30 Death and Burial in the Late Islamic Near East: Some Insights from Archaeology and Ethnography

St John Simpson

ABSTRACT—*There are well-known inherent interpretational problems in the comparison of data collected by social anthropologists and archaeologists. A number of attempts have been made to link these disciplines as part of a so-called ethnoarchaeological approach to the ancient Near East. However, little attention has yet focused on equivalent mortuary data from this region despite increasing comparative analyses based on case studies from Africa, Europe, the Far East and New World. Such a study does suggest new means of cautiously interpreting aspects of the archaeology of death in the ancient Near East.*

This paper will address some of the problems by means of reference to written and excavated evidence for recent graves and mortuary customs in Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine and Syria. Possible explanations will be proposed for the location, orientation and internal zoning of cemeteries belonging to both sedentary and nomadic communities; possible reasons will be suggested for variation in the preferred type of grave construction. The possible roles of certain associated objects as deliberate or accidental grave goods will be explored and avenues outlines for renewed research.

The study of burials and burial-practices can throw considerable light on populations past or present and their beliefs, superstitions and cultural attributes.[1] In some cases, within the Near East, reconstruction of ancient societies is certainly enhanced through the integration of excavated data with contemporaneous written sources relating to death and burial.[2] In other cases, the written sources are absent or remain comparatively silent and greater reliance is placed on the interpretation of excavated evidence.[3] Cautious use of ethnographic data as comparative material is instructive.[4] However, although a number of ethnoarchaeological studies have been undertaken in the Near East, relatively little attention has focused on death and burial.[5] Indeed, most available ethnographic accounts for this region at best usually only provide incidental information on the subject.[6]

In recent years, there has been growing awareness among Near Eastern archaeologists that careful study of Islamic burials can provide useful additional information on past societies within the Near East.[7] Attention has particularly focused on burials of the late and post-mediaeval periods (henceforth: Late Islamic). Late Islamic burials have been excavated at a large number of sites in Iraq,[8] Israel/Palestine,[9] Jordan[10] and Syria,[11]

1 Brown (ed.) 1971; Chapman, Kinnes & Randsborg (eds.) 1981; Pader 1982.
2 Alster (ed.) 1980; Barrelet 1980.
3 Fiedel 1979; Forest 1983.
4 Ucko 1969; Binford 1971; O'Shea 1984.
5 Solecki 1979; Watson 1979; Yoffee 1979; Kramer 1982; Seeden 1985.
6 Granqvist (1965) is a notable exception.
7 Toombs 1985; Eakins 1993; Lancaster & Lancaster 1993.
8 Published and unpublished data from salvage excavations in Iraq include, within the Hamrin Dam basin, Tepe al-Atiqeh (Gibson (ed.) 1981, 15); T. Gubba (Odani & Ii 1981, 152); T. Madhhur (Roaf *et al.* 1984, 113); T. Razuk (Gibson (ed.) 1981, 81-82); T. Songor (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988; Matsumoto & Yokoyama 1989; Yokoyama & Matsumoto 1990) and T. Yelkhi (Invernizzi 1980, 30-31; cf. Fiorina 1985b, 74) plus T. Abu Dhahir (Simpson in preparation), T. Khirbet Salih (Wilhelm 1993), Seh Qubba (Ball & Gill in press) and possibly T. Karrana 3 (Wilhelm & Zaccagnini 1991, 12-13; Stein 1993) in the Saddam Dam Salvage Project.
9 Caesarea (Toombs 1978, 228-229, 1985, 18; Chase 1992; Holum *et al.* 1988, 224-225; T. Dan (Spauer 1992, 57-59); T. Dor, Site K-60 (Guz-Silberstein & Raveh 1990, 51); T. Gezer (Macalister 1912, I, 312, 315, Fig. 166; Dever, Lance & Wright 1970, 1); T. el-Hesi (Fargo & O'Connell 1978, 169-170, 172-173; Eakins 1980, 1993; Toombs 1985); T. Jemmeh and area (Petrie 1928, 25, Pl. LXVII, 4-8; Schaefer 1989, 59); Jerusalem/Bethany (Saller 1957, 327); T. Jezreel (Ussishkin & Woodhead *et al.* 1991/92, 29/31, 42); T. Mevorakh (Stern *et al.* 1978, 4-9, Figs. 1, 23, Pls. 6, 21, 41, 46; Toombs 1985, 17-18); T. Qiri (Avissar 1987); T. esh-Shari'a (Oren 1976, 11-13); T. Sheikh 'Ahmed el-'Areyny (Yeivin 1961, 3-4, Pls. 1-2; Toombs 1985, 16); T. Yoqne'am (cited by Avissar 1987, 7); T. Zeror (Ohata (ed.) 1966, 2-3, 31, Pl. X; Ohata (ed.) 1967, 6, 9-19, Pls. XII-XIII; Toombs 1985, 17).
10 T. Deir 'Alla (Van der Kooij & Ibrahim (eds) 1989, 90, 110); T. Iktanu (Prag 1989, 42); el-Lejjun (De Vries 1987, 341-46; Groot 1987, 497; Parker 1988, 142, 146); Mt. Nebo (Saller 1941, I, 314); Pella (Hennessy *et al.* 1983, 359, Bourke 1992, 221, 223-224, Browne 1992); Umm Qais (Mershen 1990, 1991a, 1991b).
11 T. Chagar Bazar (Mallowan 1936, 6, Fig. 29); T. Mohammed Diyab (Bachelot *et al.* 1990, 13, 26: Fig. 4); T. al-Raqai (Curvers 1987); T. Tuneinir (Fuller & Fuller 1989/90).
12 Qal'at al-Bahrain (Kervran 1982, 75-76, Pl. VI).
13 Bahia oasis (Fakhry 1950, II, 110, Pls. LXVII-LXVIII).
14 Alisar hüyük (Schmidt 1933, 118-120; von der Osten 1937, 193, 195); Girnavaz (Erkanal 1988, 142-143).
15 Rang Mahal (Halbert 1959). The range of evidence for Muslim burial practices from Africa, South Asia and the Far East lies beyond the scope of this paper however (cf. Burton-Page 1986).
16 Cf. Gibson (ed.) 1981, 15, 23.
17 Roberts 1982, 127-128.
18 Hansen 1967, 54-55; Algar 1990, 563.
19 White 1845, III, 329-330; Lane 1890, 475; Al-Khayat 1986, 175.
20 A'lam 1990, 743-744.
21 White 1845, III, 329-330; Conder 1889a, 127; Musil 1908, III, 423-424; Granqvist 1965, 62-67.
22 Granqvist 1965, 63; cf. Curtis, in this volume.
23 Eakins 1993, 13, Pl. 20; Lancaster & Lancaster 1993, 152-153, 155.
24 Algar 1990, 563; also Drower 1937, 181.
25 Lane 1890, 485; Blackman 1968, 110-111. Blackman's (1968: 110) reference to the slaughtering of a camel near the grave of a wealthy Egyptian individual recalls the discovery of camel skeletons in or close to relatively rich Parthian graves in Arabia (Potts 1990, II, 278-279; cf. also Lane 1890, 488; 1987, 261; Wilson 1906, 159; Granqvist 1965, 253; Sweet 1974, 213). The belief amongst Egyptian fellahin today that a man's shadow is a separate entity that accompanies a person throughout his life and into the grave clearly descends from Pharaonic times (Blackman 1968, 113).
26 Blackman 1968, 110, 123.
27 Butcher n.d., 52; Granqvist 1965, 58-63, 138.
28 Lane 1890, 475-476; 1987, 259; cf. Drower 1941, 185; Algar 1990, 563.
29 Lane 1890, 484.
30 Oren 1976, 12; Fargo & O'Connell 1978, 169; Toombs 1985, 105-106, 112; De Vries 1987, 346; cf. also Halbert 1959, 185. Fragments of cloth survived in only two of the excavated graves in Field VI at T. el-Hesi: both were of linen.
31 Granqvist 1965, 58.
32 Exceptions are described by White (1845, III, 335).
33 E.g. Conder 1889a, 125.

with further cases known from Bahrain,[12] Egypt,[13] Turkey[14] and India.[15] All of these are non-urban cemeteries which may be compared directly with ethnographic or eighteenth-nineteenth century European travellers' observations of rural and bedouin Muslim communities in the Near East. Although excavated Late Islamic graves are often casually referred to as 'bedouin' burials, many probably represent village cemeteries.[16] The following comments represent an attempt to integrate these major archaeological and ethnographic sources of evidence for death and burial in the Late Islamic Near East.

Treatment of the body

Procedures for the proper treatment of the dead are prescribed in the Islamic law manuals although the Qur'an itself says nothing about funerals.[17] The body should be buried before sunset or early the following day, before which time all the necessary preparations must have been made. The body is firstly stretched out in the house, courtyard or morgue with the face and soles of the feet towards Mecca.[18] It must then be washed, except in the case of martyrs for whom the blood is their hallmark of martyrdom. Washing with water and soap or lotus leaves, followed by sprinkling with camphor and dried leaves, is carried out either by the spouse or by persons of the same sex as the deceased;[19] the use of camphor may be a continuation of a Sasanian mortuary practice.[20] The body is sometimes hennaed and perfumed, the head shaved (in the case of men) or hair plaited (for women), beard trimmed, nails pared and – if necessary – body circumcised.[21] A striking throwback to earlier customs is illustrated by a further description of the painting and gilding of the faces of dead young virgins at the Muslim village of Artas, south of Bethlehem.[22] Bedouin undertake similar, but simpler, preparations at or close to the place of burial. Rectangular paved areas found close to bedouin graves at T. el-Hesi and in north-east Jordan were probably used during this stage of preparations.[23]

The burning of a light close to the corpse is generally disapproved of although there are local exceptions.[24] Prayers are recited over the body; watch is kept over the corpse and, in Egypt, the blood of an animal sacrifice is scattered over the spot where the person died in order to facilitate departure of the soul or ghost and to expiate minor sins.[25] The body is then wrapped in shrouds, generally white in colour, which should be left open at the head so as to allow the soul to escape freely. A green outer shroud is used by Muslims and Copts alike in Egypt;[26] other grave clothes are described from Egypt and Palestine.[27] Variation in the type of cloth used as shrouds reflects the relative wealth of the deceased[28] but valuable shrouds were deliberately torn in order to reduce the risk of later pilfering.[29] Traces of cloth noted in bedouin graves at T. el-Hesi, El-Lejjun and T. esh-Shari'a presumably represent the remains of such shrouds.[30] It is notable that burials without shrouds were compared by villagers at Artas with the graves of gipsies.[31] Coffins are rarely used by Muslims although these are not strictly forbidden.[32] Christian and Druze communities do use coffins,[33] and Butcher describes an incident in Egypt where the discovery of coffins in an

old disputed cemetery determined that the ground had belonged to Christians rather than Muslims.[34]

The corpse is then placed on a ladder or bier with low sides, covered with a shawl or rug (variations in which signify the sex or status of the deceased) and carried to the freshly dug grave by male relatives, sometimes accompanied by boy singers, professional wailers, musicians, paupers and female relatives.[35] It is sometimes considered unlucky to precede the bier as this is the position of the angels of death. Similarly, as the angels proceed on foot, it is often considered improper to ride to a Muslim funeral. In contrast to Christian practice, these funeral processions travel rapidly because, on the one hand, the righteous should be allowed to reach heaven as rapidly as possible, whereas in the case of sinners the cortège should reduce as much as possible the length of contact with the corpse.[36] However, it is believed that the speed of the funeral procession is also affected by the wishes and goodness of the deceased.[37] There are no restrictions on other religious minorities attending the funeral, but some consider it inappropriate to stand beside the open grave as this is considered a Jewish custom.[38]

Grave construction

This usually varies according to the materials available or the local type of subsoil but there may be other factors at work; the T. Abu Dhahir excavations suggest chronological change possibly related to different socio-ethnic groups[39] and the T. el-Hesi data suggest somewhat greater care being paid to the construction of graves for women.[40] The most important feature common to many regions is the belief that women should be buried deeper (i.e. at *c.* 1.5 m) than men (*c.* 1-1.3 m), i.e. shoulder and breast height respectively, the aim being to cover the respective sexual characteristics.[41] Infants may be interred in more shallow graves however: those excavated at T. Songor B ranged from 0.20–0.80 m depth.[42] Burials of all ages were excavated at T. el-Hesi, ranging in depth from *c.* 0.20–1.50 m, again the shallowest generally belonging to infants or secondary burials and the deepest to an exceptionally tall adult.[43] Further differences apparently occur depending on whether the deceased was bedouin, semi-sedentary or fully sedentary.[44]

Common types of Late Islamic grave vary from stone[45] or mudbrick-lined cist[46] (the latter suggestive of a mudbrick village in the vicinity and perhaps even the season as fresh bricks can only be made during the dry season) to simple shaft graves[47] or shafts with undercut side-chambers blocked with re-used mudbricks, stones, fired bricks, slag or even bushes.[48] The latter obviously leave no archaeological traces.[49] The size of the side-chamber should be sufficient to allow the deceased to sit upright during its interrogation by the angels.[50] The bases of the graves should be pure earth.[51] Multiple graves are permissible in times of war or epidemic but care should be taken to ensure that the first interment is that of the most pious.[52] Graves at Artas were unusual in that the villagers here also used caves as tombs: there was careful avoidance of those caves that contained undecomposed bodies but old burials were simply swept to one side before the new interment was placed.[53] Granqvist noted the sealing of tomb-entrances with stone slabs which were then plastered over in order to reduce the chance of disturbance by men or animals; channels were also dug around the tomb for drainage.[54]

34 Butcher n.d., 51.
35 Lane 1890, 476-481; 1987, 260-261; Jaussen 1927, 335; Granqvist 1965, 92-95, 158-161; Sweet 1974, 214.
36 White 1845, III, 334; Roberts 1982, 128.
37 Blackman 1968, 113; Atiya 1987, 58.
38 Roberts 1982, 128.
39 Simpson, in preparation.
40 Toombs 1985, 71-72.
41 Musil 1928, 670; Drower 1941, 185; Dickson 1949, 212; Watson 1979, 215. This factor would be interesting to compare with graves of other periods where both the anthropological data and the tops of the grave-cuts are recorded: unfortunately, the latter are usually eroded away or are unrecognised in excavation. Some of the Islamic graves at T. Zeror (north mound) were 1.5 m deep but the sex of the occupants are not mentioned (Ohata (ed.) 1966, 3).
42 Matsumoto & Yokoyama 1989, 295; Yokoyama & Matsumoto 1990, 189, 195.
43 Fargo & O'Connell 1978, 169; Toombs 1985, 36-37; Eakins 1993, 9-10, 12, 15, 18.
44 Musil 1928, 670-671; Fiorina 1985b, 74; Toombs 1985, 43; Hobs 1989, 65-66.
45 Balawat (Curtis, Collon & Green 1993, 31, 33: Fig. 30.a-b); Caesarea, area KK (Chase 1992; Toombs 1978, 229); T. el-Hesi, Grave Types II-IV (Toombs 1985, 38-39, 63; Eakins 1993, 9, 15); T. Iktanu (Prag 1989, 42); T. Mevorakh (Stern *et al.* 1978, 4, Fig. 23, Pl. 6: 1-3): (adults and children); T. Mohammed Diyab (Bachelot *et al.*, 1990, 13, 26: Fig. 4); T. Qiri (Avissar 1987, 7); T. Sh. 'Ahmed el-'Areyny (Yeivin 1961, Pl. 1); Umm Qais (Mershen 1990; 1991a, 137); T. Yoqne'am (cf. Avissar 1987, 7); T. Zeror, north mound, including re-used grinding stones (Ohata (ed.) 1966, 2-3, Pl. X; Ohata (ed.), 1967, 9-10, Pls. XII-XIII).
46 T. Songor A, Grave 111: a single infant, out of a total of some 235 Islamic graves excavated at this site (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 151, Pl. 44B).
47 Caesarea, area KK (Chase 1992); T. el-Hesi, Grave Types I-II (Toombs 1985, 37-38, 63; Eakins 1993, 9, 15); T. Mevorakh (Stern *et al.* 1978, 4); Pella (Hennessy *et al.* 1983, 359; Bourke 1992, 221); T. Songor A (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 150-151); T. Zeror, north mound (Ohata (ed.) 1966, 3).
48 Alishar hüyük (Schmidt 1933, 119); T. el-Hesi, Type I (Toombs 1985, 37, Pocket Inserts 1-2); T. Karrana 3 (Stein 1993, 206); T. Madhhur (Roaf *et al.* 1984, 113); T. Songor A (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 151, Pl. 44A); T. Yelkhi (Invernizzi 1980, 30). Cf. also Dickson 1949, 210.
49 The type with undercut side-chambers was probably rather common in antiquity but as burials were often only recognised when the excavator made direct contact with the bones or grave-goods many published attributions of 'shaft' graves are somewhat suspect (cf. Toombs 1985, 37).
50 Lane 1890, 484; Blackman 1968, 115.
51 Algar 1990, 564.
52 Bell 1911, 99; Al-Khaysi 1986, 178.
53 A ninth-tenth century Early Islamic instance of the same practice was found at Siraf (Ball, pers comm.).
54 Granqvist 1965, 56, 85, 104.

In parts of Egypt, family vaults are constructed above ground.[55]

Other unusual excavated burials include simple interments placed beneath a cairn of stones.[56] Thomson[57] mentions that robbers' tombs were marked by such cairns, that were added to and cursed by passers-by. Cairn burials are more common in Afghanistan and India.[58] Finally, at T. Mevorakh and T. el-Hesi, miscarried foetuses and young babies were buried in so-called 'Gaza-ware' pots.[59] Incidentally, these provide a clue as to the late date (probably early eighteenth century AD or later) of these graves.[60] Other Islamic jar-burials have been reported from T. Zeror, north mound (?),[61] Beersheba & T. Sera'[62] and other Palestinian sites.[63]

Cemetery location

Owing to religious prohibitions on intramural burial, Islamic graves tend to cluster in distinct cemeteries beyond the settlement. The distance maintained between the living and the dead varies from a track-width at T. Abu Dhahir[64] to almost a kilometre at Aliabad and Godin Tepe[65] or more at Hasanabad[66] and T. Yelkhi.[67] Cemeteries are often found on dry raised ground (i.e. agriculturally poor or useless areas), particularly on nearby deserted tells,[68] or rocky outcrops.[69] In cases where an old cemetery becomes full, a new spot is chosen.[70]

In some cases there is shared use by different villages of one mound as a place of burial, the nearest side of the mound corresponding to the village.[71] Whereas archaeologists would probably refer to such cases as single cemeteries, the villagers in question see distinct areas as being representative of different communities. Instances of longer-distance transport of the dead are provided by the extensive Shi'ite cemeteries at Kerbela, Najaf, Meshed, Qom and (in the Safavid period) Ardabil, whence the deceased used to be wrapped in shrouds or reeds, supported on wooden boards and carried on horse, mule or camel-back.[72] In the case of Coptic funerals where the burial takes place at a monastery, the coffin of the deceased is usually carried on camel-back.[73] Significantly, improvements in transport may contribute towards an increase in long-distance transport of the dead.[74]

In urban cases, where cemeteries become full and/or pressure on space precludes expansion of the cemeteries, two solutions are possible. The first is re-burial in crypts (as in the case of Christian communities in Mosul); the second is the creation of separate cemeteries outside the walls (Muslim Mosul). The latter tend to become the focus of certain other activities considered hazardous or 'antisocial', such as pottery production or car-repair garages[75] Incidentally, Chase also cites the case of Bosnian Muslim cemeteries being located close to threshing floors.[76] Finally, Barth describes a preference by some nomads for burial either in a village cemetery or close to a perennial water supply;[77] less concern seems to have been shown by other bedouin tribes, who simply buried the corpse near the tent.[78] The size of bedouin cemeteries varies from a few dozen to several hundred.[79] All cemeteries are usually avoided at night when they are considered to be haunted by *jinns*.[80]

55 Blackman 1968, 116; Lane 1987, 262.
56 T. Mevorakh, Tomb 40 (Stern *et al.* 1978, 4): adult.
57 Thomson 1911, 488.
58 Halbert 1959, 187-188; Ball, pers comm.
59 Stern *et al.* 1978, 4-5, 9, Fig. 1, Pls. 6: 4-5, 21; Toombs 1985, 39-40, 107, Pls. 26-27, 84; Eakins 1993, 9, 11-12, 18, Pls. 13-19, 28-29.
60 Amino acid epimerisation analysis of stratified landsnail shells from a site in the Negev suggests a date of *c.* 1700 for two associated sherds of 'Gaza-ware' (Rosen & Goodfriend 1993).
61 Ohata (ed.) 1967, Pl. XIIIA
62 Stern *et al.* 1978, 8.
63 Canaan 1927, 8; Ohata (ed.), 1970, 74 commented on the prevalence of infants/children among Late Bronze Age-Iron Age-Seleucid jar-burials at T. Zeror Cemetery.
64 Simpson, in preparation.
65 Kramer 1982, 76.
66 Watson 1979, 15.
67 Fiorina 1985b, 74.
68 E.g. T. Abu Dhahir: Simpson, in preparation; T. al-Hawa: Ball, Tucker & Wilkinson 1989, 20-21; T. Mevorakh: Stern *et al.* 1978, 4.
69 Middle Euphrates: Bell 1911, 84. The same is found in other periods (Simpson, 1992).
70 T. Abu Dhahir: Simpson, in preparation; Aiuni/T. Yelkhi: Fiorina 1985b, 74; T. Songor/T. Gubba/T. Baradan: Matsumoto & Yokoyama 1989, 297; Umm Qais: Mershen 1991a, 136-137, 140-141; cf. also El-Lejjun: De Vries 1987, 346.
71 Balawat: Rassam 1897, 201-207 & John Curtis, personal communication, December 1993; T. Yelkhi: Fiorina 1985b, 74. The mound of Balawat was shared by at least seven different nearby villages (Balawat, Kaburli, Badana Alia, Badana Sufla, Karashaw, Tiwajna and Zara Khatun); T. Yelkhi was shared by villagers from Aiuni (or Uyun) al-Kheshalat and elsewhere. This situation was also suggested at T. Deir 'Alla.
72 Loftus 1857, 54-56, 65-66; Bird 1988, I, 35-36, Breasted 1922, 14, ORINST 6799, cf. Marcanti 1977, Fiche E5; Browne 1970, 78; Algar 1990, 564. These have inspired some archaeologists to interpret Bronze Age cemeteries on Bahrain (Mackay 1929; Lamberg-Karlovsky 1984/85) and Parthian graves at Warka (Loftus 1857, 66; cf. also Ward 1886, 21) as being evidence for similar long-distance transport of the dead. In both these cases, however, the discovery and excavation of nearby contemporaneous settlements suggests instead that they simply served local populations (Frohlich 1983).
73 Blackman 1968, 124.
74 Adams 1989, 195.
75 Mosul has both; cf. also Burder 1847, 419-420.Pottery production may be reflected in the archaeological record with the coincidence of Early Dynastic graves and kilns at T. Ingharra, Kish (Matson 1974, 346).
76 Chase 1992, 179.
77 Barth 1980, 142. Cf. also Haiman 1992, 49; Lancaster & Lancaster 1993, 162-163.
78 Musil 1928, 418; Dickson 1949, 207.
79 E.g. Haiman 1986, 127; Dagan 1992, 101. De Vries (1987, 345) estimated that there may be over a thousand bedouin burials at El-Lejjun; over a hundred individuals have already been excavated.
80 Dickson 1949, 208.

Cemetery organisation

Graves within a cemetery are normally regularly spaced.[81] The combination of this with regular alignments theoretically contributes to a more efficient use of space. However, most cemeteries tend to be rather organic in their growth, developing first laterally then vertically as pressure of space precludes further spread and finally shifting away altogether to a new location. This sequence was partly demonstrated by the Stratum II Islamic cemetery at T. el-Hesi.[82] At T. Toqaan, there was clustering of graves according to family (rather than social) status and graves of close kin were located as close together as possible.[83] However, as death does not respect family ties, in practice the development of family plots is complicated by the natural outward growth of the cemetery.[84] Blackman, Granqvist and Lane each describe segregation of corpses according to sex where the burials are placed in shared vaults or caves.[85] In the Hamrin basin of Iraq, the mound of T. Madhhur is said to have been used only for women and children.[86]

Separated areas or distinct cemeteries for children and infants are frequent.[87] At Hasanabad, the two cemeteries were 140 metres apart.[88] The reason given was that babies were too young to know sin and therefore should be kept separate.[89] However, there are also exceptions.[90] Granqvist records the occasional burial of children in the same graves as adults if they died at the same time, the reason being that the children help protect the associated adults.[91] Fakhry has noted that in the Bahia oasis (Egypt) newborn babies may be buried anywhere, including the house, and without a grave-marker, but children over three days of age have to be interred individually within a cemetery, unless they died shortly after a parent when they may be interred in the parent's grave.[92] Excavated instances of this have been demonstrated from T. el-Hesi, including one case of a pair of young infants possibly despatched immediately after birth because of the difficulty of simultaneously rearing two children.[93] A further discovery at this site was that greater care was paid to the grave-construction and laying out of the body of children who died at about three years of age, suggesting a possible change in their family status at this age.[94]

Finally, there are numerous cases of graves clustering around the tombs of shaikhs and other important figures, who are themselves interred close to a mosque or shrine.[95] In most cases, it seems as if it is the presence of the shrine that dictates the growth of a cemetery, the main reasons apparently being that proximity to a holy person will help protect the grave from disturbance and increase the amount of blessing in the afterlife.[96] A similar reason evidently lies behind the storage of grain, heavy agricultural equipment or other possessions near a tomb or shrine.[97]

Interment & orientation

Islamic burials are normally primary inhumations, hence normally fully articulated when excavated. Both articulated and disarticulated burials have been excavated at T. el-Hesi and El-Lejjun. The latter were presumed to belong to "bedouin nomads who brought their deceased from temporary burials in the winter pasture to be reburied here".[98] However, a strong case was put forward by the excavators of T. el-Hesi that most, if not all, of the secondary burials represented the remains of individuals accidentally disturbed during later grave-digging.[99] Cremation is strictly forbidden to Muslims and it is said that a corpse is as capable of suffering pain as a live person.[100]

The orifices of the body usually are closed in order to hinder evil influences; however, the ears are left open so that the deceased may reply correctly upon subsequent questioning by visiting angels.[101] Curiously, the jaw may be tightly bound in order to prevent the lower portion from accidentally opening;[102] any cords around the shroud are loosened.[103] In some cases the shrouds themselves are removed, carefully folded and placed in the grave beneath the body.[104] These observations suggest that the T. el-Hesi excavator's interpretation of

81 At Aliabad they were approximately a metre apart. (Kramer 1982, 78).
82 Fargo & O'Connell 1978, 169; Toombs 1985, 22-29; Eakins 1993.
83 Sweet 1974, 214-215; cf. also Granqvist 1965, 57. This is difficult to demonstrate archaeologically although attempted at T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 22-29, 46-47).
84 Kramer 1982, 78.
85 Blackman 1968, 116; Granqvist 1965; Lane 1890, 484.
86 Roaf *et al.* 1984, 113.
87 E.g. T. Abu Dhahir: Simpson, in preparation; Aliabad: Kramer 1982, 76; Bethlehem: Granqvist 1965, 58; T. Iktanu: Prag 1989, 42; T. Songor B: Matsumoto & Yokoyama 1989; Yokoyama & Matsumoto 1990; cf. also Canaan 1927, 8.
88 Watson 1979, 15, 214-215.
89 Watson 1979, 215. Although the reasons are unknown, similar segregation is found at a number of ancient Near Eastern sites, for instance Samarran T. es-Sawwan (Campbell, this volume), 'Ubaid T. Abada (Jasim 1985, I, 33-36) and Bronze Age Saar (Ibrahim 1982, 25, Fig. 32, Pl. 40).
90 Cf. Toombs 1985; Eakins 1993.
91 Granqvist 1965, 83.
92 Fakhry 1950, II, 121.
93 Toombs 1985, 23-24, 26; Eakins 1993, 11, 17, Pls. 4-11.
94 Toombs 1985, 41, 69-71.
95 Yeivin 1961, 3; Barth 1980, 142; Toombs 1985, 30-32; Haiman 1986, 127; Schaefer 1989, 59; Mershen 1991a, 136, 140-141; Eakins 1993, 13; Ball & Gill, in press.
96 Canaan 1927, 7-9.
97 Lewis 1971, 50; Adams & Nissen 1972, 237: Site 449; Mershen 1991a, 136; Prag, this volume; cf. also Lancaster & Lancaster 1993, 154.
98 De Vries 1987, 345.
99 Toombs 1985, 22, 44-47; Eakins 1993, 9-11, 15-17, Pl. 3.
100 Roberts 1982, 129.
101 Granqvist 1965, 82-84; Roberts 1982, 128. For coins in graves see n. 124-127, 142-143. On the other hand, Musil (1928, 670) states that Rwala bedouin do not close the eyes or nostrils.
102 Al-Hamadhâni 1973, 85.
103 Blackman 1968, 115.
104 Butcher n.d., 53, 57.

pins found in two graves as means of securing such shrouds[105] is incorrect. It is interesting to note here that red staining, thought to derive from skin coloration, was found on the bones of three womens' skeletons at T. el-Hesi.[106] The body is laid in the grave facing Mecca and usually with the head to the west; specific grave orientation of course varies throughout the Islamic world.[107] At T. Abu Dhahir, slight shifts in orientation during different sub-phases were noted although the reasons for these are unknown. A minority of burials excavated at T. el-Hesi were plainly orientated away from Mecca; the excavators suggested this may have been either because of a wish to face Jerusalem, Islam's third holiest city[108] or perhaps even through genuine uncertainty on the part of one or more individuals as to the true direction of Mecca.[109]

Minor variations occur in the laying out of the body but it is unclear whether this was truly random or whether it reflects minor variations in chronological and social groupings. Some 235 Islamic graves were excavated at T. Songor A, in the Hamrin basin of Iraq: the bodies were either placed on their back or on their side, with legs extended but arms either flexed or straight by the sides.[110] At T. el-Hesi, the majority of the excavated burials were either extended on their back or placed on their right side; a minority were placed in other positions, including that of a young woman who had been decapitated, possibly as a punishment for suspected adultery; at least one other individual may have been buried alive.[111] At T. Zeror (north mound), the excavators found that bodies were placed with the head either to the west or the east;[112] crucially, however, all the bodies faced south, i.e. towards Mecca. In many cases, the body was placed on one side,[113] in others, the bodies were placed on their back with the right arm extended by the side but the left arm bent and the left hand placed over the pelvis or (less commonly) the chest.[114] At Artas, the right hand was placed beneath the head; if necessary, the body or head was propped up on bricks or stones to ensure that they remained correctly orientated.[115]

At T. Deir 'Alla, the bodies are said to have been covered with sherds and mudbricks.[116] This may reflect concern in protecting the corpses from being disinterred, particularly by dogs; for this reason, villagers in western Iran placed large stones over the bodies.[117] Alternatively, it may reflect an aversion to letting the earth touch the dead body.[118] Finally, each of the mourners throws dust or three handfuls of earth into the grave before the backfilling begins.[119]

Grave-goods

Late Islamic graves containing objects are surprisingly frequent in excavations, despite Islamic prohibitions on grave-goods.[120] Excavated categories of finds comprise coins; European tokens; items of jewellery,[121] including beads, bells, pendants, finger-rings, earrings, hair-rings, toe-rings, bracelets, anklets and headdresses (sometimes utilising perforated coins or unperforated metal discs); pins; combs; mirrors; knife blades; glass bottles; ceramics and natural coloured stones arranged around the head of the corpse.[122] The range and relative frequency of these objects can be judged from the accompanying Appendix.

The funerary significance of many of these grave-objects is uncertain. The occasional discovery of unperforated coins in Islamic graves recalls classical and Partho-Sasanian practices and would seem to be at complete variance with Islamic belief.[123] However, Empson records that Yezidis in northern Iraq occasionally placed gold coins with the deceased as a means

105 Toombs 1985, 104.
106 Cf. Musil 1908, III, 424. Their unusual physical characteristics and clustering suggested that they may represent "women from a different tribal group, characterized by longer crania, [who] entered the community which used the cemetery by marriage, and that these women adorned their skin with ochre in a manner not practised by the other women of the community" (Toombs 1985, 90). This discovery recalls similar cases of ochre-stained burials from earlier periods in the Near East.
107 The Yezidis of northern Iraq are said to be interred with their faces to the east (Drower 1941, 36-37, 185). Lane (1890, 474) hints at further variation as some Muslims orientated the top of the head rather than the face towards Mecca at the time of death. I am grateful to Dr A.A. Soweleh for kindly pointing out other exceptions (Manchester, December 1993).
108 Toombs 1985, 79.
109 Eakins 1993, 25, 32, 35. Toombs (1985, 78) also observes that minor variation in orientation of the head could easily occur if the shroud was not fully removed during the final stages.
110 Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 151.
111 Fargo & O'Connell 1978, 169; Toombs 1985, 66-90, 112-113; Eakins 1993, 21-35.
112 Ohata (ed.) 1966, 2-3; 1967, 9-10, Pl. X.
113 E.g. T. Zeror, north mound: Ibid., 3, Pl. X.
114 Caesarea: Chase 1992; T. el-Hesi: Toombs 1985, 71, 82-86, Eakins 1993, 26-27, 33, 35; El-Lejjun: De Vries 1987, 345, Parker 1988, 142, 146: Fig. 14; T. Zeror, north mound: Ohata (ed.) 1967, 9-10, Pl. XII. Toombs (1985, 76-77) concluded that reasons of modesty may have dictated this practice whereby genitalia and breasts were covered.
115 Granqvist 1965, 79; Toombs 1978, 229; 1985, 41-42, Pl. 28; Lane 1987, 262; Holum *et al.* 1988, 224; Eakins 1993, 9, 11, 15; cf. also Musil 1928, 670; Dickson 1949, 214.
116 Van der Kooij & Ibrahim (eds) 1989, 90.
117 Watson 1979, 214-215; Kramer 1982, 78.
118 Wilson 1906, 157; Jaussen 1927, 336; Empson 1928, 63; Dickson 1949, 214. Curiously, traces of single wooden boards were found placed over Islamic burials excavated at Qal'at al-Bahrain (Kervran 1982, 75; and personal observation).
119 Roberts 1982, 128.
120 Found in *c.* 40 % of graves at T. el-Hesi Field I (Toombs 1985, 42-43).
121 Unspecified "jewellery" is reported from Islamic graves excavated at T. Dor, Site K-60 (Guz-Silberstein & Raveh 1990, 51) and T. Jezreel, Area B (Ussishkin & Woodhead *et al.* 1991/92, 29/31); "imitation jewellery and cornelian" was found with burials at the Qal'at al-Bahrain (Kervran 1982, 75, Pl. VIB) and "necklaces" were reported from graves excavated at T. esh-Shari'a in the Negev (Oren 1976, 11, 13).
122 Miscellanious objects/fragments of uncertain function, some possibly representing accidental inclusions in the fill, are also reported from T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 108-109).
123 Simpson 1992. The lack of perforations suggest that they were not simply re-used as items of jewellery.

of rewarding the examining angels who questioned the deceased in the grave during the first night of burial;[124] and in the Bahia oasis of the Egyptian Western Desert, Fakhry mentions that people still occasionally placed a coin in the mouth of the old-aged in order to prevent other deaths in the family.[125] An Iranian adaptation of this practice is described by Sykes, who refers to the placing in the mouth of an etched carnelian carrying the names of the twelve imams.[126]

According to Butcher, Copts as well as Muslims may be buried with items of jewellery.[127] Some objects may be gender-specific: Invernizzi observed that bracelets and beads were found associated particularly with young girls' burials at T. Yelkhi,[128] and Ohata stated that grave-goods were associated with womens' burials at T. Zeror.[129] Grave-goods of any sort were less common in male graves at T. el-Hesi although exceptions included burials with metal rings and bracelets.[130] Significantly, at this site, the discovery of bracelets too large to have been worn by the children with whom they were found suggests that at least some of the jewellery may have belonged to mourners rather than the deceased.[131]

There is a certain amount of known ethnographic detail linking items of dress with local Near Eastern superstitions. Certain materials were preferred as a means of protection for the wearer. These include the wearing of a blue glass or stone bead in order to reflect the 'Evil Eye' back onto itself, or cowries (known among the Qashqa'i as *Bibin Tarak* "Eye-Crackers") designed to break the 'Evil Eye'. Dark green stone beads were considered by some to prevent post-natal diseases and protect against any ill effects of menstruation. Similarly, serpentine was regarded as being effective against insect bites, goldstone against poison, certain yellow glass beads against jaundice, tortoise-shell and alum against illness; and red agate, carnelian or amber were regarded as a means of healing, preventing ear/throat inflammation, abortion, internal bleeding and other dangers, and promoting love and fertility. Brown/black and white banded agate or glass ('butter and honey') beads were worn as a means of increasing marital affection; a smooth opaque white bead to promote lactation; turquoise to ensure prosperity; coral was associated with kindness and good fortune; and cloves were worn at weddings.[132] Among these materials, blue glass beads and bracelets, cowries, and agate, carnelian and coral beads are found within Islamic (as well as earlier) graves; cloves are unlikely to survive into the archaeological record (and in any case are less likely to have formed part of the death assemblage).

It is worth noting that frequently the colour or shape of a bead is regarded as more important than the raw material itself – hence the substitution of, for example, red glass or, more recently, red plastic for carnelian or agate beads. In addition, the specific forms of certain beads and types of jewellery were significant; circular or triangular shapes were considered powerful magic and bells and reflective surfaces were also regarded as effective means of protection against evil influences.[133] Triangular pendants, bells and mirrors all occur in Late Islamic graves. Cowries at T. el-Hesi were interpreted as fertility charms and bracelets with snake-head terminals regarded as possible insurance against snake bites.[134] It is interesting, however, that many of the more elaborate ethnographically attested styles of metal jewellery – let alone gold or silverwork – do not appear in Islamic graves; instead, cheaper versions made of glass or plastic are more abundant within the mortuary context, as are crude beads of bone, shell or mother-of-pearl.[135] A possible explanation of deliberate manufacture for the afterlife is inappropriate here and an explanation should be sought within the social and economic context. A detailed comparative study of regional urban, village and bedouin jewellery styles, associated beliefs and the excavated mortuary evidence would be very useful.[136] In the meantime, the available evidence strongly suggests that costly jewellery was retained in circulation whereas items with amuletic significance were preferred grave-goods.

The available ethnographic accounts are usually silent on the topic of grave-goods, possibly because many of their authors did not witness closely the burial ceremonies.[137] Exceptions are Granqvist and Musil who mention the burial of a strike-a-light in a village grave at Artas, a set of coffee utensils in another, a comb and a piece of soap in the graves of virgins, a needle and thread or kohl with women and a water-filled pitcher beside the head of bedouin.[138] It is interesting to note

124 Empson 1928, 63.
125 Fakhry 1950, II, 122. Alternatives were to bury an onion in the grave or to lay a nail in the earth over the head of the deceased (ibid.). The Mandaeans have a similar belief: in order to prevent the deceased from returning and taking close relatives with him, perhaps an allusion to the spread of infectious disease within a family, stones are placed on the mouth and shroud (Drower 1937, 185-186). The closing of the orifices of the deceased has a lengthy tradition (cf. Curtis this volume).
126 Sykes 1902, 167. A yet further variation is illustrated by the apparent discovery of single plain carnelian beads in the mouths of early Seleucid burials excavated at Saar on Bahrain (Herling 1994).
127 Butcher, 52.
128 Invernizzi 1980, 30.
129 Ohata (ed.) 1966, 3.
130 Fargo & O'Connell 1978, 169; Toombs 1985, 92-93, 104-105.
131 Toombs 1985, 92-93, 101, 103.
132 Allgrove *et al.* 1976, 45; Weir 1989, 193-202; Mershen 1991a, 139-140, 1991b; cf. also Budge 1930, 306-330.
133 Allgrove *et al.* 1976, 45.
134 Toombs 1985, 105; Eakins 1993, 60-61.
135 This is despite the fact that metal bracelets and both gold and silver jewellery were manufactured in villages as well as the urban centres (e.g. cf. Buckingham 1825, 140).
136 Cf. Buckingham 1827, 292, 382; Lane 1890, 519-532; Spauer 1992, 57. Attempted by Jero (n.d.) for Late Assyrian graves excavated at Assur.
137 Cf. e.g. Sweet 1974, 215.
138 Granqvist 1965, 62-63, 84; Musil 1908, III, 424. On historic period lithics, cf. Miller 1984. Coffee appeared throughout the Near East in the sixteenth century (Hattox 1991) following an initial period of religious disapproval similar to that

that at least some of these items (coffee sets, mirrors, combs) are occasionally left as offerings on top of the graves or are depicted on Late Islamic gravestones.[139]

The presence or absence of objects are clearly unreliable means of distinguishing 'pre-Islamic' from 'Islamic' graves. Indeed, firmly identifiable Early Islamic graves are surprisingly rare. From the point of view of the archaeologist, this material culture therefore is potentially most useful in dating graves within the Islamic period: as these graves provide relatively closed groups, they may be considered representative of minor categories of Ottoman and later material culture.[140] The occasional discovery of earlier coins re-used as elements of jewellery[141] suggests that extreme caution should be used before attempting to date graves on the basis of associated coins.[142] However, some success has been had through comparison of imported glass 'trade beads' found, for instance, in Late Islamic graves at Caesarea with dated assemblages from North America.[143]

Finally, although technically not grave-goods, mention should be made of the Iraqi Shi'ite practice of placing small inscribed clay "prayer-stones" in the graves of pilgrims who had made the journey to Kerbela (whence they were made).[144] The Yezidis of northern Iraq have a similar custom.[145] Conder also mentions the inclusion in certain Palestinian Shi'ite graves of character commendations written on palm-leaves or the writing of prayers on the shroud.[146] These practices recall the occasional occurrence of scroll amulets in graves of earlier periods.[147]

Grave-markers

Muslim law disapproves of inscribed or ornamented graves. It is therefore ironic that many of the most splendid monuments of Islam comprise tombs.[148] A primary purpose of grave-markers is to prevent people from accidentally treading on or otherwise disturbing the dead;[149] Qur'anic quotations are rarely used, however, lest the inscriptions become accidentally defiled in this way. The extent and type of grave-marker varies considerably from site to site. Ethnographic accounts from Egypt,[150] Palestine,[151] Jordan,[152] Iraq,[153] Kuwait[154] and India[155] attest the use of temporary palm-frond, reed, brick, pottery or sand mound markers. In Baluchistan, there is even deliberate selection of third millennium carved stone objects as markers for recent graves or shrines.[156] Similarly, in eastern Jordan, old Safaitic inscriptions seem to have been re-used as bedouin grave-markers.[157] The placing of palm-fronds, aloes, myrtle and sometimes sweet basil above graves in Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Turkey are believed to bestow a blessing on the dead;[158] likewise, flowers are grown over Druze, Iranian and Turkish graves[159] and scarlet flowers are placed over Yezidi headstones on feast days.[160] According to Lewis, cypresses were planted in Ottoman cemeteries because "the aromatic resinous scent which they gave off was considered an antidote to the graveyard smells, and because of the implications of immortality in their evergreen leaves".[161] The scale and importance of these beliefs in late Ottoman Syria is illustrated by Buckingham's description of mule caravan trade in myrtle.[162]

Significantly, most of these types of markers tend to erode rapidly and are unlikely to leave recognisable traces in the archaeological record.[163] Use of these may explain, however, the occasional accidental discovery of entire cemeteries of unmarked graves (T. el-Hesi;[164] T. Mevorakh;[165] T. Songor A;[166] T. Tuneinir;[167] T. Yelkhi).[168] At T. Abu Dhahir, Aliabad and

accorded smoking a century later (Simpson 1990). Thereafter, coffee-making apparatus achieved a symbolism reminiscent of Near Eastern 'wine-sets' of the first millennium BC (Sherratt, in press; cf. also Yassine (ed.) 1988, 273).
139 Cf. belowGrave-markers.
140 Mershen 1991a, 1991b; Spauer 1992.
141 E.g. at T. Razuk: Gibson (ed.) 1981, 82, Pl. 104.
142 Mershen 1991a, 138-139; Ilisch 1993. A medieval (Crusader) date was suggested by the excavators for some of the late graves at T. Mevorakh (Stern *et al.* 1978, 5, 20, Pl. 46: 15). This was based on the discovery of a perforated twelfth century silver coin in one grave. This clearly represents re-use of an old coin as an item of jewellery: a highly worn bronze coin of Trajan was found in another late grave at the site (Stern *et al.* 1978, 9, 20, Pl. 46: 10). See also n. 101, 124-127.
143 Cited by Mershen, 1991a. It should be possible to identify products of the Hebron glasshouses in some of these Late Islamic graves (cf. Arkell 1937; Spauer 1992).
144 Niebuhr 1780, II, 222-223; cf. also Hansen 1967, 30-31.
145 Empson 1928, 61-62.
146 Conder 1889a, 127.
147 Simpson 1992.
148 Ball, pers comm..
149 Cf. Dickson 1949, 208.
150 Blackman 1968.
151 Jaussen 1927, 336; Dagan 1992, 94.
152 Buckingham 1825, 122-123.
153 Loftus 1857, 59; Bell 1911, 80; Roux 1960, 28; Postgate 1980a, 101.
154 Dickson 1949, 210.
155 Halbert 1959, 187-188.
156 Dales 1977.
157 Lancaster & Lancaster 1993, 154, 157.
158 Thomson 1911, 84; Blackman 1968, 115-117, 259, 260; Lane 1987, 263.
159 Burder 1847, 408-409, 416-417; Conder 1889, 125; Barth 1980, 143; Llewellyn 1986, 59.
160 Drower 1941, 105.
161 Lewis 1971, 106; cf. also Drower 1937, 183, 190.
162 Buckingham 1825, 400-401.
163 The use of temporary grave-markers in antiquity can be inferred by common orientation and a lack of intersecting grave-cuts. However, at T. Songor A, many of the grave-cuts did intersect, supporting the excavators' comment that no postholes from such markers could be traced (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 137, 150).
164 Toombs 1985; Eakins 1993.
165 Stern *et al.* 1978, 4.
166 Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 150.
167 Fuller & Fuller 1989/90, 333.
168 Invernizzi 1980, 30. Earlier this century, Mandaean cemeteries rarely included grave-markers although "some wealthier Mandaeans, copying their [Muslim] neighbours, have begun to erect brick tombs with the name of the buried person on the slab." In earlier times, according to local belief, the dead were excarnated (Drower 1937, 184).

Hasanabad, many of the childrens' graves were unmarked.[169]

Unworked stones are frequently used as grave-markers, for instance in Iran,[170] northern Iraq,[171] Jordan,[172] Palestine and the Negev.[173] More unusual types of marker are found in Central Asia: at Kounia-Urgench (Turkmenistan), the ladders used as biers in the funeral-procession were then left upright above the grave, whereas at Kaminskoye (Kyrgyzia) aluminium yurt frames placed over the graves were used to imitate the former homes of the deceased.[174]

Where present, tombstones may indicate the name, family or tribe and profession of the deceased. This is particularly well-defined in the case of Ottoman tombs in Istanbul and other Turkish cities.[175] Conversely, according to Kramer,[176] villagers at Aliabad were usually unable to identify grave occupants "unless the deceased were close kin, the death was very recent, or the grave has an inscription". At Artas, different shapes of stone were used to correspond to different sexes;[177] in Egypt, sex was distinguished by different numbers of sticks or projections at the top of the tomb[178] and in western Iran the addition of a third stone over the centre of the grave marked the womens' graves.[179] Elsewhere, womens' graves are denoted by garments or plaits of hair placed over the top[180] although Drower[181] implies that plaits simply mark a sign of mourning by widows. Upright gravestones may also be attributed another function as St Clair[182] was informed that on occasion they represented the angels of death. Individuals who died in battle may have weapons depicted on the tombstone, as in the case of tombs observed immediately outside Mosul in 1758[183] and more recent graves in Iraq.[184]

Yassine has briefly described bedouin cut tombstones found in Jordan and decorated with "some of the symbols of bedouin hospitality, such as the coffee grinder, and the coffee pot and cups".[185] These may reflect a bedouin belief reported by Granqvist that "coffee utensils mourn on the death of a sheikh. They are hung up and turned upside down."[186] Significantly, a number of bedouin graves in eastern Jordan possess a "short distance from the foot of the grave ... a circle of stones, often built up against a large standing stone, with a variable number of upright stones within it and, perhaps, a pile of small spherical stones nearby." These "represent a coffee hearth(s), the stones within it being coffee pots and the smaller ones being camel-dung fuel".[187] Further elaborate adult gravestones are occasionally found in western Iran and south-east Turkey: examples include the depiction of a prayer stone, prayer beads, ewer and bowl (=washing set) or a semi-circular comb for a man and scissors, a mirror or a double-sided comb for a woman. Others depict scenes with armed horsemen, ibex, gazelles or weaving, with the front and back sides of the stele corresponding to 'life' and 'death'.[188] In some Yezidi cases, the scene may symbolise the manner of death of the individual interred beneath.[189]

Post-funerary ceremonies

Dyeing of the face and hands, tearing of garments, scratching of cheeks, wailing and occasionally the playing of musical instruments (drums or flutes) at the grave by female relatives of the deceased are customary amongst Muslims (and minority groups[190]) although forbidden by the Prophet and disapproved of by the orthodox.[191] Necklaces and bracelets may be broken and discarded.[192] Suggestions that this sometimes occurred at the grave-side are provided by the discovery of glass bracelet fragments near Late Islamic graves at T. Abu Dhahir,[193] T. Iktanu,[194] T. Razuk[195] and T. Songor A.[196] The period of mourning is characterised also by the wearing of dull-coloured or old clothing, and a temporary stop in manufacture of bright textiles or basketry.[197] Quotations from the Qur'an are recited over the grave and incense is burnt at Yezidi funerals.[198]

Throughout the Near East, there is a strong Late Islamic tradition of undertaking ritual meals at the grave-side. In Egypt, specially-baked loaves are brought regularly to the grave where they are often donated in the name of the deceased to assembled paupers.[199] Bread, figs, dried fruit, water, clothes and even cash offerings were also made at the grave-side in Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Iraq as an act of charity on behalf of the soul of the deceased;[200] special care was taken in some cases to take the favourite food of the deceased.[201] Early nineteenth century "bedouin" graves in the Amman area were covered in "numerous propitiatory offerings and tokens in memory of the tenants of the graves";[202] Musil confirms that specially baked bread offerings and water libations were offered at bedouin graves,[203] a practice that continues today.[204] Drower details the carefully prescribed ingredients of and customs at Mandaean ritual meals in the marshes of southern Iraq.[205] Baldensperger[206] mentions that other Palestinian gravestones had scooped-out tops in order to collect rainwater as a drink for the departed souls.[207] The same reason presumably lies behind the Egyptian practice of placing a full water-jar at the head of the grave[208] and may explain the discovery of six water juglets (*abariq*) above the capstones of an excavated man's grave at T. el-Hesi.[209]

Thereafter, the cemeteries become places of solitude and grazing, hence perhaps the discoveries of Late Ottoman smokers' pipes at T. Abu Dhahir,[210] T. el-Hesi,[211] T. Madhhur[212] and T. Razuk.[213]

Conclusions

The diversity in excavated rural Late Islamic graves reflects variation in the age, sex and social status of the deceased. Anthropological verification is required if these factors are to be tested as alternatives to the prevalent archaeological tendency to extrapolate social hierarchy from mortuary evidence. Detailed anthropological studies of excavated Late Islamic populations are still at an early stage[214] but their potential importance has been highlighted with reference to data from the Negev and Hamrin basin.[215] The relationship between different contemporaneous ethnic and religious groups is unclear from archaeology yet similarity between Muslim and Coptic mortuary ceremonies has been demonstrated from Egypt[216] and Betts has alluded to "marked tribal differences in burial customs" in the Eastern Desert of Jordan.[217] The ethnographic record for the Near East points to relatively rapid changes in fashion and wide variation of detail within even relatively small geographical areas: the implications of these variables for appreciating variability in associated material culture and death-assemblages should not be under-estimated. There are hints also of regional continuity in burial-practices from pre-Islamic times, particularly concerning treatment of the body and the placement of grave-goods (albeit within an altered theological context). For instance, in Egypt funeral ceremonies are "performed largely for the benefit of the departed, to ensure them happiness in the life beyond".[218] Throughout the Late Islamic Near East there are strong suggestions that local superstitions, popular beliefs and orthodox religion all play important roles in death and funerary ceremonies. Where present, many grave-goods seem to have been selected for their perceived apotropaic properties rather than material value: major disparities with the corresponding above-ground ethnographic record demonstrate the potential unreliability of economic reconstructions based solely on mortuary data. Finally, there are strong suggestions of simple practicality in terms of grave construction and cemetery organisation. On the basis of these observations, it is not surprising that considerable intra- and inter-site variation also occurs in the Ancient Near East. Indeed, cemeteries from different periods may have more in common than do different sites within a single period.[219] Comparative studies of the mortuary evidence from different periods would be useful in future.[220]

169 Personal observation; Kramer 1982, 76; Watson 1979, 215.
170 Kramer 1982, 76-77.
171 Drower 1941, 36-37.
172 Yassine (ed.) 1988, 273.
173 Schaefer 1989, 59; Dagan 1992, 101.
174 Personal observations, 1991. The conical roofs of Seljuk and later tomb-towers may be influenced by tent designs
175 White 1845, III, 347-358.
176 Kramer 1982, 78.
177 Granqvist 1965, 86.
178 Fakhry 1950, II, 121; cf. also Musil 1928, 670; Mershen 1991a, 137.
179 Kramer 1982, 76.
180 Granqvist 1965, 106-107; Roberts 1982, 128.
181 Drower 1941, 36-37.
182 St Clair 1887, 236.
183 Ives 1773, 323.
184 Personal observations, 1985-1987.
185 Yassine (ed.) 1988, 273; cf. Prag, this volume.
186 Granqvist 1965, 105-106.
187 Lancaster & Lancaster 1993, 152-155.
188 Watson 1979, 215; Mortensen & Mortensen 1989, 932-934, 950-951, Pls. II-III; Vanden Berghe & Tourovets 1992, 20-35, Pls. 13-18; personal observation, Mardin 1986.
189 Drower 1941, 36-37.
190 Cf. Drower 1937, 180-181.
191 Fakhry 1950, II, 122; Granqvist 1965, 53-54, 142-143; Blackman 1968, 109-114, 122-125.
192 Al-Hamadhāni 1973, 85; Dickson 1949, 209-210.
193 Simpson, in preparation.
194 Prag 1989, 42.
195 Gibson (ed.) 1981, 81, Pl. 55: 24-26.
196 Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 159, 170: Fig. 17.
197 Granqvist 1965, 108.
198 Drower 1941, 98.
199 Butcher n.d., 59-60; Lane 1890, 485; Blackman 1968, 115, 118-120, 259, 261.
200 Conder 1889a, 126; Wilson 1906,159; Canaan 1927,188-193; Empson 1928, 63; Drower 1941, 98; Fakhry 1950, II, 121; Granqvist 1965, 90, 98-100, 157; Sweet 1974, 215.
201 Fakhry 1950; II, 122.
202 Buckingham 1825,122-123.
203 Musil 1928, 671-672.
204 Lancaster & Lancaster 1993, 153-154.
205 Drower 1937, 186-188, 204-224.
206 Baldensperger 1893, 217.
207 Cf. also White 1845; III, 347; Lewis 1971, 105.
208 Fakhry 1950; II, 121.
209 Toombs 1985, 106-107. The roots of these practices can be traced back to at least the third millennium in Mesopotamia, whereby libations were offered with the intention of preventing the dead from returning to haunt the living (Thompson 1903: I, xxvii-xxxi; Healey, this volume). Ultimately related to ancestor cults, the latter can be detected in the Near East as early as the aceramic neolithic (Bienert 1991).
210 Matney forthcoming.
211 Bliss, cited by Toombs 1985, 18.
212 Roaf *et al.* 1984, 113-114, 159-160, Fig. 24, 2-3.
213 Gibson (ed.) 1981, 81, Pl. 104: 4.
214 Eakins 1980, 1993; Ishida & Wada 1981; Kervran 1982, 76; Wada 1982; Curvers 1987; Bourke 1992, 221; Browne 1992.
215 Toombs 1985, 90; Matsumoto & Yokoyama 1989, 297; Eakins 1993, 47-55.
216 Blackman 1968, 109-128.
217 Betts 1989, 86.
218 Blackman 1968, 120.
219 Reece 1982.
220 Cf. Nadel, this volume.

Appendix: Artifact categories from excavated Late Islamic graves in the Near East

Coins

Balawat (Curtis, Collon & Green 1993, 30), T. Dor, Site K-60 (Guz-Silberstein & Raveh 1990, 51), T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 95, 100-101, 116, Pls. 68b, 69a-b, 70), El-Lejjun (Betlyon 1985, 32-33, 1987: 683-684; De Vries 1987, 344-346), T. Karrana, Burial 16 (Wilhelm & Zaccagnini 1991, 12-13; Ilisch 1993), T. Mevorakh (Stern *et al.* 1978, 4-5, 9, 20, Pl. 46: 15), Mt. Nebo (Saller 1941, 285), Qal'at al-Bahrain (Kervran 1982, 75), Rang Mahal, Grave 1 (Halbert 1959, 185, Pl. 86: 41), Umm Qais (Mershen 1991a, 137-138), T. Yoqne'am (Avissar 1987, 7).

N.B. Some examples at T. el-Hesi and El-Lejjun were hammered flat, hence the legends were illegible.

Tokens

T. Chagar Bazar, Trench A (Mallowan 1936, 6; Christie Mallowan 1983, 136-137; 17th century, Hans Krauwinkel of Nuremburg).

Beads

Silver: T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 99, Pl. 65a).

Copper alloy: T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 97, 99, Pls. 62a: 4, 63a).

Glass: T. el-Hesi (Fargo & O'Connell 1978, 173; Toombs 1985, 94-100 & Pls.), El-Lejjun (De Vries 1987, 344), T. Mevorakh, Tomb 28 (Stern *et al.* 1978, 5, 9, 103, Pl. 41: 4, 6), Mt. Nebo (Saller 1941, I, 314), T. Qiri, Tombs 5-7 (Avissar 1987, 8, 48-49: Figs. 6: 14-15, 17, 21-22), T. al-Raqai (Curvers 1987, 7, 29: Fig. 17: 89), T. Razuk, Burial 5 (Gibson (ed.) 1981, 82, Pl. 104: 8), T. Songor A, Graves 46-47, 55, 154, 251 (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 160-161, 171: Fig. 18), Umm Qais (Mershen 1990, 332), T. Yelkhi (Invernizzi 1980, 30), T. Yoqne'am (Avissar 1987, 8).

Venetian glass (?): T. Qiri, Tomb 5 (Avissar 1987, 8, 48-49: Fig. 6: 18).

Composition: T. el-Hesi (?) (Toombs 1985, 94, 96-99), T. Qiri, Tomb 5 (Avissar 1987, 8, 48-49: Fig. 6: 16), T. Songor A, Graves 46, 278 (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 151, 160, 171: Fig. 18).

Plastic: El-Lejjun (De Vries 1987, 344, 346).

Blue plastic: T. Razuk, Burial 4 (Gibson (ed.) 1981, 82, Pl. 104: 5).

Amber: T. Iktanu (Prag 1989, 42; cf. also Prag 1991, 55), T. Mevorakh, Tomb 17 (Stern *et al.* 1978, 5, 9, 103, Pl. 41: 2), T. Qiri (Avissar 1987, 8, 48-49: Fig. 6: 19), Umm Qais (Mershen 1990, 332). N.B. Mershen (1991a, 139) suggests a possible source for amber on the river Zarqa in Jordan.

Bone: T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 95-96, 98 & Pls.), T. Razuk, Burial 4 (Gibson (ed.) 1981, 82, Pl. 104: 5), Umm Qais (Mershen 1991a, 139).

Shell: T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 98, 100, Pls. 67a: 8-9, 67b: 3, 5, 8, 10), El-Lejjun (De Vries 1987, 344), T. Qiri, Tomb 5 (Avissar 1987, 8, 48-49: Fig. 6:19), T. Razuk, Burials 2, 4 (Gibson (ed.) 1981, 81-82, Pls. 55: 8-15, 104: 5), T. Songor A, Graves 55, 154, 278 (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 151, 160-61, 170: Fig. 18), Umm Qais (Mershen 1991a, 139).

Coral: T. Songor A, Grave 278 (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 151).

Wood: T. Songor A, Graves 46, 55 (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 160-161, 171: Fig. 18).

Carnelian/agate: T. el-Hesi (Fargo & O'Connell 1978, 173; Toombs 1985, 93, 95, 97, 99-100 & Pls.), T. Mevorakh, Tombs 13, 17, 30, 35 (Stern *et al.* 1978, 5, 9, 103, Pl. 41: 5, 7-12), T. Songor A, Graves 46, 47, 55, 278 (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 151, 160-161, 171: Fig. 18), Umm Qais (Mershen 1991a, 139).

Crystal: T. Songor A, Grave 278 (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 151).

Soapstone: T. Mevorakh, Tomb 17 (Stern *et al.* 1978, 5, 9, 103, Pl. 41: 1, 3).

Black stone: T. Zeror, north mound (Ohata (ed.) 1967, 9-10, Pl. XII).

Red stone: T. Razuk, Burial 4 (Gibson (ed.) 1981, 82, Pl. 104: 5).

White stone: T. Razuk, Burial 4 (Gibson (ed.) 1981, 82, Pl. 104: 5).

Unspecified stone: T. Razuk, Burial 2 (Gibson (ed.) 1981, 81-82, Pl. 55: 8-15), T. Songor A, Grave 46 (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 160, 171: Fig. 18), Umm Qais (Mershen 1990, 332, 1991a: 139).

Unspecified: El-Bawiti (Fakhry 1950, II, 110, Pl. LXVII), T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 18), T. Jezreel, Area B (Ussishkin & Woodhead *et al.* 1991/92, 29/31), Mt. Nebo (Saller 1941, I, 314), T. Sh. 'Ahmed el-'Areyny (Yeivin 1961, Pl. 2), Umm Qais (Mershen 1990, 332), T. Yoqne'am (Avissar 1987, 7), T. Zeror, north mound (Ohata (ed.) 1966, 3).

N.B. Some of these beads may derive from bracelets (see below).

Bells

Silver: T. Mevorakh, Tomb 17 (Stern *et al.* 1978, 5, 9, 103, Pl. 41: 15).

Copper alloy: T. Gubba (Ii 1989, 224, Pl. 49, No. 210), T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 101, Pl. 69c-d, with traces of cloth), El-Lejjun (De Vries 1987, 344), T. Mevorakh, Tomb 29 (Stern *et al.* 1978, 5, 9, 103, Pl. 41: 13-14), T. Songor A, Grave 100 (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 158, 170: Fig. 17, Pl. 52A).

Unspecified: T. Sh. 'Ahmed el-'Areyny (Yeivin 1961, Pl. 2: 21).

Pendants

Silver: T. Mevorakh, Tomb 4 (Stern *et al.* 1978,5, 9, 103, Pl. 41: 18).

Copper alloy: T. Mevorakh, Tombs 31, 33 (Stern *et al.* 1978, 5, 9, 103, Pl. 41: 16-17).

Glass: T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 100).

Composition: Balawat (Curtis, Collon & Green 1993, 30).

Shell: mother-of-pearl: T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 100, Pls. 59a: 43, 62c: 1, 66a: 23, 68c).

Green stone: T. Qiri (Avissar 1987, 7-8, 48-49: Fig. 6: 20).

Travertine: T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 98, 100, Pl. 67a: 4).

Unspecified: T. Yoqne'am (Avissar 1987, 7).

Finger-Rings

Copper alloy: T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 101-102, Pl. 71b, silver-plated), El-Lejjun (De Vries 1987, 344), Pella (?) (Hennessy *et al.* 1983, 359), T. al-Raqai (Curvers 1987, 8), T. esh-Shari'a (Oren 1976, 12), T. Songor A, Grave 154 (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 158, 170: Fig. 17, Pl. 52A).

With stone insets: T. el-Hesi (Fargo & O'Connell 1978, 173; Toombs 1985, 101-102), Umm Qais (Mershen 1991a, 137, 139), T. Zeror, north mound (Ohata (ed.) 1966, 3).

With glass insets: El-Bawiti (Fakhry 1950, II, 110, Pl. LXVIII), T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 101-102).

Iron: T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 101, Pls. 71a, 72c).

Bone: T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 101, Pl. 71c: 1-2).

Unspecified: T. Sh. 'Ahmed el-'Areyny (Yeivin 1961, Pl. 2), Umm Qais (Mershen 1991a, 137, 139).

Earrings

Copper alloy: El-Bawiti (Fakhry 1950, II, 110), T. Deir Alla (Van der Kooij & Ibrahim (eds) 1989, 90, 110, two with traces of textile), T. Gubba (Ii 1989, 224, Pl. 49, No. 211, with traces of cotton), T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 97, 102, Pl. 62d, with glass drops and traces of cloth), Pella (?) (Hennessy *et al.* 1983, 359), T. Songor A, Grave 47 (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 170, Fig. 17, Pl. 52A, each with a pair of drops).

Unspecified: T. Sh. 'Ahmed el-'Areyny (Yeivin 1961, Pl. 2), Umm Qais (Mershen 1991a, 137).

Hair-Rings

Copper alloy: El-Bawiti (Fakhry 1950, II, 110, Pl. LXVIII).

Twisted glass: T. Deir Alla (Van der Kooij & Ibrahim (eds) 1989, 90, 110).

Toe-Rings

Copper alloy & iron: T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 102 & Pls.).

Bracelets

Copper alloy: El-Bawiti (Fakhry 1950, II, 110, Pl. LXVIII), T. Deir Alla (Van der Kooij & Ibrahim (eds) 1989, 110), T. el-Hesi (Fargo & O'Connell 1978, 173; Toombs 1985, 103-104 & Pls, some with snake-head terminals and traces of cloth), El-Lejjun (De Vries 1987, 344), T. Mevorakh, Tomb 17 (Stern *et al.* 1978, 5, 9, 103, Pl. 41: 20), T. esh-Shari'a (Oren 1976, 12, one with traces of cloth), T. Songor A, Grave 278 (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 151, Pl. 44A: on both arms), Umm Qais (Mershen 1991a, 139), T. Yoqne'am (Avissar 1987, 7), T. Zeror, north mound (Ohata (ed.) 1966, 3).

Iron: Caesarea, area KK (Chase 1992), T. Deir Alla (Van der Kooij & Ibrahim (eds) 1989, 110), Gezer, Cave 30 (?) (Macalister 1912, I, 312), T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 104, Pl. 81a-c), El-Lejjun (De Vries 1987, 344), T. Mevorakh, Tombs 5, 17, 31 (Stern *et al.* 1978, 5, 9, 103, Pl. 41: 19), T. Songor A, Graves 264, 278 (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 151, Pl. 44A: on left arm), Umm Qais (Mershen 1991a, 139), T. Zeror, north mound (Ohata (ed.) 1966, 3).

Unspecified metal: Umm Qais (Mershen 1990, 332).

Blue glass: T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 102-103 & Pls.), T. Mevorakh, Tombs 2, 25, 31 (Stern *et al.* 1978, 5, 9, 103, Pl. 41: 21-22), T. al-Raqai (Curvers 1987, 7, 29: Fig. 17: 90).

Amber glass: T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 102-103, Pl. 76a: 4).

Coloured twisted or trailed glass: T. Dan, area B (Spauer 1992, 57-59), Gezer, Cave 30 (Macalister 1912, I, 312, 315, Fig. 166), T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 103 & Pls.), T. Jemmeh (Petrie 1928, 25, Pl. LVXVII: 4-8), Jerusalem: Bethany (Saller 1957, 327), Mt. Nebo (Saller 1941, I, 314), T. Sh. 'Ahmed el-'Areyny (Yeivin 1961, Pl. 2).

Unspecified glass: T. Gubba, Graves 295-303, 352-353 (Ii 1989, 221, 234: Fig. 23, Pl. 44), T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 18), El-Lejjun (De Vries 1987, 344), Qal'at al-Bahrain (Kervran 1982, 75, Pl. VIB), T. esh-Shari'a (Oren 1976, 12), Umm Qais (Mershen 1990, 332, 1991a: 137, 139), T. Yelkhi (Invernizzi 1980, 30).

Plastic: T. Razuk, Burial 4 (Gibson (ed.) 1981, 82, Pl. 104: 7).

Leather studded with metal: T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 104).

Leather studded with glass: Umm Qais (Mershen 1990, 332, 1991a: 137, 139).

Unspecified: T. Sh. 'Ahmed el-'Areyny (Yeivin 1961, Pls. 1-2).

N.B. Bracelets formed of glass, composition, shell and silver beads were found with Burial 3 at T. Razuk (Gibson (ed.) 1981, 82). Further bead-bracelets were excavated in Graves 154 & 251 at T. Songor A (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 161, 171: Fig. 18).

Anklets

Copper alloy: T. Deir Alla (Van der Kooij & Ibrahim (eds) 1989, 90, 110).

Iron: T. Deir Alla (Van der Kooij & Ibrahim (eds) 1989, 90, 110).

Head-dresses

T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 105-106, Pl. 80a), El-Lejjun (Betlyon 1985, 32-33; De Vries 1987, 344), Umm Qais (Mershen 1990, 332, 1991a: 139).

Pins

Copper alloy: T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 104, Pl. 64b).

Combs

Wooden: El-Lejjun (De Vries 1987, 344), Rang Mahal (Halbert 1959, 185).

Mirrors

Bronze: T. Songor A, Grave 278, circular mirror found close behind the cranium of an adult (Kamada & Ohtsu 1988, 151, 158, Pls. 44A, 53).

Glass: T. Mevorakh, Tomb 17 (Stern *et al.* 1978, 5-7, Pl. 41: 23-25). Traces of silvering survived on the backs suggesting that they were originally mounted on a perishable (perhaps cloth) backing.

N.B. Mirror fragments are also reported from bedouin graves at El-Lejjun (De Vries 1987, 344).

Knife Blades

Iron: El-Lejjun (De Vries 1987, 344).

Glassware

T. el-Hesi (?) (Toombs 1985, 108), El-Lejjun (De Vries 1987, 344; Parker 1988, 142, 146: Fig. 14), T. Sh. 'Ahmed el-'Areyny (Yeivin 1961, 4, Pl. 2: 1-8).

Ceramics

T. Dor, Site K-60 (Guz-Silberstein & Raveh 1990, 51), T. el-Hesi (Toombs 1985, 106-108, Pls. 82-83, 85, 88b).

Natural Coloured Stones

T. Khirbet Salih, Burials 2-3 (Wilhelm 1993, 261).