BEFORE ARISTOTLE BECAME ARISTOTLE:
PSEUDO-ARISTOTELIAN APHORISMS IN ĀDĀB AL-FALĀSİFA

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Much has been said about the origin, content and authorship of Ādāb al-falāsifa (= AF), one of oldest available collections of gnomologia in Arabic. Since the early decades of the nineteenth century this book is wrongly assumed to be an abridgement of an original written or translated by Hunayn ibn Ishāq (d. 260/873). Elsewhere I believe to have shown that AF is neither a work of Hunayn ibn Ishāq nor a shorter recension of a previously existing text. Rather, it is an independent book which the fourth–fifth/tenth–eleventh-century author Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Anārī prepared by using several smaller tracts of a number of earlier authors, among them ‘Alī ibn ‘Ubayda al-Rahānī (d. 219/834), al-Kindī (d. after 252/865), Hunayn ibn Ishāq, Ishāq ibn Hunayn (d. 296/908) and others. At this stage it is not possible to ascertain whether anybody else prior to al-Anārī had compiled a book of similar content in the beginning of the fourth/tenth century. However, the anonymous Istanbul manuscript Köprülü 1608, a comparable but much larger collection, offers itself remotely as a possible model for al-Anārī.


3 Zakeri, ‘Ādāb al-falāsifa,’ pp. 185–90; Z 1, pp. 59–73.
Adab al-falasifa is clearly a composite work consisting of several distinct texts, of Greek, Persian, and early Islamic origin, the most conspicuous among them Adab al-faylasif Mahbatharjis al-mu'allim. Here as a token of my gratitude to Hans Daiber, who first encouraged me to work on the Arabic gnomologia many years ago, and always readily and cordially placed his vast erudition at my disposal, I offer a new edition and translation of another distinct unit in the Af, namely the so-called Hijmat Arisūśīs, ‘Aristotle’s Wisdom’, the legendary circumstances of its creation I have discussed in detail at another occasion. The content of this piece is nicely framed in a fabulous story related to the legendary ‘gatherings of philosophers’ in which the orphan Aristotle is to serve Plato who is teaching a good-for-nothing prince in one of the Houses of Wisdom (bayt al-hikma). On the day of examination in the presence of the learned and the dignitaries of the empire, as the prince fails to demonstrate the fruits of Plato’s teachings, Aristotle, who has secretly learned everything by heart, steps on the podium and with a brilliant public oration displays the Teacher’s fruitful lessons and so rescues him. Deeply impressed by the ingenuity of the young boy, Plato now adopts him as his pupil to teach him all the sciences.

The framework story of ‘Aristotle’s Wisdom’ does not properly fit Overwien’s proposal of a preconceived methodical structure of the Af, though it could be taken as an example for illustrating the educational procedure in the houses of wisdom described in earlier chapters of the book. Overwien interprets this story as part of the attempts by Alexandrian biographers of Aristotle in late antiquity to harmonize between the two great ancient philosophers.

In the printed text the dicta of the delivered oration are not numbered and the divisions among the items are not always sharp and clear. Sometimes the sentences are attached to one another with a simple conjunctive ‘and’ without an apparent or inherent relationship between them. Consequently they have been divided differently in different editions. They are numbered here from 1 to 75 for the purpose of easy reference (Loewenthal has done the same in his German translation

3 Overwien, ‘Hunayn ibn Ishāq,’ pp. 102, 110.
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