



# The Qur#ān: An Introduction by Anna M. Gade.

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al-Ma'mūn's reign. Fair enough: the policies of the seventh Abbasid monarch are inherently fascinating (Abbasid studies would be far less interesting without them). One might argue that the marketing of the book is misleading: it is as much a revisionist study of al-Ma'mūn's reign as it is a close discussion of the themes of messianism. But no matter: Yücesoy brings much attention to bear on the latter topic and succeeds in underscoring the merits of his material as grist for scholarship.

But the effort to tie al-Ma'mūn's initiatives to contemporary messianic activity is not wholly successful. The caliph's initiatives have sparked debate over many decades of modern scholarship, and it seems unlikely that Yücesoy's arguments will settle things. He seems to say, for example, that prophecies played a central part in justifying the turn to "ancient wisdom," an ef-

fort represented by the many texts that were rendered into Arabic as the translation movement matured. But if the foreign texts were recognized as yielding rich material, much of it with a lasting application for the practical needs of the Abbasid Empire, then was the need to justify their use really so pressing? Equally problematic is the discussion of the *Miḥna*. Yücesoy provides a helpful summary of the various, sometimes clashing views of modern scholarship regarding the "Inquisition." But his effort to map out a new position—in proposing that al-Ma'mūn's program was one of *tajdīd*, of "religious renewal and restoration," informed in turn by an appropriation of messianic themes—comes very late in the book and is quite brief. The argument, on its face, is certainly plausible but deserves greater attention than is given it here.

*The Qurʾān: An Introduction.* By Anna M. Gade. Foundations of Islam. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2010. Pp. xiv + 304. \$90 (cloth).

REVIEWED BY WILLIAM A. GRAHAM, *Harvard University*

This is not an easy book to review. Its author is demonstrably well-versed in not only qurʾānic studies and her special area of interest, Southeast Asian Islam, but also the wider range of Islamic religious literature, history, and practice, both east and west. She has produced a remarkable, admirable, and in many respects successful attempt to present the Qurʾān not simply as text but as *scripture*, in both its origins and its subsequent history, and she has done so within the compass of a single book of just under three-hundred pages. However, the very impressive range of topics covered may make her book less than wholly successful in providing a manageable "introduction" to the Qurʾān "for a university classroom" (p. xi), as her title and obvious intention would want it to be. I shall return to this issue below.

The book consists of six chapters. The first, "The Written Qurʾān," treats the written text itself. Generally excellent, this shortest chapter does not give quite enough detail or explanation (by comparison with other topics in the book) for some aspects. For example, the additional "markings" (p. 3) in the written/printed text are not given very clear or complete treatment. Nor does the author take advantage of the mention of *sajdah* in Q 41:37 to mention also the several verses marked as requiring prostration when

reciting—notwithstanding two further mentions of *sajdah* (pp. 221, 266; *sajdah* is not in the Index). It was also surprising not to find mention of manuscript versus print versions of the text.

Chapter 2, "The Multifaceted Qurʾān," is divided between (i) considerations regarding the historicity of the Qurʾān in the traditional Muslim view, in which we also get a sketch of the history of the early Islamic community and its reverberations in the qurʾānic text itself, and (ii) discussion of "qurʾānic beliefs," by which Gade refers to important themes or topics treated, such as *tawhīd*, God, angels and Satan, theodicy, good works, predestination/free will, prophecy, Muhammad and his relation to the Revelation, and eschatology. If this sounds like a daunting list of topics for even a long chapter, it is.

The third chapter, "Readings of the Qurʾān," is, if anything, even more ambitious. Here Gade treats the recitative traditions regarding the Qurʾān (after a brief introduction to the *ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*); the history of the qurʾānic text in both traditional Muslim and modern academic scholarship; the oral tradition of Qurʾān recitation in the different "readings"; the complexities of, and varied topics regarding, qurʾānic language and style and the history of their treatment; the vexed issue of "clear" and "obscure" passages in

Muslim interpretation; the technical discipline of interpretation or exegesis, *tafsīr*; and the issues of translation and novel, contemporary modes of access to the Qurʾān and its interpretation. This chapter thus also covers a vast number of topics that together suggest the range and extent of interpretive materials and approaches that fourteen centuries of Muslim treatment of the Qurʾān have produced.

“The Qurʾān’s Guidance” (Chapter 4) pushes the reader into the complex world of historical legal uses of the Qurʾān, *fiqh* traditions of legal inquiry and ethical and legal theory, the so-called five pillars of practice, the five “schools” (*madhāhib*), the derivation of legal rulings in Sunni practice, sunnah and hadith, “occasions of revelation,” abrogation theory and practice, and qurʾānic ethical takes on major social issues such as women’s societal roles and practices. Gade treats here finally even qurʾānic positions on global concerns such as colonialism, modern state organization, liberation movements, and ecological responsibility (this last is a recurring interest of the author throughout the book).

Chapter 5, “The Present Qurʾān,” explores various ways in which the Qurʾān is present in everyday life, art, and piety. Topics treated include qurʾānic allusions and citations in vernacular poetry; formulaic usages in everyday life; theological debates over the created (*makhlūq*) and inimitable (*muʿjiz*) nature of the Qurʾān; the powerful emotional impact of the qurʾānic word on listeners or readers; memorization/preservation (*taḥfīz*) of the qurʾānic word in Muslim piety; qurʾānic healing practices; qurʾānic recitation practices inside and outside the *ṣalāt*; the Qurʾān in visual art (calligraphy), oral performance, popular usages, and devotional practices such as *dhikr* involving recitation of God’s names or passages such as the *Fātihah*. Much interesting material is found in this chapter, but it is surprising that no apparent use was made of Navid Kermani’s important book, *Gott ist Schön: Das ästhetische Erleben des Koran* (Munich, 1999).

Finally, “Space, Time, and the Boundaries of Knowledge” (Chapter 6), probes the Qurʾān’s depictions of the nature of God, the cosmos, and the eschaton, offering fuller citation of qurʾānic stories about the prophets, previous communities, and the Last Judgment. This is an interesting and innovative way to conclude the book in that it tries to do justice to the powerful qurʾānic themes of human limitation and divine infinitude.

This brief conspectus of the book’s contents should indicate how much of Islamic religious life and history Gade touches upon in trying to present as full a

picture as possible of the permeation of Islamic piety and practice, as well as culture more generally, by the qurʾānic word. Readers cannot come away from the book without a strong awareness of the qurʾānic dimensions of Muslim thought, piety, and usage in every age from the beginning of the tradition to the present day. The book contains many excursions of up to about six pages into examples of qurʾānic involvement in different dimensions of Islamic life around the world across the centuries, often giving historical summaries, as of Islamic origins (Chapter 2), or recent interpretations of the Qurʾān regarding the social status of women (Chapter 4). It also tries to introduce the several qurʾānic sciences, from exegesis to recitation and “readings.” At the same time, it contains a large number of translated passages from the Qurʾān that reflect the major themes and styles of the text. A strength throughout is its sensitivity to both Muslim and non-Muslim scholarship and their divergences.

All of this is laudable and impressive, but it is this reviewer’s impression—as someone who also has taught Qurʾān courses—that it would be hard to use this book as a first introduction to the Qurʾān without a lot of supplementary readings and lectures to make it intelligible. Where it might excel, however, would be either as a resource for targeted reading of selected material on a given topic (recitation, *tafsīr*, qurʾānic aesthetics) or as a stimulating summary reading near the end of an introductory course on the Qurʾān or even the Islamic tradition. The actual reading is often very slow going because of the density of material and multiple objectives for any given section. To move rapidly from the qurʾānic text to the Muʿtazilah, the Mihna, Ghazali, Sufism, or Sayyid Qutb, and back again, is a bit daunting an exercise for beginning students. However, the challenge that this book offers good students is undeniable and makes the work definitely worth considering by any teacher.

The book is generally very well and attractively produced with several good photographs, two tables, and helpful back matter, including a list of all cited qurʾānic texts. Bibliographically, I was surprised in a few places by omissions of relevant scholarly works for some of the many different topics treated: e.g., the absence of Daniel Gimaret’s *Les noms divins en Islam* (Paris, 1988), given the long discussion of the Most Beautiful Names of God; or John Burton’s *The Sources of Islamic Law: Islamic Theories of Abrogation* (Edinburgh, 1990), given the extensive treatment of abrogation. The general bibliography in the back matter is adequate but somewhat idiosyncratic. Desir-

able precision is lacking in such matters as citation of translated or reissued works (e.g., Gätje or Nöldeke), where the language and/or date of the original edition is not indicated (this is becoming a lamentably widespread practice that is especially misleading for beginning students). As for coverage, it is understandably a bibliography aimed at introductory studies, but even so some important milestones in the study of the Qurʾān have been omitted, most notably I. Goldziher's *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden, 1920), all of Angelika Neuwirth's works, Paul Nwyia's *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique* (Beirut, 1970), and all of the relevant major articles from the *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān* (which encyclopedia Gade does cite and to which she herself is a contributor), e.g., Nasr Abu Zayd, "Everyday Life and the Qurʾān (online, Leiden, 2012)." Some typographical or other

errors noted are: p. xi, l. 12 from bottom: insert "of" after "appreciation"; p. 4, l. 18: "*tarawih*" should be replaced by or followed by "*tarawih*" as the plural translation of "extra prayers"; p. 10: insert "they" at beginning of line 7; p. 21, l. 8: "*munāfiqun*" (plur.), not "*munāfiq*"; p. 90, l. 15 from bottom: end of line should read "of the figure of Musaylima"; p. 94, l. 2: the passage that follows is from a book edited by McNeill and Waldman, but the excerpted translation is by Walter Klein, not McNeill and Waldman; p. 101, l. 17 from bottom: A. L. Tibawi is sadly not "contemporary"—he died in 1981; p. 113, l. 5: "*illab*" would be more precise than "*taʿlil*" in the sentence here; p. 144, paragraph 2, l. 3: insert "that" after *habitus*; p. 160, l. 4 from bottom: "mid-1200s," not "mid-1300s"; p. 173, l. 5 from bottom: "are cited," not "is cited"; p. 196, l. 5: "*linnās*," not "*linnas*."

*An Introduction to Islamic Archaeology*. By Marcus Milwright. The New Edinburgh Surveys, edited by Carole Hillenbrand. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010. Pp. x + 260 + 68 figs. \$105 (cloth), \$32.50 (paperback).

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL JENNINGS, *University of Chicago*

In 1948, University of Chicago Professor Robert J. Braidwood published a slim volume titled *Prehistoric Men*.<sup>1</sup> Braidwood's aim was to introduce the general public to the academic field of prehistory. With clarity of expression and evident passion, he succeeded in this regard, and the impact of his book quickly surpassed its modest page count. As an introduction to the field, it remains important.

One could perhaps draw a parallel between the field of prehistory in the middle of the twentieth century and the field of Islamic archaeology today. On the one hand, the numerous ongoing excavations of Islamic sites stand as a testament to what A. Walmsley calls the evolution of a "clearly identifiable and adequately defined field of archaeological study concerned with the world of Islam and Muslim societies of the past."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Islamic archaeology is still in search of introductory texts that convey a mission statement akin to that provided in *Prehistoric Men*, as well as a more comprehensive textbook for students. Into this void Marcus Milwright has placed his new work, *An Introduction to Islamic Archaeology*.

*An Introduction to Islamic Archaeology* is an accessible and thoughtful book. In the introduction, the book's strongest chapter, Milwright carefully presents the need to establish a working definition of Islamic archaeology and to articulate its relationship to the fields of both Islamic history and art history. Archaeology differs from the field of history in its emphasis on the interpretation of physical evidence, and it diverges from art history in its interest in spatial relationships and concern with material culture as a whole, rather than objects d'art alone. Each field has a story to tell and Milwright's expressed aim is to "deal both with the principal discoveries of archaeological research carried into the Islamic period and with the practice of Islamic archaeology."<sup>3</sup> *An Introduction to Islamic Archaeology* contains three parts: 1) an examination of the archaeology of late antiquity and the early Islamic period; 2) a series of thematic chapters on topics like the countryside, urbanism, religious practices, trade, and industry; and 3) a look at later centuries, including the interaction between the Islamic world and western Europe.

Over the past few decades, several scholars have addressed the history of Islamic archaeology in terms

<sup>1</sup> R. Braidwood, *Prehistoric Men*, 1st ed. (Chicago, 1948).

<sup>2</sup> Alan Walmsley, "Archaeology and Islamic studies: the development of a relationship," in *From Handaxe to Khan*, ed. Kjeld von Folsach, Henrik Thrane and Ingolf Thuesen (Aarhus, 2004), 318.

<sup>3</sup> Marcus Millwright, *An Introduction to Islamic Archaeology* (Edinburgh, 2010), 8.