



Département d'études arabes
قسم الدراسات العربية

From the Oath under the Tree to the Hijra

Evolving narratives of the *Umma's* Foundation

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PhD dissertation

2023 PhD dissertation : “Historiographical and normative conceptions of the images of Prophet Muḥammad. From the first manifestations in the sources to the 3rd/9th century”. Prof. Mathieu Tillier, Sorbonne University

- **Historical** Muḥammad **VS representations** of the Prophet across time and space
- **Authenticity** of the sources **VS authority** conferred to texts (*Sīra-maghāzī*, *fiqh*, *tafāsīr*) and to Muḥammad himself
- Date **when**, **where**, and **in which historical contexts** these texts were put into circulation

Methodology

From dating Hadith to patterns of motives

Dating Hadith: Schacht (CL), Juynboll (ICL), Motzki (*isnād-cum-matn*)...

Hadith: a **methodological revolution from Iraq, 2nd/8th**, first applied to *fiqh*

- How to study discourses put into circulation during the **1st/7th century?**

Try to break at least partially **the mold of the Islamic tradition**

Dating *aḥādīth* VS **motives**

Motive: hadith or part of a hadith, with a **semantic unity**

Methodology

From dating Hadith to patterns of motives

Step 1: identifying a **topic** in the Coran and/or the Islamic tradition...

- **Who are the Predecessors** (*al-sābiqūn al-awwalūn*) ?
- *Q al-Tawba* 9:100
- Concept of *Sābiqa* and its privileges (‘*aṭā*’, authority in *fiqh*)

And the Outstrippers [Predecessors], the first of the Emigrants and the Helpers (*al-Sābiqūn al-awwalūn min al-Muhājirīn wa-l-Anṣār*), and those who followed them in good-doing (*wa-lladhīna attaba‘ū-hum bi-iḥsān*). God will be well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him; and He has prepared for them gardens underneath which rivers flow, therein to dwell forever and ever; that is the mighty triumph.

Arberry, 1955

Methodology

From dating Hadith to patterns of motives

Step 2: Identifying its associated motives.

- *Ashāb al-shağara*
- Those who prayed towards the two *qibla*-s
- All *Muhājirūn* (cf. Crone)
- Those who left Makka for al-Madīna...

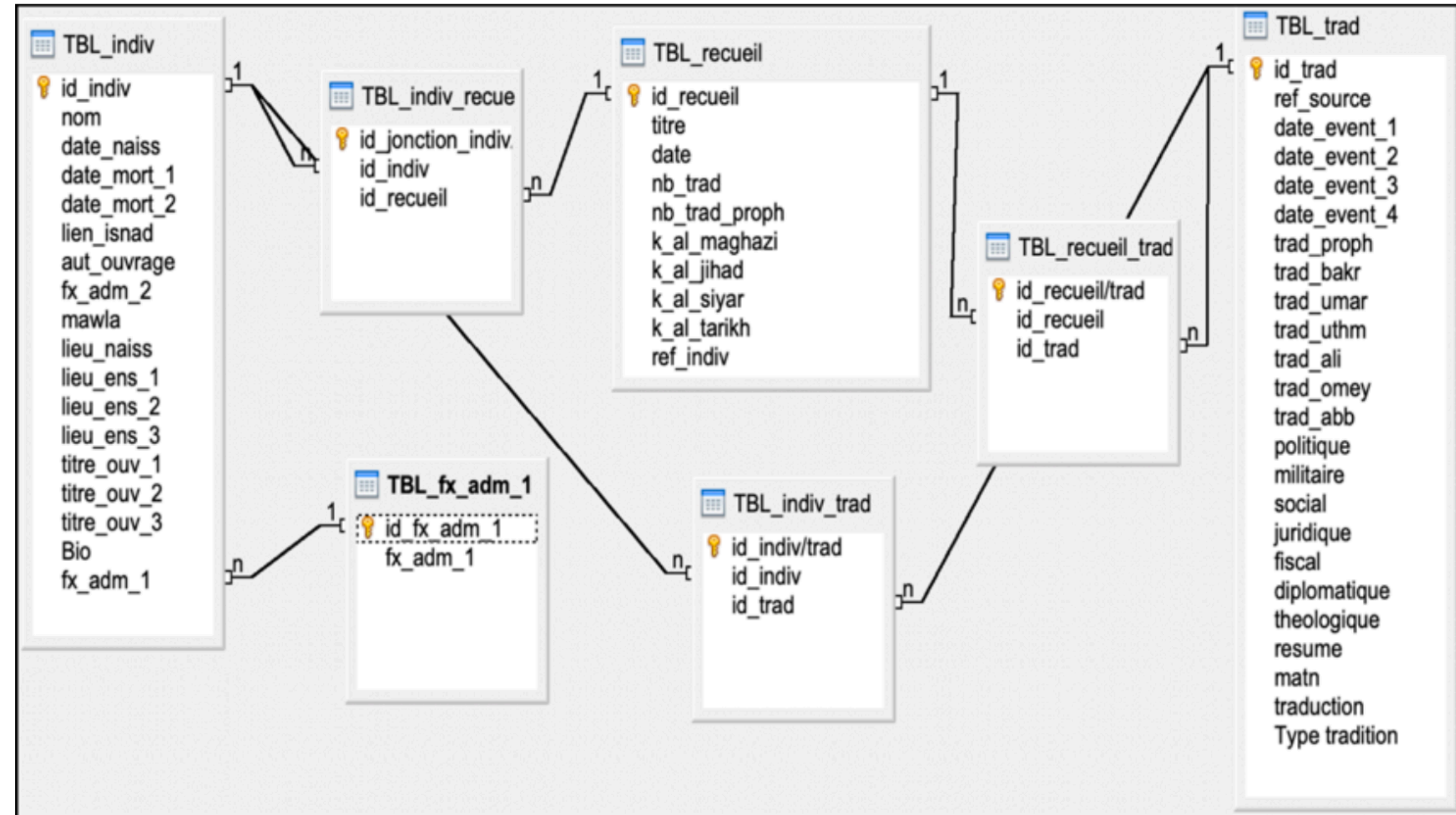
English translation	Text in arabic
Muḥammad b. Bišr narrated to us from Ismā‘īl from ‘Āmir who said the early Predecessors are those who were present at the pledge of allegiance	عن محمد بن بشر حدثنا إسماعيل عن عامر قال السابقون الأولون من أدرك بيعة الرضوان

Methodology

From dating Hadith to patterns of motives

Step 3: collecting motives and their *asānīd*

- Collecting in a **SQL database** to order and extract automatically



Methodology

From dating Hadith to patterns of motives

The early Predecessors are those who were present at the pledge of allegiance

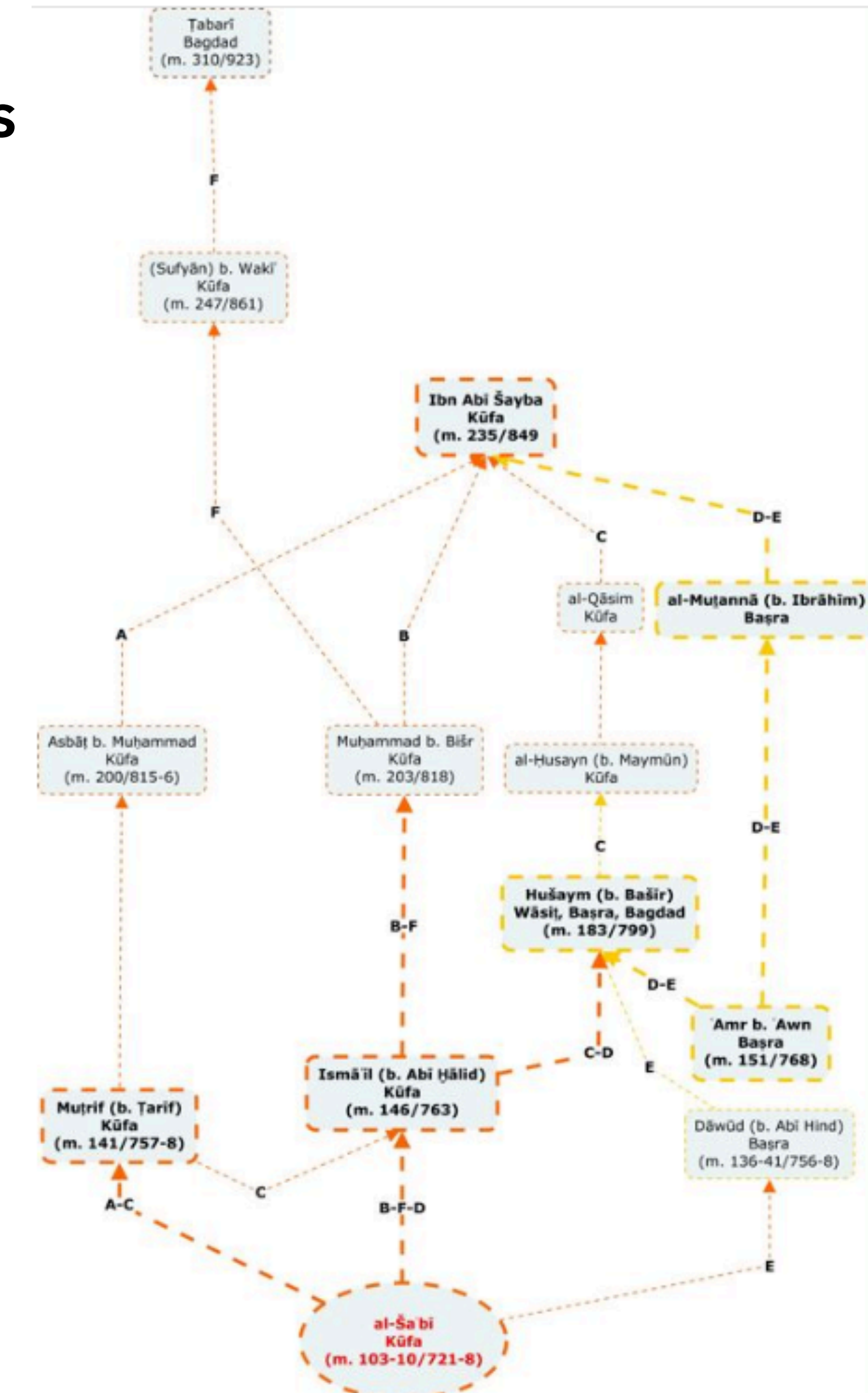
Step 4: Establishing **diagrams** of their transmissions

- Identifying speakers, transmitters and their **position** and **function** in the diagram
- Identifying **patterns** of diagrams
- **Date and locate**

Step 5: if possible, **comparing data with other sources**

(Coran, epigraphy, papyrology, numismatic, christian texts, academic literature...).

- **Q *al-Fatḥ* 48:19**

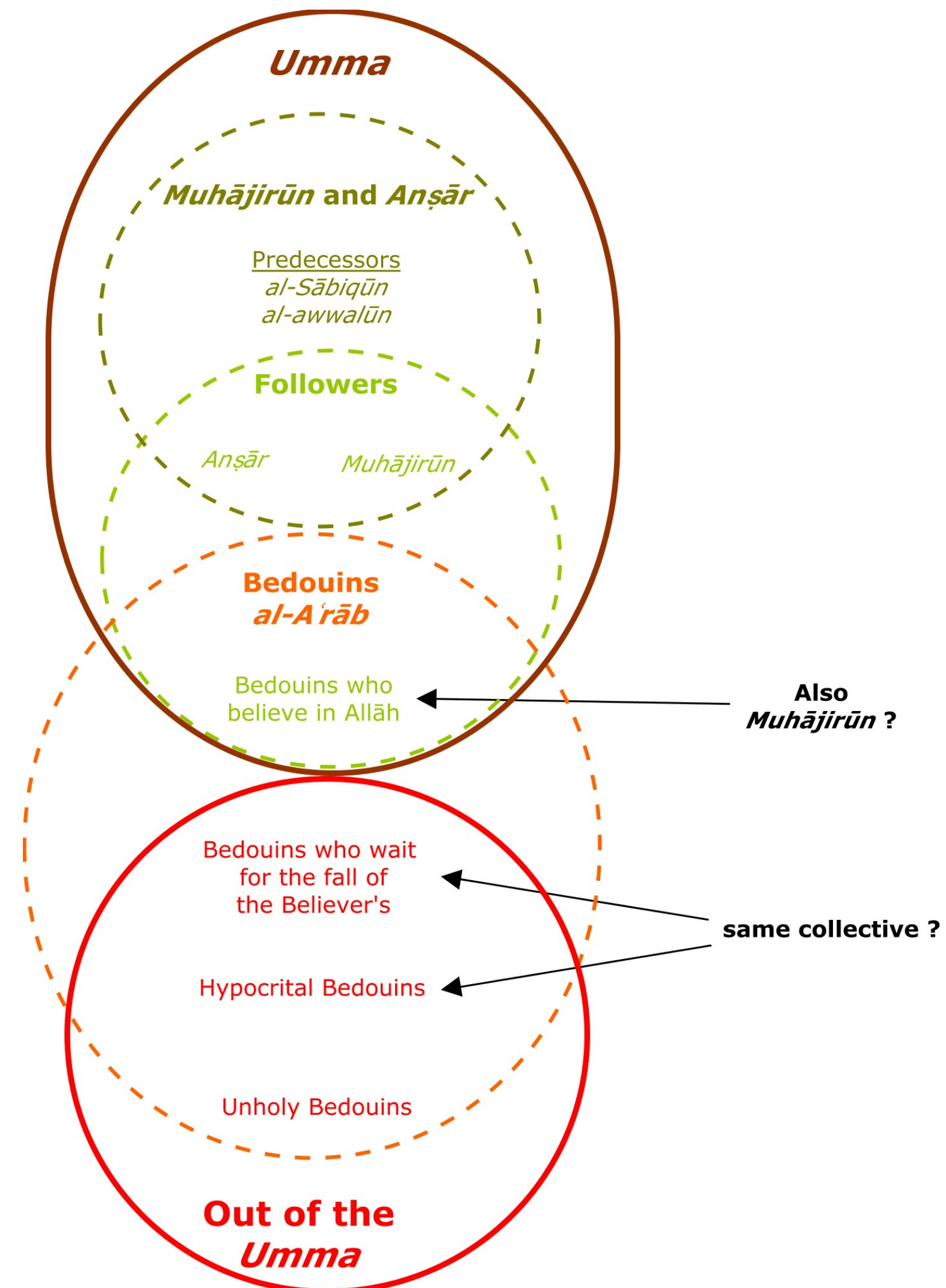


Changing contours of the *Umma*

Divergent conceptions of the *Sābiqa*

Illustration of the complex **social hierarchy** as described in Q 9:100 and following verses

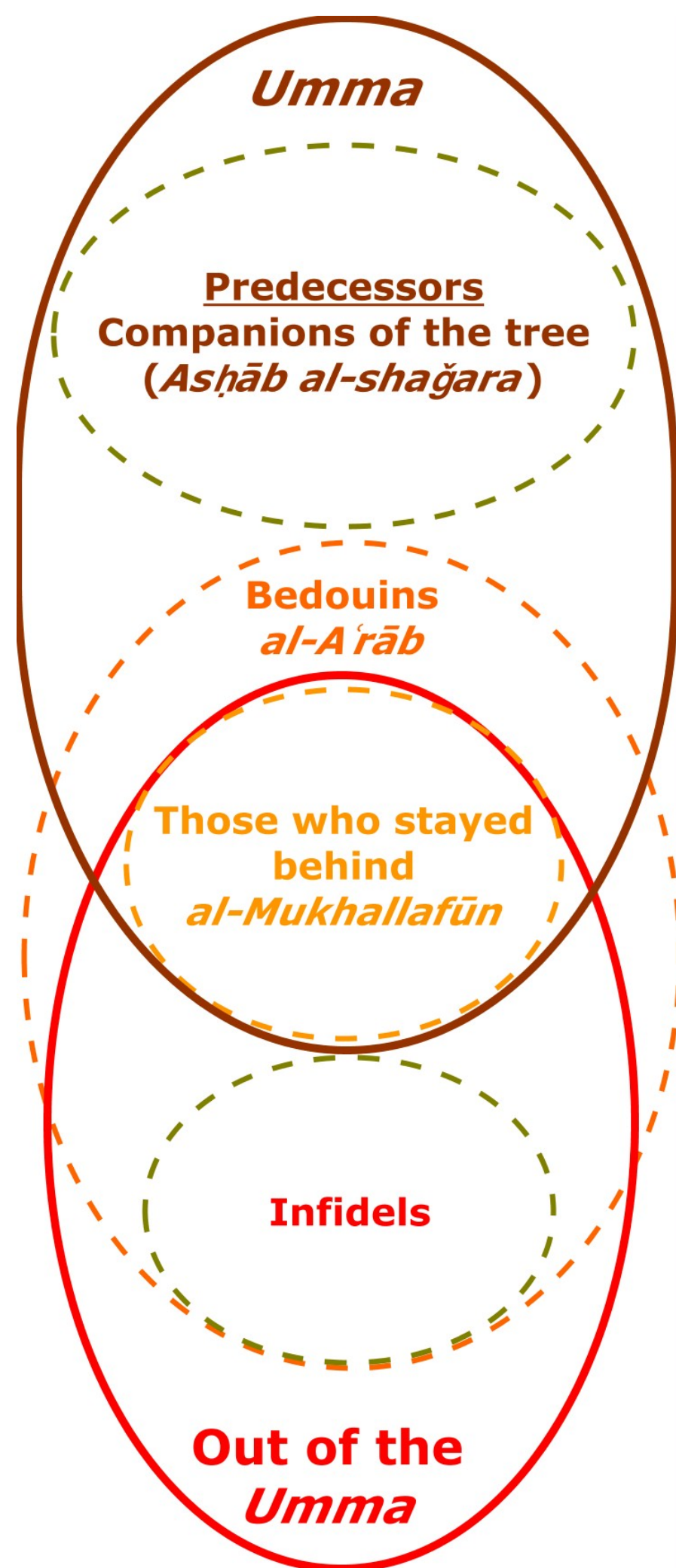
Early-mid 1st/7th century



Changing contours of the *Umma*

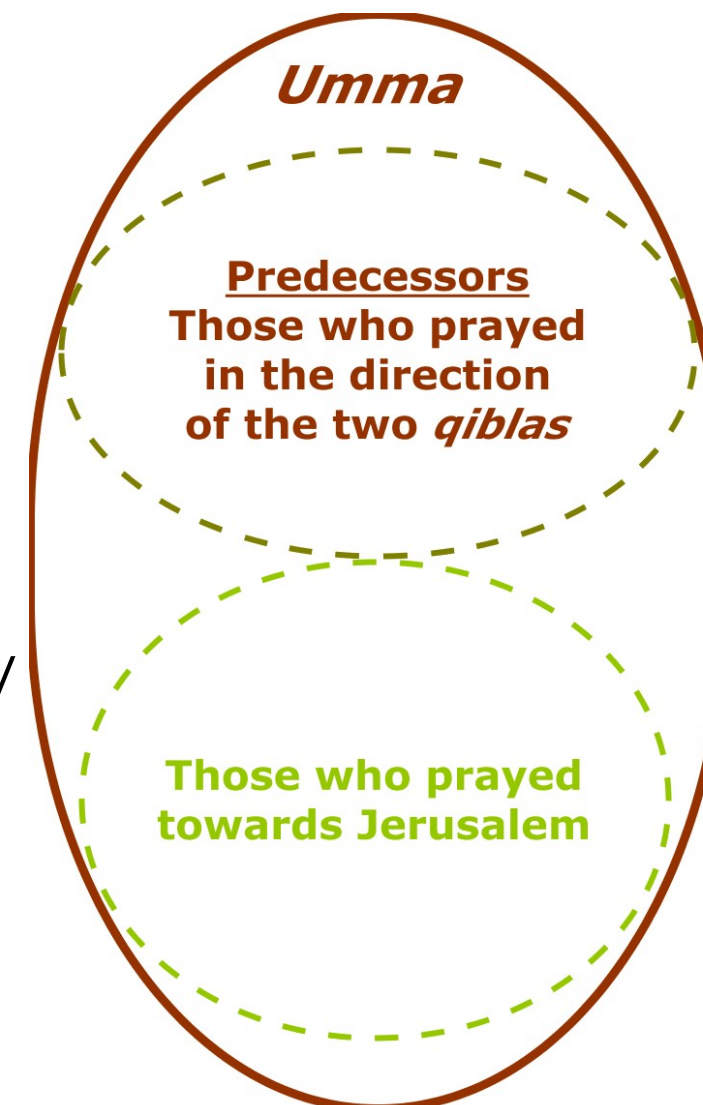
Divergent conceptions of the *Sābiqa*

Aṣḥāb al-shajara



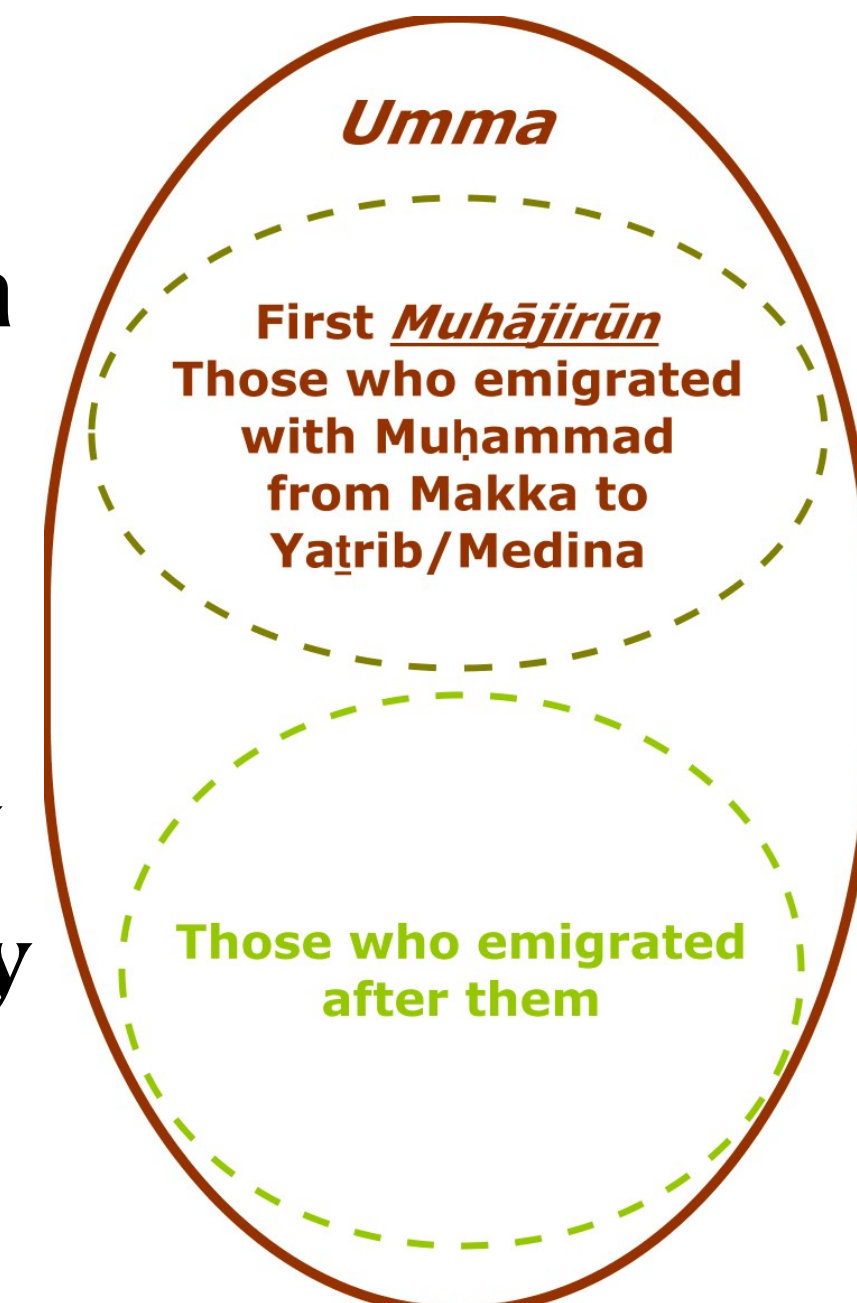
Kūfa, mid-late 1st/7th century

Those who prayed towards the two *qibla*-s



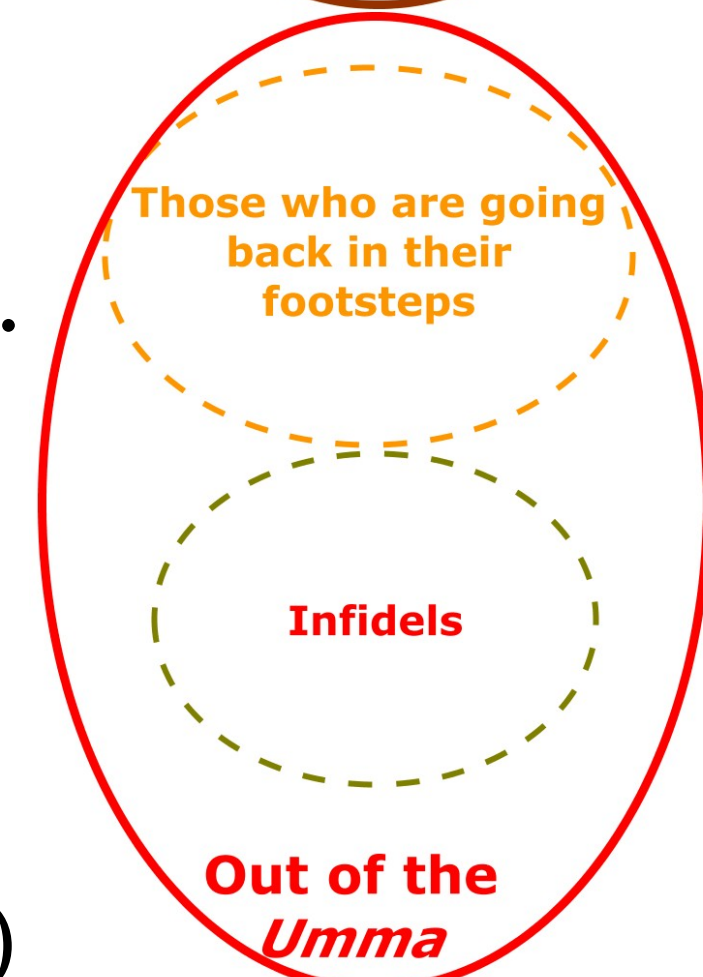
Madīna and Baṣra, mid-late 1st/7th century

Those who emigrated with Muḥammad



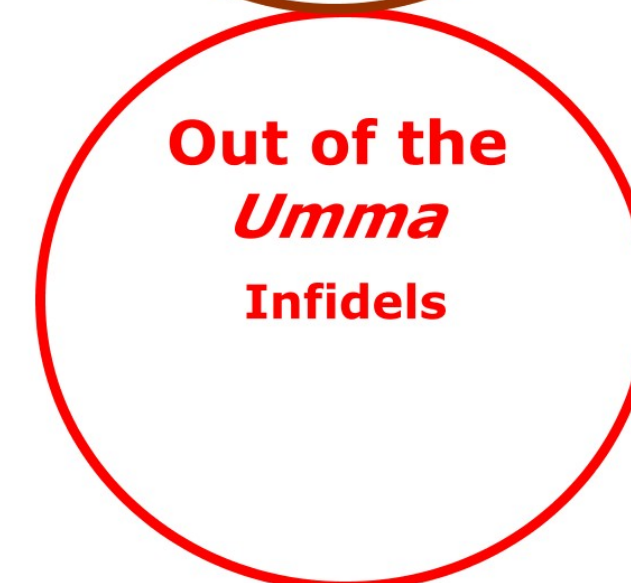
al-Sha'bī (d. 103-10/721-8)

Ibn al-Musayyab (d. 96/715)



Madīna, early 2nd/8th century

Nāfi' (d. 117/735-6)



Qatāda b. Di'āma (d. 117/735-6)

‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Umar (d. 144-7/761-4)

Ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/728)

From the oath under the tree to the Hijra

Narratives of the *Umma's* foundation: the oath under the tree

Function of narratives: support the claim of various social groups to be associated with the Predecessors

Chronology of the story of al-Ḥudaybiya (6/628)

- **Mid-late 1st/7th**, all episodes of the story of Ḥudaybiya put into circulation
- **Muḥammad as chief of the Arabs and Bedouins** (*rasūl* in Coran and early christian texts: Sebeos, Syriac chronicles and *ṭayyāyē d-Mḥmṭ*, Hoyland and Palmer)
- Narrative of Ḥudaybiya at the beginning of **Maʿmar b. Rāšid's *Kitāb al-maghāzī***
- Vocabulary: *ʿām Ḥudaybiya, al-Fatḥ* (Crone, Tillier)
- **Mid 2nd/8th and onwards:** story of al-Ḥudaybiya shortens significantly (*Sīra, kutub al-maghāzī, Ṭabaqāt, Taʿrīkh*)

From the oath under the tree to the Hijra

Narratives of the *Umma's* foundation: the Hijra

Chronology of the story of the Hijra from Makka to al-Madīna

- **Mid-late 1st/7th**, main structure of the story, story of the cave and building of the mosque (‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr, cf. Görke and Schoeler)
- **100/720-140/760 : evolution of the narrative**
 - al-Zuhrī (d. 124/741-2) adds many new details like the story of Surāqa
 - Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767) : the boycott, the constitution of Madīna...
 - Hijra coined to designate this episode
 - Transition from *al-Sābiqūn al-awwalūn* to *al-Muhājirūn al-awwalūn*
 - Debates to integrate the *Anṣār* and *Muhāğirūn* to Abyssinia in this group
 - Story of the adoption of the Hijri calendar at the time of ‘Umar

Conclusion

Various narratives to support the claims of various social groups and their aspiration to form an elite in the Empire

- Competing narratives for more than two centuries
- The oath under the Tree considered **main foundation narrative of the *Umma* up until the end of the Umayyads**, why?
 - **Capacity to lead Arabs and Bedouins** at the core of the *Sābiqa*
- **Between 100/720 and 140/760, the story of the Hijra starts replacing al-Ḥudaybiya**
 - **Family (*ahl, bayt*) and Companions** of Muḥammad define the *Sābiqa*
 - A narrative that **supports the Abbasids** as well as the descendants of Mekkans in al-Madīna VS descendants of the *Anṣār*