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Andreas Görke, Harald Motzki, Gregor Schoeler

First Century Sources for the Life of Muḥammad? A Debate*

Abstract: In a recent issue of *Der Islam*, Stephen R. Shoemaker has contributed an extensive article in which he challenged the processes and findings of a number of studies conducted by Gregor Schoeler, Harald Motzki, and Andreas Görke.[1] The following article offers a response to his findings. Whereas the three authors argued the case for the possibility that authentic traditions of the first century of the Hijra can be reconstructed, Shoemaker holds the contrary point of view, as already stated in the abstract of his study: "While az-Zuhrī and occasionally other authorities of his generation can often be persuasively linked with the tradition in question, the reach back to ʿUrwa is generally not convincing ..." Yet he is not entirely consistent in his views. In his study several statements are to be found that in fact support the views of the authors whose studies he critically examines. Overall, Shoemaker makes more concessions towards the possible authenticity of some of the material traced back to the first century than any "sceptic" prior to him. Unfortunately, Shoemaker's criticism and rendering of the three authors' studies is fraught with misunderstandings and inconsistencies. They are the focus of attention in this critical review. In addition, hitherto unknown traditions as well as sources that Shoemaker mentions without quoting or paraphrasing them will be presented. This material also challenges a number of Shoemaker's key conclusions.

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I. Introduction

It is well known that the extant Muslim narrative sources relating to the life of Muḥammad date from at least 150 to 200 years after Muḥammad's death in the

* The authors would like to thank Bertram Thompson MA for his accurate translation of parts II.2, II.3, and III and Dr Andrew Newman for his attention to the entire text.

1 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*", 257–344.

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year 11/632 and that these sources are highly problematic when used as sources for the life of Muḥammad: since no archaeological surveys have been conducted in Mecca or Medina, there is no external evidence that could be adduced to support the accounts presented in the Muslim sources. The non-Muslim sources – several of which predate the Muslim sources – often are at variance with the Muslim accounts, if they mention Muḥammad at all. Several of the Muslim accounts about the life of Muḥammad appear to be interpretations of the Qurʾānic text and do not constitute independent sources, but rather seem to have grown from exegetic speculations. Other accounts clearly reflect later theological, legal or political debates, while yet others constitute what can be termed salvation history. Moreover, the accounts often contradict each other regarding chronology, the persons involved or the course of events.[2]

Is it possible, then, to say anything about the life of Muḥammad? A number of scholars have argued that it is not, some going even so far as to claim that Muḥammad was not even a historical person and that all the accounts that allegedly refer to his life are later projections and purely fictitious.[3] Gregor Schoeler, Harald Motzki, and Andreas Görke in several articles have attempted to show that despite the apparent difficulties with the Muslim narrative sources, by a careful analysis of the different lines of transmission and the related contents of a given tradition it is possible to reconstruct earlier layers of these sources. They have argued that in some cases these earlier layers are likely to reflect traces of the historical Muḥammad and that this is the case, for instance, in a number of traditions traced back to ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr, a nephew of the Prophet's wife ʿĀʾisha and one of the persons understood to have been the first to write and teach about the life of the Prophet.

Shoemaker in his article criticises these conclusions. First, he argues that Schoeler and Görke often push the evidence beyond what it can bear and that few traditions can with certainty be traced back to ʿUrwa. However, Shoemaker would admit that a number of traditions can be traced back to ʿUrwa's student Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/744), but the reach back to ʿUrwa to him "is generally not convincing,"[4] since there are too few *isnāds* to securely establish this link. Secondly, he argues that in several cases Schoeler, Görke and Motzki withhold or invent evidence or adjust it in order to fit their arguments. And finally, he remarks that the method used – the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis – fails to reveal anything new

2 Cf. Crone, "What Do We Actually Know About Mohammed?" and Görke, "Prospects and Limits," 137–151, here 137–140 for a detailed description of the problems regarding the sources for the life of Muḥammad.

3 Nevo and Koren, *Crossroads to Islam*, 11.

4 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 257.

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about the historical Muḥammad, and that the traditional principles of *matn* analysis as advanced by Goldziher and Schacht produce much better results.

Shoemaker is basically arguing from a "sceptic's" point of view, but despite his criticism, which will be addressed more thoroughly below, he makes more concessions towards the possible authenticity of some of the material traced back to ʿUrwa than any "sceptic" prior to him. Thus he says: "In all fairness it must be said that [...] Schoeler and Görke have developed and deployed a very sophisticated method of analysis that represents perhaps the best effort thus far to identify early material within the *sīra* traditions;"[5] "[...] analysis of the hijra itself reveals a slim core of tradition that might be associated with ʿUrwa;"[6] and "[...] in certain instances it may be possible to isolate some basic details that have a rather high level of historical credibility."[7]

Basically, this is not very different from what Schoeler, Görke and Motzki say – but it is assessed in a different way. In the following it will be shown that much more material can convincingly be ascribed to ʿUrwa than Shoemaker would admit. An important tool for this is the corpus of *sīra* traditions ascribed to ʿUrwa, which has been completed and analysed in the meantime and the results of which Shoemaker did not yet take into consideration for his article.[8]

Shoemaker in general argues in a sound scholarly fashion, but he frequently misunderstands or misrepresents the positions Schoeler, Görke and Motzki hold and thus argues against points that haven't been made. For instance he presents the works of Görke and Schoeler as an attempt to reconstruct ʿUrwa's *sīra*, implying that ʿUrwa wrote an actual book in this genre. This is already insinuated through the title of his article, and he explicitly refers to "ʿUrwa's *sīra*" a couple of times, i.e., suggesting that Görke and Schoeler attempt to "reconstruct the 'sīra' of ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr,"[9] or aim "at reconstructing the biography of Muḥammad as it was taught by ʿUrwa in the later first century AH."[10] He refers to what he calls a "proposed reconstruction of ʿUrwa's *sīra*"[11] and claims that in their article on the *hijra* Görke and Schoeler "present an outline of ʿUrwa's *sīra*."[12] He then argues that his own analysis of the material – in contrast to this "rather sanguine analysis" – affirms Chase Robinson's findings that ʿUrwa should not be considered to

5 Ibid., 267.
6 Ibid., 302.
7 Ibid., 325.
8 Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte über das Leben Muḥammads*.
9 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 257.
10 Ibid., 264.
11 Ibid., 267.
12 Ibid., 268.

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be an author, but rather should be considered a storyteller who took some interest in the past.[13] However, while it is true that Schoeler, in the outline of the project to collect and evaluate the corpus of traditions from ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr, indeed proposed such a goal,[14] in none of the studies Shoemaker analysed was it claimed that ʿUrwa wrote a book on the *sīra* or should be considered to be an author. Görke and Schoeler usually speak of "ʿUrwa's *sīra* traditions", and in their book *Die ältesten Berichte über das Leben Muḥammads*, which Shoemaker unfortunately only had recourse to when his article was already accepted for publication, they even explicitly state that with their study they consider it proven that ʿUrwa never wrote an actual book on the *sīra*.[15] Other cases of misrepresentation of Görke's, Motzki's and Schoeler's positions will be discussed below.

Shoemaker's arguments also occasionally display internal contradictions. Thus at the beginning of his article, Shoemaker praises Juynboll's method of *isnād* analysis[16] and later reiterates his claim that an *isnād* analysis can only yield results when the traditions studied feature a dense network of transmitters ("in which several 'partial common links' transmit independently from the common link"[17]). Nevertheless, in some cases two lines of transmission (through Hishām b. ʿUrwa and al-Zuhrī) seem to suffice for Shoemaker to ascribe a tradition possibly or likely to the common link, ʿUrwa.[18] However, elsewhere the same two lines of transmission are considered to be too few and not independent from each other.[19]

A further inconsistency can be observed in Shoemaker's reference to Michael Cook's study of eschatological traditions[20] and Görke's response.[21] Cook himself had already acknowledged a number of methodological problems in his study, which basically stemmed from the material he studied, and Görke drew the attention to some additional problems. Shoemaker in general acknowledges these problems.[22] Nevertheless, he then completely ignores Görke's conclusion (and does not even mention it) that these problems in fact make the traditions

13 Ibid., 269.
14 Schoeler, "Foundations for a New Biography of Muḥammad," 21–28, 27f.
15 Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 267: "Die erhaltenen Überlieferungen ʿUrwas zur Prophetenbiographie bieten also keinerlei Anhaltspunkte dafür, dass ʿUrwa ein Buch zu diesem Thema verfasst hat. Im Gegenteil kann durch diese Studie endgültig als bewiesen angesehen werden, dass ʿUrwa kein solches Buch verfasste."
16 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra,*" 265f.
17 Ibid., 292.
18 Ibid., 321, 324.
19 Ibid., 327f. and see below on the traditions about al-Ḥudaybiya.
20 Cook, "Eschatology and the Dating of Traditions," 25–47.
21 Görke, "Eschatology, History, and the Common Link," 179–208.
22 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra,*" 264f.

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studied by Cook unsuitable for an *isnād* analysis, while with other traditions (e.g. ones distributed more widely and in different sources) the *isnād* analysis indeed can provide an accurate dating which coincides with the external dating based on the *matn* (which for Shoemaker is more reliable). Instead, despite the acknowledged problems with Cook's study, he uses it as key evidence against the reliability of the *isnād* analysis: "when tested against other more reliable criteria for dating, such *isnād* criticism often fails to provide an accurate date."[23]

II. The ʿUrwa Traditions

The first part of Shoemaker's article mainly deals with four studies by Gregor Schoeler and Andreas Görke on different traditions about the life of the Muḥammad reported on the authority of ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr, namely on the *hijra*,[24] the beginnings of Muḥammad's revelations,[25] the ʿĀʾisha scandal (*ḥadīth al-ifk*),[26] and al-Ḥudaybiya.[27] As noted, Shoemaker could not fully consider the publication of Görke's and Schoeler's book on traditions ascribed to ʿUrwa. Nevertheless, he referred to it in a footnote, where he claimed that, with regard to the four traditions treated in his article, the book "adds nothing that would impinge on the arguments presented," and that the additional traditions treated in the book (dealing with the battles of Badr, Uḥud, and the Trench, and the conquest of Mecca), are "even less persuasively assigned to ʿUrwa."[28] This assessment is only partly correct. While it is true that the long accounts about these additional events are less well attested than the four aforementioned events, this is not true for all of their parts. Thus the story about the Muslim al-Yamān, who was accidentally killed by Muslims during the battle of Uḥud – an incident that must have been embarrassing for the early Muslims and is unlikely to be invented –, is very well attested by several independent transmissions of al-Zuhrī and Hishām from ʿUrwa.[29] Moreover, although the additional traditions are in general less well attested, they fit into the overall picture and display the same characteristics. For instance, traditions traced back to Hishām < ʿUrwa reveal, on the whole, fewer embellishments and details than those traced back to al-Zuhrī < ʿUrwa. Thus, al-

23 Ibid., 264.
24 Görke and Schoeler, "Reconstructing the Earliest *Sīra* Texts," 209–220.
25 Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie*, 59–117 (= *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 38–79).
26 Ibid., 119–70 (80–116).
27 Görke, "The Historical Tradition About al-Ḥudaybiya," 240–275.
28 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra,*" 268–69, footnote 30.
29 Cf. Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 125–30.

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though there are fewer attestations of the additional events than there are of those referred to by Shoemaker, these attestations nevertheless corroborate the previous findings about the historicity and character of the different transmissions from ʿUrwa.

In any case, apparently there are – in contrast to Shoemaker's assertion – only relatively few long traditions traced back to ʿUrwa. This fact makes it unlikely that these traditions were systematically forged. Had ʿUrwa had a reputation of being an (or the) indisputable authority in the field of the biography of Muḥammad in the generations of al-Zuhrī or Ibn Isḥāq, why wasn't more material ascribed to him regarding other important events in the life of Muḥammad? There are, for instance, no reports ascribed to ʿUrwa on the birth of Muḥammad, the reconstruction of the Kaʿba, the night journey and the ascent to heaven, nor does he seem to have given longer accounts on the battle of Uḥud, the affairs of the Banū l-Naḍīr and Banū l-Qaynuqāʿ, the farewell pilgrimage, or the death of Muḥammad.[30]

As regards the four tradition complexes that Shoemaker discussed in his article, a number of additional attestations of the traditions have been presented in Görke's and Schoeler's book, for instance on Muḥammad's first revelations, which render some of Shoemaker's arguments obsolete, as will be seen below. Let us now study his arguments in detail!

The Hijra (Andreas Görke)

The largest single section of Shoemaker's article deals with the *hijra* traditions attributed to ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr, to which Shoemaker devotes more than thirty pages. His analysis raises some important issues, but as will be shown, his arguments and conclusions are problematic. He is of course right in observing that the density and brevity of Görke's and Schoeler's article on ʿUrwa's *hijra* traditions,[31] in which they discussed the contents of the traditions in only five pages, may be potentially misleading.[32] A case in point is the diagram, which indeed could be interpreted to indicate that all parts of the tradition complex were transmitted along all of these lines of transmission. This, however, was not what Görke and Schoeler intended, and they did not claim this to be the case anywhere in the article. The diagram was simply used to facilitate visualising the dif-

30 Ibid., 262–63.
31 Görke and Schoeler, "Reconstructing the Earliest *Sīra* Texts."
32 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 270.

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ferent lines of transmission. In any case, the traditions are analysed in much more detail in Görke's and Schoeler's recent book,[33] and had Shoemaker had the chance to study this chapter more thoroughly, he might have reconsidered his assessment that the book basically adds nothing new to the findings made in the article.

Even without recourse to the book, however, some of his arguments can be shown to be based on misconceptions. This already starts with his statement that "[a]ccording to Görke and Schoeler, this assemblage of traditions was originally a single, extended narrative composed by ʿUrwa, beginning with the Meccans' opposition to Muḥammad's preaching, followed successively by the emigration of some early Muslims to Abyssinia (including the story of Abū Bakr and Ibn al-Dughunna), the spread of Islam in Mecca, the return of the refugees from Abyssinia, the renewed hostility of the Meccans, the meetings of ʿAqaba, the departure of many Muslims for Medina, and concluding with Muḥammad's *hijra* to Medina in the company of Abū Bakr."[34] Yet, this is not what Görke and Schoeler said. They did indeed conclude that ʿUrwa composed or transmitted a narrative made up of several elements. But, as they made clear, their conclusion was: "We can therefore assume that ʿUrwa's reports comprised at least the following elements: 1) The harassment of the Muslims in Mecca, 2) The subsequent emigration of some Muslims to Abyssinia, 3) The ongoing harassment of the Muslims in Mecca and the emigration of many of them to Medina, 4) The emigration of the Prophet to Medina together with Abū Bakr and ʿĀmir b. Fuhayra."[35] Thus among the material that Görke and Schoeler assumed to be traced back to ʿUrwa they did *not* include the story of Abū Bakr and Ibn al-Dughunna, nor the spread of Islam in Mecca, nor the return of the refugees from Abyssinia, nor the meetings of ʿAqaba, as Shoemaker claimed.

Shoemaker takes particular interest in the story of Abū Bakr and Ibn al-Dughunna. Over nine pages he argues that this story cannot be traced back to ʿUrwa, but instead has to be credited to al-Zuhrī at best, and that even this attribution is questionable.[36] This result of his, he claims, stands in contrast to Görke's and Schoeler's position, as – according to Shoemaker – they maintain that this narrative "also belongs to this complex of 'authentic' ʿUrwa material."[37] However, in the article Shoemaker refers to, what Görke and Schoeler actually say is quite the opposite from what Shoemaker claims their position to be: "It is difficult to

33 Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 38–77.
34 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 270.
35 Görke and Schoeler, "Reconstructing the Earliest *Sīra* Texts," 219f.
36 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 284–92.
37 Ibid., 284, cf. 289.

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tell whether the elements found in only one of the recensions go back to ʿUrwa or to a later transmitter, e.g. if the story of Ibn al-Duġunna was already part of ʿUrwa's report or if this story was introduced by al-Zuhrī."[38] Thus while Görke and Schoeler do not exclude the *possibility* that ʿUrwa also told a version of the story, including the encounter of Abū Bakr and Ibn al-Dughunna, they do not claim that this story should be considered to be part of the authentic ʿUrwa material.

As a result, some of Shoemaker's findings are in fact not at variance with Görke's and Schoeler's, although he claims that they are. However, one major difference that remains is the question whether the story of Abū Bakr and Ibn al-Dughunna is linked to the emigration of some Muslims to Abyssinia prior to the *hijra* to Medina. In their study Görke and Schoeler indeed made this connection. They came to the conclusion that both al-Zuhrī and Hishām b. ʿUrwa in their narrations combined the story of the harassments of Muslims in Mecca that lead to the emigration of some of them to Abyssinia and the story of the *hijra* proper. As both al-Zuhrī and Hishām b. ʿUrwa claim to base their narrations on ʿUrwa, Görke and Schoeler conclude that this connection of the events already goes back to him, although many details in the narrations recorded in the written sources may in fact be later elaborations and additions.

Shoemaker argues, on the contrary, that "the story of Ibn al-Dughunna's patronage does not appear to be linked with the 'first *hijra*' to Ethiopia, as Görke and Schoeler propose."[39] He observes that in Ibn Hishām's version of the account no such connection is made (which is correct) and although the connection is made explicit in the versions of al-Bukhārī, al-Bayhaqī and ʿAbd al-Razzāq, he dismisses their versions because the chronology to him seems not to be convincing. In addition, he draws attention to the limited attestation of these versions – according to Shoemaker there are only three versions (Maʿmar < al-Zuhrī, as adduced by ʿAbd al-Razzāq, Ibn Isḥāq < al-Zuhrī, as adduced by Ibn Hishām, and ʿUqayl < al-Zuhrī, as adduced by al-Bayhaqī and al-Bukhārī) which are all only preserved in single strands. Following Juynboll in his requirements for the historicity of traditions, Shoemaker concludes that the ascription of these versions to al-Zuhrī has to be called into question. Instead he argues that "these three *ḥadīth* collections [i.e., al-Bukhārī, al-Bayhaqī and ʿAbd al-Razzāq] likely preserve an account of this event that over the course of transmission has fused together several earlier and independent elements into a single condensed narrative. In essence, we have here a sort of 'mini-history' of Islam from the initial reaction against

38 Görke and Schoeler, "Reconstructing the Earliest *Sīra* Texts," 219.
39 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 287.

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Muḥammad's early preaching to his *hijra*, focused on themes of persecution and flight."[40]

Basically, this 'mini-history' is exactly what Görke and Schoeler proposed, with the difference that they argued that the process of combining traditions into a single narrative did already start with ʿUrwa, continued with al-Zuhrī, and went on in the next generations. That the whole complex is indeed a composition of different elements can probably best be seen in the version of ʿAbd al-Razzāq, who relates the whole complex on the authority of Maʿmar b. Rāshid.[41] ʿAbd al-Razzāq begins his tradition with a summary of the events leading to the emigration of some Muslims. This part is traced back via Maʿmar < al-Zuhrī to ʿUrwa. Then follows a comment that is only traced back to Maʿmar < al-Zuhrī, not mentioning ʿUrwa. The next part comprises the story of Abū Bakr and Ibn al-Dughunna (explicitly mentioning that this happened on the way to Abyssinia) and the subsequent *hijra* to Medina. This part is traced back via Maʿmar < al-Zuhrī < ʿUrwa to ʿĀʾisha. Then follow two insertions from Maʿmar, which do not go back to al-Zuhrī, before the story of the *hijra* is taken up again. Again some traditions follow that are traced back to other sources of al-Zuhrī and Maʿmar. Finally the tradition ends with the report of the arrival of Muḥammad and Abū Bakr in Medina, told on the authority of Maʿmar < al-Zuhrī < ʿUrwa, not mentioning ʿĀʾisha. In this case the *isnāds* clearly indicate the composition of the story. A comparison of this version with the other versions traced back to al-Zuhrī as well as quotations of parts of this compilation further indicates that the first part of the story is probably wrongly traced back to ʿUrwa by ʿAbd al-Razzāq (or by his student and transmitter of the *Muṣannaf*, Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Dabarī) and in fact goes back to al-Zuhrī only: this part is missing in several later quotations of the ʿAbd al-Razzāq tradition and is also transmitted as a single tradition traced back to al-Zuhrī only. The other versions, quoted among others by al-Bukhārī and al-Bayhaqī, also do not contain this part.[42] We shall later come back to the composition of this tradition complex.

What about the limited attestations? Shoemaker remarks that the version traced back to Ibn Isḥāq < al-Zuhrī is recorded by Ibn Hishām only. According to him, the failure of al-Ṭabarī and others "to associate this tradition with Ibn Isḥāq leaves some doubt regarding the authenticity of Ibn Hishām's attribution, and it is certainly not out of the question that he himself invented the *isnād* through Ibn Isḥāq."[43] While Ibn Hishām is known for shortening Ibn Isḥāq's text where he

40 Ibid., 289.
41 ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī, *al-Muṣannaf* V, 384ff.
42 Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 54.
43 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 285.

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deemed it appropriate for different reasons, nobody so far has ever suggested that he invented traditions and ascribed them to Ibn Isḥāq, and Shoemaker fails to provide any evidence why this would be likely. In any case, it is not true that the story is recorded by Ibn Hishām only. Al-ʿUṭāridī also quotes Ibn Isḥāq on this passage (on the authority of Yūnus b. Bukayr), and while the order of the elements is slightly different, the wording is close to the one given by Ibn Hishām.[44] We can therefore assume that the story indeed was told in this way (without mentioning Abyssinia as Abū Bakr's destination) by Ibn Isḥāq.

In addition to the three versions mentioned so far (Maʿmar, ʿUqayl, and Ibn Isḥāq), Shoemaker suddenly notes that there is a fourth one, traced back to al-Zuhrī through ʿAbdallāh (b. Wahb?) < Yūnus b. Yazīd. However, he immediately discards this version on the grounds that it is only quoted by al-Bukhārī and only in a single – minor – edition of al-Bukhārī's collection, while all the major editions of his work name ʿUqayl instead of Yūnus. Shoemaker concludes that this *isnād* cannot be trusted and he omits it from his figure on the transmission of the story of Abū Bakr and Ibn al-Dughunna.[45] However, Shoemaker is wrong in his observation. The tradition is indeed included in the major editions of al-Bukhārī's collection with the *isnād* Yūnus < al-Zuhrī.[46] Possibly he overlooked it as it is usually not numbered separately, but is adduced by al-Bukhāri as a confirmatory tradition directly following the one of ʿUqayl. In addition, parts of this version are also quoted by Ibn Khuzayma on the authority of ʿAbdallāh < Yūnus < al-Zuhrī.[47] So we may infer that there are indeed four versions of al-Zuhrī's tradition, not three, as Shoemaker maintains. Thus altogether, the version according to al-Zuhrī is better attested than Shoemaker claims. Three of these versions are very similar in content and in wording (Maʿmar, ʿUqayl, and Yūnus); all indicate that the story of Abū Bakr and Ibn al-Dughunna took place on the way to Abyssinia. The versions of Maʿmar and ʿUqayl also connect this story to the account of the *hijra*. Yūnus' version as quoted by al-Bukhāri is shorter than the other two versions and does not include the *hijra*, but the quotations by Ibn Khuzayma indicate that this version originally was also longer and included mention of the *hijra*.[48] On the other hand, Ibn Isḥāq's version is much shorter, does not have a link to Abyssinia and does not include the *hijra*. With three versions agreeing that the story is linked to Abyssinia and only one that disagrees, it might seem

44 Ibn Isḥāq, *Kitāb al-Siyar wa-l-Maghāzī*, 235. Cf. Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 62.

45 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 290.

46 This information was kindly provided by Christopher Melchert.

47 Ibn Khuzayma, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:133ff., 4:132. Cf. Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 54.

48 Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 54.

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apparent that Ibn Isḥāq's version is the one that is likely to have been tampered with. But the case is not that simple. The three versions of Maʿmar, ʿUqayl, and Yūnus are so close to each other that it must be assumed that they are based on a single written source. This may have been a version of al-Zuhrī, but although each of the versions displays some characteristics that distinguish it from the others, it cannot be ruled out completely that one of these versions served as a model for the other two. Thus, basically, we have one tradition that combines several elements to a longer narrative and identifies Abū Bakr's destination as Abyssinia (the versions of Maʿmar, ʿUqayl, and Yūnus) and one tradition that does not link the story either to Abyssinia or to the subsequent *hijra* to Medina (the version of Ibn Isḥāq).

As we have seen, Shoemaker argues that the second variant is more likely to be correct, based on chronological considerations. In Ibn Hishām's *sīra* the return of the emigrants from Abyssinia was already related before the story of Abū Bakr and Ibn al-Dughunna, indicating – according to Shoemaker – that "the emigration of some early Muslims from Mecca to Ethiopia not only had already taken place but had come to an end before Abū Bakr's meeting with Ibn al-Dughunna."[49] Likewise, despite the mention of Abyssinia as Abū Bakr's intended destination in the other traditions, Shoemaker concludes that the position of the story in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* – directly prior to Muḥammad's *hijra* – does not allow for a connection of this event with the emigration to Abyssinia, which is not narrated at all in al-Bukhārī's work. This argument is based on questionable premises, namely that the different narratives all display a consistent chronology and that the authors of the *ḥadīth* collections tried to create coherent accounts. However, as Görke and Schoeler showed in their analysis of the ʿUrwa corpus of *sīra* traditions, the interest in chronology apparently only started in the generation of al-Zuhrī and became of major interest only in the generation of Ibn Isḥāq and Mūsā b. ʿUqba.[50] As apparently there was no generally accepted chronology prior to the generation of Ibn Isḥāq and Mūsā b. ʿUqba and probably no consensus apart from very few key dates, the attempts of creating a consistent chronology display a lot of contradictions. This is not only apparent when comparing different chronologies as those of Ibn Isḥāq, Mūsā b. ʿUqba and al-Wāqidī,[51] but also within the single works. Ibn Hishām, for example, mentions that Khālid b. al-Walīd converted to Islam shortly before the conquest of Mecca (*qubayla l-fatḥ*), but he actually places the story before the expedition to al-Ḥudaybiya, two

49 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 286.
50 Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 272–273.
51 Cf. J.M.B. Jones, "The Chronology of the *Maghāzī*," 244–280.

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years earlier.[52] Thus we cannot simply rely on the chronology of any of the *sīra* authorities.

Relying on the presentation of the material in the *ḥadīth* collections is even more problematic. As has been shown by Muhammad Qasim Zaman, the *ḥadīth* collectors did not necessarily attempt to provide a consistent narrative of events in their collections.[53] They collected traditions that were in some way connected to an event as long as they had reliable *isnāds*. They may have attempted to provide some chronological order, but this was not their main interest. Thus drawing any far reaching conclusion from the place where a tradition is found in a *ḥadīth* collection seems unwarranted.

Finally, Shoemaker's argument is based on the assumption that the emigration to Abyssinia was a single event, that at a certain point of time a number of Muslims went there together and eventually returned. While this is not impossible, it is by no means certain. It would be just as reasonable to assume that the emigration was rather a process which took place over a certain period of time. This would also explain the apparent disagreement over when this actually happened and whether the Muslims returned to Mecca or went to Medina from Abyssinia.

Whatever the historical basis, the traditions traced back to al-Zuhrī < ʿUrwa ultimately leave us with two possibilities to explain their dissimilarities: either Ibn Isḥāq quoted only a part of a longer tradition from al-Zuhrī, changed the text of the tradition (eliminating the reference to Abyssinia) and quoted the rest of the tradition with a different *isnād*. Or, either Maʿmar, ʿUqayl or Yūnus (or their respective transmitters) combined different stories from various authorities without acknowledging this and eliminated some of the *isnāds* to create the impression that all parts in fact were traceable to al-Zuhrī < ʿUrwa, while the other two copied his version, again without acknowledging it. Both scenarios involve some intentional manipulation of the text, but the second scenario requires that at least three persons intentionally suppressed their real sources. When we take into account the results from the assessment of the complete ʿUrwa corpus, it seems more likely that it was indeed Ibn Isḥāq who made the changes: Ibn Isḥāq can be shown in other cases to have introduced changes to the traditions he transmits from al-Zuhrī < ʿUrwa; for instance he seems to have given ʿAlī a more prominent role in the account of al-Ḥudaybiya.[54] Maʿmar, on the other hand, seems to have been a more reliable transmitter.[55] Another point indicating that the changes may

52 Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, 2:276 ff.

53 Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "*Maghāzī* and the *Muḥaddithūn*," 1–18, esp. 6, 10.

54 Cf. Görke, "The Historical Tradition About al-Ḥudaybiya," 260.

55 Cf. Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 250.

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be due to Ibn Isḥāq is the presentation of the agreement between Abū Bakr and Ibn al-Dughunna in the different versions. In the versions related on the authority of Maʿmar, ʿUqayl and Yūnus, it is Abū Bakr who breaches the agreement with Ibn al-Dughunna as he prays publicly although he initially had accepted not to do so. In Ibn Isḥāq's version, there is no agreement that Abū Bakr should not pray publicly, thus in his version it is Ibn al-Dhughunna who is unhappy with the agreement and asks Abū Bakr to cancel it. Based on the principles of *matn* criticism, it would be easy to argue that Ibn Isḥāq's version constitutes an example of the overall tendency to present the early Muslims in a better light and the unbelievers in a more unfavourable light, while it is difficult to find a reason why in the other version Abū Bakr is presented as the one who breaches the agreement if this was not the case in the original story.[56]

Furthermore, if we turn back to ʿAbd al-Razzāq's long presentation of the *hijra* tradition complex, it does not give the impression that Maʿmar or ʿAbd al-Razzāq tried to suppress *isnāds*; on the contrary, several insertions are clearly marked as such. If we further compare this and the related versions of ʿUqayl and Yūnus as well as shorter quotations from these versions, we can observe that the *isnāds* are rather consistent: we have already seen that the first part of the complex, which describes the events that lead to the emigration of some Muslims to Abyssinia, is usually only traced back to al-Zuhrī. The story of Abū Bakr and Ibn al-Dughunna and the story of the *hijra* are always traced back via al-Zuhrī to ʿUrwa < ʿĀʾisha, while the story of the arrival in Medina is always traced back via al-Zuhrī to ʿUrwa only. Ibn Isḥāq, on the other hand, does not relate the story of Abū Bakr and Ibn al-Dughunna on the authority of ʿĀʾisha, but only traces it back to ʿUrwa. Taking all these findings into consideration, a plausible explanation would be that ʿUrwa already combined some stories into a single narrative, for which he named ʿĀʾisha as his source. He seems also to have addressed the arrival of Muḥammad in Medina in his teaching, but did not claim that he had this information from ʿĀʾisha. Whether ʿUrwa had already combined this story with the ones he allegedly had heard from ʿĀʾisha or whether this was done by al-Zuhrī, we cannot tell for sure. Apparently, al-Zuhrī added more to this story, as for instance the introductory summary of the situation in Mecca which resulted in the emigration of some Muslims to Abyssinia and some comments. Again, we cannot tell if he already linked his additions to the narrative of ʿUrwa or if this was only done by Maʿmar. Finally, Maʿmar also contributed to the narrative with a couple of additional comments. Why Ibn Isḥāq did not quote the whole story on the authority of al-Zuhrī, but only that part dealing with Abū Bakr and Ibn al-Dughunna, we do

56 Cf. ibid., 62.

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not know. Possibly he did not hear the complete story from al-Zuhrī and thus did not have the authority to relate the whole story. In any case, it is very likely that he adapted the story, both eliminating the reference to Abyssinia and presenting Abū Bakr in a more favourable light.

One accusation of Shoemaker's which must be rejected outright is that Görke and Schoeler invented *isnāds* to "multiply the lines of transmission."[57] Shoemaker argues that they used the tradition on the *hijra* quoted by Ibn Isḥāq from either "someone he does not distrust" (Ibn Hishām) or Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (al-Ṭabarī) to authenticate Ibn Isḥāq's *hijra* tradition from al-Zuhrī, thereby inventing an *isnād* Ibn Isḥāq < al-Zuhrī < ʿUrwa for the story of the *hijra* that is unfounded.[58] But in fact Görke and Schoeler never claimed that Ibn Isḥāq quoted al-Zuhrī on the *hijra*. It is true that their statement "the version recorded by Ibn Isḥāq (d. 150/767) tells the same story, but in a completely different wording"[59] could be misunderstood to refer to the whole story – and apparently Shoemaker did so. But the next paragraph should make clear that this is not what Görke and Schoeler claimed: "Ibn Isḥāq only gives the first part of the story (which deals with Ibn al-Duġunna), on the authority of al-Zuhrī < ʿUrwa, while the second part (the story of the *hijra* itself) is narrated by Ibn Isḥāq, either on the authority of 'someone he does not mistrust' < ʿUrwa (in Ibn Hishām) or Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. ʿAbdallāh al-Tamīmī < ʿUrwa (in al-Ṭabarī). Ibn Isḥāq thus combines in his report a version of the al-Zuhrī recension with a third recension we shall call the Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān recension."[60] Thus Görke and Schoeler do *not* take Ibn Isḥāq's version as evidence that al-Zuhrī related both the story of Ibn al-Dughunna and the *hijra*. They do, however, see evidence for this connection through the versions of Maʿmar, ʿUqayl and Yūnus, as explained above. They also regard the version of the *hijra* story quoted by Ibn Isḥāq as additional evidence that ʿUrwa indeed related the story, despite the difference in the *isnād*. The actual text of the tradition is the same in the versions of Ibn Hishām and al-Ṭabarī, and perhaps al-Ṭabarī simply polished the *isnād* or Ibn Hishām omitted the name for some reason. In any case, Ibn Isḥāq apparently claimed – despite possibly concealing his direct source – that the tradition originated with ʿUrwa. And a comparison of the texts with that of al-Zuhrī (in the versions of Maʿmar and ʿUqayl) and the letter ascribed to ʿUrwa also make this likely. But nowhere do Görke and Schoeler take this tradition as evidence for the Zuhrī version. Thus again Shoemaker argues against a fictitious position.

57 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 299.
58 Ibid., 298–299.
59 Görke and Schoeler, "Reconstructing the Earliest *Sīra* Texts," 218.
60 Ibid.

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Possibly the most important part of SHOEMAKER's article is his analysis of the letters ʿUrwa allegedly wrote to one of the Umayyad caliphs. These letters, some of which contain lengthy narratives about different episodes from the life of Muḥammad,[61] had been accepted as historical by many scholars. SHOEMAKER is astonished that apparently even critical scholars have never raised doubts about the authenticity of ʿUrwa's letters, and he sets out to offer the first thorough criticism. His main arguments can be summarized as follows:

1) The letters are only[62], or practically only[63], attested by al-Ṭabarī; except for the letter on the *hijra*, none of the letters is attested by any other early Islamic source.[64]
2) The *isnāds* given by al-Ṭabarī are highly problematic: al-Ṭabarī names only one authority (ʿAbd al-Wārith) from which he has received the information in his *Tafsīr*, while he names a second authority (ʿAlī b. Naṣr) in his *History*. This fact had been explained by von Stülpnagel by assuming that al-Ṭabarī wrote the *History* after the *Tafsīr* and that he had also heard the letters by the second authority in the meantime. This view, however, overlooks the fact that in his *Tafsīr* al-Ṭabarī indicates that he heard the letter with a completely different *isnād* as well – traced back via Abū l-Zinād to ʿUrwa – which he does not mention in his *History*. This would rather indicate that the *Tafsīr* must have been the later work. In addition, the recipient is given as ʿAbd al-Malik's son al-Walīd in this version.[65] SHOEMAKER suggests that the additional *isnāds* offered by al-Ṭabarī may "reflect two different strategies for shoring up a tradition that al-Ṭabarī himself thought had a weak transmission history."[66]
3) There is a very small fragment of the letter about the *hijra* which Ibn Ḥanbal includes in his *Musnad*, which has a similar *isnād* from ʿAbd al-Ṣamad, the second authority in al-Ṭabarī's *isnād*, down to ʿUrwa. According to SHOEMAKER, it is possible that al-Ṭabarī expanded on ʿAbd al-Ṣamad's brief letter and created new letters ascribed to ʿUrwa.[67]
4) Had ʿUrwa in fact written these letters, it would be difficult to comprehend why other scholars failed to mention them – these letters, if existent, must

61 One letter, however, is very short. For this letter and its genuineness cf. below the chapter on the slander about ʿĀʾisha, 35 with footnote 157.
62 SHOEMAKER, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 278, 284.
63 Ibid., 273, 281.
64 Ibid., 280.
65 Ibid., 277–278.
66 Ibid., 279.
67 Ibid., 296.

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have been important sources for al-Zuhrī, Ibn Isḥāq and others – but none of these early scholars mention them.[68]

5) Other scholars have shown the adducing of letters to be a literary topos in both the Greco-Roman and the Islamic historical tradition, and the invention of letters was so widespread that a very careful approach has to be taken.[69]
6) The content of the letters is not ascribed to ʿUrwa in other sources.[70]
7) The letters, in contrast to the Constitution of Medina, are not in conflict with the later tradition. While this dissonance with the later tradition in the case of the Constitution of Medina both explains its weak attestation and lends it credibility, the same cannot be said for ʿUrwa's letters.[71]

Let us examine these arguments more closely. Ad 1 and 2: It is true that the letters are not widely attested. However, al-Ṭabarī's works are not the only sources mentioning these letters of ʿUrwa. As Shoemaker himself observed, Ibn Ḥanbal quotes a short version of the letter about the *hijra* also according to ʿAbd al-Ṣamad, the second link in al-Ṭabarī's *isnād*. Shoemaker's argument that al-Ṭabarī may have invented the additional *isnād* through Abū l-Zinād to shore up the tradition is not convincing: if al-Ṭabarī had wanted to do so, why did he not quote the text in more detail? Why should he have provided the text with a different addressee? This would rather undermine the authority of the original text instead of enhancing it. Why should he mention this *isnād* only in the case of the *hijra* and not to support any other letter? This seems to make little sense. It is much more likely that al-Ṭabarī indeed knew of the letter in the version traced back to ʿUrwa via Abū l-Zinād – regardless of the question whether this letter indeed originated with ʿUrwa or is a later forgery. This is corroborated by the fact that a passage from another letter – on the conquest of Mecca – in a version of Abū l-Zinād is quoted by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī on the authority of ʿUmar b. Shabba.[72] Ibn Ḥajar claims not to just have heard the tradition, but to have taken it from ʿUmar b. Shabba's (now lost) *Kitāb Makka*, and there is no reason to doubt this statement. As in the case of the letter al-Ṭabarī quoted on the authority of Abū l-Zinād, this letter, too, is addressed to al-Walīd and not to ʿAbd al-Malik, and again it is close in content and wording to the respective passages in the respective letter in the recension of Hishām b. ʿUrwa, but shows some deviations. Although the attestation of the letters therefore remains weak, there are more indications that at least some letters of

68 Ibid., 276.
69 Ibid., 279–280.
70 Ibid., 280.
71 Ibid., 275–276.
72 Cf. Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 229–230.

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ʿUrwa were transmitted in two recensions by the time of Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) and ʿUmar b. Shabba (d. 262/876), i.e., one to two generations before al-Ṭabarī. Point 1 of Shoemaker's arguments is thus simply not correct. The *isnāds* for the letters in the version of Hishām as given by Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Ṭabarī are identical for the first generations (Hishām > Abān al-ʿAṭṭār > ʿAbd al-Ṣamad), as are the *isnāds* given by al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Hajar for the respective versions of Abū l-Zinād (Abū l-Zinād > Ibn Abī l-Zinād > Ibn Wahb). Therefore, we may assume that if the letters were indeed forged, this would have happened at the latest by the time of Ibn Wahb (d. 197/812) and ʿAbd al-Ṣamad (d. ca. 207/822).

Ad 3: Shoemaker's idea that al-Ṭabarī expanded on the letter quoted by Ibn Ḥanbal and then invented other letters is likewise not convincing. Firstly, Ibn Ḥanbal explicitly says that he is only quoting part of the letter, i.e., that the tradition he had was longer than what he includes in his *Musnad*. Secondly, if al-Ṭabarī were indeed responsible for the long letters, why would he write them in a way that does not fit his works? Most of these letters describe a sequence of events. Therefore al-Ṭabarī frequently only quotes parts from a letter and then complements this description with other material from different sources, before he proceeds to quote the next passage from the letter. If al-Ṭabarī invented the letters, why did he not produce shorter and more focused letters that would not require addressing the separate sections of a particular letter in this manner? He also quotes other traditions that are not in accord with the letters. Why should he invent letters that neither fit into the format of his works nor are in accordance with his other material?

Ad 4: If ʿUrwa indeed wrote the letters, why have other authorities of the *sīra* not included them in their works? This, indeed, seems a crucial question, but the answer perhaps lies in the character of the letters. As Shoemaker rightly observes, what al-Ṭabarī (and Ibn Ḥanbal and Ibn Ḥajar) record are not transcripts of documents, but reports about these letters that were transmitted as other *sīra* traditions. The letters themselves – assuming that they were indeed sent by ʿUrwa to an Umayyad caliph – would have been out of reach for the scholars of the *sīra*. What al-Tabari and others recorded thus can only have been based on the notes or copies of these letters, which ʿUrwa may have kept. It seems not to have been uncommon to keep an archive of copies of letters, and we have evidence of letters that apparently constitute copies from a personal archive and not the letters actually sent. Thus there is a papyrus that includes two letters from the same sender to two different addressees on a single page,[73] which can only be explained by as-

73 Papyrus Nessana 77. This information was kindly provided by Robert Hoyland. See his forthcoming publication "P. Nessana 77 revisited" in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*.

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suming that these are personal archival copies. It is not implausible that ʿUrwa also kept an archive of letters he had sent. These letters would then have only been known in scholarly circles if he indeed taught them in his classes. But when teaching on the *hijra*, the battle of Badr or another topic on which he may have written a letter, why should he quote verbatim from the letter? Imagine a scholar today, who has written an as-yet-unpublished article or encyclopaedia entry on a certain topic and then teaches a course on the topic. We would assume that while the contents will be very similar, our scholar will not necessarily actually read his article verbatim in class. But he might quote from it when asked to do so, or he might actually even send the article to someone interested in the topic. Coming back to ʿUrwa, it seems plausible that he did not usually refer to the letters when teaching about a topic, but that his son Hishām – and possibly Abū l-Zinād – eventually asked about these letters. It is also conceivable that his son Hishām actually inherited the archive after ʿUrwa's death. After all, in the time of Hishām and probably also a generation later, most probably these letters were not regarded as being any more authoritative or important than other traditions. We also have to bear in mind that the letters could not have been written before 73/692, when ʿUrwa acknowledged Umayyad rule after the defeat of his brother ʿAbdallāh b. al-Zubayr, and that they may date from a decade or more after that event. Thus it is likely that much of ʿUrwa's teaching took place before he even wrote the letters. Of course all these considerations remain speculative – but they could provide an explanation why the letters were not quoted as frequently as one may have assumed.

Ad 5: It is true that adducing letters was a literary topos both in the Greco-Roman and the Islamic historiographical tradition and that invented letters are not uncommon. However, the literature Shoemaker uses to prove the problematic character of the letters at least partially refers to a completely different use of letters in the historiographical tradition. A case in point is Shoemaker's use of Noth's study of the early Islamic historical tradition.[74] What Noth had studied were in fact letters which formed part of the historical narratives of the early Islamic conquests. Noth argued for instance that it is inconceivable that the commanders of the conquests were in constant correspondence with the caliphs and that it were the caliphs who ultimately took the military decisions. He saw these letters as a result of a later tendency to attribute a degree of central authority to the caliphs which they probably did not have in the time of the conquests. He argued that from the military point of view such letters did not make sense at all, given that the caliph did not know the situation on the ground and that the cor-

74 Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition.*

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respondence would have taken at least three to six weeks, during which time the situation would have changed.[75] While Noth makes clear that his findings refer to this kind of letters, Shoemaker omits the reference to the first century and takes Noth's conclusion to refer to all kinds of letters. In the following, the passages omitted by Shoemaker are given in italics: "Our first task in these instances would not be to determine whether or not such letters are literary fictions, but rather whether or not they are original documents. *As of now, I am unaware of any letters in the tradition on the period of the pre-dynastic caliphate to which the character of documents can clearly be attributed. Again, this does not mean that no one wrote or corresponded in the period of the early caliphs*. But if we wish to use the testimony of the transmitted letters, then we must begin with the assumption that they are not 'authentic', *if by this term one has in mind a verbatim or largely verbatim transcription of a documentary text which originated at the time to which the later tradents attribute it*."[76] ʿUrwa's letters, however, – whether historical or not – are of a completely different type. They are not part of the historical narrative, but are said to contain information about a completely different topic (namely the life of Muḥammad). Noth's conclusions cannot simply be taken to refer to all letters, as Shoemaker insinuates.

Ad 6: It is simply not true that the content of ʿUrwa's alleged letters is not otherwise recorded on the authority of ʿUrwa. Part of the contents of his letters is recorded in traditions mostly traced back via his son Hishām, and in other cases parts of the letters have parallels in traditions reported on the authority of al-Zuhrī as well.[77] What is true, though, is that not *all* elements recorded in the letters have parallels in other traditions. But in their analysis, Görke and Schoeler treated these elements like other elements traced back via a single source only: they argued that these elements cannot securely be traced back to ʿUrwa.

Ad 7: It is true that the letters of ʿUrwa are not in conflict with the later tradition as is partly the case with the constitution of Medina. But the letters differ in several regards from other traditions traced back to ʿUrwa (and to other early authorities of the *sīra*). They contain far fewer miraculous elements than the traditions traced back to ʿUrwa via al-Zuhrī, for instance; they also contain much fewer names, and sayings from the prophet are frequently adduced by "it is alleged that the prophet said" and not with a complete *isnād*. Details are usually

75 Ibid., 76–87.
76 Ibid., 84–85.
77 Cf. Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 43–48, 74–75, 92–93, 227–229, 233–234.

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less elaborate than in the regular traditions, and there are fewer quotations from the Qurʾān. Thus while the content does not conflict with the later tradition, the style does: it seems that the letters preserve a more rudimentary version in which several later tendencies – as the growing elaboration of the stories, the tendency to identify anonymous persons, the increase of miraculous elements and the increase of Qurʾānic references – have not yet been at work or have been so on a much smaller scale.[78]

Thus, most of the arguments brought forward by Shoemaker against the authenticity of ʿUrwa's letters are not convincing. A production of these letters in the time of al-Ṭabarī or his direct authorities seems highly unlikely. As at least some points of the letters do have parallels in other traditions on the authority of ʿUrwa, it is rather probable that the letters did indeed in some way originate with ʿUrwa. This does not mean that they were transmitted verbatim – on the contrary, this can be ruled out already by comparing the different versions of the existing letters. It is quite possible that in the course of transmission parts of the letters were omitted and other parts added, intentionally or unintentionally. In addition, the relation between the letters of ʿUrwa and the traditions traced back to Abū l-Aswad and Mūsā b. ʿUqba, which are partially identical in wording, still needs to be clarified.[79] Precisely for this reason Görke and Schoeler argued that only those parts of the letters should be assumed to go back to ʿUrwa that have parallels in other traditions traced back to him.

As can be seen, Görke and Schoeler were much more careful and hesitant in concluding that material originated with ʿUrwa than Shoemaker claims. Nevertheless, it could be shown that more material on the *hijra* can convincingly be traced back to ʿUrwa than Shoemaker admits, and that many of Shoemaker's proposed scenarios of possible forgery can easily be dismissed.

What about the historicity of ʿUrwa's accounts of the *hijra*? In their article, Görke and Schoeler suggested that the reconstructed contents of ʿUrwa's reports "reflect the *general outline* of the events correctly."[80] This *general outline* should not be confused with Watt's *basic framework*, as Shoemaker does.[81] Watt had argued that the basic framework of the *sīra* – consisting of a list of expeditions, their main protagonists, the number of people involved, the outcome, and the chronological data –, was generally known to scholars and was usually

78 Cf. ibid., 264.
79 For some thoughts on this relation, see ibid., 66–68, 83–92, 235–236, 274.
80 Görke and Schoeler, "Reconstructing the Earliest *Sīra* Texts," 220.
81 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 270.

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narrated without an indication of sources.[82] In contrast, Görke's and Schoeler's *general outline* describes the basic line of events of the reconstructed traditions. Shoemaker challenges the view that ʿUrwa's reports on the *hijra* probably contain historical facts by referring to "the early *hijra* traditions recorded in the Wahb b. Munabbih papyrus" that "call into question nearly every aspect of the ʿUrwan *hijra* narrative."[83] The papyrus referred to is dated to 229 AH and thus is not early at all.[84] It is true that this papyrus is traced back to Wahb b. Munabbih through its *isnād*, but one may wonder why Shoemaker accepts this ascription – attested only in a single source with a single strand – as genuine. The story presented in the papyrus is a mythological version of the *hijra*, which contains numerous miraculous elements (in contrast to the version narrated by ʿUrwa). The existence of traditions like the one ascribed to Wahb only shows that in parallel to a "historical" tradition, "non-historical" traditions also existed, and that the scholarly transmission as practiced by ʿUrwa and his students was quite (although not completely) successful in keeping the tradition free from legendary transformations.[85] One could even reverse Shoemaker's argument by saying that a study of the traditions ascribed to Wahb shows how good ʿUrwa's traditions are in contrast.

The Beginning of Revelation: the *Iqraʾ* Narration (Gregor Schoeler)

Shoemaker deals extensively[86] with Schoeler's treatment of Muḥammad's first revelation experience.[87] In this regard, Islamic tradition traces the most important relevant accounts – according to which Sura 96 was the first to be revealed – to al-Zuhrī < ʿUrwa (< ʿĀʾisha), the so-called *iqraʾ*-narration. This tradition complex thereby forms a part of the corpus of *sīra* traditions traced back to ʿUrwa.[88] Shoemaker designates the *isnād*-bundle set up by Schoeler as "indeed impressive;"[89] it would clearly show al-Zuhrī as the likely source for a tradition about

82 Watt, "The Materials Used by Ibn Isḥāq," 23–34, 27f.; idem. "The Reliability of Ibn Isḥāq's Sources," 31–43, 32–35. This has meanwhile shown to be wrong: Schoeler, *Character und Authentie*, 16; Cf. Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 4.
83 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra,*" 302.
84 Khoury, "Der Heidelberger Papyrus des Wahb b. Munabbih," 558.
85 Cf. Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 269.
86 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 303–321.
87 Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie,* 59–117 (= *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 38–79).
88 Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 22–37.
89 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 304.

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Muḥammad's first experience of revelation. Thus far he is in agreement with Schoeler. Unlike Schoeler, however, Shoemaker is of the opinion that the precise nature of what al-Zuhrī may have taught his students about this pivotal event is not exactly clear. While Schoeler considers the long version of the story – as preserved by ʿAbd al-Razzāq (< Maʿmar < al-Zuhrī < ʿUrwa), al-Bukhārī and Muslim *i.a.* (LV I)[90] – to be the archetype of the narrative, according to Shoemaker some other accounts of the event transmitted by al-Zuhrī diverge so extensively from it that it is methodologically questionable whether all of them can be represented in the same *isnād*-bundle. Here Shoemaker refers to two short versions which are transmitted by Ibn Isḥāq[91] and Ibn Saʿd[92] respectively; he terms them 'identical'.[93] Later in his article, they are only 'highly similar' and 'almost identical'![94] Shoemaker holds these short versions to be the original version, 'inherited' by al-Zuhrī from the earlier Islamic tradition and initially taught to his students; the long version (LV I) would possibly be his own composition, which he created on the basis of this brief report utilizing, in addition, other traditions he discovered later, and subsequently also disseminated in the course of his teaching activities. Shoemaker sees his assumption confirmed by the fact that besides al-Zuhrī, Hishām b. ʿUrwa also had disseminated a short version, allegedly very similar to al-Zuhrī's, on the authority of his father, ʿUrwa (see below).[95] All three short versions are held by Shoemaker to have the same origin.

Why this construction? For one, Shoemaker wishes to establish that in the generation before al-Zuhrī, i.e., in ʿUrwa's time, the parts of Zuhrī's long version that Shoemaker assumes to have been added afterwards, and indeed the entire conglomerate, did not yet exist.[96] For the other, he probably wants to show – in terms of a hypothesis proffered by U. Rubin[97] – that al-Zuhrī's original version, and *a fortiori* ʿUrwa's tradition on which it is based, only contain Muḥammad's visions of light and hearing of voices (i.e., 'biblical' motifs), not, however, the Qurʾānic 'embellishments' (e.g., no mention of the *ufuq* motif, i.e., the angel visions from Suras 53 and 81) and no mention of Sura 96 as the first one revealed). The development from the short to the long version would thus be evidence of

90 ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf* V, 321–324. For further references see the 'Corpus' (= Appendix 1) in Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie,* 171 (= *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 124).
91 Apud Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat sayyidinā Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*, I, 151.
92 Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 1, 129; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb,* I/1, 259 f. (no. 71).
93 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 305.
94 Ibid., 306, 313.
95 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 307 ff.
96 Ibid., 306.
97 Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 108–110.

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Rubin's thesis of a process of 'Qurʾānisation' which seized the traditions concerning the beginning of revelation (and also others).[98]

Schoeler, in contrast, had taken the position that Ibn Isḥāq had shortened al-Zuhrī's account (LV I) for his own purposes (Ibn Isḥāq quotes only the first four sentences or so of al-Zuhrī's long version).[99] Schoeler based his rationale for this on the observation that Ibn Isḥāq shortly thereafter gives a very similar long version of the story (LV III, traced to Wahb b. Kaysān < ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr), and his argument was: The abridgement was done for redactional reasons in order to avoid repetitions (or redundancy). – Now it is to be admitted that both possibilities exist: the dissemination of two different versions by al-Zuhrī on the one hand, and abridgement of the long version (LV I) by Ibn Isḥāq on the other. Shoemaker's argumentation for the validity of the first possibility has feet of clay and can even be turned against him. He argues that if Schoeler's abridgement theory is correct, it would be difficult to explain why both authors, Ibn Isḥāq and Ibn Saʿd, abridged the account in identical fashion.[100]

Now, the two abridgements are by no means identical, as Shoemaker claims; in fact, Ibn Saʿd quotes a substantial bit more from the long version (LV I)[101] than does Ibn Isḥāq.[102] While the latter addduces the first four sentences or so of the text, and closes with the solitariness of which the Prophet has grown fond, Ibn Saʿd cites a number of sentences more; he *additionally* reports that Muḥammad visited Mount Ḥirāʾ and performed devotions (*al-taḥannuth*) for several nights, that he subsequently returned to Khadīja to pick up supplies, and that in the end 'the truth' (*al-ḥaqq*) came to him on Mount Ḥirāʾ. This shows that Schoeler's allegedly 'off-hand remark' (Shoemaker) that Ibn Saʿd and Ibn Isḥāq had independently shortened al-Zuhrī's (archetype) long report (LV I)[103] is by no means improbable, but rather very probable.

On the basis of his hypothesis Shoemaker had to assume that al-Zuhrī had circulated not only two, but at least three different short versions of the narrative. That of course is not impossible – there are in fact quite many more short versions of the account, and, in addition, a medium-length version,[104] all of which theoretically could likewise have been abridged by al-Zuhrī himself – although this is

98 Ibid., 307–313.
99 Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie,* 75 f. (= *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 48 f.).
100 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 305, 306.
101 Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 1, 129; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I/1, 259 f. (no. 71).
102 Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat sayyidinā Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*, I, 151.
103 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 313.
104 Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie,* 171–173; 185 (= *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 124–125; 138).

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rather improbable. That, at least in the case of Ibn Saʿd, an abridgement of the text by Ibn Saʿd is the more probable alternative and that no mention of Sura 96 being the first message is to be expected at this place arises from the following observation: In the chapter in question Ibn Saʿd treats only 'the coming-down of the revelation to the Messenger of God' (*dhikr nuzūl al-waḥy ʿalā rasūl Allāh ṣlʿm*) – this is, by the way, also the chapter's heading – and at no time in this chapter does he designate any *sūra* as the first one revealed. And this for good reason, because the mention of the first piece revealed to the Prophet of the Qurʾān' is the subject of the subsequent chapter (entitled: *dhikr awwal mā nazala ʿalayhi min al-Qurʾān*) and is reserved for it! Correspondingly, another such version (abridged in another way) of the al-Zuhrī tradition in which Sura 96 is named as the first revealed is found in the chapter just named; indeed, it is immediately adduced there as the first tradition.[105]

In summary it can be said that – contrary to Shoemaker's claims – it is much more probable that Ibn Saʿd and likewise Ibn Isḥāq produced the abridged versions in question by shortening the long version (LV I), because their short versions are in no way identical.

Now, Shoemaker considers the previously mentioned tradition according to Hishām b. ʿUrwa < ʿUrwa,[106] which, much like the traditions cited by Ibn Isḥāq und Ibn Saʿd, likewise deals with the beginning of the revelation (but additionally also conveys the Khadīja II, i.e., consolation motif![107]), to be quite similar to these two accounts, as it too contains no Qurʾānic motifs (rather only the 'biblical' ones: mention of seeing light and hearing voices). Although Shoemaker – quite correctly – considers it 'certainly possible' that Hishām's tradition is from ʿUrwa,[108] this report would, according to Shoemaker, provide no basis for Schoeler's conclusion that ʿUrwa might have transmitted more than this tradition.

This contention of Shoemaker's has meanwhile become obsolete as during the compilation of the ʿUrwa corpus two more traditions going back to Hishām <

105 Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 1, 130.

106 Ibid.

107 Shoemaker levels a charge that, "Schoeler invokes close parallels (sc. of Khadīja's response in the Hishām b. ʿUrwa tradition) with Khadīja's response to Muḥammad in a few other versions of the al-Zuhrī recension, *although he fails to specify which ones* [italics GS]" ("In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 308). – Here they are: The phrase in question in the Hishām tradition (Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 1, 130) reads*: innaka taṣduqu l-ḥadīth wa-tuʾaddī l-amāna wa-taṣilu l-raḥim*; compare with this the corresponding phrase in the al-Zuhrī version in al-Ṭabarī (*Taʾrīkh,* I, 1147): *innaka la-taṣilu l-raḥim wa-taṣduqu l-ḥadīth wa-tuʾaddī l-amāna*; and the al-Zuhrī version in ʿAbdarrazzāq (*al-Muṣannaf,* V, 322): *innaka la-taṣilu l-raḥim wa-taṣduqu l-ḥadīth wa-taqrī l-ḍayf wa-tuʿīnu ʿalā nawāʾib al-ḥaqq.*

108 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 313, 307.

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ʿUrwa came to light, which are independent of al-Zuhrī's tradition.[109] They corroborate that ʿUrwa has by no means conveyed only the beginning of the conglomerate, but other parts also spread by al-Zuhrī, as well. One tradition[110] includes a part of the Waraqa account, whereby the Nāmūs (here it is the Nāmūs of Jesus, not of Moses!) and Muḥammad's Qurʾānic proclamations are mentioned (a specific *sūra*, however, is not named); the other tradition[111] refers to the period of the *fatra* which – according to this tradition – was ended by the revelation of Sura 93. Here Gabriel is mentioned by name as the purveyor of the earlier revelation! It is not said expressis verbis, however, that Sura 96 was the first; but Sura 93 is named and cited as being the one that was revealed after the first revelation.

In summary it can be said that in the three mentioned traditions according to Hishām < ʿUrwa, the following four elements are attested, which are also found to be similar or identical in the comprehensive Zuhrī version:

1. The motif of appearances of light and the hearing of voices as the first sign of revelation
2. Khadīja II: The consolation motif (Khadīja consoles and praises Muḥammad)
3. The Waraqa account
4. The *fatra* account.

Furthermore, it can be deduced with certainty that it must have also included:

5. An account concerning the conveyance of an initial revelation which (or the conveyor of which) is designated by Waraqa as Nāmūs, and the conveyor of which is later identified by the Prophet as Gabriel.

On the other hand, it is to be admitted that (up to now) it cannot be proven that Hishām, like al-Zuhrī, on the authority of ʿUrwa mentioned Sura 96 *expressis verbis* as the first one revealed; this element can thus (up to now) not be traced to ʿUrwa with certainty. At present, it has likewise not yet been verified that ʿUrwa transmitted the conglomerate as a whole; but he has demonstrably transmitted three related traditions which contain substantially more elements than the non-Qurʾānic ones of the appearance of light and hearing of voices, also including several Qurʾānic elements; special attention should be paid to the mention of Sura 93!

109 Görke and Schoeler, *Die älteste Berichte*, 27–32; Schoeler, *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 51–54.

110 al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, *Jamharat nasab Quraysh*, 419 (no. 720).

111 Ibn Isḥāq, *Kitāb al-Siyar wa-l-Maghāzī*, 135; al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, XII, 624. – Rubin is aware of the existence of this other tradition of Hishām and quotes it (*The Eye of the Beholder,* 117), but, he fails to mention and discuss its 'Qurʾānised' nature!

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The three traditions are enough to refute the assertion that a 'Qurʾānisation' of the account of the first revelatory experience, as assumed by Shoemaker following Rubin, took place first with al-Zuhrī, and not until a later stage of his lecturing activities. Rather, ʿUrwa, according to an account transmitted by both al-Zuhrī and Hishām, had already included Qurʾānic elements, as attested by the appearance of Gabriel and the mention of Sura 93, which was revealed after the *fatra*.[112] For this reason, Rubin's thesis, to the extent that it relates to Hishām's version of the beginnings of revelation, must be considered refuted, and Rubin's entire thesis must be reviewed anew; because the Qurʾānic motifs in this account (mention of Gabriel and at least *one* early revealed *sūra*) are obviously *not* later than the non-Qurʾānic (biblical) motifs (light and voices); the former have not overlaid the latter but had existed beside them already in the last third of the first century in ʿUrwa's store of traditions about the initial revelation experience.

Although Shoemaker in many places does not seriously doubt that the Hishām < ʿUrwa tradition on the beginning of the revelation is independent of the al-Zuhrī < ʿUrwa < ʿĀʾisha version and goes back to ʿUrwa,[113] he contests an argument brought forth by Schoeler which admittedly, as he grants, is 'well-grounded' in Schacht's analysis. Schoeler had argued that the non-elevation of the *isnād* to ʿĀʾisha in Hishām's traditions is a strong indication of its authenticity and, at any rate, of its independence from al-Zuhrī's version.[114] In contrast, Shoemaker here[115] again follows Rubin[116] who had asserted that the traditions about the first revelation do not exhibit any backward growth in the *isnāds*, and that the appearance in particular of the name ʿĀʾisha is not such a backward growth (whereby according to Rubin the *isnād* is purely a literary tool,[117] not a credible indication of origin!).[118] This assertion by Rubin, however, is no longer tenable; it can now – owing to the meanwhile completely compiled and evaluated corpus of ʿUrwa traditions – be refuted. It has been shown, namely, that in the entire ʿUrwa corpus reports transmitted by al-Zuhrī on the authority of ʿUrwa are as a rule traced

112 Likewise Waraqa's expression of his strong trust in the Prophet and his divination regarding Muḥammad's eventual triumph, which Shoemaker calls a strongly Qurʾānised motif ("In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 312), is already found in this tradition of Hishām < ʿUrwa! Waraqa even wants to help the Prophet in the foreseen *jihād*!

113 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 313, 316, 317.

114 Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie,* 80 (= *The Biography of Muḥammad,* 51f.)

115 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 307f.

116 Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 234–238, 249–250.

117 Ibid., 237.

118 Shoemaker also expresses the same criticism with respect to a similar argumentation by Motzki. See below 47.

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back to ʿĀʾisha or (more seldom) to other informants as original transmitter(s), whereas corresponding traditions on the authority of Hishām usually end with ʿUrwa as original transmitter.[119] This, however, means that ʿUrwa had not, or at any rate very frequently had not, indicated his sources, and it is very probable that al-Zuhrī often elevated the ʿUrwa traditions to ʿĀʾisha or other informants. This could indeed have been done in good faith without any intent of deception; al-Zuhrī may have believed that the bulk of ʿUrwa's store of traditions goes back to his aunt ʿĀʾisha. Therefore the absence of ʿĀʾisha in the *isnād* of Hishām's ʿUrwa tradition (quoted by Ibn Saʿd) is indeed an indication of its old age and genuineness, and an even stronger piece of evidence for its independence of the al-Zuhrī transmission.

On the following point, however, Shoemaker is to be agreed with: The reconstruction of the reports that ʿUrwa circulated about the first revelation experience (and of all of his *sīra* traditions, indeed) must essentially be based on the transmission lines of al-Zuhrī and Hishām;[120] some other extant transmission lines, in particular the line Ibn Lahīʿa < Abū l-Aswad < ʿUrwa, are unusable for that purpose. Schoeler had described the Abū l-Aswad version from the start as 'extremely problematic'[121] (also for the reason that it is mixed with another version, that of Mūsā b. ʿUqba < al-Zuhrī); in Görke's and Schoeler's book, in which this line of transmission could be better assessed than in the earlier study, owing to the meanwhile completely compiled corpus of ʿUrwa traditions, Schoeler used this version only as an example of a problematical 'apocryphal' ʿUrwa tradition.[122] The puzzle represented by this line, however, is not solved. This is because the traditions with the *isnād* Ibn Lahīʿa < Abū l-Aswad < ʿUrwa clearly include, apart from additions, embellishments and miracle stories, also elements going back to ʿUrwa (i.e., found likewise in corresponding traditions of al-Zuhrī < ʿUrwa and Hišām < ʿUrwa), but which are deformed through later additions and alterations.

Shoemaker then deals with a hypothesis by means of which Schoeler – with reference to A. Sprenger[123] – had attempted to determine ʿUrwa's sources for his version of the revelation experience. As explained above, according to Hishām's tradition, ʿUrwa had not named any informant at all; and the fact that al-Zuhrī's tradition indicates ʿĀʾisha as ʿUrwa's source is based in all probability, pursuant to what was said above, on elevation of the *isnād*. Regarding Ibn Isḥāq's long version of the revelation experience (LV III; transmitted on the authority of

119 Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 16, 255 f.
120 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 314–317, in particular 317.
121 Quoted by Shoemaker, ibid., 314.
122 Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte,* 18 f., 33 f.
123 Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Moḥammad*, I, 339 f.

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Wahb, a client of the al-Zubayr family), which is so similar to al-Zuhrī's ʿUrwa version (LV I) that a common origin has been assumed for a long time already, Schoeler has expressed the following supposition:[124] The person indicated by Wahb as his informant, the *qāṣṣ* (popular story teller) ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr, who is to have recited the story at al-Zubayr's estate in the presence of ʿUrwa's brother ʿAbdallāh, is possibly the original narrator of the story and ultimately also ʿUrwa's source. This conjecture is supported by another, independent, *very well attested* short *awāʾil*-tradition according to which ʿUbayd is to have indicated Sura 96 as the first one revealed.[125] It must be emphasized that Schoeler termed this conclusion only a hypothesis.[126] He still holds it to be just a hypothesis, but a good one; also because it could be a prop for an interesting theory which should actually also appeal to Shoemaker: namely, the view espoused by M. Jones[127] and M. Cook[128] that the traditions on the life of Muḥammad are based in great part on material spread by *quṣṣās*.

Shoemaker's imputation that Schoeler would manipulate *isnāds*[129] has to be strongly rejected. As ʿUrwa, in transmitting the story of the first revelation experience, obviously *did not name his informant* (see above) – and in other cases also often did not do so – and as a story about the beginnings of the revelation, almost identical in content, is said to have been recited by a story-teller at the court of *ʿUrwa's brother* ʿAbdallāh, it immediately suggests itself that ʿUrwa's direct or indirect source for his narration might be found in this story of the said *qāṣṣ*. The intention is by no means to present this hypothesis as the only or 'correct' one.

Shoemaker's argument that Ibn Isḥāq's version from Ibn Wahb (LV III) is more recent than al-Zuhrī's version because (in terms of Rubin's thesis) it is even more 'Qurʾānized'[130] is unconvincing because it cannot be determined from which link in the transmission chain the Qurʾānic elements originate. They could have come from ʿUbayd, the story-teller, from Wahb, the transmitter from him, or from Ibn Isḥāq. It is likewise possible that all three were involved to different degrees in the embellishment of the story with Qurʾānic elements and allusions. An

124 Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie,* 98 f.; cf. the figure on p. 100b (= *The Biography of Muḥammad,* 66 f.; cf. the figure on p. 68).

125 Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie* 108 (= *The Biography of Muḥammad,* 74). The *awāʾil*-tradition in question (with the *isnād* n.n. < ʿAmr b. Dīnār < ʿUbayd) is quoted in Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1,1, 130 and elsewhere.

126 Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie,* 100 (= *The Biography of Muḥammad,* 67).

127 Jones, "Ibn Isḥāq and al-Wāqidī."

128 Cook, *Muhammad*, 66.

129 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 318.

130 Ibid., 319.

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early 'Qurʾānisation' has already been proven above for a tradition traceable with certainty back to ʿUrwa (appearance of an angel). Moreover, even if Shoemaker's assertion that Ibn Isḥāq's Wahb version might contain more Qurʾānic elements and references than al-Zuhrī's version was accurate, this could not be used as an argument for a later emergence; because al-Zuhrī's version, as well, contains many such elements and references. It even contains a distinctive Qurʾānic allusion not included in Wahb's version, the *zammilūnī* motif, i.e., the report that the Prophet had hurried to Khadīja and shouted: 'Cover me,' which heralds the revelation of Sura 73.[131] When Shoemaker writes: " ... Ibn Isḥāq's Wahb-account must explain the meaning of *taḥannuth* for its audience *while the al-Zuhrī version can take this knowledge for granted ...*" (italics GS),[132] this is clearly wrong: Al-Zuhrī's version[133] likewise includes an explanation of *al-taḥannuth* (*wa-huwa al-taʿabbud al-layālī dhawāt al-ʿadad*)!

There is evidence of the circumstance that the *iqraʾ* story already existed at the end of the first century – and indeed in the form transmitted by Ibn Isḥāq (LV III; appearance of the angel *during sleep*) –, and from then onwards was disseminated, possibly by *quṣṣāṣ,* 'throughout the world.' Schoeler has called attention to a highly interesting discovery made by the specialist in Nordic studies Klaus von See.[134] Von See had noted that a tradition in the Venerable Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* completed in 731, namely, the story about the monk Caedmon,[135] exhibits highly notable parallels to the *iqraʾ* story. These parallels are indeed so precise that von See argues that Bede's tradition must somehow be dependent on the *iqraʾ* story.[136] Shoemaker, however, with reference to Bell and Rubin, holds, to the contrary, that the similarities between the two reports can better be explained through the common influence of the biblical tradition. Besides that, the interval for any transmission to England would be too brief.[137]

With these assertions, Shoemaker misappropriates the entire line of argument furnished for this thesis by von See and, in his wake, Schoeler. Moreover, since Shoemaker fails to quote or paraphrase the parallel texts, it remains concealed from the reader that "none of the many parallels to Caedmon's vision believed up to now to be furnishable shows even remotely a similarity as does

131 Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf,* V, 322; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh,* I, 1147.
132 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 319.
133 ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf,* V, 322.
134 von See, "Caedmon and Muhammed."
135 Beda Venerabilis, 396–399.
136 von See, "Caedmon and Muhammed," 231–233.
137 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 320–321.

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Muḥammads vision."[138] This holds in particular for Isaiah 40, 6 (cf. also Isaiah 29, 12), i.e., the specific biblical verse envisaged by Bell, Rubin and Shoemaker to be the possible model of Muḥammad's first revelation experience. Let us take a look at the text!

In Isaiah 40, 6 it is said: "The voice said, 'Recite/read.' And I said: 'What shall I recite/read?'" (*qôl ômêr qᵉrâ wᵉ-âmar mâ äqrâ*) – "All flesh is grass [...]" Cf. Isaiah 29, 12: "But deliver the book to one who is unlearned, and say 'Read this' (*qᵉrā-nā zäh*), and he replies 'I cannot read' (*lô yâdaʿtī sêfär*) [...]"

Juxtaposed to this in the following is the relevant Bede tradition, the story of the unlearned laybrother Caedmon who received the gift of singing praise of God in the vernacular (i.e., in English). In slightly abbreviated form, it reads as follows:[139]

> As he (sc. Caedmon) gave himself there (sc. in the cattle sheds) [...] over to sleep, someone joined him in his dream, greeted him, called him by his name and said: Caedmon, sing something to me (*canta mihi aliquid*). But he answered: "I cannot sing [...] (*nescio, inquit, cantare*)." Thereupon said he who had spoken to him: "Yet you should nonetheless sing for me!" "What", said he, "should I sing (*Quid, inquit, debeo cantare*)?" And the other said: "Sing of the beginning of creation." Upon receiving this answer, he began forthwith to sing verses in praise of God, the Creator, verses he had never heard before [...]: "Now we shall praise the author of the kingdom of heaven, the power of the Creator and his guidance [...], how he [...] as originator of every miracle came forth, who first created the heavens as a roof for the children of mankind [...]"

In comparison, Ibn Isḥāq's version of Muḥammad's first revelation experience can be sumarised as follows:[140]

> One night, when Muḥammad exercised his religious practices in solitude atop Mount Ḥirāʾ, the angel Jibrīl appeared to him unexpectedly in his sleep and commanded him: "Read/recite". Muḥammad replied: "I cannot read/recite (*mā aqraʾu*)." After that, the angel pressed him and repeated his command, whereupon the future prophet said. "What shall I recite?" Then the Angel told him: "Recite in the name of your Lord who created [...]" (beginning of sūra 96), which Muḥammad repeated. Then the angel dissappeared and Muḥammad woke up.

Dealt with in this account and in the story of Caedmon's vision alike are 'initiation scenes', the conveyance of initial messages harking back to a divine commission. Caedmon's and Muḥammad's visions are the same in all of the essential details. Above all it is the succession of motifs that is exactly identical: The first demand

138 von See, "Caedmon and Muhammed," 231.
139 Beda Venerabilis, 398, 399 (IV, 24 [22]).
140 al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh,* I, 1149 f.; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat sayyidinā Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*, I, 151ff.

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of the heavenly messenger to sing/recite is followed by a refusal; the second demand is followed by the question as to 'what' should be sung/recited; the answer is the hymn/*sūra, which in both cases involves praise of the creator god*! In Isaiah 40, 6 by contrast, it is not a matter of an initiation scene, an initial revelation. Moreover, it is not a heavenly messenger that is speaking, but only a voice; and the single demand is followed by a text which rather than extolling the creator god has a completely different subject ('All flesh is grass!').

It is quite possible, or even probable, that the motifs of the Isaiah verse(s) – particularly the invitation of the voice to recite and the subsequent reaction of the Prophet – inspired the story of Muḥammad's first revelation experience. And it is natural to assume that Bede knew the Isaiah verse(s). However, it is to be ruled out that the Islamic tradition and Bede, independent of each other, developed from these verses stories that are identical in so many motifs and details, and even in the succession of motifs. So, only the assumption that the Islamic narration somehow found its way to England and influenced the Caedmon vision is left.

One possible manner of the conveyance has been long known. Von See, who here follows the historian E. Rotter,[141] first of all calls attention to the historical situation:[142] When Bede wrote his *Historia*, the rapid advance of Islam in Europe was '*the* main topic' in the Christian Occident, and at the close of his work Bede makes explicit mention of the Arab threat (V, 23). Following Rotter, von See furthermore points out that after years of warlike confrontations between Muslims and Christians the years 726–730 were marked by reciprocal efforts towards an understanding – one of the external signs thereof was the marriage of the Berber emir Manu(n)za with a daughter of Duke Eudo of Aquitaine.[143] "In verbal communications – particularly during such periods of peace – knowledge of religious texts and customs could effortlessly have been passed back and forth."[144] The agents for the widespread dissemination of the story into Christian Europe would likely have been *quṣṣāṣ*, popular preachers and story tellers who crossed the Strait of Gibraltar with the Muslim armies.

Therefore there is still no plausible alternative to deriving the European Caedmon story from Muḥammad's initial revelation experience. It is not enough to assert 'the Bible's clear impact' in shaping both stories; whoever makes such a claim must also explain how a motif was independently spun in two locations

141 Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*.
142 Ibid., 228.
143 Ibid.; von See, "Caedmon and Muhammed," 232.
144 Ibid.

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into the same story. This type of explanation is what SHOEMAKER owes us. Bede's story thus remains an important piece of evidence that the Arabic story – in the form which was to find its classical design through Ibn Isḥāq (appearance of an angel *in a dream*) – existed already decades before the redaction of Ibn Isḥāq's *K. al-Maghāzī*, and had spread throughout the world in this form.

The ʿĀʾisha Scandal (Gregor Schoeler)

In discussing the second component of Schoeler's monograph, the story of the ʿĀʾisha scandal, SHOEMAKER is much less harsh in taking SCHOELER to task than in his treatment of the first revelation experience.[145] Surprisingly, he follows SCHOELER here in every essential point. He holds it to be probable that the story was passed along at the end of the first century by ʿUrwa, and considers it at least to be possible that ʿUrwa got it from his aunt, ʿĀʾisha.[146] The rumors about ʿĀʾisha's infidelity thus belong – according to SHOEMAKER – "to the earliest layers of Islamic Tradition."[147]

The argument that convinced SHOEMAKER in this case was SCHOELER's observation that "the main outlines of the story *go against* the usual pattern" (later Sunni tradition looked to ʿĀʾisha as 'the mother of the faithful'), and "that the entire story (like the story of the Satanic verses, f.i.) must have been a matter of extreme awkwardness for the Prophet, something that his disciples would hardly have invented."[148] The 'criterion of embarrassment' (or 'dissimilarity'), according to SHOEMAKER, is indeed also a cornerstone in the Life-of-Jesus research. By the way, SHOEMAKER also concurs with SCHOELER on the evaluation of the story of the Satanic verses (which is not in the ʿUrwa corpus), which SCHOELER holds to be historical,[149] whereas J. BURTON, R. HOYLAND and U. RUBIN believe the story to be unhistorical.[150] Rubin would see it as an absolute intensification of the story of Muḥammad's total isolation.[151]

SHOEMAKER then vacillates back and forth as to whether he should also agree with SCHOELER on the assumption that the events reported by ʿUrwa about the

145 SHOEMAKER, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 321–326.
146 Ibid., 325.
147 Ibid., 322, 324.
148 SCHOELER, Charakter und Authentie, 164 (= *The Biography of Muḥammad,* 113); SHOEMAKER, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 322.
149 SCHOELER, "Review of Uri Rubin: *The Eye of the Beholder,*" 220.
150 Cf. SHOEMAKER, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 322–324.
151 RUBIN, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 156–166; cf. 162.

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scandal story did in fact take place in the way they were described.[152] He finally decides that ʿUrwa's account might indeed mirror the event of the accusation with some precision, and he even thinks it possible that ʿĀʾisha herself was the original informant.[153] After having taken this step forward, he immediately takes a half-step back in that he expresses doubt that the account of the Qurʾānic revelation, by means of which ʿĀʾisha was ultimately acquitted (near the end of the scandal story), could be a later embellishment by ʿUrwa. In closing the discussion, Shoemaker nonetheless notes: "In any case, the ʿĀʾisha scandal does indeed appear to be an especially early tradition, attesting that … in certain instances it may be possible to isolate some basic details that have a rather high level of historical credibility."[154] The like of it hasn't been expressed by any sceptic at all up until now!

After this statement, what nonetheless comes at the end of the chapter is yet again – as expected – a *caveat*: Shoemaker remarks, first, that "Schoeler's painstaking analysis of the various *matns* and the accompanying *isnāds* serves merely to confirm in this instance what can otherwise be determined through applying standard criteria of historical criticism," and, second, that the historical 'kernel' yielded by the study is quite lean.

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152 Citing Robinson's remark: "[…] in societies undergoing rapid social and political change (such as early Islam), oral history tends to be much less accurate," Shoemaker wants to "provide a needed counterweight to Schoeler's general trust in the reliability of 'early' oral transmission" ("In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 325). – While Robinson's assessment may be valid as a general rule (cf. the introductory quotations in Schoeler, *The Biography of Muḥammad*, XIII–XVI), we are able, in the present case, to determine the nature and reliability of the transmission (namely, to and from ʿUrwa) in a more specific and more accurate way. It is beyond dispute that ʿĀʾisha's accounts, in particular that of her scandal story, reflect ʿĀʾisha's subjective versions of these events, but it is also clear that she reported, in the case of her scandal for sure, an event that actually took place. ʿUrwa's reports – mostly based on eye witness and earwitness reports – may have been selected by his memory and interpreted and coloured by his personality, but they are not made out of thin air. (They display almost no miracle stories! cf. above 22). We can safely assume that they give the general outline (or basic line) of the events correctly. The nature and the reliability of the transmission from ʿUrwa to his students can even often be discerned accurately: as in many cases we have reports from both of his main transmitters, al-Zuhrī and Hishām b. ʿUrwa, we are able to compare these reports. It is true that they often display a considerable degree of variation. But, by establishing the intersection (shared material) of these versions we can find out what ʿUrwa actually reported about an event.

153 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 324–326. – An important piece of evidence for this, not mentioned by Shoemaker, is the fact that in this case not only al-Zuhrī, but also Hishām, in a rare exception, says that ʿUrwa has received this story from ʿĀʾisha! In Hishām's traditions on the authority of his father, the *isnād*, as a rule, ends with ʿUrwa (see above 27f.).

154 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 325.

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As to the first point, it can be said that it is for the story of the ʿĀʾisha scandal in particular that the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis has proven to be an excellent tool. Through attention to the *isnāds*, the corpus could be structured into ʿUrwa traditions according to al-Zuhrī and those according to Hishām b. ʿUrwa; here the *matn*-analysis corroborated in full what the *isnāds* 'assert', namely, that both tradition complexes must have a common source, namely, ʿUrwa's lectures. In the absence of *isnāds*, how could it be known that the tradition comes from ʿUrwa, which even Shoemaker doesn't doubt? And how could it be known that al-Zuhrī and Hishām transmitted them further?

According to the *isnāds*, Hishām relied solely on his father's reports, while al-Zuhrī indicates having questioned further informants for his version. The *matn*-analysis confirms this: Al-Zuhrī gives more material than Hishām, particularly the story of the lost necklace; in addition, he gives the names of many persons who remain anonymous in Hishām's version.[155] ʿUrwa's very short letter to the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik regarding the scandal story[156] was transmitted further by Hishām, according to the *isnād*; and the content indeed shows that the short text exhibits only features that distinguish the Hishām recension.[157] It is particularly in the case of this letter that Shoemaker's thesis deeming ʿUrwa's letters forged is absolutely unconvincing; why would a forger, based on a genuine, detailed report by Hishām – even Shoemaker considers it authentic – have produced a short version (consisting of three lines only!) in which many essential elements of the story are missing and in which the respondent (ʿUrwa) is quite obviously merely responding to a specific (incriminating) question of the caliph?

Furthermore, even forgeries can often be determined by means of the *isnād-cum-matn*-analysis; other versions of the story, attributed by the *isnāds* to Ibn ʿUmar, Ibn ʿAbbās, Abū Hurayra and other standard traditionists, could clearly be recognized, through confronting the texts with those of the 'genuine' versions

155 Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie,* 145–148 (= *The Biography of Muḥammad,* 100–102). This is also a strong argument against Shoemaker's reservation expressed elsewhere that Hishām's versions might be based on the al-Zuhrī versions and dependent on them (see 38 ff.); that is absolutely out of the question here. If any version here could be dependent on another, then it is more likely al-Zuhrī's comprehensive version of Hishām's terser one! But this, too, is improbable; Hishām has special material as against al-Zuhrī, and several characteristically divergent motifs.

156 Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie,* 149–150 (= *The Biography of Muḥammad,* 103–104); Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 155 f.

157 While in al-Zuhrī's version, ʿĀʾisha mentions only ʿAbdallāh b. Ubayy as one of the slanderers, in Hishām's version, she lists in addition the following culprits: Ḥassān b. Thābit, Misṭaḥ b. ʿUthātha, Ḥamna bt. Jaḥsh. In the letter which belongs to the Hishām recension, the same names occur, as expected; however, ʿAbdallāh b. Ubayy is absent from the list.

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(according to al-Zuhrī and Hishām b. ʿUrwa), as dependent on them and counterfeit.[158]

Finally, another serious contradiction in SHOEMAKER's argumentation should be mentioned.[159] Whereas at the end of this chapter and of his conclusion he would grant viability to *matn*-analyses only, at other places he insists on pure *isnād*-analyses, invoking one of JUYNBOLL's methodological principles, that a common link (CL) can only be identified as authentic when at least three transmission lines emanate from him going directly to at least three different partial common links (PCLs) who, according to the *isnāds*, also transmitted the tradition in question to at least three pupils, and so forth. He overlooks the advantages of the combined approach. Unlike JUYNBOLL's pure *isnād*-analysis, an *isnād-cum-matn* analysis – particularly when a tradition complex is as widely attested as the scandal story and when the relevant reports display as long and elaborate texts as in this case[160] – can come up with safe assumptions about the existence of a genuine CL, even if only two transmission lines link the CL with two different transmitters of whom the texts show that their transmissions are independent of each other.

As to the seond point, however, SHOEMAKER is indeed right: We will have to reconcile ourselves to the fact that only few historical facts about the life of Muḥammad can be determined with certainty or high probability. This is no different in the Life of Jesus research! Nevertheless, much has been gained from what little we have: The generally recognized historical kernel contained in Islamic tradition has been expanded through evaluation of the ʿUrwa corpus and is no longer restricted to the Constitution of Medina (and, possibly, the story of the Satanic verses) alone.

One accomplishment derived from having compiled the ʿUrwa corpus and having utilised the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis is surely also that many theories brought forward by 'sceptics' have now become even less probable or irrelevant, like, for instance, that the Hijra originally referred not to an emigration from Mecca to Medina, but to an emigration to Palestine,[161] or the – truly absurd – assertion that there was no prophet named Muḥammad. Another accomplishment could be that in the future we will be spared the corpulent Muḥammad biographies the authors of which draw on late compilations exclusively, paraphras-

158 SCHOELER, *Charakter und Authentie,* 154–158, 161–166 (= *The Biography of Muḥammad,* 106–109, 111–114).

159 Cf. above 5f. and below 47f.

160 The scandal story is altogether the longest report in the Islamic tradition!

161 CRONE and COOK, *Hagarism*, 24f.; more cautiously presented by COOK, *Muhammad*, 76.

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ing the reports of the compilers (Ibn Isḥāq, al-Wāqidī, etc.) and adding to it what just crosses their minds – as already happened with the Muḥammad biographies in the 19th century.

Al-Ḥudaybiya (Andreas Görke)

In the account of al-Ḥudaybiya, Shoemaker rather surprisingly comes up with completely new arguments, not related to the texts at all. At first he correctly characterizes the situation of the sources: there are many versions going back to al-Zuhrī that "offer compelling evidence that an early version of the story can with some confidence be assigned to al-Zuhrī."[162] He also correctly mentions that the Abū l-Aswad tradition is problematic and "cannot be used to assign the traditions of al-Ḥudaybiya to ʿUrwa,"[163] thus making the possible association of the story with ʿUrwa dependent of the traditions on his son Hishām. It is likewise true that the version of the story of al-Ḥudaybiya transmitted by Hishām from ʿUrwa is not attested frequently. In fact, there are only two long versions of this tradition. However, in the study of the complete corpus of ʿUrwa traditions, a couple of additional references to this tradition can be found. Thus for instance al-Bayhaqī, Ibn Kathīr, and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī all refer to Hishām's tradition, as he gives a date for the event (in Ramaḍān/Shawwāl – one of the rare incidences where we find a dating, though without a year, in traditions ascribed to ʿUrwa), which is in contradiction to the later Muslim tradition, in which the event is dated to Dhū l-Qaʿda.[164] Thus while the long tradition is only attested in two sources, it seems to have been well known among Muslim scholars. What could be adduced in favour of the authenticity of Hishām's tradition is the fact that the sources in which it is included are rather early collections and that they are in close textual agreement, so that we must assume a common source. One of the sources is the *Kitāb al-Kharāj* of Abū Yūsuf (ca. 113/729–182/798), who according to the Muslim biographical tradition heard traditions directly from Hishām b. ʿUrwa. As Hishām is commonly assumed to have died in 146/763, it is not unlikely that Abū Yūsuf indeed transmitted traditions on the authority of Hishām.

Shoemaker, however, does not care that Abū Yūsuf may have heard the tradition directly from Hishām but instead argues that "it would seem that both Abū Yūsuf and Ibn Abī Shayba encountered a tradition about al-Ḥudaybiya that

162 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra,*" 326.
163 Ibid., 326.
164 Cf. Görke and Schoeler, *Die ältesten Berichte*, 192.

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was attributed to Hishām ibn ʿUrwa" and "it seems quite possible, for instance, that someone else composed this narrative on the basis of al-Zuhrī's account and placed it into circulation under Hishām's name sometime before its discovery by Abū Yūsuf and Ibn Abī Shayba."[165] How and when this "encounter" or "discovery" should have taken place, we are not told. Should we, on the one hand, assume that they both found ("discovered") a written tradition, but did not hear it from anybody? This would be rather unusual in the Muslim system of transmission, which apparently from a very early time was based on study circles and the combination of oral and written transmission. If on the other hand we assume that someone invented the tradition and then passed it on, why should both Abū Yūsuf and Ibn Abī Shayba independently omit this person's name? Thus, this possibility is extremely speculative and leaves us with more questions than answers.

Possibly, Shoemaker saw this himself, as he later argues that "it is no less plausible that Hishām himself composed this narrative on the basis of al-Zuhrī's account, eliding his debt to this source and attributing the story directly to his father instead."[166] Thus, while Shoemaker might be willing to accept the ascription to Hishām as correct, he now doubts whether the transmission of Hishām from ʿUrwa can be trusted. And, according to him, this "possibility [of falsely attributing traditions to his father] applies to other traditions bearing his name as well."[167] While Shoemaker's main argument against the reliability of Hishām's transmission from ʿUrwa to this point was the comparably limited attestation of these versions, he now attempts to discard them altogether. To this end, however, he does not look at the texts to see to what extent they support such an assumption, but instead he looks at the death dates of Hishām, al-Zuhrī, and ʿUrwa and on general life expectancy in the European (sic) Middle Ages. His argument is that when we assume a life expectancy of slightly over 50 years for men who had reached the age of 25, as calculated by a statistical analyses of medieval archives, and assume that these data are roughly comparable to medieval Arabia, then Hishām (d. 146/763) can only have been a child when his father ʿUrwa died (about 94/712). Therefore he is likely to have had the knowledge not directly from his father, but rather from his father's students as al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742). Moreover, even if the traditions were not taken directly from al-Zuhrī, al-Zuhrī's teaching must have influenced them.[168] It need not be discussed at this place whether the

165 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 327.
166 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid., 328.

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data from the European Middle Ages can be transferred to medieval Arabia, but to draw conclusions from an average value to a single case is always problematic. As it is an average value, it includes both those persons who died at a considerably younger age and those who grew considerably older. Even with an average life expectancy of around 50 years, there will have been quite a number of people who lived for more than 75 or 80 years. This assumption is corroborated when we have a look at what was considered to be old in the Middle Ages. Shulamith Shahar studied the conception of "old" in the works of several authors and legal texts of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.[169] She observed that for several authors "old age" begins at 60 or 70, with some only after 72.[170] In many legal texts of the time, the age of exemption from military or administrative duties is set at either 60 or 70.[171] She also discusses retirement of higher clergy from their positions or possible exemptions from non-salaried public duties, and finds that in the 11th to 13th century (the data that Shoemaker adduces are from the 14th century) retirement from such positions was apparently impossible before the age of 60 or 70, and exemptions from public duties were usually only granted after reaching the late 60s or 70.[172] Among the persons she studied, some reached the age of 89 or even 95, and several more examples of persons reaching at least their 80s could easily be adduced.

Coming back to the Muslim tradition, it is quite feasible that it were the people who happened to live longer who became important transmitters, just because of their greater age.[173] According to the Muslim biographical tradition, Hishām is said to have been born around 61/681, which would make him about 82 at the time of his death – admittedly most probably much longer than the average life expectancy, but not at all impossible.

If we leave aside the speculation about Hishām's age, how far do the texts ascribed to Hishām < ʿUrwa and al-Zuhrī < ʿUrwa support Shoemaker's thesis? Firstly, it has to be remarked that the different versions traced back to al-Zuhrī < ʿUrwa differ considerably. There are a number of elements that occur in only one or two of the three longer recensions (Ibn Isḥāq, Maʿmar and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz); i.e., only Ibn Isḥāq mentions that ʿAlī actually wrote the contract, the number of the participants differs between 700, 1300–1900, and 1800 in the respective versions, the order of the delegates differs, there are differences in the

169 Shahar, "Who were Old in the Middle Ages?," 313–341.
170 Ibid., 317–319.
171 Ibid., 329–335.
172 Ibid., 337–339.
173 See also Motzki, "*Quo vadis Ḥadīṯ*-Forschung? 62–64 (Engl. transl. "Whither *Ḥadīth* Studies?," 69–70).

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actual clauses of the treaty, etc. The crucial question is how the version ascribed to Hishām < ʿUrwa relates to these versions. At first glance, it seems that the Hishām version could indeed just be another variant of the al-Zuhrī version in that it shares some elements with only one of the different recensions – i.e., it mentions that the Aḥābīsh were offered *khazīr*, which is otherwise only mentioned by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz < al-Zuhrī, or it includes the discussion of Muḥammad with Abū Bakr on which way to proceed, which is recorded by Maʿmar and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, but not by Ibn Isḥāq. A closer examination of the material, however, reveals that the versions traced back to al-Zuhrī despite their differences are much closer to each other both in structure and in wording than any of these version is to the one(s) traced back to Hishām. Only in the Hishām version do we find a date, and only here al-Miqdād, who claims that in contrast to the Jews, the Muslims would not leave their prophet alone, figures in the narrative. In Hishām's version there are fewer delegates mentioned than in the versions of al-Zuhrī. In all al-Zuhrī versions, there are four delegates, of which three are named in all versions – Budayl b. Warqāʾ, Mikraz b. Ḥafṣ and ʿUrwa b. Masʿūd. In Ibn Isḥāq's and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's versions, the fourth delegate is given as al-Ḥulays b. ʿAlqama, while in Maʿmar's version it is a man from the Banū Kināna. In all versions al-Suhayl b. ʿAmr comes to sign the treaty. Although the order of the delegates differs, they all have a specific role – one is identified by Muḥammad as a pious man, another as a wicked man, one has a dispute with Abū Bakr etc. In Hishām's version, in contrast, there are only two delegates, one of the Banū Ḥulays (with a similar role as the pious al-Ḥulays in al-Zuhrī's version), and ʿUrwa b. Masʿūd, before Mikraz b. Ḥafṣ and al-Suhayl b. ʿAmr both come to conclude the treaty. The whole story of the delegates is much briefer and less developed than in any of al-Zuhrī's versions. Al-Zuhrī's versions also have elements which are not found in Hishām's version, as the protests of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar against the signing of the treaty. Taking all the evidence together, it seems unlikely that the Hishām version is just another variant of al-Zuhrī's teachings. As it differs more from the versions traced back to al-Zuhrī than these differ among each other, it is more likely that it is indeed an independent tradition (as the *isnād* indicates) and that it has a common source, namely the teaching of ʿUrwa.

Conclusion (Andreas Görke)

Shoemaker raised a number of important points regarding the authenticity of the *sīra* traditions traced back to ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr, and in some points he is undoubtebly right: it is true, for instance, that the *sīra* traditions – not only those of ʿUrwa, but *sīra* traditions in general – have been preserved in considerably fewer

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versions than many legal traditions. This is not very surprising, however, as from the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries many more legal and *ḥadīth* works have been preserved than historical works or works specifically dealing with the life of Muḥammad. As only a few *ḥadīth* collections include sections on Muḥammad's biography, the number of possible sources in which *sīra* traditions were likely to be included is much smaller than the number of sources which comprise mainly legal traditions. Thus, we simply have fewer versions for almost any *sīra* tradition than we have for most legal traditions, and this makes *isnād* analysis more difficult.

But Shoemaker's conclusion, that therefore using *isnād*-critical methods on *sīra* traditions is less likely to yield relevant results, is unfounded, or possibly based on a too strict focus on the *isnād*. While it is true that usually there are fewer versions of *sīra* traditions than of legal traditions, on the other hand, many *sīra* traditions are much longer than legal traditions. This, too, is not surprising, as *sīra* traditions in general needed to provide a context and some line of events, while legal traditions can (and often do) only contain a legal maxim without mentioning any context. The longer a tradition is, however, the easier it is to compare different versions regarding contents, wording, or the line of events. Thus while in legal studies there are usually many versions of a tradition but the differences between the versions are often rather small, in *sīra* traditions it is much easier to see whether one version can be derived from another or whether they more likely have a common source.

This is an aspect that is totally disregarded by Shoemaker, who only argues with the *isnāds*. But as can be demonstrated, very often a careful comparison of the *matns* can reveal if a text is dependent on another and could indeed be derived from it or not. In several cases a careful comparison of *matns* thus immediately vitiates Shoemaker's speculative assumptions on the possible invention of different variants of a text. Insisting, as Shoemaker does, on Juynboll's criteria for dense network of transmitters may be useful when focusing on the *isnād*; however, when taking into account the variants of the *matn*, secure statements about the interdepencency of texts can already be made with a less dense network of transmitters.

Shoemaker also fails to see several of the other benefits of the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis. With this method for instance, it is possible to detect later insertions and transformations of a tradition. The method aims not only at reconstructing earlier layers of a tradition, but also at studying its transformation process. Thus by using this method it can be shown that attempts at establishing a chronology of events begin only in the generation after ʿUrwa, scarcely only with Hishām, slightly more with al-Zuhrī, and systematically only in the generation of Ibn Isḥāq. Observations such as this one cannot be achieved by resorting to *matn* criticism alone.

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Employing criteria of 'embarrassment' and 'dissimilarity' indeed may reveal 'authentic' traditions, but the exclusive focus on traditions that are in conflict with the later Muslim view or that present Muḥammad or other early Muslims in a negative light necessarily results in a distorted image of Muḥammad and the development of Islam.[174]

Shoemaker is undoubtedly correct in his assessment that the amount of 'historical' information gathered using the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis is small compared to the voluminous and detailed depictions of the later Islamic sources, but in this he is in line with Görke and Schoeler.[175] In his main points of criticism regarding the *sīra* traditions of ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr, however, Shoemaker is wrong: There are several traditions that can convincingly be traced back to ʿUrwa, and these traditions contain historical information that significantly exceeds what can be gained by *matn* criticism alone.

III. The Traditions About the Murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq (Harald Motzki)

Shoemaker's description of Harald Motzki's methods and publications must be critically reviewed. To start with, in his introduction[176] Shoemaker approvingly cross-references the views of the exponents of "hermeneutics of suspicion," such as Goldziher, Schacht, Cook and Juynboll, yet either conceals[177] or plays down the substantial criticism of their premises and methods expressed by Motzki, Schoeler, Görke and others.[178] When describing Motzki's method, Shoemaker writes: "Motzki, however, has argued for removing some of Juynboll's safeguards, seeing them as overly restrictive. In particular, he contends that the single strands excluded by Juynboll should be taken into account, en-

174 Cf. Fück, "The Role of Traditionalism in Islam," 16; Görke, "Prospects and Limits," 141–142.
175 Cf. Görke, "Prospects and Limits," 148–149.
176 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra,*" 257–269.
177 Ibid., 264 f., note 17.
178 Motzki's critique of the views expressed by Goldziher, Schacht and Cook can be found in *Die Anfänge der islamischen Jurisprudenz* (Engl. transl. *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence*); "Der *fiqh* des -Zuhrī," 1–44 (Engl. transl. "The Jurisprudence of Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī," 1–46); "Dating Muslim Traditions. A Survey," 204–253. See also Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie* (Engl. transl. *The Biography of Muhammad*) and Görke "Eschatology, History, and the Common Link," 179–208.

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abling him to use such *isnāds* to establish a much earlier common link for certain traditions."[179]

Shoemaker fails to mention that Motzki has provided detailed reasons explaining his divergence from Juynboll's method. Juynboll excluded traditions that are attested to by only *single strand isnāds*: He considered them unhistorical, i.e., unusable for a historical reconstruction, because he based his dating solely on the *isnāds*. This made sense for his approach. Motzki, on the other hand, uses not only the *isnāds* but also the texts (*matns*) of the traditions. Under certain conditions, which are explained below, these texts enable him to take the *single strand* traditions into account as well.[180]

Motzki's arguments in support of his approach are not even discussed by Shoemaker: He simply dismisses them as "not persuasive," relying on critical remarks by Christopher Melchert that he does not verify. Melchert objects to Motzki's study "Quo vadis Ḥadīṯ-Forschung," which, inter alia, advocates the use of *single strand* traditions and also introduces the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis, because, according to Melchert, no clear and meaningful text can be attributed to the supposed common link, Nāfiʿ: "Nāfiʿ is quoted every way. Motzki talks of identifying a kernel of historical truth, but if that is taken to be whatever element is common to his multiple versions, it seems to be normally so small as to be virtually worthless."[181]

Melchert's criticism, however, is unjustified. An examination of the *zakāt al-fiṭr* tradition with the aid of the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis shows that Nāfiʿ is the real common link. This conclusion is not undermined by the facts that it is possible to reconstruct several text variants traceable to Nāfiʿ and that the text common to the main variants is rudimentary in comparison with the variants. Although the text, which is certainly attributable to Nāfiʿ, is rudimentary compared to some traditions from students, it is definitely a comprehensible tradition: "The Messenger of God made the almsgiving of the fast-breaking (*zakāt/ṣadaqat al-fiṭr*) a duty, one *sāʿ* dates or one *sāʿ* barley for each freeman or slave." This text contains three essential elements: the obligation of *zakāt al-fiṭr*, the type and quantity of alms, and the persons obliged to distribute alms. This text is not "virtually worthless."

The evidence pointing to Nāfiʿ as the author of the rudimentary text of the tradition is not undermined by the fact that the traditions traced back to Nāfiʿ's

179 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 266.
180 This is explained in Motzki, "*Quo vadis Ḥadīṯ*-Forschung?," 40–80; 193–231 (Engl. transl. "Whither *Ḥadīth* Studies?," 47–124), a study quoted by Shoemaker in this context.
181 Melchert, "The Early History of Islamic Law," 293–324, esp. 303.

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students contain supplements to this text or render only snippets of it. The divergences in the traditions of Nāfiʿ's students can be explained by editing: on the one hand by Nāfiʿ himself – in the course of his teaching career he may have expanded the original version several times or quoted it only partially on occasion – and, on the other hand, by his students, who supplemented the original text with further details and specifications, or transmitted only parts of the original text. Although it is not possible to establish with any certainty who was responsible for the divergences, this is not an argument against attributing the rudimentary text to Nāfiʿ.

Melchert's arguments therefore do not vitiate the usefulness of the rule followed by the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis, according to which text versions substantiated only by *single strand isnāds* can also be included in the investigation if these texts diverge from those of the partial common link (PCL) transmitters. Shoemaker's conclusion that "it seems preferable that the more cautious principles set forth by Juynboll should remain in place"[182] is therefore based on unsound arguments. Juynboll's principles hold only for the pure *isnād* analysis for which he formulated them and not for the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis in which the *matn* is just as important as the *isnād*.

Shoemaker's brief description of the *isnād-cum-matn* method[183] advocated by Motzki is correct. This cannot, however, be said of Shoemaker's bibliographic references. He quotes Motzki's *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools* (Leiden/Boston 2002) and notes that this is the work in which the method "has been most thoroughly applied."[184] In this work, however, Motzki does not use the *isnād-cum-matn* method, which relates to single traditions or textually interrelated tradition complexes. Instead he applies the source reconstruction method, which is *not* based on single traditions but on a multiplicity of textually discrete traditions attributed in a source or collection to one and the same transmitter. A detailed description and rationale for the *isnād-cum-matn* method was initially provided by Motzki in "*Quo vadis Ḥadīṯ*-Forschung" (1996) and in "The Prophet and the Cat" (1998).[185]

Shoemaker admits, on the one hand, that Motzki "has utilized this method with much success in various studies of early Islamic tradition" and calls Motzki's datings of traditions to the early second century H. "persuasive" and

182 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 266.
183 Ibid., 266.
184 Ibid., 266, note 23.
185 *Die Anfänge* and "Der Fiqh des -Zuhrī," which Shoemaker quotes, contain only the beginnings of an *isnād-cum-matn* analysis.

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"convincing."[186] On the other hand, he criticizes Motzki's attempts to date traditions back to *before* the common links of the early second century, i.e., into the first century, as "occasionally [...] rather speculative," "more conjectural" and therefore "far less persuasive,"[187] citing Melchert and Robert Hoyland in support of this view.[188] Melchert, however, correctly describes Motzki's own characterization of his conclusions on the history of a tradition *before* the common link as hypothetical rather than certain.[189]

Motzki sees the last two decades preceding the death of the common link as a tolerably certain *terminus post quem*. He does, however, challenge the assumption of Schacht and his followers that it is generally impossible to trace a tradition beyond the last decades of the common link's lifetime back to the first century. It does not makes sense to Motzki to assume that all of the common links invented the informants they name or that all their traditions are based on "rumors and legends" that, in Shoemaker's opinion, were put into circulation by "anonymous individuals."[190] Motzki thinks it is possible that common links were able to at least partly remember the person from whom they heard something concerning a *tābiʿ*, *ṣahābī* or the Prophet, or that they wrote down the name(s) of their informant(s) together with the information received from them. In these cases, the common link would be seen as a *terminus ante quem*. On the other hand, Motzki does not rule out the possibility that a common link no longer knew whom he had received the tradition from and simply named a person who seemed to be the most probable source. Motzki also takes into account the possibility that common links themselves invented the content and *isnād* of traditions.[191] It might be difficult to find out what really happened but there are cases where the evidence points to one of these possibilities.

Motzki thus acknowledges that statements regarding the provenance and content of a tradition prior to the common link must necessarily be more tentative than statements regarding the identification of the common link and the texts traced to him. Nonetheless, Motzki does make a case for not discarding, *a priori*, the possibility of finding out more about the history of a pre-common link tradition *based on the available evidence*.[192] Insights gained in this way are more

186 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra,*" 266–267.
187 Ibid., 267.
188 Ibid., note 24.
189 Melchert, "The Early History," 302 (not 301, as Shoemaker has it).
190 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra,*" 333, 336.
191 This problem has been addressed by Motzki in several publications, e.g., *Die Anfänge*, "Der Fiqh des -Zuhrī," "*Quo vadis*" and "The Prophet and the Cat."
192 The similarity to texts or customs of other religious traditions can also be an indication.

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grounded than Shoemaker's speculation that the transmission of a common link was based on "rumors and legends" circulated by "anonymous individuals"[193] or that it was invented by the common link himself.[194]

As has been seen, the introduction to Shoemaker's critical review of Motzki's study "The Murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq: On the Origin and Reliability of some *Maghāzī*-Reports" (2000), already hints at weaknesses in Shoemaker's arguments that become more obvious as one proceeds in reading the review.

Al-Zuhrī's Version

There are several stories about the murder of the Jew Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq. Motzki demonstrates through an *isnād-cum-matn* analysis of the numerous variants that al-Zuhrī propagated one of these stories. He is clearly the common link in the *isnāds* and the common source of this version.[195] Shoemaker accepts Motzki's result as "very likely"[196] because of the "complex transmission history" of the variants of the story in question, i.e., he accepts it solely because of the variegated *isnāds* that accompany these variants.

Motzki attempts to go even further: he tries to determine al-Zuhrī's source for these stories because he sees the common link primarily as the first systematic propagator of a tradition, and not necessarily as its forger.[197] Identification of the source proves to be difficult because the transmitters from al-Zuhrī give different names for his informant: ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Kaʿb b. Mālik, ʿAbdallāh b. Kaʿb b. Mālik, Ibn Kaʿb b. Mālik and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbdallāh b. Kaʿb b. Mālik. These differences in names led Motzki to the obvious conclusion that al-Zuhrī did not always designate his source by the same name. However, each case concerns a son or grandson of Kaʿb b. Mālik. Motzki therefore identifies Kaʿb b. Mālik's children as al-Zuhrī's likely sources for his version of the incident. Motzki points to two pieces of evidence that support this argument. Firstly, it is noticeable that al-Zuhrī's *isnād* is defective in most of the variants, i.e., it ends with his informant's name(s) and does not name an eyewitness to the event or, at least, a Com-

193 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra,*" 333, 336.
194 Motzki has addressed the problem of a tradition's history before its circulation by the common link in his studies "Der Prophet und die Schuldner," 1–83 and "*Ar-radd ʿalā r-radd*," 147–163 (Engl. transl. "The Prophet and the Debtors" and "*Al-Radd ʿalā l-Radd*," 125–230). Shoemaker does not mention these publications.
195 Motzki, "The Murder," 177–179, 190–207.
196 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra,*" 332.
197 See the references in note 191.

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panion of the Prophet who may have heard the story from an eyewitness. Secondly, the information from Islamic sources says the Kaʿb b. Mālik family was part of the same clan as Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq's murderers, namely, the Banū Salima.

Shoemaker vehemently rejects Motzki's identification of al-Zuhrī's sources. He has two objections: Firstly, the differences in names "*perhaps reflect* [ital. HM] the efforts of later transmitters seeking to 'grow' the *isnād* back to al-Zuhrī's source" and secondly, "the early authors of Islamic history [...] *may* themselves *have invented* [ital. HM] this connection between the Kaʿb family and Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq's murder."[198]

Shoemaker's objections are unconvincing. Who are the "later transmitters" and the "early authors" of Islamic history? Are they al-Zuhrī's students, later transmitters or the compilers of anthologies in which the variant traditions are found? Are Shoemaker's vague speculations reasonable in light of the names evidenced by multiple variants of the tradition?

Motzki rules out any *backwards growth* of the *isnāds* because one would then expect the *isnāds* to extend back to an eyewitness to the event, which is not the case. Using the *isnāds*, he dates the difference in names to no later than the generation of al-Zuhrī's students. Motzki assumes that al-Zuhrī himself rather than his students was responsible for the difference in names, arguing as follows: Al-Zuhrī's informant was presumably ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbdallāh, Kaʿb b. Mālik's grandson, who transmitted from both his father, ʿAbdallāh b. Kaʿb, and his uncle, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Kaʿb. Al-Zuhrī was probably unsure from which of the two ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbdallāh heard the story, or he assumed that both of Kaʿb b. Mālik's sons told it in a similar way. This is why he sometimes indicated his direct informant for the story, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, as his source but at other times ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's presumed sources.[199]

Shoemaker's conclusions concerning al-Zuhrī's sources are inconsistent. On the one hand he writes: "There is no reason to assume that al-Zuhrī simply received the surviving narrative as 'a condensation of the reports' already made by members of the Kaʿb family; the resulting account is more than likely al-Zuhrī's own composite, based on rumors and legends about the event that were then circulating in Medina."[200] On the other hand, he adds that "al-Zuhrī [...] presumably pieced together the various traditions about this episode, many of which may have originated among the members of the Kaʿb family as tall tales about the

198 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra,*" 332.
199 Motzki, "The Murder," 179. Similar differences in the names of al-Zuhrī's informant can also be found in other transmission complexes, see Boekhoff-van der Voort, "The Raid of the Hudhayl," 312–313, 366.
200 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra,*" 332–333.

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eminence of their ancestors."[201] On the one hand anonymous "rumors and legends," on the other, the Kaʿb b. Mālik family's "tall tales"? Motzki assumes the latter to be the case, although he suspects that the "tall tales" had already been condensed to story-form by al-Zuhrī's informant. Shoemaker considers this improbable arguing, unconvincingly, that the names of al-Zuhrī's source were "invented."[202] Otherwise, Shoemaker and Motzki agree that al-Zuhrī is the author of the account.[203] Motzki emphasizes at the end of his study that al-Zuhrī did not necessarily report his informant's tradition word for word.[204]

The methodological problem that emerges in this discussion between Motzki and Shoemaker concerns the evaluation of the informant(s) or source(s) of the common link. Is it methodologically responsible to critically and cautiously use the information about the source(s) available in the traditions themselves and in other Islamic works, or must all of this information generally be disregarded because it is potentially counterfeit? Motzki considers the latter approach too extreme because the assumption of counterfeit is based on generalizations that are methodologically unacceptable. All unprovable information is rejected simply because of some individual, provable cases of forgery. In the case at hand, it is the names of the informant(s) of the common link that Shoemaker considers bogus, without concrete proof in that regard. Motzki, however, argues that the possibility that a common link received at least the essence of his tradition from the person he indicated as his informant should not be excluded *a priori*. Whether and how convincingly this can be proved depends on the available evidence. In the present case, the evidence points to one or more of Kaʿb b. Mālik's children as sources for al-Zuhrī's tradition.

Abū Isḥāq al-Sabīʿī's Version

As already noted, Shoemaker accepts Motzki's conclusion that the Medinan scholar al-Zuhrī is the common link of one of the lines of transmissions, i.e., he was the first systematic propagator of one of several different accounts regarding the murder of the Jew Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq. However, Shoemaker disputes Motzki's identification of al-Zuhrī's Kūfan contemporary, Abū Isḥāq al-Sabīʿī, as a common link and therefore also Motzki's dating of the traditions attributed to him. Shoe-

201 Ibid., 333.
202 Ibid., 332.
203 Ibid., 333.
204 Motzki, "The Murder," 207.

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MAKER suggests "for the time being to leave this Abū Isḥāq tradition to the side in any historical analysis."[205]

SHOEMAKER's arguments against MOTZKI's dating are weak. His observation that the "network of transmission [is] considerably less dense than is the case with the al-Zuhrī version"[206] is correct: A comparison of MOTZKI's diagrams of the *isnād* variants of both versions makes this visible.[207] Nonetheless, SHOEMAKER admits that "on the surface at least, there could appear to be a reasonable probability that this Kūfan contemporary of al-Zuhrī placed this second account of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq's murder into circulation."[208] However, he identifies two obstacles to this: firstly, the name Abū Isḥāq and secondly, JUYNBOLL's devastating verdict on traditions that base themselves on a transmitter of this name.

SHOEMAKER writes: "None of the various *isnāds* actually identifies Abū Isḥāq al-Sabīʿī as a transmitter, referring instead to an otherwise unidentified 'Abū Isḥāq' who emerges the tradition's common link. MOTZKI does not bring either this ambiguity or its significance to his reader's attention ..."[209] This demand is exaggerated: Most of the *isnāds* of traditions contain only single elements of a name and only rarely full names with *kunya*, *ism*, *nasab*, *nisba* and *laqab* – a mere glance at MOTZKI's diagrams would have shown SHOEMAKER this.[210] SHOEMAKER is inconsistent because the same objections could be made to al-Zuhrī, who is only called "al-Zuhrī" in most of the *isnād* variants. The name al-Zuhrī, however, is just as ambiguous as Abū Isḥāq, and there are dozens of transmitters with the *nisba* al-Zuhrī. For the transmitters, compilers and *ḥadīth* scholars, such abbreviations of names in the *isnāds* were generally not a problem because, by virtue of the transmitters named before and after the relevant name, they could identify the person who was meant. This is also MOTZKI's approach: The fact that two of the direct transmitters of Abū Isḥāq, Isrāʾīl and Yūsuf, are grandsons of Abū Isḥāq al-Sabīʿī leads him to conclude that Abū Isḥāq al-Sabīʿī is meant.[211] Abū Isḥāq's informant for his account of the murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq, al-Barāʾ b. ʿĀzib, likewise supports the view that al-Sabīʿī is the transmitter because he is the only

205 SHOEMAKER, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra,*" 334.
206 Ibid., 333.
207 See MOTZKI, "The Murder," 237, 238.
208 SHOEMAKER, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra,*" 333.
209 Ibid.
210 See MOTZKI, "The Murder," 237–239. In the diagrams, MOTZKI reproduces the names as they appear in the traditions. Where the same person is named differently in the *isnād* variants, he reproduces all the given name elements. A case in point is Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī.
211 MOTZKI, "The Murder," 176.

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Abū Isḥāq who transmits from al-Barāʾ.[212] The other transmitters, who are known under the name Abū Isḥāq,[213] are ruled out based on the said criteria, i.e. al-Barāʾ b. ʿĀzib as Abū Isḥāq's informant and two of al-Sabīʿī's grandsons as direct transmitters from him.

Shoemaker criticizes Motzki's failure to respond to Juynboll's extremely negative verdict regarding *isnāds* "with one unspecified Abū Isḥāq at the Successor level."[214] This criticism is not completely unjustified, but for the sake of consistency Shoemaker should have criticized this in Motzki's analysis of al-Zuhrī's version as well. Juynboll's critical study "An Appraisal of Muslim *Ḥadīth* Criticism. *Rijāl* Works as Depositories of Transmitter's Names"[215] addresses not only Abū Isḥāq but also the names of some other famous transmitters, such as Nāfiʿ and al-Zuhrī. Concerning the traditions exhibiting the name al-Zuhrī at the Successor level (*tābiʿūn*), Juynboll writes: "[...] it is no longer possible to sift the genuine Zuhrī traditions from the fabricated ones, or as is my contention, even the genuine Ibn Shihāb az-Zuhrī traditions from the possible hundreds of pseudo-Zuhrī ones."[216]

Motzki's long study of traditions dealing with the murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq was not the appropriate place to go into Juynboll's reading of Ibn Ḥajar's *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* and other biographical works on *ḥadīth* transmitters. While it is true that Juynboll's reading did contain a series of interesting observations, he also reached a number of highly speculative and excessively sceptical conclusions. Since Motzki has proven for al-Zuhrī and Nāfiʿ that it is indeed possible to identify genuine al-Zuhrī and Nāfiʿ traditions,[217] he did not have to take seriously Juynboll's verdict on Abū Isḥāq ("dubious in the extreme irrespective of the texts they support")[218]. All the more because Juynboll in his last *opus magnum*, the *Encyclopedia of Canonical Ḥadīth*,[219] backed away from his previous extreme assumptions and identified both al-Zuhrī and Abū Isḥāq as in all probability authentic common links in some traditions, including a tradition of Abū Isḥāq al-Sabīʿī from al-Barāʾ b. ʿĀzib.[220] In his *Encyclopedia*, Juynboll did not address

212 See Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 8, 230 and vol. 5, 431.
213 See Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 8, 230–231.
214 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra,*" 333.
215 In Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition,* 134–160, esp. 146–159.
216 Ibid., 158.
217 See Motzki, "Der *fiqh* des -Zuhrī" and "*Quo vadis Ḥadīṯ*-Forschung?"
218 Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, 142.
219 See also Motzki's review of the book in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 36 (2009), 539–549.
220 Juynboll, *Encyclopedia*, 48.

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the tradition of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq's murder that is attributed to Abū Isḥāq. However, he would certainly not have considered Abū Isḥāq a genuine *common link* in this tradition but only a *seeming common link*, because the *isnād* complex only exhibits a *seeming partial* common link under the direct transmitters of Abū Isḥāq alongside three *single strands*. In contrast, Motzki's analysis, which takes not only the *isnād* variants into account but also the *matn* variants, shows that Abū Isḥāq should indeed be seen as a real common link.[221]

ʿAbdallāh b. Unays' Version

Shoemaker also criticizes Motzki's analysis of this third version of traditions about the murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq. He writes: "It is not at all clear that these two accounts should be understood as conveying a single tradition, as Motzki presents them, and despite his assertions to the contrary, the two reports differ so markedly in their content that they are best viewed as in fact two independent accounts."[222] This is an imprecise rendering of Motzki's argumentation. Motzki summarizes both versions as "the tradition of ʿAbdallāh b. Unays," since their *isnāds* end with this companion of the Prophet. This does not mean that he sees them as a "single tradition." In his examination of the *matns* Motzki emphasizes that both traditions "differ in extent and content from each other much more than the variants of the other two traditions on this event did, to wit, those of Abū Isḥāq and al-Zuhrī discussed above."[223] He speaks of "two stories" that "differ substantially in many details" and "real contradictions which cannot be explained by assuming that they derive from either elaboration or abbreviation of the original narrative."[224] "These differences, as well as the variation in the elaboration of some episodes [...] corroborate our conclusion that both texts do not depend directly on each other."[225] They are thus "largely independent accounts". Shoemaker's assertion that Motzki considers the two accounts "as conveying a single tradition" is not correct.

However, despite the clear differences between the texts, Motzki discovers common features not only in the *isnāds* but also in the *matns*.[226] He differentiates

221 Motzki, "The Murder," 175–177, 182–190.
222 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 334.
223 Motzki, "The Murder," 211.
224 Ibid., 213. Shoemaker's assumption that there is only one original narrative is not convincing. There could be more. See below.
225 Ibid., 214.
226 Ibid., 180–181, 207–214.

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between *correspondences* in content and *similarities* in content. The similarities naturally have a certain margin of fluctuation. Moreover, Motzki sees structural correspondences between both texts: The sequence of their units of content follows a similar scheme. This becomes visible when the units of content of al-Wāqidī's tradition are numbered, combined in groups and compared with the sequence of the units in al-Ṭabarī's account that is said to derive from one of Ibn Unays' daughters. This is what Motzki did in his study. Motzki even succeeds in reconstructing the skeleton of a complete narrative out of the units of content that correspond or show similarities in both versions.[227] The structural correspondence in the sequence of units of content and the common kernel of content cannot be a coincidence. How are they to be explained? Forgery is unlikely, neither by the Medinan al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822), who could have used as a model the version of Jaʿfar b. ʿAwn al-Kūfī (d. 206/821 or 207/822), one of the transmitters in al-Ṭabarī's *isnād*; nor by Jaʿfar b. ʿAwn, who could have used al-Wāqidī's version as a model: both versions differ too starkly in details and vocabulary. It is more plausible to assume that both narratives – al-Wāqidī's and al-Ṭabarī's – are based on oral traditions and have a common origin in the far past. Motzki considers it *possible* that both traditions have their *origin* in accounts from ʿAbdallāh b. Unays, whom both traditions designate as the murderer of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq. The *isnāds* of both of the traditions point to ʿAbdallāh b. Unays as the original source,[228] and the common kernel of content might go back to him. Motzki therefore calls him "the common source."[229]

Shoemaker rejects the result of Motzki's analysis of the two narratives that point to ʿAbdallāh b. Unays as the common link of the *isnāds*. Shoemaker's objection is based on the precarious state of the transmission: "The network of transmitters in this instance is not sufficiently dense that their convergence on ʿAbdallāh b. Unays reveals any meaningful evidence that he is its *author* [ital. HM], particularly since he is the story's central *actor* [ital. HM]."[230] The first part of Shoemaker's objection would apply if this were a case of pure *isnād* analysis. However, in this case Motzki relies primarily on the *matns*; the *isnāds* are secondary.

The second part of Shoemaker's objection, "particularly since he is the story's central actor", is curious. Why can the "central actor" of an event not have reported about it himself? Shoemaker does not explain his objection. Does he

227 See ibid., 212–213.
228 Ibid., 239.
229 Ibid., 212.
230 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 335.

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mean that if ʿAbdallāh b. Unays really was the source of the narratives he would have told them in the first person? If this is what Shoemaker means, his argument is unsound. According to the *isnāds*, the accounts we have before us were transmitted by ʿAbdallāh b. Unays' children (his son and daughter). It is thus obvious that they worked their father's information about the event into narratives *about* him. The transmitters of the following generation named in the *isnāds* – who, as in al-Zuhrī's version, belong to the Kaʿb b. Mālik family – might also have been responsible for content and style of the accounts. The designation "author" for ʿAbdallāh b. Unays, which Shoemaker uses and which he erroneously portrays as Motzki's view, is applicable in a figurative sense at best. For his part, Motzki does not speak of an "author" but rather of the "common source," i.e., the person to whom the pivotal pieces of information of the account can be traced. As ʿAbdallāh b. Unays was himself a participant in the event, these main pieces of information, i.e., the common core of the content, might reflect historical facts.

To recapitulate, Motzki concludes that both of the accounts reported in al-Wāqidī's and al-Ṭabarī's works are family traditions from the circle of the Kaʿb b. Mālik family and go back to ʿAbdallāh b. Unays' children who might have narrated to members of the Kaʿb b. Mālik family, at least the core of facts common to both accounts as recounted to them by their father. Both of the narratives thus possibly go back to the first century H., and the common core might even date back to the first half of the first century. This dating is based on the *isnāds* and *matns* of both of the accounts. These results of the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis are admittedly based on only two traditions that, moreover, are extant with only *single strand isnāds*. Owing to this precarious state of the tradition, any dating of ʿAbdallāh b. Unays' version is much less certain than is the case for al-Zuhrī's version, which is available in numerous *matn* and *isnād* variants. On this point, Shoemaker and Motzki are in agreement.

In contrast to Motzki, however, Shoemaker thinks that the paucity of *isnāds* makes them useless for dating: "On the whole the evidence of the *isnāds* does not present a very compelling case for any connection with ʿAbdallāh b. Unays."[231] This leaves Shoemaker with only one option: To use the *texts* for dating. The first possible contenders for the origin of both texts would consequently be both authors, al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822) and al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), in whose works the traditions are found. But without giving any reasons, Shoemaker rules them out as authors (Shoemaker: "producers") of the narratives: "Both compilers *very likely* [ital. HM] found these traditions more or less in the state that they transmit them."[232] Accord-

231 Ibid., 335.
232 Somewhat hesitantly in the case of al-Wāqidī. Ibid., 336.

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ing to Juynboll's criteria that Shoemaker favours, this is questionable; Juynboll, as a rule, made the authors of the collections or their teachers responsible for traditions with *single strands*.[233] Shoemaker suspects that "some earlier, anonymous individuals" created the two traditions, modeling them on other, extant traditions about the murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq, in particular al-Zuhrī's version: "Presumably some earlier, anonymous individuals produced these accounts from traditions already in circulation."[234] Thus, due to the precarious *isnād* situation (only *single strands*), Shoemaker concludes that the two traditions are forgeries that could have emerged only after al-Zuhrī at the earliest, i.e., in the second quarter of the second century or later.

For this dating, Shoemaker relies on Motzki's *matn* analyses of the traditions about the murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq. Motzki found that the *matns* of both traditions whose *isnāds* end with Abdallāh b. Unays exhibit structural similarities and correspondences in wording with the *matn* variants transmitted by al-Zuhrī.[235] Motzki, however, rejected the hypothesis "that al-Wāqidī or his informant may have created a new, much more elaborate narrative based on a version of al-Zuhrī's tradition without mentioning that,"[236] and he puts forward three arguments in that regard.[237] He considers it much more probable "that al-Zuhrī's version and the two traditions which are ascribed to Ibn Unays are not dependent on each other, but derive from common older sources."[238] Motzki identifies them as stories circulated by members of the Kaʿb b. Mālik family, and they should therefore be dated to the last quarter of the first century at the latest, and perhaps even further back, to ʿAbdallāh b. Unays' children. Shoemaker rejects Motzki's arguments, objecting that they "are not decisive and cannot exclude this possibility" that al-Wāqidī's story is dependent on al-Zuhrī's version,[239] but he does not put forward any arguments in support of his objection. Shoemaker's forgery hypothesis must therefore be rejected: It is unconvincing, as is his attempt to refute Motzki's dating, which moves to the first century the origin of the three versions in which the murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq is reported.

Moreover, Shoemaker's rejection of Motzki's dating is somewhat incomprehensible since he accepts al-Zuhrī's version as believable ("an account of these

233 See, e.g., Juynboll, "Nāfiʿ, the *Mawlā* of Ibn ʿUmar," 212.
234 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 336.
235 Motzki, "The Murder," 214–221.
236 Ibid., 217.
237 See ibid., 217–218.
238 Ibid., 221.
239 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 336.

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events can be traced with some credibility to al-Zuhrī"),[240] and assumes that al-Zuhrī did not invent the story himself but instead "pieced together the various traditions about this episode, *many of which may have originated among the members of the Kaʿb family* [ital. HM]."[241] Motzki shares this view but, for good reason, he also includes the versions of ʿAbdallāh b. Unays and Abū Isḥāq al-Sabīʿī among these "various traditions," which were already in circulation prior to al-Zuhrī, i.e., in the first century.

At the end of his critical discussion of Motzki's study, Shoemaker concedes that the murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq might indeed be a historical fact. However, he does not exclude the possibility that the entire story is an invention modeled on reports of murders of other Jewish opponents of Muḥammad. Shoemaker provides a taste of how this invention might have taken place.[242] Of course, it must be said in this regard that there are no limits to the imagination: Hypothetically, anything is possible. Researchers should, however, rely on the evidence available in the sources at hand. For early Islam these are primarily the Islamic traditions with their texts and chains of transmission and, occasionally, extra-Islamic sources. The possible influence of other literatures on the texts must naturally also be taken into account. Shoemaker sees in the narratives about the murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq a "rather clear imitation and influence of biblical models."[243] In contrast, Motzki, while not excluding the possibility that biblical texts had some influence, considers the relevant evidence too weak.[244]

One of Shoemaker's final arguments aimed at playing down the significance of studying the transmission material is the meagerness of the historical kernel so painstakingly reconstructed by Motzki: "It ultimately does not reveal much about the 'historical Muḥammad' or the nature of his religious movement."[245] The first part of this two-pronged attack is admittedly true, yet it does not detract from the value of this type of study. After all, acknowledging how little we know with certainty about the historical Muḥammad is in itself progress. Yet a multitude of individual stones can indeed impart an idea of the original, complete mosaic. The second part of Shoemaker's attack, i.e., that the reconstructed historical kernel

240 Ibid., 336.
241 Ibid., 333.
242 Ibid., 337–338.
243 Ibid., 339.
244 Motzki, "The Murder," 229. See also Schoeler's arguments concerning Muḥammad's first experience of revelation mentioned above 32.
245 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra,*" 338. See also 339: "It holds extremely little information of any value for reconstructing either the beginnings of Islam or the life of Muḥammad".

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"ultimately does not reveal much about [...] the nature of his [Muḥammad's, HM] religious movement," is questionable. Does the historical fact that the Muslims in Medina murdered a Jewish opponent outside Medina with the consent of the Prophet reveal nothing "about the nature of his religious movement"?

Furthermore, studies that implement the *isnād-cum-matn* method are aimed at reconstructing not only the historical core of the traditions but also – and this is just as important – their history, i.e., the development of the traditions in the course of the transmission process.

Finally, it is striking that Shoemaker in his "conclusions" characterizes the method of Schoeler, Görke and Motzki as "use of the *isnāds* for dating traditions," "*isnād* criticism,"[246] "*isnād*-critical study/approach."[247] He has apparently not realized that *isnād* analysis is only a part of the method, and that text analysis also plays a crucial role. It is in fact the combination of both analytical methods that leads to new results. Shoemaker's opinion that "the antiquity of these traditions can generally be determined even more definitely using traditional criteria of *matn* analysis," that "*matn* criticism remains the most valuable tool for mining the early Islamic tradition to recover its oldest traditions"[248] and that "for knowledge of this period [the first century, HM] we must continue to rely largely on the traditional principles of *matn* analysis as advanced by Goldziher and Schacht,"[249] is curious. Without *isnād* analysis, traditions can normally be dated only to the period in which the compilations emerged. This would mean that al-Zuhrī's version of the tradition of the murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq and most other *sīra* traditions could have originated only around the end of the second and the beginning of the third century, the period in which Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833) passed on his *Sīrat rasūl Allāh* to his students and ʿAbd al-Razzāq (d. 211/826) passed on his *Muṣannaf* to his students. Without *isnād*-analysis, the traditions contained in their works cannot even be dated to Ibn Isḥāq (d. 151/768) or Maʿmar (d. 153/770), let alone to al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742). Dating of this sort opens the floodgates to far-fetched forgery conspiracies.

In closing, it should be emphasized that the results of Görke and Schoeler's reconstruction of the ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr corpus, which made it possible to date

246 Ibid., 340.

247 Ibid., 343. On 330 Shoemaker writes: "In contrast then to Motzki's claims that *isnād* criticism provides 'more sophisticated methods of dating than relying either on the compilations containing the traditions or on the *matn*'." This, too, is an inaccurate account of Motzki's writings. The quotation is taken out of context: Motzki is not referring to *isnād* criticism but to the *isnād-cum-matn* method.

248 Shoemaker, "In Search of ʿUrwa's *Sīra*," 269.

249 Ibid., 344.

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with certainty a part of the traditions attributed to him to the second half of the first century, also provide indirect support for Motzki's dating of the traditions about the murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq.

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