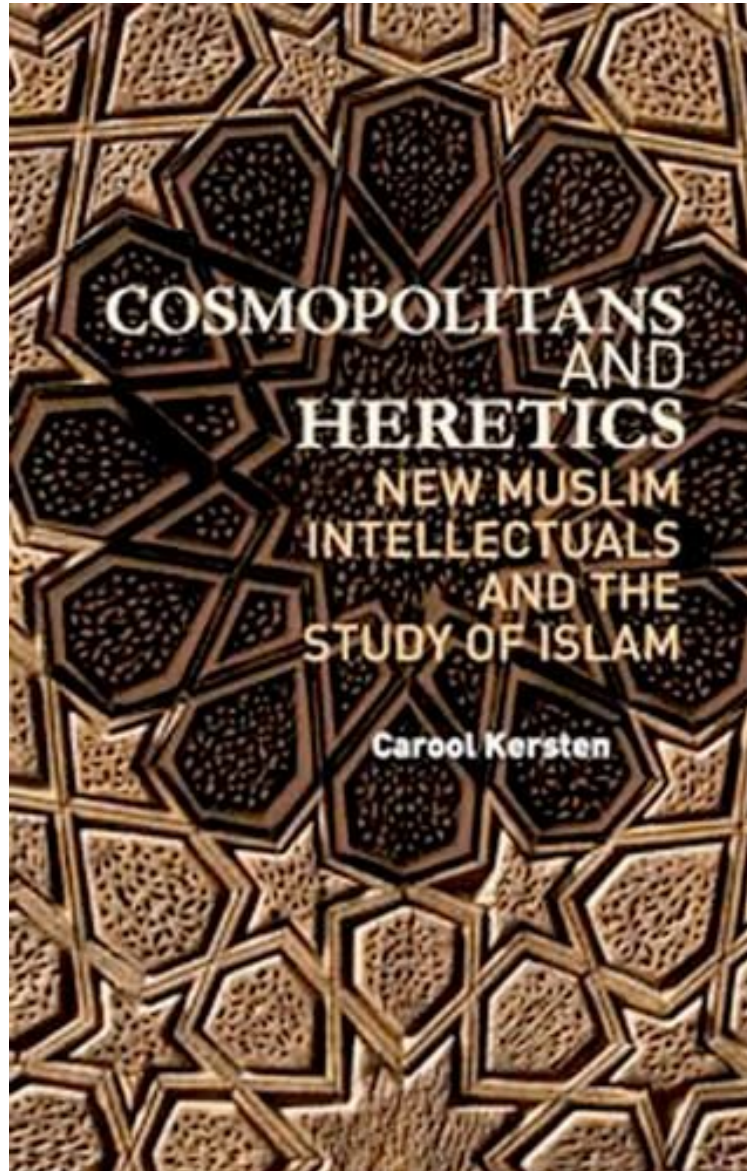


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Cosmopolitans and Heretics: New Muslim Intellectuals and the Study of Islam

Carool Kersten

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Carool Kersten : *Cosmopolitans and Heretics: New Muslim Intellectuals and the Study of Islam* before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Cosmopolitans and Heretics: New Muslim Intellectuals and the Study of Islam*:

Dramatic political events involving Muslims across the world have put Islam under increased scrutiny. However, the focus of this attention is generally limited to the political realm and often even further confined by constrictive views of Islamism narrowed down to its most extremist exponents. Much less attention is paid to the parallel development of more liberal alternative Islamic discourses. The final decades of the twentieth-century has also seen the emergence of a Muslim intelligentsia exploring new and creative ways of engaging with the Islamic heritage. Drawing on advances made in the Western human sciences and understanding Islam in comprehensive terms as a civilisation rather than restricting it to religion in a conventional sense their ideas often cause controversy, even inviting accusations of heresy. *Cosmopolitans and Heretics* examines three of these new Muslim intellectuals who combine a solid grounding in the Islamic tradition with an equally intimate familiarity with the latest achievements of Western scholarship in religion. This cosmopolitan attitude challenges existing stereotypes and makes these thinkers difficult to categorise. Underscoring the global dimensions of new Muslim intellectualism, Kersten analyses contributions to contemporary Islamic thought of the late Nurcholish Madjid, Indonesia's most prominent public intellectual of recent decades, Hasan Hanafi, one of the leading philosophers in Egypt, and the influential French-Algerian historian of Islam Mohammed Arkoun. Emphasising their importance for the rethinking of the study of Islam as a field of academic inquiry, this is the first book of its kind and a welcome addition to the intellectual history of the modern Muslim world.

"Charts new territory for the robust study of Islam as a force in today's world. It traces the Asian arc of influence stemming from the cluster of new Muslim intellectuals whose work is little known but whose impact has begun to grow during the latest period of global history. The Indian Ocean network mapped here provides welcome attention to themes and issues, texts and contexts that will now be debated with fresh, sustained vigour." --Bruce B. Lawrence, Professor of Islamic Studies, Duke University and author of *The Qur'an-A Biography*"Kersten's sharply written study examines the contributions of three cutting edge Muslim scholars who engage creatively with the main currents of twentieth century thought: Nurcholish Madjid, Hasan Hanafi and Mohammed Arkoun. Displaying a profound grasp of modern intellectual history, Kersten assesses the efforts of these thinkers to break out of old paradigms and fashion novel and humanistic understandings of Islam, often at risk of severe censure. The terrain covered in the book is impressive, and fascinating details emerge as Kersten traces the scholarly genealogies of his subjects. In a field dominated by studies of Islamism, *Cosmopolitans and Heretics* offers relief. This is intellectual history of the highest calibre that should be read by anyone interested in modern Islamic thought. I would rate it as outstanding." --John Calvert, Professor of History, Creighton University and author of *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism*"One of the reasons for the really abysmal knowledge of Americans both the general public and many scholars about the contemporary currents in Islam is language. As Carool Kersten's challenging but very important new study shows, much of the work of or on Islamic modernism is beyond the reach of potential readers who do not speak Arabic or Indonesian or French. This is what makes a summary like Kersten's so very valuable, as he is bringing some critical information to the English-speaking world that would be largely inaccessible otherwise."--Anthropology Database" This investigation of the work of three significant contemporary Muslim thinkers, from Indonesia, Egypt and Algeria/France, provides a good illustration of the range of thinking and approaches across the Muslim World, both on Islam itself and on Muslim interaction with Western Thought. The whole discussion is well located in the context of debates about concepts such as postcolonialism, translation, and hybridity, and the book is a powerful, and welcome, plea for the investigation of Islamic Thought on a global, as opposed to a regional, basis."--Professor Hugh Goddard, University of Edinburgh About the Author Carool Kersten is Senior Lecturer in the Study of Islam and the Muslim World at King's College London and a Research Associate of the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). He is the author of *Cosmopolitans and Heretics: New Muslim Intellectuals and the Study of Islam* and co-editor of *Demystifying the Caliphate*, also published by Hurst