

INTRODUCTION

Wilferd Madelung

Source: *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate*, Cambridge: CUP, 1997, pp. 1–27.

No event in history has divided Islam more profoundly and durably than the succession to Muḥammad. The right to occupy the Prophet's place at the head of the Muslim community after his death became a question of great religious weight which has separated Sunnites and Shi'ites until the present. The issue of right and wrong in the matter has long since been settled in their minds. For Sunnites, the first caliph, Abū Bakr, was the only rightful successor since he was the most excellent of men after the Prophet. Although Muhammad had not explicitly appointed him as his successor, his preference for him was indicated by his order for Abū Bakr to lead the Muslims in the prayers during his final illness. The consensus reached by the Muslims in favour of Abū Bakr merely confirmed what was ultimately God's choice. For Shi'ites it was Muḥammad's cousin and son-in-law 'Alī who, on account of his early merits in Islam as well as his close kinship, had been appointed by the Prophet as his successor. His rightful position was then usurped by Abū Bakr with the backing of the majority of Muhammad's Companions.

In spite of the fundamental importance of this conflict for the history of Islam, modern historians have devoted relatively little effort to the study of the background and circumstances surrounding the succession. This general lack of interest is evidently grounded in the view that the conflict between Sunna and Shī'a, although revolving around the question of the succession, in reality arose only in a later age. Such a view is well supported by early Sunnite tendentious historiography, represented most blatantly by Sayf b. 'Umar (d. 180/796). According to his account, 'Alī, on being informed of Abū Bakr's election, was in such a hurry to offer his pledge of allegiance that he arrived dressed merely in his shirt and had to send for his clothes.¹ Perfect concord then prevailed among the Muslims until 'Abd Allāh b. Saba', a converted Jew from Ṣan'ā', began to agitate against the third caliph, 'Uthmān, and, after the murder of the latter, spread extremist views about

‘Alī having been the *waṣī*, the legatee or the executor of the will, of Muhammad.² Ibn Saba’ thus became the founder of the Shī’a who retrospectively turned ‘Alī into the legitimate successor of Muhammad.

While few if any modern historians would accept Sayf’s legend of Ibn Saba’, the underlying view that the succession of Abū Bakr to Muḥammad was in itself—aside from the abortive attempt of the Medinan Anṣār to seize the caliphate—unproblematic and that the conflict about it was artificially created by the Shī’a after the death of ‘Alī and against his own lifelong attitude is widely taken for granted. It is fully reflected in the most recent discussions of the origins of the ‘Alid and the ‘Abbasid, or Hashimite, Shī’a by M. Sharon. According to Sharon, the very concept of the ‘Family of the Prophet’, later expressed in the terms of *ahl al-bayt*, Āl Muḥammad, *āl al-nabī* and Banū Hāshim, did not exist in the time of Muḥammad and under the early caliphs. Although the term *bayt* had sometimes been used in pre-Islamic Arabia for the noble families of famous chiefs and prominent men, this was not the case with respect to Muḥammad. In Islam the term *ahl al-bayt* first came to be applied to the families of the caliphs. The Shi’ite supporters of ‘Alī, according to Sharon, then developed the idea of the *ahl al-bayt* of the Prophet and of Āl Muḥammad in order to establish hereditary rights of their man and his descendants to the caliphate. In the later Umayyad age the ‘Abbasids appropriated the idea and still later, from the caliphate of al-Mahdī, propagated the concept of the Banū Hāshim as the Family of the Prophet to bolster their own claim to legitimate succession.³ Yet ‘Alī himself had still accepted the caliphate on the terms laid down by Abū Bakr and ‘Umar without pretence to any special title based on his personal blood relationship with Muḥammad.⁴

If concord prevailed among the Muslims until the caliphate of ‘Uthmān and the controversy between Sunna and Shī’a arose only after the caliphate of ‘Alī, there is obviously not much incentive to study in depth the circumstances of the succession and the establishment of the caliphate. Abū Bakr’s and ‘Umar’s success during their reigns was decisive and spectacular, and recent historical research has tended to concentrate mostly on their activity in suppressing the dangerous movement of the Apostasy (*ridḍa*) of the Arab tribes and initiating the great Muslim conquests outside Arabia.

The few earlier studies dealing specifically with the succession as such, however, suggest that it was certainly not as unproblematic as implied in the prevalent view of the origins of the schism between Sunna and Shī’a. In 1910 H. Lammens published his article on the ‘Triumvirate of Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and Abū ‘Ubayda’ in which he argued that it was the common purpose and close co-operation of these three men, initiated in the lifetime of Muḥammad, that enabled them to found the successive caliphates of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. The latter would have appointed Abū ‘Ubayda as his successor if Abū ‘Ubayda had not died during his caliphate.⁵ Although Lammens did not speak of a conspiracy to seize the succession,

his presentation of the activity of the triumvirate suggests this term. In particular through Abū Bakr's and 'Umar's daughters 'Ā'isha and Ḥafṣa, who kept their fathers informed about every move and secret thought of their husband Muḥammad, these two men came to exert great influence on the Prophet's actions and thus prepared the stage for their seizure of power. This conspirational aspect of Lammens' theory has probably provoked the common warnings of more recent western scholars that his study is unreliable.⁶ Lammens noted that the purpose of the triumvirate was to exclude the Hashimites, in particular 'Alī, as the kin of Muḥammad from the succession, although 'Alī, in Lammens' view, was hardly a serious rival for them. Dull-witted, incapable, and married to the pitiful figure of the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima, who was easily outmanoeuvred by the clever and headstrong daughter of Abū Bakr in their competition for Muḥammad's favour, 'Alī could not have been an attractive choice for Muḥammad as his successor. Having experienced mostly disappointment in respect of his blood relations, the Prophet naturally turned away from them. His *ahl al-bayt*, Lammens affirmed with reference to Qur'ān XXXIII 33, consisted exclusively of his wives.⁷

The only comprehensive and thorough investigation of the establishment, nature and development of the caliphate until 'Alī's reign has been offered by L. Caetani in his monumental *Annali dell' Islam*. In his initial discussion, Caetani noted the gravity of the conflict between Abū Bakr and the Banū Hāshim following his surprise claim to the succession during the assembly of the Anṣār in the Hall (*saqīfa*) of the Banū Sā'ida just hours after the death of Muḥammad. The Banū Hāshim refused to recognize Abū Bakr and buried their illustrious kinsman privately, depriving the new caliph and 'Ā'isha of the honour of attendance. Caetani indirectly acknowledged the potential seriousness of 'Alī's claim to the succession by rejecting the common accounts that Abū Bakr based his claim before the assembly of Anṣār on the prior rights of Quraysh as Muḥammad's tribe, since this argument would have strengthened the case of 'Alī as the closest relative of the Prophet.⁸ Rather, Caetani suggested, Abū Bakr argued the need to elect a successor to Muḥammad who would most closely follow in his footsteps, propagate his teachings and maintain the unity of the Muslim Community. He was chosen solely for his superior qualities as a statesman and his personal merits.⁹ In view of these merits, Caetani judged the opposition of the Hashimites and other Companions to Abū Bakr to be motivated merely by personal ambition and rancour.¹⁰ If Muḥammad had been able to choose his successor, he would presumably have preferred Abū Bakr to anyone else.¹¹

In a later volume of the *Annali*, however, Caetani opted for Lammens' theory of the triumvirate of Abū Bakr, 'Umar and Abū 'Ubayda¹² as the most likely explanation for the origins of the caliphate. The inspirer of their joint action had been 'Umar, 'the greatest statesman after the Prophet and in some respects even greater than the master himself'.¹³ 'Umar had the

practical and political intelligence to foresee the demise of Muhammad and to prepare the agreements for resolving the problem of the succession with energy and in the best way possible, thus saving the Muslim Community from disaster.¹⁴ The true founder of the caliphate thus was 'Umar who merely put forward Abū Bakr as the first caliph in recognition of his righteousness and his high standing with the Prophet.

As a result of the reaction of later scholars against the conspiracy theory, Caetani's earlier view that Muhammad, had he made a choice, would most likely have preferred Abū Bakr as his successor and that, in any case, Abū Bakr was the natural choice for the Muslims on account of his merits in Islam has become the prevalent opinion among non-Muslim historians of Islam. It is expressed, for instance, by W. M. Watt in his standard biography of Muḥammad in the words: 'Certainly before Muḥammad left Mecca for Medina Abū Bakr had established himself as his chief lieutenant and adviser; and this position he maintained to Muḥammad's death, so that he was the obvious choice for successor.'¹⁵ Yet the critical observer may well question here whether the choice was really so obvious. It is true that in modern life the choice of a chief lieutenant and adviser to succeed, for instance, the head of a corporation or the leader of a political party must seem reasonable enough. But the succession to a ruler or king in traditional society was normally based on dynastic kinship and inheritance, and the succession of a lieutenant and adviser, however close to the ruler, would have been considered highly irregular. It has, of course, often been argued that the succession to tribal leadership among the Arabs was not based on heredity, and Lammens went so far as to assert that hereditary power and the dynastic principle were among the concepts most repugnant to the Arab mind.¹⁶ This assertion has, however, rightly been challenged by E. Tyan, who pointed out that hereditary succession was not unknown among the Arab tribes, as was consistent with the importance of noble lineage, *nasab*, among them and that among the Quraysh in particular hereditary succession was the rule.¹⁷ It may be countered that the succession to Muḥammad cannot be compared to that of a ruler or king and that the classical Sunnite theory of the caliphate indeed sharply distinguishes between it and kingship, *mulk*, which it condemns in part for its principle of hereditary succession. But the classical theory is obviously posterior to the succession and its opposition to *mulk* and the principle of heredity presumably reflects in part its essential purpose of justifying the early historical caliphate.

There is thus *prima facie* good reason to suspect that the common view of western scholars of Islam about the succession to Muḥammad may not be entirely sound and to propose a fresh look at the sources for a proper reassessment. The starting point for establishing what Muḥammad may have thought in general about his succession and what his contemporary followers could have seen as basic guidelines after his death must certainly be a study of the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān, as is well known, does not make any

provisions for, or even allude to, the succession of Muḥammad, and for this reason non-Muslim historians have virtually ignored it in this regard. It contains, however, specific instructions about the maintenance of kinship ties and inheritance as well as stories and statements about the succession of the past prophets and their families, matters which could not be irrelevant to the succession to Muḥammad.

The obligations of kinship and the families of the prophets in the Qur'ān

The Qur'ān places great emphasis on the duty of all Muslims to maintain the bonds of blood relationship. In numerous passages the faithful are enjoined to act kindly (*ihsān*) towards their close kin, to assist them, and to provide for their sustenance: 'Surely, God commands justice, doing of good, and providing for the close kin (*ītā' dhi l-qurbā*), and forbids the abominable, the reprehensible, and transgression' (XVI 90). Most often the relatives are mentioned in this context together with the orphans, the poor and the wayfarer (*ibn al-sabīl*) as those entitled to the generosity of the faithful. The fact, however, that they are regularly enumerated in the first place seems to indicate their primary right before any other beneficiaries: 'And give to the close kin his due, to the indigent, and the wayfarer. That is best for those who seek the Countenance of God and they will be the prosperous' (XVII 26). Righteousness (*birr*) consists, among other things, in giving money for the love of God to the kin (*dhawi l-qurbā*), the orphans, the poor, the wayfarer, those begging, and for the manumission of slaves (II 177). When the faithful ask Muḥammad what they should spend (in charity), he is charged to tell them: 'Whatever good you spend, it is for the parents (*wālidayn*) and for the close relatives (*aqrabīn*), the orphans, the poor, and the wayfarer. Whatever good you do, God has knowledge of it' (II 215).

In a wider sense, it is obligatory to treat relatives kindly: 'And remember, We took the covenant of the Banū Isrā'īl: Do not worship anyone but God, treat with kindness (*ihsān*) parents, kin, orphans, and the poor, speak gently to the people, perform the prayer, and give alms' (II 83). The Muslims are likewise ordered: 'Worship God and do not join partners with Him, treat with kindness parents, kin, orphans, the needy, the client who is a relative (*jār dhi l-qurbā*), the client who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer, and your slaves' (IV 36). Relatives, orphans and the poor are also entitled to be provided for and to be received with kindness when they present themselves at the time of the division of the inheritance of a deceased person (IV 7–8). It is evidently relatives without a right to a share of the inheritance who are meant here.

Kindness to relatives and material support of them are thus recognized as a cardinal religious obligation in the Qur'ān. This obligation, however, is not unconditional. It applies only to kin who have become Muslims. In the

Sūra of Repentance the faithful are warned: 'O you who believe, do not take your fathers and your brothers as friends (*awliyā*) if they prefer infidelity to the faith. Those of you who take them as friends, they are the wrongdoers. If your fathers, your sons, your spouses, your clan (*ashūra*), [if] riches you have acquired, or a trade whose decline you fear, and dwellings which please you, are dearer to you than God, His Messenger, and striving in His path, then wait until God will bring about His order. God does not guide the people who offend' (IX 23–4). It is not even permitted to pray for forgiveness for relatives who have failed to join Islam: 'It is not proper for the Prophet and for those who believe to pray for forgiveness for those who set up partners with God, even though they be of close kin, after it has become clear to them that they are inmates of the hell-fire. And Abraham prayed for his father's forgiveness only because of a promise he had made to him. But when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of God, he dissociated himself from him' (IX 113–14). Furthermore, the faithful must not deviate from honesty and fairness even if it were for the benefit of parents or close kin: 'O you who believe, stand firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even though it be against yourselves, your parents, or close kin, whether rich or poor, for God is closest to them both. Do not follow passion in place of justice' (IV 135). Quite in general the faithful are admonished: 'And whenever you speak, be just, even though it concern a close relative' (VI 152).

Within these limitations, however, the right of the kindred to kindness, care and material support is absolute and clearly takes precedence over any voluntary ties of friendship and alliance: 'Blood relations (*ulu l-arḥām*) have closer ties (*awlā*) to each other in the Book of God than believers and Emigrants (*muhājirūn*). You may, however, do kindness to your [unrelated] friends (*awliyā'ikum*). That is recorded in the Book' (XXXIII 6). It is known that after their emigration to Medina many Muslims, in the 'brothering' (*mu'ākhāt*) arranged by Muḥammad, established formal alliances with Medinan and other foreign Muslims in order to compensate for the absence of their blood relations who still remained polytheists. The Qur'ān states in that regard: 'Surely, those who believed and have emigrated and have fought with their property and their persons in the path of God, and those who sheltered and aided [them], they are the allies (*awliyā*) of each other. As for those who believed but did not emigrate, you have no ties of alliance whatsoever with them until they emigrate; but if they ask for your aid in religion, it is your duty to aid them, except against a people with whom you have a compact. And God sees whatever you do. The infidels are allies of each other. Unless you do this [aid other Muslims], there would be temptation [to apostatize] on earth and much corruption. Those who believed and have emigrated and fought in the path of God and those who sheltered and aided [them], they are the faithful truly. For them, there will be forgiveness and generous sustenance' (VIII 72–4). These verses established a close solidarity among the Muslims, Mekkan Emigrants and Medinan

Helpers (*anṣār*) assembled in the Community at Medina. Yet verse 75, which follows the passage and was evidently added later, modified the meaning in favour of the blood relations even if they joined the Medinan Community at a later date: 'Those who believed afterwards and emigrated and fought together with you, they are of you. And blood relations have closer ties with each other in the Book of God.' The latter sentence, according to the commentators of the Qur'ān, specifically restored the right of inheritance of the relatives in disregard of the alliances earlier concluded with strangers.¹⁸

The obligation to provide for the needy kin must not be suspended because of personal grudges: 'Let not those among you who are [materially] favoured and have ample means commit themselves by oath not to help their kin (*uli l-qurbā*) and the needy and the Emigrants in the path of God. Let them forgive and overlook. Do you not desire that God shall forgive you? And God is forgiving, merciful' (XXIV 22). According to the commentators, this verse referred to Abū Bakr and his nephew Miṣṭaḥ. The latter had been among those who cast doubt on the fidelity of 'Ā'isha during the affair of her absence from the camp of the Muslims. Abū Bakr, deeply offended by the conduct of his nephew, vowed that he would no longer provide for him as he had done in the past, even after Miṣṭaḥ formally repented of his mistake. The Qur'ān, however, commanded him not to neglect his duty towards his needy nephew and to pardon him.¹⁹

In the story of the past prophets, as it is related in the Qur'ān, their families play a prominent role. The families generally provide vital assistance to the prophets against the adversaries among their people. After the death of the prophets, their descendants become their spiritual and material heirs. The prophets ask God to grant them the help of members of their family and they pray for divine favour for their kin and their offspring. The prophets of the Banū Isrā'īl were in fact all descendants of a single family from Adam and Noah down to Jesus: 'Truly, God chose Adam, Noah, the family of Abraham, and the family of 'Imrān above all the worlds, as off-spring one of the other' (III 33–4). After narrating the story of Moses, Ishmael and Idrīs, the Qur'ān adds: 'Those were the prophets on whom God bestowed his blessings of the off-spring of Adam and of those whom We carried [in the ark] with Noah, and of the off-spring of Abraham and Israel, of those whom We guided and chose' (XIX 58).

The chain of the prophets and their families is described with more detail in the following verses: 'And We gave him [Abraham] Isaac and Jacob, all of whom We guided. And before him We guided Noah, and of his off-spring, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron. Thus We recompense those who do good. And Zachariah, and John, and Jesus, and Elias, all of them among the righteous, and Ishmael, and Elisha, Jonah, and Lot: Each of them We preferred above the worlds, and [some] of their fathers, their descendants, and their brothers: We chose them and We guided them to the straight path. That is the guidance of God with which He guides whomever

He wishes of His worshippers. But if they had set up partners [with Him], whatever they have been doing would have been in vain for them. They are the ones to whom We have given the Book, the rule (*hukm*) and prophethood' (VI 84–9).

Noah was saved together with his family while the rest, or the great majority, of his people were drowned in the Flood because of their sins: 'And [remember] Noah when he implored [Us] in former time, and We responded to him and rescued him and his family from the great disaster. We aided him against the people who treated Our signs as lies. They were an evil people, so We drowned them all together' (XXI 76–7). 'We rescued him and his family from the great disaster and made his descendants the survivors' (XXXVII 76–7). God commanded Noah: 'Place in it [the ark] pairs of every [species] and your family (*ahl*) except for those of them against whom the sentence has already gone forth. Do not address Me concerning those who were unjust. They shall be drowned' (XXIII 27; see also XI 40). The wife and one of the sons of Noah were in fact excluded from the rescue, even though Noah pleaded for his son: 'And Noah called to his Lord and said: O my Lord, surely my son is of my family, and Your promise is the truth, and You are the justest of judges. [God] said: O Noah, he is not of your family. Surely, it is not righteous action. Do not ask of Me that of which you have no knowledge' (XI 45–6).

Likewise, the family of the prophet Lot was saved together with him while the remainder of the people of his town were annihilated: 'The people of Lot treated the warnings as lies. We sent against them a shower of stones, except for the family of Lot. We rescued them at dawn, as a favour from Us. Thus We recompense those who give thanks' (LIV 33–5). The family of Lot had acquired a state of purity which distinguished them from the ordinary people. When Lot reproached his people for having surrendered to turpitude, 'the only answer of his people was to say: Expel the family of Lot from your town. They are indeed people who purify themselves (*yataahharūn*). But We saved him and his family, except his wife. We desired that she be of those who stayed behind' (XXVII 56–7). Lot's wife, like Noah's, was punished because of her betrayal of her husband. 'God has set as an example for the unbelievers the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were married to two of Our righteous servants but betrayed them. Thus they were of no avail at all for them before God, and they were told: Enter the fire together with those who will enter it' (LXVI 10).

Abraham was the patriarch of the prophets of the Banū Isrā'īl. All later prophets and transmitters of the scripture among them were of his descendants: 'And We sent Noah and Abraham and placed among their off-spring prophethood and the Book' (LVII 26). The father of Abraham, however, was an obstinate idolater and a persecutor of the confessors of the unity of God. As mentioned above, Abraham at first prayed for him, on account of a promise made to him, but later dissociated himself from him.

When God chose Abraham as imam for his people. Abraham prayed to his Lord that He grant this honour also to his descendants: 'And remember when Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commandments which he fulfilled, [God] said: I shall make you an imam for the people. He said: And also of my off-spring? [God] said: My compact will not comprise the evil-doers' (II 124). God's compact thus covered the just among the descendants of Abraham. God gave him his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob who became prophets: 'When [Abraham] had turned away from them [the idolaters of his people] and from what they worshipped besides God. We granted him Isaac and Jacob, and each one We made a prophet. We bestowed of Our mercy on them, and We accorded them a high truthful repute' (XIX 49–50). 'And We gave him Isaac and Jacob and placed among his progeny prophethood and the Book. We gave him his reward in this world and surely he will be of the righteous in the hereafter' (XXIX 27).

When the angels announced to Abraham the imminence of the birth of his son Isaac and, after him, of his grandson Jacob, his wife Sarah doubted the good news in view of their advanced age, but the angels reminded her of her elevated rank as the spouse of Abraham: 'And his [Abraham's] wife was standing, and she laughed. Then We gave her good tidings of Isaac and, after Isaac, Jacob. She said: Alas for me, shall I bear child, as I am an old woman and this my husband is an old man? This is indeed a wonderful thing. They said: Do you wonder at God's order? The mercy and the blessings of God are upon you [m. pl.], o people of the house (*ahl al-bayt*). He is indeed worthy of praise and full of glory' (XI 71–3). The 'people of the house' are here certainly the family of the prophet Abraham to whom Sarah belonged through marriage, not the adherents of the cult of the House, i.e. the Ka'ba, as has been suggested by R. Paret.²⁰ The miraculous birth of Isaac is justified by God's supreme favour for the family of his chosen prophet. Those distinguished by such favour of God must not be envied their elevated rank: 'Or do they envy the people for what God has given them of His favour? We had already given the family of Abraham the Book and wisdom (*hikma*), and bestowed upon them a mighty kingship (*mulk*)' (IV 54).

Isaac and Jacob are also described as imams who direct the people by the order of God: 'And We gave him Isaac and Jacob as an additional gift, and We made all of them righteous men. We made them imams who guide by Our command, and We inspired them to do good things, to perform the prayer, and to give alms. They constantly served Us' (XXI 72–3). But there were also renegades among the descendants of Abraham and Isaac: 'We blessed him [Abraham] and Isaac, but of their progeny there are some who do good and some who manifestly wrong themselves' (XXXVII 113; see also LVII 26).

In the face of the opposition of the Banū Isrā'īl, Moses implored his Lord to grant him the help of his brother Aaron: 'Give me an assistant from my

family, Aaron, my brother, increase my strength through him and make him share my task' (XX 29–32). God responded to his prayer: 'We indeed gave Moses the Book and appointed his brother Aaron with him as an assistant' (XXV 35; see also XX 36). Aaron thus was chosen as the associate of Moses in the revelation: 'Certainly We gave Moses and Aaron the salvation (*fiṣṣān*) and a light and a reminder for the pious who fear their Lord in the unseen and are frightened of the hour [of the Judgment]' (XXI 48–9). A mysterious relic (*baqiyya*) of the family of Moses and the family of Aaron became one of the signs of the divine investiture with the royalty of the Banū Isrā'il: 'Their prophet [Samuel] said to them: The sign of his [Saul's] rule is that the Ark of the Covenant shall come to you, carried by angels, containing a divine immanence (*sakīna*) from your Lord and a relic of what the family of Moses and the family of Aaron left. Truly, in that is a sign for you if you have faith' (II 248).

To David, prophet and vicegerent (*khalīfa*) on earth, God gave his son Solomon as his assistant and successor: 'We gave to David Solomon, how excellent a servant' (XXXVIII 30). Solomon inherited from David both his kingship and his prophetic wisdom and judgement: 'And Solomon became David's heir (*wa-waritha Sulaymānu Dāwūda*) and said: O people, we have been taught the speech of the birds and have been given of every thing' (XXVII 16). Jointly David and Solomon gave judgment, witnessed by God, in a case of damage to the fields (XXI 78).

Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, said in his prayer: 'Indeed, I fear the *mawālī* after my death. My wife is barren, so grant me a descendant (*waliyyan*) from you who will inherit from me and inherit from the family of Jacob, and make him, O my Lord, pleasing [to You]' (XIX 5–6). The commentators generally take the term *mawālī* to mean relatives.²¹ As R. Blachère has observed, however, it seems that there is here rather an allusion to the hostility of the other priests towards Zachariah, who had no offspring, as narrated in the Gospel of Thomas.²² In any case, John became the heir of the family of Jacob.

In the story of the non-Israelite prophets, their families likewise play a vital part as their disciples and protectors. The sinful people of Madyan answered their prophet Shu'ayb: 'O Shu'ayb, we do not understand much of what you say, and surely we see you weak among us. If it were not for your clan (*raḥi*) we would certainly have stoned you, for you are not powerful over us' (XI 91). A group of Thamūd, the people of the prophet Ṣāliḥ, said to each other: 'Swear a mutual oath by God that we attack him and his family by night. Then we shall say to the one entitled to his vengeance: We did not witness the destruction of his family, and we are surely telling the truth' (XXVII 49). God prevented their plot and annihilated the guilty and all the people of Thamūd.

The eminent position of the families and the descendants of the past prophets and the parallelism often observed between the history of the former prophets in the Qur'ān and that of Muḥammad must raise

expectations of a distinguished place reserved for his family. The kin of Muḥammad are mentioned in various contexts, sometimes probably in a wider sense than that of his family. This order is addressed to the Prophet: ‘Warn your nearest clan (*‘ashīrataka l-aqrabīn*), and lower your wing to the faithful who follow you’ (XXVI 214–15). The ‘nearest clan’ refers most likely to the Quraysh, although a narrower interpretation does not seem impossible.

Shi‘ites frequently quote as evidence verse XLII 23 where Muḥammad is commanded to address the faithful: ‘Say: I do not ask you for any recompense for this [the communication of the revelation] except the love for near kinship (*al-mawadda fi l-qurbā*).’ They interpret it as asking the Muslims to love the *ahl al-bayt*, the family of the Prophet. This interpretation, however, does not agree with the wording of the text. Al-Ṭabarī in his commentary on the verse²³ offers three interpretations and prefers the first one, according to which the demand is for love of the faithful for the Prophet to whom they are related by blood ties. This explanation would be the most plausible if the verse were Mekkan and addressed to the Quraysh. The verse is, however, usually considered Medinan, pronounced at a time when many Muslims were not related to Muḥammad by blood ties. Preference might thus be given to the third interpretation of al-Ṭabarī (the second is rather improbable), that love towards relatives in general is meant. However, an interpretation close to that preferred by al-Ṭabarī seems to suggest itself by reference to another verse which affirms that Muḥammad is nearer to all Muslims than they are to each other: ‘The Prophet has closer ties (*awlā*) to the faithful than they themselves have to each other, and his wives are their mothers’ (XXXIII 6).

There are, in any case, other references to the kin of the Prophet which certainly refer to his family and blood relations. The Qur’ān reserves a part of the fifth (*khums*) of booty (*ghanīma*) and a part of the *fay’*, that is property of the infidels taken by the Muslims without combat, to the kin of Muḥammad in association with himself: ‘Know that whatever you capture as booty, the fifth of it belongs to God, to the Messenger, to the near kin (*dhi l-qurbā*), the orphans, the poor, and the wayfarer, if you believe in God and in what He has sent down on His servant on the day of salvation, the day of the meeting of the two groups’ (VIII 41). ‘What God has granted as *fay’* to His Messenger from the people of the towns belongs to God, the Messenger, the close kin, and the orphans, the poor, and the wayfarer, in order that it may not circulate among the rich among you’ (LIX 7). The Sunnite and Shi‘ite sources agree that by the ‘near kin’ in these verses were meant the descendants of Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf, the great-grandfather of Muḥammad, and of Hāshim’s brother al-Muṭṭalib,²⁴ to the exclusion of the descendants of the other two brothers of Hāshim, ‘Abd Shams (the ancestor of the Umayyads) and Nawfal. The association of the Banu l-Muṭṭalib with the Banū Hāshim dated from the pre-Islamic *ḥilf al-fuḍūl*,

a pact grouping these two families and some other clans of Quraysh in an alliance opposed to the other two and their allies.²⁵ This alliance was confirmed at the time of the boycott of Muhammad by the Quraysh when the Banu l-Muṭṭalib joined the Hāshim in extending protection to him.²⁶ Because of their association with the Banū Hāshim, a number of the Banu l-Muṭṭalib received portions of the produce of Khaybar belonging to the Prophet.

The portion of the booty and *faṭṭ*' reserved to the kin of the Prophet was, according to numerous reports in the sources, a recompense for them for their exclusion from the alms (*ṣadaqa*, *zakāt*). The relatives of Muḥammad were, like himself, forbidden to receive any part of the alms. The reason usually given for this exclusion was that the alms accrued from the defilements (*awsākh*) of the people, alms-giving being considered an act of purification. On account of their state of purity, it was improper for the close kin of the Prophet to receive or to handle the alms. The schools of religious law, Sunnite and Shi'ite alike, have preserved this prohibition for the Banū Hāshim to partake of the alms of the ordinary Muslims.²⁷

This state of purity, which distinguished the family of Muḥammad from the common Muslims, agreed with the elevated rank of the families of the earlier prophets. As mentioned above, the Qur'ān described the family of Lot as people who kept themselves pure (*yataṭahharūn*). The same state of purity is evidently referred to in the verse addressed to the wives of the Prophet: 'Stay in your houses, and do not show yourselves in spectacular fashion like that of the former time of ignorance. Perform the prayer, give alms, and obey God and His Messenger. God desires only to remove defilement from you, o people of the house (*ahl al-bayt*), and to purify you (*yutahhirakum*) completely' (XXXIII 33). Who are the 'people of the house' here? The pronoun referring to them is in the masculine plural, while the preceding part of the verse is in the feminine plural. This change of gender has evidently contributed to the birth of various accounts of a legendary character, attaching the latter part of the verse to the five People of the Mantle (*ahl al-kisā'*): Muḥammad, 'Alī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. In spite of the obvious Shi'ite significance, the great majority of the reports quoted by al-Ṭabarī in his commentary on this verse support this interpretation.²⁸

It seems quite unlikely, however, that this part of the verse could have been in effect a separate revelation which was later attached to the rest, as these reports imply. Just as in respect to the similar verse addressed to the wife of Abraham, R. Paret has argued that *ahl al-bayt* may here rather refer to the adherents of the cult of the Ka'ba.²⁹ This interpretation, however, is incompatible with the clear aim of the verse to elevate the rank of the wives of the Prophet above all other Muslim women. The previous verse begins with the declaration: 'O women of the Prophet, you are not like any other women' (XXXIII 32). The women are addressed here as members of the purified family of the Prophet through marriage. It is known that

Muḥammad on other occasions addressed his wives individually as *ahl al-bayt*, evidently with the intention of honouring them.³⁰ Here they are admonished in clearly critical terms to conform to their elevated state in their conduct. The *ahl al-bayt* of Muhammad meant, as was consistent with the general usage of the term at the time, primarily his blood relations, the same Banū Hāshim who were forbidden to receive alms in order that their state of purity not be soiled and, in second place, the wives.

There is still the verse of the 'mutual imprecation (*mubāhala*)' whose religious significance is, in view of the uncertainty about the circumstances surrounding its revelation, difficult to evaluate.³¹ Muḥammad is addressed: 'If anyone dispute with you in this matter [concerning Jesus] after the knowledge which has come to you, say: Come let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, then let us swear an oath and place the curse of God on those who lie' (III 61). The commentators are agreed that the verse was occasioned by the visit of a delegation of Christians from Najrān in the year 10/631–2 who did not accept the Islamic doctrine about Jesus. Modern scholars have critically noted a certain tendency of the commentators to relate many Qur'anic passages concerning Christians to this visit.³² Who is meant by 'our sons' and 'our women' on the part of Muḥammad? The *mubāhala*, according to the reports, did not take place, since the Christians excused themselves from it, and the majority of the Sunnite reports quoted by al-Ṭabarī do not identify the members of the family of Muḥammad who were expected to participate. Other Sunnite reports mention Fāṭima, Hasan and Ḥusayn, and some agree with the Shi'ite tradition that the *ahl al-kisā'*, including 'Alī, were assembled for the occasion. Irrespective of the circumstances, there does not seem to be a plausible alternative to the identification of the 'sons' in the verse with the two grandsons of Muḥammad and, in that case, the inclusion of their parents, 'Alī and Fāṭima, would be reasonable. The term 'our women', in place of 'our wives', does not exclude the daughter of the Prophet. The participation of the family was perhaps traditional in the ritual of the *mubāhala*. Yet the proposal itself of this ritual by the Prophet under circumstances of an intense religious significance and its sanction by the Qur'ān could not have failed to raise the religious rank of his family.

The Qur'ān thus accorded the *ahl al-bayt* of Muḥammad an elevated position above the rest of the faithful, similar to the position of the families of the earlier prophets. God desired to purify them from all defilement. Certainly the renegades of the Prophet's family who opposed his mission were excluded from the divine grace, just like the renegades among the families of the past prophets. Abū Lahab, the uncle of Muḥammad, and his wife were even singled out for divine curse in a Sūra of the Qur'ān. But such exceptions did not affect the divine favour for the *ahl al-bayt* in general.

Insofar as the Qur'ān expresses the thoughts of Muḥammad, it is evident that he could not have considered Abū Bakr his natural successor or have

been pleased by his succession. The Qur'ān certainly does not fully reflect Muḥammad's views about the men and women surrounding him and his attitude towards them. Yet he could not have seen his succession essentially other than in the light of the narrations of the Qur'ān about the succession of the earlier prophets, just as he saw his own mission as a prophet, the resistance of his people with which he met, and his ultimate success by divine grace in the light of the experience of the former prophets as related in the Qur'ān. These earlier prophets considered it a supreme divine favour to be succeeded by their offspring or close kin for which they implored their Lord. Modern Sunnite apologists argue against this on the basis of Qur'ān XXXIII 40 which describes Muḥammad as the Seal of the Prophets. They maintain that, as the last of the prophets, Muḥammad was not to be succeeded by any of his family according to God's design. In order to reveal this design, God also let all of Muhammad's sons die in infancy.³³ For the same reason Muḥammad did not appoint a successor, since he wished to leave the succession to be settled by the Muslim Community on the basis of the Qur'anic principle of consultation (*shūrā*).

The argument rests, however, on a fancifully wide interpretation of the term 'Seal of the Prophets'. For even if its meaning in the Qur'ān is accepted to be the 'last of the prophets', which is itself not entirely certain,³⁴ there is no reason why it should imply that Muḥammad as the spiritual and worldly leader of the Muslim Community, aside from his prophethood, should not be succeeded by his family. In the Qur'ān, the descendants and close kin of the prophets are their heirs also in respect to kingship (*mulk*), rule (*ḥukm*), wisdom (*ḥikma*), the book and the imamate. The Sunnite concept of the true caliphate itself defines it as a succession of the Prophet in every respect except his prophethood. Why should Muḥammad not be succeeded in it by any of his family like the earlier prophets? If God really wanted to indicate that he should not be succeeded by any of them, why did He not let his grandsons and other kin die like his sons? There is thus good reason to doubt that Muḥammad failed to appoint a successor because he realized that the divine design excluded hereditary succession of his family and that he wanted the Muslims to choose their head by *shūrā*. The Qur'ān advises the faithful to settle some matters by consultation, but not the succession to prophets. That, according to the Qur'ān, is settled by divine election, and God usually chooses their successors, whether they become prophets or not, from their own kin.

Why then did Muḥammad fail to make proper arrangements for his succession, even though he presumably hoped for a successor from his family? Any answer must remain speculative. A simple Islamic explanation would be that in an important decision of this nature he expected a Qur'anic revelation, but did not receive one. Non-Muslim historians may be more inclined to speculate that Muḥammad hesitated because he was aware of the difficulties a Hashimite succession might face given the intense rivalry for

leadership among the clans of Quraysh and the relative weakness of the Banū Hāshim. In the year 10/631 Muhammad sent ʿAlī as his representative to the Yemen, where his conduct seems to have provoked some criticism. Upon his return, just three months before the Prophet's death. Muḥammad found it necessary to make a strong public statement in support of his cousin.³⁵ It was evidently not a suitable occasion to appoint him successor. Muḥammad might also have delayed a decision hoping to live long enough to be able to appoint one of his grandsons. His death was generally unexpected among his followers even during his mortal illness. He himself may also have been unaware of the approaching end until it was too late.

Two witnesses: ʿĀʿisha and ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās

Among the extant reports about the succession and the early caliphate those attributed to Abū Bakr's daughter ʿĀʿisha and to ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās, cousin of Muḥammad and of ʿAlī, are of primary importance. Both were in a position to observe closely the events in which they were emotionally deeply involved and in some of which they played a direct part, although in opposite camps. ʿĀʿisha, as is well known, championed her father's right to the succession of Muḥammad and backed the caliphate of his appointed successor, ʿUmar. In the election of the *shūrā* after the murder of ʿUmar, she clearly preferred ʿUthmān to her personal enemy ʿAlī. She soon became, however, a vocal critic of ʿUthmān's conduct as caliph and her agitation against him contributed to the outbreak of open rebellion. When ʿUthmān was murdered by the rebels and they raised ʿAlī to the caliphate, she immediately turned against the latter, claiming revenge for the dead caliph. After the defeat of her alliance in the battle of the Camel, she withdrew from active politics. Her relations with the Umayyad Muʿāwiya, under whose reign she died in 58/678, were cool.³⁶

ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās, born in 619, three years before the *hijra*, appeared first in public life under the caliph ʿUmar. The latter seems to have tried to draw him into his company as a representative of the Banū Hāshim, who mostly avoided him. During the siege of ʿUthmān's residence in Medina by the rebels from Egypt and Kūfa, he was among the group of sons of prominent Companions who protected the palace of the caliph. ʿUthmān then appointed him leader of the pilgrimage to Mekka and entrusted him with an open letter to the pilgrims, from whom he hoped for relief. ʿAlī initially relied extensively on his advice and appointed him governor of Baṣra. Ibn al-ʿAbbās, however, later defected temporarily and was evidently critical of some aspects of his cousin's reign. After ʿAlī's murder he wrote a letter to his son al-Ḥasan encouraging him to continue his father's war against Muʿāwiya and to fight for his rights. He did not back the revolt of al-Ḥasan's brother al-Ḥusayn under the caliph Yazīd. Together with ʿAlī's other son Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya, he refused to recognize the caliphate

of 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, who imprisoned both of them. They were freed by Kufan horsemen sent by the Shi'ite rebel leader al-Mukhtār. Ibn al-'Abbās died soon afterwards in 68/687–8.³⁷

Caetani considered the attribution of historical reports to these two Companions as mostly fictitious. He argued that the use of the chain of transmitters (*isnād*) became customary only long after their time and it was then often traced back to Companions in order to raise the authority of anonymous traditions.³⁸ 'Ā'isha in particular was chosen because it was assumed that she must have had first-hand knowledge of the events.³⁹ Reports thus could be old and reliable except for their attribution. In practice, however, Caetani tended to reject these reports as apocryphal or to express serious reservations about them while preferring, wherever possible, accounts reported without *isnād* by the early compilers of history such as Ibn Ishāq. Somewhat inconsistently, he described Ibn al-'Abbās as an arch liar and fabricator on account of the fictitious biblical stories and cosmological myths which he spread in his exegesis of the Qur'ān.⁴⁰ Yet if this exegesis can reliably be attributed to Ibn al-'Abbās, why should the attribution of historical reports to him be regularly fictitious? A further problem regarding Caetani's view is that many of the reports ascribed to 'Ā'isha and Ibn al-'Abbās quote them speaking in the first person. It is evident that these can never have been anonymous traditions and that only the formal *isnād* could be a later addition. If the attribution is rejected the reports themselves must be presumed to be later fabrications.

The date of the introduction of the formal *isnād* is thus of little relevance to the question of correct attribution. This must be judged largely on the basis of the mutual consistency of the reports attributed to the same witness and their consistency with what is known of his or her life and political attitudes. 'Ā'isha and Ibn al-'Abbās were, as noted, deeply involved in the events, though in opposite camps. Their testimony can be expected to be partisan in both what they reported and how they presented it, rather than neutral and disinterested. Since the tendentious aspect of the reports often agrees with later Sunnite or Shi'ite partisan positions, there has been a common tendency among western scholars to regard them as later fabrications, in particular those favouring Shi'ite views. Yet tendentiousness alone is no evidence for late origin. If some reports, because of particular circumstances, can be seen to be almost certainly correctly attributed, the burden of the proof with regard to similar ones, where matters are more ambiguous, is on those who wish to consider them as late forgeries.

The historical reports attributed to 'Ā'isha and Ibn al-'Abbās in the major sources such as Ibn Hishām, al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Sa'd and al-Balādhurī fulfil this condition of consistency to a high degree. They reflect sharply defined personal views and political attitudes. There are variant versions in which some of their outspoken statements, which must have seemed objectionable to the later transmitters, appear toned down or are omitted.

Only a few reports must be definitely rejected as at variance with their political attitudes.

‘Ā’isha’s reports are highly laudatory and apologetic for Abū Bakr, whom she presents as a kindly father figure full of the *ḥilm*, gentleness and prudence, valued so highly among the Arabs as a leadership quality, quite in contrast to the coarse and rude ‘Umar who was feared by everybody in spite of his undeniable righteousness. At the beginning of his mortal illness, Muḥammad told the assembled Muslims that he knew no man more excellent in his actions (*afdāl yadan*) among the Companions than Abū Bakr and ordered that all (private) doors leading to the mosque (and his living quarters) be blocked except for Abū Bakr’s.⁴¹ He insisted, in spite of ‘Ā’isha’s protests, that Abū Bakr, and no one else, should take his place in leading the prayers. It is evident that in ‘Ā’isha’s view her father was the rightful successor of Muḥammad on the basis of the latter’s implicit choice of him, not the events at the Saqīfat Banī Sā’ida. Abū Bakr’s greatest concern was to treat the family of his deceased friend kindly and fairly, a duty which he placed even higher than his obligation towards his own kin. ‘Ā’isha spared no effort to portray her husband’s kin in general, and ‘Alī in particular, in the most negative light; their incompetence was matched only by their arrogance. Muḥammad’s uncle al-‘Abbās greatly upset the ill Prophet when he, in the company of several pro-Hashimite women, infused medicine through the side of his mouth (*laddahī*) without his permission and then explained that they thought he had pleurisy (*dhāt al-janb*), a suggestion angrily rejected by Muḥammad, for God would not have afflicted him with ‘this devil’s disease’.⁴² Not even to the dead body of the Prophet would his kin have shown due respect had it not been for divine intervention. ‘Alī, encouraged by his wife Fāṭima and al-‘Abbās, who falsely pretended to the inheritance of Muḥammad’s worldly possessions, imagined that he was entitled to the caliphate as Muḥammad’s cousin and son-in-law. But as everybody deserted him after the death of Fāṭima, he was forced to offer Abū Bakr his allegiance. His condition for meeting him was that the rude ‘Umar should not be present. After he recognized that Abū Bakr had been right all along, people began to speak to him again.

‘Abd Allāh b. al-‘Abbās presented the views of the Banū Hāshim about their own right much more cautiously. He recognized that ‘the people (*qawm*)’, meaning Quraysh, had decided against what the former firmly considered as their legitimate claim as the Prophet’s kin. His attitude to ‘Alī was not without reservations. He mentioned having repeatedly criticized his cousin’s actions and warned him of their consequences. He rejected the belief of some of ‘Alī’s partisans that the Prophet actually made a will (*awṣā*) in his favour. Yet this, he suggested, was probably only because ‘Ā’isha and Hafsa prevented Muḥammad from seeing him alone when he asked for him during his illness and they insisted on calling their fathers. When the ill Muḥammad proposed to write a letter of guidance for his Companions,

‘Umar intervened, asserting that he was raving. ‘Abd Allāh’s father al-‘Abbās recognized the approaching death in the face of Muḥammad and tried to persuade ‘Alī to approach him concerning the succession. He told ‘Alī that the Prophet would either give the rule to them or, if not, would at least commend (*awsā*) them to the good care of ‘the people’. ‘Alī refused, however, expressing fear that if the Prophet denied them the succession, ‘the people’ would never give it to them.

The presentation of Ibn al-‘Abbās, however, leaves no doubt that he considered ‘Alī as entitled to the succession, although not formally appointed, and held that he was arbitrarily deprived by Abū Bakr with the connivance of ‘the people’. The Banū Hāshim expressed their distrust and then their disapproval of their conduct by excluding virtually all outsiders from the preparation of the funeral and the burial of the Prophet, thus depriving the new caliph of the honour of paying his final tribute to his predecessor. Abū Bakr denied them illegally their inheritance and the share of the *fay*’ to which they were entitled according to the Qur’ān. ‘Umar later tried to meet their grievance by offering them partial restitution, but this was rejected by the Banū Hāshim as insufficient. ‘Umar’s views evidently interested Ibn al-‘Abbās in particular. ‘Umar admitted in public that the decision taken at the Saqīfat Banī Sā‘ida constituted a *falta*, a precipitate and ill-considered deal. He nevertheless insisted that Abū Bakr’s caliphate, in view of its manifest success, was determined by God’s choice and legitimate. He expressed his regret to Ibn al-‘Abbās that ‘Alī continued to shun him and would not join him in a journey. Yet while he sought to treat ‘Alī as a distinguished early Companion, he was greatly worried about the possibility of ‘Alī’s succession to the caliphate since he and his clan would turn it into a hereditary reign depriving ‘the people’ of their right to it. Privately he explained to Ibn al-‘Abbās that ‘the people’ would not countenance the rule of the Banū Hāshim out of jealousy, since these would then enjoy the monopoly of both prophethood and caliphate.

The authenticity of the reports attributed to ‘Ā’isha and Ibn al-‘Abbās is no guarantee of their reliability. It will be seen that both of them were prepared to invent stories to bolster their claims and to discredit their opponents. The temptation was obviously great. Their authority as the Prophet’s favourite wife and as his cousin was beyond challenge and no one would question their veracity openly. They could say what others could not, but what many wanted to hear. For their partisan distortions merely reflected the passions that were tearing the Muslim Community apart. Yet they were also generally better informed than others, and even distorted and dressed up reports may be expected to reflect their knowledge of the facts, in particular for events they personally witnessed. The later narrators relied heavily on their accounts in their own summaries of events. For the historian, their conflicting points of view and bias must be of as much interest as the facts they report.

Some of the narrations either of ‘Ā’isha or of Ibn al-‘Abbās were clearly intended to counter the stories of the other. ‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Utba b. Mas‘ūd heard ‘Ā’isha tell that the ill Prophet asked leave from his wives to be nursed in ‘Ā’isha’s apartment and that he walked there supported by two men of his family, one of them al-Faḍl b. al-‘Abbās and ‘another man’. Later he presented the report to Ibn al-‘Abbās, who asked him if he knew who the other man was and, on his reply in the negative, told him: ‘‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, but she could not bring herself to mention anything good of him even if she would have been in a position to do so.’’⁴³ Ibn al-‘Abbās could not have had first-hand knowledge of the event. Given ‘Ā’isha’s well-known hostility towards ‘Alī, however, the assumption that he was the man whom she would not name was reasonable enough. Ibn al-‘Abbās disputed ‘Ā’isha’s account that the Prophet died in her arms.⁴⁴ When Abū Ghatafān told him that he had heard ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr transmitting ‘Ā’isha’s claim, he countered: ‘Are you in your right mind (*a-ta’qilu*)? By God, the Messenger of God died reclining on the chest of ‘Alī. He was the one who washed him together with my brother al-Faḍl b. al-‘Abbās. My father refused to attend saying: The Messenger of God used to order us to stay behind a curtain [when he washed himself]. Thus he remained behind the curtain.’⁴⁵

Ibn al-‘Abbās narrated that the Prophet before his death expressed the wish to write a letter for those present ‘after which you will not go astray’. ‘Umar said: ‘The Messenger of God is overcome by pain. You have the Qur’ān, the Book of God is sufficient for us.’ The people present started to quarrel, some demanding that the Prophet should be given the chance to write, others siding with ‘Umar. As their noise pained Muḥammad, he told them to leave him. Ibn al-‘Abbās, according to the report, used to comment that the greatest calamity was thus caused by their disagreement and noise which prevented the Prophet from writing his will.⁴⁶ Although Ibn al-‘Abbās refrained from suggesting what the Prophet wanted to write, it was assumed that he hinted at Muḥammad’s intention to name ‘Alī his successor, and Shi‘ites have always interpreted the report in this sense. ‘Ā’isha countered the story with one of her own: ‘The Messenger of God told me during his illness: Call your father Abū Bakr and your brother [‘Abd al-Raḥmān] to me so that I may write a letter. For I fear that someone will have wishful fancies (*yatamannā mutamannin*) and someone will say: I am more worthy, but God and the faithful refuse anyone but Abū Bakr.’⁴⁷ No one could doubt that the wishful man was ‘Alī.

As further illustration of the reporting of ‘Ā’isha and Ibn al-‘Abbās and their opposite bias, two examples relating to Muḥammad’s actions during his last illness and to his funeral may be briefly analysed here. The Kufan al-Arqam b. Shuraḥbīl al-Awdī, a companion of ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas‘ūd,⁴⁸ asked Ibn al-‘Abbās whether the Prophet had made a will (*awṣā*). Ibn al-‘Abbās denied this and explained that (during his last illness) Muḥammad

had demanded: 'Send for 'Alī.' 'Ā'isha, however, suggested: 'Would you send for Abū Bakr?', and Hafsa joined her, proposing: 'Would you send for 'Umar?' When all three men assembled, Muḥammad dismissed them, saying that he would ask for them when he had a need. As the time of prayer came he said: 'Give order to Abū Bakr to pray with the people', but 'Ā'isha replied: 'Abū Bakr is frail (*raqīq*), so order 'Umar.' Muḥammad gave order for 'Umar to lead the prayer, but 'Umar refused, saying: 'I would not precede when Abū Bakr is present.' Then Abū Bakr went forward. The Prophet, feeling a temporary recovery, went out after him, and when Abū Bakr heard his movement, he drew back. Muḥammad dragged him forward by his clothes and stood him in his place. Then he himself sat down and recited the Qur'ān from where Abū Bakr had left off.⁴⁹

Caetani considered this report to be apocryphal and invented by the Muslim traditionists in order to explain why Muḥammad had not left a testament.⁵⁰ The attribution to Ibn al-'Abbās is, however, entirely reasonable. The Kufan Shi'ites had been claiming since the time of 'Alī's caliphate that the Prophet had made 'Alī the executor of his will. The question of the Kufan al-Arqam b. Shuraḥbīl thus had a motive. The position of Ibn al-'Abbās on the question is the same as in other reports attributed to him. Muḥammad did not actually make a will in favour of 'Alī, but would probably have done so if he had not been prevented. The first part of the story was presumably invented by Ibn al-'Abbās who, in any case, could not have had first-hand knowledge. The second part is based on the account of 'Ā'isha quoted below. Muḥammad gave the order for Abū Bakr to lead the prayer of the Muslims but 'Ā'isha objected that her father was too frail. Then Ibn al-'Abbās deviates. Muḥammad gave order that 'Umar lead the prayer, and only when 'Umar refused to precede Abū Bakr, the latter went ahead. The message is clear: in the eyes of Muḥammad the leadership of the prayer had no significance for the succession. He did not care whether Abū Bakr or 'Umar performed the task. When Abū Bakr still hesitated, the Prophet rudely grasped him by his clothes, pushing him into his place and then, apparently not quite satisfied with his performance, continued Abū Bakr's recitation of the Qur'ān.

'Ā'isha reported the event as follows: when the prayer was called, the Prophet said: 'Order Abū Bakr to pray with the people.' 'Ā'isha countered: 'Abū Bakr is a frail man, and if he were to take your place, he could not bear it.' Muḥammad repeated: 'Order Abū Bakr to pray with the people', and 'Ā'isha made the same objection. Now the Prophet grew angry and said: 'You [women] are consorts of Joseph (*sawāhib Yūsuf*).' A third time he commanded: 'Order Abū Bakr to pray with the people.' As he was led out into the mosque, Abū Bakr stood back. Muḥammad made a sign to him to stand in his place. 'Ā'isha added: 'Abū Bakr thus followed the prayer of the Prophet, and the people followed the prayer of Abū Bakr.'⁵¹ Three times the Prophet had thus insisted that Abū Bakr, and only he, should lead the

prayer of the Muslims in his place. This was shortly after he, according to 'Ā'isha, had told them that Abū Bakr was in his view the most excellent of his Companions and had ordered all private doors of the mosque to be closed except for Abū Bakr's. The message was equally clear: Muḥammad wished to indicate that Abū Bakr was his choice for the succession.

There is, however, a second account by 'Ā'isha which may have induced Ibn al-'Abbās to mention 'Umar. According to it, Muḥammad, while ill in the apartment of his wife Maymūna, asked her nephew 'Abd Allāh b. Zam'ā to order the people to pray. 'Abd Allāh met 'Umar and told him to lead the prayer. The Prophet recognized 'Umar's stentorian voice and asked: 'Is this not the voice of 'Umar?' Upon receiving confirmatory answer, he said: 'God refuses this as do the faithful. Order Abū Bakr, let him pray with the people.' It was now that 'Ā'isha entreated Muḥammad twice to excuse Abū Bakr until he put an end to the argument by calling her and the women 'consorts of Joseph'.⁵² This may well be 'Ā'isha's initial version⁵³ which she then revised because of the unflattering part given in it to 'Umar. It would thus appear that 'Umar did lead the prayer at first during Muḥammad's illness and that 'Ā'isha, in order to maintain that the appointment to the leadership of the prayer by Muḥammad was meant to signify appointment to the succession, had to create the impression that 'Umar's leadership occurred against the will of Muḥammad and was disapproved of by him.⁵⁴

About the washing of Muḥammad's body for the funeral, al-Ṭabarī relates, on the authority of Ibn Ishāq, an account that differs from the one quoted above.⁵⁵ Both Ibn Hishām and al-Balādhurī quote Ibn Ishāq's account without the attribution to Ibn al-'Abbās.⁵⁶ There could thus be some doubt about the correctness of the attribution. The reliability of al-Ṭabarī in his quotations is generally high, however, and the attribution of the account to Ibn al-'Abbās is confirmed by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.⁵⁷ Thus it seems likely that Ibn al-'Abbās gave two different accounts about the same event on different occasions. The account related by Ibn Ishāq is, in any case, distinctly pro-Hashimite and provoked 'Ā'isha to give a counter-report. Ibn al-'Abbās related that 'Alī, al-'Abbās and his sons al-Faḍl and Qutham, Usāma b. Zayd and Shuqrān, both clients of Muḥammad, undertook to wash his body. Aws b. Khawālī, a Medinan veteran of the battle of Badr, implored 'Alī to let him join for the sake of the stake of the Anṣār in the Prophet and was let in by him. 'Alī drew the body to his chest, and al-'Abbās, al-Faḍl and Qutham helped him to turn it. Usāma and Shuqrān proceeded to pour water on the dead body without removing his shirt. 'Alī washed him, rubbing the shirt from the outside without his hand touching the body. He said: 'You are dearer to me than my father and mother, how sweet you are alive and dead.' Nothing of the body of the Prophet thus was seen, contrary to the case with ordinary men.

The report stresses that only Muḥammad's close kin and two of his clients were present. The women, including 'Ā'isha, in whose apartment

Muḥammad had died and was buried, were excluded. Only one of the Anṣār, but none of the Mekkan Emigrants, was exceptionally admitted. Out of reverence for the Prophet, great care was taken, against the common practice, not to uncover his body.

ʿĀʾisha did not take her exclusion with good grace. She reported that when the men wanted to wash the Prophet, they disagreed, saying: 'By God, we do not know whether we should bare the Prophet of his clothes as we bare our dead or whether we should wash him with his clothes on.' As they were thus quarrelling, a slumber was cast upon them and every one of them fell asleep with his chin on his chest. Then a speaker, known to no one, addressed them from the direction of the house: 'Wash the Prophet with his clothes on.' Muḥammad's kinsmen obeyed the command. The transmitter of the report added: 'Āʾisha used to say that with hindsight (*law istaqbaltu min amrī mā istadbartu*) she thought that only his wives should have washed him.⁵⁸ The listeners were thus left in no doubt that the wives, under 'Āʾisha's guidance, would not have needed a divine reprimand to stop them from committing an act of disrespect to the Prophet's body, unlike Muḥammad's insensitive and quarrelsome kin.

Abbreviations

<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>Ṭabarī</i>	al-Ṭabarī, <i>Ta'riḫ al-rusul wa l-mulūk</i>

Notes

- 1 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ al-rusul wa l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje *et al.* (Leiden, 1879–1901; henceforth Ṭabarī), I, 1825.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 2941–2.
- 3 M. Sharon, *Black Banners from the East* (Jerusalem, 1983), 75–85; M. Sharon, 'Ahl al-Bayt—People of the House', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 8 (1986), 169–84; M. Sharon, 'The Umayyads as Ahl al-Bayt', *JSAI*, 14 (1992), 115–52, esp. 134–49.
- 4 M. Sharon, 'Notes on the Question of Legitimacy of Government in Islam', *Israel Oriental Studies*, 10 (1980), 116–23, at 121.
- 5 H. Lammens, 'Le triumvirat Abou Bakr, 'Omar et Abou 'Obaida', *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale de l'Université St Joseph de Beyrouth*, 4 (1910), 113–44.
- 6 See, for instance, J. Sauvaget and C. Cahen, *Introduction to the History of the Muslim East: A Bibliographical Guide* (Berkeley, CA and London, 1965), 126.
- 7 H. Lammens, *Fāṭima et les Filles de Mahomet* (Rome, 1912), 99. Lammens' portrayal of Fāṭima was taken up by L. Caetani, who suggested that Muḥammad married off Fāṭima to 'Alī because she, of suspect legitimacy and lacking any physical and moral attractions, was not desired by anyone, and the union was for him a means to liberate himself from the annoyance of a daughter for whom he did

- not feel any sympathy (*Annali dell'Islam* (Milan, 1905–25; henceforth *Annali*), X, 470).
- 8 *Annali*, 11/1, 516. It is to be noted here that in Caetani's view Muḥammad was not in fact a Hashimite or even a Qurayshite, but rather an orphan of unknown origin who had been taken into the family of Abū Tālib b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. The fake genealogy making him a descendant of Hāshim and Qusayy (Hāshim's grandfather) was invented by 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās and Hishām b. al-Kalbī. (See in particular *Annali*, I, 58–75). On this basis Caetani referred to 'Alī as 'the (alleged) nephew of Muḥammad' (*Annali*, VII, 15) and to al-'Abbās as 'the alleged uncle of the Prophet' (*Annali*, II/1, 407).
- 9 *Annali*, 11/1, 523, 528.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 542.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 523.
- 12 The third volume of Caetani's work in which he discussed the theory of Lammens was published in 1910, the same year as Lammens' monograph. Caetani was, however, informed by personal letters from Lammens about the latter's views.
- 13 *Ibid.*, III, 123.
- 14 *Ibid.*; *ibid.*, V, 477–81.
- 15 W. M. Watt, *Muḥammad: Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford, 1961), 35–6.
- 16 H. Lammens, *Le Berceau de l'Islam: l'Arabie occidentale à la veille de l'Hégire* (Rome, 1914), 314.
- 17 E. Tyan, *Institutions du droit public Musulman* (Paris, 1954–6), I, 97–9, 114–16. In his *Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh, 1968), W. M. Watt likewise affirms that it was Arab practice to select the chief of a tribe from a certain family. He suggests that, had Muḥammad's adoptive son Zayd b. Hāritha been alive at the time of the Prophet's death, he might have succeeded without difficulty (although Qur'ān XXXIII 40 had expressly denied that Muḥammad was a father in relation to Zayd). 'Alī, though extolled by the Shi'ites, must have been unacceptable to many Muslims (p. 31). Watt praises the restoration of dynastic rule by the Umayyads as an achievement in accordance with Arab tribal practice (p. 39).
- 18 Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir and Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo, 1373–88/1955–69), XIV, 89.
- 19 Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1321/1903), XVIII, 72–3. Miṣṭaḥ is 'Awf b. Uthātha b. 'Abbād b. al-Muṭṭalib (Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Isāba fī tamayīz al-Shāhāba* (Cairo, 1323–5/[1905–7]), VI, 88; al-Zubayrī, *Kitāb Nasab Quraysh*, ed. E. Lévi-Provençal (Cairo, 1953), 95). As a Mutṭalibid he was also entitled to support from the Prophet's fifth of booty and *fay'*. He is mentioned among the recipients of the produce from Muḥammad's share of Khaybar (see W. Madelung, 'The Hāshimīyyāt of al-Kumayt and Hāshimī Shi'ism', *Studio Islamica*, 70 (1989), 5–26, at 12 and n. 36).
- 20 R. Paret, 'Der Plan einer neuen, leicht kommentierten Koranübersetzung', in *Orientalis-tische Studien Enno Littmann zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, ed. R. Paret (Leiden, 1935), 121–30, at 127–30.
- 21 Ṭabarī, *Jāmi'*, XVI 32.
- 22 R. Blachère, *Le Coran* (Paris, 1957), 329, n. 5.
- 23 Ṭabarī, *Jāmi'*, XXV, 13–15.
- 24 According to a report of the 'Alid 'Ġsā b. 'Abd Allāh, Muḥammad also gave portions of the *khums* to the the Banū 'Abd Yaghūth (Ibn Shabba, *Ta'rikh al-Madīna al-munawwara*, ed. Fahīm Muḥammad Shaltūt (Qumm, 1410/[1989/90]), 645). The descendants of Muḥammad's maternal uncle 'Abd Yaghūth b. Wahb b. 'Abd Manāf of the clan of Zuhra are meant.

- 25 W. M. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford, 1953), 6–8.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 8, 120–1. In his *Muhammedanische Studien* (Halle, 1889–90), I. Goldziher suggested that the hadith of Jubayr b. Muʿim about the Prophet’s preference of Hāshim and al-Muṭṭalib over ʿAbd Shams and Nawfal was an ʿAbbasid anti-ʿUmayyad partisan invention. This judgement rests on a complete disregard of the facts of Muhammad’s career and his conflict with his Mekkan opponents.
- 27 See Madelung, ‘The Hāshimiyyāt’, 24–6. Caetani mistranslated the phrase (*ahl baytih*) *man hurrima l-ṣadaqa ba’dah* in the hadith about Ghadīr Khumm attributed to Zayd b. Arqam as ‘people of his house are those who are excluded from the obligation of paying the legal alms after the death of the Prophet’ (*Annali*, X, 455). There was no such exclusion.
- 28 Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ*, XXII, 5–7.
- 29 Paret, ‘Der Plan’, 127–30.
- 30 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* ([Cairo] 1313/1895), III, 246. In his *Fāṭima et les filles de Mahomet*, 99. Lammens asserted that *ahl al-bayt*, as understood in Arabic, basically means a man’s wives assembled under the same roof. Yet the references given by him in n. 4 as evidence for the use of the term with respect to families other than Muḥammad’s clearly show that the primary meaning was close kin, blood relations.
- 31 The significance of the verse of the *mubāhala* has been barely discussed in western studies and biographies of Muhammad. L. Massignon’s monograph *La Mubāhala de Médine et l’hyperdulie de Fatima* (Paris, 1955) and W. Schmucker’s articles ‘Die christliche Minderheit von Naḡrān und die Problematik ihrer Beziehungen zum frühen Islam’, in *Studien zum Minderheitenproblem im Islam*, Bonner Orientalistische Studien, Neue Serie, ed. O. Spies (Bonn, 1973), vol. XXVII/1, 183–281 and ‘Mubāhala’ in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd edn, Leiden, 1954–) deal largely with later doctrine and legend. Schmucker argues that the part ascribed to the Christians of Naḡrān is wholly fictitious and that the verse, which he describes as obscure, does not relate to any historical event. The wording of the verse would seem, however, to refer to a historical occasion. Yet even if the verse were merely intended to extol Muhammad’s religious rank in abstract terms, the question would remain why his ‘wives and sons’ were included in it and who was meant by them. The contemporaries could hardly avoid understanding it as referring to his *ahl al-bayt*.
- 32 T. Nöldeke and F. Schwally, *Geschichte des Qurāns* (Leipzig, 1909–38), I, 177, n. 2.
- 33 The argument has a basis in hadith. According to statements ascribed to several Companions, Muḥammad’s son Ibrāhīm did not survive because he would have become a prophet. See Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, II, 105–6; Y. Friedmann, ‘Finality of Prophethood in Sunni Islam’, *JSAI*, 7 (1986), 177–215, at 187–9.
- 34 Friedmann, ‘Finality of Prophethood’; G. G. Stroumsa, ‘Seal of the Prophets: The Nature of a Manichaeian Metaphor’, *JSAI*, 7 (1986), 61–74; C. Colpe, ‘Das Siegel der Propheten’, *Orientalia Suecana*, 33–5 (1984–6), 71–83, revised version in C. Colpe, *Das Siegel der Propheten*, (Berlin, 1990), 227–43.
- 35 L. Veccia Vaglieri, ‘Ghadīr Khumm’, *EI* (2nd edn) and below, 253.
- 36 On the life of ʿĀ’isha see especially N. Abbott, *Aishah the Beloved of Mohammad* (Chicago, 1942).
- 37 For a short summary of the career of ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās see L. Veccia Vaglieri, ‘ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās’, *EI* (2nd edn).
- 38 See in general his discussion in *Annali*, I, 38ff.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 11/1, 691–2.

- 40 *Ibid.*, I, 47–51.
- 41 Ṭabarī, I, 1808. As against the numerous reports of ‘Ā’isha and others about the last public prayer led by Muhammad, according to which he primarily manifested his preference for Abū Bakr. ‘Abd Allāh b. al-‘Abbās is quoted as having given a completely different account on the authority of his elder brother al-Faḍl. According to this account, the Prophet did not mention, or allude to, Abū Bakr at all. He confessed his repentance for any offences he had committed against others and asked those present to confess their wrongdoings so that he could pray for them. When one of them acknowledged being a liar, hypocrite and guilty of every offence, ‘Umar self-righteously told him: ‘You have disgraced yourself.’ But the Prophet said: ‘The disgrace of this world is lighter than the disgrace of the hereafter. O God, grant him truthfulness and faith and bring his matters to a good end.’ ‘Umar insisted: ‘Speak to him.’ The Prophet laughed and said (to the man): ‘‘Umar is with me and I am with ‘Umar. After me, stick to ‘Umar, wherever he shall be’ (Ṭabarī, I, 1801–3).
- 42 Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat sayyidinā Muḥammad rasūl Allāh*, ed. F. Wustenfeld as *Das Leben Muhammeds nach Muhammed Ibn Ishāk* (Göttingen, 1859–60), 1007; Ṭabarī, I, 1809. The women named as present by ‘Ā’isha were Umm Salama and Maymūna, wives of Muḥanumad, and Asmā’ bt ‘Umays. All three were pro-Hashimite and therefore odious to ‘Ā’isha. On Asmā’ see Abbott, *Aishah*, 113–15. ‘Ā’isha added with satisfaction that Maymūna was given an infusion of medicine through her mouth while she was fasting because of the curse of the Prophet and as a punishment for what they did. In other versions ‘Ā’isha is quoted as saying that she was also present (Ṭabarī, I, 1808–9). In one of them, transmitted by her nephew al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad, she tells the assembled women not to give the medicine to the Prophet, but she is nevertheless also affected by his curse and forced to swallow medicine (Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, vol. I, ed. Muḥammad Hamīd Allāh (Cairo, 1959), 546). Other versions, not attributed to ‘Ā’isha, mostly blame Asmā’, rather than al-‘Abbās, for giving Muḥammad the medicine (Ṭabarī, I, 1810; Ibn Sa’d, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*, ed. E. Sachau *et al.* (Leiden, 1905–40), II/2, 31–2, where one version is attributed to ‘Abd Allāh b. al-‘Abbās). Caetani misunderstood the tendency of ‘Ā’isha’s account as implying that Muḥammad distrusted everybody except his uncle al-‘Abbās (*Annali*, 11/1, 499). The impression conveyed is rather that Muḥammad was strict with the women but unduly lenient with his kinsman al-‘Abbās, who was the main culprit.
- 43 Ṭabarī, I, 1800–1, quoting Ibn Ishāq; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat sayyidinā*, 1005; ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-San‘ānī, *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A‘zamī [Beirut, 1390–2/1970–2], V, 429–30 and Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, VI, 34 (Ma‘mār ‘an al-Zuhrī). Ibn Hishām suppressed the comment of Ibn al-‘Abbās on ‘Ā’isha’s unwillingness to mention anything positive about ‘Alī.
- 44 For ‘Ā’isha’s account see Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat sayyidinā*, 1011, Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, II/2, 50. There ‘Ā’isha is quoted as stating that it happened during her turn for Muḥammad’s company and that she did not wrong anyone in relation to him. She apologizes that it was only due to her foolishness and extreme youth that the Prophet died in her arms. This is in conflict with her other reports that Muhammad had ceased to circulate among his wives, having taken leave to stay with her during his illness.
- 45 Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, II/2, 51. The latter part of the report about the washing of Muḥammad’s body by ‘Alī in the absence of al-‘Abbās is paralleled by a report of ‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Utba from Ibn al-‘Abbās (*ibid.*, 62). That Muhammad died with his head in the lap of ‘Alī and that his body was washed by ‘Alī singly is also affirmed in a speech that the latter is reported to have addressed

- to his followers at Siffin. Nasr b. Muzāhim al-Minqarī, *Waq'at Siffin*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muhammad Hārūn (Cairo, 1382/[1962]), 224).
- 46 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣammaf*, V, 438–9; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Cairo, 1312/[1894]), *Mardā*, 17; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, II/2, 37–8; *Annali*, II/1, 508.
- 47 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Būlāq, 1290/[1873]), *Fadā'il al-sahāba*, 11.
- 48 Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* (Hyderabad, 1325–7/[1907–9]), I, 198–9.
- 49 Ṭabarī, I, 1810–11.
- 50 *Annali*, II/1, 506.
- 51 Ṭabarī, I, 1811–12. According to the version related by al-Zuhrī, 'Ā'isha explained that her objection to Muḥannad's order was motivated by her fear that the people would not like anyone occupying the place of Muhammad and would blame him for any misfortune that occurred; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat sayyidinā*, 1008; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, II/2, 18; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 559.
- 52 Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, VI, 24.
- 53 The report continues the narration of 'Ubayd Allah b. 'Abd Allāh, al-Zuhrī's main source for the events, about the beginning of Muḥammad's illness. Ibn Ishāq and most later sources preferred the toned down version which al-Zuhrī related on the authority of Ḥamza b. 'Abd Allāh, grandson of the caliph 'Umar. 'Ā'isha may have hesitated to tell him the unflattering story about his grandfather. Al-Ṭabarī's *isnād* is independent of al-Zuhrī.
- 54 'Abd Allāh b. Zam'a is himself quoted as narrating the story. According to his account, Abū Bakr was absent at the time and 'Umar led the complete prayer. 'Umar afterwards reproached him and insisted that he, 'Umar, had thought that the Prophet had actually named him and that otherwise he would not have led the prayer. 'Abd Allāh b. Zam'a excused himself saying that, in the absence of Abū Bakr, he had considered 'Umar the most worthy of leading it; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat sayyidinā*, 1008–9; Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, IV, 322.
- 55 Ṭabarī, I, 1830–1.
- 56 Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat sayyidinā*, 1818–9; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 569.
- 57 Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa l-nihāya* (Cairo, 1351/1932), V, 260–1. The *isnād* is Ibn Ishāq—Ḥusayn b. 'Abd Allāh—Ikrima—Ibn al-'Abbās. Caetani strangely asserted that this report of Ibn Ishāq was without *isnād* and thus was a genuine and authentic tradition of Ibn Ishāq. He considered it therefore as particularly authoritative (*Annali*, II/1, 519).
- 58 Ṭabarī, I, 1831. Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat sayyidinā*, (1019) omitted the venomous comment of 'Ā'isha.