

Conference Report

New Insights into Early Islamic Historiography: A Substantial Conference Report (Göttingen, 25-26 June 2015)

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with contributions by

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In his seminal study, *Islamic History: A Framework of Inquiry*, Stephen Humphreys presented the central question all scholars who try to reconstruct the origins of Islam have to answer on a methodological level: “In what sense [...] is it possible to reconstruct the political history of early Islam?”¹ In order to address this question several related issues have to be taken into account: (1) the textual form of the sources we use, (2) the degree of accordance between available sources to their previous textual forms in terms of narrative structure and content, (3) the paucity of reliable criteria for evaluating the texts’ authenticity or fictiveness, (4) the problem that intensive source criticism does not leave much material for a historical reconstruction, (5) the issue

1. R. Stephen Humphreys: *Islamic History. A Framework for Inquiry*. 2nd ed. London 1991, p. 70. Of course, this question can also be applied to social, economic, religious or any other type of historical approach to this period.

that many of these texts do not respond to our contemporary questions.²

These (and related) challenges have long puzzled historians of the Islamicate world. In a workshop held at the University of Göttingen in June 2015,³ seventeen junior and senior researchers of early Islamic history discussed questions of source criticism, authorship, and authenticity of Arabic sources by also contextualizing them with Syriac, Greek, and Ancient Near Eastern sources. Most of the participants presented their individual perspectives on one of the points raised above. These approaches (in addition to the ensuing discussions)⁴ were not only

2. This list is inspired by Humphreys, *Islamic History*, 70-71.

3. This workshop was sponsored by the Courant Research Center “Education and Religion (EDRIS),” the Ministry of Science and Culture of Lower Saxony, and the Göttingen Graduate School for Humanities.

4. The organizers would like to thank the panel chairs Prof. Dr. Lale Behzadi, Dr. Nicolet Boekhoff-van der Voort, Dr. Zachary Chitwood,

thought-provoking, but also offered new individual insights into some of the central problems of early Islamic historiography described above. Therefore, the workshop conveners together with the participants agreed to publish these approaches in the rather unusual format of a “substantial conference report”.

Thus, each participant was asked to summarize his ideas, case study or argument in a two-to-four-page long text in order to introduce them to an interested audience before the publication of the respective papers, monographs, translations, and studies. The outcome was impressive. Each contribution had something important to say on the above-mentioned issues and is worth being read. For instance, one contribution is—after severe source criticism—event-orientated, i.e. focusing on the status of the Jews of Khaybar after the town’s conquest by the Prophet (F. Donner). That only one study pursues this path shows how significant the methodological obstacles are in writing the political history of early Muslim society. Most contributions, instead, are source-orientated, i.e. they either study the textual forms of the available sources or try to come up with older textual forms of these sources. To the first group belong

the contribution on geographical terms in al-Azdī’s *Futūḥ al-Shām* (J. Scheiner) and on Ibn A‘tham’s *riḍḍa* narrative (M. Schönleber), while the second group includes contributions on the Prophet’s nocturnal journey to Jerusalem (M. Akpınar), on ‘Umar’s *khuṭba* at al-Jābiya (Y. Deghani Farsani), on the ‘Abbāsīd revolution (I. Lindstedt), and on the oldest Greek translation of the Qur’ān (M. Ulbricht). A third group of contributions highlights general features of early Islamic historiography, such as the one that discusses factuality and fictionality as doubtful criteria for a source’s authenticity (I. Toral-Niehoff). Other contributions tackle multi-layer intertextuality as typical feature of this type of literature (G. Leube), the origins of the *fitna* theme in historical sources (M. Sadeghi) or the change of societal definitions on what constitute historical sources (leading to the exclusion of astrological histories) (A. Borrut).

The discussions during the workshop as well as this report prove that some stimulating studies are currently underway that—once published in fully developed forms—will further deepen our understanding of the potentials and boundaries of writing early Islamic history.

and Prof. Dr. Sebastian Günther for their effective moderation and engaged discussion.

Contents

- I. Fred M. Donner, “The Status of the Jews of Khaybar.”
- II. Jens Scheiner, “Geographical Terminology in al-Azdī’s *Futūḥ al-Shām*.”
- III. Mónika Schönleber, “Ibn A‘tham’s Arrangement of *Ridda* Material.”
- IV. Mehmetcan Akpınar, “Parallelisms between Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīra* Material and Muqātil b. Sulaymān’s *Tafsīr*.”
- V. Yoones Dehghani Farsani, “Genesis and Textual Development of the *Futūḥ al-Shām* Ascribed to al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823).”
- VI. Ilkka Lindstedt, “The ‘Abbāsīd Revolution and Its Earliest Historiography”
- VII. Manolis Ulbricht, “The Earliest Translation of the Qur’ān.”
- VIII. Isabel Toral-Niehoff, “The Fact-Fiction-Debate in Early Muslim Historiography.”
- IX. Georg Leube, “Intertextuality as a Typical Feature of Early Arabic Historiography.”
- X. Masoud Sadeghi, “The Origins of *Fitna*-Writing in Islamic Historiography.”
- XI. Antoine Borrut, “Addressing the ‘Gap of Sources’: Historiography and Cultural Memory in Early Islam.”

I. The Status of the Jews of Khaybar

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There exist in the traditional Arabic sources many reports about the Prophet Muḥammad's conquest of the oasis town of Khaybar in northern Arabia. More than 125 reports are known, which vary in length, detail, content, and focus; some are related with full or partial *isnād*, others with no hint as to their origin or transmission. There are many conflicting details among these reports, and some exhibit clear signs of being later creations rather than accurate reports going back to the events themselves, such as the presence of *ṣulḥ-ʿanwa* traditions of the kind analyzed long ago by Albrecht Noth.⁵

This contribution focuses on reports about the status of the Jews of Khaybar following the Prophet's conquest of the town. The general impression one receives after studying the many reports is that the Jews of the city, after being conquered by the Prophet's forces, were at first asked to leave the oasis, taking with them only what they could carry: that is, the Prophet

condemned the Khaybar Jews to almost total dispossession. Some reports include a story involving deceit by some of the Jews' leaders, which seems to provide the reason for the Prophet's harsh treatment of these leaders, although it is not explicitly given as a cause for the decision to evict the Jews as a whole. However, when the Prophet realized that the Medinese did not have sufficient manpower to cultivate the palm groves of Khaybar, the Jews were allowed by the Prophet to stay temporarily, so they could care for and harvest the date palms as sharecroppers, in exchange for half of the crop. Many reports describe the process of crop estimation and division, and many others discuss specifically how the lands of Khaybar were divided among the Prophet's followers. This arrangement—according to which the Jews continued to occupy the town and work its palm groves in exchange for half the produce—lasted until the time of ʿUmar; by then, we are told, the Muslims had enough manpower to work the lands themselves, and so the Jews were expelled and the lands divided up among their Muslim owners. When the Jews objected, ʿUmar quoted as justification a saying of the Prophet that “No two religions should exist in Arabia.”

A number of reports exist, however, that diverge somewhat, or sometimes considerably, from the general narrative summarized above. But there are, as I argue, two basic facts on which all reports agree. They are (1) that Jews remained in Khaybar, in some status, after the Prophet took it over, and (2) that the Jews were

5. Albrecht Noth, “Zum Verhältnis von kalifaler Zentralgewalt und Provinzen in umayyadischer Zeit. Die „Ṣulḥ“—,ʿAnwa“-Traditionen für Ägypten und den Iraq,” *Die Welt des Islam* 14 (1973), 150–162. An English translation by Gwendolin Goldbloom is found in Fred M. Donner (ed.), *The Expansion of the Early Islamic State* (Aldershot, 2008), 177–188. See for example the reports traced back to Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/741–2) in Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-sunan*, ed. M. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (n.p., ca. 1990?), III: 171 (no. 3018), or Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. M. de Goeje as: *Liber Expugnationis Regionum. Auctore Imāmo Ahmed ibn Jahja ibn Djābir al-Belādsorī* (Leiden, 1866), 23.

eventually expelled from the oasis by ‘Umar and their lands divided among the Muslim settlers.

To explain the evolution of the many confusing traditions about Khaybar and its Jews, I propose that the actual course of events was different from that implied in the traditions found in Ibn Hishām, and in many others that resemble it. The actual sequence of developments may have been as follows:

(1) When the Prophet and his forces subjected Khaybar, its Jewish population was left on the land because of a treaty they had concluded with the Prophet. The town’s inhabitants, however, were required to pay half the annual date-crop as tribute. This arrangement continued until the time of ‘Umar (or later).

(2) The Jews of Khaybar were expelled by ‘Umar (or at a later time?) and their lands divided among the Muslims. (The division of lands may reflect an earlier division by the Prophet of the date crop taken as tribute.)

(3) In order to legitimate ‘Umar’s action, three stories (or sets of stories) were generated by later traditionists and must have been already in circulation by the early second/eighth century. I argue that these three stories are:

(a) The story that the Jews were “hired” by the Prophet as sharecroppers because of a shortage of labor. This story effectively changed the initial status of the Jews of Khaybar from that of rightful owners having treaty rights to that of temporary sharecroppers who could be expelled at any time. This

story is contradicted by a few reports that imply that the Jews had actually concluded a treaty or security agreement (*amān*) with the Prophet⁶ (in which case they would not have been subject to expulsion).

In yet other reports, the Prophet tells the Jews “I affirm you on this basis as long as we wish” (*uqirrukum ‘alā dhālika mā shi’nā*), or “as long as God wishes” (*mā shā’a Allāh*),⁷ but a variant transmitted via al-Wāqidī reads “I affirm you in that which God affirmed you” (*uqirrukum ‘alā mā aqarrakum Allāh*),⁸ which sounds like a recognition of the Jews’ possession of the land. The idea that the Prophet himself planned to expel the Jews of Khaybar until he changed his mind and let them stay was, of course, a convenient way of providing an exculpation for ‘Umar’s (or someone’s) later act of expelling them.

(b) The stories of Jewish perfidy. These stories seemingly justify the decision to expel Jews from Khaybar, but they are suspicious because they assume distinctly different forms in different reports. In one version, the Jewish leaders hide things the Prophet explicitly asks about, pleading that they no longer have them, and when

6. E.g., Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, *Kitāb al-amwāl*, ed. M. Khalīl Harrās (Cairo, 1969), 241-242 (no. 457).

7. Ibn Shubba, *Ta’rīkh al-madīna al-munawwara*, ed. F. Shaltūt, 4 vols. (Beirut, 1990), 178.2 and *ibid.*, 177.2.

8. Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Wāqidī, *Kitāb al-maghāzī*, ed. J. M. Jones, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1966), 690-691.

their deceit is revealed by discovery of the hidden objects, the leaders are killed.⁹ In a second form, however, the story is completely different: in it, the Jews kill ʿAbdallāh b. Sahl, who had come to Khaybar in the time of the Prophet (but after the conquest) as crop estimator.¹⁰ The fact that the Jews' offense is described differently in various kinds of reports, each situated in a different time-frame, makes it appear to be a floating *topos* of "Jewish perfidy" used to justify their eventual expulsion, by either the Prophet or ʿUmar. It seems also possible to suggest that the ultimate expulsion of the Jews took place later than the time of ʿUmar, since ʿUmar, no less than the Prophet, was a convenient grafting-point for justifications of actions taken at later times.

(c) The story that the Prophet said, "No two religions should exist in Arabia." Some features of the wording and conceptualization of this report already make it suspicious, in particular its use of the phrase *jazīrat al-ʿarab*, which seems likely to reflect conditions toward the middle or end of the second/eighth century, when

the concept of "Arabness" appears to have been developed and circulated by traditionists. Moreover, other reports suggest that the Prophet did not take such a negative view of other religions, or of the Jews—indeed, among the reports on Khaybar is one stating that the Prophet took ten Jews of Medina along with him when he went on the Khaybar campaign, evidently as advisers¹¹—suggesting that he was not hostile to Jews as such, and making very suspect the claim that he issued a sweeping statement barring the existence of two religions in Arabia. The use of the word *dīn* in this report to mean "religion" in an abstract sense also arouses our skepticism. In the Qurʾān, *dīn* generally means either "custom" or "law, judgment"; it seems to have become commonly used to mean "religion" only in the eighth century,¹² which is therefore a more likely time-frame for the origin of the "no two religions" *ḥadīth* than the time of the Prophet in the early seventh century.

In conclusion, it seems likely, in other words, that the "discovery" of this supposed *ḥadīth* of the Prophet was another way to exculpate ʿUmar (or whoever eventually drove the Jews from Khaybar) for having expelled the Jews of Khaybar, via an appeal to alleged prophetic authority.

9. E.g., Muḥammad Ibn Saʿd: *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. E. Sachau et al. as: *Ibn Saad. Biographien Muhammads, seiner Gefährten und der späteren Träger des Islams bis zum Jahre 230 der Flucht*, 9 vols. (Leiden, 1904-1940), II-1, p. 79, l. 27; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, III, 157-158 (no. 3006).

10. ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *Al-sīra al-nabawiyya*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld as: *Das Leben Muhammed's nach Muhammed Ibn Ishāk bearbeitet von Abd el-Malik Ibn Hishām. Aus den Handschriften zu Berlin, Leipzig, Gotha und Leyden*, 3 vols. (Göttingen, 1858-1860), 777-778.

11. Al-Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, 684.

12. See Fred M. Donner, "Dīn, islām, und muslim im Koran," in Georges Tamer (ed.), *Kritische Koranhermeneutik. In memoriam Günter Lüling* (Erlangen, forthcoming).

II. Geographical Terminology in al-Azdī's *Futūḥ al-Shām*

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In 1850, the famous orientalist, Aloys Sprenger (1813-1893), discovered an old and worm-eaten manuscript in one of Delhi's private libraries, which was said to have been established by the Great Moghuls. Since then this manuscript has been the focus of the study of the origins of Islamic religion and culture. According to its colophon, the manuscript bears the title *Kitāb futūḥ al-Shām* (i.e. *The Book on the Conquests in Syria*) and was copied in Jerusalem in 613/1217 by an unknown writer called Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ghassānī. This work mainly describes how a group of people called "Muslims" (i.e. submitters [to God's will]) took control of Southern Mesopotamia and Greater Syria (today's Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian Territories, and the north of the Arabian Peninsula) in the course of a few years by means of negotiating with local people and fighting the Byzantine overlords. The detailed events and their narratological features shall not concern us here.

It is rather the question of authorship that is addressed in this contribution. Since the time when William Nassau Lees prepared the first critical edition of the manuscript in 1854, there seems to have been a consensus among scholars that the work was composed by a single compiler-author. On the basis of the manuscript's chains of transmission (*riwāyāt*) and the approximately 200 single chains of transmitters (*asānīd*) that are found throughout the manuscript a case can be (and was) made for Abū Ismā'īl Muḥammad

b. 'Abdallāh al-Azdī al-Baṣrī as compiler-author of the work.¹ Although biographical information on al-Azdī is scarce, based on his name he seems to have belonged to the Southern Arabian tribe of Azd and he—or one of his ancestors—seems to have dwelled in Baṣra where the Azd had settled in early Islamic times. Al-Azdī's death date is not preserved. On the basis of his teachers and disciples as documented in the *asānīd*, various years in the last quarter of the second/eighth or the early decades of the third/ninth century were suggested, making al-Azdī a contemporary of the well-known Iraqi scholar Sayf b. 'Umar (d. ca. 180/796-797), who belonged to the Northern Arabian tribe of Tamīm.

The aim of this contribution is to give additional support to the view that the *Futūḥ al-Shām* was compiled by one person (who most likely was Muḥammad

1. Already Lees argued on the basis of the *asānīd* for al-Azdī's authorship: See Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh al-Azdī, *Futūḥ al-Shām*, ed. W. Lees as: *The Futooh al-Shām. Being an Account of the Moslim Conquests in Syria by Aboo Ismā'īl Mohammad bin 'Abd Allah al-Azdī al-Baṣrī, Who Flourished About the Middle of the Second Century of the Mohammadan Era* (Calcutta, 1854 [Reprint Osnabrück 1980]), p. V. For a more detailed argument see Lawrence I. Conrad, "Al-Azdī's History of the Arab Conquests in Bilād al-Shām. Some Historiographical Observations," in Muḥammad 'A. al-Bakhīt (ed.), *Proceedings of the Second Symposium on the History of Bilād al-Shām During the Early Islamic Period Up to 40 A.H./640 A.D. The Fourth International Conference on the History of Bilad al-Sham* (1985). Vol. 1. *English and French Papers* (Amman, 1987), 28–62.

b. ‘Abdallāh al-Azdī). This can be done by studying several clusters of information that serve as indicators for the work’s textual cohesion. To these clusters belong the set of individuals and tribes mentioned in the work, the religious depiction of the Byzantines and the Muslims therein, and the usage of geographical terms in the text. While I have tackled the first two points in the study accompanying my forthcoming English translation of the *Kitāb futūḥ al-Shām*, some thoughts on the spatial feature of this work shall be presented here.

“Greater Syria” is expressed in the Arabic original as “*bilād al-Shām*” (i.e. the lands—or the regions—of Syria). In other words, this geographical space is conceived as an aggregation of regions that, together with some major cities, are mentioned in the work as well. Going roughly from north to south, these regions are: *arḍ Qinnaṣrīn* (i.e. the land of Qinnaṣrīn); *arḍ Ḥimṣ* (i.e. the land of Ḥimṣ) with Ḥimṣ as the major city; *arḍ Dimashq* (i.e. the land of Damascus) with Damascus as the major city; *arḍ al-Balqā’* (i.e. the land of al-Balqā’) with ‘Ammān as the major city; *arḍ Ḥawrān* (i.e. the land of Ḥawrān) with Bosra as the major city; *arḍ al-Biqā’* (i.e. the land of the Beqaa valley) with Baalbek as the major city; *arḍ al-Urdunn* (i.e. the land of the Jordan river) with Fiḥl as the major city; and *arḍ Filasṭīn* (i.e. the land of Palestine) with Caesarea and Jerusalem as the two major cities. These regions and cities are referred to over and over again, sometimes in relation to one another, for example, “*arḍ al-Urdunn* is adjacent to *arḍ Filasṭīn*”, while at other times a city is related to the respective region, as in the case of Bosra, “the city of Ḥawrān.” In analogy, Southern Mesopotamia is referred to as

arḍ al-‘Irāq (i.e. the land of Iraq), which consisted of the “land of al-Kūfa,” “the land of al-Baṣra,” and “the arable lands of Iraq” (*sawād al-‘Irāq*), and includes the major cities of al-Kūfa, al-Baṣra, al-Ḥīra, al-Ubulla, and ‘Ayn al-Tamr.

Neighboring “the lands of Syria” and “the land of Iraq” is, according to the *Futūḥ al-Shām*, the geographical space of “al-Ḥijāz” that is described as lying south of *bilād al-Shām* and north of Yaman (i.e. Yemen), and that represents the Muslims’ home region. Al-Ḥijāz seems to have ended somewhere north of Medina, because Ayla, the port city at the gulf of ‘Aqaba, is described as a “Syrian” town (most likely belonging to the “land of Palestine”).

Beside these geographical terms, many more place names are mentioned in the *Futūḥ al-Shām*. However, most of them occur only once and cannot be taken into consideration here. Suffice it to say that all place names and in particular the regions and major cities are consistently used throughout the work, thus creating a coherent geographical image of these parts of the Middle East. This coherence speaks in favor of a single authorial hand that has shaped the work. In addition, the historio-geographical image that arises from this analysis can be tentatively associated with a well-known historical context. Hence, this image does not fit the context of the Ayyubid or Mamluk periods, i.e. a period during which the *Futūḥ al-Shām* is erroneously said to have been written.² On the contrary, this image is in accord to all what is known about Syrian space in the

2. Michel J. de Goeje, “Mémoire sur le Fotouho’s-Scham attribué à Abou Ismaïl al-Baṣri,” in M.J. de Goeje (ed.): *Mémoires d’histoire et de géographie orientales* (Leiden, 1862-1864), II: 22-23.

first/seventh or second/eighth centuries. In other words, it fits the periods when the events are said to have taken place or when the suggested compiler-author, al-Azdī, is said to have flourished.

In conclusion, on a methodological level, this case study has shown that the analysis of geographical images can serve

as an argument for a work's cohesion and its authorship. On a content level, the usage of geographical terminology (in addition to other indicators that earlier scholars had brought forward) strongly supports the argument that Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Azdī was the compiler-author of the *Futūḥ al-Shām*.

III. Ibn Aʿtham's Arrangement of *Ridda* Material

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Ever since C. Brockelmann's comment, in his magisterial *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, according to which Ibn Aʿtham's (d. ca. in the first quarter of the 10th century¹) *Kitāb al-futūḥ* is a "fanciful history [...] written from a Shīʿi viewpoint",² certain suspicions swirl around this work.

Of course, this has not prevented specialists to use Ibn Aʿtham's texts for various purposes, although their access to the *Kitāb al-futūḥ* was for a long time

significantly complicated by the lack of a comprehensive edition, which was only published in the 1970s.³ However, this edition, prepared on the basis of four incomplete Arabic manuscripts⁴ and a sixth/twelfth-century Persian translation of the work, did not necessarily clear up all important uncertainties. To mention only a single eloquent example, I refer to the fact that little more than one-third of the *Kitāb al-futūḥ*'s Hyderabad edition could be created by relying on texts provided by more than one manuscript, given that the work's first ca. 22% (168 fols.) were

1. For Ibn Aʿtham's life, see recently Ilkka Lindstedt, "Al-Madāʿini's Kitāb al-Dawla and the Death of Ibrāhīm al-Imām," in Ilkka Lindstedt, Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, Raija Mattila, and Robert Rollinger (eds.), *Case Studies in Transmission* (Münster, 2014), 103–130, esp. 118–123. For an earlier dating, cf. Lawrence I. Conrad, "Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī," in Julie S. Meisami and Paul Starkey (eds.), *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* (London, 1998), 314, and his long-awaited and recently published study: Lawrence I. Conrad, "Ibn Aʿtham and His History," *Al-ʿUsūr al-Wuṣṭā* 23 (2015), 87–125, henceforth Conrad, "Ibn Aʿtham".

2. Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur. Supplement*, 3 vols. (Leiden, 1937–1942), II: 220. The English translation follows Conrad, "Ibn Aʿtham," 88.

3. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, ed. M. Khān, 8 vols. (Hyderabad, 1968–1975), henceforth Ibn Aʿtham, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*.

4. Namely, FB Gotha MS. orient. A 1592, Ahmet III 2956/I–II, Chester Beatty 3272, and MS Mingana 572. For the proportion of the *Kitāb al-futūḥ*'s preserved parts in the respective manuscripts, see the concise summary in Mónika Schönleber, "Notes on the textual tradition of Ibn Aʿtham's Kitāb al-Futūḥ," in Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, Petteri Koskikallio, and Ilkka Lindstedt (eds.), *Contacts and Interaction. Proceedings of the 27th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants. Helsinki 2014* (Leuven, 2017), 427–438.

preserved only in a unique manuscript now kept in Gotha,⁵ while another ca. 38% (278 fols.) containing the final parts of the book is again known from a single copy.⁶

In view of this unfortunate distribution of preserved sections, the exploration and proper identification of a new codex⁷ (kept in Patna, India) incorporating a further copy of the *Kitāb al-futūḥ*'s first chapters—covering the story of Abū Bakr's election, the *ridda* wars, and the early *futūḥāt* in Iraq—has enabled a significant breakthrough in the study of the early parts of Ibn Aʿtham's book.⁸ It is, therefore, more than surprising that all successive editions⁹ of the Patna manuscript ascribed the text to al-Wāqidī and, consequently, their accompanying critical apparatuses mirror the editors' firm belief in al-Wāqidī's authorship. Moreover, their misidentification also prevented them from correcting the

mistakes of the Patna text on the basis of the corresponding part of the Gotha codex, or vice versa.

Thus, at the onset of my research, all these inadequacies prompted me to make an attempt to prepare a new critical edition of the *Kitāb al-futūḥ*'s above mentioned early parts basing it on the available Arabic manuscripts and the lessons provided by the late sixth/twelfth-century Persian translation, in the hope that a new, firmly established text accompanied by an in-depth analysis of the work's textual tradition would be able to serve the needs of further studies.¹⁰ The creation of a reliable text is likewise a *sine qua non* of the investigations of my PhD dissertation (in preparation), whose main aim is to understand Ibn Aʿtham's authorial contribution and concept when producing his version of the *ridda* wars. Instead of trying to fulfil the Rankeian maxima, i.e. to reconstruct “*what actually happened*” during the *ridda* fights, the focus of my research is rather on finding the place of Ibn Aʿtham's *ridda* narrative among the other written accounts reporting about these events.

The value of Ibn Aʿtham's text lies firstly in the fact that his narrative is not only one of the few literary sources informing us about the tribal conflicts after the death of Muḥammad, but it is—beside al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310/923), Ibn Ḥubaysh's (d. 584/1188), and al-Kalāʿī's (d. 634/1237) respective accounts—one of the longest and most informative one as well. This latter fact seems especially important because, with the exception of the above-mentioned authors, all other extant written sources

5. Published in Ibn Aʿtham, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, I-II, p. 146.

6. Ahmet III 2956, II, published in Ibn Aʿtham, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, VI, p. 101–VIII.

7. KBL Cat. No. 1042, ff. pp. 1r-44v.

8. Miklos Muranyi, “Ein neuer Bericht über die Wahl des ersten Kalifen Abū Bakr,” *Arabica* 25 (1978), 233–260 and Fred M. Donner, “The Bakr b. Wāʿil Tribes and Politics in Northeastern Arabia on the Eve of Islam,” *Studia Islamica* 51 (1980), 5–38, esp. 16, n. 2.

9. Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Wāqidī, *Kitāb al-ridda wa-nabdha min futūḥ al-ʿIrāq. Kilāhumā riwāyat Ibn al-Aʿtham al-Kūfī ʿalā asās al-makḥṭūʿa al-waḥīda bi-Bānkī Būr (Bāqī Būr/al-Hind)*, ed. M. Ḥamīdallāh (Paris, 1989); idem: *Kitāb al-ridda maʿa nabdha min futūḥ al-ʿIrāq wa-dhikr al-Muthannā b. Ḥāritha al-Shaybānī. Riwāyat Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aʿtham al-Kūfī*, ed. Y. al-Jabūrī (Beirut, 1990), henceforth (Ps.-) al-Wāqidī, *Ridda*, ed. al-Jabūrī; and idem: *Kitāb al-ridda*, ed. M. ʿAbdallāh Abū al-Khayr (ʿAmmān, 1991).

10. For some preliminary remarks on the textual tradition, see Schönleber, “Notes.”

on the *ridda* are only several pages long, while the works of the known later second/eighth- and third/ninth-century authors, who are reported to have written separate works on the *ridda* or one of its individual subjects, are now lost.¹¹ Beside this, Ibn A‘tham’s *ridda* narrative has another interesting characteristic, namely that, although it is formally inserted into a book entitled as “*futūḥ*”, it is, in fact, an independent theme within the whole work marked off by its own introductory section and a brief closing passage.¹²

The present contribution offers some of the results of a case-study that concentrates on the figure of Khālīd b. al-Walīd as characterised in Ibn A‘tham’s *ridda* narrative. This examination does not only make it clear that Ibn A‘tham was remarkably familiar with a considerable number of sources and traditions available in his time, but it also serves the recognition of the compiler-author’s material-arrangement method. The incorporation of several motifs originating from different traditions, as well as the omission of others, enabled Ibn A‘tham to reshape pre-existing narrations and

to construct his own version by placing special emphases on certain characteristics of his protagonists. It is also interesting to note that Ibn A‘tham’s rendering preserved several motifs, not mentioned in other written sources, that might have been derived from now lost traditions, but which, for one reason or another, had not gained currency in Muslim historiography. Further similar analyses are needed in order to gain a better understanding of the emergence and *raison d’être* of this long neglected source.

But the limits of such an investigation are also clear. Many important issues raised by L. I. Conrad’s ground-breaking study, such as, among others, the authorship, structure and later continuation of the work, and the use of *isnāds*, can only be conclusively answered after an in-depth analysis of Ibn A‘tham’s entire work.¹³

In conclusion, the above-mentioned (as well as some further) characteristics of the *ridda* narrative strongly suggest the benefit of conducting a separate analysis of Ibn A‘tham’s *ridda* story, whose results offer useful starting points for further research into the entire work.

11. See Wilhelm Hoenerbach, *Waṭīma’s Kitāb ar-Ridda aus Ibn Ḥaḡar’s Iṣāba. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Abfalls der Araberstämme nach Muḥammads Tod* (Wiesbaden, 1951), esp. 18–21.

12. This detached nature has been already pointed out by Albrecht Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition. A Source-critical Study. In Collaboration with Lawrence I. Conrad. Translated from the German by Michael Bonner*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, 1994), 29.

13. See Conrad, “Ibn A‘tham.”

IV. Parallelisms between Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra* Material and Muqātil b. Sulaymān's *Tafsīr*

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The *tafsīr* work by Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. ca. 150/767) is a prime source for extensive narrative material (e.g. *asbāb al-nuzūl*) that can be dated to the second/eighth century. A significant number of the narratives recorded in the *Tafsīr* also have parallels in Ibn Ishāq's (d. 150/767) *sīra* work. However, Muqātil is silent about his informants, and his sources are unknown to us. By undertaking a comparative source analysis, this contribution investigates the possibility of common sources for the traditions of Muqātil and Ibn Ishāq. Earlier scholarship has already indicated certain parallels between the two sources. Thus, John Wansbrough pointed out similarities between Muqātil's and Ibn Ishāq's versions of a dialogue between the Meccan polytheists and the Jewish rabbis from Medina.¹ Similarly, Harald Motzki highlighted many parallels between Muqātil's and Ibn Ishāq's accounts of the story according to which Walīd b. Mughīra devised a plan to defame the Prophet during the fair season in Mecca.² In expanding this investigation, I examine another account in which Muqātil's and Ibn Ishāq's versions resemble each other more than any other available account. I focus

on various episodes from the Prophet's nocturnal journey to Jerusalem, notably the description of Burāq and the detailed characterization of the physical features of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, as well as the episode in which Abū Bakr meets the Quraysh, and then goes to the Prophet to inquire about the details of Muḥammad's journey.

While, for example, an analysis of a wide range of classical sources on the descriptions of Burāq has shown that the information about its physical appearance originates exclusively in Basra, and is found especially in the Basran exegete Qatāda b. Di'āma's (d. 118/735) narrations, I can show that Ibn Ishāq's accounts on the *isrā'* episodes also demonstrate that the Basran exegetical traditions (i.e., a mixture of Qatāda's and his teacher al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's [d. 110/728] narrations) are his main source(s) for descriptions of Burāq. The physical appearance of Burāq as described in Muqātil's *Tafsīr* is also similar, and thus constitutes another parallel between his and Ibn Ishāq's work. Although Muqātil almost never mentioned his sources, I can show other instances in which Qatāda's accounts are integrated into his *Tafsīr*.

Overall, my contribution discusses the role of the early second/eighth Basran exegetical material, especially the traditions which are often attributed to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Qatāda, both in

1. John E. Wansbrough, *Qur'ānic Studies. Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Amherst, 2004), 122ff.

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

Muqātil's and Ibn Ishāq's works. Thus, I raise the question about the symbiotic relationship between the individual

exegetical traditions and the new forms that they take, not only in exegetical works, but also in the *sīra* literature.

V. Genesis and Textual Development of the *Futūḥ al-Shām* Ascribed to al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823)

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Among the extant *futūḥ* works there is one known under the title *Futūḥ al-Shām*, which is conventionally ascribed to al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823), the Medinan-Baghdadi historian of early 'Abbāsīd times. Unlike other available *futūḥ* works, such as that of al-Azdī and of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, which enjoy recognition among scholars of Islamic Studies as being valuable historical sources, the *Futūḥ al-Shām* ascribed to al-Wāqidī has been considered as a "pseudo-work" on the Muslim conquests that, although drawing on historical materials, is mostly a work composed in later times.¹

According to bio- and bibliographical dictionaries, al-Wāqidī wrote several books on the early Muslim conquests during his lifetime, among them the one entitled *Futūḥ al-Shām*. We find accounts on these works and citations from them in later sources as well. This provides us with an opportunity to compare the extant corpus of the *futūḥ* material written/compiled by al-Wāqidī in his *Futūḥ al-Shām* (from now on *FSW*) with the book *Futūḥ al-Shām* ascribed to him (from now on *FSAW*) as two text corpora. I will provide a summary of this comparison in this contribution.

The comparison between the quotations from the *FSW* and *FSAW* was conducted from the viewpoints of the *isnāds*, the compilation methods of the compiler-authors of the two corpora, and the content of selected passages. At the end it should yield an image for each corpus, which then shows, how similar or diverse the *FSAW* and *FSW* are. In doing so, I aim to suggest a hypothesis regarding the genesis and development of the *FSAW*. In this contribution, I will confine myself to one example from the *isnāds* and one selected passage contained in the two corpora. I will therefore first provide a short account of the classical perception of the *FWS*, then a comparison between the two corpora. I will then discuss the results of this comparison.

Little is known about the original book, *Futūḥ al-Shām* by al-Wāqidī (*FSW*); few identifiable citations from it can be found in later sources. Muḥammad b. Sa'd, al-Wāqidī's distinguished pupil, speaks in the entry on his master in the *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* about the great knowledge of his master in the fields of prophetic campaigns, the biography of the Prophet, and the early Muslim conquests, about each of which al-Wāqidī is said to

1. Three versions have been edited and published, although no edition is a critical one.

have written books.² More than a century later, Ibn al-Nadīm provides a list of al-Wāqidī's works, in which a book under the title *Futūḥ al-Shām* can be found.³ One century later, we find the *FSW* mentioned and quotations taken from it in the *Ta'riḫ madīnat Dimashq (TMD)* by Ibn 'Asākir.⁴ Ibn 'Asākir's reports show that he must have had the book at his disposal. In one place, he even points out that he read the quoted account in the *Futūḥ al-Shām* which al-Wāqidī wrote.⁵

Let us now turn to the comparison of the extant corpus of *FSW* with the book *FSAW* from the viewpoint of *isnāds* and selected passages from the two corpora, respectively.

(1) The *TMD* provides a single *isnād* three times in different places that connects Ibn 'Asākir to al-Wāqidī. This *isnād* reads:

Abū al-Faraj Ghayth b. 'Alī > [...] >
Abū al-Qāsim Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad b.
Ja'far al-Khiraqī > Abū Bakr Aḥmad
b. al-Ḥasan b. Sufyān al-Naḥwī >

2. Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. E. Sachau et al. as: *Ibn Saad. Biographien Muhammeds, seiner Gefährten und der späteren Träger des Islams bis zum Jahre 230 der Flucht*, 9 vols. (Leiden, 1904-1940), I: 314.

3. Muḥammad Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, ed. A. F. Sayyid (London, 2014), II: 308.

4. See for example: 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'riḫ madīnat Dimashq*, ed. 'U. al-'Amrawī and A. Shīrī, 80 vols. (Beirut, 1995-2001), XXVII: 139.

5. Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'riḫ madīnat Dimashq*, XL: 455. That Ibn 'Asākir used al-Wāqidī's work was also recently argued for by Scheiner. See Jens J. Scheiner, "Ibn 'Asākir's Virtual Library as Reflected in His *Ta'riḫ madīnat Dimashq*," in Steven C. Judd and Jens J. Scheiner (eds.), *New Perspectives on Ibn 'Asākir in Islamic Historiography* (Leiden, 2017), 176-178.

Abū Ja'far Aḥmad b. 'Ubayd b. Nāṣiḥ al-Naḥwī > Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Wāqidī [...].

As one can see in this *isnād*, before reaching al-Wāqidī, there are two scholars mentioned, i.e. Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Naḥwī and Abū Ja'far Aḥmad b. 'Ubayd, respectively. According to the biographical dictionaries, Aḥmad b. 'Ubayd was one of al-Wāqidī's pupils, while Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan was a pupil of Aḥmad b. 'Ubayd.⁶ Furthermore, the former used to study the works of al-Wāqidī with his master Aḥmad b. 'Ubayd and transmitted them to later generations.⁷

In the collective *isnād* that stands at the beginning of the *FSAW*, one recognizes the names of Abū Ja'far Aḥmad b. 'Ubayd and Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Naḥwī.⁸ This part of the collective *isnād* reads:

Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Wāqidī > Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Sufyān al-Naḥwī > Aḥmad b. 'Ubayd

It is obvious that al-Wāqidī is falsely positioned at the beginning of this *isnād*, since he could not have studied with a pupil of his pupil. If we put al-Wāqidī in the right place in this *isnād*, i. e. after Aḥmad b. 'Ubayd, then we gain the last part of the *isnād* as found in the *TMD* mentioned above. This chain of al-Wāqidī, Aḥmad

6. Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'riḫ Baghdād aw Madīnat al-Salām*, ed. B. Ma'rūf, 12 vols. (Beirut, 2001), V: 142.

7. Ibid.

8. Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Shām*, ed. W. Lees as: *The Conquest of Syria. Commonly ascribed to Aboo 'Abd Allah Moḥammad b. 'Omar al-Wāqidī*, 3 vols. (Calcutta, 1854-1862), I: 1.

b. ‘Ubayd, and Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan occurs at least one more time in the *FSAW*.⁹ What one may conclude is that in both the *FSAW* and the *FSW* a similar *ṭarīq* of transmission of knowledge from al-Wāqidī to later generations is identifiable.

(2) As mentioned above, Ibn ‘Asākir quotes short accounts directly from the original *FSW*. In one place he mentions the beginning of the *khuṭba* which ‘Umar delivered in al-Jābiya.¹⁰ It reads:

Ayyuhā al-nās, ūṣīkum bi-taqwā llāh al-lādhī yabqā wa-yafnā mā siwāhu, wa-l-lādhī bi-ṭā‘atihī yanfa‘ awliyā’uhū wa-bi-ma‘ṣiyatihī yaḍurru a‘dā’uhū. Fa-dhakara al-khuṭba.

Oh people! I advise you to fear God, who is everlasting and everything but him will perish, whose friends will benefit from their obedience to them, and whose enemies will be harmed through their disobedience towards him. Afterwards he started his speech.

A *khuṭba* which ‘Umar is said to have delivered in al-Jābiya is found in the *FSAW*, as well.¹¹ The beginning of this *khuṭba*, according to the *FSAW*, reads:

Ammā ba‘d: fa-innī ūṣīkum bi-taqwā llāh ‘azza wa-jalla al-lādhī yabqā

wa-yafnā kull shay’ siwāhu, al-lādhī bi-ṭā‘atihī yanfa‘ awliyā’uhū wa-bi-ma‘ṣiyatihī yafnī a‘dā’uhū. Ayyuhā al-nās! Addū zakat amwālikum.

Now to the topic: I advise you to fear God—the Strong and Exalted—who is everlasting and everything but Him will perish, whose friends will benefit from his obedience and whose enemies will be harmed by their disobedience towards him. Oh people! Pay the alms tax from your ownings [...].

This example shows that both works preserve the same texts and that one should expect to find this *khuṭba* in both corpora. However, Ibn ‘Asākir abbreviated his version. A number of other parallel passages occur in the *TMD* and the *FWAS* as well.¹²

In conclusion, one may observe that the two corpora, i.e. the *FSW* and the *FSAW*, resemble each other from the viewpoints of *isnāds* and the content of selected passages. Therefore, it seems possible to suggest the hypothesis that the *FWAS* actually represents in its core the *FSW*, which however has presumably suffered changes during the pass of time. This hypothesis has to be supported by more evidence which I will provide in my forthcoming study of the *FWAS*.

9. Al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Shām*, III: 1.

10. Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, XL: 455.

11. Al-Wāqidī, *Futūḥ al-Shām*, II: 261.

12. I am aware that one should take the possibility into account that the two very similar passages could represent a standard formulaic beginning for a *khuṭba*. However, even in this case it is more likely that both corpora have a similar content.

VI. The ‘Abbāsīd Revolution and Its Earliest Historiography

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This contribution centers on the narratives of the ‘Abbāsīd revolution (*dawla*) and its aftermath that took place in the years 129–137 AH/747–755 CE. I study two works on these events, both called *Kitāb al-dawla*, composed by Arab Muslim collectors (*akhbārīs*) of historical narratives, al-Haytham b. ‘Adī (d. ca. 205/820–1) and al-Madā’inī (d. ca. 228/842–3). The works are not extant, but can be reconstructed, to some extent, on the basis of later quotations.¹

The principles for reconstructing al-Madā’inī’s *Kitāb al-dawla* from Ibn A‘tham’s *Kitāb al-futūḥ* and al-Ṭabari’s *Annales* have been discussed previously by Gernot Rotter and myself.² Al-Haytham b. ‘Adī’s *Kitāb al-dawla* has been reconstructed in a study by Tilman Nagel on the basis of Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi’s (d. 328/940) *Al-‘iqd al-farīd*.³

I argue that themes in preparation of the revolution are not very important in al-Madā’inī’s narrative.⁴ The fact that

al-Madā’inī did not have much to do with the ‘Abbāsīd ruling elite might be a factor in this. As to al-Haytham b. ‘Adī, who frequented the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs from al-Manṣūr to al-Rashīd, themes of preparation were much more important for him, as far as we can judge from Nagel’s reconstruction. In his *Kitāb al-dawla*, al-Haytham b. ‘Adī emphasized the significance of Abū Hāshim b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya’s testament to the ‘Abbāsīds.⁵ For him, the role of al-‘Abbās as the Prophet’s uncle is not an important factor for the genealogical legitimation of the ‘Abbāsīds. According to al-Haytham, the “secret *bay‘a* and the clandestine *da‘wa*”⁶ was carried out by the Hāshimites since the killing of al-Ḥusayn. His narrative, then, links the advent of the ‘Abbāsīds with the wider context of the Shī‘a. In al-Haytham b. ‘Adī’s narrative, the testament of Abū Hāshim foretells that the two first ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs (Abū al-‘Abbās and al-Manṣūr) will both be *ṣāhib hādihā al-amr*, “possessor of this authority/cause.”⁷ Ibrāhīm al-Imām is overlooked, probably showing embarrassment of his fate: his untimely death in Ḥarrān at the hands of Marwān.⁸

1. Ilkka Lindstedt, “Al-Madā’inī’s *Kitāb al-dawla* and the Death of Ibrāhīm al-Imām,” in Ilkka Lindstedt, Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, Raija Mattila, and Robert Rollinger (eds.), *Case Studies in Transmission* (Münster, 2014), 103–130.

2. Gernot Rotter, “Zur Überlieferung einiger historischer Werke Madā’inīs in Ṭabarīs Annalen,” *Oriens* 23–24 (1974), 103–133; Lindstedt, *Al-Madā’inī’s Kitāb al-dawla*.

3. Tilman Nagel, *Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des abbasidischen Kalifates* (Bonn, 1972), 9–69; Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi al-Andalusī, *Al-‘iqd al-farīd*, ed. A. Amīn, A. al-Zayn, and I. al-Abyārī, 7 vols. (Cairo, 1940), IV: 475–482.

4. Only Aḥmad b. ‘Alī Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb*

al-futūḥ, ed. M. Khān, 8 vols. (Hyderabad, 1968–1975), VIII: 159–160, represents them.

5. Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi, *Al-‘iqd al-farīd*, IV: 475–476.

6. Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi, *Al-‘iqd al-farīd*, IV: 475.

7. Jacob Lassner, *Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory. An Inquiry into the Art of ‘Abbāsīd Apologetics* (New Haven, 1986), 57–58.

8. On the accounts of Ibrāhīm al-Imām’s demise, see Lindstedt, *Al-Madā’inī’s Kitāb al-dawla*.

In al-Haytham's *Kitāb al-dawla*, the sending of the 'Abbāsīd propagandists (*du'āt*) is placed at the year 100 AH,⁹ a figure that has clear apocalyptic undertones. In the same year, it is said, the 'Abbāsīd *mahdī*, the first Caliph Abū al-'Abbās, is born.

Indeed, it seems that al-Madā'inī's *Kitāb al-dawla* also began with a narrative that 'demonstrated' the 'Abbāsīds' supremacy over the Ḥasanids (and, one suspects, at the same time of the 'Abbāsīds' supremacy over the other lineages of the family of the Prophet).¹⁰ In the story, which takes place in the Umayyad era, 'Abdallāh b. al-Ḥasan, al-Nafs al-Zakiyya's father, says that it is not yet the time for his sons to revolt. However, the 'Abbāsīd 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī says that if the Ḥasanids will not revolt, he will snatch the power from the Umayyads.

According to Nagel, in the early narratives speaking about the revolution itself, the word *dawla* takes on messianistic overtones.¹¹ There are accounts ascribed to al-Haytham b. 'Adī that connect the 'Abbāsīds *da'wa* and *dawla* to the different Shī'ī uprisings of the last years of the Umayyads. These accounts can be adorned with poetic embellishment, such as the poetry of Sudayf b. Maymūn that link together the killings of al-Ḥusayn (called *sibṭ Aḥmad*, "the grandson of Aḥmad [the Prophet]"), Zayd b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, his son Yaḥyā b. Zayd, and Ibrāhīm al-Imām.¹² The 'Abbāsīds are in this way connected to the Shī'a, broadly understood, and are seen

as avengers of the deaths of the earlier Shī'ī figures.¹³ Moreover, Abū al-'Abbās is transformed as the sole real, legitimate caliph that the Muslim community has ever had in addition to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.¹⁴

Also in al-Madā'inī's *Kitāb al-dawla* the killings of Zayd b. 'Alī and Yaḥyā b. Zayd play a significant role. It is said that donning the color black was a sign of mourning for the two figures.¹⁵ In one tradition, when the Khurāsānians address Ibrāhīm al-Imām, they note that Zayd b. 'Alī and Yaḥyā b. Zayd are called "people of your house" (*ahl baytika*).¹⁶

'Abbāsīd historiography, then, showed the 'Abbāsīds drawing legitimacy from three different Shī'ī sources: a) through a testament from Abū Hāshim ← Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya ← 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib; b) al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, by avenging his killing; c) Zayd b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī and his son Yaḥyā b. Zayd, by avenging their killings. No wonder, then, that according to al-Madā'inī's *Kitāb al-dawla*, the people in al-Kūfa expected the Khurāsānian troops to proclaim an 'Alid as caliph.¹⁷

The narratives representing the themes in the aftermath of the battle were important in al-Madā'inī's *Kitāb*

9. Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, *Al-'iqd al-farīd*, IV: 477.

10. Ibn A'tham, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, VIII: 159–160.

11. Nagel, *Untersuchungen*, 9–12.

12. Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, ed. 'A. al-Dūrī et al. To date 7 vols. in 9 (Beirut, 1978), III: 126, 162.

13. Elton Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan under Abbasid Rule 747–820* (Minneapolis, 1979), 39 remarks: "As always, the Abbasids capitalized on the strength of other movements by assimilating them with their own."

14. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, III: 140–141.

15. Ibn A'tham, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, VIII: 160.

16. Moshe Sharon, *Black Banners from the East. The Establishment of the 'Abbāsīd State. Incubation of a Revolt* (Leiden, 1983), 147, n. 176, referring to the Anonymous, *Akhbār al-'Abbās*, ed. 'A. al-Dūrī and 'A. al-Muṭṭalibī as: *Akhbār al-dawla al-'abbāsiyya wa-fīhi akhbār al-'Abbās wa-waladīhī* (Beirut, 1971), 241.

17. Ibn A'tham, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, VIII: 177, last line.

al-dawla. The accounts form a story how the ʿAbbāsids, once in power, cleansed their political base of figures that were not anymore needed or that were dangerous to the new dynasty in the post-revolutionary reality. For al-Haytham, these themes were not as central. His *Kitāb al-dawla* virtually ends with the *bayʿa* to Abū al-ʿAbbās in the year 132/749. The reign of al-Manṣūr and the murders of Abū Salama and Abū Muslim are only briefly hinted at.¹⁸

Al-Madāʿinī continued the story to the first years of the second ʿAbbāsīd caliph, al-Manṣūr, who is indeed the principal figure in the political murders. In al-Madāʿinī's *Kitāb al-dawla*, the aftermath consists of four different narratives:

(1) The murder of Abū Salama which takes place in the reign of Abū al-ʿAbbās but in which al-Manṣūr is the central player.¹⁹

(2) The death of Abū al-ʿAbbās (136/754) and the *bayʿa* to al-Manṣūr. However, at the former's death, ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī also proclaims himself caliph, which leads al-Manṣūr to send Abū Muslim to fight him. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī is defeated but not killed.²⁰

18. Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi, *Al-ʿiqd al-farīd*, IV: 482; Nagel, *Untersuchungen*, 11.

19. Ibn Aʿtham, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, VIII: 207–209; Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. de Goeje et al. as: *Annales quos scripsit Abu Djafar Mohammed ibn Djarir at-Tabari*, 15 vols. (Leiden, 1879–1901), III: 58–59; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, III: 154–155.

20. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 89–98; Ibn Aʿtham,

(3) Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ drafts a foolproof *amān* for ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAlī. This irks al-Manṣūr who wants to have Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ killed. The murder is carried out by Sufyān b. Muʿāwiya al-Muhallabī who had also a personal grudge.²¹

(4) The ending and the culmination of the *Kitāb al-dawla* is the murder of Abū Muslim at the hands of al-Manṣūr. The leading figure in the revolutionary phase is done away with and the rule belongs completely to al-Manṣūr.²²

Al-Haytham b. ʿAdī does not mention Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ in his *Kitāb al-dawla*, as far as it can be reconstructed. To add the killing of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (ca. 139/756–7) to those of Abū Salama and Abū Muslim seems to be a novel innovation of al-Madāʿinī.

In conclusion, the early third/ninth century was a time when interest in the history of the ʿAbbāsīd *dawla* really began, although it is impossible in most cases to date the works with any precision. Early compilations, like those by al-Haytham b. ʿAdī and al-Madāʿinī, were later incorporated in the longer works of authors such as Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī and al-Ṭabarī and into the grand narrative of the Muslim community.

Kitāb al-futūḥ, VIII: 214–218.

21. Ibn Aʿtham, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, VIII: 218–219; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, III: 221–223.

22. Ibn Aʿtham, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, VIII: 219–229; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 99–119; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, III: 201–204.

VII. The Earliest Translation of the Qurʾān

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My contribution aims at examining the very first translation of the Qurʾān, produced in Greek in the third/ninth century, and to compare it with the original Arabic text. This translation by an anonymous author, while generally very accurate, contains some textually subtle, but theologically highly important differences with respect to the Arabic text. This seems to be the result of a Christian hermeneutical reading of the Qurʾān.

The translation was used in a Byzantine polemic against Islam, the so-called *Refutation of the Qurʾān* (Ἀνατροπή τοῦ Κορανίου)¹ by Nicetas of Byzantium (fl. 9th century). Additionally, and beyond the comparison, the research analyzes the use and function of this translation in Nicetas' *Anatropē*, which is its main and oldest source (Vat. gr. 681). This is important in order to determine Nicetas' image of Islam and to consider his impact on later Byzantine and Western writers concerning Islam.

Nicetas is the first to actually use the Qurʾān itself for a refutation of the Islamic faith. His attempt had a vast influence on later Byzantine and even mediaeval European apologetic writing against Islam. He composed, besides a polemical treatise against the Latins and Armenians respectively, two letters directed to a Muslim emir as well as his *opus magnum*, the *Refutation of the Qurʾān*, which he wrote around 860 CE. Nicetas ought to be seen in the light of the re-emerging

Byzantine Empire in the ninth century; he is likely to have been a monk² and a member of the clerical elite of Constantinople, since he was close to the Emperor's court and to the patriarch of Constantinople, Photios (858–867 & 878–886).³

Biographical details about Nicetas are very scarce and can only be reconstructed from his works, even though he was one of the most important polemicists, wielding the greatest influence on Byzantine and even medieval views of Islam until the late Middle Ages. It is astonishing, therefore, that until now there has been conducted no complete analytical research of Nicetas' writings. Furthermore, no studies have been written about possible interrelations between the first translation of the Qurʾān, which was used by Nicetas, and later translations, such as the one commissioned by Petrus Venerabilis (1142), from which

1. Henceforth *Anatropē*.

2. Inferring from some expressions in his works which apply the conviction of a monk, cf. Manolis Ulbricht: "Al-tarjama al-ʿulā li-l-Qurʾān al-karīm min al-qarn 8/9 m. fī sijjāl Nikītās al-Bizantī (al-qarn 9 m) maʿa al-islām bi-ism Tafnīd al-Qurʾān" [In Arabic: "La première traduction du Coran du 8^{ème}/9^{ème} siècle et son utilisation dans la polémique de Nicéas de Byzance (9^{ème} siècle) avec le titre 'Réfutation du Coran'"], *Chronos: Revue d'histoire de l'Université de Balamand* 25 (2012), 33–58, here p. 37 (or online URL: http://edocs.fu-berlin.de/docs/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/FUDOCSDerivate_000000005501/Ulbricht_Traduction-du-Coran_Chronos-25_2012.pdf)

3. As he was officially assigned to compose the response to the Armenians. Cf. also the title of his letter against the Armenians (in *PG* 105, 587–588).

Martin Luther (1483–1546) was inspired, or the one later made by Marcus of Toledo (1209/10).

As part of my research on the *Coranus Graecus*,⁴ I will provide a critical edition of the fragments of the Greek translation of the Qurʾān, preserved in the *codex unicus* Vat. gr. 681 of Nicetas of Byzantium, and an analytical commentary of Nicetas' work. Furthermore, I will analyze Nicetas' argumentation in his *Anatropē* along with his methods of adapting the Greek translation for polemical theological purposes. This forthcoming work will include a concordance and indices, such as for grammatical phenomena, transliterated terms, syntactical patterns, and the translation of particular Arabic expressions into Greek, and so on.

The commentary studies the Greek translation of the Qurʾān with respect to historical, theological, and socio-cultural aspects. First, I examine the differences between the Greek and the Arabic texts of the Qurʾān by verifying if another reading, besides the reading of Ḥafṣ ʿan ʿĀṣim, i.e. the one of the current Cairo edition of 1924, was used for the translation. From the typology of linguistic inconsistencies between the Greek and the Arabic texts, I furthermore draw conclusions about the religious and cultural environment of the translator and about the character of the translation. Finally, I give insight into how Nicetas used this translation by classifying the usage of the Qurʾān within his polemics into different subjects, such as: 'ethics', 'Christology', 'violence', etc. This way one can illustrate that Nicetas' arguments had

4. Manolis Ulbricht, "Coranus Graecus" [in preparation for *Studi e testi*, Rome (Vatican) forthcoming].

a long afterlife not only in the Byzantine realm, but also in the Latin Middle Ages up to the Modern Period.

Focusing on the translation itself, it became clear, that it is an accurate and mostly literal one.⁵ However, it does not seem to be an official work since its language level is close to the spoken Byzantine Greek. It has rather strong influences of a vulgar Greek of the Byzantine era, which makes the manuscript one of the rare testimonies of written Byzantine colloquial language. Moreover, as the concordance and indices will show, there are a number of irregularities within the translation process, which might stem from the use of another Arabic Qurʾān reading than Ḥafṣ ʿan ʿĀṣim and/or from the fact that it was not only one person who translated the Qurʾān.

The translator obviously possessed deep knowledge of the Christian Orthodox liturgy as he uses various technical terms from the Greek liturgical books in his work. For example, he depicts the Arabic word "Qurʾān" in Greek as «ἀνάγνωσμα» ('reading') with a clear reference to the Gospel readings in Christian liturgy, or he translates the word "sūra" as «ὠδή» ('ode'), which is an expression for a certain form of liturgical hymn. These observations lead to the conclusion that the anonymous translator is most likely a Christian, maybe a monk, but at the same time acquainted with a profound knowledge of Islamic rites and prayer practices. He can only have acquired this knowledge by cohabitation with Muslims. As I argue, the translator, who lived somewhere in the Middle East, was also part of this cultural-religious exchange and therefore followed the

5. For the following see Ulbricht, "Al-tarjama."

tradition of John of Damascus and Theodor Abū Qurra.

It is remarkable that discrepancies between both the Greek and the Arabic version appear particularly in expressions related to doctrinal questions in Islam and Christianity. For instance, a certain kind of difference appears regularly in verses referring to Jesus Christ: in different *sūras*, his name is connected to the term *kalima* ('word'). However, in the Arabic text, the word appears without the article. The Greek translation, by contrast, determines this expression by adding the definite article, calling him e.g. «ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ» ('the Word of God'), while the Arabic text gives 'a word of God'. This radically changes the sense of the Qur'ānic text

because it thereby assumes the Christian teachings about Jesus Christ as 'the Word of God' and thus, as the 'only begotten Son of God', which is strictly refused by Islam and in the Qur'ān itself.

In conclusion, my research is directly related to the question of understanding the Qur'ān itself, which requires consulting lexicographical and exegetical literature. By analyzing the Greek translation, we can get an idea of the comprehension of the Qur'ānic text itself in early times and furthermore, of the literature the translator had at his disposal for both understanding and translating the Qur'ān. This would provide us with a better understanding of the historical development of exegetical literature on the Qur'ān.

VIII. The Fact-Fiction-Debate in Early Muslim Historiography

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Since the pivotal publications in the seventies by Albrecht Noth, Patricia Crone, and Michael Cook, there has been an ongoing and most likely never-ending debate on the validity, authenticity, and historicity of Arabic historiography for the study of early Islam. It has produced conflicting and mutually exclusive "schools" of historians working on this period.¹ Against the background of the

general "linguistic" and "literary" turn in Historical Studies of recent decades,² we can further observe that Islamicists increasingly have started to apply methodical tools drawn from Literary Studies (as e.g. from the broad field of narratology³), in the hope that these might help to assess the factuality (and therefore reliability) of these texts. The articles by

1. Cf. for a survey Fred M. Donner, "Modern Approaches to Early Islamic History," in Chase Robinson (ed.), *The New Cambridge History of Islam. Vol. I*, (Cambridge, 2011), 625-644; cf. also Robert G. Hoyland, "History, Fiction and Authorship in the First Centuries of Islam," in Julia Bray (ed.), *Writing and Representation in Medieval Islam. Muslim*

Horizons (London, 2006), 16-46.

2. This process was strongly influenced by Hayden White, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973).

3. See for instance Gérard Genette, Nitsa Ben-Ari, and Brian McHale, "Fictional Narrative, Factual Narrative," *Poetics Today* 11 (1990), 755-774.

Stefan Leder have been pioneering in this regard,⁴ since he introduced the theses of the German Medievalist Wolfgang Iser on the origins and ontology of fictionality (“Fiktionalität”) into the field of Arabic and Islamic Studies.⁵

In the following contribution, I want to renew the discussion by making some points inspired by theoretical approaches developed in the thriving field of Medieval Studies in Germany. I will argue that the many similarities between early Arabic historiography and medieval chronicles call for a closer cooperation to better evaluate the status of these texts.

(1) On the one hand, there is a discussion among Arabists regarding the alleged “rejection of fiction” within classical Arabic literature. Except *maqāmāt* texts and fables, we do not have any prose text from the initial period that overtly refer to a literary and autonomous world of fiction.⁶ Critical statements of premodern Arab scholars against “inventions” and “lies” in literature have contributed to convey the impression that there was an ideological taboo working against fiction. Furthermore, classical Arabic literary criticism does not have any reflection about the concept of fiction. All seems

4. See for example Stefan Leder (ed.), *Story-telling in the Framework of Non-Fictional Arabic Literature* (Wiesbaden, 1998); especially his “Conventions of Fictional Narration in Learned Literature,” in S. Leder (ed.), *Story-telling in the Framework of Non-Fictional Arabic Literature* (Wiesbaden, 1998), 34-60.

5. Wolfgang Iser, *Das Fiktive und das Imaginäre. Perspektiven einer literarischen Anthropologie* (München, 1983).

6. Rina Drory, “Three Attempts to Legitimize Fiction in Classical Arabic Literature,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 18 (1994), 289-307.

to indicate that literary fiction—though existent, as shown by the list in the *Fihrist* by Ibn al-Nadīm⁷—was relegated to the depreciated realm of trivial literature. Medieval studies, on the other hand, discuss the “invention” of fiction in the late medieval period,⁸ which was apparently unknown till then.⁹

(2) A special problem seems to arise from the narrative style we find in early Arabic prose texts (so-called *khbar* style), since it harmonizes with our understanding of factuality. However, this apparent factual status often contradicts the obviously fictitious content. Some scholars argue that this “confusion” is a special problem of Arabic text traditions, so that they regard it as crucial to “detect fiction” by establishing specific textual signals.¹⁰ However, European medieval chronicles are equally fuzzy in their delimitation of “fact and fiction”. This discrepancy between “factual style and fictitious content” might also be due to our distorting Eurocentric¹¹ and maybe anachronistically modern¹² understanding of reality. In addition, as the Medievalist

7. Mohammed Ferid Ghazi, “La littérature d’imagination en arabe du II^e/VIII^e au V^e/XI^e siècles,” *Arabica* 4 (1957), 164-168.

8. Cf. Walter Haug, “Die Entdeckung der Fiktionalität,” in W. Haug (ed.), *Die Wahrheit der Fiktion. Studien zur weltlichen und geistlichen Literatur des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen, 2003), 128-144.

9. Cf. Jan-Dirk Müller, “Literarische und andere Spiele. Zum Fiktionalitätsprinzip in vormoderner Literatur,” *Poetica: Zeitschrift für Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft* 36 (2004), 281-312.

10. Leder, *Story-telling*.

11. Cf. Julie Scott Meisami, “History as Literature,” *Iranian Studies* 33 (2000), 15-30.

12. Müller, *Literarische und andere Spiele*.

Jan Müller emphasizes, a factual style does not necessarily indicate a non-fictional status, but might be a peculiar literary strategy.¹³

(3) Further problems arise from semantic confusion and imprecise terminology. This applies not only to the semantic field of fact/fiction, e.g. *true/false*, *real/imaginary*, *real/unreal*, *fiction/fictionalized*, etc., that tend to get blurred and mixed. It is also important to note that we still cannot establish often all the semantic dimensions of core Arabic terms used in this regard like *kadhib* (“lie”, “falsehood”, “dishonesty”?). Hence, we need further clarifications on Arab terminology and conceptualization.

(4) One critical point noted in both fields is the lack of distinction made between rhetorical embellishment, or functional fictionality on the one hand, and free invention and autonomous fictionality on the other hand.¹⁴

(5) It is important to keep in mind that the idea of “fiction” in the sense of German “Literatur” presupposes an independent framework (Bourdieu: “field”) where “fiction” is allowed, expected, and appreciated—something that would emerge in European modernity. This is not

the case in classical Arabic literature, and likewise in earlier medieval literature.

(6) Arabic *akhbārīs* worked in a different manner than modern historians; and thus they rather resemble those medieval historians doing “Vorzeitkunde” (antiquities). Their main endeavor was not to draw, via scientific methods, verifiable and accurate representations of the past, but rather to evoke the resonance of these memories and to produce historical meaning. The *isnād* served to establish further the validity of the record, since absolute certainty was impossible to obtain.

(7) Another potentially useful concept is that of rhetoric history,¹⁵ whose purpose is to convey moral values by referring to *exempla* of the past and so convince the reader via rhetoric embellishment. These historians wanted to reconstruct a plausible and version of the past according to the testimonies of reliable transmitters, and then to interpret these events according to their world-view.

In conclusion, as these parallels between Arabic and medieval European source material have shown, there is much to be learned through interdisciplinary exchange and scientific cooperation between both fields. Therefore, any further intercultural study between both fields of research is more than welcome.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Meisami, *History as Literature*.

IX. Intertextuality as a Typical Feature of Early Arabic Historiography

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If the work of a historian consists of patient chiselwork in a quarry of sources, early Arabic historiography, particularly when dealing with Islamic salvation history, rather resembles an ocean: *There is always more material relevant to any particular topic, than one is able to keep in mind, and the closer one looks at any episode, the less clear it becomes where exactly this episode belongs to.* While the first aspect of the oceanic extent of early Arabic historiography makes it particularly difficult to construct any argument *ex negativo* and makes indispensable a systematic evaluation of the source-material as a whole, I will in this contribution concentrate on the multitude of equally relevant intertextual references pertaining to any particular episode.

As an example, I study the conquest of Dūmat al-Jandal by Khālīd b. al-Walīd. While this is by no means the only account linking Muḥammad and his time with the North Arabian oasis-town of Dūmat al-Jandal, there exists a fairly well defined corpus of stories describing the capture of a “king” affiliated to the Arabic tribe of Kinda by Muslim troops led by Khālīd following a prediction by Muḥammad.

They say: The Messenger of God [...] sent Khālīd b. al-Walīd [...] against Ukaydir b. ‘Abd al-Malik [ruler] of Dūmat al-Jandal. Ukaydir was the king (*malik*) of Kinda and he was a Christian. Khālīd asked: “[...] How

can I get at him in the middle of the land of [the tribe of] Kalb?” [...] The Prophet [...] answered: “You will find him hunting cattle (*al-baqar*) and will take him captive!”¹

I argue that the first dimension in which intertextual references can be traced in this simple story is the general depiction of Kindites as part of a coherent pattern extending across images of Kinda. I will limit myself in the following to an exemplary enumeration, having discussed the motives mentioned in the following in more detail elsewhere.² The portrayal of Ukaydir as king over Arabs belonging to other tribes fits into a general trend to portray Kindites as rulers over other tribes. The costly cloak of Ukaydir’s brother dazzles the Muslims as does the garment presented by Ukaydir to Muḥammad during his audience. Both form part of general tendencies to ridicule Kindites as *weavers of textiles* and praise their beautiful clothing. The princely pastimes of the Kindite ruler, hunting for example, and his haughty opposition to Islamic authority can also be described as part of a more widespread trend in the depiction of Kindites.

The second dimension of conflicting intertextual references concerns the early Islamic polity of Islamic salvation

1. Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Wāqidī, *Kitāb al-maghāzī*, ed. M. ‘Aṭā, 2 vols. (Beirut, 2004), II: 405.

2. See Georg Leube, *Kinda in der frühislamischen Historiographie* (Würzburg, forthcoming).

history in general. The structure of the prediction and its eventual fulfillment in the above mentioned text confirms the status of Muḥammad as a true prophet; the confident obedience of Khālīd b. al-Walīd serves as a rehabilitation of this general often censored harshly for un-Islamic behaviour; the subsequent agreements over tribute and protection, *jizya* and *dhimma*, serve as prophetic precedents for administrative structures in the lands conquered under Muḥammad's successors; and Muḥammad's acceptance of the presence of an unbeliever (*mushrik*) serves as precedence for the acceptability of all kinds of gifts by Islamic authorities.

How then is one to interpret a story torn between such a multitude of conflicting contexts? I would like to make two suggestions. While the interweaving of such a multitude of strands makes the exclusive interpretation of any single

one of the potentially viable contexts highly problematic, the origin of a body of material that is *thought through* in this manner can be explained by assuming a high degree of *Unfestigkeit* and philological *contamination* of the text during the process of transmission. As synchronous *contamination* is not usually reflected in the *isnāds*, this necessitates a reinterpretation of the *isnāds*, commonly understood as *chains of transmission*, as *chains authorizing accounts known, discussed and thereby transmitted in much wider circles*. Put axiomatically, *every transmitter knows more than he is quoted for and every account is known to more people than show up in its isnād(s)*. This in turn offers the possibility to trace in process the multivocal negotiation of tradition inside a community characterized until today by the paradigmatic importance of its salvation history.

X. The Origins of *Fitna*-Writing in Islamic Historiography

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The theme of *fitna* was one of the main themes of classical Islamic historiography. *Fitna*, as a historiographical theme, referred to religio-political conflicts within the Muslim community itself. The term *fitna* (“temptation”, “discord”) is generally negative and the antithesis of obedience and stability (more commonly expressed as “unity of the community”). My main question in this contribution therefore is: When, where, and why did the theme of *fitna* arise? Before proposing my answer I

scrutinize three previous answers to this question.

(1) In his *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, Fred M. Donner argues that the theme of *fitna* was inaugurated by the Shī‘a during the First Civil War, because—as a losing party—they “needed to justify their continued resistance to Umayyad rule and their continued support of the political claims of ‘Alī’s descendants.”¹ Tackling the

1. Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*:

question how the *fitna* theme was included into the Sunnī historical tradition, Donner ventures that the ‘Abbāsids’ revolutionary movement took over the bulk of the Shī‘a narrative tradition, including this theme.²

I have several remarks concerning Donner’s view. First, the term *fitna* did and does generally carry a negative connotation and was the antithesis of obedience—a strongly recommended principle in the early Muslim society—and stability. So this term was not used by actual participants in the early civil wars—whether Shī‘a or other groups—to refer to those events or to the motivations of various actors in them. Second, explaining the emergence of this theme, Donner stresses the political *incentive* and *need*, and does not point out the difference between history written for the purposes of political patronage and historicizing legitimation, and history written in response to or as a result of political events and issues. Finally, the use of *fitna* in Shī‘i collections of *ḥadīth* and monographs mostly carry an apocalyptic sense and has to do with the messianic literature (like the *Kitāb al-ḥitan wa-l-malāḥim* written by Ibn Ṭāwūs).

(2) Although Chase F. Robinson does not pay attention to *fitna* writing as a historical type, he regards the writing of *ḥitan* and *malāḥim*, in the apocalyptic sense, to be influenced by the Syriac Christian tradition. “We have reports”, he says, “that histories in the Eusebian tradition were being translated during the reign of al-Manṣūr (r. 136-158/754-775), and it seems that one Muslim apocalyptic text [i.e. the *Kitāb al-ḥitan wa-l-malāḥim*],

The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing (Princeton, 1998), 187 (italics mine).

2. Donner, *Narratives*, 188-190.

perhaps written about 163/780, is the reworking and translation of a Christian version written in Syria”.³ To Robinson’s origin of the apocalyptic sense of *fitna*-literature has to be added the political and social circumstances of the early Muslim society that had an impact on accepting and reworking this literature.

(3) In their *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source Critical Study*, Albrecht Noth and Lawrence Conrad divide the major themes around which historical texts were composed into primary and secondary ones, and consider *fitna* (sedition), along with *futūḥ* (conquests), *ridḍa* (apostasy), *ansāb* (genealogies), and administration as a primary theme that is said to have some roots in historical reality. In contrast, secondary themes are considered to be derived from the primary ones and provide less reliable information to historians.⁴ Although they do not propose a general dating scheme for their “themes”, they base the view that the annalistic form as an established historiographical feature is a product of the late second/eighth or early third/ninth centuries and works arranged by caliphates appeared thereafter, and probably derived from, the annalistic scheme, on the reason that such “original” themes as *futūḥ* and *fitna* “clash with a thematic outlook oriented towards everything that happened under each individual caliph”.⁵ In other words,

3. Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003), 49.

4. Albrecht Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition. A Source-critical Study. In Collaboration with Lawrence I. Conrad. Translated from the German by Michael Bonner*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, 1994), 27.

5. Noth, *Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, 27.

since the *futūḥ* and *fitna* themes occurred during more than one caliphate, the material could not have been fitted into a caliphate based arrangement. However, it may be said that since the *futūḥ* and *fitna* themes historically occurred during more than one year the material could not have been fitted into an annalistic scheme, either.

Therefore, I argue that to answer the question on the origins of *fitna* literature, a closer look at *ḥadīth* literature and monographs on the theme of *fitna* is necessary. The usage of *fitna* in *ḥadīths* can be regarded as a middle phase between its Qurʾānic and historical usage. It was through *ḥadīth* literature that *fitna* could have been used as a historical theme and could have found different connotations from its previous Qurʾānic meanings. In addition to a chapter on *fitna* in Maʿmar b. Rāshid al-Azdī's (d. 151/768-769) *Al-jāmiʿ*, the Sunnī authoritative *ḥadīth* collections that emerged in the mid-third/ninth century also include a chapter on *fitna*. For example, al-Bukhārī's (d. 256/870) chapter on *fitna* in his authoritative *ḥadīth* collection *Al-ṣaḥīḥ* was arranged into 28 sections (*abwāb*).⁶ Other *ḥadīth* collections' chapters on *fitna* were arranged somewhat differently. Although there are in fact differences among various *ḥadīth* collections, for instance, in the methods and purposes governing the selection, the use of the materials, and in the contents of such materials themselves (hence, every one of them needs a proper study), for the

present purpose it is sufficient to derive some conclusions regarding the semantics of the word *fitna* from the respective *ḥadīth* collections' chapters. *Fitna* in these collections is used in two general different, but related, senses:

(1) *Fitna* as opposed to obedience means revolt, as opposed to unity, order, and stability means conflict, turmoil, and disorder, and as opposed to the *Sunna* of Prophet means innovation and heresy.

(2) In contrast, *fitna*, is also used in an apocalyptic sense when associated with *malāḥim* and the coming of the Mahdī.

I argue that on this basis it is possible to differentiate two types of *fitna* writings: *fitna* writings as history of rebellion, revolt, and turmoil (i.e. civil war) and *fitna* writings as history of the future, i.e. the coming of the Mahdī and apocalyptic events.

The first type of literature was formed in the late Umayyad and the early ʿAbbāsīd periods. Although it did not witness worries of the Prophet about the future of his community, it testifies to the political and social circumstances after the death of the Prophet and reflects the conservative approach of the early Muslim society to its social and political problems. The second type was influenced by Near Eastern religious communities in the years before and following the rise of Islam. The apocalyptic connotation of the second and the predicting character of the first type are, therefore, the fictional aspect of most *fitna* writings by Muslim scholars.

6. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Al-jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. L. Krehl as: *Le recueil des traditions Mahométanes par Abou Abdallah Mohammed ibn Ismaïl el-Bokhâri*, 4 vols. (Leiden, 1862-1908), IV: 365-383.

XI. Addressing the ‘Gap of Sources’: Historiography and Cultural Memory in Early Islam

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My contribution addresses the construction of historical knowledge in early Islam, and the chances of survival of early texts. In particular, I am interested in the construction of what became a historiographical vulgate, and what it represented for the society that produced it, in order to shed light on the cultural memory of early Islam. In this line of enquiry, I also question the gap of narrative sources we are facing for the first 200 years of Islam or so, and address the problematic question of the disappearance of earlier texts.

To discuss these thorny issues, I look at the specific example of Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Khwārizmī (d. after 323/847), who was arguably one of the most famous scholars of the early ‘Abbāsid period. He enjoys an impressive scholarly fame and legacy, ranging from algebra and mathematics to astronomy, geography, and cartography. Yet, he has been almost totally forgotten as a historian, even if it is well established that he wrote a now lost *Kitāb al-ta’rīkh*. How can we make sense of this selective memory of his work?

I argue that a substantial amount from his lost history can be retrieved and that it sheds a new light on ‘Abbāsid historiography in the making. I also contend that his history primarily vanished because of its specific genre. Indeed, al-Khwārizmī wrote an astrological history that represented a very popular genre in early ‘Abbāsid times, using planetary

conjunctions to explain past, present, and future events.¹ I study the various reasons behind the eventual decline of this mode of historical writing, and suggest that, with the waning of astrological histories, came the vanishing of al-Khwārizmī’s history.

Why is this significant and what does this tell us about historiographical developments during the first centuries of Islam? One point to emphasize is that scholars like to lament the dearth of narrative sources for early Islam but we should take into account all existing texts, even when they do not fit our traditional categories. Thus, for various reasons, astrological histories have been excluded from traditional accounts of the rise of Islamic historiography, even though they shed fresh light on the construction of historical knowledge in early Islam. Indeed, some of these astrological histories are significantly earlier than our more traditional narrative sources and thus offer rare access to early layers of Islamic historiography. Moreover, the vanishing of astrological histories reveals a radical shift in historical writing in early Islam, and in historical causality in particular. Their disappearance bears testimony to a change of “régime d’historicité” in the late

1. For more on astrological histories, see Antoine Borrut, “Court Astrologers and Historical Writing in Early ‘Abbāsid Baghdad: An Appraisal,” in Jens Scheiner and Damien Janos (eds.), *The Place to Go: Contexts of Learning in Baghdād, 750-1000 C.E.* (Princeton, 2014), 455–501.

third/ninth century, that is a moment in which a society redefines its relationship between “past, present, and future” in the context of a “crisis of time,” to follow French historian François Hartog’s definition.² Finally, and more broadly, I argue that these elements should force us to re-evaluate the gap of (narrative) sources we are facing for the first centuries of Islam. Astrological histories only represent one alternative mode of historical writing that flourished in early ‘Abbāsīd times if not earlier. We should also make room for other genres and categories (*quṣṣāṣ* or *futūḥ* literature, Muslim apocalyptic, etc.). And we ought, furthermore, to stop opposing “internal” (i.e., Muslim) to “external” (i.e., non-Muslim) sources. Non-Muslim sources have a critical role to play if we want to properly integrate early Islam into the multicultural world of Late

Antiquity. Besides, a sizeable number of texts produced by non-Muslim scholars were composed while their authors were serving at the caliphal court in some official capacity, and so they can hardly be regarded as “external”.

Such an approach not only significantly reduces our gap of sources but also opens up new perspectives on the circulation of historical information and the construction of historical knowledge. The first two and a half centuries of Islam remain a formidable methodological challenge for scholars. Perhaps a preliminary step is to fully acknowledge that the so-called gap of (narrative) sources we are facing up to the middle of the third/ninth century is, for a large part, an optical illusion and a historiographical construct, both ancient and modern. The vanishing of histories, of alternative pasts and memories is, ultimately, *historically* explainable.

2. François Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité. Présentisme et expériences du temps* (Paris, 2003), 27.