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D. Gutas (ed.) With the assistance of Ch. Burnett and U. Vagelpohl, *Why Translate Science? Documents from Antiquity to the 16th Century in the Historical West (Bactria to the Atlantic)*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2022 (Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section One. The Near and Middle East 160), IX + 764 pp.

The aim of this collection of essays is better understood against the backdrop of the *Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* by Kittel *et al.*[1] which it complements with a rich anthology of texts. Four sections of Kittel *et al.*, in particular, provide the frame of *Why Translate Science?*, namely sections XVII, *Translation Within and Between Cultures: The Ancient World*; XVIII, *Translation Within and Between Cultures: The Near East in Ancient and Medieval Times*; XX, *Translation Within and Between Cultures: Medieval Europe*, and finally XXI, *Translation Within and Between Cultures: The European Renaissance*. Two authors, Mohsen Zakeri and Charles Burnett, contributed to both enterprises.

Following the Introduction by the editor D. Gutas (pp. 1-5), *Why Translate Science?* opens with a chapter by F. Mundt and D. Cohen, "Latin Translations of Greek Science and Philosophy: Some Relevant Passages" (pp. 6-51) which retraces the two topics of the *patrii sermonis egestas* (the alleged poverty of Latin in comparison to Greek) and of literal translation vs free rendering, both dealt with in four chapters of section XVII of Kittel *et al.*[2] Mundt and Cohen aptly remark that "Although both this essay and its related texts focus on philosophy and science, it is necessary to preface them with some remarks on the very early history of Latin translation, namely the poetic genres of epic and drama" (p. 6). The two topics originate from some of the earliest Latin translations from Greek, and were voiced respectively by Cicero and Horace. The anthology of passages presented at the end of the first chapter of *Why Translate Science?* includes Terentius, Cicero, Horace, Seneca, and Jerome as the documentary pieces on the theory of the 'word for word' translation. Lucretius, Cicero, Seneca, and Aulus Gellius form the set of the documentary pieces concerning the claim of poverty of Latin in comparison with Greek. The anthology of passages is completed by a section on "Translating Plato and Aristotle in Late Antiquity".

M. Zakeri is the author of a chapter entitled "Translations from Greek into Middle Persian as Repatriated Knowledge" (pp. 52-169). Zakeri sets for himself the task of modifying "the general perception, which has inadvertently put more weight on the ʿAbbāsids, showing that not only were translations from Greek, Sanskrit, and other languages into Middle Persian and Syriac (the language of instruction at western Iranian schools, a fact rarely taken into consideration) carried on in diverse fields before the coming of Islam, but that after a temporary slowdown in pace owing to the havoc caused by the early Arab conquests, the movement continued on its path undeterred" (p. 53). The basic attitude of the Sasanians towards science and philosophy is echoed in the title of Zakeri's chapter: translation means repatriation. "Intensive propaganda campaigns promulgated the idea that science in all its

[1] H. Kittel – A.P. Frank – N. Greiner – Th. Hermans – W. Koller – J. Lambert – F. Paul *et al.* (eds), *Übersetzung. Translation. Traduction. Ein internationales Handbuch zur Übersetzungsforschung. An International Encyclopedia of Translation Studies. Encyclopédie internationale de la recherche sur la traduction*, De Gruyter, Berlin - New York 2004-2011.

[2] S. Swain, *Bilingualism and Translation in the Educational System of Ancient Rome*; J.G.F. Powell, *Translation and Culture in Ancient Rome: Cicero's Theory and Practice of Translation*; L. Holford-Strevens, *An Antonine Littérateur: The Case of Aulus Gellius*; R. Lamberton, *Theory and Practice of Translation in Late Antiquity.*

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branches was originally developed in Persia and spread from there to the rest of the world as a result of natural and human disasters (Alexander the Great being the protagonist in the latter), such that seeking and recovering it was a national and religious duty. (...) Acquisition of foreign learning, especially Greek and Indian, occupied first position on the imperial agenda" (p. 54). Since the majority of original texts are lost, Zakeri relies mostly on "indirect evidence based chiefly on bibliographical references and occasional quotations in secondary and tertiary literature, and the doxographical works of later Muslim biographers, historians, and commentators" (pp. 55-6). Hence, the texts presented at the end of the chapter to document the perceived need to translate from Greek and other languages include, besides a famous passage of the Sasanian *Acts of Religion* where the repatriation of knowledge is stated, passages taken from the *K. al-Fihrist* by Ibn al-Nadīm and other Arab sources. A point which goes often unnoticed, here as in other essays on the same subject, is the striking similarity between this topic and the typical early Christian theme of the so-called *furta Graecorum*, namely the idea that the knowledge and doctrines in which the Greeks took great pride were robbed from the wisdom of the Hebrews.[3] Hence, the adoption of Greek philosophy to support the Christian faith was nothing but repatriation. On mere chronological basis, the outside reader might even wonder if similarity does not mean inspiration on the part of the authors of the Sasanian *Acts of Religion*.

The essay by D. King, "Why the Syrians Translated Greek Philosophy and Science" (pp. 170-253) examines in depth the nature, extent, and impact of the translations produced during several centuries by the Christians of Syria. "However the nature and long-term significance of their contribution may be adjudged, there can be no doubt that the volume of translation work carried out by the Syrians of late antiquity was very substantial in its own right, certainly of far greater extent than its extant manuscript remains initially suggest. At a time when the ancient world was undergoing transformations so fundamental as to give birth to new cultures and literatures, the Syrian churches showed an eagerness to appropriate the Greek classic heritage that was rivalled by few amongst the Western European successors of the Latin rhetors. When the most famous of ʿAbbāsids-era translators, Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq, claimed to have translated into Syriac no fewer that ninety-five works by Galen, he was merely presenting himself as the high point of a long tradition already more than three centuries old" (p. 170). King aptly labels this attitude an "obsession with translating into their own language" (*ibid.*) and proceeds to describe the schools which fostered the transmission of both religious and secular texts from late antiquity well into later ages, when the Syriac-speaking countries were under Muslim rule. "Medicine and Aristotelian logic hog the lion's share of the extant translations, with astronomy, rhetoric, and grammar not far behind. Mathematics, alchemy, and psychology, the latter so pertinent to the Christian concern for the destiny of the soul, were also popular (...). Technical subjects are not absent either (...). The conceptual framework within which these translations ought to be read is that of a Graeco-Syriac tradition oriented toward and in emulation of a still ongoing Alexandrian tradition of scientific learning" (pp. 172-3). The set of texts appended to this essay opens with the *Prologue* by Sergius of Rešʿaynā to his

[3] See e.g. Justin, *Apol. I*, 44, 59, 60; *Apol. II*, 10; Clemens of Alexandria, *Strom.* I, 22; VI, 2. A detailed treatment of the topic is offered by D. Ridings, *The Attic Moses. The Dependency Theme in Some Early Christian Writers*, Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, Göteborg 1995.

introduction to and commentary on Aristotle's logical works, entitled *On the Aim of all the Works of Aristotle*. Other texts by Sergius and his contemporaries Proba and Paul the Persian, plus further texts by translators belonging to later phases of the translations into Syriac (Severus Sebokht, the patriarch Timothy I, and Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq being the most prominent) complete this rich and interesting chapter.

U. Vagelpohl and I. Sánchez, "Why Do We Translate? Arabic Sources on Translation" (pp. 254-376) start their essay with the remark that, notwithstanding the wealth and influence of the translations and the fact that the Arabic sources contain much information about them, "it is difficult to find statements that give a clear-cut answer to the question as to why we translate" (p. 254). Indeed, "contemporary observers were apparently not overly concerned with this question" (*ibid.*). This does not mean that statements about the translations carried out were lacking, quite the contrary. There is, for example, the famous *Epistle* by Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq about his translations of Galen's works which provides "precious bibliographical information about previous translations, prosopographical details about translators and patrons, and technical information concerning translation practices" (pp. 255-6). After a survey of the main issues concerning the translations and their context, Vagelpohl and Sánchez highlight the importance of the sole text that features in their anthology under the heading "Why Do We Translate?", namely a famous passage by al-Kindī at the beginning of his treatise *On First Philosophy*. They observe: "Al-Kindi's remarks – that the accumulation of knowledge is a process that spans generations, and that we owe a debt of gratitude to our forebears, whatever their religion and ethnic background – are echoed by other authors at the time. This noble sentiment offers an answer to our opening question that is generic at best. It also illustrates the kind of response that seems to emerge from the flood of pronouncements on translation that can be found in the Arabic literary tradition" (p. 261). Vagelpohl and Sánchez also observe that "What the authors on whom we rely seem to deem much more important were questions of cultural transfer: who took knowledge from whom. The reports of this mostly legendary transfer (...) either mention translation, but do so baldly, as something that took place but was not in question, or do not mention it at all: for the authors and compilers of these reports, it was clearly an uncontroversial activity" (pp. 262-3).

The following chapter is dedicated to "an exception in the structure of this volume" (p. 377). It is the essay by I. Toral on "The *Nabatean Agriculture* by Ibn Waḥšiyya, a Pseudo-Translation by a Pseudo-Translator: The Topos of Translation in Occult Sciences" (pp. 377-96). In so far as it pretends to be the translation "of an approximately 20,000-year-old original Babilonian source", the *Nabatean Agriculture* belongs rather to the "pseudo- or fictitious translations", but it is precisely as such that, according to Toral, it is "very relevant to a better understanding of the function of translation and translated texts in the cultural system of ʿAbbāsid and Buyid Baghdad" (p. 377). In the preface, Ibn Waḥšiyya "claims to have rescued several books from oblivion and then translated 'from the Chaldaean language' (...). These books allegedly belong to the heritage, neglected and dating back millennia, of the Nabateans" (p. 380). The work features "a curious hybrid between scientific handbook and magical treatise" (p. 381). Its extensive preface makes it, in the opinion of Toral, a case in point for *Why Translate Science?* The preface "evinces a textual strategy that aims both to convince the reader of the authenticity of the translation, by drawing on existing notions of translation, and to enhance the status of Ibn Waḥšiyya as a competent translator, by meeting the reader's expectations" (p. 382).

A. Kaldellis, "Translations into Greek in the Byzantine Period" (pp. 397-444), highlights the "'uniquely unique' position" of Byzantium with respect to other cultures of the period. "Ancient philosophical, scientific, and technical knowledge was recorded and perfected in Greek texts, and Byzantium, a Greek-speaking society whose elite education was based on ancient *paideia*, was the only post-classical culture that had direct and unmediated access to the surviving original sources. It did not need translations to access ancient thought" (p. 397). As a consequence, Byzantium "needed translation only in order to access contemporary intellectual developments taking place in neighboring cultures, primarily in the Near East (in Syriac, Arabic, and Persian) and in the Latin West" (p. 398). They took, however, little interest in these developments, and Kaldellis wonders why. His answer is primarily that "the Byzantines inherited a strong view of the superiority of their own language" (*ibid.*); in addition, the prevailing feeling after the seventh century was one of being "surrounded by barbarians who had dismembered and occupied its lands (...). For centuries after the Germanic and Arab conquests, there was no awareness among the Romans of any potential intellectual threat arising from a foreign direction, no idea that the Franks would produce an Abelard or the Muslims an al-Fārābī" (p. 399). Another important reason was religion. "(...) the dominant paradigm explicitly and resolutely rejected any notion that potentially conflicted with Orthodox doctrine" (p. 400). Nonetheless, translations of foreign works were carried out, and Kaldellis narrows his focus to those from Arabic (between the 9th and the 11th centuries) and from Latin. These "flourished between the late thirteenth and the early fifteenth centuries" (p. 406) and included Cicero, Ovid, Augustine, Boethius, and Thomas Aquinas.

Ch. Burnett, "The Statements of Medieval Latin Translators on Why and How they translate Works on Science and Philosophy from Arabic" (pp. 444-87) surveys the prefaces of several translators from Arabic in a time span which ranges from the mid-tenth to the late thirteenth century. The earliest translations include works on astrology and astronomy. In one of these corpora the anonymous translator formulates an idea which, Burnett explains, will resurface time and again: "The translator is trying to convince his reader of the importance of the text that he is translating. He emphasizes that the material is not new, but is rather a re-introduction of the wisdom of the Ancients, which has been neglected and forgotten. It is so important that he feels he must not add anything of his own, but rather should translate the Arabic faithfully. Exactly the same order of material (or even of words) should be preserved in Latin as in the Arabic. As we shall see, the conceit that translation is the rediscovery of something lost is a leitmotif" (p. 446). Another topic destined to become widespread is formulated by Stephen of Antioch, who was active in the first half of the 12th century, and consists in the scientific poverty of the Latin world, which he "contrasts with the wealth that the Orient can provide". Hence he "exhorts his readers to consult the 'truth of the Arabs' (*Arabum veritas*)" (p. 448), and so does Adelard of Bath. It is however with the translators active in Spain that full-fledged accounts of the purpose of translations come to the fore. "The main translators in Toledo, Gerard of Cremona and Dominicus Gundissalinus, did not write prefaces to their translations, and we only know of their motives indirectly. The situation in north-east Spain is different, and here a related group of translators appear to have followed a common policy: paying attention to the Latinity of their translations, adding prefaces, and situating their translations within a larger programme of research" (p. 449). Even though Gerard of Cremona and Gundissalinus did not state explicitly their purposes in translating the works of the Arabs, for Burnett they had, nevertheless, a programme: they endorsed

what had been outlined by al-Fārābī in his *Enumeration of the Sciences*. This is a treatise which Gundissalinus translated and imitated in his own *De Divisione philosophiae* and whose influence, according to Burnett, is apparent also in the selection made by Gerard of Cremona of the works to be translated (p. 451). "For a more circumstantial account of Gerard's aims and motifs we may turn to the *Vita* written by his students (...). Here again we find a reference to the 'poverty of the Latins' (*Latinorum penuria*)" (pp. 452-3). Burnett's survey ends with the translators of the 13th century and the towering figure of Michael Scot.

Ch. Burnett, together with M. Angold, is also the author of the chapter entitled "Latin Translators from Greek in the Twelfth Century on Why and How They Translate" (pp. 488-524). This century "marked the beginning of a substantial transmission of knowledge from both Arabic and Greek into Latin" (p. 488). The "Why and How" of the title is best exemplified in the prologue by Burgundio of Pisa (d. 1193) to one of his translations. Burnett and Angold call attention to the (now familiar) topic of filling a gap in Latin literature, and to Burgundio's explicit allegiance to the model of literal translation. "A strict *verbum de verbo* translation method is advocated, complemented by notes and explanations, and supported by a long list of precedents, which becomes a virtual history of translations from Greek into Latin (...). Burgundio gives Boethius' method as one of these precedents, and refers to Horace's description of the *fidus interpres* ('faithful interpreter'). His advocacy of a literal method of translating reflected what was becoming more and more the norm among translators of the twelfth century" (p. 489). James of Venice – the translator of the *Posterior Analytics*, *Sophistical Refutations*, *Physics*, and *De Anima* – and Henricus Aristippus – the translator of *Meno* and *Phaedo* – were both active in the 12th century, as was the anonymous translator of the *Almagest* directly from Greek (p. 491). "In the case of these Latin translations from Greek we thus have a close-knit network. Some of the translators knew one another. The texts that have prefaces are addressed to friends rather than potentates. The translators worked in the same academic environment, albeit in different cities. Costantinople was the centre where they met, or from which they obtained the manuscripts of the texts that they translated. They shared a predilection for extravagant language, rich in Classical allusions, no doubt because, as scholars of Greek, they were educated in the Classical authors in both Greek and Latin" (p. 492).

The chapter by P. Beullens, "Why Did Latin Translators Translate from the Greek in the Thirteenth Century and Later?" (pp. 525-43), asks the same question as the previous chapter, this time about the translations at the end of the Middle Ages. Three translators, Robert Grosseteste, Bartholomew of Messina, and William of Moerbeke incarnate the typical attitude of the 13th century, according to which, for Beullens, the earlier translations were considered "unsatisfactory, both for their lack of accuracy and for the incomplete view of the philosopher's" [Aristotle's] "output that they offered. Questions were raised about their doctrinal acceptability, and it was thought that more and better translations, made directly from the Greek originals, could resolve the problem" (p. 525). This is apparent chiefly in William of Moerbeke, whose approach is described on the basis of Roger Bacon's report. It is well known that Bacon was a harsh critic of Moerbeke's translations; however, as Beullens notices, he was "well informed about William's project to update the Latin versions of Aristotle's works, either by revising the existing translations where they were available, or by making new ones if he found no existing suitable versions" (p. 526). Beullens notices also the "strict adherence to the word-for-word method" of Moerbeke and his contemporaries (p. 527), and aptly remarks that this does not imply that they translated "in a purely mechanical manner" (*ibid.*).

The reader interested in this crucial point in the study of translations, namely how to reconcile the ideal of perfect literacy with the aim of granting intelligibility, should refer to the analysis conducted by C. Luna and A.-Ph. Segonds on Moerbeke's translation of the commentary of Proclus on the *Parmenides*.[4]

G. Freudenthal opens his chapter "Why Translate? Views from Within Judaism: Egodocuments by Translators from Arabic and Latin into Hebrew (Twelfth-Fourteenth Centuries)" (pp. 544-683) with a comparison between the languages of the Jewish communities in Islamic countries and in Christian Europe. While for the Jews of the Muslim world bilingualism was the rule, this was not so for those living in the Christendom: "for philosophy and science, biblical exegesis, religious law, Hebrew philology, and similar disciplines, Judeo-Arabic was employed; Hebrew was reserved for poetry, as well as the liturgy. (...) The result was a situation of continuous bilingualism, in which Jewish intellectuals had two written languages at their disposal, in addition to their various vernaculars, whose use as a rule remained oral. (...) The situation was very different for Jewish cultures living under the Cross (...). The diglossia that prevailed under Islam had no parallel under Christianity: the cultural languages of the Jews in Europe (Andalusia excluded) were Hebrew and Aramaic only" (p. 545). Since these communities had no Latin, "Jewish intellectuals in Christian lands could access non-Jewish texts only via translations or Hebrew compositions summarizing them" (p. 546). Freudenthal emphasizes the fact that this translation movement, massive as it might have been, had to go against the tide. "This cultural transfer had not only to overcome the traditional resistance to all 'alien' or 'secular' thought, but also to do so via the very narrow route of texts (notably translations) written by Arabophone scholars. In sum, there were powerful factors militating against the introduction of non-Jewish lore into Judaism in Hebrew" (p. 547). Hence, most translations are prefaced or postfaced by accounts about why the texts were chosen: these statements are labelled "Egodocuments" which attest that "the Arabic-Hebrew translation activity was a socially self-conscious, coherent, and continuous tradition. (...) We may say that the Arabic-Hebrew translators constituted a sort of network extending through time and space" (p. 553).

The last chapter, by D.N. Hasse, deals with "Renaissance Scholars on Why They Translate Scientific and Philosophical Works from Arabic into Latin" (pp. 684-728). Here too the documentary pieces are chiefly prefaces and dedicatory letters to their patrons, who often were scholars like Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Domenico Grimani, or Ercole Gonzaga. The time span goes from the end of the 15th cent. to the mid-16th cent. "The outcome of these seventy years of translation effort is impressive in size and quality: Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine* was made accessible in new and improved Latin versions, and many commentaries by Averroes then still unknown in Christian Europe could now be read in Latin, such as the *Long Commentary* on the *Posterior Analytics*, the *Epitome* of the *Metaphysics*, and the *Middle Commentary* on *De Animalibus*. But the translators also engaged with other Arabic scientific traditions, such as the medicine of Averroes, the astronomy of Alpetragius, and the astrology of Haly ibn Abenragel" (pp. 684-5). The university of Padua was the centre from where the influence of these texts radiated . "The existence of patrons, of an audience, and of an academic context therefore constituted an important foundation for Arabic-(Hebrew)-

[4] Proclus, *Commentaire sur le Parménide de Platon*, *Introduction générale et Livre I*, ed. C. Luna – A.-Ph. Segonds, 2 vols., Les Belles Lettres, Paris 2007 (CUF), pp. CCLXXVII-CCCLXIII.

Latin translation activity in the Renaissance" (p. 687). Here a new concern comes to the fore: that of correct versions to improve or replace the medieval ones. "In a culture where Avicenna and Averroes were prescribed reading in many Christian European universities, correct translations of these authors were an essential demand. The promise of uncorrupted texts that are more reliable than the medieval translations is proffered alike by Arabic-Latin translators, Hebrew-Latin translators, and humanist revisors" (*ibid.*). In addition, there was an increased interest in new texts which had never been translated before. "The greatest demand, apparently, is for new texts by Averroes, which are diligently collected by the editors of the monumental 1550/52 Giunta edition of the combined Aristotle and Averroes" (p. 688).

As stated by the editor Dimitri Gutas, this collection does not aim "to present a survey of all translations from Greek, secular or religious" (p. 3, fn. 4), but rather to "present the material for a social history of science" (p. 3). It is also stated that "its aim, as a handbook, is to make the material easily accessible to research, not to conduct the research itself" (*ibid.*), and from this point of view the anthology of passages at the end of each chapter is useful. The editor's caveat also explains to some extent the exclusion of important stages in the long history of pre-modern translations as well as that of some important topics in this multifaceted phenomenon. As an example of the latter, the exclusion of the momentous translations of Neoplatonic texts in the early phase of the transmission of learning from Greek into Arabic is surprising. The reader wonders why attention is called to the *Nabatean Agriculture* as an example of texts which are creations of new literary items rather than 'mere' translations, whereas the pseudo-*Theology of Aristotle* or the *Book by Aristotle on the Pure Good* - which are respectively a selection and reworking of Plotinus' *Enneads* and a selection and reworking of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* – are ignored. A possible explanation is that metaphysics is excluded in this volume from the field of science, whereas occult doctrines and practices like those dealt with in the *Nabatean Agriculture* are included. Still, the problem of exclusions and inclusions under the heading of 'science' in pre-modern times remains a very difficult one, and one which bears significantly also on the question of the aspects of the history of pre-modern translations which are not considered in this volume. For instance, the 6th and 7th century translations from Greek into Armenian of Aristotle's logical works, accompanied by comments stemming from the school of Alexandria are ignored, even though logic falls undoubtedly within the province of 'science'. All this, of course, depends upon the difficulty of dealing with a cultural phenomenon which, for its vastness in time and space, the extent of its impact, and the variety of aspects involved is hard to reduce to one or few criteria. This collection represents, nevertheless, a very welcome starting point for further research.

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