

Finding the musical network in *al-Wāfi bil-Wafayāt*

Rosy Beyhom

(Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow, Orient-Institut Beirut)

My post-doctoral project consists in its first degree phase of identifying entries (people, treatises, concepts, practice, theory, etc.) related to the music world in all the Arabic literature spanning from the 10th to the 13th century, this time being considered a void by scholars in musicology. However, I believe that research was never undertaken to fill this gap and the post-colonial musicology was never challenged by researchers in the Arab world. I intend to find the people and the knowledge they carry which relates to the musical practices. I am starting with al-Şafadī's most famous work, *al-Wāfi bil-Wafayāt*, the biggest biographical collection that happens to be written in the 13th century by this wealthy Mamluk scholar. His distinguished position in society allowed him access to data other collectors could not reach and his biographical collection is the widest for his century. Al-Şafadī relies on other books that he introduces in his introduction; he also performs field work to complete many of his entries. I find that the selection of data to constitute a biography is very important, although it is not yet entirely clear to me at this stage how Ibn 'Aybak al-Şafadī has proceeded to write his entries when related to music, how does he chose what to keep and what to disregard and how do these factors influence our contemporary scrolling of the data, especially when it comes to material pertaining to music?

One of the most interesting characteristics of *al-Wāfi bil-Wafayāt* is that al-Şafadī links people throughout his text; he would mention for example that a person's father or teacher has a biographical entry, but he also provides the social, cultural and political context very often. By embedding people, it becomes easy to follow teachers and their pupils, to determine lineages of intellectual families but mostly to see the cultural and educational network that existed until the 13th century. The space al-Şafadī describes is a moving one: a person wishing to learn was supposed to travel to a designated city to learn a precise science. All this movement in space and time can be tracked in *al-Wāfi bil-Wafayāt* for the main sciences of Islam but in a less degree for music, nonetheless, even marginal individuals have their impact on the chain of musical knowledge transfer. When al-Şafadī goes into the detail of a person's life, this is when it becomes exciting and thrilling and the chances of reading information related to the music life or entertainment via music increase. On another level, it is known that music was not always favoured by rulers; hence many times it was considered illegal and was even forbidden. Was al-Şafadī a true reporter of the musical events, people and the entertainment, did he hide some facts to clean a person's slate in history regarding music, a part of *al-malāhī* (frivolous distractions), out of his respect for the person's status in society or among scholars? I expect that several readings of this biographical collection in addition to a later comparison with another biographical collection by al-Şafadī dedicated only to his contemporaries, *'A'yān al-'asr wa 'a'wān al-naşr*, will surely shed some more light on the above mentioned questions.

Short Biography: Rosy Beyhom holds a PhD in musicology from the WWU Münster - Germany. She is an active member of the CERMAA research center (<http://foredofico.org/CERMAA/cermaa-membres>), an international musicology hub based in Lebanon that promotes awareness via non-biased approaches to the analysis of music. She is a permanent co-editor of the NEMO-Online (<http://nemo-online.org/academic-board>) peer-reviewed journal. She earned a post-doctoral fellowship at the OIB (Oct 2021-March 2022) that allowed her to better establish the dimensions of her project. She is currently completing the study of *al-Wāfi bil-Wafayāt* by Ibn 'Aybak al-Şafadī as an introductory phase to her project.