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Review

LUTZ EDZARD, ed., *Arabic and Semitic Linguistics Contextualized. A Festschrift for Jan Retsö*

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Edited in the Asien-Afrika-Institut
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by Alessandro Bausi

in cooperation with

Bairu Tafla, Ulrich Braukämper, Ludwig Gerhardt,
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Reviews

both flyleaves and two black and white (Map 2 ‘Localization of epigraphic documents in the Gəʿəz language on the territory of the Aksumite state’, p. 622; Map 3 ‘Localization of epigraphic documents in the Gəʿəz language beyond the Aksumite state’, p. 623)—considerably facilitate the use of this book.

Serge A. Frantsouzoff, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Saint Petersburg

LUTZ EDZARD, ed., *Arabic and Semitic Linguistics Contextualized. A Festschrift for Jan Retsö* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015). 576 pp., 11 illus., 6 diagrams, 1 map, 7 tables. Price: €128.00. ISBN: 978-3-447-10422-7 (HB).

This *Festschrift* for Jan Retsö is edited by Lutz Edzard and published by Harrassowitz; it is a good quality book and has a hard cover. The introductory section contains a dedication by the editor, a tribute from the pupils, and a bibliography prepared by Edzard, containing seventy-eight titles.

The twenty-nine papers (mostly in English, but some in German or French) cover various fields of linguistics and philology, mostly in the domain of Semitic studies. The volume duly reflects the diversity of research interests of Jan Retsö, a linguist and philologist whose works deal with topics such as Arabian history, the linguistics of Classical Arabic as well as Middle Arabic and Modern Arabic dialects, and comparative Semitic studies, and whose vast knowledge of languages, religion, history and archeology, both of the Middle East and of Europe, gives the editor every right to qualify him as ‘a humanist in every sense of the word’ (p. 9).

The first section, ‘Slavic linguistics’, contains two papers: ‘Canonical and non-canonical uses of the imperative in Slavic’ (S. S. Alvestad) and ‘New manuscript fragment of a *Prolog*, discovered in the University Library in Uppsala’ (A. Granberg).

The section ‘Arabic linguistics and philology’ includes several text editions: ‘Texts in the Bedouin dialects of the Awlād Saʿīd and the Tayāha of Sinai’ (R. de Jong); ‘Ein Begleitbrief von 904 H zu Erlassen aus dem mam-lükischen Ägypten’ (‘A letter of 904 H to accompanying decrees from mamluke Egypt’, W. Diem); and ‘Tillo. Two texts reflecting daily life and cultural aspects of the Arabs of Tillo, South-eastern Turkey’ (A. Lahdo). It also includes several papers on various aspects of the grammar of Classical Arabic or of Modern Arabic dialects: “Doppelte” Tempus- und Aspektmarkierung im Neuarabischen. Versuch einer Typisierung’ (‘The “double” marking of tense and aspect in modern Arabic. An attempt at classification’, M. Hanitsch); ‘The

Arabic definite article: A synchronic and historical perspective' (B. Heselwood and J. Watson); 'Une occurrence ancienne de la structure *kāna sa-yaf'alu* en arabe écrit' ('An ancient occurrence of the construction *kāna sa-yaf'alu* in written Arabic', P. Larcher); 'Verb form switch as a marker of clausal hierarchies in urban Gulf Arabic' (M. Persson); 'Agglutinated verb forms in the Northern province of Yemen' (O. Shachmon). The final part of this section contains papers on Arabic dialectology and sociolinguistics: 'The position of Mardin Arabic in the Mesopotamian-Levantine dialect continuum' (O. Jastrow); '*Luġat al-'umm* and *al-luġa al-'umm*—the 'mother tongue' in the Arabic context' (G. Mejdell).

The next section, 'Arabic literature, science, and history of ideas', contains four papers. One is a text edition, with a translation and a glossary, 'Qustā b. Lūqā. *On protection against rheum and catarrhs that occur in the winter*. English translation of the Arabic text preserved in the manuscript Ayasofya 372' (L. Ambjörn). Two papers deal with cultural conceptualizations: 'Aesthetics of generosity—generous aesthetics. On the cultural encoding of an Arab 'national virtue'' (S. Guth) and 'Überlegungen zur Erinnerung und Identitätsbildung im Koran' ('Considerations on memory and identity-formation in the Koran', G. Tamer). One contribution focuses on a female character of classical Arabic literature, 'Who was Ḥubbā al-Madīniyya?' (P. Myrne).

The next section, 'Hebrew linguistics', contains papers on grammar, lexicon and text studies of Biblical Hebrew: 'Thoughts on Biblical Hebrew ^א*šer*' (M. Eskhult); 'Linguistic variation and textual emendation: The case of Judges 4:20' (S. E. Fassberg); 'A note on segholate adjectives in Biblical Hebrew' (N. Pat-El). It also includes one paper dealing mostly with theoretical aspects of the phenomenon of clause combination, illustrated with examples from Arabic and Biblical Hebrew, "Subordination": Some reflections on Matthiessen and Thompson's article "The structure of discourse and 'subordination'" and its bearing on the idea of circumstantial clause in Arabic and Hebrew' (B. Isaksson). One paper in this section focuses on the beginnings of Modern Hebrew, 'Eli'ezer Ben-Yehuda and Algerian Jews: Relationship and language' (O. Tirosch-Becker). Another paper in this section employs the method of structural comparison to examine languages from very different language families, Hebrew vs Slavic languages, 'Aspect in the Slavic and the Biblical Hebrew imperative' (S. S. Alvestad and L. Edzard).¹

¹ The same text is also published as S. S. Alvestad and L. Edzard, 'Aspect in the Biblical Hebrew imperative from a modern Slavic perspective', in L. Edzard, ed., *The Mor-*

The last section, 'Aramaic, Ethiopic and comparative Semitic linguistics', contains two papers on comparative Semitics, one of them contrasting data from Semitic and Scandinavian languages: 'Explicit performative utterances in Semitic' (R. Hasselbach-Andee); 'Coordinated clause structures in Scandinavian and Semitic involving a finite verb form and an infinitive' (J. B. Johannessen and L. Edzard). It also contains two papers on Aramaic languages: 'Causative constructions in Neo-Aramaic (Christian Urmi dialect)' (G. Khan); 'Arabic or *Ṣūrayt/Ṭūrōyo*' (S. Tezel). Finally, it includes two papers dealing with Ethiopian Semitic languages: 'Sonorant alternations in Muher' (Fekede Menuta and R. Meyer) and 'Amharic and NSM (Natural Semantic Metalanguage)' (K. M. Yri).

The paper by Fekede Menuta and R. Meyer is a detailed analysis of interrelations between the sounds *n/ñ*, *y*, and *r* in Muher (peripheral South Ethiopian Semitic), taking into account both synchronic and diachronic aspects, as well as the factor of intense contact between the Muher and the *Ḫəza* language. Based on extensive fieldwork, this contribution sheds light on alternation between the consonants *nn/ññ* and *y*, and *y* and *r*. It postulates the diachronic changes **ll > nn/ññ* and **l > y*, which led to synchronic alternation between *nn/ññ* and *y* in some verbal paradigms. At the same time, it attributes synchronic alternation between *r* and *y* to the influence from *Ḫəza*. Some considerations on sonorant alternations in other languages of the Gurage cluster are also offered in this paper.

The contribution by K. M. Yri focuses on the concept of Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) developed by Anna Wierzbicka and her followers. The author proposes translations of the semantic 'primes' of NSM into Amharic, as well as a translation of a semantic definition employing NSM syntax (that is, a definition which uses semantic primes only) into Amharic. He concludes his experiment with criticism of the NSM concept as Anglo-centric, at the same time expressing the hope that efforts to develop NSM will continue, and it will become a more adequate universal tool for encoding language-specific meanings.

Apart from these two papers, Ethiopianists will be interested in the section on performatives in *Gə'əz* and Amharic in R. Hasselbach-Andee's contribution, as well as in the brief discussion of Amharic converb coordination in J. B. Johannessen and L. Edzard's paper.

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pho-Syntactic and Lexical Encoding of Tense and Aspect in Semitic (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2016), 22–52.