



Beyond Islam: A New Understanding of the Middle East (Library of Modern Middle East Studies)

Sami Zubaida

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In this magisterial work, Sami Zubaida draws on a distinguished career's worth of experience trying to understand the region to address the fundamental question in Middle East studies: what *is* the Middle East? He argues, controversially, that to see it through the prism of Islam, as it is conventionally viewed, is to completely misunderstand it. Many of what we think of as the "Islamic" characteristics of the region are products of culture and society, not religion. To think of Islam itself as an essential, anti-modern force in the region rather than something shaped by specific historical-economic processes is, Zubaida argues, a mistake. Instead, he offers us an alternative view of the region, its historic cosmopolitanism, its religious and cultural diversity, its rapid adoption of new media cultures, which reveals a multi-faceted and complex region teeming with multiple identities. Wide-ranging, erudite, and powerfully argued, Zubaida's work will be essential reading for future generations of students of this fascinating region.

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