Manuscripts, Politics and Oriental Studies

Life and Collections of Johann Gottfried Wetzstein (1815–1905) in Context

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CHAPTER 7

Johann Gottfried Wetzstein’s Manuscripts Containing Arabic Popular Stories

Jan Just Witkam

1 Introduction*, **

I have known of Wetzstein's work ever since my first reading of volume eight of Ahlwardt’s catalogue of the Arabic manuscripts in Berlin, back in the 1970s. However, I read for the first time about Wetzstein the man only about a decade ago, in a letter (from Berlin, dated 7 August 1887) sent by Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje to P.N. van der Chijs, Snouck Hurgronje’s contact in Jeddah.1 In this letter, he writes (my translation from Dutch):

I have learnt many interesting things from Wetzstein about the Syrian Bedouin tribe of the Ènèzè. Wetzstein had for many years a village of his own, founded by himself, inhabited by Muslim farmers, and he had intimate contacts with the most important sjêchs of the Ènèzè. They would stay with him when they came to Damascus, in order to avoid the excesses of Ṭama’ [greed] of the Wālī [governor]. It is curious that these people usually do not even know the creed of Islam (ashhadu, etc.), and they decide everything according to the ʿĀda [customary law] which sometimes is rather strange.2

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* I gratefully acknowledge the practical help that I received during my research in Berlin in 2014 and 2015 from curator Christoph Rauch and his staff in the Orientabteilung of the Staatsbibliothek. At the same time, it is regrettable that that the library risks being the last major West European library where readers are not permitted to make electronic images. This rule, without an apparent rationale, has hampered the progress of my work and has considerably increased my travel expenses.

** Dr. Boris Liebrenz kindly drew my attention to several publications concerning Wetzstein's life and work. I have profited from this very much.

1 For another episode in the relationship between Van der Chijs and Snouck Hurgronje, see my “Copy on demand: Abū Šubbāk in Mecca, 1303/1886”, in The trade in papers bearing marks in non-Latin characters, ed. Anne Regourd, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2018, pp. 206–226.

2 MS Leiden Or. 8952 A1069. Snouck Hurgronje’s transliteration of some Arabic words is left intact. The original letter can be viewed online through Leiden’s general catalogue.
Three letters written by Wetzstein to Snouck Hurgronje are preserved in the library at Leiden.\textsuperscript{3} The two met in 1887, when Snouck Hurgronje visited Berlin. The young explorer of Mecca was greatly impressed by Wetzstein and his fourteen years of experience in the field. Snouck Hurgronje had only lived in Arabia for one year, five months of which he had spent in Mecca. Wetzstein’s letters are full of informative facts and quotations. Much more of the correspondence between Wetzstein and Snouck Hurgronje is preserved in the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, where there are seven drafts of the letters that Wetzstein sent to his young Dutch friend between 19 May 1887 and 14 February 1889, and seventeen letters that Snouck Hurgronje wrote to Wetzstein between 15 March 1887 and 28 February 1889.\textsuperscript{4}

In his three letters in the Leiden library, Wetzstein emerges as an inexhaustible source of knowledge, with snippets of information and poetical quotations, as well as all sorts of literary detours and diversions. It is not just the source that appears limitless, all the information is given in the most friendly and sympathetic way. His general erudition is illustrated by much more than his letters, however; his three excursus, published at the end of Delitzsch’s commentary on the Book of Genesis,\textsuperscript{5} being a case in point and certainly not an isolated instance.

Although Wetzstein’s biography has never been written, the turning point in his life must have been his return to Berlin, with all its social and financial limitations. This is in sharp contrast to his time in Damascus, where he had been the proud and absolute ruler over a kingdom of literature and scholarship and at the centre of consular affairs. “Consul Wetzstein”, as he continued to be known after his return to Berlin, was one persona. Another, a result of the petty jealousies that came to plague his later academic life, was “the man that knew too much”. Indeed, his erudition may have inadvertently reminded others of their own ignorance. In my opinion, this aspect would be an interesting lead

\textsuperscript{3} Wetzstein’s letters in the Snouck Hurgronje Archive are MS Leiden, Or. 8952 A: 1069, dated 20 May 1887, 30 May 1887, 15 August 1888. These letters can be viewed online through Leiden’s general catalogue. A single letter by Wetzstein, sent in 1900 to M.J. de Goeje (1836–1909) and now kept in the De Goeje Archive (MS Leiden BPL 2389), is not available online.

\textsuperscript{4} They are listed in Ingeborg Huhn, Der Nachlass des Orientalisten Johann Gottfried Wetzstein in der Handschriftenabteilung der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2006, pp. 121–122. They are not included by P.S. van Koningsveld in his Minor German Correspondences of C. Snouck Hurgronje from libraries in France, Germany, Sweden and The Netherlands, Leiden, Documentatiebureau Islam-Christendom, 1987.

\textsuperscript{5} Franz Delitzsch, Commentar über die Genesis. Mit Beiträgen von Professor H.L. Fleischer und Consul Wetzstein, Leipzig, Dörrfiling und Franke, 1872. The three excursus by Wetzstein are on pp. 561–590.
for a biographer. Generosity comes with its disadvantages, as not everybody is comfortable with feeling obliged to repay unsolicited favours: paradoxically, bitterness and resentment are sometimes the result, and Wetzstein may well have witnessed his share of this. The proceedings of the Berlin conference on Wetzstein may constitute the starting point for a project to review the life and work of this fascinating man.

The first Wetzstein collection came to Berlin in 1851, the second in 1862. The third is the Rifāʿī collection, which is kept in the University Library in Leipzig, and the fourth is a collection of 173 items that Wetzstein collected towards the end of his stay in Syria in 1860–1861; this latter is kept in Tübingen. It seems that Wetzstein indulged in the manuscript trade mostly for financial reasons. The first two Wetzstein collections are fully integrated into the Staatsbibliothek as Wetzsteiniana I (193 volumes) and Wetzsteiniana II (1,962 volumes), and the Arabic manuscripts in them are described in Ahlwardt’s catalogue. Looking into that eighth volume of Ahlwardt’s great work, which mostly treats popular stories and romance cycles, one is struck by the many hundreds of references to the Wetzsteiniana II collection (siglum We.). As a whole, that collection contains texts on many more subjects than romances, but popular stories are a large and significant part of it.


7 For the Tübingen collection, see the contribution of Michaela Hoffmann-Ruf to this publication.

8 However, Hars Kurio in ‘Die Wetzstein'schen Handschriftensammlungen der Orientabteilung der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz’, in: Huhn, Nachlass, pp. xiii–xiv, has different years and figures.

9 W. Ahlwardt, Verzeichniss der arabischen Handschriften. Achter Band. Berlin, A. Asher & Co., 1896 (= Die Handschriften-Verzeichnisse der königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin. Zwanzigster Band). See also id., Zehnter Band. Berlin, A. Asher & Co., 1899, pp. 25–47, for a number concordance of these two Wetzstein collections in Berlin: a complete survey of the two Wetzstein collections in the Berlin Staatsbibliothek is given on pp. 25–26 with a concordance of the first Wetzstein collection (siglum We.), comprising 193 items that correspond with Ahlwardt’s catalogue numbers. On pp. 27–47 is a concordance of the second Wetzstein collection (siglum We.), comprising 1962 numbers. The total of 193 + 1962 = 2155 items, which contain many more individual texts as many volumes contain more than one text.
2 Wetzstein’s Manuscripts

Ahlwardt’s survey of popular stories and romance cycles is largely, though not exclusively, based on the Wetzsteiniana II manuscripts. A few other collections in the Staatsbibliothek contain popular stories and romances as well. What is said here, with reference to the Wetzsteiniana II collection, about a typology of Arabic manuscripts of popular stories equally applies to the relevant items in the other collections.

About his collecting of manuscripts, among them the popular stories, Wetzstein writes in his own catalogue of the Wetzsteiniana II collection, which was never published (my translation from German):

This library was acquired in the period between 1852 and 1858 directly from the owners in the towns in the East of Syria, and on commission from the towns of Mardin, Mosul, Hilla, Baghdad and Cairo. There are even eight books in the collection from Medina and Mecca.10

The collection not only contains numerous works about all branches of science that have been cultivated by the Arabs, it also contains some materials that one does not encounter in other larger collections that have come from the Orient, and which deserve further mention:

[...] It was the purpose of the collection to provide a complete as possible collection of the ancient Arabic belles-lettres. [...] After many years’ hard work, with many sacrifices [...] almost every aspect of this literature that had not been lost over the centuries, can be found in this collection: legends, stories, novellas, novels, semi-histories, both in poetry and (rhymed) prose [...] which fills the sons of the desert with enthusiasm.11

10 Catalog der arabischen Handschriftenbibliothek des Dr. J.G. Wetzstein königl. Preuss. Consuls in Damaskus, p. 1. This is Wetzstein’s own catalogue of the Wetzsteiniana II collection. It is partially preserved as a manuscript in Wetzstein’s hand in the Orientabteilung of the Staatsbibliothek. The introduction is dated (p. 5) Berlin, 20 April 1859. It must have consisted of several volumes and Ahlwardt must have had it on his desk when compiling his eighth volume of the Berlin catalogue. However, the part from which Ahlwardt quotes is now apparently lost. Only a fragment of Wetzstein’s detailed catalogue seems to have been preserved in the Staatsbibliothek, as Hs. or. sim. 8943 (on its front cover it contains a label with the mark Or. HB D 9). It covers MSS W. 314 through W. 418. See Christoph Rauch’s contribution to this volume on Wetzstein’s own catalogue.

11 Catalog der arabischen Handschriftenbibliothek, pp. 1–2. Immediately after, Wetzstein
Wetzstein then mentions the most important titles:

Sirat ‘Antar, Benī Hilāl, Delheme, Iskandar, Bedr Nār, Sayf Du Yazan, Arqaṭ, ‘Anqa, Miqdād, al-Hākim, al-Kurdī, Ġawdar, ‘Amr al-Nu‘mān, Ḥamza Qrān, al-Malik al-Ṭāhir (Baybars), etc. [...] Many of these could be connected with the Arabian Nights, but the mass of this literature is now much larger and complete, and such a collection cannot be brought together again. In Damascus, hardly any manuscript copies of the longer and shorter literary compositions are left. In this respect, the present collection will remain useful.12

Ahlwardt has a more no-nonsense approach to the storytelling volumes in the Wetzstein collection. In a short introduction to volume eight of his catalogue, he mentions the main romances, stresses the importance and uniqueness of the Sirat ‘Antar manuscripts, and occasionally quotes from Wetzstein’s descriptions.13 Whatever one may think of this type of literature, Ahlwardt writes, the sheer size of this source, now in the Berlin library, cannot be ignored. Ahlwardt refers to the Sirat Banī Hilāl as the most valuable sub-collection in the Staatsbibliothek. This huge cycle is almost exclusively present in the Wetzsteiniana II collection (Ahlwardt nos. 9188–9361 = Catalogue, vol. 8, pp. 155–462).

This proportion of popular stories within the Wetzsteiniana II collection is not well represented in the internet presentation of the Oriental collections in the Staatsbibliotheek. Of the c. 60 Wetzstein manuscripts that I found online (in February 2015), only a few volumes with popular stories have been made available, and these seem to have been selected in a haphazard way. There is certainly enough work still to be done.14

Another important job for literary historians relates to the fact that the content of Ahlwardt’s eighth volume has not been adopted in histories of Arabic literature. Brockelmann’s Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur, which otherwise takes Ahlwardt’s catalogue as its starting point, is almost exclusively period- and author-based. Popular stories in Arabic are mostly preserved in eighteenth and nineteenth-century manuscripts, but their content is timeless (or at least considerably older than the manuscripts in which they are usually preserved),

12 Catalog der arabischen Handschriftenbibliothek, p. 2.
13 Ahlwardt, Verzeichniss, vol. 8, six unnumbered pages at the beginning of the volume.
14 On 23 April 2017, the number of fully digitised Wetzstein manuscripts online amounted to 216.
and author names are hardly ever recorded. In the rare cases where the author is given, there is no guarantee that the information is authentic. For Brockelmann, all this was apparently sufficient reason to simply ignore this popular literature almost entirely, despite it accounting for several thousands of volumes on the shelves in Berlin alone.\textsuperscript{15} Brockelmann’s decision to ignore this large segment of Arabic literature has been detrimental to the study of popular Arabic literature (though others have tried to fill this lacuna\textsuperscript{16}). That may be an extra incentive for the study of the Arabic popular stories, which are described by Ahlwardt in such great detail, and are used so sparingly in Arabic scholarship.\textsuperscript{17}

3 Ideas for a Typology

A tentative typology of manuscripts with popular stories in the Wetzstein collections takes the following contours. Volume eight of Ahlwardt’s catalogue contains a description of the narrative literature in prose. This comprises nos. 8952–9066 (legends and stories of conversion), nos. 9067–9107 (shorter stories) and nos. 9108–9361 (long stories). Ahlwardt provides an abstract for all these texts, which makes his catalogue a primary source for a literary history in itself, even more so than is already the case for the other volumes of his catalogue.

A count of the first section, legends and stories of conversion, in Ahlwardt’s volume reveals a total of \textit{c.} 160 texts, of which seventy-six come from Wetzstein’s second collection, and the rest from ten other collections, of which the first and second Petermann collections and the Sprenger collection are the most conspicuous (with fifteen, thirty-three and twenty-one texts, respect-

\textsuperscript{15} Carl Brockelmann, \textit{Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur}, Leiden, Brill, 1937–1942 (Supplement 1, 11, 111) and 1943–1949 (\textit{Geschichte} 1, 11), mentions popular stories in \textit{Geschichte} 11, pp. 62–63, Supplement 11, pp. 59–65, where they are treated as somehow connected to the \textit{Arabian Nights}.

\textsuperscript{16} Regarding this connection, I mention with gratitude the generous bibliographical help that I received from Dr Ibrahim Akel in Paris, when, in the course of 2015, I took my first steps in the field of research into Arabic popular stories. He maintains the sort of bibliography that Brockelmann could have produced. My acquaintance with Dr Akel dates from the Wetzstein conference of 2015.

\textsuperscript{17} As an excursus from my research on manuscripts in general, I have recently indulged in working on the content of this sort of material. See my “King Ṣābūr and the gazelle. An Oriental story from the Maghreb”, in \textit{A life with the Prophet? Examining Hadith, Sira and Qur’an [= Bonner Islamstudien, 38]}, ed. Albrecht Fuess and Stefan Weninger, Berlin, EBVerlag, 2017, pp. 85–118.
Ahwardt’s second section, shorter stories, contains some fifty-one texts, of which twenty-eight come solely from Wetzstein’s second collection. For the third section, the long stories, a much larger proportion seems to come from Wetzstein’s second collection, but the difficulties of gathering statistics are compounded by the fact that one story may be contained in a large number of volumes, and vice versa, one volume containing more than one story. For the ʿAntar cycle, to give but one example, the second Wetzstein collection is represented with 178 parts and twenty-six fragments, the Sprenger collection with ninety-nine parts, whereas six more parts originate from three other collections. It is my impression that the greater part of the long stories is preserved in manuscripts of the second Wetzstein collection only.

In order to generate material on which I could base some of my ideas, I created a small corpus of manuscripts from the Wetzstein collection in the Staatsbibliothek. A list of these is provided in the Appendix. My first criterion for inclusion in this corpus was that the selected manuscripts should contain specific information about their copyists and the period in which they worked. It may seem strange that I would seek such features in a type of manuscript that is characterised by a general lack of precise information about origin in terms of time and place. That I have done so nevertheless is in order to have at least some grasp of time, place and individual copyists and owners. From June 2014 onwards, I visited the Staatsbibliothek on several occasions to compose and study this corpus of manuscripts with popular stories from the Wetzstein collection. I took it as my sample of the whole and arrived at a number of observations.

Arabic manuscripts with popular stories have much in common with other Arabic manuscripts, but it is the differences that are my focus here. These stories are not part of the established literary and scholarly canon, which has consequences for their outward and physical appearance. A general impression is that they are ‘simple’ manuscripts made by and for ‘simple’ people. Their non-canonical content means that they fall outside the strict rules that scholars and literati have devised for the transmission of texts. One will not find, for example, sets of reading certificates, such as those encountered in Ḥadīṯ manuscripts, and, exceptionally, the Maqāmāt of al-Ḥarīrī (the literary Arabic prose text par excellence).¹⁸ Texts such as the Maqāmāt belong to an entirely different stratum of society.

What further strikes the reader of popular stories is the language in which they are couched. It is not the Arabic that one learns at school or university, but a deviation “from the Classical norm in written texts”.19 “Classical Arabic” or “Modern Standard Arabic” is nobody’s mother tongue. It has a normative grammar, telling the speaker or writer how he should use this artificial language. Those scribes who recorded the stories of the popular story books apparently had little knowledge of these grammatical prescriptions, or they simply could not care less. They wrote in their own living language, which must be called Arabic as well, but which distinguishes itself in many ways from al-Luğa al-Fuṣḥā, the official, literally the “most eloquent”, Arabic language.20 At first sight, the free orthography of the written versions of popular stories strikes the reader as antinomical, or even anarchistic. One has to consider, however, that the stories were recorded outside the usual channels of transmission. I doubt whether there would be any established Faqīḥ, ‘Allāma, Adīb, Kātib, Nāṣih, Šārīḥ or Muḥaššī who would write in this way, because such language is, according to the rules of normative grammar, incorrect, faulty, corrupt even, whereas descriptive grammarians would consider it only as “different” from the norm. This attitude, still very much alive today among Arab scholars, can sometimes result in curious paradoxes. Supposed mistakes in the manuscripts are silently corrected and authentic examples of the living Arabic language are contaminated or even destroyed by a misguided sense of normalisation.

An example of this is the work by the Tunisian scholar Maḥmūd Ṭaršūna on his edition of Kitāb Miʿat Layla wa-Layla, the “One-hundred-and-one Nights”, a framework for a number of stories. Ṭaršūna bases his edition on two manuscripts, one in Paris (Arabe 3662) and the other in Tunis National Library (no. 4576), but he frequently corrects the text according to his own ideas about the language in which the stories are presented. Inevitably, this leads to curious cases of hyper-correction, including the introduction of morphological features (for example, the use of the dualis of verbal forms) that do not exist anywhere else in the manuscripts. About his handling of his text, Ṭaršūna says:

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19 Kees Versteegh, The Arabic Language, Second edition, Edinburgh, University Press, 2014, p. 152. In the present context, Versteegh’s chapter on “Middle Arabic” (ibid., pp. 152–171) is particularly useful. An older work on this, which is still useful, is Johann Fück, Arabiya. Untersuchungen zur arabischen Sprach- und Stilgeschichte, Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1950, especially pp. 57–62. However, Versteegh, Fück and others largely ignore the mass of linguistic information present in the collections of popular stories.

20 Versteegh, The Arabic Language, p. vii, calls the opposition between these two varieties of Arabic “the major theme” of his book.
“We have maintained the language and the idiom of the book and we have only permitted ourselves to correct the numerous grammatical mistakes.”21 This is opening the gate to an influx of unhistorical and contaminated language at best, to the trivialisation of the wording of texts at worst. All this usually goes unnoticed, as these “mistakes” are not given in a critical apparatus, nor listed as emendenda – they are simply passed over in silence. Such normative behaviour can go largely unnoticed on the morphological level, because that is easy to normalise, but on the syntactical level there is no way to disguise the differences.22 Predictably, in that case, the ignorant or sloppy copyists get the blame. As wrong and incorrect as their work may be according to the normative philologist, it is nevertheless a form of the living language of the storytellers that is given by the copyists of the manuscripts. Taken together, the corpus of popular literature is a huge reservoir of non-normalised, non-fuṣḥā versions of Arabic. Against the widespread normalisation, diplomatically edited examples of the language as presented in the manuscripts of popular stories are a rarity that one should welcome rather than suppress.

It seems that for popular stories and poetry, texts are more or less safe in the hands of folklorists, rather than with the philologists. Their sources are sound recordings, not manuscripts, and I have the impression that they keep the non-standard language elements better intact than philologists do.23 In the long run, however, the administration and the preservation of the folklorists’ sound archives is very different from that of manuscripts.24 Yet, man-handling the texts in the way that Mahmūd Ṭaršūna and friends do seems to be less of an issue when sound recordings are the primary source of an edition.

For the editing of popular stories from a tradition of multiple manuscripts, new strategies have to be thought out. If the number of manuscripts is not too large, one could think of a synoptical presentation. Surely, the elaborate

23 Ṣādʿ Abdallāh al-Ṣuwayān, already early on, gives some attention to archivation, e.g. in his Gāmʿ al-Māṭūrūtī al-Ṣafahiyya, Al-Dawḥa, Markaz al-Turāṭ al-Šaʿbī, 1985, pp. 46–49. The technical specifications in that book are now entirely outdated, but the point is that he mentions the importance of organised institutional storage.
theories of textual criticism of the Lachmannian philologists do not apply to this material. This is not confined to the study of Arabic popular stories, as can be shown with a quotation from an entirely different field of the humanities, medieval Irish literature:

This view of the development of medieval texts as deterioration and corruption rests on two assumptions: first, that the basic text must have been a kind of copyright-protected product that careless tradition bearers corrupted by prolonged use, and second, that there must have been an Urtext, an extended written form on which a stemma could be anchored, rather than a floating multiform tradition, such as we find in the modern oral-derived cultures [...]. These two assumptions are the bequest of classical to medieval studies, and of the linguistic method of internal reconstruction to the study of literary texts, or, rather, works of verbal aesthetics, since they need not have been composed in writing. There is no way of proving or disproving these assumptions.

Copyists of Arabic popular stories have the idea that they must reveal a good text, and therefore they frequently note in their colophons that the delivered text is without Ziyāda or Nuqṣān, “without additions or omissions”, and also that it is bi-l-Tamām wa-l-Kamāl, “absolutely complete” – which demonstrates an inclusive attitude. This should not be interpreted as a reference to the phenomenon of variant readings, which may be dealt with using Lachmannian textual criticism. Nor is it possible to construct a stemma on the basis of the undoing of Ziyāda or Nuqṣān. Finding the “real” author or the “true” version of


FIGURE 7.1 A manuscript of popular stories with its owners and readers. Title-page of Part 20 (number corrected) of a section of the Arabian Nights, here called Sīrat Alf Layla wa-Layla. The owner is mentioned in the title where usually an author would be mentioned: al-Ḥāǧǧ Ahmad al-Rabbāṭ al-Ḥalabi, and (added at the left) ’Umar and Ḥasan and Darwīš al-Qabbānī. Top left: another owner or reader: Muṣṭafā al-Mawsili Tū ... ǧī (?) on 25 R1 (= Rabī’ al-Awwal) of AH[12]63/1847. Repeated reader’s note (also given on text pages): Muḥammad Firdaws al-Ǧaʿfarī AH1262/1845–1846. Another reader: Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. al- ... (?). The expression nazarā fihi wa-taʾammala maʾānīhi, “has looked in it and has considered its content”, is formulaic for a reader’s note.

STAATSBIBLIOTHEK ZU BERLIN – PK, ORIENTABTEILUNG, WETZSTEIN II 1082 (WE. 1082), F. 1A

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WETZSTEIN’S MANUSCRIPTS CONTAINING ARABIC POPULAR STORIES

Figure 7.2 A text page of the same manuscript as fig. 7.1. Part 20 of a section of the Arabian Nights, Sīrat Alf Layla wa-Layla: Ḥikāyat Ḥasan al-Ǧawharī. Reader’s note by Muḥammad Firdaws al-Ga’fari, with the year AH1262/1845–1846 in the upper margin.

Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – PK, Orientabteilung, Wetzstein II 1082 (We. 1082), F. 4a

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a clearly defined text is irrelevant in what one may call the “fluid tradition” of popular stories. If authors are mentioned at all, they are mythical. There is never a single author of a story. Successful popular stories are changing all the time. That is why in this field of study inventories of themes have come into being.\textsuperscript{27} In the popular story literature the owners or collectors of manuscripts sometimes tend to acquire a position of authority in the transmission of a story, even more than the copyists. This can be seen on some of the title-pages of some of the manuscripts in the Wetzstein collection, for instance, MS Berlin, We. 1082, f. 1a (see figs. 7.1 and 7.2).\textsuperscript{28} Reading and re-reading the numerous versions of stories, as I have done with those Wetzstein popular texts selected for my sample, I could not escape the conclusion that the old philological approach to this material is futile. Maḥmūd Ṭaršūna’s destructive work on the \textit{Kitāb Miʾat Layla wa-Layla} makes this clear as well.

4 The Social Backgrounds of People Involved

These “simple” manuscripts with popular stories sometimes contain the names of copyists, owners and readers with an indication of their professions. This tells us about their station in life, and it shows where in society there was interest in and use of the popular stories. In the small corpus that I constructed to facilitate my research on the Wetzstein II collection, I came across a number of references to professions among copyists, owners and readers:

- \textit{Al-ʿAqqād}, seller of cords (We. 641, f. 41b)
- \textit{Al-Baqqāl}, the greengrocer (We. 1736, f. 139b)
- \textit{Fayyāl}, ? (We. 1082, f. 29a), or maybe \textit{Qabbāl}?
- \textit{Al-Furğī}, the baker (We. 741, inside front cover), or possibly to be read as \textit{al-Firanǧī}, the Frank
- \textit{Al-Ǧabbān}, the cheese merchant (We. 702, f. 95b; We. 1020, f. 66a)


- Al-Hādīq, the skilled person? (We. 560, f. 137b), maybe not a specifically professional indication
- Al-Haffār, the stone mason (We. 522, title-page; We. 678, f. 117a)
- Al-Ḥakawātī, the storyteller (We. 741, f. 88b, copyist; We. 1034, f. 138a, copyist), see also al-Ḥammāmī
- Al-Ḥallāq, the barber (We. 803, f. 22a, copyist)
- Al-Ḥammāmī al-Ḥakawātī, the owner of a bath house who is also the storyteller (We. 1034, f. 138a, copyist)
- Al-Ḥaššāš, the haššāš (or hay) merchant (We. 741, f. 88b)
- Al-Ḥallāṣī, the receiver (WE. 171, vol. 2, f. 1a)
- Mu'addib wa-Mu'allim al-Αṭfāl, the educator and teacher of children [in Alexandria] (We. 1085a, f. 184b)
- Qabbāl? see Fayyāl, above
- Al-Qaṣṣāṣ, the shearer, or the popular story teller (We. 702, f. 13b, see fig. 7.3)
- Al-Qaṭṭān, the cotton merchant (We. 702, f. 74a; We. 830, f. 40a)
- Šaḥy al-Qaṭṭāna, the head of the cotton merchants (We. 702, f. 69b, see fig. 7.4)
- Al-Rabbaṭ = ? (We. 522, cover; We. 561, f. 1a; We. 641, f. 1a; We. 702, f. 74a, We. 1082, f. 1a)29
- Al-Safarǧalātī, the quince merchant (We. 561, f. 1a)
- Al-Šāwīş, the police sergeant (We. 561, f. 60b)
- Al-Tanakǧarī, the tinsmith (We. 641, f. 41b)30
- Al-Tarrās, the shield-maker (WE. 171, vol. 5, f. 1a)
- Al-Zaytī, the oil merchant (?) (WE. 171, vol. 5, f. 121a)

Apart from the Qaṣṣāṣ, ‘the popular storyteller’, the Mu'addib wa-Mu'allim al-Αṭfāl, “the educator and teacher of children” and the Hakawātī, “the storyteller”, the above professions are not directly connected with the transmission or presentation of popular stories. I have the impression that the mention of professions is a feature that is largely missing in the manuscripts of the more “official” literature. This may point at a use of popular stories within other professional strata of society, in particular among members of the guilds.

Other indicators can be found in the corpus as well, such as birth notes (We. 707, f. 44b) or notes on other familial events. How far the presence of such notes

30 Or to be understood as al-Tunbakǧī, “the tobacco merchant” (as in We. 559; reference kindly provided by Boris Liebrenz)?
Figure 7.3 Colophon of the “Story of the Judge and the Thief” written in a rather free orthography, giving as date of copying 6 Ğumād 11 1243 (1827), by copyist Bakrī (?) al-Qaṣṣāṣ (“the shearer” or “the popular storyteller”) Ṣalḥāḥ (?). Formula commonly used in colophons of storytelling texts (but not only there), as if the copyist is just the receiver of the story: wa-hāḏā mā intahā ilaynā min Qiṣṣat al-Qāḍī wa-l-Ḥarāmī bi-l-tamām ⟨wa-l-kamāl⟩, “and this is what came down to us [...]”

Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – PK, Orientabteilung, Wetzstein II 702 (We. 702), f. 138
A professional indication in a note of readership. A lengthy reader's note in the margin, written by al-Sayyid Darwiş b. al-Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, the Šayḥ al-Qaṭṭāna, the head of the cotton merchants, dated 29 Muḥarram 1253 (1836) Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – PK, Orientabteilung, Wetzstein II 702 (We. 702), f. 69b
is relevant to an assessment of the social status of the owners of a book needs further research.\textsuperscript{31}

\textbf{Appendix: the Corpus}

To begin my research in Wetzstein’s popular stories I composed, with Ahlwardt’s volume eight as a point of departure, a corpus of what I considered to be relevant manuscripts. This comprises the manuscripts in the list below, all of which I studied by autopsy during my visits to Berlin in 2014–2015. None of the manuscripts mentioned below is a so-called \textit{Hakawāti} manuscript with text written in large script, a feature that would facilitate declamation by a professional storyteller.\textsuperscript{32}

In 2009, I had such a storyteller’s reciting manuscript in my hands, not in Berlin but among the stock of Mr Herman Bouwman, an antiquarian bookseller in Groenekan, the Netherlands. Mr Bouwman has meanwhile suspended his activities. Some of my notes on this manuscript were once on Mr Bouwman’s website, where it was registered as Arab. 357. It was sold and its present whereabouts is unknown to me. At the time I described the manuscript, which featured an illustration, as follows:

Collective volume with texts in Arabic, European laid paper, 20 × 14.5 cm, f. 6–34 + 1–35 f., text written in large \textit{nash} script with \textit{ruq’a} features, 13 lines to the page, paper pasted boards. There is an owner’s seal by Ǧa’far Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Madānī on f. 6a. An owner, who appears to be the copyist, has written his name and address on the first leaf of either part: Muḥammad Luṭfī al-Rahunği, owner of al-Maktaba al-Adabiyya in Sūq al-Miskīn (town not mentioned). The manuscript is possibly a single volume from a set of reading books of a \textit{Hakawāti}, a professional storyteller (hence the large script?). On the last page of the volume an owner or reader has made a drawing in pencil, representing the protagonist of the stories, al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Baybars, whose \textit{Sīra} is based on the legends around the Mamlūk Sulṭān Baybars I, who reigned from 1260–1277. One may imagine that the image was also used during the performance of the Hakawāti.

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ibn al-Maʿtūq}, “the son of the manumitted slave” (We. 702, f. 23a). This should not necessarily be interpreted in the sense that the father of this person was himself a manumitted slave. In Morocco, for instance, “Matoug” is a common family name and carries no implication of the etymological meaning of the word \textit{Maʿtūq}.

\textsuperscript{32} Āḥmad al-Laḥḥām, the storyteller in \textit{Maqhā al-Nawfara} in Damascus, can be seen with a manuscript, or sometimes with a photocopy of a manuscript, in his hands on the numerous recent (2015) photographs of him that can be found in Google images following the use of the search terms “damascus storyteller”.

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As for the contents of the volume I noted:

(1) Kitāb 16 of the Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir (Baybars), with a summary of the content written on the title-page; (2) the continuation of the preceding text, also Kitāb 16. The division into two of the text may reflect the amount of text read aloud during one session.

Most manuscripts in the corpus that I composed from the Wetzstein collection in Berlin date from the first half of the nineteenth century. They may have been only one or at best two generations of owners old. Serial numbers are written on many manuscripts. It was not always clear to me whether these indicate a certain order of the episodes in a larger cycle, or whether they are classmarks given to the volumes by their owners.

Collection Wetzstein 1:
- **WE. 171**, volumes 1–11 (Ahlwardt 9156 (2), (10), (3), (11), (1), (4), (5), (7), (6), (8), (9) respectively): episodes of Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir

Collection Wetzstein 11:
- **We. 388** (Ahlwardt 9070, 5): Qiṣṣat Tamīm al-Dārī. Old and atypical manuscript
- **We. 440** (Ahlwardt 9149): Dū al-Himma wa-l-Baṭṭāl
- **We. 522** (Ahlwardt 9108): part 2 of Sīrat al-ʿAnqā bt. Bahramḡūr
- **We. 560** (Ahlwardt 9147): Kitāb Tuhfat al-Ṣudūr wa-ʿAnqā bt. al-Rīḥ wa-ʿAnqā bt. Bahramḡūr
- **We. 561** (Ahlwardt 9155, vol. 8, pp. 114–115): Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir (Baybars)
- **We. 627** (Ahlwardt 919): part 4 of Sīrat al-Malik Sayf
- **We. 641** (Ahlwardt 9123): part 9 of Sīrat al-Malik Sayf b. Ḍaʿl-Yazan
- **We. 662** (Ahlwardt 9103; Ahlwardt 9104): Dīwān, Šāhid Kalām, Nukta wa-Šāhid min Nawādir al-Luṣūs, and several other stories (see fig. 7.5)
- **We. 678** (Ahlwardt 9169): Min Sīrat Ġawdar
- **We. 792**, A collective volume, texts in order of occurrence in the volume:
  - Ahlwardt 9077, 1: Qiṣṣat al-Qāḍī wal-Ḥarāmī
  - Ahlwardt 8978, 2: Qiṣṣat Ahl al-Kahf

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33 We can rule out the possibility that the manuscripts were commissioned by Wetzstein. Many came from the library of Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ, who was operating before Wetzstein arrived in Damascus. See Liebrenz, “The Library of Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ”; Liebrenz, *Die Rifāʿīya aus Damaskus. Eine Privatbibliothek im osmanischen Syrien und ihr kulturelles Umfeld*. Leiden, Brill, 2016, pp. 228–233.
Figure 7.5 The colophon of the collection of the “Twenty Nightly Stories” mentions the copyist, ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Miṣrī. No date is given. The Šāhid at the left of the colophon is the beginning of the next story in the volume. Šāhid means here “a true story.”

Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – PK, Orientabteilung, Wetzstein II 662 (We. 662), f. 50a
- Ahlwardt 3999, 1: Stories, fragments poetry and prose, not in Ahlwardt vol. 8
- Ahlwardt 9186, 1: Hikāyat al-Ḥalīfa al-Sammāk ma‘a al-Ḥalīfa Hārūn al-Raşīd
- Ahlwardt 9052, 4: Qiṣṣat al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ wa-l-Ġulām
- Ahlwardt 9052, 4: Hikāya Latīfā laḥā Ma‘nā liman yafhamu
- Ahlwardt 9085: Qiṣṣat ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd ma‘a Salmī
- Ahlwardt 9059: Qiṣṣat Masrūr ma‘a Zayn al-Muwāṣīf
- Ahlwardt 9172: Incomplete copy (abrupt end) of Qiṣṣat Ahmad al-Danīf
- Ahlwardt 8993 (2): Qiṣṣat Miqrād
- Ahlwardt 9054 (2): Sīrat al-Bakrī
- Ahlwardt 8989 (2): Gāzāt Banī al-Naẓīr wa-mā fiḥā min al-ʿAǧāʾib
- Ahlwardt 9021: Qiṣṣat al-Imām ʿAlī [...] ilā al-Ḥiṣn al-Azraq
- Ahlwardt 9054 (2): Sīrat al-Imām ʿAlī [...] wa-Ḫālid b. al-Walīd
- Ahlwardt 9020 (2): Gāzwat Bīr Maʿīna
- Ahlwardt 9019: Gāzwat al-Imām ʿAlī ‘alā ʿAbd Habbār b.ʿAbd Zaynǧīr
- Ahlwardt 9179: Qiṣṣat Tawaddud
- Ahlwardt 9084 (2): Qiṣṣat Zayd wa-Kaḥlā
- We 797. Ahlwardt 9087: Kitāb al-Samar fiḥi Hikāyat al-Šayyād wa-l-Qumqum wa-l-Samak al-Muǧānī wa-l-Malik wa-Ibn al-Tāǧir wal-Ṭilasm
- We. 741 (Ahlwardt 8986): Haḏihi Gāzwat al-Farǧ ... ma‘a al-Nabi ...
- We. 754 (Ahlwardt 9192): Bāni Hilāl, Dīwān al-Aws
- We. 756 (Ahlwardt 9196): Bāni Hilāl, Dīwān Ǧābir wa-Ǧubayr, part 2
- We. 764 (Ahlwardt 9220): Bāni Hilāl, Dīwān al-Kawkabī
- We. 765 (Ahlwardt 9222): Dīwān al-Hiraql
- We. 767 (Ahlwardt 9228): Dīwān Ǧaǧrāb, Bāni Hilāl
- We. 769 (Ahlwardt 9233): Dīwān al-Faylasūf
- We. 777 (Ahlwardt 9255): Bādhrān 2, Bāni Hilāl
- We. 780 Collective volume:
  - (Ahlwardt 9277): Dīwān al-Māḏīfī al-Ṣaʿīd
  - (Ahlwardt 9267): Dīwān al-Ǧarkasī
- We. 781 (Ahlwardt 9280): Dīwān al-Ǧaḏanfar min Sīrat Bāni Hilāl
- We. 783 (Ahlwardt 9355): Dīwān al-Wišāḥī (?)
- We. 786 (Ahlwardt 9342): Dīwān ʿAyyāt, Sīrat Bāni Hilāl
- We. 787 (Ahlwardt 9343): Dīwān ʿAyyāt, Sīrat Bāni Hilāl
- We. 788 (Ahlwardt 9345): Dīwān ʿAyyāt, Sīrat Bāni Hilāl
- We. 790 (Ahlwardt 9346): Dīwān Budayr wa-Fawza, Bāni Hilāl
- We. 795 (Ahlwardt 9294): Dīwān al-Dubaysī, Bāni Hilāl
- We. 797 (Ahlwardt 9300): Dīwān al-Timurlank, Bāni Hilāl
– We. 800 Collective volume:
  – Qiṣṣat Ḥalab al-Ḥuzāʾī (Ahlwardt 9307)
  – Dīwān al-Harās fi Qubruṣ (Ahlwardt 9311)
  – Dīwān Abū Basṣār al-ʿAṭṭār (Ahlwardt 9315)
– We. 803 (Ahlwardt 9351): Dīwān al-Ǧitriīf Abū Zayn al-Dār
– We. 806 Collective volume:
  – (Ahlwardt 9301): Qiṣṣat ʿĀna maʿa al-Yahūd
  – (Ahlwardt 9350): Dīwān al-Amīr Zaydān maʿa Zayn al-Dār
– We. 807 (Ahlwardt 9271): Dīwān Qaṭiyya, Banī Hilāl
– We. 808 (Ahlwardt 9274): Dīwān Miṣr, [Banī Hilāl]
– We. 809 (Ahlwardt 9276): Kalām al-Ḫāḍa wa-Ḥarda, Banī Hilāl
– We. 810 Collective volume:
  – (Ahlwardt 9269) Dīwān al-ʿArīš
  – (Ahlwardt 9198): Dīwān Qaṭrāb al-Šarīf Abū Hāšim
  – (Ahlwardt 9328): Dīwān al-Ḥaṣhīṣ (Banī Hilāl)
– We. 811 (Ahlwardt 9279): Dīwān Qatlat al-Māḍī (Banī Hilāl)
– We. 812 (Ahlwardt 9326): Dīwān al-Rašrāš (Banī Hilāl)
– We. 815 Collective volume:
  – (Ahlwardt 9331): Dīwān Hawlā Umm Naṣr wa-mā ġarā lahā maʿa Ḥarb al-Zanāṭī (Banī Hilāl)
  – (Ahlwardt 9333): Dīwān Qatl al-Zanāṭī (Banī Hilāl)
– We. 816 Collective volume:
  – (Ahlwardt 9263): Dīwān al-Qudsī
  – (Ahlwardt 9282): Dīwān al-Ḥaṭṭiyya
– We. 817 (Ahlwardt 9334): Dīwān Ġubayna al-Mahraǰān wa-ʿAyn Salwān (Banī Hilāl)
– We. 818 (Ahlwardt 9335): Banī Hilāl, part 83, wa-fīhi Mawt Yahyā wa-Marīhi (?) wa-Yūnus wa-Qatl Sulfān al-Yaman ...
– We. 821 (Ahlwardt 9340): Banī Hilāl, part 86
– We. 830 (Ahlwardt 9203): Dīwān al-ʿĀšir min Sīrat Banī Hilāl wa-fīhi Kamāl Dīwān al-Ḫaḍrā wa-Barakāt ʿalā al-Tamām
– We. 834 (Ahlwardt 9260): Dīwān Naǧd b. ʿAlqam min Sīrat Banī Hilāl
– We. 866 (Ahlwardt 9265): Dīwān al-Ǧarkāsī
– We. 875 (Ahlwardt 9201): Dīwān al-Ḫaḍrā bt. Qaṭrāb al-Šarīf ..., Banī Hilāl
– We. 876 (Ahlwardt 9216): Kitāb Barḍaḥā wa-mā waqaʿa maʿa al-Sulṭān Ḥasan
– We. 885 (Ahlwardt 9252): Dīwān Badrān
– We. 892 Collective volume:
  – (Ahlwardt 9293): Qiṣṣat al-Dabīsī
  – (Ahlwardt 9297): Qiṣṣat al-Māriya
– We. 893 (Ahlwardt 9284): Dīwān May al-Ǧāriya
– We. 900 (Ahlwardt 9313): Dīwān al-Harās fi Qubruṣ
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- We. 985 (Ahlwardt 9124): Sīrat ‘Antar, part 25
- We. 1020 (Ahlwardt 9124): Sīrat ‘Antar, part 60
- We. 1034 (Ahlwardt 9125): Sīrat ‘Antar, part 13
- We. 1082. Ahlwardt 9176: Incomplete copy (lacuna) of Ḥikāyat Ḥasan al-Ǧawhari, said to be vol. 20 of Sīrat Alf Layla wa-Layla
- We. 1085a (Ahlwardt 9128): Part 4 of Sīrat Abū l-Fawāris ‘ Antar b. Šaddād al-’Absī
- We. 1344, 6 (Ahlwardt 9038, 2): Ḥadīṯ Qatl al-Imām Ḥusayn
- We. 1723 Collective volume, of which only the last text is a popular story;
- We. 1736 Collective volume, of which only the penultimate text is a popular story
- We. 1761 Collective volume with text, of which only two can be considered as popular stories:
  - (Ahlwardt 2525): Qiṣṣat Iblīs

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