

Europe and the Islamic World: A History

THIS book is a magisterial work of scholarship by three distinguished professors of medieval Islam (Tolan), the 'early modern' (Veinstein), and the modern Middle East (Laurens). Each has written extensively in his field of specialization and comes to this tripartite project with a wealth of old and new information. The task the authors faced was formidable: to survey and interpret the history of relations between, on the one hand, a religion that, until the twentieth century, spanned three continents, and, on the other, 'Europe'—that religio-geographical region that, from the sixteenth century on, assumed a major role in Islamic history and in the making and the unmaking of the modern Islamic world. The foreword by John L. Esposito, the director of the Prince Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, points in the intellectual direction of this book: it is an attempt to challenge the 'clash of civilizations' canard and to posit a complex, ongoing, and detailed alternative in a balanced and deeply engaging book.

It is unlikely that the authors were not thinking about Norman Daniel's classic *Islam and the West* as they wrote their chapters. Daniel had written a detailed history of Christian antipathy, misrepresentation, and demonization of Islam. His 'west', however, ended with the early modern period. Tolan, Veinstein, and Laurens focused on all the Islamic world, itself a vague term especially in the modern period, and on Europe, as if wishing to avoid the United States—a problematic avoidance since the role of the United States in the Islamic World since WW2 has been preminent. Be that as it may, the authors went beyond Daniel who never explained why Euro-Christians had been so hostile to Islam and why they had so demonized it. By emphasizing 'History' in the title, the authors showed that no understanding of the

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Penulis

John Tolan, Gilles Veinstein and Henry Laurens

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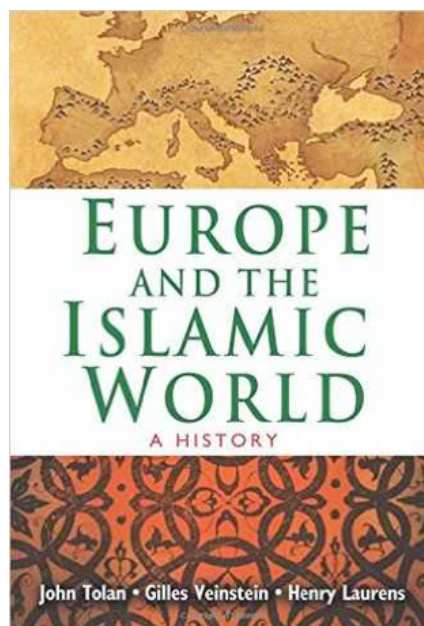
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relations between Euro-Christendom and the Islamic world could rest only on theology and ignore the complex legacy of trade and war, alliance and conflict, polemic and cooperation and

intellectual exchange. Whatever the views of Europeans or Muslims, they were rooted in geopolitical, cultural, commercial, and social realities.

John Tolan may have had the less difficult task in his 'Saracens and *Ifranj*: Rivalries, Emulation, and Convergences'. The relations with 'Europe' (a name that did not exist in the imagination or cartography of the first and later Muslims) was limited due to distance and difficulty in communication—but there were writings by travellers, captives, and emissaries which have survived in the original Arabic as well as in summary by later geographers. Understandably, Tolan has to be selective in his analysis of sources, and his choice is excellent (also determined, I suspect, by the availability of the texts in translation): al-Idrisi, Usama ibn Munqidh and Ibn Jubayr, among others.

Tolan opens by examining 'Europe' in early Arab cartography—and reproduces the only examples of maps (and illustrations) in the book that show the worldview which the Arabs developed from their Greek and Hellenistic sources. He then moves on to three themes: war, minority status, and trade. His approach is comparative: as he discusses the theme of Muslim jihad, he situates it alongside Christian crusade *andreconquista*; and as he examines the conditions of the minorities in the Islamic world, the Jews and the Christians, he also looks at the status of Jews and Muslims in Christian regions, two groups that were not yet part of 'Europe'. A point that would have been useful to mention is that until the forced conversions of the 'pagans' by Charlemagne in the eighth and ninth centuries, there were more Christians and Jews living in the Islamic world than in 'Europe'.

(Sumber: *Journal of Islamic Studies* (2015) 26 (3): 370-374, May 11, 2015)

Islam Is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority

ZAREENA Grewal's *Islam Is a Foreign Country* offers a valuable contribution to the growing body of scholarship on American Islam by illuminating the motivations and pedagogies of American Muslims who seek Islamic knowledge overseas in Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Some of these "student-seekers," as Grewal calls them, pursue studies at universities like Egypt's famed Al-Azhar University, while others join study circles and communities of students who learn from a "traditional" scholar. The majority of Grewal's ethnographic informants sought knowledge in both spheres, and she conducted participant observation across a number of sites in this "network of pedagogies."

Coupling ethnography with historical-archival research, *Islam Is a Foreign Country* is an extensively researched, and at times lyrically written, study of a unique subculture in American Islam. This subculture of devout Muslim Americans is variously referred to as the "traditional" Islam or "neo-orthodoxy" movement (not to be confused with the Christian neo-orthodoxy movement of the twentieth century). The Muslim Americans going overseas to study with these religious scholars, many of whom are themselves American Muslims who undertook similar journeys in the 1970s and 1980s, are seeking more than concrete knowledge of texts and traditions. These journeys, Grewal argues, are also an effort to articulate an authentic Islam in the "mobile, heterogeneous, transnational community of believers" that comprises Muslim America. This effort to resolve dilemmas of "authenticity" and "religious authority" in American Islam has implications not only for this subculture, but also for Muslim American citizenship.

The book is organized into two parts. Based on the back cover synopsis of the book, readers may expect Islam

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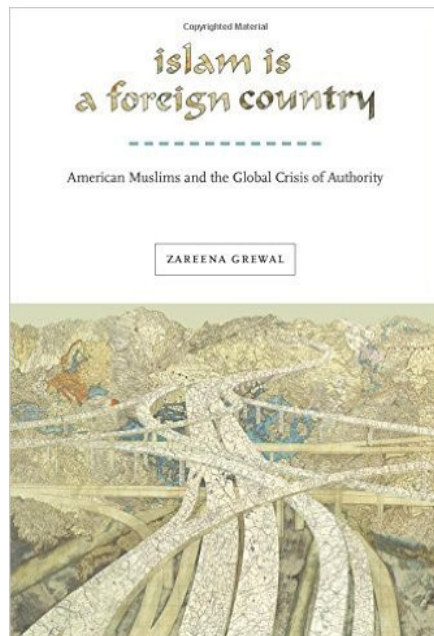
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is a Foreign Country to be structured around Grewal's ethnographic data and analysis. While the book opens with a brief narrative of Grewal's own background, identity, and positionality, in the first half—"Part I: The Roots and Routes of Islam in America"—Grewal focuses on articulating the striving for

"religious authenticity" that is perennially at the heart of American Islam. While Part I is peppered with often poignant vignettes from the field, it is not until the second half—"Part II: Tradition Bound"—that Grewal shifts from a largely historical-archival framework to a more overtly ethnographic approach to the subject. Part II more fully engages and relies upon Grewal's years of fieldwork in Cairo, Damascus, and Amman with Muslim Americans seeking "authentic" Islam.

Grewal's analysis highlights a key paradox of the Muslim American student-seeker's experience. On the one hand, the student-seeker expends considerable effort and resources to journey overseas for knowledge that they believe will "reintroduce a common vocabulary of argumentation in their mosques," and "[help them] develop a local, American expression of Islam, safeguarded from the incoherence and instability of crisis." Indeed, Grewal's respondents framed travel to the "East" as an effort to access the timeless "Archive of Tradition" and bring it back to the United States so that they may resolve the "crisis of authority" in their own mosques.

However, *Islam Is a Foreign Country* problematizes this quest for "authenticity." Grewal unflinchingly demonstrates that these efforts all too often fail to translate into new kinds of mosque leadership or culture building. She concludes by asserting that external political pressures compel Muslim American leaders to acquiesce to the "good Muslim/bad Muslim" binary, thereby forgoing the complex negotiation of authentic Muslim American citizenship that this knowledge might facilitate.

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