MUSLIM WESTERN SCHOLARSHIP OF ḤADĪTH AND WESTERN SCHOLAR
REACTION: A Study on Fuat Sezgin’s Approach to Ḥadīth Scholarship

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Abstract

The following article is analyzing both Fuat Sezgin’s approach to Western scholarship of Ḥadīth and the views of some non-Muslim scholars, which give either support or criticism against him. Some questions have been discussed; to what extent is Fuat Sezgin influenced by Western methods of Ḥadīth research and to what extent does he argue against the methods of non-Muslims? To what extent does he persist on arguing the reliability of Ḥadīth literature? To what extent does he base his argument on Muslim Ḥadīth literature? To what extent does he digress from the classical methodology of Ḥadīth research?

The following pages show that Sezgin has been familiar with non-Muslim scholarship of Ḥadīth research. Yet instead of following Western scholars’ approaches and premises on the early Ḥadīth literature, he severely criticized them and decided to follow the mainstream of Muslim scholars’ belief in the historicity of Ḥadīth transmission and collection. Fuat Sezgin focused his criticism on Goldziher’s historical claims. If one classifies Western discourse of Ḥadīth literature, Sezgin and Azmi can be located in the same line for their similar approach and way of handling the early literature of Islam. Both Sezgin and Azmi have been involved in the discussion on the reliability of early Islamic transmission. However, in contrast to Muslim scholars, who generally believe that the process of Ḥadīth transmission
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during the first century was mainly oral, they insist on arguing that many ḥadiths were, in fact, recorded in writing from the earliest times.

Keywords: ḥadīth, isnād, authenticity, transmission, literature, collection

A. Introduction

It is self evident that ḥadīth is an unavoidable source of Islamic authority and has been used as the principal source of Islamic thought from its very genesis. However, since the 19th century, questions about the authenticity, originality, authorship, provenance and the correctness of ḥadīth have appeared, and they have become of central importance to the study of Islam, especially to those concerned with Islamic law. These questions arose from Western scholars and Muslim scholars alike. Gustav Weil, for example, suggested that a European critic is required to reject at least half of al-Bukhārī’s Ṣaḥīḥ. The first serious challenges to the authenticity of Muslim ḥadīth literature by Western scholars began with Alois Sprenger, who expressed his skepticism about the reliability of ḥadīth as a historical source. This attitude was followed by William Muir, who also maintained a critical attitude toward the authenticity of ḥadīth. European scholarship of ḥadīth culminated in the work of Ignaz Goldziher, whose work was unquestionably the most important critique of ḥadīth in the nineteenth-century. Goldziher was the first scholar to subject the ḥadīth to a systematic historical and critical study. Instead of considering ḥadiths as reliable sources for the rise of Islam, he regard them as invaluable source for the beliefs, conflicts and concerns of the later generations of Muslims and put the ḥadīths into circulation.

Goldziher’s skepticism was adopted by Leone Caetani and Henri Lammens who were of the opinion that almost all the traditions about the Prophet’s life were apocryphal.5 Other scholars who refused hadīth as authentic materials for the historical reconstruction of the time of the Prophet and the first Islamic century are John Wansbrough,6 Patricia Crone and Michael Cook.7

Although in Western scholarship Goldziher’s Muhammedanische Studien was considered to be the first milestone among Western efforts to depict the history of hadīth, he met with criticism from Muslim scholars.8 In western scholarship, Goldziher’s book, published in 1890, was not followed by similar studies and remained unrevised in any significant way until Joseph Schacht’s Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence appeared in 1950. Schacht dealt especially with legal tradition and its development.9 His thesis that isnāds have a tendency to grow backwards and his “common link theory” have influenced the Western scholars who came after him. Like Goldziher, he assumed that few if any hadīths originated with the Prophet. He believed, however, that it was possible by careful study to arrive at a rough estimate of when a particular hadīth was put into circulation. Schacht’s approach has been adopted by J. van Ess10 and has been revived in a large scale by G. H. A. Juynboll, even though he differs from Schacht in

several significant points.\textsuperscript{11} Both Schacht and Juynboll are of the opinion that the common link is the fabricator of \textit{hadith}.\textsuperscript{12} Schacht’s premises and methods of investigation as well as Juynboll’s method of dating a \textit{hadith} by analyzing only the \textit{isnāds} have been subjected to criticism.\textsuperscript{13} Perhaps the most significant challenges to their conclusions may be found in Harald Motzki’s works.\textsuperscript{14} Unlike Schacht and Juynboll, Motzki is inclined to regard the common links not as the fabricators of \textit{hadiths} as Schacht and Juynboll do, but rather as the first systematic collectors of traditions who transmitted the \textit{hadiths} in regular classes of students out of which an institutionalized system of learning developed.\textsuperscript{15} Opposition to Schacht’s and Goldziher’s assumptions about the \textit{hadiths} may also be found in the works of M. Sibā’i, N. Abbott, M. M. Azami and F. Sezgin. They argue for an early and continuous practice of writing down \textit{hadith} in Islam. In their opinion the Companions of the Prophet kept written records of \textit{hadiths}, and most of these \textit{hadiths} were transmitted in written form until the time they were compiled in the canonical collections.\textsuperscript{16} Motzki and Schoeler have also pointed out,}

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what Schacht and Juynboll denied, that some hadiths can be dated to the first century. However, whether or not they can be ascribed to the Prophet, they could not prove.17

In the following pages, Fuat Sezgin’s approach to Western scholarship of hadith is analyzed. Similarly, the views of some non-Muslim scholars, which give either support or criticism against them will also be touched upon. To what extent is Fuat Sezgin influenced by Western methods of hadith research and to what extent does he argue against the methods of non-Muslims? To what extent does he persist on arguing the reliability of hadith literature? To what extent does he base his argument on Muslim hadith literature? To what extent does he digress from the classical methodology of hadith research?

The following pages will show that Sezgin has been familiar with non-Muslim scholarship of hadith research. Yet instead of following Western scholars’ approaches and premises on the early hadith literature, he severely criticized them and decided to follow the main stream of Muslim scholars’ belief in the historicity of hadith transmission and collection. Like Azmi who severely attacked Joseph Schacht’s methods and conclusions on early hadith literature, Fuat Sezgin focused his criticism on Goldziher’s historical claims. If one classifies Western discourse of hadith literature, Sezgin and Azmi can be located in the same line for their similar approach and way of handling the early literature of Islam. Both Sezgin and Azmi have been involved in the discussion on the reliability of early Islamic transmission. However, in contrast to Muslim scholars, who generally believe that the process of hadith transmission during the first century was mainly oral,18 they insist

on arguing that many hadīths were, in fact, recorded in writing from the earliest times.

B. Fuat Sezgin’s Core Ideas

The core of Sezgin’s historical reconstruction of early hadīth literature is that the classical hadīth collections, which were compiled in the third century, are the result of a reliable process of transmission or the continuation of written activity that had already been practiced by the saḥāba since the time of the Prophet. It is here that Sezgin’s point of view starts to differ from that of Goldziher. Goldziher does not reject the possibility that the Companions tried to preserve the Prophet’s words and deeds in the so-called saḥīfas, and that the use of ḵiṣāṣ began when these Companions passed on to the next generation of Muslim what they had heard and recorded. Goldziher maintained, however, the possibility that those saḥīfas might be “the inventions of later generations used to provide justification for later saḥīfas against opposition hostile to the writing down of hadīth”, and that the invention of hadīth also began very early. Having made several observations on hadīth materials, Goldziher came to the conclusion that the hadīth reflects later development and cannot be used as a historical documentation for the time of the Prophet. To undermine Goldziher’s claims, Sezgin cited reports from some early Muslim sources, such as ‘Ilal of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Ṭabaqāt of Ibn Sa’d (d. 230/844-5), Tārikh of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), Taqdimah of Ibn Ābī Ḥātim (d. 327/938) Ṭaqyīd al-ʿilm of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 403/1012-3), Jāmiʿ bayān al-ʿilm of Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (463/1070-1), al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣīl of al-Rāmahurmūzī (d. 360/971) and others. However, Sezgin neither discusses the historicity of the reports nor shows any interest in the fact that his sources are contemporaneous with the classical hadīth collections.

The evolution of *ḥadīth* literature, according to Fuat Sezgin, took place in the following phases:

1) *Kitaḥat al-ḥadīth*, the writing down of the *ḥadīth* in the time of the *ṣaḥāba* (Companions) and of the ‘early ṭabi‘ūn (Successors) in the so-called *ṣaḥīfah*.

2) *Tadwīn al-ḥadīth*, collating the scattered records of *ḥadīth* in the last quarter of the first, and in the first quarter of the second century.

3) *Taṣnīf al-ḥadīth*, the arrangement of *ḥadīths* by content in subdivided chapter from 125 A.H. onwards. Towards the end of the second century, *ḥadīths* were arranged according to the names of Companions, in books called *kitāb al-munānad*. In the third century the systematic books were edited and written. In the modern literature these are called the canonical collections. This view of the evolution of *ḥadīth* literature, Sezgin continues, is based on information on continuous written transmission since very early times, and on the examination of such materials. This can be seen from the fact that when the authors (*muḥaddithūn*) of that time passed their works on in oral form, they took over written record from each other.

Basing his argument on Muslim literature, Sezgin consistently makes his historical assessment about the collection of *ḥadīth*. Similar to what Muslim generally believed, Sezgin says that some Umayyad rulers, amongst whom is the famous ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (d. 97/717-101/720), ordered that materials of *ḥadīth* be collected in an official manner, fearing that (some of) it might be lost. The ones who undertook the collection at ‘Umar’s behest were Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ḥazm (d. 120/737) and Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/}

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24 Sezgin, *Geschichte*, p. 55
742). “annal man dawnwana‘l-hadith al-Zuhri”. Sezgin again goes on saying that the information about the first writings on various fields, about the evolution of isnāds and about the scrutiny of the chains of transmission of hadith convince us that literary activity in the time of al-Zuhri was already mature, and that al-Zuhri played an important role in compiling the hadith.27

Sezgin regards the taṣnīf al-hadith (the arrangement of hadith by content), which began in 125 A.H. as a further development of the monographic descriptions of Umayyad time.28 To corroborate his notion, Sezgin mentions as the oldest musannifūn such names as Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767)29 in Mekka, Ma‘mar b. Rāshid (153/770) in Yaman, Hishām b. Ḥassān (d. 148/765), Sa‘īd b. ʿAbī ‘Aruba in Baṣra and Ṣufyān al-Thawrī in Kuфа. He also mentions al-Jāmi‘ of Ma‘mar b. Rāshid (d. 153/770), K. al-Manāṣik of Qaṭāda and al-Jāmi‘ of Ṣa‘īd b. Ḥabīb al-Baṣrī (d. 160/776) as the oldest preserved works of this period.

Referring to classical Muslim hadith critics, Sezgin lists eight methods in which transmission of hadith took place: Samā‘, Qira‘a, Ḥājja, Munawala, Kitāba or Mukātaba, i‘lām al-rāwī, Wāsiyya and Wija‘a.30 Sezgin believes that only the first two methods (samā‘ and qira‘a) involved committing to memory, whereas the others, and often in practice even samā‘ and qira‘a, involved written materials.31 Sezgin further claims that these methods of transmission were applied from the very early days of Islam, and with the help of preserved materials it can, according to him, be established, that from the beginning an exclusively written basis for the transmission was involved and that the names of the authors are contained in the isnāds.32 To corroborate his view about the customary practice of kitāba (writing), besides samā‘

27 Sezgin, Geschichte, p. 57.
28 Sezgin, Geschichte, 58.
29 For a discussion on Ibn Jurayj, see the following pages.
30 See the foregoing discussion.
32 Fuat Sezgin, Geschichte, p. 60.
and qira‘a, in early transmission of ḥadīth, Sezgin picks up some clues from books, such as: Isāba of Ibn Ḥajar, Ḥal of Tirmidhī, Tabdhīb of Ibn Ḥajar, Ṭabaqāt of Ibn Sa‘d, Jami‘ bayān al-īlm of Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr. For example, a few Companions are reported to have handed down the letters of the Prophet. ‘Amr b. Ḥazm b. Zayd is reported to have transmitted the letters written by the Prophet to him about farā‘id, zakāt, and diyāt, which, according to Sezgin, were later included in ḥadīth collections.33 ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Ukaym al-Juhaṇī, later transmitted the letter of the Prophet to his tribe, the Juhaṇya.34 The Successor, Bāṣḥir b. Nahīk asked Abū Hurayra whether or not he was allowed to hand down the writings under his own name, which he had copied from the latter. Abū Hurayra agreed.35 Sezgin quotes also some sources suggesting that the activity of writing took place in every generation.36

Sezgin’s views that ḥadīth collection is the result of continuous written activity did not, however, convince his Western counterparts. Juynboll, reiterating Goldziher’s claim, says that a manuscript or a papyrus could have been forged by later authorities because there was a large fabrication of isnaḍs.37 Juynboll may be correct in his view that Sezgin does not seem to have any qualms about the genuineness of the texts he presents.38 Juynboll, however, does not go through the texts, which Sezgin presented. Juynboll criticism of Sezgin’s claim is too general. To most Western scholars, Sezgin’s historical reconstruction is exclusively based on sources, whose authenticity is debatable or even doubtful. His arguments, therefore, are circular.39

Another core of Sezgin’s view is that the isnaḍ indicates written texts, and on no account indicates purely oral transmission. The isnaḍ mentions the author and the authorized transmitters of books.40 Sezgin

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34 Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ḥal, I, p. 52; Ibn Ḥajar, Tabdhīb V, p. 323.
36 He mentions some names involved in the activity of writing in every generation, see Geschichte, pp. 63-75.
37 Juynboll, Muslim tradition, p. 4.
38 Ibid.
39 Herbert Berg, The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam, pp. 22-23.
40 Geschichte, p. 79.
simply believes what is stated in the isnād. This leads him to receive unquestionably the sources he quotes, and he simply ascribes actual texts to the names attached to them in isnāds without having any doubts as to the authenticity of isnāds.

Sezgin reiterates that a comparison between oldest preserved ḥadīth books with later ḥadīth collections, proves not only that isnād indicates selected from excerpts, but above all establishes that the arrangement of materials and chapter division of later compilations go back to quoted older books.41 To put it in another way, isnād, by virtue of the mutual relation of sources, brings us back to the time of the names quoted.

To establish the mutual relation of sources, Sezgin quotes al-Bukhārī as example: “Ḥaddathanā ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad qāla ḥaddathanā ‘Abd Razzaq qāla akhbaranā Ma’mar ‘an Hammām ‘an Abī Hurayra…”42 In this isnād every name is well known. They are writers of books, except Abū Hurayra, but he has written documents as well. No book is preserved from ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Musnadī43 (d. 229/843), but we have books of Abd Razzaq (d. 211/826) and of Ma’mar b. Rashīd (d. 155/771) and of Hammām b. Munabbih (d. 130/747). All ḥadīths with this isnād can be found in Abd Razzaq’s Muṣannaf and in Hammām’s Šahīfa, and partly in Ma’mar’s Ja’mi”44. It is probable, Sezgin continues, that al-Bukhārī made use directly of Hammām’s Šahīfa transmitted by the people named in the isnād or that he used the book of his master (‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad), who directly borrowed the text from the šahīfa or from ‘Abd Razzaq’s book, whose direct or indirect sources are the šahīfa of Hammām.45 This phenomenon, that ḥadīths, and other traditions from old sources, appear in later works with long isnāds becoming longer and longer were known to classical Islamic scholars already. Because the time gap between them and the

41 Geschichte, p. 80.
42 Sezgin, Geschichte, p. 81.
43 Sezgin mentions that al-Bukhārī has quoted his books in 197 places. Sezgin, Geschichte, p. 81.
44 Sezgin, Geschichte, p. 81.
sources was not so big, they knew the sources, and they could identify books by recourse to the names in *isnāds.* Therefore, they gave us only rarely and rather incidentally clues regarding older sources. Sezgin argues, therefore, that we have to find a way to recognize the dependence of sources through the *isnāds* in the books. We can then detect in later books fragments of early Islamic literature that have been lost. Thus, although early manuscripts have scarcely survived, Sezgin argues that early texts can be reconstructed from the later compilations that must have used them as written sources. With regard to the reliability of the *isnād*, Sezgin states that in order to be able to establish the first sources of Islamic literature, one has, first of all, to abandon the old prejudice that it was only in the second and the third century that the *isnād* came into being and the names of transmitters are invented. It is by this generalization that Sezgin failed to convince his Western counterparts.

C. Reaction to Sezgin’s Views

Sezgin’s theses on the continuous practice of writing and the reliability of *isnād* received both criticism and support from both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. The support from Muslim scholars can be found in the works of M. Z. Siddiqi, Muḥammad Ḥanīḍullah, Mušṭafā al-Sibā‘ī, Muḥammad ‘Ajjaj al-Khaṭīb, M. Mustafa Azmi, and others.

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46. Geschichte, p. 82.
47. Ibid., p. 83.
49. For the discussion on a Muslim critic see the discussion on Abū Rayya below.
and ‘Abd al-‘Azīm Ibrāhīm Muḥammad al-Muṭ’īnī.\(^{\text{55}}\) Their methods and sources are similar to that of Sezgin.\(^{\text{56}}\) Ḥanīdullah has published the Ṣabīfa of Ḥammām ibn Munabbih, supposedly the oldest preserved hadīth work. This is not an autograph, however, and therefore, to some Western scholars, especially to those who adhere to Schacht’s “common link” concept,\(^{\text{57}}\) there is no guarantee that the real author is Ḥammām ibn Munabbih.\(^{\text{58}}\) For the sympathizers of Schacht, the text might have been fabricated by ‘Abd Razzaq (d. 211/827) or Ma’mar (d. 153/770) who appear in the isnād before Ḥammām,\(^{\text{59}}\) for the common link of all preserved text is ‘Abd Razzaq.\(^{\text{60}}\) This claim does not seem convincing, because it is based more on hypothetical speculation than on an analytical study of both matn and isnād. It may be difficult to prove that ‘Abd Razzaq, the common link, has really received the information from his informants, but this fact does not justify the claim that all the texts were invented by ‘Abd Razzaq. Until the contrary is proven, the possibility that ‘Abd Razzaq’s claim to have received a text from a given informant is true cannot be excluded \textit{a priori}.

A non-Muslim scholar, who gives support to Sezgin’s methods and conclusions is Nabia Abbott. Her approach to hadīth is unique in that she is a non-Muslim scholar, but her methodology and conclusion is very similar to that of the Muslim scholars. Like Sezgin, Abbott argues for the existence of literary activities among Arabs even in pre-Islamic times, and for the continuous practice of writing hadīth since the time of the Prophet.\(^{\text{61}}\) Abbott edited a small collection of hadīths from a series of papyrus fragments, some of which she ascribed to al-

\(^{\text{55}}\) Al-Shubhat al-thalāthūn, (Cairo, 1999).


\(^{\text{57}}\) See below the discussion on the concept of common link.


\(^{\text{60}}\) Ḥanīdullah, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 69; Motzki, \textit{The Origins}, p. 38.

\(^{\text{61}}\) Nabia Abbott, \textit{Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri, II Quranic Commentary and Tradition}, pp. 5-73. Another support from non-Muslim scholar comes from J. Goldfeld. He suggests that Sezgin’s findings are a “masterly introduction to \textit{tafsīr} and hadīth (which) serve as a new basis for Orientalistic research.” Goldfeld, “The Tafsir of Abd Allah i. Abbas.” In \textit{Der Islam} 58 (1981), pp. 125-35.
Zuhri as author. But whether or not the texts truly originated with al-Zuhri remains debatable.

Having analyzed the documents and compared them with later hadith collections, Abbott concluded that oral and written transmission went hand in hand almost from the beginning, that the traditions of the Prophet as transmitted by the Companions and Successors were, as a rule, scrupulously scrutinized at each step of the transmission. This process is supposed not to have left many unsound hadiths, but the facts do not support this as even early Muslim scholars, especially the collectors of the second and third century recognized that more unsound hadiths existed than sound ones. Massive forgery did happen in early Islam. In this context Abbott suggests that it was the isnads that proliferated, not the contents. Abbott, however, does not suggest that hadiths found in the canonical collections are completely authentic. However, they contain, in Abbott’s view, genuine core of Muhammad’s, his Companions’ and his Successors’ sayings and deeds, which were recorded by al-Zuhri and his contemporaries who in turn received them from their predecessors.

Sezgin’s and Abbott’s view that hadith and aithar were transmitted both scrupulously and in written form from the beginning was rejected by many Western scholars. Some of them insisted that the early transmission was mainly oral, others (following Schacht) went so far to reject the idea that there was any transmission of hadiths in the first Islamic century at all. G. Schoeler and H. Motzki advocate a position between the two extremes. Schoeler rejects Sezgin’s thesis that early transmission was substantially written, i.e. transmitted in the form of book, but he also criticizes the claims of Sezgin’s opponents as too

one-sided. He argues that oral and written transmissions existed side by side independently and sometimes were connected to one another in different ways.\textsuperscript{67} After scrutinizing the character of transmission in early Islam, Schoeler concludes, though he does not generalize, that already in the second half of the first century, the Successors like ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr concerned themselves with gathering reports about the Prophet, and they often possessed notes to back up their memory.\textsuperscript{68}

Like Sezgin and Abbott, and unlike Goldziher, Schoeler does not interpret the saying of early scholars “\textit{mā ra‘aytu fī yadīhī kitāban qaṭṭu}” (I never saw a book or something written in his hands), “\textit{lam yakun lâhu kitāb, innamā kāna yahfajzu}”\textsuperscript{69} (he had no book, but used memory to preserve it) to mean that early scholars did not write down the traditions they received. It merely means that authorities (\textit{shaykh}) memorized their material and did not use scripts during their public lectures.\textsuperscript{70} Schoeler argues that students often recorded the material during its presentation or wrote it down later from memory or copied

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\item \textsuperscript{68} Schoeler, \textit{Character und Authentie}, p. 166-167.
\item \textsuperscript{70} Schoeler, “Die Frage”, p. 206. Abbott, quoting \textit{al-Kifāya} of al-Khaṭīb, argues that “Scholars who were not likely to be seen writing down traditions nor with a book in hand would have been the illiterate or semiliterate and the blind or nearly blind” (Abbott, \textit{Studies}, vol. ii, p. 61). Sezgin argues against Goldziher who interprets the dictum of contemporary of Wākī‘ (d. 196/811) “\textit{ra‘aytu Wākī‘an wa-mā ra‘aytu bi-yadīhī kitāban qaṭṭu innamā huwa yahfajzu}” that Wākī‘ avoided using books and papers. According to Sezgin Wākī‘ had written books and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal used the \textit{Muṣannaf}}
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it from a written source in the possession of other students of the Shaykh.71 However, Schoeler realizes that written material can be as easily fabricated as the oral one.72 Unlike Sezgin, however, he suggests that written and oral materials are complimentary rather than mutually exclusive (scheinen sich eher zu ergänzen als sich gegenseitig auszuschließen).73

Schoeler’s thesis received significant support from some of the works of Harald Motzki.74 At the same time, the latter’s works are probably the most significant non-Muslim critique of Goldziher and Schacht’s theories about the development of Ḥadīth. By virtue of this fact, Motzki’s ideas and methods, although they differ from those of Sezgin, attract our attention here. Motzki focuses on the Muṣannaf of ʿAbd Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 211/826). The edition of this work contains composite transmissions, but ninety percent of the material goes back to Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Dabārī (d. 285/898).75 His transmission implies, according to Motzki, a written text.76 Using a “tradition historical” (überlieferungsgeschichtlich) approach77 in his analysis on the Muṣannaf, he argues against the tenability of some of Goldziher’s and Schacht’s claims concerning the development of early Islamic jurisprudence and

of Wālī, as, according to Sezgin, it is also known by Goldziher. Sezgin, Geschichte, p. 70; Goldziher, Mub. Stud., II, p. 197; Goldziher ZDMG 50 (1896), p. 469.

72 Ibid., p. 226. He quotes Van Ess, who argues that early writing is no guarantee for the genuineness. See Van Ess, Zwischen Hadith und Theologie, p. VII. He quotes also Goldfeld who says that written transmission could not avoid insertion, tendentious change and revision. Goldfeld, “The Tafsīr of ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbbās”, pp. 126 and 135. See also Motzki, The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence, p. 95.
75 Motzki, The Origins, pp. 57, 68.
77 This approach, which examines the material of a particular transmitter is, according to Motzki, familiar in Western Islamic scholarship since J. Wellhausen’s work “Prolegomena zur ältesten Geschichte des Islams,” Skizzen und Vorarbeiten, vol. 6 (Berlin 1899). Cf. Motzki The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence, xii.
legal traditions. Motzki concludes from his investigation of the structures of the *Muṣannaf* that the materials of ‘Abd Razzaq, which he claims to have received from his four main authorities (Ma’mar, Ibn Jurayj, al-Thauri and Ibn ‘Uyayna) are genuine on the sense that they are not fabricated by ‘Abd Razzaq, but really derive from the four authorities named.78 He then investigates one of ‘Abd Razzaq’s sources in detail, the transmission of the Meccan scholar Ibn Jurayj, which covers about one third of the *Muṣannaf* and which consist of about 5,000 *ḥadīths*. 39 percent of Ibn Jurayj’s material allegedly comes from ʿĀṭā b. ʿAbī Ṭūbāh, seven percent from ‘Amr b. Dīnār, six percent from Ibn Shihāb, five percent from Ibn ʿAbd Zubayr, three percent from ‘Abd Ka‘īm, two percent from Hishām b. ‘Urwa and two percent from Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd, between one point five and one percent each from Ibn Abī Mulayka, Musa b. ʿUqba and ‘Amr b. Shu‘ayb. Another group of ten names compose seven percent, each only between one and nought point five percent. The remaining 20 percent come from 86 people, each with very few texts. One percent is the personal legal opinion of Ibn Jurayj.79 For Motzki, this strange distribution of authorities implies that fabrication is improbable. Suppose that Ibn Jurayj is a forger, it is implausible that he would have accredited his material to his authorities in such a complicated way. He could have more easily mentioned one, two or a few older *fuqahāʾ* for all his texts. Motzki suggests, therefore, that the names of informants indicate real sources. The implausibility of fabrication is, for Motzki, corroborated by the fact that each of Ibn Jurayj’s major sources seems to have an individual character. The sources reveal much diversity: (1) Variance in form. For example, the use of *raʿy* is unevenly distributed. (2) Variance in the relationship between Ibn Jurayj’s informant and the latter’s main authority and the numbers of accounts transmitted from

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78 Motzki’s source analytical and tradition historical approach leads him to establish the historicity of relationship between ‘Abd Razzaq and his alleged main authorities independent from biographical dictionaries. His conclusion on the relationship, however, coincides with what biographical dictionaries are telling about. See Motzki, *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence*, pp. 62-71.

him. The relationship may be pupil/teacher, e.g. in the case of ‘Aṭā’ b. abī Rabāḥ and Ibn ‘Abbas, son/father as in the case of Ibn Tāwūs and Tāwūs, or mawlā/patron, as in the case of Naḍī f. and Ibn ‘Umar. (3) Strong variance in the proportions of traditions from the Prophet, the ṣaḥāba and the tābi’un. (4) Variance in the use of the isnād. In some sources isnāds are rare, in others frequent (5) Great variance in the terminology of transmission, that is, how Ibn Jurayj presents his sources. He for instance never uses the word “‘an” when he quotes Ibn Mulayka, whereas in 60 to 80 percent of his transmissions from Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd, Mūsā b. ‘Uqba and ‘Amr b. Shuʿayb he uses the term “‘an”. This fluctuation can also be found in his usage of the term “samiʿu”. For Motzki, all these variances argue against the possible assumption that Ibn Jurayj fabricated the texts or projected them to older authorities. A last argument put forward by Motzki to confirm his conclusion on the reliability of Ibn Jurayj’s material in the Muṣannaf is the fact that Ibn Jurayj does not always mention his informants. Eight percent of his material is anonymous. This he also takes as an indication that Ibn Jurayj did not fabricate his informants. Motzki asks:

“Why does he cite Naḍī f., Ibn Shihāb and even his teacher ‘Aṭā’ indirectly or anonymously, although he was in contact with them and otherwise always passes on their teachings and traditions directly? For what reason does he transmit hadīths of the Prophet which for a continuous isnād lack only the link before himself, which would be so easy to fabricate, and traditions of the Prophet completely without informants, although he was familiar with a number of a good isnāds?”

In sum, the theory of “back projection”, championed by Schacht does not apply in the case of Ibn Jurayj’s transmission.

Motzki does not stop with Jurayj’s materials. He goes further in examining materials by Ibn Jurayj’s most frequently cited sources, i.e., ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ (d. 115/733) and ‘Amr b. Dīnār (d. 126/743-4). Motzki bases his argument on what he calls “extrinsic and intrinsic formal criteria of authenticity”. By extrinsic criteria he means the

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existence of different genres of texts and their frequency. The materials ascribed to both informants can be classified in different genres, that is, responsa and dicta of ‘Aṭā‘, and ‘Amr, which appear in very different proportions. To confirm his hypotheses that the relationship between Ibn Jurayj and ‘Aṭā‘ is historical, Motzki scrutinizes how Ibn Jurayj presents ‘Aṭā‘’s materials. He eliminates six intrinsic criteria of authenticity. The criteria refer to (1) the existence of Ibn Jurayj’s opinions. This means that he did not feel that it was necessary to project his own opinion backwards to an older authority. (2) Ibn Jurayj’s commentary on ‘Aṭā‘’s statements. Motzki considers it is implausible that Ibn Jurayj invented a text, then attributed it to ‘Aṭā‘, and later criticized it or commented on it. (3) Ibn Jurayj’s indirect transmissions from ‘Aṭā‘. If he were a forger, he could have easily quoted ‘Aṭā‘ directly without having to use a third person. (4) Ibn Jurayj’s occasional expression of uncertainty about ‘Aṭā‘’s wording. This for Motzki indicates the truthfulness of Ibn Jurayj’s materials. (5) Ibn Jurayj’s record of ‘Aṭā‘’s variant traditions. (6) Records of the deficiencies of ‘Aṭā‘, who occasionally express his uncertainty and ignorance, presents contradictory opinions and changes of mind. If Ibn Jurayj had been a forger, then he would not have reported these weaknesses. All the “extrinsic and intrinsic formal criteria” for Motzki argue against the theory that Ibn Jurayj projected material back to earlier authorities. That is to say, Ibn Jurayj’s transmission of ‘Aṭā‘’s material contained in the Muṣannaf of ‘Abd Razzaq is historical.

Motzki goes even further in examining ‘Aṭā‘’s materials. ‘Aṭā‘ refers to some ṣaḥāba, such as Ibn ʿAbbās, ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿĀlī, ʿĀʾisha, Jābir b. ʿAbd Allāh, Abū Hurayra, Ibn ʿUmar, Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, Muʿāwiyā and others. Again his “variance” argument argues against the assumption that ‘Aṭā‘ is a forger. ‘Aṭā‘’s transmission from Ibn ʿAbbās, for example, represents half of all his traditions from the ṣaḥāba. Motzki further observes that ‘Aṭā‘ nevertheless refers to Ibn

82 By responsa, Motzki means answers of ‘Aṭā‘ on questions of Ibn Jurayj or anyone else, named or unnamed.

83 By dicta, he means statements of ‘Aṭā‘, which are not preceded by a question.

84 For the variance of genres see Motzki, The Origins, pp. 79-81.

‘Abbās infrequently; when he does it, he does not mean to give his own opinion more weight; ‘Atā’ sometimes cites Ibn ‘Abbās indirectly though he could have always cited him directly; he does not always agree with Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Atā’’s Ibn ‘Abbās material varies in genre and style; he does not quote any prophetical hadīth from Ibn ‘Abbās although the canonical hadīth collections abound with them. All this indicates in Motzki’s eyes the genuineness of ‘Atā’’s Ibn ‘Abbās material. As for ‘Atā’’s few traditions from other ṣaḥāba Motzki suggests that ‘Atā’ either really heard and met them or transmits traditions heard from informants (not always given by him) or current at the time.

Most interesting is Motzki’s analysis of ‘Atā’ hadīths from the Prophet, which are rare in his material. He examines several traditions and their variants preserved in other collections in order to date them. One example of his studies is the legal maxim “al-walad li’l-fira’ash wa-li’l-‘a’hir al-hadīth”. This maxim is to be found not only in the Musannaf of ‘Abd al-Razzāq but also in the Muwat’ta and other early and later collections. The variant of the maxim in Mālik’s Muwat’ta and all early variants of the long version have the isnād “Ibn Shihāb (al-Zuhri) from ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr from ‘Ā’isha”. There is also short version with the isnād “Al-Zuhri from Ibn al-Musayyab and Abū Salama from Abū Hurayra” From the different variants it is possible to infer that, al-Zuhri is a common link in the isnāds of the texts. Referring to al-Zuhri’s and ‘Atā’’s transmissions and references to the maxim, Motzki is sure that the maxim was known by the first decade of the second century. Motzki’s dating of the maxim does not stop here. Because ‘Atā’ generally did not transmit from Ibn Shihāb, yet sometimes from ‘Urwa, and because ‘Urwa is the informant of the common link al-Zuhri for the maxim “al-walad li’l-fira’ash”, Motzki considers the death of ‘Urwa (d. 92/711) as the terminus ante quem for the existence of the maxim. This means that not only the maxim but also the long version of this tradition was already in circulation in the second half of the first century A.H.. Motzki does not even rule out the possibility that the maxim was known earlier, and goes back to the Prophet himself. This dating differs

widely from that of Schacht, who dates the maxim to the second quarter of the second century. It also contradicts Schacht’s theory that traditions from Companions and Successors are generally earlier than those from the Prophet and that there is no tradition from the Prophet which could be regarded as authentic.88

Motzki’s conclusion that Ibn Jurayj’s transmission contained in the *Muṣannaf* of ‘Abd al-Razzāq is reliable does not mean that he generally precludes the possibility of fabrication of traditions, but only that he thinks it possible to distinguish between genuine and spurious traditions.89 Motzki’s “variance” argument has not gone unchallenged. As Herbert Berg argues that the variance “may exist because of theological agenda of one or more of the texts’ reductors or tradents” it may also “be a product of a less deliberate manipulation of the material in the *Muṣannaf*”.90 This argument, however, as Berg admits is purely hypothetical, and not based on the analysis of the *Muṣannaf*.

Motzki’s judgment on the *isnāds* contained in ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s *Muṣannaf*, which he bases on the diversity of *isnāds* and *matns*, is in harmony, to a great extent, with the information given by Muslim scholars in biographical dictionaries. Whereas Sezgin and most Muslim scholars, if not all, mainly base their judgment on *isnāds* upon biographical dictionaries, Motzki mainly bases his judgment on an analysis of *isnāds* and *matns* found in the collections of traditions.

D. Concluding Remark

Unlike most Muslim scholars who believe that the process of transmission of *ḥadīths* in the first century was mainly oral, Fuat Sezgin, like Nabia Abbott, advocate the view that many *ḥadīths* were transmitted in writing from very early times onwards. In another words, the classical *ḥadīth* collections, which were compiled in the third century, are the result of a reliable process of transmission or the continuation of written activity that had already been practiced by the *ṣaḥāba* since the time of the Prophet. Sezgin cited reports from some early Muslim

88 Ibid., pp. 16-20; Cf. Joseph Schacht, *Origins*, p. 3.
89 Ibid., p. 9.
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sources, such as Ḥīdāyah of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Ṭabaqāt of Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/844-5), Tārīkh of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), Taqdimah of Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d. 327/938) Taqyīd al-ʿIlm of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 403/1012-3), Jāmiʿ Bayān al-ʿIlm of Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (463/1070-1), al-Muḥaddith al-Fāṣil of al-Rāmahurmuzī (d. 360/971) and others. However, Sezgin neither deeply discusses the historicity of the reports nor shows serious interest in the fact that the sources are contemporaneous with the classical ḥadīth collections. Moreover, Sezgin is of the opinion that the isnād indicates written texts, and on no account indicates purely oral transmission. The isnād mentions the author and the authorized transmitters of books. Sezgin simply believes what is stated in the isnād. This leads him to receive unquestionably the sources he quotes, and he simply ascribes actual texts to the names attached to them in isnāds without having any doubts as to the authenticity of isnāds. With regard to the reliability of the isnād, Sezgin states that in order to be able to establish the first sources of Islamic literature, one has, first of all, to abandon the old prejudice that it was only in the second and the third century that the isnād came into being and the names of transmitters are invented. It is by this generalization that Sezgin failed to convince his Western counterparts and the latter accuse them of resorting to mere ascription and circular argument.
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