When Did Ibn Ishāq Compose His *maghāzī*?

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It is widely assumed that Ibn Ishāq (d. c. 151/768) wrote Muḥammad's biography at the behest of the second Abbasid caliph Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr (r. 136–158/754–75).

Wim Raven wrote:

Pivotal in the biographical literature is Muḥammad b. Ishāq [...]. After having left his native Medina for Iraq, he was asked by the caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136–158/754–75) to write an all-encompassing history [...]. Ibn Ishāq did not merely collect materials; he composed a structured work, arranged sometimes chronologically and sometimes by subject matter.¹

Gregor Schoeler wrote:

It was only at al-Manṣūr's behest that he recorded his collection in his exhaustive syngrammatic historical work, the *Kitāb al-kabīr* (or *Kitāb as-sīrah* or *Kitāb al-maghāzī* in the broader sense). We cannot exclude the (never explicitly documented) possibility that Ibn Ishāq had already redacted parts of his collections [...] as a coherent narration and transmitted the material in this form before the intervention of the caliph. But we can establish on the basis of our sources that, before the redaction for the court, the *publication* of his material was restricted to his personal lectures, whereas he now, for the first time, produced a proper book for use by lay people (albeit only a small court circle).²

- 1 Wim Raven, "Biography of the Prophet," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam THREE*, accessed 1 October 2017, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_23716 (According to Raven, "Ibn Hishām's selections" were the first *sīra* text to be transmitted in a fixed form). See also Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early 'Abbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 157: "Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767) had written his *Sīra* of the Prophet under the patronage of al-Manṣūr."
- 2 Gregor Schoeler, *The Biography of Muḥammad: Nature and Authenticity* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), 29.

Recently Sean Anthony wrote:

Although he hailed from Medina, Ibn Ishāq compiled and transmitted his works, in particular his works on the Prophet's biography, exclusively in Iraq (Hira, Baghdād), the Jazīra (Harrān), and Rayy, due to, on the one hand, the networks of patronage he enjoyed there from the 'Abbāsids and, on the other, the controversies surrounding him in his native Medina.³

A century ago Josef Horovitz took a close look at the evidence:

That Ibn Ishāq wrote his *Kitāb al-maghāzī* for the caliph [...] cannot anyhow mean that he composed it on a commission from the caliph. The list of authorities cited by him, of itself, shows that he had composed his material principally on the basis of the traditions collected by him in Medina, as well as on the basis of those that he had collected in Egypt; on the other hand, he nowhere names the authorities of Iraq. *The work was obviously completed when Ibn Ishāq left the city of his fathers* [italics added—M.L.] and we know also a Medinan who passes on the work of Ibn Ishāq: Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd (d. 184[/800]). It may still, none the less, be supposed that Ibn Ishāq undertook some supplementary alterations in his work for love of the caliph, or that he suppressed passages that he feared might be displeasing to the caliph.⁴

1 Ibn Sa'd's Account of the Course of Ibn Ishāq's Life

Because there is a gap at this point in the Leiden edition of Ibn Sa'd's (d. 230/845) famous biographical dictionary, Horovitz had no access to Ibn Ishāq's fuller entry,⁵ and he could not quote it in support of his argument about the early composition of Muḥammad's biography. (Appendices I & II include the abridged entry which was available to Horovitz, followed by the fuller entry available to us now.)

3 Sean Anthony, "Muḥammad, Menahem, and the Paraclete: New Light on Ibn Ishāq's (d. 150/767) Arabic Version of John 15:23–16:1," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 79 (2016): 264.

4 Josef Horovitz, *The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and Their Authors*, ed. Lawrence I. Conrad (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2002), 79–80.

5 See on this gap Schoeler, *Biography*, 153, n. 118.

Ibn Sa'd was well-placed to obtain reliable information about Ibn Ishāq: first, they belonged to the same social network of *mawālī* associated with the Abbasid court; second, one of Ibn Sa'd's informants was a son of Ibn Ishāq.

Ibn Ishāq's association with the Abbasid court is well known, as is the fact that Ibn Sa'd was a *mawlā* of the Banū Hāshim (for more details see Appendix III). Ibn Sa'd was al-Wāqidī's (d. 207/822) secretary, perhaps in the latter's capacity as qadi in the Abbasid capital Baghdad. Just like Ibn Ishāq, who was born some fifty years earlier, al-Wāqidī left Medina to join the Abbasids. In his entry on Ibn Ishāq, Ibn Sa'd quotes a son of Ibn Ishāq whose name is not mentioned. The son told Ibn Sa'd that his father had died in Baghdad in 150/767 and had been buried in Maqābir al-Khayzurān.⁶ Ibn Sa'd remarked however that according to other learned men (*'ulamā'*), Ibn Ishāq died in 151/768. Ibn Ishāq's son may well have provided Ibn Sa'd with other details about his father.

The passages of the fuller entry in Ibn Sa'd's biographical dictionary that concern us in connection with the composition of the *maghāzī* are the following:

Ibn Ishāq was the first who collected (*jama'a*) and compiled (*allafa*) the *maghāzī* of the Messenger of God [...]. He left Medina early (*qadīman*), and hence none of them [i.e. the Medinans] except Ibrāhīm ibn Sa'd had transmitted from him. Muḥammad ibn Ishāq was with 'Abbās ibn Muḥammad in the Jazīra. Beforehand he had gone (*wa-kāna atā*) to Abū Ja'far in Ḥīra and had written for him (*kataba lahu*) the *maghāzī*. For this reason the people of Kūfa learned ["heard"] from him, and the people of the Jazīra also learned ["heard"] from him when he was with 'Abbās ibn Muḥammad. He also came to Rayy, and [hence] the people of Rayy too learned ["heard"] from him. Consequently, his transmitters from these places are more numerous than the people of Medina who transmitted from him.

The arrangement of Ibn Ishāq's itinerary is somewhat confusing, because the Jazīra appears before Ḥīra, although Ibn Ishāq went first to Ḥīra. The confusion was probably caused by poor editorial work on Ibn Sa'd's part. This is also evident in the inconsistency regarding Ibn Ishāq's Medinan transmitters. On

6 Al-Khayzurān, the mother of Hārūn al-Rashīd and al-Hādī, was buried in the cemetery named after her. It is today in the A'ẓamiyya quarter in east Baghdad; Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā: al-qism al-mutammim li-tābi'ī ahl al-Madīna wa-man ba'dahum*, ed. Ziyād Muḥammad Maṣṣūr (Medina: Maktabat al-'Ulūm wa-l-Ḥikam, 1408/1987), 402, n. 5.

7 I.e. Ibn Ishāq's son was probably an *'ālim* himself, which is hardly surprising given his family background.

the one hand, we are told that Ibn Ishāq left Medina “early,” and hence only one Medinan, namely Ibrāhīm b. Sa’d, transmitted from him. On the other hand, having told us about Ibn Ishāq’s journeys, Ibn Sa’d concludes that consequently his transmitters from the places he visited were more numerous than the Medinans who transmitted from him. In fact there were several Medinan transmitters.⁸ However, Ibrāhīm, who was a wealthy man, possibly owned the only full recension of Ibn Ishāq’s *maghāzī*. One has to bear in mind that the production of a complete copy of a book—especially one that was transmitted piecemeal over many sessions—involved a major investment of time and money.

The course of Ibn Ishāq’s life as outlined by Ibn Sa’d is significant because the entry, for all its weaknesses, is arranged chronologically (as one would expect in a biographical dictionary). First Ibn Sa’d mentions Ibn Ishāq’s collection (of accounts) and his compiling of the *maghāzī*. Then he mentions some of Ibn Ishāq’s sources—all of those listed—‘Āsim b. ‘Umar b. Qatāda (d. ca. 120/738), Yazīd b. Rūmān (d. 130/748), Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm [ibn al-Ḥārith al-Taymī] (d. 120/738) and Fāṭima bt. al-Mundhir b. al-Zubayr (d. unknown)—were Medinans, as has already been noticed by Horovitz. Then comes Ibn Ishāq’s early departure from Medina (*qadīman*). Ibn Sa’d does not mention Ibn Ishāq’s journey to Egypt in 115/733,⁹ following which he returned to Medina. Then there are journeys to Ḥīra (after al-Manṣūr’s accession in 136/754), to ‘Abbās b. Muḥammad (d. 186/802) in the Jazīra (not before 142/759, the year of ‘Abbās’s appointment as governor),¹⁰ to Rayy, and finally death and burial in Baghdad.

Ibn Sa’d’s outline, which places the composition of the *maghāzī* before the departure from Medina, is trustworthy precisely because it is at the background of the entry—it is taken for granted. Ibn Sa’d’s focus is not on the date of composition, but on Ibn Ishāq’s activity as a *muḥaddith* and the opinions of other scholars regarding his reliability.

8 Muṭā‘ al-Ṭarābīshī, *Ruwāt Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Yasār fī l-maghāzī wa-l-sīyar wa-sā‘ir al-marwīyyāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir & Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1414/1994), 67 defines Ibrāhīm as *al-madanī al-ashḥab ibn Ishāq al-madanīyyīna*. He counted more than ten Medinans who transmitted from Ibn Ishāq; al-Ṭarābīshī, *Ruwāt Muḥammad*, 72. Ibn Sa’d’s statement that Ibn Ishāq was the first to write a biography of Muḥammad is problematic but cannot be discussed here.

9 Mizzi, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, ed. Bashshār ‘Awwād Ma‘rūf (Beirut: al-Risāla, 1405/1985–1413/1992), 24:424.

10 Ṭabarī, *Ta‘rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, eds. Michael Jan de Goeje et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1879–1901), 1-3:141. The source is Wāqidi. ‘Abbās remained in office until his dismissal in 155/772; Ṭabarī, *Ta‘rīkh*, 374. In the same year Mūsā ibn Ka‘b was appointed *‘alā ḥarb al-jazīra wa-kharājihā*; Ṭabarī, 375.

2 Ibn Ishāq's "Undoings"

More support for Ibn Ishāq's composition of the *maghāzī* prior to his departure from Medina is gained from a boastful statement attributed to his above mentioned disciple, Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd.¹¹ Ibrāhīm's son, Ya'qūb (d. 208/823), unsuspectingly told Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) about the following saying of his father: "Muḥammad b. Ishāq 'undid' the *maghāzī* three times, and I observed and witnessed all of this" (*naqaḍa Muḥammad ibn Ishāq al-maghāziya thalāth marrāt, kull dhālika ashhaduhu wa-aḥḍuruḥu*).¹² According to Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon*, *naqaḍa* means, *inter alia*, he undid it, unwove it, rendered it uncompact, unsound or unfirm, after having made it compact, sound, or firm;—namely a building/structure/rope/cord/silk/flax/cloth. *Naqaḍa al-binā' min ghayr hadm* means he took to pieces the building without demolishing, or destroying it.

It is worth emphasising that Ibn Ishāq himself, and not one of his disciples, was responsible for the composition of all four versions of the book—the fourth version was the one created when he "undid" the third. One assumes that several months or even years elapsed between one "undoing" and another, and it follows that the book had been composed long before Ibn Ishāq left Medina.

Ibrāhīm did not mean to criticise his venerated teacher—the background of his statement is the competition with other recensions of Ibn Ishāq's book. His recension was the earliest one, and naturally the later the recension, the better it reflected Ibn Ishāq's most up-to-date version. The "undoings" supported Ibrāhīm's claim for the accuracy of his recension: he repeatedly learned Ibn Ishāq's book, while the latter was revising it. In other words, he had several opportunities to correct his recension and weed out its errors. Indeed 'Alī b. al-Madīnī's (d. 239/853) comments that "none of the books transmitted from Ibn Ishāq is more accurate (*aṣaḥḥ*) than the book[s, i.e. recensions] of Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd and Hārūn al-Shāmī (d. unknown)." Regarding the latter's recension 'Alī remarks: "This is so because Ibn Ishāq dictated to Hārūn from his own book."¹³

11 Ṭarābīshī, *Ruwāt*, 66–104 begins with Ibrāhīm his discussion of Ibn Ishāq's transmitters and dedicates to him and to his recension a comprehensive study.

12 Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-ʿIlal wa-maʿrifat al-rijāl riwāyat ibnihi ʿAbdillāh*, ed. Waṣī Allāh ibn Muḥammad ʿAbbās (Riyadh: Dār al-Khānī, 1422/2001), 3:436. A version found in another edition of the same book by the same editor (Bombay: al-Dār al-Salafiyya, 1408/1988), 55 has it that besides "undoing" the *maghāzī*, Ibn Ishāq also changed them: *qāla Ya'qūb: sami'tu abī yaqūlu: sami'tu al-maghāziya minhu thalāth marrāt yanquḍuhā* [printed: *yanquṣuhā*] *wa-yughayyiruhā*.

13 Ṭarābīshī, *Ruwāt*, 232. Hārūn was Ibn Ishāq's *kātib* and disciple; Ṭarābīshī, 231–234.

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal rather cynically used Ibrāhīm's statement out of context in order to cast doubt on Ibn Ishāq's reliability as a *muḥaddith*. Another version of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's verdict has a five-point appraisal of Ibn Ishāq, one of which is his "undoings." Aḥmad starts with a general positive evaluation, immediately followed by four reservations: "His hadith transmission is fine (*huwa ḥasan al-ḥadīth*), but when he combined [in one report hadith he had received] from two men (*jama'a 'an rajulayn*) ..." At this point Aḥmad paused. But his interlocutor insisted, so Aḥmad went on: "He transmitted hadith from al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742) and from another person, ascribing the hadith of one of them to the other." This looks like two different accusations. In any case, Aḥmad rejected the practice of creating Combined Reports, which was common in historiography but was anathema in the realm of legal hadith. The second reservation is the one discussed here: "Ya'qūb [Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd's son] said: 'I heard my father say: I learned ['heard'] from him the *maghāzī* three times, [since] he used to undo and change them.'" Aḥmad continued: "Mālik [b. Anas] (d. 179/796) said with reference to him [Ibn Ishāq]: 'He was a liar' (*dajjāl*)." Aḥmad concluded his appraisal with a comment of his own: "Muḥammad b. Ishāq came to Baghdad and was indiscriminate in his choice of informants. He would quote (*yahkī*) from al-Kalbī (d. 146/763) and others [i.e. similarly untrustworthy scholars]."¹⁴

Aḥmad sensibly expects a reliable *muḥaddith* to keep repeating precisely the same hadith under all circumstances. Still, he was aware of the fact that Ibn Ishāq's work on *maghāzī* (unlike Ibn Ishāq's work on legal hadith) did not require the highest standards of transmission. Elsewhere we read that when Aḥmad was asked about Ibn Ishāq, he stated that people wrote "these hadiths" from him—meaning "*maghāzī* and the like." In legal matters, Aḥmad explained, standards were much higher: "When something comes to you which concerns what is lawful and forbidden, we want people who are like this," and he drew together the fingers of both hands except for the thumb.¹⁵ His gesture was meant to convey uncompromising firmness. In other words, Aḥmad acknowledged that in "genres" other than legal hadith lower standards were adequate.

14 *Mīn kalām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal fī 'ilal al-ḥadīth wa-ma'rīfat al-rijāl*, ed. Ṣubḥī al-Badrī al-Sāmarrā'ī (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma'ārif, 1409), 49. A cursory check shows that Ibn Ishāq quotes al-Kalbī referring to him both by his *nisba* al-Kalbī and by his *kunya* Abū al-Naḍr. Cf. Harry Munt, "Writing the History of an Arabian Holy City: Ibn Zabāla and the First Local History of Medina," *Arabica* 59 (2012): 17–18.

15 Michael Lecker, "Wāqidi's Account on the Status of the Jews of Medina: A Study of a Combined Report," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 54 (1995): 23–24.

In the background of Ibrāhīm's statement there must have been an undisputed fact, namely the existence of Ibn Ishāq's book which predated his departure from Medina. This is the premise of his claim for the accuracy of his recension. Owners of other recensions of Ibn Ishāq's book vouched for the accuracy of their recensions with reference to the method by which they received them from Ibn Ishāq, with two of them claiming to have received their recensions twice.¹⁶

Presumably Ibn Ishāq's work acquired book form early on in his career.¹⁷ But the version that emerged from the Medinan "undoings" was not the end of the road for the book, which continued to evolve (due to new evidence, new analysis or new political circumstances). As long as Ibn Ishāq was alive there was probably no "conclusively edited copy." At different stages of his life Ibn Ishāq taught different versions of it. The recensions of his disciples were "reports of work in progress," or milestones along Ibn Ishāq's lifetime project on the life of Muḥammad.

3 The Role of the Abbasid Court

The Abbasids were not indifferent to the way in which the biography of Muḥammad was taught, especially with regard to the problematic role of his uncle and their ancestor, 'Abbās (d. 32/653). Their close ties with Ibn Ishāq, al-Wāqidī, Ibn Sa'd and other players in the field of historiography were no accident. The same is true for their relationship with Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd, for which we have both factual evidence and anecdotes. Anecdotes are useful because of the reliable background information they contain. Sometimes they provide an insight into the boundaries of tolerance in early Islamic literature.

¹⁶ Schoeler, *Biography*, 28, 32.

¹⁷ Cf. Amikam Elad, "The Beginnings of Historical Writing by the Arabs: The Earliest Syrian Writers on the Arab Conquests," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 28 (2003): 65–152, esp. 116–128. The rich textual evidence in this fundamental and inspiring article is new to the research literature. Cf. also Amikam Elad, "Community of Believers of 'Holy Men' and 'Saints' or Community of Muslims? The Rise and Development of Early Muslim Historiography," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 47 (2002): 267–278. On p. 268, n. 63 of the latter article Elad quotes Meir Jacob Kister, "The *Sīra* Literature," in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, eds. Alfred Felix Landon Beeston, Thomas Muir Johnstone, Robert Bertram Serjeant and Gerald Rex Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 352: "*Sīrah* literature [...] came into being in the period following the death of the Prophet. It developed in the first half of the first century of the *hijrah* and by the end of that century the first full-length literary compilations were produced."

As a great-grandson of Muḥammad's companion 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf (d. 32/653), Ibrāhīm ibn Sa'd was a member of a rich and influential family from the Zuhra branch of Quraysh. He had lived in Medina and later moved to Baghdad, where he was put in charge of the treasury (*bayt al-māl*). So far the factual evidence; the following is anecdotal. Ibrāhīm was a free spirit: he loved music and is said to have issued a fatwa sanctioning it. When one of the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* came to learn from him the hadith of Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri, he heard him singing and vowed never to learn from him. Without hesitation Ibrāhīm pledged that as long as he was in Baghdad, he would not transmit a single hadith unless he sang beforehand. When Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170/786–193/809) asked Ibrāhīm about a certain hadith, the latter required that an oud be brought to him, which the caliph found amusing. Hārūn al-Rashīd was even more amused by a story which Ibrāhīm told him on the authority of his father, Sa'd (d. ca. 125¹⁸), about how Mālik b. Anas had clumsily tried his hand at making music.¹⁹

Obviously, Ibrāhīm belonged to the caliph's inner circle. It also appears that Mālik, a bitter adversary of Ibrāhīm's teacher Ibn Ishāq, was unpopular in Hārūn's court. It may be relevant for us here that just like Ibn Ishāq, Ibrāhīm's father cast doubt on Mālik's claim to be a freeborn Arab.²⁰ The father was himself an influential figure in the Abbasid administration. He was the *shurṭa* chief and then he officiated several times as qadi of Medina.²¹ The governors employed him as a tax collector (*a'māl al-ṣadaqāt*).²²

18 Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh madīnat Dimashq*, ed. 'Umar b. Gharāma al-'Amrawī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1415/1995–1421/2000), 20:208–209.

19 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1422/2001), 6:606.

20 Meir Jacob Kister, "The Massacre of the Banū Qurayza: A Re-examination of a Tradition," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 8 (1986): 77. Mālik wanted to be a singer, but his mother told him that nobody listened to a singer with an ugly face. She advised him to turn to the field of *fiqh*, where an ugly face made no difference; Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, ed. Samuel Miklos Stern, trans. C.R. Barber and S.M. Stern (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967–1971), 2:82, n. 2; Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1345/1927–1394/1974), 4:222. See also Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, *Risālat al-ghufrān*, ed. Bint al-Shāṭi' (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'arif, 1950), 501. Mālik was bald (*aṣḥā*); Ibn Farḥūn al-Mālikī, *al-Dibāj al-mudhahhab fī ma'rifat a'yān 'ulamā' al-madkhab*, ed. Ma'mūn al-Jannān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1417/1996), 59. Sa'd did not transmit hadith in Medina, and therefore its people, including Mālik, did not write his hadith; Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, 10:244.

21 Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, 20:206. He is sometimes referred to in *isnāds* as Sa'd ibn Ibrāhīm al-qāḍī. See e.g. Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, eds. Shu'ayb al-Arnāwūṭ et al. (Beirut: al-Risāla, 1401/1981–1409/1988), 4:293. He was qadi of Medina at the time of Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq; Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, 10:241. See the entry on Qāsim in Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, 23:427–436.

22 Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, 20:210.

Here belong two dubious accounts which link the Abbasids to the creation of Ibn Ishāq's biography. One account gives the credit to the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158/775–169/785) but this is impossible, since al-Mahdī only ascended the throne several years after Ibn Ishāq's death. Allegedly the caliph demanded that Ibn Ishāq compose for his (the caliph's) son a book covering the history of the world from its creation to their own time. The book that ensued was too large, so the caliph demanded a summary "which is this abridged book." The large book was stored in the treasury.²³ The glaring error regarding the caliph's identity casts doubt on the account's reliability as a whole.

The other account is included in a passage from al-Mas'ūdī's (d. 345/956) *Murūj al-dhahab* which, while praising the endeavours of the intellectual caliph al-Manṣūr, implies that he was somehow associated with the creation of Ibn Ishāq's book:

In his days Ibn Ishāq composed (*waḍa'a*) the book[s, read *kutub* instead of *kitāb*—or rather the sections of a modular "history" book which also existed as independent books] of *maghāzī*, *siyar* and *akhbār al-mubtada'* which had neither been collected beforehand, nor known nor classified (*wa-lam takun qabla dhālika majmū'a wa-lā ma'rūfa wa-lā muṣannafa*).²⁴

The passage as a whole is more panegyric than history. Ibn Ishāq may well have produced a book for the caliphal library, but it was merely a copy (or rather a revised copy) of a book he had composed long before he arrived at the Abbasid court. The caliphal copy must have been more elegant than all of the recensions, past or future. It also had another advantage: since its production was overseen by Ibn Ishāq himself, it was free of the additions which Ibn Ishāq's disciples attached to their recensions. In this sense it continued the line of the versions that came out of the Medinan "undoings."

ps. I now realise that C. Brockelmann, in his *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur* (GAL), stated that Ibn Ishāq completed the biography in Medina—and that al-Manṣūr played no role in its compilation. For an English translation see now C. Brockelmann, *History of the Arabic Written Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2016–2018), Supplement, 1: 202: "He studied hadith, and completed his learn-

23 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 2:16. Al-Khaṭīb suggests that al-Mahdī should be replaced by al-Manṣūr. Al-Mahdī's return from Rayy in 151/768 (Fasawī, *al-Ma'rifa wa-l-ta'rikh*, ed. Akram Diyā' al-'Umārī (Beirut: al-Risāla, 1401/1981), 1:37) more or less coincided with Ibn Ishāq's death.

24 Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, ed. Ch. Pellat (Beirut: al-Jāmi'a al-Lubnāniyya, 1966–1979), 5:211, no. 3446.

ing in Egypt in 115/733. In his home country he completed his biography of the Prophet, which is therefore wholly based on the Medinan tradition [...]. He presented a copy of his work to the caliph al-Manṣūr in al-Hāshimiyya [...]. In a footnote Brockelmann remarked: "The report in al-Khaṭīb that he wrote this work on the order of the caliph for the crown prince al-Mahdī, before later abbreviating it, must be a myth [...]."

4 Appendix 1: Ibn Sa'd's Abridged Entry on Ibn Ishāq

Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir-Dār Bayrūt, 1380/1960–1388/1968), 7:321–322; Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, VII/ii, ed. Eduard Sachau (Leiden: Brill, 1918), 67:

The passage in bold includes the list of those who transmitted hadith from Ibn Ishāq, including Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd. It is missing in the fuller entry (Appendix 11) because of a scribal error: the passage begins with *wa-kāna* and the scribe's eye strayed to the following occurrence of *wa-kāna*:

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِسْحَاقَ بْنِ يَسَارَ مَوْلَى قَيْسِ بْنِ مَخْرَمَةَ بْنِ الْمُطَّلِبِ بْنِ عَبْدِ مَنَافٍ بْنِ قُصَيٍّ، وَيُكْنَى مُحَمَّدُ
أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، وَكَانَ جَدُّهُ يَسَارٌ مِنْ سَبْيِ عَيْنِ التَّمْرِ، وَكَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ ثَقَفَةً، وَقَدْ رَوَى النَّاسُ عَنْهُ، رَوَى
عَنْهُ الثَّوْرِيُّ، وَشُعْبَةُ، وَسَفْيَانُ بْنُ عَيْنَةَ، وَيَزِيدُ بْنُ زُرَيْجٍ، وَإِبْرَاهِيمُ بْنُ سَعْدٍ، وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ بْنُ عَلِيَّةَ،
وَيَزِيدُ بْنُ هَارُونَ، وَيَعْلَى وَمُحَمَّدُ ابْنَا عَبْدِ، وَعَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ نُمَيْرٍ، وَغَيْرُهُمْ، وَمَنْ النَّاسُ مَنْ تَكَلَّمَ فِيهِ،
وَكَانَ خَرَجَ مِنَ الْمَدِينَةِ قَدِيمًا، فَأَتَى الْكُوفَةَ وَالْجَزِيرَةَ وَالرَّيَّ وَبَغْدَادَ، فَأَقَامَ بِهَا حَتَّى مَاتَ فِي
سَنَةِ إِحْدَى وَخَمْسِينَ وَمِائَةً، وَدُفِنَ فِي مَقَابِرِ الْخِزْرَانِ

5 Appendix 11: Ibn Sa'd's Fuller Entry on Ibn Ishāq

Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā: al-qism al-mutammim li-tābi' ahl al-Madīna wa-man ba'dahum*, ed. Ziyād Muḥammad Manṣūr (Medina: Maktabat al-'Ulūm wa-l-Ḥikam, 1408/1987), 400–402; Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad 'Umar (Cairo: Khānjī, 1421/2001), 7:552–553; <http://shamela.ws/rep.php/book/1126>:

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِسْحَاقَ بْنِ يَسَارَ مَوْلَى قَيْسِ بْنِ مَخْرَمَةَ بْنِ الْمُطَّلِبِ بْنِ عَبْدِ مَنَافٍ بْنِ قُصَيٍّ وَيُكْنَى أَبَا عَبْدِ
اللَّهِ، وَكَانَ جَدُّهُ يَسَارٌ مِنْ سَبْيِ عَيْنِ التَّمْرِ. وَكَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ بَنِي إِسْحَاقَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ جَمَعَ مَغَازِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ

صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَالْفَهَاءُ. وَكَانَ يَرْوِي عَنْ عَاصِمِ بْنِ عُمَرَ بْنِ قَتَادَةَ، وَيَزِيدَ بْنِ رُومَانَ، وَمُحَمَّدِ بْنِ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ، وَغَيْرِهِمْ. وَيَرْوِي عَنْ فَاطِمَةَ بِنْتِ الْمُنْذِرِ بْنِ الزُّبَيْرِ، وَكَانَتْ امْرَأَةً هِشَامِ بْنِ عُرْوَةَ فَبَلَغَ
ذَلِكَ هِشَامًا، فَقَالَ: هُوَ كَانَ يَدْخُلُ عَلَى امْرَأَتِي! — كَأَنَّهُ أَنْكَرَ ذَلِكَ. وَخَرَجَ مِنَ الْمَدِينَةِ قَدِيمًا،
فَلَمْ يَرَوْهُ أَحَدٌ مِنْهُمْ غَيْرَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ بْنِ سَعْدٍ. وَكَانَ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ إِسْحَاقَ مَعَ الْعَبَّاسِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ بِالْجَزِيرَةِ.
وَكَانَ أَنَّى أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ بِالْحَيْرَةِ فَكُتِبَ لَهُ الْمَغَازِي، فَسَمِعَ مِنْهُ أَهْلُ الْكُوفَةِ بِذَلِكَ السَّبَبِ. وَسَمِعَ
مِنْهُ أَهْلُ الْجَزِيرَةِ حِينَ كَانَ مَعَ الْعَبَّاسِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ، وَأَنَّى الرَّيِّ فَسَمِعَ مِنْهُ أَهْلُ الرَّيِّ. فَرَوَاتُهُ مِنْ
هُؤُلَاءِ الْبُلْدَانِ أَكْثَرُ مِمَّنْ رَوَى عَنْهُ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ. وَأَتَى بَغْدَادَ. فَأَخْبَرَنِي ابْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ بْنِ إِسْحَاقَ،
قَالَ: مَاتَ بِبَغْدَادَ سَنَةَ خَمْسِينَ وَمِائَةٍ، وَدُفِنَ فِي مَقَابِرِ الْخَيْرَانِ وَقَالَ غَيْرُهُ مِنَ الْعُلَمَاءِ: تَوَفَّى مُحَمَّدُ
ابْنُ إِسْحَاقَ سَنَةَ إِحْدَى وَخَمْسِينَ وَمِائَةٍ. وَكَانَ كَثِيرَ الْحَدِيثِ، وَقَدْ كُتِبَتْ عَنْهُ الْعُلَمَاءُ وَمِنْهُمْ
مَنْ يَسْتَضَعِفُهُ

6 Appendix III: Ibn Sa'd's *walā'*

The original owner of Ibn Sa'd's *walā'* was al-Ḥusayn b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Ubayd Allāh b. al-'Abbās (d. 140/757 or 141/758).²⁵ Al-Ḥusayn was one of Ibn Ishāq's many informants.²⁶ Ibn Ishāq quoted from him, for example, the account of the alleged secret conversion to Islam of 'Abbās, his wife and his slave Abū Rāfi' who was the supposed source of the account (*kuntu ghulāman li-l-'Abbās ...*).

The Abbasid caliphs descended from 'Ubayd Allāh's brother 'Abd Allāh. Through his *walā'* Ibn Sa'd had an even closer link with the ruling line of the Banū Hāshim. Al-Ḥusayn's son, 'Abd Allāh, who presumably inherited Ibn Sa'd's *walā'*, was married to a member of the ruling line, namely Umm 'Īsā *al-ṣuḡhrā* (i.e. the younger of the two sisters each of whom was called Umm 'Īsā) bt. 'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās (d. unknown). They had no children and when he died, she received his inheritance together with his *aṣaba* or male relations. Umm 'Īsā's brother Muḥammad was "the father of the caliphs" (*abū al-khalā'if*).²⁷

25 Johann Wilhelm Fück, "Ibn Sa'd," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., accessed 1 October 2017, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3343. Mizzi, *Tahdhib al-kamāl*, 25:258; Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir-Dār Bayrūt, 1380/1960–1388/1968), 5:315.

26 Mizzi, *Tahdhib al-kamāl*, 6:384.

27 Muṣ'ab al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, ed. Évariste Lévi-Provençal (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1953), 29–30; Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 5:313.

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