

## Brief Reviews

*The Emergence of Early Sufi Piety and Sunnī Scholasticism: ‘Abdallāh 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 ‘Abdallāh 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 Ma‘mar

b. Rāshid (d. 153/770), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/777), and Shu‘ba 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) “Sunnī 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 ‘Alla, respectively) as well as in Sam’al, 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-yi’i” read “Hadad-yi’i.”

*P. 36:* The second combination of the Deir ‘Alla 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 ‘Alla,” 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 Sam’alian, one is well advised to follow the pessimistic judgment of P. Noorlander, “Sam’alian 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 /d/ (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 /banin/ 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):* 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 Sam’alian 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 Mittellaramäisch,” *JSS* 56 (2011): 37–70.

*P. 56:* On the construct and analytic genitive construction in Old Aramaic, see also R. J. Kutay, “La relation génitive 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

in any serious study of the texts. The extensive bibliography (pp. 273–301) constitutes a welcome update, but is obviously not meant to be comprehensive (see the remarks *infra*).

In sum, Fales and Grassi have provided us with a valuable compilation of editions of the Old Aramaic texts, with commentaries that incorporate the results of recent research. The accompanying grammatical sketch and paleographic appendix, however, are somewhat patched-up, and it seems that they have not been directed to the same audience. Nonetheless, Fales and Grassi have succeeded in making the exciting Old Aramaic inscriptions more easily accessible. Anyone interested in this important corpus will keep their book close by on the shelf, for easy reference.

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*Patterns of Sin in the Hebrew Bible: Metaphor, Culture, and the Making of a Religious Concept.* By JOSEPH LAM. New York: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2016. Pp. xix + 308. \$74.

After all that has been written on the concept of sin in the Hebrew Bible, it is hard to come up with an approach that might yield truly new insights. Joseph Lam has chosen the angle of metaphors. He analyzes four root metaphors of sin in the Hebrew Bible: sin as burden, sin as an account, sin as path or direction, and sin as stain or impurity. The purpose of this language investigation is to illuminate the history of the emergence of sin as a religious and theological concept. The assumption, then, is that sin is not a timeless category but a historical notion that has been subject to change. There is one author in particular whose work has been a source of inspiration for Lam's own study. Throughout the book Lam recognizes his debt to Gary Anderson, whose *Sin: A History* (2009) has served as a model for the kind of contribution Lam was hoping to make. Anderson's study describes the shift from the concept of sin as burden or weight (as in the Hebrew Bible) to the idea of sin as debt (Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity). Unlike Anderson, Joseph Lam focuses almost entirely on the Hebrew Bible. Also, he aims for greater theoretical finesse. But ultimately, though, the goal of his study is to lay bare a crucial phase in the emergence of the concept of sin.

Gary Anderson's study of sin is compelling because it makes a simple point: sin used to be a burden, and developed into a debt. The shift reflects a transformation in the societies that gave rise to the metaphors. In rural societies where the exchange of goods follows the mode of barter, sin is a burden; in more developed societies where trade is based on monetary value, sin becomes

a debt. Anderson may have simplified matters—this is one of Lam's criticisms—but his thesis has the advantage of clarity. It tells a story in a nutshell. For Anderson to make his point, it is essential to have a clear time frame: the Hebrew Bible and after. By largely limiting his inquiry to the Hebrew Bible, Lam finds himself without a timeline. While earlier generations of scholars would confidently distinguish between pre- and postexilic books of the Bible, such historical assessments have become increasingly problematic. It is almost impossible to set a date for individual books of the Bible or parts thereof. As a result, Lam's study ends up looking at the phenomenon of metaphors for sin rather than their history. The four root metaphors he puts under scrutiny do not represent a chronological series but reflect complementary and contemporaneous aspects of the idea of sin encountered in the Hebrew Bible.

The strength of Lam's book comes to the fore in the finely attuned and meticulous manner in which he analyzes the semantic fields connected with the four root metaphors. This leads to insights and observations that go beyond linguistics. With respect to sin as a burden, Lam notes how the metaphor highlights the idea of sin as an object that bears people down and from which they cannot free themselves. The burden can only be lifted or carried away by another party—either human or divine. The metaphor of sin as an account is a “rhetorical strategy”—Lam borrows the term from Mark Smith—to throw into relief God's supremacy as well as the moral importance of memory. The metaphor of path or direction highlights the notion of habit in evil conduct. Finally, the metaphor of sin as stain or impurity represents “a direct and potent way of expressing disapproval of sin” (p. 205). The rhetorical power of the impurity metaphor takes the reality of sin beyond ethical reasoning; bloodstained hands provoke an immediate response of aversion. Metaphors, so Lam concludes, are good to think, adapting a famous phrase of Claude Lévi-Strauss. They flesh out an otherwise abstract notion and fill it with feeling.

Does Lam succeed in what he initially set out to do? It would be interesting to know his own thoughts on the matter. It seems that he drew inspiration from Anderson's diachronic study of sin metaphors and eventually found the material he was dealing with to be unsuited to a diachronic approach. So he had to switch strategies. The subtitle of the book promises a study of “the making of a religious concept,” but what Lam actually offers is a synchronic reading of four root metaphors of sin. The downside of putting those four “patterns of sin” side by side is the absence of progression in the book. Lam does not take his readers on a journey, from a point of departure to a destination, but on a sightseeing tour. He is an excellent guide, and there is much to learn from his observations. But the book is, in a way, without a real conclusion. The insight that “sin is not as simple as it might seem”—the quote is from the dustjacket—is