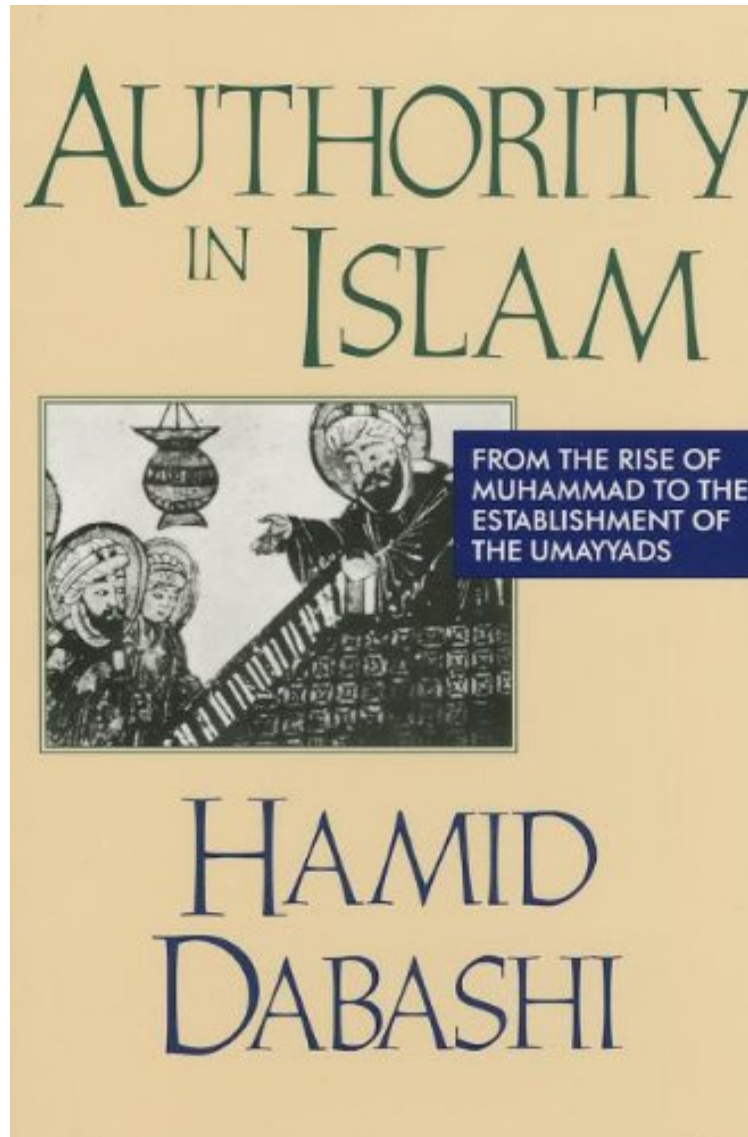


(Ebook free) Authority in Islam: From the Rise of Mohammad to the Establishment of the Umayyads

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Hamid Dabashi

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mistake of reading this book directly after reading W. Madelung's impressive work on the succession to Muhammad. In short, Madelung's work far surpasses this one. Granted, however, this work does not aim to do what Madelung sought to do. Dabashi, here, focuses on Weberian theory of *charisma* and its subsequent routinization. As such, the aim of author is to 1) expand upon Weberian theory of authority and 2) revise it insofar as the specificities of the period can inform and mature this theory. In this, he more or less succeeds, and this has brought his work broader appeal outside the field of Islamics than, for example, Madelung's source-heavy study. To summarize the book, three trends of authority appeared after Muhammad's death as a way of continuing his authority that would profoundly impact and guide the currents of Islamic history thereafter. These three are the Sunni (institutional), Shi'a (individual), and Khawarij (negational). Though the theory is more or less solid, the approach is methodologically sloppy-movements appear to at times to be given more cohesion and definition than they really had. Anachronisms abound. Mostly, these appear throughout as a tendency that comes all too close to a picture wherein these three currents of authority formed instantaneously after Muhammad's death. Much of this also arises from the fact that Dabashi's work is also quite weak when it comes to sources and citing evidence to support many of the sweeping generalizations that are made concerning the period in question. This work will most likely be more enjoyed by the sociologist of religion than the historian.

From the origins of Muhammad's prophetic movement through the development of Islam's principal branches to the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty, the concept of authority has been central to Islamic civilization. By examining the nature, organization, and transformation of authority over time, Dabashi conveys both continuities and disruptions inherent in the development of a new political culture. It is this process, he argues, that accounts for the fundamental patterns of authority in Islam that ultimately shaped, in dialectical interaction with external historical factors, the course of Islamic civilization. The book begins by examining the principal characteristics of authority in pre-Islamic Arab society. Dabashi describes the imposition of the Muhammadan charismatic movement on pre-Islamic Arab culture, tracing the changes it introduced in the fabric of pre-Islamic Arabia. He examines the continuities and changes that followed, focusing on the concept of authority, and the formation of the Sunnite, Shiite, and Karajite branches of Islam as political expressions of deep cultural cleavages. For Dabashi, the formation of these branches was the inevitable outcome of the clash between pre-Islamic patterns of authority and those of the Muhammadan charismatic movement. In turn, they molded both the unity and the diversity of the emerging Islamic culture. Authority in Islam explains how this came to be. Dabashi employs Weber's concept of charismatic authority in describing Muhammad and his mode of authority as both a model and a point of departure. His purpose is not to offer critical verification or opposition to interpretation of historical events, but to suggest a new approach to the existing literature. The book is an important contribution to political sociology as well as the study of Islamic culture and civilization. Sociologists, political scientists, and Middle Eastern specialists will find this analysis of particular value.

In this unprecedented study, Dabashi combines the insights of Weberian sociology with Rieffian psychoanalysis and applies both to the originary period of Islamic history... [S]atisfying book. Recommended for all levels of readers. B. B. Lawrence, Choice
About the Author Hamid Dabashi is the Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. He is the author of, among other works, the acclaimed *Authority in Islam: From the Rise of Muhammad to the Establishment of the Umayyads*.