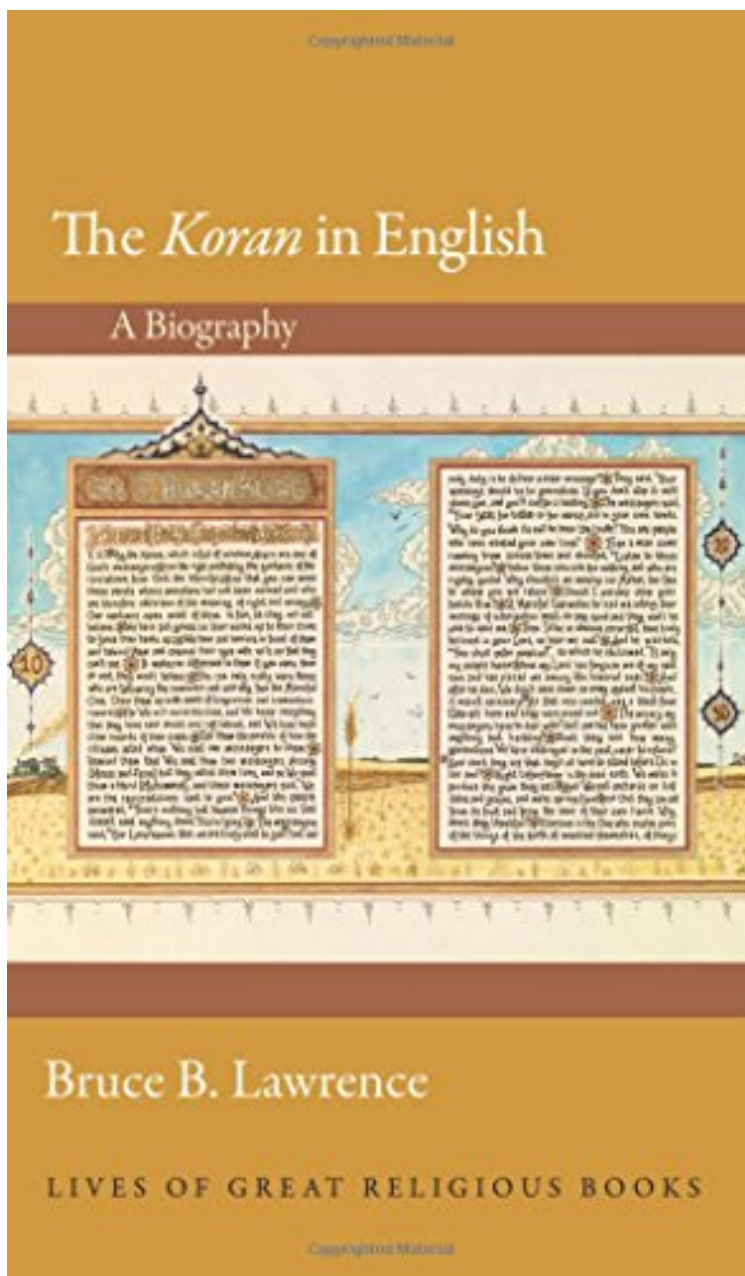


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The Koran in English: A Biography (Lives of Great Religious Books)

Bruce B. Lawrence

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Bruce B. Lawrence : The Koran in English: A Biography (Lives of Great Religious Books) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Koran in English: A Biography (Lives

of Great Religious Books):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Necessary reading for Islamic studies
By Peter Gottschalk
For anyone interested in reading the original who doesn't understand Quranic Arabic, then Lawrence's book is an essential. Even more pointedly since most Muslims don't speak Arabic (let alone Quranic Arabic) but rely on interpretations or translations of the Qur'an into their own language anyone trying to understand how Muslims read, interpret, and engage the Qur'an should read Lawrence's book to appreciate the complexities involved with any translation. The author moves deftly between historical, linguistic, political, and religious matters that all play crucial roles in how Muslims and non-Muslims have come to know the Qur'an through English interpretations. It's rather shocking how much is packed into 172 pages of main text without the book ever losing its readability for a general audience.
2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Scintillating Read!
By Mashal Saif
How do individuals that don't speak Arabic access the Koran? Is the translated Koran the same as the Arabic original? What are the historical and contemporary politics, challenges and delights of translating the Koran into English? These riveting questions are answered by Bruce Lawrence, one of the foremost authorities on Islam, in his masterful new book, *The Koran in English: A Biography*. This incredibly informative yet accessible text takes the reader on an expansive journey through seventh century Arabia, Muhammad's birthplace, to the Englishman Robert of Ketton in the twelfth century, who first translated the Koran into Latin. Numerous other destinations and individuals also feature prominently. The book masterfully meanders across centuries and continents, focusing particularly on the modern era. Orientalist translations of the Koran into English in the eighteenth century are put in conversation with those of South Asian Muslim scholars living under colonial rule. The efforts of Muslim converts from across the West, who journeyed to colonial India also feature in Lawrence's oeuvre. Always attuned to the latest developments, Lawrence spends many pages examining a variety of online Korans. Lawrence's focus is especially important since Muslim tweens, millennials and everyone in between (like their non-Muslim counterparts) are often glued to their smartphones and turn to the internet for virtually every need, including religious guidance and Koranic knowledge. Refusing to shy away from controversial topics, Lawrence also discusses issues ranging from: contemporary debates over the Koran's alleged permission of wife-beating; feminist translations of the Koran; Saudi Arabia's campaign to promote its version of Islam and the Koran; etc. Making sure not to reduce the Koran to a Middle Eastern or non-Western document, Lawrence devotes several pages to an examination of Sandow Birks' graphic American Quran. The visuals in this chapter and others serve as illustrations of the multifaceted nature of translations. They remind the reader that the Koran (translated or in Arabic) is not simply a written text but engenders visual, graphic and aural responses, among others. Despite covering enormous ground in a pithy 175 pages, *The Koran in English*, is neither densely obtuse nor too flighty to follow. Instead, Lawrence's engaging writing style and his frequent insertion of himself in the book's narrative brings distant places and earlier decades to life, making for a scintillating read. This book is a must for all serious students of the Koran as well as interested novices. Sections of the book, or even its entirety, would make for excellent reading in courses on Islam and the Quran.
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Clear Progress
By Todd Lawson
Even when reading an "original" language we are translating, how much more and how slippery the process when a second language comes in? Bruce Lawrence has given us all a highly estimable resource for thinking about the Quran and the Koran in English. The richness of this contemplation and the information it contains is truly illuminating, even urgent, reading. It will be an essential textbook for university courses on the Quran, from undergrad on. Two major insights: the Koran in English mirrors history and its various avatars emerge as historical documents of the highest value, especially with regard to Muslim/Christian relations. Second, it is the music of the Quran and the Koran that represents its true reality. The text of the Quran is a musical score as much as it is scripture. Its singular beauty must be heard and felt in order for the meaning event to happen. A splendid book (and beautifully produced - how unusual)!

The untold story of how the Arabic Qur'an became the English Koran
For millions of Muslims, the Qur'an is sacred only in Arabic, the original Arabic in which it was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century; to many Arab and non-Arab believers alike, the book literally defies translation. Yet English translations exist and are growing, in both number and importance. Bruce Lawrence tells the remarkable story of the ongoing struggle to render the Qur'an's lyrical verses into English and to make English itself an Islamic language. The "Koran" in English revisits the life of Muhammad and the origins of the Qur'an before recounting the first translation of the book into Latin by a non-Muslim: Robert of Ketton's twelfth-century version paved the way for later ones in German and French, but it was not until the eighteenth century that George Sale's influential English version appeared. Lawrence explains how many of these early translations, while part of a Christian agenda to "know the enemy," often revealed grudging respect for their Abrahamic rival. British expansion in the modern era produced an anomaly: fresh English translations from the original Arabic not by Arabs or non-Muslims but by South Asian Muslim scholars. The first book to explore the complexities of this translation saga, *The "Koran" in English* also looks at cyber Korans, versions by feminist translators, and now a graphic Koran, the American Qur'an created by the acclaimed visual artist Sandow Birk.

"Comprehensive. . . . Lawrence has done pathbreaking work for English-speaking students of the Quran."--Publishers Weekly
"Lively, open-minded and erudite. . . . You don't have to be a Muslim or all that religiously inclined to find this book, the latest installment in the sprightly Princeton University Press series called Lives of Great Religious Books, delightful reading."--Patrick Reardon, Chicago Tribune
"Exploring the motivations, reactions, and inspirations for other activities makes this work not only unique but also valuable for those trying to evaluate the discussions surrounding translations of the Koran."--Muhammed Hassanali, Booklist
"From the Back Cover" At a moment when historically grounded reflection on European and American interactions with Islam and Muslims is vital, Bruce Lawrence offers an engaging and opinionated book based on wide-ranging scholarship. Accessible to adventurous beginners and illuminating for specialists, The "Koran" in English is a terrific read."--Kecia Ali, author of Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Quran, Hadith, and Jurisprudence
"Lawrences lively and fascinating study ranges well beyond textual history. It probes the international politics of Quran publication and even showcases the recently completed graphic Quran of American artist Sandow Birk. There is nothing like this book."--Jane Dammen McAuliffe, editor of the Encyclopaedia of the Quran
"Bruce Lawrences The "Koran" in English is a masterful reception history of the Muslim scripture. A scripture is always a scripture to someone, and Lawrence takes us on a magical, erudite journey through the centuries. Here we see the Quran not as a text that floats above time and place, but read, internalized, contested, and engaged by a host of believers, scholars, mystics, artists, and polemicists. A rich and engaging read that could only come from the pen of one of the most brilliant and humane scholars of our time. Enthusiastically recommended for both scholarly audiences and wide readership!"--Omid Safi, Duke University
"A major contribution. This book is the first systematic treatment of the Qur'an in English translation and, I think, is destined to be a seminal work."--Ziauddin Sardar, author of Mecca: The Sacred City
"This is an excellent book--and with recent interest in the Qur'an both positive and negative, the time is right for it."--Amir Hussain, coeditor of A Concise Introduction to World Religions
About the Author
Bruce B. Lawrence is the Nancy and Jeffrey Marcus Humanities Professor Emeritus of Religion at Duke University. His many books include Who Is Allah?; New Faiths, Old Fears: Muslims and Other Asian Immigrants in American Religious Life; and Shattering the Myth: Islam beyond Violence (Princeton). He lives in Hillsborough, North Carolina.