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booklet contains various contributions that explain the phenomenon itself and a bibliography of those works that have been found in the project (pp. 159-171). The 2004 booklet includes contributions on the use of Arabic scripts to write Islam-related texts, both within the People’s Republic of China, such as modern Uyghur (a Turkic language, spoken by a large non-Han group in western China) and Han-Chinese (among whom there are numerous groups that are of an Islamic persuasion), Salar (a non-Han group in northwestern China), and outside China, such as Spanish, Malay and Punjabi. Taken together these articles provide a good impression of the extent of the use of Arabic script for local languages in the early twentieth century. The illustrations of original Chinese booklets are usually too small and of insufficient quality, to be of much use for the reader.

Sadly, the research seems to have been carried out in isolation of Western scholarship on related phenomena. Thus, there has been published quite recently an excellent study on the late sixteenth-century revival of Islamic culture in Arabic and Persian in China proper, in other words not in the traditionally Islamic periphery of the Chinese empire, but among Han-Chinese scholars of Islamic descent in Shandong and the Lower Yangzi region. This study in its turn refers to recent Chinese scholarship that could also have been fruitfully used. Equally important is the fact that various Western writers already noted the phenomenon many decades ago. A 1925 bibliographical survey by Isaac Mason already had some wonderful depictions of the kind of combined Arabic/Chinese texts which are the object of this project. Similarly I have found no references to the extensive work by Donald Leslie and others on related topics.

Finally, a very real weakness of the book is the lack of anthropological fieldwork to accompany the search for texts. Despite the possible significance of this kind of material for linguistic and historical linguistic purposes, its real importance is as a cultural phenomenon within particular religious as well as political contexts. In the 2003 report a table is included (a, pp. 46-50) which summarizes the rather non-committal answers of those who sold or otherwise handled such booklets. However, given the extremely sensitive nature of Islam in China today, both for its supposed and highly exaggerated connections to terrorism, and as the religion of several large (and still growing) so-called minority peoples, it is not to be expected that merely polite questioning will yield much interesting information on the usage context of such booklets. This would be true of any ethnographer, but even more so of Japanese scholars speaking excellent Chinese who, certainly to local minorities, must look suspiciously like the Han-Chinese that, from their point of view, suppress them and economically compete with them.

A proper fieldwork project is required in order to supplement this information. Some of those who grew up with such books in the 1930s and 1940s will still be alive and eager to share their memories, once they have come to trust the researchers, something that takes time and is not easily done on the basis of guerrilla fieldwork. Similarly, these books are again being produced and utilized, no doubt in different ways from in the past. All of this should be studied in order to improve our understanding of the curious hegemonic interrelationships between a once powerful cultural center and again powerful politico-economic system (i.e. China Proper) and a highly powerful religious culture (that we usually label Islam, but is as diverse in China today as it is elsewhere).

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In the preface the author explains that the present book is an elaborated version of his Habilitationsschrift entitled Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitāb al-Aqānī, which he presented to the Philosophical Faculty of the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg in 1965. He did not publish it at the Saxonian Academy in the 1960s because the remaining volumes of the Cairene Dār al-kutub edition were unobtainable. Publication in the original form was not planned until later, though there was much interest in the typewritten version. The debate about oral and written transmission in the Middle Ages had, of course, moved on since then, but the author did not make any major changes in his present work.

After the Introduction the author turns his attention in Chapter One to structure and order in the Kitāb al-aghānī, the Book of Songs of Aḥū l-Faraj al-Isbahanī. He also deals with the problems in the source, methods and identification. As the other chapters in the book are a schematic overview of various aspects of the Aghānī, the discussion of the results and conclusions is presented in this first chapter. Here, he provides a concise survey of the most important results (especially on a statistical level). The results are based on the schemes of Chapters Two to Five, which give an exact idea of the number of informants of Aḥū l-Faraj, i.e. 150 persons, including two women. This figure is then broken down into 51 informants (34%) who were responsible for 96.1% of the isnāds (chains of trustworthy transmitters); 21 informants (14%), each with over 100 quotations, featuring at the top in 83.3% of the isnāds, etc. The writings of the historian al-Ṭabarī (d. 922) are widely quoted in the Aghānī, notably his History of Prophets and Kings with its passages on the maghāzī (raids and battles) in the time of the prophet.

Among the long list of other sources (pp. 23-26) are Ibn al-Marzubān’s (d. 921) Ṭabqāt al-shu'ārā’ (Generations of

5) In other words, shorter fieldwork visits on tourist visa, because a formal research permit is unlikely for bureaucratic and/or political reasons.
Poets), Yahyā ibn al-Munajjīm’s (d. 912) Kitāb al-bāhir fi akhbār mukhadrām l-dawlatayn (The Poets who participated in both periods) and his father ‘Alī ibn Yahyā’s Kitāb al-shuʿarāʾ al-qudāmā wa-l-islāmiyyīn (Book of Old and Islamic Poets), and al-Sulṭān’s (d. 947) Aḥbār Abī Tammādām (Anecdotes on the Life of Abu Tammam).

In the Appendix to Chapter One the author explains his system of cross references and other practices related to his presentation of the works and the persons (pp. 26-28).

Chapter Two (pp. 29-70) deals with the informants of Abū l-Faraj: 150 are mentioned with references to where they occur in the Kitāb al-aghānī and one item is devoted to anonymous persons. Chapter Three deals with 76 important and frequently quoted authorities (pp. 71-109). Chapter Four deals with written sources: a total of 99 works are addressed. Item 100 is devoted to anonymous written sources, for instance: ‘ba’d al-kutub’, “one of the books” (pp. 110-134).

Chapter Five concentrates on the articles of the Kitāb al-aghānī, following the sequence of the book itself, and includes a survey and enumeration of articles: 482 articles in 24 books (pp. 135-152); analyses of chosen articles (pp. 152-226); and identification tables (pp. 227-232). In the Appendix the author presents corrections in the text of the present Aghānī editions (pp. 233-249). Finally, the book provides a list of abbreviations, a bibliography, and a register of persons and works.

This book could be a useful tool to further develop the interest aroused by the appearance of Hilary Kilpatrick’s Making the Great Book of Songs (2003). In a certain sense a cross-fertilization has occurred between the publication of the two books: the fact that scholars such as Hilary Kilpatrick have used Fleischhammer’s typewritten dissertation has, without any doubt, contributed to the idea of republishing it. Hopefully, it will not take too long for other unpublished monographs on the Aghānī to be published until now, probably because the editions were incomplete (not all the volumes had been published, nor had all the manuscripts been used) and because of the extent of the work. Fleischhammer’s groundbreaking dissertation (Habilitationsschrift Halle-Wittenberg 1965) remained unpublished for many years before it was properly published (Wiesbaden 2004). Fortunately, a prestigious work has now (2003) appeared by Hilary Kilpatrick, who could only make use of the typewritten version of Fleischhammer’s dissertation.

Kilpatrick explores the tradition of musical performance, which lies at the heart of the Aghānī. A selection of melodies and the accompanying poems are discussed and placed in the biographical entourage of the poet by references to his akhbār (biographical reports and anecdotes).

At the start, Kilpatrick focuses on the Aghānī as a work of literary rather than a source of historical information, her primary aim being to find unity and coherence in what seems, at first sight, to be formless and chaotic. She addresses the principles behind the structure of the work and the organisation of the material, which is — after all — a compilation.

The book comprises 9 chapters. When explaining the organisation of the work the author herself says (p. 278): “The first five chapters have been designed chiefly to document research on the Aghānī, its author’s life, and the statements he made when compiling the book. Even when the interpretations which I have added can be called into question or turned out to be wrong, the information itself should still be useful to scholars.”

Chapter 1 runs through the research to date on the Kitāb al-aghānī; Chapter 2 deals with Abū l-Faraj’s life; Chapter 3 focuses on songs and singers — with remarks on the integration of the song settings into the text — and on Abū l-Faraj’s interesting comments on the transmission and sources of songs, for which he relied on both written and oral texts. One important question is whether the settings can be attributed to a certain composer, which was sometimes the subject of strong disagreement. The accounts of the origin of the 100 songs and Abū l-Faraj’s problems around it are also discussed, along with the compiler’s comments on and appreciation of certain songs, and his attitude towards contemporary singers and musical life.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to “Abū l-Faraj on Poetry and Poets”. The poetry is placed in the respective contexts. These include poetry intended for songs, such as the lyrics of the Top Hundred transmitted and evaluated by rawātīt (transmitters), songs embedded in narratives, and independently quoted poetry. The profiles of poets and singers are compared and contrasted.

Chapter 5 deals with Abū l-Faraj’s views on prose, the akhbār and the organisation of the material. Reports on są‘ (rhymed prose) and narrative motifs in the book are discussed.