

200–07), *The First Brick* (WVDOG 4, pl. 12, etc.), *Another Dragon-Slaying Episode* (KAR 6), *The Theogony of Dunnu* (CT 46, 43), *The River Incantation* (numerous manuscripts). Notes on the editions of all these texts are found on pp. 493–526 and hand copies or photos on pp. 573–605 (= plates 39–71).

Part IV, “Other material related to Enūma Eliš”, deals with the theogonies of Enlil and Anu (pp. 405–26) and with the goddesses Namma, Ningirimma and Ninimma. In his summary (pp. 439–65), Lambert attempts to answer different questions about the composition of the epic, among them the question of its date. Lambert concludes that the epic was composed between Nebuchadnezzar I (c. 1125–1104 BC) and c. 900 BC.

The extraordinarily long time-span during which this book was in the making seems to be the reason for the secondary literature used and quoted not being up-to-date. Thus, e.g., the edition of the KAR 4-myth (*A Unilingual/Bilingual Account of Creation*, pp. 350 ff.) does not mention any edition or translation of the text after 1965, although the text was edited by G. Pettinato on pp. 74–81 of “Das altorientalische Menschenbild und die sumerischen und akkadischen Schöpfungsmythen” and translated by K. Hecker, TUAT III/4, 1994, 606–08 and B. Foster, *Before the Muses* (Bethesda, 2005) 491–3 (for further studies see now www.seal.uni-leipzig.de no. 1.3.16.8). The edition of *Enūma Eliš* does not always refer to the editions of manuscripts from school texts by P. Gesche, “Schulunterricht in Babylonien im ersten Jahrtausend v. Chr.” (AOAT 275, Münster, 2000). For the iconography of monsters (cf. p. 229 n. 11) see F.A.M. Wiggerman and A. Green, “Mischwesen”, *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* vol. 8 (Berlin and New York, 1993–97), 222–64.

The edition of *Enūma eliš* by T.R. Kämmerer and K.A. Metzler, *Das babylonische Weltschöpfungsepos Enūma eliš* (AOAT 375, Münster, 2012) appeared almost simultaneously with *Babylonian Creation Myths*. The two books should be used side-by-side: some new manuscripts are in both volumes in hand copy or photo, and Kämmerer and Metzler present the text far more conveniently as a score. However, Lambert’s edition is more complete since it offers 30 manuscripts more than Kämmerer and Metzler, and Lambert’s thorough study of the epic in the context of the religious history of Mesopotamia is unmatched in Kämmerer/Metzler.

Babylonian Creation Myths is an excellent book and a worthy memorial of a great Assyriologist.

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THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

GEORGE ANTON KIRAZ:

A Grammar of the Syriac Language. Volume 1. Orthography.

lix, 482 pp. Piscataway, NY: Gorgias Press, 2012. ISBN 978 1 4632 0183 8.

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While a postdoctoral researcher the present reviewer well remembers struggling to decipher the system of dots in an early-eighth-century Syriac manuscript, with the limited aid provided by J.B. Segal’s 1953 study *The Diacritical Point and the*

Accents in Syriac, reviewed by the Hebraist G.R. Driver in *BSOAS* 17, 1955, 182, and now republished by Gorgias Press. At the time Driver remarked that Segal led the reader “with assured mastery of his subject, though perhaps not always with limpid lucidity, through schemes of ever-increasing complexity”. Other treatments of orthography and related topics such as the late-nineteenth-century German grammars of Nöldeke and Brockelmann were even sketchier.

Kiraz’s volume has the lucidity that Segal’s lacked, while also covering the various vocalization and orthographic systems more broadly. Trained in the Syrian Orthodox tradition but also holding a Cambridge doctorate in computational linguistics, Kiraz is ideally placed to tackle this complex subject from a modern scientific as well as a historical perspective. He covers a vast range of scholarship, both European and Middle Eastern, medieval to modern. (He also brought up his own children to speak “Kthobonoyo” or Classical Syriac, in the manner of Eliezer Ben-Yehudah, so can also speak knowledgeably about spelling conventions in modern Turoyo children’s books.)

There is a wealth of material contained in this volume. It commences with a definition of modern technical terms (graphs, graphemes and glyphs), before a description of praxis in the earliest manuscripts and of the major figures in Syriac grammatical study into the medieval period, followed by a chronology of developments in the representation of Syriac century-by-century to the present day. The second chapter surveys the consonantal graphemes and the role of *matres lectionis*. This leads naturally into the third chapter, a discussion of vowel graphemes and the history of different pointing systems used for the disambiguation of the numerous homographs that exist in Syriac. Statements are fully referenced to a wide range of earlier grammars or to actual practice in a particular manuscript (usually via Segal). The differences between Eastern and Western Syriac vocalization are noted.

The fourth and fifth chapters deal with the area that puzzles all non-expert readers of Syriac, namely the precise significance of grammatical and punctuation marks. Kiraz also adds common abbreviations and acronyms, and liturgical and musical markers.

Biblical manuscripts are often marked with prosodic accents (compare the accentuation marks in Hebrew scriptural texts). Here Kiraz draws on the work of predecessors, but as someone with first-hand experience of ecclesiastical recitation. The final section in the first part covers numbering systems (used especially for dates and for the ordering of quires), from early inscriptions onwards.

The second part of the volume covers “graphotactics”, patterns of formation of strings of letters, and also the development of the written script. (Kiraz has designed a number of computer fonts, so is well-versed in the various systems of scripts and their ligatures.) The diagrams provided would be of use to anyone teaching or learning how to write Syriac script.

The third section discusses the ways in which Syriac script has been used to write other languages (“alloglottography”), especially Arabic, a combination known as Garshuni; but also Armenian, Greek, Malayalam and Sogdian (a number of other scholarly experts have contributed to this chapter). Conversely, other scripts have sometimes been used to represent Syriac with mixed success, particularly in the case of Roman font, where a lack of a consistent transcription method has hampered the cataloguing of Syriac books in Western libraries.

Finally Kiraz briefly covers technological developments in printing, and the use of typewriters and computers for reproducing Syriac. He provides sixteen colour plates of noteworthy uses of Syriac script, including the earliest Syriac document, the oldest inscription, the famous Orpheus mosaic from Edessa, and various children’s toys with the alphabet. There are indexes for general subjects; technical terms in both English and Syriac; Biblical references; graphs; authorities; and manuscripts.

Given the technical and complex nature of the subject, Kiraz has performed a minor miracle in providing Syriacists with a work that is both comprehensive and highly readable.

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TERESA BERNHEIMER:

The 'Alids: The First Family of Islam, 750–1200.

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This slim book aims to shed light on the emergence of the 'Alids as "a distinct social force" (p. 2) and better to situate the role of the Prophet's family in medieval Islam, from the coming of the Abbasids to the rise of the Seljuks. The introductory chapter defines the structure of the book. Bernheimer's study focuses on the eastern half of the Muslim world, from Iraq to Central Asia, in part because of an imbalance in the source material that makes it more difficult to follow 'Alid trajectories in the Islamic West. Bernheimer is well aware of the limitations of the use of "'Alids" (*'Alawī*) as a category, and also of the ambiguity of the terms *sayyid* and *sharīf* in the sources, and concentrates largely on Ḥasanids, Ḥusaynids, and Ṭālibids. Her work aspires to offer a social history of the 'Alids, from their rebellious movements in early Abbasid times to their emergence as local elites from the third/ninth century onwards and their subsequent rise as social and cultural elites up to the late fifth/eleventh century. In so doing, Bernheimer expands in particular on the work of Kazuo Morimoto and of Biancamaria Scarcia Amoretti, to whom she is clearly indebted.

Chapter 2 is devoted to Ṭālibid genealogies and their role in defining social boundaries. Bernheimer notes that proximity to the Prophet had to be affirmed increasingly over time, which prompted the rise of Ṭālibid genealogies from the mid-third/ninth century onwards. The 'Alids were of course not the only ones with strong genealogical claims and they tend to be discussed *after* the Abbasids in most genealogies. Bernheimer traces the first Ṭālibi genealogy back to the murky figure of the Ḥusaynid Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥasan al-'Aqīqī (d. c. 277/891), in the context of an intense competition towards legitimacy between 'Alids and Abbasids. From this perspective, this discussion would have benefited from more engagement with the *Anonymous History of the Abbasids*, which preserves important evidence of the competition between 'Alids and Abbasids. More broadly, the struggle for the definition of the concept of *ahl al-bayt* predates the Abbasid period (see in particular Moshe Sharon, "The Umayyads as *ahl al-bayt*", *JSAI* 14, 1991, 115–52, duly listed in the bibliography but never integrated into the discussion), and it would have been helpful to frame the argument in a wider context taking into account recent debates about the construction of identities in early Islam. Be that as it may, the genre of 'Alid genealogies flourished from the fourth/tenth century onwards, becoming a true "industry" (p. 31). This prompted not only disagreements between genealogists but also the rise of false claimants and false genealogies. Bernheimer analyses some strategies used to forge false genealogies as well as specific punishments reserved for those who engaged in such falsifications. The incentive for such forgeries was not only a matter of prestige, but also of financial reward, since the family of the Prophet was exempted from a variety