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Selected Texts

From

Encyclopedia of Quran & Encyclopedia Islamica

For

Quranic Sciences & Hadith Students

Department of Quran Sciences and Hadith

Payam Noor University

باسمه تعالی

مقدمه

قرآن کریم به عنوان خوان گسترده الهی خطاب به انسانها توجه اندیشمندان مسلمان و غیرمسلمان را به خود جلب کرده است، آگاهی از دیدگاه های مکتوب و منقح و معتبر در نزد نظریه پردازان انگلیسی زبان در باره این کتاب وحیانی و آسمانی حایز اهمیت است بر این اساس درسی با عنوان زبان خارجه یا زبان تخصصی در مجموعه دروس رشته علوم قرآن و حدیث پیش بینی شده تا دانشجویان این رشته مخصوصا شاغلان به تحصیل در دوره های تحصیلات تکمیلی بتوانند توانمندی خود را در بهره گیری از این آثار و انتقال آن به زبان مقصد همراه با نقد و بررسی و اظهار نظر افزایش دهند.

دائرةالمعارف های انگلیسی نگاشته شده در حوزه دین و اسلام متعدد است که از میان آنها دو دائرةالمعارف قرآن و اسلامیکا مورد توجه قرار گرفته و از بین مداخل فراوان آنها سه مدخل حدیث، ابرار و متشابه انتخاب شده است. مستحضرید مداخل انتخاب شده مرتبط با رشته و محتوای آن یعنی مفاهیم قرآن کریم واصطلاحات عولم قرآنی و حدیثی است تا دانشجویان بتوانند محتوای علمی و پژوهشی مداخل مذکور را با مطالب مطالعه شده خود در منابع اصیل عربی و فارسی در دروس تخصصی انطباق دهند.

امید واریم این جزوه سرآغازی برای تهیه متن آموزشی و پژوهشی این درس در رشته علوم قرآن و حدیث دوره کارشناسی ارشد دانشگاه پیام نور باشد.

امین ناجی/ صانعی پور

In the Name of Allah

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&

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For

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Muḥammad claimed to be unique in the art of 'embellishing with colour' (*tazwīq*) and maintained that no one could produce a portrait as well as he. Around this time, due to increasing contact between India and Europe a new style emerged in the 'Indo-Persian' tradition of miniature painting. Moreover, some of the Mughal emperors showed a particular interest in including naturalistic features in paintings and portraits, which, due to the amicable relations between the monarchs of Persia and India and the movement of artists between the two regions, served to reinforce and strengthen the innovations which had already appeared in Persian ateliers.

At around the same time, the use of Western watercolour technique can be seen in certain works by Riḍā 'Abbāsī and his student Mu'in Muṣawwir, including a portrait of Riḍā 'Abbāsī painted by Mu'in Muṣawwir. With the coming of Muḥammad Zamān and 'Alī Qulī Jabbahdār, who had trained under European painters, this style of painting developed further among Persian artists, and thereafter it was generally accepted by both artists and patrons. Muḥammad Zamān imported and adapted not only the European style of watercolour, but also various elements of Christian subject matter and iconography, and subsequently these were employed and reproduced by Persian artists for many years. Muḥammad Zamān's brother, Muḥammad Ibrāhīm (Hājī Muḥammad), his son Muḥammad 'Alī, his grandson, Muḥammad Bāqir, his great-grandson Muḥammad Ḥasan, and apparently his great-great-grandson, Muḥammad Ṣādiq, were all professional watercolour painters. In addition, Abū al-Ḥasan Muṣṭawfī Ghaffārī (q.v.), 'Alī Ashraf Afshār, Mīrzā Bābā Shīrāzī, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Thānī Ghaffārī, Luṭf 'Alī Šuratgar, Aghā Buzurg Shīrāzī, Maḥmūd Khān (Malik al-Shu'arā'), Mīrzā 'Alī Akbar Khān (Mu-zayyin al-Dawla), Yūsuf, Ismā'īl Jalāyir, Muḥammad Ghaffārī (Kamāl al-Mulk) and Muṣawwir al-Mamālik were all skil-

ful watercolour painters. The watercolour masterpieces which they produced are held by various museums and collections.

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YAHYA DHOKA'
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Al-Abrār, an Arabic term which can be translated as meaning 'the pious' or 'the righteous'. It appears several times in the Qur'ān, and has entered into the terminology of Sufism and mysticism.

IN THE QUR'ĀN

Some Qur'ānic commentators and many lexicographers consider the term *abrār* to be the plural form only of *barr* (al-Ṭabarī 4/142; al-Ṭabrisī, 2/908; Ibn al-Athīr, 1/116, al-Qurtubī, 19/125). However, most regard the term as the plural of both '*barr*' and '*bārr*', both bearing the same meaning (al-Ṭūsī, 3/92; Maybudī, 10/318, 406; al-Zamakhsharī, 1/489; Fakhr al-Rāzī, 6/146 - commenting on 3:193). Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (41), on the other hand, claims *abrār* is the plural form only of *bārr*. Since *barr* in its singular form is used three times in the Qur'ān (19:14, 19:32, 52:28) while *bārr* does not appear in the Qur'ān at all, the view of those commentators and lexicographers who consider *abrār* the plural of *barr* and maintain that the plural of *bārr* is *barara*, seems more convincing.

Abrār is repeated six times in the Qur'ān. In four verses (3:198, 76:5, 82:13, 83:22), the term refers to the blessed in Paradise.

Furthermore, in one verse in *Sūrat al-Mutaffifin* (83:18) the record of the deeds of the *abrār* is said to be in the *ʿIlīyyūn*, a term which is explained by the commentators in various ways: the *ʿIlīyyūn* is either the divine Throne, the 'Lote-tree of the Limit' (*sidrat al-muntahā*), or the emerald tablet (*lawḥ*) that is suspended under the Throne, upon which the deeds of all human beings are recorded. It is also regarded as the highest level of Heaven. In another verse (3:193), the 'possessors of insight' (*ʾulū al-albāb*) supplicate God, asking that their souls may be taken to Him at death along with the *abrār*.

Qur'ānic commentators have expressed diverse opinions regarding the *abrār* and their distinctive characteristics, including the following: the *abrār* are those who have attained perfect obedience to God, such that He is pleased with them (al-Ṭabarī, 4/142; al-Ṭūsī, 3/85; al-Ṭabrisī, 2/908). They accomplish to perfection the religious obligations incumbent upon them. They commit no sins and avoid all things forbidden by the *sharī'a* (al-Ṭabarī, 4/142; Maybudī, 10/406). They are those believers who are sincere in their faith and carry out the divine commands (Maybudī, 10/318). They are those righteous souls who perform good deeds solely for the sake of God's good-pleasure, and not for any other reason (al-Ṭūsī, 10/302). They are those who perform both the obligatory (*wājib*) and the recommended (*mustaḥabb*) acts (al-Ṭabrisī, 9/616). They are those who give God His due, and fulfil all their vows (al-Qurṭubī, 19/125 quoting Qatāda). Their faith in God, His Prophet and the Resurrection is based upon the assimilation of true guidance and insight (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 20/213). Some commentators report Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's statement that the *abrār* are those who do not inflict pain on even the smallest ant (al-Ṭūsī, 3/85; al-Qurṭubī, 13/125; al-Suyūṭī, 2/415). This statement is also given in a slightly different version, where the *abrār* are described as 'those who

do not cause harm to ants, nor do they tolerate any kind of vice' (Abū al-Futūḥ al-Rāzī, 5/444; al-Ṭabrisī, 10/616). In his comment on the verse, 'Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, pardon us our wrong deeds, and take us to Thee with the *abrār*' (3:193), Maybudī writes that the intended referents of the *abrār* are the prophets and the saints (2/388). A number of commentators refer to a *ḥadīth* in which the *abrār* are described as those who are virtuous in their actions towards their elders and their children (Ibn Bābawayh, 2/69; Maybudī, 10/406; al-Qurṭubī, 19/125; al-Suyūṭī, 2/415).

According to al-Ṭabrisī, on the authority of the Household of the Prophet (q.v. *ahl al-bayt*), and according not only to the supporters but even to many opponents of the Household of the Prophet, in the verse 'As to the *abrār*, they shall drink of a cup mixed with *kāfir*' (Q 76:5), the *abrār* refers to 'Alī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn (10/616). Ibn Shahrāshūb (2/4) also reported a saying of Ḥasan b. 'Alī, the content of which is almost identical to the former report. In a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, the *abrār* are defined as the companions of 'Alī (al-'Ayyāshī, 1/412).

It should be noted that in his *Sharḥ al-ziyāra al-jāmi'a al-kabīra*, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī defines the *abrār*, as the term appears in the expression '*anāsir al-abrār*', as the *shī'a* of the imams, this category embracing the messengers (*mursalūn*), the prophets (*anbiyā'*), the legatees (*awṣiyā'*), the virtuous (*sāliḥūn*), and the angels (*malā'ika*).

IN SUFISM

Abrār, in the terminology of the Sufis, refers to those who are midway along the mystical path, having attained some degree of knowledge of God and having reached certain spiritual stations (Ibn al-'Arabī, 2/740; al-Baqlī, 2/353). However, there is a variety of opinions among Sufi authors regarding the precise definition of the term. In some early sources, the *abrār*

are considered saints, 'the friends of God' (*al-awliyā*), who are effective in resolving problems in the world (al-Hujwīrī, 269; al-Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, 80). According to al-Hujwīrī (p. 269), the *abrār* are lower than the *awtād* (s. *watad*, peg) and higher than the *abdāl* (q.v.) and they are seven in number. He writes, 'The elite of the realm of the Real, may His loftiness be glorified, comprise 300 individuals who are called the *akhyār* (the elect), in addition to forty more people who are called the *abdāl*; then there are seven other individuals who are called the *abrār*. There are four more persons who are called the *awtād*, and three others who are referred to as the *nuqabā'* (s. *naqīb*, leader). Finally, there is one who is the *qūṭb* (pole) or *ghawṭh* (succour)' (al-Hujwīrī, 269). However, Kh^wāja 'Abd Allāh Anṣārī apparently deems the *abrār* to be lower in rank than the *abdāl* and the *awtād*. He writes, 'Those who engage in combat against the lower soul are divided into three groups: one is striving, he is of the *abrār*, the other is attaining, he is of the *awtād*; the third is delivered, he is of the *abdāl*' (Anṣārī, 1979, 22). In another place, Anṣārī, like al-Hujwīrī, says the status of the *abrār* is lower than that of the *awtād*, adding that there are forty of them. He writes, 'The *awliyā*' always amount to 360 people, of which forty are the *abrār*, thirty are the *awtād*, ten are the *nuqabā'*, three are the *nujabā'* (noble), and one is the *ghawṭh*' (Anṣārī, 1962, 80). He adds that whenever the *ghawṭh* dies, one of the *nujabā'* takes his place and subsequently, going through all the ranks, one person is elevated to the next, higher position. In other words, one of the *awtād* takes the place of one of the *nuqabā'*, one of the *abrār* takes the place of one of the *awtād*; finally, one of the common folk attains the status of the *awliyā*' (Anṣārī, 1962, 80).

Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj argues on the basis of Qur'ānic verses that the *abrār* are lower than the *muqarrabūn* (those brought near) (al-Sarrāj, 84–86). In some later Sufi sources, the *abrār* are considered to be lower than

the *muqarrabūn* (al-Baqlī, 2/366; al-Nasafi, 103, 303), and higher than the *multaqūn* (God-fearing) (al-Baqlī, 1/130). On the superiority of the *muqarrabūn* over the *abrār*, most Sufi sources refer to the saying: 'The good deeds of the *abrār* are the bad deeds of the *muqarrabūn*.' Some consider this to be a fabricated *ḥadīth*, and others attribute it to the Sufi shaykh, Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz (Furūzānfar, 65). 'Aṭṭār cites a saying of the renowned Sufi Sarī al-Saqāṭī, which shows clearly the precedence given to the *muqarrabūn* over the *abrār* in Sufi doctrine: 'The hearts of the *abrār* are attached to the [eschatological] end, while the hearts of the *muqarrabūn* are attached to the [primordial] beginning. This means that the good deeds of the *abrār* are the bad deeds of the *muqarrabūn*' ('Aṭṭār, 1/281).

Al-Bākhazī, a Sufi writer of the 8th/14th century, confirms this point of view: 'Whatever the disciple does is *for* God, and whatever the shaykh does is *through* God. The shaykh has the station of the *muqarrabūn*, and the disciple has the station of the *abrār*' (al-Bākhazī, 128, emphasis added). Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī refers to four spiritual degrees in the scale of attaining proximity to God. He puts the *abrār* in the third rank and describes them as 'a group who are busy reforming people and places; their main effort is to make good the shortcomings of the people' (al-Ṭūsī, 142). In the first two ranks, those who come before the *abrār*, al-Ṭūsī places the *mūqinūn* (sing. *mūqin*, those who possess certainty) and *muḥsinūn* (sing. *muḥsin*, those who do good). In the fourth rank are the *fā'izūn* (sing. *fā'iz*, victorious) or the *mukhlisūn* (sing. *mukhlis*, sincere) (al-Ṭūsī, 142).

A group of Sufi commentators on the Qur'ān have interpreted the term *abrār* in a fashion that reflects their own spiritual station and mystical 'taste'. For example, Rūzbihān calls the *abrār* those to whom God has granted contemplation of His reality and in whose hearts He has placed divine love. The *abrār* drink from the streams of light flowing from the divine

Attributes, while the *muqarrabūn* drink from the ocean of the divine Essence. The drink of the *abrār* is flavoured with the wine flowing in the streams of the *muqarrabūn*. If the *abrār* were to drink the undiluted wine of the *muqarrabūn*, they would perish altogether. The *abrār* are in the station of intimacy (*uns*), while the *muqarrabūn* are in the station of holiness (*quds*) (2/366).

As noted above, Rūzbihān deems the *abrār* to be midway along the spiritual Path. The difference between them and the gnostics (*ʿarifūn*) is given as follows: 'The *abrār* remain in a state of intoxication (*sukr*) within contemplation, and are thus prevented from attaining complete knowledge of reality. They begin their drink in sobriety, and finish it with intoxication; the gnostics, on the other hand, drink the pure wine of contemplation suffused with divine wisdom, so that they begin their drink in sobriety, and finish it also with sobriety. Thus they are not veiled from the marvellous manifestations of the Essence and the Attributes' (2/353).

In the Qur'ānic commentary attributed to Muḥyī al-Dīn b. al-ʿArabī but actually by ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, the *abrār* are the righteous who have been delivered from the veil of God's 'effects and acts', and are veiled by the divine Attributes without, however, remaining at this station; or rather, even while subsisting in the domain of the divine Qualities, they are aware of the realm of the divine Essence (2/740). In this commentary, the *abrār* are divided into two groups: the first consists of the *abdāl*, and they are extinguished from their own selves, whilst the other is composed of those who subsist within their own selves, even while being effaced by the divine Attributes, as they have not yet attained extinction in the divine Essence (1/243).

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al-Sūfiyya (Kabul, 1341 Sh./1962); ʿAṭṭār, Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ* (Leiden, 1905); al-ʿAyyāshī, Muḥammad b. Masʿūd, *al-Tafsīr* (Tehran, 1380/1961); al-Bākharzī, Yahyā b. Aḥmad, *Awṣād al-aḥbāb wa fuṣūṣ al-ādāb* (Tehran, 1345 Sh./1966); al-Baqlī, Rūzbihān, *ʿArāʾis al-bayān fī haqāʾiq al-Qurʾān* (Nawalkashūr, 1301/1883); Furūzānfar, Badr al-Zamān, *Aḥādīth-i mathnawī* (Tehran, 1361 Sh./1982); al-Hujwīrī, ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, ed. V. Zhukovskii (Leningrad, 1936); Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-karīm* (Beirut, 1978); Ibn al-Athīr, Mubārak b. Muḥammad, *al-Nihāya* (Cairo, 1383/1963); Ibn Bābawayh, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, *ʿUyūn akhbār al-Riḍā* (Najaf, 1390/1970); Ibn Shahrāshūb, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, *Manāqib ʿAl-i Abī Ṭālib* (Qumm, n.d.); Maybudī, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, *Kashf al-asrār wa ʿuddat al-abrār* (Tehran, 1361 Sh./1982); al-Nasafi, ʿAzīz al-Dīn b. Muḥammad, *Kutāb al-insān al-kāmil* (Tehran, 1341 Sh./1962); al-Qurtubī, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, *al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān* (Beirut, 1967); al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad, *al-Mufradāt fī gharīb al-Qurʾān* (Beirut, n.d.); al-Rāzī, Abū al-Futūḥ Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, *Rawḍ al-jinān wa rawḥ al-janān* (Qumm, 1404/1984); al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn, Muḥammad b. ʿUmar, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (Cairo, 1309/1892); al-Sarrāj, Abū Naṣr, *al-Lumaʾ* (Leiden, 1914); al-Suyūṭī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *al-Durr al-manthūr* (Beirut, 1403/1983); al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Cairo, 1325/1907); Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn, *al-Mizān* (Tehran, 1392 Sh./1972); al-Ṭabrisī, Faḍl b. Ḥasan, *Majmaʿ al-bayān* (Beirut, 1408/1988); al-Ṭūsī, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan, *al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Beirut, n.d.); al-Ṭūsī, Naṣīr al-Dīn, *Akhlaq-i nāṣirī* (Tehran, 1360 Sh./1981); al-Zamakhsharī, Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar, *al-Kashshāf* (Beirut, n.d.).

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Abri, a kind of decorated marbled paper produced by mixing a variety of paints, which create dense, swirling patterns reminiscent of clouds or waves. This term is not to be confused with *abr* (cloud) or *abr-sāzī* (use of cloud forms), which is one of the seven motifs of the art of Persian painting (q.v. *Abr*). Marbled paper was used to decorate the borders of fine manuscripts, albums (*muraqqaʿāt*), the backgrounds of drawings and calligraphic samples, book covers, endpapers (or fly-leaves), the background on pen-cases and lacquer

H

Ḥadīth and the Qur'ān

One important genre in Arabic literature comprises the sayings attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad, descriptions of his deeds as well as accounts of events supposed to have occurred during his lifetime. This literary genre is the tradition literature, the ḥadīth, which is a term for the literature as well as for a single tradition.

This article is divided into eleven sections:

(1) general introduction; (2) traditions about the beginning of the divine revelations and what the Prophet is reported to have experienced while receiving them (see REVELATION AND INSPIRATION); (3) traditions dealing with the collection of the scattered qur'ānic fragments by order of the first three caliphs (see COLLECTION OF THE QUR'ĀN); (4) traditions dealing with the seven variant readings (*qirā'āt* or *ahruf*; see READINGS OF THE QUR'ĀN); (5) traditions in which the various modes of Qur'ān recitation are sorted out (see RECITATION OF THE QUR'ĀN); (6) exegetical traditions in general (see EXEGESIS OF THE QUR'ĀN: CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL); (7) traditions that clarify certain well-known qur'ānic legal prescriptions (see LAW AND THE QUR'ĀN); (8) historical reports closely connected with particular qur'ānic verses (q.v.; see also OCCASIONS

OF REVELATION); (9) traditions that sing the praises of certain sūras or verses; (10) special genres of ḥadīth literature closely related to the Qur'ān: “stories of the prophets” (*qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*) traditions (see PROPHETS AND PROPHETHOOD); eschatological traditions (see ESCHATOLOGY); ḥadīth *qudsī*; (11) the Shī'ī ḥadīth sources (see SHĪ'ISM AND THE QUR'ĀN).

(1) General introduction

Normally each tradition consists of (1) a list of names, beginning with the collector in whose collection the tradition found a place followed by several transmitters going back to the prophet Muḥammad or to another ancient authority, the so-called *isnād* (see further down), followed by (2) the actual text (*matn*) of the tradition. Certain collections of ḥadīths, six in all, were compiled in the latter half of the third/ninth century and became generally considered as so reliable by the Sunnī Muslim religious authorities of the day that they were canonized as it were, eventually acquiring a sanctity second only to the Qur'ān. In each of those six collections, known collectively as *al-kutub al-sitta*, i.e. “the Six Books,” there is, apart from countless scattered allusions to qur'ānic verses and accompanying “occasions of revelation”

(*asbāb al-nuzūl*, the plural of *sabab al-nuzūl*, cf. sec. 8 below), as well as a host of concomitant issues, at least one special section that deals exclusively with qur'ānic matters — exegesis in the widest sense of the word. These sections contain the *tafsīr* traditions. In order of the importance of the collections, with references to the better-known editions, these sections are:

- (1) *Bad' al-wahy* and *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, in Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. L. Krehl & Th.W. Juynboll, 4 vols., Leiden 1862-1908, i, 4 f.; iii, 391 f., and the edition authorized and carried out by a number of Azhar scholars and other religious dignitaries, 9 vols., Cairo 1313/1895, Maṭba'at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī and reprinted many times, i, 2 f.; vi, 223 f. (al-Bukhārī's lengthy exegetical [*tafsīr*] section in iii, 193 f. = vi, 20 f., is especially important);
- (2) *Bāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān wa-mā yata'llaqu bihi* and *Tafsīr*, in Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875), *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, 5 vols., Cairo 1955 (reprinted many times), i, 543 f.; iv, 2312 f.;
- (3) *Abwāb qirā'at al-Qur'ān wa-taḥzībīhi wa-tartībīhi*, *Bāb fī thawāb qirā'at al-Qur'ān* and *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf wa-l-qirā'āt* in Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān b. al-Ash'ath al-Sijistānī (d. 275/889), *Sunan*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī l-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, 4 vols., Cairo 1354/1935 (reprinted several times), ii, 54 f., 70 f.; iv, 31 f., and Muḥammad Shams al-Ḥaqq al-'Azīmābādī, *Awn al-ma'būd sharḥ sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 14 vols., Beirut 1990, iv, 186 f., 228 f.; xi, 3 f.;
- (4) *Faḍā'il* (or *Thawāb*) *al-Qur'ān* and *Qirā'āt* in Muḥammad b. 'Isā al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892), *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir et al., 5 vols., Cairo 1937-65, v, 155 f., 185 f.; his *Tafsīr* section (v, 199 f.) is, like al-Bukhārī's, especially important;
- (5) *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, *Abwāb qirā'at al-Qur'ān* and *Tafsīr* in Aḥmad b. Shu'ayb al-Nasā'ī (d. 303/915), *Kitāb al-Sunan al-kubrā*, ed.

'Abd al-Ghaffār Sulaymān al-Bundārī and Sayyid Kasrawī Ḥasan, 6 vols., Beirut 1991, v, 3 f., 173 f.; vi, 282 f. (n.b.: in Nasā'ī's abbreviation of this collection entitled *Sunan* or *al-Mujtabā* there are no special Qur'ān-related sections);

- (6) *Bāb iftitāḥ al-qirā'a* in Ibn Māja al-Qazwīnī (d. 273/886), *Sunan*, ed. M.F. 'Abd al-Bāqī, 2 vols., Cairo 1952-3 (reprinted several times), i, 267 f.

Five other major pre-canonical collections of ḥadīth and related material with special sections devoted to the Qur'ān are:

- (1) Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795), *Muwatta'*, ed. M.F. 'Abd al-Bāqī, 2 vols., Cairo 1951 (reprinted many times), *Kitāb al-Qur'ān*, i, 199 f.;
- (2) Abū Dāwūd al-Tayālīsī (d. 203-4/819-20), *Minḥat al-ma'būd fī tartīb Musnad al-Tayālīsī Abī Dāwūd*, ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Bannā al-Sā'atī Beirut 1372, ii, *al-Kitāb fī mā yata'llaqu bi-l-Qur'ān*, 2 f.;
- (3) 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 211/826), *Muṣannaf*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A'zamī, 11 vols., Beirut 1970, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, iii, 335 f.;
- (4) Abū Bakr b. Abī Shayba (d. 235/849), *Muṣannaf*, 15 vols., Hyderabad 1966-88, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, x, 456 f.;
- (5) 'Abdallāh b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī (d. 255/869), *Sunan*, ed. Fawwāz Aḥmad Zamarlī and Khālīd al-Sab' al-'Alamī, 2 vols., Cairo/Beirut 1987, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, ii, 521 f.

Among the most important Shī'ī ḥadīth sources we find the following, each with special sections on the Qur'ān:

- Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī (d. 328/939), *al-Kāfi fī 'ilm al-dīn*, ed. 'Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, 8 vols., Teheran 1381, *Faḍl al-Qur'ān*, ii, 596 f.;
- Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1110/1700), *Bihār al-anwār*, 2nd edition, ed. al-Sayyid Ibrāhīm al-Mayānjī and

Muḥammad al-Bāqir al-Bahbūdī, 104 vols., Beirut 1983, vols. lxxxix and xc, 1-145, *Kitāb al-Qur'ān*. For an appraisal of this source, see section 11 below.

Seemingly complete *isnāds* preceding longer or shorter medieval Qur'ān studies were occasionally utilized in later writings in the qur'ānic sciences (see TRADITIONAL DISCIPLINES OF QUR'ĀNIC STUDY) in order to lend these prestige, but these studies are not part of ḥadīth literature per se. Thus we find, for example, a concise enumeration (*talkhīs*) in which passages assumed to have been revealed in Mecca (q.v.) are separated from those assumed to have been revealed in Medina (q.v.), headed by a strand ending in Mujāhid/Ibn 'Abbās in Jamāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's *Itqān* (i, 24 f.), who cites a book on abrogation (q.v.) by the grammarian al-Naḥḥās (d. 338/950, cf. *GAS*, ix, 207 f.). Throughout his massive work al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) quotes other such surveys on a variety of qur'ānic subjects with the name of only one ancient authority (often Companions like Ibn 'Abbās or Ubayy b. Ka'b; see COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET) prefixed as the transmitting authority. The "mysterious letters" (*fawātiḥ*, see LETTERS AND MYSTERIOUS LETTERS) with which a number of sūras begin are enumerated with a host of interpretations, each of which is again preceded by an *isnād* of sorts (cf. Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, iii, 21 f., and also Majlisī, *Biḥār*, lxxxix, 373 f.). Examples of such works on a number of qur'ānic disciplines with scattered and non-canonical *isnāds* attached to them are otherwise legion. The significance of such *isnāds* is slight on the whole, and mentioning them at all seems more a matter of habit than a purposeful attempt to substantiate historically the transmission paths of such studies.

The evolution of the ḥadīth went hand in hand with Muslim exploration and inter-

pretation of the Qur'ān. Thus we find a variety of interpretive issues reflected in the ḥadīth: theological, ethical (see ETHICS AND THE QUR'ĀN), legislative, grammatical and lexicographical exegesis (see GRAMMAR AND THE QUR'ĀN), setting off the general of the Qur'ān against the specific in the ḥadīth or, on some occasions, the general in the ḥadīth against the specific of the Qur'ān, as well as providing background information on the history of the revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl, nāsikh wa-mansūkh*). Some of these aspects, in addition to various others, will be dealt with in sections 2-11 below.

The *isnāds* preceding accounts about the Prophet or his closest associates or anyone from the past were first instituted in the course of the final decades of the first/seventh century. From that time, people who wished to transmit something, for example a saying or anecdote which they had picked up somewhere, were required first to name their informant and the informant of that informant, and so on all the way back to the lifetime of the pivotal person of the event. This requirement led to the birth of untold numbers of *isnād* chains which, eventually, turned up in the tradition collections, heading the individual sayings and anecdotes.

Isnāds occurring in the canonical collections are, on the whole, accepted almost without question by the Islamic world as historically reliable authentication devices, traditional ḥadīth criticism being a highly developed discipline in the Muslim world. They are, however, rejected as such by those Western investigators of ḥadīth who opine that *isnāds* are better left alone, inasmuch as not only a good number — as is generally admitted — but, conceivably, *all* of them may be forged, and that there is no foolproof method of telling which one is sound and which one is not. In the present article the appraisal of *isnāds* is less

radically skeptical. *Isnāds* heading the adduced traditions have all been scrutinized and analyzed and, as far as that seemed tenable, questions as to chronology, provenance and authorship of the traditions supported by them have been addressed. This procured satisfactory answers in some instances, but that is, unfortunately, not always the case (e.g. see sec. 6 below).

At any rate, an effort has been made in this article to adduce datable traditions with indications as to their conceivable originators. Mostly, references will be given first to the number of the *isnād* bundle as listed in the *Tuhfa* of Yūsuf b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mizzī (d. 742/1341; for this author, who lists in his work all canonical traditions from the Six Books and a few others in alphabetical order, according to the oldest transmitters of their respective *isnāds*, see Juynboll, Some *isnād*-analytical methods). After that, references to occurrence in one or a few important collections will be added. This will then be followed by the transmitter(s), if any, who may be held responsible for the proliferation of these traditions. In an attempt to highlight the importance of non-Arab converts to Islam (*mawālī*) in early Islam, indication is given when these transmitters belonged to that category.

Throughout this article, mention will be made of several newly-coined technical terms developed in recent *isnād*-bundle analysis, such as "common link" (= cl), "seeming common link" (= scl), "spider," "single strands" (= ss's), and the like. For the time being the following introductory excursus should suffice. For visual illustrations, one is referred to the diagrams as drawn here (Diagrams A, B and C, see p. 380) and also those in section 3 below (Diagrams D and E). (For an extensive introduction to these terms, see Juynboll, Nāfi', and id., Early Islamic society.)

When all the *isnād* strands found in the

collections in support of one particular, well-known tradition are put together on a sheet of paper, beginning at the bottom with the names of the oldest transmitters and working one's way upwards in time, a picture emerges which turns out to be similar to other pictures, whenever that exercise is repeated in respect to other well-known traditions. From the bottom up one finds first a single row or strand of three, four or more names (rarely two) from the Prophet or any other ancient central authority, a strand which at a given moment starts to branch out to a number of names. Where that single strand (ss) branches out first, we find a man whom we call the common link (cl), and when his alleged pupils have themselves more than one pupil we call each one of such pupils a partial common link (pcl). All these branches together constitute a so-called *isnād* bundle.

The more transmission lines there are, coming together in a certain transmitter, either reaching him or branching out from him, the greater the claim to historicity that moment of transmission, represented in what may be described as a "knot," has. Thus the transmission moments described in ss's (*fulān-fulān-fulān*, etc.), linking just one master with one pupil and then with one pupil and so on, traversing at least some two hundred years cannot lay claim to any acceptable historicity: in all likelihood they are the handiwork of the collectors in whose collections they are found. But when the transmission from a cl branches out to a number of pcls, each of whose transmissions branches out also to a number of other pcls, then these "knots" give a certain guarantee for the historical tenability of that transmission path, at least in the eyes of the rather less skeptical *isnād* analyst.

The more pcls a cl has, the more probable the authorship of the (wording of that) tradition under scrutiny is to be ascribed to

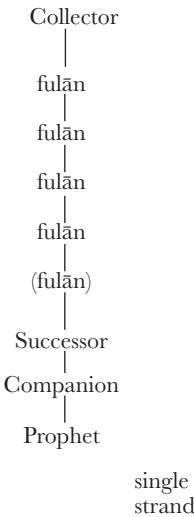


Diagram A

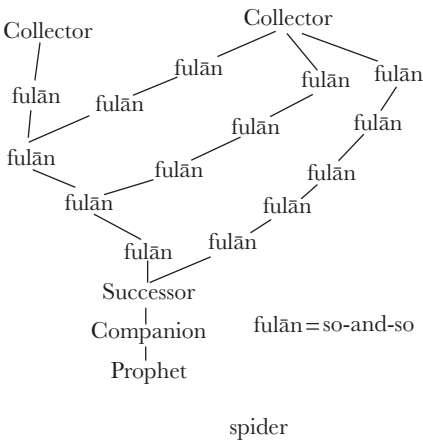


Diagram B

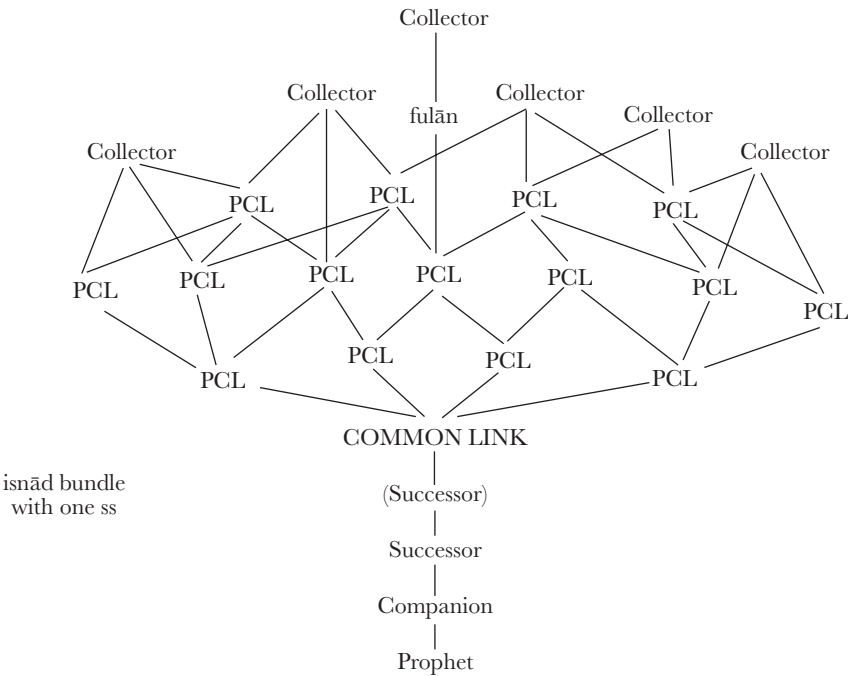


Diagram C

that cl. And that supplies at the same time answers to questions about the provenance and chronology of the tradition thus supported. In other words, a transmitter can only safely be called a cl when he has himself several pcls, and a pcl can only safely be called that, when he has himself several other, younger pcls. When the number of pcls of a cl is limited we rather speak of that cl as a seeming cl. Seeming cls may emerge in bundles which, upon scrutiny, turn out to be two or a few ss's which happen to come together in what looks like a cl, but which, for lack of pcls, is not.

Summing up, the vast majority of traditions in the Six Books are supported by *isnād* structures in the form of ss's. When, in any given tradition, several ss's seem to come together in a seeming cl, which does not have the required minimum of believable pcls, we call the *isnād* structure of that tradition a "spider." In Muslim tradition literature we find thousands upon thousands of ss's, a good many of which form into otherwise undatable spiders. Traditions supported by *isnād* bundles that deserve that qualification are rather rarer, but do seem to contain data that may point to a more or less tenable chronology, provenance and even authorship.

(2) *The beginning of the divine revelation*

The best-known tradition about the beginning of the revelation (*waḥy*) depicts how the Prophet was visited by the angel Gabriel (q.v.; Jibrīl) who gave him a short text to recite, the first divine revelation of all, five verses of Q 96: "Recite in the name of your lord...." The oldest version of the story extant in the sources may tentatively be attributed to the storyteller (*qāṣṣ*) of Mecca, 'Ubayd b. 'Umayr (d. 68/687), officially installed in that position by the second caliph (q.v.), 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. This version was later reworded and provided with some crucial interpolations by

the Medinan/Syrian chronicler Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742). He traced the account back to the Prophet via a 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr/'Ā'isha (see 'Ā'ISHA BINT ABĪ BAKR) *isnād*. The development of the textual accretions and embellishments of the story — including an attempt of the *mawlā* Yaḥyā b. Abī Kathīr (d. between 129/747 and 132/750) to have Q 74:1-5 accepted as the first revealed verses — as well as of its multiple *isnād* strands, has been studied and provided with diagrams of the *isnād* bundles by Juynboll (Early Islamic society, 160-71) and Schoeler (*Charakter*, chap. 2; cf. also Rubin, Iqra').

There are various traditions on how the Qur'ān was further revealed. Some late and undatable traditions describe how the Qur'ān was lowered in its entirety during Ramaḍān (q.v.) to the heaven (see HEAVEN AND SKY) nearest to earth (q.v.), on the "Night of the Divine Decree" (*laylat al-qadr*, see NIGHT OF POWER), whereupon it was revealed piecemeal from there to Muḥammad through the angel Gabriel (q.v.). Efforts to mark the exact night in Ramaḍān that must be identified as *laylat al-qadr* have resulted in a cluster of traditions supported by *isnād* strands, from among which various late common links are discernible. The overwhelming number of (partially conflicting) prophetic and Companion reports on the exact day in Ramaḍān leads, however, to the inevitable conclusion that the discussion was an ancient one, in all likelihood triggered by Q 97:1-3: "We have sent it (i.e. the Qur'ān) down in the Night of the Divine Decree... a night better than one thousand months (q.v.)." For some late originators of prophetic *laylat al-qadr* traditions, see Mizzī's *Tuhfa*, iii, no. 4419 (Mālik, *Muwatta'*, i, 319; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ii, 824), in which *isnād* bundle we encounter the Baṣran transmitter Hishām b. Abī 'Abdallāh al-Dastuwā'ī (d. 152-4/769-71) and the Medinan jurist Mālik b. Anas who are seen

to occupy common link positions.

Then there are traditions in which we encounter descriptions of the physical symptoms allegedly displayed by the Prophet while he received revelations. One of the oldest of such traditions may be attributed to the Medinan (later, Kūfan) transmitter Hishām b. 'Urwa (d. 146/763), the son of 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr mentioned above. Here, it is related that the Prophet either heard a tinkling bell from which he had to distill the divine message or that he was approached by the angel (q.v.) in human form who delivered a spoken message. He is also depicted as perspiring profusely, even in cold weather, when a revelation was sent down upon him (cf. Mizzī, xii, no. 17152; Mālik, i, 202 f.; Muslim, iv, 1816 f.). Another early tradition, for which the Kūfan transmitter Maṣṣūr b. al-Mu'tamir (d. 132/750) may be held responsible, deals with the occasional forgetfulness in retaining revelations from which the Prophet is reported to have suffered. This was caused by God, it says in a later commentary, who thereby abrogated a verse's recitation. Forgetting a verse constituted, on the whole, human punishment for not having memorized it properly in the first place, in the same way one would be punished for the escape of a camel (q.v.) that had not been hobbled. Often this forgetfulness was deemed to be the result of a malicious whisper from the devil (q.v.; Mizzī, vii, no. 9295; Muslim, i, 544). Another early traditionist responsible for a similar tradition is the above-mentioned Hishām b. 'Urwa (cf. Mizzī, xii, nos. 16807, 17046; cf. also Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath*, x, 457 f.).

The revelation process was allegedly assisted by the angel Gabriel who descended from heaven once every year during Ramaḍān in order to collate with the Prophet the qur'ānic fragments that had been revealed in the course of that year, mostly in groups of no more than five

verses (cf. Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, i, 124 f.). In the final year of Muḥammad's life, Gabriel is recorded to have come down to earth twice for this collation. Seemingly the earliest datable tradition in which this is reflected may be ascribed to the Kūfan *mawlā* Zakariyyā' b. Abī Zā'ida (d. 147-9/764-6, Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, xii, no. 17615; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, ii 2, 40; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 1904 f.). And there is a tradition in the same vein to be dated to the time of the Baghdādī jurist-cum-traditionist Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855, cf. his *Musnad*, i, 231).

(3) *The collection of the Qur'ān*

As the early Muslim historical sources inform us, during the Prophet's life the qur'ānic fragments were noted down by several of his Companions, sometimes labeled as his "secretaries," on the available materials that could serve for that purpose. But upon his death the scattered remains could hardly be said to constitute an ordered or easily accessible redaction (see CODICES OF THE QUR'ĀN). The ḥadīths in the canonical and other collections that purportedly give an account of the first caliphs' endeavors to gather up (*jam'*) these fragments and organize them into chapters (*ta'liḥ*) in an orderly fashion do not permit hard and fast conclusions as to chronology and authorship. They can be divided into two distinct reports, the first one centering on Abū Bakr's and 'Umar's measures (for its *isnād* bundle, see Diagram D) and the second on 'Uthmān's efforts in this respect (for its *isnād* bundle, see Diagram E).

Muḥammad's desire to keep matters open so that cases of abrogation or repeal (*naskh*) concerning certain prescriptions (*aḥkām*) could still be inserted is given as the reason why he did not already assemble the revelations in a *muṣṣhaf* (q.v.), i.e. a collection of sheets (= *ṣuḥuf*; see WRITING AND WRITING MATERIALS; INSTRUMENTS), during his lifetime (cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath* al-

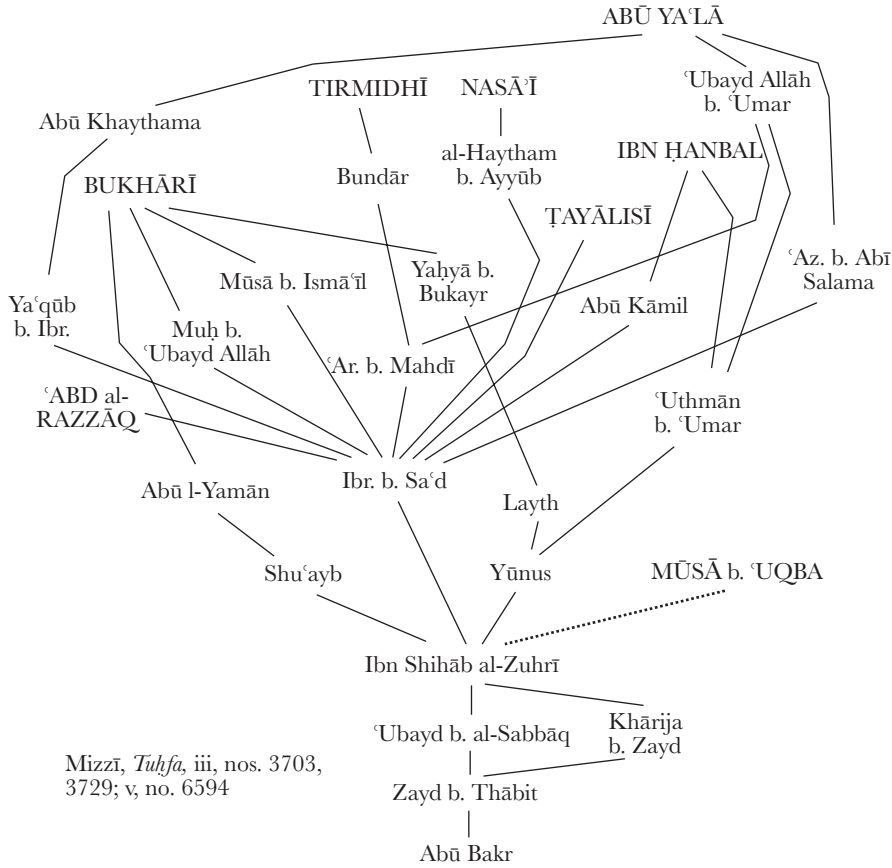


Diagram D

bārī, x, 386, ll. 8 f.). That is why the “rightly-guided caliphs” (*al-khulafā' al-rāshidūn*, the first four caliphs of Islam) took up the matter only after his death. Notwithstanding numerous textual variants, the background data in these two reports tally by and large with what we read in Islam's most prestigious, early historical sources, but their embellishing elements caution us that we should not take them at face value or all too literally.

Within its *isnād* bundle the first report dealing with Abū Bakr seems to show a common link: Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī who, with a strand down to the young Companion Zayd b. Thābit (d. between 45/665 and 55/675) via the totally obscure, and there-

fore probably fictitious, transmitter 'Ubayd b. al-Sabbāq, may conceivably be held responsible for the skeleton of the wording as well as for this strand, *if* that is not the handiwork of an unidentifiable transmitter higher up in the bundle who is evidently also responsible for the Khārijā b. Zayd strand. As for the historicity of details, one does well to treat the report with caution.

The second report, the one concerning 'Uthmān's directives, is even more swamped by typically ahistorical or, differently put, topical, embellishments. Zuhri is again a key figure in its *isnād* bundle but his strand down to 'Uthmān via the Baṣran Companion Anas b. Mālik (d. 91-3/710-12) is even more dubious than the one to Abū

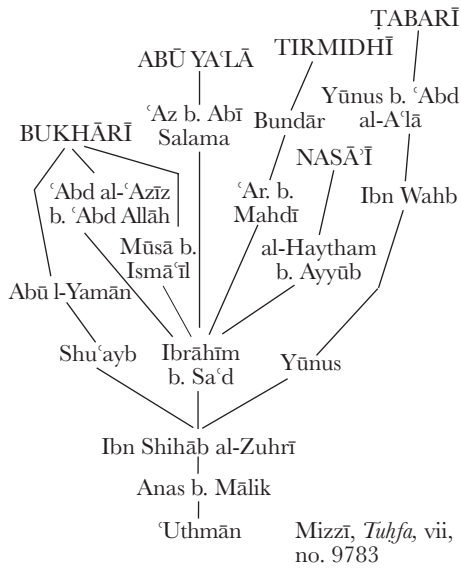


Diagram E

Bakr because of various considerations brought together in Juynboll, Shu'ba. In any case, Zuhūrī cannot be held responsible for it. On the other hand, the position of his younger and distant kinsman the transmitter Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd al-Zuhūrī (d. 183/799), who migrated from Medina to Baghdad, is more firmly established and, what is more significant, especially highlighted by the otherwise fierce *isnād* critic, the Baghdadi *mawla* Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn (d. 233/847; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, i, 122, 9). So it is he, and not Zuhūrī, who may be held largely responsible for its wording.

The overall conclusion must be that the basic historicity of what both stories tell us remains a matter of dispute among dispassionate historians, especially in the case of the second. A reliable chronological reconstruction of the final redaction of the Qur'ān can presumably only be achieved on the basis of ancient manuscript evidence. Islam has, however, always accepted the Abū Bakr and 'Uthmān stories without question as fundamental. Schwally (in Nöldeke, *GQ*, ii, 18 f.) prefers to hold 'Umar, rather than Abū Bakr, largely responsible

for the first collection of the Qur'ān and in Burton's *Collection* and Wansbrough's *Qur'ānic studies* both stories are rejected out of hand on the basis of a host of different considerations. For a much less skeptical assessment of the two traditions, see Motzki, *De Koran*, 12-29.

Abū Bakr's order to have the Qur'ān organized is laid down in a report in which it is alleged that he was warned by 'Umar that, because of the many casualties at the battle of 'Aqrabā' in the Yamāma (see EXPEDITIONS AND BATTLES) against the false prophet Musaylima (see MUSAYLIMA AND PSEUDO-PROPHETS), many of the memorized fragments (see ORALITY) of qur'ānic revelations might be lost for posterity. So Zayd b. Thābit was assigned to collect as many fragments preserved in peoples' memories, as well as those preserved in writing on all sorts of material, as he could find. The oldest historical source in which this report is said to have been preserved is the *Maghāzī* of Mūsā b. 'Uqba (d. 141/758; Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath*, x, 390, l. 8), where a sober account is quoted from Zuhūrī who, this time, dispenses with naming his authority, a highly significant omission by any standards. Except for a small fragment, that *Maghāzī* text is lost.

The second report centering on 'Uthmān is chronologically situated in the second or third year of his reign. In this report it is alleged that one of his generals had observed that his men from Iraq (q.v.) recited the Qur'ān differently than did his men from Syria. This was incentive enough for 'Uthmān, so the story tells us, to have the sheets (*ṣuḥuf*) on which Abū Bakr had recorded the fragments sorted out and copied out again, whereby the dialect of Quraysh (q.v.) was to prevail in the case of conflicting readings.

Thus the 114 sūras of the Qur'ān were supposedly collected in one *muṣḥaf*, roughly in the order of decreasing length. As

Muslim sources indicate, the last sūra to be revealed was Q 9, Sūrat al-Tawba (“Repentance”) and the last verse Q 4:176, the so-called *kalāla* verse that dealt with a category of the relatives of a deceased person who are entitled to a share in the inheritance (q.v.; cf. Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, ii, no. 1870; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iii, 1236). The Baṣran *mawlā* Shu‘ba b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 160/776) is the transmitter responsible for a tradition to this effect. According to a Shī‘ī source the last sūra to be revealed was Q 110 (Majlisī, *Biḥār*, lxxxix, 39). An enigmatic report not contained in any of the canonical collections but listed in al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923; *Tafsīr*, xxvi, 40), with a full *isnād* ending in Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān, the first Umayyad caliph (d. 61/680), claims that the final verse of Sūrat al-Kahf (“The Cave,” Q 18) was indeed the last verse sent down to Muḥammad. Another such report, for which see al-Suyūṭī (*Itqān*, i, 184 f.), relates that two more short sūras, or rather prayers, were originally thought to have been part of the Companion Ubayy b. Ka‘b’s early, pre-Abū Bakr redaction, the so-called *sūrat al-khal’* and *sūrat al-ḥafd*, but they were eventually not added to the 114. And, finally, the existence of short sequences of rhyming prose lines (*saj’*), which are strongly reminiscent of early Meccan sūras (see RHYMED PROSE; FORM AND STRUCTURE OF THE QUR’ĀN), complete with various, seemingly pre-Islamic oaths, and which do not deserve to be dismissed as mere pastiche (Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, i, 2484, id., *History*, xiii, 223 f.; Ibn Ishāq, *Sīra*, iii, 343), may leave one with the impression that there were more such fragments floating about which never made it into what later came to be called the ‘Uthmānic codex. Al-Suyūṭī (*Itqān*, iii, 72-5) has, furthermore, conveniently listed some assorted verses, including the famous stoning (q.v.) verse (cf. Powers, Exegetical genre, 117-38), that were, as several Companions tell us,

allegedly revealed to Muḥammad, but were never incorporated in it either.

(4) *Traditions on the seven qirā’āt or aḥruf*

On various occasions the Prophet is supposed to have taught his followers one particular wording of a qur’ānic fragment at one time and at other times other wordings, concluding: “... recite it in the way that is easiest for you.” This course of events is reflected in a *matn* cluster in the canonical collections concerning the “seven readings” (*sab’at aḥruf* or *sab’ qirā’āt*; for the variant *sab’at aqsām*, “seven subdivisions,” Majlisī, *Biḥār*, xc, 4). When ‘Umar was once reported to have voiced his anxiety as to what is truly qur’ānic and what not, the Prophet is said to have reassured him with the words: “Every phrase that is purported to be part of the Qur’ān is correct as long as forgiveness (q.v.) is not confused with chastisement (see CHASTISEMENT AND PUNISHMENT), or chastisement with forgiveness,” and “Each of the seven *aḥruf* is ‘sufficient and restores health’ (*kāfin shāfin*)” (Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath*, x, 401, 9 f.). But this is a late report, in which the flexible attitude vis-à-vis qur’ānic variant readings is presented in florid terms. It had many precursors.

The number seven for the different readings is not to be taken literally, but rather as conveying an undefined number of units under ten, as seventy is often used to convey an undefined number of tens under one hundred. As long as the inner meaning is preserved, there is no harm in variants. The first tentatively datable traditions, which deal with variant readings but do not yet center on the number seven, may be attributed to the Baṣran traditionist Shu‘ba (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, i, no. 60; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 562 f.; and Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, vii, no. 9591; Bukhārī, *Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, 37, 3, iii, 410 = vi, 245). The number seven, mostly interpreted as representing a number of

ways of placing, or deleting, variable diacritics and vowels in verbs and nouns, especially in their endings, or the metathesis of letters, whole words, or phrases, etc., is occasionally assumed, wrongly in the opinion of most medieval scholars, to point to the different dialects (q.v.) the Arabs (q.v.) spoke, when the Qur'ān was in the process of being revealed. Moreover, the number is occasionally identified with seven modes of expression: verses or phrases containing incitement (*zajr*, see EXHORTATION), command (*amr*, see COMMANDMENTS), permission (*halāl*), prohibition (*harām*, see LAWFUL AND UNLAWFUL), affirmed or ambiguous (q.v.) statements (*muḥkam* or *mutashābih*) and similes (*amthāl*, see METAPHOR). Perhaps the earliest datable and most comprehensive tradition based on the number seven and probably going back to a discussion that had been going on for more than half a century before his lifetime is that of Mālik b. Anas (*Muwatta'*, i, 201, no. 5, = Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, viii, no. 10591; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 560). There are otherwise very few phrases in the Qur'ān that actually allow recitation in seven ways, the classic examples being: *'abada al-tāghūt* in Q 5:60 (Bayḍāwī, *Anwār*, i, 265), and *fa-lā taqul lahumā uff* in Q 17:23 (cf. *ibid.*, i, 537).

The permission to resort to as many as seven variant readings is thought to have come forth from God's desire to facilitate (*takhfīf*, *tashīl*) mastery in Qur'ān recitation for those Arabs who were to embrace Islam at a later stage, especially after the emigration (q.v.; *hijra*). Following the early conquests (q.v.), in particular after the completion of the Qur'ān redaction that reportedly came to be recognized as that of 'Uthmān (see above, section 2), with the consolidation of the empire and the proliferation of Qur'ān instruction, the study of the variants began to constitute a separate Qur'ānic discipline, even if some scholars hold the view that the so-called "'Uthmān

muṣḥaf" represents just one of the seven permissible *aḥruf*, making the other six obsolete. This seeming contradiction and accompanying harmonization attempts are set forth in detail by al-Zarkashī (*Burhān*, i, 222-7, and also Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 560, note 3; for further discussion of the seven *aḥruf*, see Gilliot, *Elt*, 112-33).

(5) *On recitation*

There are traditions in which the proper ways of recitation are described, e.g. that one is not to hasten the recitation without pauses as one does while reciting poetry (see POETRY AND POETS), a recitation mode which is called *hadhdh*. Originators of such traditions are the Kūfan *mawla* Sulaymān b. Mihrān al-A'mash (d. 148/765; Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, vii, no. 9248; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 563) and Shu'ba b. al-Ḥajjāj (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, vii, no. 9288; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 565). Then there are traditions on the lengthening (*ishbā'* or *madd*) of vowel sounds while reciting with the Kūfan jurist al-Thawrī as probable originator (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, vi, no. 8627; Tirmidhī, *Ḥāmi'*, v, 177) and the Baṣran transmitter Jarīr b. Ḥazim (d. 175/791) as probable originator (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, i, no. 1145; Bukhārī, *Faḍā'il*, iii, 406 = vi, 241). Vibrating in recitation (*tarjī'*) is dealt with in a tradition of Shu'ba (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, vii, no. 9666; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 547). This vibrating could perhaps be described as interrupting the vowel sounds with a series of glottal stops, that at least appears to be the explanation of Majd al-Dīn al-Mubārak b. al-Athīr (d. 606/1210, cf. his *Nihāya*, ii, 202).

The total number of Qur'ān verses is variously given as 6204, 6214, 6219, 6225 or 6236. That number is also thought to indicate the steps whose ascendance will bring the faithful Qur'ān reciter, practicing the solemn recitation mode of *tartīl*, ever closer to paradise (q.v.), cf. a tradition in Muḥammad Shams al-Ḥaqq al-'Aẓīmābādī (fl.

1312/1894, cf. his *ʿAwn al-maʿbūd*, iv, 237), for which al-Thawrī may tentatively be held responsible. Furthermore, there is a well-known tradition with many details about the Prophet's prolonged night recitation (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, iii, no. 3351; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 536 f.) with A'mash as possible originator. To Shu'ba, who was eventually imitated by al-Thawrī can be attributed a tradition in which the teaching of Qur'ān recitation to others is praised (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, vii, no. 9813; Bukhārī, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, 21, iii, 402 = vi, 236).

The slogan-like Prophetic tradition "Adorn the Qur'ān with your voices" (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, ii, no. 1775; Abū Dāwūd in *ʿAwn al-maʿbūd*, iv, 239) is supported by a complex *isnād* bundle in which the position of the early Successor and Qur'ān expert Ṭalḥa b. Muṣarrif (d. 112/730) may be construed as that of common link. In fact, his may be considered one of the earliest datable traditions in the entire canonical ḥadīth corpus. In view of his purported Qur'ān expertise he might conceivably be this tradition's originator. Moreover, the matter of Ṭalḥa's supposed authorship may be definitively settled by the long list of people mentioned in the *Hilya* of Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038, cf. v, 27) who are reported to have transmitted it from him. According to the commentators, this slogan-like saying constitutes a case of inversion (*qalb*), in which the two final words are to be interpreted as if they were in reverse order, not *zayyinū l-Qur'ān bi-aṣwātikum* but *zayyinū aṣwātakum bi-l-Qur'ān*, i.e. "Adorn your voices with Qur'ān recitation."

Another very famous tradition that emphasizes the merit of recitation is the following: "A believer (see BELIEF AND UNBELIEF) who recites the Qur'ān is like a citron (*utrūj*), both its smell and taste are delicious, a believer who does not is like a date, its taste may be good but it has no

smell, a hypocrite (*munāfiq*, see HYPOCRITES AND HYPOCRISY) who recites the Qur'ān is like sweet basil, its smell is good but its taste is bitter, and a hypocrite who does not recite the Qur'ān is like a colocynth which has no smell and tastes bitter" (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, vi, no. 8981; the Six Books, e.g. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 549). Although this tradition may convey the impression that it hails from a time later than Qatāda's (d. 117/735), he is the undeniable key figure in its *isnād* bundle. Qatāda is, moreover, also the conceivable originator of the following tradition: "He who recites the Qur'ān skillfully will find himself in the company of the honorable, godfearing scribes (obviously an allusion to Q 80:15-6: *saḥāratin kiramīn bararatin*, "noble and righteous scribes," identified with angels, prophets or divine messengers; see MESSENGER), and he who, to his regret, can recite the Qur'ān only haltingly will have a double reward" (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, xi, no. 16102; the Six Books, e.g. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 549 f.).

Reciting the Qur'ān in a singsong manner was thought to be especially meritorious. This is reflected in a relatively late tradition for which the Meccan transmitter Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (d. 198/814) can be held responsible: "God listens to nothing as he listens to a prophet singing the Qur'ān" (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, xi, no. 15144; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 545). The discussion on raising one's voice while reciting the Qur'ān versus muttering under one's breath seems to have been triggered directly by Q 17:110. A number of personal opinions on the issue are attributed to early first/seventh century jurists (Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, ii, 440 f.). A later, more elaborate prophetic tradition has the transmitter Hushaym b. Bashīr (d. 183/799), the son of a *mawlā* from Wāsiṭ, as originator (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, iv, no. 5451; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 329). It had a forerunner brought into circulation by Hishām b. ʿUrwa (cf. Muslim, *ibid.*), in which the

verse is said to pertain to private prayer (q.v.; *du'ā'*).

A tradition, full of narrative embellishments (cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath*, x, 296-8), which relates the story of how some jinn (q.v.), bombarded by shooting stars (see PLANETS AND STARS), came down from heaven to listen to Qur'ān recitation, was probably brought into circulation by the Wāsiṭī *mawlā* Abū 'Awāna al-Waḍḍāḥ b. 'Abdallāh (d. 175/791; Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, iv, no. 5452; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 331 f.). This tradition harks back to an episode in Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra* (cf. ii, 63) in which Muḥammad, on his return journey from Ṭā'if, recites parts of the Qur'ān in the middle of the night to the amazement and delight of seven jinn who immediately committed themselves to his cause.

Prescriptions as to the minimal amount of Qur'ān recitation that is required in the various prayers (*ṣalāt*) is found in an early tradition for the skeleton of which the *mawlā* from Yamāma, Yaḥyā b. Abī Kathīr (d. 129-32/747-50), may be held responsible: in the first two prostrations (*rak'as*, see BOWING AND PROSTRATION) of the afternoon (q.v.; *ẓuhr*) and 'aṣr recitation of Sūrat al-Fātiḥa (Q 1; see FĀTIḤA) and two sūras (variant: one) suffices, whereby performance of the first *rak'a* of the *ẓuhr* should be drawn out, while the second may be somewhat shortened; the same rules apply to the morning (*ṣubḥ*) prayer. This tradition (see Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, ix, no. 12108; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 333) evidences a large number of minor variants, reflecting how the issue has been the subject of an ongoing debate. The Medinan *mawlā* 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Jurayj (d. 150/767) is the common link in an *isnād* bundle supporting a tradition on the recitation requirement of the *ṣubḥ ṣalāt* (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, iv, no. 5313; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 336). And to Hushaym b. Bashīr can possibly be attributed a tradition which relates how the Prophet's Com-

panions tried to compute the time to be spent in recitation during the *ẓuhr* and 'aṣr *ṣalāts* by measuring it against certain Qur'ān passages, such as the thirty verses of Sūrat al-Sajda ("Prostration," Q 32) for each of the first two *rak'as* of the *ẓuhr* and half that time for the second two *rak'as* of the *ẓuhr* and the first two *rak'as* of the 'aṣr, and half that time again for each of the final two *rak'as* of the 'aṣr (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, iii, no. 3974; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 334). Finally, Mālik may be credited with two traditions on the Prophet's recitation habits in the evening (*maghrib*) prayer (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, ii, no. 3189, xii, no. 18052, Mālik, *Muwatta'*, i, 78): namely Q 52 and Q 77.

(6) Tafsīr traditions in general; Ibn 'Abbās' role

One of the first and at the same time most important *tafsīr* collections is that of Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923). Strictly speaking it is a collection of prophetic and other ancient ḥadīths that, without exception, have a bearing on a qur'ānic verse or phrase. Al-Ṭabarī's collection is available in a dependable complete edition and an incomplete one, edited by the brothers Shākir (see Bibliography). It is not only important because it presents al-Ṭabarī's considerable qur'ānic scholarship, but it also contains an array of ancient *tafsīr* collections predating his own time, collections that for the most part have otherwise not come down to us. Two major rubrics within his exegetical material are readily discernible. First of these is that of the "occasions of revelation" (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), for which see further down. The second major rubric within *tafsīr* traditions is that of "abrogation" (*nāsikh wa-mansūkh*). This genre of traditions grew out of the abrogation principle (*naskh*): previously revealed verses may be considered to have been abrogated by verses expressing a different ruling that came down at a later date. On the one hand, Islamic teaching in

the Qur'ān is based on the principle of *yusr*, ease, rather than *'usr*, hardship, leading to the alleviation of, and concessions in, several previously revealed prescripts. On the other hand, however, a hardening of a legal point of view is, for instance, discernible in Islam's increasingly outspoken disapproval of intoxicating beverages (see INTOXICANTS). *Nāsikh wa-mansūkh* collections are numerous. Apparently the earliest is the one by Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/838, cf. the introduction to Burton's text edition).

No survey of Muslim *tafsīr* traditions is complete without an appraisal of the most frequently quoted alleged Qur'ān expert among the Prophet's Companions, Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687), a son of one of Muḥammad's uncles, who is said to have been some ten, thirteen or fifteen years old when the Prophet died. In view of his young age it should not come as a surprise that the overall number of traditions he is supposed to have actually heard from Muḥammad in person turned out to be a matter of controversy, some saying that there were no more than four, nine or ten such traditions, others suggesting larger numbers (Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, v, 279). He is furthermore credited with hundreds of sayings in which he is reported to have given explanations of qur'ānic passages.

Upon scrutiny of the accompanying *isnād* strands, all these — with very few exceptions, for which see below — seem to date to a relatively late time of origin, as they are at most supported by late spiders. The vast majority have only single strands as authentication (for this chronology, see the theoretical introduction found at the end of sec. 1 above and Juynboll, *Nāfi'*, and id., *Early Islamic society*). But this has never prevented the Islamic world, or indeed a fair number of western scholars, from regularly dubbing Ibn 'Abbās the “father of Muslim Qur'ān exegesis.” It appears that

the collections of Abū Dāwūd and Nasā'ī are especially rich in these, but the four other canonical collections also contain a sizeable number. Thus we find hundreds of *tafsīr* traditions scattered in Mizzī (*Tuhfa*, iv and v, nos. 5356-6576). A comparison of these traditions with ones dealing with the same qur'ānic passages in the older *tafsīr* collections, such as those of Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. ca. 102/720), Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), 'Abd al-Razzāq (d. 211/826) and the ancient exegetical materials brought together in al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, makes clear that it is figures such as the *mawālī* Mujāhid, 'Ikrima (d. 105-7/723-5), Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and Ismā'īl b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suddī (d. 127/745) as well as the blind Baṣran Qur'ān expert Qatāda (d. 117/735), who are credited with personal opinions that later turn up in single strand-supported Ibn 'Abbās traditions. These have sometimes, but not always, a slightly more elaborate exegesis, in which matters of abrogation often seem to have been settled definitively. (For more on the phenomenon that Companion-supported reports vis-à-vis Successor-supported reports can be considered to have been of later origin — one of Schacht's main hypotheses — see Juynboll, *Islam's first fuqahā'*, 287-90, but also Rubin, *Eye of the beholder*, 233-8.)

The overall conclusion must be that Ibn 'Abbās' purported Qur'ān expertise constitutes, in fact, the final stage in the evolution of early Islamic exegesis, in as far as it is based upon prophetic traditions that found a place in the canonical collections. Curiously, the jurist al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820) is reported to have trusted no more than some one hundred *tafsīr* traditions of Ibn 'Abbās (Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, iv, 209). Traditions that sing Ibn 'Abbās' praises, i.e. so-called *faḍā'il* traditions, meant to corroborate his supposed expertise, are likewise relatively

late and cannot be dated more precisely than to a time in the second half of the second/eighth century at the earliest. Common links bringing such Ibn 'Abbās *faḍā'il* into circulation are hardly discernible in the *isnād* constellations supporting them, with the possible exception of the Baghdadi transmitter Abū l-Naḍr Hāshim b. al-Qāsim (d. 205-7/820-2; Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, v, no. 5865; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 1927). One thing, however, is clear: in these *faḍā'il* God's benevolence is called upon to grant Ibn 'Abbās juridical insight (*faqḥiḥu*) in the older ones, and it is only in the later ones that Qur'ān expertise is added (*wa-'allimhu [ta'wīl] al-Qur'ān*), an addition for which Ibn Ḥanbal may be held responsible (cf. his *Musnad*, i, 266, 269, 314 etc.).

Occasionally, we find a common link in a bundle supporting an exegetical or a background-providing remark attributed to Ibn 'Abbās that invites dating. Seemingly the earliest such tradition that could be unearthed, pertaining to Q 4:93, has the Kūfan Maṣṣūr b. al-Mu'tamir (d. 132/750) as common link (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, iv, nos. 5624; also no. 5621; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 2317). But its *isnād* bundle may constitute, in fact, an example of late spiders superimposed upon one another, in which the real originator is no longer visible. In any case, it is the only such Ibn 'Abbās tradition dating to this seemingly early time. Within the output of other, later common links there are the occasional Ibn 'Abbās/Qur'ān traditions, but they are very few in number and hardly foreshadow the veritable avalanche of such traditions with single strands and late spiders alluded to above.

A convenient survey of *tafsīr* traditions which are *expressis verbis* prophetic but without *asbāb al-nuzūl* is presented by al-Suyūṭī (cf. the end of his *Itqān*, iv, 214-57). The material, presented without complete *isnād* strands, is arranged sūra by sūra and the sources in which the traditions are found,

canonical as well as post-canonical, are duly identified.

(7) *Traditions on some Qur'ān-related prescriptions*

First among these is the *sajda*, i.e. performing an extra prostration (*sajda*, pl. *sujūd*) at the recitation of certain qur'ānic passages. The practice is reported to have come into fashion before the emigration (*hijra*), when Muḥammad recited a qur'ānic passage for the first time in the open near the Ka'ba (q.v.), provoking various hostile reactions from the as yet unbelieving Meccans (see OPPOSITION TO MUḤAMMAD). What qur'ānic passages constituted actual *sajda* passages and how they became part of the ritual as determined by the legal schools of later times has given rise to one of the first extensive discussions among the earliest Muslim generations. This is clearly reflected in the dozens of reports supported by *isnād* strands ending in Companions (= *mawqūfāt*), or strands that have no Companion between the Successor and the Prophet (= *mursalāt*), and personal opinions (*aqwāl*) ascribed to the first jurists (*fuqahā'*) preserved in the pre-canonical collections ('Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ*, iii, 335-58; Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaḥ*, ii, 1-25). Reports supported by these three genres of strands are demonstrably earlier than those authenticated by strands ending in the Prophet (= *maṣṣū'āt*, cf. Juynboll, *Islam's first fuqahā'*, xxxix [1992], 287-90) and they became the breeding ground for a host of prophetic traditions which are found in the canonical collections, mostly — but not always — supported by an assortment of spiders and single strands.

A very early prophetic tradition prescribing that a *sajda* is to be performed when Q 17 is recited originated conceivably at the hands of the Baṣran transmitter Sulaymān b. Ṭarkhān al-Taymī (d. 143/760, cf. Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, x, no. 14649; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 407). Special sections devoted to *sajda* prescrip-

tions are found, for example, in Mālik (cf. *Muwatta'*, i, 205 f.; Bukhārī, *Faḍā'il*, i, 273 f. = ii, 50 f.; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 405 f.). Among these traditions there are only very few supported by datable bundles which show a conceivable originator (cf. Shu'ba in Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, vii, no. 9180; Mālik in *ibid.*, xii, no. 14969; Sufyān b. 'Uyayna in *ibid.* no. 14206; and the Baṣran Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd al-Qaṭṭān [d. 198/814] in *ibid.*, vi, no. 8144; for a survey of *sujūd*-related traditions, see Tottoli, Muslim attitudes towards prostration).

Other subjects related to law and ritual are mentioned so concisely in the Qur'ān that interpretation had to be distilled from data proliferated in ḥadīth. There are so many of these that just one well-known example should suffice here. The rules concerning the performance of the minor ritual ablution (see CLEANLINESS AND ABLUTION) when washing water is not available all go back to the *tayammum* verses, Q 4:43 and Q 5:6. In all likelihood the discussion dates to the lifetime of the Prophet, or in any case to the time when these verses became generally known, probably in the course of the first/seventh century. Traditions about *tayammum* were inserted in stories featuring 'Ā'isha which have Hishām b. 'Urwa as common link (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, xii, nos. 16802, 16990, 17060, 17205; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 279), and one which has Mālik b. Anas as common link (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, xii, no. 17519; Mālik, *Muwatta'*, i, 53 f.), and one story centering in the Companion 'Ammār b. Yāsir (d. 37/657) with A'mash as common link (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, vii, no. 10360; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 280), and another one with Shu'ba as common link (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, vii, no. 10362; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 280 f.). The *tayammum* story has one feature which is also found in the ḥadīth *al-īfk* (see below in sec. 8), namely 'Ā'isha losing her necklace. In the *tayammum* story her necklace is retrieved, too, after a while, but the circumstances forced

those searching for it to perform a *ṣalāt* without a proper ritual ablution (*wuḍū'*). This feature was worded by Zuhri but its historicity, if any, cannot be established with a measure of certainty.

(8) *Historical reports, in particular so-called "occasions of revelation"*

Numerous verses gave rise to more or less extensive accounts of the special circumstances leading up to, or resulting from, their respective revelation. Certain allegedly historical episodes in early Islam accompanying these instances of revelation were eventually laid down in reports, together comprising a separate literary genre within the qur'ānic sciences, the so-called "occasions of revelation" literature (*asbāb al-nuzūl*). A relatively late, major collector in this genre is 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī (d. 468/1075). One may be struck by the (quasi-) polemical tone (see POLEMIC AND POLEMICAL LANGUAGE) of a sizeable proportion of these *asbāb* traditions: a remarkably large percentage deals with situations in which Jews (see JEWS AND JUDAISM) or Christians (see CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIANITY) are addressed, mostly in hostile terms, but that may conceivably be due to al-Wāḥidī's selection.

An *asbāb* collection consists predominantly of historical reports (*akhbār*), each headed by an *isnād* strand like any ordinary ḥadīth. Among the best-known of these reports is perhaps the one that became known as the *ḥadīth al-īfk*, the "ḥadīth of the slander," a malicious rumor launched by some men who, at one time, accused the Prophet's favorite wife (see WIVES OF THE PROPHET) 'Ā'isha — falsely as it turned out — of having committed adultery with someone on the return journey from Muḥammad's campaign against the tribe of al-Muṣṭaliq. The affair supposedly constituted the immediate cause for the revelation of Q 24:11-5. For the skeleton of the

wording of this story al-Zuhrī can on good grounds be held responsible (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, xi, nos. 16126, 16311; xii, nos. 16576, 17409; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iii, 103 f. = vi, 127 f.; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 2129-37; Ibn Ishāq, *Sīra*, iii, 310 f.). (For a study of its *isnād* strands as well as of its historicity, if any, see Juynboll, *Early Islamic society*, 179 f. and Schoeler, *Charakter*, chapter 3.)

The wording of the *khbar* about the Prophet's recognized miracle of splitting the moon, hinted at in the Qur'ān by the verse "The hour drew nigh and the moon (q.v.) was split" (Q 54:1) may, on the basis of *isnād* analysis and other arguments, be attributed to the Baṣran Shu'ba (Juynboll, *Shu'ba b. al-Ḥajjāj*, 221 f.).

An episode that reportedly was to have a particular impact on the exchanges between Muḥammad and his Meccan opponents concerns his recitation one day of Q 53:1-20, in which three ancient Arabian deities were mentioned, al-Lāt, Manāt and al-'Uzzā. Part of his recitation highlighted their capacity to mediate with God, an additional verse which came to be regarded as having been prompted by the devil (see INTERCESSION; SATANIC VERSES). Thereupon everyone present, friend and foe, prostrated themselves, which roused Gabriel's wrath, who reproached Muḥammad for having recited a text not conveyed by himself. It was then that Q 22:52 was supposedly revealed, according to which God asserted his power to wipe from his Prophet's memory whatever the devil had implanted there. It is against this background that S. Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* is set. The episode, concisely chronicled in al-Wāḥidī (*Asbāb*, 177) is headed by single *isnād* strands, most of which end in Successors and some in Companions, and therefore prevent us from drawing chronological inferences more precise than that they are relatively early. The observations that Muqātil, the early exegete, hints at the

controversy (*Tafsīr*, iii, 133), that al-Ṭabarī (*Ta'rikh*, i, 1192) cites Muqātil's contemporary, the Medinan (later Iraqi) *mawlā* Ibn Ishāq, while Mujāhid leaves it unmentioned, all may point to its having originated sometime in the first half of the second/eighth century.

The nocturnal journey (*isrā'*, see ASCENSION), alluded to in Q 17:1, which is supposed to have formed the onset of Muḥammad's midnight ascension into the seven heavens (*mi'rāj*), is related in great detail in the canonical ḥadīth collections, but the *isnāds* that support the various accounts are either single strands or just produce undatable spiders, thus no conclusions as to authorship other than that the texts are relatively late can be drawn from the material; they probably date back, at the earliest, to the beginning of the third/ninth century (Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iii, 30 f. = v, 66-9, and Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 145-50).

The *ḥijāb* verse, the breeding ground of four different *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports (Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, xxii, 37-40) prescribes that Muḥammad's wives should answer callers at the Prophet's living quarters from behind a "partition" (*ḥijāb*). Muqātil b. Sulaymān may have had a hand in the proliferation of an early background story (*Tafsīr*, iii, 504-5), which illustrates how the Prophet, when he married Zaynab bt. al-Jaḥsh, had the *ḥijāb* verse (Q 33:53) revealed to him. During the banquet he gave, he was irritated by some guests who had overstayed their welcome. The earlier exegete Mujāhid does not yet list the story, neither does Ibn Ishāq for that matter. We may therefore tentatively infer that the story originated during Muqātil's lifetime, if we do not want to attribute it to him directly, responsible as he was for so many "explanatory" stories (*qiṣaṣ*) which he wove through his *Tafsīr*. Soon after that, the traditionists, having taken it aboard, began to embellish

it with narrative trimmings which probably originated at a much later date (e.g. Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, i, no. 1505; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ii, 1050, with the Baghdadi Ya'qūb b. Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd [d. 208/823] as common link), for there is not a single such *ḥijāb*-related tradition that is supported by an early bundle in which a common link or even a seeming common link is discernible (Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ii, 1048-52). Another *asbāb al-nuzūl* report in this context is the one dealing with 'Umar al-Khaṭṭāb's concern with the "un-protected" state of the women of those days (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, viii, no. 10409, Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, i, 23 f., with Hushaym b. Bashīr as common link). The question of whether, on the one hand, certain qur'ānic verses contained historically feasible data and thus gave rise to historically significant *asbāb* exegesis or whether, on the other hand, certain other *asbāb* traditions were brought into circulation just to embellish *tafsīr* in general, thus creating a quasi-historical background for certain other verses is discussed extensively in Rubin, *Eye of the beholder*.

(9) *Traditions with praises of particular sūras or verses*

There are sūras and verses whose recitation equals that of variously given, sizeable parts — one quarter, half, two thirds etc. — of the entire Qur'an, and guarantees the reciter, were he to die suddenly in the midst of his recitation, a martyr's death (see MARTYR) or entrance into paradise. Shī'ī ḥadīth is even more given to hyperbole in this respect (Majlisī, *Bihār*, lxxxix, 223-369). On the whole we find a strikingly large number of such reports molded in the form of statements ascribed to Companions and early Successors (i.e. *mawqūfāt* and *aqwāl*) in the pre-canonical collections, especially in Ibn Abī Shayba's *Muṣannaf*. This permits us to infer that popularizing the recitation of certain Qur'an fragments

was an early phenomenon that originated in the first/seventh century.

The popularity of Sūrat al-Kahf ("The Cave," Q 18) is reflected in early traditions which can be attributed to Qatāda (cf. Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, viii, no. 10963; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 555) and his pupil Shu'ba (cf. Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, ii, no. 1872; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 548). Sūrat al-Mulk ("Sovereignty," Q 67), a sūra of thirty verses, is valued because recitation thereof is said to engender forgiveness. Shu'ba may be held responsible for this one, too (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, x, no. 13550; Tirmidhī, *Jāmi'*, v, 164). The Kūfan *mawlā* Ismā'īl b. Abī Khālid (d. 146/763), another famous common link, is the plausible originator of a tradition singing the praises of *al-mu'awwidhatān*, the final two sūras of the Qur'an (Q 113 and Q 114, Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, vii, no. 9948; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 558). There are a number of traditions in which the issue of whether or not they actually belong to the Qur'an is differently answered. But feasible originators of these could not be identified. The issue may be old, though, for there are some *aqwāl* ascribed to the Kūfan *faqīh* 'Āmir b. Sharāḥīl al-Sha'bī (d. 103-10/721-8) and others that substantiate that chronology (Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, x, 538 f.). It looks as if only the Companion 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd (d. 32/653) purportedly opposed their being included in the *muṣḥaf*, but whether or not that is historically accurate could not be ascertained.

The *mu'awwidhatān*, as well as the Fātiḥa (q.v.), were commonly recited in case of illness (see ILLNESS AND HEALTH), as some traditions assert (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, xii, no. 16589; Mālik, *Muwaṭṭa'*, ii, 942 f.; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 1723, with Zuhri as originator, and Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, iii, no. 4249; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 1727, whose author is unclear). Mālik can be considered as the proliferator of a tradition highlighting the particular merits of Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ ("Sincerity," Q 112;

Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, x, no. 14127; Mālik, *Muwatta'*, i, 208). His Iraqi contemporary Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd is possibly the author of a tradition in which the recitation of two verses of Q 2 (Sūrat al-Baqara, "The Cow") is regarded as sufficient for someone who wants to spend (part of) the night in religious devotion (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, vii, no. 9999 and 10000; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 555). Moreover, the controversial Syrian traditionist Baqiyya b. al-Walīd (d. 197/813) seems the common link in an *isnād* bundle (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, vii, no. 9888; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, iv, 128) supporting a prophetic tradition asserting that somewhere in the *musabbihāt*, i.e. Q 57, Q 59, Q 61, Q 62 and Q 64, there is a verse that is more excellent than a thousand other verses. All the alleged merits of the different sūras and particular verses are conveniently brought together in Suyūṭī (*Itqān*, iv, 106-15).

Wholesale fabrication in this field was otherwise a generally recognized phenomenon. Thus the *mawlā* Abū 'Iṣma Nūḥ b. Abī Maryam (d. 173/789) was identified by early tradition critics as responsible for an *i'rab*-glorifying tradition, i.e. one that emphasizes the necessity of reciting the Qur'ān with full case and mood endings (Ibn 'Adī, *Kāmil*, vii, 41) as well as one protracted tradition in which all the sūras are enumerated one by one with the recitation rewards of each (Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, x, 488; van Ess, *TC*, ii, 550, n. 25). Abū 'Iṣma confessed that he had brought this tradition into circulation in order to make the people concentrate more on the Qur'ān (Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, iv, 115). Motivated by the same urge, Maysara b. 'Abd Rabbihi (fl. 150/767) is also mentioned in this respect as the originator of a similar, lengthy tradition (Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, vi, 138; van Ess, *TC*, ii, 120 f.).

Finally, judging by the huge number of manuscripts of Q 36 (Sūrat Yā Sīn) and the innumerable printed versions available for

very little money in talisman-like booklets throughout the Islamic world, this sūra seems to have been a particular favorite with the public. It is called the "heart (*qalb*) of the Qur'ān" whose recitation equals that of ten times (Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, iv, 110), or eleven times (Majlisī, *Bihār*, lxxxix, 292), the whole Qur'ān. The precise origin for this popularity is hard to pin down, but it is recorded that its first partial recitation by Muḥammad allegedly coincided with one of his miracles preserved in the *Sīra*: when he (or Gabriel) sprinkled dust on the heads of his Meccan opponents, they could not see or hear him recite, and this is supposed to have prevented them from harming him (*Sīra*, ii, 127).

(10) *Other ḥadīth literature related to the Qur'ān*

Background information and stories laid down in traditions illustrating the numerous qur'ānic references to early prophets and Jewish personalities evolved into a ḥadīth-based literary genre of its own, the so-called "stories of the prophets" or *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* literature. Although hugely popular, Muslim scholarship has always emphasized that its *isnād* structures were on the whole not to be relied upon and that the stories should be appraised for their entertainment value rather than their religious-historical contents. First and foremost among the purported ancient authorities who, from the perspective of *isnāds*, were seen to be responsible for the stories was — again — Ibn 'Abbās. A survey of the origins of the genre is found in T. Nagel, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* and in the introduction of R.G. Khoury (ed.), *Les légendes prophétiques* (see also the bibliography for studies by Kister, Gilliot and Tottoli). A striking example of how a legal decision allegedly issued by the Jewish king David (q.v.; Dāwūd) and improved upon by his son Solomon (q.v.; Sulaymān) is linked in Qur'ān exegesis (at Q 21:78) and ḥadīth lit-

erature to an ancient legal issue whose origins may well lie in pre-Islamic (*jāhiliyya*, see AGE OF IGNORANCE) usage (*urf*) concerns the guarding of sowing fields against freely roaming animals and the compensation, if any, to be paid by the animals' owners for damage caused by them (cf. Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, xvii, 50-4; and, with al-Zuhrī as common link, Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, ii, no. 1753; Mālik, *Muwatta'*, ii, 747 f.).

As soon as the many qur'ānic references to the day of resurrection (q.v.; see also LAST JUDGMENT) and what judgment the believers awaited after their death became generally known, numerous eschatological traditions were brought into circulation with details purporting to elucidate certain passages. A relatively late, major contributor to this genre who flourished in the latter half of the second/eighth century is the blind Kūfan *mawlā* Abū Mu'āwiya Muḥammad b. Khāzim (d. 195/811). But out of many such traditions a few will be mentioned here which may tentatively be assumed to be among the earliest.

The Kūfan centenarian 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Umayr (d. 136/754), known as the Copt, seems the originator of the oldest tradition on the *hawḍ*, the basin, which constitutes one of the stations the believer is to pass by on the day of resurrection where he will find the Prophet acting as water scout (*farāṭ*, Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, ii, no. 3265; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 1792; the tradition was taken up by Shu'ba, Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, i, no. 148; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iii, 1474). The basin as such receives no mention in the Qur'ān, but the Kawthar, the river in paradise from Q 108:1 (see WATER OF PARADISE), is sometimes defined as a special basin that will be given to the Prophet (cf. also Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, iv, the *ṣifat al-hawḍ* paragraph). This basin and the basin become then occasionally confused in Muslim eschatology.

Another such station, the bridge (*sirāt*) spanning hellfire (see HELL; FIRE), is not

qur'ānic either, but when asked where the people would be on the day referred to in Q 14:48, the Prophet allegedly said "on the bridge" according to a tradition proliferated by the Baṣran *mawlā* Dāwūd b. Abī Hind (d. 139-41/756-8, Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, xii, no. 17617; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 2150; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, xiii, 252 f.). A'mash is the probable originator of a tradition commenting on that with which the people will be confronted on the day of grief alluded to in Q 19:39, namely death in the shape of a ram that will be slaughtered (cf. Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, iii, no. 4002; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 2188; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, xvi, 88).

To the question about when the day of resurrection might be expected, various answers are recorded in ḥadīth. Conceivably one of the oldest is the answer the Prophet is said to have given in a tradition for which Shu'ba may be held responsible: "When I received my divine call, the hour of judgment was already as near as my two fingers here are to each other" (Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, i, no. 1253; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 2268 f.; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, i, 11). In Q 4:34 it says "Men will manage the affairs of women;" this verse is incorporated in an early Shu'ba tradition on the Portents (*ashrāt*) of the hour (cf. Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, i, no. 1240; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 2056). A further description of the scene in front of God on that day is detailed in another Shu'ba tradition appended to Q 21:104 (cf. Mizzī, *Tuhfa*, iv, no. 5622; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 2194 f.; see APOCALYPSE).

The last tradition mentioned above is in fact partly a ḥadīth *qudsī*. This is the third separate ḥadīth genre dealt with in this section. It comprises sayings attributed by Muḥammad directly to God, sayings that were never incorporated in the book (q.v.), because the Prophet was supposed to have received these in a way fundamentally different from qur'ānic *wahy*. Judging by the *isnād* strands the individual divine sayings

are supported by — in most cases no more than single strands — it is a remarkably late genre whose earliest origins, with very few exceptions, go back to the final years of the second/eighth century. The canonical collections have preserved a fair amount of such sayings, scattered over all sorts of contexts. The one major study devoted to the genre is by W.A. Graham, *Divine word and prophetic word in early Islam* (cf. especially part two), but its list of *qudsī* sayings needs updating.

(11) *Shī'ī ḥadīth sources*

The Qur'ān-related material in the gigantic collection of Shī'ī texts, *Biḥār al-anwār* (cf. vol. lxxxix), is for the most part presented only as ḥadīths (of which several are ḥadīth *qudsī*, see sec. 10 above), but mostly supported by *isnād* strands peopled largely by Shī'ī imāms. We do find a number of Sunnī *isnād* strands being used, but then the appended texts are shortened in a way that agrees with Shī'ī tenets. Thus 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib's (q.v.) role as collector of the qur'ānic fragments is emphasized to the point that the merits accruing to other early Islamic authorities, such as Abū Bakr and 'Uthmān, are suppressed or left unmentioned leaving the impression that the collection of the Qur'ān (cf. sec. 3 above) is really carried through only by 'Alī while Zayd b. Thābit's role is reduced to that of a virtual onlooker (Majlisī, *Biḥār*, lxxxix, 51, 53). Many pages later (ibid., 75 f.) the reports as found in the canonical Sunnī collections are duly mentioned.

Among the better known examples of instances where the Shī'ites accuse the Sunnites of having introduced alterations (*tahrīfāt*) in the final redaction of the Qur'ān is the suppression of the word *a'imma*, the plural of *imām*, and substituting for it *umma*, "community" (see Q 2:143; 3:110; cf. Majlisī, *Biḥār*, lxxxix, 60 f.; see COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY AND THE

QUR'ĀN; IMĀM). And Sūrat al-Aḥzāb ("The Clans," Q 33), so the Shī'ites say, was in reality even longer than Sūrat al-Baqara ("The Cow," Q 2), having been subjected to radical changes and abridgement (ibid., lxxxix, 288). The "seven readings" (*sab'at aḥruf*; cf. sec. 4 above) are interpreted by Shī'ites also as "seven ways of issuing legal opinions (*fatwās*) by the imām" (cf. ibid., lxxxix, 49).

The *Biḥār*'s traditions are replete with the usual hyperbole, e.g. Ibn 'Abbās is reported to have said that his Qur'ān expertise compared with that of 'Alī was like a small pool of water compared with the sea (cf. ibid., 104 f.). On the day of judgment the Qur'ān is described as talking to God about the merits accrued by a reciter when he studies the Qur'ān while young (cf. ibid., 187 f.). Finally, we find the seemingly complete text (Majlisī, *Biḥār*, xc, 3 f.) in ḥadīth form of a *tafsīr* collection by Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Ja'far al-Nu'mānī (d. 360/971) which is not even mentioned by Sezgin (cf. *GAŚ*, i, 543). Its main source seems to be Ja'far al-Šādiq (d. 148/765), the sixth imām of the Shī'a. For the rest we find that Shī'ī material in general is very similar to its Sunnī counterpart.

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Ḥafṣa

A wife of the prophet Muḥammad and a daughter of the caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. Ibn Sa'd relates that she was born in Mecca five years before Muḥammad's first revelation (ca. 605 c.e.). Her mother was Zaynab bt. Maz'ūn. Ḥafṣa emigrated to Medina with her first husband, Khunays b. Ḥudhāfa, of the Sahm, a clan of the Quraysh (q.v.). He is believed to have died shortly after the battle of Badr (q.v.; 2/624) in which he participated (Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqāt*, viii, 81), although some say that he was killed during the battle of Uḥud (Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, vii, 582; see EXPEDITIONS AND BATTLES). Ibn Qutayba, however, reports that Khunays was Muḥammad's envoy to the Persian emperor, which indicates that he died much later (Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb al-Maʿārif*, 59).

The Prophet is said to have married Ḥafṣa after ʿĀ'isha bint Abī Bakr (q.v.; Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, vii, 582), two months before the battle of Uḥud (3/625; al-Balādhurī, *Ashraf*, ii, 54). Eventually, Muḥammad divorced her, but later resumed the marriage

into the way the qur'ānic ideals of almsgiving strengthened communities and ameliorated inequities might still serve to aid Muslims to move beyond mere rhetoric in their search for continuity. See also GIFT AND GIVING.

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Alphabet see ARABIC SCRIPT; LETTERS AND MYSTERIOUS LETTERS

Altar see IDOLS AND IMAGES

Ambiguous

A concept in qur'ānic exegesis which bears upon the controversial issue of the amount of interpretive license which may be taken in commenting on God's word. The root *sh-b-h* is attested several times in the Qur'ān. In reference to the Qur'ān or its verses, the active participle *mutashābih* (or *mutashābihāt*) appears twice with the sense of "ambiguous" or "similar."

Q 3:7 states that the Qur'ān consists partly of *muḥkam* verses and partly of *mutashābih*: "It is he who sent down upon you the book (q.v.), wherein are verses clear (*āyāt muḥkamāt*) that are the essence of the book (*umm al-kitāb*), and others ambiguous (*mutashābihāt*)."

Numerous commentators, while examining Q 3:7, mention two other verses which seem to contradict it. They are Q 39:23, which states that all the verses of the Qur'ān are *mutashābih*: "God has sent down the fairest discourse as a book con-similar (*kitāban mutashābihan*)" and Q 11:1 in which all the verses of the Qur'ān are characterized as clear: "A book whose verses are set clear (*uḥkimat āyātuhu*)."

Al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392), on the authority of the commentator Ibn Ḥabīb al-Nisābūrī (d. 406/1015), argues that these passages present three different statements on the nature of the Qur'ān: the Qur'ān as clear (*muḥkam*), as ambiguous (*mutashābih*) and as a combination of the two. He characterizes the verse that supports the idea of the compound nature, a Qur'ān made up of clear verses and ambiguous ones (Q 3:7), as the "correct" one (*ṣaḥīḥ*, *Burhān*, ii, 68; cf. Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, iii, 30).

The relation between the two components of the Qur'ān is governed by the meaning ascribed to the word *mutashābih*, for which the exegetical literature offers a variety of definitions. The meaning of "similar" is used to document the miracu-

lous nature of the Qur'ān. On the other hand, the term interpreted as “ambiguous” has wider implications and bears upon three central qur'ānic issues: 1. The juridical validity of the Qur'ān, where the ambiguous verses are contrasted with the clear ones. 2. The question of the validity of interpreting the Qur'ān, where the ambiguous verses are used to argue the cases for and against interpretation. 3. The inimitability (q.v.) of the Qur'ān (*i'jāz al-Qur'ān*).

Similar verses

Similarity between verses may manifest itself either in the wording (*lafẓ*) or in the meaning (*ma'nā*) of the verse. Accordingly, *mutashābihāt* are sometimes defined as verses in which the same words are used to mean different things (Ibn Qutayba, *Ta'wīl*, 74; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, iii, 114, 116) or else as verses that use different words to express a similar sense (Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, iii, 115-6; see L. Kinberg, *Muḥkamāt*, 145). In a widely-repeated definition, wording and meaning appear together and the similar verses are presented as those that “resemble one another in rightness and truth (*al-ḥaqq wa-l-ṣidq*), i.e. meaning, and in beauty (*al-ḥusn*), i.e. wording” (Baghawī, *Ma'ālim*, i, 426). Naturally, the resemblance of verses can occur only in cases of repetition. This explains why repetition is presented as one of the characteristic features of the *mutashābih* verses. The correlation between the repetition of the *mutashābih* verses and their resemblance is treated in one of the definitions adduced by al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) where *mutashābih* verses are those in which the words resemble one another when repeated in other qur'ānic chapters (*Tafsīr*, iii, 116).

Similar verses and the inimitability of the Qur'ān

Each of the definitions dealing with the resemblance and the repetition of the *muta-*

shābih verses touches upon the inimitability of the Qur'ān. The relation between the inimitability (q.v.) of the Qur'ān and the *mutashābih* verses can be understood through the dichotomy of wording and meaning mentioned above. In his commentary on “It is he who sent down upon you the book, wherein are verses clear that are the essence of the book, and others ambiguous” (Q 3:7), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) combines the verse under discussion with two verses already mentioned, Q 11:1 and Q 39:23, as well as “If [the Qur'ān] had been from other than God, surely they would have found in it much inconsistency” (Q 4:82; see DIFFICULT PASSAGES). Based on the four verses, he concludes that the *mutashābih* verses are those which repeat, resemble and confirm each other, and they prove the miraculous nature of the text. There are no contradictions in the Qur'ān. Rather, its verses confirm and reinforce one another. Simultaneously, the Qur'ān is also defined as consisting of *muḥkam* verses, namely, verses written in an inimitable way. Thus these two features, i.e. noncontradictory confirmed messages and an inimitable style of language which cannot be produced by mortals, attest to the divine source of the Qur'ān (Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vii, 180).

Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) offers a different explanation for the correlation between the inimitability of the Qur'ān and the *mutashābih* verses. Trying to find a reason for the existence of the *mutashābih* verses in the Qur'ān, he argues that stylistically the *muḥkam* and the *mutashābih* verses represent the two major forms of expression used in the Arabic language, the concise (*mūjāz*) and the allusive (*majāz*). God has included both styles in the Qur'ān to challenge mortals to choose either style should they attempt to produce a Qur'ān similar to that brought by Muḥammad. However, no one

can ever meet this challenge and the Qur'ān therefore, with its two styles, the *muḥkam* and *mutashābih*, will forever remain inimitable (Zād, i, 350-1; cf. Ibn Qutayba, *Ta'wīl*, 86).

Mutashābih meaning “ambiguous”

A common way to treat the terms *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* is to contrast the clarity of the first with the ambiguity of the other. As was mentioned, this contrast bears upon some of the most prominent qur'ānic issues: the abrogating and abrogated verses (*al-nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh*, see ABROGATION), the authority to interpret the Qur'ān and the inimitability of the Qur'ān.

Ambiguous verses and the abrogating and abrogated verses

Among the definitions that contrast the *muḥkam* with the *mutashābih*, there is to be found the presentation of the *muḥkam* verses as abrogating ones (*nāsikhāt*) and the *mutashābih* as abrogated ones (*mansūkhāt*). A widely-cited definition represents the *muḥkam* as the abrogating verses, the verses that clarify what is allowed (*ḥalāl*), the verses that clarify what is prohibited (*ḥarām*), the verses that define the punishments (*ḥudūd*, see BOUNDARIES AND PRECEPTS) for various offenses, the verses that define the duties (*farā'id*) and the verses that one should believe in and put into practice. Conversely, the *mutashābih* verses are the abrogated ones, the verses that cannot be understood without changing their word order (*muqaddamuhu wa-mu'akhkharuhu*), the parables (*amthāl*), the oaths (q.v.; *aqsām*) and the verses in which one should believe, but not put into practice (Ibn 'Abbās, *Tafsīr*, 124; Abū 'Ubayd, *Nāsikh*, 4; Ibn Abī Ḥatīm, *Tafsīr*, ii, 592-3; Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, iii, 115; Baghawī, *Ma'ālīm*, i, 426; Ibn 'Aṭīyya, *Muḥarrar*, i, 400; Qurtubī, *Jāmi'*, iv, 10; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, i, 345; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, ii, 5; Shawkānī, *Tafsīr*, i, 314).

The *muḥkam* are presented here as the verses that deal with essential matters whereas the *mutashābih* verses are held to deal with secondary matters. This is the way to understand the comparison made in the qur'ānic text itself. Q 3:7 defines the *muḥkam* verses as “the essence of the book” and the *mutashābih* as the rest.

Another way to examine the juridical value of the terms is to consider them as two kinds of divine commandments (q.v.). In this case, the *muḥkam* verses contain the commands that are universal and never change, whereas the *mutashābih* verses contain the commands that are limited and do change. The *muḥkam* contain the basic commandments, shared by all religions, such as obeying God and avoiding injustice. The *mutashābih* verses, on the other hand, contain the practical aspects of these commandments and may vary from one religion to another, e.g. the number of required prayers and the regulations concerning almsgiving and marriage (Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vii, 183; cf. Māwardī, *Nukat*, i, 380). In this interpretation, the distinction between abrogating and abrogated verses becomes meaningless because the chronological element is replaced by a question of universality. This means that the *muḥkam* verses are defined as those that are universal to all of the revealed religions and the *mutashābih* verses are those that contain what distinguishes Islam from the other revealed religions.

Ambiguous verses and the authority to interpret the Qur'ān

Several commentators recognize three kinds of *mutashābih* verses: those that cannot be understood, those that can be examined and understood by everyone and those that only “the experts” (*al-rāsikhūn fī l-ilm*) can comprehend (e.g. Fīrūzābādī, *Baṣā'ir*, iii, 296). The *muḥkam* are defined as clear verses that require nothing to be un-

derstood whereas the comprehension of the *mutashābih* requires explanation (Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, iii, 116-7; ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mutashābih*, i, 13; Māwardī, *Nukat*, i, 369; Baghawī, *Ma‘ālim*, i, 428; Ibn ‘Aṭīyya, *Muḥarrar*, i, 401; Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vii, 184; Qurṭubī, *Ḍamī‘*, iv, 9; Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, iii, 3; Shawkānī, *Tafsīr*, i, 314). A different set of definitions represents the *muḥkam* as verses that contain or permit only one interpretation whereas the *mutashābih* are those that may be interpreted in more than one way (Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, iii, 115-6; al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām*, ii, 281; Māwardī, *Nukat*, i, 369; Wāḥidī, *Wasīl*, i, 413-4; Baghawī, *Ma‘ālim*, i, 427; Ṭabarī, *Majma‘*, ii, 15; Qurṭubī, *Ḍamī‘*, iv, 10; Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, iii, 4; Shawkānī *Tafsīr*, i, 314). While there is no room to doubt the instructions supplied by the *muḥkamāt*, the ambiguity of the *mutashābih* verses may create a situation in which the believers become confused, not knowing which direction to choose. They may then tendentiously interpret these verses in favor of their own personal interests.

This raises the question as to whether any exegetical effort should be made to eliminate the vagueness of the *mutashābih* verses and two contradictory attitudes developed. Some scholars claimed that the *mutashābih* verses are meant to remain ambiguous and any attempt to interpret them might lead the believers astray. Only God knows their true meaning and this is the way it should stay. Others maintained that the *mutashābih* are meant to be illuminated. Not only does God know the meaning of these verses, but the scholars of the Qur’ān also know it. Their duty is to supply the interpretation of them and this may vary among the different scholars since the *mutashābih* verses may be interpreted in a variety of ways. These two opposing views on the validity of interpreting the *mutashābih* verses parallel those on the interpretation of the Qur’ān as a whole.

Ambiguous verses as those that should not be interpreted

The basic argument against the interpretation of the *mutashābih* is that knowledge of these verses is limited to God (Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, iii, 116; Māwardī, *Nukat*, i, 369; Ibn ‘Aṭīyya, *Muḥarrar*, i, 401; Qurṭubī, *Ḍamī‘*, iv, 9; Abū Ḥayyān, *Baḥr*, ii, 381; Ālūsī, *Rūḥ*, ii, 82). As such, they concern matters about which no mortal has clear knowledge. To show that the essence of the *mutashābihāt* cannot be grasped by human beings, several topics defined as *mutashābih* are mentioned: resurrection day (Māwardī, *Nukat*, i, 369; Baghawī, *Ma‘ālim*, i, 427; Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vii, 184; Qurṭubī, *Ḍamī‘*, iv, 10; Abū Ḥayyān, *Baḥr*, ii, 381; Zarkashī, *Burhān*, ii, 70), the appearance of the Antichrist (*al-Dajjāl*) before the end of days, the return of Christ (Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, iii, 116) and the prophesied day the sun will rise in the west (Māwardī, *Nukat*, i, 369; Baghawī, *Ma‘ālim*, i, 427; Abū Ḥayyān, *Baḥr*, ii, 381), among others (see ANTICHRIST, APOCALYPSE, RESURRECTION; LAST JUDGMENT).

A different argument contends that the *mutashābih* are those verses whose meaning can be easily distorted (Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, iii, 116; Ibn ‘Aṭīyya, *Muḥarrar*, i, 401; Qurṭubī, *Ḍamī‘*, iv, 9; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, ii, 5; Shawkānī, *Tafsīr*, i, 314). This should be understood in light of the second part of the key verse “As for those in whose hearts is swerving, they follow the ambiguous part, desiring dissension and desiring its interpretation” (Q 3:7). The commentators who correlate the *mutashābih* and dissension (q.v.) adduce a number of qur’ānic verses in support of their position. One such example is presented by al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) on the authority of Sa‘īd b. Jubayr (d. 95/714): To justify their ideas, the early sect of the Kharijīs (q.v.) employed “Whoever fails to judge according to what God has sent down is a wrongdoer” (Q 5:47) and “Then the unbelievers ascribe equals to their

Lord” (Q 6:1) to support their controversial doctrines. When the Khārijīs faced the injustice of a leader, they read these two verses together and, by assuming correlation between the two, they set forth the following argument: He who does not judge according to the principles of justice is an unbeliever. An unbeliever is a polytheist (*mushrik*) who ascribes equals to God. Thus a leader who acts in this manner can be deemed a polytheist (*Durr*; ii, 5). The technique used here joins two verses that were not necessarily meant to be combined and draws conclusions from this juxtaposition. By so doing, the Khārijīs were able to prove that their teachings — such as espousing that a caliph should be deprived of his position for acting improperly — are anchored in the Qur’ān and thus fully authorized.

Another example of the correlation between the *mutashābih* verses and dissension deals with the controversial issue of free will versus predestination (see FREEDOM AND PREDESTINATION). The rivals are the rationalist Mu’tazilīs (q.v.) and the conservative Sunnīs. Both sides refer to the same verse, Q 18:29 which states “Say, ‘The truth is from your Lord.’ So whoever wishes, let him believe and whoever wishes, let him disbelieve.” The Mu’tazilīs define the verse as *muhkam*, i.e. the kind of verse that should be followed since it favors the argument for free will. The Sunnīs, who do not accept the idea of free will, define this verse as *mutashābih*, i.e. the kind of verse that should not be followed. Q 76:30 presents the opposite view: “You cannot will [anything] unless God wills it.” The Mu’tazilīs define this verse as *mutashābih* since it contradicts their view, but the Sunnīs define it as *muhkam* because it favors the idea of predestination. By shifting the terms, it became possible to endorse or refute an idea according to one’s needs (Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vii, 182; Abū Ḥayyān, *Baḥr*, ii, 382). The same method

was applied to other verses on topics such as the disagreements between the proponents of determinism (Jabriyya) and the proponents of indeterminism (Qadariyya), or the issue of whether believers will see God in the afterlife (Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vii, 185; Abū Ḥayyān, *Baḥr*, ii, 382; cf. L. Kinberg, *Muḥkamāt*, 159).

The correlation between the *mutashābih* verses and dissension was also mentioned in the discussion of the reasons for the existence of the *mutashābih* in the Qur’ān: God revealed them to test the people. Those who do not follow the *mutashābih* will be rewarded as true believers, while those who follow them will go astray (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ẓād*, i, 353). The same idea is mentioned along with the fact that the *mutashābih* can be easily distorted. Although established and profoundly elaborated, the negative approach to the interpretation of the *mutashābih* was not the only one adduced in the exegetical literature. No less detailed were the arguments favoring their interpretation (see EXEGESIS OF THE QUR’ĀN; CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL).

Ambiguous verses as those that may be interpreted

The perception of the *mutashābih* as ambiguous verses was used to argue, as shown above, against their interpretation. The same perception, however, is also used to support and encourage their interpretation. Although contradictory, the two approaches had a common starting point: Ambiguous verses are dangerous in the sense that a wrong interpretation might mislead the believer. With this idea in mind, some scholars recommended avoiding any examination of these verses whereas others encouraged the interpretation of them, but prescribed caution with regard to the steps that need to be taken in this process. One precaution is to check the *mutashābih* against the *muhkam*. This is expressed in a set of definitions which oppose

the *muḥkam* and the *mutashābih* regarding the dependence of the latter. The *muḥkam* are defined as independent verses that need no explanation (Māwardī, *Nukat*, i, 369; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ẓād*, i, 350; Abū Ḥayyān, *Baḥr*, ii, 381) nor reference to other verses to be understood (al-Naḥḥās, *Iṣāb*, i, 355; Qurṭubī, *Jāmi'*, iv, 11; Shawkānī, *Tafsīr*, i, 314). Conversely, the *mutashābih* are dependent verses that cannot be understood without consulting or comparing them to other verses (Baghawī, *Ma'ālīm*, i, 427; Zarkashī, *Burhān*, ii, 68). The *mutashābih*'s dependence on the *muḥkam* derives from the clarity of the latter and the ambiguity of the former. The *muḥkam*, by interpreting the *mutashābih*, clears away any misunderstanding that might mislead the believer (Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vii, 185). It thus can happen that when a believer consults a *muḥkam* to understand an ambiguous *mutashābih*, he finds his way to the true faith (Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vii, 185; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, i, 345). When a *mutashābih* is not interpreted in accordance with a *muḥkam*, those who rely on it will go astray (al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām*, ii, 281). In light of this argument, the *muḥkam* are regarded as “the essence of the book” (*umm al-kitāb*, Q 3:7) or “a source to which other verses are referred for interpretation” (Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, iii, 9).

Thus the ambiguity of the *mutashābih* verses creates the need to scrutinize them. Had the Qur'ān consisted only of *muḥkam* verses, there would have been no need for the science of the interpretation of the Qur'ān to develop (Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vii, 185-6). Had every verse been clear to everyone, the difference in people's abilities would not come to the fore. The learned (*ʿālim*) and the ignorant (*jāhil*) would have been equal and intellectual endeavor would cease (Ibn Qutayba, *Ta'wīl*, 86; cf. Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vii, 185). Behind this perception is the notion that the *mutashābih* are verses that make people think when they try to

identify them and use their own judgment in interpreting them. Consequently, it can be said that they are presented as verses that stimulate people and put them on their guard. It seems that the *mutashābih* are perceived as the conscience of the believer and indicate the level of his religious knowledge. Due to their ambiguity, dealing with them requires a high degree of religious discernment. The more profound the person, the better his decisions and thus the more pleasant his condition in the next world. This issue is thoroughly discussed in the commentaries with regard to the status of “the experts in knowledge” (*rāsikhūn fī l-ʿilm*) mentioned in Q 3:7.

Ambiguous verses and the inimitability of the Qur'ān

As indicated above, the features of the *mutashābih* as “similar verses” are held to supply proof of the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān. Additional evidence of this was found in the features of the *mutashābih* in the sense of “ambiguous verses.” This derives from two opposing attitudes toward the interpretation of these verses, opposition to interpreting the *mutashābih* and support for their interpretation.

Almost every commentator identifies the “mysterious letters” (*fawātiḥ* — or *awāʾil al-suwar*, see LETTERS AND MYSTERIOUS LETTERS) of the Qur'ān as *mutashābih* (e.g. Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, iii, 116-7). These are the letters that occur at the beginning of certain sūras and whose meaning is unclear. The significance of the mysterious letters, as well as the other *mutashābih* verses, is considered a divine secret known only to God himself. Both should be regarded as parts of the book that God has prevented his people from understanding. Their concealed meaning points to the divine source of the Qur'ān and thus attests to its miraculous nature (ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mutashābih*, i, 17).

The ambiguity of the *mutashābih* verses enables believers to interpret them in more than one way. This means that the Qurʾān accommodates more than one approach to a given issue and that different trends in Islam are likely to find their ideas reflected in the Qurʾān (ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mutashābih*, i, 26, 28. See also L. Kinberg, *Muḥkamāt*, 158, 168). This allows the holy text to serve as a source of answers and solutions to any problem at any time and represents one of the central aspects of the miraculous nature of the Qurʾān.

In examining the different attitudes toward the interpretation of the Qurʾān, H. Birkeland (*Opposition*, 9) states that the opposition to qurʾānic exegesis was never comprehensive and was aimed at the usage of human reasoning (*raʿy*). The validity of *tafsīr bi-l-ʿilm*, i.e. exegesis based on ḥadīth (the records of the pronouncements and actions of the prophet Muḥammad, see ḤADĪTH AND THE QURʾĀN) was, in H. Birkeland's view, never disputed. Support for this theory can be found in the way the term *mutashābih* is treated in the exegetical literature as well as in its relation to the term *muḥkam*. The prohibition of interpreting the *mutashābih* verses may be understood as a reflection of the opposition to the use of human reason. At the same time, allowing the interpretation of these verses seems to be conditional upon the usage of ḥadīth as a means of interpretation. Indeed, Muslim scholars have traditionally not regarded the employment of ḥadīth to illuminate a qurʾānic verse as interpretation, but rather as a means of confirming the message included in the verse. Consequently, a verse in harmony with a reliable ḥadīth may be relied upon as a source of guidance. Such a verse would be defined as *muḥkam*. The *mutashābih*, on the other hand, can never be regarded as authoritative. Both the need of various streams in Islam to have their distinctive

ideas anchored in the Qurʾān and the injunction to follow only the *muḥkam* verses may explain the variance in the identity of the verses which different groups view as *muḥkam* and *mutashābih*. As shown above, a verse defined by one scholar as *mutashābih* may be characterized as *muḥkam* by another. The flexible way in which the two terms were used enabled the commentators to adapt a verse to their needs by defining it as *muḥkam*. In so doing they were actually using their own independent reasoning presented as ḥadīth. See also TRADITIONAL DISCIPLINES OF QURʾĀNIC STUDY.

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