

Erich Trapp (comp.), *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität besonders des 9.–12. Jahrhunderts, Faszikel I (α–ἀργυροζώμιον)*, Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Byzantinistik. Band VI/1, Vienna, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1994, pp. x, 192, 53 (3–7001–2150–4 and 3–7001–2164–4).

Dionisius A Agius, *Siculo Arabic*, Library of Arabic Linguistics, Monograph No. 12, London and New York, Kegan Paul International, 1996, pp. xx, 362, £65.00, \$110.00 (0–7103–0497–8).

Medicine has never been restricted to one particular land or to one particular time. Moreover, medical knowledge has never acknowledged political (or linguistic) borders. That is why medial language is usually replete with loan words, foreign expressions, “arcane” signs etc. Apart from foreign influences, medical knowledge also developed within the framework of the local language, which in turn influenced the foreign vocabulary. This linguistic cradle always creates puzzles and problems for the student of the history of medicine, especially of its ancient and medieval periods. The historian must deal not only with the subject itself, but at the same time with its native descriptions which makes the task more difficult. The books under review contribute significantly to the solution of the last problem.

Each is concerned with the problem of Graeco-Arabic cultural transmission. Despite the great achievements in historical research during the last few decades, the question to what extent Arabic science (medicine) was influenced by Greek science (medicine), and how strong the influence was in the opposite direction, still requires additional study. Linguistic transmission and the role which intermediaries (Syriac, Coptic, Berber, Hebrew, Latin and medieval Romance languages) played in it are also of great importance.

The first of the books under review is a new dictionary. The importance of Byzantium for a scholar interested in the history of the

Mediterranean world hardly requires defence. Yet researchers have frequently been hindered by the absence of suitable lexicographical aids. Generations of scholars—even those specializing in medieval Greek studies—have been obliged to use primarily the dictionaries of ancient Greek, even though this reliance has brought with it several major difficulties, not least the fact that, although many Greek words in the Byzantine written language in general were orthographically similar to those from Antiquity, their meanings had often undergone significant changes.

E Trapp’s new dictionary (hereafter *LBG*) can thus be welcomed as the first modern attempt to produce a comprehensive lexicon of Byzantine Greek. It aims to list all the words which either are not listed or are insufficiently illustrated by quotations from ancient authors. Special attention has been paid to the words found in ninth to twelfth century sources; the thirteenth-century sources have almost all been examined, and those in fourteenth- to fifteenth-century sources have been taken into account in cases where indices exist.

Among the words to be found in the *LBG*, besides the pure “Byzantine” political entries, are many that entered the language in the course of the development of the sciences and the trade activities of Byzantine merchants. Among them are rare medical, alchemical, and botanical terms. Although a number of these words have yet to be identified (e.g., *LBG* p. 156, gives without any explanation the name of the plant ἀπέραντος, cited in Paul of Aegina 1.193.7), the very fact of their being listed with the corresponding usage in a dictionary will help scholars to find the final correct identification.

The *LBG* material adheres to a strict alphabetical order. Usually an entry contains a key word, a German translation, an indication of the source and some information about other works where this word (or its variants) is listed or commented upon. Nevertheless, the strict alphabetical order deprives a scholar of some very important indirect information. Thus, in an alphabetical listing the variants of one and the same word do not appear together (e.g.

LBG p. 52, ἀλαμπικός *Destillierkolben*, and *LBG* p. 64, ἀμβικιάζω *destillieren*; ἀμηριζάνης *LBG* p. 67 and ἀμυριζαντάριος *LBG* p. 70 without cross-reference; *LBG* p. 53, ἀλεκτρομαντεία and ἀλεκτορομαντεία are separated). A scholar cannot thus establish the orthography or decide which form was the more common or was treated as colloquial, etc. The Byzantine words listed in the *LBG* often differ from their classical forms in prefixes, suffixes and gender terminations. The alphabetical order again does not provide a clear survey of these changes.

Examples appear in the *LBG* sporadically, but even then they are usually reduced to a few words and are not very helpful. Because of the lack of context, the reader is forced to rely exclusively upon the German translation, without being able to check it at once. Without the corresponding original text, however, the translation (like all translations) may sometimes be confusing. For example, in medieval Greek the diminutive suffix -ιον marks not just diminutives, but “normal” meanings as well.¹ Thus, without a context, it not easy to be sure that ἀλωπέκιον (*LBG* p. 63) means a “*Fuchslein*” (small fox) rather than a “fox”.

The spoken Arabic of one of the most important Mediterranean crossroads, that of medieval Sicily, has already undergone a number of analytical studies. But even in the latest works devoted to this subject it still has been treated merely as an Arabic language without any regard to the cultural and religious affiliation of its users. In his new book the Senior Lecturer in the Department of Arabic Studies at the University of Leeds, Dr Dionisius A Agius re-examines the socio-linguistic situation in Sicily during both Islamic (827–1091) and Norman (1091–1282) rule. For the amalgam of Christian and Arabic cultural manifestations in Sicily, Agius uses the term Siculo-Arabic, which covers both the particular variety of the Arabic language and the population which spoke it. The linguistic analysis is based on three main sources: *Tathqīf al-Lisān wa Talqīh al-Ġanān* by Ibn Makki al-Siqilli (d. 501 AH/1107 AD), Siculo-Arabic

documents referring to technical and material culture, and Siculo Middle Arabic found in Norman name-lists (*ġarā'id*). Agius traces historically the existence in Sicily of three linguistic communities. One was isolated culturally and linguistically from Islam and the Arabic language. The second had a common cultural affiliation in which Muslims were brought up with a common language—Arabic. The third community acculturated to Islam and spoke a pidgin, and later creolized, form of Arabic but remained affiliated to Christianity (cf. p. 105–13).

The main part of the book consists of linguistic examples, which are of great value because they help a scholar to tie together all the different phonetic variants of one and the same Arabic word. These variants, spelt in various ways, could be taken for different words. Sometimes it is quite difficult to find their meaning because the orthographic variants are not usually provided in standard dictionaries.

But although Agius’s book contains all the different orthographic variants of the words used in Siculo-Arabic, it still remains difficult to use. Its great disadvantage lies first of all in the indifferentiated word-index. Thus, it lists the classical Arabic, Siculo-Lahn Arabic, Siculo-Middle Arabic, Siculo-Arabic, Andulasi Arabic, Maltese (including other Arabic dialects) and other technical terms in one index (p. 471–521), which does not help in sorting out specific words. There is also no thematic division: thus, it is hard to say in which branch the inhabitants of Sicily used dialectal forms (and how often) and in which they preferred classical Arabic expressions. In order to avoid some of these difficulties the reviewer has compiled an index of the medical matters found there (see Appendix). It notes the pages where the dialectal forms are listed. This book on Siculo-Arabic can also contribute to some extent to the *LBG*. There are some words which help to explain difficult and obscure lemmas or which add some new material: ἀγριλλα (p. 336), ἀζάρια (pp. 372, 373, 395), ἀκεμι (p. 411), ἀντζάριν (p. 261), ἄοιν (p. 348). Unfortunately, being predominantly

Book Reviews

interested in the phonetics, Agius does not give any contexts, although they would help the reader to understand the freedom and ease with which the words under investigation were used by the population of Sicily.

The general impression which a reader thus has after having read these books (if one can speak of “reading” a dictionary) is that the “wrong” orthography is not so much a subject for an editor’s corrections and conjectures, but new material for historical and philological research.²

Appendix: the medical matter found in Agius’s book (the phonetical variants are to found on the pages indicated in brackets).

‘abīt (pure and fresh (blood)) (191)
‘aṭas (a sneeze) (216)
bakra (pulley) (215)
barqūq (apricot) (312)
ba‘ūda (gnat) (204)
buḏūr (seeds) (274)
ḏabl (turtle-shell) (211)
ḏar‘ (udder) (214)
ḏifda‘ (frog) (219)
dummal (a kind of purulent pustule) (214)
fālūdag (a sweet made of flour, water and honey) (181)
faqqūṣ (type of melon before it has become ripe) (187)
faṣṣ (stone or gem) (211)
fayḡan (rue) (198)
fustaq (pistachio-nut) (213)
ḡirdān (mouse) (180)
ḡaḏīda (wheat) (180)
ḡillūz (hazel-nut) (219)
ḡirḡūr (water-cress) (220)
ḡulḡulān (coriander seed) (227)
ḡulba (grain) (204)
ḡummāḏ (sorrel) (206)
kaḑal (buttocks) (216)
kulya (kidney) (203)
lawz (almond) (347)
lubān (pine-tree) (209)
mamḡūr (salted fish) (198)
mašīma (placenta) (197)
maṣṭaka (mastic) (195)
muṣaaqqar (fresh ripe dates) (188)
nāb (canine tooth, an old she-camel) (206)

naḏūḡ (a certain kind of perfume) (214)
nāḡīḏ (wisdom tooth) (180)
qiba (stomach of an animal) (204)
qu‘āṣ (a certain disease which attacks sheep and goats) (188)
qunfuḏ (hedgehog) (180)
raḏf (heated stones used to heat milk) (215)
rubb al-sus (licuorice) (228)
ṣadr (chest) (188)
ṣalḡam (turnip) (186)
ṣanawbar (pine-tree) (214)
ṣillawr (cat-fish) (188)
surra (navel) (184)
turbaḏ (turpeth) (274)
‘unqūḏ (bunch of grapes) (225)
wazaḡa (lizard) (215)
xass (lettuce) (184)
xirniq (a small rabbit) (220)
xubbāz (mallow) (206)
xuṣya (testicle) (203)
zahr (a flower or blossom of a plant) (283)
za‘farān (saffron) (279)
zaytūn (olives) (346)
zummaḡ (a bird of the eagle family) (214)
zumurrud (emerald) (180)
zunamiyy (reed) (198)
zunbūr (a certain tree of large size, resembling the plane tree) (225)
zu‘rūr (hawthorn) (225)

Nikolaj Serikoff, Wellcome Institute

¹ A good illustration of this are the Greek synonyms for peach, given by the Arab scholar al-Biruni, who in his *Book on pharmacy* writes: “*Kummathra* (peach) in the Byzantine Greek [it is called] *kidhuni* “[κιδώνι, which is actually a quince, N Serikoff], al-Ahwazi (a ninth century author), wrote the *Book about the Byzantines*, which, although presumed lost, is widely cited by al-Biruni, new series) [says] that in Byzantine Greek [it is called] *abidhi* (ἀπιδὴ <ἀπιδίων cf ‘άπιος). (Al-Biruni’s *Book on pharmacy and materia medica*, ed. with English translation by al-Hakim Muhammad Sa’id, Karachi, 1973, p. 322, no. 34).

² About the “corrections” found in the *LBG* see: N Serikoff, ‘Greek words in the foundry: thoughts on a new Byzantine lexicon’, *J. r. Asiatic Soc.* (forthcoming).