It was early recognized as a foreign word, and said by the philologers to be of Persian origin.[1] The Pers. كليد to which they refer it is itself a borrowing from the Gk. κλείς, κλείδα (Vullers, Lex, ii, 876), which was also borrowed into Aram. אקלידא ; Syr. ܩܠܝܕܐ, ܐܩܠܝܕܐ or ܩܠܝܕܐ. In spite of Dvořák's vigorous defence of the theory that it passed directly from Persian into Arabic,[2] we are fairly safe in concluding that the Ar. اقلِيد is from the Syr. ܐܩܠܝܕܐ,[3] and the form مقلاد formed therefrom on the analogy of مفتاح, etc.[4]

مِلَّة (Milla).

ii, 114, 124, 129 ; iii, 89 ; iv, 124 ; vi, 162 ; vii, 86, 87 ; xii, 37, 38 ; xiv, 16 ; xvi, 124 ; xviii, 19 ; xxii, 77 ; xxxviii, 6.

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It is most commonly found in the phrase مِلَّة ابراهيم, but is used for the faith of Jews and Christians (e.g. ii, 114), and for the old heathen beliefs (e.g. xii, 37 ; xiv, 16).[5] The Muslim authorities take it as an Arabic word but have some difficulty in explaining it.[6]

It has long been recognized as one of those religious terms for which Muḥammad was indebted to the older religions. Sprenger held that it was an Aramaic word which the Jews brought with them to the Ḥijāz, and Hirschfeld, Beiträge, 44, agrees,[7] as does Torrey, Foundation, 48. The Aram. מלא, like the late Heb. מלה, means word, but could be used figuratively for the religious beliefs of a person. The Syr. ܡܠܬܐ, ܡܠܬܐ, however, is a more likely source, for besides meaning word,

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[1] al-Jawālīqī, Muʻarrab, 139 ; as-Suyūṭī, Itq, 324 ; Mutaw, 46 ; al-Khafājī, 181.

[2] Fremdw, 79 ff. ; Muḥīṭ, sub voc., wants to derive it directly from Greek.

[3] Fraenkel, Fremdw, 15, 16 ; Mingana, Syriac Influence, 88.

[4] Fraenkel, Fremdw, 16, thinks that a form with מ may have been known in the Aramaic from which the Arabic word was borrowed.

[5] Rāghib, Mufradāt, 488, says that مِلَّة can only be used for a religion that was proclaimed by a Prophet. Cf. LA, xiv, 154.

[6] See Sprenger, Leben, ii, 276, n.

[7] In his New Researches, 16, Hirschfeld suggests that in Muḥammad's mind מלה = מלא may have been somewhat confused with מילה circumcision, so that מלא representing the doctrine of Abraham, and מילה representing the outward sign of the Abrahamic covenant, being confused together, produced مِلَّة as the دِين of Abraham. This seems, however, a little far-fetched.