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JERUSALEM STUDIES IN ARABIC AND ISLAM



HANIFIYYA AND KA'BA An inquiry into the Arabian pre-Islamic background of din Ibrahim

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Modern scholars usually treat Muslim reports concerning the pre-Islamic hunafa' (sing. hanif), who allegedly followed the monotheistic religion known as din Ibrahim, with a great deal of scepticism. W.M. Watt, for instance, stresses the apologetic nature of these reports, suggesting that the term hanif in its monotheistic sense was never actually used before the Quran. This means that traditions about pre-Islamic monotheistic hunafā' are merely the result of an apologetic projection of Quranic concepts.¹ Casual examination of the Muslim sources seems at first to justify this sceptical approach. There is, for instance, a whole series of traditions presenting Muhammad's genealogical ancestors (e.g., Ma'add, Mudar, al-Ya's, Asad b. Khuzayma), as following the hanifiyya of Abraham; in these traditions Muslims are requested not to curse these persons.² The apologetic nature of these traditions is obvious, their chief aim being to present the prophet as descended from noble monotheistic ancestors who allegedly never practiced idolatry. In other cases, however, the apologetic motive is not quite self-evident. Some western scholars have already noted that among those persons whom Muslim sources describe as hunafa' are some bitter opponents of Muhammad. The reports concerning these persons must be taken as authentic, because, as

¹ EI^2 s. v. "Hanīf". See also *Hagarism*, 13-14. And see Wansbrough, *Milieu*, 6, where the stories about the *hanīfs* and other seekers of the true faith are labelled as *praeparatio evangelica*, and p. 7, where they are said to represent "a myth devised to interpret the spriritual, intellectual, and social transformation brought about by the mission of an Arabian prophet."

² Abū I-Baqā', 48, 55-56, 59; Halabī, I, 17; Kalā'ī, I, 68; Munammaq, 4. See also Rubin, "Nūr", 77.

already noted by Fueck, no Muslim could have had any interest in characterizing these opponents of the prophet as $hunaf\bar{a}'^3$. In the following pages an attempt is made at elucidating the basic elements of the *hanīfiyya* professed by these opponents of Muhammad and the reasons for their strife with the prophet. This may give us a better insight into the Arabian background of the *hanīfiyya* and *dīn Ibrāhīm*.

1. The hanifiyya of Muhammad's enemies

Some reports deal with Abū 'Āmir 'Abd 'Amr b. Şayfī,⁴ who was one of the prominent leaders of the Aws in Medina and an implacable enemy of Muhammad. Shortly after the latter's arrival in Medina, Abū 'Āmir reportedly set out to Mecca with fifty or fifteen people of the Aws, all refusing to embrace Islam. Abū 'Āmir is said to have taken an active part on the Meccan side in the battle of Uhud. In fact, he is said to have been the first to attack the Muslims along with the Ahābīsh of Quraysh.⁵ Following the expulsion of Banū al-Nadīr to Khaybar (3H/625), Abū 'Āmir is again said to have gone to Mecca along with some Jews and certain people of Aws. They reportedly urged Quraysh to attack Muhammad, and made an alliance with the Quraysh in order to fight the prophet and destroy him.⁶ After the conquest of Mecca (8H/630), Abū 'Āmir is said to have fled to Tā'if, and when Tā'if surrendered to Muhammad (9H), Abū 'Āmir went off to Syria, where he eventually died.⁷

The name of Abū 'Āmir is connected with the affair of the building of the mosque known as *masjid al-shiqāq*,⁸ or *masjid al-dirār*.⁹ It is related that on the eve of Muhammad's raid on Tabūk (9H/630), some people built a mosque in Medina and asked

- 7 Balādhurī, Ansāb, I, 282 (from al-Wāqidī); 'Uyūn al athar, I, 222.
- 8 Cf. Suyūțī, Durr, III, 146.
- 9 Cf. Quran IX/107 ff. See Gil, 70 ff.

³ Fueck, 98 n. 11, concerning Abu I-Qays b. al-Aslat.

⁴ See about him Gil, 87 ff.

⁵ Ibn Hishām, III, 71. See also Wāqidī, I, 205-206; Balādhurī, Ansāb, I, 313; Halabī, II, 240. It is related that the prophet fell into one of the ditches which were dug by Abū 'Amir. See Halabī, II, 232, 240.

⁶ Wāqidī, II, 441-442.

Muhammad to pray with them in it. At first the prophet intended to oblige, but eventually found out that the people had mischievous intentions, the nature of which is not disclosed in the sources. Whatever their motives, it is stressed that they had contacts with Abū 'Āmir who was at the time in Syria. They reportedly prepared the mosque as headquarters for Abū 'Āmir's supporters who expected his return. When their plans were exposed the prophet ordered that the mosque be torn down and set on fire.¹⁰ Some reports say that Abū 'Āmir himself ordered his supporters to build that mosque and collect weapons in it, telling them that he was about to bring Byzantine troops who would expel Muhammad and his Muslims from Medina.¹¹

The sources contain important details concerning the spiritual orientation of this enemy of Muhammad. Ibn Ishāq (d. 150H/767) says about him:¹²

wa-kāna qad tarahhaba fī l-jāhiliyya wa-labisa l-musūha wa-kāna yuqālu lahu l-rāhibu

He used to practice tarahhub and wore hair mantles and was called "al-rahub"

A good insight into the meaning of this report may be gained from a verse by Hassān b. Thābit, Muḥammad's poet, who, mourning the death of the prophet, describes his sorrowful wives "like nuns putting on hair mantles" (*mithla l-rawāhibi yalbasna l-musūḥa...*).¹³ From Hassān's description it may be inferred that Abū 'Āmir was known as "*al-rāhib*" mainly because of his hair mantle which, like those of Muḥammad's mourning wives, resembled the garments of the *rāhibs*, i.e., the Christian monks. In other words, Abū 'Āmir's *tarahhub* was not necessarily a Christian practice as suggested by Wellhausen,¹⁴ but merely a kind of ascetic conduct resembling Christian manners only in its outer manifestations.

- 13 Ibn Sa'd, II, 321. Cf. Ibn Hisham, IV, 322.
- 14 Reste, 239. Cf. Gil, p. 91, note 60.

¹⁰ Wāqidī, III, 1046; Balādhurī, Ansāb, I, 282, 283; Bidāya, V, 21ff.

¹¹ Suyūtī, Durr, III, 276; Qisas, 212; 'Adawī, 253ª.

¹² Ibn Hishām, II, 234. See also 'Uyūn al-athar, I, 221; Ibn Sa'd, II, 37; Istīʿāb, I, 380; Balādhurī, Ansāb, I, 281; Wāqidī, II, 441; Suyūtī, Durr III, 276; Halabī, II, 240; Murūj, I, 74.

Al-Balādhurī (d. 279H/892) reports that Abū 'Āmir wished to present himself as a prophet,¹⁵ which seems to indicate that he probably used to recite certain prophetic utterances. The content of his utterances may be deduced from the report of Ibn Hajar to the effect that Abū 'Āmir used to speak about the resurrection and the *hanīfiyya*.¹⁶ There seems to be no reason to suspect this report. Themes dealt with in the prophetic utterance of Muhammad could very well be included in the preachings of other contemporaries having similar prophetic claims.

The relation of Abū 'Amir to the hanifiyya is indicated in a report of al-Wagidi (d. 207H/823) concerning a conversation between the Jews of Medina and Muhammad b. Maslama of the Aws,¹⁷ which took place before Muhammad's arrival in Medina. The Jews told Ibn Maslama that nothing seemed to prevent him from embracing their religion, except for the fact that it was the religion of the Jews. They claimed that he probably preferred the hanifiyya about which he had heard, but, they stressed, Abū 'Amir had already abandoned it.18 This report implies that both Muhammad b. Maslama and Abū 'Amir, who were fellow tribesmen, used to adhere to a kind of monotheistic hanifiyya, not too far removed from the Jewish religion, and that Abū 'Amir eventually abandoned it, unlike Ibn Maslama who stuck to it. From the general context of this conversation it is clear that the Jews actually alluded to Muhammad's message, which, in their view at least, was based on that hanifiyya which was eventually rejected by Abū 'Amir, but supported by Ibn Maslama.

Abū 'Āmir's rejection of the kind of hanīfiyya which Muhammad adopted as "Islam" is also indicated in a direct confrontation between him and the prophet. Gil describes it quite rightly as an "encounter between two hanīfs of different

¹⁵ Baladhuri, Ansab, I, 282.

¹⁶ Işāba, II, 137; wa-kāna yadhkuru l-ba'tha wa-dīna l-hanīfiyya.

¹⁷ See about him Isaba, VI, 33ff.

¹⁸ ka-annaka turīdu l-hanīfiyyata llatī sami'ta bihā. ammā inna Abā 'Āmir qad sakhitahā wa-laysa 'alayhā (Wāqidī, I, 367).

persuasions."¹⁹ Ibn Ishāq reports that Abū 'Āmir came to Muhammad when the latter arrived in Medina, and asked him what was the religion he had brought. Muhammad said: "I have brought the *hanīfiyya*, the *dīn* of Abraham." Abū 'Āmir said: "That is what I follow." Muhammad said: "You do not." Abū 'Āmir said: "Yes, I do," and added that Muhammad had introduced in the *hanīfyya* things which did not belong to it (*innaka adkhalta, ya Muhammad, fī l-hanīfiyya ma laysa minhā*). Muhammad said: "I have not. I have brought it pure and white."²⁰ The break between these two *hanifs* was never bridged, and it is reported that Muhammad changed Abū 'Āmir's appellation from "*al-rāhib*" to "*al-fāsiq*".²¹

What was the origin of the dispute between Muhammad and Abū 'Āmir? The sources examined thus far do not allow a clear-cut answer. Gil's conclusion, following a thorough examination of a wide range of source material, is that Abū 'Āmir was a leader of a group of dissenters with "a kind of pacifistic orientation", who were also opposed to "the new system of justice personified by Muhammad", and hence "to the very essence and foundations of the Muslim *umma*."²² It seems, however, that the roots of the conflict must be looked for within the *hanīfiyya* which occurs in the above-cited dialogue as the main issue disputed by Abū 'Āmir and Muhammad. In order to elucidate the origin of this "inter-*hanīfī*" conflict, one has to study the reports concerning other rivals of Muhammad who are likewise presented as monotheistic *hunafā*'.

The poet Abū Qays b. al-Aslat²³ was the leader of the Medinan tribe Aws Allāh of the Aws, i.e., Abū 'Āmir's tribe. Ibn Ishāq reports that he kept his people back from Islam until after the battle of the Khandaq (5H/627). This was the only section of

- 21 Ibn Hishām, II, 235, III, 71; Ibn Sa'd, II, 37; 'Uyūn al-athar, I, 222; Qişaş, 212. 22 Gil, 91.
- 23 See about him Sezgin, GAS, II, 287.

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¹⁹ Gil, 90.

²⁰ Ibn Hishām, II, 235. See also 'Uyūn al-athar, I, 222; Qişaş, 212.

the Anşār in which there were no Muslims at all.²⁴ According to another report, Abū Qays fled to Mecca and stayed there with Quraysh until the submission of Mecca.²⁵

This opponent of Muhammad is said to have been known in Yathrib as "al-hanif."²⁶ Ibn Sa'd (d. 230H/845) stresses that he was more eager in observing the hanifiyya than anyone else in Medina. He allegedly used to say: "I adhere to the religion of Abraham, and will not cease till I die."27 The hanifiyya of Abū Qays, like that of Abū 'Amir, seems to have been at variance with the hanifiyya of Muhammad, although they had a lot in common. Ibn Sa'd reports that Abū Qays "almost" embraced Islam, and used to refer to the hanifiyya in his poems and to describe the prophet who was about to appear in Mecca.²⁸ The circumstances which hindered Abū Qays from embracing Islam are elucidated in a report recorded by Mughultay.29 It says that Abū Qays resembled Qays b. al-Khatim in poetic vigour and courage; he was God-fearing, a follower of the hanifiyya and urged Quraysh and the Aws to follow the prophet. 'Abdallah b. Ubayy (the leader of the Munafiqun in Medina and a relative of Abū 'Amir) heard about it and said to Abū Qays: "You have abandoned our party (ludhta min hizbinā kulla malādh). Once you seek alliance with Quraysh and once you wish to follow Muhammad." (marratan tatlubu l-hilfa fi Quraysh wa-marratan bi-ittibā'i Muhammad). Abū Qays became angry and swore that he would not embrace Islam for a whole year. He died before the end of that year. Some say that before his death he was heard uttering the shahāda. This report indicates that Abū Qays was wavering between attraction to Muhammad and loyalty to Quraysh. His faithfulness to Quraysh and, in fact, his devotion to Mecca, is clearly indicated in some poetic verses recorded on his authority,

- 24 Ibn Hishām, II, 80. See also Ibn Sa'd, IV, 384; Sam'ānī, 345.
- 25 Istī ab, IV, 1734; Isaba, VII, 335.
- 26 Ibn Sa'd, IV, 383, 384.
- 27 Ibid, IV, 384.
- 28 Loc. cit. See also Isaba, VII, 334.
- 29 Mughultāy, 32^a-32^b. Cf. also Ibn Sa'd, IV, 385; Balādhurī, Ansāb, I, 274; Isāba, VII, 334.

where the basic tenets of his *hanifiyya* are set out. The verses have already been noted by Wellhausen³⁰ and others,³¹ but no attention has been drawn to their special significance. Though Wellhausen cavils at the authenticity of these verses, his doubt does not seem justified. As pointed out above, themes like *hanīfiyya* and monotheism in general, which are treated at length in the Quran, may very well occur independently in the poetic utterances of other contemporaries of Muhammad. The verses to which we refer are recorded by Ibn Ishāq.³² The first four run as follows (tr. Guillaume, 201):

- Lord of mankind, serious things have happened / the difficult and the simple are involved.
- Lord of mankind, if we have erred / guide us to the good path.
- Were it not for our Lord we should be Jews / and the religion of the Jews is not convenient.³³
- Were it not for our Lord we should be Christians / along with the monks on Mount Jalīl.

The final two verses read [tr. U. R.]:

- nasūqu l-hadya tarsufu mudh'inātin / mukashshafata l-manākibi fī-l-julūlī
- But when we were created, we were created / with our religion distinct from (that of) any other generation
- We lead the sacrificial animals walking obediently in iron / their shoulders bare under the clothes.

The fifth verse suggests that the *hanifiyya* is a primordial, natural religion preserving the basic monotheism inherent in man since

³⁰ Reste, 238, note 1.

³¹ E.g., Buhl-Schaeder, 69.

³² Ibn Hishām, II, 80. See also Ibn Sa'd, IV, 384-385.

³³ Better: has no counterparts.

creation, and is thus distinct from any other acquired religion. The sixth line sheds light on the ritual practices of the hanifs. They lead sacrificial animals which are called hady. This term, which occurs also in the Quran (e.g. V/2, 95, 97), stands for sacrificial animals consecrated to the Ka'ba. They were usually slaughtered near the Ka'ba, especially during the 'Umra. In the above verse, the animals are described as tarsufu mudhinatin. Rasafa means to walk heavily with iron fetters and the like.34 It seems that an allusion is here being made to a special feature of the sacrificial animals which used to be brought to Mecca. The Arabs used to hang on each animal a pair of iron horse-shoes, an act referred to in Muslim sources as taqlid al-na'l.35 Muslim scholars explain that the horse-shoes symbolized travels.³⁶ In the same verse the sacrificial animals are also described as being covered with clothes named julul through which their shoulders are seen. This again is characteristic of animals led to the Ka'ba during the pilgrimages. The act of covering the animals with these clothes is named tailil al-hady.³⁷ The pilgrims sometimes used to make holes in the clothes so that the special scars made on the skin of the animal remained visible. The scars signified that the animal was consecrated to Allah.38

The verses of Abū Qays indicate that the ritual practices observed by *hanīfs* like Abū Qays were focused on the pilgrimage to Mecca, and on the veneration of the Ka⁵ba³⁹ In some further verses of Abū Qays recorded by Ibn Ishāq,⁴⁰ the attitude of the

34 E.g., Ibn Hisham, III, 332: ...idh ja'a Abū Jandal b. Suhayl b. 'Amr yarsufu fī l-hadīd.

- 36 Fath al-bari, III, 438.
- 37 E.g., Qirā, 569.
- 38 Fath al-bari, III, 438-439.
- 39 Buhl-Schaeder (p. 69-70) contend that these verses were composed by a follower of Muhammad who wished to glorify the religion of Abraham as having the pilgrimage at its centre. But even so, this does not necessarily mean that the pilgrimage was not really a central element in *dīn Ibrāhīm*.
- 40 Ibn Hishām, I, 302 ff.

³⁵ E.g., Qirā, 566.

former towards the Ka'ba, as well as towards Quraysh, is stated very clearly. Introducing these verses Ibn Ishāq says that Abū Qays used to love Quraysh, being their relative by his wife, Arnab bint Asad. Ibn Ishāq adds that in this *qasīda* the poet magnifies the sanctity of Mecca. A few verses addressed to Quraysh may illustrate the attitude of Abū Qays: ⁴¹

aqīmū lanā dīnan hanīfan fa-antumū / lanā ghāyatun qad yuhtadā bi-l-dhawā'ibī
Raise up for us a hanīfī religion / you are our object; one is guided in travel by heights fa-qūmū fa-şallū rabbakum wa-tamassahū / bi-arkāni hādhā l-bayti bayna l-akhāshibī
Rise and pray to your Lord and rub yourselves / against the corners of this house between the mountains fa-in tahlikū nahlik wa-tahlik mawāsimū / yu'āshu bihā, qawlu mri'in ghayri kādhibī
If you perish we shall perish, and the fairs by which men live / these are the words of a truthful man.

In these verses the people of Quraysh feature as representing the *hanīfiyya*; they are urged by the poet to go on observing it, while they are also requested to worship their Lord, i.e. Allāh, and to venerate the Ka'ba which functioned as His sanctuary, and was usually known as "*baytu llāhi l-harām*." The poet states that the existence of Quraysh is vital for the survival of the entire Meccan ritual system; this means that *hanīfs* like Abū Qays regarded Quraysh as the legitimate custodians of the main centre of *hanīfī* worship.

At this point one may cast another look at the material concerning Abū 'Āmir. It seems that his *hanīfiyya* too was based on the veneration of the sanctity of Mecca and the Ka'ba, as well as on loyalty to Quraysh. Apart from his personal relations with Meccan leaders like Abū Sufyān,⁴² Abū 'Āmir greatly admired the

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⁴¹ Tr. Guillaume, 128 ff.

⁴² Abū 'Amir once presented Abū Sufyān with a mawlā of his. See Ibn Sa'd V, 311.

ritual position of Quraysh. Al-Wāqidī reports that when Abū 'Āmir left for Mecca with fifty people of Aws Allāh, following Muhammad's *hijra* to Medina, he said to Quraysh that their ritual conduct was right, whereas what Muhammad had brought was wrong.⁴³ Furthermore, after the expulsion of the Jews of al-Nadīr to Khaybar, some of their leaders came to Mecca along with Abū 'Āmir and asked Quraysh to conclude a treaty against Muhammad (see p. 86 above). The way in which the oath of this alliance was taken is most instructive. All parties reportedly entered behind the hangings of the Ka'ba and pressed their bodies against its walls.⁴⁴ This ceremony could not have taken place were it not for the deep devotion to the sanctity of the Ka'ba on the part of Abū 'Āmir as well as on the part of the Jewish leaders.⁴⁵

Another rival of Muhammad known as a *hanif* was the poet Umayya b. Abī 1-Şalt from Tā'if.⁴⁶ His monotheistic orientation is indicated, to begin with, in the fact that some considered him a Jew.⁴⁷ But it seems that he was closer to people of the sort of Abū 'Âmir. This is implied by the fact that his name occurs alongside that of Abū 'Āmir in the commentaries on Quran VII/175 which deals with "him to whom we gave Our signs, but he cast them off and Satan followed after him..." (tr. Arberry). According to Ibn 'Abbās, the Anṣār claimed that the verse referred to the *rāhib* for whom *masjid al-shiqāq* was built (i.e., Abū 'Āmir), whereas Thaqīf claimed that the verse dealt with Umayya b. Abī al-Ṣalt.⁴⁸ According to another tradition, the persons meant by this verse were people from among the Jews, the Christians and the *hunafā*'.⁴⁹

⁴³ Wāqidī, I, 205-206.

⁴⁴ Ibid, II, 442.

⁴⁵ On the attitude of the Jews of Arabia towards the Ka'ba see more below.

⁴⁶ See about him Buhl-Schaeder, 97 ff; Sezgin, GAS, II, 298 ff. For the traditions concerning him see already Sprenger, I, 110 ff.

⁴⁷ Fath al-bari, VII, 116.

⁴⁸ Suyūțī, Durr, III, 146. See also Işāba, I, 250; Aghānī, III, 187; Bidāya, II, 221; Fath al-bārī, VII, 116.

⁴⁹ Suyūtī, loc. cit.

It is noteworthy that the $hunaf\bar{a}'$ are mentioned in this interpretation alongside other monotheistic groups who "cast off" the "signs" of Allāh, i.e., rejected Muhammad.

Like Abū 'Āmir, Umayya, too, used to wear rough hair clothes (musūh). Al-Zubayr b. Bakkār (d. 256H/870) reports that Umayya was well versed in holy books, wore musūh, was God fearing and used to mention Abraham and Ishmael and the hanīfiyya in his poems. He prohibited wine-drinking and did not believe in the idols. He was a seeker looking for the true religion.⁵⁰

The nature of the poetry of Umayya b. Abī al-Ṣalt may be deduced from the fact that Muhammad reportedly stated that Umayya "almost" embraced Islam in his poetry.⁵¹ The most characteristic verse recorded on his authority is perhaps the following⁵² (tr. Guillaume p. 30):

kullu dīnin yawma l-qiyāmati 'inda l- / -lāhi illa dīna l-ḥanīfati būrū In God's sight at the resurrection every religion / but that of the hanīf is doomed to perdition.

The authenticity of the verses attributed to Umayya has been doubted more than once.⁵³ The above quoted verse is described by Watt as "presumably of Islamic inspiration".⁵⁴ Against this supposition it may again be pointed out that the same themes may have been treated independently by the prophet as well as by various contemporary poets with a similar monotheistic orientation. As a rule, if one does not suspect the authenticity of the Quran one does not have any immediate reason for rejecting the authenticity

⁵⁰ Aghānī, III, 187. Cf. also Isāba, I, 250; Fath al-bārī, VII, 116; Ibn Qutayba, Ma'ārif, 28.

⁵¹ Muslim, VII, 48-49; Bukhārī, V, 53; Isāba, I, 249; Bidāya, II, 228.

⁵² Ibn Hishām, I, 62. See also Isāba, I, 251; Aghānī, III, 187.

⁵³ See for details Buhl-Schaeder 70; Sezgin, GAS, II, 299.

⁵⁴ Watt, "Hanif", El2.

of other utterances containing a similar religious or ethical message.55

Umayya b. Abī al-Şalt apparently never embraced Islam. There is a tradition recorded by Ibn 'Asākir on the authority of al-Zuhrī (d. 124H/742) to the effect that Umayya met Muhammad in Mecca before the *hijra* and being deeply impressed by his preachings decided to embrace Islam. But in the meantime the battle of Badr took place, in which many Meccan leaders, including some of Umayya's relatives, were killed. He thereupon abandoned his former intention to embrace Islam and returned to Tā'if.⁵⁶ He also composed a special *qaşīda* lamenting the death of the Meccans at Badr,⁵⁷ and Muhammad reportedly forbade its recitation.⁵⁸ From that time on, Umayya used to stir up Quraysh against Muhammad.⁵⁹

Umayya, like the former $han\bar{i}fs$, doubted whether Muhammad represented the true $han\bar{i}fiyya$. On his death-bed he reportedly said: "I know that the $han\bar{i}fiyya$ is true, but I have my doubts concerning Muhammad" (...wa-anā a'lamu anna l-han $\bar{i}fiyya$ $haqqun wa-l\bar{a}kinna l-shakka yudākhilunī fī Muhammad).⁶⁰$ Muhammad, on his part, said about him: "āmana shi'ruhu wa-kafara qalbuhu."⁶¹ To this must be added the personal rivalry between them. Umayya, like Muhammad, tended to consider himself a prophet, and was jealous of Muhammad's prophetic success.⁶²

- 55 Not even *Hagarism* seems to produce conclusive evidence that the Quran is not authentic, i.e., did not come into existence in Arabia in Muhammad's days.
- 56 Bidāya, II, 226. See also Suyūtī, Durr, III, 146; Fath al-bārī, VII, 116-117; Isāba, I, 250.
- 57 Ibn Hishām, III, 31 ff.; Balādhurī, Ansāb, I, 306ff.
- 58 Aghānī, III, 187.
- 59 Loc. cit.
- 60 Ibid., III, 191; Isāba, I, 252; Fath al-barī, VII, 116.
- 61 Aghānī, III, 191; Ibn Qutayba, Ma'ārif, 28; Isāba, I, 251; Bidāya, II, 228; Fath al-bārī, VII, 116.
- 62 Ibn Qutayba, Ma'ārif, 28; Aghānī, 111, 187; Isāba, I, 250; Murūj, I, 70-71. Cf. Suyūtī, Khasā'is, I, 60. Umayya, like Muhammad, features in the sources as being subjected to a miraculous opening of his breast. See e.g., Bidāya, II, 224 ff; Aghānī, III, 188 ff; Isāba, I, 252.

The reports concerning the above mentioned hunafā' lead to the conclusion that their hanīfiyya consisted mainly of: (i) adherence to what they used to call "the religion of Abraham" (Abū Qays, Umayya); (ii) close contacts with Mecca and Quraysh, and devotion to the sanctity of the Ka'ba (Abū 'Āmir and Abū Qays). The link between these two elements seems to have been the conviction that Mecca was an Abrahamic haram, and that the Ka'ba was the House of Abraham. This idea was shared by Muḥammad, as is attested in the numerous Quranic passages stressing the relation of Mecca and the Ka'ba to Abraham and Ishmael (e.g. II/125, 126, 127; XIV/35).

The break of these hanifs with Muhammad seems to have been the result of a change in Muhammad's practical attitude towards Quraysh and Mecca, following the hijra. The act of the hijra from Mecca to Medina came after Muhammad had lost his last hope of establishing monotheism in Mecca through peaceful preaching to Quraysh. When the opposition of Quraysh became unbearable, for reasons which cannot be treated here, the prophet not only left Mecca, but started launching military attacks on Meccan caravans. Thus he violated the pre-Islamic sacredness of Quraysh as ahlu llah which he had previously recognized.63 For him Quraysh were no longer under God's protection, nor were they the legitimate agents of the Abrahamic sacredness of Mecca and the Ka'ba. Moreover, shortly before leaving Mecca, Muhammad stopped praying towards the Ka'ba and appointed Jerusalem as gibla instead, but only for a limited time. Soon afterwards he resumed the gibla of the Ka'ba, and from then on, his prophetic message was directed not only against shirk, but also and foremost against the mushrikun themselves, i.e., Quraysh. In Muhammad's perception, they deviated from the true Abrahamic ideals, or, from the original hanifiyya, which he had set out to restore.

At this stage, Arabian *hanifs* had to decide with which side they should throw in their lots. Upholding Muhammad would have meant supporting the struggle against *shirk*, but it would also have

⁶³ This is seen in Sūrat Quraysh. See Rubin, "Ilaf".

meant admitting that Quraysh had no longer any Abrahamic sacredness, and no longer deserved to be the custodians of the House of Allāh. In practical terms, it would have forced them to sever their connections with the central hanifi sanctuary in Mecca. Those hanifs whose personal ties with Quraysh were strong and whose devotion to the Pre-Islamic sacredness of Quraysh and the Ka'ba was great could not choose Muhammad's side. So they became his enemies, and accused him of distorting the basic principles of the true hanifiya. They were persons of the sort of Abū 'Āmir, Abu Qays and Umayya b. Abī al-Şalt.

But there were also some other hanifs who eventually did embrace Islam. One of them was the poet Abū Qays Şirma b. Abī Anas of Banū 'Adiyy b. al-Najjār.64 His ascetic conduct resembled that of Abū 'Amir. Ibn Ishaq reports that Sirma used to practice tarahhub in the Jahiliyya, and to wear musuh. He abandoned the idols, purified himself with water, and avoided menstruating women. He once contemplated becoming a Christian, but gave it up. He set up a private sanctuary of his own, into which impure people were not allowed. He used to say: "I worship the Lord of Abraham." When Muhammad came to Medina, Sirma embraced Islam at a very advanced age.65 His attachment to Muhammad is demonstrated in a special qasida he composed in praise of the prophet.⁶⁶ Sirma's relations with Quraysh and Mecca seem to have been less predominant than his wish to support a leader who, in his view, had good chances to succeed as a hanifi prophet preaching the religion of Abraham in Medina. Or, one may suppose that the stress laid on the fact that when he became a Muslim he was already a very old man, indicates an apologetic elaboration typical of akkbar relating to several pre-Islamic poets who actually passed away before they had any real chance to embrace Islam.

⁶⁴ See about him Buhl-Schaeder, 98; Sezgin, GAS, II, 294.

⁶⁵ Ibn Hishām, II, 156. See also Ibn Qutayba, Ma'ārif, 28; Istī'āb, IV, 1735, II, 737; Işāba, III, 422-423; Murūj, I, 74.

⁶⁶ Ibn Hishām, II, 157 ff.; Balādhurī, Ansāb, I, 268; Ibn Qutayba Ma'ārif, 28; Istī'āb, II, 738.

Other names of pro-Muhammadan hunafā' are mentioned by al-Tha'labī in his commentary on Quran III/113. This verse deals with members of ahl al-kitāb who were "a nation upstanding" (umma qā'ima). Al-Tha'labī quotes a report to the effect that before Muhammad came to Medina, there were there people like As'ad b. Zurāra, al-Barrā' b. Ma'rūr, Muhammad b. Maslama and Abū Qays Şirma b. al-Aslat(!), monotheists practicing ablution and the sharā'i' of the hanīfiyya. When Muhammad arrived, they believed in him and rallied round him.⁶⁷

2. Hanifiyya in pre-hijra Mecca

Muhammad's attachment to the idea of $d\bar{i}n \ Ibr\bar{a}h\bar{i}m$ started already before the *hijra*, while he was still at Mecca.⁶⁸ Here there were some older *hunafā*' who probably introduced this idea to the young Muhammad. The most notable of them was Zayd b. 'Amr b. Nufayl.⁶⁹ The name of this *hanīf* appears, to begin with, in a report recorded by Ibn Ishāq and others, mentioning four persons

68 Since the days of Snouck Hurgronje western scholars believed that the idea connecting the history of Mecca and the Ka'ba with Abraham appears only in verses labelled Medinan. But later on, scholars like E. Beck and others showed that the idea appears already in Meccan verses (for details see R. Paret, "Ibrahim", E12). In fact, there is striking evidence for the early possible date of the introduction of din Ibrahim in Arabia. Sozomenos (fifth century A.D.) who was born near Gaza and had a good knowledge of the Arabs, describes them as descendants of Ishmael who, due to the influence of their pagan neighbours, had corrupted the old "discipline" of their ancestor, according to which the old Hebrews used to live prior to Moses. Sozomenos even knows of a certain group among the Arab descendants of Ishmael who eventually came in contact with the Hebrews, and by learning from them resumed their original conduct. See Sozomeni historia ecclesiastica Lib. VI, 38, in Patrologia Graecia Vol.LXVI, 1411-1412. This reference was given to me by my student G. Algazi, who also translated the relevant passages. And see also a reference to the same source in M. Cook, Muhammad, Oxford, 1983, 81, 92. And cf. the (unjustified) criticism of H. T. Norris in BSOAS, XLVIII 1985, p. 131.

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⁶⁷ Al-Tha'labī, al-Kashf wa-l-bayān, MS Tel Aviv University, 508750, p. 148.

⁶⁹ Most of the traditions concerning this person were already gathered and translated by Sprenger (I, 119, ff.).

including Zayd, who decided to abandon the idolatry of Quraysh and left Mecca in search of the true religion. Zayd b. 'Amr is said to have been the only one who did not adopt Judaism or Christianity but rather insisted that he worshipped the Lord of Abraham.⁷⁰ The monotheistic attitude of Zayd is implied in some poetic verses attributed to him in which he voices his aversion to the worship of the Daughters of Allah and other deities.⁷¹ In other verses he professes his exclusive devotion to Allah.⁷² A purely monotheistic talbiya which he is said to have uttered during the hajj is also attributed to him.⁷³ Some reports describe a strife between Zayd and his fellow tribesmen. His paternal uncle, al-Khattab (father of 'Umar) is said to have forced him out of Mecca so that he had to remain on Mount Hira', being able to enter Mecca only secretly. Al-Khattab reportedly feared lest other Meccans should follow Zayd in abandoning the old din of Quraysh,74

Tradition lays special emphasis on Zayd's attachment to din*Ibrāhīm*. Asmā' bint Abī Bakr reportedly said that she had seen Zayd leaning his back against the Ka'ba saying: "Oh Quraysh, by Him in whose hand is the soul of Zayd, not one of you follows the religion of Abraham but I".⁷⁵

- 70 See Ibn Hishām, I, 237 ff.; Muhabbar, 171-172; Munammaq, 175 ff.; Bidāya, II, 237 ff.
- 71 Ibn Hishām, I, 241; Bidāya, II, 242; Aghānī, III, 15-16; Zubayr b. Bakkār, I, 416-417.
- 72 Ibn Hishām, I, 246: wa-aslamtu wajhī li-man aslamat / lahu l-ardu tahmilu şakhran thiqālā. See also Ibn Qutayba, Ma'ārif, 27; Aghānī, III, 17; Zubayr b. Bakkār, fol. 167^b; Bidāya, II, 242; Bayhāqī, Dalā'il, I, 400.
- 73 Ibn Sa'd, III, 380; Bayhaqī, Dalā'il, I, 384; Bidāya, II, 240; Balādhurī, Ansāb, I, 117.
- 74 Ibn Hishām, I, 246; Aghānī, III, 15; Zubayr b. Bakkār, fol. 166^b; Murūj, I, 70; Bidāya, II, 238.
- 75 Ibn Hishām, I, 240: "mā asbaha minkum ahadun 'alā dīni Ibrāhīma ghayrī. See also Ibn Sa'd, III, 381; Isāba, II, 614; Bukhārī, V, 51; Aghānī, III, 15, 16; Mughulţāy, 107^a; Zubayr b. Bakkār, fol. 166^b-167^a; Khargushī, Brit. Lib., 29^a; Bidāya, II, 237; Suhaylī, I, 256.

Of special interest are the traditions recounting the meeting between Zayd b. 'Amr and the young Muhammad, which took place shortly before the latter's first revelation.⁷⁶ In the earliest versions of these traditions Muhammad presents Zayd with a bag of meat which he, Muhammad, had sacrificed to the idols. Zavd refuses to partake of it explaining to him that he does not eat what has been offered to idols. He also explains that he has searched for the true religion and is now a follower of the religion of Abraham.⁷⁷ The immediate motivation for the circulation of such a tradition was to highlight the virtues (fada'il) of Zavd as Muhammad's mentor. On the other hand, however, one must remember that even fadā'il traditions may more often than not contain a grain of authenticity. This seems to be the case with the tradition about Zayd which implies that he was a monotheistic adherent of din Ibrahim, while Muhammad was still an idolater. Such a tradition could never have been invented, not even for the mere purpose of glorifying Zayd. From this tradition, which Muslim scholars indeed tried to reshape, one must, therefore, conclude that Zayd was indeed a hanif who introduced to Muhammad the monotheistic idea of din Ibrahim.

The Abrahamic hanifiyya of Zayd is described in the sources as being focused on the veneration of the Ka'ba. Many traditions assert that the Ka'ba served as Zayd's *qibla*. Ibn Sa'd (d. 230H/845) has recorded a tradition relating that Zayd used to pray facing the Ka'ba, saying: "This is the *qibla* of Abraham and Ishmael. I do not worship stones and do not pray towards them and do not sacrifice to them, and do not eat that which was sacrificed to them and do not draw lots with arrows. I will not pray towards anything but this House till I die."⁷⁸ According to another tradition Zayd used to say: "I follow the religion of Abraham and I prostrate

⁷⁶ See a thorough examination of these traditions, Kister, "A bag of meat", passim.

⁷⁷ E.g., Khargūshī, Brit Lib. 27^b-28^a; Kister, "A bag of meat", 270, with further references.

⁷⁸ Ibn Sa'd, III, 380. See also Bidaya, II, 240; Zurqani, VII, 27.

myself towards the Ka'ba which Abraham built." So he used to prostrate himself towards the Ka'ba in the Jāhiliyya.⁷⁹ A similar tradition recorded by al-Khargūshī (d. 406H/1015) relates that Zayd b. 'Amr used to pray towards the Ka'ba saying: "my Lord is the Lord of Abraham and my $d\bar{i}n$ is the $d\bar{i}n$ of Abraham." Waraqa b. Nawfal also used to pray towards the Ka'ba saying: "My $d\bar{i}n$ is the $d\bar{i}n$ of Zayd and my Lord is the Lord of Zayd."⁸⁰ People like Zayd believed that already Abraham himself used to pray towards the Ka'ba. The following rajaz verse is reported to have been uttered by Zayd when praying towards the Ka'ba.⁸¹

'udhtu bi-mā 'ādha bihi Ibrāhim / mustaqbila l-qiblati wa-huwa qā'im I seek refuge in what Abraham sought refuge / when he was facing the qibla while standing (in prayer).⁸²

Muḥammad himself used the Ka'ba as *qibla* during the first years of his prophetic activity in Mecca, before adopting, for a limited time, the *qibla* of Jerusalem. The prophet is said to have prayed towards the Ka'ba in general,⁸³ or towards the Black Stone in particular,⁸⁴ or towards Maqām Ibrāhīm.⁸⁵

The authenticity of all these traditions which imply that the Ka'ba functioned as a hanifi and Islamic *qibla* ever before Jerusalem replaced it, is self-evident in view of the fact that no one in early Islam was interested in fabricating traditions implying that the *qibla* of the Ka'ba could ever be replaced in favour of another *qibla*, be it only for a short time. Muslim theologians tried

⁷⁹ Bayhaqī, Dalā'il, I, 400.

⁸⁰ Khargushi, Brit Lib. 28b. See also Bidaya, II, 237, 241,

⁸¹ Ibn Hishām, I, 245; Aghānī, III, 15; Balādhurī, Ansāb, I, 117; Zubayr b. Bakkār, fol. 166^b.

⁸² For Abraham's prayer towards the Ka'ba see also Ibn Sa'd, I, 162, III, 379; Işāba, II, 616; Bidāya, II, 239; Fath al-bārī, VII, 108.

⁸³ Bayhaqī, Dalā'il, I, 401; Suyūtī, Khasā'is, I, 233-234; Tabarī, Tafsīr, II, 4. 84 Halabī, I, 264.

⁸⁵ Tabarī, Tafsīr, XXX, 164, 165; Suyūtī, Durr, VI, 369; Muqātil, II, fol. 26b.

rather to tone down these traditions, labelling them as $da' i f.^{86}$ They gave predominance as sah i h to other traditions stating that Muhammad, while at Mecca, never used the Ka'ba as *qibla*, but prayed always towards Jerusalem.⁸⁷ In this manner, the Ka'ba could never have been abrogated by the *qibla* of Jerusalem; there was only one abrogation, which occurred after the *hijra*, when the Ka'ba replaced Jerusalem forever.⁸⁸

3. The Abrahamic sacredness of the Ka'ba and Quraysh

The observation that the *hanīfiyya* at both post-*hijra* Medina and pre-*hijra* Mecca was focused on the veneration of the Ka'ba, entails the conclusion that the Abrahamic sacredness of the Ka'ba is pre-Islamic by origin. This may be confirmed through some further reports concerning this sanctuary.

The pre-Islamic deity of the Ka'ba was Hubal. His was the one and only statue situated inside the Ka'ba. The rituals performed in front of this statue contained typical Abrahamic elements, circumcision in particular. Ibn Ishāq reports that when the Arabs wanted to circumcise a boy, or to marry someone, or

⁸⁶ See for instance, Fath al-bārī, I, 88: wa-qāla ākharūna: kāna yuşallī ilā l-Ka'ba fa-lammā tahawwala ilā l-Madīna istaqbala Bayta l-Maqdis. wa-hādhā da'īf wa-yalzamu minhu da'wā l-naskhi marratayni....

⁸⁷ E.g., ithāf al-akhissā', I, 183: wa-l-sahīh alladhī atbaqa 'alayhi l-aktharūna annahu lam yusalli bi-Makkata illā ilā Bayt al-Maqdis.

⁸⁸ For these matters see further Bayhaqī, Dalā'il, II, 287 ff; Bidāya, III, 252 ff.; Zurqānī, I, 399 ff.; Uns, I, 193-194; Suyūtī, Khasā'is, I, 486; Rubin, "Ka'ba", note 29. A reference to the history of the qibla is made in Hagarism, 23-24, with the attempt to prove that originally the qibla was located not in Mecca but rather "somewhere in north-west Arabia". But the adduced archeological and literary evidence seems to prove nothing of the sort. It shows merely that in many cases, qiblas of certain mosques were not built in the mathematically exact direction of the Ka'ba but rather faced the general direction of Arabia. In Iraq it was, of course, west, whereas in Egypt it was east. In Judaism as well, it is not obligatory to search the exact direction of Jerusalem, the general direction of the "mizrāh" (east) being perfectly sufficient.

bury a body, or when they doubted someone's descent, they would take the person to Hubal with a hundred dirhams and a sacrificial animal and would cast the arrows of Hubal and thus know what their conduct should be.⁸⁹ That circumcision was common among the Arabs since pre-Islamic times is a well-established fact.⁹⁰ Muslim tradition, like the Jewish one, connects it with Abraham who was the first to be circumcised.⁹¹ The link between circumcision in Arabia and Abraham dates back to the pre-Islamic times. This link was already known to Josephus Flavius who says in his *Antiquities* that the Arabs "circumcise after the thirteenth year, because Ishmael, the founder of their nation, who was born to Abraham of the concubine, was circumcised at that age...¹⁹²

The ritual of casting arrows in front of Hubal was in itself Abrahamic. The image of Abraham holding these arrows was actually painted inside the Ka'ba, and when Mecca was conquered by the Muslims, Muhammad ordered it to be erased.⁹³

The Ka'ba was the site where the offering of Abraham's son was believed to have taken place. This is indicated, to begin with, in the reports about an ancient, dried up, pair of horns of the ram (kabsh) which Abraham had allegedly hung on the spout of the Ka'ba till the days of 'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr when they disintegrated.⁹⁴ A similar pair of horns, claimed to be of the same significance, was hung in the Dome of the Rock since the days of 'Abd al-Malik, which reflects, of course, the view locating the Abrahamic sanctuary in Jerusalem. The 'Abbāsids, however, are said to have transferred these horns to the Ka'ba.⁹⁵ That the motive of the offering of Abraham's son was well-known already

- 89 Ibn Hishām, I, 160-161. See also Azraqī, 73; 'Adawī, 41ª.
- 90 E.g., Wellhausen, Reste, 174 ff.
- 91 E.g., Ibn Sa'd, I, 47, 51; 'Abd al-Razzāq, XI, 175. Cf. also Fath al-bārī, XI, 74 ff.; Bukhārī, VIII, 81; Suyūţī, Durr, I, 114 ff.; Tabarī, Tafsīr, I, 416.
- 92 Flavius, Antiquities of the Jews, book I, chap. XII/2.
- 93 Ibn Hisham, IV, 55; Azraqī, III, 113; Wāqidī, II, 834.
- 94 E.g., Tabarī, Tārīkh, I, 189, 194; idem, Tafsīr, XXIII, 53; 'Adawi, 60^b; Suyūţi, Durr, V, 284; Qisas, 80, 82; Rubin, "Ka'ba", note 142.
- 95 Wāsitī, 75-76; Ithāf al-akhissā', I, 225, 244; Uns, I, 275.

in pre-hijra Mecca is indicated by the fact that it occurs in a Meccan sūra (XXXVII/102-111). It is also dealt with in poetic verses of Umayya b. Abī 1-Şalt, which appear to be entirely independent of the Quran.⁹⁶ Muslim tradition is not unanimous concerning the exact place of the sacrifice. One tradition states that Abraham slaughtered the ram "at the $Maq\bar{a}m$ ",⁹⁷ but most traditions locate the whole scene in Minā, the most notable Arabian slaughter area near Mecca, where sacrificial rites were performed on each pilgrimage since pre-Islamic times.⁹⁸ As is to be expected, another set of traditions locates this crucial Abrahamic episode in *Bayt al-Maqdis.*⁹⁹

- 96 Tabari, Tarikh, I, 195; Qisas, 83.
- 97 Tabari, Tafsir, XXIII, 55.
- 98 Some traditions mention specific sites at Mina, e.g., Mount Thabir, the Jamarat, etc. For these traditions see the commentaries on Quran XXXVII/107, and especially Tabari, Tafsir, XXIII, 51 ff.; Suyūți, Durr, V, 280 ff. See also Fākihī, 515^b; Azraqī, 401; Qirā, 540, 665 (where Masjid al-Kabsh in Minā is mentioned). The prophet is said to have slaughtered in Minā in the slaughter place of Abraham. See Qirā, 448. Some of the traditions do not specify the name of Abraham's son, whereas others say it was Isaac, in contrast to traditions naming Ishmael. For traditions naming Isaac see also Zurgānī, I, 98; Azragī, 401; Khargūshī, Brit. Lib. 192ª; Qirā, 448. For traditions naming Ishmael see also Mustadrak, II, 556; Qisas, 82, 83; Khargushi, Brit. Lib. 74ª. The view identifying Abraham's son with Ishmael was the origin of Muhammad's epithet: Ibn al-Dhabihayni (son of the two offered persons, namely Ishmael and 'Abdallah). See e.g., Khargushi, Brit. Lib. 74ª; idem, Tübingen, 70ª; 'Ajluni, Kashf, I, 199; Halabī, I, 37; Zurgānī, I, 97-98; Rāzī, XXVI, 153; Mustadrak, II, 554; Qişaş, 81; Uns, 41; Suyūtī, Khasā'is, I, 112-113.
- 99 E.g., Muqātil, II, 112^b; Rāzī, XXVI, 155. Cf. Zurqānī, I, 98. Partisans of this view would, of course, name Isaac as the offered son, claiming that he was never in Arabia. For the discussion of these matters see Rāzī, XXVI, 153; Zurqānī, I, 98; Mustadrak, II, 555; Uns, I, 41.

The pre-Islamic Abrahamic sacredness of the Ka'ba is clearly demonstrated in the belief that Abraham's footprints could be seen on one of its sacred stones. This belief is reflected in the very early verses attributed to Abū Tālib in which numerous pre-Islamic places of worship are described in a manner which is totally independent of the phraseology of later Islamic sources. The verse referring to Abraham's footprints reads.¹⁰⁰

wa-mawti'i Ibrāhīma fī.l-şakhri ratbatun / 'alā qadamayhi hāfiyan ghayra nā'ilī
By Abraham's footprint in the rock still fresh / with both feet bare, without sandals

Later on, Muslim tradition applied to the stone bearing Abraham's footprints the Quranic epithet "Maqām Ibrāhīm".¹⁰¹

Even the view that the *haram*, i.e., the sacred territory of Mecca, was founded by Abraham may be regarded as pre-Islamic in origin. Muhammad b. Habīb (d. 245H/859) has recorded in his *Munammaq* a remarkable report saying that Quraysh once asked Thaqīf to become their partners in the Meccan *haram*, in return for equal partnership of Quraysh in the territory of Wajj which was owned by Thaqīf. Thaqīf refused saying: "How can you be partners in a land in which our father settled, and dug it out of the rocks with his bare hands, without iron tools. And you have not founded the *haram* by yourselves. It was Abraham who founded it."¹⁰² In other words, Thaqīf maintained that Quraysh had no right to make transactions with the Meccan land due to its Abrahamic sacredness. Later on, Muhammad established the *haram* of Medina on the model of the Abrahamic *haram* of Mecca.¹⁰³

103 E.g., Wāqidī, I, 22, before Badr.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Hishām, I, 292. Tr. Guillaume, 123.

¹⁰¹ For the Islamic legends explaining the circumstances of these footprints see El², s.v. "Makām Ibrāhīm" (MJ. Kister).

¹⁰² Munammaq, 280: ...kayfa nushrikukum fī wādin nazalahu abūnā wa-hafarahu bi-yadayhi fī l-şakhri lam yahfirhu bi-l-hadīd...wa-antum lam taj'alū l-harama innamā ja'alahu Ibrāhīm....

The pre-Islamic sacred position of Quraysh as *ahlu* $ll\ddot{a}h$ (above, note 63) was also based on Abrahamic elements. Some early verses ascribed to 'Abd al-Muttalib' deal with the divine protection under which Mecca, the Ka'ba and Quraysh were put. One of these verses reads¹⁰⁴

nahnu ahlu llāhi fī baldatihī / lam yazal dhāka 'alā 'ahdi [A]braham We are the people of Allāh in His town / this has always been according to Abraham's covenant.

Generally speaking, the pre-Islamic Arabs seem to have been well aware of their genealogical descent from Abraham and Ishmael, and, in fact, the authority of Quraysh among the rest of the Arab tribes was based on this descent. Ibn Habib, for instance, reports that the people of Mudar used to say: "Quraysh carried out for us the obligation of the din which Ishmael bequeathed us" (qadat 'annā Quraysh madhammata mā awrathanā Ismā'īl mina l-dīn).¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Ibn Ishaq reports that the Arabs recognized that Quraysh were their leaders and that they were the noblest descendants of Ishmael (sarih wuld Isma'il).¹⁰⁶ The immediate motivation for the circulation of such reports may have been the apologetic wish to stress the fada'il of Quraysh, but it may again be stressed that even fada'il material does not have to consist only of lies. In view of the rest of the material adduced in this paper there does not seem to be any serious reason for doubting the authenticity of the reports about the pre-Islamic Abrahamic sacredness of the Ka'ba and Quraysh.

4. The origin of the idea of the "House of Abraham"

The view that the Ka'ba was the sacred "House of Abraham" is indeed very early. Its origins may be traced back to the *Book of*

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¹⁰⁴ Ya'qūbī, I, 253. See also Azraqī, 96; Fākihī, 416^a; 'Adawī, 52^a. Cf. Balādhurī, Ansāb, I, 69.

¹⁰⁵ Muhabbar, 264; Kister, "Mecca and Tamim", 128.

¹⁰⁶ Ibn Hishām, IV, 205.

Jubilees.¹⁰⁷ In chapter XXII Abraham addresses Jacob (!) saying (verse 24 ff): "This house have I built for myself that I might put my name upon it on the earth; it is given to thee and to thy seed for ever, and it will be named the house of Abraham; it is given to thee and to thy seed for ever; for thou wilt build my house and establish my name before God forever ..." It seems that in this passage Jacob is actually ordered to build an eternal sanctuary named "the House of Abraham."108 In chapter XXXII Jacob actually sets out to accomplish this task. The place he chooses is Beth El. He plans to build this place and to surround it with a wall and make it an eternal sanctuary for himself and for his seed. But that night he has a vision. An angel shows him seven tablets on which is written the history of all generations to come. The angel says to him (verse 22): "...do not build this place, and do not make it an eternal sanctuary, and do not dwell here, for this is not the place..."109 In this passage it is stressed that Beth El was not destined to be the place for the eternal Abrahamic sanctuary, but the right place is not specified. The appropriate place for it, according to the prevalent Jewish concept, was on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, where Solomon built the Temple (2 Ch, III/I). This place was said to have been the site of the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. XXII/l). The messianic idea of the building of the "House of Abraham" as formulated in Jubilees could easily have been known in pre-Islamic Arabia through the Abyssinian Christians for whom

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¹⁰⁷ R.H. Charles, The Book of Jubilees, London 1917. Some of the relevant passages in Jubilees were already noticed by S.D. Goitein. See his Ha-isläm shel Muhammad, Jerusalem, 1966 (in Hebrew), pp. 166-167.

¹⁰⁸ Charles, op. cit., 126 note 3, remarks that "House" throughout this passage means "family"; but the general context implies that the passage deals with the actual building of a sanctuary. And see also Goitein, loc. cit.

¹⁰⁹ The Hebrew translation by Hartom (Tel Aviv, 1969) reads: אול תשב....ואל תשב....ם אביך....ם אביך....ם הזה, כי לא יהיה המקום הזה לְרָ לבית אברהם אביך...ם not dwell in this place; for this place will not be for you the House of Abraham your father." This seems most plausible, but the Ethiopic version as translated by Charles reads: "...and do not dwell here; for this is not the place. Go to the house of Abraham thy father..." This seems to imply instead of Hartom's.

this book was sacred. Thus the Arabian monotheistic adherents of " $d\bar{i}n \ lbr\bar{a}h\bar{i}m$ " in the vicinity of Mecca and Medina could quite naturally locate their own "House of Abraham" in the most notable sanctuary of the area, the Ka'ba.

This location was also shared by some Jews. 'Abdallah b. Salām, a well known Jew of Medina, (Qaynuga')¹¹⁰ belonged to those monotheistic groups who finally embraced Islam. He seems to have been closer to the hanifs than to the majority of the Jews in this, that he regarded the Ka'ba as the House of Abraham. This is indicated in the following tradition which says that 'Abdallah b. Salām once told the Jewish leaders of Medina: "I wish to visit the mosque of our father Abraham." Thereupon he went to Mecca where he happened to meet Muhammad by whom he was deeply impressed.¹¹¹ But for the majority of the Jews of Arabia, the "House of Abraham" was not in Mecca. When Muhammad diverted his gibla from Jerusalem to Mecca, the leaders of the Medinan Jews reportedly told him that if he claimed to be an adherent of din *lbrāhīm* he must return to the former *gibla*.¹¹² This means that for those Jews the *qibla* of the true religion of Abraham was Jerusalem.113

- 110 See about him Isaba, IV, 118 ff.
- 111 Suyūţī, Durr, VI, 410. See also Rubin, "Şamad", 208. For other traditions in which some Arabian Jews refer to the Ka'ba as the House of their father Abraham see Ibn Hishām, I, 25 (Jews of Medina addressing the Tubba'). Some other Jews who collaborated with Abū 'Āmir took part in a ritual ceremony in which they entered under the clothes of the Ka'ba pressing their bodies against its walls (see p. 94 above). Christians as well may have venerated the Ka'ba, towards which some of them reportedly used to pray. See Suyūţī, Durr, I, 143: ...şallat al-naşārā naḥwa l-Ka'ba hawlayni qabla qudūmi l-nabī (ş).

¹¹² Ibn Hishām ,II, 199. See also Suyūtī, Durr, I, 142.

¹¹³ And see Ithäf al-akhissä', I, 181: "li-annahum känü yaz'umüna qiblat Ibrähīm känat Bayt al-Maqdis.

ABBREVIATIONS

- 'Abd al-Razzāq 'Abd al-Razzāq, al-Muşannaf, ed. Habīb al-Raḥmān al-A'zamī, Beirut 1970.
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