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Introduction to Mongolian Comparative Studies by Nicholas Poppe

Review by: Gerard Clauson

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Turcologists as improbable. So far as Turkish is concerned there is no reason to suppose that there was an initial *p*- now lost; the initial *h*- in a few words in the modern language of Chinese Turkestan, which is supposed to prove the original existence of an initial *p*- in Proto-Turkish, is undoubtedly a modern secondary sound not a survival; in all earlier stages of the language the words in question began with a vowel. There are certainly some odd phonetic phenomena in Mongolian; some words with initial vowels in every other dialect have an initial *h*- in the language of the thirteenth century, corresponding to *f*- before rounded vowels and χ - before other vowels in the Monguor dialect. But this does not prove that there was a primæval initial *p*- in Mongolian. It can equally well be argued that the thirteenth century *h*- in Mongolian was a secondary phenomenon like the initial *h*- in the Turkish of Chinese Turkestan and that the evolution *h* > *f* before rounded vowels is merely another example of the process which produced *f*- from an earlier *h*- in Chinese; in other words, that the course of evolution in Mongolian was not *p*- > ϕ - > *h*- > zero—but, in a few words, zero- > *h*- > ϕ -. However, the fact that some of the statements made are open to dispute does not greatly affect the very real and solid merits of this book.

GERARD CLAUSON.

Near and Middle East

LE PARLER ARABE DE TRIPOLI (LIBAN). Par Hassan EL-HAJJÉ, avec une Préface de J. CANTINEAU. Paris, Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1954. pp. 204, 2 maps.

This is a descriptive grammar of the dialect of Tripoli (Ṭarābulus al-Shām) with a few texts added by way of illustration. It is most creditable that Professor Cantineau should have induced a Tripoli student to work on his dialect, abandoning the well trodden paths in early Arabic literature for the vast unexplored and rewarding field of the vernacular language, nor can there be any doubt as to the competency of the author—as far as this book goes.

Yet the presentation and method of this study rouse certain persistent doubts. There is no real description of the method employed. In default of any description of the informants, in itself an important matter, one is left to assume that the author has set before us, by a species of introspection, the language that he himself speaks. Is this fairly then to be described as the dialect of the town of Tripoli? Assuming that M. El-Hajjé belongs to what we should term the middle class, is this book not rather, essentially, the spoken Arabic of the average educated citizen? There seems to be but a small proportion of the whole which differs much from what one has heard in conversation with Syro-Lebanese speakers, and in so far as verbal structure is con-