

Philosophical production through translation: The Kindī-circle and development of an Arab philosophy tradition

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ABSTRACT

With this article, I would like to participate in the philological oriented discussion of Graeco-Arabic Studies on the Kindī-circle from a translational perspective. Despite all their differences, the Kindī-circle translations share a lexical and partially syntactical orientation towards Greek as their source language. In the research that has been done until now, this source-language-orientation is often traced back to a supposed lack in language abilities. Based on the awareness raised in Translation studies that translations – especially but not only in the field of science and philosophy – often do not serve the subsidiary purpose of making a text accessible to persons who do not have sufficient knowledge of the source language, I try to carve out the translational intentions of the circle by situating the Kindī-translations within the nascent Arabic system of philosophy and science. In doing so, it can be seen that the translation strategies of the translators are not attributable to inadequate language abilities, but rather play a vital role in the development of an Arabic philosophical tradition and terminology. This leads me to arguing for describing those translations as “philosophical translations” (Heller 2017).

KEYWORDS: Abbasid translation movement; translators’ intentions, Kindī-circle; philosophical translation