



Proximity, Resemblance, Sidebars and Clusters: Ibn al-Nadīm's Organizational Principles in *Fihrist 3.3**

Shawkat M. Toorawa

Cornell University

Abstract

The *Kitāb al-Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380/990), one of the most important bio-bibliographical works in Arabic, is an invaluable source for the study of the first four centuries of Arabic writerly culture and of medieval Islamic history. Ibn al-Nadīm divides his work into 10 parts (and 30 chapters), organised according to different fields of knowledge and scholarship. He also subdivides the notices, entries and titles very deliberately, typically chronologically. Here, I describe another organisational phenomenon discernible in the third chapter of the third part of the *Fihrist*, namely organization based on notions I term 'proximity' and 'resemblance', which yield 'sidebars' and 'clusters.' This organisation yields valuable information about the writerly culture of the 3rd/8th, 4th/9th and 5th/10th centuries.

Keywords

Ibn al-Nadīm; Fihrist; biographical work; writerly culture; adab; singers; Ibn Abī Ṭāhir

Introduction

The organizational principles governing and guiding the structure of biographical or bio-bibliographical works can be elusive. Who is excluded, and why? If exclusion is not for ideological or partisan reasons, is it for organizational ones? Who is included, and why? What criteria do the author-compilers use to classify those individuals they do include? Specifically, how are biographical notices sequenced — by merit, by precedence, by generation, by talent, by profession or qualification? Or is the material organized alphabetically, or chronologically, i.e. according to less subjective criteria?

* This article is an expansion of S.M. Toorawa, "Who (and How) Does Ibn al-Nadīm Cluster? Looking for Answers in Fihrist 3.3," a paper delivered at the University of St Andrews in 2006. I am grateful to Chase Robinson for comments on the paper at St Andrews; and to James Montgomery, Devin Stewart and Letizia Osti for comments and valuable suggestions.

In describing the biographical works dealing with the Companions of the Prophet Muḥammad, Claude Gilliot identifies four criteria of classification: moral and chronological; relationship to the Prophet; (purely) chronological; and alphabetical.¹ John Nawas divides biographical dictionaries into four categories or types: general, chronological, geographical, and thematic.² Users of Arabic biographical works will have encountered all of these organizational principles. Often, the overarching principle is articulated, or at any rate clear. Thus we find works which are organized alphabetically, such as *al-Muḥammadūn min al-shu'arā'* of al-Marzubānī (d. 384/994) or the *Irshād al-arīb fī mā rifāt al-adīb* of Yāqūt (d. 629/1229); works which are organized according to imputed or received precedence or merit, such as the *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* of Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845); centenary works, which are typically organized by dates of death in a given Islamic century, such as the *Tārīkh al-Islām* of al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348); regional works, such as the *Nuzhat al-khawātir wa-bahjat al-masāmi' wa-l-nawāzīr*, a biographical dictionary of subcontinental Arabophone scholars by 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Ḥasanī (d. 1342/1923); and thematic works, such as the *'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'* of Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a (d. 668/1270), dealing with physicians.

The principles governing the organizations of biographical works do not of course have to be mutually exclusive. In *Tārīkh Baghdad*, for example, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) uses Baghdad as a way of delimiting biographees, but he also organizes their notices alphabetically — and also places women in a final section, thus making explicit, and reproducing, a gendered notion of precedence, something to be found also in the *Ḍaw' al-lāmi' li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsi'* of al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497) and the *Riyāḍ al-'ulamā' wa-ḥiyāḍ al-fudalā'* of 'Abd Allāh Afandī (d. ca. 1130/1718), for example. Even the first Arabic biographical dictionary (and, by many accounts, the first biographical work in any language), the *Ṭabaqāt* of Ibn Sa'd, though organized according to successive generations, starting with the time of the Prophet, also pays attention to geography. By contrast, Ibn Sa'd's contemporary, Ibn Sallām al-Jumāḥī (d. 232/846), organizes his *Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-shu'arā'* according to generation and talent, but with no implication about or attention to moral or religious merit or geography.

The *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, a bio-bibliographical catalogue of some 7000 titles, was completed in 377/987-8, and is one of the most important biographical works in the history of Arabic scholarship.³ In the Introduction, the author,

¹ Claude Gilliot, "Ṭabaqāt," *EI2*, X, p. 9.

² J. Nawas, "Biography and Biographical Works," in: *Medieval Islamic Civilisation Encyclopaedia*, ed. J. Meri, I, London: Routledge, pp. 110-111.

³ Since the early 1970s, the standard edition of the *Fihrist* has been Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-*

Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380/990),⁴ writes that his catalogue is an index of all the books, in the Arabic language and script, of the Arab and non-Arab peoples, in all branches of knowledge, accompanied by biographical information about authors and compilers.⁵ As such, the *Fihrist* has been one of the most valuable sources for the study of the first four centuries of Arabic writerly culture, of medieval Islamicate history, and even, in some instances, of non-Arab/ic and non-Muslim culture.

Ibn al-Nadīm divides the *Fihrist* into ten principal parts, which he designates *maqālāt* (sing. *maqāla*), each of which is then subdivided into *funūn* (sing. *fann*).⁶ I list below the ten *maqālas* and their general contents (indicating in parentheses the lengths of each constituent *fann* and the total number

Fihrist li-l-Nadīm, ed. Riḍā Tajaddud, Teheran: Marvi Offset Printing, 1391/1971, [hereafter *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud], complemented by *al-Fihrist li-bn al-Nadīm*, ed. G. Flügel, I-II, Leipzig: F.C.W. Vogel, 1871-72 (which includes the additions of al-Wazīr al-Maghribī [d. 418/1027]) [hereafter *Fihrist*, ed. Flügel]. An updated version of Flügel's edition appeared in 2006: *al-Fihrist li-bn al-Nadīm*, ed. Muḥammad 'Awnī 'Abd al-Ra'ūf and Imān al-Sa'īd Jalāl (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Āmma li-Quṣūr al-Thaqāfa). But in 2009, a critical edition appeared: *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. A. F. Sayyid, London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2009 [hereafter *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid]. I also use MS 3315, Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, a copy of which was very kindly supplied to me by Devin Stewart [hereafter *Fihrist*, MS 3315]. MS 3315 is the earliest MS and only one remove from Ibn al-Nadīm's autograph (the other half of which is MS 1934, Şehit Ali Paşa, Istanbul). On the manuscripts of the *Fihrist*, see V. V. Polosin, «*Fihrist*» *Ibn an-Nadima kak istoriko-kul'turniy pamyatnik X veka*, Moscow: Nauka, 1989, pp. 11-19. For further details about Polosin's study, see D. Stewart, "Scholarship on the Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadim: The Work of Valeriy V. Polosin," *Al-'Uṣūr al-Wusṭā: Bulletin of Middle East Medievalists* 18 (2006): 8-13.

⁴ On Ibn al-Nadīm, about whom little is known, see now D. Stewart, "Ibn al-Nadīm, Abū l-Faraj Muḥammad b. Ishāq (d. 990)," in: *Essays in Arabic Literary, 925-1350*, ed. T. DeYoung, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, in press; and D. Stewart, "Ibn al-Nadīm's Ismā'īli Contacts," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 19/1 (2008): 1-20.

⁵ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/1, p. 3, ll. 8-11 = *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 3, ll. 7-9; cf. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm: A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, ed. and trans. B. Dodge, I, New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, pp. 1-2. Although Sayyid's edition is superior, I cite Tajaddud's also as it is widely used. Translations throughout are mine; Dodge's English translation contains numerous errors, some serious, but I provide references to it (hereafter Dodge, *The Fihrist*) in parentheses for the benefit of non-Arabists.

⁶ There is no consensus on what to call these divisions in English. Dodge, *The Fihrist*, uses "Chapter" and "Section"; L. Osti, "Authors, Subjects and Fame in the *Kitāb al-Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm: The Case of al-Ṭabarī and al-Ṣūlī," *Annali di Ca'Foscari* 38/3 (1999): 155-170, uses "chapter" and "section"; D. Stewart, "The Structure of the *Fihrist*: Ibn al-Nadīm as Historian of Islamic Legal and Theological Schools," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39 (2007): 369-387, uses "book" and "chapter." My own preference is "part" for *maqāla* and "chapter" for *fann*: we can then describe the *Fihrist* as divided into 10 Parts and/or 30 chapters. Here, I shall confine myself to the use of the Arabic terms, and a numerical shorthand, thus 3.3 for *Maqāla* 3, *fann* 3. For a librarian's perspective on Ibn al-Nadīm's taxonomy (including likening the ten *maqālāt* to Dewey's ten classes), see H.H. Wellisch, *The First Arab Bibliography*, Fihrist al-'Ulūm, Champaign: Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois, 1986.

of pages of each *maqāla*, according to the pagination in the Tajaddud edition [for illustrative and comparative purposes], and also the total number of folios according to Chester Beatty MS 3315 and Şehit Ali Paşa MS 1934):

Table 1: Contents of the Fihrist's Ten Maqālāt

0.	Introduction [3 pages/2 folios]
I.	Languages and scripts; the scriptures of Muslims and other people of the book — 3 <i>fanns</i> [17+3+16 = 36 pages/13 folios]
II.	Arabic grammar and lexicography (<i>naḥw</i> , <i>luḡha</i>) — 3 <i>fanns</i> [25+13+13 = 51 pages/34 folios]
III.	History (<i>akhbār</i>), belles-lettres (<i>ādāb</i>), biography (<i>siyar</i>), genealogy (<i>ansāb</i>) — 3 <i>fanns</i> [28+27+17 = 72 pages/45 folios]
IV.	Poetry (<i>shī'r</i>) — 2 <i>fanns</i> [4+17 = 21 pages/15 folios]
V.	Scholastic theology (<i>kalām</i>) — 5 <i>fanns</i> [22+5+3+2+13 = 45 pages/13 folios [MS 3315] + 27 [MS 1934, and missing some folios]
VI.	Law (<i>fiqh</i>) and Tradition (<i>ḥadīth</i>) — 5 <i>fanns</i> [3+7+7+4+5 = 38 pages/45 folios]
VII.	Philosophy (<i>falsafa</i>) and the “ancient sciences” (<i>al-'ulūm al-qadīma</i>): mathematics, medicine) — 3 <i>fanns</i> [25+19+16 = 60 pages/63 folios]
VIII.	Stories (<i>asmār</i>), legends (<i>khurāfāt</i>), romances (<i>gharā'im</i>), magic (<i>siḥr</i>), conjuring (<i>shā'badha</i>) — 3 <i>fanns</i> [5+5+5 = 15 pages/15 folios]
IX.	Doctrines of the non-monotheistic creeds — 2 <i>fanns</i> [26+6 = 32 pages/27 folios]
X.	Alchemy [9 pages/9 folios]

Throughout the *Fihrist*, Ibn al-Nadīm makes a number of revealing statements about his principles of organization, classification and sequencing. The following are a few examples:

[1.2]

wa-naḥnu nastaqṣi dhālika fī mawḍi' i-bi' inda dhikri-nā ḥā' ulā' i l-qawm fī mawḍi' i-him min al-kitāb in shā' a Allāh⁷

We (shall) give a detailed account of this in its [proper] place, when we mention this group [of scholars] in their [proper] place in the book, God willing.

⁷ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/1, p. 116, ll. 12-13, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 49, ll. 7-8, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 20r, ll. 8-9 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 96). For an example from a later *maqāla* (6.5), see e.g. *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 2/1, p. 81, l. 2, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 279, l. 23 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 543).

[1.2]

iqtaḍā dhikru-hum fī ḥādhā l-mawḍi' mā'a khtilāf aṣqā'i-him wa-tabāyun awqāti-him inna l-'ulamā' an-hum akhadhū fa-dhakartu-hum 'alā ghayr tartīb⁸

It is necessary to mention them in this place, in spite of their different [places of] origin and the disparity of their epochs. [As for] the scholars who studied with them, I mention them out of order.

[1.2]

Qad tabaqqā min al-ruwāh wa-l-ā' rāb man nadhkuru-hu fī mawḍi' i-hi min akhbār al-naḥwiyyīn wa-l-lughawiyyīn al-kūfiyyīn in shā'a llāh⁹

There remain transmitters and Arab [informants], whom we will mention in their [proper] place in the accounts of the Kufan grammarians and lexicographers, God willing.

[2.2]

Inna-mā qaddamnā l-baṣriyyīn awwalan li-anna 'ilm al-'arabiyya an-hum ukhidha wa-li-anna al-Baṣra aqdamu binā'an min al-Kūfa¹⁰

We placed the Basran scholars first because (linguistic) knowledge of Arabic was (first) obtained from them, and because Basra was founded before Kufa.

As these examples from early in the *Fihrist* show — and many more could be adduced from later in the work — ordinarily Ibn al-Nadīm is inclined to cluster people (and titles) from the same place of origin, to cluster from the same time period, to mention material thematically, and to sequence people and titles chronologically. He is also inclined to list a scholar's students or disciples in pedagogical (i.e. chronological) order, though sometimes it is the more prominent student's notice¹¹ that occasions mention of the teacher, as in 2.2, where Ibn al-Nadīm notes of al-Qāsim b. Ma'n:¹²

[2.2]

Iqtaḍā-hu ḥādhā l-makān fa-dhakartu-hu li-anna... Ibn al-A'rābi akhadha an-hu

He must occur in this place [i.e. the "Accounts of Ibn al-A'rābi"] because... Ibn al-A'rābi learned from him.

⁸ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/1, p. 118, ll. 13-14, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 49, ll. 12-13, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 20r, ll. 14-15 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 96).

⁹ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/1, p. 138, ll. 6-7, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 56, ll. 1-2, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 23r, l. 25 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 108).

¹⁰ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/1, p. 191, ll. 6-7, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 71, ll. 5-6, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 33v, ll. 4-5 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 141).

¹¹ I distinguish between "notice," which applies to an individual (or family); "title," which applies to a written work; and "entry," which applies to any listed item (including notice and title).

¹² *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/1, p. 208, l. 2, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 76, l. 4, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 37r, l. 1 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 152).

When Ibn al-Nadīm does not have information about someone, he mentions this. In an entry that appears in 3.2, he writes:¹³

anā shākk fi al-Būshṭī hal huwa bi-l-shīn aw al-sīn... Fa-nas'alu 'an hādihā l-rajul wa-'an kutubi-hi wa-yulḥaqu bi-bābi-hi in shā'a llāh

I am doubtful about "al-Bushtī," whether it is with a *shīn* or *sīn*... We shall inquire about this man and his books and he will be inserted in the appropriate section, God willing

Even when relying on the material of other scholars, Ibn al-Nadīm shows himself to be scrupulously attached to order:¹⁴

qarā'tu bi-khaṭṭ Abī 'Alī ibn Muqla mā hādihā nasakhtu-hu, awradtu-hu 'alā tartībi-hi wa-bi-lafzi-hi qitḍā'an hādihā l-kitāb

What I have transcribed, I have read in the handwriting of Abū 'Alī b. Muqla. I have reproduced it following its order and wording, as this book requires.

Ibn al-Nadīm is as concerned with microstructural order as he is with macrostructural order. This is clear from his practice of designating an otherwise unidentified sequence as a *ṭabaqa* ("group[ing], class/ification") or as a *ṭā'ifa* ("cluster").¹⁵ This concern for the microstructural is clear also in his sequencing of the members of families of scholars: they may not all write about the same topics, but he will typically list them together chronologically. In 2.1, for instance, he makes this sequencing explicit, alerting us to "The Accounts of the Yazīdīs, in sequence," *Akhhbār al-Yazīdiyyīn 'alā al-nasq*.¹⁶

Ibn al-Nadīm's remarks about the principles of classification in the *Fihrist* have not gone unnoticed, but neither have they attracted a great deal of scholarly attention, certainly not as much as the contents of the work have. Some scholars have been able to deduce organizational principles based on the indi-

¹³ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 431, ll. 7, 9-10, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 154, ll. 4, 5, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 82v, ll. 23-24, 25-26 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 305). Cf. *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/1, p. 258, ll. 4-5, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 92, ll. 8-10, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 46v, l. 5 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 183), where he lists individuals about whom he has not conducted any research.

¹⁴ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 389, ll. 4-8, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 139, ll. 4, 5, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 73v, ll. 14-15 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 273) (Sayyid has for the last three words, *iqṭaḍā-hu hādihā l-makān*, "it must occur in this place").

¹⁵ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 396, l. 7, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 142, l. 9 (*ṭabaqa ukhrā*), *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 75v, l. 8 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 280); *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 394, l. 10, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 141, l. 15 (*ṭā'ifa*), *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 75r, l. 16 (Dodge, p. 279).

¹⁶ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/1, p. 138, l. 8, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 56, l. 3, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 23v, l. 1 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 109).

viduals Ibn al-Nadīm includes, some have been able to glean biographical and historical information about individuals mentioned based on Ibn al-Nadīm's organizational principles, and recently a few have been able to show that the very organizational structure can convey historical and ideological information about Ibn al-Nadīm.

Over a century ago, in 1897, Julius Lippert pointed out that within *maqālas* the *Fihrist* is, with exceptions, largely chronological.¹⁷ Holger Preissler takes this up in a 1987 article, arguing that Ibn al-Nadīm's methodology is indebted to *ṭabaqāt* literature, i.e. Ibn al-Nadīm identifies the beginning of each science or discipline and then follows that discipline's development and authors up to his own time.¹⁸ Preissler also argues that several hierarchically interwoven principles of organization are at work in the *Fihrist*.¹⁹ In an important study published in 1989, Valeriy Polosin argues, rather, that when the *Fihrist* does appear to proceed chronologically, it does so because the works from which Ibn al-Nadīm extensively quotes do so. For Polosin, the *Fihrist* is a work in progress, as can be seen from the numerous spaces left blank for information to be added later. Polosin concludes that the *Fihrist* is characterized by "compositional chaos" ("kompozicionnaja nerazberikha").²⁰ But as his statements quoted above show, Ibn al-Nadīm is systematic and, as Dimitry Frolow and Devin Stewart have carefully argued, for Ibn al-Nadīm chronology is a fundamental organizational principle — even if it is not the only one.

In a 1997 article on Ibn al-Nadīm's sequencing of works of Qur'anic exegesis, Frolow showed that Ibn al-Nadīm's careful deployment of chronology and regional origins allowed him to place greater emphasis on Shi'ite exegetes than Syrian ones, in a departure from traditional accounts of the development of that genre. He writes:²¹

At first sight, the list of *mufasssīrīn* given by Ibn al-Nadīm leaves the impression of a paratactical succession of names, put together at random, though in fact it is an example of a neat construction whose aim is to give a picture of the genesis and development of the Muslim exegetical tradition during the first three centuries of the Muslim Era. We have before us one of the earliest Muslim conceptions of the history of *tafsīr*, which is definitely Shi'ite in its outlook.

¹⁷ J. Lippert, "Ibn al-Kufi, ein Vorgänger Nadīm's," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 11 (1897): 147-155.

¹⁸ H. Preissler, "Ordnungsprinzipien im Fihrist," in: *Ibn an-Nadīm und die mittelalterliche arabische Literatur. Beiträge zum 1. Johann Wilhelm Fück-Kolloquium (Halle 1987)*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996, pp. 38-43. This volume includes six other articles on the *Fihrist*.

¹⁹ Preissler, *Ordnungsprinzipien*, pp. 38-39.

²⁰ Polosin, «*Fihrist*», p. 62.

²¹ D. Frolow, "Ibn al-Nadīm on the History of Qur'anic Exegesis," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 87 (1997): 65-81 (p. 65).

Frolov demonstrates that the two main parameters Ibn al-Nadīm uses — ones familiar in, and from, *ṭabaqāt* composition, as Preissler showed — are chronological and geographical, i.e. the division of scholars between four main regional centres or “schools.”²² Frolov goes on to identify five clusters, which he calls “compositional nuclei” (1. Kufan school; 2. Basran school; 3. ≈ second/eighth century; 4. third/ninth century; and 5. tenth century and post-Ṭabarī).²³

Devin Stewart has also argued for chronology as a fundamental organizational principle in the *Fihrist*, one that reveals not only Ibn al-Nadīm’s scholarly positions, but also his rigour. In a 2007 article, Stewart underscores the importance of recognizing the role of chronology on four distinct levels: the sequencing of the *maqālas* within the *Fihrist* (e.g. the placement of *Maqāla* 5, Islamic theology, before *Maqāla* 6, Islamic law); the sequencing of *fanns* within a single *maqāla* (e.g. ancient poetry before modern poetry in *Maqāla* 4); the sequencing of authors within a single *fann* (overwhelmingly by death date, e.g. the Zāhirī jurists in 6.4); and the sequencing of works within a single genre (*vide* Frolov).²⁴ Stewart notes that the area requiring the most work in deducing principles or data is the third, i.e. the sequencing of works within a single *fann*, a task made difficult by the fact that Ibn al-Nadīm evidently does now and again breach chronological order.

The Organisation of *Maqāla* 3

Fann 1

Maqāla 3 is one of the longest *maqālas* and includes two of the longest *fanns* (1 and 2) (see Table 1 above). At 45 folios, it accounts for about 15% of the manuscript. In the Introduction to the *Fihrist*, Ibn al-Nadīm characterizes *Maqāla* 3 as follows:²⁵

al-maqāla al-thālitha wa-hiya thalāthat funūn fī l-akhbār wa-l-ādāb wa-l-siyar wa-l-ansāb

The Third Part, comprising three chapters, covering historical accounts, belles-lettres, lives, and genealogies.

²² Frolov, *Ibn al-Nadīm*, p. 75.

²³ Frolov, *Ibn al-Nadīm*, pp. 78-81.

²⁴ Stewart, *Structure of the Fihrist*, pp. 370, 371.

²⁵ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/1, p. 5, ll. 3-5, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 4, ll. 3-4, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 1v, ll. 19-20 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 3).

The introductory remarks to *Maqāla* 3 itself, however, read as follows:²⁶

al-maqāla al-thālitha . . . fi akhbār al-akhbāriyyīn wa-l-nassābīn wa-aṣḥāb al-aḥdāth wa-l-ādāb

The Third Part . . . comprising accounts about the reporters of historical accounts, genealogists, and the recounters of historical events and belles-lettres.

Though the differences are minor, the latter has the virtue of sequencing the areas of expertise in a way that reflects the actual sequencing in the *Maqāla*, thus *akhbār*→*ansāb*→*siyar/ahdāth*→*ādāb*, with *ādāb* appearing last (rather than *akhbār*→*ādāb*→*siyar/ahdāth*→*ansāb*). If we turn now to the characterisation of the three individual *fanns* of *Maqāla* 3 from the Introduction to the *Fihrist*, we find a far more detailed enunciation of contents, divided by *fann*:²⁷

[3.1] *al-fann al-awwal fi akhbār al-akhbāriyyīn wa-l-ruwāb wa-l-nassābīn wa-aṣḥāb al-siyar wa-l-aḥdāth wa-asmā' kutubi-him*

[3.1] The First Chapter, comprising accounts about the reporters of historical accounts, the transmitters, the genealogists, the recounters of historical biographies and events, and the titles of their books

[3.2] *al-fann al-thānī fi akhbār al-mulūk wa-l-kuttāb wa-l-mutarassilīn wa-'ummāl al-kharāj wa-aṣḥāb al-dawāwīn wa-asmā' kutubi-him*

[3.2] The Second Chapter, comprising accounts of the rulers, the secretaries, the epistolographers, and the land-tax officials and government clerks, and the titles of their books

[3.3] *al-fann al-thālith fi akhbār al-nudamā' wa-l-julasā' (wa-l-udabā') wa-l-mughannīn wa-l-ṣafādima wa-l-ṣafā'ina wa-l-mudḥikīn wa-asmā' kutubi-him*

[3.3] The Third Chapter, comprising accounts of the boon-companions, table-companions, (belletrists), singers, slap-takers, buffoons, and comedians, and the titles of their books

Thus the enumerated contents of *Fann* 1 and the contents of the entire *Maqāla* match closely. The significant differences are twofold. The first is the omission of *ādāb* from *Fann* 1 — indeed, no specifically belletristic works are named in the *fann*, and the word *ādāb* occurs only in the *Wakī'* entry toward the end of the *fann*. The second difference is the mention of *ruwāb* (transmitters), an important component of the *fann*, something that a perusal of it clearly shows.

²⁶ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 277, ll. 2, 4, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 101, l. 4, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 50v, ll. 2-3 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 192).

²⁷ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/1, p. 5, ll. 5-10, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 4, ll. 5-8, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 1v, ll. 20-25 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 3).

Fann 1 is, therefore, not divided sequentially according to the rubrics provided by Ibn al-Nadīm, i.e. *akhbāriyyīn*, then *nassābīn*, then *ruwāb*, then *aṣḥāb al-siyar wa-l-ahdāth*. Rather, all the individuals listed represent one or more of the rubrics. The *fann* does, however, proceed (more or less) chronologically. In this respect, *Fann* 1 is in keeping with the overarching internal organizational principle to be found in most *fanns*, namely chronology. And Ibn al-Nadīm does not abandon his practice of listing students, disciples and peers after teachers or major figures: for example, Muḥammad b. Saʿd, who is *min aṣḥāb al-Wāqidi* (“one of the students of al-Wāqidi”), appears after the al-Wāqidi entry.²⁸ But, as we shall see, *Fanns* 2 and 3 are organized quite differently from *Fann* 1.²⁹

Fann 2

Turning to *Fann* 2, its rubrics as identified in the *Fihrist*’s Introduction, in the *Maqāla* 3 Introduction, and in the heading to the *fann* itself, can be schematized as follows:

Table 2: Enumerated Contents of *Fihrist* 3.2

<i>Fihrist</i> Intro.	<i>Maqāla</i> heading	<i>Fann</i> Heading
<i>mulūk</i>		<i>mulūk</i>
<i>kuttāb</i>	<i>al-kuttāb</i>	<i>kuttāb</i>
		<i>khutabāʿ</i>
<i>mutarassilīn</i>	<i>al-mutarassilīn</i>	<i>mutarassilīn</i>
ʿummāl <i>al-kharāj</i>	ṣunnāʿ <i>al-kharāj</i>	ʿummāl <i>al-kharāj</i>
<i>aṣḥāb al-dawāwīn</i> ³⁰		

The absences of *mulūk* and *aṣḥāb al-dawāwīn*, the one use of *al-mutarassilīn* as a descriptor of *kuttāb*, and the use of *ṣunnāʿ* rather than ʿummāl, are minor differences in the various rubrics. The only material difference is the addition of *khutabāʿ* (orators), which, like the addition of *ruwāb* in *Fann* 1, serves to

²⁸ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 310, l. 2, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 111, l. 22, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 57r, ll. 8-9 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 214).

²⁹ Osti, *Authors, Subjects and Fame*, p. 160, has noted this: “In *fann* 1, contrary to other subsections, here there is no subdivision according to the different specializations of the writers, but only a chronological one.”

³⁰ The phrase *wa-aṣḥāb al-dawāwīn* does appear in *Fihrist* (ed. Flügel), p. 115, l. 23. *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 357, l. 6, includes the phrase in square brackets, indicating its origin in the Bibliothèque national MS arabe 4451 alone.

nuance and better describe the contents of the *fann*. If we assume that the omission of *aṣḥāb al-dawāwīn* in the *fann* heading is inadvertent — which we are justified in assuming given its appearance in the earlier two enumerations, and in some manuscripts — then, the complete list of contents is: *mulūk* (rulers), *kuttāb* (secretaries), *khuṭabāʾ* (orators), *mutarassilīn* (epistolographers), *ʿummāl al-kharāj* (land-tax officials), *aṣḥāb al-dawāwīn* (government clerks). It turns out that this is in fact *grosso modo* the sequence according to which the *fann* proceeds. Also, if we give more credence to items that appear in all enumerations than those that appear only once or twice, i.e. to *kuttāb*, and *mutarassilīn*, then we might reasonably expect the *fann* to deal more with those types of individuals (and those disciplines). As the following schematic shows, this turns out to be the case:

Table 3: Breakdown (Provisional) of *Fihrist* 3.2

A. *Mulūk*

B1. *Kuttāb/Mutarassilīn*

B1.a. *al-Kuttāb al-mutarassilūn*

B1.b. *Kuttāb... mim-man duwwinat rasāʾ ilu-hu*

C. *Khuṭabāʾ*

D. *Bulaghāʾ*

B1.b.2. *Kuttāb... mim-man duwwinat rasāʾ ilu-hu*

B2. *Mutarassilūn*

B2.b. *al-Kuttāb al-mutarassilūn...*

E1. *ʿUmmāl al-Kharāj/F. Aṣḥāb al-dawāwīn*

B2.b. *al-Kuttāb... mim-man duwwinat rasāʾ ilu-hu*

E2. *ʿUmmāl al-Kharāj* [principally Christians]

B2.c. *al-Kuttāb al-mutarassilūn* [Iṣfahanis, Khurasanis]

B2.d. *al-Kuttāb al-mutarassilūn* [miscellaneous]

Unlike *Fann* 1, therefore, *Fann* 2 proceeds according to its enumerated rubrics, organizes chronologically within rubrics, but also pays attention to other parameters, such as geography, professional specialty and genre of writing.

Fann 3

The contents of 3.3 are described as follows in the *fann* heading (and are all but identical in the three places they are enumerated):³¹

³¹ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 435, ll. 6-7, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 157, ll. 6-7, *Fihrist*, MS

akhbār al-nudamā' wa-l-julasā' wa-l-udabā' wa-l-mughannīn wa-l-ṣafādima wa-l-ṣafā'ina wa-l-muḍḥikīn wa-asmā' kutubi-him

accounts of the boon-companions, table-companions, belletrists, singers, slap-takers, buffoons, and comedians, and the names of their books

At thirteen folios, 3.3 is somewhat lengthy (though shorter than the two preceding *fanns*), and comprises sixty-eight notices. I list the first twenty of these (numbered below for ease of reference) below, and include dates of birth and death as mentioned in the *Fihrist*:³²

(*Mawṣilis*)

- [1] IBRĀHĪM AL-MAWṢILĪ (b. 125, d. 188)
- [2] IṢHĀQ B. IBRĀHĪM AL-MAWṢILĪ (b. 150, d. 235)
- [3] ḤAMMĀD B. IṢHĀQ (d. 275)

<*Munajjim family members in sequence*: Abān; Yaḥyā; Muḥammad, 'Alī (d. late in al-Mu'tamid's reign [256-279/870-892]), Sa'īd, al-Ḥasan; Aḥmad, 'Abd Allāh, Yaḥyā, Hārūn>

(*Munajjims*)

- [4] ABĀN
- [5] 'ALĪ B. YAḤYĀ (d. 275)
- [6] YAḤYĀ B. 'ALĪ (b. 241, d. 300)
- [7] AḤMAD B. YAḤYĀ B. 'ALĪ
- [8] HĀRŪN B. 'ALĪ (d. 288)
- [9] 'ALĪ B. HĀRŪN (b. 277, d. 352)

[10] AḤMAD B. 'ALĪ

[11] HĀRŪN B. 'ALĪ

(*Ḥamdūn family*):

- [12] ḤAMDŪN B. ISMĀ'ĪL
- [13] AḤMAD B. ḤAMDŪN
- [14] ABŪ HIFFĀN
- [15] YŪNUS AL-KĀTĪB AL-MUGHANNĪ
- [16] IBN BĀNA (d. 278)
- [17] AL-ṢĪNĪ
- [18] ABŪ ḤASHĪSHA
- [19] JAḤZA (d. 326)

Methodological remarks

- [20] IBN ABĪ ṬĀHIR (b. 204, d. 280)

3315, fol. 83v, ll. 5-6 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 307). Cf. *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/1, p. 5, ll. 9-10, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 4, l. 7, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 1v, ll. 24-25 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 3); and *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 277, ll. 9-10, *Fihrist*, p. 101, l. 8, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 50v, l. 6 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 192).

³² *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, pp. 156-163, l. 3, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 83v to 87r (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, pp. 307-342). On occasion, Ibn al-Nadīm's dates are incorrect. This does not affect analysis of Ibn al-Nadīm's chronological order since those are the dates known to him. Moreover, as Stewart, *Structure of the Fihrist*, p. 373, has noted, "Ibn al-Nadīm uses the information available to him to determine chronological order, even when he does not have specific dates."

The methodological remarks that appear between the notices of [19] Jaḥḥa and [20] Ibn Abī Ṭāhir are Ibn al-Nadīm's first explicit statement in this *maqāla* — and the most explicit methodological statement in the entire *Fihrist* — regarding his organizational principles:³³

Raja' nā ilā l-muṣannifin al-mushabharīn

Qāla Muḥammad ibn Ishāq: idhā dhakartu min al-muṣannifin insānan ittabā tu-hu bi-dhikr man yuqāribu-hu wa-yushbibu-hu wa-in tā'akhharat muddatu-hu 'an muddat man adraka-hu ba'da-hu wa-hādhibi sabili fī jamī' al-kitāb.

We return to the renowned authors

Muḥammad b. Ishāq writes: When I mention someone from among the authors, I follow him by mentioning another who is close to him and similar to him, even if his [life] span is later than that of the one I mention after him. This is my methodology throughout this book.

In the Flügel edition, we find the variant *adhkuru-hu* for *adraka-hu* in the passage quoted above, the variant *al-mughanniyyīn [sic] al-mashhūrīn* in the heading, and an additional, preceding methodological statement.³⁴ Even if we accept the reading *adraka-hu*, over the more likely *adhkuru-hu*, and break the sentences differently, the identical methodology is still conveyed. Reading *al-mughannīn al-mashhūrīn* is an error, that is, famous singers are not discussed next — something that is underscored by the additional methodological statement to be found in the Flügel edition, namely:³⁵

«Ba'da akhbāri-hi akhbār Qurayṣ al-mughannī wa-huwa yaḥī'u ba'da hādhibi l-waraqa bi-sab'a 'asharata waraqa ka-dhā rattaba-hu mu'allif al-kitāb.»

«After his account [= Jaḥḥa] (should be) the account of Qurayṣ the Singer, but it appears seventeen folios after this one. This is how the author of the book has ordered (the account).»

In addition to the scribal comment about the number of intervening folios, when Ibn al-Nadīm himself comments on order and sequence in the *Fihrist*,

³³ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 450, l. 10 to p. 451, l. 1, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 163, ll. 4-6, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 87r, ll. 9-11 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 319). The reading of *mushabharīn* (as opposed to the more common *mashhūrīn* and *mushtabirīn*) is supported by its appearance elsewhere in the *Fihrist*, e.g. MS 3315, fol. 20r, l. 12. Sayyid prefers *mushtabirīn*; note also that he prefers *atbā tu* to *itabā tu*, with similarly little change in import.

³⁴ *Fihrist*, ed. Flügel, p. 146, ll. 3-6.

³⁵ *Fihrist*, ed. Flügel, p. 146, ll. 3-4; *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 450, ll. 8-9, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 163, ll. 2-3 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 319). (I follow Tajaddud's practice of showing material from the Flügel edition between angle quotation marks, «»).

he does so in the first person and this statement is in the third person. This material was therefore most likely inserted (or amended) by a copyist. Reading *mughannīn* for *muṣannifīn* suggests that the copyist was not paying attention to the content of the biographies that follow Jaḥẓa's, nor to the rubrics announced in the headings. Although accounts of *nudamā'*, *julasā'* and *mughannīn* have been presented so far, if *udabā'* are a separate rubric we have not encountered them yet, and the notices that follow would appear to be these very *udabā'* (see further, below).

On the face of it, then, the listing of notices [1] to [20] seems to conform neither to a death date chronology nor to any other immediately discernible principle. But let us now add in known dates of birth and death, and also heed Ibn al-Nadīm's methodological remarks. The list now looks like this (with the dates provided by Ibn al-Nadīm in regular type, and other known dates underlined):

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Birth date</i>	<i>Death date</i>
<i>Mawṣilī family members</i>		
*[1] IBRĀHĪM AL-MAWṢILĪ	125/742-3	188/804
[2] IṢḤĀQ B. IBRĀHĪM	150/767	235/850
[3] ḤAMMĀD B. IṢḤĀQ		275/888
<i>Munajjim family members:</i> ³⁶		
*[4] ABĀN		
[5] 'ALĪ B. YAḤYĀ	<u>200/815</u>	275/888
[6] YAḤYĀ B. 'ALĪ	241/855	300/912
[7] AḤMAD B. YAḤYĀ		
[8] HĀRŪN B. 'ALĪ	<u>251/865</u>	288/901
[9] 'ALĪ B. HĀRŪN	277/890	352/963
[10] AḤMAD B. 'ALĪ		
[11] HĀRŪN B. 'ALĪ		392/1000
<i>Ḥamdūn family members</i>		
*[12] ḤAMDŪN B. ISMĀ'ĪL		
[13] AḤMAD B. ḤAMDŪN	<u>237/852</u>	<u>309/922</u>

³⁶ I omit here the listing within the entry titled "The Munajjim family in sequence" (see above) from my enumeration, as that listing — which includes [4], [5], [6], and [8], but also others to whom no subsequent notice is devoted — is self-evidently sequenced. See *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 441, l. 13 to p. 442, l. 11, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 160, ll. 6-15, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 85r, l. 16 to fol. 86r, l. 5.

The Munajjim family dates of death may appear to proceed chronologically by death date, but there is an exception in [8] Hārūn b. ‘Alī, who dies before [6] Yaḥyā, who precedes him. For both, the *Fihrist* provides exact dates, so evidently Ibn al-Nadīm (or his source) is himself aware of the fact that Hārūn pre-deceases Yaḥyā. By setting the family members apart as a microcluster, we see that the listings *within* families proceed chronologically by date of birth. From this attention to birth date, we can infer and assume that [7] Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā was likely born between 241/855 and 251/865, and that Aḥmad b. ‘Alī and Hārūn b. ‘Alī were both born after 277/890. Since Hārūn lived till 392/1000, he likely was not born much before 350/961, thus placing the date of birth of Aḥmad b. ‘Alī between 277/890 and ca. 350/961. In the case of the Ḥamdūns, Iṣḥāq (father) naturally precedes Ḥammād (son), but also the various members of the Munajjim family, not all of whom are directly descended from the Munajjim listed immediately prior (i.e. some are brothers).

Now, it is true that we do not have dates for the progenitors Abān or Ḥamdūn, but by lining them up with the other main entries up to and including [14] Abū Hiffān, we get this sequence:

[1] IBRĀHĪM AL-MAWṢILĪ (d. 188/804)

[4] ABĀN (?)

[12] ḤAMDŪN B. ISMĀ‘ĪL (?)

[14] ABŪ HIFFĀN (d. 257/871)

We may reasonably surmise, on the chronology by date of death principle, that Abān and Ḥamdūn died between 188/804 and 257/871. Given that we do not have dates recorded in any other sources, this sequence in the *Fihrist* — if it is not based on faulty information — gives us an admittedly large but nevertheless defined 69-year window in which to place the deaths of these two figures, with Abān’s death preceding Ḥamdūn’s.

What of the individuals listed after Abū Hiffān? An important clue is provided by the statement, “we return to the renowned authors.” Ibn al-Nadīm can only be ‘returning’ if he has ‘left’; what remains is to determine when he ‘left.’ Ibn al-Nadīm must have ‘left’ when he departed from his customary chronology. That happens immediately after Abū Hiffān, with Yūnus al-Kātib al-Mughannī. Abū Hiffān dies in 257/871 and Yūnus dies in 147/765. Three of the next four individuals not only follow chronology by death date (see below), but they are also all part of a cluster or microcluster of famous authors who sang and wrote about singers and singing. The last of these, Jaḥḥa, dies in 324/936, thus post-dating Ibn Abī Ṭāhir who follows him:

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Death date</i>
[14] ABŪ HIFFĀN	257/871
[15] YŪNUS AL-KĀTIB	<u>147/765</u>
[16] IBN BĀNA	278/891
[17] ḤUBAYSH	
[18] ABŪ ḤASHĪSHA	ca. 279/892
[19] JAḤḤA	324/936
[20] IBN ABĪ ṬĀHIR	280/893

Regarding [17], H.G. Farmer, who discovered a “Haesen the Naesyby” in an anonymous English-Arabic fragment (where “Ishak of Musul,” “Jonos the Secretary” and “Omer bin Bane” are also to be found), believed that “He may be identified with Hasan ibn Mūsā an-Naṣībī (d. ca 860 A.D.)” in the *Fihrist*.³⁷ In this, Farmer was relying on Flügel’s “Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Niṣṣībī,”³⁸ but MS 3315 clearly reads Ḥubaysh b. Mūsā al-Ṣīnī (a reading also adopted by Sayyid), and the death date is too early if our list is chronological by death date. Though a certain Ḥabash on whom Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī relies (besides Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī, ‘Amr b. Bāna, al-Makkī, a certain al-Hishāmī, and Yūnus al-Kātib) for information about song settings is “one of the mystery men of mediaeval Arabic music,” Hilary Kilpatrick identifies him with the *Fihrist*’s Ḥubaysh,³⁹ indeed, he once appears in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* as Ḥabash b. Mūsā.⁴⁰ If we accept that Ibn al-Nadīm is scrupulous about chronology, then we can expect Ḥubaysh/Ḥabash to have died around 279/892. We cannot be more precise as we do not have a reliable death date for Abū Ḥashīsha as a *terminus ante quem*.

If we factor in the methodological remark that appears immediately after the Jaḥḥa notice in the Flügel edition, namely *ba’da akhbāri-hi akhbār Qurayṣ al-Mughannī* (After his account [= Jaḥḥa] [should be] the account of Qurayṣ the Singer),⁴¹ if we factor in the notices of Qurayṣ and Ibn Ṭarkhān, which

³⁷ H.G. Farmer, “An Anonymous English-Arabic Fragment on Music,” *Islamic Culture* 18 (1944): 201-205 (p. 203).

³⁸ *Fihrist*, ed. Flügel, p. 145, ll. 12-13; cf. *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 448, ll. 6-7, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 162, ll. 10-11, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 86v, l. 13.

³⁹ H. Kilpatrick, *Making the Great Book of Songs: Compilation and the Author’s Craft in Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī’s Kitāb al-Aghānī*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 39.

⁴⁰ Kilpatrick, *Making the Great Book of Songs*, p. 362, n. 19.

⁴¹ *Fihrist*, ed. Flügel, p. 146, ll. 3-4; *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 450, ll. 8-9, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 163, ll. 2-3 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 319).

appear in the Flügel edition, and if we ignore all the intervening notices — none are singers, after all⁴² — then the sequence looks like this:

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Death date</i>
[14] ABŪ HIFFĀN	257/871
[15] YŪNUS AL-KĀTIB	<u>147/765</u>
[16] IBN BĀNA	<u>278/891</u>
[17] AL-ŞĪNĪ	
[18] ABŪ ḤASHĪSHA	ca. 279/892
[19] JAḤZA	<u>324/936</u>
[20] IBN ABĪ ṬĀHIR	280/893
[21], [22], [23]... [66]	
«[67] QURAYŞ AL-JARRĀḤĪ»	<u>324/936</u>
«[68] IBN ṬARKHĀN»	339/950

Note that the chronology of the singers' dates of death continues to be followed. Indeed, in the Qurayş entry, we read: *wa-tuwuffiya Qurayş fi sanat arba' wa-⁴ishrin wa-fi-hā māta Jaḥza*, "Qurayş passed away in (3)24, in which year Jaḥza also died."⁴³ As for the the non-singers, Ibn Abī Ṭāhir, who dies in 280/893, now appositely follows Abū Hiffān, who dies in 257/871.

Although the foregoing shows that Ibn al-Nadīm's sequencing is systematic, several important questions remain, among them: Why do the Ḥamdūns follow the Banū Munajjim? Why does Abū Hiffān follow the Āl Ḥamdūn? Why introduce the singers after Abū Hiffān? Why follow Jaḥza with Ibn Abī Ṭāhir? And if we accept that the singers constitute a sidebar or microcluster, as I hope I have shown that we must: How do we explain the consequent adjacency of Ibn Abī Ṭāhir and Abū Hiffān. The answers to these questions, I am suggesting, lies in two phenomena, 'proximity' and 'resemblance.'

⁴² But see [28] Abū Ayyūb al-Madīnī, *min al-zurafā' al-udabā' 'arif bi-l-ghinā wa-ākhhbār al-mughannīn*, "one of the refined belletrists, knowledgeable about singing and about the accounts about singers" (*Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 450, ll. 8-9, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 165, l. 10, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 88r, l. 25 to 88v, l. 1 [Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 319]).

⁴³ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 481, l. 11, *Fihrist*, ed. Flügel, p. 156, l. 19, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 173, l. 17 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 342).

Proximity and Resemblance in 3.3

The Ibn Abī Ṭāhir/Abū Hiffān Sequence

In a 1991 article, Hilary Kilpatrick first studied the function, selection and placement of *akhbār* in *adab* works, in particular the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, and described the phenomenon of placement enhancement. She showed that one account may often cast into relief aspects of another account because of the two accounts' placement relative to one another, that "the context in which a *khbar* or group of *akhbār* is placed enhances its meaning."⁴⁴ Building on and extending Hilary Kilpatrick's study of the function, selection and positioning of *akhbār* in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, I described (in a study of [20] Ibn Abī Ṭāhir) — something I termed "proximity":⁴⁵

"Proximity" ... is when the author/compiler chooses to record together, or in close proximity, accounts that relate figures who are otherwise connected. In other words, I am suggesting that the presence of certain names in an account — whether in the chain of transmission (*isnād*) or the text itself — leads the author/compiler to include other accounts that contain other individuals who, in the author/compiler's mind, are connected. These associations may even transcend the categories and divisions of a given work, such as biographical entries, or discussions of particular tropes in a work of literary criticism. Associations known to the author/compiler take hold and guide the selection of accounts. What may at first blush appear to be a random process turns out to be more mediated. The selection of item number 2 is predicated on item number 1 ... The link that is established gives a super-structural coherence to clusters of accounts.

In the *Kitāb al-Waraqā* — an important source for Ibn al-Nadīm⁴⁶ — for example, Ibn al-Jarrāḥ (d. 296/908) appears to use "proximity." In his entry on al-Qiṣāfi (d. 247/861), he follows verses recited by Abū Hiffān, with an anecdote quoted directly on the authority of Ibn Abī Ṭāhir.⁴⁷ The anecdote describes the offering by Abū Ayyūb b. Ukht Abī al-Wazīr (fl. third/ninth century) of a pot of *sikbāj* stew to Muḥammad b. Mukarram (fl. third/ninth century), in

⁴⁴ H. Kilpatrick, "Context and the Enhancement of the Meaning of *Akhbār* in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*," *Arabica* 38 (1991): 351-368.

⁴⁵ S.M. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr and Arabic Writerly Culture: A Ninth-Century Bookman in Baghdad*, London: Routledge, 2004, p. 103.

⁴⁶ Polosin, «*Fikhrīst*», has shown that Ibn al-Nadīm relies greatly on Ibn al-Jarrāḥ's *Kitāb al-Waraqā*. Other important sources are the works of al-Ṣūlī, of al-Marzubānī (notably the *Kitāb al-Muqtabas*), and of Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī (notably the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*). See Stewart, *Scholarship on the Fihrist*, p. 13.

⁴⁷ Ibn al-Jarrāḥ, *Kitāb al-Waraqā*, ed. 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām and 'Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1953, pp. 8-9.

the presence of al-Qiṣāfi the Younger, who proceeded to declaim two lines about the gift. We should not be surprised that Abū Hiffān and Ibn Abī Ṭāhir are quoted for information about al-Qiṣāfi, as they moved in the same circles, but it appears that the mention of Abū Hiffān evoked the others for Ibn al-Jarrāḥ. The connection between al-Qiṣāfi, Abū Hiffān, Ibn Abī Ṭāhir, and Abū l-‘Aynā’, was, I am suggesting, obvious to Ibn al-Jarrāḥ. Ibn al-Jarrāḥ also quotes Abū Hiffān in the notice devoted to al-Aṣma‘ī (d. 213/826).⁴⁸ If we rely on “proximity” as a predictive mechanism, we might expect to find Ibn Abī Ṭāhir, for example, also mentioned there — and he is. In the notice devoted to Abū l-Janūb (fl. third/ninth century), Ibn Abī Ṭāhir is again quoted soon after Abū Hiffān.⁴⁹

Further evidence for the viability of “proximity” as an explanation for sequencing or clustering individuals can be found in the *Ṭabaqāt al-shu‘arā’* of Ibn al-Mu‘tazz. Ibn al-Mu‘tazz places Ibn Abī Ṭāhir’s notice in the vicinity of those of Ibn Abī Fanan, Abū ‘Alī al-Baṣīr, Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb, Abū Hiffān, al-Tammār, al-Qiṣāfi, and Abū l-‘Aynā’.⁵⁰

Table 4: Sequence of Notices 110 to 124 In Ibn al-Mu‘tazz’s *Ṭabaqāt al-shu‘arā’ al-muḥdathin*

110	IBN ABĪ FANAN
111	ABŪ ‘ALĪ AL-BAṢĪR
112	AḤMAD B. AL-KHAṢĪB AL-JARJARĀ’Ī
	[.....]
119	ABŪ HIFFĀN
120	YĀ’QŪB AL-TAMMĀR
	[..]
122	AL-QIṢĀFĪ
123	ABŪ L-‘AYNĀ’
124	IBN ABĪ ṬĀHIR

⁴⁸ Ibn al-Jarrāḥ, *Kitāb al-Waraqā*, pp. 33-34.

⁴⁹ Ibn al-Jarrāḥ, *Kitāb al-Waraqā*, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁰ Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, *Ṭabaqāt al-shu‘arā’ al-muḥdathin*, ed. ‘Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj, Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1968², pp. 396-416. Cf. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir*, pp. 35-38, 104, 109-122; W.P. Heinrichs, *Ibn al-Mu‘tazz*, in: *Arabic Literary Culture, 500-925*, ed. M. Cooperson and S.M. Toorawa, Detroit: Gale, 2004, p. 168: “throughout the entries of the *Ṭabaqāt al-shu‘arā’ al-muḥdathin*, certain clusters of poets seem to have arisen by association. There is a group of four *muwaswisun*... Another group are nonsense poets... These few indications of the contents leave no doubt that Ibn al-Mu‘tazz’s book is a rich source for the sociology of poetry in the early ‘Abbasid era.”

The individuals in Table 4 above are all ones with whom Abū Hiffān and Ibn Abī Ṭāhir were closely associated. Indeed, most are members of the group al-Marzubānī designates *Shayāṭīn al-‘Askar* (lit. “the Demons of ‘Askar,” though I prefer “The Bad Boys of Baghdad”).⁵¹ This suggests that the motivation for this particular sequencing is related to Ibn al-Mu‘azz’s knowledge of these poets’ specific socio-literary association. In fact, most of those named are also regulars at the *majālis* of ‘Alī b. Yaḥyā, whose cluster of family notices is at only one remove — and only three lines from — the Abū Hiffān notice.

In the following anecdote, quoted by Yāqūt on the authority of al-Marzubānī — the very same author who enumerated the *Shayāṭīn al-‘Askar* in his *Mu‘jam al-shu‘arā’* — describes the habitués of ‘Alī b. Yaḥyā’s gatherings (with those whose notices appear in *Fihrist* 3.3 asterisked, and those appearing elsewhere in the *Fihrist* italicised):⁵²

*‘Alī b. Hārūn related to me on the authority of his father and (paternal) uncle:
 *Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Yaḥyā b. al-Munajjim one day held a gathering attended by those poets who never missed his gatherings, such as *Aḥmad b. Abī Ṭāhir, *Aḥmad b. Abī Fanan*, *Abū ‘Alī al-Baṣīr*, *Abū Hiffān al-Mihzamī, al-Hadādī, his cousin, i.e. Abū Hiffān’s, Ibn al-‘Allāf, Abū l-Ṭarīf, Aḥmad b. Abī Kāmil, the maternal uncle of Abū l-Ḥasan’s son [*‘Alī b. Hārūn], and *‘Alī b. Mahdī al-Kisrawī, who was his [‘Alī’s] son’s teacher (*mu‘allim*) . . . Abū l-‘Ubays b. *Ḥamdūn was [also] present . . .

The “proximity” of Abū Hiffān to Ibn Abī Ṭāhir can, it seems to me, be established beyond question. Indeed, as several anecdotes in the sources show, they were not just professional or occasional acquaintances, but comrades, and members of a socio-literary group. Can “proximity” and “resemblance” also provide answers to, or clues about, the other sequences?

⁵¹ Al-Marzubānī, *Kitāb Mu‘jam fi asmā’ al-shu‘arā’*, ed. ‘Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj, Cairo: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya/Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Awlādu-hu, 1379/1960, p. 398, l. 3. Cf. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir*, pp. 108-121.

⁵² Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb fi mā‘rifat al-adīb*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd Rifā‘ī, XV, Cairo: Maṭbū‘at Dār al-Ma‘mūn, 1936-1938, repr. Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1400/1980, p. 89, ll. 1-8, and 15. Cf. Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir*, pp. 118-122.

The Banū Munajjim/Āl Ḥamdūn and the Āl Ḥamdūn/Abū Hiffān sequences

The Āl Ḥamdūn notice is extremely brief:⁵³

Āl Ḥamdūn

Wa-buwa Ḥamdūn ibn Ismā'il ibn Dāwūd al-Kātib wa-buwa awwal man nādama min ahli-hi wa-bnu-hu Aḥmad ibn Ḥamdūn rāwiya akhbārī rawā 'an al-'Adawī «wa-labu min al-kutub K. al-Nudamā' wa-l-Julasā'»

The Family of Ḥamdūn

Ḥamdūn b. Ismā'il b. Dāwūd the Secretary, the first of his family to be a boon-companion. His son Aḥmad b. Ḥamdūn was a transmitter and reporter of historical traditions. He transmitted from al-'Adawī. «His books include 'On Boon-Companions and Table-Companions'.»

Brief notices are not unusual in the *Fihrist*, but they are unusual when a family is being described — in contrast, the preceding entries devoted to the Maṣṣilī and Munajjim family take up three pages (just under two folios) and two pages (one and a half folios), respectively. The brevity suggests that Ibn al-Nadīm was not done noting all the information he intended to include — this would certainly be in keeping with Polosin's views about the way Ibn al-Nadīm planned and redacted his catalogue. Indeed, two generations of Ḥamdūns renowned for their companionship are missing: Abū l-'Ubays b. Aḥmad, and his son, Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad. As we learned from al-Marzubānī (via Yāqūt) above, Abū l-'Ubays was a regular at the *majālis* of 'Alī b. Yaḥyā. With such documented contact between members of the Munajjim and Ḥamdūn families, “proximity” can certainly explain the adjacency of these two families here in *Fihrist* 3.3. More importantly, it can also explain why the Ḥamdūns are not elsewhere: Ḥamdūn might, as a *kātib*, have merited mention in 3.2, and Aḥmad, as a *rāwiya* and *akhbārī*, might have merited mention in 3.2, but their ties to boon-companionship meant that they were classed in 3.3.

Abū Hiffān following on after the Banū Ḥamdūn can also similarly be explained: he and Abū l-'Ubays b. Ḥamdūn were both habitués of 'Alī b. Yaḥyā's *majālis*. But in Abū Hiffān's case, Ibn al-Nadīm evidently also felt the

⁵³ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 446, ll. 7-10, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 161, ll. 23-25; *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 86r, ll. 22-124 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 316).

pull to place him elsewhere strongly enough that he opens the notice with *wa-sa-yamurru dhikru-hu fī jumlat shu'arā' al-muḥdathīn*, “he shall be mentioned [again] among the group of the modern poets”⁵⁴ — a recurrence which does not, in fact, take place. Though not common, this failure of Ibn al-Nadīm to mention an individual elsewhere when he has specifically signalled that he will do so, suggests that at this particular point in the *Fihrist* sequencing might still have been in flux. Moreover, unlike the Mawṣilī and Munajjim Family entries, which are discrete on the page, the Ḥamdūn one runs directly into the Abū Hiffān notice, without any break. This is not unusual in the *Fihrist* generally, but it is unusual for a notice of a non-family member to follow on from a family entry in this way. Below is a schematic representation of the sequence from notices 1-20:

Substantial family entry (Munajjim)
 Brief Āl Ḥamdūn entry → Brief Abū Hiffān entry (without signalled follow-up)
 (Otherwise unannounced) Sidebar of four singers
 Substantial family entry (Ibn Abī Ṭāhir)

Indeed, we might consider the possibility that in this *maqāla* (and possibly in others, though I have not tested this), the entries to which Ibn al-Nadīm devotes a substantial amount of space represent another matrix of organization in the *Fihrist*. In 3.3, the substantial notices are those of the Mawṣilīs and Munajjims (court companions, authors on music, musicians/entertainers), Ibn Abī Ṭāhir (multifaceted author, with special interests in plagiarism, poetry, and belles-lettres), al-Ṣūlī, combining the above two (court companion, entertainer [chess], multifaceted author, with special interests in poetry, and belles-lettres), and al-Ṣaymarī (companion, humourist/entertainer, belletrist). This would help explain some of the overlaps which characterize 3.3. In the case of al-Ṣaymarī, for instance, Ibn al-Nadīm is explicit about such overlap, describing him as a jester and clown (*min abl al-fakāhāt wa-l-murāṭazāt* [*muraṭanāt?*]), but also as urbane and knowledgeable about the stars (*adīb 'arīf bi-l-nujūm*), and an intimate court companion of al-Mutawakkil and al-Mu'tamid.⁵⁵

Noteworthy also is the way in which Ibn al-Nadīm chose to open 3.3, with Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī. He opened 3.2 with Ibrāhīm al-Mahdī, also a singer.

⁵⁴ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 446, l. 12, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 161, l. 27; *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 86v, l. 1 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 316).

⁵⁵ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 467, ll. 6-7, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 168, l. 24; *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 90v, ll. 14-15 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 332).

Indeed, the two singers represent two rival schools of music and singing. Though both are given prominence by being placed at the beginning of a *fann*, one could argue that neither is in exactly the right place, and that the two might even belong together. Might Ibn al-Nadīm have been making a point about, or taking a position on, the rivalry? Those Ibn al-Nadīm chooses to place at the end of *fanns* are important too. As Stewart has noted:⁵⁶

... when Ibn al-Nadim was unsure of particular authors' placement as he recorded additional entries, he tended to put them at the end of the [*fann*] in question. His intent may have been to finish recording the necessary information and then perhaps create a new redaction of the entire work at a later date. In any case, these occasional elements of disorder in the text do not negate the fact that the *Fihrist* is on the whole constructed with a great deal of thought and care.

Resemblance

The Abū Hiffān/Singers, and Jaḥḥa/Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Sequences

Two sequences in notices 1-20 remain to be explained: the appearance of the singers cluster after Abū Hiffān, and the appearance of Ibn Abī Ṭāhir after the last singer, Jaḥḥa. "Proximity" — which, as I use it, is an indicator of social or socio-literary relations — is a highly improbable explanation for the adjacency of Abū Hiffān, who died in 257/871, and Yūnus, who died a century earlier in 147/765. But something about Abū Hiffān must have evoked Yūnus, and similarly, something about Jaḥḥa must have evoked Ibn Abī Ṭāhir. The former can be explained by the fact that Abū Hiffān appears over fifty times as a transmitter in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, an important source for Ibn al-Nadīm on singing, music and much else besides.

A different mechanism can be enlisted to explain Ibn Abī Ṭāhir's adjacency to Jaḥḥa, not one related to socio-literary networks, but one related to titles. Ibn Abī Ṭāhir may well have been evoked for Ibn al-Nadīm by Jaḥḥa's *Kitāb Faḍā'il al-sikkāj*. Only two authors in the *Fihrist* are credited with works on *sikkāj*, Jaḥḥa and Ibn Abī Ṭāhir's son, 'Ubayd Allāh, mention of whose *Kitāb al-Sikkāj wa-faḍā'il-i-hā* is separated from mention of Jaḥḥa's work by only one

⁵⁶ Stewart, *Structure of the Fihrist*, p. 384; though admittedly these names might have been added later.

manuscript page (one and a half pages in the Tajaddud edition).⁵⁷ That works of a particular type appear in a particular *fann* or *maqāla* is no cause for surprise, as Ibn al-Nadīm is organizing his catalogue — and it is fundamentally a catalogue of titles and not a biographical work — that way. But 3.3 is different. Whereas the other *fanns* in *Maqāla* 3 (and even other *fanns* and *maqālas*) cover areas that are constituted as recognized disciplines or fields, most of 3.3 covers a particular kind of individual, a multi-faceted (and multi-talented) group of writers.⁵⁸ In light of this, we can expect clustering of certain types of works here, and not elsewhere. Of the ten books on plagiarism (*sariqāt*) recorded in the *Fihrist*, for example, seven appear in *Maqāla* 3, six of those in 3.3. As Wellisch has noted:⁵⁹

Amid all the various songbooks, cookbooks, and books of light verse, we also find fairly frequent remarks and complaints about plagiarism by unscrupulous authors and especially poets . . .

The importance of plagiarism in 3.3, which has also been noted, and discussed, by Dieter Sturm,⁶⁰ is underscored by the prominence it has in the very opening notice, where Ibn al-Nadīm describes the plagiarism of Iṣḥāq al-Mawṣilī's *Kitāb al-Aghānī*.⁶¹

There is much more that can be said about 3.3, which contains another 48 notices after Ibn Abi Tāhir (given below, including known dates):⁶²

⁵⁷ *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 87r, l. 6 and fol. 87v, l. 27 (*Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 450, l. 5 and p. 453, l. 11, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 162, l. 26 and p. 164, l. 12). Cf. Stewart, *Structure of the Fihrist*, p. 375: “the element that seems to hold the chapter together is that many of the cited figures authored a work entitled *Kitāb al-Sunan*.”

⁵⁸ For Osti, *Authors, Subjects and Fame*, p. 160, the fact that *Maqāla* 3 is the least homogenous of the *maqālāt*, which she says is clear from the range of topics, “is a testimony of how little history was felt as a unitary discipline.”

⁵⁹ Wellisch, *The First Arab Bibliography*, p. 19.

⁶⁰ D. Sturm, “Ibn al-Nadīm's Hinweise auf das Verhältnis zum geistigen Eigentum im Historikerkapitel des *Kitāb al-Fihrist*,” *Hallesche Beiträge zur Orientalwissenschaft* 13-14 (1990): 65-70.

⁶¹ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 438, l. 3 to p. 439, l. 9, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 158, ll. 13-27, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 84r, l. 22 to fol. 84v, l. 14 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, pp. 309-311).

⁶² *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, pp. 454-482, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, pp. 164-173, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 87r to 93v (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, pp. 322-342).

-
- [20] IBN ABĪ ṬĀHIR (d. 280/893)
 [21] His son, 'UBAYD ALLĀH (d. 313/925)
The Abū l-Najm Family
 [22] HILĀL
 [23] ṢĀLIḤ
 [24] AḤMAD B. ABĪ AL-NAJM
 [25] ABŪ 'AWN AḤMAD
 [26] ABŪ IṢḤĀQ B. ABĪ 'AWN (d. 322/933)
- [27] IBN ABĪ AL-AZHAR (d. 313/926)
 [28] ABŪ AYYŪB AL-MADĪNĪ (?)
 [29] AL-ṬHA'LABĪ (fl. 240s/860s)
 [30] IBN AL-ḤARŪN (fl. fourth/tenth century)
 [31] IBN KHURRADĀDHBĪH (d. 299/912)
 [32] IBN 'AMMĀR AL-ṬHAQAFĪ (d. 319/931)
 « [33] (ABŪ L-FARAJ) AL-SARAKHSĪ (d. 286/899-900) »
 [34] JA'FAR B. ḤAMDĀN AL-MAWṢILĪ (d. 323/935)
 [35] ABŪ ḌIYĀ' AL-NIṢṢĪBĪ (d. late third/ninth century)
 [36] IBN ABĪ MAṢṢŪR AL-MAWṢILĪ (fl. 830s/220s?)
 [37] IBN AL-MARZUBĀN (d. 301/921-2)
 [38] AL-KISRĀWĪ (d. betw. 283/896 and 289/902)
 [39] IBN BASSĀM (d. 303/914-15)
 [40] (JA'FAR B. AḤMAD) AL-MARWAZĪ (d. 274/887)
 [41] ABŪ BAKR AL-ṢŪLĪ (d. 329/941-2)
 [42] AL-ḤAKĪMĪ (d. 335/947-8)
 [43] (ABŪ 'ALĪ) AL-BARRAJĀNĪ (?)
Another grouping
 [44] AL-ṢAYMARĪ (d. 275/888)
 [45] AL-NAMALĪ (fl. 230s/850s) [al-Namlī?]
 [46] AL-HĀSHIMĪ (d. 250/864)
 [47] IBN AL-SHĀH (d. 376/986?)
 [48] AL-MUBĀRAKĪ (fl. third/ninth century?)
 [49] AL-KUTANJĪ (fl. late third/ninth century)
 [50] JIRĀB AL-DAWLA (fl. third/ninth century?)
 [51] AL-BARMAKĪ (fl. 335-356/947-967)
 « [52] IBN BAKR AL-SHĪRĀZĪ (fl. 350s/960s) »
Another cluster
 [53] IBN AL-FAQĪH AL-HAMADHĀNĪ (d. 281/893-4)
 [54] 'UBAYD ALLĀH (?)
 [55] AL-MU'TAMIR (?)
 [56] AL-MAS'ŪDĪ (d. 345/946)

- [57] AL-AHWĀZĪ (d. 345/946)
[space]⁶³
- [58] AL-SHIMSHĀTĪ (d. after 377/987)
[space]⁶⁴
- [59] AL-SARRĀJ (d. 317/929-30)
- [60] AL-RĀMHURMUZĪ (d. 359/970)
- [61] AL-ĀMIDĪ (d. 369/980)
Chess players
- [62] AL-‘ADLĪ (fl. 230s/850s)
- [63] AL-RĀZĪ (fl. 230s/850s)
- [64] AL-ŞŪLĪ (d. ca. 335/946)
- [65] AL-LAJLĀJ (d. after 360/970)
- [66] AL-UQLĪDĪSĪ (fl. late third/ninth-early fourth/tenth)
- « [67] QURAYŞ AL-JARRĀĤĪ AL-MUGHANNĪ (d. 324/936) »
- « [68] IBN ṬARKHĀN (d. 339/950) »
-

Of this motley crew, James Montgomery writes:⁶⁵

Given that the amanuenses are catalogued in Section Two of Chapter Three [3.2], the focus of this chapter [= 3.3] seems to be those individuals who were distinguished by their ability to entertain. It is surprising to encounter the *udabā’* here, and it suggests that for Ibn al-Nadīm in Baghdad of the late fourth/tenth century, *adab* was on a par with singing and entertainment, whether slap-stick or table-talk.

I believe Montgomery is correct in concluding that for Ibn al-Nadīm, *adab* ran a wide gamut of activities, and correct in regarding the individuals in this section as entertaining in one way or another. But I would like to suggest that it is not surprising to find *udabā’* in 3.3 when we consider the clusters, and when we consider the attention with which Ibn al-Nadīm identifies the *adab* component in the literary output of the forty-three authors that appear in

⁶³ There is the equivalent of approximately six lines of blank space here: see *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 92v.

⁶⁴ There is the equivalent of approximately four lines of blank space here: see *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 93v.

⁶⁵ J.E. Montgomery, “Serendipity, Resistance, and Multivalency: Ibn Khurrādādhbih and his *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*,” in: *On Fiction and Adab in Medieval Arabic Literature*, ed. P.F. Kennedy, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005, pp. 177-232 (p. 197).

notices 27 to 68: Ibn al-Nadīm describes almost every author as either *adīb*, *min al-udabā'*, or *muta'addib*. This is something Ibn al-Nadīm had already signalled in the rubrics for this section, namely *udabā'* (belletrists). Thus, [26] Ibn Abī 'Awn, for instance, is included in 3.3 because he is *min ahl al-adab*, "one of the belletrists" even though he properly belongs elsewhere (*wa-naḥnu nadhkuru khabara-hu 'inda dhikr al-'Azāqirī*, "we give his account when we mention al-'Azāqirī").⁶⁶ In the case of [34] Ja'far b. Ḥamdān, Ibn al-Nadīm writes:

Abū l-Qāsim Ja'far ibn Ḥamdān al-Mawṣilī al-faqīh ḥasan al-tā'lif wa-l-taṣnīf yatafaqqahu 'alā madhhab al-Shāfi'ī wa-kāna shā'iran adīban nāqidan li-l-shi'r kathīr al-riwāya wa-la-hu fī l-fiqh 'iddat kutub nadhkuru-hā 'inda dhikrinā al-fuqahā' fa-amma kutubu-hu al-adabiyya fa-hiya Kitāb al-Bāhir fī l-ikhtiyār min ash'ār al-muḥdathīn (wa-bā'd al-qudamā' wa-l-sariqāt), Kitāb al-Shi'r wa-l-shu'arā' al-kabīr wa-lam yatimma-hu, Kitāb al-Sariqāt wa-lam yatimma-hu wa-law tamma-hu la-staghnā al-nās 'an kull kitāb fī mā'nā-hu, Kitāb Maḥāsin ash'ār al-muḥdathīn laṭīf

Abū l-Qāsim Ja'far b. Ḥamdān, of Mosul, jurispudent, skillful in authorship and composition. He followed the jurisprudence of al-Shāfi'ī and was a poet, belletrist, literary critic of poetry, and abundant in narrations. He wrote a number of books on jurisprudence, which we (shall) mention in the section on jurists. As for his belletristic books, they are: the *Book of Splendour*, being a selection of the verses of the Moderns (and of some of the Ancients, and plagiarisms [too]); the *Book of Poetry and poets*, unabridged, which he did not complete; the *Book of Plagiarisms*, which he did not complete and which, had he completed it, no-one would then be in need of any other book on the subject; and the *Book of the Outstanding Verses of the Moderns*, a fine work.

Of interest is the fact that for Ibn al-Nadīm, one sign of the *adab* and *tā'addub* of authors is skill in writing books on any subject. Number [40] al-Marwazī, for instance, besides being *auwal man allafa fī al-masālik wa-l-mamālik kitāban*, "the first author to write a book on 'highways and kingdoms,'" is described as *aḥad al-mu'allifīn li-l-kutub fī sā'ir al-'ulūm*, "one of the authors who composed books in all disciplines."⁶⁷ This also appears to be implied about [37] Ibn al-Marzubān (see below).

When we map all the notices in 3.3 against the rubrics announced for the *fann*, we see that 3.3 is not like 3.1, which consisted of individuals all of whom

⁶⁶ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 454, l. 14 to p. 455, l. 9, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 164, l. 24 to p. 165, l. 1, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 88r, ll. 15-16 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 323).

⁶⁷ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 463, ll. 9-10, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 167, ll. 18-19, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 89v, ll. 17-18 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 329).

embody all the rubrics, presented in more or less chronological order. Nor is 3.3 like 3.2, which proceeds sequentially (with breaks) more or less according to its rubrics.⁶⁸ In fact, 3.3 appears to use *overlapping* rubrics, as outlined below, something underscored by the figure of al-Šūlī, who not only appears as notice [41], but also as notice [64].

Table 5: Breakdown (provisional) of Fihrist 3.3

A. <i>Nudamāʾ/Julasāʾ/Udabāʾ</i>
B1. <i>Udabāʾ/Julasāʾ</i>
C1. <i>Mughannīn</i>
B2. <i>Udabāʾ/Julasāʾ</i>
D. <i>Šafādīmal/Šafāʾinal/Mudḥikīn</i>
B3. <i>Udabāʾ</i>
[F. <i>Shatranjīyyūn</i>]
C2. <i>Mughannīn</i>

I intend to analyse notices 20-68 in greater detail in a future article. Suffice to make two further observations here: first, that this sequence includes notices of two individuals closely connected to Ibn Abī Ṭāhir; and second, that there are a number of microclusters and sidebars apparently so sequenced because of “resemblance” that are worthy of further investigation.

The two individuals connected to Ibn Abī Ṭāhir are [37] Ibn al-Marzubān and [38] al-Kisrawī. Of Ibn al-Marzubān (d. 309/921), Ibn al-Nadīm says, *yataʾātā tariqat Aḥmad ibn [Abī] Ṭāhir ḥāfiẓ li-l-akḥbār wa-l-ashʾār wa-l-mulāḥ*, “he pursued the method of Aḥmad b. [Abī] Ṭāhir, and was a repository of reports, poetry and humorous anecdotes.”⁶⁹ His *Kitāb Akḥbār Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt wa-mukhtār shiʿri-hi* [Reports about Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt and a selection of his poetry], *Kitāb Alqāb al-shuʿarāʾ* [Nicknames of the Poets], *Kitāb al-Shiʿr wa-l-shuʿarāʾ* [Poetry and Poets], and *Kitāb al-Hadāyā* [Gifts] are all similar to titles by Ibn Abī Ṭāhir.⁷⁰ Ibn al-Marzubān also relied upon Ibn Abī Ṭāhir directly and indirectly for information in his works: he quotes him

⁶⁸ As Osti, *Authors, Subjects and Fame*, p. 160, has observed about 3.2, “chronological order is secondary to rank.”

⁶⁹ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 461, ll. 7-8, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 166, l. 27, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 89r, ll. 24-25 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 327). Although the name reads “Aḥmad b. Ṭāhir,” there is little doubt that the ‘Abī’ has been inadvertently dropped. See Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir*, p. 163, n. 120.

⁷⁰ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 461, ll. 9-14, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 167, l. 1, 4, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 89v, ll. 3-6 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, pp. 327-328).

three times in his *Kitāb Faḍl al-kilāb ‘alā kathīr mim-man labisa l-thiyāb*,⁷¹ and he features prominently in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* in lines of transmission linking Ibn Abī Ṭāhīr with Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī.⁷² Ibn al-Marzubān is followed immediately by ‘Alī b. Maḥdī al-Kisrawī (d. between 283/896 and 289/902). This is the Kisrawī who was mentioned as a regular at ‘Alī b. Yaḥyā’s *majālīs*, which means he and Ibn Abī Ṭāhīr had close personal contact. Of him, Ibn al-Nadīm writes:⁷³

*Wa-kāna mu’addiban adīban ḥāfiẓan ‘arīfan bi-Kitāb al-‘Ayn khāṣṣatan wa-kāna yu’addibu*⁷⁴ *Hārūn ibn ‘Alī (ibn Yaḥyā) al-Nadīm*

[Al-Kisrawī] was a refined belletrist, a repository of transmissions, and a poet especially knowledgeable in the *Kitāb al-‘Ayn* [of al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad]. He tutored “the son of” Hārūn b. ‘Alī b. Yaḥyā al-Nadīm...

Indeed, when Yāqūt cites this passage in the *Irshād al-arīb*, he attributes the characterization to Ibn Abī Ṭāhīr.⁷⁵

As for the microclusters and sidebars in 3.3 that invite and merit closer examination on the basis of “resemblance,” they can be schematized as follows:

Table 6: Microclusters and Sidebars in Fihrist 3.3

B2. Belletrists/Companions

- [27] to [33] with works on rulers or secretaries, and/or authors themselves companions of rulers;
- [32] & [33] Geographical belletrists
- [34] to [40] Multifaceted belletrists
([34] & [35], authors of works on plagiarism)
- [41] Companion to ruler, belletrists

D. Entertainers

- [42] & [43] (*speculative* identification)
- [44] to [52] Slap-takers and buffoons

⁷¹ Ibn al-Marzubān, *Book of the Superiority of Dogs over Many of Those Who Wear Clothes*, ed. and trans. G.R. Smith and M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1978, pp. 13, 15, 25 (Arabic pagination).

⁷² E.g. Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, I, Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1969, p. 244, l. 1.

⁷³ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 462, ll. 3-5, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 167, ll. 8-9, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 89v, ll. 8-9 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 328).

⁷⁴ Omitting the «walad» of the Flügel edition since al-Kisrawī was more likely the teacher of Hārūn than of Hārūn’s sons (and corroborated in Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb*, XV, p. 89, l. 8). *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 462, l. 3, has *walad* (indicating that it is from BN Ms arabe 4451).

⁷⁵ Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb*, XV, p. 88, ll. 12-15.

B3. Belletrists

[53] to [61] Multifaceted belletrists

F. Chess Players

[62] to [66]

C2. Singers

[67] to [68]

By and large, the clusters, microclusters and sidebars schematized above proceed chronologically. Notices [28] Abū Ayyūb al-Madīnī and [29] al-Tha‘labī appear to breach chronology — unless we re-draw the microcluster and tag [27] Ibn Abī l-Azhar to the end of the Abū l-Najm family cluster, whereupon chronology is maintained from [27] to [42] (and likely [43] but he is unknown). There is another hiccup with [33] al-Sarakhsī (d. 286/899-900) following [32] Ibn ‘Ammār (d. 319/931). But here, as with a number of other places in the *Fihrist*, the sequencing is in flux with respect to chronology, as the following table shows:⁷⁶

Table 7: Notices [31] to [34] in *Fihrist* 3.3

MS 3315	Flügel ed.	Tajaddud ed. & Sayyid ed.
Ibn ‘Ammār (d. 319)	Ibn ‘Ammār (d. 319)	Ibn Khurradādhbih (d. 299)
Ibn Khurradādhbih (d. 299)	Ibn Khurradādhbih (d. 299)	Ibn ‘Ammār (d. 319)
[Ja‘far b. Ḥamdān (d. 323)]	al-Sarakhsī (d. 286) Ja‘far b. Ḥamdān (d. 323)	«al-Sarakhsī (d. 286)» Ja‘far b. Ḥamdān (d. 323)]

Concluding Remarks

For Ibn al-Nadīm, individuals belong together in clusters — he repeatedly points out that he organizes his catalogue in this way. Though organized by bibliographic rubric at the macrostructural level, and very often chronologically too, other organisational criteria made explicit by Ibn al-Nadīm and inferred by scholars to date include: chronology (date of birth or death), kin-

⁷⁶ *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 88v, l. 16 to fol. 89r, l. 8; *Fihrist*, ed. Flügel, p. 148, l. 18 to p. 149, l. 8; *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 165, l. 22 to p. 166, l. 9; *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 457, l. 11 to p. 459, l. 13; Dodge, *The Fihrist*, pp. 325-326.

ship, geographical origin, contact through instruction, ideological or scholarly affinity or connection, order of appearance in works consulted, and fame. I hope that the foregoing has shown that Ibn al-Nadīm also uses “proximity” and “resemblance” at the microstructural level. This means that if we read sequences in the *Fihrist* using “proximity” or “resemblance,” we can perhaps learn — or learn more — about individuals’ socio-literary networks, social relations and literary output. Letizia Osti and Dieter Sturm have already laid some of the other groundwork for this type of analysis.⁷⁷

Admittedly, discerning “proximity” is made difficult by the fact that a cluster or an individual might generate several microclusters, possibly even overlapping ones, rendering a reading of the sequence difficult. This is true, for example, of the sequence Ja‘far ibn Ḥamdān al-Mawṣilī/Abū Diyā’ al-Niṣṣībī, both, like Ibn Abī Ṭāhir, writers of works on plagiarisms of contemporary poets; indeed, Ibn al-Nadīm cites Ja‘far for information about Ibn Abī Ṭāhir’s imputed plagiarism.⁷⁸ It is (still) unclear to me why Ja‘far would follow al-Sarakhsī, or Ibn ‘Ammār or Ibn Khurradādhbih. But as Montgomery has fruitfully speculated about the adjacency of Ibn Khurradādhbih and al-Sarakhsī, the sequencing may be connected to the type of *adab* embodied by these writers.⁷⁹ Indeed, “proximity” may sometimes shade into “resemblance.”

The need for a larger sample from which to elaborate a more sophisticated theory of “proximity” and a similar need for a more nuanced theory of “resemblance” notwithstanding, I would like to suggest that both “proximity” and “resemblance” be recognized as two important principles governing the order in which notices are placed and sequenced in the *Fihrist*, and that both phenomena be explored as Ibn al-Nadīm’s exceptional work continues to be mined for information about the ‘Abbasid period and what came before.

⁷⁷ Osti, *Authors, Subjects and Fame*; D. Sturm, “Der *Fihrist* des Ibn an-Nadīm als Quelle für die Kenntnis sozialer Zusammenhänge am Beispiel der dritten *Maqāla*,” in: *Ibn an-Nadīm und die mittelalterliche arabische Literatur*, pp. 44-50, which focuses in particular on the attention paid by Ibn al-Nadīm to non-Arabs.

⁷⁸ *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1/2, p. 451, ll. 5-11, *Fihrist*, ed. Tajaddud, p. 163, ll. 9-12, *Fihrist*, MS 3315, fol. 87r, ll. 14-19 (Dodge, *The Fihrist*, p. 320).

⁷⁹ Cf. Montgomery, *Serendipity*, pp. 197-198. That some were geographical *udabā’* (to borrow Montgomery’s salutary locution) is taken up in D. Sturm, “Die arabische geographische Literatur im Historikerkapitel des *Kitāb al-Fihrist* von Ibn al-Nadīm,” *Hallesche Beiträge zur Orientalwissenschaft* 10 (1986): 23-36.

