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2007 Albert Hourani Book Award

WINNER

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

Leor Halevi

Muhammad's Grave: Death Rites and the Making of Islamic Society is a signal contribution to the social history of early Islam. Using the prism of *hadith* and *fiqh* to peek into the *mentalité* of eighth-century urban Muslim pietists, Halevi skillfully paints a colorful tableau of their religious concerns in the area of death rituals. Through careful and incisive scrutiny of debates about use of tombstones, burial attire, washing the corpse, manners of burial, tomb construction, patterns of mourning, funerary procession as well as torture in the grave, he reveals a wide spectrum of attitudes among early pietists that ranged from patriarchal, gender segregationist idealism in the garrison towns of Basra and Kufa to relatively more women-friendly, family-oriented realism of Medina. Halevi demonstrates that irrespective of their internal disagreements, these early Muslim religious specialists all strove to Islamicize their communities by differentiating Islamic death rituals from pre-Islamic Arabian as well as Jewish, Christian and Zoroastrian practices of burial and bereavement. 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 that sets a new standard in the study of early Islamic social history.

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