

**Arab-Islamic Groups and Organization (From Muhammad to the Present),**  
by Saul Silas Fathi, 2013, Saul Silas Fathi

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Today, Islam is the second largest religion in the world, with over one billion adherents, that is one out of every five persons on earth is a Muslim. Moreover, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. Even so, Muslims—from the 7th century to the present—confronted various ups and downs from socio-political to religio-economic aspects. Nevertheless, for non-Muslims, Islam has remained, and continues to remain, an intense field of investigation, resulting in the burgeoning of many scholarly works, in particular, after 9/11 event. The book under review, by an Iraqi born American based Jew later turned author, is an attempt in the line to introduce the readers to "hundreds of Arabic terms on extensive Islamic Dictionary" which are "provided in alphabetical order" (p.6). The book is divided into ten sections preceded by an "Introduction" and a dictionary of "Arab-Islamic group and Organization: a-z"

In the introductory part "History of Islam," while pointing to the vast expansion of Islam which swept through Asia, Africa and Europe, Fathi says "today, one in 5 people on the face of earth is a Muslim" (ibid). Fathi further goes on to say that "much of the science and literature of the European renaissance was inspired by Islamic model"(ibid). Here, Fathi also writes the basic pillars of Islam like 'Islam', '*Salat*', 'Fasting', '*Zakat*', '*Hajj*' etc.

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"Arab-Islamic group and organization: a-z" (pp.12-193), a concise dictionary related to Islam and Muslims, is the core and largest part of the book. In this section, Fathi starts from 'Abushri revolt', 'African National Congress (ANC) sect', and so on; under the term 'Al-Qaida' Fathi claims that "the task of planning future attacks fell on Khalid Sheikh Muhammad" and he "had played an important role in the 9/11 terrorist strikes" (p.17). For Fathi, while comparing different calendars—Muslim, Christian, Iranian—writes "the hijra is seen as an epoch-making event and the dawn of a new era" (p.46). Under Caliphate writes fathi is "the political embodiment of Islamic rule". Here readers are also introduced with other important Islamic concepts like '*Ijma*', '*Ijtihad*', '*Jumu'ah*', '*Sunna*' etc. Fathi, on the Islamic movement 'Muslim brotherhood', writes "Its ultimate goal" was "the restoration of an Islamic Caliphate or political unification of the Muslim ummah" (p.109). For "Wahhabism and Arabia" Fathi dealt at length and has devoted 25 pages of his book, and argues "the apocalyptic, militaristic and totalitarian cult called Wahhabia would shed the blood of many fellow Muslims" (p.166). Fathi even claims that "Saudi Arabia poured one \$1 billion into Pakistan" so that "to help it develop an 'Islamic' nuclear bomb to counter the 'Hindu' nuclear threat from neighboring India" (p.185).

Section one "Caliphs and Caliphate" opens with a brief discussion of the 'Rashidun (the Rightly- Guided caliphs)', ' the Caliphate', ' Abu Bakr', 'Umar', 'Uthman', 'Ali'. It is followed by a brief mention of civil wars which broke out among the Muslims; for Fathi, who says "the murder of 'Ali and the battle of Karbala were among the most traumatic events in the history of Islam" (p.199). Fathi in this section also provides a list of all Muslim caliphs and dynasties in their chronological order.

Section two, "Muslim empires and dynasties" has also been devoted to include the "list of Muslim empires and dynasties" in a chronological order.

Section three "Islamic divisions" deals with the various sections and sects that emerged out of the Muslim; the more was the division of 'Sunni-Shia', on the question, says Fathi "who was to lead the Muslim community following Muhammad's death" (p.262). The other sects which Fathi writes include: 'Qadiani', 'Baha'i' etc.

"Muslim population by country" makes the fourth Section; here Fathi provides the census of Muslim population throughout the world as per the research conducted by Pew Research Centre in 2010.

In section five "Rightly Guided Caliphs", Fathi once again deal with the four caliphs wherein he quotes the first Caliph when elected the leader of the Muslim community saying

"obey me as long as I obey God and His messenger, if I disobey God and His messenger you are free to disobey me" (p.215). This speaks the fairness and transparency of the first Caliph.

The seventh section "Twelver Shi'a" explores the doctrines of a Shi'a group—Ithna' Ashariyyah—who believe that the Mahdi is the twelfth Imam and is "believed to be in occultation" Fathi (p.280). The Imam, as believed by Shi'a, writes Fathi, "has been hidden by God", and "will later emerge to change the world into perfect and just Islamic society" before "the day of resurrection" (p.288). The section also touches the Shi'a jurisprudential issues viz-a-viz '*Shahada*', '*Namaz*', '*Khums*', '*Mut'ah* (temporary marriage)', '*Calender*' etc.

Section eight "Islam's great accomplishments" dealt with the various sciences and scientists who, according to Fathi, emerged during the "Islamic Golden Age (c.750 CE-c.1258 CE)" (p.299). The various sciences developed during the period include: 'mathematics', 'astronomy', ' medicine', 'physics', 'ophthalmology', ' geography', 'sociology', ' psychology', 'chemistry'(p.302). The notable scientists and scholars whose achievements are still being appreciated throughout the world, note worthy among them are: al-Farbi (philosopher), al-Razi (scientists), ibn al-Haytham (ophthamologist), ibn al-Jazari (engineer), ibn Nafis (physician), al-Zarqali (astronomer), al-Tabari (historian), al-Khwarizmi (mathematician), and others.

Section nine "Islamic Charities and Organizations" comprises the list of important organizations like 'Alhambra Productions', the American Muslim', 'Amideast', ' Centre for Cross Cultural Understanding', ' World Assembly of Muslim Youth' etc.

In the tenth section "Bibliography and Recommended reading" Fathi has provided a list of books especially from western scholarship on the subject of Islamic studies.

Does the book have any weaknesses? For me the book contains various shortcomings. First, Fathi claims that the Fourth Caliph—Ali ibn Abu Talib—was a Shi'a (p.194). This is in contradiction with the Sunni's belief, who regard him as their Fourth Caliph as well. Secondly, Fathi's presentation is not consistent throughout the book. Apart from this, there are various typographical errors, and is stuffed with repetitions. Moreover, the book is without a conclusion. Fathi's inconsistent presentation might deprive the readers of their interest in reading the book. Nonetheless, the book is a good attempt and may prove a helpful tool to the students and the general readers alike for their common understanding of Islamic terms, movements, groups, and organizations.

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