

## Arabic Literary Prose, *Adab* Literature, and the Formation of Islamicate Imperial Culture

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Woe unto you, we (the chancellery secretaries) speak on behalf of all empires!

(*Wayḥakum innā ḥuṭabāʾu kulli dawlatin*) – ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib<sup>†</sup>

In the Islamicate world, the Arabic literary tradition of prosaic texts does not begin with the Qurʾān, albeit a text primarily composed in “rhymed prose” of the soothsayers (*saḡʿ*; Beeston 1983; Borg 2009), or Arabic poetry (*ṣīʿ*), the primeval register of the Arabs (*dīwān al-ʿarab*).<sup>1</sup> Rather, it was invented by a professional class of secretaries (*kuttāb*, sing. *kātib*; Sellheim and Sourdel 1990) within the confines of the chancellery of the Umayyad (r. AH 41–132/AD 661–750) and early ‘Abbāsīd empires (r. 132–656/750–1258), respectively, in Damascus, a cosmopolitan Byzantine city the Arabs conquered in 13/634, and in Iraq, where in 145/762 Baghdad was founded in the shadow of Ctesiphon, the ancient royal capital of the Parthian (r. BC 247 – AD 224) and the Sasanian (r. AD 224–651) Persian empires. Nearly half a century after Muḥammad’s death in 10/632, the Umayyad dynasty established Arabic as the official language of the burgeoning Islamic imperium, or *Pax Islamica*, largely displacing Greek (in Syria) and Middle Persian (in Iraq and Greater Iran), hitherto the two main administrative languages of the caliph empire. From the second to the fourth/the eighth to the tenth century, Arabic also served as the linguistic medium – or target language – of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement of

I am pleased to dedicate this chapter to my erstwhile patron, Dr. Stephen Grummon, former Director of the Office of Analysis for Near East and South Asia, US Department of State, who taught me all I know about the American chancellery.

<sup>†</sup> These were reportedly ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd’s last words before ‘Abbāsīd revolutionaries executed him in the year 132/750 (al-Balāḍurī 2001: 11; the Arabic transliteration follows the rules of the *Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft*, with the exception of *aw* and *ay* for diphthongs instead of *au* and *ai*, respectively).

<sup>1</sup> On the concept of Islamicate civilization, that is, regions where Muslims were *culturally* dominant, see Hodgson 1974, I: 57–60.

the ancient, “foreign” sciences (*‘ulūm al-awā’il/al-‘ağam*), above all Greek medicine, philosophy, and science (Gutas 1998), and as the scholastic language of all the Arabo-Islamic religious sciences (*‘ulūm al-‘arab/al-islāmīya*). From early on, Arabic literary prose was thus the handiwork of a professional secretariat class of predominantly non-Arab (Muslim) tribal clients (*mawālī*, sing. *mawlā*), who were typically of Persian-, Greek-, or Aramaic-speaking backgrounds and who relied, as civil servants, on the patronage of the ruling Arabo-Muslim elite (Crone 1980: 97–200; Mitter 2005). It is in this context of empire building in late antiquity that Arabic was transformed into a literary index (*fihris*t) of civilizational interconnectivity (with ancient Greece, Persia, Sogdia, and India) and thus into a language of “world literature.”

World literature here is conceived broadly in terms of the translation and reception of literary works of various forms and genres across the boundaries of language, religion, and empire, thereby creating new literary legacies and genres across these or new boundaries. (Owing to the strict meters and motifs that defined the premodern tradition of Arabic poetry, this translation and reception process largely excluded Greek and Middle Persian poetry.) From this perspective, world literature inaugurates a cyclical process of canon formation (and its deconstruction) – as is apparent, for example, in the twelfth-century AD “European” reception of Arabic philosophical, medical, and scientific literature, mainly through Hebrew translations into the Latin, which led to the “European” Renaissance (Hasse 2016: 3–133).

This chapter addresses how Arabic, besides being the scriptural and liturgical speech of Islam, came to be the dominant language, or *lingua franca*, of a world empire and its literary heritage, specifically, from the reign of the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd-al-Malik ibn-Marwān (r. 65–86/685–705; Robinson 2007) through the ‘Abbāsīd revolution in 132/750, to the reign of the caliph Abū-Ġa‘far al-Manṣūr (r. 136–158/754–775). To answer this question, one must first consider the bureaucratic history of the Umayyad dynasty (Hawting 2000: 58–89) – a history from which Arabic literary prose as distinct from qur’ānic prosaic and oratory style emerged.<sup>2</sup> Second, one must ask how the Graeco-Persian political and literary heritage, from which (Umayyad) prose epistolography, namely the *risāla* (Arazi and Ben-Shammai 1995; Hämeen-Anttila 2006), emerged, formed, and transformed the genres and subgenres with which *adab* literature became associated. The chapter is divided into two sections, with the first subdivided into three subsections

2 For a survey of the development of classical Arabic prose literature, see Leder and Kilpatrick 1992, and al-Musawi 2006.

examining the professional and literary careers of three chancellery secretaries of the late Umayyad empire, namely, Sālim Abū-l-‘Alā’, ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib, and Ibn-al-Muqaffa’, who for a short period also served the early ‘Abbāsīd dynasty. These subsections additionally address how their literary contributions and translations forged a new style of Arabic written prose and laid the foundations for the rise of *adab* literature – works through which ensuing translations became part of a corpus of premodern world literature. The second section of the chapter provides a brief survey of the genres and subgenres of *adab* literature as well as the problem of their classification in the Arabic literary tradition.

In the history of Arabic literary prose, the Umayyad period is generally associated with the art of oration or prosaic speech (*ḥiṭāba*), less so with the written prose (*kitāba*) or the Arabic codex (*kitāb*; Sellheim 1986). The oratory prose of, among others, the caliph, prefect, general, judge (*qāḍī*), and preacher (*ḥaṭīb*) in Umayyad public life – particularly their use of rhyme and parallelism – directly influenced the development of written Arabic literary prose forms (Beeston 1983; Serjeant 1983; Qutbuddin 2019: 41–42, 406–31). Setting aside the composite question of the oral and the written in early Islam (Zwettler 1978: 41–97; Schoeler 2006; Qutbuddin 2019: 21–63), the earliest datable literary prose in Arabic, extant mainly in the epistolary form, is postliminary to the fiscal, administrative, and military reforms of the caliph ‘Abd-al-Malik, who, in or around the year 78/697, began replacing Greek, Middle Persian (or Pahlavi), and Coptic with Arabic as the official language of the Umayyad chancellery (*dīwān ar-rasā’il*) and the state civil and military registers (*dīwān al-‘aṭā’ wa-l-ḡund*; al-Duri 1991; al-Qāḍī 2010), withal minting Islamic types of coinage (Bacharach 2014: 19–22).<sup>3</sup> All civil servants were then required to know Arabic, though initially knowledge of one or more of the former administrative languages was also expected. It was the secretariat class that implemented the administrative language reforms, including translating the archives of the chancellery into Arabic (al-Qāḍī 2014: 143–44). Secretaries, especially early on after the Arab conquests, came from the ranks of the protected religious minorities (*ahl al-ḍimma*; e.g., John of Damascus [d. AD 749], who served a number of Umayyad caliphs, including ‘Abd-al-Malik; Sahas 1972: 17–48), some of whom had converted to Islam. Apart from the role they played as native informants, these secretaries were trained and versed in, *inter alia*, Arabic grammar, philology, lexicography, poetry, the Qur’ān, histories of the

3 On Islamic identity formation under the reign of ‘Abd-al-Malik, see van Ess 1991, I: 9–11.

prophets and kings, and geography – subject matters, in other words, that came to comprise the “disciplines of *adab*” (*al-‘ulūm al-‘adabīya*; Heinrichs 1995: 199–200). Some of these state functionaries were, moreover, required to know arithmetic and to study economic management, mainly for the purpose of administration and taxation of agricultural goods (*ḥarāğ*; Watson 1983: 123–38; Morony 1984: 27–124) belonging to non-Muslim and Muslim subjects of the empire. This versatility also served the more humanistic end of cultivating habits of urbane etiquette and refined civility (*adab*) that, first, functioned as the hallmark of being admitted as a boon companion (*nadīm*) into the imperial courts of the late Umayyads and early ‘Abbāsids and, second, was an important remunerated cultural distinction necessary for tutoring princes and other members of the royal household. One who acquired such character traits (*aḥlāq*), or a humanistic habitus, was commonly known as a “belletrist” (*adīb*) or a “worldly man of letters,” or even a “dandy” (*zarīf*, a type of *adīb*; Montgomery 2002). The enacting of these Umayyad reforms constituted perhaps the greatest impetus for the literary development of Arabic prose as a medium for the Islamic sciences and as the target language of the Graeco-Arabic translation movement under the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate; Arabic thus effectively became the lingua franca of science, philosophy, and literary culture in the medieval Mediterranean world.

The creation of the Islamicate *adab* literary tradition, particularly as it relates to professional codes of conduct or ethics, is also inexorably linked to the professional identity formation of the bureaucratic and scholarly guilds (*šinā‘āt*, sing. *šinā‘a*), including, formatively and above all, that of the secretaries (al-Qaḍī 2014), then the judges (*quḍā*, sing. *qāḍī*; Schneider 1990), philosophers (*ḥukamā*, sing. *ḥakīm*; *falāsifa*, sing. *ḥaylasūf*), physicians (*aṭibbā*, sing. *ṭabīb*; Reisman 2004), theologians (*mutakallimūn*, sing. *mutakallim*; van Ess 1991–92), jurisconsults (*fuqahā*, sing. *faqīh*), muftīs, *ḥadīṭ* traditionalists (*muḥaddiṭūn*, sing. *muḥaddiṭ*), and poets (*šū‘arā*, sing. *šā‘ir*). After the period of the (Sunnī) Rightly Guided Caliphs (*al-ḥulafā’ ar-rāšidūn*; r. 11–40/632–661), whose religio-politics was largely dominated by Arabian tribalism (Chabbi 1997), this professional formation begins with the chancellery secretaries and the resumption of Byzantine and Sasanian imperial statecraft and ideology, as well as the appropriation of Graeco-Hellenic and Persian literary and civic cultures (Morony 1984: 507–26; Gutas 1998, 11–60; Crone 2004, 145–96; Marsham 2009: 81–182). *Adab* as a form of societal and individual habitus, that is, inculcated dispositions and skills in the soul (*nafs*), finds a cultural and literary background in the Graeco-Hellenic and the Sasanian Middle Persian “mirrors for princes” (*Fürstenspiegel*) traditions, of practical politics, civility,

and courtly *savoir faire* (Knauth 1975; Daiber 2015); it may also be traced to the Greek cultural concepts of *paideia* (*adab*) and *paideusis* (*ta'ḏīb*), namely, the cultivation of certain habits in and education of the ideal citizen of a polis, including instruction in such subject matters as grammar, rhetoric, music, mathematics, philosophy, geography, history, and gymnastics (Werner 1943–45; Marrou 1956: 243–45, 527–28; cf. Brown 1984; Kraemer 1992: 9–11, 231–33). In the Graeco-Roman world, the civilizing process of *paideia*, like that of *adab* in Islamicate polities, consists of a system of formal and informal education, most often of elites, intended to create, through theory and praxis, an ordered citizenry (cf. Elias 2000, *passim*). The discipline of *paideia* regulates and, by observing the golden mean, sets the norms of cultural etiquette, power relations, and codes for social behavior among different classes and interest groups – from the king to the philosopher to the cobbler.

Historically, the cultural transformation of Greek *paideia* into Arabic *adab* began early after the Arab conquests of the eastern lands of the Byzantine empire (Greater Syria and Egypt) with the cultural assimilation of Greek-speaking functionaries into the Umayyad dynasty, to run the chancellery. In a similar vein, *paideia* in late antiquity was also closely tied to educating a ruling class and bureaucracy, paralleling in this respect the rise of Islamicate *adab* as a form of professional and cultural ethics of the chancellery secretaries and their guild.

### Sālim Abū-l-‘Alā’ and *Sirr al-Asrār* (“Secret of Secrets”)

Sālim ibn-‘Abdallāh Abū-l-‘Alā’ (fl. 65–125/685–744), an Umayyad secretary, believed to be of Persian heritage, played a formative role in the invention of Arabic literary prose (Grignaschi 1965–66, 1967; Latham 1983: 155–65; al-Qāḏī 2019: 209–16). He trained in the Damascene chancellery during the caliphate of ‘Abd-al-Malik and likely tutored his son, the caliph Hišām ibn-‘Abd-al-Malik (r. 105–125/724–743), whose chancellery Sālim headed. The sustained reign of Hišām brought to fruition his father’s reforms, which involved the near complete Arabicization (*ta’rīb*) of the administrative apparatus, including the state civil and army register, laying the bureaucratic and, in some respects, military foundations of the ‘Abbāsīd empire that was to come (Blankinship 1994: 77–96; al-Qāḏī 2010). Sālim is reported to have been present at Hišām’s death and dispatched as the herald to inform the crown prince, al-Walīd (II) ibn-Yazīd (r. 125–126/743–744), of his succession to the caliphal throne – an indication of Sālim’s influence during Hišām’s reign. While Sālim appears to have been retained as the chief secretary, his own son, ‘Abdallāh

ibn-Sālim, became a secretary to the caliph al-Walīd II. Hišām's reign ushered in at least three enduring literary developments in the history of the Arabic language and its development as a language of world literature: first, the (relative) standardization of literary Arabic prose narrative, stylistic features of which were based on the Arabo-Islamic oratory tradition; second, the reception and influence of Greek, Persian, and Sanskrit literatures on Arabic (Bosworth 1983; Gutas 1998: 11–16), including the Arabic translations and literary redactions associated with the Graeco-Hellenic (and Middle Persian) “epistolary cycle between Aristotle and Alexander [the Great]” that contributed to the emergence of Arabic epistolography (van Bladel 2004; Maróth 2006: 1–149; Gutas 2009: 60–65);<sup>4</sup> and third, the rise of the literatures of *adab* and with these Islamicate imperial culture.

As rulers of the former Byzantine and Sasanian domains, the Umayyad Arab aristocracy undertook to instruct its caliphs and princes in the codes of ethical conduct, particularly with respect to employing religio-political power and statecraft. It was with a view to these exigencies that Sālim directed and redacted (*aṣṣlaḥa*) Arabic translations (evidently and mainly from Pahlavi) of material derived from the Graeco-Persian “mirrors for princes” genre in the form of missives purportedly exchanged between Aristotle and his student Alexander the Great during the Macedonian king's conquest of eastern Persia (Grignaschi 1975; Maróth 2006: 10–34; Gutas 2009: 64–70). This pseudo-Aristotelian compilation, which the fourth-/tenth-century bibliographer Ibn-an-Nadīm descriptively titles *Rasā'il Aristāṭālīs ilā l-Iskandar* (“Aristotle's Epistles to Alexander”), consisting of seven epistles from the longer version of the cycle, concerns the general principles of governing (*as-siyāsa al-‘āmmīya*; Grignaschi 1975: 33–287) as well as aspects of, *inter alia*, Greek philosophy and cosmology. By the end of the fourth/tenth century, this epistolary compilation, extant in a short and long version, would come to be known under another title, that of *Sirr al-asrār* (“Secret of Secrets”; hereafter *Sirr*; Manzalaoui 1971; Grignaschi 1975: 97–197; Maróth 2006: 85–133). It would over the next few centuries be augmented with additional Hellenistic and Persian material translated into Arabic and adapted to an expanding Islamicate cultural milieu (withal its later Latin and vernacular transmission in the West; Grignaschi 1980, 1982).<sup>5</sup>

4 For the Arabic edition of the entire “epistolary cycle,” see Maróth 2006: 1–149; and for a critical review of the latter and the secondary literature, descriptions of the manuscripts, earlier partial editions and translations, and a summary of the contents of the “cycle,” see Gutas 2009.

5 On the *Sirr*'s influence on early Islamic theology and for a literature review, see van Ess 1992, II: 410–II.

The *Sirr* is the earliest specimen both of the voluminous mirrors literature (Bosworth 1988; Gutas 1990: 355–62) and of encyclopaedism in Arabic literary tradition (Gutas 2006).

The *Sirr*'s two main sections address the general principles of governing and state administration (*tadbīr al-mulk*), furnishing pragmatic political advice to the king on how to morally comport himself so as to achieve his military and political objectives, organize his government, and direct his ministers, secretaries, ambassadors, governors, and generals. It includes also a sermon attributed to Plato (*ḥuṭbat Aflātūn*; Maróth 2006: 40–42), Aristotle's "Golden" epistle (*ad-dahabīya*; Maróth 2006: 108–30) on the nature of the world and an ordered summary (*tartīb*) of the various branches of Graeco-Hellenistic knowledge, ranging from political astrology, astronomy, medicine, and hygiene to alchemy, magic, talismans, physiognomy, onomancy (see Figure 3.1; Burnett 1988), and herbal and lapidary lore, as well as an epistle by Alexander to his mother regarding his imminent death, followed by gnomologia lamenting the Macedonian king's passing (Grignaschi 1993; Gutas 2009: 61–63).

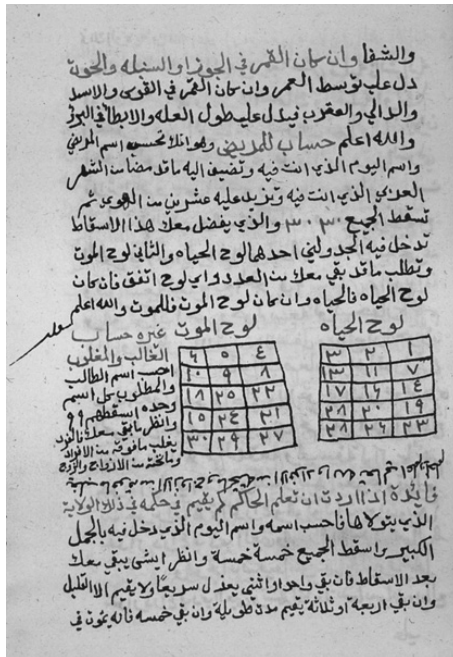


Figure 3.1 Table (*lawḥ*) for determining whether a patient will live or die based on the numerical value of his name, *Kitāb Sirr al-asrār*, US National Medical Library, Bethesda NLMed. MS A 57, fol. 7<sup>a</sup>, dated Raḡab 1264/June 1848.

The *Sirr*, in its short and long form, was translated into Latin, respectively, in the twelfth and the thirteenth century AD (the latter translation consists of ten sections under the title *Secretum secretorum*; Williams 2003: 29–30; Zonta 2003). Both translations are extant in more than 450 manuscripts, some with commentaries and glosses, including one by Roger Bacon (d. AD 1292), who produced a manuscript edition with an introduction and explanatory notes (Williams 1994). Read as an encyclopaedic mirror for princes, the *Sirr* was translated from the Latin into numerous European vernaculars (Ryan and Schmitt 1982, *passim*; Gaullier-Bougassas, Bridges, and Tilliette 2015: *passim*), including English (Manzalaoui 1977; Kavey 2007), French, German (Forster 2006), Italian, Castilian, Catalan, Portuguese, and Czech, and from the Hebrew translation into Russian. The *Sirr* is thus one of the most widely disseminated works of medieval Arabic literature, or the *adab* tradition, whose translation and literary reception history constitutes one of the most intricate transmission events of world literature in the Middle Ages.

‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib and *Risāla ilā l-Kuttāb*  
 (“Epistle to the Secretaries”)

Another such Umayyad secretary to be considered as one of the progenitors of Arabic literary prose, specifically of Arabic epistolography, is ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd ibn-Yaḥyā al-‘Āmirī al-Kātib (d. ca. 132/750; Schönig 1985; al-Qāḍī 2005, 2014).<sup>6</sup> ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd contributed to the development of *adab* literature, particularly in defining the literary education and professional ethics of the secretariat guild, whom he describes as the masters of *adab* (*ahl al-adab*; ‘Abbās 1988: 281). Born a Muslim, likely of Persianate cultural background, in al-Anbār, part of the western region of Iraq, ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd’s first vocation appears to have been that of peripatetic teacher and private tutor in al-Kūfā, a flourishing Iraqi garrison town known for its philologists, orators, and anthologists of pre-Islamic poetry, with whom he appears, formatively, to have come into contact. Around the year 86/705, ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd moved to Damascus, the metropole of the Umayyad empire, where the caliph ‘Abd-al-Malik’s irreversible Arabicization reforms of the imperial institutions of administrative finance were in effect (and inaugurated a social process that led to the Arabization of much the Middle East and North Africa). ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd trained as a chancellery scribe and then secretary (*kātib*; whence his professional title) with the aforementioned literary editor of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Sirr*, Sālim Abū-l-‘Alā’, who

6 For editions and translations of ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd’s works, see al-Qāḍī 2005: 3; 2009: 6–7.



became his professional mentor as well as a relative-in-law. Promoted from the ranks of the Umayyad bureaucracy, ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd served under his mentor as a secretary to the caliph Hišām ibn-‘Abd-al-Malik and later as the head of the chancellery of the last Umayyad caliph, Marwān II ibn-Muḥammad (r. 127–132/744–749), who ruled not from Damascus but the new capital Ḥarrān (ancient Carrhae), in Upper Mesopotamia. Before that, ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd served Marwān II, to whom he appears to have been close, during his governorship of Armenia and Azerbaijan (Canard, Cahen, and Deny 1960). Portrayed in literary biography as the ever-faithful secretary, ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd is reported to have declined the caliph’s offer to desert him when the end of the Umayyad dynasty was nigh. Instead, ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd perished alongside his royal patron at the hands of the revolutionaries who established the ‘Abbāsīd imperial caliphate in the year 132/750. The period of ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd’s civil service to the first dynasty of Islam consequently spanned nearly the entire period of Umayyad Arabicization and Islamization reforms – a bureaucratic process to which he was essential, thus playing a formative role in determining the literary character of the language of the Arabs and its letters.

Of ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd’s *œuvre*, which in a fourth-/tenth-century compilation apparently filled a thousand folios, only a fraction is extant today (al-Qāḍī 2005: 3; 2019: 208–9); of that, apart from ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd’s official and personal correspondences, there are two treatises that sealed his reputation among *adab* littérateurs as the historical father of Arabic literary prose and epistolography. The first is titled *Risāla ilā l-Kuttāb* (“Epistle to the Secretaries”; hereafter *Risāla*; ‘Abbās 1988: 281–88; Schönig 1985: 116–21; al-Qāḍī 2019) and concerns the professional, ethical, and literary formation of the secretariat professional class. It is the earliest treatise to define the genre of handbooks, or *enchiridia*, of professional ethics or “good habits” of conduct (*ādāb*, the plural of *adab*) in the Arabic tradition. As such, ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd’s *Risāla*, building on the Sasanian and Byzantine literary and practical political traditions of statecraft, evidently established the secretaries as the first professionally and ethically administered guild in the Islamicate world (Bosworth 1990). While other intellectual and professional associations (such as, for example, the physicians) manifestly, albeit informally, existed before or alongside the secretaries during the Umayyad and early ‘Abbāsīd period, it was through the professional and literary efforts of ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd and his mentor, Sālīm, that the secretaries historically became the *primus inter pares* to establish themselves as a guild or professional class within early Islamicate societies.

In his synoptic *Risāla*, whose audience, as the title indicates, is the body corporate of the chancellery secretaries or its guild members (*ma‘šar al-kuttāb*

or *ahl hādīhi ṣ-ṣinā'a*, respectively), 'Abd-al-Ḥamīd sets forth with some urgency – an urgency that may only be understood in the context of empire building – the requirements for consolidating the corporate identity of the secretariat profession, first, by formalizing a code of professional ethics, adumbrating the guild's commendable virtues (such as forbearance, deliberation, generosity, honor, loyalty, temperance in all things) and blameworthy vices (including calumny, arrogance, prodigality, luxury, excess in all forms), and, second, by delineating the boundaries of the secretarial profession from those of other guilds (*ṣunūf aṣ-ṣinā'āt*). He inventories, in effect, the curriculum of the literary arts and religious sciences a secretary was required to master, including Arabic grammar, language or lexicography, poetry, penmanship, and epistolography, the Qur'ān and the religious duties of Islam, political histories of the prophets and kings, and, for financial secretaries, accountancy and economics (the latter being a "foreign" science). 'Abd-al-Ḥamīd's tone in the *Risāla* is prospective. He argues for a single occupational, corporate identity that is shared throughout the ages among past, present, and future secretaries, and mandates cordiality if not affection among all secretaries: "For God's sake, love one another in your guild!" (*tahābbū fi llāhi 'azza wa-ḡalla fi ṣinā'atikum*; 'Abbās 1988: 283).

Later handbooks of professional ethics often provide hagiographies of their eponymous founders, in the case of Islamic legal schools (*madāhib*, sing. *madhab*), and genealogies of ancient authorities, such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle in the Nestorian Christian translator Ḥunayn ibn-Iṣḥāq's (d. 260/873) *Ādāb al-falāsifa* ("Ādāb of the Philosophers") and Hippocrates and Galen in Iṣḥāq ibn-'Alī ar-Ruhāwī's (fl. 256/870) *Adab at-ṭabīb* ("Adab of the Physicians"; cf. al-Rahim 2018: 15–23). However, 'Abd-al-Ḥamīd does not discuss the history of Byzantine bureaucracy or that of the bygone Persian empires. Instead, he presents the authority and history of chancellery secretaries as being synonymous with state and empire. The *Risāla*, all the same, establishes a universal history beginning with the "creation" and extending into the author's own era in addition to a cosmological hierarchy that ranks the kings (or as the case may be the caliphs) between God and an extensive retinue of secretaries (*ma'ṣar al-kuttāb*). The latter are the civil servants (*ḥadam*, sing. *ḥādīm*) who execute the king's orders and manage the affairs of his dominion. The secretaries, 'Abd-al-Ḥamīd writes, are thus "the ears with which kings hear, the eyes with which they see, the tongues with which they speak, and the hand with which they strike" ('Abbās 1988: 281–82; al-Qāḍī 2014: 146–47). In this respect, 'Abd-al-Ḥamīd's *Risāla* serves as a "mirror for secretaries," confirming their relation to kingship and establishing the

principles of chancellorship. The *Risāla* thus laid the literary foundations for a long tradition of handbooks on the educational formation of secretaries (*adab al-kātib*) that extends into early modernity, including most significantly for the development of this genre that of the ‘Abbāsīd chancellery secretary ‘Abdallāh ibn-Muslim Ibn-Qutayba (d. 276/889; Lowry 2005). Moreover, for Islamicate intellectual history, ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd’s *Risāla* appears to have impelled other scholarly communities, as they competed for state patronage, to formalize their guilds by instituting their own handbooks of professional ethics (*ādāb*) to govern the conduct of their respective members (al-Rahim forthcoming).

‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd’s second major treatise, a mirror for a certain prince, is titled *‘Ahd Marwān ilā ibnihi ‘Ubaydallāh*, or alternatively titled *Risālat ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib fī naṣīḥat walī-l-‘ahd* (“Marwān’s Oath to His Son ‘Ubaydallāh,” or “‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib’s Epistle on Advising the Crown Prince”; hereafter *‘Ahd*; ‘Abbās 1988: 215–65; al-Qāḍī 2005: 8–9; 2019: 232–302). ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd wrote this epistle at the behest of the Umayyad caliph Marwān II, and apparently on his behalf, to his son and heir apparent, ‘Ubaydallāh. Like the pseudo-Aristotelian *Sirr* associated with Sālim, the *‘Ahd* provides moral and religio-political counsel to the prince (who was never to become caliph), in addition to advising on such matters as warfare and military tactics, troop deployments and weapons, and espionage. Regarding the history of the “mirrors for princes” genre in Arabic, the innovation of ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd’s epistle lies in its literary appropriation of what seem to have been Arabic translations and summaries of Greek and Middle Persian texts on practical politics. The *‘Ahd*, next to the pseudepigraphical *Sirr*, appears, then, to be the earliest authored mirror for princes in the Arabic literary tradition. The epistle illustrates how the translation and cultural adaptation of a literary tradition, in this case the Graeco-Persian mirrors for princes (a genre of world literature if ever there was one), transformed Arabic, hitherto the *koine* of poetry, oratory, and Qur’ānic scripture of the Arabs (Zwettler 1978: 41–188; Qutbuddin 2019), into the literary prose of a language of world literature in the Middle Ages.

While the translations of the *Sirr* exemplify how a text enters world literature, the early Graeco-Syriac and Persian translations into Arabic conversely show how these translated texts of world literature in turn contributed to the creation of Arabic literary prose. This process becomes especially apparent in ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd’s *‘Ahd*; ‘Abd-al-Ḥamīd’s epistolary prose exhibits, while adapting oratory prose, the use of highly selective

diction (*ḡarīb*) coupled with an assiduous philological understanding of the lexical and morphological characteristics of the Arabic language, such as parallelism and cadence, in addition to religio-political and Qur'ānic themes (as shown, for example, in 'Abd-al-Ḥamīd's Islamic arguments for bolstering Umayyad caliphal authority against Qādarite and Ḥārīḡite theological doctrines of freewill and extreme pious egalitarianism, respectively; Crone and Hinds 1986, *passim*; van Ess 1991, I: 65–147; al-Qāḏī 2019: 216–18, 255–302). Similar to the beginning formulae of Islamic sermons, 'Abd-al-Ḥamīd's epistles open with glorifying and praising God (*taḥmīd*), and commending God's providential selection of Muḥammad as his messenger (the mission *topos*) as well as God's election of a caliph to rule after him; these incipits would then be followed by the formulaic transitional phrase “as to that which follows [this]” (*ammā ba 'd*), indicating the subject matter or intended substance of the epistle. Recurring several times throughout the text, the incipits introduced to the epistolary genre a cyclical structure in the form of a refrain. Lastly, 'Abd-al-Ḥamīd's *Aḥd* is one of the earliest extant instances of the epistolary genre that transformed the compositional style of Arabic, which hitherto existed either as Qur'ānic rhymed and oratory prose, or as the (insipid) bureaucratic prose (*inšā' dīwānī*) associated with the caliph 'Abd-al-Malik's imperial language reforms, into a stylistically innovative prose. Arabic was thus formatively and linguistically fashioned to assimilate the translations of the “foreign” sciences from Greek and Syriac and literary and historical texts from Middle Persian. In short, adapting oratory prose and its formulations to epistolary prose, 'Abd-al-Ḥamīd created an expository style that served as a model for the new art (*fānn*) of penned Arabic prose and letters – an art form that served the demands of the empire as well as the soul.

### Ibn-al-Muqaffa' and *Kalīla wa-Dimna* (“*Kalīla* and *Dimna*”)

The formative period of Arabic literary prose and belles lettres includes another conspicuous chancellery secretary, Ibn-al-Muqaffa', Rūzbih ('Abdallāh, his Muslim name after converting) ibn-Dādūya, who straddles the end of the Umayyad and beginning of the 'Abbāsīd period (Latham 1998; Cooperson 2005). During the latter epoch, dating from the mid-second/eighth to the seventh/thirteenth centuries and commonly designated the classical age of Arabic literature, a large array of new genres emerged, coupled with a prodigious record of literary production in nearly all domains

of the arts and sciences as well as of religion and philosophy. Born around 102/720 in the province of Fārs (later known as Fīrūzābad) to a family of landed nobility who had served as Sasanian administrators, Ibn-al-Muqaffaʿ was of Persian cultural heritage. His father (also known by a Muslim name, al-Mubārak) served in Iraq as an Umayyad bureaucrat and tax collector. The father was nicknamed al-Muqaffaʿ (“the crippled”), apparently after being brutally tortured for misappropriations; this nickname (along with its history) would come to be identified with the son (*ibn*) in the Arabic literary tradition. Ibn-al-Muqaffaʿ, like his father, reportedly converted late in life to Islam, probably from Manichaeism. Quoting fragments of a Manichean apologia and parodic verses of qurʿānic style ascribed to him (the latter texts appear to be authentic; Latham 1990: 72–77; van Ess 1992, II: 29–36), later biographical reports disparage Ibn-al-Muqaffaʿs “Muslim” character despite his ostensible conversion to Islam, rendering him as a crypto-Manichean (*zindīq*), a *topos* commonly encountered in Arabic literary biography (cf. al-Rahim 2018: 31–37). Ibn-al-Muqaffaʿs Arabic prose style, however, was above anyone’s reproach.

Ibn-al-Muqaffaʿ studied Arabic grammar, poetry, and the Qurʿān, probably in al-Baṣra, another garrison town that, like al-Kūfa, was famed for its philologists (Bohas, Guillaume, and Kouloughli 1990: 1–8). His significance lies not only in the literary development of Arabic prose but also in the role his Arabic translations and treatises played in preserving Middle Persian Sasanian culture and literature, particularly Persian dynastic histories, which were nearly extinguished in the Arab conquests of the last Persian empire. (These translations of the Pahlavi would later play a role in the reemergence of New Persian epic poetry and prose in, perhaps most importantly, the *Šāh-nāma* [“Book of Kings”] of Abū-l-Qāsim al-Firdawsī [d. 411/1020; Askari 2016], and earlier in the stoking of the anti-Arab sentiments of the *Šuʿūbīya*, a literary trend emphasizing the piety and cultural superiority of non-Arab converts to Islam in early ʿAbbāsīd society, particularly in the third/ninth century [Norris 1990].) Under the Umayyad dynasty, Ibn-al-Muqaffaʿs bilingualism, along with his mastery of Arabic written prose, a vendible qualification for any would-be chancellery secretary amid the Arabicization reforms, secured him a number of posts in Umayyad Iraq and subsequently in the province of Kirmān, whence he fled on the eve of the ʿAbbāsīd revolution. An account of how ʿAbd-al-Ḥamīd met his end with the fall of the Umayyad dynasty connects Ibn-al-Muqaffaʿ to the latter: ʿAbd-al-Ḥamīd, it is reported, sought refuge with his friend and professional subordinate Ibn-al-Muqaffaʿ, only to be discovered and tortured to death by the

revolutionary agents of the ‘Abbāsids. This narrative may be dismissed as hagiographic portraiture further linking the two major progenitors of Arabic literary prose (cf. the “meeting of great minds” *topos*, al-Rahim 2018: 23–24); Ibn-al-Muqaffa’ was in any case spared (for the time being) despite having been a civil servant of the *ancien régime*. He went on to serve two ‘Abbāsīd princes in al-Baṣra, ‘Isā and Sulaymān ibn-‘Alī, both uncles of the second caliph al-Manṣūr, until around the year 139/756, when, finally, he fell out of favor with the caliph al-Manṣūr and reportedly was tortured to death by the new governor of al-Baṣra, Sufyān ibn-Mu‘āwiya al-Muhallabī. Thus Ibn-al-Muqaffa’'s professional career as chancellery secretary and belletrist (*adīb*) embodies the continuity of bureaucratic and cultural literacy between the Umayyad and early ‘Abbāsīd caliphal empires, under which the Arabic literary tradition was formed and flourished.

Ibn-al-Muqaffa’'s contribution to the formation of *adab* literature lies principally and properly in the literary genre of the mirrors for princes. He is acclaimed for, *inter alia*, his Arabic translation and adaptation of the Perso-Indian mirror for princes, the animal fable *Kalīla wa-Dimna* (“*Kalīla* and *Dimna*”), which has been described in perhaps orientalist terms as the literary jewel from India presented to Arabo-Islamic civilization (Brockelmann 1990; de Blois 1990). Its original Arabic translation from Middle Persian became a literary model of Arabic prose narrative to be emulated, generating countless translations into other world languages. The Middle Persian literary and cultural influence on the Arabic concept of *adab* is attested in fragments of Ibn-al-Muqaffa’'s translation of the *Ā’in-nāma* (“*On Comportment*”; Tafazzolī 1984; Latham 1990: 54–55). Belonging to a homonymous genre, this Sasanian compendium, apparently lost, addressed the practical ethics of moral conduct, courtly etiquette, and general *savoir faire*. The translation, which Ibn-al-Muqaffa’ likely completed while serving as an Umayyad secretary, reflects the imperial and cultural preoccupations of the Umayyads, later ‘Abbāsīds, intent as they were on appropriating and naturalizing the considerable literary traditions of world empires that for centuries before had ruled the Near East, along with the patronage of such translations and portrayals of Sasanian and Byzantine courtly ideals and imperial ideologies (Gutas 1998: 28–60; al-Azmeh 1997, 2014).

A form of political ideology, the *ā’in*, not unlike the *adab* of the “mirrors for princes” literature in Arabic, seeks to establish a well-ordered imperium whose ruling aristocracy not only exercises power over its subjects but also determines their social and moral conduct within the limits of a stratified class system. Other equivalent Middle Persian

literary and cultural concepts, adapted as *adab* in Ibn-al-Muqaffaʿ’s literary Arabic translations and independent treatises, of which only a fraction has survived, are *andarz* (counsel) and *frahang* (etiquette; *farhang* in New Persian), both connoting correct conduct, custom (similar in meaning to *daʿb* of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, from whose plural, *ādāb*, *adab* is derived; Pellat 1985), proper manners, and social etiquette, that is, proportionality in all actions, including civil and military, by virtue of observing the rule of the golden mean, which is expressed in maxims, admonishments, and practical political advice (Shaked 1987; Marlow 2007; Macuch 2009: 160–72). Ibn-al-Muqaffaʿ appears to have written the greater part of his *œuvre* before he became an ʿAbbāsīd chancellery secretary, including his translations from Middle Persian, which were known to his senior colleague ʿAbd-al-Ḥamīd if not indeed consulted by the latter when composing his own works (al-Qāḍī 2019: 214).

An epitome of the art of translation and world literature, Ibn-al-Muqaffaʿ’s literary prose rendition of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, extant only in the form of its later Arabic prose redactions, or versions, and in translations, is based on a Middle Persian translation, no longer extant, of a collection of Sanskrit didactic animal fables arranged within the literary technique of a frame story. The Indian archetype, ostensibly intended to cultivate good manners and moral, political conduct in young princes, is posited to have been composed by a Vishnuite Brahman, probably around AD 300, in Kashmir. Its oldest recension is the *Tantrākhyāyika* (“Short Treatise of Stratagems”) – in turn the earliest known version of *Pañcatantra* (“Five Treatises”; known in the Middle Ages as the “Fables of Bīdpāy”; de Blois 1990: 1–23; Brinkhaus 2008; Riedel 2011), a celebrated mirror for princes of the Sanskrit literary tradition, parts of which appear to be adaptations of the *Mahābhārata* epic and Buddhist *Jātaka* tales, wherein an Indian king and a philosopher (*bīdpāy*) dialogically examine the nature and ethics of politics and friendship by way of animal fables (see Figure 3.2).

The genesitic story associated with the Middle Persian translation of the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra* is based on the well-attested “king queries the sage” *topos*, familiar to the annalistic universal histories of the Perso-Arabic tradition. Included in the Arabic redactions and the Latin, Hebrew, and Spanish versions of Ibn-al-Muqaffaʿ’s translational adaptation of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* – the only direct witness to the Middle Persian translation, apart from the older Syriac rendition of the late sixth century AD – is a prefatory “personal history” of the Sasanian court physician and translator Burzūya. This history illustrates the aforesaid *topos* in abridged form: it recounts how the Sasanian





Figure 3.2 *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris MS Arabe 3467, fol. 98<sup>a</sup>, dated from the ninth/ fifteenth century.

king Ḥusraw Anūšīrwān I (r. AD 531–579) became aware of the existence of an Indian book of fables, containing wisdom on how to ethically and morally rule over a kingdom and its subjects, conveyed by anthropomorphized animals similar to those of Aesop’s fables. According to the story, the king then mandates his vizier, Buzurmihr, to dispatch an envoy to India who would secure a copy of the book and translate it from Sanskrit to Pahlavi. The vizier selects Burzūya because, albeit youthful, he is acclaimed for his knowledge of medicine, and dispatches him to India. Dissimulating himself as a “seeker of knowledge,” Burzūya is granted access to the treasury of the king of India, from which he copies *Kalīla wa-Dimna* as well as other books. Upon returning from India, Burzūya is celebrated at the court of Anūšīrwān for his translation, to which the “personal history” describing Burzūya’s mission to India is appended with Buzurmihr’s notarization (de Blois 1990: 40–60). The last part of this preface, which includes remarks on religious skepticism and an exhortation of asceticism, may have been written by



Burzūya himself but has been ascribed to Ibn-al-Muqaffa' on account of its Manichean tone, thus leading to additional charges of heterodoxy against him in the Islamic tradition (de Blois 1990: 24–33).

A lively repository of practical political wisdom, Ibn-al-Muqaffa'’s Arabic *Kalīla wa-Dimna* was intended to entertain and edify its audience – adolescents, princes, kings, and philosophers alike. In contrast to the earlier Syriac translation, comprising ten frame-stories, Ibn-al-Muqaffa'’s Arabic translation appears to have consisted of fifteen didactic fables, framed by a main narrative, in which the translator evidently inserted further substories (de Blois 1990: 12–17). The book’s title is a corruption of the Sanskrit names *Karaṭaka* and *Damanaka*, referring to the two jackals that feature in the first fable. The initial five fables, or treatises, of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* are translations of the Burzūya Middle Persian translation of an early version of the *Pañcatantra*; they concern, *inter alia*, strategies for making friends and keeping them (“The Lion and the Ox” and “The Ring-Dove”), winning the battle of wits in war and peace (“The Owls and the Crows”), and avoiding hasty actions and maintaining judicious worldly conduct (“The Ape and the Tortoise” and “The Ascetic and the Weasel”).

The first fable tells the story of the jackal named Dimna, whose malevolent rumors about the loyal ox friend of the lion king leads the lion to kill the ox; to this, Ibn-al-Muqaffa' evidently appended – perhaps with a sense of primordial Manichean justice shared by his Muslim audience – a substory (“The Inquiry into Dimna’s Conduct”) wherein the jackal is judged and executed for his perfidiousness. The three subsequent animal fables (“The Rat and the Cat,” “The King and the Bird,” and “The Lion and the Jackal” [see Figure 3.3]), likewise relating to the nature of friendship, moral obligation, and justice, are adapted from the twelfth book of the *Mahābhārata* epic, while the fourth fable (“The King and His Eight Dreams”), on the royal virtue of forbearance, is taken from the ancient Buddhist tales of king Caṇḍa Pradyota. Lastly, fable ten (“The Rat King and His Advisors”), on sagacious ministerial counsel, seems to be of Middle Persian provenance and may have been inserted by Burzūya himself. To these ten stories, all apparently part of Burzūya’s Pahlavi translation, four more were appended. Two of them, both of Sanskrit derivation, address the themes of friendship and treachery (“The Traveler and the Goldsmith” and “The Prince and His Comrade”), while the other two (“The Lioness and the Horseman” and “The Ascetic and His Guest”), whose literary origin, Middle Persian or Sanskrit, is yet uncertain, concern wise counsel and moral fatalism of a Manichean variety.



Figure 3.3 *Kalila wa-Dimna*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris MS Arabe 3467, fol. 100<sup>b</sup>, dated from the ninth/fifteenth century.

The reception of *Kalila wa-Dimna* as a work of *adab* literature among readers and listeners of all social classes, and its many literary adaptations, is not unlike that of the literary reception history of *Alf layla wa-layla* (“A Thousand and One Nights”; Mahdi 1995; Reynolds 2006), which also originated in India. In fact, it is due to its very popularity that Ibn-al-Muqaffa’s Arabic translation itself was textually corrupted, if not entirely lost, in later Arabic redactions and versions; there are more than one hundred Arabic manuscript copies (de Blois 1990: 3–5; Gruendler 2013), at least two prose translations and one metrical version in New Persian, plus an Ottoman Turkish translation (de Blois 1990: 5–7; Omidsalar 2011). Thus, the earliest extant manuscript copies of *Kalila wa-Dimna*, dating from the early seventh/thirteenth century, about 500 years after Ibn-al-Muqaffa’s translation, render many stories expanded or developed with substories. Withal, the entangled reception history of the *Kalila wa-Dimna* complex of texts is all too evident

when considering the diverse linguistic, cultural, and religious contexts involved in its (re)translations and (re)adaptations into more than forty languages spanning several continents and the period from the Middle Ages to modernity.<sup>7</sup> One of the most disseminated works of premodern world literature, much like the pseudo-Aristotelian *Sirr*, *Kalīla wa-Dimna* was translated twice directly from the Arabic into Hebrew; once again into Syriac; and into Greek, Latin, and Castilian (commissioned by Alfonso the Wise, the King of Castile, in the thirteenth century AD). From another widely disseminated Hebrew translation of the thirteenth century AD, it was then again translated into Latin and, at the beginning of the fifteenth century AD, into the European vernaculars, including German, Danish, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, and English (Cooperson 2005: 155). In the nineteenth century, *Kalīla wa-Dimna* returned to the Indian subcontinent in both a Hindi and a Bengali translation. Thus, Ibn-al-Muqaffa's Arabic translation of the Pahlavi of the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra* and other texts, similar to the *Sirr* before it, which emerged from and subsequently shaped the Graeco-Hellenic "mirrors for princes" genre, illustrates how world literature in translation transformed Arabic from a poetic and scriptural *koine* into a literary language of global repute.

Ibn-al-Muqaffa's two other key works of *adab* may also be described as mirrors for princes. The first, *Kitāb Ādāb al-kabīr* ("The Comprehensive Book of Moral Comportment"; hereafter *Ādāb*; Latham 1990: 57–64), a paraenetic *adab* treatise addressed to courtiers and princes, concerns such matters of conduct as self-decorum, behavior in keeping with suavity and propriety, the importance of the art of eloquence, and the cultivation of friendship as well as the cardinal virtues associated with maintaining it. The *Ādāb* ends with Ibn-al-Muqaffa's description of the virtuous ideal man. Like 'Abd-al-Ḥamīd's *Risāla*, Ibn-al-Muqaffa's *Ādāb* also expands on the Sasanian literary and practical political traditions of statecraft, namely, the *ā'in* and *andarz* (rules of etiquette, particularly as applied at the royal court), in keeping with the cultivation of an Islamic imperial culture. Ibn-al-Muqaffa's treatise provides one of the earliest treatments of *adab* as a continuation and synthesis of the Graeco-Persian "mirrors for princes" tradition (Daiber 2015); however, the *Ādāb* does not – except perhaps by implication – define *adab* as a second-order literary category with respect to establishing a genre or typology of Arabic

7 For a comprehensive global study of the transmission and reception history of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, see Beatrice Gruendler, *Kalīla and Dimna—AnonymClassic*, 2018–2022, Fachbereich Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften, Freie Universität Berlin, [www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/en/e/kalila-wa-dimna](http://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/en/e/kalila-wa-dimna).

literature. (Scholastic definitions of *adab*, often in contrast to the concept of knowledge [‘ilm; Rosenthal 1970: 240–77], would be formatively propounded by the “father of Arabic prose,” ‘Amr ibn-Baḥr al-Ġāḥiẓ [d. 255/868–69; Toorawa 2004; Montgomery 2005].)

The second treatise, *Risāla fī ṣ-Ṣaḥāba* (“On Companionship”; hereafter *Ṣaḥāba*; Latham 1990: 64–72), is an epistle composed after the ‘Abbāsīd revolution. Here, Ibn-al-Muqaffa‘, perhaps at the behest of the aforesaid patron, ‘Isā ibn-‘Alī, offers advice to the second ‘Abbāsīd caliph, al-Manṣūr, on such affairs of the state as agrarian taxes, regional political and economic policy, and military and judicial administration; and, perhaps most intrepidly, he offers further advice on how to establish an Islamic state creed to promulgate the caliph’s religio-political omnipotence, with the purpose of fending off heretical groups. (In the spirit of this policy recommendation, al-Manṣūr’s great-grandson, the caliph al-Ma’ mūm [r. 198–218/813–833], would later adopt as an official state doctrine the creed of the createdness of the Qur’ān in his institution of the *miḥna*, or inquisition [Nawas 2015].) One may thus argue that the literary form and style of both treatises restates many of the moral and practical political lessons told in the fables of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*; however, the *Ādāb* is written as a handbook on the refinement of manners and learning well-suited to the courtly culture of an emerging imperium, while the *Ṣaḥāba* is an epistle of prescriptive policy advice, or, in effect, a memorandum, to the caliph of that imperium (Goitein 1949).

### *Adab* Literature and Literary Genre

It has been argued that rather than being a genre, *adab* is an approach, or literary disposition, to writing or a particular subject matter, perhaps even a humanistic one (Makdisi 1990; Schöller 2001), whose functional aesthetics is directed at an audience seeking to be culturally urbane (Kilpatrick 1988: 56; Heinrichs 1993: 130; Orfali 2012: 29–32). Nevertheless, attempts have been made from both within and without the Arabic tradition to define the genres and subgenres of *adab* literature – though there is little consensus on its composition as a whole or agreement on its individual components (Horst 1987: 208–9; Bonebakker 1990; Fāhndrich 1990), because of its diffuseness as a literary rubric. Notwithstanding these literary complexities, this chapter has shown how some of the political exigencies of prior moments of empire building, transregional literary and cultural interaction, as well as translation and appropriation of “world literatures” of Greek, Persian, and Sanskrit heritage fashioned Arabic prose into the literary language of an Islamic

imperium. The emergence of *adab* as an expansive literary category serving to articulate the cultural grammar of Islamicate civilization may be traced to the professional and literary activity of the three Umayyad chancellery secretaries discussed herein (Hämeen-Anttila 2014). Working within two genres of “world literature,” expressly, the *Fürstenspiegel* and handbooks of professional ethics, these chancellery secretaries generated the earliest literary configurations of *adab* literature.

The subjects or branches of knowledge encountered in *adab* literature include penmanship, Arabic grammar, epistolography, lexicography, poetry, qur’ānic and *ḥadīth* studies, doxography and gnomology, rhetoric, mathematics, (some) theology and philosophy, natural sciences, ethics, geography, biography and history, and music. *Adab* literature also includes a wide range of forms and genres: administrative literature and mirrors for princes (Bosworth 1990), encyclopaedism (Kilpatrick 1982), belletristic anthologies of poetry and prose (on a particular theme; Hámori 2007; e.g., “knowledge,” Rosenthal 1970: 252–77), didactic handbooks of etiquette, codes of conduct, and professional ethics and guild specialization, paraenetic collections of aphorisms and wisdom literature (Gutas 1975), miscellany of “dictation notes” (*amālī*), and an Arabic prosimetric genre of short narratives, the *maqāmāt*, in which rhetorical ornateness is conspicuous, pioneered by Badī‘-az-Zamān al-Hamaḍānī (d. 398/1007; Beeston 1990; Hämeen-Anttila 2002; Stewart 2006). This literature addresses matters related to the cultivation of etiquette, courtly manners and virtues, civility, and professional specialization, ethics, and morality of nearly all categories of society and pursuits, including kings and princes (*naṣīḥat al-mulūk*; Marlow 2007), Arabs and Persians (*ādāb al-‘arab wa-l-furs*; Grignaschi 1969, 1973), viziers and the boon companion (*ādāb al-wuzarā’ wa-n-nadīm*; Zaman 2002; and Sadan 1993; Zakeri 2007: 150–58, respectively), state secretaries and functionaries, judges and muftīs (*ādāb al-qāḍī wa-l-muḥtī*; Masud 2007 and 2008), physicians and philosophers (*ādāb at-ṭabīb wa-l-falāsifa*), mystics and chivalrous boys (*ādāb aṣ-ṣūfiya wa-l-futuwwa*; Ohlander 2009; Zakeri 1995, respectively), instructors and pupils (*ādāb al-mu‘allimīn wa-t-ṭullāb*), wives and husbands (*adab an-nikāḥ*), consorts and lovers (*adab al-ḡimā’*), concubines and singing slave girls (*ādāb al-ḡawārī wa-l-qiyān*), friends and foes (*ādāb al-aṣḥāb*), chefs and diners (*adab at-ṭabḥ wa-l-akl wa-š-šurb*), even chess players and gamblers (*ādāb aṣ-ṣaṭranḡ wa-l-qimār*; Rosenthal 1975).

While the question of classifying the genres and subgenres of *adab* literature may be problematic, it remains certain that the early formation of *adab* literature is inextricably linked to the endeavors of Umayyad and early

‘Abbāsīd chancellery secretaries and their reception of the literary traditions of Middle Persian and the Graeco-Hellenistic world (Yarshater 1988; van Bladel 2010). All the same, *adab* as a form of habitus or civilizing process embodies a cultural continuity with the imperial past of the Near East and Mediterranean – a past that came to shape, ethically and otherwise, the private and public life of subjects under the rule of Islamicate civilization in the Middle Ages.

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