

GOD'S BLACK PROPHETS

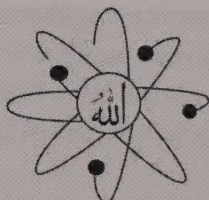
Deconstructing the Myth
of the White Muhammad of Arabia
and Jesus of Jerusalem



Wesley Muhammad, PhD

God's Black Prophets

By
Wesley Muhammad, PhD



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God's Black
Prophets

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God's Black Prophets

1967
1968

1969

1970

1971

1972

1973

1974

1975

1976

1977

1978

1979

1980

1981

1982

1983

Table of Contents

Part I: History

Jesus and Muhammad According to History, Science, and the Classical Arabic/Islamic Tradition

Chapter I: <i>Ethnic Controversies</i>	1-18
I.1. <i>Muhammad and Scholarly Ambivalence</i>	
I.2. <i>The Hellenization of Jesus and the Aryanization of Muhammad</i>	
Chapter II: <i>The Aryanization of Islam</i>	19-31
II.1. <i>The 'Abbāsid Revolution and the Changing Face of Islam</i>	
II.2. <i>Inventing New Arabs and Reshaping Islam</i>	
II.3. <i>From Black Nationalism to White Racism</i>	
Chapter III: <i>Muhammad's African Ancestors</i>	35-50
III.1. <i>The Ancient Arabs</i>	
III.2. <i>Africans in Arabia</i>	
III.2.1. <i>African Semites</i>	
III.2.2. <i>Arabic, Language of the Black Semites</i>	
III.3. <i>The Black Arabs on the Eve of Muhammad</i>	
Chapter IV: <i>The Prophetic Family</i>	51-63
IV.1. <i>Adam's Progeny</i>	

- IV.2. *Muhammad's Black Lineage*
IV.3. *Muhammad's Black Kinsfolk*

Chapter V: ***Muhammad: Black-skinned or
White-skinned?***

64-85

- V.1. *Like Father (And Mother), Like Son?*
V.2. *"This white man reclining on his arm"*
V.3. *'His whiteness is a fair-skinnedness': The
Aryanization of Muhammad*

Part II: Theology

The Ethnicity of the Prophet According to the
Honorable Elijah Muhammad

Chapter VI: ***Muhammad the Black Arab***

89-100

- VI.1. *Muhammad and the Black Nation*
VI.2. *Muhammad Not From the White Race*
VI.3. *The Black Prophet Failed to Convert the White Race*
VI.4. *Muhammad the Black Prophet Restores Islam,
the Ancient Black Religion*

Chapter VII: ***Muhammad was a White Man?***

101-109

- VII.1. *Did Elijah Muhammad Contradict Elijah Muhammad?*
VII.2. *The 'White' Muhammad vs. the Black Stone*

Forward

Why I Wrote This Book

I was an atheist. My acceptance of Islam in 1990 came only after I had academically challenged the Teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad (hereafter THEM), and those teachings have weathered the storm of my critical inquiry time and again. Even though I am now a convicted Believer, my approach to religious doctrine, including the Teachings of THEM, has never changed. Putting the Teachings under the microscope of critical inquiry has not weakened my belief: it has strengthened it to the point that I no longer simply *believe* in the truth of these Teachings, but *know* them to be accurate statements of theological and historical reality. My life for the last nearly two decades has been dedicated to proving this to the world.

Of all the aspects of the Teachings of THEM that I have studied and wrote on, none have been as challenging – indeed painful – than the subject of this book: the ethnicity of the prophet Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh (d. 632) of Arabia. The reasons for this are two-fold:

1.] There exists within the body of the Teachings of THEM what at first sight appears to be a glaring contradiction regarding this question. THEM taught at different times that Muḥammad was both a black prophet and a white man. Over the years different Muslim followers of THEM have employed different lines of reasoning to try to make

sense out of this seeming internal conflict. I too have advanced differing theories over the years. And while even now my various suggestions have the benefit of being intellectually satisfying, it was not until the world of the Classical Arabic/Islamic tradition was opened up to me and I pursued this question therein that THEM's two positions stood before me so harmoniously, embracing each other as if man and wife, and embracing the relevant empirical data currently available. All is good in the Land of Doctrine Meets Data. Except, it wasn't all good.

2.] This is so because a particular approach to the problem has gained currency among followers of THEM of various circles: the assumption that THEM's apparently last word on the matter – a singular, unparalleled statement – is the final word and that it does not need to be understood in the context of all that he had said before. In other words this single statement – Prophet Muḥammad is a white man – abrogates THEM's twenty years of consistently teaching that he was a black prophet. For these Believers, it does not at all matter that THEM's twenty-year position is confirmed by the relevant historical, anthropological and textual evidence. No, not only does this single statement *abrogate* twenty years of his own teaching, but in a single sweep it renders completely irrelevant all of this empirical evidence! Thus an 'orthodoxy' has developed among many followers of THEM according to which his unequivocal teaching is that the prophet was a Caucasian white man. Period.

I am constitutionally unable to follow this approach. The approach that I take is that the attempt should first be made to understand THEM's singular statement in the context of all else he has said on the matter, not vice-versa, and in the context of the empirical evidence. By doing so, I have discovered, the two statements of THEM that seem so self-contradictory actually prove to be not in conflict at all. But this approach also shows the reigning orthodoxy to be errant. It is an orthodoxy, however, and all errant orthodoxies die hard. Thus, even though what I have published and presented on this subject is consistent with the empirical evidence *and the full body of THEM's teaching on the subject*, because it is in conflict with the current Muslim 'orthodoxy' I have been condemned as a hypocrite to THEM and even an enemy to my spiritual father, the one whose words brought me out of the ignominy of an arrogant atheism: the Honorable Brother Minister Louis Farrakhan. Such sentiments, or a milder form of them, have been expressed by followers of THEM of various persuasions and ranks, from high to low. Friends have become enemies and supporters of my work have in an instant withdrawn their support. This situation was/is both challenging and painful.

On two occasions I had the wonderful opportunity to discuss this matter with the Honorable Brother Minister Farrakhan. He gave me valuable information and, more importantly, invaluable guidance. He told me to keep teaching THEM's teachings, for I could never go wrong teaching what he taught. I sincerely pray to Allah that I

have and am proceeding in a way consistent with that guidance. I have written this book for two basic reasons:

1.] I firmly believe that it is important to recognize a historically accurate Jesus and it is equally important to recognize a historically accurate Muḥammad. These men are arguably the two most important figures of recent history. They are also the two most revered religio-historical figures in the Black community of America and much of Africa. Both are popularly and officially portrayed as white-skinned men. If this popular and official representation is accurate, we must accept it and know that these men are none-the-less historically important. If neither were actually black, it would be wrong and futile to try and make them so. But if they were black – and the evidence is overwhelming on this point – it is equally wrong to continue misrepresenting them as white, a misrepresentation that developed from the same place for the white Jesus and the white Muḥammad: a racist disdain for Black peoples. A historically accurate Jesus and Muḥammad, therefore, can be the antidote to the anti-black racism that characterizes the Judeo-Christian and Muslim worlds.

2.] I believe the material presented in this book offers the best resolution of what might seem to some as a glaring inconsistency in the Teachings of THEM, a resolution that preserves both theological and intellectual integrity. I believe that this issue of Muḥammad's ethnicity and the material presented in this book superbly illustrates the

general concordance between the Teachings of THEM and relevant fields of study and bodies of empirical data. But this concordance often can only be discovered if we are unafraid to approach the Teachings as *scientists* rather than as *believers*. If we are afraid to ask the Teachings the tough questions, we prove to be unworthy of the most profound and beneficial answers. We must not, in the words of the Honorable Brother Minister Farrakhan, “be afraid to dig into (THEM’s) words to find all the jewels that were in the word...I call this intellectual cowardice, wanting to be safe, but not wanting to explore the depth of what this man had gotten from God (***Closing the Gap*** [2006]: 116). I believe the material in this book demonstrates the awesome dividends paid to us when we, as Believers, shirk intellectual cowardice.

This book is a companion to my book, ***Black Arabia and the African Origin of Islam*** [2009]. Some of the matters I touch on here are treated more fully in that work.

Part I: History

Jesus and Muḥammad
According to History,
Science, and the Classical
Arabic/Islamic Tradition

Chapter I

Ethnic Controversies

Was Prophet Muḥammad of seventh century CE Arabia a Black man - an *Afrabian*¹ - or was he a white (Caucasian) Arab? For some the issue of a putative ‘African Origin of Islam’ hinges on this very question. The scholarly literature seems to be divided on the issue. Islamicist Frederick Mathewson Denny, in his widely used textbook, *An Introduction to Islam*, describes the Prophet as “reddish-white, he had black eyes and long eyelashes”.² That the prophet of Islam was a white-skinned Arab is no doubt the religious and scholarly ‘orthodoxy,’ if you will.³ On the other hand, Africentric scholarship has consistently maintained that Muḥammad was black - a dark-skinned black Arab.⁴

¹ On the terms *Afrabia* and *Afrabians*, i.e Africans in Arabia, see Wesley Muhammad, PhD, *Black Arabia and the African Origin of Islam* (Atlanta: A-Team Publishing, 2009) 8-9; Ali A. Mazrui, *Euro-Jews and Afro-Arabs: The Great Semitic Divergence in World History* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2008) 140.

² Frederick Mathewson Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, Third Edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2006) 69.

³ See for example Omid Safi, Ph.D, *Memories of Muhammad: Why the Prophet Matters* (New York: HarpersCollins, 2009) 34-37.

⁴ George Wells Parker, *The Children of the Sun* (Hamitic League of the World, 1918; reprint Black Classic Press, 1981) 22: “Note, too, fact (sic) that Mohammed was of these Black Arabs”; J.A. Rogers, *Sex ad Race Volume I: Negro-Caucasian Mixing in All Ages and All Lands* (New York: Helga M. Rogers, 1968) 95-96: “Mohamet himself, by all accounts, was a Negro. A contemporary of his describes him as ‘large-mouthed’ and ‘bluish-coloured, with hair that was neither straight nor curly,’ that is, hair that was probably

This ambivalence is reflected in the iconography as well. Though the making of images of the Prophet (and all living beings) is proscribed in much of the Islamic world, this proscription is neither vertically (in terms of chronology) nor horizontally (in terms of geography) universal. Most of the images that have been produced depict him as white-skinned. See for example the Persian painting *The Night Journey of Muhammad on His Steed, Buraq* from the *Bustan of Sa'edi*, dated 1514 (Plate 1). There the Prophet is depicted riding the human-faced steed called Buraq as he ascends to heaven. The human faces – that of Buraq and of Muhammad – are white complexioned. See also the very popular,



Figure 1
Iranian devotional image of
Muhammad

frizzly like that of the ‘Fuzzy-Wuzzy.’ ‘Bluish,’ also, happens to be the precise color of certain very Negroid natives of the Sudan”; Yosef A.A. ben-Jochannan, *African Origins of the Major ‘Western Religions’* (1970; Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1991) 237: “Al-Jahiz’s description and identification of the Prophet Mohamet placed him, Mohamet, in the family of the Black Race” ; Mamadou Chinyelu, “Africans in the Birth and Spread of Islam,” in Ivan Van Sertima (ed.), *Golden Age of the Moor* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993) 360: “African blood figures in Mohammed’s lineage”; Wayne B. Chandler, “Ebony and Bronze: Race and Ethnicity in Early Arabia and the Islamic World,” in Runoko Rashidi and Ivan Van Sertima (edd.) *African Presence in Early Asia* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1995) 280: “All the chronicles that survive intact agree that Ishmael and Muhammad were of the Black race...A careful examination of history reveals that the Prophet Muhammad...was of the Black race and was black in complexion.”

contemporary Iranian Shiite devotional image of Muḥammad (Figure 1). In this Iranian icon, as noted by Omid Safi, “Muhammad is depicted not as an Arab but with distinctly Persian features,” particularly the white skin and dark eyes characteristic of Persians/Iranians.⁵

While this white-skinned Muḥammad is certainly the most popular depiction in the religious art, Muslim as well as non-Muslim, it is not the only depiction. Particularly notable is a famous 14th century image from the Luttrell Psalter of a joust between the Crusader Richard the Lionheart and the Muslim Sultan, Salah ad-Din, the Saladin of legend (Plate 2). Saladin himself (right) is depicted blue-black with a grotesque physiognomy. This conforms to Christian convention of the Middle Ages: blackness, Black peoples in particular (paramountly Ethiopians) are associated with Satan and the demonic world.⁶ In polemical representations their physiognomical features are thus routinely distorted to imply such an association. This is especially true of Arabs/Muslims in this Christian literature and religious art, because the Muslim Arabs were understood to be and were thus depicted black, ‘black as pitch’.⁷

⁵ Safi, *Memories of Muhammad*, 35. On the Persian/Iranian ‘whiteness’ see David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) 95 and below.

⁶ See especially Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, demons, & Jews: making monsters in medieval art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) Chapter 2.

⁷ Strickland, *Saracens, demons, & Jews*, 168, 173, 179-180; Diane Speed, “The Saracens of *King Horn*,” *Speculum* 65 (1990): 580-582; Paul Bancourt,

Of particular significance in this image is the shield carried by the Muslim ruler (Plate 3 for a close up). Engraved on the shield is the image of the head of a black man whose features are likewise distorted. Who is the black man on Saladin's shield supposed to be? According to Debra Higgs Strickland who studied the depiction of Muslims in this Christian literature, it is the image of the Prophet Muḥammad.⁸ It is the case that, at least in Christian literary depictions of the Muslims, it was the latter's practice to carry images of Muḥammad on their shield.⁹ Especially illuminating in this regard is no doubt the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum* (Itinerary of the Pilgrims), a Latin prose narrative of King Richard I of England which chronicles England's participation in the Third Crusade in 1189-1192. Saladin was the Muslim ruler of Egypt and Syria (and thus of Jerusalem) during the Third Crusade, making the claims of the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum* relevant to our famous Luttrell Psalter image ("Richard the Lionheart versus Saladin"). The anonymous English (?) author says regarding the Muslim 'enemy':

Among [the Christians'] opponents was a fiendish race, forceful and relentless, deformed by nature and unlike other living beings, black in color, of enormous stature and inhuman savageness. Instead of helmets they wore red coverings (i.e.

Les Musulmans dans les chansons geste du cycle du roi, 2 vols. (Aix-en-Provence: Publications Diffusion, 1982) I:56-58.

⁸ Strickland, *Saracens, demons, & Jews*, 179, 189.

⁹ Meredith Jones, "The Conventional Saracen of the Songs of Geste," *Speculum* 17 (1942): 214.

turbans) on their heads, brandishing in their hands clubs bristling with iron teeth, whose shattering blows neither helmets nor mailshirts could resist. As a standard they carried a carved effigy of Muhammad.¹⁰

According to this 12th century text, the Muslims fighting in the Third Crusade were Black and they carried an image of Muḥammad into battle, just as we find in the Luttrell Psalter image. Now, these are Crusader polemics that went out of their way to misrepresent their Muslim enemy. We therefore cannot take these representations as necessarily reflecting any historical reality.¹¹ On the other hand, the blackness of the Muslims as depicted in these texts and images certainly reflects the situation on the ground,¹² even while Christian symbolic convention is equally present in these depictions.¹³ It is therefore not impossible that these Christians experienced such images of the prophet of Islam among some Muslims. The presence of Muslim proscriptions against such iconography is no real argument against this possibility: thousands of images of Muḥammad exist today in spite of this proscription.¹⁴ In any case, it is clear that, whatever the source of their information, European Christians imagined that the prophet of their Black Muslim enemies was himself Black.

¹⁰ Quoted from Strickland, *Saracens, demons, & Jews*, 169.

¹¹ Jones, "Conventional Saracen," *passim*.

¹² Bancourt, *Les Musulmans*, I:56-58; Speed, "The Saracens of *King Horn*," 580-582; Muhammad, *Black Arabia*, Chapters Six and Seven.

¹³ Strickland, *Saracens, demons, & Jews*, 169.

¹⁴ Safi, *Memories of Muhammad*, 35-37.

What are we to make of this ambiguity and contradiction? Is a reasonably firm answer to the question of Muḥammad's ethnicity hopeless? I believe not. I believe there is sufficient evidence to come down firmly on one side of this question: Muḥammad, the Arabian prophet of Islam, was black – a black-skinned Arab, whose people were descendents of the Africans who constituted the earliest population groups of the Arabian Peninsula. He is popularly believed to be white because, like Jesus, his blackness offended the sensibilities of a later generation.

I.2. *The Hellenization of Jesus and the Aryanization of Muḥammad*

From the first time Christian children settle into Sunday school classrooms, an image of Jesus Christ is etched into their minds. In North America he is most often depicted as both taller than his disciples, lean, with long, flowing, light brown hair, fair skin and light-colored eyes. Familiar though this image may be, it is inherently flawed. A person with these features and physical bearing would have looked very different from every one else in the region where Jesus lived and ministered.

Popular Mechanics Magazine

In 1931 Austrian Jewish Biblical scholar and art historian Robert Eisler published a classic in Josephus scholarship, his ***The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist: According to Flavius Josephus' recently rediscovered 'Capture of Jerusalem' and the other Jewish and Christian sources.*** Through a meticulous analysis of extant manuscripts, Eisler endeavored to restore the original reading of a first century text that discusses

John the Baptist, Jesus and the early Christians. This first century source is the *Halōsis* or “Capture (of Jerusalem)” of Josephus (37-100 CE). Originally written in Aramaic, a Greek rewriting was published around 72 CE. This is an important text for the discussion of Christian origins, particularly given the section therein treating “the human form of Jesus and his wonderful works.” Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, is believed to have had access to official Roman records on which he based his history of the early ‘Jesus movement.’ He is thus a singularly contemporary witness. His texts passed through Christian scribal hands,¹⁵ during which process the texts were no doubt altered: some ‘offensive’ passages were omitted and some Christian embellishments interpolated.¹⁶ However, according to Eisler, a Slavonic (Old Russian) translation made from the original Greek text preserves – in scattered form – that original *Josephean Testimony*. By reconstructing the relevant passages, Eisler ‘restored’ what he believed is the original, first century description of the man Jesus.¹⁷ His very significant restoration follows:

¹⁵ Robert Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist: According to Flavius Josephus' recently rediscovered 'Capture of Jerusalem' and the other Jewish and Christian sources* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1931) 38-39: “not a single Greek, Latin, Slavonic, or other Josephus text has come down to us which has not passed through the hands of Christian scribes and Christian owners.”

¹⁶ Eisler, *Messiah Jesus*, 223-31, 381-92, 457-71, etc.

¹⁷ While there was immediate scholarly backlash to Eisler’s conclusions (e.g. J.W. Jack, *The Historic Christ* [London: James Clarke & Co, 1933]) and most scholarship today refuses to concede his point, some scholars have taken another look at the issue and affirmed its basic correctness. See e.g. Arthur E. Palumbo, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Personages of Earliest Christianity* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2004) who concludes: “It is likely

At that time also there appeared a certain man of magic power ... if it be meet to call him a man, [whose name is Jesus], whom [certain] Greeks call a son of [a] God, but his disciples [call] the true prophet who is supposed to have raised dead persons and to have cured all diseases. Both his nature and his form were human, for he was a man of simple appearance, mature age, black-skinned (*melagchrous*), short growth, three cubits tall, hunchbacked, prognathous (lit. 'with a long face [*macroprosopos*]), a long nose, eyebrows meeting above the nose, that the spectators could take fright, with scanty [curly] hair, but having a line in the middle of the head after the fashion of the Nazaraeans, with an undeveloped beard. (**Halōsis*, ii.174).¹⁸

This is a remarkable image of Jesus! A short, hunchbacked black-man with a unibrow, short (kinky)¹⁹ hair with a part down the middle, and a scanty (nappy?) beard would have made the *Passion of Christ* a profoundly different experience for undoubtedly *every* viewer. That this basic description goes back to Josephus is affirmed by a number of early Christian ecclesiastics, such as Andreas Hierosolymitanus, Archbishop of Crete (8th cent.) and John of Damascus (8th cent.).²⁰ Most of the details of this description are found in other Christian literature of an even earlier period. As T.W. Doane quotes:

In its first years, the Christian church fancied its Lord's visage and form *marred more than those of other men*; and that he must have had no attractions of personal beauty. Justin Marty (A.D. 150-

that Eisler's restoration of the Slavonic passage about Jesus does correspond as close as can be expected to what Josephus actually wrote and to what was recorded in the actual official Jewish and Roman documents. (230)"

¹⁸ Eisler, *Messiah Jesus*, 425-427.

¹⁹ As Eisler, *Messiah Jesus*, 421 points out, there are two alternatives in the manuscript tradition: ολιγόθριξ "scanty" and ουλόθριξ "curly."

²⁰ Eisler, *Messiah Jesus*, 393-94.

160) speaks of him as *without beauty or attractiveness*, and of *mean appearance*. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200), describes him as of an *uninviting appearance*, and *almost repulsive*. Tertullian (A.D. 200-210) says he had not even *ordinary human beauty*, far less heavenly. Origen (A.D. 230) went so far as to say that he was '*small in body and deformed*.' As well as low-born, and that, '*his only beauty was in his soul and life* (emphasis Doane's).²¹

This startling image of the Hebrew prophet from first century Jerusalem does violence to the reigning iconographic orthodoxy.

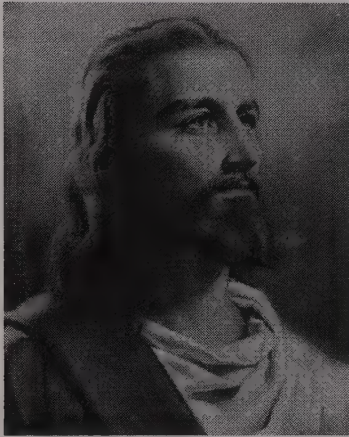


Figure 2

Indeed, this orthodox image appears to be a point-by-point contradiction of this no doubt more reliable one: black-skinned vs. white; short and hunchback vs. tall and majestic; short (and curly) hair vs. long and flowing; scanty vs. long beard, etc (Figure 2).

How did this orthodoxy image develop and on what was it based? The restored description of Jesus appears in none of the standard texts of Josephus, for definite reasons: passages about "the plain, nay, ugly appearance of 'Jesus in the flesh',"

²¹ T.W. Doane, *Bible Myths and their Parallels in Other Religions* (Mokelumne Hill, CA: Health Research, 1985 [1882]) 502.

were deleted from Josephus's *Halōsis* because of its offensive ring in the ears of Christians of a later age...It may, then, be regarded as proved that the personal description of Jesus in the *Halōsis*...underwent the usual 'corrections' at the hands of Christian copyists and readers with a view to embellishment.²²

One significant example of such 'corrective' embellishment is the *Epistula Lentuli de effigie Christi* or the Letter of Lentulus on the appearance of Christ. This "doubtless Christian forgery" purports to be a letter written by an imaginary Roman proconsular, Pilat's official superior, named Lentulus.²³ The 'appearance of Christ' described here, Eisler argues, is based on and intended to correct that found in the *Halōsis*.²⁴ The Letter reads:

There lives at this time in Judea a man of singular virtue whose name is Jesus Christ, whom the barbarians esteem as a prophet, but his followers love and adore him as the offspring of the immortal God. He calls back the dead from the graves and heals all sorts of diseases with a word or touch. He is *a tall man, well-shaped*,²⁵ and of an amiable and reverend aspect²⁶; his hair of a color of an unripe hazel, *falling into graceful curls, waving about and very agreeable crouching upon his shoulders*,²⁷ parted on the crown of the head, running as a stream to the front after fashion of the Nazarites. His forehead high, large and imposing; his cheeks *without spot or wrinkle*,²⁸ *beautiful with a lovely red*²⁹; his nose and

²² Eisler, *Messiah Jesus*, 393, 413.

²³ Eisler, *Messiah Jesus*, 396.

²⁴ Eisler, *Messiah Jesus*, 397.

²⁵ Versus the "short growth, three cubits tall, hunchbacked" prophet of the restored Josephean Testimony.

²⁶ Versus "of simple appearance".

²⁷ Versus "scanty (curly) hair".

²⁸ Thus not "in appearance elderly", and was the figure of Josephus' Testimony.

²⁹ Versus "black-skinned".

mouth formed with exquisite symmetry³⁰; his beard, and of a color suitable to his hair, reaching below his chin and parted in the middle like a fork³¹; *his eyes bright blue*, clear and serene. Look innocent, dignified, manly and mature. In proportion of body most perfect, and captivating³²; his arms and hands delectable to behold. He rebukes with majesty, councils with mildness, His whole address whether in word or deed, being eloquent and grave. No man has seen him laugh, yet his manners are exceedingly pleasant, but he has wept frequently in the presence of men. He is temperate, modest and wise. A man for his extraordinary beauty and perfection,³³ surpassing the children of men in every sense (emphasis mine).

This Letter achieved its final form some time after 311 CE. That it is a pious fiction is clear. As Biblical scholar Edgar J. Goodspeed reports:

The 'Letter of Lentulus' is evidently a fiction, designed to give currency to the description contained in the printers' manuals about the personal appearance of Jesus. The varying accounts of its provenance are simply devices to explain its survival from antiquity until today. It is probably as old as the thirteenth century; but it was unknown to Christian antiquity, and has no claims to serious attention as throwing any light upon the personal appearance of Jesus.³⁴

As Eisler points out, this tall, ruddy, blue-eyed, hazel-haired Christ is a direct answer to that short, black-skinned, short-haired Jesus of the *Halōsis*. "The obvious intension of this pious fraud was to replace this description of Jesus, so

³⁰ Versus the prognathism of Josephus' Jesus.

³¹ Versus the undeveloped beard of Josephus' Jesus.

³² Versus the hunchbacked Jesus of Josephus.

³³ Thus not 'ugly' as early Church tradition claimed Jesus actually was.

³⁴ Edgar J. Goodspeed, **Modern Apocrypha, Famous "Biblical" Hoaxes** by (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956) 91.

offensive to the later Christians and hence deleted...by another, more edifying pen-portrait.”³⁵

Remarkably, scientific advances developed three quarters of a century after Eisler wrote have confirmed the correctness of his restored description of Jesus. In the December 2002 issue of the scientific magazine **Popular Mechanics** the cover story ran: “The Real Face of Jesus: Forensic Science Reveals the True Image of Jesus.” Science-writer Mike Fillon reports on the fruits of the application of a new science, forensic anthropology, to the search for the historical Jesus. British forensic scientists and Israeli archaeologists collaborated to recreate the “most accurate image” of the Nazorean prophet to date. Based on the data obtained from this multi-disciplinary approach, Richard Neave, retired medical artist from London’s University of Manchester, created a molded image of a dark-skinned Jesus (Plate 4). The data, for the most part, is uncannily consistent with Eisler’s restored description. Mike Fillon writes:

Jesus (would have had) dark rather than light-colored eyes...in keeping with Jewish tradition, he was bearded as well...While most religious artists have put long hair on Christ, most biblical scholars believe that it was probably short with tight curls ...

From an analysis of skeletal remains, archaeologists had firmly established that the average build of a Semite male at the time of Jesus was 5 ft. 1 in., with an average weight of about 110 pounds. Since Jesus worked outside as a carpenter until he was

³⁵ Eisler, *Messiah Jesus*, 431.

about 30 years old...(his) face was probably weather-beaten, which would have made him appear older³⁶...the (image) of the dark and swarthy Middle Eastern man emerges...he probably looked a great deal more like a dark-skinned Semite than westerners are used to seeing...³⁷

Genetics also corroborates this data and confirms that Jesus, as a Hebrew, *must* have been black. The African origin of the ancient Hebrews was noted often by the Classical authors³⁸ and is now confirmed by the genetic data, particularly that related to the so-called “Cohen Gene” or, more properly, the Cohen Modal Haplotype (CMH). Discovered in 1997 by Jewish scientists, this paternal genetic marker (it is found on the Y-chromosome) has a high frequency among the Jewish (Askenazi and Sephardic) priesthood (Cohanim) and is thought to be a signature of ancient Hebrew ancestry.³⁹ The haplotype

³⁶ Eisler, *Messiah Jesus*, 413: This confirms an observation made by Eisler: “the indication regarding his age, ‘in appearance elderly’ (is) completely opposed to the traditional thirty years of Luke (3:23). Both statements could be harmonized by supposing that Jesus looked much older than he actually was.”

³⁷ Mike Fillon, “The Real Face of Jesus: Advances in forensic science reveal the most famous face in history,” *Popular Mechanics* (December 2002): 70, 71.

³⁸ Strabo, *Geography*, 16.2.34; Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 31; Josephus, *Against Apion* I.22; Tacitus, *Histories*, V.2; See futher James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Times* (Boston, 1916) 199; Gerald Massey, *A Book of the Beginnings*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1995; Facsimile of 1881 edition) Volume 2; Godfrey Higgins, *Anacalypsis: An Attempt to Draw Aside the Veil of the Saitic Isis or an Inquiry into the Origin of Languages, Nations and Religions* (Brooklyn: A&B Publishers, 1992; Facsimile of 1836 edition) 398ff, 434ff.

³⁹ Mark G. Thomas et al, “Origins of Old Testament Priests,” *Nature* 394 (July 1998): 138-140. See also Rabbi Yaakov Kleiman, *DNA & Tradition: The Genetic Link to the Ancient Hebrews* (Devora Publishing, 2004) for a review of the history of this discovery.

(CMH)⁴⁰ is indeed part of a haplogroup (Hg J)⁴¹ that originated in Black Arabia or *Afrabia* ca 30 kya (thousand years ago) and in high frequencies is believed to indicate “Semitism.”⁴²

While early reports, largely from Ashkenazi (white) Jewish writers, tended to portray this discovery as evidence that Ashkenazi Jews are truly Hebrew with a legitimate claim to the Holy Land,⁴³ further genetic tests and reports demonstrated just the opposite. Two data-sets in particular turned this apologetic use of the discovery on its head: (1) the further “discovery” that the “purest” surviving remnant of the Children of Israel identified by CMH tests is the tribe of Black Jews in India, the *Bene Israel* and the Black Jews of Cochin, who show a genetic affinity not only to Ethiopians and Yemenies, but also to the tribe of Black Jews in South Africa, the Lemba, whose relation to the ancient Hebrews has also been confirmed by the presence of high frequencies of the CMH⁴⁴ (2) and the reports confirming that, though

⁴⁰ A haplotype (from the Greek: ἄ πλοῦς, *haploús*, "onefold, single, simple") in genetics is a combination of alleles (DNA sequences) at different places (loci) on the chromosome that are transmitted together.

⁴¹ In the study of molecular evolution, a haplogroup (from the Greek: ἄ πλοῦς, *haploús*, "onefold, single, simple") is a group of similar haplotypes that share a common ancestor with a single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) mutation.

⁴² Ornella Semina et al, “Origin, Diffusion, and Differentiation of Y-Chromosome Haplogroups E and J: Inferences on the Neolithization of Europe and Later Migratory Events in the Mediterranean Area,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 74 (2004): 1023-1034.

⁴³ e.g. Rabbi Yaakov Kleiman, *DNA & Tradition*.

⁴⁴ Tudor Parfitt, “Descended from Jewish Seed: Genetics and Jewish History in India: The Bene Israel and the Black Jews of Cochin,” *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* 6 (2003): 7-18; idem, “Place, Priestly Status and Purity: The Impact of Genetic Research on an Indian Jewish Community,” *Developing World Bioethics* 3 (2003): 178-185; Mark G Thomas et al, “Y Chromosomes

the CMH is found in high frequencies among the priestly class of both Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jewry, this class only represents 4-10% of this Jewry.⁴⁵ Most Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews lack this signature⁴⁶ and in fact have been shown to be genetically related, not to Semites, but to Gentiles: Kurds, Turks, East Europeans, etc.⁴⁷ Thus, genetics confirms that the ancient Hebrews were black.

Traveling South: The Cohen Modal Haplotype and the Origins of the Lemba—the ‘Black Jews of Southern Africa’,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 66 (2000): 674-686; Tudor Parfitt and Yulia Egorova, *Genetics, Mass Media and Identity: A case study of the genetic research on the Lemba and Bene Israel* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006). Y Rashmee, who broke the story of the Bene Israel in *The Times of India* July 20, 2002 (“India’s Children of Israel Find Their Roots”) proclaimed: “More than 2,000 years after they first claimed to have set foot in India, the mystery of the world’s most obscure Jewish community – the Marathi-speaking Bene Israel – may finally have been solved with genetic carbon-dating revealing they carry the unusual Moses gene that would make them, literally, the original children of Israel...[The research says] this is the first concrete proof that ‘exils from Palestine made it as far as India’”. On the Black Jews of India see further *Jewish Encyclopedia* s.v. Cochim; Joseph J. Williams, *Hebrewisms of West Africa: From Nile to Niger with the Jews* (Biblo and Tannen [reprint]) 150; Higgins, *Anacalypsis*, I:398-400.

⁴⁵ Harry Ostrer, “A genetic profile of contemporary Jewish populations,” *Nature Reviews-Genetics* 2 (2001): 891.

⁴⁶ Only about 15% of lay Ashkenaz and 12% of lay Sephardim possess this marker. The presence of this marker in non-priestly segments of the populations may be accounted for by gene flow from the Cohanim or priests. Thomas et al, “Origins of Old Testament Priests,” 139; Semina et al, “Origin, Diffusion, and Differentiation,” 1029; Ellen Levy-Coffman, “A Mosaic of People: The Jewish Story and a Reassessment of the DNA Evidence,” *Journal of Genetic Genealogy* 1 (2005): 12-33 [15-16]; Doron M. Behar et al, “Multiple Origins of Ashkenazi Levites: Y Chromosome Evidence for Both Near Eastern and European Ancestries,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 73 (2003): 768-779 [769].

⁴⁷ Almut Nebel et al, “The Y Chromosome Pool of Jews as Part of the Genetic Landscape of the Middle East,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 69 (2001): 1095-1112: “In comparison with data available from other relevant populations in the region, Jews were found to be more closely related to groups in the north of the Fertile Crescent (Kurds, Turks, and Armenians) than to their

Anthropological and archaeological evidence for the Judean town of Lachish, sacked by the Assyrian King Sennacherib in the 8th century BCE, further confirms that Hebrews at that time were still an Africoid people. The approximately 1500 skulls discovered during excavations show a heterogeneous population,⁴⁸ but the primary group was likely of a “dark complexioned, narrow-headed type” similar to the ancient Egyptians.⁴⁹ That these “Kushites” of Biblical Lachish were in fact Hebrews is unmistakably confirmed by the so-called “Lachish Reliefs”, the monumental pictorial reliefs depicting the siege which graced the walls of Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh. These

Arab neighbors (1095)”; Gil Atzmon et al, “Abraham’s Children in the Genome Era: Major Jewish Diaspora Populations Comprise Distinct Genetic Clusters with Shared Middle Eastern Ancestry,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 86 (2010): 850-859: “genetic proximity of these European/Syrian Jewish populations, including Ashkenazi Jews, to each other and to French, North Italian and Sardinian populations favors the idea of non-Semitic Mediterranean ancestry in the formation of the European/Syrian Jewish groups (857)”; Almut Nebel et al, “Y chromosome evidence for a founder effect in Ashkenazi Jews,” *European Journal of Human Genetics* 13 (2005): 388-391; The CMH clad belongs to the J haplogroup. J has two major derivative subclads associated with it: J1 and J2. The CMH belongs to J1, which originated in Black Arabia and signals African Semitic ancestry. J2, on the other hand, which is found among Ashkenazis at a frequency twice that of J1, has a characteristically non-Semitic European distribution and is believed to have originated from a mutation that occurred in the Aegean area! F. Di Giacomo et al, “Y chromosomal haplogroup J as signature of the post-neolithic colonization of Europe,” *Human Genetics* 115 (2004): 357-371; Levy-Coffman, “Mosaic of People,” 16, 24-26: “Because Jewish populations possess approximately twice as much J2 as they do J1, their ancestry more closely matches that of Turkish and Transcaucasian populations [25].”

⁴⁸ S.O.Y. Keita, “An Analysis of Crania From Tell-Duweir Using Multiple Discriminant Functions,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 75 (1988): 375-390.

⁴⁹ Sir Arthur Keith, “The Men of Lachish,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (1940): 7-12 [11]; Keita, “An Analysis.”

reliefs depict the Assyrians leading away African-Israelite captives (Plate 5) and even flaying them alive (Plate 6).⁵⁰ These African-Israelites, with their short stature, prognathicness, and short, kinky hair resemble in these respects the Josephus' restored description of Jesus. Thus, divergent evidences converge to confirm that description.

Robert Eisler observes:

strange and bewildering...is this small, bent, and homely figure when first emerging from behind the veil which pious delusion has managed to weave around it for centuries...The complete disappearance of the genuine pen-portrait of Jesus is but a proof of the far-reaching Hellenization of the Jewish Messiah, a process which took place in the first centuries of the Church.⁵¹

It will be demonstrated here that the Hellenization process which transformed the small, black-skinned Jesus of history into the tall, ruddy white-skinned Christ of the orthodox iconographic tradition is directly paralleled by an *Aryanization* process which transformed a black-skinned prophet of Arabia named Muḥammad into the ruddy white-skinned Muḥammad of the orthodox Islamic iconographic tradition. This *Aryanization* of Islam, involved a massive Persian/Iranian influence on Islamic tradition consequent to the misnomered 'Abbāsīd Revolution (ca. 750) which toppled the Umayyads, Islam's first historical

⁵⁰ See especially David Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish by Sennacherib, with drawings of the Lachish reliefs by Judith Dekel; photographs of the Lachish reliefs by Avraham Hay; and reconstructions of the Assyrian siege by Gert le Grange* (Tel-Aviv : Tel Aviv University, Institute of Archaeology, 1982).

⁵¹ Eisler, *Messiah Jesus*, 431, 433.

dynasty.⁵² This process changed the demographic face of the Muslim world in general from black to mainly white. As a consequence the black Arab Muḥammad, like the black Hebrew Jesus, was found offensive in and to the new order. His image too was thus 'corrected,' giving us the 'white Prophet of Mecca' so adored by most of the Muslim world today.

⁵² See below.

Chapter II

The Aryanization of Islam

II.1. *The 'Abbāsīd Revolution and the Changing Face of Islam*

The Egyptian polymath Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī (d. 1505), in his *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'* ("History of the Caliphs"), reports one of several variants of an important hadith, which variants are here combined:

Zayd b. Aslam related that the Prophet (s) saw a vision and told his companions about it. He said: "I saw a group of black sheep and a group of white sheep then mixed with them [until the white sheep became so numerous that the black sheep could no longer be seen in the herd of sheep.] I⁵³ interpreted it to mean that [the black sheep are the Arabs. They will accept Islam and become many. As for the white sheep, they are the non-Arabs (i.e. Persians, Turks, Byzantines, ect.)] They will enter Islam and then share with you your wealth and your genealogy [and become so numerous that the Arabs will not be noticed amongst them.]" The Companions became surprised by what he (s) said. Then one said, "The non-Arab Persians will enter our land, O' Messenger of Allah?!" The Prophet (s) then said, "Yes. By He Who Has my soul in His Hand, if the religion was hanging on the distant star, men from the non-Arab Persians would reach it and the luckiest of them would be the people of Faris."⁵⁴

⁵³ Or Abu Bakr with the approval of the angel.

⁵⁴ Al-Suyūfī, *Tārīkh al-khulafā'*, ed. Jamāl Maḥmūd Muṣṭafā (Cairo: Dār al-Fajr lil-Turāth, 1999) 86; Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarat al-Uḍabā'*, I, 219; Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 2 vols. (London: George Allen and Uneven Ltd) 1:112.

The fact that the original Arabs and Arab followers of Muḥammad were black is well-documented.⁵⁵ So too is the fact that these original Muslims have been lost within an influx of non-Arab converts to Islam. The face of Islam went from black to white. By the 11th century, as Robert Goldston observes,

although both Abbasid and Fatimid caliphs continued to maintain their titles, between the Mamelukes in Egypt and the Seljuks in the East real power in the Arab world (except North Africa and Spain, where the Seljuks never penetrated) had passed into Turkish hands. There it was to remain until our own day.

And what of the original Arabs, those lords of the desert who had formed the vanguard of Islam and presided over its golden age? Almost all had long since become so submerged into the cosmopolitan empire that they were indistinguishable from their neighbors.⁵⁶

This demographic shift is part of what I have called the *Aryanization* of Islam: the transformation of Islam's culture, ideology, spirit, and face from Semitic (black Arab) to Indo-Aryan (largely Iranian but also Turkic and Byzantine). Dana Reynolds-Marniche notes:

The black nationalistic views and horrifying racism of the original Arabs towards fair skinned peoples settling in Arabia is

⁵⁵ See Muhammad, *Black Arabia*, Chapters Six and Seven.

⁵⁶ Robert Goldston, *The Sword of the Prophet: A History of the Arab World From the Time of Mohammed to the Present Day* (New York: Dial Press, 1979) 87.

aply illustrated by early writings and expressions from individuals of Mohammed's own tribe in Arabia.⁵⁷

This Arab black nationalism was that of the Umayyads (661-750 CE), Islam's first political dynasty which was a *black Arab* dynasty.⁵⁸ It was toppled in 750 by what has been called, erroneously, the "Abbāsīd Revolution." It is true that the Banū 'Abbās, after which the second dynasty took its name, was a black Arab tribal family like its rival the Banū Umayya.⁵⁹ But as Saleh Said Agha has clearly demonstrated, the "revolution which toppled the Umayyads [was] neither Arab nor 'Abbāsīd," it was Iranian.⁶⁰ Jan Restö says also:

the Abbasid revolution in 750 was, to a large extent, the final revolt of the non-'arab Muslims against the 'arab and their taking power. This revolt was dominated by the Iranian 'aḡam (non-Arabs), and the outcome was the establishment of at least formal equality between the two groups.⁶¹

The Iranians/Persians, who were a very proud Indo-Aryan group,⁶² resented the black Arabs who conquered

⁵⁷ Dana Marniche, "Fear of Blackness: Descriptions and Ethnogenesis of the original Afro-Arabian tribes of 'Moorish' Spain Part I," <http://www.africaresource.com/rasta/sesostris-the-great-the-egyptian-hercules/fear-of-blackness-descriptions-and-ethnogenesis-of-the-original-afro-arabian-tribes-of-%e2%80%9cmoorish%e2%80%9d-spain-by-dana-marniche/>

⁵⁸ See Muhammad, *Black Arabia*, Chapter Seven.

⁵⁹ See Muhammad, *Black Arabia*, 174-175 and below.

⁶⁰ Saleh Said Agha, *The Revolution Which Toppled the Umayyads: Neither Arab nor 'Abbāsīd* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

⁶¹ Jan Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003) 24.

⁶² On the Persian/Iranian 'whiteness' see below.

their land in 651 CE and brought to a close their eleven-hundred-year-old civilization.⁶³ These resentful Persian masses were the mainstay of the revolution, whose conversion to Islam, according to Agha, was a only a revolutionary expedient:

the [Arab] Establishment (under the Umayyads) did not simply self-destruct...Rather, there existed an alien antagonist, whose intrinsic interest it was to destroy it. This antagonist was the Iranian subjects...The Iranians were taught and then they learnt that, by adopting Islam, they should earn the right and the enabling claim to neutralize the Establishment's superior edge...The resulting mass conversion should not be viewed as spontaneous or haphazard. The Iranian uprising was streamlined and conducted within the frame-work of Islam, in whose moralistic, egalitarian and inclusive aspects the Iranian activists and intellectuals, like a cunning Odysseus, found the natural and appropriate weapon to wield against the worldly Establishment which claimed to represent Islam. The Trojan horse was planted right at the heart of the historic paradox of Umayyad Islam.⁶⁴

II.2. *Inventing New Arabs and Reshaping Islam*

The 'Abbāsid, or better 'Persian' Revolution was much more than a *political* revolution, but a cultural, ideological and *spiritual* one as well.⁶⁵ As Asma Afsaruddin observes:

⁶³ Mark Graham, *How Islam Created the Modern World* (Maryland: Amana Publications, 2006) 34: "Proud of their great cultural and political heritage, the Persians resented the imperious and unschooled Arabs."

⁶⁴ Agha, *Revolution*, 170.

⁶⁵ Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: The View From the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 44: "Nothing influenced the emerging shape

The third generation of Muslims, called the ‘Successors to the Successors’ (*atba’ al-tabi’in*) inherited a changed world after the ‘Abbasid revolution...Important ideological, administrative, cultural, political, and socio-economic developments and changes were ushered in after the overthrow of the Umayyads in 750...The group that benefitted the most from this sea change were the Persians, a significant number of whom assumed important official positions in various ‘Abbasid administrations and who wielded significant political as well as cultural influence...⁶⁶

The *complexion* or face of this Muslim world was changing as a result of this influx of non-Arabs into the empire. This “cataclysmic shift in the demographic balance of power” succeeded in remodeling “the political and social institutions of the Islamic empire and *inner spirit* of Islamic culture on the model of Sasanian institutions and values.”⁶⁷ It also succeeded in *constructing a new ‘Arab identity’*. As Ronald Segal points out: “increasing intermarriage (between Arabs and non-Arabs) served to submerge the original distinctions, and increasing numbers of the conquered, having adopted the religion and language of the conquerors, *took to assuming the identity of Arabs themselves* (emphasis mine-WM).”⁶⁸ Note also the comments by Richard Suskind:

of Muslim society and culture so much as the massive influx of new Muslims who had no prior experience of life in Arabia or the culture of the Arabs.”

⁶⁶ Asma Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims: History and Memory* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008) 106, 107. See further Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: The View From the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

⁶⁷ H.A.R. Gibb, “The Social Significance of the Shuubiya,” in *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, edd. Stanford J. Shaw and William R. Polk (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962): 66.

⁶⁸ Ronald Segal, *Islam’s Black Slaves: The Other Black Diaspora* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001) 22.

In one important way ... (the second caliph) Omar was unable to prevent the Moslems from mingling with the subject peoples... Since they were forbidden to own land, they used their wealth (from booty) chiefly to buy women... All the children born of these unions – and there were many thousands of them – called themselves Arabs, in order to identify with the ruling class. When they grew up and married, their offspring in turn called themselves Arabs. Thus it came about that the people of the Moslem world, many of them without a drop of Arab blood in their veins, became known as Arabs.⁶⁹

Such ‘conversion to Arabism’ is illustrated by the words of the Iranian poet Bashshār b. Burb (d. 783-4), who responded to the caliph al-Mahdi’s question, “Of whom do you reckon yourself, Bashshār?” “As for my language and dress, they are Arab; but as for my origin, it is non-Arab (*‘ajamī*).”⁷⁰

Having *converted* to Islam and Arabism, these Iranians and other non-Arabs were able to *convert Islam and Arabism* in accord with their vision of a revived Persian empire. The manner in which this remodeling of Islam and reestablishment of Persian tradition occurred is worthy of note: Iranian scholars, who would become some of the chief fashioners of Islamic tradition,⁷¹ *manipulated* that tradition and even fabricated aspects therein. Rina Drory, in her fascinating article “The Abbasid Construction of the Jahiliyya: Cultural Authority in the Making,” illustrates how this happened through gaining influence over the

⁶⁹ Richard Suskind, *The Sword of the Prophet: The Story of the Moslem Empire* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1972) 37.

⁷⁰ Quoted from Roy P. Mottahedah, “The Su‘ūbiyah Controversy and the Social History of Early Islamic Iran,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7 (1976): 173.

⁷¹ Bulliet, *Islam*, 146, 152-153.

recollection of the Arab past through the latter's principle vehicle: Arab poetry.⁷²

Pre-Islamic (rather, pre-Qur'ānic) poetry belonged to the Arab tribal heritage and was perceived as the medium by which the tribal legacy was perpetuated. The guardians of this heritage, the poets (*shu'arā'*) and the transmitters (*ruwāt*) of the poems were therefore Arab Bedouin. However, by the mid-eighth century, a new breed of transmitters came to dominate the field: urbanized, second generation Iranian converts to Islam (*mawālī*), the likes of Ḥammād al-Rāwiya (d. 722) from Kufa and his student Khalaf al-Aḥmar (d. 796) from Basra. This new breed therefore "derived from a cultural background utterly unlike that of the tribal Arab transmitters."⁷³ So too were many of the newly developing class of scholars (*'ulamā'*) *mawālī* or non-Arab converts. According to Drory, these non-Arabs "*chose* this profession as a way to integrate themselves into the emerging Islamic society," but also to *shape* that society.⁷⁴

Acquiring unprecedented expertise in the field, these Iranian transmitters and scholars of the Arab past successfully ingratiated themselves with the late Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd courts, where their recitations and intellectual wares were much appreciated. They tutored the royal families and answered academic questions of the caliph in session. Through these means they were able to "mold the spiritual world" of the caliphal house.⁷⁵

Most important for our purposes' is that these new guardians of the Arab past and Islamic tradition did not simply *transmit*: they *revised and manipulated* these traditions,

⁷² Rina Drory, "The Abbasid Construction of the Jahiliyya: Cultural Authority in the Making," *Studia Islamica* 83 (1996): 33-49.

⁷³ Drory, "Abbasid Construction," 40.

⁷⁴ Drory, "Abbasid Construction," 40, 43.

⁷⁵ Drory, "Abbasid Construction," 43.

“inventing knowledge” and fabricating Arab-Islamic learning.⁷⁶ Their falsifications of Arab poetry, fabricating verses and attributing them to well-known poets or revising existing poems, is documented. Through such manipulation these non-Arab converts were able to *create a new Arab identity*:

the non-Arab *mawālī* were the ones who actually constructed Arab identity for the Arab community through a colossal effort of collecting and organizing knowledge belonging to ‘the Arab (and Islamic) sciences’.⁷⁷

In other words, the non-Arabs who converted to Islam *and Arabism*, also constructed a new ‘Arab’ identity that was more akin to their own cultural and spiritual background. They also reshaped Islam accordingly.

Through this clandestine (though not necessarily organized) operation Persian civilization “would rebound...*mutatis mutandis* its Islamicization, slowly almost stealthily in less than a century,”⁷⁸ and in the process “Sasanian (*sic*) strands...had been woven into the fabric of Muslim thought.”⁷⁹ One Sassanian (i.e. Persian) ‘strand’ woven into Arab poetry and Islam was aspects of the cosmic dualism that characterized the Zoroastrian state religion, a dualism that saw white as inherently good and

⁷⁶ Drory, “Abbasid Construction,” 41, 43, 47.

⁷⁷ Drory, “Abbasid Construction,” 42.

⁷⁸ David Levering Lewis, *God’s Crucible: Islam and the Making of Europe, 570-1215* (London and New York: W.W. Norton, 2008)76.

⁷⁹ Gibb, “Shuubiya,” 72.

black as inherently evil.⁸⁰ This will be tremendously significant for the course Islam will take after the Revolution.

II.3. *From Black Nationalism to White Racism*

Marniche explains:

As if the world has been turned upside down, blackness in the early Arab culture as in pre-Ptolemaic Egypt and early Dravidian India (according to Marco Polo), was revered as representative of what was archetypically good, holy and powerful, while in European culture, even in early times, it appears to have been the exact opposite.⁸¹

This observation of a pro-black sentiment, if you will, in early Arab and Islamic culture is echoed by a number of scholars. John Alembillah Azumah points out that,

There is hardly any trace of antagonism or discrimination on the basis of the skin color in pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabia... In social life in pre-Islamic and early Arabia there were black slaves as well as white slaves, mainly captured during war, and there is no evidence that the former suffered any specific discrimination by virtue of the colour of their skin. On the contrary, the Habash (Ethiopians), who were active in sixth-century Arabia as allies of the Byzantines, were usually regarded

⁸⁰ See Yuri Stoyanov, *The Other God: Dualist Religions From Antiquity to the Cathar Heresy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000) 21-48; Gibb, "Suubiya," 69.

⁸¹ Dana Marniche, "Fear of Blackness Part II: Early Descriptions of the Central Arabian Tribesmen Who Comprised the 'Moors' of Spain," <http://www.africaresource.com/rasta/sesostris-the-great-the-egyptian-hercules/fear-of-blackness-part-ii-dana-marniche/>

as people with a higher civilization than the Arabs and respected during early Islamic times as people with a revealed religion. It was partly due to the high esteem with which the Habash were held in the early Islamic period that Muhammad advised his persecuted followers to seek asylum in Abyssinia in 615 CE.⁸²

So too the late Professor St Claire Drake:

In early Islam, there were positive associations with blackness...The rabbinic and midrashic stories that interpret black skin as a curse was apparently not part of early Arab oral tradition...However...they became known after the seventh-century Arab conquests, among scholars in Mesopotamia who were developing Islamic religious thought. The scholars...some [were] Arabs, [most were] Persians.⁸³

This last remark regarding the Persian/Iranian role in introducing some racism into Islamic religious thought is of great significance and must be kept in mind as we read the following remark.

‘Abduh Badawī of Khartoum, in his study of Arabic poetry and the image of Blacks therein, noted:

the Arabs despised the black color as much as they loved the white color; they described everything that they admired, material or moral, as white.⁸⁴

⁸² John Alembillah Azumah, *The Legacy of Arab-Islam in Africa: A Quest for Inter-religious Dialogue* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001) 130-131.

⁸³ St. Clair Drake, *Black Folk Here and There* 2 vols. (Los Angeles: Center For Afro-American Studies University of California, 1987) 2:85, 152.

⁸⁴ ‘Abduh Badawī, *Al-Shu‘arā’ al-Sūd wa Khaṣā’iṣuhum fī l-Shi‘r al-‘Arabī* (Cairo, 1973), quoted in Bernard Lewis, “The Crows of the Arabs,” *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985): 89.

Indeed, Bernard Lewis has documented the racism evident in pre-Islamic Arab poetry.⁸⁵ How do we account for this, in the light of the above observations of the *lack* of anti-black racism in pre- and early Islamic Arabia and in the light of the evidence adduced below that the Arabs of pre- and early Islamic Arabia were themselves black? How can these conflicting observations be rectified? Bernard Lewis rightly points out in this regard:

There are verses, indeed many verses, attributed to pre-Islamic and early Islamic poets which would suggest very strongly a feeling of hatred and contempt directed against persons of African birth or origin. *Most, if not all of these, however, almost certainly belong to later periods and reflect later problems, attitudes, and preoccupations...* pagan and early Islamic Arabia seems to have shared the general attitude of the ancient world, which attached no stigma to blackness.⁸⁶

Pre- and early Islamic poetry was thus manipulated or fabricated and the anti-black racism of the 'new Arabs' was retrojected back to the 'old' Arabs. Iranian *mawālī* introduced into Islam a virulent anti-black racism. Mino Southgate has documented that in Iranian sources of the 10th – 14th centuries, Muslim and non-Muslim, "no group was the butt of such fierce racial attack as were blacks..."⁸⁷ In some Iranian Muslim literature Blacks are enemies of

⁸⁵ Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East* (Oxford, 1990) 28-32.

⁸⁶ Lewis, *Race and Slavery*, 22, 59; idem, "Crows," 90.

⁸⁷ Mino Southgate, "The Negative Images of Blacks in Some Medieval Iranian Writings," *Iranian Studies* 17 (1984): 3-35 (9).

God and Islam and the killing of each of them is penance for a lifetime of sin, for God wants them destroyed.⁸⁸ Southgate concludes with some sense of bewilderment:

many medieval Islamic Iranian sources show color consciousness, depict negative black stereotypes, and reveal hostile sentiments toward blacks. This is not to say that negative sentiments are not expressed about other groups...It is fair to say, however, aside from mildly positive comments about Ethiopians, hardly anything good is said about blacks, and that the attack against this group...is much more fierce than that against any other group...What motivated Muslim Iran to develop the grotesque images and stereotypes...?⁸⁹

The answer, no doubt, is that these anti-black sentiments, epitomized in the cosmic dualism of some forms of Zoroastrianism, long predated Muslim Iran. The Persians of antiquity were a proud, racist people. Empirius (ca. 200 CE; *Against the Ethicists*, 43) claimed that of all whites the Persians are associated with “the whitest and the most hook-nosed.”⁹⁰ When Christian Ethiopia reconquered Jewish Yemen in 520 CE, Jewish exiles sought assistance from the Byzantine ruler of Constantinople who turned them down on behalf of his co-religionists. On the other hand Chosroes, Zoroastrian king of Persia, took a different position. He said to the Jews: “This is the white skin against the black race. I am closer to you than to the Abyssinians.” After their victory over ‘the black race’ the victory poem

⁸⁸ Southgate, “Negative Images,” 10.

⁸⁹ Southgate, “Negative Images,” 26.

⁹⁰ See further Goldenberg, *Curse of Ham*, 95.

began: "We have crossed the waters to free Himyar (southern Arabia) from the tyranny of the blacks."⁹¹

Richard Bulliet notes:

many practices, beliefs, and institutions most characteristics of the period when Islam invented a uniform identity for itself are rooted in the urban Muslim communities of eleventh-century Iran...the impact of the Iranian diaspora (also) went beyond institutional changes. It affected the content of religious thought and practice as well...⁹²

Indeed it has: the *Aryanization* of Islam. This evidence of the manipulation of Arab and Islamic tradition by racist non-Arab, non-black, converts to Islam is of profound significance for our discussion of the ethnicity of the prophet Muḥammad according to the Islamic sources. As we shall see, the sources confirm two things: (1) the prophet was black and (2) the sources were manipulated to make him white.

⁹¹ See Drake, *Black Folk*, 2:96.

⁹² Bulliet, *Islam*, 146, 152-153.



Plate I

The Night Journey of Muhammad on His Steed



Plate 3



Plate 2

Richard the Lionheart versus Saladin. Luttrell Psalter. Diocese of Lincoln, c. 1325-35. British Library, London.

Plate 4

Reconstruction of face
of Jesus by Richard
Neave based on
advances in forensic
anthropology



Plates 5 and 6

On the Lachish reliefs in
the British Museum,
Israelite prisoners are
shown being sent into exile
and flayed alive by the
Assyrians under
Sennacherib, whose
capture of Judean cities is
recorded in 2 Kings 18:13.



Chapter III

Muhammad's African Ancestors

III.1. *The Ancient Arabs*

The ethnographic evidence points to the original Arabian populations as having originated in Africa and as being black. As Bertram Thomas, historian and former Prime Minister of Muscat and Oman, reported:

The original inhabitants of Arabia...were not the familiar Arabs of our time but a very much darker people. A proto-negroid belt of mankind stretched across the ancient world from Africa to Malaya. This belt...(gave) rise to the Hamitic peoples of Africa, to the Dravidian peoples of India, and to an intermediate dark people inhabiting the Arabian peninsula. In the course of time two big migrations of fair-skinned peoples came from the north...to break through and transform the dark belt of man beyond India (and) to drive a wedge between India and Africa...The more virile invaders overcame the dark-skinned peoples, absorbing most of them, driving others southwards...The cultural condition of the newcomers is unknown. It is unlikely that they were more than wild hordes of adventurous hunters.⁹³

⁹³ Bertram Thomas, *The Arabs* (London: Thornton Butterworth LTD., 1937) 355f. More recently Runoko Rashidi documents: "The Arabian Peninsula...was, like much of Asia, first populated by Black people...Some of the surviving Black populations, known as the Veddoids, are major portions of the Mahra population found still in the extremities of Arabia." Runoko Rashidi, "Africans in Early Asian Civilizations: A Historical Overview," in Runoko Rashidi and Ivan Van Sertima (ed.), *African Presence in Early Asia* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999) 28f. See further Muhammad, *Black Arabia*, Chapter I.

While these white invaders will impact the demography of the area,⁹⁴ the black Arabians for the most part seem to have resisted miscegenation on any significant level, instead retreating to the southern portion of the peninsula. This black-skinned southern Arab is best represented today by the Mahra, Qara, and Shakra tribes of Oman and Hadramawt (Figure 3),⁹⁵ undoubtedly a modified version of Arabia's original inhabitants.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ See e.g. Dr. Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, "The Physical Character of the Arabs: Their Relations with Ancient Persians," *Anthropological Society of Bombay* 11 (1919): 724-768.

⁹⁵ On these tribes see J. E. Peterson, "Oman's diverse society: Southern Oman," *The Middle East Journal* 58 (Spring 2004): 254ff; *Encyclopedia of Islam* [Second Edition; hereafter *EP*] 6:81-84 s.v. Mahra by W.W. Müller; Bertram Thomas, "Among Some Unknown Tribes of South Arabia," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 59 (1929): 97-111; For photos of these black-skinned South Arabians see further D. Van der Meulen, "Into Burning Hadhramaut" *The National Geographic Magazine* 62 (1932): 393-421; Richard F. Nyrop (ed.), *The Yemens Country Studies* (Washington D.C.: The American University, 1985): 5-7; Sir Arthur Keith and Dr. Wilton Marion Krogan, "The Racial Characteristic of the Southern Arabs," in Thomas, *Arabia Felix*, 327 facing, 330 facing 333.

⁹⁶ The dark South Arabian today is short and "extremely round-headed (brachycephalic)" (Henry Field, "Racial Types From South Arabia," *The Open Court* 50 [1936]: 33-39) but was no doubt originally much taller and dolichocephalic. In the 13th century CE the Muslim traveler Ibn al-Mujāwir described the Mahra as "tall, handsome folk" (*Tārīkh al-mustabṣir*, 271.1.17; trans. G. Rex Smith in *A Traveller in Thirteenth-Century Arabia: Ibn al-Mujāwir's Tārīkh al-mustabṣir* [London: Ashgate, 2008] 268-69) and early pre-Christian skulls found in Hadramawt were markedly dolichocephalic (G.M. Morant, "A Description of Human Remains Excavated by Miss G. Gatton Thompson at Hureidha" in G. Caton Thompson, *The Tombs and Moon Temple of Hureidha (Hadhramaut)* [Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London # 8; Oxford: University Press, 1944] 107-112; Scott, *High Yemen*, 200f). It has been suggested that the 'definite change' in the racial constitution of the people of Hadramawt resulted from the invasion and inbreeding of brachycephalic whites (Armenoids or Persians; see *ibid*; Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, "The Physical Character of the Arabs: Their Relations with Ancient Persians" *Anthropological Society of Bombay* 7

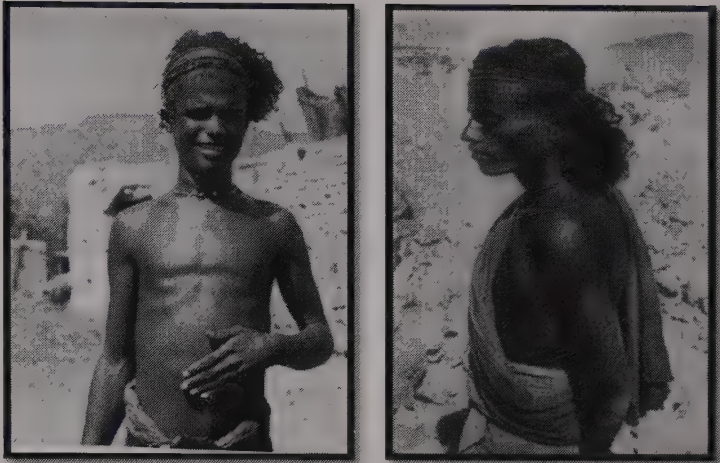


Figure 3
 Modern day black Arabs (Mahra Arabs) from Southern Arabia

III.2. *Africans in Arabia*

These ancient black Arabians were African. Arabia itself, we are assured, is but “the geological extension of Africa.”⁹⁷ As Maurizio Tosi has pointed out in his

[1919]: 724-68; Keith and Krogan, “Racial Characteristic,” 301-333). Major R.E. Cheesman already in 1925 suggested that the Mahra were remnants of Arabia’s earliest civilization: “The Deserts of Jafura and Jabrin,” *Geographical Journal* 65 (1925): 125.

⁹⁷ Words of Maurizio Tosi, “The Emerging Picture of Prehistoric Arabia,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15 (1986): 462 [art.=461-490]. See also J.A. Rodgers, *Sex and Race: Negro-Caucasian Mixing in All Ages and All Lands, Vol. I: The Old World* (St. Petersburg, Fl: Helga M. Rogers, 1967) I:95: “Arabia is but an extension of Africa”; William H. Worrell, *A Study of Races in the Ancient Near East* (Cambridge: W. Hiffer & Sons Ltd., 1927) 6: “Geologically Africa includes that part of Asia which we now call Mesopotamia, Palestine and Syria...Arabia and the Syrian Desert are merely the extension of the great deserts of Northern Africa”.

discussion, "The Emerging Picture of Prehistoric Arabia": "Physically the (Arabian) peninsula is a part of Africa, landscaped by the same geological and climate processes as the eastern Sahara and the Ethiopian highlands."⁹⁸ Coupled with this geological and climatological evidence is the ecological data. In 1982 Stacey International published its Saudi-endorsed study of the region, noting:

Maps and geography books make Arabia a part of Asia, but plant and animal life clearly bear out the theory that it is really an extension of Africa...Saudi Arabia's wildlife is...an African complex of species...The animals and plants of northern and northeastern Saudi Arabia are generally closely related to or identical with Saharan species...⁹⁹

Africa thus does not end at the Red Sea, but extends across it into Arabia.¹⁰⁰ The peninsula is therefore rightly described as Northeast Africa.¹⁰¹ It is likewise the *ethnological*

⁹⁸ Tosi, "Emerging Picture," 462. See also D.T. Potts, *The Arabian Gulf in Antiquity, Vol. I: From Prehistoric to the Fall of the Achaemenid Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 9: "During the Precambrian time...Arabia was part of Africa".

⁹⁹ *The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (Stacey International, 1982), *apud* Dr. Khalid Abdullah Tariq al-Mansour, *Seven African Arabian Wonders of the World: The Black Man's Guide to the Middle East* (n.d.: First African Arabian Press, 1991) 116.

¹⁰⁰ See further Muhammad, *Black Arabia*, 8-12; Ali A. Mazrui, *Euro-Jews and Afro-Arabs: The Great Semitic Divergence in World History* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2008) 140.

¹⁰¹ Charles S. Finch, "Nile Genesis: Continuity of Culture From the Great Lakes to the Delta," in Ivan Van Sertima (ed.), *Egypt: Child of Africa* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1994) 44: "It has been customary to separate the Near East from Africa. Ethno-culturally though, in the light of increasing Neolithic evidence, it is perhaps more nearly correct to consider the lands between Khartoum in the south and the Tigris-Euphrates in

extension of mainland Africa. As Michael D. Petraglia remarks, the Arabian peninsula was “a key geographic region that, without doubt, played a critical role in Out of Africa dispersals.”¹⁰² In fact, Arabia is likely the first territory that hominids encountered as they expanded outside of the African mainland.¹⁰³ They no doubt entered the peninsula by the south across the Bab el-Mandeb and by the north through the Levantine corridor. These ancient African immigrants to Arabia are the ancestors of the black Arabs of a later time.

III.2.1. *African Semites*

“Semitic” is properly a linguistic designation, not racial, and describes native speakers of one of the several living or dead Semitic languages. But Danna Reynolds observation

the north as constituting one broad horizon in the period between 10,000 and 5,000 B.C. This broad horizon was composed substantially of ‘Saharo-Nilotic’ ethno-cultural elements. Regional differences and variations were certainly evident in this larger cultural complex, but ongoing techno-commercial relations linked the various groups of this horizon. It is certainly true that what is known as the Near East is more properly thought of as Africa’s ‘Northeast extension,’ because geologically and geographically that is in fact what it is.”

¹⁰² “The Lower Paleolithic of the Arabian Peninsula: Occupations, Adaptations, and Dispersals,” *Journal of World History* 17 (June 2003): 173 [art.=144-179].

¹⁰³ Norman M. Whalen and David E. Peace, “Early Mankind in Arabia,” *ARAMCO World* 43:4 (1992): 20, 23 and below. On the colonization of Western Asia from Africa see Ofer Bar-Yosef, “Early colonizations and cultural continuities in the Lower Palaeolithic of western Asia,” in Michael D. Petraglia and Ravi Korisettar (edd.), *Early Human Behaviour in Global Context: The Rise and Diversity of the Lower Palaeolithic Record* (London: Routledge, 1998): 221-279.

here is critical: “the indigenous or ‘black’ tribes of Arabia were those who in ancient times migrated from Africa...and were the earliest purveyors and dispersers of the Semitic dialects.”¹⁰⁴ The Semitic family of languages, the most widespread of which is Arabic, is a branch of a larger language phylum called Afroasiatic which consists of the Semitic, Ancient Egyptian, Berber, Cushitic, Omotic and Chadic families. While some scholars maintain that Afroasiatic originated in Asia,¹⁰⁵ most linguists now accept that it originated in Africa where five of the six generally recognized branches still reside.¹⁰⁶ It likely evolved in the

¹⁰⁴ Dana Reynolds, “The African Heritage & Ethnohistory of the Moors,” in Ivan van Sertima, *Golden Age of the Moor* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992), 105.

¹⁰⁵ Jared Diamond and Peter Bellwood, “Farmers and Their Languages: The First Expansions,” *Science* 300 (2003): 597-603; idem, “Response,” *Science* 306 (2004) 1681; Werner Vycichl, “The Origin of the Hamito-Semitic Languages,” in Herrmann Jungraithmayr and Walter W. Müller (edd.), *Proceedings of the Fourth International Hamito-Semitic Congress, Marburg, 20-22 September, 1983* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1987) 109-121; Alexander Militarev, “Home for Afrasian: African or Asian,” in *Cushitic and Omotic Languages: Proceedings of the Third International Symposium, Berlin, March 17-19, 1994* (Berlin, 1994) 13-32; “Evidence of Proto-Afrasian Cultural Lexicon (I. Cultivation of Land. II. Crops. III. Dwelling and Settlement),” in Hans G. Mukarovsky (ed.), *Proceedings of the Fifth International Hamito-Semitic Congress* (Wien, 1990) I: 73-85.

¹⁰⁶ John Huchnergard, “Afro-Asiatic,” in Roger D. Woodard (ed.), *The Ancient Languages of Syria-Palestine and Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 225; Christopher Ehret, S.O.Y Keita and Paul Newman, “The Origins of Afroasiatic,” *Science* 306 (2004) 1680-1681; Carleton T. Hodge, “Afroasiatic: The Horizon and Beyond,” in Scott Noegel and Alan S. Kaye (edd.), *Afroasiatic Linguistics, Semitics, and Egyptology: Selected Writings of Carleton T. Hodge* (Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 2004) 64; ML Bender Upside Down Afrasian, *Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere* 50 (1997): 19-34; Christopher Ehret, *Reconstructing Proto-Afroasiatic (Proto-Afrasian): vowels, tone,*

Darfur-Kordofan region along the present-day border between Chad and Sudan.¹⁰⁷ Regarding the Semitic branch in particular, a number of scholars postulate an African origin of the linguistic family and its speakers.¹⁰⁸ According to Nicholas Faraclas, several lines of evidence converge to suggest that the Proto-Semites separated from the Proto-Afroasiatic group in Middle Africa and followed the Blue Nile to the Ethiopian Highlands (where most of the Semitic languages are found to this day), crossing over into Arabia from the Bab el-Manded¹⁰⁹; others probably continued north down the Nile eventually entering Syria-Palestine from the Isthmus of Suez. As Gregorio del Olmo Lete, scholar of Semitic philology from the University of Barcelona, noted most recently:

consonants, and vocabulary (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) 487; Joseph H. Greenberg, "African linguistic classification," in Joseph Ki-Zerbo (ed.), *General History of Africa, Volume 1: Methodology and African Prehistory* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981) 292–308. On the Africa vs. Asia AA Origin dispute see Daniel P. Mc Call, "The Afroasiatic Language Phylum: African in Origin, or Asian?" *Current Anthropology* 39 (1998): 139-143.

¹⁰⁷ Nicholas Faraclas, "They Came Before the Egyptians: Linguistic Evidence for the African Roots of Semitic Languages," in Silvia Federici (ed.), *Enduring Western Civilization: The Construction of the Concept of Western Civilization and Its "Others"* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 1995) 175-96.

¹⁰⁸ See e.g. Gregorio del Olmo Lete, *Questions of Semitic Linguistics. Root and Lexeme: The History of Research* (Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 2008) 115; Edward Lipiński, *Semitic Languages: Outline of a Comparative Grammar* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters and Departement Oosterse Studies, 1997) 42-43; A. Murtonen, *Early Semitic* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), 74.

¹⁰⁹ Faraclas, "They Came Before the Egyptians" 190.

[Proto-Semites] formed part of a mass of peoples who, moving out from the heart of Africa, spread north and reached the Mediterranean coast and beyond...The Semitic family [was] the spearhead of one of the expansive movements of peoples toward Asia (from Africa)...¹¹⁰

III.2.2. *Arabic, Language of the Black Semites*

The Akkadians of ancient Mesopotamia, whose Semitic language is the earliest documented, was an Africoid group,¹¹¹ as were the Arabs and Hebrews, the two best-known

¹¹⁰ del Olmo Lete, *Questions of Semitic Linguistics*, 115. Earlier George A. Barton already spoke of the "African origin and Arabian cradle-land of the Semites," suggesting that the Afroasiatic (or to use the old term 'Hamito-Semitic') proto-language originated in Africa, from which a group migrated to Arabia forming the Semitic languages. George Aaron Barton, *Semitic and Hamitic Origins: Social and Religious* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934) 8; idem, "The Origins of Civilization in Africa and Mesopotamia, Their Relative Antiquity and Interplay," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 68 (1929) 303-312: "As many of the linguistic phenomena which Hamites and Semites possess in common appear in the Hamitic languages in a more primitive form than in the Semitic, the one theory which satisfies the facts is that the Hamito-Semitic race originated in North Africa and the Sahara region, and that at a very early time-say 10,000 to 8000 B.C. or earlier-some of this stock migrated to Arabia-probably South Arabia via the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb-where they spread over the peninsula in the course of subsequent millennia. As Arabia suffered desiccation, in common with North Africa, they were gradually forced to migrate in various directions in search of subsistence. It was under this pressure that, by migration and mingling with other races, the various Semitic nations of history, other than the Arabs, were formed."

¹¹¹ Runoko Rashidi, "Africans in Early Asian Civilizations," in Rashidi and Sertima, *African Presence*, 21-28; William L. Langer, *An Encyclopedia of World History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972); T.K. Penniman, "A Note on the Inhabitants of Kish Before the Great Flood," *Excavations at Kish*, 4:65-72. The British Orientalist, Sir Henry Rawlinson, who deciphered the cuneiform script in the 19th century, was convinced that the Akkadians and the preceding Sumerians were Kushites. See e.g. *Outline of the History of Assyria* (1852) and *Notes on the Early History of Babylonia* (1854).

representatives of 'Semitism.' According to Muslim tradition the ancient peoples of Arabia were originally divided into twelve tribes: 'Ād, Thamūd, Ṭasm, 'Imlīq, Immīm, Jāsim, Jurhum, 'Abīl, Jadīs, 'Uṣ, Jāthir, Shālikh.¹¹² These tribes were the first to speak Arabic¹¹³ and are therefore called *al-'arab al-'āriba*, the "true Arabians," in contrast to *al-'arab al-musta'riba* "arabized Arabians", those foreign migrants to Arabia who learned Arabic only after settling among "the true Arabs."¹¹⁴ As al-Ṭabarī noted: "The Arabs called these nations the 'āriba Arabs because the Arabic language was their original language, whereas they called the children of Ishmael b. Abraham the *musta'riba* Arabs because they only spoke these peoples' languages after they had settled among them."¹¹⁵

Arabic is indeed first documented among Africans in Arabia (*Afrabians*). University of Michigan Professor Emeritus George Mendenhall, one of the world's leading authorities on the Near East and Near Eastern languages, notes that "Arabic could not be a gift of the prophet Muḥammad, as many Islamic clerics claim, since its origins are in the early Bronze Age," over 3,000 years before

¹¹² John D. Baldwin, *Pre-Historic Nations* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1869) 78 Baldwin's list differs slightly from what we have here. For a different list v. *EP* 10:359 s.v. Ṭasm by W.P. Heinrichs. On these various tribes and their dwellings v. al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-muluk*, vol. II edited and translated by William M. Brinner in *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Prophets and the Patriarchs* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986).

¹¹³ *EP* 10:359 s.v. Ṭasm by W.P. Heinrichs.

¹¹⁴ See Philip Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (London: Macmillan, 1970), 32.

¹¹⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 13f. Note, however, that most of the Arabian tribes designated *al-musta'riba* in Arabic literature are black tribes.

Muhammad.¹¹⁶ Mendenhall has identified the “earliest identifiable Arabic-speaking social group” as the Midianites, an important political entity that came into existence suddenly in the 13th century BCE in northwest Arabia. This highly sophisticated culture spoke a language which is an archaic ancestor of modern Arabic.¹¹⁷ This is significant because, as David Goldenberg affirms: “Kush is the ancient name of Midian.”¹¹⁸ These Midianites, the earliest identifiable Arabic-speaking *social group*, are documented as a Kushite or black Arabian tribe.¹¹⁹

III.3. *The Black Arabs on the Eve of Muhammad*

Invasions, migrations, slavery, and miscegenation have severely changed the complexion of the peninsula.¹²⁰ However, on the eve of Muhammad’s reform movement in Mecca¹²¹ and beyond the Arabs were still black. As Dana Marniche reports:

¹¹⁶ Quoted in interview by Jeff Mortimer, “Language of the Desert,” *Michigan Today*, Spring 1997 online version: <http://www.ns.umich.edu/MT/97/Spr97/mta8s97.html> accessed July 30, 2009.

¹¹⁷ *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 4:815 s.v. Midian by George E. Mendenhall.

¹¹⁸ *Curse of Ham*, 28. See also Restö, *Arabs in Antiquity*, 139.

¹¹⁹ “the people of Northwest Arabia (Midian) were called Kushites.” Goldenberg, *Curse of Ham*, 54.

¹²⁰ On which see Tariq Berry, *The Unknown Arabs: Clear, Definitive Proof of the Dark Complexion of the Original Arabs and the Arab Origin of the so-called African Americans* (Morocco, 2002), Chapter 10; Reynolds, “African Heritage,” 93-99.

¹²¹ On which see Muhammad, *Black Arabia*, 164-171.

the inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula...*long after the time of Mohammed* shared the appearance of Ethiopians and other sub-Saharan Africans, as well as customs of present day Africans stretching from the present country of Sudan to Somalia in the East to Mauritania, Mali and Nigeria in the West (emphasis mine).¹²²

She notes also: “Arabians...*in the early era of Islam* for the most part were also described as of near ‘black’ complexion (emphasis mine).”¹²³

Jewish Rabbis as late as the 5th/6th centuries CE still knew the Arabs to be black. Rabbi Akiba, famous first century Rabbi who is said to have visited Arabia, is presented in a 5th/6th century Jewish text commenting on Numbers 5:19, a passage dealing with how one knows if a wife has committed adultery. The Jewish (midrashic) text *Numbers Rabbah* says:

The King of the Arabs put this question to R. Akiba: “I am black (*kūšī*) and my wife is black (*kūšīt*), yet she gave birth to a white son. Shall I kill her for having played the harlot while lying with me?”¹²⁴

¹²² Dana Marniche, “Fear of Blackness: Descriptions and Ethnogenesis of the original Afro-Arabian tribes of ‘Moorish’ Spain Part I,” <http://www.africaresource.com/rasta/sesostris-the-great-the-egyptian-hercules/fear-of-blackness-descriptions-and-ethnogenesis-of-the-original-afro-arabian-tribes-of-%e2%80%9cmoorish%e2%80%9d-spain-by-dana-marniche/>

¹²³ Dana Marniche, “The Appearance of the Original Berbers According to European Perceptions,” <http://www.africaresource.com/rasta/sesostris-the-great-the-egyptian-hercules/the-appearance-of-the-original-berbers-according-to-european-perceptions-by-dana-marniche/>

¹²⁴ *Num. R.* IX.34 (Soncino translation).

As Jan Restö notes, while this midrash is probably completely legendary, it does give us a hint of Arabian ethnography, or what the views of the 5th/6th century redactors of this text were regarding Arabian ethnography at the time.¹²⁵ See also the *Targum Shir ha-Shirim* commenting on Song of Songs 1:5 (“I am black and comely, O Daughters of Jerusalem, [black] as the tents of Qedar”):

When the people of the House of Israel made the Calf, their faces became black like the sons of Kush who dwell in the tents of Qedar.

The Qedar was a black Arab tribe, the most powerful Arab tribe of Syria and North Arabia who fought the Assyrians in the 7th century BCE.¹²⁶ Here they are identified with Kush. They were not active at the time of Rabbi Akiba’s 5th/6th century CE redactors, but apparently their black memory was still alive and was transferred to the contemporary Black Arabs of the time. As Restö points out:

¹²⁵ Restö, *Arabs in Antiquity*, 530. On the “rabbinic view of the Arab as dark-skinned” see further Goldenberg, *Curse of Ham*, 122-24.

¹²⁶ The verbal root *qēdār* < *q - d - r* means “to be dark”. As Marvin Pope informs us, “The root *qdr* itself carries the idea of darkness.” *Song of Songs: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible; Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1977) 319. See also Tremper Longman III, *Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001) 97. Qedar is related to the Arabic root *kh-d-r*, from which we get *akhḍar* “of blackish hue inclining to green, black-complexioned.” See Jaroslav Stetkevych, *Muhammad and the Golden Bough: Reconstructing Arabian Myth* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996) 73.

The blackness of the Arabian king is due to his dwelling in the land of the Qedar whose inhabitants are black, according to the Song of Songs... Rabbi Aqiba's Arabia is thus identical with that of Qedar, which was the area between Egypt and Palestine.¹²⁷

Thus, in the century or so prior to the rise of Prophet Muḥammad in Mecca and long afterwards, the Arabs were still known to be black.

That the Arabs of the early Islamic period were still black is well documented in the Classical Arabic/Islamic sources.¹²⁸ Ibn Manzūr (d. 1311), author of the most authoritative classical Arabic lexicon, *Lisān al-‘arab* (“Language of the Arabs”), notes the opinion that the phrase *aswad al-jilda*, ‘black-skinned,’ idiomatically meant *khālīṣ al-‘arab*, “the pure Arabs,” “because the color of most of the Arabs is dark (*al-udma*).”¹²⁹ In other words, blackness of skin among the Arabs indicated purity of Arab ethnicity. Likewise, the famous grammarian from the century prior, Muhammad b. Barrī al-‘Adawī (d. 1193) noted that an *Akhḍar* or black-skinned Arab was “a pure Arab (*‘arabī mahḍ*)” with a pure genealogy, “because Arabs describe their color as black (*al-aswad*)”¹³⁰ Finally Al-Jahīz (d. 869), in his *Fakhr al-sūdān ‘alā l-bidan*, (“The Boast of the Blacks over the Whites”) declared: “The Arabs pride themselves in

¹²⁷ Restö, *Arabs in Antiquity*, 530.

¹²⁸ See especially Berry, *Unknown Arabs*.

¹²⁹ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘arab* (Beirut: Dār al-Šādir - Dār al-Bayrūt, 1955-1956) s.v. اخضر IV:245f; See also Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Williams & Norgate 1863) I: 756 s.v. خضر .

¹³⁰ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, s.v. اخضر IV:245.

(their) black color, العرب تفخر بسواد اللون (*al-‘arab tafkhar bi-sawād al-lawṇ*)”¹³¹

A particularly instructive case is that of the Arab poet Rabīʿ b. ʿĀmir of the early Umayyad period, better known as Miskīn al-Dārimī (“The poor man from the tribe of Dārim”; d. 708). Miskīn was a distinguished member of noble ancestry from the Banū Dārim from Tamīm of Iraq.¹³² A pure Arab born to a wealthy family, he was known for being “very dark, handsome, courageous, and eloquent”.¹³³ At a certain point in his life Miskīn became a very religious ascetic. He gave up his wealth with its finery and his poetry, and all but locked himself in a mosque in Medina.

Though Miskīn was a famously black-skinned (*al-aswad*; *al-sumra*) pureblooded Arab,¹³⁴ this was no handicap to him in seventh century Hejaz, as least for the most part, as a famous anecdote reveals. We are told that a merchant arrived in Medina once with a load of black veils, which he had a difficult time selling. Disappointed, this merchant was informed that the only one who could help him was the famous poet Miskīn, who now was an ascetic who

¹³¹ Al-Jahīz, *Fakhr al-sūdān ʿalā al-bidan*, in *Risāʾil Al-Jahīz*, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1964) I:207. See also the English translation by T. Khalidi, “The Boast of the Blacks Over the Whites,” *Islamic Quarterly* 25 (1981): 3-26 (17). See further Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies (Muhammedanische Studien)* 2 vols. (London, Allen & Unwin, 1967-), 1:268 who notes that, in contrast to the Persians who are described as red or light-skinned (*aḥmar*) the Arabs call themselves black.

¹³² On him see Abī al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī* (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāh, 1955) 20: 167-178; *EP* 7:145 s.v. Miskīn al-Dārimī by Ch. Pellat.

¹³³ *EP* 7:145 s.v. Miskīn al-Dārimī by Ch. Pellat.

¹³⁴ Al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, 174.

abandoned his poetry. The merchant found Miskīn in his mosque and impressed upon him to help. Though the Muslim ascetic initially resisted, Miskīn eventually agreed, left the mosque and donned some of his old finery. Miskīn recited verses suggesting that a beautiful woman in a black veil distracted him from his prayer. The word spread enthusiastically that the handsome, wealthy poet had returned to his former lifestyle, enamored by a black veiled beauty. Every unmarried woman in the city thus had to have a black veil, and the merchant sold out within days. Mission accomplished, Miskīn went back to his religious asceticism.

This anecdote nicely illustrates the general mood at that time vis-à-vis blackness. No stigma was yet attached to it, for the most part. While Miskīn was black, he was famous for being a *handsome* and wealthy poet. It is important to note also that his blackness was a consequence of his noble Arab ancestry. However, I have routinely qualified my statements with “for the most part.” This is because another famous anecdote reveals the minority opinion, but even more forcefully makes our point.

It is reported that Miskīn proposed to a woman of his tribe who rejected him because of both his blackness and (now) poverty. She instead married a wealthy, fair-skinned man who was not a pure Arab. Clearly the seed of self-hatred was growing among some Arabs of seventh century Hejaz. One day Miskīn passed the two on the street and recited some verses to them, boasting of his noble heritage

and denigrating her spousal choice for his lack of the same. He said before them:

I am Miskīn to those who know me.
My complexion is dark brown (*al-sumra*),
the complexion of the Arabs.¹³⁵

Regarding her husband Miskīn said: “the wealth of his house (*samīn al-bayt*) is poverty with respect to genealogy (*mahjūl al-nasab*),”¹³⁶ i.e. his material wealth can not equal Miskīn’s pure Arab genealogy, which her choice lacks.

Moroccan scholar Tariq Berry has insightfully drawn out some significant implications of this anecdote. Firstly, and this is a point we shall return to later, the anecdote demonstrates that with regard to skin complexion, the terms *aswad* (“black”) and *sumra* (“brown”) can be used interchangeably. Secondly, it articulates an important historical truth: pure Arabs are black-skinned Arabs. And thirdly, related to this latter point, fair-skinned Arabs were considered of ignoble birth.¹³⁷ True Arabs were black Arabs.

Thus, Muḥammad’s Arab people, before his birth and long after his death, were noted for being a proud black people. What about Muḥammad himself?

¹³⁵ Al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, 174.

¹³⁶ Al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, 175.

¹³⁷ Berry, *Unknown Arabs*, 59.

Chapter IV

The Prophetic Family

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us that there is one God. He has one religion, and he gave that one religion, the same religion, to all of his prophets. Which means Abraham was a Muslim, Lot was a Muslim, Noah was a Muslim, Moses was a Muslim, Daniel was a Muslim, Jesus was a Muslim, all were Muslims. All practiced the religion of Islam. And all were black men. None of them were white. You can not name one prophet...in the Bible that came from Europe. No prophet came from Europe. The prophets all came from Africa and Asia. Never has a prophet been a white.

Malcolm X

IV.1. *Adam's Progeny*

Al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), the famed Muslim historian and Qur'ānic exegete, recorded in his *Ta'riḫ al-rusul wa'l-mulūk* ("The History of the Messengers and Kings") the following on the authority of 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās, the cousin of the prophet Muḥammad of Arabia:

The Children of Sam (Shem) settled al-Majdal, the center of the Earth, which is between Satidimā and the sea and between Yemen and Syria. Allah made the prophets from them, revealed the Books to them, made them beautiful, gave them a black complexion, luminous and free of blemish (*al-udma wa l-bayād*).¹³⁸ The children of Ham settled in the south, along the course of the south and west wind-this region is called al-Dārūm. Allah gave them a black complexion, a few of whom were also luminous and free of blemish...The children of Japheth settled in al-

¹³⁸ On *al-bayād* as 'luminous' and free of blemish see below.

Şafūn, along the course of the north and east wind. They are ruddy-complexioned and very fair-skinned (*al-ḥumra wa l-shaḡra*).¹³⁹

This tradition reported by al-Ṭabarī and found in Rabbinic Hebrew literature as well,¹⁴⁰ makes a couple of important points. First, prophecy is the inheritance of a particular ethnic group, the black Semites. It then follows that the prophets were all black Semites, at least from this perspective. Secondly, the distinction here noted between *two* types of black complexions – black (*al-udma*) vs. black, clear and luminous (*al-bayād*) – is profoundly important and will take on greater significance for us as we discuss prophet Muḥammad’s relation to blackness.

Not only do the prophets (*anbiyāʾ*, sing. *nabīy*) hail from the same ethnic group, but they also hail from the same *family*, according to the Qurʾān (57:26; 29:27; 4:163; 19:58). They are the progeny (*dhurriyya*) of Adam through

¹³⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul waʾl-mulūk*, edd. Michael Jan de Goeje and Lawrence Conrad, *Annals of the Apostles and Kings. A Critical Edition Including ʿArīb’s Supplement* (Gorgias Press, 2005) vol. I, 220-221; *The History of al-Ṭabarī Volume II: Prophets and Patriarchs*, translated and annotated by William M. Brinner (Alban, NY: State University of New York Press, 1985) 19.

¹⁴⁰ For example the 8th century *Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer*, Chapter 23 [28a] (Friedlander edition): “Noah brought his sons and his grandsons, and he blessed them with their (several) settlements, and he gave them as an inheritance all the earth. He especially blessed Shem and his sons, black but comely, and he gave them the inhabitable earth. He blessed Ham and his sons, black like a raven, and he gave them as an inheritance the coast of the sea. He blessed Japheth and his sons, they entirely white, and he gave them for an inheritance the desert and his fields; these (are the inheritances with) which he endowed them.”

Abraham.¹⁴¹ As David Powers explains: “From these verses, we learn that the prophets emerged in succession and that they were all members of a single tribe or family that extended from Adam to Muḥammad.”¹⁴² Prophet Muḥammad referred to the prophets as paternal brothers (*awlād ‘alāt*).¹⁴³

Making the prophets the progeny of Adam through a particular family line may be the Qur’ān’s own acknowledgment that the prophets were black, for Adam, the patriarch, is described as being created from black mud fashioned into shape (*ḥama’ masnūn*; 15:26-34).¹⁴⁴ According to Arabic linguistic specialists Adam got his name from the fact that, being derived from materials from the face of the earth (*udma al-ard*) he therefore was black-skinned (*al-udma*).¹⁴⁵

That the prophets between Adam and Muḥammad were black is found in the sources, as least with regard to Moses and Jesus. Moses was tall, thin, curly (*ja’d*) or straight (*sabiṭ*) haired and black-skinned (*ādam*).¹⁴⁶ Jesus’ ethnicity is more controversial, however. According to an oft-quoted hadith:

¹⁴¹ Willem A Bijlefeld, “A Prophet and More than a Prophet?” *Muslim World* 59 (1969): 17-18.

¹⁴² David S. Powers, *Muḥammad Is Not the Father of Any of Your Men: The Making of the Last Prophet* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009) 51.

¹⁴³ *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukharī*, *kitāb aḥādīth al-anbiyā’*, # 651, 652.

¹⁴⁴ On *ḥama’* as black mud see *ḥamma*, ‘to blacken, become black’ and al-Qurṭubī who noted: “*al-ḥama’* is black mud (*al-ṭīn al-aswad*).” *Al-Jāmi’ li-ahām al-Qur’ān* (Cairo: Maṭba’at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah, 1967) 10: 21.

¹⁴⁵ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, s.v. آدم XII:11., quoting Ibn Athīr.

¹⁴⁶ *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukharī*, *kitāb aḥādīth al-anbiyā’*, # 574, 607, 608, 647, 648.

Ibn Umar narrated: the Prophet (s) said: “[During my Ascension to Heaven] I saw Moses, Jesus, and Abraham. Jesus was white-skinned (*aḥmar*), curly haired with a broad chest; Moses was black-skinned (*ādam*), straight-haired and tall as if he was from the people of al-Zuṭṭ.¹⁴⁷

On this account it is popularly accepted that, while Moses was black, Jesus was white. However, other Companions of Muḥammad insisted that this was erroneous and reported differently from him.

Sālim narrated from his father: “No, By Allah, the Prophet (s) did not say that Jesus was white-skinned but said: ‘While I was asleep circumambulating the Ka’ba (in my dream), suddenly I saw a black man (*rajul ādam*) with straight hair walking between two men, and water dripping from his head. I asked who he was, and the men said he is the Son of Mary (Jesus). Then I looked behind and saw a white man (*rajul aḥmar*), fat, curl-haired and blind in the right eye which looked like a bulging grape. I asked whom he was and they said, ‘This is al-Dajjāl’.¹⁴⁸

In other words, the white man seen in the Prophet’s vision was not Jesus, who was seen as a black man, but al- Dajjāl. Qāwī al-Harawī (d. 1605) in his commentary on al-Tirmidhī’s famous *al-Shamā’il al-Muḥammadiyah* (“The Noble Qualities of Muḥammad”) mentions a variant hadith according to which the Prophet said regarding Jesus:

¹⁴⁷ *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukharī*, *kitāb aḥādith al-anbiyā’*, # 648; Ibn Sa’d, *Kibāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, edd. Eugen Mittwoch and Eduard Sachau, *Ibn Saad: Biographien* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1917) vol. 1, part II:125; idem, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqat al-Kabir*, trans. S. Moinul Haq and H.K. Ghazanfar (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1986) vol. 1, part II: 492.

¹⁴⁸ *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukharī*, *kitāb aḥādith al-anbiyā’*, # 650, 649

“I saw a black-skinned man (*rajul ādam*), the best one can see among brown-skinned men.”¹⁴⁹ This, of course, agrees well with the historical data. Thus, Adam, Moses and Jesus were black prophets, members of a black prophetic lineage.

IV.2. *Muḥammad’s Black Lineage*

In his work, ***Islam’s Black Legacy: Some Leading Figures*** (1993), Mohammed Abu-Bakr includes among 62 leading Black figures of Islam the prophet Muḥammad himself.¹⁵⁰ Abu-Bakr rightly notes:

According to Muslim tradition, Muhammad descended in a straight line from Ishmael’s second son Kedar (Arabic: Qaidar), whose name in Hebrew signifies ‘black’...From the sons of Kedar inhabiting the northern Arabian desert, sprang the noblest tribe in Arabia, the Koreish (Quraysh), the tribe from which Muhammad descended.¹⁵¹

As we have also discussed above, the Arabian Qedar were a black tribe akin to the equally black Nabataeans,¹⁵² and these two were in some way related to the Quraysh, the black tribe *par excellence* of Mecca. As Robert F. Spencer remarks: “It is said that the Quraysh explained their short stature and dark skin by the fact that they always carefully

¹⁴⁹ Qāwī al-Harawī, *Kitāb jam’ al-wasā’il fī sharḥ al-shamā’il* (Istanbul: Maṭba’at Shaykh Yaḥyā, 1874) 58.

¹⁵⁰ Mohammed Abu-Bakr, ***Islam’s Black Legacy: Some Leading Figures*** (Denver: Purple Dawn Books, 1993), Chapter 1.

¹⁵¹ Abu-Bakr, ***Islam’s Black Legacy***, 1.

¹⁵² See Muhammad, ***Black Arabia***, 138-140.

adhered to endogamy.”¹⁵³ This adherence to endogamy explains why the Black Quraysh were seen as the standard of Arab purity.

The Quraysh consisted of several sub-clans. One important Qurayshī sub-clan is the Banū ’l-Mughīra of the larger Qurayshī sub-clan of the Banū Makhzūm. According to al-Jāhīz: “The clan of Mughīra is the *Khudr* of the tribe of Makhzūm.”¹⁵⁴ By “the *Khudr*” al-Jāhīz means the exceptionally black-skinned (*akhḍar*), noting: “Blacks according to the Arabs are *al-khudr* because *al-akhḍar* is black (*li-anna al-akhḍar aswad*).”¹⁵⁵ Thus, the second caliph ‘Umar’s mother, Ḥantama bt. Hāshim b. al-Mughīra, from Banū ’l-Mughīra, is described as black.¹⁵⁶ This was an exceptionally powerful Qurayshī clan. Hishām b. al-Mughīra was head (*sayyid*) of the Quraysh in Mecca, such that “Hishām” and “Mecca” were interchangeable terms. When he died the people of Mecca were summoned to the funeral of their ‘lord (*rabb*)’.¹⁵⁷ The Banū ’l-Mughīra were also a significant part of the Meccan opposition to Muḥammad. In fact, the infamous ‘Amr b. Hishām, better known as Abū Jahl (“Father of Ignorance”), the implacable enemy of Muḥammad who brought about the fateful boycott

¹⁵³ Robert F. Spencer, “The Arabian Matriarchate: An Old Controversy,” *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 8 (Winter, 1952) 488. See further Muhammad, *Black Arabia*, 173-178.

¹⁵⁴ Al-Jāhīz, *Fakhr al-sūdān ‘alā al-bidan*, 208 (Ar.); 18 (Eng.).

¹⁵⁵ Al-Jāhīz, *Fakhr al-sūdān ‘alā al-bidan*, 207, 208 (Ar.); 17, 18 (Eng.). See also Berry, *Unknown Arabs*, 78.

¹⁵⁶ Al-Mas’ūdī, *Prairies*, IV, 192; *EI2* 6:139 s.v. Makhzūm, Banū by M.

¹⁵⁷ D.S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*, 2nd edition (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1905) 12; *EP* 6:137 s.v. Makhzūm by M. Hinds.

against the Prophet in 616-18, was the leader of the exceptionally black Banū 'l-Mughīra.¹⁵⁸ He commanded the Meccan forces in the battle of Badr, a prominent portion of which were from the Banū 'l-Mughīra. However, when Muḥammad conquered Mecca in 630, this black tribe accepted Islam and was incorporated into the new order.

Another significant Qurayshī sub-clan is the Banū Zuhra, the tribe from which the prophet's mother, Amīa bt. Wahb, hailed. It's members were likewise noted for their blackness. See for example the famous Sa'd b. Abī Waqqās (d. 646), cousin of Amīa and uncle of Muḥammad. He is described as very dark, tall and flat-nosed.¹⁵⁹ Muḥammad, it should be noted, was quite proud of his uncle Sa'd. We are told that once Muḥammad was sitting with some of his companions and Sa'd walked by. The prophet stopped and taunted: "That's *my* uncle. Let any man show me *his* uncle."¹⁶⁰

IV.3. Muḥammad's Black Kinsfolk

No doubt the most important Qurayshī sub-clan is Muḥammad's own, the Banū Hāshim. This is the Prophet's own family (*usra*), his clan (*raḥt*), kinsfolk (*āl*), and relatives (*dhawu l-qurbā*). As the *ahl al-bayt* (family) of the Prophet the

¹⁵⁸ *EP* 6:138 s.v. Maḥzūm by M. Hinds.

¹⁵⁹ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā* (Beirut, 1992), 1:97.

¹⁶⁰ On Sa'd b. Abī Waqqās see 'Abd al-Raḥmān Rāfat al-Bāshā, *Ṣuwar min ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥābah* (Karachi: al-Maktabah al-Ghafūrīya al-ʿĀshimīyah, 1996) 285-292 (287); Berry, *Unknown Arabs*, 71-72.

Banū Hāshim enjoyed special status, both during his life time and in the early post-prophetic community.¹⁶¹

This special status accorded to the Banū Hāshim was related to their noted purity.¹⁶² Henry Lammens takes notice of “les Hāšimites, famille où dominait le sang nègre” (“the Hashimites, the family where Black blood dominated”).¹⁶³ Lammens remarks that they are “généralement qualifiés de آدم = couleur foncée” (“generally described as ādam = dark colored”). The convergence of Hāshim ī blackness and genealogical nobility is best represented by the lineage of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib (d. 578), the Prophet’s paternal grandfather. Al-Jāhīz noted in his *Fakhr al-sūdān ‘alā al-bidan*:

The ten lordly sons of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib were deep black (*dalham*) in color and big/tall (*dukhm*). When Amir b. al-Ṭufayl saw them circumambulating (the Ka‘ba) like dark camels, he said, “With such men as these is the custody of the Ka‘ba preserved.” ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās was very black and tall. Those of Abū Ṭālib’s family, who are the most noble of men, are more or less black (*sūd*).”¹⁶⁴

‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s ten sons were: Ḥārith, ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā (Abū Lahab), Abū Ṭālib, al-Zubayr, ‘Abd Allāh, Ḥamza, Muqūm, al-‘Abbās, Hijl, and Zarrar. All ten were black Arabs of the Banū Hāshim, including ‘Abd Allāh,

¹⁶¹ See W.F. Madelung, “The ‘Hāshimīyyāt’ of al-Kumayt and Hāshimī Shī‘ism,” *Studia Islamica* 70 (1989) 5-26.

¹⁶² Madelung, “The ‘Hāshimīyyāt,’” 24.

¹⁶³ *Études sur le siècle des Omayyades* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1930) 44.

¹⁶⁴ Al-Jāhīz, *Fakhr al-sūdān ‘alā al-bidan*, I:209.

Muḥammad's father. Al-‘Abbās fathered an important first cousin of the Prophet noted for his deep blackness: ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās whom al-Jāḥiẓ described as “very black and tall.” The Syrian scholar and historian al-Dhahabī (d. 1348) too reported that ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās and his son, ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh, were “very dark-skinned.”¹⁶⁵ These are the Banū ‘Abbās, after which the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty was named.

Of particular importance for us are ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā (Abū Lahab), uncle and infamous enemy of the Prophet and Abū Ṭālib, uncle and father of the progenitor of the Shiite line of Imams (see below). Abū Lahab's importance for us here rather lies with his great grandson, the seventh century CE Qurayshī poet, al-Faḍl b. al-‘Abbās. Al-Faḍl himself and his mother, Amīna, were cousins of the Prophet. Al-Faḍl, called *al-Akhḍar al-Lahabī* “The Flaming Black,” is well-known for both his blackness and his genealogical purity. He recited these famous words:

I am the black-skinned one (*al-Akhḍar*). I am well-known.

My complexion is black. I am from the noble house of the Arabs.¹⁶⁶

Ibn Manẓūr (d. 1311) notes the opinion that *al-Akhḍar* here means *aswad al-jilda*, ‘Black-skinned’, and signifies that al-Faḍl is from *khālīṣ al-‘arab*, the pure Arabs, “because the color of most of the Arabs is dark (*al-*

¹⁶⁵ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, V:253

¹⁶⁶ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, s.v. اخضر IV:245f.

udma).”¹⁶⁷ Similarly Ibn Barrī (d. 1193) said: “He (al-Faḍl) means by this that his genealogy is pure and that he is a pure Arab (*‘arabī maḥḍ*) because Arabs describe their color as black (*al-aswad*).”¹⁶⁸ Thus, al-Faḍl’s blackness (*akhḍar*) is the visual mark of his pure, Qurayshī background, being born of a pure Arab mother and father. He represents the black nobility of the Banū Hāshim.

Al-Jāḥiẓ noted that Abū Ṭālib’s family was “the most noble of men” and “more or less black (*sūd*).” This fact is further confirmed for Abū Ṭālib’s famous son, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661), the first cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. ‘Alī, the fourth of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (*Khulafā’ Rāshidūn*) is the central figure of Shiite Islam. For the latter, ‘Alī is considered the first Imam and he and his descendents are considered the legitimate successors of the Prophet. That ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib was a black-skinned Arab is pointed out by al-Suyūṭī, who describes him as “husky, bald...pot-bellied, large-bearded...and jet-black (*ādam shadīd al-udma*).”¹⁶⁹ ‘Alī’s own son, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad, according to Ibn Sa‘d (d. 845), described ‘Alī thusly: “He was a black-skinned man with big, heavy eyes, pot-bellied, bald, and kind of short.”¹⁷⁰ ‘Alī’s descendents, the *sharīfs*/*sayyids*, were similarly described as black-skinned.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, s.v. اخضر IV:245; Lane, *Arabic-English*, I: 756 s.v. خضر .

¹⁶⁸ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, s.v. اخضر IV:245.

¹⁶⁹ Al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-khulafā*, 134.

¹⁷⁰ Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (Beirut: Dar Sādir) 8:25. On ‘Alī as short and dark brown see I.M.N. al-Jubouri, *History of Islamic Philosophy* –

This ‘family blackness’ of Abū Ṭālib is very significant for our discussion of the appearance of the Prophet because Abū Ṭālib’s son Ja‘far, known as *al-Hāshimī*, “The Hāshimite,” who is the elder brother of ‘Alī, is “one of Muḥammad’s kinsmen who most closely resembled him.”¹⁷² Indeed, Muḥammad himself is reported to have said to his black-skinned cousin: “You resemble me both in appearance and character (*ashbahta khalqī wa khuluqī*).”¹⁷³

The representative of the Banū Hāshim who is most instructive in this regard is Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh (d. 762), known also as *al-Nafs al-Zakiyya* (“The Pure Soul”). He is a pure descendent of the Prophet himself through the latter’s daughter Fāṭimah, wife of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, and in fact “prided himself on being a Qurayshi of pure lineage...[with] a pure descent from the Prophet.”¹⁷⁴ This point is clearly evident in a letter he sent to the ‘Abbāsīd caliph Abū Ja‘far al-Manṣūr (r. 754 – 775), against whom he rebelled in 762. *Al-Nafs al-Zakiyya* felt Abū Ja‘far al-

With View of Greek Philosophy and Early History of Islam (2004), 155; Philip K Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 10th edition (London: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1970) 183.

¹⁷¹ Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, *Al-Fusūl al-muhimmah fī ma‘rifat aḥwā l-a‘ummah* (Najaf: Dār al-Kutub al-Tijārīyah, 1950); Berry, *Unknown Arabs*; idem, Tariq Berry, “A True Description of the Prophet Mohamed’s Family (SAWS),” http://savethetruearabs.blogspot.com/2009/08/true-description-of-prophet-mohameds_26.html.

¹⁷² *EP* 2: 372 s.v. *Dja‘far b. Abī Ṭālib* by L. Veccia Vaglieri.

¹⁷³ *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukharī*, *bāb faḍā’il aṣḥāb al-nabī*, 47; *The Translation of the Meanings of Ṣaḥīḥ Bukharī, Arabic-English*, trans. Dr. Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān (Medina: Islamic University, 1985) V:47.

¹⁷⁴ Muhammad Qasim Zaman, “The Nature of Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya’s Mahdīship: A Study of Some Reports in Iṣbahānī’s *Maqātil*,” *Hamdard Islamicus* 13 (1990): 60-61.

Mansūr's mixed lineage (his mother was a Berber) disqualified him for leadership over the community. He wrote to the caliph:

You well know that no one has laid claim to this office (the caliphate) who has a lineage, nobility, and status like ours. By the nobility of our fathers, we are not the sons of the accursed, the outcasts, or freedmen...I am at the very center of the Banū Hāshim's lines. My paternity is purest among them, undiluted with non-Arab blood, and no concubines dispute over me.¹⁷⁵

What did this pure Arab descendent of the Prophet look like? "Muḥammad (Al-Nafs al-Zakiyya) is described as tall and strong with very dark skin".¹⁷⁶ Indeed, al-Dhahabī describes him as "black-skinned and huge."¹⁷⁷ But it is al-Ṭabarī's description that is most informative:

Muḥammad (Al-Nafs al-Zakiyya) was black, exceedingly black, jet black (*ādam shadīd al-udma adlam*) and huge.¹⁷⁸ He was nicknamed "Tar Face" (*al-qārī*) because of his black complexion (*udmatihī*), such that Abū Ja'far used to call him "Charcoal Face" (*al-muḥammam*).¹⁷⁹

Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya was a Qurayshī Arab whose pure lineage on both his father's and his mother's

¹⁷⁵ Quoted from al-Ṭabarī, **The History of al-Ṭabarī, Vol. XXVIII: 'Abbāsīd Authority Affirmed**, trans. annot. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985) 167-68.

¹⁷⁶ *EP* 7:389 s.v. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh by F. Buhl.

¹⁷⁷ *Al-Ibar fī khabar man ghabar* (Kuwait: Turāth al-Arabī) 4:198.

¹⁷⁸ McAuliffe's translation "Muḥammad was very swarthy-his complexion almost black" totally misses the mark. **History of al-Ṭabarī**, 160.

¹⁷⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, 10:203.

side put him “at the center” of the genealogical lines of the Banū Hāshim, the Prophet’s kinsfolk; indeed he was famously of pure descent from the Prophet himself. The fact that he was so black he was called ‘Tar face’ and ‘Charcoal face’ is of significance for our discussion of the ethnicity of the Prophet himself.

Chapter V

Muḥammad: Black-skinned or White-skinned?

Aḥmad b. Abī Sulaymān...said, "Anyone who says that the Prophet was black should be killed. The Prophet was not black."

Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (d. 1149), *al-Shifa*

V.1. *Like Father (And Mother), Like Son?*

With Muḥammad's tribe (Quraysh), kinsmen (Banū Hāshim) and direct descendents ('Alids) all being black-skinned Arabs, one would thus expect the Qurayshī prophet to be black too, especially since he reportedly claimed to be a pure Arab from the house of Hāshim¹⁸⁰: this would make him very black-skinned like the pure Arabs from that tribe. Muḥammad's pedigree actually demands this as his whole immediate family tree were pure, black-skinned Arabs. Just to recap, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (d. 578) was the prophet's grandfather and 'Abd Allāh, one of his ten 'deep black' sons, was Muḥammad's father. Another deep black son, al-'Abbās, was father to the above mentioned 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbās, described as black. These were the

¹⁸⁰ He is supposed to have described himself as "Arab of the Arabs, of the purest blood of your land, of the family of the Hashim and of the tribe of Quraysh." Quoted in Chandler, "Ebony and Bronze," 285.

uncle and first cousin of Muḥammad. Abū Ṭālib, another deep black uncle, was father to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, another first cousin of the prophet who was described as jet-black. Both of these father-son pairs shared this deep blackness, what about the ‘Abd Allāh - Muḥammad pair? We would expect the same, unless Muḥammad’s mother made a mitigating genetic contribution. But is this the case?

While listing the Prophet Muḥammad as one of 62 leading Black figures of Islam, Mohammed Abu-Bakr goes on to describe the Prophet, somewhat contradictory, as “of medium height, and his skin was white, tinged with red (He inherited his complexion from his mother.)”¹⁸¹ Neither of these statements rings true. As we will see, the evidence doesn’t really indicate that the Prophet had white skin, nor is it likely that his mother was capable of passing such on to him. Amīna bt. Wahb, Muḥammad’s mother, hailed from the Banū Zuhra, a black sub-clan of the black Quraysh tribe.¹⁸² Amīna is the daughter of Wahb b. ‘Abd Manāf b. Zuhra whose mother (Amīna’s grandmother) is said to be ‘Ātika bt. Al-Awqaṣ from the exceptionally black Banū Sulaym.¹⁸³ The black Sulaym are thus considered the maternal uncles of the prophet and he is therefore reported

¹⁸¹ Abu-Bakr, *Islam’s Black Legacy*, 7.

¹⁸² See above. On the other hand, Caesar E. Farah suggests that Amīna’s tribal background is the Najjār clan of the Banū Khazraj, a tribe in Medina also noted for its blackness. See Caesar E. Farah, *Islam* 7th Edition (Hauppauge, NY: Barron’s, 2003) 37; Muhammad, *Black Arabia*, 178-179; Berry, *Unknown*, 68.

¹⁸³ Ibn Athīr, *al-Nihāya fī gharīb al-ḥadīth* (Cairo, 1385/1965) III:180 s.v. ‘-t-k; Michael Lecker, *The Banū Sulaym: A Contribution to the Study of Early Islam* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1989), 114. On the Banū Sulaym see further Muhammad, *Black Arabia*, 180-181.

to have said: “I am the son of the many ‘Ātikas of Sulaym.”¹⁸⁴ In other words, Amīna’s paternal grandmother is from the black Sulaym tribe, and her grandfather ‘Abd Manāf was from the black Zuhra tribe. It is thus not at all likely that the Prophet’s mother was sufficiently light enough to pass white skin to her son, especially since his paternal side was ‘deep black’ as well.

But Muḥammad had more than just *Qurayshī* blackness running through his paternal veins as well: His great, great grandfather was ‘Abd Manāf who bore with Ātika bt. Murra *al-Sulaymī* the prophet’s great grandfather Ḥāshim. That is to say that the prophet’s great, great grandmother was from the jet-black Banū Sulaym. Ḥāshim, the great grandfather, bore with Salmā bt. ‘Amrū *’l-Khazrajī* the prophet’s grandfather, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib. This means that his paternal great grandmother was from the black Medinese tribe Banū Khazraj. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib stayed within the Quraysh, but he bore the prophet’s father ‘Abd Allāh with Fāṭima bt. ‘Amrū *al-Makhzūmī*, from the exceptionally black Makhzūm clan.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Ṣāliḥī al-Shāmī, *Subul al-hudā wa-’l-rashād fi sīrat khayr al-’bād* (Cairo, 1392/1972) I:384-85; Lecker, *Banū Sulaym*, 114-115.

¹⁸⁵ On the Banū Makhzūm see Muhammad, *Black Arabia*, 176-177. On the significance of these matrilineal listings in Muhammad’s genealogy see Daniel Martin Varisco, “Metaphors and Sacred History: The Genealogy of Muhammad and the Arab ‘Tribe,’” *Anthropological Quarterly* 68 (1995): 139-156, esp. 148-150.

The Prophet's Black Lineage

‘Abd Manāf + Ātika bt. Murra AL-SULAYMĪ



Ḥāshim

Ḥāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf + Salmā bt. ‘Amrū ‘L-KHAZRĀJĪ



‘Abd al Muṭṭalib

‘Abd al Muṭṭalib b. Ḥāshim + Fāḥima bt. ‘Amrū AL MAKHZŪMĪ



‘Abd Allāh

‘Abd Allāh + Amina bt [Wahb b. ‘Abd Manāf **AL-ZUHRĪ** and ‘Ātika bt. Al-Awqāṣ AL-SULAYMĪ]



Muḥammad

V.2. “This white man reclining on his arm”

This all indicates that Muḥammad’s lineage is a mix of Qurayshī, Sulaymī, and Khazrajī blackness. We thus have every *prima facie* reason to expect Muḥammad to be black-skinned, and no reason to believe anything else was possible. Where, then, does the Muslim world get its white-skinned prophet from?

When we examine the Classical Arabic literature, our expectations of a black-skinned Muḥammad are not disappointed. Imām Abū ‘Isā Muḥammad b. ‘Isā al-Tirmidhī (d. 892) was a black Arab from the famously ‘black and beautiful’ Banū Sulaym. He is the author of the *Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī* (also called *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*), one of the six orthodox collections of Sunni hadith. He is also the author of the famous *al-Shamā’il al-Muḥammadīyah* (“The Noble Qualities of Muḥammad”), a collection of hadith describing the Prophet. Al-Tirmidhī reports in both collections a report on the authority of the famous Companion of the prophet, Anās b. Mālik:

The Messenger of Allah was of medium stature, neither tall nor short, [with] a beautiful, dark brown-complexioned body (*ḥasan al-jism asmar al-lawn*). His hair was neither curly nor completely straight and when he walked he leant forward.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (Hims: Maktabat Dār al-Da‘wah, 1965-) 6:69 # 1754; Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Shamā’il al-Muḥammadīyah*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Awwāmah (Medina, 2001) 29 #2. This report is found as well in Ibn Sa‘d, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, vol. 1, part II:123 (Ar.); 488 (Eng). On further reportings of

Ibn Sa'd (d. 845) reports a similar description of Muḥammad on the authority of 'Abd Allah b. 'Abbās, the Prophet's Companion and cousin.

Yazīd al-Fārisi said: I saw the Messenger of God (s) in a dream during the time Ibn 'Abbās [was governor] over Basra. I said to Ibn 'Abbās: "I saw the Messenger of Allah (s) in a dream." Ibn 'Abbās said: "Verily, the Messenger used to say, 'Satan cannot assume my form, so he who saw me in a dream, surely had a vision of me.' Can you describe to me what you saw?" [Yazīd] said: "Yes, I [will] describe [him]. He was a man between two men. His body and flesh were brown and blemish-free with a sheen (*asmar ilā al-bayād*),¹⁸⁷ smiling, eyes with collyrium, features of his face beautiful. His beard was thick from this end to that, and (the man) pointed to his two temples with his hands. It was so thick that it covered his neck..." Thereupon Ibn 'Abbās said: "Had you seen him while awake, you could not have described him better than this."¹⁸⁸

Like the report on the authority of Anās, the Prophet is here described as brown-skinned, *أسمر asmar*. Before we examine the connotations of this term, there is another report worth citing. Al-Zubayr reported on the authority of Ibrāhīm: "The Messenger of Allah (s) stretched his left foot, such that the blackness of its exposed part (*zāhiruhā aswad*) was visible."¹⁸⁹ This black limb is no doubt relevant to the descriptions of the brown body.

this hadith see Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Shamā'il al-Nabī*, edd. Māhir Yāsīn Fahl and Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2000) 34, n. 1.

¹⁸⁷ On *al-bayād* see below.

¹⁸⁸ Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, vol. 1, part II:125 (Ar.); 492 (Eng).

¹⁸⁹ Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, vol. 1, part II:127 (Ar.); 495 (Eng).

أَسْمَر *asmar* means brown, but the term connotes different shades. The normal connotation is a pretty standard (dark) brown, as evidenced by other formations from the same root¹⁹⁰: *samar* “darkness, night”; *al-gārra al-samrā* “the black continent (Africa)”.¹⁹¹ In the context of human complexions *sumra* / *asmar* has been associated with *khudra* and *ādam*, black.¹⁹² However, ‘black’ too has various connotations, so we need more information in order to pin down the chromatic implications of the above hadith reports.

There are several shades or degrees of ‘black’ in Arabic: *humma*, *aswad*, *akhḍar*, *ādam* (deep black), *aṣḥam*, *jawn*, *fāḥim* (coal black), *ḥālik* (pitch black), and more.¹⁹³ Linguistic scholar Abū Maṣṣūr al-Tha‘labī (d. 1036), enumerating the different “classifications of human blackness (*fī tartīb sawād al-insān*),” explains:

When his maximum [blackness] (*alāhu*) is less than *sawad* (black), then he is *asmar* (brown). If his blackness is greater with yellow enhancing it then he is *aṣḥam*. If his blackness exceeds *al-sumra* then he is *ādam*. If it exceeds that, then it is *aṣḥam*. If his blackness is intense, then he is *adlam*.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ J. M. Cowan (ed.), *Hans Wehr Arabic-English Dictionary* 4th edition (Ithaca: Spoken Language Services, Inc., 1994) 500 s.v. *اسمر*.

¹⁹¹ Berry, *Unknown Arabs*, 49 notes: “When the Arabs of the past said that a person was brown, they meant that he was dark-skinned; close to black, which is actually a dark shade of brown.”

¹⁹² Ibn Maṣṣūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, s.v. *خضر* IV: 245; s.v. *اسمر* IV:376: “*al-udma* is *al-sumra*, and *al-ādam* among people in *al-asmar*.”

¹⁹³ For more ‘blacks’ see al-Tha‘labī, *Fiqh al-lugha* (Beirut and London: Dār al-Kitāb al-Arabī, 2006) 81.

¹⁹⁴ al-Tha‘labī, *Fiqh al-lugha*, 82.

This suggests a hierarchy of intensifying blackness: *asmar* / *sumra* → *sawad* → *aṣham* → *ādam* → *aṣham* → *adlam*. It also implies that, while at the bottom of the hierarchy, *asmar* / *sumra* still falls within the category ‘black’.

Ibn Manẓūr reports that “*al-sumra* [is] a degree between white (*al-bayād*) and black (*al-aswad*), and it is that in the context of human complexions, camels, etc.”¹⁹⁵ According to Ibn Athīr, *al-sumra*’s ‘blackness’ predominates over its ‘whiteness’ (*al-sumra alladhī yaghlibu sawāduhu ‘alā bayāḍihi*).¹⁹⁶ Thus, al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390) reports in his ***al-Tahdhīd***: ‘*al-sumra*...is a color inclining to a faint blackness (*sawad^{hīn} khafiyⁱⁿ*), as in the description of the Prophet: he was brown complexioned (*kāna asmar al-lawṇ*)...’¹⁹⁷

Al- Tirmidhī ralso eports from Anās b. Mālik:

The Messenger of Allah (s) was neither tall, such that he would stand out, nor was he short. He was not albino-white (*al-abyaḍ al-amhaq*), nor was he deep black (*ādam*). His hair was neither very curly nor completely straight. Allah commissioned him towards the end of his fortieth year. He remained in Mecca for ten years and in Medina for ten years. Allah caused him to pass away at the turn of his sixtieth year and there was not found on his head and beard [as much as] twenty white hairs.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, s.v. سمر IV:376.

¹⁹⁶ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, s.v. سمر IV:376.

¹⁹⁷ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, s.v. سمر IV:376.

¹⁹⁸ *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, 9:244 # 3627; Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Shamā‘il al-Muḥammadīyah*, 21-22 #1; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *bāb ṣīfat al-nabī*, # 747, 748; Ibn Sa‘d, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, vol. 1, part II:123 (Ar.); 488 (Eng).

This report does not stand in contradiction to Anās' report according to which the Prophet was brown-skinned.¹⁹⁹ *Asmar* is not necessarily (*ādam*).²⁰⁰ According to al-Tha'labī's classification cited above, *ādam* is a more excessive blackness than *asmar*. What is thus denied here is that the Prophet was one of the excessively black Arabs.²⁰¹ Rather, he was a (dark) brown Arab, at least according to this group of hadith reports. Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 743), the fifth Shiite Imam and descendent of the Prophet noted for his physical resemblance to Muḥammad, was an "even brown" complexion (*asmar mutadil*).²⁰²

But Anās is also the reported source of a more widely known description of the Prophet which, at first sight, seems to completely contradict all of the above.

While we were sitting with the Prophet in the mosque, a man came riding on a camel. He made his camel kneel down in the mosque, tied its foreleg and then said: "Who amongst you is Muḥammad?" At that time the Prophet was sitting amongst us (his companions) leaning on his arm. We replied, "This white man (*hadhā l-rajul l-abyaḍ*) reclining on his arm."²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ Qāwī al-Harawī, *Kitāb jam' al-wasā'il*, 14.

²⁰⁰ *Contra* Māhir Yāsin Fahl and Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf, comments in al-Tirmidhī, *al-Shamā'il al-Nabī*, 33 n. 4; 'Abd al-Ra'ūf b. Tāj al-'Ārifīn al-Munawī, *al-Rawḍ al-bāsim fī Shamā'il al-Muṣṭafā Abī al-Qāsim* (Damascus: Dār al-Bashā'ir, 2000) 23, n. 2.

²⁰¹ As correctly pointed out by Muḥammad 'Awwāmah in his comments, al-Tirmidhī, *al-Shamā'il al-Muḥammadiyah*, 23.

²⁰² Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, *Al-Fusūl al-muhimmah fī ma'rīfat aḥwā l-a'ummah* (Najaf: Dār al-Kutub al-Tijārīyah, 1950) 193.

²⁰³ al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, kitāb 'alim, bāb faḍl 'alim*, # 63.

There are several other reports that describe Muḥammad as أبيض *abyad*, white.²⁰⁴ How can the same man (Anās b. Mālik) describe another (Muḥammad) as both of dark brown complexion and as white? Is this not a blatant contradiction? The problem, it turns out, is not in these texts but in our modern, Western inability to appreciate the pre-modern Arabic color classification system. We assume that terms such as white, green, blue, and red meant the same to the early Arabs that they do to us today. But as Moroccan scholar Tariq Berry explains in his book, *The Unknown Arabs*, this is simply not the case:

The term *white* can be very confusing to those reading about the description of people of the past because, in the past, when Arabs described someone as white, they meant something entirely different from what is meant today. In the past, when the Arabs described someone as white, they meant either that he had a pure, noble, essence or that he had a nice, smooth complexion without any blemishes. They meant he had a black complexion with a light-brownish undertone.²⁰⁵

Arabist Jeham Allam makes the same point in his study of Arabic color terminology.

color terms often acquire, in certain fixed allocations, a range that goes beyond what they normally possess, e.g., “white” in the expression “white coffee” refers to a deep shade of

²⁰⁴ al-Tirmidhī, *al-Shamā'il al-Muḥammadiyah*, #7, 9, 11, 13; Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, vol. 1, part II:120-127 (Ar.); 484-499 (Eng).

²⁰⁵ Berry, *Unknown Arabs*, 49.

brown...when referring to skin, an Arabic speaker may use [abyaḍ] (“white”) as a euphemism for [aswad] (“black”).²⁰⁶

Berry’s and Allam’s point is confirmed by the appropriate Classical Arabic/Islamic sources. Syrian scholar Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 1348) affirms:

When Arabs say, ‘so-and-so is white (*abyaḍ*),’ they mean a golden brown complexion with a black embellishment (*al-hinṭi al-lawn bi-ḥilya sudāʾ*). Like the complexion of the people of India, brown and black (*asmar wa ādam*), i.e. a clear, refined blackness (*sawad al-takrūr*).²⁰⁷

Ibn Manẓūr affirmed the same:

The Arabs don’t say a man is white [or: “white man,” *rajul abyaḍ*] due to a white complexion. Rather, whiteness [*al-abyaḍ*] with them means an external appearance that is free from blemish [*al-zāhir al-naqī min al-‘uqūb*]; when they mean a white complexion they say ‘red’ (*aḥmar*)... when the Arabs say, ‘so-and-so is white (*abyaḍ - bayḍāʿ*), they [only] mean a noble character (*al-karam fi l-akhlāq*), not skin color. It is when they say ‘so-and-so is red’ (*aḥmar - ḥamrāʿ*) that they mean white skin. And the Arabs attribute white skin to the slaves.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Jehan Allam, “A Sociolinguistic Study on the Use of Color Terminology in Egyptian Colloquial and Classical Arabic,” in Zeinab Ibrahim, Nagwa Kassabgy and Sabiha Aydelott (edd.), *Diversity in Language: Contrastive Studies in English and Arabic Theoretical and Applied Linguistics* (Cairo and New York: The American University on Cairo Press, 2000) 78.

²⁰⁷ Al-Dhahabī, *Ṣiyar a’lām al-nubalāʾ*, edd. Shu’ayb al-Arna’ūt and Husayn al-Asad (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, 1981) II:128.

²⁰⁸ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, s.v. حمر IV: 209, 210.

To speak of someone as white complexioned, like the Romans, Persians, Turks, etc., the Arabs used the term **أحمر** *aḥmar*, red.²⁰⁹ **أبيض** ‘white’ had a totally different connotation: it signified a blemish-free black complexion. In other words, what we call white today the early Arabs called red, and what they called white often was what we would today call black! Thus, Tarif Khalidi confirms in his, ***Images of Muhammad*** (2009) regarding the descriptions of Muḥammad as ‘white’:

these physical characteristics are clearly symbolic in character. We cannot fully appreciate this symbolism because we are separated from the world of the Hadith...by about twelve hundred years...One might argue that most of these physical attributes appear to point to his immaculateness and his freedom from physical blemish. Many are allusions to the descriptions of beautiful women in pre-Islamic poetry...the age of the Hadith...was far more sensitive to physiognomy than we are: to them, the physical exterior of a human being was intimately linked to his or her moral character.²¹⁰

Further, as David Goldenberg notes, ‘white **أبيض**’ in pre-modern Arabic was about “luminosity, not chromaticity.”²¹¹ Arab usage distinguished between whiteness related to redness or white-skinnedness (*al-bayāḍ al-mušḥab bi-ḥumra*) and whiteness related to yellowness or

²⁰⁹Ibn Manẓūr, ***Lisān al-‘arab***, s.v. **حمر** IV: 209: “*al-aḥmar* is a general white complexion (*al-abyaḍ muṭlaqan*).” See further Goldziher, ***Muslim Studies***, 1:268 and below.

²¹⁰Tarif Khalidi, ***Images of Muhammad: Narratives of the Prophet in Islam Across the Centuries*** (New York: Doubleday, 2009) 42.

²¹¹ Goldenberg, ***Curse of Ham***, 93.

luminance (*al-bayaḍ al-mušrab bi-ṣufra*). The former (*bi-ḥumra*) arises from the blood visible from within the body, and the latter (*bi-ṣufra*) arises from gloss and sheen (*ṣaḡāla wa ṣafā*).²¹² According to al-Tha‘labī, the whiteness that is praise-worthy is that which associates a person’s complexion “closer to yellowness (*ṣufra*), like the color of the moon and pearls, then he is *azhar*, luminous.”²¹³

In Classical Arabic there is no incompatibility between being black and being luminous. The verb, *isfarra*, which in Modern Standard Arabic means “to become yellow,” in Classical Arabic also meant “to become black.”²¹⁴ *Ṣufra* meant both “yellowness” and “blackness.”²¹⁵ The same is true for human complexions. Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d. 765), the sixth Shiite Imam and son of Muḥammad al-Bāqir, had a black complexion (*ādamā l-lawn*), but like the Prophet was also described as possessing a luminous face (*azhar al-wajh*).²¹⁶ This is further, and more forcefully, demonstrated by descriptions of Ja‘far’s son, Mūsā al-Kāzīm (d. 799), the seventh Imam. He was deep brown (*asmar ‘amīq*), black-complexioned (*aswad al-lawn*).²¹⁷ Yet, he too is *azhar*, luminous. In fact it is said that this black-skinned descendent of the Prophet is luminous (*azhar*) except, we are told, in the high summer. The heat in his region seems to

²¹²Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Shamā‘il al-Muḥammadiyah*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Awwāmah (Medina, 2001) 22.

²¹³ Al-Tha‘labī, *Fiqh al-luḡa*, 77.

²¹⁴ Allam, “Sociolinguistic Study,” 82.

²¹⁵ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, s.v. صفر IV:244 “*asfar* (“yellow”) is black”. See also Allam, “Sociolinguistic Study,” 82; Berry, *Unknown Arabs*, 51-52.

²¹⁶ Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, *Al-Fusūl*, 205.

²¹⁷ Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, *Al-Fusūl*, 213.

have robbed him of his bodily sheen and luster, leaving him completely black (*tamīm akhdar*) and pitch black (*ḥālīk*).

Not unexpectedly the Prophet is described as luminous. “The Messenger of Allah was luminous of complexion (*azhar al-lawṇ*).”²¹⁸ His face shone with resplendence like that of a full moon and his *azhar* and *abyaḍ* complexion had a luster (*nūr*) resembling that of a statue made of clear silver.²¹⁹ Indeed, according to one Companion under his cloths the Prophet was like the half-moon in luminance.²²⁰

Qāwī al-Harawī (d. 1605) correctly pointed out that these descriptions of the Prophet as luminous are not inconsistent with the description of the Prophet as *asmar*, because the former have the sense of sheen (*al-ṣafāʾ*) and luster (*al-lamaʿān*) of the *asmar* skin under the light of the sun.²²¹ Anās b. Mālik thus affirmed that the Messenger of God “was luminous (*azhar*), not albino-white,”²²² and specified further that “his (s) whiteness was related to (dark) brown, *kāna abyāḍ bayāḍahu ilā al-asmar*,” thus *not* related to *aḥmar*, white-complexioned.²²³

²¹⁸ Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Shamāʾil al-Muḥammadiyah*, #7; Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, vol. 1, part II:121, 123 (Ar.); 484, 488 (Eng.)

²¹⁹ Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Shamāʾil al-Muḥammadiyah*, #7, 11; Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, vol. 1, part II:121 (Ar.); 484 (Eng.)

²²⁰ Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, vol. 1, part II:127 (Ar.); 495 (Eng.)

²²¹ Qāwī al-Harawī, *Kitāb jamʿ al-wasāʾil*, 17.

²²² Quoted by al-Thaʿlabī, *Fiqh al-luḡa*, 77.

²²³ Quoted by al-Munawī, *al-Rawḍ al-bāsim*, 25. This is also the context in which we must understand the similar statement found in the Ibn ʿAbbās report cited above, that Muḥammad was *asmar ilā al-bayāḍ*, “brown related to white,” which I translated above as “brown and blemish-free with a sheen”.

There is thus harmony between the reports of Muḥammad's *brown-ness* and his *white-ness*. Al-Jahīz affirms:

The Arabs boast of (their) black color. If it is said, 'How came this be so, seeing that the Arabs speak of someone as luminous (*azhar*), white (*abyaḍ*), and blazing white (*agharr*)?' we would answer: 'They are not referring in this context to whiteness of skin (*bayāḍ al-jilda*), but rather to nobility and purity of character.'²²⁴

So far all of the pieces fit nicely together: the fact that the prophets were members of a family line descendent from Adam, the black patriarch, suggests they should be black, as is in fact the case with Moses, Jesus and, clearly, Muḥammad; the fact that Muḥammad's particular tribe and family were black Arabs suggests that Muḥammad himself would be a black Arab, which the above reports indicate; the fact that, despite the initial impression of discord and contradiction among the above reports, there is actually coherence and consistency among them all pointing to Muḥammad's blackness; and the fact that this all comports with what historical and ethnological data we have, makes the case of Muḥammad's blackness compelling.

However, just as the historically black Jesus was found repugnant to some later, white Christians who consequently Hellenized him by transforming him into a white (red!) man, so too did later Muslims transform

²²⁴ Al-Jahīz, *Fakhr al-sūdān 'alā al-bīdan*, I:207 (Ar.); 17 (Eng.)

Muḥammad into a 'red' man. This no doubt happened under the direction of the anti-black ideology that the "Persian Revolution" introduced into Islam. The impact of this *Aryanization* on the black legacy of Muḥammad is nicely illustrated by words from the ninth century poet Abū al-Ḥasan Alī b. al-'Abbās b. Jurayj, also known as Ibn al-Rūmī (d. 896). By Ibn al-Rūmī's day the era of the black Arabs was over and the *Aryanization* of Islam had made good progress.

the 'Abbāsids were notorious for their infatuation with Persian...sedentary, urban culture while condescending to 'genuine Arabic' (i.e. nomadic) culture.²²⁵

Like many of the Muslims during the 'Abbāsīd era (750-1258), Ibn al-Rūmī was not an Arab. His mother was a Persian and his father was Byzantine (some say half-Greek).²²⁶ Yet, in one poem he presented himself as an advocate of the ill-treated black Arabs, in particular the black family of Prophet Muḥammad. Ibn al-Rūmī was a Shiite Muslim so he was a big advocate of the rights of *ahl al-bayt*, the Prophet's Hāshmite relatives and 'Alid descendents. He fulminated in his poetry against the 'Abbāsīd abuse of the tombs of the Shiite Imams and their

²²⁵ Drory, "Abbasid Construction," 34.

²²⁶ *EP* 3:907-909 s.v. Ibn al-Rūmī by S. Boustany; Dr. Ali A. El-Huni, *The Poetry of Ibnal-Rumi (Critical Study)* (London: Dār al-Ḥikma, 1996) 13-18; Beatrice Gruendler, *Medieval Arabic Praise Poetry. Ibn al-Rūmī and the Patron's Redemption* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003) 42.

living descendents of his day. He wrote to the ‘Abbāsīd caliph:

You insulted (the family of the Prophet Muḥammad) because of their blackness (*bi-l-sawād*), while there are still deep black, pure-blooded Arabs (*al-‘arab al-amḥād akḥḍar ad‘aj*). However, you are white²²⁷ - the Romans (Byzantines) have embellished your faces with their color. The color of the family of Hāshim was not a bodily defect (*‘āha*).²²⁸



Figure 6
Modern popular
depiction of Alī

At this time, the ninth century, Muḥammad’s familial blackness was still acknowledged but clearly disdained by the ‘Abbāsīds who, through miscegenation with slave girls largely from ‘white’ countries, were themselves no longer black-skinned.²²⁹ We saw this as well with the caliph al-Manṣūr, son of a Berber concubine, who mockingly called Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, that pure, jet-black descendent of the

²²⁷ Literally blue, *zurg*. One of the many contradictory meanings of this term is white. See Allam, “Sociolinguistic Study,” 87 and Lewis, *Race and Slavery*, 26 observes that white peoples in the north were called in Arabic ‘pale blue’ as well as red.

²²⁸ Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Maqātil al-ṭalibīyyīn*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-Arabiyya, 1949) 759.

²²⁹ Leslie Pierce, *The Imperial Harem* (1993) 38: “While the caliphs of the Umayyad dynasty had prided themselves on the purity of their Arab lineage through marriage with noble Arab women, by the second century of Islamic history many of the caliphs of the Abbasid dynasty were the sons of slave concubines.”

Prophet, “Tar Face” and “Charcoal Face”. This growing discomfort over the blackness of the prophetic family will eventuate with their *Aryanization*. Thus, despite the fact that ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and his family were jet black (*shadīd al-udma*), in Iran today thousands of depictions of him and descendents depict him as white-skinned. The prophet Muḥammad himself would likewise undergo *Aryanization*.

V.3. ‘His whiteness is a fair-skinnedness’: The Aryanization of Muḥammad

A number of reports, clearly secondary, insist that “the whiteness of his complexion was a fair-skinnedness (*abyaḍ al-lawṇ mushrab ḥumrā*).²³⁰

It was said to ‘Alī [b. Abī Ṭālib]: “O Abū Ḥasan! Describe for us the attributes of the Prophet (s).” [‘Alī] said: “He was white, his whiteness being related to white-skinnedness (*kāna abyaḍ mushrab bayāḍuhu ḥumrā*). He had long eyelashes, black eyes, stature neither too short nor too tall, though inclining to tallness. His shoulder’s were broad; the hair on his chest was neither curly nor straight and his palms and feet were fleshy. When he walked, he walked reclining as his climbing. Drops of sweat on his face were like pearls. I never saw anyone like him, before or since him, may Allah bless him.²³¹

We have here the unlikely scenario of the very black-skinned first-cousin of the Prophet, son of one of his nine

²³⁰ Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Shamā’il al-Muḥammadiyah*, #6, 14, 15; Ibn Sa’d, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, vol. 1, part II:120, 121,122, 124, 129 (Ar.).

²³¹ Ibn Sa’d, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, vol. 1, part II: 122 (Ar.); 486 (Eng.).

very black-skinned uncles, insisting that Muḥammad's whiteness was in fact white-skinnedness, rather than just luminance. Likewise, Abū Umāmah al-Bāhili is given to clarify as well: "Muḥammad was a white man whose whiteness was fair-skinnedness (*rajul abyad ta'lūhu ḥumra*)."²³² Some of the commentators went great exegetical distances to *make* Muḥammad white-skinned. Thus Qārī al-Harawī even claimed that the description of the Prophet as (dark) brown, *asmar*, intends to deny to Muḥammad any whiteness that does not involve a fair-complexion.²³³ Rather, this seventeenth-century scholar insisted that Muḥammad's whiteness was a luminance, yes; but a white complexion as well (*bal kāna bayadahu nūr^{an} mushrab^{an} bi-ḥumrat^{an}*).²³⁴ Al-Munawi insisted on the same:

concerning [Muḥammad's] whiteness (*bayād*) due to light (*al-nūr*), illumination (*idā'a*), and brilliant gloss (*al-idā'a al-sāḥi'*), this does *not* deny that he was (also) white-skinned (*mashrab bi-ḥumra*).²³⁵

The modern Iranian shaykhs Maulana Muhammad Zakaria and Ahmed E. Bemat, in their commentary on al-Tirmidhī's *al-Shamā'il al-Muḥammadiyah*, claim:

the Holy Prophet's (s) white complexion had a touch of redness and there was a luster in it...Hence the *Imams* have stated that 'if someone says that the Holy Prophet's (s) complexion was black, we will issue a *fatwa* of infidelity (*kufṛ*) for him because he insulted

²³² Ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, vol. 1, part II: 124 (Ar.); 491 (Eng.).

²³³ Qāwī al-Harawī, *Kitāb jam' al-wasā'il*, 15. Likewise Muḥammad 'Awwāmah in his comments, al-Tirmidhī, *al-Shamā'il al-Muḥammadiyah*, 23.

²³⁴ Qāwī al-Harawī, *Kitāb jam' al-wasā'il*, 14.

²³⁵ Al-Munawī, *al-Rawḍ al-bāsim*, 37.

and disparaged the Holy Prophet (s) and the insulting and disparaging of a prophet amounts to infidelity...²³⁶

It comes as no surprise that those who historically have viewed blackness as offensive and evil would also view claims that the Holy Prophet was black as an insult to him. In devotional images of the prophet Muḥammad throughout Iran today (Figure 1), therefore, “Muhammad is depicted not as an Arab but with distinctly Persian features,” as Omid Safi points out.²³⁷ This is so because true Arabs are distinctively black.

But it is certain that *the Arab* prophet could not have been *aḥmar*. As Ibn Manẓūr affirms:

“Red (*al-ḥamrāʾ*) refers to non-Arabs due to their fair complexion which predominates among them. And the Arabs used to say about the non-Arabs with whom white skin was characteristic, such as the Romans, Persians, and their neighbors: ‘They are red-skinned (*al-ḥamrāʾ*)...’ *al-ḥamrāʾ* means the Persians and Romans...And the Arabs attribute white skin to the slaves.”²³⁸

Ibn Manẓūr goes on to quote important commentary on the Prophet’s famous claim, “I was sent to the Whites (*al-aḥmar*) and the Blacks (*al-aswad*): “i.e., the Arabs and the non-Arabs, for the predominant complexion of the Arabs is brown and black [*al-sumra wa l-undma*] and that of the non-

²³⁶ Shaikh a-Hadith Maulana Muhammad Zakaria and Shaikh al-Hadith Mufti Ahmed E. Bemat, in *Shamail-e-Tirmizi*, trans. Prof. Murtaza Hussain F. Qurashi (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 2006) 11.

²³⁷ Safi, *Memories of Muhammad*, 35.

²³⁸ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, s.v. *حمر* IV: 210.

Arabs is white [*al-bayaḍ wa l-ḥumra*].”²³⁹ The same point was made by several Classical Islamic scholars. Al-Dhahabī observed:

Red (*al-ḥamrā*), in the speech of the people of the Hejaz, means white-complexioned (*al-bayḍā bi-shuqra*), and this is rare among them. Thus the meaning of the hadith ‘a red man as if one of the slaves.’ The speaker is saying that this is the complexion of the Christian slaves captured from Syria, Rome, and Persia.²⁴⁰

The seventh century Arab from the tribe of Nakhāḥī, Shurayk al-Qāḍī, could claim that, because it was such a rare occurrence “a fair-skinned Arab is something inconceivable and unthinkable.”²⁴¹ Al-Jahīz noted that it was common knowledge that Arabs were black and *not* white-skinned:

[The Blacks say]: ‘The Arabs are from us (*wa minnā al-‘arab*), not from the whites, because their color is closer to ours. The Hindis complexion is more conspicuous than the Arabs, they are black (*wa ḥum min al-sudān*). Since the Prophet (s) said, ‘I was sent to the Whites (*al-aḥmar*) and the Blacks (*al-aswad*),’ it is common knowledge that the Arabs are not white (*al-‘arab laysat bi-ḥumra*).’²⁴²

Because white-skin was the mark of the Persian and Byzantine slaves, it was looked down upon by the black

²³⁹ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, s.v. حمر IV: 209; *ibid.* s.v. خضر IV: 245.

²⁴⁰ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, II:128.

²⁴¹ Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-Iqd al-farīd* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiya, 1983) 8:140.

²⁴² Al-Jahīz, *Fakhr al-sūdān ‘alā al-bidan*, 216 (Ar.); 22 (Eng.).

Arabs. Al-Mubarrad (d. 898), the leading figure in the Basran grammatical tradition, is quoted as saying:

The Arabs used to take pride in their brown and black complexion (*al-sumra wa al-sawād*) and they had a distaste for a white and fair complexion (*al-ḥumra wa al-shaqrā*), and they used to say that such was the complexion of the non-Arabs.

Thus, a white-skinned Muḥammad would have been a *non-Arab* Muḥammad, bearing the ignoble mark of the local slaves! A pale-skinned Muḥammad would have been a profound oddity in seventh century Arabia and would have had little chance of success amongst the proud, *black* Meccans and Medinese. The Meccan objectors to his message accused him of some of everything, but *never of being a non-Arab!*

Part II: Theology

The Ethnicity of the Prophet
According to the Honorable
Elijah Muhammad

Chapter VI

Muhammad the Black Arab

VI.1. *Muhammad and the Black Nation*

The evidence of the Classical Arabic/Islamic sources confirms the claims of the Africentrist scholars, according to whom the Arabian prophet was black. How does this conclusion comport with the Teachings of THEM? While speaking of modern-day Arabs as “light-skinned or copper-colored,”²⁴³ THEM also acknowledged that the original Arabs were black, even mentioning “the original Black Arabs”.²⁴⁴ THEM seems to confirm as well that the tribe of Quraysh and the Banū Hāshim, the Prophet’s kith and kin, were black. In 1950 THEM granted an interview to University of Chicago student Hatim Sahib for his Masters thesis. According Sahib,

The current Apostle (Elijah Muhammad) has told the writer that W.D. Fard told him that he is from the royal dynasty of the Hashimide Sheriffs of Mecca, who were the kings of the Hejaz until the first world war. The wife of the Apostle told the writer that he is the son of very wealthy and noble parents of the tribe

²⁴³ Elijah Muhammad, *The Supreme Wisdom. Volume I: Solution to the so-called Negroes’s (sic) Problem*, (Phoenix: Secretarius MEMPS Publications, n.d.; 1957), I:37.

²⁴⁴ Elijah Muhammad, *The Genesis Years: Unpublished & Rare Writings of Elijah Muhammad (Messenger of God) 1959-1962* (Maryland Heights, Missouri: Secretarius MEMPS,2003) 188.

of Koreish; the tribe from which Mohammed the prophet sprang, and that he had royal blood in his veins.²⁴⁵

According to THEM W.D. Fard's mother was a white woman from the Caucasus region of Eurasia, maybe Azerbaijan.²⁴⁶ His maternal line was therefore not Arabian. It was his father who was Arabian, no doubt a Qurayshī Arab and member of the pure, black Banū Hāshim. And as we would expect, THEM said W.D. Fard's father was a jet-black Arabian.²⁴⁷

These 'original Black Arabs' were members of the Black Nation, and Prophet Muḥammad was such a black Arab, according to THEM. Writing in the *Pittsburgh Courier* February 2, 1957, he says:

The old Christian missionaries, writers on the life and teachings of Muhammad, were his enemies. They were so grieved over the great success of Muhammad and Islam that they have written falsely against the man of God by attributing His success to the use of the sword instead of to Allah (God) from whom it actually came. All who hate Islam (The Truth) use the same false charges against Muhammad and Islam. As I have said before in this column, *'Muhammad was a member of the Black Nation, and the white*

²⁴⁵ Hatim A. Sahib, "The Nation of Islam," Masters thesis, University of Chicago, 1951, 69.

²⁴⁶ Warith Deen Muhammad, *As The Light Shineth From the East* (Chicago: WDM Publishing Co., 1980) 29; Peter Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1979) 36.

²⁴⁷ The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, "Theology of Time," 1972.

race by nature is against black man leadership, regardless whether spiritual or political (emphasis mine – WM),²⁴⁸

This is an important quote: THEM clearly distinguishes the Prophet Muḥammad, who was a member of the Black Nation, from the white race. Further, THEM attributes the white race's false charges against the Prophet to their innate inability to follow 'black man leadership.' By clear implication the Prophet Muḥammad is thus referred to as a 'black man.' That the Prophet, as an Arab, was a member of the Black Nation and distinct from the white race is a point THEM made frequently. In at least 3 other writings THEM says:

Muhammad, an Arab, was a member of the black nation. The Jews and Christians are of the white race, and they don't believe in Muhammad as a prophet of God...The Arabs or Muslims have tried and are still trying to get the white race to believe and recognize Muhammad as a Divine Prophet of Allah, and the Qur'an, a Divine Revelation, as they recognize Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus) and the Bible coming from Allah (God).²⁴⁹

Again, because the white race (Jews and Christians) can't accept 'black man leadership,' they reject the black Arab Muḥammad as a prophet of God. Muḥammad, like Jesus

²⁴⁸ The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, "Those Who Live in Glass Houses Shouldn't Throw Stones," *Pittsburgh Courier* February 2, 1957, page B2, col. 1.

²⁴⁹ *Supreme Wisdom* I:18; The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, *The Supreme Wisdom, Volume II* (Atlanta: MEMPS, n.d.) 75, 76; Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Black Man in America* (Chicago: Muhammad's Temple No. 2, n.d.; 1965), 94.

before him, was a 'dark' man, a black prophet, which is why they were both rejected by the white race, according to THEM:

The white race rejects the religion of Islam, its God, and Holy Book (Quire-an), because it is a Universal Truth, and that both *the Arab Prophet Muhammad and Jesus were dark men*, and brothers of the darker Nation, though they (the white race) naturally object being a follower of *a black prophet* (emphasis added WM).²⁵⁰

This description by THEM of the Prophet as a black prophet who is 'dark' recalls that of Anās b. Mālik who too described him as dark brown (*asmar*). THEM says elsewhere that in rejecting Allah and Muḥammad, whites are rejecting "a black god" and his "black prophet":

The God that revealed the Holy Qur-an Sharrief to Muhammad is the same that revealed the scriptures to the other prophets...Some people whom the devils have deceived in regard to the Holy Qur-an call it the work of Muhammad. Some call the religion Islam a dream of Muhammad...The white race does not like to worship a black god and his prophets. They are too proud to recognize a black prophet or god.²⁵¹

Here, in explaining why whites reject Allah and his prophet Muḥammad, THEM invokes their dislike for worshiping a black god and his black prophet, suggesting that Allah is a black god and Muḥammad his black prophet.

²⁵⁰ "Truth is Confirmed" *apud The Genesis Years*, 434.

²⁵¹ *Message to the Black Man in America*, 92-93.

VI.2. *Muhammad Not From the White Race*

The Classical Arabic/Islamic sources we encountered above sharply distinguished between the black Arabs and the whites. THEM too clearly and frequently distinguished Muhammad, the black Arab, from the white race. The latter were/are characterized by their innate inability to obey Allah and Islam:

All mankind can't believe and obey the teachings of Islam. All mankind are not members of the Righteous. Islam is righteousness and he who would believe in it and do the Will of Allah (God) must be by nature one born of Allah. The only people born of Allah is the Black Nation...The white race, by nature, can't be righteous. Islam was taught to them from Moses to Muhammad, but they were never able to live the life of a Muslim believer and can't do it today.²⁵²

The world of Islam is the world of black mankind...I have taught you that white people cannot accept Islam. Righteousness is the religion of Islam. Righteousness, the white man cannot accept because his nature is against righteousness.²⁵³

The white race will not agree with Muhammad and the true religion of God (Allah), which is Islam because of the nature in which they were created,-as they are the opposers of Allah and the Truth.²⁵⁴

²⁵² *Supreme Wisdom*, I:30; *Supreme Wisdom*, II:50

²⁵³ "Time For Truth; Know Thyself," *The Genesis Years*, 317.

²⁵⁴ *Message to the Black Man in America*, 27.

Islam, i.e. Peace and Obedience to Allah, is contrary to the very nature of the white race. If they are to be Muslim, they must be grafted back into members of the Black Nation. Nothing short of this will make them obedient to Allah.²⁵⁵ On the other hand, Islam is the nature of all black humanity (the Black Nation),²⁵⁶ and Muḥammad, the black Arab, and his followers were obedient to Allah, thus their phenomenal success in ‘reviving’ Islam (on which see below).

Muhammad took hold of the best, the belief in one God (Allah), and he was successful...He and his followers obey the law of (the one God) Allah, while the Jews and the Christians preach it and do otherwise.²⁵⁷

Muhammad and his followers were successful in their wars with their enemies because Allah, Whom they obeyed, was on their side. And Allah helped Muhammad and his followers because they fought for Truth and they were not the aggressors.²⁵⁸

Muḥammad’s obedience to Allah and Islam is natural, being a member of the Black Nation, and is contrasted with the white race’s natural inability to obey Allah and Islam. It might be argued that Muḥammad’s natural obedience is the context in which we are to understand the fact that he

²⁵⁵ *Message to the Black Man in America*, 116.

²⁵⁶ *Message to the Black Man in America*, 68: “The people of Islam are the black people, and their numbers are made up of the brown, yellow and red people, called races.” *Supreme Wisdom*, I: 50: “...by nature *all* members of the black nation are Muslims (lovers of peace).” Also *Supreme Wisdom*, II:55.

²⁵⁷ *Message to the Black Man in America*, 75, 106.

²⁵⁸ *Supreme Wisdom*, I:27; *Supreme Wisdom*, II:11.

received the Holy Qur'an directly from the Black God Allah, according to THEM, not through an intermediary, angelic or otherwise.

The Holy Qur'an-it is holy because it is the Word of Allah (God), who speaks directly to His servant (Muhammad)...²⁵⁹

This book, the Holy Quran Sharrieff, is not from a prophet but direct from Allah to Muhammad (may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him!) not by an angel but from the mouth of Allah (God).²⁶⁰

This intimate relationship between Muḥammad and the Black God Allah would seem to mitigate against Muḥammad being a 'Caucasian', for the Caucasian (white race) are unable to be obedient enough to be considered Muslim, much less have such an intimate relationship with the Black God as to receive *directly* from Him the revelation.

VI.3. *The Black Prophet Failed to Convert the White Race*

THEM was adamant, it seems, that Whites simply could not be made Muslim. Says he: "Some Arab Muslims think that the white people can be made Muslims but NOT ME (emphasis original)!"²⁶¹ One of those 'Arab Muslims' who made the mistake of thinking whites could be made Muslim was the black Arab prophet himself, Muḥammad. He tried, but failed, to convert them: "both Jesus and

²⁵⁹ *Supreme Wisdom*, I: 20; *Supreme Wisdom*, II:76.

²⁶⁰ *Supreme Wisdom*, II:66.

²⁶¹ *Supreme Wisdom*, II:24

Muhammad failed to convert the Jews and Christians, but the last Messenger will not make an attempt to convert them,”²⁶² says THEM. THEM gives us some significant detail regarding Muhammad’s ultimately fatal mistake:

(The white race was) made by nature a liar and murder. The black nation is only fooling themselves to take the Caucasian otherwise. This is what Jesus learned of their history, before he gave up his work of trying to convert the Jews or the white race to the religion of Islam. And, the same knowledge of them was given to Muhammad by the Imams (Scientists) of Mecca. That is why the war of the Muslims against them came to a stop. Muhammad was told that he could not reform the devils and that the race had 1,400 more years to live; the only way to make righteous people (Muslims) out of them was to graft them back into the black nation. This grieved Muhammad so much that it caused him heart trouble until his death (age sixty-two and one half years). The old scientists used to laugh at Muhammad for thinking that he could convert them (devils) to Islam. This hurt his heart.²⁶³

We learn here from THEM that, after making a sincere effort to convert the whites (Jews and Christians) to Islam, the Holy Scientists/Imams of Mecca informed Muhammad, like they did Jesus, of the origin, nature, and history of the Caucasian and that it was physically impossible to bring them to Islam (unless they are re-grafted). Muhammad thus ceased his jihads against them.

²⁶² “For Where So Ever the Carcass is...There the Eagles will be Gathered Together (Matt. 24:28),” *apud The Genesis Years*, 293.

²⁶³ *Message to the Black Man in America*, 116.

This unwelcome knowledge so grieved the Black Arab Prophet that he developed heart troubles till his death.

VI.4. *Muhammad the Black Prophet Restores Islam, the Ancient Black Religion*

According to THEM, the Black Arab Prophet Muhammad did not originate Islam. It pre-existed him:

the Muslim should pray and give praise to Allah. It is not something just started in the time of Mohammed, 1,400 years ago, but it has always been the righteous way to do (to pray and give praises to Allah).²⁶⁴

In fact, says THEM, “Islam is as old as Allah (God) Himself and is the religion of which Allah (God) is the author.”²⁶⁵ Also, “Islam is the natural religion of the Black Nation. It is the nature in which we were made;”²⁶⁶ “Islam is the original religion of *all* black mankind.”²⁶⁷

By the time of the Prophet Muhammad Islam was no longer dominant in the world, and this because of the birth of the white race 6000 years ago, says THEM. Muhammad’s movement was only a revival: the Prophet had simply sparked “The awakening of the Arabs nearly fourteen hundred years ago to the ancient Truth (Islam)

²⁶⁴ *Message to the Black Man in America*, 146.

²⁶⁵ *Message to the Black Man in America*, 69.

²⁶⁶ *Message to the Black Man in America*, 80. *Supreme Wisdom*, II:19: “The black nation’s religion is Islam and its God is Allah, the author of Islam.”

²⁶⁷ *Supreme Wisdom*, II:48.

(not a new Truth) of Allah.”²⁶⁸The Arabs who were ‘awakened’ to Islam by the Prophet were the original black Arabs who had Islam but lost it.

Muhammad turned on the light (Islam) in the ancient house (Arab nation) that burned low since the time of Ibrahim (Abraham) and cleaned it up for the reception of a much brighter light of the Mahdi (Allah in Person) and His people, which will come from the West out of the house of the infidels.²⁶⁹

That ‘ancient house’ is the ancient nation of the original black Arabs who had Islam initially, but its light had burned low by Muḥammad’s time. It was he who rekindled it. This means that Muḥammad did his primary work among the *black Arabs*, which is exactly what the historical evidence indicates.²⁷⁰ Whites, as a race, never had Islam; certainly not in ancient times. This is also consistent with THEM’s claim that Jesus in fact was the *last* prophet sent to the white race. Who, then, was Muḥammad sent to? To the black Arabs among whom Islam had burned low. Though the prophets before him were black prophets sent to the white race, Muḥammad the black Arab was sent to his own people, as would the future Muḥammad – the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. This is so because that first

²⁶⁸ Elijah Muhammad, “The Truth,” *apud The Genesis Years*, 195. See further Muhammad, *Black Arabia*, Chapters Four and Five.

²⁶⁹ Elijah Muhammad, “The History of Jesus,” *Pittsburgh Courier* August 3, 1957, p. A6.

²⁷⁰ Muhammad, *Black Arabia*, Chapters Six and Seven.

Muḥammad is the proto-type of the second Muḥammad (see below).

In order for the white race's pre-ordained rule to take effect, Islam had to retreat. However, after being in retreat for several millennia, the black Arab Muḥammad and his black Arab followers and successors²⁷¹ revived this ancient Black Islam on the world scene, almost reconverting the whole world back to it.

Islam temporarily ceased to dominate mankind after the making of the devil-6,000 years ago-who was then allowed to rule mankind...When Muhammad started teaching Islam in Arabia over 1300 years ago...he and his followers and successors almost converted the whole world back into Islam in a few hundred years. However, the re-conversion had to be slowed down to allow the devils to rule their time out.²⁷²

Because the black Prophet's revival of this ancient Black Islam was so successful, it almost threatened the pre-ordained rule of the white race. Muḥammad's success had then to be curtailed, presumably by the Holy Scientists/Imams of Islam. As THEM said: "Muhammad set the devils back for 1,000 years. They were released on the coming of Columbus."²⁷³ If Muḥammad and his Muslim followers were white, their one-thousand year rule would have been part of the six-thousand year rule of the white race. However, the evidence clearly indicates that the

²⁷¹ On the Black Arabs of the Muslim Conquests see Muhammad, *Black Arabia*, Chapter Seven.

²⁷² *Supreme Wisdom*, I:29; *Supreme Wisdom*, II:50.

²⁷³ *Message to the Black Man in America*, 104.

Muslim empire that bottled-up Whites in Europe for a millennium were *Black Muslims* – black Arabs and black Africans.²⁷⁴ As anthropologist Dana Reynolds-Marniche notes in her discussion of the Muslim conquests and the Moors who ruled the Iberian Peninsula:

Anyone familiar with the Arabic writings of the Syrian, Iraqi and Iranian historians up until the 14th century knows that this is also their description of the early ‘pure’ Arab clans of the Arabian peninsula... [i.e. “blacker than the blackest ink – no shred of white on them except their teeth.”]...The irony of history is that early Arabic-speaking historians and linguists made a distinction between the Arabs in Arabia and the fair-skinned peoples to the north; and contrary to what may be fact in our day, in the days of early Islam, those called ‘Arabs’ looked down condescendingly on fair-skinned populations and commonly used the phrase ‘fair-skinned as a slave’ when describing individuals in tribes in the peninsula that were pale in complexion... Arabs were usually designated as “black” and “dark brown”... We know the Arabs were so predominantly black in color that even the term “white” in earlier days, according to Arabic linguistic specialists ... meant a black man with a clear skin...²⁷⁵

Thus, it was *black Muslims* who “set the devils back for 1,000 years”.

²⁷⁴ Muhammad, *Black Arabia*, Chapter Seven; Ivan Van Sertima, *Golden Age of the Moor*; Dana Marniche, “Fear of Blackness: Descriptions and Ethnogenesis of the original Afro-Arabian tribes of ‘Moorish’ Spain,” <http://www.africaresource.com/rasta/sesostris-the-great-the-egyptian-hercules/fear-of-blackness-descriptions-and-ethnogenesis-of-the-original-afro-arabian-tribes-of-%e2%80%9cmoorish%e2%80%9d-spain-by-dana-marniche/>.

²⁷⁵ Dana Marniche, “Afro-Arabian Origins of the Early Yemenites and their Conquest and Settlement of Spain,” <http://www.africaresource.com/rasta/sesostris-the-great-the-egyptian-hercules/afro-arabian-origins-of-the-early-yemenites-and-their-conquest-and-settlement-of-spain-dana-marniche/>.

Chapter VII

Muhammad was a White Man?

VII.1. *Did Elijah Muhammad Contradict Elijah Muhammad?*

The ethnicity of Prophet Muhammad of Arabia thus seems pretty unequivocal in the writings of THEM. He and his followers were black Arabs, as the original Arabs were black, and were thus naturally predisposed to obedience to Allah (Islam), in contrast to the white race which was naturally incapable of being obedient to Allah. In at least four writings THEM says the Prophet was a member of the Black Nation.²⁷⁶ Elsewhere he refers to him (by allusion) as a 'black man' (once)²⁷⁷; as a 'black prophet' (twice)²⁷⁸; and as a 'dark man' (once, directly)²⁷⁹. THEM clearly and frequently distinguished Muhammad and his followers from the white race. It was in fact Muhammad and his revivalist Islam which ruled the world for a time that interfered with the white race's time to rule. The Holy Scientists thus had

²⁷⁶ The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, "Those Who Live in Glass Houses Shouldn't Throw Stones," *Pittsburgh Courier* February 2, 1957, page B2, col. 1; *Supreme Wisdom* I:18; *Supreme Wisdom*, II: 75, 76; *Message to the Black Man in America*, 94.

²⁷⁷ The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, "Those Who Live in Glass Houses Shouldn't Throw Stones," *Pittsburgh Courier* February 2, 1957, page B2, col. 1

²⁷⁸ "Truth is Confirmed" *apud The Genesis Years*, 434; *Message to the Black Man in America*, 92-93.

²⁷⁹ "Truth is Confirmed" *apud The Genesis Years*, 434.

to curtail Muḥammad's revivalist Islam so that the white race could get back to ruling mankind.

How then are we to understand THEM's much later, and quite isolated statement in 1972 that "that Muhammad that was here 1400 years ago was a white man"²⁸⁰? This seems profoundly at odds with all that he has said before regarding the issue. What's more, the early position, which at first sight is contradicted here, is the position that completely harmonizes with the historical and ethnological data as we currently possess it. Did THEM, with this single statement, *abrogate* all that he had said before? In other words, the real question is not 'Did Wesley Muhammad contradict Elijah Muhammad?', but rather 'Did Elijah Muhammad contradict Elijah Muhammad'? In my opinion (and it could only ever be an opinion) this conclusion is unwarranted. I do not intend here to suggest that I know what THEM meant by this statement in 1972. However, I would like to offer a possible way in which it could be understood. I quote again Tariq Berry from his ***The Unknown Arabs***:

The term *white* can be very confusing to those reading about the description of people of the past because, in the past, when Arabs described someone as white, they meant something entirely different from what is meant today. In the past, when the Arabs described someone as white, they meant either that he had a pure, noble, essence or that he had a nice, smooth

²⁸⁰ "Theology of Time," June 4, 1972 (Lecture).

complexion without any blemishes. They meant he had a black complexion with a light-brownish undertone.²⁸¹

Is it possible that THEM meant that the Arabian Prophet was 'white' in the Arabic sense, black-skinned with a glow and a noble essence? He seems to suggest in *Message to the Black Man* that, while un-trained in Arabic at the start of his own prophetic mission, THEM later learned Arabic from Allah.²⁸² Arabic would thus be an appropriate context in which to try to understand THEM's words. Not just the language, but the whole Classical Arabic/Islamic tradition seems to be the proper context of his broader discussion of Muḥammad and his ethnicity (though this is not to deny the revelatory context, i.e. Master Fard Muhammad's teaching to him on this matter). In other words, if we try to understand THEM's seemingly contradictory statements – Muḥammad is a black/dark Arab and a white man – in the context of the same seemingly (but not actually) contradictory statements of Anās b. Mālik, we find that there never was a contradiction. THEM's two positions are completely consistent with what the Classical Arabic/Tradition suggests: Prophet Muḥammad was a black-skinned Arab with luminous complexion and a noble essence.

²⁸¹ Berry, *Unknown Arabs*, 49.

²⁸² Muhammad, *Message to the Black Man*, 189.

VII.2. *The 'White' Muhammad vs. the Black Stone*

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad said in *Theology of Time* (1972):

I am Elijah of your Bible. I am your Muhammad of your Holy Qur'an. Not the Muhammad that was here, near 1,400 years ago. I am the one that the Holy Qur'an is referring to. The Muhammad that was here 1,400 years ago was a white man.

Then they put up, a sign of the real Muhammad. There in Mecca, Arabia, they call it, 'the little black stone.' I looked at it. I made seven circuits around it. I kissed 'the little black stone.' But, I didn't like to kiss it. Because, I knew what it meant. It means that the people will bow to the real Black man that is coming up, out of uneducated people, who have not the knowledge of the Bible and Holy Qur'an. And that's why they made that stone an unhewn stone. He will be uneducated. So, I was there kissing my, a sign of myself. And I was afraid to tell 'em, that this me you are talking about here.

This is a very profound truth articulated by THEM. And it is perfectly consistent with the classical Arabic tradition which describes Prophet Muḥammad as a 'white man', i.e. as a black Arab with a luminous glow. That same tradition describes the Black Stone in a way also confirming what THEM has just stated, and it helps us to understand the difference between Prophet Muḥammad, that 'white man' of 1,400 years ago, and THEM, the unhewn Black Stone of today, the Day of Judgment.

Abū al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥusayn reported on the authority of Anās b. Mālik that the Prophet (pbuh) said: “The Black Stone is one of the stories of Paradise”.²⁸³ Thus, the context in which we are to understand the Black Stone, or its ‘story’, is the context of Paradise, i.e. the period following the Day of Judgment. What is the ‘story’ of the Black Stone and what will be its ‘story’ in Paradise? Sa‘īd b. Jubayr reported on the authority of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abbās that the Prophet said:

The (Black) Stone will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment, with two eyes with which it will see, and a tongue with which it will speak and testify as to who touched it with sincerity.

A person is symbolized by the Stone who was considered dead and, on the Day of Judgment, is resurrected. His resurrection is described as a new sight (he is no longer blind) and the ability to speak (he is no longer dumb). This is consistent with the Jesus of the Bible who is “the first-born from the dead”. What else do we know of this person, symbolized by the stone, who will be ‘resurrected’ in the Last Days?

Abū Maṣṣūr al-Qazzāz reported on the authority of Anās b. Mālik (the same Companion who explicitly described the prophet as dark-skinned, *asmar*) that the Prophet said: “The Black Stone is *Yamīn Allah*, the Right

²⁸³ The following traditions are quoted from Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb tanwīr al-ghabash fī fa-l ‘l-sūdān wa’l-ḥabash*, ed. and trns. by Imran Hamza Alawiye, “Ibn al-Jawzī’s Apologia on Behalf of the Black People and their status in Islam: A Critical Edition and Translation of *Kitāb tanwīr al-ghabash fī faḍl ‘l-sūdān wa’l-ḥabash*,” (PhD. Dissertation, University of London, 1985) 78-79.

Hand of God on earth.” This person from the Last Days symbolized by the Black Stone is *God’s right-hand man*, His Apostle. Thus Classical Arabic Tradition – the same tradition that confirms THEM’s dual position that Muḥammad was a dark-skinned prophet and a ‘white-man’ – also confirms that the Black Stone symbolizes, not Prophet Muḥammad, but the Apostle of God who will be resurrected from his ‘dead state/people’ in the Last Days, the Day of Judgment in which we now live. This Apostle is *Yamīn Allah*, God’s very right hand, the hand of power on earth.

Writing in the ***Pittsburgh Courier*** THEM said:

Muhammad found the stone out of place and had it put back into its proper place. This act of Muhammad shows that he was not the fulfiller of the sign which the stone represents, *but rather a prototype of that which the stone represents.*²⁸⁴

A *prototype* is “an original model on which something is patterned; archetype; *an individual that exhibits the essential features of a later type.*”²⁸⁵ Though not impossible, it is difficult to imagine a Caucasian (“white man”), no matter how singularly righteous, being the *prototype* of the last black Messenger of the Black God, Allah. The Prophet of Arabia is also prototype of the Last Messenger in that both were sent to their own black communities (black Arabs and black

²⁸⁴ “The History of Jesus,” A6.

²⁸⁵ ***Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*** Tenth Edition (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 2001) s.v.

Americans), in contrast to the prophets prior to Prophet Muḥammad who were sent to the white race.

If this is the case, why then did THEM emphasize the ‘whiteness’ of the Prophet as distinct from the ‘blackness’ of the unhewn ‘stone’ of the last Day? I don’t know. However, this too is perfectly consistent with Classical Arabic Tradition.

Above we quoted the tradition according to which God gave the Arabs (and the Semites in general) a black complexion that was luminous and free of blemish, a complexion called in Arabic ‘white’ (*al-udma wa l-bayād*), but to Africans he gave only a black, we might say unhewn complexion; only some Africans or ‘children of Ham’ were given a black, clear and luminous complexion.²⁸⁶ The fact that the sources use the language *black* and *white* when referring to two different *black* complexions is of paramount importance. The Qur’an [3:106] says:

The day will come when some faces will be illumined (*tabyaddu*) while other faces will be darkened (*taswaddu*). As for those whose faces are darkened, they will be asked, ‘Did you not disbelieve after believing?’ Therefore, suffer the retribution for your disbelief.

In this day – the Day of Judgment – some people’s faces will be illuminated. The word used here is from the same root as *abyad*, the term used to describe the Prophet’s ‘whiteness’ or clear, brown complexion with luminance. Other faces – the disbelievers – will be darkened. What

²⁸⁶ On *al-bayād* as ‘luminous’ see below.

does this mean? Whose faces will be ‘illuminated’ on that day? Ibn Abbās reports:

An Abyssinian man came to the Prophet (s) [wanting] to ask him [something]. The Prophet (s) said to him, ‘Ask whatever you wish.’ So he said: ‘O Apostle of God, you (pl.) surpass us in appearance (*al-ṣūra*) and complexion (*al-akwan*) and in prophethood. If I were to believe just as you believe, and if I were to do just as you do, would I enter Paradise with you?’ He said, ‘Yes.’ Then the Prophet (s) said: ‘I swear by the One who owns my heart, that the radiance of the Black person (*bayad al-aswad*) will be seen over the stretch of a thousand years.’²⁸⁷

This is profoundly important. The context of this declaration by the Prophet is the tradition according to which Arabs in particular and Semites in general (the non-Shabazz Blacks) were blessed with a black complexion with a luminous glow, whereas the Ethiopians and other African “Hamites” (Shabazz’s family) had a black complexion but most lacked the glow (due to Shabazz’s rebellion). The Abyssinian’s question was framed in the plural, indicating that he was contrasting the black and luminous form of the Arabs and Semites in general to that of his people. The Prophet’s response indicates that black Abyssinians, i.e. the ‘Africans’ of Shabazz or so-called ‘Hamites,’ will be the faces that will glow most brightly in the Millennium, i.e. the Hereafter.

This is the ‘story’ of the Black Stone in Paradise: the people of God’s right-hand man (His Apostle) will shine the brightest in Paradise/the Hereafter. This is the difference between the Arab Prophet, with his black skin and luminous glow (the ‘white man’) and the Black Stone, born from among a dead people –

²⁸⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb tanwīr al-ghabash*, 140 [Eng], 307 [Arb].

Shabazz's people – in the last day. The stone is unhewn, i.e. unfinished, unpolished, because the Apostle is from a dead people; an unfinished, unpolished people. He and his people lacked the glow, which lack was the signature of the 'death' of the Black God.²⁸⁸ Yet it is he and his people who will have the greatest glow, that true F.O.I glow (and more), on that day and it is they who will have precedence in Paradise over the black Semites (Arabs). This is no doubt why the black-skinned 'white man', Muḥammad the Arab, heard the footsteps of the Ethiopian former slave Bilāl enter Paradise before his own: the lost-found Tribe of Shabazz has precedence in this day and the Hereafter over the Blacks of the 'Old World,' the pre- and non-Shabazz type represented by the Prophet Muḥammad and the black Arabs.

²⁸⁸ See my book, *The Truth of God: The Bible, The Qur'an, and the Secret of the Black God* (Atlanta: A-Team Publishing, 2007) Chapter V.

GOD'S BLACK PROPHETS

Deconstructing the Myth
of the White Muhammad of Arabia
and Jesus of Jerusalem

Wesley Muhammad, PhD

"The Prophet uncovered his thigh and I saw the whiteness of the Prophet's thigh." Al-Bukhari (d. 870)

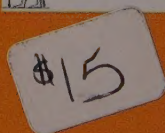
"The Messenger of God stretched his left foot, such that the blackness of his exposed part was visible." Ibn Sa'd (d. 845)

Jesus Christ and Prophet Muhammad are arguably the two most important figures of recent history. They are also the two most revered religio-historical figures in the Black community of America and much of Africa. Both are popularly and officially portrayed as white-skinned men. However, Dr. Wesley Muhammad demonstrates in this work that the historical, textual and scientific evidences converge indicating that both were actually black-skinned men whose ancestors were African Semites who crossed into the Levant and Arabia several millennia ago. For the first time, a broad range of the relevant Classical Arabic/Islamic source material is brought together, demonstrating that the popular and official image of the prophet Muhammad is a secondary fabrication. Dr. Muhammad documents the 'bleaching' of the image of both men by a later generation of Christians and Muslims who were offended by the dark appearance of their community's respective founder.

This work also addresses the intra-Muslim controversy over the seeming self-contradictory position of Elijah Muhammad on the question of Prophet Muhammad's ethnicity. It is documented that Elijah Muhammad declared both that Muhammad was a black prophet and that he was a white man. Dr. Muhammad thus raises the question, "Did Elijah Muhammad contradict himself?" Dr. Muhammad argues that he did not and that Elijah Muhammad's two statements can be perfectly harmonized when understood in the context of the Classical Arabic/Islamic scholarly tradition.



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