How and when did Qur’anic exegesis (tafsir) emerge as a literary genre of its own? To what extent was it influenced by other disciplines, such as law, theology or philosophy? How did different political or theological agendas shape works of tafsir, and in what ways did the genre develop over time and in different regions? These are some of the major questions which this volume seeks to address.

This volume constitutes the first comprehensive attempt at describing the genre of Qur’anic exegesis in its broader intellectual context. Its aim is to provide a framework for understanding the boundaries of tafsir and its interaction with other disciplines of learning, as well as the subgenres and internal divisions within the genre. It discusses the emergence of the genre in the beginnings of Islamic history and the changes and potential ruptures it has experienced in later times, the role of hadith, law, language, philosophy, theology and political ideology for the interpretive process, the regional dimension, the influx of modernist ideas and the process of writing tafsir in languages other than Arabic.

Among the fifteen authors who have contributed to the volume are leading scholars in the field as well as young researchers, which makes for a unique and fresh perspective on a field that has long been reduced to its instrumental value for understanding the Qur’an. Covering the time from the formation of Qur’anic exegesis until the present, it is a valuable resource for advanced students and scholars in the field.

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Abdullah Saeed, editor,
*Approaches to the Qur’an in Contemporary Indonesia*  
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Annabel Keeler
*Sufi Hermeneutics: The Qur’an Commentary of Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī*  
(2006)

Fahmida Suleman, editor,
*Word of God, Art of Man: The Qur’an and its Creative Expressions*  
(2007; Paperback 2010)

Feras Hamza and Sajjad Rizvi, editors, with Farhana Mayer, 
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Toby Mayer, editor and translator, 
*Keys to the Arcana: Shahrastāni’s Esoteric Commentary on the Qur’an*  
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Tafsīr and Islamic Intellectual History
Exploring the Boundaries of a Genre

EDITED BY
Andreas Görke and Johanna Pink

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The Institute of Ismaili Studies

The Institute of Ismaili Studies was established in 1977 with the objectives of promoting scholarship and learning on Islam, in historical as well as contemporary contexts, and fostering better understanding of Islam's relationship with other societies and faiths.

The Institute's programmes encourage a perspective which is not confined to the theological and religious heritage of Islam, but seeks to explore the relationship of religious ideas to broader dimensions of society and culture. The programmes thus encourage an interdisciplinary approach to Islamic history and thought. Particular attention is given to the issues of modernity that arise as Muslims seek to relate their heritage to the contemporary situation.

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In facilitating the Qur'anic Studies Series and other publications, the Institute's sole purpose is to encourage original research and analysis of relevant issues, which often leads to diverse views and interpretations. While every effort is made to ensure that the publications are of a high academic standard, the opinions expressed in these publications must be understood as belonging to their authors alone.
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The Qur’an has been an inexhaustible source of intellectual and spiritual reflection in Islamic history, giving rise to ever-proliferating commentaries and interpretations. Many of these have remained a realm for specialists due to their scholarly demands. Others, more widely read, remain untranslated from the primary language of their composition. This series aims to make some of these materials from a broad chronological range – the formative centuries of Islam to the present day – available to a wider readership through translation and publication in English, accompanied where necessary by introductory or explanatory materials. The series will also include contextual-analytical and survey studies of these primary materials.

Throughout this series and others like it which may appear in the future, the aim is to allow the materials to speak for themselves. Not surprisingly, in the Muslim world where its scriptural sources continue to command passionate interest and commitment, the Qur’an has been subject to contending, often antithetical ideas and interpretations. This series takes no sides in these debates. The aim rather is to place on record the rich diversity and plurality of approaches and opinions which have appealed to the Qur’an throughout history (and even more so today). The breadth of this range, however partisan or controversial individual presentations within it may be, is instructive in itself. While there is always room in such matters for personal preferences, commitment to particular traditions of belief, and scholarly evaluations, much is to be gained by a simple appreciation, not always evident today, of the enormous wealth of intellectual effort that has been devoted to the Qur’an from the earliest times. It is hoped that through this objective, this series will prove of use to scholars and students in Qur’anic Studies as well as other allied and relevant fields.
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Note on Transliteration, Conventions and Abbreviations

Arabic transliterations follow a modified system based on the standard of the International Journal of Middle East Studies. Names, terms and toponyms from non-Latin alphabets are transliterated unless common in English. The genealogical sequence Muḥammad ibn Qāsim, etc., is abbreviated with 'b.' for ibn (son) and 'bt.' for bint (daughter); the definite article on the nisba and the laqab is generally dropped after its first appearance, that is, from 'al-Khargaṣī' to 'Khargaṣhi' or 'al-Jāḥīz' to 'Jāḥīz', and so forth. Definite articles, however, are by and large maintained for formal titles, that is, al-Ḥakīm. The word imam is capitalised when referring to proper titles or to the Imams of the various Shi‘i traditions. Dates pertaining to Islamic history are generally indicated both in hijri and Common Era forms before the sixteenth century, and in Common Era forms from the seventeenth century onwards. All translations are the relevant author’s unless otherwise indicated.

Abbreviations

EI¹ Encyclopaedia of Islam, ed., M.T. Houtsma et al., 1st edition. Leiden, Brill, 1913–38
EQ Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān, ed., Jane Dammen McAuliffe. Leiden, Brill, 2001–6
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