Rebhan, Helga and Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (München). 2010. *Die Wunder der Schöpfung – Handschriften der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek aus dem islamischen Kulturkreis*; *The Wonders of Creation: Manuscripts of the Bavarian State Library from the Islamic world*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. 239 pp. Illustrated. ISBN 978-3-447-6197-1.

The Bavarian State Library has prepared a lavishly illustrated exhibition catalogue for their exhibition *Die Wunder der Schöpfung* in December 2010. The exhibition formed a part of events titled “Changing Views” commemorating the one-hundredth anniversary of the exhibition *Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst* that had displayed more than 3500 objects of Islamic origin. The famous 1910 exhibition focused on scholarly approaches to Islamic art turning away from exotism. The library exhibited 262 Oriental manuscripts and a particular interest was shown on the paleographic aspects of the texts. The anniversary exhibition in December 2010, displayed some of the same manuscripts that formed a part of the earlier exhibition (numbers 1-43 in the catalogue) but, in addition, it presented thirty-seven manuscripts acquired since 1910. According to the organizers, the intention of the exhibition is to combine the study of book art and literature with provenience and other historical information (Vorwort, page 12).

The catalogue presents the exhibited manuscripts by providing sparse codicological information as a list below the entry title: place of origin, date, material, number of folia, size, language, illumination, binding, provenience and the library signum. Further information is given in the descriptive texts introducing the manuscripts. The introductions are written on one page in two columns, one column in German and the other in English. The page facing the introduction displays a sample page of the manuscript or the binding. Some of the manuscripts are represented by more than one illustration. The introductory texts provide some information on the subject matter, author and period of manuscript and give some details on its provenance. In addition, the illuminations are described in more detail and in some cases also the binding receives further attention. The descriptive texts function well in contextualizing the contents or the illuminations by placing them in the literary history of the texts and in the developments of the book art. The amount of specialist

terminology is not overwhelming and a useful glossary is provided as an appendix.

There are a few points of comment, though. Even though most of the descriptions in the texts correspond well to the pictures provided, there are some discrepancies. For example, on page 136, the text describing item 45 *Ilkhanite Koran* informs that the manuscript “illustrates the preference for the gold-blue color combination” with blue headings and blue vowel marks. Unfortunately the picture chosen to illustrate the manuscript does not display this combination of colors. Similarly, on page 30, the text describes the ornamental opening double page, but the picture only shows one page. The descriptive texts themselves are lucid, the German text being the original and the English one the translation. The translations are generally accurate but some errors have crept in. On page 211, Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq is in the German text characterized as “Polyglott” but instead of using the English equivalent “polyglot” the translator has chosen to translate “language scholar.” Ḥunayn was a medical scholar and polyglot translator but not a language scholar. On page 133, the last paragraph in the English translation has not been properly edited and remains somewhat garbled.

The texts provide some information on the developments and various schools of book art and illuminations. The descriptive texts are kept short and thus do not allow any detailed discussions. However, they do provide the reader with some basic facts on the various schools and periods. Among the art history comments there is one that strikes an odd note. On pages 71–73, the a 18th century copy of al-Qazwīnī’s *‘Ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt* (item 17) is presented showing illustrations in a naïvist style and bold colors. Unfortunately, the catalogue text does not express appreciation of the style on its own right but, instead, condemns it as an example of “a remarkable artistic decline in Arab painting.”

It can be concluded that the catalogue *Die Wunder der Schöpfung* is here produced as a coffee table book with a large number of well executed color illustrations. It functions well independent of the exhibition and allows especially a lay reader a short introduction to the Islamic book art with examples from not only the more familiar Middle East and Iran but also from China and Java.

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