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ARABICA-ISLAM

- L. KOPF, *Studies in Arabic and Hebrew Lexicography* (*Mehqarim be-millona'ut 'aravit we-'ivrit*); edited by M. H. Goshen-Gottstein with the assistance of S. Assif, Jerusalem, Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1976 (25 cm., 261 + 195 hebr. pp., introduction by Goshen-Gottstein pp. 7-14 or pp. 7-12 hebr.). \$ 30.00.

Mr. M. H. Goshen-Gottstein has recently brought together some of Kopf's publications in the above mentioned volume (March 1976).

Kopf was a well-known scholar not only for his publications in the field of Arabic science (especially biology: for instance many zoologic items from his hand are found in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*² (Leiden), eg. I pp. 215, 239, 795, 951; II pp. 71, 76, 223, 248, 275, 455), but also for those in the field of lexicography, both Hebrew and Arabic (but mainly Arabic).

During the last period of his life (from the end of the forties until his death, 23 August 1964; he was born in Upper Silesia, 23 Sept. 1917) he worked at the National and University Library at Jerusalem, where he became head of the oriental division. From this period is the bulk of his writings. Between his studies in the two fields, lexicography and biology, there are connections: sometimes Arabic works on zoology, which are mainly based on Aristotelian writings, contain also data from other, e.g. lexico-graphical sources (there are questions of identifications of certain animals, plants etc.). (p. 130)

In one of his articles ("The Bird 'Anūq; A Lexicological Study Concerning Arabic Zoology", in *JRAS* 1956 pp. 157-164; in the present collection pp. 125 sqq) he stresses the unreliability of Arabic lexicography in the zoological field: his conclusions are that the mysterious 'anūq bird, and likewise the *layl* and *nahār*-bird didn't really exist except in the imagination of the Arabic lexicographers. They came into being by a misinterpretation of proverbs and poetry.

The choice Mr. Goshen-Gottstein has made in this collection are from Kopf's already published articles in reviews and from his hitherto unpublished dissertation. Mr. Goshen-Gottstein stresses Kopf's importance as a lexicographer. From his dissertation (*Arabic Lexicography — its Origin, Development, Sources and Problems*; in Hebrew;) Goshen-Gottstein chose three chapters which Kopf judged in the preface of his dissertation the most important ones, i.e. ch. 11 „The Word-Definitions in the Indigenous Arabic Lexicons”; ch. 8 i, “Scribal Errors and Their Prevention” and ch. 8 k “Free use of Analogy”.

Some articles, collected in this volume, are more or less reworkings of his dissertation, such as „Das Arabische Wörterbuch als Hilfsmittel für die Hebräische Lexicographie”, from *Vetus Testamentum*, VI, 1956, pp. 286-302, = in the present collection, pp. 229f.; “Religious influences on Medieval Arabic Philology” from *Studia Islamica* V, 1956, pp. 33-59 = in the present collection, pp. 19f.; and “The Treatment of Foreign Words in Mediaeval Arabic Lexicology”, from *Scripta Hierosolymitana* IX, 1961, pp. 191-205 = in the present collection pp. 247f.

Kopf's work and especially his dissertation is characterized by Goshen-Gottstein (p. 11) as follows: “one cannot but realize that this is the most comprehensive and profound theoretical study on the problem of classical lexicography”. Although “some of the dissertations written since have developed or rectified certain aspects of his work” (and in this connection he quotes a.o. F. Corriente, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 20, 1975, 38ff.; Manfred Ullman, *Untersuchungen zur Ragaz Poesie*, Wiesbaden, 1966, which has drawn attention to the spurious overrichness of classical dictionaries partly achieved by including ‘nonce forms’ by Ragazpoets — leaving out alone ghost entries born out of misplaced diacritic points —; and S. Wild, *Das Kitāb al-‘Ain und die Arabische Lexicographie*, Wiesbaden, 1965) “Kopf's work — even after all these works — stands out as a major achievement in the critical analysis of the sources of Arabic lexicography”. (p. 12)

About Kopf's efforts to review problems connected with the lexicography of Biblical Hebrew in the light of his knowledge of Arabic sources, Goshen-Gottstein remarks i.a. the following: ‘Kopf did not waste his time tracing how bible scholars copied Arabic etymologies from each other. His world was that of the excitement of the first discoverer, and he tried to make his readers participate in his etymological adventures’ (p. 11) (e.g. his articles “Arabische Etymologien und Parellelen zum Bibelwörterbuch from *Vetus Testamentum*” VIII, 1958, pp. 161-215; IX, 1959, pp. 247-287).

Kopf's main ideas about the use of the Arabic dictionaries are to be found in his article “Das Arabische Wörterbuch als Hilfsmittel für die Hebräische Lexicographie”.

One of his arguments is the deceitful character of the vocabularies, which are always compilations.

In this regard he had a predecessor in Dozy who was the first to be aware of the fact that an Arabic dictionary should not be based exclusively on the deficient mediaeval Arabic dictionaries (Dozy severely criticised Freytag because of his uncritical use of sources, and his lack of method; “Il n'a dépouillé régulièrement aucun livre” he said of him

in the preface, p. VI, of his *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* I, Leiden-Paris, 1927²), while in recent times we find i.a. Manfred Ullman who confirms Kopf's point of view by expressing the same idea (*Ragaz-Poesie* p. 231; *my translation*): “It is not possible, as Barth and Freytag and Henri Fleisch, *L'Arabe Classique, Esquisse d'une structure linguistique*, Beyrouth 1956, have done, to use Belot as basis for his studies.

Only when one takes in account the linguistic situation which one really comes across can one get reliable and conclusive results... Freytag and Lane reproduce all the words mentioned in the Arabic Lexicons, without indicating if they are really found and to which field of the literature they belong. Thus are represented along with usual forms other forms which seem to be equivalent but which owe their existence only to poetic necessity”.

In connection with Ullman we should mention the *Wörterbuch der Klassisch Arabischen Sprache*, which has appeared recently (Wiesbaden 1960 and ff.) and of which M. Ullman is one of the collaborators, which promises to fill the gap in this field.

Kopf was one of the first who had a detailed view about the kinds of deficiencies and mistakes the Arabic lexicons bristle with. “It goes without any doubt, that most medieval Arabic dictionaries lack any linguistic foundation. Arabic lexicography developed in a complicated manner. The method and the tools of the research and the criticism were inadequate and by the juxtaposition of materials derived from different sources they developed a rather complicated network of which the separate threads are not to be distinguished from each other and it is unthinkable to isolate therein the true from the false” (p. 238 *my translation*).

One of his famous examples is from the *Qāmūs*, a vocabulary by Firūzabadī, in which the sources are represented in a very abridged form: the example he cites is the word *kursī* which means “chair”. In the *Qāmūs* is also given the meaning: ‘ilm “knowledge” (p. 238; see also p. 31 *hebr.*, note 17).

This way of giving the meaning of the word *kursī* “knowledge” traces its origin back to the *tafsīr* on the Quranic verse: “His throne extendeth over the heavens and the earth (II:256)”. To avoid an anthropomorphic explanation of the passage, some religious tendencies tried to get out of this by explaining it as “knowledge”. So this meaning (which was not a real existing meaning) entered the vocabularies, which were compilations of all kinds of poetic *sharḥ*'s, *tafsīr*'s etc.

Other wrong explanations are due to a special context (often a particular verse of poetry) in which the word occurred and the philologist who did not know the word tried to explain it by means of this context without any certitude or system. (p. 46 *hebr.* sqq.) In many cases the given words are explained in a too specific way, while the real signification is a generic one (*loc. cit.*). So Kopf concludes that the mediaeval Arabic dictionaries can not be used at random for comparative purposes. One should first check if a word has ever had the meaning as given in the dictionary.

The dictionaries based on mediaeval Arabic dictionaries such as Golius, Freytag, Lane, Belot lack scientific foundation, although for practical use they were during quite a period the only means and to some extent sufficient for

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inductive use. With his œuvre Kopf can be situated between Dozy, Fischer, the collaborators at the *Wörterbuch der Klassischen Arabischen Sprache* such as Kraemer, Gätje, Spitaler, Ullman and others. (However, the other recent *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français-Anglais* by R. Blachère, M. Chouémi, C. Dénizeau, Paris, 1967 and ff. is based mainly on mediaeval vocabularies and only to a lesser degree on literary sources). His main concern hereby was the usefulness of the Arabic dictionary for comparative purposes (within the field of Semitic languages). The value of the republication of Kopf's writings lies in the fact that he demonstrated clearly to scholars of Semitic studies the danger of relying any more on dictionaries like Belot (as for instance Von Soden did when he compiled his *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*; see *Orientalia* 28 (1959) 26 sqq.).

The present book contains a picture of the late L. Kopf, but a complete list of his publications is missing.

Leiden/Amsterdam,
30 januari 1980

A. SCHIPPERS