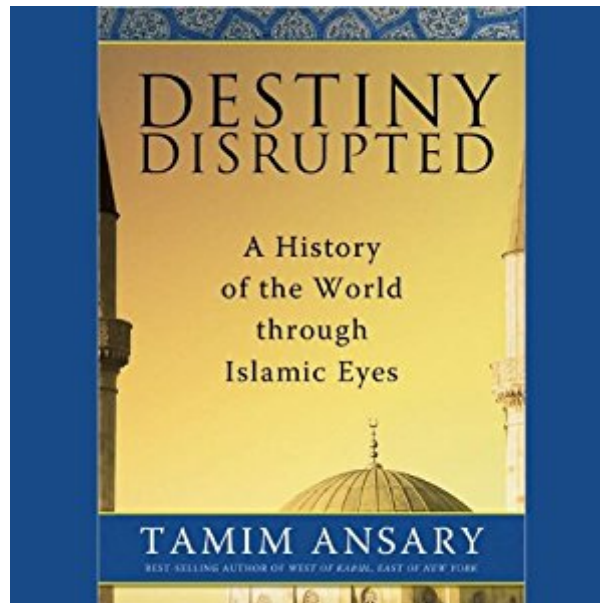




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Destiny Disrupted: A History Of The World Through Islamic Eyes



Synopsis

We in the west share a common narrative of world history that runs from the Nile Valley and Mesopotamia, through Greece and Rome and the French Revolution, to the rise of the secular state and the triumph of democracy. But our story largely omits a whole civilization that until quite recently saw itself at the center of world history, and whose citizens shared an entirely different narrative for a thousand years. In *Destiny Disrupted*, Tamim Ansary tells the rich story of world history as the Islamic world saw it, from the time of Mohammed to the fall of the Ottoman Empire and beyond. He clarifies why our civilizations grew up oblivious to each other, what happened when they intersected, and how the Islamic world was affected by its slow recognition that Europe was a place it long perceived as primitive and disorganized; had somehow hijacked destiny. Entertaining and enlightening, *Destiny Disrupted* also offers a vital perspective on current conflicts. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Everyone should read this book. History is always from your vantage point. This book provides an alternate explanation of events which explains very clearly the development of Islam and the different paths it has taken. I couldn't put the book down.

I am Turkish, hence part of the Islamic Civilization Tamim Ansary is talking in his book. As I love history I thought I would not learn much from this book, but since my British Muslim friend from work who recommended to me was very enthusiastic about it, I gave it a go. I was very surprised to see

that in every single page I had a lot of new things to learn. Mr. Ansary's narrative is very fluid, he takes you through the centuries easily, explaining and showing how Islam was born, how it evolved to become the most advanced civilization in the world, and how it started its decline vis a vis the West. Ansary brings the Islamic world up to the end of the 20th century and shows the historical reasons behind the current mess in Middle East, which is linked in a big extend to Western "disruption" starting with Crusades in 11th century and accelerating with "Discoveries - Colonization- Industrialization". Anybody who is interested in world and Middle East geopolitics would find this book extremely helpful as setting the historical/social/cultural base for understanding Islam

Most books I have read written by a Muslim author are...best called "strange". This book explains the history of the world and much of that strangeness. The basis of the faith of all religions affects the culture those religions are part of and this book explains how current culture has been affected by religion.

It seems remarkable to me that *Destiny Disrupted* is the first new global history written from an Islamic perspective that has come to my attention in the fourteen years since 9/11. After all, analyses of events in what we call the Middle East frequently emphasize that Muslims perceive the world through a lens shaped by different values. Here, then, is an accessible, popular history that goes a long way toward illuminating those differences for the lay reader. For starters, Ansary notes what should be obvious to any Westerner who isn't blinded by ethnocentricity: what we typically call the Middle East is east of nothing to people who live there. Ansary prefers to call the region "from the Indus to Istanbul the Middle World, because it lies between the Mediterranean world and the Chinese world." Three "worlds" on the globe. From a geopolitical perspective, the center of gravity in the Middle World has shifted back and forth among three poles: Mesopotamia, where history began; Persia, where empires rivaling Rome were founded; and Turkey, a latecomer peopled by invaders from the plains of Central Asia and later alternating between Muslim and Christian rulers. As Ansary writes, "We often hear of Alexander the Great conquering the world, but what he really conquered was Persia, which had already conquered the world." The Middle World as a whole (and, for that matter, the West as well) interacted very little with the Chinese world. Most of "history" the friction between the Middle World and the West "cropped up along the narrow strip of Mediterranean coastland that includes today's Lebanon, Israel, Syria, and Jordan. To put today's events in historical perspective, the grim developments of recent years in that area

mirror thousands of years of historical conflict. Theology explained The fundamental difference between Islam and Christianity is profound. Ansary explains that "instead of focusing on isolated individual salvation, Islam presents a plan for building a righteous community. Individuals earn their place in heaven by participating as members of that community and engaging in the Islamic social project, which is to build a world in which orphans won't feel abandoned and in which widows won't ever be homeless, hungry, or afraid." It was said in 2002 in the run-up to the US invasion of Iraq that President George W. Bush (perhaps apocryphally) was unaware that Sunni and Shi'i represented firmly opposed brands of Islam "far more deeply divided than Roman Catholics and Protestants. (Sunni and Shi'i continue to kill one another; Christians pretty much stopped doing that centuries ago.) Regardless of whether this claim is true of the former president, it certainly was true (and probably still is) of a majority of Americans. *Destiny Disrupted* explains those differences beautifully (even if it fails to make the violence surrounding them understandable). As in every other major religion, however, the contrast between Sunni and Shi'i is only the most superficial pattern of diversity. Just as Christianity encompasses hundreds (if not thousands) of different theological perspectives, and the divisions among Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews dramatically oversimplify the reality, Islam, too, has experienced a multitude of breakaway sects and tendencies. If you want an eminently readable introduction to these distinctions, and a guide to the meaning of those seemingly opaque leadership titles (caliph, imam, sultan, ayatollah), you'll find it in this book. Ansary does an admirable job casting light on this (to Western eyes) obscure subject. He also explains the overarching principles of Islamic faith with great clarity. Ever since Mohammed laid them out in the seventh century, Islam has rested on five pillars: *shahadah*, to attest that there is only one God and Mohammed is his messenger; *salaat* (or *namaz*), to perform a certain prayer ritual five times every day; *zakat*, to give a certain percentage of one's wealth to the poor each year; *sawm* (or *roza*), to fast from dawn to dusk during the month of Ramadan each year; and *hajj*, to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime, if possible. Ansary points out that these five pillars are all actions, not beliefs; even the first of them requires Muslims to attest. He emphasizes, "Islam is not merely a creed or a set of beliefs; it is a program every bit as concrete as a diet or an exercise regiment [sic]. Islam is something one does." Tamim Ansary is an Afghan-born American writer and public speaker. He is also (obviously, given the subtitle of this book) a Muslim.

Wonderful, wonderful book. As someone raised with primarily American and Ancient Western

history (changed schools often at inopportune times) I had too little background on the world between the West and East. After a recent trip to Egypt and the UAE, I became a lot more curious. This book doesn't pretend to be an official history of the Middle East or the Muslim world, but it is an incredible, well-told introduction to it. The style is also enough of a storytelling approach to make it memorable as well. Just a word of caution, if you're the type to get upset with a description of Sherman as a "boy who liked to play with matches" a lot of the humor and tone of this book will not suit you.

This is a clear, lucid explanation of the history of the Muslim world and the current cross currents that help to make that world a place of danger and conflict. These currents include doctrinal schism, ethnic and tribal rivalry, national identities (and the lack thereof), personal rivalries, the conflict between modernist and fundamental conservative outlooks, economic power and numerous other factors. The author does a wonderful job of showing how the world and its history looks quite different to the Muslim from the "Middle World" (as he calls it) than to Euro-Americans. Born in Afghanistan but a long time resident of the United States, Tamim Ansary is a distinguished writer with a full command of the American idiom. His critique of both the Muslim world and the West is sympathetic to both, but he does not shrink from identifying foolishness and cruelty on either side. It is a very well balance presentation. This to be the best book I have seen to help the Westerner understand the complexities of the Middle East.

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