

### Further Reading

- Afsaruddin, Asma. *Excellence and Precedence: Medieval Islamic Discourse on Legitimate Leadership*. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- El-Hibri, Tayeb. *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History: The Rashidun Caliphs*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Madelung, Wilferd. *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Muir, William, Sir. *Annals of the Early Caliphate from the Death of Mahomet to the Omeyyad and Abbaside Dynasties*. Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1968.
- Sha'ban, Muhammad. *Islamic History: A New Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.

## RELICS OF THE PROPHET

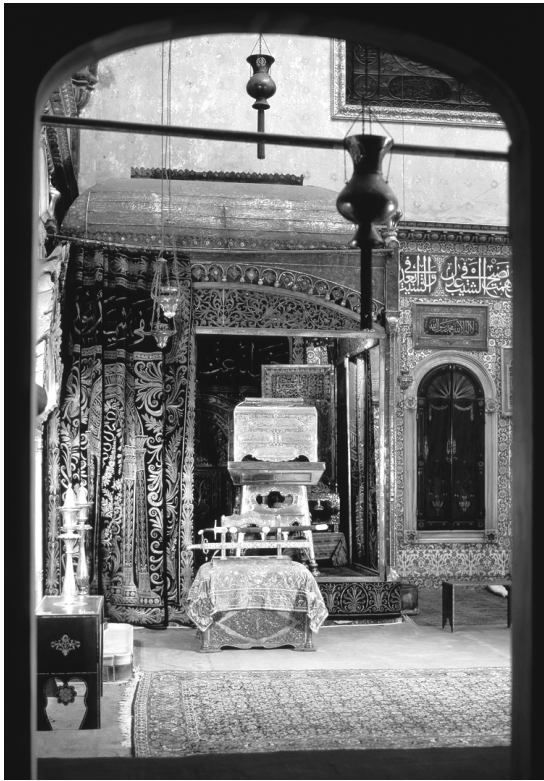
Islam has not developed a practice of venerating the relics of saints, as one might find in Christianity. However, there does exist a veneration of some relics (*athar*) of the Prophet Muhammad. As for the saints (*awliya'*) in Islam, the object of veneration centers around the saint's grave and never the relic itself.

The veneration of the relics of the Prophet finds its foundation in some canonical hadith, wherein stories are related about Companions seeking the spiritual blessing (*baraka*) linked to the prophetic presence, through drinking from his cup, preserving the water of his ablutions, or even trying to absorb his bodily secretions, such as his sweat or his blood as a result of a bloodletting. At the end of the first and last pilgrimages of the Prophet, when the established ritual prescribed the shaving of one's hair, the Companions preserved some of the Prophet's hair. The land where the Prophet was buried is also considered blessed and, according to the devotion literature, still gives off a particular fragrance of musk said to emanate from his body. It is perhaps for this reason that pilgrims have long kept some of the earth situated around the Prophet's grave.

Some Companions, such as the Umayyad caliph Muawiyah I (d. 680), having collected and preserved these relics, ordered that they be buried with a hair of the Prophet placed upon their eyes, mouth, and above or beneath their tongue. The great Islamic military commander Khalid b. al-Walid (d. 642) attributed his victories to the fact that he launched himself into each battle carrying with him a hair of the Prophet. The Companions also distributed the relics of the Prophet to every part of the emerging Islamic empire, where they were often utilized in the construction of sacred and public buildings, being placed in the foundations.

### Collection in the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul

Some of the oldest and most important specimens were passed down by the rulers of various Islamic dynasties and finally came into the possession of the Ottoman sultans and have been preserved to this day in the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, now a museum. The collection is called *The Sacred Trust (al-Amanat al-muqaddasa)*, wherein the following relics attributed to the Prophet are kept: a



Sabres, mantle, and banner belonging to the Prophet Muhammad, housed in the Ottoman Treasury, Topkapi Palace, Istanbul, Turkey. (Gianni Dagli Orti/The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY)

mantle; a flag; four fragments of the Qur'an written on leather, dictated by the Prophet; four letters written on leather, dictated by the Prophet; a seal, with the writing *Muhammad rasul Allah* (Muhammad is the Messenger of God); some hairs enclosed in small shrines; two footprints in stone; some leather sandals; a wooden cup; a bow; a stone for dry ablutions (*tayammum*); a tooth; a bottle with the water of his ablutions; a stick; reliquaries with the dust of his tomb; and two swords. The most revered specimen is the *Khirqat al-Sa'ada*, a mantle that found its way to Istanbul from Mecca following the Ottoman conquest. This relic has always been held in high esteem by the Ottoman rulers, who built many precious shrines to preserve and protect it. Some sultans wanted to be close to the mantle during their oaths of al-

legiance. It was also utilized as a symbolic banner during battles. December 15 was chosen as the day upon which an annual ritual visit to the mantle took place and thus became a national holiday. There is another mantle attributed to the Prophet in Istanbul named the *Khirqat al-Sharif* that is situated in a specially built mosque to preserve the mantle in the Fatih District. The mantle is shown to the people every year during the month of Ramadan and in modern times was restored using a laser treatment.

Other important relics in the Topkapi collection are the swords. One is called *al-Ma'thur* and was inherited by the Prophet from his father Abd Allah ibn Abd al-Muttalib. According to tradition, it was forged by the jinn, referring to a being generally considered beyond human perception and similar to the genies and demons of the Greco-Roman tradition. The other sword is said to be one of the three swords of ancient origin that were taken away from the defeated Israelite tribes. According to Islamic eschatological tradition, Christ, in his second coming as the Messiah, will use the sword to defeat the Antichrist. Another relic kept in Istanbul is a tooth of the Prophet that he is said to have lost during the Battle of Uhud (625).

Some relics of the Prophet are also preserved in Cairo in the mosque of al-Husayn, wherein the following are preserved: a mantle, a *kohl* applicator (an ancient form of eye cosmetic), the handle of a rod, a sword named *al-'Adbi* and some hairs.

### Footprints of the Prophet

The footprints attributed to the Prophet Muhammad are numerous. The most important is preserved in Jerusalem inside the Dome of the Rock (*al-Qubbat al-sakhra*), which was miraculously produced, according to some traditions, during the heavenly journey of the Prophet, the *mi'raj*. It is currently located in the southwest corner of the Dome of the Rock in a reliquary. Other footprints are preserved in Ta'if in Saudi Arabia on Mount Abu Zubayda; in Cairo in the mausoleum of Qa'it Bay; in Tanta, in the Egyptian delta, inside the mausoleum of Ahmad al-Badawi (d. 1260); in the Masjid al-Aqdam (Mosque of Footprints), south of Damascus; and in the mosque al-Karimiyya in Aleppo, where a footprint is positioned vertically, allowing the water to pass on his surface, before being collected in a glass, ready to drink. Concerning the two footprints preserved in the Topkapi Palace, one is believed to have been produced by the pressure of the foot of the Prophet during the reconstruction of the Ka'ba, while the second is a replica of the footprint impressed on a rock in Jerusalem. Finally, many footprints of the Prophet are said to be kept in the Indian subcontinent. The most important is the footprint preserved in the mosque known as *Qadam Sharif*, the "Noble Footprint" in Delhi, and another in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

### The Relics as Sacred Foundation of Civilization

From the perspective of religious history, the preservation of the relics of the Prophet Muhammad in Islam is closely linked to the foundation of civilization as a general concept. It is indeed very common to find mention of rulers who placed relics in the foundations of important buildings to legitimize and sacralize their power. And so the spread of relics can go hand in hand with the spread of Islamic civilization.

### The Hadith as a Prophetic Relic

The term used to define the prophetic relics, *athar*, means at the same time "trace," "remain," and also "tradition" (hadith). For this reason, some Islamic hadith scholars compared the practice of collecting sayings of the Prophet with the collection of relics, both facilitating the desire of a believer to draw closer to the Prophet's holy presence.

*Luca Patrizi*

*See also:* Architecture; Dome of the Rock; Hadith; Night Journey

### Further Reading

- Aydin, H. *The Sacred Trusts: Pavilion of the Sacred Relics* Istanbul: Topkapi Palace Museum, 2010.
- Dickinson, E. "Ibn al-Salah al-Shahrazuri and the Isnad." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122(3) (2002): 481–505.
- Gril, D. "Le corps du Prophète." *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 113–114 (2006): 37–57.

Hasan, P. "The Footprint of the Prophet." *Muqarnas* 14 (1993): 335–343.  
 Wheeler, B. *Mecca and Eden: Ritual, Relics, and Territory in Islam*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

## RELIGIOUS NARRATIVES, POPULAR ARABIC

See Popular Arabic Religious Narratives

### REMEMBRANCE

Substantive and verbal expressions derived from the Arabic root *dh-k-r* occur in more than 270 verses of the Qur'an (excluding the passages rendering the meaning of "male"). Depending on context, the underlying signification of remembrance can also be applied in the sense of "thinking of," "mentioning or speaking about," "relating," or "admonition or warning." The Qur'an and numerous traditions of the Prophet Muhammad emphasize the importance of remembering God and His benefits. Later on, Islamic theology and mysticism elaborate various interpretations and, as to the latter, rituals of performing *dhikr*.

#### Remembrance in the Qur'an

The primary signification of the first form of the verb as employed in the Qur'an is "calling in mind, thinking about," the remembrance of God being the main focus. The crucial importance of remembering God is expressed in the verse (Q 13:28): "Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of God; for without doubt in the remembrance of God do hearts find satisfaction" or the verse "Verily, I am God. There is no God but I: so serve me (only), and establish regular prayer for my remembrance" (Q 20:14). This connection of remembrance and prayer can even go so far as to deem remembrance of God superior to the religious duties. For example, in Qur'an 29:45, we find "Recite what is sent of the Book by inspiration of you, and establish regular prayer, for prayer restrains from shameful and evil deeds; and remembrance of God is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt."

Remembering God can also be specified in the way that the "name of God" should be remembered, as stated in the verse "But he will prosper who purifies himself, and remembers the name of his Guardian-Lord, and prays" (Q 87:14–15). In this context, the proclamation of the Divine name over slaughtered animals is included: "That they may witness the benefits (provided for them), and celebrate the name of God, through the day appointed, over the cattle which he has provided for them (to sacrifice)" (Q 22:28; see also Q 22:34.36). Eating animals in general is included as well: "They ask you what is lawful to them (as food). Say: Lawful unto you are (all) things good and pure, and what you have taught your trained hunting animals (to catch) in the manner directed to you by God. Eat what they catch for you, but pronounce the name of God over it" (Q 5:4; see also Q 6:119.121).

Except for the name of God, individual Divine acts and features occur as a target of remembrance, such as God's favor (*ni'ma*; e.g., Q 5:7.11) or his benefits