

## AL FÂRÂBÎ'S ARTICLE ON ALCHEMY

This little article attributed to Al Fârâbî has been translated into German by E. Wiedemann,<sup>1</sup> but the Arabic text has not hitherto been published. In the following pages I have given the Arabic text without accompanying it with an English translation. For, on the basis of the Arabic text established here, only few alterations are necessary in the German translation which is based on the same manuscripts as used here.

Two manuscript copies of this article are known to be extant. These are the Berlin and the Leiden copies<sup>2</sup>. Reference to them in the footnotes has been made by the abbreviated forms B and L. In addition, part of this article has come down to us in the *Kashf al ħunûn*<sup>3</sup>. I have used both the London and the Istanbul editions. In the footnotes these have been indicated as HK and HKI.

Both manuscripts of this article seem to contain errors. Especially the Berlin copy is quite badly written and contains simple orthographic mistakes. It is apparently the more complete text, however, and contains certain appropriate phrases absent both in L and HK. It has served, therefore, to a greater degree than L, as the primary manuscript. In general, there are many minor differences between the two manuscripts, and the same thing is true for the section taken over by Hajî Khalîfa. Hence, the large number of footnotes.

The authenticity of the attribution of this article, which defends alchemy, to Al Fârâbî may be doubted. However, such words and terms as *nuzû'*, *muĥakât*, *ightibaĥ*, *taşdlĥ*, and *taşawwur* found in this article are used also in other works of Al Fârâbî, e.g., in the *Mabâdî ârâ ahl al madîna al fâđîla* and in his writings on logic. In

<sup>1</sup> Eilhard Wiedemann, "Zur Alchemie bei den Arabern", *Journal für praktische Chemie*, N. F., vol. 76, 1907, p.1 15-122.

<sup>2</sup> See Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur*, vol. 1, 1943, p. 234.

<sup>3</sup> Hajî Khalîfa, *Kashf al ħunûn*, London 1842, vol. 5, p. 272-73; İstanbul 1943, vol. 2, p. 1527-28. This article of Al Fârâbî is mentioned by Ibn abî Uşaybi'a (*Uyûn al anbâ fî tabakât al aĥibbâ*, Bulak 1299, vol. 2, p. 139), but Ibn al Ķifî and earlier sources do not speak of it. These earlier sources do not claim, however, to give a complete list of Al Fârâbî's works.

addition, it contains certain ideas which frequently occur in other works of Al Fârâbî. E. g., the idea that certain kinds of knowledge ought to be kept secret, and should be divulged only to people conversant with these subjects ; and the idea that a knowledge of philosophy and especially logic is indispensable in order to gain a thorough acquaintance with the natural sciences.

This article is mentioned, as belonging to Al Fârâbî, by Ibn abî Uşaybi'a,<sup>4</sup> but sources earlier than the thirteenth century apparently do not contain any reference to it.

Dr. A. Kessen, chief librarian of the Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit of Leiden, was kind enough to send the Turkish Historical Society a photostatic copy of the Leiden MS. , and a photograph of the Berlin MS. was obtained through the courtesy of Professor Dr. Helmuth Scheel, general secretary of the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz, and Mr. Orhan Tahsin Günden, Turkish consul general in Frankfurt-am-Main. I am grateful to Mr. Uluğ İğdemir, general secretary of the Turkish Historical Society, who as usual, has given his kind and prompt assistance in these matters. I take pleasure also in expressing my thanks to the Ankara branch of the USIS and to Mr. Donald Webster for their kind help in obtaining a photostatic copy of Wiedemann's article.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn abî Uşaybi'a, *Uşaybi'a al anabâ fî tabaqât al atibbâ*, Bulağ 1299, vol. 2, p.