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RECENT ARABIC LITERATURE

Le Parler arabe des Juifs d'Alger. Par MARCEL COHEN, chargé de cours à l'École des Langues Orientales. Paris: H. CHAMPION, 1912. pp. xvii + 559.

Until quite recent times philological studies were mainly devoted to the grammatical speech and literature, and the languages of the people were contemptuously disregarded. That this attitude is at best one-sided is self-evident. For the grammar of a language represents the arbitrary views of a school of a certain period, and usually arrests the natural development, whereas the common people who remain uninfluenced by grammar continue to develop a dialect of their own. Due to these considerations, the investigation of various dialects is assiduously pursued in modern times. In Arabic especially such studies are of vital importance. The classical language, as represented in the *Ḳur'ān* and early poetry is to some extent still the model for Arabian writers throughout the globe, but the numerous dialects differ so greatly from one another, that a man well versed in one will be at a loss to understand another. For the comparative grammar of Semitic languages, dialects offer suggestive hints, and Brockelmann in his *Grundriss* made ample use of them. As Jews form a group for themselves, they usually develop dialects of their own, which preserve important features of the parent tongue.

That the Arabic dialect spoken by the Jews of Algiers deserves special treatment is fully justified by Marcel Cohen's book, which is an exhaustive study of this dialect, and throws a good deal of light on the development of that language. Such a book would naturally have been best written by a native of Algiers. It is, however, a remarkable fact that speakers of a certain dialect are seldom alive to its importance. Thus Jewish-German, though the vehicle of thought of several millions of Jews, and possessing

a rapidly-growing literature, has not been yet treated comprehensively. And it should be borne in mind that there are a fairly large number of philologists whose mother-tongue is Jewish-German. It would therefore be unreasonable to wait for a native to write a comprehensive study of the dialect of the Jews of Algiers. M. Marcel Cohen, who seems to have had an excellent philological training, made a careful study of this dialect while sojourning in Algiers. He availed himself of the services of intelligent natives, who supplied him with apparently reliable information.

In his *Introduction* M. Cohen gives a short sketch of the Jews of Algiers. The usual tragedy of Jews in the diaspora reveals itself here. They are swayed by foreign influences, and are the first to discard their language and adopt another. There is every reason to believe that soon Arabic will cease to be the language of the Jews of Algiers, and will be supplanted by French, the language of the recent conquerors. M. Cohen also points out the characteristics wherein this dialect differs from the other dialects spoken by Muhammadans or Jews. He maintains that this is a real dialect, and not a jargon, as it is usually considered by the non-Jewish population of Algiers, and by Bargés in his work on Tlemcen. This view can, however, be contested, and our decision depends on the exact definition of the term *jargon*. This Jewish dialect contains a considerable amount of Hebrew loan-words to make it unintelligible to non-Jews. In this respect it resembles Jewish-German, which is commonly known as *jargon*. Moreover, the Jews of Algiers, as their history shows, are composed of heterogeneous elements, and conflicting influences were at work to make their dialect what it is to-day. It is thus deprived of a natural development which is the primary characteristic of a dialect.

The first part of this important work deals with phonetics. M. Cohen is very exhaustive, and treats of all sounds very minutely. One is, however, inclined to doubt the accuracy of this difficult study. For one who is not a native will find it impossible to determine whether certain characteristics are indi-

vidual or general. This difficulty is almost unsurmountable in the case of unaccented vowels, where even the most careful inquiries would fail to elicit reliable information. It will, however, be readily granted that M. Cohen obtained the best possible results under the circumstances. Moreover, he seems to have been supported by the independent investigations of W. Marçais, whom the author frequently quotes. It is interesting to note that many Jews of Algiers are unable to pronounce *sh*, a characteristic which is shared by Jews in certain parts of Lithuania. The fact that *h* is sometimes pronounced as *hamza* is to be ascribed perhaps to some Jews who immigrated from Egypt, where this is quite usual. On the whole, I think that most of these characteristics are to be explained in some such way.

Of greater importance and interest is the second part dealing with morphology. Here the author could work with greater accuracy and precision. The wear and tear of language is here clearly manifest. It is safe to say that the verbal forms approximate Aramaic more than Arabic. The dropping of syllables is quite frequent. Trisyllabic forms of classical Arabic are reduced to one syllable. To illustrate this point the following example will suffice: *kteb*, 'he wrote', instead of *kataba*. This represents an advanced stage of decay, for in Egypt *keteb* is the ordinary form. A comparison of this dialect with the other Arabic dialects spoken in the Orient will yield fruitful results. One may perhaps find Hebrew influence in the usage of *ra'ā* in the sense of *to be* (p. 252), which is like הנה. Thus *rāk* = הנה, *thou art*.

The studies in the vocabulary, which form the third part of this work, deal chiefly with words borrowed from other languages. As may well be imagined, Hebrew loan-words are very prominent. Most of the terms employed in religious ceremonies are Hebrew, in a grammatical or corrupt form. This is the case with all Jewish dialects, for religious terms are not easily translated. But the author rightly observes that owing to the fact that the Jews of Algiers lack talmudic knowledge, Hebrew words are less numerous in this dialect than in Jewish-Spanish or Jewish-

German. Most of the formulas of greeting are in Hebrew, as are also a number of euphemistic expressions. Some Hebrew phrases are used as a peculiar slang, which the author treats separately. These expressions are sometimes not devoid of humour. Thus עשר מכות (ten plagues) means *ten francs*.

In explaining these terms our author is not always fortunate, and it is to be regretted that this part of the work was not revised by a competent Hebrew scholar. Apart from the numerous misprints, some of which are corrected in *Additions et Corrections* (pp. xi-xvii), there are many errors in orthography and interpretation. תשעה באב instead of טרפה and תשע בעב instead of תשעה באב (p. 393) are left uncorrected. The vocalization is seldom accurate. In mentioning the name of a detested dead person, the Algiers Jews use the expression ישרף עצמות together with the Arabic suffix 3rd pers. masc. sing., and the author (p. 396) remarks that in Hebrew it ought to be עֲצָמוֹתוֹ! Had he looked up a Hebrew paradigm, he would have known that the only possible form is עֲצָמוֹתָיו. It should be noted that the Midrash uses שהיק עצמות without a pronominal suffix. הודו ליי כי טוב is translated by *éclat pour Dieu, puisque c'est bon!* הודו being taken as a noun. He also fails to remark that this phrase occurs in Ps. 136. 1.

The texts which the author appends are instructive in various ways. They are judiciously and carefully chosen, and are calculated to give the reader some idea of the customs and manners of the Jews of Algiers. Text I is written in Hebrew characters, and is supplied with a transcription and French translation. It is a humorous anecdote about a Rabbi Ghzi'el (little gazelle), which reminds one of the anecdotes related of Luḡmān. The remaining texts are transcribed in European characters, and translated into French. Text II is a description of Sabbath dishes given by an old woman. It ends with a humorous couplet:

eššebbat bla tḥina
kīf eššultan bla mādina

‘Sabbath without *tḥina* (food prepared on Friday and kept warm for the Sabbath) is like a king without a city.’

Text III deals with burial rites, and Text IV describes marriage ceremonies. They are very quaint customs, and in some way poetic. They remind one of the idyllic state of ancient times. The latter text ends with a wedding hymn. Text V is a commercial letter.

The index of the words occurring in this book is well compiled, and serves a useful purpose in enabling one to find out what words are peculiar to this dialect.

Register zum Qorankommentar des Ṭabari (Kairo, 1321). Von HERMANN HAUSSLEITER. Strassburg: KARL J. TRÜBNER, 1912. pp. 47.

Among Muhammadan writers of the ninth century Ṭabarī stands out pre-eminently as historian and theologian. His *Annals*, which were published under the direction of de Goeje, are extensively used. But his *magnum opus*, his commentary to the Qur'ān, was hitherto neglected. O. Loth gave a description of this monumental work in *ZDMG.*, XXXV (1881), 588-628. About ten years ago this work was published at Cairo in thirty volumes. The index volume is in Oriental fashion, and is not suitable to the needs of European scholars. As a scientific European edition of this work can hardly be expected in the near future, Haussleiter has compiled a useful index which will enable the reader to find his way in this commentary. It was undertaken at the instance of Prof. Lidzbarski. The verses are marked in accordance with Flügel's edition of the Qur'ān.

Monuments of Arabic Philology. By Dr. PAUL BRÖNNLE. Vol. I. Commentary on Ibn Hisham's Biography of Muhammad according to Abū Dzarr's MSS. in Berlin, Constantinople, and the Escorial (Wuestenfeld's edition, pp. 1-540). Edited by Dr. Paul Brönnle. Cairo: F. DIEMER, FINCK, & BAYLAENDER SUCC., 1911. pp. 16 + 208. Vol. II (continuation and end), pp. 2 + 258.

To bridge over the gulf that separates the East from the West has often been attempted by making the literature of the one accessible to the other. As is usually the fate of Utopian ideas,

no visible success was hitherto achieved, and the East remains unknown to the West. Nevertheless, there still exists a small band of scholars who, despite all discouragement, persist in doing their best to bring about this desired end. Animated by this idea, Dr. Paul Brönnle devoted himself to researches in Arabic literature, and, as a result of his fruitful labour, is publishing *Monuments of Arabic Philology* in six volumes.

In order to make the texts accessible to readers of both the East and the West, Dr. Brönnle is issuing two editions: an Oriental (Arabic-English) and a European (Arabic-German). The former is to contain five volumes of texts, and a volume of critical notes and indices of all texts. The editor has skilfully chosen texts of varied interest, excluding all grammatical works of which abundant specimens had been printed. One needs only to glance at the table of contents to be convinced of the sound judgement of the editor. These volumes are to comprise works by Abū Dzarr, Al-Rabai, Ibn Khalawaih, Qutrub (complete works), and 'Alī ibn Hamza. The European edition will be published on a slightly different plan; each volume will be complete in itself, consisting of texts, critical notes, literary introduction, and indices.

Hitherto two volumes of the Oriental edition appeared, and they contain Abū Dzarr's commentary to Ibn Hishām's Biography of Muhammad and two short prefaces by the editor. Dr. Brönnle had formerly published a thesis entitled 'Die Commentatoren des Ibn Hishām und ihre Scholien', in which he gave a detailed account of Abū Dzarr and his works. He is thus singularly qualified for the task of editing this manuscript.

The present volumes are an important addition to the Tafsīr literature of the Arabs. Abū Dzarr is very concise, and does not weary the reader with irrelevant verbosity which characterizes some of the Arabic commentators. He explains difficult words in a brief, but convincing, manner, and is not unlike the Jewish commentator Rashi. He avoids the pitfall of *ignotum per ignotius*, a fallacy frequently committed by Arabic commentators, who sometimes give the impression as if they aimed at displaying their

knowledge of synonyms rather than elucidating the text and clearing up difficulties.

It is impossible to pass judgement on the editor's work, as these volumes are only provided with short prefaces, which can naturally lay no claim to literary merit, for they do not touch upon any textual problem. They merely tell of the assistance obtained from royal personages, and about the various manuscripts utilized for the edition. The consonantal text is clearly and accurately printed, but the vowels which are supplied sporadically are frequently misplaced, and sometimes even wrong. This is perhaps due to the fact that Oriental printers are inexperienced in publishing vocalized texts. The editor would do well to rectify this error in the European edition.

It is to be hoped that Dr. Brönnle will continue his work and earn the gratitude of Arabic scholars all the world over.

Oriental Cairo, the City of the Arabian Nights. By DOUGLAS SLADEN. Illustrated with sixty-three intimate pictures of life in Oriental Cairo from photographs by the author, and with the newest map of Cairo. Philadelphia: J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY, 1911. pp. xiv + 391.

Since Napoleon made Egypt his winter quarters, that country became the rallying-point of European and American tourists. Indeed, the tourist is such an important factor in Egyptian life, that Cairo, which is naturally the centre of attraction, assumes quite a different aspect during the season which begins in November and ends in April. As among these tourists there is a number of talented men who come not only to escape the severity of the western winter, but also to receive new impressions which they wish to record, there sprang up a vast literature on Egypt. Edward Lane, who may be regarded as the pioneer in this field, had many followers who attempted to narrate what they observed. The bulk of these books being personal impressions, they are usually not exhaustive, as many places are overlooked or disregarded by the writers, and are thus not sufficiently reliable for the traveller. On the other hand, the guide-books, such as

Baedeker and *Cook*, are only good for reference, but are too dull for reading. A book on Egypt which should at once be reliable and readable has hitherto been a desideratum. Mr. Sladen is, therefore, to be congratulated on his achievement. He succeeded in the present volume to combine the exhaustiveness of a guide-book with the fascination of a book of impressions. Possessing an artistic eye and a descriptive pen, he is able to discover beautiful things and to describe them graphically. All the thirty-four chapters are charmingly written, and some even have a fine touch of poetry about them. Mr. Sladen is very enthusiastic about the sights he describes, and by the magic of his vivid descriptions communicates his enthusiasm to the reader. Sight-seers in Cairo will, after perusing this book, find the hidden charms of the Pyramids and the Tombs of the Caliphs revealed unto them. For Mr. Sladen, beside depicting minutely most sights of interest, takes care to inform the reader at what time and by what route they may be approached with greater advantage. In reading this book one feels as if an enthusiastic guide with artistic taste and charm takes him for a pleasant excursion, pointing out all beautiful objects.

Although the author does not aim at giving historical accounts, he nevertheless embodies in every chapter well-chosen facts which would interest the average reader and sight-seer. He advisedly abstains from encumbering the reader with tedious details which are seldom retained in the mind for more than a few minutes. Those, however, who desire further information are referred to other books, whose aim it is to give detailed accounts.

The sixty-three photographs represent various aspects of native Egyptian life. They are, however, not always in their place. Thus on p. 280 there is the beginning of a chapter entitled, 'Roda Island and Moses', and there is no allusion whatsoever to the return of the Holy Carpet from Mecca. Yet it is a photograph of this imposing procession that faces p. 280. This picture naturally belongs to chapter XXI, which deals with this subject. A similar fate has befallen the only two Jewish photographs depicting a grand Jewish funeral. They are facing pp. 14, 15

respectively, but would certainly have been more suitable for pp. 223, 224, where a few lines are devoted to the description of 'a funeral of a rich Jew more magnificent than any funeral the author ever saw, except the procession of a dead monarch or a national hero'.

The meagre descriptions of native life which occur sporadically are not to be taken seriously. This may be due to the fact that Mr. Sladen is not sufficiently familiar with the Arabic language. For, after all, the first and most important qualification for the understanding of a race is to be well versed in its tongue. Moreover, Mr. Sladen is not a keen observer. He is too much engrossed in his artistic pursuits to be able to observe men of another race objectively. It is true that he caught the humour of the Esbekiya, and chapter III is certainly amusing. But this is a superficial and cheap sort of humour, which never escapes even the dullest person who visits an Oriental town for the first time.

It should be pointed out that Mr. Sladen's book is not free from political bias. The author never misses the opportunity of drawing attention to the overwhelming favour England is bestowing on the Egyptians by occupying their country. Mr. Sladen is, no doubt, entitled to his opinion about forcing improvements upon weaker races, but his book would not have suffered if he had kept his opinion to himself. But, as remarked above, Mr. Sladen is subjective in his mode of thinking. This also accounts for the fact that he cannot resist showing his contempt for American tourists, especially for those belonging to the fair sex. We are, however, ready to forgive a man his national and personal prejudices, provided he is artistic, and Mr. Sladen is artistic to a high degree.

With the exception of the short description of a grand Jewish funeral, of which mention was made before, and the obtrusively frequent allusions to Jewish women of ill-fame, there is no Jewish interest in this book. This is to be regretted, as there is a considerable Jewish population, both native and European, in Cairo, and we should have liked to get a description of it from

Mr. Sladen's pen. The Jewish Quarter (Hāret al-Yahūd) which branches off the Musky has a humour of its own, and offers many points of interest. Its narrow alleys, through which a carriage can hardly pass, and mediaeval synagogues are in a way quite unique.

The first three appendices which deal with 'Ways of getting to Egypt, &c.', 'Cairo is the real scene of *The Arabian Nights*', 'Artists' Bits in Cairo, &c.', are very useful. One cannot, however, see the necessity or utility of reprinting as an Appendix Mr. Roosevelt's speech on Egypt at the Guildhall.

The index, which was compiled by Miss Margaret Thomas, makes the book appear more scientific than it actually is.

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