THE ĤAMĂSA OF ABŬ TAMMĂM

Part II

V. THE ANTHOLOGY OF AL-ĤAMĂSA

a. Origin and Transmission

The name ‘al-ĥamăsa’, which means ‘bravery’, is the title of the first of the eleven chapters of the anthology, although, as time passed, it came to be applied as the title of the entire work. The Ĥamăsa is a collection of single verses and extracts from poems (muqatt’a‘ät).

None of Abū Tammām’s contemporaries mention the anthology. It may therefore be assumed that the Ĥamăsa was one of his last works and that he died shortly after he had completed it, so that it may almost be accounted a posthumous work, as is confirmed by al-Mas’ūdi. The reason for this, according to at-Tibrizi, is that the book remained in the library of the Salama family, who kept it for themselves and showed it to scarcely anyone else. Abū al-Wafā’ b. Salama was a bibliophile of Hamadan at whose house Abū Tammām stayed while he was travelling from Ḥurāsān to al-‘Irāq. There he was surprised by ‘a heavy fall of snow that blocked the roads and prevented the traveller from continuing on his way. The circumstance distressed Abū Tammām, but gave much pleasure to al-Wafā’. The latter said to the poet: “Do stay quietly here, for it will be some time before the snow clears”, and he led him into his library. Here Abū Tammām read, studied, and wrote five books about poetry, amongst them being the K. al-Ĥamăsa and the Waḥšiy-yāt.”

This statement by at-Tibrizi may be partially true. A library was necessary for the preparatory work on a collection of poems. However, it is quite impossible that Abū Tammām could have written the major part of these works during his sojourn at Hamadan. The actual date of the compilation of the Ĥamăsa had been unknown long before the time when at-Tibrizi wrote: otherwise it would certainly have been mentioned by al-Marzūqi.

1 Murūğ, p. 166.
2 Tibr/Bulaq, p. 4.
3 Ibid.
As to the transmission of the Ḥamāsa, certain precise data are known. In the Samāʾ, an Istanbul manuscript, the names are given of those scholars who transmitted the text of Abū Tammām’s Ḥamāsa up to the time of al-Gawālīqi:

Abū Tammām
al-Altāḳī 1
Abū Riyāsh 2
al-Šamārī 3
al-Ḥaiṣī 4
al-Wāṣīṭī 5

Al-Gawālīqi was a pupil of at-Tibrizī and was later his successor at the Nizāmiyya Academy in Bagdad. The manuscript referred to above comes from a course al-Gawālīqi held at that Academy in the year 521/1127. The transmission chain above shows that the philologists, in dealing with the transmission of the text, from time to time chose to consult several sources.

Regarding a manuscript of the Ḥamāsa, something can be learnt from the Muḥtaṣar, an extract from the Ḍamharat an-Nasab, that is to say Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb’s review of the K. an-Nasab al-Kabīr by Ḥiṣām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī in the transmission of Abū Saʿīd as-Sukkārī. This contains a mention of a manuscript of the Ḥamāsa produced by a scribe named al-Arzānī. He must have been a

---

1 This chain of names, according to which Abū Tammām himself passed on the Ḥamāsa to al-Antāḳī (qāla Abū al-Muṣṭafīf al-Antāḳī anṭadānī Abū Tammām Kitāb al-Ḥamāsa kullabū), certainly contradicts the words of al-Masʿūdī to the effect that the Ḥamāsa was not published until after Abū Tammām’s death; cf. p. 142, note 1.
2 Died 339/950. Yāqūt II, 123.
3 Died 385/995. GAL S 1, 175.
7 371-450/981-1058. Nuzhat, p. 244.
8 421-502/1030-1109. GAL I, 279.
9 466-539/1073-1144. GAL I, 280.
10 Fihrist, p. 146.
11 MS completed 665/1266 according to the pattern of the Muḥtaṣar of 648/1250. Istanbul, Ragīp Pasa, 999.
12 p. 262.