

under the same requirements as before. Ritual cleanliness has
 been a central element of Islamic law since the time of the
 Prophet Muhammad.

Although this book does not deal with the development of
 ritual purity laws, it does provide a comprehensive overview of
 the subject. The author discusses the various schools of Islamic
 law and their differing views on ritual purity. She also
 examines the historical and cultural context of these laws.
 The book is well written and easy to read. It is a valuable
 resource for anyone interested in Islamic law and culture.

The author is a leading expert on the subject and her
 research is thorough and up-to-date. She provides a
 clear and concise explanation of the complex issues
 involved in ritual purity. The book is a must-read for
 anyone who wants to understand the importance of
 ritual purity in Islam. It is also a great resource for
 students and scholars alike.

Reviewed by
 Dr. [Name]
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Body of Text: The Emergence of the Sunni Law of Ritual Purity

Marion Holmes Katz

*Albany, New York: State University of New
 York Press, 2002. 275 pages.*

This book is perhaps the first study in English devoted to the development and rationale of ritual purity laws. The author, Marion Holmes Katz, a professor at Mount Holyoke College, chooses not to write from the traditional Muslim or Islamic jurisprudential perspectives. Though this does not invalidate an argument *per se*, it certainly renders her premises troublesome from a traditional Islamic legal perspective. Katz's attempt to formulate an alternative interpretive methodology, however, fails due to internal inconsistencies in her argument as well as the prevalence of poor and often speculative reasoning.

Body of Text is divided into four chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion. The introduction begins with a discussion of Islamic law's comprehensive nature, noting that it even addresses washing after relieving oneself. Most interestingly, she points out similarities among various religions in matters of ritual purity, but unfortunately assumes that this necessarily is proof of simple borrowing. The author excludes the possibility that these religious rules had a common source. Katz proceeds to reconstruct Islamic law's methodological and historical development and sets out her approach to its sources. However, while asserting that relying on *ahadith* is inappropriate, she nevertheless employs *ahadith* as well as various *athar* (deeds and precedents of the Companions) to reach several conclusions. Given that she effectively rejects the Hadith literature, as understood by Muslim jurists and Hadith scholars, the work as a whole is rendered unpersuasive.

Chapter 1, "Qur'anic Rules of Impurity and the Covenantal Community," attempts to associate relevant Qur'anic verses with an advanced stage in defining the covenantal community. Katz hopes to relate those verses dealing with ritual purity to a common, broader context, but confuses her presentation by including texts that do not speak to ritual or bodily purity, but rather to inner or moral purity. The author defends the inclusion by asserting, in contradiction to traditional Muslim exegesis and jurisprudence, that the verse describing nonbelievers as impure means impure in the same manner as those verses asserting menstruating women to be in a state of ritual impurity.

Katz also mentions verses 9:17-18 as banning nonbelievers from mosques. This is not only inaccurate as a matter of law, and inconsistent with the Prophet's practice, but is an unfounded interpretation of the text as well. The questions researched by the author are definitely meritorious, and the conclusions drawn are certainly interesting, but they are, at best, tenuous. There simply is not enough evidence to consider her answers conclusive to any degree. More importantly, their relevance and significance is unclear.

In the next chapter, Katz gives a detailed analysis of Muslim interpretations of certain Qur'anic texts. Despite her discomfort with *ahadith*, Katz admits that she must use "lore" properly to understand the Qur'an. In addition to her dismissal of *ahadith*, her methodology is inconsistent with traditional principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*). Katz asserts that Qur'an 5:6, if literally read, requires that *wudu*'be performed for each *salat*. She fails to comprehend properly the meaning and implication of the verb *qama* (lit. to establish, to stand) and the imperative (*amr*), which does not imply obligation (*wujub*) in each case.

Katz also cites a text, the authenticity of which she questions without explanation, in which Ibn Jurayj asks ‘Ata whether *wudu’* is required or preferable before each *salat*. As another example, she quotes an instance in which an individual performs *wudu’* prior to every *salat*, believing this to be obligatory. For Katz, the presence of a question, such as in the first report, and of the practice in the latter report are proof of the ambiguity of Qur’an 5:6. All other possible textual interpretations are disregarded, and the early Muslim community’s practice conflicts with the Qur’an. Further, she claims that there are absolutely “no explanation[s] for the discrepancies between the accepted practice and the apparent meaning” of the Qur’an. These are but two simple examples of her speculative reasoning.

In the third chapter, she examines those acts that cause minor ritual impurity. The first of such acts is *ma massat an-nar*, or “that which is touched by fire” (and not cooked food). For Katz, the traditional explanation of abrogation with respect to this ruling was conjured by early jurists. She does not actually examine the texts, their *asānīd*, *matn*, and grammar in light of other texts, except perhaps to find power as the motivational dynamic. Among the fabricators (or so she would seem to imply) of relevant texts, is ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz. Why such a man, who even she describes as pious and scrupulous, would fabricate and do so with regard to the Prophet is unclear.

In the work’s final chapter, Katz addresses whether nonbelievers, women, and the dead are substantively impure. This question was answered with near unanimity in the negative by Muslim jurists. Far more enlightening are the texts that she quotes and discusses regarding the creation of human beings with certain hollow cavities (*jawf*), and thus why they are so weak by their own construction. The trials of Adam prior to his descent to Earth, and their relationship and implication to matters of spirituality, morality, ritual purity, and even inheritance law are indeed significant and relevant. Perhaps these trials and texts would have constituted a more deserving basis and beginning point for exploring the laws of ritual purity and their rationale.

Katz completes *Body of Text* with a conclusion, an index, and a bibliography from which certain seminal works, such as *On Schacht’s Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* by M. M. Azami, are conspicuously absent. Such works address many of the methodological and hermeneutical weaknesses of *Body of Text*.

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