

Traditions about the Murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq: Harald Motzki's *Isnād cum Matan* Analysis Revisited

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Abstract: While the western scholarship on *Ḥadīth* and its authenticity has contributed much in recent times, few works have found accolade comparable to those of Harald Motzki (2019). He offered a way of dating *Ḥadīth* which he named *Isnād cum matn* analysis, and claimed that it corrected many of the shortcomings of prevalent *Ḥadīth* dating methods which focused either on the text or the chain of *Ḥadīth* and concluded incompletely. He studied *Ḥadīth* clusters using ICMA method without generalizing his conclusions beyond the cases he studied. There are two tiers of available writings on Motzki's method, those which applied it to cases not studied by Motzki, and those which reevaluated the latter's ICMA method critically. Van der Voort applied ICMA to Zuhri's *Sīrah* traditions while the author and some others have critically reevaluated his case studies. This paper, based upon the author's doctoral dissertation, examines Motzki's application of his ICMA method on the Traditions about the Murder of Ibn Abī al-Huqayq.

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Introduction

The personality of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the exemplar for all Muslims and his life is the model and the ideal for every believer in Islam. Muslims find the proper way in his teachings and acts. This is why Muslims since the dawn of Islam (circa 610 AD) devoted their lives serving and preserving the *Sunnah* (or the way of the Prophet). After the first generation of Muslims (the Companions) we come across such names as Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 767 AD), Mālik (d.795 AD), Al-Shāfi'ī (d.820 AD), Al-Shaibānī (d.805 AD), Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal (d. 855 AD), Al-Bukhārī (d. 870 AD) and Muslim (d. 875 AD) among the milieu of scholars who embody this endeavor to protect the *Sunnah*. It was primary for these Muslims to protect the *Sunnah* since their lives and those of the subsequent generations as well had to be in harmony and concordance with the Prophetic model for their ultimate success in both worlds.

With this, they strived to preserve and compile the *Sunnah* of their Prophet-in the form of *Ḥadīth*, *Fiqh* and *Sīrah* with great care and engaged themselves in separating the chaff from the pure. It is the fruit of those early Muslim scholarly efforts that even now in the third millennium, people have access to the Prophetic example.

The West also has had much to write about this legacy of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), especially in the last couple of centuries. The above-mentioned view of early *Ḥadīth*, *Fiqh*, and *Sīrah* concordant development is however predominantly not shared by them.¹ The first two centuries A.H. have been at the center of their attention since it was that period in Islamic history when these three disciplines started, their fundamentals formed and they saw their early development. Some of these western scholars rejected the Muslim version of their own religion's early history and thought it to be quite incorrect, while others rejecting parts of it and reviewing the rest.² One of the most renowned of these scholars was Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921) who studied a number of

¹⁻ *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, ed. Chase C. Robinson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), s.v. "Modern Approaches to Early Islamic History"

²⁻ These scholars include: Ignaz Goldziher (d.1921), Leone Caetani (d.1935), Snouk Hurgronje (d.1936), Margoliouth (d.1940), Lammens (d.1937), Guillaume (d.1965), Joseph Horowitz (d.1974), Patricia Crone (d.2015), G.H.A. Juynboll (d.2010), N.J.Coulson (d.1986), Michael Cook (b.1940), John Burton (d.2005), Nabia Abbot (d.1981), Harald Motzki (d. 2019) and Gregor Schoeler (b.1944) etc. Some of these hold to the first view and some to the second while some in-between the two.

traditions and concluded that most of them were fabrications and so quite spurious;³ followed by Joseph Schacht (1902-1969) who took this skepticism to its epitome.⁴ Harald Motzki (d. 2019), revisiting his predecessors' methods, has approached the issue differently by a combined analytical method in the study of *Ḥadīth*, namely his *isnād cum matn* analysis.⁵

Motzki's *isnād cum matan* analysis of a tradition starts with a discussion on the subject consisting of a critique of contemporary studies in the west and then collecting different instances of the same tradition as they appear in different collections, differences in the *isnāds* (or textual vehicle) considered and plotted. The common links⁶ and the other important members of the *isnāds* are highlighted. In the next step, the *matan* (text) analysis, text variants are grouped according to their common links or *madārs* as highlighted in the first step. Similarities and differences in texts are pointed out, high-lighting the extent to which they vary or agree. Next, Motzki draws conclusions from the *matan* analysis after comparing them with the results of his analysis of the *isnāds*. This method is however limited to the Tradition under study and while some of its conclusions may be generalized, Motzki does not purport it as such.

This method has recently been employed by some of his students and colleagues, of whom Boekhoff's "Zuhri" is notable.⁷ Shoemaker's critical paper on Motzki's method has already been critically reviewed by Motzki and others.⁸ The author has also worked on Motzki's method

³ Ignaz Golziher, "The Principles of Law in Islam," in *The Historians History of the World*, ed. H.S. Williams (New York: The Outlook Company, 1904) viii: 294-303.

⁴ See Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Joseph Schacht, "A Revaluation of Islamic Traditions," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 2 (1949): 147 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25222333>; Zafar Ishaq Ansari, "The Early Development of Islamic Fiqh in Kufah with Special Reference to the Works of Abu Yusuf and Shaybani" (doctoral thesis, McGill University: 1966),

⁵ This paper is based upon the author's PhD thesis, "Textual Criticism: A Comparative Study between the Methods of Joseph Schacht and Harald Motzki in the Study of *Ḥadīth*", IIUI, 2016.

⁶ The persons responsible for the first formal dissemination of the information/tradition.

⁷ [Nicolet Boekhoff-van der Voort](#), "Between history and legend: the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad by Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri" (Radboud University, 2012).

⁸ Harald Motzki, Gregor Schoeler, and Andreas Goerke, "First Century Sources for the Life of Muḥammad: A Debate?" *Der Islam*, November 2012 DOI: [10.1515/islam-2012-0002](https://doi.org/10.1515/islam-2012-0002).

elsewhere as case studies.⁹ An international conference was held in January 2024, where the author also presented his paper on “Inter-receptions.”¹⁰ The following example would serve to illustrate his *isnād* cum *matn* analysis with lucidity as it appears in his study on the traditions telling the incident of the murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq at the hands of Muslims.

Traditions about the Murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq

Some Jews of Khybar were conspiring with the Meccans against the Prophet (peace be upon him) and among their leaders was one Abū Rāfi‘, also known as Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq. A team of *Anṣār* (Muslims of Medinese origin) went to kill him since his actions were hurting the Prophet and they came back successful. The event is reported in different collections of *Ḥadīth* (Prophetic Traditions) and *Sīrah* (Prophetic biography) through different *isnāds* (chains of narration), some detailed while others quite brief in their description of the event.

Motzki finds the variety of reports about the murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq useful for his *isnād* cum *matn* analysis which requires comparisons among different lines of transmission as well as variations in text. His *isnād* cum *matn* analysis of the traditions constitutes a report of this incident in vivid detail which is divided in two parts: the *isnād*, and the *matn* analyses. The results are then conjoined by him to reach at conclusions about the history` of these reports.

Isnād Analysis

Harald Motzki’s *isnād* analysis constitutes collecting the various chains of transmission by which the Muslim narratives about the murder of Ibn

⁹- Bilal Ahmad, “Isnād cum Matn Analysis of Zakāt al-Fiġr Traditions: An Analysis of Harald Motzki’s Method” *Hamdard Islamicus*, 44:4 (2021); idem., “Harald Motzki aur Ḥadīth: Aik Jā’izah” *Fikr o Nazar*, 56:1-2 (2018); idem., “Genesis of Qur’ānic Exegesis with Reference to the Companion Ibn ‘Abbās as Its Source: Critical Analysis of Harald Motzki’s Isnād Cum Matn Analysis of the Qur’ān XV:90-91” *Hamdard Islamicus*, 4:3 (2017); idem., “Textual Criticism: A Comparative Study between the Methods of Joseph Schacht and Harald Motzki in the Study of Hadith” (International Islamic University, 2016).

¹⁰ Ibid. “Islamic and Modern Western *Ḥadīth* Criticism Inter-Receptions: A Qualitative Analysis of ICMA”, (Paper presentation, ICMA Conference, Bathurst, January 27-28, 2024); Other important papers were also presented at the conference:
https://cdn.csu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/4272140/Program-Booklet-v3.pdf

Abī al-Ḥuqayq reach us. These chains are diagrammed by him in the same manner as G.H.A. Juynboll (1935-2010) before him had done in his *isnād* analysis.¹¹ In case of the traditions narrating the murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq, Motzki points out that there are four groups of transmission based upon the authorities till which the reports go back according to his assessment. These are: the Companion al-Barā' b. 'Āzib, a son (or a grandson) of the Companion Ka'b b. Mālik, the Companion 'Abd Allāh b. Unays, and Ibn Lahī'a (but it purports to go back to the Successor 'Urwah b. al-Zubayr),¹² and Motzki then analyses each of these *isnād* groups as follows:

Al-Barā' 's tradition:

Motzki tells that variants of Al-Barā''s version of the tradition about the murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq are to be found in five sources: Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Ṭabarī's annals, Rūyānī's *Musnad*, Bayhaqī's *Sunan* and his *Dalā'il*.¹³ Bukhārī reports two brief and three detailed versions. The detailed ones all have Abū Ishāq as their informant, who is the common link of this bundle according to Motzki. Moreover, three transmission lines in the detailed versions in the above mentioned collections also by Ṭabarī (d.923 CE) and Bayhaqī (d.1066 CE) go via Isrā'īl, Abū Ishāq's learned grandson, making him a 'partial common link'. The short versions are peculiar according to Motzki in that their common link is Yaḥyā b. Ādam whom he holds responsible for these versions. Thus considering the detailed versions and ignoring the brief ones, Harald Motzki comments that the tradition about the murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq which is connected with the name of al-Barā' as the original transmitter, was spread in Kūfā in the first quarter of the second century A.H. by Abū Ishāq (d. 126 A.H.).¹⁴

Ibn Ka'b 's tradition:

According to Harald Motzki, a version of the tradition reporting the murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq comes from either a son or a grandson of the Companion Ka'b b. Mālik and appears in various collections of traditions

11- Motzki, *Biography*, 237-239; G. H. A. Juynboll, "Some *Isnād*- Analytical Methods Illustrated on the Basis of Several Woman- Demeaning Sayings from *Ḥadīth* Literature", in *Ḥadīth*, 176-216. The *isnāds* are diagrammed by Juynboll in this article who then explains the common links, the partial common links, the dives and some other terms which he coined. Motzki uses a similar approach in his *isnād* analysis, except that he modifies Juynboll's above mentioned terms wherever he finds them inaccurate.

12- Herald Motzki, *The Biography of Muhammad-The issues of the Sources* (Leiden: Brill.2000), 175.

13- Ibid. 175-176.

14- Ibid. 176-177.

including Mālik's *Muaṭṭa'*, Shāfi'ī's *Umm*, 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf*, Ibn Hishām's *Sīrah*, Bayhaqī's *Sunan* and his *Dalā'il*, et cetera. As is the case with al-Barā's tradition, there are some short and other long versions of this Companion's version of the tradition in question. Motzki, following in the footsteps of Juynboll (d.2010) makes an *isnād* bundle from all the variants available to him and points out that as many as seven transmitters claim to have the story from the common link. He then remarks that this common link is Zuhri who is one level later than Ibn Ka'b.

A problem with regards the alleged source of Zuhri's narration is noted by Motzki whence three names are mentioned: 'Abd Allāh ibn Ka'b, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ka'b, and 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Ka'b. A fourth source mentioned is 'son of Ka'b' without saying the son's name. Motzki also mentions here Mālik's hesitation over the son of Ka'b: was it 'Abd al-Raḥmān or 'Abd Allah? He considers the *isnāds* of this tradition as disconnected and concludes that Zuhri himself was confused about his source and mentioned different names at different times which later transmitters had to rectify by giving names themselves.¹⁵ The fact that different transmitters have reported different names from Zuhri (d.741 CE) as his source doesn't mean that he confused names. Also regarding Motzki's rectification claims of names confused by Zuhri, it would be admissible on the condition that the resultant *isnāds* would not show signs of 'confusion'. These names however appear in different *isnāds* as they are. A plausible explanation ignored by Motzki here is that Zuhri may have heard it from the two brothers on separate occasions, or from Ka'b's grandson who was a (grand) son of Ka'b too and may have informed Zuhri that his father or uncle was his source who in turn told these different names to his students. While it is still quite possible that Zuhri may have mixed up the names, even that would not weaken the *matn* that he transmitted but strengthens his credibility as an honest traditionist who would specify what he remembered as well as what he did not, in *matn* and in *isnāds*. Whether it was 'Abd Allāh ibn Ka'b, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ka'b, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Ka'b, or 'son of Ka'b' from whom Zuhri reported is important to ascertain,¹⁶ yet even without that the tradition stands since it comes from a honest Successor-traditionist of the highest caliber. The fact that each of these names is mentioned in other versions of the tradition in a variety of *Ḥadīth* and *Sīrah* collections further affirms Zuhri as a responsible transmitter. Moreover, western scholars like

¹⁵- Ibid. 178-179.

¹⁶- Ibid. 179. Here Motzki doesn't consider it important to ascertain the exact person from whom Zuhri reported, because the *isnād* doesn't go an eye-witness anyway, thus undermining its authenticity.

Nabia Abbott have discussed Zuhri and his transmission of *Hadith* in detail and she mentions that Zuhri kept written record of what he transmitted from the Prophet (peace be upon him) as well as from the Companions and their Successors.¹⁷ Schoeler (b.1944) considers him to be among the earliest Muslim scholars and the most illustrious student of 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr who wrote down traditions in a proper way, and faced difficulties while doing it.¹⁸ None of these comments is supportive of the claim that Zuhri became confused about his source and did not inform his students-who were quite large in number- of it. The fact that he used to lend his notebooks to his students so that they may copy from them¹⁹ shows that the manner in which his traditions were dissipated among them was quite phenomenal and academically sound.

Coming back to Zuhri's students, Motzki remarks that they would sometimes try to improve their teacher's disconnected *isnads*-like the one under discussion here- and here he holds Sufyan, Ibn Jurayj, and Al Walid responsible.²⁰ Improvement of *isnads* here means 'addition of an earlier as the original informant',²¹ and it would be a valid allegation if these scholars had been dishonest in their work. In itself, such a difference in *isnads* should not be labeled as an 'improvement', since it implies multiple sources for the information transmitted by them. This claim is weakened further by the fact that in an earlier writing, Motzki himself praises Ibn Jurayj thus:

"The fact that Ibn Jurayj claims to have 90% of his material from specific informants but leaves 8% without statements of provenance speaks against the assumption that his informants are fabricated; since, if he had a motive to father his traditions on others, it would have affected all the texts...On the contrary, all of these indices suggest that Ibn Jurayj's statement of sources, when he makes them, are

17- Ibid. 174-175.

18- Gregor Schoeler, Shawkat M. Toorawa, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam*, tr. Shawkat M. Toorawa (Paris: Edinburgh University Press, 2002) 47-50; Schoeler, *The Biography of Muhammad*, tr. Uwe Vagelpohl (New York: Routledge, 2011) 23-25.

19- Idem. *Genesis*, 48.

20- Motzki, *Biography*, 178-179. In general, different students would relate from their teachers in different ways at different levels of accuracy. Some would do it with honesty while others not so. It depends upon the integrity or otherwise of individual students.

21- Ibid. 178-179

credible and that he actually received from his informants the traditions ascribed to them.”²²

The allegation of improvement is weakened still further when one finds Motzki praising Ibn Jurayj’s transmission of traditions in one of his more recent writings by saying: “It would be unwarranted to regard Ibn Jurayj as unreliable or as a forger... A historian need not necessarily share the *ḥadīth* critics’ reservations regarding Ibn Jurayj’s Zuhri transmission.”²³

The two above-mentioned comments by Motzki weaken his allegation against Ibn Jurayj that he was among those responsible for improvement of Zuhri’s otherwise weak *isnāds*. Other scholars also consider Ibn Jurayj and Sufyān-among other transmitters of Zuhri- as reliable transmitters of traditions²⁴ which renders Motzki’s claim against them as untenable and finally it appears that Zuhri had probably mentioned different names in front of different students and they reported it as they heard or read it.

Ibn Unays’ s tradition:

This version of the tradition in question appears in Ṭabarī’s *Tārīkh* and al-Wāqidī’s *Maghāzī* in its complete form. Harald Motzki finds an oddity in its instances that appear in the latter collection which is related to al-Wāqidī’s immediate source- Ayyūb b. Nu’mān. While narrating the incident in detail he reports from Abū Ayyūb b. Nu’mān and just beneath it from Ayyūb b. Nu’mān. Motzki thinks that the correct name would be Ayyūb b. Nu’mān while Abū is incorrect.²⁵ A search into al-Wāqidī’s *Maghāzī* concludes that the name Ayyūb b. Nu’mān appears eight times while the name Abū Ayyūb b. Nu’mān appears only twice. Moreover, upon checking out reports by scholars like Ibn ‘Asākir, Bukhārī, Ibn al-Athīr, it appears that they consistently mention the name Ayyūb b. Nu’mān in different places and contexts, while the Abū adduced by al-

²²- Herald Motzki, *the Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence-Meccan Fiqh before the classical Schools* (Leiden: Brill, 2002) 243-244; Ibid. 218-219. Here too Motzki affirms Ibn Jurayj’s honesty in transmitting from Zuhri.

²³- Herald Motzki, *Analyzing Muslim Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 17.

²⁴- Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri II-Quranic Commentary and Tradition*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1967), 2:178-182. Among his students Sufyān is known to have had the habit of putting traditions on paper and his notebooks became collector’s items among those interested in *Ḥadīth*, as Abbott tells us.

²⁵- Motzki, *Biography*, 180.

Wāqidī is never mentioned by them.²⁶ This corroborates Motzki's opinion that the correct name is Ayyūb b. Nu'mān and not Abū Ayyūb as it occurs in Wāqidī's book once. If Wāqidī (d.823 CE) were correct, then Abū Ayyūb would be Nu'mān himself rendering al-Wāqidī's Abū Ayyūb b. as redundant in any case. Last but not least is the fact that al-Wāqidī himself is considered unreliable by Muslim *Ḥadīth* scientists like al-Haithamī (d.1405 CE) who considers him specifically to be the weak link in the chain Ayyūb b. Nu'mān via al-Wāqidī.²⁷ Among the other scientists of *Ḥadīth*, Ibn Ḥajar (d.1449 CE) considers al-Wāqidī in spite of his vast knowledge as an ignorable transmitter,²⁸ and Nasā'ī (d.915 CE) narrates from Yaḥyā b. Ma'in that al-Wāqidī was a fabricator of *Ḥadīth*.²⁹ Such evidence goes against al-Wāqidī (and his *Maghāzī*) as a reliable source for knowing about the events in the Prophet's life with certainty, meaning that his reports should be taken with utmost care, comparing them to others' reliable reports to see if they fit in their framework or not. If they do, then they are acceptable, otherwise maybe not.³⁰

Lastly, Motzki mentions that Ṭabarī's (d.923 CE) version of the tradition under question is via an *isnād* which is different from the one given by al-Wāqidī and doesn't involve Ayyūb b. Nu'mān. Motzki moves forward commenting that the two *isnāds* meet at the Companion 'Abd Allah b. Unays (d. 54 A.H.) who seems to him to be the common link of the version.³¹

26- Bukhārī, *Al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr* (Hyderabad Dakkan: Dā'irat al M'arif al 'Uthmānia, nd.), 1: 424; Muḥammad ibn Sa'd, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, ed. Ihsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), 1:216, 2:348, 3: 584, 590,...; Abū Na'im Aḥmad al-Isbahānī, *Ma'rifat al-Ṣaḥābā* (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭn li al-Nashr, 1419 A.H.), 3: 1180, 6: 3037...; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq* (np: Dār al-Fikr, 1415 A.H.), 44: 22, 50: 207, 56: 105, 58: 387, 396, 423, 454.

27- Nūr al Dīn al-Haithamī, *Majma' al-Zawā'id wa Manba' al-Fawā'id* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Qudsī, 1414 A.H.), 6: 109.

28- Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb* (Syria: Dār al-Rashīd, 1406) 498.

29- Aḥmad bin Shu'aib al-Nasā'ī, *Tasmiyat Mashāikh Abī 'Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad bin Shu'aib bin 'Alī al-Nasā'ī wa Dhikr al-Mudallisīn*, ed. Al-Sharīf Ḥatīm bin 'Ārif al-'Aunī (Makkah: Dār 'Ālam al-Fawā'id, 1423 A. H.), 76.

30- In order to ascertain the effects of the inaccuracy in *isnāds* on his version of the incident, discussion on the *isnād* would come in the corresponding discussion in the next section on Motzki's *matn* analysis of the traditions about Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq's murder.

31- Motzki, *Biography*, 181.

'Urwa 's tradition:

The last version of the tradition reporting the murder of Ibn Abī al-Huqayq comes from 'Urwa as discussed by Motzki who tells us that it appears only via the *isnād*: Ibn Lahī'a- Abū al Aswad- 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr.³²

Matn Analysis:

Traditions reporting Ibn Abī al-Huqayq's murder come to us via their common links, the persons responsible for the first formal dissemination of the information³³ about the said expedition according to Motzki. In his *isnād* analysis he considers the *isnād* bundles and points out these common links. In the first step of his *matn* analysis he looks for similarities and differences in the text variants under each common link separately, and a kernel text is pointed out by Motzki for each common link, as discussed below. The second step comprises of comparisons among the *matn* variants transmitted from different common links, with the goal to see if the kernel goes beyond them. Motzki says that this would help answer the question whether historical conclusions can be drawn from the resultant kernel or not.³⁴ In short, kernel texts are compared to each other to find out till where they go back in history. The following discussion on each of the form *matn* versions of the traditions regarding the murder of Ibn Abī al-Huqayq is expected to help in understanding Motzki's approach in his *matn* analysis:

The Version from Al-Barā'

Among the detailed versions about the murder of Ibn Abī al-Huqayq and found in Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, the one transmitted by Isrā'īl from Abū Ishāq is the starting point for Harald Motzki's textual analysis of this tradition complex. It reads:

Yusuf b. Mūsā--- 'Ubayd Allāh b. Mūsā--- Isrā'īl--- Abū Ishāq--- al-Barā' b. 'Āzib. He said:

The Messenger of God sent people of the Anṣār to the Jew Abū Rāfi'. He gave the command to 'Abd Allāh b. Atīk. Abū Rāfi' had hurt (*yu'dhī*) the Prophet and had assisted [his enemies] against him (*yu'īnu 'alayhi*). He lived in one of his fortresses in the Ḥijāz. When they came near it--- the sun was setting and people were returning (going) with their pasturing cattle (*sarḥ*)--- 'Abd Allāh said to his companions: "Sit down here. I will go and talk friendly with the gatekeeper, so that perhaps I can enter." He went on until he came near the gate Then he concealed his face as if he was going

³² Motzki, *Biography*, 181. It appears in Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*,(4:38) while its fragments are to be found in some other books.

³³ Motzki, *Origins*, 25.

³⁴ Motzki, *Biography*, 182.

about his business. People entered and the gatekeeper called out to him: "Servant of God! If you wish to enter, do it [now], because I wish to close the door!" I entered and hid. After the people had entered, he closed the gate and then he hung the keys (*aghālīq*) on a pin (*watid/wadd*). I reached for the keys (*aqālīd*), took them and opened the gate. An evening party was taking place (*yusmaru 'indahu*) at [the place of] Abū Rāfi' on the upper floor of his [house]. After the people of his party had left, I climbed up to him. Every time I opened a door, I locked it behind me from inside. I said [to myself]: "If people have been alarmed by me they cannot touch me until after I have killed him." Finally, I found him. He was, however, in a dark room (*bayt*) in the midst of his family. I did not know where in the room he was. I said: "Abū Rāfi'!" He answered: "Who is there?" I rushed (*ahwaytu*) towards the direction of the voice and gave him a stroke with the sword. I was [too] perplexed/excited (*dahish*) and so could not finish him off. He cried out and I ran out of the room and waited not far away. Then I entered anew and said: "What was the reason for this noise, Abū Rāfi'?" He answered: "Damn you! (*li- ummika al- wail*, literally: Woe unto your mother!). A man in the house struck me with a sword." When he said it, I gave him a heavy stroke without killing him. Then I plunged the blade (*zuba/ dubayb*) of the sword into his belly until it forced its way right to his back. Now I knew I had killed him. I began to open door after door until I finally arrived at a stair (*daraja*) of his [house]. When I thought that I had reached the ground, I took my feet [off the stair] and fell, although the night was moonlit, breaking my leg. I tied it with my turban and then left. I sat down at the gate and said [to myself]: "I shall not leave this night until I know that I have [really] killed him." When the cock crowed and the announcer of the death (*al-nā'ī*) appeared on the wall and cried: "I announce the death of Abū Rāfi', the merchant of the people of Ḥijāz," I left, went to my companions and said: "Escape! God has killed Abū Rāfi'!" I then went to the Prophet and reported it to him. He said to me: "Show me your foot [*sic*]." I did and he touched it with his hand. Then it was as if I had never had pain in it.³⁵

Harald Motzki mentions that a variant of the above tradition is found in Bayhaqī's *Dalā'il* with two *isnāds* attached to it- one via Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm and the other via Abū Bakr b. Abī Shayba- implying that the said traditionist considered both these versions as identical, except for some typical copyist errors. Yet another version found in Ṭabarī's *Ta'rikh* is compared by Motzki to these versions which shows that they must derive from a common source by way of written transmission. This is because of some significant differences among the versions as mentioned here by

³⁵ Motzki, *Biography*, 182-183.

Motzki, like *rabbāh* in place of *tājir* and *yabghī* in place of *yu'in* in Ṭābarī's *Tārīkh* and Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* respectively. There are also some additions like *wa kāna bi arḍ al-Ḥijāz* and *taḥta āriyy ḥimār*, which are significant enough and beyond copyist errors according to Motzki. Further corroborative evidence is found by Motzki in a third variant which is found in Bayhaqī's *Sunan*. This text corresponds to both the previous versions as well as seeming independent from them. Motzki concludes that the common source of these versions according to *isnāds* is the *matn* transmitted by Isrā'īl.³⁶

Three remaining detailed versions of the tradition are different enough and yet structurally identical when compared to those discussed above, to be considered independent of them and Motzki considers them one by one. The first of these occurs in Bukhārī and Bayhaqī via Yusuf b. Ishāq whence Motzki notices a few differences from those previously discussed, like the word *kuwwa* or *kawwa* instead of *watad* or *wadd*, the assassin fell from a *sullam* (ladder) and not a *daraja* (stair), instead of breaking his lower leg, his foot was dislocated, respectively.³⁷ Other versions mentioned by Motzki in this regard are those of Zakariyyā b. Abī Zā'idā and Sharīk.³⁸

Being independent of one another, all of the above versions come from Abū Ishāq (d. 126 A.H.), and he is the common link of the traditions from al-Barā' b. 'Āzib (d. 72 A.H.) according to Harald Motzki. Since al-Barā' did not participate in the expedition, he must have heard of it from Ibn 'Atīk (d. 12 A.H.). Al-Barā' was 24 years old at that time as Motzki tells us and comments that the veracity of this ascription cannot be substantiated on the basis of this tradition alone. Since a long time had passed before Abū Ishāq had heard the story from al-Barā' (between 50 A.H. and 72 A.H.). Further transmission to his pupils happened around 125 A.H. and these long spans of time probably caused changes in the story's form-even if only slightly- every time it was retold.³⁹ However, as has been mentioned earlier on, historical reporting is different from a game of whispers, and the differences among the traditions about the murder of Ibn Abī al-Huqayq point out to another fact that they are accounts of the said event in the Prophet's life which different people narrated to different

³⁶ Ibid. 184, 185.

³⁷ Ibid. 186. Here as before, Motzki suffices mentioning these differences without pointing out whether they are detrimental to the integrity of these texts or not, although the needed clarifications have been given by the exegetes of Bukhārī like Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī*, (7: 428-430) and al-'Ainī, *Umdat al-Qārī*, (17: 138).

³⁸ Motzki, *Biography*, 187.

³⁹ Ibid. 190.

people- via Abū Ishāq--- al-Barā' in different wordings and appear in books of history like the one by Ṭabarī and Bayhaqī as well as collections of *Ḥadīth* like that of Bukhārī and Bayhaqī. Al-Barā' may have heard about the expedition from Ibn 'Atīk and/or from some other Companion/s, and related it to his students who further conveyed it. Being a Companion himself made it possible for him to have any and all of these Companions as his sources. Since there was no official version of the story, so whichever version a traditionist would hear he would report it after due verification according to his standards. Bukhārī for example, sincerely mentions two detailed versions one after the other within the same collection, both of which satisfy his standards. One version only, if there, would in fact imply that different narratives were redacted and transformed into one standard version, which would not stand as a naturally historical phenomenon. As far as the current research is concerned, such evidence appears to be internally corroborative where one bit supports the others and it is expected that the other versions would follow suit.

The Version from Ibn Ka'b

The starting point of Motzki's textual analysis of Ibn Ka'b's version of the traditions reporting the murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq is a tradition reported by 'Abd al- Razzāq (d.822 CE) (from Ma'mar d. 153 A.H.) in his *Muṣannaf*. It is a very detailed version,⁴⁰ even longer than Bukhārī's cited above and starts by providing the backdrop of this expedition, which was carried out by a group of Companions from the Khazraj tribe in Madīnah upon their own request. The Prophet prohibited the team members from killing women and children. Ibn 'Atīk was the team leader and there were four other members. Details about the guard and where he hung or put the keys are absent from the account, but details about the staircase/ladder leading to the victim's quarters are mentioned, that steps had been cut in a trunk of a palm tree.⁴¹ The team went up it and entered the victim's quarters. One of them attacked him, but he survived the initial blow, after which 'Abd Allah b. Unays killed the man and he was also the one whose foot was seriously sprained from the fall according to this version. Exchange of words between the assailant and Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq's wife is also narrated in this version clearer than in the previously mentioned and one of the Jews in the vicinity confirmed having heard Ibn 'Atīk's voice. Ibn Ka'b informs that the day the expedition returned was Friday and

⁴⁰ Ibid. 191-192.

- In the researcher's view, it probably sheds light on why, in one version of al-Barā' 's tradition 'ladder' was mentioned and in another 'stair'... it may have been a hybrid as explained here.

upon seeing them coming, the Prophet (peace be upon him) prayed for them during his sermon.

Ibn Ishāq's version as reported by Ibn Hishām and Ṭabarī is similar in structure and wording to this report by 'Abd al-Razzāq via Ma'mar but the former's own report is visibly different from that of the latter according to Motzki.⁴² These differences are in repetition of elements, completeness of some names, order of others, and placement of Prophetic prohibition in the texts. The person suddenly changes from first to third somewhere in Ibn Ishāq's version. In Ma'mar's text, the person who fell down was Ibn Unays, while it was Ibn 'Atik in Ibn Ishāq's, which is corroborated by the version from al-Barā'. In one of the versions from Ibn Ishāq via Ibn Hishām, Ibn 'Atik's hand was injured (in place of leg/foot in other versions) which is an inaccuracy as Motzki comments, since his partners would not have carried him away had he injured his hand. In Ibn Ishāq's text, it is said that Ibn 'Atik's voice was recognized by Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq's wife, which according to Motzki had been 'put in her mouth' (by a reporter). Moreover, it is different from Ma'mar's report: "One of them said "By God, I certainly heard the voice of Ibn 'Atik" according to Motzki.⁴³ It may have been as Motzki says or it might have been that Ma'mar or his source simply didn't specify who among the Jews had said it, keeping in view the fact that the wife of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq also qualified as one. In any case, saying that something has been put in someone's mouth requires evidence to that effect since it is a grave accusation of forgery, and one fails to find any evidence of that here.

Here Motzki also comments that one of the versions of the tradition in question was not a model for another, and that the *isnāds* show their common link Zuhri, whose version would then serve as their model. Motzki also explains that the source of differences among the versions sprout either from Zuhri's pupils-who had different levels of memory retention- or from Zuhri himself, who may have narrated differently at different times. One may alternatively assume that one of Zuhri's informants was responsible for these variations as Motzki adds (who are 'Abd Allah b. Ka'b or 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Ka'b). He then rejects this assumption since the texts from the two informants correspond to each other to such an extent that they must have been preserved in written form, something which can be attributed to Zuhri and his pupils at the earliest, and not his informants. Motzki further remarks that writing down was an exception and not a rule in the first century A.H.⁴⁴ Firstly, Motzki's claim

⁴² Motzki, *Biography*, 193-194

⁴³ Ibid. 192.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 195.

here that if texts correspond strongly to each other they must have been in written form, seems odd. As it appears oral transmission is predominantly the basis for written transmission and doesn't deserve to be methodically rejected as a secure means of transmission.

The millions of *ḥuffāz*⁴⁵ of Qur'ān and many of *Ḥadīth* all over the world and all-over Islamic history are enough to belie this notion, and on the other hand millions of others also remember intricate details of a host of literature vividly just because they put their efforts into the task. Therefore, what appears to the researcher is that the strong correspondence between the two informants' texts (who are brothers also) is because of their care in listening to their sources and meticulousness in reporting to their audience, as well as Zuhri's efficiency and not because they were necessarily in written form. It is true that while some people have photographic memory, others also remember things well and still others' may not be up to the mark but it doesn't imply that the two latter kinds of people are unable to convey things correctly. In the end it all comes down to checking out the transmitter of a report for his mental and ethical merits and weaknesses. As discussed earlier, Zuhri can be considered as among the highest ranking traditionists of his time, and resorted to writing as well as memory while transmitting to his students, through handbooks that he used to pass over to his pupils,⁴⁶ some of whom were also well-known for keeping written records of these reports. A complete transmission of traditions in written form was not an exception, at least in the second half of the first century.⁴⁷ Traditions from the Companions Anas b. Mālik, Abū Hurairah, and the Successor Nāfi' were already in circulation in that period because of the efforts of their apt pupils. Those scholars who found distaste for their writing down of traditions in Madīnah would take their manuscripts with them to places far and beyond, thus causing them to be spread all over the Muslim lands, as illustrated by Abbott in detail.⁴⁸

Coming back, some other shorter versions are also discussed for their inaccuracies by Harald Motzki here and an interesting example is his discussion on a participant's name which is mentioned as *fulān* (so-and-so) ibn Salama, found in Ibn Bukayr's version,⁴⁹ as well as in Ma'mar's version

⁴⁵- Ones who have memorized the Qur'an.

⁴⁶- Schoeler, *Genesis*, 48

⁴⁷- Idem. *Biography*, 20. He puts the start of formal compilation of Prophetic material at around the last third of the first century.

⁴⁸- Abbott, *Papyri*, 2: 40-50;

⁴⁹- Motzki, *Biography*, 196; Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1405 A.H.), 4:34.

discussed above.⁵⁰ While in Bayhaqī's *Dalā'il*, Ibn Bukayr reports it as Ibn Ishāq's opinion, in Ma'mar's version it is simply reported that 'so-and-so ibn Salama' was among the participants. Motzki thinks that this was a part of Zuhri's version.⁵¹ For all that we may speculate, Ibn Ishāq's straightforward statement 'I think that so-and-so ibn Salama...' may have been based upon what he heard from his source, Zuhri and the fact remains that a 'so-and-so ibn Salama' was a part of the expedition as reported by 'Abd al-Razzāq (and others).

Motzki's comparisons of the short versions of Yunus b. Bukayr and Muḥammad b. Salama with others try to render these erroneous because of their lack of accuracy in reporting, like when Ibn Bukayr reports the Prophetic prohibition. In versions like those of Ma'mar and Ibn Ishāq, he (the Prophet) said: Do not kill the women and the children. In Ibn Bukayr's version, the Prophet prohibited from killing...⁵² This 'error' becomes immaterial when one notices that in some versions the Prophet's direct speech is reported while in the others his indirect speech is reported, and both are academically sound ways of reporting.

In another illustration of error, the problem with the first transmitter's name (whom Motzki calls Zuhri's informant) whether it is 'Abd Allah or 'Abd al-Raḥmān is resolved here by Motzki simply by counting the number of transmitters who mentioned each name, and concluding that it was 'Abd Allah since three transmitters from Ibn Ishāq (al-Bakkā'i, Salama b. al-Faḍl, and Ibn Bukayr) mentioned 'Abd Allah while Muḥammad b. Salama and Ma'mar both mentioned 'Abd al-Raḥmān.⁵³ Oddly enough, Motzki had discussed the issue of Zuhri's informant in detail in his *isnād* analysis of Ibn Ka'b's version which was duly analysed there.⁵⁴ Still, since he discusses the issue here it may be useful to have a look at Ma'mar whose given original informant is doubted here. Motzki gives preference to the three above-mentioned (in text above) transmitters over Ma'mar since they agree on a name against the one given by the latter and it would have been more plausible if he had checked out

⁵⁰ Motzki, *Biography*, 191.

⁵¹ Ibid. 196.

⁵² Ibid. 191, 197.

⁵³ Ibid. 197.

⁵⁴ It has been said earlier in the discussion on Motzki's *isnād* analysis (Motzki: 178-179) of this tradition that Zuhri may have heard from both the brothers and reported accordingly since both the names of the brothers are mentioned in the many books where the tradition is reported, and some scholars didn't go beyond saying that it was a son of Ka'b. It was said there that all this doesn't necessitate a flaw in the transmission as claimed by Motzki there.

the persons and compared them with Ma'mar to see how their chain's connections fare in comparison to his, as he had done in establishing the veracity of transmitters from and of 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf* in one of his earlier studies quite meticulously. Here, Ma'mar is an important student of Zuhri who eventually settled down in Yemen. He was himself a well-respected teacher there and among his pupils was 'Abd al-Razzāq who remained with him for at least seven years⁵⁵ and took written notes.⁵⁶ The tradition under discussion is a part of 'Abd al-Razzāq's *Muṣannaf* as everyone knows and comes to us from him via Ma'mar-- Zuhri link, and as Schoeler agrees⁵⁷ a chain of teachers and students offers the best chance of providing authentic material.

Next, Motzki mentions two short stories about the incident, one in Ibn Shabba's *Ta'rikh al Madīnah* and the other in Bayhaqī's *Dalā'il*. The latter is via Mūsā b. 'Uqbā-Zuhri and the already short narration is actually broken into two parts. The first part's *isnād* is *Mursal* since it doesn't mention the Companion Ibn Ka'b, while the second part's *isnād* is complete as Motzki point out.⁵⁸ He claims the incompleteness in the second *isnād* to be due to carelessness on Mūsā's part,⁵⁹ but it shows his honesty and accuracy to the researcher. Two considerations help towards this realization: Firstly, the narration is divided into two parts and each part is carried by its *isnāds*. It seems that the *Mursal* part is left so because Mūsā came to know of it that way, and didn't try to improve its *isnāds*. For the second part he was probably sure of the *isnāds'* completeness and presented them accordingly. This attests his honesty and accuracy in reporting. The second consideration is that the tradition's genuineness is corroborated by many other traditions in other collections which narrate the same incident in different levels of detail. Last but not least is the fact that Mūsā was among the oldest Medinian students of Zuhri and that he

⁵⁵- Abbott, *Papyri*, 2: 179; Motzki, *Origins*, 63.

⁵⁶- Abbott, *Papyri*, 2: 179.

⁵⁷- Schoeler, *Biography*, 15.

⁵⁸- Mūsā b. 'Uqbā, *Al-Maghāzī*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqshīsh (Agadir: The Ibn Zuhri University, 1994), 228-229; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, 4: 38-39. Here, the first part's *isnād* is *Mursal* since it doesn't mention the Companion Ibn Ka'b, while the second part's *isnād* is complete at its end and misses the transmitters between Mūsā and Bayhaqī, thus rendering it *Mu'allaq* or hanging.

⁵⁹- Motzki, *Biography*, 198.

and his recently discovered *Maghāzī* are revered by traditionists and *Ḥadīth* scientists go against the claim.⁶⁰

Coming back to Harald Motzki's analyses of the texts in the tradition complex about the murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq and his inference from the above discussion on variations in the texts of the tradition complex about the murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq, when he says, "We come across the phenomenon that textual variations are corroborated by two or more scholars so that the conclusion suggests itself that the difference has been caused by the common link, here al-Zuhrī himself."⁶¹ One can easily notice that Motzki conclusion would be quite correct if put in a slightly different way, that the difference (is not caused by but) comes from or via the common link, owing to the fact that the common link is not the cause of a tradition, but its dissipater, by his own standards. A second consideration is that even if variations are corroborated by one scholar it may have come from the common link, as can be checked for individual cases.

A very important claim by Motzki concludes his discussion on the short stories discussed above. He considers the word *ḥalīf lahum* found in some versions⁶² in place of the fifth participant's name and thinks that it doesn't make sense since the tribe referred to in *lahum* is missing.⁶³ The comment itself may not be clear but what follows it is quite important an inference to notice. Motzki says: "Little inconsistencies such as this *lahum* corroborate our conclusion that the "short stories" are indeed abbreviations of longer versions."⁶⁴ He further remarks that the cause of these abbreviations- whether it is Zuhrī's pupils or later transmitters- is not always clear.⁶⁵

Motzki's discussion on short stories about the murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq is followed by one on certain brief texts which do not serve as summaries of long versions but are concerned with details which could be

60- Ibn Sa'd, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā: al-Qism al-Mutammim li Ṭābi'yī ahl al-Madīnah*, Ziyād Muḥammad Maṣṣūr (Al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah: Maktaba al-'Ulūm wa al-Ḥikam, 1408 A.H.), 340; Mūsā b. 'Uqbā, Ibn, *Al-Maghāzī*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqshīsh (Agadir: The Ibn Zuhri University, 1994), 49-50, 229 fn; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), 1:286.

61- Motzki, *Biography*, 198-199.

62- Abū Bakr al Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1405 A.H.), 4:39; Ibn Shabba, *Tā'rīkh al-Madīnah*, ed. Fahīm Muḥammad Shaltūt (Jeddah: Syed Ḥabīb Maḥmūd Aḥmad, 1399 A.H.), 2: 464

63- Motzki, *Biography*, 202.

64- Ibid. 202.

65- Ibid. 202.

used as legal arguments according to him.⁶⁶ Here he refers to those parts of the long versions and their parallels which mention the Prophetic prohibition against killing of women and children. Some of its illustrations are found in Mālik's *Muṭṭā'* and Shāfi'i's *Umm*,⁶⁷ on which Motzki comments that either Zuhri must have told the story in varying versions or his pupils didn't always reproduce his texts religiously.⁶⁸ It is quite strong a probability that Zuhri shared it with different people at different times in different levels of detail, keeping them matched with what he had come to know of from his sources. This is quite probable since he was an honest traditionist of the highest caliber and conveyed traditions orally, in written form, or a combination of the two as mentioned before. To confirm Motzki's comment whether Zuhri's pupils may have taken their teacher's narrations religiously or otherwise here demands a peek into what 'religiously' is. As is evident from Motzki's comment, since the texts were not conveyed ditto, they were not conveyed religiously. Texts which are transmitted word to word are definitely the surest, as is the case with Qur'ān, yet narrating about someone's life and times doesn't require a word to word correspondence with the original text simply because there is none but different renditions of the same event. Its details ought to be constructed from those reports which are coming from reliable sources via a reliable chain. Taking Mālik's text as an example, one notices that it falls in the chapter titled: 'The Prohibition against killing Women and Children in Military Expeditions', which also contains some other traditions reporting the general Prophetic prohibition. Being a student of Zuhri, it can be expected of Mālik to have received or heard the story about the murder from him, but reported only the part which concerned him then and there. It thus seems to be a case of an intelligent transmission of traditions on the part of Mālik, and not an example of an irreligious one.

Motzki's *matan* analysis compares word differences whenever and wherever they occur in the texts. In the case of the Prophetic prohibition against killing women and children mentioned above, he points out that the wording of the 'legal deductions' varies among the versions reporting the murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq. He says:

According to Ma'mar's version of it, the Prophet used the words *walīd aw/wa-mra'a*; in the three versions of the "legal deduction", however, he spoke of *al-nisā' wa-l-wildān* (Mālik,

⁶⁶- Ibid. 202-203.

⁶⁷- Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'i, *al-Umm* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, nd.)4:239; *Al-Muwatta' of Imam Malik ibn Anas*, tr. Aisha Abdurrahman Bewley, (London: Kegan Paul International, 1989), 174.

⁶⁸- Motzki, *Biography*, 204.

Sufyān) or *al-nisā' wa-l-ṣibyān* (Ma'mar) in the plural form and in a reversed order. This change seems to reflect the priorities and the generalizing tendency of legal thinking. Most remarkable is that both versions were spread by one and the same scholar, Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī. This explains why the wording of the 'legal deduction' was able to intrude in transmissions of the *maghāzī* tradition, as we have seen above.⁶⁹

The above-mentioned word differences would have led one towards suggesting that Zuhri or his students may have inserted their own words into the Prophetic ones or that legal thought infiltrated into traditions, if the above-mentioned words were Prophetic in the first place. Reading the parts of traditions where the Prophetic prohibition is mentioned one finds them to be in indirect speech with stress on meaning and not on exact words.⁷⁰ The issue remains whether these versions of the prohibition convey the same meaning or not? A brief look at the versions is all that is needed to show that they all convey the same prohibition that is not to kill the members of the female gender and the minors. In view of these simple considerations, it becomes immaterial if the words are the same or different and just their connotation remains. Motzki's inference about 'legal deduction' intruding into traditions also becomes irrelevant here.

His *matan* analyses of different versions- long, short and 'legal'- of the traditions from Ibn Ka'b are followed by his overview⁷¹ of the story which can be called his rendering of the incident and goes with the many versions of the said tradition complex discussed above. Wherever a detail doesn't seem to him to fit in seamlessly with the overall story, Motzki duly points it out.

The discussion on Ibn Ka'b's tradition complex concludes with Motzki's comment that his *matn* analysis has not produced any further evidence which could help identify Zuhri's actual informant, beyond the fact that he was a member of the Ka'b b. Mālik's family. He also believes that the name of the original author is missing because there is none identifiable and that the version is a condensation of the reports from the participants which were retold from generation to generation and in order

⁶⁹- Motzki, *Biography*, 204-205.

⁷⁰- 'Al Ṣan'ānī,' Abd al Razzāq, *Al Muṣannaf* (Beirut: Al Maktab al-Islāmī, 1403 A. H), 5:202; Ibn Shabba, *Tā'rikh al-Madīnah*, ed. Fahīm Muḥammad Shaltūt (Jeddah: Syed Ḥabīb Maḥmūd Aḥmad, 1399 A.H). 2:462; Shāfi'i, *Umm*, 4:239; Mālik, *Muṭṭā'*, tr. Bewley, 174.

⁷¹- Motzki, *Biography*, 205-206.

to praise the great deeds of their ancestors in favour of Islam.⁷² His theorization here appears to be judgmental when it comes to people's intentions without providing any corroborative evidence to the effect. Similarly, none of the reports from Ibn Ka'b claim an original author or narrator save himself in the first place, who had come to know of its details like others. To validate or reject a report in which someone from among the Companions reports about an expedition that he came to know about from a participant- since they belonged to the same small Medinian community- requires two things. Firstly, the people involved in the report should be checked for their honesty and reliability, something which can be well achieved through *isnād* analysis. If someone else has reported the same story- like a participant himself or one of his Companion fellows- then these reports support one another. Secondly, the *matn* analysis here involves looking out for irreconcilable differences among the versions, the absence of which helps towards authenticating them. In case of the event under discussion here, one finds quite a large number of parallel reports with similarities and differences, some of which have been discussed above while others below, and before they are all studied and their points of divergence and convergence are confirmed, it is improper to pass judgments about them.

Finally, while theorizing on how the text of the tradition in question developed before Zuhri, Motzki mentions that even if the story really came from the descendants of Ka'b b. Mālik, a long time had passed and the story was conveyed orally and took its final form in which Zuhri received it⁷³ which means that his *isnāds* didn't accurately carry the text to him or that they were unreliable. Motzki's other statement that weaknesses in Zuhri's *isnāds* speak in favour of their reliability⁷⁴ seems odd here since if an *isnād* is broken, incomplete or weak, it is usually a cause of worry for the scientist of *Ḥadīth* or its historian since he has to take up the task of either authenticating or rejecting the text that it carries. It also seems odd that if a text is carried orally it is a case for redaction as Motzki claims, and in Zuhri's case it has already been seen that he was careful of whom and what he reports, so the texts carried by his *isnāds* generally appear to be fine. Whether his informants had any need to modify the texts that they transmitted is the point to be pondered over here and to sort it out, the

⁷²- Ibid. 206-207.

⁷³- Ibid. 206-207.

⁷⁴- Ibid. 206. Here, since none of the given participants of the expedition was from Ka'b's family, nor is his name given in the *isnād*, no direct report is available and this weakness speaks in favour of the reliability of Zuhri's *isnād* according to Motzki.

following may be considered. First, it is a case of misunderstanding that the story took a certain final form in Zuhri's time, since such a final form is not even the point anyway. Different Companions would share their views of the Prophet's life and times with their audiences till they reached the collectors. The early generations were naturally much more careful of what they conveyed about their beloved Prophet than their descendants. Zuhri is one of the first and most illustrious students of the Companions and senior Successors who took up the task of collecting reports about the Prophet and sharing them with their audiences in more than one media as has been discussed before. There were those after Zuhri who too accurately transmitted from him in different levels of detail from what they came to know, and those who didn't stress so much on word accuracy but still conveyed the story or its parts as they were. A few people no doubt made serious mistakes here and there so that wherever there is an irreconcilable difference it may be because of the latter group. Historical reality however can be reconstructed from the two former kinds of people and not just from the first, since it doesn't constitute more than honest, intelligent reporting.

The Version from 'Abd Allah b. Unays

There is a version of the tradition reporting the murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq which starts with the name of a member of the team sent by the Prophet (peace be upon him), namely 'Abd Allah b. Unays, at the start of its *isnāds*. It appears in historical collections of Ṭabarī and Wāqidī, naturally with some similarities, differences and irreconcilable portions in their texts.⁷⁵ Motzki considers their differences as pointing to their individuality and their similarities- which are more than their differences- pointing to their common source, as he did with other versions discussed above. He then puts the common points in the texts together and tries to reconstruct the story related by the common source, which he tells is very brief and obscure. He also points out that there are five contradictions between the two versions and they support a very important claim, namely that the two versions are not based upon one another.⁷⁶ These differences are: 1) the number of persons who entered the quarters of the victim: two in Ṭabarī's report, and the group in Wāqidī's. 2) The person who raised the sword upon the victim's wife and remembered the Prophetic prohibition: In Ṭabarī's version it is Ibn Unays, and in Wāqidī's it is someone else. 3) The one who hurts his foot: Ibn 'Atik in Ṭabarī's version and Abū Qatāda in Wāqidī's. 4) The episode of the forgotten bow is about: Ibn Unays in Ṭabarī's version and Abū Qatāda in Wāqidī's. 5) The wife of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq recognizes the voice of Ibn 'Atik in Ṭabarī's version, while it is

⁷⁵ ibid, 207-212.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 212-213.

mentioned in Wāqidī's that the Jews of Khyber had heard what had happened and went on a search for the killers.⁷⁷

Onwards, Motzki adds another version- that of Zuhri's discussed earlier- to this textual comparison and once again says that similarities among the versions point to a common source while differences against their inter-dependence.⁷⁸ Differences in content among the versions of Zuhri, Ṭabarī and Wāqidī are then discussed by Motzki in detail. He notices that fewer text elements in Zuhri's version correspond to elements in Ṭabarī's than in Wāqidī's, which leads him to believe that Zuhri's version is closer to Wāqidī's than Ṭabarī's. He claims that the three versions, that of Zuhri from Ibn Ka'b and those of Wāqidī and Ṭabarī from Ibn Unays must have come from the narratives circulating in the family of Ka'b b. Mālik. These narratives vary in content and length while also having similarities, which is probably so because their sources are different and also because they were transmitted orally for a long period of time which may have been the cause of interferences among the variations and expansion and abbreviation of the stories may also have happened then according to Motzki.⁷⁹

Moving on with his theorization, Motzki raises the question that if the above mentioned history of the traditions is accepted, why is it that two of them have been constructed as going back to Ibn Unays, while that of Zuhri doesn't specify the real author of the report? He then tells that every participant must have narrated his version which found its way to one's descendants and friends and became part of the tribal memory of the Banu Salīma clan to whom all the participants belonged. These descendants and friends would emphasize the role played by their elder, however some of these transmitters may have even tried to reconcile the family biases and concede important roles to the leading participants.⁸⁰ The above mentioned claims by Motzki on the origins of the different versions of the tradition about the murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq give an insight into his view on how and why the Companions' families and friends shared the Prophetic material among themselves and with their audiences, and how the different versions were 'constructed' upon them. It is true that people share their memories in their own individual ways as the participants in the expedition did, but saying that some of them did it in order to exalt their elders or friends is tantamount to saying that they

⁷⁷⁻ Ibid., 213-214.

⁷⁸⁻ Ibid. 215-219.

⁷⁹⁻ Ibid. 219.

⁸⁰⁻ Ibid. 219-220.

were generally dishonest and requires solid evidence to this effect, something lacking in Motzki's claim here.

Further, if an *isnād* doesn't mention the 'original author' as Motzki claims about Zuhri's, it may well have been a case of Zuhri hearing from Ibn Ka'b the event's details who came to know of these from his father, mother or paternal uncle.⁸¹ Ṭabarī reported a parallel (and non-contradictory) version from another path which passes through Ibn Ka'b and sheds some light on the source of his version of the incident who is: 'his mother (who is also the daughter of Ibn Unays) - Ibn Unays'. It shows that Ibn Unays is Ibn Ka'b's maternal grandfather⁸² a relation which is quite reliable and strong- and was a source of information for him in addition to his paternal grandfather. Any family bias claim also disappears since it were Ibn Ka'b's two grand-parents from whom he came to know of the incident. As far as the textual differences between the two narrations, Ibn K'b may have reported it the way he heard it from his different family sources and transmitted it without family biases. The way in which Zuhri⁸³ and Ibrāhīm b 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ka'b b. Mālik⁸⁴ related the incident in their turns was probably the way it reached them, which also shows their honesty and it is important to note that no attempts at a uniform, constructed narrative by these scholars appear to have happened here.

Wāqidī's case is different from that of Zuhri's or Ṭabarī's since his version contains some irresolvable differences from the other two versions as mentioned above. If they can't be resolved, Wāqidī's laxity in reporting may have been among its causes, something which Motzki seems to ignore.⁸⁵ Correct conclusions can't be drawn from *Ḥadīth* textual criticism unless such versions are taken into consideration, especially in those parts where the text transmitted is irreconcilable with the many versions which don't contradict one another. This is not to deny Wāqidī his due place as a historian, but to point out that his *Maghāzī* probably doesn't present historical reality the way clear-cut *matn-isnād* combination affords us. In other words, it doesn't imply that whatever he presents is wrong since he writes in the continuous narrative of a seasoned historian, whence the *matn-isnād* combination may suffer. His versions do agree with those

⁸¹ Ibid. 191. A paternal uncle of Ibn Ka'b is mentioned as his source in a short version.

⁸² Ibid. 207.

⁸³ Ibid. 203.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 207.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 217. He rejects Horovitz's and Schoeler's critique of Wāqidī. Methodologically it seems quite odd that he doesn't consider the Muslim critique of Wāqidī's traditions as discussed above.

traditionists who use the said combination approach on many points as Motzki's comparisons show too. What needs to be carried out is a comparison of his narrative with those traditionists who use the said combination approach before the former is accepted.

The Version from 'Urwa

Bayhaqī reports in his *Dalā'il* a short version of the tradition about the murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq having 'Urwā b. Zubayr in its *isnād*. It doesn't recur in other collections of traditions which is problematic for Motzki's *isnād cum matn* analysis since his approach requires multiple paths to a version of a tradition.⁸⁶ He also thinks that it may have originally been a detailed version of the tradition without giving any reason here.⁸⁷ Among the textual differences noted by Motzki is that one Aswad al-Khuzā'ī mentioned here is given as Aswad b. al-Khuzā'ī in Zuhri's version but the major difference according to him is that the three participants' names are given in the tradition while the fourth, Ibn Unays is missing. These lead him to conclude that this version is not directly dependent upon Zuhri's.⁸⁸

The tradition reaches us through Ibn Lahī'a - Abū al-Aswad - 'Urwa, and Motzki thinks that the former's *Maḡhāzī* reports from 'Urwā are not quite secure, and contain features which don't belong to 'Urwā.⁸⁹ He concludes his discussion on 'Urwa's tradition with the comment:

“We must, therefore, admit the possibility that either Ibn Lahī'a or Abū al-Aswad used elements of al-Zuhri's tradition which he recalled, adding other elements from unknown sources or which he invented. As long as Ibn Lahī'a's transmissions from Abū al-Aswad have not been systematically studied and compared with other versions, and as long as variants of this alleged 'Urwa tradition which are separate from Ibn Lahī'a's are lacking, we should refrain

⁸⁶- Motzki, *Biography*, 223; Andreas Görke, “Prospects and Limits in the Study of the historical Muḡammad”, in *The Transmission and Dynamics of the Textual Sources of Islam*, ed. Boekhoff-van der Voort, Kees Versteegh and Joas Wagemkers (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 143.

⁸⁷- Ibid., 222.

⁸⁸- Motzki, *Biography*, 223

⁸⁹- Ibid. 224; Andreas Görke, “The Historical Tradition about al-Ḥudaybiya. A Study of 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr's Account”, in *Biography*, ed. Motzki, 257; Yusuf b. 'Abd al-Raḡmān al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī asmā' al-Rijāl* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risāla, 1980), 15:501.

from making hasty conclusions and had better not used this tradition ascribed to 'Urwa for dating purposes."⁹⁰

The two parts of Motzki's concluding comments seem to mismatch, since on one hand he says that Ibn Lahī'a or Abū al-Aswad added elements to Zuhri's version, while on the other he warns against hasty conclusions about their version unless we have versions of the tradition ascribed to 'Urwa.

At the end of the above discussion, his *isnād-cum-matn* analyses of the variety of traditions reporting the murder of Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq, it is observed that he is able to sift out very little information on this important event in the Prophet's life, and this is the historical kernel of the event in question according to him:

"...that the Prophet sent a few men under the command of 'Abd Allah b. 'Atīk to Abū Rāfi' b. Abī l-Ḥuqayq who lived outside Medina in order to kill him. The assassin (or assassins) had to ascend to his apartment and when descending he or another man missed a step and hurt his foot. They did not leave until the death of the victim had been verified."⁹¹

However, the evaluation of his analyses carried out in the previous sections pointed out the many inaccuracies in his own approach to traditions, like magnifying otherwise insignificant natural differences among text variants, and ignoring the fact that biographies of narrators carry much more significance for historical research than meets the eye.

Conclusion:

The importance of Motzki's *isnād cum matn* analysis method notwithstanding, it is noticeable in his studies like the one above that the method itself loses its objectiveness in application at places.⁹² It partly follows from his over-dependence on Juynboll's *isnād* plotting method which considers the common link or someone using his name as the source

⁹⁰- Ibid. 224.

⁹¹- Motzki, "The Murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq: *On the Origin and Reliability of some Maghāzī-Reports*," in *Biography*, ed. Motzki, 232.

⁹²- Bilal Ahmad, "Genesis of Qur'anic Exegesis with Reference to the Companion Ibn 'Abbās as its Source- Critical Analysis of Harald Motzki's *isnād cum matn* Analysis of Qur'an 15:90-91" XL, *Hamdard Islamicus*, 7-29; Some studies, like Nicolet Boekhoff-van der Voort, "Between History and Legend: The Biography of the Prophet Muḥammad by Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri" (PhD Thesis, Radboud University, Nijmegen, 2012), have also applied Motzki's method on *Ḥadīth* and it is becoming a trend in modern *Ḥadīth* scholarship.

of the *Ḥadīth* to which it is attached and rejects the part beyond it as possibly original. Although Motzki doesn't explicitly claim it here, the tier beyond the common link hardly qualifies as valid and *Ḥadīth* goes as far as him while other possibilities stand ignored here by Motzki. His own remark on Schacht's common link theory-where the former had remarked that the common link was probably the first formal dissipator⁹³ and not the originator of the tradition to which it was attached- doesn't come in practice here.

Inaccuracies are also visible here and there, which compromise Motzki's use of the *isnād cum matn* method here. Moreover, his idea that shorter versions are summaries of longer ones seem as sweeping as his own remark about Schacht's principle that the shorter traditions are older than the longer ones.⁹⁴ A short kernel is traced back by him, which appears to confuse the matter further, and the whole idea of an objective *isnād cum matn* analysis suffers.

⁹³- Motzki, *Origins*, 25.

⁹⁴- Motzki, "Dating Muslim Traditions- A Survey," in *The Ḥadīth- Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies*, ed. Mustafa Shah (London: Routledge, 2011), ii: 44. This is Motzki's own critical take on Schacht.

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