quite engaging. The author shows how these two sūrahs cohere and what are the main contextual relationships between the various themes in them. In this the author offers a detailed study of the two sūrahs of a kind that has not been undertaken before.

New studies on the Qur’ān using new methods is a very encouraging sign of the now growing field of Qur’ānic studies. This is a very useful study and it advances our understanding of the composition of the Qur’ān in very significant ways. It is to be hoped that more detailed studies of the Qur’ān will be carried out in this manner.

Walid Saleh


Movements of revival and reform are an important part of the histories of Muslim societies. Distinctive movements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were complex expressions of major developments of that era and also provide significant foundations for contemporary developments in the Muslim world. Understanding these historical and contemporary movements requires analyses based on in-depth knowledge of what the individuals and groups actually thought rather than simply viewing such movements of renewal with perspectives shaped by contemporary polemics about Muslim activism. Bernard Haykel provides this type of study of the important transitions in Yemen associated with the thought and career of Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Shawkānī (d. 1250/1834).

Haykel’s study of al-Shawkānī, “a towering figure in both Yemeni Islam and modern Islamic reformist thought” (p. 1), “aims at providing a detailed analysis of a specific project initiated by a reformist scholar” (p. 2). This book is an intellectual biography embedded in the history of the Zaydī imamate of Yemen, showing al-Shawkānī’s place in two fundamental socio-political transformations: the transformation of the imamate itself from a “charismatic style into dynastic and patrimonial modes of domination” (pp. 2-3) and the simultaneous rise of “scholars who subscribed to Sunni Traditionist ideas, men
who abandoned the inherited teachings of the Zaydi-Hadawi school of law (madhhab) upon which the imamate in Yemen was founded” (p. 3). The tension between the Traditionists and those from the Zaydi-Hadawi school is the major theme in Haykel’s narrative, as he analyzes the life of al-Shawkānī and the history of Yemen in the past four centuries.

After a useful introduction to the histories of Zaydism and Yemen, Haykel presents a detailed account of the rise of the Qāsimī imāms during the seventeenth century CE. At the peak of their power in the middle of that century they fulfilled the classical Zaydī ideal for imāms, being both learned scholars and effective warriors. However, in Haykel’s analysis, the “eighteenth century imāms no longer fulfilled the requirements of leadership and scholarship prescribed by the original Zaydī doctrine” (p. 47) and the imamate-state “acquired many of the institutions of other Middle Eastern and Islamic states of the time” (p. 48). A key element in this transition is the emergence of scholars who emphasized the importance of the Sunnah understood in ways fundamentally similar to Sunnī scholarship. This position, called “Sunnī Traditionist” by Haykel, became a major legitimizing support for the new style of imamate and the Traditionist ‘ulamā’ “behaved in a more traditionally ‘Sunnī’ manner” and they “legitimized the rule of the imams” (p. 70).

Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Shawkānī was the key figure in the intellectual transformation of the religio-legal foundations of the imamate and Zaydism in Yemen. Haykel concludes that his “importance lies in that he represents the culmination of the Traditionist enterprise in Yemen, or what Michael Cook has labelled ‘the Sunnisation of Zaydism.’” (p. 231) In chapter three, Haykel presents al-Shawkānī’s main ideas, with the core being an emphasis on ijtihād, and “his scholarly attention was directed at the canonical Ḥadīth collections and Ḥadīth sciences, which he considered the most authoritative” (p. 86). Haykel concludes that at “the core of his teachings lay a set of simple and elegant ideas: ijtihād is not only possible for latter-day Muslims, it is mandated by God; “jurists with the requisite and attainable training must interface directly with the primary sources of revelation” and Muslim weakness, resulting from “erroneous beliefs and practices,” could be reformed effectively through “his interpretive methodology” (p. 234). Chapter four covers al-Shawkānī’s role in transforming the Yemeni political structure.

Chapters five and six provide in-depth analyses of the debates between the Traditionist scholars and their Zaydī opponents. In these debates, a major issue was the judgment on cursing the Companions of the Prophet: “The question of whether one could or should curse certain Companions became a symbol of all that differentiated one group from the other” (p. 164). The key related issue was whether one could accept the Sunnī canonical Ḥadīth
collections as authoritative. Chapter six provides a detailed examination of the responses to al-Shawkānī’s major work on this subject, showing how they were embedded within the political conflicts of the time.

In the final chapter and the conclusion, Haykel provides a very important discussion of the long-term impact of al-Shawkānī and the Traditionist heritage. As a part of this analysis, Haykel examines the works of Yemeni historians as they reshaped the image of al-Shawkānī in terms of changing twentieth-century Yemeni political realities. Following the revolution of 1962, al-Shawkānī is presented as a republican style hero and the characterization of al-Shawkānī and his Traditionist colleagues “as courageous opponents of imams and Zaydism has pervaded modern Yemeni political rhetoric” (p. 220). The longstanding debates between Traditionists and old style Zaydism continue to shape contemporary political and religious ideology in Yemen.

Haykel emphasizes the importance of viewing al-Shawkānī’s life and work in “fine detail... within his local context and intellectual tradition” (p. 232). In describing this volume, he states that it “is this book’s premise that this is the proper backdrop for understanding any given reformer, and only with this established can one venture to make broader comparisons and intellectual taxonomies” (p. 232). However, he also adds briefly in his conclusion, that this “is not to say that he was not influenced by outsiders, a fact that would be impossible in the eighteenth century given the quantity of written sources and outside contacts available to him” (p. 232). This short observation is a reminder that one of the risks of concentrating on the “fine detail” of the reformer’s local context is the risk of an exceptionalism that essentializes the Yemeni-Zaydi experience.

Contextualization is a very important part of analyses of this sort but purely localistic contextualiation is “impossible in the eighteenth century,” given the availability of written sources and the density of the networks of contact among scholars in the broader Islamic community of that era. Just as it is impossible to make comparisons without giving attention to the specific local conditions that produced reformers in the eighteenth century, it is also important to give attention to the broader dimensions of the contexts within which these reformers lived and worked. The context of al-Shawkānī and the other reformist scholars of his era is both local and the broader world of Muslim scholars. Haykel assumes that examination of the reformers in this broader context leads to treating them “as constituents of an undifferentiated phenomenon” (p. 232) or “as a homogeneous group” (p. 233). However, to say that networks of scholars influenced the discourses of reform in the eighteenth century is not the same thing as saying that there were no important doctrinal and conceptual differences. It is only to affirm that the discourses of the
scholars in these networks were influenced by their contacts with teachers and colleagues from other parts of the Islamic world.

Haykel’s thorough analysis of Sunnī Traditionism in Yemen is a model study in its comprehensive utilization of local sources and the in-depth understanding of the debates of the era of al-Shawkānī and the continuing importance of the issues raised in those debates. Haykel makes a very important contribution to understanding movements of revival and reform in Islam both as they developed in the eighteenth century and as they continue to develop at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

John O. Voll


This edited volume consists of twenty-nine articles spread over 862 pages under four general headings: Mesopotamia (pp. 3–125); Classical and Medieval Europe (pp. 127–236); India and Iran (pp. 265–605); and Islam (pp. 607–862). It was published as “an expression of respect and gratitude” (xi) to David Pingree (1933–2005) by his students and colleagues at the Department of the History of Mathematics at Brown University and elsewhere a year before his death on November 11, 2005 and contains the most up-to-date bibliography (pp. 863–881) of that prolific scholar whose life was devoted to research and study.

Born on January 2, 1933 in New Haven, Connecticut, Pingree attended Phillips Academy, Andover, “where he was drawn to what became his lifelong study of Sanskrit texts through references to them in the works of New England transcendentalists such as Thoreau.”¹ His life is a series of academic achievements at some of the most prestigious institutions in the United States. The two most important influences on his academic life were those of Otto Neugebauer, the founder of Brown University’s Department of the History of