

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910791088203321
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Titolo	Idols in the East [[electronic resource] ] : European representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100-1450 // Suzanne Conklin Akbari
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Ithaca, : Cornell University Press, 2009
ISBN	0-8014-6497-8 0-8014-6498-6 1-322-50477-6
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (336 p.)
Disciplina	303.48/256040902
Soggetti	Christianity and other religions - Islam Islam - Relations - Christianity Orientalism - History - To 1500 Islam in literature East and West in literature Orientalism in literature Literature, Medieval - History and criticism Europe Relations Islamic Empire Islamic Empire Relations Europe Europe Relations Latin Orient Latin Orient Relations Europe Latin Orient In literature
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Frontmatter -- Contents -- List of Illustrations -- Acknowledgments -- Introduction: Medieval Orientalism? -- 1. The Shape of the World -- 2. From Jerusalem to India -- 3. The Place of the Jews -- 4. The Saracen Body -- 5. Empty Idols and a False Prophet -- 6. The Form of Heaven -- Conclusion: A Glance at Early Modern Orientalism -- Works Cited -- Index
Sommario/riassunto	Representations of Muslims have never been more common in the Western imagination than they are today. Building on Orientalist stereotypes constructed over centuries, the figure of the wily Arab has

given rise, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, to the "Islamist" terrorist. In *Idols in the East*, Suzanne Conklin Akbari explores the premodern background of some of the Orientalist types still pervasive in present-day depictions of Muslims—the irascible and irrational Arab, the religiously deviant Islamist—and about how these stereotypes developed over time. *Idols in the East* contributes to the recent surge of interest in European encounters with Islam and the Orient in the premodern world. Focusing on the medieval period, Akbari examines a broad range of texts including encyclopedias, maps, medical and astronomical treatises, chansons de geste, romances, and allegories to paint an unusually diverse portrait of medieval culture. Among the texts she considers are *The Book of John Mandeville*, *The Song of Roland*, *Parzival*, and *Dante's Divine Comedy*. From them she reveals how medieval writers and readers understood and explained the differences they saw between themselves and the Muslim other. Looking forward, Akbari also comes to terms with how these medieval conceptions fit with modern discussions of Orientalism, thus providing an important theoretical link to postcolonial and postimperial scholarship on later periods. Far reaching in its implications and balanced in its judgments, *Idols in the East* will be of great interest to not only scholars and students of the Middle Ages but also anyone interested in the roots of Orientalism and its tangled relationship to modern racism and anti-Semitism.

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