



# Can Islam Be French?: Pluralism and Pragmatism in a Secularist State (Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics)

*John R. Bowen*

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*Can Islam Be French?* is an anthropological examination of how Muslims are responding to the conditions of life in France. Following up on his book *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves*, John Bowen turns his attention away from the perspectives of French non-Muslims to focus on those of the country's Muslims themselves. Bowen asks not the usual question--how well are Muslims integrating in France?--but, rather, how do French Muslims think about Islam? In particular, Bowen examines how French Muslims are fashioning new Islamic institutions and developing new ways of reasoning and teaching. He looks at some of the quite distinct ways in which mosques have connected with broader social and political forces, how Islamic educational entrepreneurs have fashioned niches for new forms of schooling, and how major Islamic public actors have set out a specifically French approach to religious norms. All of these efforts have provoked sharp responses in France and from overseas centers of Islamic scholarship, so Bowen also looks closely at debates over how--and how far--Muslims should adapt their religious traditions to these new social conditions. He argues that the particular ways in which Muslims have settled in France, and in which France governs religions, have created incentives for Muslims to develop new, pragmatic ways of thinking about religious issues in French society.

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