



Elsaid M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem:

Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage

Leiden: Brill, 2008, HC, 1070 pp, ISBN: 978 90 04 14948 9

This eighty-fifth volume in Brill's Handbook of Oriental Studies Series attempts to fulfill the long-standing need for an Arabic-English dictionary of Qur'anic usage. Adding an important resource for the study of the Qur'an, the *Dictionary* is distinguished by many features: It brings to English-speaking readership contextualized interpretations of the Qur'anic vocabulary through the works of classical scholars; it follows the Arabic root system, devoting one section to each of the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet; roots are alphabetically arranged with special attention given to the classification of roots with geminated second and third radicals, which are classified unlike the tradition followed by Western lexicographers such as Lane and Wehr (thus the root *s-b-b* appears after the root *s-b-ʿ*); cross references provide easy access to roots of certain foreign words which could be thought of as arising from more than one possible combination (e.g. *ā-z-r*); an inventory of the basic concepts covered by the root provides a broad framework of what it encompasses; it recognizes that abstract derivatives in Arabic are derived from concrete ones, rather than the other way around (*jamāl*, beauty, comes from *jamal*, camel, not the other way around); and it presents all morphological derivatives of a given root which are found in the Qur'an, along with their frequency.

By necessity, such a work has to base itself on existing source material. The authors chose the *al-Muʿjam al-mufahras li afāz al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, the well-known concordance of Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿabd al-Bāqī, both for their dictionary entries as well as for the frequency count. The glosses are based on Abdel Haleem's *The Qurʾān—A New Translation* with necessary changes. Other translations mentioned in the bibliography (under "English Sources") are *The Holy Qur'an: Arabic Text, English Translation and Commentary* by Maulana Muhammad Ali, a follower of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadyān, who is considered an imposter by majority of Muslims; *The Message of the Qurʾān* by Muhammad Asad, whose rationalistic interpretations of the supra-rational of the Qur'an led him, among other things, to deny such fundamental tenets of Islam as the role played by angels and jinn and whose translation often chooses the far-fetched rather than familiar meanings of certain words; and the equally problematic *An English Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an* by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, who imposed im-

agery of English Romantic poets onto the Qur'ānic vocabulary. These are clearly inappropriate choices for the English translations of the Qur'ān to be used in a work which claims to be “based upon the interpretations by classical Qur'ānic commentators of the contextualized occurrences of the finite vocabulary items used in the Qur'ānic text” (xvi). The *Dictionary* has, however, managed to avoid some of the doctrinal problems which the choice of the aforementioned modernist translations of the Qur'ān would have brought to it. There is, for instance, no trace of the Lahori Aḥmadi creed in its gloss on Prophet Īsā ﷺ, no mention of his alleged death in Kashmir and the transference of the role of the messiah to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. In some cases, however, the reliance on these translations becomes apparent—for instance, the *Dictionary* takes the obscure meaning of *ibil* (clouds) used by Muhammad Asad in his translation of Q. 88:17 instead of the more generally held view that it refers to camels.

It took the authors seven years to complete this work. In the course of their project they had to make certain difficult decisions, such as whether or not to include the so-called scientific interpretations in their work. Such decisions and the editorial parameters have been indicated in the “Introduction”. The Arabic text used in the *Dictionary* is clear though not elegant; due consideration has been given to properly transliterate words; and the work has received proper editorial care. Notwithstanding the reservations mentioned above, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'ānic Usage* is a significant new contribution to Qur'ānic scholarship and will provide an important resource for those who cannot access the original Arabic works.



George Saliba: *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance*

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When, where, and how did the Islamic scientific tradition begin? When, where and how did it reach its zenith? What did it accomplish? And when did its decline begin? These are the basic questions that have puzzled historians of science for over a quarter century as they reconsider the “classical narrative” formulated by earlier grand Orientalists such as Goldziher and his successors. George Saliba’s new book, which he calls “essentially an essay in historiography” (vii), joins the many seminal works he has written over the last thirty years that have constituted some of the most original studies on the history of Islamic science and have been