

SORBY, Karol R.: *Moderná spisovná arabčina. Diel II.* (Modern Written Arabic. Part II.). Banská Bystrica, Filologická fakulta UMB 1999. 416 pp.

*Modern Written Arabic. Part II* (Part-II, in what follows) is the second and final part of an ambitious manual of MWA, the only fully codified variety of Arabic used in the written and, less frequently, prestigious oral communication throughout the Arab world. Designed for the college-level instruction in Arabic, the book, together with the first part (*Moderná spisovná arabčina. Diel I* /Part-I, 1998/), will be used at Slovak and partly also Czech universities as a reliable teaching and learning device. Both parts constitute an organic and well-balanced whole based on the author's long teaching experience as well as the most recent results attained worldwide in the field of the second language instruction. As the first manual of MWA ever written in the Slovak language, it is a pioneer work that fills a serious gap on the Slovak book market.

As against Part-I, designed for an introductory course (phonology, graphical system, verbal and nominal morphology, and basic syntactic structures), Part-II has to cover the needs of more advanced students of the synthetic norm of Arabic. Both volumes, each on its level, are designed to develop communicative competence in written Arabic and to foster a reliable speaking proficiency at the prestigious level of oral communication. This goal is supported by the well-planned organization of grammar, the careful selection and graded provision of the lexical material (Part-I: cca 1400; Part-II: cca 3000–3500 lexical units), and by expertly planned exercises and drills of various types.

Part-II, designed for an intermediate and partly also an advanced level of instruction, offers 20 lessons organized in the following way:

- grammar: each lesson deals with a limited number of specific aspects of Arabic grammar as related to the sentence structures just analysed; morphological topics treated are based on widely expanded and systemized data introduced in Part-I, constituting material basis for an integral system of syntax from very basic syntactic relationships up to the involved structures of complex sentences;

- drills: despite a variety of drill types in each lesson (translation, transformation, substitution, etc.), all of them substantially follow a unique scheme: input – output – correction – recurrent drilling. The MWA-orientation of the manual can perhaps most convincingly be felt in the drill sections and in the textual parts of the book. Here, the Arabic studied is quite patently presented as a modern and really living medium of prestigious communication;

- texts: in tune with the general orientation, the texts included reflect very various aspects of the present-day Arab reality: Arab countries; social and cultural life; cultural heritage; glorious events of the past; daily news; scenes from everyday life; etc., etc.

In order to offer some preliminary information about the phenomenon of diglossia, typical of the Arabophone space, Part-II presents some short true-to-life conversation texts in a slightly analyticized version of MWA. The deviations from the synthetic norm are restricted to phenomena typical of prestigious oral communication: deletion of the 'i'rāb-type inflectional markers, represented by short vowels, in the pre-pausal position (case and verbal mood), as well as some other less outstanding features.

As I already had the opportunity to stress in my review of Part-I (*Filologická revue* 1, 1998, pp. 72–74, Banská Bystrica, FiF UMB), the number of potential users would, no doubt, markedly increase, if the book had a Key to exercises (possibly also tape recording). The clarity of exposition, the overall clearness of presentation and easy accessibility of data would make of this manual a reliable self-teaching device.

In spite of the fact that Sorby's manual offers a number of highly interesting innovative features, some grammatical phenomena, though included and rightly treated in the book, would perhaps deserve separate treatment under their own headings or, at least, be linked together by way of cross-references. In the case of transitivity and its modified manifestations (causativity, factitivity), for instance, the relevant derivational procedure is treated in Part-I (233–252) as part of the 2–10 derivational system of derived verbal and verbonominal stems (‘*alima* > ‘*allama*, ‘*a‘lama*). In Part-II, the particle *bi-* is presented, correctly once again, as a transitivizer / causativizer of verbal predicates involving intransitive / reflexive verbs (V intr./refl. + *bi-* > V trans./causat.), as in: *taqaddama* “to present oneself” > *taqaddama bi(hi)* = *qaddama (hu)*). In view of the relative complexity of this feature, it would perhaps been helpful to the student to be cross-referenced back to the derivational rendering of causativity. The same holds for the verbs of the type *ġa‘ala*, operating as both inchoative (*ġa‘altu ‘uġanni*) and causative/factive (*ġa‘altuhu yuġanni*) verbs. When cross-referenced, the phenomenon would have been presented as part of a trichotomous system of derivational, syntactioc and lexical procedures.

Of course, remarks of this type reflect only a rather subjective point of view and an alternative solution of the problem, and they do not lower the soundness of the methodology applied by the author or the merit of the general arrangement of the book.

The manual will be of invaluable help to the Slovak and Czech university students of Modern Written Arabic. With an additional Key to the exercises or other self-control aids, it would become an excellent teach-yourself device in this domain of language instruction, as well.

Ladislav Drozdík

GOMBÁR, Eduard: *Moderní dějiny islámských zemí* (Modern History of the Islamic Countries). Prague, Charles University, Karolinum Publishing House 1999. 427 pp.

The number of scientific works dealing with the history of Asian and African countries is still insufficient in Czech and Slovak historiography. The more must be welcomed this original synthetic work by a prominent Czech Arabist and historian, expert on Arab and Islamic history, associate professor in the Institute of Near East and Africa at the Faculty of Philosophy in the Charles University in Prague.

Eduard Gombár set himself a difficult task in writing the modern history of the Near and Middle East and North Africa from the middle of the eighteenth century up to the end of the First World War. This comprehensive history of Islam during a period of nearly two hundred years is divided very thoughtfully into twenty four chapters. It is undoubtedly the result of many years of a successful symbiosis of the author's teaching and research work at the university. The reader can witness also his intimate acquaintance with the region under consideration due to his frequent shorter and longer stays in many Middle Eastern countries.

The core of the work is the exposition of the political, social and economic development of the Ottoman Empire (that from the beginning of the sixteenth century included greater part of the territories inhabited by the Arabs) and Persia, comprising the three circles of civilization: Arab, Turkish and Persian. The process of the decline of the Ottoman Empire starting in the seventeenth century is seen as irreversible despite sincere efforts of different rulers to introduce reforms or modernization. The author skilfully pointed to the crucial reasons for this unwelcomed development. In his explanation he delicately brought together problems concerning internal development (modernization,