is described differently in this version. While in no. 5191 'Umar claims that the behaviour of the Meccan women changed because of the bad influence of the Medinan women, in this report he compares the behaviour of all the women in Medina to the pre-Islamic situation. 'Umar even seems to imply that women in Medina abuse the attention given to them by God:

He (Ibn 'Abbās) said: Then 'Umar said: "By God, in the pre-Islamic times we did not pay attention to women, but this changed when God revealed what He revealed regarding them and assigned to them what He has assigned." He said: "Once when I was making a decision on a certain matter, my wife said: "What about doing so-and-so." He said: I said to her: "What's the matter with you? What have you got to do with anything that I want to do?" She said: "Good heavens, Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb! You don't want to be argued against, whereas your daughter argues with God's Messenger so much that he remains angry for the whole day!"

'Umar's discussion with his daughter is narrated in the same way as in no. 5191. In addition to Ḥafṣa, 'Umar talks to Umm Salama as well:

Then I left and went to Umm Salama's house because she was one of my relatives. I talked to her but Umm Salama said: "Good heavens, Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb! You interfere in everything; you even want to come between God's messenger and his wives!" By God, her words slightly relieved my feelings and I left her.

The co-operation between 'Umar and his *Anṣārī* friend in transmitting news is reported in the same way as in no. 5191, as well as the episode about the *Anṣārī* knocking at 'Umar's door. 'Umar put on his clothes and went to God's Messenger and he found him in his *mashruba*. The black servant is mentioned but the threefold attempt of 'Umar to enter is omitted and the Prophet receives 'Umar without delay. The Prophet is lying on a bare mat. The leather pillow stuffed with date-palm fibres is mentioned again and in addition to this it is reported that: "leaves of acacia tree were piled at his feet."

The report ends abruptly:

I saw imprints the mat had left on his side, and I wept. He said: "Why are you weeping?" I said: "God's Messenger, the Persian and the Byzantine rulers have what they have and you are the Messenger of God!" He said: "Does it not satisfy you that they enjoy this world but we will enjoy the Hereafter?"

This hadith seems to be out of place in this chapter. It has nothing to do with the Qur'anic verse it is supposed to refer to, namely 66:1–2. However, the last words link the report to the theme of choice between life and death. Being the last words, they remain hanging in the air; a question, whose answer is left unpronounced since it is self-evident.

The last three chapters in this section refer to verses 3, 4, and 5 in *Sūrat al-tahrīm*, and thus bring us back to the motive in Hadith of Choice: Chapter 3 {*wa-idhā asarra l-nabīyu ilā baʿḍi azwājihī ḥadīthan*} ilā {*al-khabīr*} no. 4914 repeats the episode between ʿUmar ibn al-ʿAbbās and the Prophet when ʿUmar asks which of the Prophet’s wives were referred to in 66:4 {*wa-in tazāharā ʿalayhi*}. Chapter 4 {*in tatūbā ilā llāhi wa-qad ṣaghat qulūbukumā*} no. 4915 and Chapter 5 {*ʿasā rabbuhū in ṭallaqakunna an yubdilahu azwājan khayran minkunna*} nos. 4915 and 4916 are very similar.

### c. *Qiwāma*

The Hadith of Choice acts as a link to a Qur’anic verse, the verse of *Qiwāma*, which is one of the most important with regard to the position of women.

*Kitāb al-Nikāḥ*, Chapter 92 no. 5201.

*Bāb qawl Allāhi taʿālā {al-rijālu qawwāmūna ʿalā l-nisāʾ}*

On these words of God: Men are the protectors of women.

Anas said that the Prophet took an oath that he will separate himself from his wives for one month and he stayed in his *mashruba*. On the twenty-ninth day he came down and he was told: “God’s Messenger, you took an oath for a month!” He said: “There are twenty-nine days in this month.”

Chapter 93 no. 5202.

The separation of the Prophet from his wives. It was told by Muʿāwiya ibn Hayda that he said: In any case he will separate (himself from) them only in the house. The first variant is more authentic.

Narrated Umm Salama: The Prophet took an oath that he would not visit some of his wives for one month, *ḥalafa lā yadhkulu ʿalā baʿḍi nisāʾihi shahran*. But when twenty-nine days had elapsed, he went to them in the morning or in the evening. It was said to him: “Oh, God’s Messenger! You had taken an oath that you would not visit them for one month.” He said: “A month can be twenty-nine days.”

In hadiths no. 5201 and no. 5202 the separation and the exchange of words is related in a totally depersonalised fashion. No names are mentioned and the events are told in the passive voice. The Qur’anic verses that these hadiths refer to are very important. The verse of *Qiwāma* has been widely used by those who claim that the position of women is inferior to that of men in the Qur’an.

No. 5203

Narrated Ibn ʿAbbās: One morning we saw the wives of the Prophet weeping, and every one of them had her family with her. I went to the mosque and it was crowded with people. Then ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb came and went up to the Prophet who was staying in his room. He made greetings, but nobody answered. He greeted again, but

nobody answered. He greeted again, but nobody answered. Then he was called and he went to the Prophet, greeted him and said: "Have you repudiated your wives?" The Prophet said: "No, but I have taken an oath not to approach them for one month." He stayed away for twenty-nine days and then went to his wives.

A version of the hadith is repeated in *Kitāb al-nikāḥ* Chapter 92 with the chapter heading "Chapter on these words of God: Men are the managers of the affairs of women for that God has preferred in bounty one of them over another." These words reproduce the words of the *Verse of Qiwāma* (4:34). The Qur'anic words al-Bukhārī quotes in his chapter heading do not seem to have anything to do with the text he gives in the following hadith. The chapter heading mentions the *qiwāma* of men over women: *Bāb qawl Allāhi ta'ālā {al-rijālu qawwāmūna 'alā l-nisā'}* and the hadith says that "the Prophet took an oath that he will separate himself from his wives for one month and stay in his *mashrubā*, room. On the 29th day he came down and he was told: "God's Messenger, you took an oath for a month! He said: There are 29 days in this month." Interestingly, the discussion between 'Ā'isha and the Prophet about the length of the month is brought up even in this short version, although 'Ā'isha's name is not mentioned.

The relevance of the substance of the hadith to the chapter heading becomes clear if one reads not only the chapter heading but also the whole Qur'anic verse of which it is a part and which is, of course, assumed to be known.<sup>217</sup> What al-Bukhārī omits in his chapter heading are these words of God: "Righteous women are therefore obedient, guarding the secret of God's guarding." And as punishment for those wives who do not obey, the continuation of the same verse recommends that the husband should talk to his wives first, then he should abstain from sexual relations with them and as a last resort the disobedient wife may be beaten: "And those you fear may be rebellious admonish; banish them to their couches, and beat them." These words are clearly assumed to be known by the listeners and the readers of the text, otherwise there would be no sense in connecting the Hadith of Choice to the *Verse of Qiwāma*. In fact, al-Bukhārī uses the Hadith of Choice here to legitimise the separation of the Prophet from his wives. The separation is clearly sanctioned by God in the second part of the *Verse of Qiwāma*. But al-Bukhārī is, here again, using the same text in two contradictory ways. At the end of no. 5191, he says that God disapproved of Muhammad's separation from his wives: *wa-kāna qāla mā anā bi-dākhilin 'alayhinna shahran min shiddati mawjdatihi 'alayhinna ḥīna 'ātabahu llāhu*.<sup>218</sup>

<sup>217</sup> In some editions I have seen a version which makes the omission more explicit: He says: *qawl Allāhi ... ilā qawlihi*, from these words of God ... until his words, and thus includes the whole verse.

<sup>218</sup> He had said: I will not visit them for one month, because of his anger towards them, when God had blamed him.

In this group of hadiths nothing new is said about the event or the characters in the story; its function seems to be to justify *qiwāma* and to justify the Prophet's separation from his wives. This seems to contradict the words of God to his Messenger in the Verses of Choice since here God says to Muhammad: "O Prophet, why forbiddest thou what God has made lawful to thee ..." If, indeed, these two Qur'anic verses are connected and refer to the same incident, the banning in the second verse could be understood as referring to the Prophet's abstention from sexual relations with his wives as a group. The text is usually interpreted as referring to either a trick played by 'Ā'isha and the Prophet's promise not to drink honey any longer,<sup>219</sup> or to an incident between Ḥafṣa, 'Ā'isha, Māriya al-Qibṭiyya, and the Prophet, and the promise of the latter to abstain from sexual relations with Māriya,<sup>220</sup> or the general misbehaviour of the Prophet's wives.<sup>221</sup> Martin Lings is the only commentator who gives only the jealousy of the Prophet's wives towards Māriya as the background for the separation. He discusses the love of the Prophet for her, and how he used to visit her every day. When the Prophet noticed that the other wives were not happy with his visits, he made Māriya live further away from his house in upper Medina. But this only made things worse: because of the longer way the Prophet's visits took a much longer time than earlier. The other wives were so upset that the Prophet made an oath not to visit her any more.<sup>222</sup>

Al-Bukhārī is a genius in building up the puzzle of the Prophet's life. In *Kitāb al-ṣalāt* Chapter 18 *al-ṣalāt fī l-suṭūh, wa-l-minbar, wa-l-khashab* no. 378<sup>223</sup> he repeats once more the same story about the Prophet's separation for twenty-nine days. This time the focus is on the days the Prophet spent in his room and the way he performed his duties as the religious leader of the community:

<sup>219</sup> See chapter on *tahrīm* above.

<sup>220</sup> Al-Bukhārī does not tell the story about the jealousy Māriya caused in the hearts of the other wives. Māriya is not mentioned by al-Bukhārī at all. By many Muslim commentators of the Qur'an she is mentioned as one of the reasons behind the jealousy of the Prophet's wives. She is said to be white and beautiful and, most importantly, she gave Muhammad a son. The secret, which Ḥafṣa divulged to 'Ā'isha (66:3) supposedly dealt with the Prophet's relation to Māriya. According to some interpretation the *tahrīm* of the Prophet meant his declaring Māriya unlawful for him. Ṭabarī Vol. 28, p. 100–102. Öhrnberg, in his article "Māriya al-Qibṭiyya unveiled" (1984), shows that it is doubtful whether Māriya even existed. Öhrnberg's argument is that the story of Māriya and her son Ibrāhīm is a transposition of the story of Ibrāhīm, Hājir and Ismā'īl.

<sup>221</sup> See Stowasser 1994: 95–100.

<sup>222</sup> Lings 1983: 277–279. Lings's book, though eloquently written, is a completely uncritical account of what the early sources tell us about the Prophet's life. Lings does not even evaluate the different versions of events given by an early biographer like Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām. He simply chooses the version he prefers. Martin Lings is also known by the name Shaykh Abu Bakr Siraj ad-Din; he converted to Islam in 1938.

<sup>223</sup> Book of Prayer, Chapter 18 about prayer on terraces, on the pulpit and on planks, no. 378.

Anas ibn Mālik told that the Prophet fell from his horse and his leg or his shoulder was injured. He took an oath that he would separate himself from his wives for one month and he stayed in his *mashruba*. The stairs to the room were made of tree stumps. His friends came to visit him and he performed the prayers with them while they were standing. When he greeted them he said: "The imam is appointed so that people would follow his example. Thus, when he pronounces *takbīr* they pronounce it, when he kneels down, they kneel down, when he bows down, they bow down and when he prays standing they pray standing." On the twenty-ninth day he came down and he was told: "God's Messenger, you took an oath for a month!" He said: "There are twenty-nine days in this month."

Several other hadiths (*Kitāb al-adhān*, Chapter 51 *Innamā ju'ila l-imāmu li-yu'tamma bihi* no. 679, Chapter 82 *Ījāb al-takbīr wa-ftitāḥ al-ṣalāt* no. 732 and 733, Chapter 128 *Yahwī bi-l-takbīr ḥīna yasjud* no. 805; *Kitāb taqṣīr al-ṣalāt* Chapter 17 *Ṣalāt al-qā'id* no. 1114) relate the same incident about the Prophet's injury, some even give that he hurt his right side. There is an evident confusion here with the different incidents in the Prophet's household. The length of the month the Prophet stayed in his *mashruba* seems to have a strongly accentuated importance.

*Kitāb al-ṣawm* Chapter 11 *Qawl al-nabī (ṣ) "Idhā ra'aytumu l-hilāla fa-ṣūmū, wa-idhā ra'aytumūhu fa-aftirū"*, *wa-qāla Ṣila 'an 'Ammār: man ṣāma yawm al-shakki fa-qad 'aṣā Abā l-Qāsim (ṣ)* no. 1911 links this hadith again with the hadith of qiwāma:

Related Anas: When his leg was injured the Prophet took an oath that he would separate himself from his wives. He stayed in his *mashruba* for twenty-nine nights, and then he went downstairs. They said: "God's Messenger, you took an oath for a month!" He said: "There are twenty-nine days in this month."

*Kitāb al-maḏālim* Chapter 25 *Al-ghurfati wa-l-'ulliyati l-mushrifati wa-ghayr al-mushrifati fī l-suṭūḥi wa-ghayrihā* no. 2469 reports on the authority of Anas, again, that

When the Prophet took an oath that he will separate himself from his wives for a month his leg was injured. He stayed in his *'ulliyā* when 'Umar came and said: "Did you repudiate your wives?" He said: "No, but I took an oath that I will separate myself from them for a month." He stayed for twenty-nine days, and then he went down and visited his wives.

*Kitāb al-ṭalāq* Chapter 21 *Qawl Allāhi ta'ālā: {li-lladhīna yu'lūna min nisā'ihim tarabbuṣu arba'ati ashhurin}*.<sup>224</sup> No. 5289 reports that Anas ibn Mālik said:

When his leg was injured the Prophet took an oath that he would separate himself from his wives. He stayed in his *mashruba* for twenty-nine days. Then he went down and



they said: God's Messenger, you took an oath for a month." He said: "There are twenty-nine days in this month."

*Kitāb al-aymān wa-l-nudhūr* Chapter 22 *Man ḥalafa an lā yadkhula ʿalā ahlihi shahran. Wa-kāna l-shahru tisʿan wa-ʿishrīna* no. 6684 is the same word for word.

**Conclusion.** The subsection *Ikhtiyār* presents hadiths which act as background stories to the Verses of Choice (33:28–29). In these verses God asks Muhammad to tell his wives that they are free to go if they want the pleasures and prosperity of life. But if they choose God and His Prophet and stay with their husband they will gain their reward in Paradise. The alleged choice the wives of the Prophet had to make was a choice between staying married to Muhammad and getting a divorce. However, the choice his wives made had far greater implications: the factual choice they made was a choice between "this life and the Hereafter," it was a choice between spiritual life and death.

According to this hadith report – and all its variations – all the wives of the Prophet chose to stay with him. However, according to Ibn Saʿd, one tribal woman left the Prophet,<sup>225</sup> but she was not one of the wives who were mentioned in the Prophet's biographies.

The subsection of *Tahrīm* introduces the idea of the Prophet's example to the concept of choice. It gives us a glimpse of the Prophet's family life. The "trick of honey" illustrates the jealousies and pettiness of the Prophet's wives, which was one of the reasons for his separation from them, but it also demonstrates the permission of the Prophet and, probably other Muslim men, to make absolution of their oaths. The Prophet's example is pointed out directly by Ibn ʿAbbās in hadith no. 4911. Thus, the theme of choice is doubly intertwined with the idea of following the Prophet's example. People have a choice between God and this world; choosing God means following the Prophet's sunna.

The subgroup of *Qiwāma* develops the relationship of men and their wives. The Verse of *qiwāma* (4:34) is linked to the Verses of Choice (33:28–29) by al-Bukhārī. He links the Qur'anic words {*al-rijālu qawwāmūna ʿalā l-nisāʾ*} to the separation of the Prophet from his wives.

The Prophet's isolation is presented as an important event in the Medinan community and it is discussed on many occasions. Alternatively, the separation and the literal application of the oath became an important question later and this is reflected in the number of hadiths dealing with this event. The length of his isolation is mentioned exactly in each hadith. It was supposed to be one month, and it was twenty-nine days, but "there were twenty-nine days in that month", as

<sup>225</sup> Ibn Saʿd, *Al-Nisāʾ*, p. 100–102, 137.

is affirmed each time. The position of ‘Ā’isha as the favourite wife is also emphasised. In the majority of the hadiths the fact that the Prophet asked the critical question of her first is mentioned, and in some of them it is stressed that she made up her mind quickly and by herself, without consulting her parents.

## 2. Cluster of the Prophets

This group includes hadiths which may be divided into two subgroups: hadiths dealing with an incident between the Prophet and Abū Bakr, and hadiths dealing with the Prophet and ‘Ā’isha.

### a. The Prophet and Abū Bakr

Hadiths *Kitāb al-ṣalāt* Chapter 80 *Al-khawkhati wa-l-mamarri fī l-masjid*, no. 466,<sup>226</sup> *Kitāb faḍā’il aṣḥāb al-nabī (ṣ)* Chapter no. 31/3 *Qawl al-nabī (ṣ): Suddū l-abwāb, illā bāba Abī Bakrīn* no. 3654,<sup>227</sup> *Kitāb manāqib al-anṣār* Chapter no. 105/45 *Hijratu l-nabī wa-aṣḥābihi ilā l-Madīnati* no. 3904<sup>228</sup> describe an incident between the Prophet and Abū Bakr in front of a group of people. These three hadith reports are almost identical, and they are all narrated by Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī.

*Kitāb al-ṣalāt* Chapter 80, no. 466.

The Prophet delivered a sermon and said that God made one of his slaves choose between this world and God. He chose God. Abū Bakr wept. I wondered why this *shaykh* was weeping if God made one of his slaves choose between this world and God, and he chose God. But that slave was God’s Messenger himself and Abū Bakr knew more than we did. The Prophet said: “Don’t weep, Abū Bakr! Abū Bakr has helped me the most with his company and his fortune. If I were to take a *khalīl* from my community I would certainly take Abū Bakr but the Islamic brotherhood and friendship are enough. Close all the gates in the mosque except that of Abū Bakr.”<sup>229</sup>

<sup>226</sup> Book of Prayer, Chapter 80, on windows and corridors in the mosque, no. 466.

<sup>227</sup> Book of the virtues of the Companions, Chapter 31/3, on the words of the Prophet: Close all the gates except the gate of Abū Bakr, no. 3654.

<sup>228</sup> Book of the glory of the Followers, Chapter 105 about the emigration of the Prophet and his Companions to Medina, no. 3904.

<sup>229</sup> The *Sīra* by Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām describes the incident briefly: Al-Zuhrī said that Ayyūb b. Bashīr told him that the Messenger went out with his head bound up and sat in the pulpit. The first thing he uttered was a prayer for the men of Uḥud asking God’s forgiveness for them and praying for them a long time; then he said, “God has given one of his servants the choice between the world and that which is with God and he has chosen the latter.” Abū Bakr perceived that he meant himself and he wept, saying, “Nay, we and our children will be your ransom.” He replied, “Gently, Abū Bakr,” adding, “See to these doors that open

These reports tell about a man who had to choose between this world and God. Abū Bakr is the only one who understands what the story is about and the hadiths end with the Prophet's praise of him. The rhetorical intention of these texts seems to be to emphasise the virtues of Abū Bakr and to point out that the Prophet preferred him among all the other Companions.

Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām<sup>230</sup> relates another version of the choice of the Prophet. The Prophet went to pray for forgiveness for the dead Muslims in the cemetery of Medina, Baqī' al-Gharqad, and Abū Muwayhiba accompanied him. The Prophet said to him: "I have been offered the keys to the treasuries of this world and immortality therein, followed by Paradise, and I have been given the choice between that and meeting my Lord and Paradise." Abū Muwayhiba urged the Prophet to choose the first option, but the Prophet answered: "I have already chosen the meeting with my Lord and Paradise."<sup>231</sup> Al-Bukhārī does not relate this version.

#### b. The Prophet and 'Ā'isha

Hadiths *Kitāb al-da'awāt* Chapter no. 29 *Du'ā' al-nabī (s)* {*Allāhumma al-rafiqa al-a'lā*} no. 348,<sup>232</sup> *Kitāb al-maghāzī* Chapter no. 84/85 *Ākhiri mā takallama bihi al-nabī (s)* no. 4463,<sup>233</sup> *Kitāb tafsīr: Sūratu l-nisā'* Chapter no.13 {*fa-ulā'ika m'a lladhīna an'ama llāhu 'alayhim min al-nabiyyīna*} no. 4586;<sup>234</sup> *Kitāb al-riqāq*

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on to the mosque and shut them except the one from Abū Bakr's house, for I know no one who is a better friend to me than he".

'Abdu 'l-Raḥmān b. 'Abdullāh told me from one of the family of Sa'īd b. al-Mu'allā that the apostle said in his speech that day, "If I were able to choose a friend on earth I would choose Abū Bakr, but comradeship and brotherhood in the faith remain until God unites us in His presence." (Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām 1859, vol. I/2, p. 1006, tr. Guillaume 1980: 679)

<sup>230</sup> I have chosen to use this double name to denote the authorship of the earliest existing *Sīra* of the Prophet. Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833 or 213/828–829) explains himself in his introduction to the *Sīra* that he gives a shortened version of Ibn Ishāq's (d. 150/767–768 or 151/768–769) material to which he has occasionally added his own comments. Ibn Hishām's book is mainly based on the third (*Kitāb al-Mab'ath*) and the fourth (*Kitāb al-Maghāzī*) parts of Ibn Ishāq's work. Ibn Hishām was a student of a student of Ibn Ishāq, namely Ziyād ibn 'Abdallāh al-Bakkā'ī (d. 183/799). I have also used Guillaume's English translation/edition, which, according to Motzki, is a "reconstruction" of Ibn Ishāq's recensions. (Motzki 2003: 174; Schœler 2002:66–68, 84)

<sup>231</sup> Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām 1859, vol. II, p. 1000, Guillaume 1980: 678–679, and a slightly different version in Lings 1983: 337–338.

<sup>232</sup> Book of Invocations, Chapter 29, about the invocation of the Prophet (pbuh): "God, the highest companion!" no. 348.

<sup>233</sup> Book of Military expeditions, Chapter 84/85 on the last words of the Prophet, no. 4463.

<sup>234</sup> Book of Exegesis, Surah of Women, Chapter 13, With those of the Prophets unto whom God has shown favour, no. 4586.

Chapter no. 41 *Man aḥabba liqā'a llāhi aḥabba llāhu liqā'ahu* no. 6509<sup>235</sup> portray an episode between the Prophet and 'Ā'isha.

Kitāb tafsīr, Sūratu al-nisā' Chapter 13 no. 4586.

"With those of the Prophets unto whom God has shown favour"

{*fa-ulā'ika ma'a lladhīna ar'ama llāhu 'alayhim min al-nabiyyīna*}

Narrated 'Ā'isha: I heard God's Messenger say: "No prophet gets ill without being given a choice between this world and the Hereafter." During his fatal illness his voice became weak and I heard him say: "With those unto whom Allah hath shown favour, of the Prophets and the saints and the martyrs and the righteous." {*fa-ulā'ika ma'a lladhīna ar'ama llāhu 'alayhim min al-nabiyyīna wa-l-ṣiddīqīna wa-l-shuhadā'i wa-l-ṣāliḥīna*} So I knew that he had been given the choice.

Kitāb al-maghāzī Chapter no. 84/85 no. 4463.

The last words of the Prophet

*Bāb: Ākhir mā takallama bihi al-nabī (ṣ)*

When the Prophet was still healthy, he said: "No prophet will die before he has seen his place in Paradise and then he is given the choice." When he was very weak and his head was on my thigh, he lost consciousness for a while. Then he looked up at the ceiling of the house and said: "God, the highest companion." I understood that he is not going to choose us, because I realised that what he had said was the application of his words to us when he was still healthy. Thus, she said that his last words were "God, the highest companion!"<sup>236</sup>

These hadiths describe the last moments of the Prophet. Each one of them is reported by 'Ā'isha. They refer to a choice that is given to all the prophets. Before the end of their life they have to choose between the worldly life and God. Abū Bakr is not mentioned in these reports and the rhetorical emphasis lies on the person of Muhammad. However, 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr is very strongly present in these hadiths.

#### *The thigh as a topos*

The words of the Prophet refer to Qur'an 4:69: {*wa-man yuṭī'i llāha wa-l-rasūla fa-'ulā'ika ma'a lladhīna ar'ama llāhu 'alayhim min al-nabiyyīna wa-l-ṣiddīqīna*}

<sup>235</sup> Book of little things in life, Chapter 41 Who desires to meet God is wanted by Him, no. 6509.

<sup>236</sup> The death of the Prophet is described shortly in the *Sīra*, too: 'Ā'isha used to hear the apostle say: "God never takes a prophet to Himself without giving him the choice." When he was at the point of death the last word I heard the apostle saying was, "Nay, rather the Exalted Companion of paradise." I said (to myself), Then by God he is not choosing us! And I knew that that was what he used to tell us, namely that a prophet does not die without being given the choice. (Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām 1859 vol. I/1, p.1008, tr. Guillaume 1980: 680.)

*wa-l-shuhadā'i wa-l-ṣāliḥīna wa-ḥasuna ulā'ika rafīqan*}. When these words were revealed to the Prophet his head was lying on 'Ā'isha's thigh.<sup>237</sup> The significance of the thigh has been briefly mentioned in connection with the Hadith of Choice. It is characteristic of the reports transmitted by 'Ā'isha that they range from general descriptions to more detailed pictures of daily situations and acts. Hadiths transmitted by her often include detailed accounts about intimate incidents in the Prophet's household.

These details of daily routines and single incidents can give us a vivid picture of the life of the Prophet and the life of the early Medinan community. The details may have a practical or an aesthetic function, or they may be transmitted for a religious objective, to highlight a point in the Prophetic sunna.<sup>238</sup>

Stetter in his *Topoi und Schemata im Ḥadīṭ* suggests that the apparently insignificant details in the hadith reports might be considered "*nebensächlicher literarischer Schmuck ... der beiläufig dem biographischen Interesse an Mohamed diente und Einzelzüge anschaulich machte*".<sup>239</sup> However, the meaning of these details is more important. As stated earlier, Stetter himself interprets the thigh as a symbol of readiness to receive divine inspiration.

In *Kitāb al-tayammum* there is a report about a lost necklace, which resembles the famous hadith of slander.

Kitāb al-tayammum, Chapter 1 no. 334

Narrated by 'Ā'isha, the Prophet's wife: We set out with God's Messenger on one of his journeys. When we reached al-Baydā' or Dhāt al-Jaysh, (I noticed that) a necklace of mine was broken (and lost). God's Messenger stopped there to look for it, and so did everybody else. There was no water there, so the people went to Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq and said: "Don't you see what 'Ā'isha has done? She has made God's Messenger and the people stay in a place where there is no water and they carry no water with them." Abū Bakr came in while God's Messenger was sleeping with his head on my thigh. He said to me: "You have detained God's Messenger and the people where there is no water and they carry no water with them." Abū Bakr blamed me and said what God let him say and he hit me on my side with his hand. Only the Prophet's head on my thigh prevented me from moving (on account of pain).

<sup>237</sup> According to some other reports the Prophet died reclining on the chest of 'Alī. Ibn Sa'd II/2: 51. It is typical that the two bitter enemies disagree even on this.

<sup>238</sup> Juynboll draws conclusions about the structure of the text and says that "*matns* that go under the names of younger Companions are frequently a bit more elaborate, with embellishments, additions, inserted clarifications and the like, whereas the *matns* supported by strands with the older Companions are often stark, terse and so concise as to be in need of those embellishments, additions and clarifications. The conclusion seems obvious: the more elaborate a *matn*, the later it was probably brought into circulation. (Juynboll 1989: 364)

<sup>239</sup> ... [U]nimportant literary decoration, which at the same time contributes to give biographical information about Muhammad and to make the details of his life more illustrative. (Stetter 1965: 15)

God's Messenger got up in the morning and there was no water. Then God revealed the verse of *tayammum*, and they all performed *tayammum*. Usayd ibn Ḥuḍayr said: "Family of Abū Bakr! This is not the first blessing you evoke."

The camel on which I was riding moved and the necklace was found beneath it.

Al-Bukhārī seems to pay quite a lot of importance to the thigh since in *Kitāb al-ṣalāt*, there is a chapter about it, namely Chapter 12 *Mā yudhkaru fī l-fakhdh*:

Ibn 'Abbās, Jarhad and Muḥammad ibn Jaḥsh report that the Prophet said: "*Al-fakhdhu 'awratun*." (The thigh is to be covered.) But Anas said: "The Prophet uncovered his thigh." The Anas' report is better supported, whereas Jarhad's report is more precise and it will provide a solution to the inconsistency. Abū Mūsā said: "The Prophet covered his knees when 'Uthmān entered." Zayd ibn Thābit said: "God revealed a verse to the Prophet while his thigh was on mine, and his thigh became so heavy that I feared that mine would break."

A similar text is repeated in *Kitāb al-jihād*, Chapter 31 no. 2832:

Narrated Sahl ibn Sa'd al-Sā'idi: I saw Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam sitting in the mosque, so I approached him and sat by his side. He told me that Zayd ibn Thābit had told him that God's Messenger had dictated the verse to him:

Such believers as sit at home – unless they have an injury – are not equal to those who struggle in the path of God with their possessions and their selves. (4:95)

At that very moment Ibn Umm Maktūm came to the Prophet and said: "God's Messenger, if I could I surely would take part in *jihād*." He was blind. God revealed the verse to His Prophet and his thigh was on mine and it became so heavy that I feared that it would crush my thigh. Then he relaxed and God revealed, "Unless they have an injury".

The *fakhdh* is also a place to hold children and show love and affection to them. *Kitāb al-adab*, Chapter 12 Taking a child on your lap (thigh), no. 6003.

Narrated Usāma ibn Zayd: God's Messenger used to put me on one of his thighs and al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī on his other thigh. Then he embraced us and said: "God, be merciful to them since I love them very much."

**Conclusion.** In the cluster of choice it was the wives of the Prophet who had to make a choice. God told his Messenger to make his wives choose between this life and the hereafter. In the cluster of the prophets, it is the Prophet himself who is given the choice. These hadiths tend to stress the importance of the Abū Bakr family. In the first subgroup it is the father who understands the Prophet's words, in the second one it is the daughter.

Both the Prophet and his wives had to make a choice between life and death, but there is a difference between the choices presented in these two sections. The wives were made to choose in this life, the Prophet was made to choose just before his death. In the subgroup of hadiths dealing with the Prophet and 'Ā'isha this is evident, in the other one dealing with the choice given to all the prophets it

is not clear when the choice was presented. According to the *Sīra* it was presented before the fatal illness of the Prophet.

### 3. Cluster of wine and milk

There are several hadith reports which describe the nocturnal ascension to the seven heavens, *miʿrāj*, of the Prophet. During the ascension the Prophet is given a choice between two or three bowls which contain something to drink. The *miʿrāj* is shortly referred to in the Qurʾan (17:1) but neither the bowls nor the choice of the Prophet are mentioned.<sup>240</sup>

*Sūrat al-isrāʾ*<sup>241</sup> no. 1:

Glory to God who did take His servant for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque (*al-masjid al-ḥaram*) to the farthest mosque (*al-masjid al-aqṣā*), whose precincts we did bless – in order that we might show him some of our signs: for he is the one who hears and sees.

*Kitāb aḥādīth al-anbiyāʾ* Chapter 24 *qawl Allāhi taʿālā*: *HAst thou wa-hal atāka ḥadīthu Mūsā*<sup>242</sup> {*wa-kallama llāhu Mūsā taklīman*}<sup>243</sup> no. 3394

Narrated Abū Hurayra: God's Messenger said: On my Nightly journey I saw Moses and he was a lean and slender man (*rajulun ḍarbun*) as if he was one of the men of the Shanūʾa. I met Jesus and he was of medium stature and he was red as if he had just come out of the vault (*ka-annama kharaja min dīmās*). I saw Abraham and among his children I have the greatest resemblance with him. Two bowls were brought to me. In one of them was milk and in the other one there was wine. They said to me: Take any one you like. I took the milk and drank it. He said: You have been guided on *al-ḥiṭra* or you have attained *al-ḥiṭra*. Had you selected wine, your *umma* would have been misled.

Numbers 3437, 4709, 5576, 5603 are almost word for word the same as 3394. There is a mention of the bowls in *Kitāb tafsīr al-Qurʾān sūrat al-isrāʾ*<sup>244</sup> no. 17

<sup>240</sup> Milk is mentioned twice in the Qurʾan and its beneficial qualities are emphasised in two other verses. In 23:21 and 36:73 cattle and the beverage it produces for Muslims to drink is spoken of; in 16:66: milk, pure, agreeable/permissible to those who drink it {*labanan khāliṣan sāʾighan li-l-shāribīn*} is mentioned as an example of the wisdom and loving care of God. As regards honey, verse 68 mentions bees and the beneficial syrup they produce as a cure for mankind. (For the use of honey in the Prophet's medicine, see Perho 1995: 121 and *passim*.) Verse 47:15 mentions water, milk, honey and wine in a parable of Paradise. "In it are rivers of water incorruptible; rivers of milk of which the taste never changes; rivers of wine, a joy to those who drink; and rivers of honey pure and clear." Those who are condemned to the eternal fire are given boiling water to drink.

<sup>241</sup> No. 17 The nocturnal journey.

<sup>242</sup> Book of hadiths about the prophets, Chapter 24 about the words of God: "Hast though received the story of Moses?", Qurʾan 20:9.

<sup>243</sup> "And unto Moses God spoke directly", Qurʾan 4:164.

<sup>244</sup> Book of Exegesis, surah of the nocturnal journey.

Chapter 3 no. 4709; *Kitāb al-ashriba*<sup>245</sup> Chapter 1, no. 5576; Chapter 12, nos. 5603 and 5610.

In *Kitāb manāqib al-Anṣār* Chapter 42 *al-miʿrāj*<sup>246</sup> no. 3887 and in *Kitāb bad' al-khalq* Chapter 6 *dhikri l-malā'ikati ṣalawātu llāhi ʿalayhim*<sup>247</sup> no. 3207 a longer version of the episode is presented. The latter report omits the bowls but adds some more information on details. In these reports God's Messenger described his Night Journey, how his chest was cut open and his heart was taken out. A golden tray of Belief was brought to him and his heart was washed<sup>248</sup> and returned to its place. Burāq<sup>249</sup> was brought to the Prophet and it carried him and Gabriel to the nearest heaven.

In the first heaven Muhammad met Adam and they greeted each other. In the second heaven he met Yaḥyā (John) and ʿĪsā (Jesus), who were cousins. They greeted each other. In the third heaven he met Yūsuf (Joseph) and they greeted each other. In the fourth heaven he met Idrīs and in the fifth Hārūn (Aron), in the sixth Mūsā (Moses) and they greeted each other. When Muhammad left Moses, Moses wept. When he was asked why he was weeping he said: "I weep because a young man was sent after me and his followers will enter Paradise in greater numbers than my followers." In the seventh heaven Muhammad saw Ibrāhīm (Abraham) and they greeted each other. Then Muhammad ascended to *sidrat al-muntahā*<sup>250</sup> and he saw four rivers, two of which were hidden and two were visible. Muhammad asked about the rivers and Gabriel replied: "As for the hidden rivers, they are the two rivers in Paradise and the visible rivers are the Nile and the Euphrates."

"Then *al-bayt al-maʿmūr*<sup>251</sup> was shown to me and a container of wine and another of milk and a third of honey were brought to me. I took the milk. Gabriel said: "This is the *fiṭra* of you and your *umma*."

Then the prayers were prescribed to Muhammad. They were fifty prayers a day. When Muhammad returned he passed by Moses who asked how many prayers his people was ordered to offer. When Moses heard that fifty daily prayers were prescribed he told Muhammad to go back and ask for a reduction because

245 Book of drinks.

246 Book of the glory of the Followers, Chapter about the ascension.

247 Book about the Beginning of the creation, Chapter about the angels.

248 With water from the Zamzam, no. 3207.

249 Burāq was a white animal, smaller than a mule but bigger than a donkey, no. 3207.

250 The lotus tree of the seventh heaven. The tree is described in more detail in no. 3207: I saw its *nabq* fruits (*nabq*, Christ's thorn, *Zizuphus spinachristi*; bot. lotus fruit), which resembled the clay jugs of Hajr (a town in the Arabian peninsula) and its leaves were like the ears of an elephant. Four rivers flowed from its roots, two of them were apparent and two were hidden.

251 God's house, i.e., the *Ka'ba*.



his people would not be able to fulfil the prescription. Muhammad went back to God several times following the advice of Moses until the daily prayers were reduced to five only. According to Moses it was still too many but Muhammad felt that he could not go back any more and he said that he was satisfied.

Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām describes the Nightly Journey in the *Sīra* of the Prophet. There are several different portrayals of the journey, but only two of them report the choice between the bowls of drink.

The English translation by A. Guillaume pictures the incident as follows:

‘Abdullāh b. Mas‘ūd used to say: ... There he found Abraham the friend of God, Moses, and Jesus assembled with a company of the prophets, and he prayed with them. Then he was brought three vessels containing milk, wine, and water respectively. The apostle said: “I heard a voice saying when these were offered to me: if he takes the water he will be drowned and his people also; if he takes the wine he will go astray and his people also; and if he takes the milk he will be rightly guided and his people also. So I took the vessel containing milk and drank it. Gabriel said to me, You have been rightly guided and so will your people be, Muhammad.”

In his story al-Ḥasan said: “The apostle and Gabriel went their way until they arrived at the temple at Jerusalem. There he found Abraham, Moses, and Jesus among a company of the prophets. The apostle acted as their imam in prayer. Then he was brought two vessels, one containing wine and the other milk. The apostle took the milk and drank it, leaving the wine. Gabriel said: “You have been rightly guided to the way of nature and so will your people be, Muhammad. Wine is forbidden you.”<sup>252</sup>

**Conclusion.** In this cluster the Prophet has to make a choice between three bowls of drink. But, again, the contents of the bowls have a much greater significance than is directly made known. The apparent choice between the bowls is a choice between life and death.

There is a fundamental difference in the way the incident is described in the hadiths and in the *Sīra*. The hadiths describe the event as a free choice of drinks offered to the Prophet. The bowls are presented to Muhammad and it is understood that the choice he made had an effect on the destiny of his people, but the Prophet acts in ignorance of the outcome of his choice. The Prophet has to make a choice, which has far-reaching consequences to him and to his people, but the choice is represented as a hazardous game. Had the Prophet chosen water or honey – both being lawful drinks, and honey even the favourite drink of Muhammad – he would have condemned his people without meaning to. The *Sīra* gives an alternative impression of the course of events. According to the first version by Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām, Muhammad hears a voice guiding him to choose the bowl of milk as the three bowls are presented to him. The voice clearly

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<sup>252</sup> Guillaume 1980: 182.

gives the Prophet three alternatives: to drown himself and his people, to lead his people astray, or to be rightly guided and guide his people to salvation. In this case the Prophet makes a choice being fully conscious of the nature of his choice. The second version of the incident reported by Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām resembles the versions given by al-Bukhārī.

#### 4. Cluster of the spouse

The cluster of the spouse can be divided into three subsections: hadiths which describe the choice of a wife, hadiths in which a husband claims that his wife has chosen him, and hadiths that report Barīra's choice.

##### a. Section of the wives

There are plenty of hadith reports which claim something about the criteria according to which a wife is chosen, and there are quite a few short hadiths which simply enumerate the criteria of choosing a wife. The words *khayyara* and *ikhhtiyār* are not used in this connection, but the notion of making a choice is clearly present.

*Kitāb al-nikāḥ* Chapter 16 *al-akfā' fī l-dīn, wa-qawluhu: {wa-huwa lladhī khalaqa min al-mā'i basharan fa-ja'alahū nasaban wa-ṣihran}*<sup>253</sup> no. 5090:

Abū Hurayra narrated that he heard the Prophet say:

A woman is married for four (reasons): her wealth, her descent, her beauty and her religion, and the religious one will make you prosper.

Although these reports do not include the word 'choice' as such, the notion of choice is strongly present. In all these hadiths a woman is presented as the object of choice. In *Kitāb al-buyū' wa-qawl Allāhi ta'ālā: {wa-aḥalla llāhu l-bay'a wa-ḥarrama l-ribā} wa-qawluhu: {illā an takūna tijāratan ḥaḍīratan tudīrūnahā baynakum}*<sup>254</sup> Chapter 1 *mā jā'a fī qawl Allāh 'azza wa-jalla: {fa-idhā quḍiyati l-ṣalātu fa-ntashirū fī l-arḍi wa-btaghū min faḍli llāhi} ilā ākhiri l-sūra wa-qawlihi {lā ta'kulū amwālakum baynakum bi-l-bāṭili illā an takūna tijāratan 'an tarāḍin minkum}*<sup>255</sup> no. 2048 a woman is even more explicitly presented as an object of choice:

<sup>253</sup> Book of Marriage, Chapter 16 What is sufficient in religion, and His words: "It is He who has created man from water/a seed and He has given for them relationships of lineage and marriage." (25:54)

<sup>254</sup> Book of Trade and the Word of God, "God has permitted trade and forbidden usury" (2:275) and his words: "Except it be a transaction which you carry out on the spot among yourselves." (2:282)

<sup>255</sup> Chapter 1 about the words of God: "When the prayer is finished you may disperse through the land and seek of the bounty of God" (62:10) till the end of the surah and His words: "Eat

‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf said: “When we came to Medina, God’s Messenger established a bond of brotherhood between me and Sa’d ibn al-Rabīʿ. He said to me: “I am the richest man among the *Anṣār*, and I will give you half of my wealth, so look at my two wives and whichever of the two pleases you I will divorce her, and once she has become lawful you may marry her.” ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf did not accept the offer. He asked Sa’d ibn al-Rabīʿ whether there was a *sūq* there to do business and he chose later another woman from among the *Anṣār* and got married.

The chapterheading of this report does not refer to choice. The overall meaning of the report seems to be to approve of practising trade in general. But in *Kitāb al-nikāḥ* Chapter 7 *qawli l-rajuli li-akhihi unzur ayya zawjatayya shi'ta ḥattā anzila laka ‘anhā* no. 5072 the will of the *Anṣārī* to let his fellow *Muhājir* choose one of his wives is emphasised by classifying it in the Book of Marriage and, even more strongly, in the chapter heading: “A man said to another: Decide which one of my two wives you desire and I’ll hand her over to you.”

When ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf came (to Medina) the Prophet created a bond of brotherhood between him and Sa’d ibn al-Rabīʿ an *Anṣārī*. He had two wives and he offered to share his fortune and his wives with ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. “God bless you with family and fortune” and he said “Where is the market place?” He went to the market and bought some cheese and some butter. Some days later the Prophet saw him again and he had a yellow stain on his clothes. “What does this mean, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān?” asked the Prophet. “I married an *Anṣārī* woman,” he answered. “And what did you give her?” asked the Prophet. “The weight of a *nawār* (seed/pit/kernel) of gold.” “Give a banquet, even if it is only one sheep.”

This is a clear example of the way al-Bukhārī scatters hadiths with the same contents throughout several *kitābs* in his collection. It is quite obvious that he wanted not only to take up but emphasise the wish of the *Anṣārī* to share even his wives with the *Muhājir*. The motives of al-Bukhārī can only be guessed at. He might simply have wanted to highlight the generosity of the *Anṣār*. The role of the *Anṣār* or helpers was to give shelter and protection to the *Muhājirūn*, emigrants, who made the *hijra* with the Prophet from his native Mecca to Medina. The *Anṣār* had made an agreement with the Prophet and were ready to give whatever they could to help the newcomers. Some are even reported to have divided their property in two and given one half to the *Muhājirūn*. The Prophet established a bond of brotherhood between individual *Muhājirs* and Medinans to create a lasting tie between the tribes.<sup>256</sup> The *Muhājirūn* and the *Anṣār* maintained their separate identity for quite a long time and intermarriage between the two groups was not common. The Hadith of Choice (no. 5191) also indirectly supports this view since it takes it for granted that the Meccan women were married to Meccan men, and

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not up your property among yourselves in vanities; but let there be among you trade by mutual good-will.” (4:29)

<sup>256</sup> The *Muhājirūn* were mainly of the Meccan Quraysh tribe, the *Anṣār* mainly of the Aws or the Khazraj tribe who lived in the oasis of Medina.

the Medinan women to Medinan men. According to this text the Meccan women had only heard of the behaviour of the Medinan women with their husbands, but nothing is said about mixed marriages; not to mention a polygamous marriage with a Meccan *and* a Medinan co-wife! Nevertheless, ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn ‘Awf, the narrator in hadith 2048 did finally choose a woman from among the *Anṣār*.

A woman is represented as an object of choice in those numerous hadiths which tell about a man who – very likely – has married. The Prophet asks him whether he has chosen a young, virgin girl or a mature woman. The man always answers that he has chosen a mature woman, either a widow or a divorcée. This provokes astonishment and the Prophet asks him why he did not marry a virgin to play around with her. The man always has a practical answer: he has to take care of the orphan girls of his late father and he wanted to have an experienced lady to take care of the children, as in *Kitāb al-wakāla*, Chapter 8 no. 2309 and in *Kitāb al-da‘awāt*, Chapter 53 no. 6387.

It is noteworthy that the Prophet takes this attitude in these reports, since his own marriages and his choice of wives, as repeated in traditional *Sīra*, do not encourage Muslims to prefer virgins as brides. In fact, according to the Prophet’s *Sīra* and a number of hadiths, of the Prophet’s wives only ‘Ā’isha was a virgin when the Prophet married her, and the *muḥaddiths* do not fail to emphasise this in many hadiths assigned to her.<sup>257</sup> According to the literature available to us the Prophet seems to have chosen his other wives either for charitable reasons or for political and communal purposes.<sup>258</sup>

<sup>257</sup> For example *Kitāb al-nikāh*, Chapter 9 *Nikāh al-abkār*, *qāla Ibn Abī Mukayla: qāla Ibn ‘Abbās li-‘Ā’isha: lam yankih al-nabī (ṣ) bikran ghayraki*, no. 5077 Narrated ‘Ā’isha: I said: “God’s Messenger, suppose you arrived in a valley where there is a tree of which something has been eaten and then you found trees of which nothing has been eaten, of which tree would you let your camel graze?” He said: “Of the one of which nothing has been eaten before.” This means that God’s Messenger had not married a virgin besides her.

<sup>258</sup> The Prophet married thirteen wives:

1. Khadija bint Khuwaylid (d. 619): a Qurashi widow who had previously been married twice. Muhammad lived in a monogamous marriage with her for 25 years. She gave birth to all the children of Muhammad except Ibrāhīm. Muhammad is said to have married her because he appreciated her purity and chastity.
2. Sawda bint Zam‘a (d. 619–20 A.D. at the age of 30): “the aging Qurashi widow” who reportedly gave her day to ‘Ā’isha (see *Kitāb al-hiba wa-faḍlihā wa-l-tahrīd ‘alayhā* Chapter 15 *Hibat al-mar’a li-ghayri zawjihā, wa-‘itqihā idhā kāna lahā zawj fa-huwa jā’iz idhā lam takun safīha. Fa-idhā kānat safīha lam yajuz, wa-qāla llāhu ta‘ālā: {wa-lā tu’tū l-sufahā’a amwālakum}* 4:5 no. 2593 and *Kitāb al-nikāh* Chapter 99 *al-mar’a tahabu yawmahā min zawjihā li-ḍarratihā, wa-kayfa yaqsimu dhālika* no. 5212). According to the literature, Muhammad married her out of sympathy (she was a widowed mother of two daughters from her earlier marriage) but also out of loneliness.
3. ‘Ā’isha bint Abī Bakr (614–17 *Ramaḍān* 58/13.7.678): a Qurashi girl whom the Prophet married 619–20 A.D. at the age of 6. The marriage was consummated three years later, 1–2/623–4. ‘Ā’isha is often presented as the favourite one of the Prophet,

The marriages of the Prophet are even now widely discussed in Muslim communities. The position of the Prophet's wives and the example of the Prophet

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the one he really loved, but there were practical reasons for this union too: the Prophet wanted to offer respect to the girl's father, Abū Bakr.

4. Ḥafṣa bint 'Umar: a Qurashi widow whom Muhammad married in the year 3 / 635. The reason for marrying Ḥafṣa was to offer 'Umar, her father, the same respect and political power as the Prophet had offered Abū Bakr.
5. Zaynab bint Khuzayma: from the Hilāl tribe, who was also called *Umm al-masākīn*, was a widow of 'Ubayda ibn al-Ḥārith. He was martyred in the battle of Badr. The Prophet married her in *Ramaḍān* 4, but she died 2 or 8 months later.
6. Umm Salama or Hind bint Abī Umayya: a Qurashi widow who was married to the Prophet by her son, Salama ibn Abī Salama, in *shawwāl* 4/March 626 a month after his marriage to Zaynab. The Prophet married her to be able to take care of the widow and her orphan children.
7. Zaynab bint Jaḥsh was previously married to Zayd ibn Ḥāritha, the freed slave of Muhammad. It was because of her that *sūra* 33:37 was revealed. Zaynab was from the Khuzayma tribe and the Prophet married her in *Dhū l-Qa'da* 5/March–April 629 when she was about 35 years of age. The asserted reason for this marriage was to break the taboo about adopted sons and emphasise blood relations instead of adoption.
8. Juwayriya bint al-Ḥārith was an Arabian war captive, from the Banū Mustaliq of the Khuza'a tribe. The Prophet married her soon after Zaynab in the year 5. The Prophet is said to have married both Juwayriya and Maymūna (no. 11) to smooth the progress of spreading Islam. Juwayriya was the daughter of al-Ḥārith, the chief of the Banū Mustaliq tribe.
9. Umm Ḥabiba or Ramla bint Abī Sufyān was a Qurashi widow whom the Prophet married after the conquest of Khaybar, 7 A.H.
10. Ṣafīyya bint Ḥuyayy was born in Medina. She belonged to a Jewish tribe but converted to Islam. The Prophet married her in *Ṣafar* 7/June–July 628. With his marriage to Ṣafīyya the Prophet is said to have wanted to create better relations with the Jews.
11. Maymūna bint al-Ḥārith was a Meccan widow of Banū Hilāl. The Prophet married her in 7/629 when she was 27 years old. She was the last of the Prophet's wives.

In addition to these eleven Muhammad married two women 'Amra and Asmā' whom he divorced before the marriage was consummated. *Kitāb al-ṭalāq*, Chapter 3, *man ṭallaqa, wa-hal yuwājihu al-rajulu mra'atahu bi-l-ṭalāqi*, no. 5254: Al-Awzā'ī reported: I asked al-Zuhrī who was the wife of the Prophet who sought refuge in God against him. He said that 'Urwa had told him that according to 'Ā'isha when the daughter of al-Jawn was introduced to the Prophet and he approached her she said: "I seek refuge in God from you." The Prophet said: "You called for the Greatest; go back to your family."

5255: Abū Usayd narrated: We went out with the Prophet and when we arrived at a wall called *al-Shawṭ* we ended up between two walls and the Prophet said: "Stay here" and went in. He was taken to the Jawniyya, to a house between palm trees, the house of Umayma bint al-Nu'mān ibn Sharāḥīl. She was accompanied by her nurse who took care of her. When the Prophet went to her he said: "*Habī nafsaki lī*." Present yourself to me or give yourself to me. She said: "Would a queen present/give herself to a man in the street/common people?" The Prophet stretched out his hand to quieten her down, but she said: "I seek refuge in God from you!" The Prophet said: "You sought refuge in God." Then he came out to us and said: "Abū Usayd, give her two *rāziqīs* and take her back to her family." *Rāziqī* means a cloth of white cotton.

The statuses of two of his women were somewhat ambiguous: Rayḥāna bint Zayd, a Jewish prisoner of war and the Egyptian Copt Māriya al-Qibṭiyya were his concubines, but they are usually mentioned when the Prophet's wives are listed.

as a husband is still a relevant topic in the debate about the matrimonial rights of women, but also in the construction of a modern image of the Prophet. Many contemporary populist writers such as Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal find proof in the Hadith of Choice for the argument that Muhammad's marriage especially to Ḥafṣa was not based on love. Haykal repeats 'Umar saying that the Prophet would have wanted to divorce Ḥafṣa but did not do so because he wanted to keep good relations with 'Umar. Haykal makes a strong effort to prove that none of the marriages of the Prophet was contracted out of love, but for political and social reasons. His aim is to prove that the Prophet was not too keen on women and was able to control his sexual drive. Although the love of the Prophet for young 'Ā'isha is a popular theme in Islamic tradition, Haykal points out that it would have been illogical, if not impossible, that Muhammad would have fallen in love with 'Ā'isha when she was just a child. "*Fa-laysa mimmā yarḍāhu l-manṭiq an yakūn qad aḥabbahā wa-hiya fī hādhihi l-sinn l-ṣaghīra.*"<sup>259</sup>

Haykal also claims also<sup>260</sup> that it would have been strange that Muhammad would have first married Khadija, a widow who was much older than he and stayed in a monogamous marriage with her until her death and then, at an advanced age he would have become interested in younger women and married several out of love or sexual lust. To provide evidence to his argument, Haykal points to the fact that Muhammad did not have any children with his wives except Khadija and Māriya, although all of his wives – with the exemption of 'Ā'isha – would have been able to bear children since they had given birth in their former marriages. Haykal seems to imply that Muhammad did not have sex with his wives. However, there are hadiths that underline the sexual capacities of Muhammad; some affirm that he used to visit all his wives during the same night. The chapter headings of *Kitāb al-ghuṣl* Chapter 12 *Idhā jāma'a thumma 'āda, wa-man dāra 'alā nisā'ihī fī ghuṣlin wāḥidin* no. 268, and *Kitāb al-nikāḥ* Chapter 103 *Man ṭāfa 'alā nisā'ihī fī ghuṣlin wāḥidin* no. 5215 clearly indicate that the Prophet had intercourse with his wives, otherwise it would not be necessary to refer to the *ghuṣl*, the major ritual ablution, which is required after intercourse.

#### *b. Section of husbands*

A woman is not always exclusively the passive object of choice; in some cases she is the active subject. The section of husbands includes hadiths which contradict the pattern that a man chooses his wife and the woman is the object of choice. In these hadiths a husband indicates that his wife has chosen him.

<sup>259</sup> Haykal 1981: 330–331.

<sup>260</sup> Haykal 1981: 329–330.

*Kitāb al-ṭalāq* Chapter 5 *Man khayyara azwājahu wa-qawl Allāhi taʿālā: {qul li-azwājika in kuntunna turidna l-ḥayāta l-dunyā wa-zīnatahā fa-taʿālayna umattiʿkunna wa-usarriḥkunna sarāḥan jamīlan}*<sup>261</sup> no. 5262:

Narrated ʿĀʾisha: God’s messenger gave us a choice and we chose God and His Messenger but it was not counted for anything (it was not counted as a repudiation).

*Kitāb al-ṭalāq* Chapter 5 no. 2563:

Narrated Masrūq: I asked ʿĀʾisha about the choice and she said: The Prophet gave us a choice but was it repudiation? Masrūq said: I don’t care if I give her (his wife) a choice once or a hundred times after *she had chosen me*.

The chapter heading of this chapter quotes the same Qur’anic verse as the cluster of choice, namely the beginning of the Verses of Choice. Thus, they must refer to the same incident in the Prophet’s household, though the perspective is quite different. The message of the words by Masrūq seems to be that the choice given to the wives to either have their freedom or stay married is not a real choice; once they have accepted to marry they have chosen their husbands, they do not have the possibility to choose otherwise. However, the formulation emphasises the woman’s free choice of a husband: “*lā ubālī a-khayyartuhā wāḥidatan aw miʿatan baʿda an takhtārānī.*”

Of course, the words cited are not the words of the Prophet and thus do not have the same importance. Besides, this hadith is *khābar wāḥid* and cannot be considered an important one.<sup>262</sup>

### c. Section of Barīra

This section includes hadiths that deal with Barīra’s choice to go or not to go back to her husband.

*Kitāb al-farāʾiḍ* Chapter *idhā aslama ʿalā yadayhi l-rajul* 22 no. 6758

Narrated al-Aswad: ʿĀʾisha said: “I bought Barīra and her masters stipulated that the *walāʾ*, clientage, would be for them.” ʿĀʾisha mentioned this to the Prophet and he said: “Set her free, as the *walāʾ* is for the one who gives the money.” She said: “So I set her free.” Then the Prophet called Barīra and gave her the choice to go back to her husband or not, *fa-khayyarahā min zawjihā*. She said: “Even if he gave me so-and-so much I would not stay with him.” So she chose to be her own mistress, *fa-khtārat nafsahā*.

<sup>261</sup> Qur’an 33:28.

<sup>262</sup> Being *khābar wāḥid* or *mutawātir* or anything in between is of course not an issue in this context, but it is worth noting that this is the only occurrence of this text in al-Bukhārī’s collection.

The same report is repeated in *Kitāb al-ʿitq* Chapter 10 no. 2536, *Kitāb al-hiba* Chapter 7 no. 2578, *Kitāb al-farāʾid* Chapter 20 no. 6754, *Kitāb al-ṭalāq* 14 no. 5279 and Chapter 17 no 5284, and *Kitāb al-aḥīma* Chapter 31 no. 5430.<sup>263</sup>

**Conclusion.** The section on the spouse deals with the choice of a spouse. A wife is explicitly chosen because of some of her qualities; in some cases she is even offered for marriage by her own husband, as in nos. 2048 and 5072. But women also have the power to choose their husbands. The most famous case is the one of the Prophet himself when his first wife Khadija asked him to marry her. A forced marriage is nowhere sanctioned either in the Qurʾan or in the hadiths. On the contrary, in *Kitāb al-nikāḥ* Chapter 42 *lā yunkiḥu l-abu wa-ghayruhu al-bikra aw al-thayyiba illā bi-riqāhumā*<sup>264</sup> the consent of the bride is explicitly presumed, even though the consent does not need to be very forcefully expressed, since the silence of the bride is sufficient.

Barīra's case illustrates an example of a strong woman who knows what she wants.<sup>265</sup> She was a slave of ʿĀ'isha, who set her free. There were three norms, *sunan*, that were set by the Prophet because of Barīra: the question of clientage, *walā'*, of a freed slave, the question of the continuation of the marriage of a freed woman with a slave, and the question of the permissibility of the Prophet's family to use the alms given by Muslims for their own benefit.<sup>266</sup> The Prophet and his family were not allowed to receive alms because they were given as an act of purification. Because of their state of purity it would have been unsuitable for the Prophet and his family to receive alms, but they could receive gifts as tokens of esteem. Not for the same reason was receiving *zakāt* possible for the family and the descendents of the Prophet or his clients. Both *ṣadaqa* and *zakāt* were supposed to become soiled in the process of cleansing the property of their givers and payers.<sup>267</sup>

<sup>263</sup> *Kitāb al-ṭalāq* Chapter 16 *shafāʿat al-nabī (ṣ) fī zawji Barīra* no. 5283 is an illustration of the compassionate mentality of Muhammad. Ibn ʿAbbās narrated: Barīra's husband was a slave called Mughīth. I can still see him walking behind her with tears flowing down his beard. The Prophet said to Abbās: "ʿAbbās, isn't it astonishing how much Mughīth loves Barīra, and how much Barīra hates Mughīth?" And he said (to Barīra): "Why don't you go back to him?" She said to him: "Messenger of God, is this an order?" "No, I'm only pleading on behalf of him." She said: "Then no, I don't want him."

<sup>264</sup> Book of Marriage, Chapter 42 A father (of a female) or anyone else must not marry a virgin or a mature woman without her consent.

<sup>265</sup> Barīra had a role in the Hadith of Slander, too. It was she who defended her mistress by saying that she knows only good of her. "The only fault that I know about ʿĀ'isha is that when I am kneading dough and tell her to watch it she neglects it and and falls asleep and the sheep comes and eats it."

<sup>266</sup> See *Kitāb al-nikāḥ* Chapter 19, no. 5097; *Kitāb al-ṭalāq* Chapter 14, no. 5279; *Kitāb al-aḥīma* Chapter 31 no. 5430.

<sup>267</sup> Weir-Zysow: "Ṣadaqa", *Et*<sup>2</sup>; Zysow, "Zakāt", *Et*<sup>2</sup>; Madelung 1997: 13–14.



## 5. Cluster of retaliation

The cluster of retaliation deals with cases of homicide or war. Hadiths in this group describe situations where somebody is killed, or they portray negotiations between the leaders of hostile tribes. The cluster can be divided into three subsections: The section on the victim, the hostile tribe, and the chief of pagans.

### a. Section on the victim

In these reports the family of the victim of homicide has a choice between possible punishments to be inflicted on the killer, or the killer's family has a choice either to pay the blood money, to take an oath of innocence, or to be killed.

*Kitāb al-ilm* Chapter 39 *Kitābat al-ilm* no. 112

Narrated Abū Hurayra: In the year of the conquest of Mecca, the tribe of Khuzā'a killed a man from the tribe of Banū Layth in revenge for a person who had been killed. When they told the Prophet about this he mounted his camel and addressed the people: "God held back killing – or the elephant,<sup>268</sup> said Abū 'Abdallāh – from Mecca."<sup>269</sup> Abū Nu'aym said: "He (God) has now given them into the power of His Messenger and the believers. Mecca did not forfeit its sacred character for anyone before me, *lam taḥilla li-aḥadin qabli*, and will not do it for anyone after me, *wa-lam taḥilla li-aḥadin ba'dī*. It was forfeited to me but now it is again sacrosanct, *ḥarām*. It is not allowed to uproot its thorny bushes or to cut its trees or to pick up fallen objects except to look for its owner. If somebody is killed, his relatives have the right to choose between two possibilities: to get the blood money or retaliation. A man from Yemen came and said: "Write that down for me, God's Messenger." The Prophet ordered his companions to

<sup>268</sup> The elephant refers to the story of Abraha and the Meccan history. Abraha wanted to destroy the *Ka'ba* and he wanted to attack it with his armoured elephant, called Maḥmūd. Nufayl ibn Ḥabīb was a leader of an Arab tribe who had earlier confronted Abraha on his way to Mecca. Abraha won the battle and when he was going to kill Nufayl he asked him to save his life for he could act as Abraha's guide in Arab country. Abraha accepted. When Nufayl saw Maḥmūd, the elephant, ready for battle, he whispered in his ear: "Kneel Maḥmūd, or go back to where you came from, for you are in God's holy land!" The elephant knelt down and refused to attack although he was severely beaten. (See Guillaume 1980: 21–26; Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām 1858 vol. I/1, p. 29–35.) Birkeland (1956: 100–101) connects the story of Abraha with the subject of this book by claiming that *Sūrat al-fil* (105), which deals with the elephant of Abraha, is a clear example of the way Muhammad, as the author of the Qur'anic text, applied a pre-Islamic legend to illustrate the power of God.

<sup>269</sup> Abū 'Abdallāh, i.e., al-Bukhārī is not sure whether he should write *al-qatl* or *al-fil*. Both words have the same consonant profile if the diacritical marks are left out. The word *qatl* means killing or murder, whereas the word *fil* means elephant. Thus al-Bukhārī hesitates between the phrases "God held back killing in Mecca" and "God held back the elephant from Mecca". *Inna llāha ḥabasa 'an Makkata l-qatla aw al-fila*.

write that down for him.<sup>270</sup> Then a man from Quraysh said: "Except *al-idhkkhir*, except *al-idhkkhir*,"<sup>271</sup> God's Messenger, we use it in our houses and graves." The Prophet said: "Except *al-idhkkhir*."

Hadiths in *Kitāb al-diyāt* Chapter 8 *man qutila lahu qatīl fa-huwa bi-khayr al-naẓarayn* no. 6880<sup>272</sup> and *Kitāb fī l-luqaṭ* Chapter 7 *kayfa tu'arrafu luqaṭatu ahli Makka*, no. 2434<sup>273</sup> are almost identical with the above. With characteristic creativity al-Bukhārī is again using the same text for three completely different purposes. The first is placed in *Kitāb al-ʿilm*, the Book of Knowledge and it is classified under the chapter heading *Kitābat al-ʿilm*, Writing down knowledge. In this case the essential message, according to al-Bukhārī is the incident when a Yemeni man asks the Prophet to write down for him what he had just said. In the second case the same report is used in *Kitāb fī l-luqaṭ*, under the chapter heading *Kayfa tu'arrafu luqaṭatu ahli Makka*. In this case al-Bukhārī fixes the attention on the few words of the Prophet about the prohibition to pick up any fallen objects in Mecca except to look for its owner. Finally, in *Kitāb al-diyāt* or the Book of Blood Money under the chapter heading: *Man qutila lahu qatīl fa-huwa bi-khayr al-naẓarayn*, the emphasis is on the two possibilities of recompensing the victim's relatives.

A long hadith which is composed of many short episodes in the book about the virtues of the *Anṣār* describes, according to its *tarjama*, the *qasāma*<sup>274</sup> in the days of *Jāhiliyya*. It presents a Qurashi man who is employed by a man of the Banū Hāshim tribe. The employer kills his employee and after a series of events he – or his tribe – has to take responsibility for his crime.

*Kitāb manāqib al-Anṣār* Chapter 27 *al-qasāma fī l-Jāhiliyya* no. 3845

Ibn ʿAbbās told us:<sup>275</sup> The first case of *qasāma* happened to us, Banū Hāshim, in the *Jāhiliyya*. A man from another branch of Quraysh employed a man from the Banū Hāshim tribe. They set out driving camels. Another man from Banū Hāshim passed by. The leather rope of his saddlebag had broken so he said to the worker: "Will you help

<sup>270</sup> According to this hadith the writing down of the Prophet's words seems to be quite a normal procedure since it is not commented on at all. See the discussion about the oral vs. written tradition in notes 87 and 195.

<sup>271</sup> *Idhkkhir* is a type of grass that smells good. It was used for building houses and in goldsmith's work. Wensinck-Jomier "Ka'ba", *EF*<sup>2</sup>, p. 322.

<sup>272</sup> Book of blood money, Chapter 8 The (relatives of the) one who was killed have a right to kill, and he has the choice of two alternatives, no. 6880.

<sup>273</sup> Book about found objects, Chapter 7, How to proclaim the objects found in Mecca, no. 2434.

<sup>274</sup> The word *qasam* means an oath. *Qasāma* is used to denote an oath, which is repeated fifty times to assert the guilt or the innocence of an individual who is accused of killing someone. In pre-Islamic times it was used to constitute a procedure of accusation but the Islamic schools of law have used it mainly as a procedure for the defence of the one presumed guilty. See Pedersen, "Qasam", *EF*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>275</sup> The following is a slightly shortened paraphrase of the hadith.

me and give me a fetter so that I can tie the handle of my bag?" The worker gave him a rope and the man tied his bag with it. When the caravan halted, all the camels' legs were tied with their fetters except the legs of one camel. The employer asked the worker the reason for this. When he replied that there was no fetter for it, the employer, asking where the fetter was, hit the worker with a stick, which was to be his destiny, i.e., cause of his death.

A man from Yemen happened to pass by the worker. The worker asked him if he would go on a pilgrimage. The Yemeni was not sure but the worker asked him to convey a message for him. The man accepted and the worker said: "When you attend the pilgrimage, call the tribe of Quraysh, and if they respond to you, ask for the family of Banū Hāshim, and if they respond to you, ask for Abū Ṭālib and tell him that so-and-so has killed me because of a fetter." Then the worker died. When the employer reached Mecca, Abū Ṭālib came to meet him. "What has happened to our companion?" He said: "He became ill and I looked after him as well as I could, but, finally, I had to bury him." Abū Ṭālib said that the deceased merited this.

After some time, the messenger whom the worker had asked to convey his message reached Mecca during the pilgrimage season. He called out: "Tribe of Quraysh!" People replied: "Here we are." Then he shouted: "Family of Banū Hāshim!" Again the people replied: "We are Banū Hāshim." He asked: "Who is Abū Ṭālib?" They replied: "This is Abū Ṭālib." The messenger said: "So-and-so has asked me to convey a message to you: 'I was killed because of a fetter.'"

Abū Ṭālib went to the employer and said to him: "Choose one of three alternatives: pay us one hundred camels because you have murdered one of our companions; or make fifty of your men take an oath that you have not murdered our companion; or if you do not accept (either of these two) we will kill you – *fa-in abayta qatalnāka bihi*." The people of the employer came to say that they would take an oath. But a woman from Banū Hāshim who was married to a man from the tribe of the employer and had given birth to his child, came to Abū Ṭālib and said: "I ask you not to count my son among the fifty men, and that he should not take the oath where the oath-taking is carried out." Abū Ṭālib accepted the request. Then a man from the tribe of the owner came and said: "Abū Ṭālib, you accept the oath of fifty persons instead of a hundred camels, and that means that (by taking an oath) each man avoids giving two camels. Here are two camels, accept them from me and excuse me from taking an oath where the oaths are taken." Abū Ṭālib accepted them from him and forty-eight men came and took the oath. Ibn 'Abbās added: "By Him in whose hand my life is, within a year none of those forty-eight was alive."

This hadith describes an event from the pre-Islamic period. The Prophet is not involved in this narration at all but in all probability it happened in the lifetime of Muhammad but before the hijra, since Abū Ṭālib who is mentioned in the text is most likely the Prophet's uncle. It is Abū Ṭālib who gave a choice to the employer who had killed a man of his own branch of Banū Hāshim. Although the words are addressed to the employer the responsibility of making amends for the death fell on the whole group of people. They had the choice between paying, taking an oath of innocence and fighting. It appears that the choices they actually had were to pay or to die, since the end of the hadith makes it clear that making a false oath meant death.

This hadith is supposed to relate an event in the *Jāhiliyya*. It describes a judgement which suggests a change in the process of dealing with *lex talionis*. The Mosaic notion of the law of retribution was an important element in the life

of the Arabs of the Peninsula. The shedding of blood required vengeance. But, it was possible to avoid killing by paying blood-money or by *qasāma*, and the Prophet continued this tradition. There is a whole *kitāb* in al-Bukhārī dealing with vengeance, *Kitāb al-diyāt*, Book of Blood-money. Chapter 8 no. 6880 has been mentioned above. Chapter 22 *al-Qasāma* no. 6898 describes an event in Khaybar: A group of Muslims had dispersed into the town and after a while they found one of their companions killed. They asked about the murderer but the people of Khaybar said that they did not know anything about the affair. They went back to the Prophet and he told them that they will have to prove who was guilty of the murder. They said that they cannot do it. The Prophet said: "Let them make an oath (of innocence)." "We will not accept the oath of Jews", they answered. The Prophet did not want to leave the death unavenged, thus he ordered them to take one hundred camels from his own assets.<sup>276</sup> According to this hadith it seems that it was not as important to find the guilty party as it was to avenge human life, to even the score of loss. The fact that the Prophet ordered the blood money to be paid from the property which was collected from the Muslim community itself indicates that the notion of punishment was much less essential than the need of getting recompense.

The next hadith in the same *kitāb*, no. 6899, is different in structure from the usual *isnād + matn* pattern. It is a kind of metahadith, composed of three hadiths told by the same narrator under one single *isnād* in the beginning. One of them relates the same incident as no. 6898 but in a slightly different version. The other hadiths are not Prophet reports, but accounts about later events. They discuss the practice of *qasāma* from different points of view as well as the Prophet's attitude to capital punishment. This hadith is an example of reports which discuss events in the early Muslim community after the death of the Prophet. The Prophet is present in the report but not as an acting or speaking agent, but someone whose behaviour is evoked. The report is not narrated from the perspective of the Prophet but from that of the people who are discussing his behaviour.

#### *b. Section on the hostile tribe*

This section deals with the different choices that are given in the case of warfare to a hostile tribe that had lost the battle against the Muslims.

*Kitāb al-wakāla* Chapter 7 *idhā wahaba shay'an li-wakīlin aw shaft'i qawmin jāza li-qawli l-nabī (s) li-wafd Hawāzin hīna sa'alūhu al-maghānim, fa-qāla l-*

<sup>276</sup> *Qāla*: "Fa-yaḥliḥūna!" *Qālū*: "Lā narḍā bi-aymāni l-yahūd." *Fa-kariha rasūl Allāh (s) an yuṭalla damuhu fa-wadāhu mi'atan min ibili l-ṣadaqati.*

*nabī (ṣ)*: “*Naṣībī lakum*,” hadiths no. 2307/8,<sup>277</sup> *Kitāb al-ṣitq* Chapter 13 *man malaka min al-ṣarabi raqīqan fa-wahaba wa-bāṣa wa-jāmaṣa wa-fadā wa-sabā l-dhurriyyata wa-qawl Allāhi taʿālā* {*ʿabdan mamlūkan lā yaqdir ʿalā shayʿin wa-man razaqnāhu minnā rizqan ḥasanan fa-huwa yunfiqū minhu sirran wa-jahran hal yasta ʿūna l-ḥamdu li-llāhi bal aktharuhum lā yaṣlamūna*} no. 2539/2540,<sup>278</sup> *Kitāb al-hiba wa-faḍlihā wa-l-tahrīd ʿalayhā* Chapter 24 *idhā wahaba jamāʿatun li-qawmin* no. 2607/8,<sup>279</sup> *Kitāb farḍ al-khumus* Chapter 15 *wa-min al-dalīli ʿalā l-khumusi li-nawāʿibi l-muslimīna, mā saʿala Hawāzimu l-nabī (ṣ) bi-raḍāʿihi fihim fa-taḥallala min al-muslimīna. Wa-mā kāna l-nabī (ṣ) yaʿidu l-nāsa anyuṣṭiyahum min al-fayʿi wa-l-anfāli min al-khumusi, wa-mā aṣṭā Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh min tamri Khaybara* no. 3131/2<sup>280</sup> are almost identical:

When the delegates of the tribe of Hawāzin arrived, submissive to God’s Messenger, he got up.<sup>281</sup> They appealed to him to return their property and their captives. God’s Messenger said to them: “Most of all I like true speech! So, choose between two possibilities: either your captives or your property. I have been delaying (their distribution).” God’s Messenger had waited for them for more than ten days after his return from al-Ṭāʿif. When they realised that God’s Messenger would give them back only one of the two possibilities, they said: “In that case we choose our captives.”<sup>282</sup>

The hadith continues with a description of the Prophet addressing his companions and giving them the choice to give back the captives right away or to

<sup>277</sup> Book of Representation, Chapter 7. It is permitted to give something to an authorised representative or a mediator of a people according to the words of the Prophet (pbuh) a delegation of the Hawāzin when they asked for the booty (they had lost), and the Prophet (pbuh) said: “I will give you my part.”

<sup>278</sup> Book of Manumission of slaves, Chapter 13 about an Arab owner of a slave, who gives her away, sells her, has sexual intercourse with her, buys her back and enslaves her children, according to the words of God (a servant possessed by his master, having no power over anything, and one whom We have provided of Ourselves with a provision fair, and he expends of it secretly and openly. Are they equal? Praise belongs to God! Nay, most of them know not.) no. 2539/2540 (16:75)

<sup>279</sup> Book of gifts, their merit and encouragement to give gifts, Chapter 24 about a group giving to a people, no. 2607/8.

<sup>280</sup> Book about the duty to pay one fifth, Chapter 15 evidence that the fifth can be used for the needs (calamities) of the Muslims. When the Hawāzin appealed to the Prophet (pbuh) because of his foster relationship to them, he asked for the acceptance of the Muslims. About the Prophet’s (pbuh) promise to give people booty and presents of one fifth, about what he gave to the *Anṣār*, and the dates of Khaybar he gave to Jābir ibn ʿAbdallāh. Muhammad’s foster relationship with the Hawāzin was created by his wet nurse, who was a woman called Ḥalīma bint Ḥārith. She was a member of a clan which was a branch of the great tribe of Hawāzin.

<sup>281</sup> Note the detailed information of the bodily position of the Prophet once again.

<sup>282</sup> In Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām’s *Sīra* the Hawāzin answer the Prophet: “Do you give us the choice between our cattle and our honour? (*khayartanā bayn amwālīnā wa-aḥsābinā*, Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām 1859 I/2, p. 877) Nay, give us back our wives and our sons, for that is what we most desire.” (Guillaume 1980: 592)

keep them until the Prophet would be able to offer compensation for them. This compensation probably meant that the Prophet would pay for them from his own assets as he did in the previous hadith no. 6898. However, this was not necessary, since all of the Muslims answered at the same time that they will do as the Prophet proposed, but the Prophet was not sure whether he had received the opinion of all of them. He asked them all to go back to their leaders, *‘urafā’*, and let them present their decision to the Prophet. All of them returned and their leaders discussed the matter with them and then they came to the Prophet and told him that they had given up their shares gladly and willingly.<sup>283</sup>

In this hadith, two groups of people have to make a choice. First the Hawāzin choose between getting either their captives or their property, and then the Muslims have the choice of giving the captives away or to waiting to get compensation. This hadith seems to stress the possibility of both the penitent Hawāzin, whom the Prophet calls their brothers, *ikhwānakum*, and the Muslims of Medina having a free choice of administering their economic share as they wish. According to the *Sīra* some of the Muslims took advantage of the Prophet’s offer, but al-Bukhārī does not mention this.

### c. Section on the chief of pagans

In these hadiths the Chief of the pagans, ‘Āmir ibn al-Ṭufayl, gave the Prophet a choice – or, rather, tried to impose a choice on him.

*Kitāb al-maghāzī* Chapter 29 *ghazwat al-Rajī’, wa-Ri’l, wa-Dhakwān wa-Bi’r Ma’ūna, wa-ḥadīth: ‘Aḍal, wa-l-Qāra wa-‘Āṣim ibn Thābit wa-Khubayb wa-aṣḥābih*, no. 4091.<sup>284</sup>

Anas reported that the Prophet sent his (Anas’s) maternal uncle, a brother of Umm Sulaym, at the head of seventy riders (to fight Banū ‘Āmir), because the chief of the pagans, ‘Āmir ibn al-Ṭufayl, had asked (the Prophet) to choose between three arrangements. He had said: “You will be the chief of the Bedouins and I will be the chief of the townspeople; or I will be your *khalīfa*; or I will attack you with Banū Ghaṭafān in thousands.” But ‘Āmir was infected with plague in the house of *Umm* so-and-so. He said: “I have got an abscess like a camel in the house of a woman of the tribe of so-and-so! Get me my horse!” Therefore he died on the back of his horse.

Ḥarām, the brother of Umm Sulaym, had left with a man who walked with a limp and a man of Banū so-and-so. He (Ḥarām) said to them: “Stay (dual) here close by,

<sup>283</sup> According to Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām’s *Sīra* the Prophet first accepted to give them his own share and asked the Muslims to do the same. The *Muhājirūn* gave their share to Muhammad and so did the *Anṣār*. Some of the Muslim tribes refused to give up their share. The Prophet promised to give them six camels for each man from the first booty he will take. Thus, the captive women and children were returned. (Guillaume 1980: 593)

<sup>284</sup> Book of military expeditions, Chapter 29 about the expedition to al-Rajī’, Ri’l, Dhakwān and Bi’r Ma’ūna, and reports about ‘Aḍal, wa-l-Qāra, ‘Āṣim ibn Thābit, and Khubayb and his companions, no. 4091.b

while I go to the Banū ‘Āmir. If they will guarantee my safety, join (pl.) me but if they kill me, go (pl.) to your people.” Thus he said: “Will you guarantee my safety so that I may bring you a message from God’s Messenger?” While Ḥarām was speaking the Banū ‘Āmir made a sign to a man who approached him from behind and stabbed him with his lance. According to Hammām he was completely pierced. “*Allāhu akbar*,” he cried, “*fiṣtu wa-rabbi l-Ka’ba!*”<sup>285</sup> The man (of Banū so-and-so) was captured and killed and all their companions as well, except the limping man who had climbed to the top of a mountain. On this occasion God revealed this verse, which was later abrogated: “*Innā qad laqīnā rabbanā fa-raḍiya ‘annā wa-arḍānā.*”<sup>286</sup> In thirty mornings the Prophet cursed the tribes of Ri’l, Dhakwān, Banū Liḥyān and ‘Uṣayya because they had rebelled against God and his Messenger.

In this hadith the concept of choice can be looked at from a different point of view. This time the choice is given to the Prophet, not by God but by an enemy. The concept of choice is not emphasised in any way in the text, and al-Bukhārī seems to have paid no attention at all to it. The report is placed in a long chapter together with hadiths which deal with *qunūt*.<sup>287</sup> In number 4096 a pact between the Prophet and a pagan tribe is mentioned:

‘Āṣim al-Aḥwāl said: I asked Anas ibn Mālik about *qunūt* during prayer. He said: “Yes.” (It is done during prayer.) “Before or after bowing down?” I asked. “Before” he answered. “But”, I said, “Someone told me that you have said it was after”. He (Anas) said: “False! The Messenger of God *qanata* after bowing only for one month after having sent a group of seventy people called *al-qurrā’* to a pagan tribe with whom the Prophet had a pact. This tribe violated the pact and the Prophet said a *qunūt* and cursed the tribe after bowing down for one month.

There was probably a pact of non-aggression between the Muslims and the Banū ‘Āmir. Al-Bukhārī has in all likelihood added the short statement about the choice to the story of the massacre in Bi’r Ma’ūna. He also reports that ‘Āmir ibn al-Ṭufayl died of plague soon after he had challenged the Prophet, whereas Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām tells about his life even after the incident in Bi’r Ma’ūna.<sup>288</sup> The choice that was given to the Prophet is not mentioned in any other reports of this

<sup>285</sup> “I am victorious by the Lord of *Ka’ba!*”

<sup>286</sup> “We have encountered our Lord; He was pleased with us and He made us pleased.” In the previous hadith (no. 4090) in the same chapter the verse is rendered as: *ballighū ‘annā qawmanā annā qad laqīnā rabbanā fa-raḍiya ‘annā wa-arḍānā.* “Convey this message to our people: we have encountered our Lord; He was pleased with us and He made us pleased.” In no. 4093 the words are put into the mouths of the men whom the Prophet had sent to fight: *Inna aṣḥābakum qad uṣībū wa-innahum qad sa’alū rabbahum fa-qālū: rabbanā akhbir ‘annā ihkwānanā bimā raḍīnā ‘anka wa-raḍīta ‘annā.* “Your companions have perished and they addressed their Lord and said: Our Lord, let our companions know that we have been pleased with you and you made us pleased.”

<sup>287</sup> *Qunūt* is a technical term with various meanings. In hadith literature it usually means to recite standing, and it is often connected with *du‘ā’*, prayers and blessings for the Muslims and curses upon the unbelievers. See Wensinck, “*Ḳunūt*”, *ET*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>288</sup> See Guillaume 1980: 434–436, 631–634.

event. Al-Bukhārī deals with the alleged choice given to the Prophet in an interesting way: ‘Āmir ibn al-Ṭufayl, a leader of a pagan tribe challenged the Prophet and threatened him. Before the Prophet had a chance to answer him – or at least no answer is reported – he died of plague. The pagan leader exceeded his authority and immediately received his punishment.

**Conclusion.** The Cluster of retaliation consists of several very different hadith reports. The subgroup of the victim brings up the special position of Mecca as an abode of peace and it establishes the punishment for homicide. The other report in this subgroup describes an event from the pre-Islamic period. According to this report Abū Ṭālib gave a choice to another branch of Banū Hāshim to make amends for the death of a man of his own tribe. They had the choice between paying, taking an oath of innocence and fighting i.e., being killed. The whole tribe was answerable for the crime of one of its members. The end of the hadith makes it obvious that the real options they had were to pay or die, since making a false oath meant death.

The tribe of Hawāzin, who had lost in battle, addressed the Prophet in a submissive way. They were given a fair choice of either getting back their property or their captives. But the Chief of the pagans threatened the Prophet and wanted to be his equal, and as a result he died of plague.

## 6. Cluster of trade

The cluster of trade includes hadiths of two sub types: the first type reports that the wives of the Prophet were given the choice of getting either agricultural products or land and water to cultivate. According to *Kitāb al-ḥarth wa-l-muzārāʿāt* Chapter 8 *al-muzārāʿa bi-l-sharṭ wa-naḥwih*,<sup>289</sup> no. 2328 the Prophet used to give his wives one hundred *wasqs*<sup>290</sup> of the production of dates and barley he got from the people of Khaybar, eighty *wasqs* of dates and twenty *wasqs* of barley. When ‘Umar executed the contract of Khaybar he gave the Prophet’s wives the option of either having the land and water as their shares, or carrying on the previous practice. Some of them chose the land and some chose the dates and barley. ‘Ā’isha chose the land.

<sup>289</sup> Book of cultivation and cultivation by a temporary sharecropping contract, Chapter 8, temporary sharecropping contract with provision.

<sup>290</sup> *Wasq* is a measure of capacity. In the early years of Islam one *wasq*, or a camel load, was equal to 60 *ṣāʿ*, which means 252.34 litres (or 194.3 kg). Until the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd one *wasq* was 2.5 times the *wasq* of the early years, but for the later period the sources give the worth of 60 *ṣāʿ* for a *wasq* again. (Hinz 1955: 53) Thus, we can safely determine that hundred *wasqs* was 25,234 litres (19,430 kg) of agricultural products and that the Prophet gave his wives 20,187 litres (15,544 kg) of dates and 5,046 litres (3,886 kg) of barley.



It is interesting that ‘Ā’isha’s choice is mentioned here again separately although it is not commented on in any way. The ownership of land must have been an important issue in early Islam. There are at least two *Kitābs* in al-Bukhārī dealing with it, namely *Kitāb al-ḥarth wa-l-muzārā‘a*, Cultivation and cultivation by contract and *Kitāb al-musāqāt*, Contract of irrigation. The Prophet did not give land to his wives, but he did give the products of the land. This might have been because the Jews stayed in Khaybar until the year 20 A.H. when ‘Umar expelled the Jews from there as well as from Najrān.

The second type of hadiths confirms that the seller and the buyer have the choice of cancelling the transaction up until the time they depart.

*Kitāb al-buyū‘* Chapter 19 *idhā bayyana al-bayyī‘ān wa-lam yaktumā wa-naṣaḥā*, no. 2079.<sup>291</sup>

Related ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥārith on the authority of Ḥakīm ibn Ḥizām:

God’s Messenger said: “The seller and the buyer have the choice [of cancelling or confirming the deal] until they separate. If they are honest their transaction will be blessed, but if they conceal something or tell lies the blessing coming from their transaction will be annulled.”<sup>292</sup>

In the same *Kitāb al-buyū‘* Chapter 43 *idhā lam yuwaqqit fī l-khiyār, hal yajūzu al-bay‘?* no. 2109,<sup>293</sup> Chapter 44 *al-bayyī‘āni bi-l-khiyāri mā lam yata-farraqā* nos. 2110 and 2111,<sup>294</sup> Chapter 45 *idhā khayyara aḥaduhumā ṣāhibahu ba‘da l-bay‘ fa-qad wajaba l-bay‘* no. 2112,<sup>295</sup> Chapter 46 *idhā kāna l-bā‘i‘ bi-l-khiyār hal yajūzu l-bay‘?* no. 2113<sup>296</sup> convey the same message.

**Conclusion.** There is an enormous number of hadiths in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī which deal with the economic aspects of life. There are several *kitābs* dedicated to economics in some way: such as *Kitāb al-zakāt*, Alms tax; *Kitāb al-buyū‘*, Selling; *Kitāb al-salam*, Sales in which the price is paid but the merchandise is delivered later; *Kitāb al-shuf‘a*, Right of pre-emption; *Kitāb al-ijāra*, Rent; *Kitāb al-ḥawālāt*, Transference of a debt, bills of exchange; *Kitāb al-kafāla*, Guaranties, bails; *Kitāb al-wakāla*, Representation; *Kitāb al-ḥarth wa-l-muzārā‘āt*, Cultivation and culti-

<sup>291</sup> Book of trade, Chapter 19 when the two parties (to the sales contract) are precise and do not conceal anything but are sincere, no. 2079.

<sup>292</sup> There is quite a humorous hadith in the *Kitāb al-buyū‘* Chapter 42 *Kam yajūzu l-khiyār?* No. 2107 (Book of sales, Chapter How long is the option valid?) The Prophet said: “The two parties of a sale have an option until they depart, unless it is an optional sale.” Nāfi‘ said: “When Ibn ‘Umar bought something that pleased him he used to leave (quickly).”

<sup>293</sup> Chapter 43 when the time limit of the option is not fixed, is the sale still valid? No. 2109.

<sup>294</sup> Chapter 44 the two parties (to the sales contract) have a choice until they separate, nos. 2110 and 2111.

<sup>295</sup> Chapter 45 when one of the parties has pronounced his opinion on the option, the sale is irrevocable, no. 2112.

<sup>296</sup> Chapter 46 if the seller has (reserved for him) the choice, is the sale still valid? No. 2113.

vation by contract; *Kitāb al-musāqāt*, Contract of irrigation; *Kitāb al-istiqrāḍ wa-adā' al-duyūn wa-l-ḥajr wa-l-taflīs*, Loan, payment of debts, freezing of property and bankruptcy; *Kitāb al-khuṣūmāt*, Lawsuits; *Kitāb fī l-luqat*, Objects which are found; *Kitāb al-sharika*, Partnership; *Kitāb al-rahn*, Mortgaging; *Kitāb al-ʿitq*, Manumission of slaves; *Kitāb al-mukātab*, Liberty (of a slave) by a contract; *Kitāb al-hiba wa-faḍlihā wa-l-taḥrīḍ ʿalayhā*, Gifts, their merits and encouragement to give them; *Kitāb al-shurūṭ*, Conditions; *Kitāb al-waṣāyā*, Testaments; *Kitāb farḍ al-khumus*, Duty to pay one fifth, and *Kitāb al-jizya wa-l-muwāḍʿa*, Taxation of non-Muslims under Muslim rule and deposits. The hadiths in cluster of trade illustrate in part the financial support the widows of the Prophet had, typically ʿĀ'isha is mentioned by name again, and partly the refined regulations Islamic authorities wanted to set for trade.

### 7. Cluster of the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn

This cluster includes hadiths, which describe the relations between the Prophet and the *Anṣār* and the way he treats the *Anṣār* compared to the way he treats the *Muhājirūn*.

According to several hadiths, whenever the Prophet had a choice he would choose the easiest possibility if it was a lawful option. In the case of the *Anṣār* the Prophet said that he would take the more difficult option if it would enable him to stay with the *Anṣār* rather than an easier one if it would mean a separation from them.

In hadith no. 4332 the Prophet claims that if other people passed through a valley and the *Anṣār* took the mountainous way, he would choose the mountain pass with the *Anṣār*. No choice is given to anyone, but there is an allusion to a choice which the Prophet would make should he have to choose between the *Anṣār* and other people.

The Prophet would choose the *Anṣār* but he would also expect them to choose him should they be in a situation which demanded a choice. The following hadiths illustrate the relations between the *Anṣār* and the Prophet.

*Kitāb maghāzī* Chapter 57 *Ghazwat al-Ṭā'if fī shawwāl sana thamānin.*<sup>297</sup>

No. 4332

It was the day of the Conquest of Mecca<sup>298</sup> and the Messenger of God distributed some war booty among the people of Quraysh, which made the *Anṣār* angry.<sup>299</sup> The

<sup>297</sup> Book of military expeditions, Chapter 57 about the expedition to al-Ṭā'if in the month of *Shawwāl*, year 8.

<sup>298</sup> The battles of al-Ṭā'if and Ḥunayn took place in the year 8 immediately after the conquest of Mecca. According to the *Sīra* by Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām no booty was distributed in Mecca or after the battle of Ḥunayn as is suggested in hadith no. 4333.

Prophet said: "Doesn't it please you that the people take the worldly things and you get the Messenger of God (with you)?" They said: "Yes it does." The Prophet said: "If people took their way through a valley or a mountain pass, I would take my way through the valley or through the mountain pass together with the *Anṣār*."

## No. 4333

It was the day of the battle of Ḥunayn. The Prophet confronted the tribe of Hawāzin and had ten thousand men with him besides *al-Ṭulaqā'*.<sup>300</sup> When they (Muslims) fled, the Prophet said: "People of *Anṣār*!" They replied: "*Labbayka, yā rasūl Allāh, wa-sa'dayka, nahnu bayna yadayka!*"<sup>301</sup> The Prophet got down and said: "I am God's servant and His messenger." Then the pagans were defeated. The Prophet distributed the booty amongst *al-Ṭulaqā'* and *Muhājirūn* and did not give anything to the *Anṣār*. So the *Anṣār* were dissatisfied and he called them to a leather tent and said: "Doesn't it please you that the people take sheep and camels and you get the Messenger of God (with you)?" The Prophet added: "If the people took their way through a valley and the *Anṣār* took their way through a mountain pass, I would choose the mountain pass with the *Anṣār*."

## No. 4334

The Prophet gathered some people of *Anṣār* and said: "The People of Quraysh have only recently left the *Jāhiliyya* and its calamity (of unbelief). That is why I want to treat them well and attach them more tightly to us. Won't it please you that the people take the worldly things and you take God's Messenger home with you?" They said: "Yes it will." The Prophet said: "If all the people took their way through a valley and the *Anṣār* took their way through a mountain pass, then I would take the valley with the *Anṣār* or the mountain pass with the *Anṣār*."

In another group of hadiths the Prophet emphasises the importance of choosing the easiest possibility, which makes his readiness to choose a more difficult passage with the *Anṣār* even more remarkable. *Kitāb al-manāqib* Chapter 23 *sifat al-nabī*, no. 3560 and *Kitāb al-adab* Chapter no. 80 *qawl al-nabī (s): Yassirū walā tu'assirū* no. 6126<sup>302</sup> and *Kitāb al-ḥudūd* Chapter 10 *iqāmati l-ḥudūdi wa-l-intiqāmi li-ḥurumāt Allāh* no. 6786<sup>303</sup> are identical:

<sup>299</sup> After the battle of Qurayza, which took place before the battle of al-Ṭā'if, the Prophet divided the booty into shares: three shares for each man with a horse and one for each man without a horse. He also took a fifth of the booty to himself to be used as he wished. (Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām 1859 I/2, p. 292–293) According to Guillaume 1980 (p. 466) lots were cast on the booty, but this is an error in his translation. Later on the booty was supposed to be shared according to this "*sunna*" but according to this hadith the Prophet made exceptions.

<sup>300</sup> Pl. of *ṭalīq*. In the plural this is a technical term denoting those who had refused to accept Islam until the surrender of Mecca. They would have been the legal booty of the Prophet after the conquest, but he released them. The term has later been used disparagingly of the late Meccan converts by their enemies.

<sup>301</sup> Here we are at your service, God's Messenger! We are under your command!

<sup>302</sup> Book of *adab*, Chapter about the words of the Prophet: "Make things easier, not more difficult."

<sup>303</sup> Book of divine ordinance, Chapter about the application of the divine ordinance and God's revenge for the violation of the sacred.

Narrated ‘Ā’isha: Whenever God’s Messenger had a choice between two possibilities, he would choose the easier one, unless it would be something sinful, but if it were sinful, he would keep away from it. God’s Messenger never took revenge for his own sake but when God’s holiness was violated he would revenge for God’s sake.

The Prophet often gave his followers a choice of recompensation should they be unable to fulfil their religious duties, and in the case of religious rites he gives instructions but leaves some space for individual choice.

*Kitāb al-muḥṣar* Chapter 5 *qawl Allāhi ta‘ālā* {*fa-man kāna minkum marīḍan aw bihi adhan min ra’sihi fa-fidyatun min ṣiyāmin aw ṣadaqatin aw nusukin*} *wahuwa mukhayyarun, fa-ammā l-ṣawm fa-thalāthatu ayyāmin*<sup>304</sup> no. 1814 describes an event when the Prophet sees a man who looks like he is suffering from vermin or insects in his hair. The Prophet asks about it and says: “*La‘allaka ādhāka hawāmmuka?*”<sup>305</sup> When the Prophet receives an affirmative answer he tells the man to shave his head and either fast for three days, or feed six poor people, or offer sacrifice.

In *Kitāb al-adhān* Chapter 150 *mā yutakhayyaru min al-du‘ā’i ba‘da l-tashahhudi, wa-laysa bi-wājibin*<sup>306</sup> no. 835 the Prophet instructs his followers to praise God and salute His messenger in a correct way. After this the believers may choose a *du‘ā’* if they wish.

The distribution of booty was an important matter in pre-Islamic times and in the early years of Islam. Raiding was considered normal practice and there were rules according to which leaders distributed the booty.<sup>307</sup> Therefore the way the Prophet left the *Anṣār* without giving them their share was quite a significant gesture. The words of the Prophet have quite striking similarities to his words in the Hadith of Choice. The Prophet says that the Quraysh are still close to the *Jāhiliyya*; they are not condemned like “the Persians and the Romans who have been given earthly possession” and who “have hastened to get their rewards in this world”. But still, the words of the Prophet echo the same fatal question: “Doesn’t it please you that the people take sheep and camels – or the worldly things – and you get God’s Messenger (with you)?” Although the word *khayyara* does not occur in this group of hadiths, two choices are made in each of them: the *Anṣār* accept the way the Prophet treats the various tribes in Medina, and in consequence, choose the Prophet rather than earthly possessions, and the Prophet

<sup>304</sup> Book about those who are prevented from pilgrimage, Chapter 5 about these words of God: If any of you is ill, or has an ailment in his scalp, he should in compensation either fast, or feed the poor or offer sacrifice (2:196). He should choose, and should he choose fasting he should fast for three days.

<sup>305</sup> Do you suffer from vermin?

<sup>306</sup> Book of the call to prayer Chapter 150 about the preferred prayers to be pronounced after the *shahāda*, testimony of faith; these are not compulsory.

<sup>307</sup> Løkkegaard, “Ghanīma”, *EI*<sup>2</sup>.

claims that he would choose a more difficult way with the *Anṣār* should taking an easier way mean that he would be unable to accompany the *Anṣār*.

*Kitāb al-ilm* Chapter 48 *man taraka baʿda l-ikhtiyāri makhāfata an yaqṣura fahmu baʿdi l-nāsi ʿanhu fa-yaqaʿū fī ashadda minhu*<sup>308</sup> no. 126 deals with the *Kaʿba*:

Al-Aswad said: Ibn al-Zubayr said to me: ʿĀʿisha revealed plenty of secrets to you. What did she say about the *Kaʿba*? I answered: One day ʿĀʿisha told me: The Prophet said to me: ʿĀʿisha, if your people were not so near – al-Zubayr added: near to infidelity – I would demolish *Kaʿba* (so that it would need to be rebuilt) and make two doors to it, one for the people to enter and one for them to get out. Ibn Zubayr did this.

*Kitāb al-ḥajj* Chapter 42 *faḍli Makkata wa-bunyāniha wa-qawlihi taʿālā* Chapter 42 nos. 1583–1586, *Kitāb aḥādīth al-anbiyāʾ* Chapter 10 no. 3368, *Kitāb tafsīr* Chapter 10 no. 4484 and *Kitāb al-tamannī* Chapter 9 no. 7243<sup>309</sup> give more information about the situation. It seems that there was a wall around the *Kaʿba* whose function was not evident. According to these hadiths ʿĀʿisha once asked the Prophet about the wall, whether it was part of the temple and why it did not surround the whole temple. The Prophet answered that it was built by her people but they did not have resources enough to complete it. ʿĀʿisha then asked about the entrance gate which was higher than the rest of the wall. The Prophet answered that her people wanted to be able to control who they allowed to enter the temple and who could not.

Another theme relating to criticism in the above-mentioned hadiths is the way the *Kaʿba* was built. The Prophet is reported as saying to ʿĀʿisha that the people – her people again – who rebuilt the temple did not totally follow the foundations laid by Abraham. ʿĀʿisha asked the Prophet whether he was not going to replace the building so it would be identical to the temple of Abraham. The Prophet answered: “If your people were not so close to the days of infidelity I would – in some versions – rebuild the temple on the foundations of the old shrine or – in some other – incorporate the wall into the main building and lower the threshold to the level of the ground.” In hadith no. 1586 he says: “If your people were not so close to paganism I would give orders to tear down the temple. I would give orders to put back inside everything that was taken out and level it to the ground. I would build two doors to it: one facing east and the other facing west. Then I would follow the foundations of Abraham.” The Prophet feared that

<sup>308</sup> Book of knowledge, Chapter 48 About the one who renounces the (best) choice because of his fear that some people are not intelligent enough to understand and would thus end up in something even worse.

<sup>309</sup> Book of the Pilgrimage, Chapter 42 about the superiority of Mecca and its monuments nos. 1583–1586; Book of the Prophets, Chapter 10 no. 3368; Book of Exegesis, Chapter 10 no. 4484; Book of Wishes Chapter 9 no. 7243.

because of the proximity of the *Jāhiliyya* and *kufṛ* the people of Mecca would not accept this.

No. 1586 continues with a narration of what happened later: these words made Ibn al-Zubayr destroy and re-build the *Kaʿba*.<sup>310</sup> According to the report the foundations of Abraham were still visible. They were built of stones which were like the hump of a camel. The distance between the foundations and the wall was about six cubits.<sup>311</sup>

What interests us here is the opinion of the Prophet that he had an opportunity to choose between ways of acting, and it was possible for him to choose a less accepted way of behaviour should the best way lead to the possibility of misunderstanding, i.e., if he feared that the intelligence of the people was not high enough. It is also interesting how the Prophet addresses his favourite wife: he reveals secrets to her, he speaks to her confidentially, but nevertheless, he associates ʿĀʿisha with her people, a people who were not fully developed as Muslims; they were too close to the days of *Jāhiliyya* and were not able to wholly understand the meaning of the acts and orders of the Prophet. In these reports Muhammad never once fails to call the Meccans ʿĀʿisha’s people: “*law lā anna qawmaki ḥadīthu ʿahdīn bi-l-jāhiliyya.*”

*Kitāb al-jihād wa-l-siyar* Chapter 29 *man ikhtāra al-ghazwa ʿalā l-ṣawmi* no. 2828 refers to the possibility of choosing to fight alongside with the Prophet instead of fasting. The hadith simply mentions Abū Ṭalḥa, who did not fast during the lifetime of the Prophet, because of the frequent battles he was engaged in. After the death of the Prophet he never broke his fast except when it was required.

*Kitāb al-ikrāh* Chapter 1 *man ikhtāra l-darba wa-l-qatla wa-l-hawāna ʿalā l-kufri*<sup>312</sup> includes three hadiths. None of them speaks explicitly about a choice, but the notion of choice is clearly present. No. 6941 enumerates three things that people who know the secrets of faith have, *Thalāthun man kunna fīhi wajada ḥalāwata l-īmāni*, to love God and His Messenger above everything else, to love your fellow men for no other reason than the love of God, and to hate infidelity as much as you hate the Fire. No. 6943 makes the choices men should make even more explicit:

We were complaining to the Messenger of God who at the moment was lying on his *burda*, his outer garment, in the shadow of the *Kaʿba*. “Why don’t you pray for (divine) assistance for us?” we said, “Why don’t you invoke God in favour of us?” He answered: “It used to be so that people would take a man and put him in a hole they had dug in the

<sup>310</sup> According to Wensinck and Jomier (“Kaʿba”, *EF*<sup>2</sup>) the destruction happened during a battle in 64/683 when Ibn al-Zubayr was besieged by al-Ḥusayn ibn Numayr in Mecca. The catapults around the town badly damaged the shrine and it was later rebuilt.

<sup>311</sup> The measure of length used here – *dhirāʿ* – is approximately 0.58–0.68 m.

<sup>312</sup> Book of Compulsion, Chapter 1, he who chooses strokes, death and disgrace instead of infidelity.

ground. They took a saw, put it to the head of the man and sawed him in two. Then they combed his body with iron combs to the bone. The man suffered all this without renouncing his religion. By God, our task will be completed so that a rider will be able to ride from San‘ā’ to Ḥaḍramawt without having to fear anything except God, and wolves for the security of his sheep. But you are too hasty.”

**Conclusion.** The common theme in all these hadiths seems to be the choice to accept the message of God and to accept His Messenger even though it would mean meagre financial rewards in this world; or even if it would mean a painful death. As for the unequal share for the *Anṣār* compared to the Quraysh in Medina, the reasons behind the behaviour of the Prophet must be looked for elsewhere. After the battle of Badr both those Muslims who had collected the booty, those who had participated in the fighting, and those who had protected the Prophet, claimed the booty. According to the *Sīra* it was on this occasion that the *Sūrat al-anfāl* (no. 8) was revealed.<sup>313</sup> As stated in the first verse the booty belonged to God and His messenger (8:1) and a fifth of it was assigned to the Prophet and his near relatives, orphans and other people in need (8:41).<sup>314</sup> The total number of *Muhājirūn* who took part in the battle and to whom the Prophet allocated booty was 83 men, the number of *Anṣār* was 231. As has been mentioned in note 80, the exact division of the booty was determined after the Battle of Qurayza, which was fought in the year 5, three years after the Battle of Badr.

The reason the Prophet stated for having left the *Anṣār* without booty was that the Meccan *Muhājirūn* were closer to *Jāhiliyya* than the Medinan *Anṣār*. The Prophet wanted to give gifts to the newly converted to win them over to Islam. He trusted the *Anṣār* and pleaded with them to accept his decision on this matter. The *Anṣār* chose the Prophet and accepted the unequal division of booty. The *Anṣār* seem to be truly devoted to the Prophet, but there was not complete trust between the *Anṣār* and the *Muhājirūn*. The *Anṣār* probably hoped that the *Muhājirūn* would eventually move back to their native Mecca and leave Medina under the control of the *Anṣār*. The tension between the *Anṣār* and the *Muhājirūn* did not cease until the death of the Prophet and the appointment of Abū Bakr as the leader of the community.<sup>315</sup> During the Umayyad period the *Anṣār* became merged with both the Quraysh and other tribes that had settled in Medina.<sup>316</sup>

<sup>313</sup> Guillaume 1980: 321.

<sup>314</sup> God’s share was used for the maintenance of the *Ka‘ba*. After the death of the Prophet the division of the rest of the booty soon became problematic. There were different opinions as to who were the relatives of the Prophet entitled to a share: were they Banū Hāshim, Banū Quraysh, or all the caliphs in power after the Prophet, and their families? Each of the exegetes seems to have read the text according to his own interests.

<sup>315</sup> About the relations between the *Anṣār* and the *Muhājirūn*, especially concerning the choice of the caliph, see Madelung 1997.

<sup>316</sup> Watt, “al-Anṣār”, *EF*<sup>2</sup>.

### 8. ‘Ā’isha’s choice

‘Ā’isha was the one of the Prophet’s wives who had more opportunities to make choices than the others – or at least reports about situations where she was the one who made a choice are more numerous than the same type of reports about the other wives.<sup>317</sup> In this hadith she was given the choice of letting ‘Umar be buried in her house or not. The choice was significant because the Prophet as well as ‘Ā’isha’s father was buried there, and ‘Ā’isha had planned to be buried there herself. In the same hadith an even more important choice was also made: the follower of ‘Umar as the leader of the community was chosen.<sup>318</sup>

*Kitāb faḍā’il aṣḥāb al-nabī (ṣ)* Chapter 8 *qiṣṣati l-bay’ati wa-l-ittifāqi ‘alā ‘Uthmāna bni ‘Affāna (r) wa-fīhi maqtalu ‘Umara bni l-Khaṭṭāb (r)*<sup>319</sup> no. 3700 is one of the longest hadiths in the entire collection. It starts a few days before the death of ‘Umar and describes in detail how he was stabbed while leading a prayer. The stab wound was not immediately fatal. ‘Umar was taken care of and he had time to organise his debts to be paid, give instructions to his closest friends concerning his burial, and the way in which his successor to the position of *khalīfa* should be chosen.

‘Umar sent his son ‘Abdallāh as a messenger to ‘Ā’isha and instructed him to ask her whether she would permit ‘Umar to be buried in her house alongside the Prophet and Abū Bakr. ‘Ā’isha gave permission although she had herself planned to be buried in the same place, next to her father and her husband. Ibn ‘Umar went back to his father and told him the good news. ‘Umar said: “*Al-ḥamdu lillāh, mā kāna shay’ aḥamma ilayya min dhālika.*”<sup>320</sup> After my death carry my body to ‘Ā’isha’s house, greet her and say: ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb asks permission. If she accepts, bury me there, but if she refuses take me to the graveyard of the Muslims.” The choice given to ‘Ā’isha is presented here as a real choice, since ‘Umar had plans should ‘Ā’isha change her mind and give a negative answer.

At the end of the long hadith there is a description of a political choice or “election” although neither of these words is used. The people asked ‘Umar to appoint a successor and he said that the best candidates would be ‘Alī, ‘Uthmān, al-

<sup>317</sup> This is, of course, true about hadith material in general. Reports about ‘Ā’isha as well as hadiths reported by her are strikingly numerous.

<sup>318</sup> It is ‘Umar who is credited with initiating the principle of *shūrā* and the ideal of choosing the leader of the community on the grounds of religious merit. (Madelung 1997: 76)

<sup>319</sup> Book about the virtues of the Companions of the Prophet (pbuh), Chapter 8 about the agreement of appointing ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (may God be pleased with him) and the assassination of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may God be pleased with him).

<sup>320</sup> Thank God, nothing was as important to me as that.



Zubayr, Ṭalḥa, Sa'd and 'Abd al-Raḥmān. He appointed 'Abdallāh ibn 'Umar, his son, as a witness with no share in the rule.<sup>321</sup> Then follows a long recommendation by 'Umar of the way his follower, whoever it will be, should rule.

When 'Umar passed away his body was taken to 'Ā'isha's house. 'Abdallāh ibn 'Umar greeted her and said: "Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb asks permission." "Bring him in", said 'Ā'isha, and they took him in and laid him down near to his two friends. After the burial the group recommended by 'Umar held a meeting. 'Abd al-Raḥmān said that the number of candidates should be reduced to three. Al-Zubair gave up his right to 'Alī, Ṭalḥa gave up his right to 'Uthmān, and Sa'd gave up his right to 'Abd al-Raḥmān.

'Abd al-Raḥmān asked 'Uthmān and 'Alī which one of them was willing to give up his right of candidacy so that he may choose the better of the remaining two. Both of them kept silent. 'Abd al-Raḥmān asked if they would accept leaving the decision to him and they accepted. He took the hand of 'Alī and said: "You are related to God's Messenger and one of the earliest Muslims. God watches over you! Will you do justice if I appoint you as a ruler (*la-in ammartuka*), and if I appoint 'Uthmān (*wa-la-in ammartu 'Uthmān*) will you listen to him and obey him." Then he took the other aside and said the same to him. When 'Abd al-Raḥmān was sure of their agreement he said: "'Uthmān, raise your hand!" 'Abd al-Raḥmān gave 'Uthmān the pledge of allegiance and 'Alī gave him the pledge of allegiance. The people of the house entered and gave him the pledge of allegiance.

## 9. Cluster of the funeral prayer

The cluster of the funeral prayer *is* totally different in substance than all the other hadiths where choice is discussed in some way. The cluster of the funeral prayer is the only one in which the emphasis is on the view that humankind – the Prophet in this case – does *not* have a choice.

The basic message of these hadiths is that the Prophet understood that he had a choice to pray or not to pray for a dead infidel, but this choice was taken away from him by a verse from God. This cluster also pictures a dispute between 'Umar and Muhammad, which was – interestingly – won by 'Umar. 'Umar or his son are the narrators in these hadiths and it might be argued whether this fact has something to do with 'Umar's claim of having said the last word.<sup>322</sup>

<sup>321</sup> For a more detailed description of the events, see Madelung 1997: 70–72.

<sup>322</sup> See Chapter *Inner texture* about the importance of saying the last word.

*Kitāb tafsīr, sūratu barā'a* or *al-tawba* Chapter 12 {*istaghfir lahum aw lā tastaghfir lahum in tastaghfir lahum sab'īna marratan*} no. 4670.<sup>323</sup>

Narrated Ibn 'Umar: When 'Abdallāh died, his son 'Abdallāh ibn 'Abdallāh came to God's Messenger and asked him to give him his shirt so that he could shroud his father in it. The Prophet gave it to him. Then he asked him to offer the funeral prayer for the deceased. God's Messenger got up to pray. But 'Umar got up too, seized the garment of God's Messenger and said: "God's Messenger, will you pray for him though your Lord has forbidden you to pray for him?" God's Messenger said: "*Innamā khayyarānī Allāhu fa-qāla: {istaghfir lahum aw lā tastaghfir lahum in tastaghfir lahum sab'īna marratan}*"<sup>324</sup> so I will ask more than seventy times." 'Umar said: "But he is a hypocrite!" However, God's Messenger did offer the funeral prayer for him, whereupon God revealed: {*wa-lā tuṣalli 'alā aḥadin minhum māta abadan wa-lā taqum 'alā qabrihi*}<sup>325</sup>

The next hadith in the same chapter no. 4671 relates the same incident but from a slightly different viewpoint.<sup>326</sup> The narrator is 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb himself. The whole name of the deceased – 'Abdallāh ibn Salūl<sup>327</sup> – is mentioned at the beginning of the narration and a specific reason for 'Umar to oppose the Prophet's prayer for him is mentioned:

God's Messenger was called in order to offer the funeral prayer for him. When he got up I jumped towards him and said: "God's Messenger, will you pray for Ibn Ubayy although one day he said so-and-so?"<sup>328</sup> I went on enumerating his sayings. God's

323 Book of Exegesis, Surah of Repentance or Immunity, Chapter 12 Ask pardon for them, or ask not pardon for them; if thou askest pardon for them seventy times.

324 9:80 But God has given me the choice by saying: Ask pardon for them, or ask not pardon for them; if thou askest pardon for them seventy times.

325 9:85 And pray thou neverover any one of them when he is dead, nor stand over his grave.

326 *Kitāb al-jānā'iz* Chapter 84 *mā yukrahu min al-ṣalāti 'alā l-munāfiqīna wa-l-istiḡfāri li-l-mushrikīna (rawāhu Ibn 'Umar (r) 'an al-nabī (ṣ))* no. 1366 (Book of Funerals, Chapter 84 what is reprehensible about offering prayers for hypocrites and asking forgiveness for polytheists, this was transmitted by Ibn 'Umar (may God be pleased with him) from the Prophet (pbuh)) is identical.

327 Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām reports in his *Sīra* that it was because of 'Abdallāh ibn Ubayy the verses of 5:54 were revealed: Oh you who believe, do not take Jews and Christians as your friends and protectors ... (Guillaume 1980: 363–64)

328 'Umar refers to an incident when two of the Muslims went to the drinking place at the same time and started to fight with each other. One of them shouted: "Help, the *Anṣār!*" And the other one: "Help, the *Muhājirūn!*" 'Abdallāh ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl became angry and said to his people: "They dispute our priority, they outnumber us in our country, and nothing so fits us and the vagabonds of Quraysh as the ancient saying: feed a dog and it will devour you. By God, when we return to Medina the stronger will drive out the weaker." Then he went to his people and said: "This is what you have done to yourselves. You have let them occupy your country, and you have divided your property among them. Had you but kept you property from them they would have gone elsewhere." A young boy heard these words and reported them to the Prophet. 'Umar asked him to order 'Abdallāh ibn Ubayy to be killed but the Prophet did not want to do it for fear of people saying that he gives orders to kill his own companions. The Prophet treated 'Abdallāh ibn Ubayy kindly even though his own son

Messenger smiled and said: "Enough, 'Umar!" But when I spoke too much he said: "*Innī khayyirtu wa-khartu!* I have been given the choice, and I have chosen; if I knew that if I asked forgiveness for him more than seventy times and he would be forgiven, then I would ask more than seventy times." God's Messenger offered the funeral prayer for him and went away, but soon two verses of *Sūratu barā'a* were revealed. {*wa-lā tuṣalli 'alā aḥadin minhum māta abadan wa-lā taqum 'alā qabrihi innahum kafarū billāhi wa-rasūlihi wa-mātū wa-hum fāsiqūna*}<sup>329</sup> Later I was astonished at my courage in front of God's Messenger, since God and his Messenger know best.

This version emphasises the opinion of the Prophet that he was explicitly given the choice to do as he wishes. An explicit choice is referred to in Chapter 13 {*lā tuṣalli 'alā aḥadin minhum māta abadan wa-lā taqum 'alā qabrihi*}<sup>330</sup> no. 4672. It is narrated by Ibn 'Umar again and it is the same report in a slightly different form all over again.

When 'Abdallāh ibn Ubayy died, his son 'Abdallāh ibn 'Abdallāh came to God's Messenger, who gave him his shirt and ordered him to shroud his father in it. Then he stood up to pray for him, but 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb seized his (the Prophet's) garment and said: "Will you pray for him though he was a hypocrite and God has forbidden you to ask forgiveness for them?" He said: "*Innamā khayyaranī Allāhu aw akhbaranī Allāhu!* God has given me a choice – or told me – saying: {*istaghfir lahum aw lā tastaghfir lahum in tastaghfir lahum sab'ina marratan fa-lan yaghfira llāhu lahum*}<sup>331</sup> He said: "I will ask more than seventy times." Thus God's Messenger offered the funeral prayer for him and we prayed with him. Then God revealed to him: {*wa-lā tuṣalli 'alā aḥadin minhum māta abadan wa-lā taqum 'alā qabrihi innahum kafarū billāhi wa-rasūlihi wa-mātū fa-hum fāsiqūna*}

**Conclusion.** This group of hadiths depicts a dispute between 'Umar and Muhammad, which was – interestingly – won by 'Umar. 'Umar is the narrator in this hadith and it might be discussed whether this fact has something to do with his claim that he had said the last word.

The Prophet was not allowed to perform a funeral prayer for a hypocrite; he was not allowed to ask forgiveness for him. However, the power of intercession, *shafā'a*, is one of the characteristics of Muhammad mentioned also in hadith literature, for instance in *Kitāb al-ṣalāt* Chapter 56, no. 438. On the other hand, the Qur'an is explicit in restricting the power of intercession to Muslims only (19:87) and by the permission of God only (2:255). The role of Muhammad as a *shāfi'* will be discussed in more detail in Chapter *The Prophet as a mediator*. We

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wanted to kill him. But whenever a misfortune fell, his own people blamed him even though they had wanted to make him their king before the arrival of Muhammad (Guillaume 1980: 490–492).

329 9:84 And never pray for one of them who dies, nor stand by his grave. They disbelieved in God and His messenger and they died while they were evildoers.

330 9:84 And never pray for one of them who dies, nor stand by his grave.

331 9:80 Ask pardon for them, or ask not pardon for them; if thou askest pardon for them seventy times, God will not pardon them.

shall see how hadith no. 4712 limits the power of intercession to Muhammad only; none of the previous prophets from Adam to Jesus will intercede for Muslims on the Day of Resurrection. The cluster of the funeral prayer limits the choice of Muhammad concerning who he is allowed to intercede for. According to Wensinck and Gimaret, God offered the Prophet the privilege of having the power of intercession. Here, the Prophet again had to make a choice, to have the power of intercession or the assurance that half of his community would enter Paradise.<sup>332</sup>

### *Lā tukhayyirūnī*

A group of hadiths which includes the root form *khayyara*, but does not really deal with a choice between possibilities, relates a discussion between a Jew and a Muslim. They come to Muhammad and he tells them not to give preference to him over Moses or other Muslim prophets: *Lā tukhayyirūnī ‘alā Mūsā* or *Lā tukhayyirū bayna l-anbiyā’*. Although Muhammad was exceptional among all other Prophets as has been seen in many other hadiths, in addition to the previous ones about his unique power of intercession, this hadith suggests another view of his position among the prophets.

*Kitāb al-khuṣūmāt* Chapter 1 *mā yudhkaru fī l-ishkhāṣi wa-l-khuṣūmati bayna l-muslimi wa-l-yahūdi* no. 2411,<sup>333</sup> *Kitāb aḥādīth al-anbiyā’* Chapter 31 *wafātu Mūsā wa-dhikruhu ba‘du* no. 3408,<sup>334</sup> *Kitāb al-riqāq* Chapter 43 *nafkhi l-ṣūri* no. 6517,<sup>335</sup> and *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* Chapter 31 *fī l-mashī’ati wa-l-irādati* no. 7472<sup>336</sup> are identical:

Narrated Abū Hurayra: Two men were quarrelling, one of them was a Muslim and the other one was a Jew. The Muslim said: “(I swear) by the one who chose Muhammad from among mankind!” The Jew said: “(I swear) by the one who chose Moses from among mankind!” The Muslim raised his hand and hit the Jew in the face. The Jew went to the Prophet and told him what had happened. The Prophet called for the Muslim and asked him about the matter, and the Muslim told him. Then the Prophet said: “*Lā tukhayyirūnī ‘alā Mūsā*, don’t give preference to me over Moses, for all people will faint on the Day of Resurrection, including me, but I will be the first to gain consciousness. Moses will be bearing down on the throne. I do not know if he will faint and gain consciousness before me, or if God will made an exception with him.”<sup>337</sup>

<sup>332</sup> Wensinck and Gimaret. “*Shafā’a*”, *EF*.

<sup>333</sup> Book of Lawsuits Chapter 1, what was mentioned about quarrelling and lawsuits between a Muslim and a Jew.

<sup>334</sup> Book of Hadiths about the prophets, Chapter 31, the death of Moses and his commemoration.

<sup>335</sup> Book of Trivialities, Chapter 43, about the horn blast.

<sup>336</sup> Book of Oneness, Chapter 31, about volition and desire.

<sup>337</sup> The principle of the equal importance of all prophets is mentioned in the Qur’an 2:136 and 3:84. However, in another group of hadiths (*Kitāb al-tafsīr, sūrat al-baqara*, Chapter 1 no.

In hadith *Kitāb al-khuṣūmāt* Chapter 1 *mā yudhkaru fī l-ishkhāṣi wa-l-khuṣūmati bayna l-muslimi wa-l-yahūdi* no. 2412 the same incident is related from a slightly different point of view. The narrator is Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī.

While the Prophet was sitting down a Jew came to him and said: "Abū l-Qāsim, one of your followers hit me in the face." The Prophet asked: "Who?" He said: "A man from the *Anṣār*." The Prophet said: "Bring him to me." Then he said: "Did you hit him?" The man said: "I heard him swear in the market place saying: 'By Him who chose Moses from among all mankind!' So I said to him: 'You accursed! (Would he prefer Moses) even to Muhammad?' Then I got so angry that I hit him in the face." The Prophet said: "*Lā tukhayyirū bayna l-anbiyā'*, on the Day of Resurrection all men will faint and I will be the first to gain consciousness. Then I will see Moses clinging to one of the legs of the throne. I would not know whether he had fainted as well or whether his first fainting (on Mount Sinai) was counted."<sup>338</sup>

*Kitāb tafsīr sūra 7* Chapter 2 {*wa-lammā jā'a Mūsā li-mīqātinā wa-kallamahu rabbuhu qāla rabbi arinī anṣur ilayka*}<sup>339</sup> no. 4638, and *Kitāb al-diyāt* Chapter 32 *Idhā laṭama l-muslimu yahūdiyyan ʿinda l-ghaḍabi* no. 6817<sup>340</sup> relate the incident between a Muslim and a Jew in almost the same words as 2411 and 2412. Instead of saying "Don't give preference to me over Moses" the Prophet says "*la tukhayyirūnī min bayni l-anbiyā'*, Don't give preference to me over the prophets." Moses is mentioned afterwards as in 2411: "People will faint on the Day of Resurrection and I will be the first to gain consciousness. And there I will be with Moses holding one of the pillars of the throne. I don't know if he had gained consciousness before me, or if he was spared (from fainting) because of his fainting on al-Ṭūr."<sup>341</sup>

Al-Bukhārī has linked this hadith to verse 7:143 in which Moses wishes to see God. He can see only a manifestation of His glory on the peak of the mountain.<sup>342</sup> Moses fainted, unable to bear the impact of this presence. Once revived,

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4476, *sūratu banī Isrā'īl*, Chapter 5, no. 4712 and *Kitāb aḥādīth al-anbiyā'*, Chapter 3, no. 3340) the Prophets are clearly put in an order of excellence.

<sup>338</sup> It was considered a special favour that some people did not faint when the trumpet of the Last Judgement was blown. {*wa-nufikha fī l-ṣūri fa-ṣā'iqā man fī l-samawāti wa-man fī l-arḍi illā man shā'a llāhu thumma nufikha fīhi ukhrā fa-idhā hum qiyāmun yanṣurūna*} For the trumpet shall be blown, and whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is on earth shall swoon, save whom God wills. Then it shall be blown again, and lo, they shall stand, beholding. (39:68) The first fainting of Moses that is mentioned by Muhammad happened on the mountain of Sinai when he faced God.

<sup>339</sup> 7:143 And when Moses came to Our appointed time and his Lord spoke with him, he said: "O my Lord, show me, that I may behold Thee!"

<sup>340</sup> Book about blood money, Chapter 32 When a Muslim hit a Jew in anger.

<sup>341</sup> Ṭūr sīnā, i.e., Mount Sinai.

<sup>342</sup> In the Jewish tradition Moses is raised to Heaven, where he stays for forty days learning the Torah directly from God. See Ginzberg 1947: 90–119.

God says to him: “(yā Mūsā innī ṣṭafaytuka ‘alā l-nās) <sup>343</sup> Moses, I have chosen thee above all all men!”<sup>344</sup>

Moses was the chosen one but in one hadith Adam is described as the one whose argument triumphs over Moses’ argument. Adam’s words are an excellent example of the witcraft, creative argumentation, which is needed to win a dispute. *Kitāb al-qadar* Chapter 11 *taḥājja Ādam wa-Mūsā ‘inda Allāh*<sup>345</sup> no. 6614:

God’s Messenger said: Adam and Moses had an argument and Moses said: “Adam, you are our father and you sinned and caused our expulsion from Paradise!” Adam replied: “Moses, God chose you to hear his word(s), *iṣṭafāka llāhu bi-kalāmihi*, and wrote for you with his own hand; do you blame me for something God predestined to me forty years before he created me?” Thus, Adam’s argument outweighed that of Moses.

This hadith is a strong argument for those who see Islam as a predestinarian structure. We will discuss this in more detail after the next chapter, which takes up a different view of the question of predestination and free will.

## 10. Moses and the Angel of Death

*Kitāb al-janā’iz* Chapter 68 *Man aḥabba l-dafna fī l-arḍi l-muqaddasati* no. 1339<sup>346</sup> and *Kitāb aḥādīth al-anbiyā’* Chapter 31 *Wafātu Mūsā wa-dhikruhu ba‘du* no. 3407<sup>347</sup> are almost identical:

<sup>343</sup> 7:144.

<sup>344</sup> Al-Bukhārī also cites a hadith according to which the Prophet when arriving at Medina found that the Jews in Medina fasted on the day of ‘*Ashūrā*’ (10th of *Muḥarram*) in commemoration of the day on which God saved Moses from the Pharaoh and drowned the Pharaoh with his men in the Red Sea. According to the hadith (Book about the Prophets, Chapter 24 no. 3397) the Prophet said: “I am closer to Moses than they (Jews) are.” Thus he ordered Muslims to fast on ‘*Ashūrā*’. There is another hadith (*Kitāb al-ṣawm*, Book of Fasting, Chapter 1 no.1793) in which ‘Ā’isha reports that people used to fast on ‘*Ashūrā*’ during the *Jāhiliyya*. The Prophet ordained this fast until the fasting of the month of *Ramaḍān* became compulsory. The Prophet said: “Whoever wishes to fast (on the day of ‘*Ashūrā*’) may do so; and whoever wishes to eat (on that day) may do so.”

<sup>345</sup> Book of destiny, Chapter 11, The argument of Adam and Moses before God.

<sup>346</sup> Book of Funeral processions, Chapter 68, Who desires to be buried in the Holy land.

<sup>347</sup> Book of Hadiths about the prophets, Chapter 31, The death of Moses and his commemoration.

Narrated Abū Hurayra: The Angel of Death<sup>348</sup> was sent to Moses but when he arrived Moses slapped him. The Angel went back to his Lord and said: "You sent me to a servant who does not want to die!" God (healed the eye of the Angel which had been hurt by Moses and) said to him: "Go back to him and tell him to put his hand on the back of an ox and tell him that he can get one more year to live for each hair of the ox that he can cover with his hand." He (Moses) said: "*Ay, Rabbi, thumma mādhā?* And then what, my Lord?" He said: "*Thumma l-mawt.* Then you will die." He said: "*Fa-l-ān.* Then let it be now." He asked God to bring him closer to the Holy Land. The Messenger of God said: "If I were there I would show you his grave beside the road by the red dune."<sup>349</sup>

<sup>348</sup> When a man's death approaches God sends 'Izrā'īl to get his soul. For further references see Wensinck, "'Izrā'īl", *EP*. The Angel of Death is mentioned in the Qur'an as well. Surah 32:11 reads "Say: 'Death's angel (*malak al-mawt*), who has been charged with you, shall gather you, then to your Lord you shall be returned'", but surah 47:27 speaks about angels in general: "How shall it be, when the angels (*al-malā'ikatu*) take them beating their souls and their backs?" 39:42 does not speak of angels at all: "God takes the souls at the time of their death."

<sup>349</sup> In the Jewish tradition there are some clear parallels with this hadith. The death of Moses is described as a lengthy discussion between God, angels and Moses. The most important factor in the negotiations is Moses's wish to enter the Promised Land. Moses prays to God to let him enter the Promised Land not as a king but as an ordinary man, then not even as a man but at least his bones should be buried there. When God denied even this Moses implores Him to let him enter the Promised Land, to live there only two or three years and then die. God refused this. Moses implored the Earth, the Heavens, the Sun and the Moon, the Stars and the Planets, the Hills and the Mountains, the Rivers, the Deserts and the Great Sea, and all the elements of nature to intercede for him, but they all said that they all have to implore God's mercy for themselves. Then Moses implored his disciple, his brother's son, the seventy elders and Mankind but their prayers were prevented by the head of the evil angels. When Moses is in a state of desperation, God says to him: "I have made two vows, one that thou art to die, and the second that Israel is to perish. I cannot cancel both vows, if therefore you chose to live, Israel must be ruined." Moses cannot choose his life at the expense on his people. God asks him why he is so aggrieved by his own death, and Moses answers that he is afraid of the sword of the Angel of Death. God promises not to deliver Moses into his hands.

When the last day of Moses's life arrives he tries in all possible ingenious ways to avoid death. When he realises that there is nothing he can do but accept his death, he gives his blessing to the people of Israel, casting the Angel of Death, who wanted to prevent him, beneath his feet. Moses is ready to die, and God wants to send an angel to obtain his soul. None of the angels obey, until Samael, the head of the evil angels asks God to send him to get Moses's soul. God accepts and Samael goes to Moses. When Moses looks at him his eyes become dim from the radiance of Moses's countenance. Moses refuses to give Samael his soul and Samael returns to God. God becomes angry with Samael and orders him to go back and not to return without Moses's soul. Samael sets off, goes to Moses but Moses strikes him with his staff and blinds him with the radiance of his face.

A voice from heaven asked Moses why he is striving in vain. Moses asks God not to deliver him into the hands of Samael, and God promises to attend to him Himself and to bury him. God descended from heaven with Michael, Gabriel and Zagzagel. They go to Moses who is lying down and God speaks to Moses' soul. There is a discussion between God and Moses' soul, which God addresses as my daughter, until Moses himself permits his soul to leave him. God then takes his soul by kissing him on the mouth. God buried Moses in an unknown place, but there is a subterranean passage connecting the grave with the graves of the Patriarchs. (Ginzberg 1946: 417-473)

In this hadith the term *ikhtiyār* is not mentioned, but the concept of choice is very strongly present in the narration. Moses was the one chosen by God. Muhammad did not want to be given preference over him, and Moses was going to be treated differently on the Day of Judgment. In spite of all, Moses did not accept the arrival of the Angel of Death. Ibn Kathīr explains this in his *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* by saying that Moses did not recognise the Angel since he was disguised as an Arab. In the same way neither Abraham nor Lot recognised the angels who spoke to them because they were disguised as young men.<sup>350</sup>

When the Angel came back to Moses it is no longer possible to think that Moses did not recognise him. The hadith reports the instructions given by God to the Angel and Moses's answer is given directly after the words of God. The hadith does not tell about the exchange of words between the Angel and Moses when they meet for the second time. Moses's answer is addressed directly to God, not to the Angel of Death and the role of the Angel is forgotten when the emphasis moves to the dialogue between Moses and God. The Angel must have acted as an intermediary or a messenger between the two during the exchange of words.

Moses had the power to drive away the Angel of Death, but God gave him an even greater power of choice between life and death. For every hair that is under Moses's hand when he lays it on the fur of an ox he will get one more year to live. Moses did not accept the offer. After inquiring what would happen after those additional years and receiving the answer that after those years he would die, he chose to die right away.

This hadith seems to be in striking contradiction with the numerous hadiths which emphasise that the moment of death of each human being is predestined. Although there are different opinions about the degree of predestination and free will in both the Qur'an and hadith literature, and the scriptures can be used to defend both lines of opinion, God is clearly pictured as fixing the date of man's death; He is the God of life and death.

{*Huwa lladhī khalaqakum min fīnin thumma qaḍā ajalān wa-ajalun musamman 'indahu*}<sup>351</sup> and {*wa-lan yu'akhhira llāhu nafsan idhā jā'a ajaluhā wa-llāhu khabīrun bi-mā ta'malūna*}<sup>352</sup> emphasise the importance of the fixed term, *ajal*, of each individual, which cannot be postponed when it comes to an end. The fixed term of each individual is mentioned by al-Bukhārī, too. In *Kitāb al-qadar*<sup>353</sup> Chapter 1, which has no *tarjama*, hadith no. 6594 enumerates four things that are decreed for each human being before his birth.

<sup>350</sup> Ibn Kathīr, vol. II, p. 181.

<sup>351</sup> 6:2 It is He who created you of clay, then determined a term and a term is stated with Him.

<sup>352</sup> 63:11 But God will never defer any soul when its term comes. And God is aware of the things you do.

<sup>353</sup> Book of Destiny.



‘Abdallāh reported that he heard the Prophet, the truthful and trustworthy say: “Every one of you must stay forty days in the womb of your mother. Then he will be a clot of blood for the same period of time. After that an angel will be sent to the foetus with the order to mark four things: his subsistence, the term of his life, and whether he will be happy or unhappy<sup>354</sup> – *rizqihi wa-ajalihi wa-shaqiyyun aw sa‘īdun.*”

The following hadith no. 6595 presents slightly different issues that are destined in the womb:

Anas ibn Mālik reported that the Prophet said: God has appointed to each womb an angel who will say: “Lord, a drop of sperm! Lord, a clot of blood! Lord, an embryo!” Then, when God completes the creation he will say: “Lord, a boy or a girl, unhappy or happy? What will be his subsistence? What will be his term?” And this will be written while he is in his mother’s womb. – *Ay Rabb dhakar am unthā? A-shaqiyyun am sa‘īdun? Fa-mā l-rizqu? Fa-mā l-ajalu? Fa-yuktabu ka-dhālika fī baṭni ummihi.*

*Kitāb bad’ al-khalq* Chapter 6 *Dhikri l-malā’ikati ṣalawātu llāhi ‘alayhim* no. 3208,<sup>355</sup> and *Kitāb al-tawhīd* Chapter 28 *Qawlihi ta‘ālā {wa-la-qad sabaqat kalimatunā li-‘ibādīnā al-mursalīna}*<sup>356</sup> no. 7454 relate the same sequence of the development of man in the womb and the same four qualities that are written by the angel before the birth, but they continue with these words of the Prophet:

Sometimes a man may behave as one of the people of Paradise until the moment when only an arm’s length separates him from Paradise, and then, that which was written will interfere, and he will behave like one who is condemned. It happens, also, that a man may behave as one of the damned ones until the moment when only an arm’s length separates him from Hell, and then that which was written will interfere, and he will behave like one who is destined for Paradise.

In *Kitāb al-qadar* Chapter 11 *Tahājja Ādam wa-Mūsā ‘inda llāh* no. 6614<sup>357</sup> Adam outwits Moses with the argument that he should not be blamed for something God had predestined for him forty years *before he even was created*. In the collection of Muslim there is a hadith in *Kitāb al-qadar* Chapter 4 no. 1841, which states that God wrote down rulings regarding the created world fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth. This hadith does not appear in al-Bukhārī’s collection. The *Kitāb al-qadar* in al-Bukhārī deals with several other issues, which will be briefly presented in the next chapter.

<sup>354</sup> Or, whether he will be destined to Paradise or to Hell.

<sup>355</sup> Book of the Beginning of creation, Chapter 6, About the angels, peace be with them.

<sup>356</sup> Book of Oneness, Chapter 28, About these words of God: “Already Our word has preceded to Our servants, the Envoys.” (37:171)

<sup>357</sup> Book of Destiny, Chapter 11, Adam and Moses disputing before God.

### KITAB AL-QADAR IN ṢAḤĪḤ AL-BUKHĀRĪ

*Kitāb al-qadar*, the Book of Destiny, includes 16 chapters and 26 hadith reports and it is thus one of the shortest books in the collection. Some famous and very predeterministic hadiths cannot be found in al-Bukhārī. Muslim's *Kitāb al-qadar* includes some on them, such as the one about God writing down the decrees regarding the created world fifty thousand years before the Creation, and the one which states that what reaches you could not possibly have missed you, and what misses you could not possibly have reached you.

The first chapter in al-Bukhārī's *Kitāb al-qadar* discusses the forty decisive days of the foetus in the womb of the mother as described above. The second chapter deals with the possibility of recognising those who were destined to go to Paradise from those who were destined to go to Hell. The Prophet says that indeed it is possible to recognise them, but when questioned about the meaning of the acts of men he says that everyone acts in the way he is created to act: *Kullun yaʿmalu limā khuliqa lahu aw limā yuyassaru lahu*.<sup>358</sup>

The third chapter discusses the destiny of the children of polytheists. The answer of the Prophet in each of the three hadiths in the chapter is: *Allāhu ʿalamu bimā kānū ʿāmilīna*, God knows best what they would have done.<sup>359</sup>

The fourth chapter, subtitled {*wa-kāna amru llāhi qadaran maqdūran*}<sup>360</sup> includes five hadith reports, each of which deals with the destiny of man illustrated in various events in human life. In the first hadith the Prophet forbids women from asking for the repudiation of another woman in order to be able to marry her husband, since she has what has been predestined for her; *fa-inna lahā mā quddira lahā*. The second hadith pictures an event when one of the daughters of the Prophet sends a message to her father to tell him that her son is dying. The Prophet sends the messenger back with these words: To God belongs what He takes and what He gives. Everyone has a fixed term; be patient and benefit (from it); *Li-llāhi mā akhadha, wa-li-llāhi mā ʿaṭā, kullun bi-ajalin, fa-l-taṣbir wa-l-taḥtasib*.

<sup>358</sup> Chapter 2, no. 6596, the same phrase is repeated in *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* Chapter 54 *Qawl Allāhi taʿālā* {*wa-la-qad yassarnā l-Qurʿāna li-l-dhikri fa-hal min muddakirin*} (54:17), no. 7551.

<sup>359</sup> In *Kitāb al-janāʿiz*, Chapter 91 *Mā qīla fī awlād al-muslimīn* clearly states that children of Muslim parents have access to Paradise should they die before puberty; Chapter 93 *Mā qīla fī awlād al-mushrikīn* presents the problem from the point of view of children of polytheists. Two of the hadiths, nos. 1383 and 1384, simply state that since God has created them, He knows best what they would have done, but no. 1385 claims that each child is born with his *fiṭra*, as a Muslim (*kullu mawlūdin yūladu ʿalā fiṭratin*) and it is his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magi.

<sup>360</sup> 33:38 The command of God is a decree determined.

The third hadith deals with *ʿazl*, coitus interruptus. A man asks the Prophet's opinion about it and he answers that the practice is allowed, because nobody exists without the decision of God: *fa-innahu laysat nasamatun kataba llāhu an takhruja illā hiya kā'inatun*. The fourth hadith briefly mentions a sermon by the Prophet and describes a listener's reaction to it and finally, the fifth pictures the Prophet scratching the ground with a stick and saying: "The place of each one of you is written beforehand either in Paradise or in Hell." One of the people around him asked if they might not, in that case, depend on their destiny. "No", said the Prophet, "do (good) things because that is made easy/possible for everyone; *Lā, i'malū fa-kullun muyassarun*".

Chapter 5 *al-ʿamalu bi-l-khawātīm*,<sup>361</sup> stresses the importance of the last acts of man. The chapter includes two hadiths both of which relate a similar report. No. 6606 is located in the Battle of Khaybar. The Prophet points out a man and says that he is destined to hellfire. Later the man proved to be a very brave soldier, but finally, he became badly wounded. The People around the Prophet say to him: "God's Messenger, don't you see how the man about whom you said that he is destined to hellfire has been fighting courageously for the sake of God and how badly he is wounded." The Prophet answered: "*Ammā innahu min ahli l-nāri*; But still he is among the people of hellfire." Some of the Muslims seemed to doubt the words of the Prophet but then the man, exhausted with his wounds, took an arrow from his quiver, and committed suicide. The Muslims told this to the Prophet and he asked Bilāl to declare: "*Lā yadkhulu l-jannata illā mu'minun, wa-inna llāha layu'ayyidu hādihā l-dīn bi-l-rajuli l-fājiri*: No-one except the believer will enter Paradise, and God strengthens this religion even by the ungodly man."

In no. 6607 the man about whom the Prophet says that he is "*min ahli l-nāri*" is described to be one of the most important Muslims, *min aʿẓami l-muslimīn*. As in the previous hadith the man gets severely wounded and commits suicide. A man among the Muslims witnesses this and goes back to the Prophet and says: "*Ashhadu annaka rasūl Allāhi*, I testify that you are the Messenger of God." The man relates to the Prophet what happened to the brave man, but in addition to the previous hadith he says: "*Wa-kāna min aʿẓaminā ghanā'an ʿan al-muslimīna fa-ʿaraftu annahu lā yamūtu ʿalā dhālika*; he was one of the best of all Muslims, and I knew that he would not die in that condition (i.e., being a Muslim)."<sup>362</sup> The Prophet said: "A servant may seem to be acting like the people of Paradise while in fact he is one of the people of hellfire; or he might seem to be acting like the

<sup>361</sup> Acts are judged according to the last ones.

<sup>362</sup> Houdas translates the sentence: Tu as su qu'il ne mourrait pas dans la lutte (el-Bokhāri, vol. 4, p. 323). This translation would be a more logical one, emphasising the preknowledge of the Prophet about the destiny of the man in question. However, the verb is vowelled with *ḍamm* – *ʿaraftu* – in all of the editions I have at my disposal.

people of hellfire, while in fact he is one of the people of Paradise. *Wa-innamā l-a'mālu bi-l-khawā'im*; acts are judged according to the last ones."

The same idea is expressed in *Kitāb al-jihād wa-l-siyar* Chapter 77 *lā yuqālu: fulān shahīd*, no. 2898. It is a narration of God's Messenger's battle against the polytheists. When he returned to his camp and the enemies returned to their camp one of the Companions of the Prophet continued fighting and killing the pagans. The Companions of the Prophet felt that none of them had done as much as he had done that day. But the Prophet said: "*Ammā innahu min ahli l-nāri*." A man among the Prophet's companions decided to follow the brave man because he was amazed at the Prophet's words.

The brave man became seriously wounded and he decided to bring about his death quickly. He planted the blade of the sword in the ground directing its sharp end towards his chest. Then he leaned on the sword and killed himself. The other man, who had followed him and witnessed his suicide, came to the Prophet said: "I testify that you are God's Messenger." The Prophet asked: "What has happened?" He replied: "When you described the man as one of the people of the hellfire and people were greatly surprised at what you said, I followed him to find out the truth. So, I looked for him. He became severely wounded and hastened to die by slanting the blade of his sword in the ground directing its sharp end towards his chest. Then he leaned on his sword and killed himself." The Prophet said: "A man may seem to people to be practising the deeds of the people of Paradise while in fact he is one of the people of hellfire. Whereas another man may seem to people to be practising the deeds of the people of hellfire while in fact he is one of the people of Paradise."

Chapter 6 *Ilqā' i l-'abdi l-nadhra ilā l-qadari* (About the casting of the vow or votive offering about destiny), rejects these kind of vows because they are of no use, and on the other hand, the vow will never bring about anything which is not predestined. Chapter 7 *Lā ḥawla wa-lā quwwata illā bi-llāh* includes one hadith which stresses the omnipresence of God in quite a humorous way:

Abū Mūsā reports: We were with the Prophet on a raid and every time we climbed uplands and every time we descended into a valley we raised our voices to shout: "*Allāhu akbar!*" God's Messenger approached us and said: "*Ya ayyuhā l-nās, irba'ū 'ala anfusikum*, People, save your breath; you are not calling to someone who is deaf or absent. You are calling to the one who hears and sees." Then he said: "Abdallāh ibn Qays, shall I teach you a phrase, which is one of the treasures of the Paradise? *Lā ḥawla wa-lā quwwata illā bi-llāh*; there is no power and no strength save in God."<sup>363</sup>

<sup>363</sup> The same incident is reported in *Kitāb al-jihād*, Chapter 131, It is reprehensible to raise the voice in *takbīr*, no. 2992: When we had got on the top of a hill we raised our voices to say the *tahlīl* and the *takbīr*. The Prophet said to us: "People, calm down, you are not calling to someone who is either deaf or absent. He is with you; he is hearing and present.

Chapter 8 *al-maʿṣūmu man ʿaṣama llāhu*; the one whom God protects is inviolable, describes the two opposite sentiments within each of his *khalīfas*, one inciting good and the other inciting evil. The one who is protected by God is inviolable. van Ess, in his *Zwischen Ḥadīṭ und Theologie* (1975), takes this hadith up as an example of a hadith with “*ein qadaritischer Grundsatz*”, which, as van Ess also notes, is immediately watered down with the claim that only the one who is protected by God may be *maʿṣūm*.<sup>364</sup> Chapter 9 deals with the sin of adultery, which is prescribed to each human being: adultery of the eyes, i.e., the look, adultery of the tongue, i.e., speech, for the soul wishes and desires, and the genitals will either agree or refuse.<sup>365</sup> Chapter 10 containing only one hadith, deals with the *zaqqūm* tree, the cursed tree growing at the bottom of Hell which the Prophet is supposed to have seen during his nightly ascension.

Chapter 11 includes the argument between Adam and Moses, which has been discussed above. Chapter 12 accentuates the fact that nothing that has been given by God can be taken away and nothing can be given that God refuses, chapter 13 exhorts people to look for refuge in God against all evil. Chapter 14 {*Yaḥūlu bayna l-marʿi wa-qalbihi*}<sup>366</sup> relates an incident when the Prophet says to Ibn Ṣayyād<sup>367</sup> that he thinks about something and asks Ibn Ṣayyād to guess what it is. Ibn Ṣayyād starts to pronounce the word *al-dukkhān* (smoke) but is unable to continue. “Be silent, don’t exceed the limits of your power”, the Prophet says. ʿUmar wants to cut Ibn Ṣayyād’s throat, but the Prophet tells him to leave the man

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This pleasing hadith does not seem to fit into the *Kitāb al-jihād* at all. Ibn Ḥajar writes in his *tafsīr* that it is probably the intention of al-Bukhārī to claim that the interdiction of raising your voice in *takbīr* is meant to apply especially to fighting expeditions.

<sup>364</sup> van Ess 1975: 70–71.

<sup>365</sup> van Ess again gives an alternative explanation of this hadith. According to him, the original meaning of the text might not have necessarily been predestinarian, but it might have originated for legal purposes and its function might have been to contest the harsh punishments for illegal sex. It might also, according to van Ess, have had an ascetic function: adultery is not only intercourse, but starts by making eyes at someone (van Ess 1975: 88–90). Van Ess’s hypothesis sounds credible, but considered from the point of view of our analysis it is ambiguous. The fact that al-Bukhārī has classified this hadith in the *Kitāb al-qadar* testifies that he took it for a predestinarian text. But, on the other hand, the *tarjama* takes up three Qur’anic verses (21:95, 11:36, and 71:27) of which the first, 21:95, especially if read in context with the previous verse is clearly anti-predestinarian, and only the two following verses can be understood as predestinarian. 11:36 speaks of works and sin and thus refers to the effect of human acts and choices on his salvation. 71:27 speaks of misleading people, but mentions also that unbelievers will only breed unbelievers.

<sup>366</sup> {*Wa-ʿlamū anna llāhu yaḥūlu bayna l-marʿi wa-qalbihi*}, And know that God stands between a man and his heart, 8:24.

<sup>367</sup> Ibn Ṣayyād was supposed to be a false prophet. *Kitāb al-janāʿiz* Chapter 79 no. 1354 presents a much longer story about Muhammad and Ibn Ṣayyād. Ibn Ṣayyād was supposed to be able to foretell the future through divination, soothsaying and augury.

alone. "If it is him, you won't be able to kill him, if it is not him, there would be no use doing it."

Chapter 15 {*qul lan yuṣṭibanā illā mā kataba allāhu lanā*}<sup>368</sup> deals with the plague. 'Ā'isha asks the Prophet about it and he tells her that a Muslim should stay in his hometown even if it is infected by the plague since nothing that is not predestined by God will affect him at least without him getting the recompense of martyrdom.<sup>369</sup> Finally, in the last chapter, no. 16 {*wa-mā kunnā li-nahtadiya law-lā an hadānā llāhu*}<sup>370</sup> {*law anna llāhu hadānī la-kuntu min al-muttaqīna*}<sup>371</sup> the Prophet is carrying soil with his people on the day of the Battle of Khandaq and he recites these verses:

ولا صمنا ولا صلينا	والله لو لا اهتديا
و ثبت الاقدام ان لاقيا	انزلن سكينه علينا
اذا ارادوا فتنه ابينا	ولمشركون قد بغوا علينا

By God, without God we would not have been guided  
neither would we have fasted, nor would we have prayed.  
Send down peace upon us  
and make us firm when we meet (the enemy).  
The pagans have been unjust against us,  
but if they wish discord among us we refuse.

**Conclusion.** The theme of choice is doubly intertwined with the idea of following the Prophet's example. People have a choice between God and this world; choosing God means following the Prophet's sunna.

All these hadiths seem to carry a strong predestinarian message. The birth of each human being is decided by God, one may even practice coitus interruptus as a contraceptive tool; it does not diminish the power of God. Some aspects of the life of the human being are written while one is still in the womb of the mother: the sex, the sustenance, the happiness – or whether one is destined to Hell or Paradise – and the day of one's death. There is even an allusion to the predesti-

<sup>368</sup> 9:51 Nothing will happen to us except what God has decreed for us.

<sup>369</sup> In hadiths explaining martyrdom, plague is mentioned as a reason for martyrdom. Narrated Abū Hurayra: God's Messenger said: "Five are regarded as martyrs: They are those who die because of plague, abdominal disease, drowning or a falling building, etc., and the martyrs in God's cause." Narrated Anas ibn Mālik: The Prophet said: "Plague is the cause of martyrdom of every Muslim (who dies because of it)."

<sup>370</sup> 7:43 Had God not guided us, we had surely never been guided.

<sup>371</sup> 39:57 If only God had guided me, I should have been among the godfearing.

nation of the choice of spouse in one hadith. People should not fear death of their children or plague – or other fatal deceases – for it is all in the hands of God.

What is the meaning of the acts of man?<sup>372</sup> This question is addressed to the Prophet several times and each time his answer emphasises the importance of human acts. Although there are plenty of hadiths explicitly stating the contrary, according to the answers of the Prophet to the direct question, one should not rely on one's destiny; Muhammad insists on the importance of the acts of man. The meaning of God's guidance is that it facilitates the good acts of believing people. Many hadiths report some real choices people face during their lifetime, but they also call attention to the guidance of God.

‘Ā’isha was rightly guided when she made her choice between the worldly life and the hereafter. She did not even need to consult her parents. Muhammad was rightly guided in his nightly journey when he had the choice between the different bowls of drink. He might have chosen the wine, and his *umma* would have been destroyed, but he chose as he was guided to choose.

There are important choices that affect the life of all humankind, like the choice the Prophet had to make; there are choices that affect the destiny of the individual human being, like the choices the Prophet's wives had to make. There are choices the prophets have to make before their death, when their place in Paradise is shown to them; and Moses chose to die when the Angel of Death came to him.

There are choices that have an influence on the individual life of a human being; the choice of a spouse is one of the most important. ‘Ā’isha was given the choice to let ‘Umar be buried in her house or to keep the place for herself. The Mothers of the Believers were given a choice between land and water on the one hand, and agricultural products on the other.

The hadiths that are presented in this work illustrate a whole range of possible shades between a predestinarian and a free will-based interpretation of Islam. The most fatalistic ones claim that God fixed the course of the whole world before the Creation and describe a human life which is predestined from birth to death and even the hereafter. Human life originates because of the will of God. It does not matter whether the couple uses contraception or not, each child that is meant by God to be born is born in due time. In some special cases the destination of a man is reportedly fixed decades before his birth, as was the case with Moses and Adam, but some other hadiths claim that human beings' destiny is determined in the womb.

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<sup>372</sup> Michael Cook gives a thorough account of the meaning of acts from the Murji'i viewpoint in his thorough analysis of early texts in his *Early Muslim Dogma* (1981).

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF CHOICE AND FREE WILL

In the light of the Qur'an and the hadiths it is clear that the question of free will – whether one is the *khāliq*,<sup>373</sup> creator, of one's acts or whether they are predetermined by an omnipotent God – preoccupied people in the first years of Islam. If we take the hadith material at face value, a debate about this subject was going on between the prophet Muhammad and the first Muslims, but also between him and the contemporary Christians, Jews and polytheists. The question of the meaning of human actions was, according to the texts, posed to the Prophet, and al-Bukhārī has transmitted some of the answers he allegedly gave to these questions. The answers the Prophet gave were not elaborate enough to satisfy the minds of the theoretically oriented Muslims of later periods, and many Muslim scholars and philosophers both before and after the times of al-Bukhārī have dealt with this question.

The starting point for all of them has, in addition to the sunna, been the Qur'an. The Qur'an presents the human being as a responsible agent: "Say: 'The truth is from your Lord; so let whosoever will believe, and let whosoever will disbelieve.'" (18:29) The acts of an individual will affect his afterlife: "So today no soul will be wronged anything, and you shall not be recompensed, except according to what you have been doing." (36:54) But the freedom of a human being is of limited nature: "No indeed; surely it is a Reminder; so whoever wills shall remember it. And they will not remember, except that God wills." (74:55–56) In several Qur'anic verses divine guidance is dependent on the actions of man: "But as for unbelievers, they say, 'What did God desire by this for a similitude?' Thereby He leads many astray, and thereby He guides many; and thereby He leads none astray save the ungodly such as break the covenant of God." (2:26) And "yet I am All-forgiving to him who repents and believes, and does righteousness, and at last is guided". (20:82) Thus, the guidance of God is possible only if people believe in God. On the other hand, human beings are described as completely subordinate to the supreme and absolute power of God: "Whosoever will, let him take a straight path to his Lord. But you will not, except as God wills, for God is full of Knowledge and Wisdom" (76:30), and "No soul can believe except by the will of God and He will place doubt on those who will not understand". (10:100)

<sup>373</sup> The concepts *khāliq* and *makhlūq*, creator and created, are central to Islamic theology. They illustrate the irrevocable ontological difference in the nature of God and his creation, human beings. As we have seen, for the Mu'tazilites the Qur'an had to be *makhlūq*, because otherwise it would have to have been *khāliq*, and that was not possible.



Thus, the message of the Qur'an is ambiguous: both those who wish to see Islam as a religion of free will and those who wish to see it as a predestinarian religion may easily find a basis for their arguments in the Qur'an.<sup>374</sup>

### **The doctrine of *qadar***

The history of Islamic theology has been marked by an effort to make a balance between the responsibility of individual people for their actions on the one hand, and the omnipotency of God on the other. According to the traditional view the speculative theology in Islam started with the discussion of the question of the freedom of humankind.<sup>375</sup> Before the times of al-Bukhārī the Khārijite ideology had formulated their conception of a God who was omnipotent and omniscient, but also and most importantly, a righteous God who demanded righteousness for His people as well. This demand for righteousness led to the doctrine of human responsibility: those who committed sins were unbelievers, excluded from the community and punished in the afterlife. One's actions determined one's destiny after one's death: one either associated with the people of Paradise or belonged to the people of hellfire, as it is phrased in some of the hadiths. According to some of the Khawārij it was even allowed to kill the children of unbelievers in war since the children of believers and unbelievers went to Paradise or Hell respectively.<sup>376</sup>

A loose group of sects called Qadariyya argued for some kind of free choice pertinent to humankind in the early period of Islam from the end of the seventh to the beginning of the ninth century. Their starting point was that you should not ascribe evil to God. God creates only good, evil is the work of either man or Satan. Although man chooses between the two, God knows throughout eternity which choices he will make. Accordingly, nothing happens without the preknowledge of God.

The Mu'tazila has already been mentioned in the chapter dealing with the created or uncreated nature of the Qur'an. The Mu'tazilite doctrine originated in the first half of the eighth century in Basra. In the beginning the movement was characterised by a diversity of people and doctrines, but later genuine schools of thought were established and the Mu'tazilite ideology became a coherent doctrine. There are some principles which characterise all Mu'tazilites,<sup>377</sup> but their funda-

<sup>374</sup> For a list of thirteen Qur'anic verses that have been used by the partisans of a predestinarian view of Islam, and sixteen verses that have been used by those who argue for the free will of man, see Badawi 1972: 41–43, and Jomier 1996: 153.

<sup>375</sup> Badawi 1972: 41.

<sup>376</sup> According to Watt they even discussed the destiny of those children whose parents became Muslims after the death of their children. See Watt 1948: 37.

<sup>377</sup> Gimaret in his *Et*<sup>2</sup> article "Mu'tazila" discusses these principles.

mental dogma is the principle of the necessary<sup>378</sup> justice of God. This principle of necessary justice leads to the exclusion of all kinds of predestination. It is for humans to choose whether they believe or not and it would be unjust to decide their destiny in advance, without giving them a chance to merit this by their actions. God guides each individual equally and whether he/she will be led to the right path or will go astray is according to his/her own choice. This same principle of justice also suggests that men have control over their voluntary acts and that they are the producers of them.

### The doctrine of *jabr*

Jahm ibn Ṣafwān (d. 128/746)<sup>379</sup> represents a view totally opposite to the principle of men having control over their acts. According to him there is no difference between things that happen in the world in general and the actions of human beings. All of them are continuously and directly created by God. Man possesses power and will and choice, but it is God who creates in him the power, the will and the choice by which he acts. Thus, man is compelled, *majbūr*, in his actions, having no real power, no will, and no choice.<sup>380</sup>

Jahm's student, Ḍirār ibn 'Amr, and Ḍirār's student, al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Najjār, held strictly predestinarian views. According to them, acts of men are created by God, men are only the doers of them. The believer is a believer whom God guides. The unbeliever is abandoned; God creates his unbelief and does not do what is good for him. God may cause suffering to children in the afterlife or He may show favour to them and not cause any suffering. The man who dies dies at the end of his term, and the man who is killed is killed at the end of his term.

A group called *Ahl al-Ithbāt*,<sup>381</sup> with which both Ḍirār and al-Najjār have been identified, was one of the most important adversaries of the Mu'tazila.

<sup>378</sup> No Muslim could ever argue that God might be unjust, but according to the Mu'tazilite view God's justice is not only a fact, it is for Him a permanent obligation. In the name of His justice God is required to act in a certain way, otherwise He would be unjust. See Gimaret, "Mu'tazila", *Et*, p. 789. The capacity of God to act in an unjust way was a dividing question among the Mu'tazila. Some of them – Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām (d. 231/845) as their leader – thought that God cannot be held to do something evil. Another group, led by al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, maintained that God has the *possibility* of being unjust and committing evil acts, but He would never do so, being necessarily always just. (Al-Jabbār, *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, al-Qāhira, 1965, p. 313–315, quoted in Badawi 1972: 107–109)

<sup>379</sup> Watt (1948: 100–101) doubts this early date of death and mentions that Ḍirār ibn 'Amr, who supposedly was a student of Jahm, reached maturity by about 180, and Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, who is said to have opposed Jahm, died in 150.

<sup>380</sup> Wolfson 1976: 606.

<sup>381</sup> Or *mujbira*.

According to them there was no power over which God did not have power. Man could do nothing but what God knew would be and was willed to be. God was mainly responsible for making one person a believer and another one an unbeliever, since it was God who created faith and unbelief. However, they claimed that God did not force people to have faith or unbelief. God creates faith but it is not faith until man has acquired it. The *Ahl al-ithbāt* used the concept of *kasb* to describe man's relationship to his voluntary acts.

### The doctrine of *kasb*

It was Ḍirār who first applied the term *kasb* to the problem of one's free choice of action.<sup>382</sup> Ḍirār explained one's acts in relation to God's omnipotence as deriving from two agents, *fā'ilān*: God, who creates them and man who acquires them. Al-Najjār elaborated this further and said that God is the *khāliq*, creator of acts, man is the *fā'il*, agent. The acts of man are created by God whereas men are the agents, *fā'ilūn*, of them. Man has power over the acquisition, *kasb*, but is powerless with regard to creation.<sup>383</sup> This thesis of man the acquirer, *muktasib*, was opposed to the Mu'tazili thesis of man the creator, *khāliq*, of his actions. Nevertheless, the notion of *kasb* was used by the Mu'tazilites as well. They believed that all human actions are freely performed by man, but they preferred to describe the performance of these actions by acquisition, *kasb*, because the freedom by which man performs them is ultimately acquired from God.

But the theory of *kasb* also found its way to the so-called orthodox Sunni theology. "Right up to the present day", writes Louis Gardet, "the Ash'arīs defend the theory of *kasb* and refute Mu'tazili objections to it".<sup>384</sup> Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (260–324/873–935) succeeded in drafting the principles of *kalām* for the service of Sunni theology. Born in Basra, he adhered to the doctrine of the Mu'tazila and he was a student of Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī (d. 303/915), the leading figure of the later school of Basra.<sup>385</sup> At a mature age al-Ash'arī separated himself from the Mu'tazilites and turned the focus of his attention to the Qur'an and the sunna.<sup>386</sup>

<sup>382</sup> Watt 1948: 104; Badawi 1972: 245.

<sup>383</sup> Wolfson 1976: 669; Gardet: "Kasb", in *El*<sup>2</sup>; see also Gardet 1967: 61–64.

<sup>384</sup> "Kasb", *El*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>385</sup> The Mu'tazila is usually divided into two separate schools, those of Basra and those of Baghdad. Both of these are further divided into an earlier and a later period. See Gimaret: *Mu'tazila* in *El*<sup>2</sup>. Badawi gives a table of the important representatives of both the school of Basra and the school of Baghdad. (Badawi 1972: 22–23)

<sup>386</sup> Some of the legends about his conversion can be found in Klein's introduction to al-Aṣ'arī's *Ibāna*, p. 27–28.

Al-Ash'arī's theology was and is widely accepted in the Islamic world. His argumentation is convincing since he knew the points of view of his adversaries thoroughly. In his *Ibāna* he conducts a dialogue with the Mu'tazila, refuting their arguments one by one. Al-Ash'arī based his arguments on four main foundations: the Qur'an, sunna, consensus, and rationality.

One of the main points in al-Ash'arī's theory is the insistence that the difference between believers and unbelievers is the result of God's different treatment of them and not the result of their own acts. It is impossible for the unbelievers to have the power to believe, since God gives the power to believe exclusively to the faithful.<sup>387</sup> "... He will place in the loins of the hypocrites as it were slabs of stone, and they will not be able to worship, and this is a proof of what we believe, namely, that it is not necessary for God, if He commands them to enable them to fulfil His commandment; and this shows the falsity of the belief of the Qadariyyah."<sup>388</sup>

Because of the absolute power of God He must have created both good and evil in the universe. All is from God, is a basic point in al-Ash'arī's theology:

Do not the Magians assert that Satan has power over evil, over which God has not power, and are they not infidels because they believe this? They will certainly answer yes. Therefore it may be said to them: Then since you think that the infidels have power over infidelity, but God has no power over it, you exceed the Magians in their belief, because you believe, with them, that Satan has power over evil and God has no power over it.<sup>389</sup>

Concerning the fate of each individual that is written for him in his mother's womb al-Ash'arī adheres to predestinarian views:

It may be said to them (the Mu'tazilites): Has not God said: "and when their appointed hour has come, they shall not retard it an hour, and they shall not advance it." (7:34) And has He not also said: "And by no means will God delay a soul when its appointed time has come." They will certainly answer yes. It may be said to them: Then tell us about him whom someone kills violently – do you think that he is killed in his appointed term? Wherefore, if they say yes, they agree, believe the truth, and abandon the *qadar*. But if they say no, the answer is: Then what is the appointed term of this murdered person? And so, if they say: "The time at which, God knew, if he had not been killed, he would have married a woman, whom He knew to be the woman destined for him, even though he did not actually marry her", and, "When, it was known to God, if he had not been killed, but had survived, he would have disbelieved, that Hell would be his home", since this is impossible, it is impossible that the time to which he does not attain should be the term appointed for him, inasmuch as these words do not support the words of God "And when their appointed term has come, they shall not retard it an hour, and they shall not advance it".<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> Al-Aš'arī 1940: 109.

<sup>388</sup> Al-Aš'arī 1940: 111. The Qadariyya maintained that God, being absolutely righteous, could not command people to do something they are not able to do.

<sup>389</sup> Al-Aš'arī 1940: 113.

<sup>390</sup> Al-Aš'arī 1940: 116.

In a chapter entitled: "Chapter containing the traditions cited concerning the *qadar*" al-Ash'arī repeats some of the hadiths that have been dealt with in this book. He introduces only the most predestinarian ones: the one describing the development of a foetus in cycles of forty days (al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-qadar* Chapter 1 with no chapter heading, no. 6594) and the one dealing with the argument between Adam and Moses (al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-qadar* Chapter 11 *Tahājja Ādam wa-Mūsā 'inda llāh* no. 6614). He also cites the following hadith.<sup>391</sup>

We were at a funeral in Baq' al-Gharqad. The Messenger of God came to us, sat down and we sat down around him. He had a stick with him. He bowed his head down and kept scratching the soil with the stick. Then he said: "There is not among you a living soul whose place in Paradise or Hell has not been written, and who has not been destined to be miserable or happy." One man said: "God's Messenger, shall we not rely on our destiny then, and neglect practising (religion). And he who is of the people of happiness will go to the people of happiness, and he who is of the people of misery will act like the people of misery?" He said: "Practice, for everything you have been created for is made easy for you."<sup>392</sup> As for the people of happiness, they easily do the works of happiness, and as for the people of misery, they easily do the work of misery." Then he said: "So he who gives (alms) and fears God and testifies to the Best We will indeed make smooth for him the path to Bliss. But he who is a greedy miser and thinks himself self-sufficient and gives the lie to the Best We will indeed make smooth for him the path to misery." (92:5–10)

This text is in al-Bukhārī's *Kitāb al-tafsīr, sūrat al-layl* no. 92 Chapters 6 and 7 and a shorter version of it is quoted in *Kitāb al-qadar* Chapter 4 {*wa-kāna amru llāhi qadaran maqdūran*} no. 6605. The last hadith al-Ash'arī quotes is the one, which claims that it is the last acts that matter. This report is given by al-Bukhārī in his *Kitāb al-qadar*, Chapter 5 *Al-ʿamalū bi-l-khawātīm*, nos. 6606 and 6607.

### The Prophet as a mediator

Another dimension in the discussion about the meaning of people's acts and the preknowledge of God of the destiny of each human being is the role of the Prophet.<sup>393</sup> As has been mentioned Muslims agree that the Prophet has a power of intercession on the Day of Resurrection. I will cite quite a lengthy hadith, which illustrates the role of Muhammad in quite a typical rhetorical form:

*Kitāb al-tafsīr, Sūrat banī Isrā'īl*, Chapter 5 {*dhurriyyata man ḥamalnā maʿa Nūḥin innahu kāna ʿabdan shakūran*}<sup>394</sup> no. 4712:

<sup>391</sup> The translation is mine; Klein's translation can be read in al-Ash'arī 1940: 127.

<sup>392</sup> This phrase is missing from no. 4949, but it is in most of the versions relating to the same incident.

<sup>393</sup> On the role of the Prophet, see Gardet 1967: 147–229 and 311–314.

<sup>394</sup> 17:3 The seed of those We bore with Noah; he was a thankful servant.

Related Abū Hurayra: Someone brought some meat to the Prophet. The leg (of the roast) was presented to him as he used to like it.<sup>395</sup> He bit a piece of it and said: "I will be the chief, *sayyid*, of all the people on the Day of Resurrection. Do you know why? God will gather all the people of early generations as well as late generations on one plateau so that the announcer, *al-dā'i*, will be able to make them all hear his voice and they could all be seen. The sun will come close to the people and they will suffer a distress and trouble they will not be able to bear. Then the people<sup>396</sup> will say: "Do you not see to what state you have reached? Won't you look for someone who can intercede for you with your Lord?" Some people will say to some others: "Go to Adam."

So they go to Adam and say to him: "You are the father of mankind; God created you with His own hand, and breathed into you of His Spirit and ordered the angels to prostrate themselves before you; so intercede for us with your Lord. Don't you see in what state we are? Don't you see what condition we have reached?" Adam will say: "Today my Lord has become angry as He has never become before, nor will ever become hereafter. He forbade me the tree, but I disobeyed Him. Myself! Myself! Myself!<sup>397</sup> Go to someone else; go to Noah."

So they go to Noah and say to him: "O Noah! You are the first of the messengers to the people of the earth, and God has named you The seed of those We bore with Noah; he was a thankful servant,<sup>398</sup> intercede for us with your Lord. Don't you see in what state we are?" He will say: "Today my Lord has become angry as He has never become nor will ever become hereafter. I had one invocation, *da'wa*, and I made it for my nation, *qawmī*.<sup>399</sup> Myself! Myself! Myself! Go to someone else; go to Abraham."

They go to Abraham and say: "O Abraham! You are a prophet of God and His friend, *khalīl*, among the people of the earth, so intercede for us with your Lord. Don't you see in what state we are?" He will say to them: "My Lord has today become angry as He has never become before, nor will ever become hereafter. I had told three lies<sup>400</sup>

<sup>395</sup> Note again the topos of presenting meticulous information about the details of the moment when the Prophet pronounced the cited words.

<sup>396</sup> In another version it is the believers, *al-mu'minūn*, who gather together and say these words. See *Kitāb al-tafsīr, Sūrat al-baqara*, Chapter 1, no. 4476.

<sup>397</sup> "*Nafsī, nafsī, nafsī!*" By this he probably means that he himself would be in need of intercession. The other interpretation might be that the word *nafs* is used to denote the lower soul, which is said to be prone to evil. Some exegetes take the Qur'anic word *nafs* as applying to human nature, but al-Ghazālī would interpret *nafs* as being the lower nature of man – man's natural animal desire – which is prone to evil. This interpretation is common among the Sufis.

At times the word *nafs* is clearly employed simply for emphasis, to express self as in 5: 28 and 116. At other times the word is employed to express life, as in 5:49. The commonest use of the word in the Qur'an is, however, that in which it denotes the whole man without any implication of there being higher and lower elements in his nature.

<sup>398</sup> 17:3 {*Dhurriyyata man ḥamalnā ma'a Nūḥin innahu kāna 'abdan shakūran*}.

<sup>399</sup> See *Sūrat Nūḥ* no. 71.

<sup>400</sup> *Kitāb aḥadīth al-anbiyā'* Chapter 8 no. 3358 gives us information about these three lies. "Abraham never lied except on three occasions, twice because of God: when he said {*innī saqīmun*} 37:89, Surely, I am sick; and when he said {*bal fa'alahu kabīruhum hādhā*} 21:63, No; it was this great one of them that did it. For the third time he lied when he was one day with Sarah and he passed by a tyrant who had heard that his wife was the most beautiful woman. The tyrant sent someone to Abraham to ask about Sarah: "Who is she?" Abraham said: "She is my sister." Abraham went to Sarah and said: "Sarah! There are no believers on the face of the earth except you and I. This man asked me about you and I told him that you are my sister, so don't deny it." The tyrant then called Sarah and when she went

– Abū Ḥayyān mentioned them in the hadith – Myself! Myself! Myself! Go to someone else; go to Moses.”

The people then go to Moses and say: “O Moses! You are a messenger of God and God chose you from among the others with His message and with His words to you, so intercede for us with your Lord. Do you not see in what state we are?” Moses will say: “My Lord has today become angry as He has never become before, nor will become hereafter, I killed a person whom I had not been ordered to kill. Myself! Myself! Myself! Go to someone else; go to Jesus.”

So they go to Jesus and say: “You are God’s Messenger and His Word which He sent to Mary, and His spirit, and you talked to the people while still in the cradle. Intercede for us. Do you not see in what state we are?” Jesus will say: “My Lord has today become angry as He has never become before nor will ever become hereafter.” Jesus will not mention any sin, but he will say: “Myself! Myself! Myself! Go to someone else; go to Muhammad.”

So they go to Muhammad and say: “O Muhammad! You are God’s Messenger and the Seal of the prophets, and God forgave your early and late sins. Intercede for us with your Lord. Do you not see in what state we are?”

Then I will go in the foot of God’s throne and prostrate before my Lord, the Sublime, the Powerful. Then God will guide me to such praises and glorification to Him as He has never guided anybody else before me. Then it will be said: “O, Muhammad! Raise your head. Ask, and it will be granted. Intercede, and it will be accepted.” I will raise my head and say: “My people, O my Lord! My people, O my Lord! *Ummatī, yā rabbi.*” It will be said: “O, Muhammad! Let those of your people who have no accounts, enter through the gate of the Paradise on the right; and they will be with the people who enter from the other gates.” Then (the Prophet) said: “By Him in whose hand my soul is, the distance between the two gateposts of Paradise is like the distance between Mecca and Himyar or between Mecca and Busra.”

*Kitāb al-tafsīr, Sūrat al-baqara, Chapter 1, Qawl Allāhi ta’ālā: {wa-‘allama Ādama l-asmā’ a kullahā}*<sup>401</sup> presents the same situation with a group of Muslims going from Adam to Noah, Moses, Jesus and finally Muhammad. Muhammad intercedes for them and God allows a group of people to enter Paradise. Muhammad goes back to God, intercedes again and saves another group of people. Muhammad thus saves four groups of people, and finally he says to God: “Only

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to him, he tried to take hold of her with his hand, but his hand was seized. He said: “Pray to God for me, and I shall not harm you.” Sarah prayed and he got well. He tried to take hold of her for the second time, but he was seized as before or even worse. He said again: “Pray to God for me, and I will not harm you.” Sarah prayed and he became well. He then called his guard and said: “It is not a human being you have brought me, but a devil.” The tyrant then gave Hajar to Sarah. Sarah came back to Abraham while he was praying. Abraham, gesturing with his hand, asked: “What happened?” She replied: “God has prevented the plot of the infidel and gave me Hajar for service.” Abū Hurayra added: “She (Hajar) is your mother, O Banī Mā’ al-Samā’ (i.e., descendants of Ismā‘īl, Hajar’s son).

Abraham’s first lie took place during an annual feast. People used to gather together and celebrate. When Abraham’s father asked him to join them Abraham said that he was sick and profited from the occasion to destroy their idols. He told the second lie in connection with this same episode. When people came back and saw the idols broken they asked if it was Abraham who had destroyed them. He said no, but it was the biggest of the idols, which Abraham did not destroy. See Ibn Kathīr 1981: 216–217.

<sup>401</sup> 2: 31 And He taught Adam the names, all of them.

those people are left in the fire that were condemned by the Qur'an and destined to remain there in eternity." Abū 'Abdallāh<sup>402</sup> said: "Except those who were condemned by the Qur'an, meaning by the words of God."

Almost the same version is repeated in *Kitāb al-tawhīd*, Chapter 19 *Qawl Allāhi ta'ālā* {*limā khalaqtu bi-yadayya*}<sup>403</sup> no. 7410, but in the end the groups that are saved from the fire are described in a little more detail: The first group consists of those who say that there is no god except God, and have a weight of a barleycorn of good in their heart. The second group consists of those who say that there is no god except God and have a weight of a wheatcorn of good in their heart, and the third group of those who say that there is no god except God and have a weight of a maize corn of good in their heart.

Al-Ash'arī also deals with the problematics of Muhammad's role as intercessor in his *Ibāna*. "The Muslims have unanimously agreed that the Apostle of God has the power of intercession. Then for whom is the intercession...?" and he goes on to argue that it is useless to pray for the faithful because Paradise has already been promised to them, and God does not break His promises. Thus the "intercession in question is only for those who deserve punishment, that their punishment may be removed from them, or for those to whom He has not promised a thing, that He may bestow it upon them; and so, without doubt, since the promise of the bestowal precedes, there is no room for intercession".<sup>404</sup>

One of the most brilliant stories in the collection pictures the events on the Day of Resurrection in a different way. The same hadith is repeated in *Kitāb al-adhān*, Chapter 129 *Faḍli l-sujūdi* no. 806,<sup>405</sup> and *Kitāb al-tawhīd*, *Bāb Qawl Allāhi ta'ālā* {*wujūhun yawma'idhin nāḍiratun ilā rabbihā nāḍiratun*} no. 7437:<sup>406</sup>

Reported Abū Hurayra: The people said: "God's Messenger, shall we see our Lord on the Day of Resurrection?" He replied: "Do you have any doubt about seeing the full moon on a clear night?" They replied: "No, O God's Messenger." He said: "Do you have any doubt about seeing the sun when there are no clouds?" They said: "No." He said: "You will see Him in the same way. On the Day of Resurrection, people will be gathered and He will order the people to follow what they used to worship. So some of them will follow the sun, some will follow the moon, and some will follow idols; and only this people, *umma*, will stay with their hypocrites. God will come to them and say: "I am your Lord." They will say: "We shall stay in this place till our Lord comes to us

402 I.e., al-Bukhārī.

403 38:75 Said He, Iblis, what prevented thee to bow thyself before that I created with My own hands?

404 Al-Ash'arī 1940: 130-131.

405 Book of the Call to Prayer, Chapter about the merit of prostration, no. 806.

406 Book of the Unity of God, Chapter about these words of God: Upon that day faces shall be radiant, gazing upon their Lord. (75: 22-23)



and when our Lord comes, we will recognise Him." Then God will come to them (again) and say: "I am your Lord." They will say: "You are our Lord."

God will call them and a path will be laid across Hell and I (Muhammad) shall be the first amongst the messengers to cross it with my people. Nobody except the messengers will be able to speak that day and they will say: "God! Save us. Save us." There will be hooks like the thorns of *sa'dān*.<sup>407</sup> Have you seen the thorns of *sa'dān*? The people said: "Yes." He said: "These hooks will be like the thorns of *sa'dān* but nobody except God knows their greatness in size. They will grab the people according to their deeds; some of them will perish according to their deeds; others will be torn into small pieces, *minhum man yukhardalu*, but then they will be saved, *thumma yanjū*."

When God is merciful towards whomever He likes amongst the people of Hell, He will order the angels to take out of Hell those who worshipped Him alone. The angels will take them out by recognising them from the traces of prostrations, for God had forbidden the fire to eat away those traces. So they will come out of the fire, it will eat away the whole of the human body except the marks of the prostrations. They will be completely burned. The water of life will be poured on them and as a result they will grow like the seeds growing on the bank of flowing water.

When God had finished judging among his servants, one man will be left between Hell and Paradise and he will be the last man from the people of Hell to enter Paradise. He will face Hell saying: "O God! Turn my face from the fire as its wind has dried me and its steam has scalded me." God will ask him: "Will you ask for anything more should this favour be granted to you?" He will say: "No, by your Power!" He will give to God what He wills of the pledges and the covenants and God will turn his face from the Fire. When he faces Paradise and sees its charm, he will remain silent as long as God wills. Then he will say: "O my Lord! Let me go to the gate of Paradise." God will ask him: "Didn't you give pledges and make covenants that you would not ask for anything more than what you requested at first?" He will say: "O my Lord! Do not make me the most wretched among your creatures." God will say: "If this request is granted, will you then ask for anything else?" He will say: "No, by your Power! I shall not ask for anything else." He will give God what He wills of the pledges and the covenants and God will let him go to the gate of Paradise. On reaching it and seeing its life, charm, and pleasure, he will remain silent as long as God wills and then he will say: "O my Lord! Let me enter Paradise." God will say: "You miserable one, O son of Adam! How treacherous you are! Haven't you made covenants and given pledges that you will not ask for anything more than what you have been given?" He will say: "O my Lord! Do not make me the most wretched among your creatures." And God will laugh at him and allow him to enter Paradise.

Then God will say to him: "Ask", and he will ask various things and when he stops God will say: "Ask for more of such-and-such things." Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī said to Abū Hurayra: God's Messenger said: "God said: 'This is for you and ten times more like it.'" Abū Hurayra said: "I do not remember from God's Messenger except (his saying): 'This is for you and a similar amount besides.'" Abū Sa'īd said: "This is for you and ten times more like it."

<sup>407</sup> *Sa'dān, neurada procumbens*, is a plant whose fruit is covered with thorns.

## CONCLUSIONS

It would be too simple to state that the Qur'an is predominantly non-predestinarian and hadith literature exclusively predestinarian. As we have seen, there are hadiths that have bypassed the control mechanism of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, who for the most were against the "liberal" thinking of the Mu'tazila and the Qadariyya. Certainly, we have to bear in mind that the *muḥaddithūn* were not always consistent in their thinking. Al-Bukhārī obviously did not even make an effort to build into his writing a coherent theological or ideological structure.<sup>408</sup> For most of the cases the only thing we can do is to guess why he chose to keep so many of hadiths which contradict the notion of God's preknowledge, the notion of *ajal* being the most evident example. One might naturally claim that the preknowledge of God does not mean predestination, but in the case of *ajal* it must mean predestination as well. God wrote the time of each individual's death while he was still a foetus in his mother's womb. God fixed the date for him. Thus he both knew about and predestined events.

The question of free will and predestination has been the most important problem in Islamic theology since the early days of the development of *kalām*. Studying this question seems to have been fashionable in Western Orientalism in the middle of the 20th century. Watt wrote his *Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam* in 1948, and in the same year Louis Gardet and M.-M. Anawati published their *Introduction à la théologie musulmane*, which is a work of comparative theology largely dealing with the notions of free will and predestination in Christianity and Islam. Only less than two decades later Louis Gardet published his *Dieu et la destinée de l'homme*, which presents much of the same material

<sup>408</sup> Guillaume, in his *The Traditions of Islam*, takes up an example which contradicts my argument. He analyses a hadith in *Kitāb faḍli l-ṣalāt fī masjid Makka wa-l-Madīna* Chapter 1 *Faḍli l-ṣalāt fī masjid Makka wa-l-Madīna* no. 1189: "Journey only to three mosques: *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*, *al-Masjid al-Rasūl* and *al-Masjid al-Aqṣā*." No. 1190 says: The Prophet said: The prayer in this mosque of mine is better than a thousand prayers in any other one, except *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*." Guillaume sees here the influence of an Umayyad tendency to emphasise the sanctity of Jerusalem in comparison with Mecca and Medina. It was in the interest of 'Abd al-Malik to promote pilgrimages to the mosque he had built there and all he had to do was to procure a hadith claiming that the sanctity of *al-Aqṣā* was comparable to that of Mecca and Medina and ascribe it to the Prophet. The point that interests us here is the fact that al-Bukhārī has omitted *al-Aqṣā* both from the name of the whole *kitāb* and the *tarjama*. (See Guillaume 1924: 47–48) The *Kitāb* goes on to relate hadiths about *al-Masjid al-Qubā'*, which allegedly was the first mosque the Prophet built in Medina. If Guillaume's interpretation is correct, al-Bukhārī must have felt that he needed to emphasise the position of Jerusalem at least a little in his *tarjamas*, since he brings the short *Kitāb* to an end with a chapter called *Bāb masjid Bayt al-Muqaddis*, in which all three mosques are again mentioned.

already published in 1948. All these texts outline the general development of *kalām* concerning the nature of the omnipotence of God, the meaning of the acts of man, and the role of the Prophet. They outline the development of *kalām* to its mature stages during the formative period of Islamic scholarship.

The development of *kalām* only started in the lifetime of al-Bukhārī. His texts as well as the collections of other hadith scholars were used extensively in the debates about various points of theology and philosophy. Some of the scholars, al-Ash‘arī being one of the most evident examples, based their arguments mainly on the Qur’an and sunna. In the ninth century, when al-Bukhārī wrote his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, the philosophy of *ikhtiyār* was still in its infancy. The doctrine of *qadar* was discussed before and during the times of al-Bukhārī by the Khawārij, the Qadariyya, and the Mu‘tazila. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) was a contemporary of al-Bukhārī. He was an uncompromising adherent to the *ahl al-sunna* and he would have given his life for the defence of the doctrine of the uncreated Qur’an. The Ḥanbalite tradition is usually regarded as the opposite of the *kalām*, claiming that the Qur’an and the sunna should be accepted without asking how, *bi-lā kayfa*. It was al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/935) who, after the death of al-Bukhārī, succeeded in combining the Sunni theology and *kalām*. Nevertheless, al-Ash‘arī claimed he was an adherent of the doctrine of Ibn Ḥanbal,<sup>409</sup> as did many of the most influential Islam scholars centuries later, such as Ṭaqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) and his follower, Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (1703–1792). Both Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb are known for their aversion to the subtleties of *kalām* and their commitment to the Qur’an and the hadith. Al-Bukhārī, especially, was held in high esteem in the 13th and 14th centuries. Ibn Taymiyya used al-Bukhārī’s texts extensively, but did not blindly accept his authority.<sup>410</sup> It is on the ideas of these scholars that many groups of present-day Muslims ground their interpretation of Islam.

These great scholars of Islam have read and interpreted hadiths in a biased manner. The texts, which clearly portray Muslims facing up to real choices, have been given much less weight than those texts which emphasise predestinarian views. This preconceived notion has influenced Western scholars’ views as well. The distinction between the Qur’an and the hadith, according to W. Montgomery Watt, is that “in the Qur’an the center of interest is the majesty and omnipotence of God, whereas in the hadiths it is the predetermined character of man’s life that

<sup>409</sup> The Ḥanbalite and the Ash‘arite schools were not on good terms later on. In the year 622 (1225 A.D.) the Ash‘arites founded a *madrasa*, which based its teaching on the Shāfi‘ite interpretation of law. In the charter they claimed that admission to the *madrasa* was denied Jews, Christians, and Ḥanbalis. This school was still prosperous in the era of Ibn Taymiyya. (Laoust 1939: 21)

<sup>410</sup> Laoust 1939: 74–75.

is in the forefront".<sup>411</sup> Wensinck formulates it in a more unconditional way. According to him "tradition has not preserved a single hadith in which *liberum arbitrium* is advocated".<sup>412</sup>

While reading al-Bukhārī it is important to separate the factual texts from the interpretation of the compiler/author. In al-Bukhārī's case this influence is greater than in case of the other compilers because of his extensive and frequently arbitrary *tarjamas*. What is the argument the Prophet possibly wanted to set forth when he allegedly expressed his view on a certain matter? The answer to this question is not easy. The different layers of reality which are present in all hadith texts make it almost impossible to dig back to the original situation when each phrase was – if it ever really was – uttered. Moreover, the same reports or parts of them are used in many different hadiths and they are linked with many different events, which makes the task even more difficult.

While analysing the audience of the Prophet's words we encounter the same kind of difficulties. We might, of course, take the texts on face value. Muslim theologians must then confront the question whether the anticipated audience of the speaker in the hadith were the people in front of him, the contemporary early *umma*, or whether they were supposed to be the universal audience of all Muslims present and future. By analysing the texts it is possible to formulate an opinion of the audience, but it is a theological decision to estimate the consequences of this analysis. Surely there are hadiths which were meant to be followed only by the contemporaries of the Prophet. When setting rules about taxation, for example, the Prophet surely had in mind the Arabian conditions in the seventh century.

My impression after having spent years reading al-Bukhārī is that he wanted to reproduce a large number of hadiths and answer as many questions as possible. He gives contradictory hadiths with no hesitation, he repeats the same reports under many different and incompatible *tarjamas*, and he uses so many intertextual techniques, such as pointing to other hadiths and persons and explicit or implicit reference to other texts, that the impression he gives is that his aim was to present neither an exclusive nor an inclusive collection of authentic hadiths. He seems to have felt very strongly the people's need to have answers, as in this example: "I used to study with Abū Ḥanīfa.<sup>413</sup> One day I heard him give five different answers to a single question. So I got up and left him and studied hadith," said Ḥafṣ ibn Ghiyāth (d. 194/809).<sup>414</sup> The wish to obtain unambiguous answers by studying hadiths was already futile in the beginning of the ninth century, and al-Bukhārī could do nothing but adjust to the situation. So many points of view were ascribed

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<sup>411</sup> Watt 1948: 20.

<sup>412</sup> Wensinck 1965: 51.

<sup>413</sup> Abū Ḥanīfa (80–150 / 699–767) was a famous representative of the *ahl al-kalām*.

<sup>414</sup> Dickinson 2001: 5.

to the Prophet by reliable transmitters that it was impossible to avoid contradictions. Al-Bukhārī claimed that his reports were authentic but in his vocabulary the term *ṣaḥīḥ* most probably meant the highest possible probability of historicity; in time its meaning came to denote the factual authenticity of a hadith.

In the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* people do deal with real choices in their lives. The reports describe early Muslims in various different situations where they have to make up their minds and choose between two or many options. Both men and women are presented as choice-makers, but also as objects of choice. Women are objects of choice in some hadiths, but in some others it is men who define themselves as an object of choice, and in Barīra's case it is the Prophet who places a man in that position.

A hadith dealing with the notion of choice might relate an incident in the daily life of people or it might refer to a story about an earlier prophet or another religiously essential event in the history of early Islam. But in the majority of cases examined in this thesis the basic choice, which people often have to make implicitly though on occasions explicitly, ultimately turns out to be a choice between life and death. In a hadith in the cluster of the victim, which describes an event from the pre-Islamic period, Abū Ṭālib gives a choice to the employer who has killed a man of his own branch of Banū Hāshim. Although the words are addressed to the employer the responsibility for making amends for the death fell on the whole group of people. They had the choice between paying, taking an oath of innocence, or fighting. It appears that the choices they actually had were to pay or to die, since the end of the hadith makes it clear that making a false oath meant death.

In the cluster of the hostile tribe, the Hawāzin came to God's Messenger and they appealed to him to return their property and their captives. The Prophet asked them to choose between their captives or their property. In Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām's *Sīra* the way the Hawāzin understand the choice is expressed explicitly. They say to the Prophet: "Do you give us the choice between our cattle and our honour? *Khayyartanā bayn amwālīnā wa-aḥsābinā?* Nay, give us back our wives and our sons, for that is what we most desire."<sup>415</sup>

The Prophet's wives chose the hereafter, which meant a choice of salvation. Muhammad and Moses chose to die, to meet their Creator rather sooner than later. The choice between honey, water, milk, and wine was a choice of life and death for the whole community. Al-Bukhārī links the theme of choice with the idea of following the Prophet's example. People have a choice between God and this world; choosing God means following the Prophet's sunna.

<sup>415</sup> Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām 1859 I/2, p. 877; Guillaume 1980: 592.

## EPILOGUE: HADITH LITERATURE AND PRESENT DAY MUSLIMS

The debate about the interpretation of the Prophet's way of life or the way his example should be followed clearly indicates that it has been a controversial issue from the beginning of the development of Islamic culture, i.e., since the death of the Prophet. By this I refer to the possibility asking for guidance directly from the Prophet, which, during his lifetime, was a common way of defining "the right way". This is the way Muslims themselves interpret the beginning of the development of what we now know as Islamic culture. The relatively moderate number of Muslims and the limited geographical size of the Islamic sphere of influence would have made personal contact with the Prophet, or one of his closest companions, possible. It was only after the death of the Prophet that the rapid expansion of Islam took place.

While applying the Prophet's example, the early Muslims had to decide how to interpret the effects of the particular "Prophetic" behaviour. What was the actual purpose of the Prophet while acting in the way he did – if indeed he had any particular purpose in mind? What were the essential, necessary or sufficient grounds for an act to become the sunna of the Prophet?

One of the difficulties in the interpretation of the sunna or an individual hadith report lies in the way the texts are presented. I have earlier directed attention to the way hadiths often only allude to an event which is supposed to be known by the readers, or take the knowledge of certain revealed verses or basic philosophical or theological questions for granted. Muslim scholars and even lay Muslims have, from the early days of the development of Islam, debated the validity and the scope of the Prophet's example as a binding rule for all Muslims. It has never been self-evident that the Prophet's example could – or even should – be imitated by all and in every situation. Muslims have always had to evaluate whether the Prophet's quoted words or reported actions constituted a concession to an earlier rule or whether they represented a peremptory requirement.

To illustrate my case, I shall give an example of a common hadith report, which is repeated by al-Bukhārī many times in different forms and with different *isnāds*. *Kitāb al-ṣalāt*, Chapter 22 *Al-ṣalāt 'alā l-firāsh*, no. 382:<sup>416</sup>

‘Ā’isha, the Prophet's wife, related: I used to sleep in the arms of the Prophet and my feet were towards the *qibla*. When he prostrated himself he touched me and I pulled in my legs. When he got up I spread them out again. In those times there were no lamps in our rooms.

<sup>416</sup> Book on Prayer, Chapter 22, about prayer on a bed, no. 382.

No. 384 simply states that the Messenger of God used to pray on the bed where they used to sleep while 'Ā'isha lay between him and the *qibla*.

This hadith has most probably been inserted into the collection as a response to the numerous hadiths which claim that the presence of a woman, especially if she passes between the praying Muslim and the *qibla*, annuls the prayer in the same way as the prayer is annulled by a dog and a donkey. Taken out of context and interpreting it as a peremptory requirement, this hadith might even be understood as an exhortation to pray with one's wife in front of a believer. However, it seems to be a concession to either an earlier rule or a response to a false belief circulating among Muslims at that time. At the end of number 382 it is mentioned that there were no lamps in the rooms of the Prophet's wives. How should this be interpreted in terms of prayer, one's wives, and lamps in general?

Muslim scholars have carried on lengthy discussions about the necessity of ablutions before each prayer, the number of *rak'as* in the five prayers while a Muslim is travelling, fasting while travelling, combining ritual prayers, and so on, and the reason for the discord has been the interpretation of the meaning of the Prophet's act and the problems in contextualising his act. Burton discusses these hadiths extensively in his *Introduction to the Hadith*. Against this background, the blind imitation of the sunna of the Prophet by some modern Muslims, especially some of those who have recently converted to Islam, reveals very clearly the narrowness of their understanding of Islam and, moreover, their lack of knowledge of the history of Islam. Some Muslims seem to neglect the fact that the Prophet Muhammad himself did not behave in a consistent way in all situations. He also changed his opinions on several matters and readily admitted that he often spoke as a man only, not as a Prophet to be imitated or even a ruler to be obeyed.

Moreover, the flexibility in interpreting Islam is in danger of disappearing as a result of globalisation. Mass media, the Internet, and satellite TV tend to standardise and regulate Muslim views everywhere. In earlier times it was possible to form a different consensus in separate Islamic communities, and it was even possible for the consensus to change as a result of historical processes. Losing this variation and flexibility would be a great loss for Islamic civilisation.

However, this is not the first globalisation process in the Islamic world. The first took place in al-Bukhārī's lifetime and he was both a product of, and an actor, in this process. It is obvious that when Islam initially spread in the first two centuries of its history and more non-Arab peoples were converted there grew a need to insist on the uniformity of the faith. The six books are considered to be the most important products of the ninth century, but they are not the only hadith collections of this era. Hadith scholars were influential throughout the Islamic world and they harmonised the Muslims' views about the Prophet's sunna in cities like Baghdad, Basra, Bukhara, Cairo, Cordoba, Herat, Kufa, Mosul, Nishapur, Qazvin,

Rayy, and Samarqand. Nowadays, a Muslim may access the Internet, ask for a *fatwā* from an on-line mufti, read or listen to *khutbas* by imams at the other end of the world, or go to a hadith database and search for hadiths that include certain keywords. No *tarjamas* are given there, and no *isnads* either. With little or no knowledge of the social, military, economic, and ideological history of Islam, the reader will surely be puzzled.



## CHRONOLOGY

### The era of the Prophet according to traditional accounts

- c. 570 Birth of the Prophet. Year of the Elephant, i.e., attack to Mecca by Abraha.
- c. 595 Marriage to Khadija.
- 605 The Prophet arbitrates in a dispute among the Quraysh about the placing of the black stone in the Ka'ba.
- 610 The first revelation.
- 619 Deaths of Abū Ṭālib and Khadija.
- 620 Journey to Ṭā'if. Ascension to the heavens.
- 621 First pledge at 'Aqaba.
- 622 Second pledge at 'Aqaba. Hijra to Yathrib and year 1 A.H.
- 624 Battle of Badr. Expulsion of the Banū Qaynuqā' Jews from Medina.
- 625 Battle of Uḥud. Massacre of 70 Muslims at Bi'r Ma'ūna. Expulsion of Banū l-Naḍīr Jews from Medina.
- 626 Expedition of Banū l-Muṣṭaliq.
- 627 Battle of the Trench. Expulsion of Banū Qurayza. Marriage to Juwayriya bint al-Ḥārith.
- 628 Truce of Ḥudaibiya. Expedition to Khaybar. The Prophet addresses letters to various heads of states.
- 629 The Prophet performs the pilgrimage at Mecca.
- 630 Conquest of Mecca. Battles of al-Ṭā'if and Ḥunayn

### The era of al-Khulafā' al-rāshidūn

- 632 Farewell pilgrimage at Mecca. Death of the Prophet. Election of Abū Bakr as the first caliph.
- 634 Death of Abū Bakr. Appointment of 'Umar as the second caliph.
- 644 Conquest of Fars, Kerman, Sistan, Mekran and Kharan. Death of 'Umar. Appointment of 'Uthmān as the third caliph.
- 646 Campaigns in Khurasan and Asia Minor.
- 653-654 The Arabs cross the Oxus River
- 656 Death of 'Uthmān. Appointment of 'Alī as the fourth the caliph. Battle of the Camel.
- 657 'Alī shifts the capital from Medina to Kufa.

**Era of the Umayyads**

- 661 Death of 'Alī. Accession of Mu'āwiya as the caliph.  
 662 Khawārij revolts.  
 674 The Arabs defeat the local ruler of Bukhārā and it becomes a vassal state.  
 677 Occupation of Samarqand and Tirmiz.  
 680 Death of Mu'āwiya. Accession of Yazīd. Tragedy of Kerbala and martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn.  
 685 Accession of 'Abd al-Malik at Damascus.  
 686 Mukhtār declares himself as the caliph at Kufa.  
 692 The fall of Mecca. 'Abd al-Malik becomes the only Caliph.  
 695 Khawārij revolts. The Muslims advance in Transoxania.  
 705 Death of 'Abd al-Malik. Accession of Walīd I.  
 711 Conquest of Spain, Sind and Transoxania.  
 717 Death of Sulaymān. Accession of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz.  
 720 Death of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz ('Umar II). Accession of Yazīd II.  
 724 Death of Yazīd II. Accession of Hishām.  
 743 Death of Hishām. Accession of Walīd II. Shi'a revolt in Khurasan.  
 745 Kufa and Mosul occupied by the Khawārij.  
 746 Death of Jahm ibn Ṣafwān

**The 'Abbāsīd era**

- 750 Fall of Damascus. End of the Umayyad era..  
 762 Foundation of Baghdad.  
 767 Deaths of Abū Ḥanīfa, Ibn Ishāq and 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Jurayj  
 786 Death of Hādī. Accession of Hārūn al-Rashīd.  
 795 Death of Mālīk ibn Anas  
 809 Death of Hārūn al-Rashīd  
 810 Birth of al-Bukhārī  
 815–816 Shi'a revolts  
 c. 815 Death of Ḍirār ibn 'Amr  
 820 Death of Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī. Ṭāhir establishes the rule of the Ṭāhirids in Khurasan.  
 823 Death of Ṭāhir in Khurasan. Accession of Ṭalḥa and his deposition. Accession of 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir.  
 827 al-Ma'mūn declares the Mu'tazila creed as the state religion. Death of 'Abd al-Razzāq ibn Hammām al-Ṣan'ānī.

- 833 Deaths of Ibn Hishām and al-Ma'mūn. Accession of al-Mu'taşim.  
836 al-Mu'taşim shifts the capital to Samarra.  
847 Accession of al-Mutawakkil.  
848 al-Mutawakkil restores orthodoxy.  
849 Death of the Ṭāhirid ruler 'Abdallāh ibn Ṭāhir; accession of Ṭāhir II.  
855 Death of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal  
860 Founding of the Samanid rule in Transoxania.  
861 Murder of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph Mutawakkil; accession of Muntaşir.  
868 Death of Abū Muḥammad 'Abdallāh ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī  
870 Death of al-Bukhārī  
873 End of the Ṭāhirid government  
874-875 Death of Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj  
886 Death of Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Māja  
889 Death of Sulaymān ibn al-Ash'ath Abū Dā'ūd al-Sijjistānī  
892 Death of Abū 'Īsā Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā al-Tirmidhī  
915 Death of Aḥmad ibn Shu'ayb al-Nasā'ī  
944 Death of Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī  
935 Death of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī  
995 Deaths of al-Dāraquṭnī and al-Nīsābūrī  
1023–1025 Death of 'Abd al-Jabbār  
1113 Death of Ibn al-Qaysarānī  
1277 Death of Muḥyī l-Dīn Sharaf al-Dīn al-Nawawī  
1328 Death of Ṭāqī l-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya  
1352-1353 Death of Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī  
1373 Death of Ibn Kathīr  
1413 Death of Sayyid 'Alī al-Jurjānī  
1449 Death of Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī  
1657 Death of Ḥajjī Khalīfa  
1792 Death of Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb



## VOCABULARY

‘Abādila	Anas, Abū Hurayra, Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn ‘Umar
‘adāla	righteousness, honourable reputation
‘adl	justice, honesty; a person with ‘adāla
āḥād	occasional or single; hadiths with only one or few different <i>isnāds</i>
‘ālim	pl. ‘ulamā’ learned, scholar as an early term, a Companion of the Prophet who, when asked for advice, referred to an example of the Prophet or another Companion. See <i>faqīh</i> .
Anṣār	followers, <i>al-Anṣār</i> , people in Medina who received Muhammad after his <i>hijra</i>
awā’il	pl. of <i>awwal</i> , firsts 1. a genre of historical or theological texts devoted to beginnings 2. a form used by early Muslims to tell individual reports of beginnings: “ <i>Awwal man fa’ala ...</i> ”
bid‘a	innovation
ḍa‘īf	weak
dajjāl	liar, a person relating false hadiths, used especially for severe cases of forgery
dirāya/‘ilm al-dirāya	a science, which aims at defining the authenticity of a hadith report. It takes into consideration the <i>matn</i> , but the analysis focuses on classifying the hadith on the merits of its <i>isnād</i> . A crucial criterion is the reliability of the chain of narrators. <i>Al-Riwāya</i> and <i>al-dirāya</i> are complementary disciplines, which cannot be viewed in isolation of each other.
faḍā’il sg. faḍīla	virtue, merit, in hadith literature usually in plural, it means laudatory stories about the merits and virtues of the Prophet or his supporters. Fabricated <i>faḍā’il</i> type stories became important political weapons as early as during the dispute about the first successor of the Prophet as the leader of the Islamic community after his death.
faqīh	pl. <i>fuqahā’</i> , specialist in jurisprudence, as an early term <i>faqīh</i> denoted a Companion of the Prophet who used his own personal judgement, <i>ra’y</i>
fiqh	jurisprudence
ḥalal wa-ḥarām	legal and illegal, juridical opinions which later were formulated as Prophetic hadiths
ḥasan	fair, good, the second degree of hadiths classified by authenticity
hijra	emigration (of Muhammad and his companions from Mecca to Medina)
ḥujja	evidence; definite argument in matters where the Prophetic example is the guiding principle
ḥujjiyya	evidential value
ijmā‘	consensus
ijtihād	individual reasoning
‘ilm	knowledge

inqiṭāʿ	discontinuity (of an <i>isnād</i> )
ʿiṣma	an exalted spiritual position which protects from committing sin. In Imāmī Shīʿite Islam Muhammad, his daughter Fāṭima and the twelve imams are believed to possess <i>ʿiṣma</i> , thus, they are called <i>maʿṣūm</i> .
isnād	chain of transmitters of a hadith
ittibāʿ	following the true example of the Prophet (instead of <i>taqlīd</i> )
ittiṣāl	continuity (of an <i>isnād</i> )
al-jarḥ wa-l-taʿdīl	disapproving and approving, the criticism of hadith transmitters, refers to the evaluation of the reliability of the transmitters
kadhib	mendacity, falsehood
kadhhdhāb	liar, untruthful
kalām	theology, dialectic theology, legal discussion
khabar al-khāṣṣa	= khabar al-wāḥid = khabar al-infirād = āḥād
madhhab	school of jurisprudence
majhūl	unknown, not identified
mashhūr	famous; hadiths which have been <i>āḥād</i> but have become <i>mutawātir</i> during the 8th and 9th centuries
maʿṣūm	inviolable; infallible, sinless, see <i>ʿiṣma</i>
mathālib	sg. <i>mathlab</i> a defect, blemish, opposite of <i>faḍāʿil</i> type hadiths
muḥaddith	hadith transmitter
muhājir	emigrant: <i>al-Muhājirūn</i> , those Meccans who emigrated from Mecca to Medina with the Prophet in 622
mujaddid	renewer of faith
munkar	objectionable
munqaṭiʿ	interrupted <i>isnād</i> , one of the links in the chain of transmitters is missing
mursal	<i>isnād munqaṭiʿ</i> where the first transmitter is missing
mustakhrāj	excerpt of a collection of hadiths, a partial copy of <i>ṣaḥīḥ</i> reports found in the <i>Ṣaḥīḥān</i> in which the author gives his own <i>isnāds</i>
mutawātir	following in uninterrupted succession; hadiths with many different authentic <i>isnāds</i> , widely transmitted hadiths (how many <i>isnāds</i> are needed for a report to be <i>mutawātir</i> is not clearly established)
muttafaq ʿalayh	a hadith which is accepted both by al-Bukhārī and Muslim in their collection
nāsikh	abrogation
qāṣṣ,	pl. <i>quṣṣās</i> early Islamic storytellers. Some of the stories ( <i>qiṣṣa</i> , pl. <i>qiṣaṣ</i> ) probably told about the Prophet and his supporters and thus they may be considered as prototypes of hadith.
qiyās	use of analogical reasoning
r	<i>raḍiya llāhu ʿanhu</i> , may God be pleased with him, an Islamic eulogy
raʿy	opinion; decision based on subjective, individual reasoning
al-riwāya/ʿilm al-riwāya	A science focusing on investigating the transmitters ( <i>rāwī</i> pl. <i>ruwāt</i> ) in the <i>isnāds</i> of hadith reports. It concerns itself with preserving information about the

transmitters, such as biographical data, information about their students and teachers, travels, literary work and anything affecting their reliability.

§	<i>ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam</i> , God bless him and grant him salvation, an eulogy after the name of the Prophet
ṣaḥābī	the Companion of the Prophet pl. <i>al-ṣaḥāba</i> . At first only those early Muslims who had accompanied the Prophet, or first generation Muslims, later the term became to denote anyone who had met the Prophet. The last of the Companions was, according to Goldziher's article in the <i>Et</i> <sup>2</sup> , a small child who died shortly after 100/718, that is to say 86 solar years after the death of the Prophet.
ṣaḥīfa	pl. <i>ṣaḥā'if</i> , script, page, leaf
ṣaḥīḥ	true, authentic, sound; the most highly appreciated class of individual hadiths and hadith collections
shafā'a	intercession
shāfi'	intercessor
sharī'a	Islamic law
sharṭ	pl. <i>shurūṭ</i> , condition
<i>al-sunna l-nabawiyya</i>	Prophetic sunna
<i>sunnat al-nabī</i>	sunna of the Prophet
<i>al-sunna l-‘ādiyya</i>	non-binding habits and preferences of the Prophet
<i>al-sunna l-hudā</i>	binding sunna which is related to the Prophetic mission of Muhammad
tābi'ūn	Followers of the Prophet
ta'dīl	declaring 'adl, trustworthy
tadwīn	recording, writing down, official registration of hadiths in writing
takhrīj	resolving, explaining or rendering a hadith, making the final version of the text
talfiq	picking and choosing from legal decisions, "patching"
taqlīd	blind imitation
tafsīr	interpretation
tarhīb wa-targhīb	intimidation and invitation
tarjama	1. Chapter heading, introduction of a hadith report 2. Biography (in a <i>rijāl</i> work)
thābit	well-authenticated
uṣūl	roots; theory
'ulamā'	sg. 'ālim, scholar, religious authority
waḍ'	fabrication of hadiths
waḥy	divine revelation
<i>waḥy matlū</i>	recited revelation
<i>waḥy ghayr matlū</i>	revelation which is not recited





## CLASSIFICATION OF *ISNĀDS*/HADITHS

### The authentic category

1. al-musnad            The contrary of *mursal*. The *isnād* is connected uninterruptedly to the Prophet. There are three types of *musnad* hadiths: *mutawātir*, *mashhūr* and *āḥād*.
2. al-muttaṣil        Uninterrupted, but it might be *mawqūf*. The opposite of *munqatiʿ*.
3. al-marfūʿ            A saying, deed, or affirmation attributed by a Companion to the Prophet. It might be *muttaṣil* or *mawqūf*.
4. al-muʿanʿan        An *isnād* with one or more times the formula *fulān ʿan fulān*. ʿAn is inserted in case accepted transmission methods have not happened between the two transmitters. An *isnād*, which is *muʿanʿan* is considered *ṣaḥīḥ* if it is *muttaṣil*, the reporters are contemporaneous and trustworthy, and no *tadlīs* is suspected.
5. al-muʿallaq        one or more transmitters are missing. It is:
  - a) *muʿallaq*, if a transmitter is missing in the beginning of the *isnād*
  - b) *munqatiʿ*, if a transmitter is missing in the middle of the *isnād*
  - c) *mursal*, if a transmitter is missing in the end of the *isnād*
6. al-afrād (sg. fard)    equal to *khbar wāḥid*, single, one of its kind
7. al-mudraj            inserted, an addition by a reporter to the text being narrated
8. al-mashhūr        famous: A hadith, which is transmitted and known by many. It has at least three different *isnāds*.
9. al-gharīb wa-l-ʿazīz
  - a) *gharīb*, authorized by one trustworthy transmitter by his *ʿadāla* and *ḍabt*. It can be *ṣaḥīḥ* as the *gharībs* in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, or not *ṣaḥīḥ*, which is more common.
  - b) ʿazīz, authorised by two to three transmitters
  - c) *mashhūr* authorized by many transmitters
10. al-muṣaḥḥaf        contains a misinterpretation of diacritical marks in respect to the *rāwī* or some detail in the *matn*
11. al-musalsal        a report in which all the reporters use the same mode of transmission such as ʿan, *ḥaddathanā*, etc. repeat any other

additional statement or remark, or act in a particular manner while narrating the report.

### The weak category

1. al-mawqūf stopped, it might be *muttaṣil* or *munqatiʿ*
2. al-maqtūʿ The *isnād* is stopped at the *tābiʿūn*, the hadith comes from them, thus it is *mawqūf* and has no legal proof.
3. al-mursal The hadith comes from the *tābiʿūn*, but refers to words or acts of the Prophet. It is accepted as legal proof but not un-animously. *Al-irsāl* means a lack of *isnād* e.g., if a reporter refers directly to the words of the Prophet without saying: *Ḥaddathanā fulān ʿan rasūl Allāh ...*
4. al-munqatiʿ The *isnād* is not *muttaṣil*.
5. al-muʿḍal Two or more reporters are missing from the *isnād*.
6. al-shādhdh wa-l-munkar irregular and objectionable
  - a) *shādhdh*: Deviating from the constant or common, e.g., a different report is told by a reliable transmitter, *shādhdh mardūd*, a rejected irregular report
  - b) *munkar*, a different report is told by a non-reliable transmitter.
7. al-muʿallal An apparently logical report but it is not of established authority.
8. al-mudallas Forged: A report, which is ascribed to a higher authority than it ought to be. E.g. a report, which is ascribed to an early authority although the reporter has not met him.
9. al-muḍṭarib Confused, unsettled: The report has several variations.
10. al-maqlūb Reversed: A report, which is known by the authority of someone is attributed to another authority and, thus, it seems to become *gharīb*.
11. al-mawḍūʿ Invented: It might be judged true, false or doubtful, nevertheless, it must not be reported by those who know that it is *mawḍūʿ*, unless it is notified that it might be invented.

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