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PROPHETS AND PROGENITORS IN THE EARLY SHĪ'A TRADITION*

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INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

[4] See Ibn Shahrāshūb, II, 34 (Ibn Ishāq).

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

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

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

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

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

[6] See *GAS*, I, 556 ff.

[7] Ibn Shahrāshūb, II, 18: *zayd b. 'alī fī qawlihi: "wa-ulū l-arḥām ba'ḍuhum awlā bi-ba'ḍin", qāla: dhālika 'alī b. abī ṭālib, kāna muhājiran dhā raḥim.*

[8] *GAS*, I, 307.

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

[10] *Ibid.*, 18.

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

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

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

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

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

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al-Ḥusayn were even represented as having Muḥammad's outer appearance (see Bukhārī, IV, 227, V, 33; Ya'qūbī, II, 117; Tirmidhī, XIII, 196. Other persons too were said to have looked like the Prophet. See Zurqānī, VII, 17; *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, VII, 76–77; Ya'qūbī, II, 117).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The spiritual light is said to have been transmitted to 'Alī as a part of Muḥammad's testament (*waṣiyya*). This consisted of all his divine spiritual virtues, namely his eternal knowledge, the worldly existence of which was to be continued through 'Alī and after him through all the Shī'ī Imāms. The symbol of this eternal knowledge (*'ilm*) is the divine light of the Imāmi spirit which transmigrates from generation to generation.

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

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[14] *Muslim Studies*, I, 46.

[15] *Vorlesungen*, 218.

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

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

I. THE UNIVERSAL WAṢIYYA

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

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

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

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

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

[19] See about him *Ansāb*, V, 43 ff., 59 ff.

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

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

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

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

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[21] See e.g. *Biḥār*, XXIII, 39: *inna l-'ilm llādhī ahbaṭa ādam lam yurfa'. wa-l-'ilm yutawārath, wa-kull shay'min al-'ilm wa-āthār al-rusul wa-l-anbiyā' lam yakun min ahl hādhā l-bayt fa-huwa bāṭil*. . . See also *'Ilal*, 591.

[22] *Biḥār*, XXIII, 366. . . *fa-qāla fī kitābihi: "shar'a lakum min al-dīn" yā āl muḥammad "mā waṣṣā bihi nūḥan"; fa-qad waṣṣānā bi-mā waṣṣā bihi nūḥan. "wa-llādhī awḥaynā ilayka" yā muḥammad "wa-mā waṣṣaynā bihi ibrāhīma" wa-ismā'īla wa-isḥāqa wa-ya'qūba "wa-mūsā wa-'īsā". fa-qad 'alimnā wa-ballaghnā min 'ilminā wa-stawda'nā. fa-naḥnu warathat al-anbiyā' wa-naḥnu warathat ulū l-'azm min al-rusul.*

[23] Khuwārizmī, 47 (from al-Bayhaqī). Another Shī'ī tradition says that the tablets of Moses, the Gospel, the *ṣuḥuf ibrāhīm* and the *zabūr* are in the possession of the Shī'ī Imāms. See M.J. Kister, "Ḥaddithū 'An Banī Isrā'īl", *IOS*, 2 (1972), p. 232.

[24] See Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, II, 384; Tha'labī, 236.

[25] *Ithbāt*, 93; Khargūshī, 8b. And see also Qur'ān, II, 248, the *tābūt* contains "the *Shechina* and the relics of what the family of Moses and the family of Aaron left." The traditions say – in accordance with Jewish legend – that the relics of Moses and Aaron deposited in the Ark, consisted of the broken tablets of the Law, as well as of the staff of Moses, the clothes of Moses and Aaron, the Torah, the *manna* etc. See e.g. Ṭabarī, *op.cit.*, 387–388.

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

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

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

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

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[26] *Ithbāt*, 18–19.

[27] *Ibid.*, 28.

[28] Khargūshī, 9b–10a.

[29] See *Ithbāt*, 202; *Biḥār*, XXIII, 277: *wa-l-silāḥ fīnā bi-manzilat al-tābūt fī banī isrā'īl, yadūru ma'a l-imāma kayfa dāra.* About the belongings of the Shī'ī Imāms, see Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 218. In fact, as early as al-Mukhtār, his Yemenite adherents used to compare what was regarded as 'Alī's chair to the *tābūt* of *Banū Isrā'īl*. See below.

[30] See e.g. W. Madelung, "Imāma", *EI*², III, p. 1167.

[31] But see Zurqānī, I, 4: *wa-qīla: ism allāh al-a'ẓam huwa l-asmā' al-thalātha: allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm.* See the detailed discussion, Suhaylī, I, 47 ff.

[32] *Ithbāt*, 120–121; *Biḥār*, XI, 68.

[33] *Ithbāt*, 121.

[34] *Ibid.*, 148, 231.

[35] See *GAS*, I, 33.

[36] Ibn Shahrāshūb, III, 81.

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

The *jafr* of the Shī'ī Imāms[38] is also regarded as an inheritance from the preceding prophets. Only prophets or *awṣiyā'* were allowed to look into it.[39] Sometimes a red *jafr* is mentioned which contains Muḥammad's arms, and sometimes a white *jafr* which contains the Torah of Moses, Jesus' Gospel, David's Psalms and the rest of the Holy Scriptures.[40]

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

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

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[38] See e.g. Madelung, *loc. cit.*

[39] *Ithbāt*, 196. See about the *jafr*, *Vorlesungen*, 264, note 4; T. Fahd, "Djafr" *EI*², II, 375 ff.

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

[41] See e.g. Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 451; *Ma'ārif*, 26. Isaac, however, is sometimes counted as the first Hebrew prophet. See *Biḥār*, XI, 56.

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

[43] According to the principle of the *naṣṣ*, the prophet had expressedly designated and appointed 'Alī as his successor before his death (see e.g. *Muslim Studies*, II, 112 ff; Hodgson, *op. cit.*, 10 ff.). One can trace this idea back to the very beginning of the second century A.H. An explicit literary expression of it is found in Muḥammad's biography as compiled by Ibn Isḥāq (d. 150/151 A.H.). The material used in his book stems from the beginning of the second century. According to an instructive tradition, as it is quoted from Ibn Ishāq by al-Ṭabarī (through Salama b. al-Faḍl), Muḥammad assembled all the children of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, embraced 'Alī who had been the only one ready to assist the Prophet, and declared: "This is my brother, my *waṣiyy* (i.e. successor) and my *khalīfa* upon you. Obey him and do his bidding! " [Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, II, 319–321. In Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, XIX, 75, the text seems to be deliberately shortened: . . . *inna hādhā akhī wa-kadhā wa-kadhā*. See also Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 305–306 (Ibn

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

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

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

[44] See about the distinction between *awṣā* and *dafa'a*, *Biḥār*, XXIII, 59. But on the other hand, 'Alī's position as a *waṣiyy* is generally regarded as parallel to the position of the previous *awṣiyā'*. See e.g. *Biḥār*, XI, 41 (from *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt*): *wa-inna 'alī b. abī ṭālib kāna hibat allāh li-muḥammad, waritha 'ilm al-awṣiyā' wa-'ilm man kāna qablahu. ammā inna muḥammadan waritha 'ilm man kāna qablahu min al-anbiyā'*.

[45] *'Ilal*, 195. See also *Biḥār*, XXIII, 20; 64 (from *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*), XI, 44.

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

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

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

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

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

[47] *Ibid.*, XI, 266.

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

[49] *Ibid.*, XI, 48, XXIII, 225–226 ('Ayyāshī), 249 (Furāt); *Jawāhir*, 210.

[50] See *Mustadrak*, II, 587.

[51] See e.g. *IOS*, 5, p. 104 ff.

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

[53] See below.

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

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

II. AHL AL-BAYT AND BANU ISRA'IL

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

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

[54] P. 62–63.
[55] P. 73–75.
[56] See p. 73, 74, 75, 84, 86, 87.
[57] P. 75 infra.
[58] *Biḥār*, XI, 33–34.
[59] See e.g. Hodgson, " 'Abdallāh b. Saba' ", *EI²*; Shahrastānī, I, 174.

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

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

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

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

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

[61] See *GAS*, I, 312.

[62] III, 46.

[63] Ibn al-Biṭrīq, *'Umda*, 38 (from Aḥmad); *'Ilal*, 469; *La'ālī*, I, 358. See also *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, VIII, 114. And see Khuwārizmī, 20: *'an mujāhid 'an ibn 'abbās qāla: qāla rasūl allāh (ṣ): al-subbāq thalātha, fa-l-sābiq ilā mūsā yūsha' ibn nūn, fa-l-sābiq ilā 'īsā ṣāḥib yāsīn wa-l-sābiq ilā muḥammad 'alī ibn abī ṭālib.*

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

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

[66] Kister, *op. cit.*, 223.

[67] See Ibn Shahrāshūb, III, 166 (from al-Balādhurī and Aḥmad). See also *ibid.*, 46, 189; *'Ilal*, 137–138; Khargūshī (Tübingen) 15a.

[68] Ibn Shahrāshūb, II, 164.

[69] Rajab al-Barsī, 57.

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

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

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

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

[70] Ibn Sharāshūb, II, 247. See also *Ithbāt*, 166; *Biḥār*, XI, 30.

[71] Ibn Shahrāshūb, II, 172; *Ithbāt*, 152.

[72] *Ithbāt*, 153.

[73] Khuwārizmī, 221; *La'ālī*, I, 354–355.

[74] Khuwārizmī, 233, 226. And cf. *'Iqd*, IV, 312 (from al-Sh'abī).

[75] *Ithbāt*, 154.

[76] *'Ilal*, 148–149.

[77] Khuwārizmī, 40–41, 45; *Nahj*, II, 429 (from Aḥmad); *La'ālī*, I, 355–356. See also Ibn Shahrāshūb, II, 286; Rajab al-Barsī, 56.

[78] Ibn Shahrāshūb, III, 27.

[78a] A Shī'ī tradition maintains that by Children of Israel *Āl Muḥammad* are meant. See Kister, *op. cit.*, 233.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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tween *Ahl al-Bayt* and *Banū Isrā'īl* who had suffered from the Pharaoh, was reportedly drawn already by Arwā Bint al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, during her visit to Mu'āwiya, the first Umayyad Calif. The tradition to this effect was recorded by al-'Abbās b. Bakkār (d. 222 A.H., see *GAS*, I, 313). See *'Iqd*, II, 120. Ibn al-Ashtar as well reportedly declared (in the year 66 A.H.) that the massacre of Ḥusayn and his family was worse than what Pharaoh had done to *Banū Isrā'īl* (*Ansāb*, V, 249). Likewise, *Banū Isrā'īl* were taken as a model for the *tawwābūn* (repentants), i.e. those Shī'īs who since the year 61 A.H. intended to revenge the blood of al-Ḥusayn. Their leader, Sulaymān b. Ṣurad, on the basis of Qur'ān II, 54, urged them to repent for their sin of neglect of al-Ḥusayn, just as *Banū Isrā'īl* were ordered by Moses (after the affair of the calf) to repent for their sins by killing each other (*ibid.*, 206).

[80] Ibn Shahrāshūb, I, 258: *Kā'in fī ummatī mā kāna fī banī isrā'īl ḥadhwa l-na'li bi-l-na'li wa-l-qudhdha bi-l-qudhdha; kāna fīhim ithnā 'asḥara naqīban*. See more such traditions *ibid.*, 254; 258 ff. A similar comparison is made between the sins committed by the two communities. See e.g. Suyūṭī, III, 14 ff; Ibn al-Biṭrīq, *'Umda*, 178.

[81] *Ithbāt*, 259.

[82] Khuwārizmī, 85.

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

[84] *'Ilal*, 209. See also Ibn Shahrāshūb, III, 207; cf. *Biḥār*, XXIII, 70. The Zaydiyya, of course, recognized other Imāms as well.

[85] See various traditions about the two of them, Ibn Shahrāshūb, III, 234, 237; Khargūshī (Tübingen) 21b–22a; *Jawāhir*, 314, *La'ālī*, I, 391.

[86] Khargūshī (Tübingen), 21a.

[87] Bukhārī, IV, 179; Khargūshī (Tübingen), 20a–20b; Ibn Shahrāshūb, III, 155.

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

III. THE EARLY FOUNDATIONS

The Shī'ī preoccupation with traditions which deal with the prophets of *Banū Isrā'īl* as pre-figuring its own heroes, dates back to the earliest stages of its development. In fact, the Shī'a seems to be responsible for the main flow[89] of Judaeo-Christian motifs into the Muslim literature already since the first century A.H. This assumption finds support in Goldziher's observation that in the first century A.H. those who were concerned with religious matters were mainly Shī'īs[90] (this Shī'ī religious activity caused almost simultaneously the counteraction of the Umayyad rulers[91]). Therefore it seems probable that the belief in the identity of fate between *Banū Isrā'īl* and the Muslim community as a whole[92] has its origin in the more restricted Shī'ī form of this outlook concerning the close relation between the history of *Banū Isrā'īl* and that of *Ahl al-Bayt*.[93]

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

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

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

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

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

[92] Kister, *op. cit.*, 232.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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[94] The general Christian-Gnostic or Neo-Platonic origin of this idea has been indicated time and again. See e.g. Von Grunebaum, *Islam*, (London, 1964) p. 161–162; I. Goldziher, "Neo-Platonische Und Gnostische Elemente Im Ḥadīth", *ZA*, 22 (1909), p. 337.

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

[96] *Jubilees*, VII, 38–39.

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

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

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

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

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

[99] *Ibid.*, 50–51.

[99a] And see about Ibn Isḥāq's *tashayyu'*, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, I, 224; *'Uyūn al-Athar*, I, 13.

[100] Omitted completely in Ibn Hishām's version. Since he was interested only in the genealogical Arab descent of Muḥammad, Ibn Hishām has preserved only those passages of Ibn Isḥāq which deal with the ancient history of the Arabs.

[101] Al-Ṭabarī quotes the material from Ibn Isḥāq through Ibn Ḥumayd who quotes it from Salama b. al-Faḍl (d. 191 A.H.). The *riwāya* of Salama is considered the most complete one. See *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, I, 221.

[102] The term *ṣafiyy* (pl. *aṣfiyā'*) is used with reference to the Shī'ī Imāms as well, i.e. they have the *safwa*.

[102a] It is most significant that the struggle of the patriarchs against the posterity of Cain recurs as a central motif in later Shī'ī traditions as well. It serves as a model for the conflict between the Shī'īs and their enemies. Sheth, for instance, is presented as the leader of his Shī'a, who dwelt in the valley, in contrast to Cain and his posterity who dwelt on the mountain, (*Ithbāt*, 18). It is further related that Sheth practiced *taqiyya* because of the persecution of Cain's posterity, and his *taqiyya* was taken as a model by the Shī'a (see *Biḥār*, XI, 241: ... *wa- li-dhālika yasa'unā fī aqwaminā al-taqiyya li-anna lanā fī ibn ādam uswatun*. See also *ibid.*, 263–264, 227–229, 240.

Deluge and wrote the *waṣiyya* for him. Sheth, as Adam's *waṣiyy* was charged with the government after Adam's death.[103] As a prophet, Allāh also revealed to him fifty scriptures.[103a] The *waṣiyya* of Adam contained some objects which were put on stairs (*fī mi'rāj*) so that the name of Allāh would not be forgotten. Among these objects was the horn which Adam had brought from Paradise.[104] Of Enos, who succeeded his father Sheth, Ibn Isḥāq says:

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

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

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

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[103] Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I, 152: ... *wa-kataba waṣiyyatahu fa-kāna shith fī-mā dhukira waṣiyya abīhi ādam 'alayhi l-salām wa-ṣārat al-ri'āsa min ba'ḍi wafāt ādam li-shith.*

[103a] *Loc. cit.* According to other sources, scriptures were revealed already to Adam. See e.g. *Ithbāt*, 18, and see also Tha'labī, 88; *Biḥār*, XI, 43. And see about the scriptures of Adam, Sheth and Enoch in the Apocryphal book, *Secrets of Enoch*, XXXII, 11.

[104] Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, 159.

[105] *Ibid.*, 163: *wa-qāma ināsh ba'd muḍiyyi abīhi shith li-sabīlihi bi-siyāsat al-mulk wa-tadbīr man taḥta yadayhi min ra'iyyatihi maqāma abīhi shith. wa-lam yazal fī-mā dhukira 'alā minhāj abīhi, la yūqafu minhu 'alā taghyīr wa-lā tabdīl.*

[106] *Ibid.*, 170.

[107] *Ibid.*, 172–173: ... *fa-stakhlafahu ukhnūkh 'alā amri allāh wa-awṣāhu wa-ahla baytihi qabla an yurfa'a wa-a'lamahum anna allāh 'azza wa-jalla sa-yu'adhdhibu walada qāyin wa-man khālaṭahum wa-māla ilayhim, wa-nahāhum 'an mukhālaṭatihim.*

[108] *Ibid.*, 173. The *waṣiyya* of Lamech to Noah see *ibid.*, 174.

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

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

> Sheth the son of Adam begat Enos and many people. To him Sheth delivered his *waṣiyya* (*wa-ilayhi awṣā shith*). Enos begot Cainan and many people, and to him the *waṣiyya* (was delivered). Cainan begot Mahalaleel and people with him, and to him the *waṣiyya* (was delivered). Mahalaleel begot Jared and people with him, and to him the *waṣiyya* (was delivered). . . [110]

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

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

IV. PROPHETS AND PROGENITORS

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

As a reaction to the wide use made of Judaeo-Christian elements in the build-up of the merits of Muḥammad and the Imāms,[111a] it seems that already within

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

[110] Ibn Sa'd, I, 39.

[111] *Ibid.*, 40.

[111a] As far as Muḥammad himself was concerned, the Judaeo-Christian elements, as well as Persian ones, were used since the first century A.H. as a model for his prophetic person, mainly for apologetic purposes, in order to demonstrate that his virtues were no less divine than those of the previous prophets. See e.g. Sellheim, *op. cit.*, 53 ff, 59 ff.

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

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

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

[113] See e.g. *IOS*, 5, p. 75 ff.

[114] *Ibid.*, 80 ff.

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

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

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[114a] *Ithbāt*, 94 ff. This passage belongs to the traditions about *Nūr Muḥammad* which al-Mas'ūdī has woven into the main group of traditions dealing with the universal *waṣiyya* (see above).

[115] 10a ff.

[116] About Isaac as Ishmael's successor see also Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I. 314, 317.

[117] See above part 1.

[118] *Ithbāt*, 94; Khargūshī, 10a. See also Tha'labī, 236.

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

[120] *Ithbāt*, 94–96; Khargūshī, 10a–10b.

[121] Qur'ān II, 248.

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

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

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

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

[123] Khargūshī, 9b–10a. Cf. Tha'labī, 236.

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

[125] See more traditions about it in *Ithbāt*, 37; *Simṭ*, I, 146; *'Iqd*, V, 89.

[126] *Muslim Studies*, I, 135–136.

[127] See Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, VI, 85.

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

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

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

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

[129] See e.g. *ibid.*, 242. They were of the tribes Shibām, Shākir and Khārif of Hamdān, as well as Nahd from Quḍā'a. And see also J. Wellhausen, *Die religiös-politischen Oppositionsparteien im alten Islam*, translated into the Arabic by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (*al-Khawārij wa-l-shī'a*, Kuwait 1976) p. 169 ff.

[130] *Ibid.*, 248.

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

[132] *Ibid.*, 242: *wa-innī mru'un aḥbabtu āla muḥammadin/ wa-āthartu waḥyan ḍummīnathu l-ṣaḥā'ifu*.

[133] In its usual Shī'ī context, this expression refers to 'Alī's family that is, *Ahl al-Bayt*.

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

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

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

ABBREVIATIONS

'Abd al-Razzāq — 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A'ẓamī, Beirut. 1970.
Abū Dāwūd — Abū Dāwūd, *Al-Sunan*, ed. Aḥmad Sa'd 'Alī, Cairo, 1952.
Aghānī — Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, Būlāq, 1285 A.H.
Ansāb, I — Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, I, ed. Ḥamīd Allāh, Cairo, 1959.
Ansāb, IV — Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, IV, ed. Schloessinger, Jerusalem, 1939–1971.
Ansāb, V — Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, V, ed. S.D. Goitein, Jerusalem, 1936.
Azraqī — Al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka al-Musharrafa*, ed. Wüstenfeld, Leipzig, 1858.
Biḥār — Al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, new edition, Tehran, n.d.
Bukhārī — Al-Bukhārī. *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, I–IX, Cairo, 1958.
Fatḥ al-Bārī — Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Būlāq, 1300 A.H.
GAS I — F.Sezgin, *Geschichte Des Arabischen Schrifttums*, I, Leiden, 1967.
Ibn al-Biṭrīq, *'Umda* — Ibn al-Biṭrīq, *Kitāb al-'Umda fī 'Uyūn Ṣiḥāḥ al-Akhbār*, n.p., n.d.
Ibn Hishām — Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, I–IV, ed. Al-Saqā, Al-Abyārī, Shalabī, 3rd edition, Beirut, 1971.
Ibn al-Jawzī — Ibn al-Jawzī, *Al-Wafā bi-Aḥwāl al-Muṣṭafā*, ed. 'Abd al-Wāḥid, Cairo, 1966.
Ibn Kathīr — Ibn Kathīr, *Shamā'il al-Rasūl*, ed. 'Abd al-Wāḥid, Cairo, 1967.
Ibn Sa'd — Ibn Sa'd, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, Beirut, 1960.
Ibn Shahrāshūb — Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib Al Abī Ṭālib*, Najaf, 1956.
'Ilal — Ibn Bābawayhi, *'Ilal al-Sharā'i'*, Najaf, 1966.
'Iqd — Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi, *Al-'Iqd al-Farīd*, Cairo, 1965.
Ithbāt — Al-Mas'ūdī, *Ithbāt al-Waṣiyya Li-l-Imām 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib*, Najaf, 1955.
Jawāhir — Al-'Āmilī, *Al-Jawāhir al-Saniyya fī al-Aḥādīth al-Qudsiyya*, Baghdād, 1964.
Khargūshī — Abū Sa'd al-Khargūshī, *Sharaf al-Nabiyy* Ms. BM, Or. 3014.
—, (Tübingen) *Abū Sa'd al-Khargūshī, Sharaf al-Nabiyy*. (Ms. Tübingen), M.A. VI, 12.
Khuwārizmī — Al-Khuwārizmī, *Al-Manāqib*, Najaf, 1965.

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

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

La'ālī — Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-La'ālī al-Muṣnū'a fī al-Aḥādīth al-Mawḍū'a*, Cairo, 1352 A.H.
Ma'ārif — Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb al-Ma'ārif*, ed. Al-Ṣāwī, Beirut, 1970.
Muslim — Muslim, *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, I–VIII, Cairo, 1334 A.H.
Mustadrak — Abū 'Abdallāh al-Nisābūrī, *Al-Mustadrak 'Alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn fī Al-Ḥadīth*, rep. Riad, 1968.
Nahj — Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha*, I–IV, Cairo, 1329 A.H.
Rajab al-Barsī — Rajab al-Barsī, *Mashāriq Anwār al-Yaqīn*, Beirut, n.d.
Ṣawā'iq — Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, *Al-Ṣawā'iq Al-Muḥriqa fī al-Radd 'alā Ahl al-Bida' wa-l-Zandaqa*, ed. 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Abd al-Laṭīf, Cairo, 1965.
Shahrastānī — Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal*, ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Kaylānī, Cairo, 1967.
Simt — Al-'Iṣāmī, *Simt al-Nujūm al-'Awālī*, Cairo, 1380 A.H.
Suhaylī — Al-Suhaylī, *Al-Rawḍ al-Unuf*, ed. 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Sa'd, Cairo, 1971.
Suyūṭī — Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Khaṣā'iṣ al-Kubrā*, ed. Muḥammad Khalīl Harās, Cairo, 1967.
Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* — Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Būlāq, 1323 A.H.
—, *Ta'rīkh* — Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk*, ed. Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo, 1960.
—, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād* — Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, Cairo, 1931.
Tha'labī — Al-Tha'labī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, Beirut, n.d.
Tirmidhī — Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, in: Ibn al-'Arabī's *'Āridat al-Aḥwadhī*, rep. Dār al-'Ilm li-l-jamī', n.d.
'Uyūn al-Athar — Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *'Uyūn al-Athar*, rep. Beirut, n.d.
Ya'qūbī — Al-Ya'qūbī, *Al-Ta'rīkh*, Beirut, 1960.
Zurqānī — Al-Zurqānī, *Sharḥ 'alā l-Mawāhib al-Laduniyya li-l-Qasṭallānī*, Cairo. 1329 A.H.