

## Greek Gnomological Wisdom in Islamic Intellectual Culture: Transmission, Adaptation, and Islamization

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the role of gnomological literature as a key medium in the transmission, adaptation, and Islamization of Greek wisdom within the Islamic intellectual tradition. While previous scholarship on the Graeco-Arabic translation movement has primarily focused on systematic philosophical and scientific texts, this study highlights the distinctive function of aphoristic wisdom literature in shaping Islamic ethical discourse. Drawing on Syriac and Arabic gnomological corpora, alongside modern studies on translation, adab literature, and the concept of *ḥikmah*, the article argues that gnomology offered a particularly flexible and socially pervasive vehicle for cultural negotiation. Through processes of linguistic adaptation, theological filtering, genre recontextualization, attributional reconfiguration, and ethical selection, Greek aphorisms were integrated into Islamic moral frameworks without preserving their original philosophical systematization. Figures such as Plato and Hippocrates appear in Islamic gnomologia less as metaphysical authorities than as moral sages whose concise statements supported ethical self-cultivation, governance, and pedagogy. By situating gnomological literature at the center of Graeco-Islamic intellectual exchange, this study demonstrates that Islamization functioned as a creative and selective transformation oriented toward moral utility and ethical coherence. Gnomology thus emerges as a strategic interface through which Greek ethical insights were domesticated and incorporated into Islamic conceptions of wisdom (*ḥikmah*), offering new perspectives on the social life of knowledge in premodern Islamic civilization.

**KEYWORD:** *Gnomology, Greek Wisdom Literature, Islamic Intellectual History, Adaptation and Islamization, Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement*

## INTRODUCTION

The encounter between Greek intellectual heritage and Islamic civilization represents one of the most significant moments of cross-cultural knowledge transmission in pre-modern history. From the eighth century onward, the Islamic world became a major center for the reception, translation, and transformation of Greek philosophical, scientific, and ethical traditions. While much scholarly attention has focused on the translation of systematic philosophical works—particularly those of Aristotle, Plato, and their commentators—less emphasis has been placed on the transmission of gnomological literature, namely collections of aphorisms, moral maxims, and wisdom sayings attributed to Greek sages. Yet these gnomological materials played a crucial role in shaping Islamic ethical discourse and intellectual culture.

Gnomology, as a literary and intellectual genre, occupies a distinctive position within the Graeco-Arabic translation movement. Unlike comprehensive philosophical treatises, gnomological texts consist of concise, context-independent sayings designed for memorization, moral instruction, and practical guidance. In the Greek world, such aphorisms circulated widely in educational and rhetorical settings, often detached from their original philosophical frameworks. This inherent flexibility made gnomological literature especially amenable to translation, reinterpretation, and cultural integration (Gutas, 2019: 4949; Krotkoff, 1978: 273). When transmitted into the Islamic world, these brief sayings proved capable of crossing linguistic, religious, and intellectual boundaries with relative ease.

The translation and transmission of Greek gnomological material into Arabic did not occur in isolation. Syriac Christian scholars played a decisive intermediary role, transmitting Greek aphoristic traditions through Syriac gnomologia that had already undergone processes of selection and reinterpretation. As Arzhanov's study of Syriac sayings of Greek philosophers demonstrates, these collections formed a coherent corpus of ethical wisdom that blended Greek philosophical authority with Near Eastern pedagogical concerns (Arzhanov, 2019: 69–75). The Arabic reception of gnomological material thus inherited not a pristine Greek tradition, but a multilayered corpus shaped by prior cultural negotiations.

Within the Abbasid intellectual milieu, especially during the height of translation activity associated with the Bayt al-Ḥikma, gnomological literature flourished alongside more technical philosophical and scientific works. However, its function diverged markedly from that of systematic philosophy. Arabic gnomological collections were not primarily vehicles for metaphysical speculation or epistemological inquiry. Instead, they served ethical, pedagogical, political, and rhetorical purposes, embedding Greek wisdom within Islamic genres such as *adab*,

advice literature, mirrors for princes, and moral exhortation (Overwien, 2018: 34–38; Belhaj, 2024: 55–60).

This functional reorientation raises important questions about the nature of intellectual transmission and transformation in the Islamic world. Greek wisdom was not merely preserved or replicated; it was adapted and Islamized. Adaptation involved linguistic, semantic, and generic transformations that rendered Greek aphorisms intelligible and relevant to Arabic-speaking audiences. Islamization, in turn, entailed a deeper process of ethical and theological reorientation, whereby Greek maxims were reframed within an Islamic worldview grounded in *tawḥīd*, moral accountability, and divine guidance.

Recent scholarship has increasingly recognized that Islamization should not be understood as the rejection or suppression of foreign knowledge. Rather, it represents a selective and creative appropriation, guided by Islamic intellectual priorities. Göksu and Al-Khaffaf’s analysis of Greek material “clothed in Islamic garb” illustrates how translation strategies and conceptual reframing allowed Greek ethical and scientific ideas to function within Islamic epistemological boundaries (Göksu & Al-Khaffaf, 2024:54). Gnomological literature provides a particularly clear lens through which to observe this process, as its brevity and ethical focus made it especially susceptible to reinterpretation.

Moreover, gnomological texts illuminate the social reach of Greek wisdom in Islamic civilization. Unlike philosophical treatises accessible only to trained scholars, aphoristic collections circulated widely among secretaries, administrators, educators, and moralists. The presence of figures such as Hippocrates within Arabic gnomologia exemplifies this phenomenon. As Overwien shows, Hippocrates appears less as a technical medical authority than as a moral sage whose reflections on balance and moderation resonated with Islamic ethical ideals (Overwien, 2018:41). This transformation underscores the extent to which Greek wisdom was repurposed to serve Islamic moral pedagogy.

Recent studies have further highlighted the importance of Plato’s reception within gnomological traditions, particularly through aphoristic attributions that detach Platonic wisdom from its original dialogical structure and recontextualize it as concise ethical instruction. As shown in studies focusing on Platonic gnomology, Plato appears in later traditions less as a metaphysician and more as a moral authority whose statements could be readily extracted, abbreviated, and circulated independently of their philosophical framework (Muhaimin, 2025:v). This process facilitated the integration of Platonic ethical insights into non-philosophical genres, including wisdom literature and moral exhortation.

In the Islamic world, such Platonic gnomological material resonated strongly with existing conceptions of *ḥikmah* as practical wisdom oriented toward ethical self-cultivation. Rather than preserving Plato’s dialectical method, Islamic compilers

emphasized statements aligned with virtues such as justice, moderation, self-knowledge, and social responsibility. This selective reception underscores the broader pattern whereby Greek philosophy entered Islamic culture through fragmented, ethically prioritized forms, rather than through comprehensive doctrinal systems (Muhaimin, 2025:vi).

Contemporary reflections on the nature of wisdom traditions emphasize that gnomology functions not merely as a literary genre, but as a mode of transmitting lived wisdom across cultural and religious boundaries. As suggested in reflective-philosophical discussions on Islamic intellectual culture, wisdom sayings operate within a shared human concern for ethical orientation, enabling diverse traditions to engage in dialogue without requiring doctrinal uniformity (Ahmad Fadhil, 2025:1-4). From this perspective, the Islamization of Greek gnomological content appears not as an act of appropriation alone, but as a process of ethical domestication, whereby foreign wisdom is rendered meaningful within an Islamic moral universe. Taken together, these insights reinforce the argument that gnomology provided a particularly effective medium for the transformation of Greek wisdom in the Islamic world. The aphoristic reception of figures such as Plato demonstrates how philosophical authority could be preserved while philosophical systematization was set aside. This dynamic supports the central thesis of this article: that gnomology functioned as a strategic interface through which Greek ethical insights were adapted, filtered, and integrated into Islamic conceptions of *ḥikmah*.

This article seeks to address this gap by examining gnomology as a key medium in the transformation of Greek wisdom within the Islamic world, with particular attention to the processes of adaptation and Islamization. Rather than treating gnomological literature as a peripheral genre, the study positions it as a central site of intellectual negotiation, where Greek ethical concepts were selectively appropriated, reshaped, and integrated into Islamic moral discourse.

## METHODS

This study employs a qualitative historical-textual research method situated within the field of intellectual history, focusing on the transmission and transformation of ethical ideas across cultural and religious traditions. The methodological orientation follows the premise that texts must be understood within the historical and intellectual contexts in which they were produced and received, rather than as repositories of timeless meanings (Skinner, 2002: 3-6). The primary sources analyzed in this research consist of Greek, Syriac, and Arabic gnomological materials, including collections of aphorisms attributed to Greek philosophers, as well as Arabic ethical and advice literature in which these sayings were incorporated. The study applies close textual analysis to examine how gnomological content was

selected, translated, modified, and recontextualized. Particular attention is given to shifts in language, ethical emphasis, and conceptual framing that indicate processes of adaptation and Islamization.

Analytically, the research adopts a comparative intellectual-historical approach, comparing Greek formulations of ethical maxims with their Syriac and Arabic counterparts. This comparison is not intended to reconstruct an original or “authentic” Greek meaning, but to identify how meaning was reshaped through historical acts of interpretation. In this respect, the study treats gnomological texts as sites of hermeneutical engagement, where inherited wisdom was reinterpreted in light of new moral and theological horizons (Gadamer, 2004: 268–272). Conceptually, the analysis is informed by hermeneutical methodology, which emphasizes the dialogical relationship between text, interpreter, and historical context. From this perspective, Islamization is understood as a process of semantic and ethical reorientation rather than doctrinal replacement. The focus therefore lies on the function of gnomological wisdom within Islamic intellectual culture, especially its role in moral education, ethical cultivation, and the articulation of *ḥikmah*.

Through this combined methodological framework, the study seeks to illuminate gnomology as a dynamic medium of cultural negotiation in which Greek ethical wisdom was selectively appropriated and reconfigured to serve Islamic intellectual and moral objectives.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Gnomological Tradition in the Islamic World**

The gnomological tradition refers to the literary and intellectual practice of compiling, transmitting, and transforming concise moral, ethical, and philosophical maxims attributed to classical sages. In the pre-Islamic Greek world, such sayings (*gnōmai*) circulated within educational, rhetorical, and moral contexts. Their aphoristic brevity made them particularly amenable to translation, citation, and reinterpretation, distinguishing them from larger systematic philosophical texts such as Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* or Plato’s dialogues (Gutas, 2016: x). Early Islamic reception drew heavily upon this stock of Greek wisdom aphorisms, but the form in which they appeared in Arabic and Islamic intellectual culture was neither static nor unmediated.

The earliest phase of gnomological transmission into the Islamic milieu took place within the broader Graeco-Arabic translation movement, which flourished in Abbasid Baghdad from the eighth to tenth centuries. This movement, centered around institutions like the Bayt al-Ḥikma (House of Wisdom), translated Greek philosophical, scientific, and ethical works into Arabic from Greek and often via Syriac intermediaries (Gutas, 2016:4950). The gnomological genre, unlike large

treatises, was particularly well represented in these translation and compilation efforts because of its adaptability and appeal to a range of readers, from scholars to administrators and educators. Collections that survive or are known through manuscripts demonstrate that makers of such anthologies selected sayings attributed to figures such as Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, incorporating them into early Arabic compilations (SAWS project: Introduction to Arabic gnomological collections).

The Syriac Christian tradition played a pivotal intermediary role. Syriac gnomologia, which combined Greek moral insights with Christian pedagogical frameworks, formed an important conduit of aphoristic wisdom into the Islamic world. Arzhanov's studies of Syriac sayings reveal that ethical materials attributed to Greek philosophers were already circulating within Eastern Christian milieus before they entered Arabic, demonstrating an early layer of selection, transformation, and appropriation (Arzhanov, 2019:75). This Syriac inheritance thus shaped early Arabic gnomological collections by embedding Greek wisdom within a shared ethical discourse familiar to Near Eastern readers.

In the Islamic context, gnomology underwent several transformations. First, it entered Arabic not merely as a series of translated sayings, but as part of wider *adab* (ethical instruction) literature. Works such as Ibn Durayd's *Kitāb al-Mujtanā* and al-Mubashshir ibn Fātik's *Mukhtār al-ḥikam wa-maḥāsīn al-kalim* illustrate how Greek maxims were integrated alongside Arabic ethical norms, Qur'anic verses, and sayings of the Prophet and early Muslims (Overwien, 2018:38). Gnomological compilations thus became ethical guides accessible to literate elites and administrative cadres, who valued pithy wisdom for moral self-cultivation and statecraft.

The reception of gnomological material in Islamic intellectual culture reflects broader attitudes toward Greek philosophical heritage. Islamicate scholars revered Greek rational discourse while simultaneously reconfiguring it to align with Islamic moral priorities. Belhaj's work on Greek philosophy in Islamic advice literature demonstrates that Greek ethical concepts, especially Plato's theory of happiness and Aristotle's virtue ethics, were not simply imported but rearticulated within Islamic political and moral frameworks (Belhaj, 2024:50). This contextual engagement positioned Greek wisdom not as alien philosophy but as valuable ethical insight compatible with Islamic discourse.

Moreover, Arabic gnomological collections often included figures such as Hippocrates, whose medical wisdom was repurposed as ethical guidance rather than technical instruction. Overwien's study indicates that Hippocratic sayings circulating in Arabic gnomologia emphasize moderation, balance, and moral comportment—values that resonated with Islamic ethical priorities even as they departed from Hippocrates' original medical context (Overwien, 2018:38). Thus, gnomological texts

served as vectors for Greek ethical thought, reshaped to support Islamic conceptions of moral virtue.

At the narrative and symbolic level, gnomological traditions in Arabic also overlapped with ekphrastic and didactic practices. Treiger examines how depiction of philosophers holding aphoristic sayings became a motif in Christian and later Islamicate contexts, suggesting how visual and textual forms reinforced the authority of moral wisdom (Treiger, 2021:162). Although the precise visual culture differs between Christian and Islamic milieus, the rhetorical deployment of gnomological authority remained constant: philosophical wisdom was anchored in recognizable personae whose sayings provided ethical models.

Greek wisdom entered Islamic literature not as isolated fragments but as integrated components of a wider moral corpus. The medieval Arabic encyclopedia of wisdom attributed to Yahya ibn al-Biṭrīq, while not strictly gnomological in form, exemplifies how ethical, political, and moral knowledge derived from Greek sources became embedded within broader Arabic ethical and administrative literature .

The significance of gnomological traditions in the Islamic world lies in their functional flexibility. Unlike systematic treatises that might be confined to specialist circles, gnomological collections circulated widely across educational, administrative, and devotionally oriented contexts. They provided accessible wisdom that could be quoted in sermons, quoted in educational settings, and invoked in counsel to rulers and officials. The integration of Greek aphorisms into Islamic ethical literature thus reflects both the adaptability of the gnomological genre and the multipurpose role of ethical wisdom in medieval Islamic society.

In sum, the gnomological tradition in the Islamic world was not a passive retention of Greek material. Instead, it represented an active cultural practice of selection, recontextualization, and integration within Islamic ethical, educational, and political discourses. Through translation, compilation, and adaptation, Greek ethical maxims became part of a shared moral lexicon that underpinned Islamic conceptions of wisdom (*ḥikmah*), moral virtue, and righteous conduct.

### **Adaptation and Islamization of Gnomological Content**

The adaptation and Islamization of Greek gnomological material within the Islamic intellectual tradition represents one of the most sophisticated modes of cultural translation in premodern history. Unlike systematic philosophical treatises, gnomologia—collections of aphoristic sayings attributed to ancient sages—offered a flexible medium through which Greek ethical thought could be selectively appropriated, reframed, and integrated into Islamic moral discourse. This process did not involve the simple preservation of Greek wisdom, nor its wholesale rejection,

but rather a multilayered transformation that operated simultaneously at linguistic, semantic, theological, literary, and epistemological levels.

The first and most visible form of adaptation occurred at the level of language. Greek gnomological sayings entered Arabic primarily through Syriac intermediaries, where they had already undergone an initial process of contextualization within Christian ethical frameworks (Arzhanov, 2019: 69–70). Syriac translators favored paraphrastic renderings that prioritized moral clarity over philological precision. When Arabic translators encountered these materials, they inherited not only the content of Greek aphorisms but also a tradition of interpretive translation that allowed significant semantic flexibility.

In Arabic, Greek ethical concepts were rendered using terminology deeply embedded in Islamic moral vocabulary. Concepts such as *aretē* (virtue), *sōphrosynē* (self-control), and *eudaimonia* (happiness) were translated into terms like *faḍīla*, *ʿiffa*, and *saʿāda*, all of which carried Qurʾanic and theological resonances. This semantic reconfiguration ensured that Greek wisdom was no longer perceived as external philosophical discourse, but as ethical insight compatible with Islamic moral anthropology (Belhaj, 2024: 58–61). This process also entailed a shift in ethical orientation. Greek aphorisms emphasizing rational autonomy were reframed within an Islamic worldview that understood reason as a faculty operating under divine guidance. As a result, gnomological sayings in Arabic often present wisdom as the harmonious alignment of intellect, moral discipline, and spiritual awareness, rather than as purely rational self-sufficiency.

A second crucial form of Islamization involved theological filtering. Greek gnomologia frequently contained assumptions rooted in polytheistic cosmologies or philosophical metaphysics incompatible with Islamic monotheism. In Arabic compilations, such elements were systematically removed, muted, or reinterpreted. References to pagan deities, fate, or cosmological determinism were either omitted or replaced with formulations emphasizing divine wisdom and moral accountability before God.

This filtering process did not neutralize the ethical force of Greek aphorisms; instead, it redirected their moral significance. Wisdom became explicitly linked to ethical responsibility, humility before God, and the cultivation of virtuous character as preparation for the afterlife. In this way, gnomological material was integrated into an Islamic moral teleology centered on divine justice and eschatological accountability (Gutas, 2016: 4952).

Theological adaptation is particularly evident in collections that juxtapose Greek sayings with Qurʾanic verses or prophetic traditions. Such textual proximity implicitly reframes Greek wisdom as subordinate to, and validated by, Islamic revelation. Rather than challenging Islamic doctrine, Greek aphorisms are presented as converging with universal moral truths ultimately grounded in divine wisdom.

Another decisive mode of adaptation lies in the recontextualization of gnomological material within Islamic literary genres. Greek aphorisms were detached from their original philosophical settings and embedded within *adab* literature, mirrors for princes, ascetic treatises, and educational manuals. This genre shift altered both the function and audience of gnomological content.

In *adab* literature, gnomological sayings served as tools for moral refinement and social etiquette. Belhaj's analysis of Islamic advice literature demonstrates that Greek wisdom was frequently mobilized to articulate ideals of just governance, moderation, and ethical leadership (Belhaj, 2024: 63-68). Within this context, Greek sages were transformed into exemplars of universal wisdom whose insights reinforced Islamic ethical norms rather than competing with them.

Similarly, in ascetic and devotional texts, gnomological sayings were reinterpreted as exhortations toward self-discipline, humility, and moral vigilance. The aphoristic form facilitated memorization and citation, allowing Greek wisdom to circulate widely within religious instruction and moral pedagogy.

Islamization also manifested through changes in attribution practices. In many Arabic gnomological collections, sayings attributed to specific Greek philosophers were anonymized or collectively attributed to "the philosophers." This attributional fluidity reflects a shift in the conception of authority: the moral content of wisdom took precedence over historical precision.

Such practices allowed compilers to adapt sayings more freely, modifying their wording or context without concern for doctrinal inconsistency. Authority was no longer derived from the philosophical system of Plato or Aristotle, but from the perceived universality of the ethical insight conveyed. This reconfiguration of authority enabled Greek wisdom to be absorbed into Islamic ethical discourse as shared moral capital rather than foreign philosophy (Krotkoff, 1978).

A defining feature of Islamic gnomology is the selective emphasis on practical ethics over speculative metaphysics. While Greek philosophy encompasses extensive inquiry into ontology and cosmology, Arabic gnomological collections overwhelmingly prioritize aphorisms concerned with conduct, character formation, and social harmony. Overwien's study of Hippocrates in Arabic gnomologia illustrates this tendency clearly. Hippocratic sayings appear not as technical medical doctrines, but as ethical reflections on moderation, balance, and self-control (Overwien, 2018: 38-41). This ethical reframing aligns medical wisdom with Islamic moral values, transforming scientific authority into ethical guidance.

This pattern suggests that adaptation was guided by an implicit criterion of moral utility. Sayings that could reinforce Islamic ethical ideals were preserved and circulated, while those that lacked immediate ethical relevance were marginalized.

Greek gnomological material also underwent Islamization through rhetorical deployment in political and administrative contexts. In mirrors for princes and

political advice literature, aphorisms attributed to Greek philosophers were employed to legitimize ideals of justice, prudence, and responsible leadership. Within these texts, Greek sages functioned as moral authorities whose insights reinforced arguments about ethical governance. This rhetorical strategy did not elevate Greek philosophy above Islamic norms; rather, it positioned Greek wisdom as corroborative evidence for ethical principles already endorsed by Islamic teachings. The authority of Greek sages thus became instrumental rather than foundational.

Narrative and symbolic adaptation further contributed to the Islamization of gnomology. Treiger's study of ekphrastic traditions demonstrates how images of philosophers holding scrolls of aphorisms symbolized the authority of wisdom across cultural boundaries (Treiger, 2021:239). While originating in Christian contexts, such imagery influenced the broader cultural imagination of philosophical wisdom, including its reception in Islamic literature. In textual narratives, Greek sages were often portrayed as seekers of truth whose insights anticipated or converged with Islamic ethical ideals. This narrative framing recast Greek philosophy as part of a universal moral heritage culminating in Islamic revelation.

The culmination of adaptation and Islamization lies in the integration of gnomological material into the Islamic concept of *ḥikmah*. In Islamic thought, *ḥikmah* signifies wisdom that unites knowledge, ethical conduct, and divine guidance. Greek aphorisms, once reconfigured, were absorbed into this conceptual framework, losing their identity as foreign philosophical artifacts. In advanced stages of integration, gnomological sayings appear seamlessly alongside Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions, without explicit markers of origin. This textual coexistence signals the full assimilation of Greek wisdom into Islamic moral discourse (Arzhanov, 2019: 210–215).

The Islamization of gnomological content should thus be understood as a creative and selective transformation rather than a defensive response to foreign philosophy. Through linguistic adaptation, theological filtering, genre recontextualization, attributional flexibility, ethical selection, rhetorical deployment, narrative framing, and conceptual integration, Greek wisdom was reshaped to serve Islamic intellectual and moral objectives. This process reveals a pragmatic epistemology characteristic of Islamic intellectual culture: knowledge was valued according to its ethical efficacy and capacity to contribute to moral refinement. Gnomology, with its brevity and adaptability, emerged as an ideal medium for this transformative engagement.

Greek gnomological wisdom contributed not only to specific ethical compendia in Arabic but also to the broader epistemic foundations of Islamic intellectual culture. As modern scholarship observes, the influence of Greek philosophical ideas—especially through translation and adaptation—extended beyond maxims and aphorisms to affect epistemology, logic, and methodologies of reasoning

among Muslim thinkers (Rosyada, 2025: 3). The movement of Greek wisdom into the Islamic world, facilitated by major translation efforts in the Abbasid period, meant that Islamic scholars encountered Greek notions of rational inquiry and ethical investigation as part of a living philosophical legacy rather than isolated fragments. This shaped Islamic intellectual engagements by providing tools to systematize knowledge, refine argumentation, and negotiate the relationship between reason (‘aql) and revelation (naql), a dialectical interplay that became central to Islamic theology and philosophy.

The impact of Greek ethical wisdom was particularly evident in Islamic theological discourses, where concepts derived from Greek ethical frameworks were reconsidered in light of Qur’anic and prophetic teachings. The integration of Greek ethical principles into kalam (Islamic scholastic theology) demonstrates how ahl al-ḥikmah (“people of wisdom”) used Greek ideas to articulate Islamic doctrines more precisely, especially in debates about divine attributes, human responsibility, and the nature of good conduct (Zaki, 2025: 20). In this context, Greek wisdom aphorisms were not merely decorative additions; they became heuristic devices that theologians used to clarify ethical stances and educational directives within Islamic religious communities.

In educational and pedagogical spheres, Greek gnomological influence reinforced the value of rational inquiry and systematic learning, shaping curricula in madrasa and scholarly circles. Contemporary researchers note that Islamic educational models, especially in the classical period, combined Qur’anic instruction with logical and ethical training derived from Greek rationalism, thereby strengthening Muslim scholars’ capacities for reflection and critical thought (Ramadhona et al., 2025: 152–153). This led to a distinctive educational synthesis in which Greek rational methods were appropriated and relabeled within Islamic paradigms of knowledge (‘ilm), promoting a balance between orthodoxy and reasoned inquiry that would inform Islamic scholarship for centuries.

At the institutional level, the legacy of Greek gnomological wisdom contributed to the emergence of centers of learning that integrated ethical reflection, scientific inquiry, and theological debate. The history of how Greek philosophical thought was transmitted into Islamic philosophical tradition shows that translation movements, coupled with active intellectual engagement, produced a creative synthesis that elevated Islamic philosophy as a discipline in its own right (Rosyada, 2025: 5). Rather than passive preservation of Greek texts, Muslim scholars such as al-Kindi, al-Farabi, and subsequent thinkers critically appropriated and transformed Greek ethical concepts to address Islamic intellectual challenges, forging new epistemological paths that were responsive to Islamic theological commitments.

Finally, the influence of Greek wisdom on Islamic intellectual culture had long-term cultural and civilizational ramifications that extended into later periods and

global intellectual history. As recent studies indicate, the creative appropriation and expansion of Greek philosophical and ethical concepts in Islamic contexts contributed to the transmission of these ideas back to Europe during the medieval period, affecting the development of European scholasticism and the Renaissance (Wahda & Santalia, 2024:309). In this sense, Greek gnomological wisdom, after being adapted and islamized by Muslim intellectuals, became part of a global philosophical heritage, highlighting the role of Islamic civilization as a mediator and innovator rather than a mere repository of ancient knowledge.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis presented in this article demonstrates that gnomological literature occupied a central position in the transformation of Greek wisdom within the Islamic world. Rather than functioning as a marginal or derivative genre, gnomology provided a practical and widely accessible medium through which Greek ethical insights could circulate beyond specialized philosophical circles. Its aphoristic form enabled Greek wisdom to be detached from its original metaphysical frameworks and reintroduced into Islamic contexts as concise moral guidance suited to education, administration, and ethical exhortation. Through Syriac mediation and Arabic compilation, gnomological texts became embedded within Islamic adab literature, mirrors for princes, and moral instruction, thereby shaping ethical discourse at multiple social levels.

The processes of adaptation and Islamization identified in this study reveal a consistent pattern of selective transformation. Linguistic and semantic choices aligned Greek ethical concepts with Islamic moral vocabulary, while theological filtering removed or reframed elements incompatible with Islamic monotheism. Genre recontextualization relocated Greek aphorisms into Islamic literary forms, and attributional fluidity shifted authority from individual philosophers to the universality of ethical wisdom itself. In this environment, figures such as Plato and Hippocrates were no longer transmitted as systematic thinkers but as exemplary moral voices whose sayings reinforced virtues such as moderation, justice, and self-discipline. The guiding criterion throughout this process was ethical utility rather than philosophical completeness.

Taken together, these findings support the conclusion that Islamization should be understood as a constructive intellectual practice rather than a defensive or reductive response to foreign knowledge. Gnomology illustrates how Islamic intellectual culture engaged Greek heritage through pragmatic and morally oriented appropriation, integrating external wisdom into the conceptual horizon of *ḥikmah* without erasing its origins entirely. By foregrounding gnomological literature, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Graeco-Islamic intellectual

exchange, highlighting how ethical knowledge was not only translated but socially embedded and reoriented within the moral universe of Islam.

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