

RESEARCH ARTICLE

“Mu’Jamu-L-Udabo” As An Important Literary-Philological Source Created In The Late 12th And Early 13th Centuries

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Abstract

This article analyzes Yoqut al-Hamawi’s renowned work “Mu’jamu-l-udaba” as a significant literary-philological source composed in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The study briefly examines the scholar’s position within the tradition of writing biographical dictionaries (tarājim), as well as the information presented in the work concerning scholars from various regions, including Baghdad, Isfahan, al-Andalus, and Qayrawān.

KEY WORDS

Yoqut, al-Hamawi, Mu’jamu-l-udabo, Baghdadi, Qarawani, Isfahani, Andalusi.

INTRODUCTION

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, numerous prominent figures emerged who made significant contributions to the development of science, particularly in the field of philology. At the same time, scholars engaged in the discipline of khabar (historical reports) and the compilers of tadhkiras worked diligently to collect and transmit information about the lives and literary works of such scholars and creative figures to subsequent generations. By this period, the composition of prose works such as tarjama (biographical dictionaries), tadhkira (biographical anthologies), and tabaqat (biographical layers or classes) had become increasingly widespread.

Among works of tabaqat, Ibn Abu Ya’la’s “Tabaqatu-l-Hanabila” (1131) may be cited; among tadhkiras, Muhammad Awfi’s “Lubabu-l-albab” (1221); and among works of tarjama, Yoqut al-Hamawi’s “Mu’jamu-l-udaba” (1226) and Ibn Khallikon’s “Vafayatu-l-a’yan” (1274) serve as notable examples.

The composition of these types of prose works in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries represents a continuation of earlier

established traditions and, in turn, contributed to the further development and consolidation of these literary-historiographical genres in subsequent periods.

For example, in “Mu’jamu-l-udaba”, the author identifies Abu Bakr bin Muhammad bin Abdulmalik at-Tarikhi as one of the earliest figures to compose works in the genre of tarjama (biographical writing). Yoqut notes that his work was limited in scope and contained relatively brief biographies. Subsequently, Yoqut mentions other scholars who contributed to this field, including Abu Muhammad Abdullah bin Ja’far bin Durustavayh, Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Imran al-Marzubani, Abu Sa’id al-Hasan bin Abdullah bin al-Marzubon as-Siyrofiy, Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Hasan al-Ishbiliy az-Zubaydiy, Abu-l-Mahosin al-Mufaddal bin Muhammad bin Mis’ar al-Ma’ariy, Ali bin Fazzol al-Majoshi’iy, and al-Kamal Abdurahmon bin Muhammad bin al-Anbariy. Yoqut explicitly states that he incorporated into “Mu’jamu-l-udaba” those portions of their works which he deemed beneficial.

Based on this example, it becomes evident that Yoqut al-Hamawi’s “Mu’jamu-l-udaba” was grounded in earlier works of

the same genre and elevated the tradition to a new stage of development. Among the biographical works composed after "Mu'jamu-l-udabo" are Ibn Khallikan's "Vafayat al-a'yan" (third quarter of the thirteenth century), as-Safadiy's "al-Vafi bi-l-vafayat" (fourteenth century), al-Kutubi's "Favat al-Vafayat", Ibn Tag'ri's "al-Manhal as-Safiy" (fifteenth century), Khayruddin az-Zirikli's "al-A'lam: Qamus tarajim li-ashhar ar-rijal va an-nisa" (twentieth century), and Umar Riza Kahhalla's "Mu'jamu-l-muallifin" (mid-twentieth century). These works may be regarded as logical continuations of the same biographical tradition.

Some of these later works provide information about Yaqut al-Hamawi and his "Mu'jamu-l-udaba". For instance, Ibn Khallikan includes Yaqut's biography in his "Vafayatu-l-A'yan." In that biographical entry, Ibn Khallikan refers to Yaqut's work under the title "إرشاد الأبناء إلى معرفة الأدباء" and describes it as a four-volume composition. However, in the editions prepared by Margoliouth and Ihsan Abbas, the title appears as "إرشاد الأريب إلى معرفة الأديب." This variation in title, as well as the difference in the number of volumes—two fewer than mentioned by Ibn Khallikan—constitutes an important and noteworthy detail in the textual history of the work.

Another noteworthy point is that in certain works containing the biography of Yaqut al-Hamawi, neither "Mu'jamu-l-udaba" nor his other major writings are mentioned. For instance, in Jamoliddin al-Qifti's "Inbahu-r-ruvah", Yaqut al-Hamawi's life and scholarly activity are discussed. This biographical account includes information about his life trajectory, travels, and hardships, and even presents critical remarks regarding his personality. However, his major works are not referenced therein. This omission is particularly striking given that Jamoliddin al-Qifti was among the scholars closely associated with Yaqut al-Hamawi, and the two were personally well acquainted.

The study of any work as a historical source necessitates consideration of the principles and methodology of source studies. In this regard, the orientalist scholar Q. Sodiqov defines source studies (in Russian, *источниковедение*) as a broad auxiliary discipline that examines written sources of literature, history, and other fields, as well as works preserved from the past. According to him, it encompasses such branches as literary source studies, historical source studies, and the source studies of specific scientific disciplines (i.e., the study of scholarly works as sources) .

"Mu'jamu-l-udaba" corresponds to the branch of literary

source studies. Before proceeding to analytical evidence supporting its classification within this category, it is appropriate to recall Q. Sodiqov's definition of literary source studies. He explains: "Literary source studies (i.e., *литературное источниковедение*) refers to the critical examination of written sources produced in various periods of literary history, including the manuscripts and printed editions of poetic and literary works—whether authored by known poets and writers or anonymous—as well as works of oral folk literature, from the time of their creation up to the present".

Among European scholars who have expressed views on source studies and literary sources are A. Gacek and J. Witkam ; among Arab scholars, S. Mahasini and S. Nashshar ; among Russian scholars, I. Krachkovski and D. Likhachev ; and among Uzbek scholars, A. Habibullaev . Although these scholars have offered diverse interpretations and perspectives, Q. Sodiqov's formulation provides a comprehensive conceptual framework that corresponds in substance to the essential elements of their approaches.

"Mu'jamu-l-udaba" provides information about writers who produced both prose and poetic works from the seventh century—the era of the Companions—up to the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, when the work itself was composed. Through the biographical accounts of numerous scholars who lived across nearly seven centuries, the work offers valuable insights into the literary processes of the period, the scholarly and intellectual environment of specific times and places, authors who participated in academic debates, master-disciple relationships, and even women who contributed to scholarly life in the medieval period. Thus, it serves as an important source for understanding both the literary dynamics and the philological heritage of the era.

An analysis of the philological aspects of the work requires a twofold approach, as it contains information pertaining both to literary processes and to linguistic scholarship.

For the interpretation of literary processes, the literary milieu may be examined regionally—namely, Baghdad, Qayrawān, al-Andalus, and Isfahan—and analyzed comparatively. From each region, two representative figures have been selected. Below follows a brief analytical overview of them.

Ahmad bin Khalid Abu Sa'id ad-Darir al-Baghdadi, although born in Baghdad, later relocated to Nishapur, where he became one of the leading scholars of literature . "Mu'jamu-l-udaba" records that in Nishapur he met and studied under

prominent scholars such as Abu Umar ash-Shaybani and Ibn al-A`rabi. This demonstrates the central role of distinguished scholars within the literary milieu of the time. A notable aspect of ad-Darir al-Baghdadi's biography is that he was accompanied from Baghdad to Nishapur by Abdullah bin Tahir and a group of Arab literati, who actively taught Arabic literature there. This indicates that scholars regarded Nishapur—one of the major non-Arab intellectual centers—as a fertile environment for the development and dissemination of Arabic language and literature. Such developments contributed to the advancement of literary culture in Iranian cities under the influence of Arabic literary traditions.

Hibbatullah bin Salama bin Nasr al-Baghdadi was active at the al-Mansur Mosque in Baghdad and was recognized as one of the foremost authorities in tafsir and nahv. "Mu'jamu-l-udaba" mentions the titles of two of his major works. Hibbatullah al-Baghdadi made a substantial contribution to the literary life of his time. He studied under prominent scholars such as Abu Bakr bin Malik al-Qatiy'i, and in turn, his contemporary Abu-I-Hasan Ali bin al-Qasim at-Tabisi was among those who studied under him, illustrating the continuity of scholarly transmission within the literary and philological tradition.

Another prominent group of scholars extensively represented in "Mu'jamu-l-udaba" consists of figures from the intellectual milieu of Qayrawān. Below, the biographies of selected scholars and writers from this city are analyzed from literary and philological perspectives.

Ibrahim bin Usman al-Qarawani was one of the leading jurists of his time and was also regarded as a foremost authority in Arabic language, nahv, and aruz. He authored numerous works on grammar and the Arabic language. Among the most renowned works from which he studied and which he reportedly memorized were كتاب العين، غريب المصنف، إصلاح المنطق، كتاب سيبويه. He is considered to have made a significant contribution to the literary processes of his era. His recognition as a linguist and his inclusion in "Mu'jamu-l-udaba" further substantiate the philological importance of Yaqut al-Hamawi's work.

Ahmad al-Jazzar al-Qarawani was likewise an influential scholar who contributed to both the literary and medical spheres of his time. His biography indicates that he gained renown through medical works such as زاد المسافر، pharmaceutical treatises including الإعتقاد and البغية، as well as a historical work exceeding ten volumes entitled التعريف بصحيح التاريخ. Yaqut explicitly notes his admiration for this

historical composition. The inclusion of such versatile scholars—distinguished in medicine as well as in the social sciences—within "Mu'jamu-l-udaba" contributes to a broader understanding of the intellectual and literary environment of Qayrawān.

Another city whose scholars frequently appear in "Mu'jamu-l-udaba" is al-Andalus. Through an examination of Andalusian scholars, the literary and philological significance of the work becomes further evident.

Ali bin Muhammad al-Andalusi an-Nahvi was a scholar renowned in his city for his learning. His direct connection to the literary and scholarly milieu is reflected in his study of nahv under Abu Bakr bin Tohir. He earned his livelihood as a tailor, dividing his income into two parts and sharing one portion with his teacher. His works كتاب شرح سيبويه and the single-volume كتاب شرح الجمل are mentioned in his biographical entry in "Mu'jamu-l-udaba", underscoring his contribution to linguistic scholarship and further demonstrating the philological scope of Yaqut's compilation. The linguistic works of scholars such as Ali al-Andalusi and their contributions to the development of linguistic studies indicate that "Mu'jamu-l-udaba" encompasses philological sciences and the authors who advanced them, thereby underscoring the work's philological significance.

Yahya bin Ahmad al-Andalusi was a man of letters and a poet, as well as a scholar of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, medicine, and therapeutics. Information about such polymath scholars—who were active in multiple disciplines and served the advancement of knowledge within the Andalusian intellectual and literary milieu—can be derived from "Mu'jamu-l-udaba". The work also includes two poetic excerpts by the scholar, consisting of three and two verses respectively. Notably, many scholars like Yahya al-Andalusi, who were engaged in fields such as geometry, medicine, astronomy, or disciplines other than language and literature, nevertheless possessed talent in poetry and literary expression. Yaqut al-Hamawi preserved examples of their poetic compositions in "Mu'jamu-l-udaba". This, in turn, demonstrates the high regard in which Yaqut held language and literature, consistently foregrounding them within his biographical compendium.

Scholars and literati from Isfahan likewise occupy a significant place in "Mu'jamu-l-udaba". Based on their biographies, the literary and philological importance of the work becomes even more apparent.

Yaqut introduces Hamza bin al-Hasan al-Isfahani Abu Abdullah by describing him as "renowned for his virtue, possessing a strong memory, and the author of excellent compilations," yet subsequently characterizes him as "weak-minded and lacking steadiness". Such contrasting evaluations are rare within the work. From this, it may be inferred that despite his substantial scholarly output, the scholar may have exhibited signs of psychological fragility. Another distinctive feature noted is that Hamza al-Isfahani was regarded as "the most eminent scholar of his time in the Persian language". Whereas many other scholars are praised for their mastery of Arabic, his distinction is specifically linked to Persian. In his biography, Yaqut lists fourteen of his works devoted to poetry, religious studies, and historical subjects. His unique status is thus defined by his creative production in Persian and his recognized position in the field of poetry.

Mumawiya Abu Rabiya al-Isfahani was a scholar of nahv who authored numerous works in this field. His most renowned work is الجماهير. Although limited biographical information is provided about him, the text notes that he relocated to the city of Karkh in his youth. In addition, Yaqut preserves samples of his poetry—two verses in one instance and three verses in another.

The information concerning the types of works composed by these authors and the regions in which they were active demonstrates the extent to which "Mu'jamu-l-udaba" illuminates the literary processes of its time. A noteworthy aspect is that even when Yaqut possessed only limited information about a particular author, he nevertheless preserved samples of their poetic production. This significantly enhances the literary value and scope of "Mu'jamu-l-udaba".

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