

## Foreword

As we were planning the November 2008 'Chair of Arabic Studies' Conference 'The Arabic of yesteryear and nowadays,' we did not think of the possibility of editing and publishing a book with the papers discussed in that event. However, Mr. Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain, President of the 'Foundation of Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain's Prize for Poetic Creativity' (Kuwait), which sponsored the conference, felt the need to put together the papers presented and to publish them in one volume, taking into consideration the importance of the conference and the rich variety of topics addressed in it. We, as participants in and organizers of the conference, were asked to carry out this task.

The present book, which is entirely based on the works presented in the conference, is the first of a forthcoming series of publications of the proceedings of similar conferences or symposia on different aspects of the Arabic language, history and culture.

The conference was organised by the 'Chair of Arabic Studies' of the University of Cordoba, and both the present book and the conference were made possible thanks to the generous financial support granted by the 'Foundation of Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain's Prize for Poetic Creativity.' Under the patronage of Prof. Dr. Joaquín Mellado Rodríguez, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, the official inauguration of the conference took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November, 2008 in the *Aula Magna* at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Cordoba.

The aim of the conference was to bring together scholars studying texts, Arabic-related registers and dialects belonging to different periods and areas throughout centuries from a philological and linguistic perspective. The outcome was, indeed, a significant contribution to the investigation of geographical and diachronic criteria used to facilitate the analysis of both old and present linguistic entities.

Since the very beginning, as organizers, we had in mind a group of scholars who have been working unflinchingly in the field of Arabic linguistics for a long time. We asked for works on specific topics in order to structure a 'balanced' conference addressing the Arabic of today and the Arabic of the past.

The first part of the conference, dealing with both the Old and the Mediaeval periods, was made up of six presentations, discussing dialectology, culinary lexicon, grammar and loan-translations. The second focused on the current situation, it included six contributions, addressing topics such as lexical statistics, grammar and North-African dialects. Suffice it to say at this point that the participants in the conference had the chance to enjoy long and fruitful discussions with the speakers during and after their presentations.

The conference could not have taken place without the help of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Cordoba and the generous grant of Al-Babtain Foundation. As organizers of the conference and editors of the present book, we would like to particularly thank Mr. Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain for his generosity and willingness to help and support those who work hard to spread the Arabic language and its rich and vast culture.

We wish also to thank all our colleagues who did not hesitate to lend a hand since the beginning. Their kindness and professionalism helped us overcome all difficulties. Without their help, the conference and the present book could not have been possible.

Lastly, we would also like to thank Reichert Verlag Publishers for making the publication of this book possible. We truly hope that the twelve articles presented in this book can arouse the interest of scholars, colleagues and the students of Arabic language and culture.

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