

Reconstructing the Earliest *sīra* Texts: the *Hiġra* in the Corpus of ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr

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In his famous study “Ueber die Entwicklung des Ḥadīth”¹ I. GOLDZIHNER argued that the Islamic tradition (*ḥadīth*) could not be used as a historical source for the time of the Prophet and the Companions, but was only the result of theological, social and political tendencies of later times in which (as GOLDZIHNER assumed) these materials originated. This position laid the ground to a sceptical view which was further developed in Western Islamic Studies after GOLDZIHNER and which until today is still alive.² Its most famous adherents, J. SCHACHT,³ J. WANSBROUGH,⁴ M. COOK,⁵ P. CRONE,⁶ and their followers argue,

- 1) that the corpus of the Islamic tradition originated in the second century AH or later,
- 2) that from this tradition no authentic information about the deeds and words of the Prophet, his companions and successors can be obtained and

¹ In: I. GOLDZIHNER, *Muhammedanische Studien*, II (Halle, 1890), 1–274.

² Cf. H. MOTZKI, “Introduction”, in: idem (Ed.), *Ḥadīth: Origins and Developments* (Trowbridge, Wiltshire, 2004) (The Formation of the Classical Islamic World, vol. 28), xviii ff.

³ J. SCHACHT, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1950); idem, “A Revaluation of Islamic Traditions”, *JRAS* 1949, 143–54; reprinted in: H. MOTZKI (Ed.), *Ḥadīth*, 27–39.

⁴ J. WANSBROUGH, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford, 1977); idem, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford, 1978).

⁵ M. COOK, *Early Muslim Dogma: a Source-Critical Study* (Cambridge, 1981); idem, “Eschatology and the Dating of Traditions”, *Princeton Papers in Near Eastern Studies* 1 (1992), 23–47.

⁶ P. CRONE, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton, 1987); idem, *Slaves on Horses: the Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge, 1980).

- 3) that the chains of transmitters (*asānīd*, sg. *isnād*) are not reliable and do not indicate the real sources either.

It must be stressed that the above-named scholars hold this radically sceptical view to be valid not only for the legal *ḥadīth*, but also for the historical *ḥadīth*, especially the *sīra* tradition. Schacht explicitly argued to this effect in an article “On Mūsā ibn ‘Uqba’s Kitāb al-Maghāzī”.⁷ One basic principle of historical science seems to corroborate this sceptical approach, namely that one should base one’s research, whenever possible, on direct reports, i. e. on contemporary sources.⁸ However, the reports on the origins of Islam and on the first century AH are only available in writings that later generations recorded based on traditions. The time gap between the earliest surviving sources and the events is some 150 to 200 years or more. Moreover, the state of the tradition seems to corroborate the assumptions of the sceptical scholars, since it contains numerous contradictions, legendary reports etc.⁹ If the sceptical scholars were right, almost all of the time of Muḥammad and most of the following decades would defy any historical research.¹⁰

Of course, this sceptical approach did not find unanimous approval in Western Islamic studies; needless to say, Muslim scholars harshly rejected it and tried to refute it.¹¹ Scholars who do not subscribe to the sceptics’

⁷) In: *Acta Orientalia* 21 (1953), 288–300. However, some sceptical scholars admit that the historical tradition is not as unreliable as the legal tradition (cf. CRONE, *Slaves*, 1).

⁸) Cf. E. BERNHEIM, *Lehrbuch der Historischen Methode und der Geschichtsphilosophie*, 3rd and 4th ed. (Leipzig, 1903), especially 469f.

⁹) As CRONE, *Slaves*, 59ff. rightly points out.

¹⁰) H. MOTZKI (*Ḥadīth*, xxi, note 32) recently pointed out that GOLDZIEHER already drew the conclusions and tried to use only the Koran as a secure source for his description of the life of Muḥammad (in his *Vorlesungen über den Islam*, reprint (Darmstadt, 1963), 1–29). The same is true for R. BLACHÈRE and his biography of Muḥammad (*Le problème de Mahomet*, Paris 1952). – The Koran, however, is of very restricted value for the historical research on the life of Muḥammad, as it usually only alludes to events but does not describe them.

¹¹) Some names of scholars who rejected the sceptical view: J. FÜCK, N. ABBOTT, M. M. AZMI, F. SEZGIN, J. VAN ESS, H. MOTZKI, G. SCHOELER. – GOLDZIEHER’s theses, although at first widely accepted by Western scholars, were rejected by others, most notably J. FÜCK (cf. MOTZKI, “Introduction”, in: idem, *Ḥadīth*, xxi). SCHACHT’s theses aroused both approval and rejection (cf. MOTZKI, “Introduction”, xxivf.). The radical scepticism of CRONE and COOK as presented in their book *Hagarism* (Cambridge, 1977) was mainly met with opposition and partly even with outrage by other scholars.

point of view of course do not deny that the Muslim tradition contains lots of spurious and false material, something which already the Muslim scholars in classical times recognized. However, they object to discarding the tradition altogether.¹²

Yet, simply rejecting the theses of the sceptical scholars is not in any way sufficient. Criteria have to be found that allow one to distinguish between genuine material on the one hand and spurious or false material on the other hand. As those scholars who do not subscribe to the sceptics' point of view assume that there are good and bad traditions,¹³ it is not surprising that they all start with studying single traditions.

One method that was in principle used already by Johannes H. KRAMERS¹⁴ and J. VAN ESS¹⁵ was further developed by H. MOTZKI,¹⁶ G. SCHOELER,¹⁷ and A. GÖRKE¹⁸ in the last decade.¹⁹ It consists in examining whether the dependence of the *ḥadīths* as indicated by their *isnāds* is

¹²) Cf. H. MOTZKI, "Introduction", in: idem, *Ḥadīth*, xlf.

¹³) Explicitly A. NOTH, "Iṣfahān-Nihāwand. Eine quellenkritische Studie zur frühislamischen Historiographie", *ZDMG* 118 (1968), 274–96, especially 295.

¹⁴) "A Tradition of Manichaen Tendency ('The She-Eater of Grass')", in: H. MOTZKI (Ed.), *Ḥadīth*, 245–57.

¹⁵) *Zwischen Ḥadīth und Theologie. Studien zum Entstehen prädestinarianischer Überlieferung* (Berlin, New York, 1975).

¹⁶) H. MOTZKI, "Quo vadis Ḥadīth-Forschung?" *Der Islam* 73 (1996), 40–80, 192–231; idem, "The Prophet and the Cat: on Dating Mālik's *Muwatta'* and Legal Traditions", *JSAI* 22 (1998), 18–83; idem, "The Murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq: on the Origin and Reliability of some *Maghāzī*-Reports", in: idem (Ed.), *The Biography of Muḥammad: the Issue of the Sources* (Leiden, 2000), 170–239.

¹⁷) G. SCHOELER, *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds* (Berlin, New York, 1996); idem, "Mūsā b. 'Uqba's *Maghāzī*", in: H. MOTZKI (Ed.), *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 67–97.

¹⁸) A. GÖRKE, "The Historical Tradition about al-Ḥudaybiya: a Study of 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr's Account", in: H. MOTZKI (Ed.), *The Biography of Muḥammad*, 240–75 (an earlier German version was published in *Der Islam* 74 (1997), 193–237); idem, "History, Eschatology, and the Common Link", in: H. BERG (Ed.), *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins* (Leiden, 2003), 179–208.

¹⁹) Another method shall briefly be mentioned at this point: J. FÜCK in his article "Die Rolle des Traditionalismus im Islam", *ZDMG* 93 (1939), 1–32 (English translation: "The Role of Traditionalism in Islam", in: H. MOTZKI (Ed.), *Ḥadīth*, 15ff.), argued that there are a couple of traditions that present Muḥammad in a very unfavourable light and that even the most sceptical scholars cannot doubt the authenticity of some of these traditions. The story about the slander of 'Ā'īsa was not mentioned explicitly by FÜCK in this context but should be counted among these traditions.

corroborated by their texts or not (*isnād-cum-matn*-analysis). However, this method only provides information about whether a certain tradition is old, roughly speaking whether it was already circulated in the first century AH or not. If this kind of tradition does indeed go back to the Prophet or a companion is a different question.

This method was tested by G. SCHOELER²⁰ and A. GÖRKE²¹ in four studies of *sīra*-traditions that were traced back to ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr (23/643–44–93/711–12)²² (the first revelation, the slander about ʿĀʾiša, Muḥammad’s arrival in Medina after the *hiğra*, and the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiya). These studies showed – as the Islamic biographical literature always claimed – that ʿUrwa indeed collected these and other reports on the life of the Prophet in the first century AH and passed on this material to a number of students of his. It was possible to prove this because the traditions in question were not only transmitted by *one* of ʿUrwa’s students but by two or more, i. e. the traditions are known in several recensions. The comparison of the different recensions and versions of ʿUrwa’s reports was carried out similarly to the study of the dependency of manuscripts. More often than not it lead to the results

- 1) that the different recensions and versions were indeed independently transmitted. This becomes apparent through the differences, the “particular character” of each recension and version;
- 2) that the different recensions and versions go back to a common source. This becomes clear through the correspondence in contents – despite all differences – of the various versions. In some cases, especially in cases of direct speech, there sometimes even is a slight correspondence in the wording;
- 3) that the contents of what ʿUrwa taught can be reconstructed.²³

The positive results of these studies made it seem promising to collect ʿUrwa’s other *sīra*-traditions as well and study them in the same way. The aim was to collect as complete as possible a corpus of these tradi-

²⁰) G. SCHOELER, *Charakter und Authentie*; idem, “Mūsā b. ʿUqba’s *Maghāzī*”, 85–88.

²¹) A. GÖRKE, “The Historical Tradition about al-Ḥudaybiya”, 240–75.

²²) G. SCHOELER, “Urwa b. al-Zubayr”, in: *EI*², s. v.

²³) Cf. *ibidem*, 912, and G. SCHOELER, “Foundations for a New Biography of Muḥammad: the Production and Evaluation of the Corpus of Traditions according to ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr”, in: H. BERG (Ed.), *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins* (Leiden, 2003), 21–28, cf. 23.

tions²⁴ and to reconstruct the contents of ʿUrwa's *sīra* reports on this basis. A project to this goal was granted by the Swiss National Science Foundation in 2002 and is currently being carried out by Tanja Duncker and Andreas Görke.

Meanwhile, the compilation of the corpus has been completed. The ʿUrwa corpus turned out to comprise the basic framework to the whole *sīra*, i. e. it contains different long and detailed reports about the main events of Muḥammad's life and his deeds. These are in particular:

- 1) The beginning of the revelation
- 2) The reaction of the Meccans – the emigration of some Muslims to Abyssinia – the meetings of al-ʿAqaba – the *hiġra* to Medina
- 3) The battle of Badr
- 4) The battle of Uḥud
- 5) The battle of the Ditch
- 6) The treaty of al-Ḥudaybiya
- 7) The slander about ʿĀʾiša
- 8) The conquest of Mecca

Most of these reports are well documented, i. e. they are reported by two or more transmitters from ʿUrwa, his most important transmitters being his son Hišām (d. 146/763) and his master pupil al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742).

The traditions that Hišām, al-Zuhrī and others report on the authority of ʿUrwa usually differ in wording and in some of their elements. They do, however, follow the same basic structure; in other words: they tell the same story. From this one can conclude that these traditions indeed go back to the same source, namely ʿUrwa.

In contrast to this, longer traditions reported by his foster-child Abū l-Aswad (Yatīm ʿUrwa) (d. 131/748, or some time later) from ʿUrwa usually differ considerably from those reported by Hišām and al-Zuhrī.

²⁴) Earlier attempts to compile as completely as possible the corpus of traditions according to ʿUrwa are: J. VON STÜLPNAGEL, *ʿUrwa Ibn az-Zubair. Sein Leben und seine Bedeutung als Quelle frühislamischer Überlieferung* (Diss. Tübingen, 1956), 38 ff.; Salwā Mursī al-Ṭāhir, *Bidāyat al-kitāba al-tārīḫīya ʿinda l-ʿArab* (Beirut, 1995). – A compilation of the Abū l-Aswad-transmission of ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr is the book *ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr, Maġāzī rasūl Allāh bi-riwāyat Abī l-Aswad ʿanhu*, ed. M. M. al-ʿAzamī (Riyāḍ, 1981). – The corpora compiled by these researchers are however incomplete in light of current knowledge. In addition, none of the aforementioned authors examined the authenticity of the ʿUrwa corpus critically according to the method that is here presented.

More often than not the Abū l-Aswad traditions are identical in wording or at least very close to traditions reported by Mūsā b. ʿUqba (d. 141/758); in several cases traditions are reported with the combined *isnād* Abū l-Aswad ← ʿUrwa and Mūsā b. ʿUqba ← al-Zuhri.²⁵

Other events of the *sīra*, in addition to numbers 1–8 above, must have been known to ʿUrwa as well, although no long historical traditions about them are reported on his authority: he refers to these events in some of his legal traditions (e. g. to the conquest of Ḥaybar in the context of the division of Muḥammad's heritage after his death).²⁶

In the following, one of the longer reports – report number 2 (which tells the events leading to the *hiġra* and the *hiġra* itself) – will be studied in more detail. It is in fact a conglomerate, in which different events are concatenated to a single narrative. Apparently, it was already conceived as a whole by ʿUrwa. In addition to this longer report, there are a number of shorter traditions about the *hiġra* told on the authority of ʿUrwa. Most of these short traditions only deal with a single aspect connected to the *hiġra* in some regard (e. g. the fact, that the first child born after the *hiġra* was ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Zubayr).²⁷ We shall concentrate on the long report in the following.

There are different recensions of this report, one of those going back to Hišām b. ʿUrwa, the other one to al-Zuhri.²⁸ The longest version of Hišām's recension is recorded by al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923).²⁹ Although split up in sev-

²⁵) For her PhD-thesis Tanja Duncker is currently studying these traditions that deviate from the main line of transmission.

²⁶) E. g. al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā* (Beirut, 1406 AH), VI, 300; Muslim ibn al-Ḥaġġāġ, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Beirut, 1979), XI, 76 ff., Abū Awāna, *Musnad Abī Awāna* (Cairo, 1943), IV, 143 ff.

²⁷) E. g. al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī* (Beirut, Damaskus, 1990), V, 2081 (Kitāb al-ʿAqīqa, bāb 1, ḥadīṯ 5152); Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf* (Bombay, 1979–83), V, 335; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīḥ madīnat Dimašq* (Beirut, 1995), V, 225. Other short traditions deal with Qurʾān 5:83, said to have been revealed about the Negus: e. g. al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* (Beirut, 1992), V, 7; Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf* (Bombay, 1979–83), XIV, 348 f.; al-Nasāʿī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā* (Beirut, 2001), X, 84. The events dealt with in these and other short traditions are not mentioned in the different recensions of the long report and do not seem to be part of ʿUrwa's *sīra* tradition about the *hiġra*.

²⁸) Cf. figure 1 for an overview of some of the main lines of transmission of this report.

²⁹) al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* (Beirut, 1992) VI, 246 f., al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīḥ* (Leiden, 1879–1901), I, 1180 f., 1224 f., 1234 ff.; cf. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, VI, 212. Shorter versions transmitted on the authority of Ḥammād b. Salama ← Hišām ibn ʿUrwa and Abū

eral parts, these parts actually constitute a whole, namely a single tradition in the form of a letter by ʿUrwa sent to the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 65/685–86/705). That the parts recorded by al-Ṭabarī indeed belong together is very likely for several reasons: Some parts are split up in his *Taʿrīḥ* but form a single narrative in his *Tafsīr*.³⁰ All parts have the same *isnād*: Ṭabarī ← ʿAbd al-Wārith ← his father, ʿAbd al-Ṣamad ← Abān al-ʿAṭṭār ← Hishām b. ʿUrwa ← ʿUrwa.³¹ This *isnād* is only used by al-Ṭabarī when he quotes from the letters ʿUrwa sent to the caliph. It does not occur in any other instance and in almost every case when al-Ṭabarī quotes from ʿUrwa’s letters, this is the *isnād* he uses. One part of the tradition continues exactly where the one before stopped.³² In all but one of the parts it is explicitly mentioned that they refer to a letter of ʿUrwa’s to ʿAbd al-Malik.³³

Therefore, we may conclude that these parts originally were part of one and the same tradition. Al-Ṭabarī also claims to have heard the same tradition with only minor differences from Yūnus (b. ʿAbd al-ʿAlā) ← (ʿAbdallāh) Ibn Wahb ← Ibn Abī l-Zinād ← Abū l-Zinād ← ʿUrwa.³⁴

Let us now turn to the contents of this recension. Hiṣām’s recension of ʿUrwa’s report, or letter, comprises a number of themes. The general outline of the events is as follows: The Meccans at first listen to Muḥammad’s preaching, but the situation worsens when he begins to speak against their gods. The Meccans put pressure on the Muslims and mistreat them. Some Muslims emigrate to Abyssinia and stay there for some years. In the meantime, more Meccans convert to Islam and the situation for the Muslims in Mecca improves. Many of the emigrants to Abyssinia return. When several people of the Anṣār in Medina convert to Islam, the situation in Mecca worsens again and the Meccans harass the Muslims. 70 of the Medinans meet Muḥammad during the *ḥaǧǧ* in ʿAqaba and guarantee safety to him and any of the Muslims who come to Medina. Muḥammad then advises the Muslims to emigrate to Medina. Many of them do, but Muḥammad asks Abū Bakr to wait with him in Mecca.

Usāma ← Hishām ibn ʿUrwa can be found in Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt* (Leiden, 1904–28) III, 1, 122, and Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Beirut, 1987–91) 14, 182–183 respectively. These versions do not have the form of a letter and only treat the *hiǧra* proper.

³⁰ Compare al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, VI, 246 f. with his *Taʿrīḥ*, I, 1180 f. and 1224 f.

³¹ In his *Taʿrīḥ*, al-Ṭabarī names a second transmitter, ʿAlī b. Naṣr, who is also said to have heard the report from ʿAbd al-Ṣamad.

³² al-Ṭabarī, *Taʿrīḥ*, I, 1234 f. continues the story from I, 1224 f.

³³ The explicit reference to the letter is not found in *Taʿrīḥ*, I, 1234 f.

³⁴ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, VI, 247.

One day, Muḥammad comes to Abū Bakr's house at an unusual time and Abū Bakr immediately knows that something has happened. The Prophet tells him that God gave him permission to emigrate. Muḥammad and Abū Bakr hide in a cave in the mountain Tawr for some days, where they are provided with food by 'Āmir b. Fuhayra, a freedman of Abū Bakr. Abū Bakr's son, 'Abdallāh, provides them with news in the meantime. After a couple of days, when the talk about their disappearance calms down in Mecca, they march to Medina, together with 'Āmir b. Fuhayra and a guide from the Banū 'Abd b. 'Adī. The route they take to Medina is given with some detail.

They arrive in Medina and stay with the Banū 'Amr b. 'Awf for two days or longer. Then they move on and Muḥammad chooses a place in the area where the Banū l-Nağğār settle (probably to build a mosque there).

The other long report goes back to al-Zuhri (d. 124/742). Al-Zuhri's recension can be found in different versions. In contrast to Hišām's recension, none of these versions is in the form of a letter. The longest al-Zuhri versions are those recorded by 'Abd al-Razzāq (d. 211/827) ← Ma' mar ← al-Zuhri ← 'Urwa³⁵ and by al-Buḥārī (d. 256/870) ← Yaḥyā b. Bukayr ← al-Layṭ ← 'Uqayl ← al-Zuhri ← 'Urwa.³⁶ Shorter versions are recorded among others by al-Buḥārī ← Abū Šāliḥ ← 'Abdallāh ← Yūnus ← al-Zuhri ← 'Urwa,³⁷ and Ibn Ishāq ← al-Zuhri ← 'Urwa.³⁸ These versions are quoted with minor variations at several places in the *ḥadīth* literature.

As Hišām, al-Zuhri starts his narrative with the situation in Mecca. As this worsens for the Muslims, people start to emigrate to Abyssinia. Abū Bakr is among those emigrants. On his way (most versions give Bark al-Ġimād as the place where this happened) he meets Ibn al-Duġunna (or Ibn al-Daġina), who persuades him to stay, as someone of Abū Bakr's standing should not be driven out. He offers him his protection. Abū Bakr accepts and returns to Mecca.

When Abū Bakr prays publicly in front of his house, this causes discontent and unrest among the Qurayš. They fear that other Meccans might join him. Ibn al-Duġunna asks him to stop praying publicly or to

³⁵ 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Šan'ānī, *Muṣannaḥ* (Beirut, 1970), V, 384 ff.

³⁶ al-Buḥārī, *Šaḥīḥ*, III, 1418 ff. (Kitāb Faḍā'il al-šaḥāba, bāb 74, ḥadīth 3692/3694); al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa* (Beirut, 1985), II, 471 ff. gives a similar account on the authority of Ibn Šāliḥ ← al-Layṭ ← 'Uqayl ← al-Zuhri ← 'Urwa.

³⁷ al-Buḥārī, *Šaḥīḥ*, II, 804 f. (Kitāb al-Kafāla, bāb 4, ḥadīth 2175).

³⁸ Ibn Hišām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya* (Cairo, 1955), I, 484 ff.; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ*, I, 1237 ff.

release him from his obligation to protect Abū Bakr. Abū Bakr decides to release Ibn al-Duġunna from this obligation.

At that time, Muḥammad sees the place of migration in a dream. It is identified as Medina. Some people emigrate to Medina and most of those who previously had fled to Abyssinia also move on to Medina. Abū Bakr also prepares to leave but is asked to stay by Muḥammad.

One day, Muḥammad comes to Abū Bakr's house at an unusual time and Abū Bakr immediately realizes that something has happened. Muḥammad declares that God granted him permission to emigrate and that Abū Bakr should accompany him.

They hide in a cave in the mountain of Tawr for three days. They take some food with them. Asmā', Abū Bakr's daughter, uses a piece from her belt to tie the bags. That is why she is called Dāt al-niṭāqayn (the one with the two belts).

Abū Bakr's son 'Abdallāh and his freedman 'Āmir b. Fuhayra come to the cave every day and supply Muḥammad and Abū Bakr with food and information about what is going on in Mecca.

After three days, they leave for Medina with a guide from the Banū 'Abd b. 'Adī, whom they had hired before and whom they trusted, although he was an infidel. He guides them to Medina along the sea-shore.

The versions of the al-Zuhrī recension differ in some details. While the long versions by Ma'mar ← al-Zuhrī and 'Uqayl ← al-Zuhrī are very close in wording (as is the shorter version by Yūnus ← al-Zuhrī), the version recorded by Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767) tells the same story, but in a completely different wording. There are some differences in the contents as well.

Ibn Ishāq only gives the first part of the story (which deals with Ibn al-Duġunna), on the authority of al-Zuhrī ← 'Urwa, while the second part (the story of the *hiġra* itself) is narrated by Ibn Ishāq either on the authority of "someone he does not mistrust" ← 'Urwa (in Ibn Hišām) or Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Abdallāh al-Tamīm ← 'Urwa (in al-Ṭabarī). Ibn Ishāq thus combines in his report a version of the al-Zuhrī recension with a third recension we shall call the Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān recension.

As noted above, there are some distinctive features in Ibn Ishāq's al-Zuhrī versions. For instance, in the versions by Ma'mar, 'Uqayl and Yūnus ← al-Zuhrī, the agreement between Ibn al-Duġunna and Abū Bakr explicitly includes that Abū Bakr may not pray publicly. His doing so therefore is a clear breach of the agreement. Ibn al-Duġunna asks Abū Bakr to either adhere to what they had agreed on or else release him from his obligation.

In Ibn Ishāq's versions there is no hint that the agreement included a clause that Abū Bakr should not pray publicly. When he begins to pray in public, Ibn al-Duġunna only tells him that the Qurayš dislike the place he has chosen to pray. Abū Bakr then asks Ibn al-Duġunna if he wanted to renounce the protection, and when Ibn al-Duġunna says that he indeed does, Abū Bakr releases him from his obligation.

Although the different versions give a slightly different touch to the story, it is still clearly the same story. Apparently the versions going back to Maʿmar, ʿUqayl and Yūnus draw on a common (written) version, since the texts are almost identical in wording. It cannot be excluded that one or two of these versions were copied from the third.

Comparing the recensions by Hišām b. ʿUrwa, al-Zuhrī, and Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, we can see that they have a great deal in common, although they differ in numerous details. The recension according to Hišām concentrates on different points than the one according to al-Zuhrī: While in Hišām's recension, the emigration to Abyssinia is told in a very general manner, al-Zuhrī's recension focuses on the story of Abū Bakr and Ibn al-Duġunna and in a way personalizes the story of this first *hiġra*. And while in Hišām's recension the meetings in al-ʿAqaba are mentioned and the route of the *hiġra* is given in detail, these details cannot be found in al-Zuhrī's recensions, nor in the one by Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān.

We may assume for good reason that the different recensions indeed go back to a common source, namely ʿUrwa, as we explained from the outset (i. e. we have different recensions going back to the same source, transmitted independently from each other).

It is difficult to 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. It is possible that ʿUrwa sometimes told the story in a general manner (as transmitted by Hišām), and sometimes in a personalized manner (as transmitted by al-Zuhrī). It is comprehensible that the *general* form is to be found in the letter sent to the caliph.

While this cannot be decided at this point, we must assume that the elements common to different recensions indeed do go back to ʿUrwa. 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. Fuḥayra.

These elements constitute what we may call the *general outline* of the events. In addition to this general outline, some of the *details* can also be shown to go back to ʿUrwa, e. g. the story of Abū Bakr and Muḥammad hiding in a cave in the mountain Ṭawr, their supply etc.

Concluding, we could show that the long traditions preserved in different recensions (i. e. that of Hišām ibn ʿUrwa as recorded by al-Ṭabarī and that of al-Zuhrī as recorded by ʿAbd ar-Razzāq etc.) go back to ʿUrwa, and we were able to reconstruct the contents of what ʿUrwa taught on this subject.

The shorter traditions, which we have so far neglected, are of two kinds. The first kind consists of *parts* of the long tradition that have been transmitted with different *isnāds* and that corroborate the above findings.³⁹ The other kind consists of traditions which deal with the *hiğra* in some regard, but which have no parallel in the long versions (e. g. the story of ʿAbdallāh b. al-Zubayr, ʿUrwa's brother, being the first child born after the *hiğra*).⁴⁰ Although harking back to ʿUrwa, they most probably were not part of what constituted his teachings on the *sīra* in a narrower sense.

As to the historicity of this report, we of course should not take the traditions at face value. But ʿUrwa was a son of one of the earliest Muslims, al-Zubayr, and a nephew of the Prophet's wife ʿĀ'īsa; he therefore was very close to the events and the persons involved therein. Even if his reports are by no means eyewitness reports and even though his materials were based on first-hand reports only for the last years of Muḥammad's life, there is no reason to doubt that they do reflect the *general outline* of the events correctly.

The conclusions from this study are radically opposed to the sceptical view presented in the beginning: Although some tampering with the *asānīd* may have taken place, the *asānīd* cannot generally be considered unreliable. At least part of the Islamic tradition apparently already originated in the first century, and from the tradition studied it is even possible to obtain, however scarce, information on the life of the Prophet. The study of the corpus of ʿUrwa ibn al-Zubayr's traditions on the *sīra* thus provides us with new insights both on the development of the Islamic tradition in the first two centuries AH, and on the life of the Prophet Muḥammad.

³⁹) Eg. al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, II, 751 f. (Kitāb al-Buyūʿ, bāb 57, ḥadīṭ 2031); V, 2187 f. (Kitāb al-Libās, bāb 15, ḥadīṭ 6570); al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, VI, 375. Cf. note 29.

⁴⁰) Cf. note 27 above.