

## 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.

Kinga Dévényi

*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

as *‘ilm al-adawāt*, “the science of grammatical instruments or particles”. The editor tells us that he first found an MS of this work in the Oriental Manuscript Collection in the University Library in Leipzig and having been impressed by its contents tried to locate other MSS of the same booklet. He succeeded in finding eleven different copies all over the Eastern and Western libraries and then he decided to edit the work on the basis of these MSS.

In his introduction, Arik Sadan first gives information about the most famous works of the *adawāt* genre based on Ḥāğğī Halīfa’s *Kašf az-ẓunūn*, then he sets out to present the eleven MSS of the *Tadkira*. Only after making the principles of the edition known to the reader speaks the editor about the author confessing that we know about him nothing, not even the century in which he lived, but perhaps it is nearer to the 13<sup>th</sup> century than to the 11<sup>th</sup>. The edition itself occupies 104 printed pages, the MS consisting of 12-15 folios differing according to the various copies. There is an Appendix containing chapters 1-32 as they appear in MSS, i.e., the MS found in the Manisa Library (ms D). The reason for this is that this manuscript is very different from the others, both in the order and the content of the chapters.

Sadan’s principles of edition are a bit outdated since he does not edit one of the MSS with references to the others, but instead he makes a super-text selecting places from each one according to his own judgement. Notwithstanding the text remains sometimes quite puzzling and incoherent.

Kinga Dévényi

*The Structure of Mehri*. By JANET C. E. WATSON. (*Semitica Viva*, 52.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012. xxviii + 479 p. ISSN 0931, ISBN 978-3-447-06736-2

This work under review is a unique contribution to the study of the modern Mehri dialects and helps scholars to attain a better knowledge of the South-Arabian language on the whole. The book is based mainly on the author’s collection of data from some Mehri speakers of Oman and therefore lays emphasis on the description of the Mehreyet dialect spoken in Oman. The author, however, compares her data with those of the Mahriyōt, the dialect of Yemen, thus the book rightly bears the title “The Structure of Mehri”. Since about two thirds of the Modern South-Arabian speakers use Mehri, it is far the most important language in this branch of Semitic languages. Watson estimates their number between 100,000 and 180,000, while Soqotri is spoken by 60,000 and Šheret or Jibbali only by 10-30,000 according to her. This last data, however, may be an

underestimation of the real number of Jibbali speakers since they can be met all over in Oman, not only in Dhofar.

The book consists of four large chapters. The first (pp. 1-46) is an overview of phonetics and phonology, comprising sections not only on the classical phonological entities but also on what is called in modern linguistics morphonological phenomena like prosody, syllable structure, melodic processes, syncope and syllable contact. The description of Mehri consonants and vowels is not only thorough and sufficiently detailed but it also gives a summary of the results and problems presented by earlier writers on this theme. What one misses, however, in a grammar of such impressive size are precise definitions of the phonological terms used since these traditional denominations, like ‘voiced uvular fricative’ are not always unambiguously understood.

The second chapter (pp. 47-137) deals with the grammatical categories – the different types of nouns, pronouns, verbs, verbal aspect and mood, particles, etc. – always making comparisons between the various forms of the two main dialects of the Mehri, Mehreyyet and Mahriyōt. The nominal morphology is shown in its amazing abundance which is the clear characteristic of an unstandardized language state. The different formal clusters are presented in separate, lucidly arranged tables, which make them easy to survey for the reader. These tables, however, do not always reflect real morphological correlations between their elements, because owing to the descriptive linguistic principles followed by the author, lexical relations mingle with morphological ones. On page 59, for instance, we are informed that the plural of *wōz* (‘goat’), is *rawn*, and on page 60 that the plural of *nhūr* (‘day’) is *yōm*, although neither of these two couplets may form morphological pairs and thus could not have been put among other regular couplets like *bōkar* (‘young she-camel’) and *bkūr*. The above examples are important lexical data but have nothing to do with morphology.

The above two chapters seem to serve only the preparation for the greater structural units of the language, since they are followed by two main parts without decimation: Phrase Structure (pp. 138-228) and Clause Structure (pp. 229-405), though these large chapter headings are only mentioned in the table of contents and are lacking in the book itself. The phrase structure part contains chapter 3 on attribution (pp. 138-175), chapter 4 on annexion (pp. 176-196) and chapter 5 on complementation (pp. 197-228). The clause structure part contains chapter 6 on predication (pp. 229-270), chapter 7 on coordination (pp. 271-309), chapter 8 on negation (pp. 310-346) and chapter 9 on supplementation (pp. 347-405). This last chapter, contains both the supplements of simple sentences and subordinate clauses. Probably it would have been more fortunate to deal with these two types of supplementation separately. The grammar is supplemented

by chapter 10 (pp. 406-470) containing oral texts. The book ends with the references and (regarding the size of the grammar) a very short index.

All in all the Mehri grammar of Jane C.E. Watson may constitute a milestone and starting point for further research in the field of the Modern South Arabian language and is an important contribution to Semitic studies in general.

Kinga Dévényi

*Textes en parler arabe des musulmanes de Meknès (Maroc)*. By ARSÈNE ROUX, ed. by HARRY STROOMER. (*Semitica Viva*, 42.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008. xix + 109 p. ISBN 978-3-447-05520-8

The Arabic texts in the Moroccan dialect of Meknes occupy the first 66 pages of the book written by the author's hand. The French translation of the texts is printed in 41 pages (pp. 69-109). There is a preface written by the editor of the book, Harry Stroomer (pp. ix-xv), followed by a very short introduction by the author, Arsène Roux (pp. xvii-xix). The texts have been found by the editor in the archives of the outstanding French scholar of Berber studies, Arsène Roux (1893-1971) in Aix-en-Provence. He was also an expert of the Moroccan Arabic dialects, having spent eight years in Meknes between 1919 and 1927. During this period he prepared his doctoral thesis in 1925 titled "*Le parler arabe des musulmanes de Meknès*", which remains in MS. In this thesis he analyzed the dialect of Meknes, laying special emphasis on the language use of the women speakers of the town. The original work, i.e., the doctoral paper, consists of 310 pages, divided into three sections: (i) Arabic texts with French translation (pp. 1-133), (ii) the phonetics and phonology of the dialect (pp. 134-193), (iii) the morphology – verbs, nouns, articles, demonstratives, pronouns, verbal and nominal pronominal affixes (pp. 194-309). According to the editor's opinion the second and third sections of the thesis have become outdated, but the first part, consisting of 28 texts, remained interesting and worth publishing. We can only regret this view, and can only hope that he might change his opinion in the future and make available for the scholarly public the remaining chapters, which it is quite hard to imagine in what way could have become outdated since they deal with the sounds and forms of a language in a given period of time. At the moment, however, let us content ourselves with what we have.

The editor lists some peculiarities of the language usage of the women recorded in the texts comparing them with the common Moroccan dialect. The main aim of Roux's thesis was to illustrate in his texts the three regular phonetic changes which have taken place in the women's language in Meknes: š → s,

ž → z and r → ġ. Although one can understand why the Arabic transcription of the texts was not re-typed, the fact remains that it is very inconvenient to read not because of the handwriting but because of the intensive greyness of the paper. One wonders whether it would not have been possible to whiten the paper a little. Notwithstanding the difficulties of reading this is an important publication which helps us to a better knowledge of an interesting segment of the Moroccan Arabic dialect area.

Kinga Dévényi

*Die Chronik des Ibn Wāṣil. Ġamāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Wāṣil: Mufarriġ al-kurūb fī aḥbār Banī Ayyūb. Kritische Edition des letzten Teils (640/1248-659/1261) mit Kommentar. Untergang der Ayyubiden und Beginn der Mamlukenherrschaft.* By MOHAMED RAHIM, (*Arabische Studien*, 6.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010. xlvī + 308 p. ISBN 978-3-447-06149-0

The final part of Ibn Wāṣil's Ayyūbid history is particularly interesting for the historians of that age because the author was a contemporary of the fall of the Ayyūbid dynasty and the coming into power of the Mamlūks. This new edition was necessitated by the lack of a critical edition and also the lack of explanatory notes in the previous editions. After a brief introduction Mohamed Rahim gives a detailed biography of the author, evaluates the *Mufarriġ* from the point of view of historiography, and also as a literary piece of work. Then he compares it with other historical works of this era and states how the text was transmitted.

The editor made an enormous effort to bring about a critically acceptable and useful text. However, his editorial notes overstep the usual and sensible level. Although additions to the text of the edited MS from another MS are to be welcome, Rahim brings this method to excesses. It seems superfluous, for example, to mention the shortcomings of the non-edited MSS. On p. 108 the editor mentions, that the name Muḥammad ibn °Abd al-Muḥsin al-Anṣārī is shortened to Muḥammad al-Anṣārī in another MS, which is evidently the result of the copyist's negligence. The same holds true when he notes the grammatical errors of the non-edited MSS. These might be interesting in an edition of poetry but not in a historical work. The vast amount of questionable editorial notes disturbs the reader and unnecessarily grows the size of the book. The same may be said about the explanatory endnotes of the editor. While it is certainly useful to be informed that Munyat °Abdallāh is nowadays called Mīt al-Ḥūlī °Abdallāh (en. 464) and is situated on the Eastern bank of the Nile in the Daqahliyya district, it seems to be quite superfluous to tell the same kind of information about

such places as the citadels of Damascus and Cairo, or the big Egyptian cities like Manṣūra and Asyūṭ. It is quite unnerving for the reader to glance at a note and find only that Arīḥā is Jericho, or that the congregational mosque at that time was al-Azhar (it is told twice!), and so on. Though the majority of the notional explanations may prove useful, there are many that form part of common knowledge of any reader of Classical Arabic: the meaning of *waqf* or *ismāʿīliyya* and many similar notes. The too many explanatory notes lessen their value and are tiring for the reader. If, however, this book were a university textbook or these endnotes were attached to a German or English translation of the Arabic text they would be justified. Summing up my critical remarks I think that less footnotes and endnotes may have been more.

The result of this remarkable editorial work on the whole, in spite of these excesses mentioned above, is a readable and reliable text with many important references to the works of other historians dealing with the same age and clarification of many personal and place names. Thus the publication will serve as an important source book for a turning point of the Medieval Islamic history.

Kinga Dévényi