



“Times of Transformation: Contingency and Incoherence in Islamic Narratives about the Past”

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Modern representations of “Islamic history” tend to privilege coherence and systematic development over time when narrating the past of Muslim communities. Can we subvert this framework and see Islamic narrations of the past as struggles to rationalize a world that must also retain its randomness? I believe there is ample evidence in the original sources to take this view. A reconceptualization along these lines can generate new readings of texts and images and help us overcome certain limitations that have characterized Islamic studies as an academic field since the nineteenth century.

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