From al-Biṭrīq to Ḥunayn: Melkite and Nestorian Translators in Early ʿAbbāsid Baghdad

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Abstract

The present study examines the social history of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement from the perspective of the Christian communities that participated in it. Special attention is given to Melkite and Nestorian translators active in ʿAbbāsid Baghdad – from the late eighth-century Melkite translator al-Biṭrīq to the famous ninth-century Nestorian translator Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq – and to the complex interactions between Melkites and Nestorians, which involved both competition and scholarly collaboration.

Key Words

Graeco-Arabic translation movement; ʿAbbāsids; Melkites; Nestorians (Church of the East); al-Biṭrīq; the circle of al-Kindī; Ḥunayn ibn Isḥaq.

By the time of the Muslim conquests of the Middle East in the seventh century CE, Middle Eastern Christianity had split into three factions:[1]

(1) Chalcedonians, who accepted the Council of Chalcedon in 451 and its « two natures in Christ » (dyophysite) formula and maintained liturgical communion with the imperial Church of Byzantium;

[1] An earlier version of this study was presented at the online workshop « The Translation of Arabic Scientific Texts into Greek between the Ninth and the Fifteenth Centuries » (26 February 2021), organized by Johannes Pahlitzsch (Mainz), Joe Glynias (Princeton), and Zachary Chitwood (Mainz). I am deeply grateful to Professor Pahlitzsch for his thought-provoking response to, and comments on, my paper and to Joe Glynias and the participants for their helpful comments and suggestions.

(2) Anti-Chalcedonians, who rejected the Council of Chalcedon and adhered to the « one nature in Christ » (monophysite or miaphysite)[2] formula – they were called « Jacobites » in Syria (after the sixth-century Syrian bishop Jacob Baradaeus) and « Copts » (literally: « Egyptians ») in Egypt, though the term « Jacobites » was often applied generically to both groups;[3]

(3) The Church of the East, the main Christian group in the territories of the Persian Sasanian Empire – its followers were often called « Nestorians » (because in the wake of the Council of Ephesus in 431 they sided with the archbishop of Constantinople, Nestorius, who was condemned and deposed by that council).[4]

In the seventh century yet another schism rocked the Chalcedonian faction:

(1.1) After the Council of Constantinople (680–681), those Middle Eastern Chalcedonians who accepted the council's « two wills in Christ » (dyothelete) formula came to be known as « Melkites » (royalists), because they remained in communion with the imperial Byzantine Church;

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[2] In modern terminology, a distinction is often drawn between « monophysitism » (the belief that Christ has one divine nature – this view is characteristic of Eutyches and was rejected not only by the Council of Chalcedon but also, eventually, by the anti–Chalcedonian faction) and « miaphysitism » (the belief that Christ has one nature, which is both divine and human). « Miaphysitism » is, of course, a neologism: in Greek, compounds with the meaning « one » or « single » are always formed with the prefix μονο-, not μια-. For opposing views on the admissibility of the term « miaphysitism », see PHILIPPE LUISIER, « Il miafisismo, un termine discutibile della storiografia recente: problemi teologici ed ecumenici », *Cristianesimo nella Storia*, 35/1 (2014), p. 297–307; SEBASTIAN P. BROCK, « Miaphysite, not Monophysite! », *Cristianesimo nella Storia*, 37/1 (2016), p. 45–54 (and other articles in the same volume).

[3] The Copts frequently called themselves « Jacobites ». For an early example, see the tenth-century Copto-Arabic author Macarius of Manūf al-ʿUlyā's *Epistle on Chrism* – MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ar. 100, fol. 173v [left-to-right numbering]: نحن الارتدكسيّة اليعاقبة القبط; French trans.: LOUIS VILLECOURT, « La lettre de Macaire, évêque de Memphis, sur la liturgie antique du chrême et du baptème à Alexandrie », *Le Muséon*, 36 (1923), p. 33–46, at p. 34: « nous les Coptes Jacobites orthodoxes ».

[4] On the term « Nestorians » as a self-designation, see ALEXANDER TREIGER, « The Christology of the *Letter from the People of Cyprus* », *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 65/1–2 (2013), p. 21–48, at p. 44–46, with multiple examples from the eighth to nineteenth centuries. See also NIKOLAI N. SELEZNYOV, « Nestorius of Constantinople: Condemnation, Suppression, Veneration, with Special Reference to the Role of His Name in East-Syriac Christianity », *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 62/3–4 (2010), p. 165–190, which offers important correctives to SEBASTIAN P. BROCK, « The Nestorian Church: A Lamentable Misnomer », *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 78/3 (1996), p. 23–35.

(1.2) Those Middle Eastern Chalcedonians who favoured the « one will in Christ » (monothelete) formula and, as a result, broke communion with the imperial Byzantine Church came to be known as « Maronites » (after their spiritual centre, the monastery of Mar Maron in Syria).[5]

Members of these four factions – the Melkites, the Maronites, the Jacobites (including the Copts), and the Nestorians – were interacting with Muslim administrations: first, the Umayyad government in Damascus, then – in the wake of the ʿAbbāsid revolution – with the ʿAbbāsid court in the newly founded capital Baghdad, and subsequently with Sunnī and Šīʿa dynasties that controlled various territories in the Middle East: the Fāṭimids, the Ḥamdānids, the Būyids, the Selǧūqs, the Ayyūbids, the Mamlūks, and eventually the Ottomans.

This intra-Christian sectarian diversity was a key factor affecting both Christian intellectual life and Christian communities' relations with their Muslim overlords. It is therefore a legitimate – though rarely asked – question whether this factor played a role in the history of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement. I believe that it did. In the present contribution, I shall offer some preliminary observations on this topic by focusing on Melkite and Nestorian translators in ʿAbbāsid Baghdad and their competition and cooperation.

I. *Introduction*

Dimitri Gutas's ground-breaking monograph *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture* (1998) has demonstrated that the Graeco-Arabic translation movement, which spanned two centuries and a half (*c.* 750–*c.* 1000) and revolutionized the intellectual life in the Middle East, was not the result merely of the caliphs' zeal for Greek learning or of Christian intellectuals' altruistic desire to make such learning accessible to Muslim patrons. Instead, the translation movement was the effect of an intricate network of social and cultural factors that ranged from the ʿAbbāsids' dependence on Iranian, still to a large extent Zoroastrian, elites to interreligious polemic. Gutas has masterfully reconstructed the climate within the Muslim society that both made the Graeco-Arabic translation movement possible and enabled it to have a lasting effect.[6]

[5] On the early history of the Maronites, see HARALD SUERMANN, *Die Gründungsgeschichte der maronitischen Kirche*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1998.

[6] DIMITRI GUTAS, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ʿAbbāsid Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th Centuries)*, Routledge, London 1998; see also DIMITRI GUTAS, « The Rebirth of Philosophy and the Translations into Arabic », in ULRICH RUDOLPH, ROTRAUD HANSBERGER, PETER

A complementary network of factors must have been at play among the Middle Eastern Christian communities that participated in the translation activity.[7] Just as the Muslim patrons – and Muslim society generally – had an interest in promoting the translation movement, so the Christian translators – and Middle Eastern Christian society generally – must have had reasons to collaborate. It is true that the remuneration offered for philosophical and scientific translations (at least those of the highest academic calibre) was remarkably high and provided a strong incentive to Christian intellectuals to participate in the Graeco-Arabic translation movement.[8] At the same time, these Christian translators did not only seek to meet economic demand. They must have regarded themselves as partners in a joint enterprise, which *both* intertwined societies – the Muslim (still a minority in the Middle East) *and the Christian* (still the majority) – supported for their own reasons. For such a « symbiotic » relationship between the Muslim elites and the Christian intellectuals to have been forged, not only select individuals on both sides but the two intertwined societies must have had their vested interests. It is therefore imperative to investigate how the Christian communities in general and the ecclesiastical authorities in particular viewed the translation movement and what motivated them to encourage their members to participate in it.

George Saliba has made a pertinent and insightful observation: according to him, the Christians who became involved in the Graeco-Arabic translation movement were striving to maintain their hegemony as state officials in the Islamic polity in the wake

ADAMSON (eds.), *Philosophy in the Islamic World, Volume I: 8th–10th Centuries*, Brill, Leiden–Boston 2017 [= PIW], p. 95–142.

7 For the Christian context, see George Saliba, « Revisiting the Syriac Role in the Transmission of Greek Sciences into Arabic », *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies*, 4 (2004), p. 27–32; SIDNEY H. GRIFFITH, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2008, p. 106–128; SARAH STROUMSA, « Philosophy as Wisdom: On the Christians' Role in the Translation of Philosophical Material into Arabic », in HAGGAI BEN-SHAMMAI, SHAUL SHAKED, SARAH STROUMSA (eds.), *Exchange and Transmission across Cultural Boundaries: Philosophy, Mysticism and Science in the Mediterranean World (Proceedings of an International Workshop Held in Memory of Professor Shlomo Pines)*, Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem 2013, p. 276–293; ALEXANDER TREIGER, « Palestinian Origenism and the Early History of the Maronites: In Search of the Origins of the Arabic *Theology of Aristotle* », in Damien JANOS (ed.), *Ideas in Motion in Baghdad and Beyond: Philosophical and Theological Exchanges between Christians and Muslims in the Third/Ninth and Fourth/Tenth Centuries*, Brill, Leiden 2015, p. 44–80.

8 The Banū Mūsā paid Ḥunayn, Ḥubayš, and Ṯābit ibn Qurra (presumably, each) 500 dīnārs a month « for full-time translation » – see GUTAS, *Greek Thought*, p. 133 and 138; GUTAS, « Rebirth », p. 104–105. The vizier Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (Ibn) al-Zayyāt (d. 847) reportedly spent 2000 dīnārs a month commissioning translation of Greek works – see JAMES E. MONTGOMERY, « al-Ǧāḥiẓ and Hellenizing Philosophy », in CRISTINA D'ANCONA (ed.), *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, Brill, Leiden–Boston 2007, p. 443–456, at p. 449.

of the Arabicization of the bureaucracy under the Umayyads. In this climate of intense interreligious competition, philosophical, medical, and scientific knowledge became a valuable commodity that was exploited by those with access to it. In fact, as Saliba notes, it was owing to this climate of competition that Middle Eastern Christians reached back to the scientific books of the Greeks that their predecessors knew existed but had less incentive to peruse.[9]

Saliba's observation leads us to consider the rivalry *between* the various Christian communities of the Middle East. Though all these communities conflicted with each other, by far the most significant cultural divide separated the « Westerners », i.e., the Christians of the former Byzantine provinces of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt (who were Melkites, Maronites, and Jacobites, including Copts), on the one hand, and the « Easterners », i.e., the Christians of the former Sasanian Empire (Nestorians / the Church of the East), on the other.

Until the ʿAbbāsid revolution, the « Easterners » seem to have remained on the losing side of this competition. As a result of the collapse of the Sasanian Empire, the Church of the East lost the privileged status that it had enjoyed under the Sasanians. Its doctrinal archenemies, the Jacobites gained ground by expanding their ecclesiastical hierarchy to the East (the « maphrianate of Tikrīt ») and establishing monasteries in northern Iraq.[10] The Melkites, too, held on to power, insofar as it was the Melkite elites in Damascus – notably, the family of John of Damascus – that continued to control the state apparatus under the Umayyads.[11] Similarly to the

[9] George Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA 2007, p. 27–72.

[10] George A. Kiraz, « Maphrian Catholicos », in Sebastian P. Brock et al. (eds.), *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*, Gorgias, Piscataway, NJ 2011, p. 264–265. Nestorian authors frequently complained that after the Sasanian regime collapsed, Muslim authorities abandoned the Sasanian discrimination policies between different Christian denominations. This allowed the rival Jacobite community to flourish. See Michael G. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ 1984, p. 346: « one of the things Yōḥannan bar Penkayē [the friend and contemporary of the catholicos Ḥnānīšōʿ I (r. 686–693)] complained most bitterly about was the way the new rulers allowed both Nestorians and 'heretics' (Monophysites) to survive the conquest. He particularly deplored the demoralizing consequences of undiscriminating toleration in the reign of Muʿāwiya, when 'there was no difference between pagan and Christian; the faithful was not distinct from a Jew' ».

[11] On John of Damascus's family background, see Sean W. Anthony, « Fixing John Damascene's Biography: Historical Notes on His Family Background », *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 23/4 (2015), p. 607–627; Sidney H. Griffith, « The Manṣūr Family and Saint John of Damascus: Christians and Muslims in Umayyad Times », in Antoine Borrut, Fred M. Donner (eds.), *Christians and Others in the Umayyad State*, The Oriental Institute, Chicago 2016, p. 29–51.

Jacobites, the Melkites took advantage of the changed political situation and expanded their hierarchy eastward, establishing the « catholicosate of Romagyris ». This catholicosate was initially located in the former Sasanian city of Wēh-Andiok-Ḫosrow (« Ḫosrow's Better Antioch ») in the vicinity of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, commonly known in Persian as Rūmagān and in Arabic as al-Rūmiyya. When in 762 the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 754–775) transferred the population of Rūmagān / al-Rūmiyya all the way to Šāš (near modern Tashkent), Šāš became the new location of the catholicosate of Romagyris, while a second Melkite catholicosate was eventually established in Baghdad.[12]

[12] On Wēh-Andiok-Ḫosrow, the catholicosate of Romagyris, and the catholicosate of Baghdad, see Marie-Louise Chaumont, « Antioch (1) », in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* [= EIr], vol. II.2, p. 119–125; online version: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/antioch–1-northern-syria> (Accessed May 2021); Wassilios Klein, « Das orthodoxe Katholikat von Romagyris in Zentralasien », *Parole d'Orient*, 24 (1999), p. 235–265; Jean-Maurice Fiey, « 'Rūm' à l'est de l'Euphrate », *Le Muséon*, 90 (1977), p. 365–420; Joseph Nasrallah, « L'Église melchite en Iraq, en Perse, et dans l'Asie centrale », *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, 25 (1975), p. 135–179; 26 (1976), p. 16–33; 27 (1977), p. 71–78, 277–293; Joseph Nasrallah, « Réponse à quelques critiques récentes au sujet des catholicosats melchites de Bagdad et de Romagyris », *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, 33 (1983), p. 160–170; Jean Dauvillier, « Byzantins d'Asie Centrale et d'Extrême-Orient au moyen âge », *Revue des Études Byzantines*, 11 (1953), p. 62–87; Neophytos Edelby, « Note sur le catholicosat de Romagyris », *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, 2 (1952), p. 39–46; Ken Parry, « Byzantine-Rite Christians (Melkites) in Central Asia in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages », in Elizabeth Kefallinos (ed.), *Thinking Diversely: Hellenism and the Challenge of Globalisation* [special edition of *Modern Greek Studies (Australia and New Zealand)*, 2012], p. 91–108; Ken Parry, « Byzantine-rite Christians (Melkites) in Central Asia and China and Their Contacts with the Church of the East », in Li Tang, Dietmar W. Winkler (eds.), *Winds of* Jingjiao*: Studies on Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, Lit, Vienna 2016, p. 203–220; Wolfgang Hage, *Das orientalische Christentum*, W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 2007, p. 84; Klaus-Peter Todt, *Dukat und griechisch-orthodoxes Patriarchat von Antiocheia in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit (969–1084)*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 2020, p. 447–453. On Melkite presence in Central Asia, see also Robert Griveau (ed.), *Martyrologes et ménologes orientaux XVI-XVIII: Les fêtes des Melkites, par al-Birouni, Les fêtes des coptes, par al-Maqrizi, Calendrier Maronite, par Ibn-al-Qolaʿi*, Firmin-Didot, Paris 1914 (Patrologia Orientalis X.4, No. 49); Daniel Galadza, « Liturgical Byzantinization in Jerusalem: al-Biruni's Melkite Calendar in Context », *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata*, 3rd series, 7 (2010), p. 69–85; and the following two studies of a Greek-Sogdian Psalm fragment (likely, of Melkite provenance) from Bulayïq near Turfan: Nicholas Sims-Williams, « A Greek-Sogdian Bilingual from Bulayïq », in *La Persia e Bisanzio*, Accademia nazionale dei lincei, Rome 2004, p. 623–631; Nicholas Sims-Williams, « A New Fragment of the Book of Psalms in Sogdian », in Dmitrij Bumazhnov, Emmanouela Grypeou, Timothy B. Sailors, Alexander Toepel (eds.), *Bibel, Byzanz und christlicher Orient: Festschrift für Stephen Gerö zum 65. Geburtstag*, Peeters, Leuven 2011, p. 461–465. On the role of Syriac among Central Asian Melkites, see Miklós Maróth, « Ein Brief aus Turfan », *Altorientalische Forschungen*, 12 (1985), p. 283–287; cf. Werner Sundermann, « Byzanz und Bulayïq », in Petr Vavroušek (ed.), *Iranian and Indo-European Studies: Memorial Volume of Otakar Klíma*, Enigma Corporation, Prague 1994, p. 255–264, at p. 258; Adrian C. Pirtea, « The Syriac and Sogdian Prefaces to the *Six Books on the Dormition of the Virgin Mary*: Marian

The Melkite Church's expansion to Iraq necessitated forging relationships with ʿAbbāsid elites, while its members' linguistic prowess, especially their facility with Greek, provided them with a ready means of doing so. Before long, Melkite scholars became indispensable as translators of Greek philosophical and scientific literature who – unlike other Christians at the time – could work directly from the Greek original. This is why we find Melkite scholars at the forefront of translation activity, especially in the early stages of the translation movement (*c.* 770s–*c.* 830s), after which they gave the central place – though never surrendered the stage completely – to the Nestorians. This is the period on which we shall focus below.

II. *Melkite Translators*

What was the role of the Melkites in the Graeco-Arabic translation movement? This is a question that has not been systematically addressed because the standard narrative of the Graeco–Arabic translation movement privileges the role of Nestorian translators (Ḥunayn and his school); this, in turn, has to do with the fact that Nestorian Christians were the dominant Christian group in Baghdad and that most primary sources – notably Ḥunayn's famous *Risāla* – focus on Nestorian translation activities.[13]

Based on the lists of translators provided by Ibn al-Nadīm and Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, Gérard Troupeau estimated that Nestorians constituted *c.* 62% of all the known translators (38 out of 61), while Melkites constituted only 18% (11 out of 61).[14]

Traditions between the Eastern Mediterranean and Central Asia » (forthcoming in an edited volume on Syriac and Iranianate Christianity, edited by Chiara Barbati and Vittorio Berti, to be published with the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften in Vienna – I am grateful to Adrian Pirtea for sharing this article with me prior to publication).

[13] On Ḥunayn's *Risāla*, see Gotthelf Bergsträsser, *Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq über die syrischen und arabischen Galen-Übersetzungen*, Brockhaus, Leipzig 1925; Gotthelf Bergsträsser, *Neue Materialen zu Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq's Galen-Bibliographie*, Brockhaus, Leipzig 1932; John C. Lamoreaux, *Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq on His Galen Translations*, Brigham Young University Press, Provo, UT 2016 (cf. Dimitri Gutas, « A New 'Edition' of Ḥunayn's *Risāla* », *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 28 (2018), p. 279–284); Dimitri Gutas, « Scholars as Transmitters of Philosophical Thought », Section 2.1: « Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq », in PIW, p. 680–704.

[14] Gérard Troupeau, « Le rôle des syriaques dans la transmission et l'exploitation du patrimoine philosophique et scientifique grec », *Arabica*, 38/1 (1991), p. 1–10, at p. 4–5: « Du fait que 25 traducteurs sont communs aux deux listes [i.e., the lists of translators provided by Ibn al-Nadīm and Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa], que 11 sont propres à Ibn al-Nadīm et que 14 sont propres à Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, c'est un total de 61 traducteurs que nous fournissent les deux listes. Ces 61 traducteurs se répartissent de la manière suivante: 48 sont des syriaques (38 nestoriens, 9 jacobites et 1 maronite); 11 sont des byzantins melkites; 1 est sabéen et 1 est persan. Les traducteurs syriaques représentent donc 78% des traducteurs, et ce sont les nestoriens qui se taillent la part du lion avec 62%. Cette statistique vient

However, it is important to point out that only translators with identifiably Greek names were tallied as Melkites; translators with Arabic names whose confessional affiliation is left unspecified in the sources were catalogued as Nestorians *by default*; clearly, this procedure is unfavourable to Melkites (and others), as they too could bear Arabic names in the period under discussion. This casts a shadow of doubt over Troupeau's confessional breakdown of the translators; moreover, Troupeau's figures may be skewed for yet another reason: the primary sources from which they derive seem to be better informed about Nestorian translators than about translators from rival Christian groups. Based on these considerations, it is possible that the Melkites' share in the Graeco-Arabic translation movement – especially in its early stages – is underestimated. More pertinently for our purposes, we need a clear explanation of how Melkite translators fit into the general narrative of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement. This is a significant scholarly lacuna that ought to be addressed.[15]

The earliest Melkite translator known by name is a certain al-Biṭrīq (literally: « the *Patrikios* », though the Arabic term *biṭrīq* was often used generically for Byzantine dignitaries).[16] Al-Biṭrīq's son Yūḥannā, or Yaḥyā, ibn al-Biṭrīq – the sources refer to him as a *mawlā*, « client, freedman, or loyal associate », of the caliph al-Maʾmūn[17] – was likewise active as a translator, as we shall discuss below.[18] According to the *Fihrist*

confirmer ce dont on se doutait déjà, à savoir le rôle prépondérant des syriaques en général et des nestoriens en particulier, mais il était bon de préciser et de chiffrer exactement ce rôle ».

15 For a useful survey, which, however, does not include all the Melkite translators and, on the other hand, includes some translators who were clearly not Melkites, see Joseph Nasrallah with Rachid Haddad, *Histoire du mouvement littéraire dans l'église melchite du V^e^ au XX^e^ siècle*, 5 vol. in 8 parts, Peeters, Louvain 1979–2017, vol. II.2, p. 74–91; see also Fiey, « Rūm », p. 414–417.

16 For some examples, see Alexandre M. Roberts, « al-Manṣūr and the Critical Ambassador », *Bulletin d'Études Orientales*, 60 (2011), p. 145–160.

17 On the term *mawlā* in this period, see Daniel Pipes, « Mawlas: Freed Slaves and Converts in Early Islam », in Robert Hoyland (ed.), *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, Routledge, London–New York 2017, p. 277–322. Yūḥannā, or Yaḥyā, ibn al-Biṭrīq would seem to fall within the category of *mawlā amīr al-muʾminīn*, which, according to Pipes (p. 298 [153]–301 [156]), does not necessarily imply conversion to Islam.

18 Douglas M. Dunlop, « The Translations of al-Biṭrīq and Yaḥyā (Yuḥannā) b. al-Biṭrīq », *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 91/3–4 (1959), p. 140–150; Nasrallah, *Histoire*, vol. II.2, p. 81–86. On Yūḥannā (or Yaḥyā) ibn al-Biṭrīq, see Françoise Micheau, « Yaḥyā (or Yūḥannā) b. al-Biṭrīq », *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition [= EI^2^], vol. XI, p. 246 (the translator is called « probably a Mālikī », instead of Melkite!). Micheau provides a complete list of translations attributed to him; she also indicates that he was part of the team that went to Byzantine territory in search of manuscripts. Gerhard Endress suggests that he belonged to the circle of al-Kindī – see Gerhard Endress, « The Circle of al-Kindī: Early Arabic Translations from the Greek and the Rise of Islamic Philosophy », in Gerhard Endress, Remke Kruk (eds.), *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism: Studies on the Transmission of Greek*

of Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Biṭrīq worked under the auspices of the caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 754–775), who commissioned him to translate « some of [or: some material from] the ancient books » (*ašyāʾ min al-kutub al-qadīma*).[19]

Ibn al-Nadīm also claims that al-Biṭrīq translated Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* for the Persian astrologer ʿUmar ibn al-Farruḫān al-Ṭabarī (d. after 812).[20] If this information is correct, ʿUmar ibn al-Farruḫān's *tafsīr* of the *Tetrabiblos*, completed in 812 and extant in MS Uppsala, Universitetsbibliotek 203, would have to be based on al-Biṭrīq's translation.[21] It is, however, possible that ʿUmar ibn al-Farruḫān's version or paraphrase of the *Tetrabiblos* (if this is how the word *tafsīr* is to be understood) is derived from Middle Persian sources, as argued by several scholars.[22] This remains to be verified. There is perhaps also a third, harmonizing solution: ʿUmar ibn al-Farruḫān's *tafsīr* of the *Tetrabiblos* may be derived, by and large, from Middle Persian sources, but in producing this *tafsīr* he could have consulted al-Biṭrīq, who may have provided translation of select passages from the original Greek and/or helped resolve difficulties in the Middle Persian sources. If this last solution is to be adopted, this would imply that al-Biṭrīq was still alive in the early ninth century (more on this possibility below).

Philosophy and Sciences Dedicated to H.J. Drossaart Lulofs on His 90th Birthday, Research School CNWS, Leiden 1997, p. 43–76, at p. 55–58; GERHARD ENDRESS, « Building the Library of Arabic Philosophy: Platonism and Aristotelianism in the Sources of al-Kindī », in D'ANCONA (ed.), *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, p. 319–350, at p. 332.

19 IBN AL-NADĪM, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm, Abul-Faraǧ Muḥammad ibn Isḥáq Composed at 377 AH*, ed. AYMAN FUʾĀD SAYYID, al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, London 2009, vol. II.1, p. 144; cf. BAYARD DODGE (trans.), *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm: A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, 2 vol., Columbia University Press, New York-London 1970, vol. II, p. 586.

20 IBN AL-NADĪM, *Fihrist*, vol. II.1, p. 232; trans. DODGE, vol. II, p. 649–650.

21 For a description of the manuscript, see KARL VILHELM ZETTERSTÉEN, *Die arabischen, persischen, und türkischen Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek zu Uppsala*, Almqvist & Wiksells Boktrycheri-A.-B., Uppsala 1930–1935, vol. I, p. 94–96. On the Arabic *Tetrabiblos*, see FUAT SEZGIN, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* [= GAS], 16 vol., Brill, Leiden 1967–2015, vol. VII, p. 41–44 (refers to the Uppsala manuscript on p. 43, yet argues confusingly that ʿUmar ibn al-Farruḫān's commentary on the *Tetrabiblos* is not extant; cf. p. 113); GUTAS, *Greek Thought*, p. 109.

22 DAVID PINGREE, « ʿUmar ibn al-Farruḫān al-Ṭabarī », *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, vol. XIII, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York 1970, p. 538–539, at p. 538; CHARLES BURNETT, « The Certitude of Astrology: The Scientific Methodology of al-Qabīṣī and Abū Maʿshar », *Early Science and Medicine*, 7/3 (2002), p. 198–213, at p. 201. On ʿUmar ibn al-Farruḫān al-Ṭabarī, see also DAVID PINGREE, « The Ṣābians of Ḥarrān and the Classical Tradition », *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 9/1 (2002), p. 8–35, at p. 21–22, criticized by KEVIN VAN BLADEL, *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science*, Oxford University Press, Oxford–New York, 2009, p. 100, fn. 157.

Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa argues that al-Biṭrīq was a prolific and good translator, though inferior to Ḥunayn (*lahu naql kaṯīr ǧayyid, illā annahu dūna naql Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq*); he also claims that he saw many medical works by Hippocrates and Galen in al-Biṭrīq's Arabic versions.[23] One of al-Biṭrīq's Hippocrates translations is indeed extant in MS Istanbul, Ayasofya 3632: the *De alimento* / *Kitāb al-ġiḏāʾ* (fol. 106v–110r).[24] At least one Galenic translation is extant as well: Book VI of Galen's *On the Faculties and Powers of Simple Drugs* / *Fī l-adwiya al-mufrada* (MS Istanbul, Saray Ahmet III 2083), though the translator's name is not indicated in the manuscript.[25] Several other Galenic translations ascribed to al-Biṭrīq are mentioned in medieval sources.[26] Curiously enough, despite his involvement in medical translations, al-Biṭrīq is never mentioned in Ḥunayn's *Risāla*.[27]

I should now like to call attention to a hitherto unnoticed Syriac source, which possibly refers to al-Biṭrīq. This is a section of Bar-Hebraeus's *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum* that deals with the early years of Timothy's tenure as catholicos of the Church of the East (i.e., the early 780s). According to Bar-Hebraeus, a certain Joseph, the Nestorian metropolitan of Merv, who had been publicly convicted of « sodomy » (*sḏōmāyūṯā*), converted to Islam and plotted against the Christians. He claimed that the Nestorians were, effectively, the « fifth column » who prayed day and night for Byzantium's victory over the Muslims. A certain Byzantine *patrikios* was then summoned before the caliph, who, being aware of this allegation, helped refute it. Here is the relevant passage:

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[23] Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ fī ṭabaqat al-aṭibbāʾ*, ed. Nizār Riḍā, Dār Maktabat al-ḥayāh, Beirut [1965], p. 282; online edition, section 9.31: <https://dh.brill.com/scholarlyeditions/reader/urn:cts:arabicLit:0668IbnAbiUsaibia.Tabaqatalatibba.lhom-ed-ara1:9.31> (Accessed May 2021).

[24] John N. Mattock (ed. and trans.), *Kitāb Buqrāṭ fi ʾl-akhlāṭ / Hippocrates, On Humours and Kitāb al-ghidhāʾ li-Buqrāṭ / Hippocrates, On Nutriment*, W. Heffer and Sons, Cambridge 1971; online: <https://www.graeco-arabic-studies.org/single-text/text/mattock–122.html> (Accessed May 2021).

[25] Peter E. Pormann, « The Development of Translation Techniques from Greek into Syriac and Arabic: The Case of Galen's *On the Faculties and Powers of Simple Drugs*, Book Six », in Rotraud Hansberger, M. Afifi al-Akiti, Charles Burnett (eds.), *Medieval Arabic Thought: Essays in Honour of Fritz Zimmermann*, The Warburg Institute, London 2012, p. 143–162 (partially edits al-Biṭrīq's version in a tabular form along with the Greek original, Sergius of Rēšʿaynā's Syriac version, and a later Arabic translation probably by Ḥunayn).

[26] Dunlop, « Translations », p. 142–143; Nasrallah, *Histoire*, vol. II.2, p. 82.

[27] See, for example, Ḥunayn's discussion of Galen's *On Simple Drugs*: Lamoreaux, *Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq*, p. 66–69 (work No. 53). The following phrase may be an oblique reference to al-Biṭrīq's translation: « Yuḥannā ibn Māsawayh asked me to collate for him the second part of this book and correct it, which I did, although it would have been more accurate to translate it [anew] » (§56.11).

> There was there [i.e., in Baghdad] a certain Roman [i.e., Byzantine] *patrikios*, an honourable man, who was a prisoner (*īṯ (h)wā tamman paṭrīq (ʾ)nāš rūmāyā gaḇrā myaqrā d-asīr*). The caliph summoned him in and asked him about the Nestorians, what [the Byzantines] thought of them. The *patrikios*, having heard of the accursed Joseph's libel, wanted to confute him, and so responded as follows: « In our view, the Nestorians are not even Christians, and if any of them is present in [our] lands, we do not allow him to enter any of our churches. In truth, they are closer to the Arabs than to us ». In this way the caliph's anger was calmed.[28]

Bar-Hebraeus's source for this information seems to be contemporary with the events described: this may have been Timothy's lost letter to the people of Gondēšāpūr, in which he addressed Joseph of Merv's affair, or some other eighth-century document.[29] If the Byzantine *patrikios* (Syr. *paṭrīq(ā)*) mentioned by Bar-Hebraeus is, in fact, our translator al-Biṭrīq, as seems quite likely, this would serve to confirm an important point: that al-Biṭrīq was a prisoner of war.

The chronological setting of Bar-Hebraeus's report in the early 780s suggests that al-Biṭrīq may have been among the prisoners captured in 780 during the Muslim siege of Ṣamālū (Gr. τὸ Σημαλοῦος κάστρον = Cemele / modern Çayağzı midway between Caesarea / Kayseri and Ancyra / Ankara).[30] The campaign against Ṣamālū was led by the sixteen-year-old prince Hārūn – the future caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd (r. 786–809) – under the auspices of the Barmakids Ḫālid ibn Barmak (d. 781/2) and his son Yaḥyā ibn Ḫālid (d. 806), then Hārūn's tutor. The Ṣamālū garrison – « ten households together with the *komēs* » (*ʿašarat abyāt fīhim al-qūmis*), as al-Balāḏurī informs us – surrendered on the condition that their lives be spared and that they not be separated; they were then re-settled in the al-Šammāsiyya quarter in Baghdad.[31] Significantly, al-Šammāsiyya had been given by the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 775–785) as a fief (*iqṭāʿ*) to Ḫālid

[28] Bar-Hebraeus, *Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, ed. and trans. Joannes Baptista Abbeloos, Thomas Josephus Lamy, Section II, vol. III, Maisonneuve, Paris–Peeters, Louvain 1877, col. 173–174; David Wilmshurst (ed. and trans.), *Bar Hebraeus, The Ecclesiastical Chronicle*, Gorgias, Piscataway, NJ 2016, p. 360–363; the translation from Syriac is my own, though I have borrowed a few phrases from Wilmshurst. This passage is briefly referenced in Fiey, « Rūm », p. 373, fn. 43, but he does not draw the connection to al-Biṭrīq. The caliph mentioned in this passage is probably al-Mahdī (r. 775–785).

[29] Jean-Maurice Fiey, « Chrétientés syriaques du Ḫorāsān et du Ségestan », *Le Muséon*, 86 (1973), p. 75–104, esp. p. 83–84; cf. Raphaël J. Bidawid, *Les lettres du patriarche nestorien Timothée I*, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City 1956, p. 50.

[30] On the location of Ṣamālū, see Friedrich Hild, Marcell Restle, « Semaluos Kastron », *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantistik*, 23 (1974), p. 263–270.

[31] Fiey, « Rūm », p. 374–376.

ibn Barmak.[32] The possibility that some of the Ṣamālū prisoners of war became involved in translations in Baghdad – an activity sponsored by the Barmakids[33] – was raised by Jean-Maurice Fiey and was then imaginatively developed by Benjamin Jokisch.[34] Jokisch even attempted to identify al-Biṭrīq with Gregorios Mousoulakios, the *komēs* of Opsikion (the Byzantine theme in the northwestern Asia Minor), who also held the title of *patrikios*.[35] Though this identification – along with many other of Jokisch's extravagant theories – is to be rejected, the possibility that some of the Ṣamālū prisoners became involved in Graeco-Arabic translations ought to be considered seriously. If al-Biṭrīq was a prisoner of war, as suggested by Bar-Hebraeus's report, he may well have belonged to this group.

Of course, if this should be the case, we would need to modify al-Biṭrīq's *floruit*: he can no longer be considered as active during the reign of al-Manṣūr (r. 755–775), but during the second half of the reign of al-Mahdī (r. 775–785) and the reigns of his sons al-Hādī (r. 785–786) and Hārūn al-Rašīd (r. 786–809). This would help resolve the chronological difficulty arising from the fact that the *floruit* of al-Biṭrīq's son Yūḥannā (or Yaḥyā) ibn al-Biṭrīq is placed by the sources as late as the reign of al-Maʾmūn (r. 813–833). This would also help explain how al-Biṭrīq could have collaborated with ʿUmar ibn al-Farruḫān on a *tafsīr* of the *Tetrabiblos* completed in 812, as discussed above.

We know of yet another Barmakid-sponsored Graeco-Arabic translation project. According to an important note in the preface to the Arabic translation of Vindonius Anatolius of Berytus's *Collection of Agricultural Practices* (the « Anatolius B » version in Carlo Scardino's classification), « this [text] is [part] of the wisdom which the patriarch of Alexandria, the metropolitan of Damascus, and the monk Eustathius / Arsenius / Eusebius (?) extracted for Yaḥyā ibn Ḫālid ibn Barmak and translated from Greek into

[32] Ihsan Abbas, « Barmakids », in EIr, vol. III, p. 806–809; online: <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/barmakids> (Accessed May 2021); Fiey, « Rūm », p. 375; Benjamin Jokisch, *Islamic Imperial Law: Harun-Al-Rashid's Codification Project*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin–New York 2007, p. 84.

[33] On the Barmakids' sponsorship of translations (not only from Greek, of course, but even more so from Middle Iranian languages and Sanskrit), see Gutas, *Greek Thought*, p. 114 and 128–129; Kevin van Bladel, « The Bactrian Background of the Barmakids », in Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett, Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (eds.), *Islam and Tibet: Interactions along the Musk Routes*, Ashgate, Farnham and Burlington 2011, p. 43–88, esp. p. 74–86.

[34] Fiey, « Rūm », p. 386 and 415; Jokisch, *Islamic Imperial Law*, p. 81–90.

[35] Jokisch, *Islamic Imperial Law*, p. 83–88; for a detailed refutation of Jokisch's arguments, see Wolfram Brandes, [Review of Jokisch, *Islamic Imperial Law*], *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 103/1 (2010), p. 216–230, esp. p. 224–225.

Arabic; this took place in the month of Rabīʿ al-Awwal [MS G] / Rabīʿ al-Āḫar [MS S] of the year 179 [AH] », i.e., 795 CE.[36]

In this team of Melkite clerics, the patriarch of Alexandria must be Politianus (patriarch 140–186 AH / 757–802 CE).[37] Indeed, as we know from Eutychius, Politianus, who was a physician by training, visited Baghdad and healed Hārūn al-Rašīd's concubine; this is supposed to have taken place *c.* 796.[38] Though Eutychius's report suggests that Politianus was specifically summoned to Baghdad to heal the concubine, it is more likely that he had arrived in Baghdad earlier on ecclesiastical business – to plead with the caliph to restore to the Melkites church buildings appropriated by the Jacobites, which is the goal specifically mentioned by Eutychius – and stayed there long enough to participate in the Anatolius translation project completed in 795 and to heal the concubine *c.* 796.[39]

We do not know who was the Melkite metropolitan of Damascus in 795,[40] but it is very tempting to identify him with the translator Basīl al-Muṭrān mentioned in the

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[36] Carlo Scardino, *Edition antiker landwirtschaftlicher Werke in arabischer Sprache, Band I: Prolegomena*, Walter de Gruyter, Boston–Berlin 2015, p. 201–204. Scardino provides a critical edition of the preface based on the only two known manuscripts of the text: G = MS Madrid, Gayangos 30 and S = MS Aleppo, Salem, Ar. 377 [*olim* Sbath 1200]; I thank the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library for facilitating access to the Aleppo manuscript: <https://www.vhmml.org/readingRoom/view/501336> (Accessed May 2021). I am reproducing the Arabic text here with two corrections (explained below): وهو من الحكمة التي استخرجها بطرك الإسكندرية ومطربليط* دمشق وأوستثي** الراهب ليحيى بن خالد بن برمك وفسّروه من الرومي إلى العربي، وذلك في شهر ربيع الأوّل / الآخر من سنة تسع وسبعين ومائة. At (*) G reads مكرليط, which is, obviously, a corruption of مطربليط; S reads مطران: clearly, مطربليط was the original reading, which became corrupted in G and was replaced by a less archaic term in S. At (**) G reads أرسبح; S reads أويسح, which is then corrected to أويسي: clearly, the final /ḥ/ in both manuscripts is a misreading of the original final /y/ with the tail pointing backwards. أوستثي (Eustathius – more commonly, however, spelled أسطاث), أرسني (Arsenius), and أوسبي (Eusebius) are possible readings. Scardino corrects the text to أوسطات (Eustathius), following Sbath's conjecture; cf. Endress, « Building the Library », p. 348, fn. 85.

[37] Politianus's dates are given by Eutychius as « four years into the caliphate of [al-Manṣūr] » (i.e., 140 AH / 757–8 CE) till « sixteen years from the caliphate of [Hārūn] al-Rašīd » (i.e., 186 AH / 802 CE); he is said to have been patriarch forty-six years (lunar years are clearly meant here) – see Eutychius, *Eutychii patriarchae Alexandrini Annales*, ed. Louis Cheikho, vol. II, Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, Louvain 1960 (CSCO 51 / Scriptores Arabici 7), p. 49:14–15 and 52:12–16. von Gutschmid proposed a revised chronology, according to which Politianus died in 197/813 – see Alfred von Gutschmid, « Verzeichniss der Patriarchen von Alexandrien », in Franz Rühl (ed.), *Kleine Schriften von Alfred von Gutschmid*, Teubner, Leipzig 1890, vol. II, p. 395–525, at p. 484; this revised chronology is often cited and accepted.

[38] Eutychius, *Annales*, p. 51:20–52:11.

[39] On Melkite temporary visitors to Baghdad, see Fiey, « Rūm », p. 385–387.

[40] For a fairly complete listing of all the known Melkite metropolitans of Damascus, see Klaus-Peter Todt, « Griechisch-Orthodoxe (melkitische) Christen im zentralen und südlichen Syrien: Die Periode von

Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadīm and by Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa.[41] The monk Eustathius / Arsenius / Eusebius (?) is otherwise unknown. It is, however, possible, that he is the superior of the Melkite Egyptian monastery Dayr al-Quṣayr (south of modern Cairo) and the future patriarch of Alexandria Eustathius, who took office after Politianus's death. This conjecture, originally put forward by Paul Sbath,[42] is strengthened by two facts: (1) Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Tamīmī (d. 980) in his *Kitāb al-Muršid* cites the *Kitāb al-Filāḥa al-rūmiyya* and claims that it was translated into Arabic by (or under the auspices of) « the patriarch Eustathius » (*Usṭāṯ al-baṭriyarḫ*);[43] (2) Ḥāǧǧī Ḫalīfa (d. 1657) names a certain Eustathius (spelled Usṭās) among the Arabic translators of the closely related *Kitāb al-Filāḥa al-rūmiyya*.[44] Whatever the case might be, this Eustathius (if this is the correct reading of his name) must be differentiated from the translator Usṭāṯ, who – some forty years later – worked for al-Kindī.

Whatever the exact identification of the translators involved in the Anatolius project, we have evidence of three Melkite clergymen collaborating on a Graeco–Arabic translation under Barmakid patronage. Moreover, the heading of « Anatolius

der arabischen Eroberung bis zur Verlegung der Patriarchenresidenz nach Damaskus (635–1365) », *Le Muséon*, 119/1–2 (2006), p. 33–88, at p. 68–70 and 73.

41 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, vol. II.1, p. 146; trans. Dodge, vol. II, p. 587; Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ*, p. 281; online edition, section 9.18: <https://dh.brill.com/scholarlyeditions/reader/urn:cts:arabicLit:0668IbnAbiUsaibia.Tabaqatalatibba.lhom-ed-ara1:9.18> (Accessed May 2021). To stay on the side of caution, this Basil (spelled Basīl) should perhaps be distinguished from another Basil (spelled Bāsīl), who served al-Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn Ḏū l-Yamīnayn (see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, vol. II.1, p. 148; trans. Dodge, vol. II, p. 588), given that Ibn al-Nadīm includes both Basils in the same list of translators; some scholars, however, conflate the two Basils – see, e.g., Gerhard Endress, « Die wissenschaftliche Literatur », in Wolfdietrich Fischer, Helmut Gätje (eds.), *Grundriß der arabischen Philologie*, Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, Wiesbaden 1982–1992, vol. II, p. 400–506 and vol. III, p. 3–152, at vol. II, p. 424, fn. 60. It is unclear which of the two Basils translated the first four books of Porphyry's commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* – the *Fihrist* (Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, vol. II.1, p. 167; trans. Dodge, vol. II, p. 603) simply says « Basīl translated it »; the spelling with the short /a/ seems to point to Basīl al-Muṭrān, but the absence of « al-Muṭrān » makes this less certain.

42 Paul Sbath, « L'ouvrage géoponique d'Anatolius de Bérytos (IV^e^ siècle): Manuscrit arabe découvert par le R. P. Paul Sbath », *Bulletin d'Institut d'Égypte*, 13 (1931), p. 47–54, p. 49; cf. Paul Sbath, *Bibliothèque de manuscrits Paul Sbath*, Imp. « Au Prix Coûtant », Cairo 1934, vol. III, p. 61 (description of MS Sbath 1200 = the present MS Aleppo, Salem, Ar. 377).

43 MS London, British Library, Or. 9010, fol. 47v: فمنها شرابان ذكرهما يونيوس بن أناطوليس البيروتي واضع كتاب الفلاحة الرومية في المقالة السابعة من كتابه هذا وهو الذي تولّى ترجمتَه ونقلَه من اليوناني إلى اللسان العربي أسطاث البطريرخ. This reference was unearthed by Ullmann – see Manfred Ullmann, *Die Nikomachische Ethik des Aristoteles in arabischer Übersetzung*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 2011–2012, vol. II, p. 17 (I was unable to consult the manuscript). On al-Tamīmī, see also Manfred Ullmann, *Die Medizin im Islam*, E. J. Brill, Leiden–Köln 1970, p. 269–270.

44 Scardino, *Edition*, p. 238.

B » implies that the same team produced other Graeco-Arabic translations as well: « Anatolius B » is said to be « [part] of the wisdom » (*min al-ḥikma*) which the team « extracted for Yaḥyā ibn Ḫālid ibn Barmak and translated from Greek into Arabic » (*istaḫraǧaha ... li-Yaḥyā ibn Ḫālid ibn Barmak wa-fassarūhu min al-rūmī ilā l-ʿarabī*).[45]

With the onset of the ninth century, the Melkites continued to play an important role in Graeco-Arabic translations. At least two Melkite translators worked for the ʿAbbāsid general and governor al-Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn, nicknamed « the ambidextrous » (*Ḏū l-Yamīnayni*) for his ability to wield a sword with either hand. These are:

(1) a certain Basil (spelled Bāsīl), who may or may not be identical with the aforementioned Basīl al-Muṭrān and may or may not be the one to whom a translation of the first four books of Porphyry's commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* is ascribed; we do not know what specifically this Basil translated for al-Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn (this *could* be Porphyry's commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* or something else);[46]

(2) the famous Melkite theologian Theodore Abū Qurra, who translated the Pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *De virtutibus animae*.[47] This translation was probably prepared *c.* 816, when al-Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn was stationed in the north-Syrian city al-Raqqa (the ancient Callinicum) and when, according to Michael the Syrian's testimony, he engaged in the study of philosophy.[48]

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[45] According to Sonja Brentjes, « the preface to one of the two extant Arabic manuscripts of Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Nayrīzī's (d. ca. 922) commented edition of the *Elements* report[s] that al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf b. Maṭar translated the *Elements* either for the Abbasid caliph al-Hārūn [*sic*] al-Rashīd (r. 786–809) or on order of his vizier Yaḥyā b. Khālid al-Barmakī (ex. 805) » – see Sonja Brentjes, « An Exciting New Arabic Version of Euclid's *Elements*: MS Mumbai, Mullā Fīrūz R.I.6 », *Revue d'histoire des mathématiques*, 12 (2006), p. 169–197, at p. 171. If so, this may be another Graeco-Arabic project conducted under Barmakid patronage. The situation with the Arabic Euclid, however, turns out to be extremely complex – see Sonja Brentjes, « Who Translated Euclid's *Elements* into Arabic? », in Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, Ilkka Lindstedt (eds.), *Translation and Transmission: Collection of Articles*, Ugarit-Verlag, Münster 2018, p. 21–54.

[46] See fn. 41 above.

[47] Mechthild Kellermann, « Ein pseudoaristotelischer Traktat über die Tugend: Edition und Übersetzung der arabischen Fassungen des Abū Qurra und des Ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib », Ph.D. Diss., Friedrich-Alexander-Universität zu Erlangen–Nürnberg 1965. On Theodore Abū Qurra, see John C. Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, Brigham Young University Press, Provo, UT 2005; Alexander Treiger, « New Works by Theodore Abū Qurra, Preserved under the Name of Thaddeus of Edessa », *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 68/1–2 (2016), p. 1–51.

[48] Kellermann, « Ein pseudoaristotelischer Traktat », p. 24–25.

Most significantly, the Melkites seem to have played a central role in the « circle of al-Kindī » – a workshop of Christian translators, founded, directed, and financed by the Arab Muslim aristocrat and prominent philosopher al-Kindī (d. *c.* 870), who was a tutor to prince Aḥmad, son of the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Muʿtaṣim (r. 833–842).[49] Owing especially to Gerhard Endress's research, we are well-informed about the activity of the circle of al-Kindī.[50] Its literary output included Arabic translations and adaptations of such works as Plotinus's *Enneads* IV-VI (translated by ʿAbd al-Masīḥ Ibn Nāʿima al-Ḥimṣī and transmitted in three texts, the most important of which is the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*),[51] sections of Proclus's *Elements of Theology* and other works,[52] Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (translated by a certain Eustathius / Usṭāṯ),[53] and several others. The translator Yūḥannā (or Yaḥyā) ibn al-Biṭrīq, the son of al-Biṭrīq the Byzantine *patrikios* mentioned earlier, may have also belonged to the circle of al-Kindī. He is credited with an Arabic paraphrase of Plato's *Timaeus* (no longer extant), Arabic translations of Aristotle's *De caelo*, *Meteorology*, and some zoological works, an Arabic paraphrase of Aristotle's *De anima*, and Arabic translations of several medical works.[54]

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[49] Peter Adamson, *al-Kindī*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007; Peter Adamson and Peter E. Pormann, *The Philosophical Works of al-Kindī*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2012.

[50] Endress, « The Circle of al-Kindī »; Endress, « Building the Library ».

[51] Fritz W. Zimmermann, « The Origins of the So-Called *Theology of Aristotle* », in Jill Kraye, William F. Ryan, Charles B. Schmitt (eds.), *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The* Theology *and Other Texts*, The Warburg Institute, London 1986, p. 110–240; Maroun Aouad, « La *Theologie d'Aristote* et autres textes du Plotinus Arabus », in Richard Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques* [= DPA], 7 vol. in 9 parts, CNRS, Paris 1989–2018, vol. I, p. 541–590; Peter Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus: A Philosophical Study of the* Theology of Aristotle, Duckworth, London 2002.

[52] Gerhard Endress, *Proclus Arabus: Zwanzig Abschnitte aus der* Institutio theologica *in arabischer Übersetzung*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Beirut–Wiesbaden 1973; Cristina D'Ancona Costa, *Recherches sur le* Liber de Causis, J. Vrin, Paris 1995; Elvira Wakelnig, *Feder, Tafel, Mensch: al-ʿĀmirīs* Kitāb al-Fuṣūl fī l-Maʿālim al-ilāhīya *und die arabische Proklos-Rezeption im 10. Jh.*, Brill, Leiden–Boston 2006; Gerhard Endress, « Proclus de Lycie: Œuvres transmises par la tradition arabe », in DPA, vol. V.2, p. 1657–1674; Dragos Calma (ed.), *Reading Proclus and the* Book of Causes, 2 vol., Brill, Leiden–Boston 2019–2021.

[53] Amos Bertolacci, « On the Arabic Translations of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* », *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 15 (2005), p. 241–275. Though it is sometimes argued that Eustathius / Usṭāṯ – the translator of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* from Greek into Arabic – was a Jacobite, based on the fact that there is a ninth-century Jacobite apologetic work in Arabic, ascribed to a certain « monk Usṭāth » (Mark N. Swanson, « 'Our Brother, the Monk Eustathius': A Ninth-Century Syrian Orthodox Theologian Known to Medieval Arabophone Copts », *Coptica*, 1 (2002), p. 119–140; Zimmermann, « Origins », p. 136), the identity of the two Usṭāṯs – Usṭāṯ the translator and Usṭāṯ the apologist – is questionable, especially as Usṭāṯ's apology does not exhibit familiarity with Greek philosophy.

[54] Dunlop, « Translations »; Nasrallah, *Histoire*, vol. II.2, p. 82–86; Micheau, « Yaḥyā (or Yūḥannā) b. al-Biṭrīq »; Endress, « The Circle of al-Kindī », p. 55–58; Rüdiger Arnzen, *Aristoteles' De anima: Eine verlorene*

All of al-Kindī's Christian translators seem to have been « Westerners » rather than « Easterners » – and most of them, it would seem, were Melkites.

In the case of one of them, ʿAbd al-Masīḥ Ibn Nāʿima al-Ḥimṣī, both the Melkite and the Maronite scenarios seem possible. I have explored this subject in an earlier study entitled « Palestinian Origenism and the Early History of the Maronites: In Search of the Origins of the Arabic *Theology of Aristotle* ».[55] There, I attempted to trace the confessional and educational background of ʿAbd al-Masīḥ Ibn Nāʿima al-Ḥimṣī. In the absence of substantial biographical information about him, I had to rely on the only five known facts: (1) he was a Christian from the city of Homs in western Syria; (2) he worked for al-Kindī; (3) he translated directly from Greek rather than Syriac,[56] though he may have known Syriac as well;[57] (4) he had access to a Greek manuscript of Plotinus (and may have been operative in procuring it for al-Kindī); (5) he produced a sophisticated Arabic adaptation of Plotinus.

My argument can be summarized as follows: ʿAbd al-Masīḥ Ibn Nāʿima's provenance from Homs makes it certain that he was a « Westerner » (i.e., a Melkite, a Maronite, or a Jacobite) rather than an « Easterner » (a member of the Church of the East). The fact that he translated from Greek rather than Syriac makes it unlikely that he was a Jacobite.[58] We are therefore left with two scenarios: that he was a Melkite or that he was a Maronite. In either case, the fact that he produced a sophisticated Arabic adaptation of Plotinus indicates that he had a strong background in philosophy, including Neoplatonism.

Building on Sebastian Brock's path-breaking article « A Syriac Intermediary for the Arabic *Theology of Aristotle*? In Search of a Chimera », I suggested that the best way to

spätantike Paraphrase in arabischer und persischer Überlieferung: Arabischer Text nebst Kommentar, quellengeschichtlichen Studien und Glossaren, E. J. Brill, Leiden–New York 1998, esp. p. 145–174.

55 Treiger, « Palestinian Origenism ».

56 Sebastian P. Brock, « A Syriac Intermediary for the Arabic *Theology of Aristotle*? In Search of a Chimera », in D'Ancona (ed.), *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, p. 293–306; cf. Zimmermann, « Origins », p. 115.

57 It is possible, but not entirely certain, that al-Ḥimṣī knew Syriac. Ibn al-Nadīm indicates that al-Ḥimṣī translated Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations* [from Greek] *into Syriac*, and subsequently Ibrāhīm ibn Bakkūš translated his translation into Arabic while correcting it. This information may or may not be correct. It is significant that the oldest extant *Arabic* translation of the *Sophistical Refutations* is attributed to « al-Nāʿimī », i.e., presumably, ʿAbd al-Masīḥ ibn Nāʿima al-Ḥimṣī; however, it makes no mention of Ibrāhīm ibn Bakkūš and is possibly translated directly from Greek rather than Syriac. For an overview of the Syriac and Arabic transmission of the *Sophistical Refutations*, see Henri Hugonnard-Roche, « Les *Réfutations Sophistiques* », in DPA, vol. I, p. 526–528; Gerhard Endress and Pieter S. Hasper, « The Arabic Tradition of Aristotle's *Sophistici Elenchi* », *Studia Graeco-Arabica*, 10 (2020), p. 59–110.

58 Treiger, « Palestinian Origenism », p. 59–62.

account for ʿAbd al-Masīḥ Ibn Nāʿima's philosophical expertise, as well as for the fact that he had access to a Greek manuscript of Plotinus – in the ninth-century Middle East a rare commodity indeed – is a background in Christian Platonism: the intellectual movement which had been condemned by the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553 under the umbrella of « Origenism ». Consequently, the question of ʿAbd al-Masīḥ Ibn Nāʿima's philosophical training can be redefined in terms of a survival of Christian Platonism (« Origenism ») after the Fifth Ecumenical Council all the way to the ninth century. I have argued that such a survival is possible and, indeed, plausible among the Chalcedonian Christians of the Middle East: both Melkites and Maronites. Though – despite some tantalizing clues[59] – we are still very much in the dark about the historical specifics of this survival, I would argue that the very fact of Neoplatonism's resurgence with al-Kindī can be regarded as a testimony to a continuous Platonizing trend among contemporary Middle Eastern Christians.[60]

In another recent study, I have presented further evidence of Chalcedonian / Melkite involvement: one passage from al-Kindī's *Book of Definitions* originates from Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*. This is the famous definition of *ʿišq* (=ἔρως) as *ifrāṭ al-maḥabba* (« excess of love »), which is derived from Gregory of Nyssa's phrase ἐπιτεταμένη γὰρ ἀγάπη ὁ ἔρως λέγεται (« for eros is said to be excessive / intense love »).[61] I am calling this definition famous, because in its Arabic garb it appears in a wide variety of Muslim and Jewish authors, e.g., philosophers of the Kindian tradition (al-Saraḫsī and Miskawayh), the tenth-century Jewish Neoplatonic philosopher Isaac Israeli of Kairouan, the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity,

[59] Treiger, « Palestinian Origenism », p. 62–66.

[60] On the so-called « Kindian tradition » in Arabic philosophy, see Peter Adamson, « The Kindian Tradition: The Structure of Philosophy in Arabic Neoplatonism », in D'Ancona (ed.), *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, p. 351–370; Hans-Hinrich Biesterfeldt, Elvira Wakelnig, Gerhard Endress, Cleophea Ferrari, « The Beginnings of the Islamic Philosophy in the Tradition of al-Kindī », in PIW, p. 221–380. On Ismāʿīlī reception of Neoplatonism, see Paul E. Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiism: The Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993; cf. Paul E. Walker, « Platonisms in Islamic Philosophy », *Studia Islamica*, 79 (1994), p. 5–25.

[61] Alexander Treiger, « From Dionysius to al-Ġazālī: Patristic Influences on Arabic Neoplatonism », *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World*, 9/1–2 (2021), p. 189–236, at p. 219 – see Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Homily 13, *Patrologia Graeca* [= PG], vol. XLIV, col. 1048C; Hermann Langerbeck (ed.), *Gregorii Nysseni in Canticum canticorum*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1960 (Gregorii Nysseni Opera, 6), p. 383, l. 9; cf. Jean Daniélou, *Platonisme et théologie mystique: Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse*, Aubier, Paris 1944, p. 206; Robert Beulay, *La Lumière sans forme: Introduction à l'étude de la mystique chrétienne syro-orieniale*, Éditions de Chevetogne, Chevetogne 1987, p. 128; Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena*, Brill, Leiden 2013, p. 395.

the thirteenth-century Muslim mystic Ibn al-Dabbāġ, and the twelfth-century Judaeo-Arabic Ṣūfī author Abraham he-Ḥāsîd.[62] I can now confirm that this Arabic definition is derived directly from the Greek (whether of Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentary on the Song of Songs* or of a later Greek source that cites it) rather than the intermediate Syriac translation of Gregory of Nyssa.[63]

This information complements the important observation made by Tamar Frank in her Yale doctoral dissertation from 1975 (written under the supervision of Franz Rosenthal) that several entries in al-Kindī's *Book of Definitions* originate from John of Damascus's *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, chapter 36 [II.22].[64] This fact is particularly significant because it confirms that al-Kindī's Christian collaborators involved in the production of the *Book of Definitions* – his « research assistants », so to speak – were Melkites.

III. *Nestorian Translators*

The Melkites' main rivals in the translation business were scholars of the Church of the East. The ʿAbbāsid revolution and the founding of Baghdad provided this Christian community with a much-needed opportunity to regain its influence at the caliphal court and reassert itself as the dominant, quasi-official form of Christianity in the

[62] See references provided in Treiger, « From Dionysius to al-Ġazālī », p. 219.

[63] For the Syriac text of this passage from Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentary of the Song of Songs*, see MS Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. syr. 106, fol. 140v, col. 2–3: ܪܚܡܬܐ ܓܝܪ ܗܝ ܕܐܬܬ ܠܗ̇ ܠܬܪܒܝܬܐ ܡܬܢܓܕܬܐ ܪܓܬܐ ܡܬܩܪܝܐ. On this Syriac translation, see Ceslas van den Eynde, *La version syriaque du Commentaire de Grégoire de Nysse sur le Cantique des Cantiques: ses origines, ses témoins, son influence*, Bureau du Muséon, Louvain 1939. Though Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentary of the Song of Songs* was also translated into Arabic, this took place much later, in the eleventh century; the translator is, probably, ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Faḍl of Antioch – see Alexandre M. Roberts, *Reason and Revelation in Byzantine Antioch: The Christian Translation Program of Abdallah ibn al-Fadl*, University of California Press, Oakland 2020, p. 45. To the list of manuscripts provided in Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, 5 vol., Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City 1944–1953, vol. I, p. 332–333, the following should be added: MSS Sinai ar. 278 (*c.* thirteenth cent.); Sinai ar. 279 (*c.* twelfth cent.); New Haven, Beinecke, ar. 349 (year 1750); Damascus, Rūm Orthodox Patriarchate, 117 (year 1643), No. 6; Damascus, Rūm Orthodox Patriarchate, 271 (year 1828), No. 1; Ḥarīṣā, Bibliothèque des missionnaires de Saint Paul, 36 (year 1797). The section containing the phrase ἐπιτεταμένη γὰρ ἀγάπη ὁ ἔρως λέγεται seems to be omitted in this Arabic translation – see MS Sinai ar. 278, fol. 242r.

[64] Tamar Z. Frank, « Al-Kindī's *Book of Definitions*: Its Place in Arabic Definition Literature », Ph.D. Diss., Yale University 1975, p. 58–59. John of Damascus's main source for this section is Maximus the Confessor's *Opuscula theologica et polemica*.

Islamic empire.[65] It is for this reason that Timothy I, catholicos of the Church of the East for over forty years (r. 780–823), relocated his patriarchal residence from the old Sasanian capital of Seleucia-Ctesiphon to Baghdad. He quickly established himself as the pre-eminent Christian official of the Caliphate and in this capacity engaged in presenting the Christian faith to the Muslim rulers, as evidenced by his famous disputation with the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 775–785).[66]

As is well known, al-Mahdī commissioned Timothy to prepare an Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Topics*. The way Timothy himself tells the story in one of his Syriac letters written *c.* 782/3 is quite remarkable:

> The royal command required us to translate the *Topika* of the philosopher Aristotle from Syriac into the Arabic tongue. This was achieved, with God's help, through the agency of the teacher Abū Nūḥ [al-Anbārī]. A small part was done by us as far as the Syriac is concerned, whereas he did it in its entirety, both Syriac and Arabic; the work has already reached a conclusion and has been completed. And although there were some others who were translating this from Greek into Arabic – we have written to inform you how and in what way it happened that all this took place – nevertheless (the king) did not consider it worth even looking at the labours of those other people on the grounds that they were barbaric, not only in phraseology, but also in sense, whether because of the natural difficulty of the subject [...] or as a result of the lack of training of those who approached such things. For you know the extent and magnitude of the toils and labours such a task requires. But (the king) entirely approved of our labours, all the more so when from time to time he compared the versions with each other.[67]

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[65] For the status of the Church of the East under early Islamic, especially ʿAbbāsid rule, see Cécile Cabrol, *Les secrétaires nestoriens à Bagdad (762–1258 AD)*, CERPOC, Beirut 2012; Marijke Metselaar, *Die Nestorianer und der frühe Islam: Wechselwirkungen zwischen den ostsyrischen Christen und ihren arabischen Nachbarn*, P. Lang, Frankfurt am Main 2009; Silke Abele, *Der politisch-gesellschaftliche Einfluss der nestorianischen Ärzte am Hofe der Abbasidenkalifen von al-Manṣūr bis al-Mutawakkil*, Verlag Dr. Kovač, Hamburg 2008.

[66] For the original Syriac text and English translation of the dialogue, see Alphonse Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies*, W. Heffer & Sons, Cambridge 1928, vol. II, p. 1–162; the Syriac text is now available in a critical edition with a German translation: Martin Heimgartner, *Timotheos I., Ostsyrischer Patriarch, Disputation mit dem Kalifen al-Mahdī*, 2 vol., Peeters, Louvain 2011 (CSCO 631–631 / Scriptores Syri 244–245); Arabic version (an early medieval translation from Syriac) and French translation: Hans Putman, *L'église et l'islam sous Timothée I (780–823): Étude sur l'église nestorienne au temps des premiers ʿAbbāsides avec nouvelle édition et traduction du Dialogue entre Timothée et al-Mahdī*, Dār al-Mašriq, Beirut 1975.

[67] I am citing the letter in Sebastian Brock's translation – see Sebastian P. Brock, « Two Letters of the Patriarch Timothy from the Late Eighth Century on Translations from Greek », *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 9 (1999), p. 233–246, Letter 43, §2, p. 235–236; cf. commentary, p. 240–241. For the Syriac text, see Martin Heimgartner, *Die Briefe 42-58 des ostsyrischen Patriarchen Timotheos I.*, 2 vol., Peeters,

Who were those hapless « others » involved in the translation of the *Topics* (and presumably other philosophical and scientific works) about whom Timothy speaks with triumphalism? Given that they worked *from Greek* (as opposed to Syriac) into Arabic, it seems evident that these « others » were Melkites – such as Timothy's contemporary al-Biṭrīq. Timothy's scornful remark about the « barbaric » style of their translations is surely in reference to their language, which must have been the Melkite Middle Arabic of the time, far removed from Classical Arabic standards.[68] His comment about the translators' « lack of training » must refer to the fact that they were still – in these early stages of the translation movement – simple Melkite clerics, monks, and (as we have seen) prisoners of war who lacked thorough training in philosophy and the sciences. When Timothy was commissioned to prepare an Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Topics*, he must have seized this opportunity not in the least with a view to demonstrating to the caliph that professionals of the Church of the East could outdo their ecclesiastical rivals. Interestingly, however, Timothy also acknowledges his debt to the future Melkite patriarch of Antioch Job (patriarch before 799–*c.* 839) for his assistance with some difficult Greek terms.[69] Competition with Melkite translators thus did not exclude cooperation. We shall see further examples of such interconfessional cooperation below.

Providing valuable services to the caliphal court and the Muslim elites – like the translation of the *Topics* – was thus, for the Church of the East, an important instrument of regaining its influence and prestige in an atmosphere of intense rivalry between Christian groups. It is no doubt for the same reason that a few generations later the Church of the East maintained and supported what might be called an « academic translation workshop » under the leadership of Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq – a bilingual (Syriac-Arabic) Nestorian Christian from al-Ḥīra, who had come to master

Louvain 2012 (CSCO 644-645 / Scriptores Syri 248-249), Syriac text: vol. I, p. 65–66 / German trans.: vol. II, p. 47–49 (sections 43,1–4). For the social context, see Gutas, *Greek Thought*, p. 61–69.

[68] On the « inferior style » (i.e., Middle Arabic register) of early translations, see Gutas, *Greek Thought*, p. 137–138. On Christian Middle Arabic, see Joshua Blau, *A Grammar of Christian Arabic, Based Mainly on South-Palestinian Texts from the First Millennium*, 3 vol., Secrétariat du CSCO, Louvain 1966–1967 (CSCO 267, 276, 279 / Subsidia 27–29); Joshua Blau, « A Melkite Arabic Literary *lingua franca* from the Second Half of the First Millennium », *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 57/1 (1994), p. 14–16; but cf. Johannes Pahlitzsch, « Some Remarks on the Use of *Garšūnī* and Other Allographic Writing Systems by the Melkites », *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World*, 7 (2019), p. 278–298, at p. 280 (with reference to Johannes den Heijer's and Samir Khalil Samir's research – these scholars are skeptical of this notion of a specifically Melkite or Christian Middle Arabic variety).

[69] Brock, « Two Letters », p. 239, 242, and 246. On the patriarch Job of Antioch, cf. Alexander Treiger, « The Beginnings of the Graeco-Syro-Arabic Melkite Translation Movement in Antioch », *Scrinium*, 16 (2020), p. 306–332, at p. 306–311.

Greek.[70] Though several of Ḥunayn's patrons were Muslims, others were Nestorian Christians, particularly physicians, whose preferred language was Syriac and who therefore commissioned translations from Greek into Syriac rather than Arabic.

Like Timothy before him, Ḥunayn, too, frequently found fault with other Christian translators: in his case it was often a matter of criticizing – and revising – earlier translations of Galen into Syriac and Arabic, prepared by specialists from rival ecclesiastical factions.[71] Ḥunayn's son Isḥāq and other members of Ḥunayn's team were active in revising philosophical translations as well as preparing new ones with a view to supplanting earlier versions. Thus, Isḥāq's Arabic translation of Aristotle's *De anima* – to take just one example – may have been attempted with the specific goal of supplanting the Arabic paraphrase of the *De anima* translated by Yūḥannā (Yaḥyā) ibn al-Biṭrīq as well as an earlier version of the *De anima* (the so-called « Pseudo-Isḥāq ») and of producing a « definitive » translation of this Aristotelian treatise.[72]

From the perspective of intra-Christian ecclesiastical politics, Ḥunayn's translation workshop functioned, in many ways, as a Nestorian competitor of the circle of al-Kindī. This dovetails well, and sheds further light on, the fascinating examples, pointed out by Endress, of the bitter rivalry between al-Kindī on the one hand and

[70] In the early ʿAbbāsid period, Greek was more readily available to the Melkites, who still maintained it in their Church services, and to a lesser degree to the Jacobites and the Maronites, than it was to the Nestorians. The Nestorians, in fact, had to make a special effort to familiarize themselves with Greek. On Ḥunayn's acquisition of Greek, see Gotthard Strohmaier, « Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq: An Arab Scholar Translating into Syriac », *Aram*, 3 (1991), p. 163–170, at p. 165–166. For more on Ḥunayn's and his team's translations, see the references provided in fn. 13 above.

[71] Notably, Sergius of Rēšʿaynā (6th century) and Ḥunayn's older contemporary Job of Edessa (Ayyūb al-Ruhāwī, d. after 832) – see Sebastian P. Brock, « The Syriac Background to Ḥunayn's Translation Techniques », *Aram*, 3 (1991), p. 139–162, esp. p. 141–142. Job of Edessa is often considered to be a Nestorian (and this much is affirmed by Bar-Hebraeus), but his Edessene origin makes this somewhat unlikely, and it is for this reason that Alphonse Mingana, the editor of Job's only surviving Syriac work, *The Book of Treasures*, assumed that he was a Melkite or a Jacobite who converted to the Church of the East at some point in his life – see Barbara Roggema, « Job of Edessa », in David Thomas et. al. (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History* [= CMR], 16 vol. to date, Brill, Leiden 2009–in progress, vol. I, p. 502–509, here p. 503. The question of Job of Edessa's confessional affiliation merits a special investigation.

[72] On Isḥāq's translation of the *De anima*, see Alexander Treiger, « Reconstructing Isḥāq ibn Ḥunayn's Arabic Translation of Aristotle's *De anima* », *Studia Graeco-Arabica*, 7 (2017), p. 193–211. (For reasons unknown to us Isḥāq's translation remained incomplete: it reached only as far as 431a14, i.e., near the middle of *De anima*, III 7.) On the Arabic paraphrase of the *De anima*, see Arnzen, *Aristoteles'* De anima. On the earlier Arabic version of the *De anima* (curiously, misattributed to Isḥāq ibn Ḥunayn in the manuscript – hence « Pseudo-Isḥāq »), see Arnzen, *Aristoteles'* De anima, p. 690–707.

Ḥunayn's Muslim sponsors, the three mathematicians Banū Mūsā on the other.[73] Al-Kindī was an Arab Philhellene and, for this reason, got along particularly well with Melkites.[74] The Banū Mūsā, by contrast, were Iranians of Ḫurāsānī origin, sympathetic to the Persian nationalist Šuʿūbiyya movement; their Christian collaborators were thus, predictably, members of the Christian community that had had a long history in Iranian lands: the Nestorian Church of the East.

This rivalry between Melkite and Nestorian translators is echoed in the much-discussed passage by the Muslim scholar al-Ṣafadī (d. 1363) contrasting the literal (*ad verbum*) method of translation with translation according to sense (*ad sensum*).

> The translators use two methods of translation. One of them is that of Yuḥannā b. al-Biṭrīq, Ibn an-Nāʿimah al-Ḥimṣī and others. According to this method, the translator studies each individual Greek word and its meaning, chooses an Arabic word of corresponding meaning and uses it. Then he turns to the next word and proceeds in the same manner until in the end he has rendered into Arabic the text he wishes to translate. This method is bad for two reasons. First, it is impossible to find Arabic expressions corresponding to all Greek words and, therefore, through this method many Greek words remain untranslated. Second, certain syntactical combinations in the one language do not always necessarily correspond to similar combinations in the other; besides, the use of metaphors, which are frequent in every language, causes additional mistakes. The second method is that of Ḥunain b. Isḥāq, al-Jauharī and others. Here the translator considers a whole sentence, ascertains its full meaning and then expresses it in Arabic with a sentence identical in meaning, without concern for the correspondence of individual words. This method is superior, and hence there is no need to improve the works of Ḥunain b. Isḥāq.[75]

While the contrast between the two methods of translation does not hold water, and in this sense the passage just cited has been rightly characterized as misleading, it is nonetheless remarkable for another reason: the two supposed examples of the « bad » *ad verbum* method (Yūḥannā ibn al-Biṭrīq and ʿAbd al-Masīḥ Ibn Nāʿima al-Ḥimṣī) are scholars affiliated with the circle of al-Kindī, while of the two « good » *ad sensum* translators one (Ḥunayn) was a Nestorian Christian, and the other (al-Ǧawharī), a

[73] Endress, « The Circle of al-Kindī », p. 45–49.

[74] This contrasts with, and complements, what Dimitri Gutas has discussed under the heading of « anti-Byzantinism as Philhellenism » – see Gutas, *Greek Thought*, p. 83–95.

[75] I am citing the passage in Rosenthal's translation – see Franz Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam*, trans. Emile and Jenny Marmorstein, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1975, p. 17; cf. Gutas, *Greek Thought*, p. 142; Brock, « Syriac Background », p. 147–148.

Persian Muslim.[76] Leaving al-Ǧawharī aside as a non-Christian, we can readily discern in al-Ṣafadī an echo of the Church of the East's marketing of its translation methods as superior to those of their ecclesiastical rivals.

Of course, criticism went both ways. For example, a member of the circle of al-Kindī, probably a Melkite Christian, criticized the « confusion of thoughts (Heb. *šibbûš maḥăšāḇôṯ*) of Ḥabīb ibn Bahrīz the Nestorian, who translated [Nicomachus of Gerasa's *Introduction to Arithmetic*] from Syriac into Arabic for al-Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn the ambidextrous (Heb. *baʿal šənê hay-yāmînîm* = Ar. *ḏū l-yamīnayni*) ».[77]

Despite this rivalry, however, Melkite and Nestorian translators collaborated as well. We know of two Melkite translators, the brothers Iṣṭifān ibn Basīl and Taḏārī (or Tiyādūrus) ibn Basīl (probably sons of one of the two Basils mentioned earlier), who collaborated closely with Ḥunayn and submitted their translations to him for revision.[78] Iṣṭifān ibn Basīl is mentioned numerous times in Ḥunayn's *Risāla*. For

[76] The mathematician and astronomer al-ʿAbbās ibn Saʿīd al-Ǧawharī (d. after 843) is meant here; on his superb knowledge of Greek (quite unusual for a Muslim scholar), see Gutas, *Greek Thought*, p. 139 (based on a passage in the Melkite scholar Qusṭā ibn Lūqā's polemical letter to Ibn al-Munaǧǧim). Al-Ǧawharī is also credited with a translation of Šānāq al-Hindī's *Book of Poisons* from Pehlevi into Arabic (see GAS, vol. V, p. 243–244; cf. vol. III, p. 193–197; vol. VI, p. 138–139).

[77] Ḥabīb ibn Bahrīz's translation was subsequently edited by al-Kindī; presumably, after al-Kindī's death, a member of his circle (who, I presume, was a Melkite Christian) added a prologue and restored the missing first section of the translation; the resulting text is lost in the original Arabic, but is preserved in a fourteenth-century Hebrew translation – see Gad Freudenthal, Tony Lévy, « De Gérase à Bagdad: Ibn Bahrīz, al-Kindī, et leur recension arabe de l'*Introduction arithmétique* de Nicomaque, d'après la version hébraïque de Qalonymos ben Qalonymos d'Arles », in Régis Morelon, Ahmad Hasnaoui (eds.), *De Zénon d'Élée à Poincaré: Recueil d'études en hommage à Roshdi Rashed*, Peeters, Louvain–Paris 2004, p. 479–544, at p. 514–515; cf. Gad Freudenthal and Mauro Zonta, « Remnants of Ḥabīb ibn Bahrīz's Arabic Translation of Nicomachus of Gerasa's *Introduction to Arithmetic* », in Y. Tzvi Langermann, Josef Stern (eds.), *Adaptations and Innovations: Studies on the Interactions between Jewish and Islamic Thought and Literature from the Early Middle Ages to the Late Twentieth Century, Dedicated to Professor Joel L. Kraemer*, Peeters, Paris–Louvain–Dudley, MA 2007, p. 67–82; Gad Freudenthal, « The Tribulations of the Introduction to Arithmetic from Greek to Hebrew via Syriac and Arabic: Nicomachus of Gerasa, Ḥabib Ibn Bahrīz, al-Kindī, and Qalonymos ben Qalonymos », in Irene Caiazzo, Constantinos Macris, Aurélien Robert (eds.), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Brill, Leiden–Boston 2022, p. 141–170.

[78] On Iṣṭifān ibn Basīl, see Nasrallah, *Histoire*, vol. II.2, p. 79–81; Roger Arnaldez, « Iṣṭifān b. Basīl », in EI², vol. IV, p. 254–255; Manfred Ullmann, *Untersuchungen zur arabischen Überlieferung der* Materia medica *des Dioskurides*, mit Beiträgen von Rainer Degen, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 2009, p. 21–24. The name is spelled اصطفن, but it is typically assumed that the last vowel is long (*scriptio defectiva*); I follow this convention here. On Taḏārī ibn Basīl, the Arabic translator of Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*, see Teddy J. Fassberg, « Prolegomena to any Future Edition of Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*: Theodore's Arabic Translation », *Classical Philology*, 116 (2021), p. 247–266 (I am deeply grateful to Joe Glynias for a

example, in the entry on Galen's *On the Causes of Breathing* (work No. 37), Ḥunayn writes:

> Ayyūb[79] produced a translation of it [into Syriac], which was unintelligible. Isṭifān also translated it into Arabic. Abū Ǧaʿfar [Muḥammad ibn Mūsā, Ḥunayn's patron] asked me to do the same thing he had asked for regarding the previous book [i.e., go over the Greek and correct any mistakes in the translation], and he ordered Isṭifān to collate [it] with me. I corrected both the Syriac and the Arabic at the same time, until the Syriac text became intelligible, with no shortcomings, because I wanted to keep a copy [of it] for my son, and [I did] the same for the Arabic, though it had been, to begin with, much more accurate than the Syriac.[80]

Isṭifān ibn Basīl also produced Graeco-Arabic translations of Dioscurides's *Materia medica*[81] and (possibly) Menander's *Statements* (in the version Men. ar. I).[82] My own research indicates that the Arabic citations of Plato's *Phaedo* in al-Bīrūnī's *India* are similar in their terminology to the Arabic Menander (Men. ar. I).[83] If the Menander

reference to this article and to Teddy Fassberg for sharing it with me prior to publication). Fassberg's article demonstrates conclusively that Taḏārī (the translator of the *Prior Analytics*) could not have been Theodore Abū Qurra, as maintained by some scholars in the past.

79 This is Ayyūb al-Ruhāwī (Job of Edessa) – see fn. 71 above.

80 LAMOREAUX, *Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq*, p. 53 (the translation is my own).

81 ULLMANN, *Untersuchungen*; MARIE CRONIER, « L'apport de la traduction arabe de Stéphane à l'établissement du texte grec du *De materia medica* de Dioscoride », *Galenos*, 2 (2008), p. 15–33; ALAIN TOUWAIDE, « Traducción y transliteración de nombres de plantas en la versión árabe de Hunayn b. Ishâq e Istifân b. Bâsil del tratado *De materia medica* de Dioscórides », *al-Qantara*, 30/2 (2009), p. 557–580.

82 MANFRED ULLMANN, *Die arabische Überlieferung der sogenannten Menandersentenzen*, Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, Wiesbaden 1961; MANFRED ULLMANN, « Bemerkungen zu den arabischen Übersetzungen der sogenannten Menandersentenzen », *Der Islam*, 42 (1966), p. 79–88; RUDOLF FÜHRER, *Zur arabischen Übersetzung der Menandersentenzen*, B. G. Teubner, Stuttgart 1993. More recently, Ullmann has expressed reservations about the attribution of the Arabic translation of Menander's *Sentences* to Isṭifān ibn Basīl – see MANFRED ULLMANN, *Wörterbuch zu den griechisch-arabischen Übersetzungen des 9. Jahrhunderts*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 2002, p. 56–57: « Ich habe auch einige Beispiele aus den arabischen Menandersentenzen aufgenommen, die von einem 'Isṭifān' übersetzt wurden. Da die Thematik beider Texte [=Menander and Dioscurides] aber ganz verschieden ist und demzufolge auch der Wortschatz differiert, ließ sich nicht feststellen, ob der Übersetzer der Menandersentenzen und Isṭifān ibn Basīl identisch sind ».

83 The following features are common to Men. ar. I (critical edition: ULLMANN, *Die arabische Überlieferung*, p. 17–59; abbreviated: M, followed by sentence number) and al-Bīrūnī's citations from the *Phaedo* (critical edition: GEOFFREY J. MOSELEY, « Plato Arabus: On the Arabic Transmission of Plato's Dialogues – Texts and Studies », Ph.D. Diss., Yale University 2017, p. 37–91; abbreviated: Ph, followed by

translation was indeed produced by Isṭifān ibn Basīl, we would have to attribute to him al-Bīrūnī's quotations from the *Phaedo* as well.

Isṭifān ibn Basīl's brother Taḏārī (or Tiyādūrus) ibn Basīl is the Arabic translator of Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*. According to the testimony of the *Fihrist*, he « showed » his translation to Ḥunayn, and Ḥunayn « corrected » it (*ʿaraḍahu ʿalā Ḥunayn fa-aṣlaḥahu*).[84] Thus, Taḏārī acted in much the same way as his brother Isṭifān – he submitted his Arabic translation to Ḥunayn, who corrected it, probably also improved its style, and put the finishing touches on it.

It is remarkable that the type of Melkite-Nestorian collaboration on display here is quite different from the one observed some seventy years prior with Timothy's (and his assistant Abū Nūḥ's) translation of Aristotle's *Topics*: while Timothy believed his skills to be superior to those of Melkite translators (such as Timothy's contemporary al-Biṭrīq), he nonetheless had recourse to Melkite informants, because they were native Greek speakers and had a better grasp of rare Greek terms. Here, by contrast, we observe two Melkites – and presumably native Greek speakers – Isṭifān ibn Basīl and his brother Taḏārī, to the contrary, come to the Nestorian translator Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq for assistance.

Though the Melkites continued to be involved in Graeco-Arabica in the late ninth and tenth centuries – the translators Qusṭā ibn Lūqā al-Baʿlabakkī (d. 912), who was also an accomplished physician, philosopher, astronomer, and mathematician,[85]

fragment number): (1) δίκη ~ √*nqm*: δίκην τίνουσαι, 81d8 ~ نقمة تنتقم منها, Ph 3; διδόντες δίκας, 113d8 ~ انتُقم منهم, Ph 6 (cf. M 15, 100); (2) λύπη ~ √*ḥzn*: ὅτι ψυχὴ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου ἀναγκάζεται ἅμα τε ἡσθῆναι σφόδρα ἢ λυπηθῆναι ἐπί τῳ, 83c5–6 ~ نفس كلّ إنسان تفرح وتحزن للشيء, Ph 1 (cf. M 3, 103, 194, 197, 198, 295, 296, 342; this rendering probably depends on colloquial Greek: in Modern Greek λυπημένος means « sad »; this strengthens the assumption that the translator was a native Greek speaker); (3) ἀδικέω ~ √*ẓlm*: ἠδίκουν ἂν οὐκ ἀγανακτῶν τῷ θανάτῳ, 63b9 ~ لكان تركي الحزن على الموت ظلما, Ph 4; καθαιρόμενοι τῶν ... ἀδικημάτων, 113d7 ~ نقوا من الظلم, Ph 6; ἀδικίας, 82a4 ~ ظلم, Ph 3; φόνους ἀδίκους, 113e3–4 ~ القتل بظلم وتعمّد, Ph 6 (cf. M 7, 29/30, 227); (4) μέγας ~ *ʿaẓīm*: ἱεροσυλίας πολλὰς καὶ μεγάλας, 113e3 ~ غصب الأموال العظيمة, Ph 6 (cf. M 13, 182, 239, 316, but M 163 *kibār*); (5) τιμή ~ *karāma*: τιμάς, 113e1 ~ كرامات, Ph 6 (cf. M 159, 215, 299; this rendering appears also in al-Bīrūni's citations of Plato's *Laws*); (6) φόβος ~ *ǧaza*ʿ: φόβων, 81a7 ~ الجزع, Ph 10; φόβῳ (+gen.), 81c11 ~ (من) لجزعها, Ph 3 (cf. M 86, no Greek original, but cf. the Slavonic given in the footnote); (7) κακός ~ √*rd*ʾ or √*šrr*: τῆς ... τροφῆς κακῆς οὔσης, 81d8–9 ~ لرداءة غذائها, Ph 3; τῶν κακῶν, 114b2–3, 81a7 ~ الشرور, Ph 6, 10 (cf. M 65, 179, 252); (8) use of *tark* for negations: ἠδίκουν ἂν οὐκ ἀγανακτῶν τῷ θανάτῳ, 63b9 ~ لكان تركي الحزن على الموت ظلماً, Ph 4 (cf. M 16, 184).

[84] IBN AL-NADĪM, *Fihrist*, vol. II.1, p. 162; trans. DODGE, vol. II, p. 599. See FASSBERG, « Prolegomena », p. 249–250.

[85] For his translations, see especially HANS DAIBER, *Aëtius Arabus: Die Vorsokratiker in arabischer Überlieferung*, Steiner, Wiesbaden 1980; cf. NASRALLAH, *Histoire*, vol. II.2, p. 57–64, 67–70; GERRIT BOS, *Qusṭā*

Yumn (mid-tenth century),[86] presumably the latter's son Naẓīf ibn Yumn the Melkite priest (*al-qass al-rūmī*) (d. 990),[87] and Yūḥannā the Greek priest and geometer (*al-qass al-yūnānī al-muhandis*) known as Ibn Fatīla (late tenth century)[88] deserve mention – the Nestorians maintained their pre-eminence, having permanently secured for themselves, despite initially less immediate access to Greek sources, a central place in the Graeco-Arabic translation movement.

ibn Lūqā's Medical Regime for the Pilgrims to Mecca: The Risāla fī tadbīr safar al-ḥajj, Brill, Leiden 1992. On his theological œuvre, see MARK N. SWANSON, « Qusṭā ibn Lūqā », in CMR, vol. II, p. 147–153, with detailed references.

[86] This Yumn, who was a son of an old Greek (*rūmī*) man, assisted the historian Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. after 961) in translating a historical work in Yumn's father's possession from Greek into Arabic: وهذه التواريخ أخذتها عن رجل رومي كان فرّاشاً لأحمد بن أبد العزيز بن دلف فوقع عليه السباء وهو رجل كبير يقرأ ويكتب بالرومية وكان لا ينبعث في النطق بالعربية إلاّ بجهد وكان له ابن من جند السلطان منجّم فَهِمٌ يقال له يُمن فترجم لي عن لسان أبيه أملاً من كتاب له رومي الخطّ هذه التواريخ – see ḤAMZA AL-IṢFAHĀNĪ, *Hamzae Ispahanensis Annalium Libri X*, ed. and trans. IOSEPHUS M. E. GOTTWALDT, 2 vol., Leopold Voss, Saint Petersburg–Leipzig 1844–1848, vol. I, p. 70; cf. NASRALLAH, *Histoire*, vol. II.2, p. 76.

[87] JOSEPH NASRALLAH, « Naẓīf ibn Yumn: Médecin, traducteur et théologien melchite du X^e siècle », *Arabica*, 21 (1974), p. 303–312; JOEL L. KRAEMER, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival of the Buyid Age*, Brill, Leiden 1986, p. 132–134 (and Index, p. 321); BERTOLACCI, « On the Arabic Translations », p. 248–249 and *passim*. On his theological œuvre, see MARK N. SWANSON, « Naẓīf ibn Yumn », in CMR, vol. II, p. 464–468, with detailed references to which the following can be added: NIKOLAI N. SELEZNYOV, « 'Послание о единстве' багдадского мелькита в составе энциклопедического «Свода» арабоязычного копта XIII века » [A Baghdad Melkite's « Epistle on Unity » as Part of a Thirteenth-Century Arabophone Copt's Encyclopedic Compilation], *Государство, религия, церковь в России и за рубежом*, 3 (2010), p. 151–156; reprint: NIKOLAI N. SELEZNYOV, *Pax Christiana et Pax Islamica: Из истории межконфессиональных связей на средневековом Ближнем Востоке* [Pax Christiana et Pax Islamica: On the History of Interconfessional Ties in the Medieval Middle East], Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow 2014, p. 33–42.

[88] He collaborated with Ibrāhīm ibn Bakkūš on an Arabic version of Aristotle's *Sophistici Elenchi* – see ENDRESS and HASPER, « Arabic Tradition », p. 68. We know this from Ibn Suwār's colophon in the famous Paris Organon manuscript (MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, ar. 2346, fol. 380v): « I have got information that Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm ibn Bakkūš translated this book from Syriac into Arabic and that he cooperated with Yūḥannā the Greek priest and geometer known as Ibn Fatīla in revising parts of it from the Greek; this has not become available to me »; for the Arabic text, see ʿABD AL-RAḤMĀN BADAWĪ (ed.), *Manṭiq Arisṭū*, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, Cairo 1948–1952, p. 1018; reprint: Wakālat al-maṭbūʿāt, Kuwayt 1980, p. 1054.

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