



King Faisal
PRIZE



Trade Routes in the Islamic World

Professor Abdelhamid Hammouda

Professor Abdelhamid Hussein Hammouda, from the Arab Republic of Egypt, is a prominent historian who has profoundly enriched the Arabic library with his valuable studies and works. His expansive research targets various fields of Islamic history, spanning diverse geographical regions and historical eras.

Born on January 11, 1961, in Faqus, Ash Sharqiyah Governorate, Professor Hammouda received his general and university education in his hometown, earning his bachelor's degree from Zagazig University in 1983. He subsequently obtained his master's degree in Islamic History with distinction from the same university in 1988, and in the same year, he earned his Ph.D. with First-Class Honors in Islamic History from Minia University.

Following his doctorate, he embarked on an academic career, gradually climbing the academic ranks at Cairo University (Fayoum Branch), and continuing at Fayoum University after it became an independent institution, ultimately achieving full professorship in record time in 2009. He has served his university and community by undertaking numerous academic, supervisory, and administrative roles, most recently serving as the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Fayoum University for three years, starting in 2015.

The administrative and supervisory responsibilities Professor Hammouda assumed did not hinder his passion for scientific excellence. He has made substantial contributions through rigorous research, study, and authorship. His academic production includes twenty peer-reviewed papers published in esteemed scientific journals. Furthermore, excluding his encyclopedic works, he has authored sixteen standalone books covering a wide selection of topics across various eras and states of Islamic history.

His publications encompass the history of the Arab-Islamic state, the history of the Maghreb in the Islamic era, the history of Arab-Islamic civilization, the history of independent Islamic states in the Islamic East during the Abbasid Caliphate, and the histories of both the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties. He has also written extensively on the Islamic East from the emergence of the Seljuks to the Mongol invasion, international relations in Islam, the history of Andalusia during the Islamic era, and the means of entertainment and leisure among Muslims, in addition to other topics.

He devoted four of his published works specifically to his home country, Egypt. One provides a general overview of Islamic Egypt, tracing its history and civilization from the Islamic conquest to the fall of the Ikhshidid dynasty. The other three focus on Egypt's local history: The Political and Civilizational History of Fayoum, The History of Upper Egypt in the Fatimid Era, and Islamic Civilization in the Delta Region during the Fatimid Era. The importance of studying local history is well recognized; it provides crucial scientific additions to the history of regions that are often marginalized in general historical sources. These provinces were typically situated far from primary capitals where caliphs and sultans resided, and where the fateful decisions recorded by history and passed down through generations were made. Notably, Professor Hammouda did not confine himself strictly to his exact specialization in Islamic history.



He expanded his scope to author works on the history of the Arabs prior to Islam, while maintaining his profound focus on the local history of Egypt and demonstrating a broad interest in numerous countries across the Islamic world throughout various political, economic, social, and civilizational eras.

Professor Hammouda possesses a profound legacy in authoring multi-volume works, which he titled “Encyclopedias.” These works are of immense scientific value and benefit, serving as indispensable resources for any researcher tackling the subjects they cover, which include *The Encyclopedia of the History and Civilization of Early Islam*. This six-volume masterpiece covers the Islamic call in Mecca, the Islamic state in Medina, and the successive eras of the caliphates of Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq, Umar ibn Al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan, and Ali ibn Abi Talib. It provides comprehensive coverage of the Prophetic era and the Rightly Guided Caliphate, offering a monumental service to human knowledge regarding these two pivotal foundational periods of Islamic history.

The second encyclopedic work of Professor Hammouda is *The Encyclopedia of the History and Civilization of Islamic States in the Islamic East*, A ten-volume composition that covers the histories of various independent states in the eastern Islamic world, including the Tahirid, Saffarid, Ziyadid, Samanid, Buyid, Ghaznavid, Seljuk, Ghurid, and Khwarazmian dynasties.

His third major encyclopedic work, *Trade Routes in the Islamic World*, spans five volumes and meticulously details trade networks across the Islamic East, Iraq and Persia, the Arabian Peninsula and the Levant, Egypt and the Greater Islamic Sahara, and the Maghreb and Andalusia. It is for this monumental work that Professor Hammouda rightfully earned King Faisal Prize for Islamic Studies. He did not merely catalog international trade routes and stations between the East and West, as his predecessor, the late Dr. Naim Zaki Fahmy, had done. Instead, Professor Hammouda takes the reader on an immersive commercial journey across all the regions he documents. He details maritime and overland trade, guiding the reader through commercial waystations, markets, the urban planning of market locations, and the administrative bodies overseeing them. He comprehensively outlines the types of trade, goods, merchant guilds, commercial and financial transactions including weights, measures, and sales methods, as well as financial instruments such as barter, currency, banking, deposits, the market inspection system, and the regulation of commercial facilities. Furthermore, when discussing the markets of the East, he provides vivid details regarding the means of land transportation, highlighting the use of two-humped Bactrian camels, Bukhara horses, known as Shahari Bukhariya, Samarkand horses, known as Shen horses, alongside Samarkand camels and other pack animals.

This five-volume work was highly praised by several prominent, specialized scholars who reviewed it for King Faisal Prize, praising the methodology employed in its composition. In fact, one reviewer noted, “The author relied on an analytical method, tracking news of trade routes across historical, geographical, and travel sources. He utilized a comparative method, cross-referencing the texts of Muslim geographers with those of European historians and geographers. He also drew upon economic and archaeological documents related to ports and trade routes. His writing style distinctively combines scientific academic rigor with clear, accessible language. Moreover, he did not merely narrate historical texts; he actively interpreted and analyzed them, explaining their civilizational outcomes and repercussions.” This same reviewer concluded: “An objective reading of these references reveals that they were written by an academic specialist who exerted immense effort.



These are rigorous works based on primary sources focusing on trade in the Islamic world, such as Ibn Hawqal, Al-Yaqubi, Al-Idrisi, Yaqut Al-Hamawi, Al-Qalqashandi, and Ibn Khaldun, in addition to foreign sources like Lopez and Marçais. The author excelled in organizing the trade routes according to the regions of the Islamic world where commerce flourished. The chapters, distributed objectively and comprehensively, cover all aspects of human knowledge in their respective fields. This work is crucial in its domain and deserves to be classified as a primary reference for any academic research or study on trade routes in the Islamic world.”

Another reviewer stated, “This encyclopedia represents a qualitative addition to the study of the history of trade in the Islamic world. It elevates historical geography from a level of fragmentation to one of regional comprehensiveness. Its descriptive nature makes it closer to a monumental documentary encyclopedia than a purely interpretative analytical study; therefore, the author’s true value lies in his extensive composition of classical sources and his meticulous tracking of trade routes across regions. It simultaneously invites a future rereading through the lenses of historical economics and urban sociology. Thus, it can be said that Abdelhamid Hammouda’s *Trade Routes* is a massive classical encyclopedic effort that greatly enriches the Arabic library in the history of Islamic commerce.”

Professor Abdelhamid Hammouda’s biography reveals his active and impactful presence at scientific conferences and symposia both within Egypt and abroad. He commands immense respect, appreciation, and acceptance among his Egyptian professors, colleagues, and students. They rejoiced greatly at his winning of King Faisal Prize in Islamic Studies, celebrating his well-deserved inclusion in the vanguard of eminent scholars who have been granted this prestigious honor over its esteemed history of more than four decades.