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andeten Fragen wird viel Zeit nötig sein, um den reichen
schung nutzbar zu machen.

Gehak des Buches auszuschopfen und für die weitere For-
sieneine Basis für exakte Abgrenzungen. In dieser und in

May A. YOUSEF, Das Buch der schlagfertigen Antworten
von Ibn Abi ’Awn. Ein Werk der klassisch-arabischen
Adab-Literatur. Einleitung, Edition und Quellen-
analyse. Berlin, Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1988 (21 cm.,
iv + xii + 156 S. und iv + 256 S. Arabischer Text)=
Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, Band 125. ISBN
3 922968 71 6.

Ibn Abi ’Awn (d. 322/934) is a little studied author of
adab and some other works whose Al-ajwiba al-muskit
is presented here in an admirable edition by May A. Yousef.
The book earned her a well-deserved PhD from Bochum
University.

The edition is preceded by an extensive study of the
author, a reconstruction of his biography distilled from
the few references to him extant in the sources, dates on his
family background, his forefathers and their literary out-
put, his ill-fated association with a well-known heretic of
his days, Muhammad b. ’Ali ash-Shalmaghanl alias Ibn al-
’Arāqīr, and their joint execution in 322/934. There is
precious little that can be questioned in this first chapter,
constituting a seemingly complete survey of what is known
about Ibn Abi ’Awn with judicious conclusions added.

Then follows an introduction to adab literature, very
readable though not entirely new — how could it be
otherwise —, and Ibn Abi ’Awn’s particular handling of the
genre. Yousef reaches the conclusion that he belongs not
only to the collectors of akhbār, poetic fragments, nawādir
eccetera, but that it can be proved from occurrences of the
same stories in earlier and later comparable sources that he
also extensively abbreviated the material he found, thus
underlining the qualification muskit from the title: the
‘answers’ are presented as effectively ‘shutting up’ (imag-
inary) opponents by their eloquent brevity and conciseness.
In so doing Ibn Abi ’Awn appears to have enhanced the
expressiveness of the collected anecdotes.

A most interesting and thorough analysis of the contents
of the book follows in the third chapter. The ad rem
answers are by no means homogeneous: the nine sections
of the text are unequal in length, the first section on serious
ripostes almost as long as the other eight put together, and
the tone of the first few sections slowly eroding from the
dead serious via the hilarious to — what may rightly be
termed — the prurient and vulgar. This can be illustrated
best by enumerating the respective qualifications given to
the sections: the serious ripostes, those of the philosophers,
those of the Greek, those of ascetics and those of schol-
astics (mutakāllimān); then follow anecdotes describing
the ready wit (or the lack of it) characterizing bedouins,
women, homosexuals and a certain class of inhabitants of
Medina (some of whom are of the ‘Umar b. Abi Rabi’a-
type); all this is concluded by a number of quick-witted
answers simply called ‘humorous’ (in Arabic ajwiba haz-
liyya) which in this text virtually boil down to ‘scabrous’.

In another chapter, a veritable tour de force, Yousef
surveys with numerous examples the principles upon which
the ‘Aussagefähigkeit’ in the anecdotes from the respective
sections is based, most of which amount to various plays on
words, such as paronomasia, antithesis, and a number of
other, neatly distinguished methods. Also the next chapter
on general style characteristics contains a multitude of
finely differentiated ‘devices’ displayed by the originators of
the anecdotes as well as by the collector of these anecdotes,
Ibn Abi ’Awn himself, who appears to have had a hand in
the modeling, if not simply the invention, of many. These
two chapters constitute in my eyes a major contribution to
the study of the literary techniques applied by early Muslim
adab authors/collectors.

The book goes from strength to strength. The next two
chapters deal with Ibn Abi ’Awn’s sources and imitators
respectively. Reading these one gains the impression that
not a single stone was left unturned. Only first-class experts
in the field of Arabic literary borrowing and transmission
may be able to find something to quarrel with the data
contained in these. The editor’s introduction is concluded
with a (critical) appraisal of the work’s first (partial) edition
and the manuscripts on which the present edition is based.
Then follow seventeen pages of bibliography testifying to
the rare thoroughness of this edition and its apparatus.

Reading the text and (re)reading the introduction, I was
struck more than once by the idea that what this publi-
cation needs most, indeed cries out for, is a neater pre-
sentation with proper Arabic and Roman types. Instructors
of Arabic literature may be expected to find the book
makes excellent teaching material for the advanced student.
A new edition, with the introduction preferably in English
translation, better produced and, if at all possible (for the
editor must have piles of notes and textual comments
within easy reach), provided with an extensive additional
apparatus clarifying obscure words and expressions of this
at times very difficult text, would in my eyes be a desider-
umatum to be looked forward to. The editor is to be com-
mented and hereby encouraged to undertake the publication
of — in a purely technical sense — a much more readable,
new edition.

The Hague, December 1989

G.H.A. JUYNBOLLI

Jürgen W. WEIL, Mädchenmamen — verrät's! Hundert
Rätsel-Epigramme aus dem adab-Werk Alī gāriya wa-
ģāriya (7./13. Jh.), Berlin, Klaus Schwarz, 1984 (21
cm., 181 pp.)= Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, Band
85. ISBN 3-922968-35-X.

In this book Jürgen Weil (in daily life a nuclear physicist,
not an arabist, as so it would seem) deals with the third
chapter of a book about "A Thousand and One Slave
Girls", in which hundred names are presented in the form
of riddles which are often explained at the same time by an
explanatory text in prose (tafsir). Weil begins with short
chapters about the book which he studied from a Viennese
manuscript (Nationalbibliothek, Wien, Flügel Katalog-
Nummer 387). The Medieval author of the Alī jāriyah wa-
ǰāriyyah seems to be a little known poet named ‘Alī ibn
Muhammad ibn al-Riḍā ibn Muhammad al-Husaynī al-Muṣawī al-Tusi, also known as Ibn al-Sharīf Dartarkhwān al-ʿĀḍhī (GAL (2) I, p. 432; Kahhālah, 1959, VII, pp. 197b-198a). He was born in 589/1193 in Hammāh (Syria) and died in 655/1257.

The Vienna Manuscript seems to be one of the most beautiful possessions of the Arabic collection in the Austrian National Library. It contains 255 folia (20 x 14 cm.) which are subdivided into eight chapters dealing with respectively 250, 50, three times 100, 211, 45 and 145 epigrams about slave girls. The Medieval author of the Alīf jāriyah wa-jāriyah seems to have first written a book on A Thousand and One Male Slaves (Alīf ghulūm wa-ghulūm; see GAL I, p. 352) from which he drew the inspiration to write the present book. Each chapter of the book presents a different characteristic of girls: e.g. their qualities, their clothes, class, religions, tribes or countries of origin, their arts and professions, and name-riddles (the third chapter).

Since 1963 Jürgen Weil has published several articles on chapters or individual poems belonging to the above manuscript (see his bibliography, pp. 179 sqq. and introduction, pp. 4-5). In a few pages, Weil gives an impression of the genre of poems in the other chapters of the book, many of which have already been discussed in other articles by Weil. However in this introductory chapter he has only given translations, not the Arabic original (‘da es sich dabei nur darum handelt, einen allgemeinen Eindruck zu gewinnen, beschränken wir uns auf die Übersetzung’).

Weil also gives an analysis of the riddle principles. He distinguishes various levels: optic, graphemic, phonologic, lexemic, psychologic. This is a different form of explanation than Lausberg’s two levels, i.e. “Spielebene” and “Ernstebene”1), or the definitions quoted by Smoor in a recent publication on riddles2). Weil distinguishes in total 16 categories of riddles.

The name riddles of the slave girls are presented in the next section. These constitute the bulk of the book (pp. 26-170). Each of the 100 riddles starts on a new page; sometimes riddle and explanation require more than one page. Weil gives a full transliteration of the text of the poems which each consists of three lines; then he gives a translation in German; followed by a transcription of the taṣfīr (‘explanation’) in the manuscript. If it is not given, the notion of wādiḥ has been written in the margin of the manuscript to indicate that the riddle is clear and needs no comment. Thereupon Weil indicates metre and rhyme, and gives his own comment. Finally, he indicates in numerical form which categories of riddles are involved (see the previous chapter). From a poem in the manuscript reproduced in facsimile on p. 25, it would appear that the poem itself and the comment is almost entirely vocalized. This of course facilitates the interpretation of the poems. The interpretation is also made easier by the fact that the solution is given in the introductory line of every poem, e.g.: ‘And he said about a girl whose name was Ghāziyyah...’.


La Maison Meiner, dont l’intérêt pour la philosophie et la théologie est en particulier documenté par le nombre de volumes de sa série consacrée à ces themes, est décidée à apporter à l’Islam un intérêt spécial, ce qui se traduit aussi par d’autres travaux de présentation et de traduction. Le traducteur de ces deux petits livres les a choisis non seule­ment parce que tous les deux appartiennent à la dernière cases, however, the taṣfīr is good enough to solve far-fetched word and letter plays which would have otherwise remained unsolved.

Although the main solution of the name-riddles is given at the beginning and comments are available on passages which could otherwise be puzzling, the reader will sometimes still be confronted with problems in the lines of poetry and might occasionally prefer translations different from those given by Jürgen Weil. Nevertheless, because of the transcription from the Arabic the reader can check for himself the translations, should he so wish to do.

At the end of the book (pp. 181 sqq.) Weil provides a glossary with technical literary and metrical terminology, and a bibliography.

It is possible from this book for the reader to gain a good impression of a late genre of Arabic poetry which possibly developed from the description of ghīlmān and jāwārī in the wine drinking scene in which cup-bearers are depicted who were frequently non-Arabic taken from foreign countries, or religious minorities. Since the cup-bearers were often described as gazelles, with whom the drinkers were in love, love motifs frequently occur. However, in the short poems represented in this collection, references are seldom made to the wine scene. Ghīlmān and jāwārī books also seem to exist as an independent genre in Persian and Turkish literature.