

initial suspicions about intentions. At times horses were given to European merchants and diplomats as gifts, but riding a horse in parts of Mocha was problematic for resident Europeans. There are reports of coffee and tobacco being given to visiting merchants, but apparently no references to *qāt* (*Catha edulis*), which was widely chewed in the highlands by the eighteenth century. It is clear that alcoholic beverages (arrack, beer, wine, brandy, and other spirits) were not only drunk by the resident European merchants but also frequently requested by high-ranking Yemen officials in the port (p. 116).

Chapter two provides an analysis of the tribute and gifts involved in securing and maintaining trade with Yemen, especially for coffee, which came almost exclusively from Yemen before 1730. Um argues that European traders were careful observers of local attitudes toward tribute and gift-giving, even if they grumbled about it in their records. Her discussion of “ordinary commercial gifts” is important since merchants were often the representatives of governments capable of negotiating trade agreements. It is necessary to piece together casual comments made in the records since these were not recorded as regular economic transactions. In 1717, for example, the Dutch provided the governor of Mocha with an array of spices, textiles, various oils, and a musket (p. 62). Lower-ranking officials also received similar gifts, though of lesser quantity. European merchants were also expected to provide gifts to the Zaydi imam. There are several examples of foreign ship surgeons attending the medical needs of the imams. Um reports that Dutch and English gifts in Yemen were modest, not including rarities given to more prestigious Indian Ocean rulers (p. 77). Most appreciated in Yemen were gifts that could be displayed at ceremonial occasions, including colored textiles for clothing and banners.

The third chapter expands the analysis to merchants coming from India, including the early eighteenth-century Gujarati Mullā Muḥammad ‘Alī, who appears to have provided gifts to the Zaydi imams on a yearly basis. Eager to obtain Yemeni coffee, the Ottomans also offered gifts to the imam. The imam and his officials reciprocated to merchant offerings in a number of ways, especially with the gifts of a robe of honor (*khil‘a*) (pp. 94–98) and horses (pp. 98–101). Given the scarcity of data on gift-giving of Indian merchants, much of the information in this chapter is based on accounts kept by the Dutch and English. The fourth chapter provides details on what Um refers to as “everyday objects and tools of the trade,” many being described in inventories of the local factories in Mocha. One of the primary needs was for food and drink, especially imported alcoholic beverages for the resident Europeans. Perishable foods could be obtained locally, but spices, sugar, and rice were imported from India. Olive and coconut oil would come from the Dutch plantations in Batavia. Medical supplies, writing utensils, and some Western furniture items were imported as well.

The conclusion relates the study on Mocha to the broader Indian Ocean network at the time. Um argues that the economic historian needs to think beyond the material aspects of commerce and “read company sources with an eye to social engagements” (p. 148). It is only in the conclusion that we encounter an Arabic source, from a Yemeni biography about the 1737 French bombing of Mocha (p. 142). Although Um does a thorough job with the European sources, a failing of the book is the lack of study of Arabic sources, which are admittedly limited. For example, the seventeenth-century *Ta’rikh al-Yaman* (Beirut, 1985) of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alī al-Wazīr has several passages about events in Mocha with Europeans. Hopefully this excellent study will stimulate a search for manuscripts and archival material that provide local Yemeni perspectives on the Mocha trade.

DANIEL M. VARISCO
AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR YEMENI STUDIES

The Qur’an: A Historical-Critical Introduction. By NICOLAI SINAI. The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys. Edinburgh: EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2017. Pp. viii + 242. £90 (cloth); £24.99 (paper).

After a century of slow progress, Western scholarly research into the Quran has accelerated rapidly in recent decades. The Quran is a difficult book to engage with. Not an easy read, its origins are shrouded by a range of challenging and at times seemingly intractable questions about its authorship, its histori-

cal context, the influences upon it, and its original meaning. Almost every important question about the origin and original purpose of the Quran has been disputed vigorously, with the result that the field of Quran Studies today is in a state of flux with little consensus about even the most basic questions.

With his introduction under review here, Nicolai Sinai has done specialists and nonspecialists alike a great favor by producing what is the best available guide to the historical-critical study of the Quran, supplemented at many points by his own recent research findings. In a thorough and admirably even-handed way, Sinai introduces his readers to a wide range of scholarship, equipping them to make up their own minds about the Quran or to take their own investigations further.

Sinai's book is admirable for its comprehensiveness, clarity, and conciseness. Its stated aim is to "induct readers into the current state of the historical-critical study of the Qur'an, understood as the discipline tasked with elucidating the Qur'an's content and literary organisation and with reconstructing how the texts compiled in the Qur'an are likely to have been understood by their original addressees" (p. 1). It is historical in that it treats the Quran as a text whose origin and transmission were subject to natural processes that apply to texts in any time or place. It is critical in that, setting aside dogmatic presuppositions about the text's religious significance and its subsequent reception and treatment in the centuries after its original appearance, it explores what conclusions can be drawn from the text itself, read in the light of contemporaneous historical evidence. At several points throughout his exposition, Sinai notes that it is standard practice to apply similar principles to the historical-critical study of the Bible.

The book is divided into three parts, each comprising two or three chapters. In the first part, the first chapter introduces the reader to basic features of the Quran, including its poetic structure; its principal actors, Allāh and his messenger; its marked self-referentiality; the organization of its suras; its orthography; and its textual variations. The second chapter reviews the traditional Islamic understanding of the Quran's origin. This takes the life of Muḥammad, based on hadith and biographical (*sīra*) sources, as the context for interpreting the quranic text. Sinai offers some reasons for skepticism about the traditional account. He compares it with evidence from seventh-century non-Islamic sources, noting that the two are not always entirely aligned. However, he observes that the comparative lack of biographical information about Muḥammad in the Quran and the allusive character of the available biographical material could point to the conclusion "that the scriptural passages in question are best placed in the midst of these events" (p. 51), so that the Quran could not have been a post-hoc creation after Muḥammad's death.

The first part concludes with a chapter on the quranic milieu. Sinai notes inconsistencies between the text of the Quran and its reported context, including compelling arguments presented by Patricia Crone that the agrarian environment of the quranic community, as described in the Meccan suras, is inconsistent with a Meccan location. The Southern Levant would fit much better. Although Sinai regards the "conventional placement of the genesis of the Qur'an in today's Mecca and Medina" as "by no means beyond reasonable doubt" (p. 59), he finds it implausible that Islamic historical memory could have "completely obliterated" (p. 60) an alternative original location. Furthermore, Sinai argues that references to pagan sacrifices in the Quran point to a location in the Arabian desert, on the grounds that Byzantine oversight would have suppressed such pagan practices in the Levant. A strength that this chapter shares with the rest of the book is that Sinai has the gift of allowing a question to remain open, even when advocating for a preferred solution.

The second part, on methodology, provides an overview of the considerable interpretative challenges presented by the quranic text. The first chapter in this part explores the complex question of whether the suras of the Quran are coherent or just compilations of disconnected parts. Sinai overviews the important contributions of recent research, including that by Angelika Neuwirth, to present the case for the coherence of individual suras, offering valuable case studies of the internal structure of some of them.

The following chapter explores the crucial issue of the Quran's internal chronology. Sinai discusses the significance of gradually increasing verse length throughout the Quran's composition and surveys the stylistic and theological markers of the "Meccan-Medinan divide," which separates the suras into two groups, one earlier (Meccan) and one later (Medinan). Despite some "Meccan-Medinan hybridity" (p. 127)—the phenomenon of some suras showing mixed Meccan and Medinan characteristics—Sinai presents compelling text-internal reasons to support two important conclusions, namely, that "the Qur'anic texts can be read as a linear sequence of consecutive proclamations" and that "the traditional distinction between a Meccan and Medinan stage of the Qur'anic proclamations is tenable" (p. 130).

One of the long-standing issues in Quran Studies is what to make of the many biblical and post-biblical Jewish and Christian textual allusions. A whole chapter is devoted to this topic. Sinai argues that the biblical influence was mediated by an oral context, which, however, did not involve any significant direct engagement with biblical texts (pp. 141–42). An insightful feature of Sinai's analysis is his observation that, while making use of extensive Jewish and Christian influences, the Quran tends to adapt them to its own "overarching theological concerns" (p. 147), in which earlier materials are "reworked in a selective and discriminating manner" (p. 150).

The climax of Sinai's whole presentation is the final part in which he explores the Quran's evolving theological emphases, first within the Meccan suras and then within the Medinan suras. These two chapters together form perhaps the best available introduction to the theology of the Quran. Sinai begins by describing the theology of the early Meccan eschatological proclamations, including the role of "signs," both historical and cosmic, as pointers to the proclamation. He then traces the polemical tensions that emerge in the later Meccan suras. Sinai's account of the theological transition from Mecca to Medina draws on seminal work by David Marshal and Walid Saleh. An apparent delay of divine punishment, of which there had been many prophetic warnings, causes stress to Muḥammad and his community in late Meccan suras; it is finally resolved in the Medinan suras through believers' violence against disbelievers. Sinai finds convincing precedents for the emergence of the Quran's "militant piety" (p. 195) in contemporary militant expressions of Christianity. The complicated relationship between the quranic community and Jewish believers, including the elaboration of the Quran's legal stipulations, is given particular attention in the final chapter, which concludes with a description of the emergence of Muḥammad as the "prophet of God," whose status has, by the end of the quranic recitations, acquired "unique salvific importance" (p. 209).

Sinai's introduction to the current state of historical-critical research into the Quran is a tour de force that amply achieves its stated goal of equipping readers with the tools to engage with the Muslim scripture. Not only will this historical-critical introduction help graduate students—and professors as well—to find their way around what is a complicated and highly contested field, it will also shape the field by laying out a comprehensive research agenda for the future.

MARK DURIE
MELBOURNE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Traditional Yemeni Scholarship amidst Political Turmoil and War: Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl b. al-Muḥahhar al-Manṣūr (1915–2016) and His Personal Library. By SABINE SCHMIDTKE. Series Islamo-Arabica, vol. 1. Cordoba: CORDOBA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2018. Pp. 213 + 87 (Ar.), illus. €40.

Interest in Zaydi texts has been evident for over a century, starting with Rudolf Strohmann's "Die Literatur der Zaiditen" (*Der Islam* 1 [1910]: 354–68; 2 [1911]: 49–78) and Cornelius van Arendonk's *De opkomst van het zaidietische imamaat in Yemen* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1919). One of the major scholars analyzing Zaydi Islam today is Wilferd Madelung, especially in *Der Imam al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm und die Glaubenslehre der Zaiditen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1965). Nevertheless, the one-thousand-year history of the Zaydi sect in Yemen has received relatively little attention by most scholars of Islamic law and theology, despite an abundance of published texts and extant manuscripts. Of the latter, it is estimated that there are between 40,000 to 100,000 in Yemen (with another 10,000 in European libraries), many in mosque libraries, most notably the Great Mosque in Sanaa, but also major private collections. One of the Yemeni private collections of manuscripts is the personal library of Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Manṣūr, who died in 2016. This manuscript library is now documented and analyzed by Sabine Schmidtke, with eighty-seven color plates of manuscript pages. There is an extensive bibliography (pp. 147–69) and indices of authors, book titles, and placenames. This volume is a welcome addition to a growing interest in Zaydi Islam by historians and anthropologists.

Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Manṣūr was a Yemeni *sayyid* who lived to the rare age of 101. His genealogy included the renowned Zaydi imam al-Manṣūr bi-llāh al-Qāsim (d. 1029/1620), who founded