

Narrative Review

Rituals of the tombs of the Just in Islam

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Abstract: This article explores the association of beliefs with shrines among Muslims and their importance to them. Shrines are the graves of righteous saints among the Muslims. The practices and rituals performed by visitors to the graves of the righteous among the Muslims were analyzed and discussed. These actions were discussed extensively so that the reader would not forget to understand the nature of these rituals and actions that take place at the grave of the righteous according to the point of view, religion, justice, and traditions of the Muslim faith. It must be noted that to this day, many still perform and participate in these rituals with great belief and reporting spiritual benefits. This article explores in detail what these rituals are and their importance.

Keywords: Islam, graves of the righteous, customs and traditions.

Introduction

There exists a distance between God and his believers within the frame of institutionalized religion, in which rites and rituals are organized in a set order. They don't meet the expectations of the ordinary believer who seeks the proximity of God in a direct way in order to give him His abounding blessings and fulfill his daily desires. In other words, many believers search for more spontaneous ways to refer to God without passing through different mediating agents that can lessen the power of the spiritual experience. Many people, whose religiosity is based on simplicity and innocence, come to the tombs to pour their hearts there and ask for what is important to them in all domains, like maintenance, health, mating or kids, and so on.

In the past, they used to visit the tombs of the just on the anniversary day of the death of the Just. The common belief is that on the day of his departure, the Just exists for sure in his place. In other words, the Just comes down from the upper world in which he exists to the earthly world, shedding on it from his spirit and merits, and this is a good time to communicate with him and ask him to do the mediating act for fulfilling the requests. Another time in which people traditionally visit the tombs of the Just is the first day of the month or the middle day of the month (15th of a month), while the moon is full, and in repentance days: the month of

In general, the visit to the tomb of the Just is done collectively, especially to distant tombs located on hilltops, in distant villages, and in caves. In the feasts held near the tombs, they used to tell a lot of things praising the Just: patients who were healed, infertile redeemed, miserable saved, and so on. These stories (part of them true and some fake) are meant to strengthen the myths associated with the Just and enlarge the group of believers going there.

Within the frame of the rituals performed at the tomb of the Just there are different ritual practices, such as telling a prayer, writing poetry, performing songs and thanksgivings, and stretching over the tomb, lighting candles, immersing in the waters near the tomb, laying stones, hanging cloths on trees near the tomb, writing notes between the tombstones. The celebrators who arrive in groups usually arrange merrymaking.

As a part of the Just ritual, there are customs related to the need to keep in touch with the Just by giving and taking: leaving something personal near the tomb in order to remind the Just of the visitor and his request, and taking something from the tomb or its surrounding, in order to continue and hold on to the Just also after the event of visiting. Some customs are performed privately, while others are performed in public. Many customs are common to all of the tombs, while others are special to a particular tomb (Rayner 1984:39).

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Objectives of the article.

This article aims to shed light on the social and religious dimensions and other actions that take place at the shrine of the righteous man among Muslims.

As well as the factors that motivate visiting shrines and venerating them

The article also aims to identify the actions and rituals undertaken by the visitor to the shrine and their impact on continuing to visit the shrine of the saint among the Muslims.

Essay objectives require an understanding of some basic terms in the essay

Beliefs regarding shrines about Muslims and in the Islam religion, in order to understand their motivations.

The importance of the topic

The article addresses one of the important topics related to visiting the graves of the righteous in the Islamic community. An anthropological approach is crucial in Understanding Hajj practices: beliefs and rituals. This article attempts to contribute to social and anthropological studies of religion by discussing important matters. Areas and topics of social reality: “The society that does not work to understand it The actions and behaviors of its citizens and issues of bias around their actions is essential.

“ Identity Society” (Rashik, Shamharoush 2010: 7). Therefore, it is important to understand And clarify the human relationship with the sanctities (the shrines and their patrons).

The Muslim tombs of the Just, with their white domes, are among the most common and typical sites in the landscape of this Land. They exist almost in every place, from the slopes of Hermon in the north to Mount Sinai in the south, and from the Jude desert (Medbar Yehuda) and the Jordan valley (Bekat Yarden) in the east to the beach plane in the west.

The typical tombs include a relatively simple and shaky structure, with one or two rooms covered by a white dome. Near most of the tombs of the Just, there is a water source – a pit, a well, or a spring, and special healing merits are attributed to their waters. Also, near most of the tombs of the Just, bushy trees grow (mostly oak, fig, carob, or olive), and sometimes a grove. They constitute an integral part of the totality of the tomb, which was sanctified due to it. There is a strict prohibition against damaging the trees or picking their fruits, except for their use in the tomb.

Most tombs are built in a relatively high place and can be seen from a distance. Very few tombs are located in valleys. The tombs of the Just are spread in all parts of this Land, from Galilee and the Golan up north, in the villages and towns, on hilltops, in valleys, in the open fields, and near settling places. They are especially numerous in the Arabic villages and relatively rare in the Jewish settlements. Naturally, the majority of Muslim tombs of the Just exist in areas where the Muslim population is stable, and thus, there is no wonder that most of the Muslim tombs of the Just are located in Judea and Samaria (Yehuda veshomron), in the villages around Jerusalem and in Galilee. Thus, Muslim believers live near the tombs to which they attribute merits. In a more specific manner, most of the tombs of the Just are located in the mountains of Jerusalem and its surroundings, while above 75% of the tombs are situated on hilltops. Often, tombs are built near a big stone or a pit, near a spring or an old tree (Lezros 1982:79).

Most of the tombs exist within the Arabic villages or near them, and in many villages, we can find several tombs – one inside the village and others outside the village. One of the tombs inside the village is usually turned into a mosque. Many of the tombs of the Just are found in the graveyards or nearby. Sometimes it is a big cemetery, and sometimes only a few tombs. In most cases, the graveyard was established around the tomb, and in only a few cases was the tomb built inside the existing graveyard.

The theology around pilgrimage to the tombs of the Just in Islam

Also, in Islam, pilgrimage to the tombs of the Just and the ritual activity that developed around it are pronounced expressions of the popular religion. Islam is not different from other religions in this matter; the distance between God and the believer is no less than the distance in Judaism. Therefore, along with the institutionalized religion in Islam, a parallel system of popular religion was developed in search of different ways to communicate with God and His messengers.

Pilgrimage to the tombs of the Just in Islam is more complicated than in Judaism. Just for clarification, it is worth distinguishing between Orthodox Islam and the popular Sufi Sunnite Islam.¹

The Islamic Arab culture, like other cultures, was developed through a conflict between rationalism and non-rationalism, between certainty and non-certainty, and between innovation and traditionalism, namely between the normative and familiar and the creative and strange (Basilius 2008:16-25). In other words, between factions that consider the ancient and the past as sacred and models to follow and rationalistic and empiric factions that doubted and asked questions in many cases about the mystical issues of human existence.

The rationalistic, certainty approach is represented by the Orthodox Islam. This is the formal stream, pedantic to perform the commandments and demanding faith in the mission of the

Prophet Muhammed rejects other mediators between man and God (Cahen 1995:269-270). In other words, this stream stands for rationalistic faith principles that draw on religious law systems, the Sunna, and doctrines in the domains of faith, judgment, and administration. The representatives of the Orthodox stream are the Ulama – the Orthodox Sunnites. They made an effort to keep the control over the institutes in their hand. These Ulama accepted the authority of the secular state, and in return, they were given permission to continue their religious activity with the support of the state (Cahen 1995:288).

Faith in God, especially in the certainty of faith, is perceived by Orthodox Islam, Judaism, and Christianity as an important basis for worshipping God. Al-Jahiz places it among the four foundations upon which the believer's faith is based and according to which he can be judged: righteousness, the straight money (meaning it is money that has been earned after hard work and effort), and the one who shares the worship of God (Al-Jahiz 1945:230). The Imam Mohammed Ben-edris Alshafii (767-820) and the two philosophers Abd El-Malek Ben Karib Al-Azmaii and Omar Ben Bahr El-Jahiz were among those who rooted the traditional tendency in the Arabic culture. The consciousness, according to Al-Shafii, means understanding the former. This is an understanding that doesn't search for the unknown but focuses on the known to understand it in a deeper manner.

The Islamic, popular and mystic Sufi movement developed in the 9th century along with the Orthodox Islam.² Its representatives are the different Sufi orders that sometimes were involved in sociocultural activities (Lazros 1980:80). The movement sees the significance of the religious laws in profound and hidden significances, namely, the value of the religious laws is not in their external form, but rather in their unseen depth. The popular Sufi Islam is based mainly on concepts such as asceticism, God-fearing, tolerance, humbleness, restraint, continence, impulses repression, self-scrutiny, loving God, and prolonged abstemiousness. We can see that the Sufi stream appeals to the sentiments, to the inner consciences, to the experience world of the believer, and demands moral purity and adhesion to the Just's teachings (Drori 1987:22). From those who identify with it. In other words, the relation between the believer and his God is demanded to be total and without mediators. The Sufi movement is the most tolerant sector and less fanatical in Islam.

The origin of the pilgrimage to the tombs of the Just in the Sufi tradition seemingly lies in the pagan and Christian worlds that preceded Islam. In mysticism, the Just person, the

¹**Sunnites** – the ones that their religious laws and their judgment are determined according to the main stream in Islam – the Sunna. In the seventh century Muslims were divided to Sunnites and Shiites; the basis of this rip was the question that was authorized to be elected to be Caliph – the head of the Muslim community, the heir and substitute of the Prophet Mohammed.

²**Sufi** – the movement Hasidism and mysticism in Islam, which was deeply affected by the Neo-Platonism and other mystic concepts that originated in Eastern religions. The involvement in this movement is called: 'Sufism' (tasawuf). Its principles: fostering the spirit of asceticism, cancellation of the life of this world and scorning the practical religion commandments, seeking to know God through meditation, in different phases (situations and status). There is a number of versions regarding the origin of the name:

- A. according to their attire made of wool (suf in Arabic) – as a distinctive mark for simplicity and modesty;
- B. according to the name of sitting in a remote-corner inside the mosques, on Sufa bench.
- C. according to the name of being pure 'safa' – pure, clean of tendencies of material, worldly life.

friend of God and His protector (wli) has a central place. This is because the “wli” is the popular image of “Sufi,” a person who knows how to suppress his soul and win Godly enlightenment, expressed in this context mainly by his ability to perform miracles and wonders (“karamat”) (Lazaros 1982:78). The “wli” is the protector of man from the wrath of God, and mediates on his behalf in front of Him in every simple matter and also in big matters, and God responds to him in all times. The ability of the “wli” includes: healing patients, fortune-telling, understanding the language of the living and the inanimate, bringing down rains, and moving mountains (Lazaros 1971:132). The basic assumption was if he could do so during his lifetime, he will do more after death. Thus, the stories about these Just after their death were more than in their lives, and accordingly, also the ritual of admiration to them. The ritual of pilgrimage to the tombs of the Just – “ziara” (from the Arabic word “zara” – which means to visit, and hence the word Mazar: a place of visit, a holy place) was fostered in the Sufi orders.

The sacred Just were actually a sort of “mediators” between believers and the Creator. Since in their lives, they were flesh and blood, they can understand the feelings of the humans with their weaknesses and are able to please them more easily than Allah. If we add to this the fact that the contact with the Just doesn’t oblige them to obey the strict commands of the formal religion, we will get the beginning of the explanation for the pilgrimages to these tombs.

Out of Sunnite Islam, in the Shiite stream of Islam, the ritual of tombs of the sacred Just constitutes a foundation of the religious existence. Contrary to the disagreements among the Sunnite Islamic wise-men regarding the ritual of the tombs of the Just, there is unanimity among the Shiites concerning the obligation to perform the rituals of the tombs of the Shiites’ sacred Just. This ritual is one of the most developed forms in the ceremonial and conceptual aspects of religious activity. Unlike the Sunnite, in which the rituals of the tombs of the Just represent popular religious culture, in Shiite, it is an expression of institutionalized religion.

This ritual, which also encompasses a broad strata of Orthodox believers, was and remains an undesirable innovation (B`edaa) in the religion of Islam. However, the popular need to mediate between the ordinary man and his God was strengthened, and the ritual of the saints was very common, in part even preserving pagan ritual traditions in monotheistic attire.

In Israel, the ritual of the tomb was more common than in other places due to the many tombs spread in the Land of Israel. Nevertheless, the ritual was not isolated only for the prophets but also to the Just and the miracle makers (Tawfiq 1996:23-50).

All kinds of sacred in Islam.

In Islam there are three kinds of Sacred, and their tombs are an object of pilgrimage (Tawfiq 1996: 20-62).

A) Historical figures –many of the Muslim sacred are admired commanders and warriors in the Muslim army that occupied the Land in 638. Others are warriors who died and were buried in distant countries, but they have a tomb indication (one or more) in the Land.

B) Men from the Quran – only a few of the men mentioned in the Quran are perpetuated in “holy places” in the Land, while the most famous among them is, of course, Muhammad. There are sites in the Land of Israel related to his activity, most of them in Jerusalem.

C) Biblical figures/personages – the Land of Israel, as the Land of the Bible, serves as a ravine of vision (That is, it is a country unique in being sacred to the three monotheistic religions), including the Biblical personages who lived and were buried there. For many of these prophets, there are even sites perpetuating their names: one site perpetuates his birth place, another site perpetuates his activity, a third site perpetuates his death, and so on. In certain cases, they point to different tombs belonging to the same Biblical figure, while the inhabitants of each village are convinced that “the real tomb” is in their region.

As a result of this, the tombs of the Sacred in Islam are known by different names: “Nabi” – prophet (here we must note that the concept of the prophet in Islam doesn’t specify only the prophets but also a long list of influential people in different degrees, mentioned in the New Testament and in the Bible and not as prophets), “Sidna” – our master (an appellation of ancient fathers or of important Muslim sacred), the “wli” – the beloved or the sacred (usually referring to the tomb structure itself) and “maqam” – place (a holy place is not always a burial place but indication to the buried person). “Kaber sheikh”, is the most

common concept, and it indicates the burial place of a spiritual leader or a valuable personality (Tawfiq 1996:23-50).

A reference in the Islamic annals indicates that also admired women reached a degree of sanctity from the earliest periods until today. In most places dealing with the lives of the sacred people, many sacred women are also mentioned, and their miraculous deeds are no less impressive than those of men. It is important to note that the sacred women did not emerge from the aggressive and fighting Islamic stream, but rather from the Sufi, the mystic and ascetic stream.

According to Sufi Islam, there is a determined hierarchy of degrees of sacred people living in the world, and it is accepted that their number will always remain fixed: 400 living sacred people. The rituals of visiting the tombs developed over the years, and the Sufi visit the tombs to be blessed, to stretch over them, to ask personal requests, and to celebrate the sacred birthday.

The most important finding of the article.

Through the article, the most important recommendations were reached:

1-Interest in building education and awareness centers to inform people of the importance of visiting the graves of righteous Muslims.

2-Introducing the culture of visiting graves into the educational curricula to raise students' awareness and create a generation interested in visiting the graves of the righteous among Muslims.

3- Paying attention to introducing the graves of the two friends into tourist centers so that the visitor can feel comfortable learning about the importance of those graves.

Conclusion

In this article, I tried to provide an idea about the beliefs and rituals associated with the graves of the two righteous Jews among the Muslims, and it is challenging to offer an analysis.

The nature of the relationship between the levels of cultural structure, i.e., religious, social, political, and even economic levels. I even gave an ethnographic presentation. Recording the beliefs, customs, and traditions practiced by Muslim visitors to their holy shrines and the actions they perform during their visit to the shrines of righteous saints. It must be noted that, to this day, many people still participate in these rituals.

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