The Holy City of Medina

This is the first book-length study of the emergence of Medina, in modern Saudi Arabia, as a widely venerated sacred space and holy city over the course of the first three Islamic centuries (the seventh to ninth centuries CE). This was a dynamic period that witnessed the evolution of many Islamic political, religious and legal doctrines, and the book situates Medina’s emerging sanctity within the appropriate historical contexts. The book focuses on the roles played by the Prophet Muhammad, by the Umayyad and early Abbasid caliphs and by Muslim legal scholars. It shows that Medina’s emergence as a holy city, alongside Mecca and Jerusalem, as well as the development of many of the doctrines associated with its sanctity, was the result of gradual and contested processes and was intimately linked with important contemporary developments concerning the legitimation of political, religious and legal authority in the Islamic world.

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Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization

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The Holy City of Medina

Sacred Space in Early Islamic Arabia

HARRY MUNT

University of Oxford
To Rebekah
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Finally, I would like to take the opportunity here to thank my family. My parents and my sister, Jassy, have always been there to support me. My greatest debt, however, is, as ever, to Rebekah.
Notes on the Text

The transliteration system used throughout this book for Arabic words and phrases follows a slightly modified version of the system recommended by the International Journal of Middle East Studies. Some proper nouns are fully transliterated, but others with common English equivalents are not; so, for example, al-Tāʾif, but Medina, not al-Madīna. For the very occasional transliteration of Persian, a slightly modified version of the system used by the Encyclopaedia Iranica has been adopted. For the transliteration of languages other than Arabic and Persian, in particular of Syriac and pre-Islamic Arabian languages, I have tried to follow systems that appear to an outsider such as myself to be relatively standard in their respective fields.

As is now common in the field, both hijrī and Common Era dates are usually given together in the form hijrī/CE; Muḥammad’s hijra to Medina thus took place in 1/622. On those few occasions when only a hijrī or a CE date is provided, this is made clear.

References have been given in a brief form in the footnotes, usually just the author’s surname and a short version of the work’s title, and fuller details can be found in the bibliography. A handful of works are referred to by other abbreviations, which are listed in the next section. The most common exception is encyclopaedia articles, which are referred to in the footnotes in the form: Name [or abridged name] of encyclopaedia, s.v. ‘Title of article’ (Author’s name); for example, EI, s.v. ‘Buʿāth’ (M. Lecker). The few citations from classical Greek and Latin sources are cited using referencing conventions common in works on ancient history. Papyri and pre-Islamic Arabian inscriptions are referred to using
standard sigla, but a more precise reference to a published edition/translation is also always provided.

All translations from the Qurʾān are my own, unless otherwise stated, although I have to acknowledge the considerable debt I owe to two previously published translations: A. J. Arberry’s *The Koran Interpreted*, 2 vols. (London, 1955) and A. Jones’s *The Qurʾān* (Cambridge, 2007).

There is one final stylistic abbreviation of which the reader should be aware. Many mentions of Muḥammad in Arabic and Persian works are followed by one of a handful of standard invocations for God’s blessing upon him, sometimes also upon his family and/or Companions. In general, I do not translate these blessings to save cluttering the text, but I do indicate where they appear in the editions I have used by inserting the abbreviation ‘(ṣ)’.
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAE</td>
<td>Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASIC</td>
<td>Shahîd, Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSOAS</td>
<td>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRAI</td>
<td>Comptes rendus des séances de l’année: académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI³</td>
<td>Encyclopaedia of Islam Three, eds. K. Fleet et al. Leiden, 2007–.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJMES</td>
<td>International Journal of Middle East Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILS</td>
<td>Islamic Law and Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAOS</td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JESHO</td>
<td>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRAS</td>
<td>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSAI</td>
<td>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSS</td>
<td>Journal of Semitic Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSJ</td>
<td>Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSAS</td>
<td>Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies</td>
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Map 1. The early Islamic Hijaz.
Map 2. The sacred landscape of early Islamic Medina.