

E. J. BRILL
LEIDEN · NEW YORK · KÖLN
1993



JOEL L. KRAEMER

EDITED BY

ISRAEL
ORIENTAL
STUDIES
XIII

IQRA' BI-SMI RABBIKA...!

SOME NOTES ON THE INTERPRETATION OF *SŪRAT AL-'ĀLAQ*

(VS. 1-5)

URI RUBIN

I

Sūrat al-'alaq (XCVI) opens with the imperative *iqra'* which is immediately followed by the phrase: *bi-smi rabbika*... The majority of the modern translators of the Quran into English, German and French whose translations have been available to me,¹ are unanimous that *iqra'* relates to a certain prophetic text which Muhammad is commanded to read or recite. But the translators do not agree on the contents of this text. Pickthall translated: "Read: In the Name of thy Lord..." which implies that *bi-smi rabbika* opens the text which the prophet is commanded to read. Arberry's translation implies the same: "Recite: In the Name of thy Lord." Most translators, however, assume that *bi-smi rabbika* does not form part of the text which the prophet must read or recite, but merely describes how the prophet should carry out the command: *iqra'*. Accordingly, *iqra' bi-smi rabbika* is rendered: "Read/Recite in the Name of thy Lord."² Scholars who studied the Quran and Muhammad's *Sīra* translated likewise.³ This translation implies that our verse is understood to contain a general command to the prophet to start delivering his prophetic message, in the Name of his Lord. According to both

¹ For the bibliographical details of the translations mentioned hereby see J. D. Pearson, "Bibliography of translations of the Quran into European languages", in A. F. L. Beeston and others (eds.), *Arabic literature to the end of the Umayyad period*, Cambridge 1983, 502 ff.

² "Read, in the Name of thy Lord" — Sale, Palmer, Muhammad Asad; "Lies" — Henning, Ullmann, "Recite" — Rodwell, Bell, M. Zafarullah Khān, N. J. Dawood; "Trage vor" — Paret. "Pêche" — Blachère. "Proclaim" — A. Yusuf 'Alī. "Call" — H. Amīr 'Alī. ³ E.g., Lohmann, 249: "rezitiere im Namen..."; Schedl, 47: "Rufe im Namen..."; Buhl-Schaefer, 137: "Sag her im Namen...". Cf. also, G. H. A. Juybnoll, "The position of Qur'ān recitation in early Islam", *JSS* XIX, 1974, 240 ff.

perceptions, however, the translation of *bi-smi rabbika* remains the same: "in the Name of thy Lord."

But what seems to be the consensus of modern scholars concerning the translation of *bi-smi rabbika* will not necessarily be the result of a re-examination of the Muslim interpretation of *Sūrai al-'alaq*. Such an examination, which is undertaken in this paper, may unveil another possible approach to which modern scholars have not yet paid the serious attention it deserves.

II

The command: *iqra' bi-smi rabbika* should be compared to other Quranic verses containing the phrase: *bi-smi rabbika*. There are only three other such verses, in all of which the wording is: *fa-sabbih bi-smi rabbika l-'azīm* (LV/74, 69; LXIX/52) — "and praise the magnificent Name of the Lord." The *bi-* of *bi-smi* in these verses is evidently *bā' zā'ida*, as is indicated in another Quranic verse: *sabbih isma rabbika l-'a'lā* (LXXXVII/1), where the *bā'* is absent. A similar structure, with *uḡkur* instead of *sabbih*, occurs in LXXXIII/8 *wa-uḡkur isma rabbika*; it recurs in LXXVI/25 as well.⁴ Verse 1 of *Sūrai al-'alaq* is unique in that it has *iqra'* and not *sabbih* or *uḡkur*, but its formal structure is identical with that of the other verses containing *bi-smi rabbika*. The conclusion is, therefore, inevitable. The *bi-* in our verse as well is *bā' zā'ida*.

This interpretation of the *bi-* is corroborated in some early Muslim commentaries. Abū 'Ubayda (d. 210/825) says: *iqra' bi-smi rabbika: maḡzāhu: iqra' isma rabbika*.⁵ Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) is even more explicit. He says that the *bā'* may be added in speech without affecting the meaning, so that *iqra' bi-smi rabbika* means *iqra' isma rabbika*.⁶ He goes on to adduce further Quranic verses containing this kind of *bi-*.⁷

The interpretation of *iqra' bi-smi rabbika* in the sense of *iqra' isma rabbika* was suggested several decades ago by scholars like Hirschfeld and Grimme. The former translated our verse: "Proclaim the Name of thy Lord..."⁸ The latter rendered it: "Preise den Namen deines Herren."⁹ But since the days of Nöldeke-Schwally this interpretation has been totally

⁴ And cf. LV/78: *iabāraka smu rabbika*.

⁵ Abū 'Ubayda, II, 304.

⁶ Ibn Qutayba, 248: *wa-l-bā' uzāhu fī-l-kalām wa-l-mā'nā liqā'uhā... wa-qawluhu: iqra' bi-smi rabbika, ay isma rabbika*. And see also Rāzī, XXXII, 13 (Abū 'Ubayda); Ṭabarī, XXX, 151.

⁷ XXXIII/20; LXXVI/6; XIX/25; LXVIII/6; LX/1; XXII/25.

⁸ Hirschfeld, 18.

⁹ Grimme, I, 18.

rejected by most modern scholars.^{9a} Nöldeke-Schwally,¹⁰ who were also aware of the above interpretation of Abū 'Ubayda, contended that *qara'a bi-* is never used as an equivalent to *qara'a*; it occurs only in the sense of "to read in a certain text" or "to adhere to a certain *qirā'a*" (i.e., a variant reading of the Quran), like *qāla bi-ṣay'in*. But clear additional evidence of the usage of *qara'a bi-* in the sense of *qara'a* may be found in ex-Quranic material. To begin with, al-Rāzī (d. 607/1210) adduces a verse of al-Aḥqaf, in corroboration of Abū 'Ubayda's interpretation; it reads:

.../ *Sūtu l-mahāgiri lā yaqra'na bi-l-suwari*
Dark-eyed (women), who do not recite the *sūras*.¹¹

More examples from *Hadīṭi* literature may easily be gleaned according to Wensinck's *Concordance* (s.v. *qr'*). The most typical cases occur in traditions dealing with the recitation (*qirā'a*) of Quranic passages during the *ṣalāt*. For instance: *man qara'a bi-qul huwa llāhu aḥad fa-ka-annama qara'a bi-tūlī l-Qur'āni* "He who recites (the *sūra* opening with) *qul huwa llāhu aḥad*, shall be (rewarded) as though he recited one third of the Quran."¹² In a parallel version of the same tradition, the *bi-* is absent: *man qara'a allāhu l-wāḥidu (l) l-samadu fa-qad qara'a tūta l-Qur'āni*.¹³ Many traditions assert the importance of the recitation of the *Fātiḥa*, or *Umm al-Qur'ān*, as it is sometimes called: *lā ṣalāta li-man lam yaqra' bi-fātiḥati l-Kitāb*.¹⁴ "There is no (valid) prayer for him who does not recite the *Fātiḥa*". And another version says: *man ṣallā ṣalātan lam yaqra' fihā bi-Umm al-Qur'ān fa-hiya ḥidāg*.¹⁵ In a parallel version the *bi-* is again absent: ...*fa-qara'a Umma l-Qur'ān*.¹⁶ And there are more such cases.¹⁷

Such examples in which the *bi-* may or may not occur, without ever affecting the meaning of *qara'a*, confirm that in *Sūrai al-'alaq*, *iqra' bi-smi rabbika* may very well be understood as *iqra' isma rabbika*, as held by Abū 'Ubayda and Ibn Qutayba.

The command to "recite the Name" of the Lord seems to refer to a certain act of devotion which the prophet is prompted to perform in

^{9a} In recent years, only Lüling (p. 291f) seems to have been aware of the value of Abū 'Ubayda's interpretation.

¹⁰ I, 81–82. See also Buhl-Schaefer, 137 note 35; Lohmann 256.

¹¹ Rāzī, XXXII, 13. Cf. Wright, II, 160A.

¹² Ahmad, V, 141.

¹³ Tirmidī, XI, 24.

¹⁴ Buhārī, I, 192; Muslim, II, 9; Tirmidī, II, 46.

¹⁵ Abū Dāwūd, I, 188; see also, 198; Muslim, II, 9, 10, 160; Buhārī, II, 72; Mālik, I, 148.

¹⁶ Tirmidī, XI, 5.

¹⁷ E.g., *Faḥ al-bārī* II, 202: *iqra' mā tayassara ma'aka min al-Qur'ān... yaqra'u bi-mā tayassara 'alayhi...* Mālik, I, 138: *wa-qad kāna l-qar'ū yaqra'u bi-l-m'ānā... wa-kāna l-qar'ū yaqra'u sūrata l-baqara...* And see further Tirmidī, II, 102, 103 etc.

honour of his Lord. The nature of this devotional act is elucidated in some further Muslim interpretations of *iqraʿ bi-smi rabbika*, which are based on Abū ʿUbayda's approach. Al-Rāzī, commenting on Abū ʿUbayda's interpretation, says: *wa-ma'nā iqraʿ isma rabbika, ay, uḍkur isma rabbika*.¹⁸ In other words, *iqraʿ bi-smi rabbika* is equivalent to *uḍkur isma rabbika*. A scrutiny of Quranic occurrences of *ḍakara* shows that to "mention" the Name of God means to praise Him during prayer. In fact, when *ḍakara* is connected with the Name of the Lord, it always appears in juxtaposition with *sabbaha*. For instance, *Sūra LXXXVII* which opens with the command: *sabbih isma rabbika l-ʿilā* has in verses 14–15 the following statement: *qad aḥḥaba man tazakkā, wa-ḍakara sma rabbihī fa-sallā*. The close relation between *ḍakara, sabbaha*, the Name of the Lord and prayer is demonstrated also in *LXXXVI/25–26: wa-ḍkur isma rabbika bukratan wa-ʿaḥḥan; wa-mina l-layli fa-sḡud lahu wa-sabbihlu laylan ṭawīlan*. Similarly, *LXXIII/7–8* reads: *inna laka fī l-nahāri sabḥan ṭawīlan; wa-ḍkur isma rabbika wa-tabattal ilayhi tabīlan*.¹⁹ In view of these Quranic verses, it is clear that when *iqraʿ bi-smi rabbika* is interpreted as *uḍkur ismahu* the meaning is "to mention the Name of the Lord and glorify it in a devotional supplication of gratitude and thanksgiving."²⁰

The Quranic *iqraʿ bi-smi rabbika* seems to draw on Hebrew liturgical patterns which had their origin in the Old Testament.²¹ The biblical עָרַב לַיהוָה literally means "to call the Name of God". It occurs in several contexts, the most relevant of which seems to be the one where God is glorified in a thanksgiving hymn. The following three verses are the most typical ones:

הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה קְרָא בְשֵׁמוֹ הַגָּדוֹל בְּעִלְיוֹתָיו
 כֹּסֵם יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵשֶׁת רְחוּם יְהוָה אֱקַרְאָה
 לְךָ-אֲרֹכָה זָכָה תוֹרָה וְכֵשֶׁם יְהוָה אֱקַרְאָה²²

In these verses, "to call the Name of God" means "to magnify His name and to make known His omnipotence." In the Quran as well, the Name, or rather "the most beautiful Names of Allah" stand for the various aspects of His infinite power as the creator of the world and as the divine source of bounty and benefaction. For instance: *LIX/23–24* (tr. Arberry): "He is

¹⁸ Rāzī, XXXII, 13. See also Abū Ḥayyān, VIII, 492; Ālusi, XXX, 178–9.

¹⁹ And cf. III/41.

²⁰ This is indeed the way in which al-Rāzī perceived our verse in another work of his, named *Sarīḥ al-asmāʿ al-ḥusnā* (ed. ʿAbd al-Raʿīf Saʿd, Cairo 1980). On page 72, he adduces this verse alongside other Quranic verses dealing with the glorification of Allah.

²¹ Cf. already Hirschfeld, 19. But see, on the other hand, Nöldake-Schwally, I, 81–82, where Hirschfeld's biblical references are discarded as irrelevant.

²² *Jes. XII/4; Chron., XVI/8; Ps., CV/1.*

²³ *Ps. CXVI/13.*

²⁴ *Ibid., 17.*

God, the Creator, the Maker, the Shaper. To Him belong the Names Most Beautiful. All that in the heavens and the earth magnifies Him..."²⁵ Likewise, in *Sūrat al-ʿalaq*, the command to "recite" the Name of the Lord means to recount His greatness as the only origin of man's existence and intelligence. This meaning of our *sūra* was correctly perceived by al-Ṭabarī (d. 548/1153), who, commenting on verse 1, says: "This is a command from Allah to His prophet, to 'recite' the Name of his Lord, and to call Him by His most beautiful Names (*an yaqraʿa bi-smi rabbihī wa-an yaḍwahu bi-asmāʾihī l-ḥusnā*); the magnifying of the name is the magnifying of the person bearing the name, because the name represents what is characteristic of the person, so that there is no other way to magnify him."²⁶

The deity which the prophet is commanded to magnify in our *sūra* is not presented as *Allāh*, but rather as *rabbika*. This intimate address seems to reflect the essential monotheistic experience of the prophet who has become aware of the fact that Allah is his Lord, to the exclusion of any other deity. This point was noticed in the early *Tafsīr* of Muḡāṭil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767), where it is stated: *iqraʿ bi-smi rabbika yā Muḥammadu, yaʿnī l-wāḥida*.²⁷ The same idea is formulated more explicitly by Abū Ḥayyān (d. 754/1353) who says that the form "your Lord" (as opposed to "the Lord") is meant to be personal and intimate suggesting that Muḥammad must not follow any other god.²⁸

The one and only god which must be glorified is the Lord who created man (*allaḥī ḥalaga*) and gave him intelligence (*allaḥī ʿallama*). With these descriptive statements the monotheistic message of the opening passage of the *sūra* is fulfilled. The creative powers of God and His bounty are adduced here, as elsewhere in the Quran, to demonstrate that He is the one and only true God which must be worshipped, to the exclusion of the lesser deities to whom even the *muḥrikīn* themselves never attributed any creativity or bounty. These deities were considered by their followers only as intermediators between man and the High God. This point as well has been noticed by Muslim exegetes. Al-Rāzī, for instance, adduces Quranic verses in which the *muḥrikīn* admit that Allah is the Creator, pointing out that *allaḥī ḥalaga* in our *sūra* is designed to lead the *muḥrikīn*, through their own tenets, to the inevitable conclusion that Allah alone deserves to

²⁵ And see also VII/180; XVII/110; XX/8.

²⁶ Ṭabarī, XXX, 151. For a further discussion of the relation of the name to the person bearing it, see, e.g., Rāzī, *Asmāʿ* 18 ff.

²⁷ Muḡāṭil, II, 244b.

²⁸ Abū Ḥayyān, VIII, 492: "...wa-ḡāra l-ḥiṭabu li-yadulla ʿalā l-ḥiṭāsiḡi wa-l-ṭarḥiṡi, ay laḡsa laka rabbun ḡayruhu.

be worshipped.²⁹ In conclusion, *Sūrat al-ʿalaq* fits in with the general monotheistic message of the Quran, its chief aim being to urge the prophet to magnify the omnipotence of his Lord and thus spread monotheism.

III

As is well known, the text of the opening passage of *Sūrat al-ʿalaq* appears in traditions about Muḥammad's first prophetic revelation,³⁰ where this *sūra* is presented as the first passage to be revealed to the prophet.³¹ Some modern scholars found in these traditions authentic evidence concerning Muḥammad's personal development and concerning the chronology of the Quran. It seems, however, that *Sūrat al-ʿalaq* became part of the traditions about Muḥammad's first prophetic experience only after a certain process which deserves a closer examination. To begin with, there is a rare tradition which seems to date back to the time when *Sūrat al-ʿalaq* was not yet even considered Meccan. The tradition is recorded on the authority of al-Sāʿib b. Yazīd (d. 82H). It runs as follows: "When God revealed to Muḥammad *iqraʾ bi-smi rabbika llaqīr ḥalaqa*, the prophet came to Ubayy b. Kaʿb and said to him: 'Gabriel commanded me to deliver this *sūra* to you in order to make it public.' Ubayy said: 'Did Allah really mention my name?' He said: 'Yes!'"³² This tradition pertains to the Median period when Ubayy already started collecting the Quranic revelations, so that such a tradition could have been circulated only prior to the establishment of the view that our *sūra* had been revealed at Mecca.

Neither do the earlier versions of the traditions about Muḥammad's first prophetic experience have any allusion as yet to *Sūrat al-ʿalaq*. One of these traditions which is recorded on the authority of ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 94H) relates that Muḥammad once said to Ḥadīġa: "Oh, Ḥadīġa, I see light and hear a voice. I am afraid I am becoming a *kāhin*" (...*la-qad ḥašīru an akūna kāhinan*). Ḥadīġa comforted him saying that he was too noble

and righteous to be a *kāhin*.³³ In another version traced back to Ibn ʿAbbās through Ḥammād b. Salama, the prophet sees light and hears voices, expresses a similar anxiety (*wa-irni aḥṣā an yakūna fīya ġunm*), Ḥadīġa comforts him, goes to Waraqa b. Nawfal and tells him about it, and the latter confirms that Muḥammad is a prophet.³⁴ The early date of these accounts is indicated not only by the absence of any specific Quranic text, but also by the way in which the image of Muḥammad is perceived. He has grave doubts in himself, fearing that he is becoming a *kāhin* or *māġnūn*. Such a perception dates back to the time when the concept of Muḥammad's *ʿisma* was not yet established. As we are about to see, more elaborate versions have these doubts expressed, if at all, by persons other than Muḥammad himself. Another tradition which likewise does not have an allusion to *Sūrat al-ʿalaq*, is recorded on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās through ʿIkrima (d. 105/723). In this tradition Muḥammad is on the mountain Aġyād, at Mecca, where he sees an angel against the horizon, throwing one leg over the other. The angel addresses him saying: "Muḥammad, I am Ġibrīl." Muḥammad is frightened, hurries back to Ḥadīġa, says he is afraid he is becoming a *kāhin*, Ḥadīġa comforts him, goes to Waraqa who confirms that Muḥammad is indeed a prophet.³⁵ This tradition which locates Muḥammad's first prophetic experience in Aġyād³⁶ seems to be an elaboration on some Quranic passages alluding to prophetic visions seen on the horizon (LIII/7; LXXXII/23).³⁷ The tradition takes these Quranic visions as though referring to Muḥammad's first encounter with the angel whose name was Gabriel.³⁸

²⁹ Ibn Saʿd, I, 195. For the significance of Ḥadīġa's comforting words see Kister, "God will never disgrace thee", 27 ff. For the traditions about Ḥadīġa see also Lohmann, 441 ff.

³⁰ Ibn Saʿd, I, 195. See also Suyūṭī, *Ḥaṣṣīṣ*, I, 241; Ibn Saḥrāṣūb, I, 41; Sprenger, I, 343. For the traditions about Waraqa, see also Lohmann, 446 ff.

³¹ Ibn Saʿd, I, 194–195; Balāḡūrī, *Ansāb*, I, 104; Suyūṭī, *Ḥaṣṣīṣ*, I, 242; Sprenger, I, 343.

³² For another tradition with the same location see ʿIbārī, *Tajisīf*, XXVII, 27; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, VI, 123; Ibn Kaṭīr, *Taġīṣ*, IV, 249 (Ibn Laḥīʿa — Ibn Laḥīʿa — Abū l-ʿAswad — ʿAʿīṣa).

³³ For these passages, see Bell, "Muḥammad's visions", 145 ff. For the "horizon traditions", see further, Lohmann, 434 ff.

³⁴ Another "non-Quranic" encounter between Gabriel and Muḥammad was recorded in the *Maġāzī* of Abū Maʿšar al-Sindī (d. 170/786): Muḥammad feels something pressing him to the ground, he is frightened, a voice says: "do not be afraid, it is Gabriel." Muḥammad tells about it to Ḥadīġa (Muġūṭāy), III^a, from Abū Maʿšar. Some reports say that three years before the appearance of Gabriel, Muḥammad received a non-Quranic inspiration from Iṣrāʾīl. See Ibn Kaṭīr, *Bidāya*, III, 4; Suhaylī, I, 269, 270; Ḥalabī, I, 236, 244, 261 ff., 263. See also "Iṣrāʾīl", *EF* (A.J. Wensinck), Al-Wāġidī and others rejected these reports stressing that the only angel who ever inspired Muḥammad was Gabriel. See Ibn Saʿd, I, 191; Yaʿqūbī, II, 23; Muġūṭāy, III^a-III^b. But, on the other hand, there is a noteworthy tradition stating that once Iṣrāʾīl, Gabriel and Michael appeared to Muḥammad, and the prophet saw between the eyes of Iṣrāʾīl "everything before it was sent down" (*raʾaytu bayna ʿaynay Iṣrāʾīl kullia šayʿin*

²⁹ Rāzī, XXXII, 15. See also Abū Ḥayyān, VIII, 492; Ālūsī, XXX, 180. Cf. Lohmann, 264 ff.

³⁰ For these traditions see Sprenger, I, 330 ff.; Nädleke-Schwally, I, 78 ff.; Buhl-Schaefer, 136 ff.; Lohmann, 416 ff.; Paret, *Mohammed*, 47 ff.; Bell, "Mohammed's call", 13 ff.; Watt, *M/Mecca*, 39 ff.; Sellheim, *passim*.

³¹ Other *sūras* were also regarded as the first to be sent down to Muḥammad. For instance, *Sūra XCIV (al-Th)*, or *al-Qalam* (LXVIII). For *al-Th* see Ḥalabī, I, 261. For *al-Qalam*, *Faḥḥ al-bārī*, VIII, 521; Zurgānī, I, 222; Ḥalabī, I, 244. For harmonizing solutions see Balāḡūrī, *Ansāb*, I, 109; Ḥalabī, I, 260 ff. For other such *sūras* see further below. Cf. also Lohmann, 430 ff.

³² Ibn Saʿd, II, 341; Sprenger, I, 342.

Other versions recounting the appearance of Gabriel on Agyād do include the revelation of *Sūrat al-ʿalaq*. One of these versions was recorded by Abū Nuʿaym on the authority of ʿĀʾiṣa through ʿUrwa b. al-Zubayr.³⁹ The prophet sees Gabriel on Agyād; the angel shows him how to perform the ritual abtution (*wuḍūʿ*) and how to pray, and delivers him *Sūrat al-ʿalaq*. Muḥammad returns to Hadīġa, tells her what has befallen him and she testifies that Muḥammad is a prophet.⁴⁰ A more detailed report is recorded by al-Hargūṣī in his *Šaraf al-nabi*.⁴¹ Gabriel addresses Muḥammad in Ġiyād al-Aṣġar, Muḥammad faints and is brought back to Hadīġa by people who say that he is possessed (*magḥnūn*). Hadīġa denies it stressing that her husband is a prophet. The same events take place the following day, and only on the third day does Gabriel appear to Muḥammad in his most beautiful image, teaches him the *wuḍūʿ* and the *ṣalāt* and delivers *Sūrat al-ʿalaq* to him. Muḥammad returns to Hadīġa and tells her what has happened.⁴²

Other traditions containing the text of *Sūrat al-ʿalaq* are based on the notion that the Qurānic *iqraʿ bi-smi rabbika* records the reminiscences of a dialogue which is supposed to have passed between the angel and the prophet. The earliest version reflecting this idea, which still does not seem to impose new meanings on the Qurānic text, is the one recorded on the authority of ʿAbdallāh b. Šaddād (d. 81H): Gabriel comes to the prophet and says: “...*yā Muḥammad, iqraʿ!*” Muḥammad says: “*wa-mā aqraʿ?*”⁴³ Gabriel presses Muḥammad and repeats demanding: “*iqraʿ!*” to which Muḥammad responds: “*wa-mā aqraʿ?*”, this time, Gabriel says: “*bi-smi rabbika llaḏī ḥalaga...*” till he reaches: “*allama l-insāna mā lam yaʿlam.*”⁴⁴

qabla nuzūlīhī). See Hargūṣī, Brit. Lib. 89^a, idem, Tübingen, 67^a; Suyūfī, *Durr*, I, 91–92. Cf. idem, *Ḥaṣṣiḡ*, III, 156–157.

³⁹ Abū Nuʿaym, *Dalāʾil*, 70–71. See also Ibn Ḥaġar, *Isāba*, VII, 600–601 (from Abū Nuʿaym). Cf. Sprenger, I, 348–349.

⁴⁰ A tradition relating that *Sūrat al-ʿalaq* was revealed after Muḥammad was taught the *wuḍūʿ* and the *ṣalāt*, is already recorded by al-Balāḏurī (*Aṣṣab*, I, 111), on the authority of Maʿmar b. Rāšid (d. 154/770).

⁴¹ Brit. Lib. 24a-25a.

⁴² A short note is recorded by al-Fakihī as well, to the effect that some people claim that *Sūrat al-ʿalaq* was revealed to Muḥammad in Agyād al-Saġīr, and this was the first *sūra* to be revealed (Fakihī, 471a. See also Fasī, I, 200, from al-Fakihī, where this note is said to be *ḡarīb ḡiddan*).

⁴³ Nöldeke–Schwally (I, 81–82) already drew attention to *Jes. XI/6: דברא קרא דברא קרא* 702

⁴⁴ The view that only the passage ending with *lam yaʿlam* was revealed to Muḥammad in his first encounter with the angel is manifest in several traditions (e.g., Balāḏurī, *Aṣṣab*, I, 110; Muġātilī, II, 244^a; Bayhaġī, *Dalāʾil*, I, 412; Suyūfī, *Durr*, VI, 368; Wāhidī, 6; Qurṭubī, XX, 117; Ḥāzin, VII, 222). But there were also some who held that the first passage to be revealed ended with *al-rūḥā* (v.8), or that the whole *sūra* was revealed on that occasion. See Balāḏurī, *Aṣṣab*, I, 110, 108. And see also Lohmann, 433 ff.

At this point, the mutual exchange reaches its close, and Muḥammad returns to Hadīġa. He tells her that he thinks something evil has possessed him, she comforts him, etc.⁴⁵ The original significance of the Qurānic *iqraʿ bi-smi rabbika* may easily be traced in this tradition; it features here as Gabriel’s answer to Muḥammad’s question: “*What shall I recite?*” If this answer is supposed to provide an object for Muḥammad’s “*What...?*”, it must be rendered: “(Recite) the Name of thy Lord!” Thus, the original significance of *Sūrat al-ʿalaq*, in which Muḥammad is urged to magnify the Name of his Lord, is fully preserved. The structure of the *sūra* is also reflected in this tradition. The *sūra* has some key-words which are repeated twice: *iqraʿ* — *iqraʿ*, *ḥalaga* — *ḥalaga*; *ʿallama* — *ʿallama*. This phenomenon is reproduced in Gabriel’s command: *iqraʿ* which is also twice repeated.

But the dialogue in the tradition of ʿAbdallāh b. Šaddād may also be translated in a different manner:⁴⁶ Gabriel: “Recite!” Muḥammad: “What shall I recite?” Gabriel: “(Recite:) *bi-smi rabbika llaḏī ḥalaga...*” Such a rendering, which does not seem to reflect the original significance of the tradition of ʿAbdallāh b. Šaddād, is, nevertheless, possible, in view of further traditions in which Muḥammad is definitely commanded to recite the actual words of *Sūrat al-ʿalaq*. One of these traditions, which provides the Qurānic: *iqraʿ bi-smi rabbika* with a new meaning, has the *ismād*: Zuhri-ʿUrwa-ʿĀʾiṣa. It contains details about the time and location of the event. The first part was recorded by Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767)⁴⁷ and others.⁴⁸ It says that Muḥammad’s prophethood began (*awwal mā budīʿa bihi rasūlu llāhī(s) mina l-nubuwwa*) with a “true dream” (*al-rūḥā al-ṣādiqa*). Each dream he saw in his sleep came to him like the breaking of dawn.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Tabarī, *Tarīḡ*, XXX, 162. See also idem, *Tarīḡ*, II, 47–48; Suyūfī, *Durr*, VI, 368–369; Ibn Abī Šayba, II–12; Sprenger, I, 331.

⁴⁶ Cf. Lohmann, 429–430.

⁴⁷ Ibn Hišām, I, 249–250.

⁴⁸ Ibn Saʿd, I, 194; Balāḏurī, *Aṣṣab*, I, 105.

⁴⁹ Watt (*M/Mecca*, 40, 42) renders *al-rūḥā al-ṣādiqa* as “true vision”, stressing that it is “quite distinct from dreams.” But Ibn Ishāq’s version states explicitly that Muḥammad saw this *rūḥā* while being asleep, which means that it is practically a dream. And see also Ibn Kaṯīr, *Bidāya*, III, 4, where it is stressed that this tradition refers to a dream. And see Muġātilāy, II 1^a: *awwalu mā yurīʾa bihi l-nabiyāna fī l-manānī ḥarīa tahādīya quḏūbuhum jannata yanzīlu l-waḥyū bāda*. Other reports depict the beginning of Muḥammad’s prophetic awareness in entirely different ways. Some say that it first started when his breast was cut open and cleansed (Tabarī, *Tarīḡ*, II, 52; Maqrīzī, I, 38). Others say that his prophethood began when the stones and trees of Mecca started saluting him (Ibn Hišām, I, 250; Ibn Saʿd, I, 157; Bayhaġī, *Dalāʾil*, I, 402; Balāḏurī, *Aṣṣab*, I, 104). Another report states that the first time a divine voice addressed him in a prophetic revelation was when he was working naked with Qurayš at the Kaʿba, and the voice commanded him to put on his clothes (Ibn Saʿd, I, 157; Suyūfī, *Ḥaṣṣiḡ*, I, 218–219; *Mustadrak*, IV, 179; Hargūṣī, Brit. Lib. 26^a–27^a). For the

