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This volume contains articles based on presentations given at or prepared for the Colloquium on Arabic Linguistics, held in Bucharest June 2-4, 2003, organized by the Center for Arab Studies of the University of Bucharest.

Nadia ANGHELESCU deals with “Le rôle de la métaphore dans les explications d’Ibn Ḥinni” (pp. 7-24). In explaining the system developed by Ibn Ḥinni she follows the theory of Lakoff and those who profess the inspiration of conceptual metaphors. “Metaphors are mechanisms by which we understand abstract concepts and realize abstract reasoning.”

Andrei A. AVRAM wants to promote the significance of “Arabic pidgins and creoles from a comparative perspective” (pp. 25-40), comparing features of Nubi, an Arabic based creole spoken in Kenya and Uganda, and Juba Arabic, an Arabic pidgin spoken in the Sudan, with features of other creoles and pidgins in the world. Nowadays “… textbooks of or introductions to pidgin and creole studies tend to focus on Atlantic and/or Pacific varieties with a European lexifier and only infrequently refer to and include data from Arabic-based pidgins and/or creoles.”

Ramzi BAALBAKI limits his interest exclusively to the Classical Arabic of some authoritative Medieval Arab grammarians when speaking about “Some considerations of word order in kāna constructions” (pp. 41-58).

Monica BROȘTEANU deals with “Problèmes concernant la traduction en roumain de quelques « noms divins » coraniques” (the Holy names of God in the Koran and their translation into Rumanian) (pp. 59-64).

Nicolae DOBRIȘAN discusses “ʿAl-mudāf wa-l-mudāf ʾilay-hi and genitive exponents in Arabic Dialects” (pp. 65-80). He bases his list on Versteegh’s Pidginization and Creolization: the Case of Arabic (Benjamins, Amsterdam 1984), p. 92: ṭab, ṭabq, ṭaq, ṭaq, ṭab, ṭab, ṭab, ṭab, ṭab, ṭab, ṭab, ṭab, ṭab, ṭab, ṭab, ṭab, ṭab. He discusses the alternation of genitive exponent constructions with genitival constructions and the frequency or not of the last type, and gives reasons why the exponents sometimes may be used rather than the genitive constructs and vice versa.

Ioana FEODOROV, since 2008 well-known because of her edition of the Arabic Version of Dimitrie Cantemir’s Divan1), tackles the subject of “Middle Arabic Elements in Two Texts from Macarius Ibn al-Zaʿīm’s Maṣḥūrat al-wujūd” (pp. 81-92), in fact a text by the Greek-Orthodox patriarch of Antioch on the basis of her father, prof. Virgil Cândea’s, extracted text of one of the manuscripts and other manuscripts kindly made available by others. The “Pleasant Collection” consists of reports of various dimensions on different topics that the author came to know about in his scholarly studies and during his visits to Christian Rumanian Principalities (1652-58) to share the “spiritual wealth” with his own people. Therefore he tried to make his language and style as close as possible to the vernacular of his Christian Arab countrymen, without abandoning totally the rules of Classical Arabic.

1) Born in Rumania and Prince of Moldavia (1673-1723).
discusses Middle Arabic features of the text, mentioning the findings of Blau, Grand-Henry and Lentin.

Daniela Rodica FIRANESCU occupies herself with "Ma’dīn al-kalām chez al-Zarkāšī. Interrogation et performance" (pp. 93-117) based upon Al-Burhān fi ‘ulām al-Qurān by Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkāšī looking for what is with this late author the concept of the meanings of speech (les sens des énoncés), for instance what is interrogation? “… the best place to look for formative elements in linguistic or philological thinking in Islam is the tradition of exegesis of the Qurān” as she quotes Versteegh (1991).

George GRIGORE discusses “Quelques traces du contact linguistique dans le parler arabe de Mardin (Turquie)” (pp. 119-134). Jean-Patrick GUILLAUME deals with “A-tarja t Filasṭīn? ou de quoi rient les grammairiens arabes?” (pp. 135-147). Alan S. KAYE occupies himself with “Semantic parameters and Literary Arabic form II” (pp. 221-235).

Pierre LARCHER’s contribution is entitled “Du jussif au conditionnel en arabe classique: une hypothèse dérivationnelle” (pp. 185-197). Adrian MACELARU writes about “Semantic transparency and Number Marking in Arabic and Other Languages” (pp. 149-184).

The eighth-century scholar Sibawayhi’s Book was composed, and with its terminology. Strangely enough, the book of 900 or more pages has no introduction nor conclusion or transmission chain, which is rather unusual in Arabic texts. Sibawayhi composed The Book as a consciously complete literary product. In the text the author is aware of The Book he is making by his cross references. Seventy-eight manuscript copies of The Book have been located and described, the oldest extant ms. being from 962 and the oldest complete ms. from 1192. There are two independent manuscript traditions. As far as the arrangement is concerned, Sibawayhi has a rigorously structured methodology, first syntax of Arabic, then its morphology and then its phonology. The first seven chapters are introductory. They are to be identified with the Risāla (‘Epistle’) by Sibawayhi. Carter distinguishes six categories of data in the book, such as about the natural language of the Bedouins, the artificial language of Arabic poetry, the different language of the Koran, the tradition of the prophet (Hadith), proverbs and idiomatic phrases, and made-up words and sentences, the first and the last category based upon observation, and the middle categories based upon artificiality. All those data and the used terminology are analysed in the subsequent subchapters.


The eighth-century scholar Sibawayhi was the first linguistic scholar of Arabic. Michael G. Carter discusses his origins and background, the relationship that Sibawayhi had with his teachers, the intellectual context of his grammatical ideas, and how his general concept of language shaped his approach to Arabic. Sibawayhi’s impressive work is known simply as The Book or as Sibawayhi’s Book. It became the most authoritative work on the grammar of Classical Arabic. After an introduction, in which the origins of Arabic grammar and linguistics are discussed and the individual nahwiyyūn (grammarians) prior to him, the author sketches the personality of Sibawayhi, of whose life little is known, his name and origins are mentioned, his birth in al-Baydā‘ in Shirāz, his coming to Baṣra to study religious law and his turning to grammar after he made a serious mistake in grammar.

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Khalīl ibn Ahmad, and others, are mentioned as his masters. Under a subchapter ‘Public life’ the Mas’ulat al-zumbiḥ (‘The Question of the Hornet’) is dealt with, a debate engaged in Baghdad which is considered as the most famous incident in Sibawayhi’s life (p. 13).

It deals with a question which in English would be called the ‘it is I’ or ‘it is me’ question and in Arabic the ‘fa’-i’dhā huwa iyās-hā’ question (literally ‘he is her’). Sibawayhi was in favour of the first version, but four Bedouins who were present by chance agreed with the second possibility, and so Sibawayhi was ‘proved’ wrong. A special little subchapter is devoted to the date and manner of his death. His death is between 778 and 810, so Carter distinguishes from the sources. As for the cause of his death, either it was illness that killed him, or he died of grief after the humiliation of Baghdad. In the subchapter ‘Sibawayhi and his masters’, there are lots of names such as Hammād ibn Salama, Khalaf al-Ahmār, between them Ḫūfān such as al-Kisā‘ī and al-Farrā‘. Add to those several persons named in The Book but not directly known to Sibawayhi such as Ibn Mas‘ūd and the Koran exegete Mujāhid, and Abū ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āli‘, or persons named in The Book whom he knew personally, such as Yūnūs ibn Ḥābib or associated names such as al-‘Āsma‘ī. Yūnūs ibn Ḥābib and al-Khalīl ibn Ahmad are considered Sibawayhi’s principal teachers.

The second chapter deals with the question when and how The Book was composed, and with its terminology. Strangely enough, the book of 900 or more pages has no introduction nor conclusion or transmission chain, which is rather unusual in Arabic texts. Sibawayhi composed The Book as a consciously complete literary product. In the text the author is aware of The Book he is making by his cross references. Seventy-eight manuscript copies of The Book have been located and described, the oldest extant ms. being from 962 and the oldest complete ms. from 1192. There are two independent manuscript traditions. As far as the arrangement is concerned, Sibawayhi has a rigorously structured methodology, first syntax of Arabic, then its morphology and then its phonology. The first seven chapters are introductory. They are to be identified with the Risāla (‘Epistle’) by Sibawayhi. Carter distinguishes six categories of data in the book, such as about the natural language of the Bedouins, the artificial language of Arabic poetry, the different language of the Koran, the tradition of the prophet (Hadith), proverbs and idiomatic phrases, and made-up words and sentences, the first and the last category based upon observation, and the middle categories based upon artificiality. All those data and the used terminology are analysed in the subsequent subchapters.

The third chapter deals with the arrangement and general principles of The Book. We learn for instance that Sibawayhi’s analysis is based exclusively upon language as behaviour. “As a modern scholar has defined it, the grammarian’s task is to account for ‘the actions performed by the speaker in order to construct a linguistic sequence appropriate to his specific intended meaning’”, and “this”, according to Carter, “[…] is exactly what Sibawayhi set out to do” (p. 61).

Another subchapter deals with “The ethical criteria” Sibawayhi uses to express correctness,rightness or otherwise in the speech act. In the subchapter ‘Hierarchies and general postulates’ Carter discusses hierarchies between verbs, nouns and other categories and reductions in verbal endings e.g. lam taku instead of lam takun or the fact that the perfect of wada’a ‘to leave’ is not used but always replaced by synonyms such as
The next three chapters, 4, 5 and 6, are a useful abstract and analysis from Sibawayhi’s ideas on respectively Syntax (p. 73), Morphology (p. 99), and Phonology (p. 120).

The seventh and last chapter, on the legacy of The Book, tells us how from the beginning it was said ‘I have read the book,’ to indicate that Sibawayhi’s grammar was intended. The impact of the book upon al-Jahiz, and upon others such as the Kufan and Basran school, and Sibawayhi’s pupils, among them al-Akhfash and Qutrub, is immensely great. Also attention is devoted to technical advances due to Sibawayhi’s Book and modified and abandoned terms (pp. 138-139). The real evaluation in the light of Western linguistics, still must be made, according to Carter.

The book ends with a chapter for further reading with a useful list of publications and an index. I miss some names such as Henri Fleisch and Ramzi Baalbaki, or Pierre Larcher, in these lists but perhaps the list is not meant to be exhaustive. What is the relevance of having a series of Makers of Islamic Civilization, after all the books that have already appeared on these Makers? At least for this volume we are grateful because of Michael Carter’s conciseness with its constant reference to corresponding derived verbs in Classical Arabic, which allows the reader to put the Hassaniyya data in a more general diachronic perspective.

An article of similar precision and potential impact is Jérôme Lentin: “Datif éthique, datif coréférentiel et voix moyenne dans les dialectes arabes du bilâd al-sîm et quelques problèmes connexes”. The focus of the paper lies on the use of pronominal phrases with the preposition in constructions in which the pronominal element is coreferential with the subject of the sentence, without being a genuine reflexive. This “coreferential dative” is different from the “ethical dative”, in which, according to the author’s definition, the l- phrase is not coreferential with any argument of the verb. The author shows that this coreferential dative is to be considered an expression of the category “middle”. While focusing on the dialects of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, Lentin provides fascinating vistas over the entire territory of Arabic dialects, as well as into Middle Arabic. While reading the article, I wondered whether it would be possible to merge the ethical and the coreferential dative into one single category. One might try to define them as marking an (indirectly) affected, or (mentally) involved participant in the event. In cases where this affected participant in the event is coreferential with the subject, automatically middle meanings appear, as the subject affects itself.

An entirely different kind of subject is taken up by Aryeh Levin “The ‘āmil of the ḥabar in old Arabic grammar”. In this article the different ways the Arab grammarians have tried to account for the case-assignment in the predicate of...
nominal sentences are studied. The article is extremely well-written, and, in spite of the very complicated matter, very clear. It would indeed constitute a good start in a “direct immersion” course on Arab grammatical traditions.

Arkadiusz Plonka “Sayyabān ou l’anomie au Liban: quelques remarques sur le lexique expressif en arabe” studied the depreciative lexicon used in the anti-Arab polemics of the Garden des exiles, an extremist faction during the Lebanese civil war. By means of a dozen of examples taken from Standard Arabic and Lebanese Arabic written texts, the author exemplifies the many different ways language is used in order to insult the enemy.

The final and by far the longest article is by Georgine Ayoub: “L’inscription de l’énonciateur dans son énoncé en arabe écrit et parlé: étude de quelques marqueurs (‘an, ‘in, ‘anna, ‘inna, ‘ān, ‘in-nu)” It aims at a description of the different meanings conveyed by the use of these complementisers and subordinators, using a morphological decomposition of the classical elements in ‘a and zero / -na. In an interesting development, she also involves the energetic endings in her analysis. After this, she shows the change in the meaning of ‘an between Coranic Arabic and Classical Arabic, and — on the other end of the time scale — studies the modern usage of the complementisers (‘ān, ‘in-nu) in Lebanese Arabic. The article strongly draws from Culiosi’s linguistic theory, and only occasionally tries to explain the theoretical concepts. Thus the less informed reader has to find out by himself what is meant exactly by central concepts such as “l’image du premier énonciateur” (a definition of ‘an in 156 — especially the concept “image” remains difficult to interpret without explanation). This is unfortunate, as it seems that the proposed analysis in itself is very insightful and could have impact on more general discussions about, for instance, evidentiality and mutativity.

All in all, this is a collection of interesting papers about a wide array of subjects. Quite a number of articles from this volume have the potential of becoming standard accounts in their sub-disciplines, and one hopes that they will find their way into their respective natural environments.

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Ghawānī al-Asḥawāt fi Ma‘ānī al-‘Ushshāq of Ibn al-Bakkāʾ is one of the late works in the long line of Arabic treatises of love. The date of composition of the book is not known, but the author died in 1630. So he was a contemporary of another late author on love, namely Marī ibn Yusuf, whose Munyat al-muḥābbīn (still unedited) also was composed early in the 11th/17th century.

The editor of the Ghawānī al-Asḥawāt, George Kanazi, earlier published another text on love in the same series, namely Abd al-Rahmān al-Shayzarī’s Rawḍat al-qulūb wa-maṣḥat al-muḥābb wa-l-maḥābāt. The edition of this text was begun by David Semah and completed by Kanazi, whose familiarity with the tradition of treatises on love manifests itself in the many references given in the critical apparatus annex footnotes of his edition of the Ghawānī.

The edition of the Ghawānī is based on the three known manuscripts of the text. Two of these are dated: the Paris one in 1088 H, the Gotha one 1092 H; the Cairo MS is undated. The editorial principle, to use the editor’s term, was to “unify” the MSS. Thus there is no attempt to define the relationship between the MSS, and the edition is, without further discussion, simply done eclectically. This is somewhat surprising to the reader who is accustomed to discussions about stemmata and who is raised with the idea that contamination of the textual tradition ought to be avoided.

Considerable effort has been taken by Kanazi to trace the numerous quotations (explicit or without source reference) from earlier authors, as well as parallels with other texts. If relevant for the edition, these were included in the apparatus.

The various indices, among them an index of verses and an index of books cited, give us a quick idea of the range of literature upon which the author drew. The index of personal names, a lām, which also includes authors that are cited, is most useful in this respect, although it is sometimes difficult to find out under which part of their names they are arranged; apparently they are simply put in under the name as it is cited in the text, and no attempt is made to systematize this basis on a rule of bibliographical literature.

Sometimes the edition is a little unwieldy where it comes to tracing authors. An example is the reference in the text (p. 141) to a work called Manāẓīl al-‘ahbāb wa-manāẓīḥ al-‘ahbāb. The author of this work is not mentioned in the text of the Ghawānī. The footnotes annex apparatus do not give further information, and neither does the index of books (p. 236). Luckily the book is included in the bibliography of the edition, and that is how we can find out that this Manāẓīl al-‘ahbāb is the same as the work by Shihāb al-Dīn Mâhmûd al-Halabi referred to by David Semah in his article in Arabica 24 (1977), 2, p. 187 ff., and published in Beirut in 2000. The bibliography, by the way, is not arranged alphabetically according to author (although authors are mentioned first) but to title. An excellent idea, but it might have been useful to alert the reader to this.

Kanazi’s introduction to the Ghawānī al-Asḥawāt makes no attempt to give us an idea of the position which the Ghawānī takes up in the love tradition. This is a pity, because as an editor he must have come to know the text very well, and it would have taken little effort to tell us something about the relation of the Ghawānī to other works in the genre and about Ibn al-Bakkāʾ’s specific approach to the subject. Was he just a collector of opinions, which he then arranged according to subject? Or was there a particular agenda behind his selection of quotations, such as for instance a moral one?

Apparently the editor felt that he had done enough in making available a scholarly edition of the text, with ample source references, and decided to leave it to other scholars to analyse the text and its implications. This is an understandable and acceptable point of view, of course, and the edition certainly is a most welcome addition to the range of texts on love that are available in print.

The edition does not include references to modern scholarly literature on the subject; for this, as well as for an overview of the works on sacred and profane love that belong to the tradition, the reader is referred to the Arabic introduction of the edition of al-Shayzarī’s Rawḍat al-qulūb, pp. XVII-XXII.

It is thus from the text of the Ghawānī itself that the reader has to find out how the text is related to older sources in this field and to discover from what angle the author, Ibn al-Bakkāʾ, approached the subject. A review is not the place for an extensive analysis of such matters, so let it suffice to say that the Ghawānī basically consists of the views given by a variety of authors on love and its various aspects. The material is arranged in three chapters: the nature and essence of love; the truthfulness of lovers and the signs of love; about those who have died from love.

Earlier works on love explicitly cited by the author are Ibn Abī Hājāla’s Diwān as-Sabāba; Ibn Sinā’s Risāla fī l-‘Iṣq; Ibn Qayyim’s Rawḍat al-Muḥābbīn; the symposium on love in Masʿūdī’s Murūj adh-Dhahab; Ibn as-Sarrāj’s Maṣāʾerī al-‘Ushshāq; Shihāb al-Dīn Mâhmûd al-Halabi’s Manāẓīl al-‘ahbāb. Personally, I was interested to see whether there was any trace from Ibn Hazm’s Tawq al-Hamāma, rarely quoted in the later tradition. No reference or parallel was found, not even in the chapter on the signs of love, which is a context where parallels with the Tawq al-Hamāma, without explicit reference, regularly turn up in other works.

As far as I could deduce from Ibn al-Bakkāʾ’s own introduction, his approach is that it is highly recommendable, almost a moral obligation, to seek friendship and love, because a close friend will provide advice, even unsolicited, and thus be an invaluable help in steering a right moral and religious course. The title of the concluding chapter, the khūṭa, contains an intriguing wordplay referring to the Pure Brethren of Basra: Fi mā yata’alqa bī-l-wafā bayna ikhwān as-SAṣāf ("What pertains to faithfulness between pure brethren"); the hamzas at the end of wafā and SAṣāf are not written in the text). The chapter praises the superiority of those who remain true in spite of the fact that their love is unrequited or has to remain unfulfilled. The fairly explicit way in which the author connects to the Ikhwān as-SAṣāf and to concepts that form such a prominent part of their teaching, such as moral purity, ascetism, and mutual assistance (ta‘āwen), is quite noteworthy.

One of the interesting aspects of the Ghawānī is the attention that is paid to physiological explanations of love and the phenomena connected to it. Various authors are quoted on this subject; see, for instance, p. 54 and pp. 72-77. I was interested to see whether Abū Sa‘īd ‘Ubayd Allāh Ibn Bukhitshu’s book about curing the sicknesses of the soul and the body, where the ‘malady of love’ is extensively treated (ed. Klein-Franke, 1986) came up in this context, but Ibn al-Bakkāʾ does not refer to it.

There are a couple of things that I am unhappy about, and these concern the lack of attention paid to the book by the publisher before it went to print. I do not know whether the
series editor or someone else at the publisher’s is to blame, but in a book that appears at a prestigious publishing house such as Harrassowitz we do not expect to see the Istanbul Laleli collection referred to as La La Li collection (p. XIV). In general, the English text ought to have been checked, corrected and adapted to common scholarly usage where necessary. Then there is the point that the English table of contents does not agree with the Arabic. Further, it should also have been made clear that the Arabic introduction is more elaborate than the English. An example, also on p. XIV of the English introduction: “It starts as follows: …”. Here the incipit of the book, which is included in the Arabic version of the introduction, has been left out and is simply replaced by dots. There are embarrassing printing mistakes, such as “reduction of the text” in the English table of contents where “redaction of the text” is meant (and then we need the Arabic, tabqiq, to find out that ‘redaction’ is used here in the sense of ‘edition’ or ‘text critical approach’).

May we ask Harrassowitz for more attentive and careful handling of manuscripts landed on their desks in the future? It is distressing to see such unnecessary blemishes in a book that essentially is an interesting and valuable contribution to scholarship.

Leiden, December 2009
Remke Kruk