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The 'fictional' is viewed from the angle of a historian in Albrecht Noth's contribution (*Fiktion als historische Quelle*, 472-487). The pandemic plague, as reflected in popular thought and traditions in early Islamic society, is examined by Lawrence I. Conrad (*Umayyad at Sargh: the evolution of an Umayyad tradition on flight from the plague*, 488-528).

Highly stimulative studies of this collection embrace a wide range of literary branches, both in classical and modern Arabic literature, examined within the common methodological framework suggested by the colloquium. The volume will be read with profit by all serious students and researchers working in the domain of Arabic literature.

Ladislav Drozdík

SORBY, Karol R.: *Moderná spisovná arabčina. Diel II.* (Modern Written Arabic. Part II). Banská Bystrica, Filologická fakulta UMB 1998. 394 pp.

*Modern Written Arabic. Part I* is a carefully revised and innovated version of its previous Slovak edition *Moderná spisovná arabčina I.A – I.B*, Ústav jazykovej a odborné prípravy zahraničných študentů Univerzity Karlovy, Praha 1989. The substantially completed and thoroughly revised textual and lexical material of both volumes was brought together into a harmonious whole constituting material basis of the present edition.

The manual, backed by long experience of the college level teaching of Arabic, presents a comprehensive basic course for beginner students with no previous knowledge of the language. It consists of 28 graded lessons subdivided into grammatical, textual and drilling sections with well-balanced and highly efficient exercises. Several initial lessons pay due attention to the graphical and phonological systems of Arabic.

A typical lesson consists of an introductory text accompanied by grammatical basics. Each grammatical topic is projected into various types of exercises (transformation, substitution, translation exercises and conversation drills, etc.). The repetition exercises deal with topics explained and drilled several lessons previously.

The student is confronted with a limited number of carefully selected grammatical topics at a time and these are presented in a well-tried arrangement. Each grammatical topic, introduced with preliminary information, is presented in a simple context and is further handled in related exercises and is finally formulated as a systemized rule forming part of the basic grammatical data-base.

The grammatical part of each lesson works with a limited number of lexical items (and even here a relatively severe recurrence-based selection has been imposed on the lexical units to be included) to allow the students a more thorough concentration on the grammatical features just analyzed. The accompanying texts with progressively graded complexity include a variety of themes ranging from simple essays that reflect situations from daily life, as well as adapted texts offering basic information on the Arab social life, folklore, history and geography. As far as the theoretical part of the lesson allows it, a corresponding thematic orientation tends to reappear in related exercises and conversational drills.

One of the uncontested priorities of the book is its adaptation to the complex linguistic situation of the recent Arabophone area which is marked by the simultaneous occurrence of two culturally different variants of Arabic (diglossia) : synthetic Standard Arabic, common for the whole Arab world in written and prestigious oral communication, on the one hand, and analytic colloquial variants of the latter, generally used in situations of everyday life, in a part of broadcast programs and products of visual media designed for the general public. Despite the main goal of the manual to guide the students to master the synthetic norm of Modern Written Arabic, due attention is paid, from the very beginning of language instruction, to make the students aware of this complex diglossic situation. A limited number of conversation exercises and drills have to introduce the student to a more realistic use of analyticized Standard Arabic with a reduced use of inflectional indicators. A more thorough introduction to the substandard communication of the educated lies outside the scope of the Part I of the present manual.

Since a good deal of material that has found its way into the present edition is creatively influenced by the theoretical results of a research grant focused on the effectiveness of intensive language courses (Methods of intensive instruction of Modern Written Arabic), completed by the author several years ago, the book may successfully be exploited in various types of intensive foundation courses for beginners. When used as a teaching device in intensive courses, Part I of the manual would efficiently support the teaching process for approximately one school-year.

Although the book is designed as an autonomous and self-contained unit, the students desirous to continue their study and to improve their communicative skills and, in general, their linguistic competence in Modern Written Arabic, are advised to use a learning tool of the same internal structure: Part II of the present manual. While the Part I of the manual merely helped the learners to acquire grammatical basics, basic reading and writing skills, and basic conversation abilities, Part II will further deepen the grammatical knowledge, especially in the domain of syntax a phraseology, will help them to expand their active and passive vocabulary and to acquire skills necessary for the professional work of translators and interpreters. While Part I merely helped the students to conceive a vague idea of the nature of diglossia and some of its manifestations in the Arabophone area, Part II already presents a variety of more extensive true-to-life conversation texts in an *'i'rāb*-less Arabic, typical of the prestigious oral usage of the educated throughout the Arab world. Nevertheless, the synthetic norm of MWA continues to represent the main goal of the course even at this higher level of instruction.

A full-length key to the numerous exercises of both Parts is in preparation and so are the accompanying audio-cassettes. With help of these additional tools, the manual obtains another domain of application, as a reliable learning device suitable for self-instruction with limited assistance on the part of the teacher.

The book will be of invaluable help in various types of college-level instruction of Modern Written Arabic to teachers and learners alike.

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