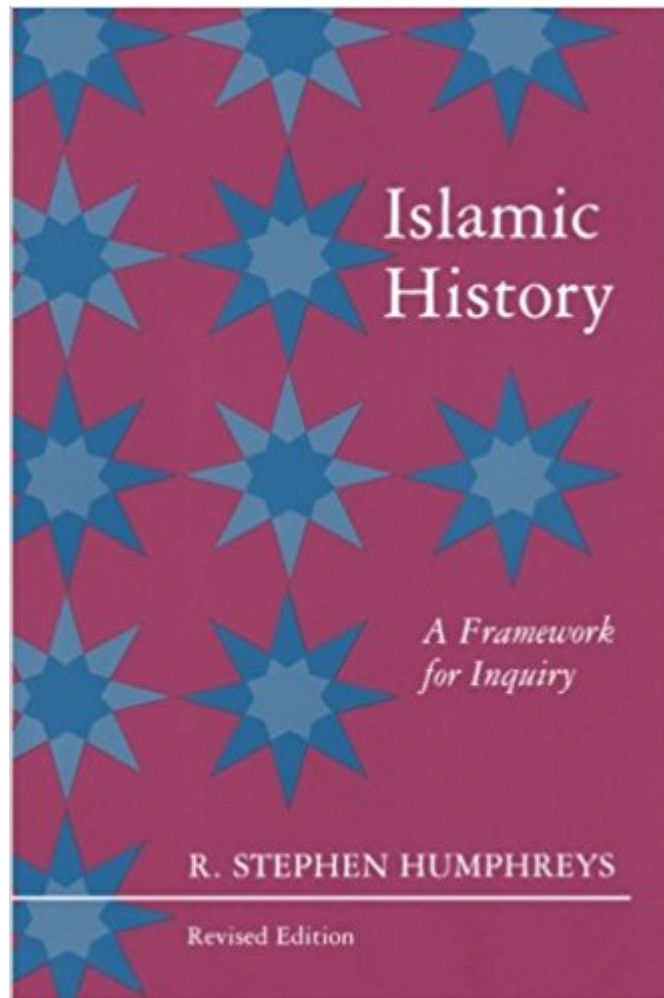




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# Islamic History: A Framework For Inquiry



## Synopsis

This book will be immensely helpful to those who wish to orient themselves to what has become a very large body of literature on medieval Islamic history. Combining a bibliographic study with an inquiry into method, it opens with a survey of the principal reference tools available to historians of Islam and a systematic review of the sources they will confront. Problems of method are then examined in a series of chapters, each exploring a broad topic in the social and political history of the Middle East and North Africa between A.D. 600 and 1500. The topics selected represent a cross-section of Islamic historical studies, and range from the struggles for power within the early Islamic community to the life of the peasantry. Each chapter pursues four questions. What concrete research problems are likely to be most challenging and productive? What resources do we possess for dealing with these problems? What strategies can we devise to exploit our resources most effectively? What is the current state of the scholarly literature for the topic under study?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

One of Choice's Outstanding Academic Titles for 1992

"This book is an extremely judicious 'stock-taking' of scholarship in the field of medieval Islamic history, especially valuable for the way it examines--and forces us to reconsider--the assumptions on which previous scholarship has been based.... Students of Islamic studies will find it

indispensable."--Fred M. Donner, University of Chicago

Good, book, particularly for academics who are doing their own research.

This book is a poor choice for people who know little about Islamic history. It is hard to follow and does not adequately explain central figures included in its text. Its chronology and definitions are very poorly written.

This is not a book for a casual reader looking for more information on Islamic History\*. This is a book for those looking to understand the framework of Islamic history. This is a challenge to get through, and the first read through feels discombobulated. However, the value of this book is that it provides the reader with a historiography of all the important works/resources (at least in the early 90s) that exist, which required a knowledge and depth of the subject that is awe inspiring for any aspiring historians (the fact that sources in at least five languages are discussed adds to the immensely impressive scope of this work). On top of that it provides key insights into the restraints that the historic record puts on the study of history and gets the reader thinking like a historian about the problems and gaps that are inherent in the discipline. I personally found that the value of this book came as I continued to increase my knowledge of Islamic history and was able to refer back to this book for resources to continue my education. While I have only just begun to scratch the surface of my interest in Islamic History, this book continues to provide insights and leads that have directed my research in ways that have saved me hundred of hours. This is a must have for anyone interested in studying Islamic History at anything higher than a casual level.\* I would personally suggest Dr. James E. Lindsay's *Daily Life in the Medieval Islamic World* (The Daily Life Through History Series) for an introductory book on Islamic history.

This book is an essential reference for anyone with interest in doing any type of study in the history of Islam from 600-1500. Humphreys hasn't written yet another drab, stale survey book; rather, he compiled something immensely more useful. He has created a veritable inventory of scholarship, not coarsely comprehensive but pleasantly judicious, and accompanied it with a running commentary that places each work on the larger grid of modern scholarship on the subject as well and extrapolation of the various challenges relating thereto. In this way, it facilitates a critical yet broad engagement with the important scholarship hitherto written in the field helping us to refine, reconsider, and reshape the direction of future scholarship. Also, this work serves as an accessible

point of entry for historians who specialize in areas other than Islamic history whom I trust will also find in plenty helpful.

If you ever wish to kick start your understanding of the vast corpus which is called Islamic history, this is the book to do it. Written by a preeminent scholar of Islamic studies this book is a gem. It's basic premise is to weed out the useless from useful texts; it informs you about the relevant texts for the fields within Islamic history which you will need to build up your results (for instance, this book tells you if you want to understand Muslims and Islam you need to study major Hadith books - and among them Bukhari should be the first place to start with). Such specific references alongwith publisher name and publishing year are really helpful. A scholar of the class of Bernard Lewis often cites this work as the first place to start with. I personally found the text very readable and not cumbersome at all, which is generally the case with reference books on historical studies.

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