



Angels Tapping at the Wine-Shop's Door

A History of Alcohol in the Islamic World

By Rudi Matthee

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'An excellent and important book covering the entire history of Islam and a very large part of the Islamic world. Drawing on a wide variety of sources, it is engaging and well written throughout.'

— **Devin Stewart, Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Emory College of Arts and Sciences**

'The first comprehensive engagement with the history of alcohol in the Islamic world, from the early days of the revelation to the nuances of contemporary alcohol policy and practice in major Muslim-majority countries. A novel, timely and compelling contribution.'

— **Mazyar Ghiabi, Senior Lecturer in Medical Humanities and Politics, University of Exeter**

A fascinating history of the complexities and contradictions of alcohol consumption in the Muslim world, from the founding of the faith to the present day.

Islam is the only major world religion that resists the juggernaut of alcohol consumption. In many Islamic countries, alcohol is banned; in others, it plays little role in social life. Yet, Muslims throughout history did drink, often to excess—whether sultans and shahs in their palaces, or commoners in taverns run by Jews or Christians.

This evocative study delves into drinking's many historic, literary and social manifestations in Islam, going beyond references to 'hypocrisy' or the temptations of 'forbidden fruit'. Rudi Matthee argues that alcohol, through its 'absence' as much as its presence, takes us to the heart of Islam. Exploring the long history of this faith—from the eighth-century Umayyad dynasty to Erdogan's Turkey, and from Islamic Spain to modern Pakistan—he unearths a tradition of diversity and multiplicity in which Muslims drank, and found myriad excuses to do so. They celebrated wine and used it as a poetic metaphor, even viewing alcohol as a gift from God—the key to unlocking eternal truth.

Drawing on a plethora of sources, Matthee presents Islam not as an austere and uncompromising faith, but as a set of beliefs and practices that embrace ambivalence, allowing for ambiguity and even contradiction.

About the Author

Rudi Matthee is the John A. Munroe and Dorothy L. Munroe Chair of History at the University of Delaware. He is the author of four prize-winning monographs on Iranian history, and the editor or co-editor of another five books. He is currently President of the Persian Heritage Foundation.