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Pre-existence and light*

Aspects of the concept of Nūr Muḥammad

U. RUBIN

INTRODUCTION

Light is one of the most prevalent representations of Muḥammad’s prophetic mission. It serves, to begin with, as a major motive in several legendary traditions about his luminous body. “Whenever he went in darkness” — says a tradition — “light was shining around him like the moonlight”.1 Dark houses were lit by his brightness, says another tradition.2 ’Ā’isha, who lost her needle while sewing at dawn, found it easily by the light of the prophet who had entered the house.3 The miracle of Moses who drew out his hand in front of Pharaoh and it was white (Qur’ān, vii 108, xx 22, xxvi 33, xxvii 12, xxviii 32), is frequently compared with what is regarded as a greater miracle of Muḥammad, namely that when he sat down light was shining on his right and left. All people saw this light, and it was believed to be glowing on his grave till the day of resurrection.4 Muḥammad’s irradiant face served for encouraging the believers in their hard battles. At Ḫunayn, while standing in the darkness, Muhammad turned his face toward the Muslims, and it shone like a full moon.5 Whenever he was standing in sunshine or moonlight, Light as a symbol of Muḥammad’s prophecy

* This article is extracted from my thesis based on a hitherto unpublished manuscript of the Kitāb Sharaf al-Muṣṭaqa, written by Abū Sa’d al-Khargūshi (d. 406; see GAS, I, 670–671) on which I have been working since 1973, at the faculty of humanities, Tel Aviv University. I was permitted and encouraged to publish this article by my supervisor, Prof. M. J. Kister, Jerusalem, who has thoroughly guided and helped me along all the stages of my work. To him I owe a great deal of my knowledge and understanding in this field.

1 Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 167: kāna iḥdā yamsiḥī fī laylatān ṣalma’ bāḍā lahu nārun kā-anahu qāmar. Cf. also Bukhārī, IV, 229: ...īdhā surra ’stānārā waḥihu ḥattā kā-anahu qī’atu qāmar.

2 Khargūshi, 80a: wa-ruwiyā anna min nūrī l-nābiyyī (f) aḏā’a l-baytu l-muṣlim. Suyūṭī, I, 156; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 107.

3 Ibid., 80a–80b; Suyūṭī, I, 107; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 188; Ibn Kathīr, 537. Cf. also Abū Nuʿaym, Ḥiṣīya, III, 209, 210. The comparison (mawdūḍt) between Muḥammad’s miracles and those of the preceding prophets is most frequent in sources dealing with Muḥammad’s prophetic merits. See e.g. Khargūshi, 90b ff.; Ibn Kathīr, 497 ff.; Ibn al-Jawzī, 360 ff.; Suyūṭī, III, 110 ff.; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 183 ff.


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or near a lamp, his light outshone them. According to some traditions, Muḥammad’s fingers were an exclusive source of light. On dark nights they used to shine for Muḥammad and his companions. His forefinger; more lucent than the sun and the moon, lightened the way for al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, whenever they were approaching his house or leaving it.

Yet, serving as an exalted symbol of Muḥammad’s prophethood, the light is sometimes conceived as being seen by selected people on special occasions only. Ḥalīma, his wet nurse, was one of them. When she first took little Muḥammad in her arms, he opened his eyes and they beamed. When Abū Ṭalib once looked at Muḥammad without being noticed, while the latter was absorbed in prayer, he saw a ray of light emerging from his head, reaching heaven. Bahīrā the monk, who saw the boy Muḥammad on his way to Syria with some Qurashi merchants, said to them: “I see what you are not able to see... I have seen on him (i.e. on Muḥammad) when he approached, light going ahead of him, shining between heaven and earth.

The representation of Muḥammad’s prophetic emergence as light, is illustrated, in its pure metaphorical sense, through traditions to the effect that “light” serves as Muḥammad’s name. Thus, some interpretations of Qur’ān v 15 (qad jā’akum nūrīn mina liihi) maintain that the word nūr mentioned in it stands for the prophet. Already some of his contemporary poets used to describe the prophet as a light guiding the believers. Among them we find Ḥassān b. Thābit, Ka’b b. Zuhayr, and 'Abdallah b. al-Ziba’rā. Similarly, some traditions maintain that Muḥammad’s name — “moon of the moons” — was inscribed upon the moon, whereas another name of his — “light of lights” — was written on the sun. Likewise, Allāh revealed to Muḥammad:

7 *Loc. cit.*
9 *Ibid*, I, 32; *Biihār*, XV, 232; *Simf*, I, 262; Khargūsh, 35b; Zurqānī, I, 143.
10 Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 35; *Biihār*, XY, 336.
11 Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 37: inī la-arā ṭā tarawna... wa-la-qad ra’ayī lahu, wa-qad aqbalā, nūrān mā bayna l-samā’i wa-l-arqī.
13 Ibn Hishām, VI, 320: nūrān aḍā’ā l-barḥiyata kullahā | man yuhdā il-l-nūrī l-mubārākī yahṭadī, and see also Khargūsh, 125a; Suyūṭī, I, 368: yad’ū il-lā nūrīn lahu sā’īn.
15 *Iṣṭī’īb*, III, 904: wa-‘alayka min sinātī l-malikī ‘alāmatun | nūrūn ‘a’azzu wa-khātamun makhtūmūn, and see also *ibid*, 902, last line; compare Goldziher, p. 328 note 1, 2.
"You are My light among My servants, My messenger to My creatures, and My ḥujja upon them". 17

Light serves also as a symbol of the prospective expansion of the Islamic faith. When young Muḥam-mad once set out to Syria his companions saw, on approaching, that its castles shook and a great light emerged from them. 18 When the ditch was dug around al-Madīna Salmān al-Fārisī hit upon a hard stone which he could not split. The prophet approached and began striking it with his hoe. Three times he struck and each time a lightning flashed from the stone. Muḥam-mad explained to the astonished Salmān that with the first blow Allāh would open al-Yaman before him; with the second he would open Syria and the Magrib; the Mashriq would be opened with the third blow. 19 According to another version, the first blow was followed by light emerging from al-Yaman, the second was followed by light from Persia, and the third was followed by light from Byzantium. 20

The light of Muḥam-mad’s prophetic emergence, as part of God’s design, was foreseen by several people in their dreams. Among them were some of his forefathers. Already al-Nadr b. Kināna saw in his dream a high green tree reaching the clouds. Its branches were “light within light”. On waking up he was told that his dream hinted at his future power, honour and high rank. The tradition goes on to remark that all these were indeed bestowed on him by Allāh (through Muḥam-mad, his offspring). 21 A similar vision was seen by ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, Muḥam-mad’s grandfather. Lying in the Ka’ba he dreamt that a pure chain was coming out of his back (i.e. out of his loins). The chain had four edges reaching the ends of heaven and earth. One of the edges turned out to be a bright green tree; two old men, namely, Noah and Abraham, sat beneath it. Afterwards he was told that a prophet, whom the inhabitants of heaven and earth would follow, was about to emerge from his loins. 22 Another version, ascribed to Abū Ṭālib, states that ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib saw some members of Quraysh trying to cut off the tree which was worshipped by all mankind; yet, a handsome boy drove them away. 23

Dreams of light were seen not only by Muḥam-mad’s ancestors. Al-‘Abbās

18 Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 38.
19 Ibn Hishām, III, 230. See also Suyūṭī, I, 571 (from Ibn Sa’d); Khargūshī (Tübingen) 45a–45b.
21 Ithbāt, 98. See also Khargūshī, 12a–12b.
22 Ithbāt, 104; Khargūshī, 17b–18a; Suhaylī, I, 182; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 24; Bihār, XV, 77, 225.
b. 'Abd al-Muttalib, the prophet's uncle, saw in his dream a white bird flying out of 'Abdallāh's (Muḥammad's father) nose, reaching to the eastern and western ends of the earth. After a while the bird came down near the Ka'ba, being worshipped by Quraysh. Then it flew away again. A kāḥīna from Makhzūm told al-'Abbās that a person who would be followed by the inhabitants of the east and the west was about to emerge from 'Abdallāh's loins.24 According to another version the bird had turned into light before it flew from the Ka'ba.25 Khālid b. Sa'īd dreamt of a light ascending out of the well of Zamzam. It lit first the Ka'ba, then all the surroundings of Mecca, then the sky and the palm trees of Yathrib. Khālid's brother, 'Amr, suggested that this vision alluded to a great event about to happen among the children of 'Abd al-Muttalib, who had dug the Zamzam.26 When 'Amr b. Murra of Juḥayna was on a pilgrimage to Mecca, he saw in a dream light shining from the Ka'ba and up to Yathrib. Out of this light a voice announced the emergence of the prophet. The light shone again reaching al-Ḥīra and al-Madā’in, and a voice announced the victory of Islam. This dream made 'Amr embrace Islam in due course.27 Finally, Salmān al-Fāris̱ saw a handsome boy radiating light eastwards and westwards, and towards Syria and al-Yaman. The light was growing brighter from hour to hour. Salmān hastened to his garden and saw all its trees and its fence prostrating themselves to Muḥammad. Salmān joined them, uttering the shahāda. Then he heard a voice announcing Muḥammad's appearance.28

Most of the above mentioned traditions were quoted from Ṣuhrawardī sources. The Shi‘a is, indeed, the Muslim sect that has made the utmost use of light. The Shi‘a imāms are regarded as the exclusive representatives of the divine light on earth. The Shi‘a interpretation of the Qur‘ānic “verse of light” (āyāt al-ni‘r, xxiv 35) sees the various instruments of light mentioned in it as allegoric symbols of 'Ali, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn and the rest of the imāms. Other Qur‘ānic verses are similarly interpreted.29 These members of Muḥammad’s family (ahl al-bayt) belong, according to the Shi‘a, to an eternal line of chosen persons on whom God bestowed His light. “When Allāh created paradise”, says a tradition, “He created it from the light of His face. Then He took the light and dispersed it. One third hit Muḥammad, one third hit Fāṭima, and another third hit 'Ali. All people whom this light reached found

24 Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 24; Bihār, XV, 256.
25 Ibn Sa‘d, I/1, p. 109; Suyūṭī, I, 304–305; Suhaylī, I, 192.
26 Suyūṭī, I, 264–265.
28 Khargushī (Berlin) 133b.
the right path of loyalty to Muḥammad’s family; those who missed it — went astray. This duality is known already in the Qur’ān. Verse ii 257 states that Allāh is the patron of those who believe. He brings them forth from darkness into light. But those who disbelieve, their patrons are ṭāghūt, that draw them away from light to darkness. The Shi‘ī interpretations identify the people of light with Muḥammad’s family, and the people of the ṭāghūt with the enemies of the Shi‘a. The divine light is reached only through the imāms; knowing them is sufficient for salvation from darkness. This notion is set forth through some interpretations of Qur’ān, vi 122. The verse speaks about the dead who were given new life, and light was made for them. Shi‘ī commentators conceived this verse as referring to people who had come to new life, by knowing their guiding light, i.e., the imām. Those who were unable to get out of darkness, also mentioned in the same verse, are referred to as people who do not know their imām. A similar interpretation is given for Qur’ān, ivii 28. The divine light of the imāms emanates to their followers, whose hearts were purified by Allāh. This very light shines in their hearts more intensely than the sun. Allāh will save them on the day of resurrection, because of their love and loyalty for the imāms. Light as an element of communication between the imāms and the rest of humankind is sometimes described as a cosmic column. It is erected as such on the birth of each imām, and supplies him with knowledge about the deeds of all people. It also communicates between the imām and the heavenly world. ‘Alī was the first Shi‘ī imām. The prophet declared that ‘Alī had a light in heaven and a light on earth; whoever got hold of that light would enter paradise, and whoever missed it would enter hell. ‘Alī was the light that

30 Ibn Shahrāshūb, III, 106; Bihār, XXIII, 308–309.
31 Bihār, XXIII, 310: fa-l-nurū hum ālu muḥammad (ṣ) wa-l-zulumāt ’aduwuwhum (from Ṭafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī).
32 Ibid, 310–311.
33 Ibid, 319.
34 Ibid, 308: ...wa-llāhi yā abā khālid, la-nūrū l-imāmī fi qulūbi l-mu’inina anwaru mina l-shamsī ṭuwaṭt bi-l-nahārī... wa-yahjibu llāhu nūrahu ’amman yashā’u fa-taẓīlimu qulūbhum. wa-llāhi yā abā khālid, lā yuḥībbunā ’abdu’u wa-yatawallānā ḥattā yuṭahhīra lāhū qalbahu... wa-idhā kāna silmān lanā sallamahu llāhu min shadidi l-ḥisābī, wa-’āmanahu min faza’ī yawmī l-qiyāmat l-akbarī. Cf. also Ithbāt, 179–180.
35 Ithbāt, 176: ...fa-idhā waqā’ a ’alā l-arḍī rufi’ a lahu ’ammadun min nūrin yarā bīhi a’māla l-’ibādi.
36 Baṣā’ir, 129.
37 Bihār, XXIII, 319–320: yā kā’b, inna li-’alīyyin nūrān; nūrān fi l-samā’ wa-nūrān fi l-arḍ. fa-man tamassakā bi-nūrīhi adkhalahu llāhu l-jannata, wa-man akhṭa’ahu adkhalahu l-nīra.
Pre-existence and light

was given to the believers by Allah (see Qur’an lvii 28),³⁸ and he was the universal light after the death of the prophet.³⁹

A special sphere in which light is a major motive, is the concept of the pre-existence of prophets. The first to study this subject in a Muslim context was Goldziher.⁴⁰ Yet, since we now have access to some further relevant sources, a new examination of the subject may not be superfluous.⁴¹

I. THE PRIMORDIAL SUBSTANCE OF MUḤAMMAD

Already early Muslim sources furnish us with the view that the spirit of Muḥammad, forming part of the spermatic substance of his ancestors existed in the world as an integral prophetic entity before his birth. It was being transmitted from father to son until its visible manifestation on earth, through the corporeal Muḥammad.¹

This traducian concept is brought forth, to begin with, in some early interpretations of Qur’an vii 172. It says: “When your Lord took from the children of Adam, out of their loins, their descendants and made them testify for themselves: am I not your Lord? they said: Yes, we do testify. Lest you should say on the day of resurrection: we forgot about it”¹ᵃ. Ibn ‘Abbās’ interpretation, as transmitted through Sa’īd b. Jubayr (d. 95),² is that Allah, after having created Adam, took out of his loins all the spirits that He was about to create till the day of resurrection; He then made them bear witness

³⁸ Bihar, XXIII, 319.
³⁹ Ibid, 320.
⁴⁰ Goldziher, 324 ff. The idea of pre-existence (particularly its Śūfi aspects) was discussed also by Andrae (pp. 313 ff.) general Ṣūfī usage of light was discussed also by F. Rosenthal (pp. 157 ff.). Cf. also L. Massignon, EI, s.v. “Nūr Muḥammadi”.
⁴¹ It should be noted that certain Muslim scholars systematically elaborated on the concept of Muḥammad’s light. In a special risāla entitled risāla fi anwār al-nabīyy Ibn Sab’īn, for instance, described 33 different sorts of Muḥammad’s light. The light of Muḥammad’s pre-existence — the subject of this study — is only one of them. See Rasī’il Ibn Sab’tn, ed. by ’Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Miṣr, n.d.) pp. 201-211. And see ibid, p. 12 the remark of the editor concerning the relation between Ibn Sab‘īn (d. 669 A. H.) and preceding Muslim philosophers and Śūfīs.
¹ The list of Muḥammad’s ancestors, his nasab, consists of Arab forefathers descending from Ishmael, and of Biblical ones, forefathers of Ishmael; descending from Adam who was Muḥammad’s primogenitor. See e.g. Ibn Hishām, I, 1 ff.; Ibn Sa’d, I/1, pp. 27 ff.; Ṭабari, Ta’rīkh, II, 274–276; Ma’ārīf, 51 ff.; Ya’qūbī, II, 118.
¹ᵃ wa-ḥad khadha rabbuka min bani Ḏadam min ḏawriyyatohum wa-ṣawbihum ‘ala anfushihim: a-laqtu bi-rabbikum? qāli: balā, shahidnā, an taqūli yawma l-giyāmati: innā kunna an dhālika ghidfiīn.
² See GAS, I, 28–29.
that He was their Lord. Hence, the spirits recognized Allâh's lordship prior to the creation of their bodies. Mujâhid (d. 104) reportedly said that they expressed their faith in Allâh, by the words of the Talbiya (i.e. the response to Allâh's call uttered by the believers on their pilgrimage). This talbiya was passed on by Allâh to Abraham, who initiated the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Another version of the same interpretation maintains that Adam's descendants were shown to him in the form of small ants. Some of these primordial entities are said to have been invested with light. One of them, namely David's spirit, was presented to Adam in a shining light. His light was brighter than that of the other prophets who also appeared as light. A tradition recorded already by Ibn Sa'd (d. 230), on the authority of Ibn 'Abbâs, states that on seeing David's light, Adam bestowed on him forty years of his own.

The prophets were distinguished not only by their light. It is stated that on that day, the prophets were among Adam's descendants (shining) like lamps, and Allâh singled them out by a special covenant. This prophetic covenant is mentioned in Qur'ân xxxiii 7: "when we took from the prophets their covenant, from you (i.e. Muḥammad) and from Noah and Abraham and

3 See e.g. Ta'barî, Tafsir, IX, 75: ...haddathânâ kuli+hâm bnu jibrâq qâla: sa'alût sa'ida bna jubây' 'an qawlihi "wo-idh akhâdha rabbuka..." qâla: sa'alût 'anîh bna 'abbâsîn fa-qâla: masâta ra+bbuka zahra adama fa-kharajat kullu nasamatin huwa khâliquhâ ilâ yawmi l-qiyâmati bi-na'mâna hâdha, wa-ashûrâ bi-yadilih, fa-akhâdha mawâdhîhâm wa-ashhhaduhâm 'alâ anfusihim... According to some interpretations, Allâh announced on that occasion who would enter paradise and who would enter hell; see ibid, 86.
4 Ibid, 80: 'an muḥammad bni ka'b al-qurażi... qâla: aqarratî l-arwâhî qabla an tukhlaqa aldhu... 68

5 See GAS, I, 29.
6 Ta'barî, Tafsir IX, 78: ...'an mujâhid qâla: inna lâha lamâmâ akhrajahuq qâla: yâ 'ibâdâ l-lâhi, ajîbâ lâha — wa-l-jâbata l-ta'at — fa-qâlû: aqâ'nâ lâhumma, aqa'nâ lâhumma, aqa'nâ lâhumma labbayka, qâla: fa-a'jâhâ lâbrâmîna ft l-manâsîk: labbayka lâhumma labbayka. It is related, likewise, that when Abraham announced the pilgrimage he was answered by people calling the talbiya out of their ancestors' loins. See 'Ilal, 419: ...wa-lâkinnahu nàdâ: holûmna l-hâjja. fa-labbâ l-nâsu min aqlâbi l-rijjûl labbayka dà'îyâ lâlî; labbayka dà'îyâ lâlî. See also Ḥalâbî, I, 160. Moses as well heard the talbiya being uttered by the Muslims in the same way. See 'Ilal, 417–418; Kharghish, 81a; Qisas, 168; Jawâhir, 248–249. These traditions suggest the early nature of the talbiya as a pure Muslim heritage. The talbiya is also reported to be a Jâhîlî way of veneration; see e.g. Ya'qûbî, I, 255–256.
7 Ta'barî, Tafsir, IX, 76: 'an sa'idî bni jubây' 'anî bni 'abbâs... qâla: lâmmâ khalâqâ lâlî adama akhrajhu dhu+ryâyatahu min zarihî mithîha l-dharrî... 8 Ibid, 79: fa-'arâqâ lalayî rîhâ dawâda ft nûrin sâ+tîn. See also idem, Ta'rikh, 158.
9 Ta'barî, Ta'rikh, I, 155; Qisas, 38.
10 Ibn Sa'd, I/I, p. 7 compare Ta'barî, Ta'rikh, I, 156–157; idem, Tafsir, IX, 78. A similar tradition appears also in The Zohar, I, 91b, 55a, 248b. (I was referred to this source by Mr. I. Fixler, Tel Aviv).
11 Ta'barî, Tafsir, IX, 79: ...wa-fihmî l-anbiyâ'î yawma'idîhin mithîhu l-surûjî wa-khaåça l-anbiyâ'î bi-mithâqîn ãkhar.
Moses and Jesus the son of Mary. We took from them a rigid covenant...".  
This covenant too was taken, according to Mujāhid, while the prophets still dwelt within Adam's loins (Adam himself is not counted here as a prophet).

A noteworthy feature of the interpretations of the verse just mentioned is the stress laid on the superiority of Muḥammad's primordial substance, to that of the other prophets. The same tendency underlies, in fact, a large number of traditions which we shall examine hereafter. Above all it is emphasized that the substance of Muḥammad was the first prophetic entity created by Allāh. This particular Muslim view is based on the simple fact that in the Qur'ānic verse at issue, Muḥammad is mentioned prior to Noah and the rest of the prophets. Qatāda (d. 118) reportedly used to recite with this verse a tradition, according to which Muḥammad said: “I was the first of the prophets to be created (i.e. as a primordial substance) and the last of them to be sent (as a real prophet”); or else: “I was the first prophet to be created and the last of them to be sent, therefore (Allāh) began with me (i.e. I was the first of those from whom He took the covenant)”. According to a tradition recorded by Ibn Saʿd, Muḥammad's covenant was taken from him as soon as Adam had been formed in clay, before Allāh breathed the spirit of life into him; it relates that Muḥammad was asked: when did you become a prophet? He said: when Adam was still between spirit and body, as soon as the covenant was taken from me”. Commenting on this tradition, al-Qastallānī says that Muḥammad was drawn out of Adam's loins, as soon as the latter was formed in clay. He was made a prophet, and the covenant was taken from him. Then he was inserted back into Adam's loins, thus being the first prophet in creation. This was his prerogative, since the

12 Cf. also Qur'ān, iii 81.
14 GAS, I, 31.
15 Tabari, Taṣfīr, XXI, 79: "an qatādu: qawluhu: “wa-idh akhadhna...” qāla: wa-dhukirā lañā anna nabīyya llāhi (s) kāna yaḡūlu: kuntu awwala l-anbiyyā fi l-khalqī wa-ḥkirahum fi l-baʾrī; see also ibid: kāna qatādu idhā tālā ḥādihi l-āyā... qāla: kāna nabīyyu llāhi (s) fi awwali l-nabiyyīna fi l-khalq.
16 Suyūṭī, I, 9 (from Ibn Abī Ḥātim, d. 327): ...kuntu awwala l-anbiyyā fi l-khalqī wa-ḥkirahum fi l-baʾrī fa-badāʿu bi-qabālahum. On the other hand, some traditions state that the covenant was taken from Muḥammad together with the rest of the prophets. See Suyūṭī, I, 11: akhadha llāhu minnt l-mithāqa kamā akhadha minna l-nabiyyīna mithāqahum. Furthermore, several interpretations of Qurʾān xxxiii 7 hold that Muḥammad's name foreruns the names of the prophets only because of his high rank, whereas chronologically Noah was the first. See Suyūṭī, Durr, V, 184: qāla rasūlu llāhi: awwalaḥum nūḥun thumma l-awwala fa-l-awwala, see also Bihār, XV, 3: wa-innamā qaddamahu li-faḍlihi wa-sharofihi.
rest of Adam’s descendants were taken out of him only after the spirit had been breathed into his body. Ibn Sa’d has, in fact, a further version of the same tradition: “I was a prophet — states Muḥammad — as soon as Adam was between spirit and body”.

Muḥammad, as the first created prophet, is sometimes entitled “the first and the last, the manifest and the hidden”. These titles belong, according to Qur’ān lvii 3, to Allāh alone; yet, in some traditions they are related to the prophet. Thus, he is the first prophet in the world (as a hidden substance), and the last prophet to be sent to it. Ibn Sa’d himself records an outspoken tradition to the effect that Muḥammad was the first of all human beings to be created, and the last of them to be sent out. The same view comes forth

18 Zurqānī, I, 39: ...fa-hādhā yaddullu ‘alā annahu min ḥiṣn ṣawwira ʿādamu ʿīnan stikhrīja minhu muḥammadan (s) wa-nūbi‘a wa-ukhīdīna minhu l-mīthāqī, thumma u‘dā ilā ẓahīr ʿādam... fa-īn qulta: inna stikhrīja ḥurūrīyyayi ʿādamīn kāna ba‘da naʃki l-rūḥī fīhī... ajāba ba‘da ʿādamu kūnsa bi-stikhrījīhi min ẓahīr ʿādam qabla naʃki l-rūḥī fīhī. Still, another tradition maintains that Muḥammad’s primogeniture was based only on the fact that he was the first of Adam’s offspring who said “yes” to Allāh, when He made them recognize His lordship, see Suyūṭī, I, 9; Zurqānī, I, 34: ...kāna muḥammadan (s) awwalu wa-qāla balā wa-li-dhālikā šāra yataqaddamīn l-anbiyyā‘, wa-huwa ‘ākhīrī man yub‘āthu.

19 Ibn Sa’d, I/1, p. 95: kuntu nabīyyan wa-ʿādamu bayna l-rūḥī wa-l-jasādi. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 33; Suyūṭī, I, 10, 11. Bayhaqi, I, 72; Khargūshī, 75; Zurqānī, I, 32–33. Another version is: ...bayna l-rūḥī wa-l-jasādi min ʿādam see Ibn Sa’d, I/1, 95, and even: kuntu nabīyyan wa-ʿādam bayna l-mā‘ī wa-l-fīnī. This version is rejected by al-Sakhawṭ. See Zurqānī, I, 33. A more far-reaching version is: ...wa-kuntu nabīyyan wa-lā ʿādamu wa-l-mū‘a wa-l-fāna. This version was rejected as false by Ibn Taymiyya and others, see ibid; and cf. also Goldziher, 324–325.


Ibn Sa’d, I/1, 96: kuntu awwalu l-nāṣī ft l-khalqī wa-āḵkirū hamū ft l-ba‘ṭhī; Goldziher’s translation (p. 326): “...und der letzte in der Auferstehung” has to be rejected. It has to be noticed here that the concept at issue has also a more rationalistic expression. It appears, to begin with, in some versions of the tradition about Muḥammad’s early prophethood, to the effect that his prophetic emergence was only pre-destined. Hence, some versions have kutibu instead of kuntu. See e.g. Suyūṭī, I, 10 (from Ahmad b. Ḥanbal): ‘an maysara l-fajrī qa‘la: qultu: yā rasūla ʿlāhī, matā kutiba nabīyyan? qa‘la: wa-ʿādam bayna l-rūḥī wa-l-jasādi, compare Zurqānī, I, 33; Isti‘āb, IV, 1488 (with kunta instead of kutiba) and see further references in Wensinck, Handboek, 163; see also Suyūṭī, ibid: inni ‘inda ʿlāhī ft ummi l-kiyāmī la-khāṭāmīn l-nabīyyīna wa-inna ʿādamaw la-munjadātīm ft īnātīhi. Hence, the traditions about the appearance of Muḥammad’s primordial name throughout the celestial world (see part 3), are used as an illustration for the rationalistic approach under discussion. See e.g. Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 33; Ḥalabi, I, 220: ...wa-kataba ‘smt ‘alā l-awwālī wa-l-awrāqī wa-l-kiyāmī wa-ʿādamu bayna l-rūḥī wa-l-jasād... Al-Ghazzālī, in his book al-Nafṣū l-Taswīyā states explicitly that the tradition about the early creation of Muḥammad has, in fact, no other meaning than the pre-destination of his emergence and not his actual pre-existence. See
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through a tradition based on the pattern of the abovementioned tradition concerning David’s light. According to this tradition Adam saw among his future descendants a shining light. Allāh explained to him that it was the light of Muḥammad, who was the first and the last.21a

Due to his divine primordial substance, Muḥammad is regarded as the best of Adam’s offspring; hence, Adam was surnamed after him: Abī Muḥammad. This kunya was granted to Adam by Allāh, on breathing the spirit of life into him.22

The spermatic substance of Muḥammad was set in motion by the procreation of Adam’s descendants. The course of this motion was determined by Allāh to include only the most excellent of all mankind. In a tradition recorded by al-Tirmidhi (d. 289) the prophet says: “When Allāh created the descendants of Adam, He put me within the best father of them all; when He divided them into tribes, He put me within the best tribe of them all, and when afterwards He made them into houses, He put me in the best house of them all”.23 In a similar tradition, quoted by Ibn Sa’d, the prophet says: “Allāh divided the earth in two halves putting me in the best one; that half He subdivided into three, and I was in the best third...”.24 According to a further tradition, also recorded by Ibn Sa’d, the prophet declared: “I was sent through the best generations of mankind, from generation to generation, till I was sent out of the generation in which I live.25 This tradition included...

Zurqānī, I, 36 (from al-Gazālī): ...bi-anna l-murūd bi-l-khalqi huwa l-taqdīru ḍūna l-lijādī. Al-Subki, on the other hand, rejects the rationalistic approach: he holds that the tradition, stating that Muḥammad had been a prophet when Adam was still between clay and soul denotes the actual existence of Muḥammad; therefore, Adam saw his name on the throne signifying his noble spirit, or his haqq, see Suyūṭī, I, 12; Zurqānī, I, 37. A harmonizing opinion is expressed by Ibn ‘Arabī who states that Muḥammad actually existed as a pre-existent spirit, yet, his prophethood was then only a divine scheme for the future. See Futūḥāt I, 134–135: wa-qāla ‘alayhi l-salām: kuntu nabiyyan wa-‘ādam bayna l-mā‘ī wa-l-‘ān. yuridū: ‘alā ‘ilmin bi-dhālīkā; fa-akhbarahu ilāhu ta‘ālā bi-ma‘rattabātī huwa-‘ādam rā‘un qubla ḍīdāhi l-ajsama l-‘insānīyya. And see also ibid, 143–144: ...fa-akhbāra annuḥu sāḥibu l-nubūwati qubla waṣīdī l-anbīyā’ī l-lādīnīa hum nuwwābuhu.

21a Suyūṭī, I, 97–98 (from al-Bayhaqī); Bizārī, XI, 152 (Ibn Ṭawūs).
22 Khargūsli, 815. And cf. also Bihārī, XI, 107; Sinīt, I, 43, 59.
24 Ibn Sa‘d, I/1, 2: inna l-nabiyya (s) qāla: qasama ilāhu l-arḍa nisfayni fa-ja‘alāni fi khayrihimnā, thumma qasama l-nisfā ‘alā thalāthā fa-kuntu fi khayrī thi‘ltīn mimāh... cp. Suyūṭī, I, 95.
25 Ibn Sa‘d, I/1, 5: ‘an abī hurayrata anna rasūla ilāhi (s) qāla: bu‘thtu min khayri qurūnī.

1.3 Muḥammad’s pure pedigree
by al-Bukhārī in his ṣaḥīḥ26 is regarded by al-Suyūṭī as proving that the prophet's ancestors were each the best of his generation.27 Another version of this tradition is clearer, since it has humiltu (i.e. "I was carried") instead of buʿithtu (i.e. "I was sent"). It runs as follows: "I was carried through (the loins of) the best generations, from generation to generation, till I emerged from my own generation".28

The notion of a primordial spermatic substance wandering through pure forefathers, was already known in Arabia in pre-Islamic times. Al-Samauʿ al b. ʿĀdiya speaks in his well known Lāmiyya about the collective essence of his tribe.

We are pure, not turbid; our hidden essence was purely preserved
By women who carried us well [i.e. conceived us] and by men;
We ascended the best backs [i.e. loins], and descended
For a while to the best wombs.29


26 Bukhārī, IV, 229.

Goldziher's explanation to this tradition does not agree with the interpretation just quoted from al-Qastallānī (see Goldziher, p. 340). His translation runs as follows: "Ich bin aus den besten Generationen der Menschen von Periode zu Periode immer wieder (von Gott) gesandt worden, bis ich endlich in der Periode, in der ich nun lebe, gesandt worden bin". Goldziher wrongly explains that "es ist derselbe Prophet der von Periode zu Periode unter den Menschen erschien, bis er zu letzt als Muhammed erstanden ist". According to Goldziher, what we have here is the gnostic idea about the recurring manifestations of the same prophetic soul through the bodies of the various prophets, including Muhammed. It means that "Nur in der äusseren Erscheinung seien die Propheten von einander verschieden; in Wahrheit aber sei es derselbe Sendling Gottes der zu verschiedenen Zeiten in verschiedenen körperlichen Erscheinungen in die Welt gesandt wurde, um Gottes Willen zu künden. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Mose, Jesu, Muhammed, seien nicht verschieden von einander, sondern dieselbe göttliche Persönlichkeit in verschiedenen körperlichen Erscheinungsformen" (ibid, 337). However, according to what has been said above, one can see that Ibn Saʿd's tradition deals only with the wandering of Muḥammad's substance through his ancestors, and not with the reincarnation of the eternal prophetic spirit through the universal prophets.

28 Khargūshī (Ṭubīgingen) 65b: wa-rawā abū hurrayratu anna rasūlā llāhī (ṣ) qāla: humiltu min khayri qurūnī bant ādama, qaran fa-qaran hattā kunτū mina-l-qarnāt lilādhi kunτū minihu.
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This notion is absolutely identical with what is said in Islam about Muḥammad, with the exception that the Muslim sources are preoccupied with the primogeniture of the essence of Muḥammad as a prophetic entity since the very creation of Adam. As we have already seen, his superiority over the other prophets consists of this primogeniture.

The importance of the women’s share in maintaining the pure genealogical origin, as expressed in the ḥamīyya, is stressed with regard to Muḥammad as well. Several traditions emphasize the pure matrimony of his mothers. The prophet stated: “a whore has never given birth to me since I came out of Adam’s loins; the nations have never ceased to transmit me from father to son, till I emerged from the best two Arab clans — Ḥāshim and Zuhra (his mother’s clan”). Similarly, Muḥammad told Ibn ‘Abbās that when Adams was in paradise, he, Muḥammad, was in his loins. Adam descended to earth with him in his loins. He was on the ark in Noah’s loins, and was thrown into the fire in his father Abraham’s loins. His ancestors had never coupled in fornication. (Allāh) had never stopped transmitting him, refined, from pure loins into clean wombs; two branches had never ramified without his being in the best one. Already Muḥammad b. al-Ṣā‘ib al-Kalbī (d. 146) declared that he had gone through a list of five hundred women who had given birth to Muḥammad’s ancestors, and did not come across one who had born a child in fornication, or according to Jāhili custom. A similar account is attributed to the prophet himself: “I emerged from (pure) matrimony and not from fornication. No fornication of the Jāhiliyya has ever touched me since Adam. I came out of purity”. The following statement is also ascribed to Muḥammad: “I am the most precious of you all (anā anfasukum, cf. Qur’ān ix 28) in lineage, nuptials and ancestry. There has not been any fornication among my ancestors since Adam. We are all (maintaining pure) matrimony”. The spotless marriage of Muḥammad’s ancestors detaches them completely from the Jāhiliyya and draws them closer to the Islamic spirit: “I was never born” — says the prophet — “from Jāhiliyya fornication; what gave birth to me was no other than Islamic matrimony”.

30 Suyūṭī, I, 96 (from Ibn ‘Asākir): mā waladatni baḥīyyun qaṭṭu mundhu kharajtu min ṣuḥbī ādāma wa-lam tazal ṭuṣātī`un l-umamu kābiran ‘an kābirin ḥāṭṭā kharajtu min ʿafḍalī ḥaṭṭaynī mina l-arabī — ḥāshīmin wa-zuhrata, cp. Ḥalabī, I, 42.
31 Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 35; Suyūṭī, I, 93; Zūrqānī, I, 67.
33 Ibn Sa’d, I/1, 31: innamā kharajtu min nikāh wa-lam akhriy min siṣḥ; min ladunī ādāma lam yuṣūbni min siṣḥī ʿāhl l-jāhiliyyati shay`un, lam akhriy illā min yuḥra. Cf. also Suyūṭī, I, 92; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 79; Bayhaqī, I, 136; Ibn Shahrašīb, II, 24; Zūrqānī, I, 67; Ḥalabī, I, 42.
34 Suyūṭī, I, 96; Zūrqānī, I, 66; Ḥalabī, I, 42.
35 Suyūṭī, I, 92; Zūrqānī, I, 66. In spite of the special emphasis laid on the pure marriage
The view according to which the sons of Adam married their sisters (each marrying his brother's twin sister) as expressed, for instance, in the Book of Jubilees (ch. 4) is also known in Islam. A detailed account of it is given by Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/151). Sheth, for example, married his sister Ḥazūra bint Ādam. This view of Biblical figures, regarded as Muḥammad’s primogenitors, does not accord with traditions about their pure matrimony discussed above. Muslim scholars sought, indeed, to diminish this discrepancy. The central figure in this context was Sheth, Adam’s successor. Thus, the Muslim sources put forward a different tradition, to the effect that Sheth, unlike his preceding brothers, was born without a twin sister. He married in due course a woman descended from paradise (ḥawrā). This view is particularly emphasized by Shi‘i sources, sensitive to the notion of the ṣafwa. Cain and Abel are also sometimes exonerated of incest; Abel, according to this approach, married a woman from paradise, whereas Cain got his wife from amongst the demons. Abel’s ūpairā gave birth to a son who married in due course the daughter of Sheth; from this marriage emerged the rest of mankind.

The substance of Muḥammad is endowed with special religious features, especially the ability to utter the talbiya. It is related that when the substance of Muḥammad’s ancestors, there are some deficiencies in some of these marriages, namely, nikāḥ al-maqt. This term refers to cases in which a son marries his father’s former wife; it is forbidden in Qur’ān iv 22. Kināna, for instance, married Barrā bint Murr, who was his father Khuzayma’s ex-wife. She bore him his son, al-Nāḍr, see Ma‘ārif, 50; Zurqānī, I, 77. Al-Jāḥiẓ firmly rejects this tradition, claiming that Kināna did not have children with his father’s ex-wife. His son, al-Nāḍr, was born to another woman who had never been married to his father. See Zurqānī, I, 77; Ḥalabī, I, 40. Compare Goldziher, 332. Another case is that of Ḥāshim who married Wāqida, former wife of his father, ‘Abd Manāf. This fact cannot, however, affect the purity of Muḥammad’s ancestry, since ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the prophet’s grandfather, was born to Ḥāshim by another woman from al-Madīna. See Zurqānī, I, 77; Ḥalabī, I, 40; Ma‘ārif, 50. And see ibid. more cases of nikāḥ al-maqt, concerning people who do not belong to Muḥammad’s ancestry. And cf. also Ṭabarī, Tafsīr, IV, 217 ff.

The Shi‘i sensitivity to the notion is based on the belief that the imāms are pure and infallible; Allāh chooses only those who possess these qualities of the ṣafwa. See ‘Īlāt, 19–20; Bihār, XI, 223–226; Ithbāt, 18. The Shi‘i’s view of the ṣafwa notion is based on the belief that the imāms are pure and infallible; Allāh chooses only those who possess these qualities of the ṣafwa. See Bihār, XI, p. 11: wa-yafā‘īْ an yakūna illadhi ṣafahu muṣḥaratuna ma‘āmīna ‘anti l-qābā‘īhi li-anāhū lā yakhṭarū illā man kāna kaḏkālika...
of Muḥammad dwelt in the loins of al-Ya’s — one of Muḥammad’s Arab ancestors — the *talbiya* could be heard from within his body. Yet, the religious faith of the human carriers themselves, is not mentioned in the traditions discussed above. Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī puts it in so many words, when he states that the prophet’s ancestors were chosen by Allāh only on the ground of their pure souls, regardless of their doings, since they all belonged to the Jāhiliyya. However, quite early in Islam, it was no longer possible to tolerate the idea that people who gave birth to the prophet should burn in hell, because of their disbelief. Thus, a Shi‘ī tradition states that Allāh ordered the fire of hell not to touch a back (i.e. loins) from which Muḥammad descended to a womb, a belly that carried him, a breast that suckled him, and a lap that covered him. The lap is interpreted to be that of Abū Ṭalib and his wife.

Furthermore, early Muslim sources already state that Muḥammad’s ancestors were no less than true Muslims. This approach is based on Qurān, xliii

41 Suhaylī, I, 10; Zurqānī, I, 78–79. Al-Suhaylī remarks that this subject has to be looked up in al-Wāqidi’s *Kitāb al-Mawlid*. See also Ḥalabī, I, 17.


43 ʿĪlā, 177: *inna l-nabiyya qāla: atāni jibrīlu fa-qāla: inna llāha ʿazza wa-jalla ḥarrama l-nāra ʾalā zahrīn anzialaka wa-ḥaqiqin ḥamalaka wa-thadyin ardaqīna wa-ḥajrin kafalaka.* Compare Jawāhir, 218–220; Bihārī, XV, 108, 126. The Sunni reaction to this Shi‘ī approach comes forth through a tradition, quoted by Muslim, to the effect that Muḥammad was asked once where his father was. He replied: “my father and your father are in hell”, see Muslim, I, 132–133; Suhaylī, I, 194; Zurqānī, I, 179 (from Muslim). The words: “my father”, mentioned in this *ḥadīth*, are interpreted sometimes as referring to Abū Ṭalib, father of ‘Alī, by whom the prophet was brought up. See Zurqānī, I, 179: *wa-arādī bi-abīhi annahum abū ṭalib wa-l-annahum raḥābu; wa-l-ʿaraqu tusammi l-murābbīya aban.* Al-Nawawī remarks that Muslim’s tradition proves that whoever died as an unbeliever would enter hell and would not be saved by his blood relations. See Zurqānī, I, 180: *qāla l-nawawī fīhi: inna man mātā ʾalā l-kafīrī fa-luwa fi l-nārī wa-l-ṭarī tanfīʾu ʿilā qarībatu l-μuqarrabin. Moreover, another tradition claims that the prophet prohibited to boast of ancestors who had died in the Jāhiliyya. See, Ḥalabī, I, 29: la taṛakhīrū bi-ābāʾikum illadhinā mātū fi l-jāhiliyya.* Yet, there is a further view which holds (like the above mentioned Shi‘ī view) that Muḥammad’s ancestors were saved from hell. According to this view Muḥammad interceded for his parents, as well as for Abū Ṭalib, who consequently came back to life and embraced Islam. They returned to the dead as true believers. Cf. several traditions about it in Zurqānī, I, 166 ff.; Suhaylī, I, 194–195; Bihārī, XV, 108 ff. This view, apparently Shi‘ī as well, also had a Sunni reaction. Several traditions maintain, on the ground of Qurān ix 113, that Muḥammad was not permitted by Allāh to ask forgiveness for his parents. See Zurqānī, I, 177 ff.; Suhaylī, I, 194; Ṭabarī, *Ṭafsīr*, XI, 31. Particularly anti-Shi‘ī are those traditions holding that Qurān ix 113 prohibited to ask forgiveness for Abū Ṭalib alone. See Zurqānī, I, 178; Ṭabarī, *Ṭafsīr*, XI, 30–31. Cf. also Goldziher, 331.
28, where it is stated that the descendants of Abraham (including Muhammad's forefathers), always preserved Abraham's "word" (wa-ja'alaha kalimatan bāqiyyatan fi 'aqibihī). Some of the commentaries say that the "word" of those descendants was the recognition of Allāh's unity, or even the explicit embraces of Islam. The Jāhili customs of Mecca are, accordingly, reported to have been first introduced by an Arab who did not belong to the line of Muhammad's ancestors — namely, 'Amr b. Luḥayy of Khuzā'ā. This leader who ruled Mecca in early times is presented as the first Arab who acted according to Jāhili customs, mentioned in Qur'ān, v 103.45

Another Qur'ānic verse, used for the same goal, is ix 28. This verse declares that the unbelievers are impure (innamā l-mushrikūna najasun). This verse, combined with traditions about the purity of Muhammad's ancestors mentioned above, proves according to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāżī (d. 606), that these ancestors could not possibly have been unbelievers. This opinion about Muhammad's ancestors was held, according to al-Rāżī, by Rāfīḍī Shi'īs.47


46 Zurqānī, I, 174 (from al-Rāżī's Asrār al-Tanzīl): wā-minmā yadulū 'alā anna abā'ā muḥammadīn (s) mā kānū mushrikūna gawlāhu (g): "lam azzal unqala min aṣlābi l-ṭahrīnā... wa-qāla ta'alā: "innamā l-mushrikūna najasun" fī-wjāba allā yakāna abadun min ajjādīhi mushrikan. See also, Rāżī, XXIV, 174. Compare Goldziher, 332–333.

47 Rāżī, XXIV, 173: wā-'lam anna rāfīḍa dhahabū lā illā anna abā'ā l-nabiyyī (g) kānū mu˚mīnīn. See also Abū Ḥanīyān, VII, 47; Zurqānī, I, 176 (from Abū Ḥanīyān). And see also Biḥārī, XV, 117: qāla l-shaykhku abā 'ār: 'tiqādūnā fi abā'ī l-nabiyyī (g) annahum muslimūna min ādām ilā abībi 'abdillāhī, wa-anna abā tālibin kāna musliman wa-ˈamīnata umma rasīlī lāḥīt (g) kānāt muslimatan. The Shi'ā emphasises in particular the religious integrity of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. It is related that he never used to cast lots by arrows, nor did he worship idols, nor eat meat offered to the idols. He used to say: "I am of the religion of my father Abraham". See Biḥārī, XV, 127. A tradition holds that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib will rise from the dead on the day of resurrection, as a nation in itself (ummata nāḥdhau). See Biḥārī, XV, 157 (from al-Kāfī). 'Ali b. Abī Ṭalib stated that neither his father nor his grandfather, nor Ḥāshim nor 'Abd Manāf did ever worship an idol. Biḥārī, XV, 144. This Shi'ī view about Muhammad's forefathers, penetrated the Sunnī literature as well. Al-Zurqānī says that Ash'arī writers also held this opinion about the prophet's ancestors. See Zurqānī, I, 177. He points out that al-Suyūṭī composed six works on the subject. See ibid 186. Compare Goldziher, 333–334. See also Ḥalabī, I, 43. Thus, traditions about the monotheism of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, for instance, occur indeed in Sunnī sources as well. See Ḥalabī, I, 4: wa-raḍāqa fi ʾākhirī ummīti 'ibādatu l-ʿaṣmāmī wa-wāḥhada ilāhā. This statement occurs already in al-Yaʾqūbī, II, 10. Cf. also Murūj, II, 131.
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Their fundamental support in this view was Qur’an, xxvi 219: wa-taquallubaka fi l-sājidin. This verse is usually interpreted as referring to Muḥammad’s prayer among the Muslims, who are called sājidin, i.e. worshippers. However, according to Shi‘i interpretations, as reported by al-Rāzī, the word sājidin stands for Muhammad’s ancestors who are introduced as worshippers, hence believers. Taquallubaka means for the Shi‘a the wandering of Muḥammad’s primordial substance through those sājidin.48

As a matter of fact, we find already in Ibn Sa’d traditions presenting Muhammad’s ancestors as proper Muslims; “do not curse Muḍar” — demands one of those traditions, ascribed to the prophet — “for he has embraced Islam”.49 A similar statement is made concerning al-Ya’s.50

A large number of traditions of the same nature is included in Abū al-Baqā’s book al-Manāqib al-Mazyadiyya. About Ma’add it is said: “Do not curse Ma’add for he held the hanifiyya of Ibrāhīm”.51 Ma’add, it is added, feared Allāh and used to give Him many thanks.52 Allāh once ordered the prophet Jeremiah to take Ma’add to his own country, lest the troops of Nebuchadnezzar who was about to raid Arābīa, would kill him. Ma’add was thus saved for the sake of Muḥammad, his future offspring. Ma’add returned later to Mecca accompanied by several Israeli prophets performing the pilgrimage.53 Another tradition about Ma’add relates that Allāh revealed to Moses that the descendants of Ma’add were his worshippers, and that a prophet would emerge from amongst them.54 In one of his preachings, Ma’add urged his children to fear Allāh and thank him.55 Nizār too urged his sons to fear Allāh.56 About Muḍar it is said that prophethood, honour and purity

48 Rāzī, ibid, 174: ...ammā hādhīhi l-āyatu fa-qālā: gawluhu: “wa-taquallubaka fi l-sājidin” yahṭamilu l-wujūha latt dhakartum, wa-yahṭamilu an yakīna l-murādu anna ilāha ta’ālā naqala rūḥahu min sājidin ilā sājidin kamā naqila naḥnu. Compare Abū Ḥayyān, ibid. See names of Muslim authors elaborating this doctrine in Murūj, II, 130-131; al-Mas‘ūdī calls them Ghulāt, who have borrowed their ideas from Greeks, Indians, Dualists, Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians. Cf. also M. E. S. Hodgson, s.v. “Ghulāt”, EI2, II, 1093 ff.
49 Ibn Sa’d, 1/1, 30: lā tasubbū muḍara fa-imnahu kāna qad aslama. See also Ḥalabī, I, 17. Other versions of this tradition mention Rabī’ along side with Muḍar. See Ansāb, I, 31; Ya’qūb, I, 226; Zurqānī, I, 79; Ḥalabī, I, 17.
50 Suhaylī, I, 10. Compare Ḥalabī, I, 17.
52 Ibid, 48.
53 Ibid, 48-49. See also Ṭabarī, Taʾrīkh, I, 560; Qīṣaṣ, 288; Simīt, I, 151; Suhaylī, I, 11; Ḥalabī, I, 17-18. About Nebuchadnezzar’s raid against the Arabs, see Jerem. xlix 28 ff.
54 Abū al-Baqā’, 52, cp. Ḥalabī, I, 18 (quoting al-Ṭabarānī).
55 Abū al-Baqā’, 53. Ma’add is also mentioned as the first to put the stone-marks of the Haram around Mecca. See Bihār, XV, 170 (from al-Kaft).
56 Abū al-Baqā’, 54.
dwelt among his descendants. Mu’adhar ordered his son al-Ya’s to fear Allāh. Khuzayma was the first to say: “there is no God except Allāh”. He too ordered his son to fear Allāh and to cling to the heritage of Abraham and Ishmael.

Traditions of the same nature may be found in other sources as well. Kināna — it is reported — foresaw the appearance of a prophet in Mecca, named Aḥmad. He ordered his people to follow that prophet. Another ancestor, namely Ka’b b. Lu’ayy, also foretold Muḥammad’s emergence in his preachings. He came to know about him through books belonging to Jews and Christians.

The Muslim sources take special interest in the faith of Muḥammad’s biblical ancestors, namely, Adam and his descendants. The Qur’ān does not express a clear opinion in this matter. Particularly obscure is verse ii 213: “The people were one nation (ummatan wāḥida), then Allāh sent the prophets with good tidings and with warnings”. This verse deals with the state of mankind before the beginning of prophetic activities in the world. Various interpretations were suggested for the expression umma wāḥida — one nation. According to one interpretation, this expression refers to the people who had lived before God sent Noah and Abraham, when they were all united in disbelief. However, the interpretation that has become widely accepted in Islam, takes umma wāḥida as referring to people who were united in true faith. Thus we find already in Ibn Sa’d a tradition, recorded on the authority of Ibn al-Kalbī, to the effect that all the ancestors between Adam and Noah were Muslims. Adam himself, who was driven from paradise because of

57 Loc. cit.
58 Ibid, 55.
59 Ibid, 57.
60 Ḥalabī, I, 16.
61 Ya’qūbī, I, 236; Ansāb, I, 41; Ibn al-Jawzi, I, 73–74; Suyūṭī, I, 69–70; Sulayḥī, I, 8; Zurqānī, I, 74–75; Ḥalabī, I, 15; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 16; Bihār, XV, 221–222. The same story is related also concerning Quṣayy. Zurqānī, I, 75. See some more traditions about prophets and other people — both Arabs and non-Arabs — foretelling Muḥammad’s emergence in Ibn Hishām, I, 217 ff.; Māwardī, 129 ff.; Ibn al-Jawzi, I, 36 ff.; Suyūṭī, I, 26 ff.; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 16 ff.; Ḥalabī, I, 183 ff.; Bayhaqī, I, 277 ff.; Khargāshī (Tübingen) 93° ff., 1° ff.; Bihār, XV, passim.
63 Ibn Sa’d, I/1, 18: wa-mā bayna nāḥīn ilā ādamā mina l-ābā’i kānū ’alā l-islāmī. See also Ibid, 26.
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his sin, is presented sometimes as a true believer. Sa‘īd b. Jubayr declared: “far be it from me to claim that Adam was an unbeliever”.

A special problem stems from Qur’ān ix 114, presenting Abraham’s father as an enemy of Allāh; his name was Āzar (Qur’ān vi 74). This religious disadvantage of one of the prominent ancestors, is explained away by Muslim scholars, maintaining that Āzar was actually Abraham’s uncle; he was referred to as father, only because of his close relation with Abraham. Abraham’s real father was Terah. According to al-Rāzī, this solution is also of Shi‘ī origin.

Muḥammad’s Arab ancestors belong to the northern descendants of Ishmael. It is quite to be expected that partisan-southern traditions would claim similar virtues, such as true Islamic faith, for this southern forefathers as well. Thus, a tradition of a pattern already known to us, claims that the prophet stated: “Do not curse Tubba’, for he was a believer”. Or else: “Do not curse Tubba’ for he has already embraced Islam”. This view about Tubba’ is anchored in Qur’ān I 12–14, where “the people of Tubba’” is mentioned along with the people of Noah, as well as with other people who turned down their prophets (and see also: Qur’ān xliv 37). The commentators deduced from this verse that Tubba’, like Noah and others, belonged to those believers who tried, in vain, to spread the true faith among their peoples.

The Tubba’ of the above mentioned traditions is usually identified with the Ḥimyarite king Tubān As‘ad Abū Karib, who once passed near Yathrib and Mecca on an expedition to the north. Thus, a further tradition in the prophet’s name, declares: “Do not curse As‘ad of Ḥimyar for he was the first to supply the coat of the Ka‘ba”. To this Tubba’ some verses are ascribed, in which their author foresees Muḥammad’s emergence and expresses his wish to join him. These verses are sometimes combined with the text of a certain testament, in which the listeners are ordered to transmit from generation to generation the tidings of Muḥammad’s future appearance.

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66 Rāzī, XXIV, 174. Compare Abī Ḥayyān, VII, 47. See also Zurqānī, I, 174; 176; Biḥār, XV, 117; Ḥalabī, I, 29–30.


68 Zurqānī, I, 178; Biḥār, XV, 183; Ṭabarī, Taṣfīr, XXVI, 98.


70 Suhaylī, I, 36.

71 Ma‘ārif, 28; Tījān, 297; Suhaylī, I, 35; Biḥār, XV, 181–182, 214; Murūj, I, 68.

72 Asma‘ī, 42.
Some traditions maintain that it was already the first Tubba’ who knew of Muḥammad’s emergence and believed in him. He too, was, reportedly, in the Ḥijāz passing across the future place of Yathrib. On passing there while returning from the north, some people whom he had brought along with him from several countries decided to stay and settle there. They knew from their books the importance of that place as the future town of the prophet. Tubba’ left a letter for Muḥammad with them, in which he recognized his prophethood. This first Tubba’ has also some verses ascribed to him, in which he foresees Muḥammad’s emergence.

The descendants of the Tubba’s were, likewise, true believers awaiting Muḥammad’s appearance. In San’ā’, it is reported, the bodies of Tubba’s daughters were found in a grave, together with a golden inscription announcing their faith in Allāh’s unity. Sayf b. Dhī Yazan, one of the last kings of Ḥimyar, conveyed the tidings of Muḥammad’s forthcoming appearance to ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who had come to congratulate him on his victory against the Abyssinians. This knowledge was handed down to him through the chain of preceding Tubba’s.

It is most interesting to observe that Muḥammad’s pure ancestors, the carriers of his primordial substance, are sometimes presented not only as true Muslims, but, at least some of them, are presented also as prophets. This view, like others discussed before, is brought forth through an early interpretation of a Qur’ānic verse. The verse, already mentioned above, is xxxvi 219: wa-taqallubaka fi l-sājidin. Already Ibn Sa’d records, on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, through ‘Ikrima (d. 105), an interpretation regarding sājidin not as mere Muslim believers, but as prophets carrying the substance of Muḥammad. It runs as follows: “(Allāh saw your — i.e. Muḥammad’s — wandering) from prophet to prophet and from prophet to prophet, till He drew you out as a prophet”.

73 Khargūshi (Tübingen) 95a–95b; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 17–18; Biḥār, XV, 223–224. This Tubba’ also built the house of Abū Ayyūb, in which Muḥammad was to settle after his arrival in al-Madīnā. See Simt, I, 312. And see also M. J. Kister, “Ḥaddithū ‘an bani isrā’īl”, IOS, II, 1972, p. 233.

74 Suḥaylī, I, 36.


76 ‘Asma’ī, 43: wa-balaghānt annahu lam yakun il-sayfi bni dht yazānīn dhālīkā l-ilmū fi amrī l-nabīyyīn (s) ëllā min jihāti tubba’in wa-mā tanākā ilayhi...

77 Ibn Sa’d, 1/1, 5: wa-mīn nabīyyīn ëllā nabīyyīn wa-mīn nabīyyīn ëllā nabīyyīn, bāṭā akhrojaka nabiyyan. Compare Zurqānī, I, 67, 176; Ḥalabī, I, 29. Goldziher tries to impose

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More outspoken variants of this interpretation, quoted from al-Bazzār (d. 292) and other authors, mention also the word “loins” (ašlāb), thus elucidating that the word “prophets” refers indeed to his ancestors, who transmitted his substance through their bodies: “from Ibn ‘Abbās: he said: this verse means his (i.e. Muḥammad’s) wandering from the loins of a prophet to the loins of (another) prophet, till (Allāh) drew him out as a prophet”.79 Or else: “Allāh saw his wandering through the loins of the prophets, from prophet to prophet, till he made him emerge from the loins of his father, out of matrimony, pure since Adam”.80 The following version is the most straightforward: “The prophet has never stopped wandering through the loins of the prophets, till his mother gave birth to him”.81

These versions of Ibn ‘Abbās’ interpretation exceed, in fact, the common Shi‘ī outlook. The Shi‘a draws, usually, a clear line between those ancestors of Muḥammad who were actually prophets (all of them Biblical figures), and the rest of his ancestors, who are supposed to carry the prophetic heritage only as ‘awṣiyā’ (sing. waṣiyy). This term refers mainly to Muḥammad’s Arab ancestors descending from Ishmael, who were successors to the preceding prophets; they are designed to link between the preceding prophets and the forthcoming one. It means that Muḥammad’s Arab ancestors, linked Ishamel—the last prophet among his forefathers—with Muḥammad himself. Al-Majlisi explains this view clearly in his Biḥār: “The Imāmite Shi‘is are unanimous that the prophet’s parents, as well as all his ancestors till Adam, were Muslims; moreover, they were righteous — whether sent prophets, or infallible ‘awṣiyā’”.82

This distinction between prophets and ‘awṣiyā’ among Muḥammad’s ancestors, finds its way to some other versions of the above-mentioned interpretation of Ibn ‘Abbās. These versions make clear that not all the carriers on the text of Ibn Sa‘d the Neo-Platonic idea of the transmigration of the prophetic spirit through all the universal prophets, including Muḥammad (Goldziher, 340). It is, however, quite clear that this tradition deals only with the wandering of the spermatic substance of Muḥammad, through his ancestors. And see also above, note 26.

80 Biḥār, XV, 3: qāla: yarā taqallubahu fi ašlābi l-nabiyyīna, min nabiyyin ilā nabiyyin, ḥattā akhrajahu min sulbi abīlī, min nikāhīn ghayrī sifākīn min ladūnī adāma.
of Muhammad's substance, were actually prophets. One of these versions runs as follows: "Ibn 'Abbās said: the verse means your wandering through the loins of the prophets, from prophet to prophet, till He made you manifest as prophet in this nation (i.e. among the Arabs)." It is suggested here that Muhammad was the first to emerge as a prophet among the Arabs, while his Arab forefathers are not regarded as such. A similar approach comes forth in al-Zurqāni's remark: "Ibn 'Abbās means the wandering of Muhammad through the loins of the prophets, though it was through the loins of intermediates, as well." Other versions of the same interpretation, simply refrain from entitling Muhammad's ancestors "prophets", thus avoiding the core of the problem: "Ibn 'Abbās said: it means that (Muhammad wandered) through the loins of the ancestors, Adam, Noah and Abraham, till (Allāh) made him manifest as a prophet". Or a further version: "Ibn 'Abbās said: through the loins of Adam, Noah and Abraham, till you emerged".

A question deserving further examination is, who amongst Muhammad's biblical ancestors was actually a prophet (and not only a waṣīyy). The problem centres mainly around Adam. Some Qur'ānic verses exclude him from the list of prophets, mentioning Noah as the first of them. A tradition on the authority of Ma'mar b. Rāshid reports, likewise, that Noah was the first of all prophets sent.

On the other hand, the Qur'ān itself mentions also prophets, preceding Noah; among them one finds Idrīs (Qur'ān xix 56) who is usually identified with Enoch, and Adam, who is represented as primogenitor of a prophetic race (Qur'ān, xix 58); Adam is also said to be the first of all people who were chosen by Allāh to be above all mankind (Qur'ān iii 33). Some early traditions, referring to Adam as a prophet, are based on this view. It is related that Abū Dharr asked Muhammad who was the first prophet. Muhammad

83 And see also Ḥalabī, I, 29: wa-hādha, kamā lā yakhfā, lā yunāfi wuqū'ā man layya nabīyyan fī ābā'īhi. fa-l-nurādū waqū'ū l-anbiyā'ī fī nasabīhi. kamā 'alimta darurata anna ābī'ahu kullāhum laysī anbiyyā'.


85 Zurqānī, I, 176: fa-fassara (ibn 'Abbās) taqallubahu fī l-sājidin bi-taqallubihi fī ȃsābī l-anbiyā'ī, wa-low ma'a l-wasī'īt.

86 Qurṭubī, XIII, 114: wa-qāla bnu 'abbās: ay fī ȃsābī l-ābā'ī — ȃdama wa-nūhin wa-ibrāhīma ȃtā akhrajahu nabīyyan.

87 Abū Ḥayyān, VII, 47: wa-qāla bnu 'abbās: fī ȃsābī ādama wa-nūhin wa-ibrāhīma ȃtā khārajat.

88 See Qur'ān iv 163, vi 84, xiii 7, xlii 13, lvii 26.

89 Tabari, Ta'rīkh, I, 178: fa-kāna awwalana nabiyyin bū'tiha nūhun 'alayhi l-salām. Cf. Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 27; Zurqānī, I, 125.
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said that it was Adam to whom Allāh spoke.90 Wahb b. Munabbīh states that Adam was the first of all messengers, while Muḥammad was the last of them all.91

The presentation of Adam as a prophet contradicts, in fact, his Qur'ānic descriptions as a rebel against Allāh (Qur'ān xx 121). The commentators reconcile this divergence by showing that the sin of Adam in paradise had taken place before he became an infallible prophet.92

The prophets succeeding Adam were, according to one tradition, Sheth, Idrīs, Noah and Abraham.93 Ishmael is also regarded as a prophet.94 Sheth, however, is sometimes excluded from the line of early prophets, Idrīs being the first prophet counted after Adam.95

According to the Shi`ī outlook Noah, regarded as the first of ʿulū l-ʿazm (Qur'ān xlvi 35), was the first to appear as a prophet, since the preceding prophets had to hide their mission because of persecution by Cain's descendants.96

II. THE SUBSTANCE OF MUḤAMMAD AS LIGHT

The most exalted representation of Muḥammad's primordial substance is light. This light is mentioned already in early Muslim sources, mainly in traditions dealing with events that took place before the prophet's birth. The central figure in these traditions is 'Abdallāh, the prophet's father. 'Abdallāh is said to have transmitted to his wife his divine prophetic sperm, that in due time brought about the birth of Muḥammad. As long as this sperm dwelt in his body, there was a blaze shining on his forehead. This blaze attracted several women who hoped to obtain the virtue of becoming the prophet's mother. The woman who won the contest at last, was Āmina of the Qurashi clan of Zuhrā. She was married to 'Abdallāh who invested her with his light. Consequently, she conceived Muḥammad. Having transmitted the light 'Abdallāh was no longer of interest to the other women, since not a trace of it was left on his forehead.

One of the earliest biographers of Muḥammad who dealt with the light

90 Ibn Sa'd, 1/1, 10, 26. Cf. Ṭabarī, Ta'rikh, I, 151 (from Ibn Ishāq).
91 Maʿārif, 26.
92 Bihār, XI, 164.
93 Maʿārif, 26.
94 Ṭabarī, Ta'rikh, I, 314 (from Ibn Ishāq); Qisas, 82; Ḥalabī, I, 18, 21.
95 Ibn Sa'd, 1/1, 16; Ṭabarī, Ta'rikh, I, 170 (from Ibn Ishāq).
96 See, for instance, Ithbāt, 24. On ulū l-ʿazm, see also 'Ilal, 122–123; Bihār, XI, 33–36.
of 'Abdallāh, was al-Zuhri (d. 124). In a tradition quoted on his authority by Ma‘mar b. Rāshid (d. 154), ‘Abdallāh is described as the most handsome man ever seen in Quraysh. One day he came across a group of Qurashi women. One of them said: “women of Quraysh, which one of you will marry this man and seize the light resting between his eyes?” and indeed there was a light resting between his eyes. Amina bint Wahb of the clan of Zuhra married 'Abdallāh, and in due time she conceived the messenger of Allah.

Ibn Ishaq’s (d. 150-151) account on the subject is more detailed. ‘Abdallāh’s light is described in his Sīra not in its relation to his physical beauty, but in a more elevated context. The light according to Ibn Ishaq, was a prophetic symbol of ‘Abdallāh’s future son, therefore it attracted the women who strove to be the prophet’s mother. Ibn Ishaq’s version, unlike that of al-Zuhri, mentions also the disappearance of the light from ‘Abdallāh’s forehead, after he had invested Āmina with it. His version, quoted by Ibn Hishām, runs as follows: On his way to marry Āmina, ‘Abdallāh was stopped by a woman near the Ka‘ba (her name was Ruqaiyya, Ruqayya or Qutayla). She was a sister of Waraqa b. Naufal — a scholar, well versed in the Holy Scriptures. Knowing from her brother, who had embraced Christianity, that a prophet was about to emerge among the Arabs, and seeing ‘Abdallāh’s light, she concluded that the future prophet was hidden in his loins. Thereupon she offered him a hundred camels for possessing her. ‘Abdallāh, who was accompanied by his father, could not comply with her request. Instead, he proceeded and married Āmina. On that very day he transferred his light to her. Later, when he returned to Waraqa’s sister, she observed that his light was gone, and lost interest in him.

The version of Yūnus b. Bukayr (d. 199), one of Ibn Ishaq’s rāwīs, is almost identical with that of Ibn Hishām (transmitted from Ibn Ishaq through al-Bakka‘ī, d. 183). The only difference consists of some extra verses in Yūnus’ version, attributed to Waraqa’s sister. In these verses she maintains that the light had gone from ‘Abdallāh coming to rest with the clan of Zuhra, i.e. Āmina’s clan. She also describes the prophet about to be born as one who is guided, with light leading his way.

A similar tradition is recorded by Ibn Sa’d on the authority of al-Wāqidi.

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1 Bayhaqi, I, 74 (from a general account about Muḥammad’s early years, transmitted through Ma‘mar); Suyūṭī, I, 104 (from al-Bayhaqi and Abū Nu‘aym).
2 Ibn Hishām, I, 164-165; Tabarl, Ta’rikh, II, 243-244 (Ibn Ishaq); Ibn al-Jawzi, I, 86-87.
3 Suhayli, I, 180; Ḥalabi, I, 39; Zurqānī, I, 101.
4 ‘Abdallāh’s trial of temptation is sometimes compared with that of Joseph. See Zurqānī, I, 110.
5 Bayhaqi, I, 84–86 (from Yūnus b. Bukayr).
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The woman, it is stated, could read the future in people’s faces (wa-kānat tanzūru wa-ta’āfī), and thus understood the meaning of ‘Abdallāh’s blazing light. A further tradition, ascribed to al-Wāqīdī, states that ‘Abdallāh’s light came to rest between Āmina’s breasts, leaving a trace on ‘Abdallāh’s forehead like a Dirham coin.

Ibn Ishaq himself has an additional tradition on the subject. It relates that the woman who tried to receive ‘Abdallāh’s light was one of his own wives. On intending to lie with her one day, his wife told him to wash himself of the traces of silt with which he had been working. Having washed he preferred to lie with Āmina, who consequently conceived the prophet. Then he returned to his first wife, but now she rejected him, saying: “No! you have passed across me with a white blaze on your forehead. I invited you, but you came first to Āmina and she has taken it away”.

Other traditions state that the woman who wanted ‘Abdallāh’s light was Fāṭima bint Murr. According to al-Ṭabari, she was a Kāhina of Khath’ām, a Jewess from the people of Tabāla (or: Tubāla). She is presented as extremely beautiful, young, modest and well-versed in books. On ‘Abdallāh’s forehead she discovered the “light of prophethood” (nur al-nubuwwa). According to Ibn Sa’d, it shone up to the sky. Ibn Sa’d quotes some verses ascribed to Fāṭima, in which the light is described as a lightning among the clouds, shining like dawn. Āmina, it is stressed, robbed it from ‘Abdallāh without his notice. In other verses she describes ‘Abdallāh, after having lied with Āmina, as being left like a smoking wick that was snuffed out. She declares that the loss of ‘Abdallāh’s light was a determined fate, independent of man’s activity or inactivity.

The divine religious nature of the traditions discussed above is entirely missing from another tradition, quoted from Ibn ‘Abbās, through ‘Ikrima, about the Khath’āmite woman. According to this tradition, the woman was a mere whore, who used to come to Mecca to look for men performing their

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6 Ibn Sa’īd, I/1, 58–59; Suyūṭī, I, 104–105 (from Ibn Sa’īd).
7 Bihār, XV, 282–283.
8 Ibn Hishām, I, 166: ...qālat: là, mārārta bi wa-bayna ‘aynayka ghurratum baydā’u; fa-da’awtuka fa-abayta ‘alayya ‘alā āmnawa fa-dhahabat bīhā. Compare, Ţabari, Tu’rīkh, II, 244 (Ibn Ishāq); Bayhaqī, I, 86 (Yūnus b. Bukayr). This woman was named Laylā from the clan of ‘Adīyy. See Suyūṭī, I, 100–101; Suhaylī, I, 180; Ḥalabī, I, 40; Zurqānī, I, 102 (from Ibn Qutayba).
9 Ibn Sa’īd, I/1, 59–60; Simt, I, 242; Suhaylī, I, 180.
10 Ţabari, Tu’rīkh, II, 244. See also Suyūṭī, I, 101; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 87; Zurqānī, I, 102; Ḥalabī, I, 39.
11a Ibn Sa’īd, I/1, 60; Suyūṭī, I, 103 (Ibn Sa’īd).
When she saw 'Abdallah, one day, she was attracted by his unusual beauty. 'Abdallah, who was ready to lie with her, came first to his wife, who consequently conceived Muḥammad. When he came back to that woman, she could not recognize him since his light was missing. The light in this version is mainly part of 'Abdallah’s physical beauty, sexually attractive to that woman who knew nothing about its prophetic significance.

Āmina’s marriage to 'Abdallah which brought about the transmission of the prophetic light to a member of the Qurashi clan of Zuhra, was predestined. It is related by Ibn Ša’d that a Jewish scholar already foresaw this marriage through his scriptures. When 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was in al-Yaman, this scholar examined his body and found in it signs of prophethood and kingdom. He urged him to marry a woman of Zuhra. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib acted accordingly, taking one Zuhra woman for himself, and one — namely Āmina — for his son, 'Abdallah. Consequently, all the disappointed women of Quraysh became sick, and two hundred of them died of grief.

The transmission of 'Abdallah’s light to Āmina was, likewise, predestined. Thus, a further tradition about 'Abdallah’s light relates that after having transmitted his light to Āmina, the disappointed woman said to him: “I have seen the light that was with you yesterday, and I wanted it to be within me. However, Allāh was determined to put it only where He wanted it to be; only where He wanted it to be.”

The moment of the transmission of the prophetic light to Āmina, had a cosmic significance. The gates of heaven and paradise opened, and the tidings about Muḥammad’s light that had entered Āmina’s womb, were sent down.

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12 Bayhaqi, I, 87–88 (from Dāwūd b. Abī Hind); Suyūṭī, I, 103–104 (from al-Bayhaqi, Abī Nu‘aym and Ibn ‘Asakir).
13 The clan of Zuhra were always proud of their close relation to the prophet through his mother, Āmina; they used to point out that they were his only uncles on his mother’s side. See Ma’ārif, 57; Khargūshi (Tübingen) 86a.
14 Ibn Sa’d, I/1, 51; Khargūshi, 136a; Bayhaqi, I, 87, 88–89; Ibn al-Jawzi, I, 84–85; Suyūṭī, I, 99–100; Zurqānī, I, 103; Suhaylī, I, 178–179; Bīhār, XV, 218; Ḥalabī, I, 43–44. According to another tradition, Āmina was married to 'Abdallah after her father had seen angels descending to help 'Abdallah; it happened when the latter was attacked by seventy Jewish scholars coming from Syria to kill the father of the future prophet and seeking to prevent Muḥammad’s emergence. When Āmina’s father witnessed this miracle, he decided to give his daughter to 'Abdallah. See Itḥāḥ, 106; Khargūshi, 18a–18b; Ibn Shahrashūb, I, 27; Bīhār, XV, 97–98; 111.
15 Itḥāḥ, 106–107; Khargūshi, 18b; Zurqānī, I, 103. A similar story is also related about the marriage of Kilāb b. Murra. See al-Wazīr al-Maghribī, K. al-‘Inās bi ‘Ilmi l-Ansāb, B. M. Or. 3620, fol. 49a ff.
16 Sīnt, I, 242: ...wa-innama ra‘aytu l-nūra llaḥīḥ kāna ma‘akā bi-l-amsī fa-aradtu an yakūna fīyya fa-‘abū ilāhu an yaf‘alahu ilā ḥaythu shā‘a, ilā ḥaythu shā‘a, See also, Ḥalabī, I, 40.
All the idols of Quraysh, as well as those all over the world, were turned upside down. Iblīs was thrown off his chair, and fled to the mountain of Abū Qubays, where he acquainted the demons with the news about the near appearance of the prophet and their own end. A further account, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, relates that on the first night of Āmina’s pregnancy all the beasts of Quraysh could suddenly talk. They conveyed to one another the tidings of Āmina’s pregnancy, announcing that “the safeguard and shining lamp of all mankind” was about to be born. Foretellers were cut off from their demonic sources of information. The chairs of all kings were turned upside down, and the tidings of the near appearance of Abī l-Qāsim (i.e. Muhammad) were announced throughout heaven and earth.

The dwelling of the prophetic light in Āmina’s body also originated some wondrous events. Ibn Ishāq reports that Āmina, after conceiving Muḥammad, was told that she had conceived the master of the Arab nation. She was ordered to name him Muḥammad. This version of Ibn Ishāq does not disclose in what state Āmina was during this revelation. Other traditions, however, state that it took place when she was half asleep, or actually dreaming.

During her pregnancy Āmina saw another prophetic vision, as well. It was a vision of light emerging from her body. Ibn Hishām relates, on Ibn Ishāq’s authority, that the light illuminated the palaces of Buṣrā in Syria. It was, in fact, a prelude to the actual emergence of Muḥammad’s prophetic light.
that was due to take place on his birth. 23 This light, according to other traditions, seemed to Amina as if it reached the eastern and the western ends of the earth. 24

The tradition about Amina's vision of light is sometimes combined with another tradition about prophets who anticipated Muḥammad's appearance. Qur'an ii 129 mentions Abraham's prayer about Muḥammad's emergence among the Arabs, and Qur'an lxi 6 speaks about Jesus's tidings of him. An early tradition based on these verses, runs as follows: "The prophet was asked: what was the beginning of your prophethood? The prophet answered: the prayer of my father Abraham; and Jesus has conveyed tidings of me". 25

The amalgamated form of this tradition — including the tradition of Amina's vision — is recorded already by Ibn Ishaq: "The prophet said: I am the prayer of my father Abraham, and the tidings of Jesus; and my mother saw, when she conceived me, a light coming out of her body, illuminating the palaces of Buṣrā in Syria". 26 Moreover, the early tradition about the primogeniture of Muḥammad's prophetic substance within Adam's body (see above), is also combined with the early traditions at issue: "The prophet said: I was the servant of Allāh and the seal of prophets, when Ādam was still just clay. I shall inform you about it: the prayer of my father Abraham, the good tidings of Jesus about me, and the vision that my mother has seen; all mothers of prophets see (such visions)". 27

We are confronted here with an early systematization of the concept about the prophetic, luminous substance of Muḥammad. The beginning of its wandering — in Adam's loins — and its end on Muḥammad's birth — are integrated here into one whole.

The actual appearance of the light on Muḥammad's birth, is described in detail in traditions frequently related in the name of Amina. She says that Muḥammad left her body with light that illuminated the castles of Syria and

23 According to Yūnus b. Bukayr's version, Amina was only informed that the light would appear on Muḥammad's birth, without her actually seeing it during her pregnancy; see Bayhaqi, I, 70, 92; Suyūṭi, I, 115. It is frequently stressed that the actual appearance of the light took place on Muḥammad's birth, whereas before it, Amina had seen this light only in her dream; see Suyūṭi, I, 114–115; Zurqānī, I, 117; Ḥalabī, I, 47.

24 Tabari, Ta'rikh, II, 161; Zurqānī, I, 107; Bihār, XV, 396–397.


26 Ibn Hishām, I, 175; Tabari, Ta'rikh, II, 165 (Ibn Ishāq); Bayhaqi, I, 71 (Yūnus b. Bukayr). And see also Suyūṭi, I, 114, 11; Ḥalabī, I, 47, 48–49.

27 Ibn Sa'd, I/1, 96: inni 'abdu lliihi wa-khdtamu l-nabiyyina wa-inna Mama la-munjadilun fī tinatihi; wa-sa-ukhbirukum min dhālika: da'watu abi ibrāhīma wa-bishshara bi wa-ra'ya umni ilai ra'at; wa-kadhālika ummahāti l-nabīyyina yarayna. And see also Bayhaqi, I, 71, 68–70; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 36; Suyūṭi, I, 114; Zurqānī, I, 116. (Amina's vision of light is sometimes connected, in these sources, to Muḥammad's actual birth). See more about wondrous events preceding Muḥammad's birth, Zurqānī, I, 111 ff.; Bihār, XV, 257 ff.; Ḥalabī, I, 70 ff.
its markets, till she saw the necks of the camels in the markets of Buṣrā.\textsuperscript{28} Other traditions maintain that it illuminated the whole region between Syria and al-Yaman,\textsuperscript{29} or even the whole world, to its eastern and western ends.\textsuperscript{30} According to another tradition, the light shone so intensely, that it frightened her.\textsuperscript{30a}

Mothers of some of the prophet’s companions reportedly shared the vision of light on his birth. In contrast to traditions asserting that Āmina was alone when Muḥammad was born,\textsuperscript{31} a tradition states that the mother of ʿUthmān b. Abī al-ʿĀṣ was also present. She saw light emerging from every corner of the room; the stars descended till she feared that they would come down on her.\textsuperscript{32} According to another tradition, Muḥammad came out of his mother’s womb straight into the hands of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf’s mother. She heard a voice greeting the boy, and saw light reaching one of the palaces of Byzantium. She also heard the voices of the angels carrying the boy all over the world. Consequently, she was among the first to embrace Islam.\textsuperscript{33}

A Shiʾī tradition puts forward the part played by ʿAlī’s mother in the same scene. She attended Muḥammad’s birth, and saw the same vision of light which Āmina had seen. On the next morning she told her husband, Abū Ṭalīb, about the light that illuminated the palm trees of Ḥajar. Abū Ṭalīb assured her that, in due course, she would give birth to a son, in the same way Āmina had done.\textsuperscript{34}

The appearance of the prophetic light on Muḥammad’s birth is the final and most elevated stage of the wandering of Muḥammad’s primordial entity, beginning with Adam. Already early poets detailed the eternal course of its wandering. Some early verses are those ascribed to al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, the prophet’s uncle. Sometimes, however, they are ascribed to al-ʿAbbās b. Mīrāḍ, who used to compose verses in praise of him,\textsuperscript{35} or to Ḥassān b. Thābit, the prophet’s poet.\textsuperscript{36} The early nature of these verses

\textsuperscript{28} Ibn Saʿd, I, 63; Yaʿqūbī, II, 9; Khargūshī, 30b; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 94, 95; Suyūṭī, I, 115, 116; Zurqānī, I, 116, 117; Ḥalabi, I, 56.

\textsuperscript{29} Khargūshī, 89b.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibn Saʿd, I, 63; Suyūṭī, I, 115, 116; Zurqānī, I, 115; Ḥalabi, I, 56. Detailed accounts are frequently quoted from Abū Nuʿaym. See Suyūṭī, I, 117-118, 122, 126, 127; see also Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 30.

\textsuperscript{30a} Yaʿqūbī, II, 9: ...raʾaytu lammā waḍaʿatuḥu nūran bādā minnī sāṭiʿ an ḥattā afzaʿan.

\textsuperscript{31} Khargūshī, 30b; Zurqānī, I, 111 (from al-Khargūshī); Ibn Kathīr, 576.

\textsuperscript{32} Ṭabarī, Taʿrīkh, II, 156-157; Bayhaqī, I, 91-92; Suyūṭī, I, 113-114; Zurqānī, I, 116; Suhaylī, I, 181; Ḥalabi, I, 58.

\textsuperscript{33} Suyūṭī, I, 116-117 (Abū Nuʿaym); Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 94-95; Zurqānī, I, 119-120; Ḥalabi, I, 63.

\textsuperscript{34} Ithbāt, 129. See also Biḥār, XV, 295 (from al-Kāfī).

\textsuperscript{35} Istīʿāb, II, 817 ff.

\textsuperscript{36} Zurqānī, I, 117.
becomes quite evident through their content. The basic notion is identical with the early traditions about Muḥammad’s primogeniture in substance, discussed in the first part of this study. The tradition ascribing these verses to al-‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, maintains that he composed them when the prophet was on his way back from Tabūk. A tradition to this effect is already recorded by Ibn Qutayba (d. 279). The verses are:

Before that [i.e. before your appearance on earth], you dwelt well among shadows [of paradise],
Deposited where leaves were stitched [i.e. the loins of Adam];
Nor as a morsel or congealed blood —
But as a drop of sperm [within Adam’s loins]. You sailed in the ark
While the flood had reached the mouth of “Nasr” and his followers.
You were transmitted from loins to wombs;
When people of one generation passed away, there came a [new] generation.
You entered the fire of Abraham, hidden,
How could he be burnt, with you in his loins?
— Till your trustworthy clan dwelt within
Khindif, on high mountains with [wide] areas beneath.
When you were born, the earth shone
And the horizons beamed with your light;
We proceed fast in this brightness
And light, and in the right paths.

The same idea is expressed in some verses of the Shi‘i poet, Kumayt (d. 125).

37 Adab al-Kātib, 333 (quoting one verse only); Suyūṭī, I, 97 (from al-Ḥākim and al-Ṭabarānī); Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 35; Murādī, II, 130; Ibn Shahrāshīb, I, 27; Zurqāṇī, I, 117 (two final verses only), III, 83–85 (with interpretations); Ḥalabī, I, 56 (two final verses): ṭaḥiṣ ṭabaqāṭī wa-l-qāhira wa-šāhīda wa-ṣuwaṣṣa ṭabāqātī wa-l-hawāy wa-ḥaṣā ṭabāqātī wa-l-qāhira wa-šāhīda wa-ṣuwaṣṣa ṭabāqātī. The verses cited in this connection are from the works of Ibn al-Jawzī (I, 35; II, 130), al-Ṭabarānī (I, 117), al-Ḥākim (I, 97), Suyūṭī (I, 97), al-Qadī al-Mukhtārī (in al-Ṭabarānī), and Ibn Shahrāshīb (I, 27).

38 The sperm, the congealed blood, and the morsel, mentioned in Qur‘ān xxii 5 and xxiii 14, are three stages in the process of the creation of the human being. Cf. Bukhārī, IX, 165; Muslim, VIII, 44 ff.; ‘Iṣṭa‘il, 345.

39 Nasr (i.e. eagle) was one of the five idols in Noah’s times mentioned in Qur‘ān lxxi 23. This idol was worshipped by some Ifīmyarīte tribes. See Ṭabarī, Tajīrī, XXIX, 62.

40 i.e. the clan of Muḥammad was most honoured among the clans of Khindif who was the wife of al-Ya’s b. Muḍar. The substance of Muḥammad is conceived here as forming part of the collective substance of his tribe.
Pre-existence and light

These verses were discussed already by Goldziher:41

When your lineage is mentioned, your long branched tree blooms [spreading out] between Eve and Amina.
You were transmitted from generation to generation,
And you have got from her [i.e. from Amina] white silver and gold [i.e. you have got your light from your mother at your birth]

Goldziher has explained that
Wir können dies nicht anders verstehen, als dass die edle Substanz des Propheten, schon von Eva her bestanden habe, und dass sie (hier mit glänzendem Silber und Gold verglichen) von Generation auf Generation in ununterbrochener Folge übergeben ward. Also die Substanz des Propheten sei von Adam her präexistent, und als edler Stoff von dem Träger der einen Generation in den der folgenden gewandert, bis sie in Muhammed in offene Erscheinung trat.42

According to a more elaborate outlook, the substance of Muhammad appeared openly as light, not only shortly before Muhammad’s birth, but long before it. Hence, not only ‘Abdallah, but also former ancestors had the prophetic blaze on their foreheads. Al-Waqidi (d. 207) already mentioned, reportedly, the light of ‘Abd Manaf: “On him was the light of the messenger of God, and in his hand was the banner of Nizār and the bow of Ishmael”.43 Other traditions refer to the same light as seen on Khuzayma’s forehead,44 as well as on Mudrika’s45 and Nizār’s.46

In fact, the blaze is conceived to be shining on the foreheads of Muḥammad.”

42 Goldziher goes on to remark “dass Kumeit hier fiir diese Übergabe das Wort ‘tanduskh’ gebraucht, der richtige Ausdruck für den Begriff der Metempsychosis der auch in der späteren Literatur eben fiir die Transmission des göttlichen Seelenteils von einem Imam auf den anderen regelmässig gebraucht wird”. This remark completely ignores the fact that Kumayt’s verses deal with the wandering of Muhammad’s substance through his ancestors, and not with the transmigration of the imāmi spirit. We shall discuss the differences between the two doctrines in the third part of this article. As for the word ‘tanāsukh’ it has to be noted that it does not fundamentally denote the transmigration of souls. It is used for the wandering of the spermatic substance as well. See, e.g. Nahj, II, 180: fi-stawda‘ahum fi afdali mustawda‘in wa-qarrakahum fi khayri mustaqarrin. tanāsakhathum karā’imu l-aslābi ilā mu‘ahharatī l-ar‘āmi.
44 Ibid, 77 (from T‘arīkh al-Kharmīs).
46 Ibid, 79; Suhaylī, I, 10; Ḥalābī, I, 17.
mad's ancestors as early as Adam. Detailed traditions about the wandering of this shining light through all Muhammad's ancestors are included in a book written by al-Mas'ūdī (d. 346), the Ithbāt al-Waṣiyya li-l-Imām 'Ali b. Abī Ṭālib. These very traditions, with some omissions, are also recorded by al-Khargūshi (d. 406) in his Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā. Some important elements of these traditions are found already in the early sources dealing with Muhammad's birth. A most prominent element is the presentation of the ancestors as mere successive vehicles designated for a continuous transmission of the light through their bodies. The light is forwarded from one to another as a whole, without leaving a trace in the body of the former carrier. The actual transmission takes place only during an intercourse that brings about the birth of the forthcoming carrier. Thus, an account similar to that concerning 'Abdallāh, is recorded in the Ithbāt concerning Adam. It relates that Adam used to order Eve to wash herself whenever he intended to lie with her, lest his light would come to rest within an impure body. On conceiving Sheth the light left Adam's forehead and appeared in her own body. When Sheth was born that very light shone on his forehead, whereas on the birth of Sheth's elder brothers the light kept on shining on Adam's forehead. Similarly, the light did not leave Kedar's forehead before his wife conceived his successor Ḥamal. The same is related about Ḥāshim who transferred his light to his wife only when she conceived 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. Abd al-Muṭṭalib, likewise, begot Abū Ṭālib and al-Zubayr, transmitting his light to neither of them. Only when his wife Fāṭima conceived 'Abdallāh did she absorb the whole light into her body.

The Ithbāt traditions lay a special emphasis on the purity of the light-bearers — both males and females. This, also, is similar to what is said in the early traditions concerning Muhammad's birth: Ibn Ishaq states that Āmina came of the noblest strain of all Quraysh. The light itself is described as a blaze (ghurrā) resembling the blaze seen on the foreheads of noble horses.
Pre-existence and light

The same description is given in the Ithštā to the light on Adam's forehead,56 as well as on that of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib.57

The pure race of the light-bearers is elevated in the Ithštā traditions to a rank of an exalted ideality. The strict preservation of the pure race is a Divine decree, committed already to Adam. It was handed down successively to all the following ancestors of Muhammad. Consigning this command of purity to Adam, Allāh said: “Take this light together with My covenant and contract so that you will deposit the light only within the pure wombs”.58 Forwarding the same order to his successor, Shēth, Adam said: “My son, Allāh has ordered me to impose on you a covenant and a compact for the sake of the light on your face, to the effect that you shall deposit it only within the purest woman of all mankind. Let it be known to you that Allāh has put upon me a rigid covenant concerning it”.59 Gabriel and ninety thousand angels witnessed this commandment being written. It was written with a pen brought from paradise, and was sealed with Gabriel’s seal. Shēth was dressed with two purple robes of light.60 Shēth, in due time, passed this commandment (waṣīyya) on to Enosh, Enosh to Kenan, Kenan to Mahalaleel and so on.61

The pure race was preserved by Muḥammad’s Arab ancestors as well. According to the Ithštā, every Arab ancestor used to write down a covenant for his successor, to the effect that he should marry only the purest woman of his time. The covenant was hung in the Ka’ba, since the days of Iṣḥām, up to the year of the elephant.62

The spiritual purity of the light-carriers is also emphasized in the Ithštā. Shēth for instance, was protected on his birth from Iblīs by several veils of light drawn around him by Allāh. Iblīs was thus isolated till the boy was seven years old; all this time a cosmic column of light was towering between heaven and earth.63 A similar column (‘aṃūd), denoting the righteousness of the new-born in its universal sense, was also erected on the birth of Abraham.

56 Ithštā, 90; Khargūshi, 8ª. Compare, Simt, I, 40.
57 Ithštā, 102; Khargūshi, 13ª, 14ª.
58 Ithštā, 90; Khargūshi, 7ª–8ª; Simt, I, 43–44.
59 Ithštā, 91. See also Ḥalabī, I, 31; Simt, I, 73.
60 Ithštā, 91–92; Khargūshi, 8ª; Biḥār, XV, 35 (al-Bakrī).
61 Ithštā, 92, and see also Simt, I, 88, 97; Zurqānī, I, 65.
62 Ithštā, 98. The pure race of the women who were married to prophets or to their descendants is stressed in the Book of Tobit iv 12; cf. about it in J. M. Grintz, Chapters in The History of The Second Temple Times, Jerusalem, 1969, pp. 54–55.
63 Ithštā, 91; Khargūshi, 8ª; Biḥār, XV, 34 (al-Bakrī). Veils were, likewise, drawn around Noah (Simt, I, 98), Abraham (Suyūṭī, III, 114) and Jesus (Qīṣṣaṣ, 319; Ḥalabī, I, 70). When Jesus was born Iblīs was barred from three heavens; when Muḥammad was born he was barred from all seven. See Suyūṭī, I, 127; Biḥār, XV, 257; Ḥalabī, I, 68.
Its beauty evoked the adoration of the angels. On the birth of Ĥumal, Kedar's son, the gates of heaven opened and rays of light, like those of the moon, were beaming between heaven and earth. Angels descended with blessings and mercy.

The prophetic blaze itself, serves as a source of blessing for the whole community of its carrier. This aspect is fully expressed in the traditions about the blaze of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. These traditions, obviously Shi'i inspired, present the prophet's grandfather as a praiseworthy leader, communicating between Quraysh and Providence. It is related in the Ithbāt that with the light of Muḥammad blazing on his forehead, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib managed to bring down rain on Mecca after a period of heavy drought. The exalted

Ithbāt, 96–97; Khargūshi, 118.

It has to be borne in mind that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, being the ancestor of both Abū Ṭālib (father of 'Alī) and al-'Abbās, serves as a natural focus for pro-Hashimite traditions, aimed against the Umayyads; thus it was originally both a Shi'i and Abbāsid interest to lay a special emphasis on the light of the prophet's grandfather. Some examples from early sources will make this phenomenon clear: Ibn IŞhāq quotes some verses in praise of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib in which his face is described as shining like a full moon. See Ibn Hīshām, I, 180: lāhu faḍīl majdīn 'alā qaumītru yawlīkhu ka-dawī l-qamārī. See also ibid., 185 (ascribed to Hūdhaifa b. Ghānim): 'alā shaybāni l-hamādi l-ladīkī kāna wajhuhā l-muḍī l-sawāda l-laylī l-qamārī l-badīrī. Jamla, a singer of the Umayyad period, who supported ahl al-bayt, sang the latter verse for 'Abdallāh b. Ja'far (b. Abū Ṭālib). See Aghānī, VIII, 145. Ibn al-Kalābī too relates that in the jāhiliyya, Nufayl b. ʿAbd allāh sang the latter verse for 'Abd allāh b. 'Uzzā who supported 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib against Ḥarb b. Umayya, composed some verses in which he described the former as a light guiding one's way. See Ibn Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-Munammaq fī Akhbār Quraysh (Hyderabad, 1964), 97: wa-shaybatu l-hamādi nūram yuṣṭaḍātā l-bihi. In fact, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's light was praised not only in early verses but also in some early traditions. 'Awāna b. al-Ḥakam (d. 147/8; see GĀS, I, 307) recorded a story about 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās who had denounced the Umayyad caliph Yazīd (d. 64) for killing al-Husayn and the young men from among the children of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib who were (shining) in darkness like lamps. See al-Balādhuri, Ansāb al-Askāfī, IVb, ed. M. Schloesinger (Jerusalem, 1938), p. 18: ...qatla al-ḥusayn wa-l-fītyāna bani 'abd al-muṭṭalib maṣūbīna l-dājā ... (about the anti-Umayyad traditions of 'Awāna see also A. A. Duri, Nash'at ʾIlm al-Taʾrīkh ʿInd al-ʿArab, Beirut, 1960, pp. 36–37). Al-Haytham b. ʿAdiyy (d. 206/7; see GĀS, I, 272) also relates that the genealogist Daghfal (see about him Isṭʿāb, II, 462) was asked by Muʿāwiyah about the most excellent men of Quraysh. He mentioned two of them, namely 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and Umayya. He described 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib as being white, tall, beautiful and having the light of prophet- hood on his forehead. See Aghānī, I, 8: ...kāna 'abd al-muṭṭalib abyaṣṣā maṣūba l-qānati ḥasanā l-wajhi fī jābnīhī nūra l-nubuwwati wa-lizzu l-mulkī, Umayya was described as his utter opposite. The anti-Umayyad feelings in these early traditions are quite obvious.

Ithbāt, 102; Khargūshi, 148; Zurqānī, I, 82 (from al-Khargūshi); Ḥalabi, I, 59 (from al-Khargūshi); Simt, I, 226 (from al-Khargūshi). By the same light he brought down rain on Qays ʾAyyalān as well. See Ithbāt, 108–109. And cf. also Ibn Saʾd, I/1, 54–55; Ansāb, I, 82–83; Yaʿqūbī, II, 12–13.
features of this blaze were fully demonstrated in the year of the elephant. When Abraha set upon Mecca, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib withdrew to the mountain of Thabīr. Thereupon the blaze on his forehead beamed toward the walls of the Ka'ba, thus making him realize that Mecca was protected by Allāh. Then, he commanded his people to return to Mecca, assuring them that victory would be theirs. That very light was the chief cause of Abraha's profound respect for 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, when the latter came to negotiate with him. Seeing the light on his forehead Abraha invited him to share with him his own throne. Having learnt that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's light had been shining on the foreheads of all his ancestors, Abraha recognized that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib belonged to a race of people exceeding all kings in honour and celebrity. Abraha's elephant was also affected by the light of Muḥammad; it prostrated itself to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, greeting the light resting in his loins. Abraha's magicians explained that the elephant had prostrated itself to the light of a prophet who was about to emerge from 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's loins. They all kissed 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's legs, and gave back to him all the property they had robbed from him.

An outstanding feature of the Ithbāt traditions about the wandering of Muḥammad's substantial light, is the stress laid on its forming part of a Divine design aimed at Muḥammad's prophetic emergence at a predestined time and place. Above all, it is stated that the entire world was created for this purpose only. Allāh revealed to Adam that Muḥammad was the only cause for his own creation, as well as for the creation of heaven, earth, paradise and hell.

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2.6.2 The preordained course of Muḥammad's light (Kedar)
In order to preserve the predestined course of the wandering substance, each of its human carriers had a revelation, by which he came to know who was his destined woman, meriting his light. Usually, these revelations took the form of a dream. The traditions about Kedar, the son of Ishmael, are most typical. The Ithbât traditions relate that Kedar presumed that his destined woman was one of the daughters of Isaac. However, though he married two hundred of them the light did not forsake his body for two hundred years. Only after having a dream in which he was ordered to marry a woman from among the Arabs — namely al-Ghâdira — did the light come to rest in her womb, and she conceived his son, Ḥamal.\textsuperscript{71} This tradition presents the merits of Muḥammad’s Arab ancestry, stressing that his primordial prophetic substance was destined to pass only through Arabs, after Ishmael and Kedar.\textsuperscript{72}

Hāshim, too, was intimated in a dream of the identity of his pure chosen wife, after having turned down several proposals coming from both Arabs and non-Arabs.\textsuperscript{73} ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib was, likewise, ordered in his dream to marry Fāṭima bint ‘Amr, the mother of his successor, ‘Abdallâh.\textsuperscript{74}

Adam, as Muḥammad’s primogenitor, was the first to have the substantial blaze on his forehead. The traditions about it deserve a special examination. Already early Muslim sources are familiar with the view that Adam and Eve were clad in “clothes of light” in paradise.\textsuperscript{75} A more detailed tradition, quoted in the name of Wahb b. Munabbih, relates that Allâh coated Adam with a very beautiful nail substance that shone like the sun. After Adam committed his sin this coating was reduced, surviving only on his finger-tips.\textsuperscript{76}

The major element of Adam’s brightness is said to have been the light of Muḥammad, shining on his forehead. “Allâh”, says a tradition, “covered Adam with clothes of paradise, adorned with various ornaments, with light emerging from their folds, like sunshine”. “The light of the prophet”, it is added, “shone on his forehead like a full moon”.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{71} Ithbât, 94–95; Khargûshi, 10\textsuperscript{a}–10\textsuperscript{b}.

\textsuperscript{72} This tradition seems to be a reaction to the contrary view about the divine spirit manifested through Muḥammad’s body after having dwelt in the bodies of the universal prophets, all of them non-Arabs. See also below.

\textsuperscript{73} Ithbât, 49; Khargûshi, 13\textsuperscript{b}; Bihâr, XV, 39–40 (al-Bakrî).

\textsuperscript{74} Ithbât, 104–105; Khargûshi, 18\textsuperscript{a}.

\textsuperscript{75} Ya’qûbî, I, 5: wa-kâna libâs âdâm wa-hawwâ’ thiyâban min nîr.

\textsuperscript{76} Ma‘ârif, 8.

\textsuperscript{77} Qînas, 23: …wa-nîru nabîyyîna (s) fi jabînîhî ka-l-gamîr laylata l-badrî.
The blaze shining on Adam’s forehead represents the substance of Muḥammad, infused into his loins; this substance is conceived in our sources as having been created separately. Traditions about its separate creation are found in the Íthbát, and with some more details, in al-Tha’labî’s Qīṣās al-Anbiyā’. This substance was created in accordance with the early concept, already known to us, when Adam was still between clay and soul, that is, before Allāh breathed the spirit of life into his body. The substance of Muḥammad on its creation is identified in these traditions with a cosmic pearl, possessing independent creative powers. Al-Tha’labî’s tradition runs as follows: When Allāh wanted to create Adam He commanded Gabriel to fetch Him dust from the earth. After it was taken from the four ends of the earth, it was plunged into water and became clay.78 Then, Allāh ordered Gabriel to descend once more and bring Him a handful of pure and luminous dust for the creation of Muḥammad. Gabriel brought this dust from the place of Muḥammad’s future grave at al-Madīna.79 The dust was mingled with the water of the Tasnîm,80 and was shaken till it became a white pearl. The pearl was plunged into the water of all heavenly rivers. When it was pulled out again Allāh looked at it, and it dripped a hundred-and-fourteen thousand drops; from each drop Allāh created a prophet. Then it was set in motion throughout the heavens and earth, so that the angels came to know Muḥammad before knowing Adam. Afterwards, Allāh kneaded the pearl into the clay of Adam. When Allāh breathed soul into Adam’s body and accomplished his creation, the light of the Pearl of Muḥammad appeared on his forehead. It was transmitted through the loins of his ancestors till Muḥammad himself was born.81

78 This is the common tradition about Adam’s creation. See, e.g., Ṭabarî, Ta’rîkh, I, 89 ff. All human beings are said to have been created in a similar way. Allāh, says a tradition, has two angels of creation. He sends them to fetch dust from the earth. This dust is mixed with the sperm dwelling in the womb. See ‘Ilal, 300-301.

79 It is generally believed that the dust (turba) for the creation of the human being is taken from the future place of his grave; see Zurqānî, I, 43; turbatu l-shakhṣī madfānuhū. It is important to note here that other traditions maintain that Muḥammad’s dust was taken from Mecca. See Zurqānî, I, 43; Ḥalabî, I, 147: wa-qad qa’la bnū ‘abbās: ašlu tḥnati rasūli llāhī (q) min surratī l-ardī bi-makka. And see also M. J. Kister, “You shall only set out for Three Mosques”, Le Muséon, LXXXII, 1-2 (1969), p. 187, note 63. Mecca is even believed to be the origin and the centre of the whole earth. See Qīṣās, 3; Zarkushi, 79; Zurqānî, I, 43; Ṭabarî, Ta’rîkh, I, 49 ff.; Khargūsh, 167b; Ḥalabî, I, 146 (with a tradition granting the same merit to bayt al-maqdis). A harmonizing explanation is given by al-Suhrawardî (d. 632) in his ‘Awārîf al-Ma’ārif to the effect that Muḥammad’s dust was taken from Mecca, yet, the pearl that was created from it was thrown in the direction of al-Madīna, which became thus the place of his future grave; see Zurqānî, I, 43-44. Cf. also Ḥalabî, I, 147.

80 A celestial spring; see Qur’ān lxxxiii 27. And cf. also Ṭabarî, Ta’fīr, XXX, 69-70.

81 Qīṣās, 20-21; see also (on the authority of Ka’b al-ʿAḥbār): Íthbát, 90; Khargūsh, 7b; Ibn al-Jawzî, I, 34-35; Zurqānî, I, 42-43; Bihār, XV, 26-27 (from al-Bakrî). A further
The luminous primordial substance of Muḥammad is thus elevated to the rank of a cosmic entity.

Within the doctrine of the prophetic light the traditions dealing with the light of "Abd al-Muṭṭalib, Muḥammad’s grandfather, appear already in early sources. We have already seen (above, note 65a) that early anti-Umayyad traditions present 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib as possessing the prophetic blaze. By so doing, these traditions allude to the merits of the descendants of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s sons, Abū Ṭālib, father of 'Alī, and al-‘Abbas, forefather of the ‘Abbāsid caliphs. Yet, anti-‘Abbāsid feelings soon caused the Shi‘a to adopt a more exclusive approach. This approach comes forth through the traditions about the transmission of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s light. Some traditions which we have already seen, maintain that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib transmitted the prophetic light only to his son 'Abdallāh. According to the prevalent Shi‘ī outlook, however, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib transmitted his light equally to both 'Abdallāh and Abū Ṭālib. Abū Ṭālib in turn transferred his share of the light to his son 'Alī, whereas 'Abdallāh transmitted his half to his son Muḥammad. Thus 'Alī is presented as the exclusive sharer of the light with the prophet, which makes him his only legitimate successor.82 The actual Shi‘ī tradition concerning this matter runs as follows:

The prophet said: I and 'Alī were a light on Adam’s forehead. We wandered from the pure loins into the purified immaculate wombs, till we reached the loins of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. Then the light was divided into two parts: one part was transmitted to 'Abdallāh and one part — to Abū Ṭālib. I emerged from 'Abdallāh and 'Alī emerged from Abū Ṭālib.83

The view of the primordial substance of 'Alī is linked with the conception of his substantial cosmic primogeniture.84 According to this concept 'Alī, tradition relates that the light was deposited at first in Adam’s back. Adam asked Allāh to transfer it to his forehead, so that the angels would be able to see it. Then he asked to see it himself, and it was transferred to his fingers. It included also the lights of 'Alī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. See Bihār, XV, 34 (al-Bakrī). According to a sunni tradition, however, it includes the lights of Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī. See Iflābī, I, 148.

82 It is interesting to note that the Shi‘a sometimes openly admits that had Muḥammad had a son of his own, 'Alī could not have been his successor; see 'Ilal, 131: ...fa-law kāna li-rasūlī lāhī wala’dīn min ba’dīhi la-kāna avālā bi-rasūlī lāhī (ṣ) min amrī l-mu’āminīna fa-kānāt lā tāthbutu waṣiyyātu amrī l-mu’āminīna.

83 Ihbāt, 129: 'an sawyidinā rasūlī lāhī annahū gūlā: kuntu anā wa-'alīyyun nūrān fī jābbati ādama fa-nqasamā mina la-ṣālahī l-tāhiratī ilā l-arḥāmi l-muṭṭalibī l-zākiyya hattā šīrā fī šuḥbī 'abdī l-muṭṭalibī fa-ngāṣama l-nūru qismayni; fa-fālī qismun fī 'abdī lāhī wa-qismun fī abi lāhīn fa-kharajtu min 'abdī lāhī wa-kharajha 'alīyyun min abi ṭālibin.

84 This concept is, obviously, rooted in the early notion about the Messiah, who is identified with a primordial cosmic human being, dwelling in front of the throne of God. It is found already in the book of Enoch (especially ch. xlvii; cf. also, Daniel, vii 9–14).
Pre-existence and light

as well as his family, were existent before Adam's creation as primordial luminous reflections of their corporeal bodies. These reflections are called *ashbāh* or *ashbāh nūr*.\(^85\) Muhammad, reportedly, explained to the *ṣaḥābi* Ḥabīb b. 'Abdallāh that *ashbāh* were shadows of light, lucent bodies without souls.\(^86\) These bodily reflections were created from clay, taken from beneath the throne. It is related that Allāh infused into these bodies the souls of the imāms created from the Divine light. From the clay of these *ashbāh* Allāh created the souls of all the Shi‘īs. Their bodies He created from other clay taken from a lower place beneath the throne.\(^87\) All the Shi‘īs share, according to another view, not only the clay of the *ashbāh* but also the Divine light of their souls. Therefore, every feeling of joy or sadness of the imāms, reaches also the souls of all the Shi‘īs. The only difference between the imāms and their followers is, according to this view, that the clay of the latter was mixed with the impure clay of their enemies.\(^88\)

The *ashbāh* appeared to Adam; it is related that Allāh commanded to raise the celestial veils so that Adam could see five forms before His throne. They were the *ashbāh* of Muḥammad, ‘Alī, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.\(^89\) Adam and Eve saw, according to another tradition, the image (*ṣūra*) of Fāṭima. It was a body of light with a crown on its head, which stood for ‘Alī; its two earrings symbolized al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.\(^90\)

The core of the *ashbāh* traditions is the reassertion of their being superior to the angels. When al-Ḥusayn was asked what Muḥammad's family was prior to Adam, he said: we were *ashbāh* of light, encircling the throne of the Merciful, teaching the angels how to praise Allāh and to laud Him.\(^91\) The angels themselves, relates another tradition, informed Muhammad on the night of the Mi‘rāj that his family had been created as luminous *ashbāh* prior to their own creation. When the angels were finally created they learned the words of Allāh's praising from those *ashbāh*.\(^92\) On the ground of their

\(^{85}\) *Ashbāh* are generally taken to be the form of the angels, that is, “delicate bodies of light” (*ajsam laṭfā nurāniyya*), see Zurqānī, I, 9. They are sometimes described as “lights within shadows” (*anwār fi l-asilla*) see Bihār, XI, 118.


\(^{87}\) Andrae, 315 (from al-Kulnī); cf. also *Ital*, 116.

\(^{88}\) *Ital*, 93–94. \(^{89}\) Bihār, XI, 175.

\(^{90}\) Suyūṭī, La‘lī, I, 395–396; Dahabī, Mizān, II, 495–496; Līsān al-Mīzān, III, 346.

\(^{91}\) *Ital*, 23: ...*qāla*: *kunnā ashbāha nūrin nadāru ḥawla ‘arshi l-raḥmānī fo-nu’allimu l-malā’ikatā l-tasbiḥa wa-l-tahlīla wa-l-tahmīda.* Yet, see ibid, 5, where they are called *arwāh* instead of *ashbāh*.

\(^{92}\) Bihār, XV, 8–9 (from Tafsīr Furāt).
superiority these primordial images were not commanded to prostrate themselves to Adam, unlike the angels that were commanded to do so (Qur'ān, ii 43, vii 11, xvi 61, xviii 50, xx 116). Furthermore, the angels, together with Iblīs, prostrated themselves to 'Alī when his lucent clay-substance passed across them in the first heaven. At that moment a voice announced: "this is not a light of an angel nor of a prophet. This is the light of the clay of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib".94

The spermatic substance of 'Alī and the rest of Ahl al-Bayt, wandering through their ancestors, is identified with the ashbāḥ. "The ashbāḥ of Ahl al-Bayt", says a tradition, "were created fifteen thousand years before Adam circulating around the throne of Allāh. When Adam was created Allāh infused them into his loins".95 Adam was a mere vehicle (wu'a') carrying this substantial light; therefore, it is often stressed that the light of Ahl al-Bayt was the only cause for the prostration of the angels to him.96 Once deposited in his loins the ashbāḥ illuminated all the horizons, the celestial veils, paradise and the throne.97

The ashbāḥ, though removed from the throne and deposited as a spermatic substance in Adam's loins, retain, according to the following tradition, their original relation to the throne. This tradition relates that Allāh removed the ashbāḥ from the top of His throne and deposited them in Adam's loins. Adam was astonished to see light emerging out of his body, and he asked Allāh about it. Allāh ordered him to look at the top of the throne. The light of the ashbāḥ was thrown from his loins up towards it, so that the images of the ashbāḥ were reflected there like human faces in a clear mirror.98

The primordial substance of 'Alī and Ahl al-Bayt is, in fact, identified not only with ashbāḥ, created from Divine clay, but also with a more exalted cosmic entity created directly from the Divine light. As such, they are considered one of the first creations of Allāh. Andrae99 has already quoted a

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93 Biḥār, XI, 142: ...fa-lammā khalaqā ilāhū 'azza wa-jalla ādāma amara l-malā'ika an yasjudū lāhu wa-lam yamūra bi-t-suqūdī. Compare ibid, XV, 21-22.
94 'Ilāi, 144; Ibn Shahrāshūb, II, 86.
95 Biḥār, XV, 6 (from Tafsīr Fardā): kunnā ashbāḥ nūr ḥāwla l-'arshi nusabbithū ilāhā qabla an yakhlūqa ādāma bi-khamsata 'ashara alfa 'āmin. fa-lammā khalaqā ilāhū ādāma farraghanā fisulbihi.
96 See e.g. Biḥār, XI, 192 (Tafsīr al-'Askarī): ...yā ādāmu innāmā amartu l-malā'ika bi-tażmitika bi-t-suqūdī laka ithd kunta wa-'ālan il-hādhihi l-anwār.
97 Biḥār, XI, 150 (Tafsīr al-'Askarī).
98 Biḥār, XI, 150-151 (from Tafsīr al-Askari): ...unṣūr yā ādāmu ilā dhurwati l-'arshi. fa-nāzara ādāma wa-waqu'a nūru ashbāhinā min zahrī ādāma 'alā dhurwati l-'arshi in-tābā'a fīthi swawru ashbāhinā kānā yantšabil'ū wajhū l-insānī fī-l-mir'ātī l-šāfiya. Goldziher (p. 327-328) finds Jewish parallels to this tradition.
99 Andrae, 314 (from al-Shahrastānī, I, 204).
tradition, recorded on the authority of al-Mughira b. Sa'id (d. 119), to the
effect that the shadows of Muḥammad and 'Alī were the first creation of
Allāh, after He had created the sea of light and darkness. The primordial
essence of Ahl al-Bayt as the first creation is sometimes described as dwelling
within shadows of a green colour. It is related that they have been praising
Allāh in this form before the creation of the angels and the rest of the spirits.\textsuperscript{100} Muḥammad and his family have been created as green shadows from the light of
Allāh; a tradition states that He placed these shadows before Him when
the heaven, earth, day, night, sun and moon were not yet existent.\textsuperscript{101}

As for the exclusive share taken by 'Alī in Muḥammad's light, it has already
been pointed out that this concept is linked with the concept of 'Alī's cosmic
primogeniture. Thus Muḥammad is reported to have told 'Alī that on the
creation of Adam, Allāh created him and 'Alī of the Divine light. He infused
this light into Adam's loins, and transferred it till it reached the loins of
'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. Then, the light was split into two, so that Muḥammad
reached the loins of 'Abdal-lâh, and 'Alī reached those of Abū Ṭālib. Thus,
Muḥammad was entitled to prophethood and 'Alī — to the waṣiyya.\textsuperscript{102} A
further tradition recorded by Ḥaḏīm b. Ḥanbal (d. 261) states: Muḥammad
and 'Alī were created as light a thousand years before Adam. This light
praised Allāh; then, it was deposited in Adam's loins. When it reached the
loins of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib it was split between 'Abdal-lâh and Abū Ṭālib.
Thus the prophethood came to Muḥammad and the Khilāfa came to 'Alī.\textsuperscript{103}

Another tradition stresses that the light of 'Alī and Muḥammad, when trans-
mitted through the loins of the ancestors, shared their trials of suffering.
Adam, with the light in his loins, inclined to sin. Noah was on the ark with

\textsuperscript{100} Biḥār, XV, 24 (from al-Kūlnī): \ldots\textit{kumā 'inda rabbīnā laysa 'inda hu ghyryrnā firī zillātin}
khadrā' ina abbiša hu wo-nuḥallilihu wnu-nuñažiduhu wo-mā min malkīn munqūrā lib lā lā HISTORY SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE BIBLE TO THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

\textsuperscript{101} Biḥār, XV, 25 (Ikmāl al-Dīn): \ldots\textit{fa-awwālu mā btadā'a min khalaqīhī an khalaqa muḥammaddan} (š) \textit{fa-khalqānā 'ahla l-bayti ma'ahu min nūri 'azamatihi fa-awqafānā aziillatān
khadrā' bayna yadayhi ḥayitū lā sama} wa-lā arḍ wa-lā makhān wa-lā la'a'if wa-lā nahnār wa-lā shams wa-lā qamar.

\textsuperscript{102} Biḥār, XV, 12–13.

\textsuperscript{103} Ibn al-Bīrāq, 'Umdu, 44, 45. Compare, idem, Khaṣ'ī's, 37–38, 109–110 (from Ḥanbal b. Ḥanbal). Another version states that Muḥammad emerged as a prophet and 'Alī emerged as a waṣiyy; idem, 'Umdu, 44: \textit{fa-akhrājānī nabiyyān wa-akhrājā 'alīyyān waṣiyyān. See also 'Ilal, 135: ...wa-fa'āla fiyya l-mubattwa wa-l-barakka wa-fa'āla fi 'alīyyin al-fasāha wa-l-furāsīyya. And see Khawārizmī, 88: ...fa-fuṣ' 'u nā wa-fuṣ' 'u 'alīyyu bnu abī ṭālib. In Biḥār, XV, 7, the conclusion of the tradition is: ...fa-khalqānī rabbi min dhālikā l-nūrī illā anna lā niṣīyya ba'di' (from Tafsīr Furāt). And see also Biḥār, XV, 12. Another tradition of the same category mentions only Muḥammad as having been placed before Allāh as light, fourteen thousand years prior to Adam's creation. When Adam was created this light was deposited in his loins; see Zurgānī, I, 49–50.
that light, and Abraham was thrown with it into the fire.\textsuperscript{104} A tradition, also recorded by Ahmad b. Hanbal, maintains that the light was split even before it reached the loins of 'Abd al-Mu'talib. The prophet said: “I and 'Ali were a light placed before Allah fourteen thousand years prior to Adam. When He created Adam, He divided this light into two. One part was I and one part was 'Ali...\textsuperscript{105} Moreover, according to another tradition, the light was already divided on its very creation. This tradition states that Allah created Muhammad and 'Ali as two lights, prior to anything else. He infused these two lights into the loins of Adam.\textsuperscript{106}

Some Shi'i traditions lay a special stress on the primordial substance of Fāṭima as being created from the Divine light. A tradition explaining Fāṭima’s surname al-Zahrā (the luminous), states that she was created of the Godly light, illuminating heaven and earth and dazzling the eyes of the angels, who prostrated themselves to this light. Allah announced that He was about to make this light manifest in the earthly world, through the loins of Muḥammad.\textsuperscript{107} Fāṭima was even believed to be the first origin for the light that was transmitted through the loins of her descendants, the Imāms. This light shone at first on her own face, illuminating the rooms of all the Muslims. When al-Ḥusayn was born this very light kept shining on his face as well as on the faces of the following Imāms.\textsuperscript{108}

The pattern of the traditions just mentioned is used to illustrate the merits of other Muslim factions as well. A tradition, quoted by al-Zurqānī from the musnad of Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-‘Adanī (d. 243),\textsuperscript{108a} states that the collective substance of Quraysh was placed as a light before Allah two thousand years before the creation of Adam. This light praised Allah, and the angels followed its example. When Adam was created Allah infused the light into his loins...\textsuperscript{109} One can see, then, that no later than the beginning of the third century A.H. the concept of the primordial prophetic substance (originally conceived as part of human sperm), has a pure cosmogonic connotation, gaining wide currency in Muslim literature.

\textsuperscript{104} *Ila*, 134: ...wa-la-qad hamma bi-l-khaṭṭa wa-naḥnu fi šulbihi wa-la-qad rakiba nāḥun fi l-safinha wa-naḥnu fi šulbihi, wa-la-qad qudhīfa ibrāḥīmu fi l-nūri wa-naḥnu fi šulbihi... Cf. Biḥār, XV, 11.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibn al-Bīṭrīq, *Umāda*, 73 (from Ahmad b. Ḥanbal): kuntu anā wa-'alīyyun nūran bayna yadayi llāhi 'azza wa-jalla ghaba an yakhluqaa lāhu ādama bi-arbā'ata 'ashara 'alṣa 'āmin. fa-lamūn khalqaa llāhu ādama qasama dhālikā l-nūra juz'ayni... Cf. Nahj, II, 430 (from Ahmad).
\textsuperscript{106} Biḥār, XV, 24 (from al-Kulīnī).
\textsuperscript{107} *Ila*, 180; Jawāhir, 240.
\textsuperscript{108} *Ila*, 180–181.
\textsuperscript{108a} See GAS, I, 110–111.
\textsuperscript{109} Zurqānī, I, 49. See also Khargūshf (Tübingen) 74b; Suyūṭī, I, 96; Ḥalābī, I, 30.

102
Khārijī and other scholars maintained that Muḥammad, as well as other prophets, was born as an ordinary human being, not necessarily infallible, nor even a believer.  

This stands, of course, in clear contrast to the concept examined so far, according to which Muḥammad was born with definite prophetic features, inherited from his ancestors as a substantial light. This view is also contravened by some traditions about the prophetic light itself. These traditions single out certain events that took place during the prophet's lifetime, regarded as the beginning of his prophetic being; this being is symbolized by light that is supposed to have been absent from him till then. One of these events is the first revelation of Gabriel to Muḥammad, at the age of forty. A tradition relates that when Muḥammad returned to Khādiżah after this revelation, the house was suddenly illuminated. Khādiżah, being puzzled, asked Muḥammad what that light was (which she did not yet know). Muḥammad said: "This is the light of prophethood...".

Likewise, it is related that when Gabriel appeared to Muḥammad he put him on a carpet of light. Some of the mi'raj traditions maintain that Muḥammad received his light on that occasion. When he was in the first heaven he received a palanquin (malāmīl) containing forty kinds of light. Muhammad himself sat in that palanquin. Its light was seen by the angels who admired its similarity to the light of God. In the second heaven he was given forty extra kinds of light, along with bright chains and rings for his palanquin. In the other heavens he received more kinds of light which aroused the adoration of the angels.

Yet, the event that is usually regarded as the beginning of Muḥammad's prophethood is the impression of the seal of prophethood upon his body after the opening of his breast. Several dates are given in the sources for this event, that is, when he was with his wet nurse, Ḥalīma; later in his childhood; when Gabriel first appeared to him, or before his ascent to heaven. Most explicit is a tradition, on the authority of the Sahābī Shaddād b. Aws, in which Muḥammad reportedly said that when he had been in the tribe of his wet nurse three angels came to him one day, and cut his breast open.

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2.10 The beginning of Muhammad's light of prophethood

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110 See, e.g. Nahj, II, 162 (in a discussion about the position of prophets before the beginning of their prophetic mission).
111 Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 43: ...fa-qālat khadižah: wa-mā āḥādā l-nūr? qālā: āḥādā nāru l-nubuwwa...
112 Bayhaqi, I, 398; Suyūṭī, I, 241; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 155.
113 Itla', 312–315.
cleansing his heart from its sins. Muhammad had seen a seal in the hands of one angel, shining in dazzling light. That angel sealed his breast with it filling his heart with light. This light was “the light of prophethood and wisdom”.115

Shi'i scholars — especially those belonging to the Imāmiyya — could not, of course, tolerate traditions of this nature. Thus, according to their explanation, Muhammad’s breast was cut open, only in order to cleanse it from doubt, but not from disbelief, since he had been a true believer long before he was born.116 Furthermore, the seal itself, according to some traditions, was imprinted upon his body, on the very hour of his birth. Thus, a tradition, ascribed to Āmina, states that Muhammad’s breast was cut open by angels shortly after he was born; they impressed a luminous seal between his shoulders.117 Some traditions hold that when Muhammad was born the seal was already impressed upon him, as an original part of his body.118 Thus, the concept of the seal of prophethood is brought, to full reconciliation with the concept of Muhammad's primordial prophetic substance.

III. SPIRITUAL PRE-EXISTENCE

We turn now to a completely different concept namely, the pre-existence of spirits utterly independent of body. In Islam, it is closely associated with the doctrine of the reincarnation of the divine spirit of the Shi'i Imāms. In other words: the divine light of which the imāmi spirit consists, transmigrating on the death of each Imām into his successor, is conceived as if it had had an existence apart, before it became united with their bodies.

The pre-existent spirits of the imāms, as well as that of Muhammad, are conceived to possess the essence of their divine features, expressed mainly by their religious conviction. Thus, a tradition states that two thousand years before the creation of the world, Muhammad was sent as a spirit to the spirits of all prophets, in order to summon them to monotheism. To the believers,

115 Ṭabarī, Ta'rīkh, II, 162: ...fa-idhā anā bī-khātāmin fī yadhī hī mīn nūrīn yahāru l-nāẓirīn dānāhu. fa-khātamā bīhī qalbī fā-mtalā‘ ā nūrīn, wa-dhālika nūrī l-nubuwati wā-l-hikma. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 112–113; Zurqī, I, 150–151. The tradition in these sources is already combined with another tradition maintaining that Muhammad’s prophethood began as early as Abraham’s prayer about him (see above note 25).
116 See Bihār, XV, 352–353.
117 Ithbār, 111; Khargūshi, 31b; Suyūṭī, I, 121; Zurqī, I, 115; Bihār, XV, 256–257, 273, 327 (al-Bakrī); Ibn Shahrashūb, I, 28.
118 See the detailed discussion about it in Zurqī, I, 160. Cf. also Suhaylī, I, 189.
he promised paradise, to the unbelievers — flames of hell. Another tradition maintains that the spirits of Muḥammad, 'Alī and his family, were created two thousand years prior to their bodies. These spirits illuminated heaven and earth. Allāh announced their merits and the merits of those who followed them, throughout the universe. When Adam and Eve entered paradise they saw on the leg of Allāh’s throne the names of Muḥammad, 'Alī, Fāṭima and the imāms, inscribed with the light of God. Thus, the luminous spirits are identified here with their names. According to another tradition, Allāh said to Muḥammad: I had created you and 'Alī as light — that is spirit — without body, before I created heaven, earth, the throne and the sea; all that time, you kept praising me. Then I incorporated your two spirits into one, and it went on praising me. Then I divided it into two, then into two again. The four parts were Muḥammad, 'Alī, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. Then Fāṭima was created as a spirit of light without body. Allāh put His hand across all of them so that the divine light began shining within them. A further tradition relates that fourteen thousand years prior to the creation of the world, Allāh created fourteen lights. These were the spirits of Muḥammad, 'Alī, Fāṭima and their descendants, the imāms.

Closely related to the concept under discussion, are the traditions about the primordial nature of the names of Muḥammad and Ahl al-Bayt. These names, inscribed with the divine light in the heavenly world, represent their pre-existent spiritual being.

Most prevalent are the descriptions of Muḥammad’s name appearing on Allāh’s throne. It is already 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd (d. 182) on whose authority al-Bayḥāqī quotes the following tradition (ascribed to 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb): When Adam committed his sin he asked Allāh’s pardon by the right of Muḥammad (bi-ḥaqqi Muḥammadadīn). Allāh asked: “how did you know Muḥammad, when I have not yet created him (i.e. his earthly being)?”

1 'Iṣāl, 162-163: ...Innā l-lāha tabāraka wa-ta’ātha rasūla llāhi (s) wa-hum rūḥun ilā l-anbiyā’ wa-hum arwāḥ qabla l-khalqi bi-żal yā’ am... innahu da’āhum ilā tawḥīdi l-lāli wa-ta’ātihi wa-ttībā’i amīrīhi wa-wa’adahum al-jamnata ‘alā dhālika wa-aw’ad’ā man khāla’u ma ajābū ilayhi wa-an’ār’āhu al-nār.

2 Bihār, XI, 172-174; see also ibid., 114, 164-165; Jawāhir, 254-255.

3 Bihār, XV, 18-19 (from al-Kulnī); Jawāhir, 212.

4 Bihār, XV, 23.

5 This is identical with the notion of the primordial name of the Messiah, created prior to the world, as expressed for instance, in the book of Enoch (48/3); cf. e.g. Albright, op. cit., p. 227 ff., and see also Andrae, 346 ff.; Andrae (p. 321) finds a similar notion about the name of the Messiah in Bereshit Rabba.

Adam said: "My lord, when You created me with Your hand, and breathed into me of Your spirit, I have looked up, seeing an inscription on the leg of the throne: 'There is no God except Allāh; Muḥammad is the messenger of Allāh'. I have known that You join to Your name only the name of Your most beloved creature". God said: "You are right, Adam. He is My most beloved creature, and if you ask Me by his right, I will forgive you at once. Were it not for his sake, I would not have created you". A further tradition relates that before the spirit that Allāh breathed into Adam reached his legs, Adam saw light glowing on the throne. He saw that it was an inscription: 'Muḥammad the messenger of Allāh'. Another tradition states however, that Adam saw these letters only after his creation had been fully accomplished. When Adam asked Allāh about it, he was told that it stood for the prophet Muḥammad, his most excellent offspring.

Muḥammad’s name was written on the throne two thousand years before the creation of heaven and earth. The circumstances of its being written on the throne are said to have been as follows: when Allāh created the throne it shook on the water. It became stable only after He had written on it Muḥammad’s name.

Muḥammad’s name was inscribed between Adam’s shoulders, as well. It was written, in fact, in several places throughout the celestial world. Sahl b. "Abdallāh al-Tustarı (d. 283) relates that the prophet’s name appeared on every leaf on the trees of paradise. These trees were planted in his name; with him things began, and with him things will come to an end, therefore he was called the seal of all prophets.

It is further related that Adam did not see in the heavens a castle or a room without Muḥammad’s name on it. He saw his name upon the necks of the maidens of paradise as well as upon all the trees, including Tuba and Sidratal-Muntahā. His name was also inscribed upon the celestial veils (al-l; zujub) and between the eyes of the angels. See Ḥalabī, I, 220. And cf. also Suyūṭī, I, 17-18, 19; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 33. Muḥammad’s various surnames were known to the angels and the prophets, as well as to the demons and to the inhabitants of paradise, hell, the continents and the seas. See Sīnīf, I, 255.

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7 Zurqānī, I, 62–63 (from al-Bayhaqī). See also Khargūshi (Tübingen) 68; Suyūṭī, I, 17; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 33; Ḥalabī, I, 219–220; Sīnīf, I, 54.
9 Ithbāt, 126–127; Zurqānī, I, 44.
10 Zurqānī, I, 62.
11 Khargūshi, 86; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 34, 60; Qīṣāṣ, 20; Suyūṭī, I, 19; Zurqānī, I, 44.
12 Suyūṭī, I, 19.
13 GĀṢ, I, 647.
14 Khargūshi, 81b–82a: ...wa-laysa fi l-jannatī waraqatūn min awrāqī l-jannatī illā maktūbun alayhā smu muḥammadin (g) wa-lā ghurisat shajaratūn fi l-jannatī illā bi-smī muḥammadin (g) wa-bihi l-ibtidā’u bi-khāṣṣi‘i wa-bihi khatmūhā fa-summiya khātama l-nabiyyīn. It is further related that Adam did not see in the heavens a castle or a room without Muḥammad’s name on it. He saw his name upon the necks of the maidens of paradise as well as upon all the trees, including Tūbah and Sidratal-Muntahā. His name was also inscribed upon the celestial veils (al-l; ujūb) and between the eyes of the angels. See Ḥalabī, I, 220. And cf. also Suyūṭī, I, 17–18, 19; Ibn al-Jawzī, I, 33. Muḥammad’s various surnames were known to the angels and the prophets, as well as to the demons and to the inhabitants of paradise, hell, the continents and the seas. See Sīnīf, I, 255.
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Shi'i traditions mentioning also the primordial name of 'Ali are widely current. Their chief point is the assertion that 'Ali was a pre-destined successor of Muhammad. 'Ali's name, as Muhammad's successor (waṣīyy), as well as that of all the imāms, was written on the throne. Muhammad saw them on his ascension to heaven. The first human being to observe these names was Adam. On entering paradise he was ordered by Allāh to look at the throne. He saw on its leg the names of Muhammad, 'Ali, Fāṭima, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. Allāh intimated to him that these were his best offspring. Were it not for them, He would not have created Adam, nor the entire world.

The close relation between these names and Allāh, is illustrated in a linguistic sense as well. According to a tradition, Adam saw five names on Allāh's throne, shortly after his creation. All of them were derived from Allāh's names. They were: Muhammad — derived from Allāh's name 'al-Maḥmūd'; 'Ali — derived from 'al-'Ali'; Fāṭima — from 'al-Fāṭir'; al-Ḥasan — from 'al-Muḥṣin', and al-Ḥusayn — derived from 'Dhu I-Ilāhsan'.

According to a Shi'i interpretation of Qurʾān ii 37 Allāh bestowed on Adam these five names, with which he later begged, and got, Allāh's pardon for his sin.

The Sunnī reaction to these Shi'i traditions comes forward in a tradition, recorded already by al-Ḥasan b. 'Arafa (d. 257), to the effect that on the night of the mi'rāj, Muhammad saw an inscription in each heaven saying: "Muḥammad is the messenger of Allāh, and Abū Bakr, the šiddīq, succeeds him". 'Ali is replaced here by Abū Bakr. Abū Bakr's name, alongside those of 'Umar and 'Uthmān, are reported to have been inscribed upon Allāh's throne.

We have already mentioned that the pre-existent spirits of Muḥammad and the imāms, seem to be closely associated with the holy spirit, transmigrating through the bodies of the corporeal imāms. The line of Shi'i imāms is conceived
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as immediately succeeding the line of the universal prophets, via Muḥammad. Hence, the divine spirit of the imāms, represented as light, is said to have transmigrated through all the prophets before reaching their own bodies. ‘Allī, the successor of Muḥammad and the first imām, received this holy spirit on the death of Muḥammad, the last of all prophets.

This concept underlies the Shi‘i notion of the waṣīyya. We shall examine this notion in a separate study. Yet it has to be noted here that according to this view the divine spiritual light was transmitted, since Adam, through the prophets as a part of their religious testament (waṣīyya) and handed over on the death of each of them, to his successor. The prophets carrying this divine light and the waṣīyya were Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. They forwarded the light through the line of their trustees (awṣīya‘). Muḥammad himself received the waṣīyya of Jesus, through the latter’s Christian successors.23 The line of transmission of this spiritual waṣīyya, including the light of God (nūr Allāh), was followed on Muhammad’s death through ‘Allī and the Shi‘i imāms. It is related that before his death, Muḥammad transmitted to ‘Allī his divine light, together with the rest of the heritage that was handed down to him through the preceeding prophets.24

This concept resembles in many respects the doctrine of the Ismā‘iliyya. Goldziher has already shown that it is a doctrine of cyclical manifestations of the aql, through the Nāṭiqs.25 Its first incarnation was Adam, succeeded by Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad. After Muḥammad the nāṭiq was the seventh shi‘i imām.26 According to Goldziher this concept, adopted also by al-Muqanna‘,27 is of a Christian, Neo-Platonic origin: all the prophets carried successively the same primordial spirit.28 The same spiritual concept is known also to Şūfism; the Aqīq belong to an eternal line of revelations, from creation to resurrection.29 Goldziher, however, wrongly imposed this idea on a tradition in Ibn Sad’s text, which belongs, in fact, to the doctrine of the spermatic substance (see above, I, nn. 26, 78; II, n. 42). This erroneous attitude was also adopted by Andrae (p. 322). Therefore, it

23 See e.g. Ithbāt, 16 ff. See also Rajab al-Barsī 58; Ibn Shahrashūb, I, 215; Biḥār, XXIII, 57-58.
24 See e.g. Ithbāt, 122: ṭumma maḍā (ṣ) wa-qad sallama ilayhi jamā‘a mawārithī l-anbiyā‘ī wa-l-nūra wa-l-bikma. See also Biḥār, XXIII, 321-322, 225-226, 249; XI, 48; Jawāhir, 210.
25 Goldziher, 339; see also Cl. Huart, s.v. “Ismā‘iliyya”, EI, II, 549 ff.
26 Goldziher, Vorlesungen (Hebrew translation, Jerusalem, 1951), p. 174. And see also Rosenthal, p. 158; R. Strothmann, s.v. “Sub‘ya”, EI; cf. also L. Massignon, s.v. “Karmaṭians”, “Nuṣairís”, EI.
27 Goldziher, 337-339.
28 Ibid., 337, see also Andrae, 322-323.
29 See e.g. Futūḥāt, I, 151. And see Andrae 328 ff.; cf. also Rosenthal, 161 ff.
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seems important to re-assert some fundamental points concerning the difference between the two doctrines.

The divergency of the two — on the one hand, the primordiality of the substance of Muḥammad and the imāms, and on the other hand the pre-existence of their spirits is, in fact, quite obvious. According to the latter, the spirits of Muhammad and the imāms were created, as we have seen, prior to their bodies. According to the former, their spirits dwelt from the very beginning within their primordial bodily substance. This substance, represented as sperm, existed since Adam. A more exalted approach regards, however, this substance as being originally a cosmic entity preceeding the creation of Adam — whether asbāb or sheer divine light.

Whereas the holy spirit transmigrates through prophets, the primordial substance wanders through loins of ancestors. According to both doctrines, the line of transmission is followed, after Muḥammad, through the Shiʿi imāms, whether as a spermatic substance, or as a holy spirit. It follows that the doctrine of the substantial entity is originally a physical, Arab-oriented one, representing the prophet's forefathers as the only origin of his prophethood. The doctrine of the divine spirit is, however, based on a universal approach, representing Muḥammad as owing his prophetic spirit to previous prophets, all of them non-Arabs; whereas Ishmael, according to the doctrine of substance, transmitted his light to his Arab descendants (Muḥammad's forefathers) — the divine spirit is regarded as staying in an exclusive non-Arab line; thus, it is related that Ishmael transmitted his divine light and his wāṣīyya to his brother, Isaak.29a This divine light reached Muḥammad via Moses and Jesus.

According to both doctrines, the light serves mainly as a source of the prophetic knowledge (ʿilm) of its carriers. According to the concept of the spermatic substance, Muhammad, as well as the imāms, received their universal knowledge on their birth.30 According to the spiritual notion, however, each of the imāms received his knowledge only on the death of his predecessor. The imām Abū ʿAbdallāh said that the succeeding imām gains the knowledge from his predecessor on the last moment of the spirit's stay (within the latter's body).31 It follows that the knowledge is conceived here as an essential part of the holy spirit. This prophetic spirit was transmitted to the imāms on

29a See Ithbāt, 41.
30 See about Muḥammad's ʿilm in Khargūshi, 31b; Biḥār, XV, 256–257, 273; Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 28. About the ʿilm of the imāms, which they receive on their birth, see Biḥār, XV, 297–299 (from al-Kulnī); Jawāhir, 214–215.
31 ...fi ʿakhīri daqiqaṭin tabqā min rāḥihi. Quoted from al-Kulnī by Maʿrūf al-Ḥusnī in his Dirāsāt fī al-Kāfī wa-l-ṣaḥīh (Lubnān, 1968), p. 305.
Muḥammad’s death. \(^{32}\) ‘Alī himself, according to the substantial approach, inherited his divine light from his father Abū Ṭalīb; according to the spiritual approach, he received his luminous divine spirit directly from Muḥammad, on the latter’s death.

Having depicted the points of difference between the two doctrines it is interesting to note some aspects in which the two seem closer to one another. One’s attention is drawn to the fact that some traditions present the prophetic primordial substance as an entity not wholly dependent on human bodies, or rather, on loins of ancestors. In other words, this substance is regarded rather as a spiritual entity wandering through human beings and not as sheer sperm. Thus, the following tradition maintains that after being infused into the loins of Adam and the rest of the ancestors, the ashbāḥ wandered not only through loins. This tradition states that the ashbāḥ of Ahl al-Bayt were created seven thousand years prior to the creation of the world. When Allāh wanted to create their earthly forms, He turned these ashbāḥ into a column of light which was thrown into Adam’s loins. This column wandered through the loins till it was divided into two parts within *ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib’s body. Muḥammad and ‘Alī were born out of these parts. Then, Allāh transferred the part of ‘Alī from his body to Muḥammad’s body. Out of these two reunited parts, Fāṭima was born. Allāh, then, transferred these two parts from Muḥammad to ‘Alī again, and al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn were born out of them. Al-Ḥasan and his descendants received ‘Alī’s half of the light, whereas al-Ḥusayn and his descendants were invested with Muḥammad’s part. \(^{33}\) This tradition suggests that Fāṭima and her descendants, through al-Ḥusayn, had a direct relation to Muḥammad’s light. This is achieved by presenting Allāh as the divine power that determines the ways of transmission.

The tendency to reduce the dependence of the light on loins and wombs comes forth also in a *khutba* which is ascribed to ‘Alī, recorded by al-Masʿūdī in his *Ikhṭiḥāt*. This *khutba* mentions the creation of Muḥammad’s light prior to the creation of the human race. When Adam was created Allāh invested him with the light. When Allāh allowed the transmission of this light He made Adam and Eve copulate. The significant feature of this *khutba* is that the following transmission of the light through Adam’s descendants, is described


without any hint to women taking part in the process: "Then You (i.e. Allāh) transferred it to Enosh. He was the successor of his father in bearing Your mission. Then You decreed the transmission of the light to Kenan. You gave him his share among the preceding and forthcoming (carriers). Then You made Mahalaleel its fourth vehicle. It is a Qudra which You deposit with whom you choose to be a prophet and a noble ancestor...".34

The substantial entity is even believed to leave the body of its carrier not through a womb but only on the carrier’s death, that is, along with his soul. This particular view comes forth in a tradition stating that three thousand years before Adam, Allāh created water beneath His throne. He poured this water into a green pearl. When He created Adam He infused the water from the pearl into Adam’s loins. When Adam died, Allāh transferred the water to Sheth. When Sheth died, He transferred it onwards till it reached the loins of ’Abd al-Muṭṭalib, where it was divided between Abū Ṭālib and ‘Abdallāh. Later it reached Muḥammad and ‘Ali equally.35 This tradition is based on the view that the sperm from which the human being is created, leaves the body on the last moment of life.36

Moreover, some traditions express the idea that Muḥammad was born out of sperm that did not wander at all through the loins of his ancestors, but came directly from heaven, to the loins of his immediate father. One of these traditions relates that when Allāh wanted to make Muḥammad manifest in the world, He drew out a drop (qa’tra) from beneath His throne, and threw it into one of the earthly fruits. ‘Abdallāh, the prophet’s father, ate it and transferred it into the womb of his wife when copulating with her. Consequently, she conceived Muḥammad. On the fortieth day of the pregnancy a sound was heard from within her womb; after four months a Qur’ānic verse was written upon the embryo’s shoulder. When he was born there was a column of light erected for him, through which he saw the deeds of all creatures.37 Again, it is the Shi’a that brings this idea to a full expression. It is related that ‘Ali’s parents, before they begot him, had eaten heavenly dates given to them by the prophet.38 Abū Ṭālib, according to another tradition, received a plate with heavenly fruits from a certain monk. He ate a pomegranate which became sperm in his loins, out of which ‘Ali was born.39

34 Ithbāt, 123 ff.
35 Bihār, XV, 13–14.
36 ‘Īlal, 299; in an ‘a‘lyyi bni l-ḥasani qāla: inna l-makhlīqa lā yamūtu ḥattā takhrīju minhu l-nutfatu llati khalaghu llāhu minhā, min fihi aw min ghayrihi.
37 Ithbāt, 109–110.
38 Ibn Shahrāshūb, II, 21.
39 Ibid. Fātima is also said to have emerged out of a heavenly apple eaten by Muḥammad during his mi’rāj, after it became sperm in his loins. See Khargūsh (Tübingen) 8b; Ibn Shahrāshūb, III, 114 (from al-Khargūsh); ‘Īlal, 183–184.
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The imām Abū 'Abdallāh (i.e. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq) related, likewise, that his grandfather had received a heavenly drink before he begot his son (Muḥammad al-Baqīr). Al-Baqīr himself begot his son, Abū 'Abdallāh, by means of a similar drink. It is evident, then, that the sources are inclined to present the primordial essence of the prophet and the imāms as a more exalted entity than sheer human sperm.

IV. CREATIVE LIGHT

Our study would not be complete without mentioning another form of the doctrine of prophetic primordiality, in which Muḥammad, as well as the Shiʿī imāms, are regarded as earthly incarnations of Allāh’s word (kalima, i.e. logos), or His creative light. Thus, a Shiʿī tradition states that Allāh uttered a word that became light. He created Muḥammad from that light; then he created ‘Alī and his descendants; then, Allāh uttered another word that became spirit. He infused this light into the former light, and infused (the joint light) into their (corporal) bodies. Likewise, Muḥammad is reported to have stated: “Allāh has created me from light, and He created that light a thousand years before Adam. Muḥammad and the imāms, created from the divine light, were believed not to cast shadows. This divine light, Allāh’s first creation, serving as a source for further creations, is identified with the pre-existent light of Muḥammad. From this light, all existences have been successively created (or rather, emanated); Shiʿī traditions maintain, of course, that ‘Alī’s essence was the first to be created from the light of Muḥammad. The following tradition, for instance, states that on the night of the miʿrāj Allāh revealed to Muḥammad that He had created him from His light, and then He created ‘Alī from Muḥammad’s light. Muḥammad, we are told, said to Salmān al-Fārisī that Allāh created him from the purity of His light, then He created ‘Alī from Muḥammad’s light, and from Muḥammad’s and ‘Alī’s lights, He created Fāṭima. Then, He created, from them all, al-Hasan

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and al-Ḥusayn, as well as the rest of the imāms. It is likewise related that the prophet proclaimed: “I was created from the light of Allāh, and Aḥl al-Bayt were created from my light. Their lovers were created from their light, and their enemies are destined to hell.” According to another tradition, Allāh created the light of Muḥammad two thousand years before creating the world. The light of ‘Alī ramified as a ray from that light. The angels asked Allāh about the light and its ray; Allāh answered: “This is a light out of My light; its main part is prophethood, and its ray is the Imāma. The prophethood is for Muḥammad, My servant and messenger, and the Imāma is for ‘Alī, My ḥujja and My partisan. Were it not for them, I would not have created My creatures”.

The origin of the creative force of Muḥammad’s light, is its circular motion. This creative motion takes place in the various cosmic spheres, which are called ḥujub (sing. ḥijāb) i.e. veils. One of the traditions about the creation of ‘Alī’s light describes this cosmic motion: The prophet said: “Allāh created my light, first of all things. He drew it out of His light and majesty. It moved around the (veil called) qudra for eighty thousand years, till it reached the (veil of) al-‘azama (which is beneath the veil of al-qudra). Then, it prostrated itself to Allāh, and the light of ‘Alī ramified from it. Thus, my light was circling about the ‘azama, and ‘Alī’s light circled round the qudra...”. From these two lights, Allāh created the rest of His creatures.

The Sunni reaction to this concept is quite predictable: ‘Alī is replaced by Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. The prophet said: “Allāh created me from His light, Abū Bakr, from my light, ‘Umar, from Abū Bakr’s light, and the Muslim community, from ‘Umar’s light. ‘Umar is the lamp of the inhabitants of paradise”. The Sūfis elevate their saints to the same rank (that is, one of the first emanations from Muḥammad’s light). Already al-Tustarī relates that when Allāh wanted to create Muḥammad He diffused light out of His own

6 Bihār, XV, 9.
7 Ibid, 20.
8 ‘Istāl, 174: ...ḥādhā nūrūn min nūrī. ʾašuhū mubuwwā wa-farʾuḫu ʾināmā. ammā l-nubuwwā fa-li-muḥammadin ‘abdī wa-rasūlī, wa-amnā l-ʾināmā fa-li-ʾalīyyin ḥujjātī wa-walīyyī fawwālāhūmā mā khalaqtu khalqī.
9 These veils are identical with the cosmic spheres that according to the gnostic doctrine sever the earthly world from the upper world of light. These veils consist of light and they are sometimes identified with some angels. Among them are also veils of fire, clouds, darkness and water. See e.g. Suyūtī, laʿāfī, I, 4 ff. These veils are identified with Muḥammad and the imāms as intermediates between Allāh and his creatures. See Rajab al-Barst, 40. And see more references in Wensinck, Handbook, 17 (s.v. “Allāh”).
10 Rajab al-Barst, 39.
11 Ibid.
12 Andrac, 319 (from Mīzān al-ʿIʿtīdāl, I, 66).
light throughout His kingdom. When it reached the (veil of) the 'ispma it prostrated itself to Allāh. Allāh created from this prostration a column of dense light, transparent like glass, wide like the seven heavens. Muḥammad worshipped Allāh there, for a million years, not as a real body, but as a nature of faith and knowledge of what was hidden. After that period, Allāh created Adam from the light of Muḥammad. From the light of Adam He created the murādīn, and from their light he created the muridūm. Ibn 'Arabi declares, likewise, that Allāh drew out of the “first father” (i.e. Adam) the lights of the aqṭāb as suns, and the light of the nujāb as stars.

Some Shi’ī traditions go even further, regarding Ṭ Ali’s light as the first of Allāh’s creations serving as a source for further creations parallel to the light of Muḥammad. “Allāh”, says the prophet, “created me and Ṭ Ali from a common light, forty thousand years prior to Adam. He divided the light into two parts, creating all things out of my light and out of Ṭ Ali’s light. Then, He placed us before His throne, and we praised Him together with the angels...”. A more detailed tradition states that when Allāh wanted to create the world, He created His throne from Muḥammad’s light, the angels from Ṭ Ali’s light, heaven and earth from Fāṭima’s light, the sun and the moon from al-Hasan’s light; from al-Ḥusayn’s light, He created paradise and its maidens.

Traditions striving to emphasise Muḥammad’s superiority over the rest of the prophets maintain that the latter were created from his light. It is related that Allāh took a handful of the light of His face and looked at it and it began to sweat. From each drop He created a prophet. This handful of light was the prophet Muḥammad. The knowledge and the religious conviction of the prophets also emanated from the light of Muḥammad. A tradition, recorded by al-Qaṣṭallānī, states that when Allāh created the light of Muḥammad He commanded it to look at the lights of the other prophets. It covered

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13 'Ilm al-Qulūb, 93–94 (quoting Sahl al-Tustari; I was referred to this source by Mr. B. Abramov, Tel Aviv). And compare Tustarı, Tafsır, in the commentary for Qur’an xxiv 35.
14 Futuḥat (the edition of ʿUthmān Yaḥyā and Ibrāhīm Madkūr, Cairo, 1972), I, 52: ...thumma stakhraja mina l-abi l-awwali anwāra l-aqṭābī shumīsan... wa-stakhraja anwāra l-nujābī nujūman.
15 Rajab al-Barṣī, 40.
16 Bilḥūr, XV, 10–11. About the creation of angels from the light of Ṭ Ali’s face see also Ibn Shahrāshībīh, II, 279; Bilḥūr, XXIII, 320; Khawārizmī, 31, 236.
17 Zurqānī, I, 28: inna ḫalīha qabada min nūri wajhīhi qabdaṭan wa-naṣara ilayhā fa-ʿarīqat wa-dhalaqat. fa-khalaqa l-lāhī min kulli nuqtatin nabiyyan, wa-inna l-qabdatan kānat hiya l-nabiyya. Ibn Taṃmiyya’s opposition to this notion, as well as to pre-existence in general, is quite strong: kullu ḫalīka kadhiban muṣṭaran bi-tifṣiqi aḥli l-ilm bi-ḥadīthihi. wa-l-anbiya’u kulluhum lam yuḵlaqa mina l-nabiyyi (z) baḥ waḥidin min abawayhi.
them, and by this light Allāh bestowed on them the ability to talk. Then He covenanted them to believe in Muḥammad.\textsuperscript{18}

A further view regards the light of Muḥammad as a source for the creation of the world. As such, it is identified with the cosmogonical pearl, which, according to a tradition, was the first creation of Allāh. This pearl was greater than heaven and earth. Allāh looked at it, and it became water. Then He looked at the water, and it bubbled, and foamed and vapourized. From the vapour, He created the heavens, and from the foam He created the earth.\textsuperscript{19}

This tradition about the creation — said to have been written in the first book of the Torah\textsuperscript{20} — serves as a pattern for a similar view about the light of Muḥammad. It is already 'Abd al-Razzāq (d. 211), on whose authority the following tradition is recorded: The prophet told the šahābi Jābir b. 'Abdallāh that Allāh had created the light of Muḥammad from His own light, prior to all things. This light moved around Allāh, being subordinate to Him. When Allāh wanted to create the world He divided the light of Muḥammad into four parts. From the first He created the pen (\textit{al-qalam}), from the second He created the tablet (\textit{al-lawḥ}), and from the third — the throne. The fourth part was subdivided into four. From the first of the four parts He created the angels, who carry the throne; from the second — the chair (\textit{al-kursiyy}),\textsuperscript{21} and from the third — the rest of the angels. The fourth was divided again into four. From the first, Allāh created the heavens, from the second — the continents, from the third, He created paradise and hell. Out of the fourth, He again made four parts. From the first He created the light of the believers’ eyesight, from the second — the light of their hearts, that is, the knowledge of Allāh; from the third — the light of their belief in Allāh’s unity. So far al-Qastallānī’s quotation from ‘Abd al-Razzāq.\textsuperscript{22} This tradition lays a special emphasis on the priority of the light on other entities, such as the pen and the throne, which, according to another view, were the first creation of Allāh.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{18} Zurqānī, I, 40.
\textsuperscript{19} Qisas, 3; Zurqānī, I, 30. Water is sometimes regarded as the first origin of creation. It was divided into sweet water — from which the righteous were created, and salt water — from which the unbelievers were created. See 'Īlaf, 83–84. See also Zurqānī, I, 31: \textit{kullu shay’in khuliqa mina l-mā’}.
\textsuperscript{20} Jawāhir, 80 (from Nāḥj al-Balāgha).
\textsuperscript{21} See about the difference between \textit{kursiyy} and \textit{'arsh} in Zurqānī, I, 30.
\textsuperscript{22} Zurqānī, I, 46–47; see also Andrae, 316–317.
\textsuperscript{23} About the primogeniture of the Pen see e.g. Taḥrīkh, I, 32. See also Goldziher, 321 ff.; Schuon, 102 ff. The throne, however, is sometimes regarded as created before the pen. See Taḥrīkh, I, 35; Zurqānī, I, 47. Its primogeniture is supported by Qur’ān xi 7. A question in itself is whether or not the throne was created before the water. Cf. Zurqānī, I, 30, 48. Quite apart from this, there is the concept of the primordial intellect

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Another version of this tradition is recorded by al-Khargushi in his *Sharaf al-Mustafā*. The light of Muhammad, it is stated, was created nine thousand years before all things. It moved around Allāh, worshipping Him with various verses. Then, a pearl was created from it, then, water was created from the pearl. The water billowed for a thousand years. The light was split into ten parts, out of which the heavenly world was created; that is: the throne, the pen, the tablet, the moon, the sun, the stars, the angels, the light of the believers, the chair, and Muḥammad himself.24 Muḥammad is here distinguished as having been created together with the celestial world, and thus, remote from the earthly world that was created separately.

The luminous essence of Muḥammad, out of which all existences emanated, or were created, is called by Muslim scholars *al-haqīqa al-muḥammadiyya*. "It is the essence of all essences; it comprises all of them in itself, and is comprised in each of them, like every whole that is immanent within each of its components".26 Al-Qaṣṭallānī remarks that the *haqiqa* emanated from the divine light, and the upper and lower world were extracted from it, according to Allāh’s predestination. From this *haqiqa* originated also the essence of all the spiritual entities.27

Finally, it should be noted that the various conceptions of Muḥammad’s primordial creation are sometimes incorporated into one amalgamated outlook. The following tradition combines two conceptions: that of Muḥammad’s wandering substance, and that of his cosmic creative light, described in its movement through the cosmic spheres. This tradition is recorded by al-Khargushi, on the authority of ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181). It states that Allāh created the light of Muḥammad 424 thousand years prior to the creation of heaven, earth, the throne, the kursi, the tablet, the pen, paradise and hell, as well as before the creation of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesus, David, and the rest of those who believed in Allāh’s unity. Alongside this light Allāh created twelve cosmic veils (*hujub*).28

4.4 Khargūshī’s tradition of the veils (*hujub*)
Allāh hedged (ḥabasa) the light in the veil of the *qudra* for twelve thousand years, during which it praised Allāh with various verses. Then He hedged it in the veil of the ‘*azama* for eleven thousand years, and in the veil of the *minna* for ten thousand years. After having passed through all the twelve veils, praising Allāh in each of them, Allāh made the light manifest on the tablet in the form of Muḥammad’s name. There it was shining for four thousand years. Then it glowed on the leg of the throne for seven thousand years. The tradition goes on to say that Muḥammad’s light was shining, thus, till Allāh deposited it in the loins of Adam. Then Allāh transferred it to the loins of Noah, then from loins to loins, till it appeared out of the loins of ‘Abdallah, Muḥammad’s father. The light of Muḥammad is displayed here as a messenger from the celestial world of light, making its way through the cosmic spheres, till its manifestation in the earthly world.

A more detailed version of this tradition, includes also the concept of the creation of Muḥammad’s spermatic substance from dust that became a pearl after having been taken from his grave. This enlarged version, recorded by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bakrı in his *Kitāb al-Anwār*, maintains that Allāh created at first Muḥammad’s light, out of which the rest of the world was created. This light made its way through the veils, till it reached the first heaven. Then, Allāh created the luminous pearl of Muḥammad from dust, depositing it in Adam’s loins.

The various concepts of Muḥammad’s pre-existence are, thus, displayed as several stages of the same cosmogonic process. This approach alludes to the existence of a one and only primordial light.

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29 Khargūshī, 8b–9a; compare *Bihār*, XV, 4–5.
30 *Bihār*, XV, 27 ff. (from al-Bakrı).
ABBREVIATIONS


Abū Ḥayyān — Abū Ḥayyān al-Baqa', Hibatu lāh, al-Mandqib ai-Mazyadiyya /i (Baghdād, 1328 H.).


Andrae — T. Andrae, Die Person Muḥammad (Upsala, 1917).


Asma‘ī — Al-Asma‘ī, Ta’rīkh al-tArab Qabla l-Isldm (Baghdād, 1959).

Baghawl — Al-Baghawī, Tafsīr, in the margin of Tafsīr al-Khāzīn (Cairo, n.d.).


Futūḥat — Ibn 'Arabī, al-Futūḥat al-Makkiyya (Dār Šādir, Beirut, n.d.).


Ḥalabi — Al-Ḥalābī, al-Sīra al-Ḥalabiyya (Būlāq, 1320 H. rep. Beirut n.d.).


Ibn Ṭabarī — Ibn Ṭabarī, Tafsīr (Beirut, 1966).


Khwārizmī — Abū Sa‘d al-Khwārizmī, Sharaf al-Nabiyya, Ms. Tübingen, M.a. VI, 12.

Khwārizmī — Abū Sa‘d al-Khwārizmī, Sharaf al-Nabiyya, Ms. Berlin (at the Staatsbibliothek) We. 312.

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Muslim — Muslim, 5/al;zd/zil;zl, I-VIII (Cairo, 1334 H.).


Qâstallâmî, Irshad — Al-Qâstallâmî, Irshâd al-Sâri li-Sharh Şâhî al-Bukhârî (Beirut, 1323 H.).

Qâsas — Al-Thâ’labî, Qïyas al-Anbiyâ’ (second print, Cairo, 1951).

al-Qummi — Al-Qummi, Tafsîr (al-Najaf, 1387 H.).


Rajab al-Barstî — Rajab al-Barstî, Mashâriq Anwâr al-Yaqîn (Beirut, n.d.).

Râzi — Al-Fakhîr al-Râzi, al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr (Tehran, n.d.).


Simt — Al-ْIṣâmî, Simt al-Nujâm al-ْAwâlî (Cairo, 1380 H.).

Suhâyli — Al-Suhâyli, Al-Rawd al-Umûf, ed. ’Abd al-Ra’ûf Sa’d (Cairo, 1971).


—, Durr — Al-Suyûtî, al-Durr al-Manthîr (Cairo, 1314 H.).

—, La’llî — Al-Suyûtî, al-La’llî al-Mašnû’a fi l-Ahâdîth al-Mawdû’a (Cairo, 1352 H.).


Tustarî, Tafsîr — Al-Tustarî, al-Tafsîr (Cairo, 1329 H.).


Ya’qûbî — Al-Ya’qûbî, al-Ta’rikh (Beirut, 1960).
