

Kūkæans, known from Syriac authors; he relates, in long digressions, the echoes of their quarrels, the essential points of which are to be found in a brief survey published in *ZDMG*, suppl. iii/1, Wiesbaden 1977, 362 [see also NABAT. 2.].

In a very detailed study, Michel Tardieu sees the Harrānians as Platonists (cf. *Šābiens coraniques et "Šābiens... de Harran"*, in *JA*, cclxxiv [1986], 1-44), "in the academic sense of the term. Plato was the object of their study and the centre of the research activity of their school" (39). He refuses to describe them as "gnostics" since, according to him, "they were not philosophers by profession. But they utilised the philosophers, and Plato in particular" (*ibid.*). He bases his argument on a statement by al-Mas'ūdī (*Murūdj*, ed. Pellat, ii, Paris 1965, 536-7, § 1395; cf. also his *K. al-Tanbih wa 'l-ishrāf*, 162, tr. 3-5), declaring that he "saw at Harrān, on the knocker of the door of the meeting-place of the Šābiens, an inscription in Syriac characters, drawn from Plato", which read as "He who knows his nature becomes a god" and "Man is a celestial plant. In fact, man resembles an upturned tree, the root being turned towards the sky and branches [sunk] in the ground" (Tardieu, 13 ff.). He sees, in the first "an echo of *Alcibiades*, 133.C" and, in the second, "a reminiscence" of *Timæus*, 90 A.7-B.2 (cf. ref. 3, n. 8 and 14). It may be noted that echoes of these quotations are to be found in the literature of the "Sayings of the Sages" (*Placita philosophorum*) and that the quotation from the *Timæus* occurs twice in the *Nabataean agriculture* (i, 360). There is no evidence to indicate that the Nabataeans of the region of Sūrā were Platonists; it has been observed that various currents of a gnostic tendency had developed there.

At the end of this extremely erudite survey, the author identifies the *šābi'a* of the Qurʾān with the "Archontics" of Epiphanius (*Haer.*, xxix, 7, xl, 1, 5), known also by the name of "Stratiotics" (Epiphanius, *ibid.*, xxvi, 3, 7), followers of the "celestial bands", a Judæo-Christian sect of gnostic character, formed in Palestine and known in Egypt (*ibid.*, xl, 1, 8) and in Arabia (*ibid.*, xl, 1, 5). The Qurʾānic term would be derived from the Hebrew *šābā*, "army" (an explanation already proposed by E. Pococke). Such an association leads the discussion back to Judæo-Christian circles, among whom the Elchasaites/*mughū tasila* provide, in the present writer's opinion, the best explanation of the Qurʾānic *šābi'a*.

Thus, whatever may be the origin of the name of the *šābi'ūn*, the latter are shown to belong to two distinct groups: on the one hand, the disciples of Judæo-Christian baptising sects (Ebionites, Elchasaites, *mughūtasila*, Stratiotics) and, on the other, Harrānian astrolators, the last representatives of decadent Greco-Roman paganism. Both groups may be described as gnostic: the first, Christian and the second, pagan. Hence the ambiguity of the term denoting them, and the diversity of commentaries relating to the three Qurʾānic verses which name them. A degree of corruption has occurred over the centuries, both in the terminology and the concepts, and this has greatly hindered the task of the historian of ideas and of religions.

Bibliography. Besides the references in the text, see, for studies and sources in general: D.A. Chwolson, *Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus*, i-ii, St. Petersburg 1856, where the bibliography of previous works is to be found; J. Hjärpe, *Analyse critique des traditions arabes sur les Sabéens Harraniens*, typescript thesis, Uppsala 1972, pp. 187, including the remainder of the bibl. F. de Blois, cited in text,

has made a selection of important studies of the subject, of which the most recent are: C. Buck, *The identity of the Šābi'ūn: an historical quest*, in *MW*, lxxiv (1984), 172-86, and M. Tardieu, cited in text.

In addition to his study of Elchasai, cited in text, mention should be made of A.J.W. Brandt's *Die jüdischen Baptisten*, Giessen 1910; J. Thomas, *Le mouvement baptiste en Palestine et Syrie*, Gembloux 1935 (diss. theol. Louvain, ii, 28); M. Simon, *Sur deux points de contact entre le christianisme et l'islam*, in *Iranica*, iii (1965), 20-7; H. Zimmern, *Nazoräer*, in *ZDMG*, lxxiv (1920), 429-38; B. Gärtner, *Die rätselhaften Termini Nazoräer und Iskarjot*, Uppsala-Lund 1957 (*Horae Soederblomianae*); G. Widengren, *Réflexions sur le baptême dans la chrétienté syriaque*, in *Paganisme, judaïsme, Christianisme* (= *Mél. M. Simon*), Paris 1978, 347-57; J.-D. Kaestli, *L'utilisation des actes apocryphes des Apôtres dans le manichéisme*, apud M. Krause (ed.), *Gnosis and gnosticism*, Leiden 1977, 207-16; see M. Tardieu, *Les livres sous le nom de Seth et les Séthiens de l'hérésiologie*, 204-10; M.J. Lagrange, *La gnose biblique et la tradition évangélique*, in *RB*, xxxvi (1927), 321-49; 481-515; 37/1928, 3-6; the same, *L'Evangile selon les Hébreux*, in *RB*, ii (1922), 161-81; 1923, 322-49; J. Daniélou, *Théologie du judéo-Christianisme*, Paris 1958; I. Goldziher, *Neuplatonische und gnostische Elemente im Hadī*, in *ZA*, xxii (1909), 317-44.

Of the works of R. Macuch, the specialist on the Mandaean, see his bibl. in *Histoire des Religions*, ii, Paris 1972, 520-2, and see K. Rudolph, ch. on the Mandaean in *Die Religionen Altisyrrens, Altarabiens und der Mandäer*, Stuttgart 1979, 403-62. On Manichaeism, see the excellent synthesis of H.-Ch. Puech, in *Histoire des Religions*, ii, 523-45 (bibl., 636-45); Seston, *Le roi sassanide Narsès, les Arabes et le manichéisme*, in *Mélanges N. Dussaud*, Paris 1939, 227-34 (= *BAH*, xxx); on *zandaqa*, see the study by G. Vajda, *Les zandīqs en pays d'Islam au début de la période abbasside*, in *RSO*, xvii (1938), 173-229, supplemented by that of F. Gabrieli, *La "zandaqa" au I^{er} siècle abbasside*, in Cl. Cahen (ed.), *L'élaboration de l'Islam*, Symposium of Strasbourg (12-14 June 1959), Paris 1961, 23-38; L. Massignon, *Inventaire de la littérature hermétique arabe*, appx. iii, apud Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, i³, Paris 1950; Y. Marquet, *Sabéens et Ikhwān al-Safā*, in *SI*, xxiv (1966), 35 ff.; G. Monnot, *Sabéens et idolâtres selon 'Abd al-Jabbār*, in *MIDEO*, xii (1974), 13-43; 'Abd al-Razzāk al-Ḥasanī, *al-Šābi'ūn fī ḥādīthihim wa-mādihim*, Šaydā 1955, Beirut 1958, 128 pp.

(T. FAHD)

AL-SĀBIKŪN (A.), lit. "foregoers": a term occasionally applied in Shī'ism to the Prophet, Imāms, and Fāṭima in recognition of their status as pre-existent beings and the first of God's creatures to respond to the demand "Am I not your Lord?" (*a-lastu bi-rabbikum?*). The term derives primarily from Qurʾān, LVI, 10-11 (*wa 'l-sābīkūn al-sābīkūn ulā'ika 'l-mukarribūn*); there are also examples of verbal usage (e.g. "how could we not be superior to the angels, since we preceded them (*sabaknāhum*) in knowledge of our Lord?" al-Kirmānī, *Mubīn*, i, 304). The Shī'ī concept of pre-existence closely parallels Šūfī theories concerning the Nūr Muḥammadī [q.v.] and the pre-eternal Covenant. Justification for the doctrine is found in numerous *akhbār*, where a variety of details, many of them contradictory, are given concerning the series of events preceding the creation.

The theme of light is central to many of these traditions. Thus, "God created us from the light of his greatness" (al-Kulaynī, *Kiṭāb al-Ḥudūdīya*, bāb 94, p.

303); "God created me [Muhammad] and 'Alī and Fāṭima and Ḥasan and Ḥusayn and the (other) imāms from a light" (al-Kirmānī, *Mubīn*, i, 304); "I [Muhammad] was created from the light of God; He created my family from my light and created those that love them from their light; the rest of mankind are in hell" (al-Kirmānī, *Faṣl*, 71); in one account, the Throne was created from the light of the Prophet, the angels from that of 'Alī, the heavens and earth from that of Fāṭima, the sun and moon from that of Ḥasan, and heaven from that of Ḥusayn (*ibid.*, 75-6).

The term *sābikūn* was also widely used in early Bābism, where it was applied with what seems deliberate ambiguity to the group of eighteen disciples who, with the Bāb, formed the primary cadre of the sect's hierarchy, the Letters of the Living (*ḥurūf al-ḥayy*). A faction which seems to have been broadly identical with the party centred on Kurrat al-'Ayn [*q.v.*] maintained that these early believers were *sābikūn* in the double sense of having preceded the rest of mankind in recognition of the new cause and in being actual incarnations of the Prophet and Imāms. Thus Mullā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Bushrūṭī [*q.v.*] was identified as Muḥammad, Mullā 'Alī Biṣṭāmī as 'Alī and Kurrat al-'Ayn as Fāṭima. This doctrine received approval in several writings of the Bāb, notably in the early chapters of his Persian *Bayān*. Later, Bābism introduced numerous variations on this theme, and in the early period of Bahā'ī Bābism, several believers were given names of God, preceded by the title *Ism Allāh* (thus *Ism Allāh al-Asdaq*).

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(D. MACEOIN)

SABĪL (A.), pl. *subul*, literally "way, road, path", a word found frequently in the Qur'ān and in Islamic religious usage.

1. As a religious concept.

Associated forms of the Arabic word are found in such Western Semitic languages as Hebrew and Aramaic, and also in Epigraphic South Arabian as *s'bl* (see Joan C. Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic, Sabaean dialect*, Cambridge, Mass. 1982, 326). A. Jeffery, following F. Schwally, in *ZDMG*, liii (1899), 197, surmised that *sabīl* was a loanword in Qur'ānic usage, most likely taken from Syriac, where *sh'bilā* has both the literal sense of "road" and the figurative one of "way of life", just as in Arabic (*The foreign vocabulary of the Qur'ān*, Baroda 1938, 162).

Thus we find in the Qur'ān its literal usage, as in III, 91/97, "whoever is able to make his way thither (sc. to the Ka'ba in Mecca)", etc. Figuratively, it has various senses, including (1) the idea of fighting in the

way of God, *sabīl Allāh* (II, 149, etc.) [see *ḌIHĀD*, *MUḌJĀHID*]; (2) the true way of the Prophet, as in XXV, 29/27, "O would that I had taken, along with the Messenger, a way!"; (3) a means of achieving or acquiring an object, or finding a way out of a difficulty, as in IV, 19/15, "or [until] God appoints for them (i.e. women committing indecency) a way [of dealing with them]"; and (4) in the expression *ibn al-sabīl* "son of the road", later taken as "traveller, wayfarer" and therefore as a fit object of charity or compassion. Cf. II, 172/178 (which may however here refer to those early believers who had suffered in Mecca for their faith by displacement or forced emigration; see R. Bell, *Bell's commentary on the Qur'ān*, ed. C.E. Bosworth and M.E.J. Richardson, Manchester 1991, i, 35, and R. Paret, *Der Koran, Kommentar und Konkordanz*, Stuttgart etc. 1980, 38-9, with citation from G.-R. Puin, *Der Dīwān von 'Umar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb*, Bonn 1970).

From the idea of doing something charitably or disinterestedly, *fi sabīl Allāh*, the word *sabīl* acquired in later Islamic times the specific meaning of "drinking fountain, public supply of water provided by someone's private munificence and charity", at the side of which is also found, less commonly, *sabbāla* "public fountain, drinking basin" (Dozy, *Supplement*, i, 630). For the social and architectural aspects of these, see 2. below.

Bibliography: Given in the article.

(C.E. BOSWORTH)

2. As an architectural term.

As noted above, the *sabīl* is used in mediaeval Islamic sources to designate water-houses which provided drinking water for free public use. In Egyptian *wakf* documents of the Mamlūk and Ottoman periods, the term *sabīl* is also used to designate other charitable objects, such as *ḥawḍ al-sabīl*, i.e. a drinking trough for the animals, or *maktab al-sabīl* which is a charitable elementary school for boys.

Although public water-supply is not specifically Islamic—it was a basic feature of Roman and Byzantine cities—the significance of the *sabīl* in Islamic cities is due to the repeated precept in the Qur'ān to give water to the thirsty. However, the *sabīl* was not common in all Islamic cities, and in the cities where it was widespread its appearance does not seem to predate the 12th century. In some cities, such as Cairo, Fez or Istanbul, the *sabīl* is characterised by a distinctive architectural form. It is always richly decorated and thus meant to be an aesthetic element in the street.

1. Cairo. Mediaeval Cairo was at a distance from the Nile and, because of its hot and dry climate, the provision of drinking water was a matter of great importance. Drinking water was transported from the Nile in goats skins by camels and mules and sold in the street by ambulant water-carriers or in shops. However, providing water on a charitable basis gave the ruling establishment a good reason to demonstrate their piety.

As a charitable foundation, a *sabīl* was sustained by *wakf* endowments. The *wakf* documents of Mamlūk and Ottoman Cairo include a great deal of references to *sabīls*, though the descriptions are generally brief. Some were attached to mosques, others were independent constructions. In the late 8th/14th century it became customary to combine the *sabīl* with a *maktab* or primary school for boys; the *maktab* was built above the *sabīl*.

The *sabīl* is usually built on two levels, an underground cistern (*sihrīdī*) and on the street level a room (*hānūt al-sabīl*) where the *muzammilāi*, or attendant of the *sabīl*, served the public. Through the win-