

# TAFSĪR AND ISLAMIC INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

How and when did Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*) 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 *tafsīr*, 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 *tafsīr* 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 *tafsīr* 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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*Tafsīr* and Islamic  
Intellectual History  
Exploring the Boundaries of  
a Genre

EDITED BY

**Andreas Görke and Johanna Pink**

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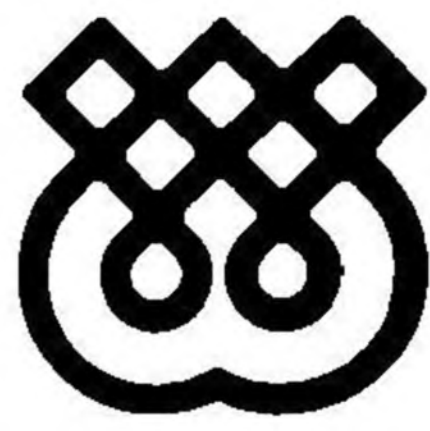
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## The Institute of Ismaili Studies

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.

Within the Islamic tradition, the Institute promotes research on those areas which have, to date, received relatively little attention from scholars. These include the intellectual and literary expressions of Shi'ism in general and Ismailism in particular.

The Institute's objectives are realised through concrete programmes and activities organised by various departments of the Institute, at times in collaboration with other institutions of learning. These programmes and activities are informed by the full range of cultures in which Islam is practised today. From the Middle East, South and Central Asia, and Africa to the industrialised societies in the West, they consider the variety of contexts which shape the ideals, beliefs and practices of the faith.

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.



# Contents

<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	xv
<i>Note on Transliteration, Conventions and Abbreviations</i>	xix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xxi
Introduction	1
<i>Johanna Pink and Andreas Görke</i>	

## **Section I: The Formation of Boundaries: Early Evolution of the Genre**

- 1 Eve in the Formative Period of Islamic Exegesis:  
Intertextual Boundaries and Hermeneutic  
Demarcations  
*Catherine Bronson* 27
- 2 Mujāhid's Exegesis: Origins, Paths of Transmission  
and Development of a Meccan Exegetical Tradition in  
its Human, Spiritual and Theological Environment  
*Claude Gilliot* 63
- 3 The Qur'anic Commentary of Muqātil b. Sulaymān  
and the Evolution of Early *Tafsīr* Literature  
*Nicolai Sinai* 113

## **Section II: Disciplinary Boundaries and their Permeation: The Place of *Tafsīr* in Islamic Scholarship**

- 4 Interrelations and Boundaries between *Tafsīr* and  
Hadith Literature: The Exegesis of Mālik b. Anas's  
*Muwaṭṭa'* and Classical Qur'anic Commentaries  
*Roberto Tottoli* 147
- 5 Shāfi'ī Hermeneutics and Qur'anic Interpretation  
in al-Jāḥiẓ's *Kitāb al-'Uthmāniyya*  
*Ignacio Sánchez* 187

6	<i>Tafsīr</i> between Law and Exegesis: The Case of Q. 49:9 (the Rebellion Verse/ <i>āyat al-baghy</i> ) <i>Rebecca Sauer</i>	223
<b>Section III: Boundaries of Dogma and Theology: The Expression of Ideas through <i>Tafsīr</i></b>		
7	al-Jurjānī: <i>Tafsīr</i> Theory between Linguistics and Theological Dogma <i>Nejmeddine Khalfallah</i>	253
8	Interpretation and Reasoning in al-Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s Qur’anic Hermeneutics <i>Abdessamad Belhaj</i>	273
9	<i>Tafsīr</i> and the Mythology of Islamic Fundamentalism <i>Neguin Yavari</i>	289
<b>Section IV: Reassessing Conventional Boundaries: Chronology, Geography, Media and Authorship</b>		
10	Where does Modernity Begin? Muḥammad al-Shawkānī and the Tradition of <i>Tafsīr</i> <i>Johanna Pink</i>	323
11	Redefining the Borders of <i>Tafsīr</i> : Oral Exegesis, Lay Exegesis and Regional Particularities <i>Andreas Görke</i>	361
12	<i>Tafsīr</i> and the Intellectual History of Islam in West Africa: The Nigerian Case <i>Andrea Brigaglia</i>	379
<b>Section V: An Expansion of Boundaries: The <i>Tafsīr</i> Tradition in Modern Times</b>		
13	Two Twentieth-century Exegetes between Traditional Scholarship and Modern Thought: Gender Concepts in the <i>Tafsīrs</i> of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā’ī and al-Ṭāhir Ibn ‘Āshūr <i>Kathrin Klausing</i>	419

## Contents

14	Yaşar Nuri Öztürk: A Contemporary Turkish <i>Tafsîr</i> Theorist <i>Kathrin Eith</i>	441
15	The Contemporary Translation of Classical Works of <i>Tafsîr</i> <i>Andrew Rippin</i>	465
	<i>Bibliography</i>	489
	<i>Index of Qur'anic Citations</i>	529
	<i>General Index</i>	533

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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-Khargūshī’ to ‘Khargūshī’ or ‘al-Jāḥiẓ’ to ‘Jāḥiẓ’, 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 *hijrī* 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

- EI*<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed., M.T. Houtsma *et al.*, 1st edition. Leiden, Brill, 1913–38
- EI*<sup>2</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. H.A.R. Gibb *et al.*, 2nd edition. Leiden, Brill, 1960–2004
- EIr* *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater *et al.* London, Routledge and K. Paul; New York, Encyclopedia Iranica Foundation, 1982–
- EP*<sup>2</sup> *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Donald M. Borchert, 2nd edition. Detroit, Macmillan Reference USA, 2006
- EQ* *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, ed., Jane Dammen McAuliffe. Leiden, Brill, 2001–6
- ER* *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade. New York, MacMillan Reference, 1987

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