

Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael at Mecca:  
A Contribution to the Problem of Dating Muslim Traditions

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## 1. Introduction

The year 1996 was a turning point in the Western research on early Muslim traditions (*aḥādīth*, *āthār*, *akhbār*). Two German studies were published that suggested a new method of dating these traditions: Gregor Schoeler's *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds*<sup>1</sup> and Harald Motzki's two-part article "Quo vadis Ḥadīth-Forschung? Eine kritische Untersuchung von G.H.A. Juynboll: 'Nāfi' the *mawlā* of Ibn 'Umar, and his position in Muslim *ḥadīth* literature."<sup>2</sup> The following was demonstrated by both authors on the basis of traditions about the life of the Prophet (*sīra*) and other *aḥādīth* of the Prophet: when the varying chains of transmission (*asānīd*) and the varying texts (*mutūn*) of a tradition found in different sources are systematically checked against each other, and when their differences and congruities are analysed, it is possible to date this tradition more precisely – and often earlier – than when the more usual methods are applied, which focus either on the chains of transmission or on the texts.<sup>3</sup> Their method was called *isnād-cum-matn* analysis.<sup>4</sup> Since then several studies have been published that applied this method to traditions belonging to different branches of Muslim literature such as jurisprudence, Qur'ānic exegesis, the life of the Prophet, history and theology.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Berlin-New York (an English translation was published in 2010 entitled *The Biography of Muhammad: Nature and Authenticity*, London-New York).

<sup>2</sup> *Der Islam* 73 (1996), 40-80; 193-231 (an English translation entitled "Whither Ḥadīth Studies?" was published in: H. Motzki with N. Boekhoff-van der Voort and S. W. Anthony, *Analysing Muslim Traditions* 47-124).

<sup>3</sup> See H. Motzki, Introduction, in: id. (ed.), *Ḥadīth xii-lxiii* und id., *Dating Muslim Traditions. A Survey*.

<sup>4</sup> This method was not completely new. It had been used to some extent already by J. H. Kramers in his article "Une tradition à tendance manichéenne" and by Josef van Ess in the first chapter of his book *Zwischen Ḥadīth und Theologie*.

<sup>5</sup> A small selection of such studies is given here: Motzki, *The Prophet and the Cat*; id., *The Murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq*; id., *The Prophet and the Debtors*; id., *Al-Radd 'alā l-Radd*; id., *The Origins of Muslim Exegesis*; Görke, *The Historical Tradition about al-Ḥudaybiya*; id., *Eschatology, History, and the Common Link*; id. and G. Schoeler, *Die*

The following is a short study that makes use of the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis. This study was prompted by an inquiry from my colleague Marcel Poorthuis, professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Utrecht (the Netherlands). He wrote an article on the post-biblical reactions to the story told in Genesis 21: 8-20, in which Abraham's wife Sarah, having borne and weaned her son Isaac, presses Abraham to repudiate his slave-woman Hagar and his first son by her. At first Abraham refuses but at God's behest he finally relents. Hagar and her son wander through the desert until they nearly die of thirst. God responds to the thirsty boy's crying by guiding them to a spring. From then on they live in the desert of Paran.

This Bible passage raises a number of theological questions and has therefore inspired commentaries, interpretations and supplements by Rabbinic as well as Islamic scholars, and has even led to interaction between the two. This is the real subject of Poorthuis' study, "Hagar's Wanderings: Between Judaism and Islam".<sup>6</sup> The author first compares the Midrash *Genesis Rabba* (5<sup>th</sup> century) with the Midrash *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (8<sup>th</sup> century), which is suspected of being dependent on Islamic narratives. He concludes that *the kernel* of the Midrash *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* is older than commonly assumed, dating back to pre-Islamic times, and that the Islamic elements were added later.

Poorthuis then compares this Jewish text with an Islamic narrative dealing with the same topic that is found in an Islamic source dating to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. This story is ascribed to 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās (d. between 686 and 687 CE), a nephew of the Prophet Muḥammad. Poorthuis concludes that the Islamic narrative was influenced by the Jewish one or that it used elements from it, rather than vice versa. This led to the question of whether the Islamic narrative originated earlier than the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century and, if so, when? This was Poorthuis' inquiry of the author of this study, and the following source analysis provides the answer.

## 2. The narrative ascribed to Ibn 'Abbās

### 2.1 The earliest source: The Muṣannaf of 'Abd al-Razzāq

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*ältesten Berichte über das Leben Muḥammads*; Boekhoff-van der Voort, *The Raid of the Hudaib*; Anthony, *Crime and Punishment in Early Medina*; Scheiner, *Die Eroberung von Damaskus*; L. Yarbrough, *Upholding God's Rule*.

<sup>6</sup> It will be published in the journal *Der Islam*.

The content of the narrative and most of the sources in which it is found are given by Reuven Firestone in his informative book *Journeys in Holy Lands. The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis*.<sup>7</sup> The earliest sources he mentions, which are useful for the dating of the story, are al-Bukhārī's (d. 256/870) *ḥadīth*-collection *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ* and al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310/923) *Tafsīr* and *Ta'rikh*.<sup>8</sup> There is, however, a still earlier source not mentioned by Firestone: 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī's (d. 211/827) *Muṣannaḥ*, a collection of traditions which is valuable not only because of its early origin but also because of the detailed version of the story it contains.<sup>9</sup>

The dating of the Muslim narratives about Ibrāhīm (Abraham), Ismā'īl (Ishmael) and his mother (Umm Ismā'īl, in the Bible: Hagar) ascribed to 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās can best start with this earliest known source. It is found in the chapter on *ḥajj*, the pilgrimage ceremonies in and around Mecca. This lengthy tradition is introduced with the following chain of transmitters (*isnād*):

'Abd al-Razzāq from Ma'mar from Ayyūb and Kathīr b. Kathīr b. al-Muṭṭalib b. Abī Wadā'a — they complement each other — from Sa'īd b. Jubayr.

The text (*matn*) starts as follows:

He [Sa'īd b. Jubayr] said: "Question me, oh young men, for I am about to leave from your midst!" So the people copiously questioned him. Then one man said to him: "May God grant you good fortune! Have you [not] seen the *maqām* [The stone on which Ibrāhīm stood]<sup>10</sup>? It is as we were relating." He [Sa'īd] said: "what were you relating [about it]?" He [the man] said: "We were saying that when Ibrāhīm, may [God bestow] well-being on him, arrived [at the place that later became Mecca], Umm Ismā'īl invited him to dismount, but he refused. Then she brought forth the stone [the *maqām* Ibrāhīm]." He [Sa'īd b. Jubayr] said: "[It happened] not like that."

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<sup>7</sup> Chap. 8-11.

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit., 204, n. 5.

<sup>9</sup> 'Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaḥ* v, 105-111, no. 9107. Concerning author and work see Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence* esp. 54-74; id., *The Author and his Work in Islamic Literature*; id., 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī.

<sup>10</sup> See Kister, *Maḳām Ibrāhīm*.

Sa'īd said: "Ibn 'Abbās said:<sup>11</sup>

'The first woman who used the girdle was Umm Ismā'īl. She used a girdle to wipe out her tracks from Sāra (Sarah). Ibrāhīm brought her and her son Ismā'īl, while she was suckling him, to a place near the [present] House [of God] under a large tree on the spot of [the present] Zamzam [spring] at the highest point of the [present] place of worship.'"

The following is a paraphrase of the most important events mentioned in the story:

Ibrāhīm leaves them there with only a bag containing some dates and a small water-skin. When the water is finished Umm Ismā'īl runs up the al-Ṣafā hill and then up the al-Marwa hill to look for help, but in vain. She hears a voice and then sees an angel at the place of Zamzam digging a hole in the ground until water flows. She makes something resembling a basin around it and fills her water-skin.

"Ibn 'Abbās said that the Prophet said:"

He comments on Umm Ismā'īl's action concerning the Zamzam spring and quotes the words of the angel who announces the future building of the House of God at this place by Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl.

(Continuation of Ibn 'Abbās' report):

Some people of the Jurhum tribe come to the place and Umm Ismā'īl allows them to settle. Ismā'īl grows up among them, learns Arabic and marries a woman from amongst them when he reaches puberty. Umm Ismā'īl dies. Ibrāhīm comes to the place to see his family, but finds only Ismā'īl's wife since Ismā'īl himself is off in search of a livelihood. Ibrāhīm asks Ismā'īl's wife about their way of life. She complains about it. Ibrāhīm gives her a message for his son and departs. When Ismā'īl hears the message he divorces his wife and marries another woman. Ibrāhīm comes a second time to the place to see his family, but again finds only Ismā'īl's wife. Ibrāhīm asks her about their way of life. Her answer pleases Ibrāhīm. He gives her a message for his son and departs.

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<sup>11</sup> For the English translation of the following I borrowed from M. Muḥsin Khān's translation of al-Bukhārī's *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ* (See bibl.). A summary of the story's content based on later versions is also given by Firestone, Abraham 9; see also id., *Journeys in Holy Lands* 63-64, 73, 76-77, 81.

When Ismā'īl hears the message he remains with his wife. On his third visit Ibrāhīm finds Ismā'īl and informs him of God's command to build a house for Him at that place. Ismā'īl helps his father to build the house, bringing to him the stones needed. When the building becomes high, he brings him "this" stone<sup>12</sup> on which his father could stand in order to place the last rows of stones. After the building is completed, both make the first ritual procession around it.

From the point of view of Western scholars, it is difficult to determine the trustworthiness of a single *isnād* like the one of this narrative ('Abd al-Razzāq from Ma'mar from Ayyūb and Kathīr b. Kathīr b. al-Muṭṭalib b. Abī Wadā'a from Sa'īd b. Jubayr from Ibn 'Abbās). A larger "context" is needed.<sup>13</sup> This context can consist of variants of the narrative equipped with varying chains of transmitters, in which case the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis can be applied.<sup>14</sup> Another type of context can consist of a large number of traditions with different contents that are ascribed to one and the same transmitter in the *isnāds*. This method has been called "source-reconstruction".<sup>15</sup> The biographical traditions of the Muslim scholars are an important resource for both methods. In the case at hand it is expedient to pursue the source-reconstruction method initially because there are only a few variants of 'Abd al-Razzāq's tradition.

According to the *isnād*, 'Abd al-Razzāq's source of information was Ma'mar b. Rāshid (d. 153/770). The biographical sources confirm that the latter was one of 'Abd al-Razzāq's most important teachers. Ma'mar was a native of Baṣra, where he began his studies; he then studied for a longer time in the Ḥijāz, particularly in Medina, and finally settled in Ṣan'ā', the capital of Yemen and hometown of 'Abd al-Razzāq, who became one of his students.<sup>16</sup> A study of 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaḥ* has shown that most of the traditions contained in this collection are ascribed to three scholars: Ma'mar (32 per cent), the Meccan Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767) (29 per

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<sup>12</sup> The *maqām* Ibrāhīm. The issue of its original function had prompted this narrative. See the introduction to the narrative.

<sup>13</sup> See Motzki, *Dating Muslim Traditions. A Survey* esp. 242-252. For a more detailed discussion of the methodological problems encountered by Western scholars when trying to date Muslim traditions, especially traditions ascribed to Ibn 'Abbās, see Berg, *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam* and the review of this book by Motzki, *The Question of the Authenticity of Muslim Traditions*.

<sup>14</sup> See Motzki, „*Quo vadis Ḥadīṭ-Forschung?*“

<sup>15</sup> See Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence* and id., *Der fiqh des -Zuhrī*.

<sup>16</sup> See id., *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence* 62-4.

cent), and the Kufan Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/777-8) (22 per cent). The remaining 17 per cent are distributed over 90 persons. The individual profiles of the traditions that ‘Abd al-Razzāq ascribes to his primary and secondary informants support the conclusion that he really did receive the texts in question from the persons he names as his sources.<sup>17</sup> This means that ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s narrative about Ibrāhīm, Ismā‘īl and his mother can safely be dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AH., when Ma‘mar was teaching in Ṣan‘ā’.

This finding is corroborated by an investigation of ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s text (*matn*) of the narrative in question. Three features support the authenticity of ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s tradition from Ma‘mar: first, the unusual introduction, which describes the situation that led to the telling of the story; in view of ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s other traditions, it is unlikely that he invented it himself. Second, ‘Abd al-Razzāq notes a few uncertainties about the precise text of the tradition: p. 106 *aw qāla yatalabbaṭ* (instead of: *yatalawwā*), 107 *aw qāla bi-janāḥihi* (instead of: *bi-‘aqabihi*), 107 *aw qāla lam taghrif min la-mā* (instead of: *tarakat zamzam*), 107 *aw ahli l-bayt min Jurhum* (instead of: *min Jurhum*). The conclusion that ‘Abd al-Razzāq is the author of these notes is corroborated by the version of the tradition transmitted by al-Bukhārī, which cites ‘Abd al-Razzāq as transmitter in his isnād and shows the same uncertainties.<sup>18</sup> Third, two statements are made by Ma‘mar about additional details that he relates from anonymous persons. There is therefore no doubt that Ma‘mar is ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s source for the story.

The next question that has to be answered is: did Ma‘mar invent the story himself or did he receive it from the two persons he names as his informants, Ayyūb and Kathīr b. Kathīr? The informant’s profile of the many texts ascribed to Ma‘mar in ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s *Muṣannaf* suggests that he indeed received the story from these informants. Ma‘mar’s texts are ascribed to three main informants or teachers: the Medinan scholar al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742), who is named in 28 per cent of Ma‘mar’s traditions, and the Baṣran scholars Qatāda (d. 117/735) and Ayyūb (b. Abī Tamīma) (d. 131/748-9), who are quoted in respectively 25 per cent and 11 per cent of the traditions. Ma‘mar transmitted only sporadically from more than 80 persons, among whom the Meccan Kathīr b. Kathīr b. al-Muṭṭalib, Ma‘mar’s second informant in the *isnād* of our story. This individual informant’s profile of the traditions ascribed to Ma‘mar in ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s *Muṣannaf* is a strong indication that Ma‘mar did not haphazardly attribute his own texts to

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 58-62.

<sup>18</sup> See below p. 8.

people but that he really did receive the traditions from the persons he mentions as his informants.<sup>19</sup>

This conclusion is corroborated by the *isnād* of Ma‘mar’s tradition about Ibrāhīm, Ismā‘īl and his mother found in ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s *Muṣannaḥ*. Ma‘mar states in his *isnād* that he received the story from two informants in two different versions from which he created a single version. This is the meaning of the remark after the mention of the two names Ayyūb and Kathīr b. Kathīr b. al-Muṭṭalib b. Abī Wadā‘a: *yazīdu aḥaduhumā ‘alā l-ākhar* (both complement each other). This procedure is rare in Ma‘mar’s traditions, and he probably used it in this case because of the length of both versions of the story. The two names are also remarkable. Ayyūb (b. Abī Tamīma) was Ma‘mar’s first Baṣran teacher and friend, and he frequently transmitted from him.<sup>20</sup> By contrast, Kathīr b. Kathīr b. al-Muṭṭalib b. Abī Wadā‘a was an unknown Meccan whom Ma‘mar rarely mentions as his informant. This is probably also the reason he gives his complete name. This all argues for Ma‘mar’s sincerity and precision in naming his informants. He could have dropped the name of the little-known Kathīr and ascribed his own version of the whole story to his famous teacher Ayyūb.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.2 A later source: al-Bukhārī’s *al-jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*

The conclusions that Ma‘mar really did receive the details of his story from the two persons whom he names as his informants in the *isnād*, and that he merged two similar but slightly varying stories into a new one are corroborated by the four traditions that al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870)<sup>22</sup> mentions in his famous *ḥadīth* collection.<sup>23</sup>

### 2.2.1 Al-Bukhārī’s first tradition

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<sup>19</sup> See the more detailed argumentation concerning the informants’ profiles in Motzki, *Der fiqh des -Zuhrī 4-10; The Jurisprudence of Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī 4-11*.

<sup>20</sup> See Motzki, *Der fiqh des -Zuhrī 4; The Jurisprudence of Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī 5*.

<sup>21</sup> The trustworthiness of Ma‘mar’s transmission from al-Zuhrī has been shown by N. Boekhoff-van der Voort in “The Raid of the Hudhayl”, and in her PhD-dissertation *Between history and legend*.

<sup>22</sup> For particulars of the author and his work see J. Robson, *Bukhārī, and Melchert, al-Bukhārī*.

<sup>23</sup> In al-Bukhārī’s collection the story is found in the *kitāb* (book/chapter) *Aḥādīth al-anbiyā’* (Stories of the prophets).

*Isnād*: ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad — ‘Abd al-Razzāq — Ma‘mar — Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī and Kathīr b. Kathīr b. al-Muṭṭalib b. Abī Wadā‘a, they complement each other, — Sa‘īd b. Jubayr — Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>24</sup>

In his *ḥadīth* collection al-Bukhārī reproduces nearly word for word the chain of transmitters and the text that ‘Abd al-Razzāq received from Ma‘mar. He only skips the introduction, which relates why Sa‘īd b. Jubayr related the story to his students,<sup>25</sup> and the two short traditions that Ma‘mar added at the end of the story.<sup>26</sup> The rest of the text contains only a few minor variations that are probably due to transmission errors. According to the *isnād*, al-Bukhārī received the tradition from his teacher ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad (al-Ju‘fī al-Musnadī), d. 229/844) who, according to the biographical literature, was a student of ‘Abd al-Razzāq.<sup>27</sup>

## 2.2.2 Al-Bukhārī’s second tradition

*Isnād*: ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad — Abū ‘Āmir ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Amr — Ibrāhīm b. Nāfi‘ — Kathīr b. Kathīr — Sa‘īd b. Jubayr — Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>28</sup>

Not content with ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s version of Ma‘mar’s story, which is based on Ayyūb’s and Kathīr’s traditions, al-Bukhārī adds a separate version of only Kathīr’s tradition.<sup>29</sup> This makes it possible to realise the peculiarities of both Ayyūb’s and Kathīr’s versions. Al-Bukhārī names the same teacher as his source for Ma‘mar’s combined version and the narrative going back to only Kathīr, yet the remaining *isnād* of Kathīr’s tradition is different from ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s *isnād*.

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<sup>24</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* iii-iv, 460-463, no. 3364 (transl.: M. Muḥsin Khān, *The Translation*, iv, book 55, no. 583).

<sup>25</sup> However, al-Bukhārī’s collection contains a short version of this introduction from another informant. See below p. 10 and note 34.

<sup>26</sup> Probably because of their defective *isnāds*; one tradition is completely anonymous, and the other relates a speech by ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb addressed to the Quraysh without any *isnād*.

<sup>27</sup> The information on the Muslim *ḥadīth* transmitters is taken from the biographical dictionary of al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*.

<sup>28</sup> The date of death of the Meccan Ibrāhīm b. Nāfi‘ al-Makhzūmī is not known (see al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl* i, 143). One can infer from the list of his teachers that he studied during the first two decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AH. The transmitter from Ibrāhīm, Abū ‘Āmir ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Amr al-‘Aqadī, died 204 or 205/819/820 or 820/821; see al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl* iv, 565-566. On the basis of these dates one can conclude that Ibrāhīm b. Nāfi‘ died around the middle of 2<sup>nd</sup> century AH.

<sup>29</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* iii-iv, 463-465, no. 3365 (transl. M. Muḥsin Khān, *The Translation*, iv, book 55, no. 584).



The transmitters of Kathīr b. Kathīr's version are given as Abū 'Āmir 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Amr from Ibrāhīm b. Nāfi' instead of 'Abd al-Razzāq from Ma'mar. Al-Bukhārī's narrative going back to Kathīr b. Kathīr is much shorter than 'Abd al-Razzāq's from Ma'mar. This is hardly surprising because Ma'mar's story combines two narratives. The comparison between 'Abd al-Razzāq's narrative from Ma'mar with al-Bukhārī's tradition transmitted via Ibrāhīm b. Nāfi' from Kathīr supports our earlier conclusion that Ma'mar really did hear the story from the two persons whom he mentions as his informants. Ayyūb b. Abī Tamīma died in 131/748-9. The year of Kathīr's death is unknown but, if one judges from the information about his teachers and students given in the biographical literature, he must have been a contemporary of Ayyūb. This means that the narrative was already circulating in Baṣra and Mecca in the first quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AH (718-742 CE).

Besides the two versions of the story quoted in detail, al-Bukhārī knew at least two other versions of the story whose *isnāds* reach back via Ayyūb or Kathīr to Sa'īd b. Jubayr. However, al-Bukhārī quotes only fragments from these versions, which are described below.

### 2.2.3 Al-Bukhārī's third tradition

*Isnād*: Aḥmad b. Sa'īd Abū 'Abdallāh — Wahb b. Jarīr — his father<sup>30</sup> — Ayyūb — 'Abdallāh b. Sa'īd b. Jubayr — his father — Ibn 'Abbās.<sup>31</sup>

This *isnād* is striking: Ayyūb does not directly transmit from Sa'īd b. Jubayr, as in Ma'mar's version, but via Sa'īd's son 'Abdallāh. This could be a transmission error.<sup>32</sup> The text (*matn*) only contains the saying of the Prophet Muḥammad concerning Umm Ismā'īl's action after the discovery of the Zamzam spring. The text differs slightly from Ma'mar's version.

### 2.2.4 Al-Bukhārī's fourth tradition

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<sup>30</sup> Like Ayyub, both are Baṣran transmitters. For Wahb b. Jarīr see al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl* vii, 494-495, for his father Jarīr b. Ḥāzim see al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl* i, 443-445.

<sup>31</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* iii-iv, 460, no. 3362.

<sup>32</sup> See below (p. 11) al-Ṭabarī's tradition, whose *isnād* goes via Ismā'īl b. Ibrāhīm to Ayyūb and further to Sa'īd b. Jubayr. It has the same text. This *isnād* corroborates Ma'mar's, who also indicates a direct transmission between Ayyūb and Sa'īd. The classical *ḥadīth* scholars had already addressed the question of whether or not Ayyūb received this tradition directly from Sa'īd; see Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-bārī* vi, 492.

*Isnād*: Aḥmad b. Saʿīd Abū ʿAbdallāh — al-Anṣārī — Ibn Jurayj — Kathīr b. Kathīr — Saʿīd b. Jubayr — Ibn ʿAbbās.

The text is as follows:

I [Kathīr] and ʿUthmān b. Abī Sulaymān<sup>33</sup> sat together with Saʿīd b. Jubayr. He said: “That is *not* how Ibn ʿAbbās related it to me! He said: ʿIbrāhīm turned to the mother of Ismāʿīl and her son Ismāʿīl, whom she was nursing, and she had a water-skin with her — he [Ibn ʿAbbās] did not ascribe it [the narrative] to the Prophet — , then ʿIbrāhīm brought her and her son Ismāʿīl...”<sup>34</sup>

This fragment is a parallel of Maʿmar’s introduction in ʿAbd al-Razzāq’s *Muṣannaḥ*. Ibn Jurayj was a Meccan scholar and contemporary of Maʿmar.<sup>35</sup> The fragment shows that even Kathīr’s tradition originally contained an introduction that relates Saʿīd b. Jubayr’s reason for recounting the story. This introduction does not appear in al-Bukhārī’s rendering of Maʿmar’s tradition nor in his above-mentioned version, transmitted via ʿIbrāhīm b. Nāfiʿ from Kathīr b. Kathīr.<sup>36</sup> Yet this introduction differs considerably from Maʿmar’s introduction transmitted by ʿAbd al-Razzāq.<sup>37</sup> The deviations between al-Bukhārī’s two fragments and the corresponding passages of Maʿmar’s long version preserved by ʿAbd al-Razzāq indicate that the fragments and the full traditions to which they originally belonged do not directly depend on Maʿmar’s long version.

Summarising the findings of this section, we note that al-Bukhārī’s traditions confirm our first dating of the story of ʿIbrāhīm, Umm Ismāʿīl and Ismāʿīl based on ʿAbd al-Razzāq’s transmission in his *Muṣannaḥ*. It was transmitted not only by Maʿmar but also independently by several of his contemporaries; the two Meccan scholars ʿIbrāhīm b. Nāfiʿ (in al-Bukhārī’s second tradition) and Ibn Jurayj (in his fourth tradition), and the Baṣran scholar Jarīr b. Ḥāzim (in his

<sup>33</sup> A Meccan scholar, see al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl* v, 112.

<sup>34</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* iii-iv, 460, no. 3363.

<sup>35</sup> On Ibn Jurayj’s biography, see Motzki, *Die Anfänge der islamischen Jurisprudenz*, 239-254; id., *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 268-285.

<sup>36</sup> See pp. 8-9.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Bukhārī’s version of Kathīr’s introduction as transmitted by Ibn Jurayj is probably a shortened version. More detailed accounts of Kathīr’s introduction were transmitted by Muslim b. Khālid al-Zanjī and Muḥammad b. Jurshum from Ibn Jurayj, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-bārī* vi, 493. These versions are more in line with Maʿmar’s text without being identical with it.

third tradition). Al-Bukhārī's versions made the textual differences between the versions ascribed to the Baṣran scholar Ayyūb b. Abī Tamīma and the Meccan Kathīr b. Kathīr more obvious, thus confirming the assumption that Sa'īd b. Jubayr is the common source of Ayyūb's and Kathīr's versions of the story. Consequently, the story can safely be dated to the last quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AH. Sa'īd died in 94 or 95/711 or 712.<sup>38</sup> He belonged to the first generation of the so-called *tābi'ūn* (Successors), who had direct contact with the *ṣaḥāba* (the Companions of the Prophet).

The next question is whether Sa'īd really heard the story from Ibn 'Abbās, the Prophet's nephew. The Muslim biographical literature suggests this could be the case because Sa'īd is regarded as one of Ibn 'Abbās' students. However, it is also possible that Sa'īd himself composed the story on the basis of various pieces of information circulating after Ibn 'Abbās' death and then attributed his narrative to his former teacher in order to give it more authority. Do other sources substantiate Sa'īd's claim that Ibn 'Abbās was his source?

### 2.3 Even later sources: al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'riḫ* and *Tafsīr*

Two voluminous works by the Muslim scholar al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), his History (*Ta'riḫ*) and his Qur'ān Commentary (*Tafsīr*),<sup>39</sup> contain another four transmissions of the narrative in question.

#### 2.3.1 Al-Ṭabarī's first tradition

*Isnād*: Ya'qūb b. Ibrāhīm and al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad — Ismā'īl b. Ibrāhīm — Ayyūb — Sa'īd b. Jubayr — Ibn 'Abbās.<sup>40</sup>

According to the *isnād*, this is a tradition from Ayyūb (b. Abī Tamīma al-Sakhtiyānī). We have already seen that he was one of Ma'mar b. Rashīd's informants for his long version of the narrative in 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaḥ* and al-Bukhārī's *Jāmi'*, and in al-Bukhārī's third tradition he also appeared as Jarīr b. Ḥāzib's informant for a fragment of the story. The

<sup>38</sup> For his biography see Motzki, Sa'īd b. Ḍjubayr.

<sup>39</sup> On the man and his work see Bosworth, Al-Ṭabarī, and Rosenthal, *The Life and Works of al-Ṭabarī*.

<sup>40</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ* i, 154-155 (Transl. Brinner, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. II 74-76); id., *Jāmi' al-bayān* xiii, 300-302.

transmitter from Ayyūb in al-Ṭabarī's tradition is Ismā'īl b. Ibrāhīm (Ibn 'Ulayya) (d. 193/808-809). As shown above, Ma'mar's story is based on two narratives recounted by different informants. Al-Bukhārī's collection contained the narrative by Kathīr b. Kathīr; al-Ṭabarī's works contain the other narrative, that by Ayyūb.

Al-Ṭabarī's version by Ayyūb enables us again to examine Ma'mar's claim that he used a narrative by Ayyūb as a source for his version of the story. The comparison of Ma'mar's and Ibn 'Ulayya's texts shows that they correspond structurally and in many but not all details. Ibn 'Ulayya's version of the story, for instance, lacks the introduction that relates Ibn Jubayr's reason for narrating the story. In Ma'mar's version, the main body of the text starts with the statement that Umm Ismā'īl was the first woman<sup>41</sup> to use a girdle in order to conceal her tracks from Sarah.<sup>42</sup> Ibn 'Ulayya does not mention a girdle but says that she was the first woman "who voided ordure and dragged the edges of her garment over it" and "when she fled from Sarah, she let her garment trail behind her to wipe her footprints out". This is the opposite of what is mentioned in Ma'mar's story. Besides, Ibn 'Ulayya places another *awā'il* notice<sup>43</sup> first, which is not found in Ma'mar's text, namely that Umm Ismā'īl was the first to run between the al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa hills.

Ibn 'Ulayya's narrative stops shortly after Ibrāhīm's second visit to Ismā'īl's dwelling place and the report that his second wife gave him about her meeting with Ibrāhīm. The narrative ends by briefly mentioning that Ibrāhīm went to see his son a third time and that they both built "the House" [of God]. The ending of the story appears to have been shortened and, without variants of Ibn 'Ulayya's tradition, it is not possible to establish who did this. Any transmitter after Sa'īd b. Jubayr, including al-Ṭabarī himself, could have shortened the ending. It is even possible that Ayyūb shortened the ending: no version solely by Ayyūb has been preserved that narrates the building of "the House" in detail. It is also noticeable that in this version Ismā'īl's mother is called Umm Ismā'īl only once, at the beginning; after that she is referred to as *al-insāna* (the woman). All these differences between Ma'mar's and Ibn 'Ulayya's versions suggest that both versions must be regarded as texts that were transmitted

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<sup>41</sup> In Ibn 'Ulayya's text "the first Arab woman".

<sup>42</sup> What is probably meant is that by using the girdle she prevented her long robe dragging on the desert ground and thereby revealing that a woman had passed that way.

<sup>43</sup> *Awā'il* are traditions about people who did something first that was later regarded as a discovery or a model adopted by others so that it became a custom.

independently of each other from a common source and, according to the *isnāds* of both traditions, this common source was Ayyūb.

### 2.3.2 Al-Ṭabarī's second tradition

*Isnād*: Al-Qāsim — al-Ḥusayn — Ḥajjāj — Ibn Jurayj — Kathīr<sup>44</sup> b. Kathīr — Sa'īd b. Jubayr — Ibn 'Abbās.<sup>45</sup>

The text begins with the introduction that is also found in al-Bukhārī's collection,<sup>46</sup> where it contains only two phrases. Al-Ṭabarī, on the contrary, has a much more detailed introduction that resembles Ma'mar's in 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf* but is even more detailed. After the introduction al-Ṭabarī relates the beginning of the story according to Ibn Jurayj's transmission from Kathīr b. Kathīr. This text, too, is more precise than al-Bukhārī's parallel transmitted by Ibrāhīm b. Nāfi' from Kathīr b. Kathīr.<sup>47</sup> It features the quarrel between Umm Ismā'īl and Sarah that sparks off the whole sequence of events, whereas al-Bukhārī's version refers to problems between Ibrāhīm and his wives (*ahlihi*). Unfortunately, al-Ṭabarī does not quote Ibn Jurayj's tradition in full; for details he refers the reader to Ayyūb's transmission of the tradition that he has quoted earlier.<sup>48</sup> However, he quotes passages of Ibn Jurayj's version from Kathīr that are not found in Ayyūb's version:

A saying of the Prophet that the rushing between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa [during the *ḥajj*]<sup>49</sup> goes back to the rushing of Umm Ismā'īl.

The people [of the Jurhum tribe] asked permission to settle with her. She readily permitted it. They got their families to join them. They lived from hunting and Ismā'īl went with them. When he became sexually mature, they married him off to one of their girls. His mother had already died earlier.

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<sup>44</sup> Al-Ṭabarī corrected the name (*ism*). His source had 'Amr b. Kathīr.

<sup>45</sup> This tradition is not found in al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'riḥ* but only in his *Tafsīr*. (*Jāmi' al-bayān* xiii, 304-305).

<sup>46</sup> See above p. 10.

<sup>47</sup> See above pp. 8-9.

<sup>48</sup> See above pp. 11-12.

<sup>49</sup> Addition by H.M.

The latter passage is ascribed to the Prophet, which is not the case in the other versions.<sup>50</sup>

Ibn ‘Ulayya’s transmission from Ayyūb as quoted by al-Ṭabarī only hints at Ibrāhīm’s third journey to Ismā‘īl, when he finally meets his son, whereas a detailed account of this journey is given in this tradition transmitted by Ibn Jurayj from Kathīr b. Kathīr, which is paraphrased in the following:

Ibrāhīm tells his son of God’s command to build a house for Him. Ismā‘īl encourages his father to carry out the will of God and helps him to build the house by dragging stones close to the site. When the construction becomes too high for the aged Ibrāhīm to reach up Ismā‘īl brings “the stone” that set off the whole story. Staying on this stone, Ibrāhīm completes the building. At the end of the story Ibn ‘Abbās says: “This [stone] is the *maqām* Ibrāhīm and [this is the reason of] his [Ibrāhīm’s] staying on it.”<sup>51</sup>

Kathīr b. Kathīr’s transmission has already been mentioned several times. Ma‘mar used it for his combined version of the story transmitted by ‘Abd al-Razzāq. Besides a somewhat shortened text by Ma‘mar, al-Bukhārī’s collection also contains two traditions going back to Kathīr: the relatively detailed tradition transmitted by Ibrāhīm b. Nāfi‘ and the fragment of a text that Ibn Jurayj transmitted from Kathīr.<sup>52</sup> On the basis of these traditions one might assume that Ibn Jurayj’s original tradition from Kathīr was more complete. Al-Ṭabarī’s tradition transmitted via Ibn Jurayj from Kathīr shows that this really was the case. The reason why al-Bukhārī quoted only a fragment of it is obvious; he had already quoted two other detailed versions, one of them by Kathīr.

Ibn Jurayj’s variant is helpful for analysing the transmission process: it makes it possible to compare the texts by two transmitters, Ibrāhīm b. Nāfi‘ and Ibn Jurayj, both of whom invoke Kathīr as their source. Both versions are very similar but differ in many minor details, which supports the conclusion that both texts go back independently from one another to Kathīr b. Kathīr.

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<sup>50</sup> The attribution of this passage to the Prophet is found in neither al-Ṭabarī’s version from Ayyūb nor in al-Bukhārī’s version from Kathīr b. Kathīr.

<sup>51</sup> See note 55.

<sup>52</sup> See above pp. 8-9 and 10.

### 2.3.3 Al-Ṭabarī's third tradition

*Isnād*: al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad — Yaḥyā b. 'Abbād — Ḥammād b. Salama — 'Aṭā' b. al-Sā'ib — Sa'īd b. Jubayr — Ibn 'Abbās.<sup>53</sup>

In this tradition, the Kufan scholar 'Aṭā' b. al-Sā'ib (d. about 136/753-754) is the transmitter from Sa'īd b. Jubayr. The text has the same structure as the other versions attributed to Ibn Jubayr that we have already seen, but it diverges much more from them than do the other versions from each other. The introduction in Ma'mar's and Kathīr's versions is missing, and the whole story is much more compressed. Ismā'īl's mother, Umm Ismā'īl, is consistently called Hājar (Hagar). When water pours forth from the Zamzam spring, this is not ascribed to an angel but to the baby Ismā'īl.<sup>54</sup> Ibrāhīm asks Sāra (Sarah) for permission to visit Hājar. She consents on the condition that he not dismount. Ismā'īl's second wife brings Ibrāhīm the *maqām*, a stone on which he can put his foot, i.e. stand, so that he does not really alight on the ground.<sup>55</sup> There are no details of Ibrāhīm's meeting with his son during the third journey. The building of the House of God is only mentioned rather than described in detail, as it is in Ma'mar's story and in the versions transmitted from Kathīr b. Kathīr. At the end of 'Aṭā' b. al-Sā'ib's story Ibrāhīm calls on all human beings to make the pilgrimage (*hajj*) to the House of God.<sup>56</sup> The text ends with allusions to Qur'ānic verses that refer to Ibrāhīm and some of his offspring who live at the House that is located in an arid valley.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *Ta'riḫ* i, 155-156 (transl. 76-78); *Jāmi' al-bayān* xiii, 302-303.

<sup>54</sup> This detail probably hails from other traditions like Abū Ishāq's transmission from 'Alī or from the narrative that Ibn Abī Najīḥ transmitted from Mujāhid and others, which will be discussed later. See al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ* i, 152-153 and 153-154 (transl. 70 f. and 73 f.).

<sup>55</sup> In order to stay without descending from his mount. This is at odds with Ma'mar's and Kathīr's versions, according to which the whole story is directed to showing that the *maqām Ibrāhīm* is the stone on which Ibrāhīm stood when he built the Ka'ba together with Ismā'īl. It is also at odds with the view that Umm Ismā'īl was still alive when Ibrāhīm returned to the place where he had left her with his son and that she brought the stone which later was called *maqām Ibrāhīm*. See p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> This detail is also found in a short tradition that al-Ṭabarī transmits from 'Aṭā' b. al-Sā'ib. It has the *isnād*: al-Ḥasan b. 'Arafa — Muḥammad b. Fudayl b. Ghazwān al-Ḍabbī — 'Aṭā' b. al-Sā'ib — Sa'īd b. Jubayr — Ibn 'Abbās; *Ta'riḫ*, i, 156 (transl.: 79-80) and in a fragment whose *isnād* ends with Ibrāhīm b. Nāfi' — Kathīr b. Kathīr — Sa'īd b. Jubayr — Ibn 'Abbās (see below). This detail probably comes from the tradition of Abū Zabyān, see *Ta'riḫ* i, 156, (transl. 79) or of Mujāhid, see *ibid.*, 157 (transl. 80).

<sup>57</sup> Qur'ān 14: 35-40 and 2: 125-128.

These variations show that ‘Aṭā’ b. al-Sā’ib’s story is not dependent on the versions of the other known transmitters from Sa’īd b. Jubayr — Ayyūb b. Abī Tamīma and Kathīr b. Kathīr — but also harks back to Sa’īd himself. The divergence from the other two transmitters’ texts can probably be explained by weaknesses of transmission. Critical *ḥadīth* scholars of the early period such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal noticed, for instance, that the quality of ‘Aṭā’ b. al-Sā’ib’s traditions declined as he got older and that he confounded traditions.<sup>58</sup>

#### 2.3.4 Al-Ṭabarī’s fourth tradition

*Isnād*: Muḥammad b. Sinān — ‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Majīd Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥanafī — Ibrāhīm b. Nāfi‘ — Kathīr b. Kathīr — Sa’īd b. Jubayr — Ibn ‘Abbās.<sup>59</sup>

This is a fragment that deals exclusively with Ibrāhīm’s third visit. The text is much the same as the corresponding passage of the tradition transmitted by al-Bukhārī via Ibrāhīm b. Nāfi‘ from Kathīr b. Kathīr.<sup>60</sup> Here again is a reference to the *maqām* Ibrāhīm as an aid for building “the House”, undeniably part of Sa’īd b. Jubayr’s story, also with regard to the content of Ibn Jubayr’s whole narrative.<sup>61</sup> However, the fragment concludes with an additional remark: when the building had been completed, God ordered Ibrāhīm to “proclaim unto mankind the pilgrimage”.<sup>62</sup>

Summarising the survey of the variants that al-Ṭabarī has preserved of Sa’īd b. Jubayr’s narrative about Ibrāhīm, Ismā’īl and his mother, the following becomes clear: the study of al-Ṭabarī’s *isnāds* and texts shows that his versions have the same structure as and show many congruities with the content and even wording of the versions found in the earlier sources; nevertheless, their wording, and sometimes even their content, often differs from them. We can conclude from this comparison that al-Ṭabarī’s traditions were not copied from the versions found in the earlier sources, ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s *Muṣannaḥ* and al-Bukhārī’s *Jāmi‘*; they are independently transmitted texts that go back to three different students of Sa’īd b. Jubayr:

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<sup>58</sup> See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl* v, 170-172.

<sup>59</sup> *Ta’rīkh* i, 156 (transl. 79).

<sup>60</sup> See al-Bukhārī’s tradition above pp. 8-9.

<sup>61</sup> See above pp. 3-4 (introduction of Ma’mar’s narrative), p. 10 (short version of the introduction of Kathīr’s narrative) and pp. 12-13 (long version of the introduction of Kathīr’s narrative).

<sup>62</sup> Qur’ān 22: 28. This theme is also found in ‘Aṭā’ b. al-Sā’ib’s narrative, see above pp. 14-15.



Ayyūb b. Abī Tamīma, Kathīr b. Kathīr, and ‘Aṭā’ b. al-Sā’ib. Al-Ṭabarī’s versions are therefore helpful for dating the story in question even if a) al-Ṭabarī’s works that originated in the last quarter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AH (around the turn of the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE) are later than ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s and al-Bukhārī’s collections; b) al-Ṭabarī’s versions are in some cases incomplete or fragmentary (like the versions by Ismā’īl b. Ibrāhīm b. ‘Ulayya and ‘Aṭā’ b. al-Sā’ib); c) they are only variants of earlier versions (like Ibn Jurayj’s transmission from Kathīr) or differ from them substantially on some points (like the text of ‘Aṭā’ b. al-Sā’ib) or contain only a fragment of the story (like Ibrāhīm b. Nāfi’s text from Kathīr).

Al-Ṭabarī’s variants confirm the conclusion already drawn above on the basis of the traditions found in the earlier sources: Sa’īd b. Jubayr was the key transmitter, the common link, for all the versions of the story in question. His original text — if such a text existed at all and if Sa’īd did not pass the story on to his students in slightly different versions on different occasions — cannot be reconstructed word for word, but only its narrative structure and some details that correspond in several versions. Even so, a fairly clear picture of the story’s content emerges. Al-Ṭabarī’s versions confirm our dating of the story that was based on the earlier sources: the narrative emerged in the last quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AH (the decades around the turn of the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE). It is not possible to prove that its core originated with Ibn ‘Abbās, as Sa’īd b. Jubayr had obviously claimed.<sup>63</sup>

### 2.3.5 A fifth tradition by al-Ṭabarī

*Isnād*: Ibn Ḥumayd — Salama — Ibn Ishāq — ‘Abdallāh b. Abī Najīh — Mujāhid and other scholars.<sup>64</sup>

In his *Ta’rīkh* (History) al-Ṭabarī quotes still other traditions about the building of “the House” in Mecca that are not attributed to Sa’īd b. Jubayr but to other early transmitters. One of these traditions resembles Sa’īd’s story and seems to be datable for this reason. Its *isnād* contains a famous transmitter: Ibn Ishāq. Muḥammad b. Ishāq (d. 151/768) was a Medinan

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<sup>63</sup> A similar problem was already noticed in earlier studies, see for instance Motzki, *The Origins of Muslim Exegesis*; Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung* 161-167, 267-274; Rippin, *Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās and Criteria*; Motzki, *Dating the So-Called Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās*; Gilliot, *Exegesis of the Qur’ān*, esp. 102-108; id., *Portrait ‘mythique’ d’Ibn ‘Abbās*; id., *Les débuts de l’exégèse coranique*; Leemhuis, *Origins and Early Development*.

<sup>64</sup> *Ta’rīkh* i, 153-154 (transl.: 73-74)

scholar and collector of biographical material about the Prophet. Research on what is preserved of his works has shown that the texts attributed to Ibn Ishāq in general really do derive from him, even if one sometimes finds wide variations between the texts.<sup>65</sup> Ibn Ishāq often names the informant/s of his transmissions, in this case the Meccan scholar ‘Abdallāh b. Abī Najīh (d. 131 or 132/748-9 or 749-750), a student of the Meccan Qur’ān exegete Mujāhid (d. 104 or 105/722 or 723), who is named as one of his informants in the *isnād* shown above. Mujāhid was a contemporary of Sa’īd b. Jubayr and, like him belonged to the circle of Ibn ‘Abbās’ students. Yet the *isnād* of the tradition at hand stops at “Mujāhid and other scholars (*ahl al-‘ilm*)” and does not claim to derive from Ibn ‘Abbās.

The text contains the following paraphrased elements:

God commands Ibrāhīm to build a house for Him at a distant place. The angel Jibrā’īl (Gabriel) accompanies him to show him the right place. At last they arrive at Mecca, an inhospitable place near where the tribe of the ‘Amālīq (Amalekites) lives. Jibrā’īl confirms that this is the place assigned by God for Hājar (Hagar) and Ismā’īl’s dwelling place. Ibrāhīm leaves them there and returns to his family in al-Shām (Syria)<sup>66</sup>.

Ismā’īl becomes very thirsty. While searching for water, Ismā’īl’s mother hears voices and runs up first as-Ṣafā hill and then al-Marwa hill but she does not find anyone. She runs back to Ismā’īl and finds him scraping together water from a spring. She makes a *ḥisy* (“a plain ground in which water remains and collects”)<sup>67</sup> and fills her water-skin with this water for herself and her son.

One of the narrators of the story comments on her action of making the *ḥisy*. One of the transmitters adds that in Mujāhid’s narrative it was the angel Jibrā’īl who dug out the Zamzam spring with his heel.

This tradition needs some comment. The *isnād* and the transmitter’s comment added at the end suggest that the text is a combination of several traditions, something which is confirmed by the inconsistency of the text. The reason given for Ibrāhīm’s inland journey on

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<sup>65</sup> See A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad. A Translation of Ibn Ishāq’s Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, Oxford 1955, xxx ff.

<sup>66</sup> In earlier Islamic times the name al-Shām included Palestine.

<sup>67</sup> See Lane, *Lexicon* i, 572-573.

the Arabian peninsula is God's command to build a house there for Him. This is incompatible with the continuation of the story, which recounts that when Ibrāhīm arrived at the place that God had chosen as an abode for Hājar and Ismā'īl he ordered them to stay there and then left them, returning to his home in Syria without having fulfilled God's command to build a house for Him. The reason given in this text also disagrees with Sa'īd b. Jubayr's narrative, which, like the book of Genesis, mentions tensions between Hājar and Sāra as the motive for the repudiation of Hājar and her son. These textual incongruities suggest that the command to build a house for God as the reason for Ibrāhīm's separation from Hājar and her son and for taking them to an inhospitable region was secondary, and that it was chosen to replace the biblical motive of Abraham's separation from Hagar and Ishmael.

The second part of the narrative that describes Umm Ismā'īl's frantic search for water for her thirsty child and the wondrous rising of a spring is largely identical with the corresponding passage in Sa'īd b. Jubayr's story, including the comment on Umm Ismā'īl's making the spring a *ḥisy*, which in Ma'mar's version is called a *ḥawḍ* (*yuḥawwiduhu*), i.e., a trough.<sup>68</sup> This suggests that this part of the narrative was adopted from Sa'īd. This is in line with al-Ṭabarī's *isnād*, which indicates that the story was compiled from information going back to several early scholars. Apart from Mujāhid, who is explicitly named as an informant, his contemporary Sa'īd b. Jubayr must have been another source. This leads to a dating of the core elements of this text to the last quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AH. Only the odd motive given at the beginning of the narrative for Ibrāhīm's journey with Hājar and her son may be somewhat later, if it is a reaction against Sa'īd b. Jubayr's story.

This dating is based on the scrutiny of the *matn* and the *isnād* of the tradition in question and fits in with our dating of Sa'īd b. Jubayr's story based on the earlier sources. Yet a small problem remains to be solved. As was pointed out at the beginning of this section, the famous transmitter Ibn Isḥāq is part of the *isnād*. It is therefore reasonable to check whether the tradition in question is also found in any works by him and, indeed, a short version of this story was found in *Sīrat al-nabawiyya*. It contains traditions that 'Abd al-Malik b. Hishām (d. 213 or 218/828-9 or 833) says were transmitted via Ziyād b. 'Abdallāh al-Bakkā'ī from Muḥammad

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<sup>68</sup> Al-Bukhārī's second tradition (from Kathīr) has *ja'alat taḥfiẓu* (she began to hurry [to contain the water]), see *Ṣaḥīḥ* iii-iv, 464, no. 3365.

b. Iṣḥāq.<sup>69</sup> There is a broad consensus that Ibn Hishām's *Sīra* really is a transmission of material collected and taught by Ibn Iṣḥāq and also that Ibn Hishām edited and shortened it. One problem, however, is that Ibn Hishām's *isnād* of the tradition in question stops with Ibn Iṣḥāq whereas the much later source, al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'riḫ*, gives an *isnād* that reaches beyond Ibn Iṣḥāq to Muḥāhid and his contemporaries two generations earlier. Was al-Ṭabarī's *isnād* perhaps artificially extended?

One of the most influential Western scholars of Islam in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Joseph Schacht, would have answered with a plain yes. He was convinced that the Muslim traditions generally came into being only by fabrication. He followed these rules: a) If there are *isnāds* of the *ḥadīth* which stop at a later level of transmission, e.g., at the Successors level, in addition to *isnāds* that reach back to a higher authority, then the latter *isnāds* are secondary. This is the result of what he calls "backwards growth of *isnāds*";<sup>70</sup> b) *isnād* variants that appear in later sources with "additional authorities or transmitters" are fabrications. He called this the "spread of *isnāds*".<sup>71</sup>

The generalising nature of Schacht's methodical rules has been criticised. It has been argued that his generalisations are based on only a few cases and are therefore assertions rather than proven facts.<sup>72</sup> In the case of Ibn Hishām's transmission of Ibn Iṣḥāq's *Sīra/Maghāzī* it is obvious that Ibn Hishām edited Ibn Iṣḥāq's traditions in a more or less intrusive way, something he himself even noted.<sup>73</sup> Studies comparing Ibn Hishām's rendition of Ibn Iṣḥāq's work with transmissions by other of Ibn Iṣḥāq's students show that Ibn Hishām sometimes omitted, shortened or changed Ibn Iṣḥāq's original *isnāds*.<sup>74</sup> There are therefore strong arguments supporting the conclusion that in cases of doubt the *isnāds* of al-Ṭabarī's

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<sup>69</sup> See the edition of 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmurī, i, 129-130 (transl. by Guillaume, *The Life* 45 who does not reproduce the *isnād*.)

<sup>70</sup> Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, 161, 171.

<sup>71</sup> Id. 164-169.

<sup>72</sup> See Motzki, *Dating Muslim Traditions*, esp. 220-221.

<sup>73</sup> See Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat al-nabawiyya* i, 18-19 (transl. by Guillaume, *The Life* 691).

<sup>74</sup> See, for instance, Motzki, *The Origins of Muslim Exegesis*, 261-267. In *The Making of the Last Prophet*, G.D. Newby has gathered traditions of Ibn Iṣḥāq about people living before the age of Muḥammad, beginning with Adam and Eve. This narrations, found in the works of al-Ṭabarī and later authors, probably derive from the *Kitāb al-Mubtada'* compiled by Ibn Iṣḥāq but not preserved as such (see also F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, I, 289). Among the traditions on Abraham, Newby quotes a short version of the story about the finding of the Zamzam spring which is not identical with the text transmitted by Ibn Hishām but closely resembles it (p. 74, second paragraph).

transmissions from Ibn Ishāq are more reliable than Ibn Hishām's *isnāds*. Ibn Hishām's tradition therefore does not disprove the dating of the tradition in question as ascertained above.

### 3. Summary

This study's point of departure was the question of whether a narrative about Ibrāhīm (Abraham), Umm Ismā'īl (Hagar) and Ismā'īl (Ishmael) that is found in Islamic sources can be precisely dated. Did the narrative emerge at the same time as the earliest collection in which it is found or does it predate that collection? And if the narrative indeed predates that collection, then how far back can we trace it? In order to answer these questions, two methods of analysis have been used: historical source reconstruction and *isnād-cum-matn* analysis.

On the basis of the earliest written source available, 'Abd al-Razzāq's (d. 211/827) *Muṣannaf*, it is possible to date his version of the narrative in the first instance to the period of his study with Ma'mar b. Rāshid (d. 153/770), that is, the second quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AH. Thanks to Ma'mar's information in the *isnād* that his story derives from a combination of two different sources — a narrative by his Baṣran teacher Ayyūb b. Abī Tamīma (d. 131/748-9) and another by Ayyūb's little-known Meccan contemporary Kathīr b. Kathīr (his precise date of death is unknown) — we can conclude that variants of the story already circulated during the first quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AH. This dating is confirmed by the transmissions of the story that are found in two later sources, *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ* by al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and the *Ta'rikh* and *Tafsīr* by al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923).

Al-Bukhārī's collection of traditions contains four versions of the story. Apart from Ma'mar's combined story transmitted by 'Abd al-Razzāq, al-Bukhārī presents a long version of the story transmitted via Ibrāhīm b. Nāfi' from Kathīr b. Kathīr only and two fragments, one ascribed to Kathīr, the other to Ayyūb. According to the *isnāds*, the transmitters of both fragments above the level of Kathīr and Ayyūb were not the same transmitters as the transmitters of al-Bukhārī's two long versions. The variations of the texts and *isnāds* of the versions that are not attributed to Ma'mar support the conclusion that these versions are not directly dependent on Ma'mar's tradition. They can therefore be used for dating the story. They confirm the dating that resulted from the analysis of Ma'mar's tradition found in 'Abd al-

Razzāq's *Muṣannaf*. Al-Bukhārī's additional versions make it possible to identify Sa'īd b. Jubayr (d. 94 or 95/711 or 712) as the "common link" of the different *isnāds* and thus as the earliest common source of the story. As a result, its dating shifts to the last quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AH.

Three of al-Ṭabarī's transmissions of the story of Ibrāhīm, Umm Ismā'īl and Ismā'īl are variants on or fragments of the versions that go back to Ayyūb or Kathīr. Their *isnāds* and texts show that they are independent of 'Abd al-Razzāq's and al-Bukhārī's versions and thus confirm our findings, which were based on their versions. Another al-Ṭabarī tradition on the same subject is ascribed to the Kūfan scholar 'Aṭā' b. al-Sā'ib (d. about 136/753-754), a coeval of Ayyūb and Kathīr who, according to the *isnād*, mentioned Sa'īd b. Jubayr as his source. A comparison of the *isnād* and *matn* of this version with the Ayyūb and Kathīr versions supports the conclusion that Sa'īd b. Jubayr is the "common link" of the story, even if 'Aṭā's text differs much more from those of his peers.

A fifth tradition of al-Ṭabarī does not mention Sa'īd b. Jubayr in its *isnād* but only Mujāhid "and other scholars [of his age]", but a close study of the text suggests that part of it derives from Sa'īd. This version of the story thus supports the dating that resulted from our investigation of the traditions about Ibrāhīm, Umm Ismā'īl and Ismā'īl that have Sa'īd b. Jubayr as a link in the *isnād*. On the basis of the traditions investigated, it is not possible to determine whether Sa'īd b. Jubayr's story goes back partly or completely to Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687-688), a nephew and companion of the Prophet whom Sa'īd obviously mentioned as his source.

*List of the isnāds:*

'ABD AL-RAZZĀQ — Ma'mar — Ayyūb and Kathīr b. Kathīr b. al-Muṭṭalib b. Abī Wadā'a — **Sa'īd b. Jubayr** — Ibn 'Abbās

AL-BUKHĀRĪ — 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad — 'Abd al-Razzāq — Ma'mar — Ayyūb and Kathīr b. Kathīr — **Sa'īd b. Jubayr** — Ibn 'Abbās

AL-BUKHĀRĪ — 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad — Abū 'Āmir 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Amr — Ibrāhīm b. Nāfi' — Kathīr b. Kathīr — **Sa'īd b. Jubayr** — Ibn 'Abbās

AL-BUKHĀRĪ — Aḥmad b. Sa'īd Abū 'Abdallāh — Wahb b. Jarīr — Jarīr — Ayyūb — 'Abdallāh b. Sa'īd b. Jubayr [?] — **Sa'īd b. Jubayr** — Ibn 'Abbās (fragment)

AL-BUKHĀRĪ — Aḥmad b. Saʿīd Abū ʿAbdallāh — al-Anṣārī — Ibn Jurayj — *Kathīr b. Kathīr* — **Saʿīd b. Jubayr** — Ibn ʿAbbās (fragment of the introduction)

AL-ṬABARĪ — Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm und al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad — Ismāʿīl b. Ibrāhīm — *Ayyūb* — **Saʿīd b. Jubayr** — Ibn ʿAbbās

AL-ṬABARĪ — al-Qāsim — al-Ḥusayn — Ḥajjāj — Ibn Jurayj — [*Kathīr*] *Ibn Kathīr* — **Saʿīd b. Jubayr** — Ibn ʿAbbās

AL-ṬABARĪ — al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad — Yaḥyā b. ʿAbbād — Ḥammād b. Salama — ʿAṭāʾ b. al-Sāʿib — **Saʿīd b. Jubayr** — Ibn ʿAbbās

AL-ṬABARĪ — Muḥammad b. Sinān — ʿUbayd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Majīd Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥanafī — Ibrāhīm b. Nāfiʿ — *Kathīr b. Kathīr* — **Saʿīd b. Jubayr** — Ibn ʿAbbās (fragment)

AL-ṬABARĪ — Ibn Ḥumayd — Salama — Ibn Ishāq — ʿAbdallāh b. Abī Najīḥ — Mujāhid and other scholars

capitals: sources

italics: transmitters from the common link

bold: common link

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