

160 Wansbrough, J. reflections on Islamic studies and the relevance of  
210263 John Wansbrough. *Theory and method in the study  
of religion: twenty five years on*. Ed. Aaron W.  
Hughes. Leiden: Brill, 2013, (Supplements to Method  
& Theory in the Study of Religion, 1), pp. 201-207.

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN  
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

21 Kasım 2017

Wansbrough  
J. &  
210263

99 BERG, Herbert. The implications of, and opposition to, the methods and theories of John Wansbrough. *Theory and method in the study of religion: twenty five years on*. Ed. Aaron W. Hughes. Repr. from *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 9 i (1997): 3-22. Leiden: Brill, 2013, (Supplements to Method & Theory in the Study of Religion, 1), pp. 209-227.

21 Kasım 2017

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN  
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

- 98 STEWART, Devin J. Wansbrough, Bultmann, and the theory of variant traditions in the Qur'ân. *Qur'anic studies today*. Ed. Angelika Neuwirth and Michael A. Sells. New York: Routledge, 2016, (Routledge Studies in the Qur'ân), pp. 17-51. An attempt at resolving the main difficulties of John Wansbrough's *Quranic Studies* by tracing its intellectual genealogy to seminal works of 'redaction criticism' (*Redaktionsgeschichte*) and 'form-history' (*Formgeschichte*) in 20th century German biblical scholarship, most eminently the works of Rudolf Bultmann and his students, followed by an analysis of the qur'anic Shu'ayb narratives.

210263

6023155

Wans brough

22 Ekim 2017

- 49 BERG, Herbert. The implications of, and opposition to, the methods and theories of John Wansbrough. *Early Islamic history: critical concepts in Islamic studies. Vol. I: The sources and historiographic debates*. Ed. Tamima Bayhom-Daoui and Teresa Bernheimer. London & New York: Routledge, 2014, pp. 35-53. Originally published in *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, 9 i (1997), pp. 3-22.

Wansbrough  
210263

22 Ekim 2017

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN  
SONRA CELEN DOKÜMAN

210263

EK

**WANSBROUGH, John Edward**

Nasir, Mohamad Nasrin Mohamad

A critique of John Wansbrough's methodology and conclusions .-- 2008 ISSN: 1394-6870 :  
Al-Shajarah: Journal of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), vol.  
13 i pp. 87-112, (2008)

; Wansbrough, John

27 Kasım 2016

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN  
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

119 BERG, Herbert. The implications of, and opposition  
to, the methods and theories of John Wansbrough.  
*Wansbrough*  
*210263* *Theory and method in the study of religion: twenty  
five years on.* Ed. Aaron W. Hughes. Leiden: Brill,  
2013, (Supplements to Method & Theory in the Study  
of Religion, 1), pp. 209-227.

210263

154 MERCHANT, Yasmin. Taking a critical turn: reflections on Islamic studies and the relevance of John Wansbrough. *Theory and method in the study of religion: twenty five years on*. Ed. Aaron W. Hughes. Leiden: Brill, 2013, (Supplements to Method & Theory in the Study of Religion, 1), pp. 201-207.

27 Kasım 2016

MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN  
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

sından dolayı, söz konusu tikel cennet tasvirlerinin aslında yerel ve tarihsel tasvirler olduğunu söylemenin, geleneksel anlayış nezdinde hiçbir şekilde hüsn-i kabul görmeyeceği aşikardır. Hiç şüphesiz bu telakki, hesabı verilmiş bir evrensellik söyleminin kaçınılmaz, kaçınılmaz olduğu kadar da yanlış bir tasavvurun sonucudur.

Söz konusu yanlış tasavvurun modern dönemdeki en çarpıcı örneklerinden biri, Kur'an'ı anlama ve yorumlama konusunda geleneksel anlayışlardan oldukça farklı bir bakış açısı geliştiren M. Esed'in cennet yorumlarında kendisini göstermektedir. Nüzül döneminin dilsel ve kültürel kodlarının bilinmesini, Kur'an'ın sağlıklı şekilde anlaşılması bağlamında olmazsa olmaz bir şart olarak gören Esed, geleneksel evrensellik telakkisinin bir tezahürü olarak, Kur'an'daki tikel cennet betimlemelerinin doğrudan nüzül döneminin Arap aklına ve zevkine hitap ettiğini maalesef atlamıştır. Bu çerçevede, cennetin güzelliklerinin sembolik ve mecazi anlamlar ifade ettiğini belirten Esed,<sup>89</sup> bu konuda zaman zaman, cenneteki bir pınarın özel ismi olan *selsebil*<sup>90</sup> kelimesini ikiye bölerek "yolu sor/ara" yani "yararlı işler yapmak suretiyle cennete giden yolu ara"<sup>91</sup> tarzında, İsmailîler'in bâtuni te'villerini anımsatan son derece zorlama yorumlar üretmiştir.

Kur'an'da tasvir edilen cennet nimetlerinin sembolik anlamlar taşıdığını ve dolayısıyla, Allah'ın vahyin ilk muhataplarını -hâşâ- kandırdığını varsayan bu yorum anlayışının arka planında, söz konusu evrensellik telakkisinin yanı sıra, özellikle müsteşriklerin Kur'an'daki cennet tasvirlerine yönelik birtakım eleştirilerde bulunmuş olmalarından kaynaklanan savunmacı bir refleksten veya ilgili tasvirlerde cennet nimetlerinin nüzül dönemi Araplarına özgü zevk ve beğenilerini yansıtan objelerden seçilmesi ve bu objelerin sıradanlaştırılarak yorumlanmasından, bilhassa cinselliğe ilişkin bölümlere rivayetler aracılığıyla birtakım çirkin motifler eklenmesinden neş'et eden bir rahatsızlık ya da tatminsizlik duygusunun varlığından söz etmek mümkündür.<sup>92</sup>

Ancak, sebep her ne olursa olsun, Esed'in bu sembolik cennet yorumunda çok önemli bir gerçek göz ardı edilmiştir. Bu önemli gerçek ise, Kur'an'ın ilk defa miladî yedinci yüzyılın Arabistan Yarımadası'nda yaşanan bir Arap kabilesine (Kureyş) Arapça olarak hitap ettiği ve bu hitaba form kazandıran kelimelerin hemen hepsini bu kabilenin lügatçesinden seçtiğidir.

<sup>89</sup> Örnek olarak bkz. Esed, *Kur'an Mesajı*, II. 520 (34. not), 913 (20. ve 21. not); III. 931 (46. not), 1100, (22., 24., 26., 27, 29. notlar), 1104-1105 (6., 8., 15. notlar), 1264, (3. not).

<sup>90</sup> 76. İnsân, 18.

<sup>91</sup> Esed, *Kur'an Mesajı*, III. 1218 (17. not).

<sup>92</sup> Nitekim bu türden bir tatminsizlik, geçmişte sufilere tarafından da dolaylı şekilde dile getirilmiştir. Bu bağlamda, cenneti avamın ve havassın cenneti olmak üzere iki kısma ayıran Gazzâlî şunları söylemiştir: (...) Arif, kendisine ma'rifet cennetinin sekiz kapısı aralanınca orada kalır ve aslâ aptalların cennetine dönüp bakmaz. Gerçekte, cennet ehlinin çoğu ahmaktır. İliyyûn ise, hadiste de zikredildiği gibi, akıl sahibi kimselere mahsustur. (...) Sentin bildiğin cennet, cisimlerden yaratılmıştır. Bu yüzden her ne kadar geniş de olsa, bir sonu vardır. Zira, mümkün [varlıklar] içerisinde hiçbir sonsuz varlık yoktur ve olması da muhaldir. Sen daha üstün olanı verip daha aşağı olanı almaktan sakın. Aksi takdirde, her ne kadar cennet ehlinde olsan da ahmaklar grubuna dahil olursun. Nitekim, Hz. Peygamber şöyle buyurmuştur: "Cennet ehlinin çoğu ahmaktır. İliyyûn ise, akıl sahiplerine aittir."(!) Bkz. Gazzâlî, Ebû Hâmid Muhammed, *Cevâhiru'l-kur'an*, Beyrut 1401/1981, s. 43-44, 49.

## John Wansbrough'nun Kur'an Tarihi Teorisi ve Batı'da Doğurduğu Tartışmalar

İSMÂİL ALBAYRAK

YRD.DOÇ.DR., SAKARYA Ü. İLAHİYAT FAKÜLTESİ

12. yy'da, Peter de Venerable'in himayesinde, Robert Ketton tarafından gerçekleştirilen Kur'an'ın Latince tercümesi sayesinde Kur'an'la ilk defa amatörce tanışma imkanı bulan Batı, bu tür çalışmaları yükselen bir trendle günümüze kadar sürdürülmüştür. Genelde İslam ve özelde Kur'an çalışmaları, Batı'da son derece önemli bir literatürün doğmasına sebep olmuştur. Zaman zaman polemik, zaman zaman apojetik karakter sergileyen bu çalışmalar, özellikle 19. yy'ın ikinci yarısından itibaren bazı tarafsız akademisyenlerin de çabalarıyla, farklı yaklaşımların doğmasına vesile olmuştur. Bu dönemi Ortaçağ'daki Kur'an çalışmalarından ayıran önemli özelliklerden biri, hristiyan araştırmacıların yanında yahudi ilim adamlarının da yer almalarıdır. Akademik çoğulculuğun Kur'an çalışmalarına canlılık getirdiği inkar edilemez; fakat bu farklı yaklaşımların bir süre sonra rekabete dönüştüğü ve sonuç olarak da, Kur'an çalışmalarının yahudi ve hristiyan yazarlar tarafından bir savaş alanı hâline getirildiği gözlenmektedir. Dolayısıyla, yahudi araştırmacılar, Hz. Peygamber'in kullandığı kaynağı Yahudilik'te ararken, Hristiyanlar da Hz. Peygamber'i Kilise'nin öğrencisi olarak görmüşlerdir. Bu kısır döngü, iki tarafı da akıl almaz bir yarışa sürüklemiştir. Bu tür yaklaşımları Hristiyanlığın temsilcisi olan Wellhausen, Andrea, Ahrens, Tisdall, Bell; Yahudiliğin temsilcisi olan Geiger, Hirschfeld, Horovitz, Hirschberg, Schapiro ve Torrey'in eserlerinde çok açık bir şekilde görebilmek mümkündür.

Bu dönemin Kur'an çalışmaları, elbette, yukarıda isimleri geçen şahıslarla sınırlı değildir. Kur'an'ın orijini ile ilgilenmekle beraber, bütün enerjilerini bu konuya hasretmeyen yazarlar da mevcuttur. Weil'in *Historisch-kritische Einleitung in den Korans* (Tarihi Eleştiri Perspektifinden Kur'an'a Giriş) ve Nöldeke'nin *Geschichte des Koran* (Kur'an Tarihi) adlı eserleri, bu tür yaklaşımların en güzel örneğini sergilemektedir. Kur'an'ın tarihi, vahiy olayı, Mekki ve Medeni surelerin tematik yapısı vb. konuları işleyen bu iki yahudi ilim adamını



RIPPIN, Andrew. Literary analysis of *Qur'ân, tafsîr,* and *sîra*: the methodologies of John Wansbrough. *Approaches to Islam in religious studies*. R.C.Martin, ed. Tucson 1985. rp. Oxford: Oneworld, 2001. pp.151-163:227-232

44 RIPPIN, Andrew. Literary analysis of *Qur'ân, tafsîr,* and *sîra*: the methodologies of John Wansbrough. *Approaches to Islam in religious studies*. R.C.Martin, ed. Tucson 1985. rp. Oxford: Oneworld, 2001. pp.151-163:227-232

12 HAZIRAN 2003

Wansbrough John

2545 RIPPIN, A. Literary analysis of *Qur'ân, tafsîr,* and *sîra*: the methodologies of John Wansbrough. *Approaches to Islam in religious studies*. R.C.Martin, ed. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985. pp.151-163

Kur'an

14 YAPP, M.E. Professor J.E.Wansbrough. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 57 i (1994) pp.1-4

34 BRETT, M. & HAWTING, G.R. Published writings of J.E.Wansbrough. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 57 i (1994) pp.4-13

03 SUBAT 1997

03 SUBAT 1997

34 BRETT, M. & HAWTING, G.R. Published writings of J.E.Wansbrough. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 57 i (1994) pp.4-13

MOJADDEDI, Jawid A. Taking Islam seriously: the legacy of John Wansbrough. *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 45 i (2000) pp.103-114 (Review of Herbert Berg (ed.) *Islamic origins reconsidered: John Wansbrough and the study of Islam* (special issue of *Method and theory in the Study of Religion* ...) 1997.)

ture (such that reference to scripture on legal issues comes subsequent to the acceptance of the text as a whole as supported and promulgated through haggadic exegesis) all point in this direction for Wansbrough.

Putting aside the purposes to which Wansbrough used his analysis within his book, however, the significance of his work on the *tafsir* texts remains. It is to this significance in terms of its impact upon the discipline and some of the challenges which the work has prompted that this essay will pay attention. This will be facilitated by looking at two recent works which typify some of the reactions to Wansbrough's work.

## 2. The significance of Wansbrough's work

One initial point is worth emphasizing. Wansbrough's analysis contained in part IV of *Quranic Studies* constitutes the first time many of the texts had been looked at with a scholarly eye. Most of the texts were in manuscript form when he looked at them; some were misidentified in manuscript catalogues. Since the publication of his book, all but one or two (as far as I can determine) of the significant early texts have been published. Whether one can say that in every instance this is a direct result of Wansbrough's work and his creating interest in the texts is doubtful but it may well be partially true in some cases. The foundational nature of Wansbrough's work may be appreciated by the references to it in recent works such as Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra*, volumes 1 and 2.<sup>1</sup>

Further scholarly studies have also built upon Wansbrough's work, in terms of adding clarification to the nature of some of the texts themselves, extending his scheme of analysis, or applying certain of his principles to the analysis of other texts. For example, I have pursued detailed studies of various texts ascribed to Ibn 'Abbās (on which, see further below) (Rippin 1981; 1983), edited and analyzed a text on abrogation (*naskh*) which Wansbrough mentioned but had been unable to examine (1984), as well as attempted to apply some of the methods of analysis to a detailed re-examination of one text ascribed by Wansbrough to al-Kalbi (1994). As well, I have re-examined the role of one of the exegetical tools which Wansbrough isolated, the "occasions of revelation" (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), and reassessed its use within a broader framework of exegesis (1985; 1988). Norman Calder, in an impressive article "Tafsir from Ṭabari to Ibn Kathīr" (1993), has extended Wansbrough's analy-

1. See, for example, the treatment of Sufyān al-Thawri (Ess 1990: 1.227-228) and Muqātil b. Sulaymān (Ess 1992: 2.516-528).

sis beyond the formative period of *tafsir* and analyzed the procedural devices in the main exegetical works from the classical Islamic period. As a final example, Christopher Buck has used Wansbrough's isolation of exegetical procedural devices as a starting point for the analysis of the nineteenth century work of exegesis by Bahā'u'llāh, the *Kitāb-i Īqān* (1995).

But Wansbrough's work in this part of the book has also brought forth various challenges. Here I wish to focus not upon those works which may have suggested corrections of a factual or even an interpretative nature, but rather, those works which have suggested basic methodological challenges to the assumptions of his approach. There have not been many such works which have paid direct attention to part IV of *Quranic Studies* (in whole or in part) in this way and those that do tend to share a common methodological objection which has come forth in other contexts also in dealing with Wansbrough's work. This issue revolves around Wansbrough's insistence upon having textual evidence for historical claims and, what is more, seeing those texts which do provide evidence as complex expressions of several generations of editors. The claims put forth by mechanisms such as *isnāds* (chains of authorities) cannot be trusted to provide a good historical basis for discussion. However, other methodological issues do arise as well, as we shall see.

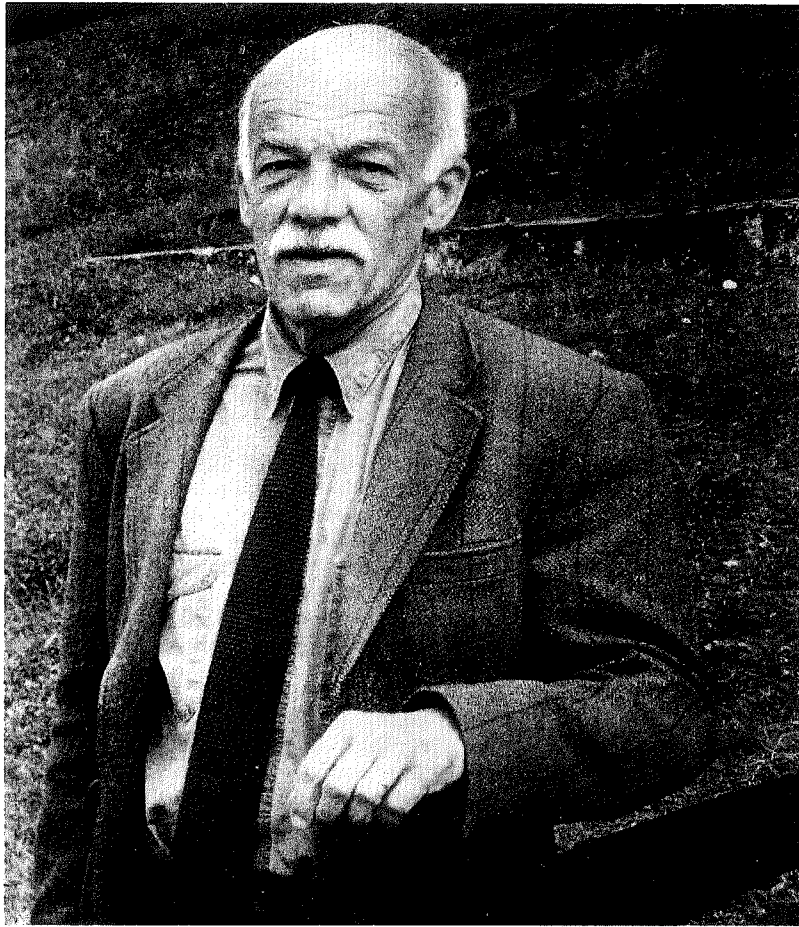
## 3. Ibn 'Abbās

Perhaps the best example of the issue which is at stake revolves around the person of Ibn 'Abbās. The fame and significance of this cousin of Muḥammad as the source of a great deal of exegetical material has been the focus of much attention in scholarly discussions of *tafsir*, at least since the time of Goldziher (1920; compare, however, Gilliot 1985). Wansbrough drew attention to a series of texts ascribed specifically to Ibn 'Abbās, all of them of a lexicographical nature. One of the roles of the figure of Ibn 'Abbās within the development of *tafsir*, according to Wansbrough's argument, was bringing the language of the Qur'an into alignment with the language of the "Arabs" (variously defined, sometimes Bedouin, sometimes urban dwellers, sometimes the Hijaz as a whole). Identity of the people as solidified through language became a major ideological stance promulgated in such texts.

Such an argument, however, depended upon a number of preceding factors, including the emergence of the Qur'an as authoritative, before it could be mounted. Such an argument could not have been contemporary with Ibn 'Abbās, who died in 687 C.E., but must stem from several centuries later. The ascription to Ibn 'Abbās was an appeal to authority in the past, to the family of the Prophet and to a name which was gathering an association with exegetical activity in general.

## PREFACE

PROFESSOR J. E. WANSBROUGH



14 YAPP, M.E. Professor J.E. Wansbrough. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 57 i (1994) pp.1-4

It was at the beginning of October 1957 that a casually dressed man, carrying a haversack and looking rather like a soldier on leave, knocked on the door of Bernard Lewis's room and announced that he was a new postgraduate student by the name of John Wansbrough. Interrogated on his academic credentials acquired at Harvard, the reasons for his interest in Middle Eastern history and on his military record in the armed forces of the United States, he responded with dignity and restraint and was duly admitted to the department of history at the School. It so happened that I witnessed this notable event because I was sitting in Bernard's room having joined the staff of the department as an assistant lecturer that same morning. Subsequently, that dearly loved teacher, Vernon Parry, wandered in, following the casual pattern of the opening of the session in those pleasant and unexact days, and introductions were made. Unsurprisingly, Vernon mixed up the new postgraduate and the new teacher—even then the self-possessed, mature John looked much more like a university teacher than I did—and when the confusion was eventually sorted out regarded us with dark suspicion as though we had been engaged in some conspiracy to subvert the proper order of affairs in the School. He was not the last to harbour such notions. It was not long, however, before, in 1960, we were to welcome John as an academic colleague in the history department. As he took up his academic duties so, with his wife and growing family, he settled into a seventeenth-century house in Essex. As he described it the house seemed to be as inconvenient a dwelling as could be imagined but when I asked why he did not live in a more modern one he looked surprised. 'It would be a waste to live in England and not to live in a house that had some history,' he replied.

John stayed in his historical house until he moved to Islington more than twenty years later but his sojourn in the history department was much shorter. Although, as may be observed from his willingness to subject himself to physical hardship in the cause of the discipline, he was far from disliking history, John had already conceived some doubts about historians, whom he regarded as people prone to skim on the surface of scholarship rather than to trouble to equip themselves adequately to investigate the depths of their subject. There was current at the time an expression, more common indeed by repute than in usage, to the effect that language was a tool of study and John had already concluded that language was much more fundamental to the study of the past than this dictum suggested. As part of his postgraduate training he had attended the lectures given by Paul Wittek on Ottoman history and was strongly drawn towards that scintillating combination of language and history which the great Austrian scholar displayed to all of his students, or at least to those who were willing to sit up to all hours of the night because Wittek's day only began at 3.0 p.m. As determined in execution as he was thorough in his convictions John quietly went off to read for the B.A. Arabic and was duly rewarded by a first class degree.

At that time the School constituted a loose framework intended to facilitate the personal academic initiatives of its academic staff rather than a scheme of neat and purposive pigeonholes in which individual scholars laboured to achieve a greater good. Nevertheless, it was felt that in studying Arabic when he should have been researching and writing history John had somewhat

11 KASIM 1996

LINGUA FRANCA IN THE MEDITERRANEAN:  
JOHN WANSBROUGH  
AND THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF MEDIAEVAL EGYPT

MICHAEL BRETT

I

John Wansbrough is not normally associated with the history of mediaeval Egypt. His fame as the author of *Qur'anic Studies* and *The Sectarian Milieu*, concerning the development (rather than the origins) of Islam, has obscured the fact that the subject of his doctoral thesis was the series of diplomatic and commercial agreements between the Mamluk Sultanate and the Italian city-states preserved in the archives of Venice and Florence in Italian and in Arabic versions. Between 1961 and 1971, the outcome of this study was six articles on the documents in question, mainly in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*.<sup>1</sup> These raised, but did not specifically address, a problem to which he referred at the time, namely the difficulty of deciding the precise relationship of the Italian and the Arabic versions to each other: to what extent, if at all, were they translations the one of the other. Some thirty years after he turned away from the whole question to the study of the Qur'an, his solution to that vexing problem is now the key to a very much wider thesis on the subject of communication and language in the Mediterranean over the last four thousand years, entitled *Lingua Franca in the Mediterranean*.<sup>2</sup>

The first chapter is entitled 'Orbits', in the original sense of 'circuits', on the principle that what is sent out will eventually return.

<sup>1</sup> J.E. Wansbrough, "A Mamluk letter of 877/1473", *BSOAS*, 24, (1961), 200-13; "A Moroccan amir's commercial treaty with Venice of the year 913/1508", *BSOAS*, 25, (1962), 449-71; "A Mamluk ambassador to Venice in 913/1507", *BSOAS*, 26, (1963), 503-30; "Venice and Florence in the Mamluk commercial privileges", *BSOAS*, 28, (1965), 483-523; "A Mamluk commercial treaty concluded with the Republic of Florence, 894/1489", in S.M. Stern, ed., *Documents from Islamic Chanceries* (Oxford, 1965), 39-79; "The safe-conduct in Muslim chancery practice", *BSOAS*, 34, (1971), 20-35. For a complete list of his relevant publications, see "Published writings of J.E. Wansbrough", *BSOAS*, 57, (1994), 4-13.

<sup>2</sup> J. Wansbrough, *Lingua Franca in the Mediterranean* (London, 1996).

The Historiography of Islamic Egypt (c. 950-1800),  
Edited by Hugh Kennedy, Leiden 2001, s. 1-11.

Bogazici 601235

11 EKIM 2006

Yasayim

Yasayan

# TAKING ISLAM SERIOUSLY THE LEGACY OF JOHN WANSBROUGH\*

JAWID A. MOJADDEDI

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

John Wansbrough's two monographs, *Quranic Studies* and *The Sectarian Milieu*,<sup>1</sup> are arguably the most significant works that have been written in the field of Islamic studies in the last twenty years. Although they are both now out of print, they continue to influence the study of early Islam through the works of the 'revisionist' scholars who have been inspired by them.<sup>2</sup> The majority of Islamicists, however, have preferred to dismiss the challenges that Wansbrough's works represent. Whilst no one has yet produced a refutation of his arguments on the basis of his own methodology, with a few exceptions, responses to his works have tended to be emphatically negative. *Islamic Origins Reconsidered* serves as a timely reminder of this contentious episode, and as evidence of its ongoing significance.

If there is one methodological principle which sets Wansbrough's work apart from that of his opponents, it is his uncompromising demand for literary evidence to support historical claims. Although it may be commonplace in the general discipline of historical studies, it is still the exception in the study of early Islam. This is largely due to the implications of the fact that no surviving Muslim texts can be dated earlier than about 800 CE. Whilst this problem was recognized before Wansbrough, his scholarship, for many, has become inextricably linked to it, on account of the seriousness with which he takes it into consideration. Most scholars have chosen to work around the problem, usually by pointing to the likelihood that

\* Review of Herbert Berg (ed.), *Islamic Origins Reconsidered: John Wansbrough and the Study of Islam* (Special Issue of *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion: Journal of the North American Association for the Study of Religion*) 9-1, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin 1997. Pp. 90. Price: DM 53.00 paperback. ISSN: 0943-3058.

<sup>1</sup> J. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (London Oriental Series 31, Oxford 1977); *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (London Oriental Series 34, Oxford 1978).

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of 'revisionist' approaches to early Islam, see J. Koren and Y.D. Nevo, 'Methodological Approaches to Islamic Studies', *Der Islam* 68 (1991), 87-107.

*the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York, 1981).

13. *Los Angeles Times*, Wednesday, December 12, 1979, Section VIII, pp.1-2.
14. Hamid Algar, Plenary Session: 'The Rise of Islam as a Force in Recent International Affairs', American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, San Francisco, December 19, 1981. Professor Algar was not present at the meeting and his paper was read for him; the 'vituperative' tone was in the style and content of the writing and not (necessarily) in the actual oral presentation.
15. Most revealing in this respect are the various reactions to the works by Wansbrough, especially his *Quranic Studies*, but also his *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Sacred History* (Oxford, 1978).
16. A.Rippin, 'Methodological Considerations in the Study of *tafsir*', paper read at the American Oriental Society Annual Meeting, Boston, March 15, 1981.
17. See especially H.R.Jauss, 'Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory', in *New Literary History* 2 (1970), pp.7-37. Basic to any consideration of Literary History is Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (3rd edn; New York, London, 1977), Chapters 4 and 19.
18. Hayden White, 'Literary History: The Point of it All', in *New Literary History* 2 (1970), pp.173-185.
19. Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Minneapolis, Chicago, 1980), pp.97 and 131. See my review of this book, in *BSOAS* 44 (1981), pp.360-363. On Gabriel also see A.T. Welch, 'al-*Qur'an*', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, V, p.403, for a remarkably positivist statement.
20. See Wansbrough, *op.cit.*, 120; Arkoun, *op.cit.*, p.421.

Andrew Rippin, *The Qur'an and its Interpretative Tradition*. (Variorum Collected Studies Series: CS715), 2001 Aldershot, Hampshire. (ISAM DN. 92410). *AR*

## II

Literary analysis of Qur<sup>ān</sup>, Tafsīr and Sīra:

the methodologies of John Wansbrough

151-163

*Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*,

227-232

ed. R. C. Martin.

Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985

## Literary Analysis of *Qur'ān*, *Tafsīr*, and *Sīra* *The Methodologies of John Wansbrough*

That Judaism and Christianity are religions "in history" seems to be a commonly accepted notion among many people today. The view is that history is the "proving ground" of these religions, that the intervention of God in the historical sequence of events is the most significant truth attested by these religions. Whether or not this is theologically valid is a question that must be left for those who pursue such questions; what is of interest here are the implications which this view has had for "secular" historical studies and, most importantly here, for the historical study of religion. The idea that these are religions "in history" has led to an emphasis on the desire to discover "what really happened," ultimately, because of the underlying belief that this discovery would demonstrate the ultimate truth or falsity of the individual religion. Now that may or may not be an appropriate task depending on the particular view of history taken by the historian, but it has led to one important problem in the study of religion—the supposition that the sources available to us to describe the historical foundations of a given religion, most specifically the scriptures, contain within them discernible historical data which can be used to provide positive historical results. In other words, the approach assumes that the motivations of

- Yasajem

Andrew Rippin, *The Qur'an and its Interpretative Tradition*. (Variorum Collected Studies Series: CS715), 2001 Aldershot, Hampshire. (ISAM DN. 92410). *pdf*

VI *Quranic Studies, part IV: some methodological notes* 39-46  
*Method and Theory in the Study of Religion, IX (1997)*

***Quranic Studies, part IV:***  
**Some methodological notes**

**1. Introduction**

Of all the insights offered by John Wansbrough's *Quranic Studies* (1977), the theories proffered about the origins of the Qur'an have tended to overshadow the others. It would seem that some people, knowing that the book contains these suggestions which run counter to accepted theories, have disregarded the entire work and cite it merely as an example of "Orientalist" misguidedness. As a result perhaps, the extensive treatment of the formative Muslim interpretative tradition, *tafsir*, contained in part IV of *Quranic Studies* has not received the detailed attention that it has deserved among scholars.

Having said that, however, it must be clarified immediately that the analysis of the *tafsir* texts conducted by Wansbrough does not stand apart from his overall theory on the Qur'an. Indeed, part of the proof for the idea of the gradual emergence of the Qur'an as an authoritative text within the Muslim community is based upon the evidence of the *tafsir* texts. The implicit arguments which these texts contain for the definition of a canon of scripture and for the general development of notions of authority of scrip-

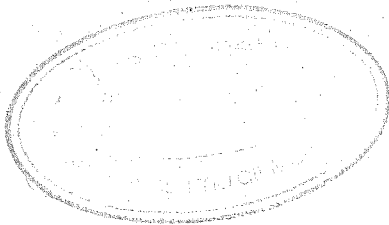
nen Batılılaşmaçı reformlarını, sonuçta Osmanlı Devlet ve toplumlarının İslâm karakterini yok edeceğini kavramakta yeteri kadar uzakgörüşlü olamamaları ise şaşılacak bir durumdur.<sup>10</sup>

Uriel Heyd, "İslam in Modern Turkey" adlı makalesinde ise, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşundan makalenin yazıldığı 1947 yılına kadar geçen sürede, İslâm'ın modern Türkiye'deki serüvenini, kayıp ve kazanımlarını anlatır.

İslâm'ın bugünkü Türkiye'de resmî bir din olarak konumunu kaybettiğini ve güçlü kurumlarının kapatıldığını; dinin, eğitim gibi, bir Devlet fonksiyonu haline getirildiğini söyleyen Uriel Heyd, Türkiye'de dinin son dönemlerdeki yeniden canlanışında, dış faktörler yanında iç faktörlerin de etkin olduğunu belirterek, maddî ve manevî alanlarda yaşanan hızlı batılılaşmanın, Türkiye'de derin bir sosyal ve ahlâkî krize sebep olduğunu ve bugün dünyanın pek çok ülkesinde olduğu gibi Türkiye'de de milliyetçiliğin, karşı karşıya bulunulan bütün iç problemleri yalnız başına çözüme gücüne sahip bulunmadığına işaret eder. Bu gelişmeler çerçevesinde Heyd, Türkiye'de daha büyük bir demokratik hürriyet döneminin başlamasıyla, İslâm'ın, bu eski iktidar merkezinde, kaybettiği bazı mevzileri yeniden elde edebileceği öngörüsünde bulunur.<sup>11</sup>

İslam Hukuku Araştırmaları Dergisi, sayı:4, Konya 2004.

D.2533



<sup>10</sup> Heyd'in modernleşmeye karşı Osmanlı ulemâsının tavrıyla ilgili burada verilen görüşleri için bk. Uriel Heyd, "III. Selim ve II. Mahmud Dönemlerinde Batılılaşma ve Osmanlı Ulemâsı I" (trc. Sami Erdem), *Dergah*, VII/80, İstanbul 1996, s. 18-20; VII/81, s. 15-16; VII/83, İstanbul 1997, s. 17-19.

<sup>11</sup> Uriel Heyd, "Islam in Modern Turkey", *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, vol. XXXIV/3-4, July-October, 1947, s. 299-308.

# JOHN WANSBROUGH VE AHKÂM TEFSİRİ

Yosun

Y. Doç. Dr. İsmail Albayrak'

## Abstract

### John Wansbrough and His Views on Legal Exegesis

This article deals with John Wansbrough's general approach to *Halakhic* (legal/ahkâm) exegesis. Briefly, like Schacht, he does not accept that Islamic Jurisprudence derives mainly from Qur'anic data. He also claims that many legal rules flourish on the basis of Muslims' polemic against Judea-Christian tradition. In addition, he thinks that not only legal rules but also methodologies are taken from these traditions. Wansbrough, due to his extreme scepticism, misuses many evidences and sources that oppose to his conclusion.

Bu makalede genelde İslâm, özelde ise Kur'ân araştırmaları konusunda radikal yaklaşımlarıyla tanınan John Wansbrough'nun ahkâm tefsiriyle ilgili görüşleri üzerinde durulacaktır. Söz konusu alan hakkındaki düşüncelerinden önce Wansbrough'nun hayatı, ilmi kişiliği, temel eserleri ile birlikte genel olarak tefsir kitâbiyatı hakkındaki yaklaşımları özetlenecektir.

### John Wansbrough Kimdir?

John Wansbrough 19 Şubat 1928 yılında Illinois/ABD da doğdu. Harvard da Sâmi dilleri üzerinde tahsilini gördü. Askerlik sonrası Ekim 1957 de doktora öğrencisi olarak Londra Üniversitesi Tarih bölümüne intisap etti. 1960'da akademisyen olarak aynı bölümde görev yapmaya başladı. Doktora eğitiminin bir parçası olan tarih derslerini Avusturyalı Prof. Paul Wittek'ten almıştır. Wansbrough'nun erken dönemde başlayan Ortadoğu tarihiyle ilgili çalışmaları bölümde uzun süredir yoğunlaştığı Arap dili öğrenimiyle daha da kuvvetlenmiştir. Osmanlı ve Memlûk tarihi çalışan Wansbrough 1967 yılında Tarih bölümünü bırakarak Yakınoğu Araştırmaları bölümüne Arapça öğretim üyesi olarak atanmış, uzun süredir ilgi duyduğu I. Goldziher ve J. Schacht gibi yazarların etkisiyle o da ilk dönem İslâm araştırmaları üzerinde yoğunlaşmaya başlamıştır. 1975'de doçent, 1984'de profesör olan

<sup>1</sup> Sakarya Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi albayrak@sakarya.edu.tr

127-139



truth of metahistory. Historical criticism was brushed aside in favor of something higher. We have already seen examples of Corbin's tendency to ignore the multiplicity and richness of historical Islam in Iran and elsewhere by compressing it into a mold of his own devising. There are others equally striking that can also be cited. For example, in connection with the Canonical Sayings of the Imams, he mentions the skepticism of many—one may say in fact, the majority—of scholars that the Imams ever actually said many of the things attributed to them. There is no attempt to deal with the issue in terms of the normal criteria for establishing the authenticity of a text or its attribution. In the place of historical analysis of the issue there is a polemic against historicism and repetition of the methodological principle that what ultimately counts is the Shi'i consciousness.

The Shi'a believed that the sayings transmitted to them were spoken by the Imams; indeed, in Shi'i souls the Canonical Sayings are the Imams eternally speaking to the faithful. In the interior lives of the believers these sayings are real events. This fact makes the *ahādīth*, or Canonical Sayings, valid historical documents without the need for more to be said. A similar argument is mounted in connection with the authorship of *Nabj al-Balāgha*, which the Ithna 'Ashari Shi'a traditionally attribute to the First Imam. These documents make an equivocal use of the word "history" in their attributions of historicity, and the question of the actual authorship of the sayings or the treatise is never seriously raised. The argument offered is rather *ad hominem*, proceeding on the basis of the evil results that Corbin considers historicism to have produced. Far from elucidating the question of historicity, Corbin's procedure thrusts it into the background and denies its importance. Nonetheless, in full confidence Corbin says of the *ahādīth* of the Imams, "In my opinion historically and chronologically we cannot go back to any more ancient sources in Islam." One must agree with Corbin that these historical questions are not the fundamental issue in the study of Shi'i religiosity, but it is not acceptable to relegate critical considerations to the dustbin of insignificance.<sup>21</sup>

Corbin's hermeneutics of Shi'i Islam is, it will be evident, more than an effort to make the nature of Shi'i piety understood on the intellectual plane. It is also an exposition and defense of a world view to which Corbin himself was committed. The encounter with Shi'i gnosticism in Corbin's works is an open invitation to us all to enter and dwell in that realm if only we will "decide" to do so.

Editor: Richard C. Martin  
Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies,  
Tucson, 1985, s. 151-163. DN: 23056 rlf

9

## Literary Analysis of *Qur'an*, *Tafsir*, and *Sira* *The Methodologies of John Wansbrough* ✕

ANDREW RIPPIN

That Judaism and Christianity are religions "in history" seems to be a commonly accepted notion among many people today. The view is that history is the "proving ground" of these religions, that the intervention of God in the historical sequence of events is the most significant truth attested by these religions. Whether or not this is theologically valid is a question that must be left for those who pursue such questions; what is of interest here are the implications which this view has had for "secular" historical studies and, most importantly here, for the historical study of religion. The idea that these are religions "in history" has led to an emphasis on the desire to discover "what really happened," ultimately, because of the underlying belief that this discovery would demonstrate the ultimate truth or falsity of the individual religion. Now that may or may not be an appropriate task depending on the particular view of history taken by the historian, but it has led to one important problem in the study of religion—the supposition that the sources available to us to describe the historical foundations of a given religion, most specifically the scriptures, contain within them discernible historical data which can be used to provide positive historical results. In other words, the approach assumes that the motivations of

render inconclusive his attempt to refute some of Goldziher's and Schacht's arguments concerning the theological literature during the Umayyad period, the oral/written transmission of material, and the fictive nature of the exegetical materials that employ *isnāds*. Even if his methods and reasoning were sound, the conclusions reached by studying the *ḥadīths* ascribed to Mujāhid cannot be readily applied to the earliest exegetes, such as Ibn ʿAbbās. The latter not only lived much earlier, but also has associated with him a status that is not comparable to the former.

Horst, Birkeland, Abbott, Sezgin, Goldfeld, and Stauth, while not in total agreement, share the belief that *isnāds* (at least those attached to exegesis) are reasonably reliable – reliable enough to reconstruct in some fashion the actual exegetical views of certain exegetes, such as Ibn ʿAbbās or Mujāhid. This sanguine approach differs only marginally from the traditional Muslim approach, which also accepts *isnāds* at face value. This optimism has not gone unchallenged.

### THE SCEPTICISM AND LITERARY ANALYSIS OF J. WANSBROUGH, A. RIPPIN, ET AL.

Thus far the scepticism regarding the *ḥadīths* of the sunna expressed by Goldziher and Schacht remains largely absent from the *ḥadīths* of *tafsīr*. Most scholars of quranic *tafsīr*, even those who were willing to be convinced by the advocates of scepticism, feel that it is immune from the same suspicions because of the genre's uniqueness in terms of provenance and content or because of its more reliable transmission. The tide of scepticism that began with Goldziher ebbed after Schacht. However, starting in the late 1970s, a new wave of scepticism rolled in that succeeded in not only casting suspicion upon the description of the early origin and development of exegesis by Muslim and Western scholars, but also bringing *tafsīr* to the very centre of the debate about the authenticity of all early Muslim texts.

The most revolutionary approach to early Muslim texts, including exegetical works, since that of Goldziher<sup>64</sup> came with the publication of John Wansbrough's *Quranic Studies* and *The Sectarian Milieu*, which focus on the related developments of the Qurʾān's canonical status and the Islamic salvation history, respectively. In so doing, he pits himself against "that school of sanguine historiography in which the pursuit of reconstruction is seldom if ever deflected by the doubts and scruples thrown up in recent (and not so recent) years by practitioners of form-criticism, structuralism and the like."<sup>65</sup> In this endeavour, he has been supported by the efforts of Andrew Rippin and a handful of other scholars. Rippin summarizes Wansbrough's point of departure thus:

What the Qurʾān is trying to evidence, what *tafsīr*, *sīra*, and theological writings are trying to explicate, is how the sequence of

worldly events centered on the time of Muḥammad was directed by God. All the components of Islamic salvation history are meant to witness the same point of faith, namely, an understanding of history that sees God's role in directing the affairs of humankind. ... Salvation history comes down to us in a literary form and must be approached by means appropriate to such: literary analysis.<sup>66</sup>

The historical analysis based on these texts which endeavours to determine "what really happened" is missing the point: "we do *not* know and probably never can know what really happened; all we can know is what later people *believed* happened."<sup>67</sup> And while virtually every facet of the first three centuries of Islam is radically re-interpreted by Wansbrough *et al.*, I shall try, as far as possible, to focus only on his discussion of exegesis.<sup>68</sup>

Wansbrough notes that the exegetical material is not homogeneous in terms of function and style. By function, he means the role a certain type of exegesis plays "in the formulation of its history by a self-conscious religious community."<sup>69</sup> Borrowing some terms from Jewish scriptural interpretation, Wansbrough classifies the material according to exegetical types ("typical context" or "habitual framework"): haggadic (narrative), halakhic (legal), masoretic (textual), rhetorical, and allegorical. By style, he means the "explicative elements" or "procedural devices" which have been employed by Muslim exegetes. Wansbrough identifies twelve such elements: anecdote, prophetic tradition, identification, circumstances of revelation, abrogation, analogy, periphrasis, poetic citations, grammatical explanation, lexical explanation, variant readings, and rhetorical explanation. These exegetical types and explicative elements are mutually corroborative for Wansbrough. Each of the latter is typical of one of the former in a fairly consistent manner. "Study of the distribution of these phenomena across the range of exegetical literature ought to produce a means of isolating the essentially separate activities which preceded the appearance of classical Islamic *tafsīr*."<sup>70</sup> Thus, it is worth looking at each of these activities in greater detail.

Wansbrough maintains that *sīra*, the telling of the life of the prophet of Islam, and *tafsīr*, the explanation of the scriptural text, were identical activities in the early period of Islam, only to become distinct literary genres later. That is, in the early period, exegesis consisted of narration (haggada), and employed the stylistic devices of anecdote, prophetic tradition, and identification (*taʿyīn al-mubham*) in the main.<sup>71</sup> For the examples employed by Wansbrough, the *Tafsīr* of Muqātil and the *Sīra* of Ibn Ishāq, the scriptural text remained subordinate, conceptually and syntactically, to the narrative. The *Sitz im Leben* for this haggadic exegesis on the basis of both style and content is the popular sermon, which not only explicated the prophetic *logia*<sup>72</sup>