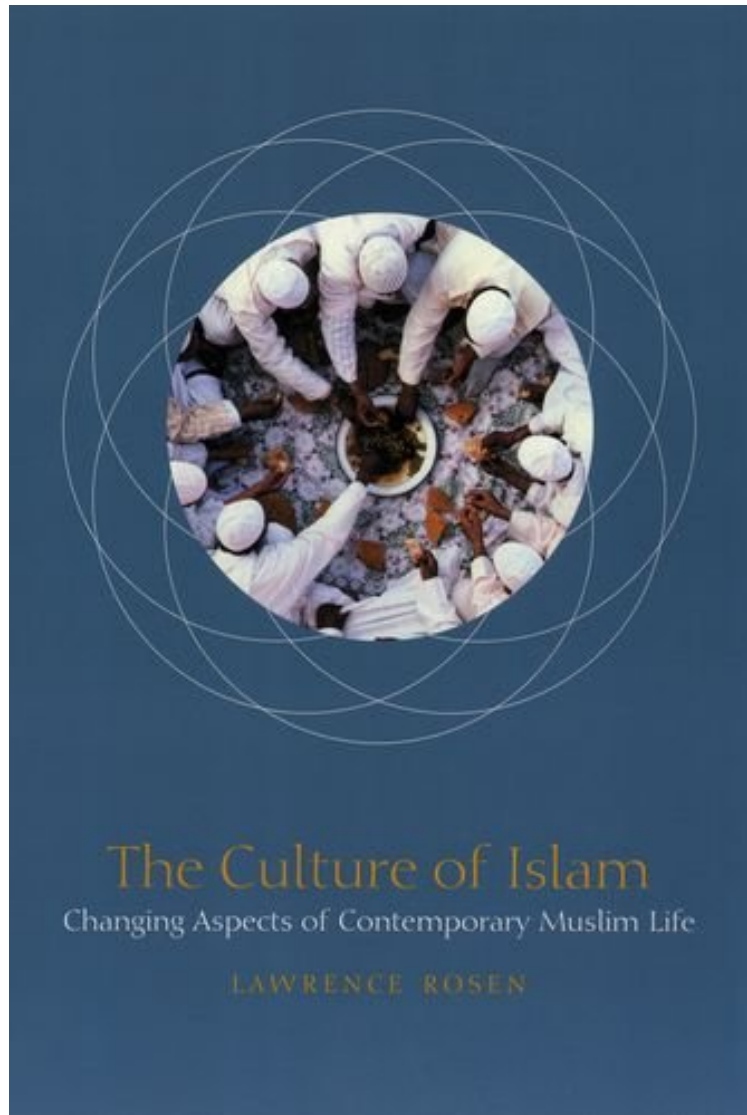


(Ebook pdf) The Culture of Islam: Changing Aspects of Contemporary Muslim Life

The Culture of Islam: Changing Aspects of Contemporary Muslim Life

Lawrence Rosen

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Lawrence Rosen : The Culture of Islam: Changing Aspects of Contemporary Muslim Life before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Culture of Islam: Changing Aspects of Contemporary Muslim Life:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Real information about the Moroccan culture. By Laurel Hoffmann It's a tough read - you need your dictionary beside you as you read it - but this book gives real information

about the Moroccan culture as it is today. Be aware though, that you may need to read it twice, each time very slowly, to fully understand the information. This really is a college textbook, written by a college professor, in PhD language. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An interesting, well-informed view

By D. Chaudoir
Lawrence Rosen is one of the most thoughtful anthropological voices writing about the Middle East. In "The Culture of Islam" he attempts something which is almost impossible: concisely describe and write about a dogmatically and culturally diverse religion with a depth of understanding that permeates how religion is actually lived. I was sympathetic to much of what he wrote, which comes mainly from Arab examples (and even there from an exceptional case, Morocco), although I did not necessarily agree with all of his conclusions. He is well-versed in Islamic jurisprudence and Arab social organization, and this primer goes farther than most in conveying a palpable understanding of a fascinating system of thought, meaning-making and cosmology. Because his experience is mainly in Morocco, as mentioned before many of the examples come from there. That does not detract from his main points which most definitely have resonance across the entire region.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. not what I expected

By Janet Smarr
The opening chapter, in the "look inside this book," is a detailed narrative about a group of men trying to deal with a social situation and to get outside help against the favoritism and bribes being deployed by the opposing side. I was hoping to pursue this narrative to see a micro-history of just how such business does get done, the texture of life, the way things work or don't work. Instead, the narrative ended unfinished at the end of chapter one, and other chapters were much more abstract accounts of sociological issues, including debate with other sociologists; so I was disappointed. Nonetheless, there are some very interesting sections here: on just how different are the ways of thinking about government or the self, or the kinds of marital problems caused (or exacerbated) by migration to the West. In sum, this does offer intriguing anecdotes and insights, but quite different from what the "look inside" seemed to promise.

Having worked for several decades in North Africa, anthropologist Lawrence Rosen is uniquely placed to ask what factors contribute to the continuity and changes characterizing the present-day Muslim world. In *The Culture of Islam*, he brings his erudition and his experiences to illuminating key aspects of Muslim life and how central tenets of that life are being challenged and culturally refashioned. Through a series of poignant tales from the struggle by a group of friends against daily corruption to the contest over a saint's identity, from nostalgia for the departed Jews to Salman Rushdie's vision of doubt in a world of religious certainty, Rosen shows how a dazzling array of potential changes are occurring alongside deeply embedded continuity, a process he compares to a game of chess in which infinite variations of moves can be achieved while fundamental aspects of "the game" have had a remarkably enduring quality. Whether it is the potential fabrication of new forms of Islam by migrants to Europe (creating a new "Euro-Islam," as Rosen calls it), the emphasis put on individuals rather than institutions, or the heartrending problems Muslims may face when their marriages cross national boundaries, each story and each interpretation offers a window into a world of contending concepts and challenged coherence. *The Culture of Islam* is both an antidote to simplified versions of Islam circulating today and a consistent story of the continuities that account for much of ordinary Muslim life. It offers, in its human stories and its insights, its own contribution, as the author says, "to the mutual understanding and forgiveness that alone will make true peace possible."

From Publishers Weekly
Rosen, a professor of anthropology at Princeton and of law at Columbia and one of the first recipients of a MacArthur "genius" grant, offers a series of layered essays on North African culture. The book calls on both his own anecdotes from years of travel and research in North Africa, as well as his anthropological background. His pen is both literary and analytical - which makes the reading a pleasure, but sometimes difficult to follow. The essays, rather than building toward a single thesis, are largely unrelated to each other. Although its title suggests that the subject is Islamic culture, the book is more about the people of Morocco. For instance, Rosen is very persuasive in his arguments that ambivalence, corruption, and tribalism play a strong role in Moroccan society. However, he does not explain why conclusions about Moroccan Muslims can be extrapolated to constitute a universal "Culture of Islam." Yet the book has many strengths; an essay entitled "Marriage Stories," for example, shows how Muslim women can and do use legal reforms to empower themselves. The author's personal anecdotes (especially one about how a young bride's resistance to entering the car of her groom's family is not reluctance so much as a bargaining chip) are satisfying and enhance Rosen's successful efforts to enlighten the reader about Moroccan and North African society. Where others would dismiss the region's Muslims as antiquated, racist or extremist, Rosen challenges various hackneyed theories about Islam and swiftly rebuts them. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. "At a time when writers and commentators are discussing Islam so freely and often superficially, the need for a measured and accessible analysis of Islam is great. Lawrence Rosen's *The Culture of Islam* perfectly meets this need. Rosen's continuing interactions with the Muslim world, which began over three decades ago, allow us special insights into Islamic culture and have formed an intellectually stimulating and highly original book." - Akbar Ahmed, Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies, American University, and author of *Discovering Islam: Making Sense of Muslim History and Society*

From the Inside Flap
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