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Contesting the Greek Past in Ninth-Century Baghdad

A dissertation presented

by

Coleman Connelly

to

The Department of the Classics

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

Classical Philology

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

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Contesting the Greek Past in Ninth-Century Baghdad

Abstract

From the eighth century through the tenth, the ʻAbbāsid capital of Baghdad witnessed the translation, in unprecedented numbers, of Greek philosophical, medical, and other scientific texts into Arabic, often via a Syriac intermediary. Muslim and sometimes Christian patrons from all sectors of ʻAbbāsid high society paid princely sums to small groups of Graeco-Arabic translators, most of whom were Syriac-speaking Christians. In this diverse ʻAbbāsid milieu, who could claim to own the Greek past? Who could claim to access it legitimately? Who were the Greeks for ʻAbbāsid intellectuals and how did the monumental effort to translate them make or fail to make the Greek past a part of the ʻAbbāsid present?

This dissertation is divided into three chapters, each investigating a distinct ninth-century approach to accessing the Greek past. Chapter 1 investigates ninth-century narratives attempting to explain how the Greek sciences came to flourish in ʻAbbāsid Mesopotamia. Against this backdrop, I shed new light on the polymath and patron of translation al-Kindī and his attempts to claim direct access to the Greeks via both an abstract teleology inspired by Aristotle and a concrete genealogy that connected his ancestral tribe of Kinda to the Greeks. In Chapter 2, I analyze other Muslim intellectuals, such as the litterateur al-Jāḥiẓ, who radically doubt the ability of Graeco-Arabic translators—the majority of whom, once again, were Christians—to provide such access to the Greek past. I argue that previous commentators on these critiques have missed their subtext, namely the Islamic concept of *taḥrīf* whereby Christians are held to have corrupted

the Bible in order to transmit a distorted version of the prophetic past that contradicts God's ultimate revelation, the Qur'ān. Finally, in Chapter 3, I investigate the attitudes toward translation and the Greek past of the Ḥunayn circle of Graeco-Arabic translators, who do in fact alter Greek cultural elements in the texts they translate, presenting an idealized version of the Greek past which both Christians and Muslims can claim.

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For his intellectual and moral support, I am deeply grateful to my friend Julian Yolles—*omnibus e meis amicis antistans mihi milibus trecentis*. Finally, let me conclude by thanking my parents, James and Kathleen, for encouraging and sustaining in me a love of learning throughout my life. I dedicate this dissertation to them both.

Introduction

From the eighth century through the tenth, Baghdad was an extraordinary place to be. The capital of the ʻAbbāsid caliphate witnessed the translation, in unprecedented numbers, of Greek philosophical, medical, and other scientific texts into Arabic, often via a Syriac intermediary. Aristotle, Euclid, Ptolemy, Galen and many other Greek authors—some of them already dead for more than a thousand years—became readily available to intellectuals across the Muslim world. Muslim and sometimes Christian patrons from all sectors of ʻAbbāsid high society paid princely sums to small groups of Graeco-Arabic translators, most of whom were Syriac-speaking Christians.[1] For obvious reasons, this Graeco-Arabic translation movement has attracted scholars interested in philosophy and the history of science. This dissertation, however, approaches Graeco-Arabic translation from a different angle and attempts to answer the following questions. Who in ʻAbbāsid society, particularly in ninth-century ʻAbbāsid society, owned the Greek past? Who could claim to access it legitimately? Who were the Greeks for ʻAbbāsid intellectuals and how did the monumental effort to translate them make or not make the Greek past a part of the ʻAbbāsid present?

This project began simply as an investigation of how Syriac-speaking Christian translators handle elements of classical Greek culture embedded in these scientific texts—that is, references to the ancient gods, lines quoted from Greek poetry, or descriptions of Graeco-Roman political institutions. I noticed that elements were often changed in passing from Greek through

[1] The now classic social and intellectual history of the translation movement is D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (New York, 1998). A corrective to Gutas's lack of emphasis on the agency of Christian Graeco-Arabic translators can be found in J. Tannous, "Syria Between Byzantium and Islam: Making Incommensurables Speak" (Princeton University, unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 2010). I am grateful to the author for providing me with a copy.

Syriac to Arabic. How, I wondered, might the translators be adapting or altering these Christian translators be adapting glimpses of the Greek past when transmitting them to their Muslim patrons and readers?

This fascinating question has received some, but not enough attention in the scholarship. In fact, even among students of Graeco-Arabic translation, its most famous treatment is probably to be found not in scholarship, but in fiction. Many readers will be familiar the short story "Averroes' Search" by the twentieth-century Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. In this piece, Borges depicts the twelfth-century Arabic philosopher Averroes' doomed attempt to understand the terms "tragedy" and "comedy" which he reads in the Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*. After a day and night spend in frustration, the philosopher finally decides that "tragedy" must refer to poetry of praise, while "comedy" must refer to poetry of blame, both recognized genres of traditional Arabic poetry. In Borges' vision, a man "closed with the orb of Islam" and therefore lacking a tradition of theater and drama could never understand the Classical Greek concepts of tragedy and comedy.[2] As a work of fiction Borges' story is effective, but it makes some fundamental—and troubling—historical mistakes.

To begin with, Averroes himself was not the first to gloss comedy and tragedy as praise-poetry and blame-poetry. Rather, this was the innovation of the East Syrian Christian translator and logician 'Abū Bišr who translated the *Poetics* from Syriac into Arabic in the tenth-century. Averroes simply found these glosses in 'Abū Bišr's Arabic translation, which he consulted along with the philosopher Avicenna's earlier commentary. The intellectual and cultural interpretive

[2] Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths. Selected Stories and Other Writings.* (London/NewYork, 2000: 147-155 at 155). Borges's story has been subjected to scholarly scrutiny as well by U. Vagelpohl, "The *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* in the Islamic world" in A. Alwishah and J. Hayes (eds.), *Aristotle and the Arabic Tradition* (Cambridge, 2015: 76-91 at 76-77).

work of the Christian translator is thus entirely elided in Borges' story. More troubling, though, is Borges' assertion that the Islamic world, whatever its achievements in the realm of the Greek sciences, is utterly closed to Greek culture and the classical Greek past which must remain forever alien.

Borges's inaccuracy would not concern to us here were it not mirrored in a good deal of Graeco-Arabic scholarship even to this day. Now, by his own explicit admission, Borges draws most of his knowledge about Averroes' Commentary on the *Poetics* from the nineteenth-century Orientalist Ernest Renan—and it shows. According to Renan's 1861 *Averroès et l'averroïsme*, the Semitic mind (*l'esprit sémitique*) was incapable of appreciating the Hellenic sublimities of Homer and the tragedians, even of Plato.[3] Hence Averroes' incomprehension when faced with tragedy and comedy was foreordained. Indeed, the alien Islamic world might be able to parrot Greek science for a time, but it was *a priori* uninterested in other elements of the Greek past, which in any case it could never have comprehended had it tried.

Now Renan's view strikes us today as grotesque, and it is all too easy to criticize a nineteenth-century Orientalist from our current vantage point. Yet I bring up Borges and Renan for a reason. I argue that, when stripped of Renan's overt Orientalism, aspects of this view are still alive and well. Many twentieth- and twenty-first century scholars and intellectuals in North America, the Middle East, and Europe have routinely presented the Graeco-Arabic translation movement under the 'Abbāsids as the first international transfer of purely scientific knowledge

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[3] See especially E. Renan, *Averroès et l'averroïsme: essai historique* (Paris, 1861: 48) where speaks of the incomprehension of "the Semitic race" (*la race sémitique*"). He would further develop this conception of "the Semitic mind" (*l'esprit sémitique*), so formulated, in a lecture before the Collège de France the following year: see E. Renan, *De la part des peuples sémitiques dans l'Histoire de la civilisation* (Paris, 1862).

from one society to another with no regard for the culture or history of the source society.[4] This dissertation aims to prove that this view is mistaken. While it is undeniable that scientific texts formed the bulk of the translated corpus, I argue that the Greek past and claims about the nature of the Greeks and their culture had an important part to play for both the Christian translators and the Muslim users of their translations. These Christians translators and Muslim readers, I argue, do display a knowledge of, and attach a cachet to, the classical past and its culture, in ways both similar to and quite different from the value we place on that past today. By analyzing a reception of the classical past parallel to, but distinct from, our own twenty-first-century reception, we can in turn ask how we view our ownership of and ability to access the classical Graeco-Roman past, what value we place in that past, and why we value it.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters, each investigating a distinct ninth-century approach to accessing the Greek past. Chapter 1 investigates ninth-century narratives attempting to explain how the Greek sciences came to flourish in ʻAbbāsid Mesopotamia. Against this backdrop, I shed new light on the polymath and patron of translation al-Kindī and his attempts to claim direct access to the Greeks via both an abstract teleology inspired by Aristotle and a concrete genealogy that connected his ancestral tribe of Kinda to the Greeks. In Chapter 2, I analyze other Muslim intellectuals, such as the litterateur al-Jāḥiẓ, who radically doubt the ability of Graeco-Arabic translators—the majority of whom, again, were East Syrian Christians—to provide such access to the Greek past. I argue that previous commentators on these critiques have missed their subtext, namely the Islamic concept of *taḥrīf* whereby Christians are held to

[4] See for example the views collected in A. Etman, "The Arab Reception of the Classics" in L. Hardwick and C. Stray (eds.), *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Oxford: 2008: 141-152 at 147), and G. Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: 2007). The emphasis on the Graeco-Arabic translation movement as an "international" transfer of knowledge is present in Gutas (1998: 192).

have corrupted the Bible in order to transmit a distorted version of the prophetic past that contradicts God's ultimate revelation, the Qur'ān. Finally, in Chapter 3, I investigate the attitudes toward translation and the Greek past of the Ḥunayn circle of Graeco-Arabic translators, who do in fact alter Greek cultural elements, presenting an idealized version of the Greek past which both Christians and Muslims can claim.

Chapter 1. Accessing the Greek Past: anti-Byzantinism and al-Kindī

Looking back on the era of Graeco-Arabic translation from the vantage point of the late tenth century, the bibliographer Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 995 or 998) attempts to explain in the final section of his *Kitāb al-fihrist* how so many ancient Greek books came to circulate in the lands of the ʻAbbāsid caliphate. Sifting through historical accounts, Ibn al-Nadīm tries to uncover the first occasion when Greek books entered the territories now under Islamic rule. Surprisingly, he turns to the reign of Julian the Apostate, the fourth-century Roman emperor famous for his attempt to restore the worship of old gods during Christianity's ascendancy. Ibn al-Nadīm tells the story of Julian's ill-fated campaign against the Sasanid Persian king Šāpūr II, during which the emperor met an early death. Long before Gore Vidal ever set pen to paper, an anonymous sixth-century Christian composed his own *Julian Romance* in Syriac and this account, which was translated into Arabic and incorporated in later Christian Arabic historiography, probably lies behind the report in the *Fihrist*.[5] Yet while the Syriac *Julian Romance* portrays the emperor as an enemy of Christianity who summoned demons to his aid and was justly punished by God, Ibn al-Nadīm or more likely his source has transformed him into a hero who tried to restore ancient Greek science. According to Ibn al-Nadīm, with the coming of Christianity the Romans prohibited philosophy, burned or locked away all philosophical books, and even outlawed intellectual

[5] On the *Julian Romance* and its Arabic translation and reception see A. Muraviev "The Syriac Julian Romance and its Place in the Literary History", *Khristianskiy Vostok*, 1, 7 (1999: 194-206).

discussion.[6] Julian, however, along with the philosopher Themistius made one last valiant effort to save the ancient sciences from oblivion.[7]

After recounting Julian's defeat at the hands of Šāpūr II, Ibn al-Nadīm explains how with Julian's death the empire reverted to the Christian prohibition on philosophical and scientific books. In doing so, he also reveals why he has been telling this story, for he explains that this was first time that Greek books first came to circulate in what is now the *Dār al-'islām:*

> Now Constantine the Great was one of soldiers in the army. The Romans (*al-rūm*) were quarreling among themselves about whom they should put in charge and so they were too weak to resist him. Šāpūr cared for Constantine and so he put him in charge of the Romans and on his account treated them kindly. He granted them free passage to depart from his lands, but only on the condition that Constantine plant an olive tree in place of each palm that had been cut down in the land of al-Sawād [southern Iraq] and in his own country. Further, the emperor was to send him people from the country of the Romans who would rebuild what Julian had destroyed when transporting equipment from Roman territory. Constantine held up his part of the bargain. Christianity was restored as was the prohibition of philosophical books, which were stored away—a state of affairs that continues to the present day. The Persians translated in ancient times some of books on logic and medicine into the Persian language, and [later] 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Muqaffa' and others translated that material into Arabic.[8]

In Ibn al-Nadīm's account, Constantine the Great has anachronistically replaced the historical emperor Jovian as Julian's successor. Familiar in Arabic sources as the first emperor to promote Christianity, Constantine is thus portrayed as the suppressor of Greek science as well. The

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[6] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, G. Flügel (ed.) (Leipzig, 1871: 241); English trans. in B. Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm* (New York, 1970: 1, 579).

[7] For one explanation of Themistius' ahistorical role as official minister to Julian in this narrative see J. Watt, "Themistius and Julian: their Association in the Syriac and Arabic Tradition" in A. J. Quiroga Puertas (ed.), *The Purpose of Rhetoric in Late Antiquity: From Performance to Exegesis* (Mohr Siebeck, 2013: 161-176).

[8] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* 241-242 (Arabic), 580-581 (English). All translations are my own except where explicitly stated otherwise. Nevertheless, even when providing my own translation, I will provide a reference to a published English or other modern language translation where such exists.

Romans are still master craftsmen and builders—Šāpūr imports Roman craftsmen to rebuild his ravaged kingdom—but Christianity has undone their claim to Greek science.[9] Just as Constantine must plant a Greek olive for every Mesopotamian palm his army has destroyed, so the report suggests does Greek wisdom first come to be planted in fertile soil of southern Iraq, where the ʻAbbāsids would in time found their capital city of Baghdad.

Ibn al-Nadīm's report draws on a centuries-long tradition that claimed the ancient Greeks for the Muslim ʻAbbāsids over and above the Christian Byzantines. This chapter will investigate two strands of this attempt to control the Greek past on the part of ʻAbbāsid thinkers. First, I will examine narratives that portray the Byzantines as illegitimate heirs to the classical Greeks due to their geographical isolation, their alien genealogy, or their Christian religion. Linguistically, this is fairly easy to do in pre-modern Arabic, which applies completely different labels to the Byzantine and classical Greeks. 'Byzantine' is of course a term used by modern historians. Just as the Byzantines called themselves the Romans (*Rhōmaioi*), so too did the Arabs who labelled them *Rūm* and medieval Arabic authors make little historical distinction between the Romans and the Byzantines. By contrast, Classical Arabic calls the pre-Christian Greeks of antiquity the 'Ionians' or *Yūnāniyyūn*. After showing in Section 1.1 how ʻAbbāsid sources variously claim that geography, genealogy, or religion separates the Greeks (*al-yūnāniyyūn*) from the Byzantines (*al-rūm*), I will go on to show in Sections 1.2 and 1.3 how Arabic sources in general and the ninth-

[9] Ibn al-Nadīm seems to be reworking an earlier account, preserved in the historian al-Masʻūdī, in which the victorious Šāpūr captured a group of Byzantine artisans who then preceded to produce silk for him: see al-Masʻūdī, *Murūj al-ḏahab wa-maʻādin al-jawhar* §§300-301 (Pellat). As we shall see, the theme of the Romans or Byzantines as masters of building, silk-weaving and other crafts is an important theme in ʻAbbāsid literature and serves to contrast them with the theoretically minded Greeks.

century philosopher al-Kindī particular deploy these same three criteria to claim the Greeks for ʿAbbāsid society.

Some parts of this story have been told before.[10] Yet previous scholarship has not emphasized just how much the Greek past plays in the historical imagination of those ninth- and tenth-century Muslim intellectuals who try to claim the Greeks for the ʿAbbāsid present. Further, the story has often told as one primarily influenced by caliphal Muʿtazilism and its attempt to cast Christianity as culturally backward religion.[11] While this religious claim is certainly present and may indeed stem from the caliph al-Ma'mūn's Muʿtazilī policies, I hope to show that ʿAbbāsid sources invoke genealogy and geography just as frequently and that these sources are often themselves conflicted about these claims. Despite these contradictions, a diverse array of ʿAbbāsid-era Muslim intellectuals all construct a similar version of the Greek past, according to which an ancient race of philosophers—the *Yūnāniyyūn*—perishes at the hands of the unenlightened *Rūm*. Only under the Islamic patronage of the ʿAbbāsids, these sources suggest, can the rational and scientific tradition begun so long ago by the Greeks flourish once more. ʿAbbāsid society's relationship to the Greek past will be of prime importance when we turn, in later chapters, to the attempts of Christian translators like Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq and his colleagues to transmit their own version of the Greek past.

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[10] I have learned most from the work of A. Miquel *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du 11e siècle,* 4 vols. (Paris, 1975); D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture.* (New York, 1998: 75-104); A. Shboul, "Byzantium and the Arabs: the Image of the Byzantines as Mirrored in Arabic Literature" in L. Conrad (ed.), *Arab-Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times* vol 8 (Aldershot, 2004: 235-260); N. El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs* (Cambridge, MA, 2004); M. Di Branco, *Storie arabe di Greci e di Romani: la Grecia e Roma nella storiografia arabo-islamica medievale* (Pisa, 2009). The outlines of what Gutas (1998: 85) has labeled anti-Byzantine philhellenism have recently been treated by G. Fowden, *Before and After Muḥammad: the First Millennium Refocused* (Princeton, 2014: 146-153).

[11] See especially Gutas (1998: 75-104).

Section 1.1. The Byzantines as Illegitimate Heirs as to the Greeks

From the start, organized Graeco-Arabic translation under the first ʿAbbāsid caliphs was expressly involved with questions of cultural possession and appropriation. Before the Arab conquest, the last Persian dynasty of the Sasanids had fostered the translation of Sanskrit, Syriac and Greek works into Middle Persian and justified this activity along peculiar ideological lines. According to Sasanid propaganda, all human wisdom had been contained in the sacred writings of Zoroaster. After his conquest of the Achaemenid Empire, the story went, Alexander the Great made translations of these books into Greek and other languages, which he then dispersed to the four corners of the earth, burning the originals. In this way the Sasanids were able to present the translation of foreign material as merely the repatriation of native Zoroastrian learning. As Dimitri Gutas has argued, it was the caliph al-Manṣūr's (r. 754-775) conscious adoption of this ideology along with other Sasanid commitments that spurred the Graeco-Arabic translation movement in its earliest stages, though under later caliphs it took on a life of its own.[12] These Sasanian accounts abound in early ʿAbbāsid literature and may have contributed, earlier than has previously been acknowledged, to an anti-Byzantine slant in ʿAbbāsid narratives of scientific transfer. After all, Byzantium had been the prime enemy of the Iranian dynasty as well, and surviving accounts of Alexander's destruction of the books routinely present him as the emperor of the Romans or Byzantines, not of the Greek or *Yūnāniyyūn*.[13]

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[12] The story is presented in surviving Sasanid sources, and its adoption by al-Manṣūr is assured by versions found in eighth-century, ninth- and tenth-century sources. See D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (New York, 1998: 40-52), with references, together with D. Gutas, "The Presence of Antiquity in the Sasanian and Early ʿAbbāsid Empires", in D. Kuhn and H. Stahl (eds.), *Die Gegenwart des Altertums. Former und Functionen des Altertumsbezugs in den Hochkulturen der Alten Welt* (Heidelberg, 2001: 347-352). For a fuller account see now K. van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science* (Oxford, 2009: 30-39 and 58-62).

[13] See K. van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science* (Oxford, 2009: 30-39).

Indeed, I argue that self-conscious competition with the Christian Byzantine Empire over the Greek legacy was present from the start of the ʻAbbāsid translation movement in the eighth century. Our earliest piece of evidence employs the very same metaphor of agricultural fecundity that Ibn al-Nadīm uses and suggests that the Byzantines are almost geographically predetermined to fail as patrons of the sciences. The late ninth-/early-tenth-century geographer Ibn al-Faqīh preserves a report from ʻUmāra ibn Ḥamza, an ambassador sent by al-Manṣūr to the court of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine V (r. 741-775).[14] ʻUmāra's report is strange and wondrous, and may have grown in the telling, but there is no reason to suspect that the fragment is not a genuinely eighth-century document, even if Ibn al-Faqīh or his epitomizer may have have shortened it.[15] Historians have concentrated on the episode's dramatic climax, in which ʻUmāra learns of the elixir from Constantine V and brings this alchemical knowledge back to his sovereign. Yet when considered in full, ʻUmāra's report is clearly intended to allege the

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[14] Ibn al-Faqīh, *Muḫtaṣar kitāb al-buldān,* M.J. de Goeje (ed.), (Leiden, 1885: 137-139); French translation in H. Masse, *Abrégé du livre des pays* (Damascus, 1973: 164-166). For a more accurate German translation of the episode in question see G. Strohmaier, "Al-Manṣūr und die frühe Rezeption der griechischen Alchemie. Ein Beitrag zur Rolle nichtliterarischer Kommunikation," *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der* Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften 5 (1989: 167-177 at 167-171), reprinted in his *Von Demokrit bis Dante: Die Bewahrung antigen Erbes in der arabischen Kultur* (Hildesheim, 1996: 365-375).

[15] So argues G. Strohmaier (1989: 171), observing that the 11th-century polymath al-Bīrūnī provides an apparent quotation from the report not present in Ibn al-Faqīh. I note, however, that the al-Bīrūnī citation is in fact a variation on elements of the Ibn al-Faqīh narrative. This suggests, rather, that al-Bīrūnī or his source has modified or misremembered the account (most plausible), that Ibn al-Faqīh or his epitomizer has done so (less plausible, since the account, which presents a seamless narrative, is far longer in Ibn al-Faqīh and he if not perhaps his epitomizer is closer in time to ʻUmāra), or that both have modified or misremembered it (least plausible). See also: G. Strohmaier "ʻUmāra ibn Ḥamza, Constantine V, and the invention of the elixir", *Graeco-Arabica* 4 (Athens, 1991: 21-24), reprinted in his *Hellas im Islam* (Wiesbaden, 2003: 147-148). In these two articles, Strohmaier also establishes on chronological grounds that the emperor in question must be Constantine V, even though Ibn al-Faqīh does not name him. Gutas (1998: 115-116) also assumes the basic historicity of episode and text, though he does not discuss its anti-Byzantine import.

benighted state of the ancient sciences in Byzantium while suggesting that Islam is primed to receive that legacy.[16]

Upon entering the imperial palace and after an elaborate set of encounters with Byzantine officials, ʿUmāra is ushered into a corridor leading to the emperor's audience chamber. As he advances, a series of mechanical and alchemical marvels confronts him—dancing swords, clockwork lions, and blinding clouds of multi-colored smoke.[17] At last he reaches Constantine V, who in fact turns out to be quite amiable. Later during his stay in Constantinople, the emperor invites ʿUmāra out for a ride in the countryside where he takes the ambassador on what is meant to be an impressive tour:

> We reached at last a walled enclosure with a gate and guards. We entered, and lo and behold there were several tamarisk trunks. He [the emperor] said, "Do you know this tree?" and I replied, "No", for I thought he had some trick in mind. He continued, "Smoke from this tree is good for treating ulcers (*al-ḫurāj*) and it is wholesome for the digestion." I said to myself, "If only he knew that in our lands this is merely firewood for the lowliest among us!" Next he proceeded to another walled enclosure with a gate and guards, and entered it. I entered with him, and lo and behold there was a *qafīz* of land in which was planted a caper bush. He said, "Do you know this one?" "No," I answered, for I had the same thought as before. He continued, "It is a plant, and serves as a stomachic (*jawārišn*). It is good for those suffering from burns (*al-ḥarq*)[18] and is used in treating

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[16] The report's anti-Byzantine stance and its relevance to Ibn al-Faqīh's own milieu is briefly discussed in A. Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du 11e siècle,* (Paris, 1975: 2, 467).

[17] The use of such machinery to impress foreign ambassadors at the Byzantine court is corroborated by the later account of Liutprand of Cremona: see Strohmaier (1989: 369) and (1991: 21) who cites G. von Grunebaum *Der Islam im Mittelalter* (Zurich, 1963: 453) and J. Dummer, "Die Schriften Liudprands von Cremona als Quelle für die byzantinische Kulturgeschichte," in J. Dummer (ed.) *Byzanz in der europäischen Staatenwelt* (Berlin, 1983: 40-46).

[18] I follow Strohmaier's (1989: 169) emendation of de Goeje's *al-ḫurq* ('unsoundness of intellect'). The use of caper in a plaster for treating burns makes better pharmacological sense: Strohmaier cites Galen, *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus* 7.7. Masse's (1973: 165) translation of the whole phrase ("*qui est est devenu atrabilaire"*) is presumably a rather liberal attempt to make sense of de Goeje's text.

> wounds." I said to myself, "If only this man knew that in our parts it is found only in the most ruined and desert places and is accessible to anyone who wants it."[19]

At this point, ʿUmāra begins to doubt the Byzantine emperor's scientific know-how, and boldly asks him about the wonders he faced on his first day. It was all a ploy (*ḥīla*), the emperor confesses. Thus Byzantine science is revealed to be, quite literally, smoke and mirrors. What the emperor takes to be precious medicines are at best well-known folk cures among the inhabitants of Mesopotamia and at worst merely kindling for paupers. The Byzantines are not simply backward, but rather their very geography seems to condemn them to ignorance. Constantine V must jealously guard the meager specimens his soil produces, while any Mesopotamian can stroll outside his city and pluck the same plants in abundance. ʿUmāra's report is significant because is reveals how, at the dawn of the ʿAbbāsid translation movement, a court official sought to portray the caliph's realm as scientifically fecund and almost climatically predetermined to reap the harvest so poorly tended by Byzantium.

ʿUmāra invokes geography, but by the ninth-century our sources begin to invoke two more reasons for the Byzantines' benightedness, their Christian religion and their lack of a genealogical relationship with the ancient Greeks. Dimitri Gutas has argued that these ninth-century attacks on the Byzantines stem from an official ideology promulgated the caliph al-Ma'mūn (r. 813-833) to support his rationalist, Muʿtazilī sympathies. Given his traditionalist

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[19] Ibn al-Faqīh, *Muḫtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 138 (Arabic) and 165 (French). Another brief, alleged quotation from ʿUmāra's report in al-Bīrūnī presents the conversation about the caper bush as happening over dinner, has ʿUmāra telling Constantine V to his face that the caper is common in his country, and attributes a snappy retort to the emperor. I argue above that, if these versions are to be understood as mutually exclusive, then Ibn al-Faqīh's is the more likely to be accurate. Regardless, the implicit criticism of Byzantine science and *materia medica* is present in both versions of ʿUmāra's report, and hence must be traceable to the eight-century. For the text of the alleged quotation in al-Bīrūnī see al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-saydana fī l-ṭibb*, in H.M. Said (ed.), *Al-Birūnī's Book on Pharmacy and* Materia Medica (1973: 47), German trans. in G. Strohmaier, *Al-Bīrūnī, In Den Gärten der Wissenschaft* (Leipzig, 1988 [1991]: 235).

Muslim opponents at home and his Byzantine Christian opponents abroad, al-Ma'mūn instituted what Gutas argues was a policy of 'anti-Byzantinism as philhellenism.'[20] As an adherent to and promoter of the staunchly rationalist Mu'tazilī school of Islamic theology, al-Ma'mūn could claim the tradition of Greek philosophy and science for Islam and the Arabs. Under this program the Christian Byzantines, with whom al-Ma'mūn was engaged in constant warfare, could be cast as backward and irrational, illegitimate claimants to the legacy of the enlightened Greeks whose real heir was Islam.[21]

Gutas's reconstruction is quite appealing, though it as we shall see it does not account for the persistence of genealogical and geographical claims in the later discourse surrounding the Byzantines' illegitimacy. If we accept Gutas' reading, then throughout the ninth- and tenth-centuries, under both the Mu'tazilī and non-Mu'tazilī successors to al-Ma'mūn, the caliph's ideology took on a life of its own and became widely accepted as historical fact in 'Abbāsid society. The ninth-century littérateur and caliphal propagandist 'Abū ʿUthmān ʿAmr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868), a contemporary of Ḥunayn's, is vocal supporter of the view.[22] Like 'Umāra's report, a fragment from al-Jāḥiẓ's lost *Kitāb al-'Aḫbār* (*Book of Reports*) expresses amazement at the subtlety of Byzantine craftsmanship and artistry, yet wonders how so accomplished a race could have sunk so low as to accept the patently irrational doctrines of the incarnation and the

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[20] Gutas (1998: 85)

[21] Gutas (1998: 83-95). On the domestic component of this ideology, which targeted the traditionalists (*'ahl al-hadīṯ*), see Gutas (1998: 95-104).

[22] On al-Jāḥiẓ's fraught and complex connection to caliphal patronage, see J. Finkel, "A Risāla of al-Jāḥiẓ" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 47 (1927: 311-334).

trinity.[23] His ascription of a belief in "three gods" to the Byzantines is particularly noteworthy and supports Gutas' reading, since *al-tawḥīd* (the emphatic doctrine of God's oneness) was central to Mu'talizite rationalism. According to Gutas, al-Jāḥiẓ is warning his fellow Muslims that if they stray from the path of rationalism, they too may become as sorry as the Byzantines, who abandoned Greek wisdom for the madness of Christianity.[24]

The ninth-century littérateur's attitude becomes more clear in passage from his *Radd 'alā l-naṣārā* (*Reply to the Christians*). Here he expresses what will become the classic 'Abbāsid formulation of discontinuity between classical Greek and Byzantine identity:

> If the common people knew that the Christians and the Byzantines (*al-rūm*) possess neither wisdom (*ḥikma*) nor clarity nor deep reflection, but merely the handicrafts of turnery, carpentry, painting, and silk-weaving, why then they would oust them from the ranks of the literate (*al-'udabā'*) and strike them from the rolls of the philosophers and sages (*al-falāsifa wa-l-ḥukamā'*). For the *Organon*, the *On Generation and Corruption,* the *Meteorology*, and so forth are by Aristotle, and he is neither Byzantine (*rūmī*) nor Christian. The *Almagest* is by Ptolemy and he is neither Byzantine nor Christian. The *Elements* is by Euclid, and he is neither Byzantine nor Christian. The *On Medicine* [sic] is by Galen, and he was neither Byzantine nor Christian, and likewise with the books of Democritus, Hippocrates, Plato and all the rest. These people are from a nation that has perished, though the traces (*'āṯār)* of their intellects remain: they are the Greeks (*al-yūnāniyyūn*). Their religion (*dīnuhum*) is not the others' [the Christians'] religion; their literature is not the others' literature. The former are scholars (*'ulamā'*), while the latter are craftsmen, who have taken the those peoples' [the Greeks'] books because of their close proximity and their homeland's vicinity. … They allege that the Greeks (*al-yūnāniyyīn*) are one of the tribes of the Byzantines (*al-rūm*)…[25]

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[23] The fragment is quoted in Našwān al-Ḥimyarī, *Šarḥ risālat al-ḥūr al-'īn*, K. Muṣtafā (ed.) (Cairo, 1948: 227-228); English trans. in Franz Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam* (London and New York, 1975: 44-45).

[24] Gutas (1998: 86)

[25] al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd 'alā al-naṣārā* in M. 'A. al-Šarqāwī (ed.) *al-Muḫtār fī l-radd 'alā l-naṣārā ma'a dirāsa taḥqīqiyya taqwīmiyya (*Cairo, 1984): 62.

Al-Jāḥiẓ goes on to claim that the Byzantines and Christians more generally have doctored the books of the classical Greeks to make them appear more Christian, and we will turn to that charge in Chapter 2. For now, it is enough to observe how al-Jāḥiẓ emphasizes that the Greeks are vanished race with no relation to the Byzantines. Elsewhere in his oeuvre as well, al-Jāḥiẓ takes for granted when discussing genealogies that the tribe of Yūnān (the Greeks) should be counted among the perished nations (*al-'umam al-bā'ida*), lost to time just like the tribes of Canaan and Thamūd.[26] Here the satirist distinguishes between the glorious Greek scientists of old whose works are being translated under the aegis of the 'Abbāsid intelligentsia and the contemporary Byzantines who are merely clever craftsmen.

As we have already glimpsed in 'Umāra's report and elsewhere in al-Jāḥiẓ, the notion of Byzantines as superb craftsmen and manufacturers is an old one in Arabic literature.[27] Indeed, pre-Islamic poets express wonder at Antiochene textiles or compare a strong camel's back to a sturdy Roman bridge.[28] Others liken beautiful faces and enticing desert rain puddles to sparkling coins struck in Caesar's realm, and the golden *dīnār* of the emperor Heraclius in particular lives on as a traditional image of comeliness well into the Islamic period—a tradition of which al-Jāḥiẓ himself makes explicit mention in his *Kitāb al-tarbī' wa-l-tadwīr* (*The Square and the*

[26] al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, Cairo (1895), 1,78

[27] See especially the thorough discussion in El Cheikh (2004: 54-60).

[28] Imru' al-Qays, *Dīwān* 43, M. A. 'Ibrahīm (ed.) (Cairo, 1969) and al-'A'ša, *Dīwān* 11 (Beirut, 1966): see also Shboul (2004: 45-46) with references.

Circle).[29] In the *Reply*, however, the satirist subverts and redeploys this trope. In terms more direct even than ʿUmāra's, al-Jāḥiẓ declares that the Byzantines' wondrous artisanship is merely practical handicraft without deeper, theoretical knowledge. It is not the true science achieved by the Greeks. The Byzantines may live near—though not originally in—the lands formerly occupied by the Greeks, but they are not their true descendants and have no legitimate claim to the Greeks' scientific tradition or to their books. Crucially, the principal point of distinction between the *Rūm* from the *Yūnāniyyūn* is their respective religions. The great Greek scientists of old were not and could not have been Christian. Still, al-Jāḥiẓ does not exclude arguments based on the disparate genealogical and geographical origins of the Byzantines and the Greeks.

This passage from al-Jāḥiẓ's *Reply* has received much attention in recent scholarship.[30] His attempt to rescue the great Greek authors of antiquity from the charge of having been Byzantine or Roman (*Rūm*) is not, however, an isolated instance. As often, our primary sources from the ninth-century are scarce, but to judge from a passage in the tenth-century historian al-Masʿūdī's (d. 956) *Kitāb al-tanbīh wa-l-'išrāf* (*Book of Admonition and Revision*), this sort of rescue attempt seems to have been an antiquarian pursuit of many other ʿAbbāsid intellectuals as well. The resemblance between al-Jāḥiẓ's claims in the *Reply* and al-Masʿūdī's summary of his

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[29] al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tarbīʿ wa-l-tadwīr*, C. Pellat (ed.) (Damascus, 1955), §29. For other pre- and post-Islamic instances, see Shboul (2004: 46) with references.

[30] In addition to Gutas (1998: 86-88), see N. El Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs* (Cambridge, MA: 2004: 103-104)—whose quotation, however, inexplicably rearranges the order of al-Jāḥiẓ's sentences—and Marco di Branco, *Storie arabe di Greci e di Romani: la Grecia e Roma nella storiografia arabo-islamica medievale* (Pisa, 2009: 51-52). In Chapter 2, I will turn to the reading of the passage presented several decades earlier by G. Strohmaier, "Die griechischen Götter in einer christlich-arabischen Übersetzung. Zum Traumbuch des Artemidor in der Version des Ḥunain ibn Isḥāḳ" in F. Altheim and R. Stiehl (eds.), *Die Araber in der Alten Welt*, Bd. 5, 1. Teil (Berlin, 1968): 127-162 at 155-156, reprinted in his *Von Demokrit bis Dante. Die Bewahrung antiken Erbes in der arabischen Kultur* (Hildesheim: 1996).

own lost *Kitāb funūn al-maʿārif wa-mā jarā fī l-duhūr al-sawālif* (*The Varieties of Knowledge and the Events of Past Ages*) has gone hitherto unnoticed. The historian is summarizing a part of his earlier work that had dealt with the history of the Greeks (*al-yūnāniyyūn*):

> [We rehearsed] how they [the Greeks] were defeated by the Romans (*al-rūm*) and were absorbed into their society (*jumlatihim*), such that [the Greeks'] name vanished and there ceased all mention of them, and all of them were renamed Romans (*nusiba l-jamīʿu ʾilā l-rūm*) after their defeat by the Emperor Augustus, who sallied forth from Rome (*rūmiyya*) and marched on Syria and Egypt. People have engaged in controversy regarding philosophers like Pythagoras, Thales, Empedocles, the Stoics (*al-riwāqiyyīn*), the Companions of the Stoa (*ʾaṣḥāb al-'usṭuwān*),[31] Homer,[32] Archelaus,[33] Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Themistius, Hippocrates, Galen, and other philosophers and physicians, disputing whether they were Romans (*rūm*) or Greeks (*yūnāniyyūn*). We cited testimonies from their own books proving that they were Greeks (*yūnāniyyūn*), and also quoted the statements of those who have said they were Romans (*rūm*).[34]

Just like al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Masʿūdī lists a series of impressive names and claims each one of these ancient worthies for the Greeks over and above the Byzantines or Romans (*rūm*). Unlike al-Jāḥiẓ

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[31] Al-Masʿūdī has mistakenly treated two different Arabic terms for the same group, the Stoics, as referring to two different schools.

[32] That Homer should be listed as a philosopher is not surprising. Maxims attributed to Homer circulated in Arabic translation alongside those attributed to more familiar philosophical figures: see D. Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation: a Study of the Graeco-Arabic Gnomologia* (New Haven: 1975: 44-45, 355, 366, 400, and 414).

[33] The shell *ʾrsylāūs* is ambiguous but I follow B. Carra de Vaux, *Maçoudi, Le livre de l'avertissement et de la revision* (Paris, 1896: 162) and S.M. Stern, "Al-Masʿūdī and the Philosopher al-Fārābī", in S. M. Ahmad and A. Rahman (eds.), *Al-Masʿūdī Millenary Commemoration Volume* (Aligargh, 1960: 28-41 at 31) in understanding that the Pre-Socratic philosopher Archelaus is meant. Archelaus' name appears with more clarity immediately after that of his teacher Anaxagoras in al-Sijistānī: see most readily F. Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam* (London/ New York, 1975: 36). This hypothesis is virtually guaranteed by the mention of *ʾrsylāūs* again at *Tanbīh*, 121 (Arabic); 169 (French) where he is identified as Socrates' teacher and Anaxagoras' pupil and his name is mistakenly etymologized as 'chief of the predators', as if from ἄρχ- + λέων ('lion') rather than ἄρχ- + λάος/λέως ('people'), as noted by Stern (1960: 39). If 'Archelaus' is correct, then the list from his name through that of Themistius seems to represent a chronological chain of succession.

[34] Al-Masʿūdī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh wa-l-ʾišrāf,* M.J. de Goeje (ed.) (Leiden, 1894: 115); French trans. in B. Carra de Vaux, *Maçoudi, Le livre de l'avertissement et de la revision* (Paris, 1896: 162). For a somewhat elliptical English translation of this passage, with a discussion of its context, see Stern (1960: 31).

he traces Roman arrogation of the Greek legacy to pre-Christian times, linking it with Augustus' alleged conquest of Syria and Egypt. Crucially, he does not at least here cite the *Rūm*'s Christianity as the feature that distinguishes them from the *Yūnāniyyūn.*

The illegitimacy of the Byzantines' claim to possess the Greeks comes across more forcefully in al-Mas'ūdī's well-known *Murūj al-ḏahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar* (*Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*), completed in 943. Explaining the disparate and uncertain genealogies that previous historians had assigned to the Greeks, our author nevertheless arrives at one point of clarity:

> Those [scholars] are wrong who believe that the Greeks (*al-yūnāniyyīn*) can be traced to the same origin as the Byzantines (*al-rūm*) and are related to the Byzantines' forebear Abraham on the grounds that they share a homeland and dwell in the same regions and territories and that they share the same character and beliefs. That is in fact why those who claim they are related and assign them one common ancestor are incorrect. For those who examine and research the matter, this is the truth and the proper avenue of research: in their language and the authorship of their books, the Byzantines merely follow the Greeks, but never arrive at the essence (*kunh*) of their eloquence (*faṣāḥa*) and linguistic facility. Compared to the Greeks, the Byzantines are diminished in their language and enfeebled in the syntax they use to express themselves and conduct their day-to-day speech (*sanan ḫiṭābihim*).[35]

Just as al-Jāḥiẓ had done, al-Mas'ūdī stresses that the Byzantines might live in the regions once occupied by the Greeks, but nevertheless cannot truly be their genealogical descendants. He cites as evidence the Byzantines' corrupt literature and language, which unlike the earlier historian al-Ya'qūbī he acknowledges to be a form of Greek, but one much diminished and debased from that spoken by the true *Yūnāniyyūn*.[36] The linguistic claim is important, as it suggests that what made

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[35] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-ḏahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar* §664 (Pellat).

[36] For al-Ya'qūbī's claim that, after the Roman conquest of the Greeks, the 'Roman' language replaced Greek see al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rīḫ* in *Ibn Wādih qui dicitur al-Ja 'qūbī, Historiae*, M. Houtsma (ed.), (Leiden, 1969 [1883]: 1,164). See also the discussion in Di Branco (2009: 108).

the Greeks great was not the particular form of their language but its eloquence and nobility of expression. According to the historian, these are qualities are lacking in Byzantine Greek, but might be present in other languages. We are probably meant to think of Arabic, given al-Mas'ūdī's use of *faṣāḥa* ('eloquence'), a term associated in the grammatical tradition with linguistically pure Arabic.

In these two passages, al-Mas'ūdī testifies even more unambiguously than al-Jāḥiẓ does to an ongoing and longstanding debate regarding the ethnic identities of the ancient Greek philosophers and physicians. Crucially, the first passage describes his endeavors in the lost *Varieties of Knowledge* as a contribution to a wider discourse and his lost book was even able to quote at length the opinions of those who disagreed with him. Who championed the Byzantine side? Al-Jāḥiẓ accuses the Byzantines themselves and Christians more generally, while al-Mas'ūdī is silent. Might Christian Graeco-Arabic translators themselves have in some way contributed to the debate? It is telling that al-Mas'ūdī claims to have scoured the books of the ancients themselves for evidence, books which were only available to him through the mediation of the Christian translators. We will turn to other examples of such antiquarianism in Chapter 2, but for now it is enough to observe that between al-Jāḥiẓ in the mid-ninth century and al-Mas'ūdī in the mid-tenth, intellectuals hotly debated ethnic origins of the ancient scientists. To judge from our two surviving witnesses, the pre-Christian *Yūnāniyyūn* and not the Christian *Rūm* were the favored party.[37]

[37] We have evidence for this debate from beyond the tenth-century as well. The eleventh-century authors like Ṣā'id al- 'Andalusī (d. 1070) allude to this earlier debate and al-'Andalusī even chastises as ignorant of history those who try to claim the Greek sages for the Byzantines: see El Cheikh (2004: 105-106) with references.

That al-Mas'ūdī should locate the Byzantines' first attempts to commandeer the Greek legacy in their pre-Christian past—namely Augustus' conquest of Egypt and Syria—is significant. It further attests to a separate tradition that emphasized the genealogical and even the geographical side of al-Jāḥiẓ's critique, at the expense of its claims about religion. Even before the arrival of Christianity, the *Rūm* were never prepared to be good stewards of Greek science. This becomes apparent elsewhere in his *Meadows of Gold*, where the historian records a more detailed account of Augustus' conquest. Here Cleopatra, the last of the Ptolemies, is presented as a philosopher queen and the last representative of an independent Greek scientific tradition:

> After [Ptolemy XIII], his daughter Cleopatra rose to power and reigned for twenty-two years. She was a sage and a practitioner of philosophy (*ḥakīmatan mutafalsifatan*), who kept company with scholars and honored the wise. She herself is held to be the author of works on medicine and magic, and other scientific subjects (*ḥikma*), which have been translated and transmitted under her name and attributed to her. These are well-known among those versed in the craft of medicine. This queen was the last of the Greek rulers. After her, their dominion came to an end and their days of splendor were forgotten. All trace of them (*'āṯāruhum*) was eradicated and their sciences ceased, except for whatever remained in the possession of their sages.[38]

In casting Cleopatra as a philosopher and scientist, al-Mas'ūdī or his source draws on various cosmetic, alchemical, and gynecological pseudepigrapha that had circulated under her name since at least the time of Galen. As the historian himself notes, some of these were translated in Arabic and we find them cited as early as the ninth-century by Qusṭā ibn Lūqā.[39] With the end of Greek political dominance, then, comes the end of Greek science—or nearly the end. Al-Mas'ūdī, who had argued in his *Varieties of Knowledge* that writers like Galen and Themistius

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[38] al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj* §707 (Pellat)

[39] M. Ullmann, "Kleopatra in einer arabischen alchemistischen Disputation", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunden des Morgenlandes* 63/64 (1972: 158-75 at 161). See also the presentation of this passage in Di Branco (2009: 121-124).

were *Yūnāniyyūn* even though they lived under the Romans, is willing to concede that some Greek science persisted after Cleopatra's death.[40]

Al-Masʿūdī goes on to explain how Cleopatra's empire fell to Augustus. In doing so, he suggests that the Roman emperor's desire to annex Greek territory became enmeshed with a desire to annex Greek science as well:

> There is curious report concerning this queen's death and suicide. She had a husband called Antony, who shared in her rule over Macedonia, a country in Egypt comprising Alexandria and other cities. Now Augustus, the second of the Roman emperors (*mulūk rūmiyya*), attacked them— he was the first to be called Caesar and all the other Caesars were so-called after him. … He waged a war in Syria (*al-šām)* and Egypt with Queen Cleopatra and her husband Antony. Eventually, he killed Antony and Cleopatra was left without any means of defending her Egyptian dominion against the Roman emperor (*malik al-rūm*). Augustus resolved that he should employ some trick (*ḥīla*) in order to capture her, knowing full well the extent of her scientific prowess (*ḥikma*). He hoped to learn from her, since she was the last remnant of the Greek sages (*al-ḥukamā' al-yūnāniyyīn*). Only after that would he torture and kill her.[41]

In what follows, al-Masʿūdī explains how Cleopatra, suspecting Augustus' plot, procures the famous asp, prepares a bower of aromatic plants near her throne, and dies by the creature's venom. Here things begin to deviate from the familiar story. The asp, taking the bower of plants to be its natural habitat, hides amid their leaves. Augustus, meanwhile, enters the palace and approaches the dead queen's exotic plants in wonderment. As the emperor inspects each flower one by one savoring its perfume, the asp hurtles out from amid the foliage and bites him. Augustus dies, and the full scope of Cleopatra's intelligence is revealed. Thanks to her zoological study, she had known that the asp would head straight for the plants after biting her and would

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[40] Al-Mas'ūdī was well aware that Galen lived during the high Roman empire and at *Murūj* §728 (Pellat) dates his death to reign of Heliogabalus.

[41] al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj* §707-708 (Pellat)

thus be lying in wait for her enemy when he entered the throne room.[42] Al-Mas'ūdī's story, then, describes Augustus' botched attempt to transfer Greek knowledge to the *Rūm*. Though he seeks to gain the science of the Greeks through a stratagem (*ḥīla*), Augustus' cunning is no match for the deeper scientific wisdom (*ḥikma*) of Cleopatra, the last representative of the living Greek tradition. The account bears some resemblance to 'Umāra ibn Ḥamza's report of his visit to the Byzantine court. Just like Constantine V, Augustus is only capable of trickery and stratagem (*ḥila*), not true science. In both accounts, the Roman emperor's ignorance of plant lore reveals his people's deeper scientific inadequacies. Al-Mas'ūdī's report of Cleopatra's death, however, looks backward at the Byzantine past rather than forward to the 'Abbāsid present. The Byzantines' primordial failure to appropriate Greek science reveals just how unfit they are to be its heirs today.

The Byzantines are thus not merely unrelated to the Greeks by genealogy. They prove themselves to be unworthy of that noble race at the very outset of their empire when Augustus is suckered in by geographically unfamiliar plants. While the Greek sciences do continue under Roman rule, it takes only a third element—Christianity—to send them into total eclipse, as al-Mas'ūdī makes clear in the section of his *Meadows of Gold* that treats Constantine the Great:

> Science (*al-ḥikma*) continued to develop and increase during the era of the Greeks (*al-yūnāniyyīn*) and for a time too under the dominion of the Romans (*al-rūm*). Scholars were honored and sages were respected, and they formulated opinions on physics, the body, the mind, the soul, and the quadrivium (*al-ta'ālīm al-'arba'a*), by which I mean *arithmetikē,* which is the science of numbers; *geometrikē,* which is the science of surveying and of geometry (*al-handasa*); *astronomiā*, which is the science of astronomy, and *mousikē*, which is the science of composing melodies. The sciences maintained their high value, enjoying universal honor and strong foundations, solid features and a towering superstructure, until the Christian religion appeared among the Romans. Then

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[42] al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj* §708-712 (Pellat)

> they effaced science's features, wiped out its vestiges, and eradicated its pathways. They blotted out what the Greeks had elucidated (*'abānat*) and they altered (*ġayyarū*) what the ancients among them had so clearly set forth.[43]

In this passage, the rich reservoir of earlier sources upon which al-Mas'ūdī draws becomes apparent. Now it would seem that the Greek sciences flourished after Augustus' conquest and it is only with Constantine's conversion that they are wiped out. Whereas his account of Cleopatra's death had cast the Ptolemaic queen as just about the last gasp of Greek wisdom, here our historian relies on a tradition that instead highlighted the Byzantines' Christianity as the cause for their benightedness. We can safely attribute the roots of al-Mas'ūdī's historiographical interest in the disappearance of the Greeks and the Roman attempt to gain mastery over their science to the ninth century. The historian al-Ya'qūbī (d. 905), writing around 872, gives a similar though much shorter account of how the Romans' political absorption of the Greeks resulted in Roman appropriation of the Greek sciences (*ḥikam*) as well.[44]

Thus, the three reasons cited in earlier sources for the difference between the Byzantines and the classical Greeks—namely, geography, religion and genealogy—all seem to have had their adherents throughout the the ninth century and all three claims have made their way into al-Mas'ūdī's compendious work of universal history. It is noteworthy too that as soon as the historian's discussion invokes Christianity as the cause for the sciences' decline we again encounter the accusation that the Byzantines have tampered with or altered (*ġayyarū*) the texts of the Greeks. Such accusations are related to a different ninth-century narrative, with roots in the

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[43] al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj* §741 (Pellat). See also the important discussion of this passage in Gutas (1998: 89-90), though the translation he provides should be used with caution.

[44] Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rīḫ,* M. Houtsma (ed.), 1,164.

Qur’ān, according to which Christians are anciently responsible for corrupting the text of the Bible. This tradition, when brought to bear against the Christian translators of ancient Greek works, has profound implications for these translators’ mediation of the Greek past through their translations and we shall turn to it in Chapter 2.

For now, it is enough to observe that in other reports as well it is always their Christianity—rather than their genealogy or geographical location—that makes the Byzantines not merely unworthy scientists, but poor custodians of Greek books as well. We have already mentioned Ibn al-Nadīm’s claim in his version of the Julian Romance that with the coming of Christianity the Byzantines prohibited philosophy and began locking away the ancient Greek books. Elsewhere, he corroborates this notion with what purport to be contemporary eyewitness accounts. Before giving his catalogue of Archimedes’ works, for instance, he casually mentions that the Byzantines burnt fifteen loads of the geometer’s books. The story is from a reliable source (*ḫabaranī l-ṯiqa*), he claims, but it would take too long to explain it.[45] When trying to account for the large number of Greek scientific books to be found in the lands of Islam, he cites at length a similar report. The Byzantines’ criminal neglect of Greek scientific books stems from their Christian scruples:

> I heard ’Abū Isḥāq ibn Šahrām say at a public gathering (*majlis*) that in the land of the Byzantines (*al-rūm*) there is a temple of ancient construction, with a double door made of iron and larger than any ever seen.[46] In ancient times during their worship of planets and idols, the Greeks (*al-yūnāniyyūn*) used to hold it in great honor, praying and sacrificing inside. He [Ibn Šahrām] said: “I asked the emperor of the Byzantines (*malik al-rūm*) to open it for me, but he refused, because it had been locked up ever since the time of the

[45] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* 266 (Arabic), 636 (English). The passage is noted by Gutas (1998: 90).

[46] The precise interpretation of this phrase is somewhat fraught: see Flügel (1871: 109 n. 5) (German) for other suggestions.

> Byzantines' conversion to the Christianity. Therefore, I continued to be courteous with him, to correspond with him, and to ask him directly whenever I attended his court (*majlisihi*).
>
> At last he agreed to open it, and lo and behold, the building was made of marble and stones of magnificent colors, upon which were inscriptions and carvings whose like I had never before seen or heard described, such was their number and beauty. Inside this temple were several camel-loads of ancient books." He exaggerated here and said 'a thousand camel-loads.' "Some of these books were worn, some were in their original condition, and some had been eaten by insects. I saw the golden instruments used in offerings and other curious things. He [the emperor] locked the door after my departure, and he had truly granted me a favor in doing for me what did." He said: "And this was in the days of Sayf al-Dawla,"[47] and he claimed that the building is three days' journey from Constantinople. Those who dwell near the place are a group of Chaldean Ṣabians whose doctrines the Byzantines have sanctioned and from whom they collect the poll tax (*al-jizya*).[48]

Whatever the underlying historicity of this account—and we should note that Ibn al-Nadīm himself doubts parts of it—it reveals the attitudes of the author and his source toward the Byzantines and their ability to safeguard Greek books. Ibn Šahrām travels west and discovers a veritable Shangri-La of untapped Greek wisdom. His description of the heathen Greek temple is bubbling over with mystery and exoticizing detail. Because of their Christianity, it is alleged, the Byzantines have turned their backs on the treasures this temple contains and prove incompetent custodians of its texts. The Byzantines' neglect and willful ignorance of the ancient sciences allows them to sit by while these precious Greek books molder away under lock and key. We also meet here, and not for the first time, the Byzantine emperor in his role as suppressor of texts, an

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[47] Sayf al-Dawla reigned from 944-967 which would make the Byzantine emperor in the account Constantine VII or Romanos II. The bibliophilic tendencies of the former are not unknown in Arabic sources: see Di Branco (2009: 132). Might Ibn al-Nadīm's story somehow reflect that emperor's interest in ancient books? Evidence from other sources, however, suggests that Ibn al-Nadīm may be mistaken and that Ibn Šahrām's embassy—provided there was only one—took place under 'Aḍūd al-Dawla (r. 949-983), making the emperor in question Basil II (r. 976-1025): see Dodge (1970: 585 n. 51).

[48] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* 243 (Arabic), 585-586 (Arabic).

archetype we will soon encounter in still more contexts. It is only by the persistent efforts of the inquisitive Ibn Šahrām that the emperor relents and allows fleeting access to this quickly-perishing trove of books.

The report even dismisses the possibility that the Byzantine Christians would live in the same district as the temple. Rather, it claims that a splinter colony of 'Chaldean Ṣabians' still dwell by this ancient structure and continue to practice the polytheism of the Greeks. The author of the report clearly has in mind the so-called Ṣabian polytheists of his own empire. These were the inhabitants of Ḥarrān (Carrhae) in what is now south-eastern Turkey, who seem to have convinced the 'Abbāsids that they were People of the Book—namely, the Ṣabi'ūn mentioned in the Qur'ān—and hence deserving of protected *ḏimmī* status in exchange for paying the poll tax.[49] The ninth- and tenth-century Ṣabians of Ḥarrān, after all, claimed to be the true heirs to both Greek and ancient Babylonian wisdom, and Ḥarrān furnished several famous Graeco-Arabic translators.[50] Hence the report has assumed that, by analogy, a long-lost colony of Chaldeans must still guard this temple in Byzantine lands, for the Byzantines as Christians cannot possibly be interested in the ancient sciences. Ibn al-Nadīm includes this tenth-century report along with other much briefer accounts concerning the ninth century. He describes al-Ma'mūn's alleged embassies to the Byzantine emperor in search of texts, Ḥunayn's purported book-seeking missions in Byzantine lands as an agent of the Banū al-Munajjim, and even Qusṭā ibn Lūqā's

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[49] This is if we follow the famous account preserved in Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* 320-321 (Arabic), 751-753 (Arabic). The historicity of this story has been called into question by, for instance, T. Green, *The City of the Moon God: Religious Traditions of Harran* (Leiden, 1992: 2-6).

[50] See most recently K. van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science* (Oxford, 2009: 66-70) with full bibliography. The classic study is that of D. Chwolsohn, *Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1856).

transport of Greek texts from Baalbek to Baghdad.[51] Thus, Ibn Šahrām's narrative was simply one in a long tradition of stories about 'Abbāsid officials rescuing Greek texts from the backward Byzantines, whose geography, genealogy, or religion rendered them sorry and illegitimate heirs to the Greeks. Indeed, other accounts—most preserved later in works later than Ibn al-Nadīm's—evoke the same motifs of mysterious Greek temples and close-minded Byzantines to explain the appearance of Greek books in Arabic translation in the ninth- and tenth-centuries.[52]

Section 1.2. Al-Kindī's Claims to the Greek Past

If the Byzantines were not the legitimate heirs to the Greeks, then who was? Perhaps as early as the eighth century and certainly by the ninth, the obvious candidate according to many members of the 'Abbāsid elite was Islam and the lands of the caliphate.[53] Yet just as it was unclear whether the Byzantines were illegitimate because of their genealogy, their geography, or their Christian religion, so too did 'Abbāsid thinkers put forth competing and sometimes contradictory narratives claiming the Greeks for themselves. Part of their appropriation of the ancient sciences lauded the universality of Greek wisdom while implicitly or explicitly admitting the Greeks' foreignness. For instance, the Islamic scholar Ibn Qutayba (d. 889) declared that the truth was still the truth even if borrowed from polytheists, comparing knowledge to a stray camel

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[51] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* 243 (Arabic), 584-585 (English)

[52] See P.S. van Koningsveld, "Greek Manuscripts in the Early Abbasid Empire: Fiction and Facts about their Origin, Translation and Destruction" in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 55.3-4 (Leuven, 1998: 345-372).

[53] Societies are not monolithic, of course, and ninth- and tenth-century 'Abbāsid reactions to Greek *falsafa* are not uniformly positive: see especially Gutas (1998: 160-161). Nevertheless, the 'Abbāsid elite widely acknowledged the universal appeal and ancient prestige of Greek science and philosophy.

that wandered freely between peoples.[54] Conversely, other narratives could downplay the foreignness of the Greeks and claim an affinity between the Greek past and the ‘Abbāsid present. The heretical philosopher Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī (d. 925) could praise the Greeks as the wisest of all nations while also claiming to be the heir and spiritual compatriot of Socrates.[55]

In this section, I will discuss how these competing accounts both find accommodation in the thought of the ninth-century polymath Ya‘qūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī, an early patron of Graeco-Arabic translation, and an older contemporary of Ḥunayn. The famous ‘philosopher of the Arabs’ presents two different narratives. The first admits the foreignness of Greek science while stressing its universality much as Ibn Qutayba’s camel metaphor does. The second seeks to downplay that foreignness and cast ‘Abbāsid society’s appropriation of Greek science as an act of repatriation. While the two claims are superficially contradictory, there is considerable overlap between them in al-Kindī’s thought. He thus provides a good case study of one influential thinker’s attempt to synthesize ‘Abbāsid society’s competing claims to the Greek past by invoking both religion and genealogy.

The notion that, despite its foreign origin, Greek wisdom had found a natural home under Islam is best expressed in the prologue to al-Kindī’s *Kitāb fī l-falsafa al-’ūlā* (*On First Philosophy*). Addressing the caliph al-Mu‘taṣim Billāh (r. 833-842), al-Kindī explains how the search for the truth is a collaborative, trans-generational process whereby the work of past

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[54] Ibn Qutayba, *‘Uyūn al-’aḫbār* (Cairo, 1923-30), 1, 15. See Gutas (1998: 159) on this and similar passages in Ibn Qutayba.

[55] al-Rāzī, *Rasā’il,* P. Kraus (ed.) (Cairo, 1939: 1, 43). See also El Cheikh (2004: 105). For his claim to follow Socrates and other pre-Platonic sages see his *Kitāb al-sīrati l-falsafiyya* in *Rasā’il falsafiyya*, ed. P. Kraus (Cairo, 1939); French translation in P. Kraus, “La conduite du philosophe. Traité d’éthique d’Abū Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī”, *Orientalia* 4 (1935: 300-334), reprinted in R. Brague (ed.), *Alchemie, Ketzerei, Apokryphen im frühen Islam* (Hildesheim, 1994: 222-255).

philosophers, even those who spoke another language (*al-mutafalsifīna qablanā min ġayri ’ahli lisāninā*), is slowly refined through the ages. The human lifespan, he continues, is too short for one philosopher to complete such research by himself:

> In fact Aristotle, the most eminent of the Greeks (*al-yūnāniyyīn*) in philosophy, said: “We must be thankful to the fathers of those who have brought us something of the truth (*al-ḥaqq*), since they were the cause (*sabab*) of their existence, and still more so to the [sons themselves], since [the fathers] were their cause and [the sons] were in turn the cause for our obtaining the truth.” How fairly he has expressed the matter! We must not be embarrassed to appreciate the truth and to acquire it wherever it comes from, even if it comes from races [or ‘genera’, *al-’ajnās*] distant from us and nations (*al-’umum*) different from us. Indeed, for the seeker of truth nothing takes priority over the truth, and the truth must not be diminished, nor must one who speaks or purveys it be demeaned. No one is diminished by the truth, but rather the truth ennobles everyone. Therefore, if we are eager for the perfection of our species (*tatmīm naw‘inā*)—since it is there that the truth is found—it is best for us to adhere in our present book to our custom in all our compositions, namely that of supplying the ancients’ perfect [or ‘complete’, *tāmman*] statements on a matter in the easiest and most straightforward of ways, following those who have preceded us [literally ‘the sons of this way’, *’abnā’ hāḏihi l-sabīl*], and of perfecting [or ‘completing’, *tatmīm*] their imperfect statements on a matter, according to the custom of our language and the norms (*sunna*) of our time…[56]

About to embark on his own exposition of metaphysics, al-Kindī couches this very project in technical Aristotelian terms, speaking of cause and being, of genera (*’ajnās*) and species, even of *teleiōsis* (*tatmīm*). His rhetorical thrust is obvious. The continuation of Greek philosophy in Arabic under the ‘Abbāsids is not the result of chance.We are no longer dealing with Ibn Qutayba’s stray camel or the unpredictable diffusion of knowledge from one race to another. Rather, al-Kindī’s appropriation of Greek *falsafa* is teleologically necessitated, the natural and inevitable ‘next step’ in its development.

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[56] Al-Kindī, *Kitāb fī l-falsafa al-ūlā*, in *Risā’il al-Kindī al-falsafiyya,* M. ‘A. ’Abū-Rīda (ed.) (Cairo, 1950: 1, 103); English trans. in A.L. Ivry *Al-Kindi’s Metaphysics* (Albany, 1974: 58). Al-Kindī’s treatise is also available with facing French translation in the edition of R. Rashed and J. Jolivet (eds.), *Oeuvres philosophiques et scientifiques d’al-Kindī. Volume II: métaphysique et cosmologie* (Leiden, 1998: 1-133).

Immediately after the quoted passage, al-Kindī goes on to offer veiled criticisms of his enemies among the religious scholars whom he portrays as purveyors of false religion. Given this context, we are probably meant to invest his deployment of the word *sunna* ('tradition, norm') with its full religious significance. Thus he suggests it is not only in the Arabic language but also according to Islamic forms that philosophy's universal aim to perfect the human species (*naw'*) is now being carried forward. While admitting that the Greeks belonged to a foreign nation, al-Kindī has nevertheless suggested how the universality of their quest for truth is compatible, nearly coterminous with Islam's. In fact, al-Kindī attempts to demonstrate again and again elsewhere that revelation is compatible with *falsafa* as well as Greek science more generally.[57] In one work, he even runs a sort of 'experiment', pitting Greek astrology's calculation for the duration of the Islamic empire against a figure he has derived from scripture and achieving the same result.[58] Especially in the proem to his *On First Philosophy* but also throughout his oeuvre, al-Kindī suggests that under his own editorial direction and the

[57] We might compare his earlier statements in the *Kitāb fī l-falsafa al-'ūlā,* 102 (Arabic); 57 (Eng.). For more explicit statements in his other treatises that the truth of Islam is the same as the truth of *falsafa*, see with references G. Endress, "The defense of reason: the plea for philosophy in the religious community", *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften* 6 (1990: 1-49) at 3-8. For more on the social context of al-Kindī's Hellenism see especially G. Endress, "Al-Kindī: Arabismus, Hellenismus, und die Legitimation der Philosophie im Islam" in *Schweizer Asiatische Studien* 44 (Bern, 2007). On the relationship between Greek science and mathematics to *falsafa* in al-Kindī's professional development, see the proposal of D. Gutas, "Geometry and the Rebirth of Philosophy in Arabic with al-Kindī" in R. Arnzen and J. Thielmann (eds.), *Words, Texts and Contexts Cruising the Mediterranean Sea* (Leuven, 2004: 195-210)

[58] Al-Kindī, *Risāla fī mulk al-'arab wa-kamiyyatihi* in O. Loth, "Al-Kindī als Astrolog", Morgenländische Forschung (1875: 261-309). Unlike the later *falāsifa*, al-Kindī and his milieu accepted the scientific validity of astrology. See also the discussion of this text in R. Walzer, "New Studies on Al-Kindī", *Oriens* 10 (1957: 203–233), reprinted in his *Greek into Arabic*, (Oxford, 1962: 175–205 at 199-200).

‘Abbāsids’ patronage, the philosophical project begun by the Greeks is one step closer to achieving its *telos*.[59]

Yet an appeal to the universality of Greek philosophy was not the only justification for its ‘Abbāsid appropriation in vogue with ninth- and tenth-century intellectuals, nor indeed was it the only justification invoked by al-Kindī himself. Rather, some ‘Abbāsid thinkers, al-Kindī most prominent among them, attempted to do so via genealogy. Despite al-Kindī’s admission of the Greeks’ foreignness in his appeal to their universality, we have already seen traces of such a genealogical justification downplaying that same foreignness. The ‘philosopher of the Arabs’ has suggested this affinity by his choice of metaphor in the above passage from his *On First Philosophy* which uses the language of ‘fathers and sons’ to describe the transference and gradual perfection of philosophy through the ages. This language is most prevalent in what the philosopher presents as a quotation from Aristotle himself. Rather, as A. L. Ivry has shown, this quotation is in fact a loose paraphrase of Aristotle, *Metaphysics* α 993b15-19, a passage which contains no mention of fathers and sons in the original Greek:[60]

> εἰ μὲν γὰρ Τιμόθεος μὴ ἐγένετο, πολλὴν ἂν μελοποιίαν οὐκ εἴχομεν· εἰ δὲ μὴ Φρῦνις, Τιμόθεος οὐκ ἂν ἐγένετο. τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἀποφηναμένων· παρὰ μὲν γὰρ ἐνίων παρειλήφαμέν τινας δόξας, οἱ δὲ τοῦ γενέσθαι τούτους αἴτιοι γεγόνασιν.[61]

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[59] At *Kitāb fī l-falsafa al-’ūlā,* 97 (Arabic), 55 (English), al-Kindī states explicitly that the philosopher’s task achieves its end when the truth has been discovered, i.e. that the philosophical quest has a *telos* and is not ceaseless. This passage appears related to the ps.-*Theology of Aristotle:* see C. D’Ancona, “Al-Kindī on the Subject-Matter of the First Philosophy” in J.A. Aertsen and A. Speer (eds.), *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1998: 841-855 at 843-847).

[60] Ivry (1974: 128)

[61] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* α 993b15-19 = *Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, 2 vols., W.D. Ross (ed.) (Oxford, 1924 [1979]).

> For if there had been no Timotheus, then we would not have much lyric poetry; and if there had been no Phrynis, there would have been no Timotheus. The same holds for those who have propounded the truth. From some of them we have received certain opinions, and others in turn were responsible (*aitioi*) for these men's coming into being.

The Greek comes across clearly in the fairly literal Arabic translation composed by 'Usṭat (Eustathius), which al-Kindī himself commissioned and used:[62]

فإنه لو لم يكن طيماوس [sic] لم يكن لنا معرفة بتأليف اللحون ولو لم يكن أفرونيس لم يكن طيماوس وبهذا النحو نقول على الذين قالوا في الحق قولا جزئيا لأنا استفدنا من بعضهم آراء يسيرة وكان آخرون علة لكينونة هؤلاء.

> If there had been no Timotheus [MS: 'Timaeus'], we would have no knowledge about the composition of melodies; and if there had been no Phrynis, there would be no Timotheus. In this way too we speak of those who have made some small pronouncement concerning the truth because we gain from some of them a few opinions, and others were the cause (*'illa*) of these men's existence.[63]

In paraphrasing Aristotle, al-Kindī has made a few changes that domesticate and render more literary 'Usṭāt's rough and literal Arabic.[64] Most important, though, is his creative misreading of Aristotle's metaphor for the philosophical tradition. Understandably ignorant of fifth-century Greek lyric poets, al-Kindī has incorrectly assumed Timotheus to be Phrynis' son.[65] In fact, he was Phrynis' innovative successor, whom Aristotle nevertheless portrays as indebted to his older

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[62] See M. Bouyges (ed.), *Averroès: Tafsir ma ba'd at-tabi'at* (Beirut, 1938-1952: cxviii-cxxi)

[63] The text of the al-Kindī circle translation of the *Metaphysics* survives only in the margin of the unique manuscript of Averroes' *tafsīr* on that work: see M. Bouyges (1938-1952: 1, 9).

[64] For instance, al-Kindī has emended 'Usṭāt's Syriacism *'illa* ('cause') to the elegant *sabab* of more literary Arabic philosophy. As Ivry (1974: 128) observes, he has also imported Aristotle's words of thanks from *Metaphysics* α 993b 11, a passage which he has already quoted slightly earlier at *Kitāb fī l-falsafa al-ūlā,* 102 (Arabic); 57 (Eng.).

[65] Ivry (1974: 128) notes that al-Kindī may even have consulted 'Usṭāt in person on the shades of meaning of the verb *gignesthai* which the translator has rendered with *kāna* ('to be'), which Aristotle is using here to mean 'come to be', but which can in some circumstances can mean 'to be born'. On al-Kindī personal involvement in his circle's translations see G. Endress, "The Circle of al-Kindī: Early Arabic Translations from the Greek and the Rise of Islamic Philosophy" in R. Kruk and G. Endress (eds.), *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism: Studies on the Transmission of Greek Philosophy and Sciences* (Leiden, 1997: 43-76).

rival.[66] The misunderstanding is somewhat willful on al-Kindī's part, since 'Usṭāt does include mention of *melopoiia* ('lyric poetry'), rendering it literally as 'the composition of melodies'. Nevertheless, by recasting Aristotle's metaphor along genealogical lines, the Arabic philosopher is able to quote the proem of the *Metaphysics* to much stronger rhetorical effect in the proem to his own account of first philosophy.

That al-Kindī should read a genealogical metaphor into his hallowed Greek predecessor's text is no surprise. In a work no longer extant, al-Kindī promoted a genealogy that linked the Greeks and the Arabs but excluded the Byzantines. Not content to espouse the universality of Greek wisdom and its Arabic-language *teleiōsis*, al-Kindī also sought to forge a more concrete and perhaps more appealing connection between the Greeks and the Arabs themselves. Our evidence for al-Kindī's genealogy and for its popularity with some of his contemporaries comes from the section on Greek history in the tenth-century historian al-Mas'ūdī's *Meadows of Gold*. The historian begins by reviewing the longstanding debate among earlier scholars regarding the origins of the Greeks (*al-yūnāniyyūn*), particularly the genealogy of their eponymous founder Yūnān.[67] Our author quotes several possible genealogies, but dismisses outright the claim that the Greeks are related via Abraham and Isaac to the Byzantines (*al-rūm*), citing as we saw above the Byzantines' marked inferiority. If the Greeks are not related to the Byzantines, then what people does share a common ancestor with that great, but bygone nation? Al-Mas'ūdī reports that

[66] On Timotheus' victory over his fellow citharode Phrynis see *OCD*[4] "Timotheus (1)". In surviving fragments, Timotheus celebrates the newness of his own poetry.

[67] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-ḏahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar* §664 (Pellat).

genealogists including al-Kindī linked Yūnān with Qaḥṭān, the ancestor of the southern Arabs of Yemen[68]:

> Those meticulous in recording the histories of past peoples report that Yūnān was the brother of Qaḥṭān, that he was descended from Eber the son of Shelah [ʻĀbar ibn Šālaḫ], and that the business of his departure from his brother's homeland is the cause of the uncertainty regarding their shared origins. The report states that he left the land of Yemen, traveling with all his kith and kin and whoever else had joined his group (*jumlatihi*) until he reached the furthest countries of the West (*al-maġrib*) and there established himself. He sired children in those regions, but soon his language became barbarous (*istaʻjama*), resembling the barbaric idioms of the Franks and Romans (*al-rūm*) who dwelt there. All trace of his parentage disappeared, all his ties were broken, and he became forgotten in the regions of Yemen, unknown even among their genealogists. Yūnān was mighty and strong, handsome and tall, of great intellect, ample judgment, stern determination, and outstanding worth. Regarding Yūnān's ancestry, Yaʻqūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī was also of the opinion that he was the brother of Qaḥṭān, and to prove it he cited as evidence reports (*'aḫbār*) which he recounted concerning the origins of ancestries[69] and which he transmitted from unique and unparalleled authorities (*min ḥadīṯi l-'āḥādi wa-l-'afrādi*) rather than from abundant and well-attested ones.[70]

According to al-Masʻūdī, one or more of his predecessors whose historical method he trusts argued that Qaḥṭān and Yūnān were brothers. The philosopher al-Kindī did so as well, he adds, though perhaps too eagerly and on shakier evidence. The proposed genealogy linking Qaḥṭān and Yūnān had apparently become well-known by al-Masʻūdī's day, for the historian mentions the controversy surrounding it once again in his *Affirmation and Revision* when summarizing the contents of a lost work.[71] In making this claim, earlier ʻAbbāsid intellectuals like al-Kindī had

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[68] See A. Fischer and A.K. Irvine "Ḳaḥṭān" in *EI*².

[69] Reading the variant *al-'ansāb* printed by Pellat (1965) for *al-'ašyā'* ('of things') printed by De Meynard and De Courteille (1861)

[70] Al-Masʻūdī, *Murūj al-ḏahab wa-maʻādin al-jawhar* §665-666 (Pellat).

[71] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh* 115 (Arabic), 162 (French)

sought to link a famous progenitor of the Arabs with the founder of the Greek race. As first suggested by Josef van Ess, this linkage allowed these intellectuals to present the Greek sciences as being Arab in origin, and hence not really foreign at all.[72] As with al-Manṣūr's adoption of Zoroastrian translation ideology a century earlier, al-Kindī and his allies could cast the introduction of Greek wisdom as an act of repatriation.[73]

Yet several key parts of the Yūnān-Qaḥṭān genealogy have gone unremarked in the scholarship. The first is the centrality of language in our historian's report of these earlier genealogies. It is unclear how much of the narrative of Yūnān's journey westward can be attributed specifically to al-Kindī, but if he did ascribe to it, then it sheds interesting light on his editorial patronage of Graeco-Arabic translations. In al-Mas'ūdī's report, Yūnān's colony thrives but the pure Arabic that he and his offspring speak quickly degenerates: the verb *ista'jama* is used of introducing barbarisms into the Arabic language. The genealogical narrative thus also claims a curious origin for the Greek language itself. Greek is nothing more than Arabic with a heavy layer of barbarous accretions, for which the Byzantines or Romans (*al-rūm*)—imagined to a be fully fledged nation even in these early times—are largely responsible. As we saw above and as attested to in a note transmitted with the *Theology of Aristotle*, al-Kindī both edited the translations he commissioned and airbrushed quotations from them in his own philosophical

[72] J. van Ess, *Frühe Mu'talitische Häresiographie: zwei Werke des Nāši' al-Akbar (gest. 293 H.)* (Beirut, 1971: 6). Gutas (1998: 88) develops and contextualizes the point more fully.

[73] Gutas (1998: 88). See also the discussion of this passage in Di Branco (2009: 47-50)

treatises, despite not knowing Greek.[74] If he devised or supported this notion of Greek's Arabic origins, did he use the theory as a justification for his own involvement in the translation movement? It would certainly have been convenient. Al-Kindī might lack Greek, but as a native speaker of its uncorrupted form, Arabic, he could be expected to possess some inborn affinity for an ancient Greek author's mode of expression once provided with a translator's rough trot. This suggestion must remain speculative, but the Yūnān-Qaḥṭān genealogy seems to have included an attempt to cast Greek as a corrupted form of Arabic. Such a conception of linguistic history would serve to relegate Graeco-Arabic translators, already secondaries, to an even more diminished role.

Al-Kindī's own personal stake in the Yūnān-Qaḥṭān genealogy has also gone unremarked. At first glance, it is not clear why the philosopher would be so eager to promote a theory that linked the Greeks with the Southern Arabs specifically, whose claim to pure Arab ancestry was disputed. According to one theory, these descendants of Qaḥṭān—the so-called *al-muta'arriba*—merely adopted Arabic language and customs from the true Arabs of northern Arabia who traced their lineage, via the Prophet's own ancestor 'Adnān, back to Ishmael and Abraham.[75] Al-Kindī's motive becomes clear when we consider that he himself boasted descent from the royal tribe of Kinda, a sept of the Southern Arabian Kaḥlan clan which in turn claimed

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[74] See G. Endress, "The Circle of al-Kindī: Early Arabic Translations and the Rise of Islamic Philosophy" in G. Endress and R. Kruk (eds.), *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism: Studies in the Transmission of Greek Philosophy and Sciences* and for a specific example of the philosopher at work see S. Fazzo and H. Wiesner, "Alexander of Aphrodisias in the Kindi Circle and in al-Kindi's Cosmology," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 3 (1993, 119-153). On the Kindī circle's translation technique more generally see G. Endress, *Proclus Arabus: Zwanzig Abschnitte aus der Institutio Theologica in arabischer Übersetzung, Beiruter Texte und Studien* 10 (Beirut, 1973).

[75] I. Lichtenstädter, "Muta'arriba", *EI*[2.]

to be the pure Arab branch of Qaḥṭān's line.[76] While we do not have al-Kindī's own writings on the matter, later bio-bibliographers were quite taken with the philosopher's illustrious lineage and list his ancestry with relish at the beginning of their entries. Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 995 or 998) traces his lineage, via Kinda, back to Kaḥlān and his progenitors, while both Ibn al-Qifṭī (d. 1248) and Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a (d. 1270) explicitly call al-Kindī a scion of Arab kings and end the philosopher's genealogy with none other than Qaḥṭān himself.[77] Indeed, the association between Qaḥṭān and Kinda was of long standing: one second-century inscription from Maḥran Bilqīs in Yemen lumps the two together, recording a Hamdānid ruler's campaign against "the king of Kinda and Qaḥṭān".[78] It is easy to see, then, why al-Kindī would be quick to champion any genealogy, however obscure, that rendered him not merely an intellectual heir but also a close cousin to the likes of Plato and Aristotle.[79]

Crucially, however, this link between the Greeks and the Southern as opposed to northern Arabs does not seem to have diminished the Greeks' pure Arab lineage in the eyes of 'Abbāsid intellectuals who accepted the genealogy. To begin with, some writers in ninth- and tenth-century Iraq championed the descendants of Qaḥṭān as the original Arabs over and above the northern

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[76] A.F.L. Beeston, "Kinda", *EI*[2.]

[77] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* 255 (Arabic), 615 (English); Ibn al-Qiftī, *Ta'rīḫ al-ḥukamā',* J. Lippert (ed.) (Leipzig, 1903: 366); Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn al-'anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-'aṭibbā'*, A. Müller (ed.) (Cairo/Königsberg, 1882-84: 1,206). It was probably this noble Arab pedigree that earned al-Kindī the moniker 'philosopher of the Arabs', which first appears in Ibn al-Nadīm.

[78] A. Jamme, *Sabaean Inscriptions from Maḥran Bilqîs (Mârib)* (Baltimore, 1962: 635/26-7).

[79] Di Branco (2009: 50) has suggested that there may in fact be a kernel of truth in al-Kindī's genealogy, citing the Archaic Greek presence in Yemen proposed by S. Mazzarino, *Fra Oriente e Occidente* (Florence, 1989: 146-149 and 355-358). The suggestion is intriguing, but it is probably too optimistic to hope that the ancient traditions upon which al-Mas'ūdī says al-Kindī relied reached back to the seventh century BCE.

descendants of ‘Adnān.[80] Al-Mas‘ūdī’s own sympathetic treatment of the Yūnān-Qaḥṭān genealogy makes sense when we consider that he too traced the origin of the Arabic language to the tribe of Qaḥṭān not to that of ‘Adnān and Ishmael.[81] The most telling proof that the Yūnān-Qaḥṭān genealogy connected the Greeks with all Arabs comes from one of al-Kindī’s contemporaries and critics, the Mu‘tazilī poet and heresiographer al-Nāši’ al-’Akbar (d. 906). In verses preserved by al-Mas‘ūdī, the poet first ridicules al-Kindī’s pretensions to *ḥikma* (‘wisdom’) and then goes on to cite his genealogy of Yūnān as proof of his ignorance:

> ’Abū Yūsuf, I have performed a careful examination,
> And have not found in you one correct opinion or conclusion.
> You pass for a sage (*ḥakīm*) among those who, when tested,
> Display not even a single thought between them.
> Do you link heterodoxy (*’ilḥād*) with the religion of Muḥammad?
> O Brother of Kinda! “Assuredly you utter a disastrous thing”[82],
> And in your error commingle Yūnān and Qaḥṭān.
> By my life, I would you had kept them well apart![83]

Al-Nāši’ states more or less directly that al-Kindī’s Yūnān-Qaḥṭān genealogy draws an unwarranted connection between a race of disbelievers (the Greeks) and Muḥammad. Even though Muḥammad was descended from ‘Adnān and of hence of northern Arab stock, the

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[80] See for example al-Ṭabarī, *Annales*, M.J. de Goeje (ed.) (Leiden, 1964-1965: 1, 215) and Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb al-ma‘ārif,* Ṯ. ‘Ukāša (ed.) (Cairo, 1960: 34), with the discussion of T. Khalidi, *Islamic Historiography: the Histories of Mas’ūdī,* (Albany, 1975: 116-117).

[81] He nevertheless attempted to find a middle ground by positing that, by a special dispensation, God had also granted Ishmael the ability to speak Arabic independently of its Yemeni originators. See al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj* §996-997 (Pellat), again with the discussion of Khalidi (1975: 116-117). This passage also suggests that al-Mas‘ūdī is not embellishing his source’s narration of Yūnān’s westward colonization, since there we learn that Yūnān and Qaḥṭān both spoke Arabic, while here al-Mas‘ūdī states that it was in fact Ya‘rub ibn Qaḥṭān who first spoke the language.

[82] Qur’ān 19:89

[83] Al-Nāši’ al-’Akbar, preserved in al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj* §666 (Pellat)

philosopher’s linkage of Yūnān and the progenitor of the Southern Arabs qualified it, in eyes of al-Nāši’, as a connection between Yūnān and the Arabs more generally. Presumably, readers more sympathetic to al-Kindī and his genealogy felt the same. We should note too that al-Nāši’ also seems to pick up on al-Kindī’s personal stake in the genealogy. Having already identified the philosopher by his *kunya* ’Abū Yūsuf, the poet adds the gratuitous and maliciously florid vocative “Brother of Kinda” as he introduces the genealogy itself.

Finally, the Mu‘tazilī’s leap from a charge of ethnic solidarity to one of religious heterodoxy (*’ilḥād*) is also important. In its Qur’ānic context, the poet’s quotation (“Assuredly you utter a disastrous thing”) addresses those who attribute a son to God. By attributing a Greek brother to Qaḥṭān, the poet implies, al-Kindī is also brushing with heterodoxy and associating his own family too closely with a race of polytheists. Al-Kindī entertained both an abstract teleology that linked Greek philosophy and Islam as well as a concrete genealogy that linked the Greeks and Arabs. Similarly, his critic al-Nāši’ al-’Akbar could pass seamlessly between al-Kindī’s connection of the Greeks with the Arabs to an allegation that he connected Islam with heresy. For both the philosopher and the theologian, the boundary between ethnicity and religion proves rather porous. In Chapter 2, we will find another Mu‘tazilī author leveling a charge of *’ilḥād* against Ḥunayn, Qusṭā ibn Lūqā and other Graeco-Arabic translators on the grounds that they too display a clannish solidarity with the classical Greeks.

Relying on al-Kindī or some other authority who argued for the Yūnān-Qaḥṭān genealogy, al-Mas’ūdī concludes the story of Yūnān’s journey west. Arriving at Athens (*’Aṯīna*), which the historian describes as the West’s “city of sages (*al-ḥukamā’*)” in ancient times, the hero builds many buildings and fathers many sons. As he lies dying, he gives a lengthy and

moralizing speech to his oldest son—possibly Cecrops, though the text is uncertain[84]—and concludes by passing on both the scepter and a bit of paternal advice:

> Now it is up to you to exercise generosity, for that is the pivot of kingship, the key of statecraft, and the entryway to sovereignty. Be eager to win men over by bestowing favors upon them, and you shall be a rightly guided sovereign (*sayyidan rašīdan*). Beware of deviating from the exemplary path upon which reason (*al-ʿaql*) is built. Indeed, whoever abandons the judgment of the intellect and the fruits of reason becomes ensnared in perils and falls into the clutches of ruin.[85]

With his final breath, Yūnān predicates the future political success of the Greek nation he has founded on its continued devotion to reason. The moment it abandons the path to reason is the moment its power is eclipsed. As we have seen, al-Masʿūdī has already presented the Yūnān-Qaḥṭān genealogy as a means of dealing the Byzantines out of the game and claiming the Greeks as originally Arab. In the end, as the historian himself soon relates, the Romans or Byzantines (*al-rūm*) will conquer the Greeks and, with their conversion to Christianity, will outlaw philosophy.[86] With the coming of the Byzantines and Christianity, the darkness of unreason will fall on the lands once ruled by Yūnān. In the conclusion of the Yūnān colonization narrative, the Arab progenitor of the Greek race is made to predict this ruinous turn of events, and give a warning to ʿAbbāsid statesmen and intellectuals whose faith in *falsafa* might be lukewarm. The story—whether propagated by al-Kindī or another proponent of his genealogy—thus serves the

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[84] Our manuscripts preserve the shell حرسوس, with the diacriticals variously distributed, while Ibn Badrūn (d. 1211) preserves حرليوس in his quotation of the passage. Pellat (1965) prints خربيوس. De Meynard and De Courteille (1861), followed by Pellat (1965) and Di Branco (2009: 48), were the first to propose that the name is a corruption of "Cecrops".

[85] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj* §667 (Pellat)

[86] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-ḏahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar* §741 (Pellat)

same purpose as al-Jāḥiẓ's warning in the *Book of Reports* cited above and plays nicely into the ideology of philhellenism, perhaps established by the caliph al-Ma'mūn, whereby Islam's scientific and political ascendancy corresponded to Byzantium's decline. Even Yūnān's exhortation to generosity may be a jab at the Byzantines, whom ninth- and tenth-century Arabic literature portrays as proverbially ungenerous.[87]

The anti-Byzantine coloring that al-Mas'ūdī or more probably his source has added to the story of Yūnān's achievements becomes readily apparently when we compare it with the account given by the contemporary Christian historian Eutychius (Sa'īd ibn Baṭrīq, d. 940). There Yūnān is only mentioned in passing and his act of foundation is considerably less noble. Eutychius has been listing Biblical genealogies. In an aside, he asserts that the religion of the Ṣabians (*al-Ṣābi'ūn*)—a term which had come to refer to polytheists, particularly those of Ḥarrān—was founded by Zoroaster in the lifetime of Abraham's father, but then cites an alternate claimant to this dubious distinction:

> Some claim that the one who brought forth the religion of the Ṣabians was a man from among the Greeks (*al-yūnāniyyīn*) who was called al-Yūnān son of Heraclius [Heracles?] and whose dwelling place was 'lyṣ ['Ilyaṣ = Ilium?]. Others claim he was from the City of Olives (*madīnat al-zaytūna*) which he built at Athens (*'Aṯīna*). The Greeks were the first to proclaim this doctrine and composed many books on astrology and the movement of the celestial sphere.[88]

[87] Al-Jāḥiẓ, for instance, claims that there is not even a word for 'generosity' in Byzantine Greek: see the discussion in El Cheikh (2004: 121) with references. The geographer Ibn al-Faqīh, in an audacious anachronism, quotes Plato as having remarked that the besetting vice of the Byzantines is their stinginess: see *Kitāb al-buldān* 330 (Arabic); 389 (French).

[88] Eutychius, *Kitāb al-ta'rīḫ al-majmū' 'alā l-taḥqīq wa-l-taṣdīq*, also known by the title *Kitāb naẓm al-jawhar* in L. Cheikho B. Carra de Vaux, and H. Zayyat (eds.), *Eutychii Patriarchae Alexandrini Annales* (*CSCO* 50-51) (Paris, 1906-1906: 1, 20) (Arabic); Italian trans. in B. Pirone, *Eutichio, patriarca di Alessandria. Gli Annali* (*Studia Orientalia Christiana Monographiae* 1) (Cairo, 1987: 45). The section from which this passage derives is not present in M. Breydy's updated *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios von Alexandrien* (*CSCO* 471-72) (1985), based as that is on the fragmentary MS Sinai, Monastery of St. Catherine - Ar. 582. See also the brief discussion and contextualization of this passage in Di Branco (2009: 55).

Eutychius' second version of Yūnān's *res gestae* bears a ballpark resemblance to the one reported by al-Mas'ūdī. In both versions, Yūnān arrives at Athens and initiates a building project, and both credit Yūnān's people with scientific or rationalistic achievement. Yet in Eutychius, we find none of the philhellenic, anti-Byzantine coloring. Rather than a City of Sages, Athens is a City of Olives. Rather than hailing from Yemen and boasting a noble Arab lineage, Yūnān's father bears a barbarous and distinctly Greek name.[89] In al-Mas'ūdī's version, Yūnān founds a mighty nation ruled according to reason, whereas in both of Eutychius' reports he initiates polytheism. Even his people's scientific achievements—astrology and astronomy—smack of the star-worship associated with the Ṣabians. Muslim authors were largely dependent on Christian chroniclers for their information on Graeco-Roman and Byzantine history.[90] It is therefore likely that al-Kindī—or whichever proponent of the Yūnān-Qaḥṭān genealogy al-Mas'ūdī follows—found a barebones account of Yūnān's activities in Athens similar to that preserved in Eutychius and expanded it to meet his ideological requirements.[91]

Al-Kindī's genealogical claim to Greeks and his associated claim of access to the Greek past without knowledge of the Greek language both appear to have reached a wide audience.

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[89] I presume that 'Heraclius'—the name of the familiar Byzantine Emperor who reigned during the lifetime of the Prophet—is a scribal corruption for 'Heracles', a more fittingly primordial figure. It is impossible to say what name—Heraclius or Heracles—Eutychius read in his source.

[90] El Cheikh (2004: 118-120); Di Branco (2009: 24-36 and 54-56)

[91] Al-Mas'ūdī of course knew and had a high opinion of Eutychius, as witnessed by his own statements at *Tanbīh* 154 (Arabic), 212 (French). Yet he does not seem to be deriving any of his details about Yūnān from Eutychius' brief account. By his own explicit admission at *Murūj* §665 (Pellat), al-Mas'ūdī derives this story from "those meticulous in recording the histories of past peoples" who advocated for the Yūnān-Qaḥṭān genealogy, a category which he later specifies to include al-Kindī. Since the historian wrote the *Tanbīh* at the end of his life, considerably later than the *Murūj*, it is possible that he had not yet encountered Eutychius' work when he composed the latter.

Besides the evidence provided by al-Mas‘ūdī, we may cite the tenth-century intellectual ’Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 1023), who preserves an allusion to these claims in his report of a debate between ’Abū Sa‘īd al-Sīrāfī and the East Syrian Christian translator ’Abū Bišr Mattā ibn Yūnus on the universality of Aristotelian logic and its worth relative to Arabic grammar.[92] Having the cornered the hapless ’Abū Bišr, al-Sīrāfī delivers the triumphant blow for traditional Arabic grammar and rhetoric. He has already established that the study of Greek logic really means the study of the Greek language—an impossibility in the unreadably barbarous Arabic versions churned out by Syriac-speakers like ’Abū Bišr.[93] As the debate concludes, al-Sīrāfī urges the translator to look no further than that most vaunted of all Arabic philosophers, the famous al-Kindī, who was so besotted with this pretentious Graeco-Arabic jargon that he fell prey to a crude prank. In a sort of Sokal Affair before the fact, a group of pranksters “composed for him questions of this [pretentious] sort, duping him with them and leading him to believe that they derived from foreign philosophy (*al-falsafa al-dāḫila*).”[94] Al-Kindī took the bait, and attempted to provide a serious answer to the nonsensical forgeries of his detractors. Al-Tawḥīdī has al-Sīrāfī

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[92] The report’s anecdote concerning al-Kindī is found in al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-’imtā‘ wa-l-mu’ānasa,* ’A. ’Amin and ’A. Zayn (eds.) (Beirut, 1939-1944: 1,127-128). For an English translation of the entire report see D.S. Margoliouth, “The Discussion between Abu Bishr Matta and Abu Sa'id al-Sirafi on the Merits of Logic and Grammar”, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1905: 79-129), with the al-Kindī anecdote at 127-128. This anecdote has received brief attention from Margoliouth (1905: 89) and P. Adamson, *Al-Kindī* (Oxford, 2007: 17-18).

[93] See especially al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-’imtā‘,* 111 (Arabic), 114 (English).

[94] Al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-’imtā‘,* 127 (Arabic), 128 (English)

reproduce two of these pseudo-philosophical questions, along with al-Kindī's response, all of which redeploy genuine Kindī-circle technical terms in a meaningless scramble.[95]

Crucially, al-Tawḥīdī's report describes al-Kindī's pitiful attempt to channel the Greek language in Arabic dress to the theme of inheritance. Al-Sīrāfī concludes: "He inherited (*wariṯa*) all of this from nowhere else but from the blessings of the Greeks (*min barakāti yūnān*) and from the benefits of philosophy and logic."[96] While it is tempting to read *yunān* here as the name of the Greeks' progenitor Yūnān, in fact both al-Sīrāfī and 'Abū Bišr regularly deploy the tribal designation *yūnān* throughout al-Tawḥīdī's report rather than the more common *yūnāniyyūn* and so the Greek nation as a whole is probably what is meant.[97] Nevertheless, the report faithfully reproduces the metaphors of familial inheritance we observed in al-Kindī's thought. Moreover, in even more explicit terms than al-Mas'ūdī, al-Tawḥīdī's report connects al-Kindī's genealogical claims to the philosopher's documented insistence that he could fluidly interpret and redeploy Greek terminology despite lacking real knowledge of the Greek language. In al-Sīrāfī's story, contemporaries of al-Kindī put that linguistic claim to the test by presenting him with a forgery, and the philosopher was unable to distinguish this fake from the genuine translations which he commissioned and which he thought himself capable of editing and adapting.

We will return to al-Kindī's claims briefly in Chapter 2. For now, we may simply conclude that al-Kindī promoted two, not entirely consistent ideologies regarding the Greek past.

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[95] On the genuinely Kindian nature of the vocabulary deployed, see P. Adamson, *al-Kindī* (Oxford, 2007: 18 and 210 n. 54).

[96] Al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-'imtā',* 128 (Arabic), 128 (English)

[97] See al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-'imtā',* 111-113 (Arabic), 114-116 (English) for numerous examples.

One linked a foreign Greek past to the ‘Abbāsid present on the grounds that Greek wisdom was universal and had found its natural, even teleologically ordained home under the caliphate and Islam. The other ideology linked Greek past to ‘Abbāsid present on the grounds that the Greeks were not really foreign at all, but of Arab, specifically Yemeni descent. Hence the empire of the Arabs was Greek philosophy’s true home, and al-Kindī, himself the descendant of Yemeni royalty, was its most natural champion and heir. In the evidence presented above, we have not observed whether in casting Islam as Greek philosophy’s true refuge al-Kindī also sought to portray Christianity or the Byzantines as illegitimate heirs to the Greeks. In what survives of an apologetic treatise written in refutation of Christianity, the philosopher certainly argued that Christian theology was irrational and incompatible with Greek philosophy.[98] We cannot know, however, to what extent these these efforts were connected with his two attempts to claim the Greek past for Islam and the Arabs. As a contemporary of Ḥunayn’s and a known rival with his patrons the Banū Mūsā—as we shall see—al-Kindī’s attempts to claim the Greek past for the ‘Abbāsid present will be particularly important in coming chapters.

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[98] In his fragmentary *Maqāla fī radd ‘alā al-naṣāra* (*Reply to the Christians*), al-Kindī cites first Porphyry’s *Isagoge* and then Aristotle’s *Topics* to prove that the Trinity is an incoherent doctrine. The fragments survive in quotations presented in the tenth-century Christian philosopher Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī’s refutation of the work: see the text printed in R. Rashed and J. Jolivet (eds.), *Oeuvres philosophiques et scientifiques d’al-Kindī* (Leiden, 1997-1998: 2, 119-127). Al-Kindī singles out the *Isagoge* because it is an elementary school textbook and hence he expects most of his Christian readers will have copy in their homes. Al-Kindī’s *Reply* may even have been written in order to support the ‘Abbāsid caliph’s Mu‘tazilī instance on *tawḥīd* (the oneness of God), which as we saw might have motivated the Ma’mūnid policy of anti-Byzantinism as philhellenism posited by Gutas. G. Endress, *The works of Yaḥyā Ibn ‘Adī* (Wiesbaden, 1977: 100) has argued that the fragments of al-Kindī’s *Relpy* constitute a chapter of a longer work, the lost treatise on the *tawḥīd* mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm, the *Risāla fī iftirāq al-milal wa-’annahum majmū’ūn ‘alā l-tawḥīd wa-kull qad ḫālafa ṣāḥibahu* (*Treatise on the difference between the creeds about the oneness of God and on that they all accept the oneness even though they all disagree with one another*). D. Thomas “Al-Kindī” in *CMR* 1 argues that the work probably presented Christianity’s views on *tawḥīd* as a distorted approximation of Islam’s, comparing it to what we know of the lost *Kitāb maqālāt al-nās wa-ḫtilāfihim* (*The teachings of people and the differences between them*) by ’Abū ‘Īsā l-Warrāq.

Section 1.3. Other ‘Abbāsid Claims to the Greek Past

As we set the stage for the Ḥunayn circle's own constructions of the Greek past, we must consider that al-Kindī's views did not provide the only model of that past prevailing in contemporary ‘Abbāsid society. Perhaps because al-Kindī's ideology placed so heavy an emphasis on Arab ethnicity in a multi-ethnic Islamic empire, we find attested three competing narratives which claimed the Greeks and their science for ‘Abbāsid society on the basis of geography instead. These accounts take the form of the *translatio studii,* that familiar story of knowledge transferred from locale to locale, though questions of religion and ethnicity appear in them as well. Like al-Kindī, they present the transfer of Greek science from West to East as the inevitable product of a teleology. Yet while the first narrative of *translatio studii* explicitly invokes Islam, the second claims the Greek tradition for ‘Abbāsid society on the basis of geography alone.

The first *translatio studii* is the famous ‘Alexandria-to-Baghdad’ narrative first attested in early-tenth-century sources, but as we shall shortly see there is good reason to project it back to the ninth. Its most famous exponent is the philosopher ’Abū Naṣr Muḥammad al-Fārābī (d. circa 950), who in a fragment of a lost work proposes the best known version of the narrative.[99] While quite long, al-Fārābī's version is worth quoting in full:

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[99] The fragment is quoted in Ibn ’Abī ’Uṣaybi‘a, *‘Uyūn al-’anbā’* 134-135. Ibn ’Abī ’Uṣaybi‘a does not state the title of the lost Fārābian work from which he derives the quotation. The classic study of the fragment and other versions of the ‘Alexandrian-to-Baghdad’ narrative is M. Meyerhof, “Von Alexandrien nach Bagdad. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des philosophischen und medizinischen Unterrichts bei den Arabern,” *Sitzungsberichte der Berliner Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, (1930: 389-429). For a critique of his use of the narrative as historical evidence see G. Strohmaier, “Von Alexandrien nach Bagdad: eine fiktive Schultradition” in J. Wiesner (ed.), *Aristoteles. Werk und Wirkung. Paul Moraux gewidmet.* B. 2 (Berlin, 1987): 381-389, reprinted in his *Von Demokrit bis Dante. Die Bewahrung antiken Erbes in der arabischen Kultur* (Hildesheim: 1996); and J. Lameer, “From Alexandria to Bagdad: Reflections on the Genesis of a Problematical Tradition” in R. Kruk and G. Endress (eds.), *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islam Hellenism* (Leiden, 1997: 181-191). See now D. Gutas, “The ‘Alexandria to Baghdad’ Complex of Narratives: a Contribution to the Study of Philosophical and Medical Historiography among the Arabs”, *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 10 (1999: 155-193).

The subject (*’amr*)[100] of philosophy became popular in the days of the Greek kings (*mulūk al-yūnāniyyīn*) after the death of Aristotle in Alexandria and up through the end of the woman’s [i.e. Cleopatra’s] rule. When [Aristotle] died, its instruction remained unchanged under the reign of thirteen kings. During the period of their reign, twelve teachers of philosophy taught in succession, the last of whom[101] was known as Andronicus [i.e. Andronicus of Rhodes]. The last of these kings was the woman whom Augustus, emperor (*malik*) of the Roman people, defeated and killed. He took over her dominion (*al-mulk*), and having secured it, he looked into the storehouses (*ḫazā’in*) of books and sorted them out,[102] finding there texts of Aristotle’s books which had been copied in the days of Aristotle himself and the days of Theophrastus. He found that scholars and philosophers had composed books on the [same] concepts that Aristotle had. He ordered that those books be recopied which had been copied in the days of Aristotle and his pupils, that there should be instruction in them, and that the others be disregarded. He appointed Andronicus to oversee this and ordered him to produce copies, some of which he would take with him to Rome and others of which he would allow to remain at the place of instruction in Alexandria. Further, he ordered him to appoint a teacher as a deputy to serve in his stead at Alexandria and to travel with him to Rome.

Instruction took place in both locations [Rome and Alexandria] and affairs continued in this fashion, until the coming of Christianity. Then instruction ceased in Rome (*rūmiyya*), but it remained in Alexandria until the Christian emperor (*malik*) examined the matter. The bishops convened and deliberated on what part of this instruction should be left in place and what part should be discontinued. They opined that the books of logic [i.e. Aristotle’s *Organon*] could be taught up to the end of the assertoric figures (*al-’aškāl al-wujūdiyya*) [i.e. from the *Categories* through *On Interpretation* and *Prior Analytics* 1.7][103], but the parts after that could not be taught, on the grounds that their contents were harmful to Christianity. By contrast, they opined that the permitted sections supported their religion. Thus public instruction in the earlier sections continued while the remaining parts were kept private, until the coming of Islam much later.

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[100] See Gutas (1999: 158 n. 13).

[101] Reading the emendation *’āḫiruhum* proposed by Strohmaier (1987: 381, n. 8) with Gutas (1999: 159, n. 18) for the *’aḥaduhum* (‘one of whom’) of the mss.

[102] Reading the variant *wa-ṣannafahā* with M. Steinschneider, “Al-Farabi”, *Mémoires de l’Académie Impériale des Sciences de Saint-Pétersbourg* 7.13.4 (St. Petersburg, 1869: 211) for the *wa-ṣan‘ihā* (‘and their production’) printed by Müller.

[103] See Gutas (1999: 179-186).

> Instruction was transferred from Alexandria to Antioch, and remained there for a long time until there was but one teacher left. Two men studied with him, and [later] departed taking their books with them. One of these was from the people of Ḥarrān, the other from the people of Marw. As for the one from the people of Marw, two men studied with him, one of whom was Ibrāhīm al-Marwazī and the other of whom was Yuḥannā ibn Ḥaylān. The bishop Isrā'īl and Quwayrā studied under the man from Ḥarrān. They travelled to Baghdad…

In al-Fārābī's telling, the tale is clearly meant to justify his own tenth-century Baghdad Aristotelian circle, by whom the remaining parts of *Organon* were finally being made available in Arabic and under whom the logical, rather than the geometrical, style of proof became ascendant.[104] Yet it has gone hitherto unobserved that the philosopher's account of Augustus' and the later Christian emperor's activities tap into the narratives preserved in al-Mas'ūdī and Ibn al-Nadīm which I discussed above in Section 1.1.

Just as in al-Mas'ūdī's *Meadows of Gold*, Augustus' defeat of Cleopatra is a pivotal moment in history when the Roman emperor attempted to gain mastery of the Greek tradition. Just as in Ibn al-Nadīm's version of the *Julian Romance* and his report of the Greek temple, a series of Roman emperors jealously controls access to Greek texts. Here Augustus even redacts Aristotle, an activity which al-Fārābī presents as benign and philologically astute, but which takes on more sinister overtones when carried on by his later Christian successor. The narrative also contains the theme of Greek books being locked away and rediscovered—even the root *ḫ-z-n* present in Ibn al-Nadīm's account reoccurs in al-Fārābī's 'storehouses' (*ḫazā'in*). The positive portrait of Augustus and some of the more historically grounded aspects of the report, including the mention of Andronicus of Rhodes, may be due to al-Fārābī's contact with his Syriac-speaking

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[104] See Gutas (2004: 209).

teachers.[105] Al-Fārābī's version, then, harnesses the stories of scheming Byzantine emperors and close-minded Christians which we observed in Section 1.1 to create the sense that the Greek sciences moved, in a neat teleology, from Alexandria ever further eastward to Baghdad. Augustus' brief attempt to reverse this East-to-West teleology by relocating philosophical instruction to his capital can only end in failure: Rome must necessarily be a dead end.

Yet although al-Fārābī's is the earliest attested and best known version of the story, he is not its originator nor is his version the closest to the original. The narrative exists in four separate but clearly related versions. In addition to al-Fārābī's, we have a similar version of the history of philosophical instruction in his contemporary al-Mas'ūdī's summary of the contents of his own lost *Varieties of Knowledge*.[106] We also have two versions that stress the *translatio* of medical instruction provided by the physicians Ibn Riḍwān (d. 1068) and Ibn Jumay' (d. 1198).[107] Common to all four of these narratives is the gradual shift of the seat of education from Alexandria to the lands of the caliphate and the claim that with coming of Christianity the Byzantine Emperor—al-Mas'ūdī alone reports his name as Theodosius [II?]—'dumbed down' the curriculum and suppressed certain portions of certain books because doing so supported the new faith. Dimitri Gutas has demonstrated that, rather than being mutually dependent, these four

[105] In this claim, I follow the arguments presented by Gutas (1999: 178-187).

[106] Al-Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh* 121-122 (Arabic), 169-171 (French). For an English translation see Gutas (1999: 158-168).

[107] Ibn Riḍwān, *Al-kitāb al-nāfi' fī kayfiyyat ta'līm ṣinā'at al-ṭibb,* K. al-Sāmarrā'ī (ed.) (Baghdad, 1986: 65-68), 107-108. For an English translation based on a corrected version of the text see Gutas (1999: 158-169). Ibn Jumay' in H. Fähndrich (ed.), *Ibn Jumay': Treatise to Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn on the Revival of the Art of Medicine*, Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morganlandes 46.3 (Wiesbaden, 1983), 23-26 (Arabic), 18-19 (English). See also Gutas (1999: 158-169).

reports trace their origins to the ninth century.[108] At the core of these 'Alexandria to Baghdad' narratives, he argues, are real historical changes in the medical curriculum in sixth-century Alexandria. In addition to the inclusion of segments of the *Organon* along with selections from the Hippocratic Corpus, the most notable change was the introduction of summaries or compendia of Galen in the place of his unabridged works—the well-known *Summaria Alexandrinorum* or *Jawāmi' al-'Iskandarāniyyīn*. Our earliest ninth-century Arabic source to mention the *Summaria* ascribes their introduction to student laziness.[109] In this narrative, the Alexandrian professors capitulate to the demands of their pupils who found reading the unabridged Galen too difficult or tedious. As Gutas argues, the propagandists of al-Ma'mūn and his Mu'tazilī successors took hold of this more or less historical account, and injected into it an anti-Christian slant consistent with that caliph's posited policy of "anti-Byzantinism as philhellenism". Far from being original to or shared by our four extant sources for the narrative, this anti-Christian element in fact shows signs of strain in their disparate contexts and must be ascribed to lost ninth-century sources on which they all ultimately draw.[110]

The earliest version of the propagandistic version that circulated in the ninth-century thus focussed not on broader philosophical but on medical and specifically logical instruction and its transfer from a backward Byzantine Christendom to the more enlightened the lands of the

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[108] Gutas (1999)

[109] This is Isḥāq ibn 'Alī al-Ruhāwī, 'Adab *al-ṭabīb* in *The Conduct of the Physician by Al-Ruhāwī* [Facsimile of the unique Edirne ms. Selimye 1658], Publications of the Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, F. Sezgin (ed.), Seris C. vol 18 (Frankurt a. M., 1985: 193-194). For the most accurate English translation see Gutas (1999: 169-170), with discussion.

[110] Gutas (1999: 174-178). See also Gutas (1998: 90-95).

caliphate. This medical focus will be important when we turn to the Ḥunayn circle's own engagement with the Greek past in Chapter 3. In their versions, the two physicians Ibn Jumayʿ and Ibn Riḍwān have apparently replaced the narrative of Cleopatra's defeat by Augustus found in al-Fārābī and al-Masʿūdī with a sweeping history of medicine derived from later sources.[111] I follow Gutas in identifying the second half of Ibn Riḍwān's account as containing the most original ninth-century content of the four. This, then, would be the narrative of *translatio studii* most familiar to Ḥunayn and his associates, which I present in Gutas's own meticulous translation from his corrected version of the text:

> Seeing that none of the [Christian] kings any longer awakened among the people a desire for [following] the teaching and that people preferred clarifying expositions by means of compendia and their likes, the most prominent Alexandrian physicians thought that if this [state of affairs] continued the craft [of medicine] would become extinct and the accomplishments of Hippocrates and Galen in [medicine], who had brought it to completion, would come to nothing. They asked the kings of the Christians to retain the teaching in Alexandria and to have the logical [curriculum[to be learned consist of primary books—that is, *Categories, De Interpretatione, Prior Analytics,* and *Posterior Analytics*—and the medical [curriculum] consist of twenty books. This was convenient to the kings of that religion. This instruction continued in Alexandria until the days of ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (God have mercy on him), for the director of instruction converted to Islam at his hands and became his companion when ʿUmar was still governor, before the rule had passed on to him.
>
> After the rule devolved upon ʿUmar, the instruction was transferred to Antioch and Ḥarrān and was dispersed in various lands. The teaching was in a state of confusion until the days of al-Ma'mūn, for he revived it by favoring the most excellent of men. But for that, all the sciences of the ancients, including medicine, logic, and philosophy, would have become extinct and forgotten, just as they are forgotten today in lands in which that had been cultivated most, I mean Rome, Athens, the Byzantine provinces, and in many other lands.[112]

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[111] See Gutas (1999: 178).

[112] Ibn Riḍwān, *Al-kitāb al-nāfiʿ*, 108. English translation by Gutas (1999: 164-166).

As Gutas himself notes, the narrative's origins in ninth-century ʻAbbāsid propaganda are most apparent in the lavish praise for al-Ma'mūn's alleged restoration of the ancient sciences nearly a century after the Graeco-Arabic translation movement was already underway.[113]

As I have already suggested, the role of the Christian Byzantine emperor in all of these narratives is particularly noteworthy. In the two physicians' versions, the reference is to plural kings, whereas in al-Fārābī's and al-Masʻūdī's one particular king is held responsible. Gutas has argued that the Byzantine historian John Malalas' (d. 578) portrait of the emperor Justinian, as filtered through the Syriac historical tradition, lies at the root of this element of the accounts.[114] After all, Malalas portrays Justinian's prohibition on non-Christian professors as a prohibition on philosophy in general.[115] Up to this point Gutas' account is plausible, but I disagree with his argument that this addition must be due to al-Fārābī, who in turn derived the historical information from his Syriac-speaking teachers. Al-Masʻūdī—whose account is demonstrably independent of al-Fārābī's[116]—also singles out one emperor in particular and names him Theodosius, not Justinian. Given that all four independent versions of the story place at least some of the blame on the Byzantine emperor or emperors, the most natural conclusion is that the

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[113] Gutas (1999: 177-178). The innclusion in the narrative of ʻUmar ibn ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz—the only 'Umayyad caliph whose image was rehabilitated under the ʻAbbāsids—is also significant: see the discussion in Gutas (1999: 187-188)

[114] Gutas (1999: 186-187)

[115] John Malalas, *Chronographia* = *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, L. Dindorf (ed.) (Bonn, 1831: 451)

[116] Although al-Masʻūdī does seem to draw on another work by al-Fārābī slightly earlier in the *Tanbīh*, his inclusion of the the caliphs under whom each transfer is said to have occurred among other disparate details demonstrates that, while he may have been familiar with al-Fārābī's telling, he is deriving his information from an earlier source. See most concisely Gutas (1999: 187, n. 89) against the views of Stern (1960: 40)

ninth-century propagandistic account also did so. In fact, as we shall see in Chapter 2, the idea that the Byzantine emperor is responsible for the suppression of texts had currency in the ninth-century. By including an account of the Byzantine emperor's meddling with ancient Greek texts, the 'Alexandria to Baghdad' narrative absorbed the idea of the Christian Byzantines as poor custodians of Greek books which we observed above and harnessed it for a narrative that claimed those books for Islam and the 'Abbāsids. In Chapter 3, we will find that this narrative of the ruler who redacts texts by imperial fiat will occur in connection with Homer in the writings of the translator Qusṭā ibn Lūqā, himself perhaps of Byzantine Greek origin and professionally charged with handling the texts of the *Yūnāniyyūn*.

Let us close our discussion of this first *translatio studii* by returning briefly to al-Fārābī and his contribution to the 'Alexandria-to-Baghdad' complex of narratives. Clearly, the elements of al-Fārābī's narrative that support the establishment of his Peripatetic school in Baghdad are his own innovations. Yet his transmutation of a history of medical and logical education into a history of logic and philosophy writ large may not be. After all, al-Mas'ūdī's independent account also casts the 'Alexandria-to-Baghdad' narrative as a history of philosophy, not of medicine. Before Gutas' synthesis, Joep Lameer had already situated the genesis of this philosophical history in a late-ninth-century Baghdad eager to establish a traditional Islamic chain of transmission between itself and the Greeks.[117] We are on less sure ground here, but it may be that elements of the philosophical *translatio studii* found in al-Fārābī and al-Mas'ūdī would have been accessible to Ḥunayn and his colleagues as well.

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[117] Lameer (1997: 189-191).

In this regard, let us turn to our second and final narrative of *translatio studii*. This account is also preserved by al-Fārābī and appears to recast the 'Alexandria-to-Baghdad' narrative on a grander, almost cosmic scale that eschews questions of religious and genealogical affiliation. If he adopted that narrative from his ninth-century predecessors, then perhaps this other aspect of his historical program should be traced to that earlier period as well. The passage in question occurs in his *Kitāb taḥsīl al-sa'āda* (*The Attainment of Happiness*), where philosopher has been discussing the science through which a human being obtains ultimate happiness and perfection:

> It is said of this science (*'ilm*) that in ancient times it was among the Chaldeans (*al-kaldāniyyīn*), who were the people of Iraq. Then it passed to the people of Egypt, then to the Greeks (*al-yūnāniyyīn*), then onward to the Syrians (*al-suryāniyyīn*), and then to the Arabs. Everything that this science encompasses was expressed in the Greek language, then in Syriac, and then in Arabic. The Greeks who possessed this science call it wisdom (*ḥikma*) in the absolute and supreme wisdom, and they call its acquisition science and its faculty philosophy (*falsafa*), by which they mean affection and love for wisdom. They call the one who has acquired it a philosopher (*faylasūf*), by which they mean the one who loves and has affection for the supreme wisdom.[118]

In this account, philosophy arose long ago among the Chaldeans of Iraq and now it has finally returned home. The narrative lays claim to Greek philosophy by invoking geography alone, without recourse to religion, genealogy, or even language, all of which are viewed as historical accidents. Like the 'Alexandria-to-Baghdad' narrative, this account implies a West-to-East teleology. Just as Augustus' transfer of Greek science from Alexandria to Rome was merely an aberration, so too in this account is philosophy's temporary sojourn in the West. Unlike the 'Alexandria-to-Baghdad narrative', this second *translatio studii* presents Greek learning as a

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[118]Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb taḥṣīl al-sa'āda* (Hyderabad, 1345 H/1926 CE): 38-39, Eng. trans. in M. Mahdi, *Alfarabi: Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle* (Ithaca, 2001 [1962, 1969]): 43.

native Mesopotamian product, and hence not truly foreign. At first blush, we might be tempted to seek the inspiration for this narrative from a late antique Neoplatonic source. Many Neoplatonists famously claimed that the teachings of Pythagoras, Plato and other Greek philosophers ultimately derived from the Near East, citing as proof Orientalizing pseudepigrapha like the *Chaldean Oracles*.[119] In this model, al-Fārābī or his source (note his "it is said", *yuqālu*) will have taken the narrative full circle. The Greeks might have invented the terminology to express this Chaldean wisdom, but such terminology is easily translated. With the coming of *falsafa* to Iraq in new Arabic dress, the ancient wisdom of the Chaldeans has been repatriated.

In fact, al-Fārābī is more likely reflecting a Syriac tradition in this cyclical narrative of scientific transfer. The narrative presented in al-Fārābī bears a striking resemblance to those espoused by al-Kindī, but the claim to a legitimate inheritance is based solely on geography rather than on ethnicity or religious confession. Despite his sympathy for his Syriac-speaking Christian teachers observed above, the marked inclusion of Syriac-speakers in the narrative of *translatio* is probably not al-Fārābī's addition, but reflects the contribution of these Syriac Christians. As we shall see in Chapter 3, Syriac writers starting with Severus Sebokht in the seventh century make the claim that Syriac speakers, as heirs to the Babylonians, are in fact the proper custodians and continuators of Greek science. In turn, the emphasis on the ancient wisdom of the Chaldeans, also called the Nabataeans in Arabic texts, may reflect not some

[119] Iamblichus was first to connect Greek philosophy with these verses and their promotion continued apace up through Proclus. For the Neoplatonist narrative of the Near East as the font of Greek wisdom, see especially Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 1.1.13-19 and *passim* in *Jamblique. Les mystères d'Égypte*, É. des Places (ed.), (Paris: 1966). This narrative of course has its roots in Plato himself and is in any case much older than the Neoplatonists: see the classic study of A. Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: the Limits of Hellenization* (Cambridge, 1975). Much Neoplatonic material was made available in Arabic, even esoteric works like Iamblichus' commentary on the Golden Verses, now lost in Greek: see H. Daiber (ed.), *Neuplatonische Pythagorica in arabischem Gewande: der Kommentar des Iamblichus zu den Carmina aurea* (Amsterdam, 1995).

posited Neoplatonic inheritance, but rather the contemporary influence of the Syriac-speaking Ḥarrānian polytheists or another minority group. Just like Syriac-speaking Christians, many such groups claimed to be the descendants of the ancient Mesopotamians and presented the Greek sciences as the legacy of ancient Iraq.[120] For now it is enough to observe that other narratives of repatriation that credited Syriac and Ḥarranian translators and were not as bound up in questions of religion and ethnicity had currency outside these respective groups—an important point come Chapter 3.

Before we conclude, we should also note a third and final Muslim narrative of scientific transfer that will be important when we investigate the Ḥunayn circle in Chapter 3, namely one belonging to one of their most generous set of patrons, the Banū Mūsā. We shall have occasion to return to this family of three brothers in Chapter 3, but for now we should note a brief account of *translatio studii* preserved in the brothers' preface to the *Kitāb al-daraj* (*Book of Degrees*), which purports to be a translation—from what language and by whom it is not clear—of ancient Greek astronomical wisdom into Arabic.[121] There the Banū Mūsā present the following narrative in order to explain the origin of their book:

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[120] On the equivalence of the Nabataeans and the Chaldeans, see al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj* §522 (Pellat). The Ṣabians of Ḥarrān and another Mesopotamian ethnic minority often traced the origins of Greek wisdom to ancient Mesopotamian nations like the Chaldaeans: see especially J. Hämeen-Anttila, *The Last Pagans of Iraq: Ibn Waḥshiyya and his* Nabataean Agriculture (Leiden, 2006: 3-84), together with my discussion of that work in Chapter 3.

[121] The text has not yet been published, and I rely on the report of A. Roberts, "The Crossing Paths of Greek and Persian Knowledge in the 9th-century Arabic 'Book of Degrees'" in C. Noce, M. Pampaloni, and C. Tavolieri (eds.), *Le vie del sapere in ambito siro-mesopotamico dal III al IX secolo* (Rome, 2013: 279-303) = *Orientalia Analecta Christiana* 293.

> The ancients from among the Greeks obtained most of their astral sciences from India, and they arranged them by virtue of their cleverness and great talents…The most beneficial and generally useful thing in which they took an interest was astrology.[122]

Alexandre Roberts has argued that we should read this account in light of the Sasanian accounts of Alexander's destruction of the Zoroastrian books and their subsequent repatriation.[123] Indeed, many of those accounts do indeed emphasize India.[124] Alternatively, the account may reflect nothing more than the very real primacy of Indian science in Baghdad some fifty years before the activities of the Banū Mūsā.[125] In either case, this brief and unproblematic account of translation that largely omits the very real difficulties posed by translation will become important in Chapter 3.

Let us conclude, then, while also looking forward to the coming chapters. In Section 1.1, we saw how 'Abbāsid society excluded the Byzantines from its understanding of the classical Greek tradition because of their geographical isolation, their Christian religion, or even their genealogical origins. In Sections 1.2 and 1.3, we observed competing 'Abbāsid narratives that sought to portray Islam or the Arabs or both as the true heirs to the Greeks. What role did these translators have in shaping such narratives themselves? As we have seen, 'Abbāsid society largely—though not exclusively—defined the classical Greeks by what they were not. They were not from the nation of the *Rūm*—the Romans or Byzantines—and they were not Christian, and it

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[122] I quote the translation of Roberts (2013: 284).

[123] Roberts (2013: 298-303)

[124] See K. van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science* (Oxford, 2009: 30-39).

[125] See especially K. van Bladel, "The Bactrian Background of the Barmakids" in A. Akasoy, C. Burnett, and R. Yoeli-Tlalim (eds.), *Islam and Tibet: Interactions along the Musk Routes* (Ashgate, 2011: 43-88).

was the lack of these qualities that distinguished their glorious achievements from what ‘Abbāsid writers believed was the sorry state of the sciences in contemporary Byzantium. Yet what *were* the classical Greeks like? One answer to this question lay in classical Greek texts themselves. Charged with the task of translation and holding a near monopoly on the Greek and Syriac languages, the Christian translators were in a privileged position to transmit their own version of the Greek past to the Muslim patrons who used their texts. As we shall see in Chapter 2, several ‘Abbāsid authors both Christian and Muslim express anxiety about the Christian translators' control over Greek texts and, by extension, the Greek past those texts encode.

Chapter 2. Tampering with the Greek Past: al-Jāḥiẓ and other critics of translation

In the last chapter, we saw that many Muslim intellectuals of the ninth and tenth centuries claimed the Greek past for Islam and the Arabs over and above the Christian Byzantines. This construction of the Greek past alleged that Christianity had led to the Greeks' downfall, but also that ʿAbbāsid Mesopotamia was ready to take up and continue their scientific legacy. In particular, we saw how the ninth-century philosopher al-Kindī had claimed unique access to the achievements of the Greek past via both an abstract teleology and a concrete genealogy that connected him personally with the likes of Aristotle and Plato. For al-Kindī, translation was unproblematic. Because of his special connection to the Greek past, the 'philosopher of the Arabs' claimed the ability to transcend the vagaries of translation and transmission and to communicate directly with his long-dead philosophical predecessors. In this chapter, I will examine ninth- and tenth-century Muslim voices—and one Christian voice—that problematize translation, radically questioning the ability of translators to give their readers an accurate picture of or clear access to the Greek past.

In Section 2.1, I demonstrate that in addition to Christian Arabic historiography and so-called 'wisdom literature', Graeco-Arabic translations of classical Greek authors provided a unique window onto ancient Greek society and history for those who cared to look. In fact, Muslim readers of the translations did use them for this purpose and saw them as irreplaceable, almost inimitable artifacts of the distant past. Yet precisely because of this perceived inimitability, Muslim intellectuals—starting with Ḥunayn's contemporary al-Jāḥiẓ—claimed that accurate translation of Greek works was impossible. Just as the Christian Byzantines were no

match for the Greeks of classical antiquity, Middle Eastern Christian translators could never match the wisdom of an Aristotle or a Galen. For al-Jāḥiẓ, satisfactory translation could only occur when the translator of work took on the qualities of the author translated. Because this condition was impossible, any translation of a Greek author was inevitably flawed and corrupt.

Yet Christian translators were not merely incompetent transmitters of the Greek past, unworthy of the Greek authors they translated and incapable of replicating their achievements in another language. In fact, as I show in Section 2.2, al-Jāḥiẓ and others held that—as Christians who worked professionally with texts—these translators were also deliberately deceptive. There was a deep-seated suspicion on the part of many Muslim writers that Christians were responsible for corrupting the text of the Bible and making it disagree with the Qur'ān—a concept known as *taḥrīf*. By the ninth and tenth centuries—the height of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement—discussions of *taḥrīf* begin to invoke translation as one of the vehicles by which Christians had achieved this falsification of scripture. Were the Christian translators of Greek texts performing similar acts of distortion in order to transmit a false understanding not of the prophetic past, but of classical Greek antiquity?

In Section 2.3, I conclude by turning to several accusations made by Muslim authors—and even one Christian—that invoke the language of *taḥrīf* to make precisely this allegation. Christian translators, these authors claim, transmit a distorted version of the Greek past that either Christianizes or Islamizes the Greeks or else in some way challenges Islam. Taken together, these accusations indicate that several 'Abbāsid intellectuals—including a Christian author with knowledge of Greek—expressed anxiety about the control Christian translators like Ḥunayn and his colleagues had over the Greek past via their translations. With their near

monopoly on Syriac and Greek, these Christian translators could, if these so chose, transmit their own version of that past by altering, omitting, or leaving in place elements of classical Greek culture embedded in the scientific texts that the formed the bulk of the translated corpus.

Thus the Muslim voices I discuss in this chapter engage directly with those I discussed in Chapter 1. Without questioning the importance of the Greek past for the ʻAbbāsid present, they question the ability of translation to provide access to it. They also make two radical claims that will have direct bearing on the activities of the Ḥunayn circle to which I will turn in Chapter 3. The first of these claims is that a translator can only hope to render a Greek author adequately by attaining the perfection and expertise of that author—apparently an impossibility. The second is that Christian translators are deliberately altering the texts of the ancient Greeks in ways that call into question the Muslim claim to possess the Greek past discussed in Chapter 1. Our key ninth-century figure in Chapter 1 was the credulous al-Kindī, so confident in his ability to bypass the Christian past and connect the Muslim present directly with Greek antiquity. For this chapter, our principal guide will be the wry and worldly al-Jāḥiẓ, an admirer of the Greeks who nevertheless refuses to ignore that he accesses their works via untrustworthy Christian intermediaries.

Section 2.1. Accessing the Greek Past Via Translations

As we have seen, ʻAbbāsid intellectuals of the ninth and earlier-tenth centuries invested a great deal in the classical Greek past, at least in the abstract. Yet for their understanding of that past, Muslim writers were almost entirely dependent on Christian writers. Sources of information on the Greek past fall into three broad categories: Christian historians working in Arabic, but with access to Greek and Syriac materials; collections of sayings and semi-legendary biographies

of ancient sages, mostly transmitted by Christians; and finally the writings of the esteemed Greek sages themselves, almost always in translations made by Christians. In reality, there would have been some overlap between these categories. What we might consider loose gnomologia or pseudepigrapha would, for some ʿAbbāsid-era intellectuals, have been subsumed into the third category. While we should be careful not to mislead ourselves by reifying these categories, we shall find that they are useful and map broadly onto the practices of the ʿAbbāsid-era writers.

The first category, Christian Arabic historiography, provided the skeletal frame over which other material on the ancient Greeks could be draped. In practice, this meant a rather circumscribed view of the Graeco-Roman past that privileged ecclesiastical history and downplayed most other features, as a survey of ninth- and tenth-century Arabic sources indicates. Greek history before Alexander the Great—the story of the *polis* and of the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars—almost completely disappeared.[126] The figure of Alexander, of course, and the associated Alexander Romance received much attention, and there was some knowledge of the Hellenistic kingdoms, particularly that of the Ptolemies but also that of the Seleucids.[127] While the Romulus and Remus legend was known, Roman history effectively began with the Caesars and its broad contours were dictated by events related to the Christian Church and its

[126] See the compendious overview of M. Di Branco, *Storie arabe di Greci e di Romani: la Grecia e Roma nella storiografia arabo-islamica medievale* (Pisa, 2009: 37-43)

[127] Di Branco (2009: 57-106)

rise from persecution to dominance.[128] On occasion, Muslim historians explicitly acknowledge their debt in these matters to the various Christian histories written in Arabic.[129]

Yet for ʿAbbāsid intellectuals who so urgently claimed the Greek past for their own present, there was a distinct dearth of concrete information about the hallowed *Yūnāniyyūn*. As we saw earlier, the classical Greeks were defined largely by they were not. They were not from the nation of the *Rūm*—the Romans or Byzantines—and they were not Christian. Yet what *were* the classical Greeks like? Such a question could partly be satisfied by our second category of gnomologia or the genre of the *nawādir al-falāsifa* whose popularity attests to readers' active curiosity about the morals and habits of the ancient Greeks.[130] The epistolary pseudepigrapha attributed to Philip the father of Alexander, to Alexander the Great himself, and to Aristotle which circulated in Arabic are particularly noteworthy in this regard.[131] These materials, which demonstrate substantial overlap with the gnomological tradition, supplement material originally in Greek with Syriac, Middle Persian, and Arabic additions, some of which date to the 'Ummayad period. The popularity of such material, and its reuse in Arabic historiographical

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[128] Di Branco (2009: 107-142)

[129] For instance, al-Masʿūdī *Kitāb al-tanbīh wa-l-ʾišrāf,* M.J. de Goeje (ed.) (Leiden, 1894: 154), French trans. in B. Carra de Vaux, *Maçoudi, Le livre de l'avertissement et de la revision* (Paris, 1896: 212) describes his use of the Christian Arabic historians Agapius of Hierapolis (d. 941 or 942) and Eutychius of Alexandria (d. 940).

[130] See especially D. Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation* (New Haven, 1975) and "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature: Nature and Scope", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101 (1982: 49-86). I briefly discuss Ḥunayn's own *Nawādir al-falāsifa* and the light it can shed on that translator's view of the Greek past in Chapter 3.

[131] For a brief overview alert to the many difficulties presented by these materials see D. Gutas, "On Graeco-Arabic Epistolary 'Novels', *Middle Eastern Literatures* 12.1 (2009: 59-70), with references.

works, points to an early and sustained interest in more than just rise and fall of Greek kings and Roman emperors.[132]

In such an environment, the Graeco-Arabic translations of classical works carried out by the likes of Ḥunayn and his workshop stood to provide the most direct information about the Greeks. For their ʻAbbāsid-era readers and users, these translations represented an almost unique conduit for positive knowledge about the classical Greek past and we have evidence that a variety of Arabic authors did in fact use them as such. We have already seen above the historian al-Masʻūdī's claim that he used the original writings of such authors as Aristotle and Galen to prove that they were Greeks (*yūnāniyyūn*) and not Romans or Byzantines (*rūm*), though the work in which he claims he did so is lost.[133] In his *Kitāb al-tanbīh wa-l-'išrāf* (*Admonition and Revision*) we find him correcting his earlier claim in the *Murūj al-ḏahab* (*Meadows of Gold*) that the astronomer Ptolemy was a member of the Ptolemaic dynasty—a gross anachronism—by referring to the astronomer's own works.[134] The earlier ninth-century historian al-Yaʻqūbī even explicitly cites Ptolemy's *Canons* as the source for a Greek kings list.[135]

The works of Galen were a particularly rich source for Arabic authors. As Gotthard Strohmaier observes, the frequently autobiographical nature of Galen's writings made him the

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[132] In the incorporation of this material into Muslim Arabic historiography see especially, Di Branco (2009: 57-106).

[133] See my discussion above in Section 1.1.

[134] al-Masʻūdī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh wa-l-'išrāf,* M.J. de Goeje (ed.) (Leiden, 1894: 129-130); French trans. in B. Carra de Vaux, *Maçoudi, Le livre de l'avertissement et de la revision* (Paris, 1896: 180-182).

[135] al-Ya ʻqūbī, *Ta'rīḫ* in *Ibn Wādih qui dicitur al-Jaʻqūbī, Historiae*, M. Houtsma (ed.) (Leiden, 1969: 1,161)

only Greek author whose life and personality were directly accessible to Arabic readers.[136] Writers as diverse as Ibn al-Hayṯam (d. c. 1040) and al-Fārābī (d. 950 or 951)—neither of whom was a physician—refer to autobiographical passages from Galen's works almost as if he were their contemporary.[137] For Muslim historiographers, the Ḥunayn circle's Graeco-Arabic translations of Galen were a goldmine. Al-Mas'ūdī himself was interested in the chronology of Galen's life, and his earliest extant reference to Galen's death in the *Meadows of Gold* is basically accurate.[138] Even at this stage, he is likely to have done so based on selections from Galen's autobiographical works.[139] In fact, al-Mas'ūdī's later *Admonition and Revision* contains several historical accounts, this time based explicitly on Galen's work, using Galen's own testimony to flush out a list of Roman emperors derived ultimately from Christian Arabic historiography. Here al-Mas'ūdī elaborates on his earlier chronology with a direct reference to Galen's autobiographical works, correctly placing the physician under Commodus and establishing his home city as Pergamon.[140] The historian uses Galen's own testimony to establish

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[136] G. Strohmaier, "Galen in Arabic: Prospects and Projects" in V. Nutton (ed.), *Galen: Problems and Prospects* (London, 1981: 187-196 at 189): "Galen is often ridiculed for his digressions and his excessive self-praise. But in this way Galen became for the Muslims the only vivid personality of classical antiquity, while all the others, be they physicians or philosophers or scientists, let alone statesmen or poets, remained shadowy, semi-mythical figures."

[137] See Strohmaier (1981: 189), with references.

[138] al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-ḏahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar* §728 (Pellat) is vague and dates his death to the reign of Elagabalus (r. 218-222). On the difficulty of dating Galen's death—a problem for which we must in fact rely in part on the Arabic tradition—see V. Nutton, *Ancient Medicine* (London, 2004: 226-227). Al-Mas'ūdī's dating jibes more or less with the best modern efforts to date the physician's death.

[139] R. Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians* (Oxford, 1949:75-98) argues that a late-antique Greek *Life of Galen* containing such fragments circulated in Arabic translation starting the first century. Whether or not we accept that conclusion, it is clear from Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a's testimony these attempts to establish Galen's chronography depended on Galen's own words in his autobiographical writings and other works. Walzer (1949: 91) suggests that this tendency is traceable perhaps even to the late ninth-century, since Galen's biography caught the attention of several ninth- and tenth-century authors, most notably Ibn al-Munajjim.

[140] al-Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh* 130-131 (Arabic), 183 (French)

a wide variety of other historical data as well, from the social position of Christians in Galen's day to the familiar legend concerning Hippocrates and his refusal to treat the Persian king Artaxerxes.[141] He is careful to note in each instance the work of Galen from which he draws—which notably include the *On My Own Books,* the *Character Traits*, and the *Commentary on the Hippocratic Oath.* He usually names the translator, invariably Ḥunayn ibn 'Isḥāq.[142]

In addition to Galen, other ancient Greeks works too might be drawn on for historical purposes. Al-Mas'udī cites, for instance, Themistius and Alexandria of Aphrodisias for historical purposes, again citing the translator where he can.[143] While the anonymous gnomological tradition sated much of the appetite for biographical details concerning ancient Greek authors, works such as Porphyry's *Philosophos historiā* (*History of Philosophy*) were also translated and consulted.[144] We find several examples of how a ninth- and tenth-century Arabic author might use these materials to conduct 'original research' on the Greek past via such sources in the seventh book of Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*. The author, for instance, cites first Porphyry and then Qusṭā ibn Lūqā's translation of Ps.-Plutarch's *Placita philosophorum* in order to illustrate a

[141] See al-Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh* 131-132 (Arabic), 183-184 (French), citing the (ps.-?) Galenic *Commentary on the Hippocratic Oath*. Later we find al-Bīrūnī and Ibn al-Qifṭī also using Ḥunayn's translation of this lost work to recount this same legend: see F. Rosenthal, "An Ancient Commentary on the Hippocratic Oath", *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 30 (1956: 52-87), reprinted in his *Science and Medicine in Islam* (Aldershot, 1991: 52-87). Attempts to align Greek history before Alexander according with Achaemenid chronology, however imperfectly understood, is not unique to al-Mas'ūdī. For instance, Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, G. Flügel (ed.) (Leipzig, 1871: 245), English trans. in B. Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm* (New York, 1970: 2, 591) asserts that Socrates died under Artaxerxes [II].

[142] The titles and identifications provided in the translation and notes of Carra de Vaux should be consulted with extreme caution. They are conjectures made before the important twentieth-century work on the Arabic Galen had been done and most are now incorrect.

[143] al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj* §1389 (Pellat)

[144] See R. Walzer, "Porphyry and the Arabic Tradition" in *Porphyre*, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 12 (Geneva, 1965: 274-299 at 282-283).

controversy over whether Thales or Pythagoras was the first philosopher.[145] While as modern scholars we might consider Porphyry and the ps.-Plutarch 'gnomological' sources, Ibn al-Nadīm treats them as hallowed authorities whom he cites by name, placing them squarely in the third of the three categories outlined at the beginning of this section.

Beyond providing this biographical and historical information, however, Graeco-Arabic translations were the only window into the culture, politics, and religion of the Graeco-Roman world available to Arabic authors. Some Muslim intellectuals explicitly sought to use the translations to do so. A remarkable example lying slightly outside our period is the scholar 'Abū al-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (d. 1048), who mines the Graeco-Arabic translations of the ninth and tenth centuries in order to compare ancient Greek religion, science, and culture to that of the contemporary Indians.[146] His compendious work, often called the *India* by modern scholars, is replete with quotations from Greek authors ranging from Plato to Aratus to John Philoponus, on topics ranging from Zeus' attributes to the scansion of Greek poetry to accounts of the ancient Greeks' mortuary rituals.[147] While no comparable work is extant from the ninth- or tenth-centuries, al-Bīrūnī does attest that Muslim users of the Graeco-Arabic translations were not

[145] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* 245 (Arabic), 590 (English)

[146] al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb taḥqīq mā li-l-hind min maqūla maqbūla fī-l-'aql 'aw marḏūla* (*Inquiry into the Indians' statements, both those that are acceptable by reason and those that are to be rejected*), in E. Sachau (ed.), *Alberuni's India, an account of the religion, philosophy, literature, chronology, astronomy, customs, laws and astrology of India about A.D. 1030.* (London, 1887); English trans. in E. Sachau, *Al-Bîrûnî's India, an account of the religion, philosophy, literature, chronology, astronomy, customs, laws and astrology of India about A.D. 1030.* (London, 1888)

[147] The topics mentioned occur, respectively, at *India* 47 (Arabic), 97 (English) (the Stoic Zeus is compared to Brahman); 68 (Arabic), 143 (English) (Greek and Sanskrit meter bear similarities); 283 (Arabic), 167-168 (English) (Greek vs. Indian funerary practices). These represent merely a handful of the many instances in which al-Bīrūnī deploys knowledge of ancient Greek culture gleaned from translated Greek works. The subject has yet to receive substantial attention, but see G. Strohmaier, "Das Bild der Antike im Werk al-Bīrūnīs, eines muslimischen Philhellenen des Mittelalters", *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 1 (1994: 17-22), reprinted in his *Hellas im Islam* (Wiesbaden, 2003: 62-66).

blind to such cultural content in the Graeco-Arabic texts they were reading. Indeed, an author like al-Mas‘ūdī closer in time to the ninth-century translators exhibits similar tendencies. For instance, in addition to citing a work by Ḥunayn, he uses the famous reference to the sacrificial cock at the end of Plato's *Phaedo*—perhaps accessed through a Galenic epitome—to establish the role played by the god Asclepius in the religion of the *Yūnāniyyūn*.[148]

Moreover, unlike Christian Arabic historiography and gnomologia, the works of the famous Greek sages themselves enjoyed a privileged place in the historical imaginations of many ‘Abbāsid-era intellectuals. As we saw in the quotation of al-Jāḥiẓ's *Reply to the Christians* in Chapter 1, these were not mere sources for the past deeds and thoughts of the Greeks, they were in fact the precious, irreproducible traces (*'āṯār*) of such inimitable intellects as Plato, Aristotle and Galen, now long perished.[149] In handling a work by Aristotle, the reader was not just accessing the past through a book, he was actually interacting with a part of that past. Consequently, for some ninth-century Muslim intellectuals like the philosopher al-Kindī and his pupil 'Aḥmad ibn al-Ṭayyib al-Saraḫsī, the works of ancient Greek authors took on a numinous quality. Our primary evidence comes from al-Saraḫsī's *Risāla fī waṣf maḏāhib al-ṣābi'īn* (*Description of Sabians' Doctrines*), an ethnographic treatise in which he collected al-Kindī's research on the religious views of the so-called Ṣabians of Ḥarrān. Of this work we possess only a few fragments quoted in later authors, but to judge from these al-Saraḫsī dealt in detail with the

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[148] al-Mas‘ūdī, *Tanbīh* 131-132 (Arabic), 184-185 (French). Al-Mas‘ūdī probably accessed the *Phaedo* passage as an isolated quotation second hand, as there is no direct evidence that the *Phaedo* was translated in its entirety into Arabic: see D. Gutas, "Platon. Tradition arabe" in *DPA* vol. 5, part a, 845-63). At *India* 17 (Arabic), 36 (English), al-Bīrūnī is similarly interested in Asclepius' divinity. He draws his evidence from (ps.-?) Galen's lost *Commentary on the Hippocratic Oath.* Since from a different fragment of the work it is clear that the *Commentary* mentioned the sacrificial cock this may have been al-Mas'ūdī source for the Plato passage as well*:* see the references and commentary in Rosenthal (1956: 61-62 and 72).

[149] See my discussion of the passage above in Section 1.1.

alleged rites of the Ṣabians, their astral deities, and their religious calendar.[150] Most interesting for our purposes, however, is al-Kindī's and al-Saraḫsī's attempt to represent Ḥarrānian, and hence ancient Greek, religion as a Religion of the Book, that is one based on revealed texts, just like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Given that the Ḥarrānians had since the ninth-century claimed protected status as People of the Book despite their polytheism, this would not have been too farfetched.[151]

According to al-Saraḫsī, the Ṣabians honored ancient Greek figures like Hermes and Solon as prophets analogous to Moses, Christ, and Muḥammad and they derived their doctrine from the texts of Aristotle and Plato.[152] Hence precisely those ancient Greek philosophical works whose translation al-Kindī sponsored were in some limited sense considered to be the revealed texts of Greek religion by the philosopher and his students. These Greek texts may even have been so considered by some of the Ḥarrānian Ṣabians themselves, such as the scientist and Graeco-Arabic translator Ṯābit ibn Qurra with whom al-Kindī may well have associated in Baghdad.[153] If al-Kindī did consort with actual Ṣabians, they do not seem to have looked kindly upon his intrusion. Al-Kindī's attempts to claim these Greek books for himself, discussed at length in the previous chapter, were met with derision by Baghdad's Ṣabian set, if we are to trust

[150] The fragments have been collected by F. Rosenthal, *Aḥmad B. aṭ-Ṭayyib as-Saraḫsī,* American Oriental Series 26 (New Haven, 1943: 40-53).

[151] See the story Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* 320-321 (Arabic), 751-753 (English), with the discussion of T. Green, *The City of the Moon God: Religious Traditions of Harran* (Leiden, 1992: 2-6).

[152] Rosenthal (1943: 42-43 and 49-51).

[153] See Green (1992: 114).

a passing remark found in the tenth-century littérateur al-Tawḥīdī.[154] In any case, this Kindian attitude toward Greek books resembles that of the later *faylasūf* al-Fārābī. As we saw in Chapter 1, the tenth-century philosopher held himself to be the reviver of a nearly extinguished tradition inaugurated by Plato and Aristotle and only accessible through their books, much as a Qur'ānic prophet might see himself in relation to those who came before him.[155]

Al-Kindī and his disciples held heterodox views and might be expected to treat ancient Greek works as quasi-revelatory.[156] Yet more orthodox Muslims too could suggest a comparison between revealed scripture and the works of the Greek sages. This way of viewing ancient Greek books comes across in a lengthy digression on the nature of translation found in the first part of the *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* (*Book of the Animals*) by the ninth-century littérateur al-Jāḥiẓ, whose views on the classical Greeks we have already had occasion to sample in Chapter 1.[157] The author has been recounting a controversy between those who favor poetry (*al-ši'r*) and those who favor prose (*al-kutub*). Even those who favor poetry, he writes, admit that the prose books of the

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[154] al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-'imtā' wa-l-mu'ānasa,* 'A. 'Amin and 'A. Zayn (eds.) (1939-1944: 1,128), English trans. in D.S. Margoliouth, "The Discussion between Abu Bishr Matta and Abu Sa'id al-Sirafi on the Merits of Logic and Grammar", *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1905: 79-129 at 128).

[155] See Section 1.3 above.

[156] See especially G. Endress, "al-Kindī über die Wiedererinnerung der Seele: Arabischer Platonismus und die Legitimation der Wissenschaften im Islam", Oriens 34 (1994: 174-221 especially 179), an aspect of al-Kindī's *falsafa* which Endress characters as a religion for the intellectual elite. For his part, al-Saraḫsī wrote a treatise attacking prophets as charlatans: see Rosenthal (1943: 40 and 51).

[157] al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān,* 'A. Hārūn (ed.) (Cairo: 1938-1945), 1, 75-79. For more general discussions of this important passage in its 'Abbāsid context, see U. Vagelpohl, "The 'Abbasid Translation Movement in Context: Contemporary Voices on Translation", *'Abbasid Studies II: Occasional Papers of the School of 'Abbasid Studies Leuven 28 June - 1 July 2004* (Leuven, 2010: 245-267 at 260-263 and M. Salama-Carr, "Translation as seen by Al-Jāḥiẓ and Ḥunayn Ibn Isḥāq: Observer versus Practitioner" in D. A. Agius and I. R. Netton (eds.), *Across the Mediterranean Frontiers. Trade, Politics and Religion, 650-1450* (Brussels, 1997: 385-393) and *La traduction à l'époque abbasside: l'école de Ḥunayn Ibn Isḥāq et son importance pour la traduction,* (Paris, 1990: 91-101). A discussion is also given in M. Cassarino, *Traduzioni e traduttori arabi dall'viii all'xi secolo* (Rome, 1998: 84-97) and a French translation of the digression with commentary was made by 'A. Badawi, *La traduction de la philosophie grecque au monde arabe* (Paris, 1968: 21-25).

ancient Greeks, Indians, and other nations are wondrous monuments of a distant past, which have proven more lasting than both poetry and even ancient buildings (*al-bunyān*).[158] Yet the fact that they are are accessed via translations is not a point in these prose works' favor. Claiming to report the views of poetry's supporters, al-Jāḥiẓ asserts the essential impossibility of translation on several grounds, including his belief that no one can achieve true bilingualism. Yet he stresses another reason, the genius of the ancient Greek authors themselves, something that translators of the present age cannot hope to imitate let alone achieve:

> The translator (*al-tarjumān*) can never convey what the sage (*al-ḥakīm*) has said, including the particulars of his meaning, the truths of his doctrines, the niceties of his concisions, and the secrets of his definitions. The translator can never live up to what these qualities merit nor convey them reliably, and he cannot achieve what is incumbent upon him as representative and deputy. For how can he express these contents and render their meanings correctly? How can he report them truly and faithfully, unless he possesses the same knowledge (*'ilm*) as the author and composer of the book did regarding the words' meanings, the usage of their inflections, and the interpretation of their articulations? Indeed, when were the late Ibn al-Biṭrīq, Ibn Nā'ima [al-Ḥimsī], [Theodore] 'Abū Qurra,[159] Ibn Fihrīr, Theophilus, Ibn Wahīlī, and Ibn al-Muqaffa' ever equal to Aristotle? When was Khālid ever equal to Plato?[160]

Of the translators whom al-Jāḥiẓ lists, we may identify the Christian apologist and Melkite bishop of Ḥarrān Theodore 'Abū Qurra (d. c. 820), the Christian translator of Aristotle Yaḥyā (or Yūḥannā) ibn al-Biṭrīq (fl. early ninth-century), and the Christian translator of the Plotinian

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[158] al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān,* 1, 75

[159] Hārūn's edition prints 'Ibn Qurra' here. Later at 1,78, Hārūn reports that the MSS have 'Abū Qurra when al-Jāḥiẓ mentions this translator a second time, though he corrects this to Ibn Qurra apparently on the belief that Ṯābit ibn Qurra is meant. I, however, follow G. Endress in F. Wolfdietrich (ed.), *Grundriss der arabischen Philologie*, Bd. 3, Supplement (Wiesbaden, 1992: 4) in positing that Theodore 'Abū Qurra is meant on both occasions. Al-Jāḥiẓ's formula *raḥimahu l-lāh* (literally 'God rest him') after the verb suggests that the whole list is one of deceased translators. Yet al-Jāḥiẓ wrote the *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* sometime earlier than 847, as C. Pellat, *The Life and Works of Al-Jāḥiẓ* (London, 1969: 10) deduces from the work's dedication. Thābit ibn Qurra (826-901) was not only alive at the time of al-Jāḥiẓ's writing, but as young man of no more than twenty-one years can hardly be expected to have made his name as a translator.

[160] al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān,* 1, 75-76

pseudo-*Theology* of Aristotle Ibn Nāʿima al-Ḥimsī (fl. early ninth-century). We may also identify the Muslim convert of Iranian origin and questionable orthodoxy, ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. c. 759), who translated from Syriac and Pahlavi not only Aristotle but also the collection of Indian beast fables known as *Kalīla wa-Dimna*.

Before we go further, it is important to note that al-Jāḥiẓ is not merely criticizing the translators here, but also indirectly attacking al-Kindī's claim to access the Greek past via translations, analyzed in Chapter 1. Two of these Christian translators mentioned—Ibn al-Biṭrīq and al-Ḥimsī—can be associated firmly with the Kindī circle.[161] As we saw in Chapter 1, the prologue of the pseudo-*Theology* even connects al-Ḥimsī with al-Kindī's practice of correcting of the Graeco-Arabic translations he commissioned.[162] When we observes that the two sages invoked by al-Jāḥiẓ are none other than Plato and Aristotle, it is likely that our satirist is deflating the philosopher's pretensions to be the heir to and conduit for Greek philosophy in Arabic. In another work, al-Jāḥiẓ attacks al-Kindī by name, painting him as a miserly hypocrite and apparently parodying his style of philosophical argumentation.[163] If we are correct in reading this passage from the *Book of the Animals* as an indirect attack on the Kindī circle, then al-Jāḥiẓ is here suggesting a more subtle criticism, one that puts the lie to al-Kindī's claim to transcend the vagaries of translation observed in Chapter 1. If al-Kindī is relying on Graeco-Arabic translations

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[161] For an on overview of both their roles in the Kindī circle see C. D'Ancona, "Pseudo-"Theology of Aristotle", Chapter I: Structure and Composition", *Oriens* 2001 (78–112 at 81-83). The association between al-Kindī and Ibn al-Biṭrīq relies on indirect evidence: see G. Endress, *Die arabische Übersetzungen von Aristoteles' Schrift* De caelo, Frankfurt/Main (1966: 118-134).

[162] See my discussion above in Section 1.2.

[163] See with references the discussion in P. Adamson, *al-Kindī* (Oxford, 2007: 17).

for his access to the Greek past, then his mission is necessarily hopeless, for these translators and their translations are inadequate.

Turning to the grounds on which al-Jāḥiẓ asserts this inadequacy, we begin to understand how radically al-Jāḥiẓ departs from al-Kindī's optimism regarding the Greek past's accessibility, even while he shares the philosopher's awe at the achievement of the Greek sages. As the passage quoted above indicates, al-Jāḥiẓ holds that the works of an author like Plato or Aristotle are unique, inimitable achievements of the distant past and hence out of these translators' reach. Unless the translator attains the same perfection as the author he translates, translation is impossible. In stressing the irreproducibility of a Greek sage's language and style, we might hear echoes of the doctrine of *'ijāz al-qur'ān,* the inimitability of the Qur'ān as revealed scripture.[164] Of course, the Qur'ān is inimitable because it is the direct word of God, whereas Plato and Aristotle are merely men. Still, it surely no accident that, after the quoted passage, al-Jāḥiẓ transitions seamlessly from discussing the impossibility of translating Greek philosophy to the impossibility of translating revealed books (*kutubu dīnin*).[165] In their inimitability and wondrous perspicacity, the Greek works already bear a distinct resemblance to revelation, though true revelation they of course are not. Indeed, it is noteworthy in this regard that we possess fragments of a blasphemous attempt to imitate the Qur'ān's style ascribed to none other than Ibn al-Muqaffa', one of the translators explicitly invoked by our satirist in his list.[166] Thus one of the

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[164] On al-Jāḥiẓ's discussion of this concept elsewhere in his body of work, see C. Pellat, *Life and Works of Jāḥiẓ* (London, 1969: 47-48).

[165] al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān,* 1, 77-79

[166] J. van Ess, "Some Fragments of the *Mu'arradat al-Qur'an* Attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffa'", in W. al-Qadi (ed.), *Studia Arabica et Islamica, Festschrift for Ihsan 'Abbas* (Beirut, 1981: 151-163).

earliest translators of Greek materials—and the earliest identifiable translator mentioned by al-Jāḥiẓ—was well-known not only for his attempt to reproduce in Arabic the writings of ancient sages, but also to for his attempt to replicate inimitable scripture. This coincidence suggests some overlap between these two activities and between these two categories of text in the imagination of some ʻAbbāsid-era intellectuals.

Elsewhere in his digression on translation, al-Jāḥiẓ again stresses that only a perfect equivalence between author and translator can yield an accurate translation. This time, however, he stresses that the gap between their levels of linguistic attainment is further widened by the translator's inevitable lack of technical knowledge:

> Whenever entry into a science (*al-bābu min al-ʻilmi*) is harder and narrower, and those knowledgeable in the science (*al-ʻulamāʼu bihi*) are fewer in number, it is harder for the translator (*al-mutarjim*), and it is more probable that he will make a mistake. You will never find a translator who can substitute (*yafī*) for a single one for these experts (ʻ*ulamā*).[167]

It is tempting again to find some imaginative overlap here between the unattainable information of the unseen (*al-ġayb*) provided by prophetic revelation alone and the Greeks' unattainable level of scientific achievement. Yet al-Jāḥiẓ is surely also reflecting a historical reality. It is only in the second half of the ninth-century—coinciding with the floruit of the Ḥunayn circle—that Graeco-Arabic translators start to become noteworthy scientists and philosophers in the their own right. Readers of the earliest ʻAbbāsid-era translations such as al-Jāḥiẓ may have suspected a very real lack of technical knowledge on the part of the translator.

The translator's lack of experience in both the linguistic niceties of the author and in the subject area being translated is, for al-Jāḥiẓ, compounded by a third factor. Graeco-Arabic

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[167] al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān,* 1, 77

translators—incompetent and unworthy of the Greek authors even under the best conditions—are in fact working with faulty texts:

> If the translator who translates a given work is not perfect (*lā yakmulu*) for that task, then he will err by as much as he falls short of perfection (*al-kamāl*). What knowledge does the translator have of distinguishing proof (*al-dalīl*) from the appearance of proof? What knowledge has he of astronomical reports? What knowledge has he of secret definitions? What knowledge has he of correcting lapses of speech and the mistakes of the books' copyists (*al-nāsiḫīna li-l-kutub*)? What knowledge has he of distinguishing unreason from solid premises? Indeed, we know that solid premises must be obligatory and must be arranged in sequence, like an extended string. Now Ibn al-Biṭrīq and 'Abū[168] Qurra have no understanding of these matters even when they are described and reduced or arranged and categorized by a gentle teacher and skilled expert (*min mu'allimin rafīqin wa-min ḥāḏiqin ṭabbin*). So what about a book handed down through various languages (*al-luġāt*) and by a diversity of pens, and by all manner of scripts belonging to the different creeds and nations (*al-milal wa-l-'umam*)?[169]

Again, al-Jāḥiẓ insists on perfect knowledge equivalent to that possessed by a Greek sage as a necessary condition for proper translation. Yet such perfection is not sufficient: even the best translator will be flummoxed by a corrupt text. Indeed, it is only by possessing the same knowledge as the sage that the translator can begin to guess at what his original meaning might have been, extracting it from beneath the errors of later scribes. In the sentences following this passage, al-Jāḥiẓ isolates the gradual corruption of the text from one generation of copyists to the next as the single greatest stumbling block for satisfactory translation. Even a lack of eloquence in Arabic on the part of the translator is less deleterious.

So far, the littérateur has emphasized the failure of the translators to live up to the Greeks as well as the tenuous textual tradition that connects them to these authors of the distant past. He has not suggested deliberate textual corruption. Yet as he concludes his digression by again

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[168] See note 159 above.

[169] al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān,* 1, 78

emphasizing the gradual corruption of the Greeks' books, his tone begins to change. Even in the case where a living writer reviews the first copies of his book and ensures that they are free of error, there is still the subsequent problem of later copyists:

> After that, the book is copied by another person, and in doing so this second copyist follows the example of the first, and the book continues to be passed down by criminal hands (*al-'aydī al-jāniyya*), through corrupting accidents, until it has become sheer error and plain falsehood (*ġalatan ṣirfan wa-kiḏban muṣmatan*). So what then is your opinion of a book which successive generations of translators have corrupted, which scribes have by turns subjected to evil treatment (*bi-šarrin*) of this sort or the like, a book of ancient origin and antique fabrication?[170]

The passage contains some of the language of unintentional corruption we have seen before. Yet now al-Jāḥiẓ comes close to suggesting that copyists in general and translators in particular bear some moral culpability for their corruption. Phrases such as 'criminal hands' and 'evil treatment' flirt with the the notion of deliberate alteration and we should note carefully al-Jāḥiẓ's insistence that the corruption of books—Greek or otherwise—is a gradual, trans-generational process. Indeed elsewhere in the *Book of the Animals*, in a discussion centering on fish species, al-Jāḥiẓ again has occasion to emphasize the vast distance that stretches between him and the translators and between the translators and the translated authors. Since his own experience dissecting a carp contradicts what he has read in certain reports, al-Jāḥiẓ wonders how he can ever again trust in the stories of fishermen and sailors or, for that matter, in books transmitted by translators.[171] This unexpected and imaginative leap on the author's part equates the physical distances traversed by sailors who tell tall tales and the temporal distances traversed by the deceptive translators of ancient books. Al-Jāḥiẓ goes on to hint once again at deliberate tampering or at

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[170] al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān,* 1, 79

[171] al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān,* 6, 19

least criminal negligence when he muses, ahistorically, on how satisfying it would be for a translated author to put his translator on public trial for his deception or falsehood (*kiḏb*) and his corruption (*’ifsād*) of the author’s meaning via mistranslation (*bi-su’i tarjamatihi*).

This view of Graeco-Arabic translation is not limited to al-Jāḥiẓ among ‘Abbāsid-era authors. Rather, we find a similar understanding of translation about a century later in the littérateur al-Tawḥīdī’s report of a debate on the merits of Greek logic vis-à-vis Arabic grammar between the Aristotelian translator ’Abū Bišr Mattā ibn Yūnus and the grammarian ’Abū Sa‘īd al-Sīrāfī.[172] In the course of their discussion on the universality of Greek logic, the question of translation arises and al-Sīrāfī asserts that it impossible to translate the niceties of a long-dead language (Greek) into a modern one (Arabic), especially via the medium of third language (Syriac) as in ’Abū Bišr’s case.[173] Much mockery is made of ’Abū Bišr’s poor command of Arabic and his own professed ignorance of the Greek language itself. Just al-Jāḥiẓ had argued, al-Tawḥīdī’s report of the dialogue stresses the Syriac Christian translator can never hope to translate a Greek author. Without being a member of the Greek nation (*qawm*), he argues, and without knowing the intention of an author’s Greek inflections (*’aġrāḍahum bi-taṣārīfihā*), that is without a nearly impossible overlap of identity between translator and author, the former cannot translate the latter with any accuracy.

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[172] The report is found in al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-’imtā‘ wa-l-mu’ānasa,* ’A. ’Amin and ’A. Zayn (eds.) (1939-1944: 1,108-129). For an English translation of the report see D.S. Margoliouth, “The Discussion between Abu Bishr Matta and Abu Sa'id al-Sirafi on the Merits of Logic and Grammar”, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1905: 79-129). On the question of the report’s transmission and the extent to which it reflects a historical debate, see U. Vagelpohl, “The Abbasid translation movement in context : contemporary voices on translation”, in J. Nawas (ed.), *Abbasid studies II. Occasional papers of the School of Abbasid Studies*. Leuven, 28 June - 1 July 2004. Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta (No.177), (Leuven, 2010: 245-267)

[173] Al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-’imtā‘,* 111 (Arabic), 114 (English)

Al-Jāḥiẓ had emphasized a third factor as well, namely the inimitability of the translated Greek sages. It may be a testament to ‘Abbāsid society's scientific confidence and absorption of Greek learning by the tenth century that, in al-Tawḥīdī, we in fact find al-Sīrāfī stressing the opposite view. The grammarian explicitly and sarcastically denies the grotesque notion—a notion in fact suggested on the thematic level by al-Jāḥiẓ and on the literal level by al-Kindī, al-Saraḫsī and the Ṣabians—that God has singled out the Greeks as some inspired and infallible race. He insists that the divine presence (*al-sakīna*) has not descended upon them and marked them out as prophets—a *reductio ad absurdum* of 'Abū Bišr's position.[174] Rather, the Greeks are like other nations (*ka-ġayrihim min al-'umam*) in their successes and their failures, their discoveries and their errors. Despite this key difference, al-Tawḥīdī's report echoes al-Jāḥiẓ's insistence upon the vast gap in time and identity between translator and author translated.

Yet the similarities between the two continue. In his peroration on the futility of 'Abū Bišr's translation activity, the grammarian al-Sīrāfī also slips into al-Jāḥiẓ's language of corruption and criminal misrepresentation, perhaps even of deliberate distortion:

> 'Abū Sa‘īd [al-Sīrāfī] said: Even if we grant to you that translation (*al-tarjama*) is truthful and does not deceive (*kaḏabat*), sets aright and does not distort (*ḥarrafat*), is precise and not vague, that it is neither obscure nor injurious (*ḥāfat*), neither reduces (*naqaṣat*) nor expands (*zādat*), that it places [words] neither too soon nor too late, that it does not botch the sense of the particular and the general, nor of the most particular and the most general —though this cannot be, for it is neither in the nature of languages nor within the capabilities of sense—then, even so, you make the following [objectionable] point…[175]

For the sake of argument, al-Sīrāfī is willing to look past the accomplished fact that translation results in tampering. Later in al-Tawḥīdī's report, the grammarian will again speak of distortion

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[174] Al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-'imtā‘,* 113 (Arabic), 115 (English)

[175] Al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-'imtā‘,* 112 (Arabic), 114 (English)

(*taḥrīf*) when characterizing other linguistic failures of Graeco-Arabic translators like the hapless ’Abū Bišr, who needless to say loses the debate.[176]

To conclude then, Muslim readers could and did use Graeco-Arabic translations to gain access to the aspects of classical Greek past, such its history, its religion, and its culture. For some, these works even occupied a space in their historical imagination similar to that of revealed scripture, in as much as the Greek authors were inimitable sages whose past achievements were irreproducible, at least by what were held to be hack translators like Ibn al-Biṭrīq or later ’Abū Bišr. Several ‘Abbāsid literary celebrities, al-Jāḥiẓ chief among them, stressed that for the translator to translate a Greek author, he had to master the linguistic and scientific peculiarities of that author, to become in essence the equivalent of that author. As this was impossible, translators inevitably ended up corrupting and distorting the books of the Greeks. As we saw, al-Jāḥiẓ and al-Tawḥīdī’s report flirted with language that suggested deliberate distortion on the part the translators. Do we find more explicit accusations of overt tampering on the part of the translators elsewhere in ‘Abbāsid literature? If so, what might motivate the translators to perform these alleged alterations of the text?

Section 2.2. *Taḥrīf* and Translation

Given the importance of Greek works for ‘Abbāsid-era Muslim intellectuals—an importance that led some to compare them implicitly or explicitly to revealed scripture—it should come as no surprise that several ninth- and tenth-century authors express anxiety about the degree to which translators controlled access to those texts. Later in this chapter, I will

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[176] Al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-’imtā‘,* 115 (Arabic), 117 (English)

discuss four ninth- and tenth-century testimonies—including two from none another than al-Jāḥiẓ himself—that directly discuss the relationship between Christian Graeco-Arabic translators and the Greek past which they mediate to their readers. These four testimonies accuse Christian translators—one even mentions Ḥunayn himself by name—of tampering with their translations of Greek works to transmit a religiously biased version of the Greek past. Before turning to these accusations, however, we must place them in their proper ninth- and tenth-century context in order to understand fully what ʻAbbāsid-era authors understand to be the motivations of this tampering. As I will demonstrate, this context is the Muslim and Christian apologetic discourse surrounding allegations that Christians have falsified the text of the Bible, which by the ninth and tenth centuries begin to include narratives of corrupt Christian translation.

We should remember, at the outset, that translation and interpretation of the Greek Classics on the one hand and of the Bible and other sacred writings on the other were not always the distinct and unrelated activities that today's scholarship would hold them to be.[177] In fact, Ḥunayn himself apparently translated the entire Greek Septuagint into elegant and readable Arabic, attracting the attention of Muslims like the tenth-century historian al-Masʻūdī, though his translation has not survived.[178] Indeed, as Christians professionally involved with texts,

[177] See for instance J. Watt, "From Sergius to Mattā: Aristotle and Pseudo-Dionysius in the Syriac Tradition" in J. Lössl and J. Watt (eds.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle in Late Antiquity: the Alexandrian Commentary Tradition between Rome and Baghdad* (Ashgate, 2011: 239-258) on the close link between Biblical and philosophical exegesis and translation in the pre-tenth-century Syriac tradition.

[178] Al-Masʻūdī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh wa-l-'išrāf,* M.J. de Goeje (ed.) (Leiden, 1894: 112); French trans. in B. Carra de Vaux, *Maçoudi, Le livre de l'avertissement et de la revision* (Paris, 1896: 159). R. Steiner, *A Biblical Translation in the Making: the Evolution and Impact of Saadia Gaon's* Tafsīr (Cambridge, MA, 2010: 52-68) has disputed al-Masʻūdī's claim that Ḥunayn worked from the Septuagint, suggesting that an Arabic translation of the Syriac Peshiṭta extant in Ms. Sinai Arabic 2 and 4 may in fact be Ḥunayn's lost translation of the Pentateuch. While Muslims did not of course patronize translation of the Bible as they did that of Classical Greek works, ninth-century ʻAbbāsid intellectuals were not unaware of these translations and even occasionally consulted them: see with references R. Vollandt, *Arabic Versions of the Pentateuch: a Comparative Study of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Sources* (Leiden, 2015: 90-105). On the history of Arabic versions of the Bible, see S. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic: the Scriptures of the 'People of the Book' in the Language of Islam* (Princeton, 2015).

translators like Ḥunayn and his colleagues would have been natural targets for accusations of tampering. According to an Islamic tradition with roots in the Qur'ān, Jews and especially Christians are habitually guilty of misusing or even altering their holy books, a concept known today and in some ninth-century texts as *taḥrīf* ('distortion').[179] In broad outline, the doctrine of *taḥrīf* posits that, as Muslim prophets, Moses and Jesus received their respective revelations, the Torah (*al-tawrāt*) and the Gospel (*al-'injīl*), intact from God, but that their followers twisted or concealed aspects of the true scripture at some unspecified time in the past. This position thus explains away any discrepancies between the pure and unadulterated verses of the Qur'ān and these other books, which differ from Muḥammad's revelation either because they are, in their present state, corrupt, or because their contents, as reported by Jews and Christians, have been wittingly or unwittingly misinterpreted.

Later Muslim thinkers would develop elaborate narratives for precisely how this alteration happened, with some arguing merely for interpretive trickery, or *taḥrīf al-ma'ānī* ('falsification of meanings'), as distinct from direct textual alteration, or *taḥrīf al-naṣṣ* ('falsification of the text').[180] In the ninth century, however, and in the centuries leading up to it, the notion of *taḥrīf* is still slippery and vague. An analysis of these early accusations of Christian *taḥrīf* as recorded in both Muslim and Christian texts will help illuminate our ninth-century

[179] On the history of the concept of *taḥrīf* generally see M. Accad, "Corruption and/or Misinterpretation of the Bible: the Story of the Qur'ānic Usage of *Taḥrīf*", *Theological Review* XXIV/2 (2003: 67-97); R. Caspar and J.-M. Gaudeul, "Textes de la tradition musulmane concernant le *tahrîf* (falsification) des écritures," *Islamochristiana* 6 (1980): 61-104; I. Di Matteo, "Il 'tahrif' od alterazione della Bibbia secondo i musulmani", *Bessarione* 38 (1922: 64-111, 223-260).

[180] On this distinction see especially G.S. Reynolds, "On the Qur'anic Accusation of Scriptural Falsification (taḥrīf) and Christian Anti-Jewish Polemic", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 130.2 (2010: 189-202 at 190). On the historical development of the doctrine of *taḥrīf* see G. Nickel, *Narratives of Tampering in the Earliest Commentaries on the Qur'ān* (Leiden, 2011: 15-36).

sources that accuse Christians of altering not scripture, but the works of the classical Greeks. Some readers familiar with ninth- and tenth-century Christian-Muslim apologetic may already have noted that certain roots associated with this discourse on scriptural tampering (e.g., ḥ-r-f, k-ḏ-b, f-s-d) occurred in the criticism of Graeco-Arabic translation discussed above in Section 2.1.

The Qur'ān itself hints rather cryptically at *taḥrīf*.[181] Often, it states that Jews, Christians, or both are hiding the truth, using verbs of confounding (*labasa*)[182] or concealing (*katama*).[183] This concealment is usually the activity of a particular party among the People of the Book, who collude together to keep God's truth under wraps:

> Those unto whom We gave the Scripture recognize (this revelation) as they recognize their sons. But lo! a party of them (*farīqan minhum*) knowingly conceal (*la-yaktumūna*) the truth. (Qur'ān 2:146)[184]

These conspiratorial tricksters conceal (*katama*), or more actively muddle (*labasa*), the text of the revelation entrusted to them with the explicit intention of misleading others:

> A party of the People of the Scripture (*ṭā'ifatun min 'ahli l-kitābi*) long to make you go astray; and they make none to go astray except themselves, but they perceive it not. O People of the Scripture! Why disbelieve ye in the revelations of Allah when ye (yourselves) bear witness (to their truth)? O People of the Scripture! Why confound ye (*talbisūna*) truth with falsehood and knowingly conceal (*taktumūna*) the truth? (Qur'ān 3:69-71)

[181] The following taxonomy of 'tampering words' in the Qur'ān relies upon those of Caspar and Gaudeul (1980: 62-63), Reynolds (2011: 192-193), and Nickel (2011: 26-30).

[182] *Pace* Reynolds (2010: 192) who seems to interpret the Qur'ānic *yalbisū* and *yalbisūna* as deriving from the verb *labisa* ('to clothe') rather than *labasa* ('to confound, mix up, jumble') as it has traditionally been understood. While morphologically *yalbisū* and *yalbisūna* could derive from *labisa,* its coordination of an accusative object with a prepositional phrase introduced by *bi-* tells against this interpretation: see Ullmann, WKAS Bd. II T. 1, 128.

[183] Qur'ān 2:140, 146, 159, 174; 3:71, 187

[184] All English renderings of the Qur'ān are quoted from the version of M. Pickthall (trans.), *The Glorious Koran* (New York, 1976 [1938]), except where otherwise noted.

A picture emerges of Christians as the possessors of special textual knowledge who nevertheless use their knowledge to conceal and deceive rather than to enlighten. Other Qur'ānic passages suggest more overt tampering, namely the substitution (*tabdīl,* from *baddala,* 'to substitute, exchange') of one revealed word for another word: "But those who did wrong changed (*baddalū*) the word which had been told them for another saying…" (Qu'rān 2:59).[185] This claim of false substitution (*tabdīl*) is made specifically of the Jews, but the People of the Book more generally are said to distort (*lawā*) revelation when reporting it in speech:

> And lo! there is a party of them (*farīqan minhum*) who distort the Scripture with their tongues (*yalwūna 'alsinatahum bi-l-kitābi*), that ye may think that what they say is from Scripture, when it is not from Scripture. And they say: It is from Allah, when it is not from Allah; and they speak a lie concerning Allah knowingly. (Qur'ān 3:78)[186]

Here the emphasis is on the Christian (or Jewish) intermediary's ability to misrepresent the very identity or label of a text, to offer non-Scripture as Scripture. The notion of crooked linguistic ability implicit in the use of the word *lisān* ('tongue', but also 'language') is also noteworthy for our purposes.

The semantically specialized gerund *taḥrīf* is not itself found in the Qur'ān but the verb *ḥarrafa* from which it derives does occur, in three passages describing the actions of certain Jews, where it is usually understood to mean 'change' or 'alter'. Our primary purpose is of course to understand accusations of Christian textual tampering, since this theme will inform our reading of the ninth-century attacks on Christian translators like Ḥunayn and his colleagues. However, since later Islamic writers level accusations of *taḥrīf* against Christians far more often than against Jews, it will be helpful to see how the Qur'ān deploys the verb *ḥarrafa* and

[185] Cf. Qur'ān 7:162

[186] Cf. Qur'ān 4:46, where the allegation of distortion is made specifically of the Jews.

characterizes those who perform the activity it denotes. In first of the three Qur'ānic passages in which the verb occurs, we find the by now familiar suggestion of conspiratorial collusion among a small, well-educated group:

> Have ye any hope that they [the Jews] will be true to you when a party of them (*farīqun minhum*) used to listen to the Word of Allah, then used to change it (*yuḥarrifūnahu*), after they had understood it, knowingly. (Qur'ān 2:75)

Precisely what form this alteration is meant to take is not clear from this passage alone, but a few verses later we find what may serve as a partial explanation of the conspirators' corrupting activities. Their conspiracy is viewed as being at the expense of those among their own people who do not share their linguistic prowess:

> Among them [the Jews] are unlettered folk (*'ummiyyūna*) who know the Scripture not except from hearsay. They but guess (*yaẓunnūna)*. Therefore woe be unto those who write the Scripture with their hands (*yaktubūna l-kitāba bi-'aydīhim*) and then say, "This is from Allah," that they may purchase a small gain therewith (*li-yaštirū bihi ṯamanan qalīlan*). Woe unto them for that their hands have written, and woe unto them for that they earn thereby (*mimmā yaksibūna*). (Qur'ān 2:78-79)

It is crucial to observe that the falsification of scripture is described here as a professional activity, carried out by textual experts who derive financial gain—literally or metaphorically—from their deceit.

In its second two instances, the verb *ḥarrafa* appears in the difficult phrase "*yuḥarrifūna l-kalima 'an mawāḍi'ihi*" usually understood to mean 'they change (or shift) words from their contexts (literally, 'places')', though its precise interpretation is controversial.[187] The longer of these two passage is worth quoting in its full context:

> And because of their [the Jews'] breaking their covenant, We have cursed them and made hard their hearts. They change words from their context (*yuḥarrifūna l-kalima 'an*

[187] The passages in question are Qur'ān 4:46 and 5:13. On the difficulty see Reynolds (2010: 194).

> *mawāḍiʿihi)* and forget (*nasū*) a part of that whereof they were admonished. Thou wilt not cease to discover treachery from all save a few of them. But bear with them and pardon them. Lo! Allah loveth the kindly.
>
> And with those who say: "Lo! we are Christians," We made a covenant, but they forgot (*nasū*) a part whereof they were admonished. Therefore We have stirred up enmity and hatred among them till the Day of the Resurrection, when Allah will inform them of their handiwork. (Qur'ān 5:13-14)

Modern scholars commenting on these two verses have noted that, while the Jews are described as both 'changing words from their context' and 'forgetting' (*nasū*) a part of their revelation, Christians are described only as 'forgetting' (*nasū*). The Qur'ān would therefore seem to be implicitly acquitting Christians of the sort of direct textual alteration implied by the verb *ḥarrafa*.[188] Yet medieval commentators did not understand the passage in this way. One of our earliest commentators, Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 767), glosses the verb *nasiya* ('forget') with the much more active *taraka* ('leave out').[189] By the time of the translation movement, we find the famous historian and Qur'ānic commentator Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923) explaining the verb *nasiya* of Qur'ān 5:14 as deliberate textual alteration. Following Muqātil, he characterizes the Christians' act of forgetting in this Qur'ānic verse as willful omission (*taraka*).

Yet he goes on to offer even stronger glosses that make no effort to exempt Christians from the charge of direct textual tampering. In an exegetical expansion of the verse, he explains that by 'forgetting' the Qur'ān really means that Christians insert (*sakala*) foreign material, make

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[188] So for instance Reynolds (2010), who argues that Syriac Christian polemic against the Jews' inability to recognize prefigurations of Christ in their scripture lies behind the Qur'ān's focus on Jewish rather than Christian tampering.

[189] See Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, 'A. M. Šiḥāta (ed.) (Beirut, 2002), vol 1 on Qur'ān 5:14, with the discussion of Nickel (2011: 108).

substitutions (*baddala*), and even destroy (*naqaḍa*) the covenant God revealed to them.[190] The modern scholarly understanding of the passage as excluding Christians from the charge of alteration is therefore at odds not only with medieval polemics that discuss *taḥrīf,* but also with exegetical interpretations of the relevant verses offered during our period. The accusation of willful forgetfulness (*nisyān*) stresses that *taḥrīf* involves not merely theological but also historical falsification and, as we shall see, both it and *tabdīl* ('false substitution') become terms of art in ninth-century discussions of Christian tampering.

To summarize then, readers of the Qur'ān can, if they wish, find evidence that Jews and Christians are practiced textual tricksters. Small professional groups of them conspire together to use their exclusive expertise to distort Scripture and deceive those who do not share their textual savvy. As mediators of texts, they are not to be trusted. Indeed, the very word *taḥrīf* is redolent of texts and writerly activity. Although some modern philologists understand the Qur'ānic *ḥarrafa* differently, medieval readers and exegetes connected it with *ḥarf* ('letter').[191] Thus, while many have questioned whether the Qur'ān really suggests that Christians and Jews engage in direct textual alteration as so many medieval interpreters understood to be the case, all would agree that the People of the Book are presented as slippery characters when it comes to texts.[192] Yet since our purpose is to understand how the notion of *taḥrīf* informs accusations of textual tampering

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[190] See al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī, Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl ʾāy al-qurʾān*, M. M. Šākir and ʾA. M. Šākir (eds.) (Cairo, 1955-1956: 10.135-136), with the discussion of Nickel (2011: 152-153).

[191] See Reynolds (2010: 194), with references.

[192] Modern scholars who have argued that the Qur'ān does not truly specify the direct textual alteration alleged by later Muslim authors include Di Matteo (1922) correcting the view of I. Goldziher, "Über muhammedanische Polemik gegen Ahl al-kitâb" *Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft* 82 (1878: 341-387), ; W.M. Watt, "The Early Development of the Muslim Attitude to the Bible", *Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society* 16 (1957: 50-62); and Reynolds (2010).

leveled at ninth-century translators, it is important to emphasize that, even as early as the Qur'ān, Christian and Jewish slipperiness is not merely textual but apparently linguistic as well. The Qur'ān presents itself as *al-bayyina* (e.g. at Qur'ān 98), the 'clear proof' of Islam's validity, and its clarity is due before all else to the language of its expression, Arabic:

> Alif. Lâm. Râ. These are verses of the Scripture that maketh plain (*al-mubīn)*. Lo! We have revealed it, a Lecture (*Qur'ānan)* in Arabic, that ye may understand. (Qur'ān 12:1-2)

Though it is not stated explicitly, we might be led to conclude that the revelations sent down to the People of the Book are not as clear as the Qur'ān because they are not in Arabic.[193] The connection is more clear in the verse that immediately follows the Qur'ān's discussion of Christian forgetfulness of the covenant quoted above:

> O People of the Scripture! Now hath our messenger come unto you, expounding unto you much of that which ye used to hide (*kuntum tuḫfūna*) in the Scripture, forgiving much. Now hath come unto you light from Allah and a plain Scripture (*kitābun mubīn*). (Qur'ān 5:15).

Concealment (*'aḫfā*) of the Scripture, one of the tricksy activities later understood as part of Christian *taḥrīf*, is contrasted with the plain Scripture, the clarity of the Qur'ān. Are we meant to contrast the Qur'ān's plain and unhidden Arabic with the confused and confusing Babel of the Torah, Psalms, and Gospel, accessible only through the unreliable mediation of deceptive Jews and Christians?

To judge from the earliest Christian accounts of their interfaith debates with Muslims, it is clear that Christians' Qur'ānic reputation as textual tricksters is source of anxiety for them which they attempt to dispel. Yet the Christian authors of these accounts downplay the very real linguistic obscurity of their Scripture to Muslims, and even evince a certain distrust of translation

[193] Cf. Qur'ān 16:103 and 26:195, and al-Buḫārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, K. al-Šahadat (ed.), 29 (Beirut, 1999: 2: 182).

themselves. The first two centuries of the Islamic conquest gave rise to a new genre of theological dialogue among the newly conquered Syriac-speaking Christians, in which the Christian author purports to recount a formal debate he or a colleague has recently had with a Muslim potentate. There is no reason to doubt that these debates took place, but the reports of them are clearly idealized reconstructions in which the Muslim plays the part of the cowed pupil ceding ever more ground to his didactic Christian interlocutor.[194] Reference to the charge of Christian *taḥrīf* and Muslim suspicion of Christians as textual mediators occurs in several of these texts. It is important to note, however, that while the reports of these debates display a certain awareness of what must have been a daunting language barrier between the Muslim interlocutor and the Christian Scripture he hopes to test for traces of corruption, they consciously deemphasize this barrier.

Anxiety connecting *taḥrīf* with language occurs in some of our earliest Christian sources. An anonymous Syriac letter preserved in an *unicum* dated to 874 purports to present a debate between a patriarch named Yoḥannan (John) and a nameless emir of the Arabs, or Hagarenes (*mhaggrāyē*) as the text labels them.[195] Based on internal and external evidence, the historical setting is thought to be the city of Ḥoms in the year 644 and the two disputants identified as John of Sedra (d. 648), patriarch of Antioch, and the emir ʻUmayr ibn Saʻd al-ʼAnṣārī, a companion of

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[194] S. Griffith, "Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian Texts" in B. Lewis and F. Niewöhner, *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden, 1992: 251-274 at 256-257)

[195] The text is published with a French translation in F. Nau, "Un colloque du Patriarch Jean avec l'Émir des Agaréens et faits divers des années 712 à 716 d'après le Ms. du British Museum *add* 1793, avec un appendice sur le patriarche Jean le Ier, diplôme qui aurait donné par Omar à l'Evêque du Tour ʻAbdin", *Journal asiatique* 11.5 (1915: 225-279). An English translation with several emendations to Nau's text is available in A. Saadi, "The letter of John of Sedreh. A new perspective on nascent Islam" *Journal of the Assyrian Academic Society* 11 (1997: 68-84), reprinted in *Karmo* 1 (1999: 46-64).

the Prophet and later governor of Syria.[196] Some scholars, who accept at face value the anonymous author's claim to be reporting the debate directly after the fact, date the letter's composition to the 640's.[197] Others, however, favor an eighth- or ninth-century date.[198] Laying these problems aside, we may safely observe that the text—which was being copied and read in the ninth-century at the height of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement—displays a marked concern with the issue of language and translation. The emir opens the debate by asking the patriarch about the authenticity and textual integrity of the Gospel:

> The blessed one and father of the community was interrogated by him [the emir] concerning whether the Gospel, which all those who both are and are called Christians across the whole world hold, is one and the same and not different (*mšaḥlap*) in any way. The blessed one answered him, saying that it is one and the same among the Greeks (*yawnāye*) and the Romans (*rhomāye*), the Syrians (*suryāye*) and the Egyptians, the Kushites and the Indians, the Armenians and the Persians, and among all the other nations and languages.[199]

Even though the debate will come to center on the divinity of Christ, the letter's Christian author has the Muslim begin by asking whether the Gospel's presence in so many different lands and its translation into so many different languages does not call into question its textual soundness. His choice of the word *mšaḥlap* may be significant: while a common turn of phrase for 'different' or 'various', in form the word is the passive participle of a verb meaning both 'to alter, pervert' and

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[196] See the conclusions of S. K. Samir, "Qui est l'interlocuteur du patriarche syrien Jean III (631-648)?" in H.J.W. Drijvers (ed.), *IV Symposium Syriacum 1984* (Rome, 1987: 387-400) and P. Crone and M. Cook, *Hagarism, the Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 1977: 162 n. 11), with Griffith (1992: 257-259).

[197] These include Nau (1915: 226-228) and Saadi (1997).

[198] See especially G. Reinink, "The beginnings of Syriac Apologetic Literature in Response to Islam" *Oriens Christianus* 77 (1993: 165-187 at 171-185), with the summary of the *status quaestionis* provided by B. Roggema, "The Disputation of John and the Emir" in *CMR* 1 (Leiden, 2009: 782-785).

[199] Nau (1915): 248 (Syriac), 257 (French)

‘to translate’. Is the author alluding to a connection drawn by Muslims between translation and deliberate textual alteration?

Later in the report, when the patriarch quotes a verse from the Hebrew Bible to prove Christ’s divinity, the emir clearly suspects textual corruption, though whether deliberate or not we cannot say. The emir has asked for scriptural proof that the Hebrew prophets too professed the truth of Christianity. John is happy to oblige him. According to the patriarch, Moses was hinting mystically at the distinction between God the Father and God the Son when he wrote Genesis 19:24 (“The Lord sent down fire and brimstone before the Lord upon Sodom and Gomorrah” in the Peshitta version).[200] His skeptical Muslim interlocutor asks for textual verification:

> The glorious emir asked that this be shown [to him] in the Book, and without delay our father showed it in the complete Greek and Syriac books. Certain Hagarenes (*mhaggrāyē*) were there with us in the place and they saw with their own eyes these passages and the glorious name of the Lords[201] and the Lord.[202]

The Christian author of the letter naturally asserts both the freedom from error and completeness of the Greek and Syriac texts of Genesis that the patriarch displays to the emir and his men. Remarkably, he suggests that certain Arab members of the emir’s entourage are able to consult these two foreign language texts with ease. It is difficult to determine to what extent any Arab elites in the seventh century—or indeed in the eight or ninth—could have performed such a

[200] The letter’s quotation omits the final *men šmā* (“from heaven”) and fronts the verb, but otherwise faithfully records the Syriac Peshitta, which corresponds more or less word for word with the Masoretic Hebrew text and the Greek Septuagint, as observed by Nau (1915: 260-261 n. 2 and 3). This Christological exegesis of Genesis 19:24 is found elsewhere in the Syriac tradition: see Nau (1915: 260 n. 1).

[201] The manuscript includes a seyame over the first instance of the shell ܡܪ̈ܝܐ, indicating a plural. As pointed out by Nau (1915: 260 n. 3), however, it may be preferable to ignore the seyame and read “the glorious name of the Lord and [a second time] of the Lord”, which fits better with Genesis 19:24,

[202] Nau (1915): 251 (Syriac), 260 (French)

consultation.[203] The point seems not to persuade the Arabs with textual proof, but rather to impress them with the performance of textual authority and, further, to reassure the Syriac reader of the report that Jewish scripture indeed prefigures Trinitarian doctrine. In any case, our author ignores whatever difficulties the Arabs might have had with the Greek and Syriac texts before them and moves on:

> The emir summoned a certain Jewish man who both was and was reputed by them to be knowledgeable in the Scriptures, and he asked him whether anything like this was present in the text (*b-meltā*) of the Law [i.e. the Hebrew Bible]. He responded, "I do not exactly know."[204]

Although the Christian author does not spell out the emir's motivation, the Muslim clearly believes that the Christian texts, written in Greek and Syriac, will differ from the original Hebrew, inaccessible to him but easily accessible to a Jew. Questions of linguistic trickery are of course precisely what is at stake here. The emir suspects that Christians have consciously or unconsciously altered the Biblical text over the course translating it from Hebrew into Greek and Syriac. The Christian author of our letter, however, does not present this is as a linguistic problem, merely a textual one (*b-meltā*). The would-be Jewish expert is portrayed is being unable to resolve it, at first glance a strike against the Christians. Yet the author of the report probably wants his reader to see the Jew as either incapable of understanding the deeper Trinitarian meaning of the Genesis passage or else obstinately unwilling to except the textual proof of Christ's divinity even when it is brought before his eyes.

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[203] There are scanty reports and indications of Syriac reading knowledge among Muslim Arabs up through the 'Abbāsid period: see S. Griffith, "The Gospel in Arabic: an Inquiry into its Appearance in the First Abbasid Century", *Oriens Christianus* 69 (1985: 126-167) and N. Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*, vol. 2 (1957: 9 n. 43). Although later bio-bibliographer would falsely report that al-Kindī knew and translated from Greek, we possess only a two contemporary reports of Muslim Arabs who read the language: see, with references, D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (New York, 1998: 126 and 139).

[204] Nau (1915): 251 (Syriac), 260-261 (French)

The emir's choice to call upon a Jew for independent verification of Christians' claims about their shared Scripture finds a parallel in another Christian report of an interfaith debate, thought to have taken place in Jerusalem around 800.[205] The Christian author, probably writing no later the mid-ninth century,[206] imagines an advisor of the emir urging his prince to summon a group of Jews and have them cross examine Christian claims about Scripture. He explains that the Jews, despite their disgracefulness, are guaranteed to report any evidence of Christian tampering because they are the Christians' sworn enemies.[207] The conceit of the Jews as hostile and therefore independent witnesses who can acquit Christians of *taḥrīf* is not uncommon in ninth-century Christian apologetic works.[208] It even makes an appearance in the Patriarch Timothy I's famous report of his debate with the Caliph al-Mahdī, held in 782/783.[209] Here the patriarch is defending Christians against the charge that they have only made small changes on the level of verb and particle but also of having deleted whole passages from scripture, such as the prediction of Muḥammad's advent which the Qur'ān declares can be found in both the *Tawrāt* (Torah) and '*Injīl* (Gospel) possessed by the Jews and the Christians.[210] This text is

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[205] K. Vollers, "Das Religiongespräch von Jerusalem", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 29 (1908: 29-71), and see now G. Marcuzzo, *Le dialogue d'Abraham de Tibériade avec 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Hāshimī à Jérusalem vers 820* (Rome, 1986), which presents a different recension of the text.

[206] Vollers (1908: 33)

[207] Vollers (1908: 37)

[208] See with references S.H. Griffith, "Jews and Muslims in Christian Syriac and Arabic Texts of the Ninth Century", *Jewish History*, 3.1 (1988: 65-94 at 67-69).

[209] Timothy I (Ṭimāte'ōs), Letter 59: 13,41-46 in M. Heimgartner (ed.), *Timotheos I., Ostsyrischer Patriarch: Disputation mit dem Kalifen al-Mahdī.* CSCO 631, 244 (Syriac) and 632, 245 (German).

[210] Timothy I (Ṭimāte'ōs), Letter 59: 13,47-55. See Qur'ān 7:157.

closely associated with the first decades of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement since Timothy claims to have had Aristotle's *Topica* translated from Syriac into Arabic for the caliph's personal use in preparation for the debate.[211] Not only does Timothy claim that the Jews confirm the Christians' innocence with regards to *taḥrīf,* but he even challenges al-Mahdī to produce "the uncorrupted Book from which you have learned that the Books which we use have been corrupted".[212] If the patriarch really did issue this challenge to the caliph during their debate, it seems rather an empty gesture since al-Mahdī was entirely dependent on the mediation of Christians like Timothy for his needs in matters of philology and translation, as the commissioned translation of the *Topica* makes only too clear.[213] As in the report of John of Sedra's debate with the emir, Timothy performs philological authority without offering textual certainty to his monolingual interlocutor.

Indeed, it is precisely this difficult situation that may have given rise to the seventh- through ninth-century Christian trope of the Jewish intermediary who can corroborate the purity of Christian Scripture. If Christians have a near monopoly on Greek and Syriac translation, then what independent authority can acquit them of having tampered with the Hebrew original of the Torah when rendering it into their liturgical languages? One questions how often Muslims really

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[211] See the important discussion in Gutas (1998: 67-69), though note the Arabic translation cited of the letter was in fact made later from Timothy's Syriac original. On the history of the Arabic translations see R. Caspar, "Les versions arabes du dialogue entre le Catholicos Timothée I et le calife al-Mahdî (IIe /VIIIe siècle)." *Islamochristiana* 3 (1977: 107–175).

[212] Timothy I (Ṭimāte'ōs), Letter 59: 8,6. I quote from the translation of A. Mingana, "The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph Mahdi", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 12 (1928: 137-298 at 171 [English]).

[213] Letters 43 and 48 of Timothy I provide direct evidence for his efforts to have the *Topica* translated for al-Mahdī. Most notable is his patron's preference, in this instance, for Syriac-into-Arabic over Greek-into-Arabic translation on the grounds of the superior Arabic style produced by the former. See most readily S. Brock, "Two Letters of the Patriarch Timothy from the Late Eight Century on Translations from Greek", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 9 (1999: 233-246).

deployed Jewish ombudsmen in their debates with Christians. It might be better to view the trope as an expression of Christian anxiety about the bind in which they found themselves and a desire to point to an easy solution. This anxiety may also explain the tendency to smooth over the messy reality of the linguistic situation which we have observed. Indeed, a probably mid-eighth-century Christian report of yet another debate, this one held at the monastery of Bēt Ḥālē between a monk named Abraham and a convalescing Muslim notable, displays similar tendencies.[214] The author insists that the Muslim is well-versed in both the Qur'ān and "our own scriptures,"[215] but what precisely does this mean when there is only partial evidence for Arabic translations of the Bible in the period, which would all in any case have been the work of Christian translators?[216]

More interestingly, the text questions the extent to which translation can effectively communicate truth at all. The author reports that the monk and the Muslim initially spoke through an interpreter, but eventually "honesty and love for the truth was to prevail"[217] and the dialogue continued without the intermediary—hence presumably in Arabic. It is probably safe to assume that the Syriac-Arabic interpreter would have himself been a Christian. Thus, when the author of the Bēt Ḥālē report suggests he is obstructing honesty and love of truth, he is tacitly

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[214] The text, extant in two late manuscripts, remains unpublished and I rely principally upon a paraphrase and translation of some of its contents in Griffith (1992: 259-261). For a fuller discussion of the text see now G.J. Reinink, "Political power and right religion in the East Syrian Disputation between a monk of Bēt Ḥālē and an Arab notable", in E. Grypeou, D.R. Thomas and M. Swanson (eds.), *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam* (Leiden, 2006: 153-69) and S.H. Griffith, "Disputing with Islam in Syriac: the Case of the Monk of Bêt Ḥālê and a Muslim Emir", *Journal of Syriac Studies*, 3.1 (2000: 29–54).

[215] Griffith (1992: 260)

[216] S.H. Griffith, *The Bible in Arabic* (Princeton, 2013: 127).

[217] Griffith (1992: 60)

accepting the Muslim narrative of the Christian linguistic intermediary as meddler and muddier of the waters.

One ninth-century Christian apologist, the East Syrian theologian ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī, attempts to turn the tables on his imaginary Muslim interlocutor and claim that Christian translation activity can in fact provide proof that New Testament is uncorrupted. Al-Baṣrī is attempting to refute a Muslim claim that the Roman emperor corrupted the text of the Gospel (*’Injīl*) by imperial fiat. Such a claim, he argues, grossly exaggerates the Roman emperor’s sway over Christian believers, but for the sake of argument he continues:

> Suppose the emperor of the Romans (*malik al-rūm*) did corrupt (*ḥarrafa*) the Gospel (*’Injīl*) which he held in his power, as you claim. How is it then that one cannot find any difference between his Gospel, namely the one in his language, and the Gospels that are in other languages which are not under his power and which would not accept his command concerning corruption (*qawlahu fī l-taḥrīf*)? Thus the emperor of the Romans is acquitted of having altered his Gospel by the testimony of all the Gospels in the many languages that are not under his power and which do not accept his command, for they are textually consistent with his, as his is with them.[218]

Al-Baṣrī attempts to turns the Muslim charge of *taḥrīf* on its head even as he asserts his independence from the Chalcedonian emperor. ‘*Malik al-rūm*’ could of course refer not only to the Roman emperor during the time of Christ but also to Byzantine *basileus* in Constantinople and, indeed, one senses an anti-Byzantine polemic behind the refuted Muslim charge as well.

This testimony is therefore important on two accounts. First, it provides crucial evidence that translation was associated with Christian *taḥrīf* in the ninth-century. Al-Baṣrī has taken an apparent weakness of Christian scripture vis-à-vis Islam—namely, its polyglot nature and its

[218] ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-burhān* in M. Hayek, *‘Ammār al-Baṣrī: Apologie et conroverses* (Beirut, 1977: 21-90 at 43). The questions of language, political control, and historical plausibility are central to al-Baṣrī’s rebuttal of the charge of *taḥrīf* in his *Kitāb al-masā’il wa-l-’ajwiba* as well: see, with references, the discussion M. Beaumont, "‘Ammār al-Baṣrī on the Alleged Corruption of the Gospels" in D. Thomas (ed.), *The Bible in Arabic Christianity* (Leiden, 2006: 241-255).

numerous, potentially inconsistent versions—and turned that weakness into a point of strength. Again, however, the point is of more comfort to Christian readers than to any Muslim ones, who would lack the linguistic know-how to verify al-Baṣrī's claim of textual consistency across translations. This anecdote, taken together with the other texts above that downplay the element of linguistic trickery inherent in Muslim charges of *taḥrīf*, suggests a faint Christian embarrassment with translation. It will be informative to keep this embarrassment in mind when we turn in a moment to our one surviving accusation of tampering leveled by a Christian author against the ninth-century translators of Classical Greek texts like Ḥunayn. Second, the charge that the emperor of the Romans has corrupted the Gospel harkens back to the archetype of the Byzantine monarch that we saw in Chapter 1.[219] There the Roman emperor had unprecedented power over Greek philosophical and scientific texts and therefore over access to the Greek past. Here the emperor has that same power over revealed texts and over the prophetic past. The Byzantine emperor's presence in both narrative complexes is our first indication that Graeco-Arabic translation and Christian *taḥrīf* occupied a similar position in the imagination of some ninth- and tenth-century authors.

It is probably in light of this discourse that we should read an episode first recorded in the Arabic world history of Agapius of Hierapolis (or Maḥbūb al-Manbijī, d. 941/2), which treats Constantine and his alleged control of the text of the Hebrew Bible.[220] Here the historian—a Melkite Christian and hence well-disposed toward the Byzantine emperor—explains that

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[219] See above at Section 1.3.

[220] Agapius, *Kitāb al-'unwān*, 636-660 in A. Vasiliev (ed.), "Agapius. Kitab al-'Uvan", *PO* 5.4 (Paris, 1910), Part I of his Arabic text with French translation. Agapius writes in the early tenth-century, though he may draw on lost ninth-century source for this account: A. Wasserstein and D. Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: from Classical Antiquity to Today* (Cambridge, 2006: 175-177) observe that a partial version of the story found in fragments of the mid-ninth-century work of 'Abū 'Isā al-Munajjim repeats many of the details found in Agapius.

Constantine is in fact responsible for assuring the scriptural purity of the Bible. According to Agapius, the Seventy who translated the Hebrew Bible under Ptolemy II into Greek did so with unerring and consistent fidelity. This is of course the familiar story of the Septuagint, though Agapius' account embellishes it by casting Ptolemy as a sort of al-Ma'mūn who patronizes the sciences and founds his own *bayt al-ḥikma*.[221] Yet this happy state of affairs does not last, the historian claims, and after the advent of Christianity later Jews corrupted the text in order to obscure certain chronologies which predicted and verified Jesus' status as the Messiah or Christ. It was this corrupted Hebrew text which was later translated into Syriac and forms the Peshitta still used by the non-Chalcedonian East and West Syrian Christians to his own day.[222] All is not lost, however. Once Constantine rose to power, he convened his bishops—presumably a reference to Nicaea and resolved the matter through extensive historical and philological inquiry. Again, we should be reminded of some of the narratives of Graeco-Arabic transmission reviewed in Chapter 1 that invoked the Byzantine emperor. Just like the anonymous Byzantine sovereign in the Alexandria-to-Baghdad narrative discussed in Chapter 1, Agapius' Constantine convenes a council of bishops, though here it is to establish rather than suppress a text. In fact, Constantine's —and for that matter the erudite Ptolemy II's—rigorous philological approach toward the Bible mirrors that of the emperor Augustus toward the text of Aristotle in al-Fārābī's more irenic telling of 'Alexandria-to-Baghdad.'[223]

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[221] The parallels with al-Ma'mūn are noted by Wasserstein and Wasserstein (2006: 148). On the *bayt al-ḥikma* under al-Ma'mūn see D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture (*1998: 53-60).

[222] The historian makes mention of this twice during the narrative at *Kitāb al-'unwān* 581 and 593 and he makes continual mention of it earlier when establishing earlier chronologies, see especially 647 and 659.

[223] See Section 1.3 above.

According to Agapius, Constantine's efforts ensured that orthodox Christians would use the Greek Septuagint—now revealed to be the uncorrupted text of the Hebrew Bible. The primary purpose of this narrative is probably to cast aspersions on those non-Chalcedonian Christians—the Chalcedonian Agapius' natural antagonists—who use the Peshitta rather than the Septuagint. Yet the story may also act as a defensive corrective to the same or similar Muslim narratives of Byzantine imperial *taḥrīf* reproduced by 'Ammār al-Baṣrī. At the episode's conclusion, Agapius repeats insistently that it is the Jews and not later translators of the Bible and Christian commenters working with the corrupted Syriac text who are at fault.[224] It is noteworthy that, just as in that East Syrian theologian's counterargument, Agapius' narrative is defensive about translation. Just like al-Baṣrī, the historian presents translation as in fact an assurance of purity and a guarantee against tampering.[225]

While the Christian sources discussed above indicate that Christians were defending themselves from the Muslim charges of mistranslating the Bible possibly as early the seventh century, our very earliest commentaries on the Qur'ān and lives of Muḥammad do not privilege language and translation in their narratives of *taḥrīf.* Instead, the methods of tampering deployed by the People of the Book are, as alleged by these eighth and early ninth century sources, considerably simpler and more straightforward. A Jew covers a portion of the Torah with his

[224] Agapius, *Kitāb al-'unwān* 659-660. Vasiliev's French translation is inaccurate here. The Italian translation of B. Pirone, *Agapio di Gerapoli. Storia universale.* Studia Orientalia Christiana Monographiae n. 21 (Milan, 2013: 94) is closer to the sense, though the Arabic remains somewhat obscure.

[225] A general connection with ninth- and tenth-century Muslim discourse surrounding *taḥrīf*—though not *taḥrīf* via translation—was already noted by Wasserstein and Wasserstein (2006: 144) and Pirone (2013: 5), who caution that Christian accusations of Jewish tampering occur in Greek and Syriac in the pre-Islamic period as well.

hand when the Prophet and his Companions are consulting him.[226] A Christian boy discovers that his father has glued two Gospel pages together to hide a prediction of Muḥammad's advent.[227] When the Qur'ān itself states directly that the People of the Book substituted (*baddala*) one word for another, as at Qur'ān 2:59, an exegete like Muqātil is happy to discuss the incident in linguistic terms, but for the most part such explanations are avoided.[228] It is only well into the ninth century, which happens to coincide with the height of both the Graeco-Arabic translation movement and Christian efforts to translate the Bible into Arabic, that the classic charge of textual corruption and alteration of the Scriptures begins to take shape, even if it has not reached the status of a near *communis opinio* among Muslim polemicists that it will enjoy after Ibn Ḥazm in the eleventh century.[229] To judge from the apologetic work of al-Baṣrī and Christian authors discussed above, some ninth-century Muslims were invoking complex historical narratives of *taḥrīf* involving secular rulers and their control over the language of scripture. Nevertheless, the charge often remains vague and diffuse. At least to judge from our surviving sources, many ninth and even tenth century Muslim polemicists, in complete contrast to Christian ones, are content to leave the precise mechanics of textual corruption unspecified.

A case in point is the *Radd ʿalā al-Naṣārā* (*Reply to the Christians*) of the belles-lettrist 'Abū ʿUthmān ʿAmr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868), a text which as we shall shortly see provides

[226] See Reynolds (2010: 191) and W.M. Watt, "The Early Development of Muslim Attitudes Toward the Bible", *Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society* 16 (1957: 50-62 at 53-54), with references.

[227] See Watt (1957: 54), with references.

[228] See, e.g., *Tafsīr Muqātil* 1,109-110 with the discussion of Nickel (2011: 73-74). The substitution which the Children of Israel are alleged to have performed here is not, however, cross-linguistic.

[229] On Christian efforts to translate the Bible into Arabic, see Griffith (2013). For the historical development of the notion of *taḥrīf* see the overviews of Accad (2003) and Caspar and Gaudeul (1980).

crucial evidence for Muslim accusations of tampering among ninth-century Graeco-Arabic translators like Ḥunayn.[230] For now, however, let us examine al-Jāḥiẓ's claims about *taḥrīf,* scriptural tampering, among Christians. Writing on commission as part of the caliph al-Mutawakkil's (r. 847-861) crack-down on Christians and others deemed a threat to Sunnī orthodoxy, al-Jāḥiẓ repeatedly casts Christians as practiced dissemblers.[231] They often hide in plain sight, he cautions, by refusing to wear the yellow sash prescribed to them by al-Mutawakkil's reforms or by hiding it under their outer garments.[232] What's more, he warns, just because they dress well, play polo, and have prominent positions as administrators and physicians to the wealthy does not mean they are any less disreputable than the Jews, though these with their lower-class occupations are more conspicuously worthy of contempt.[233]

A large part of Christians' trickery, al-Jāḥiẓ alleges, is textual in nature. He cites their ability to point out contradictory passages in the Qur'ān and dubious *hadīṯ*s in order to sow doubt among believers.[234] Christians can even quote—or misquote—Qur'ānic verses promoting

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[230] al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd ʻalā al-naṣārā* in M. ʻA. al-Šarqāwī (ed.) *al-Muḫtār fī l-radd ʻalā l-naṣārā maʻa dirāsa taḥqīqiyya taqwīmiyya* (Cairo, 1984). There are two more or less full, though problematic translations of the work: C.D. Fletcher, *Anti-Christian polemic in early Islam. A translation and analysis of Abū ʿ Uthmān ʿAmr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ's risāla: Radd ʿalā al-Naṣārā (A reply to the Christians)*, Montreal, 2002 (MA thesis, McGill University) and I.S. Allouche, "Un traité de polémique christiano-musulmane au ixe siècle", *Hespéris* 26 (1939: 123-155).

[231] On the historical context of the work, see especially J. Finkel, "A Risāla of al-Jāḥiẓ" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 47 (1927: 311-334).

[232] al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd ʻalā al-naṣārā*, 64.

[233] al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd ʻalā al-naṣārā*, 63. In a quasi-physiognomic vain typical of his milieu, al-Jāḥiẓ also alleges a greater degree of inherited ugliness and a lesser degree of intelligence among Jews than among Christian, citing his familiarity with inbreeding in animals. On physiognomic views among the ʻAbbāsid elite and their interaction with Greek physiognomy, see S. Swain (ed.), *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam* (Oxford, 2007).

[234] al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd ʻalā al-naṣārā,* 65-66

toleration for Christians.[235] In doing so, however, al-Jāḥiẓ argues that they twist the historical context to their advantage, for these verses applied to the honest Christians of Muḥammad's milieu, not to contemporary ones. In fact, al-Jāḥiẓ is quick to remark that the Christians are much better and subtler scholars than the Jews, who by contrast do not make for very formidable textual tricksters.[236] It is Christian scholars alone who are responsible for introducing into Islamic society dangerous occult and astrological texts which corrupt the innocent.[237] Most alarmingly, however, Christians' skill with texts and their possession of earlier Scripture gives them unprecedented control over the prophetic past. Early in the *Reply*, al-Jāḥiẓ observes that Christians question the truth of the Qur'ānic narrative which places a certain Hāmān in the court of Pharaoh on the grounds that the Hebrew Bible places him chronologically later, among the Persians.[238] Such Christian reports, he asserts, are mistaken and untrustworthy.[239]

In such a litany, it is no surprise that al-Jāḥiẓ takes up the charge of *taḥrīf.* His narrative of Christian Scriptural corruption is meandering and allusive. While he asserts that Christians are responsible for textual alteration, he has no interest in specifying his accusation. Our satirist elsewhere seems to hold that God's revelation to Moses, the *Tawrāt* (Torah), remains intact even to his day.[240] Here, however, he asserts the corruption of the *'Injīl* (Gospel) in no uncertain terms.

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[235] al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd 'alā al-naṣārā*, 59

[236] al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd 'alā al-naṣārā*, 62

[237] al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd 'alā al-naṣārā,* 66

[238] See Qu'rān 40:36-37. A figure named Haman also figures prominently in the Book of Esther, whose dramatic setting is the Achaemenid Empire.

[239] al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd 'alā al-naṣārā,* 53

[240] See Finkel (1927: 311), with references.

We must remember that, from al-Jāḥiẓ's perspective, this means primarily God's revelation to Christ the Muslim Prophet and only secondarily the Christian gospels. Our author argues that the Gospel's corruption is due to the collusion of the four evangelists to alter their accounts well after God's revelation to Christ in order to obtain and share control over their own community:

> [The Christians] have only received their religion from four individuals. By their own claim, two of these—John and Matthew—were among the apostles, but the other two—Mark and Luke—were among the latter-day believers. These four were not safe from error, forgetfulness (*al-nisyān*), or intentional deceit (*ta'ammud al-kiḏb*). Nor did they refrain from colluding together and agreeing to divvy up the leadership (*al-riyāsa*), ceding in turn their stipulated portion, each one to his companion.[241]

Al-Jāḥiẓ goes on to point out that the numerous textual inconsistencies between the four gospels prove the truth of his claim. Particularly noteworthy is his redeployment of the Qur'ānic tropes of forgetfulness (*al-nisyān*)—which contemporary exegetes redefined as omission—and outright deceit (*al-kiḏb*) in a historically grounded narrative of *taḥrīf*. He is particularly insistent that Mark and Luke were not even contemporaries of Christ. Nevertheless, the four evangelists cooperated across generations to maintain their political power and the textual deception upon which it rests.

Yet this account does not address questions of translation or any other linguistic details. It is worth noting that, elsewhere, al-Jāḥiẓ is happy to use the verbatim style of contemporary Jewish translations of the Bible to explain the extravagant anthropomorphic beliefs of the People of the Book.[242] He limits this accusation of bad translation technique to the Jews, however, whom he casts as poor Arabists with little scholarly ability. We may contrast this characterization

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[241] al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd 'alā al-naṣārā,* 71

[242] See al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd 'alā al-naṣārā,* 73 and 75 with the discussion of M. Goldstein, "Sa'adya's *Tafsīr* in light of Muslim polemic against ninth-century Arabic Bible translations", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 36 (2009: 173-199).

of the Jews with his earlier claim that the Christians are all the more devious for their excellent scholarship, and we might conclude that, by implication, al-Jāḥiẓ holds the Christians to be clever and deceptive translators. Still, he never makes this claim explicit, at least in his discussion of *taḥrīf*. In contrast to our Christian sources and in harmony with other ninth-century Muslim authors, al-Jāḥiẓ is not interested in wading into the textual and linguistic mechanics of the Christian *taḥrīf* that he alleges.

Although we saw evidence in the work of ʻAmmār al-Baṣrī and other Christian writers that the charge circulated in the ninth-century, it is only at the tail end of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement and well after Christians had rendered the Bible into Arabic that we find an explicit charge of tricksy Christian translation involved in a Muslim author's allegation of *taḥrīf*. The text is the *Taṯbīt dalāʼil al-nubuwwa* (*Affirmation of the proofs of prophethood*) by the Muʻtazilī theologian ʻAbd al-Jabbār al-Hamaḏānī (d. 1025), and it is perhaps no coincidence that, like al-Jāḥiẓ's *Reply*, this late-tenth-century work also provides another key piece of evidence for allegations against Graeco-Arabic translators, as we shall see very shortly.[243] The *Affirmation of the proofs of prophethood* is a long and digressive work that seeks to establish the signs by which one may recognize Muḥammad's status as a prophet, and hence belongs to a fairly common medieval Islamic genre. Departing from generic conventions, however, ʻAbd al-Jabbār engages in a lengthy attack on the the origins of Christianity, and part of that section includes an allegation of *taḥrīf*. Like al-Jāḥiẓ before him, ʻAbd al-Jabbār accuses the early Christians of corrupting God's revelation to Christ. Yet unlike al-Jāḥiẓ and previous Muslim

[243] The section of ʻAbd al-Jabbār's *Taṯbīt dalāʼil al-nubuwwa* on Christian origins here discussed is available in a new edition with English translation in G.S. Reynolds and S.K. Samir (eds.), *Critique of Christian Origins* (Provo, 2010). For the whole work see the edition of ʻA. ʻUṯmān, *Taṯbīt dalāʼil al-nubuwwa* (Beirut, 1961).

authors alleging textual *taḥrīf*, ʻAbd al-Jabbār has a detailed story to tell, and that story hinges on the mechanics of translation.

Our author begins by explaining that Christians' alteration (the verb is *taġayyara*) and substitution (*tabaddala*) of Christ's religion was gradual.[244] It all began, he claims, when a group of Christians struck a deal with their Roman overlords (*al-rūm*). The Christians would forsake their Jewish practices and adopt Roman customs in exchange for official Roman sanction. The Romans also required them to hand over their book, the *ʼInjīl*, so that Christ's revelation could be suppressed. Those Christians who remained loyal to the prophet Christ—we should properly call them Muslims—objected to this desecration of Scripture and fled, but Roman agents tracked them down and killed them, even as far away as Iraq and the Arabian peninsula, in a sort of failed proto-*hijra*.[245] So far ʻAbd al-Jabbār is on solid ground, extrapolating even if somewhat fancifully from the Qur'ān's use of the verb *baddala* and from its hints that a certain select and devious party (*farīq* or *ṭā'ifa*) among the People of the Book is responsible for scriptural corruption.[246] Again, it is crucial to note the anti-Byzantine flavor of this narrative. In Chapter 1 we encountered the notion that the Roman imperial state had unprecedented control over Greek texts and the classical Greek past. Here the emperor's government is involved in the very first instance of Christian scriptural tampering, exerting autocratic control over the prophetic past as well.

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[244] ʻAbd al-Jabbār's narrative of *taḥrīf* begins with a statement to this effect (see *Taṯbīt* 92) and the ensuing narrative is structured precisely along these lines.

[245] ʻAbd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt* 92-94

[246] This point is made by G.S. Reynolds, *A Muslim Theologian in the Sectarian Milieu* (Leiden, 2004: 87-88).

Next our author proceeds to explain how, in successive generations, different evangelists corrupted Christ's revelation in different ways until there was very little truth in it.[247] This part of the story is highly reminiscent of various earlier Muslim accounts, especially that of al-Jāḥiẓ discussed above. Even the evangelists' motive remains the same as in that ninth-century author's *Reply to the Christians*: they seek to affirm their leadership (*ri'āsatuhum*) of the Christian community.[248] Then 'Abd al-Jabbār adds an element not present in earlier Muslim discussions of *taḥrīf* extant to us:

> Moreover, among [the four gospels] there is no Gospel in the language of Christ, the language in which he and his companions spoke, namely Hebrew, the language in which Abraham, the friend [of God], and all the other prophets spoke and in which the books of God were sent down to them and to the other Children of Israel. It was in this language that God addressed them, but these people [the Christians] have abandoned it. To them the Muslim scholars (*al-'ulamā'*) have said: "O Community of Christians, your turn from the Hebrew language—which is the language of Christ and the prophets before him (peace be upon them)—to these other languages, such that no Christian, in any of his religious duties recites these Gospels in the Hebrew language, constitutes a trick (*hīlatan*), a plot (*makīdatan*), an effort to escape scandal (*firāran mina l-faḍīḥati*)." The people (*al-nās*) have said to them: "[Your] turn from [Hebrew] only came about because the first of your fellows (*'aṣḥābukum al-'awwalūna*) intended to set an ambush (*al-'idġāl*) in their writings, conspiring to disguise the lies they had composed and concealing their conspiracy to seek the leadership (*al-ri'āsa*).[249]

Here a Muslim author makes explicit the charge of deceptive Biblical translation on the part of Christians, which we had previously glimpsed only through ninth-century Christian apology. 'Abd al-Jabbār casts Hebrew, which he supposes Christ to have spoken, as a divine language of revelation, comparable perhaps to Arabic. It is noteworthy that the tenth-century theologian

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[247] 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt* 94

[248] See al-Jāḥiẓ, *Radd 'ala l-naṣārā* 71

[249] 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt* 95

presents it as the common charge of Muslim scholars and populace alike, though that may simply be a rhetorical strategy. Either way, a text written at the twilight of the translation movement reveals the primordial motivation for Christian translation activity to be deception, and more specifically a means to pass off their own monstrous doctrines as genuine revelation.

‘Abd al-Jabbār is not content to leave matters here, however. As he continues, he dismantles the notion of the Jewish intermediary who can vouch for the purity of Christian scripture, a chestnut of Christian apologetic since the seventh century as we observed above:

> For the Hebrews were the People of the Book and the People of Knowledge at that time, and these [Christians] changed (*ġayyara*) the language, or rather turned from it completely, so that the People of Knowledge could not understand their doctrine or their intention to conceal matters, and so that they could avoid a scandal before their doctrine achieved dominance and their plan was complete. Thus they turned to many other languages which Christ and his companions did not speak and which belong to those who are not among the People of Book and who do not possess God’s Books and Law, such as the Romans (*al-rūm*), the Syrians, the Persians, the Indians, the Armenians, and others among the foreigners. They practiced deception (*talbīsan*) and conspired (*iḥtiyālan*) to conceal their shamefulness and to accomplish their desire by seeking the leadership (*al-ri’āsa*) from that small group who still sought it with religion (*bi-l-dīn*). Otherwise, they would have kept to the language of Abraham and his children, and of Christ, through whom arose the clear proof (*al-bayyina)* and to whom the Books were sent down. It would have been more suitable for establishing evidence against the Children of Israel and those of the Jews who disbelieved, if they had been addressed in their own tongue and debated in their own language, which they cannot repudiate. Know this, for it is important and fundamental.[250]

‘Abd al-Jabbār does more here than turn the Christian trope of the Jewish intermediary on its head. He portrays the Jews and not the rising Christians as the scholars of Christ’s day. Thus the development of Christian philology and scholarship, whose fruits the ‘Abbāsid world had come to know well in the past two centuries, is rooted in an effort to deceive. It was only to deceive the established ‘People of Knowledge’ (’*ahl al-‘ilm*) that Christians adopted the languages of the

[250] ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt* 95-96

nations and composed interpolated translations of Christ's Hebrew revelation. The text portrays Christian translation as the ultimate turning away (*al-'udūl*) and as their faith's foundational act of betrayal. *Traduttore traditore* indeed.

Is 'Abd al-Jabbār's narrative of *taḥrīf*-via-translation his own invention or is he reproducing an earlier ninth- or tenth-century source closer in time to Graeco-Arabic translators like Ḥunayn? On the one hand, 'Abd al-Jabbār's lengthy and methodical narrative of Christian falsification is the first of its kind in Muslim apologetic, as he himself notes in a programmatic passage.[251] On the other, most of its individual components occur in much earlier works and seem to be derived from 'Abd al-Jabbār's extensive reading. Both cross-generational *taḥrīf* and the collusion with the Roman or Byzantine state are themes we encountered above in ninth-century texts. Moreover, many of the details of his *taḥrīf* narrative—particularly the roles played by figures like Constantine and Paul—can be found as far back as ninth-century authors like al-Jāḥiẓ—a fellow Mu'tazilī whom 'Abd al-Jabbār occasionally cites by name—and the Jewish convert from Christianity Da'ūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammiṣ (d. mid-9th century), whose anti-Christian apologetics the theologian may have accessed through the Karaite Jewish scholar 'Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf al-Qirqisānī (d. 10th century).[252] Given these similarities as well as the theologian's documented reliance on earlier sources for his history, it is at least plausible to suggest that 'Abd al-Jabbār incorporated the explicit charge of translation-based *taḥrīf* from a source closer in time and milieu to ninth-century Christian Graeco-Arabic translators.

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[251] 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt* 161. See the important discussion of this passage in Reynolds (2004: 140).

[252] See the extensive discussion of 'Abd al-Jabbār's sources in Reynolds (2004: 139-41 especially at 163-174 and 237-239).

Before we turn to our four testimonies that invoke *taḥrīf* against the Graeco-Arabic translators, we should linger over the anti-Byzantine aspect of ʿAbd al-Jabbār's historical account of Christian falsification. In Chapter 1, we saw how authors like al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Masʿūdī, and Ibn al-Nadīm all suggested that the Byzantines, as Christians, were poor custodians of Greek books, which they either neglected, destroyed, or altered.[253] In this section, we have seen ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī countering the claim that the Byzantine emperor was responsible for corrupting the text of the Gospel and just above we observed ʿAbd al-Jabbār making the same claim explicit. Was there a link between these two historical narratives, of the Roman emperor's corruption and suppression of Christ's religion on the one hand and his corruption and suppression of Greek science on the other? ʿAbd al-Jabbār provides precious evidence that there was.

The Roman or Byzantine emperor continues to play an important role in ʿAbd al-Jabbār's account of Christianity's corrupt origins after the passages discussing *taḥrīf* and translation quoted above. As the theologian continues, we learn that first Titus and then Pilate—cast in this account as a Roman emperor—conspired with the apostle Paul to inject heathenish Roman practices into Christ's pure Islamic religion, taking the textual corruption of the evangelists one step further.[254] Paul and the Roman emperor were able to get away with this, ʿAbd al-Jabbār

[253] See Section 1.1 above.

[254] ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt* 98-105. ʿAbd al-Jabbār calls the second emperor—whom he also assumes to be Constantine's father—Bīlāṭus, the standard name for Pontius Pilate in Arabic. At *Taṯbīt*, 5 he refers to the same figure *Fīlāṭus,* a more Syriacized name for Pilate, but one also attested in Arabic: see the editors' n. 15 ad loc. It is unclear whether ʿAbd al-Jabbar believes, against all chronological probability, that the figure is one and the same as Pontius Pilate. As first suggested by S. Stern, "ʿAbd al-Jabbār's Account of How Christ's Religion was Falsified by the Adoption of Roman Customs", *Journal of Theological Studies* 19 (1968: 128-185 at 140 and 173-174), the name may ultimately derive from the Syriac report attributed to the fourth-century bishop Mārūtā which mistakenly names Constantine's father some variant of 'Valentinianus' rather than the historical Constantius Chlorus, known in most Arabic sources who report the name: see A. Vööbus, (ed.) *The Canons Ascribed to the Mārūtā of Maipherqaṭ,* CSCO 439 (Syriac), 440 (English) (Leuven, 1982) at 21 (Syriac), 16 (English).

adds, because the Romans or Byzantines (*al-rūm*) are an irrational, anti-intellectual people only skilled in the mundane crafts (*al-ṣanā'i'*).[255] The theologian is echoing, even on the verbal level, an anti-Byzantine stance which goes back at least to al-Jāḥiẓ in the ninth century if not to 'Umāra ibn Ḥamza in the eighth and which, as we saw, was connected with the the notion that the Byzantines or Romans brought an end to Greek science.[256] With the emperor Constantine, the theologian continues, this corruption of Christ's religious code reaches its sad conclusion. Constantine's conversion is not heartfelt, but merely a matter of political expediency, and Christianity becomes inextricably linked with Roman practices.[257]

Yet just like al-Mas'ūdī and Ibn al-Nadīm, 'Abd al-Jabbār also accuses Constantine of abolishing Greek science and destroying Greek books. Now 'Abd al-Jabbār is no friend to the philosophers—whether Greek *philosophoi* or Arabic *falāsifa*—whose Neoplatonic cosmology and alleged devotion to astrology he finds impious and primitive.[258] After describing how the philosophers used geometry, astrology, and magical talismans to deceive the gullible Romans, the theologian goes on to describe Constantine's alleged prohibition of philosophy:

> This Constantine was a wicked, yet also a shrewd and patient man who scrutinized matters closely and was greatly concerned with his empire (*mulkihi*) and his subjects' affairs. He therefore looked into the matter of these philosophers and their claims about the stars and talismans. He determined that these were all false, and that these people

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[255] 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt* 105

[256] See Section 1.1 above.

[257] 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt* 106-114. The author seems to have drawn on reports in earlier Muslim sources for his historical details here, as noted by Reynolds (2004: 163-174), who does not however pick up on 'Abd al-Jabbār's redeployment of the ninth-century 'anti-intellectual Byzantines' trope.

[258] 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt* 107. On 'Abd al-Jabbār's engagement with *falsafa* more generally see A. Dhanani, "Rocks in the Heavens?! The Encounter Between 'Abd al-Ǧabbār and Ibn Sīnā," in D. Reisman (ed.) *Before and after Avicenna: Proceedings of the First Conference of the Avicenna Study Group*, (Leiden, 2003: 127-144).

> were corrupt, swindling tricksters. He began killing them in order of their rank, burning their books, and abolishing their temples. This he continued to do until Athens (*'Aṯīna*) was devoid of them. It had been the City of Philosophers, and now no one remained in it but plowmen, tanners, and dyers. He converted the temples that had been dedicated to the planets into churches and made them dwelling-places for monks, saying "These lowly people are more deserving than those ignorant swindlers and deceivers." He granted the monks and common folk power over them in every locale, and each book of medicine and geometry which they brought to light was burned. He strove against those who adhered to the philosophers' views, renouncing them and seeking aid against them.[259]

Obviously, ʻAbd al-Jabbār does not share the philhellenism of the authors we examined in Chapter 1. Nevertheless, he advances precisely the same narrative according to which the Roman emperor, in this case Constantine, simultaneously promoted Christianity while prohibiting Greek philosophy and science.

Even as he attempts to portray Greek philosophy as charlatanism, he cannot help but repeat earlier ninth- and tenth-century tropes that contrast the merely crafty Romans with the truly scientific Greek philosophers. Just as al-Masʻūdī had praised ancient Athens as the City of Sages, so too does ʻAbd al-Jabbār describes it as the City of Philosophers, now reduced to a town of Roman farmers and tradesmen.[260] Yet unlike any of the other sources we have encountered, ʻAbd al-Jabbār explicitly rather than implicitly connects the Roman emperor's corruption and suppression of Greek science with his corruption and suppression of Christ's religion and weaves the two into one coherent narrative. Just as his imperial predecessors suppressed the Gospel and just as he himself corrupts and outlaws the religion which that Gospel revealed, so too does Constantine burn Greek books and prohibit the practice of Greek philosophy.

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[259] ʻAbd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt* 108

[260] See Section 1.1 above.

Thus, at least one author writing at the tail-end of the translation movement connected narratives of Christian *taḥrīf* with the narrative of the Christian Byzantines' suppression of Greek books. Was 'Abd al-Jabbār alone in explicitly connecting these two narratives? As the theologian continues, he describes how Constantine abolished the planet-worship characteristic of Graeco-Roman religion and outlawed philosophical and astrological beliefs that treated these lifeless planets as living masters of human destiny. Yet, according to our author, this was no triumph for reason and the true religion. Rather, the emperor merely substituted for this pagan confusion of the creature with the creator the equally idolatrous worship of the cross and the Christian doctrine that God was a man. Constantine's autocratic decrees after the Council of Chalcedon suppressed whatever proto-Muslims still observed Christ's true teachings.[261] This remarkable claim—that Christianity is merely Graeco-Roman polytheism in disguise—was once held to be the Mu'tazilī theologian's own innovation, yet recent research has uncovered close parallels in fragments of the ninth-century Judaeo-Arabic author al-Muqammiṣ.[262]

Moreover, the coupling of this claim with the notion that Constantine simultaneously suppressed the books and of Graeco-Roman polytheists and philosophers, particularly the Ḥarrānians, is not unique to 'Abd al-Jabbār but also appears in a much abbreviated form in the work of his contemporaries al-Ḫaṭīb al-'Iskāfī and the more famous Ibn Miskawayh. Both authors produce a similar account of Constantine's politically motivated conversion, adding that

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[261] 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt* 109-111. For a similar sentiment see *Taṯbīt* 103.

[262] The fragments of al-Muqammis's lost work attacking Christian origins, the *Kitāb al-ḍarā'a,* are preserved in al-Qirqisānī, *Kitāb al-'Anwār wa-l-marāqib*: see the discussion and references in Reynolds (2004: 237-239), and on al-Muqammiṣ's works of anti-Christian polemic more broadly see S. Stroumsa, *Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammiṣ's* Twenty Chapters *('Ishrūn Maqāla)* (Leiden, 1989: 20-22). For the older view of 'Abd al-Jabbār's narrative see, Stern (1968) refuting the still earlier and now universally discredited thesis of S. Pines, *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source* (Jerusalem, 1966), on which see now Reynolds (2004: 4-18).

in addition to building churches the emperor burnt the Romans' philosophical books.[263] Between al-Muqammiṣ in the ninth century and ʿAbd al-Jabbār, al-'Iskāfī, and Ibn Miskawayh in the late tenth and earlier eleventh, it is plausible that earlier ninth- and tenth-century sources had already connected the Byzantine emperor's purported corruption or suppression of the Gospel and Christ's religion with his suppression of Greek books and Greek science.

After all, both of these ideas find independent expression in much earlier ninth-century authors like ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī and the anonymous originator of the Alexandria-to-Baghdad narrative. Later in the mid-tenth century, al-Masʿūdī is aware of several versions of the story of Constantine's conversion, one involving the politically motivated conversion and one involving the persecution of polytheists, though not the destruction of their philosophical books.[264] Even ʿAbd al-Jabbār's narrative of the political conspiracy among the early Christians to corrupt Christ's Gospel finds parallels in both al-Jāḥiẓ's narrative of *taḥrīf* by the four evangelists and in al-Baṣrī's attempt to refute ninth-century Muslim narratives of scriptural falsification that have not survived. After dismissing his Muslim opponents' claim that Byzantine emperor corrupted the Gospels as discussed above, the East Syrian theologian goes on to argue that any political conspiracy among the early Christians—precisely the same allegation as in ʿAbd al-Jabbār—is

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[263] In al-'Iskāfī, *Kitāb luṭf at-tadbīr,* A. ʿAbd al-Bāqī (ed.) (Cairo, 1964: 93), we read that Constantine "burnt their scientific books and tore them up (*wa-'aḥraqa kutuba ḥikmatihim wa-hatakahā*)". In Ibn Miskawayh, *Kitāb tarājib al-'umam*, 'A. 'Imāmī (ed.), (Tehran, 1987-2001: 1,101), we read that he "burnt their books and their science" (*fa-'aḥraqa kutubahum wa-ḥikmatahum*)". Both here and throughout the two sources display similar wording and must either be dependent on one another or on a common source. This complex of texts was first noted by Stern (1968: 169-176) and see now Reynolds (2004: 173-174), who disputes parts of Stern's somewhat tendentious *Quellenforschung*.

[264] Al-Masʿūdī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh wa-l-'išrāf*, de Geoje (ed.) (Leiden: 1894: 137-138). See the discussion in Stern (1968: 167-169).

also historically implausible.[265] Finally, we should recall from Chapter 1 the earlier tenth-century author al-Masʿūdī's claim that, with the ascension of Constantine, the newly converted Byzantines altered (*ġayyarū*) the clear expositions of the ancient Greeks.[266] This passage comes tantalizingly close to associating Constantine's activity with *taḥrīf*.

More directly than earlier sources extant to us, ʿAbd al-Jabbār's narrative links what ʿAbbāsid-era authors held was Christianity's poor stewardship of Greek texts with its alleged corruption of the ultimate text—God's revelation to his prophets. In any case, let us now turn to the ninth- and tenth-century testimonies which invoke the language of *taḥrīf* in order to suggest that Christian Graeco-Arabic translators specifically, rather than the Christians or Byzantines more generally, are responsible for corrupting Greek texts.

Section 2.3. Accusations of Tampering against the Graeco-Arabic Translators

After reviewing the ninth- and tenth-century apologetic discourse surrounding Christian scriptural trickery, we are at last equipped to examine the four accusations of tampering leveled against Graeco-Arabic translators like Ḥunayn and his colleagues. The four accusations are in fact preserved in authors whose discourse on *taḥrīf* (falsification of scripture) we have already discussed above. The first is found in the ninth-century littérateur al-Jāḥiẓ's *Reply to the Christians*, which in a lengthy digression takes aim at contemporary Christians who attempt to Christianize the polytheistic Greeks of Classical antiquity (*al-yūnāniyyūn*). The second, preserved in another mid-ninth-century work by al-Jāḥiẓ, alleges that Christian translators may

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[265] ʿAmmār al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-burhān,* Hayek (ed.), 43

[266] See my discussion in Section 1.1 above.

have corrupted Aristotle's *Meteorology* in order to cast doubt upon Islam, thus vitiating its value as a historical document of the Greek past. The third derives from the *Affirmation of the proofs of prophethood* written in the late-tenth century by the Muʿtazilī theologian ʿAbd al-Jabbār, who by contrast accuses Ḥunayn and others by name of being so sympathetic to the Classical Greeks that their very status as monotheists is called into question. ʿAbd al-Jabbār's work is particularly valuable because in order to prove this sympathy he cites our fourth testimony, a statement by the early tenth-century Christian scholar Yūḥannā al-Qass directly accusing Christian translators of tweaking their translations in order to Islamize the Classical Greeks. These texts level similar accusations against the ninth-century translators, but ascribe to them somewhat different motives. By placing these testimonies in what I argue is their proper context, the dialogue concerning *taḥrīf*, I will disentangle these contradictions and suggest how, despite being polemical and exaggerated, the testimonies can illuminate the work of the Ḥunayn circle itself and their decision to modify or not modify elements of Classical Greek culture in their translations. The four allegations reveal an anxiety felt by some ʿAbbāsid intellectuals regarding the translators and their control over the Greek past.

We have already seen how, in his *Reply*, al-Jāḥiẓ portrays Christians as deceivers and dissemblers who use their philological prowess to twist even the words of the Qur'ān to their advantage and who anciently were responsible for the textual corruption of Christ's Gospel. Yet early in the *Reply*, the satirist makes it clear that Christians never rise to the level of true scholarship attained by the ancient Greeks (*al-yūnāniyyūn*), not even the Christian Byzantines who are the Greeks' apparent successors. We encountered part of this passage in the previous chapter, but it is worth reviewing:

> If the common people knew that the Christians and the Byzantines (*al-rūm*) possess neither wisdom (*ḥikma*) nor clarity nor deep reflection, but merely the handicrafts of turnery, carpentry, painting, and silk-weaving, why then they would oust them from the ranks of the literate (*al-'udabā'*) and strike them from the rolls of the philosophers and sages (*al-falāsifa wa-l-ḥukamā'*). For the *Organon*, the *On Generation and Corruption,* the *Meteorology*, and so forth are by Aristotle, and he is neither Byzantine nor Christian. The *Almagest* is by Ptolemy and he is neither Byzantine nor Christian. The *Elements* is by Euclid, and he is neither Byzantine nor Christian. The *On Medicine* [sic] is by Galen, and he was neither Byzantine nor Christian, and likewise with the books of Democritus, Hippocrates, Plato and all the rest. These people are from a nation that has perished, though the traces (*'āṯār)* of their intellects remain: they are the Greeks (*al-yūnāniyyūn*). Their religion (*dīnuhum*) is not the others' [the Christians'] religion; their literature is not the others' literature. The former are scholars (*'ulamā'*), while the latter are craftsmen…[267]

The Christians, then, have no legitimate claim to the legacy of the Greeks. Despite their short-comings, however, contemporary Christians are crafty enough to make it appear as if the Greek heritage is their own:

> [The Christians] have taken [those Greek philosophers' and physicians'] books because of their close proximity and their homeland's vicinity. Some of these they ascribe to themselves, while others they adapt to their creed (*wa-minhā mā ḥawwalūhu 'ilā millatihim*), save for the the most famous of the books and the most well-known of their philosophical works (*ḥikamihim*). For when they are unable to change their [the books'] names, they allege that the Greeks (*al-yūnāniyyīn*) are one of the tribes of the Byzantines (*al-rūm*), and they boast of their religion to the Jews, parade it before the Arabs, and flaunt it in the face of the Indians, going so far as to allege that our sages follow their sages and our philosophers imitate their example. And there you have it![268]

Al-Jāḥiẓ is of course engaging here with the ninth-century ideology that claimed Greek science for Islam and the caliphate over and above Christianity and Byzantium, as discussed above in Chapter 1. In al-Jāḥiẓ's view, before Christians and Byzantines (*al-rūm*) resort to spurious genealogy, they first attempt to doctor the ancient Greeks' books. Al-Jāḥiẓ does not mention

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[267] al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd 'alā al-naṣārā* in M. 'A. al-Šarqāwī (ed.) *al-Muḫtār fī l-radd 'alā l-naṣārā ma'a dirāsa taḥqīqiyya taqwīmiyya (*Cairo, 1984): 62.

[268] al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd 'alā al-naṣārā,* 62-63

Graeco-Arabic translators like his contemporaries Ḥunayn by name. Gotthard Strohmaier, however, has suggested that it was precisely the translators that our littérateur has in mind in making this accusation.[269] He connects the passage to Ḥunayn's systematic attempts to Christianize and Islamize the Greek gods in his translation of Artemidorus, a part of Ḥunayn's engagement with the Greek past to which we will turn in Chapter 3.

There are indeed good reasons to suppose that al-Jāḥiẓ has the translators in mind in this passage. First, although he makes a general accusation against 'the Christians and Byzantines', in reality the doyens of Greek learning most familiar to him were the ninth-century Christian translators in Baghdad. And familiar to him they were! Al-Jāḥiẓ was an omnivorous bibliophile, and his works are filled with references to and adaptations from the translated Greek sciences, particularly the works of Aristotle.[270] As Strohmaier himself points out, al-Jāḥiẓ and Ḥunayn could easily have rubbed shoulders at the court of the caliph al-Mutawakkil, who was patron to them both.[271] I have translated the verb he deploys to describe these Christians' activity,

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[269] G. Strohmaier, "Die griechischen Götter in einer christlich-arabischen Übersetzung. Zum Traumbuch des Artemidor in der Version des Ḥunain ibn Isḥāḳ" in F. Altheim and R. Stiehl (eds.), *Die Araber in der Alten Welt*, Bd. 5, 1. Teil (Berlin, 1968): 127-162 at 155-156, reprinted in his *Von Demokrit bis Dante. Die Bewahrung antiken Erbes in der arabischen Kultur* (Hildesheim: 1996). J. Finkel, "A Risāla of al-Jāḥiẓ" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 47 (1927): 311-334 at 319 also takes the passage to refer to the translators. On the anti-Byzantine attitude, see the discussion in D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (New York, 1998): 86-88.

[270] For instance, his celebrated *Kitāb al-hayawān* (*Book of the Animals*) draws on everything from Ps.-Polemon to the Aristotelian *Historia Animalium*: see e.g. al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-ḥayawān* , ʿA.M. Hārūn (ed.), (Cairo 1938) iii, 146, 269-75, 284. For a list of the parallels with the *Historia animalium* see B. Lewin "Djâhiz' Djurbok", *Lychnos* (1952): 210-247 at 239-244. His contemporaries were unanimous in lauding his erudition: see Finkel (1927: 314), with references.

[271] Strohmaier (1968): 156. Al-Mutawakkil in fact commissioned al-Jāḥiẓ to write the *Reply*: see the letter of al-Mutawakkil's courtier Fatḥ ibn Kāqān preserved in Yāqūt ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *'Iršād al-'arīb 'ilā ma'rifat al-'adīb*, D.S. Margoliouth (ed.), *Dictionary of learned men of Yáqút* (The Hague, 1907-1927): vol. 6 p. 72, with the discussion of Finkel (1927: 315). Ḥunayn of course enjoyed a stormy tenure as al-Mutawakkil's personal physician, where he struck quite the figure at court: see most notably the various reports preserved in Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaibi'a, *ʿUyūn al-'Anbā' fī Ṭabaqāt al-'Aṭibbā',* N. Riḍā (ed.) (Beirut, 1965), 257-274. In my Conclusion, I will turn to these reports and their relevance for Ḥunayn's self-fashioning after the model of Galen.

ḥawwala, as 'adapt' but its literal meaning is 'turn, transform, or convert', activities that we might naturally associate with translation.[272] If al-Jāḥiẓ is referring to the Christian Graeco-Arabic translators here, why doesn't he make that more clear? To answer this question, we must view al-Jāḥiẓ's attack on those Christians who tamper with ancient Greek scientific books in the context of the ninth-century discourse surrounding *taḥrīf.* It is easy to do so. We saw in Section 2.2 how, employing the Qur'ānic language of *taḥrīf*, al-Jāḥiẓ accuses the four Gospel writers of forgetting (*nisyān*) the truth of about the past and of willfully conspiring to distort Christ's *'Injīl* (Gospel). According to al-Jāḥiẓ, two of the evangelists—Mark and Luke—were not even alive at the time when Christ received his uncorrupted revelation from God, yet this small group seized power by altering the historical record and turning the true religion of Christ—Islam—into the false religion of Christianity.[273] Precisely the same claim is being made about the ancient Greeks and contemporary Christians here. The Greeks are "a nation that has perished" accessible only through the "traces of their intellect". After the fact, Christians and Byzantines, with only a spurious connection to the Greeks, have altered the texts of the Greeks and imposed an alien religion—Christianity—upon them. Just as the four evangelists performed *taḥrīf* upon the the *'Injīl* which is Christ's legacy, so too have contemporary Christians performed it upon those precious books which are the legacy of the Greeks.

Just as al-Jāḥiẓ's narrative of scriptural corruption remains vague, so too does his narrative of the Graeco-Arabic translators' corrupt activities. We saw above that ninth-century Muslim authors are not interested in discussing the precise details of the Christian *taḥrīf* that they

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[272] See most readily *Lane's Lexicon of the Arabic Language* (p. 674) or, for examples of the root in other forms, *Lisān al-'arab* (p. 1054).

[273] al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd 'alā al-naṣārā,* 71

alleged. *Taḥrīf* via translation does not even become a prominent theme until ‘Abd al-Jabbār at the turn of the tenth century. Seen in the context of the discourse on *taḥrīf*, al-Jāḥiẓ’s refusal to enter into the mechanics of the alleged corruption is understandable, even expected. We have every reason therefore to understand the ‘Byzantines and Christians’ whom al-Jāḥiẓ attacks in this passage as ninth-century Graeco-Arabic translators, like his rough contemporaries Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq, Qusṭā ibn Lūqā, Yaḥyā ibn al-Biṭrīq or the poorly attested ’Usṭat (Eustathius) of the Kindī circle, all of whom were Christian and the latter three of whom bore Arabized Byzantine Greek names or were Melkite . Al-Jāḥiẓ accuses such experts of changing (*ḥawwala*) the texts of the real scholars, the ancient Greeks, in order to Christianize them. By altering the textual record in this way, the translators have laid spurious claim to the Greek past, which ninth-century Muslim writers claimed urgently for Islam and the Arabs.

This reading of the passage gains even more credibility when we turn to another work of al-Jāḥiẓ. In his *Kitāb al-hayawān* (*Book of the Animals*), al-Jāḥiẓ openly accuses the Graeco-Arabic translators of tampering with their texts and again suggests that their motive is to alter the historical record. The author has been discussing a commonly acknowledged crux in medieval Islamic thought. Tradition held that Muḥammad’s prophethood was witnessed by a wondrous and unique celestial sign, the swooping of the stars en masse to Earth. Later commentators were perplexed: surely this phenomenon was merely a meteor shower, and hence a natural and common enough occurrence described not only by the Jāhilī poets of pre-Islamic Arabia, but also in the books of ancient natural philosophers such as the Greeks. If it had occurred before

Muḥammad, it was not unique, and if it was not unique, it was not a sign.[274] Weighing in on the problem, al-Jāḥiẓ expends many pages and much philological ingenuity in quoting and dismissing alleged references to meteors in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry.[275] Yet when it comes to a reference found in Aristotle, he rejects the evidence as inadmissible with one quick stroke:

> You claim that you have found a mention of meteors (*al-šuhub*) in the books of the ancient philosophers and that it is the *Meteorology* by Aristotle, wherein is mentioned the report on (*al-qawl fī*) meteors together with the reports on comets, the rainbow, and the ring which can surround the moon at night. If you turn to such a source for aid and call on it for assistance, then we will inform you about the deceit (*kiḏb*) and exaggeration of the translators (*al-tarājima*), and about the book's corruption (*fasād*), brought about in part by interpretation of the discourse, in part by the translators' ignorance of how to render (*naql*) one language into another, and in part by the corruption of the text. We will inform you that [the book] is by now quite old and that vast epochs and vicissitudes have intervened. There is no safeguard against the assaults of false substitution (*al-tabdīl*) and corruption that have occurred. This account is well known and correct.[276]

The passage is rich in the Qur'ānic language of *taḥrīf*: the Graeco-Arabic translators are guilty of deceit (*kiḏb*), corruption (*fasād*), and the alteration of the text by substituting what is authentic for what is false (*tabdīl*).[277] Perhaps incompetence may play a role too, and here al-Jāḥiẓ is willing to apply to Christians a charge—namely, bad translation technique—which he had

[274] The tradition derived from later exegesis of Qur'ān 72:8. See, with references, the helpful discussion in A. Dhanani, "Rocks in the Heavens?! The Encounter Between 'Abd al-Ğabbār and Ibn Sīnā," *Before and after Avicenna: Proceedings of the First Conference of the Avicenna Study Group*, D. Reisman (ed.) (Leiden, 2003): 127-144 at 134-136

[275] al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān,* 'A. Hārūn (ed.) (Cairo: 1938-1945), 6, 272-280

[276] al-Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān,* 6, 280

[277] On the Qur'ānic valences of these words and their redeployment in ninth-century polemic see my discussion above in Section 2.2.

elsewhere reserved for Judaeo-Arabic translators of the Bible.[278] Yet his emphasis is on the willful falsification of the text, and it is worth noting that tendentious interpretation has a part to play here. As we saw in Section 2.2, the doctrine of Christian *taḥrīf al-maʿnā* ('falsification of meaning') was beginning to take shape in al-Jāḥiẓ's day. Here, however, the Graeco-Arabic translations' crooked exegesis has fed back into the text itself and corrupted it.

Al-Jāḥiẓ redeploys the language of *taḥrīf* to level a similar charge of tampering against the Graeco-Arabic translators of Aristotle. Just as Christians in the past deleted references to Muḥammad's advent from the Bible, so too might the Graeco-Arabic translators have added references to shooting stars in the *Meteorology* in order to call into question a sign of Muḥammad's prophethood. Just as each generation of evangelist added its own false accretions to Christ's Gospel, so too have the translators added their exaggerations (*ziyādāt*) to Aristotle over the years. Yet just as in these ninth-century *taḥrīf* narratives—and indeed in al-Jāḥiẓ's attack on the Graeco-Arabic translators in the *Reply*—the precise nature of the charge remains blurry. The translators are known tamperers and that alone means that the investigator can dismiss Aristotle's *Meteorology* as historical evidence. It is not Aristotle or his natural philosophy which is untrustworthy: we saw above al-Jāḥiẓ's immense respect for Greek science. Rather, it is the almost exclusively Christian translators of Greek works who may have tampered with Aristotle and rendered him an unreliable source for those who wish to learn whether meteor showers happened in the pre-Islamic past. Just as in his first accusation, al-Jāḥiẓ alleges corruption not of the scientific content per se, but of sensitive elements pertaining to the historical record. The

[278] See al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd ʿalā al-naṣārā,* 73 and 76, passages which use almost word for word the same language employed in this passage from the *Ḥayawān*.

translators have used their privileged position as intermediaries between Greek past and ʻAbbāsid present to give a falsified account of that past.

Al-Jāḥiẓ is deliberately vague in his accusations here and, as in his first allegation of tampering, does not name any particular translator of Aristotle's work. Ibn al-Biṭrīq had transmitted a paraphrased version of the *Meteorology* a half-century earlier, which later readers took to be Aristotle's own text. Al-Jāḥiẓ's contemporary Ḥunayn also produced a short compendium of materials on the Aristotelian work, one which in fact contains material not present in the earlier paraphrase.[279] Ḥunayn's name is strongly associated with the topic, for we possess a still unedited work attributed to Ḥunayn and exclusively dedicated to comets. Ḥunayn is also the translator of a commentary on the *Meteorology* attributed to Olympiodorus.[280] Might al-Jāḥiẓ be casting oblique aspersions on Ḥunayn in this passage? If we examine Ḥunayn's compendium of the *Meteorology*, the notion gains some traction. It is strange that al-Jāḥiẓ should clump Aristotle's discussion of meteors together with that of comets, the rainbow, and the paraselene, when Aristotle's text treats these in different places and with other material intervening.[281] Turning to Ibn al-Biṭrīq's version of the *Meteorology*, we find no answers, for that

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[279] For Ibn al-Bitrīq, see C. Petraitis, *The Arabic Version of Aristotle's* Meteorology (Beirut, 1967) and in P.L. Schoonheim, *Aristotle's "Meteorology" in the Arabico-Latin tradition* (Leiden, 2000). For Ḥunayn's compendium see H. Daiber, *Ein Kompendium in der aristotelischen Meteorologie in der Fassung des Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq* (Amsterdam, 1975). On Aristotle's *Meteorology* in the Arabic tradition more generally see P.L. Schoonheim "*Météorologiques.* Tradition syriaque, arabe, et latine" in *DPA*, suppl. (Paris, 2003: 324-328).

[280] See F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums,* (Leiden, 1967-84): 7, 327-328 for a description of the work on comets. The ps.-Olympiodorus translation is found in ʻA. Badawī (ed.), *Commentaires sur Aristote perdus en grec* (Beirut, 1971) 1,95. See also the overviews of these materials in P. Lettinck, *Aristotle's* Meteorology *and its Reception in the Arab World* (Leiden, 1999).

[281] See Aristotle, *Meteorology* 341b1-345a10 on meteors and comets and 371b18-378b6 on the rainbow, the parhelion, and the paraselene.

version too discusses these phenomena in widely disparate passages.[282] If al-Jāḥiẓ consulted Ḥunayn's compendium, however, then this anomaly receives a ready explanation. Ḥunayn's compendium, which reorganizes and abbreviates Aristotle's material, treats exactly these four topics one after the other in quick succession.[283] Furthermore, each is introduced— at least in our two manuscripts—with the chapter heading "the report on… (*al-qawl fī…*)", precisely the same language used by al-Jāḥiẓ in our passage.[284] The author of the *Book of the Animals* lists these topics in the same order as the compendium does but reversed, as if he had looked up Ḥunayn's reference to meteors and then worked backward from it to gain its context. Thus it may be Ḥunayn's version of the *Meteorology* that al-Jāḥiẓ used and which he here alleges may contain tampering. Since, at least as preserved in our manuscripts, the compendium clearly bears Ḥunayn's name in its title, this allegation would then be an indirect jab at Ḥunayn. The evidence is suggestive, but far from conclusive.[285]

Al-Jāḥiẓ ends his second accusation by asserting that the Graeco-Arabic translators' tampering is a "well-known" and well-established phenomenon. In spite of this, and in spite of

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[282] See in Petraitis (1967): 26-31 (on comets), 31-33 (on meteors, etc.). Ibn al-Bitrīq's text represents a substantial reorganization of the Aristotelian material and places the discussion of rainbows, the parhelion, and the paraselene much later, in his third book in fact: see 89-99.

[283] See in Daiber (1975: 57-61).

[284] Ibn al-Bitrīq's version also deploys *qawl* as a chapter heading on occasion, but a comparison between the relevant chapter headings in Ibn al-Bitrīq and Ḥunayn with al-Jāḥiẓ's wording reveals that al-Jāḥiẓ employs terminology much more similar to Ḥunayn's.

[285] In a series of brief discussions of the passage, which do not treat its accusation of tampering, Gerhard Endress has held the translator to be Ibn al-Biṭrīq without mentioning Ḥunayn's version of the *Meteorology:* see *Grundriss der arabischen Philologie* (Wiesbaden, 1992: 4); G. Endress, "The Circle of al-Kindī: Early Arabic Translations from the Greek and the Rise of Islamic Philosophy" in *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism: Studies on the Transmission of Greek Philosophy and Sciences* (Leiden, 1997: 43-76 at 43-44); and most recently G. Endress, "Al-Kindī: Arabismus, Hellenismus und die Legitimation der Philosophie im Islam" in B. Reinert and J. Thomann (eds.), *Islamische Grenzen und Grenzübergänge, Schweizer Asiatische Studien/Études asiatiques suisses* vol. 44 (Bern, 2007: 35-60 at 40-41). It should indeed be noted that, while al-Jāḥiẓ does not evince direct knowledge of Ḥunayn, he has occasion to mention Ibn al-Bitrīq twice in passing at *Ḥayawān,* 1, 76 and 78.

the textual alterations actually performed, as we shall see, by Ḥunayn and his associates, how seriously we are to take al-Jāḥiẓ's allegations?[286] After all, despite his deep learning in Arabic letters, al-Jāḥiẓ lacked both Greek and Syriac. In fact, a passage from the theologian ʿAbd al-Jabbār's late-tenth-century *Affirmation of the proofs of prophethood* demonstrates that it is not an isolated instance.[287] We have already seen above how the *Affirmation* presents Christians' crooked translation of the Gospel (*al-'Injīl*) as Christianity's foundational act of betrayal and gives an account of *taḥrīf*, in which the first Christians collude with the Roman state to corrupt Christ's revelation. In an earlier section of the work, ʿAbd al-Jabbār issues a brief but fearsome condemnation of the Graeco-Arabic translators, and unlike al-Jāḥiẓ, he is happy to name names. As we investigate this accusation, we should remember that ʿAbd al-Jabbār is writing at the turn of the tenth century in Būyid Iran after the Graeco-Arabic translation movement is all but spent. As we saw in Section 2.2, he is no philhellene, nor does he stress the ʿAbbāsid ideology expounded by al-Jāḥiẓ and others whereby the Byzantines or Romans (*al-rūm*) and Christians are illegitimate usurpers of the Greek legacy and bear no relation to the ancient Greeks.[288] In fact, for

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[286] Strohmaier (1968:156) poses the same question, though he had before him only the first accusation against the translators in the *Reply.*

[287] For this passage I rely on the edition of ʿA. ʿUṯmān, *Taṯbīt dalā'il al-nubuwwa* (Beirut, 1961), since it is derived from a part of the work not covered in G.S. Reynolds and S.K. Samir (eds.), *Critique of Christian Origins,* (Provo, 2010). The passage has received little attention from scholars. See however ʿA. ʿUṯmān (1966: 1,75-76, with notes), Dhanani (2003: 136), G.S. Reynolds, *A Muslim Theologian in the Sectarian Milieu* (Leiden, 2004: 228 n. 163) and S.H. Griffith, "From Patriarch Timothy I to Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq: philosophy and Christian apology in Abbasid times; reason, ethics and public policy" in M. Tamcke (ed.), *Christians and Muslims in Dialogue in the Islamic Orient of the Middle Ages,*(Beirut, 2007: 75-98 at 96-97). Griffith discusses its significance as evidence for tenth-century Christian attitudes toward Greek philosophy.

[288] As noted in Section 2.2, however, ʿAbd al-Jabbār does preserve traces of this narrative in his account of the reign of Constantine.

‘Abd al-Jabbār Christianity is really Graeco-Roman polytheism in disguise.[289] Nevertheless, we shall see that ‘Abd al-Jabbār reuses earlier, ninth- and tenth-century critiques of the Graeco-Arabic translators and hence forms a crucial part of my analysis.

‘Abd al-Jabbār’s accusation is important not only because of this earlier material but also because it names specific Graeco-Arabic translators—including Ḥunayn—and provides precious evidence that accusations of tampering against the translators were not an exclusively Muslim phenomenon. Before we turn to the passage in question, however, let us briefly investigate its context, which is crucial for understanding ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s discussion of the Graeco-Arabic translators. As we saw in Section 2.2, the *Affirmation*’s purpose is to confirm the traditional proofs of Muḥammad’s prophethood. Early in the work, ‘Abd al-Jabbār discusses the crux regarding the meteor showers heralding the Prophet’s mission—the same theme we saw al-Jāḥiẓ tackling in the *Book of the Animals* above. In fact, after citing various scholars’ attempts to resolve the problem including al-Jāḥiẓ’s own, ‘Abd al-Jabbār has occasion to summarize that ninth-century littérateur’s attack on the translators in the *Book of the Animals*, quoted above. A close reader, ‘Abd al-Jabbār has picked up on his fellow Mu‘tazilī’s careful use of the language of *taḥrīf*. What was only implicit in al-Jāḥiẓ becomes explicit in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s summary of

[289] As ‘Abd al-Jabbār himself puts it, “If you inspect the matter, you will find that the Christians became Roman… You will not find that the Romans became Christian.” ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt dalā’il al-nubuwwa* in Reynolds and Samir (eds.) (2010: 103). ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt* (2010 ed.), 98-119 describes the gradual corruption of Christ’s religion. See especially *Taṯbīt,* 102 for his assertion that the Romans followed the “religion of the Greeks (*dīn al-yūnāniyyīn*)”, which he characterizes in terms strikingly close to the cosmology of the *falāsifa.* See also the discussion in G.S. Reynolds, *A Muslim Theologian in the Sectarian Milieu: ’Abd al-Jabbār and the* Critique of Christian Origins (Leiden, 2004: 107-117), with references.

him: the translators are “enemies of Islam” who have corrupted the books in their care one generation after the other to destroy the true religion.[290]

‘Abd al-Jabbār approves of al-Jāḥiẓ’s narrative. In fact, he uses it as an occasion to digress from the matter of the meteor showers and look back on the whole sweep of the ‘Abbāsid translation movement with his eyes peeled for just this sort of deception. He begins with the Persian translators of the ‘Abbāsid era, many of whom he reminds us were Zoroastrians and many of whom, while nominally Muslim, were still partisans of that nation (*muta‘aṣṣibu li-qawmihi*).[291] According to ‘Abd al-Jabbār, these so-called translators in fact stole material from the Qur’ān, the *ḥadīṯ* collections, and Arabic literature and attributed it to earlier Persian authors.[292] Much more insidious, claims ‘Abd al-Jabbār, were the Persian astrologers, many of whom were close to early ‘Abbāsid caliphs like al-Ma’mūn. These hucksters passed off their own works as the books of ancient Persian astrologers in translation, and the most notorious of these was a book attributed to one Jānān, the court astrologer of the Sassanid monarch Khosrau I (d. 579).[293] The book narrated all of Islamic history from Muḥammad down to the ‘Abbāsid dynasty and made it look as if this Jānān had predicted everything, when of course the work was really a modern forgery. ‘Abd al-Jabbār is almost certainly recycling material from earlier sources and even includes a detailed report of a debate between an anonymous Mu‘tazilī

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[290] ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt* (1966 ed.: 1, 70). ’Abd al-Jabbār makes it clear that he is citing from al-Jāḥiẓ’s *Ḥayawān* here at *Taṯbīt,* 1, 69.

[291] ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt,* 1, 71

[292] ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt*, 1, 71-72

[293] ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt,* 1, 72. In the three occurrences of his name, ’Uṯmān’s edition prints ‘Jānān’ twice and ‘Jābān’ once. ‘Abd al-Jabbār does not specify which Khosrau is meant, but he probably means Khosrau I whose patronage of translation and science is well known.

theologian and the leading astronomer of the day held sometime in the early tenth century in Baghdad.[294] It is more than likely that he is reflecting the views of ninth-century ʻAbbāsid-era authors suspicious of Persian astrologers and translators and their attempt to claim past wisdom for themselves.[295]

It is in this context that our theologian turns to the Christian translators of Greek texts and accuses them not of forging whole works like the Persians, but rather of tampering with their texts. ʻAbd al-Jabbār has painted a portrait of ʻAbbāsid society in which to publish a translation is to make a claim, inevitably a false one, about history. This historical claim aims to cast one's own ethnic or religious group in the best possible light while detracting from Islam. Hence, by issuing forgeries that make it appear as if Sassanid astrologers had predicted the rise of Islam, these Persian 'translators' have subsumed Islam into a larger world historical narrative centered on Iran. As he continues, ʻAbd al-Jabbār in fact observes that certain historians ignorant of theology (*kalām*) have inserted these forged astrological accounts into their histories. Their equally gullible readers, neglecting to consult religious experts, believe these *vaticinia ex eventu.* They attribute them to bygone peoples and then marvel at the ancient authors' illusory prescience.[296] ʻAbd al-Jabbār claims that this sort of historical deception can explain the the rise of heresy among Muslims, and then turns to another prime example of it:

[294] ʻAbd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt,* 1, 72-74. The alleged debate must have taken place in the first half of the tenth century based on the names of some of the astrologers claimed to be present: see the footnotes in ʻUṯmān (1966: 1, 73), with references.

[295] On the politically volatile nature of Persian astrology and translation in the earlier days of the ʻAbbāsids, see Gutas (1998: 28-52, 75-83), with references.

[296] Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt* (1966: 1, 75)

> This is also the case with the books attributed to the Greeks (*al-yūnāniyya*) such as Plato, Aristotle, and others. They were transmitted [or 'translated', *nuqilat*] to Islam, and those who translated them (*nāqilūhā*) and taught them did so one after the other and nothing is known about their collective history. Nevertheless, they are the enemies of God's prophet —may God honor him and grant him peace—and out of everyone they have the strongest desire to cast doubt upon Islam and turn its people away from it. They hide behind Christianity yet Christians do not approve of them and in fact bear witness to their apostasy (*bi-l-'ilḥād*), their obstruction of the Laws, and their assault upon divinity and all prophetic revelations. They have excommunicated and anathematized them, the likes of Qusṭā ibn Lūqā, Ḥunayn ibn 'Isḥāq and his son 'Isḥāq, Quwayrā, ['Abū Bišr] Mattā ibn Yūnus, and Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī. These [translators] are few in number and did not all live at the same time.[297]

As the culmination of his brief review of 'Abbāsid-era translation, 'Abd al-Jabbār is gearing up to an accusation of direct textual tampering on the part of these Graeco-Arabic translators, to which we will shortly turn. We can sense the accusation coming, for 'Abd al-Jabbār's narrative of the translators' activities in the quoted passage already bears an obvious resemblance to earlier narratives of Christian corruption of scripture discussed above in Section 1.2, including his own. Just like the evangelists, the Graeco-Arabic translators operate in succession, "one after the other." Just as the Qur'ān states that a small faction (*farīq* or *tā'ifa*) among the People of the Book is responsible for obscuring scripture, so too are the Graeco-Arabic translators "few in number".[298] Just as early Christians resorted to translation in order to destroy the true religion revealed to Christ, so too do the Graeco-Arabic translators introduce the books of the Greeks to destroy the true religion revealed to Muḥammad. 'Abd al-Jabbār is tapping into al-Jāḥiẓ's ninth-century accusation against the translators in the *Book of the Animals* which after all launched this digression. Much of the language that appeared in his summary of that account reappears here.

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[297] Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt dalā'il al-nubūwa* (1966 ed.), vol. I pp. 75-76

[298] Qur'ān 2:75, 2:146, 3:69, 3:78. For 'Abd al-Jabbār's redeployment of this motif in his *taḥrīf* narrative see my discussion above in Section 2.2. His redeployment is also influenced by the *tā'ifa* among the Children of Israel mentioned at Qur'ān 61:14: see Reynolds (2004: 87-88).

What other elements in ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s narrative can be traced back to the ninth and early-tenth centuries when the Graeco-Arabic translation movement was in full swing? There is very good reason to suspect that the thrust of ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s accusation against the translators is traceable to a source closer in time and linguistic expertise to Ḥunayn. For as ‘Abd al-Jabbār concludes his accusations against the Graeco-Arabic translators whose names he has just listed, he quotes from a Christian author in order to justify his statement that the translators are crypto-apostates whom even Christians repudiate. With this source’s testimony comes a charge of direct textual tampering as well:

> Yūḥannā al-qass [‘John the Priest’], the lecturer on Euclid, the expert on the *Almagest* and so forth, used to say: “Those who translated (*naqalū*) these peoples’ [the Greeks’] books omitted much of their error (*ḍalālihim*) and the more unseemly aspects of their delusion (*fāḥiši ġalaṭihim*), out of partisanship for them (*‘aṣabiyyatan lahum*) and in order to spare them, and they gave them, on loan, meanings and clarifications from the Islamists (*al-’islāmiyyīn*) which they did not possess.” Now even when the enemy is pious, there is no safeguard against his rancor. So what of one who does not believe in Judgement Day and expects no reckoning, and fears no punishment?[299]

This citation from a Christian is a coup for ‘Abd al-Jabbār. It includes a testimony—from a scholar of Euclid and Ptolemy no less—that the translators tampered with these texts to alter the historical record and make the Greeks out to be compatible with Islam when they were in fact disbelievers.

The citation is also quite valuable to us because it provides our fourth allegation that the Graeco-Arabic translators tamper with the texts they translate, this time from a Christian source well-acquainted with both the Greek sciences and the Greek language. The Yūḥannā al-qass whom ‘Abd al-Jabbār quotes is without a doubt Yūḥannā ibn Yūsuf ibn al-Hārith ibn al-Baṭrīq al-qass, known to us primarily from entries in the encyclopedic works of Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 995 or

[299] ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt dalā’il al-nubuwwa* (1966 ed.), vol. I p. 76

998) and Ibn al-Qifṭī (d. 1248).[300] Although it is difficult to date him more precisely, Yūḥannā was active in the first half of the tenth century, making him a younger contemporary of some of the translators mentioned by ʻAbd al-Jabbār and an older contemporary of Muʻtazilī himself.[301] In addition to the commentaries on Euclid and others mentioned by both encyclopedists, al-Qifṭī claims that Yūḥannā wrote literary compositions (*taṣānīf*), and perhaps ʻAbd al-Jabbār's citation is drawn from one of those. His use of the past progressive ("used to say", *kāna yaqūlu*) suggests it may even be a remark made in lectures or *majālis* attended by ʻAbd al-Jabbār during his student days in Baghdad. Both sources emphasize that he was also a translator himself, and a translator from Greek (not Syriac) at that. Elsewhere in the *Fihrist*, we find evidence that Yūḥannā al-qass was in the habit of consulting the Greek originals even when many scholars relied on translations. An informant of Ibn al-Nadīm claims that al-qass was able to show him an original Greek copy of Euclid which Ṯābit ibn Qurra had consulted a generation earlier.[302] In still another part of his *Fihrist*, Ibn al-Nadīm mentions that a certain Yūḥannā, whom we might

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[300] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, G. Flügel (ed.) (Leipzig, 1871: 282), English trans. in B. Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm* (New York, 1970: 2, 666) and al-Qiftī, *Ta'rīḫ al-ḥukamā',* J. Lippert (ed.) (Leipzig, 1903: 380) both refer to this Yūḥannā as al-qass ('the priest') and make explicit mention of his work on Euclid. ʻAbd al-Karīm ʻUthmān's suggestion, in his 1966 edition of the *Affirmation* (p. 76 n. 6), that ʻAbd al-Jabbār is referring to the physician and translator Yūḥannā ibn Māsawayh (d. 857) is unlikely. Ibn Māsawayh worked on medicine, not geometry, and is never to my knowledge referred to as al-qass. Furthermore, his early-ninth-century floruit makes him an unlikely source of information for ʻAbd al-Jabbār, with his list of ninth- and tenth-century translators.

[301] Ibn al-Nadīm's text is lacunose precisely when the author begins to report the year of Yūhannā's death. Given, however, that the author of the *Fihrist* places him at the start of his section on mathematicians and astronomers "close to the present time", a floruit in the early tenth century seems likely. If the story preserved at *Fihrist* 241 (Arabic) / 578 (English) is about the same Yūḥannā then he was already a senior translator in 951/952. Dodge (1970: 1128) suggests that he "lived during the late ninth and early tenth century", while T. L. Heath, *The Thirteen Books of Euclid's Elements* (New York, 1956: 87) dates his death to "about 980"), without providing grounds. He is probably relying on the estimate of 370 AH (980/981 CE) made by H. Suter, "Die Mathematiker und Astrononen der Araber und ihre Werke" *Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der Mathematik* (Leipzig, 1900): 3-277 at 60. Suter claims to have deduced this date from both Ibn al-Nadīm and al-Qifṭī and be extrapolating from the account at *Fihrist* 266 (Arabic) / 635 (English) which suggests that Yūḥannā worked with, but was senior to Naẓīf ibn Yumn (d. circa 990).

[302] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* 266 (Arabic), 635 (English). See the discussion in J. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival During the Buyid Age* (Leiden, 1993: 132-133).

plausibly identify with Yūḥannā al-qass, was the top expert on hand when, in 951/2, some mysterious Greek books were found hidden deep inside the walls of Isfahan and sent to Baghdad.[303] They gave off a terrible smell, however, and his translation revealed them to contain only lists of troops and their wages. Whatever the historicity of this story and despite our scanty evidence for his life and works, a portrait emerges of Yūḥannā as a well-reputed, versatile translator of Greek books from the original Greek without recourse to Syriac. He certainly seems to have possessed the requisite skills to make empirical claims about omissions and alterations in the translations of his predecessors.

It is not clear to what extent ʿAbd al-Jabbār's citation preserves Yūḥannā's own verbiage. Given the theologian's practice elsewhere in the *Affirmation*, it is certainly not a direct quotation but rather a paraphrase which condenses a longer discussion, one faithful to the original content but with some alteration of its rhetorical thrust to suit the present context.[304] In ʿAbd al-Jabbār's citation, then, Yūḥannā asserts that a comparison of the Greek original with the Arabic translation will reveal two types of tampering: the omission of certain scandalous features and the Islamization of others. The mechanism of the first charge is fairly clear. The translators have simply left out (*ḥaḏafa*) these features. The mechanism of the second charge, that the Graeco-Arabic translators have lent meanings (or 'concepts') and clarifications borrowed from Muslims

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[303] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist* 241 (Arabic), 578 (English). Dodge (1970: 578) proposes that Yūḥannā al-qass is meant. By contrast, Flügel (1887: p. 106 [German], n. 7) proposes the ʾAbū ʿAmr Yūḥannā ibn Yūsuf al-Kātib mentioned at *Fihrist*, 244 (Arabic) / 588 (English) as a translator of Plato. We receive no information about al-Kātib's floruit, though work on Plato is more redolent of the ninth century than the tenth: see D. Gutas, "Platon. Tradition arabe" in *DPA* vol. 5, part a (Paris, 2012: 845-63). Given that we have firmly established a tenth-century floruit for Yūḥannā al-qass, I find Dodge's proposal more plausible than Flügel's. Dodge's identification is all the more likely since, of the two Yūḥannās, the *Fihrist* affords more prominence by far to al-qass. In the story of the Isfahan books, Ibn al-Nadīm seems to expect his late tenth-century readers to recognize, without disambiguation, the Yūḥannā to whom he is referring.

[304] Compare, e.g., his report of al-Jāḥiẓ's critique of the translators at *Taṯbīt* (1966 ed.: 70) with the original passage (*Ḥayawān*, 80).

to the Greek authors they translate is less clear. Perhaps Yūḥannā means that the translators have altered the meaning of the text by choosing Arabic words with technical Islamic usages—a practice we will in fact find deployed by Ḥunayn's circle. Perhaps by 'clarification' (*bayān*), he means tendentious glossing of Greek names or words to obscure their polytheistic content, another practice which we will find attested.

The alleged mechanism of tampering is unclear in part because our brief fragment does not specify the nature of the scandalous features themselves either. Does 'Abd al-Jabbār cite Yūḥannā as claiming that the Graeco-Arabic translators omit the Greeks' intellectual mistakes or, alternatively, the perverse errors of their religion? The word *ḍalāl* ('error, going astray') has strong religious overtones. 'Abd al-Jabbār might be quoting the Christian geometer as saying that the translators have omitted features of Greek philosophy that are theologically unacceptable—the eternity of the world, say.[305] The reference to '*islāmiyyūn* ('Islamists' or 'Islamic intellectuals') rather than simply to 'Muslims' could suggest this reading, and in Chapter Three we will in fact observe Ḥunayn's workshop altering if not omitting passages at odds with the doctrine of *ex nihilo* creation. On the one hand, a reference to intellectual mistakes would jibe with 'Abd al-Jabbār's wider context. The theologian could be quoting Yūḥannā in order to suggest that, just like the Persian astrologers, the Graeco-Arabic translators have made their beloved ancients out to be more perspicacious than they really were by stealing from the latest advances in Islamic science. However, the implication both inside and outside of the citation that the translators have apostatized and joined the 'people' or 'faction' (*'aṣab*) of the Greeks

[305] This seems to be the reading of Dhanani (2003: 136) in his brief discussion of this passage.

suggests that the Yūḥannā's accusation included deeper religious or cultural 'errors' as well as intellectual ones.

While the word *'aṣabiyya* ('partisanship') is probably 'Abd al-Jabbār's own given his earlier use of it to describe the crypto-Zoroastrian Persian translators, the notion that Ḥunayn and his colleagues have somehow betrayed their Christian faith was likely Yūḥannā's as well. After all, 'Abd al-Jabbār has just claimed that Christians join him in anathematizing these translators and seems to be introducing the Yūḥannā citation most immediately to support this point. It is tempting, then, to read Yūḥannā as his source for these accusations and for this list of names, which will occur in a similar context later in the work.[306] The earlier Christian author would thus be alleging that the translators have gone over to the Greeks' side and Islamized their fellow disbelievers in attempt to win over those Islamic intellectuals (*'islāmiyyūn*) who read their translations. The descriptor *fāḥiš* ('immoderate, unseemly, abominable'), applied to the errors omitted by the translators, strongly supports this reading. The word can refer generally to an excess or an overstepping of bounds, but these are usually moral transgressions, and *fāḥiš* is used most often of unseemly acts, particularly lewd ones like fornication or adultery.[307] If 'Abd al-Jabbār's word accurately captures Yūḥanna's sentiment, then the Christian mathematician could mean elements of ancient Greek religion or culture deemed abominable by certain of his contemporary monotheists, not merely abstract intellectual errors. In other words, while it is difficult to judge from the small excerpt provided by 'Abd al-Jabbār, Yūḥannā could very well be referring to the sort of bowdlerization or adaptation of the Greek past among Graeco-Arabic

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[306] 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Taṯbīt dalā'il al-nubuwwa* (2010 ed.), 153

[307] See *Lane's Lexicon of the Arabic Language (*pp. 2399-2400) and especially *Lisān al-'arab* (pp. 3355-3356). *Lisān al-'arab* quotes Qur'ān 4:19, where the nominalization *fāḥiša* is used of sexual transgression.

translators which I will demonstrate in coming chapters. In any case, the Yūḥannā citation provides precious evidence that Christians as well as Muslims suspected the Graeco-Arabic translators of tampering. While the Islamic narrative of scriptural falsification structured these accusations of tampering among ʻAbbāsid writers, it alone did not motivate them.

If the citation is discussing the bowdlerization of Greek cultural elements, then in the early tenth-century Yūḥannā is making a claim about the translators' tampering that contradicts that of al-Jāḥiẓ in the mid-ninth. As we saw, al-Jāḥiẓ shared the anti-Byzantine attitude common in ʻAbbāsid society and had argued that the Graeco-Arabic translators make the Greeks out to be Christian in order to claim them for Christianity. Yūḥannā asserts that the translators are barely Christians at all and, sympathizing with the Greeks, promote them by making them out to be more Islamic. It is tempting to read Yūḥannā as correcting the position of al-Jāḥiẓ or of other Muslim polemicists who made the same claim but whose writings do not survive. Yūḥannā, as a translator, knows that there is some truth to what al-Jāḥiẓ says. As we shall see in coming chapters, some translators really do make alterations that mask Greek polytheism and other aspects of Greek culture, rendering these elements with Christian but also sometimes Islamic terms and concepts. Rather than simply denying al-Jāḥiẓ's claim, Yūḥannā uses his privileged role as a linguistic intermediary to turn it on its head. The translators are deceiving their Muslim readership by masking the more offensive elements of the Greek past. Hence the joke is really on the Muslim author like al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Kindī, or al-Masʻūdī encountered in Chapter 1, who would claim the Greeks for Islam without consulting the Greeks' books in their original untranslated form. Such a motivation on Yūḥannā's part fits with his claim that Christian translators Islamize the Greeks and also with earlier Christian responses to *taḥrīf* allegations explored above in

Section 2.2. We saw how Christian authors expressed a marked anxiety about their inability to disprove claims of crooked translation of Christian scripture. Rather like ʻAmmār al-Baṣrī, who attempted to turn Christian translation activity from an embarrassment to evidence that can corroborate its authenticity, Yūḥannā is taking another Christian scandal and reworking to the advantage of the wider Christian community.

Before we move on, it is worth noting that the idea of the tampering Graeco-Arabic translator seems to have become something of a commonplace, for we find it repeated even in contexts where the translator's deliberate alteration of the Greek past is not at stake. Such is the context of the tenth-century littérateur al-Tawḥīdī's report of a debate on the merits of Greek logic vis-à-vis Arabic grammar between the translator ʼAbū Bišr Mattā ibn Yūnus and ʼAbū Saʻīd al-Sīrāfī, a text we had occasion to examine in Section 2.1.[308] In the course of their discussion of the universality of Greek logic, the question of translation arises and al-Sīrāfī asserts that it impossible to translate the niceties of a dead language (Greek) into a modern one (Arabic), especially via the medium of third language (Syriac).[309] This principle vitiates ʼAbū Bišr's claims for the value of Greek philosophy. Al-Sīrāfī's remarks deal only glancingly with a translator's control over the Greek past and should not have to rely on the Christian translator's alleged desire to make deliberate alterations to the translated text. Indeed, while ʼAbū Bišr's status as a non-native Arabic speaker is the source of much mockery, his Christian belief is only

[308] The report is found in al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-ʼimtāʻ wa-l-muʼānasa,* ʼA. ʼAmin and ʼA. Zayn (eds.) (1939-1944: 1,108-129). For an English translation of the report see D.S. Margoliouth, "The Discussion between Abu Bishr Matta and Abu Sa'id al-Sirafi on the Merits of Logic and Grammar", *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1905: 79-129).

[309] In this al-Tawḥīdī's al-Sīrāfī displays much the same view as al-Jāḥiẓ does in the *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*'s digression on the nature of translation discussed in Section 2.1 above: see the observations of U. Vagelpohl, "The ʻAbbasid Translation Movement in Context: Contemporary Voices on Translation", *ʻAbbasid Studies II: Occasional Papers of the School of ʻAbbasid Studies Leuven 28 June - 1 July 2004* (Leuven, 2010: 245-267 at 257-263).

raised once and he is treated throughout the debate as representative of Greek *falsafa* rather than of Christianity.[310] Yet despite this, al-Tawḥīdī's al-Sīrāfī slips effortlessly into the language of *taḥrīf* and deliberate falsification. Let us reexamine the passage we discussed briefly in Section 2.1:

> 'Abū Sa'īd [al-Sīrāfī] said: Even if we grant to you that translation (*al-tarjama*) is truthful and does not deceive (*kaḏabat*), sets aright and does not distort (*ḥarrafat*), is precise and not vague, that it is neither obscure nor injurious (*ḥāfat*), neither reduces (*naqaṣat*) nor expands (*zādat*), that it places [words] neither too soon nor too late, that it does not botch the sense of the particular and the general, nor of the most particular and the most general—though this cannot be, for it is neither in the nature of languages nor within the capabilities of sense—then, even so, you make the following [objectionable] point…[311]

For the sake of argument, al-Sīrāfī is willing to look past the accomplished fact that translation results in tampering. Note the character's apparently unthinking deployment not only of the verb *ḥarrafa* itself but also of verbs like *kaḏaba* ('to deceive') and *zāda* ('to exaggerate, expand on, increase') which we have already encountered in the ninth-century author al-Jāḥiẓ's description of the corrupt evangelists or the tampering translators of Aristotle.[312] Later, al-Sīrāfī will deploy the gerund *taḥrīf* when characterizing other linguistic failures of the Graeco-Arabic translators.[313] In the passage quoted above, translation is itself the tamperer, suggesting the extent to which the motif of *taḥrīf* had become enmeshed in the way one tenth-century intellectual approached and presented the phenomenon of Graeco-Arabic translation. Such evidence fleshes out our

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[310] Al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-'imtā',* 125 (Arabic), 126 (English)

[311] Al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-'imtā',* 112 (Arabic), 114 (English)

[312] See al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd 'alā al-naṣārā,* 71 and *Ḥayawān,* 6, 280 respectively.

[313] Al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-'imtā',* 115 (Arabic), 117 (English)

understanding of the four allegations of *taḥrīf*-like activity among Christian translators analyzed in this section and the broader cultural context in which they were made.

Together, these four allegations that the Graeco-Arabic translators tamper with their texts in order to alter their readers' perception of the Greek past will be important as we go forward. First, these testimonies justify the attention I will pay to Ḥunayn's treatment of the Greek past in both their translations and their original productions, for they demonstrate that this treatment caught the eye of several of the two translators' contemporaries or near contemporaries, both Christian and Muslim. Ḥunayn's patrons were willing to pay them princely sums, trusting in their scientific accuracy and good faith.[314] Nevertheless we have uncovered a distinct anxiety in certain quarters of 'Abbasid society regarding the accuracy with which these Graeco-Arabic translators communicated elements of the Greek past. Second, these testimonies—particularly those of al-Jāḥiẓ and Yūḥannā al-qass—represent the sort of accusation that Ḥunayn and his colleagues may personally have faced and which they may have in mind when translating and authoring their own works. That is, the testimonies will not only inform my own investigation of the translators, they may also have informed the the activities of the translators themselves.

Finally—and this is crucial—all four testimonies view this treatment of the Greek past as having repercussions for the present, as in fact being a method through which the translators assert their position in contemporary society as Christians translating for other Christian and for Muslim readers. Thus when we view the Ḥunayn circle's interpretation of the Greek past for their readers as a way of engaging with Islam's claim to possess that past, we will be on solid ground. However polemical the tenor of their accusations, several of Ḥunayn's rough

[314] For an estimate of the translators' fees see Gutas (1998: 138-139) with references.

contemporaries felt that this was the translators' project as well. Of course, our four testimonies describe the tampering in vague terms and ascribe a range of different motives to the Graeco-Arabic translators. Which, if any, of these testimonies approaches an accurate characterization of the translators' engagement with the Greek past? It is time to turn to Ḥunayn and his colleagues.

Chapter 3. Adapting the Greek Past: the Ḥunayn Circle

In previous chapters we saw both al-Kindī's claims to have special access to the Greek past and the claims of al-Jāḥiẓ and others that such access was impossible due to the compromised nature of translation. In this chapter, we will examine the circle of translators working from Greek into Syriac and Arabic led by the East Syrian Christian of ʻIbādī Arab descent, Ḥunayn ibn 'Isḥāq (d. 873). Al-Jāḥiẓ and others claimed that Christian translators were altering Greek texts to deceive their readers, and we will examine alterations to texts by Aremidorus and Galen in fact made by Ḥunayn circle translators. What window into the Greek past do Ḥunayn circle translators afford their readers? Were these translators motivated by a desire to deceive their readers into believing the Greeks had been monotheists? In fact, their motivations were more complicated. As we shall see, Ḥunayn and his colleagues adapt the Greek past to the ʻAbbāsid present so as to collapse the distance between Greek author and contemporary reader. Where al-Kindī had a privileged access to the the Greek texts whose translations he commissioned and corrected, Ḥunayn circle translators afford something like this affinity to all their readers, and make the Greek past a space both Christians and Muslims can claim.

Section 3.1. Audience and Agency in the Ḥunayn Circle

Before we analyze the activities of Ḥunayn and his colleagues, we must explain what we mean by the term 'Ḥunayn circle' and why we are using it. While we possess several independent scientific and apologetic treatises that can be squarely ascribed to Ḥunayn himself,

when it comes to his translation activity authorship of any given feature in a Ḥunayn translation can be much more difficult to assess. This is because Ḥunayn did not operate alone. Rather, his activity as a translator has been compared to that of Renaissance artist supervising a workshop full of assistants, whose work the master might check and correct but who often labored independently from one another on some component of the final product.[315] We possess an important primary witness to the Ḥunayn circle's division of labor, namely Ḥunayn's own *Risāla 'ilā ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā* (*Letter to ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā*), in which the translator describes all of the Syriac and Arabic translations of Galen made by himself, by his associates, and by others before him and explains for whom and sometimes under what circumstances each work was translated.[316] From the *Risāla* itself, we learn that Ḥunayn's most important colleagues—at least for his Galen translations—were his son 'Isḥāq ibn Ḥunayn, his nephew Ḥubayš ibn al-Ḥasan al-'Aʿsam, and a certain ʿĪsā ibn ʿAlī, whom he refers to throughout as his pupils (*talāmīḏ*).[317] From other sources we may add the names of a few more scribes and colleagues, all presumably East Syrian Christians like Ḥunayn and his family.[318]

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[315] U. Vagelpohl, "In the Translator's Workshop" in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 21 (2011: 249-288)

[316] G. Bergsträsser (ed.), "Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq: Über die syrischen und arabischen Galen-Übersetzungen", *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 17 (1925: 1-49), an edition supplemented by G. Bergsträsser, "Neue Materialien zu Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq's Galen-Bibliographie", *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 19 (1932: 1-108) and by M. Meyerhof, "New Light on Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq and his Period", *Isis* 8 (1926: 685-724). The title of Ḥunayn's work is properly *Risālat Ḥunayn ibn 'Isḥāq 'ilā ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā fī ḏikr mā turjima min kutub Jālīnūs bi-ʿilmihi wa-baʿḍ mā lam yutarjam* (*Ḥunayn ibn 'Isḥāq's letter to ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā on those of Galen's books which to his knowledge have been translated and some of those which have not been translated*).

[317] For a more detailed prosopography of translators and patrons in Ḥunayn's *Risāla* see G. Strohmaier, "Sabische und christliche Syrer in Ḥunains Sendschreiben über die Galenübersetzungen" in *Der Vordere Orient in Antike und Mittelalter. Festgabe für…Heinrich Simon* (Berlin, 1987: 15-20), reprinted in his *Von Demokrit bis Dante: Die Bewahrung antiken Erbes in der arabischen Kultur* (Hildesheim, 1996: 193-198).

[318] See O. Overwien, "The Art of the Translator, or: How did Ḥunayn ibn ʿIsḥāq and His School Translate?" in P. Pormann (ed.), *The Epidemics in Context: Greek Commentaries on Hippocrates in the Arabic Tradition* (Berlin, 2012: 151-169 at 151). The classic study is that of M. Meyerhof (1926).

Ḥunayn's *Risāla* gives us privileged insight into his circle's *modus operandi.* Often Ḥunayn would translate a given work from Greek into Syriac, sometimes at behest of another East Syrian physician, and later—sometimes several years later—he or more often one of his 'pupils' would translate the work into Arabic. In almost every instance, however, Ḥunayn's original Syriac version has not survived. As he gained access to better Greek manuscripts, Ḥunayn would on occasion return to or correct his previous work. Very often, Ḥunayn and his colleagues worked not from the Greek but from an already existing Syriac translation, sometimes one made centuries earlier in a rather different cultural milieu. Even when working from the Greek, the translator might still consult and be guided by an existing Syriac version. All told, precisely half of the Galen translations mentioned in the *Risāla* were made directly from the Greek, while the remaining half were made from some sort of Syriac intermediary.[319]

Thus, when analyzing specific changes made to elements of Greek culture or religion in the translations, we must be cautious. If from Ḥunayn's *Risāla* we know that the master himself translated a given work from Greek directly into Arabic or if we know that he translated a given work from Greek into Syriac before having one of his 'pupils' translate it into Arabic, we can be fairly certain that Ḥunayn himself is responsible for any element retained from the Greek in our existing Arabic version. In most other cases, however, we cannot safely ascribe any given alteration to Ḥunayn himself or to one his colleagues working from the master's Syriac. When we move outside the realm of the Galen translations documented in the *Risāla* into non-medical

[319] G. Strohmaier, "Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq - An Arab Scholar Translating into Syriac", *Aram* 3 (1991: 163-170 at 169), reprinted in his reprinted in his *Von Demokrit bis Dante: Die Bewahrung antiken Erbes in der arabischen Kultur* (Hildesheim, 1996: 199-206). On this background, see also the further discussion of S. Brock, "The Syriac Background to Ḥunayn's Translation Techniques" *Aram* 3 (1991: 139-162).

translations ascribed in the manuscript tradition to Ḥunayn ibn ʼIsḥāq, we are on even more uncertain ground.

Thus I will in most cases refer to changes made 'by the Ḥunayn circle', 'by the translators', or 'by the translator', and not 'by Ḥunayn', as we can rarely be certain about who might have made any given alteration to a text and at what stage in its translation. This approach, which treats Ḥunayn and his colleagues as a coherent unit with similar attitudes toward translation, receives support from recent scholarship on the Ḥunayn circle translations, which is just beginning to uncover the distinct syntactic and lexical features shared among these Arabic texts.[320] Remarkably, we can point to numerous cases in which different Ḥunayn circle translators reproduce the same, or nearly the same, Arabic verbiage when translating identical Greek passages, sometimes several sentences in length, that happen to appear in different contexts across different Greek texts.[321] From this phenomenon of parallel texts we may conclude that a Ḥunayn circle translator was intimately familiar with, and strongly influenced by, his colleagues' previous work. We may even add the direct testimony of Ḥunayn himself, who

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[320] The first attempt to identify the features of the Ḥunayn circle translations was that of G. Bergsträsser, *Ḥunain ibn Isḥāḳ und seine Schule: Sprach- und literargeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den arabischen Hippokrates- und Galenübersetzungen* (Leiden, 1913). In addition to the remarks of M. Ullmann, *Wörterbuch zu den griechisch-arabischen Übersetzungen des 9. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden, 2002: 47), see now the thorough case studies of G. Strohmaier, *Galen: Über die Verschiedenheit der homoiomeren Körperteile* (Berlin, 1970: 26-32) = *CMG, Supplementum Orientale* 3 and U. Vagelpohl, "Galen, *Epidemics*, Book One: Text, Transmission, Translation" in P. Pormann (ed.), *The Epidemics in Context: Greek Commentaries on Hippocrates in the Arabic Tradition* (Berlin, 2012: 124-150 at 132-150).

[321] See P. Pormann, "Case Notes and Clinicians: Galen's Commentary on the Hippocratic Epidemics in the Arabic Tradition", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 18 (2008: 247-284 at 261-262); O. Overwien, "Die parallelen Texte in den hippokratischen Schriften De humoribus und Aphorismen" in C. Brockmann, W. Brunschön, and O. Overwien (eds.), *Antike Medizin im Schnittpunkt von Geistes- und Naturwissenschaften*, Berlin/New York (2009: 121-139 at 133-139; O. Overwien (2012: 162-166); O. Overwien, "The Paradigmatic Translator and His Method: Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq's Translation of the Hippocratic Aphorisms from Greek via Syriac into Arabic", D. Gutas, S. Schmidtke, and A. Treiger, (eds.) *New Horizons in Graeco-Arabica Studies*, *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 3, (2015: 158-187 at 166-167); U. Vagelpohl, "Dating Medical Translations", *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 2 (2015: 86-106); and C. Connelly and G. Moseley (forthcoming).

states with tantalizing vagueness that his nephew Ḥubayš sought to emulate Ḥunayn's own method of translation.[322] From this evidence, it is not improbable that the Ḥunayn circle translators shared a similar attitude toward how one should adapt elements of the Greek past to the ʻAbbāsid present, if we exclude for the time being the question of the translation's intended recipient. Of course, as observed above, the Ḥunayn circle often consulted previous Syriac translations and was thus potentially subject to their direct influence. As we proceed, we will have to note—whenever the *Risāla* allows us to do so—whether the Ḥunayn circle worked from or at least was aware of an already existing Syriac translation made by someone outside the circle. In such cases we cannot be certain whether Ḥunayn and his colleagues or the earlier translator made the alteration. As we shall see at the later in this chapter, however, there is good reason to suppose that at least one earlier and influential Syriac translator of scientific texts consulted by Ḥunayn did not perform the sort of alterations to elements of the Greek past detectable in the Ḥunayn circle translations.

These questions of the authorship and stages of the Ḥunayn circle translations lead us to a second preliminary consideration, that of audience. Who was the intended recipient of a Ḥunayn circle translation at any given stage of the translation process, and what religion did that person profess? When translating a Greek work into Syriac for a Syriac-speaking Christian did Ḥunayn have in mind its eventual translation into Arabic for a Muslim patron by one his pupils? These are difficult questions to answer, but we are again fortunate to have the *Risāla* and the wealth of evidence it offers. Ḥunayn's *Risāla* is itself addressed to his Muslim friend and patron, the courtier ʻAlī ibn Yaḥyā al-Munajjim, who had asked the translator for a book cataloguing and

[322] Ḥunayn, *Risāla* 15 (Arabic), 12 (German): *wa-yarūmu ʼan yaqtadiya bi-ṭarīqī fī tarjamati*.

summarizing the writings of the ancients (*al-qudamā'*) on medicine.[323] Ḥunayn recalls how he had demurred to undertake so extensive a task, but had mentioned to his friend that he had already written a work in Syriac cataloguing the works and translations of Galen specifically, at the behest of "a man from among the Syrians" (*rajulan min al-suryāniyyīna*).[324] Ibn al-Munajjim had then asked him to translate this book into Arabic, and Ḥunayn was happy to oblige: hence the present work. Even from the *Risāla*'s opening address, then, it is clear that Ḥunayn was in the habit of composing at least some of his translations within a closed network of Syriac-speaking colleagues—a network to which Ibn al-Munajjim was hoping to gain access. Indeed, as already mentioned, half of the Ḥunayn circle's Galen translations were made into the Syriac, usually for a practicing East Syrian physician who presumably required the translation to better his medical craft. These were often well-connected physicians associated with the caliph and on occasion Ḥunayn makes explicit mention of a client's prestigious medical education in Gundeshapur, a privilege he himself had not received.[325] They included Ḥunayn's one-time professor of medicine Yūḥannā ibn Māsawayh and Jibrīl ibn Baḫtīšū'.[326]

Although nearly all trace of these Ḥunayn-circle Syriac translations is lost, we gain precious if oblique insight into Ḥunayn's attitude to his Syriac readers from a short letter he

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[323] Later testimonies confirm that it is indeed this 'Alī ibn Yaḥyā whom Ḥunayn addresses in this work, as was first observed by Bergsträsser (1925: 1, n. a): see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, G. Flügel (ed.) (Leipzig, 1871: 295) and Ibn al-Qiftī, *Ta'rīḫ al-ḥukamā',* J. Lippert (ed.) (Leipzig, 1903: 174); and Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn al-'anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-'aṭibbā'*, A. Müller (ed.) (Cairo / Königsberg, 1882-84: 1,198). For their friendship, we have the evidence of their apologetic correspondence on the respective truth claims of Islam and Christianity, to which we will turn below in Sections 3.1 and 3.5 below.

[324] Ḥunayn, *Risāla,* 1 (Arabic), 1 (German).

[325] Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn al-'anbā'* 185-186

[326] For more on these two figures and their relationship with Ḥunayn see Strohmaier (1991: 202-203). They are mentioned throughout the *Risāla* as recipients of Ḥunayn circle Galen translations into Syriac.

wrote prefacing his translation of Galen's *On Habits*. The letter is addressed to the East Syrian Christian physician Salmawayh ibn Bunān, who had commissioned the translation. Although originally written in Syriac and intended to accompany a Syriac translation, the document survives in the Arabic translation of Ḥubayš.[327] In the letter, Ḥunayn explains that he has appended Galen's commentary on the Hippocratic *On Regimen in Acute Diseases* together with a selection from Proclus' commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*, in order to elucidate the Hippocratic and Platonic quotations that occur in the *On Habits*.[328] Ḥunayn begins by apologizing for not including his own commentary on Galen's work. Adopting a tone of courteous flattery, he assures Salmawayh that a learned medical man such himself scarcely needs help understanding a Galenic text anyway. With extreme delicacy, however, he adds that the logical content of the Platonic and Hippocratic citations might present Salmawayh with some difficulty. He therefore urges the physician not to consult with one of his ignorant colleagues, but rather to trust only the most sympathetic explicators of Hippocrates and Plato—Galen and Proclus, respectively. The preface raises a point that will become important later in this chapter, namely Ḥunayn's emphasis on the need for sympathy and familiarity between an author and his translator or explicator.

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[327] The Arabic version letter is contained in Ayasofya 3725 and is still unpublished in its entirety. I rely in part on the German translation of F. Pfaff in J. M. Schmutte and F. Pfaff (eds.), *Galeni De consuetudinibus* (Leipzig, 1941) = *CMG, Supplementum* 3, xli-xlii, and in part on the partial edition and English translation of R. Arnzen, "Proclus on Plato's *Timaeus* 89e3-90c7" in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 23 (2013: 1-45 at 5-6). Ḥubayš's Arabic version was in turn commissioned by 'Aḥmad ibn Mūsā, as noted in Ayasofya 3725 and confirmed by Ḥunayn, *Risāla* entry 45.

[328] These continued to be transmitted in Ḥubayṣ's translation from the Syriac together with his Arabic version of the *On Habits* and are also found in Ayasofya 3725. The *On Habits* and the *Timaeus* commentary were published in Pfaff's German translation (see *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum, Suppl*. iii, 37-60) and are now respectively available in the full editions of F. Klein-Franke, "The Arabic Version of Galen's Περὶ ἐθῶν", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 1 (1979: 125-150) and Arnzen (2013). Ḥunayn, *Risāla* entry 45 corroborates the authenticity of preface, since there Ḥunayn states briefly that he had had appended Galen's commentaries when translating the work into Syriac for Salmawayh. Presumably he fails to mention the Proclus commentary because of the *Risāla*'s focus on translations of Galen.

For now, it is enough to observe Ḥunayn's attitude toward his patron. He is quick to praise Salmawayh's medical expertise. Yet he cautiously raises doubts about the physician's broader knowledge of the Greek tradition and dismisses outright ability of other Syriac-speaking physicians to understand this material. It is tempting to read the preface in light of what purports to be a contemporary account of Ḥunayn's youth preserved in a later author. There we learn that, that as an Arab Christian from al-Ḥīra, Ḥunayn initially provoked disdain from members of the Syriac-speaking medical establishment, who had studied medicine in Gundeshapur and felt that an upstart like Ḥunayn was unworthy of the medical profession. Ibn Māsawayh, who would later commission Graeco-Syriac translations from Ḥunayn, is said to have ejected the young man from his lecture room for asking impertinent questions about Galen's *On Sects*, declaring that the son of an Arab jeweler from al-Ḥīra was better suited for a career as a roadside money-changer. This episode is supposed to have spurred Ḥunayn to perfect his Greek.[329] If we accept this account, then Ḥunayn's preface to Salmawayh reveals a translator who has learned to temper his criticism of the Syriac-speaking medical establishment with courteous flattery, but who is still confident enough to assert his colleagues' inability to understand the finer points of Greek letters. It will be important to keep this attitude in mind as we analyze Ḥunayn's treatment of the Greek past in his translations.

Yet we cannot say that every Syriac translation by the Ḥunayn circle was destined for an exclusively Christian audience. Remarkably, the *Risāla* itself informs us that Ḥunayn translated Galen's *On the Parts of Medicine* into Syriac for a Muslim tax-collector, ʻAlī al-Fayyūm, and we have some evidence suggesting Muslim attendance at Syriac medical lectures in ninth-century

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[329] See Ibn ʼAbī ʼUṣaybiʻa, *ʻUyūn al-ʼanbāʼ* 185-186 with the discussion of G. Strohmaier, "Homer in Bagdad" *Byzantinoslavica* 41 (1980: 196-200 at 196).

Baghdad.[330] There are also the Ḥarranian Ṣabians to consider, who as we have seen in the previous chapters considered their own polytheism to be an authentic survival of the ancient Greeks' religion.[331] It is easy to forget that Syriac was their literary and perhaps cultic language as well. When the Ṣabians inscribed the famous Platonic dictum above the doorway to their public gathering-place (*majma'*) in Ḥarrān, it was not in Greek, but in Syriac.[332] Was the Ḥunayn circle composing its Syriac translations with Ṣabians in mind, an audience that would be particularly attuned to polytheistic references in Greek texts? His *Risāla* never mentions Ṣabian patrons, but it does twice mention the Syriac and Arabic translation activity of Ḥunayn's contemporary translator, the great Ṯābit ibn Qurra, as well as one Manṣūr ibn Dabābās (or perhaps 'Aṯānās), whom he explicitly identifies as a Ḥarranian.[333] All this having been said, the *Risāla* makes it clear that the predominant audience for the Ḥunayn circle translations into Syriac must have been Christian. Eventually, sometimes at a considerable remove in time, these preexisting Syriac versions were rendered into Arabic for an Arabic-speaking, Muslim patron. Would Ḥunayn or his pupil have taken a second look the elements of classical Greek culture

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[330] Ḥunayn, *Risāla*, entry 61. On this figure see Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn al-'anbā',* 206. For this and other evidence of a Muslim audience for the Ḥunayn circle Graeco-Syriac translations see Strohmaier (1991: 204), who accepts as authentic the report of Yūsuf ibn 'Ibrahīm preserved in Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a.

[331] The notion of a Ṣabian audience and its relation to the alterations of Greek cultural and religious elements in the Ḥunayn circle translations has briefly been raised before by, e.g., G. Strohmaier, "Galen the Pagan and Ḥunayn the Christian: Specific Transformations in the Commentaries on *Airs, Waters, Places* and the *Epidemics*" in P. Pormann (ed.), *The Epidemics in Context: Greek Commentaries on Hippocrates in the Arabic Tradition* (Berlin, 2012: 171-184 at 172).

[332] See with references K. van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes* (Oxford, 2009: 70-79 especially 72), who discusses the debate surrounding the Ḥarranian *majma'* and its significance.

[333] Ḥunayn, *Risāla*, entries 76 and 113 (Ṯābit) and 119 (Manṣūr). On the question of the latter's name and identification as Ḥarnanian (= Ḥarranian) or Ṣabian, our manuscripts differ see Bergsträsser (1932: 22-24) with the comments of Strohamaier (1987: 196).

present in the Syriac translation, primarily aimed at Christians, and made further adaptations with the Muslim patron in mind?[334]

Matters are somewhat simpler when we are dealing with the second half of the circle's Galen translations, those made directly into Arabic at the behest of a Muslim patron. Yet who were these Muslim patrons and what were their motivations for commissioning a Galen translation? Again the *Risāla* provides some answers. Unlike the Ḥunayn circle's Syriac-speaking audience, who were largely practicing physicians, its Muslim Arabic-speaking clients were experts in other fields who merely dabbled in medicine. While of high quality and accuracy, these were not technical translations aimed at experts. As some have observed, Ḥunayn could never have foreseen that these Arabic translations, and not his Syriac versions now labeled mere 'intermediaries', would become the basis of medicine in the Middle East for centuries to come once Arabic eclipsed Syriac as the language of medical learning.[335] As a consequence of their audience, the circle's Arabic translations of Galen conformed to purity of language demanded by readers accustomed to literary Arabic, for instance avoiding the transliterated Greek more common in Syriac translations.[336]

From Ḥunayn's *Risāla* we learn the names of several of these Muslim patrons, but by far the most assiduous in their commissions were the three brothers Muḥammad, 'Aḥmad, and al-Ḥasan, known collectively as the Banū Mūsā ('the sons of Mūsā'). Their father Mūsā ibn Šākir

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[334] Worth noting, but not relevant for our purposes are the few isolated cases—three to be exact—where an existing Arabic version was the basis for a later Syriac version commissioned by Yūḥannā ibn Māsawayh as well as the one case where Ḥunayn translated from Greek into Syriac despite the existence of an earlier Arabic version: see Ḥunayn, *Risāla* entries 7, 36, 38, 119 with the comments of Strohmaier (1991: 204-205).

[335] See Strohmaier (1991: 205).

[336] Succinctly put by Strohmaier (1991: 205).

had purportedly made his fortune as a highway robber by terrorizing the province of Khurasan, before settling down to a comfortable life as astronomer and boon companion of the caliph al-Ma'mūn (r. 813-833).[337] His sons cultivated not only their father's scientific interests—excelling in mathematics, astrology and mechanics—but also something of his ruthlessness. According to later report, they were bitter enemies of the philosopher al-Kindī, whose on views on translation and the Greek past we discussed in Chapter 1, and on one occasion even turned the caliph al-Mutawakkil against him. The hapless philosopher was imprisoned in the caliph's palace, and his books confiscated and handed over for a time to the Banū Mūsā. Even after al-Kindī's eventual release, the palace servants in Samarrā' called the storage room that had served as his makeshift cell '*al-kindiyya*' in dubious honor of its former inmate.[338] Our report alleges professional jealousy of al-Kindī's as the brothers' motive, and we have independent evidence suggesting that this political intrigue did indeed correspond to an intellectual rivalry. A disagreement between Muḥammad ibn Mūsā and al-Kindī concerning spherical projection reflected the former's personal animus if the testimony of al-Bīrūnī is to be trusted.[339] It is possible, too, that the interest both Muḥammad and al-Kindī showed in the theory of the critical days had a competitive streak.[340] I suggest that the disagreement between al-Kindī and the Banū Mūsā in fact extended

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[337] D.R. Hill, 'Banū Mūsā', *EI*[2]

[338] See Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn al-'anbā',* 1,207-208, who lists the account's chain of transmission back to the mathematician 'Abū Kāmil Šujā` ibn 'Aslam (d. 930), a contemporary or near-contemporary of al-Kindī and the Banū Mūsā.

[339] See R. Rashed, "al-Kindi's Commentary on Archimedes' *The Measurement of the Circle*", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 3.1 (1993: 7-53 at 11 n. 12).

[340] This is the suggestion of G. Cooper, *Galen:* De Diebus Decretoriis*, from Greek into Arabic. A Critical Edition, with Translation and Commentary, of Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq*, Kitāb ayyām al-buḥrān (Ashgate, 2011: 47-49).

to their respective narratives of the transfer of Greek science to ninth-century Iraq, in ways that can illuminate the brothers' role as patrons of and audience to the Ḥunayn circle.

What then was the attitude of the Banū Mūsā toward the Greek past and to Greek textual transmission? As Muslims, the brothers may or may not have subscribed to the widely attested anti-Christian or anti-Byzantine ideology outlined in Chapter 1—we have no evidence either way. We can safely say, however, that they opposed al-Kindī's vision of Greek science as Arab in origin. We saw in Chapter 1 how the brothers traced the origin of one science, astrology, back to India.[341] That narrative occurred in their introduction to an astrological translation they commissioned—from which translator and out of what language we cannot be certain—entitled the *Kitāb al-daraj* (*Book of Degrees*).[342] The Greeks, they claimed, then took over this science and systematized it, and it is to this form that their translation gives access. We speculated—following the suggestion of Alexandre Roberts—that as Persians the Banū Mūsā may have on some level adhered to the old Sasanian ideology whereby to translate a book was in fact to recover and repatriate lost Zoroastrian wisdom, an ideology which the 'Abbāsids seem to have co-opted. Yet in the introduction to their *Book of Degrees* the Banū Mūsā avoid such a roundabout narrative, bypassing Persia entirely and instead emphasizing that their book provides direct access to the unadulterated astrological wisdom of the Indians and Greeks.[343]

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[341] See Section 1.3 above.

[342] See A. Roberts, "The Crossing Paths of Greek and Persian Knowledge in the 9th-century Arabic 'Book of Degrees'" in C. Noce, M. Pampaloni, and C. Tavolieri (eds.), *Le vie del sapere in ambito siro-mesopotamico dal III al IX secolo* (Rome, 2013: 279-303 at 283-285) = *Orientalia Analecta Christiana* 293.

[343] Roberts (2013: 298-303)

Crucial to the brothers' narrative is the notion that, since the time of Greeks, others have neglected the astrological method promoted by the *Book of Degrees* but that Banū Mūsā have revived this art by having the work translated into Arabic. As part of this claim, they are not afraid to address questions of textual corruption. In a programmatic statement, the brothers admit that in transmitting this material there were some textual difficulties, yet they assure us that these were trivial:

> We found that book's organization (*naẓm*) was faulty and its arrangement (*waḍ'*) mixed up, so we corrected it (*fa-'aṣlaḥnāhu*) in a way that speaks for itself.[344]

It is important to recognize here the shadow of al-Jāḥiẓ, the brothers' contemporary who as we saw in Chapter 2 cast radical doubt upon the ability of translation and textual transmission to provide access to the Greek past. Against this claim, the Banū Mūsā assert their own ability to divine what the Greek author intended and to correct (*'aṣlaḥa*) the text, which in any case had only suffered a faulty rearrangement, not irreparable corruption. In doing so, they adopt an attitude very similar to that of their bitter rival al-Kindī, who as we saw in Chapter 1 claimed the ability to edit and correct the Greek translations he commissioned, apparently on the basis of his illustrious Arab pedigree and his alleged connection, via this pedigree, to the progenitor of the Greek race.[345]

In advocating a neat transmission of science from India to Greece to Baghdad, however, the brothers contest al-Kindī's narrative of Arab exceptionalism. For the Banū Mūsā the fact that these materials are translated into Arabic is not teleologically foreordained, but simply a

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[344] I quote the translation of Roberts (2013: 301). The text, which survives in four manuscripts, has not been published; Roberts's edition is forthcoming.

[345] See Section 1.2 above. Note in particular the recurrence of the verb *'aṣlaḥa.*

historical accident. Here their Iranian ethnicity is no doubt key. Crucial evidence comes from the pen of one of Ḥunayn's other Iranian patrons, the ʿAlī ibn al-Munajjim to whom he addresses the *Risāla.* It is clear that ʿAlī subscribed to the notion—held by many in ninth-century ʿAbbāsid society—that despite their current dominance the Arabs were in fact inferior to the other, more anciently established nations of the world, particularly the Persians.[346] This anti-Arab view—termed *al-šuʿūbiyya* after the Arabic word for 'nations'—finds expression in a letter ʿAlī addressed to Ḥunayn in which he invites the translator to convert from Christianity to Islam. In an effort to prove that Muḥammad was endowed with perfect intelligence, Ibn al-Munajjim cites the fact that the Prophet was able to bring the very lowliest of all peoples, the Arabs, to a life of righteousness under Islam. Where before the Arabs had been illiterate, idolatrous, bloodthirsty, indifferent to the bonds of family, and ignorant of God, under Muḥammad they became miraculously civilized.[347] It is not farfetched to imagination that the Banū Mūsā—themselves educated elites of Iranian origin—held a similar view about the superiority of other nations to the Arabs and that this explains the brothers' rejection of al-Kindī's teleology in favor of their own.

Why did these Iranian brothers, whose scientific interests lay in astrology and mechanics, commission so many translations of Galen, at such great personal expense, from the Ḥunayn circle? On rare occasions it is clear that a particular work contained material directly relevant to their studies, as when Muḥammad ibn Mūsā commissioned an Arabic version of Galen's *On*

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[346] See S. Enderwitz, *EI*^{2} 'al- Shuʿūbiyya'.

[347] Ibn al-Munajjim, *Risāla* in S.K. Samir and I. Zilio-Grandi (eds.), *Una corrispondenza islamo-cristiana sull'origine divina dell'Islām* (Turin, 2003: 79-83) (Arabic text and Italian trans.). The relevance of the passage for the milieu of the Ḥunayn circle was first discussed by Strohmaier (1991: 163)

Critical Days, a work containing some, though admittedly not much, astrological material.[348] Yet we gain precious insight into the brothers' broader motivation, once again, from the *Book of Degrees*. Near the end of their the introduction, the Banū Mūsā have occasion to stress the high esteem in which the ancient Greeks held astrology:

> By a certain justice this rank was set above all ranks of the sciences, for it pertained to the level of inspiration (*waḥy*). Galen the Physician recounts that he saw many soothsayers (*al-mutakahhinīn*) and that he pondered until he hit upon their craft; he found that it was built upon two foundations: one of them was the tempering of the mind with sparseness and delicateness of food, and the second was knowing the position of the celestial sphere at the moment of inquiry.[349]

Galen is the only scientific authority named in the work's introduction, and his invocation in defense of astrology serves to hammer home the unbroken link between Greek past and 'Abbāsid present claimed by the Banū Mūsā for their translation.[350] All the unfortunate astrological innovations which the brothers decry elsewhere in their introduction melt away. By reading this work, they suggest, we are directly accessing the pure science of the ancients, that same science of which the great Galen himself approved and whose quasi-prophetic aspects he astutely observed.

For the Banū Mūsā, then, Galen was not merely a prestigious authority on medicine, but on Greek science more generally. When they required a quotation to bolster the authenticity of their translation, Galen and no other author had the requisite cachet. Ḥunayn circle translations of his books were well-worth their weight in gold—quite literally the price Ḥunayn's clients paid, if

[348] See Ḥunayn, *Risāla* entry 19, with the discussion of Cooper (2011:15-20).

[349] I quote the translation of Roberts (2013: 302). For speculation on the origins of this quotation within the Galenic corpus see Roberts (2013: 302 n. 109).

[350] Here I follow the interpretation of Roberts (2013: 302).

we trust one later report.[351] Yet if the Banū Mūsā viewed Galen as an authentic window into the ancient past and quoted him as such, how might they have felt to learn of the deliberate alterations the Ḥunayn circle made to the Galen translations they commissioned? Were these alterations made with or without the patrons' connivance, to please them or to persuade them? We will address these and other important questions of audience while discussing the Ḥunayn circle's work. For now, it is time to turn to the circle's translations and the alterations to elements of the Greek past which they made in composing them.

Section 3.2. Ḥunayn Circle Alterations: the Case of the Arabic Artemidorus

The most dramatic—and probably the most widely known—example of this phenomenon occurs in the Ḥunayn circle translation of Artemidorus' *Oneirokritika*, a second-century CE book of dream interpretation. Given its subject matter—the content and meaning of commonly occurring dream types—Artemidorus' book is full of references to the daily life, customs, and religion of the ancient Graeco-Roman world and hence provides an unprecedented number of opportunities to observe the Ḥunayn circle's reactions to such material. Unfortunately, its ascription to the Ḥunayn circle is not entirely without difficulty. Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* mentions that Ḥunayn ibn 'Isḥāq translated five books (*maqālāt*) by Artemidorus on the interpretation of dreams, and the first editor of the extant Arabic translation, Toufic Fahd, argued that Ḥunayn was the translator largely on the basis of this testimony.[352] The unique manuscript from which he

[351] Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a claims to have seen and handled the extra-thick paper Ḥunayn allegedly used in order to raise artificially the translations' value: see D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (New York, 1998: 138-139) with references.

[352] T. Fahd (ed.), *Artémidore d'Éphèse: le livre des songes, traduit du grec en arabe par Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq (mort en 260/873)* (Damascus, 1964: xiv-xxii).

worked does not offer a translator's name. Artemidorus' *Oneirokritika* does indeed comprise five books—three original stand-alone books and two added by the author after the publication of the initial three—yet the extant Arabic version contains only the first three. Fahd was initially uncertain whether this abridgment was due to the manuscripts available to the translator, to the translator himself, or to a later redactor.[353]

At first, scholars agreed with Fahd's attribution. Franz Rosenthal affirmed that the translation technique was essentially that of Ḥunayn and his colleagues. Where Fahd had explained the occasional misprisions in the Arabic Artemidorus by arguing for Ḥunayn's youth at the time of its composition, Rosenthal preferred to stress the unfamiliar subject matter and prose style.[354] While Rosenthal dismissed Fahd's arguments for a Syriac intermediary, Gotthard Strohmaier argued that Ḥunayn had likely translated the work into Syriac himself, leaving the Arabic translation to one of his pupils, perhaps at some remove in time, as we know is the case with many of the Ḥunayn circle's Galen translations.[355] Then Manfred Ullmann cast fundamental doubt on the Ḥunayn circle's authorship of the translation. Ullmann listed twenty-seven Arabic renderings of Greek herbological, zoological, and medical terms occurring in the Arabic Artemidorus which differed from the terminology employed in known Ḥunayn circle translations. Ullmann argued that the *Oneirokritika* had existed in two translations, one by Ḥunayn in five books, now lost but attested to by Ibn al-Nadīm, and a second by some other, less

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[353] Fahd (1964: xx-xxi)

[354] F. Rosenthal, "From Arabic Books and Manuscripts XII: The Arabic Translation of Artemidorus", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 85 (1965: 139-144).

[355] G. Strohamaier, Review of T. Fahd (ed.), *Artémidore d'Éphèse* in *Orientalische Literaturzeitung* 62 (1967: 270-275)

accomplished translator who completed only the first three books, extant in the unique manuscript edited by Fahd.[356]

Ullmann's dismissal of Ḥunayn circle authorship has had a chilling effect on work attempting to integrate the Arabic Artemidorus into broader discussions of Ḥunayn circle translation technique. Yet in a rebuttal published shortly after Ullmann's article but not widely registered, Fahd effectively called into question the basis of Ullmann's objections.[357] Fahd pointed out flaws in both the methodology and the reasoning of Ullmann's lexical analysis, which by Ullmann's own admission had been hasty and ad hoc.[358] More conclusively, he adduced evidence from *al-Kitāb al-qādirī fī l-ta'bīr* (*Book on Dream Interpretation for al-Qādir Bi-llāh*) by 'Abū Sa 'd Naṣr ibn Ya'qūb al-Dīnawarī (d. after 1010), which contains quotations from all five books of Artemidorus.[359] Fahd demonstrated that the passages from books four and five of Artemidorus quoted by al-Dīnawarī are indisputably similar in lexicon and translation technique to the Arabic Artemidorus edited by him and that al-Dīnawarī's quotations from books one, two and three stem from that text as well.[360]

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[356] M. Ullmann, "War Ḥunayn der Übersetzer von Artemidors Traumbuch?", *Die Welt des Islams* 13 (1971: 204-211)

[357] T. Fahd, "Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq est-il le traducteur des Oneirocritica d'Artémidore d'Éphèse?" *Arabica* 21:3 (1975: 270-284)

[358] Fahd (1975: 277-284)

[359] Fahd (1975: 270-277)

[360] We should note, however, that not all the quotations adduced by al-Dīnawarī have direct parallels in the text edited by Fahd, suggesting that that author is accommodating them to his more literary Arabic style—something Fahd himself suggested—and that he receiving them indirectly: see B. Orfali, "al-Dīnawarī, Abū Saʿd Naṣr b. Yaʿqūb" in *EI*[3].

Most strikingly, Fahd pointed to at least one instance of parallel translation, whereby a passage from book four in which Artemidorus reproduces his own Greek verbiage from book two is rendered in nearly identical Arabic verbiage in both book two of the Arabic Artemidorus edited by Fahd and in al-Dīnawarī's quotation from book four. By themselves, these observations virtually guarantee that al-Dīnwarī had access, directly or indirectly, to a single five-book translation of the *Oneirokritika* and that the three-book version edited by Fahd represents a later abridgment of this complete translation.[361] The instances of scrupulous parallel translation—now known to be a feature of Ḥunayn circle Galenic and Hippocratic translations—is further evidence that this five-book translation is the work of Ḥunayn and his colleagues.[362]

There is thus no conclusive evidence for Ullmann's theory of two separate Artemidorus translations. While detailed philological analyses of the sort being carried out by Uwe Vagelpohl and Oliver Overwien on known Ḥunayn circle translations will undoubtedly shed more light on and may even resolve the problem, there is currently no reason to doubt the testimony of Ibn al-Nadīm or the hunches of Fahd, Rosenthal, and Strohmaier that the Arabic Artemidorus we possess is the work of the Ḥunayn circle.[363] Nevertheless, though there is in fact evidence in the form of a telling mistranslation that the translation passed through a Syriac intermediary, we are not in position to deduce precisely by and for whom the Ḥunayn circle Arabic translation we

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[361] To the fragments of books four and five present in al-Dīnawarī we may add the considerable number of fragments—again possibly adapted for style and probably accessed indirectly—in the *Kitāb ḥayāt al-ḥayawān* (*The Lives of Animals*) of Muḥammad ibn Mūsā ibn 'Īsā Kamāl al-Dīn al-Damīrī (d. 1405). Thus it is possible to reconstruct almost all of the original and complete five-book translation of the Artemidorus, and new edition incorporating these fragments is clearly a desideratum: see in this regard M. Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation: the* Oneirocriticon of Achmet *and Its Arabic Sources*, (Leiden, 2002: 141-142).

[362] See note 321 above.

[363] This is also the conclusion reached by Mavroudi (2002: 136-139).

have before us was composed.[364] If there indeed was a Syriac translation then we may of course assume that it was intended largely for a Christian audience. There is no sure way of telling, however, whether the extant Arabic translation contains further modifications intended for a largely Muslim audience that were not present in the hypothesized Syriac intermediary—something we will need to keep in mind in the analysis that follows.

The Ḥunayn circle's alterations in the Arabic Artemidorus to references to Graeco-Roman *Realien* and above all to the Greek gods represent a complete reimagining of the world that lies behind the text and to which a reader of the text might gain casual access. These dramatic alterations—all the more remarkable given the fidelity of the translation in other respects—are most conspicuous in the realm of religion, for Artemidorus' text discusses frequently and at the length the various divinities dreamers see in their sleep and the import of these apparitions. The translation's reworking of polytheistic and other religious content in the Arabic Artemidorus has been the subject of an extensive study by Gotthard Strohmaier, who observes that the translator systematically reworded references to the gods such that his Arabic version speaks never of the ancient divinities as such but in most instances of angels.[365] Handling a text so dense with references to the ancient gods must have been unusual for a ninth-century translator and, remarkably, Strohmaier is able to uncover the precise moment over the course of the translation

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[364] See the recent reassessment by Strohmaier (2012: 174).

[365] G. Strohmaier, "Die griechischen Götter in einer christlich-arabischen Übersetzung. Zum Traumbuch des Artemidor in der Version des Ḥunain ibn Isḥāḳ" in F. Altheim and R. Stiehl (eds.), *Die Araber in der Alten Welt*, Bd. 5, 1. Teil (Berlin, 1968): 127-162, reprinted in his *Von Demokrit bis Dante. Die Bewahrung antiken Erbes in der arabischen Kultur* (Hildesheim: 1996). I have also learned from the extensive study of E. Schmitt, *Lexikalische Untersuchungen zur arabischen Übersetzung von Artemidors Traumbuch* (Wiesbaden, 1970) = *Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission, Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur*, Bd. 23, particularly her collection of lexical items related to religion (210-223).

at which the translator adopted a systematic policy of converting gods to angels. Strohmaier identifies two phases in the translation of the *Oneirokritika*.

In the first phase, lasting through most of book one, the translator is reluctant to equate gods with angels.[366] Rather, he attempts to obscure from the reader the fact that a god is being discussed. Thus, a reference to dining with Kronos becomes, in the Arabic, merely "eating in the company of a man".[367] To give a few more examples, Artemidorus explains elsewhere that dreaming of an apple signifies sexual desire (*epaphrodisiā*) because the apple is an attribute of the goddess Aphrodite (*anakeitai tēi Aphrodītēi*).[368] The translator coyly renders this as "For the apple corresponds to what we were discussing" (*wa-ḏālika ʼanna l-tufāḥa muwāfiqun li-mā qulnā*), i.e. sexual desire (*šahwatu l-jimāʻi*).[369] Indeed, in a passage occurring shortly thereafter, the name Aphrodite is translated via allegory simply as 'desire' (*al-šahwa*).[370] Allegory is a preferred strategy during this first phase. When Artemidorus refers to "the artisans connected with Dionysus" (*tois peri ton Dionyson tekhnītais*), the translator renders the phrase "whoever handles the crafts employed in making wine" (*man kāna fī yadihi mina l-ṣanāʼiʻi l-mustaʻmalati li-l-šarābi*) and deploys similar workarounds whenever this Greek phrase occurs later in the

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[366] Strohmaier (1968: 133)

[367] See Strohmaier (1968: 133) with references.

[368] 1.73.17 (Greek). I follow the numbering system of Pack's 1963 edition. However, to be consulted is the new edition and translation of D. McCoy-Harris, *Artemidorus' Oneirocritica: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Oxford, 2012).

[369] 145.3-6 (Arabic) and see Strohmaier (1968: 133).

[370] 1.79.22 (Greek), 169.1 (Arabic) and see Strohmaier (1968: 133).

text.[371] Now in point of fact Artemidorus often uses this phrase to refer not to winemakers but to those skilled in music and drama—besides wine, Dionysus' other principal spheres of divine influence. Yet as we shall soon see, references to and discussions of ancient theater are a perennial stumbling block for the Ḥunayn circle, and it is not surprising that the translator has apparently mistaken the author's meaning.

Another method which the translator deploys in both the first and the second phases and which we might label allegorical is to render Helios and Selene, and also occasionally Hermes and Aphrodite, with the name of their respective celestial bodies in Arabic, i.e. the sun or the moon, the planet Mercury or the planet Venus.[372] On two occasions, this strategy places the translator in hot water, first when Artemidorus describes a image of the god Helios located in a temple and elsewhere when he describes the conventional anthropomorphic depiction of the sun god as a charioteer. In the first instance, the translator is not discomfited, referring with only minor adaptation to a statue of the sun located in a temple.[373] In the second instance, however, he completely reworks the passage to eliminate the attribution of anthropomorphic qualities to the sun.[374]

Perhaps the most bold allegorical rendering of a god's name in the first phase identified by Strohmaier occurs once again in connection with a cult statue. Artemidorus has mentioned the

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[371] This includes passages that in fact occur in Strohmaier's second phase: see e.g. 1.67.23 (Greek), 51,7 (Arabic); 1.67.23 (Greek), 136.2 (Arabic). See Strohmaier (1968: 134).

[372] See Strohmaier (1968: 134-135) with references.

[373] The adaptation consists, predictably, in the suppression of the Greek *theos* ('god') replaced by the translator with *al-šams* ('the sun'): see 2.36.22-23 (Greek), 292.9-10 (Arabic) with the discussion of Strohmaier (1968: 135).

[374] See 2.36.12-14 (Greek), 291.13-14 (Arabic) with the discussion of Strohmaier (1968: 134-135).

connection, in dreams, between genitals and words (*logoi*), since both are of all things the most generative (*gonimōtaton pantōn*), and as further demonstration of this point he describes a particular statue of the god Hermes:

> εἶδον δὲ καὶ ἐν Κυλλήνῃ γενόμενος Ἑρμοῦ ἄγαλμα οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ αἰδοῖον δεδημιουργημένον λόγῳ τινὶ φυσικῷ.
>
> And indeed, when I was in Cyllene, I saw a statue (*agalma*) of Hermes crafted in precisely the form of a phallus (*aidoion*) by a certain natural analogy (*logōi*).

In a startling move that indicates both his determination to avoid the name of the god and his understanding of god's significance as divine patron of interpreters and hence of language, the translator renders this as follows:

> وقد رايت في بلاد قوليني تمثالا جعل قياسا للمنطق وكان قد جعل مذاكيرا واتبعوا في ذلك القياس الطبيعي.
>
> And I have seen in the country of Qūlīnī a statue (*timṯālan*) fashioned in analogy to speech (*juʿila qiyāsan li-l-manṭiqi*) and it had been fashioned as genitals, and in that they followed the natural analogy (*al-qiyās al-ṭabīʿī*).

This rendering preserves the purpose of Artemidorus' anecdote about the statue: namely, it demonstrates the connection between the genitals and spoken language. Of course, by allegorizing Hermes as 'speech' he has left the Arabic reader mystified as how a statue in the shape of a phallus could possibly be meant to represent that quality. It is unclear whether the context alone has clued the translator into Hermes' significance, whether the translator drew a connection between the god's name and the noun *hermēneia* ('interpretation'), or whether he was independently aware of the Olympian god's role as messenger.[375] Of course, Plato's *Cratylus* preserves an ancient etymology connecting the name Hermes to *eirein* ('to speak'), though of

[375] The second option was noted by Strohmaier (1968: 134 n. 26).

there was no direct knowledge of that work in ninth-century Baghdad.[376] It is remarkable both here and, as well shall soon see, elsewhere that Ḥunayn circle translators betray no sign of confusing the Olympian Hermes with the eponymous Hermetic sage so well-known in the Arabic-speaking world.

These first-phase strategies serve the translator well until he encounters a long list of named goddesses—Artemis, Athena, Hestia, Rhea, Hera and Hekate—toward the end of the first book of the *Oneirokritika*.[377] Starting with this list, while he will rarely continue to deploy some of the first-phase strategies discussed above, he resigns himself for the most part to a new strategy, that of transforming the ancient gods into angels. Collective references to the gods (*theoi*) or to goddesses (*theai*) become ubiquitously "angels" (*malā'ika*), "God" (*Allāh*), or "God and his angels" (*Allāhu wa-malā'ikatuhu*).[378] References to the names of specific deities of the ancient world—including the goddesses in the initial book one list, but also for example Aphrodite, Hades, or Hermes—are generally handled with some variation of the formula "the angel who is called…" (*al-malaku llaḏī yuqālu lahu…*).[379] Angels are grammatically masculine in Arabic and thus the masculine formula is applied rigidly to gods and goddesses alike. On one occasion the translator is forced, for clarity's sake, to distinguish between "angels with masculine names" and "angels with feminine names" when Artemidorus makes a distinction between gods

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[376] Plato, *Cratylus* 408a: see Strohmaier (1968: 134).

[377] 1.80.20-21 (Greek), 179.12-14 (Arabic), and see Strohmaier (1968: 136-137).

[378] See Strohmaier (1968: 131) with references.

[379] Strohmaier (1968: 137)

and goddesses. Here he exhibits an understandable reluctance to ascribe gender to these ‘angels’— something unacceptable to Christian and Islamic doctrine alike.[380]

As with the first-phase allegories the translator often demonstrates a comfortable, even at times expert knowledge of the deities mentioned and he is not afraid to deploy this knowledge in his effort to remove polytheism from the text. So for instance in his reaction to Artemidorus' mention of Cybele, whom the Greek author describes only as “the so-called mother of the gods” (*hē legomenē mētēr theōn*). Drawing either on his knowledge of the ancient world—or more probably, it must be admitted, on a marginal gloss or alternate reading in his manuscript—the translator identifies her as the Great Mother goddess of Phrygia and renders the Greek thus: “the angel, who is called Dndwmy [i.e. Dindymēnē] who is supposed to be the greatest of the angels” (*al-malaka llaḏī yuqālu lahu Dndwmy allaḏī yuḏannu bihi ’annahu ’akbaru l-malā’ikati*).[381] Assuming that *hē legomenē mētēr theōn* is indeed what stood in his Greek text, as it does in ours, then the translator has replaced this potentially scandalous phrase with another epithet of the goddess Cybele, namely *Dindymēnē* (‘of Dindymon’, the Phrygian mountain).[382]

In general, the translator's approach to the ancient divinities he encounters is characterized by a desire to obscure their real nature. By contrast, his approach to other ancient religious *Realien* and to Graeco-Roman culture more generally is dominated by a desire to make these foreign concepts expeditiously and efficiently accessible to his reader. He displays a

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[380] 2.36.8-9 (Greek), 293.7-8 (Arabic) and see Strohmaier (1968: 139)

[381] 2.39.22 (Greek), 316.3-4 (Arabic) and see Strohmaier (1968: 138-139)

[382] Elsewhere, it should be noted, the translator clearly misunderstands the divine name *pandēmos* (‘vulgar’)—an epithet of Aphrodite's earthly avatar—referring to the goddess as an angel who is “master of the nations” (*ṣāḥib al-’umam*), a plausible if erroneous parsing of the compound adjective which literally means ‘of all the people(s)’: see 2.37.13 (Greek), 307.4 (Arabic) and Strohmaier (1968: 139).

competent grasp of the basics of classical literature and mythology, giving accurate glosses to 'Cyclops', 'Agamemnon', and 'Scylla' which unmistakably indicate some familiarity with Homeric material.[383] The translator's gloss on Agamemnon is particularly noteworthy: "He was the king of great standing who took charge of arranging the war that took place between the Greeks (*al-yūnāniyyīn*) and the barbarians (*al-barbar*)."[384] The translator presents the Greeks as civilizers and the Trojans as the uncivilized other.[385] When it comes to more extravagant myths —such as Prometheus' fashioning of the human race or Athena's springing fully formed from Zeus' head—the translator is not averse to transmitting the details, though the gods and goddesses of course become 'angels.' After all, the precise character of the myth is important for completing the logic of the dream's interpretation. Still, he is careful to assert in his translation that these events are only stories. Where the Greek introduces the myth with a simple, generic *legousin* or *phasin* ('they say'), the Arabic is much more forceful giving, respectively, *yuqālu fī l-luġzi* ('it is said in the myth') and *qāla l-'awwalūna fī luġzihim* ('the ancients said in their myth').[386] There are places where the translator fails in his cultural knowledge, notably the cult of Dionysus whose thyrsus he interprets to be some sort of crown or garland.[387] Indeed it is in

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[383] See Strohmaier (1968: 143-144) with references.

[384] Artemidorus, *Oneirokritika* 20.11-13 (Arabic). I have adopted Strohmaier (1968: 144 n. 39)'s reading of *al-yūnāniyyīn* ('Greeks') over Fahd's *al-suryāniyyīn* ('Syrians').

[385] On the relationship between Greek *barbaros* and Arabic *barbarī* see G. Strohmaier, "Das Fortleben griechischer sozialer Typenbegriffe im Arabischen" in E. Welskopf (ed.) *Soziale Typenbegriffe im alten Griechenland* 7 (Berlin, 1982: 39-60 at 53-55), reprinted in his *Von Demokrit bis Dante: Die Bewahrung antiken Erbes in der arabischen Kultur* (Hildesheim, 1996).

[386] See Artemidorus, *Oneirokritika* 3.17.17-19 (Greek), 383.5-7 (Arabic) and 2.35.16-17 (Greek), 288.9-10 (Arabic), respectively, with the commentary of Strohmaier (1968: 142).

[387] See Strohmaier (1968: 151) with references

one of Dionysus' principal domains, the theater, that the translator is most at a loss. Nevertheless he pluckily does his best to guess at the meaning of various theatrical terms occurring in the text, sometimes ingeniously, however erroneous the result.[388] Indeed, of the examples collected by Strohmaier, I would point out that the interpretation of *tragōidiā* ('tragedy') as *'aġānī* ('song'), his general understanding of *theatron* ('theater') as any place of assembly, and *hypokrisis* ('acting') as related to deception are all plausible, if sometimes post-classical Greek usages of these terms. Yet other times passages describing accoutrements such as theatrical masks (*prosōpa*) are hopelessly garbled and it is remarkable that the translator did not choose simply to omit the passage or leave a comment indicating his confusion, as we will shortly see is not uncommon. When it comes to *kōmōidiā* ('comedy') the translator is utterly at a loss, as is indicated by his strategy of transliteration ('*al-qūmūḏiyā*'), often accompanied by circumlocution when the strange word or its derivatives occurs multiple times in a single passage.[389]

At times, the translator lacks a consistent approach to *Realien*. A case in point is his treatment of *daimōnes*, the 'divinities' whom later Graeco-Roman antiquity held to be intermediaries between the divine and the earthly and who became the malevolent 'demons' of Christian cosmology. When the word *daimōnes* appears in a list of other divine beings, the translators tend simply to transliterate it, as they do with gods and goddesses.[390] Yet when the word appears in other contexts the translator is not afraid to interpret it for the reader in terms

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[388] See the examples cited by Strohmaier (1968: 152-153). For instance, the translation of *thumelikoi* ('orchestral musicians') as *al-ḏabbāḥūn* ('slaugheter') is made via a not incorrect derivation of the word from *thuō.*

[389] See Schmidt (1970: 199) with references.

[390] See Strohmaier (1968: 143) with references. This strategy of transliteration for *daimōn* is deployed by other translators, such as Qusṭā ibn Lūqā, and the word may have been comprehensible even to some Greekless readers given the popularity of the Agathodaemon figure, on whom see G. Strohmaier, "Agathodaimon", *EI*[3] and M. Plessner, "Aghāthūdhīmūn" *EI*[2].

that range from the folkloric (*‘ummār,* ‘poltergeists’) to the theologically Islamic (*šayṭān*, ‘devil’; *jinn* ‘jinn’).[391] Greek *hērōes* (‘heroes’, ‘demigods’) received similar treatment.[392]

While this strategy has the effect of reducing the foreignness of the Graeco-Roman past, other strategies render its ‘pagan’ reality with surprising starkness. Greek *bōmos* (‘altar’), *hieron* (‘temple’), and *naos* (‘shrine’) are regularly rendered with *haykal* (‘temple’), a Syriac loan word of long standing in Arabic associated in some contexts with ancient, polytheistic worship and one which we encountered in the ideologically charged context of Muslim narratives of *translatio studii* in Chapter 1.[393] The translator transmits unaltered whole sections on, e.g., temple-robbery that provide a sustained glimpse at ancient life.[394] References to statues and divine images (Greek *agalma, eikōn*, and *andriās*) are at times rendered neutrally (*timṯāl*, ‘statue’) and at times polemically (*ṣanam*, ‘idol’), when they are not omitted outright as in the case of the sun god’s statue discussed above.[395] Remarkably, the polemical *ṣanam* (‘idol’) is not employed in religious contexts in the translation and is avoided precisely when images of specific ‘angels’ (i.e. ancient divinities in the Greek original) are under discussion. This avoidance suggests that the translator has made some effort to paint a consistent portrait of his reimagined classical past, one in which

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[391] See Strohmaier (1968: 142-143).

[392] See Strohmaier (1968: 143).

[393] See Section 1.1 above.

[394] Artemidorus, *Oneirokritika* 3.3 (Greek), 371 (Arabic)

[395] See the examples collected in Schmitt (1970: 210-223 with commentary at 254).

the reverence of ‘angels’ and their celebration via images is not idolatrous.[396] In fact, the translator is perfectly willing to import a reference to these angelic cult images into his text even where none exists. Ignorant of Pan’s hooves, the translator misunderstands a reference to the unsteady feet of that god (*ou gar asphalōs hupokeimenas ekhei tas baseis tōn podōn*) and rewrites the passage so as to suggest that the statue (*timṯāl*) of this ‘angel’ usually had a rocking base.[397] This mistake provides precious insight into the mindset of the translator, who even in a passage with no mention of statuary is primed to imagine a classical past full of heathenish idols and yet determined to transform it for his reader into one full of angelic cult images instead.

Occasionally, the desire to transform the classical past enters the moral realm. At one point, Artemidorus explains that those who dream of violating a temple or a cult image of a god are destined to fall upon hard times—all of which the translator renders accurately. Yet Artemidorus’ explanation for this connection between dream and future event is not that the dream action somehow yields a just punishment. Rather, those who fall upon hard times are wont to abandon their piety toward the gods (*tēs pros theous eusebeias aphistantai*), meaning that those who dream of committing impiety are destined to experience calamity.[398] It is easy enough for the translator to transform ‘piety towards the gods’ into ‘fear of God’ (*ḫawf Allāh*), yet this results in the unconscionable notion that people regularly turn from God simply because they experience misfortune, something the translator either fails to understand or else is unwilling to

[396] I draw in part here on the interpretation of Strohmaier (1968: 132). Oddly, *ṣanam* is used in a context where the original Greek describes statues erected to celebrate noteworthy events in a human’s life: Artemidorus, *Oneirokritika* 1.50.43-47 (Greek), 107.11-13 (Arabic).

[397] See 2.37.21-22 (Greek), 300.9-10 (Arabic) with the comment of Strohmaier (1978: 151) who discusses the passage in the context of the translator’s general knowledge of Greek mythology.

[398] Artemidorus, *Oneirokritika* 2.33.21-22 (Greek)

transmit. He therefore inserts the phrase *fī l-ʾafʿāl* (‘in deeds’) into his translation such that the Greek’s “those who have fallen into great misfortunes” (*hoi…en megalais sumphorais genomenoi*) becomes in Arabic “those who in [their] deeds have found themselves on the path of wickedness and evil” (*man kāna ʿalā maḏhabi radīʾin wa-šarrin fī l-ʾafʿāli*).[399] This translation maintains a plausible logic of signifying dream and signified event, but completely reworks the moral import of that signification.[400]

Religious activity and office are also adapted for the reader. The Graeco-Roman priest and the seer (Greek *hieros, hiereus*, *mantis*) become variously either a pre-Islamic soothsayer or Christian priest (the Arabic *kāhin*, after Syriac *kāhnā* ‘priest’, can mean either), or else an Islamic imam (*ʾimām*).[401] The ancients are allowed their sacrifices (*thuō* is rendered with *ḍaḥā*) but all references to sacrificing to the gods are reworked to omit any mention of the ancient divinities, even under the guise of angels.[402] Occasionally, we can sense the Christian sympathies of the translator behind his phrasing, as when he markedly softens a reference to crucifixion and just possibly when he reworks a reference to Astarte-worshipping *Syroi* (‘Syrians’) in such a way as

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[399] Artemidorus, *Oneirokritika* 2.33.21-22 (Greek), 284.3 (Arabic). I follow the interpretation of Strohmaier (1968: 144).

[400] *Pace* Strohmaier (1968: 144) who claims that “die Pointe der Traumerklärung verlorengeht.”

[401] See Strohmaier (1968: 148) and Schmitt (1970: 210-223 and 254)

[402] Strohmaier (1968: 149)

to omit this epithet, potentially offensive to an East Syrian Christian readership.[403] Yet the same translator can also deploy, wittingly or unwittingly, a term of clear Qur'ānic origin when communicating the Greek text's distinction between meaningful dreams (*oneiroi*) and meaningless ones (*enhupnioi)*.[404] The overall impression is of a translator working in a rather ad hoc fashion, drawing on Islamic or Christian terminology to render each foreign concept as he encounters it. Yet, whether by calculated design or by the ingrained habit of appealing to a diverse audience, the translator has created and transmitted his own distinct vision of the Graeco-Roman past. It is a fantasy world with a wholesome, if perhaps not always convincing veneer of monotheism that both Christians and Muslims can claim and use. After all, the text—a scientific work on dream interpretation—would be useless to the reader if the world it presented were wholly foreign and the reader could not see himself and his own experiences in the sort of dream phenomena the work described.

Only one ancient divinity receives the honor of being rendered, not as an allegory or an angel, but as *Allāh,* the one God of the Jews, Christians, and Muslims. This is the god Apollo, in one passage alone, namely when Artemidorus invokes him as his ancestral deity and the patron of his book. The importance of this move on the translator's part was noted by Strohmaier, who

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[403] On crucifixion see Strohmaier (1968: 146) and on the Syrians see Strohmaier (1968: 147), who notes however some of the difficulties with taking this latter case as an example of deliberate softening out of Christian scruple. I would add also that the translator's rendering of *Syroi* as *'ahl bilād sūrīā* ('people from the country of Sūrīā (=Syria)', which deploys an unnatural transliteration of the place name, could indicate an attempt to distance these ancient 'Syrians' from the Christian *suryāyē*/*suryāniyyūn.* Elsewhere in the Arabic Artemidorus the translator is perfectly happy to give the natural Arabic equivalents for Middle Eastern places named in the Greek text—such as 'Tyre' and 'Heliopolis'—reserving raw transliterations for place names he apparently does not recognize—such as 'Italy': see Schmitt (1970: 254-255). On the complex question of place names and the strategies Graeco-Arabic translators use to convey them in Arabic, see more generally G. Strohmaier, "Völker- und Ländernamen in der griechsich-arabischen Übersetzungsliteratur", *Philologus* 118 (1974: 266-271) reprinted in his *Von Demokrit bis Dante. Die Bewahrung antiken Erbes in der arabischen Kultur* (Hildesheim: 1996).

[404] See Strohmaier (1968: 149-150). We cannot dismiss the possibility this word for meaningless dreams (*'aḍġāt*) had simply become a technical term.

compared it to a similar occurrence in ’Iṣtifan ibn Baṣīl’s translation of Dioscurides’ *De materia medica,* where an opening prayer to two Greek deities becomes a prayer to God (*Allāh*). Strohmaier found this parallel significant, given our testimony that Ḥunayn himself corrected ’Iṣtifan’s translation.[405] As we shall see, the handling of an author’s ancestral patron deity plays a crucial role in the Ḥunayn circle’s work on Galen. For now, let us look at the Ḥunayn circle translator’s treatment of Artemidorus’ ancestral deity Apollo in its full context:

> δέομαι δὲ τῶν ἐντυγχανόντων τοῖς βιβλίοις μήτε προσθεῖναι μήτε τι τῶν ὄντων ἀφελεῖν. εἴτε γὰρ δύναιτό τις τοῖς ἐμοῖς προσθεῖναι, ῥᾷον ἂν ἴδια ποιήσειεν· εἴτε τινὰ τῶν ἐγγεγραμμένων ταῖσδε ταῖς βίβλοις περισσὰ δοκεῖ, οἷς ἀρέσκεται μόνοις χρήσθω, τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν βιβλίων μὴ ἐξαιρῶν, θεὸν ἐπόπτην καὶ φύλακα πάντων νομίζων τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα, ᾧ πειθόμενος ἐγὼ πατρῴῳ ὄντι θεῷ εἰς τήνδε τὴν πραγματείαν παρῆλθον, πολλάκις με προτρεψαμένῳ, μάλιστα δὲ νῦν ἐναργῶς ἐπιστάντι μοι, ἡνίκα σοι ἐγνωρίσθην, καὶ μονονουχὶ κελεύσαντι ταῦτα συγγράψαι.[406]
>
> I ask those encountering my books neither to add nor to remove any of their contents. For if someone were capable of adding to my books, then he could more easily compose his own. If, in turn, any of the things written here appear superfluous, then let him use only those which please him, without removing the remaining contents of the books, considering the god Apollo to be the overseer and guardian of them all. It was out of obedience to him, my ancestral god (*patrōiōi…theōi*), that I approached this present undertaking, for oftentimes he exhorted me, and now especially, after you [Cassius Maximus][407] had made my acquaintance, he has in a clear manner [or conceivably ‘in visible form’, *enargōs*] enjoined me and all but commanded me to write these [books].

As his second book draws to a close, Artemidorus invokes the god of his mother’s native Daldis, Daldiaean Apollo, as the patron and protector of his work. He urges readers to pick and choose freely among the book’s contents but warns them against altering or abridging the book’s text lest their violation offend the god. Now Artemidorus had in mind redaction, epitomization and

[405] See Strohmaier (1968: 138) with references.

[406] Artemidorus, *Oneirokritika* 2.70.147-157 (Greek)

[407] The addressee of the first three books of Artemidorus’ *Oneirokritika.*

supplementation of the book's scientific contents—not the sort of systematic alteration of cultural and religious elements wrought by the Ḥunayn circle. Still, it is precisely in this context—a description of the divinely sponsored inviolability of the book's text—that the translator performs one of his most daring and thorough alterations. Here is the above-quoted passage in the Ḥunayn circle's Arabic translation:

وانا اسئل من لقي هاتين المقالتين مسئلة يسيرة وهي الّا يزيد على ما فيها من الكلام ولا ينقص مما فيها، وذلك انه ان كان يقدر ان يزيد على ما قلت فانه يقدر ان يضع مقالة لنفسه . فان راى فيما قلت في هاتين المقالتين زيادة شيء فليستعمل ما يستحسنه من قولي ولا ينقص مما فيها شيئا ، وانا متكل على الله انه الحافظ والمطلع على جميع ما فيها، وذلك اني حين توكلت عليه تقدمت الى مثل هذا الكتاب، وقد كنت احرك الى وضع ذلك كثيرا وبخاصة الآن فاني رايت الملك عيانا كما اراك يحركني الى ذلك، ولذلك وضعت هذا الكتاب.[408]

> I ask whoever encounters these two books (*maqālatayni*) a small favor, namely that he not add (*yazīda*) to their contents nor subtract (*yanquṣa*) from them. For if he is capable of adding (*yazīda*) to what I have said, then he is capable of composing a book (*maqālatan*) for himself. If, in turn, he sees in what I have said in these books a surplus of any material (*ziyādata šay'in*), then let him use whatever of my work he deems best, without subtracting (*yanquṣu*) anything from its contents—since I trust in God (*wa-'ana muttakilu 'alā (A)llāhi*) to be be the preserver (*al-ḥāfiẓu*) and the observer (*al-muṭṭali'u*) of all that it is in these books. For, having placed my trust in Him, I approached [the idea of working on] a book of this sort, and I was often urged to compose it, especially now when I saw the angel with my own eyes (*ra'aytu l-malaka 'iyānan*)—just as I see you [Cassius Maximus]—urging me to that task. Therefore, I composed this book (*kitāb*).

The Ḥunayn circle translator has made several fundamental changes to the text. For Artemidorus' first reference to Apollo, he has replaced the ancient divinity with none other than God, *Allāh*. In the second instance, he has reverted to his habitual practice of replacing gods with angels and reworked the text.

What motivates these changes and what accounts for the presence of these two different approaches in such close proximity to one another? Most immediately and mechanically, the translator's decision to render Artemidorus' reference to a specific divinity, here Apollo, as *Allāh*

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[408] Artemidorus, *Oneirokritika* 365.11-366.1 (Arabic)

—a decision unparalleled elsewhere in the translation—is motivated by the Greek author's language of invocation. Elsewhere in the *Oneirokritika* Artemidorus mentions specific divinities to discuss their significance as apparitions in dreams. Hence, when Apollo himself appears in the context of dream interpretation, Artemidorus deploys the same strategy he does in the case of so many other ancient divinities: Greek '*Apollōn*' becomes in Arabic 'the angel who is called Apollo (*al-malaku llaḏī yuqālu lahu 'bln*).[409] Yet this strategy is abandoned when Apollo appears in the context of the waking world as part of Artemidorus' autobiography. Here the author is invoking the aid and protection of his ancestral god. In Arabic, a Christian or Muslim would find it unnatural, even inappropriate, to invoke an angel's aid in such a way, and so the translator must deviate from his usual strategy of rendering the divinity as an allegory or an angel. He must rework the passage as an invocation of God (*Allāh*).

We might have expected the translator to render 'god' (*theos*') as *Allāh* once again when Artemidorus repeats the reference to his ancestral god Apollo later in the above-quoted passage. In fact, in light of similar passages in other Ḥunayn circle translations to which we will shall shortly turn, I argue that the translator might well have done so, had he not encountered the adverb *enargōs*, which he mistakenly took to be a reference to the god's literal epiphany before Artemidorus' waking eyes. While the adjective '*enargēs*' can describe a god's visible appearance before a mortal, the adverbial form *enargōs* is usually used of limpid speech and probably means no more than 'in a clear or manifest manner' here, rather than the unlikely, though not inconceivable meaning of 'in visible form' which the translator assigns to it. The translator is

[409] 2.35.31 (Greek), 287.10 (Arabic). Cf. 2.34.8 (Greek), 285.9-10. At 2.25.14 (Greek), 259.5 (Arabic), where there is a brief reference to the story of Daphne and Apollo and Apollo's divinity is not explicit, the translator is content simply to transliterate the god's name without identifying him as angel. The reference to Apollo at 2.35.35 has apparently fallen out of the text or else, as suggested by Strohmaier (1968: 137), was deliberately omitted by the translator given its comparison of Apollo with Helios, the sun.

scrupulous and apparently unwilling to omit this adverb from his translation, rendering it forcefully—too forcefully—as ‘I saw with my own eyes’ (*ra’aytu … ‘iyānan*).[410] Yet it would not do to suggest that the living God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—who spoke to Job hidden in the whirlwind, addressed Moses via the burning bush, and revealed the Qur’ān to Muḥammad through Gabriel—had deigned to address, let alone appear ‘in visible form’ before, a waking Artemidorus. Instead, the translator is forced to return to his standard strategy and to render ‘my ancestral god’ (*theos patrōios*) as ‘the angel’ (*al-malak*).

One could argue that the translator appears to be acting purely mechanically. He encounters an invocation of a heathenish deity’s protection and swiftly replaces it with reference to God (*Allāh*). When he next encounters a reference to the god that precludes this translation he simply reverts—unthinkingly one might argue—to his usual strategy of rendering gods as angels. Yet there are some indications that the translator is acting with more subtlety and agency. First, we must note that, in this instance, he refuses to append the customary ‘that is known as’ followed by the god’s name, here ‘Apollo’, which customarily follows these angelic transformations. Whereas in passages describing dream apparitions and their symbolism it was possible and necessary even to indicate that some specific ‘angel’ was meant and to reveal the name of the ancient divinity in Arabic transliteration, in this passage the translator is no longer in the world of dreams.[411] Rather, he has been rewriting and reconstituting Artemidorus’

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[410] That the translator should be aware and choose forcefully to translate the epiphanic and religious undertones of *enargōs* may be further evidence of the Ḥunayn circle’s familiarity with Homer, where this usage of the adjective *enargēs* is common: cf. *Iliad* 20.131, *Odyssey* 3.420, 7.201, 16.161. Had the translator lacked this cultural knowledge, he would have been far more likely to interpret the adverb in the blander, and probably intended sense of ‘clearly’.

[411] For other differences in the way the translators handles ‘the dream world’ vs. ‘the real world’ in this translation, see Strohmaier (1968: 140)

autobiographical narrative, making his ancient author invoke *Allāh* instead of Apollo and crafting a new textual reality—however thin and polite the fiction might have been to many of his readers—in which Artemidorus is a monotheist, despite being one of the *Yūnāniyyūn*. Some evidence for this reading comes in the sentence immediately following the above-quoted passage. Once he has adopted this new way of rendering Artemidorus' ancestral deity as an angel, he maintains it. Artemidorus explains that it is no surprise his ancestral god has urged him to write his work for his addressee Cassius Maximus, given his friend's great wisdom and the friendship (*proxeniā*, rendered by the translator as 'fraternization', *mu'āḫātun*) between their two lands of origin. The translator dutifully and accurately renders this further bit of autobiographical information, yet is careful to maintain the internal consistency of the new narrative. Artemidorus' reference to "Daldiaean Apollo, whom by our ancestral appellation (*patrōiōi onomati*) we call Mystes" is rendered as simply "the angel" (*al-malak*).[412] This reduction and simplification represents a clear attempt, if not a particularly audacious one, to maintain the narrative of an inspiring angel that the translator had already adopted and imposed on his author.

More remarkable is the context in which the translator reworks and adapts Artemidorus' autobiographical digression. The above-quoted passage is a stern injunction against tampering with the integrity of Artemidorus' book, specifically against 'removing from' (*aphaireō*) or 'adding to' (*prostithēmi*) the text. In order to seal his text against such tampering, Artemidorus' invokes the protection of his ancestral deity Apollo. In such a context, the translator boldly chose not only to remove the references to the god, but to add corresponding references to *Allāh* and an angel which amount to a reworking of the Artemidorus' autobiographical claims about his own

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[412] 2.70.11-12 (Greek), 366.2 (Arabic)

divine inspiration. I argue that the translator was aware of the broader import of his textual alterations in this passage on the basis of the Arabic verbs he selects when translating Greek *aphaireō* and *prostithēmi*, namely *naqaṣa* ('to reduce') and *zāda* ('to increase, add to'). These are precisely the same verbs which, as we saw in Chapter 2, occurred in ninth-century texts discussing scriptural corruption (*taḥrīf*) as well as accusation of tampering leveled by al-Jāḥiẓ and others invoking the language of *taḥrīf* to allege textual alteration on the part of Christian Graeco-Arabic translators.[413] The choice of these verbs on the part of the translator is not casual, I suggest, for in other contexts in the Arabic Artemidorus he often finds other ways of expressing these verbs in Arabic.[414] This is possible, if hardly conclusive, evidence that the translator is here aware of and engaging with the broader ninth-century discourse surrounding textual tampering and translation which we analyzed in the preceding chapter. Whether or not we view him as doing so here, it is nevertheless noteworthy, that in altering the text the translator is breaking Artemidorus' seal and violating his divinely protected injunction, only to 'reseal' the text with a new injunction against tampering which invokes *Allāh* and claims that an angel appeared before the author to encourage his work.

It is hard to know how seriously the translator intended his Muslim or Christian—or for that matter Ḥarranian Ṣabian—reader to take this reworking of Artemidorus' autobiography. Was the new autobiography, in which the Greek author invoked *Allāh* and claimed to have seen an angel with his own eyes, meant to cozen the reader into believing that Artemidorus really was a monotheist? Was it rather a fig leaf placed over the author's polytheism, on par with the regular

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[413] See Sections 2.2 and 2.3 above.

[414] See especially collection of passages the entries on *aphaireo* and its derivates in Schmitt (1970: 283-284). *Prostithēmi* and its derivate *prosthesis* admit of considerable less variation: see Schmitt (1970: 408).

rendering of gods as angels throughout the text and perhaps not meant to convince the reader of any historical reality? As we turn now to the Ḥunayn circle's work on Galen, I will argue in fact that something more subtle than either of these possibilities lies behind such reworking of authorial autobiography.

Section 3.3. Ḥunayn Circle Alterations: Greek Poetry in Galen

The Arabic Artemidorus is unique among ninth-century Graeco-Arabic translations. Replete with ancient *Realien*, religious and otherwise, in a way that few scientific texts are, it challenged the Ḥunayn circle translator to rework these aspects of the text and transmit his own historical fantasia to the reader. Yet the tendencies in the Arabic Artemidorus which I have outlined are not unique to this text among Ḥunayn circle productions. Rather, the same treatment of Graeco-Roman cultural elements, religion, and authorial autobiography are present in the large corpus of Galen translations that have survived and which formed the primary focus of the Ḥunayn circle's translation activities. Indeed, while we will note some variations, the close similarities between the translation strategies of the Arabic Artemidorus and these Galen translations serve, incidentally, as further corroboration that the former is a product of the Ḥunayn circle. This survey cannot be comprehensive. Yet by sampling the ways in which Ḥunayn circle Galen translations handle elements of culture, religion, and autobiography in the source text and comparing these strategies to the work of their predecessors and contemporaries we will be well-equipped to discuss the attitude Ḥunayn and his colleagues evince toward the Greek past and their role in transforming it and transmitting it to their readers.

The ways in which Ḥunayn circle translators of Galenic texts handle elements of religion in particular and elements of classical culture in general are fundamentally different. As in the Arabic Artemidorus, while religious elements tend to be obscured or silently reworked, the translator's approach to other elements of classical culture is to elucidate them and make them accessible to the reader—or else to omit them with this is impossible or inexpedient. However in contrast to the Arabic Artemidorus, the Ḥunayn circle Galen translator—more often than not the master Ḥunayn himself, for reasons that will soon become apparent—has a tendency to explain his approach to these cultural elements. When he is at loss or feels this non-religious cultural material is not relevant, Ḥunayn makes scrupulous and explicit reference to the alterations he has made to the text. The most well-known example of this comes from a note occurring in Ḥubayš's Arabic translation from Ḥunayn's Syriac version of Galen's *On Medical Names*:

> Ḥunayn ibn 'Isḥāq says: In the following passage Galen quotes Aristophanes. However, the Greek manuscript, from which I translated this work into Syriac, contains such a large number of mistakes and errors (*al-ḫaṭa' wa-l-saqaṭ*) that it would have been impossible for me to understand the meaning of the text had I not been so familiar with and accustomed to Galen's Greek speech and acquainted with most of his ideas from his other works. But I am not familiar with the language of Aristophanes, nor am I accustomed to it. Hence, it was not easy for me to understand the quotation, and I have, therefore, omitted it.
>
> I had an additional reason for omitting it (*tarkihi*). After I had read it, I found no more in it than what Galen already said elsewhere. Hence, I thought that I should not occupy myself with it any further, but rather proceed to more useful (*'anfa'*) matters.[415]

This note is followed a few sentences later by a similar one announcing that the translator has omitted, for the same reasons, a second Aristophanic quotation. Since *On Medical Names* does

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[415] Galen, *On Medical Names* = M. Meyerhof and J. Schacht (eds.), *Galen über die medizinischen Namen,* in Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Phil.-hist. Klasse. Jahrg. no. 3 (1931: 17-18). I quote the English translation of F. Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam* (New York, 1965: 19). See also the important discussion of this passage in D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (Routledge, 1998: 140).

not survive in Greek, we cannot say in particular what aspects of Aristophanes and his comic language might have caused Ḥunayn difficulty. It is clear, however, from the surrounding matter that Galen adduced the quotations, among other evidence, into order to demonstrate the meaning of a certain ancient medical term.[416] Thus we should note, as it will become important later, Ḥunayn's insistence that to retain the quotations would be of minimal usefulness. Galen's meaning is clear to the reader without the quotation and so to attempt an inevitably poor translation of it would be a waste of both translator's and reader's time. Philology for philology's sake, in other words, is not profitable according to Ḥunayn. Yet the translator feels duty-bound to alert the reader to his own philological failings and, crucially, to the resulting alteration of the text. Unlike the translator of the Arabic Artemidorus, who some have argued was a young Ḥunayn or else pupil of his, the mature Ḥunayn working on Galen is unwilling to fudge culturally or linguistically difficult material and terminology.

This is nowhere more obvious than in the Ḥunayn circle's handling of references to drama. We saw how the translator of the Arabic Artemidorus attempted to render such references with dispatch, often more or less correctly. Ḥunayn and his pupils are similarly expeditious when treating these references in Galen but there is more urgency to take them seriously and make explicitly clear to the reader what Galen means. Comedy, mysterious as ever, is simply transliterated as in the Arabic Artemidorus.[417] Now Syriac translators often transliterate Greek words whose meaning they understand but cannot capture in Syriac—a practice common among

[416] Since Aristophanes needed to reach a general Athenian audience, Galen argues, it stands to reason that he would employ terms according to their normal, everyday meanings. This mining of Attic comedy for lexical data forms a key part of Galen's Atticism, whose importance for the Ḥunayn circle we shall explore at the end of this chapter.

[417] See the several examples at *On Medical Names* (ed. Meyerhof and Schacht), 17-18.

early Graeco-Arabic translators as well—and some Syriac writers pepper their prose with transliterated Greek loanwords.[418] Transliteration should not necessarily be taken as a sign that a translator is ignorant of a word's meaning. However, it is clear that both the Syriac and the Arabic speaking audience of the Ḥunayn circle needed help understanding these references in Galen. A Syriac gloss preserved by a later author presents a definition of tragedy written by Ḥunayn to aid those studying Galen in Greek or more probably in Syriac translation:

> Tragedy: about this one should know that there are two kinds of music among the Greeks. One is called *ṭragodiyā* and the other *qomodēseh*. By *ṭragodiyā*, they admonish and reproach those who set out to sin and err out of fervid passion, and by *qomodēseh* those who sin out of lust. Galen uses both of these in his medical writings. When you encounter them, understand them [in this way].[419]

While tragedy is here presented in an unremarkable transliteration of its standard Greek nominal form (*tragōidiā*), comedy appears to be represented by a transliteration of the Greek aorist infinitive *kōmōidēsai* ('to treat in a comic fashion, to lampoon, to write comedies'). Since this form does not occur in any Galenic texts extant in Greek, the comment was probably a gloss attached to the Syriac translation of a now lost work.[420] It is not clear what sources Ḥunayn draws on for these barebones and utilitarian definitions. Their moralizing take on the two genres in fact bears a ballpark resemblance to the ways tragedy and comedy are treated in the tenth-century and beyond after 'Abū Bišr Mattā ibn Yūnus' Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*.

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[418] See S. Brock, "Changing fashions in Syriac translation technique: the background to Syriac translations under the Abbasids", *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 4 (2004: 3-14).

[419] For the Syriac text see O. Schrier, "Ḥunayn ibn Isḥaq on Tragedy and Comedy: A New Fragment of Galen," *Mnemosyne* 48 (1995: 344-348 at 344). I quote the translation of Aaron Butts quoted in L. Tarán. and D. Gutas, *Aristotle 'Poetics':* Editio Maior *of the Greek Text with Historical Introductions and Philological Commentaries* (Leiden/Boston, 2012: 90).

[420] Schrier (1995) followed by Gutas (2012: 90).

Yet they are sufficiently removed from the definition of tragedy presented by Aristotle that several readers have argued this gloss presents conclusive evidence that the ninth-century Syriac translation of the *Poetics* postdates Ḥunayn's floruit.[421] It possible Ḥunayn was simply making an educated, if erroneous guess from context and his own extensive reading of Galen and other Greek sources.

We find this same earnest and expeditious attempt to make sense of ancient drama for the medical student in a note by Ḥunayn included in the body of his Arabic translation of Galen's *Commentary on Hippocrates' 'Epidemics'* (covering books 1, 2, 3 and 6). Throughout this work, Ḥunayn inserts comments in passages where, he explains, Galen's Greek audience needed no further clarification but where the translation's Arabic-speaking audience does.[422] At one point Galen describes how a commentator on a given medical author must adopt the persona of member of that author's school of thought. He compares commentators to stage actors maintaining the role of the mask they wear (*en dramati phulattontes enioi tēn oikeian hupokrisin tou perikeimenou prosōpou*).[423] To fail to do so and to let one's own dogmas show through is akin to failing in one's dramatic interpretation of a comedy or a tragedy (*paraplēsion gar touto tōi kōmōidiān ē tragōidiān epikheirein hupokrinesthai mē dunamenon*).[424] This passage contains

[421] See with references Gutas (2012: 90).

[422] While, as we have seen, other translations by Ḥunayn do contain such notes, the *Commentary on the Epidemics* presents an unusually high density. These notes have been collected and discussed by U. Vagelpohl, "In the Translator's Workshop" in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 21 (2011: 249-288), who compares them to the only other Ḥunayn circle translation with a comparable density of such notes, the Arabic translation of ps.-Aristotle's *Physiognomica*.

[423] Galen, *Commentary on Hippocrates'* Epidemics *Book 3* = E. Wenkebach (ed.), *Galeni in Hippocratis Epidemiarum librum III*, CMG V 10.2.1 (Leipzig/Berlin 1936: 17.1-2).

[424] Galen, *Commentary on Hippocrates'* Epidemics *Book 3*, Wenkebach (ed.), 17.10-11

a plethora of confusing and foreign ancient theatrical terms—*drama* (‘drama’), *hypokrisis* (‘role-playing’) and *prosōpon* (‘mask’) not to mention *tragōidiā* and *komōidiā*. Yet Ḥunayn feels that Galen’s analogy has value and endeavors to clue the reader in on the cultural context of the passage with the following note:

> Ḥunayn says: The Greeks had poems containing tales of the ancients which they recounted on the authority of numerous people among whom reports circulated. When they wanted to encourage people to follow the custom (*sunna*) of the ancients in avoiding indolence and despicable conduct and aspiring to bravery and courage or to turn them from evil to self-abandonment, then people assembled who enumerated those among whom reports circulated in those poems. Not every one of them is the image (*ṣūra*) of that man who wanted to declaim the poetry containing his story, but each of them creates the impression that his recitation of the story is being performed by […?] the former person so that he tells it and it is as if he himself is the former person. This is the meaning Galen indicates in this passage.[425]

Once again we see that Ḥunayn has imposed the notion—nowhere evident in Galen’s text—that tragedy and comedy share moral edification as their goal. Yet here Galen’s analogy requires that he venture into the realm of performance context in order to explain the passage, something it was apparently unnecessary for him to do in the Syriac gloss quoted above. Even if we discount problems with the transmitted Arabic text of the gloss, Ḥunayn’s explanation is somewhat tortured. He understands that tragedy and comedy are performed by people adopting the role of the speaker and ‘play-acting’—but it would be hard *not* to arrive at this conclusion simply from a competent reading of Galen’s text. However, Ḥunayn fails to recreate accurately the ancient stage, with its multiple actors reciting the roles of their characters. He correctly deduces the presence of an audience, but seems to imagine something akin to a ninth-century *majlis* or gathering of littérateurs, wherein individuals recite poetry to one another. In this imaginary

[425] For the Arabic text, about which there are some uncertainties, see Vagelpohl (2011: 278). I quote with modifications Vagelpohl’s translation.

Greek *majlis*, individuals stand up and adopt the persona of some worthy ancient in order to recite poetry recounting that person's exemplary story in his own voice.

The Ḥunayn circle's treatment of these elements of classical culture is dominated by a desire to communicate Galen's meaning to the reader. While these passages serve as an opportunity to portray the ancients as worthy moral guides—whence the claim for the didactic nature of dramatic poetry—they are of no intrinsic value. Rather, since Galen uses these concepts in his medical treatises, the reader must be familiar with them when necessary. Yet not all Greek poetry was of merely incidental value to Ḥunayn. We possess both direct and indirect evidence that he held Homer in particular esteem and had a fairly extensive knowledge of the Homeric poems. The reasons for this knowledge—so apparently unexpected in an East Syrian translator dedicated to technical medical and philosophical writings—has not yet received a satisfactory explanation. We will shed light on this Homeric knowledge and interest in the coming section, but for now let us review the evidence for Ḥunayn's engagement with Homer and his willingness to transmit this knowledge to readers of his Galen translations. The most extensive witness comes from a quotation in Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybiʻa's thirteenth-century *'Uyūn al-'anbā'*. This extract purports to be from the eyewitness account of Ḥunayn's acquaintance Yūsuf ibn 'Ibrahīm, the same account which preserves the story of Ibn Māsawayh's ejection of the young translator from his classroom, which we discussed above in Section 3.1.[426]

Ibn 'Ibrahīm recounts that, after this humiliating experience, Ḥunayn disappeared for a few years only to make a dramatic reappearance in Baghdad. Ibn Ibrahīm had a certain friend in

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[426] Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybiʻa, *'Uyūn al-'anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-'aṭibbā'*, A. Müller (ed.) (Cairo / Königsberg, 1882-84: 1,185-186. There is no reason to doubt that Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybiʻa is faithfully reproducing the text he had before him: see for instance his accurate quotation of the independently surviving *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm shortly later in his section on Ḥunayn.

Baghdad named ’Isḥāq ibn al-Ḫaṣṣī (‘son of the eunuch’), a man educated in the Greek language (*al-lisān al-yūnānī*) and in “the culture and literature of the Byzantines” (*bi-’ādābi l-rūma wa-qirā’ati kutubihim*) by his Greek aunt Ḫiršā (i.e. Greek Khrysē, ‘Blondie’)—a concubine of the caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd.[427] This aunt had adopted the boy after the jealous caliph had had his father castrated, for shortly before his death he had set his sights on his concubine’s sister as well. It was at the house of this friend, who had fallen ill, that Ibn ’Ibrahīm met a mysterious figure:

> I was at his [Ibn al-Ḫaṣṣī’s] house when, lo and behold, I saw a man with long hair enveloping his head, some of it hiding his face from my view. He was pacing to and fro, reciting in the Byzantine language (*bi-l-rūmiyyati*) the poetry of Homer, chief among the poets of the Byzantines (*ra’īsi šu‘arā’i l-rūma*). His intonation (*naġmatuhu*) resembled the intonation of Ḥunayn, with whom at that point I had had no contact for over two years. And so I asked ’Isḥāq ibn al-Ḫaṣṣī, “Is this Ḥunayn?” He denied it, but in such a way as to effectively confirm it.[428]

Ibn ’Ibrahīm approaches the mysterious figure, who indeed turns out to be Ḥunayn. Chastened after his experience a few years earlier, the young man had withdrawn from the Baghdad social circuit and set out to prove that an ‘Ibādī Arab could indeed become an expert physician. To do so he had fully mastered the Greek language, even to point of committing Homer to memory.

How, why and where Ḥunayn might have acquired this Homeric knowledge will occupy us in the final section of this chapter. For now, let us examine the ways in which Ḥunayn deploys a marked familiarity with Homeric material in form of in-text glosses occurring in his circle’s

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[427] Ibn ’Abī ’Uṣaybi‘a, *‘Uyūn al-’anbā’ fī ṭabaqāt al-’aṭibbā’*, A. Müller (ed.) (Cairo / Königsberg, 1882-84: 1,185

[428] Ibn ’Abī ’Uṣaybi‘a, *‘Uyūn al-’anbā’*, Müller (ed.), 1,185

Galen translations.[429] We have already observed how the Ḥunayn circle translator of Artemidorus glossed the Homeric names "Cyclops", "Agamemnon", and "Scylla". Indeed, the replacement there of Greek *Skulla* of with "the sea-dog" (*al-kalba al-baḥriyya*) may, if we follow Gotthard Strohmaier, indicate familiarity with the Homeric verse comparing the cry of that monster to a newborn puppy's.[430] We find similarly tantalizing hints at Homeric knowledge in the Ḥunayn circle Galen translations. Among the more cryptic bits of evidence are two glosses from Ḥunayn that do not explicitly mention Homer, but apparently draw on Homeric material. One occurs in the Arabic of Galen's *Anatomical Procedures* and indicates quite detailed and accurate knowledge of the Homeric hapax *amnion* ('sacrificial bowl') when glossing *amneios* ('amniotic sac').[431] Another occurring in the Arabic of Galen's *The Composition of Drugs* echoes ancient Graeco-Roman debates surrounding the geographical location of the Homeric race of people called the *Eremboi*.[432] Strohmaier's claim that these glosses corroborate the Yūsuf ibn 'Ibrahīm account's depiction of Ḥunayn is perhaps overbold. The translator could easily have learned this

[429] These glosses have been collected by G. Strohmaier, "Homer in Bagdad" *Byzantinoslavica* 41 (1980: 196-200), reprinted in his *Von Demokrit bis Dante: Die Bewahrung antiken Erbes in der arabischen Kultur* (Hildesheim, 1996: 222-226).

[430] See Strohmaier (1980: 198-199). The Homeric verse in question is *Odyssey* 12.86.

[431] See with references Strohmaier (1980: 197)

[432] See with references Strohmaier (1980: 198).

information from glossaries or even marginalia in his manuscript or manuscripts.[433] Still, given the relative scarcity of such intrusive glosses in Ḥunayn circle translations and given the difficulty the translators often exhibit when faced with non-Homeric material, these glosses are noteworthy.

We are on firmer ground when analyzing Ḥunayn circle glosses which make a point of mentioning Homer by name. A comparison of two of these glosses, identified by Strohmaier, reveals both a respect for the authority of Homer and perhaps even familiarity with his works. One such gloss occurs in the Arabic of Galen's *Commentary on Hippocrates' 'Surgery'.* In the original, Galen attempts to explain the term *laparos* ('slack, empty') by way of a Homeric verse. He half-quotes the verse quite naturally and without mentioning his source, since to do so would have been unnecessary for his educated Greek audience:

> In common usage the word *laparos* signifies emptiness, just as the word *lapaxai* ['to sack, storm'] means 'to empty out'. The phrase 'to sack [*exalapaxai*] Ilium, well-populated citadel' means 'to empty out the city', and they call *laparos* those parts of the body which are between the iliac bones and the false-ribs.[434]

In light of Ḥunayn's treatment of the Aristophanes quotations discussed above, we might expect him to ignore or even omit these sentences. After all, the explanation can be of little immediate use to the reader of the surviving Arabic or the lost Syriac intermediary on which it more directly

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[433] For instance, the proper accentuation of the Homeric hapax *amnion* (*Odyssey* 3.444) is a favorite topic among ancient grammarians and its meaning ('a sacrificial bowl for collecting blood') is given in terms quite similar to Ḥunayn's Arabic gloss at, e.g., Herodian, *Schematismi Homerici* = P. Egenolff (ed.), *Zu Herodianos technikos*, , 1894, *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie* 149.12.1-2; Tryphon I Grammaticus, Περὶ παθῶν = R. Schneider (ed.), *Excerpta περὶ παθῶν*, 1895, Programm Gymnasium Duisburg, 1.25.2; Ps-Zonaras Lexicographus, *Lexicon* = J.A.H. Tittmann (ed.), *Iohannis Zonarae lexicon ex tribus codicibus manuscriptis*, 2 vols., (Leipzig: Crusius, 1808 [1967] Alphabetic letter alpha, 154.26-27). Since the term *amnion/amneion* is also a Hippocratic variant for *amneios* it quite possible that this definition of the Homeric found its way into a medical text consulted by Ḥunayn as a way to explain and etymologize the word.

[434] Galen, *Commentary on Hippocrates' 'Surgery'* = *In Hippocratis librum de officina medici commentarii iii* in C.G. Kühn (ed.), *Claudii Galeni opera omnia* 18b 762.17-763.4

depends.[435] Yet in fact the translator not only includes the explanation, he expands it considerably for the benefit of the reader:

> When you consider what this word ‘empty’ actually means, you will find that it is vacant. This, we can see, is what Homer means by his line: “And Heracles from Ilium emptied the city” (*wa-Īraqlīsu llaḏī min Īliyūna ’aḫlā l-madīnata*), that is, made it vacant. The Greek word, *laparos*, which means ‘empty’, when used of the body, applies to what lies between the pubic bones and the false-ribs.[436]

On the one hand, the translator has apparently stripped the partial quotation of its poetic ornament, but on the other he has filled it out by importing a particular context—Heracles, the agent of the sacking—and identified its author as Homer. Now in fact, Galen’s quotation does not correspond precisely to any one Homeric line: he seems to be thinking of *Iliad* 4.33 or 8.288 though he has imported an epithet from *Iliad* 2.133, 9.402 and 13.380. The translator’s gloss identifies the line, plausibly but less accurately, with *Iliad* 5.642, where the hero Tlepolemus recounts the story of his father Heracles’ sack of Troy (Ilium). In fact the Arabic follows this line more closely than it does Galen’s Greek, accounting for the Arabic’s apparent lack of the quotation’s poetic ornament vis-à-vis the hybrid quotation in Galen’s text.[437]

Unlike with the Aristophanes quotations in *On Medical Names*, the translator has understood the line, possesses at least some of the necessary background information to gloss it, and chooses to communicate this information to the reader either because it complements

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[435] This is not of course to discount those readers possessing some familiarity with Greek who might have used Ḥunayn’s Syriac translations as kind of aide or trot, a phenomenon documented in earlier centuries of Syriac translation.

[436] For the Arabic text, see M. Lyons (ed.), *Galeni in Hippocratis De officina medici comm. vers. Arab.,* (Berlin, 1963: 34.20-24 = CMG Supplementum Orientale I. I quote the English translation of Lyons (1963: 35).

[437] I follow the identification of Strohmaier (1980: 197). The first half of *Iliad* 5.642 reads “*Iliou exalapaxe polin*” (“He sacked the city of Ilium”).

Galen's meaning or because Homer possesses some cachet. The erroneous description of Heracles as being "from Ilium" is puzzling. Strohmaier assumed in passing that Ḥunayn had glossed the passage accurately in Syriac, but that Ḥubayš—possessing less knowledge of Homer—had bungled the translation from Syriac to Arabic.[438] This is in fact plausible.[439] All this said, we cannot discount here either the possibility that the gloss reflects some secondary knowledge of Homer gleaned, say, from a marginal gloss rather than the command of the Homeric poems alleged by the Ibn 'Ibrahīm account. Yet even if his knowledge is secondary, the translator has still felt it valuable to import both Homer and his Heracles into the Arabic translation.

If the above example represents a desire to bring Homeric knowledge into the Arabic translation, a second gloss indicates the need to filter and in part censor this knowledge. The gloss occurs in the Arabic of Galen's *On Semen*. There Galen speaks rhetorically of the "drugs of Paean" (*ta Paiōnia pharmaka*), making an allusion to the epithet of the god Apollo in order to emphasize the impossibility of regenerating membranous parts of the body generated by semen, even via the the most efficacious of pharmaceuticals.[440] As with the allusion to the Homeric line above, the phrase in its Greek context receives no explanation or explicitly Homeric contextualization. Now of course, in Homer, Paean is not Apollo, but a distinct deity who serves

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[438] Strohmaier (1980: 197)

[439] The first half of *Iliad* 5.642 reads "*Iliou exalapaxe polin*" ("He sacked the city of Ilium" but literally "Of Ilium he sacked the city"). Syriac often allows for a more reflexible word order than Arabic when a translator desires to follow closely the word order of the Greek. One could imagine Ḥunayn respecting the Homeric word order by placing a floating relative clause introduced by *d-* toward the beginning of the sentence and immediately following upon the name Heracles which he had imported from the context. In this scenario, Ḥubayš would then have misinterpreted the relative clause as modifying Heracles rather than Ilium.

[440] Galen, *On Semen = Galeni de semine*, P. De Lacy (ed.) (Berlin, 1992: 104.4) = CMG V.3,1.

as physician to the gods, and it is in this sense that the translator takes the epithet.[441] Yet, as we should expect from the translator whose circle produced the Arabic Artemidorus, Paean cannot be describe in divine terms:

> Ḥunayn says: This Paean is a man (*rajul*), whom the poet Homer mentions. His place among them [the Greeks] is the place of a prophet (*nabīy)* and an exemplary figure (*maṯāla*) in the doctor's profession.[442]

Just as before, the translator deems it necessary to expand the brief, and this time hardly even Homeric reference in Galen's Greek with a gloss importing Homeric knowledge. More so than in the earlier examples, this gloss corroborates the Ibn Ibrahīm narrative. It is less likely, if certainly not impossible, that a Greek scribe would gloss the banal reference to "drugs of Paean" with an elaborate Homeric explanation, and so Ḥunayn is more likely to be displaying personal familiarity with the poems here. If so, then Ḥunayn is keeping his knowledge of the true nature of Paean to himself. For his reader, he euhemerizes the deity, making him a great man and an exemplary figure (*maṯāla*) of the past, but not a god. Paean's alleged status as prophet (*nabīy*) is remarkable, and comes surprisingly close to acknowledging the validity of Ḥarranian belief, or at least the Kindī circle's understanding of it.[443]

There were other limits, besides religious ones, to Ḥunayn's willingness to translate Homeric verses or material when they occurred in Galen and transmit them to the reader. His translation of Galen's *Commentary on Hippocrates' 'Epidemics'*, Book Six, which he made directly from Greek to Arabic, contains a textual note on quotations from Plato, Homer, and

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[441] See, with the comments of Strohmaier (1980: 222-223), *Iliad* 5.401 and 900 and *Odyssey* 4.232.

[442] I translate from Strohmaier (1980: 197 n. 8)'s transcription of *Laurentianus* 226/173 for 73r 13-15.

[443] By contrast, Strohmaier (1980: 197) reads the presentation of Paean as *nabīy* as influenced by Apollo's control over prophecy, Paean being a post-Homeric epithet of that god.

others which he has omitted. As with the Aristophanes quotations, Galen had adduced these quotations to make a point about Greek usage, and Ḥunayn felt that to include them would not be useful (*yuntafaʿ bihā*). It may or may not be significant that, whereas the Aristophanes glosses had been originally in Syriac for a Syriac translation, this time Ḥunayn is translating directly into Arabic. Unlike the Syriac Aristophanes glosses, his gloss omitting Homer twice stresses the limitations of the target language and aesthetic considerations when explaining his rationale for omission:

> Ḥunayn says: Then, Galen related dicta by Homer, Plato and others of the ancients in which he indicates that the [grammatical] congruence between them is inappropriate. In Arabic, there are no suitable equivalents (*naẓāʾiru taḥsunu*) for it. I have therefore omitted (*taraktu*) to translate them into Arabic; they have no useful purpose in Arabic, because they are not comprehensible, let alone pleasant (*yustaḥsan*) or useful.[444]

We should be cautious in drawing overly bold conclusions from limited data. Still, the contrast between this gloss and the Aristophanes gloss, originally composed in Syriac, is marked. While both glosses concluded that the quotations were not useful, there the unfamiliarity of Aristophanes' style and the corrupt manuscripts were blamed. Here, when the language of composition is Arabic and the authors quoted are the august Plato and Homer, the blame lies with the Arabic language. Now it is possible that Ḥunayn is simply discussing the incommensurability of any two languages when matters of grammatical congruence and high style are at stake. Yet the gloss may be connected to Ḥunayn's tendency, attested elsewhere, to praise the Syriac and Greek languages at the expense of Arabic—a tendency to which we will turn in the final section of this chapter. For now, let us conclude by noting that, while intriguing, the Ḥunayn circle's

[444] For the Arabic text, see Vagepohl (2011: 285-286). I quote with modifications the translation of Vagelpohl. See also the discussion of O. Overwien, "The Art of the Translator, or: How did Ḥunayn ibn ʿIsḥāq and His School Translate?" in P. Pormann (ed.), *The Epidemics in Context: Greek Commentaries on Hippocrates in the Arabic Tradition* (Berlin, 2012: 151-169 at 168).

engagement with Homer in their translations is limited to a very few examples. While further research will undoubtedly uncover more, for the moment it will be more profitable to turn to an area where the translators more radically alter the Greek past in order to transmit their own version of it to their readers.

Section 3.4. Ḥunayn Circle Alterations: Religion in Galen

As in the Arabic Artemidorus, it is in the realm of ancient religion that the Ḥunayn circle makes the most fundamental alterations to the ancient Greek past in their Galen translations. The Arabic Artemidorus was unique in that the high density of ancient religious and other cultural elements allowed the translator to transmit his own fantastical, yet in many ways consistent, vision of an angel-revering classical antiquity. The medical and philosophical treatises of Galen provide no comparable density of religious or other culture-specific references. Nevertheless, the Ḥunayn circle is thorough in its adoption of religious elements, particularly the not infrequent references to the ancient gods. As in the Arabic Artemidorus, general references throughout the translated Galenic corpus to the gods ('*theoi*') become simply God (*Allāh*), as does Zeus—but only when he appears the formulaic oaths *ma Dia* and *nē Dia* ('by Zeus'). Sometimes oaths sworn by the gods become simply "by my life" (*la-ʻamrī*), a less solemn oath in Arabic.[445] The general rendering of collective "gods" as *Allāh* occasionally requires further modifications, as when a reference to sacrificing a rooster to the gods is rendered as sacrificing a rooster in order

[445] For the numerous attestations of these various renderings, see with references G. Strohmaier, "Galen the Pagan and Ḥunayn the Christian: Specific Transformations in the Commentaries on *Airs, Waters, Places* and the *Epidemics*" in P. Pormann (ed.), *The Epidemics in Context: Greek Commentaries on Hippocrates in the Arabic Tradition* (Berlin, 2012: 171-184 at 174-175).

to draw near to God (*yataqarabu bihi ’ilā llāhi*), to give one example.[446] Yet the Ḥunayn circle frequently has recourse as well to the dominant strategy of the Arabic Artemidorus, that of rendering ancient divinities as angels. Often this strategy occurs, precisely as in the Arabic Artemidorus, when the source text contains frequent and varied references to the gods, as in *Character Traits,* the *Synopsis of Plato's Timaeus*, the *Commentary on the Hippocratic Oath*, and —leaving the Galenic corpus—an excerpt from Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*.[447] Yet the strategy occurs sporadically with individual figures from mythology as well, often with the more outlandish aspects explicitly described as poetic fancies by the translator's additions, precisely as in the Arabic Artemidorus.[448] Only when the ancient divinity is invoked for some purely non-religious purpose—his temple is used an identifier of location or his name occurs as a technical numerological term—do we find the translator simply transliterating the name with no further qualification.[449] Much as the Arabic version of the *Oneirokritika* transmitted a reimagined vision of the ancient world over the course of a text, these strategies transmit such a vision over the course of a corpus.

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[446] Galen, *Anatomical Procedures* = I. Garofalo (ed.), *Galenus: Anatomicarum administrationum libri qui supersunt novem. Earundem interpretatio Arabica Hunaino Isaaci filio ascripta*, Naples, 2000: 449.7 (Greek), 448.6 (Arabic). See also the discussion of Strohmaier (2012: 175) and cf. with references F. Rosenthal, "An Ancient Commentary on the Hippocratic Oath", *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 30 (1956: 52-87 at 84), reprinted in his *Science and Medicine in Islam: a Collection of Essays* (Variorum, 1991).

[447] See with references Strohmaier (2012: 178-179). For the *Character Traits*, whose Greek does not survive and whose Arabic survives only in epitome and in fragments, see now the translation by D. Davies and introduction by P. Singer in P. Singer (ed.), *Galen: Psychological Writings* (Cambridge, 2013: 107-202). For Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, see now the edition and translation of R. Arnzen, "Proclus on Plato's *Timaeus* 89e3-90c7" in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 23 (2013: 1-45).

[448] See for example the case of Atlas in Galen's *Commentary on Hippocrates' Epidemics,* Book One discussed by Strohmaier (2012: 179).

[449] See with references Strohmaier (2012: 178) and Galen, *On Critical Days* (Arabic) = G. Cooper (ed.), *Galen,* De dies decretoriis *from Greek into Arabic* (Ashgate, 2011), 377 (Arabic), 376 (English).

There is one god in Galen who receives special treatment by the Ḥunayn circle, namely Asclepius. Galen, a native of Pergamum, calls Asclepius his ancestral deity (*patrōios theos*) throughout his works, invoking that god's long association with the Asian city, the location of the most famous Asclepeion after that at Epidauros. Moreover, the god was Galen's personal savior, for Galen explains that through Asclepius' intervention he survived a nearly fatal illness in his youth.[450] We saw in the Arabic Artemidorus that Apollo, when invoked by the author as his ancestral god (*patrōios theos*) and the patron of his work, received the unique honor of being rendered as *Allāh*. The Ḥunayn circle handles Galen's patron god, Asclepius, with similar care, and Galen's many references to Asclepius in his works allows us a more detailed understanding of their engagement with the ancient physician's personal religion. Unlike Artemidorus, Galen's outsized stature as an ancient authority both for the Ḥunayn circle and for ninth-century 'Abbāsid elites more broadly makes this engagement far more significant, and a crucial aspect of the Ḥunayn circle's contestation of the Greek past.

Our most extensive evidence for the Ḥunayn circle's engagement with the figure of Asclepius comes in their translation of the *Commentary on the Hippocratic Oath*, ascribed to Galen. The work does not survive in Greek, and in Arabic it survives only in a small number of fairly sizable fragments.[451] Some today have questioned the work's Galenic authorship, but Ḥunayn and his colleagues never doubted its authenticity, and Ḥunayn includes it among the

[450] Galen, *My Own Books* 3.5 = *De libris propriis* in V. Boudon-Millot (ed.), *Galien, Tome I* (Budé edition), Paris, 2007: 142, and see also Boudon-Millot (2007: 196-197 n. 8).

[451] This have been collected, translated, and commented upon by Rosenthal (1956).

genuine works of Galen in his *Risāla*.[452] There we learn that Ḥunayn translated it into Syriac, attaching to it an extensive commentary on the more difficult passages. We learn nothing of the intended audience of this Syriac translation and commentary, but Ḥunayn does tell us that his nephew Ḥubayš translated it into Arabic for ’Abū al-Ḥasan ’Aḥmad ibn Mūsā. Cryptically, he adds that his pupil ‘Īsā ibn Yaḥyā it translated as well—one assumes into Arabic. Given that the extant Arabic fragments are accompanied by extensive glosses from Ḥunayn's commentary introduced by "Ḥunayn says" (*qāla Ḥunayn*), we can be certain that we have before us Ḥubayš's translation of Ḥunayn's Syriac.[453] We are dealing, therefore, with an Arabic text destined for a Muslim audience, in fact for none other than the influential Banū Mūsā themselves. As the fragments testify, the work had a long afterlife among Christian and Muslim authors alike, but most relevant to our purposes is its reuse within the Ḥunayn circle itself. We find Ḥunayn's son ’Isḥāq reusing part of it in his *Ta’rīḫ al-’aṭibbā’* (*History of the Physicians*)—a work we will turn to again in the Conclusion.

When examine the fragments themselves, it becomes immediately apparent why such a commentary was necessary. The extant fragments deal entirely with the mythological origins of medicine, contain quotations from Homer and various lyric poets, and describe at length the attributes of Asclepius and the biography of Hippocrates—all material which the translator handles admirably, but for which the reader would likely need extensive clarification. It is the sections on Asclepius that will hold our interest now, however. We are first struck at the

[452] For the points for and against Galenic authorship see Rosenthal (1956: 82-87). Ḥunayn discusses the text at *Risāla* no. 87 in G. Bergsträsser (ed.), "Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq: Über die syrischen und arabischen Galen-Übersetzungen", *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 17 (1925: 1-49)

[453] Of course, it is possible that ‘Īsā ibn Yaḥyā's translation included Ḥunayn's comments, although this is not the most natural interpretation of Ḥunayn's entry in the *Risāla*. Still, for the sake of clarity, I will refer to Ḥubayš as the Arabic translator of the *Commentary of the Hippocratic Oath* throughout.

translator's desire to retain Asclepius' name wherever possible. This is nowhere clearer than in the opening lemma taken from the Hippocratic text.[454] Since the Hippocratic *Oath* survives in Greek we are here in the unique—for this text—position of being able to compare the Greek original with Ḥubayš's Arabic. In the original Greek the text reads as follows:

> Ὄμνυμι Ἀπόλλωνα ἰητρὸν, καὶ Ἀσκληπιὸν, καὶ Ὑγείαν, καὶ Πανάκειαν, καὶ θεοὺς πάντας τε καὶ πάσας…[455]
>
> I swear by Apollo the Physician, by Asclepius, by Hygieia, by Panacea and by all the [other] gods and goddesses…

In Ḥubayš's Arabic, made from Ḥunayn's now lost Syriac, we find:

إني أقسم بالله رب الحياة والموت وواهب الصحة وأقسم بأسقليبيوس وبخالق الشفاء وكل علاج وأقسم بأولياء الله من الرجال والنساء جميعا.[456]

> I swear by God (*Allāh*), the lord of life and death, the granter of health, and I swear by Asclepius and by Him who creates remedy and every therapy, and I swear by all of God's ’*awliyā’* [Islamic holy-people], both the men and the women.

As to be expected from our analysis above, an oath to ancient divinities finds those divinities replaced with God (*Allāh*), modified by epithets appropriate to the deities who have been

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[454] This fragment, which is preserved in al-Sijistāni's *Ṣiwān al-ḥikma* and in Ibn ’Abī ’Uṣaybi‘a, was not included by Rosenthal (1956) in his collection, which assembled only fragments of of the text of the *Commentary.* However, its status as a fragment of the Ḥunayn circle's translation of the *Commentary on the Hippocratic Oath* was recognized by G. Strohmaier, "Ḥunayn ibn ’Isḥāq et le Serment Hippocratique" *Arabica* 21 (1974: 318-323), reprinted in his *Von Demokrit bis Dante. Die Bewahrung antiken Erbes in der arabischen Kultur* (Hildesheim: 1996), following G. Bergsträsser, *Ḥunain ibn Isḥāḳ und seine Schule: Sprach- und literargeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den arabischen Hippokrates- und Galenübersetzungen* (Leiden, 1913: 24 and 73). The discussions of Strohmaier (2012: 178) and P. Pormann and E. Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine* (Edinburgh, 2007: 33) should be consulted as well.

[455] [Hippocrates], *Oath* 1 = J. L. Heiberg (ed.), *Hippocratis Indices librorum, Iusiurandum, Lex, De arte, De medico, De decente habitu, Praece*ptiones*, De prisca medicina, De aere locis aquis, De alimento, De liquidorum usu, De flatibus*, CMG I 1 (Leipzig/Berlin: 1927, 4)

[456] I quote the text as preserved in D. Douglas (ed.), *’Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī: Mutaḫab ṣiwān al-ḥikma* (The Hague/Paris/New York: 1979: 77.1610-1611).

omitted.[457] The Christian Ḥubayš has rendered the gods with a specifically Islamic term for holy people or friends of God (namely *'awliyā'*, singular *walī*), perhaps in effort to please the recipient of the translation, 'Abū al-Ḥasan ibn Mūsā. It is unclear what Ḥunayn's Syriac read here. Might it have been *qadiše* (Christian 'saints')? Remarkably, the only divinity to pass unscathed into Arabic is Asclepius. Both Ḥunayn and Ḥubayš expected this name to be meaningful to their readers and have retained it.[458] Yet they are careful, here, not to grant Asclepius any divine status: while the god of Epidaurus is syntactically parallel with God (*Allāh*) so too is he with the friends of God (*al-'awliyā'*).

In translating the text in this way, the translators may not have had merely their own readers in mind, but also their own public image. A biographical fragment from the work of an eleventh-century East Syrian Christian physician alleges that Ḥunayn practiced the oath and its teachings in his public life.[459] According to this account, an unnamed caliph—perhaps al-Mutawakkil—desired to test Ḥunayn's morality. He commanded the Christian physician to prepare a poison which he might use against the Byzantine enemy. Ḥunayn responded that both his religion and "the craft" (*al-ṣinā'a*) would not permit him. He explained that God (*Allāh*) had bound physicians by an oath which expressly forbade using the medical craft to prepare a

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[457] Apollo the physician has become "God, the granter of life and death". Hygieia is the goddess of health, and her name means "health". Panacea is a goddess of remedy, and her name means "all-cure".

[458] Indeed, it is almost certain that the *Commentary*, which as we shall shortly see deals at length with the nature and significance of Asclepius, used this mention of Asclepius to launch its discussion. Thus the translators could not have omitted the name even if they had wanted, as first observed by Strohmaier (1974: 323). Yet the very fact that the Ḥunayn circle endeavored to translate and comment upon a work dedicated largely to Asclepius into Syriac, and later into Arabic, suggests they may have been unwilling to omit the name in any case.

[459] The text of anecdote from 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Jibrā'īl ibn 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Baḫtīšū is preserved in Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn al-'anbā',* Müller (ed.), 1882, 1.187-188. See the discussion of the passage in Strohmaier (1974: 318-319).

poisonous drug. While the account is probably not historical, it may reflect some real statement or attitude of Ḥunayn's toward the Hippocratic Oath and its personal importance to him.[460] In this context, the decision to retain Asclepius in this text and place him alongside God and his holy-people—even if necessitated by the *Commentary's* ensuing discussion of the god—is a marked one.

This respect for Asclepius continues throughout the Arabic fragments of the *Commentary on the Hippocratic Oath.* Since the Greek original of the *Commentary* does not survive, it is not always clear in other cases what alterations, if any, the translator has made. However, in the following passage describing the divine origins of medicine, we can be fairly certain that the translator has reworked the passage in such a way that God (*Allāh*) is the ultimate source even while Asclepius' name is still transmitted to the reader:

> People in general bear witness to the fact that it was God (*Allāh*) who gave them the craft of medicine through inspiration (*al-mulhimu lahum*) in dreams and visions delivering them from severe diseases. Thus, we find an innumerably large number of people to whom their cure came from God, some (obtaining it) through Serapis, and others through Asclepius (*'Asqalībiyūs*) in the city of Epidaurus, the city of Cos, and the city of Pergamon (*Farġamus*)—the last-mentioned one being my own city (*madinatī*).[461]

By portraying Asclepius as merely the agent of God's divine inspiration, the translator is able to retain the name of the important figure while at the same time leaving his divine status ambiguous. The reference to Pergamum as the author's—from the translator's perspective, Galen's—home city is also retained, together with its connection to Asclepius. Indeed, it should be noted that the author's statement that Pergamum is his native town serves incidentally as

[460] Strohmaier (1974: 319): "*Tout ce récit offre un caractère fort légendaire. Mais les paroles de Ḥunain son peut-être le noyau historique autour duquel la narration dramatique s'est formée.*"

[461] For the Arabic text, see Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn al-'anbā',* Müller (ed.), 1,10. I quote the translation of Rosenthal (1956: 60).

evidence for Galenic authorship. The divine nature of Asclepius is also subtly airbrushed in those places where the original Greek of the *Commentary* must have spoken of performing sacrifices to him. On such occasions, the Arabic instead speaks of "sacrifices offered to Asclepius in order to achieve nearness to God" or "offer[ing] roosters to God in the name of Asclepius."[462]

Yet despite these deliberate attempts to soften the divinity of Asclepius, the translator does not refrain to transmit, in somewhat altered but unmistakable form, the *Commentary's* ensuing account of Asclepius' divine nature. This extended and explicit discussion of an ancient god's divinity in a Ḥunayn circle translation is shocking given the systematic alterations we have observed up up until this point. How and why were the translators able to countenance Asclepius' divine nature when in every other observable case they sought to obscure the gods' divinity? To begin with, the Ḥunayn circle effectively made the decision to transmit this information when they decided to translate the *Commentary on the Hippocratic Oath*. So detailed and integral to the surviving fragments of the *Commentary* is Asclepius' divinity that it is possible the *Commentary* was translated precisely because this information was valuable to Ḥunayn, his colleagues, or his patrons the Banū Mūsā. Nevertheless, the framing of the *Commentary's* discussion of Asclepius allows the translator some leeway. For one thing, it begins its discussion by explaining two ways of viewing Asclepius, one allegorical (*luġz*) and one natural (*ṭabīʿī*)—almost certainly corresponding to Greek *mūthikos* and *phusikos*.[463] The *Commentary*, it appears, is concerned primarily with the allegorical reading, for it goes on to the explain the medical significance of Asclepius's various attributes. By using the word *luġz*—the same word the

[462] I quote the translations of Rosenthal (1956: 72).

[463] See Rosenthal (1956: 64-65 n. 40). We might also vocalize the first word as *laġz*.

Ḥunayn circle had inserted in the Arabic Artemidorus when qualifying extravagant ancient myths—the translator is able to accommodate the potentially sensitive information to follow. It is noteworthy, in this connection, that when translating Galen's stray comments on Christian belief and its foundation in 'myths', the Ḥunayn circle is careful to deploy a different word (*ramz*) to translate what was probably *mūthos* or *sēmeion* in the now lost Greek.[464]

With this prefatory safeguard in place, the translators then precede to transmit, openly, the author's discussion of Asclepius dual nature, mortal and immortal, his descent variously said to be from Apollo, Phlegyas, and Coronis, and the allegorical significance of these attributes. Remarkably for the Ḥunayn circle, figures like Apollo, Hephaestus, Zeus, Hermes, Dionysus, and Demeter are all transmitted—and sometimes discussed by Ḥunayn in his glosses—without any qualifications.[465] Because it is not immediately apparent from the text that these figures are divinities, the translator may have felt secure dispensing with his circle's usual strategies of accommodation in this case. The translators are also comfortable transmitting the text's discussion of the depiction (*ṣūra*) of Asclepius and its allegorical meanings—though it is possible one of them has omitted references connecting this image's use in ancient cult.[466] Indeed, it is in connection with this topic that Galen—or whoever the author of the *Commentary* was—recounts the well-known story of the mortal Asclepius' deification:

> The statements we find written concerning his deification (*fī ta'alluhihi*) are more like idle talk (*ḫurāfāt*) than the truth. It is a well-known fact concerning him that he was raised to the angels (*rufiʿa 'ilā l-malā'ikati*) in a column of fire (*fī ʿamūdi l-nāri*). The

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[464] The significance of this discrepancy was noted by Strohmaier (1968: 142 n. 24). For the passage in question, see R. Walzer, *Galen on Jews and Christians* (Oxford, 1949: 16).

[465] Rosenthal (1956: 65-73)

[466] Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-'anbā',* Müller (ed.), 1,18, and see Rosenthal (1956: 67).

> same is also said about Dionysus and Heracles and similar men who worked zealously for the benefit of mankind. In general, God (*Allāh*), blessed and exalted, is said to have done this with Asclepius and all the others like him in order to destroy his mortal terrestrial part (*al-juz' al-mayyit al-'arḍī*) through fire and, afterward, attract to himself his immortal part (*juz'ahu llaḏī lā yaqbalu l-mawta*) and raise his soul to heaven.[467]

Without the Greek original, it is unclear precisely what alterations the translators have made. It is possible that "idle talk" (*ḫurāfāt*) vaguely reflects some mythological speculation rather than an alteration.[468] The disparaging angle is unlikely to be the author's, however, if that author is indeed Galen, for the physician attests to his sincere and personal devotion to Asclepius throughout his works. Certainly, the by-now familiar reference to angels is an alteration of the translators' for *theoi* ('gods'). The biblical phrase "column of fire" (*'amūd al-nār*) likely is as well: in classical texts Asclepius is killed by lightning.[469] Yet more important is the obvious reworking of the passage such that God (*Allāh*) has raised up Asclepius. If the translators—either transmitting Galen's words or changing them—felt these stories were all "idle talk", then why associate Asclepius so closely with God?

We find an answer to this question when we turn to Ḥunayn's explanatory note, following hard upon this passage in the large fragment quoted by Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a. The alterations—presuming they are his own and not Ḥubayš's—have not sufficiently domesticated the 'pagan' elements of this passage. To make sense of out Galen's account, Ḥunayn adds his own layer of allegory to what is already an allegorical text:

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[467] Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn al-'anbā',* Müller (ed.), 1,18. I quote with modifications the translation of Rosenthal (1956: 67). On the doxology "praised and exalted" and the question of whether such doxologies are the work of the translators or of later scribes, see Strohmaier (2012: 175).

[468] So argues Strohmaier (2012: 173) on the basis of a parallel passage in Galen where the author mentions that Asclepius and Dionysus were either mortals who became gods or else had been all along.

[469] Rosenthal (1956: 61 n. 32)

> Ḥunayn says: Galen explains here how the assimilation of man to God (*taššabuhu l-'insāni bi-llāhi*), blessed and exalted, takes place. He says that when a human being annihilates his bodily desires—which are meant by "mortal terrestrial part"—through the fire of endurance and abstention and when, after driving his rational soul (*nafsahu l-nāṭiqata*) away from those desires, he adorns it with the virtues—which are meant by "being raised to heaven"—, he is similar to God, blessed and exalted.[470]

Well-versed in the Platonica of Galen and others, Ḥunayn has added a Platonic reading to the *Commentary's* account of Asclepius. For Ḥunayn, Galen's Asclepius is not merely the model of the ideal physician—the general thrust of the *Commentary's* allegorical reading of Asclepius' staff, beard, and name among other attributes. He has also become the exemplar of a human perfection via nearness to God.

Thus it is no surprise that, throughout Galen's works, Ḥunayn and his colleagues endeavor not to omit Asclepius' name or erase him from the Greek past in the manner of other gods. Such erasure may happen on occasion, as once in *Anatomical Procedures* and second a time in *My Own Opinions*.[471] Yet in these cases Asclepius becomes not angel or man, but none other than God (*Allāh*) himself. Just in the Arabic Artemidorus, the author's personal deity is given the unique honor of being assimilated to the one God worshipped by the translator himself. It is no surprise that in both these instances Galen refers to the deity as being associated with Pergamum and in *My Own Opinions* calls him his ancestral god (*patrōios theos*). It is crucial to observe that neither of these is an incidental reference. Both record details of Galen's biography and the second recounts a particularly intimate episode, namely the illness in his youth of which Asclepius cured him.

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[470] Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a, *'Uyūn al-'anbā',* Müller (ed.), 1,18. I quote with modifications the translation of Rosenthal (1956: 67).

[471] See with references Strohmaier (2012: 177). The Arabic of *My Own Opinions* does not survive and we must rely on the independently produced Latin and Hebrew translations from the Arabic to judge its contents.

Yet on another occasion, Ḥunayn goes out of his way to indicate to his readers that Galen is discussing Asclepius, even when the god's name probably did not appear in the original. This is the case in *Medical Experience*, which does not survive in Greek. In that work, Galen invokes the prescriptions of an authority whom the Arabic translation renders as "the ancient exemplary figure who lived in the time of our grandsires" (*al-maṯālata l-qadīma llaḏī kāna fī ʻahdi l-'ajdādinā*).[472] The Greek here almost certainly read "my ancestral god" (*ho patrōios theos*) or something very similar, for immediately thereafter we find the following gloss of Ḥunayn:

> Ḥunayn says: By this he means Asclepius and he calls him an 'exemplary figure' (*maṯāla*) and sometimes he also calls him †'the guide.' (*al-dalāla*)†. He was deified *(kāna ta'allaha*) after having been a human being (*insān*) in the past.

There is a textual problem with this gloss and it is possible that the text should be corrected to read as follows:[473]

> Ḥunayn says: By this he means Asclepius and he calls him an 'exemplary figure' and sometimes he also calls him 'a god' (*'ilāhan*), because he was deified after having been a human being in the past.

Whichever text we adopt—and I favor something closer to the former, transmitted text—Ḥunayn discusses more or less openly Galen's belief in Asclepius' divinity. His rendering of the Greek

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[472] For the Arabic text, see R. Walzer, *On Medical Experience* (London, 1944), 80 (Arabic), 152 (English). See also the discussion of Strohmaier (2012: 177-178).

[473] The transmitted text reads قال حنين: يعنى بهذا اسقليبيادس وانما سماه مثالة ورمبا سماه ايضا الدلالة كان تالّه بعد ان كان انسانا فيما مضى. First, the transmitted 'Asclepiades' should obviously be corrected to 'Asclepius'. Asclepiades of Bithynia (d. c. 40 BCE) is a physician whom Galen mentions not infrequently, and it is clear that a scribe familiar with Galen's medical writings has falsely corrected the name of the god, transforming it into the name of the physician which he more immediately recognized. I have reflected this emendation in both translations presented above. There is a second, more troubling problem however: the lack of concinnity after الدلالة. This problem might be solved simply by adding *wa-* ('and') before كان. Levi Della Vida, as cited by Walzer in his edition, instead corrected الدلالة ('the guide') to الها لانه ('a god, because he'). This is paleographically plausible, but bold. Walzer adopted Della Vida's emendation, and he is followed by Strohmaier (2012: 178 n. 46). Note with caution, however, the typographical or type-setting error in the Arabic text as quoted by Strohmaier, which omits the words تالّه بعد ان كان.

text euhemerizes Asclepius by portraying him as a worthy ancient, even as his glosses explain that, in Galen's eyes at least, the mortal man had become a god.

Coupled with the evidence from the Ḥunayn circle translation of the *Commentary on the Hippocratic Oath*, this gloss calls into question the notion that the Ḥunayn circle or their readers were 'offended' by references to the gods in ancient texts and sought to bowdlerize them. When it suited them, Ḥunayn and his colleagues were perfectly willing to countenance and transmit to their readers the notion that Greeks like Galen had worshipped multiple gods, though with the caveat that those gods had once been men. We cannot discount the possibility that different patrons had different standards which Ḥunayn was willing to accommodate in different ways, something the *Risāla* itself hints at on a few occasions.[474] Laying this question aside, however, and focussing solely on the translators' perspective, we are now in position to understand better their motivations for making these changes. The systematic alteration of these elements is not an attempt to suppress the Greek past, nor is it an attempt to deceive the reader into believing that the Greeks were really monotheists. Such an attempt would have been doomed to failure, since as we have seen ninth- and tenth-century intellectuals from al-Jāḥiẓ to al-Sijistānī understood that the Greeks followed the religion of the Ṣabians. Rather, it is an attempt to 'modernize' the text, to make its author 'one of us' instead of 'one of them'. In Chapter 1, we saw how al-Kindī held himself capable of reenacting the language and philosophy of his forbears. Ḥunayn and his colleagues do the reverse, making the ancient enact the beliefs of their own ninth-century milieu.

This attempt to 'modernize' the ancients is nowhere more apparent than in a fragment from the Ḥunayn circle translation of Galen's autobiographical *My Own Books*. We have

[474] Regarding the audience for Arabic *On Medical Experience*, the *Risāla,* no. 89, Bergsträsser (ed.) is not helpful since it only discusses a Syriac epitome of the text made by Ḥunayn, not the Arabic translation extant to us.

observed above several examples of the Ḥunayn circle rewriting Galen's religious autobiography, particularly in ways that rework in monotheistic terms Galen's relationship with his ancestral deity Asclepius. Autobiographical asides are not infrequent in Galen, whose expansive style allows for these tangential comments despite his technical subject matter. Still, these short autobiographical comments do not by themselves amount to a compelling body of evidence for a Ḥunayn circle policy of 'modernizing' Galen and his personal biography. We would be on firmer ground if we could observe how the Ḥunayn circle handles longer passages in Galen's explicitly autobiographical works. From the *Risāla*, we know that Ḥunayn and his audience were interested in these treatises. Ḥunayn translated Galen's *My Own Books* into Syriac for the physician Dā'ūd —apparently consulting the earlier version of Job of Edessa, which he mentions—and into Arabic for Muḥammad ibn Mūsā.[475] His son Isḥāq translated the companion piece *The Order of My Books* into Syriac for the great Baḫtīšū', with Ḥunayn rendering it in Arabic for 'Abū al-Ḥasan ibn Mūsā.[476] Dā'ūd also commissioned a Syriac translation of *Avoiding Distress* from Ḥunayn, who cites again an earlier version by Job, and Ḥubayš made an Arabic version of this work again for Muḥammad ibn Mūsā.[477]

Galen's most extensive autobiographical work, *On Prognosis for Epigenes*, describes his earlier struggles and successes as a young physician in Rome. Despite its title the work is not technical but serves to promote an image of the young Galen as a brilliant but misunderstood practitioner. Ḥunayn himself notes the autobiographical content of the work and once again

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[475] *Risāla,* no. 1, Bergsträsser (ed.)

[476] *Risāla,* no. 2, Bergsträsser (ed.)

[477] *Risāla,* no. 120, Bergsträsser (ed.)

mentions that Job of Edessa had translated the work into Syriac before him. He dwells at length on his circle's long effort to translate the work, and praises 'Īsā ibn Yaḥyā's Arabic translation, commissioned once again by one of the Banū Mūsā, this time 'Abū al-Ḥasan. A note added by one of Ḥunayn's pupils after his death indicates that the master had even undertaken to collate the translation with the original, a work his son 'Isḥāq completed—more than the usual care which Ḥunayn expended on his translations. The title his *Risāla* assigns to the *On Prognosis—al-Kitāb fī nawādir taqdimat al-maʿrifa* (*On Anecdotes of Prognosis*)—quietly assimilates Galen's work into the popular Arabic genre of *nawādir*, choice selections of morally edifying or entertaining stories. Together, these testimonies from the *Risāla* demonstrate not only an interest in Galen's autobiography among Syriac-speakers in the late eighth century—Job's floruit—but further show that this interest sustained itself into Ḥunayn's day, when it was taken up by the Arab-speaking Muslim Banū Mūsā as well.

These four Galenic autobiographies contain much personal detail, not only of Galen's religious experience but also his engagement with the imperial court at Rome. How might the Ḥunayn circle have carried on its project of assimilating Galen to the 'Abbāsid present when transmitting these works to its diverse audiences? The Arabic—and of course the Syriac—versions of *On Prognosis* and *Avoiding Distress* are lost. The Arabic *My Own Books* and the *Order of My Books* survive, yet are unpublished. The Arabic manuscripts containing these two works remain inaccessible for the time being, but have been consulted by a team of French scholars led by Véronique Boudon-Millot.[478] Fortunately, several lengthy fragments from these two translations are also preserved as quotations near the beginning of Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a's

[478] V. Boudon-Millot, "Galen's *On My Own Books*: New Material from Meshed, Rida, Tibb. 5223" in *The Unknown Galen, Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, Vol. 45 no. S77 (2002: 9-18).

section on the life of Galen in his *'Uyūn al-'anbā'*. A short section from one of these long quotations—a passage from *My Own Books* in which Galen discussed both the Roman imperial court and his ancestral god Asclepius—allows a tantalizing glimpse at how the Ḥunayn circle might have adapted extensive Galenic autobiography for their readers.

In the notes to her edition of *My Own Books*, Boudon-Millot has confirmed that these quotations in the *'Uyūn al-'anbā'* are without a doubt taken from the Ḥunayn circle translations of these works preserved in the manuscripts she consulted. Nevertheless, she comments—without mentioning specifics—that Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a has truncated and abridged them in parts.[479] Indeed my own comparison of the Greek original and the Arabic text preserved by Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a bears this out. Crucially, however, the short excerpt from one of these longer quotations, which I am about to quote and discuss, does not show signs of abridgment. Moreover, Boudon-Millot does not mention any reworking or rewriting of the longer quotation on the thirteenth-century physician's part, simply truncation. Nevertheless, without access to the manuscript copy of the Arabic *On My Own Books* I cannot be certain that the alterations in the quotation we are about to examine are due to the Ḥunayn circle translators and not to Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a. Given, however, the extensive alterations performed by the Ḥunayn circle discussed earlier in this chapter, my working hypothesis in the following discussion will be that they are due to translators.

A comparison of the Greek original with the Ḥunayn circle translation of this short section from *My Own Books* reveals their boldest rewriting of the Greek past—and of Galen's

[479] See V. Boudon-Millot (ed.), *Galien, Tome I* (Budé edition), Paris (2007: 60-62). Regarding both the longer quotation from which I am about to quote and discuss a short section as well a another quotation also taken from *My Own Books*, she remarks simply: "*Dans les deux cas, Usaybi'a* [sic] *emprunte ses citations à la tradition arabe de Hunain qu'il ne se prive d'ailleurs pas d'abréger ou de tronquer en différents endroits"* (61).

role in it. In the original Greek, Galen describes how he was able to avoid a perilous journey to Germania while serving in the imperial retinue:

> μεταστάντος δ’ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τοῦ Λουκίου κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν εἰς Ῥώμην αὐτοῦ κομίσας τὸ σῶμα τὴν ἀποθέωσιν Ἀντωνῖνος ἐποιήσατο καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα τῆς ἐπὶ τοὺς Γερμανοὺς στρατείας εἴχετο περὶ παντὸς ποιούμενος ἀπάγειν με, πεισθεὶς δ’ ἀφεῖναι λέγοντος ἀκούσας τἀναντία κελεύειν τὸν πάτριον θεὸν Ἀσκληπιόν, οὗ καὶ θεραπευτὴν ἀπέφαινον ἐμαυτόν, ἐξ ὅτου με θανατικὴν διάθεσιν ἀποστήματος ἔχοντα διέσῳσε, προσκυνήσας τῷ θεῷ καὶ περιμεῖναί με τὴν ἐπάνοδον αὐτοῦ κελεύσας – ἤλπιζε γὰρ ἐν τάχει κατορθώσειν τὸν πόλεμον – αὐτὸς μὲν ἐξῆλθε...[480]

> When Lucius [Verus] departed from the human race on the way, [Marcus Aurelius] Antoninus transported his body to Rome and performed the apotheosis. Afterward, he was setting out to campaign against the Germani, considering it of the utmost importance to take me way with him. But he was persuaded to let me go when he heard me say that my ancestral god (*ton patrōion theon*) Asclepius enjoined the opposite, whom I had been proclaiming to be my minister (*therapeutēn*) ever since he had saved me from the deadly condition of an ulcer. Having done obeisance to the god and enjoining me to await his return—for he hoped to conclude the war swiftly—he himself set out…

Note Galen’s pious euphemism regarding the co-emperor Lucius Verus’ death (“departure from the human race”) and the mention of his deification, as well as his extended narrative about the epiphany of his ancestral god. In this connection, Galen mentions an important biographical detail—Asclepius’ divine intervention during a boyhood illness—since he used this personal connection with the god to plead his case before the emperor Marcus Aurelius, called here by his cognomen Antoninus. In the Arabic version of this passage, made by Ḥunayn from his own Syriac version, we find the following (as quoted by Ibn ’Abī ’Uṣaybi‘a):

> ومات لوقيوس فى الطريق فحمل انطونينوس بدنه الى رومية فدفنه هناك وهم بغزو اهل جرمانيا. وحرص الحرص كله ان اصحبه فقلت ان الله تعالى لما خلصنى من دبيلة قتالة كانت عرضت لى امرني بالحج الى بيته المسمى هيكل اسقليبيوس وسألته الاذن فى ذلك فشفعنى وامرنى بان احج ثم انتظرت الى وقت انصرافه الى رومية فانه قد كان يرجو ان ينقضى حربه سريعا وخرج...[481]

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[480] Galen, *My Own Books* 3.5 = *De libris propriis* in V. Boudon-Millot (ed.), *Galien, Tome I* (Budé edition), Paris, 2007: 142

[481] Ibn ’Abī ’Uṣaybi‘a, *‘Uyūn al-’anbā’ fī ṭabaqāt al-’aṭibbā’*, A. Müller (ed.) (Cairo / Königsberg, 1882-84: 1,74

> Lucius died (*māta*) on the way, and so Antoninus carried his body to Rome and buried it there (*fa-dafanahu hunāka*). They were campaigning against the people of Germania, and he [Antoninus] strongly desired that I accompany him. I said that God (*Allāh*), may he be exalted, when he had freed me from a deadly ulcer, had ordered me to undertake my pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) to his House (*'ilā baytihi*) known as the Temple of Asclepius (*haykal 'Asqalībiyūs*). So I asked him [Marcus Aurelius Antoninus] leave to do this, and he gave me permission and ordered me to go on my pilgrimage. I then waited for the time of his return to Rome, for he was eager to conclude the war swiftly, and he departed...

Ḥunayn has flattened Galen's euphemism describing Lucius Verus' death, and reinterpreted his deification—a posthumous honor for members of the imperial family—as a simple burial. The Ḥunayn circle might countenance communicating the deification of mythological figures like Dionysus or Asclepius as in the *Commentary on the Hippocratic Oath*, where indeed that apotheosis had real explanatory power. Yet it was not deemed salient or appropriate to communicate the deification of ordinary, historical figures and here the translator 'updates' Lucius Verus' funerary rites to 'Abbāsid norms.

More remarkable is the way Ḥunayn has completely reworked Galen's description of Asclepius' epiphany and Marcus Aurelius' obedience to the god. We should immediately recall the Ḥunayn circle's treatment of a similar passage in the Arabic Artemidorus, where the author described a waking vision of his ancestral deity Apollo. There the religious details substituted were monotheistic, but not confessionally specific. Here, by contrast, Ḥunayn has rewritten the passage in such a way as to turn Galen into a Muslim by deploying an exclusively Islamic technical term. Rather than Asclepius expressing his displeasure with Galen's projected journey to Germania, God (*Allāh*) commands the physician to perform his *ḥajj*, a Muslim's obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca. Rather than honoring Asclepius by granting this request, Marcus Aurelius simply grants Galen a special dispensation to go on his *ḥajj*. Yet, as in the *Commentary on the*

Hippocratic Oath, the translator is reluctant to remove Asclepius from the passage completely. The *ḥajj* is said to be toward the *bayt* ('house') of God which is know as the 'temple of Asclepius'. In his effort to maintain the name of Asclepius while Islamizing Galen's plea of religious exemption before the Roman emperor, Ḥunayn has created a *bayt Allāh* analogous to the Ka'ba at Mecca, but bearing the god's name. It can only be surmised that the translator composed this ahistorical fantasia in an effort to please the Muslim client, Muḥammad ibn Mūsā, while at the same time respecting the authoritative Galen's personal devotion to Asclepius. Yet more so than in earlier examples, we cannot describe this alteration as an effort to whitewash the past or deceive the reader of the translation. Neither Muḥammad ibn Mūsā nor any Muslim reader would believe for an instant that Galen had been some sort of proto-Muslim performing a *ḥajj.* In fact to hold such a belief would be have been nothing less than a sacrilegious rewriting of prophetic history. Instead, we should read the reworking of Galen's personal religious history as way of allowing the reader, in this case a Muslim, to feel sympathy across time with the ancient authority he is reading, to accommodate Galen's past to the 'Abbāsid present.

Section 3.5. Explaining Ḥunayn Circle Alterations

Let us conclude this chapter by placing these Ḥunayn circle alterations in their broader ninth-century context. As we shall see, some aspects of the Ḥunayn's circle's attitudes toward the Greek past fit well into their larger milieu as Syriac-speaking Christians. Yet in other ways, their attempt to transform the Greek past into a realm both Christians and Muslims can claim is uniquely their own.

Perhaps the easiest aspect of the Ḥunayn circle's engagement with the Greek past to explain is Ḥunayn's apparent knowledge of and respect for Homer. Yet this explanation has gone hitherto unnoticed. We in fact possesses another Iraqi Christian—albeit a West Syrian or Syrian Orthodox Christian—who also engages with Homer's poetry contemporaneously with Ḥunayn. The work in question is the *Book of Rhetoric*, the only extant Syriac rhetorical manual from any period, by Antony of Tagrit (Arabic Tikrīt), who flourished sometime in the ninth-century.[482] The opening of the work's fifth book engages openly in the contemporary *šuʿūbiyya* controversy wherein Syriac-speakers and especially Iranians sought to promote themselves as superior to the Arabs in civilization if not political dominance. There we find Antony asserting that he is writing in part in order to defend Syriac literature against Arab disparagement.[483] It is in this context that we find the following passage:

> For look, with the Greeks the three arts of grammar, rhetoric, and poetry exist in a collected and crafted form, but with the Syrian[s], Persians, and others, scattered and confused. For example, a Syrian may use letter points, nouns, verbs, pronouns, verb of nouns, singular and plural numbers, causal words, comparatives—in short all the parts of the grammatical art, and may prepare, put forth, and use particles and verbs which ascend to speech, and these not with discrimination and art, but either from exercise or from aptitude and discerning power; just as a king may use a writing-board and sheet, and a laborer or servant a table, not knowing how these things were made. Again, an Arab may praise, blame or incite to battle, yet may never have learned the fair art of Demosthenes or the details of the study of rhetoric. And Persians, Syrians, Armenians and other nations compose *sogyāṯā* ['canticles'], utter psalms and make comforting laments, yet have not been disciples of Homer nor made (their works) akin to the types of his meters. But they have power, and (therefore) they may compose songs and write meters, and knowledge not lagging behind the fruits, buds and

[482] On the dating of Antony of Tagrit see now J. Watt, "Literary and Philosophical Rhetoric in Syriac", in F. Woerther (ed.), *Literary and Philosophical Rhetoric in the Greek, Roman, Syriac and Arabic Worlds,* Europaea Memoria I.66. (Hildesheim, 2009: 141-154)

[483] See with references the discussion in J. Watt, "Guarding the Syriac Language in an Arabic environment: Antony of Tagrit on the use of the Grammar in Rhetoric" in W. van Bekkum (ed.), *Syriac Polemics: Studies in Honour of Gerrit Jan Reinink* (Louvain, 2007: 133-150 at 138).

> sprouts, and (even) without art blossoms and flourishes. And as I have said, namely, aptitude (also) strives to adorn the language and literature and to fill up that which art has omitted.
>
> Therefore Greek sophists should not make merry over us simple (folk), that we do not and could not have the possibility of (this) science and art nor words of poets and orators, for we do have them, although not properly set in order. They are kept with us through tradition and custom, although not with rule, art, ways, methods, canons, and demonstrations. (As) is (only) right, I do not deny that it was always so with us, but the ancient masters of the language neglected this and held it in light esteem—even though (their) eloquent utterance gave opportunity for the art—for what reason I know not. Therefore the art very much deserves to [be put into proper order] and exhibited.[484]

For Antony, Homer represents the height of self-conscious and comprehensive art or skill (Greek *tekhnē* or Syriac *ʾūmānūṯā*) in poetry. From him all the non-Greek nations, Arabs and Syrians included, can learn from Homer and the Greeks if they aim to systematize their native woodnotes wild. Homer is not merely a name here. In what follows Antony goes on to quote at length from a now-lost Syriac translation of Homer—possibly that of Theophilus of Edessa made in the eighth century—juxtaposing these quotations with passages from Syriac poets such as Ephrem and Jacob of Sarug in an effort to show that these Syriac poets are no less powerful even if that lack the *tekhnē* possessed by the Greeks and exemplified by the poetry of Homer.[485]

We should connect this invocation of Homer with a passage in the work of another ninth-century Christian residing in Iraq, the Melkite translator and physician Qusṭā ibn Lūqā. His *Response to Ibn al-Munajjim* attempts to dismantle the syllogisms composed by that great patron of the Ḥunayn circle Galen translations in his effort to prove logically the prophethood of

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[484] J.W. Watt (ed.), *The Fifth Book of the Rhetoric of Antony of Tagrit* (Louvain 1986: 7-8) = *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 480 *Scriptores Syri* 203. I quote the English translation of J.W. Watt (ed.), *The Fifth Book of the Rhetoric of Antony of Tagrit* (Louvain 1986: 5-6) = *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 481 *Scriptores Syri* 204.

[485] On these translated verses see the study of H. Raguse, "Syrische Homerzitate in der Rhetorik des Anton von Tagrit" in *Paul de Lagarde und die syrische Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Göttinger Arbeitskreis für syrische Kirchengeschichte (Göttingen, 1968: 162-175) with the comments of Watt (2007: 141).

Muḥammad and the veracity of Islam over Christianity.[486] Among other targets, Qusṭā attacks the doctrine of the Qur'ān's stylistic inimitability (*al-'ijāz*), a claim made by the Qur'ān itself in order to demonstrate its own divine origin. Qusṭā argues that this claim of stylistic inimitability is logically inconsistent with accepted accounts of the caliph 'Uṯmān's collection of Qur'ānic verses preserved in oral tradition or recorded ad hoc on palm leaves or bone fragments. According to the traditional Islamic account Qusṭā cites, 'Uṯmān required two independent witnesses to vouch for each verse he collected. Yet if the Qur'ān were truly inimitable, the Christian physician argues, there would be no need for any witnesses at all as true Qur'anic verses would be immediately distinguishable from forgeries.

Qusṭā contrasts this situation with the legend, familiar from classical and Byzantine sources, of the Athenian tyrant Pisistratus' redaction of the Homeric text, which he understands to be and presents as historical fact.[487] For Qusṭā Homer's really is an inimitable style and this is reflected in Pisistratus' approach when collecting Homeric verses:

> Now it is related that one of the kings of the Greeks, named Pisistratus, wanted to gather together the poetry of Homer. He therefore ordered by proclamation that whoever should bring forward a verse of Homer's poetry would receive a boundless sum of money. And so the Greeks came to him from every province bearing this poetry.
>
> He accepted every bit of Homer's poetry, or every bit that was similar to it, from whoever brought it to him, and he gave the man whatever amount of money he expected. Indeed, if

[486] The precise relationship between Quṣṭā's *Response* on the extant correspondence between Ḥunayn and [Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā?] ibn al-Munajjim with which it was circulated is fraught, but it was likely written at some remove in time in response to the elder ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā ibn al-Munajjim's original invitation to conversion addressed the Ḥunayn: for a summary of the various arguments see with references B. Roggema, "ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā ibn al-Munajjim" in *CMR* 1.

[487] On the origins of these accounts of the Pisistratid recension, see G. Nagy, *Homeric Questions* (Austin, 1996: 65-106). Qusṭā's version, which confusedly places the Alexandrian critics under Pisistratus, most closely resembles one preserved in the scholia to Dionysius Thrax, with which it is plausible for Qusṭā to have been familiar: see with references the note by P. Nwyia in S.K. Samir and P. Nwyia, "Une correspondance islamo-chrétienne entre Ibn al-Munağğim, Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq et Qusṭā ibn Lūqā", PO 40 (1981: 524-723 at 641 n.53)

> Pisistratus had refused anyone, then by his very refusal he would have prevented anyone else from coming to him.
>
> During his time, there were people who recited poetry and they recited it very well. Among them there were those who would forge one or two verses among the many that there were [of Homer], or fill out a part which they had not fully memorized, in order to maximize the amount of money they received.
>
> Now when the king had gathered together as much of that poetry as he could, he sent for the scholars of language and once they arrived they sorted the poetry for him and put it in order. The scholars had no doubt or uncertainty (*rayb*) concerning what parts of it were forged, but rather they all knew the genuine item from the forgery.
>
> It happened that among the forged verses there were found some which were excellent, and there were still other verses whose first half was by Homer but whose second half been had finished by someone else. The king therefore ordered that those verses be established in Homer's poetry because of their excellence and exquisiteness, and that they be designated with a symbol which would let anyone examining the text know that the verses were not part of Homer's genuine poetry, concerning which there was no doubt since it was impossible for anyone to imitate his poetry's style, and it had no need of witnesses. Whenever anything not properly part of his poetry was inserted into it, one could recognize it.[488]

For Qusṭā, as for Antony of Tagrit, Homer represents the almost superhuman heights of Greek technical achievement in poetry, and in language more generally. Where Antony of Tagrit had invoked Homer in a context pitting Syrian ethnicity against Arab ethnicity, Qusṭā invokes the poet in a context pitting Christianity against Islam.

Ḥunayn's respect for Homer attested in the Ibn ʾIbrahīm narrative and his own engagement with the poet in his circle's translations can read in light of these sources. Qusṭā and Antony use Homer as a means to a polemical end, whether defending Syriac poetry against Arab disparagement or denigrating the language of the Qurʾān. Both invoke Homer in a context in which their Syrian or Christian identities are under perceived threat, making him their 'secret weapon' against outsiders' attacks and claiming privileged access to Homer. Similarly, the Ibn

[488] Arabic text and Italian translation in S.K. Samir (ed.) and I. Zilio-Grandi (trans.), *Una corrispondenza islamo-cristiana sull'origine divina dell'Islām* (Turin, 2003: 190-193)

’Ibrahīm narrative, as we saw, presents Ḥunayn as disappearing from high society in order to master Homeric verse precisely after Ibn Māsawayh ridiculed him for being an ignorant Arab Christian from al-Ḥīra rather than a properly educated Syrian. At the conclusion of that narrative, Ḥunayn’s mastery of Homer is presented as leading to his acceptance by the Syrian community in Baghdad. When Ibn ’Ibrahīm next sees Ḥunayn, the ‘Ibādī Arab is now in the company of the prominent physician Jibrā’īl ibn Baḫtīšū‘ who addresses him deferentially as Rabbān Ḥunayn, using a Syriac title (‘our master’) reserved for great teachers. Jibrā’īl declares that Ḥunayn will surpass Sergius of Reshayna—the famous sixth-century translator of Galen into Syriac—and soon even Ibn Māsawayh accepts him as the greatest Syriac translator of the age.[489]

Homeric mastery was not merely Ḥunayn’s own way of demonstrating privileged access to the Greek language, using the Greek poet in a charged struggle over ethnic identity and worth. Rather, the story further suggests that Homer carried the requisite cachet among Syrian Christians to launch Ḥunayn’s career among those the Baghdad medical establishment, which shared his religious confession but not his ethnicity. This reading, in which Ḥunayn’s move toward Homer is motivated by the concerns of his fellow Mesopotamian Christians, challenges the view put forward by Gotthard Strohmaier. Strohmaier assumed, largely on the basis of an apparent resemblance between Ḥunayn’s hairstyle in the Ibn ’Ibrahīm passage and that of a Byzantine *skholastikos*, that Ḥunayn must have repaired to Constantinople to study Homer.[490] There is little evidence for this claim. The account itself indicates that there was an audience

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[489] Ibn ’Abī ’Uṣaybi‘a, *‘Uyūn al-’anbā’*, Müller (ed.), 1,185

[490] G. Strohmaier, “Homer in Bagdad” *Byzantinoslavica* 41 (1980: 196-200)

learned and sophisticated enough in Baghdad to appreciate Homer, so Ḥunayn had both the means and the motivation to acquire some knowledge of the poet there.

This Ḥunayn circle's engagement with and deference to Homer as an authority in Greek language therefore fits well with our admittedly limited evidence for the role Homer played in the imagination of ninth-century Iraqi Christians. Yet the alterations made by the Ḥunayn circle in their translations from the Greek, particularly in matters of religion, are harder to square with surviving evidence. When adapting or translating Greek mythological material for astronomical purposes, say, or for the exegesis of a Greek author, most earlier Syriac authors do not alter it in this fashion, even though they may on occasion indicate to their reader that these accounts are merely empty fables.[491] In terms of the longer Syriac translation tradition in which Ḥunayn worked and of which he makes explicit mention in his *Risāla*, they are a marked departure from the practice of the Ḥunayn circle's most illustrious and best attested predecessor, Sergius of Reshayna. Sergius' Syriac translation of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *On the Universe*, for instance, does not balk at transmitting the author's discussion of the Greek gods and other aspects of Greek mythology.[492]

Moreover, we possess what may be a programatic statement about this policy in Sergius' preface to this translation, addressed to man who had commissioned the translation and provided

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[491] See for example, Severus Sebokht's engagement with Aratus and others in F. Nau, "Le traité sur les constellations écrit, en 661, par Sévère Sébokt évêque de Qennesrin", *Revue de l'Orient chrétien* 27 (1929: 327-410 at 355-367) and also S. Brock, *The Syriac Version of the Pseudo-Nonnos Mythological Scholia* (Cambridge, 1971).

[492] See A. Rigolio, "From 'Sacrifice to the Gods' to the 'Fear of God': Omissions, Additions and Changes in the Syriac Translations of Plutarch, Lucian and Themistius" M. Vinzent (ed.), *Studia Patristica* 64.12, Papers presented at the Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2011 (Leuven-Paris-Walpole, 2013: 133-144 at 133-134), citing the unpublished dissertation of Adam McCollum. See also A. McCollum, "Sergius of Reshaina as Translator: the Case of the *De Mundo*" in J. Lössl and J. Watt (eds.), *Interpreting the Bible and Aristotle in Late Antiquity: the Alexandrian Commentary Tradition between Rome and Baghdad* (Ashgate, 2011: 165-178 at 175).

him with a copy of the manuscript. We should remember that, as far as Sergius was concerned, the *On the Universe* was a genuine work of Aristotle, addressed by that hallowed authority to his pupil Alexander the Great:

> But I urge you, dear sir, that if another copy of this letter [i.e. the *On the Universe*] is found, in which is anything more or less, please, elect one, do not blame our weakness: that which I have found in the copy that was sent from you, dear sir, I have taken care to preserve completely, neither adding anything to those things written here by the philosopher, nor on the other hand taking away from them according to my ability.[493]

This statement should probably be read in light of the trope of modesty common in Syriac prefaces.[494] Moreover, as far as explanatory addition and reworking is concerned—as distinct from omissions or alterations of culturally sensitive material—Sergius does not evince the same literal technique in all his translations.[495] Nevertheless, if Sergius adopted this same attitude toward Galen as he does toward the revered figure of Aristotle, then Ḥunayn may be reacting against this tendency. After all, when assessing his Galen translations, the *Risāla* never misses an opportunity to portray Sergius as a deficient translator, though occasionally conceding that his technique improved with age.

Sporadic adaption of religious and cultural elements is not entirely unprecedented in other Graeco-Arabic translators roughly contemporaneous with the Ḥunayn circle.[496] Yet the wholesale reimagining of the Greek past we have encountered in Ḥunayn circle translations is, according to current research done upon our surviving evidence, unparalleled. In fact, some

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[493] I quote from the translation of McCollum (2011: 167-168), based on his own forthcoming edition of the text.

[494] The point is made by both Rigolio (2013: 133-134) and McCollum (2011: 167-168).

[495] McCollum (2011: 168).

[496] See for instance U. Vagelpohl, "Cultural Accommodation and the Idea of Translation", *Oriens* 38.1-2 (2010: 165-184) on the Arabic version of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.

Graeco-Arabic translators unabashedly transmit to their readers precisely the sort of material consistently reworked by Ḥunayn and his colleagues. For instance, Qusṭā ibn Lūqā's translation of Pseudo-Plutarch's *Placita philosophorum* preserves wholesale references to the gods.[497] Some Kindī circle translators must have transmitted such references to the 'philosopher of the Arabs', whose interest in matters of 'Ḥarranian' religion was substantial. For example, the philosopher had access to an unaltered version of the Aristophanes myth from Plato's *Symposium* concerning Zeus' role in creating humans and human sexuality.[498] The ninth-century Arabic translator of Aratus' *Phaenomena* transmitted with skill and in almost entirely unaltered form the mythological portions of that poem, to judge from the surviving fragments.[499]

If the Ḥunayn circle's practice has a parallel, it is in fifth- and sixth-century Syriac translations of authors like Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius. In these early translations, we find a very similar policy of altering and adapting classical 'pagan' culture to realign it with Christian, and perhaps specifically monastic, norms.[500] In the case of these early Syriac translations, the alterations seem to have made texts usable for rhetorical or moral instruction in their new setting. Whether or not the Ḥunayn circle was directly inspired by such earlier practices, they help reinforce the notion that the alterations we have observed are not meant to deceive the reader,

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[497] See the edition, German translation, and lexical study of H. Daiber, *Aetius Arabus: die Vorsokratiker in arabischer Überlieferung*, Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Veröffentlichungen der orientalischen Kommission, 33. (Wiesbaden: 1980).

[498] See the collected fragments in D. Gutas, "Plato's *Symposium* in the Arabic Tradition", *Oriens* 31 (1988: 36-60).

[499] See with references E. Honigmann, "The Arabic Translation of Aratus' Phaenomena" *Isis* 41 (1950: 30-31). Honigmann's identification of the translator is, however, farfetched.

[500] M. Conterno, "Retorica pagana e cristianesimo orientale", *Annali di scienze religiose* 3 (2010: 161-188); Rigolio (2013); and A. Rigolio, "Syriac Translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius: a Gnomic Format for an Instructional Purpose?" in P. van Nuffelen, L. van Hoof, and P. Gemeinhardt (eds.), *Education and Religion and Late Antique Christianity: Reflections, Social Contexts and Genres* (London, 2016: 73-85).

after al-Jāḥiẓ's polemical claim in Chapter 2, but rather to 'update' or 'modernize' Galen, an irenic policy of assimilation rather than a hostile policy of censorship.

This attitude is born out in the Ḥunayn's independent works, where the translator demonstrates a marked tendency to transcend the past, a presentist outlook that seeks to melt away historical distinctions. This outlook finds explicit expression in his own *Response to Ibn al-Munajjim*, a much shorter apology for Christianity than the corresponding *Response* of Qusṭā ibn Lūqā whose discussion of Homer we analyzed above. Now, Qusṭā ibn Lūqā's principal strategy is to attack the premises of Ibn al-Munajjim's syllogisms, adducing historical anecdotes which call into question the universality of his opponent's Islamic *endoxa.*[501] He therefore cites everything from Homer's recension and Galen's case studies to the construction of the Temple of Zeus at his own native Baalbek in an effort to show that Ibn al-Munajjim's reasoning is based on shaky foundations due to his blinkered view of history, one that is biased toward Islam. Other nations professing other religions, from the Greeks to the Persians, would not accept these premises, according Qusṭā.

Ḥunayn, by contrast, explicitly adopts a policy of avoiding argumentation from past events. He reassures Ibn al-Munajjim that he will not insult him by dredging up the old charge of *'asāṭīr al-'awwalīn.*[502] These refer to the 'legends of the ancients' which disbelievers will claim to be the true source of Muḥammad's revelation, a charge recorded in the Qur'ān itself.[503]

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[501] Arabic text and Italian translation in S.K. Samir (ed.) and I. Zilio-Grandi (trans.), *Una corrispondenza islamo-cristiana sull'origine divina dell'Islām* (Turin, 2003).

[502] [502] Ḥunayn, *Response* = S.K. Samir and P. Nwyia (eds.), "Une correspondance islamo-chrétienne entre Ibn al-Munağğim, Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq et Qusṭā ibn Lūqā", *Patrologia Orientalis* 40 (1981: 524-723), 698 (Arabic), 699 (French).

[503] See F. Rosenthal, "'Asāṭīr al-'Awwalīn", *EI*^{2}.

Moreover, Ḥunayn explicitly refuses to engage in a debate over comparative religion by examining the religions of the past, which he claims would be irrelevant and superfluous toward establishing the truth.[504] Instead, Ḥunayn simply outlines the six factors by which a religion can be identified, today, as true, adding as supplemental proof a seventh factor at the end of his *Reponse*. These factors invoke in only the vaguest and most abstract terms the conditions under which Christianity was accepted in the past, and they are only concerned with this past in as much as it proves Christianity's veracity in the present. Ḥunayn's approach is on the whole remarkable for its eschewal of historical polemic and its basically presentist outlook.[505]

We find further attestations to this attitude elsewhere in Ḥunayn's independent output. A fragment from his lost *In Defense of Galen* (*Fī l-iʿtiḏār li-Jālīnūs*), preserved in a work of Ibn al-Maṭrān (d. 1191), explicitly cautions the reader about accepting the unscientific beliefs of the ancients encountered in their texts, perhaps referring to precisely those elements his circle omits or reworks in their translations:

> If the reader finds a remark in the learned works of antiquity beginning with the words 'Galen (or Plato, Aristotle, etc.') says', and it turns out to be a strictly scientific discussion of the subject under investigation, he should study it carefully and try to understand it. If, on the other hand, it concerns questions of belief and opinion, he must

[504] Ḥunayn, *Response*, Samir and Nwyia (eds.), 694 (Arabic), 695 (French). Such exercises in comparative religion occur not only in Qusṭā's later *Response* but in other Christian-Muslim polemic of the period as well, such that Ḥunayn attitude stands out: see S. Griffith, "Comparative Religion in the Apologetics of the First Christian Arabic Theologians" *Proceedings of the PMR Conference* 4 (1979: 63-87).

[505] The outlook has been discussed by P. Nwyia, "L'actualité du concept de la religion chez Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq" *Arabica* 21. 3 (1974: 313-317).

> take no further notice of it, since such remarks were made only in order to win people over to the ideas expressed in them or because they concern old, deeply rooted views.[506]

On other occasions, Ḥunayn collapses the distinction between past and present, subtly implying changeless continuity over vast spaces of time. When discussing the medical school curriculum of the fifth- and sixth-century Alexandrians, he writes:

> These, then, are the books to whose reading they would confine themselves in the place of medical instruction in Alexandria, and they would read them this order which I have just mentioned. They would gather every day to read and study one leading text among these, just as our contemporary Christian colleagues gather every day in places of teaching known as *skholē* [Gr. 'school, college'] for [the study of] a leading text by the ancients. As for the rest of the books, they used to read them individually—each one on his own, after having first practiced with those books which I mentioned—just as our colleagues today read the commentaries of the books by the ancients.[507]

In contrast to the anti-Christian versions of the 'Alexandrian-to-Baghdad' narrative which as we saw in Chapter 1 were likely circulating already in Ḥunayn's day, the translator here argues that Christian medical schools in ninth-century Iraq are carrying on a timeless tradition practiced in Greek Alexandria. They even use the same Greek word to describe themselves.

To what extent then are Ḥunayn and his colleagues claiming the Greeks specifically for Christianity, of whatever denomination, over and above the Muslim claims which we examined in Chapter 1? The Ḥunayn circle worked in a charged environment in which translation could be construed as repatriation or reclamation, not just for the Muslims such as al-Kindī encountered in

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[506] I quote the English translation printed Rosenthal (1975: 70), with modifications suggested by his original German translation printed in *Das Fortleben der Antike im Islam* (Zürich/Stuttgart 1965: 45-46). The Arabic text is preserved in the unpublished manuscript Sommer A8 in the Army Medical Library in Cleveland, OH containing Ibn al-Maṭrān's *Bustān al-'aṭibbā'* which I have not accessed. The passage is discussed by Strohmaier (1968: 253-254) who notes that the treatise *In Defense of Galen* is probably the same as the lost commentary of that title on Galen's *The Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* mentioned at *Risāla*, no. 46 (ed. Bergsträsser).

[507] Ḥunayn, *Risāla* (ed. Bergsträsser) no. 20. I quote the translation of D. Gutas, "The 'Alexandria to Baghdad' Complex of Narratives: a Contribution to the Study of Philosophical and Medical Historiography among the Arabs", *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 10 (1999: 155-193 at 172), who himself argues against Ḥunayn's claim of continuity.

Chapter 1, but also for Christians and other non-Muslims. At least as far back as the seventh-century, a Syriac author like the West Syrian bishop, astronomer and philosopher Severus Sebokht could justify his translation and adaption of Greek scientific material by claiming the Syrians had in fact invented 'Greek' astronomy anyway. "That the Babylonians were Syrians, no one I think will deny," he wrote, going on to claim that this science began in Babylon only to be later appropriated by the Greeks and citing as evidence the fact that Ptolemy begins his king list with Babylonian rulers.[508] In Chapter 1 we saw a very similar narrative about the origins of philosophy preserved in al-Fārābī who I argue learned it from his Syrian Christian teachers. Further research is required before we can discuss the full extant to which this ideological narrative was known and promulgated in ninth-century Iraq.[509]

We certainly do possess evidence that this attitude flourished among those non-Christians in ninth- and tenth-century Iraq who used the Syriac language. We find traces of it in the writings of the enigmatic Ibn Waḥšiyya (d. 930/931), a 'pagan' Nabataean who traced his own descent back to the ancient Chaldaeans, *al-Kaldāniyyūn* or rather *al-Kasdāniyyūn* as he would have it. He was not alone in this claim, and there is evidence that Nabataean and Syrian identities often merged and intermingled.[510] At any rate, his *Nabatean Agriculture* (*Kitāb al-filāha al-nabāṭiyya*) claims to translate from the Syriac ancient Babylonian material going back some 20,000 years. In fact, most the material seems to be derived from local traditions of more recent provenance and

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[508] For the Syriac text and French translation see Nau (1929: 332-333).

[509] On Syrian Christian self-identification as 'Assyrian' (*'Aṯōrāye*) in late antiquity more generally, see S. Brock "Christians in the Sasanid Empire: a Case of Divided Loyalties" in S. Mews (ed.), *Religion and National Identity.* Studies in Church History 18 (Oxford: 1982: 1-19 at 16-17).

[510] See J. Hämeen-Anttila, *The Last Pagans of Iraq: Ibn Waḥshiyya and his* Nabatean Agriculture (Leiden, 2006: 33-45).

especially from Greek geoponic authors such as Vindanius Anatolius of Berytus—none of whom Ibn Waḥšiyya or his possibly fictitious Syriac sources acknowledge.[511] Instead he claims to be translating this allegedly native Mesopotamian material in order to prove the ancient splendor of the Nabatean race to the Persians, Georgians, and Byzantines who falsely claim agricultural science as the their own.[512] The Christians of Mesopotamia come in for particular abuse as allegedly claiming descent from the Byzantines (*al-rūm*) when they are in fact Nabateans like the author himself—a charge structurally reminiscent of al-Jāḥiẓ's attacks which we saw in earlier chapters.[513]

In the preface to his *Kitāb al-sumūm* (*Book of Poisons*), Ibn Waḥšiyya is in high *šu'ūbī* mode, inveighing against the Arabs and claiming his own people's scientific superiority. Here again he alleges to be translating—but may in fact be forging—this scientific material in order to crush Arab claims of Nabatean rusticity and ignorance.[514] Finally, not just ethnic identity but 'pagan' religious identity may have informed more sophisticated non-Christian translators. The Ṣabian Ṯābit ibn Qurra seems to have claimed confessional solidarity with the ancient Greeks themselves—a later Christian text presents him as boasting of the antiquity of his *ḥanpūṯā*

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[511] See the introductory chapter of Hämeen-Anttila (2006: 1-80).

[512] See especially Hämeen-Anttila (2006: 99-104).

[513] Hämeen-Anttila (2006: 100-101).

[514] M. Levey, "Medical Arabic Toxicology: the *Book on Poisons* of Ibn Waḥshīya and its Relation to Early Indian and Greek Texts", *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 56 (1966: 1-130 at 20-21).

(‘paganism’)—and this claim may have informed his and other Ṣabians’ translations of Greek authors.[515]

There is some indication that, as translator, Ḥunayn engaged in similar *šu‘ūbī* discourse. Yet these claims of Arab inferiority seem to have been limited to criticism of the Arabic language. A citation from Ḥunayn’s work on Arabic grammar preserved in the work of Elias of Nisibis show the translator politely but firmly asserting the syntactic inferiority of Arabic as a scientific language to Syriac.[516] Yet perhaps because he and his family were ‘Ibādī Arabs, the *šu‘ūbī* lens does not explain the alterations to the Greek past made by Ḥunayn and his pupils. Nor can confessional identity. As we saw, these alterations both Christianized and Islamized the ancient Greek past. The Ḥunayn circle’s project seems rather to be one of ‘updating’ the Greek past and rendering it a neutral space which both his Christian and his Muslim audience can claim. Some fifty years before, the East Syrian Patriarch Timothy I might casually remark when explicating Aristotle that the ancients had worshipped and poured libations to demons—a familiar and ancient Christian explanation for the polytheistic gods.[517] In the Ḥunayn circle translations, the world of Graeco-Roman antiquity becomes a place full of angels where the one living God is recognized and worshipped. This transformation, again, is probably meant not to

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[515] See with references T. Green, *The City of the Moon God: Religious Traditions of Harran* (Leiden, 1992: 114). It is noteworthy in this regard that Ḥunayn’s *Risāla* no. 119 (ed. Bergsträsser) criticizes as displeasing a Ṣabian translator’s early translation of Galen’s *Character Traits*. Since as we saw this is one of the texts where the Ḥunayn routinely replaces gods with angels, might Ḥunayn have found the translation displeasing because the translator maintained the gods rather the follow Ḥunayn’s preferred policy?

[516] See with references D. Bertaina, “Science syntax and superiority in eleventh-century Christian-Muslim discussion: Elias of Nisibis on the Arabic and Syriac languages”, *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 22:2 (2011: 197-207 at 202-203).

[517] See Timothy I, *Letter* 48, section 6 in S. Brock, “Two Letters of the Patriarch Timothy from the Late Eighth Century on the Translations from Greek” in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 9 (1999: 233-246 at 235-236).

deceive or bowdlerize, but to bring the likes of Galen into sympathy with the ‘Abbāsid present. Again, another independent work of Ḥunayn’s can shed light on this project. We find something analogous to these alterations in Ḥunayn’s personal contributions in his collection of maxims, the *Disciplines of the Philosophers* (*’Ādāb al-falāsifa*). These contributions work in concert to present ‘philosophy’ as an area that Muslims, Christians and Jews can all participate in and claim.[518] In similar way—and with the caveat that much remains to be investigated—his circle’s modernization of a Galen’s or an Artemidorus’ religion and personal biography presents a Greek past that is neutral and reusable in the present.

[518] See S. Griffith, “Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq and the *Kitāb ādāb al-falāsifa*: the Pursuit of Wisdom and a Humane Polity in Early Abbasid Baghdad”, in G. Kiraz (ed.), *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone: Studies in Honor of Sebastian P. Brock* (Piscataway, NJ, 2008: 135-160).

Conclusion

We have analyzed three distinct ninth-century approaches to the Greek past, and the questions of who possess and may access it. In Chapter 1, against a backdrop of anti-Byzantinism, we observed al-Kindī's claim to own and access with ease the Greek past via translations he commissioned and corrected. In Chapter 2, we observed the views of al-Jāḥiẓ and others who cast radical doubt on the ability for any present individual to access the Greek past, so sure were they of these texts' malicious or negligent corruption at the hands of Christian translators. Finally, in Chapter 3, we observed the Ḥunayn circle's attempt to transpose the Greek past into the ʻAbbāsid present by altering cultural elements in their translations in such a way that their diverse audience could access and feel at home in it.

All three of these approaches require further investigation. In Chapter 1, the general narratives of West-to-East transfer, with its often anti-Byzantine coloring, must be traced to their earlier Syriac and Middle Persian analogues. Only in this way can the differences and continuities between these earlier narratives and their ʻAbbāsid version be worked out. Furthermore, it would be valuable to see if we could uncover traces of al-Kindī's attitude toward the Greek past elsewhere in his large philosophical and scientific corpus. His use of Graeco-Roman historical anecdotes in his moral works would be one fruitful area. Another area, potentially more fruitful still, would be his philosophical treatises on the recollection of the soul and the derivation of knowledge from dreams—views we might be able to connect with his practice of correcting translations of texts whose original language, Greek, he did not know. Much work too remains to be done connecting the views of al-Jāhiẓ and others in Chapter 2 with their ninth-century *šuʻūbī* background, particularly the notion that Christian Graeco-Arabic

translators somehow feel *'aṣabiyya* ('clannish affinity') for the ancient Greeks. We might learn, too, from a thorough lexical investigation of the language of *taḥrīf* in ninth-century works which I neglected here, such as the *Risālat al-Kindī* or the *Kitāb al-dīn wa-l-dawla* (*The Book of Religion and Empire*) of the Muslim convert from Christianity 'Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Sahl Rabbān al-Ṭabarī.

It is in Chapter 3, however, that the most intriguing prospects for further research await. We saw how the translators rewrite the personal religious biography of Galen in their translations in order to make him appear a monotheist. It would be valuable, first, to connect this to the effort apparent in 'Isḥāq ibn Ḥunayn's *Ta'rīḫ al-'aṭibbā'* to make Galen contemporaneous with Christ, when it fact he flourished more than a century after Christ. This attempt to align scientific and religious history may be connected to the legend attested in later Arabic and Syriac sources that Galen had converted to Christianity after being impressed by Christ's miracles of healing.[519] We also discussed Ḥunayn's attempt to collapse past and present and turn Galen into his contemporary by altering elements of the physician's personal religious autobiography. It might be possible to trace the reverse of this process, for we possess tantalizing evidence that Ḥunayn sought to model himself after Galen.

In the *Risāla* and in a long, purportedly autobiographical account preserved in Ibn 'Abī 'Uṣaybi'a, Ḥunayn portrays himself as a scrupulous philologist, in contrast to earlier Syriac translators like Sergius of Reshayna and his jealous Christian colleagues at the caliph's court—

[519] See F. Rosenthal, "Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn's *Ta'rīḫ al-aṭibbā'*", *Oriens* 7 (1954: 55-80) and F.W. Zimmermann, "The Chronology of Isḥāq ibn Ḥunayn's *Ta'rīḫ al-aṭibbā'*", *Arabica* 21 (1974: 325-330).

perhaps in answer to al-Jāḥiẓ's charges of tampering.[520] In doing so, he may by explicitly modeling himself after the Greek physician Galen, whose autobiographical works Ḥunayn translated and who in turn presented himself as a stern philologist reviving the misunderstood doctrines of Hippocrates and navigating the political intrigues of a very different imperial capital, Rome.[521] Indeed, I have already identified some narrative parallels between the autobiography attributed to Ḥunayn and Galen's *On Prognosis for Epigenes*—which as we saw in Chapter 3 was translated with particular care by the Ḥunayn circle, though it does not survive. A scene in which Galen wins over Marcus Aurelius and overcomes his rival physicians by taking the emperor's pulse finds a parallel with Ḥunayn's taking of the caliph al-Mutawakkil's pulse in order to foil the intrigues of his Syrian colleagues. Moreover, a moral precept about deriving benefit from one's enemies taken from the title of a lost Galenic work known to have been translated by the Ḥunayn circle frames the entire autobiography.

If Ḥunayn's self-modeling on Galen could be demonstrated, it would provide exciting connections with al-Kindī's and al-Jāḥiẓ's approaches to the Greek past. Al-Kindī claimed a special ability to access the Greek past via his intellectual and genealogical lineage to the likes of Aristotle. Similarly, Ḥunayn would be collapsing the distance between himself and Galen and suggesting a special affinity between himself and the physician he translated. Moreover, it would

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[520] On autobiographical account and its authenticity see F. Rosenthal, "Die arabische Autobiographie", in *Studia Arabica,* Pontificium Institutum Biblicum (Rome, 1937: 1-40 at 15-19), reprinted in his *Muslim Intellectual and Social Life: a Collection of essays* (Aldershot, 1990); G. Strohmaier, "Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq und die Bilder", *Klio* 43-45 (1965: 525-533), reprinted in his *Von Demokrit bis Dante: Die Bewahrung antigen Erbes in der arabischen Kultur* (Hildesheim, 1996); M. Cooperson, "The Purported Autobiography of Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq" in *Edebiyât* 7 (1997: 235-249); G. Saliba, "Competition and transmission of the foreign sciences. Hunayn at the Abbasid court", *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies* 2 (2000: 85-101); and M. Cooperson, "The autobiography of Hunan ibn Ishaq (809-873 or 877)" in D.F. Reynolds (ed.), *Interpreting the self: Autobiography in the Arabic literary tradition* (Berkeley, 2001: 107-118).

[521] Some have already suggested the notion that Ḥunayn imitated Galen's philological method: see U. Vagelpohl, "In the Translator's Workshop" in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 21 (2011: 249-288).

go some way toward answering al-Jāḥiẓ's impossible standard for translation, that a translator must equal his author in order to translate him accurately. By eliminating the distance between himself and Galen, Ḥunayn would be suggesting that he had indeed equalled Galen, and not merely intellectually. We would then find a development in attitude across the first half of the ninth-century: al-Kindī's naive claims to access the Greeks would give way to the skepticism of al-Jāḥiẓ, culminating finally Ḥunayn's synthesis of Greek past and 'Abbāsid present.

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