

REVIEWS

Untersuchungen zur arabischen Überlieferung der Materia medica des Dioskurides. By MANFRED ULLMANN. *Mit Beiträgen von Rainer Degen.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009. 378 pp. ISBN 978 3 447 06057 8.

The work Περὶ ὕλης [ἰατρικῆς] known as [*De*] *Materia Medica* by Dioscurides, who lived under Nero's rule (54-68 AD), enjoyed unparalleled and uncontested popularity not only in Late Antiquity but also in the Arab-Islamic world. The history of the Greek text as well as that of its translations into Latin, Syriac and Arabic is highly complex. This is partly owing to its great popularity as well as wide dissemination, and partly to the circumstance that it is composed of differing sections many of which are only loosely connected to each other thematically and are thus likely to be transmitted independently¹. In addition, in order to serve practical needs, these sections were often supplemented with quotations from other works. Again, led by practical viewpoints, the body of the work was subjected to different arrangements in the course of centuries. These circumstances complicate things considerably and increase confusion. Owing to the complex nature of the work and the disparate strands of transmission, which on their part often exert influence on each other and therefore result in considerable contaminations, earlier investigations, based on insufficient acquaintance with the original sources, have created much confusion. Relevant scholarly literature dealing with all the various aspects of Dioscurides' work is immense, too, which confronts the researcher with a task of truly gigantic proportions. Only an eye with the capability of discerning significant facts and of separating important data from the bulk of unimportant phenomena can attempt such a task with any hope of success. In the present case this rare condition seems to have been fulfilled and the author of the reviewed work shows himself so equipped. He has carried out a series of textual researches mainly based on manuscripts and succeeded in elucidating and solving a number of interesting problems. At the same time his groundbreaking results will serve as points of departure for future generations of researchers.

Ullmann differentiates altogether 5 translations. Iṣṭifān ibn Basīl's translation of the work from Greek into Arabic in Baghdad under Ġaʿfar al-Mutawakkil

¹ The Syriac translation, on which two Arabic versions are based, does not survive.

(ruled 232-247/847-861) was not revised later by Ḥunayn ibn Iṣḥāq, as is usually believed. A Paris manuscript of Iṣṭifān's translation contains on the margin a great number of remarks by the translator himself and also by Ḥunayn offering significant insights into the working method of these translators. Ullmann has discovered a previously unknown Arabic translation of the work in an Istanbul manuscript (Aya Sofya 3704) and calls it *Vetus Translatio* (c. 800 AD). It was used by ʿAlī ibn Rabbān aṭ-Ṭabarī in his *Firdaws al-Ḥikma* and by al-Bīrūnī in his *Kitāb aṣ-Ṣaydana*. In the 10th century Avicenna's teacher, al-Ḥusayn ibn Ibrāhīm an-Nātilī, contaminated this version with Iṣṭifān ibn Basīl's translation in Buḥārā, Transoxania. In addition to giving a succinct examination of their most important characteristics, Ullmann adduced the translations made by Abū Sālīm al-Malaṭī as well as Mihrān ibn Manṣūr on the basis of Ḥunayn's Syriac version for the comparative examination encompassing altogether 5 versions. Ullmann gleaned remarkable technical terms from Mihrān's translation, too. He treated these versions synoptically, so to say, and also carefully compared them with the Greek original surviving in various manuscripts. In this way he was able to discover and make accessible a rich collection of previously unfamiliar Arabic technical terms which supplement the material contained in his *Wörterbuch der Klassischen Arabischen Sprache* (1957/1970-) and in his *Wörterbuch der griechisch-arabischen Übersetzungen des 9. Jahrhunderts* (2002-2007). At the same time, significant conclusions could be drawn with regard to the textual criticism of the Greek original in view of the fact that the Arabic versions are based on manuscripts which are older than the Greek manuscripts from which the Greek original text accessible to us is derived.

The work contains a wealth of data derived from primary research based on manuscripts. These data concern details of the Arabic transmission of the work, such as Iṣṭifān ibn Basīl's translation, characteristics of various Arabic manuscripts, the Greek text used by Iṣṭifān, his glosses to his own translation and a succinct characterisation of his translation and achievement, Ḥunayn's glosses to Iṣṭifān's translation, the process in which the Greek names of plants and drugs were determined. The author gives a characterisation of the *Vetus Translatio* (see above) demonstrating it on forty example texts compared with the Greek original and parallel translations. Ullmann comes to the conclusion that four different stages can be differentiated in the development of the original text, the first of which took place within the Greek tradition. A 147-page glossary rounds off the presentation of the *Vetus Translatio*.

Much of this is entirely new and the result of recent research carried out by the author, apparently in connection with his work on the *Wörterbuch der Klassischen Arabischen Sprache* and the *Wörterbuch der griechisch-arabischen*

*Übersetzungen des 9. Jahrhunderts*². The present reviewer feels compelled to acknowledge his amazement at the facility with which the author tackles this immense and highly complex material with a quick and secure eye capable of a synoptic grasp of all the different and at the same time intertwined main and lateral strands of transmission. The many questions of details discussed on the pages of the present work are a mine of new insights on which subsequent research on the history of the Greek original of Dioscurides' *Materia Medica* as well as that of its Arabic translations will be based.

The profit that readers will derive from this truly magnificent work could have been considerably enhanced had a soft-copy version on a CD-ROM been attached to the printed edition. This method of presentation is quite common nowadays and has great advantages over traditional printed editions. Few readers, and the present reviewer is certainly *not* one of them, will want to read such a reference work on a computer screen. There is nothing wrong with an autograph-edition. The author's handwriting is clear, beautiful, lending itself to very pleasant reading. After the perplexity and stupefaction which Ullmann's autograph-editions had elicited in recent times, readers have got accustomed to this new trend. It must be made clear, however, that a CD-ROM version has the incomparable advantage that the whole work in question *can be searched* for words, combinations of words and expressions. And the very nature of the present *Untersuchungen* would make such a presentation – printed book *plus* CD-ROM – imperative. After all, this publication is not a novel one would read from cover to cover once in a lifetime but a reference work in which readers will want, among other uses, to look up words and expressions³. It is a pity that neither the author nor the publisher seems to have recognised the significance of using a computer to maximise the profit to be derived from such an important work. However, we must be grateful for what we have and it is no doubt a great work of exceptional learning.

István Ormos

² Our earlier state of knowledge of this subject was summarized by Ullmann in 1970 in his concise account of the history of medicine in Islam: *Die Medizin in Islam. (Handbuch der Orientalistik, Erste Abteilung, Ergänzungsband VI, Erster Abschnitt)*. Leiden–Cologne, 1970, 257–263.

³ This consideration is also valid for the *Wörterbuch der griechisch-arabischen Übersetzungen des 9. Jahrhunderts*. One would of course love to possess *Wörterbuch der Klassischen Arabischen Sprache* on CD-ROM too but it must be acknowledged that work on it was begun long before the computer era. But maybe one day a generous benefactor of scholarship will fund such a project. No doubt he will earn the gratitude of the commonwealth of scholars active in the field of Arab and Islamic studies.

Autochthonous Texts in the Arabic Dialect of the Jews of Tiberias. By AHARON GEVA KLEINBERGER. (*Semitica Viva*, ed. by Otto Jastrow, 46.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006. ix, 229 pp. ISSN 0931-2811, ISBN 978-3-447-05934-3.

The present work is the continuation of the study of Arabic dialects in Northern Israel by the author and is based on interviews conducted with Arabic speaking Jews in Tiberias who have been speaking this Arabic dialect as their mother tongue. Their number, however, is decreasing continuously and there are now, according to the author's estimation, not more than a hundred speakers left in Lower Galilee. The book aims at being not only a dialectological study but a historical, sociological and anthropological description of the speakers of the above mentioned dialect as well. The book contains two parts. The first and shorter part of 25 pages, gives a brief account of the Arabic dialect of the Jews in Tiberias, the second part of 165 pages presents the texts told by the chosen informants. The texts are chosen to reflect a wide spectrum of themes from the various periods of the Ottoman rule, the British mandate and the independent Israel, too. The Arabic texts occupy the left pages while their English translations are put on the opposite pages. Each text is given a title according to its main topic. Just to mention some of them: There are texts dealing with diseases and epidemics (cholera, scarlet), some are about natural disasters (flood, earthquake), some others deal with historical events (the British Army entering Tiberias, an Arab strike, mobilization of the Ottoman Army, riots in different years), still further texts concentrate on everyday family life or work, some take the natural environment as their theme (the Sea of Galilee, the sea life, the catfish), and there are texts telling stories about the neighbours of the Jewish community. There are some proverbs, too. The appendices contain an Arabic vocabulary of the Jews of Tiberias on 12 pages, and an index of the people mentioned in the texts, on 7 pages. The texts in this book may serve as an excellent rough material for the researchers of different fields of study. As the author notes: "... the texts in this book ... provide extensive data on the life of the Jews of Galilee and other historical events and anthropological details; they thereby rescue this mass of data from oblivion. ... such data could not be attained in other ways because it is not history based on written documents." It is the quantity of the texts that makes this book so extraordinarily precious and interesting.

Kinga Dévényi

Early Ibādī Literature. Abu l-Munḍir Bashīr b. Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb Kitāb al-Raṣf fī l-Tawḥīd, Kitāb al-Muḥāraba and Sīra. Introduced and edited by ABDULRAHMAN AL-SALIMI and WILFERD MADELUNG. (*Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, ed. by Florian C. Reiter, 75). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011. xi, 80 p. ISSN 0567-4980, ISBN 978-3-447-06435-4

This volume contains three Arabic treatises by Abū (and not Abu, as in the title) l-Munḍir Bašīr b. Muḥammad b. Maḥbūb, an Omani Ibādīte religious scholar who lived in the third century of the Islamic era. All the three are first editions and, as the Introduction says, were hitherto unknown to Western scholars. One can only sympathize with this kind of remarks since in the past Western Arabists have considered their knowledge too many times absolute. With this edition a significant new source has become available for the study of early Ibādīte thought. Abū l-Munḍir (died around 290/908) was a prominent Ibādīte author of theological and legal books. As the Introduction states his writings reflect expert knowledge of Ibādīte religious law and an inclination to the so called rationalist (Muʿtazilite) theology in contrast to the traditional Ibādīte scholarship.

The first of the three treatises, the *Kitāb al-Raṣf* is a compendium of Muʿtazilite theology from an Ibādīte point of view. The text may have consisted originally of lectures presented over a period of time and then collected and abridged by a student of the author. The *Kitāb al-Muḥāraba* deals with the law of warfare. The writer distinguishes between the rules applying to the fight against the idolators, the unbelievers of the People of the Book, and the apostates from Islam. The *Sīra* presents Abū l-Munḍir's formal legal opinion concerning the abdication of the Imām aṣ-Ṣalt b. Mālik al-Ḥarūsī forced by an armed revolt. The revolt caused a split in the Ibādīte community and the dispute led to mutual and obligatory dissociation. The author affirms that a legitimately installed Imām cannot be deposed except on three grounds: physical disability to perform one of the religious duties of the Imām, incurrence of a divinely ordained punishment, or refusal to repent a religious offence known by the public. These roughly correspond to the prescriptions concerning the deposition of the Imām (or Caliph) discussed by the Sunnite theologians in the 11th century, only they add the forced absence of the Imām from the centre of power or his captivity.

The edition of each of the texts was based on four manuscripts kept in three private libraries in Oman. As the editors emphasize, all four manuscripts (and a fifth, not considered during the editorial work) are late and corrupt in many places. The frequent appearance of the same mistakes in all of them indicates that they derive from a single original. The editors follow the dubious way of making a fifth text out of four and not even telling the reader which of the readings owe their existence to the editors, or which of the proposed emendations

“were straightforward” and which were those “remaining speculative without much hope that the original text could be fully restored”, according to the wording of the Introduction. In the case of the present volume the persons of the editors ensures the validity of the readings – Professor Madelung being the best recognized authority of the Imāmite and Ibāḍite theology and al-Salimi being an Ibāḍite scholar –, but the principle of edition inherited from the 19th century does not seem reader and researcher friendly nowadays.

Kinga Dévényi

High vs. Low and Mixed Varieties: Status, Norms and Functions across Time and Languages. Ed. by GUNVOR MEJDELL & LUTZ EDZARD. (*Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, im Auftrag der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft hrsg. von Florian C. Reiter, 77.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012. 210 p. ISSN 0567-4980, ISBN 978-3-447-06696-9

The volume under review is based on papers delivered at the “Oslo Workshop on High and Low varieties, diglossia, and language contact: linguistic products and social processes”, held on June 14-15, 2010 at the University of Oslo. Naturally the size of the articles does not allow for the presentation of new findings. Instead, they are state of the arts reports of different linguistic areas in and outside Europe.

The reviewer feels first of all obliged to thank the editors for undertaking the unique task of presenting such a wide range of studies in the sphere of diglossia and related matters in many different languages. Gunvor Mejdell’s article opens the collection and its long title of which nearly sums up its content: “‘High’ and ‘Low’ varieties, diglossia, language contact, and mixing: social processes and linguistic products in a comparative perspective”. She aims at presenting a point of departure for the whole volume in the field of Arabic sociolinguistics and engaging “in a kind of multiple dialog with the other contributors in this volume.” The paper deals with subsections such as diglossia and a typology of language situations, Middle Arabic and diglossia in Semitic, mixed varieties in bilingual and multilingual contexts, contemporary case of mixing and diffuse borders. In her concluding remarks she rightly states that “all the contributors in this volume challenge simplistic views of clear cut dichotomies, discrete and stable varieties, and unchanging status and functional domains.”

As Gunvor Mejdell remarks it was Charles Ferguson who first described a specific kind of language situation by the term ‘diglossia’, giving a narrow definition which distinguishes it from both the ‘standard with dialects’ and the bilin-

gual situations. Later, however, it has become evident that the basic dichotomy of ‘High’ and ‘Low’ proves too simplified compared with the real complexity of language performance and it is reflected in the use of the expression ‘mixed varieties’. The first to direct attention to this phenomenon of the Arabic language usage in detail was the Egyptian linguist as-Sa‘īd Muḥammad Badawī in his book *Mustawayāt al-‘arabiyya al-mu‘āṣira fī Miṣr*, published in 1973 in Cairo. It is only to be regretted that this book is quite unfortunately lacking in the bibliographical references of all papers of this volume dealing with Arabic, a fact which shows the unbridgeable gap between the Arab and Western scholarship and the absence of interest of Arabists in the scientific products of the contemporary Arab scholars. Even Jérôme Lentin, who intends to give a broad panorama of the Arabic linguistic situation (“Reflections on Middle Arabic”) seems to be uninterested in or unacquainted with not only Badawī’s above mentioned book but practically the whole modern Arab linguistic literature, mentioning only one among them (Aḥmad 1993).

Ernst Håkon Jahr’s paper “‘High’ and ‘Low’ in Norwegian? Dialect and standard in spoken Norwegian – a historical account of competition and language status planning” proved to be the most interesting paper for the reviewer, although its title and contents contradict the principles announced in the introductory chapter of Gunvor Mejdell, who dismisses, as stated above, the standard vs. dialect model as part of the diglossia situation. Be as it is, the truth is that while “many people know that there is something special about Norway linguistically or, rather, sociolinguistically” as Jahr states in the beginning of his paper, many more know almost nothing about this particular situation and for them an extraordinarily good picture is painted of the Norwegian language model and its historical development.

There is another ‘rarity’ among the papers. It is Tore Janson’s “Vulgar Latin and Middle Arabic”, in which he draws a parallel between the two seemingly different linguistic situations, shedding in this way new light on both. The author sums up the history of the denomination “Vulgar” used in connection with the Latin language, of which he is an expert, and compares the situation existing in the domain of late Latin language with the so called Middle Arabic. The value of this work is decreased by the fact that the author, as he confesses (p. 28), knows no Arabic at all and his knowledge of the discussion in this field is quite limited. There is one statement of the author which connects more than any other things the Vulgar Latin studies with those pursued in the field of Middle Arabic: “What Herman – the Hungarian ‘father’ of the term Vulgar Latin – describes is not a language, but a number of features of the spoken language in the Latin/Romance area before the advent of the written Romance languages.” This can be stated with respect to Middle Arabic as well – substituting Joshua

Blau, also of Hungarian origin, for Herman and leaving out the final part of the sentence, because the advent of the written Arabic dialects did not, and perhaps will not for a long time, happen.

Jérôme Lentin presents quite a different type of paper in his “Reflections on Middle Arabic”, summing up his long term research in only thirty pages in a way that gives an overall picture of the problems connected with the so called Middle Arabic linguistic situation. The author points out an entirely new development in this field of studies. This is the combination of the Middle Arabic and the diglossia which seems to be more fruitful than any other previous research trend. At the same time I have to agree with Lentin in that “unfortunately, for several reasons (among which blind purism), this field of research has not received due attention from many scholars, and has not been sufficiently investigated. Some studies have been published on single texts (or sometimes on individual authors) but only a few monographic works deal with bodies of texts belonging to a definite period of time and/or coming from a particular area.” This last statement seems to me the most important part of the whole sentence, because it sheds light on the weakest point of Middle Arabic studies so far – the lack of age and territory as if the underlying Arabic dialects were uniform regardless of time and place. Lentin is right to involve into the study of Arabic linguistic variation the so called “Artistic Colloquial” middle language. He mentions here only the products of the authorless popular literature, but I think we may as well include here the enormous quantity of television and radio serials, film scripts and theatrical pieces written mainly in Egypt in an elevated variant of the dialect. There is no sense to stop at the age of the *nahḍa* as most of the scholars dealing with Middle Arabic and mixed variants do.

The other papers in this volume are: “Arabe(s) et berbère en Mauritanie: Bilinguisme, diglossie et mixité linguistique” by Catherine Taine-Cheikh, “Elements of diglossia in Biblical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew” by Lutz Edzard, “Prestige register vs. common speech in Ottoman Turkish” by Bernt Brendemoen, “Hindi bilingualism and related matters” by Claus Peter Zoller, “Romance glosses in a Latin text: evidence of diglossia?” by Kristin F. Hagemann, “Macaronic texts in the early Irish tradition” by Jan Erik Rekdal, and “Czech code mixing 1990-2010: From domain specialization toward graded register” by Karen Gammelgaard.

Kinga Dévényi

Texte im arabischen Beduinendialekt der Region Douz (Südtunesien). By VERONIKA RITT-BENMIMOUN. (*Semitica Viva*, ed. by Otto Jastrow, 46). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011. 554 p., 15 Abb. ISSN 0931-2811 ISBN 978-3-447-06530-6

The book under review contains an admirably vast number of orally recorded texts in about 240 pages in the Southern Tunisian Bedouin dialect of the Dūz region, together with a similar amount of pages with the German translations. The Introductory chapters are, on the contrary, too brief to help the reader to appreciate the texts. It has a geographic description of the region in 14 pages with only 7 pages of a linguistic or grammatical description which is astonishing. Between the two sub-chapters there is a state of the art summary called “Forschungsstand” in one page about the Tunisian dialectology. At the end of the book there is a glossary of difficult words not translated in the texts but interpreted here in 7 pages. The bibliography unnecessarily fills 16 pages with many items not referred to in the volume.

Many problems and questions arise during the reading of this book. One of the major problems is connected to the inconsistencies of the transcription. It is stated in the Introduction (4. “Transkription”) that the author used what she called a “morphophonemisches Transkriptionssystem” (whatever it means in practice) “um die morphologische Zusammenhörigkeit von Lexemen sichtbar zu erhalten”. However, even this very obscure principle has not been adhered to. Some words are transcribed according to their supposed original lexeme (to wit, *mā*, *kān*), some others are transcribed according to their actual pronunciation (e.g., ^o*džī*). A good example for this is the case of the genitive construction with *mtā^c*. On p. 202, no. 5. it is written as *ntāḥ* in the word *ntāḥḥum* giving the actual pronunciation instead of retaining the morphophonological constituents (from *ntā^c?*/*mtā^c?* + *hum*), whereas, for example, on p. 258, no. 8 it is given as ^o*mtā^c*. Without a somewhat detailed explanation one cannot accommodate the co-occurrence of *mtā^c* and *ntā^c*.

In other places the translation is based on the superficial understanding of the structure of the phrase. E.g., pp. 502-3, no. 1: “*yūldu l-mi^cza nxallōhum līl yak^ob^{ru}*” = “Wenn (die Ziegen) Nachwuchs bekommen, behalten wir sie, bis sie groß werden.” The verb *ḥall(a)*, however, generally serves as an auxiliary verb in the meaning “to let”. A transcribed text naturally cannot be without errors but if one and the same grammatically important particle is written in two variants it is difficult to find out which of them is the right one in lack of a concise grammar of acceptable size in the book: p. 502, l. 1 “*līl yak^ob^{ru}*” and l. 2: “*līl yak^ob^{ru}*”. It is also difficult to understand, why the insertion of an automatic ultra brief vowel seemed to be necessary between two consonants in word final pausal position (*kal^ob*) – it being the rule of almost all Bedouin dialects, East and West, not to allow a two consonant closure –, while at the same time doubled consonants re-

mained written even before a third consonant which cannot be pronounced in this way ([°]*nsaddru*). However, she does not seem to adhere to her rules, and writes *mā-[°]ādš* in pause (p. 258, no. 9) instead of *mā-[°]ād^š*. Alongside [°]*nsaddru* we also encounter ^ʔ*badd^llat* (p. 132, no. 26). She gives the form *w-[°]add^lmōha* (p. 136, no. 12) alongside *mḡammōa* (p. 134, no. 9). One has a feeling of uncertainty because with the various forms it is difficult to glean the rules, since one cannot know for certain whether in a given form a certain rule is being followed or the actual pronunciation.

One could list a great number of further problems and errors along the same lines. In my view the use of a simple term “morphophonological transcription system” cannot substitute a more refined, well considered and logical transcription. The lack of marking the emphasis and the preservation of the lexical length of the vowels in all environments also cause great problems in interpreting the linguistic data. That is why one cannot use these texts as a linguistic estimation of the Southern Tunisian Bedouin dialects till the publishing of an accompanying grammar book promised in the Introduction, and one can only hope that this grammar will soon see the light. Until then the German translations can be used on their own as an anthropological collection.

Kinga Dévényi

Abū Nuwās in Übersetzung. Eine Stellensammlung zu Abū Nuwās-Übersetzungen vornehmlich in europäische Sprachen. By EWALD WAGNER. (*Arabische Studien*, ed. Hartmut Bobzin and Tilman Seidensticker, 7.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012. 218 p. ISSN 1860-5117, ISBN 978-3-447-06638-9

Ewald Wagner, the well known and recognized editor of the *Dīwān* of Abū Nuwās in its entirety, as a culmination of his lifelong research in the poetry of this [°]Abbāsīd poet compiled a comprehensive collection of the translations of his poems in 32 different languages. He does not only give the data of appearances but also the original titles of the translated poems which is not an easy task considering the sometimes fundamental changes the translators made in the meaning of the Arabic text. He arranged the translations according to his five volume edition of the Arabic text, giving not only the data of the translated poem and the translation but also telling whether the translation is complete or only partial. This book is an indispensable tool to the European cultural history and to the estimation of how Arabic literature has become known in the world during the centuries.

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