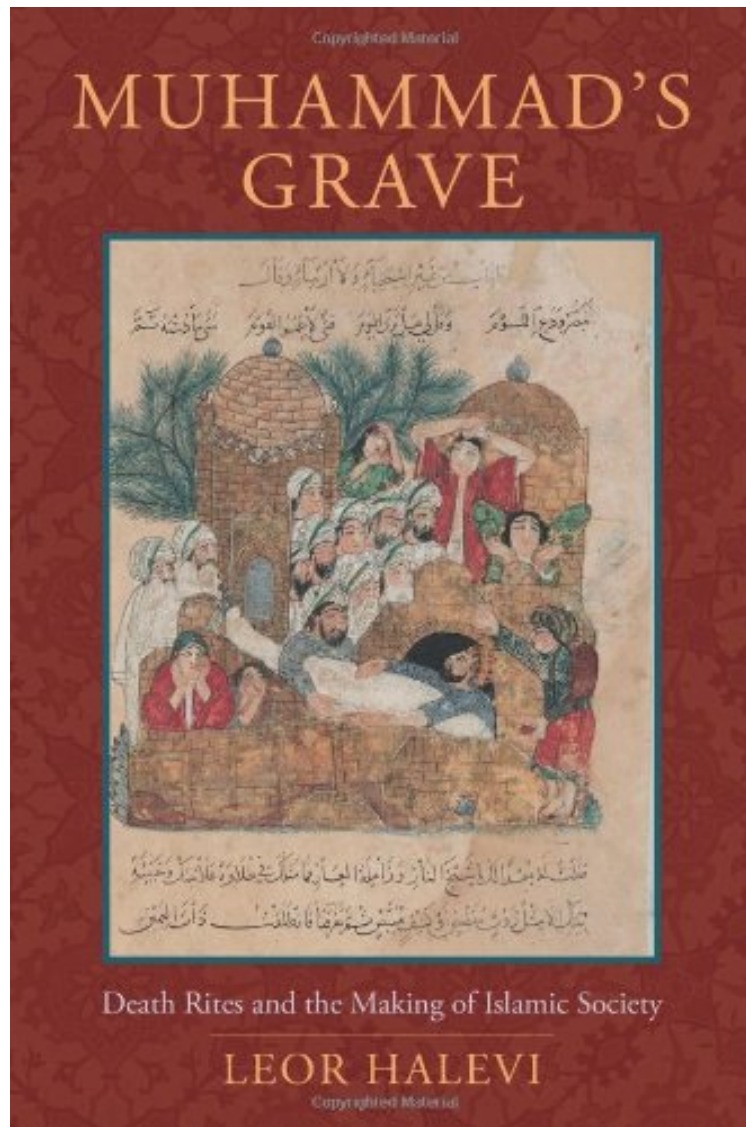


(Read download) Muhammad's Grave: Death Rites and the Making of Islamic Society

Muhammad's Grave: Death Rites and the Making of Islamic Society

Leor Halevi

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Leor Halevi : Muhammad's Grave: Death Rites and the Making of Islamic Society before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Muhammad's Grave: Death Rites and the Making of Islamic Society:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Muhammad's GraveBy Michael RubinWestern policymakers and academics often concern themselves with death in Islam only in the context of suicide terrorism. But the Islamic treatment of death is far more complicated. Halevi, professor of history at Vanderbilt University, has written a

masterful, well-written work filled with original research that shows how Islamic notions of death coalesced in the first centuries of the new religion. Well-organized by theme, the separate chapters in *Muhammad's Grave* (on such topics as cover tomb stones, the washing of corpses, shrouds, wailing, processions, and tomb construction) will primarily interest medievalists and theologians. At the same time, Halevi's work makes for interesting reading to all Middle Eastern experts. Halevi is an expert linguist and, with training at Princeton, Yale, and Harvard, equally at ease with Muhammad bin Isma'il al-Bukhari's compilations of the sayings and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, with the Babylonian Talmud, or with the essays of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French and German scholars. Because Halevi has mastered such a breadth of sources, he is able--as is Qur'anic scholar Khaleel Mohammed at the University of California--to provide the context to Islam's early years. [1] Islam did not arise in a vacuum. Classical Muslim scholarship--lost to a generation of modern scholars who have mastered neither language nor historiography--acknowledges how both Judaism and Christianity influenced Islam's development and the evolution of its rites more than some contemporary studies suggest. Hence, when discussing the washing of corpses, Halevi is able to provide the Jewish, Christian, and Zoroastrian contexts with a bit of humor. Why, he asks, did "Basrans and Kufans stray from the Medinese [prevalent in Medina] model? Did they fall under the influence of Jews or Zoroastrians, some of whose notions concerning purity and pollution they ingested as readily as Magian cheese?" Halevi also describes early debates about whether and how "should Muslims participate in everyday civic events that failed to meet their standards," such as Jewish and Christian funerals. After all, Saudi authorities might today seek to keep their kingdom Judenrein, but in classical periods of Islam to which, ironically, many fundamentalists seek to return, Arabia was a far more diverse and tolerant place. Halevi's final chapter, "The Torture of Spirit and Corpse in the Grave," may immerse itself fully in classical scholarship, but it provides important background for modern debates--as Halevi explains elsewhere. [2] If Muslims believe they suffer great pain once in the grave but can avoid such torture if they die as martyrs, then terror masters have an effective line of argument when they recruit "martyrdom" bombers. Michael Rubin Middle East Quarterly Summer 2009 [1] Khaleel Mohammed, "Assessing English Translations of the Qur'an," Middle East Quarterly, Spring 2005, p. 59-71. [2] The International Herald Tribune (Paris), May 4, 2007.

In his probing study of the role of death rites in the making of Islamic society, Leor Halevi imaginatively plays prescriptive texts against material culture and advances new ways of interpreting highly contested sources. His original research reveals that religious scholars of the early Islamic period produced codes of funerary law not only to define the handling of a Muslim corpse but also to transform everyday urban practices. Relying on oral traditions, these scholars established new social patterns in the cities of Arabia, Mesopotamia, and the eastern Mediterranean. They distinguished Islamic rites from Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian rites and changed the way men and women interacted publicly and privately. In each chapter Halevi explores a different layer of human interaction, following the movement of the corpse from the deathbed to the grave. In the process he analyzes the real and imaginary relationships between husbands and wives, prayer leaders and mourners, and even dreamers and the dead. He describes how Muslims wailed for the deceased, prepared corpses for burial, marched in funerary processions, and prayed for the dead, highlighting the specific economic and political factors involved in these rituals as well as key religious and sexual divisions. Offering a unique perspective on the making of Islamic social and religious ideals during this early period, Halevi forges a fascinating link between the development of funerary rites and the efforts of an emerging religion to carve out its own, distinct identity. *Muhammad's Grave* is a groundbreaking history of the rise of Islam and the roots of contemporary Muslim attitudes toward the body and society.

Muhammad's Grave will be warmly welcomed by scholars and students of premodern Islam, including specialists in both history and religion, and will attract the attention of European medievalists and anthropologists as well. The topic is important, the scholarship solid and original, and the presentation elegant and lucid. (Everett K. Rowson, New York University) The most exhaustive study yet on matters relating to death in early Islam. Leor Halevi meticulously demonstrates how particular beliefs and practices evolved, what sorts of contestation took place in debating these matters, how these beliefs and practices varied from one Islamic city (or community of scholars) to another, what larger questions of identity and authority were at stake, and how to interpret the literary remains that describe the beliefs and practices in question. A major contribution to our understanding of early Islamic history, Islamic religious thought, and the formation of Islam during its first centuries. (Muhammad Qasim Zaman, professor of Near Eastern studies and religion, Princeton University) Leor Halevi persuasively argues that the development of Islamic practices and beliefs relating to death, burial, and the fate of the body was a relatively extended process crucial to the eighth century. He considers a wide range of issues, including matters of sexual propriety and the restriction of the social space available to women, and the way in which a body of rituals served to create an Islamic identity. (Gerald Hawting, professor of the history of the Near Middle East, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London) "[A] signal contribution.... Exceptionally rich in its documentation and evidentiary record, highly imaginative, and creative in its use of oral traditions and legal rulings, *Muhammad's Grave* is a seminal work. (Albert Hourani Book Award Committee) Innovative... A welcome addition to undergraduate and graduate curricula, and an important

source book for scholars. (Kathryn Kueny *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*)A welcome contribution... Muhammad's Grave does more than fill the gap. (Ian Straughn *American Anthropologist*)A truly impressive display of textual scholarship fused with historical anthropology and lit up by enthusiasm. (Barnaby Rogerson *Times Literary Supplement*)The definitive history of its subject before modern times. (*Speculum*)Halevi's book is highly recommended (al-Qantara)A masterful, well-written work filled with original research. (*Middle East Quarterly*)Will be highly valued by anyone who works on early Islam and the process through which a distinctively Islamic community came about. (Martyn Smith *International Journal of Middle East Studies*)A much-needed corrective to the abstract and textual nature of much of the debate over the nature of early Islam, plunging the reader into a thoroughly imagined and painstakingly documented material world.... Erudite and engaging. (Marion Katz *Islamic Law and Society*)An important contribution to our understanding of the crafting of social ritual in early Islamic society. (Christine D. Baker *Journal of World History*)A scholarly gem... a spectacular accomplishment. (Khalid Yahya Blankinship *American Historical*)All of this is exciting stuff for students of the early Muslim world, in part because Halevi has suggested and demonstrated several possible ways forward in a notoriously unyielding field of inquiry. (Thomas Sizgorich *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*)Original and highly readable.... Halevi showcases what historians of Islam can accomplish. (*Journal of Middle East Studies*)Leor Halevi's Muhammad's Grave is a strikingly original work built on a foundation of meticulous and wide-ranging scholarship. (*Religion and the Arts*)[O]riginal and highly readable study (Mesa Romes)Impressive erudition, which includes a thorough familiarity with scholarship on Judaism and Christianity as well as Islam. (*History Workshop Journal*)Matchless imagination in relating the traditions and events of the past. (*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*)About the AuthorA graduate of Princeton, Yale, and Harvard Universities, Leor Halevi is an associate professor of history at Vanderbilt University. His work has won numerous distinctions, including fellowships from the Library of Congress, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the American Council of Learned Societies. His publications have appeared in *Past Present*, *History of Religions*, *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, and *Speculum*. His first book, *Muhammad's Grave*, has won three major awards: the Albert Hourani Award, given by the Middle East Studies Association, the Award for Excellence in the category of Analytical-Descriptive studies, given by the American Academy of Religion and the Ralph Waldo Emerson Award, given by the Phi Beta Kappa Society.