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Walter WERKMEISTER, Quellenuntersuchungen zum Kitab al-'Iqd al-farid des Andalusiers Ibn 'Abdrabbih (246/860-328/940), Ein Beitrag zur arabischen Litera

This book, originally a dissertation at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main (1977), and enlarged in the present edition with additional sections, deals with the sources of the Kitab al-'Iqd al-farid of the Andalusian author Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, who lived in the second half of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century AD. The book belongs to the so-called adab-works, defined by Hilary Kilpatrick as follows: 'The adab-encyclopedia is a work designed to provide a basic knowl
dge in those domains with which the average cultured man may be expected to be acquainted (UEAI, 10th Con

Giving examples of this kind of works, she says: 'The best-known example of an adab-encyclopedia is Ibn 'Abd Rabbih's Al- 'Iqd al-farid, but it is not unique. It is indebted to Ibn Qutayba's 'Uyun al-akhibar, probably the first in the genre, and a number of later writers imitated its author's intention, though not in its exact form'. In this last sentence she already states a certain dependence of the 'Iqd on Ibn Qutayba's 'Uyun which she considers as one of its sources.

In Werkmeister's words adab-works not only serves as edifying and entertaining literature, but also as a systematic recapitulation of common general and special knowledge expected from a cultivated Muslim secretary.

The authors of adab-works were compilers who collected traditions and texts from religious and profane sciences. In choosing texts and traditions, every individual compilator followed his own preferences, according to individual, political, religious or other factors in his time.

In this study the author wants to investigate, to what extent Ibn 'Abd Rabbih made use of in manuscript existing works and to what extent he bases himself on the living educational tradition (the 'seances' or majālis) in compiling his 'Iqd.

Werkmeister chose the 'Iqd for his research of the way in which Arabic learning and scientific traditions were passed on to following generations, in view of the fact that the problem of the dependence of the 'Iqd on earlier works like Ibn Qutayba's 'Uyun and Jāhiz's Al-Bayān wa-t-Tabyīn, was posed earlier, although these works could not be considered as direct sources of the 'Iqd. This was also the case with another work from the same time as the 'Iqd, namely Mubarrad's Kāmil.

So a well-known problem posed itself: to what extent was there an effective oral tradition of learning, and to what extent was that tradition based on written sources. The question about oral tradition was dealt with i.a. by Blachère in the fifties and by Sezgin in the seventies. According to Blachère oral traditions were fixed in writing only in the beginning of the ninth century AD and also in this century traditions of learned men were often completed by the oral traditions of their students.

According to Sezgin however, fixation of oral traditions began much earlier, namely as early as at the time of the Prophet's Companions and their direct successors. Lost isnāds can be reconstructed from later works. At first his thesis was limited to the domain of traditions of the Prophet. Later on he also applied his theory to the fields of history and poetry (thus furnishing counter-arguments against possible theories of exclusive oral composition of Arab poetry).

Sellheim does not agree with the position of Sezgin, and is of the opinion that the learned men at the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century AD did not base their material on existing writings, and their works are only partially extant in writing in the form of lecture notes and dictation cahiers by their students and pupils.

In the present work Werkmeister wants to follow the starting point of Sellheim, and tries to show that also at the end of the ninth century AD and the beginning of the tenth, oral tradition had not yet lost its significance apart from written sources. The written sources may not have played such an important role in compiling the 'Iqd. He wants to compare the versions of the different traditions and sections of the 'Iqd with the versions in previous works, also looking at the persons to whom traditions in certain fields are usually ascribed and examining loose traditions and groups of traditions according to their chains of deliverers (isnāds).

Also he wants to consider the relations of Ibn 'Abd Rabbih with the educational traditions, i.e. what he heard from his teachers and informants. The difficulty is, however, that Ibn 'Abd Rabbih has a great dislike for mentioning the isnād of a tradition. This attitude of his is very different from that of the compiler of the Kitab al-Aghāni, who seems to have had a special predilection for mentioning isnāds (sometimes as a kind of literary device perhaps: Dr. Khayrallah declares for instance on Isbahani's section about Majnūn that the isnād should be considered on occasion as a literary, not as an historiographical device) 1). Whereas the sources of the Aghāni are clearly given in exhaustive isnāds and consequently examined by scholars like Blachère, Zolondbek and Fleischhammer, isnāds are often missing in Ibn 'Abd Rabbih's work. This fact was already recognized by Hilary Kilpatrick, who observes (ibid., p. 36): 'Less of a scholar than his model [Ibn Qutayba's 'Uyun, rev.,] Ibn 'Abd Rabbih leaves out isnāds for fear of boring his audience and provides much sketchier introduction for his information'.

So Werkmeister has a more difficult job to do in determining the sources of this work, and thus he gives a contribution to the study of tradition and education, as to what extent the material was handed down orally and to what extent by means of written sources.

As far as the question of oral or written transmission is concerned, especially with regard to the early Islamic period, the last word has not been said yet. The problem will from now on have the attention of the scholars, as has been shown again recently by Schoeler's paper at the 12th Congress of the U.E.A.I. about 'Die Frage der schrift
dichen oder mündlichen Überlieferung der Wissenschaften im frühen Islam' (Malaga, 1984).

The present work gives a good insight in the later tradition of science and literature, especially in Muslim Spain.

In his introduction Werkmeister gives an exposé of the object of his research and the different problems connected with the oral and written scientific transmission within the framework of the educational system. He gives a definition of an adab work, quotes briefly the point of view of Sezgin and Sellheim (both from Frankfurt) about how these traditions were handed down, why he chooses the 'Iqd of Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, and the less frequent occurrence of the isnād in this work as compared to Ishbani's Aghāmī and Ibn Qutayba's 'Uyūn (pp. 9-15).

In the Second Chapter he gives an overview of life and works of Ibn 'Abd Rabbih. He also gives an overview of the 25 chapters of the 'Iqd, which are classified as precious stones, chapters devoted to kings, wars, generosity, ambassadors, behaviour at the courts, sciences, proverbs, kinds of food, caliphs, women, singing, jokes, etc. (pp. 16-34).

In the Third Chapter the author speaks about the use of isnāds and sources in the 'Iqd. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih himself is quoted in his preface (he leaves out isnāds to facilitate reading and make it short, and to avoid difficult and prolix style) and also other works which have the same attitude towards isnād are pointed at. There are many traditions without isnād, or with only defective mentioning of sources or anonymous sources. Those with isnād are a minority. On the basis of this inventory, the author comes to a number of conclusions to proceed further on. The author wants to establish first what kind of relationship exists between the 'Iqd and previous written sources. It is also important to try to relate other texts, mentioned by name by Ibn 'Abd Rabbih himself, and texts which may be of thematic interest, to the 'Iqd and compare them with it.

The mentioning of sources for the material not based on written works, should be statistically evaluated. This makes it possible to determine for instance which group of learned men has been mentioned more frequently and from what period they are. Consequently should be examined how their traditions arrived in Spain and if this material was already extant in writings. (pp. 44-56).

In the Fourth Chapter the author speaks about the problem of the fixation of the written sources. Various opinions have been expressed in the past according to which the 'Iqd probably depended upon several other works. But these opinions were always marginal and within the context of other research. The present author wants to look at this problem systematically. He wants to confront certain thematic passages from the 'Uyūn al-Akhbār of Ibn Qutaybah, the Al-Bayān wat-Tābihīn of al-Jāḥīz, the Kamīl of al-Mubarrad and others. A thematic ordering of the sources is therefore important, also an index of persons and themes or subjects may be useful in order to determine which passage of the 'Iqd corresponds with passages in other works. (pp. 57-188).

In the Fifth Chapter sources and authorities which had a function in the educational tradition are summed up. It is often difficult to trace back the origin of traditions because of Ibn 'Abd Rabbih's aversion to use isnāds. The best thing to do is to look at parallel traditions in other works which are provided with these isnāds. The matters of traditions are divided into groups. The author comes thereupon i.a. to the following conclusions: In compiling his 'Iqd, Ibn 'Abd Rabbih draws largely upon learned men from the ninth/tenth century, especially philologists but also others like al-'Uthbi, al-Mādāʾīnī, and Ibn Abi Shayba as well as authors like Ibn Qutayba, al-Jāḥīz, and al-Mubarrad. Among the few Andalusian authorities on which Ibn 'Abd Rabbih based his traditions, must be mentioned al-Khuṣānī, his teacher, and Abu-l-Yusur ash-Shaybānī, presumably the author of Ar-Risāla al-'Adhrā'.

The author studies in this chapter furthermore the relation between his direct informants in Andalus and their Eastern sources, be it philologists, literates, historians, or transmitters of prophetic traditions. He tries to connect certain authorities with certain themes, on which they composed books according to bibliographical literature. (pp. 189-462).

In the Sixth Chapter the author comes to the following results and conclusions:

1. written sources as fixed and definitively codified books and writings were only of secondary importance for Ibn 'Abd Rabbih in compiling his 'Iqd;
2. the bulk of the material collected in the 'Iqd comes from educational tradition, from majālīs and ḥalaqāt (a group of students following the lecture of their masters), in which scholars delivered their collected traditions to their pupils. These kinds of transmissions are not always merely oral, and educational tradition is not an unstructured mass. In the majālīs were transmitted subjects and themes which were related to each other, sometimes taken over from earlier lecture notes and note-books. Things were not only kept by memorizing them, but were written down in notes and exercise-books. When an authority collected traditions on a certain subject, the organisation of his collection was in more than one case done by his pupils or other scholars of later periods. During the transmission of the collection in the majālīs some traditions may not have had the chance to survive for reasons unknown to us;
3. the corpus of traditions from which Ibn 'Abd Rabbih borrowed his material was closed in the second half of the third/ninth century. We can see this from the fact that not only personalities such as al-Jāḥīz, Ibn Qutayba, and al-Mubarrad always base themselves on the same material and quote for the most part the same authorities, but also compilators of a later period like al-Qālī, al-Ḥusūrī, and Abu 'Ubayd al-Bakri are doing so. From this fact we can explain the many traditions they quote in common. We cannot conclude therewith from that one compiler copied it from another. Most of the content of the 'Iqd consists of traditions, stories and anecdotes transmitted on behalf of philologists going back to the end of the second/eighth or beginning third/ninth century about all kinds of subjects, ranging from grammar, lexicography, history, poetry, literature to Qur'ānic studies, ḥadīth, and tribal traditions. To the oldest material of the 'Iqd belongs earlier material (from the first/seventh century and the beginning of the second/eighth century) containing edifying remarks and religious maxims which represent adab in its original didactic sense;
4. the material as transmitted by scholars of the third/ninth century was handed down by their pupils, commented on and completed by them. By them and others these materials were transmitted to the teachers and direct in-
formants of Ibn 'Abd Rabbih. So the 'Iqd can be seen as a proof that even at the end of the third/ninth and the beginning of the fourth/tenth century a voluminous work as the 'Iqd is based principally on a living educational tradition and only in special and limited cases on texts which were definitely fixed in writing and existing as books. Also in the Islamic West one did not limit himself to excerpting existing works and remoulding them. (pp. 463-469).

The painstaking efforts of the author of this book have made it possible for us to get an insight in the manner of compilation and the structure of a famous adab-work like the 'Iqd, and at the same time we know more about the manner in which science was handed down: that there was, on the one hand, the utilization of written works, which were definitely finished, on the other hand an educational tradition and only in special and limited cases on texts which compilators made choices, and how they put together the chosen material in a new manner.

The passage begins at 9b with five anecdotes from other sources than the 'Iqd, although the first anecdote contains two lines of poetry which are occurring also in the sixth book of the 'Iqd, but in another order:

Ibn Khafaja's diwan (Leiden ms.): 'Iqd
6. (12a) Ibrâhim ibn al-Mahdi prisoner of al-Ma'mûn: VI:36
7. (12b) Mu'âwiya and 'Abdallah ibn Ja'far; Fâkhita hint Qaraza: VI:17-19
8. (13b) Abu Ha'nîfa and the wine drinking corn measurer: VI:15
9. (13b) The judge al-'Aqûs al-Makhzûmi and the singing drunkard: VI:14
10. (13b/14a) About ash-Sha'bi and the 'Irâqi governor Bishr ibn Marwân and the female slave with the lute: VI:14
11. (14a) 'Urwa ibn 'Udhayna and a woman about poetry lines: VI:16
12. (14a) The Prophet and 'A'isha about the admissibility of singing: VI:13
13. (14a) 'Abdallah ibn 'Abdallah ibn 'Uways about the Prophet and a singing female slave: VI:8

14. (14b) Between Sulaymân ibn Yasar and Sa'd ibn 'Ali Waqqâs: VI:8
15. (14b) Anecdote of 'Ubayd ibn Umayr about the Prophet and the Psalmist David: VI:19

Two more anecdotes are following about music and songs 17-18).

At the end of the book Werkmeister made some interesting tables from which we can see which passages in the 'Iqd are corresponding with passages in earlier adab-works. We can see e.g. the corresponding passages about singing in the Kâmîl of al-Mubarrad and the 'Iqd. From this we can also learn for instance that none of the above quoted anecdotes from the Diwan of Ibn Khafaja have parallels in or are derived from al-Mubarrad's Kâmîl. Other schemes in the book show the dependence of learned men of later generations on earlier generations, e.g. which scholar was a pupil of which previous masters, on whose sources his learning is based and so on.

Not only in his appendices, but in the entire book, Werkmeister has shown a remarkable erudition and has convincingly proved to us, how at the time of the 'Iqd, there was still a living educational tradition from which — rather than from definitively fixed texts — adab-compilers drew their material.

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