



Lost Islamic History: Reclaiming Muslim Civilisation from the Past

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Islam has been one of the most powerful religious, social and political forces in history. Over the last 1400 years, from origins in Arabia, a succession of Muslim polities and later empires expanded to control territories and peoples that ultimately stretched from southern France to East Africa and South East Asia. Yet many of the contributions of Muslim thinkers, scientists and theologians, not to mention rulers, statesmen and soldiers, have been occluded. This book rescues from oblivion and neglect some of these personalities and institutions while offering the reader a new narrative of this lost Islamic history. The Umayyads, Abbasids, and Ottomans feature in the story, as do Muslim Spain, the savannah kingdoms of West Africa and the Mughal Empire, along with the later European colonization of Muslim lands and the development of modern nation-states in the Muslim world. Throughout, the impact of Islamic belief on scientific advancement, social structures, and cultural development is given due prominence, and the text is complemented by portraits of key personalities, inventions and little known historical nuggets. The history of Islam and of the world's Muslims brings together diverse peoples, geographies and states, all interwoven into one narrative that begins with Muhammad and continues to this day.

Lost Islamic History: Reclaiming Muslim Civilisation from the Past Details

Date : Published September 1st 2014 by Hurst & Co. (first published August 1st 2014)

ISBN : 9781849043977

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Format : Paperback 217 pages

Genre : History, Religion, Islam, Nonfiction

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Firas Alkhateeb

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Reiza says

Rasulullah SAW bersabda; “Hikmah itu adalah barang yang hilang milik orang yang beriman. Di mana saja ia menemukannya, maka ambillah.” (HR. Tirmidzi)

Tahukah kita bahwa universitas tertua di dunia terletak di kota Fez, Maroko? Universitas Karaouin, yang berdiri tahun 859 menyandang gelar kehormatan sebagai universitas tertua di dunia. Bahkan pendirinya, adalah seorang Muslimah.

Menggambarkan sejarah menurut saya adalah salah satu pekerjaan yang paling sulit untuk dilakukan, tetapi menarik. Saya tidak bisa menampik bahwa menuliskan sesuatu tentang sejarah, meskipun sulit, adalah suatu hal yang sangat menarik sekaligus sangat penting. Apalagi, menulis tentang sejarah perkembangan peradaban Islam yang merentang lebih dari 1400 tahun.

Rentang waktu yang begitu panjang, dengan entah berapa milyar kegiatan sehari-hari yang ada didalam lingkup masanya, berupaya digambarkan, dituliskan dan dihadirkan dalam wujud sebuah buku dengan berat kurang dari satu kilogram dan berjumlah tiga ratus halaman.

Sebuah pekerjaan yang sangat ambisius, dan Firas Alkhateeb, seorang peneliti Sejarah Islam di Universitas School, Bridgeview, Illinois sekaligus pendiri situs jaringan Lost Islamic History memilih untuk mengambil pekerjaan mulia itu.

Membaca kisah sejarah mengenai peradaban Islam memang memunculkan imajinasi tersendiri. Kisahnya membentang dari desa-desa pegunungan Asia Tengah sampai kota-kota yang padat di Andalusia. Dari panasnya tanah India sampai rimbunnya hutan hujan Brazil, kisah mengenai peradaban Islam hadir dalam berbagai bentuk. Pencapaiannya luar biasa. Berbagai temuan ilmiah, filsafat, arsitektur, budaya, literatur, mewarnai peradaban Islam. Beberapa diantaranya dituliskan dalam buku ini.

Menarik untuk mengingat bahwa semua hal tersebut berawal dari sebuah gua di pinggiran kota padang pasir Mekah, di dalam malam sunyi, oleh firman Tuhan kepada Rasul-Nya yang berbunyi: ***Iqra! Baca!***

Firman Tuhan itulah yang juga membuat Peradaban Islam menyerap dengan cepat bentuk-bentuk kebudayaan lainnya di daerah yang ditaklukkannya. Menarik untuk sekali lagi mengingat kembali bahwa Peradaban Islam berkembang dengan pesat justru ketika menerima perbedaan budaya-budaya yang ada. Islam menyerap dan mengembangkan ilmu-ilmu yang didapat dari Bizantium, Yunani, Persia dan India.

Lalu apa yang membuat Peradaban Islam terpuruk? Jawaban yang saya dapatkan dari buku ini adalah: Politik. Lebih tepatnya, sengketa dan perselisihan politik di dalam internal Islam sendiri yang bahkan sudah muncul sejak masa Khalifah Utsman, atau Khalifah ketiga setelah Abu Bakar dan Umar yang notabene adalah para Sahabat Nabi. Roda politik bergulir. Kekerasan yang menyertainya melemahkan persatuan peradaban Islam hingga pecah menjadi beberapa kekhalifahan. Umayyah, Abbasiyah dan Fathimiyyah. Hingga mencapai titik ironi yang paling dalam seperti yang digambarkan oleh buku ini, bahwa pada masa kedatangan Pasukan Salib dari Eropa, negara-negara dengan Sultan-sultan kecil yang menguasai kota-kota berpengaruh di Suriah dan Palestina justru sedang saling bersaing satu sama lain dan bahkan menggunakan kedatangan Pasukan Salib ini untuk melawan pesaing-pesaingnya. Kejadian serupa terulang kembali di

Andalusia. Kota-kota saling bersaing memperebutkan pengaruh, hingga akhirnya takluk oleh kekuasaan pasukan Castille dan Aragon.

Kisah sejarah ini, selain menawarkan kisah kegemilangan, juga menyuratkan kisah pilu mengenai lemahnya peradaban, hancurnya ilmu pengetahuan, dibuatnya ia terpisah dari pendidikan agama (padahal sejatinya, tidak ada ilmu sekuler dan ilmu agama. Keduanya menyatu) hingga akhirnya tumbang. Ditenggelamkan oleh kekuasaan Mongol dan tangan-tangan kolonialis Eropa. Tetapi yang paling ironi adalah bahwa saat ini, kita tersandera bukan oleh kekuasaan mereka, tetapi oleh perilaku-perilaku menyimpang dan ekstrim yang berasal dari sekelompok orang yang mengaku sebagai Muslim. Sebegitu kuatnya hingga sampai-sampai, kita lupa bahwa Peradaban Islam pernah membentuk pribadi-pribadi unggul, para polymath, para peneliti, para penguasa yang peduli tentang pengembangan ilmu pengetahuan dan lain sebagainya. Kita begitu akrab dengan berita-berita konflik, peperangan dan kemiskinan hingga kita lupa bahwa di tanah yang berkonflik dan miskin itu dulu pernah berdiri universitas-universitas, sekolah-sekolah, madrasah-madrasah dan Rumah Kebijaksanaan yang didatangi orang-orang dari jauh untuk mencari ilmu.

Dengan ilmu, Islam jaya, dan dengan ilmu pula, peradaban Islam jatuh.

Tiga setengah bintang untuk buku ini. Beberapa terjemahan terasa agak dipaksakan dan beberapa typo di penyebutan jumlah tahun yang agak menjengkelkan. Buku serupa untuk bacaan lebih santai: Dari Puncak Bagdad: Sejarah Dunia Versi Islam & Imperium III

"Yang paling berbahaya memang kejahatan melawan agama yang dilakukan oleh siapa saja yang beranggapan bahwa Islam harus diperjuangkan dengan menolak matematika." - Al Ghazali

Md. Tahmid says

The book starts with the geopolitical situation of the pre islamic Arabia. Then it covers the arrival of the last prophet, the birth of Islam and rise of islam as a world superpower. With the passage of time, we move from one dynasty to another, let it be the Umaiyad, Abbasid, Mamluk or the Ottoman, the book travels through history of last 1400 years with such pace and elegance that it will never cease to mesmerize readers. The writer knows how to keep a book of history interesting and lively enough so that readers always feel interested. In the end, it shows us a glimpse of European renaissance and the demise of muslims as world superpower. It's an amazing journey and the book will never disappoint you.

Bilqis says

Brilliant! Such rich Islamic history I was never aware of, I am grateful to the author and the publishers for this book of knowledge. it's a must read for all Muslims. Others should read it as well it's an great eye opener. I nearly cried at the end of the Andalusian era.

Roberto Macias says

After going through Paul Johnson's "History of Christianity" and "History of the Jews" I read a few books on the Arabs. All have been very enlightening both on the rise and fall of the middle eastern empires, and

understanding the conflicts that now plague the region. "Lost Islamic History" however, has a different scope. It encompasses all Islamic culture by avoiding 19th century definitions of identity (ethnicity and nationalism) and resorting to more period, or subject, accurate descriptions, when identity was more closely related to religion.

This has been particularly truth of the Islamic faith, and we ignore it at our own risk. By taking this approach, Firas Alkhateeb takes more time in explaining the fate of Muslims in al-Andalus, and in the Indian subcontinent. He also spends some time going over the reasons for the success of the Muslim empires, specially acknowledging their contribution to the start of the renaissance.

This book is a fantastic lesson in history without being burdensome. Of all history books of the region/religion I've read, this one was the easiest to read, while still being packed with lots of information. I definitely recommend it to anyone who wishes to know more about world history.

Faiza Sattar says

A wonderful, enlightening read that everyone, irrespective of their religion, should get their hands on. Illuminates the roots of many of current world problems, especially the rapid loss of empathy for our fellow brethren. New World conflicts are very reminiscent of clashes faced by ancient societies, and perhaps we can all learn a thing or two by reading and analyzing the glorious Islamic history. But above all that, the book succeeds in making an excellent point in a few last pages - that of our Muslim identity, and its utmost importance in solidifying our spiritual connection with Islam as basis of reviving the lost spirit of the perfected religion.

Perhaps the only flaw of the book is the lack of maps and diagrams accompanying the text which could have aided my understanding of historic invasions and span of empires even more. For someone who is as geographically challenged as myself, consulting the internet time and time again becomes tedious, especially concerning ancient city names that have now changed.

That being said, it's a highly recommended book owing to the simplicity of narration which makes it an effortless read.

Shoohada Khanom says

I honestly couldn't put the book down, it goes through the history of Islam in the last 1400 years and how it spread from one country to another beginning with Prophet Mohammed SAW. It talks about rulers, statesmen, soldiers and personalities that have been neglected. It talks about the Umayyads, Abbasids and the Ottomans. I can see myself reading this again as its so informative. If you're a history kinda person and want to find out more about Islam, this is the book for you.

Iman Adipurnama says

Islam has been one of the most powerful religious, social and political entity. For over 1400 years, originates from Arabia, a succession of Muslim political power and later empires expanded to control territories and people that stretched over two third of the world.

But, somehow, many contributins from the muslim thinkers, scholars, rulers, statesmen and scientists have been excluded from the formal curriculum. This book tried to rescue their story and offering the reader a new narrative from Islamic perspectives and in objectives way.

The explanation itself, Firas Alkhateeb tried not to restrict himself to a certain Islamic school of thought or any Islamic movements. Further, he gives the explanation objectively in a plain and order way, so that the reader can get a glimpse what have been lost in Islamic worlds today.

The history of Islam and the worlds muslims brings together diverse peoples, geographies, and states, all interwoven into one narrative that begins with Muhammad and continues until this day. This book is recommended one for a muslim or non-muslim who want to learn about Islamic history in a short-well educated way.

Papatia Feauxzar says

Aside from the few shia bias from the author (I'm Sunni btw but I want to believe I have no issues with Shias lol) and the unclear stand to me of the author on the founder of Wahabism, the book is a must read. To understand the world of today, we must look at Islamic history and this book does a pretty good job at that. Great read I recommend to anyone; Muslims who have no idea of our history and non-Muslims who want to understand Islam.

Hina says

What an amazing amazing read! This should be made part of every school course! The writing is precise just giving enough information to know the events but not overly detailed so people end up getting bored. I know because I am not much into history and stuff. I love how the events are connected from the time of the Prophet to the 'modern' world today. Ottoman rule intrigued me the most.. looked up quite alot on it. One thing is clear though as long as the rulers and people followed the teachings of Islam they saw massive successes in every field but when they indulged in selfish gains and petty politics it ended in chaos for them and their people.

A must must read.. Highly recommended!

Fatehah says

Before reading this book, I only knew some of the history during pre-Islamic, the time of the Prophet p.b.u.h, a bit on the time of the rightly guided caliphs and some basic of Ottoman Empire, Abbasids and Andalusia (I mean the real basic thing that can even be considered as I just know it existed). I assure you this book is very concise. It may not comprehensive but it covers all important details starting from the pre-Islamic era as to the situation before the coming of Islam. During the life time of the Prophet which include the early life of the Prophet, the first revelations, the persecution where the all-out boycott was implemented which led to hijra, political order on Medina, the battles and victory to the end of prophethood.

On the chapter of The Rightly Guided Caliphs, I was getting to know the leadership of Abu Bakar, 'Umar, 'Uthman and 'Ali. I was amazed on 'Umar leadership and I just learnt how the event of Ali's murder take place - the controversial event that initiated the Shi'ism and the actual situation between 'Ali and Mu'awiyah. From there, the Muslim state was established - the Abbasid caliphate.

The best part that I enjoyed most was on the chapter of Intellectual Golden Ages. Fascinating. Astonished. This is the arising of Islamic civilization. The establishment of House of Wisdom and its contribution the development of education. The development of area of studies such as Mathematics, astronomy, geography, medicine, physics, fiqh and hadith, theology and shi'ism.

During the time of upheaval, apart from Isma'ilism, the Fatimids and the crusades, I'm shocked and sad to know the Mongols and its brutality which caused major destruction towards Islamic civilisation. It is estimated that almost 1 million of Muslim were killed. The House of Wisdom was destroyed. The Islamic civilisation that was built in 600 years was destroyed just within few weeks.

This book even touched on the part of Africa, how Islam arrived there. I just learnt that Mali was the first native Muslim kingdom on West Africa - where Mansa Musa build up Muslim empire while the Middle East was dealing with the Mongols. It is a pleasing fact to know the fact that the African Muslim who were made slave in America were well educated compared to non-Muslim African slave. In every part of the world that involve the coming of Islam are written in this book. That includes China, India and Southeast Asia (this is where Malacca was mentioned).

The rebirth of the Islamic civilisation during the Ottoman Empires, the success and victory of the Ottoman Empires to the liberal reform of Ottoman Empire. The decline of Muslim political power around the world - India, Southeast Asia and every part of Muslim World. The formation of states that we known today. All this were discussed in the book.

Learning the history, I see how the world today has become. But I still can't understand the Muslim as I looked into the Muslim State that we have today. The major mistake that we never learnt from the history has make us today.

Thanks to the writer, I wished to learn it further. It is a disappointment that we don't learn this in our school or even in university.

Dion Yulianto says

Buku ini cocok banget buat pembaca yang ingin mengetahui secara garis besar sejarah peradaban Islam, terutama dari segi politiknya.

Hasham Rasool says

A LIVELY AND ILLUMINATING HISTORY OF ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL FORCES IN HISTORY.

Over the last 1,400 years, a succession of Muslim polities and empires expanded to control territories and peoples stretching from southern France to East Africa and South East Asia. Yet many of the contributions of Muslim thinkers scientists and theologians not to mention statemen and sliders have been overlooked. The bestselling Lost Islamic History, now in a new updated edition, rescues from oblivion a forgotten past, charting its narrative from Muhammad to modern-day nation-states.

From Abbasids and Ottomans to Mughals and west African kings, Firas Alkhateeb sketches key personalities inventions and historical episodes to show the monumental impact of Islam on global society and culture.

Firas Alkhateeb holds a Masters degree in Middle Eastern Studies with a specialisation in Islamic intellectual history from the University of Chicago. He previously taught Islamic history at Universal School in Bridgeview, Illinois and currently teaches and studies at Darul Qasim in Chicago. He founded and writes the website lostislamichistory.com.

Hafsa says

I recommend this book for anyone who's into history or wants to learn more about the origin of Islam. The facts in this book are told in an easy story-telling format that keeps the book interesting and the writing flowing, and the content covers a lot without confusing or delving too deeply. This book also cleared up a lot of facts that I was previously confused about.

Yavareh Zardari says

I usually try to be measured, deliberate, and even kind in my review of a book. But I'll say it right off the bat: "Lost Islamic History" is terrible.

This is a chauvinistic, nationalist summation of Muslim history, which suffers from epistemic fallacies, and poor scholarship. It is essentially Muslim propaganda, and bad even at that.

The book attempts to counter the inferiority many feel to the West by focusing on the material and scientific accomplishments of past Muslim civilizations. Of course, that isn't what defined those civilizations; it is what defined those civilizations that led to their material and scientific success. The same holds true for the modern West, or the many successful societies throughout history – the principles they adhered to are what make them distinct, and what is responsible for their material achievements. However, are their greatest

achievements then not the principles themselves?

The author manages to edify the reverse of this into the reader's mind, establishing material success as the metric of note for a society. But what does it mean when societies that are not Islamic are materially successful, and when societies that are Islamic, are not?

Evidently, this is not good. Hence the author attempts to convince the reader that the positive material trends in Muslim society all came from religiosity, while the negative all came from their reversal. Towards this end, the author writes lengthy listicles noting different scientific achievements of Muslim society, and appropriates a few from others along the way.

One should ask, are long lists the best way to communicate a Muslim harmony with, and contribution to scientific literature? And what also is the implication for Muslim society when some of the items the author claims Muslims to have invented, like the decimal system's number zero, are by common knowledge known to have been invented by others?

To the first question, given the materialist hole he had dug himself, I'm not surprised the author felt he had to create lists of achievements to get himself out; that may very well have been his only option.

The second question raises many more significant points.

For one, if other civilizations are creating equal or greater material achievements, I'm not sure what makes Muslim society particularly unique. Secondly, the fact that he got this simple matter wrong implies he is either willfully twisting history (more on that later), or lacks any factual rigor (more on that later). It calls into question everything he writes, and because everything he writes is literally his opinion/narrative of history, without a single footnote to speak of, that's a serious problem.

Material success is obviously important for a society. I'm not some hermit living in a hut, and in fact Islam clearly supports the opposite:

Quran 28:77 "But seek, with that (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on you, the home of the Hereafter, and forget not your portion of legal enjoyment in this world, and do good as Allah has been good to you, and seek not mischief in the land."

What the author fails to communicate is that all civilizations rise and fall. The failure of one classical civilization simply gave rise to the next. All good things must come to an end, but from its ashes often arises something new and as beautiful, if not more. The end of the Greeks doesn't mean a condemnation of their ideas (evidently not, as they are potentially the most influential philosophical tradition in human history). The end of the British Empire doesn't mean we should reject common law. In the same way, just because Muslim society isn't doing so well today, doesn't mean we should give up on Islam. In the end, the Mongols conquered and captured more intensely than any civilization before it – does that mean they were a better society? Many of the successes that the author lists are products of thinkers and ideologies that are viewed as heretical today, like the Mutazila. Does that mean that Islam is in fact the problem?

Muslims should focus on taking the good of what has worked, and examine what hasn't. Instead of ingratiating themselves to some external philosophy or metric, as this author inadvertently makes the reader do, they should focus on incorporating these lessons into their own independent philosophy and tradition (which are often lessons that are purely material in nature, and have no implications to religion, as science and religion are two mutually exclusive domains) – but I'm beginning to diatribe a bit here and should get back on topic.

This failure of the author to appropriately establish the rise and fall of civilization plays into some Arab-

centrism as well. The Abbasids existed for hundreds of years, but relatively early into that reign their existence became purely nominal in nature. The author attributes everything during this period to the Arab rule of the Abbasids, yet in fact many different dynasties and empires arose that operated autonomously, and were led by different ethnicities. If you want to discuss scientific advancements during the so-called Golden Age, it is for example, impossible not to mention the Persians, who are not Arabs. They brought their own effective system of bureaucracy which lent itself to such material advancement (it wasn't some inherent character of the Persian gene), and was not a product of Arab rule. The effective splitting up of empires within a nominal Muslim umbrella allowed for the rise and fall of empire to occur naturally while maintaining cohesive unity, and demonstrates how real Muslim societies could operate, rather than the caliphate utopia that this book essentially puts forward in its place. In fact, it is clear both this multiculturalism, and decentralization/diffusion of authority played a large role in helping Muslim societies prosper.

The book continues to get worse by taking the traditional nationalist propaganda route of victimhood, the reductive and convenient other, and more bad scholarship. The discussion of the Fatimids is laughable. For starters, the author continually says 'the Muslims' and 'the Shias', as if to imply they are two mutually exclusive groups. There is no problem if a work is meant for a specific religious audience (that being Sunni, if that wasn't clear by this point, though it gets even more narrow later on). In fact, I'd encourage this. And if that group has negative views of others, it is okay to essentially say as much, without compromising the truth. However, given the world's Sunni authorities don't say all Shias are not Muslims, even though they voice often vociferous disagreements, it's a bit hilarious that the author decided to kufr-blast Shias right out of the pall of Islam.

Moving on, the author says things like the Fatimids and their 'Sunni-free agenda', along with a bunch of other statements implying the Fatimids are essentially evil, and that Shia-Sunni conflict is inevitable and everlasting. I'm sure the author believes this (it turns out he has made some very interesting statements). But later on, the author mentions that the Abbasid seat of the Caliphate is effectively run by the Buyids, a Persian dynasty. What he fails to mention at this time, however, is that the Buyids are in fact a Shia dynasty. If Sunni-Shia conflict is so inevitable, and Shias are sooo evil, how is that they are, without catastrophic war, running the seat of the Sunni Caliphate??? Evidently, this a serious problem for the narrative he has crafted, and so he decides to leave it out.

This review is becoming very large, but still there tons of things I can discuss. The author mentions the House of Wisdom, his convenient center to the Golden Age, but it is questionable if it was ever so important. He mentions Ibn Sina, but one should look up Ibn Sina to see for themselves if Ibn Sina fits the author's mold. There are more characters for which could be said the same. Some of his sections on the Edge are of questionable historicity (though at this point I guess that's par for the course) and a bit misleading if you know a little bit more. I can't recall the author every really mentioning the atrocities that Muslim leaders committed, though it would often be truthful to do so. It was an interesting and non-normative choice to use Aurangzeb as the dividing line for the Mughals in the way he did (usually its Akbar, and Aurangzeb is often blamed for their downfall, which is very debatable). Unfortunately, I doubt the author did it on any historical basis, but simply made an ideological choice. I found it funny how he defended Aurangzeb by accusing his critics of being anachronistic, while never extending that courtesy to others. It would've been nice if he illuminated some of the modern debate around that historical figure, but alas this was asking too much. It was interesting, also, that he chose to break again with conventional history in his description of the preacher Abdul Wahab, and what he left out when discussing the Arab revolts. And there are indeed many many more things I could add -- but if I keep doing so now, I'll never stop.

The author did do an almost A-Z of Muslim history, and the book was simple enough for easy consumption, though I wouldn't say the writing itself was a particular strong suit. But this doesn't mean this is an exactly

Islamic book, or one I would give to a Muslim to be read, given its shortcomings. If water was warm, I'd consider giving it to someone -- but I wouldn't if it was dirty and near poisonous.

Two things, I think, capture the fundamentally broken nature of this book.

First off, and most revealing I feel, it chooses to not include the suffix of respect (pbuh) after the Prophet's ? name. Ostensibly, this to appear more secular, detached, and academic (of course, he seems to throw this out the window when writing the material of the book itself). Yet the Islamic tradition refutes the notion that you cannot write (pbuh) after the Prophet's ? name and be objective. What does it say when he chooses to not do this?

Secondly, most, or an especially large part of the book, is spent on the Islamic Golden Age. That isn't too surprising, given the books focus on material matters. However, the very idea of the Islamic Golden Age is a Western Orientalist invention. It's veracity, the idea that the great demise of the Islamic world was due to the Mongols, and that the Islamic zenith merely happens to coincide with the period that most benefited Europe is very much in question (especially as many regions were autonomous anyways, later Muslim empires arguably reached equal heights to the Abbasids, and recognized Golden Age figures are only the ones that contributed to European philosophy). Does it make sense to use Western ideas of Muslim history to reclaim our 'Lost Islamic History'? I'll leave that question up to you.

I will, however, make one clear statement. If this is our history, and what the Muslim world seeks to reclaim through such novels – chauvinistic nationalism, shoddy untrue claims, victimhood and otherization – then it is best our history stays lost. On that I insist.

Hamza says

This was yet another book that took me way longer than it would've two years ago. I think I'm losing my touch, because I can't focus as well when trying to read on public transit. That said, I think it helped because I went over a lot of sentences and even paragraphs more than once.

This book is fantastic, despite the difficult task of cramming 1400 years of Islamic history into only a little over 200 pages. The author clearly knows his stuff, and I now wish I'd taken the class he co-taught on it at my mosque a few months back. I initially frowned a bit at the lack of citations, but maybe that's just not his style. He did include a bibliography at the back of the book, for which I'm grateful.

I'd highly recommend this book for anyone interested in history, Islam, or both. I know I certainly don't get to mix the two in my readings as often as I'd like to. While one (including the author himself, during a halaqa at my mosque) could argue that it should be called "Muslim history" rather than "Islamic history", the central theme of Islam being influential on different governments did exist throughout history, regardless of just *how* influential it really was.
