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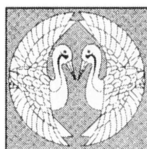
### Front cover:

Fragment of the drawing demonstrating acupuncture points which should be applied when healing back pain and a half-body paralysis. *Sabsire sūiha sindara ferguwecuke argan*, manuscript B 92 mss in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, illustration 13, fol. 42, 27.0×46.3 cm.

### Back cover:

Drawing of a male figure with acupuncture points which should be applied when healing child's night crying and tooth-ache. The same manuscript, illustration 1, fol. 28, 27.0×46.3 cm.

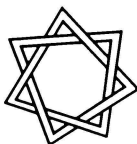
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# TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

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## THE QUR'ĀN AND ITS WORLD. IX. THE TRIUMPH OF DIVERSITY: MUSLIM EXEGESIS\*

"That thou mayest make clear to mankind what was sent down to them"

The Qur'ān, 16:44

The events which took place after Muḥammad's death brought to light numerous questions which the Qur'ān could not answer directly. This became even more obvious after the end of the Arab conquests and the emergence on the subjugated territories of a new socio-cultural community. At that period Arab-Muslim society encountered many problems which differed considerably from those it had previously faced. On the one hand, this gave birth to the appearance of other sources of Muslim law, primarily the *sunna*, whose significance steadily increased, and, on the other, it fostered the emergence of numerous "metaphoric" commentaries on the Qur'ān which drifted ever farther from the direct meaning of the text. In effect, it has resulted in the creation of new "Scriptures" by the followers of various schools of thought.

The as yet unformed nature of the early Islamic theology, the absence of generally recognised institutions and procedures comparable to the Christian ecumenical councils for ratifying religious dogma and criteria for determining the "truth" of this or that position or statute inevitably gave rise to countless disputes within the Muslim community. These conflicts touched on the most important questions of the faith. Diversity of thought became an inalienable trait of Islam, so that the problem of the "true faith" came to be insoluble [1].

As a cultural symbiosis, marked by Muslim culture's broad assimilation of the accomplishments of the peoples it conquered, took shape within the Muslim state, the theoretical conception of the social-religious system naturally grew more complex. The centre of that system was the Qur'ān, which brought together the basic semantic "inventory" of the culture and formed many aspects of the world-view

characteristic of its followers. Since the culturally and linguistically alien environment influenced greatly the Islamic assimilation of ideas, customs, and commonplace assumptions, which were fundamentally foreign to it, the "guardians of the true faith" who strove to base their views solely on the propositions established by the Qur'ān and *sunna* became intransigent enemies of all "impermissible" innovations. The problem of "tradition and innovation" runs through the entire history of Islam up to the current day.

We have already spoken of the Qur'ān as a sacral text, the true meaning of which is always broader than its direct meaning; the text is always augmented by the associations and images which it evokes in readers and listeners. At various times and in various socio-cultural and ethnic contexts, the range of these associations varied significantly. The diachronic study of Qur'ānic exegesis as the reaction of Arab-Muslim society to the Qur'ān represents, hence, an attempt to recreate the real history of the text. In this sense, the Qur'ān and Muslim exegesis form a kind of unity and a unique religious, social, and historical document [2].

As a modern scholar puts it, "calligraphy is the first sacred duty of the pen, commentary the second" [3]. Indeed, numerous commentaries on the Qur'ān reflected political and religious convictions and national and cultural predilections of their authors, be they Sunnis or Shi'ites, Sūfīs or Ismā'īlīs, inhabitants of Egypt or Khorasan, Muslim Spain or India. Their approaches to interpreting the text, the appearance and development of various instruments for its analysis, were indissolubly linked to the ideological needs of the age [4]. Internal conflicts gave way to foreign invasions, periods of prosperity were followed by years of hunger and poverty, capitals fell and dynasties perished, and

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\* In concluding our publication of E. A. Rezvan's series of articles, "The Qur'ān and its world", the author and the editors of the journal would like to express their sincere gratitude to all readers who responded to this publication. We are pleased to announce that a reworked and significantly expanded version of this series will appear in the near future as a separate book under the same title as the series. Orders for this richly illustrated edition should be sent to the journal's editors.

each age viewed the Qur'ān through its own eyes, each generation fashioned its own readings of the Sacred text. As one of the key elements in the system of traditional Muslim education, commentaries (*tafsīrs*) on the Qur'an formed,

and continue to form today, the world-outlook of millions of Muslims. Hundreds of extant commentaries convey to us their authors' unique understanding of the Qur'ān, representing an astonishing monument to ages past [5].

# I

The first interpreter of the revelation was Muḥammad himself: "We have sent down to thee the Remembrance (*al-dhikr*) that thou mayest make clear (*li-tubayyina*) to mankind what was sent down to them" (16:44). Such clarifications must have made up an indispensable part of Muḥammad's preaching and undoubtedly found their way into the Qur'ān, forming the first, basic "level" of interpretation.

Both the Muslim tradition and the analysis of the text of the Qur'ān show that throughout his life, Muḥammad continued to return to revelations he had uttered earlier, introducing changes. In *āya* 2:106, we learn that Allah can compel Muḥammad to forget certain earlier *āyāt*, that he can abrogate them, replacing them with better or similar *āyāt*. These words were uttered in response to the accusations of opponents that the Prophet allowed himself undue liberties with the "words of Allah". At times, such changes were apparently of an arbitrary nature: one word would be replaced by another of similar meaning. Muslim tradition reports a curious incident in which Muḥammad listened in the mosque to a person reciting the Qur'ān from memory and realised that the excerpt being recited contained a verse or verses which he had forgotten. Sometimes, the changes introduced by Muḥammad into the text of his revelations betray certain tendencies. This may explain the disappearance in the Qur'ān of the term *ḥanifiyya*, replaced almost throughout by *islām*, which represented a move to distance himself from the representatives of other contemporary Arabian monotheistic movements [6]. In any case, the Prophet's opponents repeatedly drew attention to inaccuracies in the transmission of previously uttered revelations. The appearance of *āyāt* close in meaning but textually divergent from those uttered earlier provoked disputes and disagreements: "It is He who sent down upon thee the Book, wherein are verses clear (*muhkamāt*) that are the Essence of the Book, and others ambiguous (*mutashābihāt*). As for those in whose hearts is swerving, they follow the ambiguous part, desiring dissension, and desiring its interpretation (*ta'wiluhu*); and none knows its interpretation, save only God. And those firmly rooted in knowledge say, 'We believe in it; all is from our Lord'..." (3:7). This *āya* would later give rise to a special theory which divided all *āyāt* into *muhkam* and *mutashābih*, with a special procedure for interpreting the latter [7].

Another form of alteration was the appearance in Muḥammad's preaching of *āyāt* which abrogated earlier *āyāt* [8], a phenomenon conditioned by the development of Muḥammad's own perception of his prophetic mission and the shifting circumstances of his life over a twenty-two-year period. The most famous case is that of the "Satanic verses" in which Muḥammad agreed to consider the pagan deities al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā and Manāt intermediaries between Allah and people (53:19—22 and 22:52) [9]. Later, within the complex of the Qur'ānic sciences (*'ilm al-Qur'ān wa-l-ṭafsīr*) there arose the special field of *'ilm naṣīkh al-Qur'ān wa-mansūkhuhu*, a field closely associated with Muslim law. By establishing the chronological interrelation of *āyāt*,

legal scholars strove to determine which *āya* could not serve as the basis for legal pronouncements because they were later abrogated. It was clarified, for instance, that *āyāt* "Then, when the sacred months are drawn away, slay the idolaters, wherever you find them, and take them, and confine them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush" (9:5) abrogates one hundred twenty four *āyāt* [10].

An analysis of such texts demonstrates that almost immediately after the Prophet's death, among the texts he had left behind which made up the Qur'ān, a certain small group of *āyāt* (around 40) was considered "abrogated". These were, in turn, linked with the abrogating *āyāt*. Taken together, they represented a fairly distinct group in which the chronological place of each *āyāt* was clearly recognised [11].

Thus, already in the course of Muḥammad's prophetic activities, the contents of his message, which made up the text of the Qur'ān, underwent significant changes: certain *āyāt* which had been uttered earlier were replaced by new *āyāt*, others received a new interpretation. The specifics of the text rendered many *āyāt* incomprehensible to neophytes. As a result, Muḥammad was compelled to provide new interpretations of revelations which had already been pronounced. It remains unclear, however, to what extent Muḥammad considered it permissible for others to provide commentary on the revelations he received. The contradictory testimony of the *sunna* provided arguments both for supporters and opponents of interpreting the sacred text and served to generate heated discussions.

Muḥammad's listeners retained in their memories the circumstances in which many *āyāt* were uttered (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) and the causes of the Prophet's polemics with his opponents. Without this, many Qur'ānic verses would remain difficult to comprehend. The "bundled" material of the *'ilm asbāb al-nuzūl* and *'ilm naṣīkh wa-mansūkh* retained an extremely important layer of information which in one form or another made its way into the majority of the *tafsīrs* and reflected the actual history of the Qur'ān's emergence. As the chronological gap between the age of the Prophet grew larger and as Islam spread into a new socio-cultural arena, the importance of these interpretations grew apace.

At first, the Qur'ān was largely interpreted orally, as recitation was accompanied by interpretation. Certain *āyāt* and *sūras* were frequently commented upon by the *imām* in the mosque after the Friday *khuṭba*. Certain people began to gather these materials in a systematic way, gradually becoming authorities in the field. Certainly, like other religious teachings, Islam was vulgarised as it spread. New recipients of the faith themselves became popularising preachers. Story-tellers (*qasṣās*) who performed at markets and in city streets added their own interpretations to Qur'ānic texts, often enriching them with parallel materials from the Judaeo-Christian cultural context. Popular "stories about the prophets" (*qisṣa al-anbiyā'*) made up a special literary genre, becoming an indispensable part of *tafsīrs* and introducing into them new ideas and images.

The biography of Muḥammad (*sīra*) was also partially an interpretation of the Qur'ān: *āyāt* in it are integrated into the context of events. The complex of *āyāt* which are connected with legal norms sanctioned by the Prophet was the subject of careful study and interpretation in the works of Muslim legal scholars. The first Arab lexicographic and grammatical works were also linked in large degree with the need to interpret the Qur'ān [12]. The emergence of a complex of Qur'ānic sciences took place in close interrelation with the development of the teaching of "readings" (*al-qirā'āt*) of the Sacred book. This progressed in the framework of Islam's formations as a dogmatic system, in which the Qur'ān was pronounced the main "miracle" (*mu'jiza*), the main divine sign (*āya*), the main proof of the superiority of Islamic religious doctrine, and the confirmation (*burhān*) of the truth of Muḥammad's prophecy.

The interpretation of the Qur'ān as a special field arose in the course of the Muslim *sunna*'s development. For many years, it did not stand out as an independent discipline. The *tafsīr* of 'Abdallāh b. Wahb (743—812), one of the earliest texts of its kind to have reached us, is in form closer to a *musnad* [13].

A special section on the interpretation of the Qur'ān is contained in al-Bukhārī's (810—870) famed collection of *ḥadīths* — *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* [14]. This section can be traced to the collections of *ḥadīths* which appeared in the second half of the seventh century. All of them were based on the principle that "the *sunna* explicates the Qur'ān". The *Kitāb al-tafsīr* [15] can, it seems, be considered one of the most important works to result from the development of this tendency. Chapter 65 of the *Kitāb al-tafsīr*, forming a key section of the work, contains 457 *ḥadīths*. Al-Bukhārī collected materials on each of the *sūras* in the Qur'ān. The *ḥadīths* are prefaced by brief lexicographic remarks with reference to Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid (d. ca. 719—722) or one of their pupils, although they occasionally lack references. In thirty-one instances, these remarks alone make up the contents of the section on a specific *sūra* (for example, *sūra* 97). As F. Sezgin has showed, a significant part of the lexical material cited by al-Bukhārī goes back to the work *Majāz al-Qur'ān* by Abū 'Ubayda (d. 825) [16].

The choice of *ḥadīths* demonstrates the rigorous standards the author applied to their veracity. Far from all *āyāt* receive commentary, and it is a rare case when more than one *ḥadīth* is cited for a single *āya*. Seventy-six individuals figure as primary transmitters in al-Bukhārī's work. These are mainly *aṣḥāb* and the best known authorities of the second generation. In terms of its composition, this chapter in al-Bukhārī's work differs somewhat from the others. Taking into account the fact that the author also penned a work entitled *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, the *Kitāb al-tafsīr* can be viewed as the result of preparatory research for a more general work. Qur'ānic texts are frequently cited by al-Bukhārī in other chapters of *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*.

Also, one of the earliest specific works on the interpretation of the Qur'ān to have reached us is the *tafsīr* attributed to Abū-l-Ḥasan Muqātil b. Sulaymān al-Azdī al-Balkhī (d. 767), a *mufasssīr* who belonged to the generation of so-called followers (*al-tābi'ūn*), who gleaned their knowledge of the Muslim tradition and scholarship directly from the companions (*aṣḥāb*) of the Prophet [17]. He is considered the founder of such important approaches in Muslim exegesis as the narrative approach, which broadened through interpretation the content of the Sacred scripture, the lexical-

grammatical approach, the symbolic-allegorical approach, and, finally, the approach intended to satisfy the needs of legal science. In addition to a large *tafsīr*, Muqātil b. Sulaymān is also credited with works on the interpretation of groups of *āyāt* and *sūras*, the circumstances of the revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), the language of the Qur'ān (specifically, instances of homonymy and polysemy in the Qur'ān — *al-wujūh wa-l-nazā'ir*), one of the first works on the "abrogating and abrogated" *āyāt* (*al-nasikh wa-l-mansūkh*), and an anti-Qadarite treatise.

Although a number of contemporary works dispute [18] or question Muqātil b. Sulaymān's authorship of the large *tafsīr*, in most cases and with certain reservations, the text of this work is treated as authentic and viewed as a basis for judgements on the author's contribution to the development of Muslim exegesis [19].

Clearly, the *tafsīr* attributed to Muqātil b. Sulaymān underwent certain alterations in the process of its transmission. The very use of the term *tafsīr* in the work's title gives rise to doubt. But an analysis of the text allows one to glimpse the outlines of an earlier work which reflects a different stage in the emergence of '*ilm al-Qur'ān wa-l-tafsīr*' as a genre. Of note is the underdeveloped state of the terminological apparatus. Researchers have found many parallels and material for fruitful juxtaposition with, for example, the *Sīra* of Ibn Ishāq (d. 767) / Ibn Hishām (d. 833 or 828) or the renowned *al-Muwatta'a* by Mālik b. Anas (d. 796) [20].

Of significant interest is the material broadly included in the *tafsīr* by its author which goes back to a group of Judaeo-Christian legends and traditions (*qīṣaṣ al-anbiya*). Such stories were common among the story-tellers (*qūṣṣās*) from whose ranks emerged Muqātil b. Sulaymān. They significantly augmented Qur'ānic tales and noted by name all of the figures who appear in some form or another in the Qur'ān. The broad employment of such tales in the *tafsīr* allowed others to state later that Muqātil b. Sulaymān "collected folk interpretations" (*jama'a tafsīr al-nās*) [21].

Specialised works on the interpretation of the Qur'ān arose within a complex of disciplines which was at first not divided into separate fields. They inherited a fully formed procedure for conducting research and an emergent terminological apparatus [22]. It seems that one can state that the tradition of writing down *tafsīrs* has existed since the middle of the second century of the Hijra.

As is the case with the significant changes in the outward appearance of the Qur'ān, about which we have written earlier [23], the appearance of '*ilm al-Qur'ān wa-l-tafsīr*' is in large part linked to the intensification of ideological struggle between the 'Alids and 'Abbāsids toward the end of Umayyad rule. *Tafsīrs* became an ideological weapon in the battle for power in the Caliphate. The *tafsīr* of the Sunni al-Makkī (642—722) and the pro-'Alid commentaries of al-Ju'fī (d. 745/46) and al-Suddī (d. 744) were created simultaneously. The tradition of Shi'ite commentaries was energetically developed in al-Kūfa, a former 'Alid stronghold. Shi'ite authors interpreted a number of sections in favour of 'Alī and his descendants, making use of the allegorical interpretation of the Qur'ān (*ta'wīl*), shifting vowelings and logical accents, employing special manipulations of letters, and seeking out meanings for certain Qur'ānic terms which differed from those accepted by Sunnis. Jābir b. Yazīd (d. 745/46), one of the earliest pro-'Alid commentators on the Qur'ān, interpreted in precisely this fashion *āya* 34:14, which tells the story of Sulaymān,

and *āya* 12:80, on the story of Yūsuf. This approach was frequently applied to the interpretation of *āya* 5:67, which Shi'ite exegetes linked to the tradition of Muḥammad's proclaiming 'Alī his successor (at Ghadīr Khumm) [24]. Moreover, pro-'Alīd commentators accused their opponents of conscious distortion (*takhrīf*) of the Qur'ānic text [25] and of destroying a number of crucial *āyāt* under 'Umar I, 'Uthmān and al-Hajjāj. A copy of a Qur'ānic manuscript containing an additional, 115th *sūra* entitled "Two Luminaries" was copied in Shi'ite circles and later published [26].

In a move undoubtedly linked to 'Abbāsīd propaganda, the role of Muḥammad's cousin, 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās (d. 687), was elevated. The tradition, prone to personalising, dubs him the first interpreter of the Qur'ān and honours him with a number of special epithets (*tarjumān al-Qur'ān*, *al-baḥr*, *ḥabr al-umma*, *ra'īs al-mufasssīrīn*). He soon became a symbolic figure who personified an entire age in the history of the Muslim community [27].

The religious and political situation in the Caliphate was reflected in discussions in which the correctness of Shi'ite *ta'wīl* was disputed in juxtaposition with Sunni *tafsīr*. The 'Abbāsīd ascent to power and subsequent repressions against the 'Alīds led to the suppression of the pro-'Alīd tendency in the interpretation of the Qur'ān. Its rebirth coincided with the rule of al-Ma'mūn (813—833), who pursued pro-'Alīd policies.

These disputes spilled out into the city squares and found expression in the topical poetry of the day, which was influenced by the conclusions of the *tafsīrs*. Thus, the poet Marwān b. Abī Ḥafṣ, a contemporary of events, wrote the following lines:

Or do you ('Alīds) reject the word of our God, conveyed by  
Jibrīl to the Prophet and uttered by Him?

The last *āya* of the *sūra al-Anfāl* bears witness to their  
( 'Abbāsīds') legacy, and you would abrogate it? [28].

At issue is *āya* "those related by blood are nearer to one another in the Book of God" (8:75) (that is, 'Abbās is the legal inheritor of his paternal uncle).

The same poet continues:

Women are not granted a share equal to that of men. The *sūra*  
*al-An'ām* was revealed on this count. When can such a thing be?

It will never be that the descendants of the daughters [Faṭīma]  
received the inheritance of their paternal uncles [29].

Ja'far b. 'Affān objected:

Why should it not be? It does in fact happen that the descendants  
of the daughters inherit [a legacy] in place of the paternal uncles.

The daughter receives a full half [of the legacy] while the paternal  
uncle is left with no share at all [30].

The "disappearance" of the last *imām*, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan (d. ca. 874), is connected with the appearance in Shi'ite circles of a number of works on the interpretation of eschatological *āyāt*.

At the same time, the *tafsīrs* reflected a sharp rivalry between two ethno-political unions — the Qaḥṭānīds and the 'Adnānīds (the "Southern" and "Northern" Arabs), a conflict which grew especially intense in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. A number of extremely important political events is connected with the struggle between

these two groups — the ascent to power of Marwān b. al-Ḥakam, who bested the "anti-caliph" 'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr with the support of the Qaḥṭānīds, and Muslim military setbacks in the South of France. One consequence of this struggle was the relative ease with which the 'Abbāsīds seized power. Finally, the rivalry between the Qaḥṭānīds and 'Adnānīds in many ways determined the political history of Muslim Spain.

In their struggle against the "Northern Arabs", the "descendants of Qaḥṭān" made broad use of interpretations of the Qur'ān. This interpretative tradition took shape in Ḥimṣ, where representatives of the Yemeni cultural elite began to gather soon after it was conquered by the Arabs. Among them were the converted Yemeni Jew Ka'b b. Aḥbar (d. 652) and Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 728), son of a Persian father and Yemeni mother. According to the tradition these two men are responsible for the oldest commentaries on those sections of the Qur'ān which discuss events in ancient history. They introduced into the context of Qur'ānic interpretation many traditions and legends from the Judaeo-Christian legacy. Qaḥṭānīd commentators attempted to interpret in their own favour a number of *āyāt* (for example, 47:38; 89:6—7), linking them with Yemen.

The Qaḥṭānīds' opponents, the "sons of 'Adnān", also made use of the Qur'ān. They strove to prove, in particular, that the Qur'ānic words on which the Qaḥṭānīds based their claim of Southern Arabian descent, were in fact not Arab. More importantly, they claimed that the Qur'ān was sent down to the 'Adnānīds and that the Prophet came from their number [31].

The 'Abbāsīd victory led to a diminishment of the Arab role in political and military life. The Arabs' opponents were united by *Shu'ūbiyya*, an ideological movement directed against Arab cultural hegemony. The Shu'ūbites also employed the Qur'ān in their polemic, especially *āya* "O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes (*shu'ūb wa qabā'il*), that you may know one another" (49:13). They asserted that the word *shu'ūb* (peoples) referred to the Persians. It stands before the word *qabā'il* ("tribes"; in their view, "Arabs"), and "what comes before is more worthy than what comes at the end". Their opponents, also with recourse to the Qur'ān, responded that, for example, in their address "'Company of jinn and mankind'" (6:130), the word *jinnns* comes first, while people are superior to *jinnns*. The opponents of the Shu'ūbites stressed in particular the exclusive nature of the Arabic language, the language of the Qur'ān. "I am an Arab, and the Qur'ān is Arabic, and the language of those who dwell in paradise is also Arabic", asserted one popular anti-Shu'ūbite *ḥadīth* [32]. To buttress their position, the anti-Shu'ūbites cited the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, connecting in particular a number of lexicographical items with his name [33].

One consequence of the Shu'ūbite movement was the appearance of *tafsīr*-translations of the Qur'ān, first into Persian [34], and later into Turkic [35].

Qur'ānic commentaries also reflected disputes between supporters of various brands of "local patriotism", who asserted the primacy of this or that city (*faḍā'il al-buldān*, *faḍā'il al-amākin*) in polemics closely linked to the political situation of the day. To this aim, attempts were made to prove that a certain event mentioned in the Qur'ān occurred in a specific place, the merits of which the commentator wished to underscore [36].



Fig. 1

The sharp ideological disputes which stemmed from the struggle of various forces for supreme control of the Caliphate were also reflected in the division of the community into proponents of a literal understanding and interpretation of the Qur'ānic text (*ahl al-zāhir*) and those who sought in the Qur'ān the "hidden", "secret" meaning (*ahl al-bāṭin*). A corresponding *ḥadīth* arose: "Not a single verse of the Qur'ān was revealed to me without it having the *zāhir* and the *bāṭin*" [37]. Abū Muḥammad Sahl b. 'Abdallāh al-Tustarī (ca. 818–896), a theoretician of early Sufism and Qur'ānic commentator, was one of the first to interpret the Qur'ān in the *bāṭin* vein. [38]. The approximately ten works which are ascribed to him represent his pupils' efforts to gather and record his statements, sermons, and commentaries on various *sūras* and *āyāt*. The symbolic-allegorical interpretation of the Qur'ān allowed al-Tustarī to develop a number of theses which were later to play an important role in the formation of Sūfī cosmogony, gnoseology, and psychology. They provided intellectual support for the works of such outstanding Sūfī thinkers as al-Hallāj (d. 922), al-Sulamī (d. 1021), al-Kushayrī (d. 1072), al-Baqlī (d. 1209). They found later development in the works of al-Ghazālī and Ibn 'Arabī. Al-Tustarī's ideas and images served as the conceptual basis of the *al-salimiyya* school, which was created at the turn of the ninth–tenth centuries in Basra by his followers.

Al-Tustarī's *Tafsīr* was drawn up among his closest pupils in Basra, it is thought, around 888–902. It is the earliest extant Sūfī work of its type. Before the text assumed its final form in 1156, it was transmitted for many years by his followers. Nonetheless, an investigation of al-Tustarī's *Tafsīr* by G. Böwering [39] has convincingly demonstrated the authenticity of the surviving text. The *Tafsīr* is fragmentary and presents commentaries of varying length (from several words to a page of text) on approximately one thousand Qur'ānic excerpts. It includes literal and metaphorical interpretations of Qur'ānic phrases and expressions, examples from the *sunna* of Muḥammad and legends about the ancient prophets, accounts of the views and practices of early Sūfī thinkers and al-Tustarī himself, episodes from his life, and sermons addressed to his pupils and his answers to their questions.

Three structural levels of the text are evident. The first, and most basic, consists of commentaries on Qur'ānic fragments which reveal their "evident" (*zāhir*) and "hidden" (*bāṭin*) meaning. In such commentaries, al-Tustarī employs Qur'ānic texts not only to buttress his ideas but to give the impulse to mystic inspiration. The second level is composed of al-Tustarī's utterances and teachings on various questions, mystical interpretations of legendary episodes from the lives of the ancient prophets. The third structural level represents later additions to the text which evidently go back to his followers. The majority of edifying tales from the life of al-Tustarī and other Sūfīs belong to this level.

The disputes over the concepts of *tafsīr* (interpretation, clarification) and *ta'wīl* (return to an origin, beginning) unfolded in the context of the polemic between supporters of *ahl al-zāhir* and *ahl al-bāṭin*. A large variety of opinions were expressed. Muqātil b. Sulaymān asserted that *tafsīr* is what is known to the '*ulamā'*', while *ta'wīl* is that which is known to Allah alone. Al-Māturīdī (d. 944) believed that *tafsīr* belonged to the companions of Muḥammad, *ta'wīl* to the *fuqahā'* (*al-tafsīr li-l-ṣaḥāba wa-l-ta'wīl li-l-fuqahā'*) [40].

The opinion of Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (838–923), an outstanding historian and exegete who worked successfully in many different disciplines (*fiqh*, lexicography, grammar, poetry, ethics, mathematics, and medicine), acquired significant authority in this regard [41]. Far from all of al-Ṭabarī's works have reached us, but his fundamental "History of Prophets and Kings" and his multi-volume *tafsīr*, which provides a summation of the preceding era of Muslim exegesis, represent the result of many years of painstaking work and testify to al-Ṭabarī's exclusive erudition. The appearance of al-Ṭabarī's work provides yet further proof of the tenth century's liminal importance, a phenomenon we described earlier [42]. That time saw the completion of extremely important and essentially unsurpassed works on the Qur'ān, the outward appearance of which was altered as well.

In the breadth of material it encompasses and in the objectivity with which al-Ṭabarī cites varied and frequently contradictory views, his *tafsīr* is without equals in the history of Muslim exegesis. Al-Ṭabarī's work includes fragments of many works by his predecessors which have not come down to us, providing us with unique materials on the early development of Muslim exegesis. At a time of pitched debate over the concepts of *tafsīr* — *ta'wīl*, al-Ṭabarī proposed something of a compromise view. He divided Qur'ānic texts into three categories: (i) those which are inaccessible to human understanding, their true meaning is known only to Allah; (ii) those which can only be comprehended with recourse to the traditional clarifications stretching back to the Prophet himself; (iii) those, the interpretive complexities of which are linguistic and can be resolved with the help of philology. Al-Ṭabarī's views on the methodology of working with the text exerted a powerful influence on future generations of Muslim exegetes. Based on the principle that the "*sunna* explains the Qur'ān" (*sunna tufassiru l-Qur'ān*), al-Ṭabarī's work was an extraordinarily important achievement for that strain of Islamic exegesis which received the name *al-tafsīr bi-l-ma'thūr* (interpretation with the aid of tradition). The editor of the newest edition of the work has calculated that from the first *sūra* to *āya* 14:25 (which is where publication has stopped) al-Ṭabarī employed 20,787 *ḥadīths* [43].

Later, al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), whose name closes the register of outstanding medieval Muslim exegetes, summed up another view which took shape around the concepts of *tafsīr* — *ta'wīl*. According to al-Suyūṭī *tafsīr* is the transmission of wisdom gathered by preceding Islamic authorities; *ta'wīl* stems from the study of the text. Viewed formally, the following distinction is stressed: *tafsīr* is the interpretation of those passages which permit only one interpretation (*al-tafsīr dhū wajh*); *ta'wīl* permits several (*al-ta'wīl dhū wujūh*) [44].

One should note, however, that the opposition between *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl* is appropriate only in the context of the polemic between *ahl al-bāṭin* and *ahl al-zāhir*. At all times a significant number of Muslims either did not take part in the polemic or acknowledged the correctness of both approaches. For them, the terms *ta'wīl* and *tafsīr* were frequently synonymous, which is reflected in the titles of many interpretations of the Qur'ān [45].

The phenomenon which stands somewhat aside from the history of the Qur'ān text's interpretation but is closely connected with the theme is the appearance of new "Qur'āns" as result of the complex ethno-social and ethno-



cultural process underway in the Caliphate. Throughout the history of Islam, people appeared in one place or another who laid claim to the title of *mahdī* (messiah). Many of them drew up their own "scriptures" [46]. One of the first *mahdī* in Islamic history was Ṣāliḥ b. Ṭarīf, who headed in 748–749 the powerful Berber tribal association of Barghawāta. He created in the Berber language a "Qur'ān" consisting of 80 "*sūras*". The ideas espoused by Ṣāliḥ represented a complex conglomerate of basic Sunni views, traditional Berber beliefs, and Kharijite ethics which stemmed from clan and tribal democracy and Shi'ite influences [47].

The growing complexity of Islam as a socio-religious system signified a new stage in the interpretation of the Qur'ān. The Mu'tazilites — representatives of the first formidable thrust in theoretical Muslim theology (*kalām*) — engaged in the interpretation of the Qur'ān with recourse to personal opinion (*al-tafsīr bi-l-ra'y* or *dirāya*), or "rationalistic *ta'wīl*". This practice was deemed impermissible by their opponents, primarily the Ḥanbalites and their followers, who supported the interpretation of the Qur'ān with the aid of *ḥadīths* and the Muslim tradition (*al-tafsīr bi-l-'ilm*, *tafsīr bi-l-ma'thūr*, or *riwāya*). For their part, the Mu'tazilites referred to the Qur'ān, citing those *āyāt* linked with the above-mentioned polemic between Muḥammad and his opponents. Most frequently cited was *āya* 3:7 on the *mutashābihāt*. According to the Mu'tazilites, the "ambiguous" *āyāt*, those which contradicted logical conclusions, should be viewed as metaphors (*majāz*) and interpreted by means of *al-tafsīr bi-l-ra'y*. With the aid of "logical conclusions" they reinterpreted everything which contradicted their teaching about higher divine justice (*al-'adl*) and the transcendental nature of divine essence (*al-tawḥīd*), in particular, the anthropomorphic conceptions of divinity which are recorded in the Qur'ān [48].

The best known Mu'tazilite commentary on the Qur'ān was created by Maḥmūd b. 'Umar Abū-l-Qāsim al-Zamakhsharī (1075–1144), a famous Mu'tazilite theologian, legal scholar of the Ḥanafite school, philologist, and literary figure [49]. Thanks to the title of his *tafsīr*, *Al-Kashshāf 'an ḥaqā'iq al-tanzīl*, completed in Mecca in 1134, al-Zamakhsharī received the honorary sobriquet Ṣāḥib al-Kashshāf. It is the only complete Mu'tazilite commentary which has reached us. It was widely distributed throughout the Muslim world, but primarily in the eastern sections, and was popular even among the Mu'tazilites' opponents.

Al-Zamakhsharī directs the bulk of his attention to the dogmatic aspect of commentary, reducing to a minimum traditional commentary based on the principle that the "*sunna* explains the Qur'ān". He was no less attentive to the philological aspects of commentary, carefully analysing known variants of Qur'ānic readings, citing examples from poetry and accentuating the text's rhetorical virtues as confirmation of the Qur'ān's "inimitability" (*i'jāz al-Qur'ān*). In an introductory phrase, al-Zamakhsharī sounds the idea of the Qur'ān's createdness, providing a rationalistic interpretation of the concepts of "divine justice" (*al-'adl*), "monotheism" (*al-tawḥīd*), and "divine attributes" (*al-ṣifāt*). He pays special attention to those sections in the Qur'ān which were supposed to express the most important Mu'tazilite beliefs about "promise" (*wa'd*) and "threat" (*wa'id*), about the "injunction to do good and refrain from what is not approved". He draws support from the authority of the leading Mu'tazilite theologians of the ninth — elev-

enth centuries from Iran and Iraq, such as 'Amr b. 'Ubayd, Abū Bakr al-Aṣamm, Al-Zajjāj, al-Jāhiz, *al-qādī* 'Abd al-Jabbār. Al-Zamakhsharī's *tafsīr* gave rise to numerous refutations and reworkings intended to cleanse it of Mu'tazilite ideas. The pathos of the *tafsīr* of al-Rāzī (d. 1209) inheres largely in its attempt to refute *al-Kashshāf*; al-Bayḍawī set himself the task of surpassing al-Zamakhsharī in philological thoroughness and the profound analysis of variant readings.

Free and far-ranging commentary — in essence, the replacement of the text by interpretation, the employment of the same *āyāt* in varying interpretations by opposing sides — was bound to provoke a reaction. A perception arose that the interpretation of the Qur'ān was undesirable, even forbidden. This was buttressed by the authority of Caliph 'Umar I, who is said to have spoken out against commentary on the Qur'ān and was the first to grasp the danger of replacing the sacred text with arbitrary interpretation [50]. *Ḥadīths* appeared which condemned the practice of *al-tafsīr bi-l-ra'y*: "he who speaks on the Qur'ān with his own judgement, certainly he will find his abode in the hell" [51]. A theory of reconciliation, however, held that 'Umar had spoken out only against the interpretation of "ambiguous" *āyāt*.

Further development of views on the possibility of Qur'ānic commentary was concentrated in disputes over the "createdness" and "uncreatedness" of the Qur'ān. These disputes reflected a profound political conflict within the Caliphate. In their most general form, the opposing sides' positions can be summarised as follows: those who, citing the authority of 'Umar I, rejected the possibility of commentary stood with the "literalists" as defenders of the view that the "Qur'ān" was the uncreated (*ghayr makhluq*) word of God. As such, it was an eternal attribute of His being and could not be altered by anyone. The Muslim community must be guided by what is outlined in the eternal book of God. Since the '*ulamā*' were the recognised authorities in understanding the changeless will expressed in the Qur'ān, the thesis of the Qur'ān's uncreatedness and eternity objectively aided the growth of their influence and power.

Opposed to them were those who took the greatest liberties in interpreting the Qur'ān. In the majority of cases, they were close to the pro-Shi'ite view on the nature of power and underscored the necessity of a divinely inspired leader for the Muslim community. A ruler who has a tie to divinity has the right to reject a religious law in the form in which it was previously understood and acknowledged. If one considers the Qur'ān created (*makhluq*), one should accept the possibility that God could create it anew. This position strengthened the hand of the '*ulamā*'s political opponents, the representatives of secular power [52].

The positions were not always expressed so clearly in works of that time. In fact, the opposite is more likely true. The abundance of ideological currents and approaches, the multiplicity of ideological levels on which polemics were conducted frequently led to the layering of one position atop another, to the combination of several points of view. For example, the *tafsīr* of al-Rāzī, the well-known representative of Ash'arite *kalām* [53], is both anti-Mu'tazilite and anti-Zahirite. In a work he penned late in life and entitled *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb*, al-Rāzī attempted to formulate an Ash'arite response to al-Zamakhsharī's *tafsīr*, expounding at the same time his own philosophical views. In conducting a polemic with the Mu'tazilites, however, al-Rāzī sometimes

supported their positions. In effect, this *tafsīr* is a rigorous philosophical tract with frequent references to the works of other authors. It is the only work of its type to have reached us.

Al-Rāzī's method is founded on the division of the Qur'ānic text into small sections, each of which expresses a complete thought. He reveals their interconnectedness and analyses transitions from one thought to another. Al-Rāzī follows this with an analysis of the text itself, citing, when he felt it necessary, variant "readings" (*al-qirā'āt*). He singles out complexities in the text, posing questions (*mas'ala, baḥṭh*) to each of the excerpts and scrupulously answering them. Al-Rāzī frequently subdivides the excerpt into even smaller parts (*wajh*), especially when he conveys the position of another authority. When treating passages where the Qur'ān establishes a ritual or legal principle, al-Rāzī usually provides the views of various *madhhabs*, giving his work an encyclopaedic character. In the course of the exposition, he frequently pauses to illuminate the natural-science views typical of his age, rendering the *tafsīr* an important source on the history of science. For various reasons, the work which the author intended to crown his career remained unfinished. It was completed by his pupils — Shams al-Dīn Ahmad b. al-Khalīl al-Huwayyā (d. 1242), chief *qāḍī* of Damascus, and Najm al-Dīn Ahmad b. Muḥammad al-Kamūlī (d. 1375). Muḥammad b. Abī-l-Qāsim al-Righī (d. 1307) penned a popular abridgement of al-Rāzī's work, *Al-Tanwīr fī-l-tafsīr mukhtaṣar al-tafsīr al-kabīr*. In general, al-Rāzī is traditionally considered to have deviated from accepted interpretations in favour of rationalism.

The discussion of the createdness or uncreatedness of the Qur'ān ended with the victory of the latter view's supporters, strengthening their positions as one of the bases of the dogmatic system of Sunni Islam and bolstering the role of the Qur'ān as an eternal and unchanging guide for the Muslim community.

The victory of those who viewed the Qur'ān as uncreated conditioned the broad acceptance in societal consciousness of the idea that the Qur'ān is unique and inimitable in content and form (*i'jāz al-Qur'ān*) as an inalienable part of Islamic doctrine and the most important proof of its superiority [54]. The original conception of the Qur'ān's "miraculous nature" reflects an archaic mythological identification of word and object. As the Arab literary tradition evolved in the eighth and ninth centuries, this identification was dismantled through the demystification of language and literature. This led to the reconception and reevaluation of the Qur'ān on the purely literary level, to the isolation of "content" and "form" within the concept of *i'jāz al-Qur'ān*.

This concept found itself at the centre of internal Islamic polemics, primarily on the question of the createdness and uncreatedness of the Qur'ān. It played an important role in the polemic with Judaism and Christianity as a key concept in grounding the truth of Muḥammad's prophetic mission. In the course of this polemic, Muslim authorities developed the ideas of "miracles" and "signs" which could be perceived by the senses (*ḥissiyya*) and comprehended by reason (*'aqliyya*). The former — significant only for their own time — were declared characteristic of Judaism and Christianity; the latter — inexhaustible — belonged to Islam. The Qur'ān — the main eternal "miracle" (*mu'jiza*) and "divine sign" (*āya*) — was declared to be the most important proof of the superiority of Muslim religious doctrine. According to Muslim theologians, inimitability is

unique to the Qur'ān. They denied that this quality adhered to the Old and New Testaments. Moreover, such concepts were absent in the dogmatic systems of Christianity and Judaism. In the course of the polemic, a complex of arguments was developed which in various combinations forms a part of all theological structures.

Shi'ite circles gave birth to another concept — *al-ṣarfa*. According to its proponents, the Qur'ān as a literary work is not unattainably perfect in the formal sense, but Allah rendered people incapable (*ṣarafahum 'an*) of creating anything similar at the time when Muḥammad was active. This was actually the limitation of the concept of *i'jāz al-Qur'ān*, which was possible in Shi'ite circles in large part thanks to the idea of the *imāms* "infallibility" (*al-iṣma*) and the conception of their connection to God.

Alternately, the formation of Sunni "orthodoxy" in the mid-ninth century and the establishment in the early tenth century of Ash'arite theological doctrine was accompanied by the development of the idea that man is inherently incapable of achieving the perfection of Qur'ānic style (*naẓm*) and composition (*ta'līf*).

Another argument (*akhbār al-ghayb* — "accounts of the concealed") is also found in the works of authorities from various schools: the Qur'ān contains information about the past, present and future which the illiterate (*ummi*), in the traditional view, Prophet could not have received through ordinary channels.

In the Ash'arite view, in the Qur'ān, as in the "speech of Allah", two aspects were highlighted — the "inner" and the "outer". The former is the "eternal speech which is an attribute of the divine essence" (*al-kalām al-qāḍim alladhi huwa ṣifāt 'azzāl*). The latter is "that which signifies the eternal, that is, the uttered words" (*al-dāll 'ala-l-qāḍim wa-huwa-l-alfāz*). By revealing the attributes of the "outer" and the "inner", the "visible" (*ẓāhir*) and the "concealed" (*bāṭin*), this approach allowed an important problem to be framed: the "unity of form and content" in the Qur'ān. This was especially important in the context of the polemic over the Shi'ite interpretations of the "concealed" (*bāṭin*) in the Qur'ān and the symbolic-allegorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of the Qur'ān.

Disputes continued over the conception of the human inability to comprehend the perfection of a form comparable to that of the Qur'ān. Some, for example, Ibn al-Mu'tazz (d. 909) and al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), claimed that one could find in the Qur'ān archetypes of all rhetorical devices and that one could study and understand those archetypes only with the aid of the appropriate sciences (*'ilm al-bayān, 'ilm al-ma'ānī*). Others, for example, Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), felt that the "words of God" (*kalām Allāh*) were fundamentally incomparable to the "words of those who were created" (*kalām al-makhluqīn*). Finally, a third group, for example, al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013), strove to arrive at a compromise: the Qur'ān is filled with stylistic beauties, but this is not related to the principle of its inimitability. With this move, al-Bāqillānī in principle rejected the concept of *al-ṣarfa* [54].

The development of theory took place in active collaboration with the philological disciplines. By the beginning of the eleventh century, a synthesis was formed between the teaching of *i'jāz al-Qur'ān* and the theory of *badī'*, which taught the figures and concrete devices which structure speech (Abū-l-Ḥasan Naṣr b. al-Ḥasan al-Marghīnānī; first half of the 9th century, and Abū Khilāl al-'Askarī; d. 1010) [55].

In literary and scholarly circles several attempts were made to create imitations of the Qur'ān (*mu'āraḍāt al-Qur'ān*), understood as “approximations” of it. Among them were works by the prominent stylist Ibn al-Muqaffā' (d. 756), the famed poets Bashshār b. Burd (d. 785/786), Abū-l-'Atāhiya (d. 828), Abū-l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (d. 1057), al-Mutanabbī (d. 955) and especially the Mu'tazilite Ibn al-Rāwandī (d. 859) [56]. It is even said the Bashshār b. Burd once heard a slave-girl singing a song to his verses and cried out: “I swear by Allah that they are better than the *sūra Al-Ḥashr*” [57].

The development of the “science of the Qur'ān” led to its differentiation. Special works appeared in specific areas. In addition to those listed above, we note here *'ilm mushkil al-Qur'ān*, *'ilm al-muḥkam wa-l-mutashābih*, *'ilm lughāt al-Qur'ān*, *'ilm i'rāb al-Qur'ān*, *'ilm mufradāt al-Qur'ān*, *'ilm marsūm al-khaṭṭ*, *'ilm al-waqf wa-l-ibtidā'*, *'ilm badā'i' al-Qur'ān*, *'ilm amthāl al-Qur'ān*, *'ilm aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, *'ilm gharā'ib al-Qur'ān*, *'ilm faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, and so forth [58]. Beliefs of the time dictated that a *mufassir* had the right to create a full-fledged *tafsir* only if he had mastered this entire complex of disciplines [59], although special compendiums also were written which united the accomplishments of all branches (for example, *Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān* by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī).

Commentary was accorded individual episodes, concepts and images of the Qur'ān, secret letters (*al-fawātiḥ*), descriptions of Allah, the hellish torments of sinners, the rewards reserved for the just. Many works were created on the rules for reading the Qur'ān (*tajwīd*), on the magical significance of individual *sūras* and *āyāt*, on their use as prayers. As the Qur'ānic sciences developed, their needs conditioned the appearance of biographical lists of Qur'ānic reciters.

Special works were created on the “virtues” (*faḍā'il*) of individual *sūras* and *āyāt*, *tafsirs* on individuals *sūras*, *āyāt*, or groups of *āyāt*. An examination of these works in chronological order allows one to glimpse the principal moments in the religious-philosophical polemic in medieval Islam over the understanding and interpretation of the Qur'ānic text. Of primary importance was the selection of *āyāt* for commentary; it changed with the emergence of new problems and socio-religious conflicts. Each era had its “favourite” *sūras* and *āyāt*. Shi'ite authors wrote a group of works entitled *Kitāb mā nuzila fī 'Alī min al-Qur'ān* (“A Book about What Was Revealed in the Qur'ān about 'Alī”). Tendentiousness reared its head in works on the circumstances in which the *āyāt* were revealed (*asbāb al-nuzūl*). One finds both pro-Shi'ite tendencies (an attempt to demonstrate 'Alī's role in the revelation of the Qur'ān, for example, the work of al-Ḥaskānī; d. 1077) and Sunni tendencies, reflected in the so-called *muwāfaqa*, works on the special accomplishments of 'Umar I (for example, al-Suyūṭī's *Qaṭf al-samar fī muwāfaqa sayyidinā 'Umar*) [60].

One of the triumphs of Shi'ite exegesis was al-Ṭabarsī's (d. 1153), *Majma' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān* [61]. This is one of three works by al-Ṭabarsī on the interpretation of the Qur'ān. It was completed in 1139 and soon recognised as one of the great achievements of Shi'ite exegesis. In the breadth of the material it encompassed and the thoroughness of its exposition, al-Ṭabarsī's work drew comparisons with al-Ṭabarī's *tafsir*. This similarity, arising from a shared group of sources, was stressed, in our view, by al-Ṭabarsī himself in the conception of the work and in its title.

Al-Ṭabarsī was the spiritual successor of the famed Shi'ite theologian Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī (d. 1067), who was in turn a follower of al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā (d. 1044). Like his teachers, al-Ṭabarsī relied on both the Shi'ite and Sunni exegetical traditions. In contrast to early and late Shi'ite exegetes, however, he recognised the authenticity of the so-called ‘Uthmānic Qur'ān. In essence, he rejected the view that the Qur'ānic text was intentionally distorted (*takhrīf*) and misinterpreted, that a number of key *āyāt* were destroyed under 'Umar I, 'Uthmān and al-Ḥajjāj. Like al-Ṭabarī, al-Ṭabarsī frequently cites various interpretations of the same *āyāt*, but unlike al-Ṭabarī, he always indicates his own position. Among the authorities on whom al-Ṭabarsī relies are 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās, Muqāṭil b. Sulaymān, Qatāda, and a number of other representatives of early Sunni exegesis. He frequently cites the views of such prominent theologians as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 728) and the Mu'tazilite Abū-l-Jubbā'ī (d. 915). In addition to the usual *isnād* references, al-Ṭabarsī also lists a number of works by his predecessors and contemporaries.

Al-Ṭabarsī structures his commentary in the following manner: place where the *sūra* was revealed, number of *āyāt*, presence of variants (*ikhtilāf*) in the reading of a specific *āyāt* in the given *sūra*. He then turns to the “virtue” (*faḍl*) of the *sūra*, citing *ḥadīth* on its special significance. In the section “interpretation of the *sūra*” (*tafsīruha*), the author briefly speaks of its contents and introduces the full text of the *sūra*. The next section enumerates the views of various authorities on the pronunciation of specific words. Arguments are presented later in a special section entitled “Proof” (*ḥujja*). The section “Language” (*lughā*) analyses rare and difficult words encountered in the *sūra*. The author here cites as examples poetic fragments (referring to such poets as al-Khansā', al-Nābigha al-Zubay'ānī, Ka'b b. Zuhayr, Dhū-l-Rumma). The section “Syntax” (*i'rāb*) discusses complex grammatical constructions in the *sūra*. This is frequently followed by accounts of the circumstances surrounding the revelation of specific *āyāt* (*asbāb al-nuzūl*). Next we find interpretation in a section headed “Meaning” (*ma'na*). Thus, al-Ṭabarsī brings together in his commentary materials from works of various genres of Muslim exegesis.

The appearance of the Ismā'ilites on the political scene was marked by the formation of Ismā'ilite interpretations of the Qur'ān. Making broad use of *ta'wīl* methods, the Ismā'ilites sought in the Qur'ān confirmation of the veracity of their methods of political struggle, the particularities of their organisation, the necessity of “propaganda” (*da'wa*), the importance of a secret hierarchy of “initiates”, etc. Interpreting certain *āyāt* and concepts allegorically (frequently terms designating the earth, heavens, mountains, trees), they employed the Qur'ānic text to prove the truth of their esoteric cosmogony and teaching of salvation [62]. According to their reading, the sermons of the Prophet in Mecca were filled with ideas and images which originated with the neo-Platonics. These ideas were first expressed in interpretations originating with authors from the “Brothers of Purity” (*ikhwān al-ṣafā'*) [63].

Appeals to the Qur'ān were an obligatory condition for grounding any ideological or scholarly position. But if theoretical theology in Islam (*kalām*) developed within its disciplinary framework in the direction of independent philosophical knowledge, working from the symbolic-allegorical interpretation of the Qur'ān (*ta'wīl*), Muslim philosophy

(*falsafa*) moved in the opposite direction. Conclusions were brought into formal agreement with Scripture, which was interpreted beforehand with the methods of *ta'wīl* [64].

Interesting in this connection, for example, is the analogy employed by Ibn Tūfayl (Abubacer) (1110—1185) to explain the phenomenon of the spirit's "inhabiting" the body of man: this spirit proceeds eternally from God and is akin to the light of the sun which illuminates the earth. Some bodies, such as transparent air, do not reflect the light emitted by the sun; others, such as bodies with smooth surfaces, reflect it entirely. Similarly, the spirit emitted by God has no effect on some bodies, such as minerals; on others, such as plants, it has a certain effect; on yet a third group, the animals, it has a powerful effect. And just as some bodies with a smooth surface are capable not only of reflecting light, but of reproducing an image, some animals not only "reflect", but reproduce the spirit, assuming its image. The latter trait is unique to man, as is confirmed by the words of Muḥammad: "The Lord created Ādam in his own image" [65].

Another characteristic example of such philosophical rumination belongs to Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (d. 1198): "Among them (the philosophers — *E. R.*) there is no dissent over the fact that the material of existing things which make up this or that material, assumes either one form or an opposite form. This, in their opinion, is the case with the forms of the four elements, fire, air, water, and earth. They differ among themselves only about that thing which does not have material in common with other things or which is composed of various materials. The question is whether some of these things can assume the forms of others. For example, can something which assumes a certain form (as observations indicate) assume this form only through many intermediary "links" or without intermediary "links". For example, a plant arises thanks to a combination of elements. Being a living thing, it turns into blood and semen; and from semen and blood come living things, as was said by Allah (May He be glorified): "We created man of an extraction of clay, then We set him, a drop, in a receptacle secure" and up to the words "So blessed be God, the fairest of creators!" (23: 12—14) [66].

Šūfī exegetes — proponents of "spiritual" *ta'wīl* — grounded their interpretations, strayed far from the literal meaning of the text, with recourse to the authority of Ibn 'Abbās and the Shi'ite *imām* Ja'far al-Šādiq. Proponents of "spiritual", or theosophical, *ta'wīl* saw four meanings in each *āya* or letter: the "evident" (*zāhir*), the "concealed" (*bāṭin*), the "limit" (*ḥadd*), and the "ascendant" or "beyond-the-limit" (*maṭla'*). These concepts are closely paralleled by the division developed by Christian exegesis: *historia*, *allegoria*, *tropologia*, *anagoge*. The resitation (*tilāwa*) of an *āya* contains its evident meaning — "(literal) expression" (*'ibāra*) — and its realisation leads to an understanding (*fahm*) of the concealed meaning or "allegorical" indication" (*ishāra*). What the *āya* permits or forbids (*aḥkām al-ḥalāl wa-l-ḥarām*) from the point of view of religious law is the "limit" (*ḥadd*). And finally, *maṭla'* is the true meaning invested in the *āya* by Allah Himself [67]. Interpretation was usually accorded the first two meanings — *zāhir* and *bāṭin* (*sensus literalis* and *sensus spiritualis* in the Patristic tradition). The "evident" meaning was considered accessible to all Muslims (*al-āmma*), while the "concealed" meaning was accessible only to a chosen few (*al-khāṣṣa*). In this, Šūfī *ta'wīl* is close to its Ismā'īlī and Shi'ite counterparts.

Šūfī exegetes, however, recognised a fundamental difference between their approach and that of the Mu'tazilites to the interpretation of the Qur'ānic text. In the view of important Muslim philosopher and mystic, Ibn 'Arabī (Ibn al-'Arabī) (1165—1240) [68], the proponents of the rational comprehension of the revelation's truths (*ahl al-naẓar al-aqlī*) were among the chosen few (*al-khāṣṣa*). They, however, seek in the Qur'ān only that which corresponds to their logical constructions and views on the nature of divinity, consciously omitting everything which contradicts those constructions. But "those who have gained knowledge" (*al-arifūn*, *al-muḥakkimūn*, *ahl Allāh*) see these contradictions and overcome them by grasping the deep interconnection of the "inner" and "outer" aspects of the prophecy.

The concealed meaning was grasped by the Šūfī in a state of mystical trance. Eschatological images, legendary episodes or obscure words awakened in his consciousness a complex range of associations. Such insights frequently led to the emergence of new stipulations within the theory and practice of Šūfism. A number of typical examples can be found in works by Ibn 'Arabī, including a work attributed to him and entitled *al-Taṣṣīr* (which, while thought to have been written by al-Kāshānī (d. 1330), appears to reflect the ideas of Ibn 'Arabī himself) [69]. For Ibn 'Arabī and his followers, the symbolic-allegorical interpretation of the Qur'ān (*ta'wīl*) became a special method of philosophising. In his commentary, initial mystical-philosophical conceptions are grounded and clarified with the aid of an allegorical interpretation of the text, often in direct contradiction with the literal sense. He saw the universe itself as a vast Qur'ān, the "metaphors" and "signs" of which could be grasped with the help of divine "revelation". The teaching of *ta'wīl* — the "return to primary sources", to the foundation of being — becomes a means of acquiring knowledge [70].

Ibn 'Arabī exerted great influence on his contemporaries, on the successive development of Šūfism and medieval Muslim philosophy, provoking sharp discussions in the Muslim world which continue to this day [71].

According to Ibn 'Arabī, the "tyrant" Fir'awn (Pharaoh) possessed true knowledge concealed (*mastūr*) from Mūsā (Moses) and consciously advanced toward the end preordained for him [72]. The pagans who answered Nūḥ's (Noah's) calls by "putting their fingers in their ears", and "wrapping" themselves "in their garments" (71:7), displaying stubbornness, and proudly praising themselves" were, in Ibn 'Arabī's interpretation, in fact possessors of "true knowledge" (*'arifūn*), unlike Nūḥ himself.

The growing complexity of socio-political practice and the emergence within Islam of new ideological teachings could not help but lead to an ever-widening gap between the interpretation and literal sense of the Qur'ān. New interpretations became, in essence, new revelations: the Shi'ites, beginning with the fifth *imām*, Muḥammad al-Baqir (d. 743) and later the Ismā'īlites, frequently called the *imām Qur'ān-i nātiq* ("speaking Qur'ān"), while the Qur'ān itself, as a text requiring interpretation, was designated by the term *Qur'ān-i ṣāmī* ("silent Qur'ān"). They felt that the *imām* could abrogate any *āya* at his desire [73]. Ismā'īlite, Shi'ite, and Šūfī *ta'wīl* frequently supplant the original text with commentary. A fine example of the principle of "interpretation as revelation" can be found in the works of 'Alī Muḥammad Shirāzī (Bāb) (1819—1850), the eponymous founder of the Bābī movement in Iran. Illustrative in

this regard is his *Tafsīr sūrat Yūsuf*, the text of which imitates the Qur'ān itself (with divisions into *sūras* and *āyāt* and with isolated letters before the beginnings of "*sūras*") [74].

Surely, the taking of such liberties with the sacred text time and time again provoked a reaction: both the traditionalists and Ash'arites subjected the practice of *ta'wīl* to harsh criticism. "Look at this shameless distortion and perversion of the original meaning, look at these repulsive interpretations and false claims which aided him in his denial of the Qur'ān. He made, after all, a lack of faith one of the qualities which deserve praise in order to prove the Šūfī community's right to exist," wrote about Ibn 'Arabī his opponent Ibn al-Akhdal [75]. Ibn Taymiyya (1263—1328) demanded the expurgation from *tafsīrs* of materials which went back to the Judaeo-Christian context; in his view, their use led to the distortion of time-honoured Muslim values and ideas.

This reaction to the taking of liberties with the sacred text may be one of the reasons for the enormous popularity which was accorded the moderate and entirely traditional work by al-Bayḍāwī (d. 1286), *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta'wīl* [76]. Al-Bayḍāwī's *tafsīr* is based on al-Zamakhsharī's *Al-Kashshāf*. In his work, al-Bayḍāwī attempted to outdo his famed predecessor, fine-tuning the latter's philological observations, broadening his interpretations by introducing historical and philological material from other works, and removing dogmatic Mu'tazilite constructions (although he was not able to accomplish this last task in full measure). Al-Bayḍāwī did not try to exhaust the full range of material available to him in any single area of commentary. Although his work contains inaccuracies, the great popularity which it acquired in Sunni Islam demonstrates that he found a proper balance between the amount and type of material he introduced. Among Sunnis, al-Bayḍāwī's commentary was regarded with near sanctity. For several centuries, it was a teaching aid in Muslim schools. In turn, many commentaries were written on al-Bayḍāwī's *tafsīr*; the best known is by Muḥammad b. Muṣṭafā al-Kujāwī Shaykh-zade (d. 1543).

The history of the Near and Middle East in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was marked by the battle with the Mongols. The Chingizids established themselves in Turkestan and Iran, Mesopotamia and Asia Minor. By the thirteenth century, the Mongols had accepted Sunni Islam, which would seem to have deprived their opponents of the main religious arguments necessary for battle with the enemy, posing instead the question: is war with the Mongols a *jihād* or a clash between two Sunni states? Having accepted the basic precepts of Islam, the Mongols continued to follow the *Yāsā* of Chingiz Khān as well. The question arose of where to locate the border between a Muslim and an apostate. An answer came in the works of Ibn Taymiyya and his pupil Ibn Kathīr (1300—1372/73), who spoke out strongly against the then dominant multitude of opinions, fiercely insisting on the primacy of the principle that the "Qur'ān explains itself" [79].

It is possible that Ibn Taymiyya's future fate was predetermined by impressions received in childhood, when the Mongol invasion compelled his family to abandon their native Ḥarrān and flee to Damascus (leading one to wonder what thoughts may today be gestating in a young "Ibn Taymiyya" marooned in a camp for refugees from Kosovo). As an adult, he participated, to employ the accurate expression of E. Sivan [80], as a *politruk* (Red Army political instruc-

tor) in several campaigns against the Mongols and the Armenian allies of the crusaders in Asia Minor. It was he who succeeded in formulating the idea later summarised clearly by his pupil Ibn Kathīr in his interpretation of *sūra* 5. Of key importance are the following fragments of the *āyāt* 5:49—55: "Whoso judges not according to what God has sent down — they are the evildoers"; "Judge between them according to what God has sent down", and "Is it the judgement of pagandom then that they are seeking?". To cite Ibn Taymiyya himself:

"[These verses] refer to people who abide the regulations and laws set by men, to fit their own misguided desires and whims, rather than adhering to the *sharī'a* bestowed upon us by Allah. This was the case with the inhabitants [of Arabia] during the *jāhiliyya* ... and (today) with the Mongols who follow the *Yāsā* code set down by Genghiz-Khān, which is a conglomeration of laws, some taken from Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and other legal traditions, and many others decided upon by the whim of the Mongol rules; the whole amalgam being given priority over the laws of Allah laid down in the Qur'ān and *sunna*. Those who follow such (man-made) laws are infidels and should be combated until they comply with the laws of God" [81].

For six centuries, the followers of Ibn Taymiyya continued to be a presence, preaching literal adherence to the letter of the Qur'ān and the *sunna* and inspiring religious movements of the Salafite type (the Wahhābites, for example). In the mid-twentieth century, his views once again gained popularity, primarily in Muslim India and Egypt, which we shall discuss below.

The Islamic world fell into a long period of cultural stagnation, ushering in the "era of supra-commentaries", the victory of empty scholasticism, scholarship divorced from actual life. It is not surprising that the famed *Muqaddima* of Ibn Khaldūn (1332—1406) contains a "Chapter on why scholars who specialise in the Qur'ānic sciences are the least capable of running the state and of resolving questions of administration". The idea on which it is based flatly contradicts the well-known *ḥadīth*: "the best among you are those who study and teach the Qur'ān" [82]. Ibn Khaldūn was echoed by 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī (al-Sha'rāwī) (1491/2—1565), the well-known Egyptian philologist and follower of Ibn 'Arabī: "There is no benefit from reading interpretations!" [83].

One of the last truly original works of classical Muslim exegesis was the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, jointly authored by the "two Jalāls", al-Maḥallī and the famed al-Suyūṭī. This unique "Arabic translation of the Qur'ān" gained great popularity, mainly in the non-Arabic-speaking world [84]. The appearance of works of this type was connected for the most part with the needs which arose as Islam spread widely in South and South-East Asia and Africa in the Late Medieval Age [85]. The great authority of al-Suyūṭī was the main reason of the popularity of *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. His marvelous works on the study of the Qur'ān, primarily *Al-Itqān fi 'ulūm al-Qur'ān* — a unique overview of the Qur'ānic sciences, an expanded version of the introduction to a planned, but unwritten or lost, large *tafsīr* — are the last genuinely original works of classical Muslim exegesis. They sum up eight centuries of development and exerted a profound influence on the later history of the "Qur'ānic sciences". As concerns the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* and its methodological roots, its most important predecessor was the *Tanwīr al-*

*miqbās min tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās*, attributed to Ibn 'Abbās, al-Kalbī (d. 763), or al-Firūzābādī (d. 871/1415) [86]. Clear and concise, replete with necessary explanations from the *asbāb al-nuzūl* and a certain amount of variant "readings" (*al-qirā'āt*), the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* served as the basis for one of the most authoritative contemporary interpretations, the *Tafsīr al-Manār*.

*Tafsīrs* form an original "hypertext", the kernel of which is provided by the text of the Qur'ān itself, which frequently includes both revelation and interpretation. This

kernel is surrounded by texts, each of which represents several levels of interpretation, usually going back to various eras, ideological and cultural communities (see fig. 1).

On the whole, the ideological battle over the place of the Qur'ān in the Muslim community reflects a broader, ongoing discussion on the role of the secular and the spiritual in a Muslim state. Interpretations of the Qur'ān continue to play an important role in this debate, aided by the tradition of "adapting" *tafsīrs* to new conditions.

## II

The fourteenth century after the Hijra, which largely matches up with the Christian twentieth century, bristled with events which were injurious to the self-image of Muslim civilisation. It is therefore symbolic that the final year of that century should have been marked by such events as the Islamic revolution in Iran and an attempt to seize the Meccan holy places by representatives of a Muslim extremist organisation.

The process of adapting the religious, philosophical, and legal norms of Islam to new historical conditions, a process which began in the mid-nineteenth century and continues to this day, is frequently designated by the term "Muslim reformation", although it is a fundamentally different phenomenon than the Christian reformation. The Muslim reformation has found expression primarily in numerous attempts to review the philosophical motivations of various aspects of secular life. Only to an insignificant degree has it touched on purely theological questions. Furthermore, the absence in Islam of an institution such as the Christian church and clergy has profoundly influenced the nature of reforms in Islam [87].

To a significant degree, processes of religious renewal in Islam at the turn of the nineteenth–twentieth centuries were linked to the task of mastering the scientific and technical achievements of the West. Implicit in this task was the rebirth of traditional cultural and spiritual values on a new basis. Two basic approaches emerged — that of reform and renewal, and that of traditionalism. If the "liminal" periods in the history of the Qur'ān were the late eighth — early ninth centuries and the tenth century, in the twentieth century we single out the first decade and the 1960s. Among the first to initiate this process were Russian Muslims, who, for a variety of reasons, found themselves at a turning point in the development of Eurasian civilisation [88].

Muslim reformist exegesis, which developed most vigorously at the turn of the century, reflected Muslim society's encounter with new realities, primarily European philosophy and scientific thought. With the aid of interpretations of the Qur'ān, the new exegetes sought, on the one hand, to show that new scientific accomplishments and social concepts had been predicted by the Qur'ān, thus preventing an erosion of the Sacred Text's authority. On the other hand, they strove to introduce to a broad Muslim readership new scientific concepts, rendering them acceptable in the context of traditional religious and philosophical values. In their interpretations, the new exegetes relied on the traditions of classical commentary: Amīn al-Khūlī (d. 1965) asserted that "scientific commentary" (*al-tafsīr al-'ilmī*) was presaged in al-Ghazālī's (d. 1111) works; al-Rāzī's famed *tafsīr* provides an original exposition of his age's achievements in the

natural sciences. The centuries-long practice of allegorical interpretation armed the reformist exegetes with an extremely important methodological tool. Citing a fragment of *āya* "We have neglected nothing in the Book" (6:38), the new commentators attempted to prove that one can find everything in the Qur'ān. And, in fact, works by al-Kawākibī (1849–1902), Ṭaṭāwī Jawharī (1862–1940) and their intellectual allies contain extremely varied materials, from anti-colonial or anti-materialist polemics to popular scientific descriptions of cell structure and the Solar system [89].

The "traumas" inflicted by long years of colonial rule, the abolition of the Caliphate, the absolute superiority of Western civilisation in the scientific and military spheres were reflected in commentaries on the Qur'ān. New *tafsīrs* conveyed both a drive to Westernise social institutions, culture, and education, and calls to return to traditional Muslim values. The simplified language of these works indicates an appeal to a broader readership; an emphasis on legal and theological problems demonstrates that the linguistic difficulties of the text were viewed as having been clarified by earlier generations of interpreters.

Muḥammad 'Abduh (1849–1905), grand Mufti of Egypt and doyen of Islamic renewal [90], and the like-minded Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935), attempted in their noted *Tafsīr al-Manār* to formulate organisational principles for a Muslim society renewed in the spirit of liberalism and reform [91]. In one form or another, the text written by 'Abduh reflected its author's famed *fatwās* on such key problems as interest on loans and polytheism. In reference to *āya* "their affair being counsel (*shūrā*) between them" (42:38), Muḥammad 'Abduh strove to prove that Islam is democratic in its essence. He called for the rebirth of the greatness of Islamic civilisation through a return to "true Islam", which had been "distorted" by later religious authorities. Muḥammad 'Abduh saw his ideas for modernising Islam as a return to the "true faith". In his struggle against the "distortion" of Islam, he relied on the authority of Ibn Taymiyya, while in advocating an ethical conception of faith, he followed the teaching of al-Ghazālī and made broad use of the traditions of Muslim rationalism. He asserted that each age requires an independent reading of the Qur'ān. Muḥammad 'Abduh advanced the thesis that the world and its laws of development can be known, that there is a greatness to human reason. In contrast to Sunni authorities, he considered the Qur'ān created.

Muḥammad 'Abduh's *Tafsīr* was published serially by the journal *Al-Manār* during the author's lifetime. It remained uncompleted and was reworked and finished by his pupil Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, receiving the title *Tafsīr al-*

*Manār*. A significant part of the *tafsīr* was occupied by lectures on the Qur'ān which Muḥammad 'Abduh had delivered at al-Azhar; they were based primarily on the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. Among the many traditional interpretations of the Qur'ānic text, Muḥammad 'Abduh attempted to choose those which were buttressed by *ḥadīths* traced back to the Prophet himself. Today, *Tafsīr al-Manār* is one of the most authoritative Qur'ānic commentaries in the Muslim world.

As national consciousness and movements of national liberation developed, the politicisation of Islam became ever more apparent, manifesting itself in the extensive employment of Islamic slogans in political struggles. Participants in anti-colonial actions frequently appealed to messianic ideas, proclaiming their leaders *mahdī*. In the nineteenth century, Ṣūfī brotherhoods continue to play an active role in political battles. The liberation of Muslim peoples from colonial dependence, the formation of a bi-polar world and the gradual growth of financial and economic independence in a number of Muslim countries posed fundamentally new problems for Muslim social thinkers. Numerous conceptions of the so-called "third way" appeared.

The struggle for Indian independence and the attempt to preserve that great multi-national state from religious fragmentation was reflected in the *tafsīr* of Mawlānā Abū-l-Kalām Āzād (1888—1958) [92]. A very different, narrowly confessional position is found in the works of two Indian Muslim theologians and publicists, Abū-l-'Alā' al-Mawdūdī (1903—1979) [93] and Abū-l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Nadwī. The latter influenced in many ways the views of Sayyid Quṭb, ideologist of the Egyptian "Muslim Brotherhood".

The struggle against neo-colonialism and the influence of Ṣūfī orders on economic and internal political life, the influence of K. Marx and P. Teilhard de Chardin, the works of Western orientalist and economists were curiously interwoven in works on the Qur'ān by Mamadou Dia, the well-known Senegalese political figure and religious philosopher [94].

During this period, the works of Muslim theologians and publicists displayed the influence of socialist ideas, primarily collectivism and the rejection of absolute private property. These ideas were employed both by the official ideologists of several ruling regimes and by their opponents (for example, the leader of the Syrian "Muslim Brotherhood", Muṣṭafā al-Sibā'ī, who released the book "Socialism of Islam" in 1958). Both groups frequently cited the Qur'ān as proof of their arguments' correctness.

The mid-twentieth century, the division of the world into two opposing military and political camps, the Cold War and the sharp ideological stand-off it occasioned set the peoples of Muslim states new challenges. The achievement of national independence in no way guaranteed the solution of important problems. The search for a place in the world, for a national and political identity took place in conditions of military confrontation with neighbours and a balancing act between two hostile centres of power. The 1960s were marked by the crisis of all ideologies then prevalent in the Arab-Muslim world. The crisis was most strongly felt in the three most developed countries of the Near and Middle East — Lebanon, Egypt, and Iran. A new radicalism arose in response to this crisis; it proclaimed a farewell to Islamic modernism and a rejection of pan-Arabism. In the view of the radical ideologists, Islamic civilisation, weakened by centuries of stagnation and colonial rule, needed to develop a weapon to oppose new dan-

gers both internal and external. Foremost among them was the penetration from West and East of ideological systems and teachings, ideological imperialism (*ghazw fikrī*).

One of the ideologists of the new Islamic radicalism, Sa'īd Hawwā, singled out the three most dangerous components of "modernisation", which undermined, in his view, the very basis of Islamic civilisation. These were *jāhili* nationalism, Marxism and existentialism [95]. Later, the *enriches-vous* policy pursued by Sadāt's regime signified a new "enemy of Islam": the cult of economic growth at any price.

The struggle for independence (the "first Islamic revolution" in Hawwā's terminology) ended in victory. The second Islamic revolution would be directed against internal enemies — secularism and consumerism [96].

Locating the main internal enemy in the state which espoused an ideology of nationalism and pan-Arabism, Muslim radicals unleashed a ruthless struggle against it. Nasser was seen as a follower of Atatürk, who had destroyed the Islamic empire (the fifteenth—seventeenth centuries of which, in the eyes of the radicals, contained some of the brightest pages in Islamic history), abolished the Caliphate, and transformed Turkey into a secular state. They called for the restoration of the Caliphate, for those who submit to the secular state share with it the sin of apostasy (*ridā*). To save themselves from *jāhiliyya* and retain the "genuinely Muslim inheritance and traditions", members of the radical group "al-Takfīr wa-l-Hijra" preached the necessity of retreat, solitary life in caves. They were even called "people of the cave" (*ahl al-kaḥf*), an allusion to *sūra* 18. The above-mentioned Mamadou Dia, however, employed this image in a call for Muslims to "come out of the cave" and embrace true dynamism in the face of the age's new challenges [97].

Sayyid Quṭb (executed in 1966), the chief ideologist of the new radicalism, founded his struggle against pan-Arabism and the nation-state in part with his interpretation of *āya* 2:110. Of what truly Islamic national state can one speak, he wrote, if Muḥammad's first followers were the Arab Abū Bakr, the Ethiopian Bilāl, the Byzantine Ṣuhayb, and the Persian Salmān [98]. Quṭb diagnosed the state of the Muslim social organism as follows: *jāhiliyya*. He asserted that the very life or death of Islam was at issue. In his view, society was once again in a state of "ordear and discord" (*miḥna wa-l-fitna*) [99]. If during Ibn Taymiyya's time, the scourge afflicted only the elite (Greek philosophy) and the newly converted (the Mongols), then today, thanks to a vice-ridden educational system and the mass media, at issue is the decay of broad layers of Muslim society under the influence of "imported ideas" (*afkār mustawrada*) and elements of a way of life which eat away at the very bases of the Muslim way of life.

Sayyid Quṭb [100] wrote also a *tafsīr* which owes its pathos to the affirmation through the Qur'ān of the justice of the "Muslim Brothers'" social programme [101]. Sayyid Quṭb's *tafsīr*, *Fi zilāl al-Qur'ān*, published in six volumes in folio and today translated into many languages, including English and French, was written between 1963 and 1964. In the foreword, the author modestly describes it as "a number of thoughts and impressions born in that period of my life spent under the protection of the Qur'ān" [102]. In fact, it is an extended *tafsīr* on the entire text of the Qur'ān in which the author relies on his earlier works on the Qur'ān and on Islamic dogmatics, his own political and religious works

[103], and works by the most important representatives of the "Islamic Radicalism", such as the Indo-Pakistani figures Abū-l-'Alā' al-Mawdūdī and Abū-l-Ḥasan al-Nadwī. Sayyid Quṭb also employs works by the leading medieval *muhaddiths* and *mufasssirs*, advocates of the method of *al-tafsīr bi-l-ma'thur*, such as al-Bukhārī, Muslim (d. 875), al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Kathīr. Cross-references within the Qur'ān itself are frequent. Quṭb strives to explain the Qur'ān through the Qur'ān itself, following the principle of *al-Qur'ān yufassiru ba'duhu ba'dan* ("the Qur'ān explains itself"). On the whole, he makes use in his work of the most varied sources, from the poetry of 'Umar Khayyām to the writings of Julian Huxley (1887—1975), one of the creators of the contemporary synthetic theory of evolution.

A pitched struggle continues today over Sayyid Quṭb's legacy, and not only among his opponents, but also among the supporters of various currents of the "Islamic Radicalism". As an example, we cite the concept of *jāhiliyya* developed by Sayyid Quṭb. For him, the entire world is in a state of *jāhiliyya* — not only the countries where "materialist communism" or "mercenary capitalism" prevails, but also Muslim countries, where, in his view, the principles of the faith have undergone prolonged and significant distortion [104]. As he puts it:

"In this sense, *jāhiliyya* is not just a specific historical period ... but a state of affairs. Such a state of human affairs existed in the past, exists today, and may exist in the future, taking the form of *jāhiliyya*, that mirror image and sworn enemy of Islam ... Modern-style *jāhiliyya* in the industrialised societies of Europe and America is essentially similar to the old-time *jāhiliyya* in pagan and nomadic Arabia. For in both systems, man is under the dominion of man rather than of Allah" [105].

It is no coincidence that after the murder of Sadāt, who differed from his predecessor in that he opened speeches with the *basmala* and closed them with references to the Qur'ān, the *Minbār al-Islām*, the print organ of the Ministry for Religious Affairs, published in two issues extended commentary on 5:44 and 48, stressing the historical context in which these *āyāt* appeared. They were uttered by Muḥammad in conditions of a confrontation with his foes [106]. Through his commentary on *āyāt* 22:40 and 2:251, Sayyid Quṭb grounded the right of "self-defence for healthy forces in Muslim society" and the use of force in such cases. His position neared that of the Kharijites in his claiming of the right of final judgement on who is a true Muslim.

Quṭb was echoed by Sa'īd Hawwā:

"Any revolt against an illegitimate ruler is justified. Isn't it then right to combat a ruler who does not apply the laws set in the Qur'ān ... ? Doesn't Allah help those who help themselves?" (cf. Qur'ān, 22:40) [107].

The task of seizing power was set: for only victory and the ascension to power would attract the masses, a belief also founded on the Qur'ān: "When comes the help of God, and victory, and thou seest men entering God's religion in throngs ..." (110:1—2) [108].

The Qur'ān was widely used in discussions of key social concepts. A fine example is the dispute over the concept of "democracy". In the opinion of Muḥammad 'Abduh, which he based on his understanding of *āya* 42:38, Islam is democratic in its essence. This view was also shared by Mawdūdī [109], while Sayyid Quṭb assumed a cardinaly different position on this *āya* in his *tafsīr*: why import to the

Near East an institution which has bankrupted itself in the West? [110].

Sharp ideological struggle revealed polar positions: if in Syria in the early 1960s school textbooks were re-written to exclude citations from the Qur'ān and *ḥadīths*, then according to the ideologists of the "al-Takfīr wa-l-Hijra" group, the Qur'ān and *sunna* were the only true sources of Muslim law. All statutes accepted after 660 on the basis of analogy (*qiyās*) and the consensus of experts (*ijmā'*) were suspect, as the *faqīhs* frequently acted to please the authorities.

In Shi'ite Islam, new ideological concepts underwent active development in the works of 'Alī Shari'ātī (1933—1977), one of the forerunners of the Iranian revolution [111]. Revolutionary ideas of social justice and equality which go back to Marxism, and an existentialist conception of the individual and freedom directed against conformity and religious obscurantism form an inalienable part of his intellectual legacy. In his works, which have been translated into Arabic, Urdu, English, and other languages, as well as in Khomeinī's fundamental work "Islamic Government", appeals to the Qur'ān serve as one of the most important forms of ideational argumentation.

*Tafsīrs* continue to be used widely by Iran's Shi'ite leaders. In their attempts to provide an ideological basis for exporting the Iranian revolution, Shi'ite propagandists strive to rely solely on the Qur'ān, a source of undisputed authority for both Shi'ites and Sunnis.

The Aḥmadiyya movement's three-volume *Large Tafsīr*, which appeared in 1963, aspires to the role of an encyclopaedia. It relies not only on traditional sources and works by the movement's founder, the messianic miracle-worker Ghulām Aḥmad (1839—1908) (a bibliography of the latter's works on the Qur'ān runs to 80 titles). In preparing the *tafsīr*, use was made of the most important encyclopaedias, works by Western Orientalists (for example, E. Renan, E. M. Wherry, A. Mingana, Ph. K. Hitti), sociologists, philosophers, and historians (for example, Th. Carlyle, S. Freud, A. J. Toynbee).

Despite the sharply negative attitude of such prominent contemporary exegetes as Mawlānā Abū-l-Kalām Āzād, Sayyid Quṭb, Kamīl Husayn [112], *al-tafsīr al-'ilmī* continues to develop. For adepts of this school such as the Turkish engineer Mehmet Şükrü Sezer, who published in Ankara in 1965 his book "The Positive Sciences in the Qur'ān", or the Egyptian 'Abd al-Razzāq Nuflī, author of "Allah and Contemporary Science" (Cairo, 1957), the entire text of the Qur'ān is a living, constantly self-renewing prophecy about contemporary scientific accomplishments and a cryptogram which encodes information about those accomplishments. They can find in a single *āya* (for example, "when the seas shall be set boiling", 81:6), a prophecy of the eruption of Krakatau, which occurred in 1883 (Muḥammad 'Abduh), and of the hydrogen bomb. In October 1957, immediately after the Soviet Union first launched sputnik, the journal *Liwā' al-Islām* initiated in Cairo a symposium on the topic "Sputnik and the Qur'ān", which affirmed that space flight was predicted by *āya* 55:33. The Qur'ān is also seen as the source of references to the theory of an expanding universe (51:47; 21:31), Nicolaus Copernicus's system (36:38, and 40), the law of the conservation of energy (55:8), etc. [113].

The needs of socio-economic development placed Muslim theologians and legal scholars before the necessity



of rethinking a number of traditional Islamic positions. Gradual limitations were imposed on the jurisdiction of *shari'ā* courts, the codification of the norms of Muslim law began, and a lively polemic ensued on the permissibility of creating a contemporary banking system in Muslim countries. Phenomena new in content were not infrequently treated as a continuation and development of Muslim tradition. Today, Qur'ānic ideas and positions, in particular the ban on the "usurer's percent" (*ribā*) are widely employed in the works of Islamic sociologists and economists, for example, in providing a basis for the so-called *tawhīd economy*.

Attempts are made to create a contemporary "Qur'ānic philosophy". This was the goal set by 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād (d. 1964), one of the ideologists of Arab nationalism, who published a series of works on this topic.

Qur'ānic symbols, parables, and tales gain a new resonance in the works of Arabic literature. We recall here the novel *Awlād Ḥāratinā* (Children of Our District) by recent Nobel laureate Najīb Maḥfūz. In essence, it forms an unusual *ta'wīl* of the Qur'ān. In a novel which consists of 114 chapters, the residents of Cairo are Ādam, Mūsā, 'Isā, and Muḥammad, presented with different names. Qur'ānic legends and parables are used in the tale of their lives and struggles. They try to bring people happiness, but each time the followers bring their teachers' efforts to naught. The author concludes that only science can bring happiness to people, but even science is powerless in the end. Its accomplishments are employed to the detriment of humanity and lead to the creation of hitherto unseen weapons of mass destruction. The novel's partial publication in the newspaper *Al-Ahrām* in 1959 provoked the indignation of Muslim authorities; it was published as a separate book in Beirut in 1967 [114].

'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Jūda al-Ṣaḥḥār has published a series of historical novels on the main figures of Qur'ānic legends. Moreover, he treated not only the Qur'ān and *tafsīrs*, but the Old Testament, Gospels, and apocrypha as well. It was precisely the use of such materials which Ibn Taymiyya opposed in his time. Ibn Taymiyya, incidentally, had his imitators in Egypt in the late 1940s, when a far-ranging discussion began on the problem of Jewish legends (*isrā'īliyyāt*) in Muslim literature.

An analysis of contemporary Muslim exegesis and literature of the "Qur'ānic circle" shows that the boundaries between "progressive" and "conservative", between "topical" and "archaic" are constantly shifting. Qur'ānic ideas and concepts are filled with new content, are reconceived in accordance with new needs and requirements. On

the other hand, a number of time-honoured Qur'ānic concepts and ideas are actualised.

We have seen that the texts of the most important *tafsīrs* are united not only by a base level of material which naturally informs all works, but by a complex system of interrelations, polemicising, correcting, and mutual developing (for example, al-Ṭabarī — al-Ṭabarī; al-Zamakhsharī — al-Rāzī; al-Zamakhsharī — al-Bayḍawī; "the pseudo-Ibn 'Abbās" — al-Jalālayn; al-Jalālayn — al-Manār; Ibn Kathīr — Quṭb, etc.).

Qur'ānic citations are widely used in the mass media and by political figures. They evoke in listeners a broad range of associations and their use can condition specific reactions. Immediately after the Israeli attack in 1967, *jihād*-related *āyāt* appeared on the walls of Cairo homes. In essence, they fulfilled the role of patriotic slogans.

Qur'ānic texts retain their significance as one of the basic decorative motifs in Islamic art and architecture. They are widely used in the design of official institutions and private homes in Muslim countries. Records and cassettes with recordings of Qur'ānic recitations delivered by the best known *qurrā'* are released in mass editions. National and international competitions of Qur'ānic recitation are conducted.

Islam arose as a synthesis of an entire complex of religious ideas and concepts which had existed since antiquity and which permeated Arabia at the time of the Prophet. As it spread beyond Arabia, it developed and was enriched thanks to its ability to "absorb" critically important elements of the religious and cultural heritage of Near and Middle Eastern peoples. As a consequence, Islam has become surprisingly multi-faceted. And while Muslim states endured a period of severe weakness, this quality allowed Islam to spread easily through the Far East as far as Indonesia. Today it is expanding rapidly in Sub-Saharan African and among the Afro-American population of the United States.

There is no doubt that the internal algorithms, multi-faceted nature, and pluralism inherent in Islam will ensure it in the twenty first century ongoing development and expansion.

As we have seen, the Qur'ān, which stands at the centre of Islam's ideological system, living and developing in interpretation, remains today one of the most venerated Books on earth. New interpretations are created every year, new books appear, new articles, even plays, all rife with Qur'ānic ideas, episodes, and images. The "history" of the Qur'ān continues to be written each day.

## Notes

1. S. M. Prozorov, "K voprosu o 'pravoverii' v islame: poniatie *ahkl as-sunna* (sunnity)" ("On the question of 'orthodoxy' in Islam: the concept of *ahl al-sunna* (the Sunnis)"), in *Problemy arabskoī kul'tury. Pamiati akademika I. lu. Krachkovskogo* (Moscow, 1987), pp. 213—8.

2. See H. R. Jauss, "Literary history as a challenge to literary theory", *New Literary History* (Baltimore, 1970), ii, pp. 7—37; *Reader-Response Criticism: from Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. J. P. Tompkins (Baltimore, 1980); A. Rippin, "The Qur'ān as literature: perils, pitfalls and prospects", *British Society of Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, X (1983), pp. 38—47; W. C. Smith, "The true meaning of scripture: an empirical historian's nonreductionists interpretation of the Qur'ān", *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, XI (1980), pp. 487—505.

3. K. Cragg, *The Pen and the Faith. Eight Modern Muslim Writers and the Qur'ān* (London, 1985).

4. One of J. Wansbrough's most important contributions is his convincing proof of this assertion, which one can find reflected in his essential work *Qur'anic Studies. Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford, 1977). See also A. Rippin's "Studying early *tafsīr* texts", *Der Islam*, LXXII/2 (1995), pp. 310—23. I offer my sincere thanks to Prof. A. Rippin (Calgary), who sent me an entire series of relevant and important works on this problem.

5. In 1920, a series of lectures on Muslim exegesis which Ignatz Goldziher had intended to deliver seven years earlier in Uppsala, but did not, was published in Leiden, see I. Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden, 1920). Although the author did not consider his work to be general — in his view, he merely noted tendencies in the development of Muslim exegesis — his great erudition, direct study of numerous sources then available only in manuscript, and scholarly intuition rendered the book a major achievement of Western Islamic studies. In 1982, A. Rippin raised the question of the need to replace Goldziher's work with a new study that would reflect more contemporary theoretical and practical concerns. See A. Rippin, "The present status of *tafsir* studies", *Moslem World*, LXXII (1982), pp. 237–8. At present, such a replacement of Goldziher's work could only take the form of a series of monographs on various aspects of the problem, see my review of *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān*, ed. A. Rippin (Oxford, 1988), in *Narody Azii i Afriki*, III (1990), pp. 175–82. Five recent publications can serve as a prototype for such a series: *International Congress for the Study of the Qur'ān*. Australian National University, Canberra, 8–13 May 1980. Series I (Canberra, 1980); *Studies in Qur'ān and Tafsir*, ed. A. T. Welch, in the special issue of *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, XCVII/4 (1980); *Approaches to the Qur'ān*, eds. G. R. Hawting and A.-K. A. Shareef (London, 1993); *The Qur'ān as Text*, ed. St. Wild (Leiden, 1996) and *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān*, noted above.

Recent years have seen the publication of numerous works on the "genres" of Muslim exegesis, *tafsirs* by various authors, and the particular features of various exegetical tendencies within Islam. Attempts to recreate and publish early texts have been undertaken both in the West and in the Muslim world. See Cl. Gilliot, "Textes arabes anciens édités en Egypte au cours des années 1992 à 1994", *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales du Caire*, XXI (1993). Traditional works have also appeared which provide a number of exegetical views for each *āya* (for example, M. Ayoub, *The Qur'ān and Its Interpreters* (Albany, 1984)).

A detailed analysis of research and publications of source material necessary for the study of 'ilm al-Qur'ān wa-l-tafsir was conducted by A. Rippin in a twice-published overview. See A. Rippin, "The present status of *tafsir* studies", *Moslem World*, LXXII (1982), p. 224–38, where he also presents a solid bibliography. For another bibliography, see C. Gilliot, *Exégèse, langue, et théologie en Islam. L'exégèse coranique de Tabarī* (m. 311/923) (Paris, 1990); A. Neuwirth, "Koran", *Grundriss der arabischen Philologie*. Band II. Literaturwissenschaft, ed. H. Gajje (Wiesbaden, 1987), pp. 119–35; Band III. Supplement, ed. W. Fisher (Wiesbaden, 1992), pp. 262–4.

6. W. M. Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'ān* (Edinburgh, 1970), p. 16.

7. Wansbrough, *op. cit.*, index; M. Ayoub, "Study of Imāmī Shi'i *tafsir*", in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān*, p. 189.

8. A. Rippin, "Naskh al-Qur'ān and the problem of early *tafsir* texts", *British Society of Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, XLVII (1984), pp. 22–43; various sources also cite the number of abrogated *āyāt*, which exceeded 200. See, for example, D. S. Powers, "The exegetical genre *naṣīkh al-Qur'ān wa manṣūkhuhu*", in *Approaches*, ed. Rippin, p. 137, Appendix A.

9. See A. G. Lundin, "'Docheri boga'" v iuzhno-arabskikh nadpisakh i v Korane" ("Daughters of god" in Southern Arab inscriptions and in the Qur'ān), *Vestnik drevnei istorii*, II (1975); J. Burton, "Those are the high flying cranes", *Journal of Semitic Studies*, XV (1970), pp. 246–65.

10. Powers, *op. cit.*, pp. 130–1 and 138, Appendix B. See also W. Hallaq, "Was the gate of *ijtihād* closed?", *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, XVI (1984), p. 6; Muṣṭafā Zayd, *Al-Naskh fi-l-Qur'ān al-karīm* (Cairo, 1963).

11. For details see Powers, *op. cit.*

12. Differences in identifying the basic developmental forces behind early Arabic grammatical schools and in dating grammatical fragments in early *tafsirs* today elicit lively discussion, for example, Wansbrough, *op. cit.*, pp. 216–27; M. G. Carter, "Language control as people control in medieval Islam: the aims of the grammarians in their cultural context", *Al-Abhāth*, XXXI (1983), pp. 65–84; C. H. M. Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qur'ānic Exegesis in Early Islam* (Leiden, 1993); M. Muranyi, "Neue Materialien zur *tafsir* Forschung in der Moscheebibliothek von Qairawan", in *The Qur'ān as Text*, p. 225–55; Rippin, "Studying early *tafsir* texts", pp. 310–23. However, it does not reduce the significance of the fact that by the second century A.H. at least, the Muslim community had attained a surprising level of unity in establishing the written form of the "most copied text", the text of the Qur'ān. See E. A. Rezvan, "Qur'ān and its world. VI. Emergence of the canon: the struggle for uniformity", *Manuscripta Orientalia*, IV/2 (1998), p. 26. This would have been impossible if many copyists had not first mastered the results of the grammatical schools' work on the bases of the Arabic language. This process, of course, must have taken some time. In this regard, of key importance for us today is a thorough analysis of the particular features which accompanied the establishment of the text as they are preserved in early fragments of Qur'ānic manuscripts. It is also important to continue the study of the vital early grammatical text written by Sibawayhi (d. 796) (see the project initiated by M. Carter at: <http://www.hf.uio.no/easteurorient/sibawayhi/HomePage/index.htm>).

13. Wansbrough, *Studies*, p. 127; see also: 'Abd Allāh b. Wāḥb (125/743–197/812). *Al-Ġamī'*. Die Koranwissenschaft. Quellenstudien zur *Hadīth*- und *Rechtliteratur* in Nordafrika, ed. Miklos Muranyi (Wiesbaden, 1993); 'Abd Allāh b. Wāḥb (125/743–197/812). *Al-Ġamī'*. *Tafsir al-Qur'ān* (Die Koranexegese). *Quellenstudien zur Hadīth- und Rechtliteratur in Nordafrika*, ed. Miklos Muranyi (Wiesbaden, 1993); M. Muranyi, 'Abd Allāh b. Wāḥb: *Leben und Werk* (Wiesbaden, 1992).

14. Muḥammad b. Ismā'il Abū 'Abdallāh al-Ju'fī al-Bukhārī, a famed Sunni *muḥaddith*. Born in Bukhara, he traveled widely in the Muslim world and died near Samaraqand. *Al-Sahīḥ* is al-Bukhārī's best-known work; he dedicated 16 years to its compilation. According to the tradition, the scrupulous analysis of *isnāds* allowed him to select from among 600,000 then current *hadīths* 2,762 (not counting repetitions) "true" *hadīths*, which he organized for the first time by content.

15. See R. M. Speight, "The function of *hadīth* as commentary on the Qur'ān, as seen in the six authoritative collections", in *Approaches*, ed. Rippin, p. 63–81.

16. F. Sezgin, *Buhārī'nın kaynakları hakkında araştırmalar* (Istanbul, 1956), XI, App. III; Speight, *op. cit.*, pp. 73–5; C. Brockelman, *Geschichte des arabischen Literatur* (Weimar–Berlin, 1898), p. 166.

17. Information about the life and works of Muqātil b. Sulaymān is fragmentary and frequently contradictory. He was born in Balkh, in the North of Afghanistan, lived in Basra and Baghdad, and died in Basra. For more detail on Muqātil b. Sulaymān and the *tafsir* attributed to him, see Goldziher, *op. cit.*, pp. 59ff.; N. Abbot, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri. Qur'ānic Commentary and Tradition* (Chicago, 1967), pp. 92–106; P. Nwiya, *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique* (Beyrouth, 1970), pp. 26–61. See also I. Goldfeld, "Muqātil Ibn Sulaymān", *Bar Ilan Arabic and Islamic Studies*, (1978), ii, pp. 13–30; K. Versteegh, "Grammar and exegesis: the origins of Kufan grammar and *Tafsir* Muqātil", *Der Islam*, LXVII (1990), pp. 206–42; C. Gilliot, "Muqātil, grand exégète, traditionaliste et théologien maudit", *Journal Asiatique*, CCLXXIX (1991), p. 39–92; J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. um 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra. Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam* (Berlin, 1991), ii, pp. 516–32.

18. See, for example, F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, (Leiden, 1967) i, p. 36.

19. See, for example, Wansbrough, *op. cit.*, Index.

20. E. g., *idem*, pp. 122–3 and 171–2.

21. H. Birkeland, *Old Muslim Opposition to Interpretation of the Qur'an* (Oslo, 1955), pp. 26–7.
22. Three works written during the last 20 years by N. Abbot, F. Sezgin, and J. Wansbrough (see Abbot, *op. cit.*; Sezgin, *Geschichte*, i; Wansbrough, *op. cit.*), have exerted great influence on the development of research in the area under discussion. Furthermore, completely different views of Sezgin and Wansbrough on the emergence of Muslim exegesis in the first century A.H. established the poles of discussions for a large group of specialists. See F. Leemhuis, "Origins and early development of the *tafsir* tradition", in *Approaches*, ed. Rippin, pp. 15–6; M. M. Sawwaf, "Early *tafsir*: a survey of Qur'anic commentary up 150 AH", *Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Mawlana Sayyid Abul 'Ala' Mawdudi*, eds. K. Ahmad and Z. I. Ansari (Leicester, 1979), pp. 135–45; C. Gilliot, "Les débuts de l'exégèse coranique", *Les premières écritures islamiques, Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, LVIII (1991), pp. 82–100.
23. Rezvan, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
24. S. M. Prozorov, *Arabskaia istoricheskaia literatura v Irake, Irane i Srednei Azii v VII — seredine X vv: Shiitskaia istoriografiia* (Arab Historical Literature in Iraq, Iran, and Central Asia in the Seventh—Mid-Tenth Centuries: Shi'ite Historiography) (Moscow, 1980), pp. 46–7; J. van Ess, "Das *Kitāb al-Irghā* des Hasan b. Muhammad al-Hanafīya", *Arabica*, XXI (1974), p. 45.
25. Mullā Muhsin Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Al-Šaffī fī tafsīr kalām Allāh al-wāfi* (s. I, A.H. 1286), pp. 12–3; J. M. Claudeul, R. Caspar, "Textes de la tradition musulmane concernant le *takhrīf* (falsification) des écritures", *Islamochristiana*, VI (1980), pp. 61–104; M. Ayoub, "The speaking Qur'an and the silent Qur'an: a study of the principles and development of Imami Shi'ite Exegesis", in *Approaches*, ed. Rippin, pp. 189–92. See also E. Kohlberg, "Some notes on the Imāmate attitude to the Qur'an", *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition: Essays Presented to R. Walzer*, 1972, pp. 209–24.
26. See "Observations de Mirza Alexandre Kazem-Beg, professeur de langues orientales à l'université de Cazan, sur chapitre inconnu du Coran, publié et traduit par M. Garsin de Tassy", *Journale Asiatique*, IVème série, II (1843), pp. 373–429. This *sūra* is included in a Shi'ite translation of the Qur'an into Urdu published in Allahabad in 1844.
27. I. Goldfeld, "The *Tafsīr* of Ibn 'Abbās", *Der Islam*, LVIII (1981), pp. 125–35; C. Gilliot, "Portrait 'mythique' d'Ibn 'Abbās", *Arabica*, XXXIII (1985), pp. 127–84; A. Rippin, "Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās and criteria for dating early *tafsīr* texts", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, XVII (Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 37–83.
28. Abū-l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Cairo, 1963–1970), x, pp. 78–88.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
30. *Ibid.*, xiii, p. 141.
31. M. B. Piotrowski, *Predanie o khim'iaritskom tsare As'ade al-Kamile* (Legend of the Himyarit Ruler As'ad al-Kāmil) (Moscow, 1977), pp. 19, 45–9, 66, 75, 81, 97.
32. P. Kahle, "The Qur'an and the Arabiya", *Goldziher Memorial Volume* (Budapest, 1948), i, p. 174.
33. A. Rippin, "Ibn 'Abbās's al-Lughāt fī-l-Qur'an", *British Society of Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, XLIV (1981), pp. 15–25; *idem*, Ibn 'Abbās's *Ghārib al-Qur'an*, *ibid.*, XL (1983), pp. 332–3.
34. A. A. Romaskevich, "Persidskii tafsīr Ṭabarī" ("Ṭabarī's Persian *tafsīr*"), *Zapiski Kollegii Vostokovedov*, V (1930), pp. 801–6; A. A. Hekmat, "Une exégèse coranique du XIIe siècle en persan: Kashf al-asrār wa-'uddāt al-abrār", *Journale Asiatique*, CCXXXVIII (1950), pp. 91–6.
35. A. Erdoğan, "Kur'an tercümelerinin dil bakımından değerleri", *Vakıflar Dergisi*, I (Ankara, 1938); R. Hartmann, "Ein altosmanischer Kor'an-Kommentar", *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, XXVII (1924), pp. 497–503; C. Huart, "Un commentaire du Coran en dialecte turc de Qastamouni (XVème siècle)", *Journale Asiatique*, série II, XVIII (1921), pp. 161–216; K. H. Menges, "Zum turkistanischen Tafsīr des 12/13", *Ural-altaische Jahrbücher*, 36 (1964), pp. 348–59; J. Schacht, "Zwei altosmanische Kor'an Kommentare", *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, XXX (1927), pp. 744–52; *idem*, "Weiteres zu den altosmanischen Korankomentaren", *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, XXXI (1928), pp. 812–5; C. F. Seybold, "Ein anonym alter türkischer Kommentar zum letzten Drittel des Korans in drei Handschriften zu Hamburg, Breslau und im Britischen Museum", *Festschrift E. Sachau* (Berlin, 1915), pp. 326–32; A. Zajackowski, *Studia nad językiem staroosmanskim*, II. *Wybrane rozdziały z anatolijskotureckiego przekładu Koranu* (Krakow, 1937); J. Eckmann, *Middle Turkic Glosses of the Rylands Interlinear Koran Translation* (Budapest, 1978).
36. See, for example, A. K. Boiko, *Arabskaia literatura v Egipte v XII—XIX vv.* (Arab Literature in Egypt in the Twelfth—Nineteenth Centuries) (Moscow, 1983), pp. 132–6.
37. I. K. Poonawala, "Ismā'īlī ta'wīl of the Qur'an", in *Approaches*, ed. Rippin, p. 209.
38. At-Tustarī was born in Tustar and died in al-Baṣra. According to Sūfi tradition, he was a pupil and spiritual inheritor of the famed mystic Dhū-l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 246/860–61). After the latter's death, he delivered a public sermon which earned him numerous followers and enemies.
39. A. Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam. The Qur'anic Hermeneutics of the Sufi Sahl at-Tustarī* (d. 283/896) (Berlin—New York, 1979), pp. 110–28.
40. Wansbrough, *op. cit.*, pp. 122–36.
41. Al-Ṭabarī was born in Āmul (Tabaristan). He lived in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq (died in Baghdad). In his youth, he was a follower of Ahmad b. Ḥanbal and dedicated many years to the study of *ḥadīths*. He followed at first the Shafī'ite *madhhab*, then attempted to found his own school, which received the name *Jarīriyya*. He entered into numerous and pointed polemics with the Ḥanbalites in which he rejected the authority of Ibn Ḥanbal in the area of *fiqh* and refuted several interpretations of Qur'anic texts accepted by the Ḥanbalites. On al-Ṭabarī's *tafsīr*, see Gilliot, *Exégèse, langue, et théologie en Islam*, pp. 207–78; O. Loth, "Ṭabarī's Korankommentar", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, XXXV (1881), pp. 588–628.
42. Rezvan, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
43. J. D. McAuliffe, "Qur'anic Hermeneutics: the views of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr", in *Approaches*, ed. Rippin, p. 48, n. 7.
44. Wansbrough, *op. cit.*, pp. 154–6.
45. Yet another synonym — *ma'na* — gradually gained acceptance in the titles of works which treated primarily linguistic aspects of the interpretation of the Sacred text.
46. A curious parallel to such "scriptures" can be seen in the apocryphal Books of Psalms of David (*Kitāb al-Zabūr li-Dāwūd*). In MS Or. 1.4.027, fols. 141a–148b (Leiden), the psalms are called *sūras* and are preceded by the *basmala*.
47. R. Tournau, "Barghawāṭa", *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden, 1963), i, pp. 1043–5.
48. Mazher-ud-din Siddiqi, "Some aspects of the Mu'tazili interpretation of the Qur'an", *Islamic Studies*, II (1963), pp. 95–120; Naṣr Ḥamid Abū Zayd, *al-Itihāq al-aqlī fī-l-ṭafsīr. Dirāsāt fī qādiyāt al-majāz fī-l-Qur'ān 'inda al-mu'tazila* (Beirut, 1982); D. Gimaret, *Une lecture mu'tazilite du Coran. Le tafsīr d'Abū 'Alī al-Djubbā'i* (m. 303/915) (Louvain—Paris, 1994).
49. Al-Zamakhsarī, who received the honorary sobriquets *Jār Allāh* and *Fakhr Khwārizm*, was born in Zamakhshar. He spent the greater part of his life in Gurganj, where he died. Despite a deformity (he lost the use of a broken leg in childhood), he enjoyed a success-

ful scholarly career and gained recognition at the court of the Khorezm-shāhs. A turning point in al-Zamakhshari's life was a severe illness he endured at the age of 43. He twice completed the pilgrimage to Mecca and began to strive for isolation and abstinence. For more detail, see Goldziher, *op. cit.*, pp. 117–77; M. al-Juwaynī, *Manhaj al-Zamakhshari fi tafsir al-Qur'an wa bayn i'jazih* (Cairo, 1959); B. Z. Khalidov, "Zamakhshari (o zhizni i tvorchestve)" ("Al-Zamakhshari: on his life and works", *Semitskie iazyki* (Moscow, 1965), ii, pp. 542–56; B. Z. Khalidov and A. B. Khalidov, "Biografiia az-Zamakhshari, sostavleniia ego sovremennikom al-Andarashani" ("A biography of al-Zamakhshari, drawn up by his contemporary, al-Andarashani"), *Pis'mennye pamiatniki Vostoka* (Leningrad, 1979), pp. 203–12; D. A. Agius, "Some bio-bibliographical notes on Abū'l Qāsim Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhshari", *Al-Arabiyya*, XV/1–2 (1982), pp. 108–20.

50. H. Birkeland, *op. cit.*; also Abbot, *op. cit.*

51. M. Abdus Sattar, "Wujūh al-Qur'ān: a branch of tafsir literature", *Islamic Studies*, XVII/2 (1978), pp. 143–4.

52. J. van Ess, "Verbal Inspiration? Language and revelation in classical Islamic theology", *The Qur'ān as Text*, pp. 177–211.

53. Fakhr al-Dīn 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad al-Rāzī (1149/50–1209) was a noted representative of Ash'arite kalām and the author of more than 130 works. He was born in al-Rayy, traveled widely, and died in Herat. In his works he strove to bring kalām closer to philosophy. In questions of *fiqh*, he was closer to Shafi'ite positions. He conducted energetic and sharp polemics with the Mu'tazilites, Hanbalites, Ismā'ilites and Karramites, at whose urging, according to tradition, he was poisoned. He spoke out against the anti-philosophy views of al-Ghazālī. Toward the end of his life, he turned away from kalām and went over to Sūfī views. See Goldziher, *op. cit.*, p. 123; J. Jomier, "Les Mafāṭih al-ghayb de Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, quelques dates, lieux, manuscrits", *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales du Caire*, XIII (1977), pp. 253–77; *idem*, "The Qur'ānic Commentary of Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: its sources and its originality", *International Congress*, pp. 93–111; *idem*, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (m. 606 H/1210 et les commentaires du Coran plus anciens", *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales du Caire*, XV (1982), pp. 145–72; R. Arnaldez, "Trouvailles philosophiques dans la commentaire coranique de Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī", *Études philosophiques et littéraires*, III (1968), pp. 11–24; M. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, *Al-Rāzī mufasssiran* (Baghdad, 1974). R. P. MacNeil's *An Index to the Commentary of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (London, 1933), while announced and included in many bibliographies, was, in fact, never published. See M. Lagarde, *Index du Grand commentaire de Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Leiden, 1997).

54. From the tenth century onward, virtually nothing was added to justifications of *i'jāz al-Qur'ān*. Thus, the leader of the Egyptian modernists, Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905), mainly repeated earlier arguments. The Muslim theologian al-Raḥī'i (d. 1937), who wrote an entire work on the concept of *i'jāz al-Qur'ān*, defining it as the sum of two concepts: a) the impossibility of an ordinary man's performing a miracle (*mu'jiza*) comparable to the Qur'ān; b) the centuries-long persistence of this inability. For more detail, see A. Allem, "I'jāzu-l-Qur'ān", *Islamic Culture*, VII (1933), pp. 64–82 and 215–85; G. von Grünebaum, *A Tenth-Century Document of Arab Literary Theory and Criticism: the Section of Poetry of al-Baqillani I'jāz al-Qur'ān* (Chicago, 1950); C.-F. Audebert, *Al-Ḥaṭṭābī et l'inimitabilité du Coran: traduction et introduction au Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'ān* (Damascus, 1982); Wansbrough, *op. cit.*, pp. 79–83, 231–2; I. Boullat, "I'jāz and Related Topics", in *Approaches*, ed. Rippin, pp. 139–58; M. Radscheit, "'I'jāz al-Qur'ān im Koran?", *The Qur'ān as Text*, pp. 113–24.

55. The concept of *i'jāz al-Qur'ān* is linked to the doctrine of the Qur'ān's untranslatability which was developed simultaneously by Muslim theologians: a "miracle" cannot be replicated by an ordinary man; hence, such attempts are harmful and deserving of punishment. However, translation (*tarjamā*) in the sense of "commentary" (*tafsir*) was permitted under the condition that the original text not be replaced by the commentary. These ideas retained their force until the 1920s, when the Turkish policy of "Turkization" led to the publication of Turkish translations of the Qur'ān without the original Arabic text. This practice was approved by al-Azhar in the 1930s. At present, the Qur'ān has been translated into the majority of European and Asian languages, as well as into many African languages. Moreover, a significant number of these translations were completed by Muslims. See R. Paret, J. D. Pearson, "Al-Kur'ān" (section 9: Translation of the Kur'ān), *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden, 1971), v, pp. 429–32. In this connection, great efforts are made by the specially created Center for the Translation of the Qur'ān, located in Qūm. We note here a curious edition put together by a private Iranian collector (Dr. Mir Mahmoud Da'wati, *The first Sūrah of the Holy Quran Al. Fatehah translated into 70 languages* (Tehran, 1995), which contains both facsimiles of the text and bibliographic information. No less active in this regard is the Aḥmadiyya Movement, which is releasing a series of translations, some into African languages, based on the English translation included in a monumental three-volume *tafsir* (1963).

56. The specialised study of such "imitations" will aid us in moving away from a unitary understanding of the multi-faceted culture of Islam, in which an entire range of evaluations existed even in the medieval period in relation to the Qur'ān. See I. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies* (London, 1971), pp. 363–5; A. S. Tritton, "The average man in early Islam", *British Society of Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, X (1940–1942), pp. 170–2; J. van Ess, "Some Fragments of the Mu'aradāt al-Qur'ān attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffa'", *Studia Arabica et Islamica. Festschrift Ihsan 'Abbas* (Beirut, 1981), pp. 151–64; A. A. Dolina, "Koranicheskie tsitaty i reminitsentsii v 'Makamakh' al-Khariri" ("Qur'ānic citations and reminiscences in the Maqāmāt of al-Ḥarīrī"), *Islam: religiia, obshchestvo, gosudarstvo* (Moscow, 1984), pp. 156–60.

57. Abū'l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, iii, p. 211.

58. See, for example, Ibn Taymiyya, *Uṣūl al-Tafsir* (Kuwait, 1971), pp. 134–8.

59. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Liḡān fi 'ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1951), ii, pp. 180–1.

60. The tendentiousness which marks works in various genres of Muslim exegesis should undoubtedly be made the object of special study. This approach was demonstrated, for example, by A. Rippin in the course of researching fragments of a polemic over Qur'ānic "readings" (*al-qirā'āt*), see A. Rippin, "Qur'ān 21:95: 'A Ban is Upon Any Town'", *Journal of Semitic Studies*, XXIV (1979), pp. 43–53; *idem*, "Qur'ān 7:40: 'Until the Camel Passes Through the Eye of the Needle'", *Arabica*, XXVII (1979), pp. 107–13; and by M. Kister, who analysed on the basis of the story of Ādam the characteristics of legendary material which found its way into *tafsirs*. See M. Kister, "Legends in *tafsir* and *ḥadīth* literature: the creation of Ādam and related stories", in *Approaches*, ed. Rippin, pp. 82–116. The same is with M. Ayyub's article on the development of Shi'ite exegesis, see his "Study of Imāmī Shi'ite *tafsir*". The list could be extended.

In Russian Qur'ānic studies, the connection between *tafsirs* and historical reality was convincingly demonstrated by M. B. Piotrovsky, who examined the reflection in early exegesis of Qaḥṭānīd-Adnānīd polemics (see his *Predanie*) and by S. M. Prozorov, who revealed the profound link between the development of Shi'ite exegesis and the socio-political history of Arab-Muslim society, see his *Arabskaia istoricheskaiia literatura*.

61. Abū 'Alī al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Faḍl al-Ṭabarī was a Shi'ite *faqih*, an expert on the tradition, and Qur'ānic commentator. He lived for many years in Meshed, where he taught and created a number of works which established Shi'ite doctrine. In 1128–29, al-Ṭabarī moved to Sabzawār (North Khorasan), one of the centres of Shi'ite scholarship and propaganda. There, perhaps under the influence of Sūfī ideas, he isolated himself from social life and dedicated himself entirely to Qur'ānic commentary. A tradition asserts that the reason for this was a miraculous event: when he was 60 years old, he had a stroke, lost consciousness, and fell to the ground.

Al-Ṭabarsī awoke in the grave and began to recite the Qur'ān in a loud voice, promising in the event of his salvation to dedicate his life to its study and interpretation. He was heard and saved. The tradition also recounts that while al-Ṭabarsī was occupied with commentary on *sūra* 20:17, he had a vision in which Muḥammad and Mūsā spoke with him. Al-Ṭabarsī died, having lived nearly to ninety, on the day of 'īd al-aḥḍā. See O. A. Musa Abdul, "The unnoticed Mufasssīr shaykh Ṭabarsī", *Islamic Quarterly*, XV (1971), pp. 96—105; *idem*, "The Majma' al-Bayān of Ṭabarsī", *ibid.*, p. 106—20.

62. I. K. Poonawala, *op. cit.*, p. 199—222; Al-Ḥabīb al-Fikkī, *al-Ta'wīl: ususuḥu wa ma'anihi fi-l-madhab al-Isma'īlī. Qāḍī al-Nu'mān* (Tunis, s.a.); A. Nanji, "Towards a Hermeneutic of Qur'ānic and other narratives in Isma'īlī Thought", *Islam and the History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, ed. R. C. Martin (Berkeley, 1982); A. A. Semenov, "Vzgliad na Koran v vostochnom ismailizme" ("The view of the Qur'ān in Eastern Isma'īlism"), *Iran*, I (1927).

63. Y. Marquet, "Coran et création. Traduction et commentaire de deux extraits des Ikhwān al-ṣafā'", *Arabica*, XI (1964), pp. 279—85; *idem*, *Philosophie des Ikhwān al-ṣafā'* (Algiers, 1975).

64. M. Alonso, "El 'ta'wīl' y la hermeneutica sacra de Averroes", *Andalus*, VII (1942), pp. 127—51; I. Michot, "Le commentaire avicennien du versé 'Puis il se founa vers le ciel'. Édition, traduction, notes", *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales du Caire*, XIV (1980), pp. 317—28.

65. A. V. Sagadeev, "Filosofskaya robinzonada Ibn Tufayla" ("The philosophical Robinsonada of Ibn Tufayl"), *Filosofia zarubezhnogo Vostoka o sotsial'noi sushchnosti cheloveka* (Moscow, 1986), p. 56.

66. Cited from Ibn Rushd. "Oproverzhenie oproverzheniia (fragments)" ("Refutation of refutation (fragments)), transl. into Russian by A. I. Rubin and A. V. Sagadeev, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia mysleitelei stran Blizhnego i Srednego Vostoka* (Moscow, 1961), p. 524.

67. Wansbrough, *op. cit.*, pp. 22—4.

68. Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. 'Alī Ibn 'Arabī (Ibn al-'Arabī) al-Ḥatīmī al-Jā'ī (1165—1240), an extremely important Muslim philosopher and mystic. He was born in Andalusia and travelled widely in the Muslim world. Among his followers, he was venerated as "the Greatest Teacher". He left behind approximately 300 works, in which he expounded his own teaching, later known as the doctrine of the "unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), which represents a complex mix of Sūfī theosophy, Muslim metaphysics, certain methods of *kalām* with elements of neo-Platonism, and gnosticism and Eastern Christian teachings. He rigorously defended the precedence of intuitive knowledge over scholasticism and rationalism. See A. Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: the Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (New York, 1999).

69. P. Lory, *Les commentaires ésotériques du Coran d'après 'Abd ar-Razzāq al-Kāshānī* (Paris, 1980).

70. The interpretations of Ibn 'Arabī are today widely used to ground the basic tenets of the Aḥmadiyya Movement's doctrine, which is condemned by the majority of the Muslim community. In our time, the publication of Ibn 'Arabī's works in Muslim countries has been linked with difficulties as a result of the opposition of Islamic authorities. See, for example, Maḥmūd Qāsim, "Tafsīr majhūl wa muthir li-l-Qur'ān li-l-mutaṣawwif al-kabīr Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī", *Majallāt al-Khillar* (December, 1970).

71. Nwiya, *op. cit.*; *idem*, "Le tafsīr mystique attribué à Ḡa'far Ṣādiq", *Mélanges de l'Université St. Joseph* (1968); Naṣr Ḥamīd Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-ta'wīl: dirāsa fi ta'wīl al-Qur'ān 'inda Ibn 'Arabī* (Beirut, 1983).

72. D. Grill, "Le personnage coranique de Pharaon d'après Ibn 'Arabī", *Bulletin d'études orientales*, XXIX (1977), pp. 179—87.

73. Ayoub, "Study of Imāmī Shī'i tafsīr", p. 183; Poonawala, *op. cit.*, p. 200; Powers, *op. cit.*, p. 126, n. 42.

74. B. T. Lawson, "Interpretation as revelation: the Qur'ān commentary of Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb (1818—1850)", in *Approaches*, ed. Rippin, pp. 223—56.

75. Al-Ḥusayn al-Akhdal, *Kashf al-ghīṭā' 'an haqā'iq al-tawḥīd*. Nasharahu Aḥmad Baqīr Maḥmūd (Tunis, 1964), p. 34. We thank A. Knysh for drawing our attention to this fragment.

76. Nāṣir al-Dīn 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar al-Bayḍāwī, a well-known Muslim exegete, *faqīh*, and historian. He lived in Shiraz, where he was chief *qāḍī*, and in Tabriz. He followed the Shafī'ite *madhab*. In addition to a *tafsīr*, he left behind several large works, including a work on *fiqh* which is based on al-Urmawī's (d. 1253) reworking of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Kitāb al-maḥṣūl*.

77. Fragments of al-Bayḍāwī's *tafsīr* were on more than one occasion reproduced in Europe for pedagogical purposes: G. R. Henzius, *Fragmenta arabica...* (Petropli, 1828); A. F. L. Beeston, *Bayḍāwī's Commentary on sūrah 12 of the Qur'ān*. Text accompanied by an interpretative rendering and notes (Oxford, 1978); see also E. A. Rezvan, "Koran i ego tolkovaniia" ("The Qur'ān and its interpretation"), in *Khrestomattiia po Islamu*, comp. and ed. by S. M. Prozorov (Moscow, 1994), pp. 70—4.

78. Ibn Taymiyya, *op. cit.*, p. 93; 'Imād al-Dīn Abū-l-Fidā' Isma'īl b. Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm* (Beirut, 1385/1965), i, p. 79. See also N. Calder, "Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr: problems in the description of a genre, illustrated with reference to the history of Abraham", in *Approaches to the Qur'ān*, eds. Hawting and Shareef, pp. 101—40; McAuliffe, *op. cit.*, pp. 46—62.

80. E. Sivan, *Radical Islam. Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven—London, 1985), p. 100.

81. Ibn Taymiyya, *Fatāwā* (Cairo, 1909), iv, pp. 198 and 280—I. We followed the translation by E. Sivan in his *Radical Islam*, pp. 97—8.

82. W. Graham, "Those who study and teach the Qur'ān", *International Congress for the Study of the Qur'ān*. Australian National University, Canberra, 8—13 May 1980, pp. 9—28.

83. A. E. Schmidt, *'Abd al-Vakhkhāb Sha'rānī i ego "Kniga rassypannykh zemchuzhin"* ('Abd al-Wahhāb Sha'rānī and His "Book of the Scattered Pearls") (St. Petersburg, 1914), Appendix, pp. 03 and 07.

84. See, for example, A. H. Johns, "Qur'ānic exegesis in the Malay world", in *Approaches*, ed. Rippin, p. 264.

85. Jalāl al-Dīn Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Maḥallī al-Shāfī'ī (1388—1459), a noted Egyptian *faqīh* and exegete who taught in Cairene *madrasa*. Al-Maḥallī was not able to complete his best known work, *Tafsīr*. According to the tradition, the *Tafsīr* was completed in 1465 in forty days by his famed pupil, Abū-l-Faḍl 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad Jalāl al-Dīn al-Khudayrī al-Shāfī'ī al-Suyūṭī (1445—1505), one of the most productive authors not only of the Mamlūke era, but, possibly, in all of Arab-Muslim literature. al-Suyūṭī attempted to encompass all spheres of Muslim scholarship of his time; the list of his works runs to some 600 titles.

86. See Rippin, "Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās".

87. F. Abbot, "A reformation in Islam?", *Bulletin of the Herry Martyn Institue of Islamic Studies*, (1963, April—June), pp. 5—24.

88. E. A. Rezvan, "The Qur'ān and its world: VIII/2. West-Östlichen Divans (the Qur'ān in Russia)", *Manuscripta Orientalia*, V/1, pp. 32—62.

89. J. Jomier, P. Caspar, "L'exégèse scientifique du Coran d'après le Cheikh Amīn al-Khūlī", *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales du Caire*, IV (1957), pp. 269—80; *idem*, "Le Cheikh Ṭanṭawī Jawharī (1862—1940) et son commentaire du Coran", *ibid.*, V (1958), pp. 115—74; F. De Jong, "The works of Ṭanṭawī Jawharī (1862—1940). Some bibliographical notes", *Bibliotheka Orientalis*, XXXIV (1977), pp. 153—61.

90. Muḥammad 'Abduh, a prominent Egyptian theologian and public figure. He was exiled from Egypt for his participation in the 'Arabi Pāshā uprising. Upon his return, he occupied a number of extremely important posts: he headed the Administrative Council of al-Azhar, where he delivered lectures and reformed the system of education; being the grand *mufī* of Egypt, and proposed a number of fundamental reforms in Muslim legislation.

91. On new Muslim exegesis, see J. M. S. Baljon, *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation (1880-1960)* (Leiden, 1961); J. Jomier, *Le Commentaire coranique du Manar: tendances modernes de l'exégèse coranique en Egypte* (Paris, 1954); *idem*, "Quelques positions actuelles de l'exégèse coranique en Egypte révélées par polémique récente", *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales du Caire*, I (1954), pp. 39–72; J. J. G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden, 1974).

92. See Maulana Abū-l-Kalam Azad, *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān*, transl. by Syed Abdul-Latif (Bombay, 1962); see also K. Cragg, *op. cit.*, pp. 14–32; S. A. Kamali, "Abūl Kalam Azad's commentary on the Qur'ān", *Muslim World*, XLIX (1959), pp. 5–18.

93. F. K. Abbott, "Maulana Maududi on Quranic interpretation", *Muslim World*, XLVIII (1958), pp. 6–19.

94. Mamadou Dia, *Essais sur l'Islam* (Dakar, 1977-1979), i–ii; Cragg, *op. cit.*, pp. 33–52.

95. S. Hawwā, *Min aḥl khuṭwa ilā-l-amām* (Beirut, 1979), pp. 12–3, 141, 211.

96. *Idem*, *Jund Allāh* (Beirut, 1977), pp. 12, 59, 205.

97. Cragg, *op. cit.*, p. 48–9.

98. Sayyid Quṭb, *Ma'ālim fi-l-tarīq* (Beirut, 1972), pp. 196–7.

99. In the opinion of the "Takfir" group, Islam has been in a state of *jāhiliyya* since the tenth century.

100. Sayyid Quṭb (1906–1966), theoretician and ideologist for the "Association of Muslim Brothers". He was born in the town of Muṣhā (Middle Egypt) into a distinguished, yet impoverished, family. Under the influence of his father, a provincial political figure linked to the "Waṭan" party of Muṣṭafā Kamil, he gained an early acquaintance with the political problems of his time. He attended a pedagogical college, and later the institute Dār al-'Ulūm. He taught in the provinces, was an inspector in the Ministry of Education, and the author of many rejected projects to reorganise the educational system. He was a member of the "Wafd" party, but later left it, although he retained an interest in party politics until the end of the Second World War. Between 1933 and 1947 he released eleven books (mainly literary criticism, poetry, and autobiographical prose), of which two were connected with the Qur'ān. In numerous magazine and newspaper articles he proved himself to be an outstanding polemicist. Up to 1946, he was under the influence of 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād, one of the ideologists of Arab nationalism. The harsh criticism of King Fārūq's regime which Quṭb expressed in his articles led to his *de facto* exile from the country in 1946, when he was posted indefinitely to the United States. Surrounded by the American way of life and cut off from his home and familiar ties, Quṭb experienced a profound internal crisis and turned to Islam as, in his view, the only system of values capable of resisting "individualism, the mercantile West's cult of the dollar, and the communist East's militant atheism, which leads human beings to absolute degradation". His condemnation of the American way of life was couched in such harsh terms that after his return to Egypt in 1951, he was compelled to resign from the Ministry of Education. 1951 also saw Sayyid Quṭb join the "Association of Muslim Brothers". He would later call this date his second birth. One year later, he was made a member of the Association's Directorial Board (*Maktab al-irshād*) as head of the section of Islamic propaganda. The new regime, which came to power as a result of the revolution of 1952, co-operated for a time with the Association, but later broke with it; in 1953, Sayyid Quṭb spent three months in prison. The attempt on Nasser's life made by a member of the Association on 26 October 1954 led to a wave of arrests. One of the first to be arrested was Sayyid Quṭb; after torture, he was sentenced to 25 years of prison camp. It was there that he succeeded in writing, and even publishing in Cairo as a series of brochures, his noted *tafsīr*, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, as well as a number of other works which together made up the ideological foundation for the "Association of Muslim Brothers". In 1964, at the request of the President of Iraq, Sayyid Quṭb was freed for a short time, although he was rearrested in less than a year. After interrogation and torture, Quṭb and two of his comrades-in-arms were sentenced to death by a tribunal headed by future Egyptian President Anwār Sadāt. They were hanged on 29 August 1966.

Between 1951 and 1966, Sayyid Quṭb wrote eight works in which he developed various aspects of the ideology of "Islamic rebirth". The content of his last work, *Ma'ālim fi-l-tarīq*, a sort of political testament in which four of thirteen chapters were taken entirely from his *tafsīr*, was the reason for the author's final arrest and execution. Fanatic conviction, outstanding literary and polemical gifts, and a martyr's death made Sayyid Quṭb one of the most venerated figures in conservative Muslim circles. His works, today published in enormous editions and translated into major Western European languages, form one of the bases of contemporary Islamic propaganda.

101. O. Carré, *Mistique et politique, "revolutionary" reading of the Koran by Sayyid Quṭb, radical Muslim Brother* (Paris, 1984); A. H. Jones, "'Let my people go!' Sayyid Quṭb and the vacation of Moses", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, I (1990), pp. 143–70.

102. Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān* (Beirut, 1978), i, p. 18.

103. *Al-Taswīr al-fannī fi-l-Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1945); *Mashāhid al-qiyāma fi-l-Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1947); *Ma'rakat al-Islām wa-l-ra'smāliyya* (Cairo, 1951).

104. This thesis forms the basis for arguments by supporters of the most extremist tendencies, who consider that the "*jāhiliyya* nature" of contemporary Egyptian and, more broadly, Muslim, society requires a rejection of contact with it, as with unbelievers, and struggle against the powers that be (Muṣṭafā Shukrī, 'Alī 'Abduh Ismā'il). It also inspired more moderate figures, who assert that when Sayyid Quṭb spoke of Muslim countries, he meant the term *jāhiliyya* in a primarily moral and intellectual sense and never appealed to *takfir* (Yūsuf al-'Azmi). The latter view is shared by Quṭb's brother, Muḥammad, who is the main publisher and interpreter of his sibling's works.

105. Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, commentary on *sūra* 5: 44–48. We follow the translation by E. Sivan, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

106. Sivan, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–4.

107. Cf. Qur'ān, see Hawwā, *Min Aḥl Khuṭwa*, p. 34, Sivan, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

108. 'Abd al-Salām Faraj, in particular, wrote of this in *The Absent Precept* (1981), see Sivan, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–8.

109. Abū-l-'Ala' al-Mawdūdī, *The Islamic Law and Constitution* (Lahore, 1977), pp. 211–2.

110. Sayyid Quṭb, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Shūrā* (Beirut, 1973), pp. 83–5; *idem*, *Ma'ālim fi tarīq*, p. 3; see also Sivan, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

111. Ali Shariati, *On the Sociology of Islam* (Berkeley, 1979) (translated by Hamid Algar); *idem*, *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies* (Berkeley, 1980) (translated by R. Campbell); *idem*, *The Visage of Muḥammad* (Tehran, 1981) (translated by A.A. Sacheddin); *idem*, *Civilisation and Modernisation* (Houston, 1979). See also, Cragg, *op. cit.*, pp. 72–90.

112. See, for example, Kamil Husayn, "Le commentaire "scientifique" du Coran: une innovation absurde", trad. par P. Noury, *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales du Caire*, XVI (1983), pp. 293–300.

113. The author possesses materials from the Fifth Conference of the Commission on Scientific Signs in the Qur'ān and Sunna (3–6 September 1993), which brought together participants from Saudi Arabia, the United States, Canada, and a number of other countries to present reports on "scientific i'jāz" such as "The i'jāz of the Qur'ān and Sunna in preventive medicine and microbiology". One should also include in this heading a curious attempt to see in the text of the Qur'ān a secret mathematical code based on the number 19, see Rashad Khalifa, *Quran: Visual Presentation of the Miracle* (Tucson, 1982). The appearance of such interpretations is absolutely inevitable

in a society where contemporary scientific knowledge is acquired and layered onto a traditional religious-cultural paradigm. In 1989, during a series of lectures on the Qur'ān in the Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, the author was addressed by a young Azerbaijani physicist who knew the Qur'ān only in Russian translation and proceeded to share observations which in many ways coincided with those advanced by supporters of "scientific *i'jāz*". Of the latter's existence, the young man had not the slightest idea.

114. For the English translation, see Najib Mahfuz, *Children of Gebelawi*, transl. by Ph. Stewart (London, 1981).

### Illustrations

**Fig. 1.** *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī. Manuscript A 536 from the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, copy dated by 1519, fols. 293 b—294 a, 11.7 × 13.0 cm.

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