Theological approaches to Qur'anic exegesis: A practical comparative-contrastive analysis. By Hussein Abdul-Raof. New York: Routledge, 2012, pp. 287, ISBN: 978-0-415-44958-8.

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Hussein Abdul-Raof, whose research interests lie, among others, in Arabic and Qur'ānic linguistics, is a professor of linguistics at the University of Taibah, Saudi Arabia. In this book, his aim is to introduce a systematic and comprehensive analysis of various schools of Qur'ānic exegesis to the reader. He embarks on a thorough investigation of the classical and modern Qur'ānic exegetical works, offering practical analysis of the Qur'ānic discourse. He discusses the relevant exegetical genres, existing cleavages, and theological similarities/differences that exist between the schools of Qur'ānic exegesis employing a compare and contrast method to analyse chapters and verses of the Qur'ān. He does this both at micro and macro levels (p. 2).

Abdul-Raof examines traditional and rational schools of thought, such as the *Ṣūfī*, *Shī'ī*, *Ibādī*, *Mu'tazilī*, metaphysical, modern and scientific approaches to the interpretation of the Qur'ān. The study covers exegetical techniques adopted in the field of Qur'ānic exegesis from the 1st/7th century up to the beginning of the 15th/21st century. Abdul-Raof offers numerous examples to explain the Qur'ānic notions and the positions relevant to each school as well as their exegetical approach.

The book is divided into five chapters with a glossary of Arabic terms accompanied by equivalent English translation(s). There is also a comprehensive bibliography of source materials that have been consulted for writing the book. Information sources cited include both primary and secondary, manuscripts and online resources.

Chapter one is preceded by an introduction in which the author discusses his objectives and also makes reference to the examples chosen from the Qur'ān to reflect such objectives (p. 1), as well as the structure of the book (p. 5).

The focus of chapter one is a discussion of the traditional school (mainstream) of Qur'ānic exegesis, its genesis, and the sources that it depended on to proffer exegesis to Qur'ānic verses. Such sources include the Qur'ān, the customary practice of Muhammad (*Sunnah*), the views of the *ṣaḥābah* (companions), and the views of early successors. The author also refers to the notion of Qur'ānic intertextuality (*tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi-al-Qur'ān*), which is said to represent a significant tool in Qur'ānic exegesis (pp. 10-13). Alluded to in this chapter is the position that mainstream Qur'ānic exegetes have assumed towards non-mainstream exegetes of the Qur'ān (p. 26).

In chapter two, Abdul-Raof discusses the schools of rational (*tafsīr bi-al-ra'y*) exegesis as well as its sources, approaches, and development. Exegetical work conducted by these schools are classified under non-mainstream exegesis. Exegetes who fall under the non-mainstream Qur'ānic exegesis include the *Shī'ī, Ibādī, Sūfī* and *Mu'tazilī*. The chapter also offers numerous examples of informative nature meant to show why *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* is allegorically-based. Abdul-Raof also explains why mainstream exegetes are sceptical about schools of hypothetical (rational) Qur'ānic exegesis, their characteristics and criteria, as well as the reason why mainstream exegetes consider their exegetical works as *madhmūm* (objectionable). The chapter also provides a comprehensive and explanatory analysis of the exegetical and theological approaches of various schools of rational exegesis, which also includes the *Zaidi*, the *Ḥūthi* and the *Ismā'īlī*: the above represent sub-sects of the *Shī'ī*. They also include the modern school of Qur'ānic exegesis which is sub-divided into inimitability (*i'jāz*) oriented and reform-based. The former is said to be divided into socio-educational and socio-political, with the latter divided into phonetic, linguistic, stylistic, and scientific. Scientific exegesis is also sub-divided into scientific-based and number-based exegesis (p. 28). The rational school is said to attach *bāṭin* (esoteric) readings to verses or text of the Qur'ān. This approach to exegesis is referred to not as *tafsīr* (exegesis) but *ta'wīl* (interpretation). Abdul-Raof also refers to the fact that the school of rational Qur'ānic exegesis represents a platform based on which other non-mainstream approaches to Qur'ānic exegesis emerged. Theological and political cleavages were given birth to as a result of the above divergent approaches to Qur'ānic exegesis (p. 29). The chapter furnishes the readers with sample examples of exegesis

reflecting the approaches of the various schools mentioned above (p. 29-82).

Abdul-Raof presents a comprehensive explanatory discussion of the school of linguistic exegesis, its development, and connection with the notion of *i'jāz* in relation to the Qur'ānic discourse in chapter three. The chapter also offers readers an insight into the semantic, stylistic, syntactic, and phonetic features of Qur'ānic genre used by linguistic exegetes in their exegetical analysis. Apart from the above, the chapter also investigates what has been the primary concern of the school, its different approaches as well as the rhetorical, phonetic, semantic, and grammatical analysis of problems involved in the Qur'ānic discourse and its impact on the meaning of the Qur'ānic *āyah* (verse) by the linguistic exegetes. It also looks at the evolution of modes of reading as a significant exegetical technique in Qur'ānic exegesis, the distinction between the semantically-oriented and the phonetically-oriented modes of reading, and the effects of modes of reading on exegesis of the Qur'ān and theological cleavages (p. 83). Also alluded to in this chapter are the features of the school of linguistic exegesis and the suggestion that exegetes of this school, in their analysis of Qur'ānic discourse, focused on semantic, phonetic, grammatical, stylistic and textual problems. Abdul-Raof offered numerous practical examples to illustrate the various approaches of this school (pp. 83-143).

Chapter four is used to offer numerous examples using a comparative-contrastive approach that explicitly reflects the divergent exegetical positions assumed by various schools of Qur'ānic exegesis in relation to theological cleavages (p. 143). A typical example that reflects the theological differences between such schools relates to the subject of *istiwā'* (God's establishing Himself on the throne) as in verse 20:5; 7:54 (p. 151). The role of linguistics in exegesis in relation to thematic links in the Qur'ān, inter-verse (*āyah*) consonance, role of co-text and context, intertextuality (conceptual and thematic intertextuality) are also discussed (pp. 152-235).

Chapter five is used to discuss the existence of cohesiveness in the Qur'ān, in addition to that of thematic sequentiality or relatedness in reference to the views echoed by some Western writers like Richard Bell, Paret, Ohlander, and William Muir who argue that the order of

arrangement in the Qur'ān lacks cohesiveness. Abdul-Raof offers a detailed discussion surrounding the above subject, referring particularly to Richard Bell and Paret's allusion to the lack of cohesiveness/thematic orderliness in the Qur'ān and argues that, the writers' views regarding the above could be attributed to lack of understanding of the Arabic grammar. Abdul-Raof also uses this chapter to allude to the significance of context (*maqām*), co-text and *al-tanās* (intertextuality) as prerequisite tools in Qur'ānic exegesis.

Among writers in the area of Qur'ānic linguistic-stylistic discourse in English, Abdul-Raof's writings, particularly the book under review, is one of the most comprehensive ones. If the writer is using this book to inform the reader about the various schools of Qur'ānic exegesis, their approach and theological differences that exist between them, in addition to the significant role of tools such as context, co-text and intertextuality in Qur'ānic exegesis, then he could be said to have succeeded. The book is rich in source materials. Its title is, however, misleading as the book discussed more than just theological approaches of the various schools of Qur'ānic exegesis.

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Articulating Islam: Anthropological approaches to Muslim worlds. Edited by Magnus Marsden and Konstantinos Retsikas. New York: Springer, 2013, pp. 265, ISBN: 978-94-007-4266-6.

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The anthropological study of contemporary Muslim societies and traditions has become increasingly prominent in the study of the Muslim world. Anthropological studies of Islam focus on texts and practices as they are comprehended, construed and deliberated over, and experienced throughout the globe. Anthropological studies and findings have significantly contributed to some of the central debates focusing on religion and society within the discipline today. *Articulating Islam: Anthropological approaches to Muslim worlds*, is a welcome contribution to recent scholarly works on anthropological studies that