

140620  
NÜBÜVVET MÜHRÜ

## CHAPTER 1

## Setting the Seal on Prophecy

The death of the Prophet was “the greatest misfortune”, so one frequently reads on Muslim tombstones.<sup>1</sup> For a little more than two decades heaven had opened; by means of His Messenger God had spoken directly to His new chosen people and, as it was soon to be believed, to human beings throughout the world. He was now no longer simply “the Merciful” (*al-Rahmān*), as the Jews of South Arabia had already described Him,<sup>2</sup> but had manifested Himself in a special manner as “the Lord of Muḥammad”.<sup>3</sup> One was, however, obliged to acknowledge that the occurrence of prophets had come to an end; all that remained of the Word was Scripture, and the charisma of God’s Messenger had to be “accommodated in everyday reality”.<sup>4</sup> The liberating interpretation,

- 1 *a’zam al-maṣā’ib*; apparently found for the first time in an inscription from the year 71/691 (cf. El-Hawary in: JRAS 1932, p. 290). Additional material in Massignon: BIFAO 59/1960/260 ff. (= *Opera minora* III, 303 ff.) and in Meier: *Der Islam* 62/1985/25, fn. 21. The formula and the idea come to be expressed in a *ḥadīth* (*Conc.* III, 432a).
- 2 J. Rijkmans in: *L’Orient cristiano nella storia della civiltà*, 436 ff.
- 3 *rabb Muḥammad*, appears thus in early Islamic poetry (O. Farrukh, *Bild des Frühislams*, 21 f.), for instance by analogy with *rabb Mūsā wa-Hārūn* in the Koran (surahs 7/122 and 26/48). – One may speculate concerning to what extent this special relation already existed in pre-Islamic times. Occupying a key position in this regard is a late Sabaeen rock inscription Ja 1028 from the year 518, at the end of which the formula *rbhd / bḥmd* is found (A. Jamme, *Sabaeen and Hasaeen Inscriptions from Saudi Arabia*, pp. 40 and 55, l. 12). Following on the invocation of “the Lord of the Jews”, i.e. *Rahmānān*, is the invocation of a *mḥmd*; the lack of mimation appears to show it is a personal name. If one may translate this as “by Muḥammad”, it might be assumed that among Jews of South Arabia there were those who were waiting for the Messiah as “the Praised One”; and that the Prophet had laid claim to this epithet for himself. The compilers of the *Dictionnaire Sabéen* (A. F. L. Beeston, M. A. Ghul, W. W. Müller and J. Rijkmans) have not included the form and thereby indicate that they consider it a personal name. However, Beeston in his most recent treatment of the inscription to date (in: BSOAS 48/1985/42 ff.) has now judged otherwise; for him *mḥmd* is an epithet of *Rahmānān* (Jamme also agrees, op. cit. 55, and similarly Rodinson in: BO 26/1969/28). Moreover, the question as to whether the Prophet subsequently adopted the name Muḥammad is generally answered in the negative (cf. F. Buhl, *Leben Muhammads*, 112, fn. 7, with additional literature). I must thank W. W. Müller, Marburg, for information on this question.
- 4 The expression “accommodation in everyday reality” (*Veralltäglichung*) comes from Max Weber (*Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, <sup>5</sup>Tübingen 1976, pp. 142 ff., also 661 ff.). On the process itself cf. T. Nagel, *Rechtleitung und Kalifat*, 23 ff., who in this connection works with

3-7

Ess. Josef van, Theology, and Society in the Second and Third Century of the Hijra: a History of Religious Thought in Early Islam, c. I, terc. John O’Kane ; edit. Maribel Fierro, M. Şükrü Hanioglu, Renata Holod, Florian Schwarz, Leiden : E. J. Brill, 2017. İSAM DN.253960.