

## NOTA BIBLIOGRÁFICA

### **The Condensations of Sacred History: On David Powers' Biography of Zayd**

Las condensaciones de la Historia Sagrada:  
Sobre la biografía de Zayd por David Powers.

Powers, David S., *Zayd*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

Writing in 1916, Sigmund Freud identified 'condensation' (*Verdichtung*) as one of the most remarkable achievements of dream-work. He observed that several persons might be combined into a compound oneiric figure that "may look like A, may be dressed like B, may perform an action that we remember C performing, and at the same time we may recognize him as D."<sup>1</sup> The result is, "as a rule, a blurred and vague image that brings to mind several photographs taken on the same plate."<sup>2</sup> As one reads David Powers' highly erudite and absorbing book, *Zayd* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press), one is astounded by the manner in which sacred narratives amalgamate persons, locations, and events into compound images of *Heilsgeschichte* that conjure up the Freudian *Verdichtung* in both their complexity and their elusive, if not entirely fanciful, link to actual historical events.

To explore the workings of Islamic sacred history, Powers has chosen narratives about a man known as Zayd. The mention of Zayd in Q. 33:37 together with the mention of the Arabian prophet Muḥammad in Q. 33:40, both within a single Qur'ānic pericope (Q. 33:36–40), highlights the legal and theological significance of the relationship between the two men. But the short and allusive Qur'ānic account raises more questions than it answers. We learn that Zayd had been married to a woman who was coveted by the Prophet, and who became his wife once "Zayd had finished with her." The circumstances of this marriage are unclear; Q. 33:37 only alludes to Zayd's status as the Prophet's adopted son (*da'ī*). As usual, Qur'ānic terseness is supplemented by a wealth

<sup>1</sup> Freud, "Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse," 7:175.

<sup>2</sup> Freud, "Vorlesungen," 7:175.

of explicative narratives. They tell us the story of Muḥammad's adoption of Zayd, who came to be known as Zayd b. Muḥammad and became Muḥammad's heir, Zayd's marriage to and divorce from the beautiful Zaynab, Zaynab's subsequent marriage to the Prophet, followed by Muḥammad's repudiation of Zayd and Zayd's exemplary death at the battle of Mu'ta in 7 or 8 AH (628–30 CE). Although students of early Islam,<sup>3</sup> including Powers in a previous monograph,<sup>4</sup> have discussed one or another aspect of these narratives, *Zayd* is the first comprehensive biography of the Prophet's adopted son written by a modern Western Islamicist.

From the outset, Powers states that he will examine Zayd traditions in comparison with cognate Biblical and post-Biblical narratives, and this methodological commitment determines the organization of the book. Powers divides each of the four chapters into three sections: "Islamic Narratives," in which he examines Islamic literary sources; "Biblical Models," in which he summarizes relevant Biblical material; and "Textual Encounters," in which he compares these two types of evidence. At first glance repetitive, this structure allows for a pithy exposition of the book's complex subject, while at the same time introducing an element of hermeneutical intrigue for the reader who tries to anticipate the author's conclusions in the third section of each chapter.

In the Introduction Powers reviews Ibn Ishāq's (d. 150/767–8) *Sīra*—the earliest comprehensive biography of the Prophet—as preserved in the recension of Ibn Hishām (d. 218/834). Although the *Sīra* accounts, as preserved by Ibn Hishām, contain rich and lively descriptions of Zayd, they surprisingly fail to address questions that would have been of utmost significance to second-century Muslims. What occasioned the revelation of Q. 33:37? What was the exact relationship between the Prophet and Zayd? Who is the unnamed woman in the Qur'ānic verse? Powers rightfully asks about the reason for such narrative lacunae (p. 15), and he provides answers in the following chapters.

In Chapter 1 ("Zayd") Powers sets out to fill the gaps in the *Sīra*. From other literary sources we learn that as a youth Zayd was abducted and sold into slavery to Khadija b. Khuwaylid. Upon becoming Muḥammad's wife, Khadija gave Zayd as a gift to her husband who subsequently manumitted and adopted him. In the vicissitudes of Zayd's early years Powers finds parallels to the Biblical Joseph. Both men share cognate names that signify "to increase"; and in the literary narratives about them, the topoi of slavery, test,

<sup>3</sup> Uri Rubin examined parallels between Moses and Muḥammad (*The Eye of the Beholder*), and Ze'ev Maghen drew comparisons between Zaynab and Bathsheba ("Davidic Motifs," pp. 91–139). For a comprehensive review of Western research on the Islamic concept of finality of prophecy, see Rubin, "The Seal of the Prophets and the Finality of Prophecy: On the Interpretation of the Qur'ānic *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*."

<sup>4</sup> Powers, *Muḥammad is Not the Father of Any of Your Men. The Making of the Last Prophet*, pp. 35–151.

patronage, and divine favor are prominent. But Zayd is far from a spitting image of Joseph: Powers finds similarities between the descriptions of Zayd and Abraham's servant, Dammesek Eliezer; and in the following chapters he will establish that the image of Muḥammad's adopted son compresses additional Biblical personages.

Chapter 2 ("Zaynab") focuses on Zayd's wife, Zaynab bt. Jaḥsh. She married Zayd not of her own free will but only upon being enjoined to do so by the divinity. Subsequently, the marriage was dissolved by another act of divine intervention. During a visit to Zayd's house, the Prophet caught a glimpse of the beautiful Zaynab, scantily clad. Although infatuated with Zaynab, the Prophet dismissed Zayd's offer to divorce her so that she might become his wife, and he changed his mind only following a divine injunction included in Q. 33:37 ("We gave her to you in marriage"). As Powers notes, Muḥammad's marriage to his daughter-in-law raised both legal and moral anxieties. These anxieties, however, cannot have originated in an existing Qur'ānic proscription of such unions. Powers may be correct to seek the origin of the prohibition of marrying daughters-in-law in the Jewish Holiness Code (p. 35), although I would like to see more evidence about the feasibility of such halakhic interaction. I wonder why the Jewish norm was ignored by Muslim exegetes who, when addressing other instances of legal ambiguity, did not shy away from employing Biblical analogies.<sup>5</sup> Be that as it may, it is important to note the legal and political significance of the repudiation: Zayd lost his right to inherit from Muḥammad and he gave up his identity as "the son of Muḥammad."

As the plot of Zayd's story gains dramatic complexity, so does the process of *Verdichtung*. 'Alī is now Abraham's servant, perhaps Dammesek Eliezer. Zaynab is at once Rebecca and Bathsheba. Muḥammad is both King David and Abraham. Zayd is both Uriah the Hittite and Ishmael. As in a dream, the correlation between these figures of Islamic and Biblical *Heilsgeschichte* is sometimes inverted. Whereas upon seeing Bathsheba, King David is unable to control his sexual desire, the Arabian prophet is steadfast in his refusal to marry Zaynab absent a divine sanction. In addition to binary oppositions, dramatic effect is achieved by narrative mirroring. Just as Zayd is reluctant to marry Umm Ayman, a former slave of Muḥammad's father and one of Muḥammad's caretakers after his mother's death, so too Muḥammad is reluctant to agree to Zaynab's marriage with Zayd, Muḥammad's former slave. Just as Zaynab, as a believer, is obligated to marry Zayd after being commanded to do so by Allah and His Prophet, so too Zayd is obligated to obey the Prophet's order and to inform Zaynab personally that Muḥammad wants to marry her. A literary device amply deployed in narratives about the Prophet, Zayd, and Zaynab is divine intervention. The Islamic *deus ex machina* comes

<sup>5</sup> For example, the Islamic penalty for adultery was sometimes justified by analogy with the Torah. See Burton, *The Sources of Islamic law: Islamic Theories of Abrogation*, pp. 129–33.

into play whenever the protagonists must be rescued from seemingly hopeless situations.

In Chapter 3 (“Mu’tah”) the narrative arc about Zayd comes to its culmination. The story contains numerous Biblical and post-Biblical allusions. Muḥammad is Abraham, who was ready to sacrifice his son, or, according to some midrashic narratives, did sacrifice him in response to God’s command. Like Isaac in some post-Biblical narratives, Zayd dies—to confirm through his martyrdom the prophetic gift of Muḥammad. Powers compares the martyrdom of Zayd and two other commanders of the Muslim army at Mu’tah to the martyrdom of seven Jewish brothers who, in 4 Macc., freely chose a gruesome death over relinquishing their faith.

In Chapter 4 (“Usāma”) Powers draws attention to the close relationship between Muḥammad and Zayd’s son, Usāma. This relationship finds expression, *inter alia*, in actions that signal a transfer of power and authority from the Prophet to Usāma, such as the exchange of bodily fluids and dressing Usāma in royal garments belonging to the Prophet. In 12/632, although only eighteen to twenty years old, Usāma was appointed by the Prophet as the commander of an army that raided Palestine to exact revenge for the slaying of Zayd. Significantly, Usāma assumed command over prominent Companions of the Prophet—with the exception of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, both of whom received an exemption from military service on this occasion. Investment with spiritual and military authority, along with analogies to Biblical figures such as Joshua, Joseph, and Solomon, convey a clear message: Although Muḥammad had repudiated—hence, formally disinherited—Zayd, he continued to hold both Zayd and Usāma in high esteem and, shortly before his death, he performed actions that apparently endorsed Usāma’s right to political succession.

As condensations of Biblical and post-Biblical models, reports about Zayd and Usāma must reflect a historical setting other than the one Islamic literary sources purport to describe. In the Conclusion, Powers attempts to uncover this setting by highlighting a point of considerable semantic tension inherent in narratives about Zayd. It is curious that the Prophet would repudiate his adopted son even though Q. 33:37 indicates that “there should be no difficulty for the believers concerning the wives of their adopted sons, when they have finished with them.” Why then did Muhammad repudiate Zayd? And why was the institution of adoption abolished immediately after the Prophet’s marriage to Zaynab?

To Powers, the key to answering these questions lies in no longer extant text of Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīra*, specifically, in passages that would have endorsed the leadership credentials of Zayd and Usāma. These passages, Powers suggests, were omitted by Ibn Hishām when he produced his recension of the text. Based on sources other than the *Sīra*, Powers argues persuasively that the political credentials attributed to Zayd and Usāma were as strong as—indeed, arguably stronger than—the credentials attributed to Abū Bakr (by Sunnīs) and ‘Alī (by Shī‘īs). The suppression of narratives about the political

qualifications of Zayd and Usāma would have suited the interests of Umayyads, ‘Abbāsids, and ‘Alīds alike, whose claims to political authority would have been threatened by claims made on behalf of the Prophet’s direct heirs through his adopted son Zayd (pp. 104–9).

In addition to political considerations, important theological reasons required the severing of the relationship between Muḥammad and Zayd. Early believers treated the advent of the Prophet, metaphorically designated as *khātam al-nabiyyīn* (the seal of prophets), as an eschatological fulfillment of previous prophecies. Towards the end of the seventh century CE, a conceptual shift took place whereby *khātam al-nabiyyīn* began to be understood as “the last prophet.” The new concept found expression in the revelation “Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men,” which became v. 40 of *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*. This remarkable prediction that Muḥammad would die without adult male progeny<sup>6</sup> arguably arose in connection with the rapidly emerging doctrine of the finality of prophecy, which demanded a prophet who was sonless. According to Powers, the proper *Sitz im Leben* of the Qur’ānic prediction would have been the caliphate of ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (65–86/685–705), during which the pericope Q. 33:36–40 “might have been formulated and inserted into the text of the Qur’ān” (pp. 122–3). In an attempt to reconstruct the original understanding of *khātam al-nabiyyīn* as eschatological fulfilment, Powers cites a variant reading of Q. 61:6 attributed to Ubayy b. Ka’b, in which Jesus predicts the coming of a Prophet whose community will be the last community (*ākhir al-umam*) and by means of whom God will “seal the messengers and the prophets” (*yakhtumu ‘l-lāh“ bi-hi ‘l-anbiyā’<sup>a</sup> wa ‘l-rusul<sup>a</sup>*). This latter phrase, Powers notes, bears a striking resemblance to the phrase *laḥtōm ḥazōn ve-navī* in Dan. 9:24.

The understanding of Islamic foundational narratives as complex images of salvation history produced by means of the compression, suppression, and displacement of historical facts and sacred tales is Powers’ indisputable contribution to the field of Islamic studies. His examination of associative links between these narratives and Biblical and post-Biblical traditions helps us to understand how the early community of believers constructed its identity in close interaction with late-antique religious and intellectual milieu. Opponents may criticize Powers for excessive speculation—as noted by Berg in his review of *Muḥammad*<sup>7</sup>—but, so long as our evidentiary basis remains scant and incomplete, as at present, our understanding of the history of early Islam is best advanced by a judicious combination of speculation and scholarly intuition.

If, like Powers, one treats narratives about the Prophet as *Heilsgeschichte* rather than as an account of what really happened, one may perhaps avoid the

<sup>6</sup> Pace Donner’s sanguine assertion that the Qur’ān is free of anachronisms (*Narratives of Islamic Origins. The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, p. 49).

<sup>7</sup> Berg, “Review of David S. Powers. *Muḥammad is not the Father of Any of Your Men. The Making of the Last Prophet*,” p. 369.

pitfalls of presuming that *sīra* accounts contain a historical kernel.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, Powers' methodology in *Zayd* (and in *Muḥammad*) raises two questions, one relating to the validity of some of the author's analogies, the second to chronology.

One can hardly deny that Islamic narratives about the Prophet's family exhibit parallels with Biblical and post-Biblical narratives. This literary interaction has been explored by a number of Islamicists representing a wide spectrum of scholarly approaches, such as Arthur Jeffery, John Wansbrough, Patricia Crone, Angelika Neuwirth, Uri Rubin, and Ze'ev Maghen, to mention but a few.<sup>9</sup> The correlations posited by Powers are for the most part clear and convincing, e.g., the cloud that symbolizes divine guidance in Biblical and Islamic narratives (p. 93) or the relationship between the verb *yakhtum* in a non-canonical version of Q. 61:6 and the cognate Hebrew verb *laḥtôm* in Dan.

<sup>8</sup> To illustrate this point, consider two recent publications on the life and death of Muḥammad. Uri Rubin grants the historicity of reports in which the Prophet proclaims upon the death of his son Ibrāhīm that he was "a prophet son of a prophet." According to Rubin, this statement served to establish Muḥammad's physical fatherhood of Ibrāhīm against gossip to the contrary ("The Seal of the Prophets," pp. 76–80). Several decades after Muḥammad's death, this metaphorical expression ceased to be understood figuratively and materialized in the doctrine that Muḥammad died sonless because he is the last Prophet. To account for the disturbing sonlessness of their prophet, Rubin argues, early Muslims dissociated the Qur'ānic statement "Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men" from its original meaning as spiritual fatherhood and interpreted it as actual, physical fatherhood ("The Seal of the Prophets," pp. 67–71). They also reinterpreted the "seal of the prophets" (*khātam al-nabiyyīn*) metaphor: Originally introduced to justify Muḥammad's marriage to Zaynab by drawing parallels with the Mosaic tradition ("The Seal of the Prophets," p. 73), the phrase came to be understood as signifying the finality of Muḥammad's prophecy. Rubin's hypothesis is undermined, however, by substantive contradictions. On the one hand, he maintains that the meaning of 'finality' was inherent in the expression *khātam al-nabiyyīn* (ibid., p. 74); on the other hand, he argues that this meaning developed after Muḥammad's death as a justification of his sonlessness ("The Seal of the Prophets," p. 80). Moreover, if I understand Rubin correctly, the figurative use of the expression "a prophet son of a prophet" somehow preceded its literal understanding. Such an inverted semantic development is difficult to accept; one might want to consider the possibility that later Muslim exegetes coined the expression as a literal endorsement of the finality of Muḥammad's prophecy. This possibility is suggested by the fact, unnoted by Rubin, that the statements about Ibrāhīm's unfulfilled prophecy are associated for the most part with the companion 'Abd Allāh b Abī Awfā (d. 87/706), not with Muḥammad. The earliest possible common link of these traditions is the Kufan traditionist Ismā'īl b. Abī Khālid (d. 146/763–4). In a recent monograph, Shoemaker has argued persuasively that narratives about Muḥammad's not taking part in the invasion of Palestine were informed by a biblical typology associated with Moses who, likewise, died without entering the Promised Land. Not so persuasive is Shoemaker's suggestion that these literary accounts reflect in an inverted way actual historical events, thus indicating that Muḥammad did participate in the initial incursions into Palestine (*The Death of a Prophet*, pp. 113–7).

<sup>9</sup> For an excellent survey of academic works interpreting Islam as a late antique religion, see Hoyland, "Early Islam as a Late Antique Religion."

9:24 (p. 120). The parallels with well-known Biblical personages, such as Moses, Joseph, and Solomon are also well-grounded. In other respects, however, the process of *Verdichtung* may have taken place only if post-Biblical narratives and midrashic interpretations referred to by Powers were also part of the early believers' common knowledge. One wonders, for instance, if tales from the homiletic 4 Macc. would have been as available to the first believers as Biblical narratives presumably had been. Add to this that revenge, obedience to authority, the issuance of battle instructions, extermination of an enemy, and the transfer of spiritual and political authority by way of anointment or dressing with a special garment are all common literary topoi that may have been possessed independently by both Jews and Muslims.

Powers' methodology has the logical effect of detaching Islamic foundational narratives from the historical events that they purport to describe. Just as the process of *Verdichtung* draws on recent memories and more distant experiences to transform them into oneiric images of great complexity, so too *Heilsgeschichte* transposes events and persons from their original setting into the realm of fiction. These transformations are often driven by contemporaneous political concerns and theological anxieties. However disconnected from their putative historical referents, sacred narratives are, nevertheless, historical for at least two reasons. First, they reflect the worldview of actual religious and political groups; and second, they undergo a process of diachronic development as they make their way to later literary sources. This is why chronology remains significant for the study of fictional narratives: It may elucidate both their original *Sitz im Leben* and the vicissitudes of their subsequent transmission.

Powers has gathered compelling evidence that Muslim historical narratives vested Zayd and Usāma with political credentials similar to those attributed to Abū Bakr and 'Alī. If the 'Alīds could make a strong case for their political claims as the Prophet's relatives through his daughter Fāṭima, the descendants of the Prophet's son Zayd and his grandson Usāma would have been equally, if not better, qualified for a prominent role in the Muslim polity. Given the textual witnesses to the political prominence of Zayd and Usāma, it is curious that we have only faint traces of an organized party that claimed political authority through these two men. One such trace may be the collective designation of Usāma's children as Banū al-Hibb, which brings to mind politically charged designations, such as Banū 'Abd Manāf, Banū Umayya, and Banū Hāshim.<sup>10</sup> But why would traditionists and exegetes like Ibn Hishām, Ibn Sa'd, al-Ṭabarī, and Muqātil b. Sulaymān, who represented a wide spectrum of political and theological views, suppress reports about Zayd's partisans, while at the same time preserving narratives about the transfer of authority from the Prophet to his son and grandson? A key to answering this question might be the chronology of two remarkable reports.

<sup>10</sup> Powers, *Zayd*, p. 86 (citing al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, Muḥammad Ḥamīd Allāh (ed.), 1:472).

In the first report, not included in Powers' analysis, al-Balādhurī recounts a conversation between the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 65–86/685–705) and Zayd's grandson Muhammad b. Usāma b. Zayd. The caliph asked Muḥammad about Zayd's age when the Prophet appointed him as a commander of the army, and Usāma replied, "Seventeen." Upon that the caliph exclaimed, "And these are the people who reproach us for having appointed al-Walīd as he was twenty and odd years old!"<sup>11</sup> Since al-Walīd was born ca. 54/674, 'Abd al-Mālik may have referred either to the military campaign that he led in 77/696,<sup>12</sup> or to his appointment as a successor to the caliphate in ca. 85/704.<sup>13</sup> Significantly, 'Abd al-Mālik treated the military and political credentials that he conferred upon his son as similar to the credentials that the Prophet conferred upon Usāma b. Zayd. There can be little doubt that the caliph's words 'those are the people who reproach us' refer to a party that associated itself with Zayd and censured the Umayyads for their administrative and political practices. Because of its single-strand *isnād*, this tradition is difficult to date; among its transmitters, one notes the Kufan historian (*akhbārī*) al-Haytham b. 'Adī al-Ṭā'ī (d. 206–9/821–4) who was often accused of *hadīth* forgery.<sup>14</sup>

In the second report, mentioned by Powers, 'Ā'isha's is credited with the words that had Zayd outlived the Prophet, he would have appointed him as his successor (p. 109). The chronology of this report, possibly put into circulation by the Kufan Muḥammad b. 'Ubayd al-Ṭanāfusī (d. 204/819–20), may point to the earliest claimants of political legitimacy through Zayd and Usāma and suggest a reason for the absence of their mention in some second-century sources.

Thus we come to the redactional history of Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra*. Ibn Hishām is known to have trimmed the original text, and Powers has good grounds to assume that references to the political legacy of Muḥammad through the bloodline of Zayd would have been especially susceptible to deletion. One wonders, however, about the limits of this inference from silence. As noted, the possibility should not be discounted that biographical traditions about Zayd, as, for instance, 'Ā'isha's above statement, may have been put into circulation *after* the death of Ibn Ishāq. For this reason, it would be illuminating to compare Ibn Hishām's material transmitted on the authority of al-Bakkā'ī → Ibn Ishāq with corresponding traditions transmitted by al-'Uṭāridī → Yūnus b. Bukayr → Ibn Ishāq and with Ibn Ishāq's traditions in al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh* and al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, Suhayl Zakkār and Riyāq Zaraklī (eds.), 7:218.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulūk*, 6:318.

<sup>13</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulūk*, 6:416.

<sup>14</sup> *EP*, s.v. "al-Haytham b. 'Adī" (Ch. Pellat).

<sup>15</sup> Take, for instance, Ibn Hishām's cursory note that the Prophet married Zaynab after she had been Zayd's wife (Ibn Ishāq, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, 4:322. By contrast, in the transmission of al-'Uṭāridī on the authority of Yūnus b. Bukayr → Ibn Ishāq, we read that the Prophet caught a glimpse of Zaynab as he was paying a sickbed visit to Zayd (Ibn



An important issue that also bears on chronology is Powers' hypothesis that early believers understood the verb *khatama* as 'to confirm' and 'to fulfill' predictions of the advent of an eschatological prophet. This hypothesis, which elicited critical remarks from Uri Rubin<sup>16</sup> and a rather vehement retort from Yasin Dutton,<sup>17</sup> hinges upon a variant reading of Q. 61:6, said to have been present in the codex of Ubayy b. Ka'b, and upon similarities between this reading and Dan. 9:24. I have been unable to establish the original source from which Jeffery extracted Ubayy's reading.<sup>18</sup> Even if this source were to be identified, it must be carefully examined and dated before we can consider it a witness to the worldview of the early believers. That said, the reading attributed to Ubayy is not the only argument in favor of Powers' hypothesis. It finds support in Jeffery's suggested progression of the Islamic understanding of prophecy from "fulfillment of the promise to the People of the Book" to "the final link in a prophetic succession."<sup>19</sup> Even Uri Rubin, who is critical of Powers' views in *Muhammad*, acknowledges that "the immediate message of Muhammad's description as 'the messenger of God and the seal of the prophets' seems to be the exact fulfillment of the history of past prophecies."<sup>20</sup> At the same time Shoemaker has argued forcefully that Muhammad and his followers were animated by a belief in the impending *eschaton*,<sup>21</sup> which, of course, was to seal, that is, to fulfill, the promise of previous prophecies. It was only towards the end of the first century AH that this conception gave way to the understanding associated with what we conventionally call 'classical Islam.'

At first sight, Powers' interpretation of Islamic foundational narratives as condensations of sacred history might disappoint scholars seeking to know what really happened in the first few decades of Islamic history. A careful reading, however, shows that while undermining the traditional narrative about Muhammad and his family, which now seems more of a sacred legend that establishes legal and moral norms, Powers does not deny that it may be possible to recover traces of historical information about the community of early believers and the way it understood and represented its past. The unde-

Ishāq, *Kitāb al-Siyar wa'l-Maghāzī*, p. 262). Even though this version provides more details than Ibn Hishām's, it does not include the amorous overtones of other narratives about Muhammad and Zaynab. Was this the outcome of a redaction of Ibn Ishāq's narrative by either al-'Uṭāridī or Yūnus b. Bukayr? May Ibn Ishāq have been the original editor? Is it possible that the erotic allusions were not part of the narrative in Ibn Ishāq's lifetime?

<sup>16</sup> Rubin, "The Seal of the Prophets," p. 75ff.

<sup>17</sup> Dutton, "Old Light on a New Problem: The *Kalāla* Verses Revisited," pp. 370–1.

<sup>18</sup> Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān. The Old Codices*, p. 170.

<sup>19</sup> Jeffery, "The Qur'ān as Scripture, IV," p. 266; cf. p. 258; Jeffery, "The Qur'ān as Scripture, III," p. 206.

<sup>20</sup> Rubin, "The Seal of the Prophets," p. 74.

<sup>21</sup> Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet. The End of Muhammad's Life and the Beginnings of Islam*, pp. 118–96.

niable contribution of *Zayd* (and *Muḥammad*) to the field of Islamic studies is that these two books invite even more research into early Islamic history as they command critical reflection on our scholarly methodologies.

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