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An Introduction to Islamic Law

The study of Islamic law can be a forbidding prospect for those entering the field for the first time. Wael Hallaq, a leading scholar and practitioner of Islamic law, guides students through the intricacies of the subject in this absorbing introduction. The first half of the book is devoted to a discussion of Islamic law in its pre-modern natural habitat. The author expounds on the roles of jurists, who reasoned about the law, and of judges and others who administered justice; on how different legal schools came to be established, and on how a moral law functioned in early Muslim society generally. The second part explains how the law was transformed and ultimately dismantled during the colonial period. As the author demonstrates, this rupture necessitated its reinvention in the twentieth-century world of nation-states. In the final chapters, the author charts recent developments and the struggles of the Islamists to negotiate changes which have seen the law emerge as a primarily textual entity focused on fixed punishments and ritual requirements. The book, which includes a chronology, a glossary of key terms and lists for further reading, will be the first stop for those who wish to understand the fundamentals of Islamic law, its practices and its history.

WAEEL B. HALLAQ is James McGill Professor in Islamic Law in the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University. He is a world-renowned scholar whose publications include *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law* (Cambridge, 2004), *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge, 2001) and *A History of Islamic Legal Theories* (Cambridge, 1997).

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Dedicated to my students

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