BOOK REVIEWS


The collection of studies in *Current Issues I* results from the panel "Current Issues in the Analysis of Semitic Grammar and Lexicon", which was held at the University of Oslo on June 3 and 4, 2004. The panel was organized and sponsored by the Oslo-Göteborg (Gothenburg) School of Asian and African Studies, established in 2003.

The papers collected in this volume are organized in three sections: i. Afroasiatic, comparative Semitic, and Arabic; ii. Native Arabic grammatical theory and modern linguistics, and literary theory applied to Arabic; and iii. Classical Hebrew and Aramaic.

Andrzej Zaborski (Jagellonian University of Cracow, "Tense, Aspect and Mood Categories of Proto-Semitic", p. 11-30) surveys tense, aspect, and mood categories in the Proto-Semitic language continuum from an Afroasiatic perspective. The amply documented study is introduced by a short account of Proto-Hamito-Semitic and language typology.

Jan Retsö (University of Göteborg, "The number-gender-mood markers of the prefix conjugation in Arabic dialects. A preliminary consideration", p. 31-40) examines two basic types of number-gender-mood (ngm) markers in modern Arabic dialects: the A-group (long imperfects) is characterized by the presence, the B-group (short imperfects), by the absence of the final -n in the respective ngm-markers. The A/B dichotomy is related to the model system of Standard Arabic.

Amharic is the subject of the two contributions that follow: Kjell Magne Yri (University of Oslo, "Cleft sentences in Amharic, with special reference to reference", p. 41-58) and Lutz Edzard (Oslo, "Syntaktische und lexikalische Merkmale des..."
Ramzi Baalbaki (American University of Beirut, "From burden to asset: morphological change in the Arabic tradition", p. 83-105) tries to answer the question of how the synchronically oriented medieval Arab grammarians explained morphological change in the study and description of their corpus of data. The chief aim of the article is to demonstrate how the grammarians managed to incorporate into their system a variety of forms and patterns able to account for morphological change.

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Werner Diem (University of Cologne, "'Even if you died a small /child/, the grief is not small.' Arabic Epitaphs of Children and Other Prematurely Deceased", p. 193-202) presents partial results of the prepared monograph on Arabic epitaphs. The author describes the method of how to know that a person with a preserved epitaph was a child or a young man or woman. The analysis accounts for possible chronological and regional peculiarities.

Rolf Furuli (University of Oslo, "The verbal system of Classical Hebrew. An attempt to distinguish between semantic and pragmatic factors", p. 205-231) tries to apply the distinction between semantic and pragmatic factors to two different Hebrew conjugations, the prefix- and the suffix-forms. The focus of the study lies on tense and aspect.

Hallvard Hagelia (Ansgar Teologiske Høgskole, Kristiansand, "Philological issues in the Tel Dan Inscription", p. 232-253) surveys the debate on philological issues in the Aramaic Tel Dan or The House of David Inscription (Fragment A was found in 1993, Fragment B, in 1994). The Tel Dan inscription, probably the most important archaeological find since the appearance of the Dead Sea scrolls half a century ago, is mostly dated to the second half of the 9th century.

The articles collected in Current Issues II result from the panel "Current Issues in the Analysis of Semitic Grammar and Lexicon II", held at the Swedish Institute in Istanbul on November 4 and 5, 2005. The panel was organized by the Oslo-Gothenburg School of Asian and African Studies. In general, the contributions deal with theoretical perspectives on comparative Semitic, Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Ethio-Semitic linguistics, and with topics connected with Arabic literature.

The articles are organized into two methodologically and thematically distinct sections: i. Topics in Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Ethio-Semitic linguistics, and ii. Linguistic and cultural topics in connection with Arabic literature.

The contribution of Michael G. Carter (Sydney University, The Qurʾān and the Authority of Arab-Islamic Linguistics, p. 11-22) reflects the author's belief that medieval Arabic linguistics cannot be successfully studied and properly understood out of its relationship to speculative theology and legal theory. The starting issue of the discussion is the duality between (1) the speech of the pagan Bedouin, subsequently described and codified by the early Arab grammarians (8th and 9th centuries) and recognized as the ultimate authority for linguistic correctness, and (2) the 'God-inspired' language of the Qurʾān, taken for the highest form of expression in Arabic, confirmed by the dogma of ʾiǧāz al-qurʾān. Carter examines the reasons why the Qurʾān could not have served as a data-provider for Arab grammarians working on the normative grammar of Classical Arabic.

The commonly accepted explanation that the predominantly analytic languages, like Hebrew, Aramaic and Ethio-Semitic, typologically commensurable with modern Arabic vernaculars, have developed from a common Proto-Semitic, sharing basic typological features with an ʾArabiyā-like synthetic language, is confronted with an entirely new theory by Jan Retsö (Göteborg University, Thoughts about the Diversity of Arabic, p. 23-33). The analysis of a number of structural features, like the verb-marked 'passive subject' (pattern-marked with ʾArabiyā / affix-marked with Aramaic-type languages and Arabic vernaculars); the dual/plural distribution, the relative-clause syntax
(juxtaposition/annexation), makes the author assume a so-far name-less and largely unspecified origin for the Aramaic-type agglomeration inclusive of Arabic vernaculars, different from the unified Protosemitic. The author’s perhaps too daring arguments cast doubts about the spread of case-inflection through the whole Semitic agglomeration of languages from the historical beginning.

Werner Arnold (University of Heidelberg, *Arabic Village and City Dialects in the Tel Aviv Area*, p. 34-39) describes some linguistic features of the Arabic dialects in the Tel Aviv area, and Janet Watson et al. (Salford, *Two Texts from Jabal Räziḥ, North-west Yemen*, p. 40-63) offer a linguistic sketch of the dialect spoken on Jabal Räziḥ on the basis of two oral texts.

Sven Olaf Dahlgren (Göteborg University, *Sentential Negation in Arabic*, p. 64-78) deals with the distribution of sentential negatives *lam* and *mā*.

The stylistic figure *hendiadys*, used as an interpretational tool in the Hebrew Bible, is examined by Rosmari Lillas-Schuil (Göteborg University, *A Survey of Syntagms in the Hebrew Bible Classified as Hendiadys*, p. 79-100).

Geoffrey Khan (University of Cambridge, *Remarks on Compound Verbal Forms in North Eastern Neo-Aramaic*, p. 101-115) examines structural and functional developments of the North Eastern Neo-Aramaic compound constructions with copula elements. The two types analyzed are: infinitive + copula, and *qtila* + copula. In view of the great dialectal diversity in the region, linguistic features of the dialects spoken by Christian and Jewish communities are taken into account as well.

The grammaticalization of nouns as postpositions in the Ethio-Semitic linguistic area, represented by Sidaamú ?afō and Amharic, is studied by Kjell Magne Yri (University of Oslo, *Decategorialization of Nouns as Postpositions in Sidaamú ?afō and Amharic*, p. 116-131). The shift from nouns to postpositions is described in terms of generalization or weakening of semantic content. The data analysed for Sidaamú ?afō are those of the author’s collection, while those related to Amharic are borrowed from Leslau’s *Reference Grammar of Amharic*, Wiesbaden 1995. The author’s treatment is predominantly synchronic with the aim to capture the contemporary linguistic usage.

The word-formational procedure of compounding, substantially incompatible with the root-and-pattern system of Semitic, is the topic of a highly interesting and well-documented study by Lutz Edzard (University of Oslo, *Some Aspects of Compound Formations in Modern Semitic*, p. 132-154). Inferring from the introductory English examples: *keyboard, six-pack, and post office*, compounds are identified with two, or more, words (it would be perhaps more appropriate to speak about roots) put together to form one word (it would be apparently more realistic to postulate for the final product ‘one concept’ instead). Furthermore, the compound nature of the output structure should be confirmed by a sort of distributional evidence to keep it apart from syntactic constructions. Some examples, quoted for Arabic, do not seem to satisfy this delimitation, not even in its modified version. Let us consider *ra’s(-)māl* (139), for instance, rewritten in *ra’s-māl* and *ra’smāl*, the former having to be classified as a syntactic construction (viz., det. *ra’s al-māl*, plur. *ru’ās al-anwāl*), the latter as a compound unit (*ar-ra’smāl, ra’smāl-f, -iya; no plural of its own; ra’smāl* (ibid.), the plural of *rasmāl*, both forms are regular one-word non-compound constructions with merely a compound etymology, and are fully compatible with the internal (pattern-
marked) flexion and derivation of Arabic (Semitic), the latter co-occurring with external (affix-marked) derivational processes; that is: flexion: singular-plural (see above); derivation: *rasmālī*, -īya; *rasmal*, *rasmala*, *murasmil*, *murasmal*; The distributional evidence, adduced by the author, in terms of *ar-rasāmīl* (ibid.) has nothing to prove, since the feature of one-wordness is already confirmed by the broken-plural identity of the construction itself.

The list of comparative data, collected in Edzard’s article, is really impressive and so is their classification, provided that the notion of compounding will be conceived liberally enough as to include various types of blends (144) and acronyms (145), as well as numerous terms of very various structure, actually non-compound units with merely a compound background.

Permilla Myrne (Göteborg University, *Āriḥ, Women’s Speech and the Language of Sexual Relations in Early Arabic Literature*, p.157-174), in the first article of section two, examines the gender-specific women’s use of sexual vocabulary in Arabic literature. The analysis is based on an anecdote centered on *āriḥ*, a well-known Abbasid woman singer, whose speech reflects independence and self-confidence even in the sexual sphere (viz., the use of the partnership-implying verbal stem *tanāyakātā*), contrasting with the vocabulary derived from the male-dominated sexual relationships (*nākahā, gāmahā, waqa*ā* “alayhā, watīʿahā*, etc.). The male sex-related vocabulary is presented in a fine socio-cultural classification.

Judith Josephson (Göteborg University, *The Hellenistic Heritage of the zanādiqa*, p. 175-194) deals with the intriguing question of who were the Muslim heretics known as *zindiq* (zanādiqa), persecuted by the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdi (775-785). At that time, the term *zindiq* was used to designate members of certain gnostic sects, mainly the Manichaeans. Nevertheless, no evidence of Manichaean beliefs may be found in writings of the Muslim converts actually accused of *zandaqa*. Several recent studies claim that most potential *zandaqa*-labelled ideas should be sought among the Muslim converts of Aramaean and Persian origin in southern Mesopotamia.

The relation between literary works in *ʿarabīya fushā* and those written in Egyptian colloquial Arabic is examined by Gunvor Mejdell (University of Oslo, *The Use of Colloquial in Modern Egyptian Literature - a Survey*, p. 195-213). The study surveys the rich variety of relevant opinions about ‘language choice’ for use in literary production. Apart from the exclusive use of *fushā* (Nāgīb Maḥfūz, Ṭāhā ʿḤusayn) and a culturally controlled use of *fushā* in the author’s language, and that of *ʿammīya*, in the protagonists’ dialogues (Yūsuf Isrls, ʿĪsān ʿAbdalquddūs), other operative strategies are taken into account as well: ‘magic fusion’ of the two varieties (Salwā Bakr), *fushāmmīya* (208) or any earlier attempts at bridging the gap between them in a unified graphic form (Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, 197).

Finally, Tetz Rooke (Göttergöteborg University, *Translation of Arabic Literature: A Mission Impossible?*, p. 214-225) examines, from a cross-cultural perspective, the problems possibly emerging in translating Arabic literary texts into European languages. The relative possibility of translating is said to depend on how the process of translation is perceived: ‘If we understand the translation as a form of imitation and believe in the notion of the perfect copy, then all translation is truly a mission
impossible. But if we approach translation less ideally and admit, yes, even
encourage difference, then the task becomes a world of possibilities (224).

Both volumes are pregnant with fruitful and inspiring ideas and will be appreciated
by all those seriously interested in Semitic and Arabic linguistics, and Arabic literature.

Ladislav Drozdík

BOUDELAA, Sami (Ed.): Perspectives on Arabic Linguistics XVI. Papers from the
272 4780 3.

The eight papers, selected for publication in the present volume, were presented at
the sixteenth annual symposium on Arabic linguistics which took place in March 2002,
in Cambridge University. Except one article, dealing with Maltese, the contributions
cover a variety of interesting linguistic issues in Arabic.

Georges Bohas (École Normal Supérieure, Lyon, ‘The organization of the lexicon
in Arabic and other Semitic languages’, p. 1-37), starting from the assumption that the
(triliteral) root fails to account for phonetic and semantic relationships between lexical
units, examines the problem of lexical organization in Arabic from a really vast and
impressive perspective. The nearly synonymous group of words, labelled ‘paradigm i’,
such as matā, mata’a (2x), matana, with a general meaning ‘stretching and/or
lengthening’, is related to three different roots: /mt/, /mt/ (2x), and /mtn/. To cure the
discrepancy between the identity of meaning and the diversity of roots, a competitive
notion of etymon is introduced. The latter denotes a binary composition of consonantal
phonemes shared by all members of the group, in this case m (p. 4). In what the author
calls paradigm ii, the binary etymon is subsequently reduced to one-consonant common
to a markedly larger group linked to the ‘semic nucleus’, in this case m. The paradigm i
units, reappearing in paradigm ii, are completed by madda, maṭa, maṭala and maṭā (p.
5). The semantic contours of the semic nucleus are markedly mister here and their
features of identity are less convincing. At the root level, the author argues, these
phonetic-semantic generalizations cannot be obtained (ibid.).

For all the innovative ideas emanating from this highly interesting reinvestigation
and further elaboration of the time-honored theories of biliteralism (Mayer Lambert,
Gesenius, Philippi - to mention only some of their 19th century pioneers), it is hardly
possible to accept the author’s characterization of the (consonantal) root in terms of an
‘obsolete grammatical tool ... invented by Arab grammarians and used by them to
describe their language’ (p. 6). Ousting the root from the inventory of basic concepts in
all branches of Semitic linguistics is thoroughly unacceptable:

- the root, and only the root, may be unambiguously distinguished from the ablaut-
marking intra-root morpheme, mostly referred to as pattern, which is operative in
internal processes of inflection and derivation; the IE ablaut is a one-morpheme internal
process involving the root alone, while the Semitic ablaut, at the minimum stem level, is
a matter of two autonomous morphemes: roots and patterns;