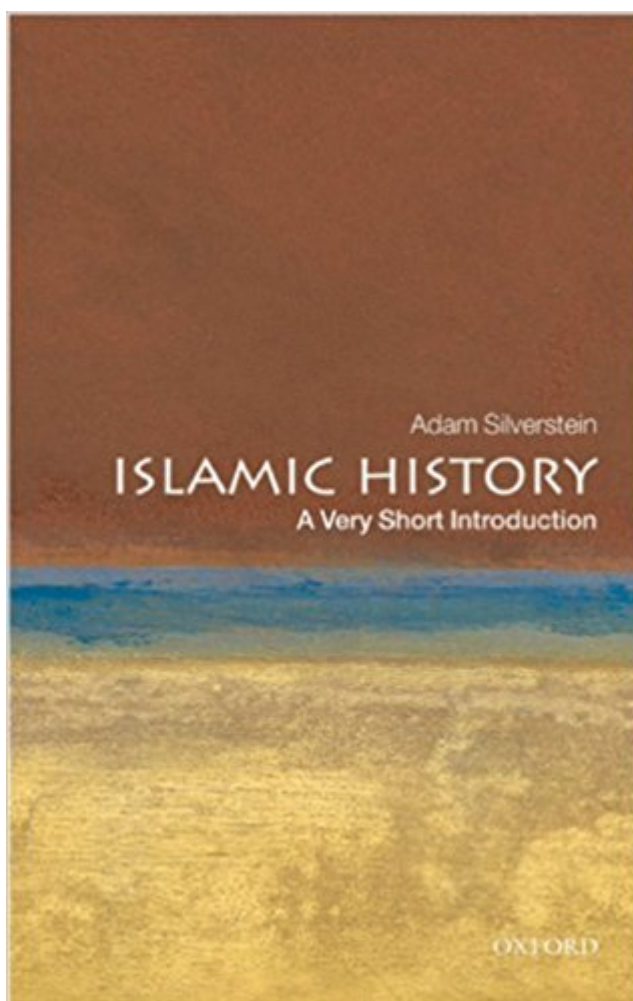


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# Islamic History: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



## Synopsis

Does history matter? This book argues not that history matters, but that Islamic history does. This Very Short Introduction introduces the story of Islamic history; the controversies surrounding its study; and the significance that it holds - for Muslims and for non-Muslims alike. Opening with a lucid overview of the rise and spread of Islam, from the seventh to twenty first century, the book charts the evolution of what was originally a small, localised community of believers into an international religion with over a billion adherents. Chapters are also dedicated to the peoples - Arabs, Persians, and Turks - who shaped Islamic history, and to three representative institutions - the mosque, jihad, and the caliphate - that highlight Islam's diversity over time. Finally, the roles that Islamic history has played in both religious and political contexts are analysed, while stressing the unique status that history enjoys amongst Muslims, especially compared to its lowly place in Western societies where history is often seen as little more than something that is not to be repeated. Some of the questions that will be answered are: How did Islam arise from the obscurity of seventh century Arabia to the headlines of twenty first century media? How do we know what we claim to know about Islam's rise and development? Why does any of this matter, either to Muslims or to non-Muslims?

**ABOUT THE SERIES:** The Very Short Introductions series from Oxford University Press contains hundreds of titles in almost every subject area. These pocket-sized books are the perfect way to get ahead in a new subject quickly. Our expert authors combine facts, analysis, perspective, new ideas, and enthusiasm to make interesting and challenging topics highly readable.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Silverstein's monograph is a fairly quick read, and well worth the effort. The history is rather sparse, as the title implies, but it makes a nice companion to something more detailed like Berkey's "The Formation of Islam." Well-written throughout, value comes particularly in the analysis and insight developed in the later chapters and conclusion, though some may find it "controversial." Highly recommended.

This was a decent intro to Islamic history from a Western historian's point of view. Most books about Islam that are written by Western scholars tend to be overly critical (in my opinion). Generally I prefer to read an anthropologist's take on Islamic issues if I'm to read a piece written from a non-Muslim, simply because they are less biased. I took a chance with this one, and found it to still be pretty good.

Appreciated what I learned, the quality of the writing, the nature of the analysis. Realize that it is a "short introduction" but felt that I got a very good overview. Excellent read. Thank you.

This book is valuable not only for a historical overview of Islamic tradition, but for the insightful last chapter on current Islam and world perception of it. This book is respectful of the religion while being forthright about some of the less pretty parts of its history. The style of the book is very accessible... some scholars may say it is too broad and not deep enough, but it met my needs... I may want to read a multi-volume work in Islam in the future, but not this weekend.

Most people are surprised that I am reading a book on Islam written by a westerner, that too, being a Muslim myself. But this is a very honest summary of the cultural and historical impact and importance of Islam. Its a very honest assessment and it got me hooked on Islamic history so much

that I couldn't stop browsing the net for two weeks, scouring for more info. Very informative and provides several arguments and counter arguments, so that you can decide for yourself.

Silverstein, an Oxford professor, writes with the clarity and simplicity that I would love to emulate. His exquisite style makes reading this complex history much easier than it might be in less capable hands. As for the accuracy of his historical account, I have no basis for judgment. Nevertheless, I would recommend this slight volume to anyone seeking a brief introduction to Islam. A good counterweight and a book I highly recommend is Timothy Gianotti's "In the Light of a Blessed Tree: Illuminations of Islamic Belief, Practice, and History," another wonderfully clear and incisive brief study of Islam, written by a former Catholic, now a Muslim. Gianotti's book includes autobiographical information describing how he came to Islam.

Before reading this book, I really know nothing about the Islamic world. This book greatly helps you have an overall understanding of the entire Islamic world history. If you want to learn something about the Islamic world, you should try this book first!

Little more emphasis on historiography itself than I expected. Seemed aimed at a somewhat specialized readership. More analytic than synthetic -- and the latter is what I expect from these Very Short Introductions. Worth reading, nevertheless.

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