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Fictional narration and imagination within an authoritative framework.

Towards a new understanding of Ḥadīth

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A considerable number of traditions (*ḥadīths*) even within the canonical Ḥadīth compendia are of a somewhat legendary or miraculous nature.¹ There are, for example, texts telling us that during an expedition or prior to the Battle of the Trench (627), the Prophet in a wondrous way provided food and water for the Muslims suffering from hunger and thirst; that Muḥammad successfully requested rain for the people in a drought; that he healed sick eyes or a fractured leg; that his prayers were heard in quite a special way; that people could improve their ability to memorise *ḥadīths* simply by spreading the Prophet's coat, and how magical or dead people played a role in the daily life of the Prophet.²

However, the mere indication of the existence of such, as we should say, obviously fantastic elements within the Ḥadīth may suffice, as we are not going to emphasise the question of truth and untruth of *what* certain *ḥadīth* texts tell us. We are interested in *how* events and happenings, historically proven or fantastically enriched, are formulated and portrayed. It will become evident, firstly, that there are texts within the authoritative framework of Ḥadīth, the nature of which can be described, according to modern theory of literature, as 'narrative' because things were not merely 'recorded' or 'reported' therein but were 'narrated'. Secondly, we will detect a number of so-called signals of fictionality,

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- 1 This is notable because Qur'ān 46:9 states that the Prophet did not perform miracles. This, of course, does not affect the miracle of the Divine Revelation. Also Muḥammad's prophetic visions, the appearance of angels and Jinns, or the Prophet's Night Journey to heaven, for example, rank among the category of accepted wonders, as they are closely related to the Divine Revelation.
 - 2 Cf. GABRIELE VON BÜLOW: *Hadithe über Wunder des Propheten Muḥammad in der Traditionssammlung des Buḥārī*. (Diss.) Bonn 1964, 26-29.

which will be evidence enough to determine this type of *ḥadīth* not only as 'narratives' but as 'fictional narratives'.

An approach like this is, as one can imagine, of a problematic nature, as it touches upon issues of the traditional understanding of Ḥadīth. We should bear in mind, on the one hand, that the Ḥadīth is that branch of Medieval Arabic literature with the most outstanding religious and authoritative claim in Islam, second only to the Qur'ān, and, on the other hand, that Islamic theology considers the Ḥadīth as a corpus of text, which should transmit and *report* in an authentic and historiographically true way about real events in the Arabic Prophet's life and the ideal early Islamic time. Nevertheless, the clarification of basic theoretical premises makes it clear that the application of theory-orientated models and methods to Ḥadīth, by no means, limits the value and importance of the Ḥadīth as a primary form of literary manifestation of early Islam; it contributes instead to increasing our knowledge of the history and nature of this branch of Classical Arabic literature and promotes the detection of some of its characteristics, so far unexpected.

1. *Theoretical premises*

1.1. Looking at Ḥadīth from the viewpoint of the modern theory of literature,³ the question as to the character of the Ḥadīth 'literature' is inseparably

3 EBERHARD LÄMMERT: *Bauformen des Erzählens*. Stuttgart (J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung) 1993⁴ [1955¹], esp. 18-23, 82-91. WARNER BERTHOFF: Fiction, History, Myth: Notes towards the Discrimination of Narrative Forms. In: MORTON W. BLOOMFIELD: *The Interpretation of Narrative. Theory and Practice*. Harvard (Harvard University Press) 1970, 263-287. WILHELM FÜGER: Zur Tiefenstruktur des Narrativen. In: *Poetica, Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft* (München: Fink Verlag) 6 (1972), 268-292. GÉRARD GENETTE: *Narrative Discourse*. New York (Cornell UP) 1980 [1972], esp. 27, 32. WIKLEF HOOPS: Fiktionalität als pragmatische Kategorie. In: *Poetica* 11 (1979), 281-317. MICHAEL J. TOOLAN: *Narrative. A Critical Linguistic Introduction*. London and New York (Routledge), Repr. 1994 [1988¹]; TOOLAN provides a condensed survey on important aspects of narrative theory such as levels of narration, grammaticisation of plot structure, position of the narrators in the text, etc. FRANZ K. STANZEL: *Theorie des Erzählens*. Göttingen (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) 1989 [1979]. WOLFGANG ISER: *Das Fiktive und das Imaginäre*. Frankfurt a.M. (Suhrkamp) 1991. MANFRED JAHN: Narratologie: Methoden und Modelle der Erzähltheorie. In: *Literaturwissenschaftliche Theorien, Modelle und Methoden. Eine Einführung*. Hrsg. von ANSGAR NÜNNING. Trier

intertwined with the problem of the ontological distinction between a) narrative (Germ.: *Erzählung*, Fr.: *récit*) and b) other forms of statement, superficially similar to the narrative. The latter, above all, applies to categories of text which serve the purpose of recording facts or events consistent with reality, such as reports, historiographical accounts or documentaries.

As a criterion of distinction between [fictional] narratives and texts that merely record facts (referred to in the following as 'reports'), at a first glance, the so-called aspect of truth or genuineness of the respective portrayal appears to be suitable. The reason for this is that the narrative – in the narrow sense of the word – should be regarded as a product of 'fictional creation', which does not have the same claim to factuality as do texts that emerged by modes of authentic reporting.⁴

But this classification of text according to criteria of truth and genuineness soon reaches its own limits. The reasons are, firstly, that a narrative may absorb elements of real life as settings or may constantly lean on authentic facts without losing its fictional character, i.e., *its general outlines shaped by placing things based on creative sovereignty*.⁵ Secondly, reports, too, as is commonly known, do not automatically conform to reality. A report may be true, untrue or intentionally untrue, i.e., it is fictitious or fictitiously interspersed. Consequently, with regard to this obdurate pattern, a text could only be described as a narrative or a fictional narrative, if it has renounced its inherent claim to authenticity, i.e., the implicit presumption that everything happened in real life as described.

1.2. On the contrary, the modern theory of literature supports the well-founded attitude that the aspect of genuineness does *not* play a decisive role in distinguishing

- the mode of statement as 'narrating' vs. 'recording' and
- the character of portrayal as 'fictional narrative' vs. 'non-fictional report'.

While neglecting the much wider spectrum of criteria suitable for the evaluation of texts, a rather formal pattern would describe, at any rate, only one aspect of its

(Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier) 1995, is especially valuable.

4 KARLHEINZ STIERLE: Erfahrung und narrative Form. Bemerkungen zu ihrem Zusammenhang in Fiktion und Historiographie. In: *Theorie und Erzählung in der Geschichte*. Hrsg. von JÜRGEN KOCKA und THOMAS NIPPERDEY, München (DTV) 1979, 85-118, esp. 85.

5 FÜGER (fn. 3) 268; HOOPS (fn. 3) 289.

characteristics, namely its 'content' or *signifié*, i.e., what is being portrayed; it would not make it possible to provide valid evidence of its narrativity nor its fictionality. Consequently, the theory of literature (after a dynamic process of development shaped by considerable shifts in priorities since Antiquity) classifies large parts of historiographical literature as non-fictional but nevertheless narrative.⁶ In the field which is described by the antipodes 'experience' (as the primary level of mental reflection) and 'knowledge' (as the most sophisticated one), historiography is, thus, recognised as a kind of narrative zero stage in the middle of both, but tending to become knowledge in an ever purer form.⁷ It hence rids itself more and more consistently of subjective breaks in experience. On the other hand, fictional narratives can be determined as being modifications of experience, which in their purest form come to fruition in narrative fiction. Accordingly,

- forms of experience vs. forms of knowledge,
- fictional narrative vs. factual narrative,
- the imaginative type of literature vs. the practical one,⁸

describe the broad spectrum of possibilities of narration. This insight is significant and an essential terminological prerequisite for our literary investigations into *Ḥadīth*, as this literary branch has, to some extent, distinctly historiographical traits. It also becomes clear that premises like this do not primarily concern a distinction of *ḥadīths* according to criteria such as fact vs. fiction or history vs. fantasy, but according to the complexity of the modes and

6 See KLAUS HEITMANN: Das Verhältnis von Dichtung und Geschichtsschreibung in der älteren Theorie. In: *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* (Köln: Böhlau) 52 (1970), 244-279. Concerning the terminological development of the relation of history to literature, see LIONEL GROSSMANN: History and Literature. Reproduction or Signification. In: ROBERT H. CARARY, HENRY KOZICKI: *The Writing of History. Literary Form and Historical Understanding*. Wisconsin (The University of Wisconsin Press) 1978, 3-39. DIETRICH HARTH: Historik und Poetik. Plädoyer für ein gespanntes Verhältnis. In: HARTMUT EGGER, ULRICH PROFITLICH, KLAUS R. SCHERPE (Eds.): *Geschichte als Literatur. Formen und Grenzen der Repräsentation von Vergangenheit*. Stuttgart (J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung) 1990, 13-28. GÉRARD GENETTE: Fictional Narrative, Factual Narrative. In: *Poetics Today* (Tel Aviv) 11/4 (1990), 755-774. ANSGAR NÜNNING: *Von historischer Fiktion zu historiographischer Metapher. I: Theorie, Typologie und Poetik des historischen Romans*. Trier (Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier) 1994.

7 STIERLE (fn. 4) 86.

8 ISER (fn. 3) 18-23; HARTH (fn. 6) 13.

methods of portrayal, i.e., we differentiate between 'factual' and 'fictional' narration in Ḥadīth.⁹

1.3. On the basis of this, the following working rules may be instrumental in an investigation into Ḥadīth:

1.3.1. The individual *ḥadīth* is regarded as a textual entity. In order to figure out, firstly, its possible narrativity, all aspects, characteristics and intertwined processes of its narration may be understood within the framework of a 'narrative complex' (Germ.: *Erzählkomplex*).¹⁰ The latter is made up of three basic elements:

- A) the narrative act realised in a narrative situation (in short: process of narrating);
- B) the 'narrative text' or narrative discourse, i.e., the substantially existing or present text, the realisation of a story as text, the *how* is being narrated (Fr.: *signifiant*), or the shaping of a story by its narrator;
- C) the 'story' (Germ.: *die eigentliche Geschichte*; Fr.: *signifié, histoire*), i.e., the content of the text, or the connection of the events narrated according to their chronological order.¹¹

1.3.2. As the narrative situation¹² essentially constitutes the so-called character of being (Germ.: *Seins-Charakter*) of narration, the *ḥadīth*-texts will thus be investigated with regard to two 'basic moments of narration'.¹³ These are:

9 The decision to place emphasis on the distinction between 'factual' and 'fictional' narration makes it possible to regard the individual *ḥadīths* as what they really are: texts. This is important because, in this way, an involvement in the traditional discussions by Muslim and 'Western' researchers with regard to the authenticity vs. non-authenticity and chronology of Ḥadīth should, for the time being, be ruled out. The term *fiction* will not be used here as it seems that *fiction* as a category has been defined by modern scholars sometimes not only in contrast but in opposition to *history*; see esp. BERTHOFF (fn. 3) 271-2. Such an attitude would be unjustified in the case of Ḥadīth, as we will see later on.

10 According to the plain and practical model by GENETTE (fn. 3) 27, 32; cf. also JAHN (fn. 3) 30-31.

11 HILARY P. DANNENBERG: Die Entwicklung von Theorien der Erzählstruktur und des Plot-Begriffs. In: *Literaturwissenschaftliche Theorien, Modelle und Methoden. Eine Einführung*. Hrsg. von ANSGAR NÜNNING. Trier (Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier) 1995, 51-68, here 51; NÜNNING (fn. 6) 116.

12 See JAHN (fn. 3) 30-31, 38-39.

13 STANZEL (fn. 3) 72. These aspects of narration connect the narrative situation (→ A) with the

- (a) the perspective of narration: (a₁) internal perspective: a [directly] co-acting narrator is present; (a₂) external perspective: the narrator is not part of the plot;
 (b) grammatical form (I-, He-, You-Form¹⁴).¹⁵

1.3.3. A paradigm of signals, so-called a) contextual-pragmatic and b) textual (e.g., linguistic and stylistic) indicators of fictionality,¹⁶ will finally provide proof to determine the given *ḥadīth* not only as 'narrative' but 'fictional narrative'. In this context, we will especially consider the process of narrating, which has been established as a main criterion of fictionality.

1.3.4. However, proving fictional elements in the *Ḥadīth* raises the question to what extent is 'fictionalisation' connected with the socio-literary phenomenon of 'imagination'. What these terms mean in our context can be explained, in brief, as follows:

FICTIONALISATION

actual or historical event,

↓
 the act, procedure, or product of authorial or personal narrating and transmitting: shaped by individual experience and formulation on the basis of

IMAGINATION

experience, mental image or conception

↓
 the process of forming mental images: thereby, sometimes, reproducing in the mind images or concepts stored in one's memory in allusion to associated images (or, of

narrative discourse (→ B) and shape the character of the story of a given *ḥadīth* (→ C).

- 14 The latter, however, is rather seldom and implies I-form, see STANZEL (fn. 3) 191-192. —Attention will also be paid to literary-theoretical findings, according to which one narrator may use another narrator to tell the story, i.e., he uses a narrating medium (→ indirect narrating).
- 15 The special practicability of this distinction in Ancient literatures is emphasised by BERND EFFE: Entstehung und Funktion 'personaler' Erzählweise in der Erzählliteratur der Antike. In: *Poetica* 7 (1975) 135-157. The philosophical dimension of the forms of individual(ised) narration is discussed by DAVID CARR: *Time, Narrative and History*. [*Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy*, ed. by JAMES M. EDIE]. Bloomington/Indianapolis (Indiana University Press) 1986, esp. 46-57, 119-121.
- 16 ISER (fn. 3) 35 and NÖNNING (fn. 6) 155; concerning signals of reality in non-fictional texts, see REINHART KOSELLECK: *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*. Frankfurt a.M. (Suhrkamp) 1989 [1979¹], 285. A checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories for the analysis of a fictional text is given by GEOFFREY N. LEECH, MICHAEL H. SHORT: *Style in fiction. A linguistic introduction to English prose*. London, New York (Longman) 1992¹⁰ [1981¹], 74-118.

↓ creative sovereignty

fictional narrative

↓ re-combining past experiences)

(*new*) *mental image or concept* of what is not actually present in the mind

1.3.5. Now considerations will be made, whether (and if so, how) fictionalisation in certain *ḥadīths* was possibly suitable as a medium and means of early Islamic education, taking into account the claim by Ḥadīth of imparting exemplary instruction and rules to the Muslim individual and society.

2. *The problem of the nature of Ḥadīth*

According to Muslim understanding, the corpus of Ḥadīth preserves, in a textual shape, what the Prophet Muḥammad said, did or condoned. If one follows this stance, the canonical Ḥadīth texts¹⁷ convey the Prophet's sayings, or the statements made by his closest companions, authentically in terms of wording and content. It includes important information on the actual circumstances or the context of the Divine Revelation to Muḥammad, and reports on central events or interesting episodes in the early Islamic period. This subject matter makes the Ḥadīth particularly significant for Islamic religious doctrine and jurisprudence. Ḥadīth-texts claim to truly refer to real events. In both Islamic theology and jurisprudence precisely this highly important claim to »authenticity« of the Ḥadīth stems, on the one hand, from its textual manifestations. On the other hand, this claim has essentially contributed to shaping this genre of Medieval Arabic literature into its present form.

2.1. The Muslim Science of Tradition established paradigms, which classify *ḥadīths* into several categories and sub-categories, corresponding, for example, to theological aspects or technical aspects of transmission.¹⁸ Basically it distinguishes texts of a) a juridical character (*ḥadīth al-aḥkām*), b) a rather historiographical character (*maghāzī, sīrah*)¹⁹ and b₁) *ḥadīths* that concern other manifold subjects. Especially this latter sub-group of *ḥadīths* reflects Muslim life

17 For practical reasons, only the *-kutub al-tis'ah*, the core piece of Ḥadīth, is referred to here.

18 JAMES ROBSON: Investigation and Classification. In: *The Muslim World* (Hartford) 41 (1951), 98-112.

19 MUHAMMAD ZUBAYR SIDDIQI: *Hadith Literature. Its Origins, Development, Special Features and Criticism*. Calcutta (Calcutta University Press) 1961, esp. 13-14.

in all its diversity. Such texts tell us about people in the mosque and in the marketplace, in the field, the desert, the living room and bedroom, in court and at play, what people did at night and during the day. They 'tell' us people's joys, concerns, rejoicing and complaints; also the science of the early Islamic period, historical memories, anecdotes, and rich wise sayings are recounted.²⁰

2.2. Let us put aside the traditional attitude towards the classification of Ḥadīth and take a look at it as a corpus of texts. Formally one may split individual *ḥadīths* into two groups of text:

a) Short *ḥadīths* of only some lines in print, in which eye-witnesses or eavesdroppers relate one or several statements made by the Prophet (or by one of his companions or their direct successors) verbatim and without any comment. These small text fragments consist, in their purest form, merely of a chain of transmitters (*isnād*) and the actual text of the Prophet's saying handed down. But also other witnesses' 'reports', which contain a Prophet's saying and brief information given by the witness (mostly concerning the context of a respective Prophet's saying, which makes up the core of the given *ḥadīth*) feature in this category.

b) The other group of text comprises of the longer or long *ḥadīths* (up to one page in print or more) which seem to be 'reports' by witnesses or contemporaries of the Prophet. They inform us about the actions and the life of the Prophet or his companions, or, as mentioned above, about other important or interesting events in early Islamic history. They frequently include the Prophet's sayings or the conversations of different persons, partially in reported speech.

It has to be taken into account – as a scientific criterion – that such *ḥadīths*, if one understands them in the conventional sense as 'reports' (see 1.1.), cannot *totally* conform to reality, i.e., that they cannot include all relevant facts. They may also be distorted in some way, as, in simple terms, each report is inevitably a subjectively made choice of recounted events. Moreover, it always includes facts related by a person, i.e., by a 'temperament' or 'figure of reflection'. Nevertheless, one can expect a direct relationship between the first or original *muḥaddīth* and the event(s) described. In other words, the eye-witness directly recounts (actual or alleged) historical events, i.e., without any mediator (Germ.:

20 DIETER FERCHEL: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī. Nachrichten von Taten und Aussprüchen des Propheten Muḥammad*. Stuttgart (Reclam) 1991, 9.

Zwischeninstanz). Hence, *ḥadīth* texts in principle, and, thus, in accordance with traditional patterns of literary theoretical classification, should be categorised anew as non-fictional and their mode of portrayal as 'factual narration'. Consequently, from a formal point of view the Ḥadīth seems – once again – to entirely fulfil the criteria that are connected with reporting, recounting 'reports' or, in a narrow sense, with historical accounts.

However, does this constitute a full characterisation of Ḥadīth as being not only a textual but a 'fine' literary – and fictional – manifestation? Do not certain *ḥadīths* (especially the texts referred to in 2.1. b and b₁) actually *formulate things based on creative sovereignty*? Are not these events and happenings narrated and fictionalised on the basis of individual experience rather than merely recorded and reported on the basis of knowledge? An in-depth analysis of the nature and structure of three exemplary *ḥadīths* will, as a first step, pave the way for a reconsideration of this important branch of classical Arabic literature.²¹

3. *Narration and fictionalisation as exemplified in three ḥadīths*

An alternative type-setting and the emphasis through different fonts are designed to demonstrate the specific textual characteristics of the *ḥadīths* such as structure with regard to levels of plot, time sequences, speech and reported speech, interpolations, and the like.²²

21 For alternative literary theoretical investigations into traditions of a distinctly historical nature (*khbar*, pl. *akhbār*), see STEFAN LEDER: The Literary Use of the *Khbar*. In: *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, I: Problems in the Literary Source Material*, ed. A. CAMERON and L.I. CONRAD. Princeton 1992. Furthermore DANIEL BEAUMONT: Hard-Boiled: Narrative Discourse in Early Muslim Traditions. In: *Studia Islamica* 83 (1996), 5-31, examined *akhbār* taken from Ibn Iṣḥāq's, al-Wāqidi's and Ibn Sa'd's compilations from the narratological viewpoint. As his new study was available to me only while revising this article for publication, it is interesting to note that BEAUMONT obtained a number of results similar to the conclusions drawn from analysing canonical *ḥadīths*. See also SAHAIR EL CALAMAWY: Narrative elements in the Ḥadīth literature. In: *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature. Arabic literature to the end of the Umayyad period*, Cambridge a.o. (Cambridge University Press) 1983, 308-316; however, according to the modern theory, this chapter should be entitled 'fictional' rather than 'narrative' elements in the Ḥadīth literature.

22 For the purpose of theoretical demonstration and description of text, a more fluent 'literary' rendering of the *ḥadīths* was renounced and a translation from the philological point of view was

3.1. *The Bedouin woman's remarkable meeting with the Prophet*

Musaddad²³ told us, he said: Yahyā ibn Sa'īd²⁴ told me, he said: 'Awf²⁵ told us, he said: Abū Rajā²⁶ told us on the authority of 'Imrān²⁷, he said:

section
of acting
↓
I-form
↓
He-form
↓
2

[ONCE] WE WERE TRAVELLING WITH THE PROPHET (S). We carried on travelling until the last part of the night. [Finally] we [halted at a place and] slept deeply. *There is no sleep sweeter for a traveller than that [in the last part of the night]!* So it was only the heat of the sun that awakened us.

The first to wake up was so-and-so, then so-and-so and then so-and-so – *Abū Rajā* named them but 'Awf had forgotten [the names that *Abū Rajā* had told him] –, and then the fourth person [to wake up] was 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Whenever the Prophet used to sleep, nobody would wake him up till he himself got up, as we did not know what was happening [i.e., what was being revealed] to him in his sleep. So, when 'Umar got up and saw what had happened to the people – and he was a strong man –, he said 'Allāhu akbar'. He raised his voice and kept on saying [even more] loudly 'Allāhu akbar' till the Prophet (S) got up [because of it].

When he [the Prophet] got up, the people informed him about what had happened to them (i.e., that they had missed the morning prayer while sleeping). He said: »There is no harm« or: »It will not do any harm. Set forth!«.

So he [the Prophet] departed from that place. AFTER COVERING SOME DISTANCE (*ghayr ba'īd*) the Prophet (S) dismounted and asked [for some water] to perform [his] ablution[s]. So he performed [his]

preferred. Only the obdurate *qāla* was replaced sometimes by suitable synonyms to make the sequence of plot more intelligible. Names of characters were occasionally substituted.

23 Abū l-Ḥasan Musaddad ibn Masraḥad al-Azdī (d. 227/842 in Basra), informer of al-Bukhārī.

24 Abū Sa'īd al-Aḥwal Yahyā ibn Sa'īd ibn Farrūkh al-Tamīmī (d. 198/813-4 in Basra).

25 Abū Sahl 'Awf ibn Abī Jamīlah al-'Abdī al-A'rābī (Basra, d. 146/763).

26 Abū Rajā 'Imrān ibn Taym al-Uṭāridī (Basra, d. 107/725).

27 Abū Nujayd 'Imrān ibn al-Ḥuṣayn ibn 'Ubayd ibn Khalaf al-Khuẓā'i (d. 52/ 672 in Basra).

ablution[s]. The call for the prayer was pronounced, and he led the people in prayer. After he had finished the prayer, [he saw] a man sitting a short distance away who had not prayed with the people. He asked:

»O so-and-so, what prevented you from praying with the people?«
He replied:

"I am in the state of *janābah*,²⁸ but there is no water." The Prophet said:

»You have to take [clean] earth, this will suffice for you (i.e., to clean yourself and to be allowed to pray)!«

3 THEN THE PROPHET CARRIED ON TRAVELLING. [But after a while] the people complained to him of thirst. Thereupon he got down [from his horse], called a [certain] person – *Abū Rajā'* had named him but *ʿAwf* [told us that he] had forgotten [his name] – and ʿAlī, and gave them both the order »Go and bring [us] water!«

4 SO THEY WENT IN SEARCH OF WATER. [After some time] they met a woman who was sitting on a camel between two bags of water. They asked [her]:

"Where can we find water?", she replied:

"I was there [i.e., at the water hole] this time yesterday, and my people were behind me".²⁹

They requested her to accompany them, When she asked 'Where?', they said 'To God's Apostle!'. [And when] she asked 'Do you mean the man who is called *The one with a new religion (al-ṣābiʿ)?*', they replied 'Yes, he is the one you mean! So, come along [with us]'.
5

THEY TOOK HER TO THE PROPHET (ﷺ) and told [him] the [whole] story. [Then] he said to the people: »Help her to dismount!«

[Now] the Prophet asked for a jug, then he opened the mouth of the bags and poured some water into the pot. Then he closed the big

28 I.e., after having sexual intercourse either with a person or in a dream which forbids prayer unless after having a bath.

29 This means that one needs a full day to travel to this water hole.

[upper] openings of the bags and opened the lower ones. So the people were called upon [with the words] 'Quench the thirst [of the people and the animals] and drink'. So everybody who wished [to do so] gave water [to the people and animals], and quenched [his] thirst. At last the Prophet gave a jug of water to the one who was [still] in the state of *janābah* and said [to him]: »Go and pour it over your body!«

The woman was standing, watching [everything that] they were doing with her water. [But,] by God, when her water bags were returned [to her] they looked as if they were fuller than they had ever been before!

Then the Prophet (S) ordered [the people]: »Collect something for her!« So they collected dates, flour and *sawīq*³⁰ for her till they had brought together (food) [which would be enough] for a [good] meal. Then they put [all of] it in a piece of cloth, helped her [to sit] on her camel and placed the sack full of food in front of her. Then the Prophet said to her: »You may know, we have not taken any of your water. But God is the one who has quenched our thirst.«

6

SHE RETURNED TO HER RELATIVES from whom she was separated [because of this event]. Her relatives asked her:

"O so-and-so, what has delayed you?" She answered:

"A strange thing! Two men met me, took me to the man who is called *The one with a new religion (al-sābī)*, and he did such and such. By God, he is either the greatest magician between this and this" – [thereby] gesturing with her middle and index fingers, raising them towards the sky, pointing at heaven and earth – "or he is truly God's Apostle".

7

AFTERWARDS THE MUSLIMS USED TO ATTACK THE PAGANS around her abode but they never touched her village.

ONE DAY she said to her people: "I think that these people leave us in peace and quiet on purpose. Have you got any inclination to Islam?"

They obeyed her, and all of them embraced Islam.

30 That is a mush of dates.

Abū 'Abdallāh [al-Bukhārī] said: [The word] *ṣaba*' [means] 'to desert one religion for another [new religion]'. [And] Abū 'Āliya³¹ said: The *Ṣābi'ūn*³² are a group of the People of the Book (*firqah min ahl al-kitāb*) who recite the Psalms.³³

As is well known from many *ḥadīths*, here a Prophet's companion recounts events in the desert on one of the Prophet's numerous expeditions. We learn from the *isnād* and from the introductory passage of the text, that 'Imrān ibn al-Ḥuṣayn al-Khuzā'i, known as a reliable transmitter from Basra, was an eyewitness of these events. He himself 'reports' on what happened; he vows and guarantees the authenticity of his report. The *ḥadīth*, being unique within the *-kutub al-tis'ah*, is of a canonical character through its appearance in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*-collection. So far so good. A closer look at the text sheds light on the finely differentiated structure and the quite sophisticated way of the portrayal of events related.

3.1.1. One may notice in the text no less than seven 'sections of acting'. These sections make up the plot and stand out against each other in terms of chronological criteria and content. They are connected by means of certain phrases, through which the *muḥaddīth* is able to cross from one level of action to the next, or through which the listener, or reader of the *ḥadīth* will conceive the beginning of a new section of the plot: e.g., by mentioning "[Once] we were travelling", or "After covering some distance", or "Then the Prophet carried on travelling". By means of this, the *muḥaddīth* also shortens whole sections of the plot, which obviously appear to be less important for portraying the events. For example, a trip lasting several hours or even a day is expressed in a single

31 Raḥ' ibn Mihrān al-Rabāḥī (Basra, d. 90/ 709).

32 Designation of three different sects; cf. *EI*² VIII, 672, and C. BUCH: The identity of the *Ṣābi'ūn*: a historical quest. In: *Muslim World* 74 (1984), 172-186.

33 Cf. *Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī, no. 344 (book 7: On rubbing hand and face with clean earth. The numbering is according to *Fath al-bārī bi-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-īmām Abi 'Alī M. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī li-Aḥmad ibn 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī*. Ed. M. F. 'ABD AL-BAQI and MUḤIBB AL-DĪN AL-KHAṬĪB, 14 vols., Cairo 1407/1986-7). For the "extraction" (*takrīj*) of this *ḥadīth*, see *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim, no. 682 (Ed. 'ABD AL-BĀQĪ, Cairo 1955-56); *Sunan* Abī Dāwūd, no. 443 (Ed. MUḤAMMAD MUḤYĪ AL-DĪN IBN 'ABD AL-ḤAMĪD, 2 vols., Cairo n.d.); *Musnad* Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, no. 19397, 19462 (Ed. SHU'AYB AL-ARNA'UṬ and 'ĀDIL MURSHID, 5 vols., Beirut 1413-4/1993-4). For its "beginnings" (*atrāf*), see *Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī, no. 347, 3571.

sentence: "So they went in search of water", or: "They took her to the Prophet", or: "She returned to her relatives". Changes of location and time, too, are bridged in this way: "Afterwards the Muslims used to attack the pagans", or "One day she said to her people". In addition, indefinite formulations of date and time, a missing chronological division of event, and certain linguistic elements of narration, i.e., expressions such as "then" (*thumma*) and "so" (the so-called 'narrative *fa-*') are to be observed. Vocabulary like this is regarded as a typical criterion of 'fictional narration'; it is well-known from different fictional genres of literature, not least from fairy-tales.

3.1.2. By introducing the report as "[Once] we were travelling", the *muḥaddith* connects himself closely with the events recounted and, thus, he emphasises the authenticity of his portrayal. His remark about the sleeping Prophet, "as we did not know what was happening", indicates that he is part of the plot, even if only a minor character. He relates the events from inside the plot. This I- or We-form of a '(visible) internal narrator' is an indication of the so-called 'original personal way of narrating'.³⁴

3.1.3. However, as early as at the end of the introduction (section 1) up to the end of the *ḥadīth*, the I-form is transformed to the He-form; and the 'original personal' way of reporting becomes a so-called 'medial personal' one. This means, on the one hand, that the *muḥaddith* relates the events or certain persons from his own personal point of view. On the other hand, he recounts the world described in the text, to a certain extent, with literary supremacy and in a relatively neutral way. Some quite emotionally charged remarks and comments by the *muḥaddith* are reminiscent of a mixture of the 'personal' and 'authorial' way of narrating, even if the latter comes to its full fruition only at the end of the text. For we can clearly hear his voice when he states: "and 'Umar was a strong man" or: "she was gesturing with her ... fingers, pointing at heaven and earth"; or "the people brought together (food) [which would be enough] for a [good] meal"; or "when her water bags were returned they looked as if they were fuller than they had ever been before!". In addition to this, generalisations such as "Whenever the Prophet used to sleep, nobody would wake him up" not only speak in favour of a 'personal' but 'authorial' way of narrating. And the statement by the *muḥaddith*, "There is no sleep sweeter for a traveller than that [in the last

34 Concerning peculiarities of the fictionality in I- and He-narration, see STANZEL (fn. 3), 110-115.

part of the night]", finally makes it unequivocally obvious that here the mode of portrayal has nothing in common anymore with that of a purely 'factual' and unemotional report. In fictional narratives, however, such insertions and sympathetic coloration are invigorating details and, in fact, typical. All these, more or less obvious signals (e.g., the summarising of whole sections of the plot into short phrases, the generalisation, coloration and emotional comments on actions or characters) clearly indicate the fictionalisation of that portrayal.

3.1.4. Finally, at the end of the *ḥadīth*, the *muḥaddīth* leaves the platform of an alleged reporter or eye-witness, and this in defiance of the strict criteria of traditional Ḥadīth criticism. In section 6 and 7 the 'original reporter', 'Imrān, relates events in detail, which occurred on or after the return of the Bedouin woman to her tribe. From what 'Imrān tells us in the first parts of the text, we have to conclude that he definitely was not a 'witness' to these events. Nevertheless, he relies on no other source or guarantor but himself for the accuracy of these parts of his report. He recounts, in his own words, what may have happened, far away from the group around the Prophet and, hence, from the world as he experienced it himself. The fictionality of the text reaches its climax. Events are related based upon a position which describes the theory of literature as 'omnipotent, superior and supreme'. Only this narrative omniscience makes it possible for the *muḥaddīth* to let his view pass through different levels of reality, to intersperse talks between the Bedouin woman and her relatives at the remote camp as a dialogue, and to relate what she asked her people one day: "I think that these people leave us on purpose. Have you got any inclination to Islam?". The 'outside narrator' invisible in these passages rounds off the *ḥadīth* with the statement "They obeyed her, and all of them embraced Islam". The narration has fully developed its fictional character.

3.1.5. Only this kind of portrayal, i.e., the fictionalisation of the related happenings, along with the final statement emphasise the exemplary positive demeanour of the Prophet and, later on, its favourable results. Irrespective of the water miracle, performed by the Prophet, the allegorical message of the *ḥadīth* becomes clear in two respects: firstly, generosity, decency and human behaviour in situations which initially do not indicate this are finally rewarded. In the desert the woman shared the water with the thirsty Muslims, which she had arduously procured for her relatives. She did so without knowing that she will be compensated by God. Her village is spared from an attack by Muslim warriors

due to this good deed.³⁵ Furthermore, an ordinary woman impressed by the beneficial actions of the Prophet but also by the benevolent behaviour of the Muslim warriors is able to make her relatives embrace Islam, hence strengthening the Muslim community. Thus, the text clearly takes on the character of an educational *ḥadīth*, serving both theological and ethical Muslim instruction.

3.2. *The black slave girl and the red leather scarf*

A (*Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī, no. 439)

ʿUbayd ibn Ismāʿīl³⁶ told us, he said: Abū Usāmah³⁷ told us on the authority of Hishām³⁸, [and he] on his father's³⁹ authority, [and he] on the authority of ʿĀ'ishah⁴⁰

that a slave girl (*walīdah*) – she was a black and had belonged to an Arab tribe, [however] they manumitted her but she remained with them – told [her]:

B (*Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī, no. 3835)

Farwah ibn Abī l-Maghra⁴¹ told us: ʿAlī ibn Mushir⁴² reported us on the authority of Hishām, [and he] on his father's authority, [and he] on the authority of ʿĀ'ishah (R), she said:

“A *black lady* (*imra'ah sawdā'*) – *she had belonged to some Arabs [as slave]* –

35 The (unexpected) compensation for a good deed is a narrative motif, which is further developed, artistically speaking, especially in later texts of Medieval Arabic literature such as of the genre of *al-mukāfā'ah* ("Just Deserts") and *al-faraj ba'da l-shiddah* ("Deliverance after Distress"). See also A. HAMORI's contribution to this volume.

36 Abū Muḥammad ʿUbayd ibn Ismāʿīl al-Habbārī al-Qurashī, informer of al-Bukhārī (Kufa, d. 250/864).

37 Abū Usāmah Ḥammād ibn Usāmah al-Qurashī (Kufa, d. 201/816-17).

38 Abū l-Munqidh Hishām ibn ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr al-Azdi (lived in Medina, d. 145/762 in Baghdad).

39 Abū ʿAbdallāh ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwām al-Azdi (Medina, d. 93/712).

40 Umm ʿAbdallāh ʿĀ'ishah bint Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (Medina, d. 57/677).

41 Abū l-Qāsim Farwah ibn Abī l-Maghra Ma'dī Karīb al-Kindī (Kufa, d. 255/868).

42 Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Mushir al-Qurashī (Kufa, d. 189/802).

I a

" "[Once] one of their girls (*sabiyyah*) went out wearing a red scarf made of leather, decorated with pearls and stones (*wishāḥ aḥmar min suḡar*)". *She went on saying*: "She placed it somewhere or it fell from her.

Then a kite passed by that place seeing it lying there, mistaking it for a piece of meat, [took it] and flew away with it.

Those people searched [everywhere] for it but did not find it." *She said*: "So [at least] they accused me of stealing it."

I b She [*Ā*'ishah] said:

"So they suddenly started to check [this black slave girl] and checked even her private parts. She told [me]:

"By God, since I was standing with these people, the kite passed by [again], dropped the scarf [down, and it fell] amongst them."

She told [me]:

"So I said to them 'This is what you accused me of although I was innocent! Here, there it is [what you have been searching for]!"

II a Then [continuing her report]
she said:

*"This slave girl [later] came
to God's Apostle and
embraced Islam."*

embraced Islam.

‘Ā’ishah said:

*"Then she had a tent – or a
small room with a low roof
– in the mosque."*

*Then she had a small room
with a low roof in the
mosque."*

*[Often] she used to come to
me, and to have a talk with
me. And whenever she sat
with me, she recited:*

*"The Day of the Scarf was
one of our Lord's wonders.
Verily, He rescued me from
the disbelievers' town".*

She [‘Ā’ishah] said:

*"[Often] she used to visit us
and to have a talk with us.
And whenever she finished
her talk, she recited:*

*"The Day of the Scarf was one
of our Lord's wonders.
Verily, He rescued me from the
disbelievers' town".*

II b She [‘Ā’ishah] said:

"Once I asked her:

*'What is the matter with you?
Whenever you sit with me,
you always recite [this
verse]?'";*

and she [‘Ā’ishah] said [finally]:

"So she told me this story".

After repeating [this verse] II b
many times, ‘Ā’ishah asked her:

*'What was the Day of the
Scarf?'*,

she (i.e., the black Lady) said: I a

*"[Once] a young [slave] girl
(juwayriyah), belonging to one
of my people, went out wearing
a scarf made of [reddy-brown]
leather de-corated with pearls
and stones (wishāḥ min adam).*

And it fell from her.

Then a kite passed by that place, mistaking it for a piece of meat, and took it.

They (i.e., her people) accused me [of stealing it] and tortured me to such an extent that they even looked at my private parts.

So, while they all were around me — and I was in great distress — suddenly the kite turned [to us again] till it was in front of our eyes.

Then it threw [down] the scarf.

So they took it.

So, I said to them 'This is what you accused me of although I was innocent!' "

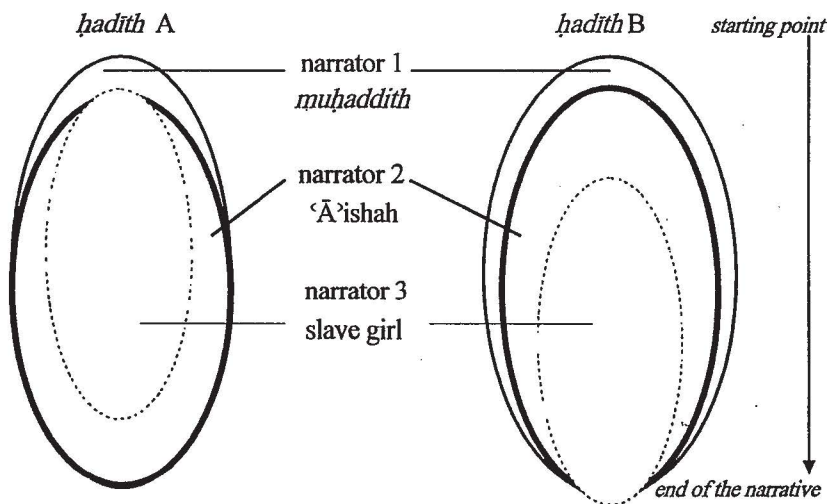
The narrative structure of this example is more complex and not easy to comprehend at first sight.

3.2.1. A *muḥaddith* recounts a story by 'Ā'ishah at an obvious narrative distance. In text A, he (or one of the guarantors mentioned in the *isnād*) refers to "that" (Arab.: *anna*) the following was narrated by her. He commences his recounting with the contextual information that "she [i.e., the black girl] had belonged as a slave to an Arab tribe, [however,] they manumitted her but she remained with them". After this introduction 'Ā'ishah's (narrator 2) actual narration begins. As in text A there is no syntactical personal relationship of the first *qālat*, it is not really clear whether 'Ā'ishah recounts or if, within the framework of her narrating, the slave girl (*walīdah*) is quoted without a transition. It could be surmised from the structure of text A that this constitutes the *walīdah*'s recounting of events, however, it only becomes clear through a synopsis with the parallel text B. The slave girl (narrator 3), in her turn, relates what happened to her in the camp of an Arab tribe. Both the slave girl and the

tribe, with whom she was associated on her release, as well as the location of the events remain anonymous throughout the texts.

3.2.2. The claim to authenticity of the events related is, apart from the chain of trustworthy transmitters, linguistically emphasised in the Arabic text by quoting individual sentences. These are introduced or connected in a stereotype way by using "she said", *qālat*. A shift within the narrative perspective in the course of the text (i.e., a change from narrator 3 to narrator 2; from the slave girl to 'Ā'ishah) is expressed merely by changing personal pronouns: "She [i.e., the slave girl] said: So [at least] they accused me of stealing it", then 'Ā'ishah: "So they suddenly started to check and checked even her private parts", then again the slave girl: "By God, since I was standing with these people". Only at the beginning of the next section of plot (→ 2) the *muḥaddith* (narrator 1) moves 'Ā'ishah as narrator 2 to the fore: "Then she (i.e., 'Ā'ishah) said: "This slave girl [later] came to God's Apostle...", again 'Ā'ishah: "Then she had a tent / [Often] she used to come to me / Once I asked her". Through 'Ā'ishah's final sentence "So she told me this story" (Arab.: *fā-ḥaddathatnī bi-hādhā l-ḥadīth*), version A interestingly comes full circle, puts the reader back to the beginning of the story and would make it possible to start its narration anew again and again.

3.2.3. The *ḥadīth* is well-suited to making clear the perspective of narration with regard to the whole text by determining the narrators' positions.



a) The *muḥaddith* (narrator 1) is an → invisible (external) narrator. In text A after a brief introduction, he puts the individual scenes side by side without any comment. All events are adequately recounted in the third person (He/She-form). Hence the style appears to be almost similar to a portrayal, which records facts, or to a report.

b) ʿĀʾishah is mentioned in the *isnād* as the main narrator (narrator 2), however, in the first section of plot she remains invisible as such. She is implied only through the mode of narration (→ undramatised narrator, or: implicit narrator). Her description in the third person, the most frequent and traditional form of narration,⁴³ is the most important indication of this evaluation. Only at the end of the first section (see I b) does she openly appear as a conceivable individual in the text (→ dramatised narrator).

c) The slave girl tells her own story. She relates the events by the mode of an original narration. She is the main character of the story and has a direct influence on the events, which she recounts in the personal I-form (→ internal narrator).

The overall concept of the *ḥadīth* makes it clear that ʿĀʾishah expounds the world of the narrative based on her knowledge of the events.⁴⁴ This becomes evident through summarising remarks such as "This slave girl [later] came to God's Apostle", "Then she had a tent" or by "[Often] she used to come to me" and "Once I asked her". ʿĀʾishah, too, has been an external narrator until now. But her narrative position changes. She becomes an inside narrator by including herself in the conversations with the black girl. With ʿĀʾishah's statement that she met the slave girl (i.e., the heroine of the narrative), a connection between the reality of the fictional narrative and the real world of the outside narrator is created.⁴⁵ The narrative clearly becomes fictionalised, however, without losing any of its vividness. On the contrary, the fictional world described becomes far more conceivable and clear for the reader/listener of the *ḥadīth*.

3.2.4. *Ḥadīth A* has only one parallel text within the framework of the *-kutub al-tisʿah*, which is also to be found in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*-compilation. As far as

43 According to FÜGER (fn. 3) 276.

44 According to STANZEL (fn. 3) 261, this special mode of statement can be categorised further as »Olympic narration«.

45 FÜGER (fn. 3) 272.

content and wording are concerned, in this text B the story about a slave girl being accused of theft is almost identically related as in text A. But both texts differ completely in the placing of the related events within the general frame of the narrative: in text B the two basic narrative constituents are to be found in the mirror image-like sequence. Here constituent 1 of text A (the slave girl tells of the lost scarf, which was stolen by the kite) is placed at the end. Instead the narration begins with constituent 2 (ʿĀ'ishah recounts her meeting with the slave girl and the latter's strange reciting of verses). Contrary to the chronological way of recounting text A, this more artistic arrangement of text B obviously creates an inner tension, inspires the reader's imagination and makes him or her curious. To attribute the interchanging of main narrative constituents within an otherwise constant narrative structure of two comparable texts merely to the initially oral transmission of *ḥadīth*s would be an inadequate explanation. It is rather plausible to understand this phenomenon against the background of the variable nature and technique of fictional narration. So one can vividly imagine how a *muḥaddīth*-narrator, in a style similar to the one known from medieval storytellers (*quṣṣās*), relates an interesting story on various occasions. Thereby both meaning and basic concept remain the same. But the order of narrative constituents or chosen individual terms may differ from one occasion to the other without substantially impairing the whole story. Hence

- the "black slave girl" is introduced in A as *walīdah kānat sawdā'*, and on another occasion, B, as → *imra'ah sawdā' li-ba'd' al-'arab*,
- the "young girl", who lost the scarf, is named in A *ṣabiyyah*, in B synonymously → *juwayriyah*,
- she is described in A as "wearing a red scarf made of leather", *wishāḥ aḥmar min suyūr*, analogously B, → *wishāḥ min adam*.

3.2.5. In the second example (B) the repositioning of narrative constituents and the beginning of the narrative, as one may say, from the end of the story do not give prominence to a gradual or moderate development of the events. Instead it emphasises the fate of the main heroine and stresses the message of the story!⁴⁶ However, the *ḥadīth*'s religious-moralistic message in both versions of the text is the same: in a seemingly hopeless situation an unjustified accusation is finally clarified with the help of God. The kite drops the stolen scarf right in front of the

46 LÄMMERT (fn. 3) 38.

people, proving the slave girl's innocence. How else can this be explained for believers without God's omnipresence? Consequently, later on the slave girl embraces Islam. The narrating and transmitting of this illustrative story from the early stage of Islam and its fictional dissemination creates and strengthens people's trust in God.⁴⁷

3.3. *The Prophet's Dream Journey*⁴⁸

The third *ḥadīth* is particularly interesting. At the beginning we are briefly told that the Prophet after a prayer often asked his companions about a dream, which they then related. As one day (details of time and location were not given) nobody could recount a dream, the Prophet himself recounts one. He tells us about how two men took him to the "Sacred Land" (*al-ard al-muqaddasa*), where he is shown different individuals in different locations. At each stage of his dream trip, the Prophet asks his attendants about the meaning of these images. Each time he is told to proceed. Only at the very end do the attendants reveal themselves as being the Archangels Gabriel and Michael. They now explain why sinners have to endure suffering ending only on the Day of Judgement and how true believers are rewarded in Paradise. The *ḥadīth* starts in the conventional manner but develops into a fascinating literary account:

Mūsā ibn Ismā'il⁴⁹ told us: Jarīr ibn Hāzim⁵⁰ told us: Abū Raja⁵¹ told us

47 The fact that in both versions poetical verses constitute the fixed point of the story reminds us of an Arab literary tradition common already in the *jāhiliyyah*, according to which historical, genealogical and lexicographic texts are grouped around verses, which they may initially have explained or defined.

48 *Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī (XII: *K. al-janā'iz*), no. 1386. - This and the other *ḥadīths* investigated here (see 3.3.3.) are elaborations of the story of the Prophet's Night Journey and the Ascent to Heaven (*isrā'* and *mi'rāj*), which is known, above all, through the versions given in certain biographical and historiographical works, e.g., in the Biography of the Prophet by Ibn Ishāq-Ibn Hishām; cf. *al-Sīrah al-nabawīyyah li-Ibn Hishām*. Ed. by M. al-SAQĀ, I. AL-ABYĀRI and 'A. SHALABI, vol. I, Cairo 1375/1955, 397-408. Engl. transl. by A. GUILLAUME: *The Life of Mohammad*. Lahore 1996¹¹, 181-187.

49 Abū Salama Mūsā ibn Ismā'il al-Tabūdhakī al-Minqarī, informer of al-Bukhārī (Basra, d. 223/838).

50 Abū l-Naḍr Jarīr ibn Hāzim ibn Zayd al-Azdī al-ʿAtakī (Basra, d. 170/786-7).

on the authority of Samurah ibn Jundab⁵² (R), he said:

Whenever the Prophet finished the (morning) prayer, he would look at us and ask »Which of you had a dream last night?«

He (i.e., Samurah) said [also that] *if anyone had seen a dream he narrated it, and the Prophet [finally] said »What Allāh wishes« [which indicated a good omen].*

So, one day, he asked us »Did any of you have a dream?«. We replied 'No'. [But] the Prophet said:

»I have seen [in dream] last night two men who came to me. They took hold of my hand, and took me to the Sacred Land.

[There, I saw] a man sitting and [another] man standing« – according to Mūsā [ibn Ismā'īl], some of the companions of the Prophet said [that the Prophet added describing this other man as]: – »[standing] with an iron hook in his hand, pushing it deep into one side of the mouth [of the seated man] till it reaches the back of his throat. Then [tearing off one side of his mouth] he did the same with the other side. In the meantime the first side of his mouth became normal again. So he repeated the same operation.

I asked 'What is this?', [but] they ordered me to proceed.

So we went on till we passed a man lying flat on his back, and another man standing at his head carrying a stone [which fills the hand (*fih*)] or a [small lump of] rock, crushing the head of the man laying down with it. When he struck him, the stone rolled away. So the man went to pick it up [again]. But whenever he returned to him (i.e., the lying man), the crushed head had returned to its normal state. So the man came back and struck him [again and again].

I asked 'Who is this?', [but] they ordered me to proceed.

So we proceeded [till we reached] a hole like an oven with a narrow top and wide bottom. Fire was kindling underneath. So, whenever the flames went up, the people were lifted up to such an

51 See fn. 26.

52 Abū Sa'īd Samurah ibn Jundab al-Fazārī, well-known companion of the Prophet (Basra, d. 58/678).

extent that they were about to get out [of the hole]. And whenever the fire died down, the people went down into it. There were men and women, all of them naked.

I asked 'Who is this?', [but] they ordered me to proceed.

I. D.

So we proceeded till we reached a river of blood. A man was standing in the middle of it;« – *Yazīd [ibn Hārūn]*⁵³ and *Wahb ibn Jarīr [ibn Hāzīm]*⁵⁴ said on the authority of *Jarīr ibn Hāzīm*. – »and [another] was standing at its bank with stones in front of him. The man in the river came closer. [But] when he wanted to come out, the other man threw a stone in his mouth, thus causing him to retreat to his former position. Whenever he set forth to come out, the other would throw a stone in his mouth [again], and he would retreat to his former position.

I asked 'What is this?', [but] they ordered me to proceed.

II.

So we proceeded till we got to a lush green garden with a huge tree. An old man and some children were sitting near its trunk. [Suddenly I saw] another man near the tree, kindling up fire in front of him.

II. A.

Then my companions made me climb up the tree and enter a house better than I have ever seen. Old men, young men, women and children were in it.

II. B.

Then my companions took me out [of this house], made me climb up [further] the tree and enter another house better and superior [to the first one] hosting old and young people.

III.

solution

I said to them (i.e., my companions) 'You have made me ramble all the night. So report to me about what I have seen!' They said "Yes" [and explained to me all that as follows]:

"As for the one whose cheek you saw being torn away, he is a liar who used to tell lies. So people would report on his authority [lies] till his lies were spread all over the world. And [that's why] he will be punished as you have seen till the Day of Resurrection.

The one whose head you saw being crushed, he is a man whom

53 Abū Khālid Yazīd ibn Hārūn al-Sulamī, informant of al-Bukhārī (Wāsiṭ, d. 206/821-2).

54 Abū l-'Abbās Wahb ibn Jarīr ibn Hāzīm al-Azdi, informant of al-Bukhārī (Basra, d. 206/821-1).

God taught the Qur'ān, but he used to sleep, failing [to recite] it at night (*fā-nāma 'anhū*), and who did not use to act according to it[s orders] by day. So he will be punished till the Day of Resurrection.

The ones you saw in the hole [like an oven], they are adulterers.

The ones you saw in the river of blood, [they are those who] dealt in usury (*ribā*).

The old man who was sitting at the base of the tree is Abraham, and the little children around him are the offspring of the people.

The one who was kindling the fire is Mālik, the gate-keeper of the fire of Hell.

The first house which you have entered is the house of common believers, and the second house is of the martyrs.

I am Gabriel and this is Michael.

[Now] raise your head!"

I raised my head and saw a thing like a cloud over me. They said: "That is your place". I said: 'Let me enter my place.' They said: "You still have life which you have not yet completed. When you complete (that remaining portion of your life), then you will enter your place"«.

3.3.1. This artificially well-elaborated account is of an almost classical fictional character. The events are set in a dream. The main characters are dream figures, deceased persons and angels. The overall structure of the text, i.e., different stages of a journey, the exciting manner of relating events, the stereotypes of question and answer as well as the final explanation and solution of the mysterious images clearly remind one of common narrative patterns (for example, in fairy-tales).

3.3.2. The enormous allegorical and highly didactic potential for religious and ethical education contribute to the value of the text. Without running the risk of over-interpreting the *ḥadīth*, one should tentatively draw attention to the following lessons. They comprise:

a) *Imparting enlightening knowledge of the Next World*

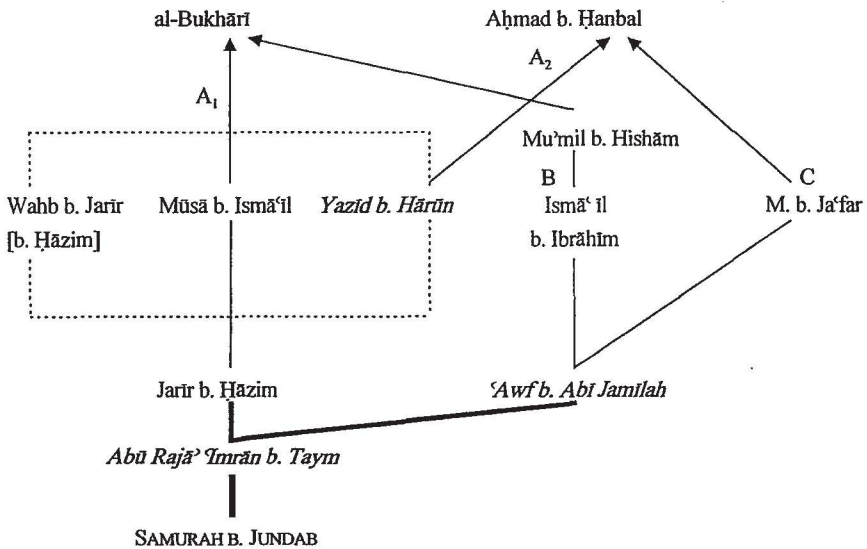
- strengthening of human belief through detailed knowledge of the Next World, its set-up in Paradise and Hell or way of reward, different for ordinary believers and martyrs

- ranking of angels and Prophets in the Next World
- b) *General principles of Islamic belief and its rites*
 - the reciting of the Qur’ān at night and complying with the rules set down in the Qur’ān in daily life
 - the conversion of the Imām to believers
 - the sanctioning of dream and the general admissibility of dream explanation as well as, according to the Prophet’s practice after prayer, its implementation as a model
 - the great importance of martyrdom
 - the life of a human being is defined by Divine predestination and has to be completed according to it
- c) *Knowledge of the Prophets*
 - the continuity of the Prophets, the close relationship of the Arab Prophet to his predecessors and their gradual ranking, or, in other words: the highest position of Muḥammad as the Prophets’ seal
 - the preferential position of Abraham, as the founder and reformer of the monotheist Ka’bah being the first Muslim.
- d) *Ethics*
 - marking the lie as a great sin; clarification of the power of lie, which, once pronounced, lasts until the end of the world
 - extramarital intercourse is sin, which will be punished in the Next World through torments of Hell
 - usury is a great sin
 - children are free from sin, and deceased children have a favourable fate, because they go straight to Paradise
- e) *Pedagogics*
 - learning and teaching by 'question and answer' is according to the Prophet’s practice a proper method of Islamic education.

3.3.3. Muslim Ḥadīth criticism classifies the text as "noble tradition, which can be traced back to the Prophet" (*ḥadīth sharīf, marfū‘ li-l-nabi*). The guarantors in the *isnād* are all regarded as reliable transmitters; the well-known Prophet’s companion Samurah ibn Jundab appears to be the ‘original guarantor’ of the text. So, the quotation of this dream account (with its clearly fictitious

nature) was for al-Bukhārī no obstacle to including it in his collection of "*The Sound Traditions*".⁵⁵ Al-Bukhārī quotes the story in two versions: firstly, the version translated here, quoted in *The Book on Demise and Funeral*, no. 1386 (marked as → A₁ in our schematic description); secondly, in *The Book on the Explanation of Dreams*, no. 7047 (→ B), where, in a lengthy and more detailed version, for example, a city built of gold and silver bricks is described. Another two versions are quoted by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. In the *Musnad al-Baṣriyyīn*, no. 19590, he quotes the story once in an even more comprehensive version (→ C), and another time in a version (no. 19602; → A₂), which is, in terms of size and text stock, almost identical with the first version given by al-Bukhārī (A₁).

A schematic description of the *isnāds* labelling these *ḥadīths* visualises the divergent paths of their transmission. It becomes obvious that all four texts can be traced back to one »basic story«: $matn A_1 \cong A_2 \leftrightarrow B \neq C$



55 See also HERM.[ANN] REINFRIED: *Bräuche bei Zauber und Wunder nach Buchari. Beitrag zur altarabischen Religion*. Karlsruhe (Badenia) 1915. For the general background and the authority of dream in Classical Islam, see LEAH KINBERG: The standardisation of Qur'an readings. The testimonial value of dreams. In: *Proceedings of the Colloquium on Arabic Grammar. Budapest Studies in Arabic* 3-4. Ed. KINGA DÉVÉNYI and TAMÁS IVÁNYI. Budapest 1992, 223-238.

This story was told first by Samurah b. Jundab; he appears to be the eye-witness of the event recounted and, speaking in terms of technical transmission, he is the first or original guarantor common to all *isnāds*. Starting with the second generation of transmitters, this basic story/ *ḥadīth* became elaborated and diversified through narration and transmission. Within this process the basic story became elaborated and shaped step by step into its four most recent textual manifestations. The latter were included in standard collections and have been preserved as such. As we will see later on, these most recent manifestations of text differ slightly but not essentially from each other. In addition, one will also conceive that certain narrators at certain levels of transmission (in technical terms: the 'common links' and 'partially common links'), contributed quite to the diversification and narrative elaboration of the basic story. According to our scheme, this lively shaping of text can be expected to a larger extent, with regard to the older transmitters and, to a lesser extent, with respect to the younger ones.

Let us have a closer look at these four texts: Version B and C differ from one another concerning length and the stock of words. Both are different in relation with A₁ and A₂. It is remarkable that in B the narrator himself has something to explain on three occasions ("I think the Prophet said"⁵⁶). At the end he even adds without any further indication: "Then some Muslims asked: 'Oh, Apostle, what about the children of the pagans...?' ", what the Prophet readily answered. If such variants of text and additions were to be ascribed only to Samurah, the Prophet's companion, original reporter and witness of the happening, the question would have to be raised as to why he related his report about clearly one and the same event in four deviating variants. But it is difficult to find a plausible explanation for this. However, the information given by the *isnāds* offers a better understanding of this problem. Abū Rajā' figures as the oldest 'common link', from whom the paths ramify. This gives reason to assume that Samurah recounted the scenario of Muḥammad's speech (→ see C within the narrative complex) to Abū Rajā' in the shape of one relatively uniform »basic text«. First Abū Rajā' circulated the story in slightly different versions (→ process of narrating, A).⁵⁷ These textual differences were elaborated and further moulded

56 *wa-aḥsibu annahū* [i.e., *al-rastū*] *qāla*, or: *ḥasibtu annahū kāna yaqūlu*.

57 This view is supported by the fact that Abū Rajā' generally played a remarkably active role in Ḥadīth transmission. It can be verified by both information from his biographers and a statistical check-up of the *-kutub al-tis'ah*. According to the latter, Abū Rajā' (see fn. 26) appears 67 times

by transmitters-narrators of all later generations, as far as one can see. On doing so, every transmitter-narrator may have varied the text slightly but not fundamentally. The consequences of such minor changes with regard to the apparent textual shape of the story also may have been gradually different at the levels of aural transmission-narration. This process of transmission by slightly elaborating and moulding the story, i.e., by 'fictional narration', first came to an end, when the four versions of this story, (i.e., their most recent textual manifestations) were included in al-Bukhārī's and Ibn Ḥanbal's written compilations.

3.3.4. The additional information on the process of transmission by narration, which was unexpectedly placed by the medieval compiler directly in the account, also makes it obvious that transformation and elaboration of a *ḥadīth* does not necessarily depend on different ways of transmission; it can be transformed instead even on only one path of transmission, especially when such a considerable internal potential of fictionality can be observed as it is the case in Muḥammad's Dream Journey: So, at the beginning of the dream scene "The Man in the River of Blood" (i.e., in the very middle of the plot of text A₁), al-Bukhārī interrupts his 'quotation-recounting' of Muḥammad's account by introducing two new informants, whose names he had not mentioned before in the *isnād*. On their authority he adds details and expressions that differ from the previous passage. Al-Bukhārī himself contributes, thus, to the textual shaping of the *ḥadīth* into the form which is apparent now in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection. But this also means that even on the level of transmission-narration directly prior to al-Bukhārī, text A₁ was exposed to minor diversification with regard to language and content, the reason for which is, technically speaking, the 'aural transmission', or, applying the findings of modern narratology, the 'transmission of text realised by fictional narration'.⁵⁸ First such scanty splinters of information concerning the course of transmission, recorded by the *muḥaddith*-compiler al-

as guarantor. He figures as a teacher of 17 pupils. He himself transmits from 3 older guarantors (i.e., 28 times on the authority of 'Imrān ibn Ḥuṣayn; 25 times on the companion of the Prophet, 'Abdallāh ibn 'Abbās ibn 'Abdalmuṭṭalib; and 15 times on Samurah ibn Jundab). Several times Abū Rajā' figures as the earliest authority of a 'report', even in cases when events from pre-Islamic time are recounted (e.g., introduced by "*kunnā fi l-jāhiliyyah ...*", cf. *Sunan al-Dārimī, al-Muqaddimah*, no. 4).

58 I.e., by the informants Wahb ibn Jarir and Yazid ibn Hārūn to al-Bukhārī.

Bukhārī with meticulous precision,⁵⁹ make visible what is otherwise almost impossible to verify: a *ḥadīth* text even in the course of only one path of transmission was not always a fixed and unified whole. On the contrary, it was made up of narrative constituents, sequences and particles that, in fact, could vary within the frame of a basic text, the latter remaining in itself complex and, according to the criteria applied by the Muslim Science of Tradition, 'authentic'.

4. *The establishment of fictional narrative as a category of Ḥadīth*

In the face of changing philosophical premises, literary-theoretical research has freed itself from the charge of mendacity raised since Plato against fictional literature. Today it acknowledges the possibility of a high degree of truth therein. Fictional narration is proclaimed to be a mode of portrayal predominantly shaped by taking over *certain* elements into a text, i.e., by realising a 'selection' of *what* is being narrated and *how*.⁶⁰ The application of narratological findings like this to the (canonical) Ḥadīth and the understanding of the *ḥadīth* as text (or, in other words, as literary entities within a process of transmission realised by narration), brings a number of astonishing internal characteristics of these texts to light. These characteristics can, to a certain extent, be generalised with regard to the wide range of *ḥadīths* of a comparable nature (i.e., longer texts with a non-juridical but thematically broad spectrum of content; see 2.1., b and b₁). They may be established as conventions of this part of the Ḥadīth literature.

4.1. All our *ḥadīth* examples, which differ in set-up, structure and content, are to be classified, firstly, *not* as texts that merely record facts, i.e., *not* as reports or documentaries. With regard to their general mode of portrayal, they,

59 Concerning some of al-Bukhārī's methodological working rules extracted by later medieval scholars, such as Abū Bakr al-Ḥāzīmī (d. 584/118) and Abū l-Faḍl al-Maqdisī (507/1113), and recent investigation in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, see SUHAIB HASAN ABDUL-GHAFFAR: *Criticism of Hadīth among Muslims with reference to Sunan ibn Māja*. London (Ta Ha Publishers) 1404/1983, 113-118.

60 Selection, as the act of imagination, includes omissions, additions and emphasis. Even if this selection as a form of the author's or narrator's intention is not necessarily formulated *expressis verbis*, it is always latent in fictional texts. Concerning the "three features of narrative in its ordinary 'literary' embodiment" and the selection which is made by a narrator / story-teller of all events and characters, see CARR (fn. 15) 57-65.

unequivocally, are not reports but narratives. Secondly, according to the structure of text they are narratives of events, the latter being arranged in their time sequence. In addition, various so-called fictional elements of text⁶¹ can be detected. These elements make up the selection by the first or original *muḥaddithūn* (Imrān, 'Ā'ishah, or Samurah) and, to a more limited extent, by later *muḥaddithūn*, of what is being narrated and how. By the technique of selection the given *muḥaddith* realises the act of fictionalisation, i.e., he crosses the boundary from the 'real' to the 'imaginary'.⁶² Thus, the ground is invented, consciously or not, to encourage an image or even to create a new one. A situation is prepared in which both the *muḥaddith* and the listener or recipient (the latter by his individually shaped assimilation of the text) have a good look at such an image.

The first or original *muḥaddith*-narrator is always obvious in such a *ḥadīth*, i.e., he is either directly present or, at least, indirectly implied in narrating the events related.⁶³ Sometimes he/she is even part of the plot and hence narrates the story from an internal position. All this means, that he/she may have given the basic story of the *ḥadīth* its (as it were so: first or original) shape. This evaluation of fictional narration in (non-judicial) Ḥadīth differs from findings considering the established historical narrative traditions (*akhbār*); there, firstly, "the narrator is absent from narration and does not serve as a focus for the reader's perception",⁶⁴ and, secondly, the text tends "towards a maximum of information and a minimum of informer"⁶⁵ (→ factual narration). However, this observation reveals even another aspect of the nature of Ḥadīth which seems to be inherent already in the terminology of the Muslim Science of Tradition, although it is perceived differently there. Thus, medieval scholars distinguished between *ḥadīth* (which means "narrative" or "talk") and *khbar* (which means "news" or

61 Such as the lexical meaning of words (i.e., vocabulary intentionally used or unconsciously altered); the encapsulation of the socio-cultural world surrounding the text into the plot; more or less concise schemes by which figures and their actions are organised, etc.

62 *Vom Realen zum Imaginären*, cf. ISER (fn. 3) 25-27.

63 Cf. also BEAUMONT (fn. 21) 7.

64 LEDER (fn. 21) 307.

65 BEAUMONT (fn. 21) 8.

"information"; and this clearly implies the claim to provide facts in a neutral mode of statement).⁶⁶

4.2. All our *ḥadīths* have a story. This story is made up of diverse narrative constituents and sequences, which, in their turn, are variable to a limited extent. Generally speaking, characteristics such as a) story, b) narrative constituents and c) the combination of fictional text elements are essential features of the 'tellability' of a *ḥadīth*. First this tellability⁶⁷ leads to the circumstance that the events or happenings related can be *narrated* to an audience and may, on different occasions, be individually received by it. Tellability implies the 'principle of diversification'. Similar, for example, to myths and legends of Antiquity or fairy-tales, it promotes the emergence of different versions of one and the same story or of one 'basic *ḥadīth* text' – in other words: it is its challenge. Precisely this can be noted in connection with the story of *The Red Leather Scarf*. As the two available versions of the *ḥadīth* show, the events were related even in a mirror image-like sequence of main constituents and with linguistic nuances. However, content, message and even wording in both texts are the same. Also Muḥammad's *Dream Journey* is (apart from a few contentual details, and being aware of the different paths of transmission over four or five generations) almost identically related in all its four versions.

4.3. Considering the technical aspect of transmission of such a *ḥadīth*, the handing down of a longer account by an individual first or oldest *muḥaddīth* (narrator) to a given transmitter (narratee) and so on, appears to be a procedure, recurring at each level of aural transmission. Thus, the narrating act of an individual *ḥadīth* recurs at every chronologically definable stage of transmission. A new 'stage' of the given narrative act starts whenever the person to whom the text was narrated (narratee) himself transmits/narrates the *ḥadīth* to one or several more recent recipients. Speaking in terms of *isnād* research, this means the former recipient/narratee himself becomes a guarantor of a (younger) transmitter.⁶⁸

66 Art. Ḥadīth. In: *Et*² III, 23-28.

67 DANNENBERG (fn. 11) 65 passim with special reference to MARIE-LAURE RYAN: *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence and Narrative Theory*. Bloomington, Indianapolis (Indiana UP) 1991.

68 Cf. SEBASTIAN GÜNTHER, Source Criticism and Isnād Analysis in Classical Arabic Literature. In: *History and Historiography in Early Islamic Times*. [= *Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam IX*.]. Ed. LAWRENCE I. CONRAD. Princeton (Darwin Press), forthcoming, 1-36.

4.4. During each generation, there is, objectively speaking, a vivid potential of textual modifications of the *ḥadīth*. Narrative constituents and sequences of text may vary quantitatively speaking (regarding their grammatical and lexical shape) or even change (regarding their arrangement in the actual plot). But categories such as modification and diversification do not affect the 'basic story' as long as conscious falsification can be ruled out. The *ḥadīth* continues to be basically unchanged. Its content and message remain the same. It is the interaction of 'narration' and 'fictionalisation', which makes it possible for a transmitter-narrator to give the *ḥadīth*, consciously or not, its actual textual shape at each stage of transmission. Consequently, this textual shape may differ slightly from the one at the previous stage. But as this transformation is always restricted to minor changes of the 'external' shape of the text, it does not affect the authenticity or the authentic kernel of *ḥadīth*. The formal transformation ultimately comes to an end, when the *ḥadīth* becomes incorporated in a standard collection, hence fixed in a written form and sometimes canonised. As long as the *isnād* had no visible flaws, the soundness or authenticity of such a *ḥadīth* was not a question either for al-Bukhārī⁶⁹ or other critical Ḥadīth scholars. Although different criteria were applied to the results formulated, recent *isnād* research has proven that this evaluation is justified, to a much larger extent, than exemplified here.⁷⁰ Taking into account the criteria of narratology, one should therefore

69 Looking at al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, the narratological attempt to trace back modifications in narratives concerning sequences and pieces of information is confirmed by linguistics. The analysis of the Prophet's sayings in reported speech, quoted on the authority of 'Ā'ishah, ascertained that: a) all the texts appear to "have the syntax of Classical Arabic, normed by School Grammar" and b) that typical characteristics of Early-Classical Arabic are not provable. As a result this allows us to conclude that the textual constitution of the respective *ḥadīths* in the form available to us was made only after 'linguistic cleansing' by scholars in the classical period of Classical Arabic (i.e., second half of the eighth century, ninth and tenth centuries). See BRIGITTE REICHEL-BAUMGARTNER: *Parameter des Idiolektivs des Propheten Muḥammad auf der Grundlage des Ṣaḥīḥ von al-Bukhārī*. (Diss.) Wien 1982, 109-111; also WOLFDIETRICH FISCHER: *Grundriß der Arabischen Philologie I*: Sprachwissenschaft, Wiesbaden 1982, 43-45.

70 See especially the important study by GREGOR SCHOELER: *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds*. Berlin, New York (Walter de Gruyter) 1996 (esp. 5, 163-166); here, he diachronically investigates two particular Medinian traditions, their ways, stages and shapes of appearance on the way of transmission from the (actual or allegedly actual) original 'reporter' to the medieval compilers who incorporated the texts into their books. The transformation of *ḥadīths* through 'authorial selection' and, as we

designate, firstly, the transmission of fictional narratives within the framework of Ḥadīth as 'a course of transmission by fictional narration', and, secondly, the respective *ḥadīths* as narrative discourses. "This recounting [...] of one or several real or fictitious events communicated by one, two or several [...] narrators [or transmitters] constitutes the [fictional] narrative text",⁷¹ i.e., in our case, the actual *ḥadīth*.

4.5. But one should also draw attention to the following point: the mode of portrayal, which has been classified by the theory of literature with the modern term 'fictional narration', seems to have not only been a known but a largely applied practice among medieval Ḥadīth scholars. Accordingly they clearly distinguished between *al-riwāyah bi-l-lafẓ* (the transmission, authentic in terms of wording) and *al-riwāyah bi-l-ma'nā* (the transmission authentic in terms of meaning), or a combination of both.⁷² Obviously they were quite aware of the circumstance that a narrator may forget names of characters, places or exact dates, that he replaces one name with another, or uses synonyms for particular expressions. All this is evident in canonical Ḥadīth.⁷³ But it seems to have been

would say, by fictionalising the events narrated, becomes excitingly obvious in this study. See also HARALD MOTZKI who argues in favour of not only considering the *isnāds* of given *ḥadīths* but investigating complementarily the relevant texts within the framework of their chronologically defined *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, i.e., the historically determined 'process of transmission'. Cf. HARALD MOTZKI: *Quo vadis Ḥadīth-Forschung? Eine kritische Untersuchung von G.H.A. Juynboll: „Nāfi‘ the mawlā of ‘Umar, and his position in Muslim Ḥadīth Literature“*, 2 parts. In: *Der Islam* (Hamburg) 73 (1996), 40-80 and 193-231, esp. 228.

71 This finding by common theory of literature exactly describes also major aspects of transmission in Ḥadīth; cf. SEYMOUR CHATMAN: *Story and Discourse, Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. London (Ithaca) 1978, 26.

72 We can verify the 'transmission authentic in terms of meaning' by plenty of information given in the *-kutub al-tis'āh*. There are expressions such as *wa-alfāzuhum mutaḥāribah* (ca. 16 times in *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim (fn. 33), e.g., no. 1873) or *wa-taqārabā fi-l-lafẓ* (ca. 20 times in *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim, e.g., no. 904); *ḥaddathānā Ḥārūn ibn Ma'rūf wa-Muḥammad ibn ‘Abbād, wa-taqārabā fi lafẓ al-ḥadīth wa-l-siyāq li-Ḥārūn* and the like (e.g., *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim, no. 3014); *al-ma'nā waḥid, kulluhum ‘an ...* (e.g., *Sunan* Abi Dāwūd (fn. 23), no. 4282); *wa-l-lafẓ qarīb ‘an alfāzihim* (e.g., *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim, no. 769); *al-ma'nā waḥid wa-l-ikhbār fi ḥadīth ...* and the like (e.g., Abi Dāwūd, no. 4708); al-Nasā'ī in his *Sunan* entitles 17 times whole passages with *ikhtilāf alfāz al-naqīlin li-khabar ...*; expressions such as *al-ma'nā waḥid qālū* are to be found ca. 50 times in *Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan* Abi Dāwūd and *Musnad* Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal).

73 In our first example Abū Rajā' was still able to name some of the acting people, but 'Awf had

of secondary importance in the first three or four centuries of Islam as long as the basic message, inherent in *ḥadīth*, remained unchanged. During that time (i.e., under circumstances of an orally dominated system of transmission, before its standardisation, and before the creation of written standard Ḥadīth compendia in the 9th and 10th centuries A.D.) precisely this scholarly attitude may have greatly influenced the establishment of a practicable platform of handing down *ḥadīths* from one generation to the next and its evaluation. In this respect, some judgements, elaborated by Western research on Ḥadīth, reflecting upon the existence of different *ḥadīth* 'versions', may change from calling it 'falsification' to determining it as 'fictional narration'. In medieval times trustworthy transmitters were to ensure that falsification should not happen. Therefore it may be that the Science of Tradition put such an emphasis on the biographies and the general trustworthiness of transmitters while almost neglecting the observation of the *ḥadīth* texts themselves.⁷⁴

4.6. In addition to this, one can note that the scanty and – concerning the plot – one-way mode of narration as well as the extensive usage of reported speech are characteristics of fictional narratives in the Ḥadīth. The sparingly developed images of the characters seem to be their exposition. Individual cases, parts of daily life and situations are only related in fragments. Hardly any attempts are made to individualise the characters. Instead features of characters are directly qualified by putting emphasis on their behaviour and by quoting their statements in the form of reported speech or in dialogues. Emotions and motives are only mentioned whenever they are necessary for the plot or, not least, for the 'message' of the *ḥadīth*.⁷⁵ These peculiarities of text and the fact that the fictional

forgotten the names that Abū Rajā' had told him.

74 It may also be interesting to consider to what extent both the narrative elements in the Qurʾān and fictional narration within the framework of Ḥadīth may have influenced other narrative genres of Medieval Arabic literature. Concerning the latter, see SABRI HAFEZ: *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse. A Study in the Sociology of Modern Arabic Literature*. London (Saqi Books) 1993¹, p. 269, fn. 4.

75 This way of narration resembles the *ayyām al-ʿarab* literature or, to a certain extent, the Jewish *Aggadah*. However, in both cases the contrast between 'factual' (= historical) and 'fictional' narration also remains somewhat unclear. For "external similarities" and "similarities between the subject matters" of Ḥadīth and Aggadah, and for the "Semitic heritage and the Semitic spirit which was common to both nations", see LEVI JACOBBER: *The Traditions of al-Bukhārī and their Aggadic Parallels*. (Diss.) Toronto 1935, xviii-xix, xxiii-xxiv. Concerning degree and function of

narratives investigated here show a high degree of 'similarity' (Germ.: *Gleichnischarakter*) constitute their allegorical and symbolic mannerism. All these *ḥadīths* have a message to the recipient, which exceeds the relationship of reality experienced by Muslims in early Islamic times. They present the recipient with a different world, which competes with reality. By means of arranging – and fictionalising – the elements of the world of experience of a former 'ideal' generation (and, accordingly, of the glory of the 'ideal' world in early Islam), the recipient is left to himself to draw his conclusions and lessons from the happenings recounted. The allegory inherent in these *ḥadīths* establishes, in fact, an exemplary connection between one sphere of existence: (1. the 'story time' of the *ḥadīth*) and others (2. the 'story-telling times' as shown by *isnād*, and 3. the 'time of reception' of the story after the canonisation of the *ḥadīth*).⁷⁶

4.7. But, at any time, this imaginary disposition of the *ḥadīths*, expressed in simple words and with a relatively plain plot, grips the reader or listener. It encourages people to use their own imagination and it makes the exemplary nature of past events emerge in their hearts. A believer may often not only perceive the Prophet or his closest companions speaking and acting in these texts, but the realisation of the Divine plan. He may conceive God himself.⁷⁷ It is particularly this imaginary disposition which has constituted the great educational potential of the *Ḥadīth* and its charismatic character until today.

4.8. These fictional narratives in *Ḥadīth* thematise a concrete human encounter with its causes and consequences. They confront the recipient with the actions or the individual fates in a mostly decisive situation or stage of life. This is obvious in our first but especially in version B of our second example: the slave girl's seemingly hopeless situation is clarified with the help of God. Consequently, she finally embraces Islam. The entire plot is tersely described concerning this particular incident.⁷⁸

allegory in the Aggadah, see EDMUND STEIN: *Die allegorische Exegese des Philo aus Alexandria*. Gießen (A. Töpelmann Verlag) 1929, esp. 15-18.

76 BERTHOFF (fn. 3) 269; BEAUMONT (fn. 21) 22; JAHN (fn. 3) 31.

77 See ALEXANDER DEMANDT: *Metaphern für Geschichte. Sprachbilder und Gleichnisse im historisch-politischen Denken*. München (Beck) 1979, esp. 75.

78 LÄMMERT (fn. 3) 36-37.

These *ḥadīths* correspond, to a considerable degree, to allegorical texts known from other cultures and religions.⁷⁹ One can call them 'example *ḥadīths*'. But the exemplary character of the incident (or of the miraculous story) related in these *ḥadīths*, is asserted first by the process of its transmission by narration. First this transmission by narration can reflect the narrator's and the recipient's belief in the incident narrated. The recipient of an example *ḥadīth* responds to the 'narration' of the incident or miracle, but *not* to the incident or miracle itself. Hence, here as in other narrative literatures,⁸⁰ the motive of narrating appears to have become an integral part of the *ḥadīth*. As a result, at every definable stage the narrative discourse of the *ḥadīth* may also reflect, to some extent, the listener's/reader's mental identification with the message of the given text.⁸¹

These findings in addition to the detection of the fictional nature of parts of the Ḥadīth literature, by no means, restrict their importance as a source only to literary, intellectual, sociological or other aspects of research with a rather broad cultural background. On the contrary, if the focus of such investigations was broader and both the narrative character and the peculiarities of its, in part, fictional nature were reflected, research on Ḥadīth could be very significant for working out historical truth contained in Ḥadīth texts. It can make not only an enjoyable or instructive 'story' conceivable but 'history' itself.⁸²

79 For example, to the more thoroughly investigated Parables of Jesus. To work out expected parallels is reserved, however, to thorough hermeneutic research. See also WOLFGANG HARNISCH: *Die neutestamentliche Gleichnisforschung im Horizont von Hermeneutik und Literaturwissenschaft*. Darmstadt (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft) 1982, esp. p. 9, 17 and 20-58.

80 K.V. ČISTOV: Das Problem der Kategorie mündlicher Volksprosa nicht-märchenhaften Charakters. In: *Fabula* (Berlin) 9 (1967) 27-40, esp. 34.

81 G. THEIBEN: *Urchristliche Wundergeschichten. Ein Beitrag zur formgeschichtlichen Erforschung der synoptischen Evangelien*. [= *Studien zum Neuen Testament* 8] Gütersloh 1974, 168. WOLFGANG HARNISCH: *Die Gleichniserzählungen Jesu. Eine hermeneutische Einführung*. 2., durchgesehene Auflage. Göttingen (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) 1990, esp. 174-175.

82 Concerning individuality, temporality and historicity in the context of narrative structure of text, see WALTER SCHIFFELS: *Geschichte(n) Erzählen. Über Geschichte, Funktionen und Formen historischen Erzählens*. [= *Theorie - Kritik - Geschichte* VII, ed. HELMUT KREUZER] Kronberg/Ts. (Scriptor Verlag) 1975, esp. the chapter on 'history in stories', 67 pp.; also CARR (fn. 15), 100-121; and esp. the chapter on "narrativ-fiktionale Geschichtsdarstellung vs. Historiographie". In: NÜNNING (fn. 6) 153-205.

Nevertheless, apart from historical facts or juridical issues possibly preserved or dealt with in these texts, it is their three-dimensional constitution – i.e., a) transmission by narration, b) narration by fictionalisation and c) fictionalisation provoking imagination –, which enables us to understand this kind of classical Arabic text as 'fine' literature, and to investigate or to enjoy it as such. In conclusion, another important aspect of the Ḥadīth has been revealed, i.e., its central significance in the formulation and transmission of religious, ethical or educational 'messages' of early Islam to the Muslim believers, and, thus, to human civilisation in general.