

BOOK REVIEWS

Muḥammad Wāʿiẓ Zādah al-Khurāsānī (ed.). *Al-Muʿjam fī fiqh lughā al-Qurʾān wa sirr balāghatihi*. Mashhad: Āstān Quds Rizvī, 1419/1998—, 17 vols. to date. HC, ISBN (set): 964-444-179-6.

In this age of fast food, short attention spans, and quick publishing, *al-Muʿjam fī fiqh lughā al-Qurʾān wa sirr balāghatihi* (*Encyclopedic Lexicon of the Vocabulary of the Qurʾān and Secrets of its Rhetoric*) is a monumental undertaking, destined to produce one of the most important reference works on the language of the Qurʾān in recent history.

The title inspired by the classical work of Abū Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ismāʿīl al-Thaʿlabī al-Naysābūrī (350/961-430/1038), *Fiqh al-lughā wa sirr al-ʿarabiyya* (p. 14), the scope of the Muʿjam is defined by an ambition to understand all the words of the Qurʾān. These are arranged according to their radicals, in order to more effectively approach the Qurʾān’s linguistic secrets and its inimitability (*iʿjāz*). Its team of researchers working under the able guidance of Ustādh Muḥammad Wāʿiẓ Zādah al-Khurāsānī has so far produced seventeen volumes (up to the root kh-m-r). Each volume consists of approximately 900 pages.

The characteristic features of the *Muʿjam* include the following:

1. It provides a linguistic explanation of the Qurʾānic vocabulary based on classical sources. Each root is treated as a single entry. Listed in the title of each entry are the derivatives, their frequency of occurrence in the Qurʾān, along with a count of their presence in Makkan and Madinan suras. This is followed by a listing of all the words derived from the given root in surah: ayah format.
2. Next come linguistic explanations under the subheading *al-nuṣūṣ al-lughawiyya*; this chronologically arranged subsection provides a summary of classical lexicographical scholarship, beginning with *Kitāb al-ʿayn* of Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad (ca. 100/718-ca.160/776) and including all major lexicons produced by both Sunnī and Shīʿa scholars.
3. This section is followed by exegetical explanations (*al-nuṣūṣ al-*

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tafsīriyya), once again based comprehensively on fourteen centuries of Islamic reflection and scholarship. This section lists all Qur'ānic usages of the words derived from the root under consideration along with their brief explanations as found in tafsīr works.

4. *Al-Uṣūl al-lughawī*, the next subsection, provides insights into the basic meanings of the root under consideration, various dimensions of the meanings associated with it, and a brief discussion on words derived from it (*mushtaqqāt*).
5. The fifth subsection, *al-isti'ṁāl al-Qur'ānī*, lists a numerical count of the Qur'ānic usage of various derivatives. Here verses of the Qur'ān are quoted in part or in full, and Qur'ānic usage is linguistically explained. For instance, this subsection for the word *abad* states that the word occurs in the Qur'ān fourteen times in a positive sense and fourteen times in a negative sense. All verses containing *abad* in a negative sense are then listed in a systematic way, indicating the addition which makes it negative (*lan*, *lā*, or *mā*), and the context in which it appears. Likewise, for its positive usage, the *Mu'jam* states that the word *abadan* is used in the Qur'ān twelve times with an active participle (*ism al-fā'il*) in the *manṣūb* state and twice with a verb. In eight verses, it occurs with the word *khālidīn*, as a description of the People of Paradise (*ahl al-janna*) and in three verses as a description of the People of Fire (*ahl al-nār*); once with *mākīthīn* as a description of the People of Paradise; and it is used twice without *khālidīn* or *mākīthīn*. The section then provides Rāzī's reflections on "forever" (*abad*).

This structure is followed fairly rigorously over the seventeen volumes published thus far over the last twelve years. There are some exceptions where linguistic and exegetical material has been combined under a single heading, for instance in the entry "Āzar", which focuses on classical discussion about his identity and whether or not it was the name of the father of Prophet Ibrāhīm, upon him peace. After providing a listing of all the classical opinions, the entry then discusses, in some detail, opinions of major exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Ṭūsī, al-Zamakhsharī, and al-Qurṭubī. This encyclopedic style increases the utility of the *Mu'jam*.

Some entries are exhaustive. The root *kh-l-q*, for instance, spans some 400 pages (17:286-686). The entry begins by stating that there are fifty-one words derived from this root, which occur 261 times in 72 different suras out of which 59 were revealed in Makka and 13 in Madina. The words derived from this root appear 211 times in Makkan suras and 50 times in Madinan suras. Then it lists all fifty-one derivatives before following the rubric described above. The conceptual diversity of words

arising out of this root is systematically organized in the section dealing with its exegetical explanations, which includes classical and contemporary reflections on phrases such as *khalāqa lakum* (*He created for you*) and *khalāqa kulla shayʿ* (*He created everything*), as well as concepts such as the creation of human beings and aspects of creation which the Qurʾān uses as proofs for Oneness of the Creator (*Tawḥīd*).

In many cases, material from ḥadīth literature and other relevant fields, such as the science of “occasions of revelation” (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) is used to elucidate points. The entry on the root *kh-m-r*, for instance, follows the general schema outlined above, lists the four Qurʾānic words derived from this root (*al-khamr*, *khamran*, *khamrin*, *khumuri-hinna*) and then organizes the material by the binary conceptual division of the words, one element of which deals with intoxication and intoxicants and the other with women covering their bodies (*cf.* Q 24:31). Many ḥadīths from both the Sunnī and Shīʿa collections are cited in the course of discussion on intricate legal matters.

Al-Muʿjam is an example of painstaking scholarship in the grand tradition of Islamic intellectual and spiritual discourse. It is a rare work in our contemporary era obsessed with short circuiting and quick results. It is a product of decades of reflection and study. While it is clearly a ready and convenient source to a wealth of classical and contemporary material on the linguistic and exegetical aspects of the Qurʾān, its usefulness is limited to those scholars who know Arabic and who therefore already have direct access to the Arabic-language sources from which the *Muʿjam* draws its material. The work, however, has the benefit of a conceptual organization designed to facilitate further research and scholarship. One can only hope for its eventual translation into other languages, including those of Western academia, that it might open further pathways into the text revered by Muslims since its revelation and likened by the luminaries of Islamic tradition to an ocean without shore.

Muzaffar Iqbal
Center for Islam and Science
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