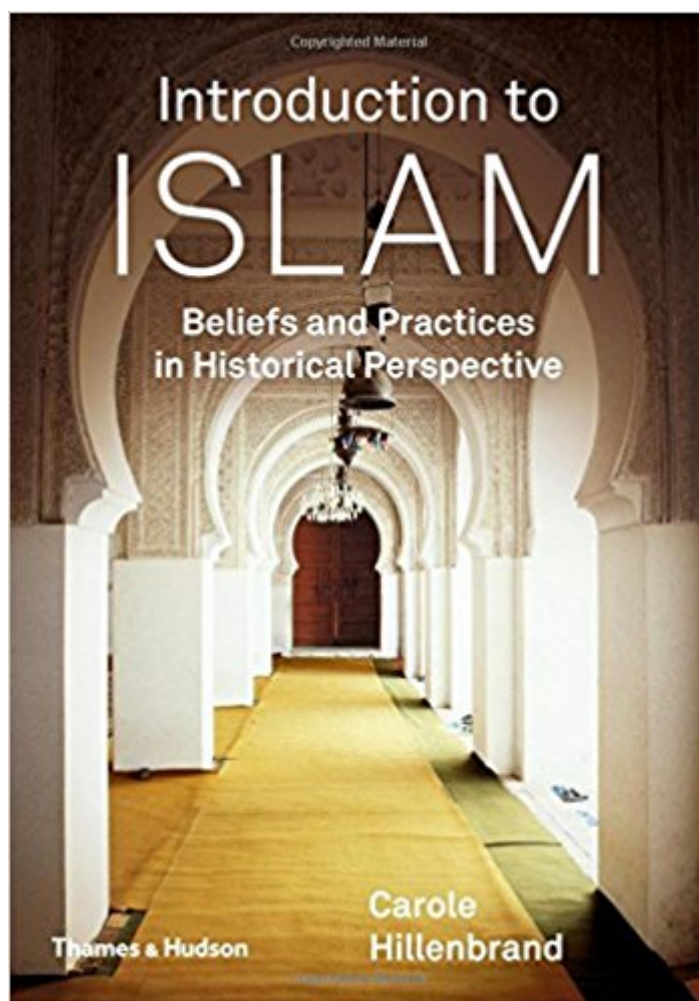


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# Introduction To Islam: Beliefs And Practices In Historical Perspective



## Synopsis

A comprehensive history of Islam and the diverse beliefs and practices of Muslims, written by one of the most eminent historians of Islam working today Carole Hillenbrand, long acknowledged as a preeminent authority on Islam, has now written a superb introduction to this great world religion, a book that promises to be the most lucid, nuanced text of its kind on the market. Beginning with the life of Muhammad, Hillenbrand firmly establishes in historical and global context the beliefs and ideals of Muslims and the branches and movements within the faith. Rather than portraying Islam as a monolithic entity, Hillenbrand emphasizes its diversity and variety. Featured chapters include, but are not limited to: Law, Diversity, Sufism, Jihad, and Women. Finally, a concluding chapter on Islam in the globalized twenty-first century is bound to appeal to instructors and students alike. 79 color illustrations

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Since 9/11, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of texts focusing on Islam and Muslims in the contemporary world, but high-quality references (like this one) are always a welcome addition. . . . Recommended for high school students, undergraduate introductory courses on Islam, and general readers interested in the subject . . .” - Library Journal

Carole Hillenbrand is an eminent authority on Islam. She is currently Professor Emerita in Islamic History at the University of Edinburgh and Professor of Islamic History at the University of St Andrews. She has previously taught at Dartmouth College, NH and Washington University in St.

Louis, MO. In 2005 she was the first non-Muslim to be awarded the King Faisal International Prize for Islamic Studies, and in 2009 she received the Order of the British Empire in the New Year's Honors List for Services to Higher Education. She has written a number of books on the subject, including the internationally successful *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, and has published more than sixty articles on aspects of Islamic history and thought.

I read this book for a class. Wonderful, clear introduction to a very deep topic. All the information you need to know to be introduced to Islam is right here in this textbook. Would recommend.

Overall, a comprehensive outline for beginners.

Carole Hillenbrand writes of how Jesus is considered a prophet in Islam, but also writes how the crucifixion is omitted. The Quran hints that Jesus wasn't physically killed, rather that he was taken to heaven while still living, similar to Enosh and Elijah. Joseph is also a prophet to the Muslims, and the story of him and Zuleykha (Potiphar's wife, not named in the bible) is used as an example of resisting temptation. She leads him through multiple rooms, each one decorated with erotic artwork, and in the artwork provided, he wears green clothing, symbolizing purity.

*Introduction to Islam*, from Thames & Hudson Publishers, is a book that creates a realistic, balanced portrayal of one of the three great religions, both venerated and maligned at the same time. This book is clear in that local customs always influence Muslim practices, as in the chapter on prophets. The author includes a 14th century illustration from Iran, depicting Mary and the angel, where she sits in a Buddhist cross-legged pose. Most of the Persian artworks have Chinese influence, in the faces, the colors, and the animals. Rashid-al-Din's *World History* has a painting of Jonah and the Great Fish, using Chinese elements such as the fish as a thrashing carp. The style of the splashing water also has similarities to Chinese brush painting. The author doesn't mince words in discussing negative aspects of Islam. For instance, no authority in a Muslim country would tolerate blasphemy or disrespect towards Mohammad, and even in tolerant Muslim Spain, Christians could not speak of him negatively. She discusses Satanic Verses and the backlash to Rushdie's book, and the death threats, book burnings, the ban on its sale. She does, however, note that most of the men who burned the book had not read it. Next we have the 2006 Danish cartoon controversy, where a depiction of Muhammad with a bomb-shaped turban sparked violent protest. But the author states that the violence was the work of radicals, who are (according to her) only 7% of all Muslims. The most destructive protest was the Muslim boycott of Danish food.

Diversity, in the form of the Sunni-Shiite split, is discussed, with good explanations of both philosophy and tradition. Hillenbrand also writes a few pages on Islam in Europe, and how the French Muslims are mostly from North and West Africa, while Germany's Muslims are from Turkey, Britain's Muslims are from India and Pakistan, etc. We also learn about the Sufi orders, and how their practices are different depending on whether you're in Africa, Egypt, or Turkey. What disappoints me about this book is that Islam in China and South Africa are left out. I've seen depictions of Cape Town Muslims, descended from Indonesian captives (known as Cape Malays) and the men and women pray side by side, not with the women behind the men. It would be interesting to hear Arab Muslims view on this. I would also have liked to read about how the Chinese Muslims in Taiwan go about preserving their customs in a non-religious society.

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