

his aspiration to foreground the performative and interactional aspects of the commentator's activity. This approach yields excellent results where our textual sources preserve references to performative life settings, as in the case of al-Bājī and the lively commentarial sessions in ninth-/fifteenth-century Cairo. In other cases, as, for instance, al-Suyūfī's short and dry commentaries (pp. 129–39), such sessions are not attested in the sources. Their absence, noted by Blecher (p. 131), as well as the exegetically demanding treatment of al-Bukhārī's cryptic chapter headings (pp. 111–28), suggest that *ḥadīth* commentary might be restricted to a narrower and properly trained audience, away from the trappings of public performance whereby scholarly excellence and rhetorical mastery were harnessed in pursuit of social capital.

In the end, Blecher has contributed to both understanding and endorsing the canonicity of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Transregional and transtemporal in its sociological value and intellectual appeal, this *ḥadīth* corpus has become an essential part of Muslim identity and modern scholars' drive to understand it.

A few errors crept into the book: p. 4: the Prophet died in the year 11/632, not 10/632 as stated by Blecher; p. 72: *salāf* should be *salaf*; pp. 75–6, and 223, note 31: *maratayn* should be *marratayn*; p. 85: *al-iṣṭilāḥ al-miṣriyya* should be, according to the author's transliteration conventions, *al-iṣṭilāḥ al-miṣrī*; p. 95: *al-Muwaṭṭa'* is a work associated with Mālik b. Anas, not Anas b. Mālik; p. 145: *al-nūr al-sāfir* stands for "revealing light" rather than "travelling light"; p. 259: *al-Jām'i al-ṣaḥīḥ* should be *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*.

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CHRISTIAN C. SAHNER:

Christian Martyrs under Islam: Religious Violence and the Making of the Muslim World.

xxi, 235 pp. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. ISBN 978 0 691 17910 0.

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As the word "Making" in the title suggests, this excellent monograph is only concerned with the early centuries of Islam, more specifically the period c. 660–860. Although a number of the sources used in this book have been around for a long time, the fact that they are in a variety of different languages and often published in obscure places means that there has been no previous attempt to consider them as a whole, let alone to seek to place them in the wider context of the emerging Muslim World. A few of the relevant texts are to be found in chronicles, but for the most part they are in the form of hagiographical narratives, a genre notoriously problematic for the historian. In his Introduction Sahner offers some eminently sensible guidelines on how best to approach these texts. In classifying the different types of martyrdom, three main categories are distinguished: martyrdom on reversion to Christianity after a Christian had converted to Islam; on conversion from Islam to Christianity; and as a result of openly insulting Islam.

The first of these categories comprises the largest number of martyrs, and contains several subgroups, among them slaves and prisoners of war, the latter contributing the highest numbers; in the case of individuals, their conversion to Islam was

sometimes a matter of ambiguity or dispute. Among the various texts discussed under this first category are the Armenian Life of Vahan, the Arabic Life of 'Abd al-Masih, a notice on Cyrus of Harran in a Syriac Chronicle, and the Lives of Elias of Heliopolis (Baalbek) and of Bacchos in Greek. To the two martyrs from Egypt whom Sahner goes on to mention, one might add an anonymous third, who features in one of the Greek Synaxaria included in the apparatus to H. Delehaye's edition of the Constantinopolitan Synaxarion for 11 December. A Christian young man (*meirax*, lad), evidently serving as a soldier in a camp named Teneste, decides to convert. His horrified parents prayed for his return to Christianity; they find their prayers answered when he turns up at home saying "I want to become a Christian again and be with you". His parents, now fearful for their own safety and of the danger of reprisals, tell him to confess his faith openly before the emir, but without letting on that they know anything about the matter. He does so, and (a significant detail) is given several chances to recant before he is finally executed.

The second category, conversion from Islam to Christianity, is best attested by three extensive accounts, the problematic Life of Antony al-Qurashi, in Arabic, and the Lives of David of Dwin (Dabil), in Armenian, and of Abo of Tiflis (Tbilisi), in Georgian. The third category involves those who brought martyrdom upon themselves through provocation. A chief witness for this is the detailed Life of Peter of Capitolias executed in Transjordan in 715 at the orders of al-Walid. Surviving only in Georgian translation, this Life goes back to a lost Greek original very probably written shortly after Peter's death by someone with a knowledge of the local topography. From Umayyad Spain there is also the much better known and much studied case of the Cordoba martyrs (between 850 and 859); according to some scholars these martyrs were little more than the literary fiction of the authors of their martyrdoms, Eulogius and Peter Alvarus. Sahner handles the problems connected with these accounts in an eminently judicial manner, and he points to a background context of the growth in sophistication of anti-Muslim polemic in general by the mid-ninth century.

After his discussion of the various texts that fall under these three main categories, Sahner turns to the judicial process in the execution of martyrs, and looks at the material from the perspective of developing Islamic law. One important point which emerges is that the actions of the authorities were reactive, rather than proactive, and in many cases the individual is offered the opportunity to avoid the death penalty (this is well brought out in the account of the young man in the Synaxarion, mentioned above).

A penultimate chapter, entitled "Creating saints and communities", considers the after-life, as it were, of the martyrdoms. How did some martyrdoms get written up, what was the aim of their authors, and how did the martyrdoms function in the wider Christian communities? One very striking fact emerges: the majority of the surviving martyr acts are of Melkite provenance, and it is quite striking that our knowledge of Miaphysite martyrs comes from Chronicles, and not from martyr acts. The silence of the East Syriac sources is all the more striking seeing that there are several martyr acts of prominent converts to Christianity from Zoroastrianism from the end of the Sasanian Empire, notably Mihrangushnasp/George (615), and Isho'sabran (620/1), for both of whom long martyr acts survive. No really satisfactory explanation for this imbalance in hagiographical production seems to be available.

The concluding chapter, entitled "Making of the Muslim world", turns to some of the wider historical questions raised by the literature on martyrdoms; in particular, what does the apparent increase in martyrdom in the latter part of the eighth century signify? One among several suggestions that Sahner offers is that this was a period

when Muslims and non-Muslims first really “came into contact and competition with each other as members of an integrated society”, and were no longer sharply divided as conquerors and conquered.

This is an important contribution to the study of one particular aspect of the early period of the transition from a majority Christian society to a majority Muslim one. By deftly combining close attention to detail with a constant alertness to wider historical issues at stake, Sahner has succeeded in providing a well-balanced, well-informed and readable account of the phenomenon of martyrdom under the Umayyads and early Abbasids.

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MIKLOS MURANYI:

The First Compendium of Ibadi Law: The Mudawwana by Abu Ghanim Bishr b. Ghanim al-Khurasani.

(Studies on Ibadism and Oman.) 159 pp. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2018. €38. ISBN 978 3 487 15678 1.

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In this new work on the *Mudawwana* of Abū Ghānim Bishr b. Ghānim al-Khurāsānī, Professor Muranyi provides a significant contribution to the growing literature on the formative period of Ibadi *fiqh* in the second/eighth century by laying the necessary analytical groundwork for an eventual critical edition of the text. The *Mudawwana* is not merely the first compendium of Ibadi law, as suggested by the title of Muranyi’s study; it is also one of the most important legal works of the early period of Ibadi jurisprudence, a product of one of the leading scholars of the late second and early third century AH. Abū Ghānim’s work, then, sheds light on the progression of legal thought and of the status of the Ibadi circles in Iraq during this period. However, such an analysis of content must rest first on an understanding of the chronology of the work’s collection, over which Muranyi casts doubt. Such doubt renders this study necessary prior to a dedicated monograph on the *Mudawwana*.

Muranyi divides his focus in this study between first elaborating his theory about the collection of the work and then exploring its content and context. In the first half of the book he thus suggests that the arrangement of the chapters and units of the text across different manuscripts, as well as the repetition of legal topics and questions, are evidence that the collection of the work postdates its author. Evidence for his theory comes both from the work itself and from similar works. The interpolations in the published editions of the text, for instance, might be traced to source manuscripts when the pages of double-folded booklets fall out of order and are copied without correction. Likewise, he references his earlier work on the *Mudawwana* of Saḥnūn b. Sa’īd (d. 240/854) as an analogous collection where autonomous units sorted into bundles of booklets make up the whole, and over time, copyists gain access to slightly different sets of bundles. His conclusion, having established the late collection of the work, is that with further study it will be possible to produce a text closer in form to the hypothetical old codex, which is missing.