

REVIEWS

Tēmōnit. The Jewish Varieties of Yemeni Arabic. By ORI SHACHMON. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2022. 250 p. ISBN 978-3-447-11912-2.

The book is an extensive documentation of Yemeni Jewish dialects, the result of approximately twenty-five years of fieldwork conducted in Israel with Yemeni immigrants. Prior to Shachmon's work, only a few Yemeni dialects, mostly that of the capital, Ṣan'ā', had been studied thoroughly. Her research offers insight into some Yemeni dialects that had never previously been described.

The book is divided into two main parts: the first part provides historical and geographic context, and a general overview of the most significant features of these dialects; the second part, which is the lion's share of the book, consists of forty specimen texts.

In the first part, the reader is given an interesting insight into the 20th-century history of the Jews in Yemen. During the second half of the century, the majority of Jews left Yemen, primarily for Israel. Today, there are practically no Jews left in the country. Due to their integration into Israeli society, the Jewish varieties of Yemeni Arabic are on the verge of extinction, making this documentation especially valuable. Shachmon then describes her methodology: the primary goal was to conduct open-ended interviews, in which the informants were encouraged to tell stories of their own choice. In a few cases, she used targeted elicitation, though this was only possible with a few informants.

After these introductory sections, Shachmon turns to a general linguistic description of the dialects. She first notes that they share many features with the Muslim varieties spoken in the given region. However, linguistic differences did exist, most notably in the cities, where Jewish-Muslim coexistence was marked by less cohesion. The differences are divided into two categories: the first involves the use of Hebrew and Aramaic elements. The second category of differences is found in the Arabic layer of a given variety: in these cases, the Arabic used by Yemeni Jews can be traced back to another Arabic dialect, a phenomenon known as "migrated dialectism", which has been observed in other Jewish languages as well. Another distinction within the Arabic layer lies in the frequency of the use of certain forms: for example, when the Muslim variety has two alternative patterns, the Jewish variety may use only one of them exclusively, even if that form is rarely used by Muslims. Shachmon then describes many interesting features of these varieties. Among these are gender-specific language use (as is well-known in other Arabic dialects); the preservation of diphthongs (*bayt*, *yawm*) in certain parts of Yemen; the

way *begadkefat* is used in these dialects (spirantization occurs in positions when it is not called for, or it does not occur when it would be called for); or the way stress patterns differ from most Arabic dialects. She also describes the secret language used by Jews in situations where they did not want Muslims to understand them, by using Hebrew and Aramaic words. Here, I would like to highlight one of her examples: “In cases where the Hebrew form sounds similar to its Arabic equivalent, an alternative Hebrew word may be chosen. This is presumably why the secret nickname for a Jew is not Hebrew יהודי *yahūdī* ‘Jew’, which is nearly identical to local Arabic *yihūdī/yahūdī*, but rather עברי *‘ibrī* ‘Israelite’.” (p. 21). This particular example is not convincing, since the word *‘ibrī* exists in Arabic as well, in the same sense. Of course, it would be possible that it is not used by Yemeni Arabs, but it is attested in Deboo’s Yemeni Arabic dictionary, also indicating ‘Jew’ (although apparently observed only in Ṣan‘ā’).¹ Shachmon does not seem entirely confident about this example either, as she begins by saying “presumably”.

At the end of the first part of the book, Shachmon provides the reader with verbal paradigms; tables of pronouns and suffixed pronouns; a description of the nominal feminine ending, gender neutral participles and adjectives; and some curious grammatical phenomena, for example, the use of *ḥaqq/ḥagg* to denote a fronted genitive exponent, among others.

The second part contains the specimen texts, stories told by Yemeni Jews now residing in Israel. The forty texts are drawn from a much larger archive of recordings and are divided into five sections based on geography: Central, Northern, Southern, Eastern, and Aden. Each section is preceded by general information on the respective community, as well as the informants, and some further description of the given dialect. For example, this is where it is noted that in Giblih, the definite article is assimilated to any following consonant, such as *ab-bēt* “the house”. Earlier in the book, she explains that Yemeni Jews settled in Israel in a dispersed way, which probably contributed to their rapid adoption of Israeli Hebrew, as they were no longer in their familiar environment. At the same time, “it has also increased the possibility of contact with, and influence by, other Yemeni dialects as well as Palestinian Arabic.” (p. 11). However, this does not seem to be taken into consideration when describing the linguistic nature of the specimen texts (except for text 32).

The recordings are transcribed exactly as they were spoken by the informants, reflecting everyday speech patterns: the sentences are often anacoluthic, and they frequently feature repetitions and mid-sentence restructuring. We are introduced to a variety of topics related to daily life, such as food preparation and the community’s relationship with Muslims (where we read both positive and negative accounts). However, the most recurring themes are child marriages, child mortality, and the

¹ Deboo, Jeffrey. 1989. *Jemenitisches Wörterbuch – Arabisch-Deutsch-Englisch*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

community's fear of a Jewish girl's conversion to Islam. One noteworthy story involves an alleged encounter with a demon.

As already mentioned, since the majority of Yemeni Jews immigrated to Israel and quickly adopted Israeli Hebrew, they are gradually losing their mother tongue. Shachmon notes that most second-generation immigrants from Yemen cannot speak their parents' language at all. Thus, this work is an invaluable source for preserving the Jewish dialects of Yemeni Arabic before they disappear entirely in the near future.

Ádám Gacsályi-Tóth

Arabische Kerzendichtung des 10.–15. Jahrhunderts. Eine Studie zur arabischen ekphrastischen Poesie. (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, 131).

By WERNER DIEM. Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2023. 300 p. ISSN 0567-4980. ISBN 978-3-447-12013-5.

In Classical Arabic poetry, description (*waṣf*) plays a significant role. Within poetical description, early literary theorists distinguished different themes (*ma'nā*; pl. *ma'ānī*). One must refer to Ibn Qutayba's (d. 889) monumental 1,500-page work, *Kitāb al-ma'ānī al-kabīr fī abyāt al-ma'ānī*. Later, some themes—mainly, but not exclusively, objects—became the focus of short poems. Werner Diem's excellent study deals with such a type: the poem describing the candle (*šam'a*). Diem uses the Greek literary term ekphrastic for works describing special objects and calls them ekphrastic ('descriptive') poems, although in contemporary literary criticism this term usually refers to a vivid verbal description of an object depicted in a visual work of art, such as a painting or sculpture, within a literary work, often a poem.

The dates in the volume may cause slight confusion. The title page gives the dates in the Common Era (poems between the tenth and fifteenth centuries), whereas inside the book the author uses only Hijri dates for the notation of poets' death years. Furthermore, none of the poets included lived into the fifteenth century CE: the last poet, Ṣafī ad-Dīn al-Ḥillī, died in 750 AH/1349 CE, i.e., in the mid-fourteenth century. It would have been more helpful to supply CE dates consistently as well.

After a detailed introduction discussing universal characteristics of the poems quoted, the book comprises ten chapters. The Introduction analyses the poems from a stylistic standpoint, emphasizing the significance of the candle and oil lamp in everyday life. These poems, like most Arabic verse, employ simile, metaphor, and personification. Personification is particularly abundant: the candle "sleeps" when unlit; its flame "struggles" against the darkness. Another characteristic is that the poems describe a generic candle rather than a particular specimen. Diem likens these poems to watercolour paintings that suggest expressive portraits with a few brushstrokes.

Concerning function, the author states that the poems are essentially descriptions (*waṣf*). This is largely correct, although certain pieces aim at more than simple description. For instance, al-Arṣānī's poem (B44) is clearly a *mağd*, glorifying the emir of Fārs by likening him to a candle that gives light to the people; incidentally, it is the longest poem in the book. The same applies to al-Ġazzī's verse B76. Love poems could also have been selected as independent types: B23 by Sulaymān al-Naṣībī (4th c. AH) likens the ends of the candle to the beloved woman. In other words, "description" is a general rubric comprising several sub-types.

Another theme of the Introduction is the set of "introductory formulas." First among them is the so-called *wāw rubba* in the form *wa-šam'atin*. The author maintains the traditional European view that this formula always refers to a non-specific event or description, supporting the opinion that medieval Arabic poetry relied on general patterns rather than individual experiences. Over the past fifty years, however, several studies—both in the Arab world and beyond—have pointed out that *wāw rubba* can, in some contexts, refer to a specific event or object observed by the poet.

The second most frequent introductory formula is the simple *šam'atun*; the third is an oath formula, *wa-šam'atin*, or *wa-* with another noun referring to the candle: *wa-ṣufrin*, *wa-bākiyatin*, etc.

At the end of the Introduction, Diem lists the sources of the candle verses. These are primarily poetic collections, though in some cases he uses individual poets' *dīwāns* as well.

Each poem is presented as follows: (i) biographical data for the poet; (ii) bibliographical data for the poem; (iii) the circumstances of composition, where known; (iv) a short summary; (v) the Arabic text with full vocalization; and (vi) a translation with footnotes.

Chapter Two contains the descriptive poems (93 in total), by far the largest group. Chapter Three presents 46 poems about the connection between the poet and the candle. Chapter Four describes the candle in specific situations (19 poems). Chapter Five gathers 10 verses about the young man and the candle, in my view somewhat arbitrarily. Chapter Six assembles five poems in which the candle serves as a gift (*hadiyyat šam'*). Chapter Seven contains eleven poetic riddles about the candle.

Chapter Eight synthesizes information on the candle poems: 8.1 discusses the introductory description of the candle; 8.2 collects lexical designations for "candle"; 8.3 summarizes attributes such as colour, form, state, surface, and actions (in personification). Chapter Nine deals with similes and metaphors used in connection with the candle; Chapter Ten treats personification: the candle has an origin, childhood, youth, lifespan, body and soul, body parts, clothing, and jewellery; it engages in relationships with humans and poets. Chapter Eleven discusses intertextuality in these verses, followed by the bibliography and indices.

Mention must be made of B31 (p. 61), attributed to al-Ma'arrī, although it is entirely unknown to scholars of the poet and is found in none of al-Ma'arrī's *dīwāns*,

as Diem himself notes. The poem's style does not fit al-Ma'arrī either; the rare *ḍarūra lim* instead of *lima* or *limā* is a clear example. Instead, Diem could have included one of the brilliant candle verses of the Syrian poet, such as the one in the *Luzūmiyyāt* titled after its first hemistich *دَوَلَاتُكُمْ شَمَعَاتٌ يُسْتَضَاءُ بِهَا*, where 'ayn is linked with mīm in the *qāfiya*; its second hemistich is:

فَبَادِرُوهَا إِلَى أَنْ تُطْفَأَ الشَّمَعُ

"Your states are candles by which light is sought;
so, hasten, before the candles are extinguished."

Here life's blessings, power, or opportunities (*دَوَلَاتُكُمْ*) are likened to candles that give light. Just as candles illuminate darkness only temporarily, fortunes are useful but short-lived. The counsel is to make use of these fleeting opportunities before they vanish.

Another fine candle poem that might have been included is al-Ġazzī's:

إِنِّي لِأَشْكُو خَطُوبًا لَا أَعِينُهَا لِيَبْرِيَ النَّاسُ مِنْ لُومِي وَمِنْ عَذْلِي
كَالشَّمْعِ يَبْكِي وَلَا يَدْرِي أَعْبَرْتَهُ مِنْ صَحْبَةِ النَّارِ أَمْ مِنْ فِرْقَةِ الْعَسَلِ

"I complain of hardships I cannot name,
to spare people my blame and reproach.

Like a candle that weeps without knowing

are its tears from the fire's company, or from parting with honeyed wax?"

Naturally, Diem does not claim to have included all candle poems. His work is an outstanding scholarly achievement and offers rewarding reading to anyone interested in Classical Arabic poetry.

Kinga Dévényi

Studien zu sabab in der arabischen Kunstprosa des 10.–15. Jahrhunderts. Ein Beitrag zur arabischen Lexik, Phraseologie und Stilgeschichte. (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, 126). By WERNER DIEM. Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2022. 208 p. ISSN 0567-4980. ISBN 978-3-447-11828-6.

Werner Diem's work is an intriguing venture into the history of Arabic lexicography and style, conducted through the analysis of a single word—*sabab*—across a vast corpus from the later Middle Ages.

He writes at the beginning of the Introduction: "This study of *sabab* aims to explore the rich semantic nuances and associated phraseology of the term, based on texts of rhymed artistic prose from the 10th to the 15th centuries, with a few examples drawn from earlier periods. It thus contributes both to Arabic lexicography and phraseology, as well as to the history of Arabic artistic prose. The study demonstrates that numerous phraseological patterns and idiomatic expressions were

transmitted across the centuries. This is hardly surprising, given that stylists were known to hold the leading figures of their discipline in the highest esteem.”

The first difficulty for the reviewer is that Diem treats the notion of Arabic artistic prose (*Kunstprosa*) as accepted and self-evident, requiring neither definition nor delimitation. There is no equivalent term in medieval Arabic literature, except perhaps *adab*, which denotes a much wider field. A closer analogue to “artistic prose” might be *inšāʾ*, often translated as chancery prose, i.e., the prose of the *dīwāns*. The use of stylistics and stylist (terms without Arabic counterparts in this context) instead of rhetoric (*balāġa*) and eloquent (*balīġ*) is also unsettling, although this usage has become widespread in European studies of Arabic prose.

That the terms *Kunstprosa* and *Stilistik*, rather than the generally accepted *inšāʾ* and *balāġa*, represent a departure even in German-language scholarship is evident from the comprehensive German history of Arabic literature, the three-volume *Grundriß der arabischen Philologie*. In vol. II (1987), Ibn al-Aʿt̃ir and his *al-Maʿt̃al as-sāʾir* are treated in the chapter “Poetik und Rhetorik” (Wolfhart Heinrichs), while al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil and similar authors appear in vol. III (1992), ch. 2, “Die *inšāʾ*-Literatur.” This is unsurprising: all of them—except Ibn Nubāṭa—served in various *dīwāns*, and their task was not to write “artistic” literature but to compose official letters in the most polished Arabic.

The discipline of eloquence (*ʿilm al-balāġa*) deals with broad categories (Ḍiyāʾ ad-Dīn Ibn al-Aʿt̃ir lists eight in *al-Maʿt̃al as-sāʾir*). Examples serve these common aims; the discipline is not a method for analysing single works in the manner of European stylistics. For this reason, it is preferable to retain the Arabic terms rather than mapping them onto European models (e.g., “artistic prose”) that may mislead.

The Introduction (Chapter 1) lists the sources of the cited texts, primarily from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, with some exceptions. One quotation in al-Qalqasandī’s *Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā* derives from al-Ġāḥiẓ: *fa-inna l-kalāma idā kāna ḥasanan ġaʿalathu l-udabāʾa adaban wa-ġaʿalati r-ruwātu ilā našrihi sababan ḥattā yaṣīra ... sullaman ilā l-ʿuṣamāʾ wa-sababan ilā ġillati l-kubarāʾ*. Diem translates: “For when the speech (of praise epistles) is fine, the literati regard them as literature, and the transmitters find in them a means for their diffusion, so that they become a stairway to the powerful and a means of access to the great and significant.”

It is misleading to translate *adab* simply as “literature” in the modern sense. The Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature notes that in modern Arabic *adab* (and *ādāb*) can mean “literature,” but classically it also connotes ‘good breeding,’ ‘manners,’ ‘culture,’ ‘refinement’; formally, many *adab* books are compilations exemplary in both style and meaning. Similarly, Francesco Gabrieli (*EF*², “*adab*”) defines *adab* as the sum of knowledge that makes a person urbane—profane culture (as distinct from religious learning)—based on poetry, oratory, historical and tribal traditions, and corresponding sciences (rhetoric, grammar, lexicography, metrics). In the modern age *adab* (and even more so *ādāb*) has become synonymous with literature in the strict sense.

Chapter 2 treats *sabab* in its physical meaning of ‘well-rope’ and ‘tent-cord.’ Chapter 3 presents *sabab* as a metaphorical binding between equivalent entities. Chapter 4 discusses the *nasab–sabab* connection.

In Chapter 5, *sabab* functions as a metaphorical bond linking one entity to another (*waṣala šay’un bi-šay’in*). The examples are well chosen and arranged, but a wider context is often lacking. For instance, in a *risāla* of al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil (no. 60): *‘ullīqat bi-dawlatinā asbābuhā*, rendered as “... and their ties have been bound to our authority.” The translation is accurate, but the exact sense of *sabab* would be clearer in a fuller contextual discussion.

Chapter 6 treats *sabab* as a link in metaphor expressed via a genitive construction. Chapter 7 assembles texts where *sabab* is a means to reach a place, fulfil God’s commands to obtain His benevolence. Chapter 8 presents *sabab* as mediation or intermediary. Chapter 9 shows *sabab* as a device. Chapter 10 takes *sabab* in its everyday sense of ‘cause’ or ‘ground.’ Chapter 11 discusses *sabab-bi* as a preposition. Chapter 12 treats *sabab* as a metrical term. Chapter 13 associates *sabab* with a person, a matter, or an abstract notion. Chapter 14 explores *sabab* as a stylistic device in the works of the great medieval stylist Ibn al-Aṭīr. Chapter 15, titled “Qur’ānic citations and innuendoes or allusions,” would be better labelled with the accepted term *iqtibās*.

The Appendix informs the reader about synonyms of *sabab*. A bibliography follows, then an index of cited authors and an index of verbs and adjectives occurring in the texts.

Werner Diem’s ambitious study illuminates a substantial chapter of Arabic lexicography and deepens our understanding of collocation in Classical Arabic.

Kinga Dévényi

Philologische Kommentarkulturen. Abū ‘Ubaydas Mağāz al-Qur’ān im Licht spätantiken Exegesewissens. (Diskurse der Arabistik, 23). By NORA SCHMIDT. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2016. 257 p. ISSN 0949-6807. ISBN 978-3-447-10696-2.

This study investigates the Qur’ān work of the philologist Abū ‘Ubayda Ma‘mar b. al-Muṭannā (d. 825), an early Muslim scholar of Arabic philology and transmitter of ancient poetry. The expression “late antiquity” in the title is questionable, since this period is commonly dated from the end of the Roman Empire to the early Muslim conquests, i.e., up to c. 750, and Abū ‘Ubayda’s activity hardly began before that date.

It is also doubtful whether the *Mağāz al-Qur’ān* can be called a commentary. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn held that *al-Mağāz* is a book on language, in which Abū ‘Ubayda gathers words not used in their “literal” (*ḥaqīqī*) meanings. There is no indication

that he knew *'ilm al-bayān*; indeed, Arabic rhetoric as an independent discipline developed later. For Abū 'Ubayda, *mağāz* was a broad and not yet fixed term.

In light of such views, Mağāz al-Qur'ān should not be classified as *tafsīr* or *ta'wīl*: Abū 'Ubayda does not deal with *asbāb an-nuzūl*, legal rulings, abrogation, and similar topics. He makes clear that his sole aim is to investigate modes of expression. He does not analyse the entire Qur'ānic text, but only verses with unusual structures, leaving many without comment.

Abū 'Ubayda was controversial. Some, like al-Ġāhiz, considered him the most learned man of his age; others were strongly critical. He viewed the Qur'ān as an Arabic text and believed that those who heard its recitation from the Prophet and the Companions needed no further inquiry to understand it, as long as the language reflected the speech habits of the Arabs—exhibiting addition, deletion, ellipsis, abbreviation, and inversion.

On this basis he interpreted the Qur'ān through his understanding of Arabic usage, rules, and modes of expression. To contemporaries this approach resembled “commentary by opinion,” since he did not draw on transmitted reports or *asbāb an-nuzūl*.

The meaning of *mağāz* in Abū 'Ubayda's exegesis corresponds to those of *tafsīr*, *ma'nā*, *ġarīb*, *taqdīr*, and *ta'wīl*, as he employs these terms interchangeably. That is, the term *mağāz* in his work denotes the various modes of expression in the Qur'ān. Naturally, he uses the term in a broader sense than that adopted in later rhetoric. Abū 'Ubayda's study of the Qur'ān was characterised by certain features to which the Mu'tazilites strictly adhered. Firstly, the assumption that language consists primarily of *mağāz* is essentially Mu'tazilite. Secondly, interpretation based on reason is also a Mu'tazilite principle.

Abū 'Ubayda was able to determine his methods of linguistic analysis freely, as the grammatical schools of Baṣra and Kūfa—institutions that later entailed both support and commitment—had not yet been established. Nevertheless, he found support in early poetry, upon which he consistently relied when interpreting the verses of the Qur'ān.

aṭ-Ṭabarī's view of Abū 'Ubayda was mixed. Although he never mentions him by name, aṭ-Ṭabarī cites extensively from *Mağāz* in his commentary. His main criticism targets Abū 'Ubayda's method: privileging reason over tradition and, in his view, misunderstanding or mis-explaining verses. Expressions such as “One Baṣran, deemed well-versed in Arab speech, said ...” occur without naming authorities among the Companions.

The book is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 addresses philological exegesis and the meaning of *mağāz*. The author assesses various views on the origins of the concept in Abū 'Ubayda's work and ultimately rejects Wansbrough's position, which seeks Greek and Latin origins, while still acknowledging antique influences. This explains the use of “late antiquity” in the title, though “early Islamic” might have been more apt. Chapter 2, on the “dialectic of allegorical and literal

interpretation,” draws on antique and Biblical analogues, but the Arabic concepts of *ramziyya* (allegory) and *išāra* (allusion) differ from *mağāz*. Chapter 3 asks, “What did the Qur’ān mean for eighth-century philologists?” and engages with notions from the Qur’ānic sciences. Chapter 4 analyses interpretive patterns in *Mağāz al-Qur’ān*. Chapter 5 surveys technical terms used by Abū ‘Ubayda—*aṣl*, *sabab*, *wağh*, and *maṭal*. Note that *wağh* (pl. *wuğūh*) is not confined to lexical interpretation but denotes possibilities in linguistic analysis more generally; such usage pervades al-Farrā’s *Ma’ānī al-Qur’ān*. Chapter 6 offers notes on literacy and book production in Abū ‘Ubayda’s age.

A bibliography, English summary, and indices of names and themes conclude the volume.

Overall, the book reflects substantial scholarly labour. It makes for stimulating reading, though some of its assertions are not entirely persuasive.

Kinga Dévényi

Creating an Islamic City. Beirut, Jihad and the Sacred. (Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts, 210). By RANA MIKATI. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2024. x + 307 p. ISSN 0929-2403. ISBN 978-90-04-68254-2.

The author succinctly states her aim in the Introduction: “This book represents a methodological experiment that attempts to write a historical narrative for a place largely forgotten by the medieval and modern historical records.” She hastens to emphasize that she does not wish to examine how a medieval city emerged from late antique traces or how a Hellenized world transformed into the supposedly alien world of Islam. Instead, she seeks to restore Beirut’s Islamic past, a history she contends has been neglected by scholars.

The only disturbing feature of the introductory chapter is its overtly—and at times provocatively—political tenor, which may be understandable in light of Mikati’s acknowledgement that her family’s entanglements with the history of Islamic Beirut make the book personal. In addition to her political and religious commitments, however, she follows a trend in American scholarship that tends to categorize European scholars—past and present—collectively as “Orientalists,” rather than engaging them as individual cases, thereby questioning the objectivity of their research.

As the author explains, the book investigates how Beirut and its community participated in creating a provincial Islamic culture, given that Beirut and other Syrian coastal cities lay at the empire’s margins. Rejecting the older view—based largely on Janet Abu-Lughod’s brief and unconvincing article “The Islamic City”—that Islam is fundamentally urban and defined by its *ḡāmi’*, *sūq*, and *ḥammām*, Mikati emphasizes that she is not writing yet another Islamic city history of a capital

but rather of a provincial town. She argues that the existence of a flourishing provincial culture in Beirut from the seventh to the tenth century has never been fully discussed.

Chapter One addresses late antiquity and the situation in Beirut before the Muslim conquest. Chapter Two focuses on continuity and change after the conquest, including the impacts of a Muslim military presence. Chapter Three examines Beirut's role in the creation of an Islamic navy during the Umayyad period and considers the emergence of early asceticism as an extreme mode of piety. With Chapter Five we reach the book's core: manifestations of mystical sainthood in Beirut. Before that, however, Mikati treats the most famous religious figure of the region, Abū 'Amr 'Abd ar-Raḥmān al-Awzā'ī (d. 774), known not only as eponym of the Awzā'ī school of jurisprudence but also as an advocate of peaceful coexistence with Christian and Jewish communities in and around Beirut. What makes him truly significant for Beirut, she argues, is that through al-Awzā'ī the city was connected to other centres within the province of Damascus and beyond, via overlapping communal, scholarly, administrative, and political networks. Without him, Beirut would rarely, if ever, have appeared in Muslim sources. Not surprisingly, Chapter Six is titled "The Death of a Scholar: the Heirs of al-Awzā'ī in Beirut."

In short, Mikati considers the extraordinary influence of a single Muslim scholar to be one of the most important factors in Beirut's emergence as a significant Muslim city. The manifestations of his sainthood are, she suggests, still felt in Beirut today.

Overall, this excellent study sheds light on the formation of medieval Beirut and underscores that a Muslim scholar regarded as a saint—not only by Muslims across Syria but also by Christians and Jews, as suggested by their presence at his funeral—could shape a city's religious identity.

The book draws on an extensive range of primary and secondary sources, which enhances its reliability. All the same, a comprehensive history of Beirut that considers all religious communities in the city remains to be written.

Tamás Iványi

Four Essays on Semitic Grammar and Dialectology. Quatre Essais sur la grammaire et la dialectologie sémitique. By HANS LAGERQVIST. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2020. xv + 205 p. ISBN 978-3-447-11399-1.

Three of the four essays deal mainly with Arabic, while the fourth is of a more general linguistic character, addressing other language families as well.

The first essay, "Definite and Indefinite Relative Clauses in Literary Modern Standard Arabic: An Outline of a Structural Analysis," begins with a brief general linguistic introduction that seems unnecessary for the subsequent analysis of Arabic phenomena. The discussion of the difference between restrictive and non-restrictive

relative clauses is somewhat muddled, and, as others before him, the author assigns linguistic significance to the comma in Arabic texts—punctuation practices that are non-standard. In treating the relative pronoun *allaḏī* and the *ṣila*, he offers a very brief and inaccurate diachronic sketch: *allaḏī* is not merely historically composed with the definite article *-l-*; according to the native grammarians its sentence-initial function is analogous to that of the definite article on a noun. Not to mention that in some dialects lone *l-* can substitute for a relative pronoun. The author classifies definite relative clauses by their syntactic role and provides several examples but overlooks the temporal shift function of relative clauses: if the main clause is in the past, the verb in the relative clause need not be in the perfect (*māḏī*) to indicate past time; and if the relative clause does contain a verb in the perfect, it can indicate pluperfect without requiring *kāna*.

The second essay, in French, “Contribution à l’étude de l’inaccompli en b(i),” opens by speaking of a ‘collapse’ of the imperfect in ancient Arabic and the emergence of an unmarked imperfect, without adducing examples. It then turns to modern dialectal usage of preverbal *bi-*, classifying it as temporal, hypothetical, habitual/repetitive, or polite in the Levantine dialects.

The third essay, also in French, “La proposition nominale: une structure en quête de clarté,” addresses general linguistic problems with reference to Slavic languages (e.g., Polish and Serbo-Croatian), then briefly touches on Semitic languages (Biblical Hebrew, pre-Classical Arabic, Aramaic). Given the cursory treatment, these sections are of limited value.

The fourth essay, “A linguistic and sociolinguistic study of the triglossia in the novel *Yā Maryam* by Sinān Antūn,” examines the coexistence of three closely related codes in Baghdad. The narrated text uses Modern Standard Arabic; dialogues and some monologues employ Christian and Muslim Baghdadi dialects. Lagerqvist investigates whether the dialect spoken by the Muslim majority has significantly influenced Christian Baghdadi. He concludes that it has not: Christian and Muslim Baghdadi appear to coexist largely independently. Of the four essays, the last is the most substantial, offering relevant insight into a sociolinguistic situation in Iraq.

Tamás Iványi

South Arabia: Old Issues, New Perspectives. Proceedings of the Workshop at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg on December 19, 2019. (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, 128). Ed. by GIULIANO CASAGNA and LUTZ EDZARD. Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2021. 237 p. ISSN 0567-4980. ISBN 978-3-447-11956-6.

This proceedings volume contains six articles based on presentations at the workshop “South Arabia: Old Issues, New Perspectives,” along with an additional contribution by Alessandra Serpone on a related subject.

The first article, by Sabrina Bendjaballah and Philippe Ségéral (University of Nantes), “Quadriliterals and ‘quineliterals’ in Omani Mehri,” describes sporadic verbs in Modern Mehri that have more than the usual Semitic three root consonants. Each type of non-triliteral verb is characterized in detail and tabulated.

The second article, by Alessandra Serpone (Rome), “Some Remarks on the South Semitic *k*-Suffix Conjugation,” treats the first singular and second person endings in *k*-, a distinctive feature of South Semitic (Modern South Arabian, Ethiopic, and even some Yemeni Arabic dialects). After synchronic preliminaries, she offers a historical overview.

Lutz Edzard (Erlangen-Nürnberg) writes on “The Functional Spectrum of the Jibbali *š*-Diatheses and the Concept of Potentiality/Feasibility in Semitic,” analysing a representative sample of *š*-diatheses in Jibbali within a framework of morphological and semantic oppositions. After a cross-Semitic survey, he asks whether Jibbali exhibits specific semantic traits in this context, focusing on the ‘be able to’ construction typical of the dialect.

The fourth article, by Fabio Gasparini (Berlin), “Semantically Unmarked Clause Linking in Mehri: The Use of *wə*-,” investigates a pervasive type of clause linking in Mehri—parataxis via the semantically bleached connective *wə*—and situates the phenomenon in a typological perspective.

Roger Blench (Cambridge), in “Semitic Upside-Down: A New Proposal for the Origins of Modern South Arabian Languages,” proposes a South Afroasiatic node comprising Semitic, Cushitic, and Chadic, coordinate with Egyptian and Berber, developing after the split from Omotic; the node is characterized by a complex phonology including lateral fricatives and an ejective series.

Letizia Cerqueglini (Tel Aviv University) also addresses diachrony in “On Egyptian and Semitic: The Modern South Arabian Perspective.”

Finally, Giuliano Casagna seeks the origin of a Modern South Arabian lexical item traditionally deemed uncertain in “The Proto-Malagasy term *kazo ‘tree, wood’ in the Modern South Arabian terms for ‘coconut’.”

This volume supports the view that focused workshops are a highly effective means of advancing a specialized field—here, Modern South Arabian studies.

Tamás Iványi

Arabische Kunstprosa im 14. Jahrhundert. Drei Einsetzungen für Oberrichter 'Imād ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭarasūsī in Lehrämter an Damaszener Hochschulen. (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, 123). By WERNER DIEM. Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2021. 237 p. ISSN 0567-4980. ISBN 978-3-447-11656-5.

This book examines three appointment texts for Chief Judge 'Imād ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭarasūsī to two different teaching offices at Damascene institutions of higher learning. Although Kunstprosa is often translated as literary prose or belles-lettres, the three texts here are chancellery documents (*inšā'*).

The Introduction (Chapter 1) first presents the biography of 'Imād ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭarasūsī, then turns to the four Damascene *madrasas* where he was appointed. The structure of the book is as follows: each text is introduced with a foreword, followed by the edition, translation, and commentary.

Chapter 2 contains aṭ-Ṭarasūsī's appointment to al-Qaymāziyya *madrasa*, written by the famous Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn aṣ-Ṣafadī. Chapter 3 presents his appointment to ar-Rayḥāniyya *madrasa* by the equally renowned Ibn Nubāta. Chapter 4 provides another appointment document to ar-Rayḥāniyya by an anonymous author; traditionally, three appointment documents could be required for a single post. Chapter 5 discusses rhetorical devices characteristic of such rhymed-prose (*sağ'*) chancellery documents, namely allusions and the mention of the appointee, predecessors, and the place of appointment.

Chapters 6–9 treat additional rhetorical features: *tağnīs* (paronomasia, i.e., employing two or more words sharing a consonantal root), the most frequent ornament in Arabic poetry and rhymed prose; and *tawriya*, a special kind of double entendre or concealed allusion. These are well-known devices described in the science of *badī'*, a branch of rhetoric (*balāḡa*). Chapters 7–8 address intertextuality: citations recur across the three texts. Identical expressions (*iqtibās*) in aṣ-Ṣafadī's and Ibn Nubāta's documents may indicate either that aṣ-Ṣafadī knew Ibn Nubāta's letter beforehand or that both drew from a common corpus—on the basis of these three texts, the question remains open. Chapter 9 summarizes the intertextual elements.

Chapter 10 asks why two letters of appointment were necessary for the Rayḥāniyya *madrasa*. Chapter 11 briefly discusses the function of such documents. An Appendix lists instances of *tağnīs* in the three texts. A bibliography and indices of persons, places, linguistic forms, and official titles conclude the volume.

Werner Diem's excellent work illuminates a relatively neglected field of Arabic writing. It is rare to find such a thorough analysis of documents of this type.

Kinga Dévényi