

BOOK REVIEWS

THOMPSON, Hanne-Ruth. *Bengali*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamin's Publishing Company, 2012. 384 p. ISBN 978 90 272 3819 1.

The book under review is a slightly modified form of the author's publication *Bengali. A Comprehensive Grammar*, published by Routledge in the series Routledge Comprehensive Grammars in 2010. The modifications mainly lie in a formal reorganisation of some paragraphs in some chapters, in shifting some parts of a chapter to some other chapter (e.g. the transliteration and vowel harmony are discussed in the chapter devoted to the sound system instead of being dealt with in the chapter named Morphology), in adding a subchapter to the original text (e.g. Bengali linguistics on pp. 9 – 10), or in excluding a subchapter from the new text (e.g. Bangla grammar terms). A significant difference between the two publications also lies in the fact that the Bengali examples are written in the Bengali script barnamala in the Comprehensive Grammar while they are written in the transliteration in the book under review (although in inevitable cases the author has not avoided the phonetic forms of words; e.g. p. 5).

A very detailed description of Bengali is presented in ten chapters: Introduction (pp. 1 – 10), Sound system (pp. 11 – 27), The Bengali script (pp. 28 – 35), Word formation (pp. 36 – 46), Morphology (pp. 47 – 126), Phrase structure (pp. 127 – 184), Sentences (pp. 185 – 254), Perspectives and functions (pp. 255 – 312), Lexical features (pp. 313 – 348), and Beyond the sentence: Sample texts (pp. 349 – 366). Then two appendices follow: Appendix 1 Verb conjugation tables (pp. 367 – 372) and Appendix 2 Numbers (pp. 372 – 375). The book is concluded by a Bibliography (pp. 376 – 379) and Index (pp. 381 – 384).

As the outline of chapters indicates, the author proceeds from the simplest phenomena to the more complicated ones in her work. The book has a seemingly logical structure, but the reader quickly realises that some chapters and subchapters also include information which does not belong to them. Moreover, the author tends to say (almost) everything she knows about a given language phenomenon and thus heterogeneous issues are found together. Although the information is undoubtedly useful for correct understanding and use of Bengali, it belongs in some other place. It may be illustrated by examples from the chapter called Morphology. For instance, when discussing adjectives, Thompson focuses more on the description of their types (defined on the basis of their function) than on their morphological structure (a list of endings that can identify words as adjectives is given in Chapter 4.2). According to Thompson's definition “/the work of an adjective is to modify a noun” (p. 93), and so she includes among adjectives each part of speech that modifies a noun, namely possessive, distributive, interrogative and deictic pronouns, quantifiers and numbers. She distinguishes six main types of adjectives: a) qualifying (descriptive), b) quantifying, numeral, ordinal (she also includes cardinal numerals with the classifier *ṭa* here, while

she herself translates *hajarta* as “a thousand”, i.e. as a noun), c) possessive, d) distributive, e) interrogative, and f) deictic (demonstrative). Types d) – f) defines as pronouns used as adjectives.

In keeping in line with her practice to include as much information as possible, when dealing with the comparison of adjectives she mentions a language means used for expressing comparison, namely *aro* (she defines it as adverb *more*, p. 83), not only with adjectives, but also elsewhere, e.g. *aro kôthin – more difficult*, *aro ðaka – more money* (in this case she considers *aro* as an adjective used with a noun); *amar ceýe lumba – taller than me*, and also *tar amar ceýe aro bôndhu ache She has more friends than I do* (p. 84), and so on.

The author similarly proceeds in the subchapter on nouns (again in the chapter called Morphology). For instance, in the discussion on plural formation, she does not give solely morphological means expressing plurality, but describes all means (including lexical) which differentiate a noun in singular and plural. Thus, alongside the plural marker (-ra) and the plural classifier (*gulo*) she mentions adding a plural quantifier or number, adding a plural possessive noun, adding a collective noun, doubling words, and doubling preceding adjectives. When discussing nouns she also introduces a category named formality (honorific – non-honorific), which is not reflected on the morphology of the noun. The discussion on noun cases obviously should not include a statement that personal pronouns do not usually take the locative case; this should belong to the paragraph on pronouns for which the author has a rather peculiar definition, namely “/p/ronouns are a sub-category of nouns...” (p. 68)

The description of other parts of speech proceeds in a similar way in the chapter called Morphology. We shall only deal with the description of an associative emphasiser *o*. The author lists all functions of “*o*”, namely, it creates indefinite pronouns and adverbs from question words, it changes *now ækhôn* to *still ækhôno*, it is a conjunction, etc. (pp. 118 –119). It is very likely that it is not the same “*o*” in all these cases, but a homonymous “*o*”. Similarly various functions of particles *ta*, *ba* and *na* are described.

Besides these and some other peculiarities in the structure and content of individual chapters the work also brings some debatable conclusions. For instance, in the paragraph Postpositions other uses, in some cases it is perhaps not possible to speak about the use of a postposition as an adverbial, as the form itself is an adverb, as e.g. in the sentence *bhitôre keu nei. There is no one inside* (p. 113). When speaking about modified postpositions, it might be more convenient to speak about adverbs because postpositions, as a rule, are not modified by an adverb.

In the next chapter called Phrase structure the author takes a closer look at the functions, uses and contexts of the inflected word classes of Bengali, namely nouns, pronouns and verbs. As it is characteristic of her, she does it rather broadly. For instance, when dealing with a noun phrase she takes the noun phrase out of its sentence context and pays attention to individual modifiers in connection with noun phrases (namely possessives, deictics, quantifiers or numerals and qualifiers). She describes their position in a noun phrase, how they occur with one another and their relationships with classifiers.

In a relatively extensive subchapter Pronouns in use, in the part called Indefinites, the author remains faithful to her way of composing the book and does not only introduce indefinite pronouns, but also adjectives and adverbs.

In an interesting subchapter Verbal parameters Thompson discusses different types of verbs (verbs of being, extended verbs, causative verbs, conjunct verbs, compound verbs), then non-finite verb forms (verbal noun, imperfective participle, conditional participle, perfective participle) follow. Rather extensive is a paragraph devoted to compound verbs. The author introduces their characteristic features and then compound makers one by one with many examples. Debatable is the statement, that the compound maker yaoṣa with verbs of motion retains its own meaning. Her examples do not prove it, just the contrary, they point to retaining the lexical meaning of the perfective participle: ghure yaṣ *travels*, phire gelen *returned*, paliṣe giyeche *fled*. Further, the compound maker asa (example 132) by itself obviously does not indicate the moment of speaking; it is indicated by the adverb eimatrô.

In the part on the verbal noun the author introduces a variety of its special uses. In some places she speaks about the position of the verbal noun (it can precede postpositions), in other places about its function (it modifies other nouns, creates a modal structure; serves as an object of a sentence). She similarly proceeds at the description of uses of verbal adjective, imperfective participle, conditional participle and perfective participle. Sometimes she gives particularities (as in a textbook). For instance, when dealing with the imperfective participle, she gives the following examples in the same subgroup named direct object of bivalent verbs:

tini chatrôder doṣṭay aste bôlechen *He told the students to come at ten o'clock.*
se bhan kôrte bojhe na. *He doesn't know how to pretend.*

In the next chapter Thompson describes how more simpler structures interact with one another to form sentences. She gives an overview of what goes into sentences, i.e. components of sentences, and then points to basic patterns of simple sentences. She distinguishes active/agentive, existential and impersonal structures, and copular structures. As it is characteristic of her, she puts various possibilities together and so, for instance, a reader finds sentences tara khulnaṣ *They are in Khulna* and also tumi bhalô acho *You are well*. in the same block of sentences defined as existential. It means that the author considers as existential all sentences including the verb to “exist”.

Bengali sentences are classified according to three different criteria, namely, internal structure (simple, complex, compound), sentence mode (declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamative) and verbal pattern (active, existential, impersonal/passive, copular). The author demonstrates the limits of a traditional analysis of the internal structure of a sentence “which is solely based on the number of finite verb forms.” (p. 197) Of interest is the classification of existential structures formed with the incomplete verb ach “to be, to be present” which is negated with nei. Thompson divides them into locative existentials and possessive-existentials (personal-possessive, personal-relational, personal-characteristic, personal-experiential). She points to the use of adjectives, verbal adjectives and abstract nouns in existential structures and to the possibility of the omission of ach. Also, the impersonal structures which do not have

agreement between a nominative agent and the verb, and copular sentences are analysed. Then subchapters Compound sentences – coordination, Complex sentences – subordination and Complex sentences – correlation follow. In the author's extensive classification different types illustrated by a number of examples are introduced.

In chapter 8 named Perspectives and functions “some of the important and fundamental linguistic features which determine the meaning of words, phrases, sentences and texts” (p. 255) are given. The author deals with case use, tense use, aspect, negation and modal structures here. In a very detailed description of case use some mistakes occur, for instance, in the statement that “the finite verb in the sentence governs the subject”, and similarly “non-finite verb forms can govern a nominative subject” (p. 256) it should be the other way round, that is – “the subject governs the finite verb” or “the finite verb is governed by the subject”.

When discussing verbs, Thompson deals with the use of tenses one by one. As regards aspect, she differentiates grammatical aspect (tense system with aspectual features built into it) and lexical aspect, which deals with the internal structure of specific verbs. She speaks about progressive, imperfective, habitual, stative, iterative, inceptive, and telic aspects.

In the subchapter Modality she gives an overview of “how modals are formed to express modal meaning”. (p. 298) She “does not take into account lexical items such as adverbials expressing possibility and likelihood or verbs like *para be possible*, *caoŷa want*.” (p. 298) but discusses past habitual, subjunctive-triggering conjunctions *yôdi*, *yate*, *pache*, *yænô*, changes in tense, impersonal structures with non-finite verb forms which are modal in meaning, and verbal noun with *dorkar*, *ucit*, and *kôtha*.

In the chapter named Lexical features Thompson deals with different types of pairings, doublings and reduplication and the purpose of such combinations. Special attention is paid to onomatopoeia and to idiomatic uses of some common verbs (*asa*, *yaoŷa*, *oŷha*, *kata*, *khaoŷa*, *caoŷa*, *jana*, *dækha*, *paoŷa*, *para*, *bôla*, *mana*), nouns (*kôtha*, *kaj*, *ga*, *cokh*, *môn*, *matha*, *mukh*, *hat*), adjectives (*kâca*, *paka*, *bôṛô*) and numbers. The chapter is concluded by the subchapter on figures and numerals (fractions and percentages, weights and measures, collective numbers, approximate numbers, indefinite big numbers).

The last chapter called Beyond sentence includes sample texts with glosses and translation to English.

Hanne-Ruth Thompson's book deals at large perhaps with all aspects of Bengali grammar. It is extremely rich in information on the character and use of the Bengali language. It proves the author's excellent knowledge of Bengali and also her teaching experience that obviously influenced her decision to also include such topics to some chapters and subchapters that do not belong there. The publication includes many examples that are to be considered a significant contribution to the work. Several commentaries by the present reviewer are meant above all to point to the untraditional elaboration of Bengali grammar. Some conclusions, which are considered debatable by the author of the review, may be a matter of an opinion and a subject of discussion. Some mistakes and misprints, as for instance introducing imperatives among tenses in the introductory chapter, naming cerebral consonants *t,th,d,dh* as palatals (they are

named correctly on p. 11), inappropriate examples *pyaent*, *šart*, *karđ* illustrating mid-word clusters *nt*, *rt*, *rđ*, or a reverse sign in examples illustrating consonant assimilation, e.g. *dhormo* < *dhōmmo* instead of correct *dhormo* > *dhōmmo*, might be considered as acceptable in such an extensive work.

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LLEWELLYN-JONES, Lloyd. *King and Court in Ancient Persia 559 to 331 BCE*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013. 258 p. ISBN 978 0 7486 4126 0.

Expert on Achaemenid Persian Empire L. Llewellyn-Jones wrote and compiled a new publication, which brings new aspects regarding the Achaemenid court. This publication was included in the monographic series *Debates and Documents in Ancient History*. The mentioned edition focuses on various topics of ancient history and in its individual volumes offers readers a basic insight into the subjects, analyses their diverse aspects and the scientific debate that binds them. In the second part, as in our reviewed paper, the monographs give translated documents, on which the analysis of the historian is based when examining further issues. So these are the ideal introductions to the following various topics.

Llewellyn-Jones in his edition focused on the Achaemenid royal court. This is not unique work recently. Within the last years, a number of monographs and collections have been written either on the issue of royal courts in antiquity, or even directly on the Achaemenid royal court. As so, in 2007 a collective monograph *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies* was compiled by A.J. Spawforth. B. Jacobs and R. Rollinger compiled an extensive insight into the topic in a collective monograph *Der Achämenidenhof/The Achaemenid Court*, which came out in 2010. A collective work entitled *Concepts of Kingship in Antiquity* is dedicated to the elements representing the royal power, including the royal court, which was compiled in 2010 by G.B. Lanfranchi and R. Rollinger. The author of the reviewed publication, Llewellyn-Jones initiated in 2013 with A. Erskin and S. Wallace the work on a monograph entitled *The Hellenistic Court*. In spite of these works many issues remain unresolved, opened or not completely reviewed. This monograph reviewed by us may offer something more in this direction, and in addition, compared to those mentioned, also offers basic source material. Of course we are not going to deal with the source materials and take a look only to the theoretical part, and we are going to look at it more specifically, and only dedicate to some of the problems.

The theoretical part is divided into an introduction and five chapters. In the introduction the author defines what he means under the term royal court. He reviews it comprehensively, recognising its political and propagandistic functions. We have to agree with the fact that the court did not only include the nobility linked to the ruling dynasty, but also the people of lower social status, who, however, were able to some extent, affect the monarch himself. As an example, I give Democedes in Darius' court,