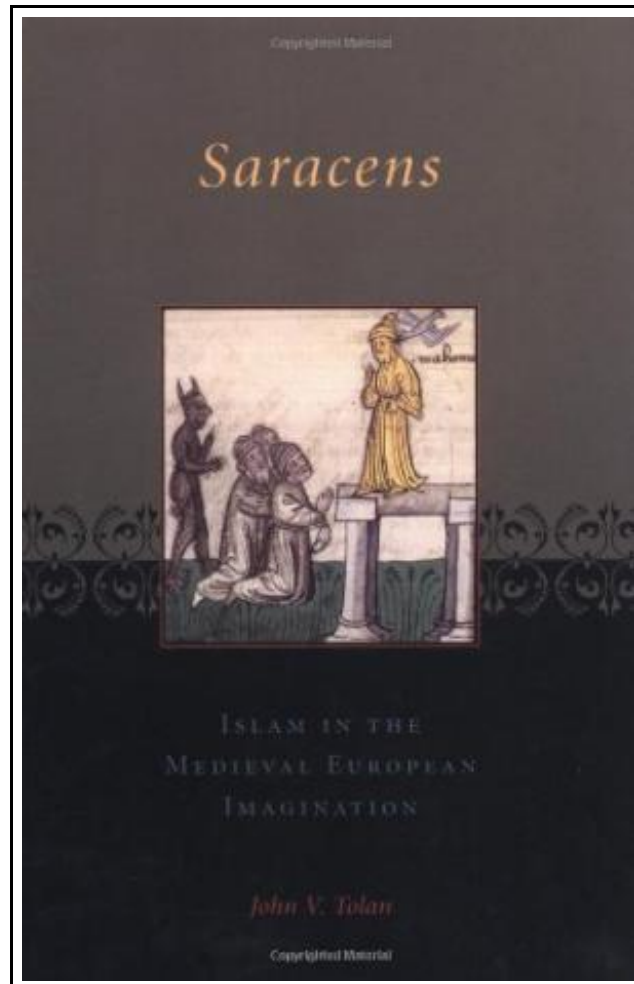


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Columbia University Press, United States, 2002. Paperback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book. In the first century of Islam, most of the former Christian Roman Empire, from Syria to Spain, was brought under Muslim control in a conquest of unprecedented proportions. Confronted by the world of Islam, countless medieval Christians experienced a profound ambivalence, awed by its opulence, they were also troubled by its rival claims to the spiritual inheritance of Abraham and Jesus and humiliated by its social subjugation of non-Muslim minorities. Some converted. Others took up arms. Still others, the subjects of John Tolan's study of anti-Muslim polemics in medieval Europe, undertook to attack Islam and its most vivid avatar, the saracen, with words. In an effort to make sense of God's apparent abandonment of Christendom in favor of a dynamic and expanding Muslim civilization, European writers distorted the teachings of Islam and caricatured its believers in a variety of ways. What ideological purposes did these portrayals serve? And how, in turn, did Muslims view Christianity? Feelings of rivalry, contempt, and superiority existed on both sides, tinged or tempered at times with feelings of doubt, inferiority, curiosity, or admiration. Tolan shows how Christian responses to Islam changed from the seventh to thirteenth centuries, through fast-charging crusades and spirit-crushing defeats, crystallizing into polemical images later drawn upon by Western authors in the fourteenth to twentieth centuries. *Saracens* explores the social and ideological uses of contempt, explaining how the denigration of the other can be used to defend one's own intellectual construction of the world.



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