

## FEMALE SCHOLARS OF QURANIC EXEGESIS IN THE HISTORY OF ISLAM

### *İslam Tarihinde Kadın Müfessirler*

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#### ABSTRACT

*In this article, we will be focusing on the female scholars who came up with a work of Quranic exegesis throughout the history of Islam. First, we will deal with Prophet Muhammad's wife, h, as the first female scholar of Quranic exegesis. Then we will deal Ziyb An-Nisa, to whom a work of Quranic exegesis was attributed, as to whether she can be considered the first female scholar who did the exegesis of the whole Quran. As we will be dealing with the late Nusret Begüm Emin, Aisha Abdurrahman, and Zainab Gazali, we will also be dealing with such scholars as Naile Haşim, Fevkiyye Aş-Şirbini, Kâmile binti Muhammad, Keriman Hamza, all of whom are still alive. Moreover, as we will include two female scholars from Turkey, Semra Kürün Çekmegil and Necla Yasdıman, we will also be dealing with the German orientalist Angelika Neuwirth and the book of Quranic exegesis she has been working on for quite some time now. Lastly, for the sake of complementarity, we shortly tackle some works concerning the exegesis of Torah and Gospels. After giving some information about the scholars who are included in this article and peculiarities of their works. We also observe a chronological order in the article as much as possible.*

**Keywords:** Female Scholars, Quranic Exegesis, Islamic Studies

#### ÖZET

*Bu çalışmada tarih boyunca Kur'an'ı tefsir etmiş olan hanım müfessirler ve onların tefsirleri üzerinde durulmuştur. Makalede en başta ilk bayan müfessir olarak kabul edebileceğimiz Hz. Peygamber'in eşi Hz. Aişe'nin tefsir alanındaki bazı girişimleri ele alınmıştır. Çalışmada kendisine bir tefsirin isnat edildiği ilk bayan olan Ziyb en-Nisa Begüm üzerinde durulmuş, bu hanımın Kur'an'ı tefsir eden ilk bayan olup olmadığı hususu tartışılmıştır. Müfessir Nusret Begüm Emin, Aişe Abdurrahman ve Zainab Gazali gibi vefat etmiş olan bayan müfessirler yanında halen hayatta olan Naile Haşim, Fevkiyye*

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eş-Şirbini, Kâmile binti Muhammad, Keriman Hamza gibi bayan müfessirler ve tefsirleri hakkında da bilgi verilmiştir. Çalışmada Semra Kürün Çekmegil ve Necla Yasdıman adında iki Türk müfessirden ve tefsirlerinden bahsedildiği gibi Alman oryantalist Angelika Neuwirth ve yapmakta olduğu tefsir çalışması hakkında da malumat verilmiştir. Konuyu bütünlemesi açısından bayanlar tarafından yapılmış Tevrat ve İncil tefsirlerine de kısaca değinilmiştir. Çalışmada söz konusu edilen müfessirlerin hayatları hakkında çok kısa bazı bilgiler verildikten sonra tefsirleri tanıtılmakta, bazı özellikleri ve özgün yönleri üzerinde durulmaktadır. Makalede mümkün olduğunca kronolojik sıra takip edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kadın Âlimler, Tefsir, İslami İlimler

## Introduction

Throughout history, the number of women are scanty in the realm of scientific investigation compared to men. In other words, men clearly hold the upper hand in this regard. This is also the case in the realm of Islamic Studies. There is no doubt that there were various reasons such as psychosocial, economic, political ones that not only hindered women in scholarly investigation but also caused them considerably to be deprived of basic education. On the other hand, one can also take into account that the written works of women somehow may not have made it to the historical records such as the books of biographies (*kutub al-tarâjım or tabaqât*).<sup>1</sup> In any case, it is known that, throughout Islamic history, some women went through scholarly investigation and wrote books concerning Islamic Studies, and particularly in the realm of Hadith,<sup>2</sup> since the emergence of the religion of Islam.<sup>3</sup>

As for the scholarly investigation in the realm of Quranic exegesis specifically, we will lay out below some works that are either written by or attributed to women. Apparently, these works are scarce. Aside from Aisha, one cannot find mention of any woman in the books of biographies written on the scholars who wrote concerning Islamic disciplines and especially Quranic exegesis.<sup>4</sup> In other

1 Muhammed Hayr Ramazan Yusuf, *Al-Müellifât mine'n-Nisâ ve Muellefâtuhunne fi't-Târihi'l-İslâmî*, (Beyrût: Dâru Ibn Hazm, 1421/2000), 13-15; Affâf Abdulğafûr Hamîd, "Min Cuhûdi'l-Mar'eti fi Tefsiri'l-Kur'âni'l-Kerim fi'l-Asri'l-Hadis," *Mecelletu Kulliyeti's-Şerîa ve'd-Dirâsâti'l-İslâmiyye*, Câmîatu Katar, issue: 25, (1428/2007), 171.

2 See: Affâf Abdulğafûr Hamîd, "Cuhûdu'l-Mar'ati fi Neşri'l-Hadisi ve Ulûmihi," *Mecelletu Câmîati Ümmi'l-Kurâ li Ulûmi's-Şerîati ve'l-Luğati'l-Arabiyye ve Âdâbihâ*, vol. 19, issue: 42, Ramazan 1428, 232-260; Muhammed b. Azûz, *Safahât Muşrika min İnâyeti'l-Mer'eti bi Sahihî'l-İmâmi'l-Buhârî Rivâyeten ve Tedrisen*, (np.: Dâru Ibn Hazm, 1423/2002), 22-330.

3 See: Yusuf, *Al-Müellifât mine'n-Nisâ ve Muellefâtuhunne fi At-Târihi'l-İslâmî*, 23-113; Muhammed As-Sâlik Muhammed Fâl, "Al-Mar'e ve't-Tefsîr: Al-Hâdir ve'l-Ğâib," <http://aafaqcenter.com/index.php/post/1529> (last visited: February 6, 2013).

4 Affâf Abdulğafûr Hamîd, "Min Cuhûdi'l-Mereti Al-Mubassir li Nûri'l-Kur'ân Evvelu Cehdin Kâmilin fi't-Tefsîr li'l-Mer'eti Hadîsen," *Al-Mu'temeru'l-Kur'ânî ed-Düveli as-Senevi Mukaddes 2 fi'l-Mihveri's-sâni*, Merkezi Buhûsi'l-Kur'ân bi Câmîati Malayâ, Kuala Lumpur, 22-23 Şubat 2013), 2, "Ziy an-Nisâ," <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/> (last visited: February 6, 2013).

words, one can contend that until relatively recently, all the *tafsirs* available were written by men.

Nevertheless, women too started to deal with the exegesis of the Quran recently. In other words, women's activities and endeavors to write books in the realm of Quranic exegesis, like in the other realms of Islamic disciplines, gradually increased in the last few decades. One can further predict that the increase of the number of the women who go into higher religious education and the enterprise of graduate studies will naturally lead to an increase of the written works in the realm of Quranic exegesis.

As a matter of fact, women were supposed to deal with the exegesis of the Quran just like men did in the whole history of Islam. Because the Quran addresses both men and women and most of its injunctions are likewise directed to both men and women. There is no difference between men and women in terms of the fundamental tenets of Islamic faith and rituals. However, just like the fact that there are issues in the Quran that are related to only men, there are also some verses the content of which addresses only women. Such issues as menstruation, childbed, and motherhood are primal examples of women-related subjects which are included in the Quran. On the other hand, issues such as marriage, divorce, inheritance are bear upon both men and women. In short, the Quran, in terms of the audience it simply addresses, is 'a book of both men and women.'

Since it was translated and interpreted overwhelmingly by men, the male perspective became dominant in the vast majority of the translations and interpretations of the Quran.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, for the same reason, women learned about the Quranic issues peculiar to them through the male perspective. However, some female scholars of the Quran somewhat challenged that male perspective. In the rest of this article, as we will go through the female scholars of Quranic exegesis, we will pay special attention to the female perspective they brought in their written works of *tafsir*.

### **1. The first female figure in Quranic exegesis: Aisha (d. 58/677) and *Tefsiru Ummi'l-Mu'minin Aisha***

At the time of the Prophet Muhammad, both men and women were interested in fully understanding the Quran.<sup>6</sup> In this regard, Aisha stands out as the most important female figure of Quranic exegesis, who is also considered the

5 See: Hülya Alper, "Ataerkil Zihniyetin Kur'an Meallerine Yansıması," *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Ağustos-Ekim 2004, year: 6, issue: 22, 176-177; Sadık Kılıç, "Kadın Erkeğin Kaburga kemiğine İndirgenecek İkincil Bir Fenomen Değildir," *EKEV Akademi Dergisi*, year: 10, issue: 27, (Spring 2006), 7-18.

6 See: Serpil Başar, "Kur'an'ın İlk Kadın Yorumcuları," <http://www.haksozhaber.net/kuranin-ilk-kadin-yorumculari-22903h.htm> (last visited: February 23, 2013).

first female *mufassir* in the history of Islam.<sup>7</sup> Aisha, was the daughter of Abubakr, the most important close companion of the Prophet. She got engaged with the Prophet at an early age in Mecca and in a short while after the Muslims emigrated from Mecca to Madina she got married with him.<sup>8</sup> She was the most beloved wife of the Prophet. As she was very intelligent and knowledgeable, she conveyed information about issues that she learned about directly from the Prophet to Muslims. What Muslims know about the family life of the Prophet came almost always from Aisha.<sup>9</sup>

Having married with the Prophet, Aisha witnessed the process of an important portion of the verses descending onto him. She is known to have said the following: "Each and every verse of the [Quranic] chapters Al-Bakara and An-Nisa descended on the Prophet while I was beside him."<sup>10</sup> In other words, it is a fact that sometimes verses were descending onto the Prophet while Aisha was with him in his room and thus she was witnessing the coming down of the revelation and the context in which they came down. She knew Arabic language and poetry very well and was very familiar with the knowledge of lineage. Most of all, she always had the chance to ask and directly learn from the Prophet himself. And there is no doubt that all those qualities gained her a valued position in the history of Quranic exegesis.<sup>11</sup>

In this context, it should be mentioned that there are narrations and interpretations of Aisha concerning some of the verses of the Quran.<sup>12</sup> Of course, these narrations and interpretations did not come out in such a way that Aisha personally wrote them down. As a matter of fact, the renowned scholars of Quranic exegesis of the time of Aisha from amongst the close companions of the Prophet Muhammad such as Abdullah b. Abbas, Abdullah b. Mes'ud, and Ubeyy b. Ka'b did not personally write down their interpretations either. What they and Aisha did in this regard was to make interpretations of some of the Quranic verses and communicate them verbally to people around them. These interpretations were transmitted to the next generations and eventually made it to the written works of Quranic exegesis. Looking at these narrations and interpretations attributed to them, we learn about their expertise Quranic exegesis.

7 See: İsmail Cerrahoğlu, *Tefsir Tarihi* (Ankara: DİB Yayınları, 1988), I/90.

8 Umeyme Muhammed Ali, *Zevcâtü'r-Rasûl Ummehâtu'l-Mu'minîn İffet-Şeref-Taharet* (Al-Kâhire: Dâru'r-Ravda, undated), 27-30.

9 Serpil Başar, *Erken Dönemde (Hicri I. Asır) Kadınların Kur'an Yorumuna Katkıları*, PhD dissertation presented to Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, (İzmir: 2010), 172; Abdullah Kahraman, "Kadın Fakihlerin Öncüsü: Hz. Aişe," *Diyanet İlmî Dergi*, 2009, vol. XLV, issue: 2, 79-80.

10 See: Hamid, "Min Cuhûdi'l-Mar'eti fi Tefsiri'l-Kur'âni'l-Kerim fi'l-Asri'l-Hadis," 171-172.

11 Hamid, "Min Cuhûdi'l-Mar'eti fi Tefsiri'l-Kur'âni'l-Kerim fi'l-Asri'l-Hadis," 172-175.

12 For these interpretations that take place in the tafsir of Taberi, see: Sevgi Tütün, "Taberi Tefsir'inde Hz. Aişe'nin Rivayetleri ve Tefsir Metodu," *İSTEM: İslâm San'at, Tarih, Edebiyat ve Mûsikîsi Dergisi*, 2010, vol. VIII, issue: 16, 99-111.

Today, various scholars of academic enterprise, in an effort to shed light on Aisha's expertise of Quranic exegesis, try to gather the narrations and interpretations attributed to her from the narrative kinds of *tafsirs*. For example, all these narrations and interpretations were collected in a doctoral dissertation written by Dr. Abdullah Ebu's-Suud Bedr,<sup>13</sup> which was published with the title *Tefsiru Ummi'l-Mu'minin Aisha*.<sup>14</sup> In addition, another scholar Dr. Suud b. Abdilllah Al-Funeysan, trying to do the same thing, came up with a book titled *Merviyyatu Ummi'l-Mu'minin Aisha fi't-Tefsir*, which was also published.<sup>15</sup> Looking into Aisha's stance in the history of *tafsir*, these scholars along with some others concluded that she was the first female scholar of Quranic exegesis.

We were unable to find out any other female scholar who had narratives of *tafsir* than Aisha at the time of the close companions of the Prophet Muhammad. There are of course narratives of *tafsir* coming from the other wives of the Prophet, each of which can partially be considered as an activity of *tafsir*. However, these narratives are not of the quality to elevate them to a point where these women can be considered as scholars of Quranic exegesis.

In later periods, there were women who were known for their recitation of the Quran, learning extensively about both the Quran and Hadith. There were women who were known for their calligraphic abilities for that matter. However, looking at the sources of *tafsir*, biographies, compendiums, and etc., we were not able to find out women who were renowned for the interpretation of the Quran. That, of course, does not necessarily mean that there was none. However, the following conclusion in this regard seems to be of espousal anyway: there were none or there were only a handful of them having no fame at all.

One can contend that this was the case up until nowadays. Today, there are women who undergo the enterprise of *tafsir*. Nowadays, just like the male scholars of Quranic exegesis, female authors make the interpretation of the Quran in accordance with the educational level they hold. In the rest of this article, we will be talking about them and their *tafsirs*.

## 2. Ziyb An-Nisâ Begüm Al-Hindiyye (d. 1113/1702) and her *Ziybu't-Tefâsîr*

Ziyb An-Nisa, who was the daughter of the greatest Timurid kings of India, Shah Sultan Alemgir Al-Hindî, was born in 1048/1658.<sup>16</sup> Her mother, Dilres Bânû

13 Abdullah Ebu's-Suud Bedr, *Tefsiru As-Seyyide Aişe Ummi'l-Mu'minin Radyallahu Anha*, PhD thesis presented to Kulliyetu't-Terbiye at Camiatu'l-Kahira, (Al-Qahirah: 1981).

14 Abdullah Ebu's-Suud Bedr, *Tefsiru Ummi'l-Mu'minin Aişe Radyallahu Anha* (Al-Qahirah: Daru Alemi'l-Kutub, 1416/1996), (304 pages).

15 Suud b. Abdilllah Al-Funeysan, *Merviyyatu Ummi'l-Mu'minin Aişe fi't-Tefsir* (Ar-Riyad: Daru't-Tevbe, 1413/1992), (510 pages).

16 Abdulhays b. Fahrud-din Al-Huseynî, *Al-l'âm bimen fi Târîhi'l-Hind mine'l-A'lâm* (Nüzhetu'l-Hevâtir ve Behcetu'l-Mesâmi' ve'n-Nevâzir), (np.: Dâru Ibn Hazm, 1420/1999, VI/724; Ismail Al-Bağdâdî, *Hediyetu'l-Ârifîn Esmâu'l-Muellifîn ve Âsâru'l-Musannifîn* (Istanbul: 1951), I/375; âdil Nüveyhid, "Mukaddime," *Mu'cemu'l-Müfessirîn min*

Şâhûr Han, came from the Safevid dynasty.<sup>17</sup> Beginning her education from an early age, Ziyb recited the whole Quran under the supervision of Meryem Ummi Inayetullah Al-Keşmîrî, acquired the skill of calligraphy, and studied all the books required in an average curriculum of the school of religion in her time called *madrasa*. She also went through some education concerning poetry and gained literary knowledge.<sup>18</sup> Many people studied with Ziyb, who was also a poet<sup>19</sup> and who spoke both Arabic and Persian.<sup>20</sup> As a woman who never married, Ziyb An-Nisa dedicated her entire life to studying and teaching.<sup>21</sup> She died in the year 1113/1702 in Delhi, India.<sup>22</sup>

One of the classical scholars, Safiyuddin Al-Erdebîlî Al-Keşmîrî, gave the information that the title of the *tafsir* of Ziyb, who also had some other books, is *Ziybu't-Tefâsir fi Tefsiri'l-Kur'ân*.<sup>23</sup> According to Al-Keşmîrî, the *tafsir* of Ziyb is actually a translated version of the *tafsir* Ar-Razi into Persian.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Al-Keşmîrî states that he was the one who translated the *tafsir* of Ar-Razi into Persian and that it was only attributed to Ziyb because the whole translation was made by him upon her request.<sup>25</sup> Thus, taking this information into account, it was contended that Ziyb cannot be considered an actual scholar of Quranic exegesis.<sup>26</sup>

*Sadrî'l-Islâm Hattâ al-Asr al-Hâdir* (Beyrût: Muessestu Nuveyhid As-Sakâfiyye, 1403/1983), I/197; Mevlana Muhammed Tâyr, *Neylu's-Sâirin fi Tabakâti'l-Müfessirin* (Pakistan: Mektebetu'l-Yeman, 1421/2000), 380; "Ziyb an-Nisâ," <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/> (last visited: February 6, 2013).

17 Al-Hasan, *Al-lâm bimen fi Târihi'l-Hind mine'l-A'lâm*, VI/724.

18 Al-Hüseynî, *Al-lâm bimen fi Târihi'l-Hind mine'l-A'lâm*, VI/724; Tâyr, *Neylu's-Sâirin fi Tabakâti'l-Müfessirin*, 380.

19 See: Al-Hüseynî, *Al-lâm bimen fi Târihi'l-Hind mine'l-A'lâm*, VI/724; Yusuf, *Al-Müellifât mine'n-Nisâ ve Muellefâtuhunne fi At-Târihi'l-Islâmî*, 43; "Ziyb an-Nisâ," <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/> (last visited: February 6, 2013).

20 See: Al-Hüseynî, *Al-lâm bimen fi Târihi'l-Hind mine'l-A'lâm*, VI/724; "Ziyb an-Nisâ," <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/> (last visited: February 6, 2013).

21 Al-Hüseynî, *Al-lâm bimen fi Târihi'l-Hind mine'l-A'lâm*, VI/724; Tâyr, *Neylu's-Sâirin fi Tabakâti'l-Müfessirin*, 380-381; (زندگی نامہ زیب النساء چہرہ «مخفی» | ادب پارسی) <http://www.forum.98ia.com/t149615.html> (last visited: August 21, 2014); "An-Nisâû'l-azbât al-lâti âserne'l-ilme ale'z-zevâc," <http://www.forsanhaq.com/showthread.php?t=309546&page=6> (August 21, 2014).

22 Al-Hüseynî, *Al-lâm bimen fi Târihi'l-Hind mine'l-A'lâm*, VI/724; Ismail Al-Bağdâdî, *Hediyyetu'l-Ârifin*, I/375; "Ziyb an-Nisâ," <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/> (last visited: February 6, 2013).

23 See: Rasul Caferyân, "Tefsiru Ziybu't-Tefâsir Ez Safi bin Veli Kazvîni be Nâm- Ziybu'n-Nisâ Duhter Ureng Ziyb," *Fasilname Peyâm Bahâristân*, (Iran: 1989), 494-499; Muhammed As-Sâlik Muhammed Fâl, "Al-Mar'e ve't-Tefsîr: Al-Hâdir ve'l-Ğâib," <http://aafaqcenter.com/index.php/post/1529> (last visited: February 6, 2013); [www.ensani.ir/storage/Files/20120413183749-8049-59.pdf](http://www.ensani.ir/storage/Files/20120413183749-8049-59.pdf) (last visited: February 6, 2013).

24 Al-Hüseynî, *Al-lâm bimen fi Târihi'l-Hind mine'l-A'lâm*, VI/724; Ismail Al-Bağdâdî, *Hediyyetu'l-Ârifin*, I/375; Nuveyhid, *Mu'cemu'l-Müfessirin*, I/197; "Ziyb an-Nisâ," <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/> (last visited: February 6, 2013); Caferyân, "Tefsiru Ziybu't-Tefâsir Ez Safi bin Veli Kazvîni be Nâm- Ziybu'n-Nisâ Duhter Ureng Ziyb," 494-499; Muhammed As-Sâlik Muhammed Fâl, "Al-Mar'e ve't-Tefsîr: Al-Hâdir ve'l-Ğâib," <http://aafaqcenter.com/index.php/post/1529> (February 6, 2013).

25 See: Al-Hüseynî, *Al-lâm bimen fi Târihi'l-Hind mine'l-A'lâm*, VI/724; Abdulhamid Birışık, *Hind Altkitası Düşünce ve Tefsir Ekolleri* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2001), 47.

26 "Al-Müfessire Al-Hindiyye Begüm... Hel Hiye Evelu men Fessera'l-Kur'ane mine'n-Nisa," <http://www.tafsir.net/vb/tafsir6056/> (last visited: February 6, 2013).

However, according to Muhammad As-Sâlik Muhammad Fâl, who undertook an investigation of the *tafsir* of Ziyb Begüm, her *tafsir* is indeed not a translation of the *tafsir* of Ar-Razi; on the contrary, it is a distinct *tafsir* which only made use of its antecedents. Moreover, Muhammad Fâl also points out that this *tafsir* is aptly indicative of the fact that Ziyb was indeed capable of dealing with Quranic exegesis.<sup>27</sup> With this assessment taken into account, this *tafsir* might stand out as the first written work of Quranic exegesis.<sup>28</sup> We could not find out whether this *tafsir* was published. It is perhaps still in the form of manuscript.

It should be noted that there is a book of inquiry on this *tafsir* written in Persian by Rasul Caferyân with the title *Tefsiru Ziybu't-Tefâsir Ez Safî bin Velî Kazvîni be Nâm-i Ziybu'n-Nisâ Duhter Ureng Ziyb*.

### 3. Nusret Begüm Emin (d. 1403/1983) and her *Mahzenu'l-Irfân der Tefsir-i Kur'ân*

Another scholar of Quranic exegesis worthy of mention in this context is Nusret Begüm Emin of Iran. As we have pointed out above, Ziybu'n-Nisâ could be considered as the first female scholar of Quranic exegesis; however, there are still some doubts whether she was the real writer of the *tafsir* attributed to her. Therefore, it should be noted at this point that, unlike Ziybu'n-Nisâ, there is no doubt about Nusret Begüm coming up with a written work of Quranic exegesis as a female scholar of Quranic exegesis. Nusret Begüm is also known as having the names Bânû Emîn and Bânû Irânî.<sup>29</sup>

There were quite a number of female scholars in Iran who either dealt with Quranic exegesis as a whole, or focused on the exegesis of some Quranic chapters, or went through methodological branches of Quranic exegesis (*ulûmu'l-Qur'an*) for that matter.<sup>30</sup> However, it seems that the most important one of them was Hacı (Al-Hâcc) Nusret Begüm binti Muhammad Ali Emîn of Iranian descent. She was the first non-Arab woman who dealt with the exegesis of the entire Quran.<sup>31</sup>

27 See: Ismail Al-Bağdâdi, *Hediyetu'l-Ârifîn*, 1/375; Nüveyhid, *Mu'cemu'l-Müfessirîn*, 1/197; Yusuf, *Al-Müellifât mine'n-Nisâ ve Muellifâtuhunne fi At-Târihi'l-Islâmî*, 45; Täyir, *Neylu's-Sâirîn fi Tabakâti'l-Müfessirîn*, 381; Birşik, *Hind Altkıtası Düşünce ve Tefsir Ekolleri*, 47; Muhammed As-Sâlik Muhammed Fâl, "Al-Mar'e ve't-Tefsir: Al-Hâdır ve'l-Gâib," <http://aafaqcenter.com/index.php/post/1529> (last visited: February 6, 2013).

28 See: "Ziyb an-Nisâ," <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/> (last visited: February 6, 2013).

29 See: Abdurrahîm Akikî Bahşâyeşi, "Tabakâti Mufessirâni Şia," [http://ketaab.iec-md.org/TAFSEER\\_QURAN/taabaqaat\\_mofasseraan\\_shia\\_jeld\\_5\\_aqiqi-bakhshaayeshi\\_05.html](http://ketaab.iec-md.org/TAFSEER_QURAN/taabaqaat_mofasseraan_shia_jeld_5_aqiqi-bakhshaayeshi_05.html) (Last visited: November 10, 2013); "Bânû Emîn," <http://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/> (last visited: February 5, 2013).

30 See: "Tabakât-i Mufessirân-i Şia," <http://quran.al-shia.org/fa/id/16/item/tfsir/taabaqaat/5/taabaq505.htm> (April 20, 2013); Mehdi Mehri, "Zen der Tefsir Mahzeni'l-Irfân Bânû Emîn Isfahâni," [http://www.shareh.com/persian/magazine/ayeneh\\_p/098-099/02.htm](http://www.shareh.com/persian/magazine/ayeneh_p/098-099/02.htm) (last visited: November 10, 2013); Abdurrahîm Akikî Bahşâyeşi, "Tabakâti Mufessirâni Şia," [http://ketaab.iec-md.org/TAFSEER\\_QURAN/taabaqaat\\_mofasseraan\\_shia\\_jeld\\_5\\_aqiqi-bakhshaayeshi\\_05.html](http://ketaab.iec-md.org/TAFSEER_QURAN/taabaqaat_mofasseraan_shia_jeld_5_aqiqi-bakhshaayeshi_05.html) (last visited: November 10, 2013).

31 See: "Tabakât-i Mufessirân-i Şia," <http://quran.al-shia.org/fa/id/16/item/tfsir/taabaqaat/5/taabaq505.htm> (last visited: April 20, 2013); "Tefsir-i Mahzenu'l-Irfân ve Mufessirân," <http://library.tebyan.net/newindex.aspx?pid=102834&ParentID=0&BookID=49667&MetaDataID=2882&Volume=1&PageIndex=0&PersonalID=0&NavigateMo>

As a matter of fact, there is no historical record indicating otherwise. Thus, as stated above, she was the first female scholar who did the exegesis of the entire Quran. She was born in 1308/1890 in Isfahân. Under the ferocious oppression of Pahlawi regime, she went through an education of Islamic law (*fiqh*), psychology, sufism, Islamic theology (*kelâm*), Quranic exegesis (*tafsir*), Arabic language and eventually managed to write various books. When she was about 40 years old, she was acclaimed and approved by the scholarly authorities of her time as *mujtahid* (i.e., as one of those scholars who hold the highest degree of authority in the tradition of Islamic law). She spent her entire adult life as a dedicated scholar specializing in Islamic Studies and peculiarly in Quranic sciences. She died in 1403/1983 at the age of 90 in Isfahân and was buried there.<sup>32</sup>

As for her *tafsir*, it is called *Mahzenu'l-Irfân der Tefsir-i Kur'ân*<sup>33</sup> and includes the entire Quran.<sup>34</sup> The language of this *tafsir*, which came out in 15 volumes, is Persian. And it was written based on a Shiite understanding of Islam.<sup>35</sup> At the beginning of this *tafsir*, there is an introduction part which contains such issues as the virtues of reading and reflecting on the Quran, and the religiously-based rejection of the endeavor to interpret the Quran without taking into account the narrative tradition of the religion of Islam. Then there is the interpretation of the first chapter of the Quran called Al-Fatiha.<sup>36</sup>

In her *tafsir*, she mostly deals with educational and ethical issues. She also takes up and expands on the issues that are related to philosophy, philosophy of religion, and linguistics. Furthermore, anyone looking at her *tafsir* can easily realize that she pays special attention to the verses containing injunctions and juristic issues in general.<sup>37</sup>

de=CommonLibrary&Content= (last visited: April 20, 2013); "Bânû Emîn... Sahibi Tefsir-i Mahzenu'l-Irfân," <http://www.telavat.com/ShowObject.aspx?classId=6&id=494> (last visited: April 20, 2013).

32 See: "Bânû Emîn," <http://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/> (last visited: February 5, 2013); "Bânû Emîn Sâhibi Tefsir-i Mahzenu'l-Irfân," <http://www.telavat.com/ShowObject.aspx?classId=6&id=494> (last visited: February 5, 2013); Merziye Haklı, "İlk Kadın Müçtehid ve Mufessir," [http://www.rasthaber.com/yazar\\_2060\\_108\\_ilk-kadin-muctehid-ve-mufessir.html](http://www.rasthaber.com/yazar_2060_108_ilk-kadin-muctehid-ve-mufessir.html) (last visited: November 10, 2013).

33 See: Nusret Begüm Emîn, *Mahzenu'l-Irfân der Tefsir-i Kur'ân* (np.: Muessese-i Tahkikât ve Neşr-i Maârif-i Ehl-i Beyt, 1390).

34 See: "Tabakât-i Mufessirân-i Şia," <http://quran.al-shia.org/fa/id/16/item/tfsir/taabaqat/5/taabaq505.htm> (last visited: April 20, 2013); "Tefsir-i Mahzenu'l-Irfân," <http://www.hawzah.net/fa/magazine/magart/5975/5979/61818> (last visited: April 20, 2013).

35 See: Mehdi Mehrizi, "Zen der Tefsir Mahzenu'l-Irfân Bânû Emîn Isfahâni," *Âyine Pezu Heş*, issue: 98-99, pp. 16-23; "Bânû Emîn... Sâhibi Tefsir-i Mahzenu'l-Irfân," <http://www.telavat.com/ShowObject.aspx?classId=6&id=494> (last visited: February 5, 2013); "Tefsir-i Mahzenu'l-Irfân ve Mufessirân," <http://library.tebyan.net/newindex.aspx?pid=102834&ParentID=0&BookID=49667&MetaDatalD=2882&Volume=1&PageIndex=0&PersonalID=0&NavigateMode=CommonLibrary&Content=> (last visited: April 20, 2013); "Nâm Bâbü Emîn... Sahib Tefsir-i Mahzenu'l-Irfân," <http://telavat.com/ShowObject.aspx?id=494&classId=6> (last visited: August 21, 2014).

36 See: "Mahzenu'l-Irfân der Tefsir-i Kur'ân," <http://lib.ahlolbait.com/parvan/resource/39317/> (last visited: April 20, 2013).

37 See: Nehle Çaravî Nâini, "Tefsiri Mahzeni'l-Irfân ve Mufessirân," <http://rasekhoon.net/article/show-16915.aspx> (last visited: December 10, 2013); "Tabakât-i Mufessirân-i Şia," <http://quran.al-shia.org/fa/id/16/item/tfsir/>

Although there are some academic works written in Persian language on this *tafsir*, we did not come across any study focusing on this *tafsir* in Turkish. Furthermore, we did not find any information showing that this *tafsir* was already translated into either Turkish or Arabic or any other language.

#### **4. Aisha Abdurrahman Binti'ş-Şâti' (d. 1419/1998) and her *At-Tefsiru'l-Beyâni li'l-Kur'âni'l-Kerîm***

Aisha Muhammad Ali Abdurrahman binti'ş-Şâti' was a renowned Egyptian professor and thinker. She was also the first female lecturer who taught in Al-Azhar University. She was born in 1331/1913 in the city of Dimyat, Egypt, and grew up in a scholarly family. Having started the elementary education in her village, she memorized the whole Quran in a short period of time. After her graduation from high school, she enrolled in the University of Al-Qahirah and studied Arabic language extensively. After she graduated from university she became a research assistant in the department of Arabic language. She also earned a PhD degree at the same university. As a lecturer, she had taught at various universities. She died at the age of 86 in the year 1419/1998.<sup>38</sup>

As a prolific writer, she published many books. The most important one of her works is her *tafsir* titled *At-Tefsiru'l-Beyâni li'l-Kur'âni'l-Kerîm*. She wrote this *tafsir*, which came out in two volumes, also considering the chronological order of the Quranic verses.<sup>39</sup> While the first volume includes the Quranic chapters Ad-Duhaa (93), Inshirah (94), Az-Zilzâl (99), Al-Adiyat (100), An-Naziat (79), Al-Balad (90) and At-Takathur (102), the second volumes includes Al-Alaq (96), Al-Qalam (68), Al-Asr (103), Al-Layl (92), Al-Fajr (89), Al-Humazah (104) and Al-Maun (107). The first edition of the book came out in 1382/1962. Presenting a unique approach, she went through the interpretation of the short chapters in terms of dictionary meanings. Also, focusing on the relationships between the chapters and making use of hadiths, she used an easy-to-understand style of language. Throughout this *tafsir*, she benefited from the perspectives of such scholars as Al-Hasan Al-Basri, Az-Zamahshari and Muhammad Abduh.<sup>40</sup>

According to Aisha Abdurrahman, whereas the numbers that appear in the juristic verses of the Quran are literal, the ones that appear in the other verses are used metaphorically. For instance, the number "a thousand" that appears in the verse that reads "the Night of Decree (*laylatu'l-kadr*) is better than a thousand

tabaqat/5/tafaq505.htm (last visited: April 20, 2013); "Tefsir al-Müfessirün," [http://al-shia.org/html/ara/books/lib-quran/tafsi\\_mofaserun-2/tafs2\\_20.htm](http://al-shia.org/html/ara/books/lib-quran/tafsi_mofaserun-2/tafs2_20.htm) (last visited: April 20, 2013).

38 See: "Aîşe Abdurrahman," <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/> (December 24, 2012); "Bintu'ş-Şâti," <http://dvd4arab.maktoob.com/f494/419430.html> (December 24, 2012).

39 See: Aîşe Abdurrahman Bintu'ş-Şâti, *At-Tefsiru'l-Beyâni li'l-Kur'âni'l-Kerîm*, 2 vols., (Al-Qahirah: Daru'l-Ma'rife).

40 See: "Bintu'ş-Şâti," <http://dvd4arab.maktoob.com/f494/419430.html> (December 24, 2012).

months"<sup>41</sup> is used metaphorically only to indicate the virtue of the Night of Decree (*laylatu'l-kadr*).<sup>42</sup>

Again, depending on the first verse of the chapter An-Nisa (4), she asserts the notion that both Eve and Adam were created from the same essence as opposed to the notion that Eve was created from Adam's rib. In addition, she considers the hadiths concerning this case as metaphorically-expressed statements indicating respect for women.<sup>43</sup>

There are two written works focusing on the *tafsir* of Aisha Abdurrahman. The first one, which is a doctoral dissertation, belongs to Abdulmecid Al-Ma'lûmî and is titled *Menhecû'd-Doktora Aisha Abdurrahman bintu's-Şati min Hilâli Kitâbihâ At-Tefsîru'l-Beyânî*. The second one is titled *Bir Kadın Müfessir: Aisha Abdurrahman ve Kur'an Tefsirindeki Yeri* and belongs to M. Akif Koç. This latter dissertation was also published.<sup>44</sup>

### 5. Zainab Al-Gazali (d. 1426/ 2005) and her *Nazarât fi Kitabillah*

Zainab Muhammad Al-Gazali, who lived in the same era with Aisha Abdurrahman, came up with a *tafsir* work too. Zainab Muhammad Al-Gazali Al-Cubeyli, with her full name, was born in the year 1335/1917 in a village near the Egyptian city of Al-Qahirah. Having graduated from high school, she began doing social work in Egypt and founded the Union of Muslim Women. Being involved in Islamic movements for a long time in Egypt, Al-Gazali, together with Emine Kutup, the sister of Seyyid Kutup, conducted lectures aimed at educating young women. At the beginning of the year 1410/1990, turning these lectures into a book form, she published a *tafsir*-related book titled *Nazarat Fi Kitabillah (Glances at the Book of God)*.<sup>45</sup> She died in 1426/ 2005 at the age of 88 in Egypt.<sup>46</sup>

In this regard, the most important work of Al-Gazali having many other books as well, is *Nazarât fi Kitâbillâh*.<sup>47</sup> As we have stated above, this book is mostly

41 Al-Kadr, 97/3.

42 Ekrem Demir, "Aîşe Abdurrahman Ve Kur'an Tefsirindeki Metodu," *Kur'ani Hayat Dergisi*, issue: 1, (November 2008). Also see: <http://www.kuranihayat.com/content/ai%C5%9Fe-abdurrahman-ve-kuran-tefsirindeki-metodu-ekrem-demir> (last visited: December 24, 2013).

43 Demir, "Aîşe Abdurrahman ve Kur'an Tefsirindeki Metodu," *Kur'ani Hayat Dergisi*, issue: 1, (last visited: November 6, 2008). Also see: "Aîşe Abdurrahman ve Kur'an Tefsirindeki Metodu Ekrem Demir," <http://www.kuranihayat.com/content/ai%C5%9Fe-abdurrahman-ve-kuran-tefsirindeki-metodu-ekrem-demir> (last visited: December 24, 2013).

44 See: Mehmed Akif Koç, *Bir Kadın Müfessir Aîşe Abdurrahman ve Kur'an Tefsirindeki Yeri* (İstanbul: Şule Yayınları, 1998).

45 "Zeynep Muhammed Al-Gazali Al-Cubeyli," <http://www.islam-tr.net/islami-arxiv/4313-zeynep-muhammed-el-gazali-el-cubeyli-hakkinda.html> (last visited: April 20, 2013); "Asrın Rabia'sı Vefat Etti," <http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=926047> (last visited: April 20, 2013).

46 "Zeynep Al-Gazâlî," <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/> (last visited: December 23, 2012).

47 It should be noted here that whereas Hasan Al-Benna also has a book of *tafsir* with the same title (*Nazarât fi Kitâbillâh*), Bessâm Cerrâr has a book of *tafsir* with a similar title (*Nazarât fi Kitâbillâhi'l-Hakim*).

dependent on her lectures addressing young women. These lectures, on the other hand, are mostly dependent on her Quranic studies while she was in prison. She perused and carefully studied the whole Quran in prison. As a matter of fact, in the introduction part of this book, she states that she spent her time in prison looking into the meanings of the Quran.<sup>48</sup> She also talks extensively about how she had a subjective spiritual experience going through the study of the Quran.<sup>49</sup>

The *tafsir* of Al-Gazali ultimately came out in two volumes. The first volume was published in Al-Qahirah in the year 1994 by a publishing house called Daru’ş-Şuruk.<sup>50</sup> It begins with the chapter called Al-Fatiha and ends with the last verse of the chapter called Ibrahim. The second volume begins with the chapter called Al-Hijr and includes the rest of the Quran. However, this second volume was not published by that publishing house due to the unexpected death of its owner. The whole book was actually published by Dâru’t-Tevzî’ ve’n-neşr Al-İslâmiyye in 2009 comprising two full volumes, which amount to 1300 pages.<sup>51</sup>

While doing the *tafsir*, Al-Gazali goes over the meanings of the verses in an easy manner. First, she explains the basic concepts that appear in the verse(s) in focus. Then, she gives information about the time period in which the verses were revealed. And then, she conveys the meanings and juristic verdicts of the verses to modern times; in other words, she makes a connection between the verses in focus and today’s political and economic events. One point she mostly stresses throughout her *tafsir* is that the Quran must be very well understood by Muslims living in modern times.<sup>52</sup>

The *tafsir* of Zainab Al-Gazali, *Nazarât fi Kitâbillah*, was also translated into Turkish by Ali Akpınar with the title *Kur’an’a Bakışlar: Meal-Tefsir*.<sup>53</sup>

## 6. Nâile Hâşim Sabrî and her *Al-Mubassir li Nûri’l-Kur’ân*

Another *tafsir* written by a female scholar is *Al-Mubassir li Nûri’l-Kur’ân* that belongs to Naile Hâşim Sabrî. Naile Hâşim was born in the year 1363/1944 in Kalkîliyye, Palestine. She grew up in a religious family with high commitment to Islamic sciences. Due to her marriage at an early age, she did not have an

48 Zeynep Al-Gazâlî, “Mukaddime Maa Kitâbillah,” *Nazarât fi Kitâbillah* (Al-Kâhire: Dâru’ş-Şuruk, 1414/1994), 11-12; Zeyneb Al-Gazâlî, “Önsöz,” *Kur’an’a Bakışlar*, translated by Ali Akpınar, (Konya: Uysal Kitabevi, 2003), XVI.

49 See: Al-Gazâlî, “Mukaddime Maa Kitâbillah,” 11-12; Zeyneb Al-Gazali, “Önsöz,” *Kur’an’a Bakışlar*, XVI-XVII. Also see: Ali Akpınar, “Zeyneb el-Gazali el-Cübeyli,” *Kur’an’a Bakışlar: Meal-Tefsir*, translated by Ali Akpınar, (Konya: Uysal Kitabevi, 2003), VI; Ali Akpınar, “Bir Hanım Müfessir: Zeyneb el-Gazali ve Tefsiri,” *Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, issue: 3 (1999), 230.

50 See: Akpınar, “Zeyneb el-Gazali el-Cübeyli,” VI.

51 “Nazarat fi Kitabillah li Zeyneb el-Gazali rahimehallah,” <http://www.alukah.net/web/alshehry/0/27519/> (last visited: August 22, 2014).

52 Akpınar, “Zeyneb el-Gazali el-Cübeyli,” VI-VII; Akpınar, “Bir Hanım Müfessir: Zeyneb el-Gazali ve Tefsiri,” 231.

53 Zeynep Gazali, *Kur’an’a Bakışlar: Meal-Tefsir*, translated by Ali Akpınar, (Konya: Uysal Kitabevi, 2003), (1381 pages).

undergraduate education. However, she kept self-educating herself going through the many religious books in her husband's personal library. For a long time, she self-educated herself at home doing endless research in Quranic studies. Eventually, she developed skills of comprehension and analysis needed to write a book of *tafsir*.<sup>54</sup>

Her *tafsir*, as the most important work she gave rise to, is titled *Al-Mubassir li Nûri'l-Kur'ân*, which amounts to 16 volumes. This *tafsir* includes the whole of the Quran and is simply the result of her long study that lasted about 20 years.<sup>55</sup> In an interview conducted with her, Naile Haşim stated that most of the *tafsirs* written before do not meet the need of our times and that the language employed in them is difficult to understand and that she wrote her own *tafsir* for the sole purpose of coming up with a book of *tafsir* addressing the contemporary social problems with which Muslims are faced.<sup>56</sup> Naile Haşim especially states that she stayed away in her *tafsir* from *Isra'iliyyat*, i.e., the stories coming from the Jewish and Christian religious and cultural heritage. Nevertheless, in her *tafsir*, she also included teaching stories conveying wisdom and useful insights.<sup>57</sup> She also stated that a dream in which she saw the Prophet Muhammad encouraging her to write a *tafsir* played a vital role in her writing the book.<sup>58</sup>

There is an introduction part at the beginning of each chapter of her *tafsir*, which she started writing in 1982. In each of these introductory sections, she gives information about whether the Quranic chapter is Meccan or Madinan, about the number of the verses, words and letters, and about the names, virtues, and the most salient aspects of the Quranic chapter in focus. The methodology that she followed in her *tafsir* is basically as follows: First, she puts forward a group of verses and mentions the context these verses were revealed, then, lays out the meanings of the words that are included in these verses. She usually

54 Hamid, "Min Cuhûdî'l-Mereti *Al-Mubassir li Nûri'l-Kur'ân* Evvelu Cehdin Kâmilin fi't-Tefsîr li'l-Mer'eti Hadisen," 4; "Nâile binti Hâşim Sabrî," <http://www.moi.gov.ps/quds/dataDetails.aspx?CATID=14&Nid=968> (last visited: December 24, 2012); "Ad-Dâiye Al-Islâmîyye As-Seyyide Naile Haşim Sabrî," <http://www.myqalqilia.com/Naela-hashem-sabri.htm> (last visited: December 24, 2012); "Şahsiyye Mukaddesiyye: Nâile binti Haşim Sabrî," <http://www.arabbab.com/?p=50732> (last visited: December 27, 2012).

55 "Nâile binti Hâşim Sabrî," <http://www.moi.gov.ps/quds/dataDetails.aspx?CATID=14&Nid=968> (last visited: December 24, 2012); "Ad-Dâiye Al-Islâmîyye As-Seyyide Naile Haşim Sabrî," <http://www.myqalqilia.com/Naela-hashem-sabri.htm> (last visited: December 24, 2012); "Nâile Sabrî...Murâbite fi'l-Kuds bi Suhbeti Kitâbillah," <http://www.raya.com/news/pages/42e3441a-aa7a-4c94-b80c-079b0edd1459> (last visited: December 27, 2012).

56 Hamid, "Min Cuhûdî'l-Mereti *Al-Mubassir li Nûri'l-Kur'ân* Evvelu Cehdin Kâmilin fi't-Tefsîr li'l-Mer'eti Hadisen," 4; "Zevcetu Ikriime Sabrî Tarsudu Muânâti'l-Mer'eti'l-Mukaddesiyye," <http://www.alquds.gov.ps/ar/index.php?view=79YOcy0nNs3Du69tjuhzy1wkyeayxx%2B7%2FAnzyAHkXWeiT9jMURkT> (last visited: December 24, 2012); "Kudve li'r-Ricâl Kable'n-Nisâ.. Nâile Sabrî.. Murâbite fi'l-Medineti'l-Mukaddese bi Sohbeti Kitâbillah," <http://www.maroc-quran.com/vb/t17518.html> (last visited: December 24, 2012).

57 "Zevcetu Ikriime Sabrî Tarsudu Muânâti'l-Mer'eti'l-Mukaddesiyye," <http://www.alquds.gov.ps/ar/index.php?view=79YOcy0nNs3Du69tjuhzy1wkyeayxx%2B7%2FAnzyAHkXWeiT9jMURkT> (last visited: December 24, 2012).

58 "Nâile Sabrî Evvel Imraatin Tufessiru'l-Kur'ane'l-Kerim," [http://alresala.tripod.com/alresala/1999/17\\_6\\_99/report6.htm](http://alresala.tripod.com/alresala/1999/17_6_99/report6.htm) (last visited: December 27, 2012).

does the *tafsir* of the verses in connection with one another; that is, while doing the *tafsir* of a specific verse she makes use of the other relevant verses. She also covers the kind of *tafsir* methodology that is described as narrative *tafsir* (*tafsir bi'r-rivaya*) using the hadiths or the statements of the close companions of the Prophet Muhammad; moreover, when needed, she draws on the statements of the generations coming after the close companions (*tâbiuun*) and the ones after them (*taba-i tâbiuun*). Doing all this, she points out the connections between the verses and the situation Muslims are in today. Not being apologetic, she also tries to attract attention to the fact that the modern monumental scientific and technological developments were actually pointed out by the Quran.<sup>59</sup> In addition, more like a manner of *tafsir*, if there are verdicts involved in the verse(s) in focus, she mentions them under the subtitle 'juristic verdict' (*hukmun fıkhiyyun*) or 'juristic verdicts' (*ahkâmun fıkhiyyetun*).<sup>60</sup> Lastly, she also covers in her *tafsir* such issues as the ones related to semantics, rhetoric and so forth.<sup>61</sup> It should be noted that we did not find any written study focusing on this *tafsir*.

### 7. Semra Kürün Çekmegil and her *Okuyucu Tefsiri*

As far as we can find out, the first *tafsir* written by a female Turkish scholar is *Okuyucu Tefsiri*, which belongs to Semra Kürün Çekmegil. The writer was born in Malatya, a southeastern city in Turkey. Çekmegil started writing this *tafsir* in 2004<sup>62</sup> and published the parts she completed in 8 volumes in 2006.<sup>63</sup>

In its introduction, the writer states that this *tafsir*, not being academic, is only the outcome of her meetings with the women of her circle that lasted years. Basically, this *tafsir* came out of the lectures she gave in such associations as Malatya Birlik Vakfı and Akabe Eğitim ve Kültür Vakfı and of the speeches she made at a radio station called Radyo Nida. In a nutshell, this work can be described as "a *tafsir* that mostly consists of the transmissions and borrowings from other *tafsirs*."<sup>64</sup>

Çekmegil wholeheartedly promotes the notion that people should both recite and understand the Quran as opposed to reciting the Quran without getting into it. In other words, according to her, reading the Quran without serious effort to

59 "Nâile Sabrı Evvel İmraatin Tufessiru'l-Kur'ane'l-Kerim," [http://alresala.tripod.com/alresala/1999/17\\_6\\_99/report6.htm](http://alresala.tripod.com/alresala/1999/17_6_99/report6.htm) (last visited: December 27, 2012).

60 Hamid, "Min Cuhûdî'l-Mereti Al-Mubassir li Nûri'l-Kur'ân Evvelu Cehdin Kâmilin fı't-Tefsir li'l-Mer'eti Hadisen," 19-21.

61 Hamid, "Min Cuhûdî'l-Mereti Al-Mubassir li Nûri'l-Kur'ân Evvelu Cehdin Kâmilin fı't-Tefsir li'l-Mer'eti Hadisen," 21-22.

62 Semra Kürün Çekmegil, *Okuyucu Tefsiri (Tefsiru'l-Kari)*, (Malatya: 2006), 6; "Ömrünü Tefsire Vermiş Bir Anne," <http://www.dunyabizim.com/index.php?aType=haber&ArticleID=5317> (last visited: November 10, 2013).

63 "Ömrünü Tefsire Vermiş Bir Anne," <http://www.dunyabizim.com/index.php?aType=haber&ArticleID=5317> (last visited: November 10, 2013).

64 Semra K. Çekmegil, *Okuyucu Tefsiri*, 1/9.

understand it would yield not many benefits for the Muslim people.<sup>65</sup> She also states that, in the making of her *tafsir*, she was basically guided by the idea of finding out and investigating into the ways the Quran points out for solving the problems of our time.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, she states that the title of the *tafsir*, *Okuyucu Tefsiri*, which literally means 'the *tafsir* of the reader,' was of a special preference for the sake of its correlation with the first Quranic verse that begins with the injunction 'read.'<sup>67</sup>

In the introduction part concerning the first chapter of the Quran (Al-Fatiha), Çekmegil in an invocational mood puts emphasis on beginning the interpretation with the Islamic expression meaning 'in the name of God, the most beneficent, the most merciful' (*basmala*).<sup>68</sup> Then, depending on the fact that *al-fatiha* means 'to open, to indicate what is rightful,' she says the following: "With the key granted to our hands, we will go in to see the palace of faith. So, let us see how Allah built that palace in order for the human being, that He created in the perfect manner and deemed to be worthy of being spoken to, to live a decent life..."<sup>69</sup>

While interpreting the first verse of the fourth chapter of the Quran called An-Nisa, Kürün says that "revelational data debunk the idea of evolution, reincarnation, and the idea that the first woman on earth was created of the first man's rib."<sup>70</sup> Moreover, while interpreting the third verse of this chapter pertaining to the Islamic understanding of polygamy, Çekmegil first states that this verse gives permission for polygamy and then makes the following point: "In fact, this verse imposed an upper limit on polygamy as it was practiced before the emergence of the religion of Islam. And even though some scholars hold the notion that the permission to marry up to four women in Islam was dependent on some societal challenges, it is actually an open door in the religion of Islam and no one is entitled to shut it by his/her subjective interpretation."<sup>71</sup>

Expanding on this issue, Çekmegil points out that some people use the permission to marry up to four women against the religion of Islam and, in return, some others try to explain this issue in a distorted manner for the simple reason that they are just being apologetic. Çekmegil also states that there is a double standard involved in the stance of those who criticize Islam for this issue: "Some non-Muslims and self-absorbed people stand against this permission for they see bigotry and tolerance of lust inherent in it. But there is no mention of the fact that a lot of the men who oppose this permission do get involved in

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65 Semra K. Çekmegil, *Okuyucu Tefsiri*, I/11.

66 Semra K. Çekmegil, *Okuyucu Tefsiri*, I/15.

67 Semra K. Çekmegil, *Okuyucu Tefsiri*, I/19.

68 Semra K. Çekmegil, *Okuyucu Tefsiri*, I/25.

69 Semra K. Çekmegil, *Okuyucu Tefsiri*, I/27.

70 Semra K. Çekmegil, *Okuyucu Tefsiri*, II/345.

71 Semra K. Çekmegil, *Okuyucu Tefsiri*, II/351-352.

relations with other women outside of the legal boundaries. What can we make of the position of those who bluster about the legal acknowledgement of these relations?"<sup>72</sup>

Although the first 8 volumes of her *tafsir* were published in 2006 the rest of it has yet to come out. However, the other volumes of her *tafsir*, as she stated in some interviews, are about to be completed.<sup>73</sup>

### **8 . Necla Yasdıman and her *Kur'an Tahlili: Araçça Gramer Işığında Sözlük-Meal-Tefsir***

Necla Yasdıman was born in 1962. Having graduated from the Faculty of Theology at Ankara University in 1984, Yasdıman enrolled in a graduate program in Islamic Studies and, a few years later, she went to Egypt to further her research concerning her doctoral dissertation. She had been in Melbourne, Australia, as a teacher of Islamic sciences (or said otherwise: 'studies') working for the Department of Religious Affairs from 1995 to 1998. Upon her return from Melbourne, she continued to work on her graduate studies and became a PhD with a doctoral dissertation titled *Aile Hukuku ile ilgili Hadislerin Tahlili ve Mezhep İmamlarının Anlayışları (Analysis of the Hadiths Concerning Familial Law and the Accounts of the Schools of Jurisdiction)*, which was published in 2003 with the title *Kur'an-Sünnet-Fıkıh-Bağlamında Kadının Evlilikteki Hakları (The Rights of Women in Marriage in the Context of Quran, Sunnah and Islamic Jurisprudence)*. Between 1999 and 2006, she worked as a preacher in the city of İzmir, Turkey. Also a mother of two children, she retired in 2006.<sup>74</sup>

The *tafsir* of Yasdıman titled *Kur'an Tahlili*, started to be published in 2006. Until 2014, 6 volumes of it came out. Whereas the first and the second volumes contain the chapters called Al-Fatiha and Al-Bakara, the sixth volume starts with the interpretation of the chapter Maryam and ends with the interpretation of the last verse of the chapter Al-Furkan. Seemingly, the other volumes containing the interpretation of the rest of the Quran will come out in the course of time. In the already-published volumes, the structure of the *tafsir* is as follows: 1- The inquiry of the dictionary meanings of the words included in the verse in focus; 2- the translation of the verse; 3- grammatical analysis of the verse (*i'râb*); 4- and then the actual interpretation (*tafsir*).

About the methodology she followed in this *tafsir*, Yasdıman briefly says the following: "First, we put forth one single page in original. Then, one by one, we took up the interpretation of the verses included in that page. And then we put

72 Semra K. Çekmegil, *Okuyucu Tefsiri*, II/352.

73 "Ömrünü Tefsire Vermiş Bir Anne," <http://www.dunyabizim.com/index.php?aType=haber&ArticleID=5317> (last visited: December 10, 2013); "Kadının Eli Ne Cüretle Tefsire Değermiş!," <http://www.yeryuzuhaber.com/kadinin-eli-ne-curetle-tefsire-degermis-haberi-9816.html> (last visited: Ağustos 23, 2014).

74 "Dr. Necla Yasdıman Kimdir?," <http://www.neclayasdıman.com/> (last visited: Ağustos 24, 2014).

forth the Arabic text of each verse with the Turkish translation followed, based on our browsing and perusing many former translations including a delicate analysis of dictionary meanings of the words and the relevant issues pertaining to Arabic grammar. After all that, we tried to carry out a three-fold analysis."<sup>75</sup> Yasdıman labels these stages as 'Dictionary Meanings' (Sözlükçe), 'Grammatical Analysis' (Dilbilgisi Tahlili) and 'Explication' (Açıklama) and further gives some details about them. According to this detailed information, under the title 'Sözlükçe,' she specifies the present, past and infinitive forms of the verbs while notifying the singular and plural forms of the nouns appearing in the verse in focus.<sup>76</sup> Under the title 'Dilbilgisi Tahlili,' she puts forth the translation of the verse in bold along with the original Arabic words including the meanings they denoted in that verse.<sup>77</sup> Lastly, under the title 'Açıklama,' making use of the *tafsirs* that came out in the last few decades, she makes a coherent interpretation of the verse and outlines the messages that she finds inherent in that verse.<sup>78</sup>

It should also be mentioned that, when looking at its bibliography, one can see that Yasdıman benefited from many works that recently came out in Turkey including the ones translated into Turkish.<sup>79</sup>

### 9. Fevkiyye Aş-Şirbini and her *Teysîru't-Tefsir*

Having graduated from an undergraduate program in Arabic language and literature in 2000, Fevkiyye İbrahim Aş-Şirbînî involved in many public activities giving lectures on religious topics at the mosques and Islamic centers in Al-Qahirah. In this sense, she is a figure of Islamic mission (*da'wah*). As a matter of fact, her *tafsir*, which is titled *Teysîru't-Tefsir*, is actually mostly dependent of these lectures. In other words, her *tafsir* basically came out of her lectures which were recorded and transcribed by the audience. Meticulously working on the transcribed material, she covered the whole Quran and eventually completed her *tafsir* in 2006.<sup>80</sup>

Concerning the methodology she followed in her *tafsir*, it seems that she pays special attention to doing *tafsir* in a phenomenological way. In other words, she gives importance to conveying the verses into the daily life. She also states that she used an easy-to-understand style of language and that she tried to stay away from *Isra'iliyyat*.<sup>81</sup>

75 See: Necla Yasdıman, Necla Yasdıman *Kur'an Tahlili (Arapça Gramer İşığında, Sözlük-Meâl-İrab-Tefsir)*, (İzmir: Anadolu Yayınları, 2006), I/IV.

76 See: Yasdıman, *Kur'an Tahlili*, I/IV-V.

77 See: Yasdıman, *Kur'an Tahlili*, I/V-VI.

78 See: Yasdıman, *Kur'an Tahlili*, I/VI.

79 See: Yasdıman, *Kur'an Tahlili*, I/VII-VIII.

80 See: Salih Selim, "Al-Ustâze Fevkiyye İbrahim Aş-Şirbînî Sâhibetu Teysiri't-Tefsir," <http://alzhour.com/essaydetails.asp?EssayId=1485&CatId=92> (last visited: December 26, 2012).

81 See: Salih Selim, "Al-Ustâze Fevkiyye İbrahim Aş-Şirbînî Sâhibetu Teysiri't-Tefsir," <http://alzhour.com/essaydetails.asp?EssayId=1485&CatId=92> (last visited: December 26, 2012).

Aş-Şirbînî states that, in her *tafsir*, she dealt with the issues put forth by the critics of Islam such as the notion of polygamy, divorce, inheritance rights of women, in a way that could be appealing to everybody trying to have an understanding of the Quran. In this context, she states that polygamy in Islam, i.e. permission to marry up to four women, is not an injunction that every Muslim man is supposed to put into action; rather, it amounts to a religiously-oriented authorization helpful to deal with some societal challenges in which women are scanty compared to men because of wars and the likes. According to her, the increased number of extra-marital relationships in the western societies can be considered as an indication of the Islamic wisdom in that regard.<sup>82</sup>

### 10. Kâmile binti Muhammad Al-Kevârî and her *Tefsîru Ğaribi'l-Kur'ân*

Kâmile binti Muhammad bin Câsim b. Ali Âl-i Cihâm Al-Kevârî was born in Doha, Qatar, and completed her pre-university education there. She memorized the whole Quran at an early age and then went into Islamic disciplines. Eventually, she graduated from university in 1997 majoring in Islamic Law (*Sharia*). Having completed her master's thesis, she now works as a researcher in the Ministry of Funds and Islamic Affairs of Qatar.<sup>83</sup>

The writer, in her *tafsir* titled *Tefsîru Ğaribi'l-Kur'ân*, especially tried to explain the words not easy to understand, drawing on the former *tafsirs* and the books pertaining to the peculiar and 'incomprehensible' words of the Quran (*ġaribu'l-Kur'an*).<sup>84</sup> To give an example, we would like to go over her interpretation on the word 'al-aalemeen' (الْعَالَمِينَ), which appears in the chapter Al-Fatiha. Kâmile Al-Kevârî, regarding this word, states the following: "the word 'al-aalemeen' in this context denotes everything that has existence except God. The word is in its plural form and cannot be used to indicate one single entity; in this sense, it does not even have a singular form like the word 'al-qavm.' The classical scholars of Arabic language Al-Ferrâ and Abû Ubeyde said that the word 'aalam' can only be used for intelligent beings. According to them, those who are denoted by this word are human beings, angels, *jinn*s and demons. And animals are not included in the content of this word because they are not intelligent beings."<sup>85</sup>

This *tafsir*, which was published in 2008 by a publishing house called Dâru Ibn Hazm, amounts to one single volume comprising 352 pages.

### 11. Keriman Hamza and her *Al-Lu'lu' ve'l-Mercân fi Tefsiri'l-Kur'an*

Keriman Hamza, actually studied journalism at university level, that is, she

82 See: Saliha Selim, "Al-Ustâze Fevkiyye Ibrahim Aş-Şirbînî Sâhibetu Teysirî't-Tefsir," <http://alzhour.com/essaydetails.asp?EssayId=1485&CatId=92> (last visited: December 26, 2012).

83 See: "Kâmile Al-Kevârî," <http://shamela.ws/index.php/author/179> (last visited: February 6, 2013).

84 Kâmile Al-Kevârî, *Tefsîru Ğaribi'l-Kur'ân* (np.: Dâru Ibn Hazm, 2008) ("introduction").

85 Al-Kevârî, *Tefsîru Ğaribi'l-Kur'ân*, 2.

is not a graduate of a religious studies or theology program.<sup>86</sup> She specialized in mass communication.<sup>87</sup> As an important aspect of her life-long activity, she conducted many interviews on TV with scholarly figures and discussed with them crucial religious issues.

She stated that, when writing her *tafsir Al-Lu'lu ve'l-Mercan*, she mostly made use of her talks and interviews with the famed scholars that she conducted in radio and TV programs. She presented her *tafsir* to the scholars of Al-Azhar University so that they can detect it to see whether it has anything against or contradictory to the officially-codified doctrine of religion of Islam. Those scholars reported back that there is nothing in it of that sort and, accordingly, they approved and strongly supported its publication.<sup>88</sup>

The style of language she employed in her *tafsir* is one that can easily be read and understood. Keriman Hamza stated that her target audience are primarily young men and women. She wrote her *tafsir* in a mood of motherhood, i.e., like a mother telling stories and giving advice to her children.<sup>89</sup> Thus, it can be contended that she wrote her *tafsir* in a pedagogical methodology. In this context, for instance, she focused on the concept of love. According to her, the notion of loving one another for the sake of God faded away in modern times and thus people's emotion that is normally manifested as loving one another dramatically decreased.<sup>90</sup>

The *tafsir* of Keriman Hamza was later published in 3 volumes (10 fragments) with the title *Al-Lu'lu ve'l-Mercan fi Tefsiri'l-Kur'an* in 2010.<sup>91</sup>

## 12. Hannân Al-Lahhâm and her *Silsiletu'n-Nazarât fi Kitâbillâh*

Hannân binti Muhammad Al-Lahhâm, was born in Syria in 1943 and is known

86 See: "Keriman Hamza: Evvelu Seyyidetin Tadau Tefsiran li'l-Kur'ani liş-Şebab," <http://www.alalamonline.net> (last visited: December 28, 2008).

87 See: "Evvelu Seyide tedaru tefsiren li'l-Kur'ani'l-Kerim li'l-Fityani ve'l-Feteyat," <http://a7lam3rba.kalamfikalam.com/montada-f6/topic-t1511.htm> (last visited: February 6, 2013).

88 See: "Keriman Hamza: Tefsiri leyse Nisaiyyen... Bel Yuhatibu'r-Ricale ve'l-Nisae ve'l-Kibare ve's-Sigâre fi Şeklin Havadiyet Haniyeten," (Aş-Şarku'l-Evsat), <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=17&article=508379&issueno=11046> (last visited: December 23, 2010); "Tefsiru Keriman Hamza li'l-Kur'ani leyse Evvele Tefsirin Tukaddimuhu Imraatun," <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=58169&SecID=94&IssueID=88> (last visited: December 23, 2010).

89 See: "Keriman Hamza: Tefsiri leyse Nisaiyyen... Bel Yuhatibu'r-Ricale ve'l-Nisae ve'l-Kibare ve's-Sigâre fi Şeklin Havadiyet Haniyeten," (Aş-Şarku'l-Evsat), <http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=17&article=508379&issueno=11046>; "Keriman Hamza ve Tefsiru'l-Kur'an," <http://www.ikhwan.net/vb/showthread.php?t=76160> (last visited: December 23, 2010).

90 "Keriman Hamza: Evvelu Seyyidetin Tadau Tefsiran li'l-Kur'ani liş-Şebab," <http://www.alalamonline.net> (last visited: December 28, 2008).

91 "Keriman Hamza: Tefsiru'l-Kur'an liş-Şebab ve'l-Etfal," <http://www.egypt.com/miscellaneous-details.aspx?miscellaneous=3109> (last visited: March 20, 2010); "Keriman Hamza: Al-Lu'lu ve'l-Mercan fi tefsiri'l-Kur'an," (al-Masr al-yawm) <http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=246012&IssueID=1699> (last visited: March 4, 2010).

for her scholarly ambitions.<sup>92</sup> Upon marriage in 1961 she put a moratorium on her undergraduate studies in Kulliyetu'l-Edebi'l-Arabî; however, also dealing with her responsibilities as a housewife, she kept educating herself. In 1979, she immigrated to Saudi Arabia with her husband and children. There, she focused on the subject of *tafsir* and does the *tafsir* of a handful of Quranic chapters: Ya-sin, Al-Lokman, An-Nisa, Al-Bakara, Al-i Imran, Al-Maide, Tâhâ, An-Nur, Al-Ahzab, Hûd, and At-Tawba. Besides, she came up with some written works aimed at helping children understand the meaning(s) of the Quran. For instance, she wrote the book titled *Hikâyât li Ahfâdî (Stories for my Grandchildren)* and did the *tafsir* of the Quranic chapter called Al-Asr. She taught the courses of 'Tafsir of the Quranic Chapter An-Nisa,' 'Juristic Verses of the Quran' (Âyât al-Ahkâm) and 'Islamic Culture' for about two years in Girls' Faculty at King Abdulaziz University of Jeddah.<sup>93</sup>

Her works concerning the realm of Quranic Studies constitute the interpretation of various Quranic chapters. She did the *tafsir* of 13 Quranic chapters and published them under the title *Silsiletu'n-Nazarât fi Kitâbillâh (Series of Lookings at the Book of God)*. In addition, she published her works concerning the *tafsir* of the three Quranic chapters under the following titles: *Advâ' alâ Sûreti Yâsîn, Advâ' va Teemmulât min Sûreti Tâhâ, Advâ' min Sûreti Lokmân*.<sup>94</sup> Her recently published works are *Tefsiru Sureti't-Talak*,<sup>95</sup> and *Tefsîru Sûreti't-Tawba*.<sup>96</sup>

Hannân gave importance to narrative exegesis and mostly depended on narrations directly coming from the Prophet Muhammad, his close companions, and the scholars who followed them (*tabiun*). As she was a literary figure herself, she tried to put forward the literary aspects of the Quran. One can also see that she gave priority to social issues following a technique of exegesis which is widely known as 'topical exegesis' in contemporary times. It seems that she also avoided in her *tafsir* controversial issues.<sup>97</sup> At the beginning of every chapter, like other scholars of Quranic exegesis, she gave information about the exact number of verses included in that chapter, about whether the verses are Meccan or Madinan, and about the hadiths concerning the special aspects of that chapter. She also looked into the relationship between the Quranic chapters, divided the chapter in focus into parts, and benefited from other verses when she tried to interpret a specific verse.<sup>98</sup>

92 See: "Hannân Al-Lahhâm," <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/> (last visited: February 7, 2013).

93 Cibr Murad, "Al-Mürebbeyye Hannân Lahhâm Tuhaddisunâ an Tecribeti Nâdî At-Tufûle," <http://www.manfata.com/> (February 7, 2013); "Rûmûz ve Şahsiyyât min's-Sevre 4 (Hannân Al-Lahhâm)," <http://www.shababsyria.org/vb/showthread.php/67296-> (last visited: February 7, 2013).

94 See: Hamid, "Min Cuhûdî'l-Mar'eti fî Tefsîri'l-Kur'ânî'l-Kerim fî'l-Asrî'l-Hadîs," 220.

95 See: Cibr Murad, "Al-Mürebbeyye Hannân Lahhâm Tuhaddisunâ an Tecribeti Nâdî At-Tufûle," <http://www.manfata.com/> (last visited: February 7, 2013); "Rûmûz ve Şahsiyyât min's-Sevre 4 (Hannân Al-Lahhâm)," <http://www.shababsyria.org/vb/showthread.php/67296-> (last visited: February 7, 2013).

96 See: Hannan Al-Lahhâm, *Tefsîru Sûreti't-Tawba* (Dâru'l-Fikrî'l-Muasir: 2007), (263 pages).

97 Hamid, "Min Cuhûdî'l-Mar'eti fî Tefsîri'l-Kur'ânî'l-Kerim fî'l-Asrî'l-Hadîs," 221-224.

98 Hamid, "Min Cuhûdî'l-Mar'eti fî Tefsîri'l-Kur'ânî'l-Kerim fî'l-Asrî'l-Hadîs," 224-227.

### 13. Angelika Neuwirth and her 'Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: Ein europäischer Zugang'

In the context of female scholars of Quranic exegesis, we also would like to mention a German orientalist named Angelika Neuwirth. At first glance, one might think that 'it is not appropriate for an orientalist to be considered an interpreter (*mufassir*) of the Quran in its traditional sense.' Because the book that is subject to exegesis is the Quran which is believed by Muslims to be the last message of God; however, the one who does exegesis is not Muslim. Moreover, as the methodological books concerning Quranic exegesis point out, one most essential requirement for the interpreter of the Quran is for him or her to become Muslim in the first place.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, it is even required for that person to become a devout Muslim; that is, he or she is supposed to be reliable in terms of religious belief and behavior, otherwise, his or her interpretation would not be acceptable and even valid.<sup>100</sup>

Given all those terms and circumstances, the question that arises is the following: Even though she made many statements showing reverence about the Quran,<sup>101</sup> how is it appropriate to consider Angelika, who did not clearly declared her being a Muslim, a scholar of Quranic exegesis (*mufassir*)?

We tend to mention Angelika under the category of female scholars of Quranic exegesis for the simple reason that she has been trying to interpret the Quran regardless of her religion. Moreover, it seems to be a 'plus' that, while trying to interpret the Quran, she depends on a new perspective different than the classical one. Thus, in this context, we will talk about her work as well.

Angelika, having gone through a good education in her homeland, Germany, focused on Oriental Studies and particularly specialized in Quranic Studies. Along this line of research, she mostly made use of semantic and philological perspectives. To further her expertise in Quranic Studies, she as an academic made visits to various universities in Berlin, Tehran, Jerusalem, Gottingen, and Munich. She also went to some universities like the University of Jordan as a visiting scholar and taught in them.<sup>102</sup> She became the director of the research project called *Corpus Coranicum*, which stands out as one of the most important academic enterprises in the west pioneered by German scholars. This project basically aims at gathering all Quranic documents systemically together and

99 Ebu'l-Fadl Celaluddin Abdurrahman Ibn Ebibekir As-Suyûti, *Al-Itkân fi Ulûmi'l-Kur'an*, annotated by Merkezu'd-Dirâsâti'l-Kur'âniyye, (Al-Memleketu'l-Arabiiyyetu's-Suudiyye: nd.), VI/2275.

100 See: As-Suyûti, *Al-Itkân*, VI/2276. Also see: Muni' b. Abdulhalim Mahmûd, *Menâhîcu'l-Müfessirîn* (Al-Kâhire: Dâru'l-Kutubi'l-Misriyye, 1421/2000), 361.

101 "Alman Prof. Dr. Neuwirth: "Kur'an Muhteşem Bir Kitap," [http://www.yaklasansaat.com/haberdosya/2008\\_haberleri/subat/subat56.asp](http://www.yaklasansaat.com/haberdosya/2008_haberleri/subat/subat56.asp) (August 25, 2014).

102 "Angelika Neuwirth," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angelika\\_Neuwirth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angelika_Neuwirth) (last visited: August 25, 2014);

making them available for researchers.<sup>103</sup> It should also be mentioned that Angelika particularly deals with the Quranic texts of the late classical period.<sup>104</sup>

We should note that we got informed and learned about Dr. Angelika basically through the written works of Esra Gözeler.<sup>105</sup> Thus, the information we lay out about Angelika is basically dependent on the works of Esra Gözeler.

Concerning Angelika's *tafsir* called *Der Koran*, Gözeler says the following: "The book of Neuwirth called *Der Koran*, which was recently launched, is actually a project of chronological exegesis of the Quran. This work comprises the following volumes: (1) Early Meccan Period, (2) Middle Meccan Period, (3) Late Meccan Period, (4) Early Madinan Period, (5) Late Madinan Period. The first volume of this work, in which Neuwirth divided the early Meccan chapters of the Quran into four categories (*Surengruppe*) and each of these categories into sub-categories (*Subgruppe*), already came out in the book form."<sup>106</sup>

According to the chronological order that Neuwirth took into account, the exegesis of each chapter includes the following stages: (1) Transliteration of the chapter into a Latin script, (2) Translation of the chapter (which completely belongs to Neuwirth), (3) Literary interpretation and critique of the chapter (*Literarkritik*), (4) Composition of the chapter (*Komposition*), (5) Structural formulation (*Strukturformel/Proportionen*), (6) Interpretation of the verses one by one (*Kursorischer Verskommentar*), (7) Analysis of the chapter and dating of the chapter (*Analyse und Deutung*), and (8) Bibliography (*Bibliographie*).<sup>107</sup>

Angelika Neuwirth, considers the fact that the Quran holds men and women equal in terms of their responsibilities in this world and of their being held responsible in the hereafter before God as a revolution.<sup>108</sup> According to Neuwirth, elevating a society not inclined to accept an equal status with women to a point where men start to see women as responsible as they themselves are is an extraordinary development for a change.<sup>109</sup>

103 Esra Gözeler et al., "Corpus Coranicum Projesi: Kur'an'ı Geç Antik Döneme Ait Bir Metin Olarak Okumak," Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi, 53:2 (2012), 226.

104 "Angelika Neuwirth," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angelika\\_Neuwirth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angelika_Neuwirth) (last visited: August 25, 2014); "Prof. Dr. Angelika Neuwirth," [http://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/en/e/semiarab/arabistik/Mitarbeiter\\_innen/professoren/neuwirth/index.html](http://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/en/e/semiarab/arabistik/Mitarbeiter_innen/professoren/neuwirth/index.html) (last visited: August 25, 2014).

105 Esra Gözeler, "Corpus Coranicum Projesi Özelinde Batı'da Kur'an Çalışmaları," (a paper presented to İstanbul Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Tefsir Anabilim Dalı), June 4, 2014.

106 Gözeler et al., "Corpus Coranicum Projesi...", 224.

107 Gözeler et al., "Corpus Coranicum Projesi...", 225.

108 "At-Tenvîr fî'l-Islam ve'l-Garb min Manzûri'l-Habire al-Âlmâniyye Angelika Neuwirth: İddiâu İftikârî'l-İslâm ile't-Tenvîr... Klišye Ğarbiyyun Kadîm," <http://ar.qantara.de/content/Itnwyr-fy-Islm-wlgrb-mn-mnzw-r-lkhbyr-llmny-nglyk-nwyfrt-d-ftqr-Islm-l-ltnwyrklyshyh-grby> (last visited: August 25, 2014); "Interview with Angelika Neuwirth: Islam as a Culture of Knowledge," <http://en.qantara.de/content/interview-with-angelika-neuwirth-islam-as-a-culture-of-knowledge> (last visited: August 25, 2014).

109 Interview with Angelika Neuwirth Islam as a Culture of Knowledge," <http://en.qantara.de/content/interview-with-angelika-neuwirth-islam-as-a-culture-of-knowledge> (last visited: August 25, 2014); "At-Tenvîr fî'l-Islam

#### 14. Miyâde Binti Kâmil and her *Ad-Dürre fî Tefsiri Sûreti'l-Bakara*

After completed her high school education, she graduated from university majoring in the realm of public education in Riyad. Afterwards, she taught at various schools and basically dealt with the Quranic education. Also a reciter of the Quran (*hâfîza*), she is able to read the Quran in different dialects of Arabic.

Miyâde binti Kâmil came up with her work of *tafsir* called *Ad-Dürre fî Tefsiri Sûreti'l-Bakara*<sup>110</sup> mainly because the female students that she taught at Merkezû'l-Kur'âni'l-Kerim could easily get into the meanings and the messages immanent in the chapter Al-Bakara. In this regard, she also observes that her *tafsir* could help the students memorize the verses of the chapter Al-Bakara.

She divided the chapter into different sections of verses in terms of the subjects with which they deal. In each of the sections, she explains how that group of verses are related to the verses that appear at the beginning of the chapter. When interpreting the verses, she first goes through the meanings of the rare words appearing in them and then explains the verses concisely. In other words, concerning the *tafsir* of the verses, she avoids long interpretations and explanations. More specifically, instead of dealing with the detailed meanings of the verses, she prefers brief explanations so that the readers can easily understand and memorize the verses when they want. In general, she always tries to point out the correlation between the verses. When interpreting the verses that contain juristic issues, she puts forth the verdicts coming out of the verses without going into details and the accounts of the former scholars of *tafsir*. On the other hand, as for the *tafsir* of the verses related to creed (*i'tikâd*) and especially to the names and attributes of God, she espouses the mainstream Sunni approach (*Ahlu's-Sunnah va'l-Jamaah*). Lastly, she also covers in her *tafsir* some short accounts and witty remarks in the effort to indicate both the brevity and the miraculous aspects of the Quran.<sup>111</sup>

#### **Torah and Gospel commentaries made by female scholars**

In the context of this article, it would be worth pointing out that there is a *tafsir* of Torah done by female scholars collectively. More than a hundred female scholars who had expertise in various disciplines came together and, under the editors Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Andrea L. Weiss, did a *tafsir* on the Jewish Bible, which is titled *The Torah: A Women's Commentary*.<sup>112</sup> These scholars assert

ve'l-Ġarb min Manzûri'l-Habire al-Almâniyye Angelika Neuwirth: Iddiâu Iftikâri'l-Islâm ile't-Tenvîr... Klişiyê Garbiyyun Kadîm," <http://ar.qantara.de/content/ltnwyr-fy-lslm-wlgrb-mn-mnzwrlkhbyr-llmny-nglyk-nwyfrt-d-ftqr-lslm-l-ltnwyrklyshyh-grby> (last visited: August 25, 2014).

110 Miyâde binti Kâmil, *Ad-Dürre fî Tefsiri Sûreti'l-Bakara* (Beirut: Muessesetu'r-Risâle, 1427/2006), (567 pages).

111 "Suâl ani'l-Ustâze Miyâde Al-Mâdi," <http://www.ahlalhdeth.com/vb/showthread.php?t=259116> (last visited: August 8, 2014).

112 Tamara Cohn Eskenazi & Andrea L. Weiss (eds.), *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* (New York: [Union for Reform Judaism] URJ/Women of Reform Judaism, 2008), (1350 pages).

that the commentaries of *Torah* made until modern times reflect a mentality of male hegemony and thus they are full of derogatory remarks against women. However, they also state that they espouse a female perspective in their work and see men and women as equal human beings.<sup>113</sup> For example, unlike what the commentators of *Torah* put forward so far, these female scholars assert that Eve, instead of being created of Adam's rib, was actually created of the same essence and at the same time with Adam; moreover, they were both created in the image of God.<sup>114</sup> In addition, there is also a female perspective dominant in such commentaries of *Torah* as *The Women's Torah Commentary: New Insights from Women Rabbis on the 54 Weekly Torah Portions*,<sup>115</sup> which was written by fifty female scholars, and Judith S. Antonelli's *In the Image of God: A Feminist Commentary on the Torah*.<sup>116</sup>

Likewise, there are commentaries of the Gospels made by female scholars. To give an example, one of them is *Women's Bible Commentary*, which was written by a group of feminist writers.<sup>117</sup>

### Results/Conclusion

In the light of the information we laid out so far, one can conclude that there are about 13 women who did interpret the Quran, entirely or otherwise. Apparently, there may be other works of this sort not within our reach. In fact, we did find out a work of *tafsir* called *Teemmûlât Kur'âniyye ve Kutûfun Idâriyye fi Zilâli Sûreti'l-Bakara* belonging to Kifâyet Muhammad Abdullah. However, we were unable to see and examine this work, nor did we find out any information about the substance of it. It also came to attention that another female scholar named Rukiyye Taha Câbir Al-Ulvânî came up with such *tafsir* works called *Tedebbür fi Sûreti'l-Hac*, *Tedebbür fi Sûreti'l-Kehf*, *Tedebbürü'z-Zehrâveyn*. We have gone through these works as they appear in a web site belonging to her;<sup>118</sup> however, we did not find them significant enough to be included in this context. Moreover, we also found out a book called *Nazarât fi Fâtihî'l-Kitâb Muhâdarât Ulkiyet alâ*

113 David Z. Jucker, "Book Review," *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, April-June, 2011, 39.2, 125-128, ([http://jbc.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/392/JBQ\\_392\\_zuckerbookwom.pdf](http://jbc.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/392/JBQ_392_zuckerbookwom.pdf) last visited: December 26, 2012); "Tefsir Nesevî li't-Tevrât," <http://www.azahera.net/showthread.php?t=226> (last visited: August 8, 2014).

114 See: "Bahsen ani'l-Insâf... Tefsir Nisevî li't-Tevrât," <http://www.onislam.net/arabic/newsanalysis/3001-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B1%D8%B4%D9%8A%D9%81/105695-2008-04-06%2011-07-53.html> (last visited: December 26, 2012).

115 Elise M. Goldstein (ed.), *The Women's Torah Commentary: New Insights from Women Rabbis on the 54 Weekly Torah Portions* (Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000).

116 Judith S. Antonelli, *In the Image of God: A Feminist Commentary on the Torah* (Michigan: Michigan State University, 1995).

117 Carole A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, Jacqueline E. Lapsley (eds.), *Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012).

118 "Mevkiu ad-Doktora Rukiyye Al-Ulvânî, As-Sîre Az-Zâtiyye," <http://drruqaia.com/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%8a%d8%b1%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b0%d8%a7%d8%aa%d9%8a%d8%a9/> (last visited: August 27, 2014).

*Ba'di'l-Muntedeyât* belonging to Mufide Muhammad Zeki Al-Bekr, which is dependent on her online lectures. We left it out since it comprises considerably short presentations.

Whereas some of the *tafsirs* we talked about cover the whole Quran some others include only parts of the Quran. On the other hand, whereas some of them are complete some others are not. Consequently, we can classify these *tafsirs* as in the following:

**1 – Complete Tafsirs:** These are the *tafsirs* that cover the whole Quran and they are the following: *Ziybu't-Tefâsir* of Ziyb an-Nisâ Begüm Al-Hindiyye, *Mahzenu'l-Irfân der Tefsir-i Kur'ân* of Nusret Begüm Emin, *Nazarât fî Kitâbillah* of Zainab Al-Gazali, *Al-Mubassir li Nûri'l-Kur'ân* of Nâile Hâşim Sabrî, *Tefsiru Ğaribi'l-Kur'ân* of Kâmile binti Muhammad bin Câsim b. Ali Al-Kevârî, *Tefsiru't-Tefsir* of Fevkiyye Aş-Şirbini, *Al-Lu'lu ve'l-Mercân* of Keriman Hamza. As matter of fact, these *tafsirs* do not include the entire verses of the Quran. However, we still consider them 'complete *tafsirs*' for the reason that they begin with the first chapter of the Quran, Al-Fatiha, and end with the last chapter of the Quran, An-Nâs.

**2 – Incomplete Tafsirs:** These are the *tafsirs* that are intended to cover the whole Quran and yet to be completed. The *tafsirs* of Semra Kürün Çekmegil, Necla Yasdıman and Angelika Neuwirth fall in this category. By the way, it should be noted that whereas the *tafsir* of Çekmegil amounted to 8 volumes, that of Yasdıman so far has only 6 volumes. On the other hand, the *tafsir* of Angelika only has one volume yet.

**3 – Partial Tafsirs:** These are the ones that cover parts of the Quran such as one of a few chapters. The following *tafsirs* fall into this category: *Tefsiru Ümmi'l-Mü'minin (Some Narrations of Aisha)*, Aisha Abdurrahman Bintu's-Şâti's *At-Tefsiru'l-Beyâni li'l-Kur'âni'l-Kerîm*, Hannân el-Lahhâm's *Silsiletu'n-Nazarât fî Kitâbillâh* and Miyâde Binti Kâmil Al-Mâdi's *Ad-Dürre fî Tefsiri Süreti'l-Bakara*.

Since understanding and interpreting the Quran is not a skill peculiar to men and there is not such a stipulation to become an interpreter of the Quran as being male,<sup>119</sup> it should not be unexpected to find out that there have been female scholars in that realm of investigation. As a matter of fact, the number of female scholars of Quranic exegesis starting from the time of the Prophet till today, which amounts to about 1500 years, seems to be scanty. One needs to pay extra attention to the fact that although the wives of the Prophet and his other female companions were very interested in the Quran and its *tafsir*, women's interest of this sort faded away in later periods. This, of course, needs to be dealt in a larger context including historical and psychosocial analyses.

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119 See: As-Suyûtî, *Al-Itkân*, VI/2275-2305; Muni' b. Abdulhalim, *Menâhicu'l-Müfessirin*, 361.

However, today, we observe that the interest of female scholars in Quranic exegesis has increased dramatically. The above-mentioned female scholars except the ones who were married to the Prophet Muhammad are those who lived in contemporary times. On the other hand, except the late Nusret Begüm, Aisha Abdurrahman, and Zainab Al-Gazali, all others are those who are alive. Thus, one can contend that in contemporary times female scholars are becoming more and more interested in Quranic exegesis as a scholarly enterprise.

There is no doubt that the books on Quranic exegesis written by female scholars will add flavor to the science of *tafsir*. However, one should not necessarily be inclined to expect those works to be unique and in some ways peculiar to women. In other words, one should not expect female scholars to make extraordinary contributions to Quranic exegesis. Thus, the notion that female scholars are welcome to deal with Quranic exegesis so long they can come up with a completely different perspective than that of male scholars seems to be baseless and futile. After all, both male and female scholars have been trying to understand and thus explain the same book called the Quran. In short, any discussion of this sort seems to be unnecessary for the time being given that throughout the history of Islam female scholars did not enjoy much representation in this branch of investigation.

It does not seem appropriate to assert that the female scholars who are interested in Quranic exegesis will and should come out with an interpretation of the Quran completely different than that of their male peers. Because it might suggest that so far the male scholars of Quranic exegesis, only considering a male perspective, sort of concealed the Quranic issues that are in favor of women. In fact, one can easily find out that the *tafsirs* written so far by female scholars in the history of Islam do not look so much different in this regard than those written by male scholars. Nevertheless, it would be reasonable to expect the female scholars of *tafsir* not to infer from the verse that reads “And if there are not two men [available], then a man and two women from those whom you accept as witnesses –so that if one of the women errs, then the other can remind her”<sup>120</sup> (فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَكُمْ فِرْعَالٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ) that women are inferior to men. Moreover, it is aptly expected of female scholars of *tafsir* not to infer from the usage of the relative pronoun ‘mâ’ (مَا)<sup>121</sup> in the verse that reads “But if you fear that you will not be just, then [marry only] one or those your right hand possesses”<sup>122</sup> (فَأَنْكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ) that women lack some intelligence abilities for although they are intelligent beings they were treated as those who are not.<sup>123</sup> Instead, with respect to the interpretation of the above-mentioned verses,

120 Al-Bakara, 2/282.

121 This Arabic phrase is mostly used as being adjacent to the words denoting inorganic objects.

122 An-Nisa 4/3.

123 With respect to that approach, see: Cârullah Ebu'l-Kasim Mahmud b. Omer Az-Zemahşeri, *Al-Keşşâf an Hakâiki*

it would be likely for female scholars of *tafsir* to put forth a more reasonable approach like, say, the renowned male scholar of *tafsir* Al-Kurtubî did centuries ago.<sup>124</sup> As a matter of fact, with respect to the interpretation of the verses above, we did not find any statement offensive to women in the *tafsirs* of Zainab Gazali,<sup>125</sup> Keriman Hamza,<sup>126</sup> and Semra Kürün Çekmeçil.<sup>127</sup>

It should also be mentioned in passing that some male scholars of Quranic exegesis laid out a perspective that might somehow offend women. This perspective is particularly evident when they interpret the Quranic verses that are related to such issues as the creation of women, the original sin, and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the paradise.<sup>128</sup> This perspective is even described as trying to write a Quranic exegesis with a male mentality.<sup>129</sup> On the other hand, both some male scholars of Quranic exegesis and female scholars of this realm who came up with *tafsir* books in recent times tend to interpret such verses in a way not inclined to offend women whatsoever.<sup>130</sup>

In Turkey, about 75% of the students attending schools and institutions of religion particularly İmam-Hatip High Schools (Religious Vocational Schools) and Schools of Theology (Theology Colleges at university level) are female. As for the graduate students of religion, nearly half of them are female. There is also a similar situation in other Muslim countries such as Jordan, Bosnia, and Iran.

*Ğavâmîdî't-Tenzîl ve Uyûnî'l-Akâvîl fî Vucûhî't-Te'vîl*, annotated by Adil Ahmed Abdulmevcud & Ali Muhammed Muavvid, (Riyâd: Mektebetu'l-Ubrykân, 1418/1998), II/15; Fahrüddin Ar-Râzî, *Tefsîru'l-Fahr Ar-Râzî (At-Tefsîru'l-Kebîr-Mefâtihu'l-Ğayb)*, (np.: Dâru'l-Fikr, nd.), IX/179; Ebussuûd b. Muhammed Al-İmâdî, *Tefsîru Ebissuûd (İrşâdu'l-Aklî's-Selim ilâ Mezâyâ'l-Kitâbî'l-Kerîm)*, annotated by Abdulkâdir Ahmed Ata, (Ar-Riyâd: Mektebetu'r-Riyâd Al-Hadîse, nd.), IV/50; Muhammed Cemâluddin Al-Kâsîmî, *Tefsîru'l-Kâsîmî (Mehâsinu't-Te'vîl)*, annotated by Muhammed Fuad Abdalbaki, (np.: 1376/19579), V/1106.

124 See: Ebu Abdillâh Muhammed b. Ahmed Al-Kurtubî, *Al-Câmi' li Ahkâmî'l-Kur'ân ve'l-Mubeyyin limâ Tedamma-nahu mine's-Sünneti ve Âyi'l-Furkân*, annotated by Abdullah b. Abdulmuhsin At-Turki, (Beyrût: Muesestu'r-Risâle, 1427/2006), VI/25-26; Muhammed Tâhir İbn Âşûr, *At-Tahrîr ve't-Tenvîr* (Tûnus: Ad-dâru't-Tûnusiyye İ'n-neşr, 1984), IV/224.

125 See: Al-Gazali, *Nazarât fî Kitâbillâh*, I/182-183, 282.

126 See: Keriman Hamza, *Al-Lu'lu ve'l-Mercan fî Tefsîrî'l-Kur'ân* (np.: Mektebetu'ş-Şuruk, 2010), I/115-116, 177-179, II/272.

127 Çekmeçil, *Okuyucu Tefsiri*, I/463; II/349-356.

128 See: Kılıç, "Kadın, Erkeğin Kaburga Kemiğine İndirgenecek İkincil Bir Fenomen Değildir," 7-11; Kadriye Durmuşoğlu & Abdurrahman Kurt, "Üç Kur'an Yorumunda Kadının Ötekiliği," *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. 17, issue: 2 (2008), 625-644; Mustafa Öztürk, "Klasik Tefsir Kaynaklarında Kadın İmgesi," *Türkiye V. Dini Yayınlar Kongresi Kadın Konulu Dini Yayınlar*, 02-04 Aralık 2011, (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı), 45-87; Safiye Gürlevik, *Mekki Surelerde Kadın (Razi Tefsiri Örneği)*, (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü: 2006), 35-48; Mehmet Hayri Kırbaçoğlu, "Kadın Konusunda Kur'an'a Yöneltilen Başlıca Eleştiriler," *İslami Araştırmalar*, vol. 5, issue: 4 (Ekim 1991), 271-283; İlhami Güler, "Kur'an'da Kadın-Erkek Eşitliğinin Temelleri," *İslami Araştırmalar*, vol. 5, issue: 4 (Ekim 1991), 310-319.

129 See: Amine Vedûd-Muhsin, *Kur'an ve Kadın*, translated by Nazife Şişman, (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2000), 104-116. Also see: "Interview with Amina Wadud," <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/muslims/interviews/wadud.html> (last visited: April 22, 2005); Alev Alatlı, "İmam Amina Hanım'dan Papa XVI. Benedictus'a İhtihat ve Feminizm (I)," *Zaman Gazetesi*, <http://www.zaman.com.tr/?bl=yorumlar&alt=&trh=20050422&hn=166011> (last visited: April 22, 2005).

130 See: Kılıç, "Kadın, Erkeğin Kaburga Kemiğine İndirgenecek İkincil Bir Fenomen Değildir," 4-7, 11-20.

Putting all these pieces of information together, one can contend that, in the upcoming years and decades, there will be more and more female scholars in the whole Muslim world specializing in Quranic Studies and Quranic exegesis.

From amongst the above-mentioned female scholars of Quranic exegesis, one is Indian, one is Iranian, two are Turkish, one is German and the rest are Arabs. And four of those Arab scholars are from Egypt, two are from Saudi Arabia, one is from Palestine, one is from Syria, and one is from Qatar.

As for the language in which female scholars of Quranic exegesis wrote their books, two of them are Persian, another two of them are Turkish, one is German and the rest are Arabic. While only one of those works is in manuscript form, the rest are published. The most voluminous one of them is that of Nâile Hâşim Sabrî with the title *Al-Mubassir li Nûri'l-Kur'ân*, which was published in 16 volumes. Next to that comes the work of Nusret Begüm Emin (d. 1403/1983) with the title *Mahzenu'l-Irfân der Tefsir-i Kur'ân*, which was published in 15 volumes. We should also mention in passing that we were unable to find out the number of the volumes of the work called *Ziybu't-Tefâsir*, which belongs to Ziyb An-Nisâ Begüm Al-Hindiyye (d. 1113/1702). However, one can contend that it was supposed to be voluminous since it was mostly associated with the *tafsir* of Ar-Razi. And it seems that the work of Semra Kürün Çekmegil, the 8 volumes of which were already published, and that of Necla Yasdıman, the 6 volumes of which were already published, will be quite voluminous as well in their final forms.

In conclusion, one can easily say that, in the following years and decades, there will be dramatic increase in the number of the works of female scholars concerning Quranic exegesis.

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