1 Introduction

1.1 State of the art

In Arabic Islamic literature, as in other literatures where texts have been transmitted in manuscript form, an astonishingly large spectrum of variance can be observed in different copies of one and the same text: variance of length, arrangement and textual content. This observation applies not only to works of so-called open transmission but also to authors’ works which have a certain thematic and textual individuality and which are held in some esteem by authorities in the field, i.e. texts which have been passed down in closed transmission. However, by examining this little studied phenomenon of text variance, we discover that learned scribes and users have tried to limit the variance with diverse means of text stabilization.

Arabic and Islamic studies have, from their beginnings, been aware of the subject of textual variance, motivated in particular by the great divergences between different lines of transmission where, in view of the identity of the main transmitters and the subject matter, such discrepancies were not to be expected. Eventually, after almost 150 years of discussion the phenomenon was explained by the Austrian scholar Aloys Sprenger (d. 1893) through a distinction made between tracts composed for publication on the one hand, and private lecture notebooks or notes of the category aide-mémoire on the other.

Also with “genuine” texts which appeared in Arabic literature from the ninth century onward, variance of text caused by transmission can be observed to different degrees. The spectrum extends from outright piracy (plagiarism) to copies of some works whose stability of textual structure may astonish the researcher. An awareness of the need for preservation and restoration of text certainly existed in varying degrees according to subject matter and genre. The means for preserving the integrity of the textual component, i.e. the wording of the text, included

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1 The first two sections of this introduction are heavily dependent on a draft paper written by Tilman Seidensticker.
2 This distinction has been further refined by Gregor Schoeler who introduced the terms syngrammata and hypomnene, a pair of terms borrowed from Greek antiquity (cf. 2009, 8, 21f.); cf. infra.
in particular: a. oral support of the transmission to neutralize the deficiencies inherent in the Arabic script;\(^4\) b. collation with manuscripts of high authority (in hierarchical order: holographs, disciples’ copies, copies in the possession of important scholars; other old manuscripts); c. meticulous reconstruction of the lines of transmission of key works with a description of textual variants.\(^5\)

In Arabic studies, in general, variance of text has been viewed as a secondary phenomenon at best; more often it has been regarded as a disturbance which obstructed the editor who was trying to restore an author’s text preserved in manuscript form. Variance has rarely been placed in the centre of scholarly attention and studied in its own right.

However, in the recent past, there have been some attempts in studies on works categorized as belonging to the open transmission, to place variance itself in the focus of research. One researcher,\(^6\) in her study of the Kitāb al-mujarrabāt or “Book of tested [magical] recipes” (GAL 2,326,XII) of al-Muḥammad b. Yusuf al-Sanūsī (whose shorter ‘aqīda will be analysed in chapter 5), has examined the inter-relationship of nine manuscripts and has arrived at the seemingly contradictory conclusion that, on the one hand, recipes have been copied blindly without selecting any individual items, but that, on the other, considerable discrepancies can be observed to exist in the repertoires within the manuscripts.

Whereas in other philological areas high standards have already been reached in the study of variance (especially in classical philology), in Arabic studies, the subject has been treated with neglect. Techniques of correction and collation are mentioned only exceptionally\(^7\) and the same conclusion can be drawn with regard to the study of the types of mistakes found in the manuscripts.\(^8\) Thus, Adam Gacek’s article “Taxonomy of scribal errors and corrections in Arabic manuscripts” published in 2007,\(^9\) which he calls a preliminary survey, constitutes significant progress.

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\(^4\) Mention may be made, in particular, of the similarity of some graphemes and the absence of vowels and sometimes of diacritical points, features which are often found in Arabic manuscripts.

\(^5\) An example is al-Yūnīnī’s (d. 701/1302; GAL S 1,262) survey of the recension of al-Bukhārī’s al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ (cf. Quiring-Zoche 1998).

\(^6\) Dorpmüller 2005.

\(^7\) E.g. Rosenthal 1947; Sellheim, Materialien 2,412.

\(^8\) Déroche 2005, 214f.

\(^9\) In his paper, Gacek at first discusses issues related to the collation of text and critical apparatus and then covers intentionality of variation, abbreviation systems, logographs and reference marks. The main part of his paper is devoted to a) a typology of scribal errors (and their causes), including six types: 1. omissions, 2. cacography, 3. erroneous letter-pointing (taṣḥif), 4.
Variance of text in literary works which belong to the “closed transmission” is the subject of the present project. In this project an attempt will be made to extend Gacek’s observations on a much-copied literary genre without however accepting the limitations of time or space: Copies of an independent genre, Arabic didactic poems as well as model or exemplary poems (German: “Mustergedichte”) composed between the eleventh and the seventeenth centuries; these poems are characterized by their relatively short length and by the high number of copies; they will be analyzed with a view to understanding the extent and causes of variance as well as the means discernible in the manuscripts of controlling the variance. The part played by the medium manuscript - and not only by the copyist or user - in the emergence and control of variance will also be taken into consideration.

Didactic poems in Arabic are known to have been written from the early third/ninth century onward. As one of the first representatives of this genre, the Abbasid poet Abān al-Lāḥiqī (d. 816; GAL S 1,107, 239; EAL 1,1) may be mentioned with a short poem on fasting and almsgiving ([Muzdawija] fi al-ṣawm wa-al-zakāt), of which however only fragments have survived. The last specimens of this genre, at the other end of the time-scale, were composed in the twentieth century. The length of the poems ranges from poems with less than one hundred verses up to those such as the Alfiyya of Ibn Mālik on grammar, with as many as transpositions, 5. additions, 6. substitutions; b) “corrections of involuntary mistakes” – here he lists omissions (saqta etc.), deletions (darb), cacographic errors, word transpositions; c) “deliberate emendations and annotations” – here he covers phenomena such as lacunae in the text; ṣaḥḥ (sic/thus); conjectures (ṣawābuhū, laʿallahū etc.); textual variants (Arabic: khilāfāt, ikhtilāfāt) resulting from misreadings, conflation or from the existence of several versions of one work; evaluation of variants; sigla, glosses and scholia.

10 This sub-genre is represented by the poem of Ibn Zurayq.
11 It turned out that the copies of Ibn Zurayq’s Qaṣīda are not quite as numerous as had at first appeared.
12 Ullmann (1966, 51) mentions that 57 verses are adduced by al-Ṣūlī, Kitāb Awrāq 51. However, it is Abān who is more widely known as the Abbasid court poet who took this collection of Indian fables and wrote it in the form of Rajaz verses which, in the Arab world, became known as Kalīla wa-Dimna (Ullmann, op. cit. 54).
13 As examples of didactic poems in the Rajaz-metre made in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Ullmann (1966, 59) mentions compositions made, i.a. on the subjects of physiognomy, prayer of the traveller, hunting and slaughtering of animals. An example taken from the survey of Mss. appended to the present study is BSB Cod.arab. 1133 which includes three poems on rhetoric composed by an author who died in 1903.
14 The Urjūza on mystical prayer with a length of only 34 verses which are embedded within a commentary in BSB Cod.arab. 1899 can be classified among the shorter poems.
1000 verses. The Rajaz metre with verses rhyming in pairs (urjūza muzdawija) has been by far the most popular but Qarīḍ-metres in combination with monorhyme have also been used, especially, of course, in shorter poems. The didactic poem on qirāʾāt of 369 verses contained in BSB Cod.arab. 1585 was composed in the Ṭawīl metre, another much shorter poem on the same subject, included in BSB Cod.arab. 1073, was written in the Wāfir metre in combination with monorhyme (–na). In the composition of didactic poems there was no limitation on subject-matter: “Almost any subject could be, and was, versified: dogmatics, the law of inheritance, medicine, astronomy, history, rhetoric, prosody, calligraphy, the explication of dreams, algebra, bloodletting, logic, navigation, agriculture, sexual intercourse, alchemy, jurisprudence, Koranic sciences, the use of toothpicks - The list might easily be extended” (van Gelder 1995, 106). According to a definition proposed by van Gelder (117), didactic poetry differs from genuine poetry with which it shares metre and rhyme but lacks the style which is typical for poetry, viz. tropes and figures of speech. Didactic poems contained the summum of a given science of the medieval Muslim curriculum and presented it in a form which made it easier for the reader to memorize.

Didactic poems were first made known in European Arabic studies especially in nineteenth century editions, where they served, by dint of their succinctness, as handy sources of information on individual areas of scholarship; they were often accompanied by Latin translations. Manfred Ullmann gave a first presentation of the genre in 1966 (Raĝazpoesie 57-59), followed by Gerhard Endress in 1987 (Wissenschaftliche Literatur 471-73) and Geert Jan van Gelder in 1995 (Didactic verse 103-17). More recently, individual poems have been examined more closely: Two didactic poems on medicine have been studied by Badr al-Tāzī (al-

15 Another example of a poem with high verse numbers is the Nihāyat al-tadrīb fi nazm Ghāyat al-taqrīb of al-ʿImrīṭī (ninth/fifteenth century) which counts 1225 verses and treats the subject of Shāfiʿi law.
16 Only what was composed in the great Qarīḍ-metres like Ṭawīl, Basīṭ etc., as distinct from Rajaz, was considered real poetry (cf. Ullmann 1966, 1, fn., quoting Goldziher 1896-1899).
17 By way of example, the Urjūza of 201 verses on salt and its processing (Risāla fi l-amlāḥ wa-ʿstinbāṭihā min al-maʿdan ilkh.) may be mentioned which is included in the multiple-text-volume BSB Cod.arab. 2106, fo. 73v-80r).
18 One example is Rudolf Habicht’s presentation in 1891 of Ibn al-Wardī’s poem on grammar, al-Tuḥfa al-Wardiyya which includes an introduction and copious notes in Latin (cf. infra).
19 Ullmann mentions examples of urjūzas taken from the areas of astronomy, medicine, alchemy, agriculture, marine science, grammar, lexicography, prosody, Mālikī law, the law of inheritance, chess, the months of the Greek calendar, Koranic readings and a bibliography of his own works by al-Dānī, horses, archery etc.
Urjūza al-Shakrūniyya; 1984) and Rosa Kuhne (Saʿīd ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, Urjūza fī l-ṭibb; 1980 [Spanish] and 1998), respectively.

1.2 Programme of work

For the study of variance in Arabic manuscripts, a corpus of texts was established which includes four didactic and model poems, resp., as well as one catechism of Sunnī Islam in prose form.

The earliest of the texts of this corpus was composed in the eleventh century, namely Ibn Zurayq (d. about 420/1029), al-Qaṣīda al-Andalusiyya, on epistolography, and the latest in the seventeenth century, namely al-Laqānī (d. 1041/1632), Jawharat al-tawḥīd, a treatise on Sunni dogma. The other two poems are al-Ūshī (d. after 569/1173), Badʾ al-Amālī, on divine unity, again according to the teachings of Sunni Islam, and Ibn al-Wardī (d. 749/1349), Waṣiyya li-waladīhi, which is an admonition by the author to his son.

In view of the fact that the study of phenomena of variance is restricted to a corpus made up solely of poems, a short prose text has been included in order to constitute a control group. The work chosen is the much copied “Lesser Catechism” or al-ʿAqīda al-ṣughrā of al-Sanūsī (d. 892/1486 or 895/1490).

The work on these texts is undertaken in six major steps:

1. Creation of a concordance of titles of the poems.
2. Codicological description of the manuscripts of each text (dating; place of copying; style of writing; collation notes, etc.). Some of these manuscripts will be catalogued here for the very first time, whereas the descriptions of others, the majority, will be elaborations of relatively short descriptions to be found in the catalogues of Ahlwardt, Pertsch, Mach, Quiring-Zoche, etc.
3. As the texts are mostly included in collective (multiple-text or composite-volume) manuscripts, the context of these volumes has also been studied, since context can be seen as a further category of variance.
4. Creation of a concordance of the length (i.e. number) and sequence of verses for each poem.
5. A prepared version of the texts (edition) is taken as the basis for a synopsis of textual variants. The copy showing the highest number of verses, has (at first) been determined as reference manuscript. After an examination of all copies

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20 As these data could only partly be derived from the catalogues or photo-/microfilm copies, visits to some of the libraries (Berlin, SBB-PK; Istanbul, Süleymaniye) had to be made.
of each work, that manuscript has been chosen as reference text which seems closest to the author’s autograph.\textsuperscript{21}

6. Synopsis of textual variants: in this synopsis, an attempt is made to distinguish between different categories of textual variants, and in particular between scribal errors and “real variants”, i.e. those variants which are semantically and metrically possible. In addition to identifying and describing variants, this synopsis tries to identify families of manuscripts.

The present study also includes an attempt to categorize variance – and the result has been the identification of five major categories (chapter II). A presentation of some elements of the cultural background to didactic poetry is offered in chapter IV. Part of this description is an examination of the complicated relationship between orality and writing, i.e. between an oral/aural and a written transmission of texts, a relationship which is reflected in the manuscript copies of the poems. The present description includes a study of the memorization of poems, aids to, and motivations for memorization. The chapter closes with a study of the uses made of (the manuscripts of) didactic poetry and of certain practices of a “per-formative” usage of Arabic poetry observed in the periphery of Dār al-islām, specifically in Northwest China.

A survey of didactic poems based on an examination of Arabic manuscripts which were available to me, beyond those of the corpus, is given at the end of this booklet as an appendix. Through the addition of this list the corpus of manuscripts studied has been considerably enlarged. This survey of about 40 didactic poems serves to give an impression of the width and diversity of the subjects covered by these texts, viz., recitation and orthography of Koran, dogma, mysticism, prayer, jurisprudence, logic, disputation, algebra, medicine, grammar, rhetoric, historiography. The poems are mostly composed in the Rajaz metre, rhyming in pairs, i.e. they represent the prosodic type of urjūza muzdawija. Notable examples of poems composed in other metres are three of the four texts of our corpus, viz., al-Ūshī (Wāfir), Ibn al-Wardi (Ramal) und Ibn Zurayq (Basīṭ) as well as many items included in the survey.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{21} For the sake of convenience al-Ṣafadī’s recension of Ibn Zurayq’s poem, edited in the 21st volume (juz’) of the -Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt (112-115) has been chosen as the reference.

\textsuperscript{22} E.g., Aḥmad b. Saʿīd al-Yamanī, Farāʾid al-durar, on readings of the Koran, Ṭawīl metre (cf. BSB Cod.arab. 1585 = a commentary on the poem); anon., Kitāb al-Shaykh Shams al-ʿārifīn, on pauses to be observed during Koran recitation, Wāfir (Cod.arab. 1073); -Zawāwī, al-Jazāʾiriyya fī l-tawḥīd, on dogma, Basīṭ (Cod.arab. 1514) etc.
The manuscript material presented allows us to distinguish between three types of didactic poetry as follows: 1. versifications of prose tracts,\textsuperscript{23} 2. “independent” poems, i.e. those not wholly based on a specific prose text,\textsuperscript{24} and 3. abridgements of excessively long didactic poems.\textsuperscript{25} It is also shown that a majority of didactic poems have occasioned the composition of one or more commentaries (in some cases, authors of the original poems have made commentaries on their own works)\textsuperscript{26} and even super-commentaries have been composed in explanation of the verses.\textsuperscript{27}

Some poems examined in the survey have been presented in greater detail than others: This applies especially to Ibn al-Jazari’s \textit{Muqaddima} on Koran recitation because, at an earlier phase of the project, it was planned to include this poem in the corpus of the study but, for reasons of time and economy, it was decided to discard it. A more detailed description is also given of poems which offer a special interest based on, i.a. inclusion within the poem of the author’s name, an indication of verse numbers or of the motivation behind the composition, etc. Aspects covered in the presentation of the poems in the survey also include indigenous evaluation and popularity of a given poem, as well as the area of dissemination; content and structure of the poem (page layout, text divisions, headings, etc.); system of counting verses in the manuscript;\textsuperscript{28} marginalia; place of a poem in the manuscript, i.e. in relation to other texts in a multiple-text volume; para-texts accompanying the poem; memorization,\textsuperscript{29} etc.

\section*{1.3 Manuscript as a medium}

In the media sciences a distinction is made between media as a \textit{technical means of transport}, e.g. script, print, electronic media, on the one hand, and between their \textit{form of mediation} (German: “Vermittlungsform”), such as body, book, picture or film, on the other. In codicology, the \textit{technical means of the script} as a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} E.g., -Ramli, \textit{Naẓm Ṣafwat al-Zubad} (BSB Cod.arab. 1738, 2048); -ʿImrīṭī, \textit{Naẓm al-Ājurrūmiyya} (Cod.arab. 2039).
\item \textsuperscript{24} E.g., -Bakrī, \textit{Alfiyya} (BSB Cod.arab. 1362, 1443).
\item \textsuperscript{25} E.g., Ibn al-Hāʾim, \textit{al-Tuḥfa al-qudsiyya fī ʿktīṣār al-Rahbiyya} (BSB Cod.arab. 2054).
\item \textsuperscript{26} E.g., -Akhḍarī, on his own \textit{al-Sullam al-murawnaq} (BSB Cod.arab. 1847).
\item \textsuperscript{27} E.g., Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Nābulī on the \textit{Muqaddima} of Ibn al-Jazari (BSB Cod.arab. 1491).
\item \textsuperscript{28} Mostly the verses were counted in blocks of ten (e.g. BSB Cod.arab. 1931, 2051).
\item \textsuperscript{29} Some authors have explicitly stated in their poems that they composed their verses in order for them to be memorized by beginners (BSB Cod.arab 1795, 1900).
\end{itemize}
symbolic system of signs which functions to transmit, store and process information, is of special significance.

The Arabic manuscripts analyzed in this project are a visual script-based medium or, to put it differently: a flexible support medium. As might be expected, the didactic poems analyzed in this project were transmitted exclusively on paper since the copies were produced only after the eleventh century (CE). From the point of view of the technical process (German: “Verarbeitung”) our medium can be determined as a written, highly complex paper manuscript which included scholarly, not representational, text copies (there are exceptions). As one example of the latter, outside the realm of didactic poetry, the Koran and certain texts on the veneration of Muḥammad may be adduced. In the last-mentioned genre the medium picture also plays a rôle.

In the materials examined, the medium brings together the author (the writers flourished between the eleventh and seventeenth centuries) and the recipient, i.e. the reader or the user, is the manuscript, not a film or a recording tape or a computer disc.30

The manuscript is a snapshot, as it were, of a process of transmission which took place both orally and in writing. Another photo shot is the picture which emerges when corrections have been entered in the manuscript. The theological poem of al-Laqānī, Jawharat al-tawḥīd, which is about twice as long as al-Ūshī’s Badʾ al-amālī was probably transmitted primarily by writing since the manuscripts exhibit hardly any deviations from the reference copy.

The manuscripts examined contain copies of didactic poems which have been composed in a wide geographical area, stretching from Andalusia to modern Kyrgyzstan (Osh) and they are often accompanied by further texts and para-texts in Arabic or other Oriental languages such as Turkish, Persian or – rarely – Javanese. As a rule, the transmitted text is written in two, seldom in three, columns and is enriched through glosses from the hand of the scribe or from some other hand, in the broad margins or between the lines.

It can be assumed that our manuscripts were produced in the environment of the Islamic institutions of learning, madrasas, or in the mosques with which they were associated, and not in the scriptorium of a princely court. Furthermore, it is assumed that paid scribes were not commissioned to produce the manuscripts (there may have been exceptions); instead, teachers and students who lived in the milieu of the Madrasa took it upon themselves to copy the texts. The same persons also formed the target-audience, i.e. the copyists wrote for both

30 The manuscript may be made available through the medium of a microfilm which reaches the user in the form of a paper print, a secondary medium.
themselves and for their “peer-group”. Depending on whether the transmission of the didactic poems was predominantly oral or mainly written – a question to be answered individually in each case – the poems were copied either from a model, or by dictation from a teacher or from the scribe’s memory. Thus, the manuscript is also the medium between the author, the scholars and the recipients, all of whom were involved in the transmission process as readers, users and commentators. Orality, which expresses itself in the dictation process, may also be considered as a medium.

In the materials accessible to us, it can be seen that the medium manuscript may also influence the contents it transports. The notes entered in the margins, for instance, may have been considered to be part of the didactic poem and, as a result, in the process of making a new copy, become incorporated unintentionally in the main text; this is an instance of conflation.

The primary function of the medium manuscript is to store and transmit the content of the text. The fact that the preservation of the original text is considered a worthwhile goal can be seen in the use of multiple means of text control.

Finally, the fact that manuscript has lent itself to “performative” usage, shows itself e.g. in the *Qaṣīda al-Juljulūtiyya*, a poem with magical names of God, the authorship of which has traditionally been ascribed to the fourth “rightly guided” caliph, ʿAlī.

### 1.4 Corpus of manuscripts studied

The majority of the manuscripts of the five above-mentioned works belong to the *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preussischer Kulturbesitz* (SBB); they are mentioned in the catalogues of Ahlwardt as well as by those scholars who continued the project of cataloguing the Arabic manuscripts of the former Royal Prussian library (VOHD XVIIA,1-2, B,1ff.). The manuscripts of this group will be described in greater detail than those of the second group, i.e. those belonging to Princeton University Library, because they could be accessed not only in microfilm or as digital copies but also in the original.

The manuscripts examined in this study belonging to the *Princeton University Library* were formerly owned by Abraham Shalom Yahuda (d. 1951) and were acquired by the library through a gift of Robert Garrett in [18]97 and John W. Garrett. They now belong to the “Yahuda Section of the Garrett Collection of Arabic Manuscripts in Princeton University Library”. Some of the paper copies made on the basis of microfilms which we bought from the university library were unfortunately of bad quality and this has influenced my descriptions negatively in some
places. A few pages were blackened and it was sometimes not possible to recognize the verses included in a commentary or to determine in which order they were arranged (e.g. Ms. Princeton no. 5310).

A small number of manuscripts of three didactic poems belong to the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (BSB) and I was fortunate in being able to describe these copies in detail. However, where a full description is already included in one of my two published catalogues of the Arabic manuscripts of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (VOHD XVIIB8 and B9), only a short summary is given in this study and/or the reader is referred to the catalogue numbers.\footnote{This is the case with Cod.arab. 1147 = VOHD XVIIB8 no. 90/2, a description of which will, unfortunately, not be found in the present study.} However, a relatively large number of manuscripts of the BSB has been taken into consideration, and my survey of didactic poetry has been drafted, at least in part, on the basis of this material. Manuscripts of the same library have also been studied for the chapter on the cultural background of the codicological phenomena discussed.

Only one manuscript of al-Ūshi’s poem belongs to the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen and it has been described by Tilman Seidensticker in VOHD XVIIB4 no. 176/6.

A number of manuscripts of various didactic poems studied for this project are in the possession of the Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi in Istanbul. The library was built, as part of the Kulliyya, or university, by the famous architect Mimar Sinan, by order of Sultan Süleymân the Magnificent, between 1549 and 1557 and it includes at present 131 collections of manuscript books which had belonged to the Sultan, the Shaykhülislâm, the Qâżî‘asker, the Queen mother and other distinguished figures of the Ottoman era.\footnote{Cf. information leaflet of the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library issued in 2010; also Demir 2005, 87; TDVİA, 38,121-23, art. “Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi”.} Using the digital catalogue of the Süleymaniye library I was able to trace copies of the poems of al-Ūshi, Ibn al-Wardî and al-Laqānî but none of Ibn Zurayq’s Qaṣîda. My descriptions of the manuscripts of the Süleymaniye are relatively short and in some places incomplete due to the limited time I spent at the library. The manuscripts were not examined exhaustively and textual variants were noted only selectively. In studying these manuscripts, I have concentrated on a small number of aspects which seemed to me to be of special interest, as for instance, the subject of variance relating to context.