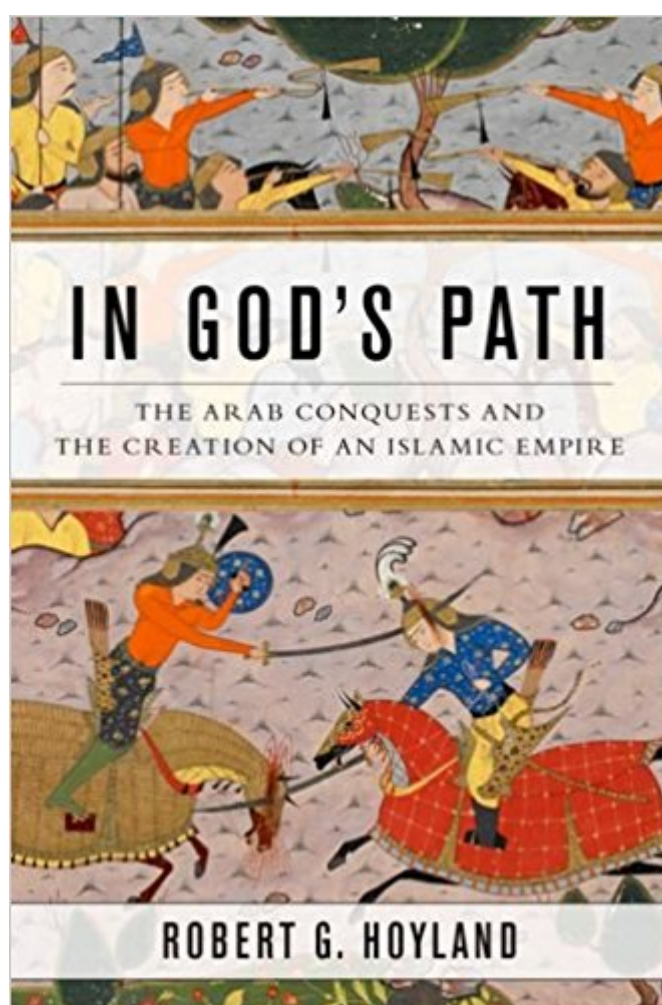


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# In God's Path: The Arab Conquests And The Creation Of An Islamic Empire (Ancient Warfare And Civilization)



## Synopsis

In just over a hundred years--from the death of the Mohammed in 632 to the beginning of the Abbasid Caliphate in 750--the followers of the Prophet swept across the whole of the Middle East, North Africa, and Spain. The conquered territory was larger than the Roman Empire at its greatest expansion, and it was claimed for the Arabs in roughly half the time. How they were able to engulf so many empires, states, and armies in such a short period of time is a question which has engaged historians since at least the ninth century. Most recent popular accounts have been based almost solely on the early Muslim sources, which were, in short, salvation history, composed for the purpose of demonstrating that God had chosen the Arabs as his vehicle for spreading Islam throughout the world. While exploiting the rich biographical and geographical information of the early Muslim sources, this groundbreaking work delivers a fresh account of the Arab conquests and the establishment of an Islamic Empire by incorporating different approaches and different bodies of evidence. Robert G. Hoyland, a leading Late Antique scholar, accomplishes this by first examining the wider world from which Mohammed and his followers emerged. For Muslim sources, the revelation of Islam to Muhammad is the starting point for their history, and modern university departments have tended to reinforce this approach. Late Antique studies have done us the service of shedding much needed light on the 4th to 6th centuries, thus giving us a better view of the nature of Middle Eastern society in the decades before the Arab conquests. In particular, Hoyland narrates the emergence of a distinct Arab identity in the region of the Roman province Arabia and western (Saudi) Arabia, which is at least as important for explaining the Arab conquests as Muhammad's revelation. The Arabs are the principal, almost sole, focus of the Muslim conquest narratives, and this is the norm for modern works on this subject. Yet, in the same period the Khazars, Bulgars, Avars and Turks established polities on the edges of the superpowers of Byzantium and Iran; in fact, the Khazars and Turks continued to be major rivals of the Arabs in the seventh and eighth centuries. The role of these peripheral states in the Arab success story is underscored in the narrative. Innovative and accessible, *In God's Path* is a welcome account of a transformative period in ancient history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[A] splendid new history of the Arab conquests.... Hoyland...has performed an invaluable service.

His book will surely serve as the definitive account of the Arab conquests for many years to come."

-Tom Holland, Literary Review"

In God's Path is a thoughtful and nuanced guide to an age that was far more complex than we might imagine from older accountsEL. A crucial story, which Hoyland tells powerfully."

-Philip Jenkins, Books & Culture"

An illuminating, richly detailed, highly readable study of one of the crucial periods of history."

-Peter Leithart, First Things"

In God's Path provides a thorough, persuasive and timely overview of this century of transformations in the history of the Middle East for specialists and non-specialists alike."

-Harry Munt, History Today"

Concise and clear, In God's Path is a recommended introduction to historical events about which everyone today wants to know."

-Peter Webb, Times Literary Supplement"

This is a succinct, intelligent guide to the period, alert to nuance and cautious about grand theories."

-Stuart Kelly, The Scotsman"

This is perhaps the best introduction to the Arab-Islamic Conquests available...Original, authoritative, and a joy to read-I cannot recommend it highly enough."

-Adam Silverstein, author of Islamic History: A Very Short Introduction

Robert G. Hoyland is Professor of Late Antique and Early Islamic Middle Eastern History at New York University's Institute for the Study of the Ancient World and author of Arabia and the Arabs.

I found this book to be very interesting, informative and well written. It covers the Arab Conquest of the Sasanian Persian Empire and part of the Byzantine Empire, covering the 7th and 8th centuries AD. It covers :  
• The military aspects of the invasion and some of the principal battles, with an emphasis on the idea that the conquest was not instantaneous, but rather took

decades.  
• The Arab invasion is portrayed as not being motivated by religious factors, but

more for plunder than for converting people. There was no initial impetus for converting the defeated people; in fact the opposite was the case, with a resistance to conversion. The book discusses the nature of the Arab army and the fact that it was not solely composed of Moslems, but also contained Christian and Jewish tribes. The book discusses the nature of the Islamic society that the invasion produced and the influence of Persia on the nature of Islam. I liked the book and found that it provided an interesting interpretation of this critical aspect of the history of the Middle East, Central Asia, the Caucasuses and the West in general.

This well written and extremely insightful book deserves a wide readership. It places the Arab conquests in a historical context second to none and provides a clear and concise description of the peoples and events that transpired. It fills an information void with regard to the Late Antique world as seen from the Arab side. The conquests and aftermaths are shown in human terms rather than from a strictly religious point of view. The role of religion is never dismissed or downplayed but is held in a perspective so that the events can be more easily understood in human terms. This is especially gratifying for those of us that are well versed in Byzantine and Persian history. Those tumultuous times can now be more readily viewed and understood on their own terms. There is something to be said for a balanced multi-perspective presentation and 'In God's Path' does just that-admirably so. The events may have occurred a long time ago but the repercussions are as recent as today's headlines. This should be a 'must read' book especially for Westerners that have a poor understanding of the histories of South West Asia in general and the Arabs in particular.

Although relatively short, this book provides an excellent short history of the early expansion of the Arab/Muslim Empire. The author makes a number of valuable insights into the emergence of the Umayyad and Abassid empires. His use of available sources is admirable, and his conclusions flow logically from his sourcing. This is the sort of work that can create a lot of argument among specialists, but provides a much more nuanced picture of early Islamic history. Very recommended.

A widely shared impression is that, immediately on conversion to Islam, Arabs swept across the Persian and Roman empires, wielding the sword as alien invaders. This study demonstrates that most elements in this story are false or at best simplifications. The Arabs in the heartland of Islam were partly Romanised, familiar with military service. People other than Arabs joined the conquerors, who also fought each other and used negotiation as well as violence in their conquests, which took place over an extended period.

Great book on the battles and politics of the Late Antiquity of the Muslim lands. Everyone interested in the history of Islam or the Middle East should read this book. We are all so wrapped up in the Middle East, and we are affected by its history every day, we need to understand what that history was and how it has shaped our world. Great read.

As for me very good explanation of the Arabs success in conquering neighbors and installing an empire but it is lack of information on the relations between conquered elites and Arabs, exchange of the culture and art e/t/c. Good book for introduction into first stages of the establishing an Islamic empire but completely no information on it's routine life and politics.

Excellent overview with thoughtful and judicious summaries of events and their interpretation. Very helpful in creating a backdrop for current struggles with Islam in the West and within the various Middle Eastern states.

Perhaps not as in depth as some might want, but for the casual reader with a passing interest it is entertaining and informative. I feel it provides a good grounding for those looking for a "starting point" on the subject, or a good overview for those just looking to get a general idea of when, how and why the early Arab Conquests happened.

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