end of the Umayyad dynasty brought a new dynamism that set in motion transformations of the political, societal, and religious landscape of the early Islamic polity, but much was lost with the decimation of the Umayyads' leadership as well. Certainly, among those loses was the Umayyad court's official record of al-Zuhrī's corpus of traditions, of which the caliphal library had stored at most a few copies for the exclusive use of the court. For the most part written records of al-Zuhrī's learning would survive only through the private copies of his students. This had important consequences for the early Abbasids. After they seized the caliphate and began to consolidate their power, the Abbasids, unlike the Umayyads, could boast no court history, no official record of the past onto which they could project their ideology. To match this Umayyad achievement, the Abbasids "had to start again from scratch," Schoeler notes.[96] They needed another al-Zuhrī. The Abbasids found one of his students, a scholar from Medina named Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq, for the task.

IBN ISḤĀQ AND THE ABBASIDS

Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq ibn Yasār ibn Kūthān was, like most transmitters of the *sīrah-maghāzī* tradition, an inhabitant of Medina, but unlike Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī or his predecessors 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr, Ibn Isḥāq was not of Arab descent and could boast no tribal genealogy. Ibn Isḥāq descended from a Jewish man named Yasār ibn Kūthān, whom Arabian tribesmen had taken captive in 12/633–34 from a synagogue in 'Ayn al-Tamr in southern Iraq along with forty other boys. His grandfather Yasār was reputed to be the first captive (*sabī*) of the early Islamic conquests brought to the city of Medina, where he lived out the remainder of his life bound by clientage to a notable family of Quraysh. Like his grandfather and father before him, Ibn Isḥāq was thus a non-Arab *mawlā*, a man bound by clientage to an Arab tribe. The Medinan household to which Ibn Isḥāq and his family were bound was a rather prominent one, that of the Qurashī notable Qays ibn Makhramah ibn al-Muṭṭalib ibn 'Abd Manāf, who himself was born of a Jewish mother.[97]

As a non-Arab client, Ibn Isḥāq lacked the high social status granted to his famous teachers by accident of birth. A widely reported anecdote from Ibn Isḥāq's youth grants us a glimpse into the societal gulf that separated him from his predecessors. It seems that when Ibn Isḥāq first began to show up at Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī's teaching sessions in Medina to learn traditions from him, he would often arrive late. Seeking the reason for this, al-Zuhrī discovered that his doorkeeper had been treating the callow youth as riffraff and shooing him away. Only after al-Zuhrī intervened was Ibn Isḥāq able to join his circle and learn traditions from him.[98]

96. Schoeler 2011, 31.
97. Ibn al-Kalbī, *Mathālib*, 234; Lecker 2015a, 35–36.
98. Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Jarḥ*, 3 (2): 191–92; Ibn Abī Khaythamah, *Tārīkh*, 2: 327.

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Despite his lowly status, Ibn Isḥāq also belonged to a new generation of scholars who rose to prominence despite being from non-Arab lineage and the subservient class of the Arabs' clients (*mawālī*). The increasing prominence of the scholarly influence and accomplishments of non-Arab scholars over Arab scholars at this time has been exaggerated in past scholarship,[99] but it is no exaggeration to note how the generation whose lives spanned the late-Umayyad and early-Abbasid period witnessed an important, demographic shift in the composition of its learned elite and the eminent bearers of its cultural ideals. Ibn Isḥāq's generation of *mawālī*-scholars were upwardly mobile, ambitious assimilators to the new hegemonic culture and, with their zealous embrace of its religion (Islam) and language (Arabic), they swiftly rose to prominence in the second/eighth century.[100] Ibn Isḥāq's rise to prominence as a scholar of *maghāzī* and, in particular, of the traditions of al-Zuhrī in Medina was not an isolated achievement, even if his was the most spectacular. His rise occurred alongside that of other prominent *mawālī* of Medina, who also wrote their own books of *Maghāzī*, which are now lost and survive only in scattered quotations in later works, such as the *Maghāzī* of Mūsā ibn 'Uqbah (d. 141/758)[101] and the *Maghāzī* of Abū Ma'shar al-Sindī (d. 170/786).[102]

Mūsā ibn 'Uqbah is a fascinating understudied case. Like Ibn Isḥāq, Mūsā was also a *mawlā* of an eminent branch of the Medinan Quraysh, the Zubayrids of the Asad clan. Mūsā had relatively little contact with the Umayyads, although he recalled joining Sālim ibn 'Abdallāh ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb on military expeditions against the Byzantines during the reign of al-Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik.[103] The impetus behind the compilation of his *Maghāzī* was allegedly to put to rest the Medinans' disputes over who had, and had not, actually participated in the battle of Badr and his efforts to preserve the knowledge of the Medinan Shuraḥbīl ibn Sa'īd.[104] Al-Dhahabī characterizes Mūsā's *Maghāzī* as being quite a short work and notes that

99. See the corrective in Motzki 1999.
100. This demographic transformation is noted in numerous accounts of an exchange between al-Zuhrī and the caliphs 'Abd al-Malik and Hishām, where within a single generation nearly all the most prominent Arab scholars were replaced and outstripped by *mawālī*; see, e.g., Tawḥīdī, *Baṣā'ir*, 8: 85, and Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 20: 81–82.
101. Mūsā's *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*, although favored by Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795) over that of Ibn Isḥāq (Fasawī, *Ma'rifah*, 3: 371), is now lost except for fragments of an abridgment by one Yūsuf ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Umar ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah (d. 789/1387) (*GAS* 1: 286–87, 300). Joseph Schacht's doubts about the authenticity of the traditions attributed to Mūsā in the second text have been addressed by Gregor Schoeler; cf. Schacht 1953 and Schoeler 2000.
102. Abū Ma'shar's *Maghāzī* was transmitted by his son Muḥammad (148–247/762–861) and his grandson Dāwūd (d. 275/888); see Khaṭīb, *Baghdād*, 4: 52, 9: 350; Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 290–91. Those portions of it that survive can only be found in quotations thereof in later works, such as al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*; see *GAS* 1: 292, 300, and Horovitz [1927–28] 2002, 91–95.
103. Ibn 'Asākir, *Dimashq*, 60: 458.
104. Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 29: 116; *GAS* 1: 279.