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Assessing the Sources of Classical Arabic Compilations: The Issue of Categories and Methodologies

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Dedicated to Professor Manfred Fleischhammer (Halle/Saale), on the Occasion of his 75th birthday, 22 July 2003

ABSTRACT *The complex nature of medieval Arabic compilations, with their evidence of manifold pieces and layers of diverse (older) text material, has been puzzling to many scholars of Islam. It has even caused some researchers to question the authenticity and credibility of information contained in these texts— and their value as historical sources—altogether.*

An inquiry into the theoretical controversies at issue here constitutes the starting point of this article. Additionally, we will look at the categories and terms more frequently used in Western studies of the sources of Arabic compilations from about the eighth to the eleventh century Common Era (CE). The second part of the article offers an extensively annotated catalogue of categories and terms. This terminology, it is hoped, will help advance the assessment of classical Arabic compilations, for it takes the actual circumstances of the transmission of knowledge and the working techniques of compilers in medieval Islam into proper consideration. In conclusion, the paper illustrates how the proposed categories and terms are to be applied. It will become clear that the application of this kind of refined source-critical examination of individual classical Arabic texts is instrumental to a better understanding of medieval Muslim scholarship in general.

Introduction

In medieval studies, the assessment of the sources of literary and scholarly works constitutes a significant aspect of literary-historical research. In methodological terms, such assessment can be pursued in two ways: firstly, by analysing a given work from the viewpoints of an 'internal analysis of sources' (German: *innere Quellenkritik*) and, secondly, by conducting an 'external analysis of sources' (*äuβere Quellenkritik*).

   The objectives of an 'internal analysis of sources' (also called 'internal criticism') include: (a) assessment of the value of a given text as a primary source for literary and historical research; and (b) elucidation of such a text's literary form, stylistic devices, contents, and so on. Synoptic studies of comparable texts, for example, serve these objectives in a particularly efficient manner. In contrast,

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an 'external analysis of sources'—hereafter referred to as 'source-criticism'—focuses on the *genesis* of texts. Source-critical studies thus trace back the origin of the material included in a particular work. They attempt to identify and investigate those older materials significant to the author of a particular literary or scholarly text, and to evaluate all the basic material that entered it.

As far as classical Arabic literature is concerned, there are a vast number of compilations in which the compiler indicates his sources by *isnāds* or chains of transmitters. These *isnāds* were used by Muslim scholars to label—and thus to prove the credibility of—the pieces of information included in these works. Hence, for an *isnād*-using Arabic compilation from medieval times, 'source-criticism' means above all *isnād*-analysis.

The major objective of source-criticism is the determination and evaluation of a given compiler's 'sources'. This includes both: (a) those basic pieces of text (*tesserae*, as it were) which make up the textual 'patchwork' of his compilation; and (b) the individuals involved (at the various stages of transmission) in passing these texts on to the compiler. More specifically, it means:

(1) Assessment of the individuals who significantly contributed to transmitting the pieces of text that the compiler eventually incorporated into his compilation.
(2) Identification of these older texts. This includes clarification of their origin in terms of both the location and the time of their coming into existence.
(3) Assessment of the nature of these older texts. This includes tracing back the ways these texts were transmitted, along with investigation into the methods used by the scholars in transmitting them, and conclusive appraisal of the value these texts had for the compiler when used as sources.

In studying the sources of Arabic compilations from the eighth to the eleventh century CE, one faces a number of theoretical and practical difficulties. These issues arise for several reasons.

Firstly, there are certain particular features of early Muslim scholarship that stem from the system of Islamic education in medieval times. The practice of imparting and acquiring knowledge in lectures and seminars, for example, raises the issue of the proportion of oral and written components in the transmission of a text within this educational process.

Secondly, the *isnāds* attached to the texts quoted in classical Arabic compilations cause the researcher to inquire into the authenticity of these chains of transmitters, their credibility as historical evidence and their value for literary-historical research.

Thirdly, there are insufficiencies in method and terminology which have been challenging the study of Islam since the times of orientalists such as Julius Wellhausen and Ignaz Goldziher.[1]

Oral and written transmission

As to the question of oral and written transmission of knowledge in early Islam,[2] Arabic and Islamic studies have made remarkable progress since the 1980s and a certain consensus among scholars has emerged. This can be noted in publications such as those by George Makdisi (on the system of education in medieval Islam); Nabia Abbott, Rudolph Sellheim, Sadun Al-Samuk, Fuat Sezgin, Manfred Fleischhammer, James Bellamy, Albrecht Noth, G.H.A. Juynboll, Walter Werkmeister, and Gregor Schoeler (on the study of 'sources' and the transmission of knowledge in Islam in medieval times); but also in the studies by Eckart Stetter, Maher Jarrar, Harald Motzki, Stefan Leder and, in recent years, Fred Donner (on the nature of classical Arabic texts).[3] Although different views and controversies regarding the nature and development of the transmission of knowledge in early Islam continue to exist, the following conclusions can be drawn:

(1) 'Sessions' *(majālis, mujālasāt)* and circles *(ḥalaqāt)*[4] were held by Muslim scholars for the purpose of teaching, as early as the first decades and throughout the first three centuries of Islam. These scholarly sessions took place at public communal places such as mosques but also at private locations such as the homes of scholars. 'Oral instruction' was the primary method of imparting knowledge.[5] From the last decades of the first/seventh century on, it was used at first for teaching the Quran and for transmitting prophetic traditions (sing.: *ḥadīth*, pl.: *aḥādīth*). Yet the imparting of knowledge by instruction in lectures, seminars *(mudhākarāt)*[6] and tutorials—soon became a most important method of Islamic education used in all major branches of Arabic-Islamic scholarship throughout the Middle Ages.

(2) To a greater extent than in Hadith, other branches of Muslim scholarship practised writing, along with memorising, to retain information. This was evidently the case as early as the first century of Islam.[7] Hence the continuous interaction of oral and written components in the transmission of knowledge is considered as one of the most important characteristics of early Muslim scholarship. It may at times have resulted in the predominance of one component over the other, yet one did not exclude the other altogether.

(3) Regardless of the fact that there was a strong emphasis on the oral component of imparting and acquiring knowledge, Muslim scholars in early Islam did base their teaching regularly on written material. At first, and in most cases,

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[2] Taken to mean here the first three centuries of Islam.

[3] For the studies consulted for the article presented here, see the bibliography.

[4] From approximately the second century After the Hijra (AH) onwards, the word *ḥalqa*, 'circle', stands for a group of individuals who met under the guidance of an acknowledged scholar to study and discuss scholarly subjects, such as tradition, grammar or prosody.

[5] J. Fück (1925), Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq, p. 6.

[6] 'Al-Mudhākarāt... originally an innovation of students, was an informal exchange of *ḥadīth* among themselves, characterized by recapitulation and review. It had no fixed time, place or form.... Through the years, it developed into an institution, with rules and regulations of its own.' See Munir-ud-Din (1969), 'The Institution', p. 595.

[7] The papyrus fragments studied by Nabia Abbott (1957) support this view. They directly and convincingly verify the existence of an already developed stage of historiography in the second half of the second/eighth century; cf. *her Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri (Historical Texts)*.

however, teachers used and produced written material other than 'real' books. Instead they based their lectures and seminars on 'collections' of data and 'lecture scripts' often organised in 'notebooks,' and on 'notes' used as memory aids.[8] Such thematically ordered 'text units' varied considerably in length and content. They may have been prepared either by the teacher himself or by a scholar prior to the teacher's time.[9]

(4) In the course of time, these collections of data gradually gained more definite shape and came to be 'fixed' (in writing, or memory, or both). Some of these old collections became known as the literary 'work' of the scholar who had prepared it initially and had then 'published' it in his lectures. Some collections were revised, edited and formally published first by a scholar's student(s). 'Titles' were attached to some old collections; others became known simply by the name of their (first or major) 'collectors'.

(5) Hence it is seen why 'the concept of a book,' as Johann Fück put it, did not then gain shape in early Muslim scholarship: for it simply was not in the nature of such first collections of data to be 'integral textual entities' with distinct literary features (in terms of language, style and textual shape), which would be inseparably connected to one particular 'writer' or 'author'. Scholars preparing such written collections and lecture scripts, however, were not deprived of 'authorial creativity' altogether: for they expressed their individual opinions and convictions through thematic selection and arrangement of the material they included in their works.

Interestingly enough, these lecture scripts and written collections of data from the first three centuries of Islam seem to make up the majority of the 'sources' used by authors of later times when composing their often voluminous compilations.

(6) Although the attitudes of Muslim scholars toward the use of writing and the written word varied,[10] many early authorities evidently practised writing and used various kinds of written material for academic proposes. As shown above, some scholars did produce (a) 'real' books (such as epistles, monographs

[8] See also W. Werkmeister, letter quoted in: *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 136 (1986), p. 121.

[9] 'At a time when transmission was not yet generally based on complete written versions, that is to say, before 250/864, the 'transmitter' could indeed be the writer of a book, editing the material that he had received from his teacher. [...] In this sense, *riwāya* implies redaction or recension. Closest to original authorship is the teacher's dictation (*imlā;*). . ., next come the student's notes of the teachings. . .; a more independent operation is the quest for material apart from personal notes or memory, and even more of redactional work is implied, when the notes of the author are edited. . .;' cf. S. Leder (1994), 'Riwāya', p. 546. See also G. Schoeler (1985), 'Die Frage', p. 201; id. (1989), 'Weiteres', p. 39; and S. Leder (1999), 'Al-Madā'inī's Version', p. 380–384.

[10] The necessity and usefulness of close contact between teacher and student can also be explained by the peculiarities of the Arabic script and, consequently, by the difficulties in reading and understanding unvocalised Arabic texts. This fact helps to understand why 'aural transmission' (*al-riwāya al-masmū'a*) was considered as the best and most trustworthy method of transmission in classical Islam. As 'aural transmission' is a more accurate description of what took place than 'oral transmission', modern scholarship would be well advised to use the former term when describing Islamic education in medieval times. For the religiously based hesitations prevalent among many early Muslims to put a statement of the Prophet into circulation in written form, and for the issue of alterations in *hadīth* texts (through shortening or expansion), see I. Goldziher (1907), 'Kämpfe um die Stellung des *hadīth* im Islam', esp. p. 862. F. Sezgin (1967), *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums (GAS)*, Vol. I, p. 54, however, seems to downplay the existence of reservations among some early Muslims regarding the writing down of Hadith and the setting forth of traditions in written form. For more religious and material-cultural pros and cons regarding oral vs. written tradition, see Günther (1991), *Quellenuntersuchungen (QU)*, pp. 28–34. For the use of writing for the preservation of ancient Arabic poetry, see the insightful article by F. Krenkow (1922), 'The Use of Writing', esp. pp. 261–264.

and authorial compilation). These books display distinct characteristics such as:

- they were conclusively edited and published by the author himself;
- they often include a preface and/or an epilogue, in which the author expressly addresses 'the reader' (*qāri'*); and
- these texts often display a sophisticated system of internal references and/or even cross-references with other works of the given author.[11]

A second category of writings in early Islam comprises (b) the many 'authorial works' such as systematic collections and lecture scripts prepared by scholars, particularly for teaching purposes. Many of these collections are known to have been edited later on by a scholar's student(s) and eventually published, often in the name of the teacher.

Finally, there were (c) 'personal notes' that scholars and students took on their research trips and during or after a lecture or seminar. Understandably, these notes were also used by students and scholars as 'sources' when they, at a later stage of their career, composed a work of their own.[12]

These seemingly basic insights need to be taken into account when discussing categories and methodologies to be applied in assessing the 'sources' of classical Arabic compilations.[13]

The issue of the *isnād*

The authenticity of *isnād*s is still an issue in modern scholarship. To date, there has been a tendency among Western scholars to view these chains of transmitters with suspicion and scepticism. Some Western scholars deny the credibility of *isnād*s at all and reject the validity of the information contained in them.[14] It is postulated instead that the *isnād* was a development of later centuries of Islam. Furthermore, it is said

[11] Representative examples of 'real books' from that time are Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's *Aghānī* and *Maqātil*; see S. Günther (2002), '...*nor have I learned it from any book of theirs*', esp. pp. 140–141.

[12] For the various categories of writings used in early Islam—including the so-called *hypomnêmata* ('private notes' intended to be nothing more than an *aide-mémoire* for a talk or lecture) and *syngrammata* ('real books'), see above under (a) and G. Schoeler (1989), 'Weiteres', p. 39; and id. (1996), 'Theorien', pp. 124–125.
The term 'authorial works' refers to texts that represent a stage in between *hypomnêmata* and *syngrammata*. The term reflects the fact that the written collections of data prepared by early Arabic scholars were quite often more than simple 'lecture notes' taken for personal reasons. Many of these collections were well structured, revised and even 'published,' so to speak, by their 'authors' when their lectures were based on them. Naturally, these early written collections (or 'authorial works') also differ from what is known as 'definitively revised and published real books' (*syngrammata*). An example of an 'authorial work' is Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī's *Maʿālim al-sunan*; see S. Günther (1996), 'Der šāfiʿitische Traditionalist', pp. 69–70, 74. For this type of 'authorial work', see also id. (1994), '*Maqâtil* Literature', pp. 197–199; id. (1994), 'New results', pp. 10–11; and G. Schoeler (1994), *Charakter*, pp. 5–6.

[13] For the question as to when the scattered traditions were actually collected (*tadwīn al-ḥadīth*, last quarter of the first to the first quarter of the second century AH), systematised (*taṣnīf al-ḥadīth*, from about 125 AH onwards), and arranged into so-called *musnad* compilations, see GAS, p. 54.

[14] Joseph Schacht (1950), *Origins*, p. 37, remarked that 'there is no reason to support [the view] that the regular practice of using *isnād*s is older than the beginning of the second century A.H.'. Patricia Crone (1980) has argued that the source materials concerning early Islam came into being no earlier than the middle to end of the second century AH (i.e., in 'Abbāsid times and under the influence of the Persians), and that they were shaped according to the political and societal needs of the Muslims of that time. She says, for example: 'The source material thus consisted of an invariable canon formed between a hundred and fifty and two hundred years after the Prophet's death. It is for that reason that it is so extraordinary impenetrable'. See her *Slaves on Horses*, p. 11, and pp. 7, 12–15. In contrast, Johann Fück (1939), stated that 'the Islamic tradition contains a genuine kernel'. He rejected 'the opinion that it is an innovation of the first two centuries' for this would misjudge the actual circumstances of that early time. Cf. his 'Die Rolle des Traditionalismus', esp. pp. 19ff. See also Th. Nöldeke (1919), *Geschichte des Qorans*, Vol. II, pp. 193–198; and N. J. Coulson (1993), 'European Criticism of Ḥadīth Literature', pp. 317–321.

the *isnād* was designed to label traditions that in fact would not date from earlier than the 'Abbāsid period as 'genuine' and 'unadulterated'. Thus little credit is given to the contents of the narratives and reports which apparently date back to the first 150 years of Islam, nor is their value as primary sources for historical research accepted.

Although a critical view is advisable when it comes to chains of transmitters covering the first century of Islam,[15] denial of the authenticity of all *isnād*s seems unjustified. This is shown, for example, by the documents and textual evidence probably dating back to the earliest time of Islam, such as the papyri published in Nabia Abbott's books on early Islamic historiography and Hadith literature. Some exciting new research studies of that period (such as Harald Motzki's book on the development of early Islamic jurisprudence) have also increased our understanding of the earliest developments of Muslim scholarship.[16] As a result, *isnād*s increasingly have come to be accepted in Western scholarship as important evidence for Islam's earliest history. Based on these premises, one can conclude the following:

(a) The retention of knowledge in memory and its oral transmission over many generations is known in various cultures. However, the method of regularly labelling pieces of text with chains of text transmitters is unique to the Arabic-Islamic culture.[17] Developing first in the transmission of Hadith, this method of using *isnād*s was later applied at large also in other branches of Arabic-Islamic scholarship.

(b) Already toward the end of the first/seventh century, it was rather common among Muslim scholars to provide the names of authorities and transmitters of a *ḥadīth*-text. But even among Hadith scholars, complete chains of transmitters appear not to have been obligatory before the end of the second/eighth century.[18]

(c) Even in the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries, no consensus seems to have existed among Hadith scholars regarding the definite meaning of the various technical expressions, used by them to indicate the transmission of a piece of text. Instead, these *muṣṭalaḥāt al-ḥadīth* were used differently and, sometimes, without consistency even by one and the same scholar.[19] Nonetheless it is justified to view these technical expressions as indications that provide useful historical information for the transmission of knowledge during the first three centuries of Islam.[20]

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[15] Sellheim (1987), 'Muhammeds erstes Offenbarungserlebnis', p. 7.

[16] N. Abbott (1957), *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri (Historical Texts)*, Vol. 1; id. (1967), *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri (Qur'ānic Commentary and Tradition)*, Vol. II; and H. Motzki (1991), *Die Anfänge der islamischen Jurisprudenz. Ihre Entwicklung in Mekka bis zur Mitte des 2./8. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag).

[17] For the phenomenon of 'naming authorities' in the text tradition of cultures other than Islam, see Horovitz (1918), 'Alter und Ursprung des *Isnād*', pp. 39–47.

[18] J. Robson (1971), 'Ḥadīth', in *EI*[2], Vol. III, p. 23. G.H.A. Juynboll (1989) puts it in more definite terms when stating that 'the *isnād* as an institution originated in the late seventies of the first/seventh century'; see his 'Some *Isnād* Analytical Methods', p. 254, and the references given there.

[19] J. Robson (1960–61), 'Standards', pp. 460ff.; L. Librande (1982), 'The Supposed Homogeneity of Technical Terms in *Ḥadīth* Study', pp. 34–50.

[20] It appears to be advisable not to apply the rules of teaching and transmission known from later centuries to the earlier times of Islam. One could thus assign meanings peculiar to later periods and authorities to earlier times and authorities. This also needs to be taken into consideration when consulting the Arabic bio-bibliographical works of later times, for their systematised and schematised way of portrayal often suggests that the early authorities already used the expressions of transmission in a strictly defined and in a consistent way. See also Sellheim (1976), *Materialien*, Vol. I, p. 34; and id. (1981), 'Abū 'Alī al-Qālī', p. 374.

(d) From the third/ninth century on, the terms of transmission apparent in *isnād*s are relatively trustworthy.[21] They now appear to provide reliable data on the compilers' working methods and on the educational system in classical Islam as a whole.

Source-criticism in practice

Until some years ago, no adequate method was available to the modern researcher for analysing *isnād*s. This fact appears to have often been an additional reason for Western scholars to disregard the chains of transmitters altogether. However, Fuat Sezgin's research on the Hadith compilation *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ* by al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870)[22] and Manfred Fleischhammer's study of the sources of *The Great Book of Songs* by Abū l-Faraj a1-Iṣfahānī (d. 356/967)[23] resulted in a methodological breakthrough. Independently of each other, both scholars developed a method of thoroughly examining all the *isnād*s quoted in one particular compilation. This method examines the *isnād*s in ascending order from the proximate (most recent) to the more remote (ancient) links. It has been applied several times, and further refined, by several scholars in recent years.

A different method was developed by Joseph Schacht and applied in his *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*. This method focuses on analysing all *isnād*s covering one particular *ḥadīth*, mainly from its oldest (first or original) transmitter(s) up to the more recent transmitter(s).[24] Schacht's method has been used and refined especially by G. H. A. Juynboll, as shown, for example, in his book *Muslim Tradition*.[25]

Hence *isnād*-analysis has become accepted as, and proven to be, a sophisticated and most efficient tool of source-criticism of classical Arabic compilations.[26]

Theoretical aspects of source-criticism

As yet, several significant issues inherent to the methodology and terminology of both *isnād*-analysis and source-criticism have not been addressed sufficiently. One of these issues is the question of what exactly is to be understood by the term 'source' when it comes to classical Arabic compilations, given the sometimes ambiguous mechanisms of transmission evident during that period.

In the common sense of the word, all material an author used for his compilation might be considered as 'sources', regardless of the age and nature of these texts. Yet a more specific definition of the term 'source' is indispensable when attempting to assess this material and the individuals involved in its transmission.

[21] G. Rotter (1974), 'Zur Überlieferung einiger historischer Werke Madā'inīs in Ṭabarīs Annalen', p. 109; A. Guillaume (1924), *The Traditions of Islam*, pp. 52ff.

[22] F. Sezgin (1956), *Bukhāriı'nin kaynakları hakkında arastirmalar* (Istanbul: Ibrahim Horoz Basımevi); and *GAS*, pp. 82–83.

[23] M. Fleischhammer (1965), *Quellenuntersuchungen*, pp. 25ff.

[24] J. Schacht (1950), *The Origins*, esp. pp. 36–37 and 163–175 (the chapter 'The evidence of the *isnād*s').

[25] G.H.A. Juynboll (1983), *Muslim Tradition: Studies in Chronology, Provenance and Authorship of Early Hadīth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Some important articles on this topic have been republished in G. H. A. Juynboll (1996), *Studies on the Origins and Uses of Islamic Ḥadīth* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Variorum).

[26] Concerning computer-assisted *isnād*-analysis, see *QU* pp. 96–99.

At first glance, it seems to be possible to rely on terms that already exist in the secondary literature. For example, one finds expressions such as:

1. '*ursprüngliche Zeugen*' (U. Sezgin): 'original eyewitnesses' and contemporaries of a given event;[27]
2. 'earliest informant and transmitter' (Bellamy);[28]
3. '*erster Gewährsmann*' (Fleischhammer): 'first guarantor'; the person who first circulated a particular piece of information;[29]
4. '*ursprünglicher Berichterstatter*' (Wellhausen): 'original reporter'; [30]
5. '*letzte Autorität*' (Wellhausen, Brockelmann): 'last authority'; i.e. the oldest authority 'to which one may refer without the need to go further into the various *isnād*s of individual traditions';[31]
6. 'earliest common figure' (Bellamy): 'the historian or *muḥaddith* from whose written work the material is ultimately drawn';[32]
7. 'common link (cl)' (Schacht, Juynboll): the oldest transmitter in an *isnād* bundle covering a certain tradition, i.e. someone 'who hears something from (seldom more than) one authority and passes it on to a number of pupils, most of whom pass it on in their turn to two or more of their pupils';[33]
8. 'partial common link (pcl)' (Juynboll): a transmitter who receives 'something from a cl (or any other sort of transmitter from a generation after the cl)' and passes it on to two or more pupils;[34]
9. 'inverted partial common link (ipcl)' (Juynboll): 'a transmitter who is represented in a bundle as having received a report from two or more authorities to pass it on to one or more pupils';[35]
10. 'common link/originator' (Juynboll): the oldest or first person in an *isnād* bundle covering a certain *ḥadīth* who can be identified as a 'common link' and may be regarded as the oldest or original authority bringing into circulation a transmitted text;[36]
11. '*Hauptautorität*' (Wellhausen): 'main authority' as regards to both a particular text and a given compiler;[37]
12. '*Sammler*' (Wellhausen): 'collector'; the first or oldest person who compiled information;[38]
13. '*größere Sammler*' (Schoeler): 'major collectors' (see below in this article);[39]
14. 'collector sources' (Zolondek) (see below in this article);[40]
15. '*Verfasser*' (Fuat Sezgin): 'author' of a (revised and conclusively edited) book;[41]

[27] U. Sezgin (1971), *Abū Miḫnaf*, pp. 71–72.
[28] K. Bellamy (1984), 'Sources of Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā's *Kitāb Maqtal Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī*', p. 16.
[29] M. Fleischhammer (1965), *Quellenuntersuchungen*, p. 25.
[30] J. Wellhausen (1899), *Skizzen*, p. 4.
[31] Ibid., p. 4.; C. Brockelmann (1926), 'Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim', p. 2.
[32] J. Bellamy (1984), 'Sources', p. 5.
[33] G.H.A. Juynboll (1989), 'Some Isnād-Analytical Methods', p. 351; J. Schacht (1950), *Origins*, p. 172.
[34] G.H.A. Juynboll (1989), 'Some Isnād-Analytical Methods', p. 352.
[35] Ibid., pp. 360–361.
[36] Ibid., p. 369.
[37] J. Wellhausen (1927), *Das arabische Reich*, p. xii [Engl. trans., p. xv].
[38] J. Wellhausen (1899), *Skizzen*, p. 4.
[39.] G. Schoeler (1985), 'Die Frage', p. 223.
[40] L. Zolondek (1960), 'An Approach', p. 223.
[41] *GAS*, p. 77, and esp. pp. 82–84. However, F. Sezgin also uses the term 'author' for all those authorities who verifiably did nothing more than collect traditions, arrange them in larger text 'units', and pass them on to other scholars. These scholars were not authors of what are commonly known as 'real books'.

16. '(*bloβer*) *Überlieferer*' (Fuat Sezgin): '(mere) transmitter', someone who, technically speaking, just passed on material from one person to another;[42]
17. 'intermediary' (Bellamy): an individual figuring technically as a link between two transmitters;[43]
18. '*unmittelbarer Gewährsmann*' (Ursula Sezgin): the 'proximate guarantor' or senior person in an *isnād*, from whom a transmitter receives material directly, i.e. without a middleman;[44]
19. '*Quellen im engeren Sinne*' (Fleischhammer): 'sources in the narrow sense of the word', i.e. all literary material or pieces of information (transmitted in writing, or orally, or both) used by a given compiler directly;[45]
20. '*Quellen im weiteren Sinne*' (Fleischhammer): 'sources in the wider sense of the word', defined as 'every guarantor within an *isnād*';[46]
21. 'ultimate sources' (Bellamy)[47] and '*letzte Quellen* [last sources]' (Schoeler):[48] chronologically, the oldest original material on which a compiler relies;
22. 'immediate source' (Bellamy): a written source the compiler had at hand to make use of directly.[49]

Upon closer examination of these and other terms used in modern research studies, it becomes clear that these expressions belong to different categories. Nonetheless, modern researchers have often given different meanings to similar terms or, conversely, used terms with different definitions as synonyms.

Yet there is one more problem: the unawareness of, or conscious disregard for, the differences in meaning between terms for the source 'materials' and for their 'authors' (or 'originators', etc.). This negligence has caused additional terminological uncertainties in Arabic-Islamic studies. It has also resulted in a significant disunity and even terminological confusion in this field of research.

For example, in German research studies, the expression '*Quelle*', 'source', is often used as a synonym for '*Gewährsmann*', 'guarantor', regardless of the kind of source it represents: Hence, the names of 'guarantors' and 'transmitters' often stand to determine the source 'materials' on which a compiler relies in his work. A similar imprecise use of expressions is to be noted in some studies in English that also use the word 'source' to describe both the *individuals* involved in transmission and the text *materials* transmitted.

The following examples serve to illustrate this point. The German expression '*gröβere Sammler*' ('major collectors') is used correctly by G. Schoeler to characterise individuals as to their contribution to the 'coalescence' and consolidation of the material transmitted by them. This expression also refers to these individuals' activities and their significance in the process of the transmission of knowledge.[50] Another expression, 'collector sources' (Zolondek), is used also to mark a particular level of transmission.[51] This is done, however, despite the fact that 'collector sources' (the corresponding German word is '*Sammlerquellen*') would, strictly speaking, refer

[42] *GAS*, pp. 81–84, 241, 243.
[43] J. Bellamy (1984), 'Sources', pp. 9–16.
[44] U. Sezgin (1971), *Abū Mihnaf*, p. 71.
[45] M Fleischhammer (1965), *Quellenuntersuchungen*, p. 26.
[46] Ibid., p. 25.
[47] J. Bellamy (1984), 'Sources', pp. 3–18.
[48] G. Schoeler (1985), 'Die Frage', p. 223.
[49] J. Bellamy (1984), 'Sources', p. 13.
[50] G. Schoeler (1985), 'Die Frage', p. 223.
[51] L. Zolondek (1960), 'Approach', p. 223.

only to text 'materials'. Furthermore, the expression 'collector sources' is then used again as a synonym for the German term '*größerer Sammler*' ('major collectors').

In this way, the significant difference between the *individuals* and the *materials* these individuals transmitted is obscured. The fact that such an indiscriminate use of terms can cause confusion becomes evident in the following statement by Ursula Sezgin who says: 'Die unmittelbaren *Quellen* Abū Miḥnafs berufen sich ihrerseits auf *Gewährsleute*.' ('[As a rule], the intermediate *sources* of Abū Mikhnaf, in turn, rely on *guarantors*.')[52]

As a result, the lack of a commonly accepted terminology negatively affects both the theoretical and the practical aspects involved in any literary-historical analysis of sources from the early period of Islam. In addition, it makes it difficult to compare the results of similar research studies.

While assessing the sources of Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's historical-biographical compilation *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn*, it thus became essential to first clarify the terms commonly used in source-criticism (such as: guarantor, transmitter, collector and author). Moreover, a number of new terms were needed, particularly in order to classify source 'materials'. Consequently, a catalogue of defined categories and terms was established which has been proven to be helpful in determining, describing and evaluating the various 'sources' significant to a classical Arabic compiler such as the tenth century historian and man of letters Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī.

In this catalogue, the first major group of terms determines the individuals involved in the process of transmission. These terms relate to a given individual's:

1. Technical function in the transmission
2. Significance as points of reference for a given compiler' work;
3. Importance and contribution to the consolidation and eventual 'fixing' of the transmitted material.

The second major group of terms determines the source materials. These terms refer to a piece of text's:

1. Formal position in the process of transmission;
2. Importance as a source for the compilation under discussion;
3. Nature or consistency (oral and/or written).

Given the matrix of text transmission in classical Islam, such conceptual tools eventually make it possible to manage the bulk of transmitters and the huge number of texts handed down by them.

Catalogue of source-critical terms

Terms for individuals

Determining an individual's technical function in transmission

Transmitter.   Any person involved in the process of transmission who received information from an individual to pass it on to another individual is termed a 'transmitter' ('*Überlieferer*').

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[52] U. Sezgin, *Abū Miḥnaf*, p. 70 (emphasis added, S.G).

1. When a person C received material from any individual A *directly* (i.e. not through intermediaries), it is said: C is a *direct transmitter* of A, or simply: C is a *transmitter* of A.
2. When a person C received material from any individual A *indirectly* (i.e. through one intermediary B or more intermediaries B_1, B_2, B_3, etc.), it is said: C is an *indirect transmitter* of A.

Guarantor. Any (senior) person in the process of transmission on whom another (junior) individual relies for information is termed a 'guarantor' ('*Gewährsmann*')

In general:
1. When a person C obtained material from any individual A *directly* (i.e. not through one or more intermediaries), it is said: A is a *direct guarantor* of C, or simply: A is a *guarantor* of C.
2. When a person C obtained material from any individual A *indirectly* (i.e. through one intermediary B, or more intermediaries B_1, B_2, B_3, etc.), it is said: A is an *indirect guarantor* of C.

In particular:
1. When the compiler of the work under discussion obtained material from any individual A *directly*, it is said: A is a *direct guarantor* of the compiler, or simply: A is a *guarantor* of the compiler.
2. When the compiler of the work under discussion obtained material from any individual A *indirectly*, it is said: A is an *indirect guarantor* of the compiler.

Informant.
More specifically:
   Any 'direct guarantor' who was in personal contact with the compiler of the work under discussion is termed an 'informant'. 'Informants' are scholars whom the compiler had met on his academic journeys, whose lectures he had attended, and with whom he had been in touch academically in some other way (for example by exchanging letters).

Teacher. Any 'informant' whose lectures or seminars the compiler attended is called his 'teacher'.

Older Guarantor. In contrast to the 'informants', any person from a generation prior to the 'informants', who passed material on to another individual, is termed an 'older guarantor' of the compiler ('*älterer Gewährsmann*').

Older, Direct Guarantor. In contrast to the 'informants', any other senior person, whose material the compiler used directly (indicated, *inter alia,* by direct quotations) without having been in personal contact with this senior person, is termed an 'older, direct guarantor' ('*älterer, direkter Gewährsmann*'). This definition applies in particular to those 'older, direct guarantors' whose lifetimes do not overlap with that of the compiler.

Original Guarantor. The earliest person in a *complete isnād* who started to pass on information to another person is termed the 'original guarantor' ('*ursprünglicher Gewährsmann*').

Earliest Guarantor. Technically speaking, the earliest or most senior person mentioned in an incomplete *isnād* is termed the 'earliest guarantor'
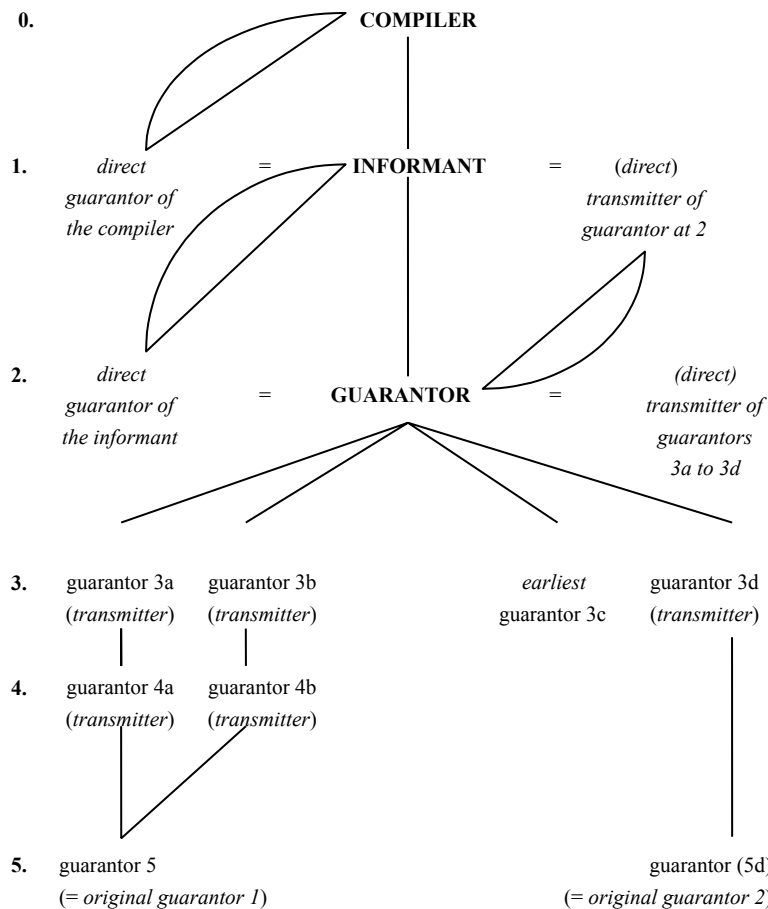
0.   **COMPILER**

1.   *direct*   =   **INFORMANT**   =   (*direct*)
              guarantor of   *transmitter of*
              the compiler   *guarantor at 2*

2.   *direct*   *(direct)*
              guarantor of   =   **GUARANTOR**   =   *transmitter of*
              the informant   *guarantors*
                                                3a to 3d

3.   guarantor 3a   guarantor 3b   *earliest*   guarantor 3d
       (*transmitter*)   (*transmitter*)   guarantor 3c   (*transmitter*)

4.   guarantor 4a   guarantor 4b
       (*transmitter*)   (*transmitter*)

5.   guarantor 5   guarantor (5d)
       (= *original guarantor 1*)   (= *original guarantor 2*)

Figure 1. Transmission Diagram.

('*frühester Gewährsmann*'). This person is not necessarily identical to the 'original guarantor' of the complete *isnād*.

First Guarantor. The earliest or most senior person in an *isnād*, regardless of whether or not it is complete, is termed the 'first guarantor' ('*erster Gewährsmann*').

Main Guarantor. In an *isnād* bundle, any person to whom the compiler refers frequently is termed a 'main guarantor' ('*Hauptgewährsmann*'). In a similar way, one can speak of main 'informants' and main 'older guarantors', etc. (but see 'main authority'). Figure 1 shows how these terms represent the various positions individuals may take within the matrix of transmission.

Determining an individual's significance in transmission

Authority. Any scholar to whom material incorporated in a given compilation is explicitly ascribed is termed an 'authority' ('*Autorität*').[53] Hence the term

[53] See also Schoeler, 'Theorien', pp. 121, 123.

'authority' reflects two dimensions: (a) the importance of this scholar as someone on whom the compiler relied in the transmission as a technical process, and (b) the significance of the materials ascribed to this scholar. Therefore, this term reflects an 'internal' relationship between the scholar and the text ascribed to him (while terms such as 'guarantor' and 'transmitter' indicate an 'external' relationship).

Older, Directly Quoted Authority.   Any senior scholar whose material the compiler quotes directly (often in longer passages) is termed a 'directly quoted older authority' ('*ältere, direkt zitierte Autorität*'). The compiler may either (a) have had direct access to the work of such a senior scholar or, more likely, (b) have drawn the passages from a more recent work (an edited copy of the work he had at hand, for example).

By quoting a senior authority directly, the compiler indicates that intermediaries were not significant to him in terms of the information he is interested in.

Often, 'directly quoted senior authorities' are important 'collectors' of material ascribed to them. Thus their materials are part of a compiler's 'actual sources'.

Earliest Authority.   The most senior scholar who transmits information—i.e. in a credible way for the first time—and who is not an eye or ear-witness or contemporary of the reported events is termed the 'earliest authority' ('*früheste Autorität*'). A scholar is termed in this way because the *isnād* under consideration is incomplete as far as its oldest links are concerned (see also 'earliest guarantor' and 'earliest source').

Main Authority.   Any scholar to whom a major report or subject is credited is termed a 'main authority' ('*Hauptautorität*'). It is a scholar who is cited for a particular topic more frequently than were other authorities. In many cases, a 'main authority' is, at the same time, an 'older, directly quoted authority'.

Classical Arabic compilers often indicate the complexity of the sources used for a certain passage or topic by quoting all relevant chains of transmitters at once. This phenomenon is called 'collective *isnād*' ('*Sammelisnād*'). Usually, a given compiler then expressly states which 'guarantor' he mainly relies on for the information following or preceding the collective *isnād*. He also often provides details regarding similarities and differences between the content of the traditions he had access to. Sometimes he even states the reason why he decided in favour of quoting one tradition and dismissing others.

Determining an individual's contribution to consolidating information and putting it in writing.
The following expressions determine the ways a scholar may have contributed to consolidating data:

Original Authority.   Any senior scholar first credited with having transmitted a report is termed an 'original authority' ('*ursprüngliche Autorität*'). Most likely, he was an eyewitness to the event at issue, or a hearer of the prophetic saying, or a contemporary of the event reported.

Earliest Authority.   If the *isnād* is incomplete and no 'original authority' can be determined, the most senior scholar (mostly from the generation subsequent to the event reported) is termed the 'earliest authority' ('*früheste Autorität*').

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Main Authority.   Any scholar most frequently quoted for a given topic is termed a 'main authority' ('*Hauptautorität*').

In most cases, 'main authorities' are 'older, directly quoted authorities'. The name of such an individual occurs more often in a given context than those of other 'authorities'. Again, the compiler often indicates the various chains of transmitters significant here in a collective *isnād*.

The following expressions determine individuals more specifically in terms of the role they played in consolidating data in writing.

Writer.   *In general terms*, any scholar to whom a conclusively edited written work is attributed can be termed a 'writer'. The expression 'writer' does not apply to individuals who technically did nothing else but take notes.

Author.   *More specifically*, a 'writer' whose written work is provably the result of *creative* scholarly efforts is termed an 'author' ('*Verfasser*').

Mostly, the written composition or book of an 'author' (be it a compilation or monograph) is known by title or its existence is at least certifiable in the medieval bio-bibliographical literature.

Editor.   A 'writer' is termed an 'editor' (or, more precisely, 'recensionist'; German: '*Rezensent*') if he is proven to have relied, in all or in most cases, on one and the same scholar (or 'direct guarantor')—while the latter can be identified in the bio-bibliographical literature as the 'author' of a book dedicated to the topic relevant in this context.

The decision on whether a scholar is termed an 'author' or an 'editor' gains in significance when assessing the (direct) 'informants' of a compiler.

Collector.   Any scholar who—for the first time—collected data on a particular topic, arranged it and systematised it in larger text 'units' is termed a 'collector' ('*Sammler*'). Many of these larger systematic text 'units' prepared by 'collectors' appear to have eventually served the compilers of the eighth to the eleventh centuries CE as their 'actual sources'.

Mostly, 'collectors' are senior scholars from the end of the eighth to the beginning of the ninth century. Early 'collectors' are noticeable in the classical Arabic compilations, for they rely—in an equally frequent manner—on a large number of 'guarantors'. Due to these early 'collectors', large numbers of individual traditions on specific subjects gained compound textual structure and shape. In an *isnād* scheme (see Figure 2), a 'collector' stands out in the following manner (viewed from the more recent to the earlier links):

These students, however, did not transmit the data the 'collector' had put together as an integrated unit of text. Instead, they incorporated these data selectively into their own works. In the course of these efforts, the various pieces of text got re-arranged. Often new material was added from sources other than the one ascribed to the 'collector' in question here. Eventually, this old 'collector's' work became obsolete and may have been lost.

This way of transmitting traditions seems to have been a common practice in the eighth to the eleventh centuries, for Islamic sciences were still in the process of formation at this time and scholars were particularly eager to arrange and re-arrange information they obtained from old collections when composing works of their own.

1. A single path of transmission(or a small number of paths of transmission) reaches a point, from where the transmission branches out.
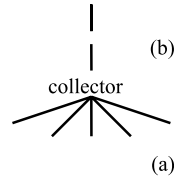
In other words: The "collector" (whose position in the scheme of transmission appears as a "knot") (a) collected information from several teachers and (b) then passed it on to only one student or a small number of students.

(b)

collector

(a)

2. Several paths of transmission converge at a certain point (forming a "knot") and then branch out again.
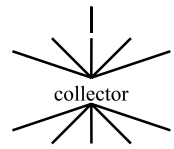
In other words: The "collector" (represented by this "knot") (a) collected information from various teachers and (b) then passed it on again to several students.

collector

3. If none of the two aforementioned cases applies, an individual may still have been a "collector." This is the case when an individual "is found, in recurrent *isnāds*, very often at one and the same position."[54]

collector
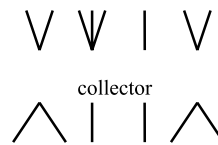
In other words, a scholar (a) relied on several teachers for the information he obtained and (b) then,in his turn, transmitted it again to numerous students.

Figure 2. *Isnād* Scheme.

Mere Transmitter. Any person who passed on information basically unaltered—i.e. in the way he had received it from his 'direct guarantor'—is termed a 'mere transmitter' ('*bloβer Überlieferer*'). 'Mere transmitter' is a technical expression intended to refer to a person with no significant contribution to consolidating or shaping text. Figure 3 (see p. 90) illustrates how these terms relate to each other:

Terms for the source material

The text material's technical position within transmission

Direct Source. A text used directly by a given compiler (i.e. the texts the compiler had at hand) is termed his 'direct source' ('*direkte Quelle*'). There are two types of 'direct sources':

1. The material at the most recent and last stage of transmission (i.e. directly prior to that of the compiler) is termed a 'direct source' without any further designation. The compiler obtained this information directly from his 'informants'. For practical reasons, the 'direct sources' often constitute the starting point for any assessment of the source 'material' a compiler used as a whole. Moreover, analysing how a given compiler made use of his 'direct sources' provides valuable insight into his actual working methods.
2. Material from an earlier stage of transmission, to which the compiler had direct access, is termed an 'older, directly used (written) source'. Interestingly enough, one often deals in these cases with written material ascribed to older 'authorities'.

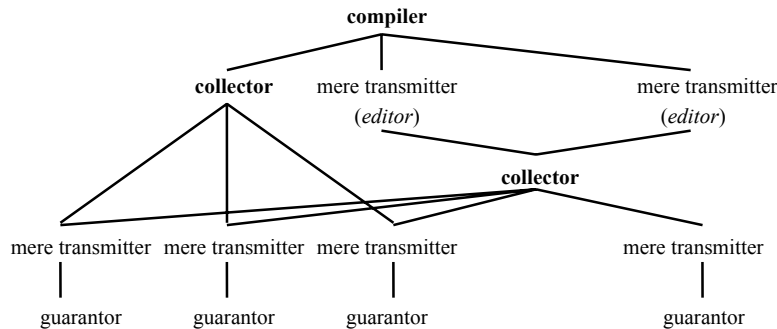[54] M. Fleischhammer (1965), *Quellenuntersuchungen*, p. 27.

Figure 3. Relationship between Individuals.

Proximate Source.   A text is termed a 'proximate source' (or 'last source'; '*letzte Quelle*'), if the person to whom it is ascribed is identified as a 'mere transmitter'. Both 'proximate sources' and 'mere transmitters' can be neglected in many cases, for their actual significance to the compiler's work is of limited value.

Yet 'proximate sources' gain in significance when a teacher (or 'informant') of a given compiler is identified to be a 'mere transmitter,' since this 'informant' was then the 'editor' of an older book.

The text material's significance as a source

Main Source.   The work (an old collection of data or a book) used by the given compiler most frequently (either for his entire compilation or for major parts of it) is termed his 'main source' ('*Hauptquelle*').

Actual Source.   A work quoted frequently by a given compiler (even if the compiler may not have had this old text at hand) is termed his 'actual source' ('*eigentliche Quelle*').

Source-criticism often deals in these cases with text 'units' that are compact in terms of textual shape and subject matter, without representing 'real books'. The expression text 'unit' means that a particular text reached a stage within the course of transmission, at which the individual bits of information (up until then rather loosely connected) got assembled into more sharply defined groups of information. These old text 'unit's can often be identified as (lost) old 'authorial works' and sometimes as 'real books'.[55]

Original Source.   The text material at the initial level of transmission, i.e. that of the 'original guarantors', is termed an 'original source' ('*ursprüngliche Quelle*'). 'Original sources' often only consist of a few sentences or bits of information. The possibilities of verifying 'original sources' (and thus the 'original authorities') are limited.[56]

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[55] S. Leder (1996) drew attention to the difficulties arising from what appear to be the titles of 'books' in the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm (d. ca. 377/987); cf. his 'Grenzen der Rekonstruktion', pp. 21–31. See also E. Landau-Tasseron (2004), 'On the Reconstruction of Lost Sources' *Al-Qanṭara*, 25, pp. 45–91; L.I. Conrad (1993), 'Recovering Lost Texts: Some Methodological Issues', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 113.2, pp. 258–263; and M. Jarrar's (1992) critical review of G. A. Newby (1989), *The Making of the Last Prophet. A Reconstruction of the Earliest Biography of Muhammad* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press), A1-Qanṭara, 13, pp. 287–290.

[56] In her study of Abū Mikhnaf's books, Ursula Sezgin (1971) attempted to verify 'original authorities' (in her terminology: 'original eyewitnesses'). She achieved some remarkable results regarding both the age of the material used by Abū Mikhnaf and the 'age' of the *isnāds* quoted by him. See her *Abū Mihnaf*, pp. 74–81.

Attempting to identify these 'sources of the sources' of a given compiler, so to speak, seems to be useful only if the medieval bio-bibliographical literature attests that an 'original authority' was a 'writer'.

The text material's nature or consistency (oral vs. written)

Written Source.   Relevant written material from the time prior to the compiler is termed a 'written source' ('*schriftliche Quelle*'). Written sources can be determined furthermore as follows:

- 'Written source quoted by name (*wsn*)' if the compiler expressly names a piece of writing: by title or by the name of its 'author,' 'editor,' or copyist, etc. (→ '*namentlich genannte schriftliche Quelle*').
- 'Definitely written source (*dws*)' if the written nature of a compiler's source is verified by both the terms of transmission (as given in the *isnād*s) and the information in the medieval bio-bibliographical literature (→ '*nachweisbar schriftliche Quelle*').
- 'Certainly written source (*cws*)' if the written nature of a compiler's source is verified either by the terms of transmission (as given in *isnād*s) or by the information in the medieval bio-bibliographical literature (such as the title of a thematically relevant work ascribed to the scholar quoted by the compiler) (→ '*sicherlich schriftliche Quelle*').
- 'Possibly written source (*pws*)' if the written nature of the material a compiler used is not conclusively attested, either by the terms of transmission or by the information in the medieval bio-bibliographical literature; yet there are some credible indications gained by source-criticism that make the researcher conclude that certain text material originated from a piece of writing. Examples of these indication are: frequent quotations of long passages; information in the medieval bio-bibliographical literature pointing to an ascribed, thematically relevant piece of writing; etc. (→ '*möglicherweise schriftliche Quelle*').

For a given compiler's written sources to be particularly significant, some further distinctions may be useful:

- 'Directly used written source': A piece of writing ascribed either to an 'informant' or to an 'older, direct guarantor.' (→ '*direkte schriftliche Quelle*').
- 'Proximate written source': A more recent (often an 'edited') copy of an older book which the compiler had at hand when preparing his compilation. (→ '*letzte schriftliche Quelle*').
- 'Actual written source': A piece of writing from the time prior to the compiler (which the compiler quotes directly, although he seems not to have had it at hand) is termed his 'actual written source' (→ '*eigentliche schriftliche Quelle*').
- 'Original written source': The earliest verifiable piece of writing (used by the compiler either directly or, more likely, indirectly) is termed his 'original written source' (→ '*ursprüngliche schriftliche Quelle*').[57]

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[57] Determination of the 'original written sources' of a compiler is an intricate task. For this purpose, all information obtained by *isnād*-analysis, and the additional indications the compiler provides (e.g. direct quotations of old authorities, etc.) need to be taken into account, along with the data given in the medieval bio-bibliographical lexicons.

Oral Source. The information a compiler obtained orally—i.e. not from any piece of writing—is termed an 'oral source' ('*mündliche Quelle*'). 'Oral sources' can be further classified as 'oral source quoted by name'; 'definitely', 'certainly' and 'possibly oral sources'.

   Finally, two more points may be made: First, the terms proposed here are not mutually exclusive. This is true even for terms of one and the same group or category. For example, if a person is termed a 'collector', he can still also be a 'writer/author'. Also, an 'actual source' can at the same time be an 'original source'. Secondly, terms may coincide even if they belong to different groups or categories. For example, if a person is classified as a 'collector', s/he may at the same time have been a 'main guarantor' or represent an 'older, directly quoted authority', and an 'actual source' is also often a 'written source'.

How these terms can be applied

The concluding section of this article gives an example of how these source-critical terms can be applied. It rests on a confined but representative number of texts, which were used by Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī as sources in compiling his *Maqātil*.[58] It focuses on the historian and man of letters Aḥmad ihn al-Ḥārith al-Kharrāz (d. 258/872 in Kufa) and the material transmitted by him.

   The medieval bio-bibliographical literature ascribes numerous books to al-Kharrāz.[59] Most of them are historical-bibliographical and genealogical works. (Ibn al-Nadīm, for example, mentions sixteen titles.) In these works, al-Kharrāz relies mainly on his teacher al-Madā'inī (d. 235/850 in Baghdad). In the *Maqātil,* Abū l-Faraj mentions al-Kharrāz 29 times by name.[60] The relevant *isnāds* show that four of Abū l-Faraj's 'informants' were acting as intermediaries between Abū l-Faraj and al-Kharrāz. These 'informants' are:

(1) 'Īsā ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Warrāq (who was still alive at the beginning of the fourth/tenth century);[61]
(2) Aḥmad ibn 'Ubayd Allāh ibn 'Ammār al-Thaqafī (d. 314/926 in -Kufa).[62]
(3) Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Abī Shayba (d. 317/929);[63] and
(4) Aḥmad ibn 'Īsā al-'Ijlī (he was still alive at the beginning of the fourth/tenth century).[64]

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[58] For *maqātil* as a genre, see S. Günther (1994), '*Maqâtil*-Literature', esp. pp. 193–196, 209–210. For Abū l-Faraj's working techniques, see id. (2002), '*…nor have I learned it from any book of theirs*', pp. 141–145.
[59] *QU*, pp. 118–21 and the references given there. See also M. Fleischhammer (1965), *Quellenuntersuchungen*, pp. 65, no. 13; 113, no. 12. Furthermore, see *GAS*, pp. 318–319; and Ibn al-Nadīm, *Al-Fihrist* (ed. Flügel), Vol. I, pp. 104–105.
[60] Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (1949), *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn* (ed. Aḥ Ṣaqr), p. 79: line 1, and 79:3, 86:1, 90:9, 95:8, 124:10, 160:9, 162:16, 166:7, 239:1, 255:15, 256:13, 259:14, 267:4, 276:13, 384:4, 390:15, 392:4, 442:17, 451:14, 451:16, 454:3, 456:3, 457:15, 459:8, 579:1, 588:7, 588:13, (and 588:16).
[61] 'Īsā ibn al-Ḥusayn (al-Ḥasan) al-Warrāq ('the book-dealer') is named 19 times in the *Maqātil* and 108 times in the *Aghānī* as an 'informant' of Abū l-Faraj's. See *QU*, p. 180.
[62] Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn 'Ubayd Allāh ibn 'Ammār al-Thaqafī was a Shiite historian and man of letters from Baghdad and secretary of various 'Abbāsid viziers. He is known as the author of several *akhbār*-works on the history of the 'Alids. He is an important 'informant' of Abū l-Faraj's for the *Maqātil*, named therein 47 times. See *QU*, pp. 133–136.
[63] Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Shabīb, known as Abū Bakr Ibn Abī Shayba (*Maqātil*, p. 95:8), was most probably from Baghdad. His biographers expressly note that he took classes with Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥārith al-Kharrāz, the latter being a student of al-Madā'inī. Aḥmadini Muḥammad Ibn Abī Shayba is named 5 times in the *Maqātil*. See *QU*, pp. 131–132.
[64] Abū l-Faraj met Aḥmad ibn 'Īsā ibn Abī Mūsā al-'Ijlī in Kufa. In the *Maqātil*, Abū l-Faraj mentions him 16 times as his 'informant.' Abū l-Faraj indicates that al-'Ijlī was an important transmitter of Abū Mikhnaf's books. No works of al-'Ijlī's are known. See *QU*, pp. 123–124.

Abū l-Faraj cites al-Kharrāz twelve times directly. He mostly introduces these quotation by the expressions *dhakara* and *qāla*.[65] Al-Kharrāz, in turn, transmits basically from two 'guarantors' (on some occasions, no 'guarantor' of his is given). Al-Kharrāz expressly refers:

- once to al-Ḥusayn ibn Naṣr who, in turn, transmits from his father, the Shiite historian Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim al-Minqarī (d. 212/827 in Kufa); and
- twenty times to al-Madā'inī (d. 235/850) who, in turn, transmits four times on the authority of Abū Mikhnaf (d. 157/775).

The analysis of the relevant *isnāds* reveals the following scheme of transmission (see also Figure 4 on the following page):

Abū l-Faraj states on several occasions in the *Maqātil* (as he does in the *Aghānī*) that he drew certain passages directly from a manuscript (*kitāb, khaṭṭ*) of al-Kharrāz's. Abū l-Faraj says:

> I transcribed (*nasakhtu*) this [information] from the piece of writing (*kitāb*) of Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥārith al-Kharrāz's. . .. (*Maqātil*, p. 384:3).

A similar statement is made in the context of the report on al-Muʿtaṣim's reign. This report is part of the chapter on the Ṭālibid Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim ibn ʿAlī, for which Abū l-Faraj also expressly used a piece of writing of al-Kharrāz's (*Maqātil*, p. 579:1).

Furthermore, Abū l-Faraj states: 'I transcribed *(nasakhtu)* the information about him also from what I found in the manuscript (*khaṭṭ*) of Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥārith al-Kharrāz's' (*Maqātil*, p. 442:17). But Abū l-Faraj indicates as well that: 'I found in the book of mine, which ʿĪsā ibn al-Ḥusayn had given to me (*wajadtu fī kitābī alladhī dafaʿahū ilayya ʿĪsā ibn al-Ḥusayn*), on the authority of Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥārith and [the latter] on the authority of al-Madāʿinī. . .' (*Maqātil*, p. 384:4); and that 'Aḥmad ihn al-Ḥārith said in his report (*ḥadīth*) on the authority of al-Madāʿinī', and 'he mentioned in his transmission *(riwāya)*. . .' (*Maqātil*, p. 392:4; 451:17). This evidence allows us to draw the following conclusions:

1. Three of Abū l-Faraj's 'direct guarantors' (i.e. the 'informants' 1, 3 and 4) are 'mere transmitters' of older texts. For the *isnāds* along with the information in bio-bibliographical literature make it clear that these 'informants' technically just passed on older material.
2. The 'informant' Aḥmad ibn ʿUbayd Allāh al-Thaqafī, however, is to be viewed differently. He is known as a 'writer' and 'author' of several writings. Moreover, there is much evidence that Abū l-Faraj attended al-Thaqafī's classes in which al-Thaqafī lectured based on what later became known as al-Thaqafī's *Kitāb Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn*.[66] In addition to these lectures of al-Thaqafī (probably organised according to his lecture notebooks), Abū l-Faraj may have had some other writings of al-Thaqafī's at hand.

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[65] For the term *dhakara*, see Abū l-Faraj, *Maqātil*, pp. 160:9, 275:4, 451:14, 588:7, 588:13. For *qāla*, see ibid., pp. 267:4, 276:13, 392:7, 451:14.

[66] Interestingly enough, al-Thaqafī's *K. Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn* (known also as *Al-Mubayyaḍa* [*fī Akhbār Maqātil Āl Abī Ṭālib*]) is not mentioned as such by Abū l-Faraj. One can assume, however, that al-Thaqafī edited his series of lectures on *maqātil* at a later date or that it was eventually published by his students. In Abū l-Faraj's *Maqātil*, al-Kharrāz (mentioned six times) is al-Thaqafī's second most important 'direct guarantor' and 'teacher'. See *QU*, pp. 133–135.
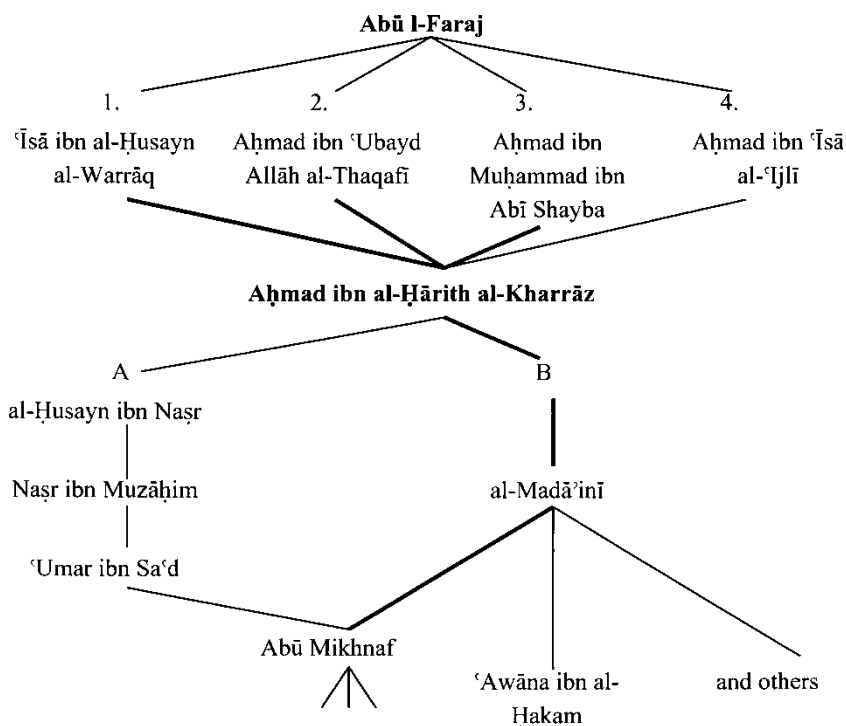
Figure 4. Transmission Example.

3. Al-Kharrāz is an important 'older guarantor' of Abū l-Faraj's. Because Abū l-Faraj had a 'piece of writing' (kitāb, khaṭṭ) expressly ascribed to al-Kharrāz at his disposal, Abū l-Faraj was able to transcribe from it. This makes al-Kharrāz an 'older, direct guarantor' and the material ascribed to him an 'older, directly used, written source, quoted by name'.

4. Al-Kharrāz transmits almost exclusively from his 'teacher', al-Madā'inī. Because it was impossible to verify in the rijāl-literature al-Kharrāz's kitāb or khaṭṭ, it can be assumed that this piece of writing (perhaps entitled Kitāb Man qutila min al-Ṭālibiyyīn or something similar) was an (edited) copy of one of al-Madā'inī's books on Shiite history.[67] Hence, this manuscript ascribed to al-Kharrāz is termed a 'proximate... written source' of Abū l-Faraj's. Accordingly, al-Kharrāz is termed a 'writer/editor'.

5. The bio-bibliographical literature identifies al-Madā'inī as a 'writer' and—to be more precise—as an 'author' of thematically relevant books. Hence, al-Madā'inī's maqātil works are among Abū l-Faraj's 'actual, certainly written sources'. Two arguments support this view. Firstly, the information in the rijāl literature confirms the written nature of the akhbār ascribed to al-Madā'inī. Secondly, the diagram of relevant isnāds indicates al-Madā'inī's position as a 'knot' in which earlier paths of transmission converge.[68]

[67] Instead of giving the names of actual composers and authors of written works, in both the Maqātil and the Aghānī, Abū l-Faraj often indicates the written sources at his disposal by simply providing the names of the 'transmitters' of those works.

[68] In Maqātil, p. 160:9, the isnād is given as follows: wa-dhakara Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥārith al-Kharrāz 'an al-Madā'inī 'an rijālihī. Apparently, the 'original guarantors' were of no importance to the compiler of the tenth century so he omitted their names.

6. There are two older 'guarantors', Naṣr ibn Muzāhim and 'Umar ibn Sa'd (see A in Figure 4) who represent a second path of transmission. Although known as 'authors' of *maqtal* books, they can be neglected in the context examined here, for they appear only once in this particular transmission.

7. One of Abū l-Faraj's most important 'older guarantors' in the *Maqātil* as a whole is the Shiite historian Abū Mikhnaf. Abū Mikhnaf is not only known as an important old 'collector' of historical information, but—like al-Mada'inī— as a significant 'author' of 'real books' on early Islamic. For Abū l-Faraj's *Maqātil*, Abū Mikhnaf's *maqtal* books are an important '*original* written source'.[69]

8. The 'oldest ('earliest,' 'first', or 'original') guarantors' relevant for this particular *isnād* bundle are rarely mentioned. They can be excluded from our examination.

Conclusions

These few examples seem to highlight again the complexity of transmission in early Islam. However, they show also that a detailed analysis of the *isnāds* quoted in a particular classical Arabic compilation, along with in-depth assessment of the scholars and materials involved in transmission, can form a solid ground for drawing conclusions about a given classical Arabic scholar's working methods. Additionally, source-critical assessment of one particular work does provide concrete data on the history of classical Arabic literature and virtually opens a window into the reality of Muslim intellectual life in medieval times.

Therefore it seems to be all the more essential to promote literary-historical research on classical Arabic literature by the use of sophisticated methodologies and tools that take into consideration and adequately reflect actual circumstances and mechanisms when it comes to the transmission of knowledge in early Islam. Source-critical studies thus can contribute substantially to the better understanding of classical Arabic literature.

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[69] *QU*, pp. 181–84.

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