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 Qinni” (pp. 7-24). In explaining the system developed by Ibn Qinni 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 BROŞTEANU 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 DOBRIŞAN discusses “Al-muḍāf wa-l-muḍāf ‘ilay-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: māl, ḥaggīhaqq, taba’, basta’, dyal, derived from words for possession. 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-Za’im’s Maṣūma’ latif (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. She

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 Lentini.

Daniela Rodica FIRANESCU occupies herself with “Ma’dāni al-kalām chez al-Zarkaši. Interrogation et performance” (pp. 93-117) based upon Al-Burhān fi ’ulām al-Qurʾān by Bāḍr al-Dīn al-Zarkašī looking for what is with this late author the concept of the meanings of speech (lex 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 Qurʾān” 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-tarfā it Filāthin’ ou de quoi rient les grammariens arabes?” (pp. 135-147). Alan S. KAYE occupies himself with “Semantic Transparency and Number Marking in Arabic and Other Languages” (pp. 149-184).

Pierre LARCHER’s contribution is entitled “Du jussif au conditionnel en arabe classique: une hypothèse dérivative” (pp. 185-197). Adrian MACELARU writes about “Semantic parameters and Literary Arabic Form I causatives” (pp. 199-208). Ovidiu PIETRĂNEAU’s contribution is entitled “Remarques sur le processus de métaphorisation de quelques noms de parties du corps en arabe” (pp. 209-220). Kees VERSTEEGH deals with “Phonological constraints in Arabic grammatical theory: the iltiqā’ as-sākīnuyn” (pp. 221-235).

Firmly based upon research of different specialists in the field of the history of Arabic grammar this publication addresses all the most relevant topics that an average researcher who occupies himself with Arabic linguistics would be interested to read. Most articles have a list of references and secondary sources for further reading. This publication of the congress papers gives us a good idea of the variety of contributions to it. We may congratulate the convenors of the congress with the excellent results.

University of Amsterdam, June 2009  Arie SCHIPPERS

* * *


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 Nahwiyun (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 Basra to study religious law and his turning to grammar after he made a serious mistake in grammar. Khalil ibn Ahmad, and others, are mentioned as his masters. Under a subchapter ‘Public life’ the Mas’ulat al-zunbat (‘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-‘idhā huwa hiya’ or ‘fa-‘idhā huwa ‘iyā-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 distils 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 Kifans 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 Muṣājid, and Abū ‘Amr ibn al-‘Alī, or persons named in The Book whom he knew personally, such as Yūnus ibn Ḥabib or associated names such as al-‘Asma’ī. Yūnus ibn Ḥabib and al-Khalil 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 traditional principles of Arabic, then its morphology and then its phonology. 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
A last subchapter is about meaning or ma‘nā in The Book and about the occurrence of the word niyya (intention).

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 supposed to say ‘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 Kifān 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 clear and accessible style, a book which can be used with benefit by students and scholars.

Amsterdam University, November 2009

Arie Schippers


Linguistique arabe is a collection of articles edited by Georgette Ayoub and Jérôme Lentin, which covers aspects of Arabic linguistics from different points of view, and concerning different varieties of the linguistic common known as Arabic. Most articles focus on Arabic (morpho-)syntax, one article concerns lexicon, and one is of a more general nature.

The first article, “The Syntax of Arabic Tense” by Elabbas Bennamourn, offers a Principles and Parameters approach to Arabic “tense”. The main question concerns the force driving verb movement to the Tense position. The author argues that in some varieties of Arabic verb movement only happens in what he calls the “present” tense, and provides a formal account of this. The article suffers from some flaws in data and presentation. Thus, one wonders how Moroccan Arabic (which according to the author has a different structure) God-wishes can be added as evidence for an “older pattern of the language” (p. 18), while they evidently constitute borrowings from literary Arabic. More importantly, the author does not explain his use of the term “tense” in order to describe what many authors consider to be aspect. As in at least some generative models, Tense nodes are different from Aspect nodes, this seems to constitute a major challenge to the proposed theoretical analysis.

In “Qu’est-ce que l’arabe du Coran? Réflexions d’un linguiste”, Pierre Larcher shows the importance of a philologically solid linguistic investigation of the Qur’an. Among his main points is the interest of the different reading traditions (one wonders why he chooses to use only two out of seven qirā’āt, however).

Kees Versteegh in his article “Some Remarks on Verbal Serialization in Arabic Dialects” makes a courageous attempt to find serial verb constructions in Arabic. The delimitation of the use of the term ‘serial verb’ is a matter of lively debate, and the Arabic examples adduced by Versteegh certainly do not constitute archetypical examples of the construction. As this is largely a matter of definition, and as Versteegh’s analysis provides an interesting view of verb-verb constructions in Arabic, this is hardly a problem. It is more so in the last section, where Versteegh suggests that seriality is a common result of language simplification due to pidginization.

In her article “De la réciprocité à l’extensivité; pour une approche renouvelée des verbes à 1e voyelle longue (arabe hassanîyya)”, Catherine Taine-Cheikh provides a detailed account of the semantics of stem VI and stem III in Hasaniyya. The abundant data show that stem VI is basically reciprocal in nature, while stem III often functions as a causative to the reciprocal, (semantically) derived from stem VI. Both stems, but especially stem III, also show meanings subsumed by Taine-Cheikh as “similarity and/or symmetry” — including sub-meanings such as “chained events”, “group actions”, and “more or less symmetrical events”. A last group of meanings, mainly found with stem III, are labeled “extensivity” by the author, which she defines as “un mouvement de l’actant a vers l’actant b, impliquant une tension, une continuité, et pouvant aboutir à un rapprochement ou à un éloignement par rapport au point considéré comme point de référence”. One can only admire the precision of the classification, and the subtlety of its semantic description. The importance of the work in an out-of-Mauritania context is greatly enhanced by 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 bilād al-sām et quelques problèmes connexes”. The focus of the paper lies on the use of pronominal phrases with the preposition l 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 ‘ami’l of the habar 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.

Arkiadiusz Plonka “Sayyabān ou l’anomie au Liban: quelques remarques sur le lexique expressif en arabe” studied the deprecative lexicon used in the anti-Arab polemics of the Gardiens des cèdres, 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 order to insult the enemy. It would indeed constitute a good start in a "direct immersion" course on Arab grammatical traditions.

The importance of the Iḥām is to have developed a strong debate between different authors. The work generated other works such as those of Ahmad ibn Idris al-Sanhājī al-Qarāfī (d. 1285) and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350). Among the Jews the Baghdadi Sa`d ibn Mansūr ibn Kammūnā (d. 1284), in his Tanāqī af al-bāhāt lil-māl al-thalāth (“Critical evaluation of the researches of the three religions”), rejected numerous objections against Judaism raised in the Iḥām, which also served as a reference text for some later authors polemizing against Judaism.2)

The work can be divided in three parts:

1. Part One (pp. 1-15) containing an introduction about Samaw`al al-Maghribī and his work, and about the interest for his work from the 19th century onwards. For instance the textual edition by Moshe Perlmann, in 1964, which was based on a later version of the manuscript, and the more recent one realised by Muhammad ’Abd Allāh al-Shārāwī (1986) on the basis of an Istanbul Ms Topkapı Saray 4832 R 506 and Damascus Zāhiriyā 5111, and he also made use of Perlmann’s edition. Information about the manuscripts with earlier versions is given, namely the Ms Tehran Majlis 593, Majlis 4547 and Dānishgāh 1074 from the Central Library of the University of Tehran.

2. Part Two contains the critical edition of the Iḥām (pp. 19-48) from the Ms Tehran Majlis 593 and 4547, and the republishing of two documents in appendix of the treatise, namely the Nusḥat mas`ala wūridat `ala S-Samaw`al al`m b`d al-zanādqa al-mutafalsifa (“Text of a question directed to Samuel by one of the godless philosophers”) (pp. 44-45), and the answer to this question, namely the Nusḥat al-jawāb (pp. 46-48). The edition is equipped with a meticulous critical apparatus.

3. Part Three (pp. 51-71) contains facsimiles of Ms Majlis 4547 (pp. 51-69) and the Ms Dānishgāh 1074 (pp. 70-71), which only provides the introduction of the work. Interesting in the facsimiles is to see how the quotations from the Hebrew Bible are given in the text: some indecipherable signs, followed by the transcription of the Hebrew in Arabic characters with the real Hebrew text added in the margin. This edition of the “Early Recension” gives us a good idea of the different textual traditions and variants. We may congratulate the team Maraza/Pourjavady/Schmidtke for their thorough editorial work.

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University of Amsterdam, June 2009  Arie Schippers


Ghawānī al-Aṣḥāwāl fi Ma‘āni al-‘Uṣḥāshāf of Ibn al-Bakkāʾ al-Balkhi 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 Yusūf, whose Munyat al-muḥābībīn (still unedited) also was composed early in the 11th/17th century.

The editor of the Ghawānī al-Aṣḥāwāl, George Kanazi, earlier published another text on love in the same series, namely Abd al-Rahmān al-Shayzarī’s Rawda al-qulūb wa-muḥābāt wa-l-muḥābīb wa-l-muḥābībīn. 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 accustomcd 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 a title. An excellent idea, but it might have been useful to arrange; apparently they are simply put in under the name of the work. As far as I could deduce from Ibn al-Bakkāʾ, 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 Rawda al-qulūb, pp. VII–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 Ḥalajā’s Diwān as-Šaḥāda; Ibn Sinā’s Risāla fi l-Īṣ qa; Ibn Qayyim’s Rawda al-Muḥābībīn; the symposium on love in Maṣʿūdī’s Muṣʿūd al-Dhahab; Ibn as-Sarrajī’s Muṣʿūdī ‘Uṣḥāshāf; Shihāb al-Dīn Māḥmūd al-Halabi’s Manāẓir al-Abbāb. Personally, I was interested to see whether there was any trace from Ibn Ḥazm’s Tawq al-Ḥamāna, 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-Ḥamāna, 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 Ḥuṣn al-Maṣūma, contains an intriguing wordplay referring to the Pure Brethren of Basra: Fi mā yata ṣaqaḥ bi-l-wafā bayna ikhwān as-Ṣaḥāfi (“What pertains to faithfulness between pure brethren”; the hamzas at the end of wafā and ṣaḥāf 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-Ṣaḥāfī and to concepts that form such a prominent part of their teaching, such as moral purity, ascetism, and mutual assistance (taʿawwun), 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 Abī Sā’dī ‘Ubayd Allāh Ibn Bukhīšū’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, tabqīq, 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