

## Reseñas



ARBACHE, Samir, *L'Évangile arabe selon Matthieu, Marc, Luc et Jean. Texte du Sinai Arabe 72 traduit du grec au VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. 2 vols. Col. «Langues et cultures anciennes» 34 (Brussels: Éditions Safran, 2023), 438 + 496 (934) pp. ISBN: 978-2-87457-135-0

In 1994 Professor Arbache presented an excellent doctoral thesis under the title *Une ancienne version arabe des évangiles: langue, texte et lexique* at the University Michel Montaigne Bordeaux III in two volumes under the direction of the late professors Jacques Langhade and Gérard Troupeau. That research now sees the light with a new dress that notably enriches that first work. If that research already represented an important contribution for the study of biblical translations into Arabic, specifically of the Gospels, it now acquires an even greater dimension. To this must be added the superb edition and layout by Éditions Safran.

The value of the text contained in MS Sinai Arabic 72 (hereafter S 72) has been recognised since this text was first known to have been copied in the South Palestinian Melkite monastery of Mār Kharitōn in the Judean desert at the end of the 9th century (897). This version, moreover, as the author indicates in his study, corresponds to a group of manuscripts which, to some extent, informs about the “history of the text” and, in his opinion, allows to suppose that the original translation must have been made in the middle of the 8th century.

The work consists of two volumes structured in four parts, three parts in the first volume and one part in the second. The first volume is focused on the study of the text divided into three parts, preceded by a foreword, acknowledgements and a preface by Patrick Scaufaire, Rector of the Catholic University of Lille, and Christian Cannuyer, President of the Royal Belgian Society of Oriental Studies; the second part, in turn, includes the edition of the Arabic text together with its French translation, preceded by an introduction; and the third part contains the Arabic-Greek and Greek-Arabic lexicon.

Preceded by a brief introduction (p. 19), the first part (“L’approche linguistique”, pp. 19-112) consists of three chapters with the following titles and summary contents:

1. “Les anciennes versions arabes des évangiles. Problématique générale” (pp. 21-36) in which the author offers, in three sections, the historical, religious and cultural context on the eve of Islam and after the arrival of Islam and the change of world order in the Near East with the establishment of the Arab-Islamic state.

2. “Le manuscrit Sinai arabe 72. Une approche informatique” (pp. 37-56) is composed of two sections: in the first, the author gives the codicological and palaeographical description of the manuscript, while in the second he offers the computerised approach applied to the treatment of the lexicon. This is followed by a conclusion (p. 55) and the

acknowledgments to the members of the Centre Informatique et Bible de Maredsous, CIB (p. 55).

3. “La langue de S 72” (pp. 57-100) consists of four sections, preceded by an introduction (pp. 57-58) containing respectively the analysis of the most important phonetic and orthographic, morphological, syntactic and lexical aspects of S 72.

The second part of the first volume includes the edition of the Arabic text together with the French translation (pp. 118-343), preceded by an introductory study on the Arabic text (manuscripts of the same group and manuscripts related to the group of S 72), the abbreviations used in the edition of the Arabic text (p. 116), a few words on the translation method adopted by the author (pp. 116-117), and the notes on the critical apparatus of the Arabic text (p. 117).

The third part opens with a brief presentation and notes on how to use the two lexical lists (p. 347) that follow: firstly the Arabic-Greek lexicon (pp. 349-391) and secondly the Greek-Arabic lexicon (pp. 393-438), which in both cases include the *lemmas*, their correspondences and frequency of use.

The second volume contains an Arabic-Greek concordance (pp. 448-934) with the *lemmas*, their frequency, their root (if any), their Greek equivalents numbered and ranked in decreasing order according to their agreement with the Arabic *lemma*, and the context of each Arabic *lemma*. The concordance is preceded by some indications on how to use the concordance (p. 446) which are exemplified in a table (p. 447).

With these two volumes, Professor Arbache provides us with an excellent edition of the manuscript S 72, a text of great value given the early date of its translation. In addition, the author has managed to combine an outstanding edition of the Arabic text with an excellent French translation, a complete philological analysis of the text and lexical tools of great value and very important for researchers.

The two magnificent volumes offered by Professor Arbache are the result of many years of work and a profound knowledge of the text and its linguistic, liturgical, cultural and historical context. This knowledge has enabled the author to provide a valuable working tool for other researchers working in the field of biblical translations.

We hope that the author will provide new editions and studies with which to contribute to the development of the studies on biblical translations into Arabic. For the time being, we can only rejoice and congratulate Professor Samir Arbache for this excellent piece of work on the early Gospels in Arabic.

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