

THE ANCESTOR OF THE ARABIC TRANSLATION OF THE *DE GENERATIONE ANIMALIUM* OF ARISTOTLE

The Arabic translation of the *De Gen. Anim.*, made at the beginning of the ninth century by Yahyā ibn al-Bitriq from a Syriac version, contains seven long omissions, noted by Drossaart Lulofs in his edition. Six of these represent approximately 110 letters or a multiple thereof in the Greek:¹ 728^b33–729^a2 (226, or 224 with Z), 761^a9–25 (658, or 661 with Z), 762^a6–8 (112, or 106 with Z), 762^b34–763^a2 (107, or 101 with Z), 768^a18–20 (110) and 781^a7–12 (225, or 223 with Z). The seventh omission (787^b22–788^b30) is too long to be useful, as the scope for accidental errors is too great.

The most likely explanation of these omissions is that the Syriac version was based on a single manuscript, or possibly several manuscripts derived from a single ancestor, which was a copy of a set of papyrus rolls with columns of about 110 letters—either ten lines of eleven letters or eleven lines of ten letters. Columns of 10–12 letters in width were common from about A.D. 125 for about a century.² Omission of a column would have been made easier by homoeoteleuton at 762^b, by homoeoarcton at 768^a, and by both homoeoarcton and homoeoteleuton at 728^b. At 781^a something similar may also have happened. At 781^a7 the last word before the omission is ὁρᾶν, followed by ὁμοίως γὰρ ἀνάγκη in the omitted section, which itself ends, in Z, with ὁρᾶν ἀνάγκη at 781^a11. There is also a different order of words, found in several other good manuscripts and also probably reflected in the Latin translations, in which the omitted passage actually ends with ὁρᾶν.³

It seems probable, then, that when Syriac scholars began to take an interest in Aristotle after the Arab conquest, and searched for manuscripts of his works, for the *De Generatione Animalium* at least they could discover very little material.

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¹ For counting purposes I have included iota subscript as one letter, and since in both books where these omissions occur, A and Γ, the Arabic text is close to that of manuscript Z (Oxon. Corp. Christi 108), I have given the figures for Z's readings as well as Lulofs's printed text where these differ.

² It has however been pointed out to me that a column of only ten or eleven lines is improbably short. That is true, and I have failed to find a relevant parallel, but the

variation in column length in the material we have is very great and there were clearly no hard-and-fast rules about it. It seems to depend on the space available, and one could imagine, for instance, that someone reusing a tattered roll might trim it down and then write short columns.

³ Further evidence of the effect of papyrus ancestors on the manuscript tradition is given by Lulofs in his preface, p. xviii.

CALLIMACHUS, IAMBUS IV, FR. 194, 100 (PFEIFFER)

ἀλλὰ ταῦτα γ' . β . . μ .

I have not seen the papyrus, but if β and μ are correctly reported, and if the space between would admit three letters, I tentatively suggest ὕβρισμα: *sed haec quidem (sunt) uituperatio*.

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