



The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry (Islamic Civilization and Muslim Networks)

By Omid Safi

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The eleventh and twelfth centuries comprised a period of great significance in Islamic history. The Great Saljuqs, a Turkish-speaking tribe hailing from central Asia, ruled the eastern half of the Islamic world for a great portion of that time. In a far-reaching analysis that combines social, cultural, and political history, Omid Safi demonstrates how the Saljuqs tried to create a lasting political presence by joining forces with scholars and saints, among them a number of well-known Sufi Muslims, who functioned under state patronage.

In order to legitimize their political power, Saljuq rulers presented themselves as champions of what they alleged was an orthodox and normative view of Islam. Their notion of religious orthodoxy was constructed by administrators in state-sponsored arenas such as madrasas and khanaqahs. Thus orthodoxy was linked to political loyalty, and disloyalty to the state was articulated in terms of religious heresy.

Drawing on a vast reservoir of primary sources and eschewing anachronistic terms of analysis such as nationalism, Safi revises conventional views both of the Saljuqs as benevolent Muslim rulers and of the Sufis as timeless, ethereal mystics. He makes a significant contribution to understanding premodern Islam as well as illuminating the complex relationship between power and religious knowledge.

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Editorial Review

Review

"An important step forward in raising questions and problematizing previously unstudied issues . . . It can readily serve both as a foundation and as an inspiration for future studies."

-- "Journal of American Academy of Religion"

"Quite contemporary, not just in vocabulary and method, but in intellectual tastes and opinions as well."

-- "Islamic Studies"

Review

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Safi focuses on a fascinating period in Islamic history that is not only replete with famous historical figures but also brimming over with historical developments of immeasurable significance for all subsequent Islamic history. Safi's book is the only integrated and engaging social and cultural history of this period, and as such it makes a singular contribution to the study of Islamic history.--Ahmet T. Karamustafa, Washington University

Marks an important step forward in raising questions and problematizing previously unstudied issues . . . It can readily serve both as a foundation and as an inspiration for future studies.--*Journal of American Academy of Religion*

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Well written and decidedly useful, Omid Safi's study should stand as a lasting contribution to Saljuq history and to Islamic/Near Eastern history more generally. His many new ideas oblige those in the overlapping fields of premodern Islamic studies to recast long-held arguments concerning Saljuq politics and society and to rethink the lives of prominent figures of the period.--Matthew S. Gordon, Miami University

From the Inside Flap

Safi examines the rule of the Great Saljuqs, a Turkish-speaking people from central Asia, who, in the 11th century, established rule over the eastern half of the Islamic world that lasted for 150 years. In an analysis that combines social, cultural, and political history, Safi examines the Saljuqs' efforts to create a lasting

political presence by joining forces with scholars and saints who functioned under state patronage. He revises conventional views of the Saljuqs as benevolent Muslim rulers and of the Sufis as timeless, ethereal mystics.

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