

unnamed photographer, dating from 1905, with 64 images of the imperial sites of Istanbul. The early 1890s had seen the renovation of these sites, as Abdülhamid impressed on the public mind the achievements of his forebears and his own unbreakable link to a glorious past.

The images in the album relating to Yıldız document the end stages of its transformation from garden retreat to the heart of the empire's administration. Hedges, walls and fences are often seen in the photographs, and Türker suggests they symbolize the status and virtue inherent in social order, and act as metaphors for the boundary between man-made and natural terrain, between civilization and rusticity.

By contrast with the mood of restfulness pervading much nature photography, the album induces the feeling of the effort of movement between the sites depicted – including those where Abdülhamid stayed in his early years. As Türker writes: “Almost every image in the album is framed to elicit a jolt in the armchair traveller”. She detects an appeal to female sensibility, and opines: “This entire album could be assessed as a depiction of one of the Friday-afternoon outings of the Sultan's harem ...”. Türker proposes that the architecture embodied in its images is closely tied to Abdülhamid's biography and to his own particular connection to his surroundings.

The contribution of Türker's book to landscape history generally, as well as to our understanding of the changing face of Istanbul, is immeasurable. She explores to effect the interplay between the personal taste of the sultans of the Ottoman nineteenth century and their imperial and political vision, humanizing them, and giving the royal women, and their gardeners, who all stamped their mark on Yıldız, their place as historical actors. Abdülhamid II has fared better of late in the public mind: here he is revealed as being as innovative as many another landowner seeking to transform his built and natural environment. The Ottoman idiom was specific, but cultural trends were international, and those at the apex of society, here as elsewhere, were receptive to the zeitgeist, and indulged their whims in creative and enriching ways.

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Mun'im A. Sirry: *The Qur'an with Cross-References*

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Reference works on the Quran have proliferated recently, a reflection of the seriousness with which academia views the field of Quranic studies. These reference works are invariably produced by single authors, but it is not clear what merit many of them have when they are produced hastily and claim universal coverage of the Quran. They run the danger of being either premature (such works are usually the culmination of a life of engagement with a particular text), or worse redundant since they do not improve on older reference works. We are at an interesting moment in Quranic studies when individual scholars are trying to replicate reference works produced for the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, reference works that are the result of collaborative work by a multitude of scholars.



There are neither the resources nor the quantity of scholars in Quranic studies to publish something like the *Anchor Bible Commentary*. We are yet to see in Quranic studies anything like the guides produced for the books of the New Testament (e.g. the T & T Clark series). Nevertheless, the lacuna in reference works on the Quran is not a manufactured problem, and the effort of these individual scholars is to be commended.

Mun'im Sirry's book promises to emulate works on the Bible guided by internal Islamic hermeneutical developments in the twentieth century. It is the result of ten years of meticulous toil, and adds a new tool for the those interested in the Quran, presenting both Arabic and English text. Each verse is first cited in Arabic with, below, an English translation. At the right margin there are references to other verses. The author states that the Quran has, "to date, never been cross-referenced" (p. 1). In a footnote Sirry refers to the tradition of cross-referencing the Bible since early modern times. This is indeed the first printed Arabic Quran with verse-by-verse English translation and cross-references. The "User's guide" explains the methodology behind the author's work. He states that "for almost every verse in the Qur'an, a selection of other passages which shed light upon, clarify, or explain the verse at hand" will be supplied (p. 35). This is perhaps the first drawback: it does not offer universal coverage of all the verses of the Quran (see pp. 134, 250, 251, 253, 256, 257, 314, 315, 316, 404, 412, 453, 666 as random examples of verses with no cross-references). Indeed, many verses and some Suras especially at the end of the Quran are not referenced, and we are not told why. The author adds that these cross-references are "based on connections in meaning between words, phrases, themes, concepts, narratives, and characters" (p. 35). The work "is not accompanied by any explanation or justifications" since, the author states, "the connection between a verse and its references is clear enough that the reader should [be] able to understand the rationale behind each cross-reference on close examination" (*ibid.*). Sirry leaves open the possibility that verses with no cross-reference have no echo in the Quran, which is clearly not something he would suggest. The criteria used to include or exclude a reference are, according to Sirry, "(1) similarities in message, (2) topically related passages, (3) allusions to the same narratives, events and characters, and (4) parallelism in phrasing" (*ibid.*).

Sirry states that this "is ultimately an interpretive work" (p. 36). He argues that cross-referencing involves "personal reasoning which is the basic feature of any commentary" (*ibid.*). This statement is the clearest indication that the work is a commentary and not a mere cross-referencing. The implication is that by comparing verses to each other, one is carrying out an explanatory exercise, even if unelaborated. Finally, the compiler invites the reader to replicate the same process that he carried out in his selections. Since this is selection based on "interpretive reasoning" the reader should play an active role in making connections.

In his introduction, Sirry offers one of the best surveys of the notion of interpreting the Quran through the Quran, and to the commentary literature on the Quran (*al-Tafsīr al-mawḍūʿī*, topical interpretation) in the modern era. This introduction to the development of these two kinds of Muslim Quran commentary remains the most important contribution of this work. The introduction examines debates about the Quran in the Muslim world in the twentieth century. Sirry sees his work as both a continuation of and an improvement on these works. That he uses "interpretive reasoning" as a mode of approaching the Quran – a term reminiscent of legal reasoning (akin to *qiyas*), and as such an internal Islamic term – leaves little doubt that we are dealing with a work directed mainly to a Muslim audience. Moreover, by placing its genealogy in the development of debates in the Muslim world, Sirry is firmly placing his work as a continuation of these debates. Cross-referencing is now placed as one of the most important means to

understand the Quran. Sirry sees his work as a new methodological tool in the development of understanding of the Quran in the Muslim world.

The work is, despite appearing at first to be a regular reference tool, exegetical, and it is thus that it acquires its value. Cross-referencing is not lacking in Quranic studies: we have had such tools for a long while. But it brings a cross-referencing method to the Islamic tradition, and should be seen as the continuation of the trend of universalizing the Quran through English-language tools. The author offers no rationale as to why the work comes with an English translation, or if it is in English, why it comes with Arabic parallel texts. The supposedly self-evident bilingual nature of the book is, to me, an indication of the degree to which English has become an Islamicate language. This is a work that reflects the new centres of Muslim studies on the Quran. The Muslim diaspora includes pioneering scholars making advances in the interpretation of the Quran and becoming universally influential. The medium of this influence is the English language, and it is through English that these tools are becoming pan-Islamic.

Sirry places a German reference work, *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz* by Rudi Paret (1971), in his list of books authored by Muslims that have offered an interpretation of the Quran by the Quran (pp. 20–21). It is not clear why such a reference work is equated with commentarial Muslim works. There is clearly a major confusion regarding the purpose of Sirry's current work: Sirry wants his work to be both an interpretive Islamic work, and an academic reference tool, but this is not a reference work in the usual sense if by that we mean a work we use in academic study of the Quran. It does not replace the work of Rudi Paret and, since not every verse is cross-referenced, it cannot be consistently used. Paret's remains the key reference work in the field, and until Angelika Neuwirth's commentary is completed, it will remain so – for better or for worse.

Take for example the coverage of Sura 68 in Sirry's work. He has cross-referencing for 15 verses out of 52. So sparsely is this Sura cross-referenced that it could not possibly be used to analyse this Sura. A cursory look at Paret's work on this Sura (*Der Koran*, pp. 484–6) makes clear that we have two radically different understandings of cross-referencing and how it can be used to facilitate a deeper understanding of the Quran. This Sura happens to be one of those covered by Angelika Neuwirth in her new commentary, yet this new source was clearly not consulted (see *The Qur'an: Text and Commentary, Volume 1, Early Meccan Suras: Poetic Prophecy*, tr. Samuel Wilder, Yale University Press, 2022, pp. 349–62; the German original came out in 2011). Since Sirry refuses to tell us which of the works he consulted were actually used we are left with the conclusion that this was an exercise of personal reasoning that joins other commentarial works. As long as we understand the function of Sirry's work then its value becomes more universal. This work is part of a wider global Muslim debate as to how to understand the Quran, and cross-referencing, a step towards a historical-critical reading of the Quran, is given the primary position as a hermeneutical tool. Sirry is stating that *tafsīr* has to be conducted through this method, and that this method is so self-evident that it does not need belabouring. The Quran is thus a decipherable text that stands above the tradition, a move that is becoming more prevalent in the Islamic world.

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