

# CHOICE

CURRENT REVIEWS OF ACADEMIC BOOKS

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Murata, Sachiko. **The vision of Islam**, by Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick. Paragon House, 1995 (c1994). 368p index afp ISBN 1-55778-516-3 pbk, \$18.95

This lucid and compelling account of Islam is written from what might be called a phenomenological perspective. Because its principal aim is to present Islam as a living faith from a Muslim perspective as reflected in the classical texts of the tradition, Murata and Chittick (comparative studies, SUNY, Stony Brook) go to some length to differentiate their work from the numerous historical, critically oriented introductions to Islam that have appeared over the last several decades. They are convinced that this latter kind of scholarship, valuable though it is, is ultimately unable to capture or convey the inner meaning that Islam has had, and continues to have, for Muslims. It is this interior dimension of Islam, abstracted from history as it were, that Murata and Chittick see to articulate in the present work. The book's ten chapters are grouped into four sections. In the first two, Islam is presented as a way of life defined by a set of primary duties and beliefs; in the third, the question of intentionality as it relates to both practice and belief is taken up, and in the final section, some of the characteristic features of Islam's conception of history are briefly discussed. The book is intended to serve as an introductory text in undergraduate college and university courses on Islam, but it can serve equally well as an introduction to Islam for a more general readership. Useful glossary of technical terms; brief set of notes. Recommended to all college and university libraries as well as to public libraries concerned to maintain up-to-date information on major living religions.—*M. Swartz, Boston University*