



The Heirs of the Prophet: Charisma and Religious Authority in Shi'ite Islam

Liyakat N. Takim

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Looks at how various factions used the tradition that scholars were the “heirs of the Prophet” during the classical period of Islam (570–1258 CE).

After the death of the Prophet Muhammad, different religious factions within the Muslim community laid claim to the Prophet’s legacy. Drawing on research from Sunni and Shiite literature, Liyakat N. Takim explores how these various groups, including the caliphs, scholars, Sufi holy men, and the Shiite imams and their disciples, competed to be the Prophetic heirs. The book also illustrates how the tradition of the “heirs of the Prophet” was often a polemical tool used by its bearers to demand obedience and loyalty from the Muslim community by imposing an authoritative rendition of texts, beliefs, and religious practices. Those who did not obey were marginalized and demonized. While examining the competition for Muhammad’s charismatic authority, Takim investigates the Shiite self-understanding of authority and argues that this was an important factor in the formation of a distinct Shiite leadership. *The Heirs of the Prophet* also provides a new understanding of textual authority in Islam by examining authority construction and the struggle for legitimacy evidenced in Islamic biographical dictionaries.

“*The Heirs of the Prophet* provides an intelligent introduction to the Imams’ disciples during this stage in Twelver salvation history, offering a coherent overview of their activities and relationship with the Imams. In its approach to questions of religious authority and orthodoxy in Islam, the study stands out as exceptional.”
— *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*

“...perhaps the most important contribution ... to current scholarship on early Shiism.” — *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*

“This book is very well written and demonstrates a vast knowledge and intimate familiarity with both primary and secondary sources on the topic of the Shiite imams and their deputies. Takim’s exploration of how authority was constructed and made legitimate in early Shiite biographies, exegeses, legal theories, *kalam*, and the like, forges new ground in the field.” — Kathryn Kueny, author of *The Rhetoric of Sobriety: Wine in Early Islam*

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