

WILLIAM POPPER (1874-1963) AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP

IN MEMORIAM¹

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1.

WILLIAM POPPER died on June 3, 1963, at the age of almost 89, while engaged in the reading of proofs of his latest publication. With his death came to an end a brilliant career of one of the greatest figures among American Orientalists of all times.

He was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on October 29, 1874, the son of Simon and Barbara Popper.² He was a student at Columbia University, under Richard Gottheil, where he received successively the degrees of A. B. in 1896; A. M. in 1897, and Ph. D. in 1899; the subject of his doctoral dissertation was "The Censorship of Hebrew Books."³ The next three years were spent by him abroad; in Europe he studied at the Universities of Strassburg (1899-1900), Berlin (1900), and in Paris (1900-1901) at the Collège de France, École des Hautes Études and École des Langues Orientales Vivantes, under such outstanding scholars as H. Derenbourg, J. Euting, Th. Noeldeke and others. The final year of his stay abroad (1901-1902) was devoted to extensive travel and study in the Near East, Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Iraq.

On his return to America he served for three years (1902-1905) as Associate Editor and Chief of the Bureau of Translation of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.⁴ For the last two years of this period (as well as later in 1919-1920) he was also Gustav Gottheil Lecturer in Semitic Languages at Colum-

bia University; between 1904 and 1905 he functioned in addition as Acting Chief of the Oriental Department of the New York Public Library.

William Popper married in 1907 Tess Magnes, sister of Dr. Judah L. Magnes who became in 1925 the first President of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; she passed away in 1942. Their four children are Ruth Magnes Eisen, Joel, Daniel, and William Jr.

In 1905 he was invited to join the faculty of the University of California, Berkeley. From the rank of Instructor (1905) he moved swiftly up to the Assistant Professorship (1906), to Associate Professorship (1916) and was appointed Professor of Semitic Languages in 1922, and Chairman of the Department of Semitic Languages (now called Department of Near Eastern Languages)—a post he held until his retirement as Professor Emeritus in 1945.

When Professor Popper joined the faculty at Berkeley, the field of Semitic and Arabic studies was very much in its infancy in Berkeley and in American universities in general.⁵ Though instruction in Semitics started in Berkeley in 1894, with Rabbi Jacob Voorsanger's⁶ appointment by the Board of Regents, as Honorary Lecturer, and was continued by Dr. Max L. Margolis,⁷ who served as Associate Professor of Semitic Languages from 1897 to 1905, it was only with William Popper's arrival on the scene in California in 1905 that the field of Semitic philology was widened in scope and substance, and was put on a firm and solid foundation. It was fortunate that at this juncture (1905)

¹ Lecture delivered at the annual meeting of the American Oriental Society in New York, April 7-9, 1964.

² His father came to the United States in 1855, and joined the Confederate army in 1861 in which he had many assignments.

³ New York, 1899.

⁴ Twelve volumes, New York, 1901-1905. Popper's contributions to the *Jewish Encyclopedia* cannot be definitely determined since many of his articles remained unsigned. Only two items are signed by him, "Confiscation of Hebrew Books" Vol. 4, pp. 221-224, and "Hebrew Periodicals," Vol. 9, pp. 602-640. To this early phase of his writings belongs also an article entitled, "One Hundred Available Books in English on Palestine," in the *American Jewish Yearbook*, Philadelphia, 1905, pp. 153-162.

⁵ See: "Semitic Studies in American Colleges" by William Rosenau in *The Reform Advocate*, Chicago, 1896, and "Semitic Studies in America" by William Pepper delivered before the members of the American Oriental Society, October 1888 published in *Hebraica*.

⁶ See Popper's Memorial Address for Jacob Voorsanger D. D. (1852-1908) in *University of California Chronicle*, Vol. 10, no. 4, Berkeley, 1908, pp. 423-433.

⁷ On his life and contributions to Semitic scholarship see: *Max L. Margolis, Scholar and Teacher* (1866-1932), published by the Alumni Association of Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, Philadelphia, 1952, especially pp. 1-16.

the Editorial Committee of the University of California Press had decided to establish a Semitic series known as the *University of California Publications in Semitic Philology*, of which Popper was designated editor. With the later appointment of Dr. H. L. F. Lutz as professor of Assyriology and Egyptology, who served with great distinction from 1920 until his retirement in 1953, and of Dr. Martin A. Meyer,⁸ as lecturer in Jewish post-biblical history (1912-1923) the Department of Semitic Languages at Berkeley became, and remained until recently, the only center of Near and Middle Eastern studies west of Chicago.⁹

During his active association with the University of California, Popper gave courses in Hebrew, Arabic, and Syriac and in Islamic history, and unfolded his unique qualifications as a stimulating teacher. He put at the disposal of all those seeking instruction his wealth of knowledge and carried thus the torch of learning throughout many generations of his students, who comprised Christian ministers, Japanese clergymen, rabbis and others. He did not spare time and effort when he found serious and diligent students and instilled into them his passion and joy for learning and his own high standards of thoroughness and accuracy.

2.

From the very beginning of his association with the University of California Popper devoted his time to research, and he soon became an internationally recognized scholar in Hebrew and Arabic studies.¹⁰

His research centered mainly around two great and distinctly different personalities, namely ISAAH, the son of Amoz of Judea, the great Biblical prophet of the eighth century B. C., and IBN TAGHRĪ BIRDĪ, the eminent historian of Mamluk Egypt of the 15th century A. D. (d. 1470).

⁸ Martin A. Meyer was a Rabbi of San Francisco's Temple Emanuel (1879-1923), a lifelong friend of William Popper as attested by the available correspondence between them.

⁹ When the history of the Department of Semitic Languages at U. C. Berkeley will be written, the contributions made by the various members of the staff at this early stage will have to be outlined in greater detail.

¹⁰ Among the organizations of which he was a member are the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, the Société Asiatique, the American Oriental Society, the Palestine Oriental Society, Jerusalem, the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, the History of Science Society, and many others.

In the field of Biblical research, he subjected the Book of Isaiah to a thorough literary and stylistic investigation as a result of which appeared his important work entitled, "Studies in Biblical Parallelism: Parallelism in Isaiah," (Chs. 1-35 and Ch. 37, 22-35).¹¹ In it he examined most minutely the Hebrew poetical style of the prophetic writings and showed how the prophetic portions of the Bible rest on the principle of internal parallelism—perhaps the most searching contribution in this field after Bishop R. Lowth's *de Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum*.¹² Guided by the parallelistic structure, Popper introduced into the Massoretic text of Isaiah changes in some of the obscure and defective passages in order to restore clarity of meaning.

In enforcing boldly—and perhaps too rigidly—the parallelistic structure, he was led to propose quite a few emendations "according to the demands of Parallelism" in the text of Isaiah. He followed up his studies with the publication of a reconstructed Hebrew text of Isaiah as conceived by him,¹³ and supplied also a new English translation entitled *The Prophetic Poetry of Isaiah (Chapters 1-37), Translated in Parallelism from a Revised Hebrew Text*.¹⁴ His numerous studies in the field of Biblical research included also, "A Suggestion as to the Sequence of some Prophecies in the First Isaiah,"¹⁵ and "Notes on Parallelism,"¹⁶ and "A Literary Problem in the Book of Isaiah,"¹⁷ in which he summarized again his point of view.

3.

Popper's lifetime-work was, however, in the field of Arabic studies, and was devoted to the critical edition of the Arabic manuscripts of "The History

¹¹ In *U. C. Publications in Semitic Philology*, 1918-1923, Vol. 1, pp. 267-552. This first part of this volume of the Series contained a study by H. H. Powell "The Supposed Hebraisms in the Grammar of Biblical Aramaic," Vol. 1, pp. 1-55. In the same volume was also published a penetrating study by Louis I. Newman, then Popper's student and now a distinguished Rabbi and scholar in New York, on "Parallelism in Amos," pp. 57-265.

¹² Oxford, 1763.

¹³ *U. C. Publications in Semitic Philology*, Vol. 1, no. 5, pp. 1-116 (Hebrew text).

¹⁴ Berkeley, 1931.

¹⁵ *Hebrew Union College Annual*, Cincinnati 1924, Vol. 1, pp. 79-96.

¹⁶ *Hebrew Union College Annual*, Cincinnati 1925, Vol. 2, pp. 63-85.

¹⁷ This was Popper's faculty lecture, published in *U. C. Chronicle*, Berkeley 1930, Vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 284-317.

of Egypt under Mohammedan Rule," by Abu'l Maḥāsīn Yūsuf Ibn Taghrī Birdī (1410-1470), one of Egypt's greatest historians and the outstanding authority on Mamluk Egypt's history during the fifteenth century.

The place of Ibn Taghrī Birdī in the annals of Islamic historiography cannot be fully discussed here.¹⁸ His father Taghrī Birdī had held the highest post in the empire next to that of the Sultan, having been viceroy of Syria and commander-in-chief of the armies that fought against Tamerlane there. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, the son, was himself related by marriage both to high officials and to prominent scholars, and knew most of the personalities of importance in Egyptian affairs. He had access to the Court and hence to the sources of official information, and was thus highly qualified to become the recorder of the history of his own times, and the critic of the conduct of men of affairs.¹⁹

Of Ibn Taghrī Birdī's many historical and other works in Arabic, the most extensive historical books were the one entitled "an-Nujūm az-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa'l Qāhira" and the other entitled, "Ḥawādith ad-Duhūr fī Madā 'l-Ayyām wa'sh-Shuhūr." In them he recorded very meticulously, almost in the form of a diary, the history of Egypt from the Arab conquest of the seventh century on, dwelling with particular concentration on all the happenings and changes of the Mamluk period in which he himself lived. He paid considerable attention not only to the political fortunes of the Mamluk sultans and their court circles, but also to social and economic history, and inserted for each period "Necrologies" on the Sultans and the prominent scholars, judges, teachers, as well as military leaders. Ibn Taghrī Birdī contributed a real "Who's Who in Mamluk Egypt."²⁰

¹⁸ See: C. Brockelmann, *G. A. L.* Vol. 2, p. 41 and *Suppl.* Vol. 2, p. 39. The most up to date survey of Ibn Taghrī Birdī's life and work was written by Popper himself in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new edition, Vol. 1, 1960, p. 138, s. v. "Abu'l Maḥāsīn." See also G. Wiet, in *Bull. de l'Institut d'Égypte*, Cairo, 1930, Vol. 12, pp. 89-105.

¹⁹ See the "Editor's notes" to the various editions.

²⁰ These necrologies continue and supplement Ibn Taghrī Birdī's other monumental biographical dictionary known as "al-Manhal aṣ-Ṣāfi," dealing with the biographies of the sultans and most important emirs, and scholars from 1245-1451. See Gaston Wiet, *MIE*, Cairo, 1932, pp. 1-480. The Arabic text of this work of Ibn Taghrī Birdī is in process of publication; Vol. I, edited by Najātī, appeared in Cairo in 1956.

The Dutch Orientalists T. G. J. Juynboll and B. F. Matthes were the first scholars—almost a century ago—to make available a small portion of the first volume and a part of the second volume of Ibn Taghrī Birdī's "Nujūm" dealing with the history of Egypt from the Arab conquest in 641 until 976.²¹ But they abandoned the work soon after.²²

Popper rescued this great historian of Mamluk Egypt from oblivion and decided to prepare a critical edition on the basis of the available Arabic manuscripts in Paris and others in Berlin and in the British Museum. Already in 1899, while in Paris, he looked over the Arabic manuscript of Ibn Taghrī Birdī's "Nujūm" in the Bibliothèque Nationale and was encouraged by his teacher H. Derenbourg in his intention to undertake the critical edition.²³ In embarking on so ambitious a project, Professor Popper, small in physical stature, undertook the task of a giant. In Europe and especially in Germany such a project would have been planned and carried out collectively by a number of competent scholars; Popper took it upon himself, single-handedly, to realize this great vision of his.

Popper's contribution to Islamic scholarship can be divided into three major phases:

- a) the critical edition of Ibn Taghrī Birdī's "Nujūm" and part of the "Ḥawādith,"
- b) the translation into English of Ibn Taghrī Birdī's "Annals" covering the history of Egypt and Syria under the Circassian Sultans from 1382 to 1469, and
- c) monographs and "Notes" on various aspects of Mamluk Egypt as a "by-product" of his research.

a) After having copied with his own hands the various Arabic manuscripts, collating and compar-

²¹ Leyden, 1852-1861.

²² Some extracts from Ibn Taghrī Birdī's "Nujūm" pertaining to the history of the Crusades were published by Barbier de Meynard, in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades*, Paris, 1884, Vol. 3, pp. 475-509.

²³ H. Derenbourg referred already in 1901 to William Popper's project of editing Ibn Taghrī Birdī (*Journal des Savants*, Paris, 1901, p. 23), saying, "Je sais qu'un de mes élèves, bien préparé et parfaitement capable de mener le travail à bonne fin, ne demanderait pas mieux que d'en accepter la responsabilité . . ." See *Les Manuscrits Arabes de la Collection Schefer a la Bibliothèque Nationale*, and his announcement in *Comptes-Rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres Pendant l'Année 1907*, Paris, pp. 331-332.

ing them, Popper began the publication of his text-critical edition, and started with that part of the "Nujūm" which covered the years from 975 to 1171 until the end of the Fatimid rule.²⁴

Popper then turned to those parts of Ibn Taghrī Birdī's chronicle which dealt with Egypt under the Mamluk dynasty up to 1468, that period of which Ibn Taghrī Birdī was a contemporary and an eye-witness of the happenings he described, and which indeed is to be regarded as Ibn Taghrī Birdī's most original and most valuable contribution to scholarship. Over a period of more than 30 years, from 1909 to 1942, there were flowing like a never-ending stream out of Popper's hands fascicle after fascicle, volume after volume of his monumental edition of Ibn Taghrī Birdī's history. The painstaking Arabic edition appeared successively in six large volumes,²⁵ enhanced in its usability not only by elaborate indices of names and places, but above all by glossaries of indispensable value, which go far beyond the material contained in the dictionaries of Lane and Dozy, to both of which he could add considerable new material. It was rightly observed that Popper's edition of the Arabic Chronicles of Ibn Taghrī Birdī, "called for broad and also exact knowledge of a very obscure period in history, and for insight into a linguistic stage in the development of Arabic which has not yet been fully worked out by anyone else. His glossaries have made plain that he himself knows that stage better than any other Arabist now alive."²⁶

Popper turned also to Ibn Taghrī Birdī's other and more voluminous chronicle entitled "Ḥawādith ad-Duhūr." In composing his "Ḥawādith,"

²⁴ Mention should be made that the early fascicles of Popper's edition (Vols. 2 and 3) were in parts proof-read by Th. Noeldeke, R. Gottheil, and Ch. Seybold, whose cooperation Popper acknowledged, as well as the philological suggestions he received from such scholars as Barth, de Goeje, D. Macdonald, Goldziher, Huart, R. Nicholson, O. Rescher, Wellhausen, and others. An interesting and bulky correspondence between Popper and Noeldeke, and also with Duncan B. Macdonald, is preserved and would deserve publication. It shows, apart from its scholarly content, a close personal bond of friendship.

²⁵ All these volumes were published in *U. C. Publications in Semitic Philology*; Vol. 2 and Vol. 3 (1909-1913), Vol. 5 (1932-1936), Vol. 6 (1915-1923), Vol. 7 (1926-1929), and Vol. 8 (1930-1942). The printed Arabic text of Popper's edition, together with the glossaries and indices, comprises over 4,343 pages.

²⁶ Stated by Duncan B. Macdonald, of the Hartford Theological Seminary.

Ibn Taghrī Birdī, a pupil of Maqrīzī [d. 1442], wanted to continue his master's history "as-Sulūk" from the end of 1441 on and supplied thus a day by day account of all the events in Egypt from 1441 to 1469.

Since the "Nujūm" was but an abbreviated and condensed version of Ibn Taghrī Birdī's "Ḥawādith," Popper wisely decided not to edit the whole text of it but to publish only "Excerpts" of those years which were not substantially incorporated by Ibn Taghrī Birdī in his "Nujūm."²⁷ He did so on the basis of a manuscript preserved in Berlin (which was copied by the fifteenth century historian as-Sakhāwī [d. 1497], in his own handwriting), with variants from a manuscript in the British Museum and supplemented later by a manuscript discovered by G. Levi della Vida in the Vatican.²⁸

It is interesting to note that as-Sakhāwī tried to belittle Ibn Taghrī Birdī's standing as the most important historian of Egypt in his own generation and criticised him severely.²⁹ Popper, in a profound and penetrating study entitled, "Sakhāwī's Criticism of Ibn Taghrī Birdī,"³⁰ showed that Sakhāwī's criticism was motivated by a racial or class bias, Sakhāwī being of "Egyptian-Arabic" stock, and Ibn Taghrī Birdī of "Turkish" stock.

b) Having completed the critical edition of the text, not resting on an achievement which in itself would have been sufficient for one scholar's lifetime, Popper began to embark on a large translation-project and devoted another decade of his life to the translation into English of part of Ibn

²⁷ *U. C. Publications in Semitic Philology*, Vol. 8 (1930-1942). About the process of the composition of the "Nujūm" and the "Ḥawādith" by Ibn Taghrī Birdī, see the pertinent remarks by Popper in his "Editor's Notes," especially Vol. 7, part 1 and part 4, and Vol. 8, part 4, pp. v-xii.

²⁸ Until 1932, when Professor G. Levi della Vida discovered this Vatican Ms. Arab 727, as being Ibn Taghrī Birdī's "Ḥawādith," it was ascribed to a fictitious author with a fictitious title. The variants of the Vatican manuscript, of which Popper received a photostatic reproduction are incorporated in Popper's edition, Vol. 8.

²⁹ Vol. 8. See as-Sakhāwī, *aḍ-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi'*, Cairo 1934, Vol. 10 pp. 305-308.

³⁰ Appeared in *Studi Orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida*, Roma 1956, Vol. 2, pp. 371-389—appropriately dedicated to this great Italian scholar. A similar study of historiographical value was published by Popper already in 1909, namely, "Hilāl aṣ-Ṣābi in Ibn Taghrī Birdī's an-Nujūm az-Zāhira," in *Mélanges Hartwig Derenbourg* (1844-1908), Paris, 1909, pp. 237-243.

Taghrī Birdī's "Annals," on the basis of his own edition, entitling it in English "The Brilliant Stars—being the Chronicles of the Rulers of Egypt and Cairo"; or in another place "The Stars that Glow—on the Rule of Old and New Cairo." Popper's efforts resulted in the publication of another set of seven large volumes, covering eighty-six years of the Mamluk period from 1382 to 1468 in the English translation.³¹

Whoever has dealt with the translation of Arabic texts can gauge the difficulties which confronted Popper. One of the major difficulties of the translator of a text like Ibn Taghrī Birdī's "Annals" was to find the proper rendering into English of the hundreds of titles and ranks of officials and offices—of the title-hungry and title-infested Mamluk society. Such a task required, in addition to superb mastery of both Arabic and English in all their shades and nuances, a deep insight into the development of the Arabic language and a thorough knowledge of the period. Popper discharged his task in an admirable way. His ability in rendering the exact English term for the adequate Arabic or Turkish designation distinguishes his translation in a high degree. Even in the poetical parts of the "Nujūm," inevitable in every Arabic work, Popper succeeded singularly in rendering into English the rhythm and alliteration of the Arabic verse. Out of an almost chaotic and staggering variety of names and titles of officials and office-holders, Popper established terminological order and set a model and guide for future translation into English of Arabic historical texts.

By adding before each part a very detailed table of contents, in which a bird's-eye-view of the essential events of almost every page of the translation is given, the use of the translation has been considerably facilitated.

Popper's translation opened indeed to the non-Arabist, to the medievalist and historian, a new world, permitted a glimpse into the life of the Sultans and their courts, and offered a typical example in English of Arab historical writings of the fifteenth century.³²

³¹ The translation of the Arabic Annals of Ibn Taghrī Birdī appeared successively from 1954 to 1960 in the *U. C. Publications in Semitic Philology*. Vol. 13 covers the years 1382-1399; Vol. 14, 1399-1411; Vol. 17, 1412-1422; Vol. 18, 1422-1438; Vol. 19, 1438-1453; Vol. 22, 1453-1461; Vol. 23, 1461-1468.

³² For translations of Mamluk historians into French, see Gaston Wiet's partial translation of Maqrīzī [d. 1442] and of Ibn Iyās [d. 1524].

c) The untiring and indefatigable efforts of Popper have produced, in addition to the edition and translation of Ibn Taghrī Birdī's "Chronicle," as a kind of "by-product" of his research a comprehensive and penetrating monograph on "The Cairo Nilometer (the *Miqyās*), Studies in Ibn Taghrī Birdī's Chronicles in Egypt."³³ Popper assembled all the relevant data on the Nilometer on the basis of Ibn Taghrī Birdī and other Egyptian historians. He surveyed the history of the *Miqyās* (Nilometer) in Cairo on the Rauḍa Island off the Cairo shore and in other places (Helwan and Memphis), and dealt with the various systems of measurement, with the annual statistics of maximum and minimum levels of the waters of the Nile, from the Arab conquest of Egypt in 641 to the sixteenth century, leading his own research well into the nineteenth century, the time when the technicians attached to Napoleon's expedition in Egypt inspected the Nilometer and provided for the first time exact and reliable figures in terms of the European metric system. Popper discussed all the historical, economic, agricultural, and meteorological aspects connected with this problem so vital for Egypt's prosperity all through history. With his usual thoroughness he left nothing unsaid.

During his editorial work on the "Nujūm," Popper collected every bit of information derived from Ibn Taghrī Birdī and his card-indices were almost overflowing with notes, sometimes illegible to anyone but himself. Within the last years of his activities Popper began to classify this material, and produced as a result of it two large volumes which he modestly called, "Systematic Notes to Ibn Taghrī Birdī's Chronicles of Egypt" with a sub-heading "Egypt and Syria under the Circassian Sultans."³⁴ In them he dealt with such concrete matters as geography, topography, measures, weights, food, salaries, fiefs, money and coins, commerce and trade, calendar, titles of offices and officials, organization of the administration, and ethnic composition of the population. These "Notes" with maps and plans are an immeasurable mine of information for an understanding of the daily life in fifteenth century Egypt which have

³³ *U. C. Publications in Semitic Philology*, Vol. 12, 1951. After the publication of Popper's "Nilometer," there appeared independently another comprehensive study on the subject by Kamel Osman Ghaleb Pasha entitled, *Le Miqyās ou Nilomètre de l'île de Rodeh*, Cairo, 1951.

³⁴ *U. C. Publications in Semitic Philology*, Vol. 15, 1955; Vol. 16, 1957.

already become an indispensable reservoir, out of which the younger generation of Arabists draws continuously information and knowledge.³⁵

In these "Notes" as well as in his "Cairo Nilometer" and his other publications, Popper revealed his wide scope and his interest in *realia*, his respect for detail, his *Andacht zum Kleinen* in the Goethean sense, worthy indeed of a great scholar.

Though Popper adhered basically to his view which he is said to have expressed as a young scholar in Paris to the effect that, "I do not write little articles but only books," he did not refuse whenever called upon to contribute smaller studies on various aspects of the Semitic and Islamic civilizations or reviews of relevant books, all of which reveal the same quality of critical and thorough evaluation, as in Popper's major works.³⁶

Popper, scholar, teacher and educator, regarded it as his duty, in order to facilitate the usage of his monumental Arabic work, to supply also an "Index" to the seven volumes of his translation, including his research on the "Nilometer" and his "Systematic Notes," as a guide to the totality of his contribution to Islamic scholarship. This he had accomplished just before he was called away from his productive and blessed life.³⁷

³⁵ Mention should be made of the Cairo publication of Ibn Taghrī Birdī's "Nujūm" (641-1405) in process, Vols. 1-12, Cairo, 1929-1956.

³⁶ Among those smaller articles, not yet mentioned above, see his contributions to *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. J. Hastings, New York, 1920: "Mulla," Vol. 8, pp. 909-910; "Pilgrimage" [Hebrew and Jewish] Vol. 10, pp. 23-24; "Purification" [Muslim] Vol. 10, pp. 496-500. Further see, "Data for Dating a Tale in the (1001) Nights" *JRAS*, London, 1926, pp. 1-14; "Performance of a Medieval Cannon," translated from Ibn Taghrī Birdī's "Chronicles of Egypt," in the *Proceedings of the U. S. Naval Institute at Annapolis*, 1940, Vol. 66, no. 6, pp. 788-793.

Of his reviews, mention may be made of the following: D. B. Macdonald, "The Hebrew Literary Genius," Princeton, 1933, in *Emanuel*, San Francisco, December 1933; Ch. Torrey, "The Jewish Foundations of Islam" New York, 1933, in *Emanuel*, San Francisco, February 1934; "The History of Ibn al-Furāt" ed. C. Zurayk, Beirut, 1936 ff. Vol. 9, part 1 and 2, Vol. 8, part 1, in *The Moslem World*, Hartford, 1939, Vol. 29, pp. 81-82 and *ibid.*, 1940, Vol. 30, pp. 304-305; M. G. Hodgson, "The Order of Assassins," The Hague, 1955, in *Middle East Journal*, Washington, 1956, Vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 314-316; S. F. Sadeque, "Baybars the First of Egypt," Oxford, 1956, in *Middle East Journal*, Washington, 1957, Vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 332-333; "The Travels of Ibn Battuta (1325-1354)," Vol. I, tr. H. A. R. Gibb, London, in *Middle East Journal*, Washington, 1958, Vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 464-466.

³⁷ *U. C. Publications in Semitic Philology*, 1963, Vol.

In surveying Popper's life work in the field of Arabic studies one cannot help feeling that indeed he was fortunate and privileged, as very few, to live and see the completion and fruition of his great research project which, conceived over half a century ago, was so brilliantly carried out with extraordinary patience, perseverance and tenacity and with a unique devotion and dedication for which scholarship everywhere will be forever indebted to this great master of Arabic.³⁸

4.

Despite his devotion to his research and teaching he gave generously and willingly an extraordinary amount of time and superb service to a great variety of University and Faculty activities. From 1922 until his retirement in 1945 he served as Chairman of the Department of Semitic Languages and from about 1932 to 1935 also as Chairman of the Department of Oriental Languages. The list of committees of which he was an active member is far too extensive to be enumerated. As Chairman of the Committee of Music and Drama for thirteen years, he was in direct charge of all musical and dramatic activities under the auspices of the University, and in this capacity he not only selected artists and lecturers to be presented but also arranged the multiplicity of details involved in such productions.

The most important service he could render to

24. The index is arranged and classified according to 1) Persons, Tribes, and Sects; 2) Places and Structures; 3) Official Positions; and 4) Topics.

The University of California Press, Berkeley, its managers and staff, deserve unqualified thanks for their never-failing cooperation over half a century in putting their facilities so generously at the disposal of Professor Popper, by publishing the results of his research in those nineteen large volumes as discussed above.

³⁸ Among the scholarly papers left unfinished by W. Popper there was found a manuscript of his English translation from the "Ḥawādith," comprising eighty-six pages of the Arabic text based on his own edition of the "Extracts." It covers part of the rule of Sultan al-Malik az-Zāhir Jaqmaq from 1442 to 1451. I have taken it upon myself to prepare this last piece of Popper's research for publication, as a debt of honor towards this distinguished colleague and personal friend with whom I was associated ever since I was appointed in 1945 by the University authorities to be his successor.

Mention should be made that Popper left also a very bulky correspondence, covering about 50 years, with the leading Orientalists and Arabists of his time from many countries, which apart from its personal aspect sheds interesting light on Oriental scholarship.

the University administration was through his membership on the Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations, on which he served altogether for eleven years, for five years as chairman. In it he played a major role in guiding University policy in the selection and advancement of personnel.

His modesty, his human qualities, his discretion and balanced judgment made him the confidant of Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Chancellors, Deans of the University, and Faculty, who turned to him for advice in many vital matters. He became soon the dominant, but never the domineering figure in the academic Senate for many decades.

When the former Vice-President of the University of California, Walter Morris Hart, retired in 1930 (d. 1964), he felt impelled to express to Popper some "last words" of gratitude and appreciation and wrote:

"You have shown a remarkable power of grasping a situation made complex by the personalities involved and of quietly and tactfully seeking a way out. You have shown the same comprehension in dealing with the departments entrusted to you by the Budget Committee . . . All these have been matters requiring confidential handling; for those there can be no applause or glory; your only reward must be the high appreciation of the very few who know."

In 1957, the then President of the University of California, Dr. Robert Gordon Sproul, expressed similarly his evaluation of Popper's service to the University by stating,

"If I had to reduce to a handful the number of faculty members who have typified the Berkeley campus to me, over the twenty-seven years of my presidency, certainly William Popper would stand well up on the list."

Popper was an extremely modest person and did not look for honors or recognition. But he had both in a considerable and deserving measure. The famous Russian Arabist, Ignace Kratchkovsky, of the Académie des Sciences in Leningrad, honored Popper in May, 1928 by asking him to send him an autograph to be included in a "galerie de portraits des arabisants modernes les plus célèbres."

In 1930, he was honored by the whole faculty, who elected him Faculty Research Lecturer for this year.

In 1949, a tribute was paid to him by the then

Vice-President and Provost, Monroe E. Deutsch (d. 1955) and by many of his colleagues and associates in honor of his 75th birthday, in the form of a Jubilee volume entitled, "Semitic and Oriental Studies,"³⁹ comprising 33 scholarly articles indicating the wide range of research conducted on the Berkeley Campus on aspects of Semitic and Oriental civilization, as a deep appreciation of his long and meritorious service as an inspiring teacher and as a scholar with the highest standards of thoroughness and accuracy.

On June 15, 1951, he was awarded an honorary degree of Dr. of Laws by the University of California in recognition of his meritorious achievements and in the citation it is stated:

"forty-five years a member of the faculty of the University—indefatigable student of the great minds of the ancient Near East—an unerring searcher for the treasures of thought and expression which are their bequest to the world—interpreter of the prophet Isaiah and skillful restorer of the poetic beauty of his book—his scholarly contributions add savor to the story of mankind and continuity to the record of civilization."

But Popper's greatest satisfaction must have been the almost universal recognition of his work by the international community of scholars. All the leading Arabists and Orientalists of the last and present generation in Europe, America, and the Near East have reviewed Popper's work most favorably and have acclaimed it as the most extensive and important piece of research that has ever been undertaken and accomplished by an American scholar in this field.⁴⁰

The search for justice, the respect for the dignity of man, so loftily expressed by Isaiah, together with Ibn Taghrī Birdī's favorite maxim, "Under all circumstances the truth must be told,"⁴¹ were Popper's guiding principles all through his life, as

³⁹ *U. C. Publications in Semitic Philology*, 1951, Vol. 11, edited by Walter J. Fischel.

⁴⁰ Those hundreds of reviews if collected and published would indicate in detail the reaction of the scholarly world to Popper's works. Here—due to limitations of space—mention be made of but one. G. Sarton wrote:

"In an age of chaos, of desultory scholarship and meretricious work, Dr. Popper is offering us an admirable example of concentration and tenacity. He will be remembered as long as Ibn Taghrī Birdī, and much longer." (*Isis*, June, 1955.)

⁴¹ See Vol. 6 of Popper's edition, p. 271. 154. Preface to Vol. 7, p. xv.

demonstrated in his teaching, his research, and in the performance of those manifold administrative assignments, and in his relationship to his students, associates, and colleagues.

At the funeral ceremony in Berkeley on June 6, 1963, the image of William Popper was portrayed by applying to him the words of a great Jewish

sage, Shammai, in the "Sayings of the Fathers," which reflects most aptly Popper's personality. "Shammai said:—Make thy Torah a fixed duty. Say little and do much; and receive every man with a cheerful expression of face." Popper was indeed a true son of his people, a worthy descendant of an Isaiah, a Hillel, and a Shammai!

IBN-AL-NAJJĀR: A NEGLECTED ARABIC HISTORIAN

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1. Prologue

IN THE COURSE of the seventh century of the Hijrah, an extensive biographical compilation of the leading notables of Baghdad, many of whom lived to witness its destruction by the Mongol hordes of Hūlāgu, was executed by a scholar who earned the high esteem of contemporaries and successors alike. This monumental work, reportedly of three hundred parts compressed into thirty volumes, was but one of at least twenty-one major works on history and literature which he authored during a lifetime devoted to scholarship and teaching. He dwelt in obscurity while associates and disciples of lesser competence gained recognition, owing largely to the fact that their works survived as a testimony to their scholarly endeavors while his were mostly lost; at least so it seems for the present. When it is considered that such historians of renown as Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, ibn-Khallikān, ibn-al-Jawzī, and ibn-al-Athīr were among his contemporaries, and when it is further understood that most of these have acknowledged their frequent dependence on him for information, it becomes all the more tempting to cast some light on him and on his works.

This author is known to us as Muhibullāh abu-'Abdullāh Muḥammad al-Ḥasan Maḥmūd Hibatullāh ibn-Maḥāsīn al-Baghdādi, called ibn-al-Najjār. From the brief biographical sketches¹

¹ Brief biographical sketches of ibn-al-Najjār are to be found in Tāj-al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyah al-kubra* (Cairo, n. d.), p. 41; Shams-al-Dīn abu-'Abdullāh al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz*, Vol. IV (Ḥaydarābād, 1334 A. H.), pp. 212-14; abu-al-Falāḥ ibn-al-'Imād al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fi akhbār man dhahab*, Vol. II (Cairo, 1951 A. H.), p. 226; Kamāl-al-Dīn abu-al-

we have of him, he appears to have been the leading Shāfi'ī *muḥaddith* of his age and, in the eyes of associates, the leading authority on biographical history as well. Indeed, existing first-hand accounts² of ibn-al-Najjār refer to his erudition and

Faḍl 'Abd-al-Razzāq ibn-al-Fuwaṭī al-Baghdādi, *al-Ḥawā-dith al-jāmi'ah wa-'l-tajārib al-nāfi'ah fi al-mi'ah al-sābi'ah* (Baghdād, 1351 A. H./1922), p. 205; Muḥammad ibn-Shākir ibn-Aḥmad al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-Wafayāt*, Vol. II (Cairo, 1951), p. 522; Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur, Supplementband I* (Leiden, 1937), p. 360 (henceforth *GAL* and *GAL S*); F. Wüstenfeld, *Die Geschichtschreiber der Araber und ihre Werke* (Göttingen, 1882), No. 327, pp. 122-23; Clément Huart, *Histoire de la littérature arabe* (Paris, 1901), p. 229; J. von Hammer-Purgstall, *Literaturgeschichte der Araber bis zum Ende des 12. Jahrhunderts der Hidschret*, Vol. VII (Vienna, 1856), p. 357.

² There is an account by his contemporary and associate Yāqūt al-Rūmī in his *Kitāb irshād al-arīb ila ma'rifat al-adīb*, ed. D. S. Margoliouth (Cairo, 1925), pp. 103-104; also by another contemporary, al-Dubaythī al-Wāsiṭī in his unpublished and missing *al-Mudhayyal 'ala ta'riḥ Baghdad lil-Khaṭīb*, executed in three volumes according to ibn-Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, Vol. VI (Cairo, 1949), No. 633, pp. 28-29. There is reference to *al-Mudhayyal* also in Ḥājjī Khalfah's *Kashf al-ḡunūn 'an al-asāmi wa-'l-funūn*, ed. & tr. Gustav Flügel, 7 vols. (Leipzig and London, 1835-58), No. 2179. A fragment of this valuable work is preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris: *manuscrits arabes*, No. 745. Al-Dubaythī's biography of ibn-al-Najjār, however, is available in the introductory material of Aḥmad ibn-Aybak ibn-al-Dim'yāṭī's manuscript *al-Mustafād min Dhayl ta'riḥ Baghdad (li-ibn-al-Najjār)*, fol. 4a, preserved in Dār al-Kutub (Cairo) and listed in *Fihrist al-kutub al-'arabiyyah fi-'l-maktabah al-Khudaywiyyah*, Vol. V (Cairo, 1308 A. H.), p. 150.

The principal biographical reference to ibn-al-Najjār, upon which all subsequent accounts depend, is by his disciple abu-Ṭālib 'Alī ibn-Anjab al-Baghdādi al-Sallāmi