JANET C.E. WATSON, *The Phonology and Morphology of Arabic*. Oxford University Press, New York 2002. Pp. ix + 307. Price: £60.00 hardback. ISBN: 0-19-925759-0.

Janet Watson's study under review provides readers with a general overview of the phonology and morphology of two modern Arabic varieties: Cairene, a rather innovative wide-spread dialect, and San'ani, a more restricted and conservative dialect. This publication is included within Oxford's well-known series on *The Phonology of the World's Languages*, edited by Jacques Durand. The main scope of the collection is to present accurate descriptions of a wide variety of languages, always applying the most recent theoretical frameworks available in a consistent and thorough way. Linguists in general and phonologists in particular have acknowledged the importance of this series. Devoting a volume to Arabic (if not more than one) is indeed a requisite for enlarging perspectives and covering part of one of the language families of the world (Semitic).

Potential readers of Watson's monograph will come mainly from two fields: general linguistics, especially phonological studies, and Arabic studies.

Chapter 1 introduces Arabic within the Semitic phylum and gives a brief sketch of the history of Arabic language from its beginnings to the present day. This is in our view an important section, not only to allow readers unfamiliar to Arabic to fully understand the origins of the two varieties under scrutiny, but also to adequately place the subject of the study. It should not be forgotten that a diachronic oriented insight could and indeed can cast some light on problems which are approached merely from a synchronic angle. As we will see later, our opinion is that Watson, while trying to include some observations of this nature, fails however to enlarge this perspective to its proper dimensions. The question is: Should a monograph of this kind include a historical perspective? The answer is probably not, or at least not in an extensive way.

The author supports the classification of Arabic within Central Semitic, more akin to North-West Semitic (Hebrew, Aramaic, Ugaritic) than to South Semitic (Ethiopic and South Arabic), according to the previous views of Hetzron and Faber. A similar view by Voigt (1998)[1] should have been quoted and listed in the references' chapter to reinforce this view. However, it should not be neglected that other researchers disagree with this classification, preferring to maintain Arabic within South Semitic. Zaborski (1994)[2] and Corriente (1996)[3] are two outstanding supporters of the latter view. The last word has not yet been said, I am afraid.

As, quoting Watson's own words: 'most accounts of the phonology and morphology of Arabic are fragmentary', she seeks to provide 'a more comprehensive and integrated account' on the phonology and morphology of Cairene and San'ani. This is indeed true if we think of modern phonological approaches, which usually focus on one or two aspects of the language, thus generally lacking exhaustiveness. But other comprehensive studies do exist indeed, from the classical studies by Cantineau (1960, included in the list of references), and Fleisch (1961)[4] ending

[1] R.M. Voigt, 'The classification of Central Semitic', *JSS* 32 (1998), 1–21.

[2] A. Zaborski, 'Problèmes de classification des dialectes sémitiques méridionaux', *Actes des premières journées de dialectologie arabe de Paris*. (Paris), 399–416.

[3] F. Corriente, *Introducción a la gramática comparada del semítico meridional*. (Madrid: Ed. CSIC), 12–13.

[4] H. Fleisch, *Traité de Philologie arabe I: préliminaires, phonétique et morphologie nominale*. (Beirut).

with more recent approaches such us those of Al-Ani (1970, quoted in the bibliography) and Mitchell (1990–3)[5], to cite but a few examples.

Chapter 2 includes a brief comparison of the phoneme inventory of Classical, Cairene and San'ani, drawing special attention to variation features and contrast phenomena. Chapter 3 outlines the feature geometry model assumed for the underlying specification of the phonemes of Cairene and San'ani. Taking into account articulator and place features, the author adopts an abstract reductionist theory to represent the whole repertoire of phonemes in both varieties.

Chapter 4 deals with the important question of syllable structure and syllabification, analysing syllable repair processes within heavy and extra-heavy syllables (mainly epenthesis, prosthesis and shortening). All this leads the author to propose a bimoraic account of CVCCC and CVVC, rather than a trimoraic one. This contention is not devoid of interest, for it contradicts other previous approaches and calls attention to the fact that a major gap exists between Standard Arabic and Arabic dialects' phonological principles. It is then more useful to apply modern criteria and methods rather than follow traditional perspectives focusing on the Standard Arabic variety whose real phonology is less predictable and not so well defined.

Chapter 5 carefully studies word stress in both varieties, which exhibits, in short terms, a predominantly moraic trochee stress system. Some peculiarities of Cairene stress are considered (as a conjecture only) to be a vestige of earlier stages. This is, by the way, one of the few diachronic contentions included in the book, which is more synchronic-oriented.

Chapters 6 and 7 are devoted to morphology. The reason for including morphology in this book (remember that the series are devoted to phonology) is to appreciate the role of morphology within the phonology of Arabic, which is clearly important. Morphology can elucidate some aspects of phonology, or, in other words, phonology has an impact on morphological patterns, hence the need for presenting a description of morphology. The aim of these two chapters is to achieve a better understanding of phonology, which is the main focus of the book and also of the series in which it is included.

Morphology is, following the views of Ratcliffe, divided into two levels: level one (roughly derivational, non-concatenative), which affects basically the stem of the word, and level two (roughly inflectional, concatenative), which does not affect the stem, and works by adding affixes to the word stem. Cairene is shown to be closer to concatenative processes, due to its progressive nature, whereas San'ani adjusts more to the non-concatenative (conservative) processes. A good presentation of additional affixes is included in the pages devoted to concatenative level-two morphology, showing the way they are adopted within the morphological boundaries of the word.

Chapter 8 deals with Lexical Phonology, considering prosodic processes (which apply prior to TC) and melodic processes (which apply after TC). Assimilations like the *–l* of the article or the detransitiving *t-* prefix are more 'extended' and pervasive in Cairene than in San'ani. Once again, we discover the links established between mere phonological processes and lexical or post-lexical elements.

Chapter 9 gives a very detailed and well-written study of post-lexical phonology, including many interesting features such as unstressed vowel shortening, glide formation, glottal stop epenthesis, geminations of clitics, and all kinds of assimilation (coronal, nasal, voicing, etc.), palatalization and labialization. Unlike many other treatises on the subject, clearly presented samples and a well organized planning

[5] T. Mitchell, *Pronouncing Arabic*. (Oxford), 2 vols.

produce a consistent chapter that elucidates many remaining shadows concerning assimilations and other features. This is in my view the most brilliant part of Watson's book. The analysis does not stand on the surface as is the case with many other studies that limit themselves to presenting some examples without making a profound comparison in terms of trigger segments, place and articulator features. Watson successfully tries to reduce apparent abundant variations to some simple rules that work effectively.

Chapter 10, the last one, deals with emphasis, its acoustics, domain, spread and directionality of spread (right-to-left or left-to-right), showing the restrictions and differences found in Cairene and San'ani. It is a well-balanced chapter on a difficult question about which a great number of books and articles have been written in the past.

The references listed are almost 300. They are adequately chosen and cited. Of course, one may find some particular references missing, for instance, recent research published by R. Ratcliffe, especially his last monograph on the broken plural appeared in 1998[6], including very interesting insights into the division of morphology into two levels, adopted in Watson's approach. But this kind of omission does not prevent us from saying that the bibliography is well oriented and also well balanced between general linguistic studies and particular Arabic studies.

The general conclusion to be drawn is that Watson's book represents a step forward in the phonological study of Arabic. The applied synchronic generative perspective, the refined look at variation and the consistent application of well-founded theoretical principles make the end-product a good monograph. The Oxford edition is clearly above standard and may be enthusiastically praised for its clarity and elegance.

Nonetheless, a few shortcomings may be alluded to. First, concerning the title of the book, it may sound, in my opinion, a bit misleading. For the sake of clarity a subtitle should have been included such as 'A contrastive study of Cairo and San'a varieties'. While it is true that San'ani and Cairene are not less 'Arabic' than Standard Arabic, traditional Arabic studies label Standard Arabic as simply 'Arabic', thus specifying regional varieties by the name of the place they are spoken in, when they constitute the focus of study. Who reads only the title of the book expects a study of phonology and morphology of Standard Arabic rather than a contrastive study of two Arabic dialects. The choice of Watson is of course legitimate, especially when one has in mind non-Arabicist readers. But more clarity is always desirable.

Another question to be discussed is that of the diachronic element as a tool for explaining some phenomena, which are not easily traced back according only to contrastive or synchronic criteria. My contention in this particular point is that diachronic insights would help to clarify more than one point. Although the author tries to present some observations of this nature, more accuracy would have been in order. For example, in page 142 she states that 'historically, the template for the imperfect aspect of form I was derived from that of the perfect through syncope of the unstressed medial vowel', ignoring the history of the Semitic and Arabic verb, originally constituted of two prefixed (imperfect) stems, and only after that developing a suffixed stem. To say that the imperfect stem comes from the perfect stem is more than doubtful. Interestingly enough, the author says that, as there is no evidence for the synchronic derivation of the form I imperfect template from that of the perfect, she assumes two distinct template patterns (perfect and imperfect). This is fine, but

[6] R. Ratcliffe, *The broken plural problem in Arabic and comparative Semitic. Allomorphy and analogy in non-concatenative morphology*. (Amsterdam-Philadelphia 1998).

there is no real contradiction between synchronic and diachronic data in this particular point!

To sum up, as previously announced, the book of Janet Watson must be considered an important monograph, a step forward in the phonological account of Modern Arabic. Those who read this work will be highly rewarded, whether they are interested in general phonology or whether they search for particular descriptions of Arabic varieties.

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ALI S. ASANI (foreword by Prof. Annemarie Schimmel), *Ecstasy and Enlightenment: The Ismaili Devotional Literature of South Asia* (The Institute of Ismaili Studies, Ismaili Heritage Series 6). I.B. Taurus, London 2002. Pp. xvii + 183. Price: £25.00. ISBN: 1-86064-758-8.

The Nizari Ismaili tradition (and much the same could also be said of the Musta'li-Tayyibi Ismailis as well), because of its unique cultural and geographical spread and diversity, offers a remarkable 'microcosmic' perspective on all the challenges facing the modern student of Islam and the study of religions more generally. Contemporary Ismaili communities, mirroring the fascinating historical spread of that branch of Shiite Islam, include the traditional centres in Syria-Lebanon; Iran; neighbouring regions of the four countries surrounding Badakhshan (Tajikistan); modern Pakistan and India — *plus* a flourishing 'diaspora' stretching from Africa and Southeast Asia to Europe (particularly the UK) and North America. The results of that diaspora mean that the cultural and religious background of the 'Ismailis' most often encountered in the West are especially rooted in the 'Khoja' Ismaili traditions of the subcontinent (Sindh, Gujarat, and Punjab), and as Dr Asani points out, the devotional and ritual heart of those communities, for many centuries, has remained the '*ginân*' songs attributed to the great Ismaili founding teachers (*pîrs*) there, composed and conveyed in a number of the local vernacular languages.

The six earlier studies by Prof. Ali S. Asani (Harvard University) brought together in this collection represent (together with his other related studies often cited here) a major scholarly contribution to an extraordinary flowering of *ginân*-studies that has suddenly emerged in the past decade, almost all due to young Ismaili scholars offering complementary perspectives on that subject and its relations to wider Ismaili, Islamic and subcontinental (bhaktic and literary) traditions.[1] As Dr Asani points out in the helpful historical Introduction ('The Nizari Ismaili Tradition in South Asia') added to this new volume, the *ginâns* and the Ismaili communities themselves are also of wider interest to many scholars dealing with three inter-related dimensions of their broader 'cultural contexts': the transnational Ismaili (and wider Islamic) community; Indo-Muslim Islam (particularly Sufism and popular literature and devotional music and ritual); and the broader 'Indic' contexts of shared devotional forms and culture (*bhakti*, sants, Nath yogis, poetic, music and dance forms, etc.). Today scholars interested in any of those contexts are at

[1] For non-specialists, who are normally in particular need of translated ginâns and contextual explanations, we may mention three closely related studies: *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginans*, tr. Z. Moir and C. Shackle (London 1992); *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance: An Anthology of Hymns by the Satpanth Isma'ili Muslim Saint, Pir Shams*, by T. Kassam (SUNY 1995); and *A Scent of Sandalwood: Indo-Ismaili Religious Lyrics*, by A. Esmail (RoutledgeCurzon 2002). The bibliography and some notes to these articles — all originally written and published in the late 1980s and early 1990s — have been 'updated' to 1999, but only the first of the above book-length studies is frequently cited here.