

RAMZI BAALBAKI:

The Arabic Lexicographical Tradition: From the 2nd/8th to the 12th/18th Century.

(Handbook of Oriental Studies.) x, 489 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2014. £138.

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Volume 107 of Brill's invaluable Handbook of Oriental Studies series is a long-awaited desideratum in the field of Arabic studies: a descriptive analysis of the Arabic lexicographical tradition in the Classical period (8–18th centuries CE). Covering more than 1,000 years of scholarship, the book comes with a most useful bibliography of primary (pp. 419–52) and secondary (pp. 452–66) sources which direct the reader to further reading and demonstrate the erudition of the author, as well as an index of names (pp. 466–76), and one of book titles (pp. 477–89) which make it easy to retrieve information, and most of all testify to the great wealth of material analysed here.

The book's structure could not be any clearer: it consists of a preface (pp. vii–x) and an epilogue (pp. 402–17) which frame the three main chapters that include almost 2,000 footnotes bearing witness to the author's diligence and accuracy. Chapter 1 (pp. 1–61) sets the theoretical background of the book, discussing various aspects of lexicography extending from the background of linguistic study, the collection of data, and the use of difficult words in lexicography to contemporary scholarship. Following Ibn Sīda's (d. 458/1066) terminology, the author analyses the two types of lexical writing: *mubawwab* (onomasiological and specialized lexica proceeding from meaning to sign) and *mujannas* (semasiological lexica proceeding from sign to meaning). Chapter 2 (pp. 62–278) is dedicated to *mubawwab* lexica, which are briefly introduced and then discussed in 11 sections (with up to 8 subsections each) according to their nature, e.g. proverbs, solecisms, homonyms and synonyms, or morphological patterns, including a subsection for multi-thematic works. In Chapter 3 (pp. 279–401) the author deals with *mujannas* lexica, which aim to include all Arabic roots and (most of) their derivatives, and which Baalbaki, after introducing them briefly, characterizes according to their system of ordering lemmata, namely the phonetic-permutative system (by place of articulation of the first root literal), the alphabetical system, and the rhyme system (by last root literal then generally by first, second and – if applicable – third literal) the widespread use of which is particularly due to al-Jawharī's (d. c. 400/1010) al-*Ṣaḥāḥ* (p. 280).

Baalbaki discusses all systems of ordering and their pioneers and peculiarities extensively, and argues that Ibn al-Sikkīt (d. 244/858) was the first to arrange lexical items according to their final letters, namely in his chapter on the nominal patterns *fa'l* and *fa'al* in his *Iṣlāḥ al-mantiq* – contrary to other chapters – although the reason for this remains unknown (p. 365). He strongly argues in favour of Arabic lexicography being the product of indigenous factors rather than an Arabized form of a borrowed system based on al-Khalīl's explorative method of "sampling" (*dhawāq*) letters to identify their places of articulation by pronouncing them (p. 55), the technical terms that still had preserved their non-technical meanings and demonstrate innovation, especially in al-Khalīl's introduction (pp. 59, 295 f.), and al-Khalīl's original principles to exhaust all possible roots of Arabic (pp. 290–6).

As the author argues convincingly, there are no distinct historical stages to enhance our understanding of Arabic lexicography as proposed by Aḥmad Amīn, but it is marked by the coexistence of the two types of dictionaries: thesauri

(*mubawwab*) and lexica (*mujannas*; pp. 46 f.). Rather, one has to place it within the wider context of Islamic scholarship in order fully to understand its significance since lexicography evolved around the study of the Quran (p. 2) and possibly owes the introduction of *isnād* to the study of hadith (p. 23). Although closely linked to the study of grammar, it is clear from the beginning that it is the lexicographer's task to explain the meaning of lexical items, as grammarians do not even explain the meaning of rare lexical items they use to illustrate their arguments (p. 60) and a quite striking difference between lexicography and grammar, as exemplified by the works of al-Khalīl and his student Sībawayhi, is that there are 428 references to hadith in al-Khalīl's *Kitāb al-'ayn*, while there are only seven or eight references in Sībawayhi's *al-Kitāb* (p. 30), and grammarians were stricter with regard to which poets to cite (p. 35).

In a balanced and comprehensive study like this, the author also discusses well-known shortcomings of Arabic lexicography: the lack of criteria for the authenticity and correctness of cited lexical items (for amusing anecdotes about linguistic fabrication see pp. 24–7); disagreements about the meaning of a lexical item resulting in it having several meanings (pp. 78 f.); the absence of a template determining the patterns to be included and the order followed which resulted in some lexical gaps (p. 412); the high degree of dependence on earlier lexicographers (pp. 153, 169, 349 ff.) which might explain why, for example, fifty of the words used by al-Jāhīz (d. 255/869) are not found in dictionaries; or specific meanings of certain words (pp. 412 f.), as well as obscurities like circularity or the use of *shawāhid* that do not elucidate the meaning of lexical items which reflect the absence of standard criteria for unambiguous lexical definition (p. 414).

By relying on Bedouin informants (up to the fourth/tenth century, p. 31) and focusing more on strange, rare or even obsolete (*gharīb*) words including *addād* (contronyms or autoantonyms like English sanction or oversight) injustice was done to words commonly used in spoken or literary Arabic and to literary and scientific neologisms (p. 409). Yet lexicography did not only preserve what was considered to be the correct usage of words and systematized the available linguistic data (p. 6) but it also documented Bedouin culture and poetry which would otherwise have been lost (p. 313). Offering as complete a history of the Arabic lexicographical tradition as available sources allow at present, Baalbaki has once again achieved great things by producing what will surely become a standard reference work for scholars and students alike.

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AHMED EL SHAMSY:

The Canonization of Islamic Law: A Social and Intellectual History.

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Ahmed El Shamsy's book, *The Canonization of Islamic Law*, is a successful effort to locate Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī's (d. 204/820) written corpus in both its intellectual and social contexts. Over the past several years, El Shamsy has made major contributions to the study of Islamic law by arguing persuasively for the authenticity of the *Umm* and *Risāla* of al-Shāfi'ī, and discovering the *Mukhtaṣar*