

The Rise of *sayyids* and *sādāt*: The Āl Zubāra and Other ‘Alids in Ninth- to Eleventh-Century Nishapur¹

INTRODUCTION

In the *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*, the tenth-century litterateur al-Tanūkhī (d. 384/994) tells the following story: Ṭāhir, the eponymous founder of the semi-independent Ṭāhirid governors in ninth-century Khurāsān, had a dream. The Prophet Muḥammad appeared to him and promised him worldly greatness if he protected his descendants. Ṭāhir did what he was told, and he and his sons were duly rewarded. This was not an easy task, in view of the great number of ‘Alid rebellions in areas under Ṭāhirid control. When Ṭāhir’s great-grandson Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir eventually killed one of these rebels in Kufa in 250/864, the Ḥusaynid Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar, he was told, again in a dream, that he had violated the family’s oath, and consequently he was the last Ṭāhirid governor in Khurāsān.²

There are many stories similar to this one, and whatever their historicity, they raise important questions regarding the status of the ‘Alid family. Clearly, the respect and veneration for the family of the Prophet Muḥammad was unparalleled in Islamic society. Notwithstanding religious or political affiliations, the descendants of the Prophet through his daughter Fāṭima and his cousin ‘Alī, thus

1. I am grateful to Chase Robinson for his comments, and would like to thank Christopher Melchert and Tamima Bayhoum-Daou for reading parts or earlier versions of this article.

2. AL-TANŪKHĪ, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*, ed. ‘Abbūd al-SHĀLĪ (Beirut, 1971), vol. II, pp. 240-242; cited also in Roy MOTTAHEDEH, *Loyalty and Leadership in an early Islamic Society* (Princeton, 1980), p. 70.

known as the 'Alids, came to be held in high esteem even by those who rejected their claims to the leadership of the Muslim community. Within the hierarchy of Islamic society, the 'Alids were "a blood aristocracy without peer".³

Although the 'Alid family undoubtedly occupied a privileged place among Muslims from the earliest Islamic period, their social prominence was by no means a forgone conclusion. In fact, in political as well as religious terms, those who became the heirs and successors to the Prophet for the majority of the Muslim community were generally not his descendants: while political authority came to be exercised by the caliphs, religious leadership went to the scholars. Yet, despite their virtual exclusion from the leadership of the majority of the Muslim community, both politically and religiously, the 'Alids nevertheless became a social success.

Especially in the eastern Islamic world, by the late ninth century 'Alid families emerged as one of the local elites. 'Alids settled in cities such as Nishapur, Hamadān, Qum, Rayy and Samarqand, after they had left the Ḥijāz. The Āl Zubāra, a Ḥusaynid family that rose to prominence in ninth-century Nishapur, are a good example of an 'Alid family of local notables: the basis for their social status was certainly their Prophetic genealogy, but they combined a number of other kinds of social capital, such as marriage relations, wealth, and scholarship to further their social rise.⁴

LOCAL NOTABLES

Much of the secondary literature on the rise of local notables in medieval Islam has focused on the question of the extent of state authority versus local autonomy. The role of local elites has thus been examined mainly with regards to their relationship to the centre. There has been less discussion on who those elites were, and from where their authority derived.⁵

3. Richard BULLIET, *The Patricians of Nishapur* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), p. 234.

4. See the family tree at the end of the article.

5. See Hugh KENNEDY, "Central Government and Provincial Elites in the Early 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, *BSOAS* 44 (1981), pp. 26-38; Axel HAVEMANN, *Ri'āsa and qaḍā'*: *Institutionen als Ausdruck wechselnder Kräfteverhältnisse in syrischen Städten vom 10. bis zum 12. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg, 1975); Claude CAHEN, "Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l'Asie musulmane du

There is little doubt that scholarship was an important factor in determining one's social standing in medieval Islamic society: as Richard Bulliet has shown, the local elites in eleventh-century Nishapur were almost entirely made up of *qāḍīs* and scholars, and it was not uncommon for a merchant to trade his wealth for scholarship in order to gain respectability.⁶ Chase Robinson has similarly suggested that in eighth-century Mosul this idea of status preservation through scholarship had already been applied: of one family of politicians and landowners whose sons became scholars he says that they were "not the only Mosuli family that understood that scholarship was one of the best ways to retain elite status in an Abbasid commonwealth of learning."⁷ Scholarship, moreover, could be the basis for real power. Some families, such as the Burhān family in eleventh-century Bukhārā, initially rose on account of their learning.⁸

This emphasis on learning and scholarship is little surprising. As Roy Mottahedeh has cautioned, much of our information on the local elites comes from the biographical dictionaries, works that were "written by *ʿulamāʾ* for *ʿulamāʾ*."⁹ However, the local histories that are written in the form of biographical dictionaries - such as the *Histories of Nishapur* - are often not *ṭabaqāt* works in the strict sense. They include information that would be irrelevant for the study of *hadīth* and *isnāds*, but omit

Moyen âge", *Arabica* 5 (1958), pp. 225-250, and *Arabica* 6 (1959), pp. 25-56 and pp. 233-265; Chase ROBINSON, *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest* (Cambridge, 2000), especially pp. 152-164; Boaz SHOSHAN, "The 'Politics of Notables' in Medieval Islam", *Asian and African Studies* 20 (1986), pp. 179-215; Ira Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass, 1967); Peter VON SIEVERS, "Military, Merchants and Nomads: Social Evolution of the Syrian Cities and Countryside During the Classical Period, 780-969/164-358", *Der Islam* 56 (1979). Only very few studies focus on the Islamic East: see for example Jürgen PAUL, *Herrscher, Gemeinwesen, Vermittler: Ostiran und Transoxanien in vormongolischer Zeit* (Stuttgart, 1996); Richard BULLIET, "Local Politics in Eastern Iran under the Ghaznavids and Seljuqs", *Iranian Studies* 11 (1978), pp. 35-56; and Jean AUBIN, "L'aristocratie urbaine dans l'Iran seljoukide", in Pierre GALLAIS (ed.), *Mélanges offerts à René Crozet* (Poitiers, 1966), pp. 323-332.

6. BULLIET, *Patricians*, p. 23.

7. ROBINSON, *Empire and Elites*, p. 156.

8. For this family see Omeljan PRITSAK, "Āl-i Burhān", *Der Islam* 30 (1952), pp. 81-96.

9. Roy MOTTAHEDEH, Review of Richard BULLIET, *The Patricians of Nishapur*, *JAOS* 95 (1975), p. 495; also Richard BULLIET, "City Histories in Medieval Iran", *Iranian Studies* 1 (1967), pp. 104-6.

information that would be of great importance, such as death dates.¹⁰ The impetus for writing these works can thus not primarily have been to provide handbooks for scholars; surely part of the incentive for writing such a book was also local patriotism, so as to shed a positive light on the region or city, through its scholarly achievements.¹¹

In a recent study, Jürgen Paul has identified different social groups in various cities in the Islamic East, who, on account of a certain social status, could act as intermediaries (*Vermittler*) and representatives between the changing rulers and the local populations. He distinguishes between three different kinds of intermediaries, whom he classifies according to the extent of their official appointment: first, intermediaries who take on state responsibilities through some kind of contract (for example tax collectors); second, persons who have an official appointment, but also require the consensus of the local population; and third, persons who act as intermediaries without any official appointment, but who have authority because they enjoy the loyalty of the local population. The elites from which these intermediaries are drawn from he identifies as first, the *dahāqīn*, the landed aristocracy of pre-Islamic Iran, who continued to have some importance as land owners; second, Islamic dignitaries, such as the *qāḍī* or *imām*; third, the urban nobility, some of whom were also Islamic dignitaries; and fourth, *ṣūfīs* or other ascetics.¹²

In contrast to many examples of non-ʿAlid noble families who claimed authority and status over some generations, the ʿAlids did not generally hold an official position.¹³ Indeed, Paul confirms that

10. For distinctions between the different kinds of local historiography, see for instance Stephen HUMPHREYS, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, revised edition (London, 1995), pp. 131-132; BULLIET, "City Histories", p. 104; Wadād al-QĀḌĪ, "Biographical Dictionaries: Inner Structure and Cultural Significance", in George ATIYE (ed.), *The Book in the Islamic World* (Albany, 1995), p. 94; Charles MELVILLE, "Persian Local Histories: Views from the Wings", *Iranian Studies* 33 (2000), pp. 10-13.

11. See Jürgen PAUL, "The Histories of Samarqand", *Studia Iranica* 22 (1993), p. 71.

12. PAUL, *Herrscher, Gemeinwesen, Vermittler*, pp. 2-7 and pp. 237-251. PAUL furthermore found that ʿAlids often took a leading role in the defence of cities, and that their importance in military matters increases over the period examined; see p. 123.

13. The exception is of course the *naqīb*, the headship of the ʿAlid or Ṭālibid family. I have elsewhere raise the question to what extent the *niqāba* was an official post; see Teresa BERNHEIMER, *A Social History of the ʿAlid Family from*

the descendants of the Prophet could be among the Islamic dignitaries (such as *qāḍīs* or *imāms*), but this was not a necessary condition for their authority.¹⁴ At least in the Islamic East until the end of the eleventh-century, there are very few 'Alid *qāḍīs*, and even fewer 'Alid families who held this office for more than one generation (as came to be fairly common in many medieval Islamic cities for non-'Alid families of judges).¹⁵ Moreover, even though many 'Alids are praised in the genealogies and other sources for their piety and scholarship, only very few actually appear in the biographical dictionaries of the legal schools. This may be taken as an indicator that the great number of 'Alids was neither Sunnī nor Imāmī, and thus not included in the dictionaries because they did not belong to either scholarly community; or perhaps they were simply not scholars of the kind or calibre to be included in the *ṭabaqāt* works.

THE SOURCES AND OTHER 'ALIDS IN NISHAPUR

Some 'Alid families were nevertheless scholarly enough to be included in the local histories. They may have been included also because their presence became almost part of the *faḍā'il* of a place: 'Alids who travelled through or settled in a place are frequently discussed in the local histories of Iran, and Ibn Funduq al-Bayhaqī (d. 565/1169) recommends at the end of his chapter on the *sādāt* in the *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq* that one should write about the descendants of the Prophet, because whoever writes about them well will find favour with God.¹⁶

the Eight to the Eleventh Century, unpublished D. Phil. thesis (Oxford, 2006), chapter three.

14. PAUL, *Herrscher, Gemeinwesen, Vermittler*, p. 246.

15. The situation in tenth and eleventh-century Syria seems to have been somewhat different. There are examples of 'Alid *qāḍīs* in eleventh-century Damascus; see for example Thierry BIANQUIS, "Notables ou mandrins d'origine rurale à Damas à l'époque Fatimide", *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales* 26 (1973), p. 198, and SHOSHAN, "Politics", p. 200. There are also some examples from medieval Ramlah; see Wasim DAHMASH, "On *Sādāt* Role in Medieval Ramlah", *Oriente Moderno* 18 n.s. (1999), pp. 441-449. During the tenth century the *ashrāf* of Damascus were also involved in politics and actively organizing the resistance towards the Fāṭimids; see Yaacov LEV, "Fāṭimid Policy towards Damascus (358/968 – 386/996), Military, Political and Social Aspects", *JSAI* 3 (1981-1982), pp. 165-183.

16. Ibn FUNDUQ al-Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, ed. Aḥmad Bahmanyār (Tehran, 1361), p. 65.

There are examples of 'Alids in the histories of Iṣfahān, Qazwīn, Samarqand, or Jurjān, and much information on the Āl Zubāra is found in the histories of Nishapur. The originally lengthy work of al-Ḥākīm al-Nīsābūrī (d. 405/1014) is extant only in a much abbreviated Persian translation, and its biographical section is condensed to a mere list of names, often incomplete or even faulty – according to Bulliet, it “amounts to little more than an index to its original multi-volume dictionary”.¹⁷ However, even though little remains of this probably very rich source, it is clear that various 'Alids played an important role in the city.¹⁸ More than seventy 'Alids who came through or lived in Nishapur are listed in the *Tārīkh Nīsābūr* and its continuations, such as the *Siyāq Tārīkh Nīsābūr* of 'Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (d. 529/1134).¹⁹ In the *Tārīkh Nīsābūr* there are reports on 'Alids also in the section of brief accounts: on names of great *sādāt* and their

17. Richard BULLIET, “A quantitative approach to medieval Muslim dictionaries”, *JESHO* 13 (1970), p. 196.

18. For two previous studies on 'Alid families in Nishapur and Bayhaq, see BULLIET, *Patricians*, pp. 234-245, and Dorothea KRAWULSKY, “Untersuchungen zur Shī'itischen Tradition von Bayhaq. Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Verbreitung der Shī'a in Persien”, in Wadād al-Qāḍī (ed.), *Studia Arabica et Islamica, Festschrift für Ihsān 'Abbās* (Beirut, 1981), pp. 293-311. KRAWULSKY argues that the presence of the 'Alid families in Bayhaq prepared the way for the establishment of the Shī'ite Sarbedārān dynasty, because they were the main transmitters (“Hauptträger und Überlieferer”, p. 295) of an Imāmī Shī'ite tradition. She suggests that BULLIET was given a wrong impression by the extant sources of the Sunni/Shī'ite make-up of Nishapur, and was incorrect to write that “the geographer al-Muqaddasī, who visited Nishapur in the tenth/fourth century, indicates substantial Shī'ite strength; but he could well have been misled...”. However, though it may be difficult to assert whether al-Muqaddasī was right or wrong, it is certainly problematic to suggest that the Shī'ite tradition of Bayhaq – and particularly an Imāmī one – can be deduced from the presence of the many 'Alids in the area. In fact, a number of 'Alids who played an important role in the affairs of Nishapur or in Bayhaq were by no means clearly Shī'ites.

19. Al-Ḥākīm al-Nīsābūrī, *Tārīkh-i Nīsābūr*; 'Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (d. 529/1134), *Kitāb al-Siyāq li-ta'riḫ Nīsābūr*, ed. Muḥammad Kāzīm al-MAḤMŪDĪ (Qum, 1983); there is another abridgement by al-ṢARĪFĪNĪ (d. 641/1243), *Muntakhab min Kitāb al-Siyāq li-ta'riḫ Nīsābūr*, ed. Khālid HAYDAR (Beirut, 1993). For the works in facsimile edition, see R. N. Frye, *The Histories of Nishapur*, Harvard Oriental Series vol. 45 (The Hague, 1965). See also the discussion of the texts in Wilferd MADELUNG, Review of *The Histories of Nishapur*, *JNES* 27 (1968), pp. 155-157.

burial places, on 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā's (d. 203/818) stay in Nishapur, and on a letter to one Sayyid Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī.²⁰

Detailed information is also found in the *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq* of Ibn Funduq, as well as his genealogy of the descendants of the Prophet, the *Lubāb al-Ansāb*. There is even some indication that there may have been more material on the 'Alids in the area: Ibn Funduq lists fifteen histories of Khurāsān, which he used for his *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq* in the mid twelfth century.²¹ In the *Lubāb* also, Ibn Funduq refers to now lost works such as a *Tārīkh Nisābūr* by Abū Aḥmad al-Ghāzī.²² The importance of local histories as a source for his genealogy is also shown by his extensive citations from al-Ḥākīm: he includes one section on the *sādāt* from the *Ta' rīkh Nisābūr (Faṣl fī ansāb al-sādāt al-madhkurīn fī Tārīkh Nisābūr)*, where the 'Alids appear in the same order in which they are mentioned in the surviving Persian abridgement. Ibn Funduq clearly used a more complete version of al-Ḥākīm's work than the one extant today, because he gives more extensive information on the 'Alids than is found in al-Ḥākīm's surviving history. He may also have used a different version, or have edited his source, because not all of the 'Alids listed in the *Tārīkh Nisābūr* are mentioned.²³

Be that as it may, the entries reflect the great variety of 'Alids in Nishapur. For instance, one Ḥusaynid, a descendant of Ja'far al-Šādiq, was an *ālim* in genealogy and history, and a follower of the *madhhab* of Mālik b. Anas; he gave legal opinions.²⁴ Another Ḥusaynid, Abū 'Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, is described as a Zaydī who came from Kufa to Nishapur in 373/983, and died there in 397/1006.²⁵ One

20. Al-Ḥākīm, *Tārīkh-i Nisābūr*, p. 223 (no. 2789) names; p. 211 (no. 2731) burial place; p. 208 (no. 2833) 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā; p. 221 (no. 2783) letter from Fakhr Rāzī to sayyid Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī.

21. Ibn Funduq, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, p. 21.

22. Ibn Funduq al-Bayhaqī, *Lubāb al-ansāb*, ed. Mahdī al-Rajā'ī, p. 492, and pp. 492, 496, 510 for other histories of Khurāsān. He explicitly names al-Ḥākīm among his sources; see Ibn Funduq, *Lubāb*, pp. 476, 495 and throughout the work.

23. Ibn Funduq, *Lubāb*, pp. 712-6.

24. His full name is Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Hārūn b. Mūsā b. Ja'far al-Šādiq; see Ibn Funduq, *Lubāb*, p. 715.

25. His full name is Abū 'Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Zayd b. Aḥmad b. 'Īsā b. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. Zayd b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī; see Ibn Funduq, *Lubāb*, p. 716.

Ḥasanid, Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn b. Dāwūd al-Ṭabarī was a Sunnī, and reportedly cried at the mention of ‘Uthmān, calling him *amīr al-mu‘minīn al-shahīd*, and also at the mention of ‘Ā’isha, calling her *umm mu‘minīn al-ṣādiqa bt. al-ṣādiq*. He was from the well-known Buṭḥānī family, who held the *niqāba* in Nishapur after the Āl Zubāra. Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn died in 355/966.²⁶ There is also an ‘Alid claimant in the list, whose genealogy was proven to be false after a register (*kashf*) was checked.²⁷

When the first ‘Alids settled in Nishapur is not entirely clear. Yaḥyā b. Zayd (d. 125/743) is reported to have come through on his flight east after the defeat of his father’s revolt in Kufa in 122/739,²⁸ and ‘Alī al-Riḍā (d. 203/818) stayed in the city for some time; but whether either one was accompanied by ‘Alids who settled in the city is not known.²⁹ ‘Alids are attested from the mid-ninth century onwards, and Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Zubāra may well have been among the first to actually settle down in Nishapur. There were most probably others as well, particularly at the Ṭāhirid court: al-Ṭabarī, for example, says that there were “Hāshimites and Ṭālibids” present at the assembly of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir.³⁰

Not all of the ‘Alids in the area, however, were on good terms with the Ṭāhirids. There were a number of ‘Alids in Ṭāhirid prisons, having generally been put there after uprisings connected to the Zaydī *da‘wa* in Ṭabaristān. The Ḥasanid al-Ḥusayn b. Ibrāhīm b. ‘Alī, for instance, died in prison in Nishapur in 270/883,³¹ as did Muḥammad b. Ja‘far b. al-Ḥasan b. ‘Umar b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, who had called for

26. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, p. 713. This is the family discussed by BULLIET, *Patricians*, pp. 234-245. Al-Ḥākim lists Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn and three sons. They are often called “al-Ḥusaynī”, which may be a mistake of the copier; see Al-ḤĀKIM, *Tarīkh-i Nīsābūr*, no. 1943 (Dāwūd b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn; he is Bulliet’s no. 6), and no. 2339 (Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Dāwūd al-Ḥusaynī; he is Bulliet’s no. 4; Frye facsimile, folio 50a). All later members of this family appear in al-FĀRISĪ’S continuation.

27. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, p. 714.

28. For example, al-IṢFAḤĀNĪ, *Kitāb Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn*, ed. A. Ṣaqr (Beirut, 1949), pp. 152-158; Wilferd Madelung, “Yaḥyā b. Zayd”, EI2.

29. Al-ḤĀKIM, *Tarīkh-i Nīsābūr*, p. 208 (no. 2833).

30. Al-ṬABARĪ (d. 310/923), *Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa-‘l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. DE GOEJE et al. (Leiden, 1879–1901), ser. III, p. 1523. See also Ibn Funduq, *Lubāb*, p. 716, for Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Mūsā b. Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, who came to Nishapur in 285/898 and transmitted *ḥadīth* there.

31. His full name is al-Ḥusayn b. Ibrāhīm b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Qāsim

allegiance to the *dā'ir* al-Ḥasan b. Zayd in Rayy.³² There were some earlier encounters with the Ṭāhirids as well: The first 'Alid uprising dealt with by a Ṭāhirid was led by the *sāhib al-Ṭāliqān* Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim b. 'Alī b. 'Umar, who was defeated by 'Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir in 219/834. The 'Alid fled, but was eventually captured and sent to the caliph al-Mu'taṣim in Sāmarrā, from where he escaped, and nothing more was known of him.³³ Another 'Alid from this branch of the family, Muḥammad b. Ja'far b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. 'Umar [b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī] died in the prison of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir;³⁴ this was also the fate of a Ḥasanid, al-Ḥusayn b. Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan b. Zayd b. al-Ḥasan.³⁵

Despite the many imprisonments, by the early tenth century Nishapur seems to have had a substantial 'Alid population. According to al-Bukhārī, the majority of descendants of al-Ḥusayn were in Baghdad, al-Dīnawar, Ābā, Jurjān and Nishapur,³⁶ and many of the descendants of 'Ubaydallāh b. 'Abdallāh b. al-Ḥasan b. Ja'far b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī lived in Kāshān and Nishapur.³⁷ Some of the 'Alids came via Ṭabaristān and Jurjān, such as the two most prominent families in Nishapur, the Zubāra Ḥusaynids and the Buṭḥānī Ḥasanids.³⁸ This route was clearly popular because of the 'Alid-Zaydī

b. al-Ḥasan b. Zayd b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī; see Abū Naṣr al-BUKHĀRĀ (died mid-tenth century), *Sirr al-silsila al-Alawīyya*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr al-'Ulūm (Najaf, 1962), p. 23; he is not mentioned in al-IṢFAHĀNĪ'S *Maqātil*. Another example is Muḥammad b. Ja'far b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. 'Umar b. 'Alī, known as *dībāja*, who came from Rayy and died in Nishapur in a Ṭāhirid prison; see al-Bukhārī, *Sirr al-silsila*, p. 55.

32. Al-IṢFAHĀNĪ, *Maqātil*, p. 615; al-Bukhārī, *Sirr al-silsila*, p. 55.

33. Al-BUKHĀRĪ calls him al-Ṣūfī; see al-BUKHĀRĪ, *Sirr al-silsila*, pp. 55-6; also al-IṢFAHĀNĪ, *Maqātil*, pp. 578-588; al-YA'QŪBĪ, *Tārīkh (Historiae)*, ed. M. Th. HOUTSMA (Leiden, 1883), vol. II, p. 576. According to al-ṬABARĪ, *Tārīkh*, ser. III, pp. 1165-1167, he called to *al-riḍā min āl Muḥammad*; according to al-IṢFAHĀNĪ, *Maqātil*, p. 578, he belonged to the Jārūdiyya, and his call was for *al-'adl wa'l-tawḥīd* (justice and oneness); see Wilferd MADELUNG, *Der Imam al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm und die Glaubenslehre der Zayditen* (Berlin, 1965), p. 79.

34. Al-BUKHĀRĪ, *Sirr al-silsila*, p. 55. He is also called a Ṣūfī, see Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, vol. II, p. 510.

35. He died in 260/873; see al-BUKHĀRĪ, *Sirr al-silsila*, pp. 22-23.

36. Al-BUKHĀRĪ, *Sirr al-silsila*, p. 80.

37. Al-BUKHĀRĪ, *Sirr al-silsila*, p. 20.

38. Ibn ṬABĀTABĀ, for instance, lists the Ḥasanids under Nishapur, but notes that they came from Ṭabaristān (*min nāqalat Ṭabaristān*); see Ibn ṬABĀTABĀ,

presence there. Al-Şarīfīnī lists some 'Alids with the *nisba* "al-Jurjānī" or "al-Astarābādī", which also implies that they had come from that region.³⁹

THE ĀL ZUBĀRA

Ibn Funduq adds to and continues the information cited from Al-Ḥākim. He begins the genealogical part of his *Lubāb* with the section on the Āl Zubāra (*bāb al-ansāb banī Zubāra*). His information on this family is so rich because he knew many family members personally,⁴⁰ especially one branch of the family that had moved to Bayhaq in the late tenth century. Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Zafar b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Zubāra (d. 403/1012) is said to have been the first 'Alid in Bayhaq; he was called *palāspūsh*, because of the *palās*, the wool cloth, he used to wear. Al-Tha'ālibī describes him as a Ṣūfī, saying that he was "*sharīf, fāḍil, ḍālim, zāhid yalbasu al-ṣūf*".⁴¹ Ibn Funduq met four generations of this family branch in the twelfth century: Abū 'Alī and two of his sons, Muḥammad and Ḥamza, and Abū 'Alī's father, Abū al-Ḥasan, and his grandfather Abū Maṣṣūr Zafar b. Muḥammad. He lists their genealogies until the year 559/1163-64, and says that he read the information back to them.⁴²

Muntaqilat al-Ṭālibiyya, ed. Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Sayyid Ḥasan al-Kharsān (Najaf, 1388/1968), p. 335.

39. See al-ŞARĪFĪNĪ, *Muntakhab min kitāb al-siyāq*, nos. 883, 685, 671; also C. E. BOSWORTH, *The Ghaznavids. Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran, 994-1040* (Edinburgh, 1963), p. 197.

40. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, p. 473. He goes on to discuss the genealogies of the Zubāra ancestors: First the descendants of 'Alī Zayn al-'Ābidīn, p. 477, and his son 'Alī al-Aḥṣas, p. 381. Among the Zubāra he knew he mentions for example one Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ḥamza, with whom he was in al-Askar (or the military?) for a number of years (*kāna ma'ī fī al-'askar sinīn kathīr*); see Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, p. 515.

41. Abū al-Ḥasan *palāspūsh* was born in 351/962; see Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, p. 511, and Ibn FUNDUQ, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, pp. 54-55. Elsewhere Ibn FUNDUQ says that he was born and lived in the village of Sevīz, which would suggest that his father, Abū Maṣṣūr Zafar b. Muḥammad, had already moved to Bayhaq; see Ibn FUNDUQ, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, p. 169. For the Ṣūfī description, see al-THA'ĀLIBĪ, *Yaṭīmat al-dahr* (Cairo, 1955), vol. IV, pp. 421-22; KRAWULSKY, "Zur Shī'itischen Tradition", p. 305.

42. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, pp. 697-703. He does not give any dates for the 'Alids he lists there.

Until the move to Bayhaq, the Āl Zubāra were based mainly in Nishapur. They had settled there after two sons of Muḥammad al-Zubāra, Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad and Abū ‘Alī b. Muḥammad, left Medina for Ṭabaristān in the mid-ninth century, following a call by a group of local Zaydīs. According to Ibn Funduq, the Zaydīs had written to Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad and invited him to take on their leadership, on the grounds that he was more worthy of the imamate than the *dā’ī* (*awlā bi’-l-imāma minhu*); the *dā’ī* al-Ḥasan b. Zayd had established rule in Ṭabaristān in 250/864.⁴³ When Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad and his brother answered the call of the Zaydīs and went out to Ṭabaristān, however, they did not take over from the *dā’ī*. Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad is said to have been betrayed (*ghudira*), the *dā’ī* stayed in power, and the two Ḥusaynids left Ṭabaristān for Ābā. From there, ‘Alī went to Jurjān, and Aḥmad to Nishapur.⁴⁴

Perhaps it was the family connections of his mother, a sister of ‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir, which caused Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad to settle in Nishapur. Aḥmad and his son Muḥammad in any case continued this relation in Nishapur, and married daughters of ‘Alī b. Ṭāhir b. ‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir.⁴⁵ According to al-Ḥākim, Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad b. Aḥmad and his grandson Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā were both buried in the burial place of the descendants of the Prophet (*goristan-i sādāt*), next to ‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir.⁴⁶

43. His full name was al-Ḥasan b. Zayd b. Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl b. al-Ḥasan b. Zayd b. al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. He was three times expelled from Ṭabaristān (in 251/865 by the Ṭāhirids, in 255/869 by the ‘Abbāsids, and in 260/974 by the Ṣaffārids), but managed to add Jurjān to his territories. When he died in 270/884, his brother Muḥammad succeeded him in Ṭabaristān as well as Jurjān; see al-ṬABARĪ, *Tārīkh*, vol. III, pp. 1523-1533; Ibn ISFANDYĀR, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, tr. E. G. BROWN (Leiden and London, 1905), pp. 161-187; Wilferd MADELUNG, “Alids of Ṭabarestān, Daylamān, and Gilān”, *Iran*; Wilferd MADELUNG, “Abū Ishāq al-Ṣābī on the Alids of Ṭabaristān and Gilān”, *JNES* 26 (1967), pp. 17-57; F. BUHL, “al-Ḥasan b. Zayd”, *EI2*; M. S. KHAN, “The Early History of Zaydī Shī‘ism in Daylamān and Gilān”, pp. 301-314; S. M. STERN, “The Coins of Āmul”, *Numismatic Chronicle*, series 7, vol. 6 (1967), especially pp. 210-212.

44. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, p. 492; Ibn FUNDUQ, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, p. 254; Ibn Ṭabāṭabā, *Muntaqila*, p. 338 (Nishapur), and p. 112 (Jurjān).

45. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, p. 55.

46. AL-ḤĀKIM, *Tārīkh-i Nisābūr*, p. 223, no. 2789. ‘Alī b. Ṭāhir b. ‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir does not seem to have played any particular role; see Mongi KAABI, *Les Ṭāhirides au Ḥurāsān et en Iraq* (Paris, 1983). According to Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*,

Of Abū Ja'far Aḥmad four sons, one was a *ra'īs* and *naqīb*, the first *naqīb* in Nishapur as far as we know; another is called a *qādī* and a poet,⁴⁷ and a third proclaimed himself as caliph.⁴⁸ Their prominence in Nishapur thus continued after the Ṭāhirids were defeated by the Ṣaffārids between 259/873 and 261/875, though nothing is known of the Zubāras' encounters with the new rulers.⁴⁹

The first *naqīb* Abū 'Alī Muḥammad b. Aḥmad (d. 360/970) was a *muḥaddith* and scholar who is called the *shaykh al-ṭālibiyya bi-Nīsābūr bal bi-Khurāsān fī 'aṣrihi*. He reportedly lived for one hundred years.⁵⁰ His brother Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad is also

p. 494, Abū 'Alī Muḥammad was buried in the cemetery of the 'Alids, next to the cemetery of 'Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir.

47. He is one of the few 'Alid *qādīs*. I have not been able to find him in the biographical dictionaries, and he is also not included in BULLIET's list of *qādīs* of Nishapur; see BULLIET, *Patricians*, pp. 256-259. This does not mean that Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad was not a *qādī*; as BULLIET also says, particularly before the year 300/913 the information is not complete.

48. In the *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, Ibn FUNDUQ twice mentions this uprising, p. 55 and p. 254, and seems to have confused some reports on the second passage. He says there that there were two calls to the caliphate by the Āl Zubāra, one by Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad during the reign of the Ṭāhirid 'Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir, and the second by Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad during the reign of the Sāmānid al-Naṣr b. Aḥmad. The first uprising is not otherwise mentioned in the sources (not in SAM'ĀNĪ's *Ansāb*, not in Ibn FUNDUQ's other work, the *Lubāb*, nor in any of the other genealogies), and it appears that Ibn FUNDUQ simply confused the two Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammads. He goes on to give some details on the second Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad (such as that he was the first to receive an allowance in Khurāsān, see below) that are otherwise known to refer to the first. I am grateful to Luke TREADWELL for sharing his notes on the Āl Zubāra with me. He also points out this confusion, and says that the first uprising probably never took place; Luke TREADWELL, *The Political History of the Sāmānid State*, unpublished D. Phil. thesis (Oxford, 1992), p. 152, note 28.

49. C. E. BOSWORTH, *The History of the Saffarids of Sistan and the Maliks of Nimruz (247/861-949/1542-3)* (Costa Mesa, California, 1994), pp. 116-135. Some 'Alids were also killed by the Ṣaffārids. For example, al-Ḥusayn b. Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Qāsīm b. al-Ḥasan b. Zayd b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī was imprisoned by Ya'qūb al-Layth when he conquered Nishapur; he took him with him to Ṭabaristān and, according to al-IṢFAHĀNĪ, *Maqātil*, p. 689, the 'Alid died on the way there. Another Ḥasanid died in a Ṣaffārid prison after having been caught in Ṭabaristān: he was Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh b. Zayd b. 'Ubaydallāh b. Zayd b. 'Abdallāh b. al-Ḥasan b. Zayd b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī; see al-IṢFAHĀNĪ, *Maqātil*, p. 690.

50. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, p. 493, also al-SAM'ĀNĪ, *Ansāb*, vol. VI, p. 246.

called *al-naqīb wa-‘l-ra’īs*, and he reportedly made a bid for power in Nishapur in the 320s/930s: he proclaimed himself as caliph, and a great number of people – from the *amīrs*, the generals and the common people (according to al-Sam‘ānī the *ṭabaqāt al-ra‘īyya*) – joined him. According to Ibn Funduq, his rule lasted for four months, during which time he took the *laqab* “al-‘Āḍid bi’llāh”, and the *khuṭba* was given in his name. He was eventually arrested and brought to Bukhārā by the Sāmānid Naṣr b. Aḥmad (r. 301/914-331/943) who first imprisoned him but soon let him go free, and even gave him a monthly allowance of two hundred *dirhams*, according to Ibn ‘Inaba. This made Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad the first ‘Alid in Khurāsān to receive a state pension: he was therefore called the *ṣāhib al-arzāq*.⁵¹ Ibn ‘Inaba also says that it was his brother (perhaps in his function as the *naqīb*) who turned Abū al-Ḥusayn in to the Sāmānid authorities, namely to Ḥamūya b. ‘Alī, the *ṣāhib jaysh* of Naṣr b. Aḥmad.⁵²

From the few mentions in the local history of Bukhārā, it appears that ‘Alid-Sāmānid relations were generally good: according to al-Narshakhī (fl. 332/943), the ‘Alids received part of the income from a village called Barkad, and taxes were remitted from some land in Bukhārā which was owned by ‘Alids.⁵³ As for the Āl Zubāra, the family does not seem to have suffered any further disadvantage from the caliphal episode, for the *niqāba* was passed on to the rebel’s son,

51. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, p. 495; al-SAM‘ĀNĪ, *Ansāb*, vol. VI, pp. 246 and 249. On allowances (*arzāq*) in the *diwān* of Khurāsān, see C. E. BOSWORTH, “Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Khwārazmī on the technical terms of the secretary’s art”, *JESHO* XII (1969), p. 144.

52. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, p. 495; Ibn ‘INABA, *‘Umdat al-Ṭālib fī ansāb āl Abī Ṭālib* (Najaf, 1961), new edition Maḥdī al-RAJĀ‘Ī (Qum, 2004), p. 347. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), *al-Shajara al-mubāraka fī ansāb al-Ṭālibiyya*, ed. Maḥmūd al-MAR‘ASHĪ (Qum, 1410), p. 187, adds that ten thousand men joined him, and also says that his brother, Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad, called him to his place and put him in chains when he heard about the uprising. For Ḥamūya b. ‘Alī, see TREADWELL, *Sāmānid State*, p. 316.

53. AL-NARSHAKHĪ (wrote 332/943), *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, ed. Riḍawī (Tehran, 1351/1939), p. 22 (“Barkad ‘Alawiyān”), and p. 47. Richard N. FRYE (tr.), *The History of Bukhārā* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), p. 16: “the village is called Barkad of the ‘Alids because the amīr Ismā‘īl Sāmānī bought this village and gave it as an endowment one third to the descendants of the ‘Alī and Ja‘far, a third to the poor and a third to his own heirs”; see also p. 33, for the land in Bukhārā from which taxes were remitted. Regarding the work, Jürgen PAUL says that “it is astounding that this very early text should differ from most of what followed in being so close

Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā, who took the title *naqīb al-nuqabā'*. He is described as a very pious and learned man. According to Ibn Funduq, he died whilst staying with the Būyid vizier al-Şāḥib b. 'Abbād (d. 381/991) in Jurjān in the year 376/986, at the age of 58.⁵⁴ A letter of condolence (*kitāb al-ta'āzī*) by Ibn 'Abbād to Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā on the death of his father survives, and it is given in an abridged form in the *Lubāb*.⁵⁵

Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā was most probably a Shī'ite. He is included in the Imāmī *rijāl* works, and said to have been theologizing (*takallama*) and debating on questions of *wa'ūd*, *qiyās* and *ijtihād*. He is said to have written a number of books on the imamate, as well as one book entitled *Ibtāl al-qiyās*.⁵⁶ Ibn Funduq relates various stories about him to emphasize his piety and generosity, some of which are of interest in this context as well; regardless of their historicity, they convey a sense of the importance, wealth and authority of this particular 'Alid and his family.

According to one account, Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā went on the *ḥajj* accompanied by seven hundred men, *sādāt* and '*ulamā'*. A *wakīl* (proxy) was in charge of the provisions, and when the party were to return home after having finished the *ḥajj* rituals, there were insufficient funds for their departure. Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā decided to sell one of his slave girls (*ghulam*), for whom the *wakīl* got a price of one thousand *dīnār* in the market. Yaḥyā, however, could not after all bring himself to sell her, but instead manumitted her. His *wakīl* asked in astonishment what they would now do with all the *sādāt* and '*ulamā'*, and Yaḥyā told him not to despair, but to have faith in God. Soon a man came who told him about a rich merchant from Khurāsān who lay dying in the neighbourhood; he wished to see the

to what we would term a 'local history': local perspective, local events and developments, traditions and so forth"; see Jürgen PAUL, "The Histories of Herat", *Iranian Studies* 33 (2000), p. 95, note 4. The original version was written in Arabic, and dedicated to the Sāmānid Naṣr b. Nuḥ in 322/934.

54. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, p. 498.

55. Ibn 'ABBĀD, *Rasā'il al-Şāḥib* b. 'Abbād, ed. 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām and Shawqī Ḍayf (Cairo, 1947), p. 136, and Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, p. 497.

56. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, p. 498; al-NAJĀSHĪ, *Kitāb al-Rijāl*, vol. II, pp. 413 and 414; al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist kutub al-shī'a* (Beirut, 1983), no. 706, p. 264; Ibn SHAHRĀSHŪB, *Ma'ālim al-'ulamā'*, no. 858, p. 118; ĀGHĀ BUZURG al-Ṭīhrānī, *Ṭabaqāt a'alām al-shī'a*, vol. I (Beirut, 1971), pp. 332-334. For the Shī'ite position on *qiyās*, see Hossein MODARRESSI, *An Introduction to Shī'ite law* (London, 1986), p. 29.

sayyid in order to make him the heir to his property, because he did not have any heirs otherwise. The merchant bequeathed to him seven of his cargo loads (*aḥmāl*) worth seven thousand *dīnār*, and thus Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā was compensated with seven thousand *dīnār* for the one thousand he did not take.⁵⁷

Another story similarly emphasizes the ‘Alid’s piety, as well as his standing in Nishapur: an Ismā‘īlī *dā‘ī* (*rajuḥ min du‘āt al-miṣriyyīn*) had gone to Bukhārā, apparently in order to convert the Sāmānid Nūḥ b. Maṣṣūr.⁵⁸ After the Sāmānid is said to have shown him some interest, the *dā‘ī* went to Nishapur and gained a following among the people (*al-ashraf wa-l-awbāsh*). When he wanted to come out openly, however, he was told that he could do so only with the consent of Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā. The ‘Alid agreed to come to the *dā‘ī*’s house, listen to his secret mission (*asrār*) and debate whatever he wished. The *dā‘ī* consulted with his followers, and – perhaps feeling the threat – they decided to take the opportunity to kill the ‘Alid. But when the latter arrived with his entourage (*mawākib al-haybat al-nabawiyya*) for the debate, he answered the *dā‘ī* with “brilliant proofs” and won the dispute. Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā returned to his house and sent out his servants to catch the *dā‘ī*; this they did, dragging him out and executing him. The story continues that the Sāmānid *amīr* was not pleased by this news; he ordered Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā to come to Bukhārā, and planned to get rid of him. The plans failed, and, according to Ibn Funduq, the ruin and demise of Nūḥ b. Maṣṣūr were sealed by his treatment of the ‘Alid.⁵⁹ The message of the story is similar to the one about the demise of the Ṭāhirids after their killing of Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar in Kufa,⁶⁰ and numerous other ones in the historical tradition: to conspire against an ‘Alid was not a good idea.

57. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, pp. 498-99. A similar story follows.

58. This episode is rather unusual: The fact that he is called a *rajuḥ min du‘āt al-miṣriyyīn* seems to suggest his connection to the Fātimids, and thus a later stage in the Ismā‘īlī mission in Khurāsān; see Patricia CRONE and Luke TREADWELL, “A New Text on Ismailism at the Samanid Court”, in Chase ROBINSON (ed.), *Texts, Documents and Artefacts. Islamic Studies in Honour of Donald Richards* (Leiden, 2003), p. 66, and pp. 37-67 for earlier Ismā‘īlī activity at the Sāmānid court; also S. M. STERN, “The Early Ismā‘īlī Missionaries in North-West Persia and in Khurāsān and Transoxania”, *BSOAS* 23 (1960), pp. 56-90.

59. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, pp. 501-502.

60. The story is given at the beginning of this article; see al-TANŪKHĪ, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*, vol. II, pp. 240-242.

Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā died in 376/986, and the *niqāba* was passed on to his son, Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad,⁶¹ and after him to one of his four sons, Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad. He was the last *naqīb* from the Zubāra family in Nishapur.⁶² By his generation, the Āl Zubāra had become well established among the cultural, political and religious elites of the city. Rowson has written about a contest between the famous poet Badī‘ al-Zamān al-Ḥamadhānī (d. 398/1008) and Abū Bakr al-Khwārazmī, which took place in the house of the *naqīb* Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad.⁶³

In 395/1004 the *niqāba* was transferred to the Buṭḥānī family, following a quarrel that involved the *naqīb*’s brother, Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn Jawharak. Ibn Funduq says that “he [Jawharak] was an impetuous youth, and a quarrel arose between him and the sons of Sayyid Imām Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn b. Dāwūd the traditionist... The followers of the imām Muṭṭalibī Shāfi‘ī, may God be pleased with him, considered it advisable to help the sons of the Sayyid Abū ‘Abdallāh [the Buṭḥānīs], and the *niqāba* passed from this line to the other one, and the sons of the Sayyid al-Ajall Abū ‘Alī [the Āl Zubāra] became dispersed.”⁶⁴

From the account given in Ibn Funduq’s *Lubāb* it is clear that the Āl Zubāra no longer played a major role in Nishapur. Some Zubāras remained in the city, but many moved away, to Ṭūs and Iṣfahān, or joined their cousins in Bayhaq.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, Ibn ‘Inaba in the early fifteenth century still described them as the most important family among the descendants of al-Ḥasan al-Afṭas – probably not because of their time in Nishapur, but because in the fourteenth century they had again risen to prominence. They had obtained the governorships of Baṣra and Irbīl, and were part of the Ilkhānid court at Tabrīz.⁶⁶

61. Little is known about him from the *Lubāb*, as there seems to be a lacuna in the text; see Ibn Funduq, *Lubāb*, p. 502.

62. The four sons are Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī, Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad, Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad, Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn Jawharak; see Ibn Funduq, *Lubāb*, p. 502.

63. Rowson, “Religion and Politics”, p. 660.

64. Ibn Funduq, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, p. 55, translated in Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, p. 197. For a fuller discussion of the different ways in which the *niqāba* was transferred see Bernheimer, *Social History*, chapter three.

65. Ibn Funduq, *Lubāb*, pp. 508-9.

66. Ibn ‘Inaba, *Umdat al-Ṭālib*, p. 346; see also Krawulsky, “Zur Shi‘itischen Tradition”, p. 303.

SCHOLARSHIP

The Āl Zubāra as well as their Ḥasanid rivals in Nishapur, the Buṭḥānīs, also equipped themselves with the tools of power and prestige of medieval Muslim society, with learning. They studied with some of the main *hadīth* scholars of their time, often Shāfi'īs, but also Ḥanafīs and even Ḥanbalīs; often, therefore, authorities who are not regarded as Shī'ites.⁶⁷ Some of the 'Alids were known as *muḥaddithūn*, and some are known to have been teachers themselves. Al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī, for instance, heard *hadīth* from Abū Manṣūr Ḥafṣ, a son of the short-lived caliph Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad.⁶⁸

Like many other 'Alid scholars, members of the Zubāra family are rarely found in the biographical dictionaries: they do not appear in the Sunnī dictionaries, as students of their teachers or otherwise, and in the Shī'ite *rijāl* works only Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā is recorded, as noted above.⁶⁹ Perhaps the reason for this absence was that they were transmitters of *hadīth*, but not really Sunnī or Shī'ite scholars; nevertheless, the Āl Zubāra clearly enjoyed great freedom in choosing their teachers in tenth- and eleventh-century Nishapur - perhaps especially so as descendants of the Prophet.

One of the outstanding scholars in Nishapur in the late tenth century was Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāq b. Khuzayma (d. 311/923), a Shāfi'ī and a teacher to many of the 'Alids.⁷⁰ Both Abū 'Alī

67. For a detailed list see BERNHEIMER, *Social History*, Appendix II.

68. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, p. 509.

69. Even Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā did not study, as far as we know, with Shī'ite authorities. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, p. 168 and *Lubāb*, pp. 496-502, and al-SAM'ĀNĪ, *Ansāb*, vol. VI, p. 249 give the following teachers: In Nishapur Abū 'Abbās Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Aṣamm (d. 346/95), according to SEZGIN, *GAS*, vol. 1, p. 186, the only transmitter of Shāfi'īs *mabsūt*; in Marw Abū al-'Abbās 'Abdallāh b. al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 357/968), a Ḥanafī and *qāḍī* who was 97 years old at the time of his death; see al-QURASHĪ, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīyya* (Hyderabad, 1332/1913), no. 726; and Heinz HALM, *Die Ausbreitung der ṣāfi'itischen Rechtschulen von den Anfängen bis zum 8./14. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 1974), p. 8. The teacher in Bukhārā was Abū Ṣāliḥ Khalaf b. Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Khayyām (d. 360/970), and in Baghdad Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh al-Shāfi'ī (d. 354/965), who is known to have written a *musnad Mūsā al-Kāzīm b. Ja'far b. Muḥammad*; see KOHLBERG, *Ibn Ṭāwūs*, no. 131, p. 156; al-Khaṭīb al-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. V, pp. 456-458; SEZGIN, *GAS* vol. 1, p. 191.

70. Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāq b. Khuzayma al-Sulamī al-Nīsābūrī, he heard from Iṣḥāq b. Rāhūya, and al-Bukhārī and Muslim related from him; see

Muḥammad (the first *naqīb*) and Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad (the caliph) heard *ḥadīth* from him, as did two Ḥasanid, al-Ḥasan b. Dāwūd b. ʿIsā and Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥusayn al-ṭabarī, whose sons took over the *niqāba* from the Āl Zubāra in 395/1004.⁷¹ Christopher Melchert has questioned the assertion of Heinz Halm that Ibn Khuzayma was instrumental in the spread of the Shāfiʿī *madhhab* in Khurāsān. He suggests instead that the non-Surayjī Shāfiʿism of the Khurāsānian ahl *al-Ḥadīth*, to whom Ibn Khuzayma belonged, was only loosely Shāfiʿī; he says that it was “a matter more of theology than jurisprudence”.⁷² Whether or not the ʿAlids studied Shāfiʿī jurisprudence with Ibn Khuzayma is not known; it certainly never says so explicitly. As Ibn Khuzayma was also, and perhaps primarily, known as a *ḥadīth* scholar, they may simply have heard *ḥadīth* from him.

Another Shāfiʿī who appears in the Zubāra list of teachers is Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Shāfiʿī (d. 354/956). He is known to have held pro-ʿAlid views, as he is the author of a *Kitāb Faḍāʾil amīr al-muʾminīn ʿAlī b. Abī ṭālib*, and a *Musnad Mūsā al-Kāẓim b. Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad*. However, according to Kohlberg he cannot be suspected of anti-Sunnī tendencies, because when the Būyids prohibited the transmission of traditions on the virtues of the Companions (*faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥāba*), Abū Bakr defied them and openly transmitted these kinds of traditions in the mosque.⁷³ He may not be a good example of an “*Imāmī* Shāfiʿī”, apparently not an uncommon phenomenon; but clearly a defence of the Companions did not prevent him from writing about the descendants of the Prophet, in this case even a Twelver *imām*, as well.⁷⁴

al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā* (Beirut, 1999), vol. II, pp. 84-91; al-Ṣafādī, *Das Biographische Lexicon des Ṣalāhaddīn Ḥalīl ibn Ayyak aṣ-Ṣafādī* (Damascus, 1953), vol. II, p. 196; Fuat SEZGIN, *GAS* (Leiden, 1967), vol. I, p. 601; al-DHAHABĪ, *Siyār aʿlām al-nubalāʾ* (Beirut, 1981-1984), vol. XIV, p. 365; al-SHĪRĀZĪ, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahāʾ* (Beirut, 1981), p. 105. He is also mentioned in Ibn SHAHRĀSHŪB, *Maʿālim al-ʿulamāʾ*, no. 744, p. 103.

71. For Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥusayn, see al-SAHMĪ, *Taʾriḫ Jurjān*, p. 200, no. 290; for his brother al-Ḥasan, see al-DHAHABĪ, *Taʾriḫ al-Islām* (Beirut, 1987-), vol. XXVI, p. 122; al-Khaṭīb al-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Taʾriḫ Baghdād* (Cairo, 1931), vol. VII, p. 306 (no. 3822).

72. Christopher MELCHERT, *The Formation of the Sunnī Schools of Law, 9th-10th Centuries C.E.* (Leiden, 1997), p. 98.

73. KOHLBERG, *Ibn Ṭāwūs*, p. 156, no. 131; see al-Ṣafādī, *Das Biographische Lexicon*, vol. III, p. 347, and al-Khaṭīb al-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Taʾriḫ Baghdād*, vol. V, pp. 456-7; Sezgin, *GAS*, vol. I, p. 191.

Devin Stewart has recently discussed the connection between Twelver Shī'ites and the Shāfi'ī *madhhab*. He suggests that the development of the Twelver Shī'ite legal system must be understood in relation to the Sunnī legal system, to which the Shī'ites reacted and responded in various ways: they either conformed to it, or adopted important concepts, or rejected it. As they were eager to escape their position as a marginalized minority, they mostly took steps to be included; thus, they chose to conform to the Sunnī legal system, or to adopt Sunnī legal concepts. One way of conforming was to join a Sunnī *madhhab*, while "inwardly still holding to Shiite beliefs".⁷⁵ A number of Shī'ite scholars did so, and chose the Shāfi'ī *madhhab*, perhaps because of a shared aversion to *qiyās*.⁷⁶ Shī'ite scholars have often pointed out that in terms of jurisprudence they are closest to the Shāfi'īs; Stewart suggests that beyond that, there was "a long and self-conscious tradition" of Twelver Shī'ites who studied with Shāfi'ī teachers.⁷⁷

To show the extent of this tradition, Stewart provides a list of scholars, starting with al-Faḍl b. Shādhān, an important Shī'ite jurist and theologian who also wrote a *Kitāb al-Dībāj fī masā'il al-Shāfi'ī wa-Abī Thawr wa-'l-Iṣfahānī*, which Stewart says "presents the opinions of al-Shāfi'ī, Abū Thawr (d. 240/854) and Dāwūd b. Khalaf al-Iṣfahānī (d. 269/882) but is not designed as a refutation (*radd*), like so many of al-Faḍl's other works, which suggests that he had some important connections to the currents of legal thought that constituted the nascent Shāfi'ī *madhhab*".⁷⁸

74. See for example Christopher MELCHERT, "The Imāmīs between Rationalism and Traditionalism", in L. Clarke (ed.), *The Shī'ite Heritage. Essays on Classical and Modern Traditions* (New York, 2001), pp. 280-282.

75. DEVIN STEWART, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy. Twelver Shiite Responses to the Sunni Legal System* (Salt Lake City, 1998), p. 61; see also the reviews by Wilferd MADELUNG, *JAOS* 120.1 (2000), pp. 111-114, and Robert GLEAVE, *Islamic Law and Society* 7.1 (2000), pp. 102-104. MELCHERT, *Formation*, pp. 83-84, suggests that semi-rationalists of all backgrounds maybe have found a convenient cover in the Shāfi'ī school: "Adherence to the Shāfi'ī schools fits well with a widespread disposition among the proto-Imāmīya toward semi-rationalism. Additionally, these Shī'ah may have been repelled by the association of ḥanafism with *irjā'*, a largely anti-Shī'ite movement."

76. STEWART, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, p. 106.

77. STEWART, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, p. 63.

78. STEWART, *Islamic Legal Orthodoxy*, p. 65. For al-Faḍl b. Shādhān, see for example SEZGIN, *GAS* I, p. 537; al-Ṭūsī, *Fihrist kutub al-shī'a* (ed. Najaf, n.d.), pp. 150-151; Ibn SHAHRĀSHŪB, *Ma'ālim al-'ulamā'*, no. 606, pp. 80-81; al-Najāshī,

Whether it was these currents of legal thought that attracted both Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad and Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad to al-Faḍl b. Shādhān is not known. Both related from him: Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad knew his books, having heard them from ‘Alī b. Qutayba (*qarā kutub al-Faḍl b. Shādhān samā’an min ‘Alī b. Qutayba*),⁷⁹ and Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad related *hadīth* from ‘Alī b. Qutayba, “who related from al-Faḍl b. Shādhān, who related from ‘Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā”.⁸⁰

Aside from the Shāfi‘īs, the ‘Alids had connections with well-known scholars of other *madhhabs* as well. For instance, one of the Bayhaqī Zubāra, Abū Ya‘la Zayd b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad (d. 447/1055), had settled in the town of Fariyūmad, where he owned much property (*amlāk*).⁸¹ Al-Ḥākim Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥaskānī (d. after 470/1077-8), one of the great Ḥanafī scholars of eleventh-century Nishapur, is said to have gone out to Fariyūmad to study with him.⁸² According to Bulliet, al-Ḥaskānī was probably the most important member of any generation of the Ḥanafī branch of the Ḥaskānīs, and his distinction was in learning, and *hadīth* in particular.⁸³ Al-Ḥaskānī also related from other ‘Alids, such as one Ḥasanid from the Buṭṭhānī family.⁸⁴

Kitāb al-Rijāl, vol. II, pp. 168-169. See also Tamima BAYHOM-DAOU, “The imam’s knowledge and the Quran according to al-Faḍl b. Shadhān al-Nisābūrī (d. 260 A. H. /874 A. D.)”, *BSOAS* 64 (2001), pp. 188-207.

79. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, p. 494; ‘Alī b. Qutayba should probably be ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Qutayba; see al-KISHSHĪ, *Rijāl*, pp. 451-456 (no. 415). Al-SAM‘ĀNĪ makes the same mistake, but his source is also al-Ḥākim; al-SAM‘ĀNĪ, *Ansāb*, vol. VI, p. 249. There is generally some confusion about his name: al-NAJĀSHĪ calls him ‘Alī Aḥmad b. Qutayba; see al-NAJĀSHĪ, *Kitāb al-Rijāl*, vol. II, pp. 168-169.

80. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, p. 496.

81. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Tārikh-i Bayhaq*, p. 186. For the village see LESTRANGE, *Lands*, p. 392.

82. Ibn FUNDUQ, *Lubāb*, p. 502. He is al-Ḥākim Abū al-Qāsim ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥaskānī al-Hadhhdhā’. Ibn Ṭāwūs describes him as a Sunnī, but there is some discussion about this; see Kohlberg, *Ibn Ṭāwūs*, p. 151: “the usual biographical notice about him, which portray him as a Ḥanafī, should therefore probably be taken as reflecting his true belief, and not merely his outward position”. There were two books of al-Ḥākim al-Ḥaskānī’s in the library of Ibn Ṭāwūs, *the Kitāb Shawāhid al-tanzīl*, and the *Kitāb Du‘ā ḥudāt ilā adā’ ḥaqq al-muwālāt* (nos. 542 and 120). See also al-DHAHABĪ, *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz* (Hyderabad, 1957), vol. III, pp. 1200-01 (no. 1032); al-QURASHĪ, *Jawāhir al-muḍīyya*, vol. II, pp. 496-7.

83. For the Ḥaskānī family, see BULLIET, *Patricians*, pp. 227-233.

84. See al-ḤASKĀNĪ, *Shawāhid al-tanzīl*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Maḥmūdī (Beirut, 1393/1974), pp. 80 and 82, where he relates from a Ḥasanid called Abū

According to his entry in al-Fārisī, al-Ḥaskānī heard *ḥadīth* from his father, his grandfather, al-Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan and others from his family (*wa-ahl baytihi*).⁸⁵

CONCLUSION

Patricia Crone has noted that the disintegration of the ‘Abbāsīd state paved the way for, among other things, the emergence of local notables, whom she calls “the distinctive figure of the medieval polity”. The local notable was the product of the fusion of landed and commercial wealth and scholarship, and he was “epitomized by the appearance of the *sharīf* in the medieval sense of *sayyid*, descendant of the Prophet. The medieval *sharīf* was an ‘Alid who is *not* a political pretender, usually not even a Shī‘ite, and who instead encashes his Prophetic genealogy as a title to local status... Wherever they appear, they are a sure sign that morally states have ceased to matter”.⁸⁶

Clearly, the Āl Zubāra in Nishapur were just of this kind of medieval *sharīf*. Yet, as this brief article has shown, they became part of the local elite even if they revolted; and in addition to encashing their Prophetic genealogy, they supported their rise with other kinds of social capital, with social relations, wealth, as well as scholarship. Though few of them made it into the *rijāl* books, it seems that in the case of the Āl Zubāra, as well as the Buḥhānīs after them, it was precisely the combination of their sacred descent and scholarship, however marginal, that ensured their place among the Khurāsān elites.

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al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasanī (d. 401/1010). There are also other ‘Alids from whom he relates, for example pp. 284-5, and p. 302; also a Ja‘farid, p. 289.

85. AL-FĀRISĪ, *Muntakhab min Siyāq*, nos. 706 and 707: *qarā’ ‘alayhī al-Ḥaskānī*. His own entry is no. 982, pp. 463-4.

86. PATRICIA CRONE, *Slaves on Horses. The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 85-86.

Annexe

The Zubāra Ḥusaynids in Nishapur

VII	wife	VIII	wife
Muḥammad al-Zubāra, <i>amīr</i> of Medina, b. ‘Abdallāh b. al- Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan al-Afṭas b. ‘Alī b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib	sister of ‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir	Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad; asked to come to Ṭabaristān by local Zaydis; settled in Nishapur ‘Alī (went to Jurjān)	Ḥājān, daughter of ‘Alī b. Ṭāhir b. ‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir

IX	wife	X	wife
<p>Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad (d. 339/951); <i>naqīb</i>; caliph in Nishapur, <i>ṣāhib al-arzāq</i></p>	<p>Fāṭima, daughter of Maymūna daughter of ‘Alī b. Ṭāhir b. ‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir</p>	<p>Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā (d. 376/986), <i>naqīb al-nuqabā’</i>, <i>shaykh al-‘itra</i>, <i>naqīb</i> and <i>ra’īs</i> in Nishapur</p>	<p>Fāṭima bt. al-sayyid... [Lubāb, p. 502]</p>
<p>Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad (d. 360/970) <i>shaykh al-Ṭālibyyīn</i>, first <i>naqīb</i> in Nishapur</p>		<p>Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn</p>	<p>Voir p. 66 →</p>
<p>Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn</p>		<p>Abū Maṣṣūr Ḥafṣ, friend of al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī</p>	<p>Fāṭima bt. ‘Abd al-Azīz Muslim</p>
<p>Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad, <i>al-qāḍī al-shā’ir</i></p>			

XI	wife	XII	wife
Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad, <i>al-naqīb al-ra'īs</i>	'Ā'isha bt. al-Faql al-Badī' al-Hamadhānī <i>al-shā'ir</i>	Abū al-Qāsim 'Alī <i>al-ajall al-'ālim</i>	
		Abū 'Alī Muḥammad, last <i>naqīb</i> of this family	
		Abū al-Faql Aḥmad	

Abū 'Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn al-Jawharak

Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad *al-zāhid*, born 351/962 *palāspūsh*, died in Bayhaq in 403/1012

Abū Ibrāhīm Ja'far *al-zāhid*; mentioned in the the *Tā'rikh Baghdad* as part of the *madhhab al-rāfiḍa al-imāmiyya* (TB, vol. VII, 236 (3728))

Abū 'Alī Aḥmad al-akbar, *al-āmil al-shā'ir*. 'Amiyya, *Lubāb*, p. 513

Voir p. 68

XIII	XIV	XV
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Abū Ja‘far
Muḥammad

Abū Barakāt
Muḥammad

Abū ‘Abdallāh al-
Ḥusayn

Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥasan
Abū Maṣṣūr Yaḥyā

Abū al-Ḥusayn/Abū
al-Ḥasan ‘Alī; called
‘ālim min al-sādāt

Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad;
poet with a *dīwān shi‘r*,
Lubāb, p. 514

Abū Muḥammad
Yaḥyā, whom Ibn
Funduq says he just
saw (*Lubāb*, p. 514)
him

Jamāl al-Dīn Ḥamza

Abū al-Qāsim
‘Abdallāh

Abū al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī

Abū Ṭālib Aḥmad

Voir p. 69



	XII		wife	
▼				
Abū al-Qāsim Aḥmad al-aṣghar				

Abū al-Saʿīd
Zayd; called *ʿilm
al-hudā*, died
in Jumādā I of
440/1048

XIII	XIV	XV
	<p>Abū Ya‘lā Ḥamza</p> <p>Abū ‘Abdallāh Ḥusayn</p> <p>Abū ‘Alī Aḥmad</p>	<p>Abū Sa‘īd Zayd</p> <p>Ismā‘īl</p> <p>Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī; Ibn Funduq was in the army with him for a number of years</p> <p>Abū al-Futūḥ Nāṣir</p>
<p>Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī</p>	<p>Abū Barakāt Zayd</p> <p>Abū Sa‘īd Muḥammad, also called <i>‘ilm al-hudā</i> (<i>Lubāb</i>, p. 515), and Ibn Funduq had just seen him</p> <p>Abū Ibrāhīm Ja‘far, he has an allowance from the dīwān of Bayhaq (<i>la-hu rizq fī dīwān Bayhaq</i>)</p>	