

(some only in manuscript), from a wide range of regions in the Islamic world. Nevertheless, it is clear that more precision and at times correction were needed. But, above all, and most unfortunately, the very title—especially the use of the technical expression “world of image,” which is only adduced in a limited way—and the actual structure of the work are open to question.

JULES JANSSENS
UNIVERSITY OF LEUVEN

Sibawayhi's Principles: Arabic Grammar and Law in Early Islamic Thought. By MICHAEL G. CARTER. Research in Arabic and Islamic Studies, vol. 5. Atlanta: LOCKWOOD, 2016. Pp. xi + 273. \$49.95 (paper).

Sibawayhi (d. 180/796) is arguably the real founder of Arabic grammar. He is considered to be the first to have laid the principal foundations of the theory of Arabic grammar and can be regarded as one of the most influential linguists of all time. Inspired by his two great teachers Yūnus and Khalīl, he has been credited with providing the basic analytical tools, technical terms, and theoretical framework for Arabic grammar. His book *al-Kitāb* is believed to be the oldest authentic book on Arabic grammar and his perception of the grammatical structure of Arabic is still shaping its theory and determining approaches to traditional Arabic linguistic studies. Despite the relatively great number of studies hitherto conducted on the emergence of Arabic grammar, however, it is still difficult to find a reliable and precise historical account of its formative stage.

The volume under review, Michael Carter's 1968 PhD thesis “Sibawayhi's Principles of Grammatical Analysis,” is a serious attempt to discuss the early history of Arabic grammar and the surrounding environment in which it evolved. In particular, it presents a thorough description and analysis of the historical and intellectual status of Sibawayhi and his role in the development of Arabic grammar independent of an alleged Greek influence. Throughout his work, Carter explicitly and implicitly invites researchers to do justice to Sibawayhi by correcting the misrepresentation of the *Kitāb* to which a number of previous studies have contributed a great deal.

It is not surprising, therefore, that one of Carter's aims here is to prove that the science of Arabic grammar was developed on its own. Basing his arguments on the similarity between the technical terms of law and those of grammar and on mutual contacts between Muslim jurists and grammarians, he insists that Arabic grammar was evolved in a purely Arab environment. This claim has perpetually been a bone of contention between some researchers who adhere to this view, such as B. G. Weiss, G. Weil, W. Diem, G. Troupeau, J. Owens, and G. Bohas, and others who argue for Greek and other foreign influence, such as W. Fischer, D. H. Hasse, A. Merx, F. Rundgren, J. Danecki, V. Law, C. H. M. Versteegh, and R. Talmon (pp. 36–37, 61; see A. Marogy, *Kitāb Sibawayhi* [Leiden: Brill, 2010], 2–3).

Carter, whose name is strongly associated with Sibawayhi, believes that Sibawayhi's work was critically misrepresented and undermined by fabricated stories about the origins of Arabic grammar. Many classical and modern works associate its initial development with Abū al-Aswad al-Duʿalī or with his master ʿAlī bin Abī Ṭālib. Furthermore, some of them attribute a book titled *Muqaddima* to Khalaf al-Aḥmar. It is interesting, therefore, to learn from Carter that those accounts “are unreliable” and that Khalaf al-Aḥmar's book “is certainly spurious” (p. 27), as it is claimed to be written on Chinese paper which was unavailable to Muslims at that time. Furthermore, the facts that al-Duʿalī's surviving poetry shows no interest in grammar and that Sibawayhi referred to him as a poet and never as a grammarian confirm Aḥmad Amīn's statement that the entire story “is nothing but a ‘fairy tale’” (pp. 1–2). It stands to reason, therefore, that Carter seeks to provide an accurate representation of Sibawayhi's work by revealing “the various ways in which Sibawayhi's grammar differs from what is generally regarded as typical Arabic grammar” (p. ix). In spite of his accepting J. Fück's view that the *Kitāb* is “a reactionary work” to his rival grammarians' views, he believes that Sibawayhi is “a genuine innovator” and the

intense technical discussions that took place in his time were in fact a major factor in making his work plainly comprehensible (p. 15).

The second chapter, “The State of *Kitāb* Criticism,” deals with Western scholars’ reluctance to accept Arabic grammar as a product of the Arab mind. This position is not an isolated one, in Carter’s view, but a clear manifestation of a more general doctrine held by the “Hellenists,” according to which “all that is best in the culture of the Arabs must have been borrowed from the Greeks” (p. 37), alluding to the tacit perception of the Greek’s intellectual superiority over the Arab in the minds of Western scholars. Carter borrowed Weiss’s term “dogma of Hellenism” to describe the major obstacle that prevents Western scholars from understanding Arabic grammar in general and the *Kitāb* in particular. Regardless of the credibility and validity of the grounds on which this is based, it underlies and consequently undermines some of their impressions and judgments in their reading of Arabic and Islamic history. There are other reasons that weaken the view of advocates of the Greek influence—among them are their confusion between the Greek term *grammatikós* and the Arabic *naḥwī* and their reliance on “the minimum of evidence” and “an alleged borrowing of partial congruence” to prove connections between Greek works and Arabic grammar. Even for the parts of speech that are typically held to be the basic units of grammatical analysis, the argument continues, there are no Greek counterparts for the Arabic terms *ḥarf*, *ism*, and *fiʿl*. Carter concludes that the Arabs relied heavily on their own ethico-legal reasoning for the formulation of Arabic grammar.

In the third chapter, Carter is keen to prove that the development of Arabic grammar was influenced by the principles of Islamic law. Assuming the absence of all evidence of a Greek borrowing, he provides several arguments to support his claim: the frequent contact between jurists and grammarians, their mutual interests, the close technical terms between the two fields, and, more importantly, Sibawayhi’s adoption of the legal analogical method and of ethical terms such as good, bad, right, and wrong. The fourth chapter explores the term *naḥw* in Sibawayhi’s technical sense, which Carter claims to be fundamentally different from the term grammar. Unlike grammar, the system of *naḥw* is based on the view that “language is a form of behaviour” and speech acts, therefore, are judged by the same categories that are employed to judge nonlinguistic acts (p. 111). Each speech act can be judged as good, bad, right, or wrong depending on the extent to which it corresponds to what the Bedouin or pure Arab would say in the same context. The notion of imitating their standard is deeply rooted in Sibawayhi’s grammar. Hence, his *Kitāb* is very rich in words denoting the “way of speaking,” such as *naḥw*, *wajh*, *ṭarīqa*, *madhhab*, *sabīl*, *sharʿ*, *sunna*, and *majrā*. According to Carter, there are no grounds for distinguishing between *naḥw* and *ṣarf* since the “way of speaking” is equally applicable to both, whether on the sentence level, as in the former case, or on the word level, as in the latter case. In what seems to be a semiotic reading of Sibawayhi’s grammar, Carter detected “a sustained social metaphor as the basis of its grammatical system” (p. 116). In addition to the behavioral, legal, and ethical aspects adopted in its terminology, Carter lists personifications, such as *ṣaḥīḥ* (sound), *muʿtal* (defective), *ghālib* (dominant), and *mustaghni* (self-sufficient), to mention only a few, as well as *ʿamila fī* (to have an effect on) and *quwwa* (power), which he borrowed from Weiss.

The fifth chapter, “The Principles and Criteria of the *Kitāb*,” is perhaps the most interesting one. According to Carter, the most important thing to notice in Sibawayhi’s approach is the fact that his grammatical analysis of Arabic is expressed in a form of “binary units” such as consonant–vowel and *mubtada* (initial term)–*khābar* (predicate). Since his main interest is in grammar rather than phonetics and phonology, Sibawayhi starts with the large grammatical structure and proceeds to the phonetic level. On the syntactic level, he prefers to use the term *kalām* instead of the abstract term *jumla* (sentence), which reflects his pragmatic approach in the analyses of the Arabic structures and his lack of interest in providing a formal grammar. Although *kalām* is used by Sibawayhi in a very vague sense, at least three meanings can be distilled. He could mean “speech” in the everyday use of the term or in a more specific sense to refer to “the speech of the Arabs,” or even more specifically to “the correct speech of the Arabs.” In other instances, Sibawayhi uses *kalām* narrowly for prose, as opposed to poetry. And in a more technical sense, he employs *kalām* to refer to the meaningful unit of speech that is limited by a volitional pause whether it is smaller than, equal to, or larger than a sentence. In this particular sense, I would argue that *kalām* (which is sometimes used interchangeably with *qawl*) can

safely be translated as “utterance” in the pragmatic technical sense of the term. In modern linguistics (particularly in pragmatics), a distinction is commonly drawn between “sentence” (the formal unit that belongs to language) and “utterance” (the actual act of speech). Bearing in mind this distinction, we can understand that utterances, unlike sentences, can be judged with such behavioral standards as *mustaqīm*, *kadhib*, and *muḥāl* as they are used in the *Kitāb*. Sentences have nothing to do with the contents of speech. To put it in ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī’s terms, “whatever is aimed at a claim, whether it is belief or disbelief, acceptance or rejection, approval or disapproval, is in fact a reaction directed to the speaker and has nothing to do with language” (*Asrār al-balāgha*, ed. H. Ritter, 3rd ed. [Beirut: Dār al-Masīra, 1983], 347).

Sibawayhi distinguishes between at least five types of *kalām*: *mustaqīm* and *ḥasan* (well formed and good), *muḥāl* (unintelligible), *mustaqīm* and *kadhib* (well formed and false), *mustaqīm* and *qabīḥ* (well formed and bad), and *muḥāl* and *kadhib* (unintelligible and false). As Sibawayhi was inconsistent in using these terms, researchers will continue to interpret—and translate—them differently. In order to uphold his ethical reading of Sibawayhi’s *Kitāb*, Carter insists on translating *muḥāl* as wrong and *mustaqīm* as right, and he provides a reasonable justification for that. In more assertive language, he states that “‘function’ and ‘place’ are the only correct translations” for the term *mawḍiʿ* (p. 179), although “position” would also suffice. The author concludes this chapter by exploring the role that Sibawayhi gave to the listener as an important element in his grammar.

The sixth chapter, which is the most complicated one, is devoted mainly to the discussion of the Arabic phrase *ʿishrīn dirhaman* (hence the chapter’s title “Twenty Dirhams”). This phrase is intended to be another way of representing one of two types of the Arabic *idāfa*-construction, to which Carter refers by the term “pseudo-*idāfa*.” Compared with the common *idāfa*, the pseudo-*idāfa* or *tanwīn-naṣb* construction, as Carter prefers to call it, is “exclusive in meaning and separable” (p. 211). The reason for including this chapter is seemingly to prove Sibawayhi’s competence in delving into deep and detailed systematic discussions, a claim for which the author enthusiastically provides a number of arguments.

In the concluding chapter, Carter hopes that his work has succeeded in refuting the claims that the *Kitāb* is a “normative, overdescriptive, superficial, excessively rationalistic, unsystematic, rigid, vague, and ultra-purist work” (p. 221). In his view, the book was designed to be “an apologetic work” in order to convince some people who disagreed with some of his grammatical ideas and views. It is, by no means, a reaction to the spread of the corruption of the language, as Ibn Khaldūn, Fück, Talmon, and others believe. Carter allocates parts of this chapter to prove that some terms used in the *Kitāb*—including *sabab*, *illa*, and *taqdīr*, which have been taken by some as being used in their later, technical sense—are in fact used by Sibawayhi in their pre-theoretical meanings. At the end of this chapter, Carter brings to the fore what he argues to be an inherent connection between Islamic law and Arabic grammar and stresses the importance of how Sibawayhi links linguistic and social behavior in his ethical approach to grammar, maintaining that he is the first and only Arab grammarian who followed this approach.

The book includes three different types of indexes, which are little helpful and can even be misleading since they refer to the page numbers of the original thesis instead of the pages of the book itself. The bibliography is generally comprehensive and up-to-date. The notes in the addenda have enhanced the original thesis with valuable comments. Moreover, they provide useful information and insights into the subject and in some cases offer suggestions for further reading. I came across some typographical errors, such as the repetition of “started” on p. 59 and the spelling “pecuhliar” on p. 72. The *ṭ* is used to transliterate both Arabic letters *thāʾ* and *ṭāʾ*, which causes some confusion in some contexts.

In general, the book is an in-depth study of the early history of Arabic grammar. I sincerely recommend it to graduate students and researchers in Arabic linguistics and related fields. Historians of general linguistics will also undoubtedly find it informative and helpful.

MOHAMED MOHAMED YUNIS ALI
WORAL, QATAR FOUNDATION, DOHA