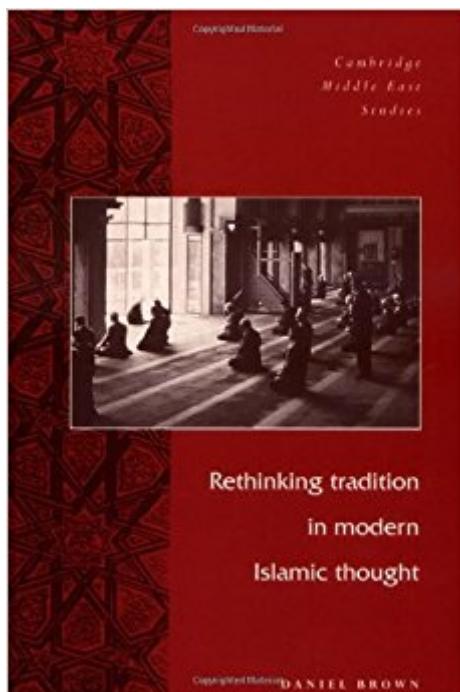The book was found

Rethinking Tradition In Modern Islamic Thought (Cambridge Middle East Studies)

Synopsis

Modern Muslim intellectuals have been trying to reestablish a foundation for the revival of Islamic law. In this fascinating study, Daniel Brown assesses the implications of new approaches to the law on contemporary Islamic revivalist movements, and explores the impact of modernity on attitudes toward religious authority generally. This book will make a major contribution to the understanding of contemporary Islam, and will be of interest to scholars of the Middle East and South Asia, and to those teaching Islamic law.

Book Information

Series: Cambridge Middle East Studies (Book 5)

Paperback: 196 pages

Publisher: Cambridge University Press; New Ed edition (March 13, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0521653940

ISBN-13: 978-0521653947

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.4 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars   3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #818,084 in Books (See Top 100 in Books)   #42 inÃ Â Books > Religion & Spirituality > Islam > Hadith   #87 inÃ Â Books > Religion & Spirituality > Islam > Law   #407 inÃ Â Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Religious Studies > Islam

Customer Reviews

"This...volume takes aim at one version of the debate among Muslims and makes a clear hit." Foreign Affairs

Modern Muslim intellectuals have been trying to reestablish a foundation for the revival of Islamic law. In this fascinating study, Daniel Brown assesses the implications of new approaches to the law on contemporary Islamic revivalist movements, and explores the impact of modernity on attitudes towards religious authority generally. This book will make a major contribution to the understanding of contemporary Islam, and will be of interest to scholars of the Middle East and South Asia, and to those teaching Islamic law.

Brown's book is the best introduction to how tradition is being understood and and re-defined in

modern Sunni Islamic thought. One would recommend before reading this text having at least some familiarity with the Islamic tradition and modern Islamic history, however. Brown himself demonstrates an excellent familarity with the sources he examines and languages and contexts which produced them. He focuses mainly on the two intellectual powerhouses of modern Islamic thought, Pakistan-India and Egypt. His conclusions demonstrate that paradigms that placed tradition and modernity diametrically opposed to each other (cf. W.C. Smith) are erroneous as tradition can also be a conduit for profound social change as is the case with Islamic tradition. Moreoever, he argues forcefully that modern approaches to tradition and religious authority are born out of a confidence that Islam is growing stronger, not from a fear that it is threatened by a tide of modernity and progress.

This book discusses Muslim issues concerning the 'hadith' - these are sayings alleged to have been said by Muhammad, but written down hundreds of years after his death. The Sunni and Shia claim them as a second source of religious law (besides the Quran) and condemn those who do not follow it to the status of a kafir (one who conceals) or even more perplexingly a mushrik (one who associates with God). However, as Daniel Brown states througout modern times, there has always been opposition to these hadith as a source of Islamic law. However,as he also details, these Muslims have often been undone by their keenness to pretend that Islam without the hadith = that of the Sunnis and Shias.The author gives an even and non biased account and I was left wondering exactly what his views were on the issue. He states many facts from the Quran such as the omission of any reference to the so-called 'sunnah of Muhammad' so treasured by the sectarians.Many Sunnis and Shias are adament that 'hadith rejection' is a modern phenomenon created by Rashad Khilifah and people such as him. However Daniel Brown displays that this has been going on long before such people.This book should be read by all sectarians because it is a book of scholarship, not one of blind faith and enforcement. Daniel Brown destroys the historical case for the 'hadith' by displaying evidence, accepted by the sectarians, when the 'hadith' were only formally collected for the first time. Those who argue that Muhammad's companions began to record hadith in writing during his lifetime must explain the Prophetic prohibition on writing of hadith. Contradictions within the hadith exist regarding this subject.Under orders from Caliph Hisham, Shihab al-Zuhri was first assigned to collect hadith. This tradition has commonly been taken to mean that al-Zuhri, under duress, became the first traditionist to violate the Prophet's prohibition on recording hadith in writing. Al-Zuhri is reported to have said: "We disapproved of recording knowledge until these rulers forced us to do so. After that reason we saw no reason to forbid the

Muslims to do so." In other words, before al-Zuhri writing was the rare exception; after him writing of traditions became commonplace. This argument is bolstered by numerous accounts that early generations of pious Muslims, including not only al-Zuhri and traditionists like him but also the first four Caliphs, strongly disapproved of writing hadith.The evidence strongly suggests that early generations of Muslims did record traditions in writing, however having reports about written records is rather different than having the records themselves. Thus, the apparent aversion of pious Muslims to the recording of hadith should be interpreted as reluctance to record an official, public collection of hadith.Scholars agree that forgery of hadith took place on a massive scale. The science of hadith developed gradually as a response to this problem. The early written compilations called suhuf were little more than random transcriptions or personal collections. Muslim sources identify the first systematic collection in recording of the hadith with the Ummad Caliph Umar and with the scholars Abu Bakr. No such collection has survived. The earliest systematic collection is the muttawata of Mailk bin Anas, 179 AH (168 years after Prophet Muhammad's death). Isnad (checking of transmissions) was not applied until after the early 2nd century AH according to Schacht. The book studies in early hadith literature stated it was earlier than this. For middle ground see Juynboll: "Muslim tradition". Major works of hadith .According to some, forgers of hadith became active even during the lifetime of the Prophet. In the Caliphate of Umar, the problem became so serious that he prohibited transmission of hadith altogether. The degree of the problem that resulted can be seen from the testimony of the muhahadithin (those who collect hadith) themselves. Bukhari selected 9000 traditions out of 700 000 . When Bukhari reports that he selected from over 700 000 traditions, he is counting every different transmission chain, even when the substance of the tradition are the same . The point is that hadith criticism did not begin during the 3rd century but was practiced continually from the time of the companions onwards .If only.......

This book gives both sides of the argument, FOR and AGAINST, and charts the history of Hadith and Sunna within Islam. It shows that right from the start in islam, the legal authority of Hadith was contested. This is well documented, but is rarely taught to Muslims, so this book is definitely worth a read. There is a detailed summary of this book available to read online, find it using a search engine.

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