Brief Reviews

The Emergence of Early Sufi Piety and Sunnī Scholasticism: ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak and the Formation of Sunnī Identity in the Second Islamic Century. By FERYAL SALEM. Islamic History and Civilization, vol. 125. Leiden: BRILL, 2016. Pp. vii + 165. $120, €93.

This brief monograph is a study of the life and works of ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181/797), a hadith scholar and compiler of two well-known hadith-based works, *Kitāb al-jihād* and *Kitāb al-zuhd*. Feryal Salem has set out to gather available biographical information about Ibn al-Mubārak, as well as describe the contents of his works, while arguing for the importance, centrality, and uniqueness of Ibn al-Mubārak for what she calls the "dynamics of the nascent Sunnī tradition" (p. 1).

Four chapters and a brief conclusion follow a short introduction. The first chapter reviews biographical sources and begins with the expected rehashing of debates regarding the sources for early Islamic history. Salem makes a point of gesturing toward a decidedly middle-of-the-road approach between total skepticism and absolute credulity.

In the second chapter, on Ibn al-Mubārak and hadith transmission, the book veers slightly toward the apologetic, an unnecessary turn given the very reasonable case Salem has set out for documenting the life and career of Ibn al-Mubārak in the preceding pages. It would also have been productive to see a slightly more nuanced discussion of what could constitute "Sunnism," which this chapter perhaps takes too much for granted as a known and fixed term.

Chapter three, on jihad, is an interesting explication of Ibn al-Mubārak's reputation as an eager participant in the guarding of the Islamic frontier, a practice he undertook regularly, or as regularly as he undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca (p. 83). Salem describes how Ibn al-Mubārak was known for generosity among his fellow fighters, and cites a few anecdotes to this effect.

The fourth and final chapter, on asceticism and Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-zuhd*, follows the same pattern as the previous chapter on his *Kitāb al-jihād*, both explicating the contents of that compilation and seeking to set the work in a broader genre.

Salem's book demonstrates that Ibn al-Mubārak was a well-known and apparently well-traveled hadith scholar whose compilations of hadith on asceticism and jihad were early examples of what would become important genres. Ibn al-Mubārak is an interesting figure in his own right, and as Salem explains in the clearest and most useful sections of this book, he had relationships and connections to other early luminaries, such as Maʿmar

b. Rāshid (d. 153/770), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/777), and Shuʿba ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 160/776), among others. The anecdotes constructed or preserved about him in various biographical sources describe him as a charismatic, colorful, and well-regarded figure. These reasons alone would have been enough to justify a monograph on his life, travels, and scholarship. Salem's underlying argument that Ibn al-Mubārak was a crucial progenitor of all the main features of a later, more consolidated (and rather essentialized) "Sunni Islam," however, is not argued as persuasively as it could be, perhaps for a lack of nuance in theorizing about the nature of sectarian consolidation itself. Finally, the paperback copy I received contains dropped or misattributed footnotes, run-on sentences (which are then nonsensical), and the occasional extra inserted word in quotes from secondary sources. I mention these only to signal that Brill, in making this work available online, may wish to address these issues in the online version, if possible.

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L'aramaico antico: Storia, grammatica, testi commentati. By FREDERICK MARIO FALES and GIULIA FRANCESCA GRASSI. Udine: FORUM, 2016. Pp. 315, illus. €35 (paper).

Despite the constant trickle of Old Aramaic inscriptions that have been discovered and subsequently published since the 1970s, the grammars by R. Degen from 1969 (*Altaramäische Grammatik*, Wiesbaden) and S. Segert from 1975 (*Altaramäische Grammatik*, Leipzig) are still the most recent descriptions of the language of the Old Aramaic corpus. Obviously, they do not cover all of the known texts. The book under review was surely written with this (somewhat miserable) *status quaestionis* in mind, even though it was not intended to fill the gap, for M. Fales and G. F. Grassi have provided us with a primer for Old Aramaic, not a full grammar.

Part one of the book comprises a historical overview of Old Aramaic (by Fales, pp. 13–40), a treatment of the essentials of orthography, phonology, and morphology (by Fales, pp. 41–52), and remarks on morphosyntax and syntax (by Grassi, pp. 53–61). As have others before them, notably Degen, Fales and Grassi distinguish the Old Aramaic of the (mainly) representational inscriptions from the ninth to seventh centuries BCE from the language of the later (administrative) texts

from the Neo-Assyrian empire, which are not the subject of the present book.

Old Aramaic was mainly in use in greater Syria, but the standard idiom apparently became a prestige language that was used outside its natural habitat (Bukan). Distinct dialects are attested on the eastern and western fringes (Tell Fekheriyye and Deir ʿAlla, respectively) as well as in Samʾal, in the northwest. A short characterization of the textual corpus, according to areas (mainly the city states of Syria and northern Mesopotamia, the find spots of the major inscriptions) and chronology, is provided by Fales (pp. 20–40). This is a valuable overview, which places many of the recently discovered texts in context.

Comments:

P. 14 n. 4: For an assessment of the language of the new Kutamuwa stele from Zincirli, see also G. W. Nebe, "Eine neue Inschrift aus Zincirli auf der Stele des Kutamuwa und die hebräische Sprachwissenschaft," in *Jüdische Studien als Disziplin*, ed. H. Heil and D. Krochmalnik, Heidelberg, 2010, 311–32.

P. 32 bullet 2 l. 8: For "Hadad-yiʿī" read "Hadad-yiṯʿī."

P. 36: The second combination of the Deir ʿAlla plaster inscription has been re-read by E. Blum, "Verstehst du dich auf die Schreibkunst …? Ein weisheitlicher Dialog über Vergänglichkeit und Verantwortung. Kombination II der Wandinschrift von Tell Deir ʿAlla," in *Was ist der Mensch, dass du seiner gedenkst? FS Bernd Janowski*, ed. M. Banks et al., Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2008, 33–53.

P. 38: On the question of the linguistic affiliation of Samʾalian, one is well advised to follow the pessimistic judgment of P. Noorlander, "Samʾalian in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: A Historical-Comparative Approach," *Orientalia* 81 (2012): 202–38.

The section on phonology incorporates the latest insights in the realization of the sibilants and the Old Aramaic cognate of Arabic /ḍ/ (p. 42 n. 87). Note the following quibbles in matters of morphology:

P. 44 (2.2.1): The "different" plural stem of *br* 'son' is, of course, a synchronic phenomenon. Both the singular and the plural /banīn/ developed from a stem **bn*.

P. 45 bottom: Why is the fem. pl. ending *-awwā + n* reconstructed with a geminated *w*?

P. 48 (2.2.2.2): The *n*-stem is better classified as middle, not passive, especially for early language varieties that also had internal Ablaut passives.

P. 49: In the section on suffixed pronouns, read "II p. f. sg. *-ky*" for "III p. f. pl. *-ky*" and "II p. m. pl. *-km*" for "III p. f. sg. *-ky*."

P. 50: The use of *nbš* 'soul' in Samʾalian for *npš* elsewhere is not necessarily diagnostic; a similar form is attested, e.g., in the Hebrew of the Arad ostraca.

P. 51: The fact that the definite article is not attested in the Tel Dan inscription could well be due to the shortness of the text. There are no nouns in the inscription

on which one would unequivocally have expected the article.

The morphosyntax and syntax section abounds in eclectic comparisons with the later Syriac and even Neo-Aramaic dialects. What is their benefit to the reader of a primer such as this? In addition, one might take issue with the following arguments:

P. 53: The definite article is not a North-West Semitic innovation, for it is unattested in Ugaritic and takes different forms in Aramaic and Canaanite, all offshoots of North-West Semitic.

P. 55 middle: The syntagma noun + *kl* with suffix (instead of *kl* + noun) is one of the few features that link the Old Aramaic from the east with Middle and Late Aramaic dialects of the same area; cf. C. Stadel, "Syntagmen mit nachgestelltem kl im Alt-, Reichs- und Mittelaramäisch," *JSS* 56 (2011): 37–70.

P. 56: On the construct and analytic genitive construction in Old Aramaic, see also R. J. Kuty, "La relation génitivale en vieil araméen (Xe–VIIe siècles av. J.-C.)," *ZDMG* 162 (2012): 265–97.

P. 59 top: The 1csg pronoun is spelled *ʾnk* in the Panamuwa inscription (as in Phoenician), not *ʾnky*.

Part two of the book consists of a presentation of the Old Aramaic inscriptions with commentary (by Fales and Grassi). This section, conveniently divided into the longer and well-known inscriptions (pp. 63–220), short inscriptions (pp. 221–43), and dubitable texts (pp. 244–53), makes up the lion's share of the book. It covers countless individual points, which we cannot review in detail in the limited space at our disposal. For each inscription, the authors offer bibliographical references and information on the archaeological context, a transliteration and translation, as well as a detailed line-by-line commentary that incorporates discussions of earlier studies. Thus they provide the reader with easy access to all the texts, similar to the second volume of KAI for the texts published until the 1970s. Notably, this is the first comprehensive annotated text edition for the major inscriptions discovered in the last fifty years (inter alia, Tell Fekheriyye, Bukan, Kutamuwa, and the gateway lions from Arslan Tash), and for all the short texts. Throughout, Fales and Grassi refer to recent studies of the inscriptions and hence their presentation is valuable even for those texts included in the outdated second volume of KAI. Occasionally, the paleographic discussions take new photographs into account (e.g., p. 108: reference to Inscriptifact).

For those unsatisfied with Aramaic in transliteration, an appendix on paleography is included (pp. 255–72), which traces the evolution of the letter forms over time. This is the work of E. Attardo, who also provided some of the drawings of the inscriptions that are given in eleven plates at the end of the book. These include reproductions of drawings from other publications as well. Regrettably, the drawings are often grainy and generally very small, and would thus be of little help