

JUSSI ARO

1928 - 1983

Curriculum

Jussi Taneli Aro was born at Lapua in Finland on June 5, 1928, the only child of Maria Aro. After completing secondary school at Lapua he was enrolled as a student of theology at the University of Helsinki in the autumn of 1945. Attracted by Semitic languages and cultures, however, after three years he dropped the regular theological studies. In 1949 he took his M.A. degree in Oriental, Greek and Roman Literature. Seven years later he finished his post-graduate studies for the Lic.Phil. degree in Oriental and Greek Literature. During this period he had already become preoccupied with Assyriology, which he had also read in Chicago in 1951-52 and in Göttingen in 1954. Before his Lic.Phil. degree he had completed his doctoral thesis *Studien zur mittelbabylonischen Grammatik*, which he defended in December 1955.

In May 1956 Jussi Aro was appointed Docent of Assyriology and Semitic Philology at the University of Helsinki. After the retirement of Aapeli Saarisalo, who had held the chair of Oriental Literature since 1935, Jussi Aro applied for the post, and on June 18, 1965, he was appointed to the chair, which he held until his death on March 11, 1983. In 1979 the chair was renamed Semitic Languages.

Although Semitic philology remained Jussi Aro's main scholarly field, he also made valuable contributions in Old Testament studies and comparative religion. In recognition of this work an honorary degree of Doctor of Theology was conferred on him in 1973 by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Helsinki.

In 1956 Jussi Aro married Eila Annikki Paukku. The marriage was blessed with seven children.

The book-loving country boy

Jussi Aro's childhood home was materially poor. His mother's farm was not big enough to provide a livelihood for her and her son, and she had to earn their

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living by various kinds of work at other farms in the vicinity. From early childhood, Jussi became accustomed to physical labour and a simple life. The spiritual atmosphere of the region was imbued with the ideas of the pietist revival movement. People attended church on Sundays, and prayer meetings were held in private homes. The word of God was respected in the plains of Ostrobothnia; the Scripture, hymnals and books of homilies were worn with frequent use. For Jussi Aro these books were "desired to make one wise and a delight to the eyes". At the age of ten Jussi made a book of his own, a pocket-size diary, and provided it with margin lines and headings resembling those in a psalter. In the diary he noted down daily events and personal reflections. The commonplace notes concern his mother's work and Jussi's days, often spent outdoors tending cattle. But this is nothing but routine: almost every page of the diary bears evidence of the boy's desire for books as sources of wisdom and as attractive objects. One of the most dramatic comments on this passion is a note written on October 5, 1938: "I'm too excited about our visit to Muhku-Mähky. I'm sure I'll get an old Bible. Of course there is no certainty about this; rather, the very opposite is true. But the cast of my mind is such that if I don't get what I most ardently have desired, I can't help losing my head. I've learnt that since our visit to Leppälä, when I so ardently wished to have an old hall clock. Well now, let's see what will happen." Four days later he comments upon the outcome: "Well, what about Muhku-Mähky? Was there any old Bible there? No, no, and no! There was only a forty-year-old one. Outside it looked old, but inside it was new."

The first diary was written in Finnish. The second one, written during the Finnish Winter War when Jussi was eleven years of age, already bears witness to his active interest in language study. Most of it is written in Swedish, admittedly clumsy, but still worthy of respect, as the boy's only teacher in Swedish was a neighbour's son. In addition, some notes are written in Latin. On one page there are six lines in Arabic, obviously copied from a one-volume encyclopedia for young readers. A couple of years later the diaries also contain lengthy parts in German and French, and short passages in English. Sporadic lines have been written in Russian, Hungarian, Greek, and even Hebrew. In the summer of 1943 he writes: "Today I read my diary notes from 1938, and I felt there weren't many noteworthy things at that time. What I wrote then is actually very childish ... but who knows how much more grown-up-like I still may become, though I am already 15 years old and know nine languages."

In the autumn of the same year Jussi Aro happened to turn over the leaves of

a book dealing with the history of the art of printing. In it he saw a picture of Elzevir's Polyglot Bible. Full of inspiration he writes: "Blessed are people who can hold that book in their hands! What heavenly bliss! I am bursting with envy; no, rather with admiration. It must be the highest degree of human happiness."

Naturally, Jussi Aro's mother hoped that her talented son would become a minister of the church. It is clear from the diaries that the son also felt that this was his calling. In his notes dated June 11, 1944, he already gives expression to his desire to become an interpreter of the Bible. After having commented upon the war raging on the Karelian Isthmus, he continues tenaciously in Latin: "Septuagintam vellem, Vulgata mihi grata esset. Diu iam optavi nondum autem accepi... Num umquam videbo illa. Prius forte moriar aut peribit mundus. Et si morirem, iuva Deus ne in peccatis meis moriar et aeterne peream. Tolle abs me idola mea, es tu solus mihi ad Deum ... Iam diu fuit spes mea, ut exegeticus et defensor veritatis verbi tui ante omnes doctissimos fiam. Tu autem scis, si etiam hoc solum desiderium honoris terreni est, quo solum splendorem falsam dedi. Sed si vis, da ut verbum tuum defendere possim." Next to the Latin text Jussi had drawn a picture of Luther crouched down over the Bible. Attracted by old sacred books, his idols, the sixteen-year-old devout pietist boy felt anxious about his soul: "Oh that I could love the Lord with the same ardour as I love books!"

Owing to the war it proved impossible to get the Septuaginta, the book which Jussi Aro had desired most since he had got both the Greek New Testament and the Hebrew Old Testament. But he did not give up. On June 15, 1944, he wrote in his diary: "Now I'll start reading the תורה וכתובים וכתובים. When I've finished it, perhaps the Lord will then find it proper to give me the LXX. Apart from the grammar and the dictionary, I'll not use any help. The historical books will not cause any problems, but as yet I can't manage the texts of the prophets and the poetical parts in that way. Maybe I'll get enough training while reading the historical books. Videamus." The result of this decision is not to be read in the diaries.

Academic studies

In 1945 Jussi Aro finished his school with top marks, having skipped over four classes. In the autumn he was enrolled as a student at the Theological Faculty at the University of Helsinki. In due course he started reading Hebrew and Greek, and followed propaedeutic lectures in theology. From the second year on it was possible to study theological subjects. In the Old Testament his teacher

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was the young professor Aarre Lauha, in the New Testament the still younger professor Aimo T. Nikolainen, both future bishops in the diocese of Helsinki.

From the very beginning, Jussi Aro also started language studies in the Faculty of Arts. In Greek Literature his teacher was Professor Henrik Zilliacus, in Roman Literature Dr. Y. M. Biese, who was holding Professor Edwin Linkomies' chair, and in Oriental Literature he attended Professor Aapeli Saarisalo's lectures. During the war Saarisalo had been living in Turkey, but as early as 1944 Jussi Aro had heard an ecclesiastic praise him as a good pedagogue and theologian. After Saarisalo's first lecture in January 1946, Jussi Aro wrote in his diary: "Aapeli Saarisalo in the evening. I was overjoyed. On Saturday again. I attend lectures in Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic."

In the autumn of 1946 Jussi Aro started studying Assyriology under the guidance of Professor Armas Salonen, who, following the pedagogical principles of his teacher Knut Tallqvist, proceeded very rapidly in his Assyriology lectures. Tallqvist had regarded it as an unnecessary waste of time to repeat anything that had already been said, because these studies were not intended for people other than prospective scholars. With this method the pupils had to follow the lectures with unwavering attention. Salonen's lectures also quite naturally introduced the students to serious research work.

Having taken his M.A. degree in Oriental Literature ("laudatur"/advanced level), Greek Literature ("cum laude approbatur"/intermediate level) and Roman Literature (id.) in 1949, Jussi Aro continued his studies but felt uncertain about the choice between full-time post-graduate studies and employment as an apprentice at the University Library. The situation, however, was unexpectedly changed by a new development. Aro was offered an opportunity to leave for Chicago, where Armas Salonen had been working as a visiting professor in 1947-49. An ASLA scholarship now enabled Jussi Aro to spend the academic year 1951-52 studying at the Oriental Institute in Chicago and working as part-time assistant in the Assyrian Dictionary project under the direction of leading Assyriologists such as the professors I. J. Gelb, A. L. Oppenheim, Th. Jacobsen, and B. Landsberger. Cooperation with these renowned scholars was the best training imaginable for Aro's future research work. In addition to increased learning and the experience of research methodology, it gave him the self-confidence indispensable for independent scholarly work.

Another experience of major significance for Jussi Aro's career was the time spent in Göttingen in the summer of 1954. There he had the great benefit of

receiving first-class guidance from Professor Wolfram von Soden, who had suggested Middle Babylonian as the theme of his doctoral thesis. During the summer von Soden went through with him the Middle Babylonian letters which would be the bulk of the textual documentation for the thesis.

The studies in Chicago and Göttingen consolidated Jussi Aro's practical mastery of languages and increased his interest in international scholarly contacts, which became extensive during the subsequent years. In accordance with his polyglot pursuits, manifested at an early age, he wrote his correspondence not only in Finnish, Swedish, English, German, and French, but also in Russian, Arabic, and Modern Hebrew.

In addition to his work with the licentiate and doctoral thesis, in the first half of the 50's Jussi Aro deepened his knowledge of Assyriology, Oriental Literature and Greek Literature. During this time, Armas Salonen was his most important teacher in Helsinki. In January 1956 Aro completed his formal academic studies with the Lic. Phil. degree; on December 17, 1955 he had already successfully defended his Ph.D. thesis. After Knut Tallqvist (1890), Harri Holma (1911), and Armas Salonen (1939), this was the fourth doctoral dissertation in the field of Assyriology in Finland. The following year Jussi Aro joined the teaching staff of the University of Helsinki as Docent of Assyriology and Semitic Philology.

The Assyriologist

Knut Tallqvist (1865-1949) and Harri Holma (1886-1954) had laid a solid foundation for Assyriological studies in Finland. Their legacy was carried forward by Armas Salonen, who devoted himself to the study of the material culture of Ancient Mesopotamia. In spite of his original plans, once introduced to Assyriology Jussi Aro took up post-graduate studies in this field. The subject of his doctoral thesis was suggested by Wolfram von Soden, in whose opinion the data on Middle Babylonian grammar supplied by F. Böhl (1911), S. J. Bloch (1940), and von Soden himself (1952) needed supplementing in many respects. Letters, official documents and boundary stones served as the textual basis of the study, while literary texts, owing to their mixed linguistic character, were excluded. The aspects of Middle Babylonian least adequately covered by earlier studies were orthography, phonology, pronouns, prepositions, adverbs, infinitive constructions, the use of the particle *-ma*, and the syntax of dependent clauses. Concentrating on these features, Aro wrote *Studien zur mittelbabylonischen Grammatik* (1955), a valuable contribution to Middle

Babylonian grammar. Two years later he published a glossary to the Middle Babylonian letters he had used as material for the thesis. Before his doctoral dissertation Jussi Aro had already written an article on *Abnormal plene writings in Akkadian texts* (1953), which was his first scholarly publication. In September 1957 he made a trip to the University of Jena in order to study the Middle Babylonian letters in the Hilprecht Collection. The results of these studies were published in 1959.

After the Middle Babylonian studies Jussi Aro began working on his magnum opus *Die akkadischen Infinitivkonstruktionen*, which was completed in 1961. When preparing his doctoral thesis he had called attention to the fact that the Akkadian infinitive constructions had not been exhaustively investigated. He started collecting data for a comparison of infinitive constructions used during different periods and in different dialects of Akkadian, and found that the material was far more extensive than he had anticipated. In the analytic part of the study he gives a systematic description of the various uses of the infinitive in Akkadian, arranged according to grammatical categories and provided with ample documentation. Different dialects and stages of development of the language are considered, together with different genres (inscriptions, epic tales, myths, rituals, omen texts, hymns, prayers, maledictions, medical texts, etc.). In the synthetic part he discusses diachronic problems, and finally compares the Akkadian constructions with their equivalents in other Semitic languages and in Sumerian.

After his appointment to the chair of Oriental Literature in 1965, Jussi Aro turned to other Semitic languages, in the first place to Arabic, the most important language of instruction in his new office. Yet he returned to Assyriology a couple of times: in 1970 he published *Mittelbabylonische Kleidertexte der Hilprecht-Sammlung Jena*, the material of which he had collected in 1957, and in 1975 an article on the loss of short final vowels in Late Babylonian.

The Arabist

In the 50's Jussi Aro was mainly occupied with Assyriology. Nevertheless, he did not neglect Arabic and Islamic studies: he was busy with the translation of the Qur'ān, and also catalogued the Arabic, Turkish and Persian manuscripts in the collections of the University Library at Helsinki. The time to apply for the chair of Oriental Literature was, however, drawing near, and it was imperative for Jussi Aro to produce some scholarly work on the Arabic language. In the recently published monograph *L'infinitif sémitique* by J. M. Solá-Solé

he found that the section dealing with the so-called *maṣḍar mīmī* was in need of amending. On the basis of more comprehensive material collected from the dictionaries by Freytag, Belot, and Wehr, as well as textual examples taken from Ibn Hišām's *Sīra*, he wrote a paper (*Der Maṣḍar al-mīmī und seine Funktion im Arabischen*, 1964) in which he succeeds in supplementing the data given by Solā-Solé. In addition to a more complete documentation, Aro's main contribution here is the special attention he gives to the crucial rôle played by different semantic categories of the verb.

In his comparative study *Die Vokalisierung des Grundstammes im semitischen Verbum* (1964), Jussi Aro devoted 50 pages to Arabic. Of these, nine pages deal with Egyptian Arabic. Although Aro had always made efforts to develop his practical command of the languages he knew, he had thus far not had the opportunity to practise spoken Arabic. In the mid-60's, however, he became good friends with Arabs living in Helsinki, and with them he started practising colloquial Arabic. Among these helpful friends he particularly used to mention Usāma al-Qādiri from Iraq, Yūsif Naḡa (Josef Naja) from Lebanon and ʿAbd al-Maḡīd ʿArār (Magid Arar) from Syria. Through them he not only learned spoken Arabic of the Levantine urban type, but he also established the contacts which were to be indispensable in his future fieldwork. In 1970 he made a trip to Syria and Lebanon, making dialect recordings in different parts of the two countries. In addition to Arabic, he also recorded modern West Aramaic at Ma^clūla and East Aramaic (Ṭurōyō dialect) in Beirut. He published a few samples of the recordings made on this trip in his Finnish textbook of spoken Arabic (*Arabiaa ilman kynneliä*, 1980), in which he gives the main characteristics of the major dialect types of Arabic.

During his trip in 1970, Jussi Aro had recorded nine South Lebanese folk tales from a man called Aḡmad ʿIzzeddīn, who originally came from Deir Qānūn near Tyrus. With the help of Josef Naja in Helsinki he made transcriptions of these texts. In 1973 he met a Lebanese student, Bišr Mruwwe (Béchéř Mrouē) by name, who had come to Finland from the village of ez-Zrēriyye, situated in the neighbourhood of Deir Qānūn. In the following winter Bišr visited his home village in Lebanon, made dialect recordings and brought them to Jussi Aro. In December 1974 Aro himself paid a short visit to ez-Zrēriyye, and during two evening entertainments he recorded anecdotes, narratives and descriptions of everyday life in the village. In working on the material in Finland he received valuable help from Saḡbān Aḡmad Mruwwe (Mroueh), Bišr's brother, who by then had also moved to Finland. Jussi Aro published a selection of these texts in Acta

Orientalia 39 (1978) under the title *Der südlibanesische Dialekt von ez-Zrē-rīyye 1. Texte*. In the following volume of Acta Orientalia he published the systematic part of the material. He also prepared the folk tales from Deir Qānūn for publication, but this study remained unfinished.

Along with the translation of Taha Husain's novel *The Days*, Jussi Aro also wrote an article on Sufi sheikhs in Egypt as described by Taha Husain (*Taha Husain über sufische Scheiche in Ägypten*, 1969). At the Millenary of al-Bīrūni celebrated in Karachi in 1973, he read a paper entitled *Encounter of cultures in the work of al-Biruni*.

The Semitist

Jussi Aro's first comparative Semitic study deals with the non-emphatic sibilants, historically a very interesting group of phonemes. This paper, *Die semitischen Zischlaute (ṭ), š, ś und s und ihre Vertretung im Akkadischen*, was published in 1959. Eighteen years later he returned to comparative phonetics in his article *Pronunciation of the "emphatic" consonants in Semitic languages*. Here he discusses the diachronic problem of the pronunciation of the so-called emphatic consonants in early forms of Semitic. Mainly on the basis of comparative phonotactic material and Greek transliterations of West Semitic words, he arrives at the conclusion that the Semitic emphatics might have been realized in Akkadian and ancient North-West Semitic in a manner more or less similar to that found in the Semitic languages of Ethiopia, i.e. as glottalized ejectives. As for Arabic, there is, according to Aro, good evidence for the view that the present-day Arabic pronunciation of the emphatics with velarization and/or pharyngealization affecting segments larger than one phoneme, is of later date, probably the result of a development of the Islamic era.

Aro's most important contribution to comparative Semitic studies is his monograph *Die Vokalisierung des Grundstammes im semitischen Verbum* (1964). He wrote it to qualify for the chair of Oriental Literature, a fact that he alludes to in the Preface. In spite of the reservation made by the author in reference to the very short period of time during which the study was completed, it is a solid piece of scholarly work. It contains an extensive listing of representative verbs in five of the major Semitic languages, arranged by vowel patterns and semantic classes. After a comparative analysis, Aro arrives at a view of the development of the Semitic verbal system, which is in general agreement with that held by the Landsberger school. Simultaneously with this monograph, Aro wrote a short comparative lexical study on the agricultural terminology common to the Semitic languages (*Gemeinsemitische Ackerbauerterminologie*).

Never abandoning his early polyglot pursuits, Jussi Aro continued to delve into the history of words, especially as indicators of cultural contacts and developments. Among his unfinished works a proof of enormous erudition in this field is to be found: an outline for a synopsis of the cultural history of the Middle East, based upon lexical comparisons between some twenty languages and using the "Wörter und Sachen" method. Another unfinished comparative work is a sketch of the narrative tradition in the Middle East, dealing with stories, fairy tales, fables, legends, and anecdotes in a historical perspective of almost four thousand years. Ever eager to widen the range of his knowledge, at the time of his premature death he was writing a grammar of Tigrīña.

The Popularizer

Finnish Orientalists have traditionally attached great importance to conveying knowledge of their fields to the wider public. In this century, Knut Tallqvist wrote several popular books in Swedish, and his pupil Armas Salonen was an even more industrious popularizer. Aapeli Saarisalo, Jussi Aro's predecessor in the chair of Oriental Literature, devoted himself after his appointment almost totally to the production of popular books, most of which dealt with the history of the Holy Land.

In the 50's Jussi Aro also started writing articles in Finnish in periodicals and newspapers. Topics discussed in these early articles include Nabunaid, the last king of Babylon, the problem of the Hapiru, the Dead Sea scrolls, the education in Babylonia, and the South Arabian culture. In the 60's he wrote newspaper articles on Oriental studies in Finland, the Middle East crisis and the impact of religions on it, the Atrahasis epic, the Canaanite and Jewish literature, the mother tongue of Jesus, and the book of Jonah. In 1967 he published a fairly comprehensive textbook on the Arab culture (*Arabialainen kulttuuri*), focussing on the Middle Ages. Notwithstanding the compilatory character typical of works of this kind, the book has an unmistakable personal touch. It also contains several translations of old Arabic poetry, among them Zuhair's Mu^cal-laqa and aš-Šanfarā's Lāmīya.

Three years later Jussi Aro published another large monograph, *Aabrahamin perilliset* (Abraham's Heirs), a collection of essays on Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Some chapters are very personally written, for instance chapter vii, a fictive description of the probable growth of the Pentateuch. The essays are based upon wide learning in the fields of Assyriology, Egyptology, Semitistics, Judaistics, Islam, and the Old Persian religion, as well as the Old Semitic

religions. Much parallel material to the Old Testament is given from ancient Oriental sources. An area of Aro's special interest was religious mysticism: he thus introduces some of the great mystics of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but, as a counterbalance, also the great sceptics al-Ma^carrī and Moshe ben Maimon. When taking a stand on controversial questions, Jussi Aro is exceptionally impartial. Good examples of this are the chapters called Anti-semitism and What went wrong with Zionism?

Among Jussi Aro's newspaper articles from the 70's, the following subjects may be mentioned: the Arabs and the Jews, the Devil worshippers, the secret dogmas of the Druzes, the hundreds of baptisms of the Mandaeans, Cyrus, al-Bīrūnī, Arabic and its dialects, Christianity and Gnosticism, the cave church of Deir Abu Hennīs, and Enheduanna, the first woman writer known in history. He also published a booklet on the basic characteristics of Judaism and Islam. In the monograph *Lähi-idän solmut* (The Knots of the Middle East, 1981) he deals with the historical background of some cultural and political developments in the Middle East. Jussi Aro had always had a keen interest in the study of proverbs, and in 1979 he published a collection of about 500 proverbs from Islamic countries in *Viisautta minareetin varjossa* (Wisdom in the Shadow of the Minaret).

The monograph *Pyhissä maissa ja pahoissa* (In Holy and Unholy Lands, 1975) contains a considerable amount of autobiographical material. In it he tells in some detail about his trips in the Middle East, but he also describes his experiences in the academic world and among his Oriental friends. The trips reach one of their culmination points at Aleppo, where Jussi Aro, recording samples of the local dialect in a park, is robbed by his 'informants'. In the details of this troublesome incident he, typically, sees irony in a supernatural dimension: in his pocketbook only a small bit of paper was left by the robbers, containing a Qur'ān quotation: "God, there is no god but He, the Living, the Everlasting, slumber seizes Him not, neither sleep; to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth."

Two of the books written by Jussi Aro in Finnish belong rather to belles-lettres: *He nousevat osaansa* (1964) and *Tie ja veräjä* (1976). With great piety and devotion, in plain and ascetic style, he here portrays his grandparents and his mother, giving a faithful description of their daily struggle for a living, their unsophisticated social milieu, and their resolute, confident faith in God. In these books we catch sight of the spiritual foundation of Jussi Aro's personality. To be sure, he had learnt to know many different types of religious and philosophical creeds and had great respect for them,

but he never abandoned the religious conviction and ethical ideals of his pietist home. Rather, the contrary was true: the more wisdom he found, the higher he rated this precious inheritance.

The Translator

In the early 50's, Armas Salonen and Jussi Aro started translating the Qur'ān from Arabic into Finnish. It had been an ambition of Knut Tallqvist to give Finnish readers a scholarly translation of this basic document of Islam, and he had done much of the necessary preparatory work. Using Tallqvist's notes, Salonen and Aro first translated suras 42 to 114, and, following the same principles, Salonen then translated suras 12 and 19 to 41, and Aro suras 1 to 11 and 13 to 18. The translation, published in 1957, is still the only Finnish translation of the Qur'ān made from the Arabic original.

Another translation carried out by Jussi Aro jointly with Armas Salonen was the publication in Finnish of a comprehensive selection of G. A. Wallin's diaries and letters in 1966. The major part of the writings of this famous Finnish explorer of Arabia had previously been published in the original Swedish, by S. G. Elmgren in 1864-66 and by Knut Tallqvist in 1905.

In the 60's, Jussi Aro did two important literary translations from Modern Hebrew: the novel *Betrothed* (Uskollisuuden vala) and an anthology of short stories *The Crooked Shall be Made Straight* (Kun väärä oikaistaan) by the Nobel prize winner S. J. Agnon. In his book *Pyhissä maissa ja pahoissa* Jussi Aro gives an account of his feelings during the translation work in the summer of 1967: "All this plagued me during the long weeks of the summer. On the one hand, I was so fascinated by Agnon and his Kabbalistic world that when I finished the work in the autumn, I felt I had lost something, and I had to look for new contents for my life. On the other hand, I was in pain, because the world of the beautiful ideas described in those stories at this very moment was expanding its dominion with weapons. Specifically, I was troubled by opinions which saw in one particular war a holy war, the materialization of God's will in a particular sense." In December of the same year he had an opportunity to meet Agnon in Jerusalem. The climax of the visit was a look at Agnon's home library, a realization of Jussi Aro's childhood dreams: "The main part of the library was upstairs, in an unheated large room the walls of which were covered by bookshelves from floor to ceiling. It was a powerful experience to see a room like this, because since my childhood I had passionately loved books, especially old books, yellow with age, in leather backs. Agnon was obviously possessed by the same passion."

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There are many modern Arabic novels worthy of translation. One of these is no doubt Taha Husain's autobiographical classic *The Days*, which Jussi Aro translated in the late 60's. Typically, because of the obstacles raised by the limited market potential in a small language area, it took more than ten years to find a publisher for this novel. In 1982 it was at last published as the first novel translated from Arabic into Finnish. In many ways the book was an extraordinarily appropriate piece of work for Jussi Aro. In it the learned writer describes the steps of a poor boy on the road of learning, from a small village school to the theological and humanities faculties in the capital city and, later on, his introduction to international centres of learning. The suitability was not limited to the contents only: the plainness and pregnancy of Husain's text was also in concord with Jussi Aro's own stylistic ideal.

There are also works in Finnish literature which are worthy of translation, but with the exception of one short story, no Finnish literature has been translated directly from Finnish into Arabic. When Sahban Mroueh in the mid-70's started translating the Finnish national epic *Kalevala* into Arabic, Jussi Aro, together with Kaj Öhrnberg, shared the task. This collaboration resulted in a complete translation, as yet unpublished.

The work on the new Finnish Bible was, however, the most important field of Jussi Aro's translation activities. In the late 60's, modern translation theories led to fundamentally new translations of the Bible into many languages. The Finnish Bible Society and the Inner Mission Society in the Church of Finland also started working on a Finnish translation of the New Testament in accordance with the principle of dynamic or functional equivalence. The result of this experiment, *The New Testament in Popular Finnish*, appeared in 1972. The next step was the translation of the book of Psalms, which was assigned to Jussi Aro. This first sample of a tentative new translation of the Old Testament was published in 1973, together with an essay on the problems of the translation.

In 1973 the Synod of the Church of Finland appointed a Bible Translation Committee which was given the commission to prepare an official modern Finnish translation of the Bible. Jussi Aro was elected a member of the committee. The first book to be translated was the prophet Amos. The practical work was given to a group of three translators, among them Jussi Aro. The translation of the book of Amos was completed in 1977. The following year the translation of the books of Samuel and a selection from the book of Psalms were completed. Jussi Aro was the philologist member of this group, too, and was also in the team

which prepared the preliminary translations of the books of Isaiah in 1981 and Daniel (published in 1984). The introductions to the books of Isaiah and Daniel, as well as to the selection from the Psalms, were written by Jussi Aro. He also assisted with the translation of the books of Esther, Ruth, Kings, and Genesis. He discussed some of the translation problems in a couple of papers published in the *Teologinen Aikakauskirja* in 1976 and 1977. In the team work his colleagues learned to know him not only as an expert with great erudition but also as an inventive translator with an extraordinary mastery of the expressive resources of the Finnish language.

Teacher and Citizen

As Jussi Aro pointed out in his inauguration lecture in 1965, the Semitic languages — or Oriental Literature, as the chair was still called — constitute, judged by modern standards, a scholarly field far too extensive for any one person to command completely. As an academic teacher, however, Jussi Aro did what he could to meet the requirements of his office. Thus, he did not content himself with giving stock lectures on a few central subjects. Desirous of widening his own scope of learning, he was always willing to take upon himself the task of teaching any Semitic subjects proposed by his pupils. The topics of his lectures were new every year, varying from Comparative Semitic studies, Akkadian, Ugaritic, different forms of Aramaic and Hebrew, Classical Arabic, Modern Written Arabic, and Spoken Arabic to old and modern Ethiopian languages. His lectures might give the impression of being improvised, but in fact they were systematic and carefully prepared. His wide reading and good memory became apparent when his students asked questions during lectures, seminars and private discussions: as a rule, Jussi Aro had a comprehensive answer ready at hand. Self-evidently, his broad learning was of great importance when he had to guide students in the task of finding suitable subjects for their special studies.

Jussi Aro did not take pleasure in publicity, nor did he feel at home in society life, not to mention administrative committees, which for him were nothing but a waste of time. Learned societies, however, were not totally unattractive. In the Finnish Oriental Society Jussi Aro held the post of secretary from 1957 to 1966, involving the editorship of the *Studia Orientalia*. In 1966 he was elected vice-president, and in 1967 president of the society. He held this post to 1967 and, for a second time, from 1980 to his death. In the Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion he was a member of the board from 1972. In 1978 he was elected member of the *Academia Scientiarum Fennica*.

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He was also a member (1967-) and Vice-Chairman (1979-) of the board of the Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies.

Jussi Aro took part in the activities of his local Evangelical-Lutheran congregation. He was unusually community-minded and willing to help, particularly those in greatest need of help. This was manifested in several ways, such as his involvement in the work of the Finnish Refugee Council, the vice-president of which he was from 1977. The hospitable home of the Aro family in Tapiola was always open to visitors, both colleagues and family friends, many of whom were Orientals. All were treated with the same cordiality by the energetic hostess and the unpretentious host.

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