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Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim world

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Abstrak

A growing number of scholars and pundits have declared that the twenty-first century will be the era of Islam. Such predictions, whether intended in a positive or negative light, err in failing to appreciate the spread and influence of Islam during the past millennium and a half, especially on the continents of Asia and Africa. Nonetheless, events during the first decade of the new millennium have underscored the importance of knowing about Islamic history and understanding the great diversity and richness of Muslim social, cultural, and religious practices. Suicide bomber attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001, killed over three thousand persons. These tragic events and the media coverage of the aftermath as well as of the two wars subsequently fought in the Muslim countries of Afghanistan and Iraq have dramatically shown how little is known in the West about Islam and the Muslim world. Islam is, and has been for nearly fifteen centuries, a global religious and political phenomenon. Muslim networks of communication, from the annual pilgrimage to Mecca to the vast new power of the World Wide Web, have enabled Muslims to establish postmodern identities in a rapidly changing world, while at the same time preserving and reinvigorating a variety of time-honored traditions and practices. The Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World is a sourcebook of information about Islam, its past and present, addressed to students and general readers as the twenty-first century begins its first decade.