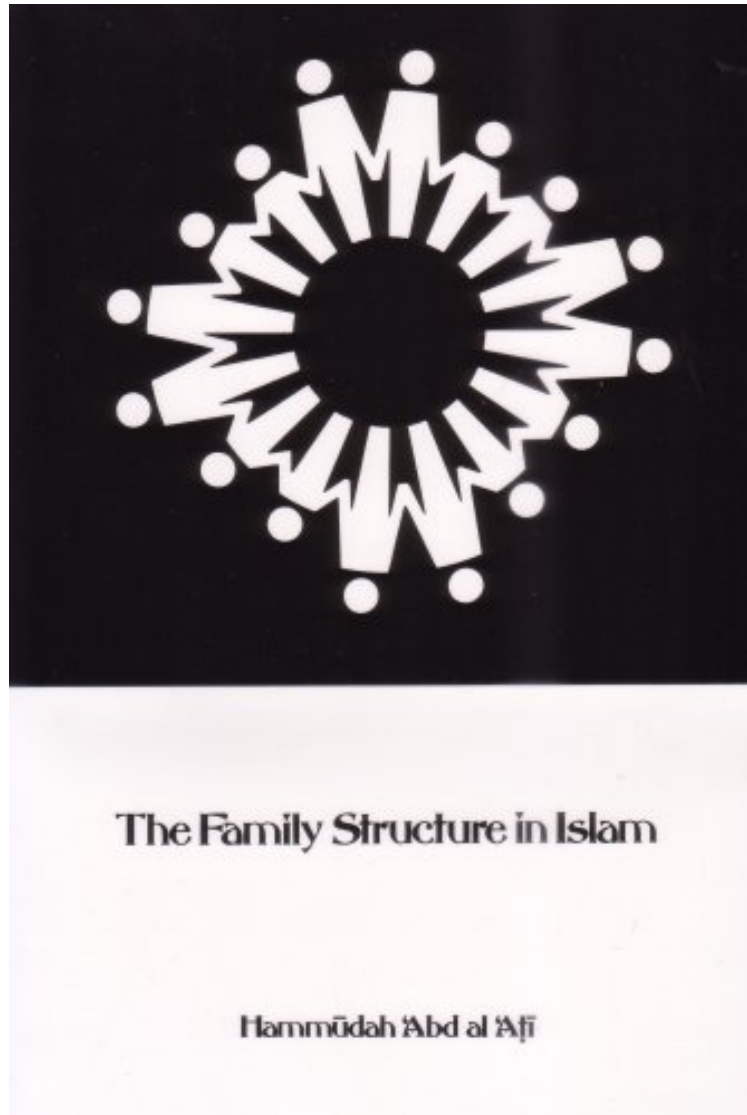


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The Family Structure in Islam

Hammudah Abd Al-Ati
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#3422283 in Books American Trust Publications 1995-06-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.00 x 6.00 x 1.001, #File Name: 0892590041371 pages | File size: 23.Mb

Hammudah Abd Al-Ati : The Family Structure in Islam before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Family Structure in Islam:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent, informative and thoroughly referenced By Keysar TradProf. Abd Al Ati, has produced an excellent book for readers of all backgrounds about an institution that is slowly losing its potency in modern society. As with his other works, Abd Al Ati is methodical and thorough. The references in this book provide a rich library of literature that the reader or researcher can pursue in order to gain a greater appreciation of the family and to see how Islam sought or seeks to try and protect and maintain the family and its

importance for a harmonious society. This book is highly recommended reading.

Family Structure in Islam by Hammudah Abd al Ati is a comprehensive and scholarly look at the family unit in Islam, from its conception via marriage, to children's rights, to rights and roles of the partners that make for a successful team. The learned author also squarely confronts more touching issues such as polygamy, modes of divorce, social equality, and inheritance laws.

Foreword The scholarly world is fortunate to have this cogent study by Dr. Hammudah `Abd al `Ati, and I am happy to have this opportunity to introduce it and to point out some of its special virtues. In doing so, however, I will be doing the reader only a small service before he proceeds to delve into the study, for its many virtues are evident merely in the reading. Dr. `Abd al `Ati deals with a wide array of topics touching on religion, set roles and the family, law, and social change. These are basic, sensitive issues in the structure of social life; they arouse the strongest feelings among people. The author approaches these disputed questions with very high qualifications: a deep, personal familiarity with Islam and a scholar's knowledge of it as well as of modern social science. He is thus able to combine sympathy and objectivity to produce understanding. After an education in the school system of al Azhar, the world's center of Islamic learning in Cairo, Dr. `Abd al `Ati pursued his studies in Canada and the United States. He thus added to the rigorous training of a venerable religious system, a thorough grounding in Western Orientalist and social science approaches. This book is a departure from recent emphases on economic development and Arab nationalism. Dr. `Abd al `Ati goes deeper into the history and social institutions of the Islamic world by considering how religious inspiration, law and social conditions during the first four centuries of Islam together shaped ideas about what the family system of Muslims should become. He deals with formative institutions in the time of their own formation. He shows that social conditions outside the religious system did not fix the ideas of Muslims about the family, though these conditions did set certain boundaries within which those ideas developed. If the author had stayed within religious conceptions, there would be nothing to add to the subject except a further treatment of divine precepts and Muslims' interpretation of them. Believing, however, that di-vine law does not eliminate human choice, he relates this law to the mode of life of the time. Dr. `Abd al `Ati might also have asked how far the Muslim prescription for family institutions was followed in reality; that question he regards as legitimate but rather difficult to illuminate in the present state of our knowledge. Within the limits of his enquiry, the author squarely confronts the most difficult issues of scholarship and morals concerning Islam. These are, in terms of Western studies and attitudes, plural marriage, modes of divorce, social equality in mating, and sensuousness. He not only sheds light on these old questions but asks us to contemplate why they continually arise. Polygyny in Islam, he observes in passing, is a subject to which every observer seems to project his own particular mind and age. Dr. `Abd al `Ati's methods, therefore, are rigorous and persuasive. Although his work does not settle issues, it clears away a lot of deadwood (the result of ignorance, prejudice and inadequate scholarship) that has obstructed the path to their settlement. With regard to dowry, for example, he shows the weakness of several hoary explanations (including some advanced by Muslim jurists) and then offers hypotheses leading to further inquiry that are much more promising. (continued ...) --Morroe Berger From his vast amount of research into the social order in which Islam arose, one of Dr. `Abd al `Ati's important conclusions is the diversity of morals and behavior. This view is an antidote to the easy generalizations (deteriorating into stereotypes) we have grown accustomed to in this domain. He shows, on several occasions, that certain combinations of traits attributed to certain groups are incompatible with one another. He points out that in seeking to understand ideas and events in the distant past an explanation of their origins is not necessarily an explanation of their persistence. He relates Islamic law and Muslims' behavior to rules and conduct in other societies while still appreciating, as in the case of social equality in mating, that each society is special in relation to others (as well as diverse within itself). He follows contemporary social science, yet sees value in the work of older scholars who have raised and illuminated important questions contributions that have not been outdated by later studies: even taken into full account by them. Dr. `Abd al `Ati's methods, therefore, are rigorous and persuasive. Although his work does not settle issues, it clears away a lot of deadwood (the result of ignorance, prejudice and inadequate scholarship) that has obstructed the path to their settlement. With regard to dowry, for example, he shows the weakness of several hoary explanations (including some advanced by Muslim jurists) and then offers hypotheses leading to further inquiry that are much more promising. At a time when the possibility and even the desirability of objectivity in the social sciences are challenged, this book shows its value in quality of mind and in research procedure. Dr. `Abd al `Ati points out that Muslim apologists have compared the Islamic ideal with Western practice, while Western apologists (often called scholars) compare Islamic practice with the Western ideal. He shows that these fatuous comparisons do not proceed from scholarly motives, and his work deprives them of their long-standing excuses and justifications. For that, and for his demonstration of the explanatory value of alternative approaches based on solid social research and clear thinking, we are in his debt. --Morroe Berger