

Schools of Qur’anic exegesis: Genesis and development. By Hussein Abdul-Raof. New York: Routledge, 2010, pp. 274. ISBN: 978-0-415-44957 (hbk).

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As its title indicates, the book under review which consists of nine chapters, “delineates precisely the odyssey of the birth, development and growth of Qur’anic exegesis and its various schools” (p ix). According to the author in the introduction, “the present work will plug the research gap in this vital discipline of Qur’anic Studies” (p. xvii).

In chapter one, which is the preamble to Qur’anic exegesis, information is provided on the evolution and development of Qur’anic exegesis. The author acknowledges that “the Uthmanic master codex has achieved the textual unity of the revelation” (p. 2). This chapter discusses the emergence of the following three prominent schools of Qur’anic exegesis: i) Ibn ‘Abbās’ Makkah School of *Tafsīr* (exegesis), ii) Ubayy ibn Ka‘ab’s Madīnah School, and iii) Abdullah ibn Mas‘ūd’s Kūfah School. It also mentions that a leading prominent early successor and authoritative exegete, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, set up the Baṣrah School of Exegesis (p. 7). Readers should keep in mind that the author relies for his narrative on works of Western scholars, such as Ignaez Goldzihar, Harms Birkeland, Nabia Abbot, John Wansbrough and Fred Leemhuis. The most striking aspect of chapter one is the discussion on the developmental phases of *tafsīr*; i.e., formative phase, recording phase, and modern phase which heralds in the modern approach to *tafsīr*. The identification and functions of four genres of exegesis are also discussed by the author in this chapter (pp. 2-4).

The second chapter comprehensively discusses the relationship between exegesis and *ḥadīth* (Prophet Tradition). The centrality of *ḥadīth* in *tafsīr* is brilliantly highlighted. A comprehensive account is also given by the author on the initial problem of fabricated *ḥadīth* and a mechanism which was worked out to critically study *ḥadīth* by looking at the chain of authority and the *matn* (text of *ḥadīth*). The historical account of *ḥadīth* as well as its functions is also discussed (pp. 36-41). In this chapter, the author considers the following as factors

responsible for the forgery of *ḥadīth*: the political crisis following the assassination of the second *Khalīfah*, the innovative scholastic view, the attempt to persuade the people to become righteous, the attempt to support ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the emergence of sects, tribal solidarity, and the rise of heretics (pp. 42-45). In this chapter, the author also discusses (pp. 45-54) some aspects of the stages of *ḥadīth*, notably the validity of *ḥadīth*, transmission and forms of defects in *ḥadīth*, chain of authority, classification of *ḥadīth* and criteria of *ḥadīth* authenticity which border on both *isnād* (chain of authority) and *matn* (text of *ḥadīth*).

In chapter three, the author discusses what he refers to as politico-theological aspects of Qur’ānic exegesis (p. 55). The politics of exegesis pertains to “politicizing Qur’anic exegesis” (p. 55). It is also about the emergence of both *Sunnī* and non-*Sunnī* schools of thought. In connection with this, he identifies twenty-two factors causing exegetical differences between the mainstream and non-mainstream scholars of exegesis.

In chapter four (pp. 84-110), the author examines the difference between *tafsīr* and *ta’wīl* (interpretation). While providing the connotation of the word *tafsīr*, the author draws from the submissions of eminent scholars of *tafsīr* such as al-Zarkashī, al-Suyūṭī al-Asfahānī and al-Dhahabī and enumerates approximately twenty-five areas of concern within *tafsīr*. The author gives a comprehensive account of the use and misuse of *ta’wīl* which has acquired a double-edged meaning.

Chapter five focuses on the evolution of exegesis, the origin and the various historical stages of development of Qur’ān’s exegesis, namely the period of the Prophet (SAW), the period of the *Ṣaḥābah* as well as the period of the early and late successor. The chapter also highlights the sources of *tafsīr*, its features, as well as the birth of formative schools of exegesis in Makkah, Madīnah, Kūfah and Baṣrah (pp. 110-129). The discussion on certain features of the recording phases of Qur’ānic exegesis reveals a number of interesting features, some of which touch on juristic studies, historical commentaries, topical exegesis, mystical exegesis, the Judeo-Christian anecdotes, among others (pp. 140-142). A significant reference is made to the *Andalus* exegeses, which are linguistic exegesis and jurisprudential exegesis, represented by prominent scholars such as Abū Bakr, al-‘Arabī, and al-Qurṭubī. A very salient feature of this chapter is the account given on the Sufi School of

exegesis and some of the Sufi major works including *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* of Muḥyi al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240) which is regarded as the most influential work of Sufi Qur'ānic exegesis. The characteristics of the Sufi School of exegesis are also enumerated in this chapter.

In chapter six, the discussion centres on the formative schools of exegesis in Makkah, Madīnah, and Baṣrah under Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn Mas'ūd, and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī respectively. Features of each of the four schools receive adequate attention from the author. The author makes a succinct comparative analysis of the four schools arguing that both Madīnah and Baṣrah schools of exegesis rely heavily on *ḥadīth*. The fear of using forged *ḥadīth* caused the Kūfah and Makkah schools to be reluctant in relying heavily on *ḥadīth* for the explanation of the Qur'ān. It is pertinent to note that evolution of the sects and their impact on the formative schools is discussed fairly thoroughly.

The seventh chapter, the longest of all chapters in the book, carefully discusses “linguistic and stylistic tools of exegesis” and explains the exegetical linguistic-stylistic tools that enable exegetes to penetrate the complex linguistic-stylistic fortress “of the multi-faceted Qur'ānic discourse” (p. 170). A list of prerequisites of the exegete is also outlined. The author enumerates, discusses, and justifies what is required of Qur'ānic scholars to be a qualified exegete of the Qur'ān. Some of these pre-requisites include co-referentiality, which is described as “the most recurrent linguistic problem (issue) in Qur'ānic exegesis” (p. 170). This is splashed with adequate illustrative examples. Other pre-requisites are repetition and co-referentiality, intertextuality, lexical morphology, context co-text, linguistic and stylistic *mutashābihāt* among others.

In chapter eight, the author focuses on the jurisprudential and theological tools that are particularly indispensable for correct Qur'ānic exegesis. The theological devices which are of value to any form of Qur'ān exegesis include explicit and implicit tenets of faith within the Qur'ānic discourse, which is hinged upon (*mabādi' al-īmān*), monotheism (*al-tawḥīd*), prophethood (*al-nubuwwah*), eschatology (*al-ba'th, al-ma'ād*) and reward and punishment (*al-thawāb wa-al-'iqāb*). Another very important tool discussed by the author is the Islamic legal ruling (*al-aḥkām*) and sources of Islamic jurisprudence, the sound knowledge which is a must for a scholar of Qur'ānic exegesis. Knowledge of the circumstances of revelation, which is the informative

details about the context of revelation, is also emphasised. The author argues that a sufficient mastery of these tools by the exegete is imperative for a clear understanding of some *āyāt*. In addition, he examines the abrogating and abrogated *āyāt*, Qur'ānic parables and similitude, and Makkan and Madīnan revelations the knowledge of which is *sine qua non* for a scholar to be able to venture into Qur'ānic exegesis.

The author concludes in chapter nine by recapitulating what he has already discussed in the previous chapters with a view to refreshing the readers' minds. As he aptly remarks, "the present work on the school of Qur'ānic exegesis is an informative contribution to the scholarship of this vital discipline of Qur'anic studies" (p. 242). It should, however, be noted that the use of "claim" by the author especially where he states, "Qur'an is claimed to have explained itself" is suggestive of deliberate distortion. This claim is contestable as al-Zarakashī in his *al-Burhān* and al-Suyūfī in his *al-Itiqān* had previously made informative contributions to the science of exegesis. It is clearly evident in this work that the author relies more on the works of the orientalists whose views and positions on some issues are echoed. The author in his odyssey in the field of Qur'ānic studies cannot say that there are no aspects of the Qur'ān that explain each other. Furthermore, when the new edition of the book is printed, spelling mistakes such as "inseption" (instead of "inception") on p. 1 should be avoided.

Politics and power in the Maghreb: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco from independence to the Arab Spring. By Michael J. Willis. London: Hurst & Co., 2012), pp. vii+410. ISBN: 978-184904-2-000.

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Throughout history, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has remained a region of deep interest and concern. Whereas there have been innumerable publications dealing with the history and politics of the Arab world, the *Maghreb* (North Africa) has received scanty attention from scholars. Moreover, most of these are on individual states. The