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Constitution Of Medina: Studies In Late Antiquity And Early Islam, Vol. 23



Synopsis

This document, known in Orientalist jargon as the "Constitution of Medina," is accepted, even by iconoclasts of the field, as an original document going back to the Prophet Muhammad. Yet, for some reason, it has not received its fair share of scholarly attention. This book is an attempt to remedy this situation, and includes the two known versions of the "Constitution," founded on many sources. This is followed by introductory chapters dealing with the Muslim and Jewish groups that participated in the document. Finally, there is a translation and a detailed commentary on the clauses. In this book, the author argues that most of the Jewish tribes of Medina, including the large ones, did not participate in the "Constitution"; the main tribes had more rudimentary, non-belligerency treaties with Muhammad. In addition, the assumption that the "Constitution" declared each Jewish group as an umma or community rests on a faulty reading: In fact the participating Jews received a guarantee of security (amana). This monograph will enrich the resources available for the study of Muhammad's concepts and policies shortly after his arrival at Medina.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This volume contains two versions of the so-called "Constitution of Medina," also known as the Medina Charter, as collected by Ibn Ishaq (an early historian of Muhammad) and Abu Abayd (whose "Book of Revenue" contains one of two accepted versions of the document, the other belonging to Fatma al-Din Ibn Sayyid al-Nafisi, an Egyptian historian). Each version is

presented in Arabic with notes on margin inscriptions and variations, and the version by Ibn Ishaq contains an English translation. The greater part of this book contains extensive historical notes on each "clause" of the document, as well as alternative English translations from multiple sources and insights on each clause from multiple historians. This is a wonderful resource for anyone working with the Constitution of Medina (I relied heavily on it while writing my term paper for a class on shariah and international law).

I would consider this a must have for anyone serious about learning about what the original Muslims thought about themselves and how they would interact with others.

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