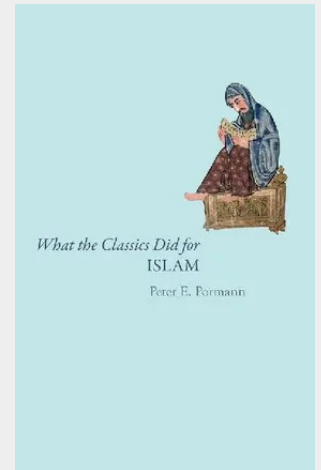


What the Classics Did for Islam

Did you know that the Quran contains Greek stories; that medieval Muslims produced a rich literature on sexology, based in part on Greek sources; or that the Islamic Republic of Iran is partially modeled on Plato's Republic? Muslim civilisation constantly engaged with the Graeco-Roman heritage in fascinating ways. This book shows how Islam was born in a Hellenised world and examines the profound engagement with classical art, philosophy, theology and science that resulted. The Abbasid Caliphate's translation of key Greek texts into Arabic even influenced the language's grammar and literature: courtiers recited Homer, with one Ottoman Sultan even visiting Troy to admire the graves of the heroes of the Iliad. Pormann shows how this legacy endures today, with classical scholarship shaping modern debates about the Quran both among modernists and fundamentalists. We can thus trace a line from Homer to al-Qaida. Anybody interested in understanding the intellectually fruitful relationship between the Islamic civilization and the classical inheritance of the Graeco-Roman world will find rich pickings in this erudite and wide-ranging account.

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