the inclining of the *faṭḥā* towards the *kasra* in the context of its pronunciation; it also includes the inclination of the "*ā*" (*alif*) towards the "*ī*" (*yāʾ*) (See Aryeh Levin, "The authenticity of Sībawayhi's description of the *imāla*", *Jerusalem Studies in Islam* 1998, 15, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 74–92). In the literature on Quranic readings (or *qirāʾāt*) this phenomenon was referred to as *idjāʿ* and examined in conjunction with other related phonological traits such as *idghām* (assimilation), *fatḥ* (raising), and *tashīl* (omission of the *hamza*). Despite being fleetingly treated at different junctures in the *Kitāb*, Sībawayhi devoted six chapters to the discussion of *imāla* (477–482) and these form the subject of Sara's translation and analysis.

The book is divided into three parts: the first offers a general introduction to the translation; the second features the six chapters, translated in a rich translation format incorporating the transliterated Arabic terminology – the Arabic text is included alongside the translation; finally, in the third section, corresponding chapters are devoted to the analysis of the translated materials. A glossary of technical terms together with lists of sundry examples is included in the book's appendixes. It is the case that earlier versions of selected parts of the work were previously published in the *International Journal of Islamic and Arabic Studies* (1994/9, pp. 58–115 and 37–82). Interestingly, a complete German translation of the *Kitāb* by Gustav Jahn was published from 1894–1900. It was based on the original Arabic work edited by Hartwig Derenbourg (1881–85), whose edition is actually used as the source of Sara's translation.

For those familiar with classical Arabic linguistic thought, Sībawayhi's work is an immensely challenging but rewarding text; it confirms not only the incredibly advanced levels of scholarship achieved within the discipline of grammar, but also the distinctly innovative approach to the study of language refined by its author. The significance of Sībawayhi's work is reflected in the attention it continues to receive as evidenced by recent studies, including Ramzi Baalbaki's *The Legacy of the Kitāb: Sībawayhi's Analytical Methods within the Context of the Arabic Grammatical Theory* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2008) and Amal E. Marogy's *Kitāb Sībawayhi: Syntax and Pragmatics*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2010). The intended aim of Sara's translation, which despite its covering only a minor portion of the original text, is to make aspects of this influential work accessible to a wider academic audience. Overcoming "obstacles and challenges posed" by the original work, it is hoped that the translation will foster interest in Sībawayhi's book, inspiring non-experts and experts in Arabic to learn more about his theoretical accomplishments in the field of linguistic thought. Although it might be argued that such translations would not necessarily be required by those who are able to grapple with the language of the original materials, such efforts do draw attention to the richness and intricacy of the early sources and thereby allow a relative gauging of the sophistication of the theories and constructs developed within the tradition of Arabic grammatical thought.

Mustafa Shah

ETAN KOHLBERG and MOHAMMAD ALI AMIR-MOEZZI (ed. and trans.):
Revelation and Falsification: The Kitāb al-qiraʾāt *of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Sayyārī. Critical Edition with an Introduction and Notes.*
(Texts and Studies on the Qurʾān.) viii, 363 pp. (English), 201 pp.

(Arabic). Leiden: Brill, 2009. €159. ISBN 978 90 04 16782 7.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X11000139

The book under review comprises a critical edition of a third/ninth century text on
the subject of *qirā'āt* (*variae lectiones*) collated by the Shii author Aḥmad
b. Muḥammad al-Sayyārī (d. *c.* 3rd/9th century). According to its editors,
al-Sayyārī's work is one of the earliest surviving Imāmī Shii literary texts devoted
to the genre of *variae lectiones* and is of "major importance both for the doctrinal
history of Shīʿism and, more generally, for the history of the redaction of the
Qur'an". The critical apparatus is impressive. The introduction is divided into six
sections, the first three written by Amir-Moezzi (pp. 1–30), and sections 4–6
(pp. 30–53) by Kohlberg. The detailed notes cover the referencing of a given dictum
cited in the text; cross-referencing to selected works on *qirā'āt*; biographies of nar-
rators who feature in the manuscript; and explanatory comments on the Arabic text
(pp. 55–289). Additionally, the paragraphs of the Arabic manuscript, extending over
201 pages, are individually referenced. The editors have previously published a
French version (in *Journal Asiatique*, 293, 2005, 663–722).

Works on *qirā'āt* usually comprise inventories of readings linked to the textual
transmission and recitation of the Quran. Within the traditional corpora many differ-
ences between individual readings tend to be infinitesimal in countenance, occurring
at the morpho-syntactic and morpho-phonological levels of the text. They preserve
vocalic as well as consonantal variants. Although technically referred to as "var-
iants", many of these are not viewed as deviations from the established text, but
liturgically valid alternatives. However, the literature also preserves types of variants
which constitute distinctive departures from the standard skeletal text (*rasm*); these
feature consonantal variants along with graphic instances of exegetical interpolation
and modifications in the word order of certain verses. Traditionally, the view is that
the skeletal text of the Quran provides the nucleus around which these readings are
finely constelled.

The *Kitāb al-qirā'āt* follows the conventional order of the Quran, citing the *lec-
tiones*, which are embedded in vignettes and supported by *isnād*s, under their rel-
evant chapters. Many of these readings are confined to selected verses within a
specified chapter and feature lexical substitution as well as vocalic, morpho-
syntactic, and consonantal variants. There are numerous instances of textual interp-
olation, although occasionally it is difficult to ascertain whether the author is
presenting a "variant", which is believed to be a record of the originally revealed
text, or merely resorting to exegetical paraphrase. Nonetheless, the instances of tex-
tual interpolation are distinctly polemical in tone; they are aimed at promoting what
Kohlberg describes as "an Imāmī message", which is fleshed out using exegetical
dicta and glosses (p. 41). Such readings include explicit references to the caliph
ʿAlī and his immediate family, the issue of *wilāya*, and other motifs connected
with the history of Shiism. Many of these are ruminated over in the reports accom-
panying the main text on *lectiones*, although readings of a "neutral" countenance
also occur. Kohlberg maintains that "the issue of the integrity of the Qur'an features
prominently" in al-Sayyārī's text. (p. 41). He posits that the title of the work
"reflects the belief that the text of the original Qur'an had been tampered with"
(p. 46). In al-Sayyārī's introduction this construct of *taḥrīf* (falsification) is pre-
sented through a series of fragmented statements: a number of these comprise see-
mingly oblique references to inconsistencies in the transmission of the originally
revealed text; others are much more forthright, claiming that additions as well as
omissions were an insidious feature of the officially redacted Qur'an. Kohlberg

adds that "it was doubtful whether al-Sayyārī's aim was to encourage his readers to recite the Qur'an in accordance with the *qirā'āt* which he cited. Instead, he must have seen his task as that of recording and preserving those readings which the Imāmī community regarded as reliable" (p. 45). One might conclude that it is equally conceivable that the work had an exegetical function, being primarily aimed at buttressing the concept of *taḥrīf*, which had acquired greater form and definition in the third/ninth century. Significantly, al-Sayyārī's own reputation and standing are vigorously denounced in the classical Shiite biographical literature; materials he transmitted were treated with open suspicion and shunned within mainstream Shiism.

The editors' preface states that certain Shiis believed that "the text of the Qur'an was intentionally corrupted in order to delete all reference to the rights of ʿAlī and his successors" and that "such views, though not often expressed in recent decades, were widely held in the first centuries of Islam" (p. viii). The construct of *taḥrīf* has a somewhat obscure history both in terms of its provenance and semantic compass, which appears to have gone through several phases of gestation; therefore, the use of the phrases "widely held" and "first centuries" gives the inaccurate impression of a uniform notion of *taḥrīf ab initio*, following the introduction of the ʿUthmanic codex. Texts devoted to *taḥrīf* are ascribed to various individuals who precede al-Sayyārī such as Muḥammad b. Khālid al-Barqī (fl. early 3rd/9th century); additionally, there are statements attributed to eminent Shiite authorities, but these surface in the later literature. Moezzi does point out that "in the Buwayhid period an original esoteric suprarational tradition which upheld the doctrine of *taḥrīf* was marginalized as scholars were either constrained or advocated a rapprochement with Sunni orthodoxy", and that even figures such as Ibn Bābawayhi passed "in silence over the many traditions which mention falsification, erasure, or alteration" (pp. 26–7). Even so, there is scant evidence to suggest that *taḥrīf* was a fully developed doctrine before the end of the second/eighth century. This explains why, within Twelver Shiism, revered scholars such as Ibn Bābawayhi (d. 381/991), al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044), and Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) soundly denounced the notion of *taḥrīf*; it was not shelved for reasons of expediency. Critically, in an earlier study Kohlberg concluded that "the internal discussion and dissension within the Imāmite community on the attitude to the ʿUthmānic Codex is a product of the intricate political and religious history of Shīʿism. The bitter disappointment at ʿAlī's failure to win the caliphate after Muḥammad's death and to bequeath it to his descendants was at the root of the ensuing allegations against the first three Caliphs", adding that "the traditions, even if mostly forged, which implied that deliberate omissions had occurred grew out of the deep frustration and reflect widely held views among the Imāmites" (Etan Kohlberg, "Some notes on the Imāmite attitude to the Qur'an", *Islamic Philosophy and the Classical Tradition*. Oxford: OUP, 1972, p. 219). In an unrelated study it has been suggested that extremist Shiite groups were not originally responsible for propagating views about the Quran and *taḥrīf*, but that the reports used to sustain such discourses emanated from Sunnite circles (Hossein Modarressi, "Early debates on the integrity of the Qur'an", *Studia Islamica*, 1983, 77). However, one needs to bear in mind that in Sunni circles these materials were not being used to fortify the notion of *taḥrīf*, but to facilitate the adumbration of an idealized history of the collection of the Quran.

Interestingly, referring to various Sunni reports, Moezzi contends that "despite all attempts by 'orthodox scholars' to conceal differences, an examination of the uncertainties and divergences found in the sources clearly shows that a great protest movement against the official version of the Qur'an took place from the very

beginning"; it is even suggested that "it took many centuries for the version called ʿUthmanic to be accepted by all Muslims" (p. 23). One does wonder which sources are being referred to: the condemnation of Ibn Miqsam and Ibn Shanabūdh along with the significance of the codex of Ubayy is fleetingly mentioned; and earlier in his introduction reports on the collection of the Quran are discussed. Still, none of these materials are contextually relevant to the claims that there was "a great protest movement". Indeed, one suspects that pronounced arguments among early Sunni luminaries about the devotional importance of *lectiones*, together with variegated discussions on conceptual constructs such as abrogation, are being inadvertently identified with the developed notion of *taḥrīf*. Fittingly, John Wansbrough expressed the view that even non-canonical (*amṣār*) codices (metropolitan or indigenous) did not display the "differences either among themselves or from the ʿUthmānic recension which are alleged to have provoked the editorial measures attributed to the third caliph" and that even the non-canonical variants ascribed to the figure of Ibn Masʿūd were in his view "not genuinely independent of the ʿUthmanic recension" (*Quranic Studies*. Oxford: OUP, 1977, 44–5). The works of the early grammarians, including luminaries such as Sībawayhi (d. *c*. 180/796), al-Farrāʾ (d. 207/822), and al-Akhfash al-Awsaṭ (d. 215/830), hold the keys to unravelling the intricacies surrounding the historical imposition of the ʿUthmānic codices, but these have not been discussed in the introduction nor are they used in the notes section. Yet, if one were to discount the pro-Imāmī readings which feature in the *Kitāb al-qirāʾāt*, the remaining *lectiones* would certainly be consistent with the form of variants featured in the literature of *qirāʾāt*. Accordingly, al-Sayyārī's text is crucial not only for gauging the doctrinal development of the notion of *taḥrīf* in the early third/ninth century, but also, in certain respects, it provides an evident indication of the textual authority achieved by the ʿUthmānic codex.

Mustafa Shah

SAUL KELLY:
War and Politics in the Desert: Britain and Libya during the Second World War.
(The Society for Libyan Studies.) 256 pp. London: Silphium Press, 2010. ISBN 978 1 900971 09 6.
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Scholarship on the North African Campaign during the Second World War has focused principally on military operations in general or has paid particular attention to the battles of El Alamein (in the Egyptian costal area) or to Operation Torch (the American and British invasion of French North Africa). There is no satisfactory study to explain how the war affected the Italian colony of Libya. Saul Kelly's book fills this void. *War and Politics in the Desert: Britain and Libya during the Second World War* does not scrutinize the military operations, but rather the British political debates on the future of the Italian colony of Libya.

Framed by a prologue and an epilogue, the seven chapters are grouped into three sections corresponding to the chronological sequence of the war and to the three main political facts which, according to the author, played an important role in shaping the future of Libya thereafter. The prologue ("Italy, Britain and Libya 1911 to 1940") briefly outlines the main events of the Italian colonial presence in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, the two former Ottoman provinces which, at the