

FIRAS ALKHATEEB

Lost Islamic History

RECLAIMING MUSLIM
CIVILISATION FROM
THE PAST

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FIRAS ALKHATEEB

LOST ISLAMIC HISTORY
*RECLAIMING MUSLIM CIVILISATION
FROM THE PAST*

PUSTAKA PERDANA



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For the most important people in my life,
my mother Sanaa, my wife Hadeel, and my sister Huda.





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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

من سلك طريقا يبْتَغِي فيه علما سلك الله به طريقا إلى الجنة

“If anyone travels on a road in search of knowledge, Allah will cause him to travel on one of the roads of Paradise.”

Prophet Muhammad





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CONTENTS

<i>PREFACE</i>	xi
1. PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA	1
2. THE LIFE OF THE PROPHET	9
3. THE RIGHTLY GUIDED CALIPHS	33
4. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MUSLIM STATE	55
5. INTELLECTUAL GOLDEN AGES	75
6. THE ISLAMIC SCIENCES	95
7. UPHEAVAL	113
8. AL-ANDALUS	141
9. THE EDGE	169
10. REBIRTH	189
11. DECLINE	215
12. OLD AND NEW IDEAS	243
<i>BIBLIOGRAPHY</i>	265
<i>INDEX</i>	269



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P R E F A C E

The aim of this book is to provide a short overview of the history of Muslim civilization, from the inception of Islam in the early seventh century to the modern day. To fully and accurately cover the depth and breadth of Muslim history is of course a monumental undertaking, one that perhaps no single volume could ever adequately contain. My goal with this attempt is thus simply to introduce the reader to the general narrative of Islamic history. It is not meant for the specialist or the serious student of Islamic history, but rather for the general reader who hopes to become somewhat more familiar with the subject. I therefore hope that for many, this text will be a jumping off point, from which a more thorough study of Muslim history and civilization will spring. Considering that this is an introductory text, it contains little in the way of original research. The vast majority of it is based on the research of others, whose works are listed in the bibliography and can serve as a valuable starting point for a deeper study of the subject.

I began the Lost Islamic History project in the early 2010s, after I began teaching Islamic history to high school students. Due to the structure of the American educational system (which is woefully light on the humanities in general), most of my students had only the most basic understandings of Muslim civilization. Their textbooks placed much emphasis on the ancient Greeks and

P R E F A C E

Romans, and then the “rise” of Europe after the Dark Ages through the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, but barely spoke of Muslim, or other non-Western, civilization at all. One small section on the Prophet Muhammad or half a page on the Ottoman Empire in Eastern Europe might be all that most textbooks devoted to the 1400 years of Islamic history.

My Islamic history class thus developed as a response to that deficiency, with my goal being to expose students to the richness of Muslim civilization that they didn’t get elsewhere. I aimed to provide an alternative to the presentation of European history as World history, focusing on the rise of Muslim civilization and the many contributions of that civilization to humanity in general. To my delight, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Most of my students were the children of immigrants who had come from various Muslim countries, and thus finally felt a connection with something historical. Naturally, it was much easier for them to identify with historical figures such as Abu Hanifa and Yusuf ibn Tashfin than they ever could with John Locke and Napoleon.

The book *Lost Islamic History* then developed out of my teaching notes. Considering that there was no high school textbook of Islamic history available in English, *Lost Islamic History* became my attempt to fill part of that gap. If people outside of my classroom could similarly get a taste of what they missed in their high school history courses, then this book would serve its purpose.

Since its initial publication in 2014, I’ve spent more time studying in-depth myself, particularly the Islamic sciences. As such, for this second edition, we have chosen to revise the text and include a new chapter dedicated to the development and history of Islamic thought. As the beating heart of Muslim civilization, Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and spirituality deserve far more

P R E F A C E

discussion than the few pages in this text, but I hope that this new chapter brings some light to the Islamic sciences that the first edition lacked. For this section of the book in particular, I am indebted to Shaykh Amin Kholwadia and the rest of the teachers at Darul Qasim, without whom my understanding of the Islamic tradition would be elementary at best. Thanks must also be given to the staff at Hurst Publishers, who have been incredibly helpful and supportive during the writing and publishing process for both the original text and this updated edition.

'An excellent brief history of the driving force that made Islamic civilisation the greatest of its time, and then the factors behind its decline.' Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan

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 statesmen and soldiers, 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.

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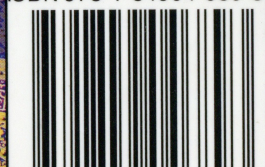
FIRAS ALKHATEEB holds a Masters degree in Middle Eastern Studies with a specialisation in Islamic intellectual history from the University of Chicago. He previously taught Islamic history at Universal School in Bridgeview, Illinois and currently teaches and studies at Darul Qasim in Chicago. He founded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



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