

“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.

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