

# EDUCATING THE KING: THE ART OF GOVERNANCE IN EARLY ARAB LITERATURE

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## Abstract

This paper questions the early Arab literary tradition of the education of kings by initially defining the notion of education in this type of literature. The conflict between power and education is then presented in terms of the opposition between the educator and the king. The architectural model that structures the conception of educating and ruling is then described, before presenting the royal virtues and functions that exemplify the ideal king. It ends with a note on the role of religion in this genre of giving advice to the royalty.

## Introduction

Since Plato's *Republic* at least, we are familiar with the idea that kings should have a special education, distinct from the one of the common people. In the *Republic*, rulers were selected according to their nature and their aptitude towards learning of some specific sciences and arts. The education of the future ruler consists in a process of selection according to a general program of education. This kind of conception of the education of the king was exemplified by the Arab philosopher al-Farabi (deceased around 950 A.C), in *The Achievement of Happiness*.

But while philosophy seems to offer a unified and systematic discourse on the king's education, literature in a larger sense presents what seems to be a prior and more practical version of this education. In fact, the idea of educating the king seems to be as old as the idea of the empire as illustrated in literature even before the emergence of philosophy as a specific and scientific discourse. *Scholars* have even distinguished a specific European literary genre called "Fürstenspiegel" or "Mirror for princes". The question of the practice of power is developed in this genre. The *Mirrors* display models of representation about the king, often crystallized in literature in some *topos*.

These forms, quite prefabricated, reflect the history of thought and have ancient origins. It has examples in Ancient Egypt or Mesopotamia and the ancient Hebrew tradition<sup>1</sup>. It then developed in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds and Medieval Latin *Mirrors* are quite well known. But this tradition can also be found in Persian and Arab literatures where it is developed and modified until the last Arabic *Mirror for Princes* in the XIXth century.

But, more precisely, in the literature of giving advice to kings, education is not expressly mentioned, and it doesn't seem to be, at first sight, as the proper place to discuss the education of kings. Indeed, in philosophy, like in Plato's *Laws*, the education of the king is based on

contemplation and science. But the literary genre stresses the practices of governance, as in the case of the *Cyropedia* of Xenophon, or in *A Discourse to an Unlearned Prince* by Plutarch in the Greco-Roman world. In the Arab<sup>2</sup> world this literature appeared even before the emergence of any Arabic philosophical writings. The first Arabic book seems to be the *Letters of Aristotle to Alexander*<sup>3</sup>, an Arab rewriting of a Hellenistic correspondence that initiated the tradition of the Arab arts of governance. This literature provided the first and only conception of power or governance in the Arab world.

These books try to respond to this question of the means of becoming a good ruler and, in this literature, information about the education of the king may be found. But it is questionable whether these literary discourses reflect the real situation of education during the initial stages of the development of Islam.. Perhaps they contribute more to the establishment of a model, working in a performative way.

These interrogations seek to understand the stakes of the topic of the *Mirrors for Princes*, and responds to the broader question of the efficiency of ancient Arab literature in terms of its capacity to educate the king. One of the difficulties we meet in the analysis of this tradition is the profusion of clichés, *topos*, and repetitions of anecdotes from one book to another. They certainly give some historical information, but melted with myths, and fantasies. The repetition of some models through time seems to be more relevant if we consider it as the reflection of what the power in a large sense wants to show to the entourage of the king and to the king himself; but not necessarily what it is really in fact. It cannot simply be considered as historical proof. It also contributes to an understanding of the system of values that were developed or needs to be developed during a specific reign.

This literary genre does not seem to establish a program of teaching, such as a specification of what should be learned as science and in what age lessons are to be taught in order to produce a good ruler. In the Arab tradition, the education of the king is revealed between the lines; not in the sense of school education, but in the ancient sense of learning, and within the context of an ancient sense of philosophy.

## **Culture as Education**

The education of the king is not specifically conceptualized in these writings, but merely implied by the problematic of educating the king. For us, education is the methodic action that an adult exercises on a child or a young adult to develop his physical, intellectual or moral aptitudes. By extension, it can designate the formation of the spirit in order to gain self-control, autonomy, and a sense of values or of duty. In the same way, it means training to make someone adapt to his social function or context. If we expect from the reading of the *Mirrors for Princes* a sort of knowledge about education in the first two senses mentioned above, we won't find it. But, if we understand education as a kind of self-transformation for a specific function or context, then the Arabic *Mirrors for Princes* are the perfect field for such an investigation. There are no indications of a kind of program of education in this literary genre. Sometimes, in one *Mirror*, we can find mention of the

sort of arts and sciences that the children of the king should be trained for. But this is not about the actual king. Indeed the reader of these texts is supposed to be, in most cases, the actual king himself and not necessarily a child. So here we must understand education as a synonym for cultural formation, a process of socialization through which the sum of cultural products of one society is transmitted to its members by means of social imitation and practical education. Culture certainly expresses itself differently among the various levels of society: some things that are relevant among the lower levels are not necessarily valuable at the higher level. The culture of the kings is not the one of the people. That is why training the king for his level of society is a duty of the court. Beyond a mere process of learning confirmed by tests, the education of kings, as revealed in the *Mirror for Princes*, is more of an adaptation towards a specific culture.

In the Arabic tradition, the metaphor of the mirror is not so developed; but the literary genre has a specific name: *al-adaab as-sultaniyya* and this is related to the notion of education, revealing the link between culture and education. But the word “*adab*,” in its singular form, designates a code of behavior and practices, which indicates that this is about the whole knowledge that is required to behave in society or in a particular group. Employed alone, this word includes the knowledge of language, poetry, proverbs, and anecdotes that constitute an elegant conversation. From this general sense, a more specific one is derived, which designates the learned prose literature from the VIIIth century to the XIXth centuries. In the first sense, it could be translated as Culture, and to some extent it can represent the antique Greek *paideia*<sup>4</sup>, or education.

In the expression *al-adaab al-sultaniyya*, which is plural, however, the prose literature deals with the different kinds of knowledge and behavior that are required from the Ruler. It is an application of the first sense of the meaning of education as enculturation with a specific group: those who share the power; in literature, it delineates a specific group of texts, but also consequently identifies the readers and subsequently specifies the purpose. In these texts, the discourse is intimately linked with a way of life, the life of the king. Knowing is intended to be immediately related to living.

It is remarkable that the verbal scheme “*a-d-b*” is related to the activity of feeding, giving a feast, and also signifies having a culture, being learned, and ways of punishing. All these activities -- feeding, attaining to a certain social class, having authority -- require social rules. The concept of “*Adab*” is always related to the activity of domestic management, community, sociability. It indicates a direction, in its original meaning of an oriented movement. There is a semantic link between direction, learning, and ruling.

*Al adaab al-sultaniyya* are not only what a sovereign should know but they are also reflective of how he should rule, because real knowledge seems to reside in the art of ruling. Politics is the royal art: it is not only the art of kingship but also the art of the arts. Education in these books is not only an ethical problem but it is firstly a political problem.

The notion of education in these books works as a mirror and we shall try to present how this mirror works. First of all, the education given in the *Mirrors for Princes* can be described as parenetical, which means that it exhorts the ruler to virtue. It is a kind of moral education specific to kings.

## Educating and Advising

Presenting a program of education to the king is difficult because of the tension between power and education. The educator must be invested with a minimum of power in order to convince his student about the benefit and the necessity of learning the knowledge he is trying to teach. This authority is the fruit of the recognition of his peers, or by his employer. But when the student is the employer, his knowledge alone is not enough to give him authority. When the most powerful is the one who must be taught, the tension between power and knowledge becomes very sensitive.

We have seen that the conception of education in the Arabic tradition of *Mirrors for Princes* must be understood within the large context of culture. The notion of education, therefore, must be interrogated in terms of the tools by which the culture of the king is transmitted. These books are the books of advices. Advising someone, especially a king, to do something, however, does not imply that the advisee will do it. The problem of advising the king has always had to face this difficulty of educating the most powerful. If we accept that education is not necessarily related to obedience, we must recognize that educating the king cannot be anything else but advising and advisement always has to deal with the problem of power.

There seems to be only two ways to advise the king: subordinate the counsel to the power, and consequently making it less inefficient or make the counsel more powerful than the king. The art of governance has always made its way between the tensions of these two options. In *Kalila and Dimna*<sup>5</sup>, by Ibn al-Muqaffa' for example, the lion, as personification of the ruler, is the most powerful in the forest. But, his strength does not make him safe from the ruses of those who are more clever than he is. In the main story of *Kalila and Dimna*, one of the advisors of the king is trying to take advantage from a secret fear of the king to obtain a more powerful position than someone who is more qualified. The struggle for power is permanent, and this struggle often occurs between the ruler and his advisors.

Arabic medieval history is full of these conflicts. The most renowned and the most quoted conflict in ancient and modern times is the conflict between Haroun ar-Rashid and his Barmakid vizirs<sup>6</sup>. In this power struggle, the ones who have the intelligence of tricks pretend to be the advisors of the sovereign. Ibn al-Muqaffa' himself, as many of the writers of *Mirrors for Princes*, was a secretary of two governors of Irak<sup>7</sup>. Strength is understood as the power which permits the sovereign to take the throne. But strength is not enough for the king, he must be aware of all the tricks that could be used against him. One of the functions of the *Mirrors for Princes* is to try to present other models of power aside from brutal strength. These texts are the first attempts to rationalize the use of power. The hidden spring of the education of kings, just like Machiavelli's *Prince*, lies in how the Muslim prince must first of all learn about maintaining his power. The ruler's need to keep himself in power was considered to be an absolute necessity<sup>8</sup>.

The art of governance must therefore include the notion of power. Advising was not only teaching about virtue but it was also addressing some of the very practical problems of ruling. Many counsels were not exhortations about doing that which is absolutely good, but about

goodness, for the sake of the king. This includes the well-being of the people, and also the preservation of power.

Teaching tricks were a very big part of this education. For example, one of the first Mirrors, *Kalila and Dimna* begins with a preface from a transmitter that puts the stress on the figure of Alexander the Great, considered as a model of the good ruler. It tells the story of one trick used by the great conqueror to overcome Poros, the king of India. Alexander supposedly sent fake riders made of copper filled with sulfur and naphta. When the riders were near the adverse army, Alexander set fire on them so the elephants of the army of Poros were burnt and they ran away. This trick introduced the tradition of advising the king.

Tricks were not only used against enemies but also inside the empire. The thematic of being secretive takes an important place in these advices. Ibn al-Muqaffa' advised the king, for the first time in the Arab writing, to have secret agents. The educational problem in the art of governance must therefore ask how counseling can be educative, if counseling implies teaching the use of tricks. Understand the virtue of the king within the context of teaching the use of tricks must be taken into consideration.

The struggle against pure strength and the arbitrary use of power have consequences on the discourse of the art of governance itself. The problem of training the powerful leads to a kind of codification of this literary genre. Power is often expressed in metaphors that are reproduced as clichés. The frequently used metaphor, for example, is the one that compares the power and ruling with sailing a ship in a tempest, or the ruler as a sailor. The steersman doesn't rule men, but he steers a ship, the entity that holds the travelers. He has to avoid the reefs, be prepared for the storms, and know how to find his way out of trouble at any time. This metaphor always appears in a context that describes the dangers that threaten the sovereign. There are inner dangers, like riots, and outside dangers, such as storms, pirates. The prince must defend the city from these perils.

This metaphor indicates that the representation of governance has less to do with ruling the souls of citizens in order to lead them for salvation in the hereafter, than with the very political duty to maintain security for the city. The power is also often compared to a fire that burns anyone who approaches it too close. These metaphors of the power are ancient; they already figured in the Greek tradition, even in Plato's opera. They stress on the military definition of power. They warn about the dangers that surround those who are close to power. These symbolic expressions of the power, however, are also less dangerous for the one who employs them than to his immediate critics.

Many recommendations figure in the *adaab al-sultaniyya* regarding the right way to address the king and the usual advice is to express it symbolically. The advisor should appeal to the imaginative faculty of the ruler. In the fable of the Lion and the Beef in *Kalila and Dimna*, Dimna, who wants to be a counselor of the King, employs the metaphor of the painter to describe the activity of the advisor when guiding the desire of the king towards goodness. The painter draws on the walls images as if they are going to step out of the wall, although they are not. But if the counselor should show prudence, he is also the one who will advise the king to act the same. Prudence requires the king to take advices from different persons, but not to consult every one at the

same time. He must also take his consultations secret, and finally he must act only according to his personal reason, after thinking and balancing every advice, as Ibn al-Muqaffa' recommends in *Risala fil-Sahaba*<sup>9</sup>. All the decisions that he makes must be his: for the king's reason only, may lead the king's way. But even though the king makes decisions on his own, the simple fact that consulting and taking advice is now part of ruling, can be considered as an attempt to limit the arbitrary use of power. Although it seems to reinforce the king's power, this regulation of the consultation which requires the art of understanding, hiding, and deliberation, reveals a resistance to arbitrary use of power. The art of governance constitute broad discourses that make use of these strategies of consultation.

### **Correcting and Succeeding**

*Mirrors for Princes* are often directly addressed to a prince. They describe the ideal prince: his behavior, and his place in the world. The European world uses this metaphor of the mirror to designate the kind of book that deals with the education, in a large sense, of the king. The metaphor of mirroring was apparently initiated by Seneca in the *De Clementia*. This metaphor operates in two directions: first, the mirror is a model and secondly, provides a reflection. It is a model, in the sense that it invites the ruler to contemplate what is in the mirror. It gives a reflection, when it invites the king to be a model for the people he rules, while the *Mirror* gives him the opportunity to remain himself. It is a characteristic of such treatises on education to give models to the king and, through this, to offer himself as a model to the people, or at least to invite the king to behave like this model.

The Arab *Fürtenspiegels* were straightaway structured by this scheme. That is why it is possible to maintain the catoptric metaphor even for texts that do not use it. For example, one Persian Fürtenspiegel, '*Ahd Ardashir*<sup>10</sup>', translated in Arabic in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, insists on the importance of the example and links it with the succession from the same to the same. The narrator of this text is supposed to be Ardashir ibn Babak, the founder of the Persian Sassanid dynasty. He addressed his sons and successors, in a paragraph that justifies all his writings:

You shall know that you will face what I have faced, and that the matters that will happen to you after my death will bring you what they brought me (...) We have seen the fair king, blessed with happiness, helped by God, favored, victorious, (...) and the salvation of the kingship would not succeed to their reign, unless after his death someone resembled him [on the throne]<sup>11</sup>.

This makes us notice that knowing the history of the past kings is a relevant part of the knowledge of the prince. Ardashir, Alexander and Pharaoh were some of the models used in these books. Moreover, history is conceived as a tribunal of the reign. To mention great quasi-mythical kings, like Ardashir in some later *Mirrors*, functions as an admonition to behave like them. But it is also an indirect invitation to do the best in order to have the same great renown<sup>12</sup>. History was conceived

as the collection of great actions and it constituted a persuasive argument for appropriate behavior. This conception of history integrates the ancient tradition of the Lives of the Famous within the tradition of the *Fürtenspiegel*.

The notion of *sira* is the perfect translation in Arabic of the Ancient Life. It signifies the biography. It was the principal material of the *Mirrors* and an efficient discourse that was an institution of the culture of the king. It provides the King with the basic elements for a culture of ruling. By defining the qualities of the king, it offers a theoretical knowledge and gives examples of the practices of power.

The function of this kind of writing as model to the subjects is clearly indicated in the same text :

You shall know that every king has a court of faithful followers and that each one in this suite has its own suite one (...etc.). And when the king sets up his suite in a convenient manner, everyone will set up its own in a same way, so that all the subjects will find welfare.

Knowing the history of past times not only leads to the imitation of the great actions of the past in the present time but also allows the reproduction of the imitation in the present space by the imitation of the place of the prince in the whole society. Every level should imitate the preeminent level. This can be related to some Neo-Platonic influences. In a preface of *Kalila and Dimna*, there is a clear evocation of the divine effluence of the king's intellect on his subjects<sup>13</sup>, which has a Neo-Platonic tone.

Intellect is what reinforces the [power] of the king on his kingdom. Indeed the people and the crowds are only good by the emanation of the flame of the justice that flows from the intellect because it is the consolidation of the nation.

This theoretical explanation of the function of such a model devoted to the king explains also the development of a specific literary genre. The *Mirrors for Princes* were evidently addressed to kings; but they were not the only ones who read them. They were mostly written by secretaries and ministers who used them to give advice to kings, and so they were a part of the practice and the education of these secretaries too. They must have been a part of the knowledge of the *udaba* or learned people of the elite. They were also a part of the culture of the court.

Imitation is the tool that permits the extension of ruling from the governance of the self to the governance of the others. It is based on the intellect but more precisely on the faculty of imagination, which allows the use of symbolism. To get the imitation efficient, the model must have a great power of representation and it must be distinguished as a model. The stress is put on the distinction between the domain of the king and the arena of the people. Two concepts are working for that: the “sociological” concepts of *’amma* and *khassa*. This distinction appears in the first *Mirrors for Princes*. The *khassa*, which has the original meaning of “what is particular, private” designates the king's familiars: his family, his courtiers and almost everyone who works close to

him as an employee, like the secretaries and the ministers and even the servants and cooks who can stay in his presence. Some of them have a better rank than others but this is not the central distinction. The *khassa* is a privileged circle that deals with the king's life, and because his life is related to his ruling, it is the people of the *khassa* who deal with the state's affairs. That explains how it is possible for the life of the king to emanate on the life of the majority which is designated by the word *'amma*.

"*'Amma*" means "what is common", or "what is public". The word designates the people, the masses. The distinction between *khassa* and *'amma* separates the field of the art of governance, that requires privacy and the use of tricks and secret, from the field that requires laws and public management. The management of the *khassa* is to be imitated in the *'amma*. The constitution and the management of the first circle requires attention, because this circle is also the circle of the most powerful people. It is also the place where an opponent can hide. But it also requires attention because it is the model of a microcosm in which the rest of the state reflects. That is why encouraging the king to be a model to the subjects must also be understood as a way of fighting against the excesses of the power. There is conflict between the two parts of the society and the conflict is solved in the discourses of the *Mirrors for Princes* by the insistence on the function of the exemplary model that the king should play by reproducing the models that are presented to him in the tradition of the art of governance.

## **Royal Functions and Royal Virtues**

The *Mirrors for Princes* define the virtues of the kings. The model is not only illustrated by great figures of the past times, but also by the moral virtues of the ruler. In the first art of governance known in Arabic, the *Letters from Aristotle to Alexander*, one letter insists on the royal virtues<sup>14</sup>. The two major virtues are courage and justice. All the others species of virtues are mentioned but are not detailed because the more important virtues that are related to ruling are courage and justice. But physical and military strength are also considered virtuous. We should understand the meaning of virtue in these treatises in its ancient sense of excellence. The king must be the most powerful. It is not only a matter of fact but it is also what characterizes the good king. Two qualities complete the portrait of a good ruler: being loved and admired. These two qualities work as a counterbalance to the great strength of the king, so his power couldn't be without any limit. Its limit lies in the opinion of his people, of the *'amma*.

These qualities are typical of the ancient Greek meaning of quality, which is relative to a social background. What is good is valued not by itself but in relation to the valuation of the social group. The quality of being loved and admired is indicative of the historical fact of desiring to have a great reputation after the king's death. Moral behavior is conditioned to the tribunal of history and courage seems to be the principal virtue that engenders strength and justice, the other principal virtue that leads to being loved and admired.



The same text describes the function of the ruler. The necessity of a ruler is related to the apparition of peace. Where there is war, there is no need for a ruler, but when peace comes, the interests of the people are neglected. A ruler is required to set up legislation and education. The argument, in this text, probably written at the end of VIII<sup>th</sup> century, is clearly influenced by the Greek conception of governance. It also reveals that setting up legislation was indeed a major issue in the first period of Islamic governance, when the Hellenic conception of governance was taken as a model. This presentation of the function of the ruler, initiates the Arab literary tradition of the *Mirror for Princes*, and justifies the need for an art of governance.

### **Function of Religion in the First *Mirrors*.**

Before ending this presentation of the conception of the education of the king in the Arabic *Mirrors for Princes*, we must make a remark about the place of religion in this culture. The tradition of *Mirror for Princes* appeared prior to the establishment of the Collection of the Words of the prophet. It is one of the closest scriptural traditions to the so-called Golden Age of policy in Islam world.

We cannot deny that the Muslim's first conquests depended on a theocratic conception of power. Here there is the influence of the ancient oriental religions and of the Persian political tradition, especially the Sassanid one. *Ahd Ardashir* represents that ancient tradition:

Sovereignty and religion are twins, one of them cannot exist without the other, because religion is the foundation of sovereignty and the sovereign is the guard of religion.

This is a Persian ancient text and the religion here is the Zoroastrian, and yet the text is very often quoted in the Arabic literature. It betrays a certain exploitation of religion. Religion could be the refuge for oppressed people of low status. They could therefore contest the power. So the sovereign has a duty to control religion. Nevertheless, he still remains out of the religious sphere. The duty of controlling and ruling does not coincide with the duty of religious edification or with an eschatological conception of governance. Ibn al-Muqaffa's *Risala fil-Sahaba*, deepens the distinction between the two spheres of government in depth. In the §17, he gives a list of the sovereign prerogatives. He is the one who decides to go to war and return from military operation. He commands the collection and distribution of public funds, and the appointment and dismissal of officials. He provides judgement by reason for all that is not written in the Book or in the law tradition. He struggles with the enemies and uses tricks against them. He orders the collecting and distributing the specific taxes provided for the Muslims only. The theocratic conception of governance is not the last word of this expression of policies. Even Ibn al-Muqaffa' gives advice to the caliph al-Mansur in order to settle the divergent practices of the judges and to constitute a code of law.

### **Conclusion**

The early Arab tradition of the *Fürtenpiegel* presents more than a program of education for the kings. It shows a culture of governance that reveals a tension between the knowledge it bears and the one that wields power. Its main issue, as an imperial literature, is to define power not only based on strength. This can explain why practical reason and tricks are valued in these writings. However the problem of strength also structures the tradition of the Mirrors for Princes itself in its rhetoric. It affects its semantics but also its content. The function of Mirrors, as examples, is to teach the king; but the way it works makes history the motor of a process of justification and activation of the art of governance. The *adaab al-sultaniyya* can be described by the metaphor of the mirror even if they do not thematise the catoptric metaphor. These books of advice for kings were not only presenting a model of the good king to be reproduced by the actual king, they also apply the structure of the mirror to articulate a theory of governance that pervades every level of society.

## **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Cf. P. Hadot, « Fürtenpiegel », in *Reallexicon für Antike and Christentum*, t. VIII, 1972, col. 555-632.

<sup>2</sup> By Arab world, we mean the cultural area in which the Arabic language is used.

<sup>3</sup> There is still no critical edition of this correspondence. Mario Grignaschi has produced two important articles on it: « Le roman épistolaire classique conservé dans la version arabe de Sâlim Abû-l-'Ala' », *Le Muséon, revue d'études orientales*, LXXX, Louvain, 1967, p. 211 – 264 ; and « Les *Rasa'il aristatalisa ila-l-Iskandar* de Salim Abu-l-'Ala' et l'activité culturelle à l'époque omeyyade », in *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales*, tome XIX, années 1965-1966, Damas, 1967, p. 7 – 83.

<sup>4</sup> It is in this sense that Werner Jaeger employed *paideia* to describe the ideals of the Greek man. Cf. W. Jaeger, *Paideia*, Oxford University Press, 1986.

<sup>5</sup> *Kalila and Dimna*, until recently, was considered by scholars as the very first Arabic Mirror for Princes. Ibn al-Muqaffa' lived in the VIIIth century. There are many editions of *Kalila and Dimna* in Arabic. One of the best, even though not perfect, is the one edited by Taha Hussain and Abd al-Wahab Azzam, Dar al-Ma'arif, Cairo, 1982.

<sup>6</sup> Harun Ar-Rashid was caliph from 786 to his death in 809. He and his minister Ja'far al-Barmaki are the heroes of many stories of *The Thousand and One nights*.

<sup>7</sup> See article "Ibn al-Muqaffa'", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol IV, Edited by B. Lewis, V.L. Ménage, Ch. Pellat and J. Schacht, Assisted by C. Dumont, E. van Donzel and G.R. Hawting, Brill.

<sup>8</sup> See for example, Ibn al-Muqaffa', *Risala fil-Sahaba*, ed. Ch. Pellat, Paris, Maisonneuve et Larose, 1976.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Muqaffa', *Risala fil-Sahaba*, ed. Ch. Pellat, Paris, Maisonneuve et Larose, 1976.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Ahd Aradashir*, [testimony of Ardashir], ed. M. Grignaschi, in « Quelques spécimens de la littérature sassanide conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Istanbul », in *Journal asiatique*, 1966.

<sup>11</sup> All the quotations have been translated from the Arabic by myself.

<sup>12</sup> There is a clear mention of it in the first Arabic Mirror for Princes, *The Letters from Aristotle to Alexander*, specifically in one letter, the *Siyasat al-mudun*, or *Lettre sur la politique envers les cités*, [Letters on the policy towards the city] edited by Bielawasky and Plezner, Wrocław-Warszawa-Krakow, 1970.

<sup>13</sup> *Kalila and Dimna*, "Introduction to the book, by Ali ibn al-Shah al-Farisi".

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Siyasat al-mudun*, or *Lettre sur la politique envers les cités*, [Letters on the policy towards the city] edited by Bielawasky and Plezner, Wrocław-Warszawa-Krakow, 1970