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This book was originally the result of Behzadi’s “Habilita-
tion” (a German examination to become a professor at a Ger-
man university) which took place in 2004 at the Faculty of
Humanities of the University of Göttingen. The author inves-
tigates Arabic medieval linguistics by Abū ʿUthmān ʿAmr b.
Bahr al-Kinānī al-Fuqaymī al-Ġāḥīz, who lived from 776/7 to
868 in Basra and Baghdad, being one of the most prolific
Arab polygraphs who not only compiled the wisdom of oth-
ers but sometimes also gave expression to his own original
ideas. After the introduction (the first chapter), the second
chapter is devoted to the circumstances of Jāḥīz as for
instance the history of his time with its periods and theo-
logical discourses, and its links with political power. The
scientific discipline of the Arabic language is discussed:
poetic mastery, justification of linguistic criticism, criteria for judgement of value, grammar, and Koran commentary. At the end of the second chapter the Kitāb al-Bayān wa-l-Tabyīn (Book of Eloquence), its formal structure, and the order of its material and its style, is discussed.

The third chapter deals with finding the best expression, the themes or meanings, the signs for it, and how a certain concept can be best translated. Sections are devoted to word sound (lafẓ), gestures (what we would call in the present time “body language”, AS) (ʿīṣāra), calculation (ʿaqd), scripture (kāfīt), and signification by its existence (Zeichenhaftigkeit des Seins, sometimes translated into English as “contextual indicators”, AS) (mīṣbu). Then the qualities of speech, the art of the reciting or having a speech, eloquence (balāṣa), the correct high speech (fuṣūṣa), conciseness (yājūz); and silence (aṣ-ṣamān) are dealt with. Follows a section about language defects, like inability to speak and faultiness (iyyi), dialect and spoken vernacular language (lāḥn), and also the relation between signifier and signified. The special and unique place of the Arabic language, and the role of the Bedouins is also dealt with.

The author recapitulates Ḥādhīz’s linguistic thoughts as follows. The concept of bayān must be seen in relation to human observation. In Ḥādhīz’s system the human being can grasp the reality in which he exists only by means of signs which refer to reality. He orients himself principally with the help of language which God gave him the disposal of. The task of the human being is to reinstall the lost uniformity of understanding between signified things and signifiers. At the same time there is always the danger to persevere in ambiguity while not being aware of it. A man wants to have real knowledge. Vanity and stupidity is at the basis of one’s inability to judge in a good manner. The second dimension of expressing yourself clearly (bayān) is related to the communication between men. According to Ḥādhīz it is one’s duty to use the richness of the communication material given at our disposal by God. Ḥādhīz encompasses a large spectre in his consideration of the language. The Arabic language is for him the only language in which the required unequivocal clearness can be produced. His regret is mainly about the fact that apparently only a few people are aware of the relatedness between language and world knowledge. So Ḥādhīz devotes a chapter to grammatical faults and errors, difficulties of articulation, and the phenomenon of the grammatically and phonologically falsified and worn out vernaculars. Word play and word jokes are also treated, and also the exercises to say something briefly and concisely. When looking in different manners for uniformity of meaning – in grammar, stylistics and rhetoric – and also in the non-verbal domain, Ḥādhīz bluntly refutes some phenomena of use of the language, especially brainless talk and deviation from pure high Arabic – his essential criterion being the measurability and uniformity and especially the suitable clearness of expression which needs no further explanation. He has some propositions how to reach this clearness of expression. He refuses to come with a canon of allowed style figures and propositions how to reach this clearness of expression. He has some expression which needs no further explanation. He has some
though by his own choice not using all his resources. With modern theories of semiotics and linguistics in mind, we should recognize Jähiz’s adherence to a theory of signs, with his endeavour of linguistic perfection and his insights in the nature of communication. Behzadi’s study wants to “elucidate an aspect of the vivid debates on the Arabic language in the 9th century and analyse to what extent people were thinking in an unconventional way and tried at the same time not to harm the consensus of the young Islamic community.” (p. 172)

The book ends with an English summary (pp. 173-175), abbreviations of much quoted titles (p. 176), a bibliography (pp. 177-182) and an index of words and names (pp. 183-186).

We are grateful for Behzadi’s analysis of Jähiz’s thoughts. This book is well organized, well written, and presents Jähiz’s theory in a clear way. The texts used are quoted according to their best available editions. The author is well versed in the secondary literature, which she quotes when needed. Her presentation makes consultation easy also for non-specialists, such as cultural historians and general linguists. She has an excellent knowledge of the cultural climate of the time and the debate in Jähiz’s time. Her interpretations are reliable and based on firm evidence. We hope this work will stimulate further research on the theoretical conceptions of Jähiz, whose texts were read by most of us mainly because of their entertainment and the funny anecdotes they contain echoing Arabic cultural life of the early Middle Ages.

University Amsterdam, April 2010

Arie Schippers

* * *


This book is a model German dissertation, since the contents of the book about the love poetry of the well-known early Arabic poet Jamil, lover of Buthayna, represent a format which can easily be repeated in the same manner in studies on the poetry of other Arabic poets. Pages in Arabic from Isbahānī’s Kitāb al-Aghānī and Ibn Khallikān’s Biographic Dictionary which deal with the Akhbār (biographic notes) of the poet Jamil Buthayna are reproduced at the end of the book. The author has translated these two biographic sections.

The book starts with quoting the famous poetry line by Heinrich Heine mentioned by Stendhal in his De l’amour, where the characteristics of ‘Udhrīche love are listed. The tribe ‘Udhrite is referred to by him as “Asra welche sterben wenn sie lieben”, an expression also quoted by Francesco Gabrieli in his Storia della letteratura araba (Firenze, Milano 1967). The author, however, comes to the conclusion that Jamil was not really a characteristic ‘Udhrite poet. After having introduced the medieval Arabic biographical sources and the modern editions of Jamil’s poetry, among which the editions of the poet by Francesco Gabrieli, Jagonak comments upon the tradition chains and musical notations, and translates and comments both the sections from the Aghānī and from Ibn Khallikān’s biographical work.

He deals also with the characteristics of Jamil’s poetry: verse structure and language, enjamblment, and the structuring of a poem. Interesting is that he discusses the relationship between nasīb and ghazal (p. 184), a subject amply dealt with by Thomas Bauer’s Liebe und Liebesdichtung in der arabischen Welt des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts (Wiesbaden, 1998) based upon the western distinction nasīb/ghazal. According to Bauer, the ghazal developed from the nasīb, but Jagonak is of the opinion that in Jamil’s ghazal poetry the song form is so various and many-sided that one can see in it rather an independent longer existing tradition than an example of a recently established type (p. 187). Jamil’s poetry can not serve as support for the thesis that the Umayyad ghazal goes exclusively back to the nasīb.

Also the themes of Jamil’s poetry are discussed. He does not tell us about unrequited love as ‘Udhrite love normally is, but he often looks back on really consummated love affairs. His poems are often examples of Hijāzī love poetry. On p. 189 Jagonak does not agree with the concept of secrecy as defined by Wagner: according to Jagonak the lover did not submit himself voluntarily to this as a kind of virtue. Another remark by Wagner (p. 190) is about the pleasure or satisfaction (ridā) with the distance of the beloved. However, Jagonak is unsatisfied with this opinion because the time of separation and hardships was felt as thoroughly painful and exhausting for the poet-lover. And he also quotes some lines about the thinness and meagreness of the poet-lover.

The author’s conclusion is that Jamil’s poetry shows in so many places parallels with Hijāzī love poetry that one can not speak of only sporadic borrowings of some motifs by Jamil from it. One can ask oneself how far the present distinction between Hijāzī and ‘Udhrite love poetry can be maintained in the present form. Perhaps the secondary literature about Jamil has dominated in ascribing ‘Udhrīche characteristics to his poems. The present book presents the now available source materials to shed more light on Jamil’s poetry and reduces its so-called ‘Udhrite character to normal Hijāzī proportions. The book is useful as a work of reference for this and other early Arabic love poets.

The book contains a bibliography (pp. 197-200), an index of rhyme words (pp. 206) and an appendix with the relevant Arabic texts (76 pp).

University Amsterdam, April 2010

Arie Schippers

* * *


The London based Institute for Ismaili Studies has taken the laudable initiative to publish a critical edition with translation and commentary of the whole of the Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’.
The book under review, the volume edited by Nader El-Bizri, is intended as an introduction to the project. The contributions, all by leading specialists, discuss various topics connected to the Pure Brethren and their *Rasā’il*: Poonawala about the need for a critical edition; de Callataÿ about the classification of knowledge in the *Rasā’il*; Hamdani about arguments for an earlier dating than is usually assumed; Baffioni about the scope of the ideas presented in the *Rasā’il*; Netton about their role in the history of ideas; Michot about Ibn Taymiyya’s views on the Ikhwān al-Safā; El-Bizri about the parts on arithmetic and geometry; Wright about music and musicology; Goodman about *The Case of the Animals*. The volume starts with a useful and clear prologue by El-Bizri himself, which also includes a synopsis of each chapter. The volume also contains a selective bibliography, which basically contains the publications referred to in the various contributions and is not an attempt to present an exhaustive bibliography on the Ikhwān al-Safā. It struck me, by the way, that none of Fuat Sezgin’s reprints (1999) of studies on the Ikhwān al-Safā and of Dieterici’s translations and editions were mentioned in the bibliography: *Institut für Geschichte der arabisch-islamische Wissenschaften*, series *Islamic Philosophy*, vols. 20 and 21 (articles); 22, 23, 24 (Dieterici’s translations), 25 (Dieterici’s edition and translation of *The Case of the Animals*, plus his vocabulary to the text). It is true, of course, that these reprints appeared in small numbers, often not more than thirty copies, and were sometimes quickly sold out.

The volume thus presents an idea of the state of the art in this field, and contains some excellent articles. Godefroy de Callataÿ carefully compares the classification of the sciences as it is presented in the *Rasā’il* with the actual arrangement of the chapters, and discusses the implications which this may have for the dating of the *Rasā’il*. Michot’s article on Ibn Taymiyya and his views on the Ikhwān al-Safā is full of fascinating new material, and equally clear and useful is Owen Wright’s analysis of the chapter on music.

Carmela Baffioni contributed a useful and insightful article about the scope of ideas presented in the *Rasā’il*, in which she makes ample use of her own previously published work. She is one of the most knowledgeable specialists on the Ikhwān al-Safā and has, over the past two decades, published a vast number of books and articles on the subject. The Ikhwān’s extensive use of Greek sources has got especial attention in her work.

In this contribution, “The Scope of the *Rasā’il* Ikhwān al-Safā”, she admirably tackles, among other things, one of the most fundamental issues in the discussion about the Ikhwān, namely the ‘extreme variety (and often inconsistency)’ of the ideas found in the *Rasā’il*. She argues that the way in which the Ikhwān systemically reworked the Greek philosophical heritage to fit in with their aims was ‘anything but inconsistent’. Their aims were very different from those of the Ancients. They saw philosophy as a way to salvation, and consequently approached the Greek heritage from a religious point of view. She also emphasizes the philological accuracy with which they reproduced their Greek sources, a topic on which she is eminently suited to give evidence (see for instance her previous article on quotations of Nicomachus of Gerasa in the *Rasā’il*). Baffioni strongly advocates, with ample reference to the *Rasā’il*, the view that the Ikhwān are connected to the Ismailis, another point of discussion among scholars. Epistle 31, says Baffioni, contains the core of their Ismaili commitment. Maybe speaking, as she does, (p. 120) about their ‘unwavering ‘Alīd devotion’ is a bit strong, given the Ikhwān’s positive attitude towards the caliph ‘Uthmān and to ‘A’isha; the suggestion has of course been made that these were due to taqīyya, but I do not find this convincing.

Just a remark: on p. 107, speaking about the transmission of Aristotle’s zoological works, Baffioni states that the zoological parts of the Corpus Aristotelicum reached the Arabs in abridged form, with the exception of *De Partibus* and *De Generatione Animalium*. These two works, however, together with the *Historia Animalium*, circulated in the Arab world as one book under the title *De Animalibus*, just as in late antiquity and in the medieval European tradition: there is no question of abbreviation. The 9th-century Arabic translation of *De Animalibus*, edited in separate volumes, has been available to scholarship since the 1970s.

Baffioni’s contribution brings into focus how the frequent inconsistency of what is said in the *Rasā’il* may lead to widely divergent views among scholars. One such issue is brought forward in Hamdani’s contribution: this is his early dating of the *Rasā’il* -before 909- against the majority opinion that they were composed between 961 and 980. As stated in the volume, Hamdani’s article is an updated version of an earlier (JSS, 1984) article about this matter.

Of course, contributors make ample use of their previous publications on the subject. This is fine and often useful to the reader, especially in an introductory volume such as this. In such cases, by the way, it would be helpful to the reader if authors referred to the text of the *Rasā’il* itself instead of to their own publications for source references. One should also be careful, especially in these days of copypasting, that articles not simply rehash old and easily accessible material: Netton’s contribution is a case in point. It largely consists of material (often in the form of extensive quotations) from his *Muslim Neoplatonists* (1982), plus some bits from his *Allah Transcendent* and a few additional publications. The attempt to discuss the ‘encyclopaedic’ aspect of the *Rasā’il* within the wider framework of later European encyclopaedias does not add much, and offers no new insights.


In the first chapter of the volume, Poonawala argues the need for a scholarly edition and translation of the *Rasā’il*, including a survey of three printed editions of the complete text: Bombay 1887-9 (this is the date Poonawala gives, but the edition itself gives 1888-9), Cairo 1928, Beirut 1957, and their relation to extant manuscripts. The ‘Arif Tāmir edition of 1995 is not included in the discussion.
The current situation as to editions of the Rasā’il is indeed far from satisfactory. In addition to what is said in the various chapters and the bibliography, I may summarize it here: printed editions start with partial editions, namely the Calcutta edition (1812) of The Case of the Animals against Man (title: Tuhfat Ichwān-oos-Sufā), which forms part of the 22nd Risāla. Friedrich Dieterici in 1879 also published the Arabic text of the Case of the Animals, and to him comes the credit of editing, for the first time, a substantial part of the Arabic text (635 pp.) of the Rasā’il, duly indicating the MSS which he used: Die Abhandlungen der Ichwān es-Sufā in Auswahl. Zum ersten Mal aus arabischen Handschriften herausgegeben, Leipzig 1883-1886.

The reason why I mention Dieterici’s work explicitly is that I could not find it among the editions, partial editions and translations of the Rasā’il that are listed in the bibliography of the present volume, and his text editions seem to have been overlooked in the Prologue (p. 20), where reference is only made to his publications that appeared between 1861 and 1872: these, however, are just translations of parts of the Rasā’il and the edition of the Arabic text of The Case of the Animals.

The omission, I am afraid, may be part of a wider problem, that maybe should receive attention in connection with the project as a whole. This is that some of the contributors hardly seem inclined to use any other than English secondary literature, and German literature is especially poorly represented. It is hard to see how one can work adequately in Islamic philosophy, and especially the Ichwān al-Sufā, without access to German, French (Marquet, Zghal Hatem) and (Baffioni!) Italian literature, however hard this may be on scholarship. As to German, Diwald’s monumental translation of Part III of the Rasā’il, with extensive commentary, study of the sources and references to the different manuscripts, is a case in point. It is duly mentioned by Poonawala (p. 34), but otherwise it hardly makes an appearance in this volume: de Callatay (p. 58) and Hamdani (p. 84) simply refer to it as an edition (which it isn’t), and only Baffioni includes it in one of her arguments (p. 103 n. 5).

As to Dieterici, anyway, scholars embarking on a critical edition of the Rasā’il certainly should not deny themselves the pleasure of consulting his work, if only for the fun of reading his views on the editing problems. I venture here to translate the relevant passage (pp. XVII-XVIII of his intro-
duction to the 1883-1886 edition).

‘This edition is based on Cod. Paris, 1005. I have collated it with the Vienna cod. 1 and the cod. Oxford, listed under Mathesis Marsch. 189 (….)’ The innumerable textual variants in the various MSS, the obvious confusion in the sentences that again and again start with “Know”, and the frequent lacunae could have added about ten more sheets to this book. For material reasons, this is impossible. We need not regret the omission, made clear on which MSS or other text witnesses the edition was based (as opposed to Dieterici, we may emphasize again). So the need for a critical edition of the Rasā’il is indeed obvious, and we eagerly await the volumes that will be forthcoming.

Leiden, March 2010

Remke Kruk


In the field of oral literature and particularly in the field of folktale studies tale-type indexes and motif indexes play a crucial role. A tale-type can be defined as the full narrative that may recur cross-culturally in variants and subvariants, whereas a motif denotes one of the details out of which narratives are composed. Both tale-type and motif are the classificatory concepts by means of which the identification and comparison of tales is undertaken.

In 2004 two important works concerning the identification of tale-types were published, one covering European folktales, the other covering the folktales of the Arab world.

Hans-Jörg Uther (University of Duisburg-Essen) published an enlarged and drastically updated version of the famous Aarne-Thompson Tale-Type Index. Though focussing mainly on folktales from European traditions, it should be shortly mentioned here because of its importance for folktale research of the Arab world. [Hans-Jörg Uther, The Types of Interna-

The second book is the tale-type index published by Hasan El-Shamy, Types of the Folktale in the Arab World. Hasan El-Shamy, professor of Folklore at the department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures and African Studies at Indiana University and a famous scholar in the field, also published a motif-index entitled Folk Traditions of the Arab World. A Guide to Motif Classification (Indiana University Press, 1995).

In Types of the Folktale in the Arab World El-Shamy presents a preliminary analysis of folktales found in the Arab world, including folktales from traditions of population groups such as Kurds, Berbers, Nubians and others.
Like Uther, El-Shamy used the ground pattern of the Aarne-Thompson tale-type classification for his section “Types of the Folktale in the Arab world” (pp. 1-977). This is also the most impressive part of the book because of the wealth of well-organised information presented. It is followed by a section called “Bibliography and Other Sources”, a section called “Register of Tale-Types” and a section called “Register of Motifs”. The book is concluded by an “Index of Authors and Sources”, a “Register of Countries” and a “Tale-type subject index”, all three valuable tools by means of which the reader can tackle the information given in the section “Tale Type classification”.

Two points will help to understand the importance of El-Shamy’s work: 1. Before the publication of El-Shamy’s work, systematic classifications of folktales in the Arab world were virtually lacking (apart from a few small scale attempts such as the one by Ursula Novak, Beiträge zur Typology des arabischen Volksmärchens, doctoral dissertation, Freiburg, 1969). Therefore El-Shamy’s work can be said to be the first to fill in this gap. 2. The academic study of folktale traditions in the Arab world or, to put it more generally, of oral literature in the spoken forms of languages in the Middle East, suffers from neglect. Universities and other academic institutions seem to encourage and defend the study of written forms of literature in the Arab world almost exclusively and usually allow but limited space for the study of oral literature, the spoken or sung artistic expression of speakers of a language. It is safe to say that, also in this respect, El-Shamy’s work contributes greatly to the emancipation of the academic study of folktale traditions in the Arab World.

Leiden University, May 2010

Harry STROOMER