Fragments from the Testament of Adam
in some Arabic Islamic sources

Juan Pedro MONFERRER-SALA
University of Cordoba (Spain)

ABSTRACT: In this research, we provide a series of fragments from Arabic Islamic sources, relating to the "Testament of Adam". With all this, we try to contribute to the compilation of the legend in Arabic Islamic literature and, at the same time, to take advantage of those elements useful for the study of the legend in Christian texts.

KEY WORDS: "Testament of Adam". Apocrypha. Arabic. Islam.

When death time was coming to Adam, he ordered his sons to look for Paradise fruits. This topic based on literary cycles about Adam's figure[1], is mainly developed in the well-known "Testament of Adam"[2], where it shows us one of the most famous legendary travels. The subject had an important impact in Jewish literature, as well as in Christian texts[3], throughout the several textual literary forms which developed and transmitted it during the Mediaeval Age[4].

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[1] For the Armenian literary tradition we have the information collected by Stone, M.E., "Report on Seth Traditions in the Armenian Adam Books", in Stone, M.E., *Selected Studies in Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha. With Special Reference to the Armenian Tradition.* («Studia in Veteris testamenti Pseudepigrapha», 9), Leiden-New York-København-Köln: E.J. Brill, 1991, pp. 41-53.

[2] About the origins of the "Testament of Adam", *cf.* Reinink, G.J., "Das Problem des Ursprungs des Testamentes Adams", in *Symposium Syriacum 1972.* Célebré dans les jours 26-31 octobre 1972 à l'Institut Pontifical Oriental de Rome. («Orientalia Christiana Analecta», 197), Roma: Pontificum Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1974, pp. 387-399.

[3] *Cf.* for instance the Syriac recension included in the legend of the "Cave of the Treasures" (*Me'arat Gazzē*), Ri, Su-Min, "La Caverne des Trésors et le testament d'Adam", in Lavenat, René (ed.), *V Symposium Syriacum 1988* (Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, 29-31 août 1988. («Orientalia Christiana Analecta», 236), Roma: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1990, pp. 111-122.

[4] *Cf.* about the textual transmission process in this kind of texts, Kraft, R.A., "The Multiform Jewish Heritage of early Christianity", in Neusner, Jacob (ed.), *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, Leiden. E.J. Brill, 1975, III, pp. 174-199.

In this research we are going to deal with the "Testament of Adam", which arrived to Islam and was assimilated by "tradition literature", which added it to the *isrā'īliyyāt corpus*. The Islamic reception of the "Testament of Adam" was not uniform. There are different drafts of that text as a result of the receptionist labour which the *isrā'īliyyāt*[5] and *masīḥiyyāt*[6] compilers did. But in this case, as a result of a perceptive rule, they removed all the Christological elements included in the section of the "Prophecy", contained in the Christian textual tradition of the legend.

Within the most significative Islamic texts collecting the "Testament of Adam", an interesting one is that of Ibn Katīr. This author makes reference to some parts of the legend in some secuential pieces of *aḥādīṯ* by means of several representative elements of this legend[7]. We have written other articles about the importance to Ibn Katīr's text for the reception of legendary texts, which arrived to Islam from Jewish and Christian circles, and about the reasons that made this possible[8].

In this paper, we could see how Ibn Katīr offered a textual organization introduced by an abridged Biblical rewriting[9], most probably on the basis of the sources which were transmitted to the fragment. This is not an isolated example of the legend reception, as other Muslim compilers have also included this *isrā'īliyyah* in their

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[5] *Cf.* Lazarus-Yafeh, Hava, *Intertwined Worlds. Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 23.

[6] See an example included in a paper by Castillo Castillo, Concepción, "Aportación mítica a la historia de Adán y Eva (II)", *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos*, 31 (1982), pp. 58-60.

[7] Ibn Katīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-l-nihāyah*. Ed. by 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwaḍ and 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawǧūd *cum alii cooperantibus*. 15 vol. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1415/1994, I, p. 101.

[8] Monferrer Sala, Juan Pedro, "La conversión de Saulo, según Ibn Katīr", *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos*, 45 (1996), pp. 147-159; Monferrer Sala, J.P., "Una traducción árabe del Símbolo niceno-constantinopolitano", *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Orientalistas*, 33 (1997), pp. 69-75; Monferrer Sala, J.P., "A Biblical quotation in Ibn Katīr's *al-Bidāyah wa-l-nihāyah*", in: Herman Teule & Rifaat Ebied (ed.), *Festschrift in honour of Professor Samir Khalil Samir*. «Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta», Louvain: Peeters, 2004, forthcoming.

[9] On this concept, adding also that of *reductio*, *cf.* Nickelsburg, G.W.E., "The Bible rewritten and Expanded", in Stone, M.E. (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*. «Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum» II/2, Assen-Philadelphia, 1984, pp. 89-156 y 110-118.

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respective works. The first fragment contains the section devoted to the "Testament of Adam", where the author tells us the following: "The meaning of Seth[10] is «God's gift»[11], a popular etymology which is not the only one, because there was another one with the meaning of "the base" (*wa-tafsīr ism Šīt al-asās*)[12]; he was named with this [name] they were provided with him after Abel was murdered (*wa-ma'nà Šī hibat Allāh wa-sammayā-hu bi-dālika li-anna-humā ruziqā-hu ba'da an qutila Hābīl)*".

Obviously, as I have just pointed out, we are in front of an abridged rewriting from the Book of Genesis (4,25): "And [he] named him Seth, because God has replaced to me another son instead of Abel, who was killed by Cain" (*'et-šᵉmô Šēt ki šat-lî 'Elôhîm zera' 'aḥer taḥat Hebel kî haragô Qayin*). In the Hebrew text the name Šēt has been explained from the verb *šît* ("to replace"), which is the same popular etymology that Ibn Katīr is giving to introduce the fragment.

However, Ibn Katīr tells us nothing about the specific origin of the rewriting, because the interpretations of that legend, as well as the text of the versicle, are the same which we could find in Targumic literature, in the Syriac text of the Pešīṭā or even in the *Septuaginta* version. These are the standardized texts, although they are not the only ones in these languages, which could be the origin of that quotation.

Besides this, Ibn Katīr's quotation is not the only peripheral interesting element in the "Testament of Adam" to our aim. In fact, after the rewriting we find a *hadīt* that Abū Darr heard from the Prophet. In this *hadīt* the following information is included: "God revealed a

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[10] About Seth, see Klijn, A.F.J., *Seth in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Literature.* «Novum Testamentum Suplementum» 46, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977; and also from Islamic sources Huart, Cl., "Shīth", in *First Encyclopaedia of Islam 1913-1936.* Edited by M.Th. Houtsma *et alii*, Leiden-New York-Köln: E.J. Brill, 1993 (Reprint Edition), VII, p. 385.

[11] *Cf.* in this respect al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīḫ al-rusul wa-l-mulūk.* Ed. M.J. de Goeje, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964, I/1, p. 152; al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūǧ al-dahab wa-ma'ādin al-ǧawhar*, Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1408/1989, I, p. 37; Ibn al-Atīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-ta'rīḫ*, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, *s.d.*, I, p. 28.

[12] Ibn aṭ-Ṭaiyib, *Commentaire sur la Genèse.* («Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium», 274; scriptores arabici, 24). Edité et traduit par J. C. J. Sanders, Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO – Peeters, 1967, I, p. 45, line 7 (trans. II, p. 43, line 11).

hundred and four sheets, fifty to Seth" (*inna Allāh anzala mi'ah ṣaḥīfah wa-arba' ṣuḥuf 'alà Šīṯ ḥamsīn ṣaḥīfah*)". This *ḥadīṯ* introduces the first element of the "Testament of Adam". The two quotations we have mentioned above, first the Biblical quotation and second that one related to the Prophet's *sunnah*, are useful for joining the text inside the last divine revelation through Islam.

We have found the first reference to the "Testament of Adam" in a narrative sequence spelled by Muḥammad b. Isḥāq. This first allusion is really important to identify the exact source of the dispersed information which was collected by Ibn Kaṯīr. If we do not take into account this first reference, we would have several possibilities which could make even more difficult our task in order to establish the exact and concrete source of the text. The fragment, of which we also have information from al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Aṯīr with a little bit changes, tell us the following:

> *Lammā ḥadarat Ādam al-wafāh 'ahada ilà ibni-hi Šīṯ wa-'allama-hu sa'āt al-layl wa-l-nahār wa-'allama-hu 'ibadāt tilka al-sa'āt wa-a'lama-hu bi-wuqū' al-ṭūfān ba'da ḏālika.*

> «When dead was coming to Adam, he made his will to his son Seth. He informed him about the hours of the night and day[13]. He apprised him about the service of those hours and he advised him that the flood will take place after that».[14]

The fragment we have just copied and translated is a clear allusion to a piece of the "Testament of Adam"[15]. This piece is the "Hours", which enjoys/enjoyed great popularity inside the Syriac church. After this fragment, Ibn Kaṯīr combined two different narrative units containing the rest of the information about the collected "Testament of Adam". This narrative units are going to be translated below in a moment. We can see the thematic parallelisms between these narrative

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[13] *Cf.* Testament of Adam (Syriac Recension) R III; Testament of Adam (Arabic recension) fol. 3r-3v.

[14] Ibn Kaṯīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-l-nihāyah*, I, p. 101.

[15] The edition and translation of the "Testament of Adam" is included in Robinson, S.E., *The Testament of Adam*, Chico, Ca.: Scholars Press, 1982. We have a Spanish translation, with a good introduction, in Martínez Fernández, Francisco J., in Díez Macho, Alejandro (ed.), *Apócrifos del Antiguo Testamento. V*, Madrid: Cristiandad, 1987, pp. 391-438.

units and the so-called "prophetic section". The topic of the flood, for instance, is found in this section as well as in R II, in order to be entirely accurate:

«When Adam was dead –peace be upon him– it was Friday (*yawm al-ǧum'ah*). The angels came to him with a balsam (*ḥanūṭ*) and a shroud (*kafan*) –from God, glorious and excels– from Paradise. They honored him there [together with] his son, to whom he gave something, peace be upon him" [16].
Ibn Isḥāq said: "The sun and the moon disappeared for seven days and nights».[17]
«'Abd Allāh ibn al-Imām Aḥmad has referred [to us]: Hidbat b. Ḫālid told us: Ḥammād b. Salamah informed to us from Ḥamīd and this from al-Ḥasan, who heard it from Ŷaḥyà, who is Ibn Ḍamrah al-Sa'dī, who said: "I saw an old man (*šayḫ^m*) in the city who was talking and asking for him they answered: "Tis is Abū b. Ka'b [who] said: When death came to Adam he said to his sons: 'Hey sons! I need the fruits of Paradise'. They went to look for them and the angels, taking his shrouds and his balsam as well as the hoes (*al-fu'ūs*), the spades (*al-masaḥī*) and the baskets (*al-makātil*), received them and said: 'Sons of Adam!, what do you want?, what are you looking for?, what do you wish?, where are you going to?', and they answered: 'Our father is ill and he needs the fruits of Paradise'. Then the angels answered them: 'Come back your father has dead'. When they were arriving Eve recognized them and she sheltered in Adam, who said her: 'I have only been brought before you; it is between you and the angels of my Lord –glorious and excels– who have taken it, they have washed it, shrouded it, embalmed it, buried it, entombed it and they have praised for him'. They have put it in his grave, set out it and have throw soil over it'. Then they said: 'Sons of Adam!, this is your rule (*sunnata-kum*)'. Right chain (*isnād ṣaḥīḥ*)"».[18]

Although some texts are limited to mention the "Testament of Adam", even without giving any new about it [19], the information included in Ibn Katīr work is completed in another fragments, like that

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[16] *Cf.* Testament of Adam (Syriac Recension) R III.
[17] *Cf.* Testament of Adam (Syriac Recension) R III; Testament of Adam (Arabic Recension) fol. 10v.
[18] Ibn Katīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-l-nihāyah*, I, p. 101.
[19] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūǧ al-ḏahab*, I, p. 37.

well-known work by al-Kisā'ī, the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*. In this respect, in a fragment included in Ibn Katīr's work, the task of getting the fruits of Paradise belongs to Seth. Seth, in the Greek recension of text entitled "Life of Adam and Eve", is the only one who can smell the odour of the fruits of Paradise without falling asleep at the moment when God and the angels descended in front of Adam's dead body[20]. I am giving below al-Kisā'ī's fragment related to the "Testament of Adam":

> "[Adam said]: I need some fruits from Paradise (*ṯimār min al-ǧannah*) and my Lord has promised he will give them to me. Go out, look for the angles and tell them my need. Seth went out and he found an angel of the gardens treasures (*ḫazā'in al-ǧinān*) named Nuryo'el (*Nūryā'īl*) with some fruits from Paradise he had carried to Adam". [21]

The theophoric name Nūryā'īl ("God's light") perhaps could be a textual variant from the Hebrew form Urī'el ("God's light"), which is the name of a well-known angel in the Jewish and Christian literary productions. In this later production this is the angel who reveals the prophecy. He is also the responsible of the penance and the one who introduces the prayers to God. [22]

On the other hand, the igneous element is a well-known *topos*, very common in Syriac literary production, to describe the qualities of the angels, who are described, among other possibilities of abstract description, as *nūrā* ("fire") or *nūrānē* ("burnings") [23].

And al-Ṯa'labī, in his *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* has also collected some information about the "Testament of Adam" that I am going to give in the translation below:

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[20] *Cf.* Tromp. Johannes, "Literary and Exegetical Issues in the Story f Adam's Death and Burial", in Frishman, Judith & Van Rompay, Lucas (ed.), *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation. A Collection of Essays*. «Traditio Exegetica Graeca» 5, Louvain: Peeters, 1997, p. 28.

[21] Al-Kisā'ī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā*. Ed. Isaac Eisenberg, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1922-23, p. 77.

[22] *Cf.* Martínez Fernández, Francisco J., in Díez Macho, Alejandro (ed.), *Apócrifos del Antiguo Testamento. V*, p. 399 from a fragment by Cedrenus.

[23] On the Syriac angelology in the "Testament of Adam", *cf.* Murray, Robert, "Some Themes and Problems of Early Syriac Angelology", in Lavenat, rené (ed.), *V Symposium Syriacum 1988*, pp. 143-153.

"The historians (*ahl al-ta'rīḫ*) and the chroniclers (*aṣḥāb al-aḫbār*) say that Adam, peace be upon him, became ill eleven days before dying and he willed to his son Seth. He wrote his testament, he gave it to Seth and ordered him it has to be keept from Cain's progeny, because Cain has killed Abel, because of his jealousy when Adam give him his sister Iqlīma to marry her". [24]

Abel's death, in relation with Cain's sister Iqlīma (Lebōdah in the Syriac version of the "Testament of Adam", R I and III) [25] is a legendary *topos* in the Jewish literary tradition as well as in Christian one. [26] On the other hand, the "Testament of Adam" in its Syriac recension (R I) is attributed to Seth, but not to Adam, as it has been stated in the fragment by al-Ṯaʿlabī.

Al-Ṭabarī, just as we can expect, is referring us to some information about the "Testament of Adam". That information, collected by al-Ṭabarī, is limited, as we can see in the fragment below, and it is also contained in Ibn al-Aṯīr's work:

"Ḥumayd told us saying: Salamah transmitted to us from Muḥammad b. Isḥāq, who said: When death came to Adam they said: God informed about the prayer (*al-duʿāʾ*) to his son Seth. He made a pact with him and showed him the cult of the creatures for every hour. [27] And he transmitted that there is a kind of creatures devoted to their cult in every hour". [28]

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[24] Al-Ṯaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ al-musammà ʿarāʾis al-maǧālis*, Beirut: al-Maktabah al-Ṯaqāfiyyah, *s.d.*, p. 41.

[25] The name is attested in several variants inside the different linguistic traditions, *cf.* the variant Azūdā in Ibn aṭ-Ṭaiyib, *Commentaire sur la Genèse*, I, p. 44, line 1, trans. II, p. 42, line 2 and note 2, where the editor stated that Ibn al-Ṭayyib took the name from 'Išōʿdad of Merv.

[26] *Cf.* Ginzberg, Louis, *The Legends of the Jews*, Philadelphia, I, pp. 108-109; Monferrer Sala, Juan Pedro, *Apócrifos árabes cristianos*. (Col. «Pliegos de Oriente»), Madrid: Trotta, p. 73.

[27] On the several angelical levels, *cf.* Testament of Adam (Syriac Recension) R II [IV,18].

[28] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīḫ al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, I, p. 153.

The scattered fragments included in Islamic authors' works, which we have just translated, are of great interest not only to know the Islamic reception of the "Testament of Adam", but also to help to reconstruct the different text which have arrived to us from Jewish and Christian literary production.

Whereas the Greek and Syriac texts has been studied by scholars, the development of the legend in Arabic language in its several Christian recensions has hardly aroused interest among scholars. Besides Renan's translations and notes[29], Bezold's editions and study[30], Troupeau's edition of the ms. 68 in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (fol. 2r-10v)[31], Gibson's edition[32] and the information given by Battista-Bagatti[33] as well in Martínez[34] and Monferrer's version[35], we have no studies about the different redactional peculiarities of the legend in its several recension in Arabic language.

In the particular case concerned with the Islamic reception, it has hardly considered, apart from those cases in which the text related to the "Testament of Adam" was a piece of an edited whole text or a particular study. Even in these cases scholars had not paid attention to the legend as a piece of an autonomous literary cycle.

[29] Renan, Ernest, "Fragments du livre gnostique intitulé: Apocalypse d'Adam, ou Pénitence d'Adam, ou Testament d'Adam", *Journal Asiatique*, 5/2 (1853), pp. 427-471, mainly pp. 439-440 y 462-463 in footnote.

[30] Bezold, C., "Das arabisch-äthiopische «Testamentum Adami»", in Bezold, C. (ed.), *Orientalische Studien Theodor Nöldeke zum Siebzigsten Geburtstag gewidnet*, Giessen, 1906, II, pp. 893-912.

[31] Troupeau, Gérard, "Une version arabe du «Testament d'Adam»", *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph*, 46 (1970), pp. 3-14 (reedited in Troupeau, Gérard, *Études sur le christianisme arabe au Moyen Age*. («Collected Studies Series», 515), Aldershot (Hampshire): Variorum, 1995, III, pp. 3-13.

[32] Gibson, M. Dunlop, *Kitab al-Magall or The Book of the Rolls*. («Studia Sinaitica», 8), London, 1901.

[33] Battista, A. y Bagatti, E., *La Caverna dei tesori*. Testo arabo con traduzione italiana e commento, Jerusalén: Franciscan printing Press, 1979.

[34] Martínez Fernández, Francisco J., in Díez Macho, Alejandro (ed.), *Apócrifos del Antiguo Testamento. V*, pp. 403-404.

[35] Monferrer Sala, Juan Pedro, *Apócrifos árabes cristianos*, pp. 61-119.

The fragments we have given in this paper are the first contribution of a former research in which we will try to give new texts to collect as much information as possible from Islamo-Arabic sources.