ARTÍCULO-RECENSIÓN

On the prehistory of the Arabic language

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Dealing with the pre-Islamic period of Arabic is nearly the same as making guesses at what the prehistory of a language could have been like, on the mere basis of a few statements issued by neighbouring people who did not speak it and of a host of scattered epigraphic materials which, however, may or not reflect the speakers' true speech and, at any rate, yield very little trustworthy information because of the well-known shorthand features of most Semitic scripts, compounded in this case by their being encoded in makeshift adopted Aramaic or South Arabian unvocalized alphabets.

This much said, it is only fair to commend Dr. Mascitelli[1] for his enthusiastic resolve to undertake an almost impossible task, while fully conscious of this, in an area where many a seasoned Semitic scholar has failed or, at least, been unable to produce new conclusive evidences. We would wholeheartedly admit our feeling of having often sailed in that same boat and regularly failed in the same purpose in many, if not perhaps all of our pronouncements on this matter; however, we also think that those of us who have joined this fray do not deserve the epithet of fools for having rushed into grounds where smarter and more angelical fellows have refrained from treading. Because, Arabic being in many ways the best known and, therefore, the most important Semitic language, any increase in our present degree of knowledge thereof is of paramount importance for a better description of the whole family; as a matter of fact, the very scarcity of certainties about that pre-Islamic and prehistoric period of its existence weighs heavily on the whole realm of Semitic linguistics, and has often been the source of bad mistakes and misapprehensions. The slightest shade of a chance of success in this endeavour is in our view, therefore, worth the effort and the risk of failure, as meant by the Arabic proverb */illā ḥaẓiyyah falā aliyyah/* "if (the purpose) is not attained, let it (at least) not be untried". In such disposition only are we trying to review this new important addition to the bibliography on the oldest phases of Arabic; at any rate, the momentous impact of whatever opinions are published on an issue like this is the main justification for the unusual length of our notes and comments.

This published version of the author's Ph.D. dissertation is divided in two distinctly outlined parts, namely, a first one, devoted to the emergence, background and spreading of Arabic in the pre-Islamic period, and a second one, being a selection of basic epigraphic texts, followed by their graphemic, phonetic and morphological analysis and a final chapter on the origins of the Arabic script.

1. D. Mascitelli, *L'arabo in epoca preislamica. Formazione di una lingua* (Arabia antica 4), Roma 2006, "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 14 x 21, 337 pp.

Both main parts, 1 and 2, are characterized by an exhaustive survey of former opinions, with no other conspicuous absence than that of some first-rate Russian authors and works, such as Anna Belova's *Istoričeskaja morfologija arabskogo jazyka po materialam pamjatnikov doislamskogo perioda* ("Historical morphology of the Arabic language on the basis of its documents in the pre-Islamic period", Moscow, Vostočnaja Literatura, 1994),[2] *Očerki po istorii arabskogo jazyka* ("Sketches of history of the Arabic language", same place and editor, 1999) and *Xim'jaritskij jazyk* ("Himyaritic language", same place and editor, 1996),[3] and D. Frolov's *Classical Arabic Verse. History and theory of* ʕarūḍ (Leiden – Boston – Köln, 2000);[4] however, in this matter the author sins in very good company, or perhaps should we say in the company of the majority, limited as we all are in our capacity for at least reading every language in the world with an important scientific production. Otherwise, the bibliography listed and frequently used is quite complete and updated, which is remarkable and commendable in an epoch when students and even professors not only shun the Classical languages, but allow themselves to ignore German, Italian and Spanish, even French in some countries. The Medieval Western European scholars' saying "Graece, non legitur" has turned for them into "non legitur nisi Anglice", with the sad consequences that could be expected from such ignorance and narrow-mindedness.

It is also noteworthy that our colleague mentions the most relevant scholars' opinions on every issue, but rather seldom adopts or rejects them, except in a few cases which we shall comment on as they come up. This attitude is most coherent in the case of the second part of his book, where the edition, commentary and interpretation of the sample texts either produce the impression of a definitive solution or of an avowed puzzling conundrum, but we feel that the statements contained in the first part would call more often for a larger measure of involvement and criticism although, of course, the author is entitled to let the reader draw his own conclusions and take any of the available options. Thus, e.g., Retsö's view of the term "Arab" (pp. 32-33), as the label of a peculiar community or brotherhood of initiated fellows giving military protection to farmers and tradesmen, may well be fascinating, but clashes openly with the historical and even anthropological evidence for its being an ethnic designation since its earliest appearances and it is unlikely to provide a clue for distinguishing true ethnic Arabs from mere Arabic speakers.

In other instances, contrariwise, we would say that Mascitelli has paid too much heed to certain school tenets which he ought perhaps to have considered with some degree of scepticism. Such would be the cases, in our view:

1) of the classification of Old North Arabian epigraphic material into two groups (pp. 34, fn. 11, and 42), according to the shape of the definite article, >*h*-< or >*h(n)*-<, respectively, it being obvious that the optionally extended shape is a mere phonetic variant, probably explainable in diachronic and/or diatopic terms, but insufficient by itself to posit very different dialects or linguistic phases. The case might be quite another when that shape is >*ʔl/m*-< (p. 225), which necessarily betrays a less akin dialect without, however, thereby precluding mutual intelligibility.[5]

2) of the rejection of linguistic connotations for the traditional classification of Arabs into tribes of Qaḥṭānian and ʕAdnānian descent (p. 44 and, most emphatically, in p. 146, where it is described as a

2. Reviewed by us in *Estudios de Dialectología Norteafricana y Andalusí* 2(1997)242-243.

3. Reviewed by us in *Estudios de Dialectología Norteafricana y Andalusí* 2(1997)244-245 and 4(2000)238-241, respectively.

4. Reviewed by us together with its Russian original (*Klassičeskij arabskij stix*, Moscow, Nauka, 1991) in *Journal of Arabic Literature* 31.3 (2000)267-273. Frolov's data and views might have helped Mascitelli in improving his outline in p. 63, fn. 39, upon discussing the eventual places of origin of verse in pre-Islamic Arabia.

5. Cf. the case of the Balearic dialect of Catalan, where the shape of the definite article is *s(a)* (< Latin *ipse - ipsa*), instead of *el – la* (< Latin *ille – illa*), which does not hinder understanding between heterogeneous speakers, as continues to be the case also in Modern Yemenite dialects with *a/im/l-* shapes for that functional.

political, rather than a scientific and philological operation), following on this view no lesser a scholar than Goldziher. Our colleague declares the acceptation of those connotations as risky, if not useless, though right away pronouncing the tribal attribution of linguistic facts and features as relevant; however, as we said in a survey of South Arabian features in Andalusi Arabic "one gets the impression, after carefully studying the linguistic peculiarities attributed to the various tribes by native authors, that there was indeed a certain correlation between their dialects and origins since, as a matter of fact, South Arabian features do appear in the speech of tribes considered to be Qaḥṭānian and viceversa".[6] To give just one example for the sake of concision, would it be wise to disconnect the consistently reported attribution of the relative pronoun */ḏū/*, an exact match of South Arabian *>ḏ(w)<*, to the tribe of Ṭayyiʔ from their reported Qaḥṭānian extraction? One must, of course, contemplate the distinct possibility of some South Arabian individuals and even communities having on occasions entirely forsaken their former language and thoroughly mastered one of the North Arabian dialects and the literary *koine*; however, the survival of some South Arabian grammatical and lexical items in their speech is equally or even more expectable, as given away by instances like those mentioned in that article of ours.[7] As a matter of fact, our most recent studies on the emergence of Western Arabic unequivocally point to Egypt and the process of decreolization of the important Yemenite settlement there.[8]

3) of his assumption of the classification of Arabic as "Central Semitic" (pp. 18-19 and 51), an original contribution of Hetzron's in line with Garbini's innovative views on the subgrouping of Semitic. In our view, however, neither of both hypotheses are more than fads, not standing serious verification, as we have demonstrated in two recent papers.[9]

4) of his reluctance to admit "true diglossia" in pre-Islamic Arabia (p. 57) after having, nevertheless, correctly assumed the existence of dialects then and there, as well that of a literary *koine*. Under such circumstances, the only possible conclusion is that a significant number of people, not of course the whole population, were diglottic, i.e., had a more or less good command of that *koine*, in addition to one of their native dialects, no matter whether these were urban or rural, Bedouin or else. We must assume that not everybody in pre-Islamic Arabia could probably understand and enjoy a *qaṣīdah*, on account of register differences, imagery and allusions, but this should not be purported as proof of cultural diversity, it being simply, in the eyes of the contemporary society, a case of sheer lack of culture. Exactly the judgment which most of us would pass on many an Englishman of our days who would not fully understand Shakespeare's idiom, it being obvious, furthermore, than in any diglottic community there is a direct relation between higher degree of culture and truer diglossia and vice versa.

5) of his suggestion of a trichotomy in the linguistic situation of pre-Islamic Arabia, whereby there would have been a spoken language, a written language and a literary language. The fact that epigraphic materials, although by their own nature always written, do not often conform themselves to the requirements of the literary oral *koine* simply reflects their authors' lack of competence or interest in using this highest level, if indeed they had reached it chronologically or geographically. As in the case of Middle Arabic, those performances did not belong to any of the well-defined systems which are usually labelled

6. In our paper "South Arabian features in Andalusi Arabic", in *Studia lingüistica et orientalia memoriae Haim Blanc dedicata*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1989, 94-103, esp. 94, fn.1.

7. The lexical issue was dealt with as early as by C. Rabin 1984, "On the probability of South Arabian influence on the Arabic vocabulary", in *Jerusalem studies on Arabic and Islam* 4, 125-134.

8. See our paper "On the degree of kinship between Andalusi Arabic and Maltese...", in *Folia Orientalia* 41 (2005) 25-38, esp. p. 36, fn. 34. We shall come back again to this theory in a forthcoming more detailed paper.

9. Namely, "On the degree of kinship between Arabic and Northwest Semitic", in AIDA 5th Conference proceedings, Cadix, 2002, 187-194 and "Lexicostatistics and the Central Semitic theory", in *Šapal tibnim mû illakū. Studies presented to Joaquín Sanmartín on the occasion of is 65th birthday. Aula Orientalia-Supplementa* 22 (2006) 139-144.

as language, and were just cases of hesitation or even intended choice between the spoken dialects and the literary *koine*. On the other hand, one should beware of generalizations, such as that of Mascitelli in p. 20, when he states that only very recently have Arabic dialects been used for written and literary purposes, thus forgetting the Andalusi *zağal*, profane and mystical, and proverb collections of the Middle Ages.[10]

6) of his disposition to accept a revised theory of noun declension as a perhaps adventitious addition to Arabic morphology (p. 68-70). Professor Owens' proposals on this issue are, of course, well-reasoned on several particular accounts, but the general coincidence of, at least, Akkadian, Ugaritic, Arabic and Ethiopic in the shape and functions of most case morphemes should be more than sufficient to posit noun declension as a common Proto-Semitic feature and refrain from toying with more original and modern but less convincing and well-grounded hypotheses. There is no real proof to say, e.g., (p. 72) that pre-Islamic Arabic possessed noun declension, but this was most likely used in an irregular way, even not at all in the urban speech. Let us not forget that Voller's hypothesis never won the day, as the basic coincidences between the language of pre-Islamic and Proto-Islamic poetry and the Qur'ānic text are largely sufficient to prove than noun declension followed the Classical rules most regularly in the high registers of prose and verse, while the trust placed by early grammarians in some Bedouins' competence in such matters[11] can only be construed as an attestation of the regular presence of that feature in the middle registers of some Post-Islamic communities, at least until the 10th century, according to Ibn Ǧinnī.[12] Besides, even some of the texts included in Mascitelli's part 2 (chapter I, pp. 105 and 110) contain evidences of *iʕrāb* (i.e., noun declension) used in total agreement with Classical Arabic rules, such as *>wl… ns[1]yhm< = /wali-…nisāʔihim/* "and for … their women", and *>wl ʔḫyhmw< = /wali-ʔāḫāʔihimū/* "and for their brothers":[13] we cannot understand why then the author says about this latter text (p. 111) that its attribution to Arabic is very dubious.

7) Our colleague's faith in other renowned scholars' infallibility is again probably excessive when he gives credit (p. 65) to Monroe's description of the language of Modern Bedouin poetry as "a near-classical *koine*, understood by illiterate, and descending directly from the ancient poetical *koine*", three qualifications which call for some important structures, namely, that the *koine* of the so-called *nabaṭī* poetry is uninflected Neo-Arabic, wholly understandable only to people used to its peculiar idiom, and not so directly derived from the pre-Islamic and Proto-Islamic poetical *koine* that it had not considerably renewed its imagery and lexicon. Neither would we agree with our colleague, and with the most knowledgeable dialectologist W. Diem, whom he is following on this matter, when they consider that in the dialectal pairs */bintak – bintik/* "your daughter", */abūk – abūki/* "your father" with gender distinction in the possessor, final short inflectional vowels have survived phonetically, although devoid of their old syntactic functions: in the second pair, the feminine suffix is actually a surviving Proto-Semitic *{-kī}*,[14] designed to avoid gender confusion, which would otherwise have happened even in Old Arabic in pause, while in the first pair we are rather confronted with a case of insertion by infixation of a former suffix. The solution is not different from that of */bintu(h)/* "his daughter" and */binta(h)/* "her / his daughter" in the same or other dialects, which must not be derived from Old Arabic */bintuhū - bintahā/*, through

10. A comprehensibe bibliography about both subjects can be found in Corriente 1997, *Poesía dialectal árabe y romance en Alandalús*, Madrid, Gredos, pp. 374-383, with some important additions in more recent years.

11. According to Blau 1963, deservedly mentioned in Mascitelli's bibliography. This positioning of his on this issue reappears in p. 246, invoking the support of Shahid 1980, which again cannot alter the well-established facts.

12. See our paper "From Old Arabic to Classical Arabic…", also mentioned in the author's bibliography, p. 66, fn. 3.

13. The broken pl. /ʔāḫāʔ/ is rather uncommon in Arabic, but is closely matched by Ethiopic /ʔaḫāw/, which in a text like this, with a strong admixture of Sabaic, and coupled with the suffix *>hmw<* might point in that same direction.

14. See Brockelmann's *Grundriß* I 309 about its original anceps quantity, and Murtonen 1964, *An Introduction to the comparative grammar of the Semitic languages*, p. 109, about the occasional survival of similar instances in Hebrew, while the length of that vowel is standard in Ethiopic.

defunctionalization of the nominative and accusative cases respectively, but again from a process of infixation of the morphematic final vowels */u/* und */a/*, by the same morphological phenomenon which generated internal plurals and feminines in South Semitic[15] and, more recently, the infixed 3rd person pl. masc. of the perfective (i.e., */kətawb/* "they wrote") and 2nd person sg. fem. of the imperfective (e.g., */tərākəz/*, vs. the masc. */tərōkəz/* "you stand upright") in Modern South Arabian.[16]

However, when considering that the core of this survey is found in part 2, where the author expounds the core of his dissertation, i.e., the selected texts, which are the skeleton and foundation of his reconstruction of the oldest phases of North Arabian, we must say, in spite of the modest outcome expectable and resulting from his praiseworthy endeavours, that his choice of samples is skillful and fair, as it accommodates different layers of epigraphic evidences (in South Arabian, Nabataean and Arabic scripts). They are sufficiently representative without superfluous duplication and illustrative of what these materials can contribute to an improved and updated description of earliest Epigraphic North Arabian, avowedly one of the most elusive topics in Semitic Linguistics on account not only of the sketchy and iterative nature of the related mostly brief inscriptions, but also of an unyielding graphemic code and constant interferences with Aramaic and South Arabian scripts and languages.

We shall not question the author's classification of the sources for the study of Old Arabic into direct, which would be, according to him, only the epigraphic ones, and indirect, i.e., those recorded in Islamic times, as this is part of the method chosen by him, although this choice forces upon him continuous and not always founded doubts about the true Arabic character of certain words and constructions. We understand that a long-standing relation with a given language tends to make us believe that we have acquired the instinct of detecting what is genuine and what is alien to it, but does not confer us any infallibility in such judgments, because we must always ignore wide areas of the past epochs or remote recesses of that language which we believe to master, so that we may at any time be fooled by substratum, adstratum and superstratum interferences as well as by semantic developments which we could not have dreamt of.

Therefore, we are going to offer our reactions to his survey of sample texts as prospective contributions to a better comprehension of them, without any pretence of superseding previous interpretations. This includes some further areas of disagreement between us and Mascitelli, which we feel obliged to air for the sake and benefit of contrasting opinions:

1) In some passages, we observe that a final *{-h}* would provide a better reading if interpreted as a reflex of the 3rd person fem. morpheme of the perfective, more akin to Hebrew that to its Arabic match *{-at}*, e.g., in >*qrbh*< "she approached" (p. 96), perhaps >*ʔsḏh*< (p. 104, if it is to be read as >*ʔusīḏat*< "she has been protected", and >*bnh*< (p. 117), best understood as */banat/* "she built", with a fem. subject. In such instances, our colleague would had benefited from taking into account Fleisch's reports[17] about exchanges of final */t/* and */h/* in the dialect of Ṭayyiʔ, perhaps cases of pseudo-corrections betraying the process of acquisition of North Arabian speech by this genealogically South Arabian tribe.

2) Some features of his transcription system, like: a) >*–a*< and >*–a*^{t}< for pausal and contextual *tāʔ marbūṭah*, instead of >*–ah*< and >*–at*<, which has become a common practice among many Western Arabic scholars, but causes confusion in cases like the pausal forms of */ḥayāh/* "life" and */ḥayā/*

15. See our *Introducción a la gramática comparada del semítico meridional* (Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1996, p. 36 and fn. 3, and p. 39 and fn. 1.

16. See T.M. Johnstone, *The Modern South Arabian Languages* (Undena, Malibu, 1975), pp. 16-17.

17. In his *Traité de philologie arabe I* (Beyrouth, Imprimerie Catholique 1961, p. 185, also valid for cases where >*ʔlh*< may be more reasonably understood as the goddess Allāt.

"shyness",[18] b) the generalization of >*ā*< for both >*ā*< and >*à*<, which does away with the graphic difference between many pairs of semantically diverse words and c), above all, from the same origin, the habit of transcribing whole paragraphs with pausal forms, which is outright shocking when it happens in the Qur'ān (p. 62, fn. 33, p. 83, p. 84, fn. 82, p. 179, etc.); such a practice can be excused, for the sake of brevity in book titles and personal names, even in short technical expressions, but never in whole quotes of sustained texts. One is equally surprised by our colleague's derivation of the personal names Sībawayhi and Miskawayh from *Siboē and *Maskoē, instead of attested Pahlavi *sēb bōy* and *mušk bōy*, as well as by his looking askance at transcriptions of Greek *chi* with Arabic *šīn* and viceversa, it being notorious that the pronunciation of that Greek phoneme and, incidentally, its Russian counterpart, in front of palatal vowels becomes very close if not identical with the German *ich-Laut* (*/ç/*) and has, therefore, been assimilated to Arabic /*š*/,[19] c) some carelessness about the accurate transcription of several Arabic items, like the name of the tribe Maḏḥiğ (always with */d/* in p. 103, 155, 157, 159, etc.), */ṯulaṯāʔ/* "Tuesday" (p. 97, **al-ṯalāṯa*), */nufasāʔ/* or */nafsāʔ/* "woman in childbed" (p. 99, **nufsāʔ*), etc.

3) Some statements about the grammar of Arabic and its dialects may have been issued hurriedly, without checking their accuracy. E.g., in p. 198, it is said that the phoneme */ẓ/* would be characteristic of Classical Arabic, as against the dialects but, in fact, some of them kept it apart from */ḍ/*, without operating the habitual merger, as shown in the older stages of Andalusi Arabic and in some modern dialects like that of Daṯīnah.[20] In the same manner, Mascitelli's statements about the pronunciation of *tāʔ marbūṭah* in pause as just */a/* (p. 74, 190 and 211-212) are inaccurate as far as Classical Arabic is concerned, as proven by rhymes, where the resulting */-ah/* is matched by any other */h/*, whether part of the root morpheme or final phoneme of some pronouns. The phonemic reality of that */h/* was precisely the main reason for the invention of the grapheme called *tāʔ marbūṭah* and this is a synchronic fact which should not be obscured by the complex diachronic merger of two different feminine markers, *{–t}* and *{–ā}*, or by a different situation in younger phases of Arabic, where that */h/* has been in fact, at least phonetically, if not phonemically, dropped. The phonotactic rules of Old and Modern Arabic do not tolerate a short vowel abutting upon a final juncture, which caused their lengthening (e.g., in "loose" rhymes, or in the case of the accusative marker *–an* in pause) or the addition of */h/* or */ʔ/* (even in the case of long vowels at the end of broken plurals of biconsonantal roots, e.g., */miyāh/* "waters", */imāʔ/* "female slaves"). Neither can we agree with our colleague's assumption of a broken plural pattern **{ʔafʕulah}* (p. 99), or with his proposal (p. 242, fn. 161) to explain the idle *alif* attached to the verbal plural morpheme *{–ū}* as a device to guarantee its lengthening, since it reappears not only optionally when that same morpheme is attached to a noun, but also in the case of the accusative marker *{–an}*, whether in pause or context, and is likelier to be just a left-over from the vertical stroke separating words in South Arabian script, put to a new use as a diacritic device to avoid confusion of homographs. Equally strange are Mascitelli's Arabic reading **/man ʕazīzun/* (p. 108), where, in the context of >*mn ʕ*zzm wwnym*< "whether powerful or weak", i.e., */min*

18. A curious feature of that procedure is that pausal forms are inserted everywhere in context, except when the final vowels are not inflectional marks; in other words, its aim is to avoid the pitfalls of inflection at the expense of producing a distorted image of any kind of Arabic, classical or dialectal. But this shortcut is not foolproof, as can be seen in p. 122, where *min qabla* is ungrammatical, as there is only the adverb *min qablu* "beforehand" and the compound preposition *min qabli* "before", but *qabla* is impossible after *min*.

19. About which, see *Grundriß* I 122. It is a pity that some Semitic scholars of our time, preferring fads to time-honoured indisputable knowledge, do not give its full value to Brockelmann's and his contemporaries' works, which remain useful and correct in most of their statements and have not been systematically outdated by more recent and fashionable authors and views.

20. See our paper "*Ḍ-L* doublets in Classical Arabic as evidence of the process of de-lateralisation of *ḍād* and development of its standard reflex", in *Journal of Semitic Studies* 23.1(978)50-56, esp. p. 50, fn. 4 and 5, with references to our *A grammatical sketch of the Spanish-Arabic dialect bundle* (Madrid, Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura, 1977), and J. Cantineau's *Cours de phonétique arabe* (Paris 1960, p. 56).

ʃazīzin wawānin/, his vocalizations **ʃarā* and **ġarā*, in p. 168, for */ʃariya/* "to be naked" and */ġariya/* "to covet", as well as his analysis of *>bny wʔḥdṯ<* in the text 4 (p. 109-110), where he seems not to recognize the Classical Arabic dual verbs */banayā waʔaḥdaṯā/* "they both built and erected", spelled as it could only be expected in the Epigraphic North Arabian orthography, where */w/* and */y/* do appear often, not only as graphemes of the matching diphthongs, but even as *matres lectionis* for */ū/* and */ī/*, unlike the case of *alif* for */ā/*, which was still being inconsistently introduced much later in the Qurʔānic orthography. Why, then, insisting on reading **al ʃarab kullihi* in the famous an-Namārah inscription, which is reputedly very close to Classical Arabic, and look for complicated explanations of the wrong congruence, when script and Old Arabic grammar would simply demand */al ʃarabi kullihā/* "of all the Arabs"?

4) Generally speaking, Mascitelli does not pay sufficient attention to dialectal variegation in North Arabian, i.e, Old Arabic. Thus, for instance, although the causative verbs had usually the prefix */ʔ/*, there are some residual cases where */h/* is still used, and the same applies to Qurʔānic variants of the V measure[21] which, in p. 100, might have provided a better reading for *>ḥḍrʃ<* as *haḍḍarraʃa*, i.e., Classical Arabic *taḍarraʃa* "to implore". In the same manner, a deeper acquaintance with certain intricacies of Arabic phonemics would have kept him from suggesting a VII measure verb from a root beginning with *hamz*, like his proposed **inʔadana* "to be authorized", in p. 115;[22] in the realm of morphology, the same applies to *sinīn*, which he labels as dialectal in that same p., while in fact the oblique case of */sa/unūna/*, not **sinūna*, is */sinīna/* in correct Classical Arabic, and to the repeated mistake *allāḏī*, masc. sg., i.e., */allaḏī/* (p. 230 and 233), and *allātī* as feminine sg. of the relative pronoun (p. 230), i.e., */allatī/*: that shape belongs in fact to the feminine pl.

5) Neither has been our colleague totally felicitous in his choice of the technical labels of linguistic groups and periods, such as North Arabian, which he restricts to what used to be known as Epigraphic North Arabian (p. 18), only to call this latter Old Arabic a bit later (p. 21), although showing his preference for Proto-Arabic, quite reasonably this time; needless to say, this causes some confusion to the reader confronted with an unusual semantic opposition between Arabic and North Arabian, e.g., in p. 101 and 103. The same applies sometimes to reshaped grammatical terms such as **nūn al-muʔakkid* in p. 101 (for *nūn al-taʔkīd*), or *alif hamza* (p. 213), for *alifu l-hamz* or *alifu / hamzatu l-qaṭʕ*, it being better not to innovate Arabic grammatical terms, as often done by some Westerners, who have coined the weird-looking and cacophonous *fatḥa-tanwīn*, *kasra-tanwīn*, etc.[23]

6) At times we feel that the received interpretations of certain passages of the inscriptions can be improved in the light of Standard Arabic usage; that would be the case, e.g., of *>ʃdky tmṭr ʔs¹my dm wlʔrḍ s²ʃr<*, where *>dm<* is clearly the collective of */dīmah/* "persistent rain", while *>s²ʃr<* would not be exactly "barley", but the wild grass which grows in the desert when it rains, the general meaning being "as long as heavens pour continuous rains and the earth grows grass".[24] This would also be the case of the term */šuʃūb/*, again in the inscription of an-Namārah (p. 157 and 159), about which our colleague is first hesitant, and then takes the wrong course, in spite of his been aware of its meaning of "sedentary settlements" in South Arabian, not "nomadic tribes", possibly because he has overlooked the classical and

21. See W. Wright, *A grammar of the Arabic language*, I 36 and 38.

22. Arabic dictionaries contain only one such item, */inʔaṭar/* " to be curved", as an allomorph of */taʔaṭṭar/*.

23. About which, see our paper "Las etimologías árabes en la obra de Joan Coromines", in *L'obra de Joan Coromines*, Sabadell 1999, 67-87, esp. 73.

24. In fact, Classical Arabic has */šaʃīr/* "growing scrubs" and */šaʃrāʔ/* "scrubland", so commonly used that it entered Castilian as **jara**. This idiom belong to a well-known semantic structure in Classical Arabic whereby eternity is expressed by the endless alternation of certain natural phenomena like sun and moon rises, night and dawn, rain and draught, etc. Even the famous *zajjāl* Ibn Quzmān used similar phrases, e.g., in 87/33 "as long as light and darkness alternate, stars set and the moon rises".

endemic dichotomy of Qurʔān XLIX,13 */ǧaʃalnākum šuʃūban waqabāʔila/* "we made of you (sedentary) peoples and (nomadic) tribes".

7) A number of misprints, as is almost unavoidable, have crept into an otherwise beautifully edited volume, of which we have detected **umm al-qarya* and **al-qayra* in p. 46 and fn. 25, for */umm al-qurà/*, *Baumstamme* in p. 51, for *Baumstamm*, Corrente in p. 57, for Corriente, "la *iʃǧāza*" (sic, perhaps an untimely reminiscence of */iǧāzah/*) in p. 84, fn. 81, for */iʃǧāz/*, *Mbhhl* in p. 110, for *Mbhl*, **zaǧǧ* "spear", in p. 156, for */zuǧǧ/*, *maširqī* in p. 205, fn. 54, for */mašriqī/*, *festehender*, in p. 239, for *feststehender*.

8) The attribution of the technical term *midianisch Thamudisch* to us in p. 55 calls for an explanation, as it is indeed in our paper of 1975, but only within a quote from Littmann.[25]

This long list of additions and corrections might give the reader of this review the impression that Maschitelli's work is weak or premature. This is not our view and, in fact, the number of our remarks is not too high, when considering that this book contains more than three hundred pages on an extremely problematic issue, as we have said repeatedly. We do commend his hard work in patiently harvesting the materials, and handling them with appropriate methods, and we congratulate him for his ability to produce in most points an accurate picture of what Pre-Islamic Old Arabic was, and how it developed into Post-Islamic Old Arabic, Classical Arabic and Neo-Arabic.

* * * * *

The fact that P. Larcher begins the introduction of his manual[26] by stating that this work is basically a course on grammatical questions related to the Arabic verb must not be lost from sight upon commenting on his sources, methods, attitudes and goals. As such a course, it is addressed to students in the main aim of clarifying Classical usage, therefore assuming a predominantly synchronic and preceptive style, which precludes any deep or extensive excursus in such areas as old and modern dialectology and, widely speaking, diachrony. Those of us who have authored grammars of Arabic for our college students are indeed familiar with that predicament, and can have only sympathy for other colleagues equally compelled to engage in that pedagogical endeavour for practical reasons, such as the scarcity of works well-adapted to students of Arabic with linguistic interests beyond mere competence and performance.

However, once a course is edited and made available to wider circles of users, it is assumed and desirable that it be reviewed, which means being noticed by the scholarly community and receiving support on its positive aspects and criticism in those felt to be improvable. This is what we shall try to do in the next lines, at the risk of sounding nit-picking, cantankerous, old-fashioned or one-sided on several issues, but only our frank opinion can mean some contribution to the author or readers in general, and that is what we shall give them all.

To begin with, the pedagogical aims have been attained quite effectively by Larcher, in our view. The successive chapters and sections of the book recapitulate the different aspects of the conjugation of Arabic verbs, most comprehensively and successfully in the case of the functions of the derived measures and their semantic connection and evolution (chapters III to XI), less so perhaps, we would say, in the case of voice (chapter II), aspect, "auxiliary" *kāna*, negatives and other questions dealt with in the final sections (chapters XII to XVI), which, at least in our opinion, contain more controversial statements.

25. The articles meant are our "Marginalia on Arabic diglossia and evidence thereof in the *Kitāb al-Aġānī*", in *Journal of Semitic Studies* 20.1 (1975) 38-61, esp. 39, fn. 1, and Littmann's "Neues zur altnordarabischen Dialektkunde" in *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 99 (1945-49), 168-180, esp. 168.

26. P. Larcher, *Le système verbal de l'arabe classique* (Didactilangue), Aix-en-Provence 2003, Publications de l'Université de Provence, 14,5 x 20,5, 191 pp.

Not surprisingly, the traditional French technical terms *accompli, inacompli, passive, active, moyen*, etc., are upheld and defended[27] by the author, perhaps as a tribute to the solid grammatical education given by private and public schools in France, although they are often less appropriate than desirable to reflect the true oppositions characterizing the Arabic verb. It must be remembered that this particular area of grammar since its very beginnings was not well served by the native grammatical terminology, modelled as it was in some points on Syriac and Greek mental patterns, and therefore imbued with concepts at least partially alien to Arabic grammar, as is obvious in the case of *māḍī* and *muḍāriʃ*. Obviously, these two native coinages do not recommend themselves in a technical treatment of the matter, because neither the *māḍī* is a genuine "past" tense, nor the *muḍāriʃ* is but partially "similar" to the nouns in their inflection (*iʃrāb*), in addition to their lack of semantic symmetry with each other; therefore, the best solution can only be the adoption of new functionally valid designations.

Our choice, in the trail of other established scholars, has been to borrow "perfective" and "imperfective" from the grammar of Slavic languages, whose verbs share with Arabic the basic opposition of aspect.[28] While it cannot surprise, on logical and statistic grounds, that most perfective actions, i.e., conceived as complete processes, do coincide with the past time, and most imperfective actions, i.e., conceived as incomplete processes, with the present or future tenses, which helps in understanding why native Arab grammarians called the perfective *māḍī* and described *muḍāriʃ* as the expression of *ḥāl* (present) and *istiqbāl* (future), it is no less evident that, with that interpretation of the Arabic verb, we cannot explain the use of the *māḍī* in optative, jussive, conditional or temporal, correlative and proverbial utterances, which will be given mere contextual explanations by Larcher in pp. 153 ff., instead of acknowledging that the aspect simply retakes its upper hand in them, while the tense connotations are conversely those resulting from the context. Phrases like */bāraka llāhu fīk/* "God bless you!" (p. 154),[29] */in šāʔa llāh/* "God willing" (p. 155), */aǧīʔuka iḏā ḥmarra lbusr/* "I shall come to you when the dates will be ripe" (p. 140)", to which we can add the saying */anǧaza lḥurru ma waʃad/* "a man of honour always fulfils

27. His personal attachment to this terminology is reflected in p. 137, when he says that native grammarians opposed *faʃala* (past) to *yafʃalu* (non-past), while the Arabists use *accompli* and *inaccompli*, thus stretching to all what in fact is applicable only to a significant share of the French. He is not happy with the clear-cut and diaphanous "perfective" and "imperfective" and overlooks that *accompli* and *inaccompli* cannot be severed from their semantic basic value of accomplishment, i.e., belonging to the (perfect) past and, therefore, implying a tense system, alien to the original and basic aspectual logemes of the Arabic verb.

28. I.e., Russian *vid*, which was translated into Western languages, together with the couple *sovershennyj* "perfective" and *nesovershennyj* "imperfective". The quote by Larcher (p. 151) of Qurʔān VII 44, */wanādà aṣḥābu nnāri/* "and the damned will shout, etc.", given as an example of "parfait de prophétie", in front of which even D. Cohen would have recognized the failure of aspect to account for such a passage, might well be analysed as an exact match of the situation in the Russian verb, where the future is expressed by the perfective verb, in parallel to the present expressed by the imperfective, both without the mark of past, which in turn generates the perfect from the perfective stem and the imperfect from the imperfective (e.g., *ljubljú* "I love", *poljubljú* "I shall love", *ja ljubíl* "I loved, used to love", *poljubíl* "I fell in love, loved once"); however, it must be acknowledged that, the aspect systems of Slavic and Semitic not being totally identical, this expression of the future is not characteristic of Arabic and must not be added to the list of those mentioned below: instead, when the context of that Qurʔānic quote is duly checked, we find it at the end of a long chain of perfectives with the connotation of future, triggered in the usual way by a long temporal clause, beginning in VII 37, */iḏā gāʔathum rusulunā … qālū/* "when our messengers will come to them … they will say", followed in apodosis by another chain of similar perfectives (*/šāhadū/* "they will witness", */qālat/* "she will say", etc.), i.e., the same structure of */aǧīʾuka iḏā ḥmarra lbusr/* "I shall come to you when the dates will be ripe" (p. 140, see below).

29. Needless to say, such optatives are no longer productive in Neo-Arabic and became scarce already in Post-Islamic Arabic, as we pointed out in "Marginalia", p. 53, with an example of substitution of */yarḥamuka llāh/* for */raḥimaka llāh/*, in the same way as */yaḥyà lmalik/* sounds nowadays more standard vs. the more Classical */ʃāša lmalik/* "Long live the king!". But this is not always the case: thus, for instance, the genuine optative perfective is well and alive in the pan-Arabic */kattar ẖayrak/* "May God increase your wealth" = "Thanks".

his promises" and */alā ʕamiltu laka tāǧā/* "Let me make you a crown!"[30], for the perfective, and */limā taqtulūna anbiyāʔa llāhi min qablu?/* "Why were you killing the prophets in the old time?" (p. 141), */taqūlu waqad māla lġabīṭu binā maʕā/* "She was saying as the camel saddle tilted under our weight"[31], or */qāla lahū kun fayakūnu/* (p. 141) "He said to it 'be', and lo, it was already (existing)" for the imperfective, are all clear examples of the aspect system at work, where none of those perfectives means past time, but just whole processes, such as wishes and hopes waiting for fulfilment, conditions that must take full place in order to produce their whole effects, and self-exhortation to action, while the imperfectives therein do not mean present nor future, but processes in progress, whether durative or iterative.

This momentous issue is developed in chapter XII where, in our opinion, Larcher does not hit the mark, because of his excessive concern over incongruous comparisons with French and other Western languages,[32] as well as of his almost exclusively synchronic approach, certainly dictated to him by the didactic character of this work, which does not allow him to take into due account the undeniable evolution from Old Arabic to Modern Standard Arabic from less to more grammatical acknowledgment of tense nuances,[33] leading to a certain erosion of an originally and basically aspect-sensitive verbal system. It is also obvious, as he says, that tense and aspect do not exclude each other, both of them playing some role in the Western European languages as well as in Arabic but, in a linguistic analysis, what counts is which of them is the categorical or logematic axis of the conjugation, of course not excluding the binary solutions in some languages, and which is only a consequence of lexical, logical or, at any rate, contextual circumstances.[34] It is obvious that, in isolation from any context, */qatala/* always conveys a complete process, but not necessarily in the past, and */yaqtulu/* always means an incomplete process, but not necessarily in the past: therefore, the logematic axis of the opposition is aspect, not tense.[35]

Modal nuances is another complex matter to which Larcher devotes chapters XIII and XIX. While agreeing with him on most of their contents, especially, the substantial difference between the auxiliaries of our Western languages, which produce true compound tenses, and the use of */kāna/*, which he defines as a "*verbe opérateur*", i.e., roughly a modifying verb, designed to provide a modal nuance, like the

30. From Ibn ʕIdārī's *Albayān almuġrib* (ed. G.S. Colin & E. Lévi-Provençal, Leiden, Brill 1951, p. 23).

31. From Imruʔulqays' *muʕallaqah*, verse 13.

32. He makes statements such as "the Arabic *māḍī* is similar to the English or the German pasts" (p. 139), "to the French *passé composé*" (p. 140), and seems to give equal weight to tense and aspect in the Arabic verb without, however, stating unequivocally his "binary" position on this issue.

33. As well as modal ones, which accounts for the great increase of the use of auxiliary verbs in Post-Islamic Arabic, above all in prose.

34. Thus, for instance, Turkish is not thoroughly devoid of means, lexical, logical or, widely speaking, contextual to express the feminine gender unequivocally, as demonstrated by the translations from Western languages (e.g., *o geldi* "he/she/it came", but *kız // kadın // kıraliçe geldi* "the girl // woman // queen came", where Arabic would have marked the gender logeme twice, in both the subject and the verb, i.e., */atà/* vs. */atat/*, in the first case, and */atati lbintu // lmarʔatu // lmalikatu/*), but, nevertheless, gender does not exist at all in Turkish grammar and cannot be posited in it on account of that contextual capacity.

35. This simple and efficient test of relevance has not been applied by the many brilliant scholars who have stuck to the "binary" character of the Arabic verb, a very expressive term coined by A. Zaborski in his defence of Kuriłowicz's hypothesis, "Kuriłowicz and the so-called 'aspect' in Classical and in Modern Arabic", in *Analecta Indoeuropea Cracoviensia II*, 1995, 529-541, to which we cannot concur with our most knowledgeable colleague and good friend. Most Western European languages have accommodated aspect too in their basically tense systems, while Slavic languages have incorporated tense to their characteristically aspectual system, but if that test is applied to both cases, it is obvious that a Russian verbal form, whether finite or non-finite, belongs always to one of the two aspects (= basic feature of the system); by comparison, in a language like French only some non-compound forms will express aspect, like the imperfect and gerund, while subjective time, i.e., tense (= basic feature of the system) will always be expressed, with the exception of the infinitive, where neither aspect is present at all.

appropinquation, beginning and uncertainty,[36] there are occasional divergences from our views. For instance, his judgment of total equivalence between */kāna yaqūmu/* and */kāna qāʔman/* (p. 147): they may be synonymous in some cases but, otherwise, Fleisch, who had a near-native command of Arabic and very deep insights in its grammar, was right in understanding "il se levait" ("he used to stand up / was standing up") in the former example, and "il était débout" ("he was standing / up") in the latter. The "sens de langue" cannot here be offset by our colleague's grammatical objections, in which we again detect his insufficient sensitiveness to aspect, since this is attached to the imperfective */yaqūmu/*, but not to the participle */qāʔm/*,[37] in spite of being both alike modified by */kāna/*, which cannot go without semantic consequences.

Our next remark concerns the analysis by Larcher (chapter II) of *faʕila* as some kind of "middle voice" between "active" *faʕala* and "passive" *fuʕila*. Not only the diathesis "active" vs. "passive" does not exist as such in the Arabic grammar, where there is a mere opposition between verbs with a known subject to verbs with an unknown subject, as designated by technical terms absolutely clear and functional in this case (namely, *ṣīġatu lfāʕil* and *ṣīġatu lmaǧhūl*), which would make impossible the existence of a "middle" voice, but in fact the characteristic implication in the latter of a subject affected by his own action, while semantically extant in Arabic, is not again a category of its grammar. The traditional label of "stative verbs" given by Semitists to both *faʕila* and *faʕula*, coupled with an eventual differentiation between temporary and permanent state or condition, and a warning to the effect that many a *faʕila* has evolved semantically and morphologically to the status of the active verbs, exactly like those of the type *faʕala*, was accurate and sufficient and nothing is gained, in or view, from drawing diagrams like those presented by the author in pp. 23 and 28,[38] in which the three vocalization types of agentive perfectives are combined with that of the non-agentive ones, suggesting an interplay of those types and diathesis which is not a part of the Arabic grammar.

We have only isolated minor remarks to chapters III to XI, as our suspicion (pp. 35, 55 and 107) that the entire root *{mkn}* is a diachronic derivate from */makān/*, i.e., a member of the root *{kwn}*; next, we have misgivings about a development from the III and VI measures from the II, "because insistence would imply reciprocity" (pp. 48-51)[39], without excluding occasional phonetic equivalence between */v:2/* and */v22/*, and, finally, we do not believe that */amr/* be an archaic doublet of */nafs/* in the sentence */aslama amrahū lillāh/* "he placed his affairs in God's hands". Equally minor also are other issues, especially diachronic ones, where we hold different opinions, which is only natural and does not imply an error on either side, but just a different viewpoint. Such is the case of the hypotheses about the development of causative *faʕʕala* (pp. 35-42), where Larcher demonstrates his familiarity with grammatical theory and bibliography by offering no less than three kinds of explanations, namely, morphological, syntactic and paradigmatic, in medieval and modern versions, with their matching arguments and *loci probantes.* This is not, of course, the place to discuss each one of them; instead, we feel tempted to add our own hypothesis,

36. Described by W. Wright, *A grammar of the Arabic language*, II 106-109.

37. As in the case of the non-agentive *mašrūb*, which we shall mention below, an agentive participle is absolutely devoid of aspect and/or tense connotations, which explains why, e.g., *qāriʔ* may mean "reader", but also "literate, capable of reading", and the motto of the P.L.O., */innā ʕāʔidūn/* does not exactly mean "we shall return", but "we must or can return, we are of the returning kind", where the emphasis is not on the future time, but on the inexorability of the process.

38. See also p. 58, where the four possibilities are supposed to have been all "basic vocalizations of the verb".

39. It is true that Zaborski in his paper "Main and secondary functions of derived verbs in Arabic" (in *Lingua Posnaniensis* 48 (2006) 165-189) argues this case very effectively, within a comprehensive explanation of the measures II, III, IX, XI and XV, but this is done at a much deeper diachronic level than that meant by Larcher. Not only for Arabic, but for the whole South Semitic branch, the lengthening of the first vowel and the gemination of the second consonant of the stem had become different marks with different functions, in spite of occasional relics and semantic junctures.

in this case, of a synchronic kind and not devoid of support in the wider frame of Semitic linguistics. Following the path opened by Rundgren[40] in his enlightening study of geminated imperfectives in some Semitic languages, where he introduced the concept of re-utilization of obsolete morphs in new functions, we have demonstrated that a large number of the Arabic II measure verbs[41] are neither originally nor semantically true intensives, but have most likely assumed that appearance in the aftermath of the adoption of North Arabian by former South Arabian speakers, who continued in their creole phase to geminate the indicative imperfectives without any intensive nuance, although their native North Arabian neighbours, even their own offspring, may well have introduce it, thus generating instances of re-utilization of that morph.

As a matter of fact, the impact of the absorption of a relatively large number of former speakers of South Arabian, a language with geminated indicative imperfectives, may well have had other consequences in the North Arabian system of derived measures: it is quite reasonable to assume that a South Arabian **{yuʔa1a22i3u}* (indicative perfective of the causative perfective *{ʔa12a3a}*, the IV measure), through the characteristic loss of */ʔ/* in North Arabian, became *{yu1a22i3u}* and could not be distinguished from the indicative imperfective of the intensive, II measure). Considering the poor marking of the IV measure, as a consequence of the weakness and frequent elimination of that prefixed morph, this could well have been the way through which, II measures began to supplant the IV ones as causatives, in the same manner as the latter was often superseded by the I,[42] since the different vocalization of the prefix, which is even cancelled in the non-agentive voice, was insufficient to distinguish them morphologically. Incidentally, the same situation might have led to the confusion of VIII and V measures, conspicuous in many synonyms as mentioned by Larcher (p. 94), who tries to explain it again through paradigmatic schemes: here *{yat1a22i3u}* and *{yat(a)1a22a3u}* would again, in our guess, have been too similar to prevent mergers and North Arabian speakers might have developed a free option between *{yat1a2i3u}* and *{yat(a)1a22a3u}*.

Another case of disagreement between us and Lercher is a consequence of his acceptation of a "passive voice" in Arabic, in pp. 121-122 where, without using the technical term, he is obviously analysing */maḥrūs/*, */maḫḏūl/*, */marḥūm/*, */maġfūr lahū/*, etc., as "passive participles" and, therefore, "past participles", i.e., "gardé", "abandonné" and "pardonné", which obliges him to explain the idioms where they appear as cases of "transposition nominale de formules", such as */ḥarasahū / ḫaḏalahū / raḥimahu llāhu/* "may God protect her / forsake him / have mercy upon him", about which he says that these idioms are not literally understood as "he upon whom one has mercy" or "who is forgiven", but "he for him one wishes that he be pitied or forgiven". Which is a correct statement, but grammatically unnecessary, when considering that those participles are not truly "passive", in the sense that they would mean that the grammatical subject is not the actor but the recipient of the action, not "past", at all, which is a category absent from the Arabic verbal system; in fact, the Arabic participles are not only tense-less, but also aspect-less, so that, e.g., in contemporary Standard Arabic */māʔun mašrūb/* may mean "drunk water", but also, as is common, "drinking water", i.e., "water than can eventually be drunk", and a cellular phone is */maḥmūl/*, not because it is carried about at all times, but because it may be so, i.e., it is "portable".

40. In his trend-setting essay *Intensiv und Aspekt-Korrelation. Studien zur äthiopischen und akkadischen Verbalstammbildung*, Uppsala-Wiesbaden, Lundequistka, 1959.

41. See our paper "Geminate imperfectives in Arabic masked as intensive stems of the verb", in *Estudios de Dialectología Norteafricana y Andalusí* 8 (2004) 33-57 (*Homenaje a Peter Behnstedt en su 60 aniversario*).

42. See our "From Old Arabic to Classical Arabic through the pre-Islamic *koine*: some notes on the native grammarians' sources, attitudes and goals", in *Journal of Semitic Studies* 21.1-2 (1976) 62-97, esp. 86 and fn. 1, where we mention Sībawayhi and Alḫalīl's survey of the confusion of I and IV, as well as II and IV measures.

Some other areas of lesser disagreements or comments are found in p. 124, where the author implies that the XI measure exists only in Moroccan, within modern Arabic dialects, while, in fact, is characteristic of the entire Western branch,[43] and in p. 132, where *ʃālam* cannot be a direct derivate of Hebrew *ʃōlām*, but of Aramaic *ʃālmā*.

Finally, in chapter XVI, we must take exception to the assumption of functional differences between the negations */mā faʃala/* and /*lam yafʃal/*. Larcher is more correct, in or view, when he says (p. 162) that the latter is a case of survival of the Old Semitic "accompli", i.e., the prefix conjugation, not yet necessarily governed by the aspectual logeme, as well as when he establishes the syntactic contexts in which both structures are found most often or correctly. However, the diachronic character of this issue eludes him again, as he does not tackle the etymological question, namely, that the negative /*mā*/ is always the stylistic evolution of an underlying rhetorical question (e.g., */mā faʃal?/* "what [do you say] he did?" > "he did not"), while /*lam yafʃal/* indeed contains a fossilized survival of the Old Semitic suffix conjugation, preceded by a contraction of */la-mā/* "certainly not".[44] Larcher is again right in presuming that this negative particle developed in conditional structures (p. 161-162), although he appears to miss the central point, namely, that the presence of the assertive */la-/* is characteristic of such structures, as a consequence of the perfective mutual conditioning and concatenation between requirement and outcome ("if A happens, then certainly B follows"). Otherwise, however, once both negations existed side by side, they came to be used as synonymous, merely subjected perhaps to dialectal or idiolectal preferences.

A second-rate issue to which we acknowledge our being particularly sensitive, is the transcription system labelled by us as the Arabists' Arabic, i.e., the habit of using pausal forms everywhere, except in the cases where final vowels are obvious, e.g., perfective verbs and functionals, thus creating an artificial Arabic, neither Classical nor dialectal, nor anything having ever existed. Larcher's transcriptions are correct most often, for instance, when he quotes from old poetry or from the Qur'ān, but not always, as in his excerpts from prose, above all, modern, as can be seen in pp. 25, in a grammatical text, 40, where **ʃafat al-ʔāṯāru*, (with *iʃrāb*!) is given as Old Arabic, instead of */ʃafati l-ʔāṯāru/*, and p. 50 in a quotation from a newspaper. One of the pitfalls of that system, is the uneasiness with certain kinds of words, as can be seen in p. 139, where the author transcribes */fatāt ǧamīla/* and translates "jeune fille", although in the spoken Arabic of our time this would sound */fatā ǧamīla/*, while the former expression would be understood as "Ǧamīla's girl".

Printing or copying mistakes are reasonably few; we have detected the following: pp. 35 **makkanuhu* for */makkanahū/*, 36 **ġallabūna* for */ġallābūna/*, **maʃšari* for */maʃšarin/* (at the end of the hemistich, not of the verse!) and */biʔawfari/*, better than */ʔaʃẓami/*, after the received text, 66, where the place name al-Ḥisāʔ becomes "le Hassa" in its French rendering, 93 **adḫaha* for */adḫala/*, 100 **inqaṭaʃa* for */inqaṭaʃati lkahrabāʔ/*, 110 **ʃaṣartu* for */ʃāṣartu/*, 111 **tanabbā* for */tanabbaʔa/*, 120 **Rišā* and **Rishâ* for the feminine personal name */rašaʔ/*, and 132 "IIIe forme trilitère" for "quadrilitère".

We hope that this rather long list of remarks will not be interpreted as a negative judgment on Larcher's work. It is only natural and positive that scholars disagree on some points, which in turn may spur new efforts to clarify the issues and bring about better solutions to our problems, even mere better wording in their texts, so that they become clearer. A long review is always a witness to the importance attributed to a book and a contribution, or at least the wish to make it, to the author's opinions.

43. Cf. H.R. Singer, *Grammatik des arabischen von Tunis*, 1984, 393-397, E.F: Suttcliffe, *A grammar of the Maltese language*, 1936, 98, and our *A grammatical sketch of the Spanish-Arabic dialect bundle*, 1977, 105, fn. 166.

44. Cf. the parallel */kam/* "how much" < */ka-mā/*, and the allomorphs */lim/* < */li-mā/* and */bim/* < */bi-mā/* (see Wright, *A grammar of the Arabic Grammar* I 274).