Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Syntax of Septuagint Greek* (Leuven – Paris – Bristol, CT: Peeters 2016). Pp. 904. €105. ISBN 978-90-429-3316-3

ANDRZEJ PIWOWAR

Institute of Biblical Studies, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin
email: andpiw@op.pl

Takamitsu Muraoka was born in 1938 in Hiroshima. He is one of the most renowned scholars of biblical languages. His research centres primarily on Hebrew, but also on Aramaic, Syrian and Greek. Muraoka does not need a special introduction as his scholarly achievements are well known to biblical scholars and students of biblical languages. His significant contributions to the field of biblical languages now encompass also *A Syntax of Septuagint Greek*, published in 2016. The book is an important publication for all those who study the text and message of LXX, as it focuses on the syntax of the Greek translation of the Old Testament, enabling the reader to know and understand it better. What is more, it is a significant tool helping one deepen the knowledge of Hellenic Greek (*koiné*), the language of the New Testament. Indirectly, then, the book refers to the New Testament Greek too, shedding light on its numerous syntactic phenomena. Among the existing coursebooks devoted to the Greek of LXX one may enumerate, among others, the following titles, starting from the oldest ones: F.C. Conybeare – S.G. Stock, *Grammar of Septuagint Greek* (Boston 1905; in 1995 Hendrickson Publishers released an expanded version of the book under the title *Grammar of Septuagint Greek. With Selected Readings, Vocabularies, and Updated Indexes*); R. Helbing, *Grammatik der Septuaginta. Laut- und Wortlehre* (Göttingen 1907); H.J. Thackeray, *A Grammar of the Old Testament in Greek According to the Septuagint* (Cambridge 1909) and, finally, M. Cimosa, *Guida allo studio della Bibbia Greca (LXX). Storia – lingua – testi* (Roma 1995). These books, however, paid limited attention to the syntax of the Septuagint Greek. Hence, there was a need for a comprehensive analysis of the syntax of the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which gap has been filled by Muraoka's new book.

A Syntax of Septuagint Greek is divided into two parts: Morphosyntax and Syntax. "Under morphosyntax we mainly deal with functions and grammatical values of various parts of speech and inflectional categories [...] The bulk of the second division, syntax, has three subdivisions into (a) paragraphs dealing

with how substantives are expanded, (b) paragraphs dealing with how the verb is expanded, and (c) where we deal with macro-syntactic questions such as concord, coordination, word and others" (*A Syntax of Septuagint Greek*, XLII). The author admits that such a division of the material on the Greek syntax is derived from E. Schwyzer's study, *Griechische Grammatik. Vol. II: Syntax* (München 1950). In the introduction to the book, Muraoka makes it clear that his aim is not to compare the Greek language employed in LXX to its earlier or later variants, but to show it as a stage in the development of the language that is complete in itself. The author makes a reservation in the introduction that his book, with a few exceptions, lacks comparative linguistic analysis, as it was neither the aim nor the subject of his book. Muraoka's study thus evinces a synchronic approach to text, rather than a diachronic or a historical one.

A Syntax of Septuagint Greek contains the analysis (at least partial one) of many texts of the Septuagint. This is corroborated by the index of passages of the Septuagint included in the final part of the book. The index covers pages from 819 to 882, with each page comprising three columns of text. This is a testimony both to Muraoka's in-depth knowledge of the text of LXX and to the amount of work he did preparing the book. Presenting the syntactic phenomena discussed in the book, the author does not refer only to a few selected examples but illustrates them with numerous texts in which the phenomena in question appear. The index of the passages of the Old Testament analysed in the book is accompanied by the index of passages of the New Testament and the index of passages of the classical authors. These testify to the great value of Muraoka's study as well as to the author's erudition and excellent knowledge of Greek literature.

A Syntax of Septuagint Greek cannot be treated as a coursebook on the syntax of biblical Greek, as it does not have a didactic character, which shows in very synthetic explanations of the phenomena under discussion as well as in the absence of exercises. The book presupposes the reader's good command of the Greek language. I do not recommend it as a coursebook on Greek syntax for beginner students. Muraoka's book is aimed at those who have a decent understanding of the basics of Greek syntax. *A Syntax of Septuagint Greek* will enable such readers to engage in a deeper analysis of the nuances of Greek syntax that Muraoka discusses. Due to their substantially synthetic nature, many of Muraoka's explanations will turn out to be incomprehensible to beginner students who do not have prior – at least rudimentary – knowledge of Greek syntax. Muraoka's book is comparable to seminal analyses of the New Testament Greek by A.T. Robertson (*A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*) or by F. Blass and A. Debrunner (*Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*). It thus constitutes a perfect scholarly tool to deepen one's understanding of the Greek text of LXX and of *koiné* Greek as such.

A Syntax of Septuagint Greek stands out among other books devoted to the syntax of the Septuagint Greek not only due to its size, but primarily due to its precise, even meticulous, analysis of the syntactic phenomena occurring in the biblical Greek of the Old Testament. The examples could be given ad infinitum; let us give just one: pp. 499-500 are devoted to diverse patterns of the rection of ἀδικέω, ἀφίημι or ἐπιθυμέω. Detailed analyses of particular syntactic phenomena present in the Greek text of the Old Testament as well as a comprehensive approach to syntax make Muraoka's book the best study of the syntax of the LXX Greek that I am familiar with. Undoubtedly, Muraoka's book is helpful also to those who study the Greek text of the New Testament for the language of the Septuagint had a tremendous influence on the New Testament Greek.

It is an exceptionally difficult task to review a book as vast as *A Syntax of Septuagint Greek*, to a large extent because of the wealth of the material the book covers. For this reason, I intend to focus on selected issues which I view as the most interesting and complex aspects of Greek syntax that generate most problems for contemporary scholars of Greek texts. Undoubtedly, one of the most difficult aspects of Greek syntax is the usage of articles. To some it may seem a trivial issue, but as a matter of fact it is, on the one hand, extremely difficult and complicated, and on the other, it is significant due to the theological message it impacts on. The deployment of articles seems particularly complicated to those whose mother tongues lack them (e.g. speakers of Slavic languages). Muraoka starts his analysis of the syntax of the Septuagint Greek precisely with the discussion of article usage, devoting 35 pages of his book to the problem. First, he presents the values of the article, analysing its usage as an equivalent to the third person personal pronouns in the nominative, to subsequently focus on its anaphoric and particularizing uses, as well as contextually determinate, generic and distributive ones. In the subsequent part of his discussion he concentrates on the omission of the article in the following situations: preposition + substantive, substantive + genetive, predicate of a descriptive nominal clause and substantive in the vocative. Further, he discusses the employment or omission of article with the nouns θεός, κύριος and with proper nouns (personal names, place names, four compass points, heavenly bodies, titles of books or documents, festivals and holidays, months, abstract nouns, ordinals and finally material or substance). The section on the usage of article ends with an analysis of the substantivising function of the article. Even the above enumeration of the aspects of article usage or omission clearly shows the depth and comprehensiveness of Muraoka's analysis of this syntactic phenomenon. The great value of *A Syntax of Septuagint Greek* lies in its illustration of theoretical discussions of grammatical issues with a huge number of biblical texts that enable one to see and better understand the theoretical problems in

practice. Muraoka does not stop at that, but he also lists numerous examples of exceptions to theoretical rules. Discussing the use of article in the Greek text of LXX, the author frequently makes references to the Hebrew text, especially when it helps understand the employment of the article. It is an important aspect of Muraoka's study as it enables the reader to get to know the translation methods used by the translators of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament into Greek. *A Syntax of Septuagint Greek* includes as well some suggestions that need to be taken into consideration in the analysis of the translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew and Aramaic into Greek (cf. for example pp. 626-627 or 635), which lets the reader get a deeper knowledge of translation methods of the translators of the Old Testament into Greek. References to this aspect of LXX are an important part of Muraoka's analysis.

Another complex aspect of the syntax of biblical Greek that poses a lot of difficulties to interpreters of texts is that of participle. Muraoka devotes 55 pages of his book to a discussion of participles. His analysis starts with substantival participle (anarthrous and articular) to later proceed to the attributive use of participle in various meanings (e.g. affinity with relative clause) and syntactic structures (e.g. expanded by an object or an adverbial, modifier intervening between a substantive and participle, noun phrase + article + participle, anomalously anarthrous: article + substantive + participle, etc.). In his subsequent discussion of circumstantial participle, the author focuses too much on the position of participium *vis-à-vis* the lead verb at the expense of semantic values of circumstantial participle (cf. pp. 391-392). If I correctly understand the underlying division of *A Syntax of Septuagint Greek* into two parts (namely, on morphosyntax and syntax), it seems that some information regarding participles presented in the first part of the book should be included in the second one, for example sections: § 31 cc) Expanded by an object or an adverbial (p. 375), § 31 ch) Expanding even an oblique case pronoun (pp. 379-380) or § 31 di) Circumstantial participle expanding another participle (pp. 393-394). Muraoka's discussion of participle later focuses on supplementing participle, periphrastic participle, predicative participle and genetive absolute. The part of *A Syntax of Septuagint Greek* devoted to particles proves beyond doubt the thoroughness of Muraoka's analysis of LXX syntax. The use of participle in the Greek text of the Old Testament is presented in a very detailed and comprehensive manner. No aspect of this part of speech has been overlooked, the analysis of participle use is thorough and complete, even if, in my opinion, too little attention has been paid to the semantic values of circumstantial participle.

The author's perfect command of the Greek language and his innovative attitude to syntax can be noticed in the discussion of conditional clauses (pp 757-774). Unlike the majority of grammar books, Muraoka's text does not

discuss four semantic categories of conditional sentences but three conditional conjunctions (εἰ, ἐάν and ἄν). On pp. 762-763, however, he abandons his method of analysing conditional sentences, concentrating on unreal conditional as a type of conditional sentence.

What contributes to the value of *A Syntax of Septuagint Greek* are footnotes that enable the reader to deepen his or her knowledge with the help of numerous sources the author refers to. The footnotes make Muraoka's book a scholarly one, rather than a mere grammar textbook.

One may find Muraoka's division of text into sections and subsections somewhat difficult to follow. This division is obviously lucid and logical, yet somewhat too complicated, making it difficult to find a given section. What I mean here are section numbers such as § 28 **dfa** or § 28 **dfb**. From the reader's point of view, it would be easier if the text employed continuous numbering of sections, in the manner of other books on Greek grammar, such as W.W. Goodwin's, H.W. Smyth's, etc. Such an organization of text makes it easier to find or return to a given fragment. Luckily, the odd pages of Muraoka's text include headings with information on the section(s) included on the page.

The index of Greek words appearing in *A Syntax of Septuagint Greek* misses a lot of words that are actually used in the book. Muraoka might have decided to include only these words that he considered crucial for Greek syntax. Still, it seems that the index included at the back of the book should include all the Greek words and syntagmas mentioned in the text.

Despite these minor formal shortcomings, *A Syntax of Septuagint Greek* is worthy of heartfelt recommendation to all those who wish to learn better the biblical Greek not only of the Old but also of the New Testament. The book is yet another testimony to the author's immense mastery and exceptional knowledge of biblical languages. Certainly, Muraoka's book will for many years, maybe even forever, remain a reference point for scholars of biblical Greek, just like A.T. Robertson's *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* or F. Blass and A. Debrunner's *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* are in the case of the New Testament Greek.