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Sommario/riassunto	Writing in the tradition of the great Arab historian, Ibn Khaldun, Akbar S. Ahmed provides an explanation of Muslim history and society which will be of interest to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Islam is popularly seen, especially in the West, as aggressive and fanatic. This readable and accessible account, by an internationally known social scientist, balances that image, combining an astute understanding of Islamic history with sociological analysis of contemporary Muslim societies. An objective picture emerges of the main features of Muslim history and the compulsions of Muslim society.