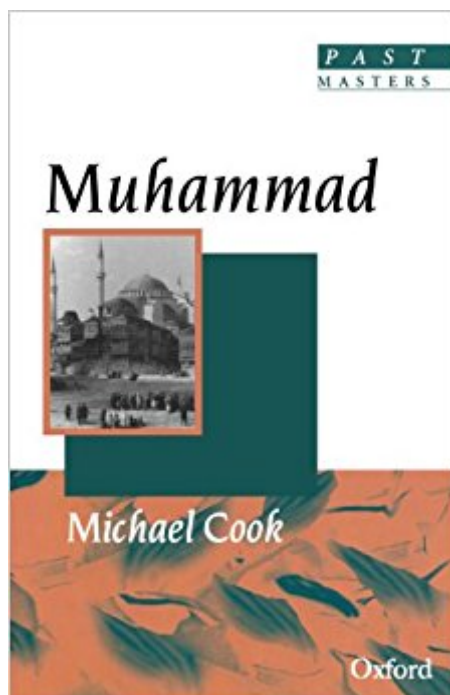


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Muhammad (Past Masters)



Synopsis

Just over a sixth of the world's population subscribes to the Muslim belief that 'there is no god but God, and Muhammad is his Messenger'. Michael Cook gives an incisive account of the man who inspired this faith, drawing on the traditional Muslim sources to describe Muhammad's life and teaching. He also attempts to stand back from this traditional picture to question how far it is historically justified.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"This very interesting, readable introduction should be of great value to beginners; the organization around the theme of monotheism is excellent."--James E. McGoldrick, Cedarville College
"Brief, thoughtful, immensely readable; a perfect introduction to Islam."--Professor Peter W. Fay, Caltech

Michael Cook is a Professor of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University. He is the author of several books on the history of the Middle East.

I have been a serious student of the history of western religions for 5 or 6 years, with emphasis on the beginnings and early years of Christianity in the context of the cultures, philosophies and religions of the time (Jewish, Greek, Roman, Persian etc.), and the subsequent development of the 6th-7th century world in which Islam arose and flourished. I have accumulated a sizable reference collection and thought I hadn't missed very much. But I just ran across Michael Cook's

'Muhammad', and it is the book I would recommend that any interested beginner read for a short account of Muhammed and the origins of Islam. Only 89 pages, it is especially good on the relationships between Islam and its Arabian cultural roots, and between Islam and Judaism & Christianity. The writing style is so clear and effective that it took my breath away more than once. Other reviewers here criticize it as an apology for Islam, as speculating things that are in dispute, and as not being the best source on this subject. The first says less about this book or about Islam than it does about the reviewer. The second is true but trivial - Cook is clear that he is speculating when he does and it is a strength of this book that he is willing to. From my extensive reading, there is nothing in his speculations that is unreasonable. On the third, there are other good introductory books such as Karen Armstrong's 'History of God' and 'Islam', but this is the best well-written short treatment I have seen. Cook wrote a short, clear book in part by leaving out all the "maybes" and "so-and-so doesn't agree with this theory" verbiage. If you want a longer, every question & detail covered, a struggle to get through, reference-style treatment, well, they're out there. That's not what this is.

Michael Cook's brief biography of Muhammad meets all the criteria of a fine, insightful analysis, worthy of repeated readings. I had first come across it in a graduate school seminar on "Muhammad and the origins of Islam" back in 1989, and I was immediately struck by its conciseness, its getting down to basics in narrating the life and historical fact of Muhammad. More, Cook adds on chapters putting Muhammad in historical and religious perspective of Middle Eastern monotheism, which cover the monotheist understanding of the universe, law, politics and history. Throughout, Cook's narrative and analysis makes splendid reading, and one gains significant insight by repeated re-readings. I would recommend this short book to anyone wishing to get a first orientation to Muhammad, Islam, and the Qu'ran.

Books in the Past Masters series are always outstanding.

Was a good little book. Even though it is small it is chocked with interesting information and was well worth the purchase.

Good

I enjoyed it as much as I had enjoyed Cook's A Short History of Quran. He writes, plainly and is

compellingly very impressive.

Good Deal!

An interesting and original semi-biography. If you want a chronological description of his life, then this is not for you. But if you are interested in an original perspective, check out this small book.

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