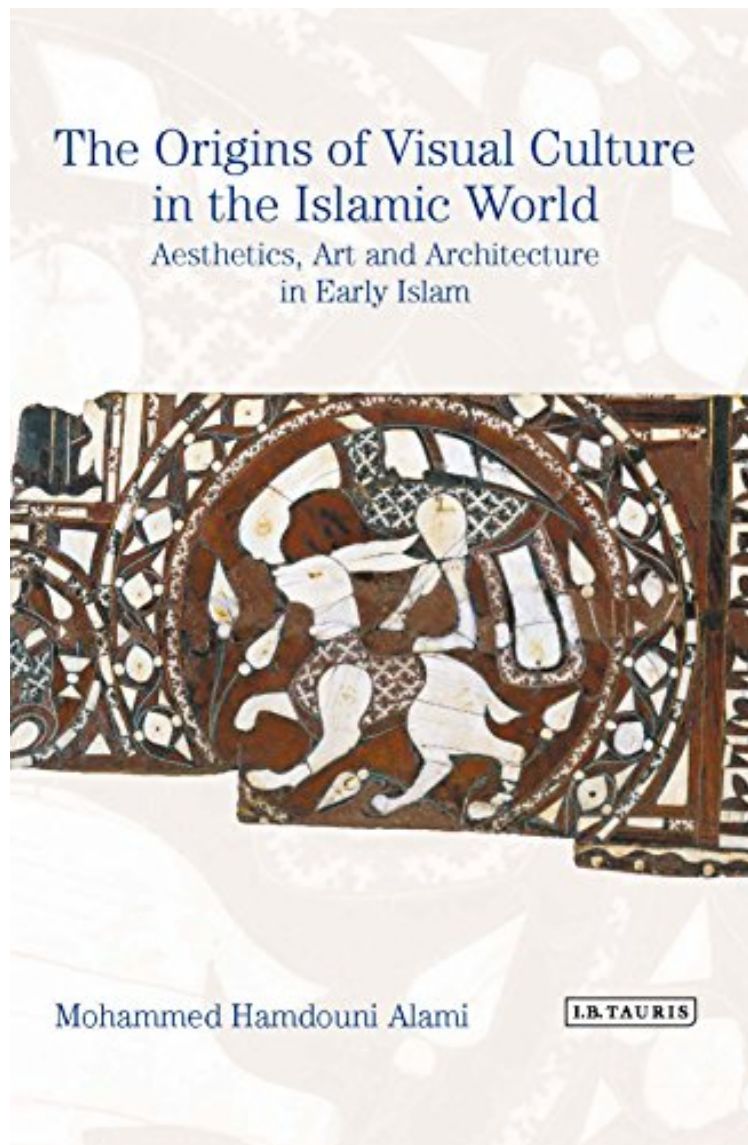


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The Origins of Visual Culture in the Islamic World: Aesthetics, Art and Architecture in Early Islam (Library of Middle East History)

Mohammed Hamdouni Alami

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In tenth-century Iraq, a group of Arab intellectuals and scholars known as the Ikhwan al-Safa began to make their intellectual mark on the society around them. A mysterious organisation, the identities of its members have never been clear. But its contribution to the philosophy, art and culture of the era - and indeed subsequent ones - is evident. In the visual arts, for example, Hamdouni Alami argues that the theory of human proportions which the Ikhwan al-Safa propounded (something very similar to those of da Vinci), helped shape the evolution of the philosophy of aesthetics, art and architecture in the tenth and eleventh centuries CE, in particular in Egypt under the Fatimid rulers. By examining the arts of the Fatimids, focusing on painting and architectural works such as the first Fatimid mosque in al-Mahdiyya, Tunisia, Hamdouni Alami offers analysis of the debates surrounding the ethics of the appreciation of Islamic art and architecture from a vital time in medieval Middle Eastern history, and shows their similarity with aesthetic debates of Italian Renaissance

About the Author Mohammed Hamdouni Alami is Associate Researcher in the Archaeological Research Facility at the University of California, Berkeley, USA. He was formerly Professor of Architecture and Art History at the Ecole Nationale D'Architecture in Rabat and holds a PhD from the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *Art and Architecture in the Islamic Tradition: Aesthetics, Politics and Desire in Early Islam* (I.B.Tauris, 2010, 2013).