

The Arabic Linguistic Tradition. By George Bohas, Jean-Patrick Guillaume, and Djamel Kouloughli. 2006 (reprint in the Georgetown Classics in Arabic Language and Linguistics of the 1990 edition). Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press. xii,163 pp. Paper. \$29.95.

This is a reprint of an important treatise on the Arabic linguistic tradition originally published in 1990. Bohas, Guillaume, and Kouloughli (hereafter BGK) emphasize in their well-written preface that it is a sad fact that “the very limited amount of space devoted to the Arab grammarians in the main histories of linguistics ... is quite out of proportion to the real importance of this tradition” (p. ix). One can only express the hope that the Arab grammarians will eventually become a significant enough topic in the general histories of linguistics to warrant a full-length discussion, along with their Greek, Roman, and Indian counterparts. This book contributes to the accomplishment of this noble and desirable goal.

The volume contains seven chapters; however, this review will focus on the first four chapters, since the latter three are very technical treatises on, in my opinion, peripheral subjects. These are: naqd ‘literary criticism’; xafaaba ‘Greek-style rhetoric’; ʔuʔuul alfiqh ‘the foundations of jurisprudence’; balaagha ‘Arabic-style rhetoric’; and ʔilm alʔaruud ‘metrics; prosody’.

Chapter 1, “General Introduction” (pp. 1-30), is a fairly detailed account of the history of the Arabic linguistic tradition from the era of the first grammarian, ʔAbuu l-ʔAswad Ad-Duʔalii (d. 688 A.D.[?]). The authors do a good job in explaining why the ʔuluum alʔarabiyya (awkwardly translated by them as the ‘sciences of Arabity’, p. 3) focused mainly on the poetry of ancient Arabia. These sciences were divided into naħw ‘grammar’ and ʔilmu lluʔa ‘lexicography’, among other interrelated topics.

The two major Arab philological/linguistic schools of Basra and Kufa (Iraq) is one of the most famous subjects within the medieval Arab grammatical tradition, so it is good to see the

BGK's thorough treatment of it. It should be pointed out that the authors sanction as a possibility the hypothesis developed by Henri Fleisch in his (1961) Traité de philologie arabe, vol. I: Préliminaires, phonétique, morphologie (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique) that the two schools may have been "invented after the fact, as a kind of historical justification for the personal rivalry between al-Mubarrad (d. 898), the leader of the Basrans and Thaʿlab (d. 904), his Kufan counterpart, when they met in Baghdad" (p. 7).

Chapter 2 concentrates on Sibawayhi's Kitaab (pp. 31-48). Disagreeing with the views of Michael G. Carter's ("Sibawayhi and modern linguistics," Language, II;1,1980) on the Kitaab, the authors have this to say: "... we must frankly acknowledge that we cannot accept it [Carter's point of view] wholesale. In particular, we feel that the methodology on which it is based does not seem completely free from arbitrariness ..." (p. 37). BGK do not see Sibawayhi as a theoretical linguist. They affirm: "More generally speaking, we are thrown back upon the problem we evoked earlier: how can we distinguish, within the text, between authentic theoretical concepts and mere illustrative paraphrase? (ibid.) ... But such a system, taken in itself, cannot predict exactly which kind of utterances are acceptable and which are not ..." (pp. 41-42).

Carter, however, tries to make a case in his book Sibawayhi (New York: Tauris, 2004) that Sibawayhi was very much a theoretical linguist (see pp. 1-2 in particular). Indian influence on Sibawayhi and his teacher Al-Xaliil cannot, in my view, be denied, since the Arabic phonemes are listed in the same order as that proposed by the Indian phonologists for the Sanskrit language, yet Carter states that it was "unlikely that there was any immediate influence from India" (2004:3). I certainly cannot agree with BGK when they opine: "The precision and sophistication of Arabic phonetic scholarship has led some orientalists to hypothesize an Indian influence on the elaboration of these ideas. But as far as we know, no convincing argument has

ever been proposed in support of this view” (p. 95). How else can one explain the similar ordering of the Arabic and Sanskrit phonemes? On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that some Arab grammarians were certainly very innovative in their phonetic views; e.g., Ibn Ginni (d. 1002) discovered the fundamentals of the phonotactic constraints on the Arabic triconsonantal root consonants a full millennium before Joseph H. Greenberg’s famous and oft-quoted article based on Classical Arabic data entitled “The Patterning of Root Morphemes in Semitic,” Word (1950:162-181).

Chapter 3, “The Canonical Theory of Grammar: Syntax (NaḤW)” (pp. 49-72), examines the (universal for the Arab grammarians) tripartite parts of speech: ism (noun), fiʿl (verb), and ḥarf (particle). After the discussion of the three parts of speech, BGK note that there is a chapter in almost every work on ʔiʿraab ‘the case markers of noun declension’ and binaaʔ ‘the mood markers of verbal inflection’. Here the grammarians saw the obvious surface-structure similarities between the -u of the nominal raʿ and indicative; the -a of the naSb and the subjunctive; and the -i of the genitive and the zero ending on the verb (not an equivalency); and the jazm (or sukuun = zero) of the noun and the jussive of the verb. The Arab tradition, as the authors affirm, use the same terminology for nominal cases and verbal moods.

Chapter 4, “The Canonical Theory of Grammar: Morphology, Phonology, and Phonetics (tašrīf)” (pp. 73-99), contains a fascinating examination of ʔidyaam, usually ‘assimilation’, but in other contexts used for ‘gemination’ (p. 90 et passim). (It should be pointed out that the vocalization iddiyaam is also correct.) After ḥaḏf ‘erasure’ applies in the derivation of *madada ‘to extend’ > madda and *yamdudu > yamuddu ‘he extends’, we can thus account for, via the Arabic traditional analysis, the origin of ʔidyaam ‘gemination’ of the d in each (pp. 90-91,

quoting Ibn Ginni and Ibn Yaʿish).

In their discussion of the first Arabic dictionary, the Kitaab Al-ʿAyn by Al-Xaliil, the authors are correct in their estimation that Sibawayhi's teacher was an acknowledged authority during that epoch and that "phonetics is probably the domain in which Sibawayhi's teachings have been most widely and faithfully accepted" (p. 94). However, one must also note that the Arab phoneticians made important discoveries in articulatory phonetics, like Ibn Sina (d. 1037), who may have been the first in the world to postulate the possibility of artificial speech synthesis (pp. 97-98).

The book is remarkably free of typographical and stylistic errors. However, two such errors came to my attention: (1) the use of a spiritus lenis for the glottal stop being used for a spiritus asper for the ʿayn (p. 82); and (2) the term 'voiced fricative pharyngeal' should be 'voiced pharyngeal fricative' (p. 94). But these are slight imperfections, and I can recommend this book as a solid introduction to the views of the medieval Arabic grammarians.

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