IBN ISHĀQ'S USE OF THE *ISNĀD* [1]

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ALTHOUGH it became the practice in Muslim Tradition (*Hadīth*) to preface each tradition with a chain of authorities (*isnād*) through whom it was transmitted, it is generally recognized that *isnāds*, even in those collections of *Hadīth* which are considered to be the most reliable, are not to be taken at their face value. Most Western scholars would agree that there was a great development of *Hadīth* as time went on, and that *isnāds* had to be produced for all the material which had been amassed. How this was accomplished in a manner which proved satisfactory to the community need not be considered here. It is sufficient to notice that *isnāds* grew up in certain districts and within certain schools, following a course which was appropriate to the district and to the men who claimed to have received the traditions. In one sense this was dishonest, but in another sense it may be understood as a method of making explicit what those responsible felt that the course of transmission must have been. One may reasonably feel sure that by the time the recognized collections of *Hadīth* were compiled during the third century of Islām, their authors had no conception of the doubtful quality of the *isnāds* which they accepted as sound. They were honest men who believed in the genuineness of the transmission, a fact shown by the readiness with which they criticized *isnāds* which did not come up to their standards. It was recognized that different classes of people made use of the method of *Hadīth* in order to lend authority to their views, so *isnāds* were scrutinized and standards of judgement were developed. Where the critics fell short was in failing to recognize that even seemingly authoritative *isnāds* were as deserving of criticism as those on which they looked with suspicion.

It was said by some in the period before the canonical collections were compiled that traditions which dealt with the good life were not closely examined, but that those which dealt with legal ordinances were very carefully investigated.[1] Professor Schacht has, however, argued cogently that those very legal traditions do not go back to the Prophet as they purport to do, and he has suggested how they came to be developed and to receive their *isnāds*.[2] This is damaging criticism of the very class of traditions which were presumably accepted only after most careful scrutiny. He has brought forward arguments in support of his point of view which cannot be lightly rebutted, and therefore we may provisionally accept his argument as proved so far as legal traditions are concerned.

But suppose we agree that the main body of legal traditions is the result of development subsequent to the time of the Prophet and that the *isnāds* have been supplied at a later date to support them, are we justified in holding that the same principle applies to all traditions and to all *isnāds*? If *isnāds* came to be applied to legal traditions in the course of the second century, does it follow that *isnāds* were unknown before this? It seems better to infer that this development of fictitious *isnāds* was a copying of something which already existed with some degree or other of genuineness.

Horovitz, who has made important researches into the question of the *isnād*, has concluded that the first introduction of *isnāds* into the literature of *Hadīth* was not later than the last third of the first century of Islām.[3] If that is accepted, one may surmise that the use of *isnāds* in oral transmission was earlier still. I do not suggest that from a very early date everyone who had information to impart was careful to trace his authority for it, a view which would be quite untenable; I would rather suggest that people who were anxious to collect accurate information about the beginnings of Islām early began to inquire about the authenticity of the material transmitted to them.

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[1] Cf. I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* (2 vols., Halle a. S. (1888-90)), ii. 153 f. ; J. Robson, *An introduction to the science of Tradition* (London, 1953), p. 11.

[2] *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1950), pp. 138 ff.

[3] *Der Islam*, viii (1918), 44.

In considering the question of the *isnād* it is inadvisable to start with the accepted collections of *Hadīth*, for they show the full development of the practice and are therefore not a suitable sphere in which to examine origins. Even the *musnad* works of Ṭayālisī (d. 203/818) and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) already show the *isnād* in fully developed form. Horovitz has reminded us that there are three sources for the sayings and doings of the Prophet, viz. *Hadīth* (Tradition), *Sīra* (Biography of the Prophet), and *Tafsīr* (Qur'ān Commentary), the ground-element in all being a pronouncement introduced by a chain of witnesses ;[1] and Lammens has rightly insisted that *Sīra* and *Hadīth* are not distinct sources,[2] as did Horovitz.[3] To consider the development of the *isnād* one should therefore go back to the earliest of these sources ; so I propose to consider a few points relating to the use or lack of use of the *isnād* by Ibn Isḥāq (d. 150/767, or 151/768) who presents us with what is presumably the earliest considerable source which we possess. It is true that we do not have the whole of his original work by itself, but his editor, Ibn Hishām (d. 218/834), seems to be very careful to distinguish what comes from Ibn Isḥāq from what he has added himself. I shall therefore ignore the Ibn Hishām passages and pay attention only to material which is stated to come from Ibn Isḥāq.

It is well known that Ibn Isḥāq does not always use an *isnād* and that when he does so he uses it in different ways, sometimes being content to quote his immediate authority, sometimes going a little farther back, and sometimes going right back to a Companion of the Prophet, or to the Prophet himself. He commonly begins his treatment of some incident by a general statement of what happened without any authority being quoted, but this is merely his method of introducing the subject, for he usually goes on to give *isnāds* of various kinds for details of the incident, or to present different statements of what happened. It is worthy of note, however, that when he gives such important information as the names of men on both sides who were killed at the battles of Badr and Uḥud, he cites no authority at all. One can only

[1] *Islamic Culture*, i (1927), 535.
[2] *Le berceau de l'Islam* (Rome, 1914), p. vii.
[3] *Der Islam*, viii. 39 f.

suggest that details such as these were treated as being so well known and well authenticated that it was unnecessary to produce the evidence of an *isnād*.

There are times when Ibn Isḥāq quotes vague authorities such as one of the learned, a man of the family of so and so, or a member of such and such a tribe. A fairly common practice is to quote one whom he does not suspect without stating who the man is. Why he does this is not clear, and it seems to be a fruitless task to attempt to discover the identity of the person. Wüstenfeld found this difficulty, and so far as I am aware no one since his time has been able to solve the problem. Only three times does Ibn Isḥāq quote such a person without tracing his authority to some earlier source.[1] Four times the man whom he does not suspect quotes Ibn 'Abbās direct,[2] twice Abū Huraira,[3] once 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd,[4] once Ibn Abū Ḥadrad,[5] and once Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī.[6] Three times he quotes 'Ikrima from Ibn 'Abbās,[7] as also Miqsam *maulā* of 'Abdallāh b. al-Ḥārith from Ibn 'Abbās.[8] Normally the man who is not suspected has one link between himself and the ultimate authority, but twice he has two.[9] On two occasions, apart from when he is called one of Ibn Isḥāq's friends, this man is specified, once as one of the people of learning [10] and once as one of the men of Ṭayy.[11] There is one occasion where he comes second in the chain, where Ibn Isḥāq cites 'Āṣim b. 'Umar b. Qatāda from one

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[1] In quoting the *Sīra* I use W to indicate Wüstenfeld's edition (2 vols., Göttingen, 1859-60), and C to indicate the Cairo edition (4 vols., 1936) edited by Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā, Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, and 'Abd al-Ḥafiẓ Shalabī. The passages referred to above are W. 378, C. ii. 195 ; W. 718, C. iii, 291 ; W. 947, C. iv. 224.

[2] W. 324, C. ii, 124 ; W. 368, C. ii, 183 ; W. 585, C. iii, 102 ; W. 789, C. iv, 12.

[3] W. 673, C. iii, 230 ; W. 964, C. iv, 246.

[4] W. 605, C. iii, 127.

[5] W. 989, C. iv, 278.

[6] W. 268, C. ii, 44.

[7] W. 376, C. ii, 193 ; W. 428, C. ii, 258 ; W. 745, C. ii, 329.

[8] W. 450, C. ii, 286 (*bis*) ; W. 585, C. iii, 102.

[9] W. 756, C. iii, 343 ; W. 849, C. iv, 91.

[10] W. 378, C. ii, 195.

[11] W. 947, C. iv, 224.

whom he (i.e. 'Āṣim) does not suspect from 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz.[1]

One may wonder why Ibn Isḥāq is unwilling to name the man if he is so deserving of trust, and one may even become a little suspicious on noting that some of the stories told on this authority are extremely doubtful, if not impossible. For example, Salmān is reported to have spoken of someone he saw who appeared annually and cured the sick, and is told by the Prophet that if he is speaking the truth this was Jesus.[2] One who is not suspected is cited as authority for telling of the ladder coming down to Jerusalem to take the Prophet up to heaven,[3] for the story of 'Ātika's vision giving warning to the people of Mecca of Muḥammad's attempt to waylay Abū Sufyān's caravan,[4] for a statement about the badge of the angels at Badr,[5] and for the statement that Badr was the only engagement in which angels fought.[6] Equally remarkable is the story that Sa'd's body felt light when carried to burial although he was a fat man, and that the Prophet explained that angels were taking a share in carrying the bier.[7] Other examples, however, contain details which are not inherently impossible. One wonders whether Ibn Isḥāq included such anonymous people among his authorities because he did not really believe what they reported. That would suggest that when he called a man one whom he did not suspect, he really meant that he did suspect his information, whatever he may have thought about him in general. Whatever the reason, it does not seem to me to be reasonable to believe that Ibn Isḥāq used such terminology when he had something to hide, for this does not agree with the general impression one gathers from his methods, despite what his detractors may have said about him.

His desire to tell only what he believes is shown by the way in which he frequently uses the root *za'am*. Goldziher drew attention to the manner in which this root is used to indicate an unfounded assertion.[8] Ibn Isḥāq obviously uses it to indicate

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[1] W. 142 f., C. i, 236.   [2] Ibid.   [3] W. 268, C. ii, 44.

[4] W. 428, C. ii, 258.   [5] W. 450, C. ii, 286.   [6] Ibid.

[7] W. 698, C. iii, 263. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) is the authority of the one who is not suspected, but the tradition is traced no farther back.

[8] Op. cit., pp. 51 f.

either that he does not believe the statement he quotes, or that he preserves an open mind. It is striking how often it is used in the earlier portion of the *Sīra*, the very portion where one normally feels that the information is most likely to be legendary. Usually it is employed when there is no suggestion of an *isnād*, the people quoted normally being vaguely indicated by such terms as " they assert ", " in what they assert ", or " they asserted ". While sometimes in later portions of the work the name of the person who made the assertion is mentioned, I have noticed only one such occurrence in the earliest portion.[1] It is used, for example, about 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's vow when he dug the well Zamzam,[2] about Muḥammad's father 'Abdallāh being 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's favourite son,[3] about the light on 'Abdallāh's forehead before he had intercourse with Āmina and she gave birth to the Prophet,[4] about Abū Ṭālib taking Muḥammad with him to Syria, on which occasion the monk Baḥīrā recognized Muḥammad as the expected prophet,[5] and about Maisara's story of two angels shading Muḥammad from the noonday heat on his second visit to Syria.[6] Ibn Isḥāq is obviously doubtful about the statement that Muḥammad described Abraham, Moses, and Jesus whom he met on his night journey, for he sets it down as the assertion of Zuhrī on the authority of Sa'īd b. al-Musayyib.[7] Incidentally, this is the only example I have noticed of the word *za'am* being used of one who can cite an authority for his statement. On another occasion Zuhrī is credited with a mere assertion when he quotes a verse of poetry which he says Farwa b. 'Āmir recited when he was about to be put to death by the Byzantines.[8] Zuhrī (d. 124/742), one of the most important transmitters of tradition, is Ibn Isḥāq's most frequently cited authority, yet there are these two occasions where he suggests doubt about information he received from him.

Some of the statements called assertions are made by people who have some interest in the matter. For example, the B. al-Najjār asserted that As'ad b. Zurāra was the first to shake

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[1] W. 112, C. i, 183.
[2] W. 97, C. i, 160.
[3] W. 99, C. i, 162.
[4] W. 100 f., C. i, 164.
[5] W. 115 ff., C. i, 191 ff.
[6] W. 120, C. i, 200.
[7] W. 266, C. ii, 41.
[8] W. 958, C. iv, 238.

hands at the 'Aqaba.[1]   The B. 'Amr b. 'Auf asserted that the Prophet stayed among them more than four days at Qubā'.[2] The B. Sa'd asserted that the Prophet gave al-Shaimā' a slave of his called Makhūl and a slave-girl and that she married them to one another.[3]   The B. Mālik asserted that one of them called Aus b. 'Auf killed ' Urwa b. Mas'ūd.[4]

At other times there is no obvious reason for calling a statement an assertion, as the incident in question is neither inherently doubtful, nor does it suggest that those who made it had a special interest.   Ibn Ishāq evidently felt that such statements had not sufficient authority and he therefore called them assertions. Some incidents which he introduces as the assertion of people are of no great significance, and this very fact makes one feel that Ibn Ishāq is trying to be as careful as possible to avoid giving a false impression.

Another characteristic of Ibn Ishāq's is to finish a story or conflicting stories by adding that God knows best what happened. He uses the phrase in telling of Muhammad's foster-mother losing him when bringing him to Mecca and of Waraqa and another man finding him ; [5] in giving different explanations of why 'Abbās explained to the people from Medina what allegiance to Muhammad would involve ; [6] in relating different reports about the house in which Muhammad lived in Qubā' ; [7] in reporting how some said 'Ubaida b. al-Hārith was the first to receive a standard and how Hamza is said to have claimed to be the first ; [8] in reporting the claims of Nājiya b. Jundub and al-Barā' b. 'Āzib to have been the one to put the Prophet's arrow in the well at Hudaibiya, after which the water gushed forth ; [9] in reporting different stories about Musailima and the B. Hanīfa deputation.[10]   The use of this phrase, sometimes when a statement is supported by an *isnād* and sometimes when it is not, shows that Ibn Ishāq was anxious to give as accurate an impression as possible and that therefore he did not always accept

[1] W. 300, C. ii, 89.   [2] W. 335, C. ii, 139.
[3] W. 857, C. iv, 101.   [4] W. 914, C. iv, 182.
[5] W. 106 f., C. i, 176.   [6] W. 300, C. ii, 89.
[7] W. 335, C. ii, 138.   [8] W. 418 f., C. ii, 245 f.
[9] W. 742, C. iii, 324.   [10] W. 946, C. iv, 222 f.

information without question, even when he had a chain of authority for it.   His desire for accuracy is further illustrated when on two occasions he prays, before quoting words attributed to the Prophet, that he may be preserved from attributing to the Prophet words he did not utter.[1]

Ibn Isḥāq often uses such phrases as " in what has reached me ", or " it was mentioned to me ", perhaps because he felt the matter was common knowledge requiring no authentication, or perhaps simply because it did not strike him that it was necessary to produce authority for his statement.   It is possible that when he uses such phrases he has forgotten where he received his information, but that is not so likely, because he often gives an *isnād* in such a way as to show that he is in some doubt regarding it, evidently with the purpose of making it plain that he cannot give as clear details as he would like.   For example, he has an *isnād* in which he cites Jahm b. Abū Jahm from 'Abdallāh b. Ja'far, or from the one who told him from him.[2]   Slightly different is the *isnād* where he cites 'Abdallāh b. Abū Najīḥ from 'Aṭā' and Mujāhid, or from the one who related that.[3]   At times he is not sure of the identity of his immediate informant.   For example, he quotes a statement attributed to 'Umar, but is not sure whether he heard it from Muḥammad b. Ja'far b. al-Zubair, or from Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Abdallāh b. Ḥusain.[4]   More commonly he mentions his immediate informant, but is not sure who is the authority at another stage of the *isnād*.   He cites Yazīd b. 'Abdallāh from 'Aṭā' b. Yasār, or his brother Sulaimān, from Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ;[5] and Yazīd b. Rūmān from 'Urwa, or another of the learned.[6]   Four times he cites a *maulā* of Zaid b. Thābit from 'Ikrima, or Sa'īd b. Jubair, from Ibn 'Abbās.[7]   On the other hand, he once cites a learned man who transmitted

[1] W. 340, C. ii, 146 ; W. 344, C. ii, 150.
[2] W. 103, C. i, 171.
[3] W. 227, C. i, 371.
[4] W. 64, C. i, 103.
[5] W. 964, C. iv, 246.
[6] W. 272, C. ii, 51.
[7] W. 371, C. ii, 186 ; W. 376, C. ii, 193 ; W. 545, C. iii, 50 ; W. 642, C. iii, 183.

some information from 'Ikrima and Sa'īd from Ibn 'Abbās.[1] A vaguer instance of similar doubt is illustrated when he quotes 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith from a member of 'Umar's family, or a member of his own family.[2] Vaguer still is an example where he quotes a friend whom he does not suspect from Zaid b. Aslam from Rabī'a b. 'Ibād al-Dīlī, or from the one from whom Abul Zinād related the story to him.[3] It should be noted, however, that there is a variant reading which gives " and " for " or ".

Two examples may be quoted of an unknown person occur-ring in the course of the *isnad*. Ibn Isḥāq cites Ṣāliḥ b. Kaisān from the one who told him from Sa'd b. Abū Waqqāṣ ; [4] and he cites a learned man from the one who told him from Muḥammad b. Ṭalḥa from 'Uthmān b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān.[5] It may be argued that such examples show that Ibn Isḥāq had something to hide, but, from a consideration of his general methods, I prefer to assume that he gives his *isnād* in this way because he cannot remember the names of those whom he cites vaguely. The full system of always producing a completely connected *isnād* where everyone is named unequivocally and is known to be reliable had not developed by his time, so there was no reason for him to have recourse to a pretence of giving *isnāds* of unimpeachable authority. He therefore gave his information as he remembered it, and he is not to be blamed because he failed to come up to a standard which did not exist in his day.

The examples which have been quoted show how Ibn Isḥāq is quite open about his methods. He does not claim that all the information he gives is of full authority, neither does he try to trace everything back to the Prophet. We may therefore be inclined to trust him when he does quote direct authorities and when he gives connected *isnāds*. His method of quoting his authorities varies. He has a large number of immediate authorities, some of whom he cites more often than others, the four most frequently cited being in order Zuhrī (d. 124/742), 'Abdallāh b. Abū Bakr (d. 135/752 or 130/747), 'Āṣim b. 'Umar

[1] W. 187, C. i, 315.   [2] W. 230, C. i, 375.
[3] W. 282, C. ii, 64.   [4] W. 576, C. iii, 91.
                    [5] W. 998, C. iv, 290.

b. Qatāda (d. 129/746), and 'Abdallāh b. Abū Najīḥ (d. 131/748). They are sometimes cited without further *isnād*, sometimes in a composite *isnād*, sometimes quoting a Companion, and sometimes having an intermediate authority, or two such authorities, between themselves and the Companion to whom the tradition is traced. A few remarks regarding Zuhrī may serve to show how he uses his authorities.[1]

While Zuhrī may appear at times as one of several authorities for a composite tradition, a method not unknown to Bukhārī whose *Ṣaḥīḥ* is commonly held to be the most reliable collection of Tradition, there are places where Ibn Isḥāq, in the course of telling what he has heard, quotes him alone for some details. Zuhrī can also be represented as passing on his information from more than one man without distinguishing what he received from each. For example, in the story of the Lie about 'Ā'isha Ibn Isḥāq quotes Zuhrī from four men, the same four being quoted as Zuhrī's authorities in Bukhārī, except that Ibn Isḥāq gives Sa'īd b. Jubair and Bukhārī gives Sa'īd b. al-Musayyib.[2] The wording in both is very similar in stating how some remembered better than others. The chief difference is that Bukhārī says they got their information from 'Ā'isha, whereas Ibn Isḥāq does not mention this.

While Ibn Isḥāq quotes Zuhrī a number of times without tracing the information farther back, there are a number of instances where he quotes him only apparently without further authority. This may be illustrated in the account of Ḥudaibiya where frequently Ibn Isḥāq merely says " Zuhrī said ", and then gives a detail. But at the beginning he tells us that Zuhrī told him from 'Urwa from Miswar b. Makhrama and Marwān b. al-Ḥakam that they told him.[3] When, therefore, he quotes Zuhrī eight different times in the course of the story without giving the source of his information, one may assume that the *isnād* given at the beginning covers all these instances.

[1] For a detailed consideration of the *isnāds* through Zuhrī reference should be made to the list of *isnāds* given by Wüstenfeld in his edition, supplemented by references in the Cairo edition. In *Z.D.M.G.*, xliv, pp. 40 ff. Fischer has dealt with omissions in Wüstenfeld's lists.

[2] W. 731, C. iii, 309.   Cf. Bukhārī, *Shahādāt*, 15.   [3] W. 740, C. iii, 322.

Although Zuhrī is Ibn Isḥāq's most commonly cited authority, there are a number of places where he quotes someone else who transmitted information to him from Zuhrī. Once he quotes 'Āṣim from Zuhrī without further *isnād*,[1] and twice he quotes one whom he does not suspect from Zuhrī without further *isnād*.[2] Once he quotes Ya'qūb b. 'Utba from Zuhrī from Ibn Abū Ḥadrad,[3] and twice he quotes him from Zuhrī from 'Ubaidallāh b. 'Abdallāh b. 'Utba from 'Ā'isha.[4] Once he quotes Ṣāliḥ b. Kaisān from Zuhrī from 'Ubaidallāh from 'Ā'isha,[5] and once without going beyond 'Ubaidallāh.[6] In addition Ibn Isḥāq once quotes one whom he does not suspect from Zuhrī from 'Urwa from 'Ā'isha.[7]

In considering such examples one must feel that Ibn Isḥāq is presenting us with information as he received it. He does not attempt to trace it farther back than he is able, so he quotes Zuhrī alone if he has no further information, and gives an *isnād* if he knows of one. And he does not pretend to have received information direct from Zuhrī when he has received it from him at second hand. This produces an impression of trustworthiness, for Ibn Isḥāq is obviously not trying to pretend to a greater degree of authority for his material than he possesses.

It may seem surprising that Ibn Isḥāq has very few traditions from Nāfi' (d. 117/735) who appears so often in Mālik's *isnāds* in the *Muwaṭṭa'*. I have discovered only six instances,[8] in five of which Ibn Isḥāq cites him directly and in the other gets his information from him through Ṣāliḥ b. Kaisān. Each time Nāfi' cites 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar, twice tracing his information back to 'Umar and once to Ḥafṣa. In only two of these instances is there a corresponding tradition in the *Muwaṭṭa'*.[9] I have counted sixty-five occasions when Mālik cites Nāfi' with an *isnād* back to the Prophet, but have not attempted to count the number of occasions when the *isnād* is not so complete. Why

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[1] W. 676, C. iii, 234.
[2] W. 676, C. iii, 234 ; W. 750, C. iii, 335.
[3] W. 837, C. iv, 77.
[4] W. 1000, C. iv, 292 ; W. 1005, C. iv, 298.
[5] W. 1021, C. iv, 315.
[6] W. 776, C. iii, 367.
[7] W. 731, C. iii, 309.
[8] W. 229, C. i, 373 ; W. 319, C. ii, 118 f. ; W. 395, C. ii, 215 ; W. 779, C. iii, 372 ; W. 878, C. iv, 133 ; W. 966, C. iv, 249.
[9] *Ḥudūd*, 1, cf. W. 395 ; *Ḥajj*, 180, cf. W. 966.

should Ibn Isḥāq quote Nāfi' so seldom when Mālik quotes him so often ? We are told that Ibn Isḥāq considered himself a greater authority than Mālik (d. 179/795) on traditions and that he asked for Mālik's traditions to be sent to him, calling himself their vet, by which he indicated that he considered himself more qualified than Mālik to judge of their value.[1]   But because Ibn Isḥāq cites Nāfi' so seldom, we are not justified in saying that he would have found fault with Mālik's numerous citations of him, even if he had been given the opportunity. Mālik's traditions from Nāfi' are almost entirely on purely legal matters, a subject which does not greatly concern Ibn Isḥāq in the Sīra, for he is chiefly interested in recording events as such. It may quite well be that Nāfi' himself was chiefly interested in legal matters, and that therefore he was not a very useful source of information for Ibn Isḥāq.

Going back to the generation before that of Nāfi' and Zuhrī, we may note how 'Urwa b. al-Zubair (d. 94/712),[2] grandson of Abū Bakr the first Caliph, appears in Ibn Isḥāq's isnāds. I have noticed forty-five occasions where 'Urwa appears, on twelve of which Ibn Isḥāq gets his information through Zuhrī. On twenty-one of the forty-five occasions the isnād is not traced back beyond 'Urwa. Six different men provide Ibn Isḥāq with information in this way,[3] but it is noteworthy that in other places each of these six men are cited as sources from whom Ibn Isḥāq received information from 'Urwa with an isnād going farther back. To those who always wish to see a complete isnād this may appear to be unsatisfactory, but the very variation of method is rather an argument in favour of the genuineness of the way in which Ibn Isḥāq quotes his authorities. Why, for example,

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[1] Cf. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Ta'rīkh Baghdād (14 vols., Cairo, 1931), i, 223 ; Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt al-a'yān, No. 623.

[2] Although 94 is the favourite date given for 'Urwa's death, there is considerable doubt as to which year in the last decade of the first century he died. Cf. Enc. of Islām, iv, 1047 ; W. M. Watt, Muhammad at Mecca (Oxford, 1953), p. 180.

[3] Hishām b. 'Urwa, Muḥammad b. Ja'far b. al-Zubair, 'Umar b. 'Abdallāh b. 'Urwa, Yaḥyā b. 'Urwa, Yazīd b. Rūmān, and Zuhrī. In addition he gets one tradition each from Ṣāliḥ b. Kaisān, Ya'qūb b. 'Utba, and one whom he does not suspect, with isnāds through 'Urwa to 'Ā'isha.

should he sometimes cite Zuhrī from 'Urwa and at other times cite Zuhrī from 'Urwa from his aunt 'Ā'isha, if that was not simply the way in which he received the transmission? If it had been necessary, or even desirable, for him to provide a complete *isnād*, nothing would have been easier than to add 'Ā'isha's name each time. That he did not do so speaks well for his reliability.

Coming to the generation of the Companions of the Prophet, we may notice how Ibn Ishāq deals with Abū Huraira (d. c. 58/678) who is the most prolific source of traditions in *Hadīth* works. He appears in Ibn Ishāq's *isnāds* only twelve times, so far as I have discovered.[1] This indicates that Ibn Ishāq had ways and means of learning information which came from this source, and therefore we may not unjustifiably infer that he would have quoted more if a considerable supply had been available. There is no suggestion here that Abū Huraira was a prolific source of information, but there is clearly an indication that he must have transmitted something. Yet one cannot help noting that, while Abū Huraira is said to have come to Medina to accept Islām in the year 7 when the Prophet was at Khaibar, only four of the passages traced to him clearly date from this time onwards. It is true that four of the earlier passages relate to sayings of the Prophet which may possibly belong to a later time than their position in the text indicates, but there are others which can come from Abū Huraira only if he received his information from someone else who is not mentioned.

Ibn Ishāq as usual is careful regarding the manner in which he received his information. Once he quotes one whom he does not suspect direct from Abū Huraira, and once he quotes what reached him from Abū Sa'īd al-Maqburī from Abū Huraira without telling how it reached him. Normally Ibn Ishāq has two men in the *isnād* between himself and Abū Huraira, twice he has only one, and once he has a surprisingly long *isnād* in which he quotes Yazīd b. Abū Habīb from Bukair b. 'Abdallāh

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[1] W. 50 f., C. i, 78; W. 368, C. ii, 183; W. 393, C. ii, 213; W. 400, C. ii, 221; W. 468, C. ii, 312; W. 579, C. iii, 95; W. 586, C. iii, 104; W. 673, C. iii, 230; W. 765, C. iii, 353; W. 964, C. iv, 246; W. 996, C. iv, 287; W. 1012, C. iv, 305.

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from Sulaimān b. Yasār from Abū Isḥāq al-Dausī from Abū Huraira. As the incident recorded refers to an expedition evidently not long after the battle of Badr, an expedition in which Abū Huraira is represented as saying he was present, one wonders whether the story which has come through so many hands has not developed in the process.

On various grounds one has reason to question the genuineness of the vast volume of tradition traced to Abū Huraira [1] in the collections of *Ḥadīth*, and this suspicion is strengthened by the fact that Ibn Isḥāq quotes him so seldom. And even when Abū Huraira appears as the ultimate authority for items of information recorded by Ibn Isḥāq, we may still have some doubts regarding what is recorded ; but while that is so, there is no reason to doubt that what Ibn Isḥāq does quote as coming from Abū Huraira reached him by the *isnāds* which he gives.

The impression one receives from a consideration of Ibn Isḥāq's methods is that he is a reliable retailer of information as he had acquired it. It is obvious, as we know also from Mālik's practice in the *Muwaṭṭa'*, that in the first half of the second century the method of always using a complete *isnād* had not been developed. But it is equally obvious that *isnāds* of various types were in use, and from this we may infer that the practice of sometimes tracing authority right back to the event is earlier than the time of Ibn Isḥāq.[2] Although the use of complete *isnāds* by Ibn Isḥāq is far from being the rule, the very variety of his method gives ground for believing that he is supplying us with the types of authority available in his day. It has already been pointed out how he can cite an authority sometimes without support, sometimes going a stage farther back, and sometimes going back to a source contemporary with the event. When, for example, he quotes Zuhrī sometimes with and sometimes without further authority, this can only mean that he

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[1] Ṭayālisī has a moderate number of traditions in his *Musnad* traced to Abū Huraira, giving 303, Nos. 2296 to 2598. It is different when we come to the *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, for there we find 313 pages of Abū Huraira's traditions in vol. ii, pp. 228-541 (6 vol., Cairo, 1311/1895).

[2] For a discussion of early forms of *isnād*, apart from the work of Horovitz mentioned above, cf. Johann Fück, *Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq* (Frankfurt am Main, 1925), pp. 5 ff.

received his transmission of the material in this way. Accordingly, when Zuhrī is represented as receiving his information sometimes from an informant without further authority and sometimes with supporting authority back to the time of the event, this must mean that his informants passed on their material in these different ways. That a connected *isnād* back to the event is not always or even generally found does not justify us in doubting the genuineness of the early *isnāds* which we do possess in complete form ; all it proves is that a complete *isnād* was not a *sine qua non* at the time. If Ibn Isḥāq did not possess any complete *isnāds*, it is difficult to understand why he should sometimes pretend that he did, when his more usual practice is to do without them. Another matter to note in this connection is that Ibn Isḥāq sometimes gives different *isnāds* through which he received different, or even contradictory, reports of an incident. This is perfectly understandable if the *isnāds* are genuine, for it is a commonplace to find different people giving different accounts of the same event, even where no personal interest is involved. Where some personal interest exists there is all the more reason to expect different accounts. So when we find *isnāds* produced to support the different views, their presence is best explained by accepting them as genuine.

If we agree that an early use of genuine *isnāds* going back to the event existed, the fact that this is far from being the rule naturally makes us question the genuineness of all the perfect *isnāds* which we find in works compiled in the third century. The examples adduced by Professor Schacht to show how many traditions which at one time did not have a complete *isnād* later acquired a perfect *isnād* cause one to entertain grave doubts ; but while this is so, we are not justified in rejecting everything we find. We have seen that some perfect *isnāds* did exist at an early period, but we are not justified in concluding that they were the only ones. It does not necessarily follow that because later compilers produce *isnāds* on occasions where, for example, neither Ibn Isḥāq not Mālik uses then, they are all fictitious, although we may have our suspicions about most of them. If we agree that complete *isnāds* existed at an early period, it is reasonable to assume that men like Ibn Isḥāq and Mālik either

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did not make use of all the *isnāds* they knew, or that there were genuine *isnāds* in existence attached to items in which they were not particularly interested, or of which they were ignorant. It is not reasonable to make the assumption either that a scholar must be aware of every detail relevant to his studies, or that when he does not make use of some item of information he is ignorant of it. But while allowance is made for this, one cannot but feel that the vast majority of *isnāds* applied with such regularity in later times to all manner of traditions are fictitious.

My inclination is to accept as genuine lines of transmission the *isnāds* which go back from Ibn Isḥāq to Companions or to the Prophet. But to go a stage farther and consider the nature of the information supplied with the supporting authority of these *isnāds* raises a very difficult question, for it is difficult for anyone to be completely objective in his criticism. It has often been suggested that, although the main body of Tradition cannot be genuine, there is a genuine core ; but no one has yet provided a method of extracting this core. Yet if the transmission is accepted within limits, there must be a basis of fact in what is transmitted, even if it has undergone some process of moulding in the course of transmission. Whatever may be said about the development of legal traditions by later generations, and whatever doubts may be cast on the reliability of any information we have regarding the Prophet outside the Qur'ān, we must believe that we possess reliable information regarding the main outline of the Prophet's career, especially after the Hijra. Although we may not, apart from the Qur'ān, have Muḥammad's actual words, we must have at least the general sense of what he said on different occasions. It may be that actual words of his have been handed down as nearly as it is possible to report words heard on important occasions. When one thinks of the phenomenal memories of the *rāwīs* who were able to recite great quantities of poetry, one is prepared to believe that there were people who were able to remember and repeat words spoken in conversation, or in more formal speeches. Granted that prose is more difficult to repeat accurately than poetry, we can still believe that there were people who could at least reproduce an approximately accurate representation of words which they had heard. But if we are to

determine with any degree of probability what the genuine core is, a study of *isnāds* is not in itself sufficient, whether we take into account all the numerous *isnāds* to be found in the canonical collections of *Ḥadīth*, or whether we confine our study to *isnāds* found only in the earliest works we possess.   One must therefore combine with a study of *isnāds* some other approach.

Perhaps a suggestion of such a method may be found in the Form Criticism which has been applied to the Gospels.   The position is certainly not quite the same, for in the Gospels as they stand we do not have the various elements of the sources separated out for us as we do through the *isnāds* of Muslim Tradition where, at least apparently, the transmission is traced back to the source.   Further, New Testament scholars are by no means agreed about the value of the method of Form Criticism. I do not therefore suggest that an application of Form Criticism will solve all problems, but I do suggest that by an examination of the form in which different types of material are presented, with or without *isnāds*, it might be possible to come to some conclusion regarding the manner in which details relating to the Prophet came to be presented ; and we might, by studying particularly the material to be found in the earliest sources we possess, discover whether the reports of the Prophet's deeds and words had become modified or adapted at a comparatively early date.

It is only reasonable to believe that even as early as during the Prophet's lifetime he was a common topic of conversation, and that stories of what he said and did were eagerly discussed. With the expansion of Islām after his death there would be even greater reason for such conversations, for new converts would be anxious to learn all they could about him.   In the material given by Ibn Hishām as coming from Ibn Isḥāq we have our earliest considerable record of the Prophet's life.   Can we, therefore, by confining our attention particularly to such a source as this come to some conclusion as to whether special forms of presenting the Prophet's words and deeds early developed through the need to make them known to succeeding generations ?   Whether this would produce any appreciable result it is impossible to say. It is a type of research which might produce some useful result, but one cannot pronounce on its value until it is undertaken.