

REVIEWS

Self-Referentiality in the Qur'ān. Ed. by STEFAN WILD. (*Diskurse der Arabistik*, 11.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006. 169p. ISBN 978-3-447-05383-9

The present volume under review consists of seven papers which were read in a symposium titled “Self-Referentiality in the Qur'ān” held in May 2004 at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin and is introduced by Stefan Wild, the editor and the convenor of the Symposium.

In connection with an important passage of the Introduction I would like to make a general remark. Stefan Wild writes (p. 14.): “The Qur'ān is also the first written and published book in Arabic culture.” Gregor Schoeler has shown, how, in the history of Arabic learned tradition, orally transmitted material is normally supported by written notation and how gradually this written notation to support memory ends up in becoming a collected and “published” book. Here he refers to Gregor Schoeler’s excellent paper titled “Schreiben und Veröffentlichen. Zu Verwendung und Funktion der Schrift in den ersten islamischen Jahrhunderten” (*Der Islam*, 1992:1-43) which was translated into English and published in a collected volume of his studies, entitled *The Oral and Written in Early Islam* (London: Routledge, 2006). In the Preface of this book Schoeler makes a sad remark (p. viii) concerning his original papers written in German: “... since scholars in the Arabic speaking world (if they do so at all) take note only of Western studies on Islam written in English, my work has remained almost unknown in the Arabic speaking scholarly world.” Surveying his articles, however, it becomes evident that he himself does not take notice of one single modern Arab scholar who published work on the same field of studies. He does not seem to be aware of the book of Nāṣir ad-Dīn al-Asad *Masādir aš-šīr al-ġāhilī*, published in 1956, neither does he know ʿIzz ad-Dīn Ismāʿīl’s most significant work *al-Maṣādir al-adabiyya wa-l-luġawiyya fī t-turāt al-ʿarabī* published in 1980, both in Cairo. This latter arrived at similar results in 1980 as Schoeler in 1992. This example reflects well the lack of communication between Western and Arab researchers.

Wild’s Introduction serves as a good basis for appreciating the following articles, even providing short summaries of each one at the end of the Introduction. It gives a wide panorama of the issues connected with the Qur'ān as text and the various peculiarities of this text. However, this panoramic summary even proves to be too wide. One can hardly imagine what makes the first part of

the Introduction, “Revelation and Modernity” necessary for the question of self-referentiality of the Qur’ān, since self-referentiality means “making reference to itself, its author or creator, or their other work, especially of a literary or other creative work” (*The New Oxford Dictionary of English*). This subsection deals with the underdeveloped, un-intellectual nature of Islamic thinking which can be the topic of an independent work on its own right. Although I disagree with Wild on many points, this kind of discussion is hardly in its place in a volume on the self-referentiality of the Qur’ān.

Putting aside these critical remarks, Stefan Wild’s introductory “Why self-referentiality” is an interesting and thorough presentation of the question how and why the Qur’ānic text refers to itself, listing the different names which the Qur’ān uses for itself and the various verbal ways of references, too. Here (p. 10) he remarks that “sometimes, these verbs do not have a Qur’ānic nominal equivalent – such as *frđ* I (to impose a divine command)”. This basically correct statement leaves the reader, however, feel that the author lacks a deeper insight into the Qur’ānic language. We can say with an exaggerated generalization that Qur’ānic text, as a rule, evades nominalization. The nouns *hiğra* or *ğihād*, for instance, do not occur in the Qur’ān, only their verbal counterparts do. Although the form *ğihād* occurs in the Qur’ān, but not as an independent noun but only as the final part of a *maf’ūl muṭlaq* construction (*figura etymologica*), together with the verb.

This overall picture drawn by the Introduction on the self-referentiality of the Qur’ānic text is needed first of all because the papers that follow do not really deal with this problem. Four of the seven articles do not deal with self-referentiality as their central question and of the rest only Madigan’s article concentrates on the theme given by the title of the volume. All of them, however, can be considered as Qur’ānic textual analysis and the Qur’ānic text forms the core of these studies.

Gerard Hawting’s “Eavesdropping on the Heavenly Assembly and the Protection of the Revelation from Demonic Corruption” discusses Qur’ānic passages that talk of demons as prevented from “listening in” or obtaining “a hearing” of the divine revelations. It also mentions the theory of human corruption of the revelation (*tahrīf*). The author compares the Qur’ānic places with a Jewish tradition on the theme of the shooting stars preventing the demons from “stealing a hearing” in the heavenly assemblies. Unfortunately, the author does not find parallels in the bedouin life of Arabia with these Qur’ānic passages although the *ğāhiliyya* poems are full of references to similar events, eavesdropping and spying within a tribe done not by demons but human beings. Perhaps this important *topos* of early poets may have played some role in the Qur’ānic concept of eavesdropping.

Thomas Hoffmann in his “Agonistic poetics in the Qur’ān. Self-referentiality, refutation and the development of a Qur’ānic self” tries to establish the development of the concept of self-referentiality in the Qur’ān and to distinguish different levels in it. At the same time the author points out the contradiction between the Qur’ān’s own assertion several times of not being poetry and its apparent poetic characteristic.

Daniel Madigan’s paper “The Limits of Self-Referentiality in the Qur’ān” deals with the possible references of such expressions in the text as *kitāb* and *qur’ān*. According to him such verses originally referred to pre-canonical entities or even to Jewish or Christian scriptures, not the Muslim canon. Interestingly enough Madigan, too, cannot think of possible parallels with the vocabulary of tribal poetry which contains ample reference to *kitāb* as is shown also by Schoeler in the book mentioned above (*The Oral and Written in Early Islam*).

Angelika Neuwirth in her paper “Oral Scriptures in Contact. The Qur’ānic Story of the Golden Calf and its Biblical Subtext between Narrative, Cult and Intercommunal Debate” speaks about the adaptation of one and the same story to the different demands of the emerging Muslim community.

Matthias Radscheit’s “The Qur’ān – Codification and Canonization” stresses the necessity to distinguish between codification and canonization. In this popular theme of modern Arabic scholarship it is most astonishing that the author knows none of their writings. It again shows the tragic split between Western and Islamic research.

Nicolai Sinai’s paper “Self-Referentiality and Self-Authorization in the Qur’ān” aims at outlining the genetic dimension of Qur’ānic self-referentiality as a whole.

Stefan Wild’s contribution “The Arabic Recitation. The Metalinguistics of Qur’ānic Revelation” concentrates on the linguistic medium of the self-referential statements.

This volume on the whole serves exceptionally well the most important aim of modern Islamic studies, *i.e.* the better knowledge of the Qur’ān as a text.

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A Critical Edition of the Grammatical Treatise Taḍkirat Jawāmi‘ al-’adawāt by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd. By ARIK SADAN. (*Arabische Studien*, 8.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012, 150 p. ISBN 978-3-447-06775-4

“*Taḍkirat Jawāmi‘ al-’adawāt* by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd, whose scholarly edition is the focus of this book, is largely devoted to a discussion of the syntactic and semantic roles of various particles in Arabic” – writes the editor of this Arabic grammatical manuscript. It thus belongs to the genre known