

[Mobile pdf] A History of Islamic Law (The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys)

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Noel Coulson

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#2842059 in Books Edinburgh University Press 1984-01-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.50 x 1.00 x 5.50l, .78 #File Name: 0748605142272 pages | File size: 51.Mb

Noel Coulson : A History of Islamic Law (The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A History of Islamic Law (The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Poorly written, lacks focus By ArnoldI read this book as part of a class on Islamic Law, but could not even finish (and I am a law student, so I am used to reading long, boring

documents). The problem with the book is that it lacks focus, and talks vaguely about historical developments in Islamic law and changes in jurisprudence, but wanders into discourses on inheritance law or other features. She rarely mentions the political context of the era except to assume all Islamic leaders were absolute tyrants. If this was supposed to be a history, it should have tracked the development of the schools and legal thought with the political/social/historical context. Instead, for the most part, it reads like a jumble of observations on evolving Islamic jurisprudence. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By GFN Thanks. 10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Still the best introduction, warts and all By Jonathan Zasloff Writing an introduction to Islamic law for Western audiences is a difficult task, because such a project involves not only clear and succinct explanations of some technical legal doctrines, but also a history of early Islam as well as constant use of unfamiliar terms. To my mind, Coulson succeeded about as well as could be expected, in addition to advancing some important new academic theories. In order to see the value of this work, you might compare it to its nearest competitors. Ignaz Goldziher's *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law (Modern Classics in Near Eastern Studies)* is really the ur-text of modern western writing on the topic, but really is not about Islamic LAW strictly speaking: it is a broad survey of Islamic theology and civilization. Overall, it is truly a masterpiece of synthesis and analysis, but it doesn't do what Coulson does. Joseph Schacht's *An Introduction to Islamic Law (Clarendon Paperbacks)* is boring and pedantic, not to mention simply wrong in what it asserts. Wael Hallaq's *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunni usul al-fiqh* is superb scholarship, but perhaps a little too advanced for someone trying to get an introductory sense of Islamic Law. It is better to read Hallaq's work AFTER Coulson. And my colleague Khaled Abou El Fadl's *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women* is terrific and pathbreaking, but it is also not an introduction: instead, it is the beginning of a new comprehensive theory of Islamic jurisprudence. It is vital, but should be read afterwards. That leaves us with Coulson, which is actually quite a bit. For dealing with such a technical area, he writes clearly and well. Other reviewers are right to suggest that sometimes he gets mired too much in details, but to some extent that is unavoidable. He argues about a trend, and then wants to show you an example. At some level, you just have to wade through, but Coulson does it about as painlessly as has been done so far. That said, there are two main problems with this book, which any reader needs to know. First, it is very outdated, despite what the book's publisher might claim. There is virtually nothing about developments since the early 1960's, which is particularly inexcusable since Coulson died in 1986 and probably could have included critical material concerning the Iranian revolution and the emergence of Wahhabi dominance in many areas of Islam. Second, two of Coulson's principal theories have been severely challenged, most prominently (and to my relatively uneducated mind, persuasively) by Hallaq. Coulson argues that Ibn-Idris ash-Shafi'i was the "master architect" of Islamic law because Shafi'i developed a system for integrating Hadith (traditions of the Prophet) with Qiyas (analogical reasoning). Hallaq challenges this by arguing that Shafi'i had not nearly worked out a complete system. Coulson also argues that "the door of Ijtihad" (the exercise of human reason to find a principle of law) was closed by the 11th century CE, and that Islamic Law became cramped and overly conservative by then. Hallaq and Abou El Fadl vigorously and successfully challenge this, and present compelling evidence of creative, reasoned jurisprudence centuries afterwards. They want to argue that current Islamic law has ample room for creative thought; updating Islamic law according to modern conditions, they contend, is not breaking with tradition but actually adhering to it. The 900-pound gorilla in the room is Wahhabism, which Abou El Fadl in particular sees as a perversion of the tradition, not its culmination. Coulson would have agreed on where the law should go, and in fact at the end of his book calls for "neo-Ijtihad." His difference with Abou El Fadl is that he says that this is a more radical step. So in all, this is still the best introduction around. Just be aware of its flaws, and definitely follow up with other work.

The classic introduction to Islamic law, tracing its development from its origins, through the medieval period, to its place in modern Islam.

This excellent little book presents a concise, clear, vivid, and well-illustrated historical account of Islamic law from its inception to the present. Muhsin Mahdi, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* *A History of Islamic Law* is a badly needed book; it will prove an extremely useful book; and above all, it is a remarkably well-constructed book. G. E. von Grunebaum, *Speculum* In comparatively limited space N. J. Coulson succeeds in unfolding the whole history of Muslim law, from its beginnings in the Koran down to judgments given in recent years in some African country [A] useful textbook, well suited to its purpose of serving as an introductory survey. S. D. Goitein, *The English Historical Mr. Coulson's compact volume is a clear, comprehensive, and authoritative treatment of the genesis and history of Islamic law in theory and practice, and of the central problem of legal reform now confronting Muslim society. Islamic law, the Sharia of medieval Islam, is for Muslims the comprehensive catalogue of Gods commands and recommendations laid down for the guidance of man In recent times, with the wholesale adoption by Muslim countries of western legal ideas and institutions, the Sharia has seemingly been all but abandoned Unless the idea of a law system based on religion is to be abandoned entirely [Coulson] points out, the task for modern Muslims, like that of their medieval predecessors, is once more to ascertain and impose the central ethical norms of Islam upon the*

functionings of their society. Richard H. Nolte, *The American Historical* The book by N. J. Coulson represents [an] introduction to Islamic law. Herbert J. Liebensny, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* About the Author N. J. Coulson was chair of oriental laws at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He is the author of numerous books including *Succession in the Modern Family*, *Conflicts and Tensions In Islamic Jurisprudence*, and *Commercial Law in the Gulf States*.