
Any reader of this book will be impressed by the enormous industry and effort which its compilation must have entailed. The author has drawn on his wide knowledge of contemporary, and some older, dialects of Mongolian to marshal a complete phonetic analysis of these dialects and a shorter, but still elaborate, analysis of the declensional and conjugational forms. The work is indeed a magnum opus, and it seems almost ungracious to point out one or two unfortunate omissions from it. In the first place, the author has completely omitted any description of one of the most important features in the language, the formation of Denominal and Deverbal Noun/Adjectives, of Denominal Verbs and of the derived forms (Passive, Causative, etc.) of the Verb. This subject is of great importance for the history of the language, particularly since some of these forms seem to be, prima facie, borrowed from Turkish, and it would be useful to know whether these particular forms go back to the earliest surviving, pre-Buddhist, stage of the language, or whether they entered it with the great mass of Turkish and other loanwords which were introduced when the Buddhist scriptures were translated into it. The book is, in fact, weakest in dealing with the earliest, and most interesting, stages of the language. For example, it omits any mention of the fact that the ḡP'ags-pa alphabet and texts distinguish between closed ē and open e and between short and long vowels. Even if ē disappeared at an early stage, its original separate existence should have been mentioned. In the section dealing with long vowels (pp. 59 and foll.) the author says that in the modern dialects there are two kinds of long vowels, (1) those representing two short vowels separated by a weak consonant in the earlier stages of the language, and (2) those which seem to be arbitrary lengthenings of naturally short vowels; but the ḡP'ags-pa evidence shows that there were apparently in the thirteenth century true long vowels as well as short ones, and a careful analysis of the evidence might show that some modern long vowels are actually survivals and not new formations. The discussion of some other phonetic points seems to be open to question. For example, it is pointed out (pp. 139 and foll.) that the Secret History and the ḡP'ags-pa texts distinguish between initial ʰk- and initial ʰg- with front vowels but that the Arabic script used in some other early authorities is incapable of distinguishing between the two sounds; it might be added that the Uyğur script which was borrowed to make the Mongolian official alphabet was equally incapable of so distinguishing and wrote both sounds with the same letter. Finally, Professor Poppe treats as an accepted fact the hypothesis that the Mongolian and Turkish languages had a common ancestor, "Proto-Altaic." The hypothesis is unproved and in fact regarded by most
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 \( \chi \)- before other vowels in the Monguor dialect. But this does not prove that there was a primaeval 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 \( p > \phi > h > \text{zero} \)—but, in a few words, \( \text{zero} > h > \phi \). 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


This is a descriptive grammar of the dialect of Tripoli (Tarabulus 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-