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0521561817 - The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate - Wilferd Madelung

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In a comprehensive and original study of the early history of Islam, Wilferd Madelung describes the conflict that developed after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, between his family, Hāshim, and his tribe, Quraysh, for the leadership of the Muslim community. He pursues the history of this conflict through the reign of the four 'Rightly Guided' caliphs to its climax in the first Inter-Muslim War. The outcome of the war, which marked the demise of the reign of the Early Companions, led to the establishment of dynastic despotism under the Umayyad caliphate and to the lasting schism between Sunnite and Shi'ite Islam. In contrast to recent scholarly trends, Professor Madelung brings out 'Alī's early claim to legitimate succession, which gained support from the Shi'a, and offers a radical and convincing reinterpretation of early Islamic history after the death of Muḥammad. This important and original study will make a major contribution to the scholarship of the period and rekindle the debate over the succession to Muḥammad.

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The succession to Muḥammad

A study of the early Caliphate

Wilferd Madelung

University of Oxford



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In memory of my mother
Emma Elisabeth Madelung, née Messerschmitt
(1907–1990)
who opened my eyes to history as it really is

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Preface

This book was at first planned as a monograph on the nature of the caliphate at its foundation and during its earliest phase, before the establishment of Umayyad dynastic rule, with only a minimal discussion of the events and persons determining its evolution. The extreme distrust of most western historians with regard to the Muslim literary sources for the early age of Islam seemed to suggest a restriction of the inquiry to a few salient events whose reality, if not their interpretation, is not seriously disputed. As the research progressed, it became evident that such an approach would not do justice to the subject. The question of the caliphate is too intricately tied to much of the internal history of the early Muslim community to be discussed without a solid understanding of that history based on more than abstract speculation. Work with the narrative sources, both those that have been available to historians for a long time and others which have been published recently, made it plain that their wholesale rejection as late fiction is unjustified and that with a judicious use of them a much more reliable and accurate portrait of the period can be drawn than has so far been realized.

The introduction of large narrative sections into the presentation has, apart from substantially expanding the volume, inevitably changed the character of the book and produced a certain dichotomy which may at times obscure its basic purpose. Especially the detailed description of the *fitna*, the Inter-Muslim War opening with the revolt against the third caliph and outlasting the reign of the fourth, may appear to have marginalized the discussion of the caliphate itself. Narrative history carries its own momentum and dictates its appropriate ways of presentation. Persons, their motivation, action and reaction move to the foreground and confine the interpretation of ideas and documentary texts. The book, especially its latter parts, can now be read as a partial history of the period. The reader should, however, be aware of its selective perspective. The Inter-Muslim War was the climax of the conflict about the caliphate and as such a proper understanding of its nature was vital.

Selective narration from the large pool of narrative source material

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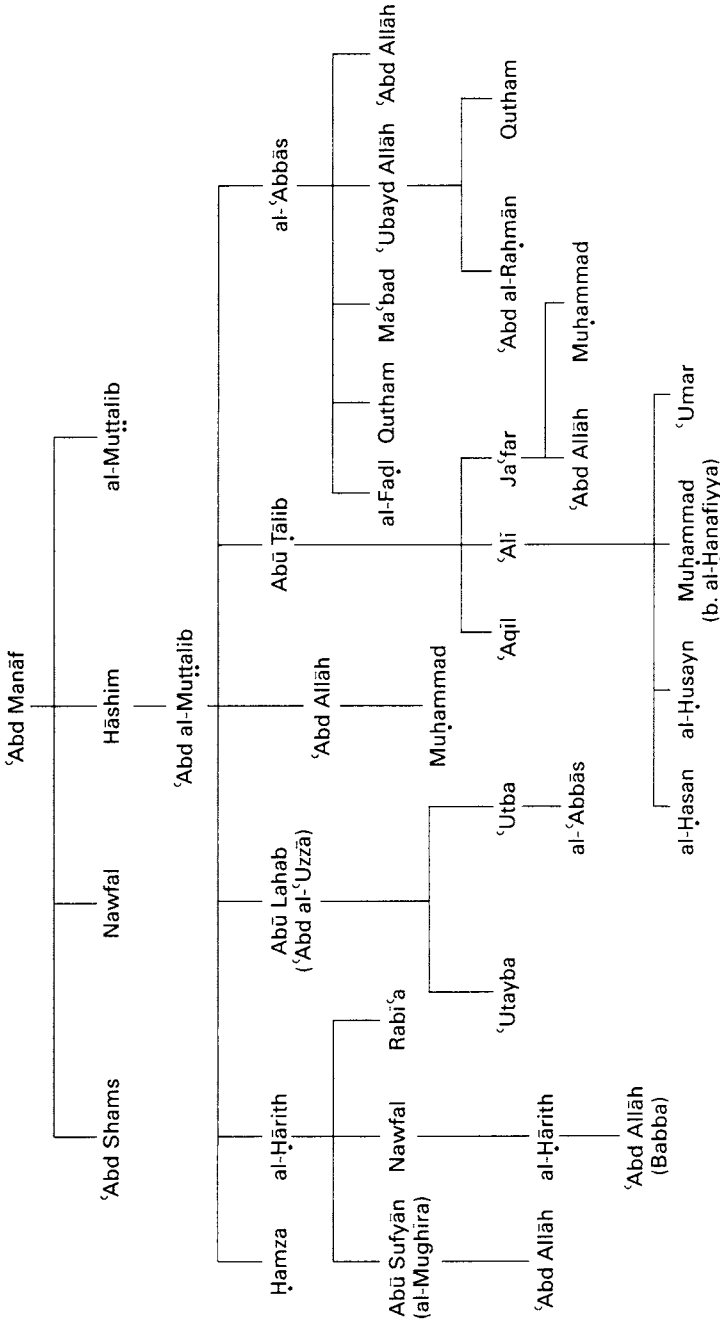
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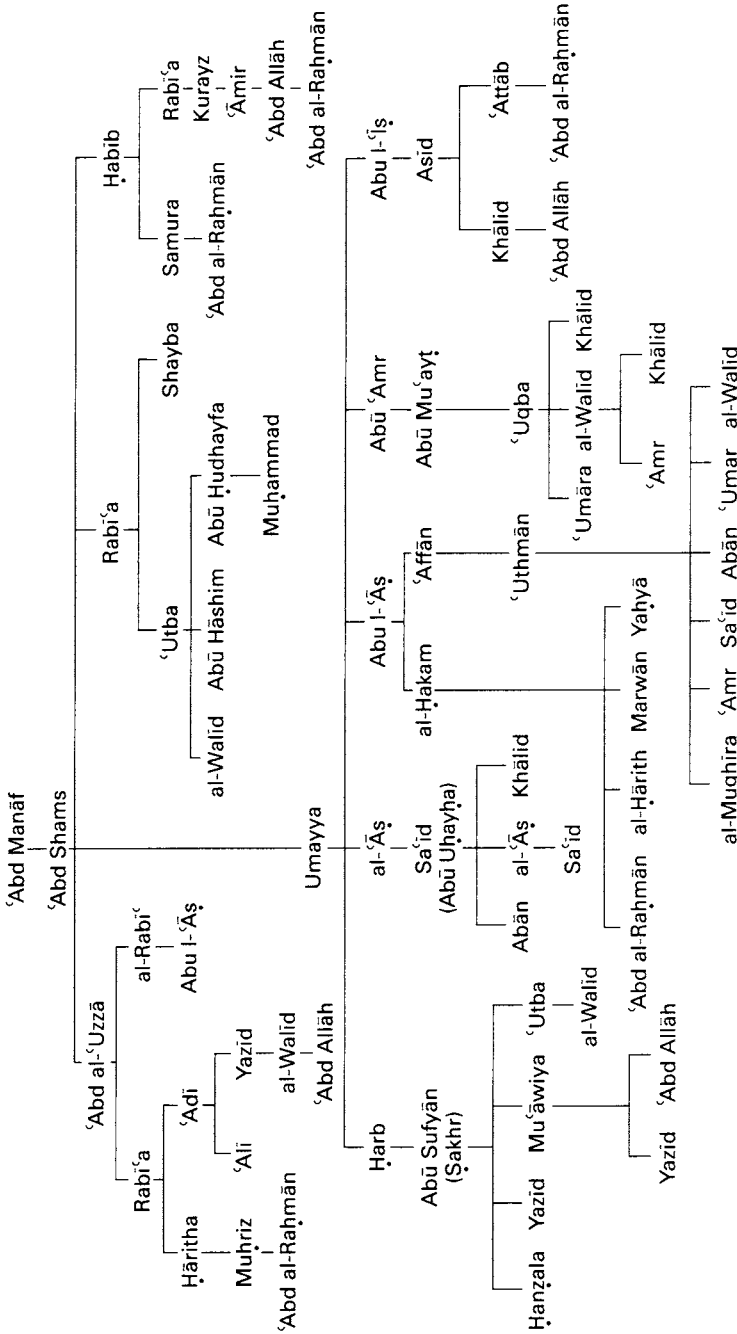
imposed compromises for the sake of readability. I have tried to strike a proper balance between abridgement and faithful rendering of reports and texts. Colourful detail which the early reporters thought worth recording, and their personal comments, may convey to the late observer living in a very different environment a sense of the times which the abstract factual data largely fail to convey. In general those reports that seemed most reliable were chosen for presentation. Significant divergent reports are often briefly summarized in the notes without full argumentation for my preference. In narrative reporting there is obviously a wide range of shades of reliability between outright fraudulent fiction and accurate factual testimony. It would have served no good purpose to weigh and assess every statement and expression of the narrators as might be appropriate in more narrowly focused studies.

The book stands in a scholarly tradition on which it builds and to which it reacts. Much of the basic western research on the history of the early succession to Muḥammad was carried out and published by a few scholars in the early decades of this century. Later research has generally accepted the substance of their conclusions while modifying some detail. The revision proposed here is more radical. The discussion naturally puts the differences into sharp relief and brings out aspects passed over or distorted in the earlier studies more prominently than if the book had been written in a vacuum of scholarship. Severe criticism, however, should not obscure its indebtedness to the tradition.

My special thanks are due to my wife who patiently read and reread through an unfamiliar subject and made valuable suggestions to improve the presentation.



1 Banū Hāshim



2 Banū 'Abd Shams

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616–19	Boycott of Hāshim by Quraysh
622	<i>Hijra</i> : emigration of Muḥammad from Mekka to Medina
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3/625	Uḥud: Muslim defeat by Mekkans
6/628	Al-Ḥudaybiyya: truce between Muḥammad and Mekkans. Pledge (of loyalty) under the Tree
7	Muslim conquest of Khaybar
8/629	Expedition to Mu'ta
630	Muslim conquest of Mekka
	Ḥunayn: Muslim victory over Hawāzin. Siege of al-Ṭā'if
11/632	13 Rabī I/8 June Death of Muḥammad Election of Abū Bakr as successor at Saqīfat Banī Sā'ida
12/633	Battle of al-Yamāma at al-'Aqrabā'
13/634	Beginning of Muslim invasion of Iraq and Palestine 22 Jumādā II/23 August Death of Abū Bakr Succession of 'Umar
15/636	Battle on the Yarmūk: decisive Muslim victory in Syria
16	Battle of al-Qādisiyya: decisive Muslim victory in Iraq
17/638	Council of al-Jābiya: 'Umar establishes pension register (<i>dāwān</i>) and immobilizes conquered land as <i>fay</i> '
18/639	Plague of 'Amwās Invasion of Egypt
21/642	Battle of Nihāwand: decisive Muslim victory in Iran
23/644	26 Dhu l-Ḥijja/3 November Murder of 'Umar <i>Shūrā</i> election of 'Uthmān
25/645–6	Northern Syria and Upper Mesopotamia included in governorship of Mu'āwiya 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'd b. Abī Sarḥ governor of Egypt Al-Walīd b. 'Uqba governor of Kūfa

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- 27/647 Victorious campaign of Ibn Abī Sarḥ to Ifrīqiya
 29/649–50 ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Āmir governor of Baṣra
 30/650–1 Sa‘īd b. al-‘Āṣ governor of Kūfa
 32/652–3 Death of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Awf
 34/654 Revolt in Kūfa. Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī appointed governor
 35/656 1 Dhu l-Qa‘da/1 May Egyptian rebels at Dhū Khushub. ‘First siege’
 1 Dhu l-Ḥijja/31 May Egyptian rebels in Medina. ‘Second siege’
 18 Dhu l-Ḥijja/17 June Murder of ‘Uthmān
 19 Dhu l-Ḥijja/18 June Pledge of allegiance to ‘Alī
 36 Ṣafar/August Qays b. Sa‘d governor of Egypt
 29 Rabī‘ II/25 October Departure of ‘Alī from Medina
 15 Jumādā I/8 December Battle of the Camel
 657 1 Ramaḍān/21 February Appointment of Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr as governor of Egypt
 Dhu l-Ḥijja/May Departure of ‘Alī from Kūfa for Ṣiffīn
 37 8–11 Ṣafar/26–29 July Main battle of Ṣiffīn
 15 Ṣafar/2 August Signing of arbitration agreement
 658 10 Shawwāl/21 March Kharijites leave Kūfa for al-Nahrawān
 Shawwāl-Dhu l-Qa‘da/March–April Meeting of arbitrators at Dūmat al-Jandal. Recognition of Mu‘āwiya as caliph in Syria
 Dhu l-Ḥijja/May Battle of al-Nahrawān
 38 Ṣafar/August Conquest of Egypt by ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ.
 Murder of Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr
 659 Sha‘bān/January Meeting of arbitrators at Adhruḥ
 39/660 Dhu l-Ḥijja/April–May Campaign of Yazīd b. Shajara to Mekka
 40/661 19 Ramaḍān/28 January Death of ‘Alī
 Succession of al-Ḥasan
 41 Rabī‘ II/August Surrender of al-Ḥasan
 49–50/669–70 Death of al-Ḥasan
 56/676 Nomination of Yazīd as crown prince
 60/680 Death of Mu‘āwiya. Succession of Yazīd
 61 Death of al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā’
 61–73/680–92 Revolt and counter-caliphate of ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr

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63/683	Battle of al-Ḥarra. Medina subdued by Syrians
64	Death of Yazīd. Succession and death of Mu‘āwiyā II
684	Succession of Marwān
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Abbreviations

<i>Aghānī</i>	Abu l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, <i>Kitāb al-Aghānī</i>
<i>Annali</i>	L. Caetani, <i>Annali dell' Islam</i>
<i>EI</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i>
<i>JSAI</i>	<i>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
Ṭabarī	al-Ṭabarī, <i>Ta'riḫ al-rusul wa l-mulūk</i>