

OLIVERIUS, Jaroslav and ONDRÁŠ, František: *Moderní spisovná arabština. II. díl.* (Al-Lughā al-ʿarabīya al-fuṣṣḥā), (Modern Literary Arabic). Vol. II. Prague, SET OUT Publishing House 2009, 151 pp. (In Czech), ISBN 978-80-86277-70-7.

This is the long awaited second part of a much anticipated text book for university students by two eminent specialists in the field of teaching literary Arabic from the Institute of Near Eastern and African Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy, Charles University in Prague. The book is the result of many years' teaching and is backed by first-hand experience. The book is intended for teaching in classes because the authors admit that using it in a "teach yourself" way would be extremely difficult. In this volume the Arabic letters of the "traditional Arabic" font are also used.

The second volume represents a natural continuation of the first volume which appeared two years ago. While the first volume dealt with the grammar (morphology) of modern literary Arabic, especially the system of nouns and verbs, the second volume is centred on the syntax of Arabic, namely on types of principal and subordinate clauses and phraseology.

It is designed for students who have mastered the grammar and vocabulary of the first volume. The second volume is also topic-based and its twelve lessons or chapters include material of various genres (academic writing, journalistic writing and anecdotal materials) and periods (classical and modern). As far as possible the authors have attempted to choose topics which will not date too quickly and which will appeal to differing student interests. From the point of view of the mechanics of language learning, the topic-based approach allows students to tackle vocabulary and structures in a coherent and concentrated manner.

The first chapter provides a general background to the Arab world and explains the conditional sentences. The second chapter deals with the four seasons of the year and explains the adverbial clauses of time. The third chapter makes the student familiar with problems of education and explains adverbial clauses of concession. The fourth chapter treats the economic dimensions of the trade exchange between the Arab states and explains adverbial clauses of comparison. The fifth chapter deals with the development of Arab industry in the shadow of international competition and explains adverbial clauses of result. The sixth chapter examines whether the Arab reformists' dreams came true and explains the adversative clauses. The seventh chapter discusses Arab civilization in the era of Arab resurrection and explains clauses of comparison (degree). The eighth chapter treats the problem of the unpleasant condition of becoming infected with a cold and analyses the disjunctive clauses. The ninth chapter gives a brief history of Arab writing and explains the usage of the particle "fa-". The tenth chapter gives an outline of the Arabian Peninsula during the al-Jāhiliyya and explains some remaining grammatical issues. The eleventh chapter discusses "television mania" and explains optative clauses, clauses of warning and clauses of exclamation. The last chapter is dedicated to the great Czech scholar and explorer Alois Musil. There is a collection of texts for further reading at the end of the book.

The permanent repetition of phrases, proverbs and sayings as well as historical facts, cultural traditions and the appropriate terminology do not only aim to illustrate the grammatical or syntactic parts of the respective lessons but also achieve a growing

knowledge about the Arab world. The exercises are subdivided into different kinds and help the student not to forget basic structures. Using this book, the student of Arabic will be able to learn the morphology and syntax of modern written Arabic. It is well-known that even educated Arabs sometimes encounter considerable difficulties in using their own language according to rules which remain valid and nearly unchanged since the revelation of the Koran fifteen centuries ago. However, after using this book with the help of an experienced teacher every student who is diligent and has a little bit of talent and above all is also well-motivated can eventually attain quite a good command of Arabic. The authors have presented a valuable contribution to the teaching of modern literary Arabic which will be appreciated both by teachers and students.

Karol Sorby

SCHULER, Barbara: *Of Death and Birth. Icakkiyamman, a Tamil Goddess, in Ritual and Story*. With a Film on DVD by the Author. Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag 2009. 501 pp. ISBN 978-3-447-05844-5

The book under review is the 8th volume of the series Ethno-Indology, Heidelberg Studies in South Asian Rituals. It is a revised version of a PhD dissertation submitted to the University of Hamburg in 2004. The author devotes her attention to the study of the relationship between an oral text and ritual in southern India. The text is represented by the southern line of the ancient story of the goddess Nili whose name is Icakki there. The problem is studied in great detail and from many aspects.

The book is divided into three main parts: Texts (pp. 5 – 217), Interpreting the Text (pp. 219 – 230), and The Living Ritual Context (pp. 231 – 343). These parts are followed by Final Conclusions and three Appendices, Appendix A: A Tabular Summary of the Ritual Sequence which also comprises 7 photos, Appendix B: A Tabular Comparison of Text versions by Topic, and quite a long Appendix C: The Encyclopaedic Apparatus: The 'Complete' Icaki *katai* (pp. 361 – 475).

As has been already said, the basis of this work is *Nili Katai/IK* (The Story of Nili/Icakki). B. Schuler had access to ten hand-written paper manuscripts of this story copied from the originals. She marked them as N1 – N10 and introduced short characteristics of all of them on pages 11– 21. The author has chosen the version N1 from the village of Tollaviḷai as a base text for editing and translating. However, before doing so she tried to trace the story of Nili throughout the history of Tamil literature. She also pointed to resemblances of the Nili story in a Kannada and a Malayalam work as well as to references to Nili in the popular tradition. The author also devoted due attention to the genre of the story, the story type, the title of the text, she discussed the opening of the story, the narrative and performance style of the *katai*, and the structure of the story.

The core of Part One presents, as has already been mentioned, a critical edition of the Icakkiyamman *Katai* (N1) (pp. 63 – 144) and the translation of the story with