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Along with his academic duties, Nanji has participated in international conferences and lectures in Australia, Canada, China, Europe, Mexico, Russia, and the United States and in many of the countries of the Muslim world. He is a member of the Religion and Philanthropy Committee of the Council on Foundations in Washington, D.C. and is on the editorial board of the *Journal of the Academy and its International Directions Committee*. He also served as co-chair of the Islam section of the American Academy of Religion. His academic and research interests in Islamic studies is combined with the development of educational programs in the study of Islam at colleges, universities, and schools. He is involved in projects on the development of integrated education in *madrassa*-based programs in East Africa. Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts has sought Nanji's advisement on integrating the study of Muslim cultures and societies into their global curriculum; he has also created similar projects in Canada, England, and the United States.

Nanji has authored, co-authored, and edited several books including: *Building for Tomorrow* (1994); *The Religious World, Third Edition* (1993); *The Nizari Ismaili Tradition* (1976); and the forthcoming *Mapping Islamic Studies* (1996). He has also contributed articles and chapters to *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, *A Companion to Ethics*, and to various academic journals and books.

Besides being a consultant, academician, and author, Nanji has been the recipient of fellowships and grants from the Canada Council, the National Endowment for Humanities, and the Rockefeller Foundation. In 1995, he was invited to give the baccalaureate commencement address at Stanford University—the first Muslim scholar to be so honored.

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**THE
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A Reference

Work on

the History,

Faith, Culture,

and Peoples

of Islam

Azim A. Nanji,
Editor



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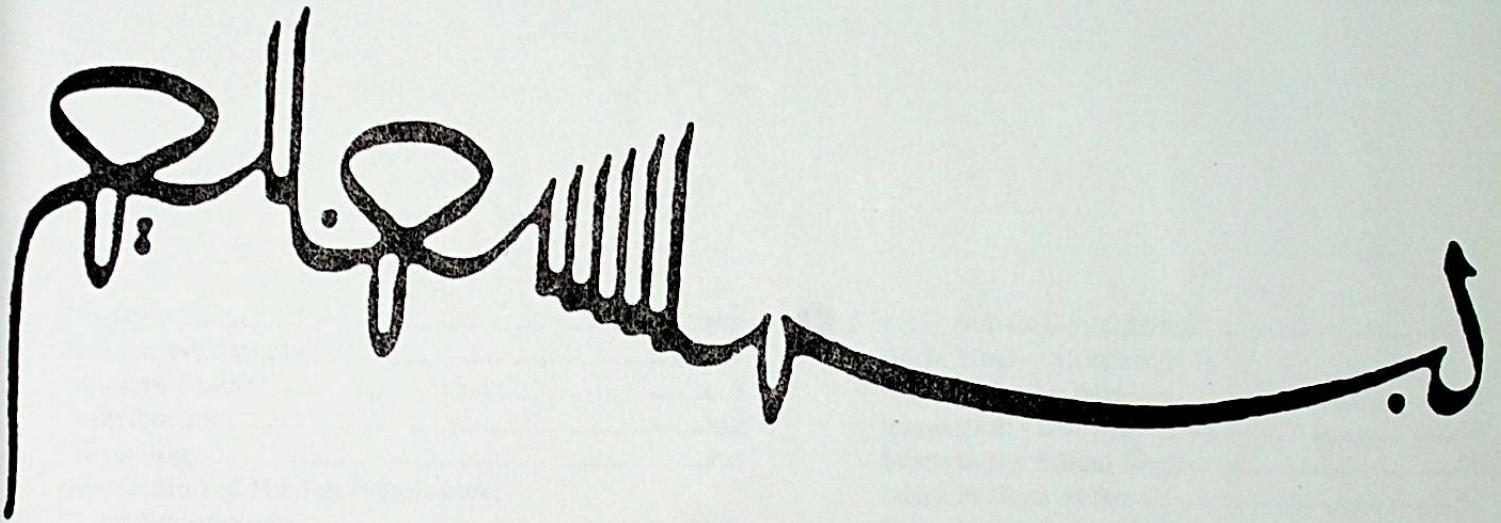
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Contents



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Contents

Preface.....	xiii
Acknowledgements.....	xv
Advisory Board.....	xvii
Contributors	xix
Chronology	xxi
Distribution of Muslim Populations by Nation-State.....	xxix
 Part I: The Beginnings and Foundations of Islam.....	1
1 The Prophet, the Revelation, and the Founding of Islam.....	3
The Founding of Islam.....	3
The Quranic Revelation.....	8
Foundational Concepts.....	9
Practices of the Faith.....	12
2 The Quran in Muslim Life and Practice	19
The Quran as Revelation	19
The Quran as Recitation.....	21
The Quran as Inspiration.....	22
 Part II: The History and Extension of Islam.....	25
3 Islam in the Middle East.....	27
Arabia before the Founding of Islam.....	27
The Early Muslim Community.....	28
Modern Developments in the Middle East.....	35
Reformism and Revivalism in the Middle East.....	35
Beyond Tradition and Modernity	41
4 Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa	45
Early Muslim Contact with Sub-Saharan Africa.....	45
Islam in the Horn of Africa	46
Islam in the Sudan Region.....	46
Islam in West Africa	47
Islam in Southern Africa.....	49
The Great <i>Jihads</i>	49
The Emergence of the Swahili Culture	50
Muslim Revivalism and European Rule.....	50
Modern Trends in Africa South of the Sahara.....	52
5 Islam in South Asia	55
The Establishment of Muslim Rule.....	55
Political Power, the Community, and the Issue of Conversion	58
Spiritual and Mystical Life.....	60
"Separatism" and "Syncretism" in Medieval India	62
The Eighteenth Century: A "Dark" Century?.....	64
The Intelligentsia and the New Realities.....	64
Educational System: The Eighteenth Century.....	65
6 Islam in Southeast Asia	73
Islam in Indonesia	73
The Spread of Islam	75
Islam in Malaysia	78
7 Islam in Central Asia and the Caucasus.....	83
Muslims in Twentieth Century Politics.....	86

Russification of Muslims in the Soviet Union	86	The Emergence of Communities of Interpretation	163
Muslims in Modern Russia	88	Part IV: The Intellectual Tradition in Islam	175
8 Islam in China	91	14 Intellectual Life in Islam	177
Muslim Ethnic Groups and Population Figures	92	The Academic Study of Muslim Intellectual Life	177
Geographical Distribution of Muslims in China	94	The Genesis	178
Religious Observance	98	The Formative Period	179
Language and Muslim Communities	100	The Heritage of Previous Civilizations	182
Muslim Communities in China and the Economic Reform Program	103	The Age of Islamic Classics	183
Muslim Communities in China and International Relations	104	Ottoman Safavi Mugul	186
China's Islamic Gamble	104	15 Muslim Philosophy and the Sciences	189
9 Islam in Spain and Western Europe	107	The Search for Knowledge	189
Muslims in Early Spain	107	Philosophy	190
The Tayfa Period	109	The Sciences	197
The <i>Murabitun</i>	109	Educating Europe: The Arabo-Latin Translation Movement	202
Christian conquest of Muslim Spain	110	16 The Ethical Tradition in Islam	205
Intellectual and Cultural Life in al-Andalus	111	Beginnings and Development: Foundational Values	205
10 Islam in North Africa and the Mediterranean	115	Theological and Traditionalist Approaches	208
Islamization and the Berber Population	115	Philosophical Approaches	209
Political Fragmentation— Ibn Khaldun's Maghrib	118	Ethics in the Shia Tradition	210
Foreign Incursions and Sharifian Resurgence	118	Sufi Perspectives	210
Ottoman Power and Local Autonomy	119	Muslim Ethics in the Contemporary World	211
Alawid Dynasty in Morocco	122	Part V: The Spiritual and Devotional Tradition in Islam	213
Islam and the West in the Modern Age	123	17 Early Muslim Spirituality and Mysticism	215
Nationalism, Independence, and Resurgent Islam	125	The Origins of Islamic Spirituality	215
11 Islam in Contemporary Europe	131	The Birth of Sufism	218
Muslim Immigration	131	The Development of a Synoptic Mystical Thought in Islam	220
Public Life	132	18 Devotional Life and Practices	223
Educational Issues	133	Popular Islam	223
Religious Observances	134	Devotion to God	224
Muslim and Mixed Marriages	136	The Quran in Popular Islam	225
Muslim Identity	137	Devotion to the Prophet	225
12 Islam in the Americas	141	Devotion to the <i>Auliya</i> in Popular Islam	226
Ethnicity and Population Statistics	141	Devotional Life in Practice	230
Large-Scale Muslim Organizations in North America	144	Muharram Celebrations in India: A Case Study	231
Local Muslim Congregations	144	19 Spiritual Life and Institutions in Muslim Society	253
Muslim Women in North America	146	Early Sufi Leaders	253
Sufism in North America	147	The Friends of God	254
Muslims in American Corrections	148	Sufi Orders	255
African American Muslims	148	The Modern Period	258
Part III: Diversity in Islam	159	Part VI: Law, Order, and Society in Islam	261
13 Diversity in Islam: Communities of Interpretation	161	20 Law, Society, and Governance in Islam	263
Diversity in Early Islam	161	Theoretical Considerations	263

Practical Implications	264	Literature of Islamic Reform in the Contemporary Period	361
Major Legal Schools	264	27 Muslim Literature in Sub-Saharan Africa	365
Islam and Social Transformation	265	Common Features in Sub-Saharan Literature	365
Self-Sufficiency of the Islamic Revelation in Providing Fundamental Principles	267	Fulani Literature	365
21 Islamic Law	269	Hausa Literature	366
The Foundation of Islamic Law	269	Wolof literature	367
Development of Islamic Law	270	Somali Literature	367
Modern Developments	273	Swahili Literature	368
Part VII: Artistic and Architectural Expression in Islam	275	28 Muslim Folklore and Folklife	371
22 The Arts of Islam	277	The Concept of Folklore and Folklife	371
Characteristic of Islamic Art	277	Muslim Identity	372
Early Islam: the Formative Years	278	Part IX: Women and Their Contributions to Islam ...	379
Classical Period	283	29 Women, Men, and Gender in Islam	381
Postclassical Period	285	Quranic and Other Normative Teachings Regarding Women	381
Late Islam: the Age of Empires	292	The Family and Gender Roles	383
The Modern Period	298	Development of Public and Private Roles of Men and Women in Muslim Societies ...	385
23 The Architectural Expressions in the Built Environment	309	Diversity in Status and Role across the Muslim World	387
Building Types and Their Architectural Character	311	Contributions of Women	387
Urban Character	313	Contemporary Developments and Issues	389
Part VIII: Literary Expressions in Islam	329	30 Muslim Women Writers	391
24 Muslim Literature in Arabic	331	Muslim Women Writers in Arabic	391
The Arabic Language	331	Muslim Women Writers in Turkish	395
The Quran	332	Muslim Women Writers in Malay	397
Early Religious Literature in Arabic	332	Muslim Women Writers in South Asia	400
The Belles Lettres: Forms of Expression	332	Part X: Muslim Education	407
The Historical Development of Muslim Literature in Arabic	335	31 Learning and Education	409
Early Muslim Literature in Arabic	338	Education in the Early Period	409
Modern Muslim Literature in Arabic	339	The Impact of Developments in Education on the Muslim World	415
Modern Arabic Literature in the Vernacular	341	Education in the Contemporary Muslim World	418
Themes in Modern Muslim Literature in Arabic	342	Part XI: Islam and Other Faith Communities	421
25 Muslim Literature in Persian and Turkish	345	32 Muslims, Jews, and Christians: Relations and Interactions	423
The Persian Language	345	The Foundational Period	424
General Characteristics of the Persian Literary Tradition	345	The Early Centuries of Muslim History	425
Historical Survey of Persian Literature	347	The Medieval Period	426
The Turkish Language	349	The Modern Period	427
General Characteristics of the Turkish Literary Tradition	349	The Future	428
Historical Survey of Eastern Turkish Literature	350	Part XII: Contemporary Developments in Islam	431
Historical Survey of Western Turkish Literature	351	33 Islam in the Modern World	433
26 Muslim Literature in South Asia	355	Early Reform Movements	433
Literatures of the Turko-Persian Culture	355	Modern Islamist Movements	435
		Popularity of Islamist Movements	438

Preface

The history and culture of the Muslim peoples of the world are part of the shared heritage of humankind. In recent years, the historical experience of Muslims has taken on major significance in world affairs. This heightened awareness, unfortunately, has in many cases, led the media and the popular imagination of Westerners to a distorted view of Islam. In explaining current events in the world, Muslims are often portrayed in homogenized fashion; their rich diversity and heritage has remained unrecognized or unrepresented. By focusing on the turbulent regions of the Muslim world and its radical leaders, who are adherents for a restored vision of early Islam, an image has been created which represents Muslims to be violently opposed to other values, particularly those of the West. This imagined and fictitious contrast distorts and misrepresents the variety in present-day and historical life of the Muslim world; overlooks the lengthy exchanges and fruitful interaction that have taken place between Muslims, other cultures, and civilizations, including the West, reduces its meaning to the realm of romance and stereotype; and confirms and reinforces ancient prejudices.

This book provides a perspective on the historical formations of the worldwide Muslim community from Arabia to the Philippines; it portrays the intellectual, spiritual, and institutional pluralism that has developed during a history of over fourteen centuries. *Muslim Almanac* examines particular regional developments showing the evolution of Muslim societies within local and global contexts, revealing the diversity that exists

among individual Muslims, traditions, and various periods of Muslim history. It explores the process of its permeation and interaction in the different cultures of the world and examines the multiple expressions, as well as conflicts and tensions that have occurred in Muslim history to the present.

This publication allows the reader to build on the foundations of Islam by tracing Muslim history through its various geographical contexts and to understand the specific nature of Islam in each of its regional expressions. The study of each realm and region provides an interconnected setting for an overview of the intellectual and cultural achievements in Islamic contexts. These include the study of theology, law, philosophy, and science; the arts and literature; education and learning; and architecture.

Dramatic changes have taken place in the Muslim world within the last two centuries. The chapters on Muslims in modern times explore these changes and their implication for all facets of Muslim life and society.

The writers of various chapters of *Muslim Almanac* are scholars—each specializing in the subject in which they have contributed. Their work represents the academic study of Islam; their insights are based not only on research, but also from personal experiences from living in different parts of the Muslim world. This provides an indepth look at the faith and culture of Islam, the history, and achievements of a world religion, whose traditions and civilization continue to play an influential role in our world.