

Early Ibādī Literature. Abu l-Munḍir Bashīr b. Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb Kitāb al-Raṣf fī l-Tawḥīd, Kitāb al-Muḥāraba and Sīra. Introduced and edited by ABDULRAHMAN AL-SALIMI and WILFERD MADELUNG. (*Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, ed. by Florian C. Reiter, 75). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011. xi, 80 p. ISSN 0567-4980, ISBN 978-3-447-06435-4

This volume contains three Arabic treatises by Abū (and not Abu, as in the title) l-Munḍir Bašīr b. Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb, an Omani Ibādīte religious scholar who lived in the third century of the Islamic era. All the three are first editions and, as the Introduction says, were hitherto unknown to Western scholars. One can only sympathize with this kind of remarks since in the past Western Arabists have considered their knowledge too many times absolute. With this edition a significant new source has become available for the study of early Ibādīte thought. Abū l-Munḍir (died around 290/908) was a prominent Ibādīte author of theological and legal books. As the Introduction states his writings reflect expert knowledge of Ibādīte religious law and an inclination to the so called rationalist (Muʿtazilite) theology in contrast to the traditional Ibādīte scholarship.

The first of the three treatises, the *Kitāb al-Raṣf* is a compendium of Muʿtazilite theology from an Ibādīte point of view. The text may have consisted originally of lectures presented over a period of time and then collected and abridged by a student of the author. The *Kitāb al-Muḥāraba* deals with the law of warfare. The writer distinguishes between the rules applying to the fight against the idolators, the unbelievers of the People of the Book, and the apostates from Islam. The *Sīra* presents Abū l-Munḍir's formal legal opinion concerning the abdication of the Imām aṣ-Ṣalt b. Mālik al-Ḥarūsī forced by an armed revolt. The revolt caused a split in the Ibādīte community and the dispute led to mutual and obligatory dissociation. The author affirms that a legitimately installed Imām cannot be deposed except on three grounds: physical disability to perform one of the religious duties of the Imām, incurrence of a divinely ordained punishment, or refusal to repent a religious offence known by the public. These roughly correspond to the prescriptions concerning the deposition of the Imām (or Caliph) discussed by the Sunnite theologians in the 11th century, only they add the forced absence of the Imām from the centre of power or his captivity.

The edition of each of the texts was based on four manuscripts kept in three private libraries in Oman. As the editors emphasize, all four manuscripts (and a fifth, not considered during the editorial work) are late and corrupt in many places. The frequent appearance of the same mistakes in all of them indicates that they derive from a single original. The editors follow the dubious way of making a fifth text out of four and not even telling the reader which of the readings owe their existence to the editors, or which of the proposed emendations

“were straightforward” and which were those “remaining speculative without much hope that the original text could be fully restored”, according to the wording of the Introduction. In the case of the present volume the persons of the editors ensures the validity of the readings – Professor Madelung being the best recognized authority of the Imāmite and Ibāḍite theology and al-Salimi being an Ibāḍite scholar –, but the principle of edition inherited from the 19th century does not seem reader and researcher friendly nowadays.

Kinga Dévényi

High vs. Low and Mixed Varieties: Status, Norms and Functions across Time and Languages. Ed. by GUNVOR MEJDELL & LUTZ EDZARD. (*Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, im Auftrag der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft hrsg. von Florian C. Reiter, 77.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012. 210 p. ISSN 0567-4980, ISBN 978-3-447-06696-9

The volume under review is based on papers delivered at the “Oslo Workshop on High and Low varieties, diglossia, and language contact: linguistic products and social processes”, held on June 14-15, 2010 at the University of Oslo. Naturally the size of the articles does not allow for the presentation of new findings. Instead, they are state of the arts reports of different linguistic areas in and outside Europe.

The reviewer feels first of all obliged to thank the editors for undertaking the unique task of presenting such a wide range of studies in the sphere of diglossia and related matters in many different languages. Gunvor Mejdell’s article opens the collection and its long title of which nearly sums up its content: “‘High’ and ‘Low’ varieties, diglossia, language contact, and mixing: social processes and linguistic products in a comparative perspective”. She aims at presenting a point of departure for the whole volume in the field of Arabic sociolinguistics and engaging “in a kind of multiple dialog with the other contributors in this volume.” The paper deals with subsections such as diglossia and a typology of language situations, Middle Arabic and diglossia in Semitic, mixed varieties in bilingual and multilingual contexts, contemporary case of mixing and diffuse borders. In her concluding remarks she rightly states that “all the contributors in this volume challenge simplistic views of clear cut dichotomies, discrete and stable varieties, and unchanging status and functional domains.”

As Gunvor Mejdell remarks it was Charles Ferguson who first described a specific kind of language situation by the term ‘diglossia’, giving a narrow definition which distinguishes it from both the ‘standard with dialects’ and the bilin-