



The Oxford History of Islam

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John L. Esposito, Editor-in-Chief of the four-volume *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, has gathered together sixteen leading scholars, both Muslim and non-Muslim, to examine the origins and historical development of Islam--its faith, community, institutions, sciences, and arts. Beginning in the pre-Islamic Arab world, the chapters range from the story of Muhammad and his Companions, to the development of Islamic religion and culture and the empires that grew from it, to the influence that Islam has on today's world. The book covers a wide array of subjects, casting light on topics such as the historical encounter of Islam and Christianity, the role of Islam in the Mughal and Ottoman empires, the growth of Islam in Southeast Asia, China, and Africa, the political, economic, and religious challenges of European imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and Islamic communities in the modern Western world. In addition, the book offers excellent articles on Islamic religion, art and architecture, and sciences as well as bibliographies.

Events in the contemporary world have led to an explosion of interest and scholarly work on Islam. Written for the general reader but also appealing to specialists, *The Oxford History of Islam* offers the best of that recent scholarship, presented in a readable style and complemented by a rich variety of illustrations.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The entire history of Islamic civilization is, of course, too much to cover in a single volume, but John Esposito comes close. In a book topping 700 pages and containing over 300 photographs, Esposito brings together experts in fields such as early Islamic history, art and architecture, science and medicine, Islam in Africa and Southeast Asia, and contemporary Islam. Beginners will be swimming in new discoveries, while old hands will find connections and facts they never suspected. Majid Fakhry, for instance, shows not only the influence of philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroes) on European intellectuals but also unveils the claims and counterclaims within Islamic philosophy over time. Dru Gladney takes us on an eye-opening journey through Islamic Central Asia and even China, where the Muslim Hui people are recognized as the country's third-largest minority nationality. And have you ever seen an exquisite mosque with towering spires made entirely of mud-brick, like there are in West Africa? Unfortunately, Esposito apparently couldn't find room here for separate sections on Sufism or Islamic literature, but there are more than enough mosques, paintings, historical maps, and tapestries throughout to keep you turning pages and learning with fascination. --*Brian Bruya*

From Publishers Weekly

A good introduction to Islamic history is hard to find, and readers interested in the world's second-largest religion can rejoice at finding this one. Esposito, professor of religious studies at Georgetown University, has brought together a fine cadre of scholars for this anthology. Fifteen articles cover almost every subject that might interest a novice in the field: philosophy, science, art, architecture and histories of Islamic empires and civilizations. The art (100 b&w photos and 200 four-color illustrations) comes fast and thick, adding a great deal to the text. A particular virtue of the book is its extension of Islamic history into the present day, with articles focusing on colonialism, American and European Muslims and 20th-century Islamic revivalism. The book is not perfect, of course, and some of its faults are serious. Only one contribution is dedicated to religious belief and practice as such, and it is one of the weaker articles in the collection. Also, although Sufism is of paramount importance in Islamic history, there is no essay dedicated to the mystical branch of Islam, and the activities of Sufi orders form only a part of several of the historical articles. That said, this valuable and near-comprehensive tome would be a welcome addition to many libraries' shelves. (Nov.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

This universally appealing book, written for the general reader, offers an excellent survey of recent Islamic scholarship. Esposito, editor of the Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World, has gathered 16 leading scholars—Muslim and non-Muslim—from various disciplines and diverse national and religious traditions, to survey a wide range of subjects. Contributors treat, among other things, Muslim history, law, and society; art and architecture; and regional differences. Chapters on the "Globalization of Islam" and "Contemporary Islam" are particularly relevant to current events. Like most of the publisher's "histories," this book is meticulous and thorough, readable and comprehensive. An ideal one-volume source, especially for those on a small budget, it is recommended for academic and public libraries. —Michael W. Ellis, Ellenville P.L., NY
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Users Review

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