BEFORE ORTHODOXY
To the memory of my maternal grandmother,

Sayyidah Ṭayyibah Ghawšīyah Khātūn, my first teacher of Islamic history
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BEFORE ORTHODOXY
Introduction

How Does Truth Happen?

In olden times, the earth was stationary, and the sun and the sky used to revolve around it. Poets used to say: By night and day the seven heav’ns revolve! And then a person by the name of Galileo came along and began to make the earth revolve around the sun. The priests were very angry that someone had put them in such a spin. By giving due punishment to Galileo, they put a stop to these sorts of movements, but even so they could not stop the world from rotating, and it still goes on moving in the same old way.

—IBN-E INSHĀ¹

This book was conceived as the first volume of a history of Muslim attitudes to the Satanic verses incident, covering the fourteen hundred years from the beginning of Islam down to the present day. The “Satanic verses incident” is the name given in Western scholarship to what is known in the Islamic tradition as qiṣṣat al-gharānīq, “The Story of the Cranes” or “The Story of the Maidens,” which narrates the occasion on which the Prophet Muḥammad is reported to have mistaken words suggested to him by Satan as being Divine Communication—that is, as being part of the Qur’ān. These Satanic verses praise the pagan deities of the Prophet’s tribe and ac-

knowledge their power to intercede with the supreme God. By ut-
tering the Satanic verses, Muḥammad thus committed the error of
compromising the fundamental theological principle of the Divine
Message of which he was Messenger—namely, the absolute and ex-
clusive unicity (tawḥīd) of the One God, Allāh.

The facticity and historicity of the Satanic verses incident are to-
day (with a few maverick exceptions) universally rejected by Mus-
lims of all sects and interpretative movements—Sunnī, Twelver
Shī‘ī, Ismā‘īli Shī‘ī, Aḥmadi, Ibādi, Ḥanafī, Shāfi‘ī, Mālikī, Ḥanbalī,
Wahhābī, Salafī, Deobandī, Barelvī, and so forth—routinely on pain
of heresy (kufr)—that is, on pain of being deemed not a Muslim. The
Satanic verses incident is understood as calling into question the
integrity of the process of Divine Communication to Muḥammad—
and thus the integrity of the Text of the Qur‘ān. The universal re-
jection of the Satanic verses incident constitutes an instance of con-
temporary Islamic orthodoxy—that is to say, it is the only truth that
a Muslim qua Muslim may legitimately hold on the matter. For the
last two hundred years, to be a Muslim, one should believe that the
Satanic verses incident did not take place—that is, the contempo-
rary Muslim should not believe that the Prophet Muḥammad recited
verses of Satanic suggestion as Divine inspiration. In other words,
for modern Muslims, the Satanic verses incident is something en-
tirely unthinkable.

The reason for my writing this book is that, as a straightforward
matter of historical fact, this Islamic orthodoxy of the rejection of
the facticity of the Satanic verses incident has not always obtained.
The fundamental finding of the present volume is that in the first
two centuries of Islam, Muslim attitudes to the Satanic verses inci-
dent were effectively the direct opposite of what they are today.2 This
volume studies no less than fifty historical reports that narrate the
Satanic verses incident and that were transmitted by the first gen-
erations of Muslims. This study of the Satanic verses incident in the
historical memory of the early Muslim community will demonstrate
in detail that the incident constituted an absolutely standard ele-
ment in the memory of early Muslims of the life of their Prophet. In

2 Shahab Ahmed, “The Satanic Verses Incident in the Memory of the Early Muslim
Community: An Analysis of the Early riwāyahs and Their isnāds,” PhD disserta-
tion, Princeton University, 1999.
other words, the early Muslim community believed almost universally that the Satanic verses incident was a true historical fact. As far as the overwhelming majority of the Muslim community in the first two hundred years was concerned, the Messenger of God did indeed, on at least one occasion, mistake words of Satanic suggestion as being of Divine inspiration. For the early Muslims, the Satanic verses incident was something entirely \textit{thinkable}.

The juxtaposition of these two realities—the fact that the Muslim community in the first two hundred years of Islam pretty much universally believed the Satanic verses incident to be true, while the Muslim community in the last two hundred years of Islam pretty much universally believes the Satanic verses incident to be untrue—calls into being a number of simple but far-reaching historical questions. How was the Satanic verses incident transformed in Muslim consciousness from fact into anathema, from something entirely thinkable into something categorically unthinkable? How did the truth in the historical Muslim community go from being the one thing to the opposite thing? How did this happen? When did this happen? Where did this happen? Why did this happen? At whose hands did this happen? The history of Muslim attitudes to the Satanic verses incident is thus a case study in a larger question central to the history of all human societies: \textit{how does truth happen}? These questions will not, however, be answered fully in the present volume, which presents the foundational historical data along with a detailed account of the attitudes of Muslims to the Satanic verses incident in the first two centuries of Islam. [\textit{Publisher’s note:} Author Shahab Ahmed died before writing the anticipated second and third volumes of this work.]

The history of Muslim attitudes to the Satanic verses incident is a history of the formation of a unit of \textit{orthodoxy}. By orthodoxy, I mean in the first instance any belief, or set of beliefs, including means for arriving at a belief, the proponents of which hold that it is the only valid and correct belief—that is, the only truth, or means for arriving at truth, on that particular matter. However, if we were to stop our definition here, we would not yet have \textit{orthodoxy}; rather, we have only a \textit{claim} to orthodoxy from which people may yet dissent. For orthodoxy to obtain as a social fact—that is: for a single truth-claim to establish and maintain itself in society as the sole and
exclusive truth—it is necessary, as a practical matter, for the proponents of that truth-claim to be in a position to impose sanction (which need not necessarily be legal sanction) upon dissenters. Orthodoxy, in other words, is not merely an intellectual phenomenon: it is also social phenomenon—it is, as Talal Asad has famously said, “not a mere body of opinion, but a distinct relationship—a relationship of power.”

The most successful orthodoxies, however, are those for which no sanction need ever be imposed at all—for the simple reason that there are no dissenters. One such example of a supremely successful orthodoxy is the belief, universally held today, that the earth is round—or, strictly speaking, is a geoid. This is a truth-claim for the maintenance of which no sanction need be imposed, for the simple reason that it is a truth-claim from which there are effectively no dissenters (the minuscule Flat Earth Society notwithstanding). That the earth is “round” is universally accepted as true—that the earth is “round” is an orthodoxy. Certainly, if someone were to dissent from this truth-claim, it would result in sanction—this might take the form of that person’s family and friends doubting his/her soundness of mind, and thus treating him/her differently to how they would treat a “normal” person; or, if that person happened to be an astrophysicist, in his/her being ostracized and rejected by his/her colleagues, who would no longer regard the person as one of them. In other words, communities and orthodoxies are mutually constitutive: communities are constituted by their adherence to crucial and definitive orthodoxies of their making, and a person’s nonadherence to a constitutive orthodoxy has the effect of placing him outside that community of truth. The historical process of the formation of orthodoxy is a process of the historical process of community—of a community of truth.

The process of the historical formation of authoritative truth in the demographically vast and geographically dispersed community of Muslims is particularly interesting since—unlike Christians, for

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4It should be clear that here I am using the term “orthodoxy” without prejudice to whether a given object of belief is really true—an orthodoxy is simply a belief that is universally held to be (really) true.
example—Muslims did not develop the institutional equivalent of a Church: that is, an institution whose cadres are expressly invested with the corporate authority and mechanisms for the determination of authoritative truth, and for the constitution of a community in that truth. There is no equivalent in the history of societies of Muslims to the institutional mechanism of a church council that is constituted precisely to determine the constitution of the truth that in turn constitutes the communion of salvation. Rather, what obtains is a loose community of scholars dispersed through a vast geographical space, holding to different, textually constituted legal and theological sects and schools of thought, and living in relationships of ongoing negotiation with political power in a variety of dispensations, on the one hand, and also in relationships of negotiation with other groups and formations of ‘ulamā’, on the other. In such a context, how does a single position come to be universally established as authoritatively true?

Of course, Islam is not the only truth-phenomenon characterized by the absence of a church institution. There is also no church in Judaism. However, the human and historical phenomenon of Islam is distinguished from Judaism (and from Christianity) by the fact that, from its very outset, Islam was an imperial religion the articulation of whose truths took place in a context charged with the demands of imperial power. Second, by virtue of the rapid and prolific geographical expansion of the early Islamic polity, Muslims have from the very outset had to articulate the truth-content of Islam in a demographically and geographically vast, dispersed, and diverse context. The territorial expansion of the Islamic polity began even before the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, and within a century the territories of the Umayyad caliphate extended from the African shore of the Atlantic to the River Indus, from Yemen to Transoxania. Muslims never enjoyed the prolonged historical comfort of articulating their formative truths on an insulated local scale, or as minority communities whose formulations were of relatively little consequence for anyone beyond themselves.

Of course, Islam is not alone in being bound up with the constitution of a vast imperial domain: one might readily cite neo-Confucianism in China as a similar imperial phenomenon. However, two differences between Islam and neo-Confucianism are crucial for thinking
about the formation of orthodoxy. The first is that whereas neo-Confucianism in China was the constitutive truth of what was, for the bulk of its history, ethnically and linguistically a relatively homogenous space, Islam, in contrast, formed in a prolifically diverse ethnic and linguistic space whose communities were influenced by vastly divergent normative notions of truth. Second, neo-Confucianism was the constitutive truth of what was a territory ruled by at most two, and often by a just a single political dispensation. Islam has been for the overwhelming bulk of its history ruled by a myriad of different polities.

Again: in this diffuse social, structural, and spatial circumstance, how did a single truth-claim come to be established as authoritative and exclusive—especially, a truth-claim that is the opposite of that with which Muslims began? What is the process by which orthodoxy formed among Muslims on the question of the Satanic verses?

Scholarship on the Satanic verses incident in both the Islamic and Western academies has effectively confined itself to the question of whether the incident really took place. This issue, however, is of little interest to me. What I am concerned with is not whether the Satanic verses incident really happened, but whether or not Muslims through history believed it to have happened: if so, why; and if not, why not? To the extent that it is possible to demarcate in broad brushstrokes across such a vast geographical space a timeline for the formation of orthodoxy on the Satanic verses, it appears somewhat as follows. In the first two hundred years of Islam, from about 600 to 800, acceptance of the historicity of the Satanic verses incident was the near-universal position. Over the period from about 800 to 1100, rejection of the incident presents itself more regularly in the literature: in this period it seems that the number of scholars who accept and reject the incident is roughly equal. However, in this period, those rejecting the incident rarely question statedly the orthodoxy of those who accept it: rather, the sentiment seems to be Allāhu a'lam, “God knows best!” In the rough period 1100–1800, rejection of the incident becomes established as the dominant position and those who reject the incident regularly accuse those who accept it of “denying (the Truth)” (kufr)—that is, of unbelief tantamount to heresy. Nonetheless, a number of historically important figures continue to argue in this period for the facticity of the incident, and hold that to
believe the incident to be true (as they do) is entirely consonant with Islam. Finally, in the period after about 1800, rejection of the incident becomes near universal. In this period, the handful of Muslim scholars who accept the incident both tend not to be recognized as ‘ulamā’ by the mutually acknowledging community of traditionally trained ‘ulamā’, and to have a larger reputation as “unorthodox” (or outright heretical) among Muslims at large.

The question of the formation of Islamic orthodoxy might well be investigated through any number of case studies. However, what makes the Satanic verses incident a particularly (perhaps uniquely) productive case study in the formation of orthodoxy is the fact that implicated in the incident are fundamental questions about the nature of Muḥammad’s Prophethood and the nature of Divine Revelation—that is, the two foundational component elements of Islam—that impinge on and were of concern to scholars engaged in almost every intellectual field in the history of Islam. As such, the incident was treated in a wide range of disciplines and genres across fourteen hundred years: tafsīr (Qur’ān exegesis), Ḥadīth and the sciences of Ḥadīth transmission, sīrāh-maghāzī (epic biography of Muḥammad), taʾrīkh (history), dalāʾīl and shamā’il (devotional biography of Muḥammad), philosophy, kalām-theology, jurisprudence and legal theory (uṣūl al-fiqh), Sufism, and, in the modern period in particular, rebuttals of Christian polemicists and Orientalists of the Western academy. What emerges from this range of treatments of the incident is nothing less than a dizzying interdisciplinary debate conducted by Muslim scholars who approach the questions at hand on the varied basis of different criteria and methods of argumentation developed and employed in different disciplines and fields of knowledge. We have noted, above, the contrast between the first two hundred years and the last two hundred years of Islamic history—between near-universal acceptance of the incident and near-universal rejection. The history of Muslim attitudes to the Satanic verses in the intervening millennium is the history of formation of Islamic orthodoxy on this question. It is a history made complicated by the

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simultaneous, overlapping, and interacting presence of a number of
different and variant trajectories: by the fact of different Muslims in
different places and at different times variously accepting and reject-
ing the incident on the basis of different epistemologies, all of which
claimed equally to be fully and legitimately Islamic, while being per-
finitely aware of other positions and claims.

The rejection of the historicity of the Satanic verses incident that
constitutes Islamic orthodoxy today is a position that is founded on
rational argumentation. The Satanic verses incident is rejected as un-
true on the basis of two epistemological principles, one of which we
may call a historiographical principle, and the other a theological prin-
ciple. These two epistemological principles are the criteria by which
Muslims assess the truth-value of the claim that Muḥammad mistook
Satanic suggestion for Divine Communication—they are the prin-
ciples by which the determination of truth is made. The authority of
these two epistemological principles is universally accepted in the
Muslim community today: they are, in other words, the epistemo-
logical principles of Islamic orthodoxy.

The historiographical principle on the basis of which the Satanic
verses incident is rejected as untrue is the fundamental principle
of Ḥadīth methodology. As is well-known, all historical reports
(riwāyah) in the early Muslim community take the same textual for-
mat—namely, a chain of transmitters to which is appended a narra-
tive body (or matn). A riwāyah thus takes the form so-and-so heard
from so-and-so who heard from so-and-so who heard from so-and-so
that the Prophet did such-and-such or said such-and-such. The basic
principle of Ḥadīth transmission is that the truth-value of a report is
assayed, in the first instance, on the basis of the reputation for verac-
ity and reliability of the individuals in the chain, on knowledge that
each person in fact studied with the person from whom he claims
to have reported, and finally that the transmission should go back
in an unbroken chain to an eyewitness. It is for this evidentiary rea-
son that the chain of transmitters is called the isnād or “support”
(for the matn-body). Now, as regards the Satanic verses incident, all
but one of the fifty reports that narrate the incident are carried by
defective chains of transmission— that is, by isnād-supports that in-
clude at least one (if not more) unreliable transmitters, or by chains
that are incomplete and do not go back to an eyewitness (interest-
ingly, the sole report that does have a sound and complete, or ṣaḥīḥ, chain has never been noticed or commented upon after its initial fourth-/tenth-century citation—for all practical purposes of historical memory, it had no subsequent existence in the memory of Muslims. Thus, on the basis of the epistemological principle of isnad-assessment—a principle that acquired such universal authority that the great scholar Fazlur Rahman straightforwardly termed it “Islamic Methodology in History”—the story of the Satanic verses incident is deemed untrue on evidentiary grounds, and thus did not actually take place as a matter of historical fact.

The theological principle on the basis of which the Satanic verses incident is rejected as untrue is the principle of ‘iṣmat al-anbiyā’ or the “Protection of Prophets”—meaning God’s protection of His Prophets from sin and/or error. Although there is some disagreement among the various sects and schools of thought of Muslims as to the exact portfolio of God’s protection of His Prophets, there is universal agreement today that Prophets are protected from the commission of error in the transmission of Divine Communication—else, there would be no guarantee of the integrity and uncorruptedness of the Text of the Qur’ān. The principle of ‘iṣmat al-anbiyā’ is grounded in such Qur’ānic pronouncements—that is, in statements by God Himself—as “Indeed, it is We who have sent down upon you the Remembrance; and We, indeed, are its Guardians,”7 “Falsehood does not come to it, neither from between his hands, nor from behind him,”8 and, of course, the famous passage, “Nor does he speak from his own desire, Indeed, it is nothing other than an inspiration, inspired!”9 Given the logical necessity of the guarantee of the integrity of the process of Divine Communication to Muḥammad, as attested by God Himself, the Satanic verses incident is deemed on the basis of the epistemological principle of ‘iṣmat al-anbiyā’ to be impossible, and thus not to have taken place as a matter of historical fact.

Now, it is simply not possible to accept the authority of either of these two epistemological principles, and simultaneously to accept

6 Fazlur Rahman, Islamic Methodology in History (Karachi: Central Institute of Islamic Research, 1965).
7 innā naḥnu nazzalnā al-dhikra wa-innā la-hu la-ḥāfizūn, Qur’ān 15:9 al-Ḥijr.
8 lā ya’tī-hi al-bāṭilu min baynī yaday-hi wa-lā min khalfi-hi, Qur’ān 41:42 Fuṣṣilat.
the historicity of the Satanic verses incident. If one accepts the epistemological principle that reports are assayed on the basis of the *isnāds*, one cannot accept the Satanic verses incident. Similarly, if one accepts that Prophets are protected by God from the commission of error in the transmission of Divine Communication, one cannot accept the historicity of the Satanic verses incident. Thus, at any moment in history, for any Muslim to have accepted the Satanic verses incident, that Muslim cannot have accepted the authority and applicability of these two epistemological principles of orthodoxy. It means that, at that historical moment, in that place, and for that person, these two truth-making principles were themselves not true: that person must have been operating by some other epistemological principles than those that eventually became epistemological orthodoxy. In other words, the history of the formation of early Islamic orthodoxy is not only also the history of the formation of Islamic epistemology as a history of how something became the truth; it is also the history of the criteria by which truth is constituted. It is the history of the truth, and of its social and intellectual infrastructure.
I

How to Read the Earliest Sources?

_How often have I said to you that when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth?_

—SHERLOCK HOLMES\(^1\)

In order to understand the historical process by which the Muslim community came to constitute orthodoxy by its universal rejection of the Satanic verses incident, we must first understand why it is that the early Muslim community accepted the Satanic verses incident in the first place. And in order to understand why it is that the early Muslim community accepted the Satanic verses incident, we must first examine when and how it is that the Satanic verses incident came to constitute a standard element in the early community’s memory of the life of its Prophet. This, in turn, can be accomplished only through a close textual analysis of the earliest narratives of the Satanic verses incident that are preserved in the Islamic literature. This analysis of the earliest reports of the Satanic verses incident will be carried out in Chapter 2, and will aim to answer two sets of broad questions.

The first set of questions pertains to the transmission of the narratives. When—that is, around what date—were narratives of the Satanic verses incident transmitted and circulated in the early Muslim community? How widely circulated were these narratives? Where were these narratives in circulation? How widely accepted were they? Who circulated and accepted these narratives? Who did not accept and circulate them? In the context of what literary genres or cultural projects were these narratives transmitted? What were the mechanisms and practices by which they were transmitted?

The second set of questions pertains to the content of the narratives. What was the textual content of these narratives? What does the content of these narratives tell us about the understanding of the Satanic verses incident in the early Muslim community? What do the narratives of the Satanic verses incident tell us about the understanding of Muḥammad and his Prophethood in the early Muslim community?

A third set of questions pertains to both content and transmission: What do the identity and nature of the genres, projects, and practitioners who accepted or rejected the reports tell us about the understanding of Muḥammad and his Prophethood in the early Muslim community?

These questions cannot, however, themselves be answered without first determining a coherent method by which to read the highly problematic early Islamic sources on the life of Muḥammad. Here, in Chapter 1, we will lay out just such a method. The early Muslim memory of the life the Prophet is preserved today in works compiled between the mid-second and late fourth centuries. As described in the introduction, the various units of information that made up this collective historical memory were transmitted among the early Muslims in the same way as all other historical knowledge—namely, in the form of the riwāyah (narrative report), which is composed of a matn or “body,” an often relatively brief individual unit of textual narrative, attached to an isnād or “support,” a chain of the names of

2 The methodological discussion that is being undertaken here is a development of an argument I first put forward in my doctoral dissertation: Ahmed, “The Satanic Verses Incident in the Memory of the Early Muslim Community,” 14–34.

3 Throughout this study, I am using the term “historical memory” to mean “that which was remembered about the past,” with no implications as to the factual status of this material.
the persons who transmitted the report. By an *early riwāyah*, I mean one that is carried by an *iṣnād* that goes back to the first half of the second century at the latest. The analysis of each *riwāyah* in Chapter 2 will be directed at the following summary goals:

1. Through the individual and comparative analysis of the respective *iṣnāds* and *matns*, to date each report—that is, to ascertain the earliest time at which we may reasonably take the report to have been in circulation.

2. To identify, in the early Islamic biographical literature, the individual first- and second-century scholars who are recorded in the *iṣnāds* as having transmitted accounts of the incident.

3. To locate, through the identification of the scholars in the *iṣnāds*, the geographical region where each report was in circulation.

4. To examine, through an analytical reading of the text (*matn*) of the narrative of each *riwāyah*, how the Satanic verses incident was understood by the early Muslim community.

The execution of these goals is, however, considerably complicated by the fact that the documentary status of the Muslim historical memory literature from the first three centuries of Islam—of which the reports of the Satanic verses form a part—is one of the most disputed subjects in modern scholarship on early Islam. No semblance of consensus has as yet been reached on the fundamental question of direct relevance to the present study: *to what degree can the contents of these second- to fourth-century texts be taken as a genuine transmission of the historical memory of the first-century Muslim community?* There is, in other words, no consensus as to whether there is any means of actually tracing the transmission history of a *riwāyah*—which is what I am proposing to do. There is also no consensus on whether the contents of these second- to fourth-century texts can be taken as narrating historical fact—but since the present study is expressly unconcerned with the issue of the historicity of the Satanic verses

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4 These goals will be presented in greater detail at the outset of Chapter 2.
incident, we are spared here the need to address this latter point. There is, however, no escape from the first question. Is it, then, possible to trace the transmission history of a *riwāyah* through the analysis of its *isnād* and *matn*? Two further sets of questions must be addressed. The first set pertains to *who* was doing the transmitting. Do *isnāds* represent genuine chains of transmission—that is, do they contain the names of real individuals who actually transmitted from each other the report in question, or are they, either in whole or in part, fabrications? And what is the historical value of the data about transmitters that is preserved in the early Islamic biographical literature?

The second set of questions pertains to what was being transmitted. Were reports transmitted with a concern to preserve their exact received wording (what the Islamic scholarly tradition calls *al-riwāyah bi-al-lafẓ*, and what modern scholarship generally associates with written transmission), or were they transmitted with a concern to preserve the essential points of their meaning (what the Islamic scholarly tradition calls *al-riwāyah bi-al-ma‘nā*, and what modern scholarship generally associates with oral transmission)? To what extent were reports subject to redaction and recension in the process of transmission, and how does one ascribe authorship in the case of a report that is subject to these processes?

In what follows, I will argue that it is indeed possible to trace transmission history in the category of reports that I am examining here. While I am certainly not the first to make a case for the feasibility of what is now sometimes called “*isnād-cum-matn* analysis,” I am seeking here to re-locate the grounds of the argument from strictly

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technical issues of textual composition to the broader context of the social and cultural constitution of historical memory—this with a view towards laying the foundations for tracing the formation of orthodoxy on the question of the Satanic verses.

In short, before we can go on, in Chapter 2, to analyze the transmission history of the Satanic verses incident in the early Islamic sources, we must first, here in Chapter 1, address the knotty question of how to read the early Islamic sources. We begin with a little recognized but highly significant statement of the obvious: the issue of how to read the early Islamic sources is not merely a question about text; it is a question about culture. The early Islamic sources, like all texts, are literary products that are expressive of the culture(s) of the society that produced them, and the processes by which these texts were produced also tell us important things about the culture(s) of that society. If we find ourselves unable to read the sources as being other than monolithic and monovalent, we will likely conceive of the society that produced them in similarly monolithic and monovalent terms; and, similarly, if we conceive of early Islamic society as monolithic and monovalent, we will likely conceive of the texts they produced in similar terms. If, on the other hand, we are able to read the sources as being multivocal and polyvalent, we will likely conceive of the society that produced them as similarly multivocal and polyvalent—and vice versa. In other words, questions about how to read the early Islamic sources, including questions about the authenticity of isnāds and the textual constitution of matns, are not merely technical questions but questions about the production of culture—that is, about the relationship between the cultural product and the society that produced it. The cultural product we are dealing with here—the historical memory of the Satanic verses incident in the early Muslim community—is truth. Since this truth was subsequently constituted and valorized differently by different societies of Muslims in different times in history, the history of Muslim attitudes towards the Satanic verses incident is a history of a changing relationship not

7 “Monolithic” is the term used by the author of a valuable recent work on Islamic historiography to characterize the “world of learning” of the first half of the second century, as distinct from subsequent periods; Chase F. Robinson, Islamic Historiography (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 30. It is my argument that this characterization of the earliest period is incorrect, and that this is demonstrated by the sources themselves—as will be seen in Part 1 of this book.
only between those subsequent Islamic societies and the historical memory of early Islamic society, but also specifically between the culture and production of truth in those subsequent Islamic societies and their memory of the production of truth in the early Islamic society that authored and transmitted the Satanic verses incident. Thus, the question of how to read the early Islamic sources is crucial not only to the investigation of the place of the Satanic verses incident in early Islamic society, but also foundational to the history of the subsequent development of Muslim attitudes to the Satanic verses incident—and to the formation of orthodoxy concerning the incident.

We will deal, first, with the question of how to read *isnāds*. In the modern study of the transmission of historical memory in the first three centuries of Islam, the tendency has been very much to assume that what we are dealing with is essentially a single monolithic and monovalent phenomenon—that of the transmission of what is usually called “early Muslim tradition.” The criterion for how to read *isnāds* in the transmission of “early Muslim tradition” has been established through studies carried out, in the main, on *riwāyahs* drawn from Ḥadīth collections—that is to say, on *riwāyahs* contained in works compiled between about 200 and 400 as a part of a project undertaken by a particular self-constituted scholarly community, the *ahl al-ḥadīth* (“Ḥadīth folk”), to prescribe laws, praxes, and creeds that might be accredited as definitively Islamic. While Ḥadīth—that is, reports about the words and deeds of the Prophet that are viewed as establishing authoritative legal, praxial, and creedal norms—were, no doubt, transmitted in some degree and form from the very beginning of Islam, the Ḥadīth literature assumed its full scale and form only with the rise in the second and third centuries of a movement of scholars expressly committed to the establishment of Islamic norms through such reports. Accompanying the rise of this Ḥadīth movement was the elaboration by its proponents of a science of Ḥadīth—essentially a science for the verification of reports through the evaluation of their transmission history—in which the *isnād* constituted the primary basis for establishing genuine transmission.8 *Isnāds*

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8 The closest thing we have to a history of the emergence of the Ḥadīth movement is the important study of Scott C. Lucas, *Constructive Critics, Ḥadīth Literature, and the Articulation of Sunnī Islam: The Legacy of the Generation of Ibn Sa’d, Ibn Ma’in, and Ibn Ḥanbal* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).
were to be assessed on the basis of the reputation for reliability and veracity of the individuals in the isnād, and by the knowledge that individuals represented as having transmitted from each other were actually in a position to have done so (by fact of being contemporaries, and of being physically in the same place), and on the completeness of the chain (the fact of its going back in an unbroken line of reliable transmitters to a reliable eyewitness). An isnād that met all of the criteria of each individual transmitter being accredited as reliable, of each transmitter being known to have indeed transmitted from and to the respective individuals indicated in the isnād, and of being a complete chain going back to an eye-/ear-witness, was deemed ṣaḥīḥ—that is, is sound or correct or true—on which basis the information carried by the isnād, the matn or “body,” might also be deemed ṣaḥīḥ/sound, correct, and true (assuming that it did not contradict the Qur’ān). Hence, the titles of the canonical Ḥadīth collections: al-Ṣaḥīḥ, “The True” or “Sound” or “Correct.” Integral to the development of the science of Ḥadīth was thus the elaboration of a literature about transmitters—that is, of a biographical literature. This biographical literature formed the database of the ‘ilm al-rijāl (“science of men”—which also included a few women, some very significant) and was primarily concerned with recording the dates of an individual, the names of his teachers and students, and his reputation for veracity and reliability. Islamic orthodoxy holds that the Ḥadīth movement succeeded in separating sound reports from less sound and unsound reports through the extensive and scrupulous assessment of isnāds.

Modern Western scholarship, on the other hand, is broadly agreed that, in order to provide “early Muslim tradition” with a transmission history that matched up to the methodological criteria of the new science of Ḥadīth, there took place in some degree—from about 150 onwards—a fabrication of isnāds; sometimes of the whole isnād, and sometimes of a section of the part of the isnād containing the names of the earliest supposed transmitters. This fabrication of isnāds constituted, in effect, the fabrication of a transmission history for “early Muslim tradition.” Where modern Western scholarship is in fierce disagreement, both with itself and with traditional Islamic scholarship, is as to the scale and historical effect of this process of fabrication: essentially, are isnāds to be trusted as representing
genuine transmission histories or not, and is there any way of telling? The critical impasse or “stalemate”9 at which modern scholars have arrived has been neatly summed up by Michael Cook:

At one end of the spectrum, we can readily discern what might be called a “Ẓāhirī” position: the author of a tradition is none other than the authority to which it is ascribed, and its transmitters are those named in the isnād. Everything, in short, is pretty much as it seems to be.

At the other end of the spectrum there is an opposing “Bāṭinī” view: roughly, that the material that concerns us is precipitated at the end of the second century of the supposed Hijra, and with little ascertainable prehistory… As might be anticipated, most scholars fall more or less lamely between these two stools.10

Since the “Ẓāhirī” (“exoteric”) position would seem to pose no difficulties for someone attempting the dating of reports, I will address myself here only to the “Bāṭinī” (“esoteric”) view, which derives considerably from Joseph Schacht’s classic 1950 study *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*. That work, while it dealt exclusively with legal, praxial, and creedal reports, applied its conclusions broadly to the transmission of “early Muslim tradition” as a whole, including historical and exegetical tradition.11 Schacht argued that these reports were put into circulation in the second and third centuries, and that their isnāds were largely fabricated and were attached to the reports in order to furnish the reports with the appearance of authoritative antiquity. Since a report had to have a complete isnād in order to be authoritative, isnāds, in Schacht’s famous phrase, exhibited “a tendency to grow backwards and to claim higher and higher authority until they

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arrive at the Prophet.”12 Hence, the less complete the isnād, the older it was likely to be.13 Schacht’s conclusions were effectively taken as a datum-line by a number of scholars—Cook’s “Bāṭinī school”—who elaborated from them a deeply skeptical approach to the transmission history of early Muslim tradition. The premise on which this approach proceeded has been nicely summed up by Fred Donner:

If forgeries were rife among even the most apparently trustworthy ḥadīths, how could we be sure that other kinds of accounts, including apparently early historical ones relying on similar chains of authorities for their warrant of authenticity, were not also merely later fabrications made for political, religious, or other ends?14

The Bāṭinī-Skeptics enjoyed a period of ascendancy, but their approach has been challenged over the last two decades by a number of scholars who, in different ways, have argued for the early dating of different portions of the early Muslim historical memory literature.15 The erosion of the erstwhile authority of the Bāṭinī-Skeptics has led to a situation that is pithily summed up by Chase F. Robinson: “If one can no longer assume that all Prophetic ḥadīth are forged or that there is no authentic material in the sīrah, no one has yet proposed a reasonable way of distinguishing between authentic and inauthentic.”16

In my view, the study of the life of Muḥammad in the memory of the early Muslim community has, in most approaches taken thus

12 Schacht, Origins, 5, see also 166.
13 Schacht, Origins, 39, 165.
14 Donner, Narratives, 20.
far, been critically limited by an impaired vision of its subject, which has been taken to be essentially a single literary corpus—usually referred to as “early Muslim tradition”—and (correspondingly) by an impaired vision of the early Islamic society that produced “early Muslim tradition.” I would argue that the Satanic verses incident is a part of what is better called the “historical memory materials” (with an emphasis on the plural) transmitted by the early Muslim community on the life of the Prophet Muḥammad. It would seem almost trite to emphasize here that the historical memory materials on the life of Muḥammad were collected in works that fall into three main literary genres: *sīrah-maghāzi* (best rendered as “epic biography”), *tafsīr* (Qur’ānic exegesis), and Ḥadīth (words and deeds of the Prophet that establish authoritative norms). However, it has not been generally recognized that *sīrah-maghāzi*, *tafsīr*, and Ḥadīth in the first two centuries of Islam were not only distinct literary genres but also overlapping yet ultimately *distinct truth projects*, with different goals, different practitioners, different materials, different methods, different forms, different values, and different meanings. As such, there is no *prima facie* reason why the history of transmission of the memory of the Prophet in one of these three different projects—Ḥadīth—should be the same as in the other projects.17

17 The following is the development of an argument I first put forward in my 1999 doctoral dissertation, “The Satanic Verses Incident in the Memory of the Early Muslim Community.” The fact, but not the full significance, of the differentiated nature of “early Muslim tradition” has since been noted by Robert Hoyland: “Early Muslim scholars give a third hint as to how best to set about writing the biography of Muhammad, and it is one that . . . has not been paid sufficient attention by modern Islamicists. It consists in the recognition that what Western researchers simply call the ‘Tradition’ is a very diverse body of material that comprises many different genres, that is possessed of different origins and forms, and so on. This is evident from the variety of terms applied to this material (*athar, ahadith, akhbar, siyar, maghazi, qisas*, etc.), from the different ways of describing its transmission (*haddatha, akhbara, qala, za’ama, ajaza, nawala*, etc.), and from the varying judgements that transmitters pass on one another”; Robert Hoyland, “Writing the Biography of Muhammad: Problems and Solutions,” *History Compass* 5 (2007), 581–602, at 589. Tarif Khalidi has developed this idea further: “One might argue that the dominant portrait of Muhammad in the Hadith was ‘Muhammad the model teacher’; whereas in the Sira the dominant portrait is ‘Muhammad in history.’ Thus, a division of territory occurs. The Hadith takes care of one aspect of Muhammad, one image, while the Sira takes care of another. One might say that the Hadith and the Sira satisfied two different needs of the believers: Muhammad as lawgiver and Muhammad as a prophet who lived through and fulfilled a certain prophetic mission or ministry”; Tarif Khalidi, *Images of Muhammad: Narratives*
The aim of the second- and third-century scholars of the Ḥadīth movement was to define, constitute, and establish legal, praxial, and creedal norms through the authoritative documentation of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muḥammad as produced from the historical memory of the early Muslim community. The Ḥadīth scholars were concerned with prescribing the specific content of Islam and, as such, their project fused with that of a closely related endeavor, that of the elaboration of Islamic law. To both these ultimately integrated fields, Ḥadīth and law, the memory of the life and personality of the Prophet existed primarily to provide authoritative Prophetic statements and acts on the basis of which to lay down in detail the specific legal, praxial, and creedal rules by which the members of the community should live. This, in turn, required the development of a methodology to establish authoritatively the authenticity of reports containing the Prophetic norms—hence the evolution of a science of isnāds. The importance of the isnād as the criterion of authenticity is, of course, precisely what called forth the fabrication of isnāds. The Ḥadīth project, then, was a self-consciously authoritative and prescriptive discourse aimed at defining the normative legal, praxial, and creedal content of Islam, and thus at constituting the articulated identity of the Muslim community. The Ḥadīth project invested these prescribed Islamic norms with social authority through the purposive appropriation, validation, and legitimation of the historical memory of the Prophet Muḥammad.

Second- and third-century scholars working in sīrah-maghāzī or tafsīr were also concerned with the historical memory of the life of Muḥammad, and the literature they produced also played a role in the formation of the identity of the ummah—but the relationship of the sīrah-maghāzī discourse with the formation of Muslim identity was quite different to that of Ḥadīth. Scholars collecting sīrah-maghāzī material were primarily concerned not with establishing norms of religious praxis but rather with constructing a narrative of the moral-historical epic of the life of the Prophet in his heroic

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struggle to found the Divinely guided human Community (*al-ummah al-muslimin*). By narrating the foundational epic of the community, the *sīrah-maghāzī* project provided a repertoire of heroic, moral, and dramatic motifs through the common attachment to which the identity of the members of new community of Muslims might coalesce and integrate. Thus, unlike the Ḥadīth project, whose self-assigned role was *prescriptive* and *authoritative*, the *sīrah-maghāzī* project served an associative and *convocative* function in the formation of the identity of the early Muslim community. *Sīrah-maghāzī* works also differed starkly from Ḥadīth works in regard to structure. The structure of *sīrah-maghāzī* works was determined by their concern for the elaboration of a larger sequential narrative of the Prophet’s life. This narrative is, of course, markedly absent from Ḥadīth works, where individual reports are presented in an atomistic and decontextualized manner under the rubric of the legal and doctrinal subject category to which the particular report relates.¹⁸ The overwhelming majority of Ḥadīth reports simply do not appear in *sīrah-maghāzī* works, and vice versa.¹⁹

Scholars undertaking exegesis of the Qur’ān (*tafsīr*), on the other hand, were endeavoring to interpret a Divine Revelation that, it was recognized, was a highly allusive and often abstruse text whose points of reference were the historical events and cultural environment of the Prophet’s life. This meant that the Qur’ān could not be understood without knowledge of those events and that environment. Most of the contents of the Qur’ān are not directly related

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¹⁸ In other words, contrary to superficial appearance, *sīrah-maghāzī* and Ḥadīth are precisely not “cut from the same cloth” as Chase Robinson asserts; see *Islamic Historiography*, 16.

¹⁹ Schacht seems not to have taken this fact into consideration when stating, “As regards the biography of the Prophet, traditions of legal and historical interest cannot possibly be divided from one another . . . seemingly historical information on the Prophet is only the background for legal doctrines and therefore devoid of independent value”; see “Revaluation,” 150. The fact is that the bulk of historical reports never found legal use, and the only canonical Ḥadīth collection to contain a section on *maghāzī* is the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī. None of the canonical Ḥadīth collections contains a narrative of the Prophet’s life. For the view that the “critique of Ḥadīth by Goldziher, Schacht, and others does not necessarily apply to the materials used in the *Sīrah*,” see also W. Montgomery Watt and M. V. McDonald (translators and annotators), “Translator’s Foreword,” *The History of al-Ṭabarī Volume VI: Muḥammad at Mecca* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), xix.
to legal and praxial issues,\textsuperscript{20} as a result of which most of the reports collected in \textit{tafṣīr} works do not appear in Ḥadīth works and are also not taken up in juristic works.\textsuperscript{21} A greater overlap does exist, however, between \textit{tafṣīr} and \textit{sīrah-maghāzī}, particularly as a consequence of the concern of the exeges of the \textit{mufassirūn} to establish the occasion of Revelation (\textit{sabab al-nuzūl}) for individual Qur’ānic verses—that is, to identify on what occasion in the Prophet’s life a particular verse was revealed; however, the bulk of the reports that make up the two genres is, again, not shared. Also, unlike \textit{sīrah-maghāzī} works, where individual narratives appear at the juncture where they fit into the larger biographical narrative, \textit{tafṣīr} reports are directed at explaining the particular verse under exegesis at the point at which it occurs in the Qur’ān. This fundamental difference in the overarching structure of the works composed in these two genres resulted in marked differences in the textual formulation and elaboration of even those reports of which the basic content was common to both genres.\textsuperscript{22}

Thus, while all of the \textit{sīrah-maghāzī}, \textit{tafṣīr}, and Ḥadīth scholars were dealing with the historical memory of the early community on the life of its founder, these three discourses differed in regard to discursive purpose, structure, content, method, and meaning. In other words \textit{sīrah-maghāzī}, \textit{tafṣīr}, and Ḥadīth constituted three \textit{overlapping but fundamentally distinct} discourses treating the historical memory of the Prophet in the second to third century of Islam. Consequently, there is no obvious reason why the transmission history of the reports contained in one of these discourses—namely, Ḥadīth—should be representative of the transmission history of \textit{sīrah-maghāzī} and/or \textit{tafṣīr} reports, as has generally been assumed. Indeed, one might reasonably suppose the opposite: that the transmission histories within the respective discourses were \textit{different}, and that \textit{riwāyahs} contained in second- and third-century \textit{sīrah-maghāzī}

\textsuperscript{20} It is generally understood that 500 of the 6,236 verses in the Qur’ān relate to legal and praxial norms.

\textsuperscript{21} Of the canonical Hadith collections, only al-Bukhārī and al-Tirmidhī contain a \textit{bāb al-tafsīr} of any length, although al-Nasā’ī composed a separate \textit{Tafsīr} that survives (al-Bukhārī and Ibn Mājah are recorded as having done so but there is no indication that these were ever cited, which makes one suspect that the works in question were, in fact, the \textit{bāb al-tafsīr} of their respective Ḥadīth collections).

\textsuperscript{22} This will be illustrated repeatedly in Chapter 2.
and *tafsīr* works should, therefore, be assessed quite differently from those in Ḥadīth works.

It may reasonably be objected, however, that since some first- and second-century scholars transmitted reports in all three of the areas of *sīrah-maghāzī*, *tafsīr*, and Ḥadīth, it is hard to see how one can speak of distinct scholarly projects. However, the fact of the matter is that, despite some overlap in personnel, the respective scholars who made up the three projects were largely not the same people—and they were not the same people because they did not utilize the same scholarly methods for the same purposes. The evidence for this is found in the *al-jarḥ wa-al-taʿdīl* biographical literature produced by the scholars of the Ḥadīth movement, beginning from the second half of the second century, and compiled, in particular, in the third century. The *al-jarḥ wa-al-taʿdīl*—literally “discrediting and accrediting”—literature is biographical material compiled by the post-formative Ḥadīth scholars for the express purpose of identifying who was a good *muḥaddith* and who was not: that is to say, who should be counted as a *bona fide* member of the scholarly project of Ḥadīth transmission, and who should not. As Muslim b. Ḥajjāj (d. 261) notes revealingly from an eminent figure of the early second-century Ḥadīth movement, ʿAbd Allāh b. Dhakwān (d. 130), in the methodological introduction to his canonical Ḥadīth collection, the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, “In Medina, I have met one hundred people, each one of whom was reliable. Ḥadīth from them were not accepted [however], because they did not belong, as was said, to the *ahl al-ḥadīth*."

In the *al-jarḥ wa-al-taʿdīl* literature, the second- and third-century scholars of the Ḥadīth movement repeatedly criticized scholars

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primarily engaged in the transmission of *sīrah-maghāzī* and *tafsīr* reports simply for not doing things in the way that Ḥadīth scholars did them, as regards both the texts that they chose to transmit and the methodologies that informed their transmission. Indeed, a recurrent way of discrediting someone as an unreliable Ḥadīth transmitter was, in effect, simply to point out that he was not really a Ḥadīth scholar at all but rather a *mufassir* or one of the *ahl al-maghāzī*. In this way, the Ḥadīth movement identified and legitimated its personnel and its modus operandi, while simultaneously identifying those who did not belong to it and delegitimizing their modi operandi.

A strikingly eminent example of this is the single most famous biographer of the Prophet, Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq (85–151), one of our

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26 This phenomenon was noted with regard to *tafsīr* scholars more than half a century ago by Harris Birkeland: “It is a notorious fact that numerous interpreters, who had not achieved a fame in other branches of religious science, viz. in ḥadīt or qirā‘a or fiqh, but were only known as interpreters, were held to be unreliable”; Harris Birkeland, *Old Muslim Opposition against Interpretation of the Koran* (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1955), 26. In this remarkably prescient monograph, Birkeland identified several extremely revealing phenomena in the early sources, even if he did not always understand their significance.

27 Michael Cooperson has aptly characterized the treatment in the biographical literature by the *ahl al-ḥadīth* of the *sīrah-maghāzī* scholars (whom he classifies as *akhbāris*—*khabar*, plural: *akhbār*, being the term generally applied to a historical report that is not a Ḥadīth report) as “collective self-assertion through *akhbāri*-bashing”; Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Ma’mūn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2000, 5, footnote 23.

sources for a narrative of the Satanic verses incident, whose career as a man of learning culminated in his migration from Madīnah to the newly built ‘Abbāsid capital city of Baghdad and his appointment there by the Caliph al-Manṣūr as tutor of his son, the future Caliph al-Mahdī. In addition to Ibn Isḥāq’s work in sīrah-maghāzī, he is reported also to have transmitted a vast number of reports dealing with aḥkām (legal, praxial, and creedal norms), which were the rightful historical memory materials of the muḥaddithūn.29 However, we find in the al-jarḥ wa-al-ta’dīl literature that Ibn Isḥāq was widely criticized by the Ḥadīth scholars for quoting from unreliable or anonymous people,30 for copying down reports from other people’s books without studying them with the owner,31 for not taking sufficient care with his isnāds,32 and for simply transmitting lies33—in other words, for failing to observe Ḥadīth methodology in his evaluation and transmission of reports. Unsurprisingly, then, we find that Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn (d. 233), one of the founders of Ḥadīth methodology, said of Ibn Isḥāq, “I do not like to use him as an authority in regard to religious obligations [mā uḥibbu an aḥtajja bi-hi fī al-farā’īd].”34 On the other hand, the pre-Ḥadīth movement scholar Muḥammad b. Shiḥāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124), who was a teacher of Ibn Isḥāq, is reported as saying that Ibn Isḥāq was “one of the most learned of men in maghāzī [min a’lam al-nās bi-hā].”35 This dual assessment of Ibn Isḥāq comes together in the remark attributed to the great hero of the Ḥadīth movement, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241): “In maghāzī and the like, he is to be written from; in regard to the ḥalāl and ḥarām (the permissible

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29 By one account, seventeen thousand such reports; see al-Dhahabi, Siyar, 7:39.
30 See al-Dhahabi, Siyar, 7:50; Ibn Ḥajar, Taḥdhib, 9:42.
33 He was called “a liar [kādhib / kadhdhāb]”; see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Tārīkh Baghdād, 1:223.
and impermissible) . . . he needs to have his hand pulled and his fingers squeezed [yaḥtāju ilā . . . maddi yadi-hi wa-ḍammi aṣābi‘i-hi].\(^{36}\)

Ibn Ḥanbal’s son, ‘Abd Allāh (d. 288), added that his father did not consider Ibn Isḥāq an authority on the sunan\(^ {37}\)—that is, on the sunnah of the Prophet—which are the words and deeds of the Prophet that establish legal, praxial, and creedal norms, and are precisely the historical memory materials with which the Ḥadīth movement was primarily concerned. In other words, Ibn Isḥāq was generally regarded as an authority in sīrah-maghāzī—reports on the words, deeds, and actions of the Prophet that are not directed at establishing legal, praxial, and creedal norms—but generally not well regarded as a transmitter of Ḥadīth—the words, deeds, and actions of the Prophet that are directed at establishing legal, praxial, and creedal norms. His credibility as a transmitter of legal, praxial, and creedal norms was further undermined by accusations of being doctrinally suspect—he was alleged to harbor Mu’tazilī (qadariyyah) and Shi‘ī sympathies (tashayyu‘).\(^{38}\) The prominent ‘ībīn al-rijāl authority al-Firyābī (d. 212) labeled Ibn Isḥāq a “heretic [zindīq],” while the most celebrated jurist of second-century Madīnah, Mālik b. Anas (d. 179), the eponymous founder of the Mālikī legal school, who was famously hostile to Ibn Isḥāq, called him a “liar [kadhdhāb]” and an “Anti-Christ [dajjāl].”\(^{39}\)

We will see Ḥadīth scholars making this dual assessment of the sīrah-maghāzī scholars, as well as of tafsīr scholars, throughout this study. The tacit logic of the Ḥadīth scholars’ assessment is worth reiterating: each of the historical memory projects possessed its own culture, and this culture affected the approach of a sīrah-maghāzī or tafsīr scholar to legal, praxial, and creedal reports (or, for that matter, that of a Ḥadīth scholar to tafsīr or sīrah-maghāzī reports). Thus, Ibn Isḥāq’s methodology was unacceptable when applied to Ḥadīth reports, but acceptable when applied to sīrah-maghāzī reports. That the Ḥadīth scholars should find Ibn Isḥāq’s methodology


\(^{37}\) lam yakun yaḥtajju bi-hi fī al-sunan, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Tārīkh Baghḍād, 1:230; Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 9:44.

\(^{38}\) The latter charge meaning that he supported the claim of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and his descendants to the leadership of the community; see Juynboll, Muslim Tradition, 48–49.

categorically unacceptable is perfectly understandable given the various deficiencies listed earlier. But why should they find his methodology acceptable in *sīrah-maghāzī*? There are two answers to this. First, if *sīrah-maghāzī* materials were to be rejected on the basis of bad *isnāds*, there would be virtually no narrative history of the life of the Prophet in existence since the vast majority of materials treated by *sīrah-maghāzī* scholars were transmitted by what, in Ḥadīth terms, were bad *isnāds*. The same applies to *tafsīr*: “In fact, every *tafsīr* before the time about 200 had to be rejected from the standpoint of later criticism.” As Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal famously noted, “Three

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40 This recurring dual assessment is in itself sufficient evidence to establish that Schacht was quite wrong to state—alongside his assertion that historical reports are really legal reports—that “the authorities for legal and historical information are to a great deal identical” (“Revaluation,” 150). This was the exception and not the rule. The question of why a scholar should be seen simultaneously as a bad Ḥadīth transmitter but as an authority in *sīrah-maghāzī* or *tafsīr* is an extremely important one, the larger significance of which has received little consideration. See, however, the valuable, if brief, observations of Ella Landau-Tasseron, “Sayf Ibn ‘Umar in Medieval and Modern Scholarship,” *Der Islam* 67 (1990) 1–26, at 6–9 (where, in addition to Sayf b. ‘Umar, the *muḥaddithūn*’s treatment of Ibn Iṣḥāq and another major biographer of Muḥammad, al-Wāqidī, is also examined); see also the remarks of Fred Donner, *Narratives*, 257–258. Tarif Khalidi answers this question in somewhat benign terms of division of labor: “by the time of Ibn Ishaq, the first of the four founding fathers, the *Sira* and the Muhammadan Hadith were two quite distinct disciplines. This is illustrated by the fact that while Ibn Ishaq’s *Sira* of Muhamad was held in very high esteem, Hadith experts held that his *isnāds* were untrustworthy and his Muhammadan Hadiths, especially those with legal import, should not be accepted. . . Here then one detects a parting of the ways. The Hadith was taken over by the Hadith experts and lawyers of Islam while the *Sira* was taken over by the biographers and historians (akhbaris).” *Images of Muḥammad*, 59.

41 It is extremely instructive to see how the seventh/eighth-century Egyptian scholar Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (671/1273–734/1334) begins his biography of the Prophet with a defense of Ibn Iṣḥāq and al-Wāqidī against the attacks of the *ahl al-Ḥadīth* by distinguishing between his high status as a scholar of *maghāzī* and his indifferent reputation as a scholar of ʿḤadīth; see his *ʿUyūn al-athar*, 15–23. Ella Landau-Tasseron points out that “The reason why he felt obliged to do so seems to be the fact that the works of Ibn Iṣḥāq and Wāqidī have become the foundation of the whole *Sira* literature, and holding negative opinion about them meant the shaking of this foundation and the placing of the historical value of the *Sira* under the shade of doubt.” See “Sayf Ibn ‘Umar,” 8–9.

42 This is the statement of Harris Birkeland, who goes on to say, “What is stated above explains why practically all the numerous commentaries from the time before al-Ṭabarī has been lost . . . Orthodoxy did not recognize them.” See the larger discussion in *Old Muslim Opposition*, 19–28; the quotations are at 27 and 28. An important question that arises here is why the *ahl al-Ḥadīth* during 150 to 300
genres [kutub] have no isnād / no final source [aṣl]: maghāzī, eschatology [malāḥim], and tafsīr.”

The extant early sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr works provide ample evidence of the fact that, unlike the Ḥadīth scholars, sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr scholars did not generally furnish their reports with complete isnāds. Most riwāyahs in sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr works either are mursal (pl. marāsīl)—that is, the isnād stops at a tābiʿī (literally, a “Follower,” meaning a member of the first-century generations who lived after the death of the Prophet) rather than a ṣaḥābī (a “Companion” contemporary of the Prophet) (this is particularly the case in tafsīr)—or are transmitted from obscure, unreliable, or sometimes anonymous individuals or by the collective isnād or “combined report,” whereby a number of reports would be combined into a single narrative cited collectively by more than one isnād, thus making it impossible to know what was crucial in Ḥadīth methodology: the identity of the individual authority with whom the text originated. This is particularly the case in sīrah-maghāzī. All such reports chose retrospectively to reject as Ḥadīth transmitters some early scholars active in sīrah-maghāzī (e.g., Ibn Isḥāq) and tafsīr (e.g., al-Suddi, for whom see Riwāyah 20, ahead), but to accept others (e.g., al-Zuhri, see Riwāyah 9; and Qatādah b. Diʿamah, see Riwāyah 23), even when this latter group had also transmitted doctrinally problematic sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr reports with poor isnāds. No one seems to have given much attention to this since Birkeland’s acute observation that “when a scholar of the past was generally recognized as a reliable authority, the tendentious biographical literature tried to minimize or even suppress his activity in tafsīr as much as possible, and tried to make him a traditionist, a Reader, or a muftī.” Old Muslim Opposition, 20. The answer may again lie considerably in the fact of necessity: to reject al-Zuhri’s reports, for example, would not only make a palpable dent in the corpus of sīrah-maghāzī but also, more importantly for the Ḥadīth movement, significantly reduce the number of reliably transmitted Ḥadīth: “Abū Dāwūd puts the number of reports transmitted by al-Zuhri as 2200, half of which were ḥadīth.” Lucas, Constructive Critics, 66.

43 This, too, was presciently noted by Birkeland, Old Muslim Opposition, 16–19. For the different wordings of this statement, see Ibn Taymiyyah, Muqaddimah fi ʿusūl al-tafsīr (edited byʿAdnān Zarzūr) (Kuwait: Dār al-Qurʾān al-Karīm, 1972), 52.

44 See, for example, James Robson, “Ibn Isḥāq’s Use of the isnād,” Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 38 (1955–56), 449–465, from which it is clear that Ibn Isḥāq was unconcerned about providing saḥīḥ isnāds. As Tarīf Khalidi has squarely noted, “Ibn Ishaq was prepared to accept other criteria of veracity besides that of personal witness, the backbone of isnād” ; see his Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 39.

were categorically unacceptable in the transmission of Ḥadīth, but to accommodate the overwhelming reality of their ubiquity in sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr, the Ḥadīth scholars produced the concessionary principle of al-tarakhkhūṣ / al-tajawwuz / al-tasāhul fī al-raqāʾiq: essentially, the application of lenient standards of isnād appraisal in regard precisely to those reports that do not carry a legal, praxial, or creedal ruling (raqāʾiq).46

But—and this is an important question—why is it that reports transmitted in the genres of sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr (as opposed to those limited sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr reports that appear in Ḥadīth works) largely failed to acquire full isnāds in the period 150–250, when the rise of the Ḥadīth movement made the complete isnād the basis for validation of reports? There are two ways in which to understand this phenomenon: either second- and third-century sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr scholars were consistently imperfect practitioners of Ḥadīth methodology—meaning that they recognized that in order to establish authoritative fact it was important to transmit reports with sound complete isnāds but somehow, in spite of this, they usually failed to do so; or, more plausibly, these scholars had a very different set of cultural, and thus methodological, concerns in which it simply was not crucial to establish the truth-value of reports through the Ḥadīth leitmotif of providing complete isnāds made up of sound transmitters. Indeed, a fundamental and little recognized cultural difference between the projects of early sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr on the one hand and Ḥadīth on the other is precisely that whereas Ḥadīth, by virtue of its function, sought to be prescriptive and authoritative, sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr did not. We have already noted how sīrah-maghāzī literature functioned to provide the new community with a foundational epic with which the new community could affiliate itself. Thus, rather than seeking to be authoritative and prescriptive, sīrah-maghāzī sought to be dramatic and evocative, to


46 See, for example, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdāḍī: fī al-ḥalāl wa-al-ḥarām wa-al-sunan wa-al-aḥkām tashaddadnā fī al-asānīd wa-idhā rawaynā ‘an al-nabī fī faḍā’il al-a’māl wa-mā lā yaḍa’ ḥukman wa-lā yarfa’u-hu tasāhalnā fī al-asānīd; his al-Kifāyah fī ilm al-riwāyah (Hyderabad: Dā‘irat al-Ma’ārif al-‘Uthmāniyyah, 1357), 134.
furnish the new community with a powerful vocabulary of motifs—heroic, ethical, prosopographical, geographical, rhetorical, miraculous, and so forth—with which the community could affiliate and through which it could express its values and ethos. To accomplish this, *sirah-maghāzī* scholars did not need to sift out reliable reports from unreliable—rather, they were casting their nets as widely as possible in the sea of epic lore of the early community on the life of its founder. Thus, they did not need to claim for themselves the indisputable authority that arose from complete *isnāds* made up of unimpeachable individuals—and they did not provide them. As for early *tafsīr*, what is most striking about the project—and strikingly little noted in the modern scholarship—is the exploratory and multivocal nature of the early exegetical literature. The literature of early Qur’ān exegesis comprises a range of interpretations on almost every verse of the Qur’ān, with strikingly little attempt to invest interpretations with the finality of categorical Prophetic authority. Even when it comes to the individual who is regarded as the founder and greatest authority figure of early *tafsīr*, the “mythic ancestor” 47 ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68), there is effectively no evidence in regard to the contradictory interpretations attributed to him that suggests that early *tafsīr* scholars disputed the attribution of these contradictory interpretations in an attempt to validate one interpretation over others. Indeed, the students of Ibn ‘Abbās regularly transmitted on their own authority interpretations that were different to those that they attributed to their great master.48 As Birkeland rightly noted, “It remains a problem why all Isnads leading to disciples of Ibn ‘Abbās were not prolonged backwards to the latter himself. His name cannot possibly have been omitted secondarily.”49 Early *tafsīr* seems, thus, to have been, in the first instance, an exploration of the Divine Word and, as such, was apparently more concerned with the range of possibilities contained in the Divine Word than with exclusive truth-claims about the Divine Word. This, in turn, meant the early *mu-fassirūn*, too, did not need to invest truth-claims with the authority of complete *isnāds* from unimpeachable authority figures. It is thus


48 We will see examples of this in Chapter 2.

49 *Old Muslim Opposition*, 36.
only logical that neither tafsīr scholars nor sīrah-maghāzī scholars compiled biographical dictionaries to legitimate and delegitimate transmitters.\(^{50}\) As a result, we are today dependent for our knowledge of the transmitters of the early Muslim historical memory of the life of Muḥammad exclusively on the narrative constructed by the Ḥadīth movement, a narrative that is, in both senses of word, highly partial.

In other words, the hostility of the Ḥadīth scholars towards the ahl al-sīrah / al-maghāzī and mufassirūn arose not because the sīrah-maghāzī scholars “imitated the muḥaddithūn, or applied the tools and methods of Ḥadīth to foreign materials so that it could eventually pass as Ḥadīth” (as Landau-Tasseron suggests),\(^{51}\) but for quite the opposite reason: apparently, the ahl al-sīrah / al-maghāzī and the mufassirūn simply did not think it was crucial to furnish complete isnāds at all. The projects of early sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr apparently neither had use for nor recognized the authority of the methodology developed by the Ḥadīth movement; had they done so, they would surely, from 150 onwards, have fabricated complete isnāds with which to upgrade their deficient reports, instead of continuing to transmit them with bad isnāds.\(^{52}\)

Having concluded that sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr scholars in the post-150 period were evidently not in the habit of fabricating complete isnāds, the question to be asked is how, in the light of this, one is to assess their incomplete, collective, or otherwise weak isnāds. The logical implication would seem to be that the deficient isnāds that carry sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr reports are very likely not fabricated at all. After all, if these incomplete isnāds are fabricated, this would

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\(^{50}\) I disagree with the explanation of Chase Robinson: “There is no way around concluding that insecurities were at work. Lacking a method that was distinct from traditionism (many were targeted for traditionists’ barbs about several of their methods) . . . our historians deliberately kept their heads low during much of the classical period.” Islamic Historiography, 113. In my view it is precisely the fact that historians and mufassirūn were secure in their own methodologies that led them not to compile biographical dictionaries, for the simple reason that their methods did not require a literature assessing the reputations of transmitters.


\(^{52}\) Indeed, the attitude of these two projects towards Ḥadīth methodology would seem to differ only in degree from that of the second-century historian ʿAwānah b. al-Ḥakam (d. 147/764–765 or 158/774–775), who declared, “I gave up Ḥadīth because I couldn’t stand the isnād”; cited by Cooperson, Classical Arabic Biography, 4.
mean that whereas *sīrah-maghāzī* and *tafsīr* scholars found it necessary to fabricate *isnāds* in the period before 150, when incomplete *isnāds* were sufficient certification of the genealogy of reports, they somehow managed to resist the pressure (and the habit) of fabricating *isnāds* in the period after 150 when complete *isnāds* gradually became the preeminent epistemological device for the establishment of the truth-value of reports. It is hard to imagine why this should be the case. If, then, we have a bad *isnād* contained in a *sīrah-maghāzī* or *tafsīr* work, there would seem to be no substantive reason (besides native skepticism) to think—in the absence of specific external evidence to suggest otherwise—that the *isnād* is fabricated, and that it does not, indeed, genuinely represent the chain of transmitters by which this information was transmitted. It is upon this principle that my analysis proceeds: *in the genres of sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr, weak isnāds should be taken at face value as in actual fact representing a genuine transmission history for the report in question, unless there is specific reason to suggest otherwise.*

Now, assuming that an *isnād* represents a genuine chain of transmission does not, of course, necessarily imply that the information carried in the report is true. However, the facticity of reports is not what we are concerned with here, only the genuineness of

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53 Indeed, Schacht’s own logic can be taken to the same conclusions. Schacht notes how *sīrah-maghāzī* reports with legal bearing were incorporated into legal discourse in the second half of the second century, and states that “this reception of ‘historical’ traditions into legal discussion went parallel with their acquiring increasingly elaborate *isnāds*” (*Origins*, 139). The implication of Schacht’s statement is that those *sīrah-maghāzī* (and *tafsīr*) reports that were of no direct legal or praxial bearing (i.e., the majority) were not subject to the same *isnād* fabrication process as were legal and praxial materials; these nonlegal and nonpraxial reports ought not, therefore, to be subject to Schacht’s thesis. See also James Robson, “Standards Applied by Muslim Traditionists,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 43 (1961), 459–479, at 461; and Rudi Paret, “Die Lücke in der Überlieferung über den Islam,” in *Westöstliche Abhandlungen: Rudolf Tschudi zum siebzigsten Geburtstag überreicht von Freunden und Schülern*, ed. Fritz Meier (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1954), 147–153, which makes a different case for the greater reliability of nonlegal Ḥadīth over legal Hadīth.

54 None of this, of course, is to be applied to reports in Ḥadīth works. The question of how to assess good *isnāds* found in *sīrah-maghāzī* and *tafsīr* works is a more difficult one, although the default assumption would be that they are suspicious by virtue of their resembling Ḥadīth *isnāds*. This question does not arise in the present study, perhaps precisely because the Satanic verses reports were not transmitted as a part of the Ḥadīth project.
transmission, which will enable us to date reports. Also, assuming that an *isnād* is genuine does not necessarily imply that the transmission history it presents is *complete*. There is simply no reason to assume that scholars always cited the full available *isnād*; given that abbreviation of *isnāds* was not uncommon even among early Ḥadīth scholars, it was probably the more so among early *sirah-maghāzī* and *tafsīr* scholars. Our working principle is that these *isnāds* represent genuine transmission histories *as far back as they go*, while leaving open the possibility that the entire report, or some of the motifs and ideas it contains, may well have entered circulation at some earlier point, or have been derived from the broader scholarly environment of the earliest recorded transmitter.

The fact that Ḥadīth scholars were prepared to accept the “deficient” (i.e., different) methodologies of the *sirah-maghāzī* and *tafsīr* scholars when applied to *sirah-maghāzī* and *tafsīr* reports, but not in regard to Ḥadīth reports, may no doubt be attributed to the fact that *sirah-maghāzī* and *tafsīr* materials did not seek, in the first instance, to establish legal, praxial, and creedal norms. Since the business of documenting legal, praxial, and creedal norms was, of course, precisely the business of defining the specific detailed content of Islam, what the scholars of the Ḥadīth movement were in effect doing was to arrogate to themselves the authority to prescribe the definitive content of Islam. The Ḥadīth project was concerned not simply with sorting reports with good *isnāds* from reports with bad ones but with distinguishing, by means of good *isnāds*, reports with doctrinally acceptable content from reports with unacceptable doctrinal content. Other scholarly projects were nonthreatening and,

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55 For the practice among Ḥadīth scholars, see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāyah*, 417–418, the chapter entitled, “On the Ḥadīth which the Transmitter Sometimes Takes Back (to a *ṣaḥābi* / the Prophet) [yarfa’u-hu tāratan] and Sometimes Stops (at a *tābi’i*) [yaqifu-hu]: What Is Its Ruling?”

56 Our working principle will be tested—and proved correct—in the course of Part 1. On the latter point, see Marsden Jones’s argument that early second-century *sirah-maghāzī* scholars drew on a common pool of available material: in his “Ībn Iṣḥāq and al-Wāqidī: The Dream of ‘Ātika and the Raid to Nakhlā in Relation to the Charge of Plagiarism,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 22 (1959), 41–51.

57 This statement is, of course, less applicable to the *tafsīr* project than to the *sirah-maghāzī* project; nonetheless, the fact is that the bulk of early Qurʾān commentary did not deal with praxial and legal issues.
hence, legitimate so long as they did not trespass into this project of the authoritative constituting of truth: in instances where *sīrah-maghāzī* and *tafsīr* reports had no problematic doctrinal implications, it did not matter to the Ḥadīth scholars if the *isnāds* of these reports did not fulfill the criteria for authoritative validation. Here, the accommodative principle of *al-tarakhkhuṣ / al-tajawwuz / al-tasāhul fī al-raqā’iq* was applied. Problems arose when materials transmitted in the *sīrah-maghāzī* and *tafsīr* literature were at odds with the norms that the Ḥadīth project was seeking to establish as Islamic—in other words, when these *sīrah-maghāzī* and *tafsīr* reports presented *alternative norms* to those of the Ḥadīth project. This danger was ever-present since, like Ḥadīth, *sīrah-maghāzī* and *tafsīr* drew on the potentially normative historical memory of the life of Muḥammad: it was thus essential for Ḥadīth scholarship to assert and retain its legitimizing authority vis-à-vis these potentially problematic historical memory materials. So, when the Ḥadīth authorities said of a scholar that he was good in *maghāzī*, but not in Ḥadīth or *aḥkām*, what this meant was that as long as he transmitted reports that, by virtue of irrelevance or conformity, did not conflict with the Ḥadīth project of establishing legal, praxial, and creedal norms, his reports were acceptable. However, in the event of his transmitting something that impinged upon or clashed with the Islam of the Ḥadīth movement, the fact that this individual did not conform to the transmission methodology of the *ahl al-Ḥadīth* could and would be invoked in order to discredit that individual as an unreliable transmitter, and thereby to reject those problematic reports as unreliably transmitted and therefore false.

Through this assertion of the *epistemological authority* of the Ḥadīth movement, the *ahl al-Ḥadīth* asserted their exclusive authority to determine the content of Islam. The Satanic verses incident, it will be seen, constitutes a classic example of this clash over the right to determine normative Islam by authoring and authorizing the memory of the person and Prophethood of Muḥammad.\(^{58}\)

\(^{58}\)The only study of which I am aware that thinks seriously about the cultural consequences of the differences between the genres of *sīrah-maghāzī* and Ḥadīth is Gordon D. Newby, “Imitating Muḥammad in Two Genres: Mimesis and Problems of Genre in Sīrah and Sunnah,” *Medieval Encounters* 3 (1997), 266–283. While confused on some fundamental points, Newby makes a number of genuinely important observations: “Sīrah, was a narrative . . . Sunnah was a non-narrative,
Thus, the point being made by the second- to third-century Ḥadīth scholars when they criticized sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr scholars in the al-jarḥ wa-al-taʿdīl literature was precisely that Ḥadīth, sīrah-maghāzī, and tafsīr were different discourses—that is, different cultural projects whose respective practitioners transmitted different materials and used different methodologies to assess those materials. As far as the Ḥadīth scholars were concerned, the Ḥadīth textual corpus was made up of reports that possessed better isnāds, meaning that they were the product of a transmission history that was superior to and more authoritative than that of the sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr corpuses. In the logic of modern Bāṭinī-Skeptical scholarship, the transmission history of Ḥadīth reports—the isnāds—must be seen as different and superior by fact of being more purposefully fabricated. The point that we are emphasizing here, however, is that of difference: the respective isnāds of Ḥadīth reports, on the one hand, and of sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr reports, on the other, are neither the result of nor expressive of the same transmission history—and thus the isnāds of sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr reports simply cannot be coherently or productively assessed in terms of the isnāds of Ḥadīth reports.

Proceeding on the working principle elaborated earlier—that sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr isnāds, more likely than not, represent a chain of genuine transmission—we come now to the second issue raised at the outset. This is the question of what was being transmitted, and how?

disjointed and atomized representation of Muhammad . . . each form became identified with different groups . . . the word Sunnah came to refer specifically to short narratives and vignettes (Ḥadīth) that could be used as sources of legal authority . . . Sunnah meaning normative practice. . . . The narrative biography, the Sīrah, located Muhammad in time and space. . . . But, if Muhammad were to be the paradigm for the community for all time, he would have to be timeless. Hence, the non-narrative, a-historic Muhammad was presented in discreet, atomized accounts each having validity for establishing precedent regardless of the time and place. . . . The result was a tension where the adherence to Sunnah is often construed to be at variance with adherence to the mythic image of Muhammad of the Sīrah. Ibn Ishāq’s Sīrah was eventually epitomized and stripped of . . . some of its more ‘popular’ elements about Muhammad, and Ibn Ishāq was himself condemned as a Shī‘ite. . . . These early biographies of Muhammad seem to be part of an already existing North Arab literary form known as the Ayyám al-ʿArab, the ‘Battle Days of the Arab.’ . . . Early Muslims used the Ayyám al-ʿArab . . . to ‘prove’ that their new tribe was superior and that their new tribal leader, Muhammad, was the most noble in birth and deeds.” Newby, “Imitating Muḥammad,” 267–269.
These are in fact two separate but related questions. First, how were reports being transmitted: in writing, or orally, or in some combination of the two, and (how) did methods of transmission change over time? Second, what was being transmitted: the specific wording of a report \((\text{al-riwāyah bi-al-lafẓ})\) or the meaning of the report \((\text{al-riwāyah bi-al-maʾnā})\), and (how) did attitudes towards literal and paraphrastic transmission change over time?

In a work published in 1968, Muhammad Mustafa Azami gathered copious evidence of writing as a standard feature of the transmission of knowledge in the first two centuries of Islam.\(^5^9\) Azami argued that transmission of knowledge in the first two centuries was practiced through a combination of writing and lecturing: teachers lectured, students wrote down what was taught, and these notes were then used as an aid to memory in lecturing. Some teachers lectured directly from their notes, others prided themselves on lecturing only from memory (i.e., that which they had memorized from their notes), some teachers apparently forbade students to write down their lectures, and others insisted they write them down; some students first wrote down and then memorized, and others first memorized and then wrote down.\(^6^0\) Azami’s thesis on the performance of transmission was largely ignored in the Western academy, but his basic findings were eventually confirmed in a series of articles published between 1985 and 1992 by Gregor Schoeler.\(^6^1\) Unlike Azami, however, Schoeler made the important distinction between the mode of transmission—that is, whether oral or written—and the content of transmission—that is, whether literal or paraphrastic. While Azami seems to assume that transmission was word-for-word and that texts stabilized very early, Schoeler argued that transmission was initially concerned with conveying the meaning of the account in question \((\text{al-riwāyah bi-al-maʾnā})\), and

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\(^{6^0}\) Azami, *Studies*, 186–197.

\(^{6^1}\) These important articles, published in German, have been now translated by Uwe Vagelpohl and edited by James E. Montgomery as Gregor Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006). Schoeler never cites Azami.
only at a later stage with the preservation of the exact wording of the text (ṣūrat al-qurʾān).\(^{62}\) It was during the earlier stage, that of ʿṣurah bi-al-maʿnā, that reports underwent considerable rewording. This latter point is extremely important for the issue of the stabilization of texts, and thus for the questions of authorship and dating of the accounts of the Satanic verses, for which reason it will be appropriate to take it up here.

That the phenomenon of ʿṣurah bi-al-maʿnā was widespread in the first two centuries of Islam is actually well attested and detailed in crucial source material that not only was relatively neglected by Schoeler but also actually provides stronger and more direct and detailed evidence than the sources from which Schoeler constructs his argument—namely, the early post-formative works on the sciences of Ḥadīth, which, while distinctly uncomfortable with ʿṣurah bi-al-maʿnā, nonetheless treat ʿṣurah as a historical fait accompli. Thus, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), writing at a historical juncture when the Ḥadīth movement had begun firmly to establish its epistemological authority in Islamic discourses, devotes a lengthy discussion to the disagreement over the permissibility of ʿṣurah bi-al-maʿnā,\(^{63}\) in which he first cites the strong purist principle preferred by classical Ḥadīth scholars: transmission should be literal. He then points out, however, that ʿṣurah bi-al-maʿnā was permitted by the Prophet\(^{64}\) and historically practiced by the ṣaḥābah and tābiʿūn, for which reason it is legitimate. He describes several specific forms of ʿṣurah that were practiced by the early generations: substituting synonyms for the words of the received text,\(^{65}\) rearrangement of the received text

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\(^{64}\) The Prophet is reported as saying, “As long as you do not permit the prohibited and prohibit the permitted, there is nothing wrong with it (ṣūrat bi-al-maʿnā)”; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Kifāyah, 199.

\(^{65}\) Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Kifāyah, 197.
(al-taqdīm wa-al-ta’khīr),\textsuperscript{66} adding to or omitting from the received text (al-ziyādah wa-al-nuqṣān),\textsuperscript{67} and abridging the received text (al-ikhtiṣār).\textsuperscript{68} All these were deemed acceptable by the early transmitters as long as the meaning of the report remained unaltered. The last three practices—rearrangement, addition and omission, and abridgement—are particularly interesting as they effectively describe processes of recension and redaction, the existence of which the early Ḥadīth authorities had to take into consideration while formulating their methodology. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī does not mention another practice that was anathema to the Ḥadīth scholars and that, as we have noted, was prevalent in the field of sīrah-maghāzī, culturally indifferent as it was to the notion of authoritative transmission—namely, transmission by collective isnād. Transmission by collective isnād is, of course, an instrument \textit{par excellence} of al-riwāyah bi-al-ma’nā as it involves combining and collating different reports into a single unit of meaning.

Given the fact that reports were being transmitted with rearrangement, addition and omission, abridgement, and collation of the received text, the question, then, is how best to identify and date the authorship of a riwāyah when its wording was changing during the course of transmission. The answer to this, surely, is that we must consider issues of authorship and dating at two levels, that of \textit{lafẓ} and that of \textit{ma’nā}. If we find two differently constructed sīrah-maghāzī or tafsīr narratives carried by isnāds going back to the same individual, it would appear reasonable to date the common \textit{meaning} of the reports as, indeed, having been transmitted from that individual, while taking the differences in wording and narrative construction as arising, if not from that individual himself, then from the subsequent process of recension in transmission. The assumption here is that a given transmission from a particular individual will stabilize as a unit of meaning before it stabilizes as a verbal unit. Two different dating methods are thus called for: \textit{dating the meaning of the report}, and \textit{dating the words}. In order to date according to meaning, however, it is first necessary to establish a \textit{unit of meaning}. While this is relatively straightforward in short reports that deal with only one

\textsuperscript{66}Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, \textit{Kifāyah}, 207.
\textsuperscript{67}Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, \textit{Kifāyah}, 207–208.
\textsuperscript{68}Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, \textit{Kifāyah}, 193.
hermeneutical issue, in a longer narrative containing more than one such issue, such as the reports on the Satanic verses incident, this becomes more difficult—and the matter will thus have to be addressed at the outset of Chapter 2, before we proceed to the analysis of the Satanic verses reports.
In what follows, all of the available early *riwāyahs* on the Satanic verses incident are collected and their *matns* and *isnāds* analyzed. Only in this way can we understand *when* and *how* it is that the Satanic verses incident came to constitute a standard element in the memory of the early community on the life of its Prophet, and thus answer the question: *why* did the early Muslim community accept the Satanic verses incident? Also, since it is with these very reports that Muslims have continued to engage down the centuries to the present day, the study of the earliest narratives of the Satanic verses incident forms the basis for the history of the subsequent formation of Islamic orthodoxy on the question of the Satanic verses.

This analysis will aim to answer the following three sets of questions.

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1 Chun man az ‘ishq-i rukhsh bī-khwud u ḥayrān gashtam / khabar az vāqi’-yi Lāt u Manātam dādand, Ḥāfiz Shirāzī (d. 792), Divān-i Khvājah Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥāfiz Shirāzī, ed. Taqīyur Rāḥmān Līmūdhī (Tehran: Kitābkūnah-yi Sanā’ī), 1992, 100.
The first questions pertain to the transmission of the narratives. When—that is, around what date—were narratives of the Satanic verses incident transmitted and circulated in the early Muslim community? How widely circulated were these narratives? Where were these narratives in circulation? How widely accepted were they? Who circulated and accepted these narratives? Who did not accept and circulate them? In the context of what literary genres or cultural projects were these narratives transmitted? What were the mechanisms and practices by which they were transmitted?

The second set of questions pertains to the content of the narratives. What was the textual content of these narratives? What does the content of these narratives tell us about the understanding of the Satanic verses incident in the early Muslim community? What do the narratives of the Satanic verses incident tell us about the understanding of Muḥammad and his Prophethood in the early Muslim community?

A third question pertains to both content and transmission: What do the identity and nature of the genres, projects, and practitioners who accepted or rejected the reports tell us about the understanding of Muḥammad and his Prophethood in the early Muslim community?

The analysis of each riwāyah will be directed at the following goals:

1. I will attempt, through the individual and comparative analysis of the respective isnāds and matns, to date each report. I am not attempting to provide a date for when a particular riwāyah was put into circulation, but will confine myself to the task of trying to ascertain the earliest time at which we may reasonably take the report to have, in fact, been in circulation, while leaving open the possibility that it may actually have entered circulation at some earlier point. As a cumulative exercise, this will enable us to determine an approximate terminus post quem for when the Satanic verses incident was present as an element in the corpus of historical memory materials transmitted by the early Muslim community.

2. I will attempt to identify, in the early Islamic biographical literature, the individual first- and second-century scholars who are recorded in the isnāds as having transmitted accounts of the incident, so as to see what sort of literary genres and cultural projects these scholars are identified with. This will tell
us something about the literary and cultural contexts within which riwāyahs on the Satanic verses incident were being transmitted in early Islam, which will, in turn, provide us with a place from which to trace changes and continuities in these literary and cultural contexts in subsequent centuries.

3. Through the identification of the scholars in the isnāds, I will attempt to identify the geographical region where each report was in circulation. Cumulatively, this analysis will enable us to assess how widespread knowledge and transmission of the incident were in the early Islamic world.

4. I will undertake an analytical reading of the text (matn) of the narrative of each riwāyah, so as to examine how the Satanic verses incident was understood by the early Muslim community. The understanding of the incident contained in the early narratives will, of course, tell us something about how the early community understood the Prophethood of Muhammad, just as modern Muslim attitudes towards the incident reflect the understanding of Prophethood in the modern Muslim community.

As noted at the end of Chapter 1, given that reports were transmitted initially with attention to meaning (al-riwāyah bi-al-ma‘nā) and only later with attention to their specific wording (al-riwāyah bi-al-lafẓ), in order to date reports it is necessary first to establish a unit of meaning. While this is relatively straightforward in short reports that deal with only one hermeneutical issue, in a longer narrative containing more than one such issue, such as the reports on the Satanic verses incident, this becomes more difficult. The three main hermeneutical issues involved in the Satanic verses incident, which I will take as defining the respective reports as units of meaning, are:

1. Did the Prophet utter the Satanic verses?
2. Why did the Prophet utter the Satanic verses?
3. Did the Prophet realize on his own that he had erred, or was he unaware of having erred until he was corrected by Jibrīl?

The questions “Did the Prophet utter the verses?” and “Why did the Prophet utter the verses?” are the most important hermeneutical
issues in the interpretation of the Satanic verses incident. The treatment in a given report of the third question, “Did the Prophet realize on his own that he had erred, or was he unaware of having erred until he was corrected by Jibrīl?” can affect the answer in that report to the second question: “Why did the Prophet utter the verses?”

**Riwa'yahs 1 to 7:**
From Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Quraẓī

**Riwa'yah 1:** From the Rayy Recension of the Sīrah of Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq

This *riwa'yah* with which, by virtue of its length and detail, it is appropriate to begin is given by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224–310), both in his great *tafṣīr*, the *jāmiʿ al-bayān* (in the commentary on Qur'ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj), and his universal history, the *Ṭārīkh al-rusul wa-al-mulūk*, with the following *isnād*:


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4 As a firm rule, the death dates recorded in the Muslim biographical literature are far more reliable than the birth dates, for the simple reason that while births were generally not recorded, by the time a prominent scholar died, his death would be recorded by his colleagues and students. Birth dates were often pushed back by memorializers as a means of buttressing a scholar’s credentials as earlier birth dates not only allowed for the possibility of transmission from the great ancients but also facilitated shorter chains of transmission, which were highly valued in Ḥadīth methodology (see G. H. A. Juynboll, “The Role of *mu'ammarūn* in the Early Development of the *isnād*,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 81 (1991) 155–175).

5 The arrow ← indicates the direction of transmission: here, Salamah b. al-Faḍl al-Rāzī transmitted the report to Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī—that is, Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī received the report from Salamah b. al-Faḍl al-Rāzī.

According to the isnād, this report is taken from Salamah b. al-Faḍl’s recension of the sīrah of the famous Medinese biographer of the Prophet, Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq (85–151). The Satanic verses incident appears in two recensions of the sīrah as taught by Ibn Isḥāq: the Rayy recension of Salamah b. al-Faḍl, and the Kufan recension of Yūnus b. Bukayr (see Riwāyah 7, below). It does not appear in Ibn Hishām’s (d. 218) edition of al-Bakkā’ī’s (d. 183) Kufan recension (what is generally called the Sīrah of Ibn Hishām). In analyzing the above isnād, it will be convenient to begin with the transmission forward from Ibn Isḥāq to al-Ṭabarī, and then to consider Ibn Isḥāq’s sources.

In regard to Ibn Isḥāq, already discussed above, only one point needs to be raised here—namely, that for the muḥaddithūn, from the early critics of the Ḥadīth movement down to such modern exemplars as the Ḥadīth scholar Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (1914–1999), the mere fact of his presence in this isnād was sufficient basis to reject Riwāyah 1 as inauthentic and untrue. We observe a similar phenomenon to that found in the biographical material on Ibn Isḥāq in the entries in the al-jarh wa-al-ta‘dīl literature on the transmitter from Ibn Isḥāq, Salamah b. al-Faḍl, who studied Ibn Isḥāq’s Kitāb al-mubtada‘ and Kitāb al-maghāzī in Rayy. Salamah was regarded by the Ḥadīth scholars as an unreliable transmitter, and duly appears in the fourth-century biographical dictionaries compiled by the Ḥadīth scholars expressly for “weak” (ḍa‘īf), “rejected” (matrūk), and “discredited” (majrūḥ) Ḥadīth transmitters. ‘Alī Ibn al-Madīnī (d. 224, 6


one of the earliest compilers of a work judging Ḥadīth transmitters) said, “As soon as we left Rayy, we threw away Salamah’s Ḥadīths.” Despite this, Salamah’s transmission of Ibn Isḥāq’s sīrah-maghāzī works was widely regarded as outstanding. Yaḥyā b. Maʿin recorded, “As regards Ibn Isḥāq, there is no one between Baghdad and Khurāsān more reliable than Salamah.” Al-Dhahabī listed his various detractors among the Ḥadīth scholars, but added, “He was strong in maghāzī.” It is noteworthy that Salamah’s reputation as a scholar of maghāzī derived in considerable measure from the fact of his written transmissions. Yaḥyā b. Maʿin said, “We wrote from him; his maghāzī books are the most complete [atamm]; there are no books more complete than his.” It is reported that Salamah’s transmission was highly regarded because Salamah came into possession of Ibn Isḥāq’s own papyri of the Kitāb al-mubtadaʾ and Kitāb al-maghāzī.10 Al-Ṭabarī took Salamah’s recension of Ibn Isḥāq from Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī, who was one of al-Ṭabarī’s main teachers during the latter’s sojourn in Rayy. The chain Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd ← Salamah ← Ibn Isḥāq occurs in al-Ṭabarī’s Tārīkh over 350 times, indicating the size of the work in question. In view of Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd’s importance to al-Ṭabarī, it is interesting to note that he had a very mixed reputation among the Ḥadīth scholars. Al-Dāraquṭnī, al-Tirmidhī, and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal all transmitted from him; however, the scholars of Rayy are reported as saying of Ibn Ḥanbal, “He didn’t know him (Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd). If he knew him as we did, he would not have spoken well of him at all.” The standard charge leveled against Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd was that he regularly attached matns to isnāds by which they had not been transmitted. One account goes so far as to claim that he never studied with Salamah or with ‘Alī b. Mujāhid (Ibn Isḥāq’s other prominent Rāzī student, d. 180), but rather obtained a written copy of these two recensions of Ibn Isḥāq from a third party. Whatever the truth of this accusation, Muḥammad

We may now turn back to consider Ibn Isḥāq’s source for the report, the early Medinese Qur’ān authority Muḥammad b. Ka‘b al-Quraẓī (d. 108).\footnote{See Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī, Ḥilyat al-awliyā’ (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1932, 3:212–221; al-Dhahabi, Ṣiyar, 5:65–68; Ibn Ḥajar, Taḥdīb, 9:420–422; Sezgin, GAS, 1:32; Nisar Ahmed Faruqi, Early Muslim Historiography: A Study of the Transmitters of Arab History from the Rise of Islam up to the End of Umayyad Period (612–750 A.D.) (New Delhi: Idārah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1979), 146–155.} I have found twenty-four riwāyahs in Ibn Isḥāq’s sirah-magāhāzī corpus that go back to Muḥammad b. Ka‘b al-Quraẓī, of which half are by way of Yazīd b. Ziyād al-Madanī (d. 136), a now-obsolete individual from whom Mālik b. Anas also took al-Quraẓī’s reports.\footnote{He had a namesake with whom he was confused. He is generally given as a mawlā of the Banū Makhzūm, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim says he was also a Quraẓī. See Ibn Sa’d, Ṭabaqāt, 6:330; al-Bukhārī, al-Tārīkh al-kabīr, Hyderabad: Dā’irat al-Ma’ārif al-‘Uthmāniyyah, 1360–1384 h, 2/4:333; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, jarḥ, 9:263; al-Dhahabi, Tārīkh al-Islām wa-wafayāt mashḥāhir al-a’lām, ed. ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Salām Tadmūrī, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabi, 1987), 8:565; Ibn Ḥajar, Taḥdīb, 11:328, Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf al-Miẓī, Taḥdīb al-kamāl fi asma‘ al-rijāl ed. Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-Risālah, 1992), 32:132–134; Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, Is‘āf al-mubaṭṭa’ fi riḥāl al-Muwaṭṭa’, published with Mālik b. Anas, Kitāb al-Muwaṭṭa’ (Cairo: Dār al-Rayyān li-al-Turāth, 1988), 2:291–404, at 3:263.} The importance of Muḥammad b. Ka‘b as a figure in early Qur’ānic studies may easily be gauged from the following. First, the following Prophetic Ḥadīth, taken as referring to al-Quraẓī, was circulated by at least three different isnāds: “There will come from out of the kāhinayn [the Banū Qurayẓah and Banū al-Naḍīr; the Jewish tribes of Madīnah] a man who will study the Qur’ān in a manner which no one after him will emulate,” and, in another version, “who will be the most learned of men in regard to the
Qur’ān.”  

Second, Muḥammad b. Ka‘b is cited no less than sixty-two times in the extant forty-nine-folio fragment of the second-century Qur’ān commentary of the Egyptian scholar ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Wahb (125–197). In only one of these reports does al-Quraẓī relate from a previous authority—that is to say that like Riwāyah 1, these are all mursal reports. All of this is strongly indicative of the existence in the second century of a body of tafsīr material that was recognized as representing the exegetical activity and opinion of Muḥammad b. Ka‘b. The fact that nineteen of the reports from al-Quraẓī given in the second-century Tafsīr of Ibn Wahb also appear, in whole or in part, in the late third-century Jāmi‘ al-bayān of al-Ṭabarī, with different isnāds going back to Muḥammad b. Ka‘b, but with similar wording, suggests that the transmission of the contents of Muḥammad b. Ka‘b’s tafsīr corpus stabilized considerably during the second century. We will have occasion to address the question of the au-

14 Muḥammad b. Ka‘b’s father was a Jew of the Banū Qurayẓah who, being a child at the time, escaped death when the men of that tribe were killed.


16 As noted in Chapter 1, a mursal (pl. marāsīl) report is one in which the isnād stops at a tābi‘ī (literally, a “Follower,” meaning a member of the first-century generations who lived after the death of the Prophet) rather than a ṣaḥābī (a “Companion” contemporary of the Prophet). In a study of isnāds that carry sīrah reports, Muḥammad al-Ṣawwayānī rejects the Riwāyah 1 on the basis of the poor reputations of Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd and Ibn Isḥāq, and because the report is mursal; al-Qaṣīmah: dirāsah naqdiyyah li-nuṣūṣ al-sīrah al-nabawīyyah, Riyadh: Dār Ṭībah, 1989, 1:433.

17 This corpus has now received a study in which Al-Quraẓī’s report of the Satanic verses incident is duly rejected by reference to the orthodox arguments of later authorities: Akram ‘Abd Khalīfah Ḥamad al-Dulaymi, Muḥammad ibn Ka‘b al-Quraẓī wa-atharu-hu fī al-tafsīr (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah), 2009, 353–357; the biographical data on Muḥammad b. Ka‘b is collated at 41–82.

The earliest narratives and their transmitters

The authenticity of Ibn Isḥāq’s transmission of this particular report from Muḥammad b. Ka‘b in the analysis of Riwāyah 2 below.

The following is a translation of the matn of the report:19

When the Messenger of God saw his tribe turning away from him, and was greatly disturbed [shaqqa ‘alay-hi] by their estrangement from that which he had brought them from God, he desired within himself [tamannā fi nafsi-hi] that there come to him from God something that would bring him and his tribe together [mā yuqāribu bayna-hu wa-bayna qawmi-hi]. Because of his love for his tribe and his concern for them [ḥirṣi-hi ‘alay-him], it would have pleased him if their harsh treatment of him should, in some measure, have been softened, to the point that [ḥattā]20 he thought to himself about it [ḥaddatha bi-hi nafsa-hu] and desired it [tamann-hu] and wished for it [aḥabba-hu].

So God sent down: “By the star when it sets: ‘Your Companion has not gone astray [ḍalla], nor is he misguided [ghawā]; Nor does he speak from his own desire [hawā].’. and when he (the Prophet) reached the verse, “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?,” Satan cast upon his tongue [alqā al-shayṭānu ‘alā lisāni-hi] because of that which he had been thinking to himself about [li-mā21 kāna yuḥaddithu bi-hi nafsa-hu] and had been desiring [yatamannā] to bring to his people: “Those high gharānīq: Indeed, their intercession is approved [tilka al-gharānīq al-‘ulā: wa-inna shafā’ata-hunna la-turtajā].”22

When Quraysh heard this they were delighted [fariḥū]. The way in which he had mentioned their gods pleased them greatly and they hearkened to him [fa-aṣākhū la-hu], while the Believers trusted their Prophet [wa-al-mu’minūn muṣaddiqūn nabiyya-hum] in regard to that which he brought them from their Lord, and did not suspect him of an error [khaṭa‘] or delusion [wahm] or lapse [zalal].

And when he reached the sajdah in the sūrah and completed the sūrah, he made the sajdah and the Muslims made the sajdah with the


20 an yalīna la-hu ba‘ḍu mā qad ghaluẓa ‘alay-hi min amri-him; Guillaume, Life of Muḥammad, 165, mistranslates this as: “if the obstacle that made his task so difficult could be removed.”

21 Guillaume reads this as lammā, “when.”

22 The text in the Tārīkh has turtajā, which probably represents a scribal error as the word is given as turtaḏā in the rest of the narrative.
sajdah of their Prophet, believing what he brought them to be true [taṣdīqan li-mā jā'a bi-hi], and in obedience to his command. And the Qurāshī and non-Qurāshī Mushrikūn present in the mosque [al-masjid] made the sajdah themselves because of what they had heard in mention of their gods [li-mā sami'ū min dhikr ālihati-him], so that there remained in the mosque neither Believer nor Mushrik who had not made the sajdah, save al-Walīd b. al-Mughirah, who was a very old man and was unable to do so, so he took a handful of soil from the valley floor and made the sajdah on it.

Then the people dispersed from the mosque. Quraysh left having been greatly pleased by what they had heard in mention of their gods, saying, “Muḥammad has mentioned our gods in the most favourable manner [bi-aḥsan al-dhikr] and has asserted in his recitation that they are the high gharānīq and that their intercession is approved [inna-hā al-gharānīq al-‘alā wa-inna shafā’ata-hunna la-turtaḍā].”

News of the sajdah reached those of the Companions of the Messenger of God who were in Abyssinia, and it was said: “Quraysh have accepted Islam”; so some men undertook to return while others remained behind. And Jibrīl came to the Messenger and said: “Muḥammad, what have you done? You have recited to the people that which I did not bring to you from God, and you have said that which He did not say to you! [yā Muḥammad mā-dhā ṣana'atā la-qad talawta ‘alā al-nās mā lam āti-ka bi-hi ‘an Allāh wa-qulta mā lam yaqul].” The Messenger of God was grieved [ḥazina] at this, and was greatly fearful of God [khāfa min Allāh khawfan kabīran].

So God sent down a Revelation and was Merciful to Him [wa-kāna bi-hi raḥīman], comforting him and lightening the burden of the matter [yu'azzī-hi wa-yukhaffiḍu ‘alay-hi al-amr], informing him that no Prophet or Messenger before him had desired as he had desired [ta-mannā ka-mā tamannā] nor wished as he had wished [aḥabba ka-mā aḥabba] but that Satan cast (something) into his desire [illā wa-al-shayṭān qad alqā ‘alā lisāni-hi], just as Satan had cast (something) onto his (the Prophet’s) tongue [ka-mā alqā ‘alā lisāni-hi], and that God then removed that which Satan had cast and established His Signs clearly [fa-nasakha Allāhu mā alqā al-shayṭānu wa-aḥkama āyāti-hi]—meaning: you (Muḥammad) are like the rest of the Prophets and Messengers. So God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he desired, Satan cast something into his

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23 In al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, this is vocalized as yuqāl.
24 In al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, this is presented as a Qur‘ānic citation, which it is not.
desire; then God removes that which Satan casts and establishes His Signs clearly—and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

So God dispelled His Prophet’s grief [ḥuzn], made him secure from that which he feared, and removed [nasakha] that which Satan had cast upon his tongue in mention of their gods—they are the high gharānīq and their intercession is approved! [inna-hā al-gharānīq al-ʿulā wa-inna shafāʿata-hunna la-turtadā]—with the words of God, the Glorious, following the mention of “al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzā, and Manāt, the third, the other”: “Should you have males, and He females? That, indeed, would be an unfair division! . . .”—meaning: crooked—“. . . Indeed, they are no more than names which you have named, you and your ancestors . . .” to His words: “to whom He wills and approves [li-man yashāʿu wa-yardā]”25; meaning: how can the intercession of your gods be of benefit with God?

And when there came from God that which removed [nasakha] what Satan had cast onto the tongue of His Prophet, Quraysh said, “Muḥammad has regretted [nadima]26 what he said about the status of your gods with God, and has changed it and brought something else.” And those two phrases [ḥarfān] which Satan had cast onto the tongue of the Messenger of God had become lodged in the mouth of every Mushrik, and they became even more iniquitous than they had been before, and even more hostile to those of Quraysh who had accepted Islam and who had followed the Messenger of God.

And those of the Messenger’s Companions who had left Abyssinia because of what had reached them about the people of Mecca having accepted Islam when they made the sajdah with the Prophet approached Mecca. When they were close to Mecca, it reached them that the conversion of the people of Mecca to Islam of which they had been speaking was false, so none of them entered Mecca except under protection or in secret.

To familiarize the reader with the incident, and to facilitate comparison with other reports, it will be useful to break the above narrative down into its component narrative elements. For the purpose of analysis, I will distinguish here between narrative units, narrative motifs, and hermeneutical elaborations. Narrative unit is the term

26 Both Guillaume and Watt translate nadima as “repent,” which is a theologically loaded word, and is badly misleading in the present context.
I am using to denote the nine structural or dramatic units that make up the plot in the accounts of the Satanic verses. These are:

1. the setting or background
2. the specific occasion
3. Satan’s intervention
4. the Satanic verses
5. the reaction of Quraysh
6. the reaction of the Muslims
7. correction
8. clarification
9. consequences

All or some of these narrative units may be present in a particular account of the incident, in any order or arrangement, by explicit presentation or by contextual implication.

**Narrative motifs** are those features of the narrative that provide the narrative units with specific content. Thus, the reaction of Quraysh may be specified by the narrative motif of the *sajdah* (prostration) of Quraysh (as above), or by a narrative motif other than the *sajdah* of Quraysh.

Narrative motifs are susceptible to a variety of **hermeneutical elaborations**. A hermeneutical elaboration is *any element of the narrative*, whether a narrative unit or narrative motif, *which serves to interpret, explicate, or valorize any other element of the narrative*. The different hermeneutical elaborations of any element in the narrative are what accord that element its meaning within the narrative in question, thus affecting the meaning of that narrative as a whole. For example, in the present report, the content of narrative unit 1—the setting for the story—is the narrative motif of the Prophet desiring an end to Quraysh’s persecution of the Muslims. This narrative motif functions as a hermeneutical elaboration for another narrative motif that itself comprises the narrative unit of Satan’s intervention (narrative unit 3, below)—namely, that Satan cast the Satanic verses onto the Prophet’s tongue as a result of his desire to be reconciled with Quraysh. In other reports, there is no mention of the Prophet’s desire to be reconciled with Quraysh as the background to the narrative; in some
cases, for example, the Prophet is simply portrayed as becoming drowsy while reciting Sūrat al-Najm, thus providing Satan with the opportunity to intervene (see Riwāyahs 24, 25, 26, and 27, below). In this latter instance, the narrative motif of the Prophet’s sleepiness serves as an alternative hermeneutical elaboration for the narrative unit of Satan’s intervention, thus conveying a very different understanding both of the nature of the Prophet’s role in precipitating Satan’s intervention and of the event as a whole. Of course, the mere absence or presence of a narrative unit may itself hermeneutically affect the narrative—that is to say, may itself function as a hermeneutical elaboration. 27

The following are the narrative and hermeneutical elements in Riwāyah 1.

NARRATIVE UNIT 1: SETTING/BACKGROUND

- **motif 1a:** Quraysh’s estrangement from the Prophet.
- **motif 1b:** the Prophet’s desire to be reconciled with Quraysh
- **motif 1c:** the Prophet’s desire to halt Quraysh’s persecution of him—“it would have pleased him if their harsh treatment of him should, in some measure, have been softened.”
- **motif 1d:** the Prophet’s further desire that Divine Revelation be the instrument by which his desire should be accomplished.

The setting and background of the Satanic verses incident within Riwāyah 1 are thus that of the Prophet’s desire to be reconciled with his estranged tribe. There is, of course, also the further question of the setting and background of Riwāyah 1 outside the self-contained text of the riwāyah itself. It was noted at the outset that al-Ṭabarī cites Riwāyah 1 in two separate works: in the sīrah section of his Tārīkh, and in his tafsīr, the Jāmi‘ al-bayān. In the Tārīkh, Riwāyah 1 appears in a series of reports on the theme of Quraysh’s opposition 27

I am using the terms narrative unit and narrative motif in a sense not dissimilar to Norman Calder, “From Midrash to Scripture: The Sacrifice of Abraham in Early Islamic Tradition,” *Le Muséon* 101 (1982) 375–402, at 397–399. Calder, however, is preoccupied with formal issues of textual origins and oral transmission, and does not consider the relationship of narrative elements to each other in terms of hermeneutical elaboration.
to and persecution of the Prophet and his followers during the Meccan period of the Prophet’s early mission; in the *tafsīr*, *Riwa'yah 1* appears solely in the commentary on Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj. The significance of this larger textual context will be taken up repeatedly in the course of the book. For the present, it should be noted that *motifs 1b, 1c*, and *1d* function as a hermeneutical elaboration for *narrative unit 3* (“Satan’s intervention”), below.

Also, through the use of the verb *tamannā*, *motifs 1b, c, and d* present a preparatory linking phrase and gloss for Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj—we know from *motifs 1b, 1c*, and *1d* that the verb *tamannā* and the noun *umniyyah* in Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj mean “desire” and not “recitation” (the other standard meaning of *tamannā / umniyyah*).

*Motifs 1b, 1c, and 1d* thus function also as a hermeneutical elaboration for *motif 8a*, below (the Revelation of Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj).

**NARRATIVE UNIT 2: OCCASION**

*motif 2a:* the Revelation of Sūrat al-Najm: “Your companion has not gone astray [*dalla*], nor is he misguided [*ghawā*]: Nor does he speak from his own desire [*hawā*]”

*motif 2b:* the recitation by the Prophet of Sūrat al-Najm . . .

*motif 2c:* . . . in the presence of the Mushrikūn . . .

*motif 2d:* . . . at the Ka’bah

In *Riwa'yah 1*, the Satanic verses incident takes place on the occasion of the Revelation to the Prophet of Sūrah al-Najm. From the logic of narrative, it appears that Sūrah al-Najm is sent down when the Prophet is at the Ka’bah (referred to, anachronistically, as “the mosque”) in the presence of Quraysh), and that he recites the Sūrah out loud as it is revealed. The second and third verses of Surah al-Najm—“Your Companion has not gone astray, nor is he misguided: Nor does he speak from his own desire”—are among the Qur’ānic verses on the basis of which the principle of *‘iṣmat al-anbiyā*’ is established. By citing the verses in full (something that, as will be seen, is done only in the reports from Muḥammad b. Ka‘b al-Quraẓī), *motif 2a* functions as a hermeneutical elaboration for *motifs 6a and 6b*, below (the Muslims’ conviction in the Prophet reliably transmitting Divine Revelation; and, specifically, their conviction that there was
no possibility of an error [khaṭa’], delusion [wahmi], or lapse [zalal] on the part of the Prophet). More significantly, the express citation of Qur’ān 53:2–3 al-Najm, “Your companion has not gone astray, nor is he misguided: Nor does he speak from his own desire,” means that the whole narrative of the Satanic verses incident—an exemplary incident of Prophetic error—functions here as a hermeneutical elaboration of these very verses.

The text of Surat al-Najm leading up to the Satanic intervention is not quoted in full in the narrative. It is:

By the star when it sets!
Your companion has not gone astray; nor is he misguided;
Nor does he speak from his own desire;
Indeed, it is none other than an inspiration inspired,
Taught by a great force,
One possessed of power, who becomes manifest,
He was upon the highest horizon,
Then he drew near, and descended,
Until he was but two-bow lengths away—or closer:
Thus did God inspire His servant with that which He inspired him!

The heart did not disbelieve that which it saw:
Would you, then, dispute with him that which he saw?
For, indeed, he saw him alight again,
At the lote-tree of the farthest limit,
By it: the garden of refuge.
When that which overwhelms everything overwhelmed the lote-tree,
The eye did not waver, nor did it stray:
Truly he saw the Greatest Signs of his Lord!
Have you seen al-Lāt, and al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt, the third, the other . . .

When he (the Prophet) reached the verse, “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other.”

Al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt are three female deities who were extensively worshipped during the pre-Islamic period in a vast geographical triangle between Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. Toufic Fahd describes them as the three most venerated deities of the pre-Islamic pantheon . . . The deep attachment felt by the Thaḳīf towards al-Lāt, the Aws and the Khazraḏj towards Manāt and the Ҡuraysh towards al-‘Uzzā, constituted the greatest obstacle in the path of the peaceful implantation of Islam in the regions of the Ḥidjāz. 29

Al-Lāt is the feminine form of al-Lāh / Allāh: the name means, simply, “the goddess”—and al-Lāt was probably “the most famous goddess of the Arabs in pre-Islamic times.” 30 There is profuse evidence of her cult throughout western Arabia from Yemen to Palmyra. 31 It is evident from the abundant surviving statuary that in Syria (most famously, at Palmyra and Busrah al-Shām) and Iraq (most famously, at Ḥatrā’) 32 she was widely worshipped in the form of Athena, 33 but it is not clear to what extent this was the case in the Ḩijāz—although both

32 See the cover illustration of this book.
the early Islamic historical tradition and excavated artifacts provide “evidence of the import of sculptures into Arabia from early times as well as exposure to external influences that led to the formulation of an indigenous sculpture tradition.” The major shrine of al-Lāt in the Ḥijāz was at al-Ṭā’īf, where she was worshipped as a carved white rock that the literary evidence suggests was “a standing female figure modeled in a naturalistic style.” The shrine of al-Lāt at al-Ṭā’īf was eventually destroyed when the town submitted to the Prophet a year before his death. The nineteenth-century travelers James Hamilton and Charles Doughty and in the early twentieth century Eldon Rutter were separately shown in al-Ṭā’īf a rock that locals regarded as the remains of the statue of al-Lāt (Doughty published a sketch of the rock). The stone is no longer in situ, having since apparently fallen victim to the general campaign of Saudi-Wahhābī vandalism. The memory of the worship of al-Lāt is, remarkably, still preserved in the name of an important tribe in contemporary Jordan: the Āl ‘Abd al-Lāt.

Al-‘Uzzā is the feminine of “al-‘Azīz,” “the Mighty,” one of the ninety-nine Qur’ānic attributes of Allāh. There is widespread archaeological evidence of her cult in central, western, and northern Arabia (most famously, at Petra), and the literary sources tell us that she was apparently the leading female deity of Quraysh (Muḥammad is controversially remembered as having sacrificed a white sheep to
al-ʿUzzā “while I was a follower of the religion of my people”). 38 In the northern Arab regions, some of her surviving statuary takes the recognizable iconography of the Greek goddess Aphrodite, while other examples are in the form of betyls (Quraysh are also remembered as going into battle carrying statues of al-ʿUzzā and of al-Lāt). 39 Particularly fascinating in this context is the mention in a ninth-century Greek Orthodox ritual abjuration text of the historical worship of a stone relief of Aphrodite at Mecca. 40 A stone remembered as the remains of a statue of al-ʿUzzā was sketched by Doughty in late nineteenth-century al-Ṭāʾif, but no longer exists. 41

Manāt, apparently the goddess of Fate, or Nemesis, was probably the oldest of these Arab female deities, and similarly worshipped throughout western Arabia (there is, for example, archaeological evidence of her cult from Qaryat al-Faw, and from al-ʿUlā, both approximately equidistant from Mecca in opposite directions). She was reportedly the particular deity of the Khazraj and Aws tribes of Yathrib (pre-Islamic Madīnah), the latter being known as Aws Manāt. Little statuary of Manāt survives, but in the reliefs from Palmyra she appears as a female figure carrying a measuring rod, and flanked by a crescent moon. 42

I have translated the verb *ra’ā* in the phrase *a fa-ra’aytum* as “to see,” and not, as it is sometimes rendered, “to consider.” My reasoning is straightforward and is both internal and external to the text of the Qur’ān: first, the verb *ra’ā* used with the meaning “to see” occurs four times in the preceding eight verses of Sūrat al-Najm; and second, al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt were idols—that is to say, physical objects—which Quraysh would, in the first instance, see.

**motif 3b:** Satan cast (*alqā al-shayṭān*) words on to the Prophet’s tongue (*‘ulā lisāni-hi*).

The use of the phrase *alqā al-shayṭān* also functions as a preparatory link-word and gloss for Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj, and hence as a hermeneutical elaboration for **motif 8a**, below. We should note here that *al-shayṭān* (Satan) of the Qur’ān is the master “evil spirit, de-

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43 See, for example, Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’ān* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980), 813.

mon, devil” whose primary role is to lead the human being away from the Divine path.

Among his tools to do this are a number of vocal attributes, he calls (XXXI, 21), simply speaks (XIV, 22, LIX, 16) promises (II, 268), and whispers (VII, 20, XX, 120; see also L, 16, CXIV, 4–5). The subtlety of the evil influence is especially suggested by the onomatopoeic waswasa (‘whisper’) in its root repetition, in its insistence that Satan does not just call or speak but comes over and over again.46

**motif 3c:** ... as a result of the Prophet’s desire to reconcile with Quraysh.

This motif, which is not present in all the reports, serves as a hermeneutical elaboration for **motif 3b** (Satan’s intervention) and, effectively, for the Satanic verses incident as a whole.

**NARRATIVE UNIT 4: THE SATANIC VERSES**

**motif 4a:** the wording: tilka al-gharānīq al-‘ulā: wa-inna shafā’ata-hunna la-turtaḏā; “Those high gharānīq: Indeed, their intercession is approved!”

It will be seen that the wording of the Satanic verses varies from riwāyah to riwāyah; however, the characterization of al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt as gharānīq (or as gharānīqah) is a consistent feature of the various texts of the Satanic verses, and appears in every full citation of the verses. I have left the terms gharānīq and gharānīqah untranslated throughout this study. This is because the word gharānīq, which is a plural noun, has three meanings, all of which are applicable in the present context.47 The first meaning presents the noun gharānīq (and,

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45 This is the gloss given in the entry “Shayṭān,” EI2.
46 A. Rippin, “Shayṭān 2. In the Qur‘ān and Islamic Lore,” EI2 (the references in the quotation are, of course, to the Qur‘ān).
much less commonly, gharānīqah) as the plural of ghurnayq, ghurnūq, or ghirmawq—“a certain aquatic bird,” generally taken to be a karkī or crane, most likely either the “Numidian or crowned crane” (bale- arica pavonina), or the “Demoiselle crane” (anthropoides virgo). The


word gharānīq appears with this meaning in pre-Islamic poetry. In this meaning, the phrase al-gharānīq al-‘ulā—“the high cranes”—is understood as expressing the idea that the deities fly up to heaven to intercede with Allāh. Certainly, “high-flying cranes” present a spectacular sight: “Migrating cranes traveling high in the air in a strong V or a long extended echelon are a beautiful sight. When traveling any distance, as in their long migrations, they frequently fly at considerable altitudes, reportedly as high as 2 miles.”

The second meaning gives gharānīq and gharāniqah as the plural of all of ghurnayq, ghirnayq, ghurnūq, ghirnawq, ghirniq, ghirnāq, and ghirawnaq, meaning “a youth white, or fair, tender, having beau-

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51 ‘They claimed that the idols brought them closer to Allāh and interceded for them; hence they were likened to birds which fly up and soar high in the sky [fa-shubbihat bi-al-ṭuyūr allatī ta’lū fi al-samā’ wa-tartaﬁ’]”; see Majd al-Dīn al-Mubārak b. Muḥammad Ibn Ṭabīb (1149–1210), al-Nihāyah fī gharib al-ḥadīth wa-al-athar (Cairo: al-Maṭba’ah al-‘Uthmāniyyah, 1311h), 3160. It is fascinating to note here that the great Sufi Muḥy al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (1165–1240) might well have used the phrase ghirnīq/gharānīq rabbi (“the gharānīq of my Lord”) to designate the agent of Prophetic inspiration; see Gerald T. Elmore, Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time: Ibn al-ʿArabī’s Book of the Fabulous Gryphon (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 229, footnote 17 (the mention of the variant readings in two of the manuscripts), and 457.

52 The phrase al-gharānīq al-‘ulā is regularly translated as “the high-flying cranes.”

53 Austin, Birds of the World, 104.
tiful hair, and comely.”54 There are several instances of gharānīq being used in this sense in first-century prose and poetry.55 Gharānīq is also given as a possible plural for ghurāniqah and ghurānīq (which are otherwise considered both singular and plural), meaning, specifically, “a shapely young woman [shābbah mumtali’ah],”56 a usage that also appears in the early poetry.57 Given the fact that al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzā, and Manāt were female deities represented in naturalistic figurative statuary—and that they were, as we shall see, viewed as the daughters of Allāh—the characterization of them as comely young women is readily understandable and convincing. It is highly instructive here to note a report attributed to ʿAbd Allāh Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68, for whom see Riwāyahs 35–44, below)—and entirely unrelated to the Satanic verses incident—which links these two meanings of gharānīq by describing “a white ghurnūq bird resembling an Egyptian woman [ṭāʾir abyaḍ ghurnūq ka-anna-hu qibṭiyyah].”58

54 Lane, Lexicon, 2253.
56 Thus Ibn Manẓūr, who says, “it is possible that al-gharānīq in the story is the plural of al-ghurāniq which means ‘beautiful’”; Lisān al-ʿarab, 5:32. Note the suggestive Levantine colloquialism, arnaqaḥ, plural: arānīq, with the same meaning of “svelte young woman”; cited by Fahd, Le Panthéon de l’Arabie, 90, footnote 1. It is also suggestive to note, in the context of this second meaning of gharānīq, that the noun gharmaqah means “an amorous playing with the eyes [ghazal al-ʿaynayn]”; Lane, Lexicon, 2253, following al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād.
58 Ibn Manẓūr, Lisān al-ʿarab, 5:32; also Fattānī Gujarātī, Majmaʿ biḥār al-anwār, 3:20. This important report was missed by Ilse Lichtenstadter in her exploration of the relationship between these two meanings of gharānīq (“water fowl” and
The third meaning of gharānīq is “a kind of tree, which is probably a variety of jojoba (awsaj); especially the young and vigorous shoots that emerge from the trunk of this tree, ‘likened to a tender youth because of their freshness and beauty.’” Toufic Fahd regards this meaning as “well-suited to the religious context of the Arabs of the Hijāz” given the widespread worship of sacred trees (al-‘Uzzā is expressly mentioned as having been worshipped in this form). This usage also appears in the early poetry; however, it should be noted that no subsequent source takes up this meaning of gharānīq in relation to the Satanic verses.

The theological concession that is made to Quraysh accords their deities the power of intercession (shafā’ah)—meaning intercession with Allāh. The Qur’ān presents the Meccans as believing in Allāh as the supreme deity, but worshipping, alongside Allāh, lesser intercessionary deities: “And they worship, side by side with Allāh, that which neither harms nor benefits them, and they say: These are our intercessors [shufa’ā] with Allāh.” It is apparently to this doctrine of intercession that the concession is being made. The Qur’ān expressly accords the power of intercession with Allāh only to those to whom Allāh has granted permission to intercede, and rejects any such claim from any other party.

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59 Fahd, Le Panthéon de l’Arabie, 90.
60 See the verse of Abū ‘Amr, wa-lā zāla yusnā sidru-hu wa-gharāniqu-hu, cited by al-Ṣaghānī (d. 650), al-Takmilah, 5:138.
61 Qur’ān 10:18 Yūnus. See also Qur’ān 36:23 Yā Sin, where a character in a parable says, “Should I take deities beside Him? If the Merciful intends to harm me, their intercession will avail me nothing, nor can they save me [a-attakhidhu min dūni-hi ālihatan in yurid-ni al-raḥmānu bi-ḍurrin lā-tughni ‘an-nī shafā’atu-hum shay’an wa-lā yunqidhūn].” For the status of Allāh as supreme deity, including a discussion of the Satanic verses incident within the context of this concept, see W. Montgomery Watt, “The ‘High God’ in Pre-Islamic Mecca,” Correspondance d’Orient 11 (1970), 499–505, at 501; see further W. Montgomery Watt, “The Qur’ān and Belief in a ‘High God,’” Der Islam 56 (1979), 205–211; on the pre-Islamic worship of Allāh, see Krone, Die altarabische Gottheit al-Lāt, 457–491.
62 See, for example, Qur’ān 10:3 Yūnus—“There is no intercessor save after his leave [mā min shaft‘in illā min ba’di idhni-hi]”; also Qur’ān 20:109 Ṭāhā, Qur’ān 21:28 al-Anbiyā’, and Qur’ān 34:23 Saba’. For a discussion of the Qur’ānic stance vis-à-vis the intercessionary claims on Allāh of the pre-Islamic deities, see Alford T. Welch, “Allah and Other Supernatural Beings: The Emergence of the Qur’ānic Doctrine of Tawḥid,” Journal of the American Academy of Religion Thematic Issue
Hishām Ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. 204), the son of the mufassir al-Kalbī cited in Riwāyah 23, below, mentioned a phrase similar to the various versions of the Satanic verses as having been a pre-Islamic talbiyah (ritual invocation) of Quraysh:

Quraysh used to circumambulate the Ka'bah and say: wa-al-Lāt wa-al-'Uzzā wa-Manāt al-thālithah al-ukhrā fa-inna-hunna al-gharānīq al-ulā wa-inna shafā'ata-hunna la-turtajā [Al-Lāt and al-'Uzza and Manāt, the third, the other! Indeed, they are the high gharānīq! And, indeed, their intercession is to be hoped for!].

If al-Kalbī’s report of this talbiyah in the form of the words of the Satanic verses, which is the only association of the word gharānīq with al-Lāt, al-'Uzza, and Manāt that does not derive from the incident itself, and which does not appear in any other source, is historically accurate, then the Prophet’s immediate Qurayshī audience would have understood him to be incorporating their talbiyah into his Divine Recitation (Qur'ān). Also, any later persons aware of this tradition would have understood the accounts of the Satanic verses incident to be presenting the Prophet as uttering the words of a Jāhilī talbiyah of Quraysh. However, it is important to note that there seems to be no evidence of any subsequent commentator interpreting the incident with reference to this reported talbiyah.64

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63 This may be what is intended by the incorrect statement “Gharaniq is a hapax legomenon,” in the Wikipedia.com entry “Satanic Verses.” See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satanic_Verses (viewed November 1, 2013).

64 See Abū al-Mundhir Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī, Kitāb al-aṣnām, ed. Ahīmad Zakī (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1924), 19. Uri Rubin takes Ibn al-Kalbī’s report as representing historical fact and interprets the Muslim understanding accordingly: “When imported from the pre-Islamic into the Islamic sphere of Muḥammad’s own life, this talbiyah became Satan’s words”; Eye of the Beholder, 159. Several other remembered talbiyāhs posit a relationship between the supreme deity, Allāh or al-Raḥmān, and the deities of the Satanic verses. The talbiyah of the Banū Ḥums invokes Allāh as “Lord of the third, the other, Lord of al-Lāt and ‘Uzza,” the talbiyah of the Banū Madhḥij invokes Allāh as “Lord of al-Lāt and ‘Uzza,” while that of Thaqīf has “al-Lāt and al-‘Uzza are in Your hands”; see the long list of talbiyāhs appended, probably by a scribe in the fourth century, to the Tafsīr of Muqātil b. Sulaymān al-Balkhī (d. 150; for whom see Riwāyahs 27 to 30, below), studied by M. J. Kister, “Labbayka, allāhumma, labbayka . . . On a Monotheistic Aspect of a Jahiliyya Practice,” Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam 2 (1980), 33–
NARRATIVE UNIT 5: THE REACTION OF QURAYSH

motif 5a: The sajdah (prostration) of the Mushrikūn accompanying the sajdah of the Muslims.

The reason for the sajdah of the Muslims is that the final verse of Sūrat al-Najm consists of the instruction “So prostrate yourselves to Allāh and worship him [fa-usjudū li-Allāhi wa-u‘budū].”\(^{65}\) The reason for the sajdah of the Mushrikūn is given as:

motif 5b: “what they had heard in mention of their gods.”

motif 5c: the description of a partial sajdah on the part of one Mushrik unable to make the sajdah fully.

motif 5d: here, the Mushrik is named as al-Walīd b. al-Mughīrah, the chief of the Banū Makhzūm clan of Quraysh, a hostile opponent of Muḥammad’s preaching who actively mocked and reviled the Prophet.

motif 5e: Quraysh’s joy at the Prophet’s praise of their goddesses.

NARRATIVE UNIT 6: THE REACTION OF THE MUSLIMS

motif 6a: the conviction of the Muslims in the Prophet as reliably transmitting Divine Revelation.

motif 6b: detailing of the Muslims’ conviction that there was no possibility of an error (khaṭa’), delusion (wahm), or lapse (zalal) on the part of the Prophet.

Through motif 6b, the narrative strongly appears to relate the incident directly to the question of ‘iṣmat al-anbiyā’ (“protection of the Prophets”). Although the report does not explicitly use the terms ‘iṣmah or ma’ṣūm, the later theological debate over ‘iṣmah in the transmission

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of Revelation dealt specifically with the question of the Prophet’s susceptibility to error (khaṭa‘), delusion (wahm), or lapses (zalal).\textsuperscript{66}

\textit{motif 6c:} News of the sajdah of Quraysh reaches the Emigrants in Abyssinia.

This functions as a hermeneutical element for \textit{motif 9b}, below (the return of the Emigrants from Abyssinia). The flight of the weakest and most defenseless of Muḥammad’s followers to Abyssinia to escape the persecution by Quraysh is generally reported to have begun in the month of Rajab in the fifth year of the Prophetic mission (i.e., five years after Muḥammad’s Call to Prophethood). Al-Ṭabarī reports that the refugees numbered eighty-two men, some of whom were accompanied by their families.\textsuperscript{67} While the Satanic verses incident itself is not dated by al-Ṭabarī, clearly it takes place after the Migration to Abyssinia.

\textsuperscript{66} See Madelung, “‘Iṣma.” That the terms zalal and khaṭa‘ were associated with the concept of ‘iṣmah as early as the first century is suggested by a report that claims to preserve the text of a letter in which the Umayyad governor al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (d. 95) addresses the Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān as al-ma‘ṣūm min khaṭal [for which read: khaṭa‘] al-qawl wa-zalal al-fiʾl (“protected from errors of speech and lapses of action”); Ibn ‘Abd Rabbi-hi (d. 327), Kitāb al-‘iḥād al-farīd, ed. Ahmad Amin Ahmad al-Za‘yn and Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī (Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta’līm wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Nashr, 1965), 5:25, cited in Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, \textit{God’s Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 56. Khaṭal—“he erred or was wrong in his speech,” Lane, \textit{Lexicon}, 2:767—has the same meaning as khaṭa‘, and better rhyme in the present context. M. M. Bravmann has argued, on the basis of pre-Islamic poetry and a report of a speech given by Abū Bakr on the day after the Prophet’s death, that the concept that God had protected (‘aṣama) Muḥammad from “moral stumblings, sins (āfāt)” is a “genuine Arab, pre-Islamic popular motif, and the Islamic idea which applies this characteristic to Muḥammad and the prophets preceding him, is based on this pre-Islamic concept”; see his “The Origin of the Principle of ‘Ismah: ‘Muḥammad’s Immunity from Sin,’” \textit{Le Muséon} 88 (1975), 221–225, at 224 and 221. However, Bravmann is taking at face value just one of several “widely divergent” versions of Abū Bakr’s speech, the others of which do not contain the phrase in question; see the references given in Fred M. Donner (translator), \textit{The History of al-Ṭabarī Volume X: The Conquest of Arabia} (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 11, footnote 64. There is, however, another report of a speech by Abū Bakr in which the Prophet is described as “Protected [ma‘ṣūm] from Satan,” for which see Volume 2, Chapter 1.

NARRATIVE UNIT 7: CORRECTION

motif 7a: Jibrīl’s visiting the Prophet to apprise him of Satan’s intervention.

motif 7b: Jibrīl disclaims responsibility for the Satanic verses.

motif 7c: Jibrīl explicitly states the nature of the Prophet’s error.

Motifs 7b and 7c are contained in Jibrīl’s words to the Prophet: “You have recited to the people that which I did not bring to you from God, and you have said that which He did not say to you!”

Narrative unit 7 functions as a hermeneutical elaboration for narrative unit 3, making it explicit that the phrase “Satan cast upon his tongue [alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi]” means that the Prophet himself recited the Satanic verses.

motif 7d: the Prophet’s sorrow and fear at learning what had happened.

The sorrow and fear of the Prophet are a hermeneutical elaboration for motif 8a, below, the Revelation of Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj.

The inclusion or exclusion of narrative unit 7: correction—where the fact of Prophetic error in the transmission of Divine Revelation is confirmed by Divine agency—from the narrative of the Satanic verses incident became crucial to the hermeneutic elaboration of the Satanic verses incident—as will be seen in this chapter.

NARRATIVE UNIT 8: CLARIFICATION

motif 8a: The Revelation by God of Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj to comfort the Prophet and explain the Divine rationale behind what happened.

Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj—“We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he desired, Satan cast something into his desire; then God removes that which Satan casts and establishes His Signs clearly—and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise”—is a hermeneu-

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68 On Jibrīl as the agent of Divine Revelation, see J. Pedersen, “Djabrā’il,” EI2.
69 wa-mā arsalnā min qabli-ka min rasūlin wa-lā nabiyyin illā idhā tamannā alqā al-
tical elaboration for the whole narrative, just as the whole narrative is a hermeneutical elaboration for Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj. Further, the fact that the narrative of the Satanic verses incident opens here with Qur’ān 53:19 al-Najm, “By the star when it sets: your Companion has not gone astray, nor is he misguided” (motif 2a), and closes with Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj, means also that Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj appears here as a hermeneutical elaboration of Qur’ān 53:19 al-Najm whereby the Divine pronouncement in Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj qualifies the Divine pronouncement in Qur’ān 53:19 al-Najm. Also, as noted above, the pivotal verb *tamānnā* (verbal noun: *umniyyah*) in Qur’ān 22:52 has two main meanings: “to desire” and “to recite.” Motifs 1b, c, and d have already presented a preparatory gloss for *tamānnā* and *umniyyah* in Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj to mean “desire” and not “recitation.”

**motif 8b:** The Revelation by God of abrogating verses, here Qur’ān 53:21–26 al-Najm.

The abrogating verses are not cited in full in the narrative. They are:

Should you have males, and He females?
That, indeed, would be an unfair division!
Indeed, they are no more than names which you have named, you and your ancestors! Allāh has not sent down any authority with them. Indeed, they follow nothing but conjecture and that which their souls desire [*mā tahwā` al-anfusu*], when guidance has come to them from their Lord!
Is it for man to have what he desires [*mā tamānnā*]?
To God belongs the First and the Last!
However many angels there are in the heavens, their intercession [*shafā’atu-hum*] is of no benefit, except after Allāh permits this to whom He wills and approves.70

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The fact of there being abrogating verses is a hermeneutical elaboration for the phrase in Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj: fa-yansakh Allāh (“then God removes”). Most accounts do not distinguish between explication and abrogating verses. The majority of them give Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj as the only verse related to the incident, serving both explication and abrogatory functions. The place of the formal or technical concept of naskh—the idea of the supercession of one Divine pronouncement by another71—in the history of the Satanic verses incident will emerge in the course of this study. The importance of Qur’ān 53:21–26 being revealed only later as abrogatory verses is that this implies that these verses were not present in the original Revelation of Sūrat al-Najm.

Qur’ān 53:21–26 al-Najm contains a number of important elements. The first is the negation of the ascription of daughters to Allāh: “Should you have males [i.e., sons], and He females [i.e., daughters]?” In the context of the Satanic verses narrative, the reference to Allāh’s daughters is clearly to be taken as pointing to ascription of such a status to al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzā, and Manāt.72 Second, the passage is a forceful negation of Quraysh’s claims of Divine authority for their deities: “they are no more than names which you have named, you and your ancestors! Allāh has not sent down any authority with them.” Specifically, the passage denies the right of intercession [shafāʿah] that was conceded in the Satanic verses: “However many angels there are in the heavens, their intercession [shafāʿatu-hum] is of no benefit, except after Allāh permits this to whom He wills and approves.” The linking of intercession with angels in this passage would seem to suggest a relationship between the angels and the three deities whose intercession is now being denied. This relationship is more explicitly brought out in Riwāyah 28, below, and will thus be taken up in detail there. Finally, attention should be drawn to the presence of the verb tamannā in the verse, “Is it for man to have what he desires [tamannā]?, which is, of course, the same verb as in Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj, “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he desired [tamannā], Satan cast something into his desire”; and of the verb hawā

71 See J. Burton, “Abrogation,” EQ.
in the verse, “they follow nothing but conjecture and that which their souls desire [mā tahwā al-anfusu],” which is the same verb as used in reference to the Prophet at the opening of Sūrat al-Najm: “Nor does he speak from his own desire [hawā].”

NARRATIVE UNIT 9: CONSEQUENCES

motif 9a: Quraysh intensify persecution.

motif 9b: return of some Muslims from Abyssinia.

In some reports, motif 9b is given at the beginning of the narrative, with the whole narrative of the incident functioning as a hermeneutical elaboration for the return of some of the Muslim refugees from Abyssinia. Note that no date is given in the narrative for the return of the refugees—the question of the timetable of events would be taken up by modern commentators in rejecting the facticity of the incident.

The hermeneutical significance of the deployment of the above motifs 1a to 9b within and across the respective narratives of the incident and their significance to the eventual problematization of the Satanic verses incident will become apparent during the course of this chapter.

Riwāyah 1 presents the Satanic verses incident as a hermeneutical elaboration of the meaning of, and the relationship between, God’s words, “Your companion has not gone astray, nor is he misguided: Nor does he speak from his own desire,” and His words, “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he desired, Satan cast something into his desire; then God removes that which Satan casts and establishes His Signs clearly—and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise,” whereby the latter Divine pronouncement is seen as qualifying the former through the narrative of the Satanic verses incident. The hermeneutical elaboration of the Satanic verses incident in Riwāyah 1 may be summarized as follows. The Prophet desired to halt Quraysh’s persecution of the Muslims through the instrument of Divine Revelation. This desire on the part of the Prophet enabled Satan to cast upon his tongue verses in praise of the goddesses of Quraysh that the Prophet, who was hoping for just such verses, took as Divine Revelation and recited as such. The Prophet remained unaware of his transgression until corrected by Jibril.
**Riwayah 2**: Abū Ma'shar’s Report from Muḥammad b. Ka'b and Muḥammad b. Qays

**Riwayah 2** is given by al-Ṭabarī in both his Jāmiʿ al-bayān (in the commentary on Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥajj) and his Tārīkh, with the following isnād:⁷³


Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911) adduces a foreshortened version of this report in the commentary on Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥajj in his massive Qurʾān commentary, al-Durr al-manṭhūr, citing as his sources al-Ṭabarī and Sa’īd b. Manṣūr al-Balkhī al-Makkī (d. 227).⁷⁴ Al-Suyūṭī’s immediate source for the latter citation is evidently the Sunan of Sa’īd b. Manṣūr, but the original source is far more likely to have been Sa’īd b. Manṣūr’s Tafsīr.⁷⁵ While al-Suyūṭī does not give

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⁷⁴ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, al-Durr al-manṭhūr fī al-tafsīr bi al-maṭhūr (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1983), 6:67. As the title indicates, the Durr is entirely a tafsīr bi-al-maṭhūr—that is, a Qurʾān commentary made up of reports compiled from earlier works.
⁷⁵ Al-Suyūṭī provides the title of each book he used in compiling al-Durr al-manṭhūr on the first occasion that he draws upon it. That al-Suyūṭī’s immediate textual source for materials from Sa’īd b. Manṣūr was the latter’s Sunan (also known as his Muṣannaf) is indicated at Durr, 1:14; indeed, in the list of sources for his al-Itqān fī ‘ulūm al-Qurʾān, al-Suyūṭī states expressly that the Tafsīr of Sa’īd b. Manṣūr is “a part of his Sunan”; see al-Itqān fī ‘ulūm al-Qurʾān, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-‘Aṣriyyah, 1988), 1:18. Elsewhere, al-Suyūṭī records having prepared from the Sunan of Sa’īd b. Manṣūr a selection that he called al-Muntaqā min Sunan Sa’īd ibn Manṣūr; see al-Suyūṭī’s autobiography, Kitāb al-taḥadduth bi-ni’mat Allāh, ed.Elizabeth Sartain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 127. However, the version of Sa’īd b. Manṣūr’s Sunan used by al-Suyūṭī does not appear to have been identical with the one that partially survives today in a unique manuscript held in Riyadh in the private possession of Sa’d b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl Ḥumayyid, partially edited and published by the owner as Sunan Sa’īd b. Manṣūr (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣumayr, 1993). While the extant manuscript contains an unusually lengthy Kitāb al-tafsīr, the Kitāb al-tafsīr does not seem to contain any report on the Satanic verses incident (I have checked the commentary on Sūrat al-Ḥajj, Sūrat al-Isrā’, and Sūrat al-Najm). Also, a com-
an isnād linking Saʿīd b. Maṣūr to al-Quraẓī and Muḥammad b. Qays, since the biographical dictionaries record that Saʿīd b. Maṣūr transmitted directly from Abū Maʿṣhar, the second link in the foregoing chain, the isnād is very probably:


The first-century Medinese authorities with whom this report originates are Muḥammad b. Kaʿb al-Quraẓī, discussed in the analysis of Riwāyah 1, and Muḥammad b. Qays. The report is prefaced with the phrase qālā (“the two of them said”), meaning that this should be taken as a collective isnād in which the wording of the report either is a collation of two separate but similar accounts or adopts the wording of one of the accounts, as the two do not contradict each other in meaning.

76 That Abū Maʿṣhar is the link between Saʿīd b. Maṣūr and Muḥammad b. Kaʿb in the isnād for Riwāyah 2 is supported by the appearance of the chain Saʿīd b. Maṣūr ← Abū Maʿṣhar ← Muḥammad b. Kaʿb elsewhere in Saʿīd b. Maṣūr’s Kitāb al-tafsīr; see, for example, MS Riyadh, Saʿīd Āl Ḥumayyid, f. 177.
Muḥammad b. Qays was a Medinese who died around 126 and was a source also for Ibn Isḥāq.\textsuperscript{77} The sources tell us that he was a qāṣṣ, which in the Umayyad period designated a public preacher whose primary activity “centered . . . on the teaching of the Qurʾān (where the qāṣṣ would recite passages from it after prayers), and particularly on its interpretation, to aid the simple masses in understanding it.”\textsuperscript{78} Expounding the meaning of the Qurʾān required the presentation of contextualizing and explicative narratives; that the term qiṣṣah (“narrative”) should have been used for these accounts—and hence the term qāṣṣ (“narrator;” pl. quṣṣāṣ) for the preachers—is unsurprising given the Qurʾānic usages of term, most of which denote reports and accounts of past nations, particularly accounts of Prophets and Messengers, which in general convey admonitions or proofs or miracles which remind people of the past and aim at directing them to the Divine paradigm or Divine Law.\textsuperscript{79}

The more scholarly quṣṣāṣ were, apparently, among the most learned of the early Muslims in regard to the Qurʾān and its exegesis. As such, it is instructive to note of Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Quraẓī that it was simultaneously said of him that he “acted as a qāṣṣ in the mosque at Rabadḥah [kāna yaqṣṣ fī al-masjid],” and that his seance in the mosque was made up of “the most learned people in tafsīr [kāna li-Muḥammad ibn Ka'b julasā' min a'lam al-nās bi-al-tafsīr].”\textsuperscript{80} Two more of the most important first-century mufassirs who appear in this study, Mujāhid b. Jābir (d. 102) and Qatādah b. Di'āmah (60–117),


\textsuperscript{78} On the qāṣṣ, see Khalil 'Athamina, “Al-qaṣṣ: Its Emergence, Religious Origin and Its Socio-Political Impact on Early Muslim Society,” Studia Islamica 76 (1992), 53–74; the quotation is at 59; and Jamāl Muḥammad Dā'ūd Jūdah, “al-Qaṣṣ wa-al-quṣṣāṣ fī saḍr al-islām,” Dirāsāt Tārīkhiyyah 33/34 (1989), 105–141. For a prodigious example of the qāṣṣ as public-preacher and exegete, see the account of Mūsā al-Uswārī and 'Amr b. Qā'id al-Uswārī given in Goldziher, Muslim Studies, 153; also 'Athamina, “Al-qaṣṣ,” 61.

\textsuperscript{79} Jūdah, “al-Qaṣṣ wa-al-quṣṣāṣ,” 105.

\textsuperscript{80} Al-Dhahābī, Sīyar, 5:56.
are both also designated in the sources as qāṣṣ. 81 Both Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Quraẓī and Muḥammad b. Qays, who is remembered as one of the great orators (khaṭīb, pl. kuṭabā’) of early Islam, 82 were qāṣṣ in the employ of the exemplarily pious and learned Umayyad caliph ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz—indeed, Muḥammad b. Qays seems to have been the personal “qāṣṣ of ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz.” 83 They would thus seem to fill the characterization of the early qussāṣ as “people with a complete religious education, almost always with a reputation for honesty who are able to attract the attention of the people thanks to their oratorical abilities.” 84 But despite this, the Ḥadīth scholars deemed Muḥammad b. Qays—as they did Muḥammad b. Ka’b—as an unreliable transmitter. In fact, this is unsurprising, as the Ḥadīth movement took an especially dim view of the qussāṣ—as is exemplified in the dictum cited already in the third century of Islam by Muslim b. Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875) in the introduction to his canonical Ḥadīth collection, the Ṣaḥīḥ, “Do not seek the company of the qussāṣ!,” 85 and supported by a number of Ḥadīths condemning the ignorance and misguidedness of the qussāṣ. The historical growth of this attitude may be seen in the sixth-century Kitāb al-quṣṣāṣ wa-al-mudhakkirīn of the Baghdādī Ḥānbalī scholar Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597), which cautions precisely against contemporary qussāṣ who teach materials not sanctioned by Ḥadīth methodology (including the Satanic verses incident). 86 The attitude of

81 This is noted in regard to Mujāhid b. Jabr (for whom see Riwāyahs 31 to 33, below), by Michael Lecker, “King Ibn Ubayy and the Qussāṣ,” in Herbert Berg (ed.), Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 29–72, at 72; and in regard to Qatādah b. Di‘āmah (for whom see Riwāyahs 24 to 30, below) by Jūdah, “al-Qaṣaṣ wa-al-quṣṣāṣ,” 113–114.


83 For his designation as qaṣṣ ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, see Ibn ʿAsākir, Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq (also noted by Lecker, “King Ibn Ubayy and the Qussāṣ,” 72), where it is further stated that Muḥammad b. Qays was with ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz on the day he ascended to the caliphate; for Muḥammad b. Ka’b, see Jūdah, “al-Qaṣaṣ wa-al-qussāṣ,” 111–112, where Jūdah is extrapolating from Muḥammad b. Ka’b’s account of his personal contact with the caliph in al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 1:270.

84 Roberto Tottoli, Biblical Prophets in the Qurʾān and Muslim Literature (Reading: Curzon, 2002), 86.

85 See G. H. A. Juynboll, “Muslim’s Introduction to His Ṣaḥīḥ,” at 283 (one qaṣṣ is singled out as an exception to the general proscription).

the post-formative *ahl al-ḥadīth* towards the *quṣṣāṣ* is well expressed in the statement with which the tenth-/eleventh-century scholar Alī al-Qāri’ (d. 1014/1605) prefaced his collection of these reports: “Most of the *quṣṣāṣ* and *wu’āẓ* were ignorant of *tafsīr* and its *riwāyahs*, and of Ḥadīth and its classifications.” Thus, as they did with the *sīrah-maghāzī* scholars such as Ibn Isḥāq, the *ahl al-ḥadīth* discredited the *quṣṣāṣ* for not following the methodology and source materials of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. Since the *ahl al-ḥadīth* were seeking to do precisely what it is that the Umayyad *quṣṣāṣ* were appointed to do—that is, to establish religious norms in the public sphere through the circulation of narratives—their hostility to the *quṣṣāṣ* is best understood in the context of this aspiration for the proprietorship of both the Muslim memory tradition and religious authority.


88 “The importance of the storytellers [*quṣṣāṣ*] in the first Muslim generations stands in contrast to the generally low regard, if not contempt, in which they were held during the classical Islamic period . . . one of the recurring accusations with which the storytellers were charged was that of spreading false ideas and misleading the believers; they were held responsible for collecting stories and divulging them without exercising any critical judgment as to their content, and as far as as the traditions concerning the prophets are concerned, for relying uncritically on legends that were full of exaggeration and of dubious origin, if not in actual conflict with the Qur’ānic word. Thus the criticism directed at them by the experts of religious learning reflects both the method and content of their work: a lack of discrimination in the selection of the sources that they used and therefore of those principles that emerged and were consolidated with the development of the criticism of the extra-canonical tradition; and of the use of legends that relied on fantastic aspects and details to satisfy the curiosity and the taste of the people”; Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets*, 87–88. The term *qāṣṣ* has been too readily rendered into English as “storyteller” (as in the foregoing passage), and the problem with this is less that “it blurs the religious, political and emotional aspects of the *qāṣṣ’s* activity” (Lecker, “King Ibn Ubayy and the *Quṣṣāṣ*,” 68) than that it is an uncritical acceptance of the pejorative characterization of one group, the *quṣṣāṣ*, by another group, the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, who were opposed to the *quṣṣāṣ* and were contesting discursive and normative authority with them. The problem with the assessment of Patricia Crone—“It is clear, then, that much of the classical Muslim understanding of the Qurʾān rests on the work of popular storytellers . . . this is the major reason why the exegetical tradition is so unreliable a guide to the original meaning of the Qurʾān and history alike: as might be expected of storytellers, they made up their stories in complete disregard to both”—is that she seems uncritically to understands the *quṣṣāṣ* to have been exactly who the Ḥadīth scholars claimed they were, and to have been doing just what the Ḥadīth scholars claimed they were doing. See Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Uni-
The present report is related from Muḥammad b. Qays and Muḥammad b. Ka‘b by Abū Ma‘ṣhar Najīḥ b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Madanī (d. 170), a Medinese contemporary of Ibn Isḥāq who compiled an important biography of Muḥammad, his Kitāb al-magḥāzī.89 Abū Ma‘ṣhar was also one of Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Wāqidī’s twenty-three primary informants for the latter’s Kitāb al-magḥāzī,90 and al-Ṭabarī drew from Abū Ma‘ṣhar’s Kitāb al-khulafā’ extensively in his Tārīkh.91 The phenomenon noted in the discussion of the isnād in Riwāyah 1, that of a prominent sirah-magḥāzī scholar having a bad reputation as a muḥaddith, is also found in the reports on Abū Ma‘ṣhar. Abū Ma‘ṣhar had a truly dreadful reputation as a Ḥadīth transmitter: one Ḥadīth scholar is said to have laughed whenever he was mentioned and another called him “the biggest liar in heaven and earth.” Similarly, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal said of him that he was unreliable (layṣa bi-dhāk) and that he did not pay attention to isnāds, but then went on to add, “He was well-versed in magḥāzī.” Another scholar said, “Abū Ma‘ṣhar has a place [la-hu makān] in learning and history; his historical reports are regarded by the Imams as authoritative [iḥtajja bi-hi] but they regard him as weak in Ḥadīth.” Yaḥyā b. Ma‘ṭīn commented, “He is weak: of his Ḥadīth, the riqāq [Ḥadīth which do not contain a legal ruling] may be recorded.” Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal especially commended Abū Ma‘ṣhar’s transmissions from Muḥammad b. Ka‘b al-Quraẓī: “Abū Ma‘ṣhar’s tafsīr reports from Muḥammad b. Ka‘b are to be recorded.”92 While clearly not respected


90 Al-Wāqidī, al-Magḥāzī, 1:1.

91 The continuing importance of Abū Ma‘ṣhar’s works may be gauged from the fact that al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī obtained ijāzahs in fifth-/eleventh-century Baghdad authorizing him to transmit both Abū Ma‘ṣhar’s Kitāb al-magḥāzī and his Kitāb al-khulafā’. See Sezgin, GAS, 1:292.

92 yuktab min ḥadīth Abī Ma‘ṣhar aḥādīthu-hu ‘an Muḥammad b. Ka‘b fi al-tafsīr.
as a Ḥadīth transmitter, Abū Ma’shar was nonetheless recognized as a historian and as a transmitter from the celebrated mufassir Muḥammad b. Ka‘b. The Ḥadīth scholars reject Riwāyah 2 on the basis of Abū Ma’shar’s presence in the isnād.93

Abū Ma’shar migrated to Baghdad in about 160 to take up an appointment at the ‘Abbāsid court at the direction of the Caliph al-Mahdī, which explains why the isnād becomes an Iraqi one. Al-Ḥajjaj b. Muḥammad al-Miṣṣiṣī, a respected Ḥadīth scholar who authored an early work on naskh in the Qur’ān, studied with Abū Ma’shar in Baghdad before moving to Miṣṣiṣah on the Iraq-Syria border.94 The present report is transmitted from al-Ḥajjāj by Sunayd al-Ḥusayn b. Dā’ūd al-Miṣṣiṣī.95 Sunayd, who is credited with the composition of a Tafsīr, had an uneven reputation as a Ḥadīth transmitter. He held the post of muḥtasib (market-inspector) in Miṣṣiṣah, where he studied closely with al-Ḥajjaj. Al-Ṭabarī has thirty-two riwāyats from Sunayd in his Tārīkh; twenty-three of these are transmitted from al-Ḥajjāj. Twenty-nine are by way of al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan al-Baghdādī, an obscure figure of apparently limited scholarly credentials who appears in al-Ṭabarī’s works only as a transmitter from Sunayd. It is interesting that al-Ṭabarī should have chosen such an obscure individual from among his Baghdādī contemporaries as the source from whom to narrate from Sunayd; perhaps al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan owned a manuscript containing Sunayd’s materials.96

The following is a translation of the report. I have followed the text of al-Ṭabarī and have given the slight variants in al-Suyūṭī either in the body of the text, where they are indicated with the sign “OR:”, or in the footnotes. As the textual transmission of al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr must have stabilized well before al-Suyūṭī’s time, the variants in al-

93 See al-Albānī, Naṣb al-majānīq, 11; al-Ḥalabī al-Athari, Dalā’il, 124–125; al-Ṣawwayānī rejects the isnād on the basis that it is mursal; al-Qaṣīmah, 1:431.
Suyūṭī’s text must represent either al-Suyūṭī’s own editorial work or the wording of the riwāyah as recorded in the earlier Tafsīr of Sa‘īd b. Manṣūr. The differences between the respective versions in al-Ṭabarī and al-Suyūṭī are, in any case, slight and do not alter the hermeneutical construction of the narrative of the incident in any way.

The Messenger of God was seated in a large gathering of Quraysh. He desired [tamannā], that day, that nothing come to him from God that would cause them to turn away from him [allā ya’tiya-hu min Allāhi shay’un fa-yanfirū ‘an-hu].

And God sent down, “By the star when it sets: your Companion has not gone astray [ḍalla], nor is he misguided [ghawā].” and the Messenger of God recited it [qara’a-hā] until he reached, “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?,” when Satan cast two phrases upon him [alqā al-shayṭānu ‘alay-hi kalimatayni]: “Those high gharānīq! Indeed, their intercession is hoped for! [tilka al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā’ata-hunna la-turjā].” He uttered the two phrases [fa-takallama bi-himā], then he went on and recited the whole sūrah.

At the end of the sūrah, he made the sajdah, and the whole gathering [al-qawm] made the sajdah with him. Walīd b. al-Mughīrah took some dirt to his forehead and made the sajdah upon it—he was an old man and was unable to make the sajdah (fully). They were satisfied with what he had uttered [fa-raḍū bi-mā takallama bi-hi] and said: “We know that Allāh gives life and death, and that it is He who creates and sustains, but these gods of ours intercede with Him on our behalf; and

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97 While al-Suyūṭī’s Durr is a tafsīr bi-al-ma’thūr—that is, it consists entirely of reports compiled from earlier works—al-Suyūṭī does not present every report separately. Rather, I have observed that when more than one of al-Suyūṭī’s sources cite a particular riwāyah by a common isnād or from a common first source but with textual variants across the different citations, al-Suyūṭī’s practice is to ignore the textual variants, and to present these textually variant reports as a single riwāyah bi-al-ma’nā. In doing so, he seems either to adjust the matn by collating the texts of the respective citations into a single “combined report,” or to follow the text of just one of the citations as representative bi-al-ma’nā of the others.

98 Cf. the translation of Watt and MacDonald, History of al-Ṭabarī Vol VI, 112–113.

99 Al-Suyūṭī: “that would cause them to separate from him [fa-yatafarraqū ‘an-hu].”

100 Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, adds the third verse: “nor does he speak from desire [iva-mā yanṭiq ‘an al-hawā].”

101 In al-Ṭabarī, Jámi’ al-bayān, and a manuscript of the Tārīkh: al-gharānīqah; in a manuscript of the Tārīkh: turtaḍā; in al-Suyūṭī: la-turtajā.
when you give them a share, we are with you [fa-idhā⁹² jaʿalā la-hā nasīban fa-nahnu maʿa-ka].”¹⁰³

¹⁰⁴In the evening, Jibrīl came to him and he (the Prophet) went over the sūrah with him [fa-ʿaraḍaʿ alay-hi al-sūrah]. When he (the Prophet) reached the two phrases Satan had cast upon him, he (Jibrīl) said, “I did not bring you these! [mā jiʿtu-ka bi-hātaynī].” And the Messenger of God said: “I have fabricated against God and have said on God’s behalf that which He did not say! [iftaraytuʿ alā Allāh wa-qultuʿ alā Allāh mā lam yaqul].” So God revealed to him [fa-awḥā Allāh ilay-hī]: “And they strove to tempt you away from that with which We have inspired you, that you might fabricate against Us something other than it [wa-in kādū la-yafṭūnā-kaʿan alladhi awḥaynā ilay-ka li-taftariyaʿ alay-nā ghayra-hu],” until His words, “And then you would have found no helper against Us [thummna lā tajīdū la-kaʿalay-nā naṣīran].”¹⁰⁵

He remained distressed [maḥmūm] and anxious [mahmūm] until there came down: “And we have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet . . .”, to His words, “. . . And God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

OR: He remained distressed and anxious because of those two phrases until there came down, “And we have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet.” So He dispelled his fears and his soul was soothed [fa-sarraʿ an-hu wa-ṭābat nafsu-hu].

¹⁰⁶The Emigrants in Abyssinia heard that all the people of Mecca had accepted Islam. So they returned to their clans saying, “They are dearer to us [hum aḥabbuʿ alay-nā].” And they found the people had reverted to their former condition [īrtakasū] when God had abrogated what Satan cast.

Given that Riwāyahs 1 and 2 share an originating transmitter—namely, Muḥammad b. Kaʿb al-Quraẓī—it is significant that, while they differ in their wording and in the inclusion and exclusion of

¹⁰²Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān: fa-idh.
¹⁰³The paragraph is given in summary form in al-Suyūṭī: “At the end of the sūrah, he made the sajdah, and the whole gathering [al-gawm] made the sajdah with him. They were satisfied with what he had uttered [fa-raḍū bi-mā takallama bi-hī].”
¹⁰⁴Al-Ṭabarī: qāla, “They said;”
¹⁰⁵The text not quoted is “in which case they would surely have taken you as a friend: And, had we not steadied you, you were, indeed, on the verge of inclining to them a little: Then We would have had you taste the double of life and the double of death,” wa-idhan la-ittakhadhū-ka khalīlan / wa-law fā an thabbatnā-ka la-qad kidta tarkānū ilay-hīm shayʿan qalīlan / idhan la-adhaqnā-ka dīʿfa al-ḥayāti wa-dīʿfa al-mamāti; Qurʿān 17:73–75 al-Isrāʿ.
¹⁰⁶Al-Ṭabarī: qāla, “he said.”
some narrative elements, they are entirely consistent in their interpretation of the incident.

Virtually all the narrative elements in Riwaṭyah 1 are present in Riwaṭyah 2, where they are either explicitly stated or implied by context. For example, motif 3b, that Satan’s intervention was a result of the Prophet’s desire, is not explicitly stated in Riwaṭyah 2 but is clearly implied by the flow of the narrative. On the other hand, while Riwaṭyah 1 does not make it explicit in narrative unit 3 (Satan’s intervention) that the Prophet uttered the Satanic verses, but defers this until later (motif 7b), Riwaṭyah 2 contains an immediate and explicit statement of this fact: “He uttered the two phrases.” The theme of persecution is not brought out in Riwaṭyah 2, from which motif 1c (the Prophet’s desire to halt the persecution by Quraysh) and motif 9a (Quraysh intensify persecution as a result of the removal of the Satanic verses) are absent. Nonetheless, even though the Prophet’s desire to reconcile Quraysh is not presented in terms of Quraysh’s persecution, the context of persecution is evident from the chronological context of the incident, which is provided by the mention of the refugees in Abyssinia.

Of prospective importance is the absence from Riwaṭyah 2 and other riwaṭyahs of motif 8b—the Revelation by God of Qur’ān 53:21–26 al-Najm as abrogating verses. Since Riwaṭyah 2 says expressly that the Prophet “uttered the two phrases, then he went on and recited the whole sūrah,” this would seem to imply that Qur’ān 53:21–26 al-Najm was part of the original revelation, and that the Prophet recited it immediately after reciting the Satanic verses.\(^\text{107}\) This would

\(^{107}\) As noted above, Qur’ān 53:21–26 al-Najm is “Should you have males, and He females? That, indeed, would be an unfair division! Indeed, they are no more than names which you have named, you and your ancestors! Allāh has not sent down any authority with them. Indeed, they follow nothing but conjecture and that which their souls desire, when guidance has come to them from their Lord! Is it for man to have what he desires? To God belongs the First and the Last! However many angels there are in the heavens, their intercession is of no benefit, except after Allāh permits this to whom He wills and approves!” The rest of Sūrat al-Najm is as follows: “Those who do not believe in the life to come call the angels by female names. They have no knowledge of it: they follow nothing but conjecture—and conjecture is no degree a sufficiency against the truth! So, avoid those who turn away from remembrance of Us and who purpose nothing but the lower life! That is their sum of knowledge; your Lord knows best who goes astray from the path, and He knows best who is guided. Allāh’s is that which is in the heavens, and that which is on the
be taken up by modern opponents of the historicity of the incident as an argument against the Prophet reciting the Satanic verses.\textsuperscript{108}

earth; to reward those who do misdeeds in accordance with what they do, and to reward with good those who do good. Those who avoid major sins and shameful deeds—except rarely—indeed, the forgiveness of your Lord is capacious! He knows you best, when He sets you up from the earth, and when you are foetuses in the wombs of your mothers: so do not reckon your souls to be pure—he knows best who is conscious of him. Have you seen him who turns away, who gives little and is stingy? Does he know the Unseen that he might see? Or was he never informed of what is in the book of Mūsā, and of Ibrāhīm the fidelous? That no bearer of burdens will bear another’s burden, and that no human being will be accountable except for what for which he strives, and that his striving will be seen, and that he will be requited for it with the fullest requital—and that the end is with your Lord. It is He who causes to laugh and to weep, and He who takes away life and gives it, and it is He who created the couple, the male and the female, from a sperm-drop as it spilled forth—and it is His to raise another life. He frees from need and gives possession. He is the Lord of Sirius. It is He who destroyed ‘Ād of old, and Thamūd so that no trace remained, and the people of Nūḥ, before, who were yet greater wrongdoers and tyrants, and he laid low the overthrown cities (of Lūṭ) and they were covered up and obliterated. So by which of the bounties of your Lord do you doubt? This is a warning of the warnings of old: the approaching time approaches. None but Allāh can unveil it. Are you astonished at this discourse? Do you laugh rather than weep, and raise your heads in confusion? Prostrate yourselves to Allāh and worship him!” Qur’ān 53:27–62 al-Najm:

\textsuperscript{108}The argument that would be made is: since there is none of mention of Qur’ān 53:21–26 al-Najm being revealed as abrogating verses, we must assume that they were...
Also absent from Riwāyah 2 are motifs 6a and 6b—the reaction of the Muslims in Mecca—through which the issue of ‘īṣmat al-anbiyā’ was alluded to in Riwāyah 1. However, like Riwāyah 1, Riwāyah 2 begins by quoting the opening two verses of Surat al-Najm in full: “By the star when it sets: your Companion has not gone astray, nor is he misguided.” This has the effect of setting up the Satanic verses incident as a direct hermeneutical elaboration of this Divine assertion: evidently, the Divine statement “Your Companion has not gone astray, nor is he misguided” is somehow qualified by the Divine statement “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he desired, Satan cast something into his desire; then God removes that which Satan casts and establishes His Signs clearly,” with the Satanic verses incident illustrating that qualification.

Unlike Riwāyah 1, Riwāyah 2 provides a time frame for the period between the Prophet’s error and his correction by Jibril, which here takes place the same evening. At the same time, Riwāyah 2 goes further than Riwāyah 1 in explaining the nature of the theological concession in the Satanic verses. This is Quraysh’s statement: “We know that Allāh gives life and death, and that it is He who creates and sustains, but these gods of ours intercede with Him on our behalf; and when you give them a share, we are with you,” which explains to the reader that Quraysh’s objection was not to the worship of Allāh but rather to the idea of the exclusivity of Allāh’s divinity. What is conceded to Quraysh is, thus, precisely the claim attributed to them in Qur’ān 10:18 Yūnus and depicted there as erroneous: “They worship beside Allāh something which can neither harm nor benefit them, and say, ‘These are our intercessionaries with Allāh.’”

recited by Muḥammad when he continued to recite Sūrat al-Najm immediately following his recitation of the Satanic verses (as he is stated in Riwāyah 2 to have done). This means that we must understand the Prophet to have “praised and condemned al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt within four verses,” which is a “confused, self-contradictory” and “illogical” notion; see Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, Ḥayāt Muḥammad (Cairo: Dār al-Ma’arif, 1935), 144.

109 A less important element from Riwāyah 1 altogether absent from Riwāyah 2 is motif 2d: the incident took place at the Ka’bah.

110 Watt has remarked that “the earliest versions” of the incident do not specify how much time elapsed between the Prophet’s error and his proclamation of his correction. It is not clear which reports Watt regards as early, but Riwāyah 2 seems to be first-century (see below), as is Riwāyah 8, below, which gives the same time frame. See also Riwāyah 29, below.
The wording of the Satanic verses is virtually identical in Riwāyahs 1 and 2, the only difference being that the last word is given as turtadā and as turtajā in Riwāyah 2. The two words are both orthographically and semantically similar (the text of Riwāyah 1 in al-Ṭabarī has turtajā), for which reason this difference is better taken as representing a scribal corruption rather than a different narrative tradition. The function of Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥajj is given identically in both accounts—namely, that of relieving the Prophet’s anxiety.

The most significant difference between the two rīwāyahs is that, in addition to Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥajj, Riwāyah 2 links the Satanic verses incident to the explanatory verses of Qurʾān 17:73–75 al-Isrā’:

And they strove to tempt you away from that with which We have inspired you, that you might fabricate against Us [an taftariya ‘alay-nā] something other than it—in which case they would surely have taken you as a friend: And, had we not steadied you, you were, indeed, on the verge of inclining to them a little: Then We would have had you taste the double of life and the double of death; and then you would have found no helper against Us.111

This connection is effected by a linking phrase in the narrative—namely, the Prophet’s saying, “I have fabricated against God [if-taraytu ‘alā Allāh] and have said on God’s behalf that which He did not say!” This linking phrase replaces motif 7c in Riwāyah 1 (Jibrīl saying to the Prophet, “You have recited to the people that which I did not bring to you from God, and you have said that which He did not say to you!”). Whereas in Riwāyah 1 the nature of the Prophet’s transgression is glossed in Jibrīl’s censure of the Prophet, in Riwāyah 2, Jibrīl only disclaims responsibility for the verses, and the gloss here is in the Prophet’s own acknowledgment of his transgression.

The association of the incident with Qurʾān 17:73 al-Isrā’ and thus with the verb iftarā ‘alā, “to forge, fabricate or devise against,” is significant because it serves to underline the Prophet’s responsi-

bility in precipitating Satan’s intervention. The link phrase in the narrative makes it clear that in seeking to reconcile Quraysh, the Prophet was hoping to receive Divine Revelation that would serve a purpose other than that of his Messengership, and the words he then uttered were inspired by this purpose and not by God: *iftaraytu ‘alā Allāh wa-qultu ‘alā Allāh mā lam yaqul.* The words of Qur’ān 17:73 themselves emphasize that the Prophet’s act was in response to the pressure of his temporal circumstances: “And they strove to tempt you away from that with which We have inspired you, that you might fabricate against Us [an taftariya ‘alay-nā] something other than it.” Nonetheless, the attribution to the Prophet of the statement “I have fabricated against God [iftaraytu ‘alā Allāh]” is a highly remarkable one in view of the Divine Declaration in Qur’ān 6:93 al-An’ām: “Who is the greater wrongdoer than he who fabricates falsehood against God [man aẓlamu mim-man iftarā ‘alā Allāhi kadhiban]?” It is important to note, however, that in neither *Riwayah 1* nor *2* is there any suggestion that the Prophet’s utterance of the Satanic verses represented a deliberate or premeditated act on his part. Rather, the incident is presented as a temporary breakdown in the Revelatory process resulting from the Prophet’s human fallibility. Thus, the Satanic verses incident is informed by an underlying assumption of the existence of a contingent relationship between the process of Divine Revelation on the one hand and the fact of the Prophet’s humanness and consequent emotional and psychological susceptibility to temporal circumstance on the other hand. We will have occasion to return to this concept throughout this study.

*Riwayahs 1 and 2* are in total agreement on the three fundamental hermeneutical questions:

1. The Prophet uttered the Satanic verses.
2. His uttering them was precipitated by his desire (*tamannā*) to be reconciled with Quraysh.
3. He was unaware of having erred until corrected by Jibrīl.

In other words, *Riwayahs 1 and 2* represent different narrative traditions of what is essentially the same hermeneutical elaboration of the incident. At the level of basic hermeneutical issues, each report is, in effect, a *riwayah bi-al-ma’nā* of the other. The most important
difference between them is the fact that **Riwāyah 2** relates the incident to Qur’ān 17:73 al-Isrā’, in addition to Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj.

Given the consistency of the accounts, it is instructive, first of all, to note once again the presence of Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Quraẓī, a very important early Qur’ān scholar, as a common source for both reports, and secondly, to note that the reports were transmitted from him by two different *ḥadīth* isnād. There is no apparent reason to doubt Muḥammad b. Ishāq’s transmission from Yazīd b. Ziyād al-Madānī. And given that Abū Ma'shar’s report was itself transmitted by two separate individuals, one of whom, Sa'īd b. Manṣūr, recorded it in a partially extant work, there seems equally little reason to doubt that Abū Ma'shar did teach the report. In these circumstances, one is encouraged to accept **Riwāyahs 1** and **2** as genuinely representative of Muḥammad b. Ka'b’s teaching about the Satanic verses in Madinah in the late first and early second centuries.

**Riwāyah 3**: al-Wāqidī’s Report from al-Muṭṭalib b. Ḥanṭab and the Banū Ṣafar

**Riwāyah 3** is given by Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd (168–230) in the *sīrah* *nabawiyyah* section of the *Kitāb al-ṭabaqat al-kabīr*, the first major biographical dictionary of the historical community of Muslims in the first two centuries of Islam. Ibn Sa'd has the report from the man for whom he worked in Baghdad as a scribe, the great Medinese historian Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Wāqidī al-Madānī, who enjoyed the patronage of the Barmakid viziers of the ‘Abbāsid caliphs, and is the author of an extant *Kitāb al-maghāzī*. The report, presumably taken from al-Wāqidī’s lost *Kitāb al-mubtada’*, is given with the following two isnād:

156) ← his father, Muḥammad b. Anas b. Fuḍālah / Faḍālah al-Ẓafarī al-Madanī (1-?)

and


As with Riwāyah 2, Riwāyah 3 is carried by two isnāds, and we cannot tell whether the text represents a conflation of two accounts, follows the text one of the two accounts, or whether the accounts transmitted by the respective isnāds were identical.

Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Wāqidī presents us with another instance of a scholar who was a colossal figure among second-century historians and compilers of sīrah-maghāzī, but was rejected as an unreliable Ḥadīth transmitter by all the major Ḥadīth authorities, whose opinion of him was unfussily summed up by al-Dhahabī: “Consensus is established on al-Wāqidī’s bad reputation.” But, al-Dhahabī also observed, “It is decided that al-Wāqidī is weak [ḍa’īf]: he is needed in ghazawāt (ie., maghāzī) and history [tārīkh] . . . as for matters of religious regulation [farā’îd], he should not be mentioned.” Elsewhere, al-Dhahabī adds, “He collected and compiled, and mixed the worthless with the valuable, shells with precious pearls. They repudiated him for this; but in spite of it, there is no doing without him in maghāzī.” In al-Wāqidī’s case, the principal reason for this was probably his practice of synthesizing different riwāyahs on the same event into a single combined report transmitted by a collective isnād, something which, we have seen in Chapter 1, was directly

114 wa-qad taqarrara anna al-Wāqidī ḍa’īf yuḥtāj ilay-hi fi al-ghazawāt wa-al-tā’rikh, al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 9:469.
115 wa-jama’a fa-aw’ū wa-khalāṭa al-ghanthth bi-al-samīn wa-al-kharaz bi-al-durr al-thamīn fa-ḥtaraḥ-hu li-ḥallāk wa-ma’a hādhā fa-lā yustaghmū ‘an-hu fi al-magḥāzī, al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 9:454. Thus, Horovitz notes, “While al-Waqidī is repudiated by the muḥaddithūn, he is held a sound authority for the sīra, the maghāzī, the conquests and fiqh”; Horovitz, “Earliest Biographies IV,” 498–526, at 520.
incompatible with the methodology of the *ahl al-hadith*.\textsuperscript{116} As with Ibn Isḥāq and *Riwāyah*, al-Wāqidī’s presence in the *isnād* was sufficient basis for the rejection of *Riwāyah* by al-Albānī and other *muḥaddithūn*.\textsuperscript{117}

In his *Tabaqāt*, Ibn Sa‘d adduces a total of eleven reports with the second of the foregoing *isnāds*, al-Wāqidī ← Kathīr b. Zayd ← al-Muṭṭalib b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥanṭab, this despite his low opinion of al-Muṭṭalib as a Ḥadīth transmitter.\textsuperscript{118} Kathīr b. Zayd, evidently al-Wāqidī’s sole informant from al-Muṭṭalib, is a similarly obscure figure who had at best an indifferent reputation with the Ḥadīth scholars.\textsuperscript{119}

The first chain is a family *isnād* transmitted within the Banū Ṣafar, a subclan of the Banū Aws in Madīnah. Yūnus b. Muḥammad b. Anas b. Fuḍālah / Faḍālah al-Ṣafarī is listed by al-Wāqidī as one of his twenty-three primary informants for the *Kitāb al-maghāzī*.\textsuperscript{120} In spite of this, the biographical information on him is sparse as he evi-

\textsuperscript{116} While writing *Maghāzī*, he did not follow the recognized rules of reporting and was not scrupulous in matters of *Isnād*; Imtiaz Aḥmad, “Wāqidī as a Traditionist,” *Islamic Studies* 18 (1979), 243–253, at 243; the opinions of the Ḥadīth authorities about al-Wāqidī are conveniently summarized at 247–249.


\textsuperscript{118} Al-Muṭṭalib b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥanṭab is an obscure figure: it is not clear if there was one individual of this name or two. See al-Bukhārī, *al-Kabīr*, 7:8; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Jarḥ* 8:359; al-Mīzān, *al-Kamāl*, 28:81–85; and Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhib*, 10:228–229. In spite of his obscurity, two of the reports that Ibn Sa‘d has from him are very important ones pertaining to the death of the Prophet; see Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:176–177. Al-Wāqidī takes from al-Muṭṭalib b. Ḥanṭab twice in the *Kitāb al-maghāzī*, and al-Ṭabarī takes from him once in his *Tārīkh*, in describing the funeral of Abū Bakr. In all, six of the fourteen reports I have found from al-Muṭṭalib deal with deaths and funerals, perhaps indicating a special interest of sorts. Eight of the fourteen reports are about the Prophet.


\textsuperscript{120} Al-Wāqidī, *al-Maghāzī*, 1:1.
dently did not transmit Ḥadīth material. Nonetheless, I have found eighteen citations of Yūnus b. Muḥammad al-Ẓafarī in al-Wāqidī’s isnāds. Of these, five are in collective isnāds where al-Wāqidī has drawn on a large number of informants to provide an uninterrupted narrative of a major event. Of the remaining thirteen, seven are Yūnus b. Muḥammad from his father, which would suggest that the father may well have been the original source for some of the information in the collective isnāds too. Al-Wāqidī also has two other informants who may well be sons of Yūnus’s father; Ya’qūb b. Muḥammad al-Ẓafarī and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Muḥammad b. Anas al-Ẓafarī. Between them they have thirteen riwāyahs in the Kitāb al-maghāzī, two of which are from their father. Muḥammad b. Anas b. Fuḍālah al-Ẓafarī, then, was a not insignificant source of the lore of the Banū Ẓafar that al-Wāqidī collected, with at least nine surviving riwāyahs originating with him, possibly more if one takes into consideration the combined report / collective isnād material. However, since he was not a Ḥadīth transmitter, the information on him, as with al-Muṭṭalib b. Ḥanṭab, is very limited. While it is uncertain whether the mention of him in the present isnād should be taken as connoting

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122 Thirteen of these are in the Kitāb al-maghāzī and five in Ibn Saʿd’s Ṭabaqāt.

123 I can find neither of them in the biographical dictionaries. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz also has a riwāyah going back to al-Muṭṭalib b. Ḥanṭab.

124 Al-Bukhārī, al-Kabīr, 1 / 1:16; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Jarḥ, 8:55; Yūsuf b. ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Ḥajar, Ṭabaqāt mutammim, 427. ‘Izz al-Dīn ‘Alī Ibn al-Athīr, Usd al-ghābah fī maʿrifat al-ṣaḥābah (Cairo: al-Maṭba’ah al-Wahbiyyah, 1280), 4:312; Ibn Ḥajar, al-Iṣābah, 6:4–5, where it is said that he transmitted only one Ḥadīth. Yūnus’s father sometimes appears as Muḥammad b. Anas b. Fuḍālah / Faḍālah and sometimes as Muḥammad b. Fuḍālah / Faḍālah (as in the above isnād), which led some Ḥadīth scholars to question if these names referred to the same individual. However, the biographical entries on Anas b. Fuḍālah expressly state that Yūnus b. Muḥammad was his descendant: Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, Istīʿāb fi maʿrifat al-aṣḥāb, ed. ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Bijāwī (Cairo: Maktabat Nahḍat Miṣr, 1960), 3:1365; ‘Izz al-Dīn ‘Alī Ibn al-Athīr, Usd al-ghābah fī maʿrifat al-ṣaḥābah (Cairo: al-Maṭba’ah al-Wahbiyyah, 1280), 4:312; Ibn Ḥajar, al-Iṣābah, 6:4–5, where it is said that he transmitted only one Ḥadīth. Yūnus’s father sometimes appears as Muḥammad b. Anas b. Fuḍālah / Faḍālah and sometimes as Muḥammad b. Fuḍālah / Faḍālah (as in the above isnād), which led some Ḥadīth scholars to question if these names referred to the same individual. However, the biographical entries on Anas b. Fuḍālah expressly state that Yūnus b. Muḥammad was his descendant: Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, Istīʿāb, 1:113; Ibn al-Athīr, Usd, 1:126. Also, Ibn Ḥajar points out that the name is given in both forms in family isnāds carrying the same autobiographical report, which would suggest that we are dealing with the same individual. Muḥammad’s father is reported to have been martyred at Uḥud when Muḥammad was in his infancy, which may have resulted in his being raised by his grandfather (who was still alive) with the result that he became associated with the name of his immediate guardian, Fuḍālah / Faḍālah, rather than with that of his father, Anas.
a genuine fact of father-to-son transmission, it is clear that the report at hand is representative of the Ẓafarī family tradition as transmitted in Madīnah in the first half of the second century.125

The following is a translation of the report which, it will be seen, is strikingly similar to Riwāyah 2. Passages that are identical in both reports are underlined.126

The Messenger of God saw his tribe shunning him [kaftan 'an-hu]. He sat alone and desired [tamannā] and said, “Would that nothing come down to me that causes them to turn away from me [layta-hu lā yanzil 'alay-yu layta-hu lā yanzil 'alay-ya shay'un yunaffiru-hum 'an-nī]!”127 Then the Messenger of God drew near to his tribe and became close to them, and they became close to him [danā min-hum wa-danū min-hu].

One day, he was sitting in one of those gatherings around the Ka'bah when he recited to them [qara'a 'alay-him], “By the star when it sets,” until he reached, “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?” whereupon Satan cast two phrases upon his tongue [alqā al-shayṭānu 'alā lisāni-hi kalimatayni]: “Those high gharānīq! Indeed, their intercession is to be hoped for! [tilka al-gharānīq al-'ulā wa-inna shafā'ata-hunna la-turtajā].” The Messenger of God uttered the two phrases [fa-takallama rasūl Allāh bi-himā], then he went on and recited

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125 It is interesting to note that some of the information that al-Wāqidī has by the above isnād is of a kind that he is unlikely to have been able to obtain other than from his Ẓafarī informants, such as the location of the graves of some of the martyrs of Badr in a mountain trail off the Pass of al-Ṣafrā’. Al-Ṣafrā’, just south of Madinah (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Mu’jam al-buldān, Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d., 3:412), was where Yūnus b. Muḥammad al-Ẓafarī lived (Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, Istī’āb, 1:113; Ibn al-Athīr, Usd, 1:126), and Yūnus told al-Waqidī that the graves were shown him by his father (al-Waqidī, Maghāzī, 1:147). (It should be noted, however, that if we accept Muḥammad b. Fuḍālah’s birth date as the year of the Hijrah, this would make him seventy when he fathered Yūnus, after which he would have to have survived long enough to pass on the family lore.) That al-Waqidī had detailed knowledge of the sīrah-related sacred geography of Madinah is illustrated by his appointment as tour guide to the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd on the latter’s visit to Madinah in 170; see Horovitz, “Earliest Biographies IV,” 498–526, at 499–501.


127 Compare Riwāyah 3:

“The Prophet was seated in a large gathering of Quraysh. He desired [tamannā], that day, that nothing come to him from God that would cause them to turn away from him [tamannā yawma'idhin an-lā ya'tiya-hu min Allāhi shay'un fa-yunaffiru 'an-hu]'”
the whole sūrah and made the sajdah, and the whole gathering [al-qawm] made the sajdah.128

Al-Walid b. al-Mughīrah took some dirt to his forehead and made the sajdah on it—as he was an old man and was unable to make the sajdah (fully). And it is said that Abū Uḥayḥah Sa‘īd b. al-‘Āṣ, who was an old man, took dirt and raised it to his forehead and made the sajdah upon it. Some of them say that the one who raised dirt to his forehead was al-Walid, some that it was Abū Uḥayḥah, and some that both of them did it.

They (Quraysh) were satisfied [radū] with what the Messenger of God had uttered [takallama bi-hi] and said: “We know that Allāh gives life and death, and that it is He who creates and sustains, but these gods of ours intercede with Him on our behalf; and now that you have given them a share, we are with you” [idh ja‘alta la-hum nasibān fa-naḥnu ma‘a-ka].

This greatly distressed [kabura dhālika ‘alā] the Messenger of God and he sat in his house. In the evening, Jibrīl came to him and he (the Prophet) went over the sūrah with him [fa-‘araḍa ‘alay-hi al-sūrah]. When he reached the two phrases Satan had cast upon him, Jibrīl said: “I brought you these two phrases [ji’tu-ka bi-hātayni al-kalimataynī]?”129 And the Messenger of God said: “I have said on God’s behalf that which He did not say! [qultu ‘alā Allāh mā lam yaqul].” So God revealed to him [fa-awḥā Allāh ilay-hi], “And they strove to tempt you away from that which we have revealed to you, that you might fabricate against us something other than it,” until His words, “And then you would have found no helper against us.”130

The similarity between Riwāyahs 2 and 3 is evident: the two reports share identically worded passages, and the construction of

128 Compare Riwāyah 2:

And God sent down, “By the star when it sets: your Companion does not err, nor is he deceived,” and the Messenger of God recited it [qara‘a-hī] until he reached, “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?,” when Satan cast two phrases upon him [alqā al-shayṭānu ‘alay-hi kalimataynī]: “Those high gharānīq! Indeed, their intercession is hoped for [tilka al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā’ata-hunna la-turjā].” He uttered the two phrases [fa-takallama bi-himā], then he went on and recited the whole sūrah.

129 Compare Riwāyah 2: “When he (the Prophet) reached the two phrases Satan had cast upon him, he (Jibrīl) said, ‘I did not bring you these! [mā ji’tu-ka bi-hātaynī].’” It is very likely that the negative particle mā has dropped out of Riwāyah 3.

130 Qur‘ān 17:73–75 al-Isrā’.
the narrative is entirely consistent across both. The substantive differences between the texts of Riwāyahs 3 and 2 are as follows. Firstly, the opening passage of Riwāyah 3 goes further than Riwāyah 2 in portraying the Prophet’s desire for reconciliation with Quraysh. Moreover, in Riwāyah 3, a degree of détente seems to have been initiated before the incident occurred: “Then the Messenger of God drew near to his tribe and became close to them and they became close to him.” Secondly, Riwāyah 3 interrupts the narrative to refer parenthetically to the existence of a disagreement over which one of the Mushrikūn made the sajdah by raising some dirt on his hand.

Thirdly, it is not clear in Riwāyah 3 whether Muḥammad’s error takes place while Sūrat al-Najm is in the process of being revealed to him (as is apparently the case in Riwāyahs 1 and 2), or whether it takes place during his recitation of the sūrah that had already been revealed at some earlier time. While this distinction does not affect the fundamental fact of the Prophet erring in the transmission of Revelation, it can be understood to constitute a difference of emphasis: does the error take place during reception or proclamation of Revelation? Most of the riwāyahs either seem to imply that the error took place during a recitation of the sūrah at a time subsequent to its initial Revelation, or, like Riwāyah 3, are vague on this point.  

Fourthly, Riwāyah 3 relates the incident only to Qur’ān 17:73–75 al-Isrā’, with no mention of Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj. The reference to Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj—“He remained grieved and anxious until there came down: ‘And we have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet...,’ to His words, ‘...And God is All-Knowing, All-Wise’”—which comes at the end of the narrative of Riwāyah 3, is omitted here; whether by accident or design we do not know. Riwāyah 3 is, in fact, the only report on the Satanic verses that does not relate the incident to Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj. However, it seems almost certain that the absence of Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj from Riwāyah 3 represents a later omission, and that the report as originally constituted would have gone on, like Riwāyah 2, to add the Revelation of Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj as the concluding element in the narrative. This is strongly

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131This secondary issue will be taken up, where relevant, in the analysis of other riwāyahs.
suggested by the wording of the opening passage in which key words from Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥajj—*tamannā, alqā al-shayṭān*—are used in describing the incident. In the report as originally constituted, these phrases must have functioned as link-words relating the incident to Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥajj, as we have seen in *Riwaḥyahs 1 and 2*.

The high degree of similarity of the *matns* of *Riwaḥyahs 2 and 3* is the more striking when one realizes that there is no apparent overlap in their *isnāds*. At first glance, this would appear to undermine our working assumption, that *isnāds* in *sīrah-magḥāzī* and *tafṣīr* works represent genuine transmission histories unless there is good reason to suspect otherwise. How can *Riwaḥyah 3*, in which there is no mention of Muḥammad b. Kaʿb al-Quraẓī, resemble the reports from Muḥammad b. Kaʿb so closely that portions of it are the same *riwaḥah bi-al-lafẓ*?

There is, however, evidence pointing to a direct connection between Muḥammad b. Kaʿb al-Quraẓī and the Banū Ẓafar. This is the Prophetic Ḥadīth, noted in the analysis of *Riwaḥyah 1*, above, prophesying the appearance of Muḥammad b. Kaʿb: “There will come from out of the *kāhinayn* [Banū Qurayzah and Banū al-Naḍīr] a man who will study the Qurʾān in a manner which no one after him will emulate.” Prominent among the *isnāds* that carried this Ḥadīth is the following: ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Mughīth b. Abī Burdah al-Ẓafarī ← his father ← his grandfather. This *isnād* is an irretrievably obscure one, although we do know that ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Mughīth b. Abī Burdah al-Ẓafarī was a contemporary of Ibn Isḥāq, and thus that his father and grandfather were presumably contemporaries of Muḥammad b. Kaʿb. What is of significance here is the existence of a Ẓafarī clan *isnād* carrying a patently false Ḥadīth, the sole purpose of which was to praise Muḥammad b. Kaʿb’s scholarship. The strong implication is that there must have been a meaningful connection between Muḥammad b. Kaʿb, who was a contemporary of both Yūnus b. Muḥammad al-Ẓafarī and his father, and the Ẓafarī clan. In further support of this is the fact that Muḥammad b. Kaʿb was a confederate (*ḥalīf*) of the Banū Aws, of which tribe the Banū

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132 For a complete list of citations see al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 5:67, footnote 1.
Ẓafar formed a clan. Given that Riwyahs 2 and 3 are virtually identical, it seems very plausible that Riwyah 3 is the outcome of contact between the Banū Ẓafar and Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Quraṣī. This impression is reinforced when we realize that of the five reports that relate the Satanic verses incident to Qur'ān 17:73 al-Isrā (see Riwyahs 4, 5 and 6, below), Riwyah 3 is the only one that is not attributed to Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Quraṣī.

Establishing such a “hidden” transmission link between Riwyah 3 and the first two riwyahs does not in any way conflict with our “Ẓāhirī”/exoteric methodology. Had there been no plausible explanation for the similarity between the two riwyahs, one would have been forced to doubt the authenticity of the isnāds. But the fact that the transmission history given by the isnād in Riwyah 3 is apparently incomplete does not mean that it is not genuine as far as it goes. This is not a false isnād but an incomplete one.

As there is no reason to doubt the fact of Ibn Sa‘d’s transmission of this report from al-Wāqidī, or that of al-Wāqidī (born 130) from so regular an informant as Yūnus b. Muḥammad al-Zafarī (71–156), Riwyah 3 must have been in circulation in Madīnah in a form similar to the present one during the second quarter of the second century at the latest. This, in turn, should encourage us to accept that Ibn Isḥāq and Abū Ma’shar did indeed receive Riwyahs 1 and 2 from Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Quraṣī at about the same time. This would put the origin of the narrative tradition contained in Riwyahs 1, 2, and 3 back into the first century. From the high degree of consistency between the texts of Riwyahs 1, 2, and 3, on the levels of verbal correspondence, narrative motifs, and hermeneutical presentation of the incident, we may thus conclude that these reports are severally and collectively representative of the way in which the Satanic verses incident was remembered and taught by Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Quraṣī in Madinah at the end of the first century.

134 The Banū Qurayzah were confederates of al-Aws at the time of their massacre, which would explain why Muḥammad b. Ka'b, who was born in Kufah, sought their patronage when he migrated to Madinah. Among the four Awsīs who had interceded with the Prophet for the Banū Qurayzah had been a man of Banū Ẓafar; see W. Montgomery Watt, Muḥammad at Medina (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 214.
That linking the Satanic verses incident to Qur’ān 17:73 al-‘Isrā’ was particularly associated with the exegetical activity of Muḥammad b. Ka‘b al-Quraẓī may be gauged from the next three riwāyahs, which are summary versions of Riwaḥy 2. The riwāyahs are cited in works compiled in Samarqand, Rayy, and Isbahan in the fourth century.

Riwaḥy 4 is a summary version of Riwaḥy 2 given in the Taṣṣīr of the early Māturīdī theologian Bahr al-‘Ulûm Abû al-Layth al-Samarqandî (d. 375), in his commentary on Qur’ān 17:73 al-‘Isrā’, with this citation:135

Abû al-‘Āliyah [Rufay’ b. Mihrān al-Baṣrî (d. 93)] related from his companions, among them al-Quraẓī:

When the Prophet recited Sūrat al-Najm, and reached, “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other. . . ?,” there ran upon his tongue [jarā ‘alâ lisâni-hi]: “Those high gharâniq! Indeed, their intercession is to be hoped for [tilka al-gharāniq al-‘ulâ wa-inna shafâ’ata-hunna la-turtajâ].” When he reached the sajdah, he made the sajdah and the Mushrikûn made the sajdah with him. Then Jibrîl came and said: “I did not bring you this.” So, there came down: “And they strove to tempt you . . . ,” until His words, “. . . in which case they would surely have taken you as a friend.” The Prophet remained distressed [maghmûm] until there came down, “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he desired, Satan cast something into his desire.”

Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandi’s citation from Abū al-‘Āliyah is of interest here. Abū al-‘Āliyah Rufay’ b. Mihrān al-Baṣrī (for whom see Riwāyah 16, below) was a great Basran mufassir and contemporary of al-Quraẓī whose tafsīr exists today only in citations in later sources. The tafsīr of Abū al-‘Āliyah was, however, already cited in the second-century Tafsīr of Yaḥyā b. Sallām al-Baṣrī (124–200), which means that it was in circulation in Basrah, in some form, by the mid-second century (see Riwāyah 20, below).137 By the time Abū al-Layth cited it in the fourth century, the tafsīr of Abū al-‘Āliyah seems to have been in wide circulation.138 There are five surviving riwāyahs from Abū al-‘Āliyah that narrate the Satanic verses incident (Riwāyahs 16 to 20, below). The isnāds of all of these riwāyahs stop at Abū al-‘Āliyah himself, and none of the riwāyahs relates the Satanic verses incident to Qur’ān 17:73 al-Isrā’, but only to Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj. As such, Abū al-‘Āliyah’s attribution of Riwāyah 4 to Muḥammad b. Ka‘b appears to be an instance of one first-century mufassir citing the variant opinion of another first-century mufassir. Riwāyah 4 thus provides us with further evidence of a very early association with Muḥammad b. Ka‘b of the interpretation of the incident by means of Qur’ān 17:73 al-Isrā’. This, in turn, should encourage us to accept the core narratives in Riwāyahs 1, 2, and 3 as having genuinely been transmitted from Muḥammad b. Ka‘b.


Riwāyah 5 is given by al-Suyūṭi in the commentary on Qur’ān 17:73


138 This is evidenced by the citations from it in the respective tafsīrs of al-Ṭabarī (see Riwāyahs 16 and 17, below); Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (see the index of citations in the partial edition: Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘aẓīm, ed. Aḥmad ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Umari al-Zahrānī [Madīnah: Maktabat al-Dār, 1988], 2:449–450); and Ibn al-Mundhir al-Naysābūrī (d. 318) (see al-Suyūṭi’s citations from the Tafsīr of Ibn al-Mundhir, Riwāyahs 18 and 19, below). It was also cited as an independent work by both Ibn al-Nadīm and al-Tha‘labī (see the discussion preceding Riwāyah 16–20, below).
al-Isrā’ in *al-Durr al-manthūr*. Al-Suyūṭī cites the report from Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 327) from Muḥammad b. Ka‘b al-Quraẓī. As is his practice in the *Durr*, al-Suyūṭī does not give either the title of his source book or an *isnād*. There is little doubt, however, that al-Suyūṭī is citing from the *Tafṣīr* of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and is very probably abbreviating the report:

God sent down, “By the star when its sets,” and the Messenger of God recited [*qara’a*] this verse to them: “Have you seen al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā . . . ?” And Satan cast two phrases upon him [*fa-alqā al-shayṭān ‘alay-hi kalimatayn*]: “Those high gharāniq! Indeed, their intercession is to be hoped for [*iilka al-gharāniq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafaq‘ata-humna laturtajāl*].” The Prophet then recited the rest of the *sūrah* and made the *sajdah*. And God sent down the verse: “And they strove to tempt you away from that with which We have inspired you. . . .” He remained distressed [*maghmūm*] and anxious [*mahmūm*] until God sent down: “And we have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet . . .” to His words, “. . . and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

**Riwāyah 6: A Summary Report from Muḥammad b. Ka‘b in the *Tafṣīr* of Abū al-Shaykh al-Iṣbahānī**

*Riwāyah 6*, another summary report attributed to Muḥammad b. Ka‘b al-Quraẓī and very similar to *Riwāyah 5*, is adduced by al-

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140 This is another work that al-Suyūṭī studied closely: he prepared a book called *al-Muntaqā min Tafsīr Ibn Abī Ḥātim*; see al-Suyūṭī, *Taḥadduth*, 127. That al-Suyūṭī is abbreviating the report is suggested by his statement in regard to Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s *Tafṣīr*: “I summarized it in my *Tafṣīr* [lakhkhaṣtu-hu fī tafsīr-ī];” see the entry on Ibn Abī Ḥātim in al-Suyūṭī’s *Ṭabaqāt al-mufassirīn* ed. ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Umar (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1976), 63. For another abridged citation by al-Suyūṭī from the *Tafṣīr* of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, see *Riwāyah 13*, below; on the legitimacy of the practice of abridging reports without changing the meaning, see Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī (d. 643), *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, ed. ‘Ā’ishah ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-‘Aṣriyyah, 1999), 1:13; for the importance of his *Tafṣīr*, see 1:7–11.
Suyūṭī in his *Asbāb al-nuzūl*\(^{41}\) from ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Ja’far Abū al-Shaykh al-Iṣbahānī (d. 369), presumably from the latter’s lost *Tafṣīr*.\(^{42}\) It is given in the citations of *asbāb al-nuzūl* for Qur’ān 17:73 al-İsrā’.

He recited, “By the star . . .” until, “Have you seen al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā,” and Satan cast upon him [*fa-alqā ‘alay-hi al-shayṭān*]: “Those high *gharāniq*! Indeed, their intercession is to be hoped for [*tilka al-gharāniq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā‘ata-hunna la-turtajā*].” So it [Qur’ān 17:73 al-İsrā’] came down. He remained grieved [*maghmūm*] and anxious [*mahmūm*] until God sent down: “And we have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he desired, Satan cast something into his desire; then God removes that which Satan casts and establishes His Signs clearly. . . .”

**Riwāyahs** 4, 5, and 6, attributed to Muḥammad b. Ka‘b, are evidently summary versions of the narrative contained in **Riwāyah 2**, also attributed to Muḥammad b. Ka‘b. All three shorter reports contain phrases found in **Riwāyah 2**, such as, “He remained grieved and anxious.” These three **riwāyahs** show us how the narrative of an incident may be reduced for *tafsīr* purposes to the bare information necessary to link particular Qur’ānic verses to an event in the Prophet’s life. It is noteworthy that the accounts are devoid of any attempt to locate the incident in the larger narrative of the Prophet’s life. There is thus no mention of the Prophet’s dealings with the Meccans, of what it was that precipitated Satan’s intervention, or of the effect of the incident on the Prophet’s mission. And while it might be posited that two of the reports, **Riwāyahs** 5 and 6, do not explicitly state that the Prophet actually recited the Satanic verses, this is the most obvious meaning of the phrase “Satan cast upon him [*fa-alqā ‘alay-hi al-shayṭān*],” and the almost irresistible implication of the logic of


the rest of the narrative. It may be that these reports represent bare-bones information for an audience that was already familiar with the incident. In any case, nothing in any of Riwāyahs 4, 5, and 6 in any way contradicts Riwāyah 2.

Riwāyahs 4, 5, and 6, as summary versions of Riwāyah 2, indicate the extent to which there existed in the first three centuries of Islam a widespread hermeneutical tradition in which the linking of the Satanic verses incident to both Qur’ān 17:73 al-Isrā’ and Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj was associated with Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Quraẓī.143

Riwāyah 7: From the Maghāzī of Yūnus b. Bukayr

Riwāyah 7 is given in the Kitāb al-maghāzī compiled in Kūfah in the second century by Yūnus b. Bukayr al-Kūfī (d. 199) as transmitted from him by Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-‘Uṭāridī al-Kūfī (177–272).144 While Yūnus b. Bukayr had a mixed reputation among the Ḥadīth scholars,145 Aḥmad al-‘Uṭāridī was markedly unpopular

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143 Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Quraẓī is not the only early mufassir to have associated the Satanic verses incident with Qur’ān 17:73 al-Isrā’; we will see in Riwāyah 33, below, that the famous Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī (d.103) also did so.
144 The authorship of Aḥmad al-‘Uṭāridī’s transmission of Yūnus’ Maghāzī has been somewhat confused by the fact that its separate editors both published it as the sirah of Ibn Ishāq: Sirat Ibn Ishāq al-musammā bi-Kitāb al-muštada’ wa-al-mab’ath wa-al-maghāzī, ed. Muhammad Hamidullah (Rabat: Ma’had al-Dirāsāt wa-al-Abḥāth li-al-Ta’rib); Kitāb al-siyar wa-al-maghāzī li-Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Muṭṭalibī, ed. Suhayl Zakār (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1978). All but five of the reports in the work are from Yūnus b. Bukayr. Three-fifths of the work is composed of reports Yūnus studied with Ibn Ishāq during the latter’s sojourn in Kufah; many of these do not appear in the recension of Ibn Hisham. The remainder of the work is made up of more than two hundred reports taken by Yūnus from sources other than Ibn Ishāq, as was noted by Alfred Guillaume, New Light on the Life of Muḥammad (Manchester: Manchester University Press, Journal of Semitic Studies Monograph No.1, [no date]), 5; and by Miklos Muranyi, “Ibn Ishāq’s Kitāb al-maghāzī in der Riwāya von Yūnus B. Bukair: Bemerkungen zur frühen Überlieferungsgeschichte,” Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam 14 (1991), 214–275, at 216–218; see also al-Ṭarābīshī, Ruwāt, 104–147. Note also the comments of Sadun Mahmud al-Samuk, “Die Historischen Überlieferungen nach Ibn Ishāq: eine Synoptische Untersuchung,” Inauguraldissertation, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt, 1978, 82–83, footnote 1, and 94–98.
with them. Ibn ‘Adī notes that “the Iraqis were in agreement that he was a bad transmitter,” and al-Dhahabi says “they ganged up against him” (takāṭhara ‘alay-hi), but goes onto defend al-‘Uṭāridī as a transmitter of Yūnus’s Magḥāzī.\footnote{Ibn ‘Adī, Kāmil, 1:194; al-Dhahabi, Siyar, 13:55–59. See also al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Tārīkh Baghdaḏ, 4:262–265; Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 1:51–52.} There is a revealing report that describes how some of the aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth in third-century Ku-fah found Yūnus’s Magḥāzī so objectionable that they pressured the prominent Ḥadīth scholar Abū Kurayb Muḥammad b. al-‘Alā’ (d. 284) into abandoning his teaching of it.\footnote{For Abū Kurayb, see al-Dhahabi, Siyar, 11:394–398.} The report is the account of al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥamīd b. al-Rabī’al-Lakhmī (d. 282), who clearly does not identify himself in the narrative with the aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth, and is, in fact, described in the sources as the author of a work of history (la-hu kitāb muṣannaf fī al-tārīkh). The story concludes with al-Lakhmī going to Aḥmad al-‘Uṭāridī and obtaining from him a manuscript of Yūnus’s Magḥāzī that bears an attestation of al-‘Uṭāridī’s having studied the book with Yūnus. It was following this, says al-Dhahabi, that the muḥaddithūn turned on al-‘Uṭāridī.\footnote{See Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Tārīkh Baghdaḏ, 4:264; al-Dhahabi, Siyar, 13:57, where the incident is dated to the 240s. It is interesting to note that the account of the incident mentions that al-‘Uṭāridī “used to play with pigeons,” a practice that was anathema to Ḥadīth scholars: see Heinz Grotzfeld, “Al-La’b bil-ḥamām,” in Ulrich Haarmann and Peter Bachmann (eds.), Die Islamische Welt zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit: Festschrift für Hans Robert Roemer zum 65. Geburstag, Beirut: Franz Steiner, 1979, 193–197.} One suspects that the objections of the Ḥadīth folk must have had to do with the content of Yūnus’s Magḥāzī, which includes several reports theologically problematic for the ahl al-ḥadīth, and much of which is, naturally, transmitted by weak isnāds. Al-Lakhmī’s account illustrates neatly how the historical memory of the Prophet was a contested entity in the third-century community of Muslims, over which the Ḥadīth folk were trying to establish their exclusive legitimating authority.\footnote{This did not stop later Ḥadīth scholars from studying the work: the Damascus manuscript bears the sama‘ (reading certification) of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, from whose Tārīkh Baghdaḏ we have the foregoing biographical information of the transmitters; see Yūnus b. Bukayr/Hamidullah, Sirat Ibn Isḥaq, lām-dāl; and Yūnus b. Bukayr/Zakkār, al-Siyar wa-al-maghāzī, 19.}

The isnād for the report on the Satanic verses is:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

The following is a translation of the text of the report:151

They (the Emigrants in Abyssinia) remained there until it reached them that the people of Mecca had accepted Islam and had made the sajdah. That was because Sūrat al-Najm had been sent down to the Messenger of God. The Messenger of God recited it and every Muslim and Mushrik listened to it silently until he reached, “Have you seen al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā?” They listened to him attentively, the Muslims all the while believing in the veracity (of what they heard) [fa-aṣākhū la-hu wa-al-muslimūn yataṣaddaqūn].152 And people reverted [irtadda nāṣ]153 when they heard Satan’s rhyming phrases [saj‘], and said [fa-qāla]: “By Allāh, let us worship them so that they may bring us closer to Allāh [wa-Allāhi li-na’bud-hunna li-yuqarribū-nā ilā Allāhi zulfū].”154 Satan taught those two verses [taynika al-āyataynī] to every Mushrik, and their tongues were debased by them [dhallat bi-hā].

This greatly distressed [kabura dhālika ‘alā] the Messenger of God, until Jibrīl came to him. He (the Prophet) complained to him (Jibrīl) about these two verses and about what he had met with from the people as a result of them [fa-shakā ilay-hi hātayn al-āyataynī wa-mā laqiya min al-nāṣfi-himā].155 Jibrīl absolved himself of responsibility for them

150 For the isnād by which the present manuscript was transmitted forward from al-‘Uṭāridī see Muranyi, “Ibn Isḥāq’s Kitāb al-maghāzī in der Riwāya von Yūnus b. Bukair,” 225–232; and al-Ṭarābīshī, Ruwāt, 124–127.


152 I am reading yuṣaddiqūn for yataṣaddaqūn, which appears in both of the fifth-/eleventh-century manuscripts edited by Hamidullah and Zakkār, and for which the lexicons provide no meaning aside from “to give ṣadaqah.”

153 Guillame translates this as “Some apostatized when they heard the saj’ of the Satan.” I prefer “reverted” to “apostatized”: since the people in question were merely following what the Prophet had said, the narrative could, in fairness, hardly call them apostates.

154 Cf. Qur‘ān 39:3 al-Zumar, wa-allaadhina ittakhadhū min dūnī-hi awliyā‘a mā na’bud-hum ilā li-yuqarribū-nā ilā Allāhi zulfū. This Qur‘ānic reference has somehow escaped the notice of all three of Hamidullah, Zakkār, and Guillame.

155 Guillame translates this as “until Gabriel came to him and complained to him of these two verses and the effect that they had upon the people”; New Light, 39. This is clearly incorrect as the subject of both verbs in the sentence fa-shakā ilay-hi hātayn al-āyatayn wa-mā laqiya min al-nāṣfi-himā can only be the Prophet, and not Jibrīl.
[tabarra’at min-humā] and said, “You have recited to the people that which I did not bring to you from God and said what He did not say to you [la-qad talawta ‘alā al-nās mà lam āti-ka bi-hi ‘an Allāh ‘azza wa- jalla wa-quṭa mà lam yaqul la-ka].”

The Messenger of God was sorely grieved [ḥazina ḥuznan shadīdan] upon that and was afraid [khāfa]. So God, comforting him over it [yu’azzī-hi la-hu], sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he tamannā, Satan cast something into his umniyyah,” until His words, “All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

In comparing Riwāyah 7 to Riwāyah 1 (the other account from Ibn Isḥāq), it is clear that the two narratives are constructed very differently. Riwāyah 7 is characterized by a number of narrative elements that distinguish it from Riwāyahs 1 to 6; it cannot be seen as a summary of Riwāyah 1. Nonetheless, given the attribution of both reports to Ibn Isḥāq, it is interesting to note that they contain identical passages. The closing passage from “You have recited to the people” until the end of the report is identical to Riwāyah 1. Also, the distinctive phrase fa-aṣākhū la-hu wa-al-muslimūna yuṣaddiqūna / yataṣaddaqūna in Riwāyah 7 is virtually identical to Riwāyah 1: fa-aṣākhū la-hu wa-al-muslimūna muṣaddiqūna nabīyya-hum—and, indeed, one of the later manuscripts of the sīrah of Yūnus contains the variant muṣaddiqūna in place of yataṣaddaqūna.156 The verb aṣākha la-hu is not found in any report other than these two from Ibn Isḥāq.

Riwāyah 7, unlike Riwāyah 1, contains no mention of persecution by Quraysh. However, we are dealing now with a report that has come down to us in the context of a work arranged by its author. In his recension of Ibn Isḥāq, Yūnus b. Bukayr arrives at the Satanic verses incident after a long section entitled “The Trial and Suffering Which Afflicted the Companions of the Messenger of God,” which culminates in the migration to Abyssinia. The theme of persecution thus forms the background to Riwāyah 7: the Satanic verses incident is presented in the explanation of the decision of some of the refugees to return to Mecca when they hear the Meccans have performed sajdah and accepted Islam—in other words, that the persecution has ended. Nonetheless, Riwāyah 7 does not mention any desire on the part of the Prophet to be reconciled with Quraysh. The

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156 Yūnus b. Bukayr/Zakkar, al-Siyar wa-al-maghāzi, 177, footnote 1.
absence of this narrative motif will be seen in other reports too. A further element that is absent in Riwāyahs 1 to 6, but that Riwāyah 7 shares with Riwāyah 8, below, is the remarkable narrative motif of the Prophet complaining to Jibrīl about what had taken place. This is a poignant image, as it presents the Prophet as unhappy with the Satanic verses and their effect, even though he thought the verses had been revealed to him by God. This gives the favorable impression that the Prophet sensed that something had gone wrong, even though he did not know what it was.

The four most distinctive features in Riwāyah 7 are as follows. First, while it is clear from the narrative as a whole that there was a Satanic intervention, there is no description of the intervention (narrative unit 3). Second, the text of the Satanic verses is not given (narrative unit 4). The narrative limits itself to an allusion to the sajī of Shayṭān: this is an account of the Satanic verses incident without the Satanic verses themselves being mentioned. It should not casually be assumed here that Satan’s verses are being characterized as sajī in contrast to what later Muslim orthodoxy categorized as the inimitable non-sajī of the Qurʾān. The idea that the Qurʾān is categorically not sajī established itself only after the rise and eventual institutionalization of the doctrine of the inimitability (iʿjāz) of the Qurʾān from the fourth/tenth century. Not only has Arabic-Islamic scholarship historically encompassed the view that “the greater part of the Qurʾān is sajī,” but also the Mamlūk polymath al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418) specifically classified Sūrat al-Najm as being composed entirely in sajī.157 In this context, the confusion between the āyāt of Sūrat al-Najm and Satan’s formulation becomes more understandable; if both are sajī then there would be no immediately detectable formal difference to alert either the Prophet or other listeners. Also, this might suggest why, in the correction scene in Riwāyah 7 (but not in any other riwāyah) the Satanic verses are accorded the same technical term—āyah—as the Qurʾān uses for its own textual units.

The third and most significant narrative feature of Riwāyah 7 is that it is the only report on the incident in which some of the

Muslims are presented as having reverted to their former belief after the Prophet’s uttering of the Satanic verses: *irtadda nās ḥīna sa-miʿū saj' al-shayṭān*. This narrative motif, which is not given in any other *riwāyah*, is elaborated by a fourth unique feature of *Riwāyah 7*—namely, the association of the Satanic verses incident with Qur’ān 39:3 al-Zumar: “Those who take for themselves protectors other than He (say): We worship them only so that they may bring us closer to Allāh.” The words placed in the mouths of the recidivists in *Riwāyah 7*—“By Allāh, let us worship them so that they may bring us closer to Allāh [wa-Allāhi li-na‘bud-hunna li-yuqarribū-nā ilā Allāhi zu-lfā]”—are drawn from this āyah. *Riwāyah 7* thus provides a Qur’ānic gloss for the (unmentioned) Satanic verses, illustrating that they constituted a theological concession that confirmed the legitimacy of Quraysh’s belief in the intercessory role of their deities, whose function it was to bring worshippers closer to the supreme god.\(^{158}\)

These four features are unique to *Riwāyah 7* and distinguish it from all the other *riwāyahs* on the incident. The fact that *Riwāyah 7* differs substantively from *Riwāyah 1*, which Ibn Iṣḥāq taught in Rayy, should not cast doubt on it being genuinely representative of Yūnus b. Bukayr’s transmission from him: Yūnus says expressly in one place that “everything that is from the discourse [ḥadīth] of Ibn Iṣḥāq, he either dictated it to me, or read it to me, or told it to me.”\(^{159}\)

Thus it makes most sense to understand *Riwāyah 7* as the result of Yūnus’s or / and al-‘Uṭāridī’s own recension of a report that Ibn Iṣḥāq taught in Kufah. Finally, we should note the position of *Riwāyah 7* on the three fundamental hermeneutical issues:

1. The Prophet uttered the verses.
2. It is not clear why.
3. He was aware of something being amiss but was not sure what it was until told by Jibrīl.

\(^{158}\) It is highly suggestive that in his commentary on Qur’ān 39:3 al-Zumar, al-Ṭabarī glosses the idea of “bringing closer to Allāh” precisely as “intercession (*shafāʿah*),” and cites earlier authorities to this effect; see *fāmiʿli* al-bayān, 23:194–195.

Riwāyahs 8 to 13:
From ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr

Riwāyah 8: From Abū al-Aswad’s Egyptian Recension of ‘Urwah’s Maghāzī

Riwāyah 8 is given in al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr of the much-traveled and apparently long-lived Ḥadīth scholar Abū al-Qāsim Sulaymān b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī (260–360), with the following isnād:


Riwāyah 8 is also cited from al-Ṭabarānī with some textual variants in the Kitāb man ṣabara ẓafira of Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Muṭṭawwi’i al-Naysābūrī al-Makkī (fl. 435). Al-Muṭṭawwi’i gives the following isnād:


160 For al-Ṭabarānī, see al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 10:173; Sezgin, GAS, 1:195–197; and Kahhālah, Mu‘jam, 1:783.
163 A known student of al-Ṭabarānī; see al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 17:299–300.
164 The name of the intermediary transmitter between ‘Amr b. Khālid and ‘Urwah is not given.
Urwah b. al-Zubayr was, of course, one the most prominent scholarly figures in early Islamic Mecca (and is also counted among the Seven Jurisprudents [fuqahā’] of Madinah who are regarded as having provided the foundation for Medinese legal thought). ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Dūrī identifies him as the founder of the study of the life of the Prophet.\(^{165}\) While no Kitāb al-maghāzī from ‘Urwah has survived as an independent work, the numerous sīrah reports going back to ‘Urwah make up an extensive biographical narrative.\(^{166}\) It is fairly certain that such a sīrah narrative was transmitted as a Kitāb al-maghāzī from ‘Urwah in Egypt in the 130s by Abū al-Aswad Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Nawfal al-Madani (d. 136/7), who is known as “yatīm ‘Urwah” (‘Urwah’s orphan), his father having entrusted his upbringing to ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr.\(^{167}\) While Abū al-Aswad’s recension of ‘Urwah’s Maghāzī does not survive today as a separate work, the surviving riwāyahs from Abū al-Aswad are

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\(^{167}\) Abū al-Aswad migrated to Egypt shortly before his death. He was viewed by posterity as possessing the same stature as Muḥammad b. Shihāb al-Zuhri and Hishām b. ‘Urwah, the two other prominent transmitters from ‘Urwah. See Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Jarḥ, 7:321; al-Dhahabi, Siyur, 6:150; Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 9:307–308; Sezgin, GAS 1:278 and 1:284; and al-‘Aẓamī, Maghāzī rasūl Allāh, 61–62.
still numerous enough to have been collected and arranged in a fairly coherent biographical narrative by al-A’ẓamī. Almost all of Abū al-Aswad’s reports from ‘Urwah are transmitted by ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Lahī’ah (97–174), who was Qādī of Egypt as well as one of the most famous Egyptian scholars of the second century.168 It is noteworthy that the isnāds of the scattered reports transmitted by ‘Abd Allāh b. Lahī’ah from Abū al-Aswad consistently stop at ‘Urwah, and do not go back to eyewitnesses, something that would strongly suggest that we are dealing with fragments of what was originally a single work.169 That “Abū al-Aswad went to Egypt, and transmitted there the Kitāb al-maghāzī of ‘Urwah” was also the understanding of al-Dhahabī.170 It is particularly significant to note of Ibn Lahī’ah that he placed great emphasis on writing, and taught from his notebooks. A report specifically records the written transmission of Ibn Lahī’ah’s reports from Abū al-Aswad, and also ascribes a statement to Ibn Lahī’ah to the effect that Abū al-Aswad wrote down his materials.171 It was probably because of his reliance on writing that, while reports from Ibn Lahī’ah appear in three of the canonical collections, his reputation as a muḥaddith was very mixed. So dependent was Ibn Lahī’ah on his books that Abd al-ḥanbal refused to accredit anyone who studied with him after his house burned down around the year 170.172 The later Ḥadīth scholar Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī (d. 807) rejected Riwāyah 8 on the basis of Ibn Lahī’ah’s presence in the isnād.173

168 “In fact, almost the entire book is based on the transmission of Ibn Lahī’ah”; see al-A’ẓamī, Maghāzī rasūl Allāh, 60, where the various transmissions of the work from ‘Urwah are listed.


170 nazala Abū al-Aswad Miṣr wa-ḥaddatha bi-hā Kitāb al-maghāzī li-‘Urwah ‘an-hu, al-Dhahabi, Siyar, 6:150.

171 Al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 8:16–17.


173 “This is not likely (to be) from Ibn Lahī’ah [lā yaḥtamilu / lā yuḥtumalu hādhā min Ibn Lahī’ah]”; al-Haythamī, Majma’ al-zawā’id, 7:72. Al-Ḥalabī al-Ḥalabī al-Athari,
The present transmission from Ibn Lahi‘ah is by way of a father-to-son communication. ‘Amr b. Khālid al-Ḥarrānī (d. 229), a Syrian migrant to Egypt, was universally regarded as a reliable transmitter. Little is known about his son, Muḥammad b. ‘Amr (d. 292), except that he transmitted from his father. The present isnād became quite well-known and, in addition to al-Ṭabarānī, it was cited by Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī (d. 430) and by Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (384–458) in their respective Dalā’il al-nubuwwah works. During al-Ṭabarānī’s sojourn in Egypt, then, he studied with Muḥammad b. ‘Amr what must have constituted the Egyptian version of the maghāzi of ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr, apparently already transmitted in writing in the 130s.

The following is the account of the Satanic verses incident:

Then those who had gone (to Abyssinia) the first time returned before (the departure of) Ja‘far b. Abī Ṭālib and his companions. This was when God sent down the sūrah in which He states, “By the star when it sets.” The Mushrikūn had said: “If only this man would speak favourably of our gods [yadhkuru ālihatā-nā bi-khayr], we would secure him [aqrarnā-hu] and his companions. He does not speak of any of the Jews and Christians who oppose his religion with the abuse and invective [al-shatm wa-al-sharr] with which he speaks of our gods.”

Dalā’il, 164, rejects Riwāyah 8 on the basis that ‘Amr b. Khālid studied with Ibn Lahi‘ah after the library fire, but I have found no evidence for this in the sources; it appears that al-Ḥalabī al-Athāri is interpreting the remark of al-Haythamī. The editor of al-Ṭabarānī’s al-Mu’jam al-kabīr, Ḥamdī ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Salafī, rejects the transmission from Ibn Lahi‘ah on the basis that “it is not from one of the ‘Abd Allāhūs”—that is, presumably, Ibn Lahi‘ah’s major students, ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Wahb (for whom see see Khoury, ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Lahi‘ah, 122–124 and Riwāyah 14, below) and ‘Abd Allāh Ibn al-Mubārak (118–181; for whom see Khoury, ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Lahi‘ah, 170–172); al-Ṭabarānī, al-Mu’jam al-kabīr, 9:34, footnote 8316.

174 There are reports from him in the canonical collections of al-Bukhārī and Ibn Mājah. See al-Dhahabī, Siyār 10:427–428; and Ibn Ḥajar, Taḥdīḥ 8:25–26.


176 Al-A‘zāmī, Maghāzi rasūl Allāh, 60.


178 Al-Muṭṭawwi‘ī: “the Mushrikūn of Quraysh.”


181 Al-Muṭṭawwi‘ī interrupts the narrative here to give an account of Quraysh’s response to the emigration of the refugees, and then resumes it.
When God sent down the surah in which He mentions, “By the star,” he (the Prophet) recited [qara‘a],182 “Have you seen Al-Lāt, Al-‘Uzza and Manāt, the third, the other?” At this point, Satan cast into it (Sūrat al-Najm) [alqā al-shayṭānu fi-hā ‘inda dhālika] a mention of the evil ones [dhikr al-ṭawāghīt], and he (the Prophet) said [fa-qāla]: “Indeed, they are from among the high ghārānīq! And, indeed, their intercession is to be hoped for! [inna-humna la-min al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā‘ata-hum (sic) la-turtajā]”; that was the rhyming phrases [saj‘] of Satan and was an instance of his sedition [min fitnati-hi].

Those two phrases [ḥātāni al-kalimatāni] became lodged in the heart of every Mushrik; their tongues were debased by them, they rejoiced at them [dhallat bi-hā alsinatu-hum wa-istabsharū bi-hā] and said: “Muḥammad has returned to his original religion and the religion of his tribe [qad raja‘a Muḥammad ilā dīni-hi al-awwal wa-dīn qawmi-hi].”183

And when the Messenger of God reached the end of the surah in which there is mention of “the Star,”184 he made the sajdah and all the Muslims and Mushrikūn present made the sajdah along with him, except for185 al-Walīd b. al-Mughīrah who was an old man and who raised some dirt on his palm and made the sajdah on it.

Both the parties were astonished at their joint sajdah [fa-‘ajaba al-farīqān kilā-humā min jamā‘ati-him] following the sajdah of the Messenger of God.

The Muslims were astonished at the Mushrikūn having made the sajdah when they were in a state of Unbelief [‘alā ghayr īmān wa-lā yāqīn], the Muslims not having heard that which Satan cast onto the tongues of the Mushrikūn [lam yakun al-muslimūn sami‘ū alladhi alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā alsinat al-mushrikīn].187

OR: The Muslims were astonished at the Mushrikūn having made the sajdah when they were in a state of Unbelief [‘alā ghayr īmān wa-lā yāqīn], the Muslims not having heard that which Satan cast into the ears of the Mushrikūn [lam yakun al-muslimūn sami‘ū alladhi alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā ʿādhān al-mushrikīn].188

182 Al-Muṭṭawwi‘ī: “he (the Prophet) recited [qara‘a] it. And when he reached His words, ‘Have you . . .?’”
183 The phrase wa-dīn qawmi-hi is missing in al-A‘ẓamī’s edition.
184 Absent from al-Muṭṭawwi‘ī is “in which there is mention of ‘the Star.’”
185 Al-Ṭabarānī: ghayr anna; al-Muṭṭawwi‘ī: ghayr.
186 al-Muṭṭawwi‘ī: min ijtima‘i-him.
187 This paragraph will be referred to in the discussion below as “paragraph 6.”
188 Thus in al-Muṭṭawwi‘ī.
As for the Mushrikūn, their minds\textsuperscript{189} were set at ease in regard to the Prophet and his Companions when they heard what Satan cast into the umniyyah of the Prophet \([lammā samī‘ū alladhī alqā al-shayṭān fī umniyyat al-nabī]\). Satan told them that the Messenger of God had recited them (the Satanic verses) when in \textit{sajdah}, so they made the \textit{sajdah} in veneration of their gods.

That phrase circulated among the people, and Satan spread it until it reached Abyssinia.\textsuperscript{190} When ‘Uthmān b. Maẓ‘ūn and ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas‘ūd and those Meccans who were with them heard that the people had accepted Islam and prayed alongside the Messenger of God, and when news reached them of the \textit{sajdah} of al-Walīd b. al-Mughīrah on the dirt on his palm, they came quickly.

The Messenger of God was greatly distressed by this \([wa-kabura dhālika ‘alā rasūl Allāh]\). In the evening,\textsuperscript{191} Jibrīl came to him. He (the Prophet) complained to him \([fa-shakā ilay-hi]\), so he (Jibrīl) ordered him (to recite the \textit{sūrah}) and he (the Prophet) recited to him \([fa-qara‘a ‘alay-hi]\). When he (the Prophet) reached them (the Satanic verses) \([fa-lammā balagha-hā]\),

\textbf{OR:} when he (Jibrīl) heard \([sami‘a]\) (the Satanic verses)\textsuperscript{192}, Jibrīl absolved himself of responsibility for them \([tabarra‘a min-hā]\) and said: “God protect me from these! My Lord did not send them down, nor your Lord command me with them! \([ma‘ādh Allāh min hātayni mā anzala-humā rabb-i wa-lā amara-nī bi-himā rabbu-ka]\).” When the Messenger of God saw this, he was greatly disturbed \([shaqqa ‘alay-hi]\) and said: “I have obeyed Satan, and spoken his words, and he has become a partner in God’s matter with me \([aṭa‘tu al-shayṭāna wa-takallamtu bi-kalāmi-hi wa-sharika-nī fī amr Allāh]\).”

So God removed that which Satan cast \([fa-nasakha Allāhu ‘azza wa-jalla mā alqā al-shayṭān]\) and sent down upon him: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he \textit{tamannā}, Satan cast something into his umniyyah; then God removes that which Satan casts and establishes His Signs clearly—and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise—to make that which Satan cast a trial for those in whose hearts is sickness, and for those whose hearts are hardened. Indeed, the Wrongdoers are in far dissension.”

\textsuperscript{189} Al-Ṭabarānī: \textit{anfusu-hum}; al-Muṭṭawwi‘ī: \textit{mufusu-hum}.
\textsuperscript{190} Al-Ṭabarānī: \textit{al-Ḥabashah}; al-Muṭṭawwi‘ī: \textit{arḍ al-Ḥabashah}.
\textsuperscript{191} The word \textit{amsā}, “in the evening,” is missing from al-Muṭṭawwi‘ī.
\textsuperscript{192} Thus in al-Muṭṭawwi‘ī.
And when God absolved him \[\text{barra'\text{a}-hu Allāh}\] of Satan’s rhyming phrases and of his sedition, the Mushrikūn reverted to their errant state and their hostility. The news reached those Muslims who had been in Abyssinia and who were now approaching Mecca. They were now unable to return because of the severity of the suffering they would encounter, and were hungry and afraid. They were afraid that if they entered Mecca they would be attacked. So no man entered Mecca unless he had protection.

\textit{Riwāyah 8}, then, provides a detailed account of the Satanic verses incident that, while it differs entirely in wording from \textit{Riwāyah 1}, is largely congruent in meaning. \textit{Riwāyah 8} introduces a new narrative motif as a background to Satan’s intervention—namely, Quraysh’s offer to support the Prophet on condition that he speak favorably of their gods \[\text{yadhkuru ālihata-nā bi-khayr}\], we would secure him \[\text{aqrarnā-hu}\] and his companions.” Satan’s intervention in the form of the Satanic verses serves to provide Muḥammad with a positive response to Quraysh’s offer. Here, as in \textit{Riwāyahs 1} and 2, the incident can be understood as taking place during the initial Revelation of Sūrat al-Najm. We should note that \textit{Riwāyah 8} does not explicitly present Satan’s intervention as being precipitated by the Prophet’s desire to be reconciled with Quraysh: no such desire is mentioned, and no gloss is provided for the meaning of \textit{tamannā} in Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj. However, it is clear that the Prophet’s utterance functions as a positive response to an offer of reconciliation.¹⁹³

Further, the Prophet’s own characterization of his error is remarkable for its choice of words: “I have obeyed Satan, and spoken his words, and \text{he has become a partner in God’s matter with me} \[\text{wa-sharīka-nī fī amr Allāh}\].” The use of the verb \textit{sharika} immediately provokes an association of the Prophet’s error with the concept of \textit{shirk}, the cardinal sin of associating partners with God. This is the only

¹⁹³The motif of persecution is not explicitly stated in the outset of \textit{Riwāyah 8}, although it is self-evident in virtue of the chronological setting (the refugees having gone to Abyssinia) and the reference to the fear of persecution felt by the returning refugees when they learned that Quraysh had not converted to Islam. Cf. \textit{motifs 1b, 1c, 1d, and 3b} in \textit{Riwāyah 1}. 
instance in the Satanic verses *riwāyahs* where the Prophet’s error is characterized in this remarkable way.¹⁹⁴

Another narrative motif in *Riwa'iyah 8*, which we have not seen in the *riwāyahs* thus far, is that of the Muslims’ confusion as to the reason why Quraysh made the *sajdah* behind the Prophet at the end of Sūrat al-Najm. In the present instance, the Muslims are astonished because they have not heard “that which Satan cast onto the tongues of the Mushrikūn” (in al-Ṭabarānī) or “that which Satan cast into the ears [ādhān] of the Mushrikūn” (in al-Muṭṭawwi‘ī). Since al-Muṭṭawwi‘ī is citing al-Ṭabarānī, we will take the wording as found in the text of al-Ṭabarānī as the original, and examine it first. The meaning of the phrase is none too clear, but there are two possibilities. The first is that *alladhī alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā al-sināt al-mushrikīn* is a rhetorical reference to Quraysh’s own repetition of the Satanic verses (*dhallat bi-hā al-sināt hum*) and their expressions of satisfaction with the Prophet’s uttering the Satanic verses: “Muḥammad has returned to his original religion and to the religion of his tribe!” This latter exclamation serves the same function in *Riwa’iyah 8* as did the reference to Qur’ān 39:3 al-Zumar in *Riwa’iyah 7*: it graphically expresses the extent of the concession to Quraysh’s religion contained in the Satanic verses, and also conveys the obliviousness of both the Muslims and the Prophet to the nature of the concession. In other words, the report is saying that the Muslims did not understand why Quraysh made the *sajdah* because they did not hear Quraysh’s expressions of satisfaction with the Prophet’s recitation of the Satanic verses.

If the phrase does not refer to the response of Quraysh, it can be taken only to be confusing the issue of who it is who uttered the Satanic verses in the first place. It will be noted that the passage describing Satan’s intervention is somewhat vague:

> When God sent down the *sūrah* in which He mentions, “By the star,” he (the Prophet) recited [*qara‘a*], “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?” At this point, Satan cast into it (Sūrat

al-Najm) a mention of the evil ones, and he said [*alqā al-shayṭānu fi-hā ‘inda dhālikā dihkr al-ṭawāghīt fa-qāla*]: “Indeed, they are high gharāniq! And, indeed, their intercession is to be hoped for!”; that was the rhyming phrases of Satan and was an instance of his sedition.

The text contains a potential ambiguity—namely, that it is unclear from the context whether the conjunction *fa* in the phrase *fa-qāla* expresses a change of subject from Satan (*alqā al-shayṭān*) to the Prophet (*fa-qāla*), or a continuation of Satan’s actions: *fa-lammā anzala Allāh Sūrat al-Najm qara’a “a-fara’aytum al-Lāt wa-al-‘Uzzā wa-Manāt al-thālithah al-ukhrā* *alqā al-shayṭān ‘inda-hā ḥīna dhakara Allāh al-ṭawāghīt fa-qāla* “wa-inna-hunna al-gharāniq al-‘ulā. . . .” Indeed, until the correction scene late in the narrative, where the Prophet explicitly acknowledges having uttered the Satanic verses—“I have obeyed Satan, and spoken his words”—the possibility exists that *fa-qāla* refers to Satan. In this case, the phrase “that which Satan cast upon the tongues of the Mushrikūn” might be taken to convey the idea that it was the Mushrikūn, and not the Prophet, who repeated the Satanic interpolation.195

The variant text of al-Muṭṭawwi‘ī, “the Muslims having not heard that which Satan cast into the ears of the Mushrikūn,” is as unclear as al-Ṭabarānī’s original. Again, were it not for the correction scene, it might be possible to take the *fa-qāla* in the passage describing Satan’s intervention as referring to Satan, and thus to construe Satan’s casting into the *umniyyah* of the Prophet as being something that Satan said to the Mushrikūn alone, without the Muslims or the Prophet 195

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195 This is apparently the understanding of al-A’ẓamī, an outright opponent of the historicity of the Satanic verses incident, who dismisses *Riwāyah 8* as self-contradictory (*kalām yunāqiḍ ākhiru-hu awwala-hu*): “Ibn Lahī‘ah has said at the beginning of the *riwāyah* that Satan cast into it [*al-shayṭān alqā fī-hā*] and that the Muslims did not hear them (the Satanic verses) [*wa-lam yasma’-hā al-muslimūn*], then he comes later and says that the Prophet continued to recite this phrase.” Al-A’ẓamī is not specific about which portions of the text contradict each other; however, he relates the phrase “Satan cast into it (Sūrat al-Najm)” (second paragraph) to the phrase “the Muslims not having heard that which Satan cast onto the tongues of the Mushrikūn.” His criticism seems to be that the narrative—as he understands it—initially says that it was the Mushrikūn (and not the Prophet) who uttered the Satanic verses, but later says that the Prophet uttered them. In any case, despite al-A’ẓamī’s assertion, there is no contradiction in the narrative, only an ambiguity that is resoundingly resolved by the correction scene. See al-A’ẓamī, *Maghāzī rasūl Allāh*, 106–107, footnote 2.
being aware of it. However, the fact of the correction scene removes this possibility. Since there is no doubt here that the Prophet uttered the verses, there are three ways in which we can interpret the phrase, “that which Satan cast into the ears of the Mushrikūn.” The first is to assume that somehow only the Mushrikūn heard what the Prophet said. The second is to take the phrase as referring forward in the narrative to paragraph 6:

The Muslims were astonished at the Mushrikūn having made the *sajdah* when they were in a state of Unbelief, the Muslims having not heard that which Satan cast into the ears of the Mushrikūn. As for the Mushrikūn, their minds were set at ease in regard to the Prophet and his Companions when they heard what Satan cast into the *umniyyah* of the Prophet. Satan told them that the Messenger of God had recited them (the Satanic verses) when in *sajdah*, so they made the *sajdah* in veneration of their gods.

The phrase “the Muslims not having heard that which Satan cast into the ears of the Mushrikūn” is an explanation for the Muslims’ noncomprehension of the reason for Quraysh’s *sajdah*. The reason for the *sajdah* is given subsequently: “Satan told them that the Messenger of God had recited them (the Satanic verses) when in *sajdah*, so they made the *sajdah* in veneration of their gods.” This private communication from Satan to the Mushrikūn, which is presented as the immediate cause of their *sajdah*, may be what is meant by “that which Satan cast into the ears of the Mushrikūn.” Finally, it is interesting to note, however, that the Prophet is characterized as being distressed before the correction scene. In other words, it would appear that, as in *Riwayah 7*, the Prophet realized that something was wrong, even though he did not know what it was.

Despite the vagueness of both versions of paragraph 6, the fundamental hermeneutical position of *Riwayah 8* is unaffected: the Prophet uttered the verses; his uttering them constituted a positive response to an offer of compromise from Quraysh; and he remained unaware of the wrongness of what he had done until informed by Jibril. The significance of the ambiguity of the *fa* in *fa-qāla* will become

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196 For this notion, see the discussion of *Riwayahs 9 to 13* from Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah, below.
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apparent in Riwāyah 9, where the narrative motif of the Prophet’s acknowledgment of his error is absent. 197

Riwāyah 9: al-Bayhaqī’s Citation of the Maghāzī of Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah, and Ibn Kathīr’s Citation from Ibn Abī Ḥātim of the Maghāzī of Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah

While there is no means of dating Riwāyah 8 on its own, a dating does become possible when we compare it to Riwāyah 9, the text of which is virtually identical to that of Riwāyah 8, but that comes from a different source—namely, the Kitāb al-maghāzī of Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah (85–141). Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah’s Maghāzī has not survived intact, but was highly praised by the second-century authorities, and the extensive citations from it in the medieval literature are an indication of the importance of the work during the first eight centuries

197 Riwāyah 8 has been studied by Uri Rubin within the framework of his thesis that sīrah reports were produced to provide exegetical material for the Qur’ān, specifically asbāb al-nuzūl. In his view the sīrah as originally constituted had few Qur’ānic references, and “Qur’ānic materials only began to be applied to the non-Qur’ānic basic narrative framework when the sacred scripture became standard source of guidance” (Rubin, Eye of the Beholder, 227). Rubin thus argues that Riwāyah 8 represents a later incorporation of Qur’ānic materials into two earlier reports from ‘Urwah, also relating to the Meccan period and containing no Qur’ānic references. One of these reports, cited by al-Ṭabarī as a letter ‘Urwah wrote to the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, states that shortly after the refugees left for Abyssinia, important men of Quraysh accepted Islam, with the result that the Muslims became more secure in Mecca. This prompted the refugees to return. The second report, transmitted with an isnād ending in Ibn Lahi‘ah ← Abū al-Aswad ← ‘Urwah ← al-Miswar b. Makhramah b. Nawfal ← Makhramah b. Nawfal (d. 64), states that when Muhammad proclaimed his message openly in Mecca, all the Meccans initially accepted Islam, but were then dissuaded by Abū Jahl and al-Walīd b. Mughirah. This report states that the Muslims grew so numerous at this time that some of them were unable to perform sajdah during recitation of the Qur’ān because of the “crush, confined space, and large number of people.” Rubin sees Riwāyah 8 as a collation of the themes in these two reports, which he assumes to be earlier, to which the Satanic verses incident was then added in order to provide a sīrah-based exegesis for Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj. Rubin’s larger thesis aside, in the present instance, his logic seems to be somewhat arbitrary: one might equally take these two reports as representing later edited versions of an earlier history of the Meccan period from which all reference to the potentially offensive Satanic verses incident has been removed. See Eye of the Beholder, 156–163, 232, and 256.
The bulk of Mūsa’s *Maghāzī* that has come down to us is in the transmission of two of his students: his nephew, Ismā‘īl b. Ibrāhīm b. ‘Uqbah, and Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ al-Madanī.¹⁹⁹ The account of the Satanic verses is cited from Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah in several works, either by an *isnād* going back through Ismā‘īl b. Ibrāhīm or one going back through Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ, or directly from a manuscript without any *isnād* at all. Although the various citations from Mūsā are largely identical or similar in wording, they contain some critical differences that radically affect the meaning of the incident, to the point where the accounts may be construed as contradicting each other.

Ismā‘īl’s transmission from Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah is given in the *Dalā‘il al-nubuwwah* of the Khurāsānī scholar Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 458) with the following *isnād*:


¹⁹⁹ See Bāqṣhīsh Abū Mālik, al-*Maghāzī* li-Mūsā, 28–32.


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It is interesting to note from the isnād that Mūsā’s *Maghāzī* was transmitted by scholars who seem to have been, in the first instance, *muḥaddithūn*. Ismā‘īl b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Uways al-Madānī appears in both the *ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī and that of Muslim, while al-Qāsim b. ‘Abd Allāh is cited by al-Dāraquṭnī. Nothing further needs to be said here about this isnād, besides noting that the transmission moves from Madīnah to Baghdad in the third century.

Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ’s transmission from Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah is given in the *Tafsīr* of ‘Imād al-Dīn Ismā‘īl Ibn Kathīr (d. 773), who is adducing it from the *Tafsīr* of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 338). Ibn Kathīr gives Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s isnād as:


Like the first isnād, the transmission from Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ is also by a well-known *muḥaddith*: reports from Muḥammad b. Isḥāq al-Musayyibī appear in Muslim and al-Dāraquṭnī. This isnād

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also moves north and east. However, unlike the first one, Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ’s isnād goes back from Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah to his great teacher, Muḥammad b. Shihāb al-Zuhrī.

The following translation follows the text of al-Bayhaqi’s citation of Ismā’īl b. Ibrāhīm’s transmission, with the necessary indications of the textual variants in Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ’s transmission:210

Then, when Quraysh saw the numbers of the Prophet’s Companions increasing and multiplying, they gathered their counsel, intensified their plotting, and planned to either kill the Messenger of God or drive him out. They proposed to his people that they (Quraysh) kill him and give them blood-money, but his people refused that and God guarded [mana‘a] his Messenger through the shelter [ḥimyah] of his clan. So they intensified their persecution [ishtaddū ‘alā] of those of their sons and brothers and tribesmen who followed him in the religion of God; it was a severe trial [fiṭnah] and a terrible upheaval [zilzāl]. And there were those whom God protected [min-hum man ‘aṣama Allāh], and those who, in the trial, went astray [man uftutina].

When this befell the Muslims, the Prophet ordered them—when he entered the gorge [al-shī‘b] with the Banū ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib211—to leave for Abyssinia. There was a King in Abyssinia called al-Najāshī in whose land no one was wronged, for which reason he was well spoken of. So, many of them left for Abyssinia when they were being oppressed and feared the trial. The Prophet remained behind and did not leave.

This was before the departure of Ja‘far b. Abī Ṭālib and his companions to Abyssinia: they left twice—those who had gone (to Abyssinia) the first time returned before the departure of Ja‘far b. Abī Ṭālib and his companions.

This was when God sent down Sūrat al-Najm. OR: Sūrat al-Najm was sent down.212

The Mushrikūn had been saying: “If only this man would speak favourably of our gods [yadhkuru ālihatanā bi-khayr], we would secure him [aqrarnā-hu] and his companions. He does not speak of the Jews and Christians who oppose his religion with the abuse and invective [al-shatm wa-al-sharr] with which he speaks of our gods.”

210 The first three paragraphs are absent from the citation of Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ’s transmission.
211 The reference here is to the boycott of the Banū Ḥāshim by Quraysh, the former being blockaded in a gorge belonging to Abū Ṭālib.
212 Thus in the citation from Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ, which begins here.
The Messenger of God was greatly distressed \(\text{ishtadda ‘alay-hi}\) by the persecution \(\text{adhā}\) which had he and his Companions had suffered from them (Quraysh) and by their calling him a liar. Their errant conduct \(\text{dalālatu-hum}\) saddened him, and he desired that they be rightly-guided \(\text{kāna yatamannā hudā-hum}\).

When God sent down Sūrat al-Najm, he (the Prophet) said \(\text{qāla}\), “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?.” OR: When God sent down Sūrat al-Najm, he (the Prophet) said \(\text{qāla}\), “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other? Would you have sons, and He, daughters?”

And Satan cast some words at the point when God mentioned the last of the evil ones \(\text{alqā al-shayṭānu ‘inda-hā kalimātin ḥīna dhakara Allāhu ‘azza wa-jalla ākhir al-ṭawāghīt}\), and he said \(\text{fa-qāla}\): “Indeed, they are the high gharānīq! And, indeed, their intercession is what is to be hoped for!” \(\text{inna-hunna al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā’ata-hunna la-hiya allatī turtajā}\) OR: \(\text{inna-hunna la-hunna al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā’ata-hunna la-hiya allatī turtajā}\). That was the rhyming phrases of Satan and was an instance of his sedition \(\text{min fitnati-hi}\). Those two phrases became lodged in the heart of every Mushrik in Mecca. Their tongues slipped over them \(\text{zallat bi-hā}\); they rejoiced in telling them to each other \(\text{tabāsharū bi-hā}\), and said: “Muḥammad has returned to his original religion and to the religion of his tribe.”

And when the Messenger of God reached the end of al-Najm, he made the \(\text{sajdah}\), and all the Muslims and Mushrikūn present made the \(\text{sajdah}\) along with him. However, al-Walīd b. al-Mughīrah was an old man and picked up two palmfuls of dirt and made the \(\text{sajdah}\) on them. The two parties were astonished at their joint \(\text{sajdah}\) alongside the \(\text{sajdah}\) of the Messenger of God. The Muslims were astonished at the Mushrikūn having made the \(\text{sajdah}\) when they were in a state of Unbelief \(\text{‘alā ghayr īmān wa-lā yaqīn}\); the Muslims not having heard that which Satan cast onto the tongues of the Mushrikūn \(\text{lam yakun al-muslimūn sami’ū alladhī alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā alsinat al-mushrikīn}\).

OR: The Muslims were astonished at the Mushrikūn having made the \(\text{sajdah}\) when they were in a state of Unbelief \(\text{‘alā ghayr īmān wa-lā}

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213 Thus in the citation of Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ.
214 Thus in the citation of Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ.
215 In the citation of Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ: the orthographic variant \text{dhallat bi-hā}, “their tongues were debased by them.”
yaqīn]; the Muslims not having heard that which Satan cast into the ears of the Mushrikūn [al-ladhī alqā al-shayṭānu fī masāmi‘al-mushrikīn].

As for the Mushrikūn, their minds were set at ease in regard to the Prophet and his Companions as a result of what had been cast into the desire of the Prophet [li-mā ulqiya fī umniyyat al-nabi]. Satan told them that the Messenger of God had recited them (the Satanic verses) when in sajdah, so they made the sajdah in veneration of their gods.

That phrase circulated among the people, and Satan spread it until it reached Abyssinia and the Muslims who were there. ‘Uthmān b. Maẓ‘ūn and his companions came to hear of it [marra bi-hā]. People were saying that the people of Mecca had accepted Islam and had prayed alongside the Messenger of God. News also reached them of al-Walīd b. al-Mughirah’s sajdah on his palms. It was said that the Muslims were safe in Mecca, so they came quickly.

And God removed that which Satan cast and established His Signs clearly and protected them from Falsehood [wa-qad nasakha Allāhu ‘azza wa-jalla mā alqā al-shayṭān wa-āhkama Allāh āyāti-hi wa-ḥafiza-hā min al-bāṭil]. God said: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he desired, Satan cast something into his desire; then God removes that which Satan casts and establishes His Signs clearly—and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise—to make that which Satan cast a trial for those in whose hearts is sickness, and for those whose hearts are hardened. Indeed, the Wrongdoers are in far dissension.” And when God made clear His decree [bayyana Allāhu qadā‘a-hu] and absolved him (Muḥammad) [barra‘a-hu] of Satan’s rhyming phrases, the Mushrikūn reverted to their errant state and their hostility towards the Muslims increased.

‘Uthmān b. Maẓ‘ūn and his companions were among those who had returned and, when they heard of the extreme hostility of the Mushrikūn towards the Muslims, they were unable to enter Mecca except under protection.

It is evident that, despite the fact that they are taken from different source-works, Riwāyah 9 is strikingly similar to Riwāyah 8. Much of the text of Riwāyah 9 from the beginning of the second paragraph to the end of the ninth is either identical to Riwāyahs 8 and 9 or virtually so. Even the one significant textual variant between the transmissions of Ismā‘īl b. Ibrāhīm and Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ—“the Muslims not
having heard that which Satan cast onto the tongues / into the ears of the Mushrikūn”—is paralleled in the variation between al-Ṭabarānī and al-Muṭṭawwi’ī’s citations. This similarity between Riwāyahs 8 and 9 is the more remarkable for the fact that it is not exceptional as regards the transmission traditions in question: the fact of a very high degree of textual congruence between maghāzī reports transmitted from Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah and those transmitted by Abū al-Aswad from ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr was first noted by al-Aʿẓamī, and subsequently discussed by Bāqṣhish Abū Mālik and Ḥusayn Nasab. This overlap is particularly striking when one considers that the isnāds that carry the foregoing reports are from different regions: ‘Urwah’s Maghāzī was transmitted by Abū al-Aswad in Egypt in the 130s, and continued to be transmitted in that country, while the transmission of Mūsā’s Maghāzī went from Madīnah to Baghdad. The most plausible explanation for this similarity is one that also helps us fix a date for the reports. It has been noted that Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ’s transmission goes back from Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah to his teacher Muḥammad b. Shihāb al-Zuhhrī (d. 124), the leading figure among the collectors of sīrah reports in late first- and early second-century Madīnah, described by al-Dūrī as having “founded the historical school of Madīnah.”

Riwāyah 12, below, a slight variation on Riwāyah 9, is also carried by the isnād, Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah ← al-Zuhhrī. ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr was the main maghāzī-teacher of Muḥammad b. Shihāb al-Zuhhrī, and al-Zuhhrī was, in turn, the main maghāzī-teacher of Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah. The bulk of Mūsā’s surviving maghāzī material is transmitted from al-Zuhhrī. It thus seems highly likely that the reports that are common to both ‘Urwah and Mūsā were either originally received by each of Abū al-Aswad and al-Zuhhrī from ‘Urwah in Madīnah before the latter’s death in 94, or possibly received by al-Zuhhrī from Abū al-Aswad before

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220 In the assessment of Gregor Schoeler: “We can safely assume that a considerable
the former’s death in 124. These reports, then, must have been in circulation in Madinah by the first two decades of the first century at the latest, and may even represent ‘Urwah’s own wording.

As with Riwāyahs 2 and 3, above, establishing a “hidden” transmission link between Riwāyahs 8 and 9 in this way does not in any way conflict with our methodology, which assumes that weak isnāds in sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr works represent genuine transmission histories unless there is good reason to suspect otherwise. Had there been no plausible explanation for why these two long and apparently unconnected reports should be so similarly worded, one would have been forced to doubt the authenticity of one or both isnāds. But the prominent connection between Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah and al-Zuhrī on the one hand, and between al-Zuhrī and ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr on the other, strongly suggests that while the transmission history given by the isnād in Riwāyah 9 is incomplete, going back only to Mūsā b.

part of al-Zuhrī’s source indications are authentic. This is true at any rate for a large number of traditions that al-Zuhrī transmitted from his teacher ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr, for we possess most of these traditions going back to ‘Urwah not only in the al-Zuhrī transmission but also in the independent transmission of Hishām, a son of ‘Urwah”; Schoeler, “Mūsā b. ‘Uqba’s Maghāzī,” 94. While in the present instance al-Zuhrī’s source is not indicated, in my estimation the textual congruity and known relations of transmission are sufficient demonstration. In a series of source-critical case studies, Gregor Schoeler and Andreas Görke have argued broadly in favor of the authenticity of the bulk of the sīrah corpus transmitted from ‘Urwah by Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī and Hishām b. ‘Urwah: “The contents of what ‘Urwah taught can be reconstructed... the ‘Urwah corpus turns out to comprise the basic framework of the whole sīra, i.e. it contains different long and detailed reports about the main events of Muḥammad’s life and deeds”; see Görke and Schoeler, “Reconstructing the Earliest sīra Texts,” 213. However, the transmission of Abū al-Aswad is regarded as “useless for a reconstruction of the contents of the original ‘Urwah tradition” on the basis that “the additional elements appearing with Abū al-Aswad are not attributed to ‘Urwah in any other transmissions”; Schoeler, “Foundations for a New Biography of Muḥammad: The Production and Evaluation of the Corpus of Traditions from ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr,” in Herbert Berg (ed.), Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 21–28, at 26. In my view, this assessment fails to consider the potential of comparing Abū al-Aswad’s transmission with material transmitted by Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah from al-Zuhrī, as has been done here.

221 According to the biographical material on the two, al-Zuhrī did transmit from Abū al-Aswad, but not vice versa.

222 This would, of course, imply the same early dating for all of the maghāzī materials common to both Abū al-Aswad ← ‘Urwah, and to Mūsā. A comparative study of the two maghāzī corpuses is much needed.
'Uqbah or al-Zuhrī instead of to ‘Urwah, this does not mean that it is not genuine as far back as it goes.

In analyzing the text of *Riwa'yah 9*, we must consider, first, the ways in which it differs from *Riwa'yah 8*. The significant differences between *Riwa'yahs 8* and *9* are as follows. First, the background of persecution is extensively brought out in *Riwa'yah 9*, whereas it is only implied by context in *Riwa'yah 8*. Second, *Riwa'yah 9* explicitly glosses *tamannā* to mean desire—here the Prophet’s desire to guide Quraysh. Third, *Riwa'yah 9* does not provide a time frame for the incident. Fourth, *Riwa'yah 9* does not contain the narrative motif of Jibrīl’s correction of the Prophet with the Prophet’s acknowledgment of having uttered the verses.

What concerns us here is the absence of the last of the foregoing narrative elements, the correction scene. We have already noted, in the discussion of *Riwa'yah 8*, how the ambiguity in the *fa-qāla* phrase in the passage describing Satan’s intervention is resolved only by the presence of the correction scene with its explicit statement that the Prophet uttered the Satanic verses. In the absence of the correction scene in *Riwa'yah 9*, however, while it is still entirely possible to understand *fa-qāla* as referring to the Prophet, a case can equally now be made for the interpretation that the *fa-qāla* refers to Satan. This would mean that the Prophet did not utter the Satanic verses; instead, Satan uttered them and cast them onto the tongues of the Mushrikūn (Ibrāhīm b. Ismā‘īl in al-Bayhaqī), or Satan uttered them and cast them into the ears of the Mushrikūn (Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ in Ibn Kathīr).223 To the reader aware of the prior existence of *Riwa'yah 8*, it is hard not to see the omission of the correction scene from *Riwa'yah 9* as, at the very least, a symptom of discomfort with

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223 A new narrative element present in the citation of Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ that may have been intended to reinforce the idea that Satan, and not the Prophet, uttered the verses is the Prophet’s recitation of Qur’ān 53:20 before Satan’s intervention: “He (the Prophet) said, ‘Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other? Would you have sons, and He daughters?’” In *Riwa'yah 1*, we saw Qur’ān 53:20 al-Najm—which criticizes the goddesses—given as an abrogating verse. The point, in *Riwa'yah 9*, of having Satan’s intervention take place after the Prophet recites Qur’ān 53:20 al-Najm—given as an abrogating verse to the goddesses when he had only just criticized them. However, for a report in which the Prophet is explicitly presented as reciting both Qur’ān 53:20 al-Najm and the Satanic verses, see *Riwa'yah 48*. 
the image of the Prophet saying, “I have obeyed Satan, and spoken his words, and he has become a partner in God’s matter with me.”

We will see from Riwāyahs 14 and 15, below, that al-Zuhrī does not appear to have entertained any discomfort with the idea of the Prophet uttering the Satanic verses. Thus, given the absence of the correction scene in both transmissions from Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah, it is very possible that that its omission is Mūsā’s doing. Regardless of whether the purpose of the omission of the correction scene is to present a narrative susceptible to an interpretation of the incident that will not offend against the idea of ‘iṣmat al-anbiyā’, certainly the narrative of Riwāyah 9 is remarkably ambiguous as to precisely the most crucial hermeneutical issue at stake. Later scholars interpreted the ambiguity in Riwāyah 9 as meaning that the Prophet did not utter the Satanic verses. The first to take this view was the third-/fourth-century Egyptian scholar Abū Ja’far al-Naḥḥās (d. 338), a contemporary of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, who clearly takes the Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ / fi masāmi‘i-him version of Riwāyah 9 to mean that the Prophet did not utter the Satanic verses. The following is al-Naḥḥās’ commentary in his al-Nāsikh wa-al-mansūkh, followed by his summary citation of Riwāyah 9:

Satan cast this into the recitation [tālāwah] of the Prophet without the Prophet uttering it [wa-lam yanṭiq bi-hi al-nabī]. And the proof of this is that this is the plain meaning of the Qur’ān [ẓāhir al-qur’ān], and that the reliable authors of sīrah works [al-thiqāt min aṣḥāb al-siyar] are of this opinion [ka-dhā yarawna].

As Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah related from al-Zuhrī: “Satan cast into the recitation [tālāwah] of the Prophet: ‘Indeed, their intercession is to be sought!,’ and this became lodged in the ears of the Mushrikūn [fa-waqaqat fi masāmi‘ al-mushrikin] and they all followed him and made the sajdah. The Muslims had no knowledge of this and did not hear it [ANKARA DHĀ-LIKA AL-MUSLIMŪN WA-LAM YASMA‘U-HU]. The news reached the refugees in Abyssinia that the people [al-jamā‘ah] had followed the Prophet (in

224 Of course, the opposite scenario—that the correction scene was added later—is also a theoretical possibility, but is highly unlikely. We have already seen the correction scene present in Riwāyahs 1, 2, and 3, which date to the first century. Also, the historical development of attitudes regarding the incident has been towards the elimination over time of narrative elements that came to be seen as doctrinally objectionable, not their incorporation.
making the *sajdah*), so they approached (Mecca). God had removed that which Satan cast, so they met with persecution and hardship.225

Al-Naḥḥās is here using *Riwayah 9* expressly to support the position that the Prophet did not utter the verses. It is interesting to note, however, that in order to do so he is abandoning the gloss of *umniyyah* as “desire” that was given in *Riwayah 9*, and is replacing it with the alternative gloss of “recitation [*tilāwah*].”226 *Riwayah 9* glosses the verb *tamannā* as “desire”—specifically, the Prophet’s desire that Quraysh be rightly guided [*kāna yatamannā hudā-hum*]. Thus, if *Riwayah 9* is to be taken to mean that the Prophet did not utter the Satanic verses, the phrase “Satan cast into his desire” must be understood figuratively. In this figurative interpretation, Satan does not actually put anything into the Prophet’s inner thoughts or desires, but rather does something to obstruct the fulfillment of Prophet’s desire. This figurative interpretation of *tamannā* as “desire”—in which Satan’s *ilqā’* is given the sense of “casting” a spanner in the works—appears somewhat forced, which is presumably why al-Naḥḥās replaced it with the meaning that is far more suitable in this context: “recitation [*tilāwah*].”

*Riwayah 10*: al-Dhahabi’s Citation of the *Maghāzī* of Mūsā b. ʿUqbah

Other adjustments were also made to the text of *Riwayah 9* in order to produce the desired hermeneutical position. *Riwayah 10*, a slightly abbreviated citation of Mūsā’s *Maghāzī*, is given in the *sīrah* of the eighth-century Damascene scholar Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748), a staunch opponent of the historicity of the incident.227

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227 Al-Dhaḥabi’s *sīrah* is preserved in an autograph copy, from which it has been edited and published separately in accompaniment to both of his *Tārīkh al-islām*, and his *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*; see al-Dhaḥabi, *Tārīkh al-islām wa-ṭabaqāt al-
Al-Dhahabī does not give an isnād, but we know that he studied a copy of Mūsā’s *Maghāzī*, and it is this that he must be citing.\(^{228}\) In the following passage, *Riwāyah 10* makes certain hermeneutically strategic omissions from the wording of *Riwāyah 9*:\(^{229}\)

The Mushrikūn of Quraysh had been saying: “If only this man would speak favourably of our gods [yadhkuru ālihata-nā bi-khayr], we would secure him\(^{230}\) and his companions. He does not speak of the Jews and Christians who oppose him\(^{231}\) with the abuse and invective [al-shatm wa-al-sharr] with which he speaks of our gods.” The Messenger of God desired that they be rightly guided [yatamannā hudā-hum].

“Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?,” was sent down. Satan cast (some) words at that point [fa-alqā al-shayṭān ‘inda-hā kalimāt]: “Indeed they are the high gharānīq! And, indeed, their intercession is hoped for! [inna-hunna al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā’ata-hunna turtajā].”

That was the rhyming phrases of Satan and was an instance of his sedition [min fitnati-hi]. Those two phrases became lodged in the heart of every Mushrik in Mecca. Their tongues were debased by them;\(^{232}\) they rejoiced in telling them to each other [tabāsharū bi-hā], and said:

“Muḥammad has returned to our religion.”\(^{233}\)

And when the Messenger of God reached the end of al-Najm, he made the *sajdah*, and all the Muslims and Mushrikūn present made

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\(^{228}\) Al-Dhahabī describes the work as follows: “As for the *Maghāzī* of Mūsā, it is bound in a small volume [mujallad laysa bi-al-kabīr]. We heard it [sami’nā-hu] and most of it is sound [ghālibu-hu ṣaḥīḥ]”; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 6:116.

\(^{229}\) This passage is preceded by the following paragraph, essentially a summary of paragraphs 1 and 2 in al-Bayhaqi:

Then Quraysh gathered their counsel, intensified their plotting, and planned either to kill the Messenger of God or drive him out. They proposed to his people that they (Quraysh) kill him and give them blood-money, but his people refused that vehemently [ḥamiyyatan]. When the Prophet entered the gorge of the Banū ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, he ordered his Companions to leave for Abyssinia, and they left twice; those who left the first time returned when Sūrat al-Najm was sent down.

\(^{230}\) *Riwāyah 12* has qarrarnā-hu; *Riwāyah 9* has aqrarnā-hu.

\(^{231}\) Reading *man khālafa-hu* for al-Dhahabi’s orthographic error, *man ḥālafa-hu*.

\(^{232}\) Reading *dhallat bi-hā* for the meaningless orthographic error *dallat bi-hā*.

\(^{233}\) *Riwāyah 9*: “Muḥammad has returned to his original religion and to the religion of his tribe.”
the *sajdah* along with him. However, al-Walid b. al-Mughirah was an old man and picked up two palmfuls of dirt and made the *sajdah* on them. The two parties were astonished at their joint *sajdah* alongside the *sajdah* of the Messenger of God. The Muslims were astonished at the Mushrikūn having made the *sajdah* when they were in a state of Unbelief [‘*alā ghayr īmān wa-lā yaqīn*]; the Muslims not having heard what Satan cast [mā alqā al-shayṭān].

In this citation of Mūsā’s *Maghāzī*, through the omission of certain parts of the text, the narrative is bent to the interpretation that it is Satan, and not the Prophet, who uttered the Satanic verses. We have no means of telling, however, whether these omissions represent al-Dhahabī’s own editorial work (he was, as noted above, himself opposed to the historicity of the incident) or that of an earlier transmitter. The first relevant omission is that of any reference to the Prophet being affected by the persecution of Quraysh. Compare the following passage as it appears in *Riwāyahs 9* and *10*—the underlined portion is omitted from *Riwāyah 10*:

234 *Riwāyah 9*: “the Muslims not having heard that which Satan cast onto the tongues/into the ears of the Mushrikūn.” The remainder of the citation in al-Dhahabī is as follows (the text in curly brackets is my observations):

As for the Mushrikūn, their minds were set at ease in regard to the Prophet and his Companions as a result of what had been cast into the desire of the Prophet [li-mā ul-qiya fi umniyyat al-nabī].

Satan told them that the Messenger of God had recited them (the Satanic verses) when in *sajdah*, so they made the *sajdah* in veneration of their gods. {The wording of this passage in al-Dhahabī is slightly different from al-Bayhaqī, but without any effect on the meaning}.

That phrase circulated among the people, and Satan spread it until it reached Abiyānū and those Muslims who were there—‘Uthmān b. Maẓ’ūn and his companions {The difference, here, between al-Dhahabī and al-Bayhaqī is orthographic: al-Dhahabī has ḥattā balaghah ard al-ḥabashah wa-μan bī-hā min al-muslimīn ’Uthmān ibn Maẓ’ūn wa-aṣḥābi-hi; while al-Bayhaqī has wa-marru bī-hā min al-muslimīn ’Uthmān b. Maẓ’ūn wa-aṣḥābi-hi}. People were saying that all the people of Mecca had accepted Islam and had prayed, and that the Muslims were safe in Mecca; so they came quickly.

And God removed that which Satan cast {*Riwāyah 9* adds: “and established his signs clearly and protected them from falsehood.”} “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he desired, Satan cast something into his desire” was sent down. And when God made clear His decree [bayyana Allāhu qaḍā’u-hu] and absolved him [baarra’u-hu] of Satan’s rhyming phrases, the Mushrikūn reverted to their errant state and their hostility towards the Muslims increased.

‘Uthmān b. Maẓ’ūn and his companions were among those who had returned and, when they heard of the extreme hostility of the Mushrikūn towards the Muslims, they were unable to enter Mecca except under protection.
The Messenger of God was greatly distressed by the persecution which had he and his Companions had suffered from them (Quraysh) and by their calling him a liar. Their errant conduct saddened him, and he desired that they be rightly-guided [kāna yatamannā huda-hum].

By removing the reference to the effect of the persecution on the Prophet, and leaving only the Prophetic desire to guide the Unbelievers, Riwāyah 10 removes the possibility that the Prophet might commit an act arising out of his distress at the persecution.

The second significant omission is of the ambiguous fa-qāla phrase:

When God sent down Sūrat al-Najm, he (the Prophet) said [qāla], “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?.” Satan cast some words at that point when God mentioned the last of the evil ones [alqā al-shayṭānu ‘inda-hā kalimātin hīna dhakara Allāhu ‘azza wa-jalla ākhir al-ṭawāghit] and he said [fa-qāla]: “Indeed, they are the high gharāniq! ...”

With the removal of the fa-qāla phrase, there is no remaining ambiguity: Satan is the only possible actor—the Prophet plays no part in the matter. In Riwāyah 10, Satan casts something, and it becomes lodged in the hearts of the Mushrikūn who rejoice at it and proceed to ascribe it to the Prophet.235 Riwāyah 10, by judiciously editing Riwāyah 9, gives an account of the Satanic verses in which there is nothing that may be taken as a basis to suggest that the Prophet uttered the verses, thus making the incident conform to the orthodox notion of ‘iṣmat al-anbiyā’. Here, the phrase alqā al-shayṭānu fī umniyyati-hi is indeed to be understood figuratively, meaning that the Prophet desired something, and that Satan intervened to obstruct the Prophet’s desire, without actually interfering with the Prophet’s actions in any way. Given the theological concerns that inform Riwāyah 10, it is instructive to note that whereas in Riwāyah 9, Quraysh say of the Prophet, “Muḥammad has returned to his original religion and the religion of his tribe [raja’ā ilā dīni-hi al-awwal wa-dīn qawmi-hi],” in Riwāyah 10 they say, “Muḥammad has returned to our religion [ra-

235 This position would become widely held in later centuries. For an instance of a contemporary emendation of an earlier report to convey this idea, see the citation from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥah in the concluding discussion to Riwāyhs 35 to 44, below.
ja‘a ilā dīni-nā].” With the development of the image of Muḥammad as preternaturally perfect Prophet, the idea that he had ever been an idol-worshipper was itself rejected. 236

Riwāyah 11: Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī’s Citation of the Mağhāzī of Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah

Riwāyah 11 is an abridgement of Riwāyah 9 that makes even bolder strategic omissions than are effected in Riwāyah 10. Riwāyah 11 appears in the Ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥābah of Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī (339–430), in the biographical entry on the Companion ‘Uthmān b. Maẓ‘ūn, with the following isnād: 237


The persecution, at the hands of of their sons, brothers and tribesmen, of those who followed the Prophet in the religion of Allāh intensified. It was a severe trial and a terrible upheaval, and there were those whom God protected, and those who, in the trial, went astray. When this befell the Muslims, the Prophet ordered them—when he entered the gorge with the Banū ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib—to leave for Abyssinia. So, many of them left for Abyssinia when they were being oppressed and feared the trial. They set out with ‘Uthmān b. Maẓ‘ūn as their leader, and he and his companions remained in Abyssinia until Sūrat al-Najm was sent down.

236 Bāqshīsh Abū Mālik prefers this phrase in al-Dhahābī to al-Bayhaqī’s citation for precisely this reason: see al-Maghāzī li-Mūsā, 67, footnote 60. On the gradual elimination from the sīrah reports of the idea that the Prophet was ever an idol-worshipper, see Rubin, Eye of the Beholder, 77–83.


238 See Siyar, 16:140–141.

239 See Tārīkh Baghdād, 8:481–482, where he is expressly noted as transmitting from Ibrāhīm b. al-Mundhir. In MS Topkapı Sarayi, III Ahmet 497 / 2, the name is given as Zayd.

240 See Siyar, 10:689–693.
When the Prophet reached the mention of the goddesses, Satan cast his rhyming phrases and sedition into the ears of the Mushrikūn, and that phrase circulated until it reached Abyssinia and those who were there—‘Uthmān b. Maẓ‘ūn and his companions. The news reached them of the sajdah of al-Walīd b. al-Mughīrah on the dirt of his palm, and it was said that the Muslims were secure in Mecca, so they came quickly. God removed that which Satan cast and established His own Signs, and preserved him (Muḥammad) from fabrication and falsehood [wa-ḥafiẓa-hu Allāh min al-firyah wa-al-bāṭil], so the Mushrikūn reverted to their errant conduct and hostility towards the Muslims—and ‘Uthmān b. Maẓ‘ūn and his companions were unable to enter Mecca, except under protection.

**Riwāyah 11** thus goes well beyond **Riwāyah 10** in its omissions from **Riwāyah 9**, and with far-reaching hermeneutical consequences. First of all, **Riwāyah 11** omits any reference to Quraysh seeking a concession on the part of the Prophet. Second, there is no mention of the Satanic verses themselves, with the result that we do not know what it is that Satan cast, beyond that it is a “phrase” in saj’. Third, while **Riwāyah 11** does not say what the phrase is that Satan cast, it is explicit as to where he cast it: “Satan cast his rhyming phrases and sedition into the ears of the Mushrikūn.” The omissions of **Riwāyah 11** thus make it impossible to construe the narrative as saying that the Prophet uttered verses in praise of the deities of Quraysh. In other words, **Riwāyah 11** accomplishes exactly what it presents God as having accomplished: it removes that which Satan cast, and preserves the Prophet from fabrication and falsehood—that is, from the suggestion that he might have uttered the Satanic verses. In this regard, it is instructive to note that the chain of transmission forward from Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ is comprised of reputable muḥaddithūn (reports from Ibrāhīm b. al-Mundhir al-Madanī appear in three of the canonical Ḥadīth collections, Ziyād b. Khalīl was designated by al-Dāraquṭnī as uobjectionable, and Fārūq al-Khaṭṭābī was known as “the musnad of Baṣrah”) and that Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī himself was one of the first authors of a work of the genre of “devotional biography” (in which there is no mention of the Satanic verses incident).241 In other

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words, *Riwa'yah 11* was transmitted by scholars whose disciplinary and doctrinal dispositions were very much hostile to the notion that Muḥammad should utter the Satanic verses. In their strategic adjustment of the narrative of the Satanic verses incident, *Riwa'yahs 9, 10,* and *11* are a harbinger of what would become the dominant Muslim attitude towards the incident in the coming centuries.

*Riwa'yah 12:* al-Suyūṭi’s Citation from Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s *Tafsīr* of the *Maghāzī* of Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah

*Riwa'yah 11* may be contrasted with *Riwa'yah 12,* another abridged version of *Riwa'yah 9,* which is given in the *al-Durr al-manthūr* of al-Suyūṭi. As with Ibn Kathīr’s citation of *Riwa'yah 9,* al-Suyūṭi is adducing the report from the *Tafsīr* of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, a work we know him to have studied closely. However, al-Suyūṭi’s citation contains a significant textual variant, for which reason we are taking it as a separate report. As is his practice in the *Durr,* al-Suyūṭi gives a curtailed isnād:


The Mushrikūn of Quraysh had been saying: “If only this man would speak favourably of our gods [*yadhkurū ālihata-nā bi-khayr*], we would secure him [*aqrarnā-hu*] and his companions. He does not speak of the Jews and Christians who oppose his religion with the abuse and invective [*al-shatm wa-al-sharr*] with which he speaks of our gods.”

The Messenger of God was greatly distressed [*ishtadda ‘alay-hi*] by the persecution [*adhā*] he and his Companions had suffered from them (Quraysh) and by their calling him a liar. Their errant conduct saddened him and he desired an end to their persecution [*yatamannā kaffa adhā-hum*].

When God sent down Sūrat al-Najm, he (the Prophet) said [*qāla*], “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?” And Satan cast some words at the point when God mentioned the last of the evil ones [*alqā al-shayṭānu ‘inda-hā kalimatin ḥīna dhakara Allāhu*]

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‘azza wa-jalla ākhir al-ṭawāghīṭ], and he said [fa-qāla]: “Indeed they, they are the high gharānīq! And, indeed, their intercession is what is to be hoped for! [inna-hunna la-hunna al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā’ata-hunna la-hiya allatī tartajā].”

That was the rhyming phrases of Satan and was an instance of his sedition [min fitnati-hi]. Those two phrases became lodged in the heart of every Mushrik in Mecca. Their tongues were sharpened by them [dhaliqat bi-hā];244 they rejoiced in telling them to each other [tabāsharū bi-hā], and said: “Muḥammad has returned to his original religion and to the religion of his tribe.”

And when the Messenger of God reached the end of al-Najm, he made the sajdah, and all the Muslims and Mushrikūn present made the sajdah along with him.

That phrase circulated among the people, and Satan spread it until it reached Abyssinia. And God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet. . . .” And when God made clear his decree [bayyana Allāhu qaḍā’a-hu] and absolved him [barra’a-hu] of Satan’s rhyming phrases, the Mushrikūn reverted to their errant state and their hostility towards the Muslims increased.

While al-Suyūṭī’s citation is clearly an abridged version of Riwāyah 9 as it is cited by Ibn Kathīr,245 it resolves the ambiguity in Riwāyah 9 in the opposite manner to Riwāyah 10. Besides the omission of certain passages, which will be dealt with below, al-Suyūṭī’s abridged citation contains one particularly important textual variant. This is the specification of the Prophet’s desire. We noted how, in Riwāyah 10, the reference to persecution in Riwāyah 9 was omitted from the passage describing the Prophet’s desire. Now compare the omissions from Riwāyah 9 effected by Riwāyah 10:

The Messenger of God was greatly distressed by the persecution which he and his Companions had suffered from them (Quraysh) and by their calling him a liar.

Their errant conduct saddened him, and he desired that they be rightly-guided [kāna yatamannā hudā-hum].

244 Thus in al-Suyūṭī; all three verbs, zalla, dhalla, and dhaliqa, are, of course, orthographically similar.
245 We noted above that al-Suyūṭī said of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s Tafsīr, “I summarized it in my Tafsīr.”
to the text of **Riwaayah 12**:

The Messenger of God was greatly distressed by the persecution he and his Companions had suffered from them (Quraysh) and by their calling him a liar. Their errant conduct saddened him and he desired an end to their persecution [*yatamanna kaffa adhā-hum*].

Whereas **Riwaayah 10** omitted the narrative motif of persecution from this passage as given in **Riwaayah 9**, **Riwaayah 12** makes it the focal issue. Thus, whereas in **Riwaayah 9**, the Prophet’s desire is the appropriate one in terms of his mission—that he will be able to guide Quraysh to the true path—in **Riwaayah 12**, as in **Riwaayahs 1, 2, and 3**, the Prophet’s desire is dictated by the bitter temporal reality—he wants to halt the persecution by Quraysh. While, of course, the conversion of Quraysh would result in the end of persecution, for Muḥammad to desire the end of persecution is something of a misplacement of Prophetic priorities. The difference between the **riwaayahs** is thus of hermeneutic significance, although we have no means of knowing when the change in wording occurred, whether with al-Suyūṭī, or long before.

The second difference between the two citations is the absence from **Riwaayah 12** of a lengthy passage including the vague *fi masāmi‘* phrase.246 This latter omission is readily understood

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246 Below are the last four paragraphs of **Riwaayah 9**. The text in common with the last two paragraphs of **Riwaayah 12** is underlined, showing the vast omissions in **Riwaayah 12**. Text exclusive to **Riwaayah 12** is given in brackets:

And when the Messenger of God reached the end of al-Najm, he made the *sajdah*, and all the Muslims and Mushrikūn present made the *sajdah* along with him. However, al-Walid b. al-Mughirah was an old man and picked up two palmfuls of dirt and made the *sajdah* on them. The two parties were astonished at their joint *sajdah* alongside the *sajdah* of the Messenger of God. The Muslims were astonished at the Mushrikūn having made the *sajdah* when they were in a state of Unbelief [*’alā ghayr īmān wa-lā yaqīn*]; the Muslims not having heard that which Satan cast into the ears of the Mushrikūn [*alladhī alqā al-shayṭānu fī masāmi‘ al-mushrikīn*]. As for the Mushrikūn, their minds were set at ease in regard to the Prophet and his Companions as a result of what had been cast into the desire of the Prophet [*li-mā ulqiya fī umniyyat al-nabī*]. Satan told them that the Messenger of God had recited them (the Satanic verses) when in *sajdah*, so they made the *sajdah* in veneration of their gods . . . That phrase circulated among the people, and Satan spread it until it reached Abyssinia and the Muslims who were there. ‘Uthmān b. Maẓ‘ūn and his companions came to hear of it [*marra bi-hā*]. People were saying that the people of Mecca had accepted Islam and had prayed alongside the Messenger of God. News also reached them of al-
as representing al-Suyūṭī’s own abridgement. The meaning of al-Suyūṭī’s citation can be only that the Prophet uttered the verses. Here, as in Riwāyahs 1, 2, and 3, the Prophet desires something and Satan casts something into the Prophet’s desire that fulfills that desire. That this is indeed how al-Suyūṭī understood Riwāyah 9 is evident in the fact that he follows his abridged citation with this remark:

Al-Bayhaqi has cited it in al-Dalā’il, without mentioning Ibn Shiḥāb [i.e., the Ibrāhīm b. Ismā’il transmission of Riwāyah 9]; and al-Ṭabarānī has cited the equivalent [mithla-hu siwā’] [i.e., Riwāyah 8 from ‘Urwah].

In other words, al-Suyūṭī is taking Riwāyah 12, his abridged version of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s citation of Mūsā / Muhammad b. Fulayḥ, to carry the same meaning as al-Bayhaqi’s citation of Mūsā / Ibrāhīm b. Ismā’il (Riwāyah 9), and for him both of these have the same meaning as al-Ṭabarānī’s citation of ‘Urwah (Riwāyah 8), where the Prophet uttered the Satanic verses.

Riwāyah 13: al-Kilā’ī’s Citation of the Maghāzī of Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah

We finally come to Riwāyah 13, which straightforwardly restores the interpretation of the incident to that given in Riwāyah 8 from

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Walid b. al-Mughīrah’s sajdah on his palms. It was said that the Muslims were safe in Mecca, so they came quickly.

And God removed that which Satan cast and established his Signs clearly and protected them from Falsehood [wa-qad nasakha Allāhu ‘azza wa-jalla mā alqā al-shayṭān wa-aḥkama Allāh āyāti-hi wa-ḥafiẓa-hā min al-bāṭil]. God said [sent down]: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he desired, Satan cast something into his desire; then God removes that which Satan casts and establishes his Signs clearly—and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise—to make that which Satan cast a trial for those in whose hearts is sickness, and for those whose hearts are hardened. Indeed, the Wrongdoers are in far dissension.” And when God made clear his decree [bayyana Allāhu qaḍā’a-hu] and absolved him [barra’a-hu] of Satan’s rhyming phrases, the Mushrikūn reverted to their errant state and their hostility towards the Muslims increased.

‘Uthmān b. Maz’ūn and his companions were among those who had returned and, when they heard of the extreme hostility of the Mushrikūn towards the Muslims, they were unable to enter Mecca except under protection.
'Urwah. Riwāyah 13 is cited from Mūsa's Maghāzī in the al-Iktifā’ fi maghāzī rasūl Allāh of the Andalusian scholar Sulaymān b. Mūsā al-Kilā’ī (565–634). Although al-Kilā’ī does not give an isnād, it is evident that he is transcribing from a manuscript of Mūsā’s Maghāzī, which he cites among his main sources.

Orthographic variants aside, Riwāyah 13 is identical to Riwāyah 9, except for the presence of three additional words:

The Mushrikūn of Quraysh had been saying: “If only this man would speak favourably of our gods [yadhkuru ālihata-nā bi-khayr], we would secure him [aqrarnā-hu] and his companions. He does not speak of the Jews and Christians who oppose his religion with the abuse and invective [al-shatm wa-al-sharr] with which he speaks of our gods.”

The Messenger of God was greatly distressed [ishtadda ‘alay-hi] by the persecution [adḥā] which had he and his Companions had suffered from them (Quraysh), and by their calling him a liar. Their errant conduct [dalālatu-hum] saddened him, and he desired that they be rightly-guided [kāna yatamannā hudā-hum].

When God sent down Sūrat al-Najm, he (the Prophet) said [qāla], “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?.” At this point, when he mentioned the evil ones, Satan cast some words onto his tongue [alqā al-shayṭānu ‘inda-hā kalimātin ‘alā lisāni-hi dhakara al-ṭawāḥīt], and he (the Prophet) said [fa-qāla]: “Indeed, they are from among the high gharānīq! And, indeed, their intercession is what is to be hoped for!” [inna-hunna la-min al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā’ata-hunna la-hiya allatī la-turtajā].

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248 Al-Kilā’ī lists his main sources in his introduction. For the importance to him of Mūsā’s Maghāzī, see Iktifā’, 1:2, 4.

249 The first paragraph in al-Bayhaqī is paraphrased in al-Kilā’ī.


251 Al-Bayhaqī: mā nāla-hu huwa wa-aṣḥāba-hu; al-Kilā’ī, mā nāla-hu wa-aṣḥāba-hu.

252 The remainder of the riwāyah is effectively identical to Riwāyah 9 (my observations are given in brackets):
**Riwa'iyah 13** thus clarifies any possible ambiguity as to the meaning of *fa-qāla* in the description of Satan’s intervention by adding the crucial phrase “onto his tongue [*ulā lisānī-hi*].” The reader/audience of **Riwa'iyah 13** is left in no doubt as to the fact that the Prophet himself uttered the Satanic verses.

That was the rhyming phrases of Satan and was an instance of his sedition [min fitnati-hi]. Those two phrases became lodged in the heart of every Mushrik in Mecca. Their tongues were debased by them [The orthographic variant, dhallat bi-hā for zallat bi-hā (al-Bayhaqī)], they rejoiced in telling them to each other [tabāsharū bi-hā], and said “Muḥammad has returned to his original religion and to the religion of his fathers.”

And when the Messenger of God reached the end of al-Najm, he made the *sajdah*, and all the Muslims and Mushrikuṇ present with him made the *sajdah* along with him. However, al-Walīd b. al-Mughirah was an old man and picked up two palmsfuls of dirt and made the *sajdah* on them.

The two parties were astonished at their joint *sajdah* alongside the *sajdah* of the Messenger of God. The Muslims were astonished at the Mushrikuṇ having made the *sajdah* when they were in a state of Unbelief [*alā ghayr īmān wa-lā yaqīn*]; the Muslims not having heard that which Satan cast onto the tongues of the Mushrikuṇ [*lam yakun al-muslimūn samī‘ā alladhī alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā alsinat al-mushrikuṇ*].

As for the Mushrikuṇ, their minds were set at ease in regard to the Prophet and his Companions as a result of that which Satan cast into the desire of the Prophet [*li-mā alqā al-shayṭān fī umniyyat al-nabī*], so they made the *sajdah* in veneration of their gods.

That phrase circulated among the people, and Satan spread it until it reached Abyssinia and those Muslims who were there—‘Uthmān b. Maẓ’ūn and his companions [The orthographic difference also seen in Riwa'iyah 12—al-Kilā’ī: ḥattā balaghat arḍ al-ḥabashah wa-man bi-hā min al-muslimīn ‘Uthmān ibn Maẓ’ūn wa-aṣḥābi-hi; al-Bayhaqī has wa-marra bi-hā min al-muslimīn ‘Uthmān b. Maẓ’ūn wa-aṣḥābi-hi]. People were saying that the people of Mecca had accepted Islam and had prayed alongside the Messenger of God. News also reached them of al-Walīd b. al-Mughirah’s *sajdah* on his palms. It was said that the Muslims were safe in Mecca, so they came quickly.

And God removed that which Satan cast and established his Signs clearly [*wa-qad nasakh Allāhu ‘azza wa-jalla mā alqā al-shayṭān wa-aḥkam Allāh āyāti-hi*] [The phrase *wa-ḥafiẓa-hā min al-bāṭil*—“and protected them from Falsehood”—given in al-Bayhaqī, is not in al-Kilā’ī]. God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he desired, Satan cast something into his desire; then God removes that which Satan casts and establishes his Signs clearly—and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise—to make that which Satan cast a trial for those in whose hearts is sickness, and for those whose hearts are hardened—for, indeed, the wrong-doers are in far dissension—and to teach those who have been endowed with knowledge that this is the Truth from your Lord, that they believe in it and humble their hearts to Him, for God guides those who believe to a straight path.” And when God made clear his decree [*bayyana Allāhu qaḍā‘a-hu*] and absolved him [*barra‘a-hu*] of Satan’s rhyming phrases, the Mushrikuṇ reverted to their errant state and their hostility towards the Muslims increased.

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Given that Riwāyah 13 and Riwāyah 9 are effectively identical except for the “onto his tongue” phrase, the question is the provenance of the phrase. Whereas it is fairly clear that Riwāyahs 10, 11, and 12 represent later editing of Riwāyah 9\(^{254}\) (although we cannot tell how much later), we have no means of knowing whether Riwāyah 13 represents later editing, or the transmission from Mūsā of someone other than Ismā‘īl b. Ibrāhīm and Muḥammad b. Fūlayḥ\(^{255}\) or a textual variant within one of these two transmissions; nor even of determining whether the wording of Riwāyah 13 is older or newer than that of Riwāyah 9.\(^{256}\) However, the effect of the “onto his tongue” phrase in Riwāyah 13 is to remove the ambiguity created by the omission of the correction scene. Riwāyah 13 provides a transmission of the Maghāzī of Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah in which the interpretation of the Satanic verses incident is the same as that in the older Riwāyah 8, from ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr.

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**Riwaḥahs 8 to 13:**

**Conclusions**

The omission of the correction scene from Riwāyah 8 produces Riwāyah 9, in which the fa-qāla phrase is now ambiguous, with the result that the narrative becomes susceptible to two contradictory interpretations on the fundamental issue of whether the Prophet uttered the Satanic verses. This ambiguity created an extremely unstable transmission tradition for the narrative of the incident contained in Mūsa’s Maghāzī. Abū Ja‘far al-Naḥḥās took Riwāyah 9 to mean that the Prophet did not utter the Satanic verses, meaning that the

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\(^{254}\) The differences are too many and too strategic for it to be otherwise.

\(^{255}\) This is a transmission of which al-Naḥḥās was evidently unaware. On al-Kilā‘ī’s citation of Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah, see Maher Jarrar, *Die Prophetenbiographie im islamischen Spanien: Ein Beitrag zur Überlieferungs- und Redaktionsgeschichte*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1989, 231–234.

\(^{256}\) One thing that is fairly safe to assume is that the additional phrase is not al-Kilā‘ī’s own gloss. In the citations from his sources in the *Iktifā‘* as a whole, al-Kilā‘ī is generally careful to distinguish between his own comments, that which he is paraphrasing from his sources, and those passages that he cites verbatim. There seems no reason, here, not to take him at his word.
Satanic verses incident did not offend against the notion of Prophetic infallibility. However, in doing so, he recognized the awkwardness for his interpretation of taking *tamannā* to mean “desire,” as is done in Riwāyah 9; he thus glossed *tamannā* as “recitation.” In al-Dhahabi’s transmission of Mūsa’s *Maghāži* (Riwāyah 10), the text of Riwāyah 9 was strategically redacted to support the interpretation that the Prophet did not utter the verses; but in al-Suyūṭī’s transmission (Riwāyah 12), the redaction of the text produced the opposite effect, making it clear that that the Prophet uttered the verses as a result of his desire to reconcile Quraysh.

While Riwāyahs 10, 11, and 12 are clearly later than Riwāyah 9, Riwāyah 13, al-Kila’i’s citation of Mūsa’s *Maghāži*, may well be coeval with Riwāyah 9. Riwāyah 13 states unequivocally that the Prophet uttered the verses. One is thus left uncertain as to Mūsa’s own teaching of the incident. It is entirely possible that Mūsā taught both interpretations as equally valid (this was the position of several commentators in the period 300–500). If he did, however, this would represent a departure from the *sīrah-maghāži* tradition in which, as we have seen from our examination of Riwāyahs 1 to 8, the original position is that of Riwāyahs 12 and 13: that the Prophet uttered the verses. As we will see from the remaining *riwāyahs*, there is, in fact, no first-century report that takes the position that the Prophet did not utter the verses.

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*Riwāyahs 14 and 15: al-Zuhrī from Abū Bakr ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith*

We have seen that Riwāyah 9 is the transmission of al-Zuhrī from ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr. Riwāyahs 14 and 15, which are carried by different *isnāds*, represent the transmission of al-Zuhrī from another source, the Medinese *tābi‘i* Abū Bakr ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith (23–95).

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257 See, for example, al-Tha’labī, *al-Kashf wa-al-bayān*, MS Istanbul, III Ahmet / 76 / 2, f.42.
**Riwaayah 14:** Probably from al-Zuhri’s *Tafsîr* with a *ṣaḥîh* mursal isnâd

*Riwaayah 14* is cited in the *Jâmi‘ al-bayân* of al-Ṭabarî with this isnâd:


Al-Suyûṭî cites the report in the *Durr* from al-Ṭabarî, and also has it from ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd al-Kissî / al-Kishshî / al-Kashshi al-Samarqandî (170s–249), presumably from the latter’s famous *Tafsîr*. For both citations al-Suyûṭî gives this foreshortened isnâd:


*Riwaayah 14* is also cited by Abû Ja’far al-Naḥḥâs al-Misrî (d. 328) in his *al-Nâsîkh wa-al-mansûkh* with this isnâd:

260 A fragment of the *Tafsîr* of ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd, extending from the beginning of Sûrat Æl ‘Imrân 3:1 to Sûrat al-Nisâ’ 4:176, exists in the margins of MS Aya Sofya 175 (which is a copy of the *Tafsîr* of Ibn Abî Ḥâtim al-Râzî) and has now been published: *Qiṭ’ah min Tafsîr al-Imâm ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd*, ed. Mikhlîfî Bnayyah al-‘Irfî (Beirut: Dâr Ibn Ḥazm, 2004). While al-Suyûṭî is recorded as having studied only the *Musnad* of ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd, he specifically cites the *Tafsîr* of ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd in his autobiography (see al-Suyûṭî, *al-Ṭahadduth*, 35); the fact that the text of the *Qiṭ’ah* corresponds closely, but not exactly, to al-Suyûṭî’s citations in the *Durr* assures us that he did indeed consult this *Tafsîr* (MS Aya Sofya 175 was copied in 748, and thus cannot have been extracted from the *Durr*). This, in turn, encourages us to take al-Suyûṭî at his word when he cites in the *Durr* other works that are now lost. *Tafsîr ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd* is listed by Abû Isḥāq al-Tha’labî in the bibliographical introduction to his *al-Kashf wa-al-bayân*; see Mufassirîn sharq, 48 (where the author’s name is given as ‘Abd al-Ḥamîd al-Kashshî). For ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd, who was a scholar of excellent repute from whom all of al-Bukhârî, Muslim, and al-Tirmidhî transmitted, see al-Dhahabî, *Siyar*, 12:235–238; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhib*, 6:455–457; Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:113. An abridged version of his *Musnad* has survived, but does not contain the present report: *al-Muntakhab min Musnad ‘Abd ibn Ḥumayd*, ed. Subhî al-Badrî al-Sâmarrâ’î and Maḥmûd Muḥammad Khalîl al-Sa’îdî (Beirut: Dâr al-Kutub, 1988).

Abū Bakr b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith (d. 93/95), to whom this report is ascribed, was a highly respected figure in first-century Madīnah. Like ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr, he is remembered as one of the seven faqīhs of Madīnah and was a teacher of al-Zuhrī.262 Yūnus b. Yazīd al-Aylī was al-Zuhrī’s companion for twelve years, and is recorded as having related a large amount of material from al-Zuhrī. He is particularly mentioned in the sources (not necessarily favorably) for his emphasis on writing down reports.263 Both the transmitters from Yūnus b. Yazīd are numbered among the greatest Egyptian scholars of the second century. Al-Layth b. Sa’d al-Miṣrī, with whom al-Naḥḥās’s isnād terminates, was probably the most important Egyptian Ḥadīth scholar of his generation.264 ʿAbd Allāh b. Wahb al-Miṣrī was the greatest Mālikī scholar of his generation; Mālik b. Anas is said to have addressed him as faqīh Miṣr (“the jurist of Egypt”) and muftī ahl Miṣr (“the mufti of the Egyptians”). He studied with Yūnus b. Yazīd, and the sources emphasize their closeness by mentioning that Yūnus b. Yazīd attended his student’s wedding feast. A fraction of his Tafsīr has survived but does not contain the commentary on Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥajj.265 Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-ʿAlā al-Miṣrī, with whom al-Ṭabarī studied during his sojourn in Egypt in the 250s, was the leading Egyptian authority of his generation on the readings of the Qurʾān. He had an

263 See al-Dhahabī, Siyār 6:297–301; Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib 11:450–452. Aylah was located where the Jordanian port of ‘Aqabah is today.
impeccable reputation as a Ḥadīth transmitter, with Ḥadīth from him appearing in three of the canonical collections.\textsuperscript{266}

The three citations contain very slight textual variants that do not affect the meaning. The fact that there are three separate transmissions of Riwāyah 14 from Yūnus b. Yazīd, and that the report was already cited from Yūnus in the Tafsīr of ‘Abd b. Ḫumayd in the first half of the third century, encourages one to date the textual formulation of Riwāyah 14 to before Yūnus’s death in 160 at the latest. With the appearance of the report in the Tafsīr of ‘Abd b. Ḫumayd, the transmission moves to Transoxania, which is where ‘Abd seems to have taught for most of his career.\textsuperscript{267}

Riwāyah 14 is considered a ṣaḥīḥ mursal report: a report the transmitters of which are reliable but that goes back not to a ṣaḥābī but to a tābi’ī.\textsuperscript{268} Since there seems little reason to suspect that the incomplete isnād is forged, only the skeptic’s fear of the first century should lead us to doubt Yūnus’s riwāyah bi-al-ma‘nā from al-Zuhrī, and that of al-Zuhrī from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al- Ḫārīth.

When the Messenger of God was in Mecca, he recited [qara’a] to them:\textsuperscript{269} “By the star when it sets.” When he reached: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?,” he said: “Indeed, their intercession is to be hoped for [inna shafavata-hā turtajā]”—the Messenger of God did this unmindfully [wa-sahā rasūl Allāh].

The Mushrikūn, “in whose hearts there was sickness [alladhīna fī qulūbi-him maraḍ],”\textsuperscript{270} met him and greeted him and were greatly


\textsuperscript{267}Most of those who transmitted from him have Transoxanian nisbahs. On a confusion over his geographical origins, see Muḥammad ʿĀrif ʿUmarī Aʿẓamī, “Kyā imām ‘Abd ibn Ḫumayd sindhī-ul-aṣl thē?” Maʿārif 143.4 (1989), 315–319.

\textsuperscript{268}Al-Suyūṭī comments of his citation that the report is mursal ṣaḥīḥ al-isnād. Both transmissions were certified as such by the leading Ḥadīth scholar of the ninth-century, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, in his Fatḥ al-bārī fī Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, (Cairo: Shirkat al-Ṭība’ah al-Fanniyyah al-Muttaḥidah, n.d.), 18:40; this verdict was accepted by al-Albānī, Naṣb al-majānīq, 9, for whom, however, as noted above, the fact that the report is mursal means automatically that it is not reliable.

\textsuperscript{269}The exact wording of the opening phrase differs slightly between al-Ṭabarī: inna rasūl Allāh wa-huwa bi-Makkata qara’a ‘alay-him, and al-Naḥḥās: qara’a rasūl Allāh bi-Makkata. The meaning is identical except for the ‘alay-him in al-Ṭabarī, meaning he “recited to them” instead of “he recited.”

\textsuperscript{270}Qur’ān 22:53 al-Ḥājī.
pleased at it.\textsuperscript{271} He said to them: “But that was from Satan! \textit{[inna-mā dhālika min al-shayṭān].}”\textsuperscript{272} And God sent down: “And we have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet, but that when he \textit{tamannā}, Satan cast (something) into his \textit{umniyyah}, then God removes that which Satan cast.”\textsuperscript{273}

As in the other summary \textit{tafsīr} reports we have seen (\textit{Riwayahs} 4, 5, and 6), the incident is not, in \textit{Riwayah} 14, placed in the context of the larger narrative of the Prophet’s life, but is rather contextualized solely by the purpose of the report, which is to explicate Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj. Given the way in which these \textit{tafsīr} reports select only those narrative elements that are immediately relevant in relating the incident to the verse under exegesis—with the result that one is left with only a bare-bones narrative—it is difficult to know how these reports are intended to be read: whether as self-contained narrative units, or with the assumption of a knowledge of a more detailed version of the narrative.

Before considering how this problem affects our understanding of \textit{Riwayah} 14, it will be useful to first summarize the interpretation of the incident. First, \textit{Riwayah} 14 is clear as to the fact that the Prophet uttered the verses (curtailed here to what is usually the second verse—there is no \textit{gharānīq} phrase). Second, the explanation provided—“The Messenger of God did this unmindfully \textit{[wa-sahā rasūl Allāh]}”—is perfectly compatible with the reports we have seen thus far. We should note that the phrase \textit{wa-sahā} locates the incident explicitly in the language of the debate over \textit{‘iṣmah}, which specifically addressed the question of whether Prophets were protected from \textit{sahw}.\textsuperscript{274} This does not mean, however, that the \textit{wa-sahā rasūl Allāh} phrase is necessarily a second-century theological gloss, as it is entirely possible that it is a first-century phrase as yet innocent of theological intent. Third, in contrast to the \textit{riwayahs} we have seen thus far, in \textit{Riwayah} 14 the Prophet is not portrayed as being unaware of having erred—and thus, by implication, as unclear about

\textsuperscript{271}The report in al-Suyūṭī simply reads, “and the Mushrikūn were greatly pleased by this,” omitting the phrase containing the Qur’ānic allusion, “in whose hearts there was sickness, met him and greeted him.”

\textsuperscript{272}In al-Suyūṭī’s report: \textit{alā inna-mā kāna dhālika min al-shayṭān.}

\textsuperscript{273}This is the part of the āyāh cited in al-Ṭabarī and al-Naḥḥās. Al-Suyūṭī cites it to the end of 22:55.

\textsuperscript{274}See Madelung, “\textit{‘Iṣma},” EI2.
the nature of Revelation and his mission—until Jibril points out his mistake. Rather, in Riwāyah 14, the Prophet realizes on his own that he has erred and says, “But that was from Satan!,” and God then sends down Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥajj to provide a Divine rationale.

Absent from Riwāyah 14 is a direct statement as to the prevalent climate of persecution and its effect on the Prophet; there is only the statement that the action took place in Mecca. Also, Riwāyah 14 makes no mention of Sūrat al-Najm being revealed to the Prophet, but only of the Prophet’s recitation of the sūrah. What is more, in Riwāyah 14 the error does not take place in a stated climate of persecution, nor in response to the Prophet’s desire/Quraysh’s offer to compromise. Since the error actually takes place not during the Revelation of the sūrah but during its subsequent recitation, the question to be asked is whether Riwāyah 14 is presenting the Prophet’s uttering the Satanic verses as a simple recitation error arising from a lack of concentration, and innocent of any external pressures.

Also, what is the time frame for the narrative: are we to take it as meaning that Quraysh immediately came up to the Prophet and congratulated him, and that the Prophet then repudiated the verses on the spot, or is this a false impression arising from the summarizing of a narrative where the event occupies a full day or more? Also, since there is no mention of the return of the refugees from Abyssinia, are we to assume that the error was without larger consequence? In other words, do we take the limited background information provided by Riwāyah 14 as defining the meaning of the narrative, or do we take it that the summary account of Riwāyah 14 assumes knowledge on the part of the reader/audience of where in the narrative of the Prophet’s life to locate the incident?

The answer, of course, is that Riwāyah 14 is susceptible to both approaches. However, the evidence suggests that the transmitters of Riwāyah 14 were themselves perfectly aware of the larger context for the incident. This larger narrative appears in Riwāyah 15.

**Riwāyah 15:** Probably from al-Zuhri’s Kitāb al-maghāzī

Riwāyah 15, which goes back by another isnād via al-Zuhri to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith, is given by Ibn Saʿd in the Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt
The report is transmitted from al-Zuhri by his nephew, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Zuhri, in a Medinese isnād:


Riwāyah 15 is not a description of the Satanic verses incident itself, but rather of the return of the refugees from Abyssinia. As such, it is given by Ibn Saʿd following his citation of Riwāyah 3 as a continuation of the narrative and, unlike Riwāyah 14, which has no context other than Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥajj, it assumes a prior sequence of events that is known to the audience of the report, but omitted from Riwāyah 14 as irrelevant to the immediate purpose of explicating the āyah:

News of that sajdah spread among the people to the point that it reached Abyssinia. It reached the companions of the Messenger of God that the people of Mecca had made the sajdah and accepted Islam [aslamū], and that even al-Walid b. al-Mughirah and Abū Uḥayḥah had made the sajdah behind the Prophet. So the people said: “If they have accepted Islam, who remains (a pagan) in Mecca?” They said, “Our clans are dearer to us [ʿashāʾiru-nā aḥabbu ilay-nā],” and they set off to return. When they were one day-hour away from Mecca [dūna Makkata bi-sāʿatin min nahār], they met a group of horsemen from the Banu Kinānah and asked them about Quraysh and their state of affairs. The horsemen said: “Muḥammad mentioned their gods favourably [dhakara Muḥammad ālihata-hum bi-khayr], so the leaders [al-malaʾ] followed him. Then he renounced them [irtaddaʿan-hā] and went back to denouncing their gods; and they went back to evil treatment of him. That is the state in which we left them.” The group discussed returning

275 Ibn Saʿd, Ṭabaqāt, 1:161.
276 For al-Zuhri’s nephew, whose reputation with the Ḥadīth scholars is somewhat mixed, see al-Dhahabi, Ṣiyar, 7:197; Ibn Ḥajar, Taḥdīḥ, 9:278–280; al-ʿUqaylī, Duʿafāʾ, 4:1245–1248; Ibn ʿAdī, Kāmil, 6:168.
277 The isnād is weak by fact of the presence of al-Wāqidī; see al-Ṣawwaynī, al-Qaṣīmah, 1:423.
278 Cf. the translation of Moinul Haq and Ghazanfar, Ibn Saʿd’s Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt, 238.
279 Note the similar phrase in Riwāyah 2: “They are dearer to us [hum aḥabbu ʿalay-nā].”
to Abyssinia; then they said, “We have come this far, let us go in and see what Quraysh are at. . . .”

Nothing in Riwāyah 15 contradicts Riwāyah 14 on any hermeneutical issue: the Prophet says the words, there is no indication that his saying them was anything other than unmindful, and there is no mention of his needing Divine Revelation to correct himself. However, Riwāyah 15 contains a number of narrative elements that are absent from the portrayal of the incident in Riwāyah 14, primary among them being the narrative motif of persecution, but also the sajdah of Quraysh and their subsequent support of the Prophet, and the return of the refugees from Abyssinia. While Riwāyah 14 (like Riwāyahs 3 to 6) seems to present the incident in an atomized or decontextualized manner in which the narrative has no points of reference beyond itself and Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj, Riwāyah 15, through the presence of these elements, places the incident in a larger context that gives it a meaning within the historical development of the Prophet’s career (as with Riwāyahs 1 to 3 and 7 to 13). In this context, it becomes more difficult to accept the Prophet’s error as a simple recitational mistake innocent of external pressures. This perspective on the incident is summed up in the voice of a party—the horsemen of the Banū Kinānah—concerned not with explicating the meaning of the Qur’ān but with keeping abreast of political developments in Mecca: “Muḥammad mentioned their gods favourably so the leaders followed him. Then he renounced them [irtadda ‘an-hā] and went back to denouncing their gods; and they went back to evil treatment of him.”

Riwāyahs 14 and 15: Conclusions

Riwāyahs 14 and 15 thus demonstrate for us how the interpretations of the Satanic verses contained in the respective reports were affected not only by considerations of dogma—as in the transmissions of the account in the Maghāzī of Mūsā—but also by structural considerations, such as the discursive purpose of the texts in a particular
genre, whether sīrah-magḥāzī or tafsīr. It is interesting to note that al-Zuhārī is recorded as having authored both a Tafsīr and a Kitāb al-magḥāzī;280 certainly Riwāyah 14 would have fitted well in the former work, and Riwāyah 15 the latter. As most of the subsequent riwāyahs examined in this study are shorter reports taken from tafsīr works, the impact of genre on the framing of reports is something that must be borne in mind.

Riwāyahs 16 to 20:
From Abū al-‘Āliyah al-Baṣrī

Riwāyahs 16 to 20 are all cited from Abū al-‘Āliyah Rufay‘ b. Mihrān al-Riyāḥī al-Baṣrī (d. 93), one of the most important Qur’ān scholars of the first century, whom we encountered in Riwāyah 4, above. Abū al-‘Āliyah was a contemporary of the Prophet, but converted to Islam only two years after the Prophet’s death. He is reported as having studied the Qur’ān with ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, Ubayy b. Ka‘b, Zayd b. Thābit, and ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Abbās. He had an excellent reputation among the Ḥadīth authorities, and reports from him occur in all six canonical collections.281 His tafsīr corpus, which was transmitted by at least five different isnāds, exists today only in citations in later works, and these have not been collected or studied. It was used extensively by Yaḥyā b. Sallām al-Baṣrī (124–200; see Riwāyah 20 below) and by al-Ṭabarī, while both Ibn al-Nadīm282 and al-Tha‘lābī283 cited the Tafsīr of Abū al-‘Āliyah as an independent work.

All five riwāyahs from Abū al-‘Āliyah agree on the fundamental hermeneutical question of whether the Prophet uttered the Satanic

280 See the list of early texts prepared by Donner, Narratives, 301. On al-Zuhārī’s Kitāb al-magḥāzī see Mubārakpūrī, Tadvīn-i siyar, 185–189.

281 He is reported as having studied the Qur’ān within ten years of the Prophet’s death. There is a report that states that when Ibn ‘Abbās was governor of Baṣrah, he would give Abū al-‘Āliyah precedence over Quraysh in seating. See al-Dhahābī, Siyar, 4:207–213; Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 3:284–286; al-Dā‘ūdī, Ṭabaqāt al-mufassirīn, 1:172–173.

282 Ibn al-Nadīm, Fihrist, 53.

283 al-Tha‘lābī has the Tafsīr of Abū al-‘Āliyah by an isnād different to those examined here; see Mufassirū sharq, 36–37.
verses. Four are identical in every regard of their interpretation of the incident, even though they differ in their wording. Three of the five riwāyahs are ṣaḥīḥ mursal.

Riwāyah 16: Cited by al-Ṭabarî with a ṣaḥīḥ mursal Basran isnād

Riwāyah 16 is cited by al-Ṭabarî in the Jāmi‘ al-bayān in the commentary on Qur'ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj.284 It is carried by a Basran isnād whose members are all of sound reputation, by virtue of which the report is a ṣaḥīḥ mursal:285


The report reads:289

Quraysh said to the Messenger of God: “Those who attend you [julasā’u-ka] are merely the slave of this tribe and the client of that tribe [‘abd bani fulān wa-mawlā bani fulān]. But if you were to speak favourably of our gods [law dhakarta ālihata-nā bi-shay’], we would attend you and then the noblemen of the Arabs [ashraf al-‘arab] would come to you; when they see that you are attended by the noblemen of your tribe, you would become more desirable to them [kāna arghabu la-kum fī-ka].”

284 al-Ṭabarî, Jāmi‘ al-bayān, 17:188.
285 For the opinion that the report is a ṣaḥīḥ mursal, see Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, Fath, 18:41–42; al-Albānī, Naṣb al-majānīq, 10. Like al-Albānī, al-Ḥalabī al-Atharī and al-Ṣawwayānī also consider mursal reports as ipso facto unreliable. In the present instance, al-Ḥalabī al-Atharī has also chosen to regard Dā’ūd b. Abī Hind as a weak transmitter and consequently to reject all the isnāds from Abū al-‘Āliyah; see al-Ḥalabī al-Atharī, Dalā’il, 136; and al-Ṣawwayānī, al-Qaṣīmah, 1:424.
So Satan cast into his umniyyah \( \text{fa-alqā al-shayṭān fī umniyyati-hī} \). This verse came down: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?,” and Satan caused (the following phrase) to run upon his tongue \( \text{ajrā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi} \); “Those high gharāniqah: their intercession is to be hoped for! Their like are not forgotten! \( \text{tilka al-gharāniqah al-‘ulā wa-shafā‘atu-hunna turjā mithlu-hunna lā yunsā} \).”

The Prophet made the sajdah when he recited it \( \text{ḥīna qara‘-hā} \), and the Muslims and Mushrikūn made the sajdah with him.

And when he realized what had been run upon his tongue \( \text{fa-lammā ‘alima alladhī ujriya ‘alā lisāni-hi} \), it distressed him greatly \( \text{kabura dhālika ‘alay-hi} \). So God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he tamannā, Satan cast something into his umniyyah,” to His words, “and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

The most significant features of the foregoing account are as follows. First, there is no doubt here that the Prophet uttered the verses: this is the plain meaning of the phrase “Satan caused (the following) to run upon his tongue.” Second, Riwāyah 16 begins, like Riwāyahs 8, 9, 10, 12, and 13, with an offer from Quraysh to the Prophet: that if he praises their gods, they will support him. In the present instance, their blandishment goes beyond an assurance of security to the assurance that their backing will bring Muḥammad to the attention of the leaders of the tribes of Arabia. Thus, while Riwāyah 16 does not mention any desire on the part of the Prophet to be reconciled with Quraysh (tamannā is not glossed at all), the Prophet’s uttering of the Satanic verses takes place in the context of Quraysh’s offer to help him succeed in his mission. The wording of the Satanic verses themselves contains a phrase we have not seen in the reports examined thus far: “Their like are not forgotten!” This phrase is a significant one as it allays precisely the concerns of Quraysh: that their goddesses would be forgotten in Muḥammad’s monotheist doctrine.

In the riwāyahs examined thus far, the Prophet makes the sajdah after completing the recitation of Sūrat al-Najm, the final verse of which concludes with the Divine command “Make the sajdah to God and worship Him!” In Riwāyah 16, the Prophet makes the sajdah not in accordance with Divine command upon completing the sūrah but upon reciting the Satanic verses. Here, the dramatic image of the
Prophet making the *sajdah* upon praising the gods of Quraysh casts his *sajdah* as a part of his concession to Quraysh.

Like Riwāyah 14, Riwāyah 16 does not contain a correction scene. In this context, the phrase “And when he realized what had been run upon his tongue, it distressed him greatly” can be understood to mean that, as in Riwāyah 14, the Prophet realizes on his own that he has erred. However, since the Prophet utters the verses in response to an offer of compromise from Quraysh, the fact that he realizes on his own that he has erred cannot be taken here, as it may in Riwāyah 14 before its contextualization by Riwāyah 15, to mean that this was a simple recitation error independent of external pressures.

*Riwāyah 17:* Also Cited by al-Ṭabarī with a *ṣaḥīḥ mursal* Basran isnād

Riwāyah 17 is also given by al-Ṭabarī in the *Jāmi‘ al-bayān,* in the commentary on Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj, with the following isnād:290


Like Riwāyah 16, this is a purely Basran isnād and it is a *ṣaḥīḥ mursal,* all transmitters being of sound reputation.294 Both Riwāyahs 16 and 17 go back to Abū al-‘Āliyah via Dā‘ūd b. Abī Hind, but the transmitters from Dā‘ūd b. Abī Hind differ.

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293 For this extremely prominent Ḥadīth transmitter, see al-Dhahabī, *Ṣiyyar,* 7:444–456; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhib,* 3:11–16. His memory deteriorated in old age and this affected his reputation as a transmitter; nevertheless, the long entry in Ibn ‘Adi, *Kāmil,* 2:253–266, culminates in a strong affirmation of his standing.
294 See al-Albānī, *Naṣb al-majānīq,* 10; al-Ṣawwayānī, *Qaṣīmah,* 1:428; both of whom reject the report on the basis that it is *mursal.*
Quraysh said: “Muḥammad! The poor and wretched and weak attend you [yujālisu-ka al-fuqarā’wa-al-masākinwa-du‘afā’al-nās]. But if you were to speak favourably of our gods, we would attend you, and then the people would come to you from the horizons!”

So the Messenger of God recited [qara’a] Sūrat al-Najm, and when he came to this verse: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?” Satan cast onto his tongue [fa-alqā al-shayṭānu ‘alā lisāni-hi]: “They are the high gharāniqah, and their intercession is to be hoped for [wa-hiya al-gharāniqah al-‘ulā wa-shafā‘atu-hunna turtajā].”

When he had finished it (Sūrat al-Najm), the Messenger of God, the Muslims and the Mushrikūn made the sajdah, except for Abū Uḥayḥah Sa‘īd b. al-‘Āṣ who took a handful of dirt and made the sajdah upon it and said: “The time has come when Ibn Abī Kabshah speaks favourably of our gods [āna li-Ibn Abī Kabshah an yadhkura ālihata-nā bi-khayr].”

It reached the Muslim Companions of the Messenger of God in Abyssinia that Quraysh had accepted Islam.

That which Satan cast onto his tongue [mā alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi] greatly disturbed [ishtadda ‘alā] the Messenger of God. So God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet,” to the end of the verse.

Although the wording of Riwaṭah 17 differs from that of Riwaṭah 16, it is strikingly similar in regard to the content and arrangement of the narrative units, as well as in the hermeneutical elaboration of the incident. The two riwaṭahs are simply bi-al-ma‘nā versions of each other. Again, the Prophet utters the verses following Quraysh’s offer of support, and again he realizes on his own that he has erred.

The only difference of any significance between Riwaṭahs 16 and 17 is that in Riwaṭah 17 the Prophet’s sajdah takes place at the end of the sūrah. While this affects the meaning of the sajdah that, in contrast to Riwaṭah 16, is no longer a part of the concession to Quraysh, it does not affect the interpretation of the incident as a whole.

A second difference is the fact that whereas Riwaṭah 16 (like Riwaṭahs 1, 2, and 8 to 13, above) appears to present the incident as taking place during the initial Revelation of Sūrat al-Najm—“This verse came down . . . and Satan caused (the following phrase) to run upon his tongue”—Riwaṭah 17 (like Riwaṭah 14) makes no reference to the Revelation of the sūrah, but only to its recitation: “So the Messenger of God recited Sūrat al-Najm, and when he came to
this verse . . . Satan cast onto his tongue.” Whether the error takes place during Revelation or recitation, what is unaffected is the fundamental fact of the Prophet’s erring in response to the blandishments of Quraysh.

We should note here, also, the difference in the wording of the Satanic verses themselves, as well as the presence of the distinctive, and possibly derogatory, reference to Muḥammad that is put in the mouth of Abū Ḫāyāḥah: “The time has come when Ibn Abī Kabshah speaks favourably of our gods.”

Riwāyah 18: Cited by al-Suyūṭī in the Durr from the Tafsīrs of al-Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim by an Unspecified ṣaḥīḥ isnād

Riwāyah 18 is cited from Abū al-ʻĀliyah by al-Suyūṭī in the Durr in the commentary on Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj.296 Al-Suyūṭī says he is taking it from al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Mundhir al-Naysābūrī (d. 318).297 While al-Suyūṭī does not

295 Quraysh are recorded as having referred to Muḥammad as Ibn Abī Kabshah on more than one occasion (see Watt, Muḥammad at Mecca, 103). The Islamic tradition gives different explanations for this nomenclature. One explanation is that Abū Kabshah was the kunyah of the Prophet’s maternal grandfather to whom the Prophet bore a physical resemblance; in this version, the name is entirely nonderogatory. It was also the kunyah of a man of Khuzā’ah who, like Muḥammad, had refused to worship idols, and had worshipped instead the star Sirius; Quraysh thus called the Prophet after him, presumably with hostile or even derogatory intent. A third explanation is that Abū Kabshah was the kunyah of the husband of the Prophet’s wet nurse; to call the Prophet after him, while not necessarily a hostile gesture, may well have been less than wholly respectful. For the foregoing, see Ibn Manẓūr, Lisān al-ʻarab (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1997), 5:367. A fourth possibility is that the Abū Kabshah in question is a certain mawlā of the Prophet called Sulaym; in this case the appellation would most likely be derogatory. In Riwāyah 28, below, we will see al-Walīd b. al-Mughirah calling the Prophet after a female client. For the mawlā Abū Kabshah, see Abū al-Qāsim Ṭabarī, Tārīkh madīnat Dīmashq: al-sīrah al-nabawīyyah, ed. Nishāṭ Ghazzāwī (Damascus: Majma‘al-Lughah al-ʻArabiyyah, 1991), 2:305–306; and Ibn Sa‘d, Ṭabaqāt, 3:36. For a list of Abū Kabshahs, see Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb al-Baghdādī (d. 245), Kitāb al-muḥabbar, and Ilse Lichtenstädter (Hyderabad: Dā’irat al-Ma‘ārif al-ʻUthmāniyyah, 1942), 129.

296 Al-Suyūṭī, al-Durr, 6:68. This is the first of the two reports al-Suyūṭī has from Abū al-ʻĀliyah.

297 The portion of Ibn al-Mundhir’s Tafsīr that is extant does not cover any of the āyāhs related to the incident; Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Mundhir, Kitāb tafsīr
provide an *isnād*, he states that these three authors cite the report “by a sound *isnād* [bi-sanadin ṣaḥīḥ].”

The Mushrikūn said to the Messenger of God: “If you mention our gods in what you say, we will attend you. No-one attends you (now) except the lowly and weak [arādhil al-nās wa-ḍu ‘afā’u-hum]. But if people were to see us with you, they would speak about it and would come to you.”

So he stood to pray and recited [*qara’a*], “By the star,” until he reached: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other? Those high gharāniqah! Their intercession is hoped for! Their like are not forgotten! [tilka al-gharāniqah al-‘ulā wa-shafā’atu-hunna turjā mithlu-hunna lā yunsā].”

And when he completed the end of the *sūrah*, he made the *sajdah* and the Muslims and Mushrikūn made the *sajdah*. And it reached Abyssinia that the people had accepted Islam. The Messenger of God was greatly disturbed at what had happened [shaqqa dhālika ‘alā rasūl Allāh], so God sent down, “We have not sent before you,” to His words, “the suffering of a barren day.”

It will be apparent that while *Riwa‘iyah 18* differs from *Riwa‘iyahs 16* and 17 in wording, the choice, content, and arrangement of the narrative units are shared sometimes with *Riwa‘iyah 16* and at other junctures with *Riwa‘iyah 17*, while the interpretation of the incident is the same in all three reports. This is another case of a *bi-al-ma‘nā* transmission of the same *riwa‘iyah*. The only narrative motif in *Riwa‘iyah 18* that is not present in either *Riwa‘iyah 16* or 17 is that of the Prophet uttering the Satanic verses while praying. We will see this motif recurring in other *riwa‘iyahs* below.298 The narrative of *Riwa‘iyah 18* does not contain a direct reference to Satan’s interference; this occurs only in the citation of Qur‘ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj. None-
theless, the meaning of the incident is the same here as in Riwāyahs 16 and 17.299 Since al-Suyūṭī’s other citations from al-Ṭabarī are largely faithful to the wording in al-Ṭabarī’s jāmi‘ al-bayān (see Riwāyahs 2 and 14, above, and Riwāyahs 34 and 35, below), one suspects that al-Suyūṭī is here citing from one of the other two sources, Ibn Abī Ḥātim or Ibn al-Mundhir. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the isnāds by which Abū al-‘Āliyah is cited in the extant portion of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s Tafsīr are different from those in Riwāyahs 16 and 17.300

Riwāyah 19: Cited by al-Suyūṭī in the Durr from the Tafsīrs of al-Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Mundhir, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī

Riwāyah 19 is also cited from Abū al-‘Āliyah by al-Suyūṭī in the Durr, again from al-Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Mundhir, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim.301 Again, it is very similar to all three of Riwāyahs 16, 17, and 18, agreeing with them in its narrative construction and hermeneutical elaboration of the incident while differing in its wording.

Sūrat al-Najm was sent down in Mecca, and Quraysh said: “Muḥammad! The poor and wretched attend you [yujālisu-ka al-fuqarā’ wa-al-masākīn]; (but) people would come to you from all the regions of the earth, if you were to speak favourably of our Gods, (with the result that) we attended you.”

So the Messenger of God recited [qara‘a] Sūrat al-Najm, and when he came to this verse: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?,” Satan cast onto his tongue [alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi]: “They are the high gharāniqah, and their intercession is to be hoped for [wa-hiya al-gharāniqah al-‘ulā wa-shafā‘atu-hunna turtajā].”

When he finished the sūrah, he made the sajdah, and the Muslims and Mushrikūn made the sajdah, except for Abū Uḥayḥah Sa‘īd b. al-‘Āṣ

299 It is also noteworthy that the wording of the Satanic verses in Riwāyah 18 agrees with that in Riwāyah 16, including the distinctive phrase “Their like are not forgotten.”


301 Al-Suyūṭī, al-Durr, 6:68. This is the second riwāyah cited by al-Suyūṭī.
who took a handful of dirt and made the *sajdah* upon it and said: “The time has come when Ibn Abī Kabshah speaks favourably of our gods! [āna li-Ibn Abī Kabshah an yadhkura ālihata-nā bi-khayr].” This reached the Muslims who were in Abyssinia—that Quraysh had accepted Islam—and they wanted to approach (Mecca) [fa-arādū an yuqbilū].

That which Satan cast onto his tongue [mā alqā al-shayjān ‘alā lisāni-hi] greatly distressed [ishtadda ‘alā] the Messenger of God and his Companions, so God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet.”

**Riwa‘yah 20:** Cited by Yaḥyā b. Sallām al-BAṣrī in His Tafsīr

*Riwa‘yah 20* is cited from Abū al-‘Āliyah in the *Tafsīr* of Yaḥyā b. Sallām al-BAṣrī al-Qayrawānī (d. 200), one of the earliest Qur’ān commentaries to have come down to us in manuscript. Yaḥyā b. Sallām grew up in BAṣrāh, but traveled to Egypt and Qayrawān. It was in North Africa and Spain that his *Tafsīr* acquired influence, and it is in Tunisia that substantial fragments of it, copied in the late fourth, early fifth, and early sixth centuries, are today preserved in manuscript.302 With the presence of *Riwa‘yah 20* in Yaḥyā b. Sallām’s *Tafsīr*, we see the transmission of the incident reach IFLRHQ. *Riwa‘yah 20* is carried by the same initial *isnād* from Abū al-‘Āliyah as is *Riwa‘yah 17*. Thus, as with *Riwa‘yahs 16* and 17 (and, according to al-Suyūṭī, 18), this is a *ṣaḥīḥ mursal* report.303 The *isnād* is:


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303 In the study by al-Khûlī, this *riwa‘yah* is given as an example of Yaḥyā b. Sallām’s “exegesis of the Qur’ān by reliance on historical reports,” and the historicity of the report is roundly rejected on the modern orthodox bases of *isnāds* and of ‘*iṣmat al-anbiyā’; *Manhaj Yaḥyā b. Sallām*, 239, 252–254.
Yaḥyā b. Sallām cites the report in the commentary both on Qur‘ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj and on 53:19 al-Najm.

The Messenger of God was standing in the Sacred Mosque [al-masjid al-harām] praying. He was reciting [yaqra‘u] Sūrat al-Najm; and when he came to these verses: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?,” Satan cast onto his tongue [alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi]: “Indeed, they are from among the high gharānīq! And, indeed, their intercession is to be hoped for! [inna-hunna min al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā‘ata-hunna turtajā].”

This pleased the Mushriḵūn [fa-a’jaba dhālika al-mushrikīn]. He recited the sūrah until he completed it; then he made the sajdah and the Muslims and Mushriḵūn made the sajdah; except for Abū Uḥayḥah who took a handful of dirt and made the sajdah on it. This reached those Companions of the Prophet who were in Abyssinia.

The Prophet was greatly disturbed [shaqqa ‘alay-hi] by what had come upon his tongue [bi-mā jā'a 'alā lisāni-hi], so God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he tamannā, Satan cast something into his umniyyah; then God removes that which Satan casts and establishes His Signs clearly—and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise—to make that which Satan cast a trial for those in whose hearts is sickness, and for those whose hearts are hardened,” meaning: the Mushriḵūn.

Absent from Riwa‘iyah 20 is the narrative motif that is given at the outset in Riwa‘iyahs 16 to 19, that of Quraysh’s offer of support. Thus, while the theme of persecution is implied by the chronology (the refugees are in Abyssinia), the Prophet’s error is not presented as taking place following an offer of compromise. There is no means of knowing with certainty whether the absence of the motif of Quraysh’s offer is Yaḥyā b. Sallām’s omission, or constitutes an intact transmission from Abū al-‘Āliyah. However, it is noteworthy that if one removes
the initial “offer” motif from Riwāyahs 16 to 19, their hermeneutical elaboration of the incident is just like that of Riwāyah 20.

In this regard, it is instructive to note that we will see in Riwāyahs 27 to 30, below, that even when the same author narrates the incident at different places in the same work, the narratives may differ, not in regard to their fundamental interpretation of the incident but in regard to the narrative elements included and omitted. The same phenomenon may be observed in regard to another citation of Riwāyah 20 itself, that found in the Taṣīr of the third-century North African Ibāḍī scholar Hūd b. Muḥakām al-Huwârī. It has been well demonstrated that Hūd’s main source was the Taṣīr of Yahyā b. Sallām, from whom he has extensive unacknowledged verbatim citations; there is no reason to doubt that Hūd has taken his text of Riwāyah 20 from Yahyā b. Sallām, especially since the text is virtually identical. Hūd’s citation, however, omits certain passages, underlined below. Text that is in Hūd but not in Yahyā is marked by curly brackets; unmarked text is common.306

The Messenger of God was standing in the Sacred Mosque [al-masjid al-harām] praying. He was reciting Sūrat al-Najm; and when he came upon these verses {this verse}: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?,” Satan cast onto his tongue: “Indeed, they are from among the high gharānīq! And, indeed, their intercession is to be hoped for!”

This pleased the Mushrikūn. He recited the sūrah until he completed it; then he made the sajdah and {the folk of Mecca,} the Musliims and Mushrikūn {and humans and jinn,} made the sajdah; except for Abū Uḥayyah who took a handful of dirt and made the sajdah on it. This reached those Companions of the Prophet who were in Abyssinia.

The Prophet was greatly distressed by what had come upon his tongue, so God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger

or a Prophet but that when he tamannā, Satan cast something into his umniyyah; then God removes that which Satan casts and establishes His Signs clearly—and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise—to make that which Satan cast a trial for those in whose hearts is sickness, and for those whose hearts are hardened,” meaning: the Mushrikūn.

Hūd’s citation thus omits the reference to the refugees in Abyssinia, the Prophet’s distress, and the sajdah of Abū Uḥayḥah; but the riwāyah is clearly that originally cited by Yaḥyā b. Sallām. Now, the omission of the narrative motif of the Prophet’s distress is significant, not for the primary hermeneutical question of whether the Prophet uttered the verses but for the secondary issue of whether the Prophet realized on his own that he had erred. Since no correction scene with Jibrīl is given, however, there is no reason to suspect that Hūd is adjusting the narrative to take the opposite position—namely, that the Prophet was unaware of his error. Rather, the “distress” motif, alongside that of the refugees in Abyssinia and the sajdah of Abū Uḥayḥah, seems to have been omitted as secondary to the fundamental hermeneutical issue. One suspects that the absence of the motif of “Quraysh’s offer” from Yaḥyā’s citation involved a similar editorial omission of a narrative motif present in the transmission of Dā’ūd b. Abī Hind, but that Yaḥyā considered to be secondary to the narrative.

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**Riwāyahs 16 to 20: Conclusions**

**Riwāyahs 16 to 20**, from Abū al-ʻĀliyah, display a high degree of consistency in their interpretation of the Satanic verses incident, even though they are differently worded and contain some variant narrative elements. They are clearly riwāyah bi-al-ma‘nā of each other. The sole inconsistency between them is the absence of the narrative motif of “Quraysh’s offer” from **Riwāyah 20**. However, given the presence of the motif in the other four reports—including **Riwāyahs 16 and 17**, which are transmitted from Dā’ūd b. Abī Hind by different persons—this omission may well represent the editorial activity of
the compiler, Yaḥyā b. Sallām al-Baṣrī. In any case, there is no reason to doubt that this motif was regarded by second-century Basrans as present in the accounts of the incident transmitted from the great Basran mufassir Abū al-‘Āliyah. Given the consistency of interpretation in Riwāyahs 16 to 20 combined with the fact that Riwāyahs 16 and 17 (the two of the four for which we have isnāds) go back to Abū al-‘Āliyah via Dā’ūd b. Abī Hind, it would appear reasonable to date the common textual formulation of the reports to before Dā’ūd’s death in 136, and to regard them as representing, in meaning, Abū al-‘Āliyah’s own interpretation of the incident.

Riwāyahs 21 and 22: From al-Suddī

Riwāyahs 21 and 22 are two different reports cited by al-Suyūṭī in the commentary on Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj in the Durr, the isnāds of which include the prominent first-/second-century Kufan mufassir Ismāʿīl al-Suddī al-Kabīr (d. 128).

Riwāyah 21: In the Tafsīr of ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd al-Samarqandī

Al-Suyūṭī has Riwāyah 21 from his copy of the Tafsīr of ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd al-Samarqandī (1708–249).307 The isnād is:

Ismāʿīl b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suddī al-Kūfī (d. 128) ← Abū Ṣāliḥ Bādhām al-Kūfī (d. 110 / 120).

Most of what Abū Ṣāliḥ transmitted is reported to have been tafsīr-related. He was very poorly regarded by the Ḥadīth scholars—indeed, any possibility of rehabilitating hi reputation was put paid to by a report in which Abū Ṣāliḥ himself declares to a student that everything he has transmitted to him is a lie.308

307 Al-Suyūṭī, al-Durr, 6:665.
Al-Suddī was one of the two most important Qur’ān commentators in Kufah at the beginning of the second century, the other being Muḥammad b. al-Sā‘īb al-Kalbī (see Riwāyah 23). He is reported as having studied with the great first-century Kufan Qur’ān authority ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Abbas (d. 68).309 Like many Kufan scholars, he was accused of harboring Shi‘ī sympathies. He had a mixed reputation among the Ḥadīth scholars, who seem to have been unhappy with his Tafsīr. ʿAḥmad b. Ḥanbal thought him an acceptable muḥhaddith, “but for the Tafsīr which he has produced,” while Yahyā b. Mā’in specifically criticized his transmission of reports from Abū Ṣāliḥ. Some Ḥadīth scholars went so far as to call him a “liar [kadhdāb].”310

The Messenger of God stood up and the Mushrikūn said, “If he mentions our god favourably, we will mention his god favourably [in dhakāra alihata-nā bi-khayr dhaakarnā ilāha-hu bi-khayr].” And “Satan cast into his umniyyah [alqā al-shayṭān fī umnīyyati-hi]: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzā and Manāt the third, the other? Indeed, they are among the high gharrānīq! And, indeed, their intercession is to be hoped for! [inna-hunna la-fi' 311 al-gharrānīq al-ʿulā wa-inna shafāʿata-


309 He is also reported as having studied with ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas‘ūd (d. 33), but this would seem to be something of a chronological stretch.

310 The biographical literature on al-Suddī includes several extremely insulting reports, mostly from his senior contemporary ‘Āmir b. Sharāḥīl al-Sha'bī (19–104), which have been explained as motivated by personal jealousy: al-Bukhārī, for example, thought that al-Suddī was a better Qur’ān scholar than al-Sha'bī. Al-Suddī’s Tafsīr was cited as a distinct work by both Ibn al-Nadīm, Fihrist, 53; and al-Tha'labī, Mufassirū sharq, 40–41. A version of al-Suddī’s extant tafsīr corpus has been collected and published by Muḥammad ‘Ata’ Yūsuf, Tafsīr al-Suddī al-Kabīr li-al-Imām Abī Muḥammad Ismā‘īl b. ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Suddī al-Kabīr, Mansura: Dār al-Wafā’, 1993; with a biographical study at 17–30. Unfortunately, however, the editor has confined himself only to those reports whose isnāds terminate with al-Suddī, and omits material (e.g., Riwāyah 21) cited by al-Suddī from earlier authorities. A fuller picture of al-Suddī as a Qur’ān scholar can be obtained only with the consideration of such reports. For al-Suddī, see also al-Dhahabi, Siyār 5:264–265; Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 1:313–314; Ibn ‘Adī, Kāmil, 1:274–275; al-Sayyid Muḥṣin al-Amin, A’ya’n al-shī‘ah, ed. Ḥasan al-Amin (Beirut: Dār al-Ta’āruf, 1986), 3:379–380; Sezgin, GAS 1:32–33. The present isnād is rejected as “very weak” by al-Albānī, Naṣb al-majānīq, 14; see also al-Ḥalabī al-Atharī, Dalā’il, 78–81.

311 The preposition fi may, here, represent a copyist’s misreading of min; however, the phrase is also found in another version of the Satanic verses: see Riwāyah 48, below.
hunna la-turtajā].” So God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he tamannā, Satan cast something into his umniyyah.”

Riwāyah 21 is similar to Riwāyahs 16 to 19 in that it presents the Satanic verses as a response to Quraysh’s offer of compromise. While the Prophet’s utterance of the verses is not explicitly stated, it is only logical to assume it in the context of this narrative: “If he mentions our gods favourably, we will mention his god favourably.” While Riwāyah 21 does not explicitly present the error as taking place during the recitation of Sūrat al-Najm, this is implied by the presence of Qur’ān 53:19, “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzza and Manāt the third, the other?,” which, it is worth noting, is given here as a part of the words cast by Satan.

Riwāyah 22: In the Tafsīr of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī

The question of the dating of Riwāyah 21 is best addressed after examining Riwāyah 22. Riwāyah 22 is adduced by al-Suyūṭī from the Tafsīr of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, without an isnād between Ibn Abī Ḥātim and al-Suddī. A partial isnād for the present report is cited from the Tafsīr of Ibn Abī Ḥātim by Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, who does not, however, give the text of the report. Unlike Riwāyah 21, this isnād stops at al-Suddī:


In the extant portion of his Tafsīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim transmitted reports from al-Suddī by at least four different isnāds, all via Asbāṭ. Asbāṭ b. Naṣr al-Kūfī was generally regarded by the Ḥadīth authorities as weak. However, the fact of Asbāṭ’s transmitting al-Suddī’s Tafsīr was noted already within two generations by Ibn Sa’d in the

312 See al-Suyūṭī, al-Durr, 6:69; whence Muḥammad ‘Aṭā’ Yūsuf, Tafsīr al-Suddī, 357.
313 Ibn Ḥajar, Fatḥ, 18:41.
The earliest third century. The following is the account of the Satanic verses incident:

The Prophet went out to the mosque to pray \([\text{li-yuṣallī}]\). While reciting \([\text{bayna-mā huwa qaṣrâ}]\), he said: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?” Then Satan cast onto his tongue, so he said \([\text{fa-alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi fa-qāla}]\): “Those high gharāniqah! Indeed, their intercession is to be hoped for! \([\text{tilka al-gharāniqah al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā’ata-hunna turtajā}]\).”

When he reached the end of the sūrah, he made the sajdah, and his Companions made the sajdah, and the Mushrikūn made the sajdah because of the mention of their gods. And when he raised his head, they picked him up and ran with him between the two parts of Mecca \([\text{hamalū-hu fa-ishtaddū bi-hi}]\), saying: “The Prophet of the Banī ‘Abd Manāf! \([\text{nabī Banī ‘Abd Manāf}]\);” until, when Jibrīl came to him, he went over (the sūrah) with him and recited those two phrases. Jibrīl said: “God forbid that I should have instructed you to recite this! \([\text{ma‘ādh Allāh an akūna aqra’tu -ka hādhā}]\).” This distressed him greatly; so God sent down, comforting his soul \([\text{yuṭayyibu nafsa-hu}]\): “And we have not sent before you. . . .”

Riwāyah 22 clearly presents a very different account of the incident to Riwāyah 21. This encourages one to accept the isnāds at face value, and to take Riwāyah 21 as representing al-Suddī’s transmission from Abū Ṣāliḥ, while Riwāyah 22 constitutes al-Suddī’s own presentation of the incident.

Riwāyah 22 returns to the idea that the Prophet uttered the Satanic verses and was not aware of having done anything wrong until corrected by Jibrīl. However, the most remarkable narrative motif in this report, which does not appear in any other riwāyah, is the depiction of Quraysh’s reaction to the Prophet’s uttering the verses: “They picked him up and ran with him between the two parts of Mecca, saying: ‘The Prophet of the Banī ‘Abd Manāf?’” This image of the

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316 The Muḥammad ‘Aṭā’ Yūsuf edition has *ashaddū ‘alay-hi bi-hi*. However, both editions of the Durr, which is Yūsuf’s source, have *fa-ishtaddū bi-hi*.
Prophet being celebrated by his tribe like a footballer who has just scored a goal for his team, and in particular the celebratory phrase, “The Prophet of the Banī ‘Abd Manāf!,” expresses most dramatically the idea of how the Prophet’s uttering the Satanic verses transformed him from outcast to hero in Meccan society. Thus, even though Riwāyah 22 does not present the Prophet’s recitation of the verses as taking place out of Muḥammad’s desire to be reconciled with Quraysh, or in response to an offer of reconciliation from them, the fact that reconciliation was, in fact, effected is presented in the most vivid terms. The dramatic nature of the image leads one to suspect that it represents the sort of narrative embellishment of reports done by preachers seeking to make their lessons both more appealing and more memorable to popular audiences. One wonders here if this sort of thing is what was meant by Ibrahīm al-Nakha’ī (d. 95) when he described al-Suddī’s exegesis as tafsīr al-qawm (“tafsīr of the people”).

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**Riwāyah 23:**
From Muḥammad b. al-Sā‘īb al-Kalbī

It is also cited directly from al-Kalbī in the commentary on Qur’ān 53:19 al-Najm in the *Tafsīr* of the third-century North African scholar Hūd b. Muḥakkam al-Huwwārī, who, as we have noted above, drew extensively on Yaḥyā b. Sallām’s *Tafsīr*.319 Yaḥyā b. Sallām’s *Tafsīr*, in turn, contains numerous citations from al-Kalbī, of whom Yaḥyā was a very junior contemporary. Yaḥyā b. Sallām’s authorship of the *Tafsīr* preserved in his name has not been questioned, and there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of his citation of al-Kalbī, who is known to have taught his *Tafsīr* in Baṣrah (probably at the invitation of the governor) between the years 133 and 139 when Yaḥyā b. Sallām was there, aged nine to fifteen.320 I have not had the opportunity to establish whether Hūd had access to al-Kalbī’s *Tafsīr* other than in the form of its citation in the *Tafsīr* of Yaḥyā. Al-Kalbī was a great polymath, and his *Tafsīr* was reportedly the longest composed until his day. Harris Birkeland used al-Kalbī to illustrate the phenomenon which I have been emphasizing in this study:

It is a notorious fact that numerous interpreters who had not achieved a fame in other branches of religious sciences, viz. in *ḥadīt* or *qiṭāʿa* or *fiqh*, but were only known as interpreters, were held to be unreliable. Characteristic is the verdict in Ibn Sa’d . . . on Muḥammad b al-Sāʿīb al-Kalbī (d. 146), the great authority of pre-Islamic genealogy and history. Ibn Sa’d admits that he is *ʿālim* in these branches and in *tafsīr*. How-

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319 Hūd al-Huwwārī, *Tafsīr*, 4:239–40. It is noteworthy that, unlike Yaḥyā, Hūd cites early *riwāyahs* on the incident only in his commentary on Qur’ān 53:19–21; in his commentary on Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj he provides a summary of the incident followed by a paraphrastic *Tafsīr*. There is no means of knowing if Hūd is citing al-Kalbī from Yaḥyā’s commentary on Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj or on 53:19 al-Najm, as the commentary on Qur’ān 53:19 al-Najm falls on the last surviving folio of the manuscript of Yaḥyā’s *Tafsīr* and is incomplete.

320 This would have been a normal age at which for Yaḥyā to attend al-Kalbī’s lectures. His Basran contemporary Ma’mar b. Rāshid (95–153) records himself as having studied with the famous Basran *mufassir* Qatādah b. Diʿāmah when he was fifteen years old (see the analysis of *Riwayah* 25, below). A study of educational practices in Nishāpur between 317 and 514 found that “typical students had begun their education by the time they reached the age 4.8–10.2”; see Richard Bulliet, “The Age Structure of Medieval Islamic Education,” *Studia Islamica* 57 (1988), 105–117, at 109. Even if Yaḥyā did not study with al-Kalbī in person, the latter’s *Tafsīr* must have been in circulation in Baṣrah during the course of Yaḥyā’s education.
ever, he was held to be “very weak,” ḍaʾīf ġiddan, in his transmission, ṛiwyā. . . . He is even called an liar and an unbeliever.321

More than fifty manuscripts purporting to be copies of the Tafsīr of al-Kalbī are in existence,322 but they have not been collectively studied—until this is done, we cannot know whether all of them are the so-called Tanwīr al-miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn ʿAbbās, the isnād of which goes back to Ibn ʿAbbās via al-Kalbī and Abū Ṣāliḥ Bādhām, and that has been shown to be the late third- / early fourth-century Tafsīr of ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak al-Dīnawarī based considerably on the original Tafsīr of al-Kalbī.323 On the basis of its citation in Yahyā b. Sallām’s Tafsīr, however, there is no reason to doubt that Riwyāh 23 stems from Kūfah in the first half of the second century:

The Prophet was praying near the Ka’bah [al-bayt] while the Mushrikūn were seated. He recited [qara’a], “By the star,” and thought to himself [ḥaddatha nafsa-hu] until, when he reached: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?,” Satan cast onto his tongue [alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi]: “Indeed, they are with the high gharānīq!324 And, indeed, it is their intercession that is hoped

321 Birkeland, Old Muslim Opposition, 26. Indeed, the ahl al-ḥadīth repeatedly called him a “liar (kadhdhāb),” but despite this Ibn ‘Adī also recognized that “he is famous for tafsīr, and no-one has a longer or more complete Tafsīr than he”; see Ibn ‘Adī, Kāmil, 6:114–120; al-‘Uqayli, Du’afā’, 4:1236–1238; Ibn Ḥibbān, Majrūḥīn, 2:253–256; Ibn al-Jawzi, Du’afā’, 3:62. The standard charge of tashayyu’ was leveled at al-Kalbī: among the reports attributed to him by his critics is one in which Jibril is said to have accidentally given some part of Divine Revelation to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib instead of the Prophet, the Prophet having stood up to do something and ‘Alī having sat down in his place. See Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 9:178–181, at 179; Muḥsin al-Amin, A’ayān al-shī’ah, 9:339–340; and the article, “al-Kalbī,” by Walid Atallah, EI2. Ibn Nadīm cites the Tafsīr of al-Kalbī as an independent work; Fihrist, 152.

322 Sezgin, GAS, 1:34–35.


324 Hūd’s citation adds here: “meaning: the angels [ya’ni al-malāʾıkah]..” Given that this phrase is one of only two differences in wording between the two citations
for [fa-inna-hā ma‘u\textsuperscript{325} al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā‘ata-hā hiya al-murtajā].” When he turned [insa-rafa] (from his prayer)\textsuperscript{326}, they said: “Muḥammad has mentioned our gods!”

The Prophet said: “By God, it did not come down to me like this! [wa-Allāhi mā ka-dhālika nazalat ‘alay-ya].” And Jibrīl came down to him and the Prophet told him (what had happened). He (Jibrīl) said: “By God, I did not teach it to you like this, nor bring it to you like this! [wa-Allāhi mā hā-ka-kadhā ‘allamtu-ka wa-mā ji’tu bi-hā hā-ka-dhā]”. So God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet,” to the end of the verse.

Hūd cites a further gloss directly from al-Kalbī:

“illā idhā tamannā: If he sought something worldly [in sa’ala shay’an min al-dunyā], Satan cast this (as) speech onto his tongue [alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi hādhā al-qawl].”\textsuperscript{327}

**Riwāyah 23** from al-Kalbī thus provides a very precise interpretation of the phrase illā idhā tamannā alqā al-shayṭān fi umniyyati-hi in Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj. In Yaḥyā’s citation, by tamannā, it is meant that the Prophet “thought to himself [ḥaddatha nafsa-hu].” Hūd’s further gloss from al-Kalbī specifies the subject of the Prophet’s thoughts as being something that he sought to gain from this world, as opposed to deriving from God and his Divine mission—sa’ala shay’an min al-dunyā. Thus, when the Prophet was reciting Sūrat al-Najm in his prayer, he became absorbed in worldly desire. Satan cast onto his tongue words that gave expression to his thoughts, and the Prophet uttered them: alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi hādhā al-qawl. In this way, **Riwāyah 23** effectively, if not explicitly, combines the two meanings for tamannā—“to desire” and “to recite”—to explain

\textsuperscript{325} Possibly a copyist’s misreading of min, although ma‘u also appears in the version of the Satanic verses in Riwāyah 24.

\textsuperscript{326} The phrase min ṣalāti-hi (“from his prayer”) is only in Hūd.

\textsuperscript{327} Hūd, *Tafsīr*, 4:240. Given that Yaḥyā’s commentary on Qur’ān 53:19 al-Najm is incompletely preserved, there is no means of knowing if Hūd is citing this gloss of al-Kalbī from Yaḥyā’s *Tafsīr* or from another source.
the Satanic verses incident. The Prophet desired something in contravention of his Divine mission, and Satan induced the Prophet to utter something that served this desire.

As in Riwāyah 14, the Prophet’s error appears to take place during his recitation of a prior Revelation, and the Prophet realizes on his own that something has gone wrong in his recitation: “The Prophet said, ‘By God, it did not come down to me like this!’” However, he is confused as to exactly what has happened until Jibrīl confirms his error, which is then explained by Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj.

Riwāyahs 24 to 26:
From Qatādah b. Di‘āmah

Riwāyahs 24, 25, and 26 represent separate transmissions from the Basran mufassir Qatādah b. Di‘āmah (60–117), Riwāyah 24 having been transmitted in Baṣrah, and Riwāyahs 25 and 26 in Ṣan‘ā’.

Riwāyah 24: Cited by Yaḥyā b. Sallām al-BAṣrī in His Tafsīr

Riwāyah 24 is cited from Qatādah in the commentary on Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj in the Tafsīr of Yaḥyā b. Sallām al-BAṣrī al-Qayrawānī (124–200) with this isnād:328


It is also cited by al-Suyūtī in the commentary on Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj in the Durr. Al-Suyūtī has it from the Tafsīr of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 338), without an isnād.329

328 Yaḥyā b. Sallām, Tafsīr, MS ‘Abdaliyyah 134, folios unnumbered; and Tafsīr Yaḥyā b. Sallām, 1:384.
329 Al-Suyūtī, Durr, 6:68. Sa‘īd b. Abī ‘Arūbah is present in two of the eight isnāds by which reports from Qatādah appear in the extant portion of the Tafsīr of Ibn Abī Ḥātim; see Koç, İsnad Verileri Çerçeve Sinde, 53–60.
Qatādah b. Dī‘āmah, who was born blind, was both a qāṣṣ330 and one of the most important mufassirs of late first- / early second-century Baṣrah, and was remembered by later Ḥadīth scholars for his phenomenal memory.331 While his tafsīr has not survived intact, it is cited over three thousand times by al-Ṭabarī,332 over twelve hundred times in the extant portion of the Tafsīr of Ibn Abī Ḥātim,333 was used by al-Tha’labī,334 and was studied by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463).335

Sa‘īd b. Abī ‘Arubah was one of the first scholars to compile a collection of Prophetic Ḥadīth according to subject matter (awwal man ʂannaʃ al-sunan al-nabawiyyah), although he was lax with his isnāds and was labeled a mudallis. Nonetheless, he had a generally high reputation as a Ḥadīth scholar until he lost his memory near the end of his life. Although averse to writing Ḥadīth, he is reported to have made a point of writing down the tafsīr of Qatādah. Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn considered him the most reliable of Qatādah’s students.336 Given that the Tafsīr of Yaḥyā b. Sallām is a second-century source, and given the favorable attestations of Sa‘īd b. Abī ‘Arubah’s transmission from Qatādah, one is encouraged to accept the citations of Qatādah in the Tafsīr of Yaḥyā b. Sallām as, indeed, representing transmissions from Qatādah. This position will be reinforced by Riwāyahs 27, 28, and 29 from a student of Qatādah’s tafsīr, Muqātil b. Sulaymān.

The following is the account of the Satanic verses:

333 See Koç, İsnad Verileri Çerçevesinde , 54.
335 See the citation from the manuscript of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī’s mashyaḵkah in Sezgin, GAS, 1:32.
336 See al-Dhahabī, Siyar, 6:413–418; Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 4:63–66; Ibn ‘Adī, Kāmil, 3:393–397; al-‘Uqaylī, Du‘afa‘, 2:474–478 (the latter two are primarily concerned with the decline in his powers of memory). This isnād was apparently not cited again in the literature, and has not been commented on by either al-Albānī or al-Ḥalabī al-Athari.
While the Messenger of God was praying at the Station of Ibrāhīm, he became drowsy [na‘asa]. Satan cast a phrase onto his tongue, and he uttered it [fa-alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi kalimatan fa-takallama bi-hā]; and the Mushrikūn latched onto it (using it) against him [ta’allaqa bi-hā337 al-mushrikūn ‘alay-hi]. He said: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?”; and Satan cast onto his tongue [fa-alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi]338: “Indeed, their intercession is what is hoped for! Indeed, they are with the high gharānīq! [fa-inna shafā’ata-hā hiya al-murtajā339 wa-inna-hā la-ma'a al-gharānīq al-‘ulā].”

The Mushrikūn memorized these (verses); Satan told them that the Prophet of God had recited them [akhbara-hum al-shayṭān anna nabīyya Allāh qad qara’ā-hā], and their tongues were debased by them [dhallat bi-hā]. And God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet.” So God repelled Satan and instructed His Prophet with His authoritative writ [fa-dahara Allāhu al-shayṭāna wa-laqqa nabiyya-hu ḥujjata-hu].340

Riwāyah 24 introduces a new narrative element that affects the hermeneutical elaboration of the incident. This is the phrase “He became drowsy [na‘asa].” Here, the Prophet is depicted as uttering the Satanic verses when he was sleepy—in other words, when he was not fully alert and conscious of what he was doing. This is not dissimilar to the explanation of the incident given in Riwāyah 14: “The Messenger of God did this unmindfully [wa-sahā rasūl Allāh].” Also, as with Riwāyah 14, in Riwāyah 24 the Prophet is apparently reciting a sūrah that has been revealed to him earlier, and the narrative motif of a desired reconciliation with Quraysh is absent. The additional element of sleepiness may, however, also be seen as specifically related to Satanic intervention as the diminished consciousness that accompanies drowsiness is understood to make the individual more vulnerable to Satan.341 The fact that this error took place while the

337 Thus in al-Suyūṭī’s citation; Yaḥyā b. Sallām has ta’allaqa-hā.
338 Al-Suyūṭī has here: “while he was drowsy [wa-na‘asa].”
339 Al-Suyūṭī: wa-inna shafā’ata-hā la-turtajā.
340 “This last sentence is not in Ḣayyā b. Sallām.
341 “The presence of Ash-Shaytān pervades the whole sleep process from the onset of drowsiness to waking. When a man yawns, the ḥadīth warn him to cover his mouth lest Satan enter; and he should not make any noise as he yawns, for it is the sound of Satan’s laugh.” Peter J. Awn, Satan’s Tragedy and Redemption: Iblīs in Sufi Psychology (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 50.
The earliest narratives and their transmitters

Prophet was praying may well have been understood by an early Muslim audience in the context of the several traditions that stress the importance of avoiding drowsiness (na‘s) when praying and when reciting the Qur‘ān. On the other hand, it should be noted that Sūrat al-Kawthar is reported to have been revealed to Muḥammad in a state of “drowsiness [ighfā’],” which would suggest that while, in the present instance, the Prophet was reciting a previously revealed verse, he was nonetheless in a state associated for him with the experience of Revelation. We will shortly encounter the na‘asa / drowsiness motif that characterizes Riwāyah 24 in three presentations of the Satanic verses incident (Riwāyahs 27, 28, and 29) that are given in the Tafsīr of Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150), whom we know to have made extensive use of Qatādah’s tafsīr. While Muqātil does not expressly cite Qatādah when presenting the Satanic verses incident (it is not his method to cite his sources), we shall see that his Riwāyah 27 shares distinctive phrases with Riwāyah 24. The fact that the distinctive na‘asa/drowsiness motif appears in the generation after Qatādah in two separate Basran sources, one of whom, Sa‘īd b. Abī ‘Arūbah, attributes it directly to Qatādah, and the other of whom, Muqātil b. Sulaymān, used Qatādah as a major source, suggests strongly that Riwāyah 24 and its na‘asa/drowsiness motif is, indeed, from Qatādah.

Riwāyah 25: al-Ṭabarī’s Citation of Tafsīr Muḥammad ibn Thawr ‘an Ma‘mar ‘an Qatādah, and of al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā’s Citation of Qatādah in the Baghdādī Transmission of the Tafsīr of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī

Riwāyahs 25 and 26 are Yemeni transmissions from Qatādah via Ma‘mar b. Rāshid al- Başrī al-Ṣan‘ānī (96–154). Riwāyah 25 is cited

342 For these traditions, including the specific warning that “drowsiness in prayer is from Satan [al-nu‘ās fī al-ṣalāt min al-shayṭān],” see A. J. Wensinck, Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musulmane (Leiden: Brill, 1936), 6:484–485.

343 Later scholars have been at pains to distinguish this ighfā’ as “not the drowsiness of sleep, but the state that would come upon him at the time of Revelation [layṣa al-ighfā’atu ighfā’ata al-nawm bal al-ḥālah allait kānāt ta‘tārihi ʿinda al-walāy]; see al-Suyūṭī, al-Itqān fī ‘ulūm al-Qur‘ān, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-‘Aṣriyyah, 1988), 1:65–66.
by al-Ṭabarī in his commentary on Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj in the Jāmi‘ al-bayān by two isnāds, both of which go back to Qatādah via Ma‘mar b. Rāshid al-Ḩāšrī al-Ṣan‘ānī (93–153):


and


Ma‘mar b. Rāshid (96–154) was a native Basran who, by his own account, studied with Qatādah when he was fifteen years old. Although he was held in high esteem by his fellow Ḥadīth scholars, some were unhappy with the fact that he transmitted Qatādah’s Tafsīr, this because of its poor isnāds. He traveled to Ṣan‘ā’, where the people thought so highly of him that they would not let him leave.345 Both of the respective transmitters from Ma‘mar, Muḥammad b. Thawr and ‘Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām, are from Ṣan‘ā’.

Al-Ṭabarī gives the text as coming from the first isnād, and adds that the second isnād transmits “something similar [bi-naḥwi-hi],” by which he means that the wording differs but the meaning is the same (see the discussion, below). In the Jāmi‘ al-bayān, al-Ṭabarī regularly cites these isnāds in this way. The fact that the two isnāds diverge at the point of the transmitter from Ma‘mar but nonetheless carry the same reports strongly suggests that the report should be accepted as having, indeed, been taught by Ma‘mar b. Rāshid in Ṣan‘ā’ in the first half of the second century.

345 There is a delightful account of this: “When Ma‘mar entered Ṣan‘ā’, they were loathe to let him leave them. Someone said to them, ‘Shackle him [qayyidū-hu]!’ So, they got him married [fa-zawwajū-hu]!” Ma‘mar eventually managed to leave Ṣan‘ā’ after about eight years in order to perform the Hajj, and apparently did not return. See al-Dhahabī, Siyar 7:5–18; Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 10:243–246; and the study by Muḥammad Ra‘fat Sa‘īd, Ma‘mar b. Rāshid al-Ṣan‘ānī: masādiru-hu wa-manhaju-hu wa-atharu-hu fī riwāyat al-ḥadīth (Riyadh: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1983).
In the first isnād, the transmitter from Ma‘mar is Muḥammad b. Thawr al-Ṣan‘ānī (d. 190), universally regarded as a reliable Ḥadīth transmitter. Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380) records a work that he calls Ṭafsīr Muḥammad ibn Thawr ‘an Ma‘mar ‘an Qatādah.\textsuperscript{346} The transmitter from Muḥammad b. Thawr is Muḥammad b. ‘Abbād al-Ṣan‘ānī al-Baṣrī, the teacher of al-Ṭabarī whom we encountered in Riwāyah 16. Muḥammad b. ‘Abbād al-Ṣan‘ānī’s interest in this work must have been piqued by the fact of it constituting a migrant tafsīr transmission from the great Basran muṭāfīs Qatādah, which after a century of transmission in the Yemen had now returned to its place of origin. The Ṭafsīr Muḥammad ibn Thawr ‘an Ma‘mar ‘an Qatādah is cited by al-Ṭabarī over one thousand times in the Jāmiʿ al-bayān.\textsuperscript{347}

In al-Ṭabarī’s second isnād, the transmitter from Ma‘mar is his most important pupil, ‘Abbād al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī (126–211 / 743–827), “the leading scholar of the Yemen” in the second half of the second century. ‘Abbād al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī enjoyed, in the main, a high reputation among the Ḥadīth authorities,\textsuperscript{348} and his vast Muṣannaf represents one of the earliest extant Ḥadīth collections.\textsuperscript{349} The present report, however, is not from the Muṣannaf but from ‘Abbād al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī’s Ṭafsīr, the bulk of which is made up of reports from Ma‘mar b. Rāshid. ‘Abbād al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī’s Ṭafsīr, to which we shall come in Riwāyah 26, has come down to us in two manuscripts. The link between ‘Abbād al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī and al-Ṭabarī is al-Ḥasan b. Abī al-Rabī’ Yaḥyā al-Baghdādī (d. 263).\textsuperscript{350} Al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā was an important transmitter of ‘Abbād al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī’s


\textsuperscript{347} Horst, “Überlieferung,” 300.

\textsuperscript{348} The quotation is from the entry on “al-Ṣan‘ānī” by H. Motzki in EI2. The Ḥadīth authority, Yaḥyā b. Ma‘in said, “Even if ‘Abbād al-Razzāq was to commit apostasy, we would not leave his Ḥadīth! [law ištadda ‘Abbād al-Razzāq mā taraknā ḥadītha-hu].” See al-Dhahabi, Siyar, 9:563–580; and Ibn Ḥajar, Taḥdhib, 6:310–315; for negative views, see Ibn ‘Adī, Kāmil, 5:311–315; al-‘Uqaylī, ḏu’afā’, 3:857–860.


**Tafsīr,** and apparently al-Ṭabarī’s main source for that work; this second isnād is cited by al-Ṭabarī 630 times in the commentary on the first twenty-six sūraẖs in the *Jāmi‘ al-bayān.*\(^{351}\) Also, at least two hundred of the reports in the published manuscript of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī’s *Tafsīr* are from al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā.\(^{352}\)

The following is the account of the Satanic verses in al-Ṭabarī’s citation of the *Tafsīr Muḥammad ibn Thawr ‘an Ma‘mar ‘an Qatādah* and in al-Ḥasan b. Yaḥyā’s Baghdādī transmission of the *Tafsīr* of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī: \(^{353}\)

In regard to His words: “... into his umniyyat”: The Prophet desired [yatamannā] that God not denounce [lā ya‘īb] the gods of the Mushrikūn, and Satan cast into his desire [fa-alqā al-shayṭān fi umniyyati-hi], and he (the Prophet) said [fa-qāla]: “The gods who are called upon: their intercession is to be hoped for: indeed, they are high gharānīq [inna al-ālihata allatī tud‘ā\(^{354}\) inna shafā‘ata-hā la-turtajā wa-inna-hā la-al-gharānīq al-‘ulā].”

And God removed [nasakha] that and established His Signs [wa-āhkama āyāti-hi], and he said [fa-qāla]: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other? Would you have sons, and He, daughters?,” until he reached: “authority [sulṭān].”

When Satan cast what he cast [lammā alqā al-shayṭān mā alqā], the Mushrikūn said: “Allāh has spoken favourably of our gods,” and they were greatly pleased by it. And that is\(^{355}\) (the meaning of) God’s words: “To make that which Satan cast a trial for those in whose hearts is sickness.”

It is apparent here that *fa-qāla* in line 4 must be taken to refer to the Prophet. As in *Riwāyahs 2* and *3,* above, the Prophet desires that God not speak badly of the gods of Quraysh. God, of course, is not going to oblige, as the Prophet’s desire is an illegitimate one.

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\(^{351}\) Horst, “Überlieferung,” 300.


\(^{353}\) The reports from Qatādah are rejected by al-Albānī on the basis that they are *mursal,* Nasb al-majānīq, 12; similarly by al-Ṣawwayānī, *al-Qaṣīmah,* 1:429.

\(^{354}\) I am reading the word tā‘-dāl-‘ayn-alif maqṣūrah as tud‘ā, rather than tudda‘ā, on the basis that the writing of the terminal alif as alif maqṣūrah is not of material significance in early Arabic orthography.

\(^{355}\) Reading *fa-dhālika* for *fa-dhakara* (see *Riwāyah 25*).
Instead, it is Satan who casts upon the Prophet words that fulfill his desire, and the Prophet duly utters the words. The hermeneutical elaboration of the incident in Riwāyah 25 is thus consonant with the interpretation of the incident we have seen in other early reports (see Riwāyahs 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16 to 20, 22, and 23).

There are, however, two significant differences between Riwāyahs 24 and 25 as regards their respective hermeneutical elaborations. The first is that the distinctive and hermeneutically pivotal narrative motif of the Prophet’s drowsiness is absent from Riwāyah 25—instead, we have here the motif of the Prophet’s desire not to displease Quraysh. The second difference is subtle, but also hermeneutically significant: namely, that in Riwāyah 25, the Prophet does not utter the Satanic verses after reciting Qur’ān 53:19, “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third the other?” Rather, in Riwāyah 25, as in Riwāyah 1, Qur’ān 53:19–23—“Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third the other? Should you have males, and He females? That, indeed, would be an unfair division! Indeed, they are no more than names which you have named, you and your ancestors! Allāh has not sent down any authority with them”—is given here as having been revealed in abrogation of the Satanic verses. This is significant because having Qur’ān 19–23 al-Najm as the abrogating verses obviates the objection raised by some later scholars to the logic of those narratives of the Satanic verses incident that have the Prophet first utter the Satanic verses in praise of the deities of Quraysh, and then continue immediately forward in his recitation of Sūrat al-Najm to condemn the deities.

These differences between Riwāyahs 24 and 25 may appear substantive enough to induce the skeptic to question the isnāds and, perhaps, to doubt the attribution of one or both of Riwāyahs 24 and 25 to Qatādah. I have already noted my view that the fact that distinctive na’asa/drowsiness motif appears in the generation after Qatādah in two separate Basran sources, one of whom, Sa’īd b. Abī ‘Arūbah, attributes it directly to Qatādah, and the other of whom, Muqātil b. Sulaymān, used Qatādah as a major source, suggests

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356 We noted in the discussion of Riwāyah 2, above, the objection of the Egyptian modern, Muhammad Ḥusayn Haykal, to “confused, self-contradictory” and “illogical” notion of the Prophet having “praised and condemned al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt within four verses”; Haykal, Ḥayāt Muḥammad, 144.
strongly that *Riwaayah 24* is, indeed, from Qatādah. However, given that the Basran and Ṣan‘ānī recensions are so different, one may make one of two provisional conclusions. It may be that Qatādah taught the incident in more than one way, *Riwaayah 25* being the interpretation preferred—or, simply, heard—by Ma‘mar. Certainly, this is not at all implausible; we will see in *Riwaayahs 27* to *30* how Muqāṭīl b. Sulaymān gave four slightly different presentations of the incident within his *Tafsīr*.

Alternatively, *Riwaayah 25* may represent Ma‘mar’s own exegetical activity, building upon what he had studied with Qatādah. The latter scenario would, for the first (and only) time in this study, call into question whether an *isnād* represents a genuine transmission history. In view of our working assumption—that fabrication of *isnāds* was not systemic in the genres of *ṣīrah-maghāzī* and *tafsīr*, and that weak *isnāds* should, therefore, be taken at face value as representing genuine transmission histories unless there is specific reason to suggest otherwise—we are obliged to address the question of why, in the present instance, there should be an exceptional motive for the false attribution of *Riwaayah 25* to Qatādah. Here I suspect that it is significant that the two transmitters from Ma‘mar, Muḥammad b. Thawr al-Ṣan‘ānī and ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī, are both *muḥaddiths* of established repute; *muḥaddiths*, of course, were concerned with providing complete *isnāds*. It may also be of significance here that Ma‘mar taught in Ṣan‘ā’: the great appeal of Ma‘mar to the scholarly community of Ṣan‘ā’, located on the southern periphery of the Dār al-Islām, must have derived considerably from the fact that he had studied in the intellectual heartland of the Islamic world under such important figures as Qatādah b. Di‘āmah. There would thus have been a particular incentive to emphasize the link between Ma‘mar’s teachings in Ṣan‘ā’ and the Basran authorities under whom he had studied. Nonetheless, we should note that while *Riwaayah 25* differs from *Riwaayah 24* in its hermeneutical elaboration of the incident, it does not contradict *Riwaayah 24* as to the fundamental point: namely, that the Prophet uttered the Satanic verses.357 As regards that unit of meaning, it does not at all misrepresent Qatādah.

357 The question of whether this difference between the *riwaayahs* attributed to Qatādah is broadly characteristic of the Basran and Ṣan‘ānī transmissions of Qatādah’s *tafsīr*
Riwa'yah 26: From the Tafsir of 'Abd al-Razzâq al-Ṣanʿānî

Riwa'yah 26 is cited in the commentary on Qur'an 22:52 al-Ḥajj in the published Tafsir of ‘Abd al-Razzâq al-Ṣanʿānî. The Tafsir of ‘Abd al-Razzâq al-Ṣanʿānî has received three separate editions, all of which have used the two extant manuscripts: MS Ankara, Sa'īb 4216, which dates to the sixth century; and MS Cairo, Där al-Kutub, Tafsir 242, which is from the eighth century.\(^{358}\)

While the isnâds for individual reports in this Tafsir always begin with ‘Abd al-Razzâq al-Ṣanʿānî, MS Där al-Kutub, Tafsir 242 as a whole is transmitted by this isnâd:


Thus, MS Dar al-Kutub, Tafsir 242 represents the Tafsir of ‘Abd al-Razzâq in the transmission of (fī riwa'yat) his student, Salamah b. Shabīb al-Makkī (d. 247), a Khurāsānī who settled in Mecca. It was probably there that he studied with ‘Abd al-Razzâq. He was clearly one of the ahl al-ḥadīth, and is cited in the canonical collections.\(^{360}\)

With Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Salām al-Khushanī al-Qurṭubī (d. 286), who studied with Salamah b. Shabīb in Egypt, ‘Abd al-Razzâq’s Tafsir was transported to Spain.\(^{361}\) MS Ankara, Sa’īb 4216 is trans-


\(^{359}\) Regrettably, I have not seen either manuscript, and am relying on the work of the respective editors of ‘Abd al-Razzâq al-Ṣanʿānî’s Tafsir. In Muṣṭafā Muslim Muḥammad’s edition, the isnâd of the Cairo MS is given in the editor’s introduction, 1:32–33, while Riwa'yah 30 is given at 2:40. In al-Qal'aji’s edition, the isnâd is given in the editor’s introduction at 1:32, while Riwa'yah 30 is at 2:35.


\(^{361}\) See Luis Molina, “Un árabe entre muladíes: Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Salām al-
mitted by the same isnād as far as Salamah b. Shabib, with no mention of any further transmitter after him.362

The following is the account of the Satanic verses in Riwāyah 26. It is effectively identical to Riwāyah 25 (al-Ṭabarī’s citation of the Tafsīr of ‘Abd al-Razzāq), except that at one critical juncture the two manuscripts differ both from each other:

In regard to His words: “into his umniyyah”: The Prophet desired yatamannā] that God denounce [ya‘īb] the gods of the Mushrikūn,363

OR: In regard to His words: “into his umniyyah”: The Prophet desired yatamannā] that Satan denounce the gods of the Mushrikūn [an ya‘ibā al-shayṭānu ațīhata al-mushrikīn],364

and Satan cast into his desire fa-qlā al-shayṭān fī umniyyati-hi, and he said [fa-qala]: “The gods who are called upon: their intercession is to be hoped for: indeed, they are as high gharānīq [inna al-ālihata allatī tud’ā anna shafā’ata-hā la-turtajā wa-inna-hā la-bi-al-gharānīq al-‘ulā].”

362 This is the assessment of ‘Abduh in the introduction to his edition: ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan’ānī, Tafsīr ‘Abd al-Razzāq, 1:229.

363 MS Ankara, Sa’ib 4216, noted by Muṣṭafā Muslim Muḥammad in his edition of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan’ānī, Tafsīr, 2:40, footnote 1. The present analysis is indebted to Muṣṭafā Muslim Muḥammad for his carefulness, as neither of the other two editors notes any textual variants between the manuscripts in regard to this report. Qal‘ajī’s text cites only the present reading; ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan’ānī, Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān al-‘azīz, 2:335.

364 MS Dār al-Kutub, Tafsīr 242, noted by Muṣṭafā Muslim Muḥammad in his edition of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan’ānī, Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān, 2:40, footnote 1. In his edition, not only does Abduh not note any textual variants between the manuscripts in regard to this report, but also he seems irresponsibly to collate the two versions, and has the text read “The Prophet desired that God denounce Satan and the gods of the Mushrikīn [an ya‘ibā Allāhu al-shayṭāna wa-ālihata al-mushrikīn],” Tafsīr ‘Abd al-Razzāq, 3:410.

365 The editions of both Qal‘ajī and ‘Abduh have yud’ā [sic].
And God removed [nasakha] that and established His Signs [wa-aḥkama ʿayāti-hi], and he said [fa-qāla]: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzā and Manāt, the third, the other? Would you have sons, and He, daughters?,” until he reached: “power.” When Satan cast what he cast [lammā alqā al-shayṭān mā alqā], the Mushrikūn said: “Allāh has spoken favourably of our gods,” and they were greatly pleased by it. And that is [fa-dhālika] (the meaning of) God’s words: “To make that which Satan cast a trial for those in whose hearts is sickness.”

The manuscripts of ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s Tafsīr thus differ from each other, and from al-Ṭabarī’s citation of ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s Tafsīr, in regard to a single phrase that entirely alters the hermeneutical elaboration of the incident. Where al-Ṭabarī’s citation reads, “The Prophet desired that God not denounce [lā yaʿīb] the gods of the Mushrikūn,” MS Saʿib 4216 reads, “The Prophet desired that God denounce [yaʿīb] the gods of the Mushrikūn.” In this second version, the fa-qāla phrase in line 5 of Riwaḥah 26 must be taken to refer to Satan and not the Prophet, unless we are to understand here that Satan managed to make the Prophet say something opposed to his own desire. Here, the Prophet desires something, Satan intervenes to obstruct it, and God then moves to fulfill it. The difference between the text of MS Saʿib 4216 and that of Riwaḥah 25 amounts, of course, to a single word: the absence of the negative particle lā from MS Saʿib 4216. There are two obvious questions that raise themselves here: is the textual variance anything more than a scribal error; and, if so, which of the two wordings is the original?

It seems to me almost certain that al-Ṭabarī’s text is the original one and that MS Saʿib 4216 is a later corruption. We should begin by noting that Muṣṭafā Muslim Muḥammad points out that “most of the riwaḥahs in the Tafsīr of ‘Abd al-Razzāq [as published from the manuscripts] are related in al-Ṭabarī by one of two chains”—namely, the two cited in Riwaḥah 25, above.366 In other words, al-Ṭabarī’s citations from Maʿmar via both Muḥammad b. Thawr and ‘Abd al-Razzāq largely correspond to the citations from Maʿmar in the manuscripts of the Tafsīr ‘Abd al-Razzāq—meaning that we are undoubtedly dealing with the same work. Al-Ṭabarī, as we have

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seen, provides two different isnāds for Riwāyah 25: in addition to the citation of ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s Tafsīr, there is the riwāyah from the Tafsīr Muḥammad b. Thawr ‘an Ma‘mar ‘an Qatādah. While in this instance al-Ṭabarī actually cites the text from Muḥammad b. Thawr, he says that the report related by ‘Abd al-Razzāq says something similar (bi-naḥwi-hi). That al-Ṭabarī uses the word naḥw to mean “the same thing as regards meaning” may be seen in the statement he makes when introducing reports that agree with his own interpretation of the Satanic verses incident (that the Prophet uttered the verses): “The ahl al-ta’wīl have said naḥw what we (al-Ṭabarī) have said. Those who said this are: . . .”

That al-Ṭabarī cannot be glossing over textual differences in the present instance is clear from the fact that he follows the above statement with the citation of none other than Riwāyah 25. In other words, al-Ṭabarī is citing Riwāyah 25 for the express purpose of illustrating his own interpretation of the incident, and is hardly likely, in this situation, to give isnāds carrying contradictory reports from the same authority! Both texts that al-Ṭabarī is citing must, indeed, have said the same thing.

The remaining question, then, is why Riwāyahs 25 and 26 differ. From my own perusal, it does not appear that, generally speaking, the reports common to the manuscripts of ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s Tafsīr, on the one hand, and those cited from ‘Abd al-Razzāq by al-Ṭabarī, on the other, differ meaningfully; rather, such divergences as there are will be largely orthographic or paraphrastic in nature. This would encourage one to view the absence of the lā in MS Saʿīb 4216 as a scribal omission from the original text, and thus to disregard Riwāyah 26 altogether as a hermeneutical unit representative of the Tafsīr of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī. What we cannot tell is whether this omission was accidental or a deliberate manipulation of the text aimed at preserving the doctrine of ‘iṣmat al-anbiyā‘.

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368 Such a manipulation might of course have been innocent in intent: one can see how a later scribe or transmitter would find it unimaginable that the Prophet would have “desired that God not denounce [lā ya‘īb] the gods of the Mushrikūn,” and would have taken the lā as necessarily representing a scribal error. There is a
thing that is clear is that Riwāyah 26, whether by accident or by design, does to Riwāyah 25 what Riwāyah 10 does to Riwāyah 9: it adjusts the narrative to present an interpretation of the incident acceptable to those who found repugnant the first-century idea that the Prophet himself uttered the Satanic verses. As for the text of MS Dār al-Kutub, Tafsīr 242—“The Prophet desired that Satan denounce the gods of the Mushrikūn”—this has the effect of rendering the narrative of the Satanic verses incident incoherent, and may be summarily discarded as corrupt.

Once we disregard the textual variants in Riwāyah 26 as later corruptions, we find that Riwāyah 26 is identical to Riwāyah 25. In other words, we will then have two (if not three) separate transmissions of the same report from ‘Abd al-Razzāq from Ma’mar, something that reinforces the attribution of Riwāyah 25 to Ma’mar b. Rāshid (if not necessarily to Qatādah).

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Riwāyahs 24 to 26: Conclusions

Riwāyah 24 may reasonably be taken to represent a transmission from Qatādah b. Di’āmah (60–117), as preserved in second-century Baṣrah in the Tafsīr of Yaḥyā b. Sallām, and thus to constitute a first-century report (a conclusion that will be reinforced as we move on to examine Riwāyah 27 from Muqātil b. Sulaymān). Although Riwāyah 25 is also attributed to Qatādah, it does not contain the similar instance in one of the manuscript sources for the present study where it is incoherently stated that the Prophet “desired . . . that there not be sent down upon him that which would not drive them (Quraysh) from him [tamannā . . . an lā yanzila ‘alay-hi mā lā yunaffiru-hum ‘an-hu],” whereas the text should read, “that there not be sent down upon him that which would drive them (Quraysh) away from him,” both in terms of narrative logic and because the verb naffar/yunaffiru/tanfīr carries a negative connotation of repulsion, and according to the principle of ‘iṣmah, Prophets are not supposed to commit acts that cause tanfīr. The second “not/lā” is self-evidently an erroneous addition, but one of ready enough provenance: one can perfectly understand how a scribe or transmitter might be puzzled that the Prophet should want to do other than drive the Unbelievers from him. See Yahyā b. al-Qāsim al-Fāḍil al-Yamānī (d. 753), Mabāḥith al-tanzīl wa-mafātiḥ abwāb al-ta’wil, MS London, British Library, Or. 6904, f. 166a.
na’asa motif; thus, either Qatādah related the incident in more than one way, or the report represents the further hermeneutical elaboration by Ma’mar b. Rāshid in Ṣan‘ā’, building on and attributed to his Basran master, Qatādah, as an authority figure. Riwāyah 26 is no more than a textual corruption of Riwāyah 25; whether deliberate or accidental, we cannot tell.

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Riwāyahs 27 to 30:
From Muqātil b. Sulaymān

Riwāyahs 27, 28, 29, and 30 are given in his Tafsīr by Muqātil b. Sulaymān al-Balkhi al-Baṣrī (80–150), a Basran contemporary of all three of Qatādahs (to whom he was junior); Sa’īd b. Abī ‘Arūbah (they were of the same generation); and Yaḥyā b. Sallām al-Baṣrī (to whom he was senior). Riwāyahs 27, 28, and 29 are elaborations of Qatādah’s interpretation of the incident in Riwāyah 24.

No less a figure than Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 208) acknowledged that “compared to Muqātil, the rest were children in tafsīr,”³⁶⁹ but Muqātil’s reputation among the ahl al-ḥadīth was close to uniformly appalling, with the outcome summed up by al-Dhahabī: “They rejected him by consensus.”³⁷⁰ Nonetheless, the Tafsīr of Muqātil b. Sulaymān represents the earliest complete commentary on the Qur’ān to have come down to us in manuscript form. It was published in Cairo between 1979 and 1986,³⁷¹ but sub-

sequently banned for its purportedly unorthodox content—the Azhar taking the same view as had the Ḥadīth movement a millennium earlier.⁹³²

Muqātil b. Sulaymān narrates the Satanic verses incident at no less than four points in his Tafsīr: the commentary on Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥajj (Riwāyah 27); on Qurʾān 53:19–26 al-Ḥajj (Riwāyah 28); on Qurʾān 109 al-Kāfirūn (Riwāyah 29); and on Qurʾān 39:43–45 al-Zumar (Riwāyah 30).

Riwāyah 27: Muqātil’s Commentary on Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥajj

Riwāyah 27 is given in the commentary on Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥajj.⁹³³

“We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet, but that when he tamannā’: meaning, when he thought to himself [ḥaddatha nafsa-hu]; “Satan cast into his umniyyah” meaning, what he was thinking to himself about [fi ḥadithi-hi].⁹³⁴

⁹³² I obtained my copy of the five-volume Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān in Cairo in 2000 from the proprietor of a bookstall in a carpark near the al-Ḥusayn Hospital, who specialized in “banned books [mamnū’āt].” It took him three months (and a healthy advance payment) to procure it for me. A Beirut reprint has since been issued.


⁹³⁴ Muqātil here refers the noun umniyyah in Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥajj to the noun amānī in Qurʾān 2:78 al-Baqarah:

(This is) like God’s words: “Among them are illiterate people who do not know anything of the book except for amānī [wa-min-hum umniyyīn lā ya’lamūna al-kitāba illā amānīyya];” He (God) is saying: except that which is related to them (by the rabbis) from it [mā yuḥaddathū ‘an-hā]—meaning, the Torah.”

The linguistic relationship that Muqātil is trying to establish here is that umniyyah and amānī both mean “that which is spoken about”—umniyyah meaning “that which the Prophet thinks / talks to himself about,” and amānī meaning “that which the rabbis talk to the illiterate Jews about.” See the commentary on Qurʾān 2:78 in Tafsīr Muqātil, 1:118; see also Alfred Guillaume, “The Meaning of amānīya in Sūrah 2:73,” in The World of Islam: Studies in Honour of Phillip K. Hitti, ed. James Kritzeck and R. Bayly Winder (London: Macmillan, 1960), 41–46.
This was (sent down) because [wa-dhālika anna] while the Prophet was reciting in prayer [kāna yaqra’ fī al-ṣalāt] at the Station of Ibrāhīm, he became drowsy [na’asa] and said: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt, the third, the other? Those high gharānīq! Intercession, from them, is to be sought [tilka al-gharānīq al-‘ulā ‘inda-hā al-shafā’ah turtajā].” When the Unbelievers [kuffār] of Quraysh heard that their gods had (the power of) intercession [li-ālīhati-him al-shafā’ah], they were delighted [fariḥū].

Then the Prophet came back [raja’a] and said: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other? Should you have males, and He females? That, indeed, would be an unfair division!”

And that is (why) He—the Glorious—said: “And God removes what Satan cast” onto the tongue of Muḥammad [‘alā lisān Muḥammad]. “Then God establishes His Signs”: from the falsehood that Satan casts onto the tongue of Muḥammad [al-bāṭil alladhī yulqī-hi al-shayṭān ‘alā lisān Muḥammad]. “And God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

“To make that which Satan cast” onto the tongue of the Prophet [‘alā lisān al-nabī], and what they had been hoping for in regard to the intercession of their gods, “a trial for those in whose hearts is sickness,” meaning: doubt.

The narrative in Riwarayah 27 from Muqātil is clearly related to that in Riwarayah 24 from Qatādah as it begins with the statement “The Prophet was reciting in prayer at the Station of Ibrāhīm when he became drowsy and said . . .” The narrative motif of the Prophet’s drowsiness in prayer at the Station of Ibrāhīm occurs only in Riwarayah 24, from Qatādah, and Riwarayahs 27, 28, and 29, from Muqātil. Since Muqātil, himself a migrant to Baṣrah, is known to have drawn on Qatādah’s Tafsīr corpus in the preparation of his own Tafsīr (Qatādah’s name occurs in both of the lists of Muqātil’s authorities given in the opening passage of his Tafsīr), one is encouraged one to conclude that Muqātil—who does not give isnāds—obtained this basic hermeneutical elaboration of the Satanic verses incident from the Tafsīr of Qatādah. This, in turn, encourages us to date Riwarayah 24 to Qatādah’s lifetime (60–117). Two elements in Riwarayah 27 that are not in Riwarayah 24 are the gloss of tamannā/
umniyyah as “the Prophet’s thoughts” and the fact of the Prophet realizing his error on his own.

*Riwāyah 28: Muqātil’s Commentary on Qur’ān 53:19–26 al-Najm*

*Riwāyah 28* is Muqātil’s commentary on Qur’ān 53:19–26 al-Najm:377

“Would you have sons, and He, daughters?”: when they said that the angels were the daughters of God [ḥīna qālū inna al-malā’ikata banāt Allāh]. “That, then, would be an unfair division”: meaning, a crooked award [jā’izah ‘awjā’], that they should have sons and He, daughters.

Then He mentioned their gods and said, “Indeed, they”: He is saying: What are they “but names which you have named, you and your ancestors; God has not sent down any power upon them” for them to be gods! . . . “Indeed, you follow no more than surmise [ẓann]”: He says that they do not have knowledge [‘ilm] that they are gods, they only surmise what they are convinced of; that al-Lāt and al-ʿUzzā and Manāt are gods. . . .

“Or does man get what he desires [am li-al-insān mā tamannā]?”: that the angels intercede for them. That was (sent down) because the Prophet recited [qaraʿa] Sūrat al-Najm and “By the Night when it darkens”378 and proclaimed them in Mecca. And when he reached, “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?,” he became drowsy [naʿasa], and Satan cast onto his tongue [alqā al-shayṭānu ‘alā lisāni-hi] (at) that “the third, the other!”: “Those high gharānīq! Intercession from them is to be sought [tilka al-gharānīq al-ʿulā ‘inda-hā al-shafāʿah turtajā],” meaning, the angels [al-malāʾikah]. The Unbelievers [kuffār] were delighted [fariḥū]; they had been hoping [rajaw] that the angels would have (the power of) intercession.

And when he reached the end of it, he made the sajdah and the Believers made the sajdah out of belief in the veracity of God [taṣdīqan li-Allāh], and the Unbelievers of Mecca made the sajdah at the mention of the gods [ʿinda dhikr al-ālihah]. Except that al-Walīd b. al-Mughirah was an old man, so he took dirt to his forehead and made the sajdah on it. Then he (al-Walīd) said, “He (Muḥammad) lives as Umm Ayman

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378 Qur’ān 92:1 al-Layl.
and her female companions live.” Umm Ayman was the Prophet’s servant; Ayman, the Prophet’s servant, was killed on the Day of Khaybar.

It is particularly instructive to see how Muqātil gives slightly variant accounts of the Satanic verses incident within the same work. While both Riwāyah 27, the narrative in Sūrat al-Ḥajj, and Riwāyah 28, the narrative in Sūrat al-Najm, present the same interpretation of the incident, the narrative given in Muqātil’s exegesis of Sūrat al-Najm omits certain narrative elements present in his exegesis of Sūrat al-Ḥajj, and includes others. Present in Riwāyah 28 / the commentary on Qur’ān 53:19–26, but not in Riwāyah 27 / the commentary on Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj, are the explicit statement of Satan’s intervention, “Satan cast onto his tongue”; the disparaging remark by Abū Uḥayḥah; and the the motif of the sajdah of Quraysh (which relates directly to the recitation of Sūrat al-Najm). Present in the commentary on Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj, but not in Qur’ān 53:19–26 al-Najm, are the glossing of tamannā to mean “he thought to himself [ḥaddatha nafsa-hu]” and the account of the Prophet’s correcting himself by reciting Qur’ān 53:20–23 al-Najm as abrogating verses. Indeed, the account in the exegesis of Sūrat al-Najm does not actually mention that the Satanic verses were ever abrogated! In Riwāyaha 16 to 20 from Abū al-‘Āliyah, we have seen the phenomenon of accounts from the same author that differ in wording, or in the inclusion of certain secondary narrative elements, while maintaining the same hermeneutical position. The fact of a single author giving textually variant accounts of the incident in the same work strongly suggests that we should not view narrative differences as calling into question the genuineness of transmission, unless those differences result in the same author taking irreconcilable positions on the fundamental hermeneutical questions in the narrative. The reason for the differences between the two accounts here is self-evidently related to the different exegetical issues that arise from the respective sets of verses.

Muqātil’s own interpretation of the incident is clearly an elaboration of Qatādah’s na‘asa interpretation. Nonetheless, there are differences between Muqātil’s and Qatādah’s respective accounts; for example, in Riwāyah 27, Qur’ān 53:20–21 are given as abrogating verses, while they are not mentioned in Riwāyah 24 from Qatādah. However, the narrative of Riwāyah 27 differs from that
of *Riwāyah 24* in only one important aspect: in *Riwāyah 27* (as in *Riwāyah 14*) the Prophet apparently corrects the error on his own—“Then the Prophet came back [raja‘a] and said . . .” While it is not clear here whether the verb raja‘a refers to the Prophet’s return from drowsiness to full consciousness, or his return to the Station of Ibrāhīm at some later juncture, the former reading seems the more logical in the context of the commentary on Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj; but the latter is more likely in light of the commentary on Qur’ān 53:19 al-Najm where the Prophet goes on to perform the sajdah and Quraysh follow him. While the fact that the Prophet corrects himself might seem to support the reading of *Riwāyah 27* to mean that this was a simple recitation error arising from lack of concentration, Muqātil’s own gloss of tamannā to mean ḥaddatha nafsa-hu would seem to suggest otherwise. The point here is that the Prophet was not merely drowsy, but that he was also thinking to himself and that it is into those thoughts that Satan cast his verses (fi ḥadithi-hi). It seems only reasonable to assume a relationship between the content of the Prophet’s thoughts and his ready acceptance of Satan’s suggestion.

In *Riwāyah 28*, it is interesting to note that Muqātil uses the terms “gods [ālihah]” and “angels [malā‘ikah]” interchangeably when referring to al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt. At this point, we may recall that in Hūd b. Muḥakkam’s citation of the text of *Riwāyah 23* from the *Tafsīr* of al-Kalbī, there was a gloss of the word gharānīq, underlined below:

> when he reached, “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?,” Satan cast onto his tongue: “Indeed, they are with the high gharānīq!”—meaning the angels—“And, indeed, it is their intercession that is hoped for [fa-inna-hā ma‘a al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā’ata-hā hiya al-murtajā]!”

The pre-Islamic worship of female angels is attested in Qur’ān 43:19–20 Zukhruf: “They make the angels, who are servants of the Merciful, female. . . . They said: Had the Merciful willed, we would not have worshipped them.” The *femaleness* of the angels

380 wa-ja‘ā‘alī al-malā‘ikah alladhīna hum ‘ibād al-raḥmāni ināthan . . . wa-qālū law shā‘a al-raḥmānu mā ‘abadnā-hum. See also Qur’ān 34:40 Sabā’: “One day He will
is expressly denied by Qur’ān 53:27 al-Najm: “Those who do not believe in the life to come call the angels by female names.” The pre-Islamic understanding that the angels were Allāh’s daughters is mentioned by Qur’ān 37:149–150 al-Ṣāffāt: “And now ask them: Does your Lord have daughters, and they, sons? Or did we create the angels female, while they watched?” The pre-Islamic worship of intercessionary lesser deities is mentioned in Qur’ān 10:18 Yūnus: “And they worship, side by side with God, that which neither harms nor benefits them, and they say: These are our intercessors [shu-fa‘ā] with God.” And that at least some angels might be granted the right of intercession by God is stated in Qur’ān 53:26 al-Najm: “However many angels there are in the heavens, their intercession is of no benefit, except after Allāh permits this to whom He wills and approves!” Finally, that al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt were the deities worshipped as intercessionary angels [malā‘ikah] and daughters of Allāh [banāt Allāh] is explained in the following passage by al-Mas‘ūdi (d. 346):

There was a category [ṣīnf] of the Arabs who worshipped the angels [ya‘budūna al-malā‘ikah], and claimed that they were the daughters of God [banāt Allāh]. They worshipped them so that they (the angels) would intercede with God on their behalf [fa-kānū ya‘budūna-hā li-tashfa‘a la-hum ilā Allāh]. These are the people of whom God speaks: “And they create daughters for God—the Glorious—and for themselves, what they desire”; and in His words: “Have you seen
al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzā, and Manāt, the third, the other? Should you have sons, and He, daughters? That, indeed, would be an unfair division!”

Muqātil, then, is describing a Qurashī theology in which al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzā, and Manāt were simultaneously seen as intercessionary lesser deities, as angels, and as daughters of Allāh. In Hūd b. Muḥakkam’s citation of Riwāyah 23, the Satanic verses are depicted as a concession to this belief. The identification of angels with cranes (one of the two meanings of gharānīq) is attested in the following report in the Sīrah of Yūnus b. Bukayr, where the Prophet is describing the famous cleansing of his breast (sharḥ al-ṣadr):

The Messenger of God said: Two angels came to me in the form of two cranes [karkariyayn]. They had with them ice, snow and cold water. One of them opened my chest, and the other washed it, blowing out (the ice, snow and cold water) through its beak [wa-majja al-ākhar minqāra-hu fa-ghasala-hu].

It is further interesting to note the disparaging remarks of al-Walīd b. al-Mughīrah: “He lives as Umm Ayman and her female companions live.” We have already noted the motif of Abū Uḥayḥah’s possibly disparaging reference to the Prophet as Ibn Abī Kabshah in Riwāyahs 17 and 19. The present remark would appear even more likely to be derogatory. Umm Ayman was an Ethiopian slave in the household of the Prophet’s father, ‘Abd Allāh, who had looked after the Prophet in his childhood. The Prophet subsequently freed her, and is reported to have called her “My second

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387 See Yūnus b. Bukayr/Hamidullah, Sirat Ibn Isḥāq, 28; Yūnus b. Bukayr/Zakkār, Kitāb al-siyar wa-al-maghāzī, 51. For the argument that the two birds in this story are an instance of “primitive Islam” still influenced by “Arab paganism,” see Harris Birkeland, The Opening of Muhammed’s Breast (Oslo: Hos Jacob Dybwad, 1955), 56–59. There is a fascinating early report that remembers one of the Companions of the Prophet as wearing a ring that bore the motif of two cranes; see Al-Tawil, “Early Arab Icons,” 61.
mother.”  

For the Prophet to live like Umm Ayman and her female friends means that, as far as al-Walid is concerned, the Prophet’s status is no better than that of a former female slave. This not only reinforces the idea of Prophetic error but also can be taken as putting forward Quraysh’s view as being that the Prophet’s uttering of the Satanic verses was a concession to their authority and a humiliation for Muḥammad.

**Riwāyah 29**: Muqāṭīl’s Commentary on Qur’ān 109 al-Kāfirūn

**Riwāyah 29** appears in Muqāṭīl’s commentary on Qur’ān 109 al-Kāfirūn (“The Unbelievers”).

> Say: O, you who are Unbelievers!
> I worship not that which you worship!
> Nor do you worship that which I worship!
> Nor will I worship that which you worship!
> Nor will you worship that which I worship!
> To you, your religion, and to me, my religion!

The following is the account of the Satanic verses incident:

> “Say: O, you Unbelievers!”: this came down in regard to the Mockers [al-mustahzi’ūn] from among Quraysh. This was because the Prophet recited, in Mecca, “By the star when it sets!” and when he recited “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?,” Satan

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cast onto his tongue [alqā al-shayṭānu ‘alā lisāni-hi] in his drowsiness [fi wasni-hi]: “Those high gharānīq! Intercession from them is to be sought [tilka al-gharānīq al-‘ulā ‘inda-hā al-shafā’ah turtajā].”

That evening, at the rear of the Ka'bah, Abū Jahl b. Hishām, and Shaybah, and ‘Utba, the sons of Rabī’ah, and Umayyah b. Khalaf, and al-‘Ās b. Wā'il, and the Mockers from among Quraysh said, “Muḥammad! Do not leave us until one of two conditions is fulfilled: either we enter with you into part of your religion and worship your god and you enter with us into part of our religion and worship our gods, or you dissociate yourself from our gods and we dissociate ourselves from your god.” Within the hour, God sent down in regard to them: “Say: O, you Unbelievers!” to the end of the sūrah.

This is the only instance I have been able to find in the early sources of the linking of the Satanic verses incident to the revelation of Sūrat al-Kāfirūn, which is the Qur’ānic locus classicus for the Prophetic repudiation of the religion of Quraysh. Here, again, we have an example of how, in the genre of tafsīr, the Qur’ānic verse that is the point of reference for a narrative affects the way in which that narrative is constituted in that specific context as distinct from other contexts. The account of the Satanic verses incident in Riwāyah 29 is reduced to a summary containing only the definitive motif of the Prophet’s drowsiness, and the explicit statement of the Prophet’s uttering the Satanic verses, while the bulk of the narrative is directed at furnishing a context for the revelation of Qur’ān 109 al-Kāfirūn, which here takes place as a result of negotiations between Quraysh and the Prophet after Muḥammad’s having uttered the Satanic verses. Quraysh are presented here as taking the concession in the Satanic verses as a strategic opportunity to settle Muḥammad’s religious dissent once and for all—in other words, as a symptom of weakness on the part of the Prophet (as is suggested by the remark in Riwāyah 28: “He lives as Umm Ayman and her companions live”). However, Muḥammad makes no further concession; rather, “within the hour” Divine intervention settles the matter by the revelation of Sūrat al-Kāfirūn. Indeed, in Riwāyah 29, it is Sūrat al-Kāfirūn that emerges as the verses that abrogate the Satanic verses and the theological concession contained therein. Also, in Riwāyah 29, a time frame emerges for the Satanic verses incident that is absent in Riwāyahs 27 and 28, whereby all the events related
to the incident take place in a single day (as they do in Riwāyahs 2, 3, and 8).

**Riwāyah 30:** Muqātil’s Commentary on Qur’ān 39:43–45 al-Zumar

Riwāyah 30 appears in Muqātil’s commentary on Qur’ān 39:43–45 al-Zumar:

Or, they take intercessors beside God; say: even though they have no power over anything, nor any understanding! God’s alone is all intercession, His is the dominion over the heavens and the earth; and it is to Him that you will be returned. And When God alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Last Day shrink in aversion, and when mention is made of other than Him, lo, they rejoice.\(^{390}\)

The following is the account of the Satanic verses incident:

“And when mention is made of those” who are worshipped “other than Him” from among the gods, “lo, they rejoice” at the mention of them. This is the day that the Prophet recited Sūrat al-Najm in Mecca, and recited [fā-qara‘a] “al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt, the third, the other: those high gharānīq! Intercession from them is to be sought [tilka al-gharānīq al-‘ulā ‘inda-hā al-shafā‘ah turtajā].” The Unbelievers of Mecca were delighted [fariḥū] when they heard that they (the goddesses) have intercession [anna la-hā shafā‘ah].\(^{391}\)

In Riwāyah 30, Muqātil again presents a slightly different narrative to those he gives elsewhere in his Tafsīr in accordance with the hermeneutical function of the narrative in the given Qur’ānic context. In Riwāyah 30, the Satanic verses incident serves to explain the allusion in Qur’ān 39:43–45 to an occasion on which those who

\(^{390}\) am ittakhadhū min dūn Allāh shufā‘ā’ qul a-wa-law kānū lā yamlikūna shay’an wa-lā ya‘qilūn. qul li-‘allāh al-shafā‘ah jamī‘an la-hu mulk al-samāwāt wa-al-ard thumma ilay-hi turja‘ūn. wa-idhā dhukira Allāh waḥda-hu ishma‘uazzat qulūb al-ladhina lā yu’minūna bi-al-ākhirah wa-idhā dhukira alladhina min dūn-hi idhā hum yastabshirūn.

“take intercessors with God” are pleased when their intercessors are mentioned along with God. According to Riwāyah 30, this allusion in Qur’ān 39:43–45 is to the Satanic verses incident, which is narrated in bare summary form with the emphasis on those narrative elements that are referents for the allusions in the Qur’ānic verses at hand: the mention of intercessionary deities alongside God, and the consequent pleasure of those who believe in intercession. The motif of the Prophet’s drowsiness is entirely absent here, presumably because the point is not to explain why or in what circumstances the Prophet uttered the Satanic verses but merely to establish that he did, on a given occasion, mention the intercessionary deities of Quraysh along God. In Riwāyah 32, below, we will encounter another instance of an early muflsir, Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī (d. 102), relating the Satanic verses incident to Qur’ān 39:43 al-Zumar. It is interesting to note that Mujāhid was one of Muqātil b. Sulaymān’s sources for tafsīr.392

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**Riwāyahs 27 to 30:**

**Conclusions**

Riwāyahs 27 to 29 represent the exegetical activity of Muqātil b. Sulaymān, and are an elaboration of Riwāyah 24 from Qatādah, one of Muqātil’s stated sources, with which they share the hermeneutical elaboration of the Prophet having uttered the Satanic verses in a state of drowsiness. In Riwāyah 27, however, Muqātil goes beyond Qatādah’s Riwāyah 24 by glossing tammanā/umniyyah as “the Prophet’s thoughts,” thereby creating a link between that which the Prophet was thinking about and that which Satan cast. Riwāyahs 29 and 30 extend the association of the Satanic verses incident from the three parts of the Revelation we have encountered thus far in this study—Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj, Qur’ān 53:19 al-Najm, and Qur’ān 17:73 al-Isrā’—to include Qur’ān 109 al-Kāfirūn and Qur’ān 39:43–45 al-Zumar. In each of the four riwāyahs of Muqātil, the incident is narrated slightly differently. This sharply illustrates the nature of narrative in the genre of tafsīr, where different narrative elements

392 Nawfal, Mujāhid, 248–249.
are selected for inclusion and omission, and are given different emphasis, on the basis of their hermeneutical relationship with the verses under exegesis. Despite their differences, all four *riwāyahs* from Muqátil agree on the fundamental hermeneutical issues: the Prophet recited the Satanic verses, and according to *Riwaṭ 27, 28,* and *29*—the three *riwāyahs* that are concerned with why he did so—he did this in a state of drowsiness.

### Riwaṭ 31 to 33:
From Mujāhid b. Jabr

*Riwaṭ 31, 32, and 33* are from the important first-century *muṣaffir,* Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makkī (d. 103/721), a student of Ibn ‘Abbās whom Qatādah b. Dī‘āmah is reported to have called “the most learned man alive in *tafṣīr* [‘َاَلَمْ مَّانَ بَاقِيَة بِإِلَى-الْتَّفْسِيرِ],” and of whom Suṭyān al-Thawrī said, “If you get Mujāhid’s *tafṣīr*, it is enough for you.” Mujāhid was also a *qāṣṣ,* and generally regarded as a reliable Ḥadīth transmitter cited in all of the four canonical *suṣnan* collections. He is reported to have said that he went through the entire Qur’ān with Ibn ‘Abbās three times, stopping to ask him about the *sabab al-nuzūl* (occasion of Revelation) of each verse.

*Riwaṭ 31:* From Mujāhid’s Commentary on Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj cited by Ibn ‘Aqīlah


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393 Lecker, “King Ibn Ubayy and the Quṣṣāṣ,” 72.
a late *tafsīr bi-al-ma’thūr* that draws on a number of early Qur’ān commentaries and that—as the title indicates—restricts itself only to such reports as are carried by complete chains (*marfu‘*) and that thus establish an authoritative ruling (*maḥkūm*). *Riwalayh 31* is carried by this *ismād*:

‘Abd b. Ḥumayd (170s-249) ← [. . .] ← Mujāhid (103 / 721).

The *ismād* suggests three things: first, that the *riwalayh* was recorded in the now lost *Tafsīr* of ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd;396 second, that Ibn ‘Aqīlah is abbreviating the *ismād* by omitting the intermediary transmitters between ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd and Mujāhid (else the report can hardly be *marfu‘* or *maḥkūm*); and third, that for Ibn ‘Aqīlah, reports from Mujāhid may assuredly be assumed to go back to a Companion (in this case, most likely Ibn ‘Abbās), else, again, he would not consider them *marfu‘* or *maḥkūm*. The following is the account of the Satanic verses incident:

The Messenger of God recited Sūrat al-Najm, Satan cast those words into his mouth [*fa-alqā al-shayṭān fī fī-hi tilka al-kalimāt*], and the Muslims prostrated themselves. Then God removed that which Satan cast onto his mouth [*thumma nasakha Allāh mā alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā fī-hi*], and established His āyāt [*wa-aḥkama āyāti-hi*].397

In this extremely summary report, there is no mention of the text of the Satanic verses themselves. However, the phrase “Satan cast those words into his mouth [*fa-alqā al-shayṭān fī fī-hi tilka al-kalimāt*]” indicates that the words in question have been cited earlier in the discussion, and that the phrase is referring back to “those words.” It is highly likely that Ibn ‘Aqīlah is abbreviating the report, which is

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396 See *Riwalayh 14*, above.
one of a long list of reports he cites in relation to Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj. Certainly there is no doubt in Ṭiwāyah 31 that the Prophet recited Satan’s words: this is emphasized in short order by the phrases “Satan cast into his mouth” and “Satan cast onto his mouth.” Ṭiwāyah 31 does not occur in the published editions of the surviving manuscript of Mujāhid’s Tafṣīr, which represent the work in the transmission of Warqā’ b. ‘Umar (d. 160) from Ibn Abī Najīḥ al-Makkī (d. 132).398 However, there were other chains of transmission of Mu-jāhid’s Tafṣīr, and it is likely from one of these that ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd is transmitting.399 An even briefer version of Ṭiwāyah 31 is given also by al-Suyūṭī in the Durr with the same isnād: ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd ← [. . .] ← Mujāhid:

“The Messenger of God recited Sūrat al-Najm, Satan cast onto his mouth [alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā fī-hi], and He established His Signs.”(400) Despite the pared-down nature of al-Suyūṭī’s citation, the fact that he is citing the same source as Ibn ‘Aqīlah is confirmed by the presence of the unique phrase alqā al-shaṭān ‘alā fī-hi, which occurs nowhere other than via this isnād from Mujāhid.

Rīwāyah 32: From Mujāhid’s Commentary on Qur’ān 39:45 al-Zumar Cited by al-Wāḥidī

Satan’s words are quoted in Rīwāyah 32, which is cited by al-Wāḥidī al-Naysābūrī (d. 468), without an isnād, in both his middle Tafṣīr of the Qur’ān, al-Wasīṭ,401 and his long Tafṣīr, al-Basīṭ, in the commentary on Qur’ān 39:45 al-Zumar: “And When God alone is mentioned,
the hearts of those who do not believe in the Last Day shrink in averse-

sion, and when mention is made of other than Him, lo, they rejoice.\textsuperscript{402}

“Lo, they rejoice!” . . . Mujāhid and Muqātil said: meaning, when\textsuperscript{403}
the Prophet recited Sūrat al-Najm in Mecca and said [\textit{fa-qāla}], “Those
high \textit{gharānīq} [\textit{tilka al-gharānīq al-\textit{ulā}].” The Unbelievers of Mecca
were delighted [\textit{fariḥa}] by this, when they heard that they (the god-
desses) have intercession [\textit{ḥīna sami‘u anna la-hā shafā‘ah}].\textsuperscript{404}

\textbf{Riwāyah 32} presents Mujāhid as explicating the allusion in Qur’ān
39:43–45 to an occasion on which those who “take intercessors with
God” are pleased when their intercessors are mentioned along with
God by relating the allusion to the Prophet’s mentioning the interces-

dionary capacity of the deities of Quraysh in the Satanic verses: “The
Unbelievers of Mecca were delighted by this, when they heard that they
(the goddesses) have intercession.” We have seen a similar pre-

tation in \textbf{Riwāyah 30} in the \textit{Tafsīr} of Muqātil b. Sulaymān, a mu-

fassir of the next generation who, we have noted, drew on Mujāhid’s
\textit{tafsīr} (it may be that Mujāhid is Muqātil’s source in this instance).

It is instructive to observe that while \textbf{Riwāyah 32} quotes the first
part of the text of the Satanic verses—“Those high \textit{gharānīq} [\textit{tilka al-
gharānīq al-\textit{ulā}]}”—it does not quote the second part of the Satanic
verses in which the \textit{shafā‘ah} of the deities is confirmed, much in the
same way that \textbf{Riwāyah 31}, while referring to “those words which
Satan cast into his mouth,” does not quote the text of the Satanic

\begin{footnotes}
\item[403] The word \textit{ḥīna}, “when,” is not in \textit{al-Basīṭ}.
\item[404] Al-Ḥusayn b. Mas’ūd al-Farrā’ al-Baghawī (d. 516), \textit{Tafsīr al-Baghawī: Ma‘ālim al-
tanzil}, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh al-Nimr, ‘Uthmān Jum‘ah Khumayriyyah, and
Sulaymān Muslim al-Ḥarash (Riyadh: Dār Ṭībah, 1993), 7:123, provides a similar
citation:

Mujāhid and Muqātil said: that was when [\textit{wa-dhālika ḥīna}] the Prophet recited Sūrat
al-Najm and Satan cast into his \textit{umniyyah} [\textit{fa-alqā al-shayṭānu fī umniyyati-hi}], “Those
high \textit{gharānīq} [\textit{tilka al-gharānīq al-\textit{ulā}]},” and the Unbelievers of Mecca were delighted
\textit{[fariḥa]} by this.

Al-Baghawī’s source is almost certainly al-Wāḥidī’s \textit{Wasīṭ}, which he used in pre-
paring his own \textit{Tafsīr}; see Ali Eroğlu, “Mûfessir Hüseyin İbn Mes‘ūd el-Bağavī
ve Tefsirindeki Uusülü,” Erzurum Yüksek İslâm Enstitüsü: Öğretim Üyeliği Tezi,
\end{footnotes}
verses themselves. *Riwayah* 32 also does not occur in the published editions of the Warqā’ b. ‘Umar ← Ibn Abī Najīḥ al-Makkī transmission of Mujāhid’s *Tafsīr*.405 But given that he was the leading student of al-Tha‘labī, al-Waḥīdī’s citation of *Riwayah* 32 is almost certainly from one of the three alternate transmissions of Mujāhid’s *Tafsīr* that are listed by al-Tha‘labī in the sources to his *al-Kashf wa-al-bayān*.406 The Warqā’ b. ‘Umar ← Ibn Abī Najīḥ al-Makkī transmission of Mujāhid’s *Tafsīr* does, however, provide a gloss for *tamannā* in Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj as meaning *qāla*, “to say”—which, it is worth noting, is entirely compatible with *Riwayah* 32.407 Similarly, al-Suyūṭī cites each of ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd and Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī as giving Mujāhid’s gloss for *tamannā* to be *takallama*, “to speak,” and for *umniyyati-hi* as *kalāmi-hi*, “his speech.”408

*Riwayah* 33: From Mujāhid’s Commentary on Qur’ān 17:73 al-:Isrā’ Cited by al-Tha‘labī

*Riwayah* 33 is an even more cursory citation given in the commentary on Qur’ān 17:73 al-Isrā’ in al-Tha‘labī’s (d. 427) *al-Kashf wa-al-bayān*: “Mujāhid said: ‘He praised their gods and mentioned them,

405 It is instructive here to note the brief commentary in Ibn Abī Najīḥ’s transmission of Mujāhid’s *Tafsīr* on the first part of Qur’ān 39:45 al-Zumar, “And When God alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Last Day shrink in aversion”: “That was the day that the Messenger of God recited Sūrat al-Najm at the door of the Ka‘bah.” This is a fascinating statement because, like *Riwayah* 31, this associates Qur’ān 39:45 al-Zumar to “the day that the Messenger of God recited Sūrat al-Najm at the door of the Ka‘bah”; see *Tafsīr al-Imām Mujāhid b. Jabr*, 579. Here, however, what is being posited is not the pleasure of those who “take intercessors with God” at the Prophet’s mentioning their intercessors on that day in the Satanic verses, but rather their displeasure when their deities were not mentioned on that day (with no reference to the Satanic verses incident). If G. Stauth is correct to date the “urtext” of this transmission of the Warqā’ ← Ibn Abī Najīḥ transmission of the *Tafsīr* Mujāhid to the 120s, this might indicate an early aversion on the part of this line of transmitters of Mujāhid to the Satanic verses incident; see Stauth, *Die Überlieferung des Korankommentars Muğāhid*, at 208–222. On this transmission, see also Fred Leemhuis, “Ms. 1075 tafsīr of the Cairene Dār al-Kutub and Muğāhid’s *Tafsīr*,” in *Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants*, ed. R. Peters (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 169–180.


and they were delighted." While Riwāyah 33 neither quotes the text of the Satanic verses nor even mentions any Satanic intervention, it is clear that it is a summary reference to the Satanic verses incident as there is no other occasion that can be construed as saying that the Prophet "praised their gods and mentioned them, and they were delighted." Riwāyah 33 from Mujāhid indicates that the association of Satanic verses incident with Qur‘ān 17:73 al-Isrā’ was not limited in the early exegetical literature to Muḥammad b. Ka‘b al-Quraṣī (Riwāyahs 3 to 6, above).

While the three reports from Mujāhid b. Jabr are too brief to provide any explanation of why the Prophet uttered the Satanic verses, all three indicate that Mujāhid evidently accepted that the Prophet did so, and indicate collectively that he associated the Satanic verses incident with all three of Qur‘ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj, 17:73 al-Isrā’, and 39:43–45 al-Zumar.

Riwāyah 34: From al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Balkhī

Riwāyah 34 is cited by al-Ṭabarī in the commentary on Qur‘ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj in his Jāmi‘ al-bayān from the first-century Khurāsānī muḥāfīd al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Balkhī (d. 105).410 Al-Suyūṭī cites it in the Durr from al-Ṭabarī.411 Al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim appears to have spent most of his career in Khurāsān and Transoxania. He studied in Rayy with the famous Sa‘īd b. Jubayr al-Kūfī (d. 95; see Riwāyah 40, below), a leading transmitter of tafsīr material from ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68), and would attribute reports to Ibn ‘Abbās without mentioning an intermediary.412 This greatly displeased the Ḥadīth

410 Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-bayān, 17:189.
411 Al-Suyūṭī, al-Durr, 6:67–68.
folk, although they acknowledged that he had “great ability [bā’ kabīr] in tafsīr and qaṣaṣ.”

Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161), who considered him one of the four most important muḥassirūn, said of him, “Al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim is known for tafsīr ['urifā’ bi-al-tafsīr]; as far as his riwāyahs from Ibn ʿAbbās, Abū Hurayrah, and everyone else he transmitted from are concerned, all of that is doubtful [fi dhālika kulli-hi naẓar]—but he is famous for tafsīr [ishtahara bi-al-tafsīr].”

Riwāyah 34 is transmitted from al-Ḍaḥḥāk by an initially Marwazi isnād:


Not much is known about ‘Ubayd b. Sulaymān al-Marwazī beyond the fact that he transmitted al-Ḍaḥḥāk’s Tafsīr and was regarded as a reliable transmitter. Abū Muʿādh al-Marwazī was an important grammarian in late second- / early third-century Marw. He composed a work on the Qur’ān that was praised by the early lexicogra-

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415 In his Jāmi’ al-bayān, al-Ṭabarī always prefaces his citation of the present isnād with the phrase ḥuddithtu ‘an al-Ḥusayn b. al-Faraj, “I was told from / on the authority of al-Ḥusayn b. al-Faraj.” In the usage of the Ḥadīth scholars, this phrase indicates that there is an unnamed transmitter between al-Ṭabarī and al-Ḥusayn b. al-Faraj; see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, al-Kifāyah, 374; al-Albānī, Naṣb al-majānīq, 15; al-Ḥalabī al-Atharī, Dalā’il, 154, Gilliot, “al-Baqara,” 1:178, has taken this to mean that, in this instance, al-Ṭabarī is transmitting by wijdah—that is to say that he simply obtained a manuscript of the work—but Gilliot’s sources do not support this interpretation of the ḥuddithtu ‘an phrase. Rosenthal has mistranslated the phrase in question as “I was told by al-Ḥusayn b. al-Faraj”; see History of al-Ṭabarī Vol 1, 227, footnote 399. Al-Ṣawwayānī rejects the isnād as “very weak” on the basis both that “the informant of al-Ṭabarī is not mentioned” and that the report is mursal; al-Qaṣīmah, 1:426.

pher Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Azharī (282–370), who drew on it when preparing his great dictionary, the *Tahdhib al-lughah*.  

Al-Ḥusayn b. al-Faraj (d. 298) was a Baghdādī contemporary of al-Ṭabarī. It is recorded that he traveled to Isfahan, where he taught the *Maghāzī* of al-Waqidi, and it was perhaps there that he studied al-Ḍaḥḥāk’s *Tafsīr*. Given his recorded interest in *maghāzī* and *tafsīr*, it is no surprise to note that he had an appalling reputation with the Ḥadīth scholars. Nor was he, in this regard, dissimilar to other teachers of al-Ṭabarī (see Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Rāzī in *Riwāyah* 1, al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan in *Riwāyah* 2, and Muḥammad b. Sa’d al-‘Awfī in *Riwāyah* 35, below). Al-Ṭabarī cites the present isnād 670 times in the *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, which would suggest that he had at his disposal a fairly complete manuscript of al-Ḍaḥḥāk’s *Tafsīr*.

The following is the account of the Satanic verses from the *Tafsīr* of al-Ḍaḥḥāk:

In regard to God’s words: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet”: While the Prophet was in Mecca, God sent down upon him (something) about the gods of the Arabs [*fī ālihat al-‘arab*]. So he began to recite, “al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā,” and to repeat it over and over [*fa-ja’ala yatlū al-Lāt wa-al-‘Uzzā wa-yukthiru tardīda-hā*]. The people of Mecca heard the Prophet of God mentioning their gods, and were delighted by this and drew near him, listening. And Satan cast into the Prophet’s recitation [*fa-alqā al-shayṭān fī tilāwat al-nabī*]: “Those high gharāniq! Intercession from them is to be hoped for! [*[ilka al-gharāniq al-‘ulā min-hā al-shafā’ah turtajā*]”; and the Prophet recited it like this [*fa-qara’-hā al-nabī ka-dhālika*]. So God sent down upon him: “And we have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet. . . .”, to, “God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

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419 Horst, “Überlieferung,” 304.

420 Al-Suyūṭī has: “(something) was sent down upon him about the gods of the Arabs.”
There is a further gloss from al-Ḍaḥḥāk cited by al-Ṭabarī (with the same isnād),\(^{421}\) and by al-Suyūṭī, this time from the *Tafsîr* of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzî: \(^{422}\)

His words, “illâ idhâ tamannā”: By *tamannā* is meant: recitation [*al-tilâwah wa-al-qirâ’ah*].\(^{423}\)

“alqā al-shayṭân fî umniyyati-hi”: into the recitation of the Prophet.\(^{424}\)

“fa-yansakh Allâh”: Jibrîl removed by God’s command [*nasakha Ji-brîl bi-amr Allâh*] that which Satan cast [*mâ alqâ al-shayṭân*] onto the tongue of the Prophet [*’alâ lisân al-nabi‘*]\(^{425}\) and established His Signs clearly.

“Then God establishes His Signs clearly”: then God cleansed [*yukhallîṣ*] the āyât of His Book from the falsehood [*al-bâṭîl*] which Satan cast onto the tongue of His Prophet [*alladhî alqâ al-shayṭân ‘alâ lisân nabiyyi-hi*].

“And God is All-Knowing” of whatever happens in His Creation; nothing is hidden from Him. “All-Wise” in His management of them, and his dealing with them howsoever He Wills and Desires.

The fact that Ibn Abī Ḥātim in third-/fourth-century Rayy has the same gloss from al-Ḍaḥḥāk as does al-Ḥusayn b. al-Faraj in third-century Baghdad would suggest that the text of al-Ḍaḥḥāk’s *Tafsîr* (or *Riwâyah 34*, at any rate) stabilized in the form in which Abū Mu‘âdh had it already in second-century Marw.

The first observations to be made about *Riwaþah 34* are that it glosses *tamannā* to mean “to recite,” and that there is no question here but that the Prophet recited the Satanic verses. The narrative in *Riwaþah 34* does, however, include a curious narrative motif. This is contained in the passage “So he began to recite, ‘al-Lât and al-‘Uzzâ,’ and to repeat it over and over. The people of Mecca heard the Prophet of God mentioning their gods, and were delighted by this and drew near him, listening.”


\(^{423}\) Al-Ṭabarî breaks this up into two separate citations; al-Suyûṭî has a single citation.

\(^{424}\) The gloss of *alqâ al-shayṭân fi umniyyati-hi* is omitted by al-Ṭabarî.

\(^{425}\) Al-Suyûṭî’s citation stops here.
Why, one wonders, should the Prophet repeat the phrase “al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā” aloud and over and over; and why should Quraysh gather round him as he did so? What situation is this curious image meant to convey? The answer may lie in the following passage from an anthropological study of the Nabaṭī poetry of Arabia. The author, Saad Abdullah Sowayan, is describing the physical process by which oral poets compose their poetry:

Composition is accompanied by emotional outbursts and loud vocalization. Generally speaking, a Nabaṭī poet does not compose in silence. Rather, he sings out his verses (yiṣibb as-ṣōt, yaz‘aj al-ṣōt). Even when there are people present, the poet cannot control himself, but keeps murmuring aloud his yet unfinished verses. . . . Singing and loud vocalization are not only signs of an emotional outburst; they also help the poet to measure the rhythm of his verses.426

Sowayan illustrates this point with a citation from poetry, and with the following observation made by Alois Musil during his travels in northern Arabia in 1909:

Our omnivorous poet, Miz‘el aḥū Za‘ēla, was composing a poem in my honour. . . . It was interesting to watch his procedure. He would ponder for several minutes and then recite two verses twenty or thirty times, substituting for some of the expressions new and better ones—azjân as he called them. Then he would bid Târeš pay attention and remember these verses. After Târeš had learnt them, Miz‘el would be absorbed and silent again, and after a while he would sing the first two verses and add the third to them. Having sung them to Târeš innumerable times in his shrill voice, he would ask me to write them down while he composed the rest.427

427 Alois Musil, Arabia Deserta: A Topographical Itinerary (New York: American Geographical Society of New York, 1927), 236–237; cited by Sowayan, Nabaṭī Poetry, 99, where he adds, “the Nabaṭī poet views his meters musically and determines whether or not their scansion is correct by singing them. The relation of singing to composition is indicated by the expression y’addil ḥūn, which refers to the act of composition and which means ‘to harmonize some tunes’ or ‘to straighten out some rhythms.’”
The process Musil is describing is strikingly similar to the image in Riwāyah 34. The Prophet is repeating a line of the Revelation over and over, very much in the manner of an oral poet; and Quraysh are gathering round, as they would with any poet, to see what will come next. It is at this juncture that Satan casts his verses into the Divine formulation. This is very probably what the image would have conveyed to a first-century Arab audience. This is certainly not to suggest that the early Muslims believed that the words of the Qurʾān were the Prophet’s own poetical composition; rather, what Riwāyah 34 indicates is that the early Muslims viewed some of the physical processes that accompanied the Revelation of the Divine Word as similar to those that accompanied the poets’ search for inspiration in the composition of oral poetry, and understood the Satanic verses incident as a momentary breakdown in this process.  

Riwāyahs 35 to 44: Attributed to ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās

Riwāyahs 35 to 44 are attributed to ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Abbās (3bh–68), called Tarjumān al-Qurʾān (“the Translator of the Qurʾān”), al-Baḥr

One wonders if there is a relationship between this concept and Qurʾān 75:16–17, addressed by God to Muḥammad: “Do not move your tongue with it (the Revelation) to hurry it [lā tuḥārrir bi-hi lisāna-ka li-ta‘jala bi-hi]: bringing it together [jam’a-hu] and reciting it [qur’āna-hu] is Our task; so when We recite it [qara’nā-hu], follow its recitation [qur’āna-hu].” This is the only instance in the Qurʾān where qurʾān is used as a verbal noun taking an object; the phrase literally says, “Qurʾān-ing it (the Revelation) is Our task.” See also Qurʾān 20:114: “Do not hurry the Qurʾān before it is accomplished for you.” For an important study emphasizing the orality of the Qurʾān in the society of its original proclamation—“qurʾān originally meant ‘reciting aloud’”—see William A. Graham, “The Earliest Meaning of ‘Qurʾān,’” Die Welt des Islams 23–24 (1984), 361–377 (quotation at 367).

For an instance of the Prophet’s repetition of a single Qurʾānic verse throughout Laylat al-Qadr, see Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, Kitāb fāḍā’il al-Qurʾān, ed. Marwān al-‘Aṭiyyah. Muḥsin Kharābah, and Wafā’ Taqī al-Dīn (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathir, 1999), 144. In the present instance, however, the context is not one in which the sūrah is being revealed; rather, it is the repetition of a previously revealed verse.
THE EARLIEST NARRATIVES AND THEIR TRANSMITTERS

(“the Ocean”), and Ḥabr al-Ummah (“the Savant of the Community”), who enjoys the status in the Islamic tradition of the founder of Qur’anic studies. Ibn ‘Abbās was thirteen years old when the Prophet died, and is counted as a ṣaḥābī. The medieval Qur’anic literature contains a prodigious number of tafsīr-related reports, and at least a dozen different tafsīr works, all of which were viewed by medieval Muslim scholarship as, in some sense, going back to Ibn ‘Abbās; this despite the fact that the medieval mufassirūn were clearly aware that reports ascribed to him were often contradictory. Claude Gilliot, building on the misgivings of earlier Western scholars, has demonstrated the extent to which the historical memory of Ibn ‘Abbās was an idealized one, and has argued that, for the early Qur’ān scholars, Ibn ‘Abbās constituted the “mythical ancestor” to whom reports were ascribed in order to furnish them with legitimacy and authority: ascription of reports to Ibn ‘Abbās cannot, therefore, be taken at face value. This does not, however, affect the possibility that some of these interpretations were, indeed, discussed by the historical Ibn ‘Abbās and his students, which might in part explain why contradictory views were ascribed to him. Nor does it explain why a student of Ibn ‘Abbās would, in the case of reports presenting the same interpretation, ascribe one report to the presumably greater authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, and another to his own presumably lesser authority without mention of Ibn ‘Abbās—as will be seen to be the case for Sa‘īd b. Jubayr with Riwāyahs 40, 41, 43, and 44 (ascribed from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr to Ibn ‘Abbās) and 42, 45, and 46 (ascribed to Sa‘īd b. Jubayr himself). And it fails even more emphatically to account for why a student of Ibn ‘Abbās would attribute one interpretation to the presumably greater authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, while presenting another interpretation on his own, presumably lesser, authority—as will be seen to be the case for Abū Ṣāliḥ with Riwāyahs 36 and 39

430 In Qur’ānic usage, the aḥbār are the Jewish religious scholars.
(ascribed from Abū Ṣāliḥ to Ibn ‘Abbās) and *Riwaḥ* 21 (ascribed to Abū Ṣāliḥ himself), for ‘Ikrimah with *Riwaḥ* 39 (ascribed from ‘Ikrimah to Ibn ‘Abbās) and *Riwaḥ* 48 (ascribed to ‘Ikrimah himself), and in the following generation for al-Kalbī with *Riwaḥ* 39 (ascribed from al-Kalbī to Ibn ‘Abbās) and *Riwaḥ* 24 (ascribed to al-Kalbī himself). These “anomalies” would suggest that *isnāds* that transmit *tafsīr* reports from Ibn ‘Abbās may be more of a statement of historical fact than has been suspected. Clearly, more research on the *tafsīr* corpus ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās is necessary in order to determine whether there is any way of identifying which reports, if any, are likely to have been transmitted from him.433

*Riwaḥ* 35: From ‘Aṭiyyah b. Sa’d al-‘Awfī

*Riwaḥ* 35 is cited by al-Ṭabarī in the commentary on Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj in the *Jāmi‘ al-bayān*, with the following *isnād*:434

432 As Harris Birkeland rightly noted, “It remains a problem why all Isnads leading to disciples of Ibn ‘Abbās were not prolonged backwards to the latter himself. His name cannot possibly have been omitted secondarily”; *Old Muslim Opposition*, 36.


Al-Suyūṭī cites the identical report without an isnād, both from al-Ṭabarī and from the now lost Tafsīr of Aḥmad Ibn Mardawayh al-Iṣbahānī (323–410).440 Badr al-Dīn al-‘Aynī also cites Riwāyah 35 from Ibn Mardawayh, both with an isnād and with slight textual variances, in his ‘Umdat al-qāri’ sharḥ Şaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.441 Ibn Mardawyh’s isnād is also provided by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Zayla‘ī (d. 762) in his study of the reports adduced by al-Zamakhshārī (d. 544) in the latter’s al-Kashshāf;442 as well as by Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 773/1370) in his work on al-Ṭabarī’s Tafsīr, first published in 1264/1848 by Muḥsin al-Amīn, A’yān al-shī‘ah, 5:153–154, which is taken entirely from Sunnī sources.


BEFORE ORTHODOXY

(d. 852). Ibn Mardawayh’s isnād is identical to that of al-Ṭabarī, with the addition of a transmitter from Muḥammad b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī al-Baghdādī—namely, the respected Baghdādī ʿaqīdī Aḥmad b. Kāmil (260–350).

This family isnād is cited by al-Ṭabarī 1,560 times in the Jāmiʿ al-bayān. In addition to the extensive use made of this Tafsīr by al-Ṭabarī, and the citations from it by Ibn Mardawayh, it was utilized by al-Thaʿlabī, who studied it with al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405), and was also studied by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463). While the reports carried by this isnād have, to the best of my knowledge, never been studied, it is clear that they made up a large and fairly important early Qurʾān commentary, which we may call the Tafsīr al-ʿAwfī.

ʿAṭiyyah b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī (d. 111/127—both disparate dates are given) was an early Shīʿī scholar of Kufah who was reportedly flogged on the orders of Ḥajjāj b. Yusuf for refusing to curse ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. It is said of him that he had been taken as a newborn to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and that it was ʿAlī who gave him his name. In spite of these credentials, he does not appear to have been recognized by the various Shīʿī sects after their formation as distinct confessional

443 Ibn Ḥajar, Fatḥ, 18:41.
444 Aḥmad b. Kāmil was a prominent scholar and sometime qāḍī in Kufah who seems to have enjoyed the universal respect of his contemporaries. He was a student of al-Ṭabarī, a teacher of both al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī and al-Dāraquṭnī (who reckoned him favorably as a muḥaddith), received a laudatory biographical notice from al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, and is recorded as authoring works on fiqh, tafsīr, and sīrah, none of which seem to have survived. See al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Tārīkh Baghdād, 4:358; al-Dhahabī, Sīyar, 15:544–546; al-Ṣafadī, al-Wāfī bi al-wafayāt (ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1993), 7:298–299; Kahḥālah, Muʿjam, 1:232; and Mubārakpūri, Tadvīn-i sīyar, 312–313.
445 See Horst, “Überlieferung,” 294, where, however, some of the transmitters are incorrectly identified; a similar error was made by Birkseld, Old Muslim Opposition, 34–42.
446 Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī studied the work with Aḥmad b. Kāmil. Al-Thaʿlabī cited it as a distinct work in the list of al-Tafsīrāt al-manṣūṭāt min Ibn ʿAbbās; see al-Thaʿlabī, Mufassirū sharq, 21–22.
447 See Sezgin, GAS, 1:31–32.
448 A large compilation of tafsīr reports from ʿAṭiyyah b. Saʿd has been published as ʿAṭiyyah b. Saʿd b. Junādah al-ʿAwfī al-Kūfī (d. 127), Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-kerim, ed. ʿAbd al-Razzaq b. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥızr al-Dīn (Qum: Intishārāt-i Dalīl-i Mā, 2000), but the commentary on Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥājj containing Riwāyah 35 and the Satanic verses incident has been omitted.
communities from the mid-second century onwards: to the best of my knowledge he does not figure in the medieval Shiʿī literature. The Kufan mufassir Muḥammad b. al-Sāʾib al-Kalbī (d. 146, see Riwāyah 23, above) was among his students and regarded him as an authority in tafsīr. Unsurprisingly, he had a bad reputation with the Ḥadīth scholars, not just because of his tashayyuʿ but also because of his typical mufassir’s failure to observe the conventions of Ḥadīth transmission.

None of ‘Aṭiyyah’s descendants who appear in the isnād was a scholar of any rank. They are generally obscure figures and, like their ancestor, have poor reputations among the Ḥadīth scholars. Al-Ṭabarī’s teacher, Muḥammad b. Saʿd, was of no more than average reputation: while the sunan-compiler al-Dāraquṭnī approved of him, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī said, “He was weak [layyin] in Ḥadīth.” That Baghdādī scholars as prominent as al-Ṭabarī and Aḥmad b. Kāmil al-Baghdādī should have studied a large work carried by such an appalling isnād from a scholar, Muḥammad b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī, who was of no particular standing in Baghdad is strongly suggestive of three things. First, the author of the work in question was almost certainly ‘Aṭiyyah b. Saʿd al-ʿAwfī (d. 111 / 127), as none of the transmitters from him has any reputation as a mufassir, nor is credited

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449 By way of illustration, we may note the most prominent of them, ‘Aṭiyyah’s grandson, al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan b. ‘Aṭiyyah. He was a Qāḍī in Baghdad in the reigns of al-Mahdī and Hārun al-Rashīd but does not seem to have been taken very seriously as a judge. Yahyā b. Maʿin said of him, “He was weak in judgeship and weak in Ḥadīth [kāna daʿifān fi al-qadāʾ daʿifān fi al-ḥadīth].” That he was not taken seriously as a scholar either is evidenced by a story cited by Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī in which al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan comically misquoted a well-known Ḥadīth on stealing from the spoils of war. Indeed, al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan seems to have been regarded as something of a joke by the people of Baghdad. The thing for which he was most famous was the length of his beard, which came down to his knees, and fully half of his biographical entry in the Tārīkh Baghdād deals with “amusing reports about al-ʿAwfī’s beard [ṭarāʾīf min akhkhār liḥyat al-ʿAwfī],” including a satirical poem that suggests that were the beard to be employed as a ship’s sail, one might travel from China to Baghdad in two weeks (on the long beard as a derogatory motif, see Goldziher, Muslim Studies, 2:119). For assessments of the soundness of the isnād, see the study of it by Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir and Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir in their incomplete edition of al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān ‘an taʾwil āy al-Qurʾān (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1954), 263, footnote 1; al-ʿAlbānī, Naṣb al-majānīq, 17–18; Muṣṭafā Zayd, al-Naskh fī al-Qurʾān (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1973), 2:320–322; al-Ḥalabī al-Atharī, Dalāʾīl, 99–104.
with such a work. In fact, the biographical material on the ‘Awfīs makes no mention of a family Tafsīr, which would suggest that al-‘Awfī’s descendants were not active in teaching the work. Hence, and second, what we are most likely to be dealing with here is an evidently large manuscript that was passed down within the al-‘Awfī family and came into the possession of Muḥammad b. Sa’d. Third, al-Ṭabarī was apparently indifferent here, as elsewhere, as to whether his isnāds conformed to the isnād methodology employed by the ahl al-ḥadīth for validating the transmission of knowledge. Otherwise, not a single one of the 1,560 reports cited by al-Ṭabarī from the Tafsīr al-‘Awfī would have been deemed valid.

The following is the account of the Satanic verses from the Tafsīr al-‘Awfī:

His words: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he tamannā, Satan cast something into his umniyyah,” to His words, “and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise”:

That was because, while the Prophet was praying, the story of the gods of the Arabs [qiṣṣat ālihat al-‘arab] was sent down upon him and he began to recite it [fa-ja’ala yatlū-hā]. The Mushrikūn heard him.

450 The earliest extant citation of a tafsīr report from ‘Aṭiyyah b. Sa’d is in the Tafsīr of ‘Abd Allāh b. Wahb (d. 197), al-Jāmi’: Tafsīr, 264; but he is also listed by Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150) in the introduction to his Tafsīr as one of his authorities; see Muqātil, Tafsīr, 1:3.

451 The only one who is recorded as having taught this Tafsīr is al-Ṭabarī’s teacher, Muḥammad b. Sa’d al-‘Awfī, and it is probably for this reason that, despite his own indifferent reputation and the even poorer standing of his forebears, the biographical entries on him state that “he was from a house of learning and Ḥadīth [min bayt al-‘ilm wa-al-ḥadīth].” It should also be noted that the absence of any mention of the work in the ‘ilm al-rijāl works is indicative of the limitations of this genre in regard to assessing anything other than the standing of a person as a muḥaddith.

452 The same would, of course, apply to Aḥmad b. Kāmil; it is interesting to note that the only stain on Aḥmad’s reputation as a muḥaddith is the observation of Ibn al-Jawzī that he was “lenient (mutasāhil),” which he clearly needed to be to transmit the Tafsīr of al-‘Awfī; Ibn al-Jawzī, Ḍu‘afā’, 1:83. Al-Albānī, who is certainly not mutasāhil, summarily rejects this isnād; Naṣb al-majānīq, 17.

453 The report in al-‘Aynī’s citation of Ibn Mardawayh begins here.

454 The word qisṣah is not in Ibn Mardawayh / al-‘Aynī.

455 The phrase ja’ala yatlū-hā is not in Ibn Mardawayh / al-‘Aynī.

and said,457 “We hear him458 speaking favourably of our gods”; so they drew near him.459

And while he was reciting it [fa-bayna-mā huwa yatū-hā], when he was saying [wa-huwa yaqūlu]: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?”460 Satan cast [alqā al-shayṭān]: “Those high gharānīq! Intercession from them is to be hoped for! [tilka al-gharānīq al-‘ulā min-hā al-shafā‘ah turtajā],” and the Prophet began to recite it [fa-ja‘ala yatū-hā].461

So Jibrīl came down and removed them [nasakha-hā] and said to him: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he tamānnā, Satan cast something into his ummiyyah” to His words, “and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

There is no doubt in Riwāyah 35 that the Prophet uttered the Satanic verses. It would appear that tamānnā is being glossed as “recitation [tilāwah]” as there is no mention of any desire on the part of the Prophet while the verb talā is used twice. As in Riwāyah 34 from al-Ḍaḥḥāk, what we apparently have here is an error that takes place during the actual process of Revelation. As in Riwāyah 34, there is no indication that the Prophet realizes that he has erred until he is corrected by Jibrīl.

It is interesting to note another similarity between the narratives in Riwāyahs 35 and 34. Although it is not stated explicitly (as it is in Riwāyah 34), the logic of the narrative in Riwāyah 35 would seem to presuppose that here, too, the Prophet is repeating the verse, “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?” We are told that the Prophet is reciting Sūrat al-Najm and that when Quraysh hear him mentioning their gods, they gather round him to listen to what he has to say. There is, of course, only one mention of the gods of Quraysh in Sūrat al-Najm, so for Quraysh to hear the Prophet mentioning their gods and to then have the time to gather round him to listen, the Prophet must, by implication, be repeating the verse in question. The similarity between the narratives is

458 The phrase in-nā nasma‘u-hu, “we hear him,” is not in Ibn Mardawayh / al-‘Aynī.
460 The phrase “when he was saying ‘Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?’” is not in Ibn Mardawayh / al-‘Aynī.
461 Ibn Mardawayh / al-‘Aynī: fa-‘alaqa yatū-hā, which has the same meaning.
underlined by the presence in both riwāyahs of the distinctive phrase ālihat al-ʿarab (“the gods of the Arabs”), which does not occur in any other riwāyah. Nonetheless, given that Riwāyah 35 does not explicitly present the same hermeneutical elaboration as Riwāyah 34, it is unlikely that one would detect the “repetition” motif in Riwāyah 35 if we did not have prior knowledge of Riwāyah 34.

The fact that the characteristic narrative motif in Riwāyah 34 is implied in the logic of Riwāyah 35, and the fact that they both share the ālihat al-ʿarab phrase, raises the question of whether the two reports are somehow linked as regards transmission. The most obvious candidate as a link is ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ʿAbbās, whose tafsīr tradition al-Ḍaḥḥāk is also known to have transmitted; one wonders if both Riwāyahs 34 and 35 stem from an interpretation of the incident taught by ʿAbd Allāh Ibn ʿAbbās. Certainly, Riwāyah 35 does suggest that the “repetition” idea was not exclusive to al-Ḍaḥḥāk in the first century. In the final analysis, however, since the two reports are not the same riwāyah bi-al-lafẓ, and are only by implication the same riwāyah bi-al-maʿnā, there is no particular need here to identify a common source. The fact that we were able to identify the hidden links in the cases of Riwāyahs 2 and 3, and 8 and 9, above, suggests that even if Riwāyahs 34 and 35 do stem from a common source, there is no reason to doubt that the isnāds are genuine as far as they go.

Finally, in view of the strong characterization of him as an early Shīʿī, it is particularly interesting that ʿAṭiyyah al-ʿAwf ī should have adduced the Satanic verses incident in explanation of Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥajj in a manner that is directly contradictory to the doctrine of ʿiṣmat al-anbiyāʾ, which, as we will see later in this book, would become so central to the Shīʿī credo from the mid-second century onwards. This is illustrative of how little later Shīʿīte creeds had to do with the proto-Shīʿīsm of late first- and early second-century Kufah on this point.⁴⁶²

⁴⁶² All Shīʿī sects subscribe to the doctrine of ʿiṣmat al-anbiyāʾ (see Madelung, “ʿIṣma”). It is, of course, possible that al-ʿAwf ī cited the incident in order to refute it, but there is nothing to suggest this in the sources.
Riwa'iyah 36: From Abū Ṣāliḥ

Riwa'iyah 36 is cited from Ibn ‘Abbās in the Tafsīr of Baḥr al-‘Ulūm Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandi (d. 375).\textsuperscript{463} Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandi does not give a fuller isnād than:

Abū Ṣāliḥ Bādhām al-Kūfī (d. 110 / 120) ← Ibn ‘Abbās.

We have already encountered Abū Ṣāliḥ and his appalling reputation in Riwa'iyah 21, of which report he is also the source. The text of Riwa'iyah 36, which he transmits from Ibn ‘Abbās, introduces a new narrative element we have not encountered before:

Satan came to him in the form of Jibrīl (fī ṣūrat Jibrīl) while he was reciting [wa-huwa yaqra'] the sūrah “By the star when it sets!” at the Ka'bah until, when he reached (intahā ilā) His words “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?” Satan cast upon his tongue [alqā al-shayṭān‘ alā lisāni-hi], “Those high gharānīq! From them intercession is to be sought! [iška al-gharānīq al-‘ulā min-hā al-shafā‘ah turtajā].” When the Mushrikūn heard that, it pleased them (a'jaba-hum), and when he reached the end of it (the sūrah), he made the sajdah, and the Mushrikūn and the Muslims made the sajdah with him.

Then Jibrīl came to the Prophet and said: “I did not bring you this (mā ji’tu-ka bi-hādhā)” So, “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet” came down.

The motif in Riwa’iyah 36 that has not appeared in any of the narratives thus far is the description of Satan appearing to Muḥammad “in the form of Jibrīl [fī ṣūrat Jibrīl].” This motif does not appear in Riwa’iyah 21, the isnād of which terminates with Abū Ṣāliḥ. This provides us with an illustration of the question raised above: why, if Ibn ‘Abbās functioned in the early tafsīr discourse as the mythic exemplar, should the same scholar, here Abū Ṣāliḥ, have attributed only some interpretations and reports to Ibn ‘Abbās’ great authority, and kept other interpretations associated with his own, presumably lesser, authority? A reasonable explanation would be to take these

\textsuperscript{463}Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandi, Tafsīr al-Samarqandi, 2:399–400.
attributions as real: certainly, they would suggest an indifference to the need to attribute reports to an authority figure.

The distinctive new motif in Riwāyah 36 serves as a hermeneutical elaboration explaining how the Prophet came to utter the Satanic verses: Muḥammad mistook Satan’s words for Jibrīl’s words because Satan deceived him by coming to him in the same form in which Jibrīl was wont to come to him. The fact that Jibrīl disavows the verses to the Prophet can also mean only that the Prophet has not of his own accord recognized them as being from Satan. That Satan could, indeed, imitate the form of Jibrīl, and that this possibility posed a danger to the secure transmission of Divine Revelation to the Prophet, is a notion that seems to have been accepted in the early Muslim community. This is illustrated in the following report cited from al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim by al-Ṭabarī in the commentary on Qur’ān 72:27 al-Jinn, “He (God) sends to guard him (the Prophet) in front and behind”:

When the angel (of Revelation) was sent to the Prophet [ḥā bu‘itha ilay-hi al-malak], other angels [malā’ıkah] were sent to guard him (the Prophet) front and back [min bayni yaday-hi wa-min khalfi-hi], lest Satan assume the form of the angel [an yatashabbaha al-shayṭān ‘alā šūrat al-malak].

This report frankly assumes not only that Satan is able to assume the form of the Angel of Revelation but also that the Prophet is not necessarily able to distinguish between Satan and the Angel of Revelation. For this reason, when the Angel of Revelation comes to the Prophet, the Angel is attended by guardian angels. This image would seem to represent an early concept of the idea of ‘iṣmat al-anbiyā’—the “Protection of the Prophets.” The Prophet himself being unable to distinguish between Satan and the Agent of Revelation, an external mechanism was required to ensure the security of the process of Revelation. In the Satanic verses incident, there seems to have been a breach of security.

464 fa-inna-hu yasluku min bayni yaday-hi wa-min khalfi-hi raṣadan.

**Riwa'iyah 37** is cited from Ibn ‘Abbās in the commentary on Sūrat al-Ḥajj in a little noticed *tafsīr* manuscript, MS Milan, Ambrosiana, Nuovo Fondo A.47, the bulk of which (including the account of the Satanic verses incident) is transmitted by the following *isnād*:


This manuscript seems to be an incomplete and apparently unique copy of a *tafsīr* listed by al-Tha'labī (d. 431) in the sources for his *al-Kashf wa-al-bayān* among the six “*Tafsīrs* textually transmitted from Ibn ‘Abbās [al-tafsīrāt al-manṣūṣāt ‘an Ibn ‘Abbās].” Al-Tha’labī cites this as *Tafsīr al-Dimyāṭī bi-isnādi-hi*—the “*Tafsīr* of al-Dimyāṭī by his *isnād*.” The indication here is that al-Dimyāṭī was not the author of the *tafsīr* but rather its particular and pre-eminent transmitter in his generation—doubtless by virtue of his having been (exclusively?) authorized to transmit by its *isnād*. This is corroborated by the fact that in three places in the manuscript the transmission is designated by the phrase “Bakr b. Sahl *bi-isnādi-hi,*” while in a further five places the designation is “‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Thaqafī *bi-isnādi-hi.*” Fuat Sezgin has attributed responsibility for transmission of the *tafsīr* to Mūsā b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣan‘ānī (from whom ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Thaqafī transmits), presumably because Mūsā b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān is the “common link” between the above *isnād* and the second *isnād*, which transmits a lesser portion of the work:

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467 MS Milan, Ambrosiana, Nuovo Fondo A.47, f. 27a, 58b, 103a. The work as a whole is carried forward from Bakr b. Sahl in the Ambrosiana MS by an *isnād* (given at f. 16a) that need not be detailed here, except to note that it is different from the *isnād* by which it made its way forward to al-Tha'labī.

468 MS Milan, Ambrosiana, Nuovo Fondo A.47, f. 6b, 75a, 88a, 91b, 113b.

The portion of the isnād that goes back from Mūsā b. ‘ Abd al-Raḥmān al-Šan'ānī to Ibn ‘ Abbās—namely, ‘ Abd al-Malik Ibn Jurayj ← ‘ Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ al-Makkī—is an extremely distinguished chain of transmission whose extensive appearance in the elaboration of early Islamic law in the Muṣannaf of ‘ Abd al-Razzāq al-Šan'ānī has received detailed study from Harald Motzki. In the context of that collection, Motzki has identified “a number of formal criteria which speak for the genuineness of the corpus of ‘ Aṭā’ traditions in the work of Ibn Jurayj.”470 It is worth noting that al-Tha'labī gives Ibn Jurayj as the first transmitter of what he identifies as the Tafsīr of ‘ Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ, for which he also gives this isnād:


Al-Tha'labī also cites a Tafsīr Ibn Jurayj by the same isnād up to Ibn Jurayj, but without going back beyond him either to ‘ Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ or to Ibn ‘ Abbās.472


470 See Motzki, Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence, especially 77–171 (the quotation is at 77), and 246–262.

471 Al-Tha’labī, Mufassirū sharq, 31–32.

In other words, there is a significant historical association of the isnād Bakr b. Sahl al-Dimyāṭī ← ‘Abd al-Ghanī b. Saʿīd al-Ṭa qa fī al-Ṣanʿānī ← Mūsā b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣanʿānī with the tafsīr corpuses from both Ibn Jurayj and ‘Aṭāʾ b. Abī Rabāḥ, and going back through these two to Ibn ‘Abbās. Indeed, it is highly revealing to note that Bakr b. Sahl’s isnād was sufficiently famous in his own lifetime for him to be offered substantial sums of money to teach the Tafsīr when on tour—this despite the fact that all the transmitters from Ibn Jurayj are of poor repute. The only record of Bakr b. Sahl’s standing as a Ḥadīth transmitter is that the compiler of the canonical Sunan, his contemporary al-Nasāʾī, deemed him “weak.”473 ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Ṭa qa fī, who was similarly categorized as “weak in Ḥadīth,” is an obscure figure primarily remembered for his transmission of this tafsīr.474 The isnād takes a particularly interesting turn with Mūsā b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣanʿānī, the transmitter from Ibn Jurayj, who was known primarily as a mufassir.475 The Ḥadīth authority Ibn Ḥiiband (d. 354 / 965) launched a blistering attack on this very transmission:


476 Ibn Ḥiiband, Majrūḥin, 2:242; see also Ibn al-Jawzī, Ḍuʿafāʾ, 3:147; al-Dhahabī, Mīzān, 4:211–212; Sezgin, GAS, 1:39.
Ibn Ḥibbān’s critique is instructive on several counts. He is most anxious to discredit the claim of the isnād that the tafsīr is transmitted from Ibn ‘Abbās by such a fine isnād as Ibn Jurayj ← ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ, two major sources of early Islamic law to whom the Ḥadīth scholars can have no objection. Not only does he accuse Mūsā the “Anti-Christ” of forging the isnād, but also he replaces Mūsā’s two distinguished jurists with two mufassirs—Muqātil b. Sulaymān and Muḥammad b. al-Sā’ib al-Kalbī—who, despite their great importance in the domain of Qur’ān exegesis, are (as we have seen) thoroughly discreditable individuals in the criteria of the Ḥadīth movement. By this attribution, Ibn Ḥibbān succeeds in enabling the a priori rejection of any report in this Tafsīr the content of which the ahl al-ḥadīth find objectionable. Ibn Ḥibbān further claims that the ‘Aṭā’ from whom Mūsā narrated was not ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ at all, but rather ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Muslim al-Khurasānī (d. 135), who did not study with Ibn ‘Abbās at all. It is noteworthy, however, that al-Tha‘labī cites an independent Tafsīr ‘Aṭā’ al-Khurāsānī by a completely different isnād that includes none of the transmitters of Riwāyah 37. That Ibn Ḥibbān’s claim was not supported even by his fellow rijāl-critics is evident in the fact that his junior contemporary, Ibn ‘Adī, while generally suspicious of Mūsā b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, conceded that “his reporting from Ibn Ju- rayj from ‘Aṭā’ from Ibn ‘Abbās might be acceptable [qad yuqbal].”

The following is the commentary on Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj:

His words: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he tamannā, Satan cast something into his umniyyah,” meaning: into his recitation [fi qirā’ati-hi].

That was because a satan called al-Abyaḍ (shayṭānan yuqāl la-hu al-abyaḍ) had come to the Prophet in the form of Jibrīl (fī ṣūrat Jibrīl).

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478 For al-Kalbī, see Riwāyah 23, and for Muqātil, see Riwāyahs 27 to 30, above.
479 For this figure of somewhat uncertain identity, see al-Dhahabi, Siyar, 6:140–143.
480 Al-Tha‘labī, Mufassirū sharq, 32.
481 Ibn ‘Adī, al-Kāmil, 6:349.
482 Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān, MS Milan, Ambrosiana, Nuovo Fondo A.47, f.33a-b. The isnād does not immediately precede the report, but is given at the beginning of the commentary on Sūrat al-Nūr at MS Ambrosiana, Nuovo Fondo A.47, f.43a. The commentary on Sūrat al-Ḥajj begins with the summary citation: Bakr b. Sahl bi-isnādi-hi; see f. 27a.
while the Prophet was reciting Sūrat al-Najm. And when he reached \[\text{[intahā īlā]}, \text{“Have you seen al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā?”}\] he cast into the Prophet’s recitation (\[\text{alqāʿ fī qirāʿat al-nabī}\]), “Indeed, they are the high gharānīqah! And, indeed, their intercession is to be hoped for! [\text{wa-inna-hunna al-gharānīqah al-‘ulā wa-inna shafāʿatā-hunna la-turtajā!}]."  

Like Riwāyah 36, Riwāyah 37 contains the motif of shayṭān appearing to the Prophet “in the form of Jibrīl [\text{fi ʂūrat Jibrīl}].” The transmission of the \[\text{fi ʂūrat Jibrīl}\] motif from Ibn ‘Abbās by two separate isnāds whose transmitters are distinct from the first generation indicates the association with Ibn ‘Abbās of this motif already by the late first / early second century. Also, like Riwāyah 36, Riwāyah 37 does not expressly state that the Prophet uttered the verses (and unlike Riwāyah 36, Riwāyah 37 contains no correction scence), but since (as noted above) the point of the \[\text{fi ʂūrat Jibrīl}\] motif is to explain shayṭān’s deception, this is the only logical reading. Riwāyah 37 glosses tamānnā/umniyyah as “recitation [qirāʿah], which is the same meaning as in Riwāyah 36 “while he was reciting [\text{wa-huwa yaqra’}].”

Riwāyah 37 does, however, contain a distinctive new motif not present in Riwāyah 36: it identifies the shayṭān in question as one al-Abyaḍ—literally, “the White One.” In other words, the al-shayṭān of Qurʾān 22:52 is here not the arch-Satan himself but one of his henchmen. Al-Abyaḍ does not seem ever to have become a major figure in Islamic literature—which is in any case oddly impoverished as regards demonology—but he is cited by Ibn ‘Ādil al-Dimashqī (d. 880) as “the shayṭān al-Abyaḍ who would come to the Prophet in the form of Jibrīl seeking to lead him astray,” 484 by Ismāʿīl Ḥaqqī Burūsawī (d. 1137/1724) as “the shayṭān al-Abyaḍ who comes to the

483 A summary version of this report is cited from ‘Aṭā’ from Ibn ‘Abbās by Abū Bakr b. ‘Ali al-Ḥaddād (d. 800) in his \text{Tafsīr al-Ḥaddād}, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Yaḥyā (Beirut: Dār al-Madār al-Islāmī, 2003), 4:437; also MS Istanbul, Aya Sofya 189, f. 244a, and MS Istanbul, Muṣalla Medresesi 12, f. 29b. “A shayṭān called al-Abyaḍ came to the Prophet and cast into his recitation, ‘Indeed, they are the high gharānīq! And, indeed their intercession is to be hoped for! [\text{wa-inna-hā al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafāʿatā-hunna la-turtajā!}].’”

righteous in the form of the Truth (al-haqq)," and by Râghib Pâşâ (1698–1763) as “the one who whispers suggestions (yuwaswis) to the Prophets.” The early tafsîr literature expresses the idea that the Prophet needed to be guarded from al-Abyaḍ’s nefarious purposes. The following is from the Tafsîr of Muqâtil b. Sulaymân, in the commentary on Qur’an 81:19–20 al-Takwîr, “Indeed, it is the word of a noble messenger: endowed with strength, secured with He of the Throne” (Qur’an 81:25 al-Takwîr goes on to say: “It is not the word of an accursed shaytân”).

When the Prophet was sent, Iblîs said, “Who is for this Prophet who has emerged from the land of Tihâmah? And a shaytân called al-Abyaḍ, who was the Companion of the Prophets [ṣâḥib al-anbiyâ’], said: “I am for him.” So he came to the Prophet, and found him in the house of al-Ṣafâ. When he (the Prophet) turned, al-Abyaḍ stood up in the form of Jibrîl (fî sîrat Jibrîl) to communicate to him (li-yûḥiya ilay-hi). So Jibrîl came down and put his hand between him and the Prophet and pushed him (al-Abyaḍ) gently. By this, he was thrust away from Mecca and landed in the furthest parts of India.

Again, the concept here is that the Prophet could not, in his own capacity, distinguish between Jibrîl and a Satanic imitation of Jibrîl—hence the need for him to be protected from his deception by angelic

486 Râghib Pâşâ, Safînat al-râghib wa-daqiqat al-maṭâlib (Cairo: Bûlâq, 1282h), cited by Toufic Fahd, “Anges, démons et jinns en Islam,” Sources Orientales 8 (1971), 155–214, at 193 (Toufic’s article is the best source I know of on Islamic demonology). One is tempted to posit an association between al-Abyaḍ and the “white-headed demon” (dîb-e sar safid) of the Persian epics; see Mahmoud Omidsalar, “Div,” Encyclopaedia Iranica, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, continued by Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1982–ongoing) (ElP). Given al-Abyaḍ’s diabolical nature, one is also sorely tempted to provide a more henchman-like rendering of his name—such as “Whitey.”
487 inna-hu la-qawlu rasûlin karîm: dhî quwwatin ‘inda dhî al-‘arshi makîn.
488 wa-mâ huwa bi-qawli shaytânîn rajîm.
489 Tafsîr Muqâtîl b. Sulaymân, 4:602–603. The fact that Muqâtîl nowhere adduces al-Abyaḍ in his four separate discussions of the Satanic verses, nor suggests that Satan appeared to Muḥammad in the form of Jibrîl, as is also the case with al-Kalbî, somewhat undermines Ibn Ḥîbbân’s claim that Mûsâ b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmân compiled the tafsîr from the discourse of al-Kalbî and Muqâtîl b. Sulaymân since, as we have seen, neither of these mufassîrs mentions that Satan appeared in the form of Jibrîl, or names al-Abyaḍ.
intervention. And despite Jibrīl’s spectacular dispatch of al-Abyaḍ to India, in the Satanic verses incident the shayṭān seems to have returned with more success than on his first attempt.

Riwāyah 38: Cited Directly from Ibn ‘Abbās in the Gharā’īb al-Qur’ān of Niẓām al-Dīn al-Naysābūrī

There is a further narrative of the Satanic verses incident, Riwāyah 38, that like Riwāyah 37 contains the “al-Abyaḍ” motif; that like Riwāyah 36 contains a correction scene; and that like both Riwāyahs 36 and 37 contains the fi ṣūrat Jibrīl motif. Riwāyah 38 is reported from Ibn ‘Abbās, but without an isnād, in the Gharā’īb al-Qur’ān wa-raghā’īb al-furqān of Niẓām al-Dīn al-Naysābūrī (d. 728).

A devil called al-Abyaḍ (shayṭānan yuqāl la-hu al-Abyaḍ) came to him in the form of Jibrīl (fi ṣūrat Jibrīl) and cast them (the Satanic verses) upon him [alqā-hā ilay-hi], and he (the Prophet) recited them [fa-qa-ra’a-hā]. When the Mushrikūn heard that, it pleased them. Then Jibrīl came and asked him (the Prophet) to recite back to him (Jibrīl), and he recited it (Sūrat al-Najm). When he (the Prophet) reached those words, he (Jibrīl) reproached him [ankara ‘alay-hi], and the Prophet said to him: “Someone came to me in your form [atā-ni ātin ‘alā ṣūrat-ka and cast them (the Satanic verses) on my tongue [fa-alqā-hā ‘alā lisān-ī].

In Riwāyah 38, that the Prophet recited what Satan cast is expressly stated twice: in the account of Satan’s casting—“and he (the Prophet) recited them”—and in the correction scene where the Prophet him-

490 The author of a commentary on the Tafsīr al-Jalālayn (necessarily, a work authored after the death of al-Suyūṭī in 911/1505), one Ibn al-Yāzījī (about whom I have been able to learn nothing), expressly states that Prophets were “protected from ‘uṣimū min him (al-Abyaḍ)”; Mā qarra bi-hi al-‘ayn fī ḥall Tafsīr al-Jalālayn MS Damascus, Maktabat al-Asad 12168, f. 110b.

491 As a rule, I have avoided presenting direct citations from Ibn ‘Abbās in later sources as independent riwāyahs, but in the present case I am making an exception since this account contains the distinctive “al-Abyaḍ” motif and thus is clearly related to Riwāyah 37.

self explains to Jibrīl the cause of his error: “Someone came to me in your form and cast them (the Satanic verses) on my tongue.” The text of the Satanic verses themselves is not given in this report, but this is likely to represent editorial economy, as the report is adduced in the context of explaining the incident that has already been narrated earlier along with the text of the Satanic verses.

Riwāyahs 36, 37, and 38 thus represent a distinctive hermeneutical elaboration of the Satanic verses incident: the Prophet was deceived into uttering the Satanic verses by Satan appearing to him in the form of Jibrīl. This interpretation of the incident was remembered from Ibn ‘Abbās, and was in circulation in the early Muslim community in the late first / early second century. Riwāyahs 37 and 38 name the Satan in question as “the White One.”

Riwāyah 39: From Abū Sāliḥ; from ‘Ikrimah the mawlā of Ibn ‘Abbās; and from an Unnamed Source

Riwāyah 39, which goes back to Ibn ‘Abbās by three different isnāds, is cited by al-Suyūṭī in the Durr from the Taḥsīr of Aḥmad Ibn Mardawayh al-Iṣbahānī (323–410).493 Al-Suyūṭī gives only abbreviated isnāds, which, in two instances, are more fully provided by Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, who does not, however, cite the text of the report:494


The first isnād contains two transmitters we have encountered transmitting other reports on the Satanic verses, Abū Sāliḥ Bādhām al-Kūfī (see Riwāyahs 21 and 37) and Muḥammad b. al-Sā‘īb al-

493 Al-Suyūṭī, Durr, 6:66.
494 Ibn Ḥajar, Fatḥ, 18:41.
Kalbî al-Kūfî (Riwa'yah 23).\textsuperscript{495} Again, since neither of Riwa'yahs 21 and 23 is attributed to Ibn 'Abbâs, the question again arises of why, if Ibn 'Abbâs functioned in the early tafsîr discourse as the mythic exemplar, should the same scholars have attributed only some reports to him and not others. It is further interesting to note that Ibn Mardawayh’s contemporary, al-Tha'labî, cites two separate tafsîrs, Tafsîr al-Kalbî and Tafsîr al-Ṣâlihî, which are both transmitted from Ibn 'Abbâs by al-Kalbî from Abû Šâlih.\textsuperscript{496} The present isnâd is initially Kufan but moves to Bâṣrah with the transmitter from al-Kalbî, Yaḥyâ b. Kathîr al-Bâṣrî, who presumably studied with al-Kalbî during the latter’s teaching appointment in Bâṣrah in the 130s (see Riwa'yah 21). Like al-Kalbî, Yaḥyâ b. Kathîr was accused of tashayyu‘ and has a bad reputation with the Ḥadîth scholars.\textsuperscript{497} The transmitter from Yaḥyâ, ‘Abbâd b. Šuhayb, was accused of being a Qadarî, and also has a bad reputation with the Ḥadîth scholars.\textsuperscript{498}

In the second isnâd, the transmitter from Ibn ‘Abbâs is probably the most important of those who related from him, his famous Berber mawla, ‘Ikrimah, of whom Juynboll observes: “On the one hand, the Ḥadîth experts did not trust him but, on the other hand, could not do without the material allegedly transmitted via him.”\textsuperscript{499} Several authorities are remembered as considering ‘Ikrimah to be the most learned of Ibn ‘Abbâs’s companions in tafsîr: Ibn Abî Ḥâtim al-Râzî wrote, “My father was asked which of Sa‘îd b. Jubayr and ‘Ikrimah was the most learned in tafsîr; he said, ‘The companions of Ibn ‘Abbâs were as children [‘ayâl] compared to ‘Ikrimah.’”\textsuperscript{500} ‘Ikri-

\textsuperscript{495} The presence of these two in the isnâd is sufficient reason for its rejection as unreliable by al-Albâni, Naṣb al-majâniq, 17; al-Ḥalabî al-Atharî, Dalâ‘îl, 69–70.
\textsuperscript{496} Al-Tha'labî, Mufassirû sharq, 23–26.
\textsuperscript{498} See al-Bukhârî, al-Kabîr, 2/3;43; Ibn Abî Ḥâtim, Jarîr, 6:81–82; Ibn Ḥibbân, Majrûhîn, 2:164–165; al-‘Uqaylî, Dî‘a‘fî, 3:891–892; Ibn al-Jawzî, Dî‘a‘fî, 2:74; al-Nasâ‘î, Dî‘a‘fî, 173. Shu‘bah b. al-Ḥajjâj is reported to have attended a session with ‘Abbâd and to have emerged condemning anyone who transmitted from him.
\textsuperscript{499} Juynboll, Muslim Tradition, 56.
\textsuperscript{500} Ibn Abî Ḥâtim, Jarîr, 6–9, at 9; see al-Dhahabî, Siyar, 5:12–36, at 32; Ibn Ḥajar, Tahdhib, 7:263–273; Ibn ‘Adî, Kâmil, 5:266–277; Tayyar Altıkulaç, “İkrime el-Berberî,” TDVİA.
mah’s *Tafsīr* from Ibn ‘Abbās was mentioned as a distinct work by two contemporaries of Ibn Mardawayh, his senior contemporary, Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380), and al-Tha‘labī. This is a Basran *isnād* and, of the transmitters from ‘Ikrimah, Abū Bakr al-Hudhalī has a poor reputation as a Ḥadīth transmitter, but Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī is immaculate and, it is interesting to note, is specifically remembered as validating ‘Ikrimah’s transmissions.

Sulaymān b. Bilāl al-Madanī, the sole named transmitter in the third, *munqaṭi‘ isnād*, was collector of *kharāj* in Madīnah. In view of the fact that he is greatly respected as a Ḥadīth transmitter, it is interesting that the link between him and Ibn ‘Abbās is unnamed, a practice that was not uncommon in the second century, especially in *sīrah* reports, but that became unacceptable after the formulation of Ḥadīth methodology.

What we have here, then, are three different *isnāds* from three different cities, Kūfah, Baṣrah, and Madīnah, all of which go back to Ibn ‘Abbās and are cited as carrying the same report:

> While the Messenger of God was in Mecca, he recited [qara‘a’u] Sūrat al-Najm. And when he came upon this verse: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt, the third, the other?,” Satan cast onto his tongue [alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi]: “Indeed, they are the high gharānīq [in-
na-hā al-gharānīq al-‘ulā].” So God sent down: “We have not sent before you. . . .”

In this brief riwāyah, the phrase “Satan cast onto his tongue” makes it clear that Riwāyah 39, like Riwāyahs 35 to 38 from Ibn ‘Abbās, takes the position that the Prophet uttered the verses. Like Riwāyah 35, there is no explicit gloss of tamannā; in the absence of any contextualizing information, the implication would seem to be that it means “recitation.”

Riwāyahs 40 to 44: Sa‘īd b. Jubayr from Ibn ‘Abbās

Riwāyahs 40 to 46 are transmitted from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr al-Kūfī al-Makkī (45–94), a leading Qur’ān scholar of the first century and one of the most prominent of Ibn ‘Abbās’s students.

The isnāds of Riwāyahs 40, 41, 43, and 44 go back to Ibn ‘Abbās, while those of Riwāyahs 42, 45, and 46 stop at Sa‘īd b. Jubayr. The rijāl literature acknowledges Sa‘īd b. Jubayr’s learning and integrity. He participated in the Kufan revolt of Ibn al-Ash‘ath and, thirteen years later, was personally executed by al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf for insisting on the legitimacy of his involvement in the revolt. He is cited in all of the canonical Ḥadīth collections. However, it is noted of him that most of the reports he transmitted were marāsīl. While no tafsīr work from him has survived intact, Ibn al-Nadīm does cite a Kitāb Tafsīr Sa‘īd b. Jubayr that, according to a report recorded by al-Dhahabi, was composed at the behest of the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (d. 86).509


Riwāyahs 40, 41, and 42 represent the transmission from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr of his student ‘Uthmān b. al-Aswād al-Makkī (d. 150), a Ḥadīth transmitter of unimpeachable repute, in two almost identical isnāds and a third separate isnād. One of these, Riwāyah 42, stops at Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, while Riwāyahs 40 and 41 go back to ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās. The texts carried by the different isnāds are remarkably similar, both in narrative construction and hermeneutical elaboration of the incident.

Riwāyah 40: In the Mukhtārah of al-Ḍiyā’ al-Maqsādī with a Deficient isnād

Riwāyah 40, with the isnād going back to Ibn ‘Abbās, is cited from the Tafsīr of Ibn Mardawayh (323–410) in a later Ḥadīth collection, the Mukhtārah of al-Ḍiyā’ al-Maqsādī (537–643). By al-Ḍiyā’ al-Maqsādī’s own account, the work consists in the main of reports with sound isnāds that do not appear in the respective Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, but also contains some reports carried by apparently sound isnāds that, in fact, contain weaknesses that al-Ḍiyā’ al-Maqsādī undertakes to identify.511, 512

Riwāyah 40 is also cited in the Durr of al-Suyūṭī both directly from Ibn Mardawayh and from al-Ḍiyā’ al-Maqdisī’s citation of him. Al-Suyūṭī does not give Ibn Mardawayh’s isnād, but says that it is made of reliable transmitters (sanad rījālu-hu thiqāt).519 The first four transmitters from Sa’īd b. Jubayr in Ibn Mardawayh’s

Albānī, Naṣb al-majānīq, 8, from this unpublished manuscript (at that time in the Zāhiriyah library), but without citing the manuscript number. For a summary description of the work, and extant manuscripts, see the study of al-Ḍiyā’ al-Maqdisī by Muḥammad Muṭī’ al-Ḥāfiẓ, al-Tanwīh wa-al-tabyīn fī sīrat muḥaddith al-Shām al-Ḥāfiẓ Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmiyyah, 1999), 314–317–323 (the present manuscript is detailed at 318).

513 Ibn Mardawayh does not actually cite his father in the isnād, but since al-Dhahabī notes at the outset of his biographical entry that Ibn Mardawayh related from Ibn Mattuwayh by way of his father, I am assuming the link here.

514 See Abū Nu’aym, Akhbār Iṣbahān, 2:214.


519 See al-Suyūṭī, al-Durr, 6:65. According to al-Suyūṭi, this report is also cited by al-Bazzār (d. 290) and al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360), which is not the case. Al-Suyūṭi is referring here to Riwāyahs 43 and 44, which are cited by al-Bazzār and al-Ṭabarānī, respectively, and which both go back to Sa’īd b. Jubayr via Abū Bishr. The reports collected in the Mukhtārah of al-Ḍiyā’ were generally regarded by Ḥadīth scholars as being sound: al-Dhahabī observed, “They are Ḥadīths that may be used as authorities, except over that which is in al-Bukhārī and Muslim [wa-hiya al-aḥādīth allatī yaṣluḥu an yaḥtajja bi-hā illā siwā al-ṣaḥīḥayn].” However it is unlikely that al-Dhahabī, his characterization of the Mukhtārah notwithstanding, would have accepted the present isnād: he was a firm opponent of the Satanic verses incident. Al-Qāsim al-Bīrzālī (d. 739/1339) called the work the “Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Ḍiyā’.” For these, and the similar opinions of other Ḥadīth scholars, see al-Ḥāfiẓ, al-Tanwīh wa-al-tabyīn, 315–316.
isnād are, certainly, all unimpeachable. Interestingly, they also seem to have been primarily muḥaddithūn, although ‘Uthmān b. al-Aswad also studied under two other prominent first-century muḥaddishūn, Mujāhid b. Jabr and ‘Aṭiyyah b. Sa’d al-‘Awfi. However, the fifth transmitter, Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Muqri’ al-Baghdādī, is damagingly obscure: there seems to be only one biographical entry on him, and while he is not expressly criticized in it, his presence in the isnād was sufficient reason for Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī to reject the riwāyah.520 While al-Albānī’s standards of isnād criticism are unusually severe, in the present instance his assessment seems justified. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy not only that al-Ḍiyā al-Maqdisī does not identify any deficiency in the isnād but also that Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī deemed this the most reliable of the isnāds that transmit the Satanic verses incident.521

The following is the narrative of the Satanic verses incident:

The Messenger of God recited [qara’a]: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?” and Satan cast onto his tongue [fa-alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi]: “Those high gharānīq: their intercession is to be hoped for! [ilīka al-qhariqīq al-‘ulā wa-shaṣa‘atu-hunna turtajā].”522

And the Mushrikūn were greatly pleased by this and said: “He has mentioned our gods.”

So Jibrīl came to him and said: “Recite to me [iqra’] ‘alay-ya what I brought you!” And he recited: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other? Those high gharānīq: their intercession is hoped for!” He (Jibrīl) said: “I did not bring you this! This is from Satan! [mā ataytu-ka bi-hādhā ‘an al-shayṭān]”; or he said: “This is from Satan! I did not bring you these” [aw qāla hādhā min al-shayṭān lam ṣā-ka bi-hā].523

520 Al-Albānī, Naṣb al-majānīq, 8–9, rejects al-Muqri’ as majhūl (indeed, there is only one biographical entry on him, that in the Tārīkh Baghdād—see above); see also al-Ḥalabī al-Athāri, Dalā’il, 92.


522 Al-Suyūṭī has: ilīka al-qhariqīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā‘atu-humma lā-turtajā.

523 This is the text in Ibn Mardawayh. Al-Suyūṭī’s text omits the alternative version of Jibrīl’s words: “or he said: ‘This is from Satan! I did not bring you these [aw qāla hādhā min al-shayṭān lam at-ta-ka bi-hā].’”
So God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he tamannā, Satan cast something into his um-niyyah” to the end of the verse.

*Riwāyah 41: In the Tafsīr of Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī with an Unacknowledged ṣaḥīḥ isnād*

In fact, there is an equally—if not more—reliable isnād that has apparently gone unnoticed by later commentators. This is *Riwāyah 41*, effectively a summary version of *Riwāyah 40*, cited in the *Tafsīr* of Baḥr al-‘Ulūm Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī with the following isnād:524


This isnād is almost identical to the previous one, with two differences—one of them being especially significant. This is the absence from the isnād of *Riwāyah 41* of the weak link in the isnād of *Riwāyah 40*—namely, Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Muqri’ al-Baghdādī. In *Riwāyah 41*, Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Mattuwayh al-Iṣbahānī transmits directly from Jaʿfar al-Ṭayālisī al-Baghdādī, without the mediation of Muḥammad b. al-Muqri’; a scenario that is entirely reasonable given their death dates, and the fact that Ibn Mattuwayh is recorded as having studied in Iraq.527 The transmitter from Ibn 524 Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī, *Tafsīr al-Samarqandī*, 2:400.
525 The published text gives the name as Jaʿfar b. Zayd al-Ṭayālisī, but “Zayd” is here evidently an orthographic corruption of “Muḥammad.”
526 The published text gives the name as ‘Ammār b. al-Aswad, but again, “‘Ammār” is here self-evidently an orthographic corruption of “‘Uthmān.”
527 Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 14:142. The fact that in *Riwāyah 42* Muḥammad b. Mattuwayh transmits directly from Jaʿfar al-Ṭayālisī without the mediation of the offending Muḥammad b. al-Muqri’ makes the presence of Muḥammad b. al-Muqri’ in *Riwāyah 41* somewhat curious as the isnād, to which he is effectivly superfluous, functions perfectly well without him. Indeed, the fact that Muḥammad b. al-Muqri’ serves no function other than to undermine the isnād in *Riwāyah*
Mattuwayh, al-Khalil b. Aḥmad al-Sijzī, was the qāḍī of Samarqand, the leading Ḥanafī jurist of the city, and a teacher of the great Ḥadīth scholar al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī. The following is the account of the Satanic verses incident:

The Messenger of God recited: “And Manāt, the third, the other.” Then he said: “Those high gharānīq: indeed, intercession from them is to be hoped for tīlka al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna al-shafā‘ah min-hā turtajāl!” So the Mushrikūn said, “He has mentioned our gods.” Then the verse [Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj] was sent down.

Despite its brevity, this report contains the essential elements of the Satanic verses incident: the Prophet recited the gharānīq verses following his recitation of Qur’ān 53:19 al-Najm. The association of the incident with Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj straightforwardly indicates that these verses were cast by Satan onto the Prophet’s tongue. Despite its immaculate isnād, this report was never included in any Ḥadīth collection; indeed, it seems never to have been cited again in the subsequent literature, as a result of which the Ḥadīth scholars have been spared the task of discrediting it.

Riwāyah 42: In the Asbāb al-nuzūl of al-Wāḥidī with an isnād Stopping at Saʿīd b. Jubayr

Riwāyah 42 is given by al-Wāḥidī al-Naysābūrī (d. 487) in his Asbāb al-nuzūl, by a different isnād to Riwāyahs 40 and 41. This isnād also goes back via ‘Uthmān b. al-Aswad to Saʿīd b. Jubayr, but is not attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās.

41 reminds one of the phenomenon by which opponents of a given Ḥadīth would undermine that Ḥadīth by adding a weak link to an otherwise sound isnād; see Norman Calder, Studies in Early Muslim Jurisprudence (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 235–241, on what he calls “invention in order to impugn.”


Sahl b. ‘Uthmān al-Rāzī is recorded as having compiled both a Musnad and a Tafsīr, both of which Abū Yaḥyā ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Rāzī is reported to have brought from Rayy to Iṣbahān. It is not unlikely that Riwāyah 42 was contained in Sahl’s Tafsīr:

The Messenger of God recited [qara’a]: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other? Those high gharāniq: their intercession is to be hoped for! [tilka al-gharāniq al-‘ulā wa-shafā‘atuh-hunna turtajā].”

And the Mushrikūn were greatly pleased by this and said: “He has mentioned our gods.”

‘Uthmān ← . The isnād is duly rejected as mursal by al-Ṣawwayānī, al-Qaṣimah, 1:434. 530

I cannot identify this scholar; cf. the isnād at Asbāb al-nuzūl, 165, cited above. 531

The citation is: Abū Bakr [Muḥammad] b. Ḥayyān; the editor, Aḥmad al-Ṣaqr, has added the name Muḥammad. This may be Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Ja’far b. Ḥayyān Abī al-Shaykh al-Iṣbahānī (see Riwāyah 6, above). He is known to have transmitted from Abū Yaḥyā ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Salm, and is sometimes cited as Abū al-Shaykh b. Ḥayyān; see al-Dhahabī, Sīyar, 13:530; cf. the isnād at Asbāb al-nuzūl, 165. 532


This sentence differs from Riwāyah 40 only in the omission of the phrase “and Satan cast onto his tongue [fa-âlqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisānī-hi],” and of the rhetorical particle inna from the Satanic verses themselves.
Jibril came to the Messenger of God and said: “Go over the Word of God with me [‘i‘riḍ ‘alay-ya kalām Allāh]!” When he went over (it) with him [fa-lammā ‘araḍa ‘alay-hi], he (Jibril) said: “As for this, I did not bring it to you! This is from Satan! [ammā hādhā fa-lāttī-ka bi hi hādhā min al-shayṭān].”

So God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he tamannā, Satan cast something into his umniyyah.”

It is evident that Riwāyahs 40 and 42 are close paraphrases of each other in which the narrative structure is effectively identical, and that the differences in wording between the two do not in any way affect the hermeneutical elaboration of the incident. Riwāyah 40, which Ibn Mardawayh’s isnād attributes to Ibn ‘Abbās, is the same riwāyah bi-al-ma‘nā as Riwāyah 42, the isnād of which stops at Sa‘īd b. al-Jubayr. Not only does this strongly suggest that the interpretation of the incident in Riwāyahs 40 and 42 was, indeed, transmitted by ‘Uthmān b. al-Aswad from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr at the end of the first-century of Islam, but also, at the level of ma‘nā, it becomes reasonable to attribute the report to Ibn ‘Abbās. On the other hand, the question arises as to why the isnād for Riwāyahs 40 and 41 should go back to Ibn ‘Abbās, while that of Riwāyah 42 stops at Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, when Riwāyahs 40 and 42 are essentially the same report. This issue will be taken up in the concluding discussion for Riwāyahs 40 to 46 from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr. For the moment, it should be noted that the interpretation in Riwāyahs 40, 41, and 42 is fundamentally no different from that in Riwāyah 35 (and the less detailed Riwāyah 39): there is no gloss of umniyyah to mean “desire” and in the absence of any contextualization of the incident, the default gloss is “recitation.” Also, in Riwāyah 42, as in Riwāyah 40, the Prophet does not realize he has erred until corrected by Jibrīl, and while (it would seem, in the interest of brevity) there is no correction scene in the summary Riwāyah 41, the Prophetic error is resolved here by the revelation of Qur‘ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj. All five reports represent a consistent hermeneutical tradition that is linked by three of the isnāds to Ibn ‘Abbās.
Riwayahs 43 and 44: Shu‘bah ← Abū Bishr ← Sa‘īd b. Jubayr ← Ibn ‘Abbās

Riwayahs 43 and 44 are transmitted from Ibn ‘Abbās by what, until the sixth transmitter, is the same isnād. They are the only riwayahs on the Satanic verses incident cited in early Ḥadīth collections, as opposed to early sirah-maghāzī or tafsīr works.536

Riwayah 43: Cited from Yūsuf b. Ḥammād al-Baṣrī in the Musnad of al-Bazzār with Two Cautionary Remarks

Riwayah 43 was recorded in the Musnad of the widely traveled third-century Basran Ḥadīth scholar Abū Bakr Ahmad b. ‘Amr al-Bazzār (d. 292).537 It also appears in the Kashf al-astār ‘an zawā’id al-Bazzār of Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī (d. 807),538 a work consisting of the zawā’id from al-Bazzār’s Musnad (i.e., those reports that are not found in the canonical Ḥadīth collections).539 Al-Haythamī’s student, Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852), then prepared an abridged version of the Kashf al-astār omitting those Ḥadīth to be found in the Musnad of Ahmad b. Ḥanbal.540 Riwayah 43 is given there, and was also cited from al-Bazzār by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Zayla’ī (d. 762) in his Takhrij

536 The Ḥadīth scholars of the middle period did not differentiate between Riwayahs 42 and 43, taking them as the same Ḥadīth. Our reasons for considering them as separate riwayah will become apparent as we proceed.


539 For the genre of zawā’id works, of which the Mukhtārah of al-Diyā’ is also an example, see ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Allūsh, ‘Īlm zawā’id al-Ḥadīth: dirāsah wa-manḥaf wa-muṣannafat (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1995) and Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh Abū Ṣu‘aylīk, Kutub al-zawā’id: nash‘atu-hā ahammiyyatu-hā wa-subul khidmati-hā (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1996).

aḥādīth al-Kashshāf. 541 Riwa‘yāt 43 is carried by an isnād made up of transmitters of excellent reputation—rijāl al-ṣaḥīḥ, as al-Haythamī points out. The transmitter from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, Abū Bishr Ja‘far b. Abī Waḥshiyyah, was universally regarded as reliable, and one report said of him that he was “the most reliable person transmitting from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr.” 542 The transmitter from Abū Bishr, Shu‘bah b. Ḥajjāj al-Baṣrī, was one of the pioneers of the Ḥadīth movement in second-century Iraq and was particularly active in the movement against fabrication of Ḥadīth. 543 The transmitters from Shu‘bah are, similarly, muḥaddithūn of excellent reputation. However, the transmission apparatus of Riwa‘yāt 43 contains two cautionary remarks, for which reason we will quote it in full. The following is al-Bazzār’s citation of Riwa‘yāt 43:

Yūsuf b. Ḥammād [al-Baṣrī (d. 245)] 544 related to us: Umayyah b. Khālid [al-Baṣrī (d. 201)] 545 related to us: Shu‘bah [b. Ḥajjāj al-Baṣrī (82–160)] related to us from Abū Bishr [Ja‘far b. Abī Waḥshiyyah al-Baṣrī al-Wāsiṭī (d. 125)] from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr [al-Kūfī (d. 95)] from Ibn ‘Abbās [d. 68]—in my estimation the Ḥadīth is doubtful [fī-mā aḥṣib al-shakku fī al-ḥadīth]. 546

When the Prophet was in Mecca, he recited [qara‘a’], “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?” And there ran upon his tongue [fa-jari ‘alā lisāni-hi]: “Those high gharānīq: intercession from them is to be hoped for! [tilka al-gharānīq al-‘ulā al-shafā‘ah

541 Al-Zayla‘ī, Takhrīj aḥādīth wa-al-āthār, 2:391–392. According to Ibn Ḥajar, Fatḥ, 18:41, Riwa‘yāt 43 was also given in the Tafsīr of Ibn Mardawayh, but I suspect that Ibn Ḥajar is here conflating Riwa‘yāths 43 and 44 (see below for details).
546 Al-Haythamī’s text has the orthographic variant ashakku fī al-ḥadīth, “I doubt the Ḥadīth,” as does al-Zayla‘ī, while Ibn Ḥajar and Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, 3:253 (where the isnād and al-Bazzār’s subsequent remarks are cited without the narrative) have al-shakku fī al-ḥadīth.
min-hā / hum⁵⁴⁷ turtajā].” The Mushrikūn of Mecca⁵⁴⁸ heard this and were pleased by it [surrū bi-hā].

This greatly distressed [ishtadda ‘alā] the Messenger of God.⁵⁴⁹ So God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he tamannā, Satan cast something into his umniyyah; then God removes that which Satan casts and establishes His Signs clearly.”

We do not know of this Ḥadīth being related from the Prophet by a complete isnād which may validly be cited [isnād muttaṣil yajūz dhikru-hu] with the exception of this isnād; and we do not know of anyone who has provided a sanad for this Ḥadīth [asnada hādhā al-ḥadīth] from Shu‘bah from Abū Bishr from Sa‘īd from Ibn ‘Abbās except for Umayyah; and we have heard it only from Yūsuf b. Ḥammād—and he [Yūsuf] was trustworthy [thiqah]. Those other than Umayyah related it as a mursal from Abū Bishr from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr;⁵⁵⁰ albeit that this Ḥadīth is also known from al-Kalbī from Abū Ṣāliḥ from Ibn ‘Abbās.⁵⁵¹ Umayyah was trustworthy and well-known [thiqah mashhūr].⁵⁵²

The citation contains two critical interjections: a brief comment of uncertain authorship that comes at the end of the isnād, and the longer commentary on the isnād that follows the report as a whole and is the critical contribution of al-Bazzār. The effect of both interjections is—in different degrees—to call into question the au-

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⁵⁴⁷ Al-Zayla’ī has min-hā; al-Haythamī and Ibn Ḥajar have min-hum.
⁵⁴⁸ Al-Zayla’ī has mushrikū Makkah; al-Haythamī and Ibn Ḥajar have mushrikū ahl Makkah.
⁵⁴⁹ In one citation of Riwāyah 42, this is given as ishtabaha ‘alā—“the Messenger of God was confused by this”—which is an orthographic error, albeit a semantically plausible one in the context of the narrative; see Ibn Ḥajar, Takhrīj aḥādīth al-Kashshāf, 114.
⁵⁵⁰ See Riwāyahs 46 and 47, below.
⁵⁵¹ See Riwāyah 39, above.
⁵⁵² Al-Haythami and Ibn Ḥajar have an abbreviated version of this comment:

Al-Bazzār said: “We do not know of it being related by a complete isnād which may validly be cited [isnād muttaṣil yajūz dhikru-hu] with the exception of this isnād—Umayyah b. Khalid [is the only one by whom it reaches back (to a Companion) and] is trustworthy and well-known thiqah mashhūr]—albeit that this is known in the Ḥadīth of al-Kalbī from Abū Ṣāliḥ from Ibn ‘Abbās.”

The portion in brackets, tafarrada bi-waṣli-hi, is in Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, 3:217, who gives al-Bazzār’s isnād as well as his comments, but does not cite the report itself, and in al-Suyūṭī, Asbāb al-nuzūl, 150, who cites the end of the isnād with al-Bazzār’s comment. Al-Zayla’ī cites al-Bazzār’s comment in full.
thenticity of the riwāyah. By declaring that this is the only sound isnād by which he knows the Ḥadīth (he was evidently unaware of Riwāyahs 40 and 41), al-Bazzār is pointing out that this is a report transmitted on the authority of a single individual (khabar al-wāḥid). 553 While the fact of the Ḥadīth being solitary does not necessarily nullify its authority in Ḥadīth methodology, 554 it removes it from the status of a categorical proof (al-qāṭ’i) to that of a possibility subject to confirmation (al-ẓann): according to the fifth-century Ḥadīth authority al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463), “We follow and act upon what it (a solitary report) says when we think that the probability is that it is true [ta’abbadnā bi-al-‘amal bi-khabari-hi matā ẓanannā kawna-hu ṣidqan].” Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī goes on to state that a khabar al-wāḥid may be rejected on the basis that its matn contradicts “reason, the firmly established ruling of the Qur’ān, or the known sunnah.” 555 In the present case, the contents of the matn are objectionable to the orthodox concept of the ‘iṣmah of the Prophet, and thus appear to contradict all three of reason, the Qur’ān, and the sunnah. When viewed in these terms, the riwāyah may be rejected.

Rejection of the riwāyah is clearly the intent of the remark appended to the isnād—“In my estimation: I doubt the Ḥadīth”—even though it is unclear whether the expression of doubt is directed at the isnād (i.e., at the genuineness of transmission) or at the matn (i.e., at the incompatibility of the content with orthodox dogma). Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī has (expectedly) taken the remark as a criticism of the isnād, and has rejected Riwāyah 43 on this basis: “It is


555 See al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Kifāyah, 19, and 432.
defective on account of the transmitter’s uncertainty as to whether it reaches back (to a Companion) [ma’ūl bi-taraddud al-rāwī fī waṣli-hi].” However, the remark can equally be taken as an objection to the unorthodox content of the report. There is also some ambiguity as to the author of this statement. Al-Haythamī provides a gloss in the Majma’ al-zawā’id stating that the “In my estimation” remark is Sa‘īd b. Jubayr’s. But does it, in fact, make sense for Sa‘īd to cast doubt on his own transmission from his great teacher, Ibn ‘Abbās, or to question the doctrinal content of the report? Pace al-Haythamī, there does not appear to be any way in which Sa‘īd b. Jubayr can reasonably be taken as the interjector in Riwāyah 43.

Firstly, the wording of the isnād—“Yūsuf b. Ḥammād related to us: . . . Shu‘bah related to us from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr from Ibn ‘Abbās—in my estimation, I doubt the Ḥadīth [‘an Sa‘īd b. Jubayr ‘an Ibn ‘Abbās fī-mā aḥsibu ashukku fī al-ḥadīth]”—does not support this reading. For Sa‘īd b. Jubayr to be the speaker, the interjected remark should come between the mention of his name and that of Ibn ‘Abbās (see Riwāyah 44, below) and the phrase should read: ‘an Sa‘īd b. Jubayr (qāla) fī-mā aḥsibu ashukku fī al-ḥadīth ‘an Ibn ‘Abbās. Secondly, such a remark would be incongruous and anachronistic coming from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr. Why should Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, who is first and foremost a Qur’ān scholar and whose reputation derived considerably from his having been a student of Ibn ‘Abbās, relate a report from the greatest of all Qur’ān scholars only to pronounce the report as unreliable in the same breath? It makes no sense for Sa‘īd to doubt either the isnād (i.e., to doubt his own transmission from Ibn ‘Abbās) or the main (no such doubt is expressed in the other reports from Sa‘īd, Riwāyahs 44, 45, and 46). The disparaging phrase in Riwāyah 43 is far more likely to have been inserted by one of the transmitters after Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, all of whom were primarily muḥaddithūn, or even as a margin comment by a later muḥaddith reading or transcribing the manuscript. It is not unlikely that the author of the remark is al-Bazzār himself: as we have already noted, his Musnad is punctuated by his critical comments on the

557 See al-Haythamī, Majma’ al-zawā’id, 7:115, where he says of Riwāyah 43 that it is “from Ibn ‘Abbās in the estimation of Sa‘īd b. Jubayr [fī-mā yaḥsib Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr].”
various *aḥādīth*. However, by ascribing the remark to Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, al-Haythami effectively undermines any claim to reliability that the report may have.

It is instructive to note that while the compilers of the *sīrah-maghāzī* and *tafsīr* sources did not question the often weak *isnāds* for the Satanic verses incident, the Ḥadīth scholars who transmitted *Riwāyah 43* questioned the report despite its apparently excellent *isnād*. We will return to this fundamental point after considering *Riwāyah 44*.

*Riwāyah 44*: Cited from Yūsuf b. Ḥammād al-Baṣrī in the *Mu‘jam al-Kabīr* of al-Ṭabarānī and in the *Tafsīr* of Ibn Mardawayh, with an Interesting Remark

*Riwāyah 44* is recorded in another Ḥadīth collection, the *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr* of Sulaymān b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī (260–360), with the same *isnād* as *Riwāyah 43*, but with the addition of two separate informants from whom al-Ṭabarānī received the *riwāyah*. The *isnād* contains two significant remarks, for which reason it is appropriate to quote its wording in full:558


*Riwāyah 44* is also cited from the *Tafsīr* of Ibn Mardawayh by al-Ḍiyā’ al-Maqdisī in his *Mukhtārah*,561 and by al-Zayla‘ī in his

Takhrīj aḥādīth al-Kashshāf.\textsuperscript{562} Al-DCALLī’ al-Maqdisī provides Ibn Mardawayh’s full isnād:


The following is the text of the report.\textsuperscript{567}

[When he was in Mecca]\textsuperscript{568} the Prophet recited [qara’a] Sūrat al-Najm, and when\textsuperscript{569} he reached, “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-’Uzzā and Manāt, the third, the other?,” Satan cast onto his tongue [alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisān-hi]: “Those high gharānīq: their intercession is to be hoped for! [tilka al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-shafā’atu-hā / -hum turtajā].”\textsuperscript{570}

When he reached the end of it, he made the sajdah, and the Muslims and Mushrikūn made the sajdah [with him].\textsuperscript{572} So God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he tamannā, Satan cast (something),”\textsuperscript{573} to His words, “the suffering of a barren day”: the Day of Badr.

In the isnād of Riwāyah 44, we have the construction, “from Sa’īd b. Jubayr, I know it only from Ibn ‘Abbās.” As with the remark in

\textsuperscript{562} Al-Zayla’ī, Takhrīj aḥādīth wa-al-āthār, 2:394.
\textsuperscript{563} As in Riwāyah 40, above, I am assuming this link.
\textsuperscript{564} See al-Dhahabi, Sīyar, 14:16.
\textsuperscript{565} See al-Dhahabi, Sīyar, 13:375.
\textsuperscript{566} Al-Zayla’ī omits the portion of the isnād linking Yūsuf b. Ḥammād to Ibn Mardawayh.
\textsuperscript{567} Al-DCALLī’ al-Maqdisī cites the text from al-Ṭabarānī, noting at the end only what he sees as salient textual variants. Al-Zayla’ī cites the text from Ibn Mardawayh.
\textsuperscript{568} The phrase käna bi-Makkata is only in Ibn Mardawayh / al-Zayla’ī.
\textsuperscript{569} Al-Ṭabarānī: īlamnā balagha; Ibn Mardawayh / al-Zayla’ī: ḥattā balagha.
\textsuperscript{570} Thus in Ibn Mardawayh / al-Zayla’ī. Al-DCALLī’ al-Maqdisī confirms that the variant shafā’atu-hā is in Ibn Mardawayh.
\textsuperscript{571} Thus in al-Ṭabarānī.
\textsuperscript{572} The phrase ma’a-hu is only in Ibn Mardawayh / al-Zayla’ī.
\textsuperscript{573} The report stops here in Ibn Mardawayh / al-Zayla’ī.
Riwaayah 43, “In my estimation, I doubt the Ḥadīth,” the immediate question is who the author of the statement is supposed to be. Al-Haythamī identifies the fourth-century compiler of the Ḥadīth collection, al-Ṭabarānī, as making the statement “I know it only from Ibn ‘Abbās”; however, this cannot be as the remark also appears in Ibn Mardawayh’s citation, and the two isnāds join up only at Yūsuf b. Ḥammād (d. 245). Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī, on the other hand, understood the remark to be Sa‘īd b. Jubayr’s, glossing it as follows: ‘an Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr qāla lā a‘lāmhu illā ‘an Ibn ‘Abbās. The identity of the speaker is important here because the remark means two different things according to whether it is spoken by Sa‘īd b. Jubayr or by one of the transmitters after him, whether Abū Bishr, Shu‘bah b. Ḥajjāj, Umayyah b. Khālid, or Yūsuf b. Ḥammād. If the author of the remark is one of the later transmitters, then he is saying what al-Bazzār said in regard to Riwaayah 43—that, in Ḥadīth methodology, this is a khabar al-wāḥid and may thus be rejected on the basis of its contents. If we follow Ibn Ḥajar, and accept the interjection as representing Sa‘īd’s words, the question arises as to why Sa‘īd should make an apparently gratuitous declaration that is detrimental to the credibility of his own report from Ibn ‘Abbās. The answer to this may lie in the very different meanings conveyed by the statement when read in the contexts of the respective discourses of the ahl al-ḥadīth and the mufassirūn. While Sa‘īd’s reply has the effect, in Ḥadīth methodology, of detracting from an otherwise excellent isnād by declaring the report a khabar al-wāḥid, the meaning of the statement changes dramatically when we remember that Sa‘īd b. Jubayr was not a muḥaddith concerned with the rules of transmission—he was, in fact, expressly criticized by the Ḥadīth scholars for failing to transmit Ḥadīths with complete isnāds—but rather a first-century Qur‘ān scholar whose stature derived from his having studied with the greatest of all Qur‘ān authorities, Ibn ‘Abbās.

574 See al-Haythamī, Majma‘ al-zawā‘id, 7:115, where he says of Riwaayah 44 that it is “from Ibn ‘Abbās in the estimation of Sa‘īd b. Jubayr [fi-mā yahsib Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr],” and of Riwaayah 45 that “al-Ṭabarānī said: ‘I know it only from Ibn ‘Abbās.’”

575 See Takhrīj aḥādīth al-Kashshāf, 114, where Ibn Ḥajar does not distinguish between al-Bazzār’s citation of Riwaayah 43 and al-Ṭabarānī’s citation of Riwaayah 44. Ibn Ḥajar also attributes a citation of Riwaayah 43/44 to al-Ṭabarī; al-Ṭabarī does not cite it in his Jāmi‘ al-bayān, but may have cited it in another work.
When seen in this light, the same statement, “I know it only from Ibn ‘Abbās,” instead of detracting from the report, has the effect of investing it with the very highest authority. For Sa‘īd b. Jubayr to say of a report, “I know it only from Ibn ‘Abbās,” is for him to make the strongest possible statement validating the report, even though the self-same statement undermines the report in the methodology of a muḥaddith.576

Thus, whoever the author of the statement,577 it serves to provide us with a subtle illustration of a methodological clash between Ḥadīth scholars and tafsīr scholars. Second- and third-century Ḥadīth scholars were confronted with a report on the Satanic verses carried by an evidently sound isnād. They recorded the Ḥadīth but were apparently uncomfortable with its contents. Their response was to note that the report was a khabar al-wāḥid (lā a‘lamu-hu illā ‘an Ibn ‘Abbās), meaning that there was a sound methodological criterion on the basis of which to question the authenticity of the matn as doctrinally objectionable; this is the assessment of the report that the eighth-century Ḥadīth scholar Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī placed in the mouth of Sa‘īd b. Jubayr. If, however, rather than anachronistically assign to Sa‘īd b. Jubayr the vocabulary of the Ḥadīth sciences, we listen to him as a mufassir-transmitter from Ibn ‘Abbās, the phrase lā a‘lamu-hu illā ‘an Ibn ‘Abbās, while functioning to delegitimize the report in Ḥadīth discourse, is transformed into a legitimizing statement in the discourse of early Qur’ān scholarship. By the eighth/thirteenth century, however, in the age of ascendancy of Ḥadīth methodology, an unambiguous blanket statement criticizing the riwāyah—“In my opinion, I doubt the Ḥadīth”—was ascribed by the Ḥadīth scholar al-Haythamī to Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, thereby placing

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576 In the early ‘Abbāsid period, reports from Ibn ‘Abbās were something of a collector’s item at the ‘Abbāsid court: “Ibn Jurayj—seeking monetary assistance from the caliph—brought him a special collection of traditions narrated exclusively on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, the caliph’s ancestor”; Muḥammad Qasim Zaman, Religion and Politics under the Early ‘Abbāsids (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 127.

577 It is interesting to note that, in its wording, the statement is most logically understood as an answer to a question: hal ta‘lamu hādhā al-ḥadīth bi-sanadin ākharin (“Do you know this Ḥadīth by another isnād?”); reply: lā a‘lamu-hu illā ‘an Ibn ‘Abbās (“I know it only from Ibn ‘Abbās”). The individual most likely to seek an answer to this question (as we have seen from al-Bazzār’s remarks) is a Ḥadīth scholar trying to ascertain whether or not this is a khabar al-wāḥid. As we have noted, all of the transmitters of Riwāyah 43 are muḥaddithūn.
the rejection of the report in the mouth of an early *mufassir*. This contestation between the methodologies of Ḥadīth scholarship and those of other intellectual discourses within Islam will be seen to be crucial to the history of Muslim attitudes towards the Satanic verses incident.

While *Riwāyah* 43 and 44 are differently worded, they both present the same interpretation of the incident. In comparing the *matn* of *Riwāyah* 43 and 44, another remark in the *isnād* of *Riwāyah* 44 is significant. This is the statement by al-Ḥusayn al-Tustarī and ‘Abdān al-Jawāliqī—“Yūsuf b. Ḥammād told us the meaning [*al-ma’nā*] from Umayyah b. Khālid”—that occurs in al-Ṭabarānī’s *isnād*, signifying that what Yūsuf b. Ḥammād transmitted here was not the words of the report he had received from Umayyah b. Khālid but a paraphrase conveying its meaning (*al-riwāyah bi-al-ma’nā* as opposed to *al-riwāyah bi-al-lafẓ*). This explains the difference in the wording, not only of *Riwāyah* 43 and 44. The statement also illustrates how, by the third century, *al-riwāyah bi-al-ma’nā* had become the exception rather than the norm in Ḥadīth transmission, as it called for explicit designation in the transmission apparatus.

In both reports, it is made clear that the Prophet uttered the verses, in *Riwāyah* 43 through the phrase, “there ran upon his tongue,” and in *Riwāyah* 44 through the phrase “Satan cast onto his tongue.” As with *Riwāyahs* 35 to 42, *umniyyah* is not glossed as “desire,” the default meaning being “recitation.” The differences between *Riwāyahs* 43 and 44 are as follows. *Riwāyah* 44 contains the motif of the *sajdah* of Quraysh, absent in *Riwāyah* 43. Also the motif of the Prophet’s distress, present in *Riwāyah* 43, is absent from *Riwāyah* 44. The motif of the Prophet’s distress, as we have seen, suggests that he was already aware, before his correction, that something had gone wrong, although there is no indication that he corrected himself. Since *Riwāyah* 44 constitutes a *riwāyah bi-al-ma’nā* of *Riwāyah* 43 formulated in the late third century, these differences probably demonstrate the way in which certain motifs that recur in the reports on the Satanic verses and that were in wide circulation—the distress of the Prophet, the *sajdah* of Quraysh—had become discretionary in a brief narration of the incident, the pivotal hermeneutical elements being whether the Prophet uttered the Satanic verses, and the meaning of *tamannā*. On these two points, *Riwāyah* 43 and
Riwa`yah 44 are in total agreement, the latter doing what its isnād says by conveying the meaning of Riwa`yah 43 in different words.

The main difference between Riwa`yahs 43 and 44, when taken as the same riwa`yah bi-al-ma`nā, and Riwa`yahs 40 and 42 taken as a pair, is the absence of the correction scene in Riwa`yahs 43 and 44. However, this does not affect the fundamental hermeneutical elaboration of the incident since Riwa`yahs 43 and 44 do not suggest that the Prophet corrected himself. Ibn Ḥajar al-`Asqalānī, quite correctly, did not distinguish between the riwa`yahs from `Uthmān b. al-Aswad and those from Abū Bishr as regards meaning.578

The correction scene is, of course, salient to another hermeneutical question: did the Prophet realize on his own that he had erred, or did he remain unaware of this until corrected by Jibrīl? This question affects the image of the Prophet that the incident conveys: if he remained unaware of his error until corrected by Jibrīl, this would be token a greater lack of understanding on the Prophet’s part of the nature and purpose of his mission. The fact that in some riwa`yahs (e.g., Riwa`yah 44), the Prophet is, at least, aware that something is amiss is indicative of how the idea that the Prophet was completely unaware of having erred might have been problematic even to those who were prepared to accept that the Prophet uttered the verses. On the evidence of Riwa`yahs 43 and 44, it would appear that the transmission tradition associated with Shu`bah ← Abū Bishr falls into this category.

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Riwa`yahs 35 to 44: Conclusions

The most remarkable feature in the nine riwa`yahs attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās (and the tenth, Riwa`yah 42, that we have attributed to him bi-al-ma`nā) is their hermeneutical consistency. On two fundamental points, they all present the same interpretation of the incident: they agree that the Prophet uttered the Satanic verses; and none of them makes any mention of the Prophet’s desire, the default gloss

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578 He said expressly that they were similar as regards meaning—nahwa-hu; Ibn Ḥajar, Takhrīj aḥādīth al-Kashshāf, 114.
for tamannā within the wording of the narratives being “recitation” [qirā‘ah, tilāwah]—which is expressly stated in Rīwāyah 37. On this second point, it is interesting to note the gloss of tamannā in another tafsīr transmission attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās, that of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥah al-Walībī al-Ḥimsī (d. 143):579 “His words, ‘When he tamannā, Satan cast into his umniyyah’: when he spoke, Satan cast into his speech [idhā ḥaddatha alqā al-shayṭān fi ḥadithi-hi].”580 Here, too, tamannā is glossed not as “desire” but as the Prophet’s utterances.581


580 One modern compiler of a tafsīr bi-al-ma‘thūr consisting only of ṣaḥīḥ reports seems to have viewed this brief report from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalḥah as sufficiently problematic to have suffixed to it the following statement in a manner that gives the impression that the statement is a part of the original text: “meaning that the Unbelievers heard that which Satan cast, and the Believers did not hear it because Satan has no authority over the Believers [laysa li-al-shayṭān ‘alā al-mu‘minin min al-sulṭān]”; Ḥikmat b. Bashīr b. Yāsin, al-Tafsīr al-ṣaḥīḥ: mawsū‘at al-ṣaḥīḥ al-masbūr min al-tafsīr bi-al-ma‘thūr (Madinah: Dār al-Ma‘āthir, 1419), 3:421 (the allusion is to Qur‘ān 16:99 al-Naḥl, inna-hu laysa la-hu ṣulṭān ‘alā alladhīna āmanū, and similar verses). We have seen the notion that the Unbelievers alone heard the Satanic verses develop in the transmission of Rīwāyahs 8, 9, and 10, above, but without Qur‘ānic justification.

581 It should be noted that knowledge of an alternate gloss for umniyyah in Qur‘ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj is ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās in the Kitāb al-lughāt fi al-Qur‘ān, transmitted from Ibn ‘Abbās by the immediate isnād isnād ‘Aṭā‘ b. Abī Rabāḥ ← Ibn Jurayj, a work whose apparent purpose in regard to Qur‘ānic vocabulary is precisely to record unusual glosses specific to tribal dialects. Here, it is stated that “in the dialect of Quraysh (bi-lughat Quraysh),” umniyyah means “his thoughts (fikratu-hu)”; however, as we have seen, this dialect-specific gloss is evidently not the one that Ibn ‘Abbās is remembered as having actually applied in his exegesis. See the
The variations of note in the *riwāyahs* attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās are three. First is the distinctive hermeneutical elaboration that is present in *Riwaγahs 36, 37*, and 38, but nowhere else, whereby Satan deceives the Prophet by appearing to him in the form of Jibrīl. *Riwaγahs 37* and 38 name the Satan in question as one al-Abyaḍ. These motifs, while absent from the other *riwāyahs*, effect a hermeneutical elaboration that is *additional to* but does not contradict the fundamental two points stated above that constitute the common hermeneutical position of the reports attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās. The second variation is in *Riwaγah 35*, which seems to imply the “repetition” motif contained in *Riwaγah 34*. However, as noted above, it is unlikely that the reader unaware of *Riwaγah 34* would detect the “repetition” motif in *Riwaγah 35*, and again, *Riwaγah 35* in no way contradicts *Riwaγahs 36* to 44. On a third point, the two transmission traditions differ: *Riwaγahs 40* and 42 from ‘Uthmān b. al-Aswad contain a correction scene, while *Riwaγahs 43* and 44 from Abū Bishr do not. We will take up this point again in the discussion of *Riwaγahs 40* to 47 below.

*Riwaγahs 35* to 44 all present what is essentially the same hermeneutical elaboration of the Satanic verses incident. It is further instructive to note here that my notion that reports may meaningfully be assessed on the basis of shared hermeneutical elaboration is not my methodological innovation: it is apparently shared by Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandi, who followed his citation of *Riwaγah 36* (from Abū Ṣāliḥ) with *Riwaγah 41* (from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr) by saying,
“Sa‘īd b. Jubayr relates something similar to that”\textsuperscript{582} (i.e., something similar to Riwāyah 36). A cursory comparison of the two riwāyahs shows little similarity in wording. In categorizing them as “similar,” Abū al-Layth can be referring only to their shared hermeneutical position. The fact that this interpretation is attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās by six different scholars transmitting knowledge in different cities clearly shows that the idea that the Prophet uttered the Satanic verses was seen by the late first- and early second-century Qur’an scholars who associated themselves with Ibn ‘Abbās as constituting a standard element in his teachings.

\textit{Riwāyahs 45 to 47:}

\textbf{From Sa‘īd b. Jubayr without Attribution to Ibn ‘Abbās}

Riwāyahs 45 and 46 go back to Sa‘īd b. Jubayr via Shu’bāh and Abū Bishr Ja’far b. Abī Waḥshiyyah. They are not attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās. Riwāyah 47 has no isnād.

\textit{Riwāyah 45:} Cited by al-Ṭabarī from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr via Shu’bāh and Abū Bishr Ja’far b. Abī Waḥshiyyah

Riwāyah 45 is given by al-Ṭabarī in the commentary on Qur’an 22:52 al-Ḥajj in his \textit{Jāmi‘ al-bayān}, with the following two Basran isnāds:\textsuperscript{583}


and

Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā al-Baṣrī (167–251)\textsuperscript{584} ← ‘Abd al-Ṣamad b.

\textsuperscript{582} Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī, \textit{Tafsīr al-Samarqandi}, 2:400.
\textsuperscript{583} Al-Ṭabarī, \textit{Jāmi‘ al-bayān}, 17:188–189.

Al-Ṭabarī cites the text of the report from the first isnād, and then gives the second isnād with the remark that it transmits “the same meaning [nahw hu].” Both isnāds are made up of transmitters with sound reputations: they are ṣaḥīḥ mursal reports.\(^{586}\) Ghundar was the pre-eminent transmitter from the great Shu‘bah b. Ḥajjāj; he studied with him for twenty years and wrote down Shu‘bah’s reports in a book of which ‘Abd Allāh Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181) said, “If people disagreed about a Ḥadīth from Shu‘bah, the book of Ghundar would decide between them.”\(^{587}\) Bundār, who transmitted the riwāyah from him, was apparently a specialist in Basran reports, and one of al-Ṭabarī’s two most important Basran teachers.\(^{588}\)

When the verse, “Have you seen al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā,” came down, the Messenger of God recited it \(\text{qara’a-hā}\); and he said \(\text{qāla}\): “Those high gharānīq! Indeed, their intercession is to be hoped for! [\(\text{tilka al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā’ata-hunna la-turtajā}\).”

Then the Messenger of God made the sajdah, and the Mushrikūn said, “He has not spoken favourably of our gods until today,” and they made the sajdah with him.

So God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he tamannā, Satan cast something into his um-niyyah,” until His words: “the suffering of a barren day.”

**Riwāyah 45** strongly resembles Riwāyahs 43 and 44 in its narrative construction, and presents the same interpretation of the incident. Again, the Prophet clearly utters the verses, and again ta-mannā apparently means “recitation.”

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\(^{586}\) They are recognized as such by al-Albānī, Naṣb al-majānīq, 5, who, of course, rejects all marāsīl; al-Ṣawwayānī, al-Qaṣīmah, 1:427, rejects the report as “weak” on the same basis.


**Riwaayah 46** is cited by Ibn Kathīr in his *Tafsīr*, and by al-Suyūṭī in his *Asbāb al-nuzūl*. Both adduce the *riwaayah* from the *Tafsīr* of Ibn Abi Ḥātim al-Rāzī. Al-Suyūṭī says that the *riwaayah* is also in al-Ṭabarī—although it is not in any surviving work of his—and in the respective *Tafsīrs* of Ibn Mardawayh and Ibn al-Mundhir. Ibn Kathīr provides Ibn Abi Ḥātim’s *isnad*. Al-Suyūṭī does not cite the *isnad*, but says that it is sound [*sanad ṣaḥīḥ*], which the chain cited by Ibn Kathīr certainly is:

\[
\text{Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 327) } \leftrightarrow \text{ Yūnus b. Ḥabīb al-Iṣbahānī (d. 267)} \leftrightarrow \text{ Abū Dāʿūd Sulaymān b. Dāʿūd al-Ṭayālisī al-Baṣrī (133–203)} \leftrightarrow \text{ Shuʿbah b. Ḥajjāj al-Baṣrī} \leftrightarrow \text{ Abū Bishr Jaʿfar b. Abī Waḥshiyyah al-Baṣrī al-Wāsiṭī} \leftrightarrow \text{ Saʿīd b. Jubayr al-Kūfī.}
\]

Sulaymān b. Dāʿūd al-Ṭayālisī was an extremely prominent Ḥadīth scholar in Baṣrah in the second half of the second century. Yaḥyā b. Maʿin preferred him above all others as a transmitter from Shuʿbah. He compiled an extant *Musnad*, the transmitter of which was Yūnus b. Ḥabīb al-Iṣbahānī.

Even though al-Suyūṭī does not give the *isnad*, the wording of the texts he cites is virtually identical to that in Ibn Kathīr, given below:

The Messenger of God recited [*qara’a*] Sūrat al-Najm in Mecca. When he reached this point [*fa-lammā balagha hādhā al-mawḍi’*]:

\[
\text{“Have you seen al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzā and Manāt, the third, the other,” Satan cast onto his tongue [*alqā al-shayṭānʿ alā lisāni-hi*]: “Those high gharānīq: }
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591 Again, it may have been in the partially extant *Tahdhib al-āthār*.
594 The phrase “this point [*hādhā al-mawḍi’*]” is not in al-Suyūṭī.
indeed, their intercession is to be hoped for [tilka al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā’ata-hunna turtajā]."

They said: “He has not spoken favourably of our gods before today.” Then he made the sajdah and they made the sajdah.

So God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet, but that when he tamannā, Satan cast something into his um-niyyah, then God removes that which Satan casts and establishes His Signs clearly—and God is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

Riwāyah 46 reads like a paraphrase of all of Riwāyahs 43, 44 (Shu‘bah ← Abū Bishr ← Sa‘īd ← Ibn ‘Abbās), and 45 (Shu‘bah ← Abū Bishr ← Sa‘īd).

Riwāyah 47: Cited by al-Suyūṭī in the Durr without an isnād

Riwāyah 47 is also cited by al-Suyūṭī in the Durr.597 Al-Suyūṭī ad-duces the report from al-Ṭabarī (no such report exists in any extant work by him),598 Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Ibn Mardawayh. While al-Suyūṭī does not provide an isnād, Riwāyah 47 is almost certainly a transmission from Sa‘īd b. Jubayr. Its matn is virtually identical to that of Riwāyah 44 (a Shu‘bah ← Abū Bishr riwāyah), but it contains the additional narrative unit of a correction scene:

The Messenger of God recited [qara’a] Sūrat al-Najm in Mecca. When he reached this point [fa-lammā balagha hādhā al-mawdī‘]: “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt the third, the other,” Satan cast onto his tongue [alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi]: “Those high gharānīq: indeed, their intercession is to be hoped for [tilka al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā’ata-hunna turtajā].”

They said: “He has not spoken favourably of our gods before today.” Then he made the sajdah and they made the sajdah.

After this, Jibrīl came to the Prophet and said: “Go over with me [i’riḍ ‘alay-ya] that which I brought you.” And when he reached, “Those high gharānīq: indeed, their intercession is desired,” Jibrīl said to him:

595 Al-Suyūṭī has la-turtajā.
596 Al-Suyūṭī cites only the opening phrase of the verse.
598 Again, it may have been in the partially extant Tahdhib al-āthār.
“I did not bring you this! This is from Satan! [lam āti-ka bi-hādhā hādhā min al-shayṭān].”

So God sent down: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet.”

We have no means of identifying by which, if either, of the foregoing two chains of transmission this report is carried.⁵⁹⁹ It reads, as we have noted, like a collation of both transmission traditions.

Riwaḥyahs 40 to 47 from Saʿīd b. Jubayr:

Conclusions

Riwaḥyahs 40 to 46 represent two separate transmission traditions from Saʿīd b. Jubayr: that of ‘Uthmān b. al-Aswād (d. 150)—carried from him by two different chains; and that of Shuʿbāh (d. 160) from Abū Bishr (d. 125)—transmitted from Shuʿbāh by four different chains. The riwaḥyahs from Saʿīd b. Jubayr are remarkable for their hermeneutical and narrative consistency. All present what is fundamentally the same interpretation of the Satanic verses incident: the Prophet uttered the verses; and, given the absence of any reference to the Prophet’s desire, tamannā would seem here to mean “recitation.” The two transmission traditions differ from one another in only one significant regard: the two longer reports from ‘Uthmān b. al-Aswād contain a correction scene, while the reports from Shuʿbāh ← Abū Bishr do not. The absence of a correction scene in the summary Riwaḥyah 41 from ‘Uthmān b. al-Aswād notwithstanding, this difference in the construction of the narrative is still impressive for the consistency with which it occurs between the two transmissions. One is strongly encouraged by this to take the isnāds at face value and recognize two distinct recensions of Saʿīd b. Jubayr’s teaching on the Satanic verses, both dating from the first half of the second century.

Unlike the rest of the Satanic verses riwaḥyahs, the reports from Saʿīd b. Jubayr are, with the exception of Riwaḥyah 42, transmitted

⁵⁹⁹ Al-Ḥalabī al-Athari, Dalāʿīl, 96, insupportably takes this as being the same as Riwaḥyah 45.
by scholars who were primarily *muḥaddithūn*. Four (*Riwayāhs* 40, 41, 43, and 44) go back to Ibn ʿAbbās, while three (*Riwayāhs* 42, 45, and 46) stop at Saʿīd b. Jubayr. Given the high degree of consistency of the content, one wonders why the *isnāds* for some of the reports go back to Ibn ʿAbbās while others stop at Saʿīd.600 There are two main possibilities here. One, which has been forcefully argued by Uri Rubin, is that “the name of Ibn ʿAbbās must have been a part of the original *isnād,*” but was then omitted to weaken the doctrinally problematic report: “complete and sound *isnāds* attached to overly provocative *matns* could have been subjected to deliberate distortion which made them shrink, so that disapproving traditionists could dismiss the whole Ḥadīth on the ground of defective transmission.”601 Certainly, the practice of abbreviating an *isnād* when transmitting a report does not seem to have been in itself unusual: it was apparently the sort of thing that busy *muḥaddithūn* might do for the sake of convenience, or out of forgetfulness. There is evidence that Shuʿbah b. Ḥajjāj, the “common link” in *Riwayāhs* 43 to 46, himself abbreviated full *isnāds*. Since this was apparently something that could be done without raising suspicion (it did not constitute *tadlis*)602 it is not unlikely that this otherwise innocent practice was deliberately applied to *Riwayāhs* 42, 45, and 46, so as to weaken them. This said, however, Rubin is quite wrong to assert categorically that the opposite process, “backwards growth—that is to say, improvement of the *isnād*—could not have taken place in this case . . . [since] no one was interested in improving the chances of this tradition gaining wide circulation.”603 There is certainly no evidence that *tafsīr* or *sīrah-maghāzī* scholars had any objection to accounts of

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600 Note that the case of *Riwayāyah* 23, which stops at al-Kalbī, and *Riwayāyah* 42, which goes back from al-Kalbī to Ibn ʿAbbās; and the case of *Riwayāyah* 48 (see below), which stops at ʿIkrimah, and *Riwayāyah* 42, which goes back from ʿIkrimah to Ibn ʿAbbās; are both quite different from that of the *riwāyahs* from Saʿīd b. Jubayr. *Riwayāhs* 23 and 42 differ markedly in content, as do *Riwayāhs* 48 and 42, which makes the difference in attribution readily acceptable. However, the reports from Saʿīd b. Jubayr are all very similar in content.

601 Rubin is addressing himself to *Riwayāhs* 44 to 46 (it is not clear whether he has seen *Riwayāyah* 43); see *Eye of the Beholder*, 256–257.


the Satanic verses incident gaining wide circulation; and, more to the point, it is also not at all clear just when it was that the scholars of the Ḥadīth movement began to object to it. Thus, it is equally possible that the reports were initially circulated with the isnāds terminating with Saʿīd b. Jubayr; but since Ibn ʿAbbās was widely known to have been Saʿīd’s primary teacher, tafsīr-related transmission from Saʿīd was generally and automatically associated with Ibn ʿAbbās. In the search for complete isnāds that characterized the Ḥadīth movement, and before the time when the content of the report was universally rejected by the Ḥadīth movement, this assumptive association might have come to be formalized in the isnād, with the result that the now complete isnād eventually made the reports particularly problematic for those Ḥadīth scholars who did disapprove of their doctrinal content. These Ḥadīth scholars then sought to undermine the isnād in the legitimate ways we have seen in Riwāyahs 43 and 44,604 or perhaps in the illegitimate way that it appears might have been employed in Riwāyah 40 with the possible insertion of the name of the deficient Muḥammad b. al-Muqri’ into an otherwise sound isnād.

Whatever the case, it is clear that as far as prominent Ḥadīth scholars in second-century Baṣrah were concerned, the first-century Kufan mufassir and disciple of Ibn ʿAbbās, Saʿīd b. Jubayr, had taught the Satanic verses incident in explication of Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj. However, we have seen in regard to Riwāyahs 43 and 44 that, at some point, the Ḥadīth scholars came to find the contents of the reports objectionable, and cast doubt on their authenticity.

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Riwāyah 48:
From ‘Ikrimah, the mawlā of Ibn ʿAbbās

Riwāyah 48 is given by al-Suyūṭī in the Durr.605 It is adduced by him from the Tafsīr of ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd al-Samarqandī (1705–249), who

604 In the first explanation, al-Bazzār and al-Ṭabarānī emerge as remarkably scrupulous muḥaddithūn as, instead of simply omitting Ibn ʿAbbās’ name from the isnād, they chose to cite Riwāyahs 43 and 44 with the complete isnād, accompanied by a legitimate attempt to undermine the riwāyahs as khabar al-wāḥid.

605 Al-Suyūṭī, al-Durr, 6:69.
is citing ‘Ikrimah (d. 107), the mawla of Ibn ‘Abbās. Al-Suyūṭī does not give ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd’s isnād. This report from ‘Ikrimah presents a discernibly different interpretation of the Satanic verses incident from that in Riwāyah 39 where the isnād goes back from ‘Ikrimah to Ibn ‘Abbās:

One day, the Messenger of God recited [qara’ā], “Have you seen al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt, the third, the other? Should you have sons, and He, daughters? That, indeed, would be an unfair division!” And Satan cast onto his tongue [alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi]: “Those, then, are among the high gharānīq! This, then, is an intercession to be hoped for! [iīlā tilka idhan fī al-gharānīq al-‘ulā tilka idhan shafā’ātun turtajā].”

The Messenger of God was filled with fear and anguish [fa-fazi’a rasūl Allāh wa-jazi’a]. So God revealed to him [awḥā ilay-hi]: “And, however many angels there are in the heavens, their intercession is of no benefit [wa-kam min malakin fī al-samāwāt lā tughnī shafā’ātu-hum shay’an].” Then God comforted him [faraja ‘an-hu] and revealed to him: “We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he tamannā, Satan cast something into his umniyyah,” to His words, “All-Wise.”

The first thing to be noted about Riwāyah 48 is that, as in Ibn Kathīr’s citation of Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ’s transmission of Riwāyah 9 from Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah, Satan’s intervention takes place not upon the Prophet reciting Qur’ān 53:19 al-Najm but after he recites Qur’ān 53:22: “Should you have sons, and He, daughters? That, indeed, would be an unfair division!” We noted how in Riwāyah 9 / Muḥammad b. Fulayḥ ← Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah, where the narrative tries to avoid conveying the impression that the Prophet uttered the verses, the point of having the Prophet recite Qur’ān 53:21–22 al-Najm is probably to undermine the logic of the incident: why should the Prophet first recite verses criticizing the gods of Quraysh, and then recite the Satanic verses praising them? Riwāyah 48, however, does not have a problem with this as it makes it clear through the phrase “Satan cast onto his tongue” that the Prophet uttered the verses after Qur’ān 53:21–22 al-Najm. The reason for this derives

606 Qur’ān 53:26 al-Najm.
607 It is for precisely this reason that Muḥammad ‘Urjūn deems the narrative in Riwāyah 48 to be incoherent, and forcefully condemns the riwāyah as “a stupid,
from a second and particularly interesting element that is unique to *Riwāyah 48*—namely, that the abrogating verse that is given here is Qur'ān 53:26 al-Najm: “And however many angels there are in the heavens, their intercession is of no benefit.”

The implication here is that there is an assumed identification of the angels with al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt; when the Revelation deems the intercession of the angels to be invalid, it is simultaneously invalidating the intercession of these three figures. We have already noted, in the analysis of *Riwāyah 28* from Muqātil b. Sulaymān, how Quraysh were remembered as having worshipped al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt in their simultaneous capacity as goddesses, intercessionary angels, and daughters of Allāh. It is to the worship of al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt as intercessionary angels and daughters of Allāh that *Riwāyah 48* relates the Satanic verses incident. Thus, while the Prophet correctly transmits the Revelation denying the pagan doctrine that al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt are the daughters of Allāh (*a-la-kum al-dhakar wa-la-hu al-unthā?*), he nonetheless falls victim to Satan by confirming the ancillary doctrine of their status as high *gharānīq* (*al-gharānīq al-‘ulā*)—that is to say, as intercessionary crane-angels. It is the specific concession to this false doctrine that God then corrects by revealing, “And however many angels there are in the heavens, their intercession is of no benefit!”

In this account, the Prophet is portrayed not as merely being distressed by what has happened but as greatly fearful of the consequences. This suggests not only that he has realized that he has erred but also that he has a sense of the magnitude of his error in the context of his Divine mission.

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*Riwāyahs 49 and 50:*

*From al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī*

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We come finally to *Riwāyahs 49 and 50*, from Abū al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (21–110), one of the most prominent figures in the Islamic intellectual

ignorant forgery [*waḍ’ ghabiyy jahūl*]; see his analysis of the *matn* in *Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*, 2:63–66.
tradition. Suleiman Ali Mourad has demonstrated how al-Ḥasan al-
Baṣrī “was transformed by his disciples, and in later scholarship,
into an icon.”608 Mourad has argued that the “often contradictory
and irreconcilable”609 content of the works attributed to al-Ḥasan
al-Baṣrī is the result of the attempts of competing groups in Islamic
history to legitimize their respective creedal positions through ref-
ERENCE to him, and has rejected the attribution to al-Ḥasan of several
important works. Whatever parties sought to associate themselves
with the legacy of al-Ḥasan, the Ḥadīth movement seems not to have
been among them, and his reputation as a transmitter was poor.610

Riwāyah 49: Cited from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī
in al-Nukat wa-al-ʿuyūn of al-Māwardī

Riwāyah 49 is cited from al-Ḥasan in al-Nukat wa-al-ʿuyūn, the
Qurʾān commentary of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī (d. 450). While
Ibn al-Nadīm records both a Tafsīr al-Qurʾān and a Nuzūl al-Qurʾān
(neither of which is now extant) as distinct works from al-Ḥasan,611
al-Māwardī does not give a source or an isnād. Al-Māwardī is here
listing the different positions taken on what it is that the Prophet
actually recited.612

The fourth (position):

Rather, he (the Prophet) said [inna-mā qāla]: “They are like the high
gharāniq [hiya ka-al-gharāniq al-ʿulā],” meaning: the angels [yaʿnī
al-malāʾikah]—“and their intercession is to be hoped for [wa-inna

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608 Suleiman Ali Mourad, Early Islam between Myth and History: al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī
(d. 110H / 728CE) and the Formation of His Legacy in Classical Islamic Scholarship
(Leiden: Brill, 2006), 32.
609 Mourad, Early Islam between Myth and History, 241.
610 Mourad, Early Islam between Myth and History, 47–51; Juynboll, Muslim Tradition,
49–55.
611 Ibn al-Nadīm, Fihrist, 283, and 59. For a study of al-Ḥasan that assumes the accu-
ricy of the tafsīr reports attributed to him, see Aḥmad Ismāʿīl al-Baṣīṭ, al-Ḥasan
612 Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb al-Māwardī, al-Nukat wa-al-ʿuyūn:
Tafsīr al-Māwardī, ed. al-Sayyid b. ʿAbd al-Maqṣūd b. ʿAbd al-Raḥim (Beirut: Dār
al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1992), 4:35; also al-Māwardi, Tafsīr al-Māwardī, ed. Khiḍr
shafāʿatu-hum la-turtajā”—meaning: according to what you say [ay fī qawli-kum]. Al-Ḥasan said this.

Al-Ḥasan is here conveying the fact that the Prophet made the utterance, but is also providing two glosses of his own. The first is that al-Lāt, al-ʿUzzā, and Manāt are being identified as “angels,” as they were in Riwāyah 23 (Hūd b. al-Muḥakkam’s citation of the Tafsīr of al-Kalbī), Riwāyah 28 (Muqātil b. Sulaymān), and Riwāyah 48 (ʿAbd b. Ḥumayd’s citation from ʿIkrimah). That al-Ḥasan took the gharānīq to mean “the angels” is also cited in Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273): “al-Ḥasan said: ‘By al-gharānīq al-ʿulā he means, the angels.”

Al-Ḥasan’s second gloss pertains to the Prophet’s statement “their intercession is to be hoped for.” Al-Ḥasan says that the Prophet meant by this “their intercession is to be hoped for—according to what you (i.e. Quraysh) say.” The question here is what the gloss itself means. Is al-Ḥasan using the phrase fī qawli-kum to express concordance—that is, that the Prophet’s utterance is agreeing with Quraysh’s belief that their deities intercede with Allāh, i.e. “according to what you say”; or is al-Ḥasan using the phrase fī qawli-kum to express contrast—that is, the Prophet’s utterance is disagreeing with Quraysh, i.e. “according to what you say”? In the absence of any further narrative context in al-Māwardī’s citation, it is difficult to tell. While the citation of al-Ḥasan appears in the course of al-Māwardī’s own treatment of Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj, there is no indication of the context in which al-Ḥasan made this statement.

Riwāyah 50: Cited from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī in Aḥkām al-Qur’ān of al-Jaṣṣāṣ

A categorical identification of al-Ḥasan’s meaning is given in Riwāyah 50, which is found in the Aḥkām al-Qur’ān of Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/981). Like al-Māwardī, al-Jaṣṣāṣ also does not give an isnād or a source, but it is very likely that he is not citing directly from

any work of al-Ḥasan, but from a third party, as he begins with the passive phrase “It is related from al-Ḥasan [ruwiya ‘an al-Ḥasan].” Also, like al-Māwardī, while al-Jaṣṣāṣ cites al-Ḥasan in the context of his own exegesis of Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥajj, there is no indication as to the context to which al-Ḥasan is addressing himself.

In the following, I have deliberately not inserted quotation marks of direct speech (which, of course, do not exist in Arabic):

> It is related from al-Ḥasan [ruwiya ‘an al-Ḥasan]:

> When he (the Prophet) recited that in which there is mention of the idols, he (the Prophet) said to them: Rather, they are—according to you—like the high gharānīq, and their intercession is to be sought—according to what you say [inna-mā hiya ‘inda-kum ka-al-gharānīq al-‘ulā wa-inna shafā’ata-hunna la-turtajā fī qawli-kum], by way of rejection against them [‘alā jihastr al-nakīr ‘alay-him].\

> It might appear from the wording of the report that the phrases “according to you” and “according to what you say” are uttered by the Prophet; in other words, that the Prophet says, “Rather, they are, according to you, like the high gharānīq, and their intercession is to be sought, according to what you say,” to which al-Ḥasan then appends the gloss “by way of rejection.” However, in Riwāyah 49 in al-Māwardī, the first parenthetical phrase, “according to you,” is entirely absent, while the second phrase, “according to what you say,” is present but is prefaced with the glossatory ay (“meaning:”) as a clear indication that, in that Riwāyah 49, what follows is not a part of the Prophet’s speech. In light of this, it is sensible to read these two phrases in Riwāyah 50 as glosses external to the direct speech of the Prophet:

> It is related from al-Ḥasan that when he (the Prophet) recited that in which there is mention of the idols, he (the Prophet) said to them: “Rather, they are”—according to you—“like the high gharānīq, and

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their intercession is to be sought”—according to what you say, by way of rejection.

Here, the phrases “according to you” and “according to what you say, by way of rejection” emerge as al-Ḥasan’s own gloss. It would appear that what we have here is the earliest recorded rejection of the Satanic verses incident—a rejection not of the idea that the Prophet uttered the verses that the early memory tradition at large (but not what we have of this particular report from al-Ḥasan) attributes to Satanic suggestion but rather of the notion that the verses constituted a concession to Quraysh. Instead, the verses are presented here as being uttered in rejection of Quraysh’s claim. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri thus emerges as the earliest scholar remembered actively to have rejected the Satanic verses incident. Of course, if we read Riwāyahs 49 and 50 without al-Ḥasan’s interventionary glosses, there is nothing to render them incompatible with the other narratives of the incident.

Conclusions:
The Satanic Verses Riwāyahs 1–50

The foregoing analysis of the fifty riwāyahs that narrate the Satanic verses incident was carried out to lay the groundwork on the basis of which to answer the fundamental question to be taken up in Chapter 3: why did the early Muslim community accept the Satanic verses incident? We began by posing two sets of questions. As regards the transmission of the narratives of the Satanic verses incident: when—around what date—were narratives of the Satanic verses incident transmitted and circulated in the early Muslim community? How widely circulated were these narratives? Where were these narratives in circulation? How widely accepted were they? Who circulated and accepted these narratives? Who did not accept and circulate them? In the context of what literary genres or cultural projects were these narratives transmitted? What were the mechanisms and practices by which they were transmitted?

It has emerged in the most emphatic terms that the Satanic verses incident constituted an absolutely standard element in the memory
of the early Muslim community on the life of its founder. We have repeatedly dated reports of the Satanic verses incident as being in circulation among individuals involved in the historical memory projects of *sīrah-maghāzī* and *tafsīr* in the late first and early second centuries of Islam. Simply, the Satanic verses incident was ubiquitous in the earliest period of systematic collection and organization of historical memory materials on the life of Muḥammad in the genres of *sīrah-maghāzī* and *tafsīr*, where it was transmitted, like all other narratives, *bi-al-ma‘nā* and by incomplete *isnāds*. Reports of the Satanic verses incident were recorded by virtually every compiler of a major biography of Muḥammad in the first two centuries of Islam: ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr (23–94), Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (51–124), Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah (85–141), Ibn Isḥāq (85–151), Abū Ma’shar (d. 170), Yūnus b. Bukayr (d. 199), and al-Wāqidī (130–207). Each of the foregoing scholars incorporated the incident into the framework of a larger narrative of the life of the Prophet—that is, into a *Kitāb al-maghāzī* or a *Kitāb al-sīrah*. *Riwāyah 1* was recorded in Salamah b. al-Faḍl’s Rayy recension of the *Sīrah* of Ibn Isḥāq; *Riwāyah 2* in the *Kitāb al-maghāzī* of Abū Ma’shar; *Riwāyah 3* in the *Kitāb al-

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615 In Chapter 1, we outlined the following working principle for the dating of the reports: a bad *isnād* contained in a *sīrah-maghāzī* or *tafsīr* work is, in the absence of external evidence to suggest otherwise, to be taken as genuinely representing the chain of transmitters by which the information was transmitted—this on the understanding that the early part of the chain is more likely to represent a *riwāyah bi-al-ma‘nā* than a *riwāyah bi-al-lafẓ*. This working principle was tested during the course of the analysis, and a number of observations suggest that the principle is a valid one. One is the fact that *riwāyahs* attributed to a single scholar by different *isnāds* display a high degree of hermeneutical consistency and a marked correspondence in narrative construction. We have seen this hermeneutical and narrative consistency most markedly in *Riwāyahs 16* to 20 ascribed to Abū al-‘Āliyah, and in *Riwāyahs 40* to 47 attributed to Sa‘īd b. al-Jubayr. We have also seen a high degree of hermeneutical consistency in *Riwāyahs 35* to 44 attributed to ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās. A particularly striking instance of this consistency is in *Riwāyahs 2* to 6 from Muḥammad b. Ka‘b al-Quraẓī, all linking the incident to Qur’ān 17:73 *al-Isrā‘*. In no case did we find that accounts without significant common elements were ascribed to the same authority. Our working assumption was also tested in two cases where pairs of *riwāyahs* carried by different *isnāds* transmitted virtually the same *riwāyah bi-al-lafẓ*. In these instances, for the *isnāds* to be genuine, there had to be some unstated link between them, it being highly unlikely that a single *riwāyah bi-al-lafẓ* of this length could have arisen independently and have been transmitted by two separate chains. In both instances, we were able to establish a very plausible link. In the case of *Riwāyahs 2* and 3, we found that *Riwāyah 3* derived from the known contact between the Ẓafarī clan and Muḥammad b. Ka‘b.
mubtada’ of al-Wāqidi (from whom it was taken by Muḥammad Ibn Sa’d, 168–230, into his biography of the Prophet); Riwāyah 7 in the Kitāb al-maghāzī of Yūnus b. Bukayr; Riwāyah 8 in Abū al-Aswad’s Egyptian recension of the Kitāb al-maghāzī of ‘Urwah; Riwāyah 9 in the Kitāb al-maghāzī of Mūsā b. ‘Uqba; and Riwāyah 15, most probably, in the Kitāb al-maghāzī of al-Zuhri, from whom it was cited by al-Wāqidi in his Kitāb al-mubtada’. Within this narrative, the incident is consistently related to the return of some of the refugees of Abyssinia. Similarly, the first- and second-century authors of tafsīr works whom we know to have recorded the incident include almost every prominent early muḥaffīl: Abū al-ʿĀliyah (d. 93), Sa‘īd b. Jubayr (23–95), Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. 102), al-Ḍaḥḥāk (d. 105), ‘Ikrimah (d. 107), Muḥammad b. Ka‘b al-Quraẓī (40–108), al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (21–110), Qatādah (60–117), Abū Ṣāliḥ (d. 110/120), ‘Aṭiyyah al-ʿAwfī (d. 111/127), al-Suddī (d. 128), al-Kalbī (d. 146), Muqātil b. Sulaymān (80–150), Ibn Jurayj (d. 150), Ma’mar b. Ṣāliḥ (d. 154), and Yahyā b. Sallām al-Baṣrī (124–200). Six of these—‘Ikrimah, Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, Abū Ṣāliḥ, ‘Aṭiyyah al-ʿAwfī, al-Kalbī, and Ibn Jurayj—transmitted the incident on the authority of ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68), with remarkably consistent hermeneutical content.616 In other words, the

al-Quraẓī. In the case of Riwāyahs 8 and 9, we found that Riwāyah 9 was received by Mūsā b. ‘Uqba from his main teacher, al-Zuhri, who was, in turn, the leading student of ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr, the author of Riwāyah 8. The fact that in both these cases we were able to establish a highly plausible transmission link between the respective riwāyahs strongly suggests that their isnāds, while incomplete, are nonetheless genuine. These findings also encourage one to accept the authenticity of the isnāds of reports such as Riwāyahs 34 and 35, which contain the same distinctive motifs but are transmitted by separate isnāds. During the course of this analysis, we have had only one occasion to conclude that an isnād was, perhaps, not to be taken at face value—namely, Riwāyah 25 where the final link between Ma’mar b. Ṣāliḥ and Qatādah b. Di‘āmah may not represent the transmission history of the report (although, as we have seen, it is not certain that this portion of the isnād is, indeed, false). We were able, in this instance, to provide two good reasons as to why the fabrication of the final link in the isnād of this riwāyah—if, indeed, it is fabricated—should be regarded as an exception in sirah-maghāzī/tafsīr rather than a rule. One reason is the fact that the report was transmitted from Ma’mar by scholars who were, in the first instance, muḥaddithūn, and were therefore particularly concerned to establish fuller isnāds in a way that tafsīr and sirah-maghāzī scholars were not. Thus, the anomaly posed by Riwāyah 25 does not undermine our working assumption.616 The report from al-Ḍaḥḥāk, as we have seen, has features to suggest that his account is also based on the teaching of Ibn ‘Abbās.
Satanic verses incident constituted a standard element in first- and second-century Qur’ānic exegesis, in which discourse it was invariably associated with the Revelation of Qur’ān 53:19 al-Najm and 22:52 al-Hajj and, sometimes, with the exegesis of Qur’ān 17:73 al-Isrā’, Qur’ān 39:45 al-Zumar, and Qur’ān 109 al-Kāfirūn. Not only did the incident form a standard element in the discourses of late first- / early second-century sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr, but also the isnāds show that, by the end of the second century, accounts of the Satanic verses were being transmitted in almost every important intellectual center in the second-century Islamic world from the Hijaz to Syria to Iraq to Transoxania to North Africa: Madīna, Mecca, Baṣrah, Kūfah, Baghdād, Miṣṣiṣah, Rayy, Balkh, Samarqand, Marw, Şanʿā’, Fustāt, and Qayrawān. Despite this universal transmission of the narratives of the Satanic verses incident in the genres of sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr, it is striking that the incident did not constitute a standard element in the third major historical memory discourse on the life of Muḥammad—that of Ḥadīth. As we have seen, the incident is not included in any of the Ḥadīth collections that came to be invested with canonical authority. The only Ḥadīth collections in which the incident is recorded are noncanonical: the Musnad of al-Bazzār, the Muʿjam al-kabīr of al-Ṭabarānī, and the Mukhtārah of al-Ḍiyāʾ al-Maqdisī. The significance of this will be taken up in Chapter 3.

A second set of questions raised at the outset addressed the content of the Satanic verses narratives. What does the content of these narratives tell us about the understanding of Satanic verses incident in the early Muslim community? Specifically, the understanding of the Satanic verses incident revolves around three main hermeneutical questions. Did the Prophet utter the verses? Why did he utter them? Did he realize of his own accord that he had erred, or was he unaware of this until corrected by Jibril?

All the first- and early second-century reports are agreed that the Prophet uttered the Satanic verses (even the maverick Riwāyahs 49 and 50 from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī agree that the Prophet uttered the gharānīq phrase). The two rīwāyahs that are ambiguous as to the question are clearly later adjustments of early reports made so as to deflect what became the doctrinally problematic content of the narrative (Riwāyahs 9 and 10 in relation to Riwāyah 8, and Riwāyah 26 in relation to Riwāyah 25). The majority of reports explicitly mention
that the Prophet uttered the verses. This is done either by straightforward use of the verbs takallama or qāla; or through the unambiguous phrases alqā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi (“Satan cast upon his tongue”), alqā al-shayṭān ‘alay-hi (“Satan cast upon him”), ajrā al-shayṭān ‘alā lisāni-hi (“Satan caused to run upon his tongue”), ujriya ‘alā lisāni-hi (“it was caused to run upon his tongue”), alqā al-shayṭān fī fi-hi (“Satan cast into his mouth”); or through a correction scene in which Jibrīl points out the Prophet’s error, sometimes after the Prophet recites the verses back to Jibrīl. In three reports, Riwāyahs 12, 21, and 25, the fact of the Prophet uttering the verses is not stated explicitly, but is clearly implied by the context.

On the question of why the Prophet uttered the verses, the accounts differ. All of the reports contained in sīrah-maghāzī works, either explicitly or by contextualization (i.e., mention of the refugees in Abyssinia), present the incident as taking place in a climate of persecution by Quraysh (Riwāyahs 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15). In three of these reports—Riwāyahs 1, 2, and 3 (all from Muḥammad b. Ka‘b al-Quraẓī)—the Prophet is portrayed as desiring a reconciliation with Quraysh; and in two reports—Riwāyah 1 (from al-Quraẓī) and Riwāyah 12 (al-Suyūṭi’s citation of Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah ← al-Zuhrī)—the Prophet is presented as desiring a respite from, or an end to, the persecution. In Riwāyah 1, the Prophet desires that Divine Revelation be the instrument by which this be effected. In Riwāyahs 2 and 3, the Prophet desires that God not send down a Revelation that will further estrange Quraysh. In these riwāyahs, the fact of the Prophet’s taking words suggested to him by Satan as being Divine Revelation is presented as arising directly from the Prophet’s misplaced desire, which, in turn, is clearly influenced by the harsh circumstances. In this interpretation, the verb tamannā in Qur’an 22:52 is glossed by the narrative as “desire,” and the verse reads: “We have not sent, before you, a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he desired, Satan cast something into his desire.” Another background motif to the incident is the one given in Riwāyahs 8 (from ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr); 12 and 13 (from Mūsā b. ‘Uqbah); 16, 17, 18, and 19 (Abū al-‘Āliyah); and 21 (al-Suddi)—namely, Quraysh’s offer of a rec-

617 Riwāyah 30, when corrected, reads like Riwāyah 24.
618 Also in the sanitized Riwāyahs 9 and 10.
onciliation with, or even active support for, the Prophet on the condition that he speak well of their gods. In all of these reports except *Riwa`yah 21*, this offer takes place in a stated context of persecution; in other words, if the Prophet agrees to praise the deities of Quraysh, the persecution will stop. In all these *riwa`yahs*, the Prophet’s uttering the verses is presented as a response to the offer from Quraysh. Whereas *Riwa`yahs 12* and *13* gloss *tamannā* as “desire,” *Riwa`yahs 16* to *19* and *21* do not provide any gloss for the verb.

In none of the above reports is Muḥammad presented as deliberately doing something that he knows to be against the terms of his Prophetic mission; rather, Muḥammad is portrayed as being under pressure, confused, and unaware of the import of his act. This point is driven home by the correction process. In those reports where Jibrīl corrects the Prophet (*Riwa`yahs 1*, *2*, *3*, *7*, *8*, *22*, *23*, *35*, *36*, *38*, *40*, *42*, and *47*), it is evident that the Prophet is not aware of having done anything wrong until he is corrected. In *Riwa`yahs 7* and *8*, however, the Prophet is presented as already being distressed before the correction takes place. This motif conveys the idea that the Prophet has sensed that something has gone wrong, although he is still not sure what exactly it is. When he is corrected, he acknowledges his error and laments it in touchingly self-critical terms, most strikingly in *Riwa`yah 8*: “I have obeyed Satan, and spoken his words, and he has become a partner in God’s matter with me [wa-sharika-ni fī amr Allāh].” In the shorter *Riwa`yahs 16* to *20* from Abū al-ʿĀliyah, there is no correction scene, and the impression is that the Prophet realizes on his own that he has erred. This suggests a lesser degree of confusion on the part of the Prophet about the nature of his Prophetic mission than is indicated in those reports where the Prophet is corrected by Jibrīl. We will return to this concept of Prophetic confusion in Chapter 3.

The fact that the *tafsir* reports are directed, in the first instance, at explaining the particular Qur`ānic verse under exegesis, while the *sirah-maghāzī* reports aim at linking an event to a larger narrative, produced marked differences in the formulation of the Satanic verses *riwa`yahs* transmitted in the respective *tafsir* and *sirah-maghāzī* projects. The *tafsir* reports are generally shorter than the *sirah-maghāzī* reports and eliminate entire narrative units, thereby affecting the hermeneutical elaboration of the incident. In reading
these reports, one is uncertain as to whether they are meant to be taken as self-contained units of information, or whether they assume knowledge of the more detailed information contained in the *sīrah-maghāzī* tradition. Our method has been to read the *tafsīr* reports as self-contained unless there is more than one report from the same individual, in which case more than one reading becomes possible. This is illustrated in *Riwayahs 14* and *15*, both transmitted from al-Zuhri from Abū Bakr b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith: *Riwayah 14*—evidently the *tafsīr* report—when read in isolation gives the impression that the Prophet’s uttering the Satanic verses was a simple recitation error that resulted from a lack of concentration, and was innocent of any external pressures; however, when *Riwayah 14* is read in the context of *Riwayah 15*—the longer *sīrah-maghāzī* report—the error emerges as one that was informed by a particular political context. Among the narrative motifs that are lacking in the *tafsīr* reports are the persecution motif and the motif of Quraysh’s offer of compromise; the former is present in none of the *tafsīr* reports save those from Abū al-‘Āliyah, the latter only in the reports from Abū al-‘Āliyah and *Riwayah 21* from al-Suddī. In the absence of these motifs, the rest of the *tafsīr* reports offer different hermeneutical elaborations of the incident from those discussed above. *Riwayah 25* (Ma’mar b. Rāshid’s attribution to Qatādah), like *Riwayahs 2* and *3*, glosses *tamannā* as the Prophet’s desire that God not insult the deities of Quraysh. Unlike *Riwayahs 2* and *3*, however, there is no reason given for the Prophet’s desire (the persecution motif is absent). Nonetheless, the Prophet’s error clearly results from this misplaced desire. A distinctive hermeneutical elaboration is found in *Riwayah 24* from Qatādah b. Di‘āmah and developed further in *Riwayahs 27, 28*, and *29* from Muqātil b. Sulaymān—namely, that the Prophet became drowsy (*na‘asa*) while praying and uttered the verses in this state of drowsiness. While Qatādah does not provide any reason why the Prophet should have uttered these specific words, the fact that the error is not corrected until “God repelled Satan and instructed His Prophet with His authoritative writ” makes it difficult to interpret the incident as the simple lapse of a sleepy man. Muqātil glosses *tamannā as haddatha nafsa-hu* (to think to oneself), which suggests that the Prophet’s sleepy utterance must have been in some way related to what he was thinking about. While *Riwayah*
The earliest narratives and their transmitters

23 from al-Kalbī does not mention the Prophet’s sleepiness, it also presents the Prophet as uttering the Satanic verses while distracted in prayer with thoughts that were disconsonant with his Divine mission: “If he sought something worldly, Satan cast this (as) speech upon his tongue.”

A further distinctive hermeneutical elaboration is that in Riwāyahs 36, 37, and 38, where the Prophet is deceived by Satan appearing to him in the form of Jibril. In some reports, the Prophet’s error is clearly presented as taking place while Sūrat al-Najm is being revealed; in others, he is reciting a Revelation that has evidently already been sent down. This distinction generally does not come across as particularly significant; the Prophet is, in both cases, mistaking Satanic suggestion for Divine Revelation. In one instance, however, the fact of the error taking place while the verses are being revealed is crucial to the hermeneutical elaboration of the incident. This is in Riwāyah 34 from al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim, where the process of Divine Revelation is understood as resembling the process of oral poetic composition. Here, the Prophet is portrayed as repeating the phrase al-Lāt wa-al-ʿUzzā over and over in the manner of an oral poet “straightening out his rhythms,” whereupon Satan casts his verses into the Prophet’s mind. The same interpretation is implied in the narrative of Riwāyah 35. Riwāyah 22, from al-Suddī, provides no explanation for the error, but places great emphasis on its political consequences: Quraysh flock to Muḥammad and celebrate him as a hero, claiming him as their own Prophet: “A Prophet from the Banī ‘Abd Manāf!” Other reports that provide no explanation for the error are Riwāyah 14 (from al-Zuhrī), Riwāyah 39 (attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās), and Riwāyahs 40 to 47 (all of which are from Saʿīd b. Jubayr with some attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās). In these reports, where there is no explicit gloss of tamannā and no narrative context within which to place the incident, the default meaning of tamannā is “to recite”: “We have not sent, before you, a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he recited, Satan cast something into his recitation.” In only one of these reports, however, is the Prophet portrayed as correcting his error on his own. In this instance (Riwāyah

619 Riwāyahs 18 and 20 from Abū al-ʿĀliyah also present the error as taking place while the Prophet is praying. In Riwāyah 18, as we have seen, the error is in response to the offer from Quraysh.
before its contextualization by Riwalayh 15, it is possible to interpret the Prophet’s mistake as a simple error in recitation (albeit a particularly egregious one). In one other report (Riwalayh 48), the Prophet realizes that he has committed an error of some magnitude, but there is no indication that he corrects himself. In the remaining reports, however, there is no suggestion that the Prophet is aware of the nature of his error, and in three of these (Riwalayhs 40, 42, and 47) he is corrected by Jibril. The fact that the Prophet does not correct himself, or is simply not aware of having done anything wrong, precludes one from interpreting his uttering the Satanic verses as a simple recitational aberration innocent of external factors.

Riwalayhs 49 and 50 from al-Hasan al-Basri present us with the earliest instance of a scholar being remembered as having actively rejected the Satanic verses. It is not clear from the citations of al-Hasan whether he took this position in the context of a tafsir work or in some other context. Also, no mention is made as to who it is that transmitted this position from him. Regardless of whether Riwalayhs 49 and 50 are a genuine transmission of al-Hasan al-Basri’s position on the Satanic verses incident, they are clearly expressive of an anxiety about the notion that the Prophet might have uttered the Satanic verses in concession to the polytheism of Quraysh. We have seen indications of this anxiety in those few Satanic verses riwalayhs that occur in the noncanonical Hadith collections: the transmission apparatuses of Riwalayhs 43 and 44 are hedged about with cautionary statements from the muhaddithun directed at undermining the validity of the isnads and thus the credibility of the reports. A similar process is evident in the variant transmissions of the incident in the Maghaz of Musa b. ‘Uqbah (Riwalayh 9)—a work transmitted from Musa’s students by muhaddithun; here, attempts are made at manipulating the text of the original report from ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr so as to give the impression that the Prophet did not utter the Satanic verses. These riwalayhs, and the fact that the incident itself did not find its way into the canonical Hadith collections, provide a telling illustration of the discomfort of Hadith scholars in the period circa 150 onwards with the memory of the Satanic verses incident as contained in the sirah-maghaz and tafsir discourses of the late first and early second centuries. We will turn to the reasons for this discomfort in Chapter 3.
Why Did the Early Muslim Community Accept the Satanic Verses Incident as Truth?

What the narratives do when they uniformly agree is to document the historical beliefs aimed at the biographical subject, beliefs which are held by the author, and perhaps the community that author represents. The history is far more one of the authors, than of the subject.

—TONY K. STEWART

It has now been categorically established that the Satanic verses incident constituted a standard, widely circulated, and generally accepted element in the historical memory of the Muslim community on the life of Muḥammad in the first two centuries of Islam. In other words, the universal rejection of the Satanic verses incident by Islamic orthodoxy today represents the rejection of something that was held to be true by early Muslims. But before we can consider why later Muslims came to reject the Satanic verses incident, we must first ask the question: why did the early Muslim

community accept the Satanic verses incident? As stated in the introduction, Islamic orthodoxy came to reject the Satanic verses incident on the basis of two epistemological principles: the theological principle of ‘iṣmat al-anbiyā’ and the Ḥadīth methodology principle of assaying reports by their isnāds. The acceptance of the Satanic verses incident in the early Muslim community indicates straightforwardly that these two epistemological principles of later orthodoxy did not enjoy universal authority in the early Muslim community—far from it. But to explain the acceptance of the Satanic verses incident in the early Muslim historical memory merely on the basis of the absence of these two epistemological principles is to present an entirely negative argument that explains only why the early Muslims could accept the incident, but not why they in fact did so. The question needs to be addressed on more productive terms. Now, the rejection of the Satanic verses incident obviously represents a negative evaluation of the Satanic verses incident: the incident is dissonant with the image and understanding of Muḥammad and his Prophethood as constituted by Islamic orthodoxy. This straightly leads us to ask: does the fact of the acceptance of the incident in the early Muslim community mean that the early community viewed the incident in a positive light as something entirely consonant with its understanding of Muḥammad and his Prophethood? What function did the Satanic verses play in the memory of the early Muslim community on the life of Muḥammad? What is the incident doing there in the first place?

Three Distinct Discourses: Ḥadīth, sīrah-maghāzī, tafsīr

To answer this, we must return to explore further the implications of the fundamental point made in Chapter 1: that the historical memory of the Prophet in the early Muslim community was not monolithic but rather remembered, constructed, and transmitted in three distinct discourses—sīrah-maghāzī, tafsīr, and Ḥadīth—and that sīrah-maghāzī, tafsīr, and Ḥadīth in the first two centuries of Islam were not merely distinct literary genres but distinct cultural projects, with different goals, different practitioners, different materials, different methods, different forms, different values,
and different meanings. The identity of the Prophet as constituted by each of these historical memory discourses is directly related to the identities of the genres, projects, and practitioners that remembered, or, to be more precise, re-membered—that is, reconstituted—him.

The acceptance of the Satanic verses incident in sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr is thus directly related to the respective identities of these two historical memory projects, and the rejection of Satanic verses incident in Ḥadīth (illustrated by the fact that the incident is not recorded in any canonical Hadīth collection) is directly related to the identity of that historical memory project. In other words, the differences in the historical memory projects is important not only for the dating of reports—which is what was emphasized in Chapters 1 and 2—but also for understanding why the Satanic verses incident was accepted by early Muslims as true. To the extent to which the projects of Ḥadīth, sīrah-maghāzī, and tafsīr were possessed of and governed by different methodologies of assessing the truth-value of these materials—that is, different epistemologies—they were nothing less than different truth projects. These epistemological differences in the early historical memory projects on the life of Muḥammad proved foundational and crucial to the later development of Muslim attitudes towards the Satanic verses incident down the centuries.

In Chapter 1, we laid out the critical differences between the three historical memory projects. The aim of the scholars of the Ḥadīth movement, as it took shape in the second and third centuries of Islam, was to define, constitute, and establish legal, praxial, and creedal norms through the authoritative documentation of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muḥammad as produced from the historical memory of the early Muslim community. The Ḥadīth scholars were concerned with prescribing the specific content of Islam and, as such, the project of Ḥadīth fused with the authoritative and prescriptive project of the elaboration of Islamic law. To both these ultimately integrated fields, Ḥadīth and law, the memory of the life and personality of the Prophet existed primarily to provide Prophetic statements and acts on the basis of which to lay down in detail the specific legal, praxial, and creedal rules by which the members of the

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2 Some overlap notwithstanding, as demonstrated in Chapters 1 and 2.
3 On “remembering” and “re-membering,” see Jan Assmann, Religion and Cultural Memory (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 11.
community should live. These normative Prophetic statements and acts covered almost every sector of quotidian life, from prayer ritual to personal sanitation, to social comportment, to dietary law, to commercial practices. To lay down indisputable common norms in every area of life required, in turn, the development of a methodology to establish authoritatively the authenticity of reports containing the Prophetic norms—hence the evolution of a science of isnāds.

The Ḥadīth project, then, was a self-consciously authoritative and prescriptive discourse aimed at defining the normative legal, praxial, and creedal content of Islam, and thus at constituting the identity of the Muslim community. The Ḥadīth project invested these prescribed Islamic norms with social authority through the purposive appropriation, validation, and legitimation of the historical memory of the Prophet Muḥammad. However—and this is the crucial point—this project did not merely require a particular method suited to its authoritative-prescriptive purpose; it also required a particular type of Prophet suited to its authoritative and prescriptive purpose. Given the centrality of the authoritative persona of the Prophet to

4 The role of the Ḥadīth project in establishing religious praxis and law is conveniently illustrated by the list of chapter titles of a representative canonical collection, the Sunan of al-Nasāʿī: ritual purity (al-ṭahārah), water (al-miyāh), menstruation (al-ḥayḍ wa-al-istiḥāḍa), bathing and cleansing without water (al-ghusl wa-al-tayammum), prayer (al-ṣalāt), appointed times (al-mawāqīt), the call to prayer (al-adhān), mosques (al-masājid), the direction of prayer (al-qiblah), the office of Imam (al-imāmah), the beginning of the prayer (al-iftitāḥ), the execution of the prayer (al-taṭbīq), forgetfulness in prayer (al-sahw), Friday prayer (al-jumʿah), shortening the prayer in travel (taqṣīr al-ṣalāt fi al-safar), the eclipse prayer (al-kusūf), prayer for rain (al-istiṣaqʾ), prayer of fear (ṣalāt al-khawf), the prayer of the two ʿĪds (ṣalāt al-ʿīdayn), staying up at night and giving up the day to pray (qiyām al-jumʿah), alms-giving (al-zakāt), the rituals of the Pilgrimage (manāsik al-Ḥajj), struggle in the cause of God (al-jihād), marriage (al-nikāḥ), divorce (al-ṭalāq), horses (al-khayl), mortmain (al-aḥbās), bequests (al-waṣāyā), gifts (al-nuḥl wa-al-hibah), conditional gifts (al-ruqāb), lifetime gifts (al-ʿumrā), oaths and vows (al-aymān wa-al-nudhūr), sharecropping (al-muzāraʿah), prohibition of bloodshed (taḥrīm al-dam), the division of land that passes into the possession of the Muslim community (qism al-fayʾ), pledging allegiance (al-bayʿah), sacrifice for newborn children (al-ʿaqīqah), sacrifice of the first-born camel foal and of a sheep in Rajab (al-faraʿ wa-al-ʿatīrah), hunting and slaughtering (al-ṣayd wa-al-dhabāʾīḥ), sacrificial animals (al-ḍaḥāyā), sales (al-bayʿa), compurgation (al-qasāmah), cutting the hand of the thief (qaṭʿ al-sāriq), faith (al-īmān), adornment (al-zinah), the conduct of judges (ādāb al-ṣudūr), seeking refuge in God (al-istiʿādah), and drinks (al-asbābīh); see Shahab Ahmed, “Ḥadith i. A General Survey of the Tradition of the Prophet,” EIr.
the logic of the Ḥadīth movement, it is obvious that the idea of an infallible or impeccable Prophet whose words and deeds might reliably be taken to establish a model for detailed pious mimesis must have possessed a particular appeal for the ahl al-ḥadīth. As Annemarie Schimmel has noted, “The absolute obedience owed to the Prophet is meaningful only if Muhammad was free from any faults and could thus constitute an immaculate model even for the most insignificant details of life.” Consequently, the image of Muḥammad contained in the Satanic verses incident, that of a Prophet who fell victim to Satan and erred in the transmission of Divine Revelation, was entirely dissonant with and, indeed, constituted a normative challenge to the Ḥadīth movement. It is for this reason that, despite its wide circulation in the first- and second-century genres of tafsīr and sirah-maghāzi, the Satanic verses incident was not included in any of the canonical Ḥadīth collections: the respective Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the respective Sunans of Abū Dā‘ūd al-Siṣīstānī (d. 275/888), Muḥammad b. ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892), Ibn Mājah al-Qazwīnī (d. 273/886), and Aḥmad b. Shu‘ayb al-Nasā‘ī (d. 303/915). The incident is also not recorded in the four main collections that are supplementary to the “the True Six (al-ṣiḥāḥ al-sittah),” the respective Sunans of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī (d. 255/868), ‘Alī b. ‘Umar al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385/995), and Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1065); nor is it in the vast Musnad of the great champion of the ahl al-ḥadīth, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. We have seen that those early muḥaddithūn who actually transmit the incident did so while either eliminating from it the most crucial narrative element—that of the Prophet himself uttering the Satanic verses (Riwāyahs 9, 10, and 11)—or underlining the isnād (Riwāyahs 40, 43, and 44).6

But this was not the case for those re-membering the Prophet in the first- and second-century projects of sirah-maghāzi and tafsīr. Scholars collecting sirah-maghāzi material were not primarily concerned with establishing norms of religious law and praxis for pious mimesis, but rather with constructing a narrative of the moral-historical epic

6 The only exception here is Riwāyah 8, which is faithfully transmitted by al-Ṭabarānī from Abū al-Aswad’s recension of the Sirah of ‘Urwah b. al-Zubayr, but which already has a deficient isnād.
of the life of the Prophet in his heroic struggle to found the Divinely guided human Community (al-ummah al-muslimah) and set it on the path to salvation. The *sirah nabawiyyah* is nothing if not an epic. Its central figure is a man of noble lineage but disadvantaged birth—a vulnerable orphan dependent on the protection of an aged uncle. He possesses extraordinary virtue that is recognized by all in his tribe, but is without fortune or power. This man is singled out by God to be His Messenger and charged with the mission of leading his people out of the darkness of idolatry to the salvation of monotheism; but his Message of monotheism and morality is rejected by his tribe, and draws only a few close friends and relatives, slaves and low-born freemen. His followers are persecuted; some are tortured and martyred, while others flee across the sea into exile. He is abused, spat upon, doused in offal. His uncle and wife die, and his clan is then boycotted by the tribe and almost starves to death. He seeks refuge in a nearby town, but its inhabitants have their children stone him away. And yet, just when all seems lost, men of the city of the maternal ancestor of his clan, drawn to his truthfulness, pledge him their allegiance and ask him to come to them to arbitrate their civil strife. Even so, he barely escapes with his life, surviving two assassination attempts, the second time saved only by the miraculous intervention of animals as he hides in a cave. He flees into exile as a refugee-Prophet, and while he receives some support in his new city, he is also met there with indifference, suspicion, and resentment. His tribe continues to regard him as a threat and fights three battles against him. At the first battle, his army is outnumbered three to one, but accomplishes a miraculous victory. In the second battle, indiscipline results in a disastrous defeat, and the Prophet is wounded and almost killed. In the third battle, he is besieged, but a previously unknown defensive tactic frustrates the enemy. While in exile in his new city, he entreats the one religious community that should be the natural audience for his Prophetic message, but rather than recognize him, they betray him, and must be repudiated by force of arms. Nonetheless, the truth of his Message is gradually recognized and his following increases. He builds a site for communal worship and government, institutes laws, and sends missionaries to all parts of the land and to foreign powers. His military strength grows, and his followers undertake one military action after another, until he is joined by other tribes, and finally
is able to amass a great army. His own tribe now accepts a truce with him, and important individuals convert to his religion. When his tribe breaks the truce, he returns from exile with a vast army and enters as conqueror the city whence he had fled for his life less than a decade earlier. He takes the pagan temple of his tribe, destroys its idols, and returns it to the worship of the One God. His tribe submits to his Message, as do the all the tribes of his race, who send emissaries to him from every corner of the land. The once imperiled and vulnerable orphan is recognized by all as Messenger and Prophet of God, and becomes the ruler of his land and his race.

The *sīrah-maghāzī* is thus an epic passage from obscurity to supremacy, from darkness to light, from ignorance to salvation: a heroic story of peril, suffering, fortitude, persistence, faith, courage, and triumph, which provided the new community with a repertoire of heroic, moral, and dramatic motifs through the common attachment to which the Islamic identity of community might coalesce and integrate. “One is not far into Ibn Isḥāq’s work until he or she realizes that this is something tantamount to an early Muslim Homeric *Odyssey*. The activities and characteristics of the hero are of epic proportions, implying and shaping the destiny of a people.”7 Within a century of his death, the followers of the Messenger of God, led by his tribe, had conquered half the known world. In this vast geographic space from Morocco to Transoxania, the followers of Muḥammad lived as a ruling minority governing majority non-Muslim subject populations, each of which possessed their own epic narratives. In this context, the early Muslim generations retrieved and (re-)constructed—from piecemeal narratives transmitted in prose and poetry over the course of a century—the foundational epic of their own community. The dramatic events of the *sīrah-maghāzī* were narrated in the early community not for authoritative prescription of conduct and creed but rather to evoke, invoke, and convoke (in this connection, it is striking how all three second-century compilers of major biographies of Muḥammad—Ibn Isḥāq, Abū Maʿshar, and al-Wāqidī—produced their biographies of Muḥammad under the patronage of the caliphal court). Much in the same way that the performance of the

pre-Islamic “Battle Days of the Arabs” (ayyām al-‘arab) provided the literary basis for the social consolidation of pre-Islamic tribal identity, the performative transmission of the sīrah-maghāzī—whether in mosques or other public places (by quṣṣāṣ) or in majlis—gatherings (e.g., the famous majlis al-qilādah that met each night in first-century Madīnah)—provided the literary basis for the social consolidation of the identity of the early Muslim community.® The subject of the sīrah-maghāzī literature was not the documentation of a quotidian Prophet who washed and ate and adjudicated disputes of sale: its subject was the dramatic commemoration of “the most important hero in our religious heritage: the Hero-Prophet.”® The sīrah-maghāzī project thus had no need of an infallible Prophetic model for pious mimesis: there is little drama to be had from a hero who never makes mistakes. Drama arises when there is the possibility of things going wrong, of defeat, of failure, when events must be outwitted and setbacks overcome. This is precisely what happens in the Satanic verses incident.®

® The social history of the transmission of history in the early Muslim community is a badly neglected subject. A rare attempt to study the social settings for the transmission of sīrah-maghāzī in the first century of Islam is Mubārākpūrī, Tadvin-i siyar, 49–100. In the highly militarized culture of early Arab-Muslim society, it is hardly surprising that so much of what was remembered of the early biography of the Prophet consisted, like the pre-Islamic ayyām literature, of “Battle Days” (maghāzī) and of poetry. The Prophet’s followers are recorded to have taken part in no less than eighty-four military engagements; see the list compiled by Mubārākpūrī, Tadvin-i siyar, 25–29.

® ahamm baṭal fi turāthi nā al-dīnī: al-baṭal al-nabī; see Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, “al-Sīrah al-nabawiyyah: sīrah sha’biyyah,” al-Funūn al-sha’biyyah 32–33 (1991) 17–36, at 18. Earle H. Waugh and Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd are among the very few scholars to have identified the popular epic nature of the sīrah-maghāzī genre, but even they have not appreciated the implications thereof.

® Uri Rubin has situated the Satanic verses incident in his larger thesis that the biography of Muḥammad represents the “adaptation” by the early Muslim community of “biblical themes” / “universal themes” of Prophethood and their “conversion to Islamic models.” He identifies these biblical/universal themes as “attestation, preparation, revelation, persecution, and salvation” (Eye of the Beholder, 3–4). In the case of the Satanic verses incident, the adapted themes are “persecution,” “isolation,” and “satanic temptation”: “the story . . . demonstrates once again the process of adaptation of universal prophetic themes to Islamic models such as the Qurān. The basic non-Qurānic level of the story of isolation was enriched with the Qurānic passages of satanic temptation”; Rubin, Eye of the Beholder, 162. In this context, Rubin has recognized the dramatic quality of the story: “the Qurānic passages of satanic temptation . . . provided dramatic air to the story of the two fitnas suffered by the Prophet in Mecca,” “the dramatic story of temptation”;
The positive dramatic function of the Satanic verses incident in the foundational epic of the early Muslim community may be illustrated by locating it in the narrative of events as constructed in the *sīrah-maghāzī* section of the *Tārīkh* of al-Ṭabarî. The passage of events leading up to the incident is as follows. Three years after he received his first Revelation, during which time his followers practiced their religion only in secret,

The Messenger of God was commanded to proclaim the divine message which he had received, to declare it publicly to the people, and to summon them to God. . . . When he did so, they did not withdraw from him or reject him in any way . . . until he spoke of their gods and denounced them. When he did this, they took exception to it and united in opposition and hostility to him. . . . His uncle, Abū Ṭālib was friendly to him, however, and protected him from harm. . . . Eventually, they went to Abū Ṭālib again. “Abū Ṭālib,” they said, “. . . we can no longer endure this vilification of our forefathers, this derision of our traditional values and this abuse of our gods. Either you restrain him, or we shall fight both of you. . . .” Abū Ṭālib sent for the Messenger of God . . . and said, “Nephew, here are the shaykhs and nobles of your tribe. They have asked for justice against you, that you should desist from reviling their gods and they will leave you to your god.” “Uncle,” he said, “shall I not summon them to something which is better for them than their gods?” “What do you summon them to?” he asked. He replied, “I summon them to utter a saying through which the Arabs will submit to them and they will rule over the non-Arabs.” Abū Jahl said from among the gathering, “What is it, by your father? We will give you it, and ten like it.” He answered, “That you should say, ‘There is no deity but God.’” They took fright at that and said, “Ask for anything rather than that!” But he said, “If you were to bring me the sun and put it into my hand, I would not ask you for anything other than this.” They rose up to leave in anger and said, “By God, we shall revile you and your God who commands you to do this!” . . . After this, the situation deteriorated, hostility became more bitter, and people

*Eye of the Beholder*, 162, 166. However, the problem with Rubin’s treatment of the Muslims’ memory of Muḥammad as someone being made to enact the script of biblical/universal prophethood is that the person that emerges is an oddly and unrecognizably passive figure. What is lost is what we have seen to be a defining feature of Muḥammad as Prophet—namely, his active and dynamic role as hero. It is only in the context of the *heroic epic* of Prophethood that the dramatic function of the Satanic verses takes on its full meaning and function.
withdraw from one another and showed more hatred to one another. Then the Quraysh incited one another against those in their various clans who had become Companions of the Messenger of God and had accepted Islam with him. Every clan fell upon those of its members who were Muslims, tormenting them and trying to force them to leave their religion. . . .

When the Muslims were treated in this way, the Messenger of God commanded them to emigrate to Abyssinia . . . the main body of them went to Abyssinia because of the coercion they were being subjected to in Mecca. His fear was that they would be seduced from their religion . . . ‘Uqbah b. Abī Mu‘āyṭ came up while the Messenger of God was by the Ka‘bah, twisted his robe round his neck, and throttled him violently. Abū Bakr stood behind him, put his hand on his shoulder, and pushed him away from the Messenger of God. Then he said, “People, would you kill a man because he says, ‘My Lord is God?’” . . . One day the companions of the Messenger of God were assembled together and said, “By God, Quraysh have never heard this Qur’ān recited out loud to them. Who will let them hear it?” ‘Abdallāh b. Mas‘ūd said, “I will” . . . The next day, ‘Abdallāh b. Mas‘ūd went to the Maqām in the late morning when the Quraysh were gathered in their groups . . . he said “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.” . . . He turned towards them as he recited, and they took notice of him and began to say, “What is this son of a slave’s mother saying?” Then they said, “He is reciting some of what Muḥammad has brought,” and rose up and began to hit him in the face. . . .

Quraysh gathered together to confer and decided to draw up a document in which they undertook not to marry women from the Banū Hāshim and the Banū Muṭṭalib,12 or to give them women in marriage, or to sell anything to them or buy anything from them. . . . When Quraysh did this, the Banū Hāshim and the Banū al-Muṭṭalib joined with Abū Ṭālib, went with him to his valley and gathered round him there. . . . This state of affairs continued until the two clans were exhausted, since nothing reached any of them except what was sent secretly . . . Al-Walīd b. al-Mughīrah,13 al-ʿĀṣ b. Wā’il, al-Aswad b. al-Muṭṭalib, and

11 A more detailed account of this is given in Ibn Hishām’s recension of the Sīrah of Ibn Isḥāq: “The Quraysh showed their enmity to all those who followed the apostle; every clan which contained Muslims attacked them, imprisoning them and beating them, allowing them no food or drink, and exposing them to the burning sun of Mecca, so as to seduce them from their religion”; Guillaume, Life of Muhammad, 143.

12 The two clans of the Prophet.

13 One of the Unbelievers who are remembered in the Satanic verses narratives as performing a partial prostration; see Riwāyahs 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 15, and 28.
Umayyah b. Khalaf met the Messenger of God and said, “Muḥammad, come and let us worship that which you worship, and your worship that which we worship, and we shall make you a partner in all our undertakings. If what you have brought is better than what we already have, we will be partners with you in it and take our share of it, and if what we have is better than what you have, you shall be partner with us in what we have, and you shall take your share of it.” Then God revealed: “Say: O disbelievers! [I worship not that which you worship! Nor do you worship that which I worship. Nor will I worship that which you worship! Nor will you worship that which I worship!] To you: your religion! And, to me: my religion!”

The Messenger of God was concerned for the welfare of his people [kāna ḥarīṣan ‘alā ṣalāḥ qawmi-hi], and very much wished to bring them together [muḥibban muqārabata-hum] by whatever means he could find [bi-mā wajada ilay-hi al-sabīl]. It has been mentioned that he desired a way to bring them together [tamannā al-sabīl ilā muqārabatī-him], and his state in this regard was . . . [here follows the narrative of the Satanic verses incident].

The events leading up to the Satanic verses incident are thus dominated by three themes: Quraysh’s displeasure at the rejection of their gods, and their consequent negotiations with and persecution of the Prophet and his followers in a sustained attempt to reach a compromise on this fundamental issue. Quraysh offer a theological compromise; and initially, the Prophet refuses, telling them if only they will follow him, they will rule the world. Quraysh intensify the persecution, and the situation of the Prophet and of the Muslims deteriorates steadily, most of the Muslims flee the country, and those who remain—including the Prophet—are subject to abuse, assault, and social and economic boycott. Quraysh make another offer, but God sends down the uncompromising Sūrat al-Kāfirūn. In this abject circumstance, the moment of his and his followers’ greatest weakness, Muḥammad wants to be reconciled with Quraysh “by whatever means he could find.” It is in this state that Satan manages to induce the Prophet to make the one concession that his tribe wants.

14 Until this point, the translation is that of Watt and McDonald, *History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. VI*, 92–108. After this point, the translation is mine.
15 Qur’ān 109 al-Kāfirūn. See *Riwāyah 29*, where these verses are revealed pursuant to the same conversation, but immediately in the wake of the Prophet reciting the Satanic verses.
of him: acknowledgment of their gods. His tribe rejoices and the persecution is halted. But, as the audience of the sīrah knows only too well, this moment of relief from bitter suffering is, in fact, the most dangerous moment of all: by this concession to falsehood, the fate and salvation of the community who, by God’s guidance, will come to rule the Arabs and the non-Arabs hang perilously in the balance. Everything—this world and the next—stands to be lost. But God does not allow this to pass, and sends guidance to the Prophet, who, in turn, possesses not only the honesty to accept his error but also the courage to face the harsh consequences of recanting it.

This is high drama, indeed. Now it is clear, once and for all, that there can be no compromise with polytheism, come what may. At this moment, the die is cast. In many ways, the Satanic verses incident has a place in the epic biography of the Prophet similar to that of the Battle of Uḥud, the shocking military defeat of the Muslims by Quraysh that, rather than destroying the Muslims, serves to fortify them with greater clarity and moral purpose. These are the great trials to be overcome on the road to victory and salvation. In other words, it is not merely that the Satanic verses incident is not problematic in the context of the epic biography of the Prophet: rather, it embodies the function of sīrah-maghāzī; it exemplifies what sīrah-maghāzī was for and what it was all about. The community has passed through the fire of persecution and the jaws of Satan, and will emerge triumphant by the will of God and the faithfulness of his Prophet.

This much for the place of the Satanic verses incident in sīrah-maghāzī, but what of tafsīr? Scholars undertaking tafsīr of the Qurʾān were endeavoring to interpret the highly allusive text of the Divine Revelation that had been proclaimed piecemeal from God by Muḥammad over the course of twenty-three years, and whose contextualizing points of reference—namely, the historical events and cultural environment of the Prophet’s life—were rarely stated in the Revelation itself. The peculiar configuration of a text that addressed itself to and through a context unstated, but alluded to, presented a complex hermeneutical challenge. On the one hand, the corpus of meaning with which the mufassirūn were concerned was determined both by the subject matter and by the specific formulation of the words of the Qurʾān. On the other hand, the meaning of the Qurʾān was governed by and contingent upon the memory of the events and
environment external to itself: the Qur’ānic text needed that external context in order to mean. Thus, while the Satanic verses incident is related to the Revelation of Qur’ān 53:19 al-Najm, Qur’ān 22:52–55 al-Ḥajj, Qur’ān 17:73 al-Isrā’, Qur’ān 109 al-Kāfûrûn, and Qur’ān 39:43–45 al-Zumar, the *mufassirûn* were dependent on sources external to the Qur’ān for any sense of chronological location and historical context—not only for the incident itself but also for the Qur’ānic passages to which the incident is related, and upon which it is contingent. It is this allusive quality of the text that resulted in what, in Chapter 1, we identified as the defining characteristic of the early *tafsīr* project: its uncertain and exploratory nature. The *tafsīr* project required the first- and second-century exegete to venture forth from the template of the text into the diffuse and variegated landscape of the external context in an expeditionary and reclamatory search for historical, literary, and philological information through which to flesh out the Qur’ānic text—an enterprise that often produced diverse and contradictory trajectories and configurations of meaning. These different meanings were regularly juxtaposed in literary presentation as equally legitimate potential claimants to truth (as exemplified in the contradictory interpretations attributed to the leading authority of early *tafsīr*, Ibn ‘Abbās).

For an interesting example of what can happen to the received chronology and contextualization when the Qur’ānic text itself is made the primary criteria by which to assess its reported external context, see Josef van Ess, “Vision and Ascension: *Sūrat al-Najm* and Its Relationship with Muhammad’s *mi’rāj*,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 1 (1999), 47–62, at 57–58: “The beginning of *sūrat al-Najm*, however, would then be nothing else but a solemn start, the introduction of a speech, a sermon perhaps, held by the Prophet when, as is suggested by the reports we find in Ṭabarî, those who had emigrated to Ethiopia came back, people who had heard what had happened in Mecca only through rumours and who were eager to know what the Prophet really thought about the subject. The greatest possible authority and persuasion would have been needed in order to invalidate the inculpations; in order to reach this goal the Prophet could have referred to his encounters with the heavenly power, the ‘numinous’ as we say today. ‘Your comrade is not astray, neither errs, nor speaks he out of caprice. This is naught but a revelation revealed, taught him by one terrible in power, very strong.” Here, rather than the Satanic intervention taking place subsequent to and despite the Divine statement at the outset of *Sūrat al-Najm*, “Your comrade is not astray, neither errs, nor speaks he out of caprice,” as is the case in the longer reports on the incident, this Divine affirmation becomes part of the Prophet’s public self-dissociation from the Satanic verses. See also Mehmet Akıf Koç, “53 / Necm Suresinin Tefsirinde Bazı Tarihî Sorunlar Üzerine,” *İslamiyât* 6.1 (2003), 165–171.

Noted in Chapter 2.
This exploratory nature of the culture of the early *tafsîr* project set it, and its practitioners, at odds with the prescriptive and authoritative nature of the Ḥadīth project and its practitioners. While the perceived need for a fully articulated religious program set the agenda for the Ḥadīth project and thus for its image of the Prophet, and while the dramatic imperative of the epic set the agenda for the *sīrah-maghāzī* project and thus for its image of the Prophet, it was effectively God—or, to be precise, God’s speech—that set the agenda of the *tafsîr* project and thus for its image of Muḥammad. The Muḥammad of the Qur’ān is an elusive figure composed of dozens of disconnected bodies of text of different, sizes, tones, and registers, like the scattered and possibly incomplete pieces of a jigsaw. The Muḥammad of the Qur’ān is variously inspired, rebuked, and comforted by God. He is someone who is mocked by his human audience and yet for whom God and the angels pray, someone who experiences ecstatic visions and extreme despair, someone to whom obedience is owed and yet is no more than a “warner,” someone who journeys to the heavens and yet walks in the marketplace, someone who is an orphan and yet stands in a long line of Prophets going back to Adam, someone who is the conduit of the Divine Word and yet is no more than “a human being like you.”

All of these were separate and true images of Muḥammad that the practitioners of the *tafsîr* project had to expound, collate, and reconcile. This they did through forays from the world of the Divine text into the world of the human context in search for the units of language and history that, when harnessed to the Divine text, would generate Divine meaning. In attempting to understand the phenomenon of Muḥammad’s Prophethood as projected by the Qur’ān, the *mufassirūn* had to address themselves also to several Qur’ānic verses that alluded to Prophetic vulnerability to Satan, and to Prophetic trial, error/transgression/sin, and repentance—whether on the part of Muḥammad

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19 *basharun mithlu-kum*; Qur’ān 18:110 al-Kahf.

20 Many of the Qur’ānic verses about Muḥammad are conveniently collected in Alford T. Welch, “Muhamad’s Understanding of Himself: The Koranic Data,” in Richard G. Hovannisian and Speros Vryonis Jr. (eds.), *Islam’s Understanding of Itself* (Malibu: Undena, 1983), 15–52, where Welch observes of the verses that “the answers they give are radically different from some of the views presented by the Sīra and Ḥadīth literature”; at 16. The fullest attempt at understanding the Qur’ānic Muḥammad is Kenneth Cragg, *Muhammad in the Qur’an: The Task and the Text* (London: Melisende, 2001).
or on the part of the earlier Prophets who “are expressly intended to be understood as typological prefigurations or pre-presentations of which the person and career of Muḥammad, Prophet and Messenger of God, provide the corresponding recapitulation and fulfillment.” These included, in regard to Ādam, “Satan whispered to him, saying: ‘O, Ādam! Shall I lead you to the tree of eternal life, and to a kingdom that will never decay?’ . . . And Ādam disobeyed his Lord, and went astray.” And in regard to Ibrāhīm:

When night darkened around him, he saw a star, and he said “This is my Lord!,” but when it set, he said, “I love not the things that set.”: And when he saw the moon emerge, he said, “This is my Lord!,” but when it set, he said, “If my Lord does not guide me, I will surely become one the people gone astray!”: And when he saw the sun emerge, he said, “This is my Lord, this is yet greater!,” but when it set, he said, “Oh people, I am innocent of your associating other deities with God [shirk]!”

And in regard to Yūsuf’s encounter with Zulaykhah: “She desired him, and he desired her—were it not that he saw the guidance of his Lord! Thus, We steered away from him misconduct and immorality.” And in regard to Ayyūb: “And remember Our servant, Ayyūb, when he cried out to his Lord: ‘Satan has afflicted me with exhaustion and suffering!’” And in regard to Mūsā:


24 Qur‘ān 12:24 Yūsuf; wa-laqad hammat bi-hi wa-hamma bi-há law lā an ra‘ā burhāna rabb-i hi ka-dhaliqa li-nasrīf‘a ‘an-hu al-sū’wa-al-faḥshā‘.

25 Qur’ān 38:41 Ṣād; wa-udhkur ‘abda-nā Ayyūb idh nādā rabb-hu anni massa-ni al-shayṭānu bi-nuṣbin wa-‘adhāb.
There, he came upon two men fighting each other, the one from among his own people, and the other from among his enemies. And the one from among his own people called out to him for help against the one from among his enemies, whereupon Mūsā struck him with his fist and killed him. He said, “This is the work of Satan; indeed, he is a clear enemy who leads astray!”: He said, “My Lord, I have wronged myself: forgive me!” So He forgave him—indeed, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.26

And in regard to Dā’ūd:

And Dā’ūd perceived that, in actuality, We had tried him; and he asked forgiveness of his Lord, and fell to his knees in prostration and repented . . . “O, Dā’ūd! We have made you a deputy [khalīfah]27 upon the earth, so judge between the people with Truth, and do not follow your desires [hawā] for they will lead you astray from the way of God!”28

And in regard to Sulaymān: “We tried Sulaymān by casting a body upon his throne; then he repented: He said: ‘My Lord, forgive me . . .!’”29 And in regard to Yūnus (Dhū al-Nūn) inside the belly of the fish that had swallowed him: “And Dhū al-Nūn, when he went away angry, thinking We would have no power over him; so he cried in the darkness: ‘There is no God but you, may you be glorified; indeed, I am from among the wrongdoers!’”30 In those instances where the Qur’ān did no more than allude to the errors/transgressions/sins of a given pre-Islamic Prophet, the early mufassirūn were propelled by and from the Word of God into the world of historical memory to

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29 Qur’ān 38:34–35 Ṣād; wa-la-qad fatannā Sulaymān wa-alqaynā ‘alā kursiyyi-hi jasadan thummā anāba: qāla rabb-i ighfir l-i.

locate the information that could be harnessed to the task of fleshing out the allusions in the passage and, thereby, to giving it meaning. In the case of the pre-Islamic Prophets, the historical memory that the early tafsīr project sought to harness to the Qur’ānic text was the Jewish and Christian literary traditions. Thus, in the absence of any Qur’ānic specification of the sin of Dā’ūd/David, the early mu-fassīrūn took that sin to be what the historical memory tradition of the tribe of Banū Isrā’īl—that is, the Torah of the Jews—said it was: namely, David’s murder of Uriah in desire for his wife.31 Similarly, the Qur’ānic allusion to Yūnus’s/Jonah’s anger was explained by the early mufassīrūn as what the sacred tribal history of the Banū Isrā’īl said it was: namely, his anger at God for what he believed to be God’s failure to fulfill His promise to punish the unrepentant people of Nineveh.32

When God said to Muḥammad, “Indeed, we have granted you a manifest victory: that God may forgive you your former and latter sins”33 and “Know that there is no God but God, and ask forgiveness for your sins, and for the Believing men and Believing women,”34 the early mufassīrūn would have viewed the notion of Muḥammad sinning first and foremost in the light of the Qur’ānic verses that mentioned the sins of the earlier Qur’ānic Prophets to whom he was heir. And when God addressed Muḥammad in words that explicitly link Muḥammad’s experience to that of previous Prophets—“We have not sent before you a Messenger or a Prophet but that when he tamānā, Satan cast something into his umnīyyah; then God removes that which Satan casts and establishes His Signs clearly”—the mufassīrūn now were propelled by and from the Word of God into the world of the historical memory of the early Muslim community to locate the context by which to create meaning. In the frank account of Prophetic error and correction in the transmission of Divine Revelation that is the Satanic verses incident—“I have fabricated against God and have said on God’s behalf that which He did not say!”,35 “I have

31 See the reports in al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi’ al-bayān, 23:146–148.
35 Riwāyah 2.
obeyed Satan, and spoken his words, and he has become a partner in God’s matter with me”,\textsuperscript{36} “You have recited to the people that which I did not bring to you from God, and you have said that which He did not say to you!”\textsuperscript{37}—the practitioners of the \textit{tafsīr} project found what they deemed to be a true and coherent exposition of Qur’ān 22:52–55 al-Ḥajj, which they viewed as consistent with the other Qur’ānic allusions to the vulnerability of Prophets to Satan, and to their moments of trial, error, and repentance, as expounded by historical memory. Indeed, given that God returns to the themes of vulnerability to Satan, trial, error, and repentance when mentioning almost all his Prophets, the early \textit{mufassirūn} would likely have seen such experiences as \textit{defining components} in God’s own account of the constitution of Prophethood. This might explain why the scholars of \textit{tafsīr} accepted the Satanic verses incident in full knowledge of the simultaneous presence in the Qur’ān of verses that assert the idea of God’s protection of the integrity of Divine Revelation. These include God’s statement about Himself, the angels, and the Qur’ān: “Indeed, it is We who have sent down upon you the Remembrance; and We, indeed, are its Guardians”;\textsuperscript{38} about the Qur’ān and His Prophet Muḥammad: “Falsehood does not come to it, neither from between his hands, nor from behind him”;\textsuperscript{39} and about Satan: “You have no power over my servants—save among those misguided ones who follow you.”\textsuperscript{40}

The opening passage of Sūrat al-Najm, the \textit{sūrah} that the Prophet was reciting when deceived by Satan, itself reads:

\begin{quote}
By the Star when it sets,
Your Companion has not gone astray, nor is he misguided,
Nor does he speak from his own desire,
Indeed, it is nothing other than an inspiration, inspired!\textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Riwāyah 8}.
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Riwāyah 1}.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{īn-nā naḥnu nazzalnā al-dhikra wa-in-nā la-hu la-ḥāfiẓūn}, Qur’ān 15:9 al-Ḥijr.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{lā ya’tī-hi al-bāṭilu min bayni yaday-hi wa-lā min khalfi-hi}, Qur’ān 41:42 Fuṣṣilat.
The pronouns in the phrase “neither from between his hands, nor from behind him” are often read as referring figuratively to the Qur’ān.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{īnna ‘ibādi laysa la-ka ‘alay-him šulṭān illā man ittaba’aka min al-ghāwīna}; Qur’ān 15:42 al-Ḥijr.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{wa-al-najmi idhā hawā; mā daila sāhibu-kum wa-mā ghawā; wa-mā yanṭiqu ‘an al-hawā; in huwa illā wahyun yāḥā}; Qur’ān 53:1–4 al-Najm.
It makes no sense to suppose that the early *mufassirūn* accepted the Satanic verses incident *despite* these Qur'ānic verses—that is, while believing these verses to *contradict* the idea that the Prophet was deceived by Satan in the transmission of Divine Revelation; rather, they must have accepted the Satanic verses incident *because* of these Qur’ānic verses—that is, while believing the verses to *conform* to the idea that the Prophet was deceived by Satan in the transmission of Divine Revelation.\(^42\) The early *mufassirūn* read the Qur’ān and historical memory texts at face value and, first and foremost, in light of each other, unaffected by the external consideration of the Ḥadīth movement’s prescriptive idea of an infallible Prophet for pious mimesis. In other words, the early *mufassirūn* read the Qur’ān and historical memory texts *in their own way* to mean that Prophets apparently did err and did fall victim to Satan—even in the transmission of Divine Revelation.\(^43\)

It is telling that the early *tafsīr* literature offers no other historical occasion of revelation for Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥājj save for the Satanic verses incident.

It may be worth emphasizing here that the discourses of *sīrah-maghāzī* and *tafsīr*—and thus the reports of the Satanic verses incident—were in wide social circulation. We have noted how Muḥammad b. Ka‘b al-Quraẓī, Muḥammad b. Qays, Mujāhid b. Jabr, and Qatādah b. Dī‘āmah were expressly remembered as *quṣṣāṣ*—that is, as persons who expounded the meaning of Qur’ān in public (and how al-Suddī was remembered as doing “the *tafsīr* of the people”). In other words, their *tafsīr* corpuses, including the Satanic verses incident, existed precisely for wider dissemination in the early Muslim community. We have, similarly, noted the respective relationships of the *sīrah-maghāzī* compilers, Muḥammad b. Isḥāq, Abū Ma’shar, and al-Wāqidi, to the caliphal court (and Ibn Sa’d was, of course,\(^42\) There is no indication that any of the first- and second-century *mufassirūn* regarded Qur’ān 22:52 al-Ḥājj as having been abrogated by the last set of quoted verses.\(^43\) For a list of Qur’ānic verses historically used as proofs that the following categories of acts are possible (*jā’iz*) for Prophets, see the remarkable book of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Rāzī (*fl.* 630), *Kitāb ḥujaj al-Qur’ān*, ed. Aḥmad ‘Umar al-Maḥmaṣānī al-Azhari (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1986), 69–74: “Unbelief (kufr),” “wrong-doing (ẓulm),” “disobeying God’s commands (ma‘āṣī),” “following Satanic influence (sabil al-shayṭān),” “fearing other than God (al-khawf min ghayr Allāh),” “being murdered (qatl),” “any act possible for other people (mā yajūz ‘alā ghayri-him).”
al-Wāqidi’s scribe). Their sīrah-maghāzī works were compiled precisely for the edification (and entertainment) of those social circles that spread out from and were influenced by the model of the caliphal court. Further, the various isnāds that we have examined document precisely the activity of transmission of knowledge: they represent the teaching of the Satanic verses narratives in social settings populated by Muslims eager to learn about the life of the Prophet Muḥammad and the meaning of the revelation sent down upon him by God. The Satanic verses incident was, in other words, a historical memory that was in wide circulation in the early Muslim community, and was generally accepted as true.

Muḥammad’s Struggle to Understand His Prophethood

The acceptance of the Satanic verses as an integral part of the early sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr literature is thus directly related to the distinctive and defining qualities of the respective projects. The Satanic verses reports illustrate several notions related to Muḥammad’s Prophethood that recur in both the early sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr literature, and are absent from the Ḥadīth literature. The first is the broad idea of Muḥammad’s fallibility as a Prophet. Modern scholarship has long recognized that the early Muslim historical memory material reflects the fact that the early Muslims perceived Muḥammad as human and fallible, and that it was only with the later development and spread of the doctrine of ‘iṣmat al-anbiyā’ that a superhuman image emerged of Muḥammad being immune to sin and error.\footnote{This was recognized a century ago by Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 2:255–262; and in the remarkable work of Tor Andrae, *Die Person Muhammeds in Lehre und Glauben seiner Gemeinde* (Stockholm: P. A. Nordstedt, 1918), especially the chapter entitled “Die unfehlbarkeit (‘isma) des propheten,” 124–174. See also Madelung, “Iṣma,” *EI2*.} That the Satanic verses incident is illustrative of this early concept of Prophetic fallibility has been noted;\footnote{This has been noted by Schimmel, *Muhammad Is His Messenger*, 58; and Rubin, *Eye of the Beholder*, 257.} but no meaningful attempt has been made to understand any further the place of the Satanic verses incident in the early Muslims’ concept of Prophethood. As such, a highly significant, indeed, defining dimension of the early Muslim
concept of Muḥammad’s Prophethood has remained unappreciated: namely, the idea that Muḥammad was not inherently aware of what it meant to be a Prophet, but came to understand his Prophetic mission only gradually. It is during the course of his struggle to grasp the meaning of his Prophetic mission that Muḥammad continued to make mistakes in carrying out his Prophetic function. The difficulty of clearly perceiving and holding fast to the Prophetic purpose was further exacerbated by the harsh circumstances of his early mission (although, as we shall see, error resulting from Muḥammad’s imperfect understanding of his role was not remembered by the early Muslims as being restricted to the period of persecution by Quraysh). Thus, there are several reports that narrate how, when Muḥammad first receives Revelations, he is confused and fearful and even contemplates suicide. The idea that Muḥammad came to understand his mission only gradually is linked in the tafsīr literature to the numerous Qur’ānic verses addressed to him that expressly and repeatedly explain to him his purpose and function as a Prophet. These range from the repeated reminder to Muḥammad that he has been sent only as a “warner”—“If they turn away, know that We have not sent you to be their keeper: you are not bound to do more than deliver the message”—to technical instructions as to the mechanics of the Revelatory process, such as, “Do not move your tongue with it (the Revelation) to hurry it: bringing it together and reciting it is Our task; so when We recite it, follow its recitation!” and “Do not be in haste with the Qur’ān before its Revelation has been determined for you!”

There are some thirty-five such verses in the Qur’ān, which gives the strong impression that Muḥammad needed constant reminding about the nature of his mission. The Prophet’s gradual comprehension of his purpose takes place in the context of his endeavor to

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49 wa-lā taʿjal bi-al-qurʾān min qabli an yuqḍā ilay-ka wahyu-hu; Qurʾān 20:114 Ṭāḥā.
50 See Faruq Sharif, A Guide to the Contents of the Qurʾān (Reading: Garnet, 1995), 43–45. Rubin has rightly identified the theme of “God’s guidance” as a component of the early Muslim image of Muḥammad’s Prophethood; see Eye of the Beholder, 76–99.
convince Quraysh of his Prophethood; but even as he begins to fully grasp his Prophetic mission, he struggles to hold fast to it in the context of the hostility of Quraysh’s response. A recurrent theme in the riwāyahs relating to the Meccan phase of Muḥammad’s career is that of the mistakes he makes: on the one hand, as a result of his imperfect understanding of the nature and purpose of his Prophetic mission, and on the other hand, as a result of the difficulty he experiences in trying to retain a clear grasp of that purpose when struggling to convert Quraysh. An explicit acknowledgment of the effect of the pressures of Muḥammad’s circumstances on his transmission of Divine Revelation is Qur’ān 11:12 Hūd: “It may be that you are leaving out a part of what is revealed to you, and that your heart is troubled by it when they say: Why does no treasure come down to him, or angel accompany him.”51 Kenneth Cragg makes the sensitive observation that this verse is “suggesting that some temptation to compromise the message was present for Muhammad in the stress caused him by the taunts of his adversaries . . . there could be no clearer evidence of how embroiled inside his personhood—his sadr—the entire mission was.”52

When the Prophet errs in these circumstances, he is corrected by God through a category of Divine Revelations that came to be called the āyāt al-‘itāb (verses of rebuke).53 Thus, we have the accounts of how the Prophet, engrossed in trying to convince the leaders of Quraysh of Islam, ignored the blind man Ibn Umm Maktūm and was rebuked for it by God in the verses, “He frowned and turned away when the blind man came to him.”54 In this famous incident, the

51 fa-la'allu-ka tārikun ba'da mā yūḥā ilay-ka wa-dā'iqun bi-hi ṣadrū-ka an yaqūlū law lā unzila 'alay-hi kanzun aw jā'a ma'a-hu malak.
52 Cragg, Muhammad in the Qur'an, 65.
54 'abasa wa-tawallā: an jā'a-hu al-a'mā; Qur’ān 80:1–9 ‘Abasa. See the accounts of the incident in al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān, 30:50–52.
Prophet is portrayed by the Qur’ān as being overconcerned to win over Quraysh to Islam—in other words, he is portrayed as confused as to the exact purpose and nature of his mission—for which he is reprimanded and corrected by Divine intervention.

Another such account, several elements of which parallel those in the Satanic verses incident, is the following report carried by the isnād Yūnus b. Bukayr ← Abū Ma’shar ← Muḥammad b. Ka‘b al-Quraẓī.\footnote{See Yūnus b. Bukayr/Hamidullah, \textit{Sīrat Ibn Ishāq}, 255; Yūnus b. Bukayr/Zakkār, \textit{Kitāb al-siyar wa-al-maghāzī}, 274; al-Ṭabarī, \textit{Jāmi’ al-bayān} 7:311–312.}

Quraysh spoke to the Messenger of God and said: “Muḥammad! You tell us that Mūsā had a stick with which he struck the rock so that there sprang from it twelve springs; and you tell us that ‘Īsā revived the dead; and you tell us that Thamūd had a camel. So perform for us some of these miraculous signs (of Prophethood) so that we believe in you \([fā-i‘ti-nā bi-ba’ḏi tilka al-āyāt ḥattā nuṣaddiq-ka]\).” So the Messenger of God said, “What do you want me to perform for you?” They said, “That you make the rocks gold for us.” He said, “If I do that, you will believe me \([tuṣaddiqū-nī]\)?” They said, “Yes, by God, if you do that we will all follow you.”

So the Messenger of God began to pray \([qāma yad‘ū]\). And Jibrīl came and said to him: “What do you want \([mā shi‘ta]\)? If you want, turn (yourself) into gold \([aṣbiḥ dhahaban]\)! However, I have not sent a Sign \([lākin lam ursil āyatan]\); and they will not believe (you) at that, not unless you chastise them \([wa-lam yuṣaddiqū ‘inda dhālika illā ‘adhdhab-ta-hum]\). So, if you will, leave them until they repent!” So the Messenger of God said, “I will leave them until they repent.”

And God sent down: “And they swear by God with their most solemn oaths that if a miracle were shown to them they would believe it . . .” to his words “they would still not believe unless God so willed it.”\footnote{Qur’ān 6:109–111 al-An‘ām.}

The thematic similarities between this report and the Satanic verses incident are very striking. As in the Satanic verses incident, the Prophet wants to win over Quraysh and, specifically, wants Divine Revelation / intervention to be the instrument that will effect this. He clearly desires that God send down upon him something that will satisfy Quraysh and, as in many of the Satanic verses accounts,
is unaware that he is acting in a manner inappropriate to his Prophetic mission until he is corrected by Jibrīl. The tone in which Jibrīl speaks to the Prophet is particularly striking. Essentially what Jibrīl is saying to the Prophet here is: “Look here, if you want to do things off your own bat, then go ahead! But this is not what Revelation and your mission are about.” In other words, Jibrīl is both correcting the Prophet and explaining to him how Prophethood functions, which is also what happens in the Satanic verses incident.57

Another incident with striking similarities to that of the Satanic verses is given in explanation of Qur’ān 17:73 al-Isrā’ in the Tafsīr of Muqātil b. Sulaŷmān (d. 150).58

“And they strove to tempt you [wa-in kādū la-yafältinū-ka]; meaning, Thaqīf. He (God) says that they strove to tempt you; meaning, they endeavoured to turn you away [hammiu an ṭaṣuddū-ka] “from that with which We have inspired you [‘an alladhī awḥaynā ilay-ka].” (This is) like His words in Sūrat al-Mā’idah:59 “Beware lest they tempt you [wa-iḥdhar-hum an yaṭifiantū-ka]”—meaning, turn you away—“from a part of what God has sent down to you [‘an ba’thī mā anzala Allāhu ilay-ka].”

This was (sent down) because Thaqīf came to the Prophet and said, “We are your brothers, your kinsmen through marriage and your neighbours. We are the best of the people of Najd with whom for you to be at peace [naḥnu khayr ahl Najd la-ka silman], and the most dangerous of them with whom you will be at war. If we accept Islam [in muslim], all of Najd will accept Islam, and if we fight you, our allies [man warā’a-nā] will fight you; so give us what we want!” The Prophet said, “What do you want?” They said, “We will accept Islam on condition that we are not pressed or rushed [lā nujashshu wa-lā nu’ashshu] and that we do not bow [lā naḥnī].” They said, “(We will accept Islam) on condition that we do not pray [lā nuṣallī], and that we do not break our idols with our own hands. All interest [riṭā] that is owed to us by people will still be owed to us, but all interest that we owe to people will be forgiven us. Who-

57It is noteworthy that the above report is, like Riwāyahs 1 and 2, also transmitted from Muḥammad b. Ka’b al-Quraẓī. For another account of this incident transmitted from Ibn ‘Abbās, see ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd, Musnad ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd, MS Hyderabad, Āṣafiyah, Ḥadīth 862, f. 117a; and ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd, al-Muntakhab min Musnad ‘Abd b. Ḥumayd, ed. by Ṣubḥī al-Badrī al-Sāmarrā’ī and Maḥmūd Muḥammad Khalil al-Ṣa’idī (Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1985), 232.


59 Qur’ān 4:49 al-Nisā’.
ever we find cutting down a tree in the Wādī Wajj, we will strip him of his clothes and beat him back and front; the sanctity of Wādī Wajj \[ḥurmatu-hu\] will be like the sanctity of Mecca, similarly its game and fowl and trees . . . (We will accept Islam on condition that) you grant us pleasure of al-Lāt and al-ʿUzzā for a year \[an tumattiʿa-nā bi-al-Lāt wa-al-ʿUzzā sanatan\]. Aside from worshipping them (for a year), we will not break them with our own hands; so that the people know that you hold us in honour, and that we have precedence over them.”

The Messenger of God said to them, “As for what you say about not being pressed or rushed, and about the interest, it is yours. As for what you say about not bowing, there is no good in a religion without bowing \[rukūʿ\] and prostration \[sujūd\].” They said, “We will do it, even though it is demeaning for us.” (The Prophet said), “As for what you say about not breaking the idols with your own hands, we will determine who other than you will break them.” Then the Prophet fell silent, and they said, “Grant us pleasure of al-Lāt for a year! \[tumattiʿ-nā bi-al-Lāt sanatan\].” He turned away from them, and was loath to say, “No!,” lest they reject Islam \[jaʿala yakrah an yaqūla lā fa-yāʾbuha al-islām\]. Thaqīf said to the Prophet, “If you are concerned that the Arabs will rebuke you for breaking their idols while leaving our idols, say to them: ‘My Lord has ordered me to continue al-Lāt in their territory for a year’ \[amara-nī rabb-ī an uqirra al-Lāt fī-arḍi-him sanatan\].” At this point, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb said, “You have burnt the Prophet’s heart by mentioning al-Lāt; may God scorch your livers! No . . . God does not allow the worship of other deities \[la yadaʿu Allāh al-shirk\] in a land where He is worshipped. So either you accept Islam in the way that the people have accepted Islam, or you stick to your territory.”

So God sent down, “And they strove to tempt you \[wa-in kadū la-yaftinūna-kā\].” He says: they strove to turn you away “from that with which We have inspired you, that you may fabricate against Us something other than it \[ʿan alladhī awḥaynā ilay-ka li-taftariya ʿalay-nā ghayra-hu\].” He, the Exalted, says: that you may say on our behalf something other than it, (meaning) something We have not said. (This is) on account of their saying to the Prophet: “Say: ‘My Lord has ordered me to continue her (al-Lāt).’”

. . . “And had we not fortified you \[wa-law lā an thabbitnā-kal\]”—O, Muḥammad!—with silence, you would have ordered the deities not to be broken,60 and you would have inclined thereby to sinful disobedi-

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60The text here reads: “you would have ordered the deities to be broken \[fa-amarta bi-kasr al-ālihah\]”; but this makes no sense in the context, and the editor, ʿAbd Allāh Shiḥātah, correctly suggests \[bi-ʿadam kasr\]; Muqātil, Tafsīr, 2:544, footnote 4.
ence [idhan rakanta ilā al-ma’siyah]. “You would have inclined [la-qad kidta tarkanu]”; He says: you were, for a moment, considering [hammamta suway’ah] inclining “to them a little [ilay-him shay’an qalilun].”

In the above incident, the Prophet is remembered as consciously considering a temporary compromise with polytheism. He contemplates allowing Thaqīf to continue worshipping al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā for a year as part of the terms of a negotiated agreement through which they will ultimately accept Islam. Thaqīf suggest to him that he make Divine Revelation the instrument by which to justify his concession. In this story Muḥammad is saved from error not by Jibrīl but by his Companion ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, who intervenes forcefully to make clear a point on which the Prophet is apparently wavering: “God does not allow the worship of other deities [shirk] in a land where He is worshipped.” God then indicates that were it not for Divine intervention, the Prophet would indeed have compromised his mission—and that too on the fundamental point of Divine Unicity. In the Satanic verses incident, of course, Divine intervention comes after the fact of the Prophet’s erroneous concession to the worshippers of al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt, and not before. The parallel between the two incidents suggested itself also to the twelfth-/eighteenth-century Damascene scholar Ḥāmid al-‘Imādī (d. 1171), who prepared a work specifically on those Qur’ānic verses revealed in accordance with or in response to the interventions of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, Abū Bakr, and ‘Ali b. Abī Ṭālib. Al-‘Imādī follows his citation of the above report with the account of the Satanic verses in Riwāyah 5 from the Durr of al-Suyūṭī. Given that ‘Umar does not intervene in the case of the Satanic verses, al-‘Imādī’s juxtaposition of the two incidents is gratuitous to his immediate subject, and would seem thus strongly to indicate that he viewed the two accounts as linked in that they both involve Prophetic error and concession to the cult of the pre-Islamic goddesses.61

The satanic verses incident as truth

It is unclear at what point in the Prophet’s career the above incident is supposed to have taken place; however, Surat al-Isra’ is generally taken to date to the last year before the Hijrah. The category of Prophetic acts described in the preceding reports—namely, errors arising from Muhammad’s own misconception about what is and what is not consonant with his Message—continues even into the Medinese period. One of these is in relation to the Revelation of Qur’an 4:34 al-Nisā’, where the Prophet, on his own initiative, simply makes the wrong legal ruling and is corrected by Divine Revelation. The following is from the *Tafsir* of Mujahid b. Jabr:

A man slapped his wife, so she went to the Prophet. He said to her husband: “(She is owed) Retaliation, retaliation [al-qiṣāṣ al-qiṣāṣ]!”

Then Revelation [al-waḥy] descended on the Prophet. “Men are qawwāmūn over women [al-rijālu qawwāmūna ‘alā al-nisā’],” came down to him. The Messenger of God recited it to them, and said: “We wanted something, and God wanted something else; and what God wants is better [aradnā amran wa-arāda Allāh amran wa-alladhī arāda Allāhu khayrun].”

In another account of this incident, the Prophet is remembered as saying, “I wanted something, but God refused [fa-abā Allāh]!” In this report, as in the Satanic verses, the Prophet makes a statement that is the direct opposite of what God wants from him, and Revelation serves to correct the Prophet and bring him into the Divine line. Indeed, in some narratives, it is precisely after this latter rush to judgment by the Prophet that the revelation takes place of the aforementioned Qur’an 20:114 Ṭāhā and of Qur’an 75:16–17 al-Qiyāmah: “Do not be in haste with the Qur’an before its Revelation has been determined for you!” and “Do not move your tongue with it (the Revelation) to hurry it: bringing it together and reciting it is Our task; so when We

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62 The incident has effectively disappeared from the later Muslim tradition; it appears in later *tafsir* works in truncated form, without the most problematic narrative elements, and in *sīrah-maghāzī* works not at all.


recite it, follow its recitation!”\textsuperscript{65} The most famous such incident from the Medinese period is, of course, that of the Prophet’s marriage to Zaynab bt. Jaḥsh, where the Prophet was rebuked by God for concealing his desire to marry Zaynab, the wife of his adopted son, Zayd b. Ḥārithah, for fear of what people would think: “You concealed within yourself that which God brought to light, and you feared the people when God is more deserving of fear.”\textsuperscript{66} Here, as with Qur’ān 11:12 Hūd (above), the emphasis is on the Prophet’s sense of what God wants from him being affected by public pressure: “You feared the people when God is more deserving of fear.”

The Satanic verses incident fits well into the pattern of incidents cited above: all are instances of Prophetic error arising from an imperfect understanding of Prophethood combined with temporal pressures. There is a further incident containing similar elements to the Satanic verses narratives, that of the Prophet’s scribe, ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Abī Sarḥ, which is transmitted by an isnād all of whose members are transmitters of the Satanic verses incident.


“And he who says ‘I will also send down in the way that God sends down’ [\textit{wa-man qāla sa-unzilu mithla mā anzala Allāhu}]?” [Qur’ān 6:93 al-An‘ām].

This was sent down in regard to ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa’d Ibn Abī Sarḥ, the brother of the Banī ‘Amir b. Lu’ayy, who used to write for the Prophet. His dictation included the words, “Powerful, Wise [\textit{‘azīzun ḥakīm}],” upon which he wrote, “Forgiving, Merciful [\textit{ghafūrun raḥīm}”—he changed it! Then he read it back to him in the way that he had changed it. He (the Prophet said): “Yes, it is the same [\textit{na’am huwa siwā’}]!” He retracted from Islam and attached himself to Quraysh, saying to them: “‘Powerful, Wise!’ would be sent down on him, and I would change it

\textsuperscript{65} Al-Suyūṭūī, \textit{Durr}, 5:602.

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{wa-tukhfī fi nafsī-ka mā Allāhu mubdī-hi wa-takhshā al-nāsa wa-Allahu aḥaqqu an takhshā-hu}; Qur’ān 33:37 al-ʿĀhzāb. On this incident, see the study by Ze’ev Maghen, \textit{Virtues of the Flesh: Passion and Purity in Early Islamic Jurisprudence} (Leiden: Brill, 2005), at 75–100 (Chapter 3, entitled “Zayd and Zaynab Revisited: Bowdlerizing the \textit{Uswa ʿHasana}”).
and read back to me what I had written, and he would say, “Yes, it is the same!”

There are also evident parallels between this narrative and the Satanic verses incident: the Prophet is deceived in the process of transmission of Divine Revelation, and is unable to distinguish what is revealed to him by God from what is not. Here, however, there is no indication of the Prophetic error resulting from any sort of external pressure, nor is there any mention of Divine correction.

The crucial difference between all these other incidents and the Satanic verses incident is, of course, that the Prophet does not, in these other narratives, fall victim to Satan. The Satanic verses incident thus represents a greater error: one that takes place in extraordinarily difficult circumstances, at the very height of Quraysh’s persecution and at the very moment of the Prophet’s greatest weakness. As in the other instances of Prophetic error, Divine Revelation serves here to correct the Prophet, and to clarify for him the nature of his mission. However, in the Satanic verses incident, the Revelation of Qur’an 22:52 al-Ḥajj serves, perhaps, less as a reprimand to the Prophet than as an explanation of what has happened. It is for this reason that several riwāyahs explicitly characterize the Revelation of Qur’an 22:52 al-Ḥajj as God’s comforting of the Prophet.

67The various accounts of this incident warrant more complete study. The present version is cited in al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-bayān, 7273. The verse under commentary is Qur’an 6:93 al-An‘ām: “Who is the greater wrongdoer than he who fabricates falsehoods against God, or who says ‘I have been Inspired’ when he has not been Inspired at all, and he who says ‘I will also send down in the way that God sends down’? [wa-man aẓlamu mim-man iftarā‘alā Allāhi kadhiban aw qāla ūḥiya ilay-ya wa-lam yuḥa ilay-hi shay‘un wa-man qāla sa-unzilu mithla mā anzala Allāhu].” For discussions of this incident, see Abū Ja'far Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321), Tuhfat al-akhyār bi-tartīb Sharḥ mushkil al-Āthār, ed. rearranged by Abū al-Ḥasan Khālid Maḥmūd al-Rabāṭ (Riyadh: Dār Balansiyah, 1999), 8:168–172; and Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Anṣārī (d. 783/1381), al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍī‘ fi kuttāb al-nabi al-ummī wa-rusuli-hi ilā mulūk al-arḍ min ‘arabī wa-‘ajamī, (Beirut: Dār al-Nadwah al-Jadidah, 1986), 1:113–114 (also 1:123–124, where the same action is ascribed as well to one ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā b. Khaṭal). ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Sarḥ’s name was on the list of those slated for execution when the Prophet conquered Mecca, but he was spared on the intervention of his milk-brother ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān, who, when he later became caliph, appointed ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Abī Sarḥ governor of Egypt. This appointment was one of the misdeeds cited against ‘Uthmān in relation to his assassination.

68See Riwāyahs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 22, and 48.
even though the Prophet’s error is a great one, God explains to him that what has happened is a perfectly normal part of the career of a Prophet: “We have not sent, before you, a Messenger or Prophet but that when he tamannā, Satan cast something into his umniyyah.” The image of Muḥammad preserved in the early Muslim historical memory literature is thus one of a man whose Prophetic consciousness developed only gradually, who was affected by the pressures of his temporal circumstances, and who was ultimately susceptible to error even in the execution of his Divine mission. It is this concept that is reflected in the Satanic verses incident.

It is striking that the early narratives of the Satanic verses incident do not make any attempt to explain how it is that the Prophet could be vulnerable to Satanic suggestion. In other words, there is no attempt to rebut any counterposition that might hold that the incident did not take place—whether on the basis of ‘iṣmah or isnād methodology or anything else—which, we will see, later scholars who accepted the incident felt obliged to do.69 The reason why no attempt is made in the formulation of narratives to justify or rebut an argument for the rejection of the incident must simply be that no significant or meaningful counterposition existed at the time that the narratives became a standard element in the historical memory of the early Muslim community. Even if some were opposed to the incident in the first and second centuries, as we have seen in Riwāyahs 9, 10, 11, and 49, that opposition simply did not matter enough for it to warrant a response from the sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr scholars—it did not register in or impinge upon their discursive domain. The early Muslim community accepted the Satanic verses incident because, for them, there was simply nothing anomalous or problematic about it. It was entirely consonant with a number of other narratives, some of which are cited above, which they took as explaining passages of the Qur’ān that also appear to allude to Prophetic error. Evidently, Divine Revelation was understood by the early Muslims

69 The only thing that we have seen in the narratives that could be construed as the acknowledgment of a counterposition is in Riwāyah 1: “the Believers trusted their Prophet in regard to that which he brought them from their Lord, and did not suspect him of an error [khaṭa’] or delusion [wahm] or lapse [zalal].” As noted in Chapter 2, the later debate over the concept of ‘iṣmah addressed itself to the categories of acts from which the Prophet was protected, specifically including khaṭa’, wahm, and zalal.
as a process refracted intimately through the person of the Prophet, and as affected by and vulnerable to Muḥammad’s personal circumstances. It was a process in which God had regularly to intervene to ensure that His Messages were correctly communicated.

**Divine Inspiration and Satanic Inspiration**

The fact that the early reports of the Satanic verses incident do not make any attempt to explain how it is that the Prophet could confuse Satanic inspiration for Divine Revelation suggests that the narrators of the incident felt no need to offer such an explanation to their early Muslim audiences. The reason for this can be only that the early Muslims did not need such an explanation: they were already culturally disposed—that is, conceptually and cognitively disposed—to accept this idea. The early Muslim concept that Divine Revelation was susceptible to Satanic intervention likely arose from other external factors that are related to the narratives of the Satanic verses—most crucially the content and wording of the Qurʾān, and the received pre-Islamic understanding of revelation and inspiration. The Qurʾān is at pains to deny that the source of Muḥammad’s inspiration is a *shayṭān*—“Indeed, it is the word of a noble messenger: endowed with strength, secured with He of the Throne. . . . It is not the speech of an accursed *shayṭān*”70—doubtless because, as far as Muḥammad’s immediate audience was concerned, there were two well-known categories of “inspired” individuals in society, the poet (*shā’ir*) and the soothsayer (*kāhin*),71 both figures with prominent social roles, the source of whose inspiration was *precisely* a companion (*qarīn*)72 *shayṭān* or (the almost synonymous) *jinnī*.73 It is

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70 Qurʾān 81:19–20, 25 al-Takwīr. See also Qurʾān 26:210 al-Shu'arā’, in reference to the Qurʾān, “The satans have not brought it down [mā tanazzalat bi-hi al-shayāṭīn].”
71 “In simplest terms, the *kāhin* was a consultant on the occult, a soothsayer or oracle whose short, cryptic, rhymed, jinn-inspired pronouncements on such matters as lost camels, launching of raids, determination of paternity, and especially dream interpretation and other kinds of auguries were seldom volunteered but were besought and usually compensated”; Zwettler, “A Mantic Manifesto,” 77–78.
73 The standard classical source on inspiration by *shayāṭīn* and *jānn* is Ibn Shu’ayd (d. 426/1035), *al-Tawābi’ wa-al-zawābi’*, ed. Buṭrus al-Būstānī (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1967); see also ‘Abd Allāh Sālim al-Miṭānī, “Qaḍīyyat shayāṭīn al-shu’arā’”
also important to note that “a jinni is not necessarily an evil spirit, and even the word ‘devil’ seems in contexts of this order to have had fairly good overtones.”

The term shayāṭīn (sing. shayṭān) was used synonymously with jinnī, apparently with special reference to poetical inspiration. Qur’ānic usage, however, while by no means unambiguous, progressively lent to the term shayāṭīn the connotation of a jinn of an evil, irreligious, or unbelieving nature, adding to it the older monotheistic senses of “devils” or “demons” par excellence and (in its defined singular form ash-shayṭān) “THE Devil” or “Satan.”

Not only was Muḥammad understood by Quraysh as being a poet and/or a kāhin, but also it is reported that when Muḥammad received his first Revelation, he was himself unable to understand what was happening to him other than in terms of the received pre-Islamic cultural concepts: he seems himself to have thought, despairingly, that he had, in fact, become a kāhin. “Exhort! For by thy Sustainer’s grace,” God assured Muḥammad and his audience, “You are neither a kāhin nor one possessed of a jinn.” In this moment, Muḥammad “brought into the open an intrinsic kinship between himself and the diviners; the same is true for his position vis-à-vis the poets. The trait these three groups have in common with regard to lore is inspiration, and, with regard to form, rhyme.”

We have seen in the discussion of Riwāyah 34, above, how the early Muslims viewed the mechanics of Revelation as not dissimilar to the process of composition of poetry. Further (as already noted in Chapter 2), the literary form of much of the Qurʾān was frankly acknowledged by the Islamic scholarly tradition as being saj—that is, the same form as that used by the kuhhān. In other words, as far

76 fa-mā anta bi-ni’mati rabbi-ka bi-kāhinin wa-lā majnūn; Qurʾān 52: 29 al-Ṭūr.
78 Stewart, “Saj’ in the Qurʾān.”
as the early Muslims were concerned, while Muḥammad was certainly neither a ]**kāhin** nor a ]**shāʿir**,** but was undoubtedly a Prophet, his Prophethood—that is, his defining quality of receiving verbal inspiration—was understood as being something “between seer and poet.”79 Most revealing is the remark made by a woman who met Muḥammad during the period when he had stopped receiving Revelations: “I see that your ]**shayṭān** has abandoned you.”80 As Toufic Fahd has stated, “From prophetic and divinatory inspiration, thus conceived, to poetic inspiration, there is but a step to be taken, only the name of the intermediary changes. The angel of the prophet and the ]**jinn** of the ]**kāhin** give way to the demon ( ]**shayṭān** ) of the poet.”81

The Qurʿān also characterizes the ]**shayāṭīn** as constantly trying to “steal a hearing [ ]**istaraqa al-samʿa**] of the heavens, and having to be driven away by God (whose weapon of choice is ]**al-shihāb** , the shooting star).82 This image was parlayed into the interpretation of Qurʿān 26:221–223 al-Shuʿarāʾ: “Have I told you about those upon whom the ]**shayāṭīn** descend? They descend upon every sinful liar: they cast a hearing [ ]**yulqūna al-samʿa**] and most of them are liars”:83

‘Āʾishah said:

I said, “Messenger of God! The ]**kāhins** would tell us about something—and it would be true!” He said, “That is a word stolen from the Truth by a ]**jinnī**, [ ]**tilka al-kalimah min al-ḥaqq yakhṭifu-hā al-jinnī** , who then throws it [ ]**yaqdhifu-hā**] into the ear of his follower.” He went on to say: “And he (the ]**jinnī** ) adds to it more than a hundred untruths.”84

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80  mā arā shayṭāna-ka illā qad taraka-ka ; al-Suyūṭī,  Itqān , 1:89. In another version, “I hope that your ]**shayṭān** has not abandoned you”; al-Bukhari,  Ṣaḥīḥ , 4950.

81 Fahd,  Divination arabe , 73. See also Fahd’s excellent entry, “Shayṭān 1. In Pre-Islamic Arabia,” EI2.

82 See Qurʿān 15:18 al-Ḥijr.

83 hal unabbi'u-kum 'alā man tanazzalu al-shayāṭīn: tanazzalu 'alā kulli affākin athim: yulqūna al-sam'a wa-aktharu-hum kādhibūn.

Again, the parallel with the Satanic verses incident is most striking. The *shayāṭīn/jinn* are very much in the business of stealing bits of the Truth from the heavens, mixing it with untruth and casting it—the same verb, *alqā*, is used in Qurʾān 26:223 al-Shuʿarāʾ as in Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥajj—into the ears of their followers. In the Satanic verses incident, the victim of this standard operation is not a *kāhin* but the Prophet.

The similarity between the respective processes of Satanic suggestion and Divine Revelation is further underlined by the fact that the Qurʾān uses the same verb to describe Satan’s intervention in Qurʾān 22:52 al-Ḥajj (and in Qurʾān 26:223 al-Shuʿarāʾ)—*alqā*, “to cast”—as it uses elsewhere to characterize the act of Divine inspiration: *yulqī al-rūḥa min amri-hi ‘alā man yashāʾ* (“He casts the Spirit by His command upon whom He wills”); and *sa-nulqī ‘alay-ka qaw-lan thaqīlan* (“We will cast upon you a weighty word”).

Even more striking, the same term, *waḥy*, is used by the Qurʾān to characterize both Divine inspiration and Satanic inspiration in the following highly suggestive passage:

And in this way we have created as enemies for every Prophet satans [*shayāṭīn*] from among humans and jinn, who inspire [*yūḥī*] each other with varnished speech aimed to deceive. If your Lord so willed, they could not do this; so shun them and their deceptions.

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See the study of Gerald Hawting, “Eavesdropping on the Heavenly Assembly and the Protection of the Revelation from Demonic Corruption,” in *Self-Referentiality in the Qurʾān*, ed. Stefan Wild (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 25–37, at 25–29, where these Qurʾānic verses and their exegetical reports are expressly linked to the Satanic verses incident.

Those accounts of the Satanic verses incident that state that Satan cast the verses into the ears of the Mushrikūn—*Riwayahs 8, 9, and 11*—follow directly the operational concept in this report.

Qurʾān 40:15 Ghāfir.

Qurʾān 73:5 al-Muzzammil; see also Qurʾān 28:86 al-Qaṣāṣ: *wa-mā kunta tarjū an pulqā ilay-ka al-kitābū illā raḥmatan min rabbi-ka* (“You did not imagine that the Book would be cast upon you, but it was as a Grace from your Lord”).

Qurʾān 6:121 al-Anʿām; see also Qurʾān 6:112 al-Anʿām: “Indeed the satans inspire [*yūḥūna al-shayāṭīn*] their followers to dispute with you, and if you were to follow them, you would become Mushrikūn.” See also Uri Rubin, “Prophets and Prophethood,” in *Blackwell Companion to the Qurʾān*, ed. A. Rippin, 234–247, at 238–239. The term most associated with Satanic suggestion, *waswasa*, is, of course, never used for Divine Revelation.
Thus, both Divine Revelation and Satanic inspiration were, according to the Qur’ān, forms of the genus wahy, and both involved the act of ilqā’. We encountered in Riwāyahs 37 and 38 the figure of al-Abyaḍ, a shayṭān whose job description was precisely to deceive the Prophets in the Revelatory process; it is striking to note that al-Abyaḍ was designated by the second-century mufassir Muqāṭil b. Sulaymān as the “Companion of the Prophets [ṣāḥib al-anbiyā’]”—that is to say, he is their companion shayṭān—and that al-Abyaḍ’s attempt to deceive the Prophet is described as an attempt “to inspire him (li-yūḥiya ilay-hi).” The defining difference in process was that the agent of Divine Revelation was not an “accursed shayṭān” but a reliable angel. In sum, in the cultural, cognitive, and conceptual matrix of early Islamic society, the respective processes of Divine Revelation and Satanic suggestion were understood to be not dissimilar in nature. The crucial thing, then, was for the recipient of the Divine Revelation to distinguish between the two. From the foregoing, one can now readily appreciate why it appeared entirely plausible to the early Muslim community that a Prophet new to his mission and subject to severe stress might just, on the single occasion, mistake the one process for the other.

Conclusions

The first- and second-century scholars of the distinct historical memory projects of sīrah-maghāzī and tafsīr accepted the Satanic verses incident as true because they viewed the incident as entirely consonant with their understanding of Muḥammad’s Prophethood. The Prophet of the sīrah-maghāzī, the foundational narrative of the community, was an epic hero who overcame suffering and setback on the road to triumph and salvation. In this epic, the Satanic verses incident represented a definitive moment of grave moral and historical peril to which the hero first succumbs, but from which he is succored to emerge resolute and fortified. The Prophet of the tafsīr was the Prophet of the text of God’s allusions, and thus the heir to a long line of Prophets to whose histories of trial, sin, and repentance God also alluded. The mufassirūn accepted the Satanic verses incident as another in this series of Divine citations of Prophet-defining mo-
ments. Further, the Satanic verses incident was seen as illustrative of Muḥammad’s ongoing struggle to comprehend the enormity of his Prophetic mission, and to retain a clear sense of its nature—as well to enact that mission with clarity in the face of complex and difficult circumstances. For the early community at large, the process and experience of Divine Revelation were understood as being perilously similar to that of Satanic (and satanic) inspiration.

In accepting the Satanic verses incident, early tafsīr and sīrah-maghāzī literature was directly expressive of the concept of Prophethood that was dominant among the early Muslims. In rejecting the Satanic verses incident, the Ḥadīth project—emerging with increasing force and definition from the mid-second century onward—was disapprovingly at odds with the early understanding of Muḥammad’s Prophethood. The logic of the Ḥadīth project required an infallible Prophet whose words and deeds would lay down legal, praxial, and creedal norms for pious mimesis, as a definitive method by which to establish the veracity and authority of those prescribed norms. It is that logic, and that notion of Prophethood, that would later establish itself as Islamic orthodoxy. That later orthodoxy was perfectly aware of which scholarly projects were responsible for narrating the Satanic verses incident in early Islam is summed up in the statement of one of the most influential opponents of the incident, al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ al-Yaḥṣubī (d. 544/1149):

This report was not transmitted by any of the people of truth [ahl al-sīḥḥah: meaning, the compilers of the canonical Ḥadīth collections]; rather it is the Qur’ān commentators [al-mufassirūn] and the historians [al-mu’arrikhūn] who have been obsessed with it [ūli’a bi-hi] and its like.90

The early mufassirūn and ahl al-sīrah / maghāzī were clearly untroubled by the fact that the Satanic verses narratives that they transmitted presented the Prophet as (momentarily) unable to distinguish between Satanic suggestion and Divine Revelation, and thus as erring in the transmission of Divine Revelation to the point

of compromising the Absolute Unicity of the Divine. They were, in other words, unaffected by the notion of Prophetic ‘ismaḥ on the basis of which epistemological principle later orthodoxy would categorically reject the Satanic verses incident. Further, they were clearly untroubled by the fact that they were transmitting the Satanic verses incident by weak isnāds that—like the isnāds by which the overwhelming majority of tafsīr and sīrah-maghāzī reports were transmitted—were either incomplete or contained unreliable transmitters, or both. They were, in other words, unaffected by the notion espoused by the Ḥadīth scholars that, for a report to be true, it must be transmitted by a complete chain of reliable transmitters, on the basis of which epistemological principle later orthodoxy would categorically reject the Satanic verses incident. Neither of these two orthodox principles exercised epistemological authority in the two earliest discourses in which the person and Prophethood of Muḥammad were remembered and transmitted in the Muslim community of the first two centuries of Islam.

We may conclude this work with two observations on the question that has most concerned Orientalist and Muslim scholars about the Satanic verses incident—which is precisely the question that we have not set out to answer: did the incident actually take place? In light of the fact that the Muslim community of the first two centuries of Islam overwhelmingly accepted the historicity of the Satanic verses incident, it is hard to see how it could have been fabricated and introduced into Muslim discourse by early enemies of Islam, as Islamic orthodoxy has argued. Orientalists have insisted that Muslims could not possibly have invented such an inauspicious story. We have seen, however, that early Muslim discourse did not view the Satanic verses incident as objectionable—or even as merely unobjectionable—but rather that the incident is illustrative of the standard understanding of Muḥammad’s Prophethood among early Muslims. There is presumably no reason, therefore, why they could not have made it up.
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Nora Lessersohn

It has taken me far too long to write this book. This project began as a term paper, written in the winter of 1993–94 in my first year as a PhD candidate in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University. It then came to be imagined as my doctoral dissertation, but simply grew too large in the research and writing, with the result that a revised and extended version of that dissertation now constitutes only the first part of a larger work.

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in kuntu asa’tu fī hawā-kum adab-ī
fa-al-‘işmatu lā takūnu illā li-nabī

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