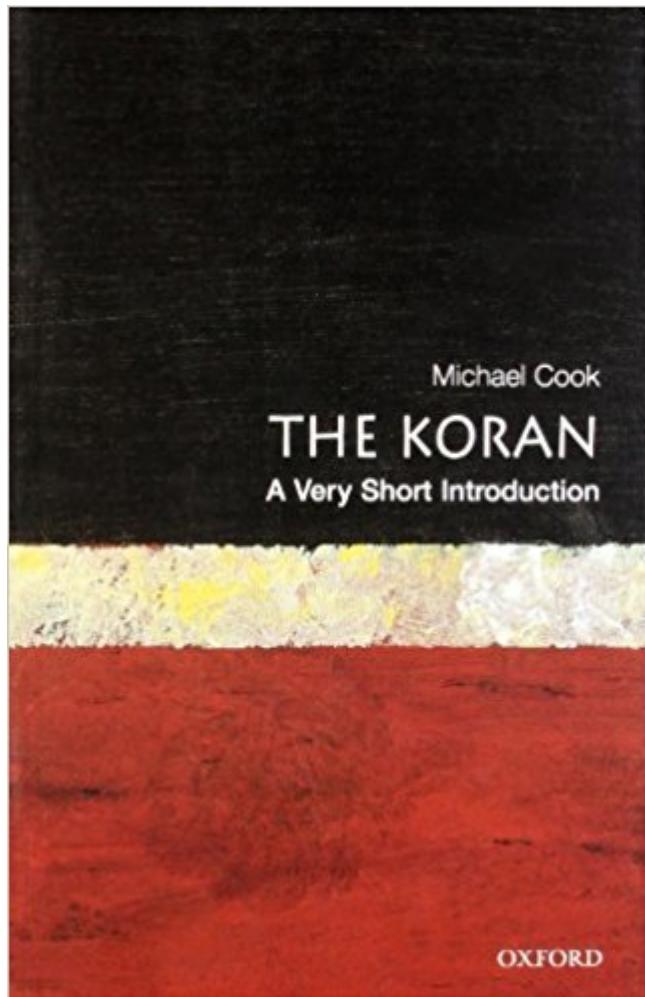


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# The Koran: A Very Short Introduction



## Synopsis

The Koran has constituted a remarkably resilient core of identity and continuity for a religious tradition that is now in its fifteenth century. In this Very Short Introduction, Michael Cook provides a lucid and direct account of the significance of the Koran both in the modern world and in that of traditional Islam. He gives vivid accounts of its role in Muslim civilization, illustrates the diversity of interpretations championed by traditional and modern commentators, discusses the processes by which the book took shape, and compares it to other scriptures and classics of the historic cultures of Eurasia. *About the Series:* Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, Very Short Introductions offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In a beautifully written, concise, and insightful study... Michael Cook makes clear some of the mysteries of this holy book....Evocative and explanatory.... For anyone, at almost any level of knowledge, wanting to learn more about the Qur'an, this is a wonderful place to start."--First Things"Professor Cook's book is informative, witty, and rich with insight. The author firmly places the Koran within its broader context, lending his treatment depth and vigor."--Mohamed Mahmoud, Tufts University

Michael Cook is Cleveland E. Dodge Professor in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University.

This book has three main sections: "The formation of the Koran", "the Koran in the traditional Muslim world" and "the Koran in the modern world". I myself did not find Cook's ruminations on "the Koran in the modern world" particularly enlightening. However, "the Koran in the traditional Muslim world" section is solid. Cook's discussions of "the Koran as codex" (technicalities of book production, etc.), "the Koran as text" (layout of the text on the page; vocalization; facsimiles from Qur'an manuscripts; the question of variant readings) and "the Koran as worship" (its use in prayer; the sample in musical notation; the problem of translation in Islamic tradition) are full of information on subjects that are very important to Muslims, but rarely discussed in popular books of this sort. In the final section, "the formation of the Koran", Cook discusses the collection of the scripture, presents some of the problems involved in the traditional accounts of its revelation and ends with a very brief airing of "a couple of examples of the many ideas that have been put forward in the last quarter-century of Western scholarship on the Koran" (p. 139), particularly the views of Wansbrough and the "much less heretical" theories of Neuwirth.

This book was not a detailed book regarding the Koran. It was more concerned with the origins of the Koran and the different interpretations by different people who have studied the Koran since the time of Mohammed . I cannot strongly recommend this book as a starting point for understanding the Koran !

very helpful.

I'm very glad I ordered this book. It is a truly academic and comprehensive introduction to the Koran. If all the books in this "short introduction" series are written as well as this one, then I would read all of them.

There is no better way to learn so much about The Koran in so little time as is possible with Michael Cook's A Very Short Introduction. I own several titles from the series and each has its strengths and weaknesses. This one shares a weakness with several of the other Short Introductions in that the topic is too exhaustive to cover in the less than two hundred pages used by Cook. Nothing I can offer will add or subtract from the previous reviews, but I will claim that the book is a good one and valuable for understanding the sacred text if you find it foreign. Furthermore, it is a handy reference that I have returned to several times as recent political conversations hover around fundamentalism

in general, and Islam in particular. Note that the two practices are no more one and the same than Christianity and fundamentalism, but both sets are often interlinked.

Close to a must read along with the companion book on Islam. I now have a much better understanding of the necessity and symbology of the koran to Islam.

For example the grave reactions to defiling of korans now makes more sense to me. Also the variations in translation right up to the very end of book. Highly recommended.

Decent intro to the history of the koran, the Arabic language, and discusses some really cool archaeological findings.

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