As gänzlich spiegelt es gleichwohl eine tiefgreifende Umorientierung wenigstens der Semitistik während der letzten Jahrzehnte (für die zweite Sektion kann Rez. das freilich nicht beurteilen): Neben sehr interessanten Detailskizzen aus laufender Feldforschung der Autoren, die alle neuen Material erschließen (Arnold, Watson et al., Khan), corpuslinguistischen Fallbeispielen, die Bekannte statistisch erhärten (Dahlgren, Lillas-Schuil), und stärker theoretisch angehauchten Studien zu übergreifenden Erscheinungen in modernen semitischen Sprachen, die allgemeine Kennzeichen besser einordnen (Yri. Edzard), ist der traditionelle historisch-vergleichende Ansatz nur noch durch Retsöts unfreiwillige Satire ordnen (Yri. Edzard), ist der traditionelle historisch-vergleichende Ansatz nur noch durch Retsöts unfreiwillige Satire ordnen (Yri. Edzard), ist der traditionelle historisch-vergleichende Ansatz nur noch durch Retsöts unfreiwillige Satire ordnen.
permissions issued by the Azhar which are reproduced in Egyptian editions of the Qur'an. If the publisher, as the permission stipulates, would somehow fail to observe the necessary punctuality, e.g. by making mistakes in the order of the pages and the quires, the permission would be withdrawn and the faulty copies will be confiscated. The permission is valid for the period of five years starting from the date of issuing, which is apparently the period during which a publisher is supposed to have a sell-out. The permission as issued to the publisher is accompanied, so it is stated, by one copy of the edition, which carries a seal print from the issuing authority on each and every page. This definitive permission, which in the present copy has been reproduced in full-colour preceding the holy text, is signed by several authorities, and finally authenticated by the Secretary-General of the Islamic Research Academy (Maṣna wa al-Buhārīh al-Islāmiyya), Ḥāfiz 'Uṣūn al-Fayyūmī. For distribution in Egypt these formalities are absolutely necessary. For the distribution in other Islamic countries the prestige of an al-Azhar-issued permission is usually sufficient to avoid practical difficulties. It is a matter of prudence and wisdom that the Ghazza publisher Mansūr has chosen the Egyptian religious authorities to authenticate his Qur'an. It provides him with direct access to the Egyptian market for his product. One remark may be added here. The King Fu'ād edition of the Qur'an, which for many years almost exclusively was the only copy available in Egypt, has now entirely disappeared from the Cairene book trade.

The editors of the present edition, who are not mentioned by name (only collectively as al-Laṣna wa al-Mushrifā 'alā Tibā'at al-hadhā al-Muṣḥaf, “the Committee Supervising the Printing of this Qur'an”), have taken the following measures to ensure that they would have a publishable text. They have taken this al-Aqṣā Mosque copy as the starting point of their work. It contains, they maintain, the text of the Qur'an according to the Ḥafs-Āṣim transmission of the text, which is the most widespread version of the Qur'ānic text. The distinction between Makki and Madani origins of the sûra's was based on information in al-Maṣaqd by Zakariyyā al-Anṣāfī (d. 926/1519). GAL G I, 99), on the work by Abū al-Qāsim Ṭūrān b. Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Kāfī (fl. 1940/1009, GAL S I, 330, where his only known work is generically mentioned as Kitāb fī 'Anna Suwar wa-Āy al-Qur'an wa-shahrī'īya), and “the other well-known books” on the subject. The indications of Waqī. “pausa,” and of Shārī, “prostration” were taken by the editors from the copy on the basis of which the printing was done. In addition to the authorities mentioned above, use was made of several other works: the Manār al-Hudā fil-Waqī wal-Ibtida' by Abū al-Aṣrār al-Uṣūnī (fl. 11th/17th cent., GAL S II, 453), of al-Maṣaqd by Zakariyyā al-Anṣāfī, of al-Nashr fi-Qirāt at-Ashr by Ibn al-Gazari (d. 833/1429, GAL G II, 201) and of a work with the general title of al-Kanz (“the Treasure”), which may be the Kanz al-Maṣādir by Ibrāhīm b. 'Umar al-Ghara'ī (d. 732/1331, GAL S I, 725; S II, 134), being one of the many commentaries on al-Qaṣīda al-Shāhīyya by al-Shāhī. Finally, information was gathered orally from accomplished scholars in this discipline.

The present list of authorities has been extensively reproduced here in order to show how much scholarship should be, and actually was, added to the manuscript text of the Qur'an before it could be transformed from a manuscript into a volume ready for printing. It is striking, but not surprising, that all authorities referred to are rather late, and cannot have any first-hand, or even second-hand, information on the original copies of the holy text. The present list of authorities is an inextricable web of references, a scholarly complex of interrelated texts, and it gives the impression that serves to authenticate the present edition by authoritative name dropping rather than to establish its authenticity by facts. Facts that are well-known, anyway, as they can be gathered from a multitude of other works written on the Qur'ānic sciences. Yet, this list of authorities is the firm base on which this edition stands. And the result of all this work is (the reader be not surprised!): an impeccable Hāfs-Āṣim copy of the Qur'an — of which there exist already so many millions!

So, why then yet another edition? The distinctive element is, as we have seen, in the title which this Qur'an has been
given, the Mushaf al-Masgid al-Aqsa, referring to Old-Jerusalem, the third most holy place in Islam after Mecca and Medina, which is constantly in danger since it was captured by Israel in the war of 1967. How far popular sentiment and religious anxiety go when this mosque is concerned is demonstrated by the numerous images of it which can be seen at a great variety of occasions throughout the Islamic world. Nowhere said in the present copy but silently present and evident by association is the idea that the al-Aqsa Mosque may be protected by this Qur'an which bears its name, and the more so by the multiplication in print of this particular Mushaf. On a more mundane level one might even assume that the present edition is not based on a concrete Mushaf in the Aqsa Mosque, but that the names-giving of the book is also part of the publisher’s marketing strategy.

The comparison to another Qur'an, coming from another endangered region, comes to mind, the so-called Fadil Pasha Mushaf of Sarajevo, Bosnia (see my “The Mushaf of Fadil Pasha”, in Bibliotheca Orientalis LXI (September-December 2004), pp. 648-651). There, in the middle of the war of attrition against the Serbs, the idea was born that a reproduction of this authoritative and beautifully made 19th-century Qur'an, which had by then already the prestige of a national Bosnian Qur'an, would be a sensible thing to do. It would fortify the Muslims and might boost Bosnian morale. The Fadil Pasha Mushaf has in fact been produced, though it was only completed after the Bosnian war (Istanbul 142312002). The decision to produce this copy of the Qur’an dedicated or somehow vaguely related to the beleaguered al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, coming in 2007 from the war-ridden town of Ghazza, may have had, in addition to commercial motives, a similar purpose.

Cairo, April 2007

Jan Just Witkam


In her capacity as the editor-in-chief, from 2001 — 2006 Prof. Jane McAuliffe was responsible for the remarkably fast and accurate publication of the six volumes of the indispensable Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an (Leiden: Brill). This impressive achievement is now followed by an off-shoot in the form of the book under review here, again edited by Professor McAuliffe, entitled The Cambridge Companion to the Qur’an.

The book is a collection of 14 contributions, divided over five categories: I. The formation of the Qur’anic text; II. Description and analysis; III. Transmission and dissemination; IV. Interpretations and intellectual traditions; and V. Contemporary readings. All contributions are written by established scholars in the field, most of whom were also involved in writing articles for the EQ. These fourteen articles are preceded by a lengthy introduction written by the editor herself.

In reading the book I often wondered for whom this publication was actually meant. In the introduction it is mentioned that the contributors had been invited to write for “a broader audience than that of specialists in Islamic studies”, while at the same time Prof. McAuliffe states that these specialists “will undoubtedly find much of interest in these pages” (p. 13). I think it is precisely this ambiguity which made me feel uncomfortable from time to time. Some of the information presented is clearly of an introductory nature, like the article by Daniel Madigan (“Themes and topics”), while in other cases the papers definitely take basic knowledge of the Qur’an for granted. An additional problem is that every single article in the book is supposed to be suitable to be read independently (p. 13), which in some cases is impossible without a basic knowledge (e.g. on pp. 41-42, where mention is made of late Meccan and Medinan passages, without any explanation). These remarks are not meant to challenge the quality of the individual contributions, which is beyond any shadow of doubt, but bearing the ambiguity of the intended readership in mind, I found some articles more convincing than others. Moreover, one might wonder why a non-specialist audience should take notice of the very detailed discussions on the origins of the Qur’an in three papers which together run to 75 pages, while at the same time the specialist is already aware of the difficulties involved in the textual history and transmission of the Qur’an.

On the whole, I think most contributions are too difficult or too detailed for the non-specialist and consequently I consider that the value of this book is restricted to an audience of students in Islamic studies and specialists, who will indeed find something in this collection which they might like. Personally, I enjoyed reading the contribution by Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom on “Inscriptions in art and architecture”, and the one by Asma Barlas, entitled “Women’s readings of the Qur’an.”

Leiden, July 2007

Nico J.G. Kapteijn


The book under review contains a long introduction and nineteen essays, selected by the author from an obviously much greater collection, most of them updated or revised reprints of studies published between 1980 and 2000 in academic journals, Festschriften and other collective works and consequently not easily accessible. Two essays are translations from German and Italian. Each essay is followed by a lengthy bibliography. The book concludes with a well-arranged list of additional sources and five indexes. In the preface, W (abbreviated from now on in this article instead of using his full name) apologizes for the fact that the essays in this book were written before the 11th of September 2001 and therefore could not take into consideration the impact of this major event on contemporary history. The omission, if it should be called one, does not diminish the value of the book. However, in Ch. 16 on ideologization in present-day Islam a sharper analysis of Islamic ideologies was called for even before the ominous date 9/11 (see below). Those who do take into account that the Muslim world, and our Western attitude towards it, may have changed since that event, will in several