

Madigan's article, "Book" in Brill's 2001, *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, which finds five meanings of the noun, but Robinson either willfully ignores, or is unaware of, a far-more sophisticated treatment of the noun *kitāb* in the article "Book(s)" in the 2013 *Integrated Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān*, wherein Gibril Haddad has identified twenty-three meanings of the noun on the basis of 48 classical *tafsīrs* and treatises on Qur'ānic language.

The inability, unwillingness, or incompetence of Western scholars to read deeply and engage with the centuries-old ocean of knowledge about the Qur'ān which is the result of Muslim scholarly reflections on the Book means that it remains imprisoned in its own crucible, which churns and churns the same old concerns and themes and paddles them under new labels. This enduring legacy is faithfully maintained by the *Unlocking the Medinan Qur'ān*.

Another difficulty faced by Western Qur'ānic studies in general and such attempts, in particular, is their refusal to acknowledge the most obvious aspect of the Qur'ān: it addresses a very concrete human reality at a given place and time, but simultaneously transcends both space and time. This aspect of the Qur'ān is known to every Muslim and thus for them the time of revelation of verses and Sūrahs has relevance only in as much as it illuminates the Divine intent in revealing what He revealed to His Prophet to guide him and his immediate community, without restricting the application of such verses for later centuries. For instance, *O you who believe*, the vocative said to be of the Madinan period (Chapter 5), reverberates in the heart of all believers past, present, and future and its relative absence in the portion of the Qur'ān revealed in Makkah makes no difference to the taxonomy of the Qur'ān because the verses revealed in Makkah address the same believers in different forms.

As opposed to such myopic views, the focus of Muslim scholarship has always been on both what is said and how it is said, but for the mostly non-Muslim Western scholars, minute details of the phrases gain out-of-proportion importance with the result that it produces "scholarship" that cares more for its self-constructed theories than the text it is claiming to study.

THE HEIGHT OF PROPHET ADAM: AT THE CROSSROADS OF SCIENCE AND SCRIPTURE, by Muntasir Zaman. Oldham, UK: Beacon Books, 2022, xix + 151 pp. ISBN: 9781915025326

The Height of Prophet Adam not only examines the apparent conflict between scientific and archaeological knowledge with regard to the *ḥadīth* about the height of Adam, upon him peace, which states that he was sixty cubits (approx.

90 feet) tall and humankind has since been decreasing in height, but—more importantly—it constructs a framework for all such investigations (chapter I), examines all the chains and variants of the *ḥadīth* (Introduction and Part II), digs deep into Islamic scholarly tradition to engage with pre-modern studies on the *ḥadīth* and its apparent conflict with archaeological data (chapters 2–3), explores ways in which the *ḥadīth* can be understood (chapters 4–6), examines the related issue of miracles and natural laws (chapter 7) and provides a concise summary of the work in a concluding chapter.

In addition to these chapters, the book contains an “Introduction” by the author, which provides an overview of his methodology, a note on Israelite narrations, introductory remarks on the grades of *ḥadīth*, and a useful discussion on the “definition of *dhirā*”, the term used in the *ḥadīth* for length. An “Afterword” by Jonathan Brown discusses another related topic: *Isrāʾīliyyāt*. Gems of wisdom and insights from the Islamic scholarly tradition are spread here and there in the text: “Mullā ‘Alī Qārī (d. 1014 AH) reminds us of the ancient adage: ‘first stabilize the throne, then engrave it (*thabbit al-‘arsh thumma ‘nqush*)’” (p. 15).

Perhaps the most significant aspect of *The Height of Prophet Adam* in terms of its methodology is the conscious effort of its author not to invent a new methodology, rather he reemploys the known, well-established, classical template: (i) *taʾwīl*, that is harmonization through interpretation; (ii) *tarjīh*, prioritization of one of the conflicting opinions; and (iii), *tawaqquf*, suspension of judgement. Zaman wisely leaves out the fourth tier of the classical template, *naskh* (abrogation) “because the scientific and archaeological evidence is not scriptural and the hadith in question is not legal in nature, which is the purview of abrogation” (p. 5).

This methodological soundness yields immediate results; the author is able to tap into the richness of previous scholarship on the subject in an organized and systematic manner. In Chapter 2, “Conflict or Concord”, the issue of the height of Adam is explored from both the scientific and scriptural perspectives in clear terms by investigating related matters such as the anatomy of his body, his weight, structural features required to support the height, and the relationship between body height and longevity.

Having set the stage, Zaman provides a synthetic summary of premodern views (Chapter 3: “A Survey of Premodern Views”), which posits three positions: (i) the *ḥadīth* is accepted at face value by a majority of scholars; (ii) al-Maqdisī, Ibn Fūrak and Ibn Khaldūn are highly critical of the *ḥadīth* on account of its implications; and (iii) a handful of scholars are ambivalent. The three who reject the *ḥadīth* are rightly given the greatest space and attention in this

short chapter because they are a minority and hence their views require more explanation than the majority view. What compelled them to go against the majority and reject the *ḥadīth*? The Sistānī historian al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d. ca. 390 AH), for instance, is quoted as saying “many Muslims reject the idea that [Adam’s] height was sixty cubits because it goes against the norm” (p. 36). Zaman engages with other scholars who have dealt with Maqdisī’s position, and looks into the possibility of corruption of al-Maqdisī’s text as suggested by a contemporary scholar, and rejects it with evidence from a manuscript of al-Maqdisī’s text which is reproduced as an image. Having established the genuineness of al-Maqdisī’s text, he leaves the matter without further discussion. Likewise, he establishes the authenticity of the views of Abū Bakr b. Fūrak (d. 406 AH) and Ibn Khadūn. In all cases, Zaman remains focused on establishing the fact of their rejection, without supporting or rejecting their claim.

There are two parts to the *ḥadīth* on the height of Adam, upon him peace: (i) Allah created Adam, making him sixty cubits tall; (ii) the height of human beings has been decreasing ever since then. Zaman examines the content of the *ḥadīth* in Part II of the book, “Conflict Resolution”, from various perspectives. Was this height in Paradise or was it on earth as well? If it was in Paradise and decreased upon his arrival on earth, as suggested by some (Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mu‘allimī, and Muḥammad Taqī ‘Uthmānī), then was it a gradual decrease? He concludes that all three aforementioned attempts to harmonize this *ḥadīth* with empirical data are problematic; the first two on the basis of the assumption that the height mentioned in the *ḥadīth* refers only to his height in Paradise and not on earth (p. 49), and ‘Uthmānī’s attempt on the ground that he unconvincingly replaces the wording of the *ḥadīth*. Zaman then quotes Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354 AH) and al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388 AH), who explained the first part of the *ḥadīth* “God created Adam in His/his form”: “Adam was created in Paradise fully formed and sixty cubits tall, unlike his progeny who have to go through the process of procreation and then grow to reach perfection—from a drop of semen until reaching their complete height as developed humans. They do not explicitly comment on the last part of the *ḥadīth*” (p. 51).

There is some ambiguity in Zaman’s treatment of the issue of the height being specific to Paradise (p. 48). Methodologically, he does not present existing explanations chronologically: he quotes the Yemenī *Ḥadīth* expert ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mu‘allimī (d. 1966) before quoting Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī (d. 1933), both of whom provide similar explanations. Furthermore, Zaman notes that Kashmīrī clearly stated that it is possible to take sixty cubits as referring to

the height of Adam in Paradise “because things are relative to their place and time, so just as a day in the afterlife equals a thousand years in this worldly life, Adam’s height was accordingly sixty cubits in Paradise where everything is larger” (p. 48), but then finds it problematic due the last part of the *ḥadīth* (“thereafter, humankind has been decreasing until this day”), which indicates “a gradual decrease in height” (p. 49).

The text of the *ḥadīth*, however, does not state that Adam’s decrease in height was *gradual*. The text of the *ḥadīth* suggests what Kashmīrī and al-Mu‘allimī have understood: Adam’s height at the time of his creation was sixty cubits because—as Kashmīrī’s states—“things are in relation to their time and place, so just as a day in the afterlife equals a thousand years in this worldly life, Adam’s height was accordingly sixty cubits in Paradise where everything is larger” (p. 48). Kashmīrī gives the example of his own time and place: those born in India before the British colonization were taller and stronger than those born after and those born and raised in villages were, likewise, taller and stronger compared to those born in cities (footnote 13).

The second part of the *ḥadīth* would only become problematic if the word “gradual” is inserted in this part of the text of the *ḥadīth*. But if one explores the possibility of a sudden decrease of the height of Adam, upon him peace, as a consequence of *ḥubūt*—his and his wife’s expulsion from Paradise, resulting in their arrival on earth, a traumatic experience of such deep remorse and regret that they both called out for forgiveness (Q 2:23) in words which remain paradigmatic to this day—then there is the possible explanation that the height of Adam, upon him peace, decreased soon after his arrival on earth *as a consequence of his expulsion* from Paradise. Furthermore, this decrease in his height was still in proportion to what it had been before his expulsion and this allows the possibility of understanding the second part of the *ḥadīth* which states that his progeny has been decreasing in height ever since. Zaman does not explore this possibility although he quotes Ibn Baṭṭāl’s (d. 449 AH) wonderful insight that the words in the second part of the *ḥadīth*, “*lam yazal yanqusu*” mirror the verse *We have created man in the best of stature, then We returned him to the lowest of the low* (Q 95:4–5), for “man goes through the vicissitudes of life until he reaches perfection, followed by steady decline. God has kept this deficiency (*naqs*) in mankind as proof that if life on this world goes through this process, then the world itself can ultimately come to an end, contrary to the beliefs of the naturalists (*dabriyya*)” (p. 51) and Ibn ‘Umar’s saying that “people have been decreasing in size, age, and character since the era of Noah” (p. 64), both indicating the traditional understanding of decline, decay, and degeneration of humanity’s physical, moral, and spiritual stature as time passes, as mentioned

in several *Ḥadīth* texts. *Dabriyyah* (lit. “eternalists”) is perhaps better translated as “materialists” or “atheists”, as it refers to those who believe that the material universe is both eternal and ultimate and therefore deny the existence of a Creator. A more serious mistranslation is that of *yawm al-ithnayn*, used in the well-known *ḥadīth* about the day of the birth of the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, which is mistranslated as “Tuesday” instead of Monday (p. 82). There is a useful, twenty-page bibliography, but, regretfully, no index.

This is the first scholarly treatise in the broad field of Islam and science that deals with Prophetic *Ḥadīth* and it sets a methodological framework for all future work in this area. Muntasir Zaman has just the right qualifications for the task: he has madrasah training in *Ḥadīth* studies and is conversant with contemporary scholarship. The result is a work that combines the rich fragrance of traditional Islamic scholarship with modern analytical methodologies.

Muzaffar Iqbal

HAJJ TO THE HEART: SUFI JOURNEYS ACROSS THE INDIAN
 rsity of NortheOCEAN, by Scott Kugle. The Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ
 . Carolina Press, 2021, 324pp. ISBN: 9781469665313

This new book by Scott Kugle, Professor of South Asian and Islamic Studies at Emory University, is both a continuation and a departure from his previous publications most of which were intensely focused on issues of *gender and sexuality* (*Sufis and Saints' Bodies: Mysticism, Corporeality and Sacred Power in Islamic Culture*, UNC Press, 2007, *Homosexuality in Islam: Critical Reflection on Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Muslims*, Oneworld Publications, 2010, *Living Out Islam: Voices of Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Muslims*, NYU Press, 2013, *When Sun Meets Moon: Gender, Eros, and Ecstasy in Urdu Poetry*, University of North Carolina Press, 2016

Hajj to the Heart continues his interest in Islamic mysticism but it departs from his obsession with sexuality. Another difference to note is the absence of his Muslim name (Siraj al-Haqq, lit. the “light of Truth”) as the author of the book. This personal choice was previously used to promote his unauthentic views on same sex relationships. He presented himself as a progressive Muslim voice finding theological grounds for the *lewdness which is no people ever committed before* (Qur’ān 29: 28). Kugle had argued that there nothing in the Qur’ān that condemns homosexuality, despite the fact that the people mentioned in the Qur’ān were utterly destroyed by the *blast which overtook them before morning*, and whose city was *turned upside down*, and received Divine punishment of a very