

6. აბასიანები თავს აცხადებდნენ არა მხოლოდ წინასწარმეტყველი მუჰამადის, არამედ ძველი აქამენიანებისა და სასანიანების ლეგიტიმურ მემკვიდრეებადაც;

7. ირანში მიიჩნევენ, რომ ბერძნებმა ავესტიდან მოიპარეს ყოველგვარი ცოდნა, ამიტომაც ბერძნულიდან ისევ საჭირო იყო ამ ყველაფრის თარგმნა და უკან დაბრუნება; ამანაც გარკვეულწილად ხელი შეუწყო აბასიანთა სახალიფოში ბერძნულიდან აქტიური მთარგმნელობითი საქმიანობის წამოწყებას.

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Iranian Influence on the Arabic Culture of the Abbasid Period

The paper deals with the important cultural processes taking place in the Abbasid caliphate, first of all – translation from Greek into Arabic. Critics have argued that this activity was initiated by Syrian Christians or wise caliphs. It is shown that the translation activity was connected with the social, political and cultural situation that developed during the Abbasid era. Most importantly, it is underlined that the influence of the Persian Zoroastrian Empire was great in the Abbasid state, which was reflected in the field of culture, including translation.

Greek-Arabic translation began in the Abbasid era, and over the course of a century and a half, almost all non-literary and non-historical Greek secular books that were distributed throughout the Byzantine Empire and the Near East were translated into Arabic. This means that, with the exception of the above, the heritage of the ancient Greek, Roman and Late Antique periods is practically entirely represented in Arabic (in some cases the Greek original is lost and only the Arabic translation survives).

This process in itself was of great importance for Greek and Arabic philology, for the history of philosophy and science. These aspects are analyzed very extensively and a great deal of scientific literature is devoted to them, but the Greek-Arabic translation process as a social phenomenon is very little studied. First of all, it should be noted that the Greek-Arabic translation activity continued, practically, for two centuries, therefore, it was not an ephemeral event. Secondly, it was supported by the entire elite of the Abbasid community: caliphs, civilian officials, military leaders, merchants and bankers, scholars and intellectuals. This was not an irreciprocal project. Thirdly, the translation work was abundantly funded by both public and private sources. It was not just fashion, the desire for education and learning in some privileged part of society. Finally, this work was carried out with consistent scientific methodology and philological accuracy.

When it comes to the Greek-Arabic translation process, the vast scientific literature is dominated by two views. First, translation work was started by Syriac Christians, who, due to their special education, were fluent in both Greek and Arabic. It was their initiative to show themselves, to educate the community and thus, at the same time, to emphasize their intellectual superiority. Second: The

translation work was an initiative of the wise caliphs, who embarked on a process similar to that of the European Enlightenment, as they valued the importance of education for society. Of course, Syriac-speaking Christians played a crucial role in the translation work, and translators were mostly (though not always) out of their circle. At the same time, the support of the famous caliphs – Al-Mansur (reigned 754-775), Harun al-Rashid (reigned 786-809) and Al-Mamun (reigned 813-833) was equally crucial; But the Greek-Arabic translation process was so complex, so important in its historical essence, that its origins and patterns of development require deeper analysis.

When talking about Greek-Arabic translation, it is important to pay attention to the situation before the Abbasid dynasty came to power, as the conditions that prepared the ground for the formation and flourishing of translation came as a result of two important historical events: the Umayyad period and the Abbasid revolution, which ended in 750. In less than 30 years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the Arabs conquered Southwest Asia and Northeast Africa – territories ruled by Alexander the Great at one time. This put an end to the Sassanid Empire, Roman and Byzantine domination of Egypt and the North Semitic area. By 732, the new empire, considered the homeland of Islam, had in fact stretched from India to Spain. Therefore, the centers of ancient civilization – Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria-Palestine, Egypt – were in the hands of the Arabs. For the first time since Alexander, Egypt and Syria-Mesopotamia were again linked politically, administratively and economically to Persia and India. At the same time, the great economic and cultural barrier, the division that cut off important parts of the civilized world, was broken by the Muslims. Opposing antagonistic forces west and east of the Euphrates and Tigris no longer existed. The disappearance of the border facilitated the exchange of raw materials, processed products, agricultural goods and luxury items, as well as allowed the population to move freely. New ideas and perspectives emerged. The significance of this event was further enhanced by the fact that it all began after the Byzantine-Persian Wars (570-630), which destroyed the area, reduced the local population, and hampered trade. These wars, as well as subsequent conflicts between the Greeks, Romans, and Byzantines, on the one hand, and the Persians, on the other, were caused by economic barriers that arose as a result of the Middle East splitting in two.

The unification of the West and the East had great cultural consequences: the unification of the peoples and territories that had been influenced by Greek culture since the time of Alexander. At the same time, these territories separated from the Byzantine Empire and were therefore liberated from the religious policies of Constantinople. This was mutually important: Constantinople defended the Chalcedonian course, divisions arose in eastern territory, the Monophysite Syrians dispersed, and the Nestorians found themselves in Iran. Also, there was a diaspora of Syrian Melkites. It was this division on religious grounds and the schism among Christians that led to their unification under a non-partisan caliphate, which paved the way for much greater cultural cooperation and union. On the other hand, this political and geographical isolation protected the Christian communities from the

Byzantines under the Muslim rule and brought all the other Hellenized peoples into the Islamic community.

The practice of translation in the Middle East has existed since the II millennium BC and an example of this is the translation of Sumerian documents into Akkadian. It is more important for us to note that Greek secular materials were translated into Middle Eastern languages, including Arabic, to some extent before the Abbasids came to power, although this fact should not explain the Abbasid translation movement, which should not be interpreted as a continuation of a pre-existing tradition. Each translation process has its own causes and objectives, which must be analyzed in the light of specific cases.

Naturally, we do not mean the translations of Greco-Syriac Christian literature, which provided the necessary technical background for the translation of secular works. They responded to the various social and ideological needs and demands of Aramaic-speaking Christians. It is widely believed that the transfer of Greek knowledge into Arabic was due to pre-existing Syriac translations. It seemed that the important task of translating from Greek into Semitic languages had already been completed in the Syriac schools, and it remained to be done that the Syriac translations into the relative Semitic languages were also transferred under the auspices of the Arab elite. This, of course, is very far from reality. Before the Abbasids, relatively few Greek secular works were translated into Syriac: Porphyry's *Isagog* and Aristotle's first three books, *Medicine*, *Some Astronomy* and *Astrology*, *Popular Philosophy*. Important Greek scientific and philosophical works were translated into Syriac as early as the ninth century during the Abbasid rule. After the conquest of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt by the Arabs, the need for translation from Greek arose from the needs of both the ruling circles and the needs of daily life.

Indian scientific material in astronomy, astrology, mathematics, and medicine entered the Arabic-speaking community through Middle Persian during the Abbasid period. Direct translations from Sanskrit do not seem to have been performed, or if they did exist, it was also a limited number of astronomical texts that were translated before the Abbasid rule in Sindh Province (Pakistan) and Afghanistan. Translations from Sanskrit were very important for the development of early Abbasid astronomy. And also, the translation of some astronomical texts that existed before the Abbasid rule proves that there were a sufficient number of international scholars at that time whose talents were consumed by the translation movement produced by the Abbasids. Translations from Greek into Middle Persian and from Middle Persian into Arabic are a very important factor not only for the Greek-Arabic translation work of the Abbasids, but also for the development of Arabic literature and culture in general. These translations have a number of aspects and the necessity of their creation was conditioned by different historical circumstances or motives. Not all of them can be combined into one group. It is important to note that translations of Greek scientific and philosophical works into Middle Persian also existed in pre-Islamic times. The interest of the Sassanids in teaching Greek was partly due to Zoroastrian imperial ideology, which meant that all knowledge was derived from the *Avesta*, the Zoroastrian canonical books, and

in this context, the Greek-Persian translation activities that reached the highest level in Khosrow I Anushirvan's reign (531-578 A.D.) are best understood.

The policies of the early Abbasid caliphs, especially al-Mansur (reigned 754-75) and his son al-Mahdi (reigned 775-85), are of great importance for examining the beginnings of Greek-Arabic translation. As mentioned above, the translations that were completed during the Umayyad rule did not play a significant role in the translation activities initiated by the Abbasids, and it is necessary to highlight the influence of Zoroastrian Sassanid culture on the formation of the early Abbasid imperial ideology. To begin with, we should mention that the Abbasid dynasty came to power after the civil war that took place between the rival factions of the house of the Prophet Muhammad and which is known as the Abbasid revolution. The task faced by the first Abbasid rulers, and which was aimed mostly at al-Mansur, involved settling not only with former rivals but also with different interest groups taking part in the Abbasid revolution. Each of them was driven by its own goals. This reconciliation had to take place at both the political and ideological levels. Significant historical research on the Abbasid revolution has shown that the success of al-Mansur and his descendants depended on their ability to form political coalitions with various major factions to prove to each of them that they were interested in the Abbasid rule. At the same time, al-Mansur and his descendants had to prove the legitimacy of the Abbasid caliphate and carefully present their ideology to various factions. We should especially single out the "Persian" faction, with the support of which the Abbasids came to power. The faction consisted mainly of Arab tribes who moved to Khorasan during the early conquests and assimilated with the local population, as well as the Persians and Arameans who lived in the Sassanid Empire before the rise of Islam and the Zoroastrian Persians who were eventually conquered by the Arabs. It is obvious that the Abbasid caliphs, in order to prove the legitimacy of their rule, tried to spread their imperial ideology, which was to include the "Persian" faction. This was achieved by declaring that the Abbasid dynasty, in addition to being a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad and, therefore, meeting the demands of Sunni and Shiite Muslims, was the successor to the ancient imperial dynasties (from Babylon to the Sassanid Empire) and Iraq. In this way they were able to link the Sassanid culture, whose positions were still firmly in the majority of the Iraqi population, to the Abbasid culture. Al-Mansur was the main creator of this policy. Al-Mansur's name is associated with the construction of Baghdad, he was the second Abbasid caliph and the true founder of the Abbasid state. Arab authors refer to him as the initiator and promoter of the translation movement.

Al-Mansur's initiative to promote science and translation was prompted by his strong interest and belief in astrology. This fact is independently confirmed by other sources. Suffice it to mention a few well-known cases – al-Mansur chose July 30, 762, to begin the construction of Baghdad on the recommendation of the royal court astrologer Nawbakht and his other colleagues; During his last pilgrimage to Mecca, he was accompanied, in addition to the royal court physician, by Abu Sahl, the son of Nawbakht, who succeeded his father as the royal court astrologer. Astrology gradually emerged in the public life of the Arab rulers under

the influence of Sassanid culture. In defeating the Umayyads in 750, people from Persia and especially Khorasan (northeastern Iran and Central Asia) proved decisive. Among them were Muslim Arabs who lived in the area for at least two generations and were "Persianized" by marriage or cultural assimilation, Arabized Persians who converted to Islam, Persians who retained Zoroastrianism, and people of other origins, such as non-native Christians and Jews. They were inhabitants of the territories formerly occupied by the Sassanian Empire. More or less, strong elements of Sassanid culture, ranging from religious to secular, were retained among these peoples, and it was their elite who held important positions in the Abbasid administration – as evidenced by the superiority of the Barmakid family in early Abbasid politics as well as the Bukhtishu family in medicine. The Sassanid culture maintained by this elite had two components, proving the immense importance of their help to al-Mansur to strengthen the Abbasid foundation: Zoroastrian imperial ideology and political astrology, which formed the cornerstone of al-Mansur's Abbasid dynasty ideology.

According to the followers of Zoroastrianism, the origin of all sciences is the Avesta. Zoroastrian canonical rules and their observance, collection and publication are related to the Sassanids, more specifically to Ardashir I, Shapur I and Khosrow I Anushirvan. The Persians under the rule of the Abbasids considered their religious obligation to study alongside the Avesta all the sciences mentioned in Denkard. For a Muslim Persian, the study of these sciences was equated with his own heritage. In addition to the Persians, the majority of the population in Iraq was Aramaic-speaking. For these people, in whose favor Abu Sahl wrote the report, the ideological letter would have a special meaning. Despite their love for Greek culture, the Aramaic-speaking nations of Mesopotamia realized that they were descendants of the ancient Babylonians. By acknowledging this fact, the Abbasid rulers gained the support of the Arameans especially after centuries of hardship when they were persecuted by the Chalcedonian Byzantines. They seem to have taken the study of all these sciences as a continuation of a natural tradition. For the Muslim Arabs, however, this would have had some consequences. According to the Zoroastrian canon, any Greek book became known among the Greeks after the conquest of Iran by Alexander the Great. That is why their translation and study meant the restoration of ancient Persian knowledge, although consideration of the Avesta as the source of all sciences and philosophy disagrees with historical facts, firstly, the superiority of Greek writing in the post-Hellenistic Middle East and, secondly, the Greek-Persian translations of the Sassanids.

Astrological history or political astrology was important to the early Abbasids because it highlighted two major factors: The first was political, which represented the supremacy of Abbasid rule, established by the order of the stars and God. This fact told all potential opponents of this regime that any political activity against them would be in vain; And the second is ideological, which meant legitimizing the rule of the Abbasids and bringing such a vision to the forefront to show that the Abbasids were the only rightful heirs to the ancient empires of Mesopotamia and Iran, and especially the Sassanians. Al-Mansur adopted this policy because it

emphasized the truth of the Abbasid dynasty and also the fact that the newly established dynasty was the successor to the Sassanians.

Based on the presented material we can conclude: 1. The Greek-Arabic translation activity was one of the most important manifestations of the highest level of culture of the Abbasid era; 2. This translation activity was at the same time a precondition for the mentioned cultural success; 3. Technically great role was played by Syrian scholars in Greek-Arabic translation; 4. The work of the patron caliphs was also of great importance; 5. The most important thing for our article: the elements of Zoroastrian imperial policy, the legitimation of power on an astrological basis, became very relevant in the Abbasid caliphate; 6. The Abbasids claimed to be the legitimate heirs not only of the Prophet Muhammad but also of the ancient Achaemenids and Sassanids; 7. In Iran it was believed that the Greeks had stolen all knowledge from the Avesta, so it was again necessary to translate all this from Greek and return it; This also contributed to some extent to the active translation from Greek in the Abbasid caliphate.