

JOURNEY TO THE END OF ISLAM

Michael Muhammad Knight



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In *Journey to the End of Islam*, Michael Muhammad Knight — whose work has led to him being hailed as both the Jack Kerouac and Hunter S. Thompson of American Islam — wanders through Muslim countries, navigating between conflicting visions of his religion. Visiting holy sites in Pakistan, Syria, Egypt, and Ethiopia, Knight engages both the puritanical Islam promoted by Saudi globalization and the heretical strands of popular folk Islam: shrines, magic, music, and drugs. The conflict of “global” and “local” Islam speaks to Knight’s own experience approaching the Islamic world as a uniquely American Muslim with his own sources: the modern mythologies of the Nation of Islam and Five Percenters, as well as the arguments of Progressive Muslim thinkers for feminism and reform.

Knight’s travels conclude at Islam’s spiritual center, the holy city of Mecca, where he performs the *hajj* required of every Muslim. During the rites of pilgrimage, he watches as all variations of Islam converge in one place, under the supervision of Saudi Arabia’s religious police. What results is a struggle to separate the spiritual from the political, Knight searching for a personal relationship to Islam in the context of how it’s defined by the external world.

Journey to the End of Islam Details

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
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Author : Michael Muhammad Knight

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From Reader Review Journey to the End of Islam for online ebook

Saeed says

Although at times abrasive, MMK's insight into Islam is eye-opening. This is a voice we need in Islam to wake us up to the realities of the religion and the way it is practiced. Enjoyed it thoroughly.

Bengt says

Worth reading just Book 2, but it'd be 100% better if he got rid of 50% of the 5% nation nonsense.

Zack says

<http://www.examiner.com/examiner/x-83...>

Booknerd Fraser says

An interesting if somewhat disjointed account of a visit to Pakistan and a pilgrimage to Mecca, by an oddball white American Muslim. I could read it with two eyes. The anthropological eye saw the faith of a person who grew up in my modern multicultural America, with a multitude of influences both high and pop culture. And he's certainly opinionated. The rational eye saw someone who accepted just about every faith he ran across regardless of the age of tradition and who spent far too much time attacking himself for doubt. But it was all interesting.

Irwan says

Honest.

John says

Not everyone's cup of tea to be sure - the author being a blue-eyed follower of an offshoot of the Nation of Islam. Moreover, there's a stream of consciousness quality to the writing (some digressions, flashbacks, etc.), along with a hip-hoppy tone, and frequent use of Muslim terms that are never explained to the general reader (rakat, du'a, etc.), though can be inferred. So ... why would I recommend it? Knight is a westerner; as he says to one guy in Mecca who criticizes him for not changing his name: "I didn't convert to being an Arab!" In other words, he's even-handed about his positive and negative encounters, neither complaining all the time, nor fawning. He comes off as a bright, though eccentric, young man, who (in spite of the all the hip-hop) expresses himself well.

Taryn says

adult white convert to islam

Tristan Broomhall says

Michael Muhammad Knight's writing is of special interest to me because I'm also a western convert, but I would recommend this even for a non-Muslim reader. He's brutally honest and constantly questioning his own religion, something that's unique and refreshing, and he's open minded enough to write passionately on any aspect of the faith, whether it's Shia saints, ganja smoking Sufis, hardline Sunnis or just some Muslim punk kids trying to play a gig in Islamabad. A refreshing read that reaffirms my view of Islam as a vibrant, diverse and accepting faith for the 21st century.

Murtaza says

This is an interesting travelogue by a relatively self-aware white Muslim convert through the Islamic world. Knight appears to have been a misfit in the world of white American suburbia, and has again become a misfit in the world of the Islamicate; excoriating both in relatively biting fashion although still settling as a Muslim today. I really liked his observations on Pakistan; particularly the ongoing fetishization of anything Western (even if its objectively inferior) as a lasting remnant of "the fear" (to quote Wallace Fard Muhammad) put in them by colonialism.

He also has some fairly moving observations of hajj, likening it to a trial run of judgement day, as well as Islamic practices which some may say amount to ancestor worship (even I've thought this in the past) and even water worship, but could be thought of as easily as a worship of life and its own miraculous improbability. These are pretty beautiful and transcendent thoughts; not just anyone could have written this. I also felt as though I could relate to him, viewing Islam as an oppositional culture (he came to it through Malcolm X, as so many people have). He is also able to see its shortcomings, both historically and in the modern world, and seems to write of them with genuine pain. At one point he makes a fairly moving comparison of his Islam to being like ones relationship with their parents; first seeing them as superheroes who can do no wrong, then seeing their failures and hypocrisies and rebelling, and finally looking at them in full context and appreciating them for what they are.

As I alluded to at the beginning, Knight is also acutely self-aware, something that saves him from potential disaster in this book, and doesn't become the white guy who converted to Islam to take it over and point out all its shortcomings and/or benefits. While the book alternates between dropping knowledge and being a bit rambly, comes off as generally a good guy, often funny, occasionally brilliant, and deeply sincere. He also really seems to love his fiance, a running theme in the book which also serves as a testament to its earnestness.

Colin says

Amazing book full of real world experience. The honesty about Islam and Muslims, cuts through the middle of the typical debate between Islamic apologetics and haters of Islam. A excellent look at the variations of Muslims around the world. Great insight into the mind of a modern Muslim looking for his faith and a journey into self realization.

Peter Certo says

a well-written and thoughtful engagement with a complex set of traditions. knight embarks on a fascinating tour through islam as practiced in its "orthodox" saudi variety as well a host of more eccentric local traditions in pakistan, syria, ethiopia, and the united states. especially interesting is his constant reflection on how (and whether) he can engage with different elements of the tradition while still engaging with something fundamentally "islamic" -- and if so, what is that? it helps to have some background in islamic studies or knight's other works to keep up with his references.

took me a good while to get through this one for some reason -- maybe because it never sustains a singular narrative for long? -- but on balance it was much more cohesive than some other stuff i've read by him. the hajj section in particular was excellent.

Bee says

truly fascinating. not for the faint of heart in the ummah but an interesting journey through an american revert's life in islam, both in and out of the country. a beautiful portrait of the multifaceted and complex reality of what islam actually is. a wonderful read!

Haris says

Hilarious. Crazy. But also, so real.

Yasmin says

I made it half-way through. It's about an American convert to Islam who decides to travel around the Muslim world and expose himself to different varieties of Islam. I found it interesting but slow reading. I hope to pick it up again later.

Cal Owen says

wow. the best thing i have read in too long.

