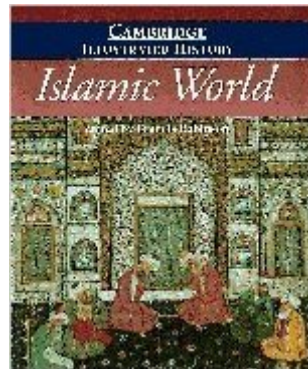




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# The Cambridge Illustrated History Of The Islamic World (Cambridge Illustrated Histories)



## Synopsis

Islamic peoples account for one fifth of the world's population and yet there is widespread misunderstanding in the West of what Islam really is. Francis Robinson and his team set out to address this, revealing the complex and sometimes contrary nature of Muslim culture. As well as taking on the issues uppermost in everyone's minds, such as the role of religious and political fundamentalism, they demonstrate the importance of commerce; literacy and learning; Islamic art; the effects of immigration, exodus, and conquest; and the roots of current crises in the Middle East, Bosnia, and the Gulf. Throughout, emphasis is placed on the interaction between Islam and the West, from the first Latin translations of the Quran to the fatwa on Salman Rushdie. This elegant book deliberately sets out to dismantle the Western impression of Islam as a monolithic world and replace it with a balanced view, from current issues of fundamentalism to its dynamic culture and art. Francis Robinson is the editor of two outstanding reference works: *Atlas of the Islamic World Since 1500* (Cambridge, 1982) and *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Islam* (1989).

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"It is a challenging task to describe the contributions of one billion Muslims who inhabit the Middle East and much of Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, South and Southeast Asia. However, the editor and the contributors of *The Islamic World* managed to put it all in perspective with accurate information, selective emphasis, and well-chosen photographs distributed fairly and with good taste throughout the book. The subject progression, the easy style of writing, and the black-and-white and

color illustrations make the book easy to read, particularly for college students and the general reader." Digest of Middle East Studies" This book helps to dispel myth and hearsay with solid information about one of the world's most maligned religions. Accessible, interesting, and thorough, this volume serves students who want to be more informed about a religion that is so often in the news." Rebecca Woodcock, University of Exeter" This richly illustrated volume is one of the first of this growing number of works to make the world of Islam accessible to a wide range of readers while keeping to high standards of scholarship. Written to make the world of Islam readily accessible to the student and general reader, this volume fulfills its aims and makes a generous contribution to the field." International Journal of Middle East Studies

With the help of sumptuous illustration, insight, and expertise, Francis Robinson and his team reveal the complex, rich, and sometimes contrary nature of Muslim culture. As well as taking on the issues uppermost in everyone's minds, such as the role of religious and political fundamentalism, they look at commerce, education, art, and the effects of immigration, exodus, and conquest. Emphasis is placed on the interaction between Islam and the West, deliberately to address an impression in the West of Islam as a monolithic culture.

This book is effective as a basic introduction to the Islamic world with a wide range of visuals. It is informative, but not super complicated so a good starting point but not deep analysis. If you are new to Islamic studies it is absolutely worth your time.

Bought this book for my husband who was taking a college course in Islamic Art and Architecture. This book was comprehensive and quite useful to him. We purchased a used copy that was in excellent condition and delivered quickly. Would recommend for content, quality and service.

Open's the door

it is really a very poor book.. it deal with islamic history in a very facile way.. I wish i could return it back

I am sorry to say that I wish I had never purchased this book, or even read it. To begin with, it is illustrated with pornography (one entire page of a half naked woman painted by a Frenchman, and a cartoon of a man reading pornography!). Instead of providing actual quotes from authentic material,

with some important exceptions such as an excellent discussion of Sakhawi's biography of Umm Hani, one of his female teachers, the authors mostly rely on illustrations which fill the bulk of the book's pages (if the illustrations were removed, you would have half the book, and not more than a fifth of these are actually necessary). Each chapter is hardly more than an essay, and a look into the Muslim world from the outside in through murky glass at best. This oversimplified history of the Muslim world does not allow as much space for its discussion of the life and call of Prophet Muhammad (Sal Allaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) from his birth to the Hijra as it gave the pornography mentioned above. The four schools of jurisprudence and their development is completed in one paragraph, the Hanbali madhab is completely distorted as the author of the particular section does not distinguish between creed and jurisprudence, not to mention completely ignores important works of 'Aqeedah or creed, or difference in, which is a fundamental part of Islamic history. Texts quoted such as hadiths are often translated inaccurately, and the one illustrative example given of a hadeeth fails to include the chain of narrators. Western scholars and modernists are cited as criticizing the authenticity of certain well-known narrations, seemingly accusing the Muslim scholarship of being lenient. In reality, the authors themselves cite hadiths throughout the book without mentioning their authenticity or even the book from which they are quoted, while the Muslim scholars of hadith, past and present, are far more critical than any modernist or western author. Beyond a halfhearted attempt to summarize the scholarship of Ahl as-Sunnah, or the Islamic orthodoxy, the book jumbles together Shi'a and Sufi misunderstandings, and portrays the latter as being nearly mainstream, and are represented even on the cover of the book. No references are given whatsoever as the book carries on by means of footnotes or otherwise, instead the book ends with an exhaustive bibliography of mainly recent western scholarship which would hardly further enlighten the reader. Resultantly, the authors portray their own effort as condescending and ethnocentric, much more than having any semblance of true research or scholarship.

In an age of prejudice towards the Islamic faith, it is nice to see a more accurate and even-handed book covering the Muslim world. This book gives an excellent introduction, going into depth on how the west has viewed the Islamic world, and vice-versa. Then it goes onto the first chapter, where it discusses pre-Islamic Arabia, the life of Mohammad, the Rashidun, the schism between Sunni and Shi'a, and the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties. This chapter is especially interesting in laying the framework for the foundations of the Islamic world, as well as the spread of Islam and Arabic culture, and later conversion of non-Arab peoples (most notably the Persians). In the next chapter, the Islamic world from 1000 to 1500 AD is covered, when Islam had spread across the Middle East,

west to Spain and west Africa and east towards India and Central Asia. This chapter covers many interesting subjects, such as the Fatimid dynasty, the Crusades, the Mongols, Byzantium and the Turks, and Islamic states in East Asia and Africa. The third chapter covers the period from 1500 to 1800 AD, a period of both great achievements and decline. The Persian, Mongol and Turkish powers are mentioned (such as the Safavids, Mughals and Ottomans), alongside mention of Islam in Africa and elsewhere in Asia (mainly China and Southeast Asia). The subsequent chapter focuses on the 1800s to the present day, and a growing western presence in Islamic lands. This chapter shows how European powers carved up Islamic lands (the French in Syria and north/west Africa, the Brits in Iraq, Palestine, Egypt and South Asia, the Italians in north Africa, Russians in central Asia, etc), and how Islamicist reformer movements arose because of this. Mention is also made of non-colonized states (such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran), and of the emergence of independent Islamic states. The second section of the book goes more into cultural studies, delving into economies, trade routes and social structure within the Islamic world. Mention is made of both historical trade routes and interconnectedness in the Islamic world, stretching from Morocco to Indonesia, and of modern economies in predominantly Muslim states. In chapter seven, the book explores learning in Islamic societies. Mention is made of the high degree of literacy in Islam, and the many great scientific achievements in medicine, astronomy and mathematics. Mention is also made of the impact of the west on Islamic learning. This is followed by a chapter on the arts in the Islamic world, ranging from calligraphy to architecture to classical Arabic music (including mention of legendary Egyptian singer Umm Kalthum) and everything in between. This is an excellent chapter for understanding and appreciating Islamic culture. The book closes out with a conclusion on Islam in the modern world, relationships with the west, the spread of Islam to every country in the world and crises in Bosnia, Palestine, Kashmir and Chechnya. It also has a wonderful timeline covering various Islamic dynasties around the world and a short glossary of Arabic terms. Its quite a nice book for getting to understand some of the basic history and culture of the Islamic world and some of the current issues facing the Islamic world. For the purposes of this book, by the way, the Islamic world counts as any country where the majority of the population is Muslim, not just self-declared Islamic states (which would be limited to Iran, Pakistan, Mauritania and such). Hence it covers almost all of the Middle East, north Africa, Central Asia and much of South Asia, as well as Bosnia, Albania, parts of west and east Africa, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and so forth. In fact, the book makes a point of examining Islam in South Asia, Africa, China and elsewhere beyond the Middle East. It also includes many illustrations and maps of the Islamic world. Hence its an invaluable aid for anyone, Muslim or non-Muslim, in understanding the wonderful history and culture of Islam.

However, it doesn't go into depth on beliefs or specific cultures (such as Arabs, Persians, Malay, Mongols and whatnot), so you would need to look elsewhere for that.

Any account of the history of the Islamic world written by a Westerner in modern times is bound to elicit contention. It's a vast subject, and no single book can succeed in representing it comprehensively; so, an abridged history, with the peculiar slants of authorship that inhere in any such attempt. Nevertheless, a good introduction to the subject for the general reader, who likely is rather naïf about Islam and its history in various cultures and times.

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