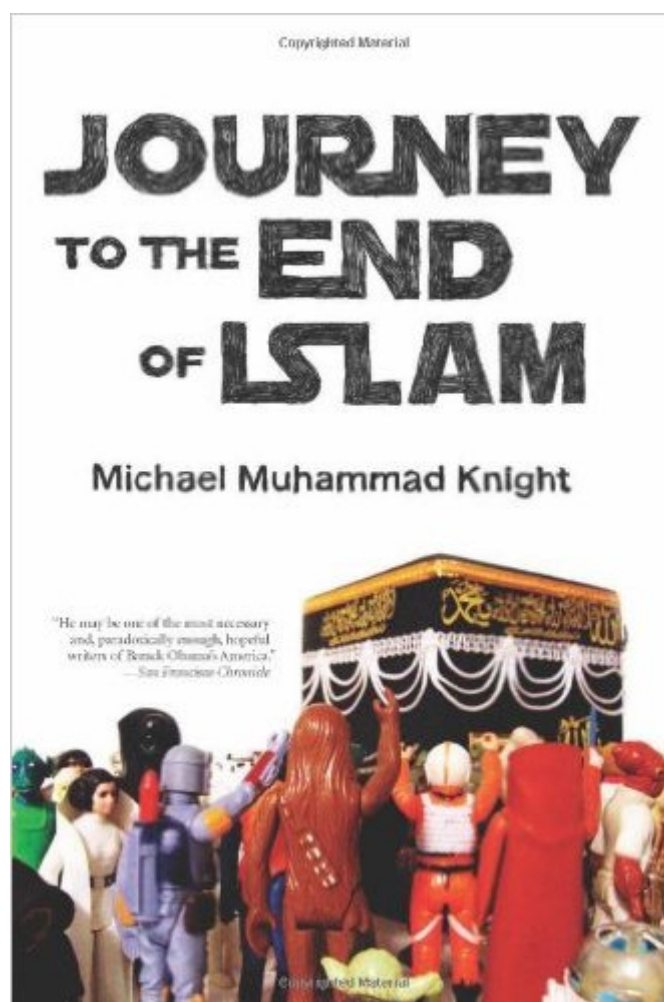


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Journey To The End Of Islam



Synopsis

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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Journey to the End of Islam is author Michael Muhammad Knight's second travel book about experiencing and documenting lesser known Islamic expressions throughout the world, the first being *Blue Eyed Devil: A Road Journey Through Islamic America*, which exclusively focused on exploring the United States' "weird" history of Islam. This book begins with Knight musing on the

fact that nearly every minority religion has been persecuted and vilified at some point in American history, including its Mormons, Catholics, Jews, etc - and yet all of these faiths have become somewhat "mainstream" over time, especially Catholicism. He then wonders if Islam has become the most "un-American" religion in the nation's history, in terms of how many people regard American Muslims and their faith. Along the way, Knight discovers that there is no such thing as a "real", "fake" or "universal" Islam - and despite the claims of many "moderate" Muslims, culture and religion are intertwined. The only "universal" aspect of Islam is the holy Qur'an in Arabic, but even that is interpreted differently by different people - and even scholars who try to come to a consensus about what this or that verse means, disagree with each other. So nothing, literally no-thing binds Muslims together as a cohesive community - this to the chagrin of many Muslims as well as non-Muslims who want to believe that they are "all the same" for very different reasons. After having had that realization, that there is no such thing as a "universal" Islam, Knight was much more able to objectively explore different expressions of Islam without being overly judgmental. At one point, however, his "inner fundamentalist" came out while in Pakistan as a man was trying to sell him what appeared to be a Sufi equivalent to a healing voodoo doll.

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