GREEK MANUSCRIPTS IN THE EARLY ABBASID EMPIRE: Fiction and Facts about their Origin, Translation and Destruction

The Abbasid Caliph Al-Ma'mûn (who reigned in Baghdad from 813-833) emerges from ancient sources and modern studies as the key-figure in the translation process from Greek into Arabic which played such an essential role in the history of Islamic civilization, especially during its formative period. Arab and non-Arab authors alike tend to describe the achievements of this caliph with admiration and euphoria. According to Sourdel the reign of Al-Ma'mûn gained fame "by the immense number of translations of foreign scientific works which took place at the instigation of the sovereign".[1]) According to the same author the "House of Wisdom" (*Bayt al-Ḥikma*) was "a scientific institution founded in Baghdad by Caliph al-Ma'mûn, undoubtedly in imitation of the ancient academy of Jundayshâbûr. Its principal activity was the translation of philosophical and scientific works from the Greek originals which, according to tradition, a delegation sent by the caliph had brought from the country of the Byzantines. (…) It included an important group of translators, of whom the most famous were the Banû 'l-Munajjim (…). To the same institution were attached astronomical observatories (…), one in Baghdâd, another one in Damascus". In the same article the author adds, that "it appears in fact that the library so constituted, and often called *Khizânat al-ḥikma*, already existed in the time of al-Rashîd and the Barmakids who had begun to have Greek works translated. Al-Ma'mûn may only have given a new impetus to this movement which was later to exert a considerable influence on the development of Islamic thought and culture".[2])

The *Cambridge History of Islam* does not speak of an earlier existence of the *Bayt-* or *Khizânat al-Ḥikma*. It speaks of the "*Bayt al-Ḥikma* of the Caliph al-Ma'mûn with its many Greek manuscripts" and of 833 as the year in which this institution of learning had been founded by him. It relates that Al-Ma'mûn had sent the Christian scholar Ḥunayn ibn Isḥâq "to accompany the mission to Byzantium in search of good manuscripts" and consequently had "gathered around him an excellent team of translators". Again, in another passage, the *Bayt al-Ḥikma* is called "the central institute for translations set up by the Abbasid Caliph Al-Ma'mûn".[3])

In assessing its accessibility to readers, several authors described the "House of Wisdom" as a *public library* or even as "the first public library in Islam"[4]) or rather as one of the *academies* "open to all those who were qualified to benefit from them"[5]) According to Heffening and Pearson[6]) "the first public libraries [in Islam] formed a fundamental part of the first academies known as *bayt al-ḥikma*". They seem to ignore that Muᶜâwiya (the founder of the Umayyad dynasty who ruled from 661-680) had already established such a library (see below). According to Eche, the "House of Wisdom" contained, from the time of Caliph Harûn al-Rashîd (786-809) through the period of Al-Ma'mûn, an increasing number of Greek manuscripts acquired as personal gifts from the Byzantine emperors, as booty during military campaigns in Christian territories in the North and as the result of special delegations of translation experts sent by Al-Ma'mûn to Byzantium for the purpose of acquiring ancient books. To these were added precious manuscripts from Cyprus demanded by the Caliph from its rulers, in exchange for a peace treaty. The "House of Wisdom" actually became the nerve-centre of the translation of these works into Arabic.[7]) The greatest of all translators, the Christian scholar Ḥunayn ibn Isḥâq, is, moreover, said to have been appointed "Chief of the House of Wisdom", while Caliph Al-Ma'mûn paid the salaries of the other Christian translators from the State Treasury as well.[8])

We are thus facing an image of the Greek-Arabic translation-movement in early Abbasid times as an intrinsic element of the official policy of the Islamic State, setting up for this purpose a special public institution and maintaining a staff of mainly Christian experts to translate Greek texts into Arabic which had been collected abroad at the express initiative of the Muslim authorities.

In his study of the transmission of Greek philosophy to the Arabs, Farrûkh added a religious dimension: the "House of

[1]) *Vizirat*,1959, vol. 1:195.

[2]) *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd. ed., s.v. "Bayt al-Ḥikma".

[3]) Vol.2B: "Islamic society and civilization", 1977, 582: L.Gardet; 748 and 768: G.Anawati; 783 and 790: S. Pines.

[4]) Pinto, 1929:216.

[5]) Makdisi in Von Grunebaum, ed., 1969:81.

[6]) *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd.ed., s.v. "Maktaba".

[7]) Eche, *Les bibliothèques*, 1967:22-29.

[8]) Al-Yûzbakî, *Ta'rîkh*, 1983:410-411.

Wisdom" had even received sums of money in the form of pious donations (*waqf*) "for those who wanted to devote themselves exclusively to translating (Greek) philosophical books into the Arabic language". After having conquered the Byzantines Al-Ma'mûn acquired these philosophical books, which had been stored away among them for ages, in stead of money, as the result of a stipulation in the peace treaty. "The Byzantine King Theofilos considered this stipulation a gain, whereas Al-Ma'mûn looked upon it as a great blessing". The Greek manuscripts concerned were translated systematically, including the numerous fragmentary ones which had been damaged by water and insects during their age-old existence. Thus, this whole marvellous process of cultural transmission was by no means a matter of coincidence or chance, but the result of the explicit policy of the state and the love of learning of (individual) persons.[9])

A fresh study of the source material from which the abovementioned versions of the events have ultimately been derived, yields a different picture, however. It is the purpose of this article to scrutinize the meaning of the reports found in the old sources and, in doing so, to try to distinguish between fiction and fact. I have divided the relevant material chronologically into two separate sections. The oldest reports date back to the 10th and 11th centuries. They are dealt with in sections I and II. Reports of later ages are dealt with in section III. I will show how these stories breathe on the one hand fascination for things Greek, and suspicion and even overt animosity, especially towards Greek philosophy, on the other. As the discussion proceeds it will become clear that in all three sections we are, in fact, dealing with legendary reports which are obviously full of historical significance but cannot be taken at face value. Often it is difficult to establish their exact dates and places of origin, even though their ideological and/or political tendencies can be detected. These legends have to be understood within the context of specific religious discussions and historical events related to the reception of Greek learning by Muslim circles. In the last sections of the article (IV and V) I will ultimately try to construct an image of some of the main features of the translation process derived from historically more reliable source material. This material consists of some Byzantine and Arabic chronicles, and especially of first-hand information provided by Christian scholars like Ḥunayn ibn Isḥâq, who translated an important number of these books into Arabic.

I — Hidden Treasures and Abundant Spoils

The oldest layer of relevant material can be found in the introductions of some famous pseudepigraphical texts. First of all, there is the pseudo-Aristotelian work "The Greatest Secret" (*Kitâb Sirr al-Asrâr*) which claims to contain Aristotle's admonitions to his pupil Alexander. This text said to have been made by a Christian scholar named Yûḥannâ ibn al-Biṭrîq, presents itself as an Arabic translation of an ancient text. In the introduction al-Biṭrîq claims to have discovered it, in a pagan temple that was being guarded by a clever monk, after a long journey: "I did not pass any temple in which the philosophers had deposited their secrets, without visiting it. Nor did I pass any venerable monk guarding its knowledge as a secret, together with whom I thought I might find the book I was looking for, without directing myself to him. Until I reached the temple Esculapios had built himself.[10]) There I got hold of a pious hermit who was leading a monastic life, a man of outstanding intelligence and penetrating scholarship. I dealt with him gently, won him over to me and applied some tricks, until he allowed me (to see) the codices (or: scrolls, the Arabic has: "*al-maṣâḥif*") deposited in the Temple. Among them I found the work I was aiming at. Thereupon I left for (your) Victorious Presence[11]) with the required book, and commenced — with God's help and the good fortune of the Commander of the Faithful — to translate it. I translated it from the Greek language into the Rûmî language and then from the Rûmî language into the Arabic language".[12])

The oldest Arabic source mentioning "The Greatest Secret" is the biographical dictionary composed by the Andalusian scholar Ibn Juljul in 987, who shows no doubt as to the authenticity of the book as a work by Aristotle translated by Yûḥannâ ibn al-Biṭrîq. He calls Yuḥannâ a "client" (*mawlâ*)[13]) of Caliph Al-Ma'mûn, who was in charge of supervising the process of translation (*"kâna amînan ᶜalâ l-tarjama"*). "He was the one who translated the letter of Aristotle to Alexander known as The Greatest Secret, which is (the same as the work entitled) "The Best Policy of Managing Supreme Leadership" (*Kitâb al-siyâsa fî tadbîr al-riyâsa*). Yûḥannâ relates that he went about looking for it, directing himself to the temples in doing so, until he had reached the Temple of the Worshippers of the Sun, which Hermes the Great had built for himself to praise the Exalted God in it. He (i.e.: Yûḥannâ) said: 'And I got hold of a monk leading the life of a hermit' (…)". The monk allowed him to see the codices of the temple among which he found the book the Caliph had ordered him to look for, "written in gold".[14])

Dunlop has traced the influence of the book of the philosopher Al-Fârâbî (d. 950-1), *k. Al-Madînah al-Fâḍilah* on the contents of *k. Sirr al-asrâr*, especially in its exposition of the 13 qualities which should be combined in the ruler of a state. He has also drawn attention to the rather spurious way the translation process is explained in the introduction: "from Greek (Yunânî) into *Rûmî* (to be translated here as Syriac? But do we have genuine examples of *Rûmî* meaning Syriac?) and from Rûmî into Arabic".[15]) Apparently, both in the introduction and the text we are dealing with pure fiction.

Leaving aside the motives of the anonymous author for putting this political text with references to the administrative order of the Abbasid empire into the mouth of Aristotle, we can observe that he has made use of three devices to enhance the credibility of the antiquity of his work. First of all, the work was *discovered* in an ancient temple. This is an essential point, because it justified at once why the work could never have been known previously. Secondly, it had been "translated" by a Christian scholar (but according to

[9]) Farrûkh, *Falsafa*, 1947:97-98.

[10]) According to Ibn Juljul, who is relying upon the authority of Orosius, this temple was to be found in the City of Rome (*Ṭabaqât*, pp. 10-11).

[11]) The Arabic has: *"al-ḥaḍra al-manṣûra"* which could be interpreted also as an allusion to Caliph Al-Manṣûr (reigned from 754-775).

[12]) Ed. Badawi 1954: 32-3.

[13]) This would imply that he had converted to Islam, a fact not alluded to by any other source (cf. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. "mawlâ", art. of P. Crone.

[14]) Ibn Juljul, *Ṭabaqât*, ed. 1985:67.

[15]) Dunlop, *Translations*, 1958.

Ibn Juljul: a neo-Muslim scholar of Christian descent) whose name is indeed known from genuine translations dating back to the early Abbasid period.[16]) And, last but not least, the search for the work as well as the translation were made by order of the Caliph of Islam, whose authority is used to legitimize the whole undertaking. It should be stressed, however, that the name of this Caliph is not explicitly mentioned in the dedication of the work itself.[17])

Similar pseudepigraphical devices are applied in an Arabic text entitled "The Treasure of Alexander" which claims to be the translation of a book found in the Byzantine city of Amorium at the time of its conquest by Caliph Al-Muʿtaṣim, the successor of Al-Ma'mûn, who reigned from 833-842. This alchemistic work deals with elixirs and talismans. The book begins with an introduction by Muḥammad ibn Khâlid the Geometrician giving an account of the alleged origin of the work which, this time, is said to have been translated from both Greek and *Rûmî* into Arabic by order of the said Caliph. The original work was discovered by the writer of the introduction in a Christian church in Amorium after the capture of that place. It consisted of 360 leaves, of entirely gold, and was deposited in a chest of the same material and declared to be the "Treasure of Alexander the King, son of Philippos, the Man with the Two Horns". The original preface is said to have been written by Aristotle and contains a dedication to Alexander. In it, we are told that this is a work of Hermes which was discovered by Balinas (=Appolonius of Tyane), and handed over by him to Aristotle. "The whole preface was perhaps invented", says Steinschneider, "just like the book itself, which starts with a dedication by Aristotle to Alexander the first words of which being a praise of God *who exists by necessity* (which is an Islamic theological expression, VK)".[18])

It is of interest to observe that another manuscript of this Arabic text, preserved in Berlin, has an introduction with some variants. There it is the Caliph himself who discovered the book, albeit in the foundations of the Monastery of Antiochos at Amorium, after having ordered the destruction of this building. The Caliph ordered translators to be send for, and it appeared that an inscription on the spine of the book read: "This is the Treasure of King Alexander son of Philippos, the Man with the Two Horns". Another piece of writing, stemming from Antiochos, drew the Caliph's attention to the great importance of the secretive contents of this work whereupon he decided to have it translated, ordering Muḥammad ibn Khalid Al-Munajjim (the Astrologer) to write a preface to it.[19])

We observe that the anonymous author of this pseudepigraphical text used similar devices as in the previous one, though the *discovery* is localized, this time, not in a *pagan temple* of vague localization (within or outside the Islamic empire?), but in a specific place in Byzantium, and in the foundations of a *church* or *monastery*. The person who made the discovery was either the Caliph himself or his astrologer, a historical figure indeed known from biographical sources,[20]) whereas "the translators" have now been cast into anonymity. In both cases, however, it is the Caliph who gives the order to translate the work, and, in the case of the "Treasure of Alexander", to have a preface written to it by his (Muslim) astrologer.

As for the role played by the Caliph according to the introductions of both pseudepigraphical texts, one should note that it is in full accordance with the rules of behaviour in regard to the "Books of the Infidels", as they were developed in early Islamic discussions. The religious scholars of early Islam actually discussed the subject of "the books of the Infidels found in the Territory of War during military campaigns". It was one out of many problems the Koran had left unsolved. According to Al-Ṭabarî the opinions of Muslim jurisconsults differed on this particular point. He says that Al-Awzâʿî (d. 774), "whose opinions, as a rule, represent the oldest solutions adopted by Islamic jurisprudence",[21]) when asked: "Is it allowed to sell a codex we have laid our hands on in the country of the Byzantines or does it have to be burned?", answered: "I prefer it should be *buried*". When Al-Awzâʿî was then nevertheless asked: "But could it not be sold?", he answered: "How, while it contains their polytheism?" According to Al-Tabarî, the famous jurisconsult Al-Shâfiʿî (767-820) took a different stand. He stated: "Their books found (during the *jihâd*) are spoils, all of them. The *imâm* (i.e. the legal Muslim ruler: the Caliph, vK) should call for someone to translate them. If it appears to be science, like medicines etcetera in which nothing rejectable is to be found, then he may sell it like the rest of the spoils. But if it is a book of polytheism, then the book should be cut to pieces, while use may then (still) be made of its (remaining) containers and its materials. These (containers and materials) may be sold. Under no circumstances may the book however be burnt or buried before it is known".[22])

A parallel to this passage is the opinion in some authoritative Mâlikî sources indicating that the text of the books of the Infidels found (during the *jihâd*) should be *erased*, while the remaining leaves, after erasure, could be *sold* (as part of the spoils), e.g. in order to be used by copyists of Arabic books as writing-materials.[23]) Moreover, Mâlik ibn Anas (d. 795), the founder of the Mâlikî school of law, himself condoned the decision of a judge who had ordered "ancient confused books" (*kutub qadîma mulabbasa*) which had been submitted to him, to be destroyed (without specification of the technique of destruction), arguing that this was in accordance with the action of ʿUthmân who had burnt copies of the Koran. According to the famous North-African jurisconsult Muḥammad ibn Marzûq (d. 1379), Mâlik ibn Anas as apparently afraid that the books of the Infidels contained falsehoods, as can be concluded from the word *mulabbasa* (confused, falsified) applied to these books. According to Ibn Marzûq the word *ancient* used in that passage suggests, moreover, that the books might have belonged to "the science of the ancient Sages and Philosophers, which is contradictory to the norms sanctioned by Islam" (*ibidem*, vol. 1:94). It should be noted that this explicit condemnation of ancient (Greek) philosophy on the basis of Islamic principles, is found in a 14th century comment. It is not (yet) found in the early fiqh-discussions themselves.

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[16]) Ibn al-Nadîm, *Al-Fihrist*, 243-4, 246, 250-1, 291, 293, 317 (mentions translations and a medical book composed by him). Also Badawi, *Transmission*, 190.

[17]) Ff. Badawi, *Dirasat islâmiyya*, 1954: 67-69.

[18]) Steinschneider, *Uebersetzungen*, repr. 1960: 128 No. 23, and Loth, *Catalogue*, 1877: 130-131.

[19]) Ahlwardt, *Verzeichniss*, vol. 3: No. 4193.

[20]) See for instance Ibn al-Qifti's *Ikhbâr*: 185.

[21]) Cf. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. al-Awzâʿî (J. Schacht).

[22]) Al-Tabarî, *Ikhtilâf*: 177-8.

[23]) Cf. Al-Wansharîsî, *Miʿyâr*, vol. 1:93.

The techniques of disposal advocated in these discussions coincide with some of the disposal methods of worn-out sacred Islamic books, as described by Sadan in his study of Güzelḥiṣari's *fatwâ* on "Copies of the Koran and religious books that have worn out and are no longer of use". Sadan distinguishes between (**1**) *incineration*, recommended by Güzelḥiṣari but considered improper by many jurists; (**2**) *sinking*, sometimes considered a faulty solution, because even running water is often impure; (**3**) *washing and erasure*, implying the wiping out of the entire text (in a sacred book) or parts of it, or holy names and formulae (in other books), as a first phase in the application of another disposal method: burial, incineration, production of new books (*palimpsests*) etc.; (**4**) *cutting to pieces*, not officially considered a proper method, and *using worn-out leaves* as a protecting wrapper of books or intercalating them in their binding, permitted by some jurists; (**5**) *burial*, considered by many jurists the best solution; (**6**) *laying aside* in a well protected and locked place, accepted by some jurists.[24]) These methods of disposal are, of course, also based on early Islamic discussions.

This background should be taken into account when trying to explain the different solutions advocated by Al-Awzâᶜî on the one hand and Al-Shâfiᶜî on the other, which were mentioned earlier. It seems that the former was poorly informed about the true nature of the "Books of the Infidels". However, in view of the possibility that they contained some kind of sacred texts, he advocated *burial* as the most appropriate method of disposal. A similar point of view seems to have been adopted by Mâlik ibn Anas, when he referred to the decision of Caliph ᶜUthmân to burn the remaining manuscripts of the Koran. This decision was taken after the committee, appointed by ᶜUthmân to "collect" an official version of the revelations which had been given to the Prophet, had completed its work. Al-Shâfiᶜî, on the other hand, who had witnessed the emergence of the translation movement, already took a more pragmatic stand by discerning between useful "books of science" and "books of polytheism", however, without mentioning the concept of "philosophy", which was to become the main target of the opposition from conservative circles against these books in later generations, as we will soon see.

Turning back to the two pseudepigraphical texts discussed earlier, we may now conclude that the role of the Caliph and the translators as described therein, is in full accordance with the rules of behaviour as advocated by Al-Shâfiᶜî. Therefore, from the point of view of literary criticism their behaviour can be qualified as *topical* or *stereotypical*. In a sense, the same can be said of the *sequence* of events which took place in a pagan temple, a Christian church or a monastery, *outside the Islamic empire* (text 2, probably text 1 as well) and *during the jihâd* (text 2). This ideological tendency is found in other stories of a similar nature as well. A case in point is the legend about the publication of the Arabic translation of an ancient medical work by the Umayyad Caliph ᶜUmar ibn ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzîz (reigned 717-720). The story tells of a Jewish scholar by the name of Mâsarjawayh who had translated a medical compendium written by the Priest Ahrun ibn Aᶜyun from Syriac into Arabic during the early period of the Umayyads. The caliph had found the work in the library of his court and ordered it to be brought to him. "He put it in his prayer room and asked God for guidance regarding the decision of whether or not to bring it into public circulation so that the Muslims could profit from it. When 40 mornings had passed he made it available to the people".[25]) The legendary piety of Caliph ᶜUmar ibn ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzîz serves here to legitimize the decision to bring an ancient book of non-Islamic origin (written by a Christian and translated by a Jew) into public circulation. This is the real message of the story which cannot be taken at face value.[26]) Moreover, Mâsarjawayh seems to be a legendary figure himself, as well. Some Arab sources assume he met the poet Abû Nuwâs, and so must have lived at the end of the 8th century, while others describe him as a pupil of Hippocrates.[27])

However, the essential aspect of these stories which cannot be reduced to *topoi* or *stereotypes*, is the genuine *curiosity* and *fascination* of the (anonymous) authors, aroused by the marvels of ancient civilizations. It is this creative force which seems to have inspired the imagination of a certain Abû Isḥâq ibn Shahrâm, who told the famous bibliographer Ibn al-Nadîm (d. end of 4th/10th century) during a public gathering (*majlis ᶜâmm*) "that in the country of the Byzantines there is a temple built long ago, which has the largest gate seen by anyone, with two iron doors. In ancient times the Greeks used to venerate it, to pray and sacrifice in it when they worshipped the stars and the idols. He (i.e. Ibn Shahrâm) said: 'I asked the King of the Byzantines to open it for me, but he refused, because it had been closed since the time the Rûm had converted to Christianity. But I did not stop keeping his company, sending him letters and asking him orally when I was present in his gathering'. He said, '(Finally) he proceeded to open it and, behold!, the building was of marble and rockstone, pillars of (various) colours with writings and inscriptions the like of which I had not seen or heard of in multitude and beauty. And in this temple there was a quantity of ancient books equalling the loads of a number of camels'. And (while telling this story) he increased this number, until he (finally) spoke of a thousand camels. 'Part of these ancient books had worn out, part of them were in their (original) state and part of them had been eaten by termites. I also saw the utensils of the sacrifices made of gold and other (metals) — exquisite things'. He said, 'After I left, the gate was closed. I was shown great favour by what he had done to me'. He said, 'This took place in the days of Sayf al-Dawla (333-356 A.H.)'. And he thought this building was at a distance of three days from Constantinople. Those living near that place were a people from among the Chaldaean Sabians. The Byzantines had allowed them to keep to their rites and collected the *jizya* from them".[28]) Most likely such a nice story would have fired the zeal of its hearers for continuing the holy war against Byzantium. This was the issue of the day in the time of Sayf al-Dawla, the founder of the Shîᶜite Hamdanid dynasty in the north. But we have no information at all about the possible acquisition of Greek manuscripts during the military expeditions of those days.

All this does not imply, of course, that no Greek or other ancient manuscripts were ever found by Muslims during wars and conquests. The very discussions of the religious schol-

[24]) Sadan, *Genizah*, "Bibliotheca Orientalis" 1986: 36-58, esp. 52-3.

[25]) Ibn Juljul, *Ṭabaqât*, p. 61; cf. Ibn al-Qiftî, *Ikhbâr*, p. 213.

[26]) Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, vol. 4, p. ?, accepted this story as a reliable piece of evidence of the earliest translations into Arabic during the Umayyad period.

[27]) Cf. Dietrich, in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. "Mâsarjawayh".

[28]) Ibn al-Nadîm, *Al-Fihrist*: 243.

ars, quoted earlier, prove that this must incidentally indeed have been the case. But if we admit that a scholar like Al-Awzâᶜî or Mâlik ibn Anas had really been confronted with concrete findings of manuscripts, this does not necessarily hold true for Al-Shâfiᶜî and others as well, who dealt with the subject of religious jurisprudence in their works. The largely theoretical and "academic" character of these discussions, noticed by many specialists in the field, should be kept in mind. This does not mean that these discussions were devoid of importance. On the contrary, they provided a system of behavioural norms and values which had a great impact on the ideas of Muslims; witness the pseudepigraphical texts dealt with before, where these very norms have become the basic ideological elements of the introductory stories. These stories have an outspokenly apologetic character: they tend to "protect" the works against any suspicion that might arise against them as "Books of the Infidels".

Similarly, one cannot exclude the possibility that other reports on the same subject are the result of the same normative literary process as well, and especially if there are additional reasons to doubt their veracity. A good exemple is a reference to the acquisition of Greek manuscripts from among the spoils in Byzantium found in the already-mentioned biographical dictionary of scientists by the Andalusian author Ibn Juljul which was, in its turn, quoted by a number of later Arabic sources. According to Ibn Juljul, Caliph Hârûn Al-Rashîd had entrusted the translation of the ancient books found by the Muslims in Anqira, ᶜAmmûriya (i.e. Amorium) and the Country of the Byzantines, to Yûḥannâ ibn Mâsawayh, a Christian scholar who is known as the author of several medical books, after they had captured these places. "He appointed him as custodian of the translation and provided (him) with proficient secretaries to write (for him)".[29]) Unfortunately, this report contains some chronological inconsistencies. For the places mentioned were only conquered after the death of Hârûn Al-Rashîd. Anqira was captured by Al-Ma'mûn in 215 (830) and ᶜAmmûriya by his successor Al-Muᶜtaṣim in 223 (837). In fact, Arabic chronicles provide detailed reports on the conquest of the city of Amorium in 223(837-8), including the spoils begotten by the Muslim army and their distribution following the conquest. During the siege of the city and after its capture, Caliph Al-Muᶜtaṣim made use of the services of an interpreter called Basil the Greek[30]) in order to communicate with the local population and, later, with the prisoners of war. The spoils were sold at public auction (among the participants of the campaign), the organisation of which was in the hands of an assistent of Chief Judge Ibn Abî Du'âd. Not a word is said about books.[31])

According to the biographical sources available, Yûḥannâ ibn Mâsawayh came to Baghdad many years after the death of Hârûn al-Rashîd, during the reign of Al-Ma'mûn. He continued to work as a medical doctor and an author of books during the reigns of Al-Muᶜtaṣim, Al-Wâthiq and Al-Mutawakkil. However, he was unknown as a translator into Arabic of any Greek book to the expert bibliographer from Baghdad, Ibn al-Nadîm. The only sources referring to his activities in this field are of a much later date and depend directly on Ibn Juljul.[32]) Moreover, it is not clear from what source Ibn Juljul drew his information, but it seems possible that there existed some unknown common source from which this report as well as a story related by Ibn al-Nadîm have been derived.[33]) In that story, which will be dealt with below, Ibn al-Nadîm talks about a delegation of experts sent by Caliph Al-Ma'mûn to Byzantium to select Greek manuscripts. After having mentioned the names of the members of this delegation he remarks, "It is also said that Yûḥannâ ibn Mâsawayh was one of those who was sent to the country of the Byzantines".

Whatever the truth may be, we have to keep in mind that Ibn Juljul composed his book in 377(987). This was the time in which the ruler of Al-Andalus, Ibn Abî ᶜAmir, launched persecutions against scholars adhering to Muᶜtazilite theological doctrines and against Greek philosophy in general, which had exercised a deep influence on these doctrines. In 368 (979) a high official in Córdoba, ᶜAbd al-Malik ibn Mundhir, suspected of secret adherence to Muᶜtazilism, was crucified (the real motive for his execution being his opposition against Ibn Abî ᶜAmir). According to Ṣâᶜid al-Andalusî, who wrote about a century later, the said Ibn Abî ᶜAmir had ordered, in the presence of the religious scholars of his court, the books of the ancient sciences found in the famous library of the late Caliph Al-Ḥakam II to be removed, with the exception of those on medicine and arithmetics. Part of them was to be burned, the remaining part was to be thrown in the wells of the palace and covered with earth and stones. According to Ṣâᶜid Al-Andalusî, Al-Manṣûr did this "in order to gain the sympathy of the population of Al-Andalus and to denounce the attitude of Caliph Al-Ḥakam towards these sciences as shameful, because they were considered obsolete among their ancestors and blamed by the tongues of their (previous) rulers. Whoever studied them was suspected of apostasy and thought to be attached to atheism". This event would have taken place soon after Ibn Abî ᶜAmir had usurped the rule over Al-Andalus, thus shortly before or after the crucifixion of Ibn Mundhir.[34]) The techniques of destruction applied according to this story, remind us of the discussions of the religious scholars on the methods of disposal of worn out sacred books (burning, sinking in water and burial). The same holds true for the exception made for books on medecine and arithmetics according to the same story. Are these elements merely *topical* or do they really reflect historical evidence? According to an earlier source, Al-Manṣûr's policy had been directed against books of philosophy. He had been zealous in "burning them and tearing them to pieces". An (anonymous) son and successor of Al-Manṣûr spread the news that it was his firm objective to follow in his father's footsteps in an official injunction written in Sevilla by his secretary Abû Zayd al-Darârî. According to this text philosophy had been based by "its inventors" on "unbelief and the

[29]) Ibn Juljul, *Ṭabaqât*, p. 65.

[30]) Ibn al-Nadîm mentions in his *Fihrist* a "Basîl al-Maṭrân" among "those who translated from (various) languages into the Arabic language" (p. 244); on p. 250 he mentions a "Basîl" as the one who had translated the first through the fourth commentaries by Porphyrios on Aristotle's *Al-Samâᶜ al-ṭabîᶜî*. Could this have been the same person? Cf. our remarks on the presence of Salmawayh in the military campaigns of Al-Ma'mûn in section IV of the present article.

[31]) Vasiliev, *Byzance et les arabes*, 1935:308-9.

[32]) Ibn al-Nadîm, *Fihrist*, 243, 295-6, 314; Ṣâᶜid al-Andalusî, *Ṭabaqât*, 56-7; Ibn al-Qifṭî, *Ikhbâr*, 248-56; Ibn Abî Uṣaybi'a, *ᶜUyûn*, vol.1, 175-183.

[33]) Viz. a report transmitted on the authority of the Baghdadi Christian philosopher, Yaḥyâ ibn ᶜAdî; cf. our discussion of this report in section II of the present article.

[34]) âᶜid al-Andalusî, *Ṭabaqât*, 164-5; cf. also Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, t. 2, 217-8.

denial of God's attributes", an accusation which breathes an outspoken anti-Muᶜtazilite attitude.[35])

Ibn Juljul's reference to the attitude of the early Abbasid caliphs may thus be read as a disguised apology of the ancient sciences, all too relevant in the time in which he composed his book. For Ṣâᶜid al-Andalusî, writing almost a century later (in 1088) and within an entirely different political climate, there was no need to maintain a discrete tone. His outright praise of Al-Ma'mûn stands in clear contrast to his description of the behaviour of Ibn Abî ᶜAmir. Ibn Juljul, who was the personal physician of Hishâm II Al-Mu'ayyad bi-'llâh, the puppet caliph who was being manipulated by the real ruler of Al-Andalus, Al-Manṣûr, does not say a word about the destruction of the ancient books of Al-Ḥakam's library, although it must have taken place before he composed his book.

According to Ṣâᶜid al-Andalusî the Arabs in the beginning of Islam and during the Umayyad dynasty, did not occupy themselves with any other sciences than those of their language, the principles of their religious law and, to some extent, also with medicine and alchemy. The first Muslim ruler who paid special attention to the sciences was the second Abbasid Caliph, Al-Manṣûr, in Baghdad. Apart from his proficiency in the religious sciences, he attached great value to the secular sciences, especially to astronomy. However, it was Al-Ma'mûn, the seventh caliph of the Abbasid dynasty, who completed what his grandfather had begun by: "looking for the sciences wherever they were to be found and by extracting them from their mines, by virtue of his noble intention and the power of his outstanding mind. Thus he entered into contact with the kings of the Byzantines, bestowed upon them precious gifts and asked them for the books of the Greek philosophers they possessed, which they did. He entrusted these to the most outstanding translators, who produced the best possible results. Then he stimulated the people to read and study these books. He used to dispute with scientists and religious scholars alike, who were held in high esteem by him, occupied lofty positions and received high salaries".[36])

Comparing the works of Ṣâᶜid al-Andalusî and Ibn Juljul, we can observe a drastic change in the role attributed to Caliph Al-Ma'mûn. For Ibn Juljul, he was only one out of several Abbasid rulers to be credited with the fine results of the translation process; for Ṣâᶜid, the open-minded judge of Toledo, Al-Ma'mûn was the key-figure. This change in accent was in all probability due to the influence exercised upon Ṣâᶜid's understanding of the events by a legendary report of oriental origin, which must have reached Al-Andalus either by way of the famous *Catalogue* of the Baghdadi bibliographer Ibn al-Nadîm, or through another channel, possibly going back to the Christian philosopher from Baghdad Yaḥyâ ibn ᶜAdî (d.974). This legend gave birth to a cycle of stories ultimately embroidered around a few important events in the life of Al-Ma'mûn.

II — The Ma'mûn-Cycle: Scientific Expeditions and Christian Conspiracies

Ibn al-Nadîm provides a highly interesting "Account of the reason why the books of philosophy and the other ancient sciences are (so) numerous in these countries".[37]) The story is given anonymously, but Kraemer has pointed out that it also figures in the biographical dictionary of Ibn Abî Uṣaybiᶜa,[38]) where it is connected with a chain of previous transmitters going back to the already-mentioned Christian philosopher, Yaḥyâ ibn ᶜAdî.[39]) Its translation runs as follows (passages omitted in the version of Ibn Abî Uṣaybiᶜa are given in italics):

"*One of the reasons thereof (viz. of the numerousness of the books of the Ancients in the Islamic empire) was that Al-Ma'mûn [saw, VK] in his dream a man of reddish-white complexion with a high forehead, bushy eyebrows, bald head, dark blue eyes and handsome features sitting on his throne*.[40]) It was as if, in his presence, I was filled with awe. So I said: Who are you?[41]) He answered: I am Aristotle.[42]) *I was very happy with that*. I said: can I ask you something, philosopher?[43]) *He answered: Go ahead!* I asked him: "What is perfection? Aristotle said: That which is excellent according to reason. I asked: then what? He said: that which is excellent according to the religious law. I asked: then what? He said: that which is excellent according to the people. I asked: then what? He said: that's it. *According to another version (of the story Al-Ma'mûn said to Aristotle): Go on, please!, and (Aristotle) said: Whosoever is loyal to you in matters concerning gold, must be treated by you as gold, and you should profess the Unity of God"* .

"This dream, then, was one of the strongest motivations for bringing (these) books into circulation.[44]) Al-Ma'mûn, who exchanged letters with the King of the Byzantines, wrote to him (again) when he had gained the upper hand over him, to ask his permission to send some selected (books) of the ancient sciences stored away in the land of the Byzantines. (The king) gave his permission to do so after having refused initially".

"Thereupon Al-Ma'mûn sent out a group for this purpose, including Al-Ḥajjâj ibn Mat$ar, Ibn al-Biṭrîq, Salm, the master of the 'House of Wisdom', and others. They selected the books from the ones they found. When they had taken these to [Al-Ma'mûn], he ordered them to be translated, whereupon they were. It has also been said that Yûḥannâ ibn Mâsawayh was one of those who were sent to the country of the Byzantines".

In the work of Ibn al-Nadîm the story ends at this point. In the version quoted by Ibn Abî Uṣaybiᶜa there is this additional passage: "Al-Ma'mûn also summoned Ḥunayn ibn Isḥâq — he was then a young man — and ordered him to translate into Arabic what he could of the books of the Greek sages and to revise what others would translate. He followed (his) order. One of the things related concerning him, is that al-Ma'mûn would give him the equivalent of the weight of the books he translated into Arabic in gold".[45]) Here ends the

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[35]) Al-Qalqashandî, vol. 13, p. 9; cf. Vermeulen: 1965, 106.

[36]) âᶜid al-Andalusî, *Ṭabaqât*, 126-9; cf. Al-Shahrazûrî, *Nuzhat*, vol. 1, 46-7.

[37]) *Fihrist*, p. 243.

[38]) *ʿUyûn*, vol. 1, 186-7.

[39]) Kraemer, *Philosophy*, 111-2.

[40]) The version of Ibn Abî Uṣaybiᶜa reads here: "Al-Ma'mûn said: I had a dream-like vision of the likeness of a man on a throne sitting in my court" (tr. Kraemer, *Philosophy*, 111).

[41]) I.A.U: "…and I inquired about him" (Kraemer, *Philosophy*, 111).

[42]) I.A.U: "It was said that he was Aristotle" (Kraemer, *Philosophy*, 111).

[43]) "I said that I would ask him about something" (Kraemer, *Philosophy*, 111).

[44]) I.A.U: "for the translation of (Greek) books" (Kraemer, *Philosophy*, 111).

[45]) Kraemer, *op.cit*., 111.

version of Ibn Abî Uṣaybi^{c}a, which is followed by a remark on the role of the family of the Banû Shâkir in the search and translation of Greek manuscripts, quoted on the authority of the Muslim philosopher Abû Sulaymân al-Manṭiqî al-Sijistânî (d. ca. 985):

"Abû Sulaymân al-Manṭiqî al-Sijistânî said that the Banû Shâkir, consisting of Muḥammad, Aḥmad and al-Ḥasan, used to pay salaries to a group of translators, among whom were Ḥunayn ibn Isḥâq, Ḥubaysh ibn al-Ḥasan, Thâbit ibn Qurra, and others. These salaries amounted to about five hundred dinars a month".[46])

Ibn al-Nadîm omitted the passage on Ḥunayn ibn Isḥâq, but quoted the lines of Al-Sijistânî after having given some lines not found in the version of Ibn Abî Uṣaybi^{c}a in his own name: "Muḥammad ibn Isḥâq says: The three sons of the astronomer Shâkir, Muḥammad, Aḥmad and al-Ḥasan, of whom more will be said later, were also interested in the export of scholarly books from Byzantine territory. They spent large sums of money on it. Ḥunayn ibn Isḥâq and other scholars whom they sent into Byzantine territory brought back precious and rare works on philosophy, geometry, music, arithmetic, and medicine. Qusṭâ ibn Lûqâ al-Ba^{c}labakkî also brought a few and translated them himself or had them translated for him. *Abû Sulaymân al-Manṭiqî al-Sijistânî says:…"* (follows the passage on the Banû Shâkir quoted before).[47])

From all this it is clear that we are dealing with the same textual tradition in both versions. According to Kraemer, "it is not unlikely that Sijistânî was Ibn al-Nadîm's source for the entire passage".[48]) This seems to be very likely indeed, if not entirely certain. Ibn al-Nadîm must at least have seen a version of the story in which the lines preceded by the name of Al-Sijistânî had been distinguished from the person on whose authority the body of the text was transmitted. This person was Yaḥyâ ibn ^{c}Adî (a friend of Ibn al-Nadîm just like Al-Sijistânî), as appears from the version of Ibn Abî Uṣaybi^{c}a.

According to Kraemer, the story of al-Ma'mûn's dream and its impact must have originated "among circles interested in legitimizing the importation and cultivation of the ancient sciences into the Islamic world". Concerning the origin of the story he remarks: "It may be assumed that the account of al-Ma'mûn's dream was invented either by members of the circle of translators and scholars active in the famous *Bayt al-Ḥikma*, in the ninth century, or by Yaḥyâ ibn ^{c}Adî and his confrères, active during the wave of translation activity a century later. Yaḥyâ ibn ^{c}Adî and Abû Sulaymân al-Sijistânî circulated the legend".[49])

Insofar as the origin of the legend is concerned, personally I would exclude the possibility of it having been invented by scholars and translators of the ninth century, whether or not they were working in the *Bayt al-Ḥikma* (I will return to this problem in section IV). First of all, the earliest authority for the legend mentioned is Yaḥyâ ibn ^{c}Adî, which would at least indicate the approximate time of its initial circulation. Secondly, I believe the legend has an anti-Christian bias — be it a very discrete one, at least in the versions provided, on the authority of a Christian scholar, by Ibn Abî Uṣaybi^{c}a and Ibn al-Nadîm. Both sources mention that the King of Byzantium only permitted the scholars from Baghdad access to his ancient collections, *after having refused initially*. Why did he refuse initially, and on what grounds did he change his decision? Versions of the legend preserved in later sources provide detailed answers to these questions. The version preserved by Ibn al-Nadîm and Ibn Abî Uṣaybi^{c}a should probably be seen as an abbreviated one, from which some tendencious elements have been removed, but not, however, without leaving some traces. Before discussing the meaning of the original version, I will present the versions preserved by the later sources.

First of all, there is the version of the biographical dictionary *Al-Ikhbâr* by Ibn al-Qifṭî (d.1248) who quotes the initial passages of the legend of Al-Ma'mûn's dream from the version of Ibn al-Nadîm. According to Ibn al-Qifṭî Al-Ma'mûn was incited by his dream to look for the books of Aristotle but could not find any trace of them in the countries of Islam. Ibn al-Qifṭî then continues the story on the authority of someone else, whose name is not mentioned.[50]) According to that authority the story continued as follows:

When Al-Ma'mûn had gained the upper hand over the King of the Byzantines he wrote to him to demand the books of Aristotle. The King of the Byzantines looked for them but could not find any trace of them in his country either "which made him very worried". He said: "The king of the Muslims asks from me the science of my Greek forefathers and (now) I cannot find them! What excuse will I have or what value will remain for this Byzantine sect (Arabic: *firqa*) in the eyes of the Muslims?" A monk living in a monastery far from Constantinople told the king that he knew how to find what he was looking for. "There is a certain house in such and such a place of which the contents are locked up by every king at the beginning of his period of government. It is said that it contains the treasure of the previous kings. Every king comes to lock it in order not to be accused of having opened it in need of its contents as a result of his bad administration. The monk said to him: *The (truth of the) matter, however, is otherwise. In that place there has only been a temple where the Greeks used to worship before the establishment of the religion of Christ. When Christ's religion had been established in those regions in the days of Constantine, the son of Helena, all the books of the ancient sciences were collected among the people and stored in that house. Consequently its gate was closed and the kings put locks on it, as you heard"* .

"Thereupon, the king gathered the dignitaries of his state, informed them about the matter and consulted them about opening the house. They advised him to do so. *Then he consulted the monk about dispatching the books, if found, to the country of Islam and whether in doing so there was any danger in this world or any sin (to be punished for) in the Hereafter? The monk said: 'Dispatch them, because you will (certainly) be rewarded for this. These books did not enter any religious community without shaking its foundations'.* The king travelled to the house, opened it and found the things, in accordance to what the monk had told him. They found many books inside and took, at random, five loads from (one of) its sides, which were dispatched to Al-Ma'mûn. Al-

[46]) Kraemer, *op.cit.*, 111.
[47]) Cf. Kraemer, *op.cit.*, 112-3.
[48]) *Op.cit.*, 114.
[49]) Kraemer, *op.cit.*, 111-4.

[50]) Literally he says: "Qâla ghayru Ibn al-Nadîm" ("Someone else, not being Ibn al-Nadîm, said").

Ma'mûn sent for the translators who translated them from Greek into Arabic".[51])

We are clearly dealing here with a version of the legend which, instead of legitimizing the ancient sciences within an Islamic context, tends to stigmatize them as the result of a secret Christian conspiracy aiming to shake the religious foundations of the Islamic empire. The Christians themselves had not wanted to permit the free circulation of these books which, consequently, had been stored away. But they would gladly agree to sending them to the Caliph in order to promote the corruption of Islam.

This same tendency stands out clearly in two other, later, versions. According to Ibn Nubâta (d. 1366) the *Khizânat al-Ḥikma* in Baghdad "consisted of the books of the philosophers transferred to Al-Ma'mûn from the island of Cyprus. The cause of this (transfer) was that Al-Ma'mun, when he had made peace with the lord of this island, demanded that he hand over *the books of the Greeks, which had been collected with them in a house, to which he had never given access to anyone*. The lord of the island gathered his close friends and his counsellors and asked their advice about the transfer of the library to Al-Ma'mûn. All of them *advised him to disagree except for one archbishop who said, 'My opinion is that you should send it to him quickly, because these rational sciences (hâdhihi 'l-ᶜulum al-ᶜaqliyya) never entered a state based on religious law (dawla sharᶜiyya) without destroying it and without creating discord among its (religious) scholars'*. Thus he sent them to Al-Ma'mûn who was delighted with them".[52]) Al-Ma'mûn is depicted here quite clearly as a fool who is cheated by a Christian conspiracy which aims to sow discord among the religious scholars of Islam and to destroy its very foundations.

A slightly different version of the story is given by Ṭâshköprüzâde (d. 1560), who relates that the books of Aristotle had been *stored* in the City of Athens. When Caliph Al-Ma'mûn wanted to obtain them, he sent a letter to the said king and demanded the books, *but the latter did not hand them over*. Ma'mûn became angry and gathered his armies. *When the king was informed, he gathered his patriarchs and monks and consulted them in this matter. They said: "If you want to break the religion of the Muslims and to shake their beliefs, then do not withold these books from them. The king approved and sent them to Al-Ma'mûn*. Al-Ma'mûn gathered the translators of his realm, like Ḥunayn ibn Isḥâq, Thâbit ibn Qurra and others…".[53])

Let us turn back now to the meaning of the legend in the version which can be ascribed to Yaḥyâ ibn ᶜAdî, found in the works of Ibn al-Nadîm and Ibn Abî Uṣaybiᶜa. According to this version, the basic criterium for defining (ethical) perfection is rational science. The revealed principles of religious law are only of secondary importance, and the opinion of the commonality is merely to be taken into consideration in the last instance. The ancient, non-Islamic sciences, imported from Byzantium (the country of the enemy) will serve adequately to maintain this order. The Caliph may use loyal Christian scholars to maintain and consolidate the primacy of reason in his empire. The reason of the initial refusal of the Byzantine king to comply with the Caliph's request is not given, but the story itself suggests the answer: he must have realised the impact of these sciences in combating the primacy of the revealed Law of Islam and in ignoring the opinion of the masses. As long as Reason prevails and the Ancient Sciences are held in esteem, Islam will remain confined to a place of secondary importance, and the opinion of the masses will remain ignored.

Essentially, then, the legend is an attack against the prevailing influence of rational science. Its origin should be located in conservative circles, viz. the followers of the line of Aḥmad ibn Hanbal in whose eyes the awful attitude of the Caliph towards Aristotle would have been considered blasphemous. These conservative circles of traditionalist religious scholars usually found support for their campaigning against rationalism among the "commonality" (relegated to the last place in the legend). The legend is at the same time an attack against the intellectual elite of 10th century Buyid Baghdad, consisting of Shîᶜite and Christian scholars who promoted the cause of the "Renaissance" of ancient science within an Islamic context.[54]) I would suggest the possibility that the figure of Al-Ma'mûn in the legend in reality is a disguised reference to the Buyid ruler, blamed for everything ascribed to his predecessor in the early 9th century. But this remains merely a matter of speculation which would have to be verified in a separate study of the image of Al-Ma'mûn during the Buyid period, and especially the point of whether, and if so, to what extent, the Buyids identified themselves with what they saw as the example given by Al-Ma'mûn in their religious and cultural policies.

Whatever the precise original "Sitz im Leben" of the legend may have been, I find it extremely difficult to accept that it was invented to legitimize the ancient sciences. The elite needed no such legitimization. An apologetic legend in favour of the ancient sciences would have been directed towards the opponents of these sciences, viz. the tradtionalist religious scholars and the masses. How could *they* ever have been convinced of the primacy of rationalism over religious Law by the image of Al-Ma'mûn (symbol of the corruption of Islam by introducing rational speculation in religious matters, see below) *standing* with the deepest awe in front of Aristotle who was *seated* on the throne of the Islamic empire! One has to assume, I believe, that the origin of the (anonymous) legend lies in the orthodox oppositional circles of the early Buyid period (ca. 950). Yaḥyâ ibn ᶜAdî noticed it and transmitted it, as a curious story. *Probably* he left some passages out, in particular the ones dealing with the motives of the Byzantine king and his clergymen, and polished some others in order to render the legend "harmless". In any case, the remark that the Byzantine king "refused initially, but gave his permission later" hardly makes any sense and gives the outspoken impression of a shortened version. The same holds true for the expression, found in the Yaḥyâ-version, that the books had been "stored away" (*makhzûna muddakhara*), viz. in Byzantium. Why had they been stored away? The later versions clear the matter up totally by underlining that the Byzantine Christians themselves had consciously neglected these books because of their anti-religious nature. The fact that the books had to be brought *from Byzantium* is to a large extent unhistorical (cf. section III below) and is to be understood as an essentially ideological element, playing on sentiments of xenophobia.

[51]) Ibn al-Qifṭî, *al-Ikhbâr*, 22-3.
[52]) Ibn Nubâta, *Sharh al-ᶜuyûn*, 135; cf. ᶜAwwâd, *Khazâ'in*, 106-7.
[53]) âshköprüzâdeh, *Miftâh*, vol. 1:293.
[54]) A fine description of this cultural revival is Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam* (1986).

According to the penetrating analysis of Sourdel,[55]) Al-Ma'mûn attempted to reconcile Sunnite and Shi^{c}ite Islam. His choice of the Ḥusaynî ^{c}Alid ^{c}Alî ibn Mûsâ al-Riḍâ in 817 as his successor was an important aspect of this policy and so was the official proclamation of the *tafḍîl* of ^{c}Alî in 827-8, implying that ^{c}Alî should have been the Prophet's successor, not only because of his close family relations to the Prophet, but also because he was the most excellent candidate available for that position. On the same occasion Al-Ma'mûn solemnly proclaimed the doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'an. Some years later, in 833, a few months before his death, he made this outspokenly Mu^{c}tazilite doctrine obligatory for all officials of the state. This is the beginning of the *Miḥna* or *Inquisition*, which would only be abolished during the period of Caliph Al-Mutawakkil (847-61).

Epistemologically speaking Mu^{c}tazilite theology adhered to the primacy of reason (^{c}*aql*) over tradition (*naql*), also in studying the Koran. The structure of Mu^{c}tazilite theology, and indeed of all later schools of Islamic theological thought, was derived from the methods and systems of Greek philosophy. No wonder that Mu^{c}tazilite scholars of the entourage of Al-Ma'mûn were favourably disposed towards the translation of Greek books. Of these scholars one may mention Al-Kindî (ca. 801-66), called "the Philosopher of the Arabs", who was a companion of Al-Ma^{c}mûn and his successor Al-Mu^{c}taṣim, and the teacher of the latter's son Aḥmad. He pioneered the process of naturalization of Greek philosophy in the Islamic world by writing numerous works based on an extensive knowledge of Greek texts translated into Arabic.[56])

It hardly needs to be stressed that the Mu^{c}tazilites supported this policy, quite contrary to the traditionalist orthodox circles of Sunnite Islam. Al-Ma'mûn's policy resulted in a very negative image among conservative circles of later generations. Incidentally he was called a *zindîq* (heretic)[57]) and a *fâsiq* (grave sinner).[58]) Moreover, Al-Subkî attributed the root of the evil of Al-Ma'mûn's attachment to the doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'an to the elements this caliph had acquired of the ancient sciences.[59]) Another legend, no doubt anti-Ma'mûn as well, claims that this caliph attempted to open the two great pyramids at a distance of 12 miles from Fusṭâṭ (ancient Cairo). He abandoned the whole undertaking[60]) only because the treasures that were found did not outweigh the expenses which had to be made. From an orthodox Islamic point of view this was a blasphemous act and Al-Ma'mûn appears here again as someone completely baffled by the marvels of paganism.

In addition, the personality of Al-Ma'mûn was used in Christian polemical writings against Islam. The most destructive specimen of this theological genre, the text known as the *Dialogue between Al-Kindî and Al-Hâshimî*, is presented by the anonymous author in his introduction as a verbatim report of a discussion which went on in all freedom in the presence of Caliph Al-Ma'mûn.[61]) Similarly, a manuscript in Paris contains disputes held in the court of Al-Ma'mûn in which the Melkite bishop Theodor Abû Qurra is said to have participated.[62]) It is precisely this image of Al-Ma'mûn, characterised by "heresy" and "friendship with Christians", to the point of allowing to degrade and insult the most sacred principles of Islam in his court, which is hinted at in the legend we have discussed. Its most plausible original habitat would thus be the circles fostering opposition against the ruling and intellectual elite of 10th century Baghdad described by Kraemer in his book *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam. The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age* (Leiden 1986).

The subject of the legend discussed so far can be defined as *the status of Greek science and philosophy in Islamic thought. Was it acceptable, from a religious point of view, to apply the principles of Greek logic in formulating the contents of the Islamic creed?* Traditionalist orthodox circles, however, vehemently opposed the use of pagan ideas. This aversion to the ancient philosophical books remained an undercurrent in orthodox circles for several centuries to come, occasionally finding an outlet in the actual destruction of suspected items. Examples of this undercurrent were documented by Goldziher in his already quoted article of 1915.[63]) The *destruction* of the ancient books was also propagated as a religious duty in a cycle of legends related to the sternly orthodox image of Caliph ^{c}Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb.

III — The ^{c}Umar-Cycle: The Destruction of Ancient Books as a Religious Norm

Discussing the originality of his scientific approach in his *Introduction to History*, the great Ibn Khaldûn shows himself deeply influenced by the Ma'mûn-legend. In an attempt to analyse the contribution of ancient peoples to the history of science he combines elements of this legend with motives derived from another tradition in which ^{c}Umar plays a major role. He says, "In a way, it (viz. my approach to history) is an entirely original science. In fact, I have not come across a discussion along these lines by anyone. I do not know if this is because people have been unaware of it. Perhaps they have written exhaustively on this topic, and their work did not reach us. There are many sciences. There have been numerous sages among the nations of mankind. The knowledge that has not come down unto us is larger than the knowledge that has. *Where are the sciences of the Persians that ^{c}Umar ordered to be wiped out at the time of the conquest?* Where are the sciences of the Chaldaeans, the Syrians, and the Babylonians, and the results that were theirs! Where are the sciences of the Copts, their predecessors! *The sciences of only one nation, the Greeks, have come down unto us, because they were translated through al-Ma'mûn's efforts.* (His efforts in this direction) were successful, because he had many translators at his disposal and spent much money at this connection. Of the sciences of others nothing has come to our attention".[64])

In another passage Ibn Khaldûn discusses the destruction of Persian books during the Muslim conquest in more detail: "However, when the Muslims conquered Persia and came upon an undescribably large number of books and scientific papers, Sa^{c}d ibn Abî Waqqâs wrote to ^{c}Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb, asking him for permission to take them and distribute them

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[55]) *La politique religieuse*: 1962.
[56]) Walzer, *Greek into Arabic*, 175.
[57]) Cf. Ibn al-Nadîm, *Al-Fihrist*, 338.
[58]) Al-Maqqarî, *Nafh*, vol. 5:302.
[59]) Goldziher, *Stellung*, 365.
[60]) Al-Sharazûrî, *Nuzhat*, 58-9.
[61]) *The apology of Al-Kindî*, London 1885.
[62]) Charfi, *Fikr*, 1986:127. See also Al-Sakûnî, *^{c}Uyûn al-munâẓarât*, 291 (dispute with Abû Qurra) and 285ff, 290 (other disputes).
[63]) *Stellung*.
[64]) Tr. Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 1: 78.

as booty among the Muslims. On that occasion, ᶜUmar wrote him: 'Throw them into the water. If what they contain is right guidance, God has given us better guidance. If it is error, God has protected us against it'. Thus the Muslims threw them into the water or into the fire, and the sciences of the Persians were lost and did not reach us".[65])

It is clear that Ibn Khaldûn was convinced that the sciences of the countries conquered by the Muslims had completely disappeared. In his view this held true not only for the sciences of the Persians, the Copts, the Babylonians and the Syrians, but also for those of the Greeks, insofar as they had been living in the countries conquered by Islam: "The Muslims developed a sedentary culture, such as no other nation had ever possessed. They became versed in many different crafts and sciences. Then they desired to study the philosophical disciplines. *They had heard some mention of them by the bishops and priests among (their) Christian subjects;* man's ability to think has (in any case) aspirations in the direction of the intellectual sciences. *Abû Jaᶜfar al-Manṣûr, therefore, sent [a messenger] to the Byzantine emperor* and asked him to send him translations of mathematical works. The Emperor sent him Euclid's book and some works on physics. The Muslims read them and studied their contents. Their desire to obtain the rest of them grew. *Later on, Al-Ma'mûn came.* He had some (scientific knowledge). Therefore, he had a desire for science. His desire drove him to action on behalf of the intellectual sciences. *He sent ambassadors to the Byzantine emperors. (These ambassadors) were to discover the Greek sciences and to have them copied in Arabic writing. He sent translators for that purpose. As a result, a good deal of the material was preserved and collected"* .[66])

The views of Ibn Khaldûn can be understood more adequately in the light of a notorious legend according to which Caliph ᶜUmar had ordered his general ᶜAmr ibn al-ᶜAṣ to destroy the famous ancient library of Alexandria, after the conquest of the city by the Muslim army. The most complete version known is found in the work of Ibn al-Qifṭî (d. 1248), in his note on the life and works of a Christian scholar, by the name of Yaḥyâ al-Naḥwî al-Misrî al-Iskandarânî,[67]) believed by him to have been alive during the conquest of Egypt. In this report Yaḥyâ is described as a Jacobite bishop in the church of Alexandria who had rejected the Christian trinitarian beliefs "after he had read the books of ancient science (*kutub al-ḥikma*)". He could "not make One Three and Three One". Consequently, he was dismissed from his bishop's see. When ᶜAmr ibn Al-ᶜAṣ had conquered Egypt he met Yaḥyâ and honoured him, because of his learning, his monotheistic belief and the way he had been treated by the Christians. He heard Yaḥyâ's arguments which undermined the doctrine of Trinity and admired them; he was charmed by his talking about the expiration of time. His logical arguments and philosophical terms were something the Arabs had not become familiar with before. ᶜAmr was a smart man, a good listener and a profound thinker. He kept Yaḥyâ's company and hardly ever left.

One day Yaḥyâ said to him: "You have brought under your control the warehouses of Alexandria and put your seal on all the articles found therein. In as far as these are useful to you I do not oppose you. On the other hand, *we* are more entitled to the things which are of no use to you at all. So order the release of them!" ᶜAmr said to him: "And what is it that you need?" Yaḥyâ explained, "The books of ancient science, in the royal libraries which have been seized (before). We are in need of them and they are of no use to you". When ᶜAmr then asked him about the history of these books, Yaḥyâ explained how Ptolomaeos Philadelphos, king of Alexandria, who was a great patron of the sciences, had a collected library of 54.120 books. "These books are still preserved; they have been taken care of by all the ruling kings and their successors until this day". ᶜAmr, who was amazed by the story of Yaḥyâ stated that it was impossible for him to take any decision in this matter without first asking Caliph ᶜUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb for permission, to whom he wrote. ᶜUmar replied: "As for the books you mentioned, if their content is in accordance with the Book of God, then they are superfluous by virtue of the contents of the Book of God. However, if their contents contradict the Book of God, then there is no need for them (either). So he ordered them to be destroyed". The story then continues as follows: "Thus ᶜAmr ibn al-ᶜAṣ began to distribute them among the public baths of Alexandria and had them burnt in their ovens (…). It is related that it took a period of six months to use up (all) these books".

The legendary character of this story has been pointed out repeatedly. First of all, the actual destruction of the library of Alexandria took place three centuries before Islam. It is well documented in historical sources. Secondly, Yaḥyâ Al-Naḥawî, the Christian scholar involved in this story whose Greek name was Johannes Philiponos, was not a contemporary of ᶜAmr ibn al-ᶜAṣ, but lived during the century preceding Islam.[68]) We are thus left with the problem of the origin and real meaning of this fabricated story. Yahya Al-Naḥawî is said to have rejected Christian trinitarian doctrines and embraced monotheism (*tawḥîd*) under the influence of the ancient books. In this way the impression is created that the ancient Greek books tend to prove the truth of Islam (*tawḥîd*) while refuting, just like the Koran, the trinitarian belief of Christianity. However, Caliph Umar did not accept the arguments of the Christian scholar. He stressed that the Koran was sufficient in itself and ordered these books to be burnt.

As to the origin of the legend of Yaḥyâ Al-Naḥawî and ᶜAmr ibn al-ᶜAṣ, this seems to be a forged version of data provided by Ibn al-Nadîm or one of his sources, viz. the (lost) book of a certain Isḥâq Al-Râhib, quoted by Ibn al-Nadîm under the title *Al-Ta'rîkh*. From this book Ibn al-Nadîm quotes the report of the foundation of the Alexandrian library by Ptolemaeos Philadelphos, including the same details as the ones provided by Ibn al-Qifṭî in his version of the Yaḥyâ-ᶜAmr legend. According to Ibn al-Nadîm Yaḥyâ al-Naḥawî, who had rejected Christian trinitarian belief, was a contemporary of ᶜAmr ibn al-ᶜAṣ, by whom he was treated with great honour.[69]) However, Ibn al-Nadîm does not in any way connect the report of the Alexandrian library with the life of Yaḥyâ al-Naḥawî, as is the case in Ibn al-Qifṭî's legendary version. Neither does he make any allusion to the influence of the ancient books on Yaḥyâ's rejection of trinitarian

[65]) Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 3:114.
[66]) Rosenthal, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 3: 115.
[67]) Ibn al-Qifṭî, *Ikhbâr*, 232-3.
[68]) Ibn al-Nadîm, *Al-Fihrist*, vol. 1, pp. 15, 239-40; vol. 2, 254; cf. Graf, GCAL, vol. 2, p. 214 (with reference to Sbath, *Fihris* 604: "von einem nicht näher charakterisierten [nestorianischen] Mönch (13 Jh?) wird eine Geschichte des Christentums bis zu seiner Zeit vermerkt".
[69]) *Ibidem*, vol. 1, 254; vol. 2, 117 n. 111. Here Isḥâq al-Râhib is, however, not mentioned as the source.

thought. The incorrect chronology of the life of Yaḥyâ al-Naḥawî in the time of the conquest of Egypt by ᶜAmr ibn al-ᶜAṣ may have been influenced by the early report of a religious dispute that took place in 639 A.D. between a patriarch also called *John* and an "amîr of the Muslims" identified by Nau, correctly I believe, as ᶜAmr ibn al-ᶜAṣ.[70]) The concoction of the Yaḥyâ-ᶜAmr story may have been a next step, directed against the influence of (Greek) philosophy on Islamic thought through *kalâm*.

IV — Cultural Exhange between Byzantium and Baghdad in the Early Abbasid Period

In this report the "bishops and priests among the Christian subjects (of the Islamic empire)", are assigned an intermediate role, viz. by making "some mention" of the ancient Greek sciences to the Muslims. Byzantium, however, remains the place of origin of the books to be translated into Arabic, and the whole matter boils down to an affair between the Emperor of Byzantium and Caliph Al-Ma'mûn. This time with a pioneering role for the second ᶜAbbasid caliph, Abû Jaᶜfar al-Manṣûr.

At this point it is necessary to refer to a few results of two historical studies on Byzantine civilization. In an article written in 1975 on "The availability of books in the Byzantine Empire, A.D. 750-850", Cyril Mango reached the conclusion that "in the Byzantine Empire between about A.D. 750 and 850 books were scarce and, by ordinary standards, fantastically expensive; further, that there did not exist at the time a central library, except the one at he Patriarchate, which was naturally limited to ecclesiastical material and not very complete at that (…). Hence the need to build up independent libraries. It appears (…) that we have here a new departure in the function of the Byzantine monastery. The close contacts which the Orthodox monks maintained with their brethern in the Arab-dominated East as well as in the West may have facilitated this process. Palestine, it would seem, was still fairly well supplied with Greek manuscripts".[71]) This conclusion evidently implies a flow of Greek books from the Islamic world to Byzantium, rather than, vice versa, from Constantinople to Baghdad, as stipulated by the Arabic sources quoted earlier!

The period studied by Mango is of crucial importance for the history of Greek letters, since it witnessed the beginning of the cultural movement often labelled the "Middle Byzantine Renaissance" to which we owe the oldest manuscripts, the *codices vetustissimi* of the ancient Greek authors.[72]) The same "Middle Byzantine Renaissance" is the central theme of a book of Lemerle of 1971, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*. The author provides some information from Greek chronicles relevant to our subject regarding one of the most prominent figures in the Byzantine cultural revival of the ninth century, viz. Leon the Mathematician. "Having acquired what little knowledge he could from various teachers, Leon resolved to continue his studies by searching out old manuscripts in monastic libraries. After much patient study, he returned to the capital where he assumed an obscure position as a private teacher. An extraordinary sequence of events completely altered his humble situation. One of his students was taken captive by the Arabs and made a slave. Upon learning that the caliph Al-Ma'mûn (813-833) was fervently interested in geometry, Leon's former student made himself known and was confronted with Arab mathematicians. His profound knowledge of Euclid impressed Al-Ma'mûn and his circle to such an extent that they ardently desired to know the person from whom he had learned so much, with the result that the caliph invited Leon to Baghdad to teach. Eventually Emperor Theophilos heard of this and decided to offer his hitherto undistinguished subject an official teaching position. This had a considerable impact on the realization of Leon's desire to assemble and copy ancient works, thus allowing him to play the very important role for which he is celebrated in the preservation and transmission of early scientific works".[73])

The international relations of the Abbasid Empire, both the peaceful and the military ones, indeed involved some forms of cultural exchange. The customary gifts exchanged through ambassadors could contain, in addition to other precious objects, a book. The Arabic "Book of Gifts and Presents" of the two brothers Al-Khâlidî contains the text of two letters exchanged between Al-Ma'mûn and a "King of India". In accordance with the wish he had expressed, Al-Ma'mûn received — among other precious gifts — a book, written on the bark of an Indian tree, entitled: *Ṣafw al-adhhân* ("Delight of the intellects"). He duly sent another book, entitled *Dîwân al-adab wa-bustân nawâdir al-ᶜuqûl*, together with some precious objects, in return.[74]) We know, moreover, of various gifts of one or a few books sent by a Byzantine emperor to a Muslim ruler through an ambassador. Well-known is the case of the *Book of Herbs* of Dioscurides sent from Byzantium to Córdoba during the reign of ᶜAbd al-Raḥmân III.[75]) The Abbasid caliph Al-Mahdî is said to have received an astrological book from Emperor Leon IV and one on falconry, which he had translated into Arabic, from Emperor Michael.[76]) Ibn Khaldûn's remark about the gift from Byzantium to Caliph Al-Manṣûr of a copy of Euclid's *Elements* together with some other books on the physical sciences fits into this pattern.

V — Greek Books and Christian Scholars in the Abbasid Empire

First of all, some authentic letters of the Nestorian patriarch Timothy I (780-823) show how this *catholicos* (*jâthilîq*) with the help of Abû Nûḥ ibn al-Ṣalṭ Al-Anbârî, a Christian secretary, was preparing a translation of the *Topica* of Aristotle, from Syriac into Arabic, by order of Caliph Al-Mahdî. In these letters Patriarch Timothy is asking his Christian addressee to look (a.o. in the Monastery of Mâr Mattay) for commentaries on the *Topica* and of various other Aristotelian and Platonic texts and to have them copied for him, if found, apparently also for the purpose of translation.[77]) There is no specification of the language of these MSS, which may have been in Syriac or Greek.

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[70]) Nau, *Colloque* (1915); see also Abel, *Légende* (1963-4), and Kraemer, *Philosophy*, pp. 97-98.
[71]) Mango, *Availability* (1975), esp. 43-44.
[72]) *Ibidem*, p. 16.
[73]) Lemerle (1971), pp. 150-2; summary quoted from Sesiano (1982), p. 15.
[74]) Al-Khâlidiyyân, *Tuḥaf*, pp. 159-65.
[75]) Van Koningsveld, *Glossary*, pp. 58-59.
[76]) Eche (1967), p. 22; Ahlwardt, *Verzeichnis, vol. 5, No. 6199(2).*
[77]) Bidawid, *Lettres*, 35; Putman, *l'Eglise et l'Islam* (1975), 106.

In the case of Ḥunayn ibn Isḥâq, the most productive of all translators, we even possess precise and detailed first-hand information. "According to Ḥunayn it was possible to collect Greek MSS in all the countries of the Islamic empire which had a Greek urbanised population at the time of the Arab conquest and in which the Greek language had not yet died out in his own day (…). He tells us that he went in search of MSS in Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt, and he particularly mentions Alexandria, Damascus (…), Aleppo and Ḥarrân as places where rare Greek books are likely to be found".[78]) These MSS belonged to Ḥunayn's private library.[79]) At the time when he wrote the first version of the essay on his Syriac and Arabic translations of the works of Galen, in 855 or 856 A.D. (ca. 241 A.H.), Ḥunayn had lost his complete library, which had been confiscated by Caliph Al-Mutawakkil, when he had fallen into disgrace and been arrested.[80]) After a while Ḥunayn was released and his library was returned to him. He continued to look for Greek MSS and succeeded in doing so, as appears from some of the new notes he provided in the second version of his essay of the year 863[81]) According to Ibn al-Nadîm, Ḥunayn "traversed the lands to collect books and also entered (in doing so) the country of the Byzantines".[82]) In the old sources, the Banû Mûsâ, the three famous sons of Al-Ma'mûn's astronomer, Mûsâ ibn Shâkir, are said to have sent a mission to the country of the Byzantines to collect ancient scientific books as well.[83]) Ḥunayn ibn Isḥâq, assisted by his students, made many Arabic translations for Muḥammad ibn Mûsâ and his brother Aḥmad. In one instance Ḥunayn tells that he has been looking in vain for a rare book of Galen in Aleppo, where, according to trustworthy people, a copy was to be found. In the second version of his essay he added that Muḥammad ibn Mûsâ had now been able to lay hands on a copy of this work.[84])

Whether or not Ḥunayn, the Banû Mûsâ and other scholars like Qusṭâ ibn Lûqâ Al-Baᶜlabakkî[85]) collected their MSS in the Islamic empire only or in the country of the Byzantines as well, the fact remains that we are dealing with private libraries only. There is no direct connection with the famous Bayt Al-Ḥikma. According to some modern authors, Ḥunayn ibn Ishaq was the director of the Bayt al-Ḥikma.[86]) But of this, as far as I know, no trace can be found in the old Arabic sources. Ḥunayn has been one of the physicians of Al-Mutawakkil's court. He is also known to have composed a book for an *umm walad* of that caliph.[87]) He translated, on a private basis, for Christian court-physicians, Muslim scholars and high officials of the court. He was never employed by any caliph to do so.[88]) Though not employed by the caliph himself as a translator he became part of a "network" consisting of Muslim and Christian scholars of different ethnic origins, closely connected to the court, who played their role in the translation-process. A similar observation can be made in the case of many other translators, both before and after Ḥunayn.

The *Bayt al-Ḥikma*, before anything else, was a library. It already existed in the time of Harûn al-Rashîd who entrusted the Persian astrologer Al-Faḍl ibn Nawbakht to take care of it. He used to translate the Persian *Ḥikma* books he found in it.[89]) The little information we have for the period of Al-Ma'mûn also speaks of scholars of Persian descent in the Bayt al-Ḥikma. We may mention as an example the famous astronomer Muḥammad ibn Mûsâ al-Khwârizmî, who is said to have devoted all his time to working in *Bayt al-Ḥikma*.[90]) Among the "masters of Bayt al-Ḥikma" in Al-Ma'mûn's time was Sahl ibn Hârûn, a fierce *shuᶜûbî* of Persian origin[91]) and Salm, who translated from Persian into Arabic.[92]) After the death of their father, when they were still boys, the three brothers Banû Mûsâ ibn Shâkir, who also had a Persian background, were taken care of by Al-Ma'mûn. He gave them a place in *Bayt al-Ḥikma* and each of them became a star in his field.[93]) As far as we can judge, the persons employed in the *Bayt al-Ḥikma* were Muslims only. Its focus was on the exact sciences, especially astronomy, including — of course — astrology. Al-Ma'mûn, like his Abbasid predecessors, had the stars consulted in many important political and military affairs. Several well-known astronomers were employed in his court.[94])

The whole process of translating Greek texts into Arabic cannot be adequately explained however, only by the influence of the Muᶜtazila. Earlier Abbasid caliphs had already stimulated some translations, nor did the movement stop with the abolishment of the Muᶜtazilite Inquisition. Many different factors have to be taken into account. Outstanding among these are the Christian scholars and translators who collected, so it seems, most of the Greek and Syriac originals from existing centres of Christian Hellenistic learning within the Islamic empire itself; secondly, the evergrowing number of Muslim scholars who wanted to study the ancient sciences and soon succeeded in surpassing them in various fields; thirdly, the Muᶜtazilite theologians who succeeded in introducing Greek methods of logic and metaphysical speculation into Islamic religious thought, notwithstanding some remaining opposition in strictly orthodox circles of later generations. And last, but not least, the Abbasid caliphs themselves, who directly and indirectly enabled the unfolding of the process among a network of Muslim and Christian personalities in and around their court.

78) Walzer, *Greek into Arabic* (1962), 116.
79) Cf. K. ᶜAwwâd, *Khazâ'in* (1948), pp. 201-4.
80) Ibn Abî Uṣaybiᶜa, *ᶜUyûn*, vol. 1/195 quoting Ḥunayn himself.
81) See also Ibn Abî Uṣaybiᶜa, *ᶜUyûn*, vol. 1, 196 line 25.
82) *Op. cit*., 294; Ibn al-Qifṭî, *op.cit*., 119.
83) Ibn al-Qifṭî, *Op. cit*., 208.
84) unayn ibn Isḥâq, *Galen-Uebersetzungen* (1925), No. 67 and passim.
85) Ibn al-Qifṭî, *Op. cit*., pp. 173-4.
86) Yûzbakî, *Ta'rîkh*, p. 411 (describing Huayn ibn Isḥâq as "ra'îs Bayt al-Ḥikma").
87) Ibn Abî Uṣaybiᶜa, *ᶜUyûn*, vol. 1, p. 199. Bergsträsser (1913), p. 7 mentions a MS of this work entitled *Masâ'il Ḥunayn ibn Isḥâq fî maᶜânî Buqrâṭ fî kitâbihi al-mawsûm bi-'l-mawlûdîn li-thamâniyat ashhur* dedicated to "al-Sayyid Amîr al-Mu'minîn".
88) His working-method and his contacts with his commissioners are amply documented in his essay.
89) Ibn al-Qifṭî, *op. cit*., 169.
90) Ibn al-Nadîm, 274; Ibn al-Qifṭî, 187.
91) Ibn al-Nadîm, 120.
92) *Ibidem*, 120.
93) *Ibidem* 120; cf. 243.
94) Ibn al-Qifṭî, pp. 286-7.

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Leiden University, P.S. VAN KONINGSVELD
The Netherlands