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## The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism

*The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism* explores the heritage of how Americans have long pressed orientalist images of Islam into service to globalize the authority of domestic cultural power. By delving deeply into rich and interdisciplinary archives of expression from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, the book examines how Muslim history and practices provided a contentious global horizon that Americans engaged to orient the direction of their national project, the morality of their social institutions, and the contours of their romantic imaginations. Early Americans first viewed the Islamic world as an antichristian and despotic threat but progressively revised these images into a resource for fashioning more comparative and cosmopolitan alternatives. Readers will better understand how long-held habits of intercultural perception have shaped present impasses between the United States and the Muslim world.

Timothy Marr is assistant professor in the Curriculum in American Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he teaches seminars on cultural memory, captivity, tobacco, birth and death, and mating and marriage. He originally became interested in the subject of this book while teaching Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* in Pakistan in the late 1980s. He is the coeditor of *Ungraspable Phantom: Essays on Moby-Dick*.

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TIMOTHY MARR  
*University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*



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for Paula

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My experiences teaching for three years at Lahore American School in the late 1980s opened my eyes to Islamic cultures and to the kindness of Muslims. It was there, teaching *Moby-Dick* to a talented group of Pakistani students, that the ideas for this book originated. That extended time living in South Asia also helped me begin to understand cultural distortions in the ways that Islam is represented and interpreted in American situations. The significance of these patterns has dramatically increased during the international struggles over terrorism following 9/11. It is my hope that this book will contribute to a fuller analysis of the impasses between Americans and global Muslims and in some small way help to create new avenues of intercultural understanding. I have been sustained throughout my work on this book by the vision of Bahá'u'lláh that the earth is one common homeland consisting of a single human family sharing a diverse world culture.

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