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**Fragments of Aristotle's Lost Original Physiognōmonikon in Ibn Abī Ṭālib
al-Dimashqī's Kitāb al-Riyāsa fī 'ilm al-firāsa**

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m eum

Tra il visibile e l'invisibile

Testi di fisiognomica
nella tradizione greco-latina e arabo-islamica

Between the visible and the invisible

Texts of physiognomics
in the Greek-Latin and Arab-Islamic traditions

a cura di Maria Fernanda Ferrini e Guido Giglioni

eum

La tradizione aristotelica: testi e contesti.
I trattati tecnici e scientifici del
Corpus Aristotelicum

The Aristotelian tradition: Texts and contexts.
Technical and scientific treatises in the
Aristotelian Corpus

1

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Johannes Thomann

Fragments of Aristotle's Lost Original *Physiognōmonikon* in Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī's *Kitāb al-Riyāsa fī 'ilm al-firāsa*

The present contribution deals with physiognomy in the pre-modern Islamic world and is preliminary in character. After a biographical sketch of the author Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī, a survey of his work on physiognomy is given. The main topic of this contribution is Dimashqī's quotations of Aristotle. Finally a tentative solution is formulated, and some evidence which contributes to its probability is added.

1. *Life and work of Ibn abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī*

In previous studies on the history of physiognomy, al-Dimashqī was regularly mentioned, but the biographical information remained scarce (Dunlop 1956; Mourad 1939, 8; Fahd 1966, 386; Hoyland 2007, 265; Ghersetti 2007, 301)¹. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī, also called Shaykh Rabwa, was born in 1256 CE (Şafadī 1998, IV, 476) We don't know anything about his education, but the first position in his career was that of the head of a Şūfī convent in the town of Ḥiṭṭīn in Palestine. His activity there ended abruptly. One of his students persuaded a traveler who spent the night in the convent to continue his journey during night time, killed him on the road, robbed his money and fled to Egypt. The governor of Şafad was told about the case and ordered to punish the head of the convent, who then was flogged (Şafadī 1998, IV, 477).

¹ More information on biographical sources is available in Ebied 2005, 23 n. 41.

Al-Dimashqī went to Damascus where after some time he achieved the reputation of a versatile and original scholar. Finally he became head of a Ṣūfī convent in Rabwa, a village in the neighborhood of Damascus (Ṣafadī 1998, IV, 475). There he died in April or May 1327 CE. His biographers describe him as an encyclopaedic scholar who had excellent knowledge in diverse topics as theology, Ṣufism, letter mystics and alchemy (Ṣafadī 1998, IV, 476; 1949, III, 163-164; English translation in Ebied 2005, 24). They emphasize his expertise in physiognomy, both as an author and as a practitioner. Furthermore his talent in poetry is mentioned. Only a small number of his works survived. Among them his cosmography *Nukhbat al-dahr fī 'aḡā'ib al-barr wa-l-baḥr* has made him first known in modern scholarship, even if his authorship is questionable (Dimashqī 1866; 1874).

Recently a critical edition of a theological work has been published (Ebied 2005). The occasion for its creation was a letter with questions of Christian theologians in Cyprus concerning Christianity and Islam. It was first sent to the famous theologian Ibn Taymiyya, who wrote a comprehensive book with answers. Ibn Taymiyya passed on the questions to Dimashqī whom he must have known, and Dimashqī wrote a book with answers, too.

Probably his most prestigious work are the *Makāmāt al-falsafiyya wa-l-tarḡamāt al-ṣūfiyya*, “The Philosophical Sessions and Sufic Interpretations”². One of the sessions is a full treatise on physiognomy, which is entirely different from the next work.

2. *The Kitāb al-Riyāsa fī 'ilm al-firāsa*

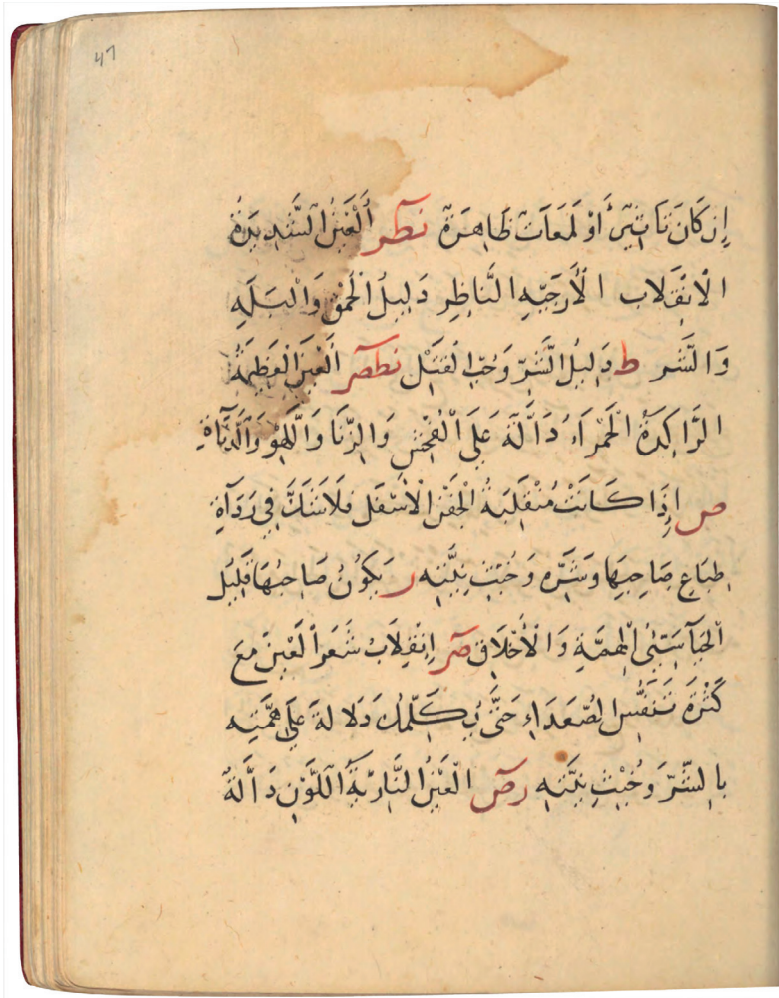
Dimashqī wrote a comprehensive Book on physiognomy, the *Kitāb al-Riyāsa fī 'ilm al-firāsa*, “Treatise on the Conduct of the Science of Physiognomy” (Hoyland 2007, 265-266; Gherseti 2007, 301). The work and its distribution are mentioned by Dimashqī’s biographers, together with his practical talent in this field.

² Unpublished. MS Cambridge UL Qq. 19; MS Kevorkian Collection; MS Mu'ta (Jordan), University Library.

The *Kitāb* was first printed in Cairo in 1882 CE, and it was studied by Georg Hoffmann who cooperated with Richard Foerster for the Teubner edition of the *Scriptores physiognomnici Graeci et Latini*, which appeared in 1893. Since then, the *Riyāsa* received occasionally some attention among historians of physiognomy, but was never thoroughly studied. This is all the more astonishing as Georg Hoffmann raised questions of high importance (Foerster 1893, I, xxvi). The *Riyāsa* is unique in the premodern history of physiognomy since it states explicitly on which sources each single physiognomic judgment is based. Dimashqī used a system of letters to indicate the source. This is an early example of a quotation system with abbreviated references to authors in the text. At the beginning of his book he explains his system, but his list exists in two different versions. In the following only the one which is confirmed to be authentic will be considered, since it is attested in Dimashqī's other treaty on physiognomy, and is the more frequent in the manuscript tradition. For this, MS Bethesda NIH A 58 is used. It is one of the earliest extant manuscripts that might have been produced around 1400 CE³. The list of sources contains the names of three Greek and four Arabic authors: *Aristū* (*tā*') stands for Aristotle. *Iflīmūn* (*nūn*) or *Fīlamūn* or *Qīlamūn* occur in different manuscripts for Polemon; *Īlāwus* (*sīn*) was recently identified with Archelaos of Alexandria⁴. *Al-Manṣūrī* (*ṣād*) stands for the work *Kitāb al-Manṣūrī* by Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, which in Europe became known as the *Liber Almanosris* by Rhazes. *Al-Shāfi* (*'ayn*) designates the famous founder of the school of jurisprudence named after him, who was described in the biographical literature as an expert in physiognomy. *Al-Rāzī* (*rā*') stands for Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, the famous theologian of the twelfth century. *Ibn 'Arabī* (*bā*') means the famous mystic writer, who included a treatise on physiognomy in his magnum opus, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* ("The Mekkanian Revelations"). Finally the letter *hā*' stands for *jamā'a* «all together».

³ Personal communication by Tobias Nünlist, Zürich.

⁴ Thomann [forthcoming].



Pic. 1. MS Bethesda, NIH, A 58 f. 47r (Courtesy of the National Library of Medicine).

Chapter 9 of the *Kitāb* contains the catalogue of physiognomic judgments from head to toe⁵. The single judgments are marked with groups of letters or with single letters. Sometimes different apodoses of the same protasis are marked separately. On the page in Plate 1 [Pic. 1] the first judgment is attributed to Polemon, Aristotle, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. On line three there follows a second apodosis which is attributed to Aristotle only. One riddle in the letters of authors is the letter *sīn* which stands for a name spelled most often Īlāwus in the manuscripts. The same letters can also be read Īlā'us. This name turns up occasionally in other sources. A number of propositions for his identity have been made. The riddle in Dimashqī's work is that name is mentioned in the introduction but his letter, the letter *sīn* never turned up in printed text. Among the manuscripts studied so far, MS Sprenger 1930 in Berlin is the only one in which the letter *sīn* occurs frequently in the catalogue of judgments. There exist even some judgments which are attributed to this author only. Based on this manuscript a stemma of dependencies of quotations was established⁶.

3. *The quotations of Aristotle*

It has already been noticed by Hoffmann that many quotations attributed to Aristotle by Dimashqī have no correspondence in the extant Greek text (Foerster 1893, I, xxxi-xxxii). Before looking at these, a case in which the physiognomic feature *can* be identified with one in the Greek text will be considered. In the Greek text there are two features of the extreme positions of the eye ball, one extruding, the other concave. Extruding position of the eye ball occurs as a pathological symptom of Grave's disease. In the Greek text it is said that those who have exophthalmic eyes (ὄσοι ἐξόφθαλμοι), to be silly people, ἀβέλτεροι (Foerster 1893, I, 70). In Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq's translation this is almost literally translated as «he who's eyes are exophthalmic, he is stupid» (*wa-man kānat 'aynāhu jāhīzatayni fa-huwa*

⁵ MS Bethesda NIH A 58, ff. 39^v-76^v.

⁶ Thoman [forthcoming].

jāhil) (Ghersetti 1999, 41). But Dimashqī's citation attributed to Aristotle is longer: «If [the eye] is like the eye of a crayfish in protrusion, it points to stupidity, disorder in [his] conditions and lewdness» (*wa-in kānat ka-a 'yuni al-sarṭāni fī l-nutū 'i dallat 'alā jahlin wa-dḥirābi l-aḥwāli wa-l-shafaqi*)⁷. The first difference is the comparative description of the feature «like the eye of a crayfish». Indeed, crayfishes have extremely protruding eyes.

The expression «like the eye of a crayfish» is uncommon in Arabic, while Hunayn's term *jāhiḥ* is a frequently used word. The uncommon expression could not have been coined by Dimashqī, because it occurs also in the physiognomic text in the *Kitāb al-Manṣūrī*, which was written three centuries early: «When the eye is protruding and small, in the position of the eyes of a crayfish, it points to stupidity and an inclination towards carnal appetites» (*wa-idhā kānat-i l-'aynu nāti'atan ṣaghīratan bi-manzilat a'yuni l-saraṭāni dalla 'alā l-jahl wa-l-mayl ilā l-shahawāt*) (Rāzī 1987: 99). This is very close to the wording of Dimashqī, except for the addition of the feature «small», and the omission of the quality «disorder in conditions». Both versions might have been based on the same text which was different from Hunayn's translation. This text was known to Dimashqī as a work of Aristotle, and thus referred to by the letter *īā*'. The comparison of a physiognomic feature of men with bodily features of animals occurs otherwise in the Greek text, as we will see shortly. Therefore, it is likely that the expression «like the eye of a crayfish» goes back to a Greek original. This Greek original was, as the example demonstrates, different from the existing Greek text in the *Corpus Aristotelicum*.

A second example provides an even stronger argument for the same conclusion. The physiognomic feature of goat-like eyes appears in the Greek texts. People having such eyes are called αἰγῶποί. This word occurs also in the papyrus discussed by Maria Fernanda Ferrini in her contribution to this volume. It refers to the yellow color of goat eyes. This color does not belong to the iris but to the surrounding part of the eye ball. Among humans, too, the feature cannot concern the iris but

⁷ MS Bethesda NIH A 58, f. 48r.

must appear on the surrounding part of the eye ball. Like exophthalmia, it is pathological. It is a typical symptom of yellow fever and jaundice. In the Greek text it is said that those who have goat-like eyes are raging mad (Foerster 1890, I, 67). In the Arabic translation of Ḥunayn, the same feature is described with another comparison. He calls it «with the color of clear wine» (Ghersetti 1999, 44). In antiquity red wine dominated in quantity, but wine from green grapes was also produced. Heavy wine was preferred, therefore we can assume that such a wine was coloured. The production of a white wine was described by the Latin author Cato, and was called *leucocoum* «white wine from Kos»⁸. The existence of white wine is also confirmed by archaeological evidence (MacKendrick 1954). In Dimashqī's text the feature is described with both expressions, with «similar to the eye of goats» and «like clear wine». These expressions are referred to the *Kitāb al-Mansūrī* and to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. According to them this feature is a sign of stupidity (*jahl*). After that Dimashqī adds the statement of Aristotle that it points to lewdness (*shabaq*)⁹. If one considers the Greek tradition, it becomes evident that Dimashqī's variant preserves an early Greek tradition. All manuscripts of the the Greek work have the adjective «like wine» οἰνωποῖ¹⁰. Accordingly, the Arabic translation of Ḥunayn has «with the color of wine» (*bi-lawn al-sharāb*), and the Latin translation «wine-like» (*vinosi*) (Ghersetti 1999, 44, 71; Foerster 1990, I, 77, l. 17). But Richard Foerster decided to make an emendation and to read «like goats» (αἰγωποῖ) instead (Foerster 1890, I, 76, l. 16). Indeed, the two words can easily be confused in Greek hand-writing, and while οἰνωπόζ is recorded in many texts, αἰγωπόζ is a rare word. It occurs five times in Aristotle's works, three times in *De generatione animalium*, once in the *Historia animalium*, and once in the *Problemata*¹¹. It is also found once in Athenaios' *Deipnosophistae*, once in Galenos' *Quod animi mores corporis temperamenta sequantur*, and twice in Johannes Philoponos' commentary on *De generatione animalium*, all in contexts similar to those found in

⁸ Pliny the Elder 1938-1962, IV, 238-239.

⁹ MS Bethesda NLH A 58, f. 48.

¹⁰ Aristoteles 1831: 2: 812 b 7.

¹¹ Aristoteles 1831: 779a33, 779b1, 779b14; 492a3; 892a3.

the Aristotelian works¹². By contrast, the word αἰγῶπός is found in early Greek classical literature (Simonides, Sophocles, Euripides) and remained in use up to late Byzantine authors (Johannes Actuarius)¹³. Obviously, Foerster's emendation was the choice of a *lectio difficilior*. Not all scholars accepted it¹⁴. But now, through the testimony of Dimashqī, it is perfectly justified. At the same time it becomes evident that Dimashqī's *Vorlage* was based on a version of the Greek text which was different from the one which is extant today. At other occasions Arabic *shabaq* is used to translate Greek λάγνος, which means "lascivious, lustful". λάγνος occurs five times in the Greek text of Pseudo-Aristotle. Again, there is no reason to doubt that Dimashqī's quotation goes back to a translation which was different from that of Ḥunayn, and further that it goes back to a Greek original which was different from the existing Greek text. There are 37 quotations in Dimashqī which are attributed to Aristotle as the only author, and there are 39 quotations in which Aristotle is mentioned among other authors. Furthermore, there are 28 quotations which are attributed to all authors with the special letter *jīm*. Taken together a corpus of 104 witnesses exists, which are related to this unknown work attributed to Aristotle. They represent different degrees of faithfulness. Those with Aristotle as the only author represent the most faithful degree. Those attributed to all authors must be assumed to be the least faithful. And those with only one or two authors besides Aristotle represent an intermediate degree of faithfulness.

4. *Problems of a reconstruction of the Aristotelian work*

A partial reconstruction of the otherwise unknown work would be possible, but it would be a demanding enterprise to realize it. First, a critical edition of the text would be indispensable. The number of manuscripts is high. 73 copies are known

¹² According to TLG: <<http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/Iris/inst/csearch.jsp> (2.5.2018)>.

¹³ 113 occurrences in the TLG: <<http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/Iris/inst/csearch.jsp>> (2.5.2018).

¹⁴ Negative: Aristotle 1999, 28. Positive: Aristotle 1984, 1247; Aristotle 2007, 198; Swain 2007, 658; Swain defends Foerster's emendations against the consensus of the manuscripts as necessary, Swain 2007, 637.

at present¹⁵. The textual tradition is complicated with at least three different versions of the text. Such a project would necessitate a great amount of work.

In addition, the analysis of the witnesses would be even more demanding. Since it is not known if the Arabic translation of the text in question was translated directly from Greek or rather from a Syriac translation, sources in both languages must be consulted. The Anonymous Latinus is involved as a source for the Greek tradition. In the witnesses with more than one author all relevant texts would have to be taken into consideration.

The problem with this is that some texts have not yet been identified. This is the case with the work attributed to al-Shāfi‘ī, the famous founder of the schools of jurisprudence the Shāfi‘īts, of which Antonella Ghersetti has identified a manuscript, but no further information is available yet (Ghersetti 2007, 301 n. 99). Another problematic case is the work of Ibn ‘Arabī, the great mystic, which Dimashqī quotes. There exist two physiognomic texts by Ibn ‘Arabī. One is a short independent treatise, the other a longer chapter in his *magnum opus*, the “Meccan revelations” (*Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*). Besides this two original works, a spurious work circulated under the name of Ibn ‘Arabī (Ghersetti 2007, 299-301).

5. *Ancient evidence of a second physiognomic work attributed to Aristotle*

In the previous section I have pointed out the difficulties behind reconstructing the Aristotelian work preserved by Dimashqī. However, the maximal possible profit of such an enterprise is high. Reasonable suspicion is justified that Dimashqī’s quotation under the name of Aristotle preserves parts of an otherwise unknown Greek work on physiognomy which was ascribed to Aristotle. The examples indicate that it was a longer text. However, the assumption that two Greek versions of a physiognomic work under the name of Aristotle existed in Antiquity was entire-

¹⁵ For a list of MSS see Thomann [forthcoming].

ly based on Arabic sources, but there are ancient Greek sources which point to the same conclusion. There exist three ancient Greek lists of the works of Aristotle, one by Diogenes Laertios (2nd c. CE), one by Hesychios (6th century CE), and one by an unidentified Ptolemaios. The catalogue included in the *Lives and Sayings of the Philosophers* of Diogenes Laertios is regarded as the oldest of the three (Dietzge-Mager 2015a, 97). It contains the entry “Physiognomy, one [book]” (φυσιογνωμονικὸν α., or according to one manuscript φυσιογνωμικόν).¹⁶ It has been argued that this entry was interpolated together with the entry of the apocryphal work “two medical [books]” (ιατρικὴ β) below one of the columns of the catalogue (MorauX 1951, 186-190; Aristotle 1999, 198). The list by Hesychius, which was based on the one of Diogenes Laertios, contains the entry “Physiognomonics, in two [books]” (φυσιογνωμονικὰ β, or, according to one manuscript φυσιογνωμικὰ β) (Dorandi 2006, 100, no. 119; Düring 1957, 86, no. 97). This corresponds well with the existing Greek text in the *Corpus Aristotelicum*, which is partitioned into two distinct books, and therefore the entry might have been based on the Greek work itself in its extant form (Aristotle 1999, 198). The catalogue of Ptolemaios is only extant in an Arabic translation, and does not contain the physiognomy (Hein 1985, 416-439). Recently this Ptolemaios has been dated to the 1st or 2nd century CE (Dietzge-Mager 2015, 158). The fate of Aristotle’s library after his death is complicated, and it is difficult to estimate to which part of it the authors of the catalogues had access to. The missing Physiognomy in the catalogue of Ptolemaios can be explained by the fact that he explicitly did not use the earlier and more comprehensive catalogue of Andronikos (1st c. BCE) (Dietzge-Mager 2015, 158). The catalogue of Andronikos might have contained the Physiognomy, and then it would be probable that the entry in the catalogue of Diogenes Laertios was taken from there. In this case the form of the entry “Physiognomy, one [book]” (φυσιογνωμονικὸν α) would be the one under which the work was known in the oldest attestation. Both the title in the singular and the indication that it consists

¹⁶ Diogenes Laertios 2013: 360, no. 109; Diogenes Laertios 1958-1959: 1: 470-471.

of only one book disagree with the existing text in the *Corpus Aristotelicum* and seem to point to a text which was differently organized.

At first glance, a work in one book is likely to be smaller than a work in two books, but in the case of the extant Physiognomonics this is rather unlikely, since the two books together are smaller than the average size of an Aristotelian book. Two of the zoological work are taken as examples. In the Bekker edition the length of books varies a lot. They can be as short as four pages, but they can reach up to 25 pages. The majority of books are in the range of ten to twenty pages. On average the books have a length of 14 Bekker pages. If we compare this to the two books of the φυσιογνωμονικά, we see that these are considerably shorter than the average of a single book. Therefore, the work called φυσιογνωμονικόν by Diogenes Laertius could well have been more comprehensive than the existing two books version.

Another problem is the question of how the φυσιογνωμονικόν could have survived unnoticed up to the time when Greek works were translated into Arabic (9th century CE). One of the best places for that was Damascus. It was not taken by force by the Arab troops in the 7th century. A peace treaty was made, no destruction occurred, and the institutions remained intact. It had early manuscript resources. In the formative period of translations from Greek into Arabic, in the 9th and tenth century, there might have been Greek manuscripts of works available in Damascus which did not exist in Constantinople. Damascus was a perfect place for an alternative textual transmission. Unlike Baghdad, it survived the Mongol conquest untouched, Dimashqī lived partly in Damascus, partly not far from Damascus. He could have access to books not available elsewhere.

6. *The Authenticity of the φυσιογνωμονικόν*

In the traditional view, the second book of the *Physiognomy* was regarded as a relatively late product (2nd century BCE), the first book was dated earlier (3rd century BCE). But Sabine Vogt came to a different conclusion in her dissertation. She argued that both books must have been written earlier than other pseu-

do-Aristotelian works. She even considered it as not impossible that both books are genuine works of Aristotle. But finally she opted for a date in the decades before and after 300 BCE. If one follows her arguments, not much time is left for a previous version of the *Physiognomy* between Aristotle's lifetime (384-322 BCE) and the redaction of the two-book version.

Aristotle's interest in physiognomy is well attested in his original works. The method of physiognomy is described in the *Analytica priora*, and passages relevant to physiognomy are found in his zoological works (Aristotle 1999, 120-145). If we continue this considerations, the idea is indeed tempting to identify such an authentic Aristotelian physiognomy with the unknown work which Dimashqī used in Arabic translation. In any case, the Aristotelian fragments in the *Kitāb al-Riyāsa fī 'ilm al-firāsa* are parts of a hitherto unknown work of the *Corpus Aristotelicum* and deserve a critical edition.

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