

hand observer and scholar has made a very successful contribution to the historiography of Iraq. It fills an important gap in the general literature on Iraq, since it goes beyond the narrow focus on politics that characterizes many works. The reader finishes this substantial book with a firm grasp of the main tendencies of the historical development. The impressive part of it is its comprehensiveness and eminent readability. The author has put together a fascinating account of continuity and change and succeeded on every score.

Karol Sorby

OLIVERIUS, Jaroslav and ONDRÁŠ, František: *Moderní spisovná arabština*. I. díl. (Al-Lughā al-ʿarabīya al-fuṣḥā), (Modern Literary Arabic). Vol. I. Prague: SET OUT Publishing House 2007, 287 p. (In Czech). ISBN 80-86277-51-8.

This is the first part of a long awaited textbook for university students by two eminent specialists in the field of teaching literary Arabic in the Institute of the Near East and Africa at the Faculty of Philosophy in the 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. The published edition uses the Arabic letters of the "traditional Arabic" font which is very comfortable and easy to read and which is of great help for beginners.

The textbook begins with an introduction containing detailed explaining of the phonological system of Arabic and the genesis and development of Arabic script. Then there is also a thorough presentation of the Arabic vowels and consonants. The book offers eighteen graded lessons each of them containing grammatical, textual and drilling sections. The book centres on imparting the grammatical and lexical basics to enable the learner step by step to understand written and spoken text, to hold a conversation with an Arabic speaker independently and, moreover, to translate and write Arabic texts. A variety of highly different texts (reports, commentaries, interviews, dialogues, tales etc.) together with appropriate exercises have been included in the book in addition to the description of grammar in the respective lessons.

When conceiving the texts, particular attention was paid to impart and consolidate those patterns which occur over and over again in spoken and written Modern literary Arabic and to provide the learner with a guide to master different communicative situations. The grammar comprises all substantial phenomena of Modern literary Arabic which are necessary for a good command of Arabic as a spoken and written language. This is a book for beginners which covers all grammatical and syntactic phenomena necessary for a correct and active command of Arabic.

The book aims at imparting Modern literary Arabic because it is impossible to cope with the numerous Arabic dialects without these foundations. The main texts of each lesson are not vocalized in order to accustom the student from the beginning to the standard Arabic writing which (except the Koran) is not-vocalized. The exercises on the

other hand are fully vocalized. The permanent repetition of stereotype phrases (greetings, wishes, forms of address etc.), proverbs and sayings as well as historical facts and cultural traditions and the appropriate terminology do not only aim at illustrating the grammar of the respective lesson but also at achieving a growing knowledge about this region of the world. The repetition exercises systematically deal with topics discussed in the lessons before to help the students not to forget basic structures. Some grammar exercises are repeated as lexical exercises with new vocabulary because it is assumed that the grammar dealt with long before is now consolidated.

Even educated Arabs sometimes encounter considerable difficulties in using their own language according to the rules which are valid and nearly unchanged since the revelation of the Koran fourteen 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, can eventually attain a quite good command of Arabic. The authors presented a valuable contribution to the teaching of Modern literary Arabic which will be appreciated both by teachers and students.

Karol Sorby

EDZARD, Lutz and WATSON, Janet (eds.): *Grammar as a Window onto Arabic Humanism. A Collection of Articles in Honour of Michael G. Carter*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006. 264 p. ISBN 3-447-05444-1.

The collection of papers in the present festschrift, is dedicated to Professor Michael Carter, as a token of personal and professional gratitude and respect on the part of the editors and all contributors to the volume whose publication coincides with the retirement of Michael Carter from his position as Professor of Arabic at the University of Oslo (1996-2004). Professor Carter is well-known for his inspiring commitment to the concept of Arabic humanism which determines his approach not solely to generally cultural but also to specifically linguistic phenomena. The festschrift volume is free from any notion of finality, it rather heralds another stage of Professor Carter's research activity in his new position of an honorary professor at the University of Sydney.

The volume is introduced by a Dedication by the editors L. Edzard and J. Watson (p. 7-8), and Bibliography M. G. Carter (p. 11-19). The 10 studies appear in the following order:

Ramzi Baalbaki: (American University of Beirut, 'Unfamiliar morphological terminology from the early fourth century A.H. Mu'addib's *Daqā'iq al-Taṣrīf*, p. 21-50) examines the morphological terminology used in Mu'addib's book *Daqā'iq al-taṣrīf* written in 949 A.D. in Ḥurāsān. Baalbaki analyses Mu'addib's *'ilal al-taṣrīf wa-daqa'iquhu* that is explanation of minute details of morphology or, in short, *ta'īl* 'explanation, argumentation'. Besides this explanatory methodology going to the extreme, the author's unfamiliar terminology, used side-by-side with terms sanctioned by the Arab grammatical tradition, is another spectacular feature of the book.