Muhammad’s Heirs

Muslim scholars are a vital part of Islam and are sometimes considered “heirs to the prophets,” continuing Muhammad’s work of establishing Islam in the centuries after his death. But this was not always the case: indeed, Muslims survived the turmoil of their first century largely without the help of scholars. In this book, Jonathan Brockopp seeks to determine the nature of Muslim scholarly communities and to account for their emergence from the very beginning of the Muslim story until the mid-tenth century. By analyzing coins, papyri, and Arabic literary manuscripts from the ancient mosque-library of Kairouan, Tunisia, Brockopp offers a new interpretation of Muslim scholars’ rise to positions of power and influence, serving as moral guides and the chief arbiters of Muslim tradition. This book will be of great benefit to scholars of comparative religion and advanced students in Middle Eastern history, Islamic Studies, Islamic Law, and early Islamic literature.

Jonathan E. Brockopp is an associate professor of History and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University. He is the editor of and contributor to The Cambridge Companion to Muhammad (Cambridge University Press, 2010).
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Muhammad’s Heirs

The Rise of Muslim Scholarly Communities, 622–950

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Acknowledgments

A work such as this registers many debts, and it is my pleasure to thank the individuals and institutions that have made my efforts possible. Just as I insist here on the importance of the rise of scholarly communities, so also I am deeply aware just how much my work is dependent on the support of others. Pride of place goes to my philosopher-wife Paula Droege, whose sharp mind and commitment to cogency helps me strive for clarity in argument, and to Asma Afsaruddin, who generously read the entire final draft of this book, offering extremely useful comments, critiques, and encouragement.

I am privileged to hold a tenured position at the Pennsylvania State University, and I thank my department and colleagues for supporting my work with research leaves as well as stimulating conversations. A sabbatical leave in fall 2012 combined with a fellowship at Penn State’s Institute for the Arts and Humanities in spring 2013 allowed for the completion of a first draft. The idea for this book, however, was formed earlier in 2012 during a month-long seminar on Mediterranean Studies sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities; I am grateful to leaders Brian Catlos and Sharon Kinoshita, as well as my colleagues at the seminar. I presented ideas from this project at the NEH seminar in Barcelona, as well as at national meetings of the Middle East Studies Association and at the American Academy of Religion, leading to separate, but related, articles on the origins of Islam that have now appeared in History of Religions and the Journal of the American Academy of Religion. The many generous comments and critiques from colleagues too numerous to name here helped shape and improve the final product. In particular, I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for those
Acknowledgments

journals and for Cambridge University Press, who went above and beyond the call to make copious notes on earlier versions of this book. In the increasingly competitive world of academia, where we are judged on the length of our CV, conscientious anonymous reviews are a thankless task. I trust the reviewers will read this note, however, and know just how much I appreciate their careful attention to argument and detail.

A special note of thanks is due to the editorial board of the Cambridge series on Islamic Civilization, especially Chase Robinson and the late Shahab Ahmad, both of whom offered encouragement and constructive criticism. The staff and editors at Cambridge have also been a delight to work with. Lauren Golder and Bill Cossen helped with compiling the bibliography and securing permissions for the many images in this book, and librarians and staff at libraries in Heidelberg, Paris, Dublin, and above all Raqqada have my thanks. But it is the Penn State librarians who helped keep the task of revisions on schedule; I kept giving them what I thought were impossible tasks, and they kept finding the books and articles I needed.

Finally, it is difficult to express in words my debt to Miklos Muranyi, who back in 1992 opened up his personal library to an American graduate student. His generosity and support, not to mention his unparalleled publications, have been the inspiration for my work ever since, and I dedicate this book to him.
Note on Transliteration and Dates

To simplify the text for nonspecialists, I reserve diacritics for Arabic technical terms, which are always italicized. Arabic names and terms that have become part of English are written without italics or diacritics, though I chose the slightly more correct Muhammad and Qur’an instead of Mohamed and Koran. Full diacritics are included in the footnotes and the bibliography.

As has become commonplace in our field, death dates of specific persons are identified first with the Muslim date (sometimes marked AH for anno hegirae), followed by the Common Era (CE) date, for example, Malik b. Anas (d. 179/795). Occasionally, I will also refer to a century in this way, such as the second/eighth century. When a century or date is not otherwise identified, it should be read as referring to the Common Era.

Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.