

TWO 'LOST' SŪRAS OF THE QUR'ĀN:  
SŪRAT AL-KHALĀ AND SŪRAT AL-ḤAFD BETWEEN TEXTUAL AND  
RITUAL CANON (1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>/7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES)\*

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**Abstract** According to the standard accounts of the codification of the Qur'ān, the third caliph 'Uthmān b. 'Affān compiled the archetypal codex (*muṣḥaf*) that serves as the authoritative ancestor for all copies of the Qur'ān. 'Uthmān's standardized codex includes 114 Sūras in total, but the caliph allegedly excluded two additional Sūras that appeared in the pre-'Uthmānic codex of Ubayy b. Ka'b, a Companion of the Prophet much revered for his knowledge of the Qur'ānic revelation. This study compiles the evidence for the exclusion and existence of these two non-canonical Sūras, collates the earliest testimonies to the text of each Sūra, and offers an evaluation of the two Sūras' historicity and their relationship to the early Qur'ānic corpus.

**Keywords** Qur'ān, Sūra, canonization, codification, 'Uthmān b. 'Affān, Ubayy b. Ka'b

According to the earliest accounts of the codification of Qur'ān,<sup>1</sup> the enterprise began at the instigation of the third caliph, 'Uthmān b. 'Affān (r. 23-35/644-656). 'Uthmān purportedly oversaw the project in Medina and personally appointed the members of the committee charged with enacting it. The caliph placed at the committee's head the Anṣārī Companion and scribe, Zayd b. Thābit (d. ca. 45/665), whom he provided with the personal

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<sup>1</sup> Nearly all of the earliest accounts derive from the early-second/eighth century account(s) of the Medinan scholar Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742). On the antiquity of these accounts and their attribution to al-Zuhrī, see Motzki, "The collection of the Qur'ān," pp. 1-34.

copy of the Qurʾān once owned by his caliphal predecessor, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13-23/634-44), to serve as its prototype. After the committee’s establishment of the authoritative text, ʿUthmān subsequently enforced the adoption of the caliphal collection of the Qurʾān across the newly settled territories of the early conquest polity. He distributed copies of this codex (*muṣḥaf*; pl. *maṣāḥif*) to the major garrison cities of the burgeoning empire and then ordered the incineration or erasure of all previously written copies of the Qurʾān, whether partial or whole, so that the official codex established by Zayd would have no rival. According to one account, ʿUthmān even destroyed his own personal copy of the Qurʾān, which he owned prior to the codification efforts during his caliphate.<sup>2</sup>

The earliest accounts of the caliph’s undertaking continue to fascinate modern readers, especially because they recount not merely the success of the caliph’s enterprise but also important controversies that accompanied his centralizing efforts to codify an authoritative, caliph-endorsed copy of the Qurʾān. When early sources recount such controversies, they do so not to undermine the integrity or the success of the caliph’s codification project; rather, they offer a narrative stage for voicing the anxieties that the process inevitably engendered. By framing the controversies within narratives, these sources in fact hope to quell any anxieties they address. Especially key to these early accounts is the theme of the fate of the earliest authoritative codices, which the caliphal codex ostensibly surpassed and supplanted. These earliest codices were privately owned copies compiled by the Prophet’s Companions and even earlier caliphs.<sup>3</sup> Hence, many early accounts contrast ʿUthmān’s codified Qurʾān established in Medina, the political and ideological epicenter of the burgeoning Islamic polity, with the older written copies of the Qurʾān owned

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<sup>2</sup> Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Baṣāʾir wa-ʾl-dhakhāʾir*, vol. 8, p. 161, “I [too] had a copy of the Qurʾān, but I erased it and am content to rely on this [new] copy (*qad kāna ʿindī muṣḥafun fa-maḥawtuḥu wa-ʾktafaytu ʿalā hādihā l-muṣḥaf*).”

<sup>3</sup> Reportedly ʿUthmān’s two predecessors, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, jointly oversaw the commitment of the entire Qurʾān to writing as well; however, they did not distribute this codex, which remained a privately held, caliphal copy. After ʿUmar’s assassination, his daughter Ḥafṣa, also the Prophet’s widow, inherited the codex, a prototype which ʿUthmān purportedly used as the template for the ʿUthmānic Qurʾān. See now Anthony and Bronson, “Did Ḥafṣah bint ʿUmar edit the Qurʾān?,” pp. 93-126.

and taught by Companions of the Prophet and their acolytes. These latter copies were revered in the far-flung garrison cities of the conquered territories (such as Kūfa and Baṣra) rather than in Medina. They were also the very copies that 'Uthmān's compilation sought to surpass and render defunct. Hence, early accounts almost invariably contrast 'Uthmān's codex with prior codices in order to demonstrate the superiority of 'Uthmān's caliphal codex over the regional, prototype codices.<sup>4</sup>

An important example of such narratives can be seen in a tradition concerning five Sūras of the Qur'ān whose status as revelation and, therefore, inclusion in the caliph 'Uthmān's codex were in dispute. Of these five disputed Sūras, the 'Uthmānic Qur'ān included three (Q. Fātiḥa 1, Falaq 113, and Nās 114). But two Sūras, called al-Khal' ('Casting-off') and al-Ḥafd ('Hastening'), the 'Uthmānic Qur'ān excluded. In contrast with the caliphal codex, these accounts present us with two counterfactual Companion codices that each adopted a different attitude to these five Sūras: these famous codices were the codex of the Hudhalī Companion 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd (d. ca. 32-33/652-54) that prevailed in Kūfa and the codex of the Anṣārī Companion Ubayy b. Ka'b (d. 19/640 or 22/643) that prevailed in Syria. Ibn Mas'ūd *rejected* all five controversial Sūras as non-revelatory and excluded them from the Qur'ān, but Ubayy *incorporated* all five as integral to the revealed scripture and included them in the Qur'ān. Hence, the 'Uthmānic codex, these narratives posit, adopted a middle position between the two extremes. The committee of Quraysh and their scribe, Zayd b. Thābit, accepted al-Fātiḥa and the so-called 'prayers of warding' (Ar. *al-mu'awwidhatān*; viz., al-Falaq and al-Nās) and included them in 'Uthmān's official codex, but they rejected the two remaining Sūras, al-Khal' and al-Ḥafd, and thus excluded them from the codex.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For a recent treatment of the theological underpinnings of the early narratives of 'Uthmān's collection of the Qur'ān, see Comerro, *Les traditions sur la constitution du muṣḥaf*, pp. 41-88 *et passim*. Exceptions to the rule of thumb outlined above are the Shī'ī accounts of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib's collection of the Qur'ān, which is said to have surpassed 'Uthmān's codex in its fidelity to the original revelation despite its rejection by the larger community. See Kohlberg and Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and falsification*, pp. 24 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Abū 'Ubayd, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, p. 318; Ibn Shabba, *al-Madīna*, pp. 1009-1010.

Because of their inclusion in the ‘Uthmānic Qur’ān, al-Fātiḥa, al-Falaq, and al-Nās are Sūras that are familiar to the faithful and scholars alike, but what of the other two Sūras that Ubayy included in his Qur’ān codex? This study explores the fate of these two Sūras and, especially, what ramifications the exclusion of the so-called ‘two Sūras of Ubayy’ from the ‘Uthmānic codex had for their canonicity and their textual transmission. On the one hand, the study surveys how the text of these two Sūras survived given their exclusion from the ‘Uthmānic canon and then collates the earliest testimonies to the text of these Sūras. The main aim here is to arrive at a more precise evaluation of their textual contents and early transmitted variants than was presented by either von Hammer-Purgstall (1850) or Nöldeke and Schwally (1919), who relied on relatively late textual attestations and underestimated the prevalence of the citations of these two Sūras in early Muslim scholarly literature. On the other hand, this study contends that the legal and *ḥadīth* literature of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries reveals that many early Muslim scholars and authorities continued to regard the two Sūras as part of the Qur’ānic revelation well into the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century, despite the putative exclusion of the two Sūras from the ‘Uthmānic Qur’ān. The key mechanism for the preservation of these Sūras, I argue, was their importance to the Muslim *ritual* canon even as their status in the *written* canon remained liminal and disputed.

### The textual history of al-Khal<sup>ḥ</sup> and al-Ḥafd

The seminal study of the two Sūras of Ubayy in western scholarship appears in the *Geschichte des Qorāns* of Nöldeke and Schwally. Writing a century ago, Nöldeke and Schwally offered a rather low estimate of how frequently the text of Ubayy’s two Sūras appeared in the literature, commenting that, “[i]t is extremely rare to find the text [of the two Sūras].”<sup>6</sup> With over a century having now passed since these words were penned, the discovery and publication of early *ḥadīth* collections and treatises on the Qur’ān have changed the landscape of early Islamic sources on an almost geological scale, bringing about new avenues for historical inquiry. As a result, this view of

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<sup>6</sup> *GdQ*, vol. 2, p. 33 (tr. Behn, p. 240).

Nöldeke and Schwally has been rendered untenable in light of current knowledge.

The full texts of Ubayy's two Sūras appear in works that are quite early – in fact, they are some of earliest sources available to modern scholars. These texts are not marginal, either; they include centerpieces of Sunnī *ḥadīth* works and the mainstays of the Sunnī legal tradition. These authorities include, for example, Abū Yūsuf al-Qāḍī's (d. 182/798) *K. Ikhtilāf al-'Irāqīyyayn*, as well as al-Shāfi'ī's (d. 204/820) commentary thereon in his *K. al-Umm*,<sup>7</sup> Ibn Sa'd's (d. 230/844-45) *K. al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*,<sup>8</sup> Saḥnūn's (d. 240/854-55) *al-Mudawwana al-kubrā*,<sup>9</sup> and the responsa of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855).<sup>10</sup> In what follows, this study adds the names of many more early works and authorities. Nöldeke and Schwally's characterization of the attestations of the text of the two Sūras as 'extremely rare', therefore, is simply not true.

Below I provide the Arabic text of the two *sūras*, al-Khal' and al-Ḥafd, as found in the *K. al-Umm* of Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820), supplemented by notes documenting textual variants for each Sūra found in sources dating prior to 250 AH.

**Tradition key for variant readings**  
(see figures 1 and 2 for full *isnāds*):

- AZ1 (*Muṣannaf*, 3: 110; Abū Rāfi' from 'Umar,)  
 AZ2 (*Muṣannaf*, 3: 111; 'Ubayd b. 'Umayr from 'Umar,)  
 AZ3 (*Muṣannaf*, 3: 112; Maymūn b. Mihrān from Ubayy)  
 AZ4 (*Muṣannaf*, 3:114; 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kāhili from 'Alī)  
 AZ6 (*Muṣannaf*, 3:117; from Ṭāwūs b. Kaysān,)  
 AZ7 (*Muṣannaf*, 3: 119; from Ibn Jurayj)  
 AZ8 (*Muṣannaf*, 3: 121; from Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī)  
 IAS1 (*Muṣannaf*, 3: 268; 'Ubayd b. 'Umayr from 'Umar)

<sup>7</sup> Abū Yūsuf, *Ikhtilāf*, p. 114; al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Umm*, vol. 8, pp. 323-324 (with thanks to Ahmed El-Shamsy for pointing out to me al-Shāfi'ī's reliance on Abū Yūsuf).

<sup>8</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, pp. 359-360.

<sup>9</sup> Saḥnūn, *Mudawwana*, vol. 1, p. 103.

<sup>10</sup> Ibn Ḥanbal, *Masā'il* ('Abd Allāh), p. 93; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Masā'il* (Abū Dāwūd), p. 98.

- IAS2 (*Muṣannaf*, 3:268-69; ‘Abd al-Malik [sic] al-Kāhili from ‘Alī)  
 IAS3 (*Muṣannaf*, 3: 269; Maymūn b. Mihrān from Ubayy)  
 IAS4 (*Muṣannaf*, 3: 269; ‘Ubayd b. ‘Umayr from ‘Umar)  
 IAS5 (*Muṣannaf*, 10: 151-52; Ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān from Ibn Mas‘ūd)  
 S1 (*Mudawwana*, 1:103; Khālid b. Abī ‘Imrān from the Prophet)  
 S2 (*Mudawwana*, 1: 103; ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kāhili from ‘Alī).

## SŪRAT AL-KHALĀ

[ <i>bi-smi llāhi l-raḥmāni l-raḥīm</i> ]	[ <i>In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate</i> ]
1 <i>allāhumma innā nasta‘īnuka wa-nastaghfiruk</i> <sup>11</sup>	1 Lord, for aid and forgiveness do we beseech you;
2 <i>wa-nuthnī ‘alayka</i> <sup>12</sup> <i>wa-lā nakfuruk</i> <sup>13</sup>	2 We praise you and do not disbelieve you;
3 <i>wa-nakhlā‘u wa-natruku man yafjuruk</i>	3 We denounce and forsake all who disobey you.

**Textual sources:** Shāfi‘ī (d. 204/820), *al-Umm*, vol. 8, p. 323; ‘Abd al-Razzāq (d. 211/827), *Muṣannaf*, vol. 3, pp. 111 (AZ2), 112 (AZ3), 121 (AZ8); Ibn Sa‘d (d. 230/844-45), *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, p. 360; Ibn Abī Shaybah (235/849), *Muṣannaf*, vol. 3, pp. 268-269 (IAS2-3); Saḥnūn (d. 240/854-55), *Mudawwana*, vol. 1, p. 103 (S2).

<sup>11</sup> AZ4 *nastahdika*; IAS4 inserts after the first verse *wa-nu’minu bika wa-natawakkilu ‘alayk*.

<sup>12</sup> S2, AZ5, IAS1, IAS5 add *al-khayr*; IAS4 adds *al-khayra kullahu*. Some MSS of Shāfi‘ī’s *Umm* (vol. 8, p. 323 n. 1) and AZ4 read: *wa-nuthnī ‘alayka l-khayra nashkuruka*.

<sup>13</sup> AZ1, AZ4, AZ5, AZ6, AZ7 add *wa-nu’minu bika*; S1 *wa-nu’minu bika wa-nakhlā‘u lak*.

## SŪRAT AL-ḤAFD

[ <i>bi-smi llāhi l-raḥmāni l-raḥīm</i> ]	[ <i>In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate</i> ]
1 <i>allāhumma ʿiyyāka naʿbud</i>	1 Lord, you we worship;
2 <i>wa-laka nuṣalli wa-nasjud</i>	2 To you we pray and bow low;
3 <i>wa-ilayka nasʿā wa-naḥfud</i>	3 For you we make haste to serve;
4 <i>narjū raḥmatak</i>	4 We hope for Your mercy;
5 <i>nakhshā<sup>14</sup> ʿadhābak<sup>15</sup></i>	5 We fear Your torment;
6 <i>inna ʿadhābaka<sup>16</sup> bi-l-kuffāri<sup>17</sup> mulḥiq<sup>18</sup></i>	6 Surely your torment will overtake the infidels.

**Textual sources:** Shāfiʿī, *al-Umm*, vol. 8, p. 324; ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 3, pp. 113 (AZ3), 121 (AZ8); Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 3, pp. 268-269 (IAS 1-3); Saḥnūn, *Mudawwana*, vol. 1, p. 130 (S1, S2); Abū ʿUbayd, *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*, vol. 4, p. 265 and see note 2 thereto.

As the above collation of the earliest attestations to the two Sūras demonstrates, the texts of Ubayy's Sūras were well-known and widely preserved. Yet, even these early attestations have their limitations when investigating their status vis-à-vis the corpus of the Qur'ān. The main caveat to keep in mind is that none of the attestations for the two Sūras derive from extant manuscripts of the Qur'ān. When the text of the two Sūras do appear in the literature, they appear in discussions of Islamic ritual procedure for either the *qunūt*-prayer or the *witr*-prayer. The importance of the two Sūras in Islamic ritual is a topic that will be taken up in the second part of this essay, but for now we focus on the textual question: Is there any evidence for the inclusion of al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd in early written copies of the Qur'ān?

The simple answer is that the historical evidence for the existence of codices (*maṣāḥif*) modeled after Ubayy's codex and that, therefore, included al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd is robustly represented in our earliest and best sources. However, in light of the absence of any extant manuscripts of the

<sup>14</sup> S1, AZ1, AZ2, AZ4, AZ7 *nakhāfu*.

<sup>15</sup> S1, AZ5, AZ7 *ʿadhābaka al-jidd*.

<sup>16</sup> AZ5, IAS4 *ʿadhābaka al-jidd*.

<sup>17</sup> S1, S2, AZ1, AZ4, AZ6, AZ7 *bi-l-kāfirīn*.

<sup>18</sup> IAS4 adds *ʿadhḥib kafarata ahli l-kitābi lladhīna yaṣuddūna ʿan sabīlik*.

Qurʾān that testify to their indubitable inclusion in early *muṣḥafs*, the evidence offered by literary testimonies is only as decisive and compelling as one's confidence in the literary sources in the absence of material evidence. Yet, it is still notable that many of those Muslim scholars who do provide accounts of written copies of Ubayy's codex often make direct material observations — specifying, for instance, where al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd appeared in this or that *muṣḥaf*— and claim to provide detailed, observational accounts of these *muṣḥafs* as material artifacts. They also somewhat differ from one another, thus suggesting that they are not derivative. Hence, while these accounts agree on the number of Sūras found in the codices copied from or modeled on Ubayy's exemplar, they never list quite the same ordered arrangement (*taʿlīf*) of the Sūras.

The most famous such description of a *muṣḥaf* of Ubayy appears in the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380/990), which in turn cites an earlier work by the famed third/ninth-century Qurʾān-scholar of Rayy, Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Faḍl b. Shādhān.<sup>19</sup> In Ibn Nadīm's account, Ibn Shādhān narrates an experience he had while visiting a small settlement some distance outside Baṣra called 'Anṣār village' (*qaryat al-anṣār*),<sup>20</sup> presumably because a large number of its inhabitants descended from the Medinan Anṣār. In this village, he found a copy of the Qurʾān attributed to Ubayy. A certain Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Malik al-Anṣārī<sup>21</sup> showed Ibn Shādhān this copy of Ubayy's codex and claimed, "We transmitted it from our ancestors (*rawaynāhu ʿan ābāʾinā*).” When Ibn Shādhān examined the features of the codex, he took notes on the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, vol. 1, pp. 66-68. The death-date of Ibn Shādhān al-Rāzī is unknown, yet his death is said to have preceded that of Qunbul in 291/903. Ibn Shādhān's son al-ʿAbbās, also famed for his knowledge as a Qurʾān scholar in his own right, died in 311/923-24. See al-Dhahabī, *Ṭabaqāt al-qurrāʾ*, vol. 1, pp. 281-283. This Faḍl b. Shādhān is also not to be confused with the Shīʿī scholar al-Faḍl b. Shādhān from Nishāpūr who lived in the same century. To make matters worse, Ibn al-Nadīm himself appears to confuse the two scholars in his *Fihrist* (vol. 2, p. 108). The work Ibn al-Nadīm quotes as an authority for Ubayy's codex appears to no longer be extant; however, the Garret collection at Princeton contains a unique manuscript of a short work attributed to al-Faḍl b. Shādhān al-Rāzī titled *Suwar al-Qurʾān wa-āyātuhu wa-ḥurūfuhu wa-nuzūluhu* recently edited by Bashīr al-Ḥimyarī and published by Dār Ibn Ḥazm in Beirut in 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Likely identical with Ṣandawdāʾ; cf. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 4/2, p. 138.ult; Yāqūt, *Buldān*, vol. 3, p. 425b.

<sup>21</sup> Reputedly a descendent of the famed Companion Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, although he himself was regarded as a poor transmitter of *ḥadīth*. See Ibn ʿAdī, *Kāmil*, vol. 8, pp. 156-161.



order, titles, and number of the Sūras therein. Thus Ibn Shādhān was able to inform us where Ubayy placed his two 'extra' Sūras in the codex: al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd were the hundred-and-third and the hundred-and-fourth Sūras of Ubayy's 116-sūra codex, he asserted, and were placed after al-Takāthur and before al-Humaza.<sup>22</sup>

Likewise, another account of the order of Ubayy's Sūras appears in a passage from the lost *Kitāb al-Masāḥif* of Ibn Ashtah al-Iṣfahānī (d. 360/971), a work that also only survives in quotations from a later work, this time the *Itqān* of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505). There are discrepancies between Ibn Ashtah's and al-Faḍl b. Shādhān's respective accounts, but the commonalities are impressive nevertheless. Again, Ibn Ashtah claims the Sūras number 116 in Ubayy's codex rather than 114 of the 'Uthmānic Qurʾān. Only the order of the Sūras that Ibn Ashtah provides differs slightly: al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd, he asserts, are sandwiched between al-ʿAṣr and al-Humazah rather than between al-Takāthur and al-Humazah as in al-Faḍl b. Shādhān's description.<sup>23</sup>

While these descriptions rank among those better known in the literature,<sup>24</sup> these two are comparatively late compared to the earliest testimonies to survive. In his *Muṣannaf*, ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 211/827) cites the authority of two of his teachers, Maʿmar b. Rāshid (d. 153/770) and Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767), who transmit to him a tradition of the Meccan scholar Ibn Ṭawūs (d. 132/749-50) that offers further insight not only into place of Ubayy's two Sūras in his codex but also into early Muslim ritual of the *qunūt*-prayer.<sup>25</sup> Ibn Ṭawūs states that his father, Ṭawūs b. Kaysān, would begin his *qunūt*-prayers with verses from al-Baqara (namely, Qurʾān 2:164, 255, and

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<sup>22</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, vol. 1, p. 68; cf. *GdQ*, vol. 2, p. 38 (tr. Behn, pp. 243-244). Arthur Jeffery questions the authenticity of Ibn Shādhān's observations regarding the copy of Ubayy's codex he examined, as Jeffery notes that the Sūra list in Ibn al-Nadīm's text is incomplete and omits Sūras attested to Ubayy's codex elsewhere. See Jeffery, *Materials*, p. 115. However, despite the neglected names, the account clearly states that Ubayy's codex contained 116 Sūras (Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, vol. 1, p. 68.12), implying the inclusion of the unnamed Sūras even if they go unmentioned by name.

<sup>23</sup> Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, vol. 1, p. 182.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Jeffery, *Materials*, pp. 114-116.

<sup>25</sup> ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 3, pp. 117-118. On Ibn Ṭawūs as a key source in ʿAbd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf*, see Motzki, *Origins*, pp. 216-217 *et passim*.

284-86) and then move on to recite al-Ikhlāṣ, al-Falaq, and al-Nās. Lastly, Ibn Ṭāwūs notes, his father recited Ubayy's two Sūras. "They noted (*dhakarū*)," 'Abd al-Razzāq adds presumably to invoke unanimity of his authorities, "that these verses constitute two Sūras ... and that they are placed after (*mawḍi'uhumā ba'da*) «Say: He is God, the One» (Qur'ān 112)."<sup>26</sup>

The Ash'arī scholar Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1014) wrote what is perhaps the most trenchant attack on the authenticity of the two Sūras of Ubayy, but his thorough critique also offers a wealth of early opinions affirming their revelatory status. One of the earliest testimonies al-Bāqillānī cites is that of the Baṣran Mu'tazilī 'Amr b. 'Ubayd (d. 144/761). 'Amr b. 'Ubayd is purported to have seen the *muṣḥaf* of the Companion and scribe Anas b. Mālīk (d. ca. 91-93/709-711), who settled and later died in Baṣra during the conquests; according to him, the codex remained in the possession of Anas's sons and was even written in Anas's own hand (*khaṭṭ*) in accordance with Ubayy's dictation (*imlā'*). When 'Amr looked at its contents, he found the two extra Sūras, which he calls *du'ā' al-qunūt* ('invocations for the *qunūt*-prayer'), copied therein. Al-Bāqillānī derides this testimony and vehemently denounces 'Amr's testimony as mendacious. Casting aside the Mu'tazilī's testimony, al-Bāqillānī cites instead the later testimony of the founder of his own theological school, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/926), who avers two centuries after 'Amr b. 'Ubayd, "I too saw Anas's *muṣḥaf* in Baṣra at the house of one of his descendants, but I found it to be entirely in agreement with the *muṣḥaf* of the majority and contrary to it in no way (*wajadtuhu musāwīyan li-muṣḥaf al-jamā'a lā yughādiru minhu shay'an*)."<sup>27</sup> Keen to dispel any notion that such a *muṣḥaf* ever existed at all, al-Bāqillānī also cites a dubious tradition from Ubayy's son Ṭufayl that 'Uthmān seized his father's Qur'ān and had 'Umar b. al-Khattāb (!) destroy it — a chronological absurdity.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 3, p. 118. The Arabic text here actually seems to be corrupt. It literally reads, "They mentioned that they are two *sūras* from al-Baqara [!] (*dhakarū annahā sūratāni min al-Baqara*)."<sup>26</sup> Should one read rather: *sūratāni min al-Qur'ān/al-muṣḥaf*?

<sup>27</sup> Bāqillānī, *Intiṣār*, vol. 1, p. 277.

<sup>28</sup> Bāqillānī, *Intiṣār*, vol. 1, p. 274. In other versions of this tradition, this group of people from 'Irāq approached Ubayy b. Ka'b's son Muḥammad (rather than Ṭufayl) asking to see Ubayy's *muṣḥaf*; however, he likewise refused for a similar reason, saying that the caliph 'Uthmān had seized it. See Abū 'Ubayd, *Faḍā'il*, p. 285; Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Maṣāḥif*, vol. 1, p. 212 (ed. Jeffery,

Despite al-Bāqillānī's strident denunciations in the late 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century, the number of early scholars alive during the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century who claim to have seen *muṣḥafs* copied on Ubayy's model and including the two Sūras is considerable. To the above testimonies, one may add the following: The Kūfan Salama b. Kuhayl (d. 121/ 738) claims to have seen with his own eyes the two sūras written down in Ubayy's codex next to al-Falaq and al-Nās.<sup>29</sup> Likewise the Kūfans 'Azra b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Khuzā'i and Maymūn b. Mihrān (d. 117/735-36) also claimed to have read the two sūras in Ubayy's *muṣḥaf*,<sup>30</sup> and so did the Baṣran scholar Ḥammād b. Salama (d. 167/784).<sup>31</sup> Most curious of all, perhaps, is a testimony attributed to Muḥammad b. Ishāq (d. 150/767), the famed author the *Maḡhāzī*: he not only claims to have seen the two Sūras in a physical copy of Ubayy's codex written after the *mu'awwidhatān*, but he also mentions a third, too. It reads as follows:<sup>32</sup>

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Lord,  
none can take away what you give, and prosperity grants the  
prosperous man no favor with you. Mighty is Your praise!  
Grant Your forgiveness and show Your mercy, God of Truth!  
(*bi-smi llāhi l-raḥīmāni l-raḥīm allahumma lā yunza'u mā tu'tī wa-lā  
yanfa'u dhā l-jaddi minka l-jadd subḥānaka wa-ghufrānaka wa-  
ḥanānayka ilāh al-ḥaqq*).

The prayer is almost identical to a famous invocation (*du'ā'*) of the Prophet Muḥammad recited at the end of the ritual prayers (*fī duburi kulli ṣalātin maktūbatin*):

There is no god but God alone. He has no partner and to Him  
alone belong dominion and praise. His power reigns over all

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*Materials*, p. 25 of the Arabic). As the editor of the Ibn Abī Dāwūd's text notes (*ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 212. n. 8), the *isnād* of this tradition is weak (*da'if*).

<sup>29</sup> Ṭabari, *Tahdhīb*, vol. 1, p. 357.

<sup>30</sup> Abū 'Ubayd, *Faḍā'il*, p. 319.

<sup>31</sup> Ibn Ḍurays (d. 294/906), *Faḍā'il*, p. 157.

<sup>32</sup> Maqrīzī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 323.

things. O Lord, none can withhold what You give, and none can give what You withhold. Prosperity grants the prosperous man no favor with you (*lā ilāha illā llāhu waḥdahu lā sharika lahu lahu l-mulku wa-lahu l-ḥamdu wa-huwa ‘alā kulli shay’in qadīrun allahumma lā māni‘a li-mā a‘tayta wa-lā mu‘ṭiya li-mā mana‘ta wa-lā yanfa‘u dhā l-jaddi minka l-jaddu*).<sup>33</sup>

Although Ubayy’s Qurʾān codex was the most famous *muṣḥaf* to include the two Sūras, reports of al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd appearing in other codices can be found, too. The Qurʾān-scholar Ibn Ḍurays (d. 294/906), for instance, claims that both the codex of Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687-88) and that of Abū Mūsā l-Ash‘arī (d. ca. 42/662-63), whose readings dominated the Baṣran school of Qurʾān recitation, included the two Sūras.<sup>34</sup> The Meccan ‘Ubayd b. ‘Umayr (d. 68/687) claimed that ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas‘ūd included the two *sūras* in his codex as well and recited them during his *witr*-prayers in addition to the *qunūt*-prayers recited at the end of the morning prayers.<sup>35</sup> In the *Kitāb al-Du‘ā’* of al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/971) there is a fascinating exchange that purportedly transpired between the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 65-86/685-705) and a partisan of ‘Alī named ‘Abd Allāh b. Zurayr al-Ghāfiqī (d. 80/699-700). “Besides the fact that you’re a brutish nomad, what causes you to love Abū Turāb so much?” the caliph asks. ‘Abd Allāh b. Zurayr responds, “‘Alī taught me two Sūras taught to him by the Messenger of God (ṣ) that neither you nor your ancestors knew!” Zurayr then proceeds to recite al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd to the caliph.<sup>36</sup>

Although some of the above claims about these two Sūras appearing in codices other than Ubayy’s may in fact be the product of confusion – wherein Ubayy’s name is erroneously exchanged for the name of another Companion<sup>37</sup> – oftentimes this does not seem to be the case. These

<sup>33</sup> Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 1, p. 1288, *kitāb al-da‘awāt* 80.18 (no. 6404); cf. Wensinck, *Concordance*, vol. 1, p. 324b, s.v. *jadd*. On the popularity of this *du‘ā’* in the Umayyad period, see al-Sayyid, *al-Jamā‘a wa-l-mujtama‘*, pp. 73-74.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Ḍurays, *Faḍā‘il*, p. 157.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ*, vol. 3, pp. 111-112; cf. Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaḥ*, vol. 10, pp. 151-152.

<sup>36</sup> Ṭabarānī, *Du‘ā’*, p. 1144 > Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, vol. 1, p. 226.

<sup>37</sup> Such an error, for example, seems to be behind one author’s claim that Zayd b. Thābit included the two Sūras in the Qurʾān; see al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, vol. 2, p. 433, “*athbata Zayd b.*

testimonies to the inclusion of the two Sūras in other early codices, albeit rare, suggest that the recognition of the Sūras as revelatory was early and not merely limited to the idiosyncratic view of Ubayy or of subsequent scholars who cited him as an authority. Even if one merely focuses on the traditions about Ubayy's Qurʾān codex, however, the literary attestations for the inclusion of al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd in written copies of Ubayy's codex are multiple, coherent, and geographically widespread – a fact that speaks volumes in favor of their authenticity.

Yet, as seen above, the finer details conveyed in these attestations are occasionally frustratingly at odds, too, inasmuch as they disagree with regard to the placement of the two Sūras in the arrangement (*taʿlīf*) of the rest of the Sūras in Ubayy's codex. On the other hand, they are nonetheless unanimous that Ubayy's Qurʾān codex contained 116 Sūras rather than the more standard 114. One probable explanation is – as Edmund Beck once postulated with regard to similarly divergent accounts of the textual readings attributed to the codex of Ibn Masʿūd<sup>38</sup> – that the codex of Ubayy initially survived mostly via oral instruction and aural reception rather than through an unbroken chain of written copies. The contents of his codex might have not survived in a strictly written form that was copied down from a clearly established, written template. Hence, the copies mentioned by subsequent scholars might have been transcribed either from a written predecessor or from the oral tradition after a break in the written transmission of Ubayy's Qurʾān codex, or some other similarly plausible scenario. Such a thesis suffices to account for the discrepancies, and this scenario gains even more credibility when one takes into account the

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*Thābit sūratay al-qunūt fi l-Qurʾān.*” Then again, according to other traditions, Zayd b. Thābit copied down the Qurʾān as Ubayy recited it to him; see Comerro, *Les traditions*, pp. 63-67, 71-72. Most early authorities place the death of Ubayy b. Kaʿb in either 19 AH or 20 AH – i.e., squarely within the caliphate of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13-23/634-44) – and assert that Ubayy did not live long enough either to see the caliphate of ʿUthmān or witness his collection of the Qurʾān. Other authorities, however, place his death during ʿUthmān's caliphate around in ca. 32-33/652-54 – around the same year provided for Ibn Masʿūd's death – perhaps in order make it chronologically plausible for him to have participated in the committee that ʿUthmān appointed to oversee the collection of the Qurʾān. See Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh Dimashq*, vol. 7, pp. 345-348.

<sup>38</sup> E. Beck, “Ausser ʿuṭmānischen Varianten bei al-Farrāʿi,” p. 435; cf. *GdQ*, vol. 3, pp. 77-83 (tr. Behn, pp. 443-447).

apparent prohibition of committing non-ʿUthmānic codices to writing from the second half of the first/seventh century onwards.

What makes Beck’s thesis even more attractive is that it can also accommodate two rather well established observations about early Qurʾān codices. The first observation is that, although standardized codices did indeed play an important role from the caliphate of ʿUthmān onwards, Qurʾān instruction transpired in a primarily oral context and without constant recourse to written copies of the Qurʾān. Indeed, the best study of Qurʾān instruction in the early Islamic period written to date, Ḥusayn ʿAṭwān’s *al-Qirāʾāt al-Qurʾāniyya fī bilād al-Shām*,<sup>39</sup> reveals several striking facts even if the scope of his observations are limited to Syria: the centrality of the mosque as the arena for instruction, the size of the circles of instruction (sometimes exceeding 1,000 students), and – most striking for our purposes – the near total absence of appeals to and mentions of the usage of written copies of the Qurʾān in these study circles. As a consequence, even with ʿUthmān’s purported destruction of the rival codices and the caliphal interdiction of making further physical copies of the regional codices that preceded the ʿUthmānic Qurʾān, the regional codices certainly survived through instruction inasmuch as the authority of Ubayy b. Kaʿb and that of his most important students remained unimpeached in subsequent generations of Qurʾān instruction.

Secondly, the authorities not only closely monitored the recitation of the Qurʾān in public – especially public performances of *ṣalāt*-rituals in the mosques – they also took extraordinary measures to ensure that the ʿUthmānic recension had no written rival. The state’s power undoubtedly played a decisive role. The earliest accounts of ʿUthmān’s rejection of Ubayy’s two *Sūras* declare in no uncertain terms that anyone who even recites these *Sūras* during the ritual prayer (*al-ṣalāt*) renders his blood licit to be shed after he is found guilty.<sup>40</sup> Attempts to compile and record non-ʿUthmānic codices were punished severely and regarded as an affront to caliphal authority and legitimacy even as early as the Sufyānī period of the

<sup>39</sup> ʿAṭwān, *Qirāʾāt*, pp. 13-36.

<sup>40</sup> Abū ʿUbayd, *Faḍāʾil*, p. 318; Ibn Shabba, vol. 3, p. 1010, *law qaraʾa ghayra mā fī maṣāḥifihim qārʾun fī l-ṣalāt aw jaḥada shayʾan minhu istaḥallū damahu baʿda an yakūna yudayyanu bihi*. The accounts might be an anachronistic back-projection onto the early period, but they still highlight a willingness of later authorities to employ force.

Umayyad caliphate. In 50/671 or soon thereafter, ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād’s subgovernor over Baṣra, Samura b. Jundub al-Fazārī (d. ca. 59-60/679-80), executed forty-seven men in a single morning for having attempted to compile a non-‘Uthmānic codex of the Qurʾān.<sup>41</sup> Although Samura b. Jundub was famed for his cruelty as governor,<sup>42</sup> many early authorities, such as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), also regarded him highly as a Companion of the Prophet and as an eminent authority on Qurʾān recitation.<sup>43</sup>

Yet, the early Islamic polity was a pre-modern state and faced the vicissitudes and limitations of its era: the caliph and his delegates could by no means exercise their authority on such a totalitarian scale as to preclude absolutely the survivals of privately owned codices of the Qurʾān that relied upon a discrete textual tradition that diverged from the caliphal templates established by the ‘Uthmān and refined by the Umayyads. Nevertheless, that no Qurʾān manuscript that includes the texts of Ubayy’s Sūras is known to have survived might be taken as a good reason either to accept the thesis that the regional codices were entirely destroyed or to reject the historicity of the two Sūras’ inclusion in any written Qurʾān codex at all. Indeed, until quite recently, the historicity of any Companion codex – let alone Ubayy’s or Ibn Mas‘ūd’s – has been regarded with the utmost skepticism and even rejected outright.<sup>44</sup> Two approaches have attempted to mitigate the justifications for this skepticism significantly; one of them has been, in my view, far more successful than the other.

The first approach comes from Adel Khoury, who has made the novel suggestion that the *Refutatio* of Niketas of Byzantium (fl. 842-912) – a Byzantine polemic against Islam that contains extensive quotations of the Qurʾān from an earlier Greek translation<sup>45</sup> – provides evidence that copies of the Qurʾān lacking the opening Sūra, al-Fātiḥa, circulated in Byzantium as late as the ninth-century CE because Niketas lists the number of Qurʾānic Sūras as being 113. Khoury suggests that, since Niketas excludes al-Fātiḥa from his list and since the Companion codex of Ibn Mas‘ūd reputedly

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<sup>41</sup> Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, vol. 4/1, p. 212; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 90.

<sup>42</sup> Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 4/1, pp. 210 ff.

<sup>43</sup> Hamdan, *Studien*, pp. 24-26.

<sup>44</sup> E.g., Burton, *Collection*, p. 228.

<sup>45</sup> See Høgel, “Greek translation,” pp. 65-119.

excluded it as well, Niketas offers modern scholars a key testimony to the circulation of non-ʿUthmānic Qurʾān codices even as late as 800s.<sup>46</sup> A more careful reading of the *Refutatio*, however, proves Khoury’s contention to be untenable and misguided. Niketas explicitly states that, although the scripture is composed of 113 textual units, the Qurʾān also contains another text — a *prooimion*, or ‘opening hymn’ — placed at the beginning the text.<sup>47</sup> This is an unambiguous reference to al-Fātiḥa. Khoury’s hypothesis, therefore, turns out to be a dead-end.

The second and far more successful approach has been pioneered by Behnam Sadeghi in collaboration with Uwe Bergmann. Sadeghi has argued on basis of a radiocarbon dating and codicological analysis of an early Qurʾān manuscript called Ṣanʿāʾ 1 that we now have access to a manuscript of a non-ʿUthmānic, ‘Companion’ codex. Ṣanʿāʾ 1 is a palimpsest with two textual layers — a younger, upper layer visible to the naked eye and an older, lower layer subjected to erasure and only made visible by X-Ray fluorescence imaging. Sadeghi argues that not only did Companion codices plausibly exist, but also that, through the recovered lower text of the Ṣanʿāʾ 1 palimpsest, modern scholars now have access to a manuscript exemplar, regardless of how fragmentary, of a non-ʿUthmānic codex. While the meticulous analysis of the readings found in the lower-text of palimpsest did not show the text to conform wholly to any Companion’s version known through literary accounts, such as those of Ubayy or Ibn Masʿūd, Sadeghi concluded that the textual readings of the lower layer can best be explained by positing that they reflect the features that distinguish the Companion codices from the ʿUthmānic codex as detailed in the literary sources.<sup>48</sup> Such promising developments strongly suggest that modern scholars should take seriously the literary testimonies to the existence of non-ʿUthmānic codices long after the caliph’s initial collection of the Qurʾān, even despite the discrepancies between them.

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<sup>46</sup> Khoury, *Der Koran*, vol. 1, p. 132.

<sup>47</sup> Niketas, *Schriften*, pp. 44-45 (Conf. I.5=PG 105, 708C); cf. Agryiou, “Traductions du Coran,” pp. 35, 64. Niketas also explicitly cites al-Falaq and al-Nās, which Ibn Masʿūd allegedly also excluded. See Høgel, “Greek translation,” pp. 117-118; Förstel, *Schriften zum Islam*, p. 122.

<sup>48</sup> Sadeghi and Bergmann, “Codex of a Companion,” p. 412; cf. Déroche, *Qurʾāns of the Umayyads*, pp. 53-56.



### The two Sūras of Ubayy in the early ritual canon

One particularly fascinating aspect of the two Sūras of Ubayy is how knowledge of these two texts did not survive merely in the arcana of the erudite notations recorded by scrupulous scholars of the Islamic tradition. The two Sūras also survived in the public and private performance of Islamic ritual. An attentive reading of al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd reveals that, first, each Sūra is quite short (3 and 6 verses, respectively) and, secondly, that both Sūras are invocations that implore mercy and forgiveness for the faithful and affirm the certainty of punishment for the faithless. All of this is to say that al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd are fundamentally short prayers. Notice too that so are the other three Sūras whose inclusion in the revelatory canon was contested. Hence, al-Fātiḥa is a brief liturgical text — an 'opening' prayer — and al-Falaq and al-Nās are two brief prayers for warding off evil (Ar. *mu'awwidhatān*). The fact that all five of the controversial Sūras were prayers had important ramifications for their canonization and the contestation thereof. In other words, the written codices were not the only sites of controversy over these Sūras' canonization; controversial as well was their early inclusion within the cultic performance of Islamic ritual. Ritual as well as Scripture thus proved to be key arenas in which the debates over the authenticity of each of the 'five Sūras' were decided.

Ubayy's two Sūras functioned as prayers and, therefore, pertained to early Islamic ritual, a fact that points us to an important aspect of their status vis-à-vis the scriptural canon. Because of their importance for Islamic ritual, the two Sūras survived through ritual performance long after the textual closure of the Qur'ān instituted by the caliph 'Uthmān, which putatively banished them from the scriptural canon. Being prayers, especially prayers of a certain type (either *qunūt* or *witr* prayers), the performance of the Sūras in the prayer ritual provided a medium for their preservation within the cultic life of the early Muslim community despite their categorical exclusion from the 'Uthmānic Qur'ān. What the Sūras' survival outside the textual canon implies is that another discrete canon existed alongside the textual canon of the Qur'ān. I suggest calling this separate canon a 'ritual canon', a canon which came to represent the codified

performance of Islamic ritual and even parts of the scripture itself, inasmuch as the Qurʾān and its recitation suffused the liturgical aspects of this ritual canon.

That the scriptural corpus of the Qurʾān underwent at least two parallel paths of codification – one path represented by the codification of the Qurʾān into a written textual corpus (Ar. *kitāb*, *muṣḥaf*) and another represented by the assimilation of the Qurʾān into the ritual corpus of Muslim piety and its cultic performance (Ar. *ʿibādāt*) – is an idea first articulated by Angelika Neuwirth. As she has noted, these two processes characterized the emerging canon from the outset, from the initial years of the revelations’ reception among first Meccan believers:

In view of the fact that the creation of the Qurʾān’s scriptural corpus was completed within a singularly short space of time, and the authoritative codification and dissemination of the entire text ... followed just as swiftly, it is easy to lose sight of a second parallel process: the emergence of the an oral canon which was tangible within live recitation and whose *Sitz im Leben* was the community’s service, the ritual ... with its central prayer rite, the *ṣalāt*.<sup>49</sup>

The two processes of textual and ritual codification that Neuwirth describes were simultaneous. The centrality of the recitation of the Qurʾān in the *ṣalāt* ritual and the notional authority of the Qurʾānic revelation as *scripture-cum-text* (Ar. *kitāb*) forged two pathways. Both pathways led towards the revelation’s canonization and both thus reflected the two modalities of its adherents’ mastery of the revelation’s transmission and performance. “We are not only confronted here with the emergence of two modes of publication,” as Neuwirth writes, “but, indeed, with two spheres of Qurʾānic impact that were later to grow into two distinct institutions, namely, teaching and ritual.”<sup>50</sup>

The realities and precedents of the ritual canon, in fact, played a vital role in the arguments for and against all the five controversial Sūras –

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<sup>49</sup> Neuwirth, *Scripture*, p. 141; idem, *Der Koran*, p. 345.

<sup>50</sup> Neuwirth, *Scripture*, p. 141.

i.e., not just al-Khal' and al-Ḥafd, but also al-Fātiḥa, al-Falaq, and al-Nās. Of all the five Sūras, al-Fātiḥa's place in the ritual canon of early Muslim prayer was and continues to be the most prominent and easily discerned. Aptly described by Rudi Paret as "an indispensable component of the prayer ritual," al-Fātiḥa 'opened' each bow, or *rak'a*, of the five *ṣalāts* and, therefore, had to be recited at least seventeen times over the course of a day.<sup>51</sup> Just as al-Fātiḥa enjoyed a unique place in the *ṣalāt*-ritual, the two Sūras of Ubayy also enjoyed, and indeed continue to enjoy, a unique place in Muslim ritual. The place they occupied, however, was not within the five *ṣalāt*-prayers but, rather, in relation to the five prayers. These two Sūras were ostensibly prayed during one of two occurrences: [1] as part of the *qunūt* prayer, supererogatory prayers that one performed, depending on one's region (or, later, one's legal school), to supplement the early-morning ritual prayer (*ṣalāt al-fajr*); or [2] as part of the *witr* prayer, supererogatory prayers made between the late-evening prayer (*ṣalāt al-ishā'*) and early-morning prayer. (Hence, it should be no surprise that the earliest works that preserve these two Sūras almost inevitably do so while discussing the *qunūt*-prayer and, to a lesser extent, the *witr*-prayer.)

The association of the Sūras with the *qunūt*-prayer in particular was so close that, as early as the lexicographer Khalīl b. Aḥmad's (d. ca. 175/791) *K. al-ʿAyn* for instance, one finds al-Ḥafd named '*sūrat al-qunūt*'.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, another early Muslim scholar, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857-58), comments that, although the two Sūras are no longer written in codices, they still remain preserved in the hearts of Muslims (*rufi'a rasmuḥu min al-kitāb wa-*

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<sup>51</sup> R. Paret, "Fātiḥa," *EP*. Perhaps, given the underdeveloped state of our knowledge regarding the emergence of Muslim ritual in the 1<sup>st</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> century, it is hazardous to impute the basic outlines of the five-daily prayers too far back into the history of early Muslim community. After all, the Qur'ān does not itself explicitly stipulate the number of prayers incumbent upon the believer as being five; however, the Qur'ānic command to perform the *ṣalāt* rituals communally and privately at specified times of the day is nevertheless manifest. See Rubin, "Morning and evening prayers," pp. 40-64. Given our knowledge of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century debates over Muslim ritual, however, it does seem highly probable that the 'five daily prayers' quite swiftly became a staple of Muslim communal ritual during the early conquest period. Cf. El-Shamsy, "Debates on prayer," pp. 335-337.

<sup>52</sup> Khalīl b. Aḥmad, *al-ʿAyn*, vol. 3, p. 185. The minor issues of attribution surrounding this text have little bearing on this dating; cf. Versteegh, *Landmarks*, pp. 28-29.

*lam yurfa*‘ *ḥifẓuhu min al-qulūb*), inasmuch as they are certainly still recited by Muslims during *qunūt*-prayers.<sup>53</sup>

Yet, the rules governing the performance of the *qunūt*-invocations and their relationship with the canonical and supererogatory prayers of Islamic ritual are a complex and vigorously debated issue from the outset of early Islamic legal debates. Here, it is not our aim to recapitulate this debate or to provide an historical overview of its trajectories, as this has been ably accomplished before by more than one scholar.<sup>54</sup> What is important to emphasize is that, whereas the liturgical function of al-Fātiḥa and its indispensability to the *ṣalāt*-ritual remained undisputed, the *qunūt* prayer remained a topic of legal debate in the *fiqh*-literature even well after the formalization of Islamic jurisprudence into discrete *madhhabs*. Two questions dominated the debates. The first was when (and even if) one ought to perform the *qunūt*-prayer; the second was what one should and may pray for the *qunūt*-prayer (Ar. *lafẓ al-qunūt*). The second question has the most bearing for al-Khal‘ and al-Ḥafd and the preservation of these two Sūras in the ritual canon.

The case of al-Fātiḥa provides an important counter-example to the plight of the two Sūras of Ubayy. Whereas al-Fātiḥa was an indispensable set piece of the five obligatory prayers — a liturgical text without which the performance of *ṣalāt* would be rendered invalid — the role of the *qunūt*-prayers was far more limited. The locus of the *qunūt*-prayers in the ritual life of early Muslims was circumscribed. They were performed either after the early-morning prayer or as part the supererogatory *witr*-prayer, or else dismissed as completely unnecessary<sup>55</sup> — even then the recitation of Ubayy’s two Sūras was optional rather than requisite. Indeed, Ubayy’s two Sūras do not occupy the ritual space of *qunūt* alone but, rather, share this ritual space with other *qunūt*-prayers that one may recite in lieu of the two Sūras, such as those prayers reputedly taught by the Prophet’s household (see below).<sup>56</sup> As Neuwirth has noted, the fact that a Companion as famed for his knowledge

<sup>53</sup> Muḥāsibī, *Fahm al-Qur’ān*, pp. 398, 400-401. On this work, see Melchert, “Qur’ānic abrogation,” pp. 75-98. See also Burton, *Sources*, p. 52.

<sup>54</sup> For a brief yet insightful discussion, see Katz, *Prayer*, pp. 32-33. The best comprehensive overviews are Bashear, “Qunūt,” pp. 36-65 and Haider, *The origins of the Shī’a*, pp. 95-137.

<sup>55</sup> Ṭabarī, *Tahdhīb al-āthār*, vol. 1, pp. 342-344.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ*, vol. 3, pp. 108, 118; Bashear, “Qunūt,” pp. 47-48.

of the Qurʾān as Ibn Masʿūd excluded the Fātiḥa from his codex certainly signal that this Sūra has been “transmitted different[ly] from other Suras,”<sup>57</sup> but al-Fātiḥa’s ubiquity in and indispensability to the preeminent locus of Islamic ritual made its inclusion in the written canon all the more likely. The role of the *qunūt*-prayers, although not unimportant, was considerably less central to the cultic life of early Muslims.

The controversy surrounding al-Falaq and al-Nās, the so-called ‘two prayers of warding’ (Ar. *al-muʿawwidhatān*), also casts considerable light on the manner in which ritual interfaced with notions of scriptural canon in the early community. Unlike the case of al-Fātiḥa, the *muʿawwidhatān* played no indispensable role in the early Muslim ritual. As noted above, Ibn Masʿūd rejected al-Falaq and al-Nās and excluded the two Sūras from his codex. For Ibn Masʿūd, the rejection of the *muʿawwidhatān* held ramifications not just for their inclusion in his Qurʾān codex; this rejection also held ramifications for the inclusion of the *muʿawwidhatān* in the canon of the *ṣalāt*-ritual. In this sense, the case of the *muʿawwidhatān* is markedly distinct from Ibn Masʿūd’s rejection of the revelatory status of al-Fātiḥa, since his stance on al-Fātiḥa had no bearing on its place in the *ṣalāt*-ritual. When Ibn Masʿūd excluded the *muʿawwidhatān* from his codex, this act had a different effect altogether: it also led to his rejection of their recitation during the *ṣalāt*-ritual. Perhaps the most striking articulation of Ibn Masʿūd’s dissenting view on al-Falaq and al-Nās appears in the *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855):

Sufyān b. ʿUyayna related to us on the authority of ʿAbda b. Abī Lubāba and ʿĀṣim b. Bahdala, from Zirr b. Ḥubaysh:

“I said to Ubayy, ‘Your brother removes the two of them from the Qurʾān (*yaḥukkuhumā min al-muṣṣḥaf*)’ — “Ibn Masʿūd?” someone [in attendance] asked Sufyān, and he did not deny it — “then Ubayy said, ‘I asked God’s Messenger, and he replied, “It was spoken to me, so I spoke it (*qīla li fa-qultu*).” Thus do we ourselves speak what God’s Messenger spoke”.”

Sufyān continued, “*Removed the two of them* refers to the two prayers of warding (*al-muʿawwidhatān*), neither of which are in

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<sup>57</sup> Neuwirth, *Scripture*, p. 169.

Ibn Mas‘ūd’s copy of the Qur’ān. He had seen the Messenger of God recite them over [his grandsons] al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn to ward off evil (*yu‘awwidhu bihimā l-ḥasan wa-l-ḥusayn*), but he never heard the Prophet recite the two at any instance of his ritual prayers.<sup>58</sup> Hence, he thought (*fa-ẓanna*) that they were two incantations for warding off evil, and he insisted on his opinion (*wa-aṣarra ‘alā ẓannihi*). All others affirmed that the two were truly part of the Qur’ān and placed them both in the Qur’ān (*wa-taḥaqqaqā ‘l-bāqūna kawnaḥumā min al-qur’ān fa-awda‘ūhumā iyyāhu*).<sup>59</sup>

An earlier source — the *Kitāb al-taḥrīsh* of Ḍirār b. ‘Amr (d. ca. 200/815) — provides us with an even more strongly worded report from Ibn Mas‘ūd in which he declares that the *mu‘awwidhatān*, “are neither part of God’s Scripture nor does their recitation count for the ritual prayers (*laysatā min kitāb allāh wa-lā yujziyāni li-l-ṣalāt*).”<sup>60</sup> Kūfan authorities counted among Ibn Mas‘ūd’s prominent students, such as ‘Alqama b. Qays (d. 62/881) and al-Sha‘bī (d. ca. 110/728), are likewise alleged to have rejected their full status in the revelatory canon.<sup>61</sup>

As noted above, the exclusion of al-Khal‘ and al-Ḥafd from written copies of the Qur’ān was enforced with the threat of violence from the authorities, often represented by the caliph and his delegates.<sup>62</sup> In the case of the *mu‘awwidhatān*, it was the *inclusion* of these Sūras that the state enforced. In Kūfa at least, where the authority of Ibn Mas‘ūd’s reading of the Qur’ān reigned, arguments in favor of the use of al-Falaq and al-Nās in the ritual of the canonical prayers were initially decided by means of state

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, vol. 9, p. 296 where Ibn Mas‘ūd also claims that the Prophet never recited the *mu‘awwidhatān* as part of the Qur’ān, “God’s Messenger commanded us to use to them to ward off evil, but he did not recite them [as part of the Qur’ān] (*amaranā rasūlu ‘llāhi an yata‘awwadha bihimā wa-lam yakun yaqra‘u bihimā*).”

<sup>59</sup> Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 35, p. 118 (no. 21,189); cf. Ibn Ḍurays, *Fadā’il*, p. 124.

<sup>60</sup> Ḍirār b. ‘Amr, *Taḥrīsh*, p. 110.

<sup>61</sup> Ḍirār b. ‘Amr, *Taḥrīsh*, pp. 110-111. ‘Alqama in particular is reputed to have kept his own personal *muṣḥaf* written in accord with the reading of Ibn Mas‘ūd, which was copied for him by a professional Christian scribe whom he hired for this purpose. See Rāmyār, *Tārīkh-e Qur’ān*, p. 481.

<sup>62</sup> Ibn Shabba, *Madīna*, vol. 3, p. 1010, Abū ‘Ubayd, *Fadā’il*, p. 318.

enforcement: the Umayyads' governor of Iraq, 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād (d. 67/686) notoriously provoked the Kūfans by reciting the *mu'awwidhatān* for the first time in the congregational prayer (*ṣalāt al-jum'a*) at the city's central mosque. Of course, Ibn Ziyad's actions defied the Kūfans' rejection of the recitation of the two Sūras in the canonical prayers; his actions also asserted the authority of Zayd b. Thābit's recension of the Qur'ān endorsed by the Umayyad caliphs' kinsman, 'Uthmān b. 'Affān, over that of Ibn Mas'ūd's recension.<sup>63</sup> Notably, the key to subsequent arguments for the inclusion of the *mu'awwidhatān* within the textual canon often rely on their place in prayer rituals, be it either the *ṣalāt* or the *witr* prayers, where Ubayy's authority is most often invoked (as above).<sup>64</sup> In Kūfa, the prevalence of Ibn Mas'ūd's codex as a viable source for rival readings to those found in the 'Uthmānic codex maintained a tenacious hold on the city's scholars well into the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>65</sup> Ultimately, however, the Kūfans' rejection of the *mu'awwidhatān* proved to be too parochial to sustain for the long term, especially in the face of the strong pressures from the authorities to adhere to the text of the 'Uthmānic codex. Although the two Kūfan traditions of Qur'ānic recitation canonized by the Qur'ān scholar Ibn Mujāhid (d. 324/936) maintained Ibn Mas'ūd as a titular founding-figure, and at times even drew upon an implicit recognition (*i'tibār*) of the variances of his codex, by the second/eighth century the Kūfan Qur'ān-scholars had to defer to the 'Uthmānic codex and demurred from contravening the letter thereof.<sup>66</sup> In other words, 'Uthmān's inclusion of the *mu'awwidhatān* coupled with the Umayyads' subsequent sponsorship and enforcement of his codex made their inclusion a foregone conclusion, regardless of regional idiosyncrasies of the Kūfans.

Of course, al-Khal' and al-Ḥafd lacked both caliphal endorsement and the authorities' enforcement and, thus, had to survive by other means.

<sup>63</sup> Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 13, p. 11; Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, 4/1, p. 270. Cf. Hamdan, *Kanonisierung*, p. 137 f. and Sinai, "Consonantal skeleton," p. 280 f.

<sup>64</sup> See Ibn Shabba, *Madīna*, vol. 3, pp. 1011-1013; Ibn Ḍurays, *Faḍā'il*, pp. 120-125.

<sup>65</sup> Nasser, *Variant readings*, pp. 55-59.

<sup>66</sup> Beck, "Studien zur Geschichte der kufischen Koranlesung," pp. 327 ff.; Shah, "Exploring the genesis," pp. 68-69. See Harvey, "The Legal Epistemology of the Qur'anic Variants," pp. 72-101 for the role the readings of Ibn Mas'ūd in Kufan *fiqh* and the Ḥanafī *madhhab*.

That other means was early Islamic ritual. Each of the two Sūras was a supplication (*du‘ā*) in the dual sense of being a supplication to God and curse against (*du‘ā* ‘*alā*) one’s enemies, which made them ideal supplications for recitation during the *qunūt*-prayers. The *qunūt* itself had been established as a supplement to the *ṣalāt*-ritual aimed at cursing the enemies of the faithful. Indeed, it was precisely the imprecative aspect of the *qunūt* ritual that made it controversial. Legal scholars debated whether or not the Prophet had in fact performed the *qunūt* to curse his enemies for only a circumscribed time, after which time God abrogated the practice by revealing Qur’ān 3:128. Yet, even if some early scholars regarded the practice as abrogated altogether, other scholars, citing such practices as ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib’s later use of the *qunūt*-prayer during his war with Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān,<sup>67</sup> continued to emulate the Prophetic practice of the *qunūt* ritual. Among those who affirmed the continued place of the *qunūt* in Muslim ritual were scholars who regarded the two Sūras al-Khal‘ and al-Ḥafd in particular as having been revealed to replace the prophetic *qunūt* with divinely revealed prayers.<sup>68</sup> ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb al-Andalusī (d. 238/853) transmits the following tradition from Khālīd b. Abī ‘Imrān (d. ca. 125-27/742-45), the learned judge (*qāḍī*) of Ifrīqiya, to this effect:

While the Messenger of God (ṣ) was praying curses against Muḍar, Gabriel suddenly appeared to him and signaled for him to be silent. He went silent, and [Gabriel] said, “Muḥammad! God has not sent you to ceaselessly curse and condemn (*lam yab‘athka sabbāban wa-lā la‘ānan*). Rather God sent you as a mercy and not a punishment. “It is not for you to decide whether or not He relents or punishes them, though indeed they are evildoers” (Qur’ān 3:128).” Then Gabriel taught him this *qunūt*-prayer (*thumma ‘allamahu hādhā l-qunūt*)... [whereafter the tradition cites the two Sūras]<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> E.g. ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 3, p. 107; cf. Madelung, *The succession to Muḥammad*, p. 257 f.

<sup>68</sup> Kister, “O God, tighten thy grip on Muḍar...,” pp. 267-272.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb, *al-Wāḍiḥa*, pp. 113-114; cf. Saḥnūn, *Mudawwana*, vol. 1, p. 103; Abū Dāwūd, *al-Marāsīl*, p. 104; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, vol. 4, p. 152.



What is important to emphasize, however, is that al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd were neither the only invocations recited during the *qunūt*-prayer nor the only one recommended for early scholars for recitation. Especially popular, too, was a prayer ascribed to prominent members of the Prophet's household, such as al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, Ibn ʿAbbās, and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya.<sup>70</sup> Yet, these other invocations recited during the *qunūt* ritual bring us to a key point: None of these other invocations were ever confused with the Qurʾān or were claimed by scholars to have revelatory status. Certainly, however, al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd were (and are) greatly revered as important invocations for the *qunūt*. The Baṣran traditionist ʿAbd Allāh b. Dāwūd al-Khuraybī (d. 213/828) reputedly forbade praying behind any *imām* who did not recite the text of “the two Sūras” in the *qunūt*-prayer,<sup>71</sup> although this seems to be a rather isolated view. The contents of the *qunūt* and *witr* prayers were seen as outside the *ṣalāt*-ritual proper and, therefore, flexible enough to permit the continued recitation of these Sūras therein. The Shīʿī scholar al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325), in fact, claims that it was ʿUthmān who relegated al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd to the *qunūt*-prayer but only after refusing to include them in his recension of the Qurʾān.<sup>72</sup>

Although they were not the only invocations recited during the *qunūt* ritual, examples of early, revered authorities reciting al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd during the *qunūt*- and *witr*-prayers abound. For example, even the famed Baṣran Qurʾān reader Abū ʿAmr b. al-ʿAlāʾ (d. 154/770) — chosen by Ibn Mujāhid (d. 324/936) to represent the Baṣran ‘canonical reading’ for his seven canonical readings of the ʿUthmānic Qurʾān<sup>73</sup> — would purportedly recite these two Sūras during his *qunūt*-prayers.<sup>74</sup> By itself, such an observation would be unexceptional insofar as early Muslim authorities recite a bevy of invocations and supplications during these prayers. Furthermore, many of these early authorities not only recited the two Sūras but also continued to designate al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd as Sūras and explicitly

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<sup>70</sup> Bashear, “Qunūt,” p. 47.

<sup>71</sup> Ibn Rushd, *Bidāyat al-mujtahid*, vol. 1, p. 256.

<sup>72</sup> Ibn Muṭahhar, *Tadhkira*, vol. 3, p. 263.

<sup>73</sup> Hamdan, *Kanonisierung*, pp. 128-130; Nasser, *Variant readings*, pp. 49, 55.

<sup>74</sup> Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, vol. 4, p. 154.

referred to them as such. The Kūfan scholar Abū Ishāq al-Sabīʿī (d. 127/745)<sup>75</sup> recounts that, after receiving the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān’s governor in Khurāsān, Umayya b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Khālīd b. Asīd, whom the caliph had appointed in 72/691-92, he heard Umayya “recite these two Sūras (*qaraʿa bi-hātayni l-sūratayn*)” — referring to al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd.<sup>76</sup> Likewise, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) reputedly began the *qunūt*-prayer with the two Sūras (*bi-l-sūratayn*) and then would proceed to supplicate against the infidels and on behalf of believing men and women. In Medina, Saʿīd b. al-Musayyib (d. ca. 94/712) would reportedly first supplicate against the infidels and for the faithful and then recite the two Sūras. When asked what to pray during the *qunūt*-prayer, the Meccan scholar ʿAṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ (d. ca. 114-115/732-33) replied, “Pray these two *surās* (*hātayni l-sūratayn*) which are found in the reading (*qirāʿa*) of Ubayy.”<sup>77</sup> By contrast, the Medinan Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī (d. 96/714) preferred to recite the two Sūras for the *witr*-prayer.<sup>78</sup>

Yet, unlike the *ṣalāt*, the *qunūt*-prayers cannot be said to boast an explicit, unambiguous scriptural mandate. The reference to “the seven oft-repeated verses (*al-sabʿ min al-mathānī*)” of Qurʾān 15:87 has often been read by commentators as an explicit reference to al-Fātiḥa, an interpretation recently revived by Neuwirth who reads the verse as reflecting the emergence of the text of al-Fātiḥa as “a sustainable formula for the communal prayer.”<sup>79</sup> No such strategy seems to have been adopted by early Qurʾān commentators for the *qunūt*-prayers, except by exegetes within the Shīʿī tradition; however, even then, the Shīʿī interpreters place little importance on Ubayy’s Sūras as a text to be recited during the *qunūt*-prayer.<sup>80</sup> Still, the word *qunūt* is certainly Qurʾānic. Though the Qurʾān admonishes believers, “Be attentive to the ritual prayer, especially the middle-most prayer, and stand before God obediently (*ḥāfiẓū ʿalā al-ṣalawāti wa-l-ṣalāti l-*

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Sezgin, *GAS*, vol. 1, p. 283.

<sup>76</sup> Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, vol. 1, pp. 292-293.

<sup>77</sup> Maqrīzī, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 323.

<sup>78</sup> ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 3, p. 121.

<sup>79</sup> Neuwirth, *Scripture*, p. 176. Arguably, a somewhat commensurate argument for the Qurʾānic sanction of the *qunūt* is attributed the sixth Imam of the Shīʿa Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), who allegedly interpreted the Qurʾānic vow, “by the even and the odd (*wa-l-shafi wa-l-watri*)” (Qurʾān 89:3), as referring to the two *rakʿas* of the *ṣalāt* and the one (odd) *rakaʿa* of the *qunūt*. See al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim*, vol. 1, p. 245.

<sup>80</sup> Haider, *Origins*, pp. 112-114.

*wustā wa-qūmū li-llāhi qānitīn*)” (Qur'ān 2:238), rarely do Qur'ān-exegetes interpret the command to stand 'qānitīn' as a Qur'ānic injunction for the *qunūt*-prayers. Rather, exegetes often glossed the word and its cognates with meanings ranging from 'obedience' and 'submissiveness' to 'standing still' and 'remaining silent'.<sup>81</sup> Likewise, the command to the Virgin Mary, “Be devoted to your Lord, prostrate, and bow alongside those who bow in worship (*uqnutī li-rabbiki wa-'sjudī wa-'rka'ī ma'a l-rāki'in*)” (Qur'ān 3:43), is rarely read as meaning an admonishment to her to perform a specific type of supplication as opposed to charging her with obedience to God more generally.

Hence, the most explicit mandate for recitation of the two Sūras during the *qunūt* came not from the Qur'ān but, rather, from the precedents of the Companions of the Prophet. By far the most important authority that traditionists cited on the place of the two Sūras al-Khal' and al-Ḥafd in the *qunūt* ritual is the second caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13-23/634-44). Our earliest attestation to the report derives from the *nuskha* of the Kūfan traditionist al-Zubayr b. 'Adī al-Hamdānī (d. 131/748), who subsequently left his native Kūfa to become a judge in al-Rayy and joined the campaigns of Qutayba b. Muslim's forces in Khurāsān, allegedly even despite Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī's admonitions not to do so.<sup>82</sup> Al-Zubayr's *nuskha*, ostensibly a transcription of a notebook of his *ḥadīth*, survives only in a 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript housed in the Zāhiriyya Library of Damascus that has hitherto remained unpublished. Its version of the 'Umar tradition reads as follows:

Al-Zubayr b. 'Adī related to me on the authority of Ṭāriq b. Shihāb: I prayed behind 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb the early-morning prayer (*ṣalāt al-ghadāt*). When he finished the recitation, he declared God's greatness and said the *qunūt* with these two sūras from the recitation of Ubayy; finally, he declared God's greatness and bowed in prayer (*ṣallaytu khalfa 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ṣalāt al-ghadāt fa-lammā faragha mina l-qir'a kabbara wa-*

<sup>81</sup> Bashear, “Qunūt,” pp. 38-47.

<sup>82</sup> Mizzi, *Tahdhīb*, vol. 9, pp. 315-317.

*qanata bi-hāṭayni 'l-sūratayni fī qirā'at Ubayy thumma kabbara wa-raka'a).*<sup>83</sup>

The report that 'Umar used to pray the *qunūt* during the early-morning *ṣalāh* and recite al-Khal' and al-Ḥafd therein was quite widespread. Although their contents frequently differ with regard to the performative aspects of the *qunūt* ritual (e.g., whether 'Umar recited the two Sūras before or after the *rak'a*), they unanimously agree in two essential details: [1] 'Umar prayed the *qunūt* during the early-morning *ṣalāt*, and [2] he recited the two Sūras known as al-Khal' and al-Ḥafd. These two essential features are manifest even in the shorter versions of this tradition, as in the following:

Shu'ba related to us on the authority of al-Ḥakam, from Miqsam, from Ibn 'Abbās: 'Umar used to pray the *qunūt* during the early-morning prayer with the two Sūras, "O Lord we seek your aid," "O Lord, you we worship". (*'Umar raḍiya 'llāhu 'anhu kāna yaqnutu fī l-ṣubḥi bi-l-sūratayni allāhumma innā nasta'inuka allāhumma iyyāka na'bud.*)<sup>84</sup>

As noted above, the *qunūt* was not so strictly scripted as to preclude the combination of several prayers with another. A particularly long (and early) version of the 'Umar tradition, with a Meccan chain of transmitters, demonstrates this quite clearly:

'Abd al-Razzāq, from Ibn Jurayj who said: 'Aṭā' reported to me that he heard 'Ubayd b. 'Umayr relate (*ya'thuru*) from 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb about the *qunūt*-prayer that he used to say: Lord, grant your forgiveness to the men and women who have faith, to the men and women who submit. Reconcile their hearts and foster accord between them. Grant them victory against those who oppose them and oppose You. Lord, curse the unbelieving

<sup>83</sup> MS Zāhiriyya (Damascus), *majmū'a* 24, fol. 76v; a PDF of this manuscript can be found online at <http://www.alukah.net/library/0/46575/> (last accessed 10 May 2016). This tradition appears in the second section (*juz'*) of al-Zubayr's *nuskha*; the first section appears in a separate manuscript: Zāhiriyya, *majmū'a* 78, fols. 51r-58r (see Sezgin, *GAS*, vol. 1, p. 87, no. 9).

<sup>84</sup> Ṭabarī, *Tahdhīb al-āthār*, vol. 1, pp. 317 f., 349.

People of the Book who deny the truth of Your messengers and who make war against Your chosen (*awliyā'aka*).

Lord, bring about dissension in their speech, cause the earth to quake beneath their feet, and send against them Your woe that is unrelenting against the evildoers. In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Lord, for aid and forgiveness do we beseech you. We praise you and do not disbelieve you. We denounce and forsake all who disobey you.

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Lord, you we worship. To you we pray and bow low. For you we make haste to serve. We hope for Your mercy. We fear Your torment. Surely your torment will overtake the infidels.<sup>85</sup>

Nearly all versions of this tradition refer to 'Umar praying the *qunūt* using 'the two Sūras (*al-sūratayn*)' or 'these two Sūras (*hātayn al-sūratayn*)', and they do so without qualifying their revelatory status – that these invocations are part of the revelation and, therefore, properly regarded as Sūras is simply tacitly assumed. Also conspicuous in the second tradition transmitted by Ibn Jurayj cited above is that, although al-Khal' and al-Ḥafd are not designated explicitly as Sūras and appear after a series of invocations, once 'Umar does begin reciting each of the two *sūras* he punctuates them with a *basmala*. Elsewhere Ibn Jurayj explains why, commenting that the *basmala* recognizes the deference owed them because they appear in the codex (*muṣḥaf*) of one of the Prophet's Companions.<sup>86</sup>

The reports that the second caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb prayed 'the two Sūras' for the *qunūt*-prayer during the early-morning prayer ritual appear quite early, and as the *isnād*-chart (see figure 1) makes abundantly clear, the tradition circulated in Baṣra, Mecca, and, most broadly, in Kūfan circles on the authority of al-Ḥakam b. 'Utayba al-Kindī (d. ca. 114-115/732-33) by the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century. This fact is further confirmed by the version of the tradition recorded in the manuscript of al-Zubayr b. 'Adī's

<sup>85</sup> 'Abd al-Razzaq, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 3, p. 111; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, vol. 4, p. 153; cf. Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 3, pp. 268, 269.

<sup>86</sup> Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, vol. 1, p. 227, *ḥikmat al-basmala annahumā sūratāni fi muṣḥaf ba'd al-ṣaḥāba*.

*nuskha* cited above. The basic breakdown of the main transmission streams are as follows:

- [1] **Başran:** Ma‘bad b. Sīrīn > Muḥammad b. Sīrīn (d. 110/728)
- [2] **Kūfan:** Ṭāriq b. Shihāb (d. 83/702) > al-Zubayr b. ‘Adī (d. 131/748)
- [3] **Başran:** Abū Rāfi‘ al-Ṣā‘igh > ‘Alī b. Zayd b. Jud‘ān (d. 131/748-49) > Ma‘mar (d. 153/770)
- [4] **Meccan:** ‘Ubayd b. ‘Umayr (d. 68/687) > ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ (d. ca. 114-115/732-33)
- [5] **Meccan/Kūfan:** Ibn ‘Abbās>Miqsam (d. 101/719-20) and Ṭāwūs (d. 106/724 or 110/728) > al-Ḥakam b. ‘Utayba al-Kindī (d. ca. 114-115/732-33)
- [6] **Kūfan:** ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Abzā’ > his sons (Sa‘īd and ‘Abd Allāh) and Dharr b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Hamdānī > al-Ḥakam b. ‘Utayba
- [7] **Kūfan:** ‘Abd Allāh b. Shaddād > Abū Ishāq al-Sabī‘ī (d. 127/744-45) and Ibn Abī Laylā (d. 148/765)

The point of mapping out this *isnād*-complex is not merely to demonstrate that the ‘Umar tradition circulated among the *ḥadīth*-folk in several regions as late as the middle of the second/eighth century. Rather, the circulation this report also serves to demonstrate something more significant for our argument — namely, that many authorities in Mecca, Kūfa, and Baṣra (if not elsewhere as well) continued to regard al-Khal‘ and al-Ḥafd as ‘Sūras’ and continued to refer to them as such well into the 2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> century.

A similar tradition circulated on the authority of the Kūfan scholar Ḥabīb b. Abī Thābit (d. 119/737 or 122/740) but was less widespread (see figure 2, where he is the common the link). Rather than appealing to ‘Umar’s precedent, this tradition appealed to that of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (r. 35-40/656-661), who recited the two Sūras during the *qunūt* for the early-morning prayer in Kūfa during his war with Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Suyān for the leadership of the early Muslim community. An early version of this tradition found in the *Muṣannaḥ* of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī (d. 211/827) reads as follows:

‘Abd al-Razzāq, from al-Ḥasan b. ‘Amāra, from Ḥabīb b. Abī Thābit, from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Aswad al-Kāhili: ‘Alī would pray these two Sūras for the *qunūt*-prayer during the early-morning prayer, except that he prayed the latter [i.e., al-Ḥafd]

first,<sup>87</sup> saying ... [the tradition proceeds to relate the texts of the two Sūras]<sup>88</sup>

Despite the attestations of this tradition of 'Alī reciting the two Sūras in the *qunūt* prayer in Sunnī sources, this tradition rarely appears in Shī'ī legal sources, playing no role whatsoever in the discussion of the *qunūt* prayers in works of, for example, al-Kulaynī (d. 329/941), Ibn Bābūyah al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991), and Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067). An important exception is al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān (d. 363/974), who lists the two Sūras among the *qunūt*-prayers passed down by the Prophet's household.<sup>89</sup> A rather late example from the Twelver Shī'a is that of al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325), who knows of al-Khal' and al-Ḥafd and their usage in the *qunūt*-prayer but surprisingly exhibits no knowledge of 'Alī's practice of it in Kūfa. He even claims that none of Prophet's household transmitted the text of the prayer, although he permitted one to pray the two Sūras in the *qunūt* but only inasmuch as it stands in for a supplication (*du'ā'*) and not due to any special status.<sup>90</sup>

### Conclusion

I have avoided addressing the question of whether or not modern scholars should regard al-Ḥafd and al-Khal' as a genuine part of the earliest stages of the Qur'ānic corpus which, for whatever reason, came to be excluded from

<sup>87</sup> *kāna yaqnutu bi-hāṭayn al-sūratayn fī l-fajr ghayra annahu yuqaddimu l-ākhira.*

<sup>88</sup> 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 3, pp. 114-115; cf. Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 8, pp. 359-360; Saḥnūn, *Mudawwana*, vol. 1, p. 130; Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 3, pp. 268-269; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, vol. 4, p. 139. A later Shī'ī source places this event in Mosque of Kāhil tribe, later known as mosque in which the Kūfan Shī'a would gather (Haider, *Origins*, pp. 232-233); see Buṭṭā'ī, *Faḍl al-Kūfa*, pp. 23-25 and Majlisī, *Biḥār*, vol. 97, pp. 452-453.

<sup>89</sup> Al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *Da'ā'im*, vol. 1, p. 247.

<sup>90</sup> Ibn Muṭahhar, *Tadhkira*, vol. 3, p. 263: *wa-law qanata bi-dhālika jāza li-shtimālihi 'alā l-du'ā'*. Although the Imāmi-Shī'a came to regard the *qunūt* as integral to every ritual prayer, Ubayy's two Sūras do not feature in their seminal legal literature. They adopted a minimalist approach to the *qunūt*-prayer too; they even permitted the *qunūt* to be as simple as saying *allāhu akbar* or *subḥān allāh* as little as five times. E.g., see al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *Da'ā'im*, vol. 1, p. 248; Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 6, p. 227.

the canon by the process of ‘Uthmān’s collection and textual canonization of the prophetic revelation. If addressed directly, the issue must be addressed as a historical, rather than a theological, question. This is not to deny that historical inquiry can have theological ramifications; it is merely an attempt to recognize the limits of historical inquiry and its methods and that the theological ramifications of historical inquiry is best left to the preserve of theologians.

Likewise, however, theological considerations should not predetermine the conclusions of a historical line of investigation. The consequences of aiming for a purely historical assessment of the evidence means that the theological arguments in favor of the completeness of the ‘Uthmānic codex and its canonical authority carry little weight. Theological claims that the ‘Uthmānic Qur’ān was ratified via unanimous communal consensus (whether *tawātur* or *ijmā’*) is, for a historical epistemology, a mere rhetorical artifice.<sup>91</sup> Likewise, the assertion that what is and is not a true Sūra may be discerned by its inimitability (*i’jāz*) is, historically speaking, little more than a theological trope.<sup>92</sup> Yet, having said this, historical inquiry does not negate the value of these ideas either; it merely excludes them from its methods. Ideas such as *ijmā’* and *i’jāz* are theological constructs that necessarily gloss over historical testimony and the heterogeneity of historical evidence in order to construct timeless truths about the Qur’ān that transcend accidents of historical difference. Moreover, the rejection of these theological constructs is not exclusively an insight of modern historians and, therefore, foreign to Muslim scholars of the period discussed here. Such arguments were perhaps first taken up by the rationalist theologian Ḍirār b. ‘Amr (d. ca. 200/815) and subsequently Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām (d. 231/845)<sup>93</sup> — but their debates are not over historical epistemology and thus do not fall within proper domain of historical inquiry. There are, in any case, multiple avenues for exploring the questions raised

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<sup>91</sup> A good survey of how the boundaries of the Qur’ān (*ḥadd al-Qur’ān*) were conceptualized can be found in Nasser, *Variant readings*, p. 79 ff.

<sup>92</sup> The smallest unit of *i’jāz* — i.e., the smallest amount of scripture required to demonstrate the Qur’ān’s inimitability — is the subject of much speculation by early scholars; however, the prevailing view touted the Sūra as the smallest unit, most likely drawing its rationale from the so-called *āyāt al-taḥaddī*. See van Gelder, *Beyond the line*, p. 98 ff.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Ḍirār b. ‘Amr, *Tahrīsh*, pp. 109-111 and van Ess, “Neue Fragmente,” p. 76.



by al-Khal<sup>c</sup> and al-Ḥafd that lay beyond the vale of historical inquiry.<sup>94</sup> They will not, therefore, be addressed in this study, although they certainly merit exploration in studies that begin with different epistemological and methodological premises.

If the authenticity question must be addressed by historians, then the question should not be about the place of the two Sūras in the Qur'ānic canon as such; rather, the question ought to be about whether or not the Sūras should be regarded as part of the Qur'ānic corpus — viz., as a part of the pool of data that historians use for analyses of the Qur'ān as a literary text and artifact of history. Nöldeke and Schwally offered the only attempt to address this question in significant detail by analyzing the texts of the two Sūras. They clearly stated that the idiom of al-Ḥafd and al-Khal<sup>c</sup> conforms far more closely to the broader idiom of Qur'ānic Arabic than even al-Fātiḥa, the authenticity of which the two scholars appeared to have doubted even more than the authenticity of Ubayy's two Sūras.<sup>95</sup> However, Nöldeke and Schwally ultimately decided against the Sūras' authenticity, ruling against their inclusion as part of the revelatory corpus. They did so on two grounds. The first objection they voiced was the absence of the command *qul* (Eng. 'say'), which the Qur'ān employs as an internal textual cue to mark prayers. However, as even Nöldeke and Schwally must admit, *qul* does not appear in al-Fātiḥa either. Hence, one must first accept their view that al-Fātiḥa is aberrant to follow their line of reasoning here. The second argument that they make draws from a series of anomalous verbal constructions that they construe as being at odds with the Qur'ānic idiom of Arabic. Most of their examples, in my view at least, are quite forced. For example, they object to the occurrence of words *al-ithnā* ('to praise') and *al-ḥafd* ('to hasten') as

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<sup>94</sup> The Shāfi'ī scholar Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058), for instance, appealed to the doctrine of abrogation to explain how Ubayy could mistake al-Khal<sup>c</sup> and al-Ḥafd for Qur'ānic Sūras. Whereas Ibn Mas'ūd erroneously presumed that the *mu'awwidhatān* were abrogated when they actually were not, Ubayy erroneously presumed that the recitation of al-Khal<sup>c</sup> and al-Ḥafd remained. What Ubayy did not realize, according to al-Māwardī, is that the two Sūras had in fact been abrogated. See al-Māwardī, *A'lām al-nubuwwa*, p. 78: *ammā Ubayy b. Ka'b fa-ẓanna anna tilāwat al-qunūt bāqiyatun wa-lam ya'lam annahā qad nusikhat.*

<sup>95</sup> *GdQ*, vol. 2, p. 36 (tr. Behn, p. 242); they expressed similar sentiments as to authenticity of the *mu'awwidhatān* (*ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 42 [tr. Behn, p. 246]).

hapaxes, although the Qurʾān is full of hapaxes.<sup>96</sup> They object to *ilayka nasʿā* ('to You we rush') because they judge *al-saʿy ilā ʾllāh* ('rushing to God') to be at odds with Qurʾānic diction. Yet, to make this claim they must inexplicably reject *faʿsʿaw ilā dhikri ʾllāh* (Qurʾān 62:9) – which refers to a ritual setting like the verse from al-Ḥafd – as somehow inadmissible evidence. The most (and, in my view, the only) compelling example is their objection to phrase *nakfuruka* in the verse from al-Ḥafd where one would expect *nakfuru bika*, insofar the Qurʾān always employs the preposition *bi-* with the verb *kafara* when a person is the object of verb. However, even this insightful objection does not fully demonstrate that the Sūra's style starkly contravenes the Qurʾānic idiom. The omission of the preposition *bi-* can be attributed to the necessity of the maintaining the Sūra's end-rhyme. In my view, therefore, Nöldeke and Schwally's analysis of the stylistic features of these two Sūras fails to show that they are at odds with the Qurʾānic corpus and thus cannot preclude the possibility of their inclusion in this corpus..

Although this study holds that the two Sūras ought to be regarded as part of the Qurʾānic *corpus*, it has not sought to answer the question of whether al-Khalʿ and al-Ḥafd are truly part of the Qurʾānic *canon*. Viewed through the lens of historical methodology, such a question is conceptually stillborn, for it is essentially ahistorical. Canonicity and canons are decided upon, created through, and maintained by canonizing communities, not historians who study their traditions. The questions underlying this study have been historical-descriptive rather than theological-normative. In summation, there are two questions which we discussed:

[1] Are the claims of our earliest historical sources that a substantial number of the Prophet's Companions and their disciples regarded al-Ḥafd and al-Khalʿ as part of the Qurʾān historically plausible? This question I have answered in the affirmative. A horde of evidence strongly indicates that not merely Ubayy b. Kaʿb – but also other Companions – regarded the Sūras as part of the Qurʾān and, therefore, part of the prophetic revelation given to Muḥammad. For instance, the conventional assertion made by a recent study that “Muslim authorities unanimously rejected the two Sūras” as part of the

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<sup>96</sup> Toorawa, “Hapaxes in the Qurʾān”, pp. 93-146; Sadeghi, “Criteria for emending the text of the Qurʾān,” pp. 22-23.

Qurʾān,<sup>97</sup> would be, in my view, a historical error as far as the first two centuries A.H. are concerned, however accurate in other regards.

[2] If it is indeed likely that the two Sūras were regarded as part of the Qurʾān by many of the earliest authorities, how long did Muslim scholars continue to regard these two Sūras as revelation, and how could they do so given the two Sūras' exclusion from the 'Uthmānic Qurʾān? This was, by far, the more challenging question to answer. I have argued that the question can best be answered at a conceptual level by viewing the canonization of the Qurʾān as a process that transpired in at least two ways: its codification into a written textual canon and its assimilation into the performance of an emerging ritual canon. The central point here is that the place of the two Sūras in the *qunūt*- and *witr*-prayers provided a ritual space for their performance and, hence, a means for their preservation, survival, and (in some circles) even ritual canonization as scripture outside the 'Uthmānic written canon. Yet, since the *qunūt*-prayer and even its contents remained contested, the recitation of the two Sūras therein lacked the force and weight of the recitation of other Sūras in the *ṣalāt*-prayers. The importance of *ṣalāt*-prayers for canonization definitively secured the inclusion of al-Fātiḥa (which was indispensable to their performance) and even al-Falaq, and al-Nās, which the Umayyads validated within and sometimes imposed onto the liturgical recitation of the Qurʾān in the *ṣalāt*-ritual. However, al-Khal' and al-Ḥafd were relegated strictly to the *qunūt* prayers; hence, as the two Sūras became increasingly identified as *merely qunūt* prayers, their status as scripture waned over the centuries. This passage of time, however, did not lead to the complete erasure of the record of those early Muslims authorities who continued to revere the two prayers as Sūras and who continued to refer to them as such.

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<sup>97</sup> Nasser, *Variant readings*, p. 93 and n. 62 thereto.

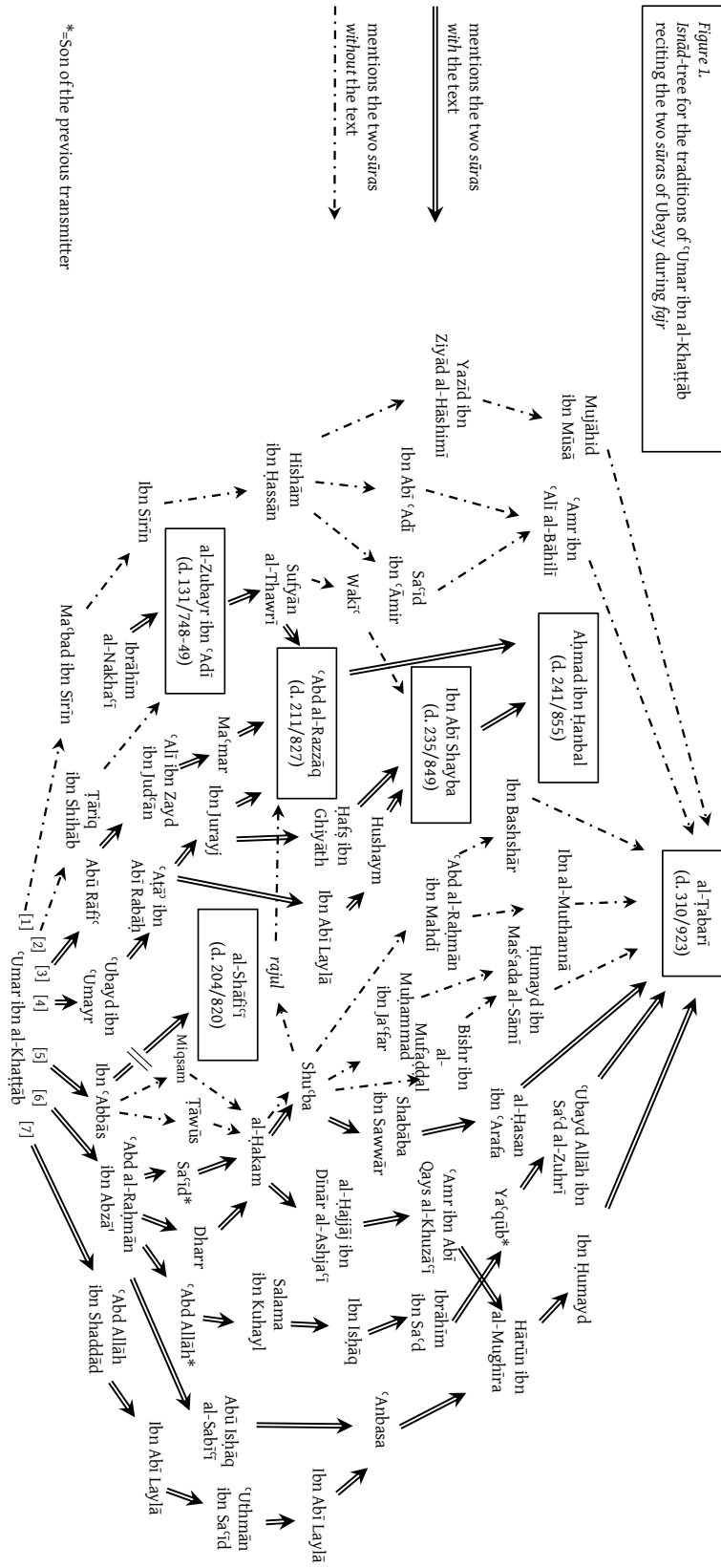
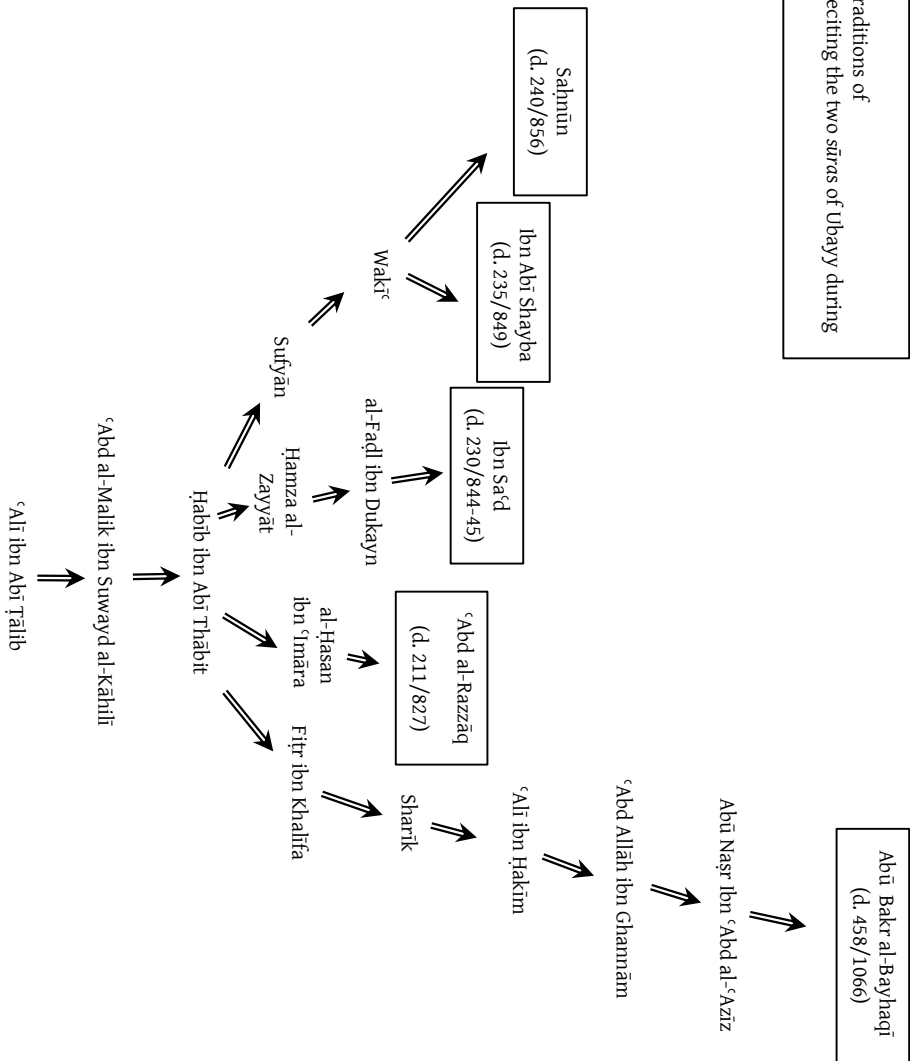


Figure 2.  
Isnād-tree for the traditions of  
ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib reciting the two sūras of Ubayy during  
ḡajr



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