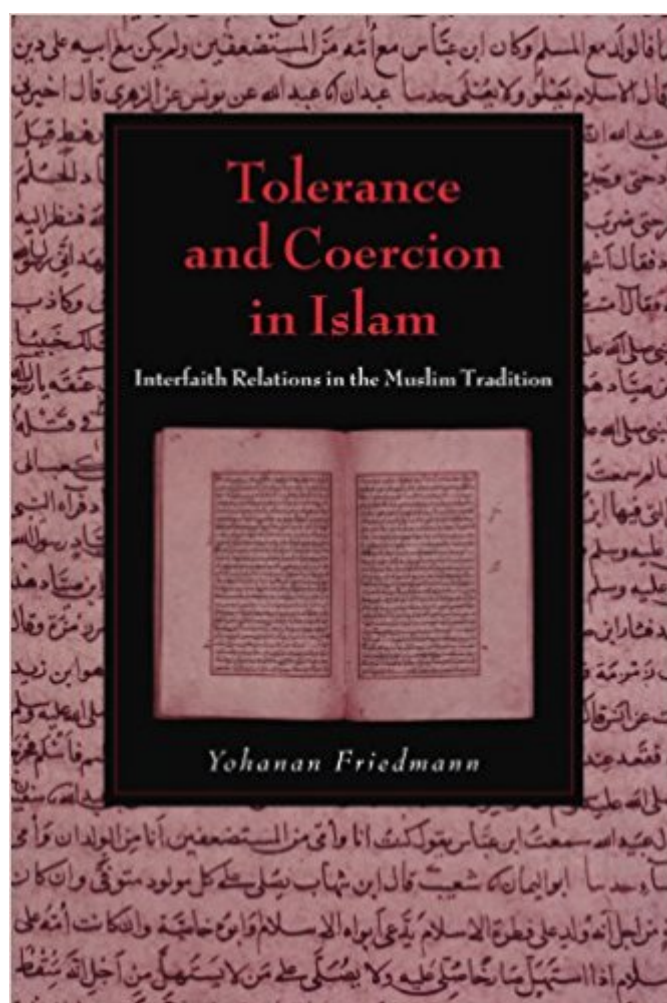


The book was found

Tolerance And Coercion In Islam: Interfaith Relations In The Muslim Tradition (Cambridge Studies In Islamic Civilization)



Synopsis

Since the beginning of its history, Islam has encountered other religious communities both in Arabia and in the territories conquered during its expansion. Muslims faced other religions from the position of a ruling power and were therefore able to determine the nature of that relationship in accordance with their world-view and beliefs. Yohanan Friedmann's original and erudite study examines questions of religious tolerance as they appear in the Quran and in the prophetic tradition, and analyses the principle that Islam is exalted above all religions, discussing the ways in which this principle was reflected in various legal pronouncements. The book also considers the various interpretations of the Quranic verse according to which 'No compulsion is there in religion', noting that, despite the apparent meaning of this verse, Islamic law allowed the practice of religious coercion against Manichaeans and Arab idolators, as well as against women and children in certain circumstances.

Book Information

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"...wholeheartedly recommended to all those with an interest in religious history and the formation of the Islamic tradition." Folklore Bulletin "...a tour de force..." Middle East Quarterly

It was as rulers that Muslims encountered other religious communities during much of their history. Under such circumstances they dictated the nature of that relationship, which they did in accordance with their particular beliefs. In his book, Yohanan Friedmann uses the Quran and

classical Muslim sources to explain their ideas. While attitudes were usually tolerant, he demonstrates that coercion was employed on occasions against marginal elements. Friedmann's erudite study sheds light not only on medieval attitudes to interfaith relations, but also on the approach of some radical Islamic movements today.

The author wrote: "The purpose of the present study is to survey and analyze a substantial body of Sunni Muslim tradition relevant to the notions of religious tolerance and coercion, religious diversity, hierarchy of religions, the boundaries of the Muslim community and the ramifications of all these on several topics in classical Islamic thought and law. I have made wide use of the hadith collections and of exegesis on the relevant Quranic verses. An attempt has been made to cover the views of the four madhahib and, at times, of Ibn Hazm...." (p.x). The author concluded: "Another field in which an egalitarian approach can be discerned and related to the earliest period of Islam is the idea of equality before the law. Three of the four schools of law reject this notion and maintain that the lives of dhimmis or other non-Muslims are not protected by the lex talionis in the same way as Muslim lives: A Muslim who intentionally killed an unbeliever is not to be killed in retaliation" (p.197). The author found that the madhahib (schools of legal thought) were divided over the issue of interfaith marriages being permissible. Pertaining to polytheists, the author opined: "While the Shafiis and some Hanbalis seem to have preserved the stern Quranic attitudes and maintained that Islam can nowhere forge a compromise with idolatry of any kind, the Hanafis, the Malikis and other Hanbalis were willing to include all idolaters and polytheists - except the Arabs - among the dhimmis" (p.198). The author believed: "In the field of interfaith relations, it is...not possible to suggest a consistent evolution from leniency to rigor... Paradoxically enough, it is the attitude to the Zoroastrians and idolaters which moved from rigor to leniency, while the attitude to the People of the Book, who are religiously much closer to Islam than the two former groups, seems to have evolved in the opposite direction" (p.199). To buttress his contentions, the author quotes frequently in Arabic from early Islamic sources. The author presents an interesting discussion as to whether or not "each prophet [can] abrogate the laws of his predecessor, can also find support in Quranic material" (p.22). .."It is also argued that laws promulgated by one prophet lapse with the coming of the next one; if this was not the case, there would be no need for the latter prophet's mission. Each sharia is abrogated by the promulgation of the subsequent one" (p.23). ..."Here we have the rather surprising notion that the former prophets, whose laws were superseded by Islam, ought to be considered as followers of the Prophet Muhammad despite the fact that they had been sent by God long before him" (p.23). Lots of interesting theological discussion regarding how much 'tolerance' Islam has for

other religions. A nice compliment to Bat Ye'or's "Islam and Dhimitude".

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