

PROPHETS AND PROGENITORS IN THE EARLY SHĪ'A TRADITION*

Uri Rubin

INTRODUCTION

As is well known, the Shī'ī belief that 'Alī should have been Muḥammad's successor was based on the principle of hereditary Caliphate, or rather Imamate. 'Alī's father, Abū Tālib, and Muḥammad's father, 'Abdallāh, were brothers, so that Muḥammad and 'Alī were first cousins. Since the Prophet himself left no sons, the Shī'a regarded 'Alī as his only rightful successor.¹

Several Shī'ī traditions proclaim 'Alī's family relationship (*qarāba*) to Muḥammad as the basis for his hereditary rights. For the sake of brevity we shall only point out some of the earliest. A number of these early Shī'ī traditions center around the "brothering", i.e. the *mu'ākhāh* which took place after the *hiḡra*; this was an agreement by which each emigrant was paired with one of the Anṣār and the two, who thus became brothers, were supposed to inherit each other (see Qur'ān, IV, 33)². 'Alī, as an exception, was paired not with one of the Anṣār but with the Prophet himself.³

A certain verse in the Qur'ān (VIII, 72) was interpreted as stating that the practice of *mu'ākhāh* was confined only to the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār, to the exclusion of those believers who had stayed back in Mecca after the *hiḡra*. They retained the old practice of inheritance according to blood-relationship.⁴ This practice, which was introduced in al-Madīna, affected the hereditary rights of the families of the Muhājirūn who were supposed to leave their legacy to their Anṣārī

* This article is a revised form of a chapter from my thesis on some aspects of Muḥammad's prophethood in the early literature of *ḥadīth*. The work was carried out under the supervision of Prof. M.J. Kister.

¹ The 'Abbāsids on their part claimed similar hereditary rights for their ancestor, al-'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who was the prophet's uncle. See on the 'Abbāsī - Shī'ī debate I. Goldzih, *Muslim Studies*, ed. by S.M. Stern (London, 1971), II, 97 ff. Al-'Abbās, according to an anti-'Abbāsī, Shī'ī tradition, hesitated to become Muḥammad's heir because he was too old and too poor. Therefore Muḥammad preferred 'Alī who received his ring, armour and the rest of his personal effects. See *Ḥidā*, 166-169. A clear anti-'Abbāsī tendency is reflected in another Shī'ī tradition to the effect that al-'Abbās was neither able to put on Muḥammad's armour nor to ride his mule (Ibn Shahrāshub, II, 151-152, see also 249).

² See e.g. W.M. Watt, *Muḥammad At Medina*, Oxford 1956, p. 249.

³ See e.g. Ibn Hishām, II, 150; Ibn Shahrāshub, II, 32-33; Ibn al-Bittiq, *Umda*, 83 ff. According to other sources, however, the "brotherhood" between 'Alī and Muḥammad had been established during an earlier *mu'ākhāh* at Mecca. In the Madani *mu'ākhāh* 'Alī was paired with Saḥl b. Hunayf. See Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Muḥabbar* (ed. I. Lichtenstaedter) rep. Beirut n.d. p. 70-71.

⁴ See Ibn Shahrāshub, II, 34 (Ibn Ishāq).

"brothers". As a result, the *mu'akkhāh* was soon abrogated and the old hereditary principle resumed. Some Qur'anic verses (VIII, 75; XXXIII, 6) are interpreted as referring to this abrogation.⁵ These verses assert that blood-relations (*u'la l-arḥām*) are more worthy than other believers.

The Shi'a however maintains that these same verses denote quite the opposite. They do not abrogate the *mu'akkhāh* but rather assert 'Alī's preeminence among the rest of the believers who took part in this agreement. According to the Shi'a, 'Alī was entitled to inherit his "brother" Muḥammad not only by virtue of the agreement but also on account of his being Muḥammad's next of kin, that is, he was Muḥammad's heir both in accordance with the old principle and the new one. It follows that the Qur'anic verses which state that blood-relations are more worthy than other believers refer to 'Alī's superior position among the participants in the *mu'akkhāh*.

Such an interpretation is recorded already on the authority of Zayd b. 'Alī (d. 122 A.H.)⁶ who, referring to Qur'an VIII, 75, stated that 'Alī was both a relation,⁷ Jābir b. Yazīd (d. 123/128/129 A.H.)⁸ is also quoted as stating in his *tafsīr* on this verse that 'Alī was entitled to inherit Muḥammad both by virtue of the religion (the *mu'akkhāh*) and by virtue of kinship; he was Muḥammad's heir as the Prophet had declared: "You are my brother in kinship; he was Muḥammad's heir as come and you are my heir (*wārith*)."⁹ Jābir b. Yazīd stated also that by right of his being Muḥammad's "brother", 'Alī received his legacy, his arms, his belongings and his mule.¹⁰ It is evident that these traditions, although dealing with Muḥammad's personal legacy, were conceived by the Shi'a as implying his religious inheritance as well.¹¹

This material, if authentically quoted from the early sources, leads to the conclusion that as early as the end of the first century A.H. the Shi'i tenet on 'Alī's hereditary rights already came to a full literary expression.

⁵ See, e.g. *loc. cit.*, Suhaylī, II, 252.

⁶ See G.A.S., I, 556 ff.

⁷ Ibn Shahrāshub, II, 18: *zayd b. 'alī fī qawlihi*: "wa-ula l-arḥām ba'ḥūhum awla bi-ba'dīn", *qāla: dhālika 'alī b. abī ṭālib, kāma muḥayṭan dhā raḥim*.

⁸ G.A.S., I, 307.

⁹ Ibn Shahrāshub, II, 35. The Shi'a sometimes stresses that al-'Abbās was not entitled to inherit Muḥammad because, unlike 'Alī, he was not a *muḥayṭ*, and therefore was not included in the agreement. See *loc. cit.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹ In fact, not only 'Alī's rights, but also those of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn were asserted on the basis of their close kinship to Muḥammad. They were 'Alī's sons from his wife Fātima, daughter of Muḥammad. Sometimes they are described as Muḥammad's own sons, without mention of 'Alī, their real father. The Prophet was quoted as stating: "all sons belong to their fathers except the sons of Fātima, I am their father and family" (Khargūshī, Tübingen, 12a; Ibn Shahrāshub, II, 158. And see also *Nafī*, III, 9, a discussion of the possibility of counting a daughter's sons among one's own offspring). A further tradition maintains that as long as Muḥammad was alive, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn never called 'Alī by the name of "father" (Khargūshī, Tübingen, 13b; Ibn Shahrāshub, II, 306–307; Khawāzimī, 8). Al-Ḥasan and

The most explicit formulation of the early Shi'i view concerning 'Alī's hereditary rights was, perhaps, the doctrine of *Nūr Muḥammad*. This doctrine deals with Muḥammad's pre-existent luminous substance which is seen as a blaze upon the forehead of each of its carriers. In the most elaborate form of the doctrine, this luminous prophetic substance is said to have been placed within the loins of the first progenitor of Muḥammad, namely Adam. The Muhammadan light continued with Adam until the conception of Sheth, when it was transferred to Eve. At the birth of Sheth it shone upon his forehead, and in the same way it was passed on from one to another of the pure progenitors of Muḥammad until it reached Muḥammad himself. Among Muḥammad's progenitors the most noteworthy were Adam, Sheth, Noah, Abraham and Ishmael. From Ishmael the light was transferred to his son Kedar, and from Kedar to the rest of his posterity, the Arab ancestors of Muḥammad.

According to the Shi'a, the process of transmission went on until it reached 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the common grandfather of Muḥammad and 'Alī. Then it was divided into two parts, Muḥammad's light being placed in the loins of his father 'Abdallāh, and 'Alī's in those of Abū Ṭālib. From 'Alī, to whom his share of the light was transferred on his birth, it was transmitted to the following Imāms, thus serving as the core of their divine nature.¹² The Shi'a circulated the view about the division of *Nūr Muḥammad* in order to assert that Muḥammad and 'Alī inherited from their respective fathers an equal share of prophetic light, 'Alī thus becoming the only legitimate successor (*wasīyy*) of Muḥammad.¹³

The doctrine of *Nūr Muḥammad* presents Muḥammad and the following Shi'i Imāms as continuing the divine line of Muḥammad's pure ancestors. In other words, those ancestors are regarded as the origin of the divine nature and religious authority of Muḥammad and the Imāms.

This doctrine corresponds by its traducian character to Arabic pre-Islamic

al-Husayn were even represented as having Muḥammad's outer appearance (see Bukhārī, IV, 227, V, 33; Ya'qubī, II, 117; Tirmidhī, XIII, 196. Other persons too were said to have looked like the Prophet. See Zurqānī, VII, 76–77; Ya'qubī, II, 117).

¹² See e.g. W.A. Rice, " 'Alī in Shi'a Tradition", *MW*, 4 (1914), 29–30; I. Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über Den Islam*, Heidelberg, 1910, p. 217–218; U. Rubin, "Pre-existence and Light", *JOS*, 5 (1975), pp. 62 ff.

¹³ See *JOS*, 5, pp. 98 ff. The widely current tradition according to which Muḥammad said: *'alī minni wa-anā minhu*, is explained according to the concept of *Nūr Muḥammad*. The particle *min* is explained as *min il-labyīn*, denoting identity, hence the rendering of the tradition would be: "'Alī is myself and I am 'Alī". The basis of this interpretation are the traditions according to which Muḥammad and 'Alī were created from the same prophetic light which wandered through the loins of their common ancestors, till it was split in the loins of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (Ibn al-Bitriq, *Umda*, 104 ff.) The Abbāsids, for their part, introduced a tradition about a divine light called *Nūr al-Khiṭāfa*, which was inherited by the 'Abbāsid Califs from Hashim, through al-'Abbās and his descendants (*Mustadrak*, III, 331 and see also *Muslim Studies*, II, 61). Another tradition counteracts the Shi'i view by pointing out that the Califs who actually ruled the Muslim community prior to 'Alī, i.e. Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān, had also an equal share in *Nūr Muḥammad* which is said to have been split between their respective fathers (*Sawā'iq*, 82–83).

views. It would be fitting to quote Goldziner's words concerning Arab paganism:

Just as the Arabs took for granted the inheritance of physical characteristics, they also assumed that moral attributes were handed down in the same way. Virtues and vices being passed on from the ancestors, the individual could prove his *murawwa* best by being able to point out that the virtues which make the true *murawwa* were transmitted from noble ancestors, or that he had ancestors who had nothing undistinguished to leave to him as the Sunna followed by the descendants. "He is elevated by the vein — i.e. the blood — of his ancestors", or "Noble veins lift him up" to his ancestor is the usual description of a man's inheritance from noble ancestors. ¹⁴

This very outlook was applied to Muhammad within the framework of the doctrine of *Nūr Muhammad* according to which the Prophet inherited his prophetic virtues, i.e. the Muhammadan light, from his forefathers. It would seem that the concept of *Nūr Muhammad* represents the common Shi'ī outlook concerning the origin of the prophetic and religious authority of Muhammad and the Shi'ī Imāms. Referring to the doctrine of *Nūr Muhammad*, Goldziner has confirmed that "Zwar in fester, einheitlich-dogmatischer Formulierung erscheint diese traductianistische Theorie nicht, aber man kann sie als die allgemein anerkannte schi'itische Anschauung vom Charakter der Imame betrachten." ¹⁵

However, a close scrutiny of the available Shi'ī sources reveals yet another view concerning the origin of the position of 'Alī and the rest of the Imāms as the only legitimate religious leaders of the Muslim community after Muhammad. Unlike the hereditary doctrine of *Nūr Muhammad*, which may be defined as physical and Arab-oriented in its essence, this doctrine is "testamentary" and may be defined as spiritual, with a clear non-Arab orientation.

According to this doctrine, the light by which 'Alī came to be Muhammad's only successor became incarnate in him only at the last moment of Muhammad's life. In fact, this light is regarded as a part of the divine spirit which transmigrated from Muhammad to 'Alī at the former's death. It follows that this spiritual light, which is generally known as the Divine light (*Nūr Allāh*) is essentially different from *Nūr Muhammad* which, as part of the ancestral sperm had come to him not from Muhammad but from his father, Abū Tālib.

The spiritual light is said to have been transmitted to 'Alī as a part of Muhammad's testament (*wasīyya*). This consisted of all his divine spiritual virtues, through 'Alī and after him through all the Shi'ī Imāms. The symbol of this eternal knowledge (*ilm*) is the divine light of the Imāmi spirit which transmigrates from generation to generation.

Like *Nūr Muhammad*, the Divine light is also regarded as having been transmitted through a universal line of chosen carriers, the first of whom was Adam. But unlike *Nūr Muhammad* which, as an ancestral sperm, was confined to the genealogical line of Muhammad's progenitors, the Divine light, as an independent spiritual

entity is able to wander through any line of chosen human beings. Thus it is said to have reached Muhammad from Ishmael not through his Arab progenitors — the posterity of Ishmael — but through the Judaeo-Christian prophets of *Banū Isrā'īl* to whom the light was transferred from Ishmael via his Hebrew brother, Isaac. Hence, the origin of the religious authority of Muhammad and the Shi'ī Imāms is said to have been closely related to the ancient non-Arab heritage of the Judaeo-Christian prophets, notably Moses and Jesus. These did not, of course, have any ancestral relation to Muhammad. ¹⁶

Some noteworthy points of this doctrine will be examined below, according to the available source material. An attempt will also be made to elucidate the relation between this non-Arab "testamentary" doctrine and the Arab, hereditary doctrine of *Nūr Muhammad*.

I. THE UNIVERSAL WASIYYA

As is well known the Shi'a held the belief that 'Alī had received from the Prophet a secret knowledge of a divine religious character, which was in due course passed on to the following Imāms as well. ¹⁷ A Shi'ī tradition relates that before his death, Muhammad summoned 'Alī, embraced him and communicated to him a thousand chapters of knowledge, each one opening into a thousand more. On the day of his death Muhammad reportedly said: "Call the beloved of my heart," he then took him under his covertlet and imparted mysteries and secrets to him, till at length he died. ¹⁸

'Alī's esoteric knowledge was elevated quite early to the rank of a universal religious heritage which came to him, through Muhammad, from the preceding prophets. The concept which developed was that the universal religious heritage wandered successively from each prophet to his *wasīy* till it came to Muhammad and from him to his own *wasīy*, 'Alī. This concept is reflected in a tradition recorded by the Shi'ī author al-Ya'qubī (d. 278 A.H.). According to this tradition it was already Mālik b. al-Harith al-Ashtar ¹⁹ who on 'Alī's accession declared: "This is the *wasīy* of the *awsiyā* and the heir to the knowledge of the prophets." ²⁰

¹⁶ To some extent, this view is parallel to the Ismā'īlī doctrine about the cyclical manifestation of the *aqī* through the *nāṭiqs*; they were Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and the seventh Imām. The examination of the exact relation between the two views remains, however, beyond the scope of this study.

¹⁷ See e.g. *Vorlesungen*, 224; M.E.S. Hodgson, "How Did The Early Shi'a Become Sectarian?", *JAOS*, 75 (1955), pp. 11 ff.

¹⁸ See Rice, *op. cit.*, 42. Some of the Shi'ī traditions concerning this matter were recognized by the Sunna as well. See e.g. *Mustadrak*, 139 *ultra* (from Ahmad). Some Shi'ī sects (like the Zaydīs) held that 'Alī had inherited only Muhammad's knowledge but not the leadership (which was given to Abū Bakr). See e.g. *Nahj*, 1, 46.

¹⁹ See about him *Anṣab*, V, 43 ff., 59 ff.

²⁰ Ya'qubī, II, 179. Cf. Hodgson, *op. cit.*, p. 2, note 10.

¹⁴ *Muslim Studies*, I, 46.

¹⁵ *Vorlesungen*, 218.

According to the Shi'ī outlook in its most elaborate form the first of the prophetic figures to possess this universal heritage was no other than Adam. It was revealed to Adam by Allāh, and from Adam it was transmitted from generation to generation through the prophets and their successors (*awṣiyā'*), till it reached the Shi'ī Imāms. This knowledge is the only true one; any other knowledge, not possessed by the *Ahl al-Bayt*, is false.²¹

The Shi'ī view which regards the Imāms as possessing religious knowledge inherited from the prophets, is reflected in the interpretation of Qur'ān XII, 13, where it is stated that the religion (*dīn*) which was enjoined upon the Muslims is the very religion that had been prescribed (*wasṣā*, i.e. given as a *waṣṣiya*) to Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. The Shi'a maintains that this verse actually refers to prophets. *Ahl al-Bayt* alone are the true heirs of these prophets,²² by virtue of their knowledge the Imāms have free authority with regard to the Holy Scriptures. 'Alī was said to have declared that he had inherited from Muḥammad the complete knowledge of the *Tawrāh* as well as that of the *Injīl* (the Gospel). This statement was made by 'Alī in al-Kūfa while he was wearing Muḥammad's armour, turban and holding his sword.²³

This knowledge, though the essence of the universal heritage transmitted from generation to generation, was nevertheless only one component of the *waṣṣiya* which was passed on from each prophet to his successor. This *waṣṣiya* contained some concrete elements as well, the most important of which was the *tābūt*, i.e. the Ark. According to our sources, the Ark was brought by Adam from Paradise.²⁴ It was made – so the tradition goes – of diamond or white pearl, with two doors locked with a golden chain and two emerald handles. In it were deposited "the testament and the brocade" (*al-'ahd wa-l dībāqā*).²⁵ The *tābūt* is said to have been used for prophetic purposes. Sheth, who was the *waṣṣiy* of his father Adam, opened the *tābūt* which had been assigned to him by his father, in order to learn

about the time of Noah's appearance.²⁶ The prophet Hūd commanded his people to open the *waṣṣiya* (i.e. the *tābūt*) once a year.²⁷ Abraham is also said to have opened the *tābūt* in order to reveal the future of his posterity.²⁸

As a symbol of Israelite prophethood the *tābūt* is, of course, transmitted only through the prophets of *Banī Isrā'īl*. The Shi'īs however, who held that the line of the ancient prophets was followed by the line of the Shi'ī Imāms, used to point to some of their own insignia as equivalent to the *tābūt*. The Imām 'Alī al-Riḍā reportedly declared that the armour of Muḥammad was assigned from Imām to Imām just as the *tābūt* had been forwarded from prophet to prophet.²⁹

Another item of the *waṣṣiya* was the "greatest name of God" (*al-ism al-a'zam*).³⁰ This divine name was also contained in the *tābūt* and it consisted of seventy three letters.³¹ Each prophet was entrusted with a certain number of those mysterious letters, but the greatest number, seventy two letters, was revealed only to Muḥammad.³² Allāh kept for Himself the last letter as an eternal secret.³³ The *ism al-a'zam* was entrusted, after Muḥammad, to the Shi'ī Imāms. 'Alī and the Imāms were given the same number of letters with which Muḥammad had been invested.³⁴

Muḥammad's famous sword, *Dhū l-Faqr* is also described by some early traditions as dating back to ancient times. A tradition quoted from the *Tafsīr* of al-Suddī (d. 128 A.H.),³⁵ says that it was made of the leaves of the myrtle (*ās*) of Paradise, and was brought down to earth by Adam. It bore an inscription saying that the sword would be transmitted from prophet to prophet till 'Alī would inherit it from Muḥammad. This sword continued to wander through the Imāms up to the Mahdī.³⁶ It seems that this particular tradition about *Dhū l-Faqr* reflects the tradition about Moses' staff which is also said to have been made of the myrtle of Paradise, and brought down by Adam. It was handed down from prophet to prophet till Moses himself received it from Shū'ayb (Jethro).³⁷

²⁶ *Ithbār*, 18–19.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁸ Khargashī, 9b–10a.

²⁹ See *Ithbār*, 202; *Bihār*, XXIII, 277: *wa-l-silāh fīnā bi-manzilat al-tābūt fī banī isrā'īl, yadūna mā l-imama kayfa dāra*. About the belongings of the Shi'ī Imāms, see Ibn Shahrāshub, I, 218. In fact, as early as al-Mukhtār, his Yeminite adherents used to compare what was regarded as 'Alī's chair to the *tābūt* of *Banī Isrā'īl*. See below.

³⁰ See e.g. W. Madelung, "Imāma", *EP*, III, p. 1167.

³¹ But see Zurgani, I, 4: *wa-qīla: ism allāh al-a'zam huwa l-asm al-'athātha: allāh al-rahīmān al-rahīm*. See the detailed discussion, Suhayfī, I, 47 ff.

³² *Ithbār*, 120–121; *Bihār*, XI, 68.

³³ *Ithbār*, 121.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 148, 231.

³⁵ See *GAS*, I, 33.

³⁶ Ibn Shahrāshub, III, 81.

³⁷ Ibn Sa'd, I, 35; *Thaḥabī*, 156. Another tradition says that Adam assigned to Sheth several staffs, their number corresponding to that of the prophets (Suyutī, I, 17–18). It is stated elsewhere that Adam brought down from Paradise the staff of Moses, the ring of Solomon, the Black Stone, sweet calamus and a fig leaf (*Simī*, I, 77–78). The tradition about Moses' staff is of Jewish origin (see e.g. *Encyclopedia Biblica*, IV, 828).

²¹ See e.g. *Bihār*, XXIII, 39: *inna l-'ilm lladhī ahbaḥa adam lam yurfa' wa-l-'ilm yutawā-rath, wa-kull shay'min al-'ilm wa-āthar al-rusul wa-l-anbiyā' lam yekun min ahl ḥadthā l-bayt fa-huwa ba'it*. See also *Ṭal.*, 591.

²² *Bihār*, XXIII, 366... *fa-qala fī kitābihī: 'shar'a lakum min al-dīn' yā al-muḥammad 'mā wasṣā bihi nūḥan', fa-qad wasṣāna bi-mā wasṣā bihi nūḥan. 'wa-llāhīr awhaynā ilayka' yā wa-'iṣā', fa-qad 'alimna wa-balaḡnā min 'ilmīnā wa-tawāda'nā, fa-nahnu warathat al-anbiyā' wa-nahnu warathat ulā-l-'azm min al-rusul*.

²³ Khuvārizmī, 47 (from al-Bayhaqī). Another Shi'ī tradition says that the tablets of Moses, the Gospel, the *ṣūḥuf ibrahīm* and the *zabūr* are in the possession of the Shi'ī Imāms. See M. J. Kister, "Haddithū 'An Banī Isrā'īl", *JOS*, 2 (1972), p. 232.

²⁴ See *Tabarī*, *Tafsīr*, II, 384; *Thaḥabī*, 236.

²⁵ *Ithbār*, 93; Khargashī, 8b. And see also Qur'ān, II, 248, the *tābūt* contains "the *Shechina* in accordance with Jewish legend – that the relics of Moses and Aaron deposited in the Ark, consisted of the broken tablets of the Law, as well as of the staff of Moses, the clothes of Moses and Aaron, the Torah, the *manna* etc. See e.g. *Tabarī*, *op. cit.*, 387–388.

The *jafr* of the Shi'ī Imāms³⁸ is also regarded as an inheritance from the preceding prophets. Only prophets or *awṣiyā'* were allowed to look into it.³⁹ Sometimes a red *jafr* is mentioned which contains Muḥammad's arms, and sometimes a white *jafr* which contains the Torah of Moses, Jesus' Gospel, David's Psalms and the rest of the Holy Scriptures.⁴⁰

We shall now turn to the traditions which speak about the actual transmission of the various items of the *wasṣiyya* in its universal course. One of these traditions counts the names of all the carriers of the prophetic-Imāmi heritage, Adam being the first of them. Adam's *wasṣiyy* was Sheth who, in turn transmitted the *wasṣiyya* to his own *wasṣiyy*, and so forth till it reached Idrīs, the second prophet after Adam. After Idrīs, the *wasṣiyya* reached the next prophet, Noah, who received it from Idrīs through the latter's *awṣiyā'*. Noah's *wasṣiyy* was Shem who continued the line of transmission till the *wasṣiyya* reached Abraham. Abraham's successor was Ishmael who, in turn, invested his brother Isaac with the prophetic heritage of the *wasṣiyya*. Isaac assigned it to Jacob, Jacob to Joseph and so forth till at length it reached Moses through Jethro. Moses who is regarded as the first prophet of *Banū Isrā'īl*, the last of whom was Jesus,⁴¹ is said to have transmitted the prophetic heritage to Joshua, Joshua to David, David to Solomon and so forth till it reached Jesus. The last of Jesus' *awṣiyā'*, namely Barda, transmitted the *wasṣiyya* to the Muslim prophet Muḥammad. Muḥammad assigned it to 'Alī and the line of transmission was now followed through all the Shi'ī Imāms.⁴²

This tradition serves in the Twelver-Shi'a as an illustration of the *naṣṣ* principle, i.e. the delegation of authority through designation. The tradition concludes with a statement ascribed to Muḥammad to the effect that the only legitimate Imām is he who has the *naṣṣ* of his predecessor, i.e. 'Alī is Muḥammad's only legitimate *mate wasṣiyy*.⁴³

³⁸ See e.g. Madelung, *loc. cit.*

³⁹ *Iḥbat*, 196. See about the *jafr*, *Vorlesungen*, 264, note 4; T. Fahd, "Djafr" *EP*, II, 375 ff.

⁴⁰ Ibn Shahrāshub, I, 218. See also Kister, *op. cit.*, 232. And see about the insignia of the Umayyads and the 'Abbāsids which were passed on in succession, *Muslim Studies*, II, 60–61.

⁴¹ See e.g. Tabari, *Ta'rikh*, I, 451; *Ma'arif*, 26. Isaac, however, is sometimes counted as the first Hebrew prophet. See *Bihar*, XI, 56.

⁴² Ibn Shahrāshub, I, 215–216; Rajab al-Barfi, 58; *Bihar*, XXIII, 57–58. The principle of the successive *wasṣiyya* was sometimes severely criticised by members of *Ahl al-Bayt* themselves. See Ibn Sa'd, V, 324–325; *Vorlesungen*, 260, note 5.

⁴³ According to the principle of the *naṣṣ*, the prophet had expressly designated and appointed 'Alī as his successor before his death (see e.g. *Muslim Studies*, II, 112 ff; Hodgson, *op. cit.*, 10 ff). One can trace this idea back to the very beginning of the second century A.H. An explicit literary expression of it is found in Muḥammad's biography as compiled by Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/151 A.H.). The material used in his book stems from the beginning of the second century. According to an instructive tradition, as it is quoted from Ibn Ishāq by al-Ṭabari (through Salama b. al-Faḍl), Muḥammad assembled all the children of 'Abd al-Muttalib, em-brother, my *wasṣiyy* (i.e. successor) and my *khaliṭa* upon you. Obey him and do his bidding! " [Tabari, *Ta'rikh*, II, 319–321. In Tabari's *Tafsir*, XIX, 75, the text seems to be deliberately shortened: ... *inna hadhā akhī wa-kadhā wa-kadhā*. See also Ibn Shahrāshub, I, 305–306 (Ibn

The most instructive element of the tradition just mentioned is the clear distinction drawn between the verb *awṣā* and the verb *daḥā'a*. Whereas *awṣā* means 'to bequeath' or 'to enjoin upon', *daḥā'a* means just 'to deliver'. This distinction is parallel to the distinction made between prophets and *awṣiyā'*. Each prophet in our tradition is said to have 'enjoined' the *wasṣiyya* on his *wasṣiyy*, whereas each *wasṣiyy* just 'delivers' the *wasṣiyya* to the following *awṣiyā'* till it is 'delivered' to the next prophet, who in turn 'enjoins' it on his own *wasṣiyy*. This distinction is based on the view that the *awṣiyā'* between every two prophets are no more than intermediary agents, whose task is merely to 'push' (*daḥā'a*) the divine heritage onwards so that its successive transmission is assured. Only the prophets are granted the authority to 'bequeath' or to 'enjoin' this heritage on their successors. Most significant is the fact that Muḥammad himself is said to have 'delivered' the *wasṣiyya* to 'Alī — a clear allusion to the fact that 'Alī, although a *wasṣiyy*, has a most elevated position parallel to that of Muḥammad himself, therefore the divine heritage has been 'delivered' to him and not 'enjoined' upon him.⁴⁴

The details of the actual transmission of the *wasṣiyya* with its various items may be found in sporadic traditions dealing each with a certain prophet. The recurring motif in these traditions is the appearance of Allāh to each carrier of the *wasṣiyya* before his death. Allāh reveals to him the identity of his *wasṣiyy* elected by Allāh to receive the *wasṣiyya*. The traditions about the designation of Sheth (*Hibat Allāh*) as Adam's *wasṣiyy*, for instance, are widely current in Shi'ī literature. Adam, it is related, was commanded by Allāh before his death to entrust Sheth with the knowledge and the faith as well as with the *ism al-a'zam* and the rest of the prophetic heritage. This would make Sheth an authoritative guide for his contemporary believers, providing them with deliverance from error.⁴⁵ The various items of Adam's *wasṣiyya*, it is related, were deposited in the *tābiṭ*, and Sheth was ordered to transmit it to his posterity before his own death.⁴⁶ Other traditions deal with

Ishāq and al-Ṭabari: Suyūfī, I, 306–307, 308–309 (from Ibn Ishāq without the declaration of 'Alī's *wasṣiyya*). Ibn Hishām in his compilation has omitted this tradition altogether. [This tradition was later used by the Shi'a for its anti-'Abbāsid aims. A Shi'ī tradition relates that 'Alī was once asked why he and not his uncle (al-'Abbās) had been entitled to be Muḥammad's heir. As an answer, 'Alī quoted the above tradition (Tabari, *Ta'rikh*, II, 321–322; Ibn Shahrāshub, I, 306–307; *Idā*, 170). According to Abū Mikhnaf (d. 157 A.H.), in al-Mukhtār's days (the middle of the first century A.H.) the title *wasṣiyy* as attached to 'Alī was already widespread. Al-Mukhtār reportedly referred to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, 'Alī's son, as *al-mahdiyy* ibn al-*wasṣiyy*. See *Anṣab*, V, 218.

⁴⁴ See about the distinction between *awṣā* and *daḥā'a*, *Bihar*, XXIII, 59. But on the other hand, 'Alī's position as a *wasṣiyy* is generally regarded as parallel to the position of the previous *awṣiyā'*. See e.g. *Bihar*, XI, 41 (from *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*): *wa-inna 'alī b. abi tālib kāna ḥibṭ al-lāh li-muḥammad, waritha 'ilm al-awṣiyā'* wa-'ilm man kāna qablahu. *amma inna muḥammad-dan waritha 'ilm man kāna qablahu min al-anbiyā'*.

⁴⁵ *Idā*, 195. See also *Bihar*, XXIII, 20, 64 (from *Tafsir al-'Ayyāshī*), XI, 44.

⁴⁶ *Bihar*, XI, 265. And see also *ibid.*, XXIII, 60 ff (*Tafsir al-'Ayyāshī*). For further traditions about Sheth see *ibid.*, XI, 229, 45, 263; Ibn Sa'd, I, 28; Tabari, *Ta'rikh*, I, 160–161. Sometimes, however, Abel is mentioned as Adam's first *wasṣiyy*, Sheth being the second. See *Bihar*, XI, 227–229, 240. Other traditions maintain that Sheth was only the third *wasṣiyy*, being preceded by Abel and his son. See *ibid.*, XI, 245–246 ('Ayyāshī).

Noah who embarked the ark with the *tābūt*,⁴⁷ and bequeathed it to his son, Shem.⁴⁸

As one would expect, a special tradition describes the transmission of the prophetic *wasīyya* from Muḥammad to 'Alī. The pattern of this tradition is identical to that of the above-mentioned traditions which deal with the preceding prophets. Thus it becomes clear that the traditions about the *wasīyya* of the preceding prophets were circulated in order to reinforce the religious significance of 'Alī's position as Muḥammad's legitimate *wasīy*. The ancient *awsyā'* mentioned in those traditions may be regarded as 'Alī's prototypes. Before Muḥammad's death, so the tradition goes, Allāh appeared to him and informed him about his approaching death. He commanded him to assign to 'Alī his knowledge and faith as well as the *īm al-a'zām* and the legacy of knowledge and prophethood, so that the transmission of the divine heritage would be followed through the prophet's offspring.⁴⁹

Some of the above-mentioned traditions were also incorporated into the Sunni compilations of *ḥadīth*, for example the tradition about the transmission of the prophetic heritage from David to Solomon.⁵⁰ This tradition also mentions light: *Nūr Allāh*, i.e. the light of Allāh, which is the main element in the prophetic heritage. It is quite obvious that since the Divine light is mentioned as a part of the *wasīyya*, this doctrine is closely related to the well-known view about the reincarnation of the Imāmi eternal spirit in the corporeal bodies of its carriers. This luminous spirit is said to have been in existence prior to the creation of the world.⁵¹

The Divine light and the *wasīyya* together represent the doctrine of the prophetic heritage in its most elaborate form. This is fully demonstrated in al-Mas'ūdī's *Iḥbāt al-Wasīyya li-l-Imām 'Alī b. Abī Tālib*. In this book, whose acknowledged aim it is to prove that 'Alī was indeed Muḥammad's legitimate *wasīy*, one is confronted with a detailed and systematic review of the successive transmission of the light and the other items of the *wasīyya* from Adam to the last Shī'ī Imām, through all the prophets.⁵² However, at one point, namely when the Divine light and the prophetic heritage reach Muḥammad through Jesus' disciples (p. 89), the sequence of the story is interrupted by a group of traditions of quite a different nature. These traditions evince in detail the Arab oriented doctrine of *Nūr Muḥammad*, and one is thus able to obtain a clear picture of the wandering of *Nūr Muḥammad* through all the genealogical ancestors of the Prophet. Although fundamentally different from each other,⁵³ the author of the *Iḥbāt* has woven the two groups of traditions into a single version as if forming two complementary aspects of the same process. The story of *Nūr Allāh* and the *wasīyya* is resumed at the point of its transmission from Muḥammad to 'Alī (p. 122).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, XI, 266.

⁴⁸ See about Noah's *wasīyya* *ibid.*, XXIII, 33, XI, 46–47, 288–289.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, XI, 48, XXIII, 225–226 ('Ayyāshī), 249 (Furāt), *Ja'wāhir*, 210.

⁵⁰ See *Mustadrak*, II, 587.

⁵¹ See e.g. *IOS*, 5, p. 104 ff.

⁵² Quotations from *Iḥbāt al-Wasīyya* are found in *Simt*, I, 17, 52, 69, 74, 137 etc. The book is referred to as *Kitāb al-Wasīyya*; its author is not mentioned by name.

⁵³ See below.

The *Iḥbāt* mentions by name all those who had carried the prophetic heritage before Muḥammad, both prophets and *awsyā'*. Among the *awsyā'* are mentioned priests and Levites. Between Joseph and Jethro priests of the family of Eli are mentioned, beginning with Phinehas who is regarded as the son of Joshua.⁵⁴ After Solomon, Levites of the family of Asaph son of Berechiah are mentioned, up to Zechariah who transmitted the light to Jesus.⁵⁵ Most of these names are difficult to identify. The major events in the days of some of the carriers of the *wasīyya* are also recorded. From Asaph son of Berechiah onwards some references are made to the contemporary history of the Persians, especially to the building of a number of prominent Persian cities and to the names of the contemporary kings.⁵⁶ Alexander the Great is also mentioned.⁵⁷

These references are most significant, for they are meant to allude to the close relation of Persians and Greeks to those chosen persons from whom Muḥammad has inherited the Divine light. In other words, the Greeks and the Persians, like the Jews and the Christians, have participated in the origin of Muḥammad's prophethood. As a matter of fact, a straightforward tradition to this effect is recorded in another source. According to this tradition, Muḥammad possessed a carpet inherited from the preceding prophets, beginning with Adam. After Muḥammad this carpet was in the possession of the Shī'ī Imāms. Among the persons who had owned the divine carpet prior to Muḥammad one finds Dhūl-Qamayn as well as Alexander the Great and Shabūr b. Ardashīr.⁵⁸ The tendentious nature of this tradition is clear enough.

II. AHL AL-BAYT AND BANU ISRA'ĪL

The testamentary doctrine of the *wasīyya* considered above is based on the conviction that the position of the Shī'ī Imāms among the Muslim believers is parallel to that of the *awsyā'* among the *Banū Isrā'īl*. It seems that the Shī'a took a special interest in the stories about the prophets of *Banū Isrā'īl* (*qisas al-anbiyā'*) in order to establish the principle of the *nass*. According to the most elaborate form of this principle, the delegation of Muḥammad's authority to 'Alī and from him to the following Imāms, was only a part, though a most essential one, of a universal process that started with Adam and continued through the prophets of *Banū Isrā'īl*.

It may be useful to draw attention to a few more Shī'ī traditions which confirm the close analogy between 'Alī and the Imāms and the *awsyā'* of *Banū Isrā'īl*. As is well known it was already 'Abdallāh b. Saba', 'Alī's contemporary, to whom the teaching was ascribed that 'Alī's relation to Muḥammad was like that of Joshua to Moses.⁵⁹ This means that 'Alī was entitled to be Muḥammad's successor just as

⁵⁴ P. 62–63.

⁵⁵ P. 73–75.

⁵⁶ See p. 73, 74, 75, 84, 86, 87.

⁵⁷ P. 75 infra.

⁵⁸ *Biḥār*, XI, 33–34.

⁵⁹ See e.g. Hodgson, "Abdallāh b. Saba", *EF*, Shahrastānī, I, 174.

Joshua had been Moses' successor. Though the assumption that this teaching was originally circulated by Ibn Saba' is hardly historical, one is nevertheless able to assert its early date. At least it is quite evident that this teaching was already well-known by the middle of the second century A.H.,⁶⁰ for it has been recorded in the *Ta'rikh* of 'Alī b. Mujāhid (d. 182 A.H.),⁶¹ from which it is quoted by Ibn Shahrāshūb.⁶² The same tradition was also recorded by Ahmad b. Hanbal.⁶³ Another tradition is that which likens 'Alī's relation to Muḥammad with that of Aaron to Moses.⁶⁴ Sunni scholars, however, claimed that since Aaron had died before Moses, the tradition was invalid with regard to 'Alī's authority after Muḥammad's death.⁶⁵

The names of 'Alī's two sons, from Fāṭima are related to the names of Aaron's two sons. The angel Gabriel, it is said, revealed to the Prophet the names of Aaron's two sons, Shubbār and Shubbayr, which were written in the Torah, and ordered him to give these names to 'Alī's two children. The rendering of these names was al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.⁶⁶ The tradition to this effect was recorded by al-Balādhuri (d. 279 H) and by Ahmad.⁶⁷

'Alī is also "coupled" with another ancient *wasīyy*, namely, Shem, who was the successor of his father Noah. The relation between 'Alī and Shem is demonstrated through a tradition to the effect that some Yemenites, "survivors from the ancient family of Noah" came to the Prophet and told him about Shem, the *wasīyy* of their prophet Noah. Upon being asked to mention his own *wasīyy*, Muḥammad pointed to 'Alī. 'Alī himself performed a miracle by which he raised Shem from his grave, and the latter testified that 'Alī was the *wasīyy* of Muḥammad.⁶⁸

In fact, 'Alī's position as Muḥammad's *wasīyy* was regarded as parallel to the position of all the preceding *awṣiyā'*. Muḥammad, it is related, told 'Alī that his relation to Muḥammad was like that of Sheth to Adam, Shem to Noah, Isaac to Abraham, Aaron to Moses and Petrus to Jesus.⁶⁹ Sometimes the traditions stress even the superiority of 'Alī to the rest of the *awṣiyā'*. Muḥammad is made to

declare that Sheth was the *wasīyy* of Adam, Joshua was Moses' *wasīyy*, Asaph was Solomon's, Petrus was Jesus' and 'Alī was his own *wasīyy*. Concluding his statement Muḥammad declared that 'Alī was the best of all the *awṣiyā'* in this world and in the world to come.⁷⁰

An even higher degree of the Shī'ī veneration for 'Alī is reflected through traditions to the effect that 'Alī's position was parallel to that of the prophets themselves. Some traditions assert 'Alī's relation to Noah. It is said that Noah had dug 'Alī's grave 700 years before the Deluge.⁷¹ It is also related that Adam, Noah and 'Alī were buried in the same grave.⁷² Other traditions point to 'Alī's relation to Abraham. While walking together in al-Madīna, Muḥammad and 'Alī were saluted by the trees, which compared them to Moses and Aaron, as well as to Noah and Abraham.⁷³ 'Alī's relation to Jesus can be deduced from a tradition saying that the Prophet once addressed 'Alī with the following statement: "You are like Jesus; some people have loved him, therefore they perished, and some people have hated him, therefore they also perished."⁷⁴

Various elements from the biographies of ancient figures recur in 'Alī's own biography. Thus we find a tradition stating that the day of 'Alī's death corresponded to the day of the revelation of the Qur'ān, to the day of Joshua's death, as well as to the day of Jesus' Ascension.⁷⁵ The biographies of the previous prophets served as a model for 'Alī's own behaviour. Once at al-Kufa, 'Alī explained to his followers why he had refrained from fighting his enemies, quoting similar examples from the lives of Abraham, Lot, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and Muḥammad.⁷⁶ Some of his spiritual traits reflect those of preceding prophets. He possessed the knowledge of Adam, the comprehension of Noah, the abstinence of Yahyā (John the Baptist), and the power of Moses.⁷⁷ On the Day of Resurrection, it is said, Allāh will invest 'Alī with the power of Gabriel, the light of Adam, the *ḥilm* of Rūdwan (the door-keeper of Paradise) and the beauty of Joseph.⁷⁸

Not only 'Alī's position and biography but also those of the Imāms in general were conceived as reflecting the history of the religious figures of *Banī Isrā'īl*.^{78a} Already Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīya reportedly declared (on the basis of Qur'ān II, 49) that the position of the Shī'īs among the Muslim community was the same as that of the *Banī Isrā'īl* among the people of the Egyptian Pharaoh — their sons had been slain and their daughters kept alive.⁷⁹ In later days when the doctrine of the

⁶⁰ See also W.M. Watt, "Shī'ism Under The Umayyads", *JRAS*, 1960, p. 159.

⁶¹ See *CAS*, I, 312.

⁶² III, 46.

⁶³ Ibn al-Bitīq, '*Umda*, 38 (from Ahmad); '*Tal*, 469; '*Laṭīf*, I, 358. See also *Faḥ al-Bārī*, VIII, 114. And see Khawāzmi, 20: '*an mujāhid 'an ibn 'abbās qāla: qāla rasūl allāh (s): al-subḥān thalātha, fa-l-sabiq ilā mūsā yūshā, ibn nūn, fa-l-sabiq ilā 'isā gāhib yāsīn wa-l-sabiq ilā muḥammad 'alī ibn abī ṭālib*.

⁶⁴ Ibn Hishām, IV, 163; 'Abd al-Razzāq, V, 406; Bukhārī, V, 24, VI, 3; Muslim, VII, 120, Timidhī, XIII, 171; Ibn Sa'd, III, 24-25; Khargushīr (Tübingen) 28b; Ibn Shahrāshūb, II, 219 ff, III, 46; Ibn al-Bitīq, '*Umda*, 62 ff.

⁶⁵ See e.g. *Faḥ al-Bārī*, VII, 60. Cf. R. Sellheim, "Prophet, Chālif and Geschichte", *Oriens*, 18-19, (1965-1966) p. 51. And see also a detailed discussion of the subject between al-Ma'mūn and some scholars, '*iqd*, V, 100-101.

⁶⁶ Kister, *op. cit.*, 223.

⁶⁷ See Ibn Shahrāshūb, III, 166 (from al-Balādhuri and Ahmad). See also *ibid.*, 46, 189; '*Tal*, 137-138; Khargushīr (Tübingen) 15a.

⁶⁸ Ibn Shahrāshūb, II, 164.

⁶⁹ Rajab al-Barsī, 57.

⁷⁰ Ibn Shahrāshūb, II, 247. See also *Ithbār*, 166; *Bihar*, XI, 30.

⁷¹ Ibn Shahrāshūb, II, 172; *Ithbār*, 152.

⁷² *Ithbār*, 153.

⁷³ Khawāzmi, 221; '*Laṭīf*, I, 354-355.

⁷⁴ Khawāzmi, 233, 226. And cf. '*iqd*, IV, 312 (from al-Sh'abī).

⁷⁵ *Ithbār*, 154.

⁷⁶ '*Tal*, 148-149.

⁷⁷ Khawāzmi, 40-41, 45; '*Nahj*, II, 429 (from Ahmad); '*Laṭīf*, I, 355-356. See also Ibn Shahrāshūb, II, 286; Rajab al-Barsī, 56.

⁷⁸ Ibn Shahrāshūb, III, 27.

^{78a} A Shī'ī tradition maintains that by Children of Israel *Al Muḥammad* are meant. See Kister, *op. cit.*, 233.

⁷⁹ Ibn Sa'd, V, 95. See also Kister, *op. cit.*, 233 (from Furāt). The same comparison be-

twelve Imāms was established, Muhammad himself was quoted as predicting their appearance:

There is going to happen among my community what has already happened among the children of Israel, (and the happenings will be similar to each other) like a pair of shoes and like two feathers of an arrow — they have had twelve captains (i.e. of the tribes).⁸⁰

The Imāms are sometimes compared to Jesus' disciples, whose number was twelve.⁸¹ Some prominent Imāms are compared to ancient religious figures. Muhammad, it is related, said that 'Alī was his own similitude, al-Ḥasan was the similitude of Ibrāhīm, al-Ḥusayn — that of Moses, and 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn was the similitude of Aaron.⁸²

Some traditions center around al-Ḥusayn. His superiority to his brother al-Ḥasan is also based on examples from the history of the people of Israel. It is claimed, for instance, that al-Ḥasan, although al-Ḥusayn's eldest brother, was not permitted to be the forefather of the succeeding Imāms, just as Moses, although the eldest,⁸³ did not beget the line of priests, who were Aaron's descendants; similarly, the Imāms were descended from al-Ḥusayn's offspring.⁸⁴ Al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom was compared to that of John the Baptist.⁸⁵

Al-Ḥasan's significance was also established on biblical foundations. A tradition relates that Jesus appeared to him in a dream and advised him to inscribe upon his ring the last verse of the Gospel.⁸⁶ Finally, a reference must be made to a Shi'ī tradition concerning al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, which has been included in the canonical compilations of *ḥadīth*. This tradition relates that the Prophet used to pronounce incantations (*awwadhā*) over them just as Abraham used to over Isaac and Ishmael.⁸⁷

tween *Ahl al-Bayt* and *Banū Isrā'īl* who had suffered from the Pharaoh, was reportedly drawn already by Arwā Bint al-Ḥarith b. 'Abd al-Muttalib, during her visit to Mu'awiyā, the first Umayyad Calif. The tradition to this effect was recorded by al-'Abbās b. Bakkar (d. 222 A.H., see *GAŚ*, I, 313). See *Yqd.* II, 120. Ibn al-Ash'ar as well reportedly declared (in the year 66 A.H.) that the massacre of Ḥusayn and his family was worse than what Pharaoh had done to (repentants), i.e. those Shi'īs who since the year 61 A.H. intended to revenge the blood of al-Ḥusayn. Their leader, Sulaymān b. Surād, on the basis of Qur'ān II, 54, urged them to repent for their sin of neglect of al-Ḥusayn, just as *Banū Isrā'īl* were ordered by Moses (after the affair of the calf) to repent for their sins by killing each other (*ibid.*, 206).

⁸⁰ Ibn Shahrāshub, I, 258: *Kā'in fī ummūti mā kāna fī Banī Isrā'īl ḥadīth wa-l-na'fi bi-l-na'fi wa-l-qudhāḥa bi-l-qudhāḥa kāna fihim ihnā 'ashara naqibān*. See more such traditions *ibid.*, 254; 258 ff. A similar comparison is made between the sins committed by the two communities. See e.g. Suyūṭī, III, 14 ff; Ibn al-Bittiq, *Umda*, 178.

⁸¹ *Ithbāt*, 259.

⁸² Khawārizmī, 85.

⁸³ This, of course, goes contrary to the evidence of the Old Testament.

⁸⁴ *Idā*, 209. See also Ibn Shahrāshub, III, 207; cf. *Bihār*, XXIII, 70. The Zaydiyya, of course, recognized other Imāms as well.

⁸⁵ See various traditions about the two of them, Ibn Shahrāshub, III, 234, 237. Khargashī (Tübingen) 21b–22a; *Jawāhir*, 314, *La'āl*, I, 391.

⁸⁶ Khargashī (Tübingen), 21a.

⁸⁷ Bukhārī, IV, 179; Khargashī (Tübingen), 20a–20b; Ibn Shahrāshub, III, 155.

The above examples provide us with some idea of the extent to which the early Shi'a was aware of the close relation between *Ahl al-Bayt* and the *Banū Isrā'īl*.⁸⁸

III. THE EARLY FOUNDATIONS

The Shi'ī preoccupation with traditions which deal with the prophets of *Banū Isrā'īl* as pre-figuring its own heroes, dates back to the earliest stages of its development. In fact, the Shi'a seems to be responsible for the main flow.⁸⁹ of Judeo-Christian motifs into the Muslim literature already since the first century A.H. This assumption finds support in Goldziher's observation that in the first century A.H. those who were concerned with religious matters were mainly Shi'īs⁹⁰ (this Shi'ī religious activity caused almost simultaneously the counteraction of the Umayyad rulers⁹¹). Therefore it seems probable that the belief in the identity of fate between *Banū Isrā'īl* and the Muslim community as a whole⁹² has its origin in the more restricted Shi'ī form of this outlook concerning the close relation between the history of *Banū Isrā'īl* and that of *Ahl al-Bayt*.⁹³

At any rate, the Shi'ī belief concerning the successive transmission of the

⁸⁸ On the other hand, the similarity between *Ahl al-Bayt* and *Banū Isrā'īl*, as emphasized by the Shi'a, was the very target for criticism by the opponents of the Shi'a. Al-Sh'abī, for instance, (d. 103 A.H.) reportedly reproached the Rāfidites, counting numerous points of identity between them and the Jews. See *Yqd.* II, 409–410. And perhaps it is of some significance that the Umayyad calif, Yazīd I, used to say that his monkey was an old man of *Banū Isrā'īl* who had become a monkey because of his sins (*Ansāb*, IVb, p. 1). About the Shi'ī use of the Bible for its own purposes see also *Vorlesungen*, 260, note 6. It is noteworthy that the Sunnī califs as well were sometimes presented as continuing the line of the prophets of *Banū Isrā'īl*. See *Muslim*, VI, 17.

⁸⁹ This flow contained, in fact, traditions covering a wide range of subjects. See Kister, *op. cit.* 221 ff, 226 ff. As is shown by Kister, a great number of these traditions reflect the widely accepted opinion that the Holy Books of the Jews and Christians included information about the Muslim prophet and his community (*ibid.*, 225). Here also one can trace the early expressions of this idea in its more restricted Shi'ī form. A tradition to the effect that 'Alī's merits are enumerated in the Holy Scriptures of the Christians is recorded on the authority of Naṣīr b. Muzaḥim (d. 212 A.H.) in *Nahj*, I, 288–289 (from his *Kiṭāb Sifīn*); cf. many more traditions which concern the prediction that 'Alī would be Muhammad's *wasīy*, in: Ibn Shahrāshub, I, 38, II, 90 ff; *Bihār*, XV, 236–239; *Idā*, 136. And see also, Kister, *op. cit.*, 222.

⁹⁰ *Muslim Studies*, II, 39. See also 43 ult. In fact, those religious circles who indulged in the Judeo-Christian literature during the first century consisted of both Shi'ī and ascetics; see, e.g., S.D. Goitein, "Isrā'īliyyāt", *Tarbiṭ*, 6 (1936), p. 89 ff, 510 ff.

⁹¹ The Umayyads did not fail to ascribe to themselves the same attributes of sacredness which the Shi'a was using with regard to 'Alī and his family. See *Vorlesungen*, 85 (from Ibn Sa'd, V, 94). See also, *ibid.*, 98 (where pro-Umayyad panegyrics from al-Farazdaq are quoted). About the Umayyad reaction to the pro-'Alīd traditions see also *Muslim Studies*, II, 43 ff.

⁹² Kister, *op. cit.*, 232.

⁹³ Already al-Mukhtār is reported to have expressed this idea. See below. For further early Shi'ī expressions of this idea see above, note 79.

wasyya in a universal line, which started with Adam, was in itself based on ideas borrowed from the early Judeo-Christian literature.⁹⁴ A passage in Flavius' *Antiquities of the Jews* may be quoted in this context. This passage deals with the patriarchs who preceded Noah. They are presented as forming a line through which their authority is handed down from generation to generation: "Sheth begot Enos... who when he had lived 912 years, delivered the government to Cainan his son... Cainan... had his son Mahaleel... This Mahaleel... died having his son Jared... He lived 962 years, and then his son Enoch succeeded him... Now Methuselah, the son of Enoch... had Lamech... to whom he delivered the government... Now Lamech when he governed 777 years appointed Noah his son to be ruler of the people... and retained the government 950 years."⁹⁵ The patriarchs in the early Judeo-Christian literature are also presented as transmitting from generation to generation a religious testament which is not accessible to any changes. One of the Apocrypha, namely *The Book of Jubilees* clearly formulates this idea. At the conclusion of Noah's testament to his sons he says:

Thus Enoch, the father of your father enjoined upon Methuselah his son, and Methuselah enjoined upon Lamech his son, and Lamech enjoined upon me all that which his father had enjoined upon him. And I enjoin upon you, my sons, just as Enoch enjoined upon his son in the first generation; he lived in the seventh generation and commanded and enjoined upon his sons and upon the sons of his sons till his death.⁹⁶

These traditions about the transfer of the ruling authority and the religious testament of the ancient patriarchs from generation to generation (which, as we have seen, form in the Shi'a only the first stage of the universal course of the Imāmi *wasyya*), found their way into Muslim sources as early as the end of the first century A.H.⁹⁷

The name of Ibn Ishāq has already been mentioned above (note 43). Referring to his attitude towards the history of the world beginning with Adam, R. Sellheim says:

Ibn Ishāq's Gesamtkonzeption ist jedenfalls entsprechend ausgefallen. Für ihn bildet das Erscheinen des Islam Fortsetzung und Schluss der 'heiligen Geschichte' der Juden und Christen; er ordnet die Geschichte des Propheten und des neuen Glaubens in die Geschichte der göttlichen Offenbarung ein, welche selbstverständlich mit Adam beginnt; er betrach-

⁹⁴ The general Christian-Gnostic or Neo-Platonic origin of this idea has been indicated time and again. See e.g. Von Grunbaum, *Islam*, (London, 1964) 2, 161-162; I. Goldziher, "Neoplatonische und Gnostische Elemente im Hadith", *ZA*, 22 (1909), p. 337.

⁹⁵ *Antiquities of the Jews*, I, chap. III, 4 (I am grateful to Mr. Menahem Kister for this reference). Flavius speaks elsewhere of a line of prophets who had holy scriptures beginning with Moses. See A.J. Wensinck, "Muhammad und die Propheten", *Acta Orientalia*, 2 (1924), 176.

⁹⁶ *Jubilees*, VII, 38-39.

⁹⁷ In fact, the idea of a divine heritage wandering through a line of prophetic figures who were chosen (*isṭiṭā*) by Allāh) for their divine mission, is known already in the Qur'ān, but this is not the subject of the present study.

tet die Weltgeschichte — natürlich nur soweit ihm bekannt — als Heilsgeschichte mit dem Höhe- und Endpunkt Muhammad. Eine solche Konzeption war aber zugleich eine Legitimation für das arabische Chalifat, welche für sich selbst sprach.⁹⁸

Sellheim's assumption that Ibn Ishāq wrote his book in order to meet the urgent needs of the 'Abbasid Califs (al-Mansur) has led him to conclude that Ibn Ishāq's intention was to show that 'Alī was not entitled to be Muhammad's successor.⁹⁹ But the Shi'i tradition mentioned above (n. 43) which presents 'Alī as Muhammad's appointed *wasyy*, as it is quoted from Ibn Ishāq by al-Tabarī, seems to indicate that Ibn Ishāq's pro-'Abbasid tendency is not quite so self-evident. Furthermore, his interest in the sacred history of the world seems also to be merged with specific Shi'i views.^{99a} For a close examination of Ibn Ishāq's traditions concerning the ancient patriarchs, as quoted by al-Tabarī from the former's *Kitaḥ al-Mubtada*,¹⁰⁰ shows that the main point of these traditions is the successive transmission of the *wasyya* of those patriarchs. These traditions were apparently meant to illustrate the developing Shi'i concept of the successive transmission of both political and religious authority.

Let us examine some of these early traditions mentioned by Ibn Ishāq. Most of them are quoted from *Ahl al-Tawrāh*, i.e. Judeo-Christian sources.¹⁰¹ The patriarchs in these traditions are described as rulers who succeeded one another. The first ruler, namely Adam, was "Allāh's elect confidant" (*saḥḥy al-rūḥmān*).¹⁰² Adam and his successors acted both as practical rulers and as religious authorities. The religious activity consisted mainly of the struggle against Cain and his sinful descendants. In their testaments they command their successors to isolate themselves from Cain's posterity, who will be obliterated by the Deluge which they predict.^{102a} Adam, according to Ibn Ishāq, informed Sheth about the seven years'

⁹⁸ R. Sellheim, *op. cit.*, 40-41. Apart from the ancient Judeo-Christian history, Ibn Ishāq's *Kitaḥ al-Mubtada* also contained the pre-Islamic history of the southern Arabs and that of the Quraysh in Mecca. See *ibid.*, 43.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

^{99a} And see about Ibn Ishāq's *taḥṣayyū*, *Ta'rikh Baghdad*, I, 224; *Uyun al-Athar*, I, 13.
¹⁰⁰ Omitted completely in Ibn Hishām's version. Since he was interested only in the genealogical Arab descent of Muhammad, Ibn Hishām has preserved only those passages of Ibn Ishāq which deal with the ancient history of the Arabs.

¹⁰¹ Al-Tabarī quotes the material from Ibn Ishāq through Ibn Humayd who quotes it from Salama b. al-Fadl (d. 191 A.H.). The *trwāya* of Salama is considered the most complete one. See *Ta'rikh Baghdad*, I, 221.

¹⁰² The term *saḥḥy* (pl. *asḥḥyā*) is used with reference to the Shi'i Imāms as well, i.e. they have the *saḥḥyā*.

^{102a} It is most significant that the struggle of the patriarchs against the posterity of Cain recurs as a central motif in later Shi'i traditions as well. It serves as a model for the conflict between the Shi'is and their enemies. Sheth, for instance, is presented as the leader of his Shi'a, who dwell in the valley, in contrast to Cain and his posterity who dwell on the mountain, (*Iḥbat*, 18). It is further related that Sheth practiced *taḥṣyā* because of the persecution of Cain's posterity, and his *taḥṣyā* was taken as a model by the Shi'a (see *Bihar*, XI, 241: "... wa-ḥ-ḥaḥḥa yasa'una fī aqwāmihā al-taḥṣyā li-anna lana fī ibn adam uswatun. See also *ibid.*, 263-264, 227-229, 240).

Deluge and wrote the *wasīyya* for him. Sheth, as Adam's *wasīy* was charged with the government after Adam's death.¹⁰³ As a prophet, Allāh also revealed to him fifty scriptures.^{103a} The *wasīyya* of Adam contained some objects which were put on stairs (*ṭī mī'rāḥ*) so that the name of Allāh would not be forgotten. Among these objects was the horn which Adam had brought from Paradise.¹⁰⁴ Of Enos, who succeeded his father Sheth, Ibn Ishāq says:

After the death of Sheth, his father, Enos took upon himself the administration of the kingdom and ruled his subjects, replacing his father Sheth. As was mentioned, he retained his father's way of conduct, not displaying any change or alteration.¹⁰⁵

Quoting *Ahl al-Tawrāh*, Ibn Ishāq relates that Jared's son, Enoch, i.e. Idri's, was a prophet. Allāh revealed to him thirty scriptures. He fought Cain's posterity and enslaved some of them. He was the *wasīy* of his father Jared. He inherited from his father all that had been entrusted to him by his own father.¹⁰⁶ Continuing the story of the patriarchs from *Ahl al-Tawrāh*, Ibn Ishāq relates that Enoch appointed his son Methuselah as his successor in the management of the Godly government, and assigned to him and to his family his *wasīyya* before he ascended to heaven. He told them that Allāh would inflict punishment upon Cain's posterity and forbade them to associate with them.¹⁰⁷ *Ahl al-Tawrāh* are also mentioned as the source of the following account about Methuselah who retained his father's belief in Allāh. Before his death he appointed his son Lamech as his successor to the government (*istakhḍafahu 'alā amrin*), and entrusted him with that which his own father had enjoined upon him (concerning Cain's posterity).¹⁰⁸

So far Ibn Ishāq. It has already been mentioned that the material in his book seems to date back to the very beginning of the second century A.H. Many elements in his account correspond both to Flavius and to some of the Apocrypha, especially to *The Book of Jubilees* which seems to be – though indirectly, of course – one of his main sources.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ Tabari, *Ta'rikh*, I, 152: ... *wa-kataba wasīyatuhu fa-kāna shith ḡ-mā dhukira wasīyya abīhi ādam 'alayhi l-salām wa-sarāt al-r'ās min ba'di waḡai ādam li-shith*.

^{103a} Loc. cit. According to other sources, scriptures were revealed already to Adam. See e.g. *Iḥbāt*, 18, and see also Thaḡabī, 88; *Bihar*, XI, 43. And see about the scriptures of Adam, Sheth and Enoch in the Apocryphal book, *Secrets of Enoch*, XXXII, 11.

¹⁰⁴ Tabari, *op. cit.*, 159.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 163: *wa-qāma insh ba'd mudiyyi abīhi shith li-sabṭihī bi-siyāsat al-mulk wa-tadṭir man tahtā yadāyhi min ra'yaytihi maqāma abīhi shith. wa-lam yazal ḡ-mā dhukira 'alā mihāj abīhi, la yuqafu mithu 'alā taghyir wa-lā tabdīl*.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 172–173: ... *ḡ-stakhḍafahu ukhṭukh 'alā amri allāh wa-awḡāhu wa-shla bayrihi qabla an yurfa'a wa-ṭamānūm anna allāh 'azza wa-jāla sa-yu'adhṭibū walada ḡāyin wa-man khalaṭūm wa-māla ilayhim, wa-nahāhum 'an mukhalaṭāthim*.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 173. The *wasīyya* of Lamech to Noah see *ibid.*, 174.

¹⁰⁹ This becomes quite evident from the fact that Ibn Ishāq has recorded the names of the wives of the ancient patriarchs (*ibid.*, 163, 164, 170, 172, 173, 203). The only probable source for this information seems to be *Book of Jubilees*, IV, ff. which contains the same names. Some of the names in the present form of their Arabic transcription, however, were

Later authors continued to record the traditions about the *wasīyya* of the ancient patriarchs. The Kufan author Ibn al-Kalbi (d. 204, 206 A.H.), as quoted by Ibn Sa'd, recorded a tradition on the authority of his father (d. 146 A.H.), which says:

Sheth the son of Adam begot Enos and many people. To him Sheth delivered his *wasīyya* (*wa-ilayhi awḡā shith*). Enos begot Canan and many people, and to him the *wasīyya* (was delivered). Canan begot Mahaleel and people with him, and to him the *wasīyya* (was delivered). Mahaleel begot Jared and people with him, and to him the *wasīyya* (was delivered) ...¹¹⁰

The *wasīyya* of Enoch, Methuselah and Lamech is mentioned in the same manner.¹¹¹

An illuminating example of the early Shi'i interest in the history of the old faiths is found in the book of the Shi'i author al-Ya'qubī. As is well known, this book contains detailed traditions about the history of the world since Adam. The *wasīyya* of each prophetic figure is also mentioned, and unlike Ibn Ishāq, al-Ya'qubī occasionally mentions the *wasīyya* of prophets succeeding Noah as well. But the most elaborate form of the Shi'i doctrine of the *wasīyya*, conceived as being successively transmitted from Adam through the prophets up to the last Shi'i Imām, is found in al-Mas'ūdī's *Iḥbāt al-Wasīyya*. The coherent outlook exhibited in this book is, as we can now see, based on Judaeo-Christian elements brought into the Muslim literature by Shi'i authors at an early date.

IV. PROPHETS AND PROGENITORS

The Shi'i doctrine of the *wasīyya* in its most complete form is clearly at variance with the doctrine of *Nūr Muḥammad*. According to the former, Muḥammad and the Imāms possess a divine heritage and a hallowed light which has come down to them from the preceding prophets. The latter regards the prophetic light of Muḥammad and the Imāms as coming from Muḥammad's Arab progenitors. What, then, is the relation between these two different Shi'i views concerning the position of the Imāms as possessing an ancient authoritative heritage?

As a reaction to the wide use made of Judaeo-Christian elements in the build-up of the merits of Muḥammad and the Imāms,¹¹² it seems that already within

faultily copied, mainly because of the graphic similarity of certain Arabic letters. All of them, however, can be easily corrected according to *Jubilees*. The names of the wives of the old patriarchs were also incorporated into Muḥammad's genealogy going back to Adam. They were recorded as a proof of his faultless descent. See e.g. Khargushī (Tübingen), 83a ff.

¹¹⁰ Ibn Sa'd, I, 39.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹¹² As far as Muḥammad himself was concerned, the Judaeo-Christian elements, as well as Persian ones, were used since the first century A.H. as a model for his prophetic person, mainly for apologetic purposes, in order to demonstrate that his virtues were no less divine than those of the previous prophets. See e.g. Sellheim, *op. cit.*, 53 ff, 59 ff.

the early Shi'a contrary trend emerged, which strove to establish the divine character of Muḥammad and the Imāns on pure, original Arab foundations. The main question to be answered was whether the prophetic authority of Muḥammad and the Imāns should be based on Judaeo-Christian foundations, or whether this same authority should not rather be presented as based on the divine heritage of Muḥammad's Arab ancestors.¹¹² In contrast to the testamentary doctrine of the universal *wasīyya* of the prophets of *Banū Isrā'īl*, the doctrine of *Nūr Muḥammad* represents the Arab side. It stresses the fact that Muḥammad's prophetic light came to him from his progenitors who are presented as pure, immaculate and completely free from *jāhili* paganism by virtue of Muḥammad's light.¹¹³ Hence the distinction of the Arab heritage. At a later stage, Muḥammad's progenitors are even presented as prophets or *awṣiyā'* on their own account,¹¹⁴ and thus elevated to an equal rank with the *awṣiyā'* of *Banū Isrā'īl*.

Those Shi'is who stressed the Arab origin of Muḥammad's prophethood were responsible for traditions which assert that even the so-called Judaeo-Christian heritage was in fact of a purely Arab origin. This tendency is demonstrated in an

instructive passage in al-Mas'ūdī's *Ithbār al-Wasīyya*.^{114a} The same passage is also recorded in al-Khargūshī's *Sharaf al-Nabīyy*.¹¹⁵ The correct meaning of this passage can be understood only against the background of the doctrine of the *wasīyya*. As we have seen, one of the main items of the *wasīyya* was the *tābūt*, i.e. the Ark, which since Adam was passed on through all the prophets. The *tābūt* is said to have been transmitted from Abraham to Ishmael and from Ishmael to Isaac,¹¹⁶ and from Isaac to the rest of the Hebrew prophets.¹¹⁷ The passage in the *Ithbār* to which we allude deals with the *tābūt* when in the possession of Ishmael. In contrast to the usual doctrine of the *wasīyya*, this particular passage contains a tradition to the effect that Ishmael bequeathed the *wasīyya* and the *tābūt* to Kedar his son (and not to his brother Isaac). He did so because he had seen on Kedar's forehead the blaze of *Nūr Muḥammad*.¹¹⁸ The transmission of the *tābūt* to Kedar emphasizes the close relation of this prophetic instrument to one of the most prominent Arab ancestors of Muḥammad.¹¹⁹ It also means the complete exclusion of the Hebrew Isaac from the line of the carriers of the *wasīyya*. In fact, the following parts of the tradition reassert that Isaac was destined to remain outside the line of divine heritage. It is related that Kedar thought, that his successor and heir to the Muḥammadan light was to be born by a woman of Isaac's posterity; he married 200 of them and waited for 200 years, but did not beget a son. It was not until he was ordered through a divine revelation to marry a woman of pure Arab descent, that he begot his successor Ḥamāl, who inherited the *Nūr Muḥammad*.¹²⁰

As for the *tābūt*, it is related that Isaac's posterity tried to take hold of it, but Kedar refused to give it away. However, since after all the *tābūt* was known to have belonged to the prophets of *Banū Isrā'īl*,¹²¹ Kedar is said to have finally delivered it to Jacob. The description of this event is, however, quite apologetic, and is designed to stress the merits of Kedar, even though he gave away the *tābūt*. The main point is that this Arab ancestor had the *tābūt* in his possession before the prophets of *Banū Isrā'īl*, and it was he who brought it to them from Arabia. Allāh ordered him to do this because he was a *wasīyy* and not a prophet. Jacob himself, upon receiving the *tābūt* from Kedar, is said to have honoured him and treated him with great deference. He bid his sons to welcome Kedar, blessed him for marrying

¹¹² A parallel divergence of opinion concerns the nature of Muḥammad's *shari'a*. Ibn 'Aqīl says that among those who held that Muḥammad had the *shari'a* of preceding prophets, were two parties. One party held that he possessed the *shari'a* of Moses, while the other (of the school of al-Shāfi'i) held that he adhered to the *shari'a* of Abraham, his genealogical ancestor (see Ibn al-Jawzi, I, 139–140). The same difference is expressed in two contradictory traditions attributed to the Prophet. According to one tradition, the Prophet stated that he was "the most worthy of Jesus son of Mary" (*anā awla l-nās bi-ṭā'ib ih marḡam*) in this world and in the world to come (Bukhārī, IV, 203; Muslim, VII, 43; Abū Dawūd, II, 522). This tradition asserts Muḥammad's direct relation to Jesus as his immediate religious successor. It is connected with Qur'an LXI, 6, where Jesus is said to have given the good tidings of "an apostle who shall come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad". The opposite tradition, however, asserts Muḥammad's direct relation to his father (i.e. ancestor), Abraham. According to this tradition the Prophet stated: "Every prophet has an associate (*waṭiy*) from among the prophets. My associate from among them is my father and the friend (*khālil*) of my Lord (i.e. Abraham. See Tabarī, *Taḥṣīr*, III, 218). This tradition is based on Qur'an III, 67–68, where it is stated that "Abraham was not a Jew, nor yet a Christian, but he was a *ḥanīf*... The people most worthy of Abraham (*awla l-nās bi-ṭā'ib ih*) are those who follow him and this prophet and those who believe." According to our tradition, the prophet most worthy of Abraham was Muḥammad. Muslim scholars tried to reconcile the two contradictory traditions. See e.g. *Faḥ al-Bār*, VI, 353 infra. It may also be mentioned that the divergence in the attitude towards *Banū Isrā'īl* was also the chief point of the various interpretations given to the tradition of the Prophet: *haddithu 'an banī isrā'īl wa-ḥa ḥaqā*. See Kister, *op. cit.*, 217 ff. It was also disputed whether or not it was lawful to write down traditions from *Banū Isrā'īl*. See *ibid.*, 234 ff. Those who were against the study of the Judaeo-Christian heritage maintained that the Islam of Muḥammad represented the only true religion; if the preceding prophets would have been alive at the time of Muḥammad, they would have followed him. Early expressions of this attitude may be found in the interpretations to Qur'an III, 81. See e.g. Tabarī, *Taḥṣīr*, III, 237, the interpretation of al-Suddī (d. 128) to this effect. See also Ibn Hishām, I, 249. And cf. Ibn al-Jawzi, I, 139.

¹¹³ See e.g. *IOS*, 5, p. 75 ff.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 80 ff.

^{114a} *Ithbār*, 94 ff. This passage belongs to the traditions about *Nūr Muḥammad* which al-Mas'ūdī has woven into the main group of traditions dealing with the universal *wasīyya* (see above).

¹¹⁵ 10a ff.

¹¹⁶ About Isaac as Ishmael's successor see also Tabarī, *Taḥṣīr*, I, 314, 317.

¹¹⁷ See above part I.

¹¹⁸ *Ithbār*, 94; Khargūshī, 10a. See also Thaḥabī, 236.

¹¹⁹ Kedar and Nebajoth, sons of Ishmael, were important figures in the genealogy of Quraysh. Quraysh were known as the "children of Kedar and Nebajoth". See e.g. Ibn Hishām, I, 135; Ibn Sa'd, I, 57; *Ansāb*, I, 52; Azraqī, I, 64. Cf. also *Mā'arif*, 16. Nebajoth is sometimes considered Kedar's son. See Ibn Shahrāshub, I, 135.

¹²⁰ *Ithbār*, 94–96; Khargūshī, 10a–10b.

¹²¹ Qur'an II, 248.

a woman of pure Arab descent, and predicted the birth of his son Hamal, of which he knew through some miraculous portents. It is Jacob who declared that Allāh had decreed that Muḥammad would be descended only from pure Arab ancestors. When Kedar died, Allāh sent people of the posterity of Isaac and they buried him near Mecca.¹²²

A further tradition, recorded by al-Khargūshī in his *Sharaf al-Nabīy*, contains a reference to the *tābūt* when still in the possession of Abraham. According to this tradition, the tidings of Muḥammad's appearance were hidden within this very object belonging to the Hebrew prophets. Abraham, it is related, opened it for his sons to see the future through it. They beheld in it all the prophets, of whom Muḥammad was the last. They saw also the first four Califs standing with him. The most important part of this tradition consists of the statement that Abraham's sons saw in the *tābūt* that all the prophets were destined to be born out of Isaac's loins; Muḥammad was the only prophet who was to be born from the loins of Ishmael. Thereupon Abraham blessed his son Ishmael whose posterity will be honoured by the birth of Muḥammad.¹²³ Thus, Ishmael's superiority to Isaac as Muḥammad's predestined ancestor,¹²⁴ had already been indicated in the main prophetic vessel of *Banū Isrā'īl*, even before it came into their possession. These traditions about the precedence of Ishmael and Kedar over their contemporary Hebrew prophets, i.e. Isaac and his posterity, belong in fact to a long line of traditions of the same tendency.¹²⁵ I. Goldziher has already dealt with traditions of this kind, stressing their special significance for the Arab-Persian debate within the general framework of Islam. Isaac, Goldziher shows, was considered the ancestor of the Persians or non-Arabs in general.¹²⁶ It seems, however, that this observation holds good mainly for the more advanced stage of the Arab-Persian conflict when it was brought into the open. But the above-mentioned traditions, which place the *tābūt* at the centre of the contest between Ishmael and Isaac and their respective descendants, do not yet reflect the Arab-Persian debate but rather the Arab-*Banū Isrā'īl* one, which took place within the early Shi'a.

This inner Shi'i conflict centered around the symbol of the *tābūt* already in al-Mukhtār's days, i.e. at the beginning of the second half of the first century A.H. Al-Mukhtār had in his possession the chair that was regarded as having been 'Alī's and as such was highly venerated. It was thought to have divine qualities similar to those of the *tābūt* of *Banū Isrā'īl*. On the basis of the Qur'anic description of the *tābūt* (II, 248), the chair was presented as containing the *sakīna*, and also a divine knowledge by which the future could be told.¹²⁷ Al-Mukhtār himself reportedly

supported the elevation of the chair to the rank of the prophetic *tābūt*, by stating that "whatever had happened to the people of the past will happen to this people (the Muslims). *Banū Isrā'īl* had possessed the *tābūt* which contained the relics left by the family of Moses and Aaron, and this (chair) is like the *tābūt*."¹²⁸

Those who indulged in the veneration of the *tābūt*, performing various rites around it, were mainly Arabs of southern descent.¹²⁹ This veneration was considered as a Jewish practice and was condemned as such by Ibn al-Ash'ar.¹³⁰ It was even regarded as contradicting the essence of the original Islamic faith, i.e. the belief in the revelation of Muḥammad. An explicit statement to this effect was made by A'shā Hamdān,¹³¹ who condemned in his verses the veneration of the so-called *tābūt*: "I am a man who loves the clan (*al*) of Muḥammad, and I prefer the revelation which is written in the scrolls (i.e. the Qur'ān)."¹³² The expression *al muḥammadī*¹³³ seems to be used here against those who preferred the so-called *tābūt*, which according to Qur'ān II, 248 contained the relics left by *al mūsā wa-al hārūn*. Thus al-A'shā wanted to make clear that he preferred the original prophetic heritage of *al muḥammad* to that of *al mūsā* and *al hārūn*. In other words, he preferred the Arab heritage to the Judaeo-Christian one.

We may therefore conclude that as early as the beginning of the second half of the first century A.H., two different orientations were at work within the Shi'a. On the one hand, there were those who tried to establish the veneration for the Shi'i heroes on Judaeo-Christian models, the 'Irāqī Arabs of southern (Yemenite) descent being some of the earliest among them.¹³⁴ On the other hand, there were those who endeavoured to stress the pure Arab nature of the Shi'i conviction. As their outlooks finally crystallized, the former stressed the close relation of Muḥammad and *Ahl al-Bayt* to the heritage of the preceding prophets, while the

¹²² *Ibid.*, 83. The Judaeo-Christian orientation of al-Mukhtār may also be deduced from the fact that certain beliefs concerning the relation of Jesus to al-Mukhtār's daughter were ascribed to the latter (*Ansāb*, V, 236). In fact, al-Mukhtār reportedly claimed that his emergence had been predicted in the holy scriptures of the ancient prophets (*zabur al-awwālīn*). See *ibid.*, 214. Cf. 245.

¹²⁹ See e.g. *ibid.*, 242. They were of the tribes Shihām, Shakir and Kharīf of Hamdān, as well as Nahd from Qud'a. And see also J. Wellhausen, *Die religiös-politischen Oppositionsparteien im alten Islam*, translated into the Arabic by 'Abd al-Rahmān Badawī (*al-Khawārij wa-l-shi'a*, Kuwait 1976) p. 169 ff.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹³¹ He was the poet of the Yemenite tribes in al-Kūfa, and took part in the revolt of Ibn al-Ash'ar against al-Hajāj. See about him *Aghāni*, V, 146 ff. About his connection to al-Mukhtār see *Ansāb*, V, 235-236.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 242: *wa-innī murū'un al-habībū alā muḥammadīn/ wa-āthartu wahyūn dūmī-nathū Isā'ia 'ifū*

¹³³ In its usual Shi'i context, this expression refers to 'Alī's family that is, *Ahl al-Bayt*.

¹³⁴ According to Watt (*JRAS*, 1960, p. 161) "the core of the early Shi'a was in south Arabian or Yemenite tribes." It would seem that they brought into the early Shi'a some of the Judaeo-Christian ideas prevailing in the south. Apart from them, however, there were those groups which finally increased the flow of Judaeo-Christian ideas into the early Shi'a, namely the Aramaean and Christian *mawālī* of southern Iraq. See about their place in the early Shi'a Watt, *op. cit.*, 164-165.

¹²² *Ithbāt*, 96-97; Khargūshī, 10b-11b; Tha'labi, 236-237. About Kedar's superiority to Jacob see also *Simi*, I, 150 (from *Kitāb al-Tīn*, in the name of Wahb).

¹²³ Khargūshī, 9b-10a. Cf. Tha'labi 236.

¹²⁴ For the predestined descent of Muḥammad from the line of Ishmael, see also Ibn Shahrāshub, I, 246; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 61; Khargūshī, 86b, 87a, 135b; Ibn Kathīr, 342-343; Suyūṭī, I, 24; Ibn Sa'd, I, 163, 164; *Bihar*, XV, 207.

¹²⁵ See more traditions about it in *Ithbāt*, 37; *Simi*, I, 146; *Iqd*, V, 89.

¹²⁶ *Muslim Studies*, I, 135-136.

¹²⁷ See Tabarī, *Tarīkh*, VI, 85.

latter elaborated the relation of the Prophet and *Ahl al-Bayt* to the heritage of Muhammad's Arab progenitors.¹³⁵

It would seem, then, that the circulation of traditions about *Banī Isrā'īl* met not only with the resistance of orthodox theologians,¹³⁶ but also with that of Shi'ī ones, who were, perhaps, among the first to expound the original Arab nature of the Islamic faith.

ABBREVIATIONS

- 'Abd al-Razzāq — 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Al-Musannaf*, ed. Habib al-Rahmān al-'Azamī, Beirut, 1970.
- Abū Dāwūd — Abū Dawūd, *Al-Sunan*, ed. Ahmad Sa'd 'Alī, Cairo, 1952.
- Aghani — Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, Bulāq, 1285 A.H.
- Ansab*, I — Al-Baladhuri, *Ansab al-Ashraf*, I, ed. Hamid Allāh, Cairo, 1959.
- Ansab*, IV — Al-Baladhuri, *Ansab al-Ashraf*, IV, ed. Schoessinger, Jerusalem, 1939–1971.
- Ansab*, V — Al-Baladhuri, *Ansab al-Ashraf*, V, ed. S.D. Goitein, Jerusalem, 1936.
- Azraqī — Al-Azraqī, *Akhbar Makka al-Musharraf*, ed. Wüstenfeld, Leipzig, 1858.
- Biḥār* — Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Arwāḥ*, new edition, Tehran, n.d.
- Bukhari — Al-Bukhari, *Al-Sahih*, I–IX, Cairo, 1958.
- Faḥḥ al-Bārī* — Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *Faḥḥ al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari*, Bulāq, 1300 A.H.
- GAS I — F. Sezgin, *Geschichte Des Arabischen Schrifttums*, I, Leiden, 1967.
- Ibn al-Bitriq, 'Umda — Ibn al-Bitriq, *Kitāb al-'Umda fī 'Uyun Shāḥ al-Akhbār*, n.p., n.d.
- Ibn Hishām — Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sira al-Nabawiyya*, I–IV, ed. Al-Saqā, Al-Abyārī, Shalabī, 3rd edition, Beirut, 1971.
- Ibn al-Jawzi — Ibn al-Jawzi, *Al-Waḥḥ bi-Aḥwāl al-Mustaḥiqq*, ed. 'Abd al-Wahid, Cairo, 1966.
- Ibn Kathir — Ibn Kathir, *Shama'il al-Rasul*, ed. 'Abd al-Wahid, Cairo, 1967.
- Ibn Sa'd — Ibn Sa'd, *Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, Beirut, 1960.
- Ibn Shahrashub — Ibn Shahrashub, *Manaqib Al-Abi Talib*, Najaf, 1956.
- 'Ild — Ibn Bābawayhi, *'Ild al-Sharīf*, Najaf, 1966.
- 'Iqd — Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *Al-'Iqd al-Farīd*, Cairo, 1965.
- Iḥbār* — Al-Mas'ūdī, *Iḥbār al-Waṣṣiyya Li-l-Imam 'Alī Ibn Abī Talib*, Najaf, 1955.
- Jawāhir* — Al-'Āmilī, *Al-Jawāhir al-San'iyya fī al-Aḥādīth al-Qudsiyya*, Baghdad, 1964.
- Khaḡūshī — Abū Sa'd al-Khaḡūshī, *Sharaf al-Nabīyy* Ms. BM. Or. 3014.
- (Tübingen) *Abū Sa'd al-Khaḡūshī, Sharaf al-Nabīyy* (Ms. Tübingen), M.A. VI, 12.
- Khuwārizmī — Al-Khuwārizmī, *Al-Manaqib*, Najaf, 1965.
- Laḥi* — Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Laḥi al-Musnā fī al-Aḥādīth al-Mawḡha*, Cairo, 1352 A.H.
- Maṭarīf* — Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb al-Maṭarīf*, ed. Al-Sawī, Beirut, 1970.
- Muslim — Muslim, *Al-Sahih*, I–VIII, Cairo, 1334 A.H.
- Mustadrak* — Abū 'Abdallāh al-Nisaburi, *Al-Mustadrak 'Ala al-Sahihayn fī Al-Hadith*, rep. Riad, 1968.
- Nahj* — Ibn Abī al-Hadid, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balagh*, I–IV, Cairo, 1329 A.H.
- Rajab al-Barsi — Rajab al-Barsi, *Mashāriq Anwar al-Taqīn*, Beirut, n.d.
- Saww'iq* — Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, *Al-Saww'iq Al-Muhriqa fī al-Radd 'ala Ahl al-Bida' wa-l-Zandāqa*, ed. 'Abd al-Wahhab 'Abd al-Latif, Cairo, 1965.
- Shahrastānī — Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa-l-Nihāl*, ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Kaylānī, Cairo, 1967.
- Simt* — Al-'Isāmī, *Simt al-Nuḡḡan al-'Awwāl*, Cairo, 1380 A.H.
- Suhaylī — Al-Suhaylī, *Al-Rawḍ al-Unuf*, ed. 'Abd al-Ra'uf Sa'd, Cairo, 1971.
- Suyūṭī — Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Khasa'is al-Kubra*, ed. Muḥammad Khalīl Haras, Cairo, 1967.
- Tabarī, Taḡṣīr* — Al-Ṭabarī, *Jamī' al-Bayān fī Taḡṣīr al-Qur'ān*, Bulāq, 1323 A.H.
- Ta'rikh* — Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-Rusul wa-l-Mulak*, ed. Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo, 1960.
- Ta'rikh Baghdad* — Al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdad*, Cairo, 1931.
- Thaḡabī* — Al-Thaḡabī, *Qisas al-Anbiyā'*, Beirut, n.d.
- Tirmidhi — Al-Tirmidhi, *Al-Sahih*, in: Ibn al-'Arabī's *'Aridat al-Aḥwādith*, rep. Dār al-'Ilm li-l-Jamī', n.d.
- 'Uyun al-Athar* — Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *'Uyun al-Athar*, rep. Beirut, n.d.
- Yaḡqubī — Al-Yaḡqubī, *Al-Ta'rikh*, Beirut, 1960.
- Zuḡānī — Al-Zuḡānī, *Sharḥ 'ala l-Mawḡhib al-Ladunīyya li-l-Qasṭallānī*, Cairo, 1329 A.H.

¹³⁵ They belonged, probably, to Qurashī, or rather Mudari circles. The doctrine of *Nūr Muḥammad* is centered around the glorification of northern ancestors like Khuzayma, Mudrika, Nizār etc. (See e.g. IOS, 5, p. 75 ff, 91 ff). In fact, the glory of Quraysh was openly expressed in a tradition based on the models of the doctrine of *Nūr Muḥammad* (*ibid.*, 102). The traditions of *Nūr Muḥammad* were supposedly originated by both Meccan and Medinian circles. They reflect the tendency to glorify these two cities. For example, Mecca is said to have been delivered from Abrahā's siege by virtue of *Nūr Muḥammad* (*ibid.*, 95). On the other hand, *Nūr Muḥammad* is said to have been created from the dust of Muḥammad's grave in al-Madīna (*ibid.*, 97). One of the first Medinian authors, who circulated the traditions about the Muḥammadan light of the Prophet's progenitors was al-Wāḡidī (*ibid.*, 91).

¹³⁶ See about it *Muslim Studies*, II, 131; Kister, *op. cit.*, 234 ff.