

## FOREWORD

It was in 1894 that, in the form of the second edition of Friedrich Dieterici's *Arabisch-deutsches Handwörterbuch zum Koran ...*, Western Islamic studies for the last time put at the disposal of students and scholars an exhaustive listing of the lexical material in *al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (with glosses in English, nothing has appeared since *A Dictionary and Glossary of the Kor-ān* by John Penrice in 1873). During the following century research on this sacred text, Islam's fundament and one of the most important texts of all humankind, has made tremendous progress, so that it has appeared to me to be high time to make the results of this research, and so our current understanding of the text, accessible in the form of a new dictionary devoted to the Arabic of the Koran.

I hope that the dictionary as presented here will be of use to the advanced student of Arabic and Islam as well as to the specialized Koranic scholar; the former will find the lexical facts of the text, the latter will, I venture, welcome a guide to the "State of the Art" of understanding, linguistically, this difficult and sometimes enigmatic text. As I do not suppose that this dictionary will normally be used without the base-text and some of its translations (or "explanations of its meanings") at hand, a fair degree of selection and abbreviation (in the quotes and their translations) appeared to be justified. (For further details see the "Introduction", esp. sections VI. and VII.) Overall, I beg the user not to overlook the word "concise" in the title and the limitations to which this attribute alludes.

The dictionary is based primarily on a close scanning of the text and the culling of the lexical items directly from it. In addition, Gustav Fluegel's *Concordantiae Corani Arabicae*, critically used (for the number of mistakes therein is not quite negligible), proved of great help. Of even greater help to me was the CD-ROM *The Holy Quran* (listed in "Bibliography"), which permits the scanning, on the monitor-screen or as a printout, of all the Koranic verses containing a certain word, or all the words derived from a certain root. It is, by the way, due to the ready availability of devices such as this that the merely selective, not exhaustive documentation in this dictionary will, I hope, be found justified.

One feature of this dictionary I feel obliged to try to justify at the very beginning is that all the Arabic material is presented in transcription only. The reasons for this, which are of equal importance, are threefold. Firstly, in this way it is made manifest that the dictionary limits itself to a strictly linguistic commentary on the text and cannot be seen as a (partial) publication of it, which some may think does not befit a scholar not professing the Islamic religion. Secondly, presenting the Arabic in (necessarily fully vocalized) Arabic script would have increased the size of the book considerably, while at the same time possibly leading to the inconvenience of some users, such as historians or scholars of comparative religion with only limited knowledge of the Arabic language, who may merely be interested in the Koranic use of certain terms. (Giving the Arabic both in the original script and in transcription would of course have taken up a prohibitive amount of space.) Thirdly, the spelling of the words in the standard text is far from

uniform (some typical examples of variation are given in the Introduction, section II., near the end); this entails that using the Arabic script would have necessitated the listing of all the orthographic variants with their places in the text, thereby needlessly and unprofitably increasing the size of the dictionary.

Many of my esteemed colleagues have contributed to this dictionary, in various ways: by commenting critically on its general plan and lines, by providing pieces of factual information, and by helping me, in some instances, with the English wording. All their help is most gratefully acknowledged. In particular I beg to offer my thanks to the following, in alphabetical order: Edith G. Ambros, Hartmut Bobzin, Heribert Busse, Herbert Eisenstein, Wolfdietrich Fischer, Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, Erich Prokosch, Tilman Seidensticker, Gebhard Selz, Alexander Sima, and Manfred Ullmann. The invaluable help contributed by Stephan Procházka I have already acknowledged on the title page.

At the time when this dictionary was being compiled, a book with the title *Die Syro-Aramäische Lesart des Koran*, which appeared in Berlin in the year 2000 under the pseudonym "Christoph Luxenberg", created a sensation of sorts and was as such given much notice in the media of information, esp. as it *inter alia* does away, by a kind of vanishing trick, with the concept of the paradisiacal maidens, the *huris*, so very central to a popular and superficial understanding of Islam, arguing that they are ghost-words due to a misunderstanding of the text. I know myself to be of the same opinion as many of my colleagues in Koranic studies when I qualify Luxenberg's approach and his consequent re-reading of the text as totally misguided, not to say deluded. (One may wish to consult e.g. the detailed review by Simon Hopkins that appeared in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, vol. 28/2003, pp. 377-380.) Accordingly, in the present dictionary one would look in vain for any reflex of Luxenberg's — to my mind, phantastic — reinterpretations.

It would be naive or foolhardy in the extreme to hope that a book such as this could appear without mistakes, or even with only a very small number of mistakes. I shall be most grateful to all users who take the trouble of pointing out to me whatever errors they find, so that I can correct them should this dictionary ever see a second edition. As it stands, the dictionary must come with a warning: *Caveat lector*.

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