

On Early Egyptian Monastic Prayer and the Islamic Ṣalāt

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1 Introduction

1.1 Ṣalāt and its Parallels to Christian Prayer

One of the “five pillars” and probably one of the best-known aspects of Islam is the ritual prayer (arab. صلاة/ṣalāt) with its characteristic prostrations. The ṣalāt is obligatory to every healthy and mature Muslim at five set times a day and thus considered as a direct commandment of God. It has a defined shape and must not be adapted to the needs or customs of the praying people.

In an essay published in 2016¹ I figured out several parallels between the Islamic obligatory Prayer and the Christian Daily Office, especially the Office of Coptic provenience. I’d like to take up this topic again, because regarding the Coptic office there are some recent publications with new insights that spread new light on this question. The new publications have been written by Stephen Emmel² who lead a project on the critical edition of Shenoute’s works, by Diliانا Atanassova who edited and analysed the Typika of the White Monastery, by Heinzgerd Brakmann who focuses on Coptic euchology and by Ugo Zanetti³ who has published and still publishes several articles and essays on Pachomian Prayer, referring to the works of Bentley Layton⁴ who published an edition of the Canons of Shenoute.

1.2 Review

Besides my own essay and the most recent essay of Zanetti that both have been published in 2016 there appeared also a new issue of “Heiliger Dienst” on common prayer of Christians and Muslims which largely ignored the liturgical parallels and concentrated on dogmatic differences between Christianity and Islam.

In general, there are only few studies on this subject. There are studies on the history of Egyptian Monastic Prayer, the youngest ones are mentioned above. Regarding Islamic Prayer there is still no book with a reconstruction of its history. Much more has been written on the relationship between the Qur’ān and Christian prayer; the most important book among them is a monography by Angelika Neuwirth⁵ who

¹ LÜSTRAETEN, Martin, Identität und Austausch. Christliche Tagzeitenliturgie und muslimisches Pflichtgebet im Vergleich. In: BUKOVEC, Pedrag/TADIĆ, Vedrana (eds.), *Ritualia orientalia mixta. Reflexionen über Rituale in der Religionsgeschichte des Orients und angrenzender Gebiete* (RVO 4), Hamburg 2016, p. 231–265.

² Emmel, Stephen (ed.), *Shenoute’s literary corpus*, 2 vols., Louvain 2004. The project is still ongoing.

³ ZANETTI, Ugo, La Liturgie dans les Monastères de Shenoute. In: *BSAC* 53 (2014), p. 167–224.; ZANETTI, Ugo, Les moines cénobites de Haute Egypte et leur liturgie. In: *Irenikon* 88 (2015), p. 348–388.; ZANETTI, Ugo, Question Liturgiques dans les « Canons de Shenoute ». In: *OCP* 82 (2016), p. 67–99.

⁴ LAYTON, Bentley, *The Canons of Our Fathers. Monastic Rules of Shenoute*, Oxford 2014.

⁵ NEUWIRTH, Angelika, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike. Ein europäischer Zugang*, Berlin 2011.

identifies the Qurʾān as a liturgical text which at the same time also records its reception. Some sūras are also depicted as recorded liturgy⁶.

Furthermore, the existing and available studies on Christian influence on the origins of Islamic Prayer are already very old and tend to claim a primacy of Christian customs⁷. Studies on parallels between contemporary Christian and Islamic prayer are still missing and studies written for the purpose of an interreligious dialogue largely ignore the ritual practice.

2 The Monastic Office in Upper Egypt

The Monastic Office in Egypt is witnessed in two traditions: the tradition of the Scetis and the tradition of the Tabennesiots⁸, which is attributed to Pachomius the Great († 348) and Shenoute († 466), who was the head of the so-called “White Monastery”, the “Red Monastery”, as well as a women’s monastery⁹ in Upper Egypt.

Up to the 9th century there are only few sources for the Pachomian Prayer, thus we have no sources that are contemporary to the Early Islam and we know that the Pachomian Prayer was fully replaced by the Office of Lower Egypt in the 10th century¹⁰. For a further reconstruction we are thus obliged to get access to more sources of the first millennium – one of them are the Canons of Pachomius and Shenoute that have been published by Bentley Layton.

Whereas the oldest layers of the Canons of Pachomius seem to presume two common prayers per day, in the evening and in the early morning before dawn¹¹, the works of Shenoute mention five prayers: Besides the prayers in the evening and morning also prayers at the first hour, the third hour and the ninth hour¹², resulting in five prayers per day. We know almost nothing about them¹³, which is due to the circumstance that apparently one didn’t need a liturgical book for worship since Pachomian prayer was very simple¹⁴: irrespective of the day or the daytime the prayer consisted of readings, meditations, silent prayers and prostrations¹⁵.

According to Zanetti at the Pachomian Prayer in the 4th century each unit of prayer started with a reading or a recitation of a Biblical text, after which the whole congregation stood up and prayed the “Our Father” with extended arms, then they made the sign of the cross, everyone prostrated to the ground and prayed in silence before rising again and making the sign of the cross again. The silent prayer continued in standing

⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 362s.

⁷ See as an example ŠAYḪŪ, Luwīs, *An-Naṣrāniyya wa-ʿAdābuhā bayn ʿArab al-Ġāhiliyya. Al-Qism at-tānī fī l-ʿĀdāb al-Naṣrāniyya fī ʿAhd al-Ġāhiliyya. Al-Ġuzʿ at-tānī. Al-Qism al-ʿawwal*, Bayrūt 1919, who claims to look for traces of a Pre-Islamic Arabic Christianity but in fact also proposes its leading influence on the formation of Islam.

⁸ Cf. TAFT, Robert F., *Praise in the Desert. The Coptic Monastic Office Yesterday and Today*, In: *Worship* 56 (1982), p. 513–536, here: p. 517.

⁹ Cf. ZANETTI, Ugo, *La Liturgie dans les Monastères de Shenoute* 2014, p. 167.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 168. A similar description is found in Cf. TAFT, Robert F., *Praise in the Desert. The Coptic Monastic Office Yesterday and Today* 1982, p. 525s.

¹¹ Cf. VEILLEUX, Armand, *Prayer in the Pachomian Koinonia*. In: SKUDLAREK, William (ed.), *The Continuing Quest for God. Monastic Spirituality in Tradition and Transition*, Colledgeville 1982, p. 61–66, here: p. 63.

¹² Cf. ZANETTI, Ugo, *La Liturgie dans les Monastères de Shenoute* 2014, p. 177.; Cf. LAYTON, Bentley, *The Canons of Our Fathers. Monastic Rules of Shenoute* 2014, p. 71s.

¹³ Cf. ZANETTI, Ugo, *La Liturgie dans les Monastères de Shenoute* 2014, p. 186s.

¹⁴ Cf. ZANETTI, Ugo, *Les moines cénobites de Haute Égypte et leur liturgie* 2015, p. 363.

¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 366.

position with extended arms until one gave the signal to sit down and listen for the next reading¹⁶. Zanetti identified this cycle as the “six times” (πσοοϋ νσοπ/*soou nsop*) that are mentioned in the Canons of Shenoute as a basic unit of prayer¹⁷, which is usually repeated four times. This assumption is first of all based on the time: To perform a prayer in a reasonable time the “six times” must not be longer than seven minutes. Before him Armand Veilleux interpreted the “six times” as six different pericopes that were read¹⁸, but this would lead to an almost neverending prayer since then an ordinary prayer must have consisted of 24 different readings, each one followed by signs of the cross, prostrations and silence.

Thus the term “six times” designated the basic unit of the prayers for the divine office consisting of six movements. Rules like for example “In any case the canon that is laid down in true measure is four rounds (of prayer) of six rounds per round”¹⁹ thus mean: the canon consists of four units of the “six-times”. In fact, each prayer consisted of a different number of “six times”:

- 4 in the morning when rising (12 in the congregational morning prayer)
- 3 or 4 in the three hours
- 3 in the evening before going to sleep (12 in the congregational evening prayer)²⁰

The prayer on Sundays was different.²¹

It is striking that the idea of a prayer that consists of a varying number of very simple prayer units of each time six bodily performances as well as the idea of performing such a prayer five times a day are similar to the obligatory prayer in Islam today. But what do we know of the formation and development of Islamic Prayer?

3 The Islamic Ṣalāt

3.1 Sources

The paramount source for Early Islam is the Qur’ān itself, which is considered to be revealed to Muḥammad and to be written down by his fellows. Soon after his death the different chapters (سورة/*sūra*) were collected and bound together, so that the text of the Qur’ān as known today was already standardized in the 7th century C.E. Already at this early stage of development Christian and Jewish influences are sensible.²²

With the chronological order of sūras in mind²³ one can observe a development in Islamic Prayer at this early stage²⁴: In the early Meccan Period there was apparently no obligatory prayer for the community but

¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 364.

¹⁷ Cf. ZANETTI, Ugo, Question Liturgiques dans les « Canons de Shenoute » 2016, p. 72.

¹⁸ Cf. VEILLEUX, Armand, La Liturgie dans le cénobitisme pachômien aux quatrième siècle (StAns 57), Roma 1968, p. 309–312.

¹⁹ LAYTON, Bentley, The Canons of Our Fathers. Monastic Rules of Shenoute 2014, p. 158.

²⁰ Cf. ZANETTI, Ugo, Question Liturgiques dans les « Canons de Shenoute » 2016, p. 77.

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 78.

²² Cf. NEUWIRTH, Angelika, Der Koran als Text der Spätantike. Ein europäischer Zugang 2011, p. 336.

²³ Cf. NÖLDEKE, Theodor, Geschichte des Qorāns. Erster Teil: Über den Ursprung des Qorāns, Hildesheim 1961, p. 66–234.

²⁴ SPORER, Johannes, „Der Lobpreis Gottes“. Mönchsliturgien, Araberstämme und der Koran, Dissertation. Universität Wien, Wien 2012 [unpublished thesis], p. 119.

for the prophet alone²⁵. It originally consisted of two prayers that have been expanded to three prayers already before the escape to Madīna²⁶ (622 C.E.). Then the ṣalāt became an obligatory prayer with an increasingly fixed form²⁷.

However, we know very little about the ṣalāt from the Qurʾān – there is even no proof for five prayers daily²⁸. Angelika Neuwirth points at the renarration of biblical stories in some sūras that witness the growing preference of a scriptural tradition²⁹ which might have had an important position at the prayer, but there is no source for the texts that have been prayed³⁰ although Neuwirth claims that there are traces of liturgical text in the Qurʾān³¹: Especially the late-Meccan sūras are supposed to represent a form of codified liturgy, since here the renarration of biblical stories is embedded in prayers³².

After the fixation of the Qurʾān the ṣalāt was an essential part of the tradition (سنة/sunna) and its legal reflection (فقه/ḥaqh). In fact, worship (عبادات/ibādāt) is one of the two treatises of Islamic jurisprudence³³. Fiqh claims that the ritual prayer must not be changed so that conservative orientalist would assume that the prayer as celebrated today is the same as the prayer in Early Islam³⁴. One of the sources of Islamic jurisprudence is the Qurʾān, another one the tradition, which was transmitted in the “sayings”³⁵ (حديث/ḥadīth) of the prophet or companions of the prophet. The fiqh-experts invented different methods of evaluating a single ḥadīth to find a way to ponder on contradictory sayings. Because of different appreciations within the fiqh-tradition different schools with different views have been established so that there is no common consensus on details and the history of prayer. However, there are also no historical manuals for prayer since prayer is learned by imitating the praying people.

The liturgical scholar would be interested to find out whether a certain element of the prayer rite existed already at the beginnings or was introduced later and if it appears to be a younger element to find out the reason or the source for this introduction. Since the history of ṣalāt is still not reconstructed and there are only few sources we have to rely on ḥadīth-critical approaches. One of them is the so-called “Common-Link-theory”: Every ḥadīth consists of the chain of transmitters who transmitted this saying (إسناد/ʾisnād) and the content of the saying (متن/matn); the Common-Link-theory focuses on the ʾisnād: One now has to look out for all similar matn-traditions which comment on the same aspect and to compare the ʾisnāds afterwards.

²⁵ Cf. WATT, William M./WELCH, Alford T., *Der Islam* (RM 25,1), Stuttgart 1980, p. 264–266.

²⁶ Cf. BOBZIN, Hartmut, *Der Koran. Eine Einführung*, München 1999, p. 72.

²⁷ Cf. MONNOT, Guy, *Ṣalat*. In: VAN DONZEL, Emeri (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Islam. Volume VIII: Ned – Sam*, Leiden 1995, p. 925–934, here: p. 925. And cf. WATT, William M./WELCH, Alford T., *Der Islam* 1980, p. 264. ²⁸ Cf. SCHIMMEL, Annemarie, *Die Religion des Islam. Eine Einführung*, Stuttgart 2003, p. 36.

²⁹ Cf. NEUWIRTH, Angelika, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike. Ein europäischer Zugang* 2011, p. 365.

³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 356.

³¹ Cf. NEUWIRTH, Angelika, *Psalmen – im Koran neu gelesen (Ps 104 und 136)*. In: HARTWIG, Dirk [et al.] (eds.), „Im vollen Licht der Geschichte“. *Die Wissenschaft des Judentums und die Anfänge der kritischen Koranforschung* (Ex Oriente Lux – Rezeptionen und Exegesen als Traditionskritik 8), Würzburg 2008, p. 157–189, here: p. 160. ³² Cf.

NEUWIRTH, Angelika, *Vom Rezitationstext über die Liturgie zum Kanon. Zu Entstehung und Wiederauflösung der Surenkomposition im Verlauf der Entwicklung eines islamischen Kultus*. In: WILD, Stefan (ed.), *The Qurʾān as Text* (IPTS 27), Leiden 1996, p. 69–105, here: p. 88–94.

³³ Cf. GHANDOUR, Ali, *Fiqh. Einführung in die islamische Normenlehre*, Freiburg im Breisgau 2014, p. 29.

³⁴ E.g. Shlomo Dov Goitein who stated: „We have no reason to presume that the obligatory prayer at its introduction was different from the prayer we know from the older and the younger sources.“ (“Wir haben gar keinen Grund anzunehmen, dass das Pflichtgebet bei seiner Einführung anders gewesen sein soll als wir es aus ältester und neuester Zeit kennen.”), GOITEIN, Shlomo D., *Das Gebet im Qoran*, Frankfurt 1923, p. 32.

³⁵ Cf. LOHLKER, Rüdiger, *Islamisches Recht* (UTB 3562), Wien 2012, p. 84.

The more transmission lines there are, coming together in a certain transmitter, either reaching him or branching out from him, the more that moment of transmission, represented in what may be described as a ‘knot’, has a claim to historicity.³⁶

Furthermore: If there is a common link to all these traditions it is probable that this common link is the one person who introduced this ḥadīth³⁷ and thus the one who gives us a terminus ante quem of a certain matn-tradition³⁸.

However, the fundamental problem of historical liturgy is the same here: Even if we know that at a certain time something was discussed, we still do not know whether it influenced or was influenced by contemporary practice.

3.2 Number and Times of Prayer

Regarding the number of prayers, we have already seen that the Qur’ān nowhere prescribes five prayers per day. Uri Rubin suggests that the two or three prayers were influenced by the Meccan prayer at the Ka’aba before the rise of Islam³⁹, Eugen Mittwoch on the other side points to Jewish models⁴⁰. Although the Qur’ān does not mention five prayers we know that all the law-schools agree in the number of five, but we do not know when, why and how the number of five prayers was introduced⁴¹.

To explain the number of five obligatory prayers – which seems to contradict the Qur’ān the ḥadīth-tradition gives seven different accounts:

- a. The first one is about a man – sometimes described as a person from central Arabia with scruffy appearance – who asks the prophet about the Islam and is taught the five pillars of Islam, among them the obligatory five prayers a day (“خَمْسُ صَلَوَاتٍ فِي الْيَوْمِ وَاللَّيْلَةِ” – “five prayers on a day and a night”). This, of course, does not explain the origin of the five prayers but the reference to a decree of the prophet himself forbids further questioning by authority.
- b. The second one is about a companion of the prophet who reports that the prophet once said that Gabriel came to him and prayed with him all the five prayers of a day (“نَزَلَ جِبْرِيْلُ فَأَمَّنِي” – “Gabriel came down and was a ’imām [i.e. prayer leader] to me”).
- c. The third one is also an etiology claiming that the prophet passed the different heavens and finally met God who enjoined fifty prayers a day to the people. On an advice of Moses, Muḥammad then bargains successfully for five prayers per day that will be treated as if they were fifty (“هِيَ خَمْسٌ” – “these are five and they are [equal to] fifty and my word will not change”).

³⁶ JUYNBOLL, Gautier H., Some isnād-analytical methods illustrated on the basis of several woman-demeaning sayings from ḥadīth literature, In: al-Qanṭara. Revista de estudios arabes 10 (1989), p. 343–383, here: p. 352. This was opposed by KAMARUDDIN, Amin, The Reliability of Ḥadīth-Transmission. A Re-examination of Ḥadīth-Critical Methods, Bonn 2005, p. 363.

³⁷ Cf. JUYNBOLL, Gautier H., Some isnād-analytical methods illustrated on the basis of several woman-demeaning sayings from ḥadīth literature 1989, p. 353.

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 354.

³⁹ Cf. RUBIN, Uri, Morning and Evening Prayers in Early Islam. In: HAWTING, Gerald R. (ed.), The development of Islamic ritual (The formation of the classical Islamic world 26), Aldershot 2006, p. 105–129, here: p. 108.

⁴⁰ Cf. MITTWOCH, Eugen, Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des islamischen Gebets und Kultus, In: APAW (1913), p. 1–42, here: p. 13.

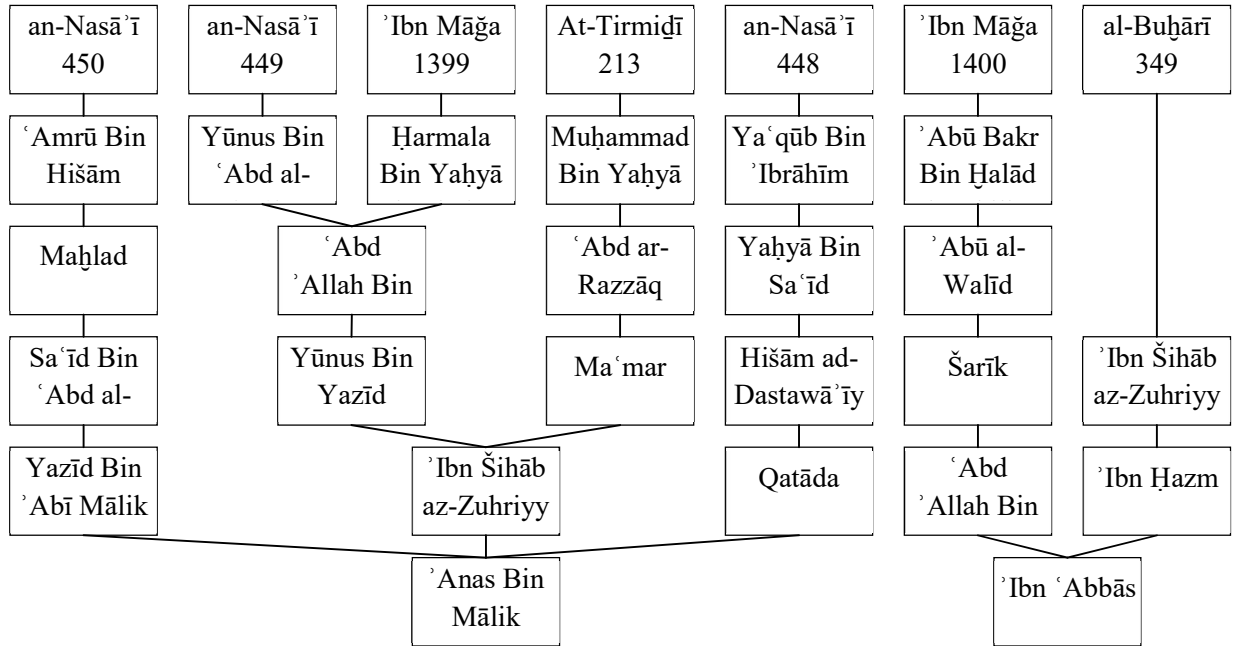
⁴¹ Cf. WATT, William M./WELCH, Alford T., Der Islam 1980, p. 271.

- d. The fourth one is an account that the early companions of Muḥammad gave a pledge to obey the five prayers.
- e. The fifth one is a reaction to an argument whether the so-called ṣalāt al-witr is obligatory or not – here Muḥammad is quoted, that God has enjoined only five prayers (“خُمْسُ صَلَوَاتٍ كَتَبَهُنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْعِبَادِ”) – “five prayers has God prescribed to the servants”) but not the ṣalāt al-witr.
- f. The sixth one is a parable in which prayer is compared to a bath and like five bathes per day wash away all the dirt five prayers a day are assumed to wash away all the sins (“فَذَلِكَ مَثَلُ الصَّلَوَاتِ الْخُمْسِ”) – “and that is like the five prayers”).
- g. And the last one is a report that in his mysterious night journey Muḥammad was told to obey the five daily prayers.

It is obvious, that none of these accounts is acceptable as a historic explanation of the introduction of five prayers and since the argument in all of these accounts is the argument by authority we do not even know the reason for five prayers. At least the common-link-theory helps to identify the age of these traditions. Looking only at the six great ḥadīṭ collections known as “the six books” (الكتب الستة) there are the following ḥadīṭs:

- a. al-Buḥārī 2678; ‘Abū Dāwūd 391; ‘Abū Dāwūd 392; ‘Abū Dāwūd 429; ‘Abū Dāwūd 430; an-Nasā’ī 458; an-Nasā’ī 459; an-Nasā’ī 2090; an-Nasā’ī 5028
- b. al-Buḥārī 521; al-Buḥārī 522; al-Buḥārī 3221; al-Muslim 610a; ‘Abū Dāwūd 394; an-Nasā’ī 494; ‘Ibn Māḡa 495; ‘Ibn Māḡa 668
- c. al-Buḥārī 349; At-Tirmiḏī 213; an-Nasā’ī 448; an-Nasā’ī 449; an-Nasā’ī 450; ‘Ibn Māḡa 1399; ‘Ibn Māḡa 1400
- d. al-Muslim 1043; ‘Abū Dāwūd 1642; an-Nasā’ī 460; ‘Ibn Māḡa 2867; ‘Ibn Māḡa 668
- e. ‘Abū Dāwūd 425; ‘Abū Dāwūd 1420; an-Nasā’ī 461; ‘Ibn Māḡa 1401
- f. al-Buḥārī 528; al-Muslim 667; at-Tirmiḏī 2868; an-Nasā’ī 462
- g. al-Muslim 173; an-Nasā’ī 451

Tradition c (“these are five and they are [equal to] fifty and my word will not change”):

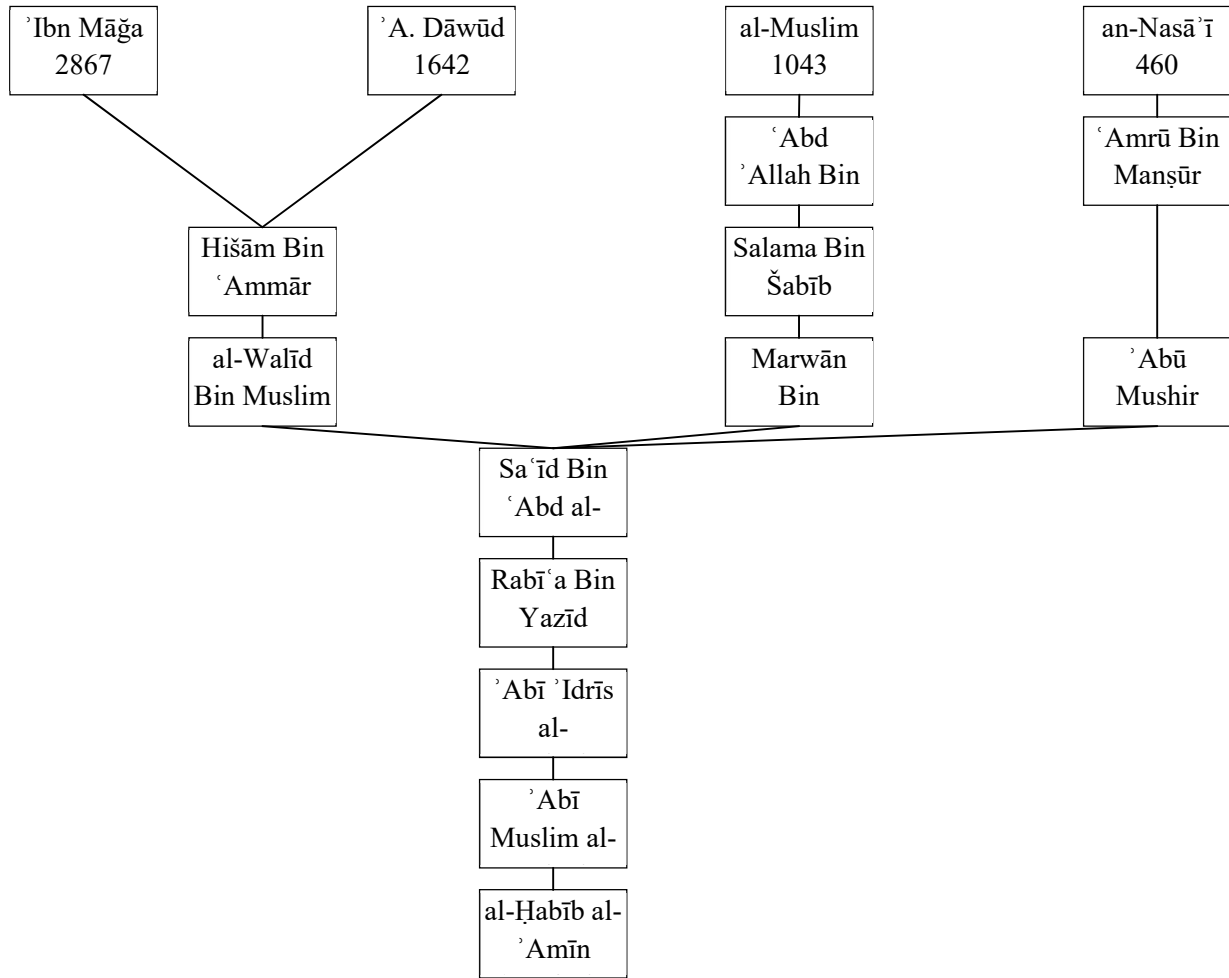


Here it seems that we face two traditions: one has its common link in 'Anas Bin Mālik († 708–714 C.E.⁴⁴) and one in 'Ibn 'Abbās († 688 C.E.⁴⁵).

⁴⁴ Cf. ABĪ AL-FADL 'AḤMAD BIN 'ALĪ BIN ḤAĠAR AL-'ASQALANIYY, *Tahḏīb at-Tahḏīb*, Bayrūt 1968, vol. 1, p. 378s.

⁴⁵ Cf. ABĪ AL-FADL 'AḤMAD BIN 'ALĪ BIN ḤAĠAR AL-'ASQALANIYY, *Tahḏīb at-Tahḏīb*, Bayrūt 1968, vol. 5, p. 278.

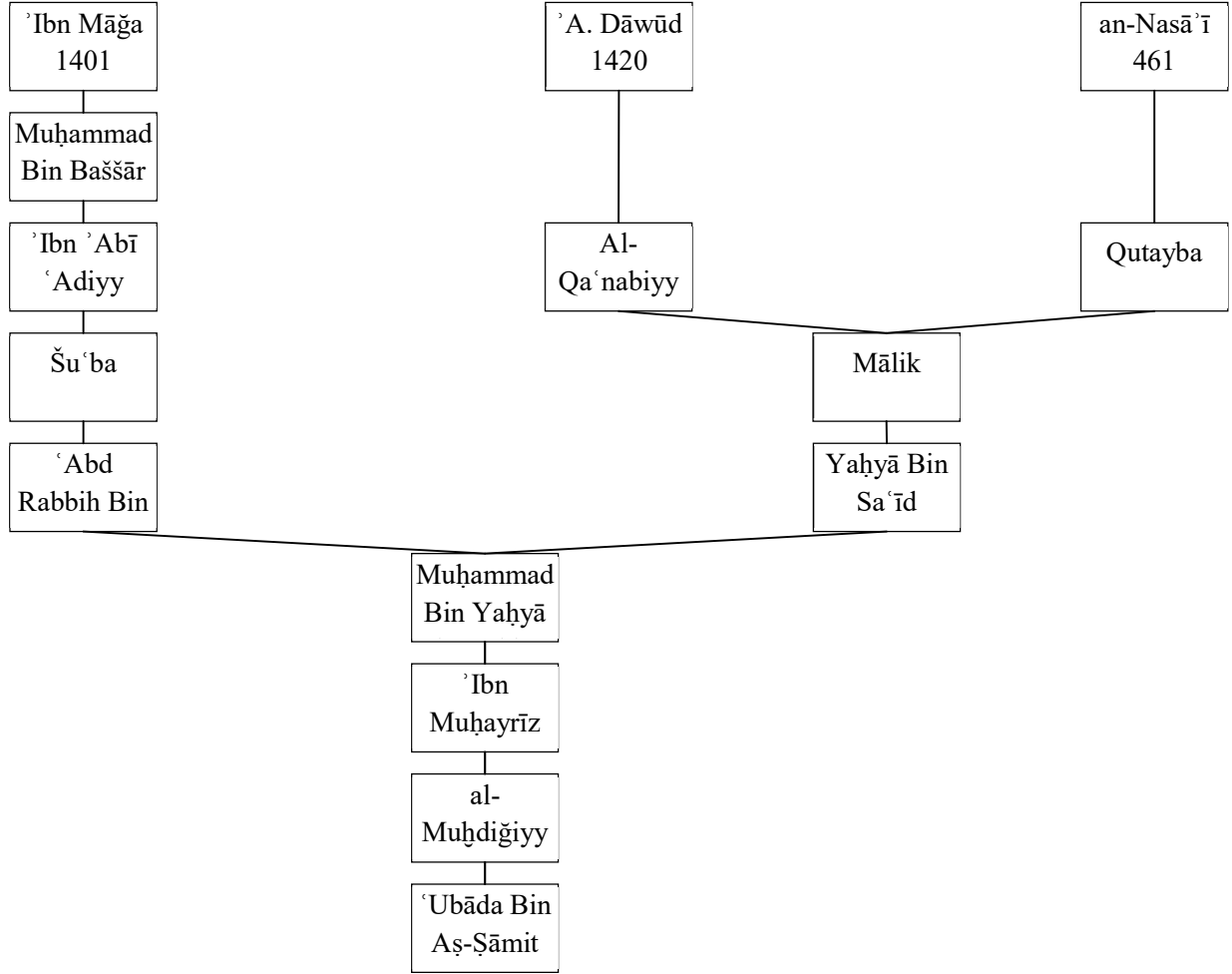
Tradition d (pledge):



The ḥadīth 'Ibn Māġa 668 has no common tradition with these ḥadīths. Besides this all other traditions meet in Sa'īd Bin 'Abd al-'Azīz at-Tanūḥiyy († 783–784 C.E.⁴⁶).

⁴⁶ Cf. ABĪ AL-FADL 'AḤMAD BIN 'ALĪ BIN ḤAĠĠAR AL-'ASQALANIYY, *Tahḏīb at-Tahḏīb*, Bayrūt 1968, vol. 4, p. 60.

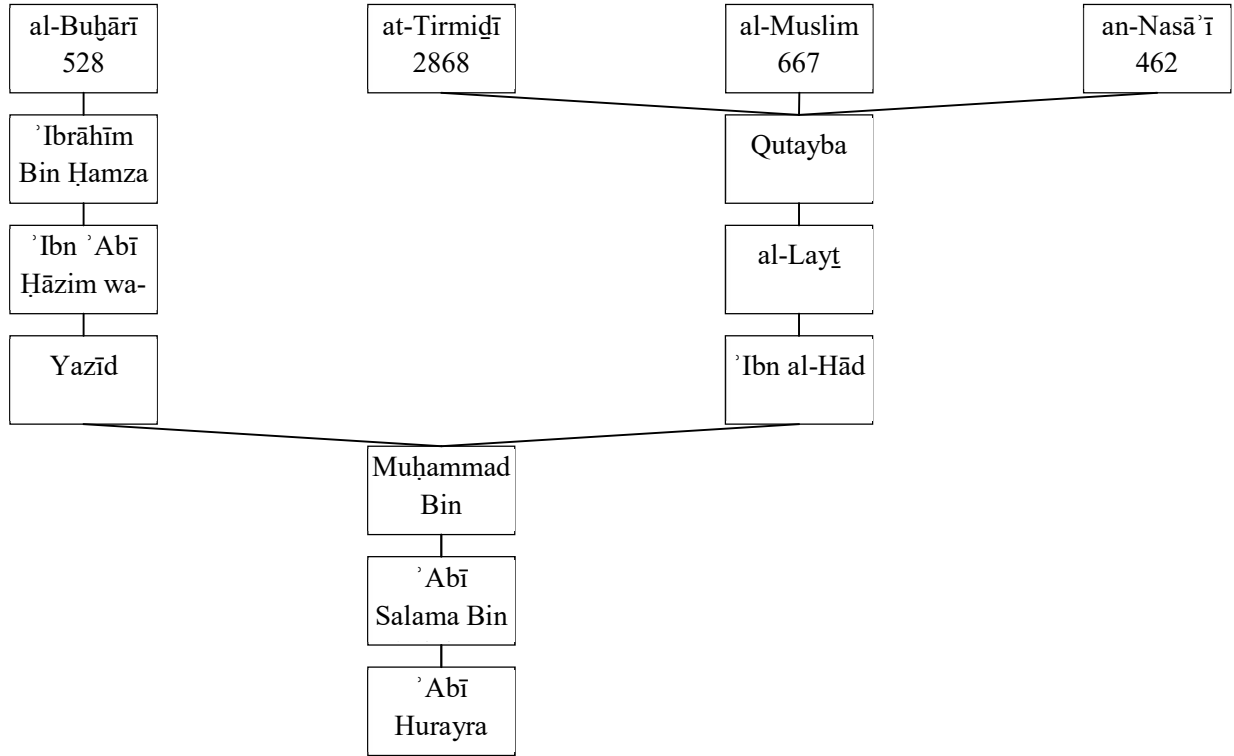
Tradition e (“five prayers has God prescribed to the servants”):



The common link of this tradition is Muḥammad Bin Yaḥyā Bin Ḥabbān († 738/739 C.E.⁴⁷). The ḥadīṯ 'Abū Dāwūd 1420 has no common link to this tradition.

⁴⁷ Cf. ABĪ AL-FADL 'AḤMAD BIN 'ALĪ BIN ḤAĠĀR AL-'ASQALANIYY, *Tahḏīb at-Tahḏīb*, Bayrūt 1968, vol. 9, p. 508.

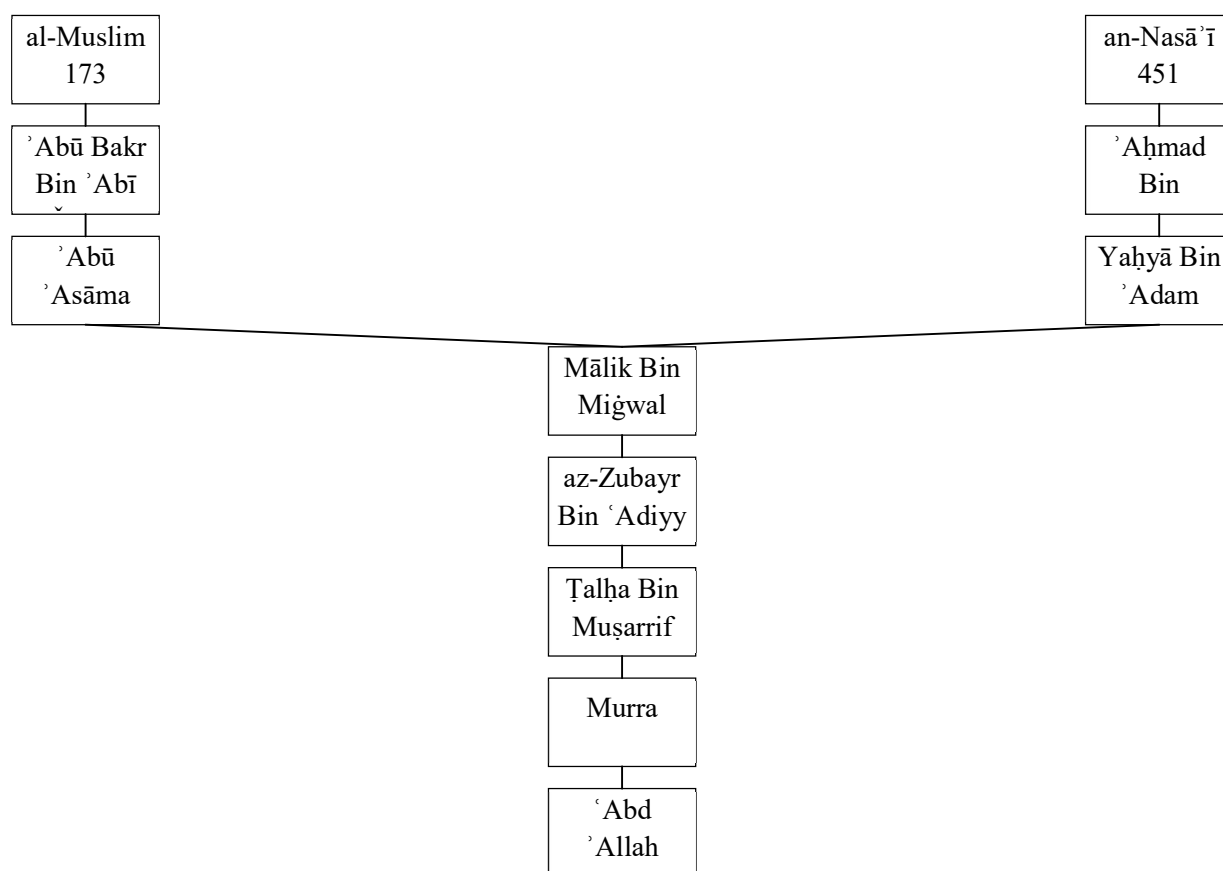
Tradition f (“and that is like the five prayers”):



The common link here is Muḥammad Bin 'Ibrāhīm († 708/709 C.E.⁴⁸).

⁴⁸ Cf. ABĪ AL-FADL 'AḤMAD BIN 'ALĪ BIN ḤAĠĀR AL-'ASQALANIYY, *Tahḏīb at-Tahḏīb*, Bayrūt 1968, vol. 9, p. 10.

Tradition g (night journey):



The common link here is Mālīk Bin Miḡwal († 773/777 C.E.⁴⁹).

Most of the traditions seem to go back to the first half of the eighth century, thus to a time when Islam was already widespread. Is this a hint, that the number of five prayers was established at a time when there was large contact to Christians, Jews or Persians? Guy Monnot mentions these possible influences but states that it “seems, indeed, inappropriate to attach too much importance to the number of prayers”⁵⁰. But finally, we know that this tradition was established after the codification of the Qur’ān but still quite early.

3.3 Units of Prayer

The same is true for the units of prayer. In the ṣalāt a prayer unit (ركعة /rak‘a) consists of the reading of the first sūra and some further verses from the Qur’ān, then God is praised, the believer bows down, speaks again some prayers and then prostrates for the first time, he sits and then prostrates for a second time before he raises again for the next prayer unit.⁵¹ The question whether the arms or hands are spread or not is open.

Thus, like at the Pachomian Prayer a prayer unit in Islamic Prayer consists of six movements, always beginning with a reading. And like the Pachomian Prayer at each prayer time a fix set of prayer units has

⁴⁹ Cf. ABĪ AL-FADL ‘AḤMAD BIN ‘ALĪ BIN ḤAĠĀR AL-‘ASQALANIYY, *Tahḏīb at-Tahḏīb*, Bayrūt 1968, vol. 10, p. 23.

⁵⁰ MONNOT, Guy, *Ṣalat*, p. 932.

⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 929.

to be prayed: prayer at noon, afternoon and night consists of four prayer units, the prayer in the evening of three and the prayer in the morning of two.

The basic bodily performances are already mentioned in the Qur'ān and especially the prostration was discussed at its introduction⁵², but the fix set of a rak'a as well as the amount of them that has to be prayed at certain times are not mentioned in the Qur'ān. However, here again the law schools agree.

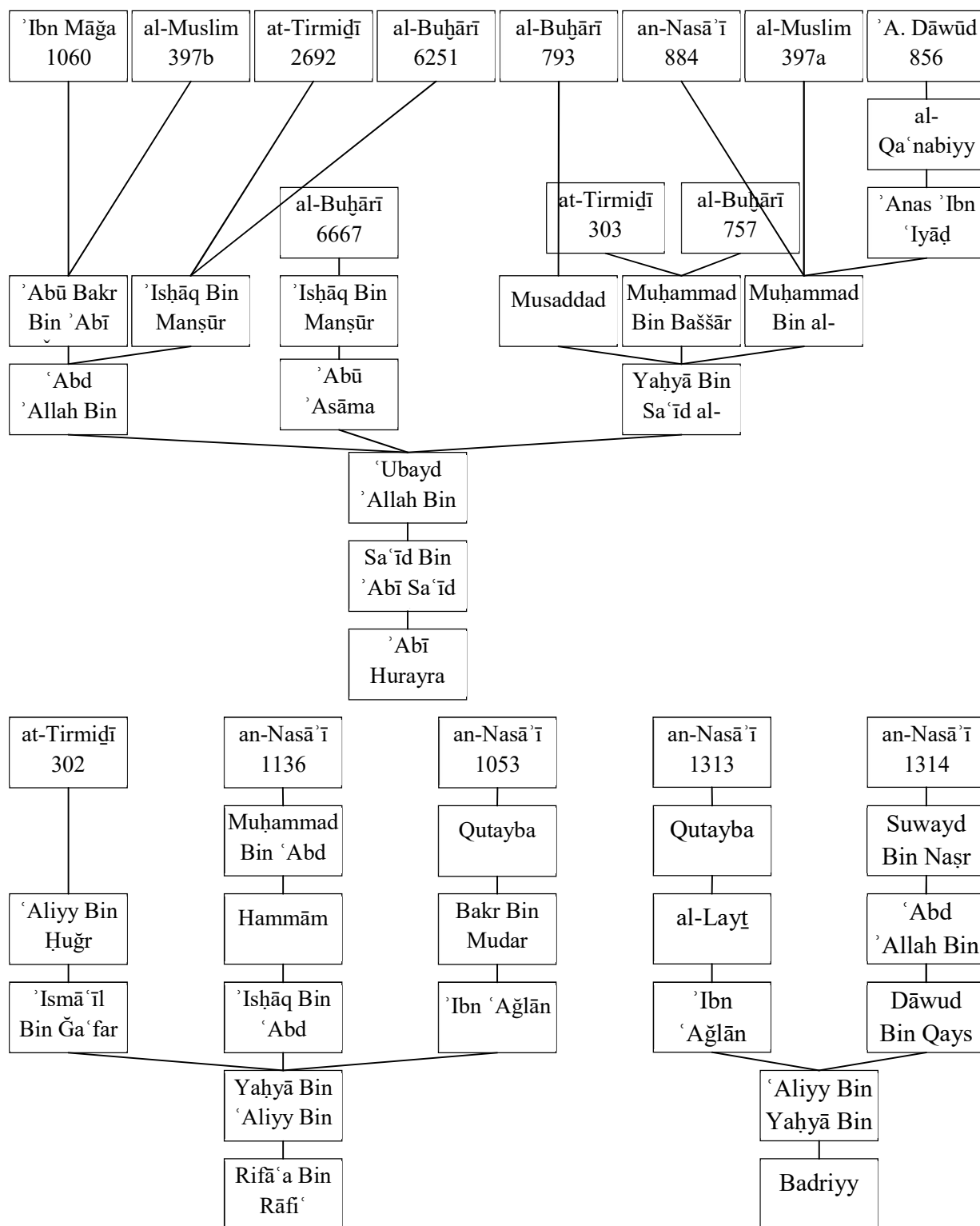
In fact, the ḥadīth-tradition lavishly discusses the audibility of certain prayers or the exact time of a prayer so that apparently the basis prayer unit was already established early. The different traditions in the ḥadīth are:

- a. In the first tradition a man enters the mosque and prays and after completion of prayer he is sent back by Muḥammad because his prayer was wrong (“لَمْ تُصَلِّ” – “you have not prayed”). So he asks Muḥammad about the right execution of prayer.
- b. The second tradition is an explanation that there were originally two prayer units for each prayer that have later been changed to the actual number (“وَزِيدَ فِي صَلَاةِ الْخَضِرِ” – “prayer while resident was increased”) while travellers still pray two prayer units.
- c. The third tradition is manifold but is always about the fellows of the prophet arguing who prays the most like the prophet did (“إِنِّي أَشْبَهُكُمْ صَلَاةً بِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ” – “my prayer resembles the prayer of the messenger of Allah”).
- d. The fourth tradition is a saying of Muḥammad that the Archangel Gabriel showed him how to pray (“نَزَلَ جِبْرِيْلُ فَأَمَّنِي” – “Gabriel came down and was a 'imām [i.e. prayer leader] to me”). We know a very similar tradition to that from above.

Whereas traditions a and c discuss the proper sequence of movements and prayers in ṣalāt, b is only about the number of prayer units that has to be prayed and d focuses on the appointed times for prayer.

⁵² TOTTOLI, Roberto, Muslim Attitudes Towards Prostration (sujūd). Arabs and Prostration at the Beginning of Islam and in the Qur'ān. In: SI 88 (1998), p. 5–34.

Regarding the first tradition (“لَمْ تُصَلِّ” – “you have not prayed”):



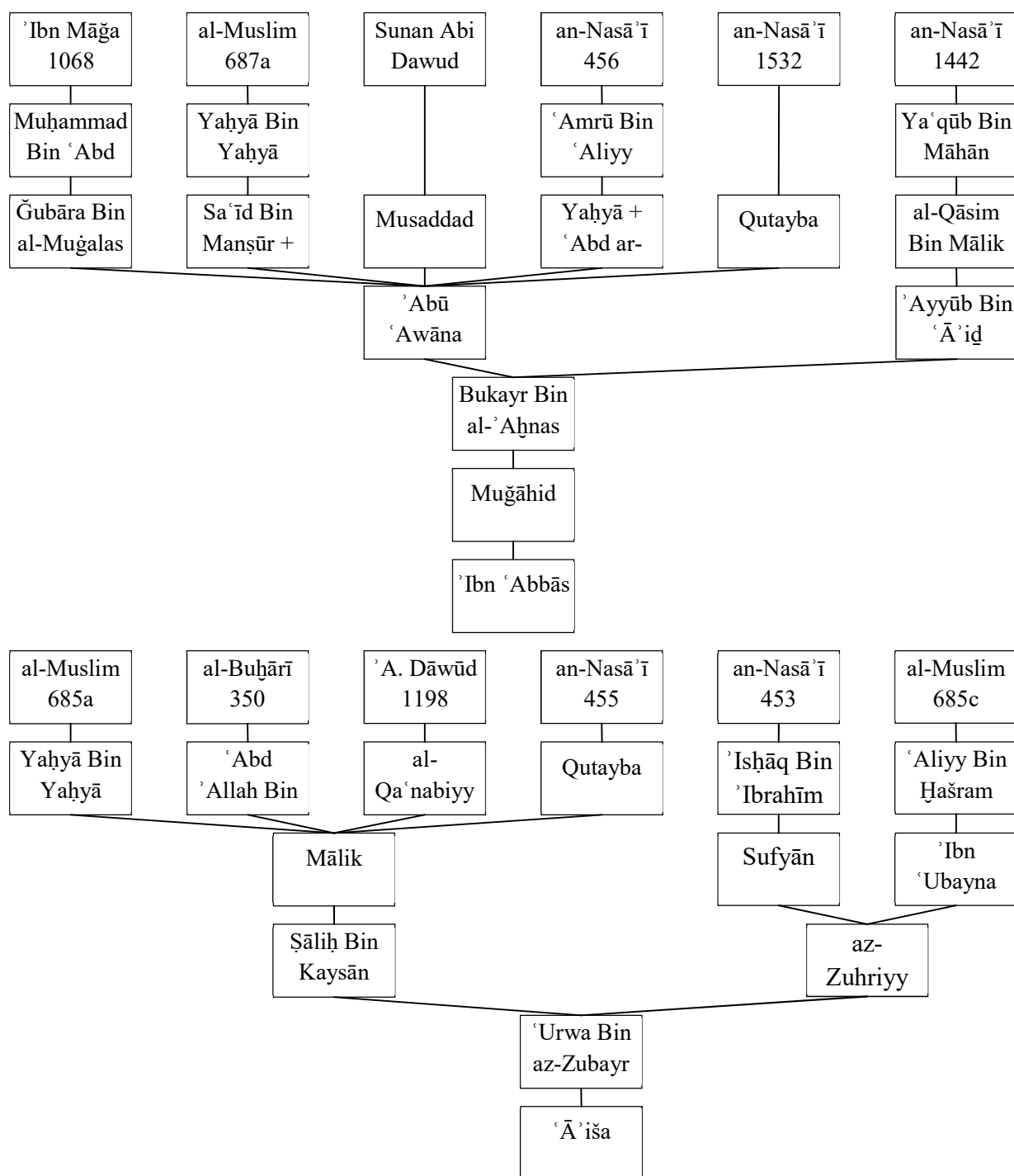
So here we have three common links: ‘Ubayd ‘Allah Bin ‘Umar († 666/668 C.E.⁵³), Yaḥyā Bin ‘Aliyy Bin Yaḥyā Bin Ḥallād Bin Rāfi‘ az-Zaraqīyy († 746/747 C.E.⁵⁴), and ‘Aliyy Bin Yaḥyā Bin Ḥalād Bin Rāfi‘ Bin Mālik al-‘Anṣāriyy († 746/747 C.E.⁵⁵).

⁵³ Cf. ABĪ AL-FADL ‘AḤMAD BIN ‘ALĪ BIN ḤAĠAR AL-‘ASQALANIYY, *Tahḏīb at-Tahḏīb*, Bayrūt 1968, vol. 7, p. 40.

⁵⁴ Cf. ABĪ AL-FADL ‘AḤMAD BIN ‘ALĪ BIN ḤAĠAR AL-‘ASQALANIYY, *Tahḏīb at-Tahḏīb*, Bayrūt 1968, vol. 5, p. 659.

⁵⁵ Cf. ABĪ AL-FADL ‘AḤMAD BIN ‘ALĪ BIN ḤAĠAR AL-‘ASQALANIYY, *Tahḏīb at-Tahḏīb*, Bayrūt 1968, vol. 7, p. 395.

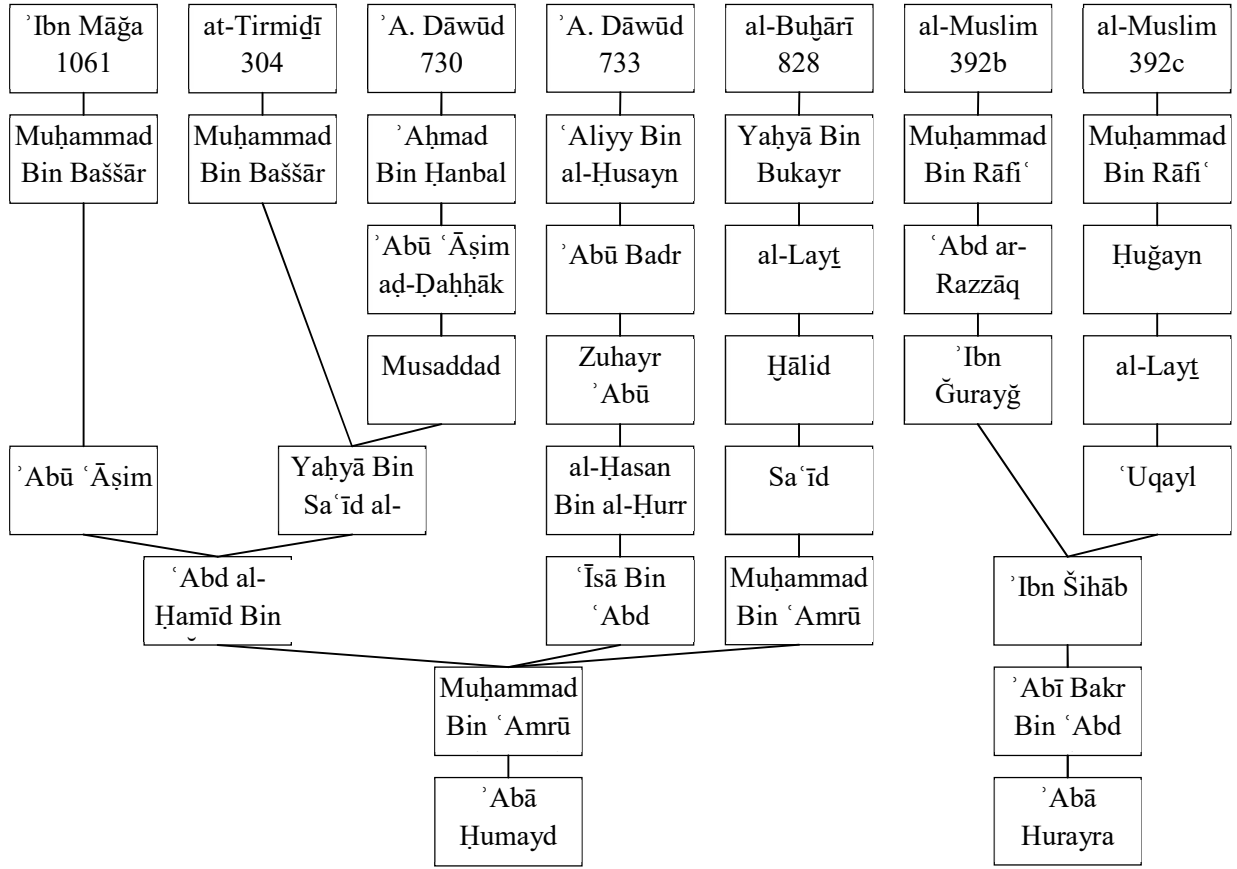
Tradition b (“وَزِيدَ فِي صَلَاةِ الْحَضَرِّ” – “prayer while resident was increased”):



The ḥadīths al-Buḡārī 389 and an-Nasā'ī 454 represent individual traditions. For the rest, here we have two different traditions, going back to Bukayr Bin al-'Aḥnas († unknown⁵⁶) and 'Urwa Bin az-Zubayr († 686–717⁵⁷).

⁵⁶ Cf. ABĪ AL-FADL 'AḤMAD BIN 'ALĪ BIN ḤAĠĀR AL-'ASQALANIYY, *Tahḏīb at-Tahḏīb*, Bayrūt 1968, vol. 4, p. 490.

Tradition c (“إِنِّي أَشْبَهُكُمْ صَلَاةَ بِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ”) – “my prayer resembles the prayer of the messenger of Allah”):



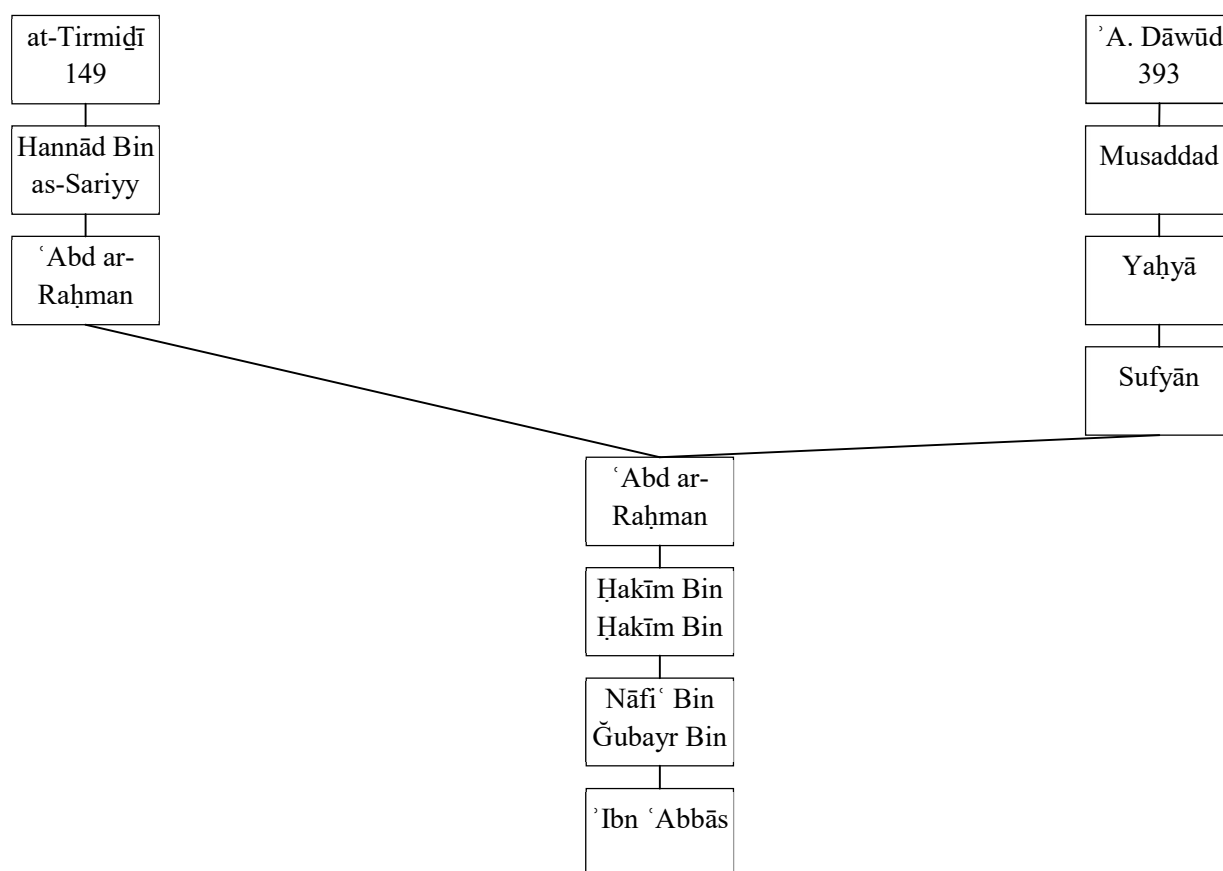
Here are two common links: Muḥammad Bin 'Amrū Bin 'Aṭā' († 673–674 C.E.⁵⁸) and 'Ibn Šihāb az-Zuhriyy († 741/742 C.E.⁵⁹).

⁵⁷ Cf. ABĪ AL-FADL 'AḤMAD BIN 'ALĪ BIN ḤAĠĀR AL-'ASQALANIYY, *Tahḍīb at-Tahḍīb*, Bayrūt 1968, vol. 7, p. 184.

⁵⁸ Cf. ABĪ AL-FADL 'AḤMAD BIN 'ALĪ BIN ḤAĠĀR AL-'ASQALANIYY, *Tahḍīb at-Tahḍīb*, Bayrūt 1968, vol. 9, p. 375.

⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 450.

Tradition d (“نَزَلَ جِبْرِيلُ فَأَمَّنِي”) – “Gabriel came down and was a ‘imām [i.e. prayer leader] to me”):



The ḥadīṭ at-Tirmidī 150 has no common link to this tradition. The remaining two traditions meet in ‘Abd ar-Raḥman Bin al-Ḥārīt Bin ‘Ayyāš Bin ‘Abī Rabī‘a († 760/761 C.E.⁶⁰).

So these ḥadīṭ-traditions were presumably introduced before the middle of the 8th century, which is surprisingly late in the history of Islam.

4 Origins and Relations

Although we now know that regarding the number and times of prayers as well as the exact shape of a prayer unit and the number of its repetitions were not introduced during the time of the Qur’ān but afterwards within the first 150 years after the rise of Islam we do not know the reasons or the sources for these introductions. The influence of old-Arabic religions is impossible to estimate since we know only little about these religions.⁶¹

There is no doubt that Christian monks and their liturgical practices were well known in Early Islam⁶² and that the Early Muslims were especially fascinated by the prostration of Christian monks during prayer⁶³.

⁶⁰ Cf. ABĪ AL-FADL ‘AḤMAD BIN ‘ALĪ BIN ḤAĠAR AL-‘ASQALANIYY, *Tahḏīb at-Tahḏīb*, Bayrūt 1968, vol. 6, p. 156.

⁶¹ Cf. WENSINCK, Arent J., *Muhammad and the Jews of Medina* (IKM 3), Freiburg im Breisgau 1975, p. 73s.

⁶² SPORER, Johannes, „Der Lobpreis Gottes“ (2012), p. 201.

⁶³ Cf. TOTTOLI, Roberto, *Muslim Attitudes Towards Prostration (sujūd). Arabs and Prostration at the Beginning of Islam and in the Qur’ān* 1998, p. 11.

Anton Baumstark also assumes that there was a Pre-Islamic Arabic Christian liturgy⁶⁴ that might have influenced Early Islam. Furthermore, he assumes a Nestorian mission of the Arabian Peninsula with an establishment of Christian worship there⁶⁵. Indeed, it seems that the more Early Islam tried to distinguish itself from the Arabian religions the more it adopted Christian practices.

Yet, the dogmatic borderlines between these Arabian Christians who might have influenced Early Islam are unclear – or as William Montgomery Watt stated: “The ordinary Christian Arab had presumably only a meagre knowledge of his religion.”⁶⁶. But this might have been crucial for their respective liturgical heritage.

It is highly probable that there was a vivid exchange between Christians and Muslims in the time of Early Islam and with regard to the strong similarities between the Pachomian Prayer and the Islamic Prayer which found its shape almost a century after the Islamic conquest of Egypt, we can presume that Pachomian monks were involved in this exchange, too.

5 Conclusion

In all religions prayer is considered as an expression of faith, it forms the identity of the one who prays and makes the theological differences visible as ritual differences.

Islamic Prayer was already in the early phases of the formation of Islam considered as the outer sign of Islamic identity⁶⁷. The obligatory prayer is simple in its form and seems to concentrate solely on the aspect of humility towards God.

Respecting the Islamic prayer as the expression of Islam, I tried to figure out the structural parallels between later introductions into Islamic Prayer on the one side and Pachomian Prayer on the other side, which can be explained by the close contact between these two groups. On this base one could discuss the possibility of a common prayer of Christians and Muslims anew, but although the prayer ritual is acceptable to both religions there are still huge theological differences.

A further problem for Orientalists lies in the circumstance that scholars who wrote about parallels between Christian and Islamic Prayer perceived Islamic Prayer as something defective and ignored its connection to Muslim self-understanding⁶⁸, though it should be obvious that a genetic explanation of a ritual could never replace a theological explanation.

The purpose of this paper was to point to the similarities which could be useful in further studies on the history and shape of Pachomian Prayer as well as on the history of Islamic Prayer and the origins of its respective liturgical units. Furthermore, this paper might have shown that although the Pachomian Prayer was replaced by the Scetic Prayer it never died out but left its traces in Islamic Prayer.

⁶⁴ Cf. BAUMSTARK, Anton, Das Problem eines vorislamischen christlich-kirchlichen Schrifttums in arabischer Sprache, In: *Islamica* 3 (1931), p. 562–575, here: p. 568.

⁶⁵ Cf. BAUMSTARK, Anton, Jüdischer und christlicher Gebetstypus im Koran, In: *Islam* 16 (1927), p. 229–248, here: p. 248.

⁶⁶ WATT, William M., *Muslim-Christian Encounters. Perceptions and Misperceptions*, London 1991, p. 6.

⁶⁷ Cf. WATT, William M./WELCH, Alford T., *Der Islam* 1980, p. 271.

⁶⁸ Cf. GRAHAM, William A., *Islam in the Mirror of Ritual*. In: HOVANNISIAN, Richard G. (ed.), *Islam's Understanding of Itself*. Eighth Conference, Malibu 1983, p. 53–71, here: p. 63.