

From Tur Abdin to Hadramawt. Semitic Studies, ed. by Tal Davidovich, Ablahad Lahdo and Torkel Lindquist, Harrasowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2014, 207 pp.

According to the *Introduction* written by the Editors, the book *From Tur Abdin to Hadramawt. Semitic Studies* is a volume “collected in honour of professor in Semitic languages, Bo Isaksson, Uppsala University on the occasion of his retirement” (p. 7). Bo Isaksson (b. 1947) studied mathematics and theoretical philosophy, and later on Hebrew Studies in Uppsala. His doctoral thesis was written under the supervision of Frithiof Rundgren Isaksson in 1987 – its theme was *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth With Special Emphasis on the Verbal System*. It was edited in the same year in the series “Studia Semitica Upsaliensia”. The main interests of Bo Isaksson are Semitic languages with special emphasis on Arabic and other Semitic dialects. In the study of vernacular forms of any language fieldworks are of the utmost importance. Isaksson conducted fieldworks in Yemen, Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Ethiopia and Turkey.

The life of a scholar consists not only of writing, but also of editorial works and teaching. The author was the editor and co-editor of “Orientalia Suecana” and “Studia Semitica Upsaliensia” several times. As a teacher he gave courses in Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic/Syriac and modern Turoyo.

The reviewed *Festschrift* consists of following texts by the scholars from Israel, Norway, Sweden, Great Britain and Austria:

Werner Arnold (Heidelberg), *Il-Lidd in Earlier Times A Text in the Arabic Dialect of Lydda (Israel)* (pp. 15–21); Eran Cohen (Jerusalem), *Presentatives in Comparative View: Biblical Hebrew and Neo-Aramaic* (pp. 23–37); Tal Davidovich (Uppsala), *On Vocalization and Case Endings in Judeo Yemenite* (pp. 39–48); Lutz Edzard (Oslo), *The Epexegetical Genitive in Semitic and the Sūra Titles in the Qur’ān* (pp. 49–58); Heléne Kammensjö (Göteborg), *Pace and Circumstance in Oral Arabic Narration: On Asyndesis and Verb Chaining in Egyptian Arabic* (pp. 59–70); Geoffrey Khan (Cambridge), *Remarks on Infinitives and Verbal Nouns in the Christian Urmi Dialect of Neo-Aramaic* (pp. 71–79); Ablahad Lahdo (Uppsala), *Bequsyone Texts Reflecting Cultural Aspects in Tur Abdin* (pp. 81–91); Torkel Lindquist (Uppsala), *Circumstantial Qualifiers in Arabic and Hebrew Political Language* (pp. 93–101); Stig Norin (Uppsala), *Hebrew in the Bar Koseva Era Observations in Some Documents from the Second Century AD* (pp. 103–115); Maria Persson (Lund), *Verb Form Switch as a Marker of Discourse Hierarchy in a Case Study of Syrian Arabic* (pp. 117–128); Stephan Procházka (Vienna), *Feminine and Masculine Plural Pronouns in Modern Arabic Dialects* (pp. 129–148); Gail Ramsay (Uppsala), *Breaking the Silence of Nature in an Arabic Novel Nazīf al-ḥajar by Ibrāhīm al-Kawnī* (pp. 149–172); Joseph Saouk (Uppsala), *A Narrative Fragment from the Arabic Dialect of Qallaf* (pp. 173–178); Shabo Talay (Bergen), *The Mesopotamian-Levantine Dialect Continuum* (pp. 179–188); Aziz Tezel (Göteborg), *An Approach to Quadriradical Verbal Formations with /’/ as Secondary in Some Arabic Dialects – Discussion of Some Examples* (pp. 189–197); Sina Tezel (Uppsala), *The Comparative Method as Applied to the Semitic Cognate Sets with Phonological Correspondences* (pp. 199–207).

The articles are preceded by a short, abovementioned *Introduction* by the Editors (pp. 7–8), a list of publications by Bo Isaksson (pp. 9–12) and *Tabula Gratulatoria* (pp. 13–14). The list is arranged chronologically and divided into “Books” and “Articles and Reviews”. The part “Books” contains, unfortunately, an error: the first and second book are the same.

As seen from the titles of articles, they cover all themes which Professor Bo Isaksson is interested in – the grammar of several Semitic languages, the comparative grammar of Semitic languages and its vernaculars and dialectology as such. Only one study goes beyond this range – it is the study by Gail Ramsay *Breaking the Silence of Nature in an Arabic Novel Nazīf al-ḥajar by Ibrāhīm al-Kawnī*. This article is devoted to the novel of one of the most renowned Libyan writers and in its analysis the scholar applies the methodology of ecocriticism, as far as I know, for the first time in the study of Arabic literature at all. It should be said that this methodology can be very useful in the analysis of Arabic literature – both prose and poetry. The Arabs, since Ġāhiliyya are closely related to nature, especially to the desert. The Bedouins in pre-Islamic *qaṣīdas* are very close to their motherland, as close as Twaregs in several novels of Al-Kawnī, not only in *Nazīf al-ḥaḡar* (see e.g. E. Machut-Mendecka, *Magic and realism of the desert (The prose of Ibrāhīm al-Kawnī)*, “*Studia Arabistyczne i Islamistyczne*” 3, 1995). Without doubt, the methodology of ecocriticism opens new perspectives for the study of Arabic literature, both classical and contemporary.

As said above, the study of vernacular needs travel and fieldwork. In some cases the effects of these fieldworks have not only linguistic, but often also ethnographical value. The best example of this fact is the article by Ablahad Lahdo. The texts in Neoaramaic published in this study preserve some information according to selected aspects of material culture in Bequsyone, a village in the heart of Tur Abdin.

On his part, the article by Werner Arnold presents another aspect of interdisciplinarity of linguistic research. It contains a story of a Christian Arab from Lydda. The story of this man can be read as a linguistic evidence of Arabic vernacular from Lydda, but also in the context of historical record, probably useful for the historians of everyday life of ordinary people in the Middle East in 20th Century.

The same can be said about the article by Joseph Sanouk which contains a short narrative recorded in Sweden during an interview with seventy-three old Yūsəf Brāhīm from the village of Qələf (Qillat/Dereçi near Mardin in Turkey).

By pointing out these articles I want to stress that the reviewed book should be useful not only for linguists, but also for researchers in the fields of literature, history, ethnography and sociology.

Another interesting aspect of this book I see in the fact, that it provides a good presentation of the Uppsala circle of linguistic research in Semitic languages, for about half of the authors come from Uppsala University, from among pupils of Professor Bo Isaksson. A circle of so clever students is the best evidence, that Isaksson as a teacher achieved the objective of which every employee of the university dreams.