

English summary

At the beginning of my research I had intended to publish an edition of Ibn al-Akfānī's treatise on the division of the sciences, entitled *Iršād al-Qāṣid ilā Asnā al-Maqāṣid*. It was compiled by Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Sā'id al-Anṣārī, known as Ibn al-Akfānī, who died in Cairo in the year of the plague 749/1348. My first reading of this work dates back to 1971, when I was studying the medieval Arabic literature on the interpretation of dreams. Ibn al-Akfānī included a section on that subject in his book. While reading the *Iršād al-Qāṣid* I was struck by its readability and the practical arrangement of its subject matter. I soon found out that the existing editions could hardly be called critical, and also that the considerable influence which the text exerted on later works of an encyclopedic and bibliographical nature in Arabic had hardly been examined. I then decided to produce a critical edition of the work and thought that this would not take too long to complete. It turned out to be otherwise.

In the course of 1973-1974 I travelled to Egypt on the assumption that there the earlier MSS of Ibn al-Akfānī's little encyclopedia could be found. I was wrong. Only fairly recent MSS are preserved in the Egyptian National Library. Stemmatological exercises on these proved fruitless.

In the meantime, the number of MSS which I could trace in public and private collections all over the world expanded rapidly. Brockelmann had listed less than twenty references¹ and in the course of 1981 I had already found some twenty more. Now, early in 1989, I have found slightly less than seventy MSS and their number will undoubtedly increase. How I have made use of this overwhelming amount of manuscript sources, I explain in my chapter on the manuscripts of the *Iršād al-Qāṣid*.

My first acquaintance with the work was not with Ibn al-Akfānī's text proper, but with the plagiarized version, entitled *al-Durr al-Naẓīm*, as it

1 *GAL* G II, 137; S II, 169-170.

is preserved in the Leiden MS Or. 958 (42). The complicated question of the authorship of the plagiarized version, and also my growing acquaintance with other works of Ibn al-Akfānī, were incentives to me to search for more information concerning the personality of this 14th-century Egyptian author. My interest received an extra impetus when I read the contemporary information on Ibn al-Akfānī which may be gleaned from works by his younger friend, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī. From these it was possible to establish a more precise portrait of this many-sided ophthalmologist and encyclopedist. The results of my research in this respect have grown, rather to my surprise, into a fully-fledged bio-bibliographical survey on the life and works of the author of the *Iršād al-Qāṣid*. It has become much more extensive than would have been necessary as a short introduction to the critical edition of the Arabic text. In fact the reader has now in his hands two books in one: a bio-bibliographical survey and a critical text edition.

The object of this information is to elucidate the image of Ibn al-Akfānī as a wit and a man of learning, and also as a scholar who combined a profoundly orthodox Islamic persuasion with a broad interest in the natural sciences. He must have played a role of some importance in the intellectual life of Cairo in the fourteenth century. Although I was able to sketch the intellectual portrait of an interesting figure, I had to stop at that stage of my quest. Medieval Muslim scholars are not liberal in providing information concerning their biography and spiritual development, much less concerning their personal history. The fragmentary information of al-Ṣafadī, indispensable as it is, suggests much more than has in fact been transmitted to us. That so much could indeed be found by the assiduous collection of bits and pieces of information is in itself a reason for optimism. It promises much for research on so many other interesting personalities of medieval Islam. In that respect, this study on the life and works of Ibn al-Akfānī has a wider bearing and may be considered a contribution to the publication of the sources of the history of ideas of the Islamic Middle Ages. The main problems that arise in an investigation such as mine are exemplified in my research and in my efforts to draw up an inventory of the existing material. These problems are the almost entire lack of dependable text

1 See the list of MSS of the *Iršād al-Qāṣid* and also my chapter on the influence of the work on later encyclopedias and bibliographies.

editions, the very incomplete state of the art of Arabic bibliography, and the wide (in a purely geographical sense) diffusion of the manuscript material which makes it almost physically impossible to take all the available material into account.

In the first chapter of my introduction, the bio-bibliographical part, I treat the life and works of Ibn al-Akfānī. I first provide a summary of his biography, establish the exact nomenclature of Ibn al-Akfānī's name and give the gist of the autobiographical material. Then I deal with Ibn al-Akfānī's biography according to the information of his friend and contemporary, al-Şafadī. The information available in a printed edition is given in Dutch translation and what has not yet been edited is presented both in a Dutch translation and in the original Arabic version. I was so fortunate as to find material on the conversational topics between the two friends, Ibn al-Akfānī and al-Şafadī, and I give a summary of these as well. At the end of the biographical part I discuss the way Ibn al-Akfānī's biography was treated in later biographical literature.

In my description of Ibn al-Akfānī's I begin with a survey of the sources of his bibliography. I then proceed to divide the known works into four groups. First there are the works that are both known with certainty to be compiled by Ibn al-Akfānī and that have been preserved, and the commentaries on these by later scholars (19 works in all). The second part contains information on those works which may be safely attributed to Ibn al-Akfānī, but the text of which seems to be lost (11 works). The third group consists of those writings which, in the course of time, have become somehow associated with Ibn al-Akfānī, but are probably not his (16 works). Finally, I mention three works which have been, in one way or another, attributed to Ibn al-Akfānī but are decidedly not his. All in all, 49 works are treated in this survey. Along the lines of this division I then discuss all 49 works by mentioning the edition(s), if any, the MSS, and also, if necessary, the degree of authenticity of a work. Of the more important works I give the contents and sometimes extensive quotations. In one case I even reproduce the entire text of a work in as far as it has been preserved. It is what remains of a treatise on politics (No. 17 in the survey). For those works that have been wrongly attributed to Ibn al-Akfānī I mention the reason why I consider their attribution false.

The second chapter contains a discussion of the MSS of Ibn al-Akfānī's encyclopedic bibliography, the *Irşād al-Qāşid*. First I present a survey of all the MSS which I know. They are arranged in alphabetical order according to location. On the basis of this survey I have composed a

chronological list of the dated MSS. I then proceed to discuss the text critical value of the four printed editions of the work. Three of these prove to have little more value than any recent MS of the text, while their value is even more hampered by the uncritical treatment they received at the hands of their respective editors. The fourth edition proved to be based on two of the earlier printed editions, without direct recourse to any of the MSS. The value of the editions is, therefore, rather disappointing from the point of view of textual criticism, and my edition remains the first critical one.

I then discuss the merits of the seven manuscripts on which I have based my edition. I describe them extensively so that their value for the textual history of the *Iršād al-Qāṣid* becomes clear. I also give an account of the eclectic method of editing which I have used. I had no other choice since it proved to be impossible to establish a 'classical' stemma of the available MSS. Later I realized that to establish a workable stemma is exceptional, and certainly not the rule as some handbooks on textual criticism make us believe. In the meantime I had opted for a more pragmatic approach. On the basis of secondary criteria, namely age and/or association value, I selected the seven manuscripts which are the basis for my edition. The second chapter ends with twenty reproductions taken from the MSS.

The third chapter contains a summary of the contents of the *Iršād al-Qāṣid*. While I was working on the edition of the Arabic text I also made a literal translation in order to check on the editorial work. I came to realize, however, that the publication of a literal translation would not be a very useful undertaking. The precision needed for a literal translation would detract from the readability of the Arabic original. And with a scientific text like Ibn al-Akfānī's treatise on the division of the sciences, the translator cannot take the liberties in which he would have indulged when translating a purely literary text. In order to retain the readability of the original I have chosen to present a summary only, thereby hoping to make Ibn al-Akfānī's text even more accessible, rather than a literal translation. Or to put it in Arabic terminology: I have kept the *ma'nā* but have given up the *lafz*.

Ibn al-Akfānī opens his text with an introduction containing general remarks on the necessity of learning. This is followed by chapters on the dignity of learning and the learned and on the conditions of teaching and studying. A discussion on the limitations and divisions of the sciences closes the introductory part. Then the sciences are treated, first the

principal theoretical sciences (*al-'ulūm al-aṣliyya al-naẓariyya*) of which there are eight: philology, logic, metaphysics and the religious sciences, the natural sciences, geometry, astronomy, arithmetic and music. There follow the three practical sciences (*al-'ulūm al-'amaliyya*), namely politics, ethics and economy. The text ends with an epilogue containing an explanation of basic philosophical terminology. All principal sciences are treated with their divisions, aims and methods, and also with an account of the state of the art in Ibn al-Akfānī's time. The philosophical terminology used by the author is entirely Avicennian. The *'ulūm far'iyya* or the sciences derived from each main science are given, together with a theoretical basis for these subdivisions. In my commentary on the contents of the *Iršād al-Qāṣid* in the fourth chapter I have schematically reconstructed Ibn al-Akfānī's line of reasoning while defining the way in which the derived sciences stem from the eight principal ones.

Exactly sixty sciences are thus dealt with. Each is accompanied by a definition, an indication of its usefulness, an account of its most important practical application and, finally, a bibliography. The latter feature was something of a novelty. The division into eight principal theoretical sciences shows how Ibn al-Akfānī blends the Hellenistic theories on the division of the sciences with Islamic components. In this respect the book is a true synthesis of what were, long before Ibn al-Akfānī's time, diametrically opposed outlooks. According to this synthesis philosophy is confirmed by revelation or vice versa. Ibn al-Akfānī's way of presenting his material and dividing the sciences reflects a synthesis which was, itself, the result of a fierce battle fought a few centuries earlier between theologians and philosophers. In the fourteenth century it had become a generally accepted approach.

The fourth chapter contains my commentary on the contents of the encyclopedia. This commentary is kept as succinct as possible and only really contains some factual explanations and bibliographical annotations. The fifth chapter is reserved for a more systematic discussion of the bibliographical materials contained in Ibn al-Akfānī's encyclopedia. The four hundred odd titles that are given by the author make of the *Iršād al-Qāṣid*, which, as I have said, is primarily a work on the division of the sciences, also a kind of annotated bibliography. I drew up a chronological list of all the authors explicitly mentioned by name or implicitly by a reference to one or more of their books. The main conclusion which may be drawn from that chronological survey is that

Ibn al-Akfānī shows a certain amount of conservatism in his bibliographical material. He hardly ever mentions contemporary authors. This may be explained by the fact that, as a summarizer and popularizer, he is always one or two generations behind in the development of science. Besides, the distribution of texts, and more generally the spread of knowledge in the fourteenth century was considerably slower than it is nowadays.

In the sixth chapter I discuss the influence exerted by the *Iršād al-Qāṣid* on the later encyclopedic and bibliographical literature of the Arabs. I devote some attention to the plagiarized version, entitled *al-Durr al-Naẓīm*, but I have not succeeded in identifying its author. I have, however, come to the conclusion that there is a connection with Judeo-Arabic circles from which this version may have originated. I then describe the way al-Qalqaṣandī, and Ṭāšköprüzāda after him, incorporated the material of the *Iršād al-Qāṣid* into their own compilations. From Ṭāšköprüzāda there is a direct line to the great bibliographical reference work by Ḥāğğī Kālifa. It becomes clear from these lines of influence that Ibn al-Akfānī's work occupies a central position in the history of the Arabic bibliographical tradition. It is itself a digest of what had been brought about by predecessors such as Ibn Sīnā, al-Fārābī, Ibn al-Nadīm and al-Šahrastānī, and is in its turn a major source for bibliographies and encyclopedias of the post-classical period. The chapter on the influence is finished with a discussion of the use that Joseph von Hammer made of Ibn al-Akfānī's encyclopedia in 1804.

The ensuing chapters contain first a bibliography of quoted books and articles, then indexes of names and subjects mentioned in the introductory chapters and of the manuscripts quoted therein. There follow indexes of proper names, titles of books and quotations from the Qur'ān as they occur in the Arabic text, and, finally, the critical apparatus. The Arabic text comes next preceded by an introduction in Arabic. This arrangement has the advantage, that the present book may also be consulted as an Arabic publication.