Comparing Interpretative Notes in the Syriac and Arabic Translations of the Hippocratic Aphorisms

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Abstract

Paris Bibliothèque nationale de France ms Arabe 6734 contains a bilingual Syriac-Arabic text of the Hippocratic Aphorisms. Whereas the Arabic lemmata are clearly taken from Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq's translation of Galen's Commentary on the Hippocratic Aphorisms, the Syriac translator has not been identified conclusively. In the Syriac translation, there is a long note on lemma iv. 47 in which the annotator refutes Galen's interpretation of this lemma. In his Arabic translation of Galen's Commentary on the Hippocratic Aphorisms, Ḥunayn also notes Galen's misinterpretation of this lemma. In this article, I present the Syriac note, along with an analysis of Galen's comment on lemma iv. 47 to show an inconsistency of Galen's interpretation of this aphorism. I then present Ḥunayn's note on this lemma for the first time, and illustrate how he edited the Arabic translation.

Keywords

Bibliothèque nationale de France ms Arabe 6734 – the Hippocratic Aphorisms – Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq

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1 Introduction

Paris Bibliothèque nationale de France Ms Arabe 6734 preserves a bilingual text of Hippocrates’ Aphorisms in Syriac and Arabic. Along with this Syriac-Arabic bilingual text (folios 29b–92b), the codex also contains an Arabic translation of the Hippocratic Epidemics (folios 1a–29a) and a Syriac-Arabic bilingual version of the Hippocratic Prognostics (folios 93a–127b).\(^1\) Palaeographic analysis suggests that the Arabic and Syriac texts were written by one hand. The copyist added the following colophon at the end of the Aphorisms part:

Colophon (folio 92b, lines 10–17)

The Hippocratic Aphorisms, which are seven books (maqālāt), and whose number is 380 aphorisms without those that are reiterated and are written repeatedly, were completed on the 10th of Tishrīn al-Awwal of the year 1517 according to [the era of] the kingdom of Alexander [i.e. the Seleucid calendar] and the year 602 of the Hiğra. Bahnâm ibn al-Ḥaddād the physician wrote it.

Thus, according to the colophon, the manuscript was copied by Bahnâm ibn al-Ḥaddād on 10 October 1205 C.E. The copyist Bahnâm does not, however,

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\(^1\) A new description of this codex is found in Uwe Vagelpohl, *Galeni In Hippocratis Epidemiarum librum I commentariorum i–iii versionem Arabicam* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014) pp. 22–25. Henri Pognon, *Une version syriaque des aphorismes d’Hippocrate* (2 parts, Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1903) part 1, p. ii transcribes and translates the Syriac colophon appended to the Syriac Aphorisms part, which gives almost the same contents offered by the Arabic colophon.
specify the names of the translators of the Syriac and Arabic versions of the Hippocratic Aphorisms.

Henri Pognon, who bought this codex in Aleppo and published the Syriac Aphorisms with a French translation in 1903, tried to identify the Syriac translator in the introduction of his edition. He paid particular attention to a long Syriac note attached to Aphorism iv. 47, where the annotator refuted Galen's interpretation of this lemma. Because the Arabic part of this codex does not have a text corresponding to this Syriac note, Pognon concluded that the Arabic version was made by someone other than the person who made the Syriac translation. After Pognon's publication, however, it became clear that Muslim scholars obtained the Hippocratic Aphorisms mainly through the Arabic lemmata standardized in Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq's Arabic version of Galen's Commentary on the Hippocratic Aphorisms. Since the Arabic Aphorisms in the Paris manuscript were also taken from Ḥunayn's Arabic translation (a fact that Pognon did not realize) many scholars assumed that Ḥunayn was in fact also the Syriac translator, and nowadays his authorship is generally accepted.

Obviously, Pognon’s thesis that the translations of the Syriac and the Arabic were different people cannot be proven only on the basis of the evidence that he provided, namely, the existence of the long Syriac note. Nevertheless, if we set this question aside, the contents of this note are still very interesting.
in themselves, since they illustrate how a Syriac scholar attempted to thoroughly understand the Greek text of the Hippocratic lemma iv. 47. Moreover, by looking through Ḥunayn’s Arabic translation of Galen’s *Commentary on the Hippocratic Aphorisms*, we do find Ḥunayn’s note to Galen’s comment on lemma vii. 70, where he remarked on Galen’s misinterpretation of lemma iv. 47. This illustrates how Ḥunayn endeavoured to read precisely the Greek texts of Hippocrates as well as his process of improving his Arabic translations.

In this article, I edit and translate the Syriac note that criticized Galen’s interpretation of the Hippocratic lemma iv. 47. I then provide the background to this criticism by analysing Galen’s comment on lemma iv. 47, to show how Galen misunderstood this aphorism. Finally, I edit and translate Ḥunayn’s note concerning this lemma for the first time, and illustrate how he edited and revised his own Arabic translation.

2 Syriac Translation and Note on Hippocrates’ Aphorism iv. 47

As already mentioned, in the Paris ms a Syriac note by an anonymous scholar is appended to the Hippocratic aphorism iv. 47, whose Greek text reads as follows: 7

> Αἱ ἀποχρέμψιες ἐν τοῖσι πυρετοῖσι τοῖσι μὴ διαλείπουσιν, αἱ πελιδναὶ, καὶ αἷμα-
> τώδεις, καὶ χολώδεις, καὶ δυσώδεις, καὶ χολώδεις, πᾶσαι κακαί· ἀποχωρέουσαι δὲ καλῶς,
> ἀγαθαί· καὶ κατὰ τὴν διαχώρησιν καὶ κατὰ τὰ οὖρα· ἢν δὲ μὴ τῶν συμφερόντων
> ἐκχρίνηται διὰ τῶν τόπων τούτων, κακόν.

In fevers not of the intermittent type, expectorations which are livid, bloody, fetid and bilious, are all bad; but if evacuated properly, they are favourable. So it is with the excretion and the urine. But if something beneficial is not excreted through these places, it is bad.

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7 Greek text: C. Magdelaine, ‘Histoire du texte et édition critique, traduite et commentée, des Aphorismes d’Hippocrate’ (3 vols., thèse de doctorat, Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1994) vol. ii, pp. 420–421. As Magdelaine reports, the Hippocratic aphorisms have a wide range of variant readings owing to their popularity. In this paper, I quote Greek aphorisms from the above mentioned critical edition composed by Magdelaine. What is remarkable is that in his commentary on the Hippocratic *Aphorisms*, Galen sometimes quotes aphorisms containing different readings compared against Magdelaine’s text.
The anonymous Syriac translator renders this aphorism as follows:

In fevers that do not intermit, discharges that are livid, bloody, black, or bilious are all bad. If, however, they flow well, they are good. And for excrement and urine it is the same. If, however, something of that which is not suitable is expelled through these places, it is bad.

After the translation above, the copyist Bahnām transcribes the following note:

This is how Galen commented, but these are not the words of Hippocrates. I am astonished at how when Hippocrates says one thing, Galen interprets another. For Hippocrates says, ‘but if things that benefit are not expelled,’ that is, (things) whose expulsion is beneficial (d-ʿādar nup-
pāṣhon). But Galen comments ‘but if things whose expulsion does not benefit are expelled’. The sense of this is different from it (i.e., the aphorism), and is very distant from it. It is known that the word of Hippocrates inclines to that first sense, both because of the form of his words, in that he has manifestly joined the negative (apagorētoqita) particle lā not to ‘that which benefits’ but to ‘that which is expelled’,\(^{11}\) and because of the fact that although it is changed, this aphorism is written again at the end of the book in the other way. For another phrase varying in its vocabulary but carrying the same sense is written, namely: ‘when things to be expelled remain, when the entire body is not purified, it is bad’. This note makes clear that different interpretations of the last part of aphorism iv. 47 were in circulation in antiquity. In the sentence ἢν δὲ μὴ τῶν συμφερόντων ἐκκρίνηται διὰ τῶν τόπων τούτων, κακόν, it is reasonable to link the negation μὴ to ἐκκρίνηται and consequently translate ‘But if something beneficial is not excreted through these places, it is bad’. However, Galen seems to read this aphorism by connecting μὴ with συμφερόντων.

What is remarkable is that the Syriac translator follows Galen’s interpretation, whereas the annotator criticizes it. This suggests that the translator and the annotator are different people. To clarify what Galen’s reading is, I will now examine Galen’s commentary on this lemma.

3 Galen’s Commentary on Lemma iv. 47

As is well known, Galen composed a huge commentary on all the Hippocratic Aphorisms in seven volumes. At the end of his commentary on Aph. iv. 47, he first notes two variant readings of the last part of the aphorism, and then he proposes two different interpretations of this part:\(^{12}\)

\[1\] τὸ δ’ ἐπὶ τῇ τελευτῇ τοῦ ἀφορισμοῦ διὰ χώς εὐφροσύνης γεγραμμένον, \[2\] ἐν τισὶ μὲν ὡς προγέγραπται, «ἡν δὲ μὴ τῶν συμφερόντων ἐκκρίνηται», ἐν τισὶ δὲ χωρὶς τοῦ «μὴ», κατά τὸν τρόπον, «ἡν δὲ τῶν συμφερόντων ἐκκρίνηται» \[3\] κατὰ μὲν τὴν προτέραν γραφήν ὅ λόγος ἔσται τοιοῦτος, «ἡν δὲ

\(^{11}\) In this comment, the Syriac annotator explains that Hippocrates connects the negation lā to the phrase ‘that which is expelled’, although in the Greek text the negation μὴ is connected to the verb ἐκκρίνηται. This point is thanks to an anonymous ARST reviewer.

τι τῶν μὴ συμφερόντων ἐκκρίνεσθαι φαίνηται κενούμενον, οὐκ ἀγαθόν ἔστι».


[1] We find the end of the aphorism written in two ways. [2] In some copies it is written as mentioned above: ἡπὲ τι τῶν συμφερόντων ἐκκρίνηται (‘But if something beneficial is not excreted’); other copies lack μὴ as follows: ἐκκρίνηται (‘But if something beneficial is excreted’). [3] According to the first reading, the sense (of the aphorism) is as follows: ἡπὲ τι τῶν μὴ συμφερόντων ἐκκρίνηται φαίνηται κενούμενον, οὐκ ἀγαθόν ἔστι (‘But if something whose excretion is not beneficial is manifestly evacuated, it is not good’). [4] According to the second reading, the sense (of the aphorism) is as follows: ἡπὲ τι τῶν συμφερόντων τῷ ζῷῳ καὶ οἰκείων ἐκκρίνηται, οὐκ ἀγαθόν ἔστι (‘But if something beneficial and suitable to the living being is excreted, it is not good’). [5] The first reading is better.

In [2] Galen reports that some copies have the reading ‘But if something beneficial is not excreted’, while others do not have ‘not’ (μὴ), and therefore read: ‘But if something beneficial is excreted’. Then, in [3] and [4] he presents the meaning of the entire statement of each version.

By comparing the two interpretations summarized by Galen with the original Hippocratic aphorism, we detect that both contain extra words and modification. It is therefore clear that Galen first quotes the actual readings of two copies of this aphorism (in [2]), and then he slightly expands and paraphrases these two versions (in [3] and [4]). And, most importantly, in the course of the first paraphrase (in [3]), Galen moves μὴ to after τῶν, thus clearly linking the negation to the participle συμφερόντων, although he does not account for this change. His conscious or unconscious alteration of the place of μὴ seems to have impressed the Eastern readers of his commentary, as clearly emerges from the Syriac translation of the aphorism as well as from the attached note discussed above. On the one hand, some scholars, such as the Syriac translator, followed Galen’s reading; on the other hand, other scholars, such as the Syriac annotator, criticized this interpretation.

13 Such as τι τῶν μὴ συμφερόντων ἐκκρίνεσθαι φαίνηται κενούμενον ‘something whose excretion is not beneficial is manifestly evacuated’, οὐκ ἀγαθόν ἔστι ‘it is not good’, and τι τῶν συμφερόντων τῷ ζῷῳ καὶ οἰκείων ἐκκρίνηται ‘something beneficial and suitable to the living being is excreted’.

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When we go back to the Syriac note discussed above, it is worth mentioning that the anonymous annotator criticizes Galen’s interpretation by quoting an aphorism that occurs—as the annotator specifies—‘at the end of the book’. This quotation can be safely identified with Aphorism vii. 70, whose Greek text reads as follows:14

Αἱ ἀποχρέμψιες αἱ ἐν τοῖσι πυρετοῖσι τοῖσι μὴ διαλείπουσι, αἱ πελιδναὶ καὶ αἵματώδεις καὶ χολώδεις καὶ δυσώδεις πᾶσαι κακαί· ἀποχωρέουσαι δὲ καλῶς, ἀγαθαὶ, καὶ κατὰ κοιλίην καὶ κύστιν· καὶ ὅκου ἄν τι ἀποχωρέουσιν στή μὴ κεκαθαρμένω, κακόν.

In fevers not of an intermittent type, expectorations which are livid, bloody, bilious and fetid are all bad; but if evacuated properly, they are favourable, as with the belly and bladder; and wherever any discharge remains without being purged, it is bad.

The first half of this aphorism is almost a copy of the initial part of lemma iv. 47, and the rest of it, namely, ‘wherever any discharge remains without being purged, it is bad’, can be compared with the second half of lemma iv. 47, namely, ‘if something beneficial is not excreted through these places, it is bad’. Since this part of lemma vii. 70 mentions non-purged matter resulting in a bad condition, the Syriac annotator uses this aphorism both to confirm the certitude of his interpretation of lemma iv. 47 (‘if something beneficial is not excreted’) and to refute Galen’s interpretation.

Interestingly, Galen also quotes lemma iv. 47 when he comments on lemma vii. 70. The whole of Galen’s commentary on Aphorism vii. 70 reads as follows:15


[1] This aphorism has been written before as follows: ‘In fevers not of the intermittent type, expectorations which are livid and bloody are all bad;

15 Ed. Kühn, Galeni Opera omnia, vol. xviii, p. 188.
16 μὴ τί correti: μήτε Kühn.
but if evacuated properly, they are favourable. So it is with the excretion and the urine. But if something beneficial is not excreted through these places, it is bad. [2] We have commented on it in the fourth book of this commentary.

At first (in [1]), Galen quotes the text of Aphorism iv. 47 without providing any comment on Aphorism vii. 70. Indeed, he claims (in [2]) to have already explained the contents of this aphorism in the fourth book, namely, as a commentary on lemma iv. 47.

This illustrates that when Galen comes to explain Aphorism vii. 70, he becomes aware of its similarity to Aph. iv. 47. Because the last part of Aph. vii. 70 discusses non-purged discharge, he clearly uses Aph. iv. 47 as an example of a medical case in which something is not excreted. Given that he uses Aph. 47 in such a way, Galen clearly proposes an interpretation of it, which is in sharp contrast with the paraphrases he had already provided in his comment on Aph. iv. 47 (see above). Now, in fact, Galen links the negation μὴ to ἐκκρίνηται (rather than linking μὴ to συμφερόντων, as he did in his comment on Aph. iv. 47).

This analysis of Galen's commentary on Aphorism vii. 70 and its comparison with his commentary on Aphorism iv. 47 reveal a certain inconsistency in the way in which Galen reads the last part of lemma iv. 47. The fact that the Syriac annotator criticizes Galen's interpretation by using lemma vii. 70 suggests that he is probably reminded of Galen's fluctuating interpretation of the last part of lemma iv. 47 by reading Galen's comment on lemma vii. 70. As we shall explain in the next section of this article, it is noteworthy that aphorism vii. 70 also prompts Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq to realize the peculiarity of Galen's interpretation of aphorism iv. 47.

5 Ḥunayn's Arabic Version of Galen's Commentary on Aphorism iv. 47 and Aphorism vii. 70

Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq, the famous translator of Greek medical works, reported in his Risāla how he translated Galen's commentary on the Hippocratic Aphorisms, criticizing previous Syriac translations.17 This criticism reveals Ḥunayn's thorough study of Galen's Greek texts.

As for the case of Aphorism iv. 47, the translator Ḥunayn follows Galen's first interpretation (namely, the one that links μὴ to συμφερόντων) just as the Syriac

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17 See Overwien, 'The Paradigmatic Translator', pp. 161–163. The Arabic text is found in
translator does. Hunayn's Arabic version of this aphorism as contained in his Arabic translation of Galen's *Commentary on the Hippocratic Aphorisms* reads as follows:19

![Arabic text with corrections and references](image)


For Hunayn's Arabic translation of Galen's *Commentary on the Hippocratic Aphorisms*, of which I am preparing an edition, I use the following six manuscripts: Madrid, Escurial, MS árabe 789 (copied around the thirteenth century C.E.; henceforth E5); Madrid, Escurial, MS árabe 790 (copied in 1209 C.E.; henceforth E6); Madrid, Escurial, MS árabe 791 (copied in 1101 C.E.; henceforth E7); Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS 2837 fonds arabe (copied in 1227 C.E.; henceforth P1); Rome, Vatican Library MS ebr. 426 (a Judaeo-Arabic manuscript; copied around the fourteenth century C.E.; henceforth R1); and Yale, Arabic MS suppl. 87 (copied in 1691 C.E.; henceforth YA). Moreover, I also refer to the (rather defective) edition of Hunayn's Arabic lemmata by John Tytler, *The Aphorisms of Hippocrates, translated into Arabic by Honain Ben Ishak, Physician to the Caliph Motawukkul* (Calcutta: The Committee of Public Instruction, 1832).
Hippocrates said: In fevers that do not intermit, expectorations which are livid, bloody, fetid and of the bilious type, are all bad; but if shaken off properly, they are favourable. The case of the excretions and the urine is like that. But if that which is not beneficial is excreted through one of these places, that is bad.

Hunayn’s translation of the last part of this aphorism—namely, ‘But if that which is not beneficial is excreted through one of these places, that is bad’—is clearly based on Galen’s interpretation, which connects μή with συμφερόντων. Even the position of the negation (mā lā yuntafaʾu bihī) in the Arabic translation mirrors the position of μή in Galen’s first paraphrase of the aphorism (τι τῶν μὴ συμφερόντων; see above). Then, Hunayn’s translation of Galen’s comment on this lemma reads:

Note that Hunayn translates ἀποχωρέουσαι (‘flow away’) into intafaḍat (‘be shaken off’), whereas the Syriac translates this word literally.

Hunayn adds aḥad (‘one of’) to clarify the context.

ms E5, fol. 16a, line 30–fol. 16b, line 6; ms E6, fol. 151a, line 21–fol. 151b, line 4; ms E7, fol. 71b, lines 4–10; ms P1, fol. 69a, lines 9–15; ms R1, fol. 72a, lines 15–19; ms YA, fol. 95b, lines 7–14.

33 Note that Hunayn translates ἀποχωρέουσαι (‘flow away’) into intafaḍat (‘be shaken off’), whereas the Syriac translates this word literally.

34 Hunayn adds aḥad (‘one of’) to clarify the context.

35 ms E5, fol. 16a, line 30–fol. 16b, line 6; ms E6, fol. 151a, line 21–fol. 151b, line 4; ms E7, fol. 71b, lines 4–10; ms P1, fol. 69a, lines 9–15; ms R1, fol. 72a, lines 15–19; ms YA, fol. 95b, lines 7–14.

36 واما إقفا E5.

37 فكون مكتوب: مكتوب E5, E6, E7: إقفا. YA.

38 وصفنا [صفل]ا (النطة), YA.

39 وما إقفا E5.

40 ليفن ينفعه E5.

41 وما إقفا E5.

42 وما إقفا E5.

43 وما إقفا E5.

44 والكلام يكون: إقفاYA.

45 ECMARDES RADEbas إقفا YA.

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As for the end of this aphorism, it is found in manuscripts written in two ways. In some of them, it is found as we have mentioned before: 'But if that which is not beneficial is excreted'; and in others, it is found lacking 'not' as follows: 'But if that which is beneficial is excreted'. According to the first manuscript, the statement is as follows: 'But if that whose excretion is not beneficial is excreted through one of these places, this is not good'. According to the second manuscript, the statement is as follows: 'But if that from which the body of the living being benefits and that which is suitable for it is excreted, this is not good'. The first manuscript is better.

As shown above, according to the Greek text of Galen, reported the first reading as 'But if something beneficial is not excreted'; however, Hunayn translates it as 'But if that which is not beneficial is excreted', by linking the negation 'not' with 'being beneficial'. As already noted, Hunayn thus seems to follow Galen's first paraphrase of the aphorism, where μὴ is placed after τῶν (see above, Greek text, [3]).

Hunayn's intention to standardize lemma iv. 47 based on Galen's reading continues when he translates the commentary on lemma vii. 70. Hunayn's Arabic version of lemma vii. 70 and of Galen's related commentary reads as follows:

على حسب النسخة الثانية على هذا المثال فإن خرج ما لا ينتفع به بدن الحيوان وما هو موافق له فليس ذلك بمعود


[1] As for the end of this aphorism, it is found in manuscripts written in two ways. [2] In some of them, it is found as we have mentioned before: 'But if that which is not beneficial is excreted'; and in others, it is found lacking 'not' as follows: 'But if that which is beneficial is excreted'. [3] According to the first manuscript, the statement is as follows: 'But if that whose excretion is not beneficial is excreted through one of these places, this is not good'. [4] According to the second manuscript, the statement is as follows: 'But if that from which the body of the living being benefits and that which is suitable for it is excreted, this is not good'. [5] The first manuscript is better.
Hippocrates said: In fevers that do not intermit, expectorations which are livid, blood-like, fetid and of the bilious type are all bad; but if shaken off properly, they are favourable. The case of what is excreted from the belly and bladder is like that; and whenever it is being excreted and its excretion is interrupted without the body’s being cleansed of it, that is bad.

Galen said: [1] This aphorism has occurred before in the following wording: ‘In fevers that do not intermit, expectorations which are livid, bloody, fetid and of the bilious type are all bad but if shaken off properly, they are favourable. The case of the excretions and the urine is like that. But if that which is not beneficial is excreted through one of these places, that is bad.’ [2] We have commented on this lemma in the fourth book of this work of ours.
When translating lemma iv. 47 quoted in the commentary, Ḥunayn keeps rendering the last part with ‘(But if that which is not beneficial is excreted)’, that is, on the basis of Galen’s interpretation. What is remarkable, however, is that after finishing the translation of Galen’s comment, Ḥunayn suddenly notes that he realizes the peculiarity of Galen’s interpretation of lemma iv. 47, as we explain in the next section.

6 Ḥunayn’s Note on Lemma vii. 70 and His Editorial Process with Lemma iv. 47

In his Arabic translations, Ḥunayn sometimes adds personal exegetical notes usually introduced by the phrase ‘Ḥunayn said’. Since these notes are put in the main text of the translations—and not in the margin—we can safely infer that Ḥunayn attributed the same status to these notes as to the translations themselves. These notes aimed to complete the translations by supplying the readers with additional explanations in Ḥunayn’s own words. His Arabic version of Galen’s Commentary on the Hippocratic Aphorisms contains nine such notes that he had written. One of these notes, provided after the body of the commentary on aphorism vii. 70, reads:

قول حنين
[1] إن كنت ترجمت هذا الفصل فيما تقدّم على نحو ما رأيت جالينوس يفسّره
[2] ثم وجدت هذا وكان

60 For example, Uwe Vagelpohl, ‘In the Translator’s Workshop’, Arabic Sciences and Philosophy 21/2 (2011), pp. 249–288 collects and translates Ḥunayn’s notes found in his translation of Galen’s Commentary on the Hippocratic Epidemics. Another example of his comment introduced by qāla Ḥunayn is in F. Klein-Franke, ‘Zur Überlieferung der platonischen Schriften im Islam’, Israel Oriental Studies 3 (1973), pp. 120–139 (130). This reference is owed to an anonymous referee.

61 This observation is owed to Reza Pourjavady in personal communication.

62 We find Ḥunayn’s notes attached to lemmata i. 12, i. 13, i. 14, vi. 11, vi. 32, vi. 35, vi. 36, vii. 32, and vii. 70.

63 ms E5, fol. 87a, lines 10–16; ms E6, fol. 90a, lines 9–15; ms E7, fol. 159b, line 14–fol. 160a, line 2; ms P1, fol. 148a, lines 6–12.

64 فَسَّرَهُ إِفْسَّرَهُ E6.

65 ولكن E5.

66 ووجدت ثم وجدت E7.
 Hunayn said: [1] I had previously translated this aphorism [as lemma iv. 47] according to the way in which I saw Galen interpreting it, although Hippocrates’ wording did not agree with the meaning Galen explained about it. [2] Then, I found that when it was repeated here [as lemma vii. 70], this aphorism was stated by a wording other than the wording [of lemma iv. 47] offering the meaning which I understood from Hippocrates by his first wording [of lemma iv. 47]. [3] Thus, I decided to translate the first statement [i.e. lemma iv. 47] according to the meaning which I found the first wording he offered as it really is, and according to what the wording of this repeated aphorism [as lemma vii. 70] shows, as follows: ‘But if that whose excretion is beneficial is not excreted through one of these places, that is bad’.

This comment confirms that Ḥunayn finally decided to read the last part of Aphorism iv. 47 as ‘if that whose excretion is beneficial is not excreted’, thus refuting Galen’s interpretation that peculiarly linked the negation μὴ to συμφερόντων. According to this note, Ḥunayn changed his interpretation after reading lemma vii. 70, a statement similar to lemma iv. 47; for he found a statement similar to lemma iv. 47 in this aphorism, but mentioning non-purged matter with a wording different from the wording used in lemma iv. 47.

This exegetical note may shed some light on Ḥunayn’s translation process. When he translated the commentary on vii. 70, he found Galen’s quotation of lemma iv. 47; he, therefore, referred to his Arabic translation of lemma iv. 47 and of Galen’s related comment and finished the translation of the commentary on vii. 70. However, in the course of comparing the two lemmata, Hunayn realized the peculiarity of Galen’s reading, and so he decided to add the note in order
to explain how he became conscious of the oddity of Galen's reading as well as to emend his own translation of lemma iv. 47.

This case involving Ḥunayn's Arabic version of lemma iv. 47 is a telling example that illustrates how he approached and translated the Hippocratic texts. As the first Arabic version shows, he first understood the Hippocratic text mainly with recourse to Galen's commentary on it, but, as the note on lemma vii. 70 illustrates, he was very keen to comprehend the Greek text of Hippocrates itself, not being a blind follower of Galen.

Although Ḥunayn carefully recorded his editorial process of lemma iv. 47 as a note to the commentary on lemma vii. 70, most of the later Muslim scholars simply used, and commented on, Ḥunayn's first version, without noticing or paying attention to his later correction, for they stopped reading the Aphorisms at lemma vii. 62, since Galen thought that lemmata vii. 59a, 59b, 63–69, and 71–81 were not authentic. 72

However, we must note that in the Paris MS, the Arabic text of lemma iv. 47 is the one Ḥunayn gave as the final version in the above quoted note to lemma vii. 70, that is: 73

 فإن لم يخرج ما ينفع بخروجه من أحد هذه المواضع فذلك ردء.

If that whose coming out is beneficial is not expelled from one of these places, that is bad.

This peculiar reading may suggest that the copyist Bahnām was reminded of the issues related to this aphorism and to Galen's interpretation of it by reading the Syriac note accompanying the Syriac translation of the Hippocratic Aphorisms preserved in the Paris MS. 74 On the one hand, the copyist kept the mistranslated Syriac version of Aphorism iv. 47 along with the related note, thus faithfully copying his Syriac model; on the other hand, perhaps being inspired by the opinion of the Syriac annotator (who, as already seen, criticized Galen's interpretation of the aphorism) he picked the corrected Arabic version of Aphorism iv. 47 from Ḥunayn's exegetical note on lemma vii. 70.

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73 See fol. 59a, lines 5–14.
74 It is possible that lemma iv. 47 of Bahnām's Arabic exemplar has already been changed based on Ḥunayn's comment and he only copies the text. However, given that only P7 has this emended text, while the other seven MSS and Tytler edition have the “incorrect” text, I am inclined to think that this emendation is due to Bahnām.
Comparison between the Syriac and Arabic Notes: Conclusion

This analysis of the Syriac and Arabic translations of Aphorism iv. 47 illustrates how Galen’s interpretations of the Hippocratic text were authoritative among Syriac and Arabic scholars. Nevertheless, the Syriac and Arabic notes concerning this lemma make clear that the translators did not always follow Galen without examining the validity of his opinions.

Certainly, the fact that the Syriac annotator and Ḥunayn had the same criticism against Galen’s comment on lemma iv. 47 (both using the wording of Aphorism vii. 70 as important evidence) is not enough to prove that Ḥunayn was the author of this Syriac note. From the similarity of the contents of these two notes, however, we can at least safely conclude that both authors of the two notes shared an equally high enthusiasm in their efforts to precisely comprehend Hippocratic texts. This eagerness shows how important it was in their times to understand medical works in Greek, which made it possible to transmit and develop Greek medicine in Syriac and Arabic at a high level.