

ولاية العهد في العصر الأموي

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المستخلص

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Succession To The Caliphate In The Umayyad Period

Historical Study (41-132A.H/661-750A.C)

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Abstract

In the year 41H / 661A.D., Al-Hasan Ibn Ali Ibn Abi Taleb abdicated the Caliphate in favor of Mu'awiyah Ibn Abi Sufian, thus the Umayyad Caliphate was established (that year was called as the "year of unity").

During the reign of Mu'awiyah, the Islamic Caliphate witnessed a very important development when Mu'awiyah introduced a new regime in the succession to the Caliphate position that adopted the inheritance system as a basic rule for succession to the Caliphate in lieu of counseling and election which was the method for nomination for the Caliphate position.

Consequently, inheritance was adopted instead of Shoura (counseling) and election when Mu'awiyah solicited approval on the succession of his son Yazeed to the Crown Prince position. Thus, Yazeed became the first Crown Prince in the history of Muslims and succession to the Caliphate position became an inheritance among the Umayyads from the father to the son and from the brother to the brother.

The Caliphate became confined to one family without being transferable to another and the Umayyad Caliphates adopted the system of Mu'awiyah in the selection of their crown princes. This trend in bequeathing the reign wasn't known to the Muslims at the time of the Rashidi Caliphates, however, it became a feature of the Umayyad regime.

Moreover, the Umayyads weren't contented with one crown prince and Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam made some amendments in this position by assigning the crown prince position to more than one person and gave it to both his sons Abdul-Malek and Abdul-Aziz. Accordingly, he introduced a new development adopted by the Umayyad Caliphs after him. Dispute became inevitable between crown princes themselves within the Umayyads prior to manifestation to the outside. The Caliphate wanted to takeover the crown prince position for his sons and to remove his brother and when the crown prince succeeds to the Caliphate he will revenge from all those who have helped and supported his brother in removing him from his position.

Consequently, the Islamic state lost some of its best men who were involved in the conflict about the crown prince position. However, this wasn't the only dispute that the Umayyad state suffered in its history. Muslims entered in many conflicts as a result of their rejection to make the Caliphate as an inheritance throne. Such rejection led to the rise of factions that confronted the Umayyad reign through making many revolutions.

The most important faction (sect) who confronted the Umayyad state was the Shiites who revolted against the Umayyad state under the slogan of soliciting the succession of A'l Al-Bait (Prophet's Kindred/Household) and the rejection of the Umayyads as rulers since the Shiites considered that the Umayyads had usurped the Caliphate from Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, the legitimate caliphate of the Muslims and his sons after him, since they considered them as the only persons having the right of succession to the Caliphate. As such, they approved the principle of inheritance but limited it to Ali Ibn Abi Taleb's family.

However, the Khawarej theory concerning the Caliphate was based on the idea that the Caliphate must be freely elected by Muslims. Therefore, they conclusively rejected the idea of bequeathing the throne and the regime of the crown prince established by Mu'awiyah. They

demanding to make the Caliphate as a common right for every Muslim who possesses the qualifications to succeed to the Caliphate.

The notion of the Shiites and Khawarij concerning the theory of Caliphate and the crown prince position affected their relations with the Umayyad state and led them to make revolutions that cost the Umayyad state a lot of effort, money and men. Those revolutions were demolishing and destruction factors and affected the stability of the state which based the principle of selecting its caliphates on inheritance.

The position of the crown prince played a role in undermining the Umayyads' reign both externally by the factions and groups and internally by the members of the Umayyad family themselves. If the crown prince position's dedication for the sons or brothers was a cause for several disputes, the dedication of it for two persons was even worse and troublesome which resulted in a split in the Umayyad family, particularly in the era of Al-Waleed Ibn Yazid who was killed by his cousin Yazid Ibn Al-Waleed which triggered the actual collapse of this family and led to its eventual fall in the year 132H / 750 A.D. in which the position of the crown prince played a role.