

**Ilkka Lindstedt**

**THE TRANSMISSION OF  
AL-MADĀ'INĪ'S MATERIAL  
Historiographical Studies**

Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed, by due permission of  
the Faculty of Arts at the University of Helsinki, in auditorium XV, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of  
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University of Helsinki, Department of World Cultures

Ilkka Lindstedt

*The Transmission of al-Madā'inī's Material.  
Historiographical Studies.*

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To V.

## ABSTRACT

This doctoral dissertation, which consists of articles published elsewhere as well as a summary of them, discusses the early Arabic historian and litterateur Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qurashī al-Madā’inī. He was an important compiler, evaluator, and organizer of historical and literary narratives. He composed an imposing oeuvre of over two hundred works, only two of which are extant today.

Al-Madā’inī was born in al-Baṣra, but he travelled and studied in many towns of Iraq. Eventually, he settled in Baghdad where he lectured and where he died ca. 228/843–4.

Al-Madā’inī’s oeuvre is understood in this dissertation in the wider framework of Arab-Islamic culture. The late second/eighth–early third/ninth centuries, when al-Madā’inī lived, were a time when the study of history and religious sciences relied to a large extent on the oral and the aural. Al-Madā’inī, too, disseminated his works principally through lectures and study circles. His works, it seems, did not circulate widely in manuscript form; they were not books proper. Rather, they circulated as notebooks written down by his students. Because of this, mapping the importance of his students in the transmission and transmutation of his historical material is of utmost importance, and much weight is put on that question. During the lives of al-Madā’inī’s students, the Arab-Islamic culture became increasingly writerly, and the idea of a work with a final form began to win the day. Al-Madā’inī’s works, however, were still somewhat fluid and mainly not transmitted by copying, at least during his lifetime.

Al-Madā’inī’s works are mostly lost but some of them can be partly reconstructed on the basis of quotations from them. However, later authors, such as al-Ṭabarī and Ibn A‘tham, reworked their source material, including the narratives stemming ultimately from al-Madā’inī. These later authors did not have direct access to al-Madā’inī’s material but received it in the recensions of al-Madā’inī’s students.

This dissertation deals especially with the historiography of the ‘Abbāsīd revolution (129–132/747–750). Al-Madā’inī was born some years after the revolution. He composed, relying on, e.g., eye-witness and court sources, a work called *Kitāb al-Dawla* about the events of the revolution and the beginning of the ‘Abbāsīd rule. It is an important early source on the matter, the basic form and contents of which I have endeavored to reconstruct.

## TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämä artikkelimuotoinen väitöskirja käsittelee varhaista arabialaista historioitsijaa Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qurashī al-Madā’inīa. Hän oli aikansa tärkeimpiä historiallisten kertomusten kerääjiä ja järjestäjiä. Lähteidensä pohjalta hän laati yli 200 teosta käsittävän tuotannon. Vain kaksi näistä on säilynyt tähän päivään.

Al-Madā’inī syntyi al-Baṣrassa. Hän matkusti, opiskeli ja opetti eri puolilla Irakia. Lopulta hän asettui asumaan Bagdadiin, missä hän kuoli n. v. 842.

Al-Madā’inīn tuotantoa tulkitaan tässä väitöskirjassa laajassa, koko arabialais-islamilaisten kulttuurin kontekstissa. Al-Madā’inīn elinaika, 700–800-luvut, oli aikakautta, jolloin historian ja uskonnollisten tieteiden tutkimus nojasi vahvasti oraaliseen ja auralaiseen, suulliseen ja kuultuun. Myös al-Madā’inī levitti teoksiaan pääosin luennoimalla. Hänen teoksensa eivät tunnu levinneen laajalle käsikirjoitusmuodossa; ne eivät olleet kirjoja sanan nykymerkityksessä. Pikemminkin hänen teoksensa kiersivät muistiinpanoina, joita hänen oppilaansa olivat kirjoittaneet hänen luentojensa pohjalta. Tämän vuoksi hänen oppilaittensa merkitys hänen historiallisen materiaalinsa välittymisessä ja muuntumisessa on tärkeä kysymys, jolle annetaan tässä väitöskirjassa paljon tilaa. Al-Madā’inīn oppilaitten elinaikana arabialais-islamilaisten kulttuuri alkoi yhä vahvemmin tukeutua kirjoitettuun sanaan. Samalla ajatus teoksesta, jolla on lopullinen muoto, voitti lopullisesti. Al-Madā’inīn teokset olivat kuitenkin vielä jokseenkin epävakaita muodoltaan eikä niitä pääsääntöisesti välitetty kopioimalla, ainakaan al-Madā’inīn elinaikana.

Al-Madā’inīn teokset ovat kahta lukuun ottamatta kadonneet, mutta osa niistä voidaan rekonstruoida karkeasti myöhempien sitaattien perusteella. Myöhemmät historioitsijat kuten al-Ṭabarī ja Ibn A‘tham kuitenkin muokkasivat lähteitään, mukaan lukien sitä materiaalia, joka juontaa al-Madā’inīn teoksista. Näillä kirjoittajilla ei ollut suoraa pääsyä hänen materiaaliinsa vaan he saivat sen hänen oppilaittensa kautta.

Tämä väitöskirja käsittelee eritoten ‘abbāsivallankumouksen (v. 747–750) historiankirjoitusta. Al-Madā’inī syntyi muutama vuosi vallankumouksen jälkeen. Hän kirjoitti mm. silminnäkijä- ja hovilähteiden perusteella teoksen nimeltä *Kitāb al-Dawla*, joka käsittelee vallankumouksen ja sen jälkeisen ‘abbāsivallan tapahtumia. Se on tärkeä, varhainen lähde, jonka likimääräisen muodon ja sisällön olen pyrkinyt rekonstruoidaan.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work on a doctoral dissertation is often considered tedious, especially by its author. I cannot say such a thing (however, I cannot guarantee that the few readers this dissertation will receive will agree). Writing this dissertation has been an interesting and rewarding journey. When one has labored almost solely on one thing for some years, many people have contributed to the maturing of one's thoughts and the progress of one's work. This dissertation is no exception – there are many individuals who I am grateful to for helping in the process of drafting it.

I will begin by thanking the external reviewers, Professor Emeritus Dr. Gregor Schoeler and Professor Dr. Stefan Leder, for finding the time to read through this work. Their comments on the manuscript of this dissertation were discerning and apt. Furthermore, their own scholarly work has always been extremely important to my understanding of Arabic historiography and literature.

I want to say a loud thanks to my supervisors at the University of Helsinki: Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies Dr. Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, Lecturer in Arabic and Islamic Studies Dr. Sylvia Akar, and Lic. Phil. Kaj Öhrnberg. All of them have contributed greatly to my work.

Extra special thanks goes to Prof. Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, who has supported me in every possible way. His wide knowledge of classical Arabic sources, sharp scholarly insight, and all-around energetic air has had a great effect on me and my work. Hooking me up with a paid position for the entire time of my work on the dissertation was no mean feat either (a monthly salary does wonders to one's peace of mind!). He has read the whole of my dissertation and his comments have made it much better, saving me from many embarrassing mistakes. His unequalled library has also been very helpful.

I am also grateful to Sylvia Akar. I remember that it was her and Professor Hannu Juusola's proseminar that pushed me, for the first time, towards the direction where I have been stuck ever since: university and research as a career choice. Sylvia Akar has read and commented on the summary part of this dissertation as well as having edited for publication Study V.

My indebtedness to Kaj Öhrnberg is immense. His lectures in my freshman and sophomore years on early Islam and the history of the Arabs kindled a fire in me which is yet to be extinguished. If there is one person who has affected my views on the early Arab-Islamic culture most, it is Kaj Öhrnberg. His influence can also be seen in the choice of topic for my dissertation, namely, Arabic historical writing. He has read and commented on most of the studies that this dissertation consists of. His vast learning on Arabic historiography and what I would dare to call wisdom have contributed enormously to my work. He has also lent, and in many cases even given, me books that I have looked for.

The Academy of Finland-financed project, Intellectual Heritage of the Ancient Near East, which I have been part of, has proved to be of utmost importance – and not only for paying my salary. The stimulating workshops and symposia in Helsinki, Innsbruck, and elsewhere have been an essential way for me to communicate my ideas and arguments as well as meeting scholars in Europe. In addition to expressing my gratitude to the directors of the project, Professor Dr. Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila and Professor Dr. Robert Rollinger, I thank the other members: Docent Dr. Raija Mattila, Prof. Dr. Erik van Dongen (currently at the University of Halifax), Dr. Saana Svärd, Riikka Tuori, Inka Nokso-Koivisto, and Jouni Harjumäki.

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On a personal note, I want to express my love and gratitude to my wife Viola Strandberg who has always encouraged me. I hope that I have not burdened her too much with boring monologues about early Islam and Arabic historiography. I also thank my family and my friends for being there for me and making my life that much more interesting.



## LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

STUDY I – The Life and Deeds of ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Madā’inī. *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften* 20, forthcoming.

STUDY II – Al-Madā’inī: *Kitāb al-Murdifāt min Quraysh* or *Kitāb Man Qutila ‘anhā Zawjuhā?* (GAS I: 314). *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften* 20, forthcoming.

STUDY III – The Role of al-Madā’inī’s Students in the Transmission of His Material. *Der Islam* 2/2014, forthcoming.

STUDY IV – Al-Madā’inī’s *Kitāb al-Dawla* and the Death of Ibrāhīm al-Imām. In: Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila et al. (eds.), *Intellectual Heritage of the Ancient Near East*. (Alter Orient und Altes Testament) Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, forthcoming.

STUDY V – The Transmission of al-Madā’inī’s Historical Material to al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī: A Comparison and Analysis of Two *Khabars*. *Studia Orientalia* 114, forthcoming

In the printed version of this dissertation, the original studies have been appended to the end. I thank the publishers for permission to reprint the articles in the manuscript or edited form.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The study of the history of the first centuries of Islam is fraught with difficulties. First, we have too many *literary sources*: written works that, although purporting to be based on earlier sources, were written down rather late, in the third/ninth century<sup>1</sup> onwards. There are too many of them in that the meticulous study of all variant narratives of a given historical event is very laborious and time-consuming. Second, we have too few *documentary sources*: official documents, records, letters, and other texts that can be dated to the early centuries, as well as inscriptions, coins, archeological remains, and so on. These simply do not exist in vast quantities, and the paucity of them makes real historical research difficult.

Although we have to take into account the documentary and non-Arabic literary sources, we are stuck, so to speak, with the Arabic literary texts, which form the most important set of sources for the reconstruction of historical events of early Islam. The study, classification, and critical evaluation of the Arabic literary sources are, then, of utmost importance.

My studies have, in the main, been probes into lost works. This is because of my subject: the historian and collector of literary narratives Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qurashī al-Madā’inī (d. ca. 228/842–3). Save for two works, his oeuvre – perhaps as many as over two hundred works – is not extant. However, his material survives in quotations appearing in later works. For this reason, the possibilities and problems in the reconstruction of his material have been my main concern. Special emphasis is put on the question of the mode of transmission of his works as well as smaller units, singular narratives (*khābars*). What concerns al-Madā’inī also concerns the wider context of the second–third/eighth–ninth-century Arabic historical writing and, taking the differences into account, other literary genres such as *ḥadīth* and (at least some) *adab* works. Al-Madā’inī’s case reminds us that the historical texts and narratives were transmitted in a lecture-based environment and *bi-l-ma’nā* (non-verbatim) until the fourth/tenth century.<sup>2</sup> The historian has to bear this in mind when reconstructing earlier historical events on the basis of them. However, I have, in the courses of my studies, come to discard excessive skepticism towards the sources, and believe that we can retrieve the basic form of at least some otherwise lost second–third/eighth–ninth-century

<sup>1</sup> All dates are given according to both the Islamic Hijrī and Common Era dates.

<sup>2</sup> Melchert 2012 notes that transmission of *ḥadīths* by paraphrase was still common in the third/ninth century, whereas in the fourth/tenth century this was frowned upon.

works. These reconstructed sources proffer somewhat reliable evidence for the study of history, at least for the events of the second/eighth century onwards. For the first century of Islam, however, I think that we are still more or less in the dark, and the Arabic sources must be used with great caution and together with the documentary and non-Arabic literary sources.

I have put to use a variety of methods, some of which are generally used in historical and historiographical studies, such as close reading as well as redaction and source criticism. Other methods are more especially employed in the field of Arabic and Islamic studies, for instance, *isnād* analysis. As with the methods, so with the sources: the net has had to be cast wide. As can be seen from the bibliographies of the studies, I have used a wide array of Arabic sources where al-Madā'inī quotations appear. Fortunately, many printed editions include comprehensive indices. Unfortunately, others do not, forcing one to leaf through thousands of pages of text.

The reader should be aware that this dissertation is not written in monograph form; rather, it consists of five articles that have been or will be published elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> In this introductory part, the new scholarly findings are only summarized. The articles (Studies I–V) represent the real new scholarly work with complete references to the original sources. Because each study is an entity of its own, each one of them includes a bibliography at the end. There is also some repetition between the studies because of their article form. I beg the reader's patience with this.

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<sup>3</sup> See List of Original Publications, above. In the printed version of this dissertation, the studies have been reprinted at the end. For copyright reasons, they are omitted from the PDF version.

## 2. EARLY ISLAM AND ARABIC HISTORICAL WRITING IN MODERN SCHOLARSHIP

### 2.1. BEFORE THE 1970S

Modern scholarly study of early Islam and its sources can be said to have begun in the nineteenth century. Its main pioneers were the German-speaking scholars. Because of this long tradition, German is, to this day, the main language of historiographical studies on the Arabic sources.

One of the earliest critical contributions was made by Ignaz Goldziher. By analyzing the texts of the *ḥadīths*, traditions about the Prophet Muḥammad, he concluded that many of them display ideological considerations of the second–third/eighth–ninth centuries.<sup>4</sup> They are, thus, fabrications in the sense that the Prophet never said things that he is purported to have said. Goldziher probed especially the *matns*, the texts, of the *ḥadīths*, whereas traditional Muslim scholarship had concentrated on the *isnāds*, the chains of transmission. Goldziher considered the *isnāds*, by and large, fabrications as well. For this reason, the analysis of the *isnāds* was often frowned upon by following generations of scholars. Recently, however, this has changed, new methods (notably the so-called *isnād-cum-matn* analysis) giving hope that critical scholarly work can be done with the *isnāds*.

Of significance, at the time, was the beginning of the publication of Carl Brockelmann's *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*. The work, at first, consisted of two volumes, but it was supplemented with three additional volumes and the first two were revised.<sup>5</sup> It is a very important early attempt to catalogue whole Arabic literature, historical writing included. Of course, our knowledge has advanced since Brockelmann's day, but there has not been a similar all-encompassing attempt to catalogue Arabic literature. Fuat Sezgin's *Geschichte der arabischen Schriftums* only takes us to the year 430/1000.

Julius Wellhausen, in his *Prolegomena zur ältesten Geschichte des Islams*,<sup>6</sup> tried to classify the early Arabic historians, such as Ibn Ishāq, al-Wāqidī, al-Madā'inī, and Sayf b.

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<sup>4</sup> Goldziher 1890: 88–152 = Goldziher 1971: 89–144.

<sup>5</sup> Brockelmann 1898–1949.

<sup>6</sup> Wellhausen 1899: 3–160.

‘Umar according to their general reliability. He contended that especially Sayf b. ‘Umar’s material was highly dubious. The different historians were then divided into different schools, notably Ḥijāzī and Iraqi.<sup>7</sup> However, Wellhausen’s approach overlooks many things: first, the early historians (or better: *akhbārīs*) often quote many divergent opinions, and second, we do not generally have their works in their original forms.<sup>8</sup> The works can be reconstructed to some extent, but these enterprises are full of pitfalls.<sup>9</sup> Recently, Sayf b. ‘Umar’s reliability has also been vindicated to some extent.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the critical attitude of some scholars towards the sources, the atmosphere was, on the whole, sanguine at least until the 1970s: historical events, even of the very early period, could be studied on the basis of the Arabic historical works, which contained at least a kernel of truth.<sup>11</sup> Sometimes the Arabic historiography was approached all too positively. This can be seen, for example, in the works of William Montgomery Watt on the Prophet.<sup>12</sup>

Further criticism of the Arabic sources, this time in the field of Islamic legal thought, was put forth by Joseph Schacht.<sup>13</sup> His work built on Goldziher’s, but he also tried to analyze the *isnāds* of the *ḥadīths* in a scholarly fashion. He argued that “traditions [which are according to their *isnāds*] from Companions and Successors are earlier than those from the Prophet.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, the *isnāds* have a habit of growing backwards.<sup>15</sup> Schacht’s novel, and one could say revolutionary, invention was the idea of the common link. The common link is the person through which the variant *isnāds* trace the transmission of a given tradition and who is, most likely, the originator of that tradition. Hence, if one has many *isnāds* for the same tradition,<sup>16</sup> one can, with this method, date traditions with some certainty.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This idea was still adhered to by Duri 1983 (the Arabic original was published in 1960).

<sup>8</sup> See Noth & Conrad 1994: 5–22 for a critique of the “theory of schools.”

<sup>9</sup> Wansbrough 1977: 120, 139–140; Conrad 1993; Landau-Tasserion 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Hinds 1979; Landau-Tasserion 1990.

<sup>11</sup> For an example of how the pre-1970s scholars approached the historiographical issues, see Lewis & Holt 1962.

<sup>12</sup> Watt 1953 and 1956.

<sup>13</sup> Schacht 1950. Of historiographical interest are also his other studies, Schacht 1949 and 1953. For (not very convincing) criticism of Schacht, see al-Azami 1985.

<sup>14</sup> Schacht 1950: 3.

<sup>15</sup> Schacht 1950: 165.

<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, this is not usually the case in historical writing, but see Scheiner 2011 for an attempt to analyze conquest of Damascus narratives with the help of the *isnāds*.

<sup>17</sup> Schacht 1950: 171–172; see further Juynboll 1983: 206–217.

The first edition of Franz Rosenthal's *A History of Muslim Historiography* was published in 1952.<sup>18</sup> His study is a veritable *tour de force*, presenting the authors and various genres of medieval Arabic historical writing. The feat is even more astonishing when one remembers that at the time many of the Arabic works were only available in manuscript form, scattered around the world. Rosenthal's critical insight and vast knowledge of the sources is remarkable. He places, in my opinion accurately, the beginnings of Arabic historiography proper to the end of the second/eighth century.<sup>19</sup>

For some scholars, this was too late. Based on her studies on Arabic papyri, Nabia Abbott spoke about texts that sprung from the Umayyad or at least the early 'Abbāsīd era.<sup>20</sup> Fuat Sezgin, in the first part of his magnum opus, *Geschichte des arabischen Schriftums*, tried to outline a method with which to reconstruct early works that were, according to him, more or less definitive texts with final forms. Sezgin also insisted that written transmission (i.e., copying) was used from the start.<sup>21</sup> This allowed him to discuss early individuals that are connected to the historical lore, such as 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr, as if they were authors of books proper.<sup>22</sup>

## 2.2. THE REVISIONIST TURN

The 1970s was a decade when many revisionist studies appeared. Albrecht Noth's *Quellenkritische Studien zu Themen, Formen und Tendenzen frühislamischer Geschichtsüberlieferung* appeared in 1973.<sup>23</sup> In this thought-provoking and important study, Noth probes the themes, literary forms, and *topoi* contained in the early Arabic historical writing. The consequence of his work is that many of the traditions on early Islam must be considered spurious, that is, they are just later literary creations.<sup>24</sup> According to Noth, the themes of dating according to the *hijra* as well as "the caliphate, law and administration,

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<sup>18</sup> I have used the second, revised edition, Rosenthal 1968.

<sup>19</sup> Rosenthal 1968: 68ff.

<sup>20</sup> Abbott 1957.

<sup>21</sup> F. Sezgin 1967: 69.

<sup>22</sup> F. Sezgin 1967: 278–279. For criticism of this view, see Study III, based mostly on Schoeler 2006.

<sup>23</sup> I have used the second edition, 1994, which is also a translation of the work in English. It was written in collaboration with Lawrence Conrad. See also Noth's earlier influential study (1971).

<sup>24</sup> See also Conrad 1988 and 1992.

chronology, and causal links, are all of a pronounced secondary character.”<sup>25</sup> The traditions that contain information on these themes are, then, of a somewhat late date, and the *hijra* dates of the early conquests, for example, are not reliable.

The year 1977 was a year when the Islamicist community quaked. Two profoundly impactful works appeared: John Wansbrough’s *Quranic Studies* and Patricia Crone and Michael Cook’s *Hagarism*. Both works offered radically new interpretations of the first two centuries of Islam. They are difficult and time-consuming reads with idiosyncratic language.<sup>26</sup> What is more, it is typical of both of these revisionist studies that the implications are not explicitly stated.<sup>27</sup>

Crone and Cook argue that the Islamic tradition is late and dubious and there are no “cogent external grounds for accepting it... The only way out of the dilemma is thus to step outside the Islamic tradition altogether and start again.”<sup>28</sup> In this polemical book, they arrive, by using the non-Muslim sources, at an interpretation that is very unfamiliar with the picture emerging from the Muslim sources. Although it has now become clear that the work’s reconstruction of the early history of Islam should be rejected rather than embraced, Crone and Cook offered an important wake-up call for the historians of first–second/seventh–eighth-century Islam, reminding them that the non-Muslim sources must be used in conjunction with the Muslim ones. Also, the documentary evidence (inscriptions, papyri, archeological remains, etc.) is as important as, or in some cases even more important than, the literary evidence, whether Muslim or non-Muslim.

It was already common knowledge that the majority of our sources for early Islamic history are from the third/ninth century or later. John Wansbrough, however, went one step further, arguing that the Qur’ān in its canonical form must also be dated to the third/ninth

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<sup>25</sup> Noth & Conrad 1994: 60.

<sup>26</sup> The revisionist scholars have used this to their advantage, claiming that critics of their theories have not read the studies carefully enough and do not understand all of the arguments. See, for instance, Hawting’s foreword to the 2006 reprint of Wansbrough’s *The Sectarian Milieu*: iii.

<sup>27</sup> For a recent revisionist interpretation of early Islamic history with a similar style, see Hawting 1999. According to his argumentation, the Qur’ānic *mushrikūn* were not idolaters or polytheists but not-strict-enough monotheists (Jews and Christians). Thus, the whole context of the revelation is different, but Hawting only insinuates at the possible implications. Earlier (Hawting 1986), his interpretation of early Islamic history was still more or less along the traditional lines.

<sup>28</sup> Crone & Cook 1977: 3. Crone and Cook’s interpretations are sometimes conjectural and not borne out by the sources. Perhaps the whole work should be interpreted as a polemical study, written somewhat tongue in cheek. The whole of this work should now be compared with Hoyland 1997, which is based on a broader investigation of the non-Muslim sources. Crone and Cook’s later works are, in my opinion, more balanced. See, e.g., Cook 1986.



century. This he does by analyzing the text of the Qurʾān and the early exegetical literature (*tafsīr*). According to Wansbrough, the Qurʾān is a product of long incubation, having many authors and redactors. It also shows signs of oral composition.<sup>29</sup> Although the Qurʾān’s birth history is a murky issue, Wansbrough’s thesis has not found many proponents. In my opinion, more convincing in his work is the examination of the early *tafsīr* works, the implications of which are applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to Arabic historiography as well. Wansbrough contends that the works are not always their putative authors’.<sup>30</sup> The early Arabic works form “a corpus of literature extant only in recensions dating from the beginnings of the third/ninth century.”<sup>31</sup> In his *The Sectarian Milieu*, published a year later, Wansbrough turned his attention to other genres of early Arabic literature, for example *sīra/maghāzī* (accounts on the life of the Prophet)<sup>32</sup> and *ḥadīth*, reaching similar conclusions as with the *tafsīr* works. He dubs what the Arabic sources offer us a “salvation history.”<sup>33</sup>

Patricia Crone and Michael Cook continued their careers with important works. Crone’s *Slaves on Horses* contains a chapter on the historiographical problems.<sup>34</sup> The chapter drives the point clearly home: the Arabic sources are late and tendentious. Nonetheless, some of her arguments can be revised with hindsight. For instance, the claim that “Muslim knowledge of the Muslim past was transmitted orally for about a century and a half”<sup>35</sup> should now be compared with the studies of Gregor Schoeler.<sup>36</sup> In fact, historical narratives were transmitted since Umayyad times in an environment which combined the oral and the written. (This does not, of course, make the Arabic tradition much more trustworthy: narratives on the Prophet or the Arab conquests, for example, are still not contemporaneous with the events.) Also,

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<sup>29</sup> Wansbrough 1977: 43–52. For a convincing refutation of Wansbrough’s arguments, see Donner 1998: 35–63. In this chapter about earlier scholarship, I will, by and large, gloss over the question of the Qurʾān, its birth and composition. This is because the problems in the study of the Qurʾān are so dissimilar from those in the study of the early Arabic historical writing. (The discerning reader will notice that with the previous sentence I expressed my rejection of those views, notably of Wansbrough, Hawting, and others, that place the context of the composition of the Qurʾān to somewhere other than the first/seventh century Hijāz.) For revisionist studies on the Qurʾān, with bearing on early Islam, see Luxenberg 2004 and Ibn Warraq 2008. I have only accessed Günter Lüling’s theories through his articles (1996 and 2000). I do not deem them credible.

<sup>30</sup> Wansbrough 1977: 144.

<sup>31</sup> Wansbrough 1977: 88.

<sup>32</sup> For the terms *sīra* and *maghāzī*, see Hinds 1983.

<sup>33</sup> Wansbrough 1978. On the legacy of Wansbrough, see the articles in Berg 1997.

<sup>34</sup> Crone 1980: 3–17. See also Crone 1987: 203–230.

<sup>35</sup> Crone 1980: 3.

<sup>36</sup> Collected in Schoeler 2006. See also my Study III.

Crone's view that the Arabic historiography is impenetrable and not a product of slow crystallization<sup>37</sup> should be contrasted with the *isnād-cum-matn* studies carried out mostly by German scholars.<sup>38</sup>

The other author of *Hagarism*, Michael Cook, too, carried on notable studies which had a bearing on early Islam. Appearing in 1981, his *Early Muslim Dogma* argued that select early Arabic sources, such as those discussed by Josef van Ess,<sup>39</sup> could be inauthentic and late.<sup>40</sup> In addition to these notions, Cook discusses the problems in the analysis of the *isnāds*.<sup>41</sup> Based on Schacht,<sup>42</sup> Cook talks about the rise and the spread of *isnāds*, two phenomena of forging the *isnāds* which make it difficult, and in some cases impossible, to evaluate or trust the *isnāds*.

Two years later, Cook's book *Muhammad* appeared. It is a concise, yet profound, study on the problems of the Prophet Muḥammad's biography, intended for the wider public. Some of the assertions in the study require comment. We see in the book the revisionist tendency to disavow the possibility of being able to see our sources' sources. Thus, Ibn Ishāq's (d. ca. 151/767) information is, according to Cook, evidently earlier than al-Wāqidī's (d. 207/822).<sup>43</sup> This leads Cook to claim that the knowledge of Muslim authors on the life of the Prophet became more extensive over the decades and centuries. In many cases this is so, but it should not be assumed a priori that later (if they even are that) sources' information is evidently spurious. Granted, al-Wāqidī contains information that is not found in Ibn Ishāq, but is this just an outcome of the fact that the former is later than the latter? One should also note that Ibn Ishāq has material which al-Wāqidī does not. What Cook does not consider is that the evaluation, selection, and redaction of historical narratives on early Islam started at least a generation earlier than Ibn Ishāq.<sup>44</sup> Late works, such as the sixth/twelfth-century Ibn 'Asākir's *Ta'riḫ Madīnat Dimashq*, can contain accounts that are ultimately earlier than Ibn

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<sup>37</sup> Crone 1980: 13–14.

<sup>38</sup> See, for instance, Görke & Schoeler 2008 who show that we can reconstruct the outlines of the material going back to 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 93 or 94/711–713). But, and I state this with emphasis, we cannot go further back in time than that because the *isnād* did not exist much before that. See also below.

<sup>39</sup> Van Ess 1977.

<sup>40</sup> Cook 1981: 153–154.

<sup>41</sup> Cook 1981: 107–116.

<sup>42</sup> Schacht 1950: 166.

<sup>43</sup> Cook 1983: 63–64. One could argue that the opposite is the case since Ibn Ishāq's work is only accessible through later recensions by, e.g., Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833).

<sup>44</sup> As demonstrated already by Noth 1971.

Ishāq or al-Wāqidī. Recent research has shown to be capable of dating traditions to, at least, the early second/eighth century.<sup>45</sup>

Things moved toward a critical, scholarly analysis of the *isnāds* with the work of Juynboll, who was building on Schacht's theories. Especially his *Muslim Tradition* is very important.<sup>46</sup> It is a multifaceted study on the early *ḥadīths* and their transmitters. Here I will deal with Juynboll's theories on the age of the *isnād*. Earlier, Josef Horowitz had contended that the birth of the *isnād* should be placed to the last third of the first century AH.<sup>47</sup> This seems to have been a good approximation. Juynboll could, with more sources at hand, place the birth of the *isnād* to the second *fitna*, that is, 60–73/680–692.<sup>48</sup> What ensues from this is that the *isnād* can (but does not necessarily) contain authentic information from the time of the second *fitna* onwards. On the other hand, earlier information and ascriptions contained in the *isnāds* are likely to be spurious.<sup>49</sup> This is a matter that the scholars who employ the so-called *isnād-cum-matn* analysis often fail to take into account.

A challenging work, *Studies in Early Muslim Jurisprudence* by Norman Calder, appeared in 1993. As many revisionist studies, it rejects the study of the *isnāds*. Instead, it tries to evaluate and date early Arabic works dealing with Islamic law by textual analysis.<sup>50</sup> Calder states that the early works, such as Saḥnūn's *Mudawwana* or Mālik's *Muwaṭṭa'* are not authored texts but "school texts" that grew organically and dates them to approximately a century later than their putative authors.<sup>51</sup> Calder is right to suggest that the second–third/eighth–ninth century Arabic works were fluid and underwent changes during their subsequent transmission. However, Calder's treatment is very impressionistic and has been criticized.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> E.g., Görke 2000. For an earlier (and methodologically cruder) attempt to reconstruct al-Zuhrī's material on the biography of the Prophet, see Duri 1957. It has also been suggested that some of the letters and other documents cited in the Arabic literary sources are authentic: al-Qadi 1992; 2008; 2010.

<sup>46</sup> Juynboll 1983. See also his collected articles, Juynboll 1996.

<sup>47</sup> Horowitz 1917.

<sup>48</sup> Juynboll 1973; Juynboll 1984: 303–311. Schacht (1950: 37) contended that the *isnād* was from the beginning of the second century AH. Crone (1980: 11) gives the middle of the second century. Wansbrough (1977: 179) gives the year 200/815 or a little earlier. However, the approximations of these scholars are not based on much more than conjecture.

<sup>49</sup> Thus we must reject, *pace* Schoeler 2011: 106, for example, the ascription of the *ḥadīth al-ifk* to 'Ā'isha.

<sup>50</sup> On the early history of Islamic law, see, e.g., Melchert 1997; Dutton 2002; Melchert 2003.

<sup>51</sup> Calder 1993: 1–38.

<sup>52</sup> E.g., Burton 1995; Brown 2007: 384–387.

Nevo & Koren, in their ultra-revisionist *Crossroads to Islam*,<sup>53</sup> try to make use only of contemporary material, that is, archeological, epigraphic, numismatic, and non-Arabic literary evidence. They argue that the Arabic conquests were not conquests at all, but rather a slow diffusion of Arab tribesmen to the Middle East, where some of them had been living for centuries.<sup>54</sup> Many of the arguments of the authors are highly speculative, however. The work's greatest shortcoming is that they fail to use the most important work on the non-Arabic sources, namely Hoyland's *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*.<sup>55</sup> Hoyland's work more or less shatters the reconstruction of Nevo & Koren, noting that the non-Arabic sources by and large agree with the Arabic sources, and not only in the cases where the former are dependent on the latter.

Hoyland has collected and surveyed all the non-Arabic, non-Muslim sources, that deal with early Islam. His work is very valuable and useful, not least to those of us who are incapable of reading Syriac, Greek, and so on. Also, Hoyland's chapter on "The Nature of the Sources," dealing, among other things, with the redactional processes of texts, is very useful for both the Arabic and non-Arabic sources.<sup>56</sup>

All revisionist scholars see the rise of Islam in the context of Judaism and Christianity. They also place the birth of Islam outside the Arabian Peninsula. Admittedly, Islam defined itself rather late, and its first, and perhaps also the second, century cannot be reconstructed in detail. However, the non-Muslim sources and documentary evidence corroborate the basic picture of early Islam that can be formulated on the basis of Arabic literary sources, although it also contests some details, especially for the first fifty years or so. In any case, Robinson's words on this matter are, in my opinion, very apt: "One solution to the problem of the Hijaz's cultural insularity is thus to pull Islamic origins entirely out of Arabia and into the Late Antique Fertile Crescent of the eighth and ninth centuries. The second, which is more promising, is to pull Late Antiquity into the seventh century Hijaz."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Nevo & Koren 2003.

<sup>54</sup> Although they do not refer to him, Nevo & Koren may have been influenced by Ignacio Olague, who back in 1969 argued that Spain was never conquered by the Arabs, citing the problematic sources that are far from contemporaneous with the events. The Arabs who came to Spain came not as conquerors but rather as immigrants who migrated because of climatic reasons.

<sup>55</sup> Hoyland 1997.

<sup>56</sup> Hoyland 1997: 32–49.

<sup>57</sup> Robinson 2010: 223.

What has gone almost unnoticed is that many revisionist scholars are, for the lack of a better word, postmodernists.<sup>58</sup> Postmodernists believe that there is no such thing as historical facts. The logical but not always stated conclusion is that the study of history is rendered obsolete. The postmodernist theories in the research of history have grown into a surprisingly large movement given that they rest on a simple misunderstanding by their proponents, namely the failure to distinguish between a historical event and a narrative telling about it; they muddy the waters by claiming that both of these are usually called “facts,” while only the former deserves that name, and serious historians have never been unclear about this.<sup>59</sup> This, I think, diminishes the revisionists’ importance in the study of early Islam. Indeed, the revisionist interpretations that have been made about the outset of Islam are highly hypothetical and, one could say, dubious. Despite this, we must thank the revisionists for reminding us how long a process the development of Islam was and how faulty our sources are. But let us go back in time and see what the German scholarship has achieved meanwhile.

### 2.3. GERMAN SCHOLARSHIP SINCE THE 1960S

The German scholarship, taken as a whole, has been less skeptical about the sources than the Anglo-American, although we have seen that this is not the case with Noth, for example.<sup>60</sup> At times, German and German-speaking scholars have been all too sanguine about the possibilities of retrieving early lost texts and using the Arabic literature as a source for the study of early Islam.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, they have not “given up” on the Arabic sources, in contrast with some of the revisionist scholars, but tried to find new methods with which to deal with the Arabic material.

German scholars have done important historiographical studies on central sources such as Abū l-Faraj’s *Kitāb al-Aghānī*<sup>62</sup> and *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn*,<sup>63</sup> Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīra*,<sup>64</sup> Ibn

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<sup>58</sup> This is borne out, e.g., by Wansbrough 1978: x; 1987.

<sup>59</sup> For thorough and convincing criticism of postmodernist theories in the study of history, see Evans 1997.

<sup>60</sup> The division into German and Anglo-American scholarship is a crude one, but in my opinion warranted to some extent. Of course, there are numerous borderline cases, such as Franz Rosenthal.

<sup>61</sup> Especially F. Sezgin 1967.

<sup>62</sup> Fleischhammer 2004. Fleischhammer completed his dissertation, on which the monograph is based, already in 1965.

<sup>63</sup> Günther 1991.

<sup>64</sup> Al-Samuk 1978.

‘Abdrabbih’s *Kitāb al-‘Iqd al-Farīd*,<sup>65</sup> and al-Haytham b. ‘Adī.<sup>66</sup> This has greatly enriched our knowledge about these texts.

One of the most important inputs has come from Gregor Schoeler, who has convincingly demonstrated that the transmission of knowledge in the early Arab-Islamic world was aural and lecture-based.<sup>67</sup> I have dealt with his lecture-based model in my articles,<sup>68</sup> so it does not need to be repeated here. What I have not commented on at length is the phenomenon of the birth of a work with a final form. Schoeler traces the origin of the Arabic book with a fixed form to the grammarian Sībawayhi (d. ca. 180/796–7), noting, however, that others before him, such as Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ (d. ca. 139/756–7), possibly also composed “conclusively edited” books.<sup>69</sup> However, Sībawayhi’s predecessors’ works are not extant, and in the case of the translator and litterateur Ibn al-Muqaffa‘, it must be remembered that his works, based on Middle Persian sources, influenced mainstream Arabic historiography of the Islamic period only little. Furthermore, the early translations of philosophical works from Greek to Arabic could be cited as evidence for a literary culture in the second/eighth century since the translations circulated mainly in manuscript form. However, they, too, were influential in spheres other than Islamic historical writing. For all we know, al-Madā’inī and his fellow *akhbārīs* were not inspired by Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ or Arabic Aristotle. That at least the Arabic historical works dealing with the Islamic period continued to be devoid of authored, fixed form till the third/ninth century, is in my opinion evident when we proceed from the Arabic sources themselves and are not biased by other *Weltanschauungen*, be they ancient Greek, Persian, or modern Western. For example al-Samuk, while studying Ibn Ishāq, has come to the conclusion that Ibn Ishāq’s work lacked a final form: “When we keep in mind the reproduction of material transmitted from Ibn Ishāq in this way [i.e., in widely divergent quotations in later sources], we come to the conclusion that the exact reconstruction of Ibn Ishāq’s historical material is impossible... [Moreover,] Ibn Ishāq never gave a binding written form to his work.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Werkmeister 1983.

<sup>66</sup> Leder 1991.

<sup>67</sup> Schoeler 2006 and 2009.

<sup>68</sup> Studies III and V; summary below in chapter 3.3.

<sup>69</sup> Schoeler 2006: 72, 142–163.

<sup>70</sup> Al-Samuk 1978: 160. Translation mine. Faizer 1996: 463 criticizes this view. See also Khalidi 1994: 34–39.

However, there have been and are differing views that contend that books proper were already written in the first/seventh or at least the second/eighth century. Nabia Abbott and Fuat Sezgin have already been mentioned. In addition, one could also mention Hinds, who believes that monographs were composed already in the first/seventh century and thereafter transmitted more or less by written means.<sup>71</sup> Of late, Amikam Elad has forcefully, but in my opinion unconvincingly, argued that historical writing began very early.<sup>72</sup> He consistently renders the Arabic word *kitāb* “a book,” carrying, it seems, the modern meaning. In the light of Schoeler’s studies, this cannot be defended.

The most important and useful tool that the German scholarship has given to us is undoubtedly the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis. The most notable developers and proponents of this method have been Gregor Schoeler and Harald Motzki.<sup>73</sup> They rely on the common link theory first promulgated by Schacht and further developed by Juynboll, although Schoeler and Motzki criticize these scholars (in my opinion unwarrantedly) for what they see as excessive skepticism towards the sources.<sup>74</sup> In any case, the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis, I believe, is a great leap forward in the study of Arabic traditions and narratives, allowing one to date them with some precision. It takes us to the late first/seventh century, but not earlier, because the *isnād* did not exist as of yet.<sup>75</sup> The method

begins by analysing and comparing the *asānīd* (chains of transmitters) of a single *ḥadīth* in as many variants as possible in order to discern common transmitters in the different chains, including the earliest one (the common link), who is assumed to be the person that distributed a particular tradition. Then, the textual variants (*mutūn*) of the *ḥadīth* are analysed. This means that the use of words and the structure of the text of each variant of a tradition is compared with others. This process helps determine whether the *aḥādīth* have a common source or have simply been copied from others. Because *aḥādīth* were mostly transmitted aurally (even if supported by written notes), meaning that small mistakes were easily made, the analysis assumes that even slight differences in the textual variants of a single *ḥadīth* indicate actual transmission from one person to another while identical texts should be treated as having been copied from others and their *asānīd* as having been forged. The results of the *asānīd*-analysis are then compared with the outcome of the comparison between the *mutūn*. If the latter support and confirm the former, it may be assumed that the *ḥadīth* in question is not a forged one but has a real history [which does not mean, however, that it stems from the Prophet

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<sup>71</sup> Hinds 1979: 11.

<sup>72</sup> Elad 2002 and 2003.

<sup>73</sup> On the study of the *isnāds* and the common link with this method, see, e.g., Görke 2003a; Motzki 2003; Schoeler 2011; for skeptical views, see, in addition to the studies quoted above in chapter 2.2., Berg 2003.

<sup>74</sup> E.g., Motzki 2010. However, I believe that Motzki’s own approach to the sources is far too optimistic.

<sup>75</sup> I find it problematic that the traditional scholars often ignore this fact; see note 49, above. Of course, it could be argued that ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr’s generation, which was the first to use the *isnād*, remembered their sources and gave them faithfully. I believe, however, that one should preferably take the cautious approach.

–I.L.J.]. The transmitter that all *asānīd* have in common can then be established as the person who distributed (the reconstructed kernel) of that particular *ḥadīth*.<sup>76</sup>

With this method, Görke and Schoeler have studied the corpus of traditions of ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 93 or 94/711–713) concerning the life of the Prophet Muḥammad,<sup>77</sup> and although their endeavor has also been criticized,<sup>78</sup> it is commendable. This corpus of material was collected at most sixty years after the death of the Prophet, which takes us some hundred years earlier in time than the standard extant *sīra* works by Ibn Ishāq/Ibn Hishām, al-Wāqidī, and others. This does not necessarily mean that ‘Urwa’s corpus is reliable however – it is still not contemporary evidence.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, Schoeler and Görke’s, as well as other scholars’, studies in early Arabic historiography and the *ḥadīths* have, in my opinion, refuted the position of the revisionists who argue that the Arabic tradition is impenetrable, being the result of a sudden explosion at the end of the second/eighth century or even later. To make myself clear, I do not draw the conclusion, contrary to Motzki and Schoeler, that we now have reliable source material for the life of the Prophet. The *isnād-cum-matn* studies have mostly given us a sidelight on the history of Arabic historiography, not the history of Islam. What is more, it seems that we cannot reconstruct, for example, contemporary sources from the Umayyad era that would deal with the Umayyads.<sup>80</sup>

#### 2.4. WHITHER HISTORIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES?

Above, a sharp – perhaps all too sharp – division into “optimistic/traditional” and “revisionist” scholars has been made. It has also been noted that the revisionists are often Anglo-American and the traditional scholars German. However, most of the scholarly community lies somewhere in between. Of late, furthermore, one could say that some kind of a consensus is emerging: the revisionist scholars, with some exceptions, have moved towards

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<sup>76</sup> The editors’ introduction to Boekhoff-van der Voort & Versteegh & Wagemakers 2011: 10.

<sup>77</sup> Görke & Schoeler 2008; Schoeler 2011.

<sup>78</sup> Shoemaker 2011.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Görke & Schoeler 2008: 294 (the German original is on p. 280): “In the light of this study, the theses that *isnāds* are generally unreliable and that the Islamic tradition cannot be used as a historical source for the life of Muḥammad – and the even more radical theses that Muḥammad was not a historical figure and that his official biography is only a product of the time it was written – must be considered to be disproven.”

<sup>80</sup> This is borne out by Borrut 2010. The solution seems to lie in turning towards the non-Muslim sources. Here we can note an irritating habit of the early Muslim historians: they rarely deal with their own era at length.



the middle, conceding that the Muslim tradition can be used, at least to some extent, to reconstruct the early history of Islam;<sup>81</sup> and the traditional scholars, who had earlier often used the sources naively, have refined their methods, coming up with, for example, the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis. One could, then, speak of an emerging middle way, and I am rather optimistic about the shape of things to come. What is needed for the study of early Islam is critical scholarly work that is based on the contemporary sources<sup>82</sup> (apart from the period of the life of the Prophet Muḥammad,<sup>83</sup> they *do* exist) but that does not dogmatically cling to Wansbrough and others' theories that the Muslim sources are unusable. At least from the early second/eighth century onwards, and probably earlier, the Arabic literary sources contain genuine vestiges of the past. It is the scholars' task to show how these can be demonstrably identified.

Recently, one of the most formidable projects in the study of early Islam and Arabic historiography has been the Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam series (1992–).<sup>84</sup> In addition to the works mentioned above, one should especially note Donner's study that deals with the question: Why did the Arabs start to write history?<sup>85</sup> It is a many-sided work, treating early Islam and Arabic historiography in depth. Related to this question, lately the influences of Greek and Syriac historiography on early Arabic historical writing have also been explored.<sup>86</sup>

There has also been a growth in good introductions to Arabic and Islamic historiography. The studies of Cahen, Humphreys, Khalidi, and, especially, Robinson ought to be cited in this

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<sup>81</sup> I am thinking, e.g., about Patricia Crone, whose later career shows increasing reliance on the Muslim sources.

<sup>82</sup> Recent new finds include a graffito that mentions the second caliph, 'Umar; see Ghabban 2008. Thus the claim of the revisionists (Nevo & Koren 2003: 132; Popp 2010) that Mu'āwiya was the first ruler of the Arabs has been disproven. It is notable that Wansbrough does not even try to use the documentary sources. His works are, then, studies in literary criticism. Those revisionist scholars who do use them (Crone & Cook 1977, Nevo & Koren 2003), use them haphazardly.

<sup>83</sup> Even for the Prophet Muḥammad's life, the non-Muslim sources are useful and earlier than the Arabic sources. See Hoyland 2000.

<sup>84</sup> Of importance in that series are, for instance, Cameron & Conrad 1992; Noth & Conrad 1994; Hinds 1996; Hoyland 1997; Donner 1998; Lindsay 2001; Horowitz 2002; Görke 2003b; Görke & Schoeler 2008; Kennedy 2008.

<sup>85</sup> Donner 1998. Earlier cursorily treated by Duri 1983: 152–159.

<sup>86</sup> Di Branco 2010.

connection.<sup>87</sup> Donner's recent survey of the historiographical problems and modern research in *The New Cambridge History of Islam* is also recommendable.<sup>88</sup>

Reading the comments on sources by practicing historians is of great interest and will benefit scholars who, like me, dwell on historiographical problems without using the texts as sources for the study of history. Kennedy offers a useful and ample, although rather traditional, survey of the principal sources.<sup>89</sup> Gordon's note is terser but still important.<sup>90</sup> Hawting offers interesting points especially pertaining to the Umayyad era.<sup>91</sup>

Many of the Muslim historians have begun to receive the attention they deserve. There are now, for instance, good studies on al-Ṭabarī<sup>92</sup> and al-Mas'ūdī.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, the different genres of, and related to, historiography have also been the object of studies. This entails the biographical literature<sup>94</sup> and, for example, the continuations (*dhayls*) of historical works.<sup>95</sup> The 'Abbāsīd revolution, the subject of one of my papers,<sup>96</sup> has given rise to a vast scholarly literature, some of it especially discussing the historiographical problems.<sup>97</sup>

Al-Madā'inī, the main subject of this dissertation, has received a considerable amount of scholarly attention.<sup>98</sup> Despite this, no authoritative study of him exists. For a longer discussion on al-Madā'inī, we have only the monograph of Fahd, which is not particularly scholarly.<sup>99</sup> The most important study, however, is that of Rotter, which first discusses al-Madā'inī on a general level and then moves to reconstruct some of his works.<sup>100</sup> The *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition article on al-Madā'inī is also very informative.<sup>101</sup> Save for

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<sup>87</sup> Cahen 1986 and 1990; Humphreys 1991 (of historiographical significance is also Humphreys 1989); Khalidi 1994; Robinson 2003.

<sup>88</sup> Donner 2010.

<sup>89</sup> Kennedy 1986: 350–388.

<sup>90</sup> Gordon 2001: 9–14.

<sup>91</sup> Hawting 1986: 11–18, 120–128.

<sup>92</sup> Rosenthal 1989: 5–164; Shoshan 2004; Kennedy 2008.

<sup>93</sup> Khalidi 1975; Shboul 1979.

<sup>94</sup> Morray 1994; Cooperson 2000; Dickinson 2001; al-Qadi 2006.

<sup>95</sup> Farah 1967.

<sup>96</sup> Study IV.

<sup>97</sup> Lassner 1986; El-Hibri 1999.

<sup>98</sup> Comments on al-Madā'inī can be found in Margoliouth 1930: 85–91; Petersen 1964: 92–99; GAS: I, 314–315; Werkmeister 1983: 397–406; Athamina 1984: 248–256; Günther 1991: 147–148; Leder 1998.

<sup>99</sup> Fahd 1975.

<sup>100</sup> Rotter 1974. See also my Study IV.

<sup>101</sup> U. Sezgin 1986.

these rather brief studies on al-Madā'inī, my articles, which constitute this doctoral dissertation, are the first attempt to furnish al-Madā'inī the *akhbārī* with a full context and to trace the transmission and transformation of his historical material. Specific emphasis is given to the generation after al-Madā'inī. That is, my studies mostly deal with al-Madā'inī's students, not his sources. It is to these scholarly findings that we now turn.

### 3. SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF MY STUDIES

I will present here the most important novel scholarly results of the papers that comprise this dissertation. I will refer to these studies with roman numerals (I–V). For the references, see List of Original Publications, above.

In the notes, I refer to my papers and other scholars' studies. References to the primary sources are kept to a minimum to make the text as compact as possible. For complete documentation, see my original articles.

#### 3.1. THE BIOGRAPHY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY OF AL-MADĀ'INĪ

One of my papers is a complete biography and bibliography of al-Madā'inī.<sup>102</sup> It builds on earlier presentations on his life,<sup>103</sup> but, for the first time, al-Madā'inī's life and works are treated at length.

Al-Madā'inī was born in 135/752–3 or later. Al-Madā'inī's full name, Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh al-Qurashī al-Madā'inī, should be remembered, since we cannot posit that every al-Madā'inī we come across in the sources is our al-Madā'inī. He is often referred to with his *kunya* + *nisba* or his *ism* + *nasab*. The name 'Alī b. Muḥammad is especially ambiguous, since there is another, slightly later, historian by that name, namely 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Nawfalī al-Hāshimī. I also want to emphasize that the *nisba* al-Qurashī is sometimes used for al-Madā'inī.<sup>104</sup> The context – in which work the name appears and which other individuals are given in the *isnād* – usually makes it relatively straightforward, for the discerning reader, to determine when our al-Madā'inī appears in the sources.

The *nisba* al-Qurashī is due to al-Madā'inī's family's *mawlā* status. Our sources state that al-Madā'inī (more precisely, his great-grandfather or great-great-grandfather) was a *mawlā* of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Samura b. Ḥabīb al-Qurashī (d. 50 or 51/670–2). Previous

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<sup>102</sup> Study I.

<sup>103</sup> Especially U. Sezgin 1986.

<sup>104</sup> For instance Ibn Sa'd uses it exclusively.

studies have noted this and comment that it means that al-Madā'inī's forefathers were not Arabs.<sup>105</sup> I try to be more specific. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Samura was an Arab commander who campaigned in Sijistān, Khurāsān, Kābul, and Zābulistān.<sup>106</sup> Hence, one of al-Madā'inī's forefathers was, most likely, a war prisoner of Iranian descent who converted (or was made to convert) to Islam. This is what the term *mawlā* often means.<sup>107</sup> As it happens, al-Madā'inī wrote a work on 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Samura, the patron of one of his forefathers.<sup>108</sup>

Al-Madā'inī was born in al-Baṣra, where he spent a considerable part of his life, receiving his basic education. He also started to teach there since Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, who, as far as we know, never left the town, is mentioned among his students.<sup>109</sup> Al-Madā'inī travelled and sojourned elsewhere, at least in al-Kūfa, al-Madā'in, and Baghdad. His stay in al-Kūfa is probably linked to studies of Mu'tazilite theology.<sup>110</sup> His teacher was a nebulous figure called Mu'ammār ibn/abū al-Ash'ath of whom we know next to nothing. Whether his name should be emended to Mu'ammār b. 'Abbād, as at least one medieval source does, remains to be settled. The emendation is not, however, very credible, even if we read the names without diacritical points.<sup>111</sup> Three of al-Madā'inī's other teachers given in biographical sources such as al-Dhahabī<sup>112</sup> are also Kūfan, including his earliest teacher, 'Awāna b. al-Ḥakam (d. 147/764–5 or later).

Although we have no information of al-Madā'inī's exact activities during his stay in al-Madā'in – whence his *nisba* – the information that he did live there at some point of his life seems credible enough because in one narrative al-Madā'inī himself recounts being there. There are also indications, but no decisive proof, that he visited Damascus and went to Mecca on the pilgrimage.

Later in life, al-Madā'inī settled in Baghdad.<sup>113</sup> We do not know whether this was before or after the so-called fourth *fitna* between the brothers al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn in the years

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<sup>105</sup> Rotter 1974: 104.

<sup>106</sup> Gibb 1960.

<sup>107</sup> Crone 1991: 876.

<sup>108</sup> Study I: Bibliography of al-Madā'inī, *Kitāb 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Samura*. Note also that al-Madā'inī wrote a work called *Kitāb Faṭḥ Kābul wa-Zābulistān*.

<sup>109</sup> Study III: Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ (s.v.).

<sup>110</sup> I refer the reader to Study I: Early Life for a longer discussion.

<sup>111</sup> The words 'Abbād and al-Ash'ath do not resemble each other in the slightest.

<sup>112</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh*: VI, 104.

<sup>113</sup> Study I: See Baghdad and Die.

194–198/810–813. At least we know that he met al-Ma'mūn, who reigned from Baghdad in 204–218/819–833, there.<sup>114</sup> Al-Madā'inī's main patron was the singer, poet, and boon-companion of the caliphs, Iṣḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (d. 235/849–50). Their relationship was amiable, of which one indication is that both transmitted *khbars* from the other.<sup>115</sup> In Baghdad, al-Madā'inī lectured and was able to compose an imposing corpus of works.<sup>116</sup> Although he had some contacts with the 'Abbāsīd court, he did not feel the need to write apologetic accounts for the ruling dynasty. His narrative on the beginnings (*dawla*) of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate displays the 'Abbāsīds at times in a not-so-sympathetic light, especially when recounting how the 'Abbāsīds massacred Umayyads in cold blood or how al-Manṣūr had Abū Salama, Ibn al-Muqaffa', and Abū Muslim, early supporters of the new regime, murdered.<sup>117</sup>

It is not known with certainty when al-Madā'inī died, although he must have been very old. In any case, it is said to have happened in Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī's house in Baghdad. The most reliable dates for his demise are 228/842–3<sup>118</sup> or Dhū l-Qa'da 224/September–October 839,<sup>119</sup> the first because it is from the earliest source (al-Ṭabarī) to give any year of death for al-Madā'inī, the second because it is rather exact.

Al-Madā'inī's precise religious persuasion is hard to discern. He might have been a moderate Shī'ite (understood very broadly). This is based on two facts: first, al-Jāḥiẓ, the first author to comment on al-Madā'inī, calls him Shī'ī, although the note itself is somewhat hard to interpret.<sup>120</sup> Second, the names of his works as well as the quotations from them show interest in Shī'ī matters.<sup>121</sup> However, Shī'ī biographers do not count him as one of their ilk.

Al-Madā'inī was not considered reliable in transmitting *ḥadīths*.<sup>122</sup> The few *ḥadīths* which he purportedly transmitted are classified as dubious (*munkar*). Also, his historical

<sup>114</sup> By way of conjecture, it could be suggested that al-Madā'inī dedicated to al-Ma'mūn a work called *Kitāb al-Ḥawba li-Amīr al-Mu'minīn*. However, the title only appears in one source, al-Ṭūsī's *Fihrist* and is hence dubious. See Study I: The Bibliography of al-Madā'inī, *Kitāb al-Ḥawba li-Amīr al-Mu'minīn*.

<sup>115</sup> Study III: Iṣḥāq b. Ibrāhīm (s.v.).

<sup>116</sup> For a complete list of his works whose titles are known to us from Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* and other works, see Study I: The Bibliography of al-Madā'inī.

<sup>117</sup> For the table of contents of al-Madā'inī's *Kitāb al-Dawla*, see Study IV: Sources for the Reconstruction.

<sup>118</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*: III, 1330.

<sup>119</sup> Al-Rabā'ī, *Ta'rīkh Milād al-'Ulamā' wa-Wafayātihim*: II, 495.

<sup>120</sup> Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*: II, 225.

<sup>121</sup> The possibility of al-Madā'inī's Shī'ī leanings was also noted by Leder 1998: 47.

<sup>122</sup> Study I: Al-Madā'inī as a Scholar.

narratives on the Prophet Muḥammad were mostly passed over. Ibn al-Nadīm’s *Fihrist* lists many works by al-Madā’inī on the life of the Prophet, but these are quoted surprisingly rarely. On the other hand, his works on the Arab conquests (*futūḥ*) and the later history of the caliphate were highly regarded. He was a specialist on the Eastern Islamic world and especially Khurāsān. This is somewhat surprising since, according to our knowledge, al-Madā’inī never visited Khurāsān nor had any special linkage there save for his possible Iranian ancestry. Although he quotes a few Persian phrases here and there,<sup>123</sup> it was, most likely, not his mother tongue. About the Western Islamic world, he wrote/lectured<sup>124</sup> next to nothing.

Ibn al-Nadīm’s *Fihrist* knows the name of over two hundred of al-Madā’inī’s works.<sup>125</sup> Thirty and sundry works of his are mentioned in other sources, some of the titles overlapping with the *Fihrist*, some of them being new. Two *adab* works of his have survived to us: the *Kitāb al-Ta’āzī*, “The Book of Condolences” (extant in part), and another work with the title *Risālat al-Mutazawwijāt min Quraysh*, “Epistle on Qurashī Wives,” which has been edited with the title *Kitāb al-Murdifāt min Quraysh*, “The Qurashī Women Who [Married One Husband] After Another.”<sup>126</sup> I have argued, however, that the work should be identified with the *Kitāb Man Qutila ‘anhā Zawjuhā*, “The Book of [Women] Whose Husbands Were Killed,” a title appearing, too, in the *Fihrist*.<sup>127</sup> This is done on the basis of the analysis of the work’s contents and language. The work deals with twenty-eight important women of early Islam. The majority of them become widows at some point of their lives, some of them many times. The expression *qutila ‘anhā*, “her husband was killed, leaving her widowed,” is repeated twenty times in the course of the work, synonymous phrases even more often. The verbal root *r-d-f* never appears in the work, strengthening my claim that its name was not *Kitāb al-Murdifāt min Quraysh*. Moreover, that work, which is, then, not extant, could as well have dealt with women, often war prisoners, who men put to ride behind them (if read

<sup>123</sup> See, e.g., Study V: The Marwān *Khabar* Translated and Compared.

<sup>124</sup> To anticipate my arguments, it is not always clear whether the existence of al-Madā’inī works that were circulating in manuscript form is due to him or his students. That is, al-Madā’inī mostly disseminated his works through lectures or study circles. Because of this, I am wary of using the word “write” in the connection of al-Madā’inī, preferring “compose,” although it is clear that he did write something, at least the notes on which his lectures were based. See Study III.

<sup>125</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*: I, 101.

<sup>126</sup> Edited by ‘Abd al-Salām Hārūn in his collection *Nawādir al-Makḥḥūṭāt*: I, 63–87.

<sup>127</sup> Study II.

*murdafāt* or *mutaraddifāt*).<sup>128</sup> My study on the *Kitāb Man Qutila ‘anhā Zawjuhā* and the *Kitāb al-Murdifāt min Quraysh*, although brief, is the first attempt to analyze the works, their titles and contents, and to rectify what I consider a wrong title for the extant work.<sup>129</sup>

The bibliography that I present for al-Madā’inī<sup>130</sup> tries to take into account all the available sources. In addition to going through the different editions of the *Fihrist* and the later works quoting it, I have skimmed through a wide variety of different Arabic sources. Mentions of al-Madā’inī’s works have also been sought with the help of digital searches.<sup>131</sup> With the help of these methods, I have been able to construct a list of works that reveals an outstanding scholar who composed works on a bafflingly large number of subjects. To be fair, most of the works were probably not very long.<sup>132</sup> Some of the titles have required emendation and reconstructing since they appear in divergent, sometimes corrupt, forms in different sources. The titles often refer to historical events or individuals, information on which can be found in sources like al-Ṭabarī. This has greatly helped in choosing the correct form of the titles.<sup>133</sup> I have organized my list of al-Madā’inī’s works alphabetically, with comprehensive cross-references to the variant titles. This, I hope, will help future scholars study al-Madā’inī’s material: what subjects he lectured/wrote about and what titles his works carried are rather important matters, for example, in the reconstruction of them (as far as it is possible).

Elsewhere, I have discussed the problems and prospects in reconstructing al-Madā’inī’s *Kitāb al-Dawla*, a work on the ‘Abbāsīd revolution.<sup>134</sup> It is an early and important source on the *dawla*. It was transmitted by a handful of al-Madā’inī’s students and was used by al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī, and Ibn A‘tham. Its general contents can be reconstructed, but not its exact wording, because the passages quoted from it diverge widely in the three sources.

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<sup>128</sup> This is the usual use of the word *murdafāt*. E.g., Jarīr, *Dīwān*: II, 615, 897.

<sup>129</sup> Study II: Description of the Contents of the Work.

<sup>130</sup> Study I: Bibliography of al-Madā’inī.

<sup>131</sup> In my studies, I have especially used the digital database *al-Maktaba al-Shāmila*, which can be accessed at and downloaded from [www.islamport.com](http://www.islamport.com).

<sup>132</sup> Cf. *Kitāb al-Murdifāt min Quraysh/Kitāb Man Qutila ‘anhā Zawjuhā*, which is twenty-one pages long in the modern edition. However, my studies on al-Madā’inī’s lost *Kitāb al-Dawla* suggest that it could have been some one hundred pages long. Al-Madā’inī’s *Kitāb Akhbār al-Khulafā’ al-Kabīr*, “The Great History of the Caliphs,” was probably even longer.

<sup>133</sup> For instance, al-Madā’inī’s work called *Kitāb Ibn al-Jārūd bi-Rūstuqbādh* appears in some sources as *Kitāb al-Jārūd bn Rūstuqbādh*. But since we know from historical texts that one ‘Abdallāh b. al-Jārūd led a minor revolt in Rūstuqbādh, *Kitāb al-Jārūd bn Rūstuqbādh* must be considered corrupt.

<sup>134</sup> Study IV. See also Study I: The Bibliography of al-Madā’inī, *Kitāb al-Dawla* (s.v.).



### 3.2. THE TRANSMISSION OF AL-MADĀ'INĪ'S WORKS: LECTURE-BASED

In two of my studies, I draw attention to the fact that al-Madā'inī disseminated his works mostly through lectures.<sup>135</sup> The *isnāds* and the biographical lexica ascertain the aural<sup>136</sup> mode of transmission, although there is also a piece of evidence that indicates that al-Madā'inī “published” some of his works by taking them to copyists. This surfaces in a comment of al-Jāhiz, who says that *akhbārīs* like al-Madā'inī brought their books to copyists-cum-stationers (*warrāqīn*).<sup>137</sup> However, the comment is derogatory – for instance, al-Jāhiz claims that the persons in question were Shī'īs – and hard to interpret. It could be that al-Jāhiz was just mocking the haphazard and painless way the *akhbārīs* were composing books, a thing that al-Mas'ūdī explicitly mentions when comparing al-Jāhiz and al-Madā'inī, noting that the latter “only transmitted what he heard,” instead of composing more original works like al-Jāhiz.<sup>138</sup> Another indication that al-Madā'inī's works were transmitted not only through lectures but also by written means is the report in which Aḥmad b. Zuhayr is quoted as saying, “Yaḥyā b. Ma'in would say to me more than once, ‘Write from al-Madā'inī his books (*uktub 'an al-Madā'inī kutubahu*).’”<sup>139</sup> However, this could easily be understood as, “Write down al-Madā'inī's works on the basis of his lectures,” or perhaps the story just underscores the significance of al-Madā'inī. *Kitāb* and its plural *kutub* are nebulous terms which can mean anything written as well as, it seems, a “lecture course” based on the teacher's notes and ensuing in students' notebooks containing the contents of the lectures.

It could also be mentioned against my thesis – that by and large, al-Madā'inī transmitted his works to his students by way of *samā'* or *qirā'at/ard* – that nowhere in the corpus is al-Madā'inī depicted as an opponent to writing.<sup>140</sup> In his time, then, writing was an integral part of the scholar's tools. Nonetheless, works did not usually circulate in manuscript form (as

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<sup>135</sup> Studies III and V. Study V was drafted first and some of its arguments are to be treated as preliminary. Study III probes the matter at greater length.

<sup>136</sup> The term is Gregor Schoeler's; see Schoeler 2006 and 2009.

<sup>137</sup> Al-Jāhiz, *Rasā'il*: II, 225. It could be noted, in this connection, that two of al-Madā'inī's transmitters, Banūsa and Muḥammad b. Hārūn (both unidentified), bear the title *al-warrāq*. However, all other students of his are described as being transmitters (*rāwī/rāwīya*), which indicates oral/aural transmission. See Study III: Conclusions.

<sup>138</sup> Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*: V, 104.

<sup>139</sup> Al-Khaṭīb, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, XII, 55.

<sup>140</sup> On the opposition to writing, see especially Cook 1997.

authored and published books); rather, they were disseminated through lectures and existed in notebook form. Aural, lecture-based transmission is explicitly mentioned in five cases in connection with al-Madā' inī:<sup>141</sup>

1) Abū l-Faraj notes that the Umayyad era poets al-Farazdaq and Jarīr were mentioned in the study circle (*ḥalqa*) of al-Madā' inī.<sup>142</sup>

2) Yāqūt says that Aḥmad b. al-Ḥārith read aloud (*asma 'a*) to al-Madā' inī all of the latter books. That is, he transmitted al-Madā' inī's works by means of what is termed *qirā'a/ 'arḍ*, reading them in the presence of his teacher.<sup>143</sup>

3) Al-Balādhurī notes twice in his *isnāds*: *qara 'tu 'alā al-Madā' inī*.<sup>144</sup>

4) An *isnād* in Abū l-Faraj's *Aghānī* reads: 'Umar b. Shabba: *'araḍtu 'alā al-Madā' inī*.<sup>145</sup>

5) Al-Ṭabarī gives an *isnād*: "Abū Zayd [ʿUmar b. Shabba] said: 'I mentioned that [report] to Abū l-Ḥasan [al-Madā' inī], but he rejected it (*ankarahu*).'"<sup>146</sup> This again suggests transmission in a study circle environment.

In the analysis of the *isnāds*, I proceed with the strictest possible premises. That means that I do not think that the expression *ḥaddathanī/-nā* always means transmission based on *samā'*. In fact, I demonstrate that, in some cases, *ḥaddathanī* was used although the transmission was certainly not direct or aural.<sup>147</sup> Also, it can be shown that the words *dhakara* or *qāla* do not always indicate written transmission. In al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rikh*, for example, *dhakara/qāla* can also indicate abbreviation of the *isnād*, "*ḥaddathanī* [al-Ṭabarī's direct source] *ḥaddathanī* [the ultimate, main source]" becoming "*dhakara/qāla* [the main source]." However, *qara 'tu/ 'araḍtu 'alā*, which are very rare expressions, seem to have been used already very early in a technical, precise sense.<sup>148</sup>

<sup>141</sup> That is, if we exclude as insufficient proof the dozens of examples in the Arabic biographical literature where someone is said to have participated in al-Madā' inī's lectures (*sami'a 'an al-Madā' inī*) and the hundreds or thousands of *isnāds* reading *ḥaddathanī/-nā al-Madā' inī*.

<sup>142</sup> Abū l-Faraj, *Aghānī*: VIII, 290.

<sup>143</sup> Yāqūt, *Irshād*: I, 408.

<sup>144</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*: II, 616; (ed. Damascus): VII, 562.

<sup>145</sup> Abū l-Faraj, *Aghānī*: V, 118.

<sup>146</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*: I, 3456.

<sup>147</sup> Study IV: Appendix.

<sup>148</sup> Study III: Introduction.

When it is understood that al-Madā'inī disseminated his works through lectures, it follows that he most likely reworked them during his career. There is not, hence, a single original wording to his works which could be reconstructed. There are also other reasons for the fact that al-Madā'inī's material surfaces in divergent quotations in later works: his transmitter-cum-students probably modified the material in the course of transmission, whatever the mode of it was; and the later authors of "real books" redacted their sources.<sup>149</sup>

Shawkat Toorawa has seen the third/ninth century as a crucial period when the Arab-Islamic civilization moved from the oral and the aural increasingly toward the written.<sup>150</sup> Somewhat related to this was another phenomenon: the rise of a work with a final form. My studies corroborate this. Although some of his contemporaries already composed "real books" that circulated in manuscript form, al-Madā'inī mostly acted in the oral/aural environment. The works of the late second/eighth–early third/ninth-century authors, transmitted through lectures, have not survived as voluminously as later works; one can only speculate how much effect the fact that they did not have a fixed form had on their survival. The decisive turn, it seems, happened a generation later, during the lives of al-Madā'inī's students. This can be seen, for instance, in the career of Ibn Abī Khaythama, who transmitted his *Ta'rīkh* only verbatim and in full and contended that other authors must not quote only passages they considered useful from it. It was a complete, definitive work which should be accepted or discarded as whole. However, Ibn Abī Khaythama still considered *samā'* as the most reliable way of transmitting his work (and maybe it was, since the Arabic script is ultimately rather ambiguous).<sup>151</sup> But it was very laborious to transmit long works like Ibn Abī Khaythama's *Ta'rīkh* by *samā'*. Other students of al-Madā'inī's, for example, al-Balādhurī, wrote multivolume works that were transmitted by written means, that is, copying. And al-Jāhiz, who also seems to have been a student of al-Madā'inī, overtly disliked lecture-based transmission.<sup>152</sup> Some of al-Madā'inī's students, however, such as Khalīfa b. Khayyāt and 'Umar b. Shabba, still transmitted their historical works by lecturing.<sup>153</sup> This is how they are extant today, as manuscripts that ultimately derive from their authors' students' notebooks.

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<sup>149</sup> See Study V: The Marwān *Khabar* Analyzed.

<sup>150</sup> Toorawa 2005. See also section 2.3, above.

<sup>151</sup> Study III: Aḥmad b. Zuhayr (s.v.).

<sup>152</sup> Study III: 'Amr b. Baḥr (s.v.).

<sup>153</sup> Study III: Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, 'Umar b. Shabba (s.v.).

### 3.3. AL-MADĀ'INĪ'S STUDENTS' ROLE IN THE TRANSMISSION OF HIS MATERIAL

Many of my articles deal with the students and transmitters of al-Madā'inī and their importance in the transformation of his works and *khabars*.<sup>154</sup> In most cases, there is one generation or more between al-Madā'inī and the sources extant to us. In some cases, on the other hand, al-Madā'inī's students' works are extant to us, such as Khalīfa b. Khayyāt's *Ta'riḫ*, al-Balādhurī's *Futūḥ* and *Ansāb*, al-Zubayr b. Bakkār's *Muwaffaqiyyāt*, 'Umar b. Shabba's *Ta'riḫ al-Madīna*, and so on.

The most important article, in this respect, is Study III, for which I have gone through an extensive corpus of Arabic biographical sources and in which I present critical and rather comprehensive biographies of al-Madā'inī's students, many of whom were important authorities in their own right. The article takes as its starting point the *isnāds* found in the later sources quoting al-Madā'inī. The *isnāds*, I argue, are reliable, and sometimes even contain information about the mode of transmission, although my analysis of the different expressions of the *isnāds* differs from the earlier scholarship.<sup>155</sup> The information obtained from the analysis of the *isnāds* is then compared with the Arabic biographical lexica, which often, but not always, proffer independent evidence. The Appendix to Study III maps the importance of al-Madā'inī's different students in the transmission of his material.<sup>156</sup>

My studies lead to conclusions that are of importance for the whole of Arabic historical writing of the second–third/eighth–ninth centuries. First of all, the sources sometimes acknowledge that al-Madā'inī's students reworked his works or composed their own works, with similar titles, on the basis of al-Madā'inī's material. The notable example is Aḥmad b. al-Ḥārith, who reworked al-Madā'inī's *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* into a work of his own, possibly called *Kitāb Maghāzī al-Nabī wa-Sarāyāhu wa-Dhikr Azwājihī*.<sup>157</sup> More often, the purported similarity between the two works can only be supposed. To give some examples, the

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<sup>154</sup> Studies III, IV, and V.

<sup>155</sup> Study III: Introduction. See also above, 3.2.

<sup>156</sup> It presents a comprehensive index to the explicitly quoted al-Madā'inī material in the selected works, namely al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb*, al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'riḫ*, al-Azdī's *Ta'riḫ al-Mawṣil*, and Wakī's *Akhbār al-Qudāt*. I have found that even the indices to al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'riḫ* (ed. Leiden) are defective. For this reason, I have leafed through the works in question and added al-Madā'inī quotations missing from the indices of the printed editions.

<sup>157</sup> Study III: Aḥmad b. al-Ḥārith (s.v.).

following students of al-Madā'inī wrote works with identical or similar titles to those of al-Madā'inī:

Aḥmad b. al-Ḥārith: *Kitāb Akhbār Abī l- 'Abbās*; al-Madā'inī: *Kitāb Akhbār al-Saffāh*.

Al-Ḥārith b. Muḥammad: *Kitāb Akhbār al-Khulafā'*; al-Madā'inī: *Kitāb Akhbār al-Khulafā' al-Kabīr*.

Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb: *Kitāb Ta'rīkh al-Khulafā'* and *Kitāb Ummahāt al-Nabī* (identical).

Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ: *Kitāb al-Dawla* (identical).

'Umar b. Shabba: *Kitāb Makka* and *Kitāb al-Madīna* (identical).

Sulaymān b. Ayyūb: *Kitāb Ibn Abī 'Atīq* (identical).

Al-Zubayr b. Bakkār: *Kitāb Nasab Quraysh wa-Akhbārihā* (identical).

Nonetheless, in 'Umar b. Shabba's *Kitāb (Ta'rīkh) al-Madīna* and al-Zubayr b. Bakkār's *Kitāb (Jamharat) Nasab Quraysh wa-Akhbārihā*, which are extant, al-Madā'inī features only rarely as a source. Hence, they cannot be considered, in the least, similar to al-Madā'inī's works with identical titles, or recensions of those works. Furthermore, the titles are general enough so that we cannot suppose that al-Madā'inī influenced his students in the naming of the works. However, denying any influence whatsoever would be excessive since it is clear that al-Madā'inī's students formed a "school" around him, transmitting from al-Madā'inī but also from each other.<sup>158</sup>

The next point I state with emphasis: All al-Madā'inī's works, which are extant or we have details of, are later recensions. My studies on two of al-Madā'inī's works, the *Kitāb al-Murdiḡāt min Quraysh/Man Qūtila 'anhā Zawjuhā* and the *Kitāb al-Dawla* (the former extant but the latter lost)<sup>159</sup> show that both exhibit similar features. Both seem to have been redacted, perhaps drastically, by al-Madā'inī's student-cum-transmitters; indeed, the existence of the works as single units circulating in manuscript form might have been more due to al-Madā'inī's students than al-Madā'inī himself,<sup>160</sup> and in addition to the unstable contents, the titles of both works were fluid. All items in the *Kitāb al-Murdiḡāt min Quraysh/Man Qūtila 'anhā Zawjuhā* are prefixed with the *isnād* Aḥmad b. al-Ḥārith<sup>161</sup> ← al-Madā'inī, indicating Aḥmad b. al-Ḥārith's handiwork throughout. The other work, *Kitāb al-Dawla*, can be

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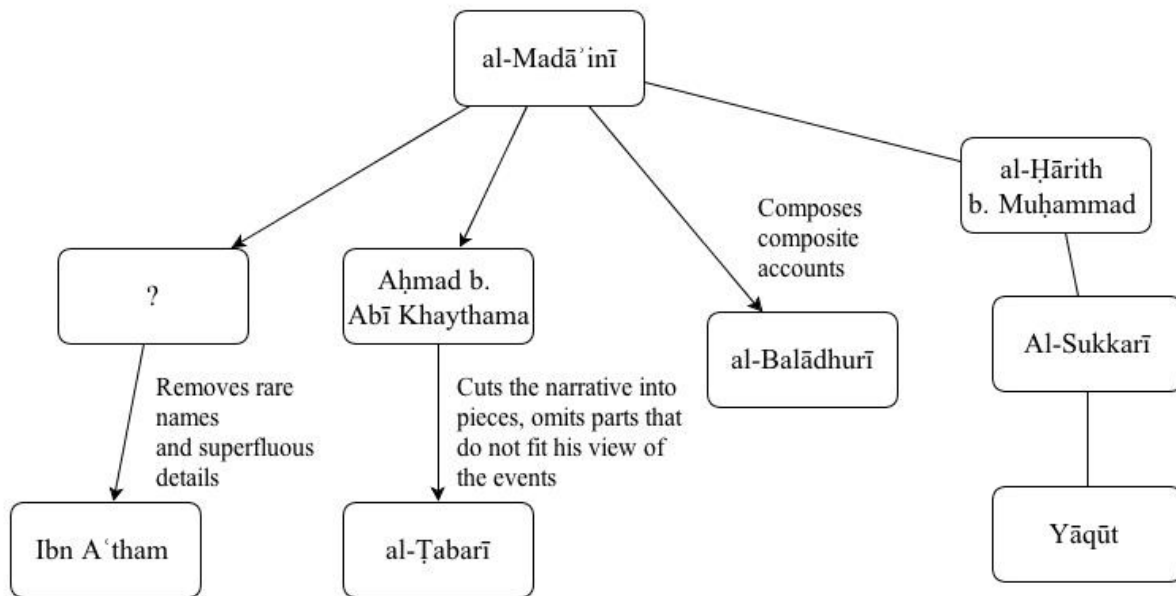
<sup>158</sup> Study III: Conclusions.

<sup>159</sup> Studies II and IV, respectively.

<sup>160</sup> Rotter 1974: 130.

<sup>161</sup> On him, see Study III, s.v.

reconstructed to some extent. We know that it existed at least in the recensions of al-Ḥārith b. Muḥammad b. Abī Usāma and Aḥmad b. Zuhayr, and al-Balādhurī used it as source material for his *Ansāb*.<sup>162</sup>



*The transmission of al-Madā'inī's Kitāb al-Dawla*

Although my studies do not treat al-Madā'inī's other work that is (partly) extant, the *Kitāb al-Ta'āzī*, a quick glance at it shows that almost all the *khbars* are preceded by a long *isnād*: Abū Sahl Maḥmūd b. 'Umar ← Abū Ṭālib 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad ← Abū Muḥammad Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. al-Mutawakkil<sup>163</sup> ← al-Madā'inī.<sup>164</sup> The fact that the *isnāds* are repeated throughout this work and the *Kitāb al-Murdifāt min Quraysh/Man Qutila 'anhā Zawjuhā* is, in my opinion, avowal of the fact that they were redacted, and perhaps compiled in a manuscript form, by al-Madā'inī's students. For all these reasons, I call the early Arabic historical writing “a dynamic, collective process,”<sup>165</sup> with multiple authors or redactors who reworked the material.

I argue that there probably was not and is not such a thing as a book, *kitāb*, by al-Madā'inī pure and simple, notwithstanding the al-Jāḥiẓ quotation that shows early authors

<sup>162</sup> On them, see their entries in Study III. On the *Kitāb al-Dawla*, see Study IV.

<sup>163</sup> On him, see Study III, s.v.

<sup>164</sup> Complete *riwāya* in al-Madā'inī, *Kitāb al-Ta'āzī*: 21. The *isnād* recurs, in abridged form or in full, *passim*.

<sup>165</sup> Study V: Conclusions.

themselves bringing their books to copyists and booksellers (*warrāqīn*). Al-Madā'inī's *kitābs* were *fi riwāyat fulān*, in a recension of one of his students, although they were known and circulated as al-Madā'inī's works and should be argued to include authentic material that is traceable to him. Some of the *kitābs* were probably collected as single works by his students on the basis of his diverse lectures that he did not yet himself envision forming a single unit; but this can be only supposed, not demonstrated. Furthermore, later authors who were not al-Madā'inī's students did not have direct access to al-Madā'inī's works since al-Madā'inī mainly disseminated his material by lecturing. Rather, what al-Ṭabarī and others had at hand were al-Madā'inī's works (and *khābars*) *fi riwāyat fulān*. (However, some writers of definitive works were al-Madā'inī's direct students, for example al-Balādhurī.) One should also try to distinguish between the al-Madā'inī quotations that are from recensions of al-Madā'inī's works and those that are from al-Madā'inī's students' works that included al-Madā'inī's material.<sup>166</sup>

To sum up this section: we do not have access to the original wording of al-Madā'inī's works or *khābars*. We have at least three factors contributing to this: 1) Since al-Madā'inī disseminated his works mostly through lectures, he probably reworked his material over the years. 2) His students transmitted his material in divergent ways. 3) Later authors who quoted al-Madā'inī's works or *khābars* through his students modified their source material.

### 3.4. LATER REDACTORIAL PROCESSES IN THE WRITTEN ENVIRONMENT

The redactorial processes that the later authors applied have been part of my studies, although I have mostly treated al-Madā'inī's *Kitāb al-Dawla* and the three authors using it: al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī, and Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī.<sup>167</sup> All of them reworked their sources,<sup>168</sup>

<sup>166</sup> I have tried to make this distinction in Study III, although, it must be admitted, our knowledge is imperfect since most of al-Madā'inī's works are lost and the bio-bibliographical literature rarely discuss them at length.

<sup>167</sup> Study IV: Sources for the Reconstruction. See also 3.5 and 3.6, below.

<sup>168</sup> Also Judd 2010: 90: "Parallel readings of citations of al-Madā'inī found in al-Ṭabarī's discussion of the fall of the Umayyads in his *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-al-mulūk* and in al-Balādhurī's treatment of these events in his *Ansāb al-ashraf* reveal how the two authors manipulated their sources. Their citations of passages of al-Madā'inī demonstrate that the two compilers made significant alterations to their sources, including deletions and additions to al-Madā'inī's reports, as well as more subtle manipulations. This parallel reading makes their infidelity to their sources, or at least to al-Madā'inī, quite obvious. By altering their sources, the two scholars presented radically different interpretations of the collapse of the Umayyads."

although it is often impossible to say whether the discrepancies are due to the different recensions the authors were using or to their own editorial toil, except in the case of al-Madā'inī's direct students' works.

Al-Balādhurī used al-Madā'inī's *Kitāb al-Dawla* in his *Ansāb* for information on both the last years of the Umayyads and the early 'Abbāsids. I have found that he uses his sources very freely and haphazardly in the part that deals with the 'Abbāsids (volume III of the modern scholarly edition). The *isnāds* are given in an abridged form, if at all, and the singular narrative items make way for “collective *khabars*” (to some modern readers, this might not be such a bad thing). This does not tally, at all, with how he uses his source material when treating the Umayyads (volume IV).<sup>169</sup> There he is rather faithful to his sources, reproducing the *khabars* intact. However, in his *Futūḥ* al-Balādhurī also often abridges his sources and composes collective accounts. The 'Abbāsīd part of his *Ansāb* is also very odd in that it stops with the second 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Manṣūr, but I do not know if it can be supposed that al-Balādhurī composed this section of his work in haste, not being able to finish it.

Al-Ṭabarī gets the credit for being the most faithful to his raw material.<sup>170</sup> This has been the supposition of many earlier Islamicists, and my studies corroborate this. He often quotes his sources accurately, with full *isnāds*, and only rarely combines the *khabars* into collective ones. Al-Ṭabarī is an important source for reconstructing lost works, but the other sources should not be disregarded because it can be shown that al-Ṭabarī “censored” his sources, omitting, for example, the reports about the slaughter of the Umayyads perpetrated by the 'Abbāsids.<sup>171</sup>

Ibn A'tham is rather vague about the handling of his source material, usually employing as the *isnād* what I have called the anonymous *qāla*. He reworks his sources to a large extent and uses collective *khabars* without acknowledging this. That Ibn A'tham approached his sources very freely can be seen in the fact that while al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī reproduce *khabars* from al-Madā'inī's *Kitāb al-Dawla* in a somewhat similar form, Ibn A'tham, although using the same work as a source, often disagrees with the two. That the three authors had the same work at hand can be seen, for example, from the fact that their quotations sometimes agree verbatim. Furthermore, all three authors are probably independent of each

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<sup>169</sup> I have not studied the other parts of the *Ansāb* in depth.

<sup>170</sup> See, however, the provisions in Study V: The Marwān *Khabar* Analyzed.

<sup>171</sup> Study IV: Sources for the Reconstruction.



other, although I have suggested that Ibn A‘tham used al-Balādhurī (probably the *Ansāb*) as a minor source.

In Ibn A‘tham’s *dawla* narrative, we cannot identify with certainty any other source than al-Madā’inī, but because his narrative contains much information not found elsewhere, he must have used other material too. An example of Ibn A‘tham’s editorial spirit is his wont to remove all place and personal names he considered superfluous. On the other hand, Ibn A‘tham also included in his work information from al-Madā’inī’s *Kitāb al-Dawla* that was shunned by other authors.<sup>172</sup>

In addition to discussing how the later authors reworked the texts of the *khbars*, I have discussed how they used the *isnād* and emphasized the problems in analyzing the chains of transmission.<sup>173</sup> The modern scholars should keep these in mind when they, often uncritically and not taking other sources into account, state that a quotation is from al-Madā’inī or some other early *akhbārī*.

### 3.5. HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE ‘ABBĀSID REVOLUTION

Two of my papers deal with the historiography of the ‘Abbāsīd revolution (*dawla*). In the first of these, I discuss the possibilities of reconstructing al-Madā’inī’s work called *Kitāb al-Dawla*, and deal, on the basis of information contained in that work, with Ibrāhīm al-Imām’s murder which forms a veritable whodunit.<sup>174</sup> The second article analyzes two *khbars* that are, similarly, from the said *Kitāb al-Dawla*.<sup>175</sup>

Of the studies that this dissertation consists of, Study IV is the only one to seriously dwell on history proper. It tries to find out what happened in al-Kūfa in early 132/late 749 when the first ‘Abbāsīd caliph, Abū l-‘Abbās, emerged as the caliph. Saleh Said Agha’s recent monograph on the “revolution which toppled the Umayyads”<sup>176</sup> provoked me to research this matter in depth; his work is discussed critically. Taking as my starting point a unique tradition stemming, as I argue, from al-Madā’inī’s *Kitāb al-Dawla*, I compare it to

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<sup>172</sup> Study IV: Ibrāhīm al-Imām’s Death and the *Bay‘a* to Abū l-‘Abbās.

<sup>173</sup> Study III: Introduction; Study IV: Sources for the Reconstruction; Study V: 2.2.

<sup>174</sup> Study IV.

<sup>175</sup> Study V. I do not state in that article that the narratives spring from that work, but I now think so. Cf. the table of contents of the *Kitāb al-Dawla* in Study IV.

<sup>176</sup> Agha 2003.

other narratives on the death of Ibrāhīm al-Imām. My argument that Ibrāhīm al-Imām died later (probably in Ṣafar 132/September–October 749) than is often claimed, leads me to refute the position of Agha, and Crone before him, according to which the revolutionaries, whether ‘Abbāsīd or not, engaged in widespread *shūrā* consultations in order to find the new caliph: in the revolutionaries’ terms *al-riḍā*, a leader with whom everyone is pleased.<sup>177</sup> In my view, the reason for the ‘Abbāsīds’ tardiness in declaring a caliph from their midst was that Ibrāhīm al-Imām was still alive when the ‘Abbāsīds and their Khurāsānī army arrived in al-Kūfa. When the news of his death reached the ‘Abbāsīds they, almost immediately, convened and chose a caliph. The man thus chosen, Abū l-‘Abbās, Ibrāhīm al-Imām’s brother, received the *bay‘a* (pledge of allegiance) most likely in Rabī‘ I 132/October–November 749, just a month after Ibrāhīm al-Imām died and possibly only a week or two after the news of that saddening event reached them.

The *shūrā* did not last many months, nor was it more extensive than the traditional account indicates.<sup>178</sup> What it was, perhaps, was *less* widespread than the Arabic sources suggest, since there is reason to doubt that the stories of Abū Salama al-Khallāl trying to find the caliph from the ilk of the Shī‘a are later ‘Abbāsīd fabrications to justify his murder. Al-Madā‘īnī’s *Kitāb al-Dawla* actually emphasizes Abū Salama’s role in the proclamation of Abū l-‘Abbās as caliph. Thus, the exact opposite to what Agha says seems to be true. At the end of the day, the ‘Abbāsīds were always pulling the strings of the revolution. Their call for *al-riḍā* from the family of the Prophet was a clever way to mask their ultimate purpose which was to bring a caliph from the ‘Abbāsīd family to the throne. The family was not very prevalent among the Hāshimītes. For this reason, they tried to gain support from the broader Shī‘ī and Hāshimī communities and were successful. When the revolution had toppled the Umayyads, the ‘Abbāsīds showed their true colors, to the dismay of other members of the “family of the Prophet,” however understood.

The other two *khābars* that I discuss and that derive from al-Madā‘īnī’s *Kitāb al-Dawla* are the one narrating the killing of Marwān in 132/750 and the one about ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī claiming the caliphate after the death of Abū l-‘Abbās in 136/754. These are discussed from a “redaction-critical” point of view and their value as sources for the reconstruction of history is only implied. Hence, I probe how al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī reworked their sources. It

<sup>177</sup> Crone 1989 and 2001; Agha 2003: xxv–xxvi, 117–135.

<sup>178</sup> Pace Agha 2003: 124.

surfaces that especially al-Balādhurī modified the material from al-Madā'inī's *Kitāb al-Dawla*.<sup>179</sup> This tallies with what I have said, to wit, that al-Balādhurī used his sources in a haphazard fashion in the part of his *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* that deals with the 'Abbāsids.<sup>180</sup>

In addition to al-Madā'inī's *Kitāb al-Dawla*, I discuss other works with similar titles, mapping the works about the 'Abbāsīd revolution.<sup>181</sup> None of the works are extant, but, on the basis of the information on and quotations from them, we observe a vivid interest in the *dawla* in the third/ninth century. Many of the authors of these works are otherwise unknown. As indicated above,<sup>182</sup> Muḥammad b. Šāliḥ, known as Ibn al-Naṭṭāḥ, who was al-Madā'inī's student, wrote a *Kitāb al-Dawla*. Although neither the work nor many quotations are extant, Ibn al-Naṭṭāḥ's *Kitāb al-Dawla* could have been based on al-Madā'inī's work. Apart from al-Madā'inī's *Kitāb al-Dawla*, only that of al-Haytham b. 'Adī seems to have been of any wider circulation.

### 3.6. THE HISTORIAN IBN A'THAM AL-KŪFĪ

I have, in an appendix to one of my articles, contributed to the study of the historian Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, the author of the *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*.<sup>183</sup> My dating of him, which is based on novel data, will be of general interest for the scholarship of Arabic historiography. Of late, there has been a tendency to redate him and his work to the third/ninth century, making him very early indeed.<sup>184</sup> However, I show this to be incorrect and date his death to the early fourth/tenth century – which was the view of many earlier scholars using his work, for example Christian Fraehn, who was the first one to proffer a death date, 314/926–7, for Ibn A'tham. In my note, I also speculate on how Fraehn could have reached this date. Although Conrad calls it “an old Orientalist error,”<sup>185</sup> it is actually more credible than Conrad's own, third/ninth century, dating.

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<sup>179</sup> Study V: The 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī *Khabar* Analysed (not very explicitly stated there).

<sup>180</sup> Study IV: Sources for the Reconstruction.

<sup>181</sup> Study IV: Al-Madā'inī's *Kitāb al-Dawla*.

<sup>182</sup> Section 3.3.

<sup>183</sup> Study IV: Appendix.

<sup>184</sup> Shaban 1971; Conrad 1998; Daniel 2012. It is very unfortunate that now the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, and the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* give what are in my opinion incorrect dates for Ibn A'tham.

<sup>185</sup> Conrad 1998: 314.

I have been able to ascertain the early fourth/tenth dating by using new sources for Ibn A‘tham’s life: al-Sahmī’s *Ta’rīkh Jurjān*,<sup>186</sup> al-Dhahabī’s *Mushtabih*,<sup>187</sup> and Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn’s *Tawḍīh al-Mushtabih*.<sup>188</sup> With the information contained in the *Ta’rīkh Jurjān*, I have been able to furnish him with a complete name: Abū Muḥammad Aḥmad b. A‘tham b. Nadhīr b. al-Hubāb b. Ka‘b b. Ḥabīb al-Azdī al-Kūfī. We also get to know that Ibn A‘tham visited Jurjān and taught Ibn ‘Adī (d. ca. 365/976), the author of the famous *al-Kāmil fī Du‘afā’ al-Rijāl*, there. According to Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn’s *Tawḍīh al-Mushtabih*, Ibn A‘tham featured in Ibn ‘Adī’s work on his teachers called *al-Mu‘jam*, which is not extant.

The dating of Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī is of utmost importance when we evaluate his work, which is often deemed to be full of legends and hearsay. The early dating, some scholars think, would make his work more worthy. If the work is early, it could also have served as a source for later authors, such as al-Balādhurī (in fact, the reverse is the case). Although I vouch for the fourth/century date of the *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, I still emphasize the value of the unique traditions contained in that work, noting, however, that Ibn A‘tham heavily reworked his source material.<sup>189</sup>

A thorough study on Ibn A‘tham’s *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* is still needed. Passages translated verbatim from this work in Bal‘amī’s *Tārīkh-Nāmah* are an interesting phenomenon that requires further explanation. Also, the partial Persian translation of the *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* by al-Mustawfī needs to be studied and compared systematically with the Arabic. The different Arabic manuscripts and recensions of Ibn A‘tham’s *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* await meticulous study – including the manuscript that is mistakenly ascribed to al-Wāqidī.<sup>190</sup> It is also left for future research to decide how Ibn A‘tham’s Shī‘ism, as well as that of the continuator of his work, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Balawī, affected the composition.<sup>191</sup>

<sup>186</sup> Al-Sahmī, *Ta’rīkh Jurjān* (ed. Hyderabad): 41–42 = (ed. Beirut): 23.

<sup>187</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Mushtabih*: 522.

<sup>188</sup> Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn, *Tawḍīh al-Mushtabih*: IX, 53.

<sup>189</sup> Study IV.

<sup>190</sup> Muranyi 1978.

<sup>191</sup> Conrad 1998 contends that the work was continued by later Sunnī scholars, but this is mere conjecture. As I argue, the *isnāds* show us that the continuator was the said al-Balawī; see Study IV: Appendix.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

To conclude with a summary of a summary, *jāmi‘ al-jāmi‘*, so to speak, the following are the main implications of my studies:

- Al-Madā’inī travelled, studied, and taught around Iraq, al-Baṣra and Baghdad being the main cities he lived in.
- Al-Madā’inī’s career should be interpreted in the light of the wider context of the historical study and writing of the time. Also, the *adab* and *ḥadīth* fields of scholarship present some interesting parallels. The second–third/eighth–ninth centuries, when al-Madā’inī lived, were a time when the Arab-Islamic civilization relied, to a large extent, on the oral and the aural.
- Ibn al-Nadīm’s *Fihrist* knows the name of over two hundred works of al-Madā’inī; other authors quote, by name, some thirty titles of his; today, only two of his works are extant.
- Al-Madā’inī disseminated his works primarily through lectures. Hence, the significance of his students in the transmission and transformation of his material is palpable.
- Al-Madā’inī’s students formed a school around their teacher. During their lifetime, two somewhat interrelated phenomena took place: the Arab-Islamic culture became increasingly writerly, and the idea of a work with a final form became prevalent.
- Later authors, such as al-Ṭabarī and Ibn A‘tham, reworked their al-Madā’inī material, which they received in a recension of some of al-Madā’inī’s students.
- Al-Madā’inī’s *Kitāb al-Dawla*, the main source for the reconstruction of which is Ibn A‘tham’s *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, is an early, significant source for the history of the ‘Abbāsīd revolution.
- Ibn A‘tham is a late third/ninth–early fourth/tenth century author. This dating, which is one hundred years later than that of Shaban and Conrad, does not necessarily reduce the value of his *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* as a historical source.

## APPENDIX: GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS

*akhbārī* – “Collector of historical material (*akhbār*); historian.”

*‘an* – “On the authority of,” a term appearing in the *isnāds*.

*‘arḍ* – “Presenting,” a mode of transmission of texts, synonymous with *qirā’a* in the early period. The student presented (*‘arḍ*) or read aloud (*qirā’a*) in front of the teacher a text that he had received from the teacher, usually through lectures (*samā’*).

*dawla* – Literally “turn,” this term usually means, in the early period, the ‘Abbāsīd revolution (747–750 CE).

*fulān* – “So-and-so, someone.”

*ḥadīth*, pl. *aḥādīth* – “Report; narrative; story.” Often *ḥadīth* means a narrative about the Prophet Muḥammad, but it can also be synonymous with *khābar*.

*ism* – One’s given name.

*isnād*, pl. *asānīd* – “Chain of transmission,” indicating from whom an authority has received the information. Sometimes different modes of transmissions can also be perceived from the expressions used in the *isnād*.

*khābar*, pl. *akhbār* – “Piece of information; report; narrative.” A general term for a single unit of narrative, whether historical or literary. A *khābar* can sometimes, albeit rarely, mean a *ḥadīth*, tradition of the Prophet.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Juynboll 1984: 265, n. 3.

*kitāb* – Often rendered “book,” *kitāb* actually means anything written, and can be used for a wide array of things, such as letters, notes, notebooks, as well as books proper.

*kitāba* – “Writing,” indicating written mode of transmission or copying.

*kunya* – The part of the Arabic name which indicates the name of one’s son (imagined or real), e.g. Abū Muḥammad, “the father of Muḥammad.” The *kunya*, when used to address someone, has an intimate tone.

*mawlā*, *mawālī* – A non-Arab convert to Islam, usually a prisoner-of-war. The term was mainly used before the coming of the ‘Abbāsids (132/750).

*nasab* – The part of the Arabic name spelling out one’s father (and father’s father etc.).

*nisba* – The part of the Arabic name which indicates, among other things, one’s tribe or place of birth.

*qirā’a* – “Reading,” see ‘*arḍ*.

*rasm* – The consonantal ductus of the Arabic script.

*rāwī/rāwīya* – “Transmitter,” either of poetry or prose texts.

*riwāya* – “Transmission; recension; narrative.”

*samā’* – Literally “hearing,” it is used in the sense of “lecture; aural transmission.” It was the main mode of transmitting texts in the early centuries of Arab-Islamic civilization.

*tarjama* – A biographical entry in the biographical lexica.

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