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H. Younansardaroud. *Der neuostaramäische Dialekt von Sārdā:riḏ* (Semitica Viva, 26). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001. XXIV + 261 S.

The 26th volume of the series "Semitica Viva" edited by Otto Jastrow presents a linguistic description of one of the Eastern Neo-Aramaic (ENA) idioms—the dialect of the village Sardarid in northwestern Iran, which belongs to the Urmia dialect cluster.

The Sardarid dialect has recently vanished from the linguistic map of this region and is presently spoken outside of Iran, sharing the common fate of the dialects used by Christians and other ethno-religious minorities in Iran after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The present description has been written by Dr. Helen Younansardaroud, a native speaker of Sardarid, the basis of this book being her doctoral dissertation (Freie Universität Berlin, 1999).

The book consists of the Introduction (historical and geographical circumstances, ethno-linguistic situation, history of research, methodological principles), Phonology (with a special emphasis on the problem of synharmonism), Morphology (including paradigms of verb conjugation and noun declension with pronominal suffixes), Syntax (syntax of the noun, syntax of the verb, the sentence in general), and Texts (recorded from a native speaker who has grown up in the linguistic milieu of Sardarid) supplied with German translations.

In the introduction to her book, the author admits that a waterproof classification of Neo-Aramaic is hardly feasible today because of the political changes of the last decades which affected the ethno-linguistic situation in the region as well as because of the new material which has become available due to recent studies. The existing classifications have thus probably to be reviewed.

A large section of the book deals with the vocalic and consonantal harmony (synharmonism) in Sardarid. It includes a discussion of consonantal harmony (with a list of minimal pairs); vocalic harmony (including diphthongs); harmony in verb forms; spreading of harmony on affixes and genitive nominal expressions (Wortzusammensetzungen); harmony in loan-words (with a list of minimal pairs); elements which resist harmony; words with fluctuating timbre. The author does not discuss which

elements are transparent (i.e. do not block harmony) and which are opaque (i.e. do block harmony).

The chapter entitled "Historic development of synharmonism" is in fact a diachronic treatment of velarized consonants but it does not explain the origins of the synharmonism. The analysis of synharmonism in Sardarid is supplemented by the excursus "The Synharmonism in the Neo-Aramaic Dialects". This detailed and very informative summary of research in this field may be recommended as a useful introduction into the problem. The main works dedicated to the synharmonism in Urmia, Jewish Neo-Aramaic, Ṭhuma (North-East Syria), Arādhīn (Iraq), Iraq Neo-Aramaic koine, Amadiya (Iraq) and Jilu (Turkey) are meticulously reviewed and discussed in the final summary.

In her treatment of synharmonism the author uses the terminology and methodology of K. Tsereteli (the latter, in his turn, partly following Yushmanov), who distinguishes three pronunciation types.<sup>1</sup> The theory of consonant and vowel harmony was developed to account for the phonologically relevant phenomenon of hard, middle and soft pronunciation (Tsereteli's "timbre"), shared by some of northernmost Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects. The term "synharmonism"<sup>2</sup> is in fact very convenient for the Eastern Neo-Aramaic facts: it is hard to separate *consonant harmony* from *vowel harmony* (these being more widespread terms)<sup>3</sup>.

The excursus on the history of research makes clear that scholars disagree on the nature and the origin of ENA synharmonism. Apparently, it was not the purpose of the author to solve this problem and to give a definitive answer. Rather, the Section 3 of the book may be considered a contribution to the documentation of this phenomenon. Nevertheless, we will try to clarify the author's position on the basis of some observations scattered throughout the Section 3. At the beginning (p. 19) it is stated that *synharmonism is a result of velarization or pharyngealization*. A detailed treatment of the consonants relevant for the synharmonism as against a very short treatment of vowel harmony<sup>4</sup> together with observa-

<sup>1</sup> Pace O. Jastrow and other scholars who distinguish two pronunciation types, i.e. "flat" and "plain" (Jastrow 1997, 352).

<sup>2</sup> It was used in the works of Soviet linguists Marogulov, Yushmanov and K. Tsereteli.

<sup>3</sup> As the author herself states, "Die Bezeichnung Synharmonismus ist vorzuziehen, weil sie die gleichzeitige Wirkung auf Konsonanten und Vokale unterstreicht (p. xxiii)".

<sup>4</sup> Restricted to the description (in the form of a table) of the three articulation classes (rows) of vowels (front, middle and back) correlated to the three timbres.

tions on the triggering impact of emphatics lead the reader to believe that this type of synharmonism is consonant-induced. On the other hand, on p. 3 of the book it is stated that "the 'velarized' phonemes /b/, /z/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /p/, /r/ are synchronically *the result of the synharmonism*". The way the relevant consonants are treated is a cautious one: "the consonant X is velarized in words with hard timbre". I admit, the way chosen looks optimal for the description of this complicated phenomenon. But there arise questions: What are the triggers? What are the targets? For some of the consonants (emphatics /s/ and /t/, the lost pharyngeal /\*ʕ/) it is stated quite explicitly that they cause hard pronunciation of the whole word (e.g. p. 20),<sup>5</sup> for some others (/r/, /l/, /g/ < /\*h/) the origin of their velarized realization is suggested: the presence of the emphatics /s/ and /t/, pharyngeal /\*ʕ/ or velar /h/ (for /l/) within a given word, or an adjacent /b/ for /g/ < /\*h/. Most of the examples for /b/, /z/, /m/ and /n/ show the presence of the above mentioned velarization inducers and are therefore convincing. In other cases, however, words with hard (<sup>h</sup>) timbre have no emphatic, pharyngeal, or velar: <sup>h</sup>nīmṛa "Leopard" or <sup>h</sup>na:tiṛ<sup>6</sup> "(daß) er tropft". I exclude examples with /q/ since, according to the author's description, it may cause velarization, but the articulation of /q/ itself depends on the timbre of the word (3.1.9). What the above examples show is that the velarized consonants are *the result* of the synharmonism, but can they be regarded as its *source*? One could reason as follows: the emphatics, the lost pharyngeal /\*ʕ/ and the laryngeal /h/ induce synharmonism both synchronically and diachronically,<sup>7</sup> the target being all the phonetic segments of the word, including vowels. Subsequently, the synharmonism becomes a phonologically distinctive feature of its own and may operate in absence of any consonant triggers. This tentative formulation may look impressionistic, but what I want to show is that the material

<sup>5</sup> Cf.: "Diachronically the consonants /t/ and /s/ stay at the beginning of the development [of synharmonism]" (p. 3).

<sup>6</sup> In 3.9 it is shown that /t/ in some cases resists harmony (p. 34). In 3.1.1 we have a list of various nominal, verbal and adverbial affixes in which /t/ does not comply with the hard timbre of the word and it is noted that /t/ is "obviously perceived (empfunden) as a morpheme". Why not to see all the examples in 3.1.1 in the light of 3.9 and to treat /t/ as a harmony restriction element? Additionally, the examples in 3.1.1 and 3.9 show that /t/ is transparent, i.e. it does not block the harmony.

<sup>7</sup> For /t/ and /s/ see note 5.

under scrutiny is not unproblematic, whereas the author's own discussion of these problems is missing.<sup>8</sup>

Without exploring all the details, I will mention the most important infelicities I have noticed. In the list of minimal pairs (p. 34) the pair *ḥalvat* "(daß) du melkst" / *ḥalvat* "leer" looks simply displaced out of inattention, i.e. their respective positions in the table should be reversed. As for the pair *ḥpalt-un* "nehmt heraus!" / *ḥpaltun* "Jacke", it seems altogether unclear since both forms are of the hard timbre. It is strange not to find among the examples of the weak verbs the very frequent *la:bil* (< *ma:bil*) "to bring" with a noteworthy assimilation (the verb is attested in the texts of the Part IV). In the first passage of 21.3 (p. 212) the phrase *ḥmjo či* "*priq=li pja:š=ili ḥmu ḥpulluš-mo*" has no translation and looks out of place.

Summing up, the present volume fulfills its very important task—a synchronic description of the Sārdä:rid dialect, which is in a danger of extinction. The documentation of synharmonism in Sārdä:rid will undoubtedly contribute to the study of this complicated phenomenon in ENA.

A. Lyavdansky

#### Reference

Jastrow 1997: Jastrow, O. "The Neo-Aramaic Languages". // Hetzron, R. (ed.). *The Semitic Languages*. London, 334–377.

<sup>8</sup> The section 3.13 ("Forschungsdiskussion") is dedicated to the previous research.