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Manfred Fleischhammer: *Die Quellen des Kitāb al-Aġānī*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004. (*Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, Band LV.2, im Auftrag der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft). 281 Seiten. ISSN 0567-4980, ISBN 3-447-05079-9.

There are not many works in classical Arabic literature as important as Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 356 AH/967 CE) *Kitāb al-Aġānī* or "The Great Book of Songs".¹ Prepared over more than 50 years, and filling no less than twenty-four volumes in its 1974 Cairo edition, this monumental compilation draws a most fascinating picture of medieval Arabic-Islamic culture and society. Not only does it offer precious information on Arabic musical traditions, but it also provides much invaluable literary, historical, and biographical data on pre-Islamic and medieval Arabic-Islamic civilization. This extends to data on ancient Arab tribes and their social life, the court-life of the Umayyads, and the various aspects of society at the time of the Abbasids, including, of course, the milieu of musicians and singers. Hence, in the *Aġānī* "we pass in review the whole of Arabic civilization from pre-Islamic times down to the end of the 3rd/9th century".² Additionally, Abū l-Faraj quotes in this book lengthy passages from earlier sources (many of which are works that have not come down to us), a fact that makes the *Aġānī* a unique source for research on the history of Arabic language and literature.

Given the singular characteristics of "The Great Book of Songs", a project devoted to a critical examination of the 'sources' of such a compilation cannot but be welcome. This is even truer, when such a study is carried out as meticulously as Manfred Fleischhammer's has been. Yet, before we turn to some of the more specific contents of his book, a few more words of general background are appropriate.

Despite the fact that the *Habilitationschrift* (which constitutes the basis of the book under review) remained unpublished after its completion in 1965, its typewritten manuscript found its way into Arabic and Islamic Studies nonetheless. There, Fleischhammer's theoretical approach to the 'sources' of Abū l-Faraj's *al-Aġānī* – along with another crucial study from that time (F. Sezgin's research on al-Bukhārī's (d. 256/870) Ḥadīth compilation *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*)

¹ I adopt this rendering of the title from H. Kilpatrick's recently published book *Making the Great Book of Songs: Compilation and the author's craft in Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's Kitāb al-aġānī*, London/New York: Routledge, 2003. (= *Routledge Curzon Studies in Arabic and Middle Eastern Literature*), an impressively comprehensive study of Abū l-Faraj's life and work from the literary-theoretical and historical-bibliographical points of view.

² Cf. M. Nallino, art. "Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (or al-Iṣfahānī)", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 11 vols., ed. by H. A. R. Gibb et al., Leiden: Brill, 1960-, i, 118.

³ F. Sezgin, *Buḥārī'nin kaynakları hakkında araştırmalar*, Istanbul: Ibrahim Horoz Basımevi, 1956; and id., *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums* i, Leiden: Brill, 1967, esp. 82-83.

– eventually caused a methodological breakthrough in terms of Western research on early and medieval Arabic scholarship. These studies addressed for the first time the complex nature of medieval Arabic compilations, with their evidence of manifold pieces and layers of diverse (older) text material, in a theoretically sound and comprehensive manner. Independently of each other, these two scholars provided the modern researcher with a proper, scholarly, method for analyzing *isnāds*, or 'chains of transmitters', within a single medieval Arabic compilation. This method was introduced to examine the *isnāds* of such compilations in ascending order, that is, from the most recent link to the most remote.

The fact that this kind of approach is instrumental in increasing our knowledge of classical Arabic literature and scholarship is evident in Fleischhammer's book.

CHAPTER ONE, part one (pp. 11-28), acquaints the reader with the composition and structure of the *Kitāb al-Aghāni*. Based on the information Abū l-Faraj provides in his introduction to the *Aghāni*, it identifies the most important collections of 'songs' (that is, poems and lines of poetry, sung to certain melodies) that constitute, generally speaking, the main sources of "The Great Book of Songs". More specifically, these sources are:

(1) A collection of the top one hundred songs, which three famous singers had prepared at the request of the Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rashid (r. 786-809 CE); additionally, a second assortment of these songs, which was prepared later by the singer Ishāq al-Mawṣilī at the request of the caliph al-Wāthiq (r. 842-847), including only the finest examples from the initial top one hundred list;

(2) A collection of the seven most famous compositions of the singer Ma'bad, entitled *Mudun* ("Cities") or *Ḥuṣūn* ("Castles");

(3) A collection of the seven most famous compositions of the singer Ibn Surayj;

(4) The so-called 'Zaynab songs' of Yūnus al-Kātib, that is, a number of poems that Yūnus' friend, the poet Ibn Ruhayma, had dedicated to his beloved; and, finally,

(5) Songs of caliphs and their descendants.

To these materials, Abū l-Faraj added more songs "of which he knew a useful story or valuable report".

He arranged all this data in 482 articles, each bearing the name of the poet or poetess, male or female singer, or event from pre-Islamic or Islamic times that was featured in this article. Further subdivisions of the *Aghāni* are chapters and paragraphs of various lengths (about 1,950 to 1,970 in number), which bear the simple title *Ṣawt* ("Melody" or "Song"). In these chapters, Abū l-Faraj presents precious information on the poet or poetess (i.e. the author of the song in question); he gives an account of his/her life, and quotes many of his/her verses. He also provides information on the meter of the poem or song in question, explanations of vocabulary and the name of the singer, along

with the beginning of the melody used for the piece and, sometimes, information on composers (p. 12).

Given the huge number and complexity of the individual bits and pieces of information that make this grand cultural mosaic of the *Kitāb al-Aghāni*, it seems almost impossible to trace its manifold source-materials, to identify how they were transmitted throughout the centuries and to cast light on how Abū l-Faraj eventually made use of them when composing the *Aghāni*. However, questions of this kind are crucial for our understanding of the history of Arabic literature. In fact, any firm data in this regard opens for us a window into the fascinating world of medieval Arabic-Islamic culture and scholarship. Moreover, it shows in the case of the *Aghāni* the prominent 10th century Arabic man of letters Abū l-Faraj 'at work'.

To begin with, Fleischhammer examines the various 'expressions' used by Abū l-Faraj to indicate the origin' of source-materials (German: *Herkunftsbezeichnungen*). It becomes clear that these expressions served the medieval author not only to acknowledge his sources, but often also to indicate the ways he used to incorporate these materials into his compilation. Fleischhammer establishes three major categories of such acknowledgments:

A) Statements clearly pointing to Abū l-Faraj as the compiler and author of the *Aghāni*, such as "Abū l-Faraj said", "the author said", "the author of this book said", or "I say (*qultu*)". This kind of expression constitutes the smallest group in number;

B) Statements indicating in various ways that Abū l-Faraj transcribed data from a written source; and,

C) The *isnāds*, that is, the chains of names of authorities believed to guarantee the authenticity of a transmitted text. Ideally, an *isnād* displays the name of the 'author' or 'compiler' (in our case: Abū l-Faraj) as the most recent link of this chain; the name of the 'first transmitter' (often an eyewitness of an event) is found at the other, most remote end of the *isnād*. As Fleischhammer points out, the approximately 8,000 *isnāds* in the *Aghāni* constitute by far the largest category of acknowledgments in this compilation.

Two more points shall be made briefly. First, many of the *isnāds* in the *Aghāni* consist of three or four, or more names, causing the number of people to be studied source-critically to increase to a huge number. Second, as a rule, the technical terms used by the authorities occurring in these *isnāds* often suggest, justifiably or not, 'oral' transmission as the predominant method of handing down a piece of information from one generation to the next – a well-known phenomenon of the medieval Islamic system of transmission that further complicates research in this regard.

In view of this composite and ambiguous situation, the second part (pp. 14-19) of the chapter is devoted to general, theoretical considerations of the issue of source-critical studies of medieval Arabic compilations. Fleischhammer outlines here his methodology and establishes the terminology he uses. He emphasizes that the first two categories of acknowledgment (A and B) help

the modern researcher to determine source-materials more or less unequivocally. In contrast, the third category, the *isnāds*, marks a real challenge.

At this point, Fleischhammer introduces the term 'sources in the narrow sense of the word' (*Quellen im engeren Sinne*) and explains why he focuses on this kind of sources when studying the *isnāds* in the *Aghānī*. He defines this expression as meaning those 'informants' and earlier 'transmitters' whose data, whether transmitted in written form or orally, Abū l-Faraj accessed directly (p. 18). Fleischhammer also explains why these must be seen as Abū l-Faraj's most important 'sources' for the *Aghānī*.

Having established the theoretical basis, Fleischhammer turns to the practical side of his research. This includes, first, the preparation of an index of all the *isnāds* occurring in the *Aghānī*. This made it possible to gain a precise idea of which scholars were most significant to Abū l-Faraj as regards their frequency of appearance in the *isnāds* as well as their re-occurrences at a certain level in the scheme of transmission. Second, the significance of the most frequent authorities in the *Aghānī* was then further assessed by scrutinizing relevant data from the medieval bio-bibliographical literature (p. 18).

If an authority was identified as a 'source in the narrow sense of the word' (that is, as the author of a relevant piece of writing or book), the next step was to determine more specifically whether this particular piece of writing was used by Abū l-Faraj directly or indirectly, with the former case pointing to an 'authorial work', and the latter to an 'recension' (p. 19). Taking the circumstances of the medieval Islamic system of transmission into account, a scholar was termed a recensionist if he either (critically) revised or surveyed the work of his professor or professor's professor and then published his version of it, often with his own name added to it.

The last part (pp. 20-26) of the first chapter presents in concise form the major results of Fleischhammer's study. Only a few points can be highlighted here:

The index of all the *isnāds* of the *Aghānī* provides a much more precise picture of Abū l-Faraj's 150 direct 'informants' (or teachers) for the *Aghānī* than the lists of slightly more than a dozen or so informants given by his medieval biographers. Among the more prominent people not mentioned by his biographers are: the historian al-Ṭabarī and the man of letters al-Ṣūlī, but also Yahyā ibn 'Alī al-Munajjim and Muḥammad ibn 'Abbās al-Yazīdī, two members of famous families of scholars, along with relatives of Abū l-Faraj's such as his father, al-Ḥusayn, his cousin Ahmad ibn al-Ḥasan, his uncle al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad (his most important informant after al-Khaffāf) and his grand-uncle 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Ahmad.

Interestingly enough, statistical examination shows that Abū l-Faraj obtained more than ninety percent of his information from only about a third of his informants. Also, he had obtained written authorization (or a 'license', *ijāza*) from at least sixteen of his informants, granting him permission to transcribe one or more of their works.

Furthermore, among the most significant written sources of informants that Abū l-Faraj undoubtedly used directly are:

- al-Ṭabarī's (d. 922) *Ta'riḫ al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*;
 - al-Marzubānī's (d. 921) *Ṭabaqāt al-shu'arā'* (a work now lost);
 - Yahyā ibn al-Munajjim's (d. 912) *Kitāb al-Bāhir fi akhbār shu'arā' mu-khaḍramī l-dawlatayn*; and
 - al-Ṣūlī's (d. 946 or 947) *Akhbār Abī Tammām*;
- Moreover, Fleischhammer suggests that one can safely assume that Abū l-Faraj also transmitted directly from one or more works of the following informants:
- Ahmad ibn 'Ubaydallāh Ibn 'Ammār (d. 926 or 931), a Shiite historian and man of letters;
 - Ahmad ibn Ja'far Jaḥza al-Barmakī (d. 936 or 931), a scholar and writer interested in history;
 - Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn Durayd (d. 933), a Basran philologist; and
 - Ja'far ibn Qudāma (d. 931), a very well-educated secretary and scholar.

From among the earlier works, which it can be shown Abū l-Faraj also used directly (since he had a transcription or recension of them at hand), the following are the most important. They are mentioned here in chronological sequence:

- Ibn al-Kalbī's (d. 819 or 821) *Kitāb Jamharat al-Nasab*;
- Abū 'Ubayda's (d. ca. 825) *Kitāb al-Ayyām and Naqā'id Jarīr wa-l-Farazdaq*;
- al-Madā'ini's (d. first quarter of the 9th c.) historical works;
- Ibn Khurdādhbih's (d. 844) *Ṭabaqāt al-Mughannīn*;
- al-Jumālī's (d. 846 or 847) *Ṭabaqāt al-Shu'arā'*;
- Ishāq al-Mawṣilī's (d. 850) works, which Abū l-Faraj used extensively;
- al-Zubayr ibn Bakkar's (d. 870) *Kitāb al-Nasab* and his *akhbār* works;
- 'Umar ibn Shabba's (d. between 875 and 877) *akhbār* works, along with his *Kitāb al-Ta'riḫ*, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* and *Kitāb al-Shi'r wa-l-shu'arā'*;
- Ibn Qutayba's (889) *Kitāb al-Shi'r wa-l-shu'arā'*; and finally
- al-Mubarrad's (d. 898) various works, including most probably his *Kitāb al-Rawḍa*.

Fleischhammer also elaborates here on the thematic spectrum and other specifics of the sources Abū l-Faraj used, and on the working methods the medieval writer applied to process them.⁴

All the data and more specific details of Fleischhammer's study are developed in chapters two to five. While CHAPTER TWO (pp. 29-70) is devoted to Abū

⁴ For Abū l-Faraj's working techniques in compiling "The Book of the Killing of the Ṭalibids (*Kitāb Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn*)", see now also S. Günther " ... *nor have I learned it from any book of theirs*". Abū l-Faraj al-Ṣfahānī: A Medieval Arabic Author at Work, in: R. Brunner et al. (eds.): *Islamstudien ohne Ende. Festschrift für den Islamwissenschaftler Werner Ende*, Würzburg: Ergon, 2002, 139-153; and id., "Assessing the Sources of Classical Arabic Compilations: The Issue of Categories and Methodologies", in: *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 32 (2005), 75-98, esp. 92-95.

I-Faraj's more than 150 'informants', including two women, CHAPTER THREE (pp. 71-109) provides a database of the most important and most frequently occurring transmitters of the *Aghānī*. CHAPTER FOUR (pp. 110-134) contains a detailed study of the written sources whose author, recensionist or title Abū I-Faraj quoted by name.

CHAPTER FIVE (pp. 135-232) lists the more than 480 'articles' from the *Aghānī*, and analyzes a representative number of them. Two Tables of Identification (pp. 227-232) register both Abū I-Faraj's informants and significant (older) authorities respectively. They expose again the question of which materials handed down by these earlier authorities need to be viewed as 'direct' sources', which as 'authorial works', and which as 'recensions'. Detailed internal references in these tables help the reader to locate this important group of scholars in the book under review.

The final sections of this publication (pp. 233-249) contain: a list of corrections to the text of the *Aghānī* in its Cairo edition, abbreviations and sigla, and the bibliography. An index of people and works (pp. 257-281) rounds off this study of "*The Sources of the Kitāb al-Aghānī*" that no serious student of classical Arabic literature would want to overlook.

SEBASTIAN GÜNTHER*

Ludmila Hanisch: *Die Nachfolger der Exegeten. Deutschsprachige Erforschung des Vorderen Orients in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2003. XII, 235 S. ISBN 3-447-04758-5.

Die Autorin, die sich bereits durch die Veröffentlichung der Briefwechsel dreier Islamkundler aus den Anfängen des 20. Jahrhunderts verdient gemacht hat,¹ legt jetzt eine Gesamtdarstellung der Geschichte der Wissenschaften vom Vorderen Orient (mit Schwerpunkt bei der Islamkunde, Arabistik und Semitistik, aber unter teilweiser Einbeziehung auch der Iranistik, Turkologie, Altorientalistik, Vorderasiatischen Archäologie, Judaistik und Ägyptologie) für die Zeit von 1900-1945 vor.

Ziel der Arbeit ist es, sowohl den inhaltlichen Wandel als auch die institutionellen Veränderungen innerhalb des Berichtszeitraums zu beschreiben. Für

* University of Toronto, Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, 4 Bancroft Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1C1, Canada.

¹ *Islamkunde und Islamwissenschaft im Deutschen Kaiserreich. Der Briefwechsel zwischen Carl Heinrich Becker und Martin Hartmann (1900-1918)*. Leiden 1992; "Machen Sie unseren Islam nicht gar zu schlecht." *Der Briefwechsel der Islamwissenschaftler Ignaz Goldziher und Martin Hartmann (1894-1914)*. Wiesbaden 2000.