

accentuates the colonial development of Canada and the United States, and *Colonial America* highlights current historical thought on the colonial period in the United States. Furthermore, *Iberia and the Americas* deals exclusively with the imperial powers of Spain and Portugal. One final notable difference is that *Colonial America* and *Encyclopedia of the North American Colonies* both devote individual articles to blacks as well as offer entries on slavery and related topics. In contrast, *Iberia and the Americas* discusses African people only within the context of articles on slavery, slave trade, slave rebellions, and race.

Iberia and the Americas: Culture, Politics, and History: A Multidisciplinary Encyclopedia is an informative and highly readable work that effectively illustrates a historic and modern day connection between Spain and Portugal and the Americas. It is recommended for undergraduate and public libraries.—Michelle Hendley, *Reference Librarian, State University of New York, College at Oneonta*

Introduction to the World's Major Religions. By Emily Taitz, Randall L. Nadeau, John M. Thompson, Lee W. Bailey, Zayn R. Kassam, and Steven J. Rosen. Ed. by Lee W. Bailey. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2006. 6 vols. acid free \$325 (ISBN 0-313-33634-2).

Religious practices and beliefs have continuously played pivotal roles in the political and social history of the world. Events of the last twenty years have drawn attention to how religious differences affect political, economic, and social affairs. Recognizing the value of having an awareness of religious differences to better understand world events, Greenwood Press has published this six-volume introduction to the largest world religions: Judaism, Confucianism and Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. The general editor is an associate professor of philosophy and religion at Ithaca College. Each volume is written by a different scholar with experience in the academic understanding of religion.

The intent of the set is to provide an introduction to each movement that can be read without having a significant background in that religion or region of the world. Each volume is structured in a similar pattern, with chapters on history, texts and major tenets, branches, practices worldwide, rituals and holidays, and major figures. Also included is a chronology, a glossary, a bibliography listing essential books as well as Internet sites, and a complete set index in the back of each volume. The written text for each volume is around two hundred pages.

Because the purpose of the set is to provide basic and introductory material, there will be components left out that may be considered important by some scholars, but that is the nature of this type of reference item. The editors wanted a volume that could be understood by those with a high school education; consequently the information is general and at times simplistic. The requirements of uniformity between the volumes occasionally results in fragmentation of the information presented. This is particularly true with regard to

the volume on Christianity, whose history is characterized by a variety of religions and approaches, but is less of a problem in the volume on Confucianism and Taoism, for example.

Similar reference works include: *Human Rights and the World's Major Religions* (Praeger, 2005), which is a comparative five-volume set with a similar structure; and the three-volume *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Religious Practices* (Thomson Gale, 2006), which is more academic and not as comprehensive. Because of its focus on the six major religious movements, *Introduction to the World's Major Religions* will be of interest particularly to high school, public, junior college, and undergraduate libraries.—Mark L. Grover, *Latin American Studies Bibliographer, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah*

Islamic Civilization, History, Contributions, and Influence: A Compendium of Literature. By S. M. Ghazanfar. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 2006. 547p. acid free \$95 (ISBN 0-8108-5264-0).

According to the preface, the purpose of this work is “to provide a readily accessible compendium of literature on Islamic civilization, with a particular focus on . . . the literature pertaining to Islamic history, contributions to knowledge, and the influence of that reservoir once it was assimilated in medieval Europe” (vii). This work does, indeed, succeed admirably in its “modest mission.” Covering more than six hundred different books and articles, it is a wonderful, compact, and affordable annotated bibliography for anyone interested in Islamic civilization and its influence on the development of Western thought.

The book is thoughtfully organized. Annotated references to books and to articles are separated, and each section is divided into the broad topics of sciences and humanities, Islam and Western linkages, and general areas of study. Each record appears in alphabetical order by author or editor and is accorded an entry number. A complete bibliographical reference is followed by a concise description of the resource, its subject area, and its relative strengths and weaknesses. Many entries for books and longer articles also include chapter or section headings. Notations on bibliographies and their extent, notes or footnotes, and indexes are also included. For ease of citation location, the back matter of the book contains a complete, non-annotated bibliography of all resources; a topical bibliography that further divides the broad areas of inquiry (such as sciences and humanities) into smaller topical subgroups; and two indexes, one for authors, editors, and translators, and one for titles. Each of these citations is easily located by its numerical entry in the main work.

It is, however, the annotations that make this work both a unique and lively read. It is clear that Ghazanfar, an emeritus professor of economics whose areas of interest include medieval Islamic thought, has an expert's knowledge of his subject area and an intimate familiarity with the sources he has chosen to include in his bibliography. Each entry distills the essence of the resource down to its major themes and central ideas in plain, straightforward language that is absent of jargon. The frequent use of quotations and paraphrases from

SOURCES

the works themselves gives the reader a flavor of the resource and supports the text of the annotations, which are objective and even-handed. The entry for Edward Said's *Orientalism*, for example, manages to acknowledge both the importance and the controversial nature of this extremely important book without subjective editorializing.

As the author himself points out, this reference is neither exhaustive nor all-inclusive, but is meant to be a beginning point for research. Deeper and wider coverage can be found in the venerable and monumental (and expensive) *Index Islamicus* (Mansell 1977–1993; Bowker-Saur, 1994–2000; Brill, 2001–), and many resources more completely cover individual subject areas within the broader context of Islamic studies, such as Hans Daiber's *Bibliography of Islamic Philosophy* (Brill, 1999), *The Modern Arab Woman: An Annotated Bibliography* by Michelle Raccagni (Scarecrow, 1978), or Seyyed Hossein Nasr's *An Annotated Bibliography of Islamic Science* (Cultural Studies and Research Institute, Tehran, Iran, 1975–). However, due to its impressive coverage, thoughtful organization, and scholarly presentation, *Islamic Civilizations, History, Contributions, and Influence: A Compendium of Literature* is highly recommended for any public or academic library, and is suitable for the general public, undergraduates, and scholars in the area of Islamic studies who wish for a concise, affordable, and useful research tool.—Amanda Sprochi, *Health Sciences Cataloger, University of Missouri–Columbia*

Middle East Conflict Reference Library. Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 2006. Individual volumes are:

Middle East Conflict: Almanac. By Tom Pendergast and Sara Pendergast. Ed. by Ralph Zerbonia. Middle East Conflict Reference Library. Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 2006. 267p. acid free \$60 (ISBN 0-7876-9458-4).

Middle East Conflict: Biographies. By Tom Pendergast and Sara Pendergast. Ed. by Ralph Zerbonia. Middle East Conflict Reference Library. Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 2006. 282p. acid free \$60 (ISBN 0-7876-9457-6).

Middle East Conflict: Primary Sources. By Tom Pendergast and Sara Pendergast. Ed. by Ralph Zerbonia. Middle East Conflict Reference Library. Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 2006. 238p. acid free \$60 (ISBN 0-7876-9458-4).

Middle East Conflict Reference Library Cumulative Index. Ed. by Ralph G. Zerbonia. Middle East Reference Library. Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 2006. 16p. acid free \$5 paper (ISBN 0-7876-9459-2).

Since the events of September 11, 2001, there is a clear need for materials regarding Middle Eastern politics and history. The editors of *Middle East Conflict* address this interest by aiming, “to aid readers who wish to understand the history of conflict in the Middle East” (xi). With this set, they provide a thorough introduction to and explanation of both the history and reasons behind the continuing battles in this contested region.

The set is divided into three volumes: *Almanac*, *Biographies*, and *Primary Sources*. Each is succinct at fewer than three hundred pages and includes the same introduction; the time-

lines in each are similar to one another. Each volume has an index at the back, supplemented by the separate *Cumulative Index* that covers all three volumes.

The *Almanac* is a generalized examination of Middle-Eastern conflict, with a decidedly modern slant. The first two chapters cover the period from ancient times until the mandate system of the 1940s, while the remaining twelve chapters cover the last sixty years. Emphasizing the events of the post–World War II period is useful, because the rise of Israel coincides with increased conflict.

The *Biographies* volume examines twenty-six key figures in the Middle East, and does so extensively. Most of the entries range from ten to thirteen pages, and include biographical information as well as the role each person has played. The small number of biographies included is slightly surprising, but the editors have done well in their choices. Not only do these biographies serve as an introduction to important figures in the conflict, but they could also prove very useful as a key source for research papers. As with the *Almanac*, this volume also focuses on the modern era in its choice of entries.

As its title implies, the *Primary Sources* volume includes numerous declarations, personal accounts, United Nations resolutions, and other primary documents relating to the conflict. Divided into seven chapters arranged by theme, this volume provides a good perspective of the region's troubled history, particularly through the first-person accounts.

The language used in this set will appeal to several user groups. All entries are clearly written without being overly dry, and at a language level intended for everyone from juvenile to adult users. The authors seem to have taken the approach that the users of these volumes are coming in with little knowledge of the region, so anyone new to this topic won't feel overwhelmed. The *Almanac* and *Biographies* volumes should serve as useful jumping-in points for anyone interested in learning more about conflicts in the Middle East, while *Primary Sources* is likely to serve those taking their studies a little further by examining the sources from which much of the information is drawn.

The biggest concern with this set is that the authority of the authors is not clear. Given that there is no list of contributors, it would seem that the Pendergasts are responsible for all the entries, with the exception of some help they were apparently given on several of the biographies. The problem is that there's no information given about the authors' qualifications for writing this set. An “About the Authors” section at the front of each volume or a list of contributors would have been helpful. The authors do list a couple of “advisors,” although the expertise and role of these advisors is never explained.

Although not a perfect or all-inclusive effort, *Middle East Conflict* should nonetheless find a home in many upper-elementary, high school, and college libraries. For biographies of figures deemed important enough for inclusion, it is an excellent source and a much better choice than a general encyclopedia. The same is true of the almanac articles, which should be valuable for anyone interested in an overview of many subjects in relation to the conflict. This three-volume set should