



Muhammad Is Not the Father of Any of Your Men: The Making of the Last Prophet

David S. Powers

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The Islamic claim to supersede Judaism and Christianity is embodied in the theological assertion that the office of prophecy is hereditary but that the line of descent ends with Muhammad, who is the seal, or last, of the prophets.

While Muhammad had no natural sons who reached the age of maturity, he is said to have adopted a man named Zayd, and mutual rights of inheritance were created between the two. Zayd b. Muhammad, also known as the Beloved of the Messenger of God, was the first adult male to become a Muslim and the only Muslim apart from Muhammad to be named in the Qur'an. But if prophecy is hereditary and Muhammad has a son, David Powers argues, then he might not be the Last Prophet. Conversely, if he is the Last Prophet, he cannot have a son.

In *Muhammad Is Not the Father of Any of Your Men*, Powers contends that a series of radical moves were made in the first two centuries of Islamic history to ensure Muhammad's position as the Last Prophet. He focuses on narrative accounts of Muhammad's repudiation of Zayd, of his marriage to Zayd's former wife, and of Zayd's martyrdom in battle against the Byzantines. Powers argues that theological imperatives drove changes in the historical record and led to the abolition or reform of key legal institutions. In what is likely to be the most controversial aspect of his book, he offers compelling physical evidence that the text of the Qur'an itself was altered.

Muhammad Is Not the Father of Any of Your Men: The Making of the Last Prophet Details

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Kristian Petersen says

Muslims scholars for centuries have unequivocally asserted the finality of the prophetic message as it was revealed to Muhammad. This is often discussed in the context of the Qur'anic pronouncement that Muhammad was the "Seal of the Prophets" (khatam al-nabiyyin). David S. Powers, Professor of Near Eastern Studies at Cornell University, reexamines the theological implications of this position in relation to the first half of the same verse, which declares, "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but rather the Messenger of God" (33:40). This pairing of prophecy and parenthood led Powers to explore the circumstances for which these words were revealed in his thought provoking book *Muhammad Is Not the Father of Any of Your Men: The Making of the Last Prophet* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). This story unfolds within the narrative of Zayd, Muhammad's adopted son, and his wife Zaynab. Powers traverses a number of interrelated narratives and themes, including familial relationships in the Near East, myth making and scriptural intertextuality, and the consonantal reconstruction of the Qur'an, among many others. Whether you welcome his argument or not Powers has provided a detailed and stimulating examination of myth, scripture, and tradition.

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