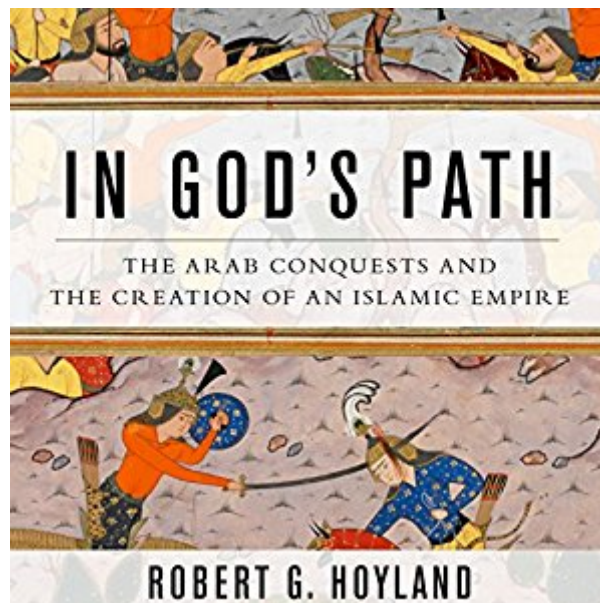




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In God's Path: The Arab Conquests And The Creation Of An Islamic Empire



Synopsis

In just over a hundred years - from the death of Muhammad in 632 to the beginning of the Abbasid Caliphate in 750 - the followers of the Prophet swept across the whole of the Middle East, North Africa, and Spain. Their armies threatened states as far flung as the Franks in Western Europe and the Tang Empire in China. The conquered territory was larger than the Roman Empire at its greatest expansion, and it was claimed for the Arabs in roughly half the time. How this collection of Arabian tribes was able to engulf so many empires, states, and armies in such a short period has perplexed historians for centuries. Most accounts of the Arab invasions have been based almost solely on the early Muslim sources, which were composed centuries later to illustrate the divinely chosen status of the Arabs. Robert Hoyland's groundbreaking new history assimilates not only the rich biographical information of the early Muslim sources but also the many non-Arabic sources, contemporaneous or near-contemporaneous with the conquests. *In God's Path* begins with a broad picture of the Late Antique world prior to the Prophet's arrival, a world dominated by two superpowers: Byzantium and Sasanian Persia. In between these empires, emerged a distinct Arabian identity, which helped forge the inhabitants of western Arabia into a formidable fighting force. The Arabs are the principal actors in this drama yet, as Hoyland shows, the peoples along the edges of Byzantium and Persia - the Khazars, Bulgars, Avars, and Turks - all played critical roles in the remaking of the old world order. The new faith propagated by Muhammad and his successors made it possible for many of the conquered peoples to join the Arabs in creating the first Islamic Empire. Well-paced, comprehensive, and eminently readable, *In God's Path* presents a sweeping narrative of a transformational period in world history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I found this book to be very interesting, informative and well written. It covers the Arab Conquest of the Sasanian Persian Empire and part of the Byzantine Empire, covering the 7th and 8th centuries AD. It covers :

- Ã Â The military aspects of the invasion and some of the principal battles, with an emphasis on the idea that the conquest was not instantaneous, but rather took decades.
- Ã Â The Arab invasion is portrayed as not being motivated by religious factors, but more for plunder than for converting people. There was no initial impetus for converting the defeated people; in fact the opposite was the case, with a resistance to conversion.
- Ã Â The book discusses the nature of the Arab army and the fact that it was not solely composed of Moslems, but also contained Christian and Jewish tribes.
- Ã Â The book discusses the nature of the Islamic society that the invasion produced and the influence of Persia on the nature of Islam.

I liked the book and found that it provided an interesting interpretation of this critical aspect of the history of the Middle East, Central Asia, the Caucasus and the West in general.

This well written and extremely insightful book deserves a wide readership. It places the Arab conquests in a historical context second to none and provides a clear and concise description of the peoples and events that transpired. It fills an information void with regard to the Late Antique world as seen from the Arab side. The conquests and aftermaths are shown in human terms rather than from a strictly religious point of view. The role of religion is never dismissed or downplayed but is held in a perspective so that the events can be more easily understood in human terms. This is especially gratifying for those of us that are well versed in Byzantine and Persian history. Those tumultuous times can now be more readily viewed and understood on their own terms. There is something to be said for a balanced multi-perspective presentation and 'In God's Path' does just that-admirably so. The events may have occurred a long time ago but the repercussions are as recent as today's headlines. This should be a 'must read' book especially for Westerners that have a poor understanding of the histories of South West Asia in general and the Arabs in particular.

Although relatively short, this book provides an excellent short history of the early expansion of the Arab/Muslim Empire. The author makes a number of valuable insights into the emergence of the Umayyad and Abassid empires. His use of available sources is admirable, and his conclusions flow

logically from his sourcing. This is the sort of work that can create a lot of argument among specialists, but provides a much more nuanced picture of early Islamic history. Very recommended.

A widely shared impression is that, immediately on conversion to Islam, Arabs swept across the Persian and Roman empires, wielding the sword as alien invaders. This study demonstrates that most elements in this story are false or at best simplifications. The Arabs in the heartland of Islam were partly Romanised, familiar with military service. People other than Arabs joined the conquerors, who also fought each other and used negotiation as well as violence in their conquests, which took place over an extended period.

Great book on the battles and politics of the Late Antiquity of the Muslim lands. Everyone interested in the history of Islam or the Middle East should read this book. We are all so wrapped up in the Middle East, and we are affected by its history every day, we need to understand what that history was and how it has shaped our world. Great read.

As for me very good explanation of the Arabs success in conquering neighbors and installing an empire but it is lack of information on the relations between conquered elites and Arabs, exchange of the culture and art e/t/c. Good book for introduction into first stages of the establishing an Islamic empire but completely no information on its routine life and politics.

Excellent overview with thoughtful and judicious summaries of events and their interpretation. Very helpful in creating a backdrop for current struggles with Islam in the West and within the various Middle Eastern states.

Perhaps not as in depth as some might want, but for the casual reader with a passing interest it is entertaining and informative. I feel it provides a good grounding for those looking for a "starting point" on the subject, or a good overview for those just looking to get a general idea of when, how and why the early Arab Conquests happened.

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