



Introducing Islam

Ziauddin Sardar , Zafar Abbas Malik , Richard Appignanesi (Editor)

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Islam is one of the world's great monotheistic religions. Islamic culture, spanning 1,500 years, has produced some of the finest achievements of humanity. Yet the religion followed by a fifth of humankind, including millions from diverse ethnic backgrounds in the US and Europe, is largely seen in the West in terms of fundamentalism, bigotry and violence, a perception reinforced by the terrorist atrocities in New York and Washington in 2001 and subsequent outrages. But the real message of Islam is very far indeed from this picture, making it perhaps the least understood religion in the world. This informative guide recounts the history of Islam from the birth of Prophet Muhammad in the 6th century to its status as a global culture and political force today. Charting the achievements of Muslim civilization, it explains the nature and message of the Qur'an, outlines the basic features of Islamic law, and assesses the impact of colonialism on Muslim societies.

Introducing Islam Details

Date : Published August 8th 2000 by Totem Books (first published September 14th 1990)

ISBN : 9781840465822

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Format : Paperback 176 pages

Genre : Religion, Nonfiction, History, Islam, Theology, Asian Literature, Indonesian Literature

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From Reader Review Introducing Islam for online ebook

Jespar Rai says

Good reas

Easy to read and clear.it's updated so it gives modern insight while not taking away from its history.I recommend it.

Eman Khan says

A simple, easy-to-follow introduction to Islam and Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) along with Islam's influence in cultivating mathematics science, and art. Don't expect too many details, it's just meant to be a brief intro.

I appreciated all the summarizations about Muslim scientists. It helped me conduct my own research to figure out what more I want to learn about them.

Einar Nielsen says

maybe I'm being too harsh on this book as it's only meant to introduction but I was really disappointed by this book. First off, I bought this book at the Ataturk airport in Istanbul which is ironic because the books hardly mentions Turks or the Ottoman empire, which is strange considering it talks a lot about the history of other Islamic nations. It skims over one of the most important philosophical debates in the religion's history and presents both sides as right (and doesn't talk about the bad on either side). Also, I found a couple of things that were just wrong (historically). So, I can't recommend this book. But if you are in an airport and are really curious about Isalm, you can give a try but I would recommend reading something else.

Jaakko Vasankari says

Not so source critical but still credible guide

Very entertaining book. However some of the claims seem a rather exaggerated. For example one person to go through millions of potential statements is a very bold claim of you think that at the age of internet going through millions of web pages is almost impossible - 1000 years ago even more so. However the authors find their critical thinking on the later parts of the book.

Jose says

Got this book to see where Sufism fits into islamic traditions. The book waxes a bit too poetic about islamic achievements in science and such by dismissing quite a few 'western' discoveries as plagiarisms -as if islamic thought hadn't borrowed -and heavily- from other civilizations. It also tows the accepted "colonialism is

awful" political correctness yadda yadda . However, it DOES offer counterpoints and it is an excellent if very brief intro to the prophet Muhammad and his teachings , the evolution of islam, its disintegration into rival groups, the splendors of islamic civilization and its fall. It is necessarily brief and it skips some important episodes (Ottomans) It delves into its mystics, its debaters and also the interested forces that ossified modern Islam or abused it into forms of repression, mysoginy and suppressed thought. Most importantly, it offers the reader a good primer on the authors and movements keen on recovering the multicultural, charismatic and essentially tolerant shape that this Faith had at the beginning.(according to the authors, i am no expert)

I understand the interest the authors put in showing islamic cultural achievement. But i think their point is to show how Islam is not contradictory with science and inquiry. Fair enough. However, i doubt Islam is the cause of it instead of just the prevalent Faith in times in which unification and power created the conditions that were the actual cause of the flowering of scientific inquiry. In my opinion, there is no islamic or christian science or logic, it is all part of reasoning. It could be said the impulse to know and to create a just society might very well benefit from a Faith just like Islam -at least it would seem that a community that shares a compassionate tolerant set of values and core beliefs will tend to be a successful one. That Islam can color or even trigger our notion of a fair economy or drive the desire of knowledge and stewardship is not out of the question despite its rare recent examples of just that. That islam is anything but an aspiration is just the sad fate of all religions. Humans cannot be expected to even remotely live up to their precepts. Certainly no benefits will be coming from an Islamic State or a modern day imposed Sharia and the book acknowledges as much.

Suresh says

The book lacks the critical evaluation of a religion, although we cannot expect more from an introductory book. However, the book is quite a good read for the one who is entirely new to the religion. It provides a brief overview, In this book, the way the author explains the achievement of Islamic Civilization in science and rationality made me think a lot on this. It would have been better if the author mentions the source of his claims.

Aamina says

Finally finished! Took me a while. So I just found out who the author is and I'm not surprised to say I found this a little biased. What I loved about this book that it really is an introduction to islam, not that I need to read it or wholeheartedly believe everything it says as I am a practicing (hope) Muslim. I like that fact that the guide mentions the way Islam really is and was. It constantly mentions that Islam has been interpreted in many ways by Muslims and Non Muslims. It really does mention everything that you should know from what Muslims have achieved and how Islam started off.

The pictures didn't help they put me off and were not very coherent. The attempt at being humorous was failing although I believe humour is needed in serious topics.

I like to read about Islam because I want to know what other people perceive, this does not change my views unless I know that what I'm reading is from an authentic source. Unfortunately this book can't and shouldn't be taken word for word. People make mistakes I get that. And I'm thankful that the authors took time out to create this. May they be rewarded and see the fruits of their hard work.

bellatuscana bellatuscana says

Overly political about how Islam has had the best of contributions and overly dismissive of the ways that it can be extremist and oppressive. Good at explaining parts of the religion, but I still feel like an outsider looking in rather than finding any way to connect to it emotionally or spiritually.

Tim says

This was a great little primer on the history and teachings of Islam, which is something that I had been seeking for some time. This is part of a series of such books from Britain's Icon Books. It is very well illustrated (by Malik) with drawings derived from Islamic artistic and decorative traditions. The text is clear and concise, and it is a pretty quick read. Nevertheless, I spent a fair amount of time with it, reading some sections over several times. Despite the simplicity of the work, it is clear that Sardar is very knowledgeable and has much of value to impart to Western readers. It attempts to tell the story of a perfectly reasonable religious faith that has been unfairly villified in Europe and the USA, and the culture and knowledge that grew up in the wake of Muhammad. The author's view appears to be that of an educated and fairly liberal, but still devout, Muslim. This title is worth keeping around as a reference book.

Nahla says

A nice introduction. It starts from the religion it self mixed with history to history and discoveries. I wasn't a huge fan of the graphics unfortunately and some things seemed to be told in a too simple way. But it is suppose to be an introduction so they don't have time to dive into details, I understand. For a non Muslim who'd like to know more, that would be great. For a Muslim, it's maybe too simple and doesn't add a lot on the knowledge I already had.

Joseph Harriott says

Hoped this would help me understand and develop respect for this Abrahamic religion, but no, it just left me saddened. It seemed to me a very politically correct description, stripped of the insightful analysis that these Introducing books usually summarise so well, and that I was hoping for. (The things that worry me about Islam are discussed at <http://muslimsagainstsharia.blogspot.com>)

Graham says

A very sympathetic account of Islam, with very strong claims made for its intellectual achievements, but gave interesting details about the Muslim achievements in Science. Not enough about the Sunni/Shia schism, and rather skates over the recent past. But interesting to read a positive account of Islam.

Qonita says

basic understanding about islam and more about the philosophy behind it. concise and inspiring.

Ellie says

This book is not exactly nuanced, it promotes its own perspective, which it is entitled to, and I do understand an introductory book is never going to be able to fully explore the nuances of a faith, let alone one with so many strands and adherents, but a little subtlety and mixed perspective would not hurt.

It makes some pretty dubious claims such as that changing even a single letter or word would, due to the intertwined nature of the Quran, make it nonsensical, and thus this protects it from tampering. It also claims no-one can write prose that could be mistaken for Quranic suras, but people have done so. It also says the Quran is the only book to have been memorised in full, and this is obviously untrue and I think it needs to be pointed out that memorising a book in a language you do not understand is worth less than reading a book in a language you do.

I also think there are far too many pictures and not enough text. Lose the drawings, which don't add much to the book anyway, and use that space to expand on what is being written.

If you want an introduction to Islam, I found the book "The No Nonsense Guide to Islam" to be an interesting, engaging, and more willing to explore the nuances of Islam, so if you're looking for a brief introduction then I would recommend that book.

James says

On the one hand this is an excellent primer into Islam, particularly as a culture. But unlike some other books in this series, such as the one on Hinduism, this specific guide is also a bit sycophantic and lacks a sense of objectivity. It often reads more as a boisterous piece of proselytizing literature than a broader look at the culture without too much dogma.

It also doesn't really tackle the schism in Islam and it actually contradicts itself in a few places. I believe this is because the author tried to please everyone - both those in the faith and those wishing to know more about it - than sticking to a more cohesive intent. In some glaring cases, the author even attacks 'plagiarism' of Islamic breakthroughs, but is not as even-handed in acknowledging older origins to ideas that Islam itself appropriated. Likewise, it really isn't objective about history. Reading this you'd believe the Islamic conquerors of the middle ages were peace-loving egalitarians, which is not true at all.

There are a few meagre attempts to point at philosophical differences in the faith, yet I got the feeling the author didn't even seem too certain about these moments. It may also be that additional content was edited in to balance the text a bit more.

Nonetheless, if Islam is a mystery to you, this is an informative read.

