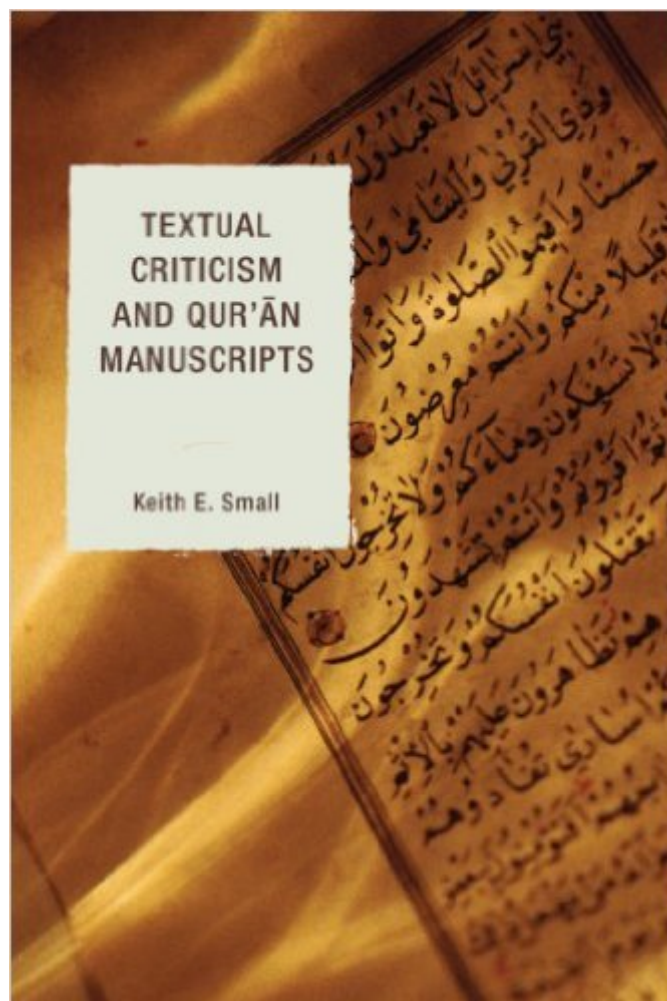


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Textual Criticism And Qur'an Manuscripts



Synopsis

This unique work takes a method of textual analysis commonly used in studies of ancient Western and Eastern manuscripts and applies it to twenty-one early Qur'an manuscripts. Keith Small analyzes a defined portion of text from the Qur'an with two aims in view: to recover the earliest form of text for this portion, and to trace the historical development of this portion to the current form of the text of the Qur'an. Small concludes that though a significantly early edited form of the consonantal text of the Qur'an can be recovered, its original forms of text cannot be obtained. He also documents the further editing that was required to record the Arabic text of the Qur'an in a complete phonetic script, as well as providing an explanation for much of the development of various recitation systems of the Qur'an. This controversial, thought-provoking book provides a rigorous examination into the history of the Qur'an and will be of great interest to Quranic Studies scholars.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In this book, which draws from his 2008 doctoral dissertation, Dr. Small surveys the status of, and issues within, Qur'an textual criticism, giving a discussion of the range of variations and

development in the manuscripts he considers: 22 manuscripts (19 of which are from the 1st 4 centuries). Dr. Small has included greyscale images of a page or two from each of the manuscripts / mushafs under discussion as well as approximate dates and physical and stylistic descriptions of each. Among his topics are: *orthographic variants involving long vowels, *copyist mistakes, *diacritical mark variants and variants affecting grammar, *rasm variants, *variant verse divisions, *physical corrections to manuscripts, *discerning intentionality / non-intentionality in variants, and *effects of orality upon written transmission. Perhaps most importantly, Dr. Small applies a methodology (reasoned eclecticism) which has served biblical textual criticism for more than a century but is not controlled by a particular religious or political ideology and is flexible enough to take into account the issues unique to the transmission of Arabic texts and the process of development of the Arabic written forms. "Textual Criticism and Qur'an Manuscripts" will certainly be an essential reference for anyone working in the field of the history of the written text of the Qur'an. It will also be a good primer on the current status of Qur'anic textual studies for laypeople as well as religious scholars who wish to learn more about the earliest manuscripts of the Qur'an.

While this book isn't for everyone as it tends to be written for those who know some history of Islam and have some understanding (or willing to learn on the fly) of textual criticism on a whole, the book is a good treatment of a subject in need of study. I have not seen much in recent Islamic study that suggests a critical, non-dogmatic look at the text and transmission of the Koran. Dr. Small does a good job in tackling a small section of what could be a larger commentary. Dr. Small takes a trees from the forest approach and looks at a small and conservative section of the Koran with some good credentials and a good number of manuscripts. He treats the subject fairly and pulls from his experience with New Testament textual criticism to establish a good basis for his study. The beginning of the book sets up the middle nicely and while it could get a little rough in the middle for people without much experience in the subject of TC, one can follow along with what he sees (a video series would be a great supplemental to this book). The best part of the book is the conclusions he draws and the writing at the end. Again, Dr. Small treats the text fairly but is very honest and open at how little the current Koran can trace itself back to the autograph(s). The New Testament is the pinnacle of textual transmission for any literature of the early era, and the Koran has a different pathway it takes for transmission and origination. Modern Islamic scholarship tends to be too dogmatic to treat the transmission of what early Muslim authors had no trouble admitting. The history of of early Islam that Dr. Small points to is enlightening and interesting. If you get into textual criticism study or a deeper study in witnessing and debating Muslims (or understanding their

full history) this is a book to pick up for sure. Final Grade - A-

A work that nearly stands alone by subject matter and technical depth. Examines over 20 different manuscripts carefully (includes photocopies of them) and gives explanation for why much of the textual tradition of the Qur'an was either lost or intentionally destroyed. Some of the textual variants seemed trivial to me personally, as have many Biblical variants, but there was an even handed treatment of the material evidence. I felt the text constructed the purposes and methods of textual criticism in a respectful manner beginning from the ground up. Not a very welcome text in the eyes of Islamic fundamentalism but useful for thoughtful inquiry concerning the text's reliability.

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