1 Introduction

Gautier H.A. Juynboll was undoubtedly one of the leading scholars of hadith literature. His vast knowledge of this literary genre and his great interest in the way it emerged and developed in content and in its formal devices is somehow unique in contemporary scholarship. He was not the only one in the last thirty years to work on this topic, of course, but there is no doubt that only few other scholars can be compared with him in knowledge or approach. Harald Motzki is a case in point and their differing attitudes and even polemical confrontations still constitute a significant contribution to the study of hadith and in particular to the momentous question of the dating of hadith and other reports on the basis of their chains of transmitters (isnāds). In particular, Juynboll was not convinced by the results of the so-called isnād-cum-matn method used and promoted by Harald Motzki and others following more or less the same line of enquiry. The disagreement concerned method (the weight to be given to the isnād as a tool to date the matns and to judge their historicity) as well as substance, since it was clear that Juynboll did not feel at ease with datings as early as the ones proposed by Motzki, who emphatically pointed to the last quarter of the 1st century AH (ca. 700 CE).1

1 Additional criticism on the usefulness of the isnād-cum-matn method has recently been voiced by Stephen Shoemaker, who pointed out that the proposed dating going back through this methodology to the last quarter of the first Islamic century is not so different from studies using different methods of comparison between hadith materials; see his “In Search of ‘Urwa’s Sīra: Some Methodological Issues in the Quest for ‘Authenticity’ in the Life of Muḥammad,” Der Islam 85 (2011): 257–344. Andreas Görke, Harald Motzki and Gregor Schoeler have replied to Shoemaker’s criticism in their joint article “First Century Sources for the Life of Muhammad? A Debate,” Der Islam 89 (2012): 2–59. Apart from this confrontation, isnād-cum-matn is the method followed by other scholars aiming at the analysis and reconstruction of early Islamic traditions; see for instance the recent studies by Pavlovitch on the traditions on kalāla and the work of Elad on the rebellion of Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya: Pavel
The question of the isnād was the specific field of research of Juynboll, who throughout his scholarly life struggled with bundles, lines, dives and common links, spending most of his time in the reading rooms of Leiden University Library, all this, I assume, with one major concern, namely, to find meaning in the formal devices of the transmission and diffusion of reports through the analysis of their chains and lists of names. I believe that the quest for the meaningfulness of the traditional devices of transmission could be an apt definition of Juynboll’s approach and personal feelings towards the literature he analysed. His scholarly activity was not aimed at dismissing or accepting the soundness of a text, but rather at discovering whether the presumed soundness is corroborated by the formal or technical peculiarities of the material transmitted by the early Muslim generations and of their literature.

This being the case, one of the major concerns implicit in Juynboll’s oeuvre, comprised of several books, numerous articles, encyclopedia entries and other publications, was no doubt related to the terminology and the technical definition of the material which emerged in early literature and also to the terms to be used in the description of that same material. This is a sensitive point in the field of hadith studies, since it appears that no comprehensive research has been carried out so far into the use of the technical terms related to hadith literature, not even into the use of key terms such as hadith, *khabar/akhbār*, āthār and additional terminology or, more significantly, their use in Islamic literary genres and non-hadith literature. My argument is that to a higher degree than other major scholars of his time working on hadith, Juynboll reveals in his publications a growing sensitivity to and awareness of the problems connected to the terms he used and their relation to the various Arabic terms he encountered in the sources. In addition, in his use of the terms he shows an awareness of the problematic relation and tension between the contents of later hadith and non-hadith literature and terminology on the one hand, and the appearance of the technical terms to define this material in early traditions and literature on the other. For this reason, I shall discuss, in what follows, one specific point related to terminology, namely: the ambiguous use and meaning of the word *khabar/akhbār*, first of all in Juynboll’s works in relation to western studies and subsequently in some samples from Islamic literature.

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Pavlovitch, *The Formation of the Islamic Understanding of kalāla in the Second Century AH (718–816 CE). Between Scripture and Canon* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Amikam Elad, *The Rebellion of Muḥammad al-Nafṣ al-Zākiyya in 145/762. Ṭālibīsand Early ‘Abbāsīs in Conflict* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).
2 History, Literary History and Differing Uses of Isnāds

In a contribution that appeared in *Le Muséon* in 1994, Gautier Juynboll deals with the question of the supposed different uses and even attitudes adopted by early Muslim authors who produced works not belonging to proper hadith literature. Given his major concern with the formal devices of transmission, the first question posed by Juynboll was if in the display of *isnāds* and also in the relevant terminology there were specific features pointing to a meaningful difference in use and circulation and, consequently, signs of a difference in genre between the reports circulated and transmitted in early Muslim society. In the introduction of this article, he states that it is his intention to analyse the "*isnāds* in hadith collections (...) and texts which are usually called by the collective term *akhbār* literature."3

The conclusion of this study is that in early times there was a close connection between the reports (*akhbār*) that were collected by hadith scholars and those accounts then entering historical works or even exegesis (*tafsīr*). The *quṣṣās* (storytellers) played a major role, according to Juynboll, in the early spread of reports which only in the later literary transmission and redaction came to have the formal devices of hadith reports or, alternatively, took other directions. This picture is fully compatible with Juynboll’s conception that the *isnāds* emerged only later on and thus that a real distinction in literary genres is only the result of a later imposition of formal devices such as chains of transmission on variant versions of a single circulating *khabar*. Juynboll posits the beginning of this phenomenon quite late, but this is another matter. What is more important is that he considers it possible to find historical evidence of the diffusion of the reports in the dynamics of the family *isnād* and of the later "perfect" *isnād* of hadith literature. Many other questions are also touched upon in the article, such as the passage from orality to script, and the importance in this process of legal and even exegetical questions which prompted the formal re-styling of already existing traditional units.

One point of interest in this discussion is the terminology used by Juynboll to characterise such a situation. In the *Muséon* article he makes a clear distinction between the different kinds, not to say genres, of tradition when he mentions, as shown above, hadith on the one hand and *akhbār* on the other. Juynboll uses the terms to indicate two different categories, namely hadith and *akhbār* col-

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2 Gautier H.A. Juynboll, "Early Islamic Society as Reflected in Its Use of Isnads," *Le Muséon* 107 (1994): 151–194, reprinted in Gautier H.A. Juynboll, *Studies on the Origins and Uses of Islamic Hadith* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996, XI).

3 Juynboll, "Early Islamic Society," 151.
lections, so as to distinguish in genre what is beyond doubt the proper hadith literature on one side and all the other traditional (i.e. based on the transmission of material ascribed to early generations) genres on the other. This appears to be the main distinction in his use of these terms. *Akhbār* is used for reports in general, but mainly, given the specific episode analysed by him as a case-study related to the biography of Muḥammad, in relation to reports with historical content. For this reason, he further uses *khabar* in relation to a report on the Prophet mentioned in the *Sīra* by Ibn Ṩaqqām.

There are a few additional points to be underlined concerning this article which is the starting point in our analysis. It seems clear that in his search for the meaningfulness of the reports and report bundles or chains of transmission, Juynboll was mostly interested in the formal devices of hadith or hadith-oriented reports. Consequently, he was also interested in the proper definition of the materials circulating in early Islamic societies though, for the sake of his enquiry, he made a sharp and precise distinction between hadith collections and collections of *akhbār*, which is related to the different use of these reports in the final literary genres in which they were fixed and written down. Furthermore, Juynboll's use of the terms seems to be more closely related to western scholarship than to what is found in Islamic literature.

3 The Terminological Question and the Use of *Khabar/Akhbār* by Gautier Juynboll

As regards our concern and thus the relation between the different literary genres, kinds of report and the terms, in particular *khabar*, that were employed to define them, Juynboll shows throughout his work a growing interest in the use of terms along with the definition given to hadiths and their parts. Apart from the above-mentioned questions discussed in his *Muséon* article, the terms Juynboll uses here do not reflect a consistent and categorical divide between hadith and *khabar* nor even a definition of what he means, taking for granted, I would suggest, their sense in western Islamic studies. Another example from his oeuvre illustrates this. The question of the uses of the term *khabar* and its relation to other technical terminology is also mentioned by Juynboll in his early article on Muslim's introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Here, so as to explain the occurrences of the terms in that introduction, Juynboll states in one note

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4 Juynboll, “Early Islamic Society,” 159, 179.
that *khabar* and hadith “are not synonymous in all the works of and about traditions. In this text, however, there is virtually no distinction between the two terms”.

The point that is relevant for us here, and worth focusing upon, is that notwithstanding its use in relation to history and historical traditions and works (*akhbār*), the term *khabar* also has a significant and unexplored history in hadith-related literature, although according to Juynboll, it reflects varying and different meanings. In this regard, a first theoretical exploration of terminology is no doubt his monograph *Muslim tradition*, which appeared in 1983.6 In his introduction to this book, Juynboll mentions first of all hadiths and their peculiarities as traditions, stating that in early times, when methods of transmission and the related formal devices were neither established nor frequently used, “the *ahādīth* and the *qīṣāṣ* were transmitted in a haphazard fashion”,7 thus making a distinction in genre between reports. Further down, *qīṣāṣ* appear as a first layer of traditions and proper stories emerging and told in Muslim societies.8 In addition, when pointing to early reports, Juynboll cites *akhbār* and *faḍāʾil/mathālib*.9 It is, however, in a passage in the first chapter that a significant point on terminology is made. Here Juynboll mentions, as an alternative way of conveying information and discourse, alternative to *raʾy*, “*ʿilm* as comprising the knowledge, including the transmission, of *āḥār, akhbār* or *ahādīth*, depending on the person(s) to whom these were ascribed”.10 In the footnote (n. 116) following this statement, Juynboll writes that usually the terms *āḥār* and *akhbār* refer to statements made by Companions or Successors while hadith refers to prophetic traditions, though the subsequent comments show that the use of the terms in a technical sense was not binding in his view. Thus when he needed to include all the reports, Juynboll referred to hadith and *āḥār*.11

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5 Gautier H.A. Juynboll, “Muslim’s Introduction to His Ṣaḥīḥ. Translated and Annotated with an Excursus on the Chronology of Fitna and Bi’d’a,” Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam 5 (1984): 265, n. 3, reprinted in Gautier H.A. Juynboll, *Studies on the Origins and Uses of Islamic Ḥadīth* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996, 111). In the same footnote he mentions Nabia Abbott’s criticism of Franz Rosenthal on this point, only to dismiss it; on this see below.
6 Gautier H.A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition. Studies in Chronology, Provenance and Authorship of Early Ḥadīth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
7 Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, 5.
8 Juynboll, 11–12, 74; on an opposition *qīṣāṣ/ʿilm* or their connection, see 77, 162.
9 Juynboll, 7, 74.
10 Juynboll, 33.
11 Juynboll, 41, 120.
In his later research, which largely found its way into articles now collected in a Variorum reprint, Juynboll delves deeper into the discussion of traditions and the use of terminology to define or only refer to them. As a matter of fact, we can observe a generic and non-technical use of *akhbār*, for instance where he states that in early works, *akhbār* appear in relation to the definition of historical sources or traditions: “in the *akhbār* sources”, that is, reports also having a transmission chain or further being specified as “historical *akhbār*”. Elsewhere he distinguishes between hadith, explained as tradition literature, and *akhbār*, defined as historical literature. This is again connected to the use of these terms in western scholarship, rather than in later Islamic literature.

Juynboll’s final major work, the *Encyclopedia of Canonical Ḥadīth* (2007), must be considered his *summa* and thus reflecting his definitive formulations, also with regard to the technical use of the terms that it includes. But in fact, something quite different transpires here, which appears to reveal an increasingly conscious technical use of the terminology on Juynboll’s part, strictly connected to his evaluation of the origin of hadith literature. *Khabar* appears in connection to the well-known question of the *khabar al-wāḥid*, but in general Juynboll refers to *khabar* to indicate traditions dealing with historical facts which can also be related to the life of Muhammad, and which can show “many textual variants”, or be “ancient”. *Khabar* is thus the core of a narrative, emerging in early times in different wordings and versions, and later constituting the basis for the traditions as a whole. Thus, in another passage, Juynboll states that a tradition “function(s) also in a *khabar* describing (...),” or elsewhere, in a rather strange formulation: “for other versions of this what may be in fact a *khabar*”. Thus, in general, *khabar* is the preferred term to define a generic unit (i.e. a tradition) on a topic and in particular its content. This is made even

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12 Gautier H.A. Juynboll, “The Role of *Muʿammarūn* in the Early Development of the *Isnād*,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 81 (1991): 155–175, reprinted in Gautier H.A. Juynboll, *Studies on the Origins and Uses of Islamic Ḥadīth* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996, v11), 159, 164, 165 respectively.

13 Gautier H.A. Juynboll, “The Origin of Arabic Prose: Reflections on Authenticity,” in *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society*, ed. Gautier H.A. Juynboll (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1982), 162, 163, *passim*.

14 Gautier H.A. Juynboll, *Encyclopedia of Canonical Ḥadīth* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), xxiv, 396.

15 Juynboll, *Encyclopedia of Canonical Ḥadīth*, quotations respectively from 22 and 25.

16 Juynboll, 106.

17 Juynboll, 189.

18 Juynboll, 71, 89, 192, 220, 245, 247, 271, 275, 286, 340, 468, 470, 478, 483, 487, 508, 541, 554, 565, 578, 579, 585, 591, 692, 703, 703–706, 713, 718, 720, 722, 724, 730.
clearer by some more explicit passages where it is stated that a particular “matn (...) is an offshoot of a khabar”,19 or, later on, when Juynboll states that lines of transmission going back to the Prophet were added to a khabar “for good measure”.20 Finally, elsewhere khabar appears in the sense of traditions and reports displaying a more narrative feature or content, as in the use of the expression “khabar-like” applied to Abū Usāma (d. 201/816), responsible for “the wording of a khabar-like report”.21

Khabar is thus a sort of early layer of the traditional reports, in the singular khabar or in the plural akhbār still denoting a bundle of reports and traditions around a specific topic or event, displaying textual variety and instability, from which only later on proper hadiths evolved; that is, when someone, according to Juynboll’s thesis, applied isnāds and traced them back via that channel to the Prophet, or when other kinds of traditions without trustworthy chains emerged and came to be attested in later literature. This is especially obvious in the use of the plural, which also indicates the whole of the traditional material relating to a topic or an event. The plural akhbār in fact specifies the corpus of traditional reports on a particular topic.22 In other instances in the Encyclopedia of Canonical Ḥadīth the term akhbār is also glossed as “historical accounts”, or mentioned in related contexts, such as “historical akhbār”, or “akhbār collections like Ibn Ishāq, Wāqīdī and Ibn Sa’d”,23 while in other passages akhbār is mentioned together with hadiths, thus indicating another, different class of traditions.24 Akhbār is also connected to historical traditions and collections such as that of Muhammad b. Ishāq.25 In one significant passage, however, Juynboll suggests that hadith and akhbār stand on common ground, and together make up a genre of tradition that differs from tafsīr literature: “... in Muslim tafsīr and and hadith/akhbār literature ...”.26 The plural form akhbār must also be considered in strict relation to the other plurals that define categories of reports. Thus akhbār, in its specific meaning also having historical connotations, must be listed in connection to other terms such as mursalāt or mawqūfāt, or to what Juynboll calls qawl/aqwāl, i.e. the sayings going back to the

19 Juynboll, 223.
20 Juynboll, 421.
21 Juynboll, 68, 492.
22 Cf. Juynboll, 26, 27, 243, 250, 256, 270, 372, 433, 434, 470, 569, 589, 691, 702, 706.
23 Juynboll, quotations respectively from 73, 693, 599.
24 Juynboll, 132, and cf. 396.
25 Juynboll, 419.
26 Juynboll, 591.
later generations, such as that of the Successors, to which belonged the early exegetes and fiqhāʾ.²⁷

4  **Khabar in Other Western Studies**

The use of the term *khabar*/*akhbār* and its relation to traditions and reports, whatever these terms may mean, has a long history in western scholarship. The evolution of this use in Juynboll’s work must also be seen in connection to this history. In general, this use is unspecific, and therefore ambiguous, being a reflection of the complexity of the term “history” in Islamic literature and literary genres. Important and substantial evidence for the use of *khabar*/*akhbār* appears, for example, in works of Islamic historiography. Since in later times the term is associated mostly with historical writing—in book titles such as *akhbār majmūʿa fi fath al-Andalus*—western studies use *khabar*/*akhbār* first of all as a synonym for historical notice or reports. In most of these studies, the problematic relation of the term *khabar*/*akhbār* to hadith in some hadith-related literature is therefore not discussed. Stefan Leder, among others, uses the term *akhbār* and thus *akhbāris* to refer to the textual units (ranging from one line to several pages) innervating historiographical and biographical compilations.²⁸ Using the term broadly to define the historical material, he in fact states that *khabar* means “a piece of information”.²⁹ The same line is followed by Fred Donner in whose view *akhbār* are historical reports whose *matn* is introduced by an *isnād*. But since Donner is more interested in the origin of this material in connection to religious tradition as a whole, he writes about “the hadith format—*akhbār* with validating *isnāds*”.³⁰ Other studies take a sim-
ilar direction, without paying attention to the question of the term, but using it to indicate the narrative units constituting medieval Islamic literature.\(^{31}\)

The scant interest in the meaning of *khabar* and its relation to other terminology could be connected to the fact that the earlier major western scholars of hadith did not deal with *khabar/akhbār* nor even mentioned the terms. Goldziher does not refer to *khabar* in his discussion of hadith and *sunna*.\(^{32}\) Neither does Schacht mention *khabar* when briefly discussing the terms used by al-Shāfi‘ī in relation to the *sunna*.\(^{33}\) Hadiths (Ar. *ḥadīth*; pl. *aḥādīth*) is the preferred term given to this material in these seminal studies, and the term *khabar* appears only in discussions of the expression *khabar al-wāḥid/al-infirād* and in relation to other definitions such as *khabar al-khāṣṣa* or *khabar al-tawātur*.*\(^{34}\) Only a few, late works show a specific concern with the relation of the term to hadith and hadith-related traditions, and thus with the fact that early reports mention various terms along with hadith literature and terminology. In general, these are studies that try to define the relation between traditions and the historiographical literature built on them on the one hand, and the literature collecting the dicta of Muḥammad and those of the first Muslims on the other. The first (*sīra, maghāzī* etc.) were produced by the so-called *akhbāriyyūn*, while the second category (hadith, *akhbār*, etc.) was produced by the so-called *muhaddithūn*. Some attention is paid to the terminological question in relation to the contents of the different traditions or to their interaction, in brief notes on the use and meanings of the terms hadith and *khabar* especially in their earliest attestations.\(^{35}\)

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\(^{31}\) See e.g. D. Beaumont, “Hard-Boiled: Narrative Discourse in Early Muslim Traditions,” *Studia Islamica* 83 (1996): 5–31. Hinting at the transition in early Islum from the *qiṣṣa* to the *khabar*, he means a change in content and tone of the narrations, without considering the terms used to define this.

\(^{32}\) See Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, vol. 2, ed. S.M. Stern, trans. from German by C.R. Barber and S.M. Stern (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), 17 f.

\(^{33}\) Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1950), 16. The opposition is hadith/āthār, see for example p. 75.

\(^{34}\) Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, 50–52.

\(^{35}\) See Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 11, where it is stated that *khabar* “became in fact something of a synonym of *ḥadīth*”. According to Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Literary Papyri. i. Historical Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 7, *khabar* is a wider category while hadith is more specific; and Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 131–153, where he discusses *khabar* in al-Shāfi‘ī and in theologians and religious authors who use it as a synonym of hadith; see in particular p. 137, where he mentions that, according to al-Shāfi‘ī, *akhbār* (meaning reports, traditions) constitute in their totality the hadith of Muḥammad. On p. 141 the author further mentions the opinion of Naẓẓām that *khabar* is of interest to a wider group than hadith scholars. Furthermore Khalidi dis-
The most recent important contributions dealing with the early use of *khabar* are those concerned with the role of al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) and the meaning he attached to the term. The frequent use of the term *khabar* in al-Shāfiʿī’s work is shown clearly in the recent monograph dedicated to him by Joseph Lowry.³⁶ The author demonstrates that in al-Shāfiʿī’s *Risāla akhbār* means “revealed reports”, such as in expressions where *khabar* appears as a generic indication of what is stated in the Qurʾān and the *sunna* (see for example: *naṣṣ kitāb aw sunna/naṣṣ khabar lāzīm*).³⁷ This would also be reflected in the use of other terminology such as *āthār* or even *aqāwil al-salaf* to refer to reports going back to persons who lived after the Prophet or to the Companions.³⁸ Much space is also devoted in Lowry’s study to the *khabar al-wāḥid*.³⁹ Al-Shāfiʿī’s use of the term *khabar* and the meaning he attaches to it has also been underlined by Josef van Ess, who interestingly states that al-Shāfiʿī moved away from the general meaning given to it by Wāsīl b. ‘Atā (d. 131/748), thus using it in connection with hadith and *sunna*. According to Van Ess, al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868–869) was to take a middle position between the two. He states that in the meantime the term *khabar* “had become too ambiguous”.⁴⁰ The early centrality of the use of *khabar* would thus be further attested by the Muʿtazilī use of *khabar al-umma* for the *ijmāʿ* and *khabar al-nabī* for the hadith.⁴¹ In this reconstruction the use of *khabar* appears to be in polemical contraposition to the Sunnī hadith theory which was evolving by then, or intentionally to depreciate it.

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³⁶ Joseph E. Lowry, *Early Islamic Legal Theory. The Risāla of Muhammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).
³⁷ Lowry, *Early Islamic Legal Theory*, 118.
³⁸ Lowry, 204.
³⁹ Lowry, 189–205. Closely connected to this order of questions, though not directly related to Lowry’s work, is an interesting paper by Murteza Bedir, “An early response to Shāfiʿī: ‘Īsā b. Abān on the prophetic report (*khabar*),” *Islamic Law and Society* 9, no. 3 (2002): 285–311, which discusses the theory of *khabar* in the work of the Ḥanafī jurist ‘Īsā b. Abān (d. 221/836), living only a generation after Shāfiʿī. Ibn Abān gives a twofold classification of the *khabar*, one rational and one religious. The discussion concerns the certainty of the various kinds of *khabar*, but what is more relevant is the use of the term here in line with Shāfiʿī, thus attesting to its diffusion in juridical discussions and definitions.
⁴⁰ Josef van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology* (Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 158; cf. on these points the same author’s *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidscha. Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam* (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 1991–1997), 11, 2, 279–280, IV, 649–650.
⁴¹ Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 168; cf. Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, IV,
Apart from all these issues and others coming up in scholarly research on Islamic historiography versus hadith literature and Islamic law, it is obvious that the use and meaning of *khabar* in early literature is an issue to be handled with care and deserving further enquiry. This point is made by Chase Robinson in his *Islamic Historiography*. Stating that both terms are crucial in understanding the first circulation of traditions, he argues that *khabar* evolved as a more general term and hadith as a saying connected to the Prophet. However, one aspect connected to the employment of the terms was related to the use of *isnāds* and their diffusion. Most recently, the problems connected to the use and meaning of *khabar* and its relation to the parallel use in non-hadith literature were touched upon by Pierre Larcher, in a brief article dedicated to the term hadith.

Larcher quotes a passage from al-Tahānawī (d. in or after 1158/1745) which presents contrasting opinions on the affirmation that the terms are synonymous or that *khabar* is broader in meaning and thus includes hadith, further adding other possible definitions. Larcher then discusses the relation between these two terms and others to define narratives and traditions which attest first of all to the existence of contrasting accounts of the meaning of the term *khabar*. Andreas Görke also mentions briefly, in a footnote to one of his articles, that the distinction between the terms hadith and *khabar* was a controversial issue among Muslim authors and, evidently, also among western scholars.

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657. Cf. instead the terminology of al-Shāfiʿī *akhbār al-khāṣṣa* and *akhbār al-ʿāmma*, on which see the studies by Lowry and also Norman Calder, “Iktīlāl and Ijmāʿ in Shāfiʿī’s Risāla,” *Studia Islamica* 58 (1983): 56.

42 Chase Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15–17.

43 Pierre Larcher, “Le mot de *ḥadīṯ* vu par un linguiste,” in *Das Propheten-*hadīṯ. *Dimensionen einer islamischen Literaturgattung*, eds. Claude Gilliot and Tilman Nagel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 7–13, in particular p. 12: the terms hadith and *khabar* have a complex relation; *khabar* can refer to a saying of the Prophet, or a have wider generic definition, or can stand in opposition to hadith.

44 The distinctions in meaning which are proposed by other studies are not based on an analysis of Islamic literature, see e.g. Rizwi S. Faizer, “The Issue of Authenticity Regarding the Traditions of al-Wāqidī as Established in His *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 58 (1999): 100, according to whom hadiths are prophetic traditions and *akhbār* all the other ones, but without giving any reference.

45 Andreas Görke, “The Relationship Between *Maghāzī* and *Ḥadīth* in Early Islamic Scholarship,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 74 (2011): 176, n. 28. It must be added that the term *khabar* is used in Imāmī Shiʿism to define the traditions ascribed to the Prophet and to the Imams, see e.g. Robert Gleave, “Between *Ḥadīth* and *Fiqh*: the ‘Canonical’ Imāmī Collections of *Akhbār*,” *Islamic Law and Society* 8 (2001): 350–382.
All these studies demonstrate a certain awareness of the problems involved in terminology and of the fact that no one has taken care to review the occurrences of the terms discussed in early Islamic literature. Various hypotheses are given in accordance with later uses or with a partial scrutiny of the statements of individual Muslim scholars and authors. Although some of these authors played a major role in the development of an Islamic criticism of the traditions and reports collected and written down in the early period, their use of terminology has never been analysed in relation to what is found in the Arabic sources. While a comprehensive discussion of the use of *khabar* and its relation to hadith and hadith-related terminology in these sources would take up too much space, an enquiry in online data bases and digitised repositories nowadays permits us to offer some preliminary considerations and a general outlook on the use of terms in early Islamic literary activity and thus to draw some lines to the previous discussions on the topic. In what follows, then, I will focus on the use of *khabar* and the apparent meaning reflected in some literary works.46

5  *Khabar* in Early Islamic Sources

Even a cursory glance at the occurrences of the term *khabar*/akhbār in early Islamic literature reveals a complex situation as regards its use and meaning. The question is no doubt further complicated by the wide circulation of the term in its primary sense: news or reports, with no specific connection to hadith, hadith-like or historical literary genres. The first point to make is that these occurrences reflect a situation that is not as straightforward as the one we find in western scholarship. It appears that the term covers different uses and meanings following differing lines of diffusion and use, or lack thereof. This occurs in all early Islamic Arabic literature with no well-defined distinctions between genres or supposed early developments of what will later on become fixed literary genres. This being the situation, it is nevertheless significant to look first of all at the hadith collections so as to establish if the term *khabar*/akhbār is used there, before moving to the larger body of literary attestations.

Early hadith collections, both the so-called canonical works and the early Muṣannaf’s, do not in general exhibit a technical use of the term with a specific

46 I relied for this enquiry on materials collected in *al-Maktaba al-shāmila* and *Ahl al-bayt* 1.0, plus some additional works.
meaning related to transmitted material, with some relevant exceptions. Abū Dāwūd (d. 275/889) is a case in point, since in his *Sunan* the formula *al-khabar ‘an al-nabi* is quite frequent and somehow original when compared to other hadith works. Where a *khabar daʾīf* is mentioned, as in al-Nasāʾi (d. 303/915), this appears as an isolated, not a systematic quotation. Although Ahmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) does not systematically use a fixed formula, we do find the term *khabar al-khabar* with reference to something from (*‘an*) the Prophet in his *Musnad*. The meaning of expressions such as *khabar ‘Aṭā‘*, *khabar Abī Sa‘d*, *khabar ‘an Ṣafiyya*, etc. in ‘Abd al-Razzāq’s (d. 211/827) *Muṣannaf* must be similar. But that this is not a technical use is evident from the fact that we have further occurrences of the term *khabar* followed by the name of an historical episode just to indicate that what is dealt with is indeed the story of an event rather than the story about or related from somebody. Such instances occur for example in Ibn Abī Shayba’s (d. 235/849) *Muṣannaf*. Furthermore, it is also in connection to this meaning that the term *khabar* appears in chapter or paragraph titles, though the question of whether chapter titles were already included in the original works is in some cases debated and even doubtful.

The same situation can be found in early historical writing. The *Sīra* by Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833) is an example. *Khabar* is story, like in *Khabar Dhī al-Qarnayn* (I, 306), in *Khabar Khaybar* (II, 353) etcetera, or, also as a paragraph title, in the story of the call to prayer (*khabar al-adhān*, I, 571). In al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822) and other early works, by contrast, there is no mention at all of the term *khabar al-khabar* in connection to the traditions of the Prophet and no relevant indication that the term indicated something related to historical reports.

As a matter of fact the sources show what is already known from other studies, namely that the first to provide a comprehensive discussion and use of the term *khabar* was al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820). In his works, and mainly in the *Risāla* and the *Kitāb al-umm*, *khabar* appears as the key term to indicate any probat-

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47 The occurrences of the term in Muslim’s introduction to his major hadith work was discussed by Juynboll himself. Muslim speaks about the “akhbār from the Messenger of God”; see Juynboll, “Muslim’s Introduction,” 268. But see also the use later on of āthār; Juynboll, “Muslim’s Introduction,” 299.
48 Nasāʾi, *al-Sunan al-sughrā* (Aleppo, 1986), VIII, 325 no. 5793.
49 Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Beirut, 2001), nos. 6087, 6749, and cf. XXIII, 132 no. 14834: *awwal khabar qadima ‘alaynā ‘an rasūl Allāh, passim*; see also X, 441 no. 6375: *khabar ‘an Ṣafiyya bt. Abī ‘Ubayd.*
50 ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf* (Beirut, 1983), 11, 93 no. 3043, 11, 441 no. 4011, 11, 546 no. 4401.
51 See also Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawīyya* (Cairo, 1955), I, 583: *ātā rasūl Allāh (s) al-khabar min Allāh.*
ive text, either originating from the Prophet or from the holy text itself. It also indicates specific reports from Muḥammad, in expressions such as (al-)

khābār ʿan.52 One expression of this kind is quite frequent: khābār lāzīm,53 and in many passages it is clearly stated that khābār and qiyyāṣ/ijmāʿ are the reference tools to ascertain certain matters. Al-Shāfiʿī also frequently uses the term when discussing the question of the prophetic report going back to only one Companion, the so-called khābār al-wāḥid, which consequently receives special attention—at

warning which caused the expression to gain wide circulation and to survive the later doubts around the use of khābār.54

Other authors following al-Shāfiʿī appear to give the term a significant place and to make extensive use of it. Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) is of particular importance in this regard. The term khābār is ubiquitous in his Tahdīb al-āthār, and closely connected to the reports going back to Muḥammad. But it is also evident in his commentary on the Qurʾān, which is the first work of this literary genre to introduce the term in any systematic way. The previous tafsīrs quote the term very rarely and when they do, it is in its original generic meaning. Al-Ṭabarī’s view, however, is clear from the introduction to his commentary: khābār is a relevant report, going back to the Prophet or to the Companions, and the related expressions communicate this fundamental meaning.55 But additional uses which further define the meanings of what a khābār can be, appear in other early literary attestations. For instance, khābār can also be a broad category: the mention of khābār in connection to words denoting soundness such as ṣiḥḥa/ṣaḥḥa indicates that the category of the khābār is a comprehensive one also including reports whose soundness is to be ascertained.56 Furthermore, what is also significant in our discussion is that al-khabār ʿan sometimes

52 Al-Shāfiʿī al-Umm (Beirut, 1990), I, 158, 11, 59; cf. 11, 199. See also khābār + the name of a person: al-Shāfiʿī, al-Risāla (Cairo, 1943), I, 434, 447; khābār + the Prophet/Al-Ṣādiq, I, 413.

53 Al-Shāfiʿī, Risāla, I, 476; al-Shāfiʿī, al-Umm, I, 54, IV, 101.

54 There is more in the works of al-Shāfiʿī in relation to khābār, but the questions related to khābār al-khāṣṣa/al-ʿāmma, for example, are relevant to our discussion only to give further testimony to the centrality of the term in his works.

55 We find the expression “a khābār from (ʿan) the prophet/Muḥammad”, al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl ʿayn al-Qurʾān (Beirut, 2000), I, 50, 87, 88; or “a khābār from ʿĀʾisha” or ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd etc., ʿTabari, Jamiʿ al-bayān, I, 89, or Ibn ʿAbbās, al-Ṭabarī, Jamiʿ al-bayān, I, 75, 95. In the same introduction it is stated of the contents of a report: naṣṣ hadhā al-khabar, see ʿTabari, Jamiʿ al-bayān, I, 50.

56 ʿTabari, Jamiʿ al-bayān, I, 56, 107. A khābār can also be not ṣaḥīḥ, see ʿTabari, Jamiʿ al-bayān, 111, 437: wa-ammā al-khabār illati ruwiya ʿan al-nabi (s.) fa-innahu in kāna saḥīḥan (cf. ʿTabari, Jamiʿ al-bayān, IV, 365), while in other passages a khābār confirms (thabita, see ʿTabari, Jamiʿ al-bayān, 111, 76, passim).
stands for “the story/report about”. It can even refer to the contents of the Qurʾān: wa-fī al-āya allatī ba’d al-khabar ‘an khalq Ādam; or even to define that of which God informs us, with a plethora of expressions which demonstrate the wide use of the term in literary devices. Significant in this regard, but also in connection with the meanings recalling traditions is that the terms khabar and hadith may be linked in one passage, where it is stated that a khabar is a mukhtaṣar from one hadith.

Khabar becomes the preferred term in the connective spaces between reports where al-Ṭabarī articulates his specific exegetical discourse and elucidates his preferences among the material selected and quoted. To judge by the use of the term it appears to denote a general meaning including every kind of report and content, ranging from the contents of Qurʾānic verses, passing first of all through the traditions going back to Muḥammad and ending up with the reports traced back to the following generations. There is no technicality in it, but it seems to be a pragmatic descriptive tool with no specific concern for technical discussions relating to hadiths and āthār. It is not necessary at this point to add further examples from other authors. There are indeed some who attribute the same relevance to the term khabar in the organisation and even definition of the reports and traditions they quote and discuss, apart from its emerging use in relation to the technical use attested, mainly in relation to the plural, in historiography. Among these few authors are Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī (d. 354/965) and Ibn Ḥāzm (d. 456/1064) in whose works khabar is the term

57 Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, I, 259; an Iblīs wa-Ādam; cf. also al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, I, 590, 11, 214, 111, 218.
58 Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, I, 413; cf. also I, 425.
59 SeeforexamplekhabaraAllāhal-khabaralladhī…,inal-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿal-bayān, II, 557; anzala Allāhal-khabar min al-samā’, al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, I, 590. See also in this vein the passages stating that a khabar yunbi’u, in al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, I, 513, 111, 60, or it indicates, i.e. yadullu, in al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, I, 155. See also al-khabar min Allāh in al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, VIII, 18. There is also an explicit indication of the meaning of a report: ma’nā al-khabar, in al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, I, 515. The khabars have isnād, al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, II, 9, they can be also uncomplete: khabar ghayr tāmm, in al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, I, 195. Ruwiyā al-khabar ‘an is also widely used, see al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, I, 266, 304, passim. There is also the expression nazīr al-khabar, in al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, XI, 113, XVII, 28; or in XI, 117: makhraj al-khabar, in XI, 303: kharaja makhraj al-khabar.
60 See al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān, IV, 165. The meaning of akhbār as reports going back to tradition or garants and thus of established knowledge not based on personal intuition or interpretation also appears in al-Ṭabarī’s introduction to his Taʾriḵh, where the term stands for identified reports, cf. R. Stephen Humphreys, Islamic History. A Framework for Inquiry (Princeton: Princeton University Press, rev. ed., 1991), 7, and see in al-Ṭabarī, Taʾriḵh al-rusul wa-l-mulāk, eds. M.J. de Goeje et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1879–1901), 1, 6–7.
to designate reports, in line with al-Ṭabarī and al-Shāfiʿī.\textsuperscript{61} In any case it must be recalled that this is only a preliminary examination still awaiting a comprehensive study, for instance of fiqh literature or the use of terms such as khabar in the discussion on uṣūl, or of the circulation of the term in Shiʿī literature, where it became the preferred term to indicate traditions.

6 Some Expressions and Formulas to Mention Khabar

Although a comprehensive review of all the occurrences of the term khabar would take up too much space, something useful can be obtained by an enquiry into the body of Islamic literature as a whole, searching for specific uses of the term in formulas and expressions which give some information concerning the traditions and reports quoted. The selection presented here is no doubt a small and subjective sample, but in my opinion it is a good example of the persistent use of the term in literature in relation to hadith-like reports and narratives.\textsuperscript{62}

What is significant here is that the occurrences of the term khabar in some expressions became formulaic, and the use and repetition of formulas give an indication of a stereotyped use that alludes to or implies a technical meaning, notwithstanding the difficulty to draw exact lines between the various uses in different contexts. Some particular and more often attested expressions are those indicating that something belongs to/is included in what is defined as khabar.

This is indeed the first meaning of the expression jā'a fī al-khabar (it came/ arrived [to us] in the khabar).\textsuperscript{63} Jā'a fī al-khabar is apparently the preferred

\textsuperscript{61} As regards the attestation of khabar in general terms, and before a comprehensive enquiry into its occurrences, we may say that Muslim authors display differing attitudes in its use. Al-Ghazālī's Ilḥā' for instance is full of quotations of the simple term. On the other side the term, which is also quoted by al-Farrā', is somehow less frequent in the commentaries written after those of al-Zamakhshārī or Ibn ʿAṭiyya, though a tafsīr such as that of al-Ālūsī quotes it several times. Commentaries on early collections of hadiths and reports, such as the one of Ibn Ḥajar, or all those on the Mawātīta' by Mālik b. Anas, make extensive use of the term khabar. Al-Makkī is another author often quoting khabar.

\textsuperscript{62} A different version of this paragraph and the following one are included in Roberto Tottoli, “L'espressione ruwiyatī al-khabar nella letteratura islamica,” in Studi Magrebini, special issue Labor limae. Atti in onore di Carmela Baffioni, eds. by A. Straface, C. De Angelo and A. Manzo, n.s. 12–13 (2014–2015): 589–603.

\textsuperscript{63} See e.g. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Uṣūl al-summa (Beirut, 1411 AH), I, 34; al-Ashʿarī, al-Ibāna ʿan uṣūl al-dīyāna (Cairo, 1397 AH), I, 193; Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fīsāl wa-l-niḥal (Cairo, n.d.), IV, 163; al-Harawī, Dhammal-kalām wa-ahlihi (Medina, 1998), IV, 16, 17; al-Zajjāj, Maʿānī al-Qurʾān wa-iʿrābuhu (Beirut, 1988), II, 297, 319; al-Māturīdī, Tāʾwilāt ahl al-summa (Beirut, 2005).
expression using the term *khabar* for some authors who were active in various literary genres and used it as a generic expression recalling the transmitted traditions as a whole.\textsuperscript{64} Some of these authors make slightly different use of the same expression as in the case, for instance, of the lexicographer al-Azhari (d. 370/981), who mostly quotes the words *jāʿa fi al-khabar* to introduce the words of the prophet Muḥammad or stories about his life, while in another case he uses the same words to introduce a story on the pro-ʿAlid rebel al-Mukhtār (d. 67/687).\textsuperscript{65} *Khabar* in this case is the religious tradition transmitted by early generations as a whole and thus including also the sayings of Muḥammad, his acts and the acts of the first generations of Muslims. As such the expression is also used in *adab* literature.\textsuperscript{66} The same meaning must be attributed to cognate formulas such as “it is found in the *khabar*” (*warada fi al-khabar*)\textsuperscript{67} or “it is mentioned in the *khabar*” (*dhukira fi al-khabar*)\textsuperscript{68} or some other ones that appear

\textsuperscript{64} See Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Tibrāl masbūk fī nāṣīḥatul-mulūk* (Beirut, 1988), I, 37, 38, 41, 396, 435, V, 401, VII, 152, X, 365; al-Samʿānī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Riyadh, 1997), V, 171, *passim*: al-Bāwardi Ghułam Thaʿlab, *Yaqūtal-sirāt fī tafsīr gharib al-Qurʾān* (Medina, 2002), I, 266; Niẓām al-Dīn al-Shāshī, *Uṣūl al-fiṣḥ* (Beirut, n.d.), 23, 26; al-Jaṣṣās, *al-Fuṣūl fī al-usūl* (al-Kuwait, 1994), IV, 353; al-Sarakhṣī, *al-Uṣūl* (Beirut, n.d.), I, 286; Al-Māwardi, *al-Hāwī al-kabīr fī fiṣḥ madhhab al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī* (Beirut, 1999), I, 323, 496; Ibn Qudāma, *al-Muḥūn* (Cairo, 1968), I, 315, 385, *passim*: al-Samarqandī, *Tanbih al-ghāfīlīn* (Damascus-Beirut, 2000), I, 24, 69; al-Makki, *Qūt al-qulūb* (Beirut, 2005), I, 37, 49, *passim*: al-Iṣbīlī, *al-ʿĀqibā fī dhikr al-mawt* (Kuwait, 1986), 245, 299; al-Anbārī, *al-Ẓāhir fī maʿānī kalimāt al-nās* (Beirut, 1991), I, 113; al-Shaybānī, *Uṣūl al-sunna* (Beirut, 1991 A.H.), I, 34, 54: Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal wa-l-nīḥal* (Beirut, 1984), 3, 48, 61, 62, 83.

\textsuperscript{65} See Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Tibr al-masbūk fī nāṣīḥatul-mulūk* (Beirut, 1988), I, 17, 32, 41 *passim*: Burhān al-Dīn al-Kirmānī, *Gharāʾib al-tafsīr wa-ʿajāʾib al-tawīl* (Beirut, 2001), I, 143 *passim*.

\textsuperscript{66} al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Ḥayawān* (Cairo, 1966), VI, 430; IbnʿAbdRabbihi, *al-ʿIqdal-farīd* (Beirut, 1986), IV, 191, V, 240; al-Ṭanūkhī, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍarawa-akhbāral-mudhākara* (Cairo, 1973), I, 269; al-Muʿāfāb.Zakariyā, *al-Jalīsal-ṣāliḥal-kāfīwa-l-anīsal-nāṣīh al-shāfiʿī* (Beirut, 2003), I, 194, 224, 630; Ibn Sīrīn, *Tafsīr al-aḥlām* (Cairo, 1949), I, 4, 98, 123, 111, 158, 159; the expression is also attested in the *Thimār al-qulūb* by al-Thaʿālabī and in the *Asrār al-balāgha* by al-Jurjānī.

\textsuperscript{67} Abū Ḥāmid al-Ṭūsī, *al-Maqṣadal-asnā* (Beirut, 1987), II, 112, 164, 169: *warada fi al-khabar* 'an al-nabī; Abū Ḥāmid al-Ṭūsī, *Maʿārjātul-quds* (Beirut, 1975), 99, 158; al-Shahrastānī, *al-Mīlal wa-l-nīḥal* (Cairo, n.d.), I, 63, 187, 188; al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʿ ulūm al-Dīn* (Cairo, 1949), I, 249, 11, 26 *passim*: al-Iṣbīlī, *al-Āqība fī dhikr al-mawt*, 1, 172, 229.

\textsuperscript{68} al-Māturīdī, *Taʾwīlāt ahl al-sunna* (Cairo, 1981), I, 573, 11, 157, 191, 266, 111, 344, 581 (*mā dhukira fī al-khabar*), 615, V, 346, 433, VII, 224, 291, 493, VIII, 43, 113, 133, 250, 286, 304, 310, 346, 354, 508, 519, 626, IX, 41, 79, 102, 121, 185, 214, 309, 386, 414, 418, 420, 532, 549, X, 177, 188, 469, 571 (on Moses), 628, 629, 643; Ibn Qudāma, *al-Muḥūn* (Cairo, 1981), I, 41, 299, 369 *passim*: al-Samarqandī, *Tanbih al-ghāfīlīn* (Beirut, 2005), I, 192; al-Jaṣṣās, *al-Fuṣūl fī al-usūl*, I, 53, 111, 164.
to reflect the same use and meaning as jā’a fī al-khabar, and thus show a variety of usages of the term khabar with the aim to convey a generic, broad meaning in relation to traditional legacy.\(^{69}\) In occurrences of this kind it is further significant that they sometimes introduce words attributed to the Prophet that are attested in well-known hadiths,\(^{70}\) or words of his that are given as paraphrases of other hadiths.\(^{71}\) These generic references are qualified by some others using khabar but specifying explicitly that for instance a tradition jā’a fī al-khabar ‘an rasūl Allah/al-Nabī, otherwise fī al-khabar al-ṣaḥīḥ thus indicating that the sound khabar is after all within the broader category of the generic khabar.\(^{72}\)

7 A Case-Study: The Expression Ruwiya fī al-khabar

Among the various expressions and ways of using the term khabar when introducing reports of different kinds, one in particular stands out as significant, for a number of reasons. This is not the only one to display features of interest, but we focus on it as a way to exemplify the need for further research into the technical use of this and similar terms in Islamic literature in general. The expression is ruwiya fī al-khabar, which is akin in meaning and use to the expressions and occurrences quoted above, such as jā’a fī al-khabar. But the terms used reveal a deeper characterisation in relation to the proper meaning of ruwiya which recalls narration, narratives and tales and thus alludes more to the contents of a khabar. The term khabar, in the occurrences of this expression, appears to indicate what is in the most authoritative religious tradition in early Islam, but not in the Qurʾān. It thus includes dicta of Muhammad but also all other reports and units attested since the first generations.

In this regard the use attested, for instance, in the Qurʾān commentary of al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944) can be considered emblematic. In one passage al-Māturīdī specifies that a certain question is not dealt with in authoritative texts or passages, and literally states that it is neither in the Qurʾān nor in the khabar. As a matter of fact, as we have already seen also with regard to other

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\(^{69}\) Al-Māturīdī, Taʾwīlāt ahl al-sunna, 111, 113: qad ḥaddaθ fi al-khabar; al-Ashʿarī, al-Ibāna ‘an uṣūl al-diyāna, 1, 194: wa-qad qila fi al-khabar.

\(^{70}\) See e.g. al-Samʿānī, Tafsīr al-Qurʾān (Riyadh, 1997), V, 171, passim.

\(^{71}\) See e.g. Māturīdī, Taʾwīlāt ahl al-sunna, 1, 374.

\(^{72}\) See e.g. Hajjāj, Tafsīr asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā (Beirut, n.d.), 1, 38: jā’a fī al-khabar al-maʾthūr ‘an rasūl Allāh; al-Ashʿarī, al-Ibāna ‘an uṣūl al-diyāna (Cairo, 1397), 1, 126: ‘an al-nabī; Ahmad b. Ḥanbal, Uṣūl al-sunna, 1, 51; al-Māturīdī, Taʾwīlāt ahl al-sunna, 11, 162, 180, 185. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ṭūsī, al-Maṣād as-nā, 1, 112, 164, 169: warada fī al-khabar ‘an al-nabī; al-Iṣbīlī, al-ʿĀqība fi dhikr al-mawt, 1, 172, 229: jā’a fī al-khabar al-ṣaḥīḥ.
expressions and occurrences, al-Māturīdī is one of the authors who mostly make use of the expression ruwiyā fi al-khabar to introduce different typologies of tradition: hadiths quoted in the authoritative collections of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim (d. 261/875) or mentioned in another collection and even quoted in a different form and not literally, but even more frequently to introduce other reports whose prophetic origin is not explicated or that deal with other prophets, angels, eschatology or creation, or even reports on the biography of Muḥammad or the history of early Islam. Other authors use the expression in the same way but occasionally also with some slight difference. Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. 373/983), for instance, makes use of ruwiyā fi al-khabar to introduce traditions on prophets and eschatology, as well as sayings of the prophet Muḥammad.

Other authors, though not using the expression with the same frequency, attest to its diffusion, besides the ones discussed above, as a way of introducing reports and narrative units of various kinds belonging as a whole to the religious tradition and that, most importantly, are quoted verbatim from the author and the work in which they are included or recalled in the contents. This occurs in more or less the same way among authors of various genres of literature, from Qur’ānic exegesis to adab works. In all these attested occurrences,
the reference to contents, sometimes through a paraphrase, is without doubt one of the most significant aspects in the use and literary circulation of the expression khabar. Ruwiya fi al-khabar sometimes introduces dicta attributed to Muḥammad that are not attested in hadith collections, which shows that khabar refers to a wider tradition or, most frequently, that it introduces a non-literal quotation of what the prophet Muḥammad said.\textsuperscript{76} In these cases, then, the expression and the term khabar apparently refer to the content of prophetic traditions and reports which are consequently quoted without isnād and mostly simply evoked without particular care for the exact wording. However, it cannot be ignored that some authors preferably use the same expression to introduce historical events of early Islam rather than reports going back to Muḥammad.

To further complicate the picture, there are also attestations of slightly different formulas and expressions which appear as variations on the theme with the same aim, namely, to introduce what is “told” in the “tradition”.\textsuperscript{77} However,
in some other cases, the expression is further qualified so as to give a more precise definition of what it introduces. It is thus stated that a quoted report *ruwiyā fī al-khabar al-ṣaḥīḥ*,78 *ruwiyā fī al-khabar al-marwi*,79 (...)* fī al-khabar al-ma’thūr*,80 (...)* al-khabar al-mashhūr*.81 It is therefore not at all strange to find that in the work of Ibn Kathīr the term *mutawātir* (uninterrupted), coming from formal hadith criticism, is added to the expression, as can already be observed in earlier juridical literature.82 This use and various qualifying attributes of what a quoted *khabar* is, are perfectly in line with what happens in the whole body of Islamic literature, with regard to other terms such as hadith. Rather than being a way specifically to qualify the term *khabar*, the adjectives added to the expressions simply serve the purpose of underlining the soundness of what is reported in a generic way and thus the aim is to enhance what is quoted rather than implicitly maintain that there can be *khabars* which are not sound.

The cognate formula *ruwiyā fī al-akhbār* (as opposed to *al-khabar*) which is used by authors such as al-Māturidī and other exegetes who mostly employ the main formula in their works, appears less frequently.83 These few quotations

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78 Al-Thaʿlabī, *al-Kashf wa-l-bayān ‘antafsīral-Qurʾān*, v, 210; Qurtubī, *al-Jāmiʿli-aḥkāmal-Qurʾān* (Cairo, 1964), XI, 243: kamā jā’a fī al-khabar al-ṣaḥīḥ; al-Qāḍī ‘Iyād, *al-Shifā’ bi-taʿrīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā* (Amman, 1407 AH), XI, 378.
79 al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *Tafsīr*, 1, 512; Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, *al-Minhāj al-qawīm* (Beirut, 2000), I, 176; al-Sarakhsī, *al-Uṣūl*, I, 134, 149 passim, IV, 211 fī al-khabar al-ma’rāf ‘an al-nabi; al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā* (Beirut, 1993), 274. See also Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, IV, 42 khabar ṣaḥīḥ.
80 al-Washshāʾ, *Kitāb al-Muwashshā* (Cairo, 1953), 6.
81 al-Makkī, *Qūtal-qulūb*, VI, 160; Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, *al-Minhāj al-qawīm*, VI, 165.
82 Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr* (Cairo, 1984), I, 24: fi al-khabar al-mutaqwātīr anna rasūl Allāh. See already in Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Brāṣī, *al-Mu’tamid fī usūl al-fiṣḥ* (Beirut, 1403 AH), XI, 82; al-Juwaynī, *al-Burhān fī usūl al-fiṣḥ* (Beirut, 1997), I, 216, 217; al-Sarakhsī, *al-Uṣūl*, I, 296. Cf. also al-Isfahānī, *al-Tafsīr fi al-dīn wa-tamyīz al-fiṣḥ al-nājīya ‘an al-fiṣḥ al-hālikīn*, I, 176: wa-qad warada fī al-khabar al-zāhir—expression followed by a hadith on Munkar and Nakir.
83 Māturidī, Tawīlāt ahl al-sunnah, I, 466, 111, 343, V, 143, 362, VII, 365 passim, quoting, appar-
show on the one hand that *ruwiya fi al-khabar* is a more frequently attested formula to introduce generic material and, on the other, that in these occurrences *akhbār* is not used in relation to historical traditions and reports. In Shiʿi literature, quotations of the formula are rare and not significant for our present concern, since they are not only few but also rather late and refer to the meaning of *khabar* as traditions going back to Muḥammad and the Imams.84

Another point of interest with regard to the use and meaning of this formula is without doubt its relation to questions of canonisation and the development of other terminology in connection to hadith and consequently the theological discussion on the role of hadith or *khabar* in early Islamic debates. Although a definitive conclusion would be in need of further study, it appears that *ruwiya fi al-khabar* reflects an approach less bound to the primacy accorded to the sayings of Muhammad which were selected in collections such as those of al-Bukhārī and Muslim as well as other authors, whose normativity was imposed only after the 10th century CE. This would explain why the expression *ruwiya fi al-ḥadīth* is less attested in Islamic literature, occurring only in works by authors who do not use the term *khabar*. Only a few authors use both formulas and in these it is evident that *ruwiya fi al-ḥadīth* points to a stricter category than what is termed *khabar*.85 However, most authors who mention one expression do not use the other, thus indicating that there is an alternative use of the two terms. This situation demonstrates that the use of *khabar* not only reflects the necessity to quote material which is not restricted to the sole canonical hadiths, but also the specific intention by some authors to use it as a unique term comprising the religious tradition as a whole, consequently expressing a different attitude than that of those affirming the authoritative role of the canonical

84 See for example the most ancient attestations in al-Qummi, *Tafsīr* (Qom, 1404 AH), I, 94, 267; al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, *al-Tawḥīd* (Qom, n.d.), 217, Id., *Kamāl al-Dīn wa-tamām al-nīma* (Qom, 1405 AH), 530; al-Sharīf al-Rejdā, *al-Majāzāt al-nabawiyya* (Qom, n.d.), 190; al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *al-Nāṣirīyyāt* (Beirut, 1997), 245 on one saying by ‘Ali; see also al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, *al-Khilāf* (Qom, 1420 AH), 19, Id., *al-Tibyān* (Beirut, 2002), 111, 564, VI, 111, 123; al-Ṭabrisī, *Majma‘al-bayān* (Beirut, 1995), IV, 214, VI, 129.

85 Only a few authors use both formulas, even in the same work, see al-Jassās, *Ma‘ānī al-Qurʾān* (Beirut, 1988), IV, 309, Id., *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 11, 379, 11, 31; al-Tha‘labī, *al-Kashf wa-l-bayān*, 11, 273, 19, 125, 138; Fakhir al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafāṭīḥ al-ghayb*, IV, 173, V, 313, VII, 61, 114, passim; al-Qurtubi, *al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, VII, 123, XII, 133, XVII, 90 passim. Rather emblematic is that Ibn Qutayba prefers *ruwiya fi al-ḥadīth* in his *Ta‘wil mushkil al-ḥadīth* (Beirut, 1982), I, 160, 166, 231, 233, above the only one occurrence of *ruwiya fi al-khabar* 259.
sayings of Muḥammad only. In this regard the use of the formula *ruwiya fī al-khabar* emerges as a preferred expression to introduce sayings of Muḥammad as well as all the other materials that are accordingly put on the same level, with more formal freedom and through a formula emphasising the contents and what is “recounted” in these *khabars*.

### 8 Conclusion

The literature reviewed in the preceding pages illustrates the diffusion and various uses of the term *khabar* when relating to religious traditions and reports. It appears that the proper meaning(s) of the term *khabar*—much more so than its plural *al-akhbār*—was the subject of differing evaluations according to literary genres.

Al-Shāfiʿī first gave the term prominence in his works, and used it as a category broader than hadith, not in the sense of including āthār and reports later dismissed as unsound according to the definition of formal devices, but rather including even Qurʾānic contents as probative texts in relation to some questions. This definition, however, did not gain wide circulation, though it had a history of diffusion in Islamic literature, since in the works by authors such as al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Ḥibbān the word *khabar* is given the meaning of a report or text usually originating with the Prophet and/or connected to his life. This interpretation of the term also comes up in later writings such as Qazwīnī’s *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt* or in other works, where *khabar* is not merely a broad reference to a wide corpus of reports including prophetic hadiths and āthār and reports going back to later generations, but rather a specific quotation of a probative text, whatever its origin. This meaning is the one surviving also in the expression *khabar al-wāḥid*.

Though not emerging early as a reference term to indicate reports and traditions from the first generations, this meaning soon came to be attested in Islamic literature. In its various uses and meanings, *khabar* is in fact attested in all literary genres while only hadith is used more often as a technical reference to a specific kind of report. Most of these quotations, and especially those from the literature written from the 10th century CE onwards give evidence of a certain shift in meaning and use. When indicating hadith-like literature, *khabar* is no longer used to indicate generic probative texts, but rather traditions and reports in general, with less concern for the now established formal devices. The numerous attestations of the formula *ruwiya fī al-khabar* is one case in point which shows that it mostly refers to the contents of what is mentioned and quoted. Though the meaning of *khabar* is not always clear, it appears in
most cases to indicate the contents of a “tradition” as being a narrative unit dealing with, first of all, the words of Muḥammad, episodes in his life, and, secondly, also stories on the creation, biblical prophets, eschatological themes, and stories on early Islam. Thus, unlike the term hadith, khabar is attested in later literature and can point to the contents of the reports and not only to their exact form. Early, but especially later authors quoting the term in this way made a conscious choice confronting early hadith literature that came to be canonised and the success of the term in historiography (mainly in the form akhbār) and probably its circulation among Shīʿīs to designate their traditions. If on the one hand this led to criticism of continued use of the term, on the other it did not prevent many authors from using it to designate generic traditions with the peculiarities mentioned above.

This final consideration calls us back to the beginning of this study, that is: the use of the terms in western studies in general and in the work of Gautier Juynboll in particular. This composite and also complex meaning and use of khabar in Islamic literature first of all reminds us of the necessity of further research. Other scholars have already pointed out the broader meaning of khabar and its use in literature, but the few samples collected here will, I hope, at least demonstrate how many occurrences there are to be collected and discussed not only with regard to khabar but also in relation to other terminology in the field of hadith studies. I believe that in the course of time Juynboll became more and more aware of this problematic issue and of the lack of a well-founded assessment of the meaning of the terms used in the criticism and discussion of hadith. His last work bears the signs of a first reflection in this direction, and tries to give a more systematic meaning to the various terms used to designate traditions and reports. As regards khabar Juynboll gives the term a specific meaning related mostly to the first layer of traditions from which the so-called hadiths evolved later on. This is a possible and probable explanation of the appearance of the term khabar, but the evidence collected in the sources discussed here reveals that this meaning moved and changed somewhat in the following centuries. Even after the final triumph of hadith criticism, the term khabar, also through the attestations of various formulas, continued to have wide circulation and use, and if some authors still privileged the connection to the sayings of Muḥammad, many others now used it in a more generic sense in contraposition to canonised hadith. Meanwhile the term gained specific meaning and further circulation in some literary genres which did not, however, obscure its use in Islamic literature as a whole.
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