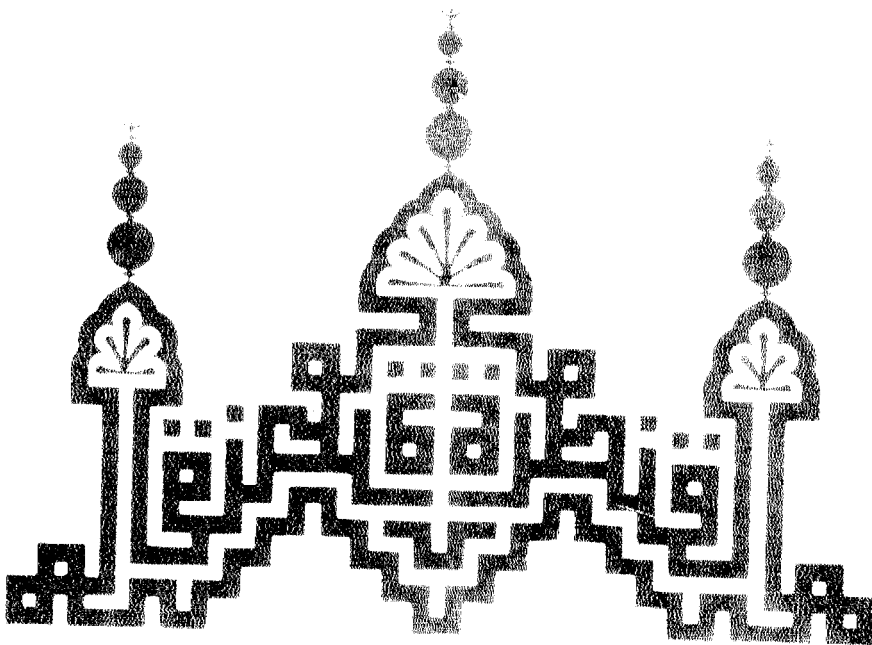


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APOCALYPSE AND AUTHORITY IN ISLAMIC
TRADITION
THE EMERGENCE OF THE TWELVE LEADERS

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Islamic tradition abounds with apocalyptic visions conveying various religious, moral, dogmatic and political messages which, by being subjected to the apocalyptic structure, were elevated to the rank of a predestined divine scheme.

A special group of such apocalypses predicts the emergence of twelve leaders among the Muslims. These apocalypses have not yet been systematically investigated, and the present article aims at elucidating their earliest versions, and at studying the changes that were introduced into them over the years. This study will shed light on some aspects of the history of the Islamic concept of authority.

THE PRINCES OF ISHMAEL

The earliest versions of the apocalypse of the twelve leaders seem to be those built upon a biblical model of authority. When looking for such a model in the Bible, Islamic tradition made special use of the figure of Ishmael in whom the Arabs saw their ancestor.

The earliest version of our apocalypse that uses Ishmael's model seems to have been preserved in a tradition of a Syrian provenance recorded by Nu'aym b. Ḥammād (d. AH 229) in his *Kitāb al-ḥimṣ*. The tradition has its origin in Ḥimṣ, where numerous apocalyptic traditions were put into circulation during the Umayyad and early 'Abbāsid period¹.

The apocalypse is attributed to Ka'b al-Aḥbār (Yemeni/Ḥimṣī d. AH 32), who usually figures in Muslim tradition as an authority on the

¹ See Wilferd Madelung, «Apocalyptic Prophecies in Ḥimṣ in the Umayyad age», *Journal of Semitic Studies* 31 (1986), 141-85.

text of the Bible. It was circulated by Ismā'il b. 'Ayyāsh (Himṣī d. AH 181) on the authority of his «trustworthy masters», whom he does not mention by name. The tradition contains the response of Ka'b to the question posed to him by a person named Yashū' who is described elsewhere as a Christian hermit (*rāhib*), well versed in holy scriptures, who acquired his knowledge before the emergence of the Prophet ². In fact, there are several versions of the discourse between Yashū' and Ka'b, all transmitted by Ismā'il b. 'Ayyāsh on the authority of his unnamed masters, and they will be discussed below. In the present version ³, Ismā'il b. 'Ayyāsh says:

Our trustworthy masters have told us that Yashū' asked Ka'b what was the number of the «kings» (*mulūk*) this community (*umma*) will have, and Ka'b said: «I have found written in the Torah (*al-tawrāt*): 'twelve rabbis (*rabbī*)'».

Although the name of Ishmael is not mentioned explicitly, this tradition obviously alludes to Genesis 17:20 where God reveals to Abraham that Ishmael will beget twelve «princes», and become a great nation. This passage has inspired many Islamic traditions of annunciation, in which the clause «great nation» has been interpreted as predicting the emergence of Muḥammad as *nabiyy ummī* ⁴. Our present tradition is focussed on the prophecy about the twelve princes of Ishmael; in the Hebrew origin they are *nesi'im*, in Aramaic [Onkelos] they are *rabrebin*, and in our Arabic version: «rabbis». The princes of Ishmael are identified here with the Islamic leaders, whose appearance has thus become the final stage in a divinely predestined history.

It is noteworthy that when asking Ka'b about the Islamic leaders, the Christian Yashū' uses the term «kings»; this seems to be in accordance with the fact that being a non-Muslim, he is not supposed to be acquainted with the more specifically Islamic title *khalifa*: «caliph». For a non-Muslim, any Islamic ruler who is not a prophet is just a «king», and this is also how rulers are usually referred to in apocalyptic texts, since the Book of Daniel ⁵. However, as will be seen below, the title «king» is

² Nu'aym b. Hammād, 65, 113, 424.

³ *Ibid.*, 53. The *isnād*: Abū l-Mughīra al-Himṣī ('Abd al-Quddūs b. al-Hajjāj al-Khawlanī, d. AH 212) ← Ismā'il b. 'Ayyāsh ← his masters ← Yashū' ← Ka'b.

⁴ On Genesis 17:20 and *al-nabiyy al-ummi* see Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: the Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1995), 24.

⁵ E. g. *Daniel* 7:17, 24.

also used in a strictly Islamic context, where it has acquired a derogatory sense, signifying an unworthy leader who is not elevated enough to be called *khalifa*, which is an exalted religious title ⁶.

But apart from implying that the emergence of the Islamic rulers was annunciated in the Torah, the apocalypse states something else. It predicts that the number of the leaders will be twelve no more no less. Such a prophecy can only make sense at a time when the actual number of Islamic leaders has not yet exceeded twelve. This means that our Syrian tradition was originated no later than the year AH 100. In AH 101 the ninth Umayyad ruler (Yazīd II) ascended the throne ⁷, and with the four Righteous Caliphs (Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī) he was already the 13th caliph after Muḥammad. The tradition must be understood against a background of an apocalyptic atmosphere created by the symbolic numeric significance of the approaching year AH 100, which was regarded as signifying a crucial turning point in history ⁸. Above all, the fact that in the year AH 100 the caliph who was in power ('Umar II ⁹) was the twelfth after the Prophet could not have been missed by the traditionists. This numeric coincidence between two such loaded numbers only increased their apocalyptic mood. Furthermore, 'Umar II was regarded as the *mahdī* i.e. the long awaited redeemer (as was also his predecessor Sulaymān) ¹⁰, and this must have heightened the eschatological alert of his contemporaries. The result was an apocalypse predicting that the number of rulers will amount to twelve, which means that after them the chaotic stage of human history will commence. The Syrian provenance of the apocalypse accords with the fact that it deals with the reign of Umayyad rulers, whose centre was indeed in Syria.

Another very similar Syrian version of the apocalypse reveals the first traces of revision. The prophet Muḥammad appears as the first of the predicted group of twelve Islamic leaders. In this version the secular

⁶ For the religious significance of the title *khalifa* see Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 4-23.

⁷ Numbered tables of the Umayyad and 'Abbāsid caliphs with dates of accession may be found in Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphate: the Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century* (London and New York, 1994), 403-404.

⁸ For the increase of apocalypse expectations towards the turn of the first century see Suliman Bashcar, «Muslim Apocalypses and the Hour: A Case-Study in Traditional Reinterpretation», *Israel Oriental Studies* 13 (1993), 90-92.

⁹ For the coincidence of the reign of 'Umar II with the turn of the century cf. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 114.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 103, 114.

title «kings» is not used, only «rabbis», which makes it possible for the Prophet to join the group. The addition of the Prophet to the group (which entails the exclusion of 'Umar II from it) reflects the Islamic apologetic effort to anchor the emergence of Muḥammad in biblical prophecies, for the sake of legitimation and attestation ¹¹. The apocalyptic statement is made this time by a (Christian?) person named Sirj al-Yarmūkī who says that he found written in the Torah that this community will have twelve «rabbis», one of them is their prophet, and when that number is completed, they will oppress, behave unjustly and assault each other ¹².

It is significant that Muḥammad has no distinct superiority here over the other members of the group, and this accords with the early dogmatic stage in which «Muḥammad was still a prophet with a small «p»» ¹³. The addition of Muḥammad is accompanied here by an explicit allusion to the eschatological tribulations which are about to begin after the twelfth leader.

THE REVISED APOCALYPSE

As the history of the Islamic *umma* continued to unfold during the reign of the 'Abbāsids who emerged in Iraq, the original versions of the apocalypse of the twelve continued to draw attention. But now they were modified and expanded, so as to suit the new circumstances. Above all, the number 12 was readjusted to a new group of leaders, being deprived of its originally absolute value; it no longer stood for the entire line of Islamic leaders, whose number exceeded 12 after AH 100. The number itself which had fascinated the traditionists due to its symbolic significance, was retained, but was turned into a modular numeric framework which could be fitted to ever changing lists of specific personalities, whose identity and manner of description were determined by the political bias of the authors of these new versions. The ever changing twelve names which were added to the apocalypse consisted of a select group of leaders, not necessarily succeeding one another.

¹¹ See Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 21-43.

¹² Nu'aym b. Ḥammād, 53. See also Ibn 'Asākir, *Mukhtaṣar*, IX, 214.

¹³ Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 28.

The Ka'b-Yashū' Discourse

The apocalypse most popular with the traditionists was the one contained in the discourse between Ka'b and Yashū', and there are versions recorded by Nu'aym b. Ḥammād which clearly indicate that this apocalypse of the Umayyad period was re-worked later on according to new circumstances of the early 'Abbāsid period. The revised versions continue to be recorded on the authority of the same tradent, namely the Ḥimṣī Ismā'īl b. 'Ayyāsh, who seems to be the one who collected all of them from his unnamed «masters». Some basic features remain unchanged in all the versions, and mainly the title «kings» by which the twelve are described, which, however, is becoming more and more derogatory. This means, of course, that the Prophet will never be included in the group thus described, but he does appear in the apocalypse, and already occupies a unique position as a prophet whom the twelve «kings» will succeed. The more archaic «rabbis» is no longer used.

The main change introduced in the revised discourse is the addition of specific names of leaders, the first of whom being usually the first three Medinan caliphs: Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān. The name of 'Alī –the fourth leader– is missing from the list which continues from 'Uthmān directly to Mu'āwiya– the first Umayyad. The absence of 'Alī implies that our versions were revised by persons opposed to the 'Alīds, i.e., they did not recognize 'Alī's position as a legitimate ruler.

In one of the revised versions of the discourse ¹⁴, Yashū' asks Ka'b whether he knows anything about the «kings» who are destined to succeed the Prophet. Ka'b does not only state that the Torah speaks of twelve «kings», but also provides a list of their epithets. It opens with the titles of the first three Medinan caliphs: Abū Bakr (*Ṣiddīq*), 'Umar (*Fārūq*) and 'Uthmān (*Amīn*), and these are immediately followed by nine Umayyads, the first being Mu'āwiya who is described as «the head of the kings» (*ra's al-mulūk*). The twelfth and last on the list is most probably Marwān II ¹⁵, who was actually the last Umayyad caliph, and about whom it is said here that suffering will be caused by his hands, and whose siege of Ḥimṣ is mentioned explicitly.

This tradition seems to draw a line between the Sufyānī and the Marwānī branches of the Umayyad dynasty, the end of the former

¹⁴ Nu'aym b. Ḥammād, 113-14.

¹⁵ See Madelung, «Apocalyptic Prophecies in Ḥimṣ», 148.

being apparently indicated by reference to «the last of the kings» (Mu'āwīya II), who is followed by the «Owner of the Mark» ('Abd al-Malik). Although the entire group is of «kings», the Sufyānīs appear more «kinglike» than the others, which certainly accentuates their unworthy status.

After the description of the last Umayyad who is twelfth on the predicted list, the tradition states that another family (*ahl bayt*) will take over, which refers to the rise of the 'Abbāsīd dynasty.

Thus, by omitting several Umayyad rulers, the group of twelve was made to span the entire period from Muḥammad's death to the fall of the Umayyads, and the 'Abbāsīd revolution was made to represent the beginning of the eschatological stage of human history. In terms of dates, the end of the reign of the predicted twelve was postponed from *ca.* AH 100 to *ca.* AH 132.

A similar structure was applied to the apocalypse in yet another version of the discourse between Yashū' and Ka'b¹⁶, and this is the most expanded version of the discourse. It is again transmitted by Is-mā'il b. 'Ayyāsh. This time he states explicitly that some of his masters made additions to the tradition. Here Yashū' is made to elaborate on the virtues of Muḥammad, saying that a prophet will emerge whose religion will overcome any other religion, and goes on to ask Ka'b about the «kings» of Muḥammad's community. In Ka'b's response, the list of «kings» commences as before with the first three Medinan rulers who are succeeded by nine Umayyads, the first of whom being Mu'āwīya, and the last – Marwān II. The latter concludes the group of twelve, and then the tribulations (*fitna*) of the 'Abbāsīd revolution are described in detail. The names of al-Saffāh, al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī are mentioned explicitly, and their advent opens the eschatological stage. The events connected with them are described with such common apocalyptic themes as *khasf* (being swallowed up by the earth) and great battles with forces of a false prophet (here: the Sufyānī). It is clear that this version of the apocalypse gained its final form not before the accession of al-Mahdī, the third 'Abbāsīd caliph, i.e. not earlier than AH 158. It is based on the notion that the advent of the 'Abbāsīds opens the last eschatological stage of human history, and the fact that the ruling caliph called himself «al-Mahdī», which is the title of the Islamic saviour, may have added to the apocalyptic mood reflected in this version.

¹⁶ Nu'aym b. Ḥammād, 424-25.

Yet another version of the same discourse ¹⁷, lacks any numeric specification, and contains just a select list of «kings» destined to rule after the Prophet: ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān (*al-amīn*) and Mu‘āwiya, «head of the kings».

The Apocalypse of Nāthā

The apocalypse of the twelve is also available in another Syrian tradition containing the vision of an obscure «prophet»: Nāth, or Nāthā. His prophecy was again circulated by Ḥimṣī traditionists ¹⁸, and was recorded by Nu‘aym b. Ḥammād ¹⁹. It was already studied by Michael Cook ²⁰, who, however, has not noticed the role of the number 12, and therefore has ascribed the absence of some Umayyad leaders to a lacuna in the text ²¹. But there is no lacuna here. The general structure of the list is similar to that of the Ḥimṣī traditions transmitted by Ismā‘īl b. ‘Ayyāsh, but the vocabulary is indeed somewhat different. The number 12 is stated explicitly, and the body of leaders is this time one of commanders (*liwā*); they are the twelve descendants of «the banished slave girl» (*al-ama al-ṭarīda*), i.e. Hagar. The title *liwā* which is not used in the other Ḥimṣī versions is quite neutral, and enables Muḥammad to join the group of twelve again. However, the Prophet is allotted a special position among them, because all the others are kings again, while he is a personage with whose advent angels rejoice, and whoever believes in him is a true believer; his victory over the nations is described with explicit reference to the conquest of Persia, Africa and Syria.

Each name of the other eleven commanders succeeding Muḥammad is preceded by the statement: *thumma yamliku*: «then will rule...». ‘Alī is still missing. The descriptions of the first three of the eleven *thumma yamliku* persons represent the first three Medinan caliphs, and after them Mu‘āwiya and seven more Umayyads are described, up to al-Wa-

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁸ The *isnād*: al-Ḥakam b. Nāfi’ (Ḥimṣī d. AH 211) ḥ Jarrāḥ b. Mulayḥ (Ḥimṣī) ḥ Arṭāt b. al-Mundhir (Ḥimṣī d. AH 163) ḥ Nāthā.

¹⁹ Nu‘aym b. Ḥammād, 429-32.

²⁰ Michael Cook, «An Early Islamic Apocalyptic Chronicle», *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52 (1993), 25-29.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 27-28, note 29.

lid II. Major events of the life and career of each of the eleven are recounted in detail, embellished with an apocalyptic chronological framework of the length of their life. The Sufyānīs and the Marwānids are again differentiated from each other, the first of the former (Mu'āwiya) being described as «The Head (*ra's*) of the Greater House», and the first of the latter ('Abd al-Malik) is the «Forehead of the House of the Second Head».

The twelfth and last of the entire predicted group is al-Walīd II (b. Yazīd), who is described as *al-Shābb* («The Youth») ²². This ruler died childless and is considered the last of the Umayyads in several other traditions ²³. After him reference is made to more leaders but the clause *thumma yamliku* is not repeated concerning them, which definitely leaves them outside the twelve predicted «commanders». The first of them is Marwān II, whose emergence marks the beginning of the apocalyptic turmoil, and whose advent is described as wind blowing from the *jawf*. He is followed by 'Abbāsīd figures like al-Saffāḥ and al-Manṣūr who are alluded to with cryptic descriptions, and whose advent is also described as wind blowing from various directions.

As observed by Cook ²⁴, most parts of the 'Abbāsīd revolution form the eschatological stage of the vision, which concludes with the emergence of the Qaḥṭānī, the fall of Constantinople, the retrieval of the Ark of Covenant and the emergence of the Dajjāl (Antichrist). Cook quite rightly dated the composition of the apocalypse (or more accurately, its final form) to *ca.* AH 160, which again brings us to the days of al-Mahdī ²⁵.

On the whole, despite some peculiarities of vocabulary, all parts of the tradition seem to have much more in common with the general run of the re-shaped versions of the other Ḥimṣī apocalypses than is assumed by Cook. On the other hand, Cook's arguments for the Christian origin of this specific apocalyptic text seem quite convincing, and there are even more features in the apocalypse which point to a Christian authorship, and mainly the designation of the Muslims as sons of «the banished slave girl». This is how Christian apologists usually call the Muslims ²⁶. But the Christian origin of the apocalypse only shows what

²² Nu'aym b. Ḥammād, 430:2.

²³ *Ibid.*, 111, 112.

²⁴ Cook, «An Early Islamic Apocalyptic Chronicle», 28-29.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁶ For «Sons of Hagar» as a derogatory appellation conferred on the Muslims in

is evident in so many other Christian chronicles, namely, that the Christian authors were quite familiar with basic historiographic and apocalyptic Islamic (Ḥimṣī) models, like the apocalypses of the twelve, and they used them in their own writings.

The Apocalypse of Ḥudhayfa

Apart from the Syrian versions, there is also one with an Egyptian *isnād* in which the apocalypse of the twelve keeps dealing with a group of «kings», the last of whom being again the last Umayyad ruler. But its structure has been re-defined in accordance with a clear anti-Umayyad bias. The group consists here of Umayyads only, the first three Medinan rulers being excluded from it and gaining the more elevated title: «caliphs» (*khulafā*). The tradition is recorded on the authority of the Companion Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān (d. AH 36), who was probably of Jewish descent²⁷, and on whose authority numerous eschatological descriptions of *fitan* were circulated. Ḥudhayfa declares: «There will be after 'Uthmān twelve kings of the Banū Umayya.» Someone asked him: «Caliphs (*khulafā*)?» He said: «No, kings!»²⁸.

This version reflects not only an increased anti-Umayyad drive, but also an urge to legitimate the authority of the first three Medinan caliphs. This was triggered, no doubt, by the 'Alīd opposition against them. Hence the present version must have been originated among Egyptian circles opposed to the Umayyads as well as to the 'Alīds. The absence of 'Alī's name from the list reflects again the anti-'Alīd determination to exclude him from the distinguished list of legitimate *khulafā*.

Christian apologies of the 'Abbāsīd period, see Sidney H. Griffith, «The Prophet Muḥammad: his Scripture and his Message According to the Christian Apologies in Arabic and Syriac from the First Abbasid Century», in Toufic Fahd (ed.), *La Vie du Prophète Mahomet: Colloque de Strasbourg, Octobre 1980* (Paris, 1983), 122-24.

²⁷ For which see Michael Lecker, «Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān and 'Ammār b. Yāsir, Jewish Converts to Islam», *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 11 (1993), 153-58.

²⁸ Nu'aym b. Hammād, 52-53, 58, 75. See also Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 250. The *isnād*: Ibn Lahī'a (Egyptian d. AH 174) ← Khālīd b. Abī 'Imrān al-Tujībī (Tunisian d. AH 129) ← Ḥudhayfa.

The Apocalypse of 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ

In other versions of the apocalypse, the last of the predicted group is no longer the last Umayyad, so that the date of the beginning of the eschatological stage in human history is postponed once again. The traditions used for this new form of the vision are attributed to 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ (d. AH 63), whose name is most suitable to father apocalyptic traditions, because he is said to have been well versed in the Quran as well as in the Bible (*tawrāt*)²⁹. Moreover, he is said to have read in Egypt such apocalyptic scriptures as the «book of Daniel»³⁰.

'Abdallāh b. 'Amr was associated with the Umayyad court, and in Ṣiffīn he fought with the Syrians against the Iraqis, and was later on appointed by Mu'āwiya governor of Egypt³¹. It may be assumed that traditions containing apocalypses bearing his name, which had been put into circulation already during the Umayyad period, had been favourable to the Umayyads, but were eventually modified by later anti-Umayyad traditionists, and this is how they have come down to us. In all the versions of his apocalypse, the title «caliphs» (*khulafā*) is applied to the twelve predicted rulers, so that they are no longer «kings». The title «caliphs» may well be part of the earliest kernel of the apocalypse, but the versions which we possess seem to bear the mark of an anti-Umayyad revision; the names of the twelve «caliphs» are never given in full, and of the twelve, only the names of the first three are usually enumerated. This is the case in the following version which was circulated by Egyptian traditionists³², and was traced back to the Prophet himself. In it the Prophet is quoted by 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr as stating that there will be twelve caliphs in the Islamic community; he then goes on to name Abū Bakr and 'Umar and addresses 'Uthmān, urging him not to give up the «gown that God has dressed you with», i.e. not to resign from the caliphate. This version implies that the Me-

²⁹ Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (henceforth, Aḥmad), *Musnad*, II, 222; Rubín, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 33.

³⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, V, 476-77 (II, 399); M. J. Kister, «The Battle of the Harra: Some Socio-Economic Aspects», in Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (ed.), *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet* (Institute of Asian and African Studies, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1977), 35 [repr. in M. J. Kister, *Studies in Jāhiliyya and Early Islam*, Variorum Reprints, London, 1980].

³¹ Ibn 'Asākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), XIII, 202-203.

³² The *isnād*: al-Layth b. Sa'd (Egyptian d. AH 175) ḥ Khālīd b. Yazīd (Egyptian d. AH 139) ḥ Sa'īd b. Abī Hilāl (Egyptian d. AH 135) ḥ Rabī'a b. Sayf (Egyptian d. ca. AH 120) ḥ Shufayy b. Mātī' al-Aṣbaḥī (Egyptian d. AH 105) ḥ 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr.

dinan rulers are included in the twelve, but the rest of the group is left unspecified. The absence of 'Alī as well as of the Umayyads from the list of *khulafā'* points clearly to the anti-'Alid as well as the anti-Umayyad tilt of the present revised version ³³.

There is also a tradition of 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr bearing a Baṣran *isnād* with this upper part: Muḥammad b. Sīrīn (d. AH 110) : 'Uqba b. Aws al-Sadūsī : 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr. The tradition is available in various versions which indicate that although the tradition was originally put into circulation during the Umayyad period (probably by Muḥammad b. Sīrīn), it was re-shaped by traditionists of the early 'Abbāsīd period.

One of the versions bearing this upper *isnād* was recorded by Ibn Abī Shayba ³⁴. Here 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr states that there will be twelve caliphs in the Islamic community, but again mentions only Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān. He says that the name of each of the three is already known to the Muslims by its correct form (*aṣabtum ismahu*). 'Umar is called *Qarn min ḥadīd* («iron horn»), and 'Uthmān is *dhū l-nūrayn* («Owner of the Two Lights»); it is stated that he was killed wrongfully and was therefore «given a twofold of God's mercy» (*ūtiya kiflayni min raḥmatihī* ³⁵). The Umayyads are not mentioned.

Another version ³⁶ with the same upper *isnād* reveals who replaced the Umayyads in the predicted group of the re-worked apocalypse; they are the first 'Abbāsīd rulers. Their incorporation in the predicted group implies the postponement of the eschatological phase in human history till after the first 'Abbāsīds have ruled. This stands in contrast to the Syrian versions in which the 'Abbāsīds are not part of the twelve, but rather open the ensuing eschatological stage of history. Their inclusion in the group certainly improves their legitimate status.

The present version does not fix the number of the members of that group, providing only their names or epithets. The first on the list are again the three Medinan caliphs (Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān), who are immediately followed by seven figures, the last of whom being the «Commander of the Bands» (*amīr al-ūṣab* = south-Arabian saviour).

³³ Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *Sunna*, nos. 1171, 1182 (cf. nos. 1152, 1169); Tabarānī, *Kabīr*, I, nos. 12, 142; *idem*, *Awsaṭ*, IX, no. 8744; See also *Majma' al-zawā'id*, V, 181.

³⁴ Ibn Abī Shayba, XII, no. 12102. Here the name of the Companion is distorted, being turned into 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar. This is also the case in *Majma' al-zawā'id*, IX, 92. But see the correct text in Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *Sunna*, no. 1154 (from Ibn Abī Shayba).

³⁵ Cf. Quran 57:28.

³⁶ Nu'aym b. Ḥammād, 63. Cf. *ibid.*, 247.

The first are the 'Abbāsīd al-Saffāḥ and al-Manṣūr, followed by al-Mahdī, al-Amīn, Sīn and Salām. Six of them, it is stated, will be of Ka'b b. Lu'ayy (i.e. Quraysh), and one [= the Commander] will be of Qaḥṭān (i.e. of Yemeni descent). The list is said to have been discovered by 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr during the battle of Yarmūk, in an [ancient] book (*fī ba'd al-kutub*). It is stated that all the persons mentioned are virtuous people, such as never seen before.

It is clear that the present version –like the above Syrian ones– acquired its final form not earlier than the days of the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Mahdī, i.e. ca. AH 160. The total omission of the Umayyads from this list of virtuous caliphs is a clear manifestation of the anti-Umayyad bias of the traditionists who tampered with it.

There is one more version ³⁷ with the same upper *isnād* of Muḥammad b. Sirīn (etc.), in which the 'Abbāsīds are still part of the predicted group, but the group itself is heterogeneous again, including also Umayyad «kings». The list consists of two mayor parts, containing five and six persons respectively. The five are the first three Medinan rulers, followed by Mu'āwiya and his son Yazīd. Mu'āwiya is alluded to as the «King of the Holy Land», and this again seems to be a derogatory presentation of this Sufyānī ruler who took hold of the sacred land. The three Medinan caliphs are singled out as the most virtuous on the list, and their names and appellations are spelled out as in the former versions. Then comes a question posed to 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr by the audience: «Will you not mention al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn?» He then repeats the same list (without mentioning the latter two) which is an explicit manifestation of the anti-'Alīd as well as of the anti-Umayyad tilt of the tradition. Next, 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr adds six names, the first of which being al-Saffāḥ, and the last is the «Commander of the Bands» (*amīr al-uṣab*). The other four are Salām, Manṣūr, Jābir, Amīn. It is further stated that they (i.e. the six) will all be of Ka'b b. Lu'ayy (i.e. Quraysh), except for one (i.e. the Commander of the Bands) who will be of Qaḥṭān ³⁸.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 60, 247. Cf. Ibn Sa'd, III, 170; Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *Sunna*, no. 1153.

³⁸ For the «Commander of the Bands» being an appellation of the Qaḥṭānī, see Madelung, «Apocalyptic Prophecies in Ḥimṣ», 150-54. He observes (p. 153) that «The Qaḥṭānī thus would be miraculously chosen to unite the *uṣab*...».

Ibn 'Abbās

The numeric framework of twelve has been somewhat bent in the above versions that include the 'Abbāsids in the predicted group, and this is also the case in some other versions aiming at including them in that group.

The following tradition actually denies that the number 12 has any significance at all, as far as the number of Islamic leaders is concerned. The tradition has a Kūfan *isnād* leading back to 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās. In it, his disciple Sa'īd b. Jubayr (Kūfan d. AH 95) is said to have related that he once heard people quoting to Ibn 'Abbās a tradition about twelve leaders who would be followed by the «Commander [of the bands]». Ibn 'Abbās retorted: «By God, after them there will be leaders of our own family, namely, al-Saffāh, al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī, and he will hand over the leadership to 'Īsā b. Maryam»³⁹. This tradition plays on the significance of the title «Mahdī» which the third 'Abbāsīd caliph took for himself, and assigns to this caliph the messianic role of the Islamic saviour.

Ka'b al-Aḥbār

But in spite of the unease with which the rigid numeric framework was met by some 'Abbāsīd circles, the 'Abbāsīd rulers figure as members of the predicted group even in a version in which the number 12 is retained. This is again a tradition of Ka'b al-Aḥbār, which this time bears a Syrian/Baṣran *isnād*⁴⁰. It speaks about twelve «managers» (*qayyim*) with whom God has blessed Ishmael (here the name of this patriarch is mentioned explicitly). The group itself is not homogeneous, the first three caliphs being singled out as the most excellent, in contrast to Mu'āwiya who is again described as the «king» of Syria. The list is not complete, and apart from the three caliphs and Mu'āwiya, allusion is made to Mu'āwiya's son (Yazīd), who is immediately followed by the

³⁹ Nu'aym b. Ḥammād, 52, 247, 271. Cf. Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, VI, 514; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 246.

⁴⁰ Nu'aym b. Ḥammād, 64. See a shortened version, *ibid.*, 53. See also Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 250. The *isnād*: Ḍamra b. Rabī'a al-Filastīnī (Syrian d. AH 202) ' Abdallāh b. Shawdhab (Baṣran/Syrian d. ca. AH 150) ' Abū l-Minhāl (Sayyār b. Salāma, Baṣran d. AH 129) ' Abū Ziyād ' Ka'b al-Aḥbār.

‘Abbāsid Saffāh and Maṣṣūr, and then come two cryptic messianic titles: Sīn and Salām. The latter two are glossed by the statement that they stand for righteousness and alleviation, respectively (*ṣalāh wa-‘āfiya*).

With the inclusion of the first two or three ‘Abbāsid caliphs in the predicted group –with or without its numeric framework– this dynasty became part of the line of pre-destined legitimate leaders, thus improving its original status of unlawful agitators whose advent had been believed to mark the beginning of the chaotic eschatological era.

THE PRINCES OF MOSES

A characteristic trend in Islamic tradition is the diminishing of biblical models in favour of genuinely Islamic ones. In the field of annunciation, biblical models appear to be replaced by Quranic ones ⁴¹, and the same applies to the apocalypse of the twelve. In contrast to the early versions in which the legitimacy of the Islamic leaders has been based on the biblical model of the twelve princes of Ishmael, there are versions in which the twelve princes of Ishmael are replaced by another group of twelve princes, a Quranic one. These are the princes of Moses. This prophet figures in the Quran as a great leader who brought a holy scripture to the Children of Israel. The Quran is also aware of other persons who shared with Moses the leadership over the Children of Israel, and they are mentioned in 5:12 (tr. Arberry):

God took compact with the Children of Israel; and We raised up from them twelve chieftains [*nuqabā*].

The biblical origin of the model of the twelve *nuqabā*’ is most probably the twelve Israelite «princes» (*nesi’im*) of the tribes ⁴². For the Muslims, however, the model of the *nuqabā*’ is genuinely Quranic, for the simple reason that the term occurs in the Quran.

The Quranic *nuqabā*’ eventually became an ideal model of delegated authority, and it was compared to various Islamic leaders to whom the authority of the Prophet Muḥammad was delegated by a special appointment. This model is used, to begin with, in one of the earliest avai-

⁴¹ See Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 32-43.

⁴² *Numbers* 7:2. Cf. Rudi Paret, *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz* (Stuttgart, 1971), 117.

lable biographies of the Prophet, where the title *nuqabā'* designates the twelve leaders of the Anṣār appointed by Muḥammad during the 'Aqaba meetings ⁴³. The latter are also compared to the [twelve] apostles (*ḥawāriyyūn*) of Jesus ⁴⁴.

The model of the *nuqabā'* was also applied to the twelve leaders of our apocalypse, which gained for it a wider circulation than gained for the versions employing the non-Quranic model of the princes of Ishmael. Unlike the princes of Ishmael who figure in Syrian versions, the Quranic *nuqabā'* appear in an Iraqi tradition. This is a Kūfan version of the Companion 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd that has the *isnād*: Mujālib b. Sa'īd (al-Sha'bī) ('Āmir b. Shurāḥīl, d. AH 103) (Masrūq b. al-Ajda' (d. AH 63) ('Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd (d. AH 32) (Prophet. A concise version of the tradition was recorded in *Kitāb al-fitan* of Nu'aym b. Ḥammād ⁴⁵, and the full text is provided in other sources ⁴⁶. A group of Companions is assembled in Kūfa at the house of Ibn Mas'ūd, and one of them asks him: «Have you ever asked the Prophet how many caliphs (*khalīfa*) will rule (*yamlīku*)?» Ibn Mas'ūd says that he asked the Prophet the same question, and Muḥammad's answer was: «Twelve, as was the number of the *nuqabā'* of Moses.»

THE APOCALYPTIC POSITION OF QURAYSH

Ka'b b. Lu'ayy

The biblical model of Ishmael was replaced not only by a Quranic model, but also by an Arabian one. In a special group of traditions, the genealogical designation of the twelve predicted leaders is genuinely Arab. In some versions the name of their Arab ancestor is Ka'b b. Lu'ayy who appears already in the above 'Abbāsīd versions of the apocalypse of 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr. In earlier versions attributed to the same

⁴³ Ibn Hishām, II, 85. And see more on the circulation of the term *nuqabā'* in Etan Kohlberg, «From Imāmiyya to Ithnā-'Ashariyya», *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 39 (1976), 529.

⁴⁴ Ibn Hishām, II, 88.

⁴⁵ Nu'aym b. Ḥammād, 52.

⁴⁶ Abū Ya'lā, VIII, no. 5031, IX, nos. 5322-23; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, I, 398, 406; *Kashf al-astār*, II, no. 1586; *Majma' al-zawā'id*, V, 193; Ibn Ḥajar, *Maṭālib*, II, nos. 2040-41; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 248; *Kanz*, VI, no. 14971; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, II, 32; Suyūṭī, *Durr*, II, 267.

Companion, which seem to be still favourable to the Umayyads, the name Ka'b b. Lu'ayy contains the entire group of twelve predicted leaders, not just the 'Abbāsids.

One of these earlier versions seems to be contained in a tradition recorded by Nu'aym b. Hammād, in which 'Abdallāh b. 'Uthmān b. Khuthaym (Meccan d. AH 132) relates that 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr took the Meccan Companion Abū l-Tufayl ('Āmir b. Wāthila, d. AH 110) by the hand, and said to him: «Oh 'Āmir b. Wāthila, twelve caliphs of Ka'b b. Lu'ayy (will rule), and then fighting and killing (will prevail)»⁴⁷.

This version retains the basic structure of the original apocalypse, except for the name of Ishmael which was replaced by the Arabian ancestor. Like the original apocalypse, this version, too, seems to allude to the twelve rulers who succeeded Muḥammad till AH 100, and the interpolation of their specific genealogical Arabian descent was designed to legitimate their authority against the opposition of various circles like Qaḥṭānīs and Khawārij who did not acknowledge the right of the Umayyads to lead the Muslims. Of course, this version could also use the name of a more famous Arab ancestor, i.e. Quṣayy, but the fact that the name of the more remote ancestor –Ka'b b. Lu'ayy– was preferred, is significant. Whereas Quṣayy is the ancestor of the Hāshimīs [Shī'īs and 'Abbāsids] as well as of the Umayyads, Ka'b is also the ancestor of Taym and 'Adī, the clans of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, respectively. Thus the tradition implies the legitimacy of the rule of the Umayyads as well as of the first Medinan caliphs. The name of Quṣayy would not have served this purpose, and in fact, his name is said to have been preferred mainly by Shī'īs wishing to exclude Abū Bakr and 'Umar from the list of legitimate Qurashi caliphs⁴⁸.

It should be noted that in another, less current, version of the statement made by 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr to Abū l-Tufayl, the ancestor's name is somewhat different: 'Amr b. Ka'b, and here the prophecy is attributed to the Prophet himself who reportedly stated: «when twelve people of the sons of 'Amr b. Ka'b have ruled (*malaka*), killing and fighting will commence»⁴⁹. The genealogical designation is somewhat obscure here,

⁴⁷ Nu'aym b. Hammād, 52. See also *Fath al-bārī*, XIII, 183-84.

⁴⁸ M. J. Kister, «Social and Religious Concepts of Authority in Islam», *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 18 (1994), 97.

⁴⁹ Ṭabarānī, *Awsat*, IV, no. 3865; *Majma' al-zawā'id*, V, 193 (from Ṭabarānī).

because none of the ruling caliphs except Abū Bakr belonged to 'Amr b. Ka'b, a subgroup of the Banū Taym.⁵⁰

A similar statement using the name of Ka'b b. Lu'ayy is available on the authority of 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar, and it, too, was transmitted by Hijāzī authorities of the late Umayyad period.⁵¹

Quraysh

However, in further traditions specifying the Arabian genealogical descent of the twelve leaders, a more prevalent, but at the same time more ambiguous, title is employed, i.e. «Quraysh»⁵². This is not a name of a specific ancestor but rather a collective designation of a group of clans with no definite genealogical framework. These versions could suit many Islamic factions: Umayyads⁵³, 'Abbāsids, as well as Shī'īs—and therefore gained a universal status and were the ones which eventually became part of the mainstream of Islamic *ḥadīth*, and gained entrance into various *muṣannaf* collections, including canonical ones. The *isnāds* of these versions are all Prophetic, and thus the apocalypse has become purely Islamic, emanating wholly from the prophetic power of Muḥammad himself.

In most of these canonical versions, the Companion quoting the Prophet is the Kūfan Jābir b. Samura al-Suwā'ī (d. AH 74). As indicated by his *nisba*, he stems from the clan of Suwa'a who had a quarter of their own in Kūfa⁵⁴. The Suwa'a belonged to 'Āmir b. Ṣa'ṣa'a, a subgroup of Muḍar, to which Quraysh also belonged. It is, therefore, only natural that a Prophetic utterance legitimating the right of Quraysh to lead the Muslims should be transmitted on the authority of this Companion. The fact that Jābir is a Kūfan may indicate a certain sympathy for 'Alī, particularly so, since his mother was the sister of Sa'd b. Abī Waq-

⁵⁰ On the members of 'Amr b. Ka'b see, e.g., Ibn Qudāma, *Ansāb al-Qurashīyyīn*, 305-19.

⁵¹ Nu'aym b. Hammād, 52. The *isnād*: Muḥammad b. Zayd b. al-Muhājir al-Qurashī (Medinan) ṭ Talḥa b. 'Abdallāh b. 'Awf al-Zuhri (Medinan d. AH 97) ṭ Ibn 'Umar.

⁵² Cf. Kister, «Concepts of Authority», 96, with note 36.

⁵³ Thus Mu'āwiya is said to have adduced a statement of the Prophet asserting the right of Quraysh to rule. See Tabarānī, *Awṣaf*, IV, no. 3152.

⁵⁴ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, I, 186.

qāṣ, a renowned Qurashī (Zuhri) supporter of 'Alī⁵⁵. In this case, the term «Quraysh» which has replaced the label Ka'b b. Lu'ayy would certainly stand only for the Hāshimite branch of Quraysh. Hence it may be assumed that already in the late Umayyad period –which is when our revised versions seem to have been originated– the apocalypse of the twelve was already beginning to assume a Hāshimite connotation, which could suit both Shī'is and 'Abbāsids, and this had occurred well before the definite Shī'ī Twelver dogma came into existence⁵⁶. However, the fact that Jābir's tradition was included in various Sunnī compilations of *ḥadīth*, means that the title «Quraysh» was taken by the authors of these compilations in its broader sense, which includes Umayyad as well as 'Abbāsīd caliphs.

Most versions of Jābir's tradition preserve the basic original structure of the apocalypse of the twelve, the name Quraysh remaining a secondary element in it. This is the case in the version recorded by al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, in the «book» of *Aḥkām* («Administration»)⁵⁷. Here Jābir is quoted by the Qurashī Successor 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Umayr (Kūfan d. AH 136), who relates that Jābir said:

I heard the Prophet say: «There will be twelve leaders (*amīr*).» Then he said something which I did not hear. My father said: «He [i.e. the Prophet] said that all of them [will be] of Quraysh.»

In this tradition, the title Quraysh has been annexed to the apocalypse of the twelve through the intervention of Jābir's father, who thus corroborates the authenticity of this addition. The confirmatory role of the father is significant in view of the fact that Jābir himself, who died more than 60 years after the death of the prophet, must have been very young during the Prophet's lifetime. Therefore, the attribution of such crucial Prophetic statement to him had to be affirmed by an adult who was made part of the audience addressed by the Prophet.

The text of the tradition of Jābir as quoted by the same 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Umayr is different in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, where it occurs in the «book»

⁵⁵ For Jābir's mother see Ibn 'Asākir (*Mukhtaṣar*), V, 356. For Sa'd's pro-'Alīd utterance see, *ibid.*, IX, 269.

⁵⁶ And see also Kohlberg's comment on these versions in his «From Imāmiyya to Ithnā-'Ashariyya», 530: «In fact, it is not inconceivable that this tradition was originally aimed against the Umayyads, while upholding the right of Quraysh to rule».

⁵⁷ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, IX, 101 (93:51). See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 93; Ṭabarānī, *Ka-bīr*, II, nos. 1875, 2062; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, VI, 519.

of *Imāra* («Authority») ⁵⁸. Instead of *yakūn*: «There will be (twelve leaders)», it opens with *lā yazālu* («will not cease to») which does not refer to the leaders but rather to the situation expected to prevail under them. In such textual setting the focus of the apocalypse is shifted from the number of the Qurashī leaders to their status among the Muslims, being an origin of consolidation, success and victory. The number 12 is thus again deprived of its absolute significance, being taken to refer only to the leaders of this blessed period. The present Prophetic statement runs as follows:

The affair (*amr*) of the people will not cease to be successful (*māḍiyan*), as long as twelve persons lead them.

This is followed by the addition of the Quraysh clause by Jābir's father.

The interchange of *yakūn* and *lā yazālu* repeats itself in the tradition of Jābir as transmitted on his authority by other Kūfan Successors. One of them is Simāk b. Ḥarb al-Bakrī (Kūfan d. AH 123). His *yakūn* version is recorded by al-Tirmidhī in the section of *Fitan* ⁵⁹, and is repeated in several other sources ⁶⁰. In some of them Simāk is just one of a group of Successors quoting Jābir, and the name of Quraysh is being added to the apocalypse either by Jābir's father, or by some unidentified persons present in the audience. Simāk's *lā yazālu* version of Jābir's tradition was recorded in the *muṣannaf* compilations of Muslim and Ibn Ḥibbān ². In it the Prophet states that Islam will not cease to be strong and stable (*'azīz*) until twelve caliphs (have ruled). In this version the Prophetic statement is again completed by Jābir's father, who tells his son that the Prophet said that all the leaders will be of Quraysh.

In the apocalypse of the twelve leaders as quoted from Jābir by al-Aswad b. Sa'īd al-Hamdānī (Kūfan?), the name of Quraysh has become

⁵⁸ Muslim, VI, 3 (33: *Bāb al-nās taba' li-Quraysh*). See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 97, 97-98, 98, 101, 107; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1876 (the clause about Quraysh is missing).

⁵⁹ Tirmidhī, *Tuḥfa*, VI, 471-74 (31:48).

⁶⁰ Ibn al-Ja'd, *Musnad*, no. 2660 (with other Successors quoting Jābir); Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 90, 92, 94, 95, 99, 108; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, nos. 1896, 1923, 1936, 2077 (*sa-yaqūm* instead of *yakūn*), 2044, 2063 (with other Successors quoting Jābir), 2070.

⁶¹ Muslim, VI, 3 (33: *Bāb al-nās taba' li-Quraysh*); Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, no. 6662. See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 90, 100, 106; Ṭayālīsī, *Musnad*, no. 1278; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1964.

part of the initial Prophetic statement, and yet another supplementary clause is added to the apocalypse; in it the eschatological message of the apocalypse is confirmed through a statement to the effect that after twelve leaders of Quraysh have ruled, the chaotic stage of history will commence. The latter statement is being added to the apocalypse by the Prophet himself. This setting of the apocalypse is again available in two versions, one beginning with *yakūn*, the other with *lā yazālu*. The *yakūn* version has been recorded by Ibn Ḥibbān ⁶², and the *lā yazālu* one has been recorded by Abū Dāwūd ⁶³. In the latter version the Prophet states that the Islamic *umma* will not cease to be successful and victorious till twelve caliphs of Quraysh have ruled. In both versions the Prophet makes his initial prophecy, then returns home, where people of Quraysh ask him: «And then what?» The Prophet replies: «Then, there will be killing (*al-harj*).»

More Kūfan versions of the tradition of Jābir appear in the canonical *muṣannaf* compilations, and most of them are assembled in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, in the «book» of *Imāra* («Authority»). All of them are of the *lā yazālu* type. One of them is quoted from Jābir by the Kūfan Ḥuṣayn b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al Sulamī (d. AH 136). The pattern is identical to the above *lā yazālu* traditions: the Prophet states that the affair (of the Muslims) will prevail until twelve caliphs have ruled, and Jābir's father provides the complementary clause about Quraysh ⁶⁴. A *yakūn* version with the same upper *isnād* (opening with the equivalent *yaqūm*) is also available, but did not gain entrance into the *muṣannaf* compilations ⁶⁵.

In another *lā yazālu* tradition of Jābir b. Samura as recorded by Muslim ⁶⁶, this Companion is quoted by al-Sha'bī. Al-Sha'bī's transmission is widely current, appearing also in Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Ḥibbān ⁶⁷, and more detailed versions of his, including the time and place

⁶² Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, no. 6661. See also Ibn al-Ja'd, *Musnad*, no. 2662; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 92.

⁶³ Abū Dāwūd, II, 421 (35:1). The version here is incomplete. For the complete version, see Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 2059; *idem*, *Awsaṭ*, VII, no. 6378; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, VI, 520.

⁶⁴ Muslim, VI, 3 (33: *Bāb al-nās taba' li-Quraysh*). See also Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 2068.

⁶⁵ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 2067.

⁶⁶ Muslim, VI, 3, 3-4 (33: *Bāb al-nās taba' li-Quraysh*).

⁶⁷ Abū Dāwūd, II, 421 (35:1); Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, no. 6663.

of the announcement, appear in several biographical compilations⁶⁸. The time is Muḥammad's farewell pilgrimage, and the place is either Minā or 'Arafa, two well-known stations of the Meccan *hajj*. The pattern in all the versions remains the same (the Quraysh clause is confirmed by Jābir's father), but sometimes it is concise, the Quraysh clause being quoted directly from the Prophet, without reference to the father's role⁶⁹. In one case, the Quraysh clause is entirely missing⁷⁰. A *yakūn* version of al-Sha'bī's transmission is also available, but did not gain entrance into the *muṣannaf* compilations⁷¹. It is stated here that twelve rulers (*qayyim*) will rule, and whoever abandons them can cause no harm to them, and then the Quraysh clause is provided by Jābir's father.

The fact that the transmission of al-Sha'bī is available in several versions indicates a process of re-shaping on the part of later traditionists, while the original form of the apocalypse of his transmission does not seem to have included the name of Quraysh. As seen above, al-Sha'bī actually appears in the *isnād* of a version recorded on the authority of another Companion (Ibn Mas'ūd), and in it the Quranic model of the *nuqabā'* of Moses is being used, while the name of Quraysh is still absent.

Another Kūfan version of Jābir's tradition is found in Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan*. This one is quoted from Jābir by Abū Khālid al-Aḥmasī, and it is again of the *lā yazālu* type, the clause about Quraysh being provided by Jābir's father⁷². However, in a rare version of the same transmission, the clause adduced by the father does not mention Quraysh, merely the fact that all twelve caliphs will enjoy the support of the entire *umma*⁷³. There is also a version in which the Successor quoting Jābir is named Abū Khālid al-Wālibī (Kūfan d. AH 100), which may be identical with the former Abū Khālid. In this version, which was not recorded in the *muṣannaf* compilations, the name of Quraysh is part of the initial *lā yazālu* statement of the Prophet, the father playing no role at all⁷⁴.

Apart from the numerous Kūfan versions of Jābir's tradition, there

⁶⁸ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 87**, 88, 90, 93**, 96**, 98**, 99***, 101; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, nos. 1791, 1795-1801.

⁶⁹ Nu'aym b. Ḥammād, 52.

⁷⁰ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1792.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, II, no. 1794; *idem*, *Awsaṭ*, III, no. 2943.

⁷² Abū Dāwūd, II, 421 (35:1). See also Ibn Abī 'Aṣim, *Ṣunna*, no. 1123; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, VI, 519-20.

⁷³ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1849.

⁷⁴ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 107; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1852.

is also a Medinan one, which was also recorded in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. It is quoted from Jābir by the Medinan 'Āmir b. Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ (d. AH 104); being Sa'd's son, he was a cousin of Jābir, who, as seen above, was the son of Sa'd's sister. The eschatological impact of the apocalypse is restored in this version, which opens with a story of Sa'd. He relates that he once sent a letter to Jābir asking him to impart to him some of the traditions he had heard from the Prophet. In response Jābir wrote down for him some of these traditions, all of which eschatological, the first being the apocalypse of the twelve, which Jābir says was announced by the Prophet on a certain Friday. It is again of the *lā yazālu* type, and the name of Quraysh is part of the initial statement, which is formulated in an explicit eschatological context: «The religion [of Islam] will not cease to prevail till the Hour (*al-sā'a*) occurs, or till twelve caliphs have ruled over you, all of whom of Quraysh» ⁷⁵.

So much for the canonical compilations. In other sources one may find some more versions of Jābir's statement, quoted from him by some less renowned Successors. All of them are of the *lā yazālu* type, and the Successors quoting them from Jābir are mostly Kūfan: 'Ubaydallāh b. al-Qibṭiyya (=Ibn Abī 'Abbād) ⁷⁶, al-Musayyab b. Rāfi' (d. AH 105) ⁷⁷, Ziyād b. 'Ilāqa (d. AH 163) ⁷⁸, and Ma'bad b. Khālīd (d. AH 118) ⁷⁹. In their versions Jābir's father is not present, the clause «all of them of Quraysh» being quoted directly from the Prophet. The father reappears in the version of a certain al-Naḍr b. Ṣāliḥ ⁸⁰, and of the Baṣran 'Aṭā' b. Abī Maymūsa (d. AH 131) ⁸¹ who was known as a *qadarī*. The latter version is of the *yakūn* type, and the clause «all of them of Quraysh» is confirmed to Jābir by his father as well as by 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. The twelve leaders are designated as confronting firmly the enmity of their foes.

Among the traditions which did not gain entrance into the canonical compilations of *ḥadīth*, there is one related on the authority of a different Companion, namely, Abū Juḥayfa al-Suwā'ī (Wahb b. 'Abdallāh, d. AH 74), a fellow tribesman of Jābir b. Samura, who was an official in

⁷⁵ Muslim, VI, 43 (33: *Bāb al-nās taba' li-Quraysh*). See also Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 86, 87-88; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1808, 1809.

⁷⁶ Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1841; *Idem*, *Awsaṭ*, IV, no. 863.

⁷⁷ *Idem*, *Kabīr*, II, no. 1883.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 2061.

⁷⁹ *Idem*, *Awsaṭ*, IV, no. 3950.

⁸⁰ *Idem*, *Kabīr*, II, no. 2060.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, no. 2073; *Majma' al-zawā'id*, V, 194.

‘Alī’s administration ⁸². His tradition ⁸³ is transmitted by his son ‘Awn, and its basic pattern is the same as that of the traditions of Jābir b. Sa-mura. Like the latter, Abū Juḥayfa is assumed to have been underage during the Prophet’s lifetime, and the clause «all of them of Quraysh» is again confirmed to him by an adult, this time –his uncle. The apocalypse itself is of the *lā yazālu* type.

To sum up the apocalypse of the twelve in its «Quraysh form», the Companions to whom it was attributed as a Prophetic utterance are of Muḍar (Suwa’a of ‘Āmir b. Ṣaṣa’a), and probably of pro-‘Alid inclinations, which means that the combination between the prophecy about the twelve leaders and the clause «all of them of Quraysh» may have had its origin in ‘Alid circles. However, the apocalypse gained wide circulation in the Sunnī sources, including canonical compilations, which means that the title «Quraysh» was taken by the compilers in its broadest sense. The two patterns of the structure of the apocalypse –*yakūn* and *lā yazālu*– reflect two focal points of the prophecy. In the *yakūn* type it is the number of the leaders, which stems from the earliest versions of the apocalypse, and preserves its biblical origin. In the second, it is the situation prevailing under the leadership of the twelve, which implies that their number is not absolute, and therefore this structure may be regarded as a secondary elaboration on the *yakūn* pattern. The *lā yazālu* type is indeed the one most prevalent in the canonical compilations.

Finally, the combination of the apocalypse of the twelve and the Quraysh clause, although evidently secondary, has created a problem of interpretation with which Muslim scholars tried to cope. There is no point in going into the details of their discussions, which are all designed to provide a clear-cut historical identification of the twelve Qurashī leaders ⁸⁴.

⁸² Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, XI, 145 (no. 281).

⁸³ *Kashf al-astār*, II, no. 1584; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, XXII, no. 308; *idem*, *Awsaṭ*, VII, no. 6207; *Majma’ al-zawā’id*, V, 193.

⁸⁴ See mainly Bayhaqī, *Dalā’il*, VI, 520-23; Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, 36-41; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 248-50; *Fath al-bārī*, XIII, 181-86. See also Kohlberg, «From Imāmiyya to Ithnā’ Ashariyya», 529-30.

THE APOCALYPTIC POSITION OF 'ALĪ

The absence of the name of 'Alī from all the lists of specific names added to the 'Abbāsīd forms of the apocalypse of the twelve, and especially from those in which the predicted group consists of «caliphs» and not of «kings», is a clear indication of their anti-'Alīd trend. This must have had its origin already among Umayyad circles, for whom 'Alī was no more than a pretender ⁸⁵. However, the view of Islamicists that 'Alī came to be considered as the fourth caliph only as late as the ninth century AD ⁸⁶ does not seem to be justified. In fact, there are traditions designed to counterbalance the Umayyad attitude towards 'Alī, in which his status as a caliph is defended, and these traditions may have had their origin in Umayyad times.

To begin with, the name of 'Alī emerges in a prophecy which in itself is just another anti-Umayyad statement discriminating between «caliphs» and «kings». 'Alī's name is explicitly added to the group of Righteous Caliphs, and the exclusion of his name from this group by others is denounced as a false claim of the Marwānī branch of the Umayyad dynasty. The tradition is of the Baṣran Sa'īd b. Jumhān (d. AH 136), which seems to indicate its late Umayyad date, or early 'Abbāsīd, at the latest. This traditionist quotes Safīna, a client (*mawlā*) of the Prophet, who heard Muḥammad say concerning the reign of the Righteous Caliphs: «The caliphate after me will last among my community 30 years.» The people who heard this from Safīna made the proper chronological calculation, and realized that only with 'Alī's reign (AH 36-40) the pre-Syrian caliphate reached a total of 30 years [Abū Bakr: 2; 'Umar: 10; 'Uthmān: 12; 'Alī: 6]. Thereupon they told Safīna that some claimed that 'Alī had not been a caliph, to which Safīna responded: «Those [who claim this] are the sons of the blue-eyed woman [=a whore, i.e. Marwān's mother ⁸⁷]; this is typical of them.» The tradition was recorded by Nu'aym b. Ḥammād ⁸⁸, and is widely current; many of its versions contain an addition to the effect that after the thirty years of caliphate, there will be «kingdom» (*mulk*) ⁸⁹. It is sometimes stressed that

⁸⁵ Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 32.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, following Madelung.

⁸⁷ See Abū Dāwūd, II, 515. See also Nu'aym b. Ḥammād, 72.

⁸⁸ Nu'aym b. Ḥammād, 57.

⁸⁹ See Ibn Abī 'Āṣim, *Sunna*, nos. 1181, 1185; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, V, 220, 221; *idem*, *Fadā'il al-ṣaḥāba*, I, nos. 789, 790, II, no. 1027; Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, I, nos. 13, 136; VII, nos.

Mu'āwiya is not included among the caliphs, being «the first of the kings»⁹⁰. The tradition also gained entrance into some authoritative *muṣannaf* compilations of *ḥadīth*⁹¹, which means that the consideration of 'Alī as a caliph has become part of the mainstream of Islamic dogma.

In a less current Baṣran version of the same Prophetic statement (reported on the authority of Abū Bakr), Mu'āwiya is said to have humbly (or ironically) responded: «We are content with being kings»⁹².

The statements predicting 30 years of caliphate seem to indicate that already towards the end of the Umayyad period at the latest, 'Alī was regarded as the fourth of the Righteous Caliphs, and that those who excluded his name from that group belonged to the Marwānīs, who, on their part, were also opposed to their Sufyānī relatives. In fact, the name of 'Alī seems to have been included in the list of caliphs already *ca.* AH 100, when the first versions of the apocalypse of the twelve were put into circulations. Only with his name, the ruler in AH 100 could be the twelfth after the Prophet.

The apocalypse of the twelve leaders reappears indeed in one isolated version of the Sa'īd b. Jumhān ḥ Saḥīna tradition, recorded by Ibn Hibbān⁹³. The Prophet says here:

The caliphate will last 30 years, and the rest of (the leaders) will be kings (*mulūk*); the number of caliphs and kings is twelve.

The concluding gloss with the number 12 reflects the above traditions in which the apocalyptic list of twelve is divided into subgroups of caliphs and kings, and at the same time preserves the original purport of the apocalypse, which predicts the eschatological turmoil after the twelfth successor of Muḥammad ['Umar II] has ruled (*ca.* AH 100).

6442-44; Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, VI, 341-42; Suyūṭī, *Khaṣā'is*, II, 421; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 198, 220, 249. And see also Ṭaḥāwī, *Mushkil*, IV, 313. And Cf. Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies (Muhammedanische Studien)*, Ed. and tr. by S. M. Stern, 2 Vols. (London, 1967-71), II, 41, n. 3.

⁹⁰ Ṭayālīsī, *Musnad*, no. 1107.

⁹¹ Abū Dāwūd, II, 514-15 (39:8); Tirmidhī, *Tuhfa*, VI, 476-78 (31:48); Nasā'ī, *Kubrā*, V, no. 8155 (76:5); Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, no. 6943; *Mustadrak*, III, 145, III, 71.

⁹² Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, VI, 342; Suyūṭī, *Khaṣā'is*, II, 421; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 198, 220. The *isnād*: 'Alī b. Zayd b. 'Abdallāh b. Abī Mulayka (Baṣran d. AH 131) ḥ 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakra al-Thaqafī (Baṣran d. AH 96) ḥ Abū Bakra al-Thaqafī (Nufay' b. al-Ḥārith b. Kalada. Baṣran Companion d. AH 50) ḥ Prophet.

⁹³ Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, XV, no. 6657.

THE APOCALYPSE OF THE TWELVE AND TWELVER SHĪ'ISM

The apocalypse of the twelve leaders retained its relevance even in later 'Abbāsīd times when the Shī'a consolidated its dogma of twelve *imāms*. The Shī'īs used our ancient apocalypse to provide their Twelver dogma with appropriate divine attestation. For that purpose, not much had to be changed in the original apocalypse that already contained the number 12, which was all they needed. Indeed, the earliest versions of our apocalypse were recorded intact in the Shī'ī sources in connection with the legitimization of the authority of the twelve *imāms*. In its Shī'ī context, the number 12 is, of course, always absolute, as is also the case in the original apocalypse.

The Princes of Ishmael

As already shown by Kohlberg, the Shī'a used the biblical model of the twelve princes of Ishmael and identified them with the *imāms* ⁹⁴. In fact, the Shī'ī compilers recorded some of the above earliest apocalypses, for example the one of Sirj al-Yarmūkī ⁹⁵, and also the earliest version of the Ka'b — Yashū' discourse ⁹⁶.

But a Shī'ī re-shaping did take place here and there, especially in versions containing specific names of caliphs, like the first three Medinan ones. The traditions were reproduced in Shī'ī sources without the names. This is the case with one of the above traditions of 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr b. al-Āṣ which reappears in Shī'ī sources ⁹⁷, but only with its first part («There will be after me twelve successors»). However, versions with 'Abbāsīd figures were not always excluded, and the above tradition of Ibn 'Abbās which mentions al-Saffāḥ, al-Mansūr and al-Mahdī as succeeding the twelve predicted caliphs, has been recorded in a Shī'ī compilation ⁹⁸.

A Shī'ī revision seems also to be behind a peculiar version in which

⁹⁴ Kohlberg, «From Imāmiyya to Ithnā-'Ashariyya», 526-27.

⁹⁵ Ibn Bābūya, *Khiṣāl*, 473-74 (no. 31); Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malāḥim*, 30. The name of Sirj al-Yarmūkī is distorted in these sources («Sarḥ al-Barmakī»).

⁹⁶ Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malāḥim*, 30 (the name of Yashū' is distorted).

⁹⁷ Nu'mānī, *Ghayba*, 63, 79 [some names in the *isnād* are distorted, and 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr is printed: 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar].

⁹⁸ Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malāḥim*, 30.

the apocalypse of the twelve is glossed by a statement to the effect that two of the twelve will be of the *ahl al-bayt* of Muḥammad, one living 40 years, and the other —30. This version is attributed to a certain Abū l-Jald who is said to have been well versed in holy scripture⁹⁹. In another tradition the same Abū l-Jald predicts that a man of Hāshim and his son will rule (*yamlīku*) for 72 years¹⁰⁰. The symbolism of the number 70 suggests that at least one of the two persons is an apocalyptic figure; his affiliation to Hāshim corresponds to other traditions stating that the Mahdī will be of the same genealogical descent. In fact, it is stated that the Mahdī will remain among the people for 30 or 40 years¹⁰¹.

In a special modified version of the apocalypse of Ka'b al-Aḥbār, the finality of the number 12 over an indefinite range of time is emphasised. Ka'b states here that there will be twelve successors (*khalīfa*), and if they are followed by a righteous generation, God will prolong their lives [till the return of the Mahdī], because a day with God is equal to a thousand earthly years¹⁰². The issue of generations living prolonged life (*mu'ammariṇ*) is indeed crucial for the Shī'ī writers defending their Twelver dogma¹⁰³.

The Princes of Moses

The Twelver Shī'īs have also recorded the versions alluding to the Quranic model of the twelve *nuqabā'* of Moses, both those comparing them with the twelve chieftains of the 'Aqaba¹⁰⁴, as well as the apocalypse of Ibn Mas'ūd that links the model of the *nuqabā'* to the twelve leaders succeeding the Prophet; the tradition appears in passages dealing with the predestined number of the *imāms*¹⁰⁵.

In fact, the Shī'ī sources contain further Prophetic traditions alluding

⁹⁹ Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il*, VI, 523; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, VI, 250; *Faṭḥ al-bārī*, XIII, 184. The *isnād*: Sa'dān b. Naṣr ḥ 'Abdallāh b. Bakr al-Sahmī (Baṣran d. AH 188) ḥ Ḥātim b. Abī Ṣag-hira (Baṣran) ḥ Abū Baḥr ḥ Abū l-Jald.

¹⁰⁰ Nu'aym b. Ḥammād, 124, 419.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 228-34.

¹⁰² Ibn Bābūya, *Khiṣāl*, 474-75 (no. 35).

¹⁰³ E.g. Ṭabarsī, *A'lām al-warā*, 441-45.

¹⁰⁴ Ibn Bābūya, *Khiṣāl*, 491-92 (no. 70).

¹⁰⁵ See Nu'mānī, *Ghayba*, 63, 74-75; Ibn Bābūya, *Khiṣāl*, 466-69 (nos. 6-11); Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malāḥim*, 29.

to the twelve *nuqabā'* of Moses, and all of them were recorded in the same dogmatic context. In one of them, the widely current similes of the shoes and the feathers of an arrow appear, conveying the idea of symmetry between the history of the Children of Israel and that of the Muslims. In the present version, the prophet states ¹⁰⁶:

Things will happen in my community, which are similar to what happened among the Children of Israel, as one sole of a shoe matches another, and as one feather of an arrow matches another. They (i.e. the Children of Israel) had twelve chieftains, as God said [Quran 5:12]: «and We raised up from them twelve chieftains».

The *imāms* thus emerge as renewing a divine sacred historical process which was first implemented with the leaders of the Children of Israel.

Other statements of the Prophet comparing the twelve leaders who will succeed him with the chieftains of the Children of Israel appear in the Shī'ī sources, where they are recorded on the authority of several Companions. Their context imply that they were recorded in allusion to the *imāms*. In fact, the word used for «leaders» in these versions is *a'imma* (sing: *imām*) ¹⁰⁷. Most explicit is a tradition in which the Prophet says to Salmān al-Fārisī that every prophet was given by God twelve *naqībs* as his successors, and then goes on to enumerate the virtues of the twelve Shī'ī *imāms*, which implies that they are his own *naqībs* ¹⁰⁸.

Quraysh

But the Shī'a used mainly the versions in which the name Quraysh is employed ¹⁰⁹, and in the Shī'ī context, the name represents just the Hāshimite branch of this clan, as does the label Ka'b b. Lu'ayy, which also appears in the versions recorded in the Shī'ī sources ¹¹⁰. The Shī'ī compilers who recorded these latter versions were probably no longer

¹⁰⁶ Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 258. See also Uri Rubin, «Prophets and Progenitors in the Early Shī'a Tradition», *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 1 (1979), 54.

¹⁰⁷ Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 258.

¹⁰⁸ Ibn Rustam al-Ṭabarī, *Dalā'il al-imāma*, 234.

¹⁰⁹ For which see Nu'mānī, *Ghayba*, 62-64, 75-79; Ibn Bābūya, *Khiṣāl*, 469-73, 475 (nos. 12-30, 36, 37); Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malāḥim*, 29, 110, 163.

¹¹⁰ Nu'mānī, *Ghayba*, 63, 79; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malāḥim*, 29, 30.

aware of the original genealogical implication of Ka'b b. Lu'ayy, in which Abū Bakr and 'Umar were also included.

Additional versions may be found in the Shī'ī sources which are missing from the Sunnī sources examined above. In one of them the tradition about Quraysh (of the *lā yazālu* type) is quoted from the Prophet by Anas b. Mālik, whose name does not appear in the *isnāds* of the above versions ¹¹¹.

There are also additional versions in which the genealogical affiliation of the twelve leaders remains unspecified, as is the case in two traditions—one of Makhūl (Syrian d. AH 112) ¹¹², and the other of Wahb b. Munabbih (Yemenī d. AH 110) ¹¹³—to the effect that the Prophet stated that there would be after him twelve successors (*khalīfa*).

In conclusion, the Shī'ī implementation of the apocalypse of the twelve has reverted it to its original significance, with the number 12 signifying literally twelve leaders who will rule the Muslims in succession, from the death of the Prophet to the Day of Judgement.

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¹¹¹ Nu'mānī, *Ghayba*, 75, 78-79.

¹¹² Ibn Bābūya, *Khiṣāl*, 474 (no. 33).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 474 (no. 34).

- Ibn 'Asākir (*Mukhtaṣar*) = Ibn Manẓūr Muḥammad b. Mukarram. *Mukhtaṣar Tārīkh Dimashq li-Ibn 'Asākir*. 29 vols. Damascus, 1984-88.
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and ,

Hajar

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the numerous versions of an Islamic apocalypse predicting the emergence of twelve leaders among the Muslims. It is contended that the earliest versions of this apocalypse were put into circulation during the Umayyad period, around AH 100, when the number of the caliphs was approaching 12. The numeric coincidence between the symbolic numbers 12 and 100 triggered an apocalyptic mood which brought about the circulation of the earliest versions of the apocalypse. These versions use the biblical model of the twelve princes of Ishmael who have been identified with the twelve Islamic leaders. The article goes on to examine many revised versions of the basic apocalypse, which reflect later political conditions that developed during late Umayyad and early 'Abbāsīd period. In these revised versions the biblical model has been replaced by a Quranic model (the twelve chieftains —*nuqabā'*— of Moses), as well as by an Arabian one (Quraysh). The article also scrutinizes the function of the apocalypse in Twelver Shī'ism.

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza las numerosas versiones de un Apocalipsis islámico que predice la aparición de 12 soberanos entre los musulmanes. Mantiene que

las primeras versiones de este apocalipsis fueron puestas en circulación durante el período omeya, alrededor del año 100 H, cuando el número de califas se acercaba al duodécimo. La coincidencia entre los dos números simbólicos, 12 y 100, alimentó una atmósfera apocalíptica que favoreció la circulación de las primeras versiones del apocalipsis. Estas versiones hacen uso del modelo bíblico de los doce príncipes de Israel que se han identificado con los doce soberanos musulmanes. El artículo continúa examinando varias versiones de este apocalipsis básico, versiones que reflejan circunstancias políticas posteriores, surgidas durante el final del período omeya y el comienzo del 'abbāsī. En estas versiones revisadas, el modelo bíblico ha sido reemplazado por el coránico (los doce jefes —*nuqabā*— de Moisés) y por un modelo árabe (Qurayš). El artículo examina también la función de este apocalipsis en el šī'ismo Duodecimano.