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### Front cover:

"Desvarāṭī (Varāri, Varādi) Rāginī", watercolour, gouache and gold on paper.  
Deccan, second half of the 18th century. Album (*Muraqqa'*) X 3 in the Karl Fabergé collection  
at the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fol. 25 a, 11.5×17.0 cm.

### Back cover:

"Lalita Rāginī", watercolour, gouache and gold on paper. Deccan, second half of the 18th century.  
Same Album, fol. 34 b, 13.5×23.0 cm.

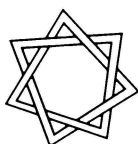
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## A MANUSCRIPT OF AN ANTHOLOGY BY AL-ĀBĪ

Abū Sa'īd (or Abū Sa'd) Maṣūb b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ābī is known as a literary and political figure of the late tenth — early eleventh century. In describing al-Ābī's native city in his "Geographical Dictionary", Yāqūt provides in passing some valuable information about him; it is virtually all that has come down to us [1]. "The town of Āba is located across from Sāwa [2] and is known among the populace by the name of Āwa; this is undoubtedly [correct]. Its residents are Shi'ites, and the residents of Sāwa are Sunnis; unceasing war is waged between these two cities because of religious differences... In my opinion, this is the place of origin of Abū Sa'd Maṣūb b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ābī, who was [repeatedly] appointed the ruler of glorious regions and was friends with al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād [3]. He later became a *wazīr* under Majd al-Dawla Rustam b. Fakhr al-Dawla b. Rukn al-Dawla b. Buwayh. He was an *adīb*, poet and compiler of books. He is the author of *Kitāb nathr al-durr*, "History of al-Ray", and other works. His brother, Abū Maṣūb Muḥammad [4], was one of the great *kātib*s and glorious *wazīr*s who served the ruler of Tabaristan".

The numerous sources on the history of the Buwayhids are silent on the political activities of al-Ābī. Ḥājji Khalīfa [5] terms him a *wazīr* and gives the date of his death as 421/1030.

Al-Ābī's "History of al-Ray" is known only because it is mentioned by Yāqūt and al-Ṣafādī [6]. In his poetic anthology *Dumyāt al-qaṣr wa 'uṣrat ahl al-'aṣr* [7], al-Bākhārī provides some satirical verses by al-Ābī and speaks of his letters (*rasā'il*) and poems (*qaṣā'id*) as being of high artistic merit. Several verses by al-Ābī are apparently also cited in *Tatimmat al-yatīma* by al-Tha'ālībī [8]. Al-Ābī's most significant contribution to Arabic literature is his seven-volume prose anthology, scattered sections of which are now held in various manuscript collections. The St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies possesses a two-volume manuscript containing the second and sixth volumes of the work [9]. Before describing the manuscript, we touch on several questions about the work as a whole.

Several variants of the work's title exist. The most extended is *Kitāb nathr al-durr wa nafā'is al-jawhar fi-l-muḥādārat* ("Book of Scattered Pearls and Precious Stones in Conversation"). Our copy is entitled *Kitāb nathr al-durr* ("Book of Scattered Pearls"), and this brief title was preferred by W. Ahlwardt [10] and I. Krachkovsky [11]. We also note that, according to Ḥājji Khalīfa [12], *Kitāb nathr al-durr* is an abridgement of a more voluminous work

by the same author — *Nuzhat al-qulūb* ("Delight of the Heart") — which has not come down to us. This is difficult to verify, as this is not clear from the anthology and is not confirmed by other sources.

Information about the plan and volume of the work is contradictory, as not one repository possesses a complete copy. Among Arab authors, only Ḥājji Khalīfa provides a description [13]. According to him, the anthology is made up of seven volumes (*mujallad*), each of which features its own eloquent introduction (*khuṭba*) and consists of four sections (*faṣl*) subdivided into chapters (*bāb*). His description leaves the ratio of volumes to sections unclear. He then gives a summary of the contents of five chapters from the first section and indicates the main themes of the remaining three sections and the number of chapters in them. The Cairo [14] and Leiden [15] catalogues indicate that al-Ābī's anthology consists of five sections. The Berlin [16] catalogue gives seven sections or parts (*juz'*), with both terms considered identical in meaning. The Paris [17] catalogue speaks of a seven-volume anthology with an abridged redaction consisting of seven parts. Scholars who worked with the St. Petersburg manuscript considered it the second and sixth volumes of a seven-volume anthology [18]. Finally, in a dissertation on al-Ābī's anthology, the American Arabist C. Owen [19] holds that the four volumes of the Cairo collection contain the full work; he provides an overview of the contents, which coincides exactly with the information given by Ḥājji Khalīfa about the four sections of the work.

As for the St. Petersburg manuscript, we find that one volume bears on its title page the heading *al-Juz' al-thānī min kitāb Nathr al-durr* ("Second part of the book *Nathr al-durr*") and contains the end of the second section and third section in its entirety. The end of the manuscript:

آخر الجزء الثانى و يتلوه فى الجزء الثالث كلام  
النساء الشرائف و الحمد لله حمد الشاكرين وصلاته  
على نبيه محمد و على آله اجمعين وسلامه

These concluding words indicate a discrepancy between parts and sections. But the other volume of our manuscript is entitled both the sixth part and sixth section of the anthology. Like the third section, it begins with an introduction (*basma* and *khuṭba*) and table of contents. Consequently, either the parts and sections should correspond to each other, or the discrepancy was fixed by the sixth section.

بالرمح وقصصا تحت ظلال السيف فان هلك المصعب  
 فان في آل الزبير خلفا وقال الماناه فكله اشهد المهلب  
 قالوا الا كان المهلب في وجوه اخوانه قال اشهد عبد  
 البر الحصين قالوا اما اشهد عبد الله بن حاتم السلمي قالوا  
 فمات عبد الله بن الزبير  
 فقلت لها عيني جبار وجزبي بلح من عبي شهد اليوم ناصره  
 كان غزوه الزبير اذ اذكر من قتل عثمان يقول كان  
 عليا انقذه من اذ قتل عثمان وكان عثمان انقذ من ان  
 يقتله علي قالوا تحت السند التابعه لجمعت  
 ولم يشهد عبد الله بن الزبير حين صد الزبير حتى يشهد  
 يقول  
 حكيت لنا الصديق حين ولينا وثمان والغازي فاننا معكم  
 فقال له ابن الزبير هون عليك ابا ابيك فليسر وسأملك  
 عندنا الشعر اما صنفه ما لنا فلبني اسد واما عفوها  
 فلان الصديق ولك في بيت المال حقان حق لجمعت رسول

Fig. 1

We can conclude from the preceding that despite some confusion over terms, *Kitāb nathr al-durr* consists of seven sections equipped with independent introductions; manuscript repositories contain sections one through four, while sections five and seven have not been discovered anywhere. Only the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies has a unique copy of the sixth section [20].

The two volumes of the manuscript differ in their externals. Nonetheless, they were apparently created at the same time, are part of a single set, and have the same history. They are not dated, but they go back to approximately the late thirteenth — early fourteenth century and come from Syria.

The first and last folios of both volumes bear dated notes by several readers of the manuscript. In one volume we find notes by: a reader whose name is illegible with the date 928 (1522); a certain 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Harawī from 930 (1524); Muḥammad Sukaykir al-Dimishqī [21] with the date Sha'bān 985 (October 1577) (two years before his death); a certain As'ad from 1083 (1672) and a certain Yahyā (?) al-Dādikhī from 1126 (1714). The other (with the sixth section) contains notes by a certain Najm al-Dīn (the second part of the name is illegible) with the date 988 (1580), a native of Aleppo, Ḥusayn b. 'Alī from 1052 (1642), and several others.

The French ambassador in Syria, J. L. Rousseau (1780—1831), a noted collector of manuscripts, acquired the manuscript at the beginning of the nineteenth century, apparently in Aleppo: together with his collection, it found its way to St. Petersburg's Asiatic Museum (today the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies) in 1819. The first mention of it in print belongs to J. L. Rousseau himself [22] and the Academician Dorn [23]. It was investigated in more detail by I. Krachkovsky: in the third section of *Kitāb nathr al-durr* (fols. 143b—150b) he discovered an abridged redaction of Ibn al-Mu'tazz's anthology *Kitāb al-ādāb* and used the manuscript when publishing this text [24].

Both volumes of the manuscript are in a good European binding of board with a leather back. Folio dimensions for the second volume are 25.3×18.0 cm; it contains 233 folios. Eastern pagination by 10-folio quires has not been preserved throughout, but it is easy to ascertain that four quires — 40 folios — are missing at the beginning. The paper is Eastern, thick, glossy, and yellowish. The first and last folios were restored, but it has been well preserved elsewhere and is easily read.

Folio dimensions for the sixth volume are 27.0×18.0 cm. It contains 174 folios (the pagination in Fraehn's hand mistakenly indicates 173 folios). Judging by various traces in the upper left corner of folios 70, 80, 90, 100, and 120, Eastern pagination by quire existed earlier. The text, 15 lines per page, is written in black Indian ink in large beautiful *nashk*, but of a different type than that found in the second volume, with free, bold roundings and extensions of final letters; between fols. 11 - 12 and 19 - 20, there are lacunae totalling some 20 folios; one or two folios at the end have been lost; fol. 1 is pasted, the lower left corner of fol. 12 is torn off; this volume differs in paper from volume II, it is of worse quality, non-glossy and apparently for this reason suffered more from dampness, as it is difficult to read in places.

Such are the external data for the manuscript. As concerns the anthology's content, it presents numerous examples of eloquence, wit, verbal resourcefulness, and well-chosen words and expressions in the form of small

stories, proverbs, sayings, aphorisms, and apt questions and answers for various circumstances in life. The heroes in these are drawn from a broad array of both legendary and historical figures. The author borrowed his material from varied sources, the vast written literature in Arabic, and the riches of Arab folklore, usually without encumbering the narration with notes or an enumeration of transmitters. Al-Ābī's work differs from many other anthologies in the preponderance of prose and relatively small number of poetic verses. The anthology is well thought through: its material is grouped thematically. A list of the chapters in the two volumes of our manuscript provides a good sense of the themes touched on and the work in general.

Volume II begins with the words: *قال رجل لعمر بن العاص* ("A man said to 'Amrū ibn al-ʿAṣ..."), which is evidently a continuation of the sixth chapter of the second section, entitled "Witticisms of the distinguished and noble". The titles of the four succeeding chapters match the titles given in the catalogue of Leiden manuscripts.

Chapter 7 (fol. 25a). "Another chapter about apt answers of a jocular nature".

Chapter 8 (fol. 34a). "Anecdotes about false prophets".

Chapter 9 (fol. 38b). "Anecdotes about Medinans".

Chapter 10 (fol. 47a). "Anecdotes about hangers-on and gluttons".

On fol. 66b, the second section ends and the third begins; the latter consists of 13 chapters:

Chapter 1 (fol. 69a). "Utterances of Mu'āwiya ibn Abū Sufyān and his children".

Chapter 2 (fol. 87a). "Utterances of Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam".

Chapter 3 (fol. 105a). "Utterances of the Hāshimite caliphs" (in the table of contents: 'Abbāsīd — *A. Kh.*).

Chapter 4 (fol. 151a). "Utterances of several Umayyads".

Chapter 5 (fol. 158a). "Witticisms of the descendants of al-Zubayr".

Chapter 6 (fol. 167b). "Anecdotes about Abū-l-'Aynā' and his speech".

Chapter 7 (fol. 186b). "Anecdotes about Muzabbad".

Chapter 8 (fol. 195a). "Anecdotes about Abū-l-Ḥārith, the sycamore".

Chapter 9 (fol. 197b). "Anecdotes about al-Jammāz".

Chapter 10 (fol. 201a). "Anecdotes about madmen".

Chapter 11 (fol. 210a). "Anecdotes about misers".

Chapter 12 (fol. 221b). "Utterances of swindlers and their ilk and anecdotes".

Chapter 13 (fol. 228a). "The inability of fools to express themselves and their correspondence (conversations — *A. Kh.*)".

Volume (and section) VI:

Introduction (fols. 1b—3b).

Chapter 1 (fol. 3b). "Witticisms from eloquent utterances and speeches of the Arabs".

Chapter 2 (fol. 10a). "Wise utterances of the Arabs" (an excerpt from this chapter and its conclusion coincide with lacunae — *A. Kh.*).

Chapter 3. “Prayers and requests of the Arabs” (only in the table of contents; the beginning of the chapter was lost in a lacuna — *A. Kh.*).

Chapter 4 (fol. 27a). “Sayings of the Arabs”.

Chapter 5 (fol. 60a). “Stars, the appearance and disappearance of stars in the firmament and the stations of the moon as understood by the Arabs”.

Chapter 6 (fol. 91a). “Incantations of soothsayers in rhymed prose”.

Chapter 7 (fol. 95b). “Animals of the Arabs”.

Chapter 8 (fol. 110b). “Bequests of the Arabs”.

Chapter 9 (fol. 122a). “Names for horses among the Arabs”.

Chapter 10 (fol. 133b). “Names for swords among the Arabs”.

Chapter 11 (fol. 138b). “Anecdotes about the Bedouin”.

Chapter 12 (fol. 151a). “Folk sayings”.

Chapter 13 (fol. 156a). “Anecdotes about drunkards and drunks”.

Chapter 14 (fol. 160b). “On lying”.

Chapter 15 (fol. 166b). “Anecdotes about shameless jokers”.

Chapter 16 (fol. 171a). “Anecdotes about passing wind”.

On fol. 174b, the text breaks off on the phrase: قال بعضهم دخلت على يزيد بن يزيد (“One of them said that [one day] I went to see Yazīd ibn Yazīd...”).

The anthology *Kitāb nathr al-durr* by al-Ābī is of great interest to all those interested in the classical literature of the Arabs. The St. Petersburg manuscript can serve as an important aid in publishing the text of the work and investigating it from a viewpoint of the history of Arab literature.

### Notes

1. *Jacut's geographisches Wörterbuch*. Bd. I, herausgegeben von F. Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1866), pp. 57–8.
2. Both of these cities were in the Eastern part of the Jibāl province in Iran: Sāwa (today Sawe) is to the north, and Āba to the south of the river Gāwmākhā (today the Kara-Su).
3. A famed Buwayhid *wazīr* (d. 385/995).
4. In the table of Buwayhid *wazīrs* (E. Zambaur, *Manuel de généalogie et de chronologie*, Hanover, 1927, p. 215) we find three times the name Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn with the *kunya* Abū Sa'd. This may be al-Ābī's brother.
5. *Lexicon Bibliographicum et Encyclopaedicum a Haji Khalifa*, ed. A. Fluegel (London, 1852), vi, pp. 300–1, 320 (henceforth, Haji Khalifa).
6. Noted by I. Krachkovsky, see “Le Kitāb al-ādāb d'Ibn al-Mu'tazz” (ed. Ign. Krachkovsky), *Le Monde Oriental*, XVIII (1924), p. 68.
7. “Depiction of the Palace and Refuge of Contemporaries”, manuscript B1 in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, fol. 50b (ll. 6–20); cf. C. Brockelman, *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur*, Supplementband 1 (Leiden, 1936–1937), p. 593.
8. Brockelman lists this work as a source on al-Ābī, but it was unavailable to me.
9. Manuscript C 679.
10. *Verzeichniss der Arabischen Handschriften der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin* von W. Ahlwardt (Berlin, 1895), vii, p. 318.
11. “Le Kitāb al-ādāb d'Ibn al-Mu'tazz” (ed. Ign. Krachkovsky), p. 68.
12. Haji Khalifa, p. 300.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 300.
14. *Fihrist al-kutub al-'arabiyya al-mahfūza bi-l-kutubkhāna al-khidwīya al-misriyya jama'ahu wa rattabahu Aḥmad al-Mayyihī wa Muḥammad al-Biblāwī* (Catalogue of Arabic Books Held at the Khedive Egyptian Library Compiled and Organized by Aḥmad al-Mayyihī and Muḥammad al-Biblāwī) (Miṣr, 1307), p. 336.
15. M. F. de Goeje et M. Th. Houtsma, *Catalogus codicum arabicorum bibliothecae academiae Lugduno-Batavae*, 2nd edn. (Lugduni-Batavorum, 1888), i, pp. 257–8.
16. *Verzeichniss der Arabischen Handschriften*, p. 318.
17. *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes* par M. de Slane (Paris, 1883–1895), p. 606, No. 3490.
18. “Le Kitāb al-ādāb d'Ibn al-Mu'tazz” (ed. Ign. Krachkovsky), p. 69; V. I. Beliaev, “Arabskie rukopisi v sobranii Instituta vostokovedeniia Akademii nauk SSSR” (“Arab manuscripts in the collection of the USSR Academy of Sciences Institute of Oriental Studies”), *Uchēnye zapiski Instituta vostokovedeniya*, VI (Moscow–Leningrad, 1953), p. 90 (call number indicated incorrectly, should be C 679).
19. Ch. A. Owen, “Arabian wit and wisdom from Sa'id al-Ābī's Kitāb nathr al-durar”. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LIV (1934), pp. 240–75.
20. Mention was recently made in the scholarly literature of the oldest manuscript of the work, held in the Imām al-Riḍā library in Meshhed; aside from the date of copying — 565 (1169–1170) — no other information was given. See *Revue de l'Institut des manuscrits arabes*, III (1957), p. 6.
21. On him, see V. Rosen, *Notices sommaires des manuscrits arabes du Musée Asiatique* (St. Petersburg, 1881), i, pp. 190–3; C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* (Weimar, 1898), i, p. 351.
22. [J. L. Rousseau], *Catalogue d'une collection* (Paris, 1817), p. 14.
23. B. Dorn, *Das Asiatisches Museum* (St. Petersburg, 1846), p. 207.
24. “Le Kitāb al-ādāb d'Ibn al-Mu'tazz” (ed. Ign. Krachkovsky), pp. 62–3, 68–9, 72–121.

### Illustrations

Fig. 1. Abū Sa'īd (or Abū Sa'd) Maṣūb b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ābī, *Kitāb nathr al-durr*, manuscript C 679, vol. II, fol. 160a.