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## THE FORMATION OF THE CLASSICAL ISLAMIC WORLD

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## THE FORMATION OF THE CLASSICAL ISLAMIC WORLD

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General Editor: *Lawrence I. Conrad*

Volume 42

# Magic and Divination in Early Islam

edited by  
*Emilie Savage-Smith*

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## GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

Since the days of Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921), generally regarded as the founder of Islamic studies as a field of modern scholarship, the formative period in Islamic history has remained a prominent theme for research. In Goldziher's time it was possible for scholars to work with the whole of the field and practically all of its available sources, but more recently the increasing sophistication of scholarly methodologies, a broad diversification in research interests, and a phenomenal burgeoning of the catalogued and published source material available for study have combined to generate an increasing "compartmentalisation" of research into very specific areas, each with its own interests, priorities, agendas, methodologies, and controversies. While this has undoubtedly led to a deepening and broadening of our understanding in all of these areas, and hence is to be welcomed, it has also tended to isolate scholarship in one subject from research in other areas, and even more so from colleagues outside of Arab-Islamic studies, not to mention students and others seeking to familiarise themselves with a particular topic for the first time.

*The Formation of the Classical Islamic World* is a reference series that seeks to address this problem by making available a critical selection of the published research that has served to stimulate and define the way modern scholarship has come to understand the formative period of Islamic history, for these purposes taken to mean approximately AD 600–950. Each of the volumes in the series is edited by an expert on its subject, who has chosen a number of studies that taken together serve as a cogent introduction to the state of current knowledge on the topic, the issues and problems particular to it, and the range of scholarly opinion informing it. Articles originally published in languages other than English have been translated, and editors have provided critical introductions and select bibliographies for further reading.

A variety of criteria, varying by topic and in accordance with the judgments of the editors, have determined the contents of these volumes. In some cases an article has been included because it represents the best of current scholarship, the "cutting edge" work from which future research seems most likely to profit. Other articles—certainly no less valuable contributions—have been taken up for the skillful way in which they synthesise the state of scholarly knowledge. Yet others are older studies that—if in some ways now superseded—nevertheless merit attention for their illustration of thinking or conclusions that have long been important, or for the decisive stimulus

they have provided to scholarly discussion. Some volumes cover themes that have emerged fairly recently, and here it has been necessary to include articles from outside the period covered by the series, as illustrations of paradigms and methodologies that may prove useful as research develops. Chapters from single author monographs have been considered only in very exceptional cases, and a certain emphasis has been encouraged on important studies that are less readily available than others.

In the present state of the field of early Arab-Islamic studies, in which it is routine for heated controversy to rage over what scholars a generation ago would have regarded as matters of simple fact, it is clearly essential for a series such as this to convey some sense of the richness and variety of the approaches and perspectives represented in the available literature. An effort has thus been made to gain broad international participation in editorial capacities, and to secure the collaboration of colleagues representing differing points of view. Throughout the series, however, the range of possible options for inclusion has been very large, and it is of course impossible to accommodate all of the outstanding research that has served to advance a particular subject. A representative selection of such work does, however, appear in the bibliography compiled by the editor of each volume at the end of the introduction.

The interests and priorities of the editors, and indeed, of the General Editor, will doubtless be evident throughout. Hopefully, however, the various volumes will be found to achieve well-rounded and representative syntheses useful not as the definitive word on their subjects—if, in fact, one can speak of such a thing in the present state of research—but as introductions comprising well-considered points of departure for more detailed inquiry.

A series pursued on this scale is only feasible with the good will and cooperation of colleagues in many areas of expertise. The General Editor would like to express his gratitude to the volume editors for the investment of their time and talents in an age when work of this kind is grossly undervalued, to the translators who have taken such care with the articles entrusted to them, and to Dr John Smedley and his staff at Ashgate for their support, assistance and guidance throughout.

Lawrence I. Conrad

## INTRODUCTION

### Magic and Divination in Early Islam

Emilie Savage-Smith

THERE ARE NEARLY as many definitions of magic and divination as there are people writing on the subject. Attempts at an all-inclusive definition tend to reflect the concerns of the person writing, whether philological, theological, historical, or anthropological. Moreover, most modern attempts to define magic and divination in Islam have been made in terms of European practice, which nearly always invokes forces other than God. Many European concepts, such as ghosts, necromancy, and witchcraft, have little or no counterpart in Islam, while the employment of dichotomies often used to characterize European practices (high v. low, white v. black, learned v. popular, prayers v. spells) is to a large extent inappropriate in the Islamic context.

When characterizing magic and divination, a contrast of the irrational with the rational is often evoked. However, what today may be deemed irrational was not always thought to be so, while both magic and divination can be viewed as a form of rationality with its own set of assumptions, based upon a process of analogy rather than proven causes and effects.

Medieval Islamic writers, as well as modern scholars, have categorized and enumerated various beliefs and practices under the general headings of *sihr* (magic) or *kihāna* (divination).<sup>1</sup> Yet the boundaries between the categories are indistinct and shifting. *Sihr*, for example, could apply to anything wondrous, including elegant and subtle poetry, to sleight-of-hand tricks, to the healing properties of plants, to invocations to God for assistance, to invocations to *jinn* or demons or the spirits of planets, and on occasion even to the divinatory art of astrology. Every medieval author had their own definitions and subcategories. For the purposes of this essay, I will make the distinction that magic seeks to alter the course of events, usually by calling upon a superhuman force (most often God or one of his intercessors), while divination attempts to predict future events (or gain information about things unseen) but not necessarily to alter them. The first part of this bibliographic essay will be concerned with magic in early Islam, and the second

<sup>1</sup>See Toufic Fahd, "Sihr", in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 11 vols. [hereafter *EI*<sup>2</sup>] (Leiden, 1960-2002), IX, 567-71; *idem*, "Kihāna", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, V, 99-101.

with divination. The articles selected for inclusion in this volume have been arranged in roughly the same manner, and they all include extensive references to earlier studies. The bibliography provided at the end of this essay is intended as an introductory guide to both topics, sharing many of the modern scholarly resources and methodologies.

### Resources and Methodologies

For many, if not most, of the practices, our sources come from a later period (post-twelfth century) when the procedures and techniques had become well defined and often quite intricate. Teasing out the nature of practices and beliefs in the first centuries of Islam is both difficult and highly speculative.

For early Islam, when pre-Islamic practices were being incorporated into Muslim society, we have to rely on sources such as *ḥadīth*, early dictionaries, chronicles, and writings not solely devoted to magic or divination. Most historians of the subject, however, have focused upon later formal treatises on magic or divination, and for the early period (the eighth to early eleventh centuries) we are fortunate in having editions and translations of pertinent astrological treatises by al-Kindī (d. ca. AD 870) and Abū Ma'shar (d. ca. AD 893) and the magical compilation commonly known as the *Picatrix*. There are, however, relatively few synthetic studies whose primary focus is magic or divination in early Islam, aside from the valuable work of John Lamoreaux.<sup>2</sup> Often, however, there are insights relevant to the earlier period to be found in studies based on material originating after the eleventh century.

The field has not been well served by bibliographers, except for divination (excluding astrology) in the work of Toufic Fahd.<sup>3</sup> The topics of magic and divination are only occasionally included in Carl Brockelmann's multi-volume *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (1889–1949) and (with the exception of early astrology and astrometeorology) completely overlooked by Fuat Sezgin in his continuation and supplement to Brockelmann.<sup>4</sup> For magic in general and for astrology (but not other forms of divination), the basic

<sup>2</sup>John C. Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition of Dream Interpretation* (Albany, 2002).

<sup>3</sup>Toufic Fahd, *La divination arabe: études religieuses, sociologiques et folkloriques sur le milieu natif de l'Islam* (Strasbourg and Leiden, 1966). Astrology is not included in this otherwise fundamental study.

<sup>4</sup>Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, VII: *Astrologie-Meteorologie und Verwandtes bis ca. 430 H.* (Leiden, 1979), 1–199, for astrology in the period before ca. 1038, and 302–35 for astrometeorology during the same period.

bibliographic starting point should be Manfred Ullmann's *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam*.<sup>5</sup>

While there are no full bibliographies of medieval sources concerned with both magic and divination, the field has been explored in a large number of pertinent articles in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (some of which will be cited here) and by two special issues of journals: *Bulletin d'études orientales*, 44 (1992), entitled "Sciences occultes et Islam", and *Quaderni di studi arabi*, 13 (1995), edited by Anne Regourd and devoted to "Divination magie pouvoirs au Yémen". Only a few of the studies in these two volumes will be singled out for mention in what follows, but both should be consulted in their entirety.

There are masses of pertinent manuscripts in libraries, but very few have been published or studied, or even catalogued. Additional sources, such as material from the Geniza, are becoming available, though they have not yet been employed extensively by historians of the subject.<sup>6</sup> Artefacts and material remains are another potential source, and major collections of Islamic amulets have been compiled in the last two centuries, but while there have been some descriptive publications, there has been relatively little historical analysis.<sup>7</sup>

In any case, there are problems of interpretation regarding artefacts and material remains. For example, do we know their intended use? If so, how is it to be interpreted? There are artefacts that are not reflected in any written sources (magic bowls being an example), and there are occasional disparities between preserved text and artefact. For example, stone-books providing instructions for elaborate magical figures and formulae to be engraved on

<sup>5</sup>Manfred Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam* (Leiden, 1972; *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, I.vi.2), 271–358, 359–426.

<sup>6</sup>Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked, eds., *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, 3 vols. (Tübingen, 1994–99). This study includes an excellent bibliography. See also Bernard R. Goldstein and David Pingree, "Horoscopes from the Cairo Geniza", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 36 (1977), 113–44.

<sup>7</sup>Possibly the largest single collection is the Wellcome Collection of Amulets, now at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, comprising two major collections of Middle Eastern amuletic materials—those of Tewfik Canaan and Winifred Black—as well as that of Henry Hildburgh, of which a substantial portion is Islamic. With the exception of an unpublished thesis, none of this collection has been catalogued or studied; see Marie-Claire Bakker, *Amuletic Jewellery in the Middle East: the Hildburgh Collection of North African Amulets in the Pitt Rivers Museum*, unpublished M.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1996. Alexander Fodor has published small reproductions and descriptions of his extensive personal collections of magical amulets and equipment; see Alexander Fodor, "Amulets from the Islamic World: Catalogue of the Exhibition held in Budapest, 1988", *The Arabist* [Budapest Studies in Arabic, II] (Budapest, 1990).

precious or semi-precious ring stones have raised doubts in the present writer about their applicability. Their designs seem far too elaborate to have been executed on a gemstone, and are in no way corroborated by the designs on the thousands of gemstones and seal stones preserved today. Perhaps stone-books are an example of a genre that is interesting to read but of little use to an amulet maker. Such problems need to be addressed.

Magical and divinatory material has been approached from various perspectives. Written treatises have generally been approached bibliographically or through textual analysis. The bio-bibliographic approach is best illustrated by Manfred Ullmann, while Toufic Fahd combined philological interests with manuscript citations.<sup>8</sup> The recent editions and translations of astrological treatises by al-Kindī and Abū Ma'shar are good examples of textual analysis, but magical texts have not received comparable attention. Most artefacts have been approached from either an epigraphical or an anthropological perspective. The catalogues of seals and talismans prepared by Ludvik Kalus are detailed epigraphic studies with relatively little historical context.<sup>9</sup> The extensive study by Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich of modern amulets and magical equipment is an example that is primarily anthropological.<sup>10</sup> To date, historians of Islamic magic and divination have not been inclined to use a cultural/social or rhetorical approach (favoured by recent historians of European magic), in which the effectiveness of magic and religion are viewed as more or less similar and the focus is upon semiotics and functionalism. A strictly anthropological approach can also blur the margins of religion and magic, in addition to which it tends to reason backwards, assuming that practices current today remain essentially unchanged from those in antiquity or the medieval period. That risk is illustrated, for example, by the fact that therapeutic inscriptions occurring on the earliest magic bowls essentially contradict their use as "fear cups", the function that anthropologists have assigned to the cups on the basis of their modern use. Similarly, there are difficulties with total reliance on a structuralist approach to the subject, combining linguistic with anthropological perspectives.<sup>11</sup> Yet

<sup>8</sup>See also Richard Lemay, "L'islam historique et les sciences occultes", *Bulletin d'études orientales* 44 (1992), 19–32.

<sup>9</sup>Ludvik Kalus, *Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques: Catalogue des cachets, bulles et talismans islamiques* (Paris, 1981); *idem*, *Catalogue of Islamic Seals and Talismans: Ashmolean Museum, Oxford* (Oxford, 1987).

<sup>10</sup>Rudolf Kriss and Hubert Kriss-Heinrich, *Volks Glaube im Bereich des Islam*, II: *Amulette, Zauberformeln und Beschwörungen* (Wiesbaden, 1962).

<sup>11</sup>For a critique of the historical and logical problems arising from a structural anthropological approach to Islamic geomancy, see the essay by Marion B. Smith, "The Nature

Joseph Henninger successfully combines an anthropological approach with textual analysis in his important study of the belief in *jinn* (Chapter 1), and recent studies of conjurers in India reveal some insights of possible use in analysing earlier practices.<sup>12</sup> A study by the present author has employed both artefacts and written texts in analysing the design and use of magical equipment and certain classes of amulets and related talismanic objects.<sup>13</sup>

While attention has been given to the origins of certain beliefs and practices, and the nature of formal discourses on some of them, the historian is still faced with a major unanswered question: How do we determine just what and how prevalent magical and divinatory procedures were, and why did so many practitioners employ them (if indeed they did)?

### Magic

✓ Most magic in the early Islamic world was protective in nature, asking for God's general beneficence. Occasionally, His intervention against other powers—the evil eye, assorted devils (*shayāṭīn*) and demons (*jinn*, "shape-shifting" supernatural creatures the existence of which was already recognized in the *Qur'ān*)—was specifically sought. This underlying assumption of the existence of evil beings, including a pantheon of demons, was inherited from pre-Islamic societies, as were many of the methods of counteracting them.

The study by Edmond Doutté, prepared nearly a century ago, is still useful as a general guide to magical practices in Islam.<sup>14</sup> The recent study by Dorothee Pielow, though based on a thirteenth-century text, is highly useful.<sup>15</sup> Also of use is the chapter on magic from the *Muqaddima* of Ibn

of Islamic Geomancy with a Critique of a Structuralist's Approach", *Studia Islamica*, 49 (1979), 5–38.

<sup>12</sup>See, for example, Lee Siegel, *Net of Magic: Wonders and Deceptions in India* (Chicago, 1991); Ariel Glucklich, *The End of Magic* (Oxford, 1997). The latter proposes (p. 12) a useful definition of the magical experience as "the awareness of the interrelatedness of all things in the world by means of a simple but refined sense perception".

<sup>13</sup>Emilie Savage-Smith, "Magic and Islam", in Francis Maddison and Emilie Savage-Smith, *Science, Tools & Magic* (London and Oxford, 1997; *Khalili Collections of Islamic Art*, 12), I, 9–148. The study centres upon items now in the Khalili Collections of Islamic Art, but the comparative material employed in the analyses incorporates a much wider range of sources.

<sup>14</sup>Edmond Doutté, *Magie et religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1908; repr. Paris, 1984).

<sup>15</sup>Dorothee Anna Marie Pielow, *Die Quellen der Weisheit. Die arabische Magic im Spiegel des Uṣūl al-Ḥikma von Aḥmad 'Alī al-Būnī* (Hildesheim, 1995).

Khaldūn (d. 1382), who supplies a "history" of the subject,<sup>16</sup> and the articles on *sihr* and *ṣīmiyā* in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.<sup>17</sup> Michael Dols, in his chapter concerned with magic in a medical context (Chapter 3), also presents the historical account given at the end of the tenth century by Ibn al-Nadīm as well as summarizing Ibn Khaldūn's assessment of therapeutic magic.

#### *Pre-Islamic Influences and Antecedents*

The fundamental study of pre-Islamic and early Islamic belief in spirits or *jinn* is that by Joseph Henninger (Chapter 1). Also useful is the more recent study by Toufic Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinnes en Islam",<sup>18</sup> and the relevant articles in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.<sup>19</sup> No thorough study has been undertaken of the indigenous Middle Eastern belief in the "evil eye" and its role in Islamic society, though the literature is full of references to prophylactic measures to be taken against the (usually unconscious) evil action of a glance. The most comprehensive study to date of the evil eye, encompassing many cultures, is that of Siegfried Seligmann.<sup>20</sup>

The Hermetic tradition of late antiquity, with its emphasis on the close relationship or "sympathy" between the physical world and the divine, had a great influence on formal magical, divinatory, and alchemical writings in Arabic.<sup>21</sup> Such influence is evident, for example, in the popular collection

<sup>16</sup>Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: an Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, 3 vols. (Princeton, 1958), III, 156–227.

<sup>17</sup>See n. 1 above; also Duncan Black MacDonald and Toufic Fahd, "Ṣīmiyā", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, IX, 612–13.

<sup>18</sup>Toufic Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinnes en Islam" in *Génies, anges et démons: Égypte, Babylone, Israël, Islam, Peuples altaïques, India, Birmanie, Asie du sud-est, Tibet, Chine*, ed. Dimitri Meeks et al. (Paris, 1971; *Sources orientales*, 8), 153–214.

<sup>19</sup>Pertev N. Boratav et al., "Djinn", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, II, 546–50; Toufic Fahd and Daniel Gimaret, "Shayṭān", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, IX, 406–409. For the much later development, first recorded in 1860, of a cult of spirits (neither demons or *jinn*) in northeastern Africa, see the article "Zār" (Alain Rouaud and Riziana Battain) in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, XI, 455–57; Janice Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men, and the Zār Cult in Northern Sudan* (Madison, 1989).

<sup>20</sup>Siegfried Seligmann, *Die Zauberkraft des Auges und des Berufen. Ein Kapitel aus der Geschichte des Aberglaubens* (Hamburg, 1922); see also Doutré, *Magie et religion dans l'Afrique du Nord*, 317–27; Philippe Marçais, "Ayn", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, I, 786.

<sup>21</sup>See Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: a Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Princeton, 1993); and for Graeco-Roman magic in general, see Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink, *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford, 1991); John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York and Oxford, 1992); Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge MA, 1997); Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, eds., *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece and Rome* (London, 1999). For Byzantine and Coptic magic, see Henry Maguire, ed.,

of treatises by the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā').<sup>22</sup> Francis Peters (Chapter 2) discusses the rise of this esotericism in late antiquity and the role played by the Sabians of the city of Ḥarrān in its transmission into early Islam.<sup>23</sup> Jewish influences on Arabic magic are explored by Alexandor Fodor in the context of a thirteenth-century treatise (Chapter 4). For a general background to pre-Islamic magical beliefs, the chapter on "Pagans and Gnostics" by Michael Morony in his book *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* is highly useful.<sup>24</sup> For Aramaic magical practices the work of Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked is indispensable.<sup>25</sup> On the difficulty of disentangling the various influences, see the article by Peter Joosse.<sup>26</sup>

Many of these pre-Islamic beliefs and practices were assimilated into the emerging Islamic culture. Pre-Islamic magical imagery featuring lions, serpents, and scorpions can be seen on several types of magical artefacts, such as amulets and magic-medicinal bowls. There was concern for sudden death (associated with the evil eye)—explaining a nexus of symbols (scorpion/serpent/mad dog) that occur on the earliest amulets, all of which could be interpreted as omens of sudden death. Astrological iconography derived from classical antiquity, involving emblematic representations of the twelve zodiacal signs and the seven planets, also played a role in talismanic design.

The employment of special occult properties of plant, animal, and mineral substances continued an established late antique practice. An entire Arabic genre soon developed on the topic, usually called *khawāṣṣ* literature from the plural of the word *khāṣṣa* meaning "special property".<sup>27</sup> The ba-

*Byzantine Magic* (Washington DC, and Cambridge MA, 1995); Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco, 1994).

<sup>22</sup>See for example Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines: Conceptions of Nature and Methods Used for its Study by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', al-Bīrūnī, and Ibn Sīnā* (Cambridge MA, 1964).

<sup>23</sup>See also "The Ṣābi'at Ḥarrān", in the article "Ṣābi'a" (Toufic Fahd), in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, VIII, 675–78.

<sup>24</sup>Michael G. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton, 1984), 384–430. See also Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, "Sadj", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, VIII, 732–38, concerning magical utterances in pre-Islamic Arabian usage.

<sup>25</sup>Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls* (Jerusalem, 1985; 2nd rev. ed. 1987), *idem*, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1993).

<sup>26</sup>N. Peter Joosse, "An Example of Medieval Arabic Pseudo-Hermetism: the Tale of Salāmān and Absāl", *Journal of Semitic Studies* 38 (1993), 279–93.

<sup>27</sup>See Manfred Ullmann, "Khāṣṣa", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, IV, 1097–98. Qur'ānic verses and phrases were also said to have occult properties (*khawāṣṣ*), for which see Toufic Fahd, "Khawāṣṣ al-ḥur'ān", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, IV, 1133–34.

sic premise was that everything in nature had hidden or occult properties that could be activated, and some properties were compatible with others while some were antipathetic. By recognizing and utilizing these properties, disease might be cured or good fortune attained. The occult properties of medicinal substances (*khawāṣṣ al-adwiya*) were favourite topics, though possibly the most popular and distinct form of *khawāṣṣ* literature were the "stone-books", devoted to the magical virtues and uses of stones and minerals. An early example is a magical-medical pharmacopoeia written in the tenth century by Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Tamīmī, who lived in Jerusalem; the chapter concerned with the *khawāṣṣ* of stones has been edited and translated by Jutta Schönfeld.<sup>28</sup> Later treatises were often illustrated with designs to be engraved on gemstones and set into a ring—to help with capturing wild animals, releasing someone from a spell, gaining love, or a host of other uses.<sup>29</sup> This type of magic did not usually involve prayers or invocations, for the material itself from which it was made, or the symbols inscribed thereon, was regarded as sufficient.

### *Islamic Magic in General*

There are, however, contrasts with many of the magical practices of late antiquity, the most obvious being the lack of animal, and occasionally human, sacrifice that was a well-attested activity in late antiquity. There is little evidence for the continued use in Islam of dolls and similar objects to bring about the destruction of one's enemy. In the case of magic bowls, it is evident that by the time they are attested in Islamic culture very fundamental changes have taken place, so much so that their derivation from pre-Islamic artefacts is very tenuous.

The role of the evil eye is much more evident in early Islamic practice than it appears to have been in earlier cultures. So imbedded in Islamic culture is this notion of the evil eye that Ignaz Goldziher has suggested that the traditional iconic gesture of astonishment in Islamic art, placing the index finger of the right hand to one's mouth, is a magical defence

<sup>28</sup> Jutta Schönfeld, *Über die Steine: Das 14. Kapitel aus dem "Kitāb al-Murṣid" des Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Tamīmī, nach dem pariser Manuskript herausgegeben, übersetzt und kommentiert* (Freiburg, 1976).

<sup>29</sup> For an example of this genre, see A.F.L. Beeston, "An Arabic Hermetic Manuscript", *The Bodleian Library Record* 7 (1962), 11–23.

against the evil eye or evil in general.<sup>30</sup> Quite certainly the representation of the human hand played an important role in protection against the evil eye throughout the pre-Islamic Middle East, and continues to do so in the Islamic lands.

Curse tablets (usually written on lead, rolled up, and hidden) are relatively common artefacts from Graeco-Roman culture, but few traces remain amongst Islamic artefacts. Binding spells continued to play a role, as they did in late antiquity, but perhaps can be seen to be of somewhat less importance.

Islamic writers often provided a magical/divinatory tradition with its own pseudo-history. Such prophets as Daniel or Enoch/Idris or Solomon, amongst others, were commonly named as originators of various arts, sometimes accompanied by tales of material being discovered in graves or caves.<sup>31</sup> An association with North Africa or India was sometimes suggested, for both areas became associated with the *topos* of esoteric knowledge. Ibn Khaldūn, writing in the fourteenth century, provided a particularly full "history" of magical knowledge.<sup>32</sup> For him, the definitive summary of everything known about magic and sorcery was the Arabic magical-astrological treatise compiled around 1004, the *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, commonly known as the *Picatrix*, that was falsely attributed to the Spanish astronomer al-Majrīṭī (d. ca. 1008). The Arabic text has been edited and translated into German, but a new edition and full study comparing it with the Latin tradition would be welcome.<sup>33</sup> For most later writers, the acknowledged authority in the field of magic was the Egyptian Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Būnī, who is said to have died in 1225. Many treatises are ascribed to him, the most influential being the *Shams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā*, which, though printed many times, has never been critically edited or translated.<sup>34</sup> Dorothee Pielow has published a study

<sup>30</sup> Ignaz Goldziher, "Zauberelemente im islamischen Gebet", in *Orientalische Studien Theodor Nöldeke zum siebzigsten Geburtstag gewidmet*, ed. Carl Bezold (Giessen, 1906), I, 320–21.

<sup>31</sup> On the role of the introductory "authenticating apparatus", see Alexander Fodor, "The Origins of the Arabic Legends of the Pyramids", *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 23 (1970), 335–63.

<sup>32</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, III, 156–70.

<sup>33</sup> *Kitāb ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, ed. Helmut Ritter (Leipzig and Berlin, 1933); trans. Helmut Ritter and Martin Plessner, *Picatrix. Das Ziel des Weisen von Pseudo-Mağrīṭī* (London, 1962). See also David Pingree, ed., *Picatrix: the Latin Version of the Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm* (London, 1986).

<sup>34</sup> Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Būnī, *Kitāb shams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā wa-laṭā'if al-'awārif* (Cairo, [ca. 1945]).

of its principal features and their historical roots, while Lory has examined its letter magic.<sup>35</sup>

One of the primary uses of magic was to ward off disease and preserve well-being. Michael Dols' discussion of the theory of therapeutic magic (Chapter 3) includes a discussion of sorcerers (*sāhir*, pl. *saḥara*) who addressed their invocations to demons. His chapter concern with exorcists (*mu'azzimūn*), who sought God's assistance as well as that of the *jinn* to heal illnesses such as epilepsy or insanity (not reprinted here, though it occurs in the same book), is marred by a confusion or equating of early modern and modern practices with medieval ones.<sup>36</sup>

Recognition of active supernatural forces other than God's to a certain extent contradicted the strict monotheism of Islam, though not the omnipotence of God, to Whom were directed most of the pleas for intervention. Religious scholars tended to recognize as legitimate those forms of magic that appealed only to God, but not the illicit forms addressed to *jinn* and demons.<sup>37</sup> It was also considered acceptable to address such invocations to angels, to Muḥammad, to 'Alī or other members of the Prophet's family, and to saints: all these were believed to intercede with God on behalf of the supplicant.<sup>38</sup> Virtually all scholars allowed for the mystical and magical interpretation of letters and numbers.

### *Amulets, Talismans, and Letter Magic*

Although they portray magical symbols whose imagery might be traceable to pre-Islamic traditions, the amulets and talismanic objects used by Muslims chiefly took the form of pious invocations to God, through Qur'anic quotations and prayers. In this respect they differ substantially from Byzantine, Roman, early Iranian and other pre-Islamic magic.

Talismans and amulets (there being virtually no distinction between the two English terms) were used not only to ward off the evil eye and misfortune, but could also be used to gain good fortune, or increase fertility.

<sup>35</sup>Pielow, *Die Quellen der Weisheit*; Pierre Lory, "La magie des lettres dans le *Shams al-ma'ārif* d'al-Būnī", *Bulletin d'études orientales* 39-40 (1987-88), 97-111.

<sup>36</sup>Michael W. Dols, *Majnūn: the Madman in Medieval Islamic Society*, ed. Diana E. Immisch, (Oxford, 1992), Chapter 9 "The Practice of Magic in Healing"; see also 243-60 for "medicine of the Prophet" (*al-ṭibb al-nabawī*), which has many folkloric and magical elements but will be discussed in the volume on medicine forming part of the present series.

<sup>37</sup>Toufic Fahd, "La connaissance de l'inconnaissable et l'obtention de l'impossible dans la pensée mantic et magique de l'Islam", *Bulletin d'études orientales* 44 (1992), 33-44.

<sup>38</sup>For healing shrines in Islam, see Dols, *Majnūn*, 243-60; Josef W. Meri, *The cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford, 2002).

or potency or attractiveness. They encompassed not only magical symbols, but also evocations and prayers nearly always addressed to God or one of His intercessors. The most common Arabic terms employed for amulets were *tilsām* (Greek *telesma*, derived from a root meaning to endow a thing with potency) and *ḥirz*, suggesting protection.<sup>39</sup> The use of the English term "charm" for such material is generally best avoided, for it implies an evocation of a lesser god or demon through recitations and incantations. The difference between magical invocations in the Islamic world and those of Europe (both pre-Christian and Christian) is that in Islam the invocations are most often (though not exclusively) addressed to God rather than to demons. Thus, while the artefact may have some magical writing and magical symbols, they are predominantly supplications to God to aid and protect the bearer. Islamic magic has been defined by Michael Dols as "a supercharged prayer",<sup>40</sup> and the artefacts bear this out. In this, Islamic magic differs from that of antiquity and from much of European medieval and later magical practices.

The prayers, Qur'anic verses, pious phrases, and invocations, often employing the 99 "Beautiful Names of God" (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*)<sup>41</sup> or names of angels, applied to magical objects were supplemented by an array of symbols whose function was to strengthen the supplications. Many of these symbols were inherited from earlier cultures, and their origins and significance have become obscure with the passage of time.

The earliest surviving talismanic objects reflect pre-Islamic magical symbolism: for example, a long-horned stag or oryx occurring on very early Iranian amuletic objects of about the ninth century, and a remarkably stable but complex design also occurring on ninth- and tenth-century amulets composed of a scorpion, rampant lion or dog, a canopy of stars, and a frame of pseudo-writing.<sup>42</sup> Both designs, for unknown reasons, drop out of the talismanic repertoire by the twelfth or thirteenth century, at which time other talismanic designs appear to dominate. Of the latter, the most common is a row of seven magical symbols, one of which is a five-pointed star (or pentagram) or sometimes hexagram traditionally called the "Seal of Solomon". The seven magical symbols together represented the sigla of God's Holy Name,

<sup>39</sup>See Julius Ruska, Bernard Carra de Vaux, and C.E. Bosworth, "Tilsām", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, X, 500-502, an excellent article except for over-use of the word "charm" and over-emphasis on the difference between talismans and amulets.

<sup>40</sup>See Chapter 3, p. 216.

<sup>41</sup>Louis Gardet, "al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, I, 714-17.

<sup>42</sup>Savage-Smith, "Magic and Islam", 135-37.

though historians have sometimes incorrectly called them the "Seven Seals of Solomon". Talismanic designs could also include astrological iconography derived from classical antiquity. These were usually anthropomorphized representations, adapted to Islamic iconographic conventions, of the zodiacal signs and the seven classical planets.

Magic writing, composed of numerals and letters as well as other marks, is another common feature.<sup>43</sup> As early as the ninth century, entire treatises were devoted to magical alphabets, secret writing, and curious alphabets of earlier cultures. For example, about AD 855 Ibn Waḥshīya composed the illustrated essay on magical scripts entitled *Kitāb shawq al-mustahām fī ma'rifat rumūz al-aqlām* ("The book of the frenzied devotee's desire to learn about the riddles of ancient scripts").<sup>44</sup> The tenth-century treatise by Ja'far ibn Manṣūr al-Yaman on deciphering ancient symbols has been edited twice and is a useful guide to early knowledge of esoteric symbols.<sup>45</sup> Early (and later) Islamic magical vocabulary also included symbols used in late antiquity consisting of combinations of short lines ending in tight curls or loops, often called "lunette sigla".<sup>46</sup> By employing the magical properties of the letters themselves (an art called *'ilm al-ḥurūf* or *sīmiyā*), it was said that one could sometimes control the *jinn*.

The best guide to deciphering the myriad symbols on Islamic talismans remains the long out-of-print study by Tewfik Canaan (Chapter 5). More recently, Venetia Porter has published an examination of Islamic seals having amuletic designs engraved in reverse and therefore intended for stamping (Chapter 6). In this she explores the ambiguity between seal (*khātam*) and amulet and the "function" of each. The study by H.A. Winkler should still be consulted, while Georges Anawati provided an excellent bibliography as part of his analysis of some North African amuletic instructions.<sup>47</sup> The oc-

<sup>43</sup>See Toufic Fahd, "Ḥurūf ('ilm al-)", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, III, 395-96; MacDonald and Fahd, "Sīmiyā", 612-13.

<sup>44</sup>Ed. and trans. Joseph Hammer, *Ancient Alphabets and Hieroglyphic Characters Explained; with an Account of the Egyptian Priests, their Classes, Initiation and Sacrifices* (London, 1806).

<sup>45</sup>Ja'far ibn Manṣūr al-Yaman, *Kitāb al-kashf*, ed. Rudolf Strothmann (Oxford, 1952); ed. Muṣṭafā Ghālib (Beirut, 1984). Magical alphabets could also be used for encoding messages; see C.E. Bosworth, "Mu'ammā", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, VIII, 257-58.

<sup>46</sup>For lunette sigla, see Chapter 5, pp. 141-43; Doutté, *Magie et religion dans l'Afrique du Nord*, 158-59, 244-48, 288.

<sup>47</sup>H.A. Winkler, *Siegel und Charaktere in der muhammedanischen Zauberei* (Berlin, 1930); Georges C. Anawati, "Trois talismans musulmans en arabe provenant du Mali (Marché de Mopti)", *Annales islamologiques* 11 (1972), 287-339. See also Savage-Smith, "Magic and Islam", 61-62, where a table is given of the relative occurrences of Qur'ānic

currence on many surviving amulets of undecipherable pseudo-Arabic raises some interesting issues for the historian. Were the words nonsense to the person writing them? Was the person writing them illiterate and misunderstanding his model? If so, was that thought to lessen or invalidate its magical or invocatory power? Did it compromise the efficacy of the magic if the person reciting an invocation or wearing an amulet did not understand the formulae?

Talismanic protection was sought for virtually everything. Manuscripts, for example, were often "protected" by the simple inscription of the phrase *yā kabikaj* ("O Buttercup"). This talismanic inscription did not involve any magical symbols, but rather reflected the idea that the buttercup, a member of the family of highly poisonous plants called *ranunculaceae*, was useful in repelling insects and worms. The use of fish-glue and starch-paste in Arabic manuscript production attracted to a volume all kinds of worms and insects. It is apparent that, when the actual plant was unavailable, it was considered equally effective to simply write the name "buttercup" (*kabikaj*) in an invocation at the front and again at the back of a volume to protect it from insects and worms. In these instances the invocation is neither to God nor to an intercessor nor to a lesser god, but to the occult powers (*khawāṣṣ*) of the plant itself.

### Magic Squares

Magic squares became an important part of the vocabulary of talisman-makers and compilers of magical manuals, particularly after the twelfth century. The earliest magic square (*wafq* in Arabic) was a 3x3 square having nine cells in which the letter/numerals from 1 through 9 were arranged so that every row and every column as well as the two diagonals had the same sum: 15. This ancient magic square (possibly of Chinese origin) was given its own special name of *budūh*, derived from the four letter/numerals that are placed in the corner squares (the letters *b* = 2, *d* = 4, *w/ū* = 6, and *h* = 8). So potent were the magical properties of this square that the name itself, *budūh*, acquired its own occult potency. Thus, like the invocation to a buttercup (*yā kabikaj*), when one did not wish or know how to write the magic square, one could invoke it against stomach pains, temporary impotency, or even to become invisible, by writing or saying *yā budūh* ("O Budūh").<sup>48</sup> The

verses on amulets.

<sup>48</sup>See Duncan Black Macdonald, "Budūh", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, Suppl., 153-54.



names of the four archangels were frequently associated with the square, and it was often placed within a larger talismanic design.

The magical literature and artefacts that have been studied up till now do not seem to display any knowledge of higher-order magic squares (i.e. larger than 3 x 3) until the thirteenth century. It appears that knowledge of their construction developed before that time but did not pass into the magical vocabulary until the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. Mathematical texts from the late tenth century, such as that by Abū l-Wafā' al-Būzjānī (d. 997), contain methods for constructing standard magic squares up to 6 x 6, yet they did not enter the magical vocabulary until about two-hundred years later.<sup>49</sup>

In a magical context there were also squares that on first sight appear to be "magic squares", but in fact lack the required mathematical properties. These fall into two categories: the so-called Latin square (in Arabic, *wafq majāzī* "false magic square") and the "verse square". In the former each row and each column contain the same set of symbols (be they numerals, letters, words, or abstract marks), but with the order of the symbols differing in each row or column. In the "verse square" the cells of the square are filled with words or phrases, but not arranged as in a Latin square. Rather, in each consecutive row one word is dropped on the right side and a new one added on the left until the entire selected verse (usually from the Qur'ān) is worked into the square.

The literature on true magic squares is extensive, for it has attracted the attention of historians of mathematics and puzzles. Yet the focus of virtually all the scholarly literature has been upon the mathematical methods of creating magic squares of higher order, rather than upon their magical significance or their role in popular culture. For the mathematical historical approaches to the subject, see the publications of Jacques Sesiano.<sup>50</sup> See Chapter 6 by Venetia Porter for the magical associations of such squares,

<sup>49</sup>Bordered magic squares of higher orders could also be constructed by mathematicians in the tenth century. See Jacques Sesiano, "Le traité d'Abū'l-Wafā' sur les carrés magiques", *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften* 12 (1998), 121–244.

<sup>50</sup>Jacques Sesiano, "Wafq", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, XI, 28–31; *idem*, *Un traité médiéval sur les carrés magiques: De l'arrangement harmonieux des nombres* (Lausanne, 1996); *idem*, "Quadratus mirabilis", in Jan P. Hogendijk and Abdelhamid I. Sabra, eds., *The Enterprise of Science in Islam: New Perspectives*, ed. (Cambridge MA, 2003), 199–233; Schuyler Cammann, "Islamic and Indian Magic Squares", *History of Religions* 8 (1969), 181–209, 271–99.

and for their use in the context of magic shirts and charts, see the discussion by the present author.<sup>51</sup>

### *Talismanic Equipment*

It is evident that the twelfth century, for whatever reason, saw a marked increase of interest in magic: Present evidence suggests it was about this time that magical-medicinal bowls were first produced (the earliest example known was made in 1167 for the Syrian ruler Nūr al-Dīn ibn Zangī), that the amuletic design known (inaccurately) as the Seven Seals of Solomon was devised, that the magical use of higher-order magic squares occurred, and the production of magical texts began to increase dramatically.

Magic healing bowls were produced in considerable quantity from at least the twelfth century, though they are not found in the written magical literature. In origin they were probably related in some fashion to pre-Islamic Aramaic bowls, though there are in fact great differences in design and function.<sup>52</sup> The latter are of clay and have spiral inscriptions invoking demons, while the Islamic ones are of metal and noticeably lacking in any reliance upon *jinn* and demons. Islamic magic-medicinal bowls are distinct amongst magical artefacts for a number of reasons: a) they were not carried or worn by the sufferer (hence not an amulet); b) they do not function continuously, as a household amulet would; c) they were employed only when needed, yet they were of a lasting material; and d) the early examples are far more informative as to their intended use than any other magical artefact, for the early (twelfth–fourteenth century) examples are engraved with statements giving specific therapeutic uses. In addition to Qur'ānic verses and magical writing, the early bowls were decorated with schematically rendered human and animal forms. A sub-group always have representations of a scorpion, a snake (or serpent), an animal that is probably intended to be a dog (though some have called it a lion), and two intertwined dragons—imagery reminiscent of the design on ninth/tenth-century Iranian amulets. This sub-group has been designated by some scholars as "poison cups", though in fact poisons and animal bites are only some of the many uses inscribed on the outside of the dish.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup>See Savage-Smith, "Talismanic Charts and Shirts", in *Science, Tools & Magic*, I, 106–23.

<sup>52</sup>For the pre-Islamic bowls, see the work of Naveh and Shaked (above, n. 25).

<sup>53</sup>See Tewfik Canaan, "Arabic Magic Bowls", *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 16 (1936), 79–127; Savage-Smith, "Magic-Medicinal Bowls", in *Science, Tools & Magic*, I, 72–105.

Another type of magical equipment with no counterpart in the literature are magic shirts, made of cloth and painted with magical symbols and verses from the Qur'ān. The only preserved examples are from the fifteenth century or later and were made in Ottoman Turkey, Safavid Iran, or Mughal India. There was, however, a tradition traceable to the ninth century of wearing a special shirt for curing fevers or aiding childbirth.<sup>54</sup> A remarkable Judeo-Persian talismanic textile, recently published in detail by Raya Shani, though of recent date nonetheless reflects an ancient magical tradition traceable to Mesopotamia and mediated through Jewish and Muslim communities.<sup>55</sup>

Mirrors have a long history of association with magical properties.<sup>56</sup> A number of medieval mirrors are preserved, usually from the late twelfth or thirteenth century, on which talismanic designs have been engraved upon the shiny surface.<sup>57</sup>

There was an old tradition of placing padlocks on sacred places or tombs of saints to mark a vow taken. Many of these locks have amuletic designs on them, and Paola Torre has published an excellent examination of this type of amuletic equipment.<sup>58</sup> Finally, in the various collections of amulets there are large numbers of amulet cases for holding rolled-up written amulets or even entire minuscule Qur'āns.

At times the artefacts enrich our understanding of a text, sometimes the literature helps us understand a surviving artefact, and sometimes there is a surprising or inexplicable discrepancy between them. A methodology, however, that examines both the material culture and the written text can perhaps aid us in better understanding the everyday practices and concerns of both the educated and the illiterate, the affluent and the poor.

#### *Magic as Trickery and Conjuring*

Magic also included the art of trickery or forgery. Several Arabic terms could be used for this activity: *nīranj* (from a Persian word for creating illusions), *sha'badha* (a magician was called a *musha'bidh*), *'ilm al-ḥiyal*, "the science of tricks", or *'ilm sāsāniya*, derived from the designation of the medieval Islamic

<sup>54</sup>See Savage-Smith, "Talismanic Charts and Shirts", 106–23.

<sup>55</sup>Raya Shani, "A Judeo-Persian Talismanic Textile", in *Irano-Judaica IV*, ed. Shaul Shaked and Amnon Netzer (Jerusalem, 1999), 251–73.

<sup>56</sup>Manfred Ullmann, *Das Motiv des Spiegels in der arabischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Göttingen, 1992), 55–61.

<sup>57</sup>See Savage-Smith, "Talismanic Mirrors and Plaques", 124–31.

<sup>58</sup>Paola Torre, *Lucchetti Orientali. Funzione, simbolo, magia. Roma, Palazzo Brancaccio, 5 luglio–30 novembre 1989* [exhibition catalogue] (Rome, 1989). See also Tim Stanley, "Locks, Padlocks, and Tools", in *Science, Tools & Magic*, II, 356–90.

underclass of swindlers and rogues as Banū Sāsān.<sup>59</sup> The activities included confidence tricks, sleight-of-hand tricks, creating illusions, and at times even included the taming of animals. They could employ lamps, candles, vapours, bottles, cups and glasses, eggs, and all sorts of other equipment.

Such practices continued traditions from late antiquity. There has not yet been a study, however, of early Islamic manifestations of such conjuring nor comparisons with pre-Islamic practices. A text that throws considerable light upon later activities is *al-Mukhtār fī kashf al-asrār* ("The Selection in Unveiling Secrets"), written in the first half of the thirteenth century by 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Jawbarī, a dervish of Damascus and ex-magician. In it, al-Jawbarī exposes the practices of charlatans and magicians. The scholarly edition and study of this important work by Stefan Wild has not yet been published.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, there is an unsatisfactory printed version and French translation available (though copies are often hard to locate).<sup>61</sup> Insights can also be gained by comparison with recent studies of magicians in countries such as India.<sup>62</sup>

#### *Magic as Wonder-working and Marvels*

Magic also plays a prominent role in the genre of paradoxography or "marvel-writing", whose origins can be traced back to the third century BC.<sup>63</sup> Virtually all writers on geography included stories of incredible creatures and events that cause wonderment, and by the twelfth century a genre of literature developed usually designated as *'ajā'ib*, equivalent to "mirabilia".<sup>64</sup> These accounts of the sensational and wondrous included manmade structures such as the pyramids, as well as natural phenomena, travellers' tales of

<sup>59</sup>Toufic Fahd, "Nīrandj", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, VIII, 51–52. See also Franz Rosenthal, "Sha'badha" in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, IX, 152; C.E. Bosworth, *The Medieval Islamic Underworld, I: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Life and Lore*; and II: *The Arabic Jargon Texts* (Leiden, 1976).

<sup>60</sup>See Stefan Wild, "al-Djawbarī" in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, which corrects some information given in the "Nīrandj" article cited in the previous note.

<sup>61</sup>'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Jawbarī, *Kitāb al-mukhtār fī kashf al-asrār* (Cairo, [ca. 1918]); *Le voile arraché*, trans. René R. Khawam (Paris, 1979–80).

<sup>62</sup>See, for example, the study of Siegel, *Net of Magic*.

<sup>63</sup>James S. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought* (Princeton, 1992), 92–109.

<sup>64</sup>See C.E. Bosworth and Iraj Afshar, "'Ajā'eb al-Maḥlūqāt" in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (London and Costa Mesa, CA, 1985-proceeding), I, 696–99; Lutz Richter-Bernburg, "'Ajā'ib" in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London and New York, 1998), I, 65–66; Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: a Companion* (London, 1994), 178–213.

the fabulous, strange events, grotesque and hybridised creatures, and occult properties of animals.

By the thirteenth century there were manuals of sorcery giving spells for flying, for becoming invisible, for walking on water, for giving someone a dog's head, and all sorts of other amazing things—forming a type of fantastical literature in its own right. See, for example, Rex Smith's study of stories of sorcery in Ibn al-Mujāwir's thirteenth-century guide to Arabia.<sup>65</sup>

### Divination

Divination is concerned with the prediction of future events or gaining information about things unseen.<sup>66</sup> In the early and classical Islamic world it encompassed a range of techniques inherited from late classical antiquity, from Sasanian Iran, and from traditional Mesopotamian practices. For these earlier practices, see the analysis by Ann Jeffers.<sup>67</sup> The relatively overlooked subject of Armenian divinatory practices has been addressed by Robert Thompson.<sup>68</sup> While all but one form of Islamic divination can be traced back to earlier practices, not all the divinatory techniques inherited from early cultures were continued with equal enthusiasm.

The divinatory practices can be grouped roughly into those whose techniques are largely intuitive and those that employ numerical or mechanical methods. Insights into the future do not always require a procedure or technique, the Šūfī association with divination being an example.<sup>69</sup> However, the discussion to follow will be restricted to those practices involving specific techniques, beginning with the intuitive forms.

Augury by observing the behaviour of animals (especially the flight of birds) was an early practice throughout Mesopotamia and continued in late antiquity, but in Islamic culture it seems to have played a less prominent

<sup>65</sup>G. Rex Smith, "Magic, Jinn, and the Supernatural in Medieval Yemen: Examples from Ibn al-Mujāwir's 7th/13th Century Guide", *Quaderni di studi arabi* 13 (1995), 7–18.

<sup>66</sup>For all types of divination in the Islamic world, with the exception of astrology, the fundamental guide is that by Toufic Fahd, *La divination arabe*. See also his article on *kihāna*, also on "Fa'l" in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, II, 758–59.

<sup>67</sup>Ann Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* (Leiden, 1996). See also Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*.

<sup>68</sup>Robert W. Thomson, "'Let Now the Astrologers Stand Up': the Armenian Christian Reaction to Astrology and Divination", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992), 305–12. This study includes an excellent discussion of terms used for various techniques.

<sup>69</sup>See for example Meri, *Cult of Saints*, where Chapter 2 is particularly relevant. For the distinction between divination and prophecy, see Toufic Fahd, "Nubuwwa", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, VIII, 93–96.

role. A factor may have been that *ṭīra*, pre-Islamic divinatory interpretation of the flight of birds, was prohibited, and the term was later extended to include divination by any animal or human movement.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, the behaviour of animals, particularly the hoopoe, was part of the water-diviner's art for discovering the presence of underground water (sometimes extended to include the presence of minerals).<sup>71</sup>

Techniques for reading the future and learning the will of God by examining the conformation of animal parts (most frequently the liver or shoulder blades) were also commonly employed in pre-Islamic Mesopotamia and the Near East,<sup>72</sup> as was hydromancy—interpreting patterns appearing on the surface of water (or oil, ink, or any shiny surface).<sup>73</sup> With the exception of divination by shoulder blades (scapulimancy), few details remain of the specific methods used in these intuitive techniques, although divination from the shape of a sheep's scapula (*'ilm al-katif*) was the subject of several early Arabic treatises, one attributed to al-Kindī and others to the elusive "Hermes".<sup>74</sup>

While foretelling the future by consulting oracles had been an important practice in classical antiquity, it played a greatly diminished role in late antiquity and almost no role in classical Islam. On the other hand, the common Graeco-Roman practice of dream interpretation (oneiromancy) passed from

<sup>70</sup>Toufic Fahd, "'Iyāfa", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, IV, 290–91; Fahd, *Divination arabe*, 498–519.

<sup>71</sup>The water-diviner's art was called *riyāfa*; see Toufic Fahd, "Riyāfa", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, VIII, 562.

<sup>72</sup>For Babylonian liver omens preserved on Assyrian cuneiform tablets, see Ulla Koch-Westenholz, *Babylonian Liver Omens: the Chapters Manzāzu, Padānu and Pān tākalti of the Babylonian Extispicy Series, Mainly from Aššurbanipal's Library* (Copenhagen, 2000).

<sup>73</sup>On the topic of hydromancy in Islam, little has been done. Alexander Fodor has translated a relevant chapter from a prolific modern Egyptian author of magical texts, 'Abd al-Fattāh al-Sayyid al-Tūkhī, who claims to have used manuscript material in the Dār al-Kutub in Cairo. The technique described involves the conjuring of spirits to do the magician's bidding; Alexander Fodor, "Arabic Bowl Divination and the Greek Magical Papyri", in *Proceedings of the Colloquium on Popular Customs and the Monotheistic Religions in the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. Alexander Fodor and Avihai Shvitiel (Budapest, 1994; *The Arabist*, 9–10), 73–101.

<sup>74</sup>Al-Kindī, *Kitāb fi 'ilm al-katif*, ed. and trans. by Gerrit Bos and Charles Burnett in *Hermetis Trismegisti astrologica et divinatoria*, ed. Gerrit Bos, Charles Burnett, Thérèse Charmasson, Paul Kunitzsch, Fabrizio Lelli, and Paolo Lucentini (Turnhout, 2001), 285–347; see also 253–83, comprising an edition by Charles Burnett of the Hermetic treatises together with an introductory history of scapulimancy. See also the collection of studies by Charles Burnett, *Magic and Divination in the Middle Ages: Texts and Techniques in the Islamic and Christian Worlds* (Aldershot, 1997), nos. XII–XV, and Toufic Fahd, "Katif ('ilm al-)" in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, IV, 763.

late antiquity into Islam through a number of treatises. John Lamoreaux has published an excellent study of dream interpretation in early Islam.<sup>75</sup> The value of this monograph extends far beyond the limits of the Muslim oneirocritic tradition, and should be read by everyone working on any aspect of divination in early Islam.

A number of Byzantine treatises were concerned with divination from winds (*brontologia*) or the phases of the moon (*selenodromia*). The prediction of seasonal changes and cultivation patterns on the basis of natural phenomena such as thunder, clouds, and rainbows formed part of the Byzantine treatises called *geoponica*, transmitted into Islam as the "Nabatean agriculture" (*Kitāb al-ṣilāḥa al-nabaṭiyya*) attributed to Ibn Waḥshīya.<sup>76</sup>

It could be argued that the most common divinatory practice was that of predicting changing weather patterns. Charles Burnett (Chapter 7) discusses a tract on the topic composed by al-Kindī (d. ca. 870), which was largely dependent upon classical and late antique traditions of weather forecasting employing a method based on the visibility of important star-groups.<sup>77</sup> Such a form of divination has been termed astrometeorology.<sup>78</sup> Alexander Fodor has published a study of one example from a group of texts concerned with meteorological divination circulating under the title *malḥama* or *malāḥim* and attributed to the prophet Daniel.<sup>79</sup> The example of the genre that Fodor chose to translate and analyse is still in circulation today, at least in Iraq, suggesting that this approach to meteorological forecasting is part of the current folklore. Fodor presents rather ingenious arguments for the date and place of composition—i.e. the beginning of the eleventh century on the southern slope of Ṭūr 'Abdīn, by a Syriac Christian monk.

Knowledge of stars, and in particular lunar mansions (a series of 28 prominent star-groups near the ecliptic), formed the basis for much of this astrometeorology. A very important examination of the recognition of star groups in early Islam is that by Joseph Henninger, regrettably overlooked in much of the literature.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>75</sup>Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition of Dream Interpretation*.

<sup>76</sup>See Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften*, 427–42.

<sup>77</sup>For a fuller discussion see Gerrit Bos and Charles Burnett, *Scientific Weather Forecasting in the Middle Ages: The Writings of Al-Kindī—Studies, Editions and Translations of the Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Texts* (London and New York, 2000).

<sup>78</sup>For basic sources for astrometeorology before the twelfth century, see Sezgin, *Astrologie-Meteorologie*, 302–35.

<sup>79</sup>Alexander Fodor, "Malḥamat Daniyal" in *The Muslim East: Studies in Honour of Julius Germanus*, ed. Gyula Káldy-Nagy (Budapest, 1974), 84–133 + 26 pp. Arabic.

<sup>80</sup>Joseph Henninger, "Über Sternkunde und Sternkult in Nord und Zentralarabien",

Lunar mansions were also given astrological and divinatory significance outside the realm of weather prediction. They played a prominent role particularly in non-horoscopic forms of astrology. Their use is evident in the treatises of the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā') and in the *Picatrix*, both compiled at the end of the tenth century, as well as in geomancy.<sup>81</sup> Daniel Varisco has published a useful study of the astrological significance of lunar mansions as given in a thirteenth-century Yemeni treatise, with a survey of earlier writings on the subject.<sup>82</sup>

The most intuitive of all forms of divination—physiognomy—will be discussed at the end of this essay. The forms of divination that were less intuitive fall into three groups: sortilege, letter-number interpretation, and astrology.<sup>83</sup>

### Sortilege

The Roman practice of lot-casting or sortilege (the interpretation of results produced by chance) was especially popular throughout late antiquity and continued to be so in the Islamic world. Lot-casting was not always divination in the sense of predicting the future, but rather a means of determining a course of action or deciding between courses of action.

In the Qur'ān two practices involving chance were prohibited: *istiḡsām*, a pre-Islamic use of rods to settle disputes or give simple omens; and *maysir*, literally, "the game of the left-handed", involving arrows and the slaughtering of animals and later extended to include all kinds of gambling (*qimār*).<sup>84</sup> Nonetheless, the casting of lots (*qur'a*) was considered legitimate.<sup>85</sup> Dice,

*Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 79 (1954), 82–117; repr. with additions in Joseph Henninger, *Arabica Sacra* (Göttingen, 1981), 48–117.

<sup>81</sup>See above, nn. 22, 33, and, for geomantic use of lunar mansions, Chapter 8.

<sup>82</sup>Daniel M. Varisco, "The Magical Significance of the Lunar Stations in the 13th-Century Yemeni *Kitāb al-Tabṣira fī 'ilm al-nujūm* of al-Malik al-Ashraf", *Quaderni di studi arabi* 13 (1995), 19–40; also Emilie Savage-Smith, *Islamicate Celestial Globes: Their History, Construction, and Use* (Washington DC, 1985), 114–32.

<sup>83</sup>Toufic Fahd classifies under the term "cleromancy" (*les procédés cléromantiques*) both sortilege and letter-number interpretation, as well as the meteorological divination in the texts called *malāḥim* discussed above; see Fahd, *Divination arabe*, 177–245. Such a classification blurs fundamental distinctions.

<sup>84</sup>See T. Fahd, "Istiḡsām" and "Maysir" in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, IV, 263–64; VI, 923–24; Franz Rosenthal, *Gambling in Islam* (Leiden, 1975), 66–112; Fahd, *Divination arabe*, 204–12.

<sup>85</sup>See Toufic Fahd, "Qur'a", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, V, 398–99; *idem*, *Divination arabe*, 214–19. Note that throughout Fahd's discussions there is a confusion of the term "rhapsodomancy" (an otherwise unattested word apparently meaning divination from verses) and "rhabdomancy", from a Greek root meaning divination using darts or rods. See also Rosenthal,

as well as arrows or rods or grains, could be used.<sup>86</sup> A variant form (bibliomancy) involved opening a book and selecting a passage at random, with the Qur'ān being the most commonly used volume. The Arabic term for bibliomancy was usually *ṭariq al-istikhārāt* ("the method of choices"), the term *istikhāra* meaning entrusting to God the choice between several options.<sup>87</sup> Lot-books in the form of tables of questions and answers were also employed, with selection determined by letters or numbers or verses. A lot-book consisting of 144 topics, each topic provided with twelve answers, circulated under the name of al-Kindī (as well as other early figures) and claimed an association with the caliph al-Ma'mūn.<sup>88</sup>

Geomancy (*'ilm al-raml*, "the science of the sand") also falls within the category of sortilege, although it does not appear to have been one of those techniques taken from pre-Islamic practices. In this respect it is unique amongst the Islamic divinatory practices. Numerous Arabic and Persian manuscripts on the topic are preserved, but they do not seem to occur together with works on interpretation of dreams nor with physiognomy—suggesting a very different origin and different milieu in which it was practiced. Its origin is a matter of speculation, but it appears to have been a well-established practice in North Africa, Egypt, and Syria by the twelfth century. Its purported history and association with the archangel Gabriel, Idrīs, and a legendary Indian sage Ṭumṭum al-Hindī is related in Chapter 8.<sup>89</sup> Ibn Khaldūn associated it particularly with urban practices, and said: "Many city dwellers who had no work, in order to make a living, tried sand divination".<sup>90</sup> It appears to be the only example we have of a divinatory technique for which a mechanical device was constructed.<sup>91</sup> The fact that

*Gambling in Islam*, 32–34, 51–52; Thompson, "Let now the Astrologers Stand Up", 306; Savage-Smith, "Divination", in *Science, Tools & Magic*, I, 150–51, 158–59.

<sup>86</sup>For examples, see Anna Contadini, "Islamic Ivory Chess Pieces, Draughtsmen and Dice", *Oxford Studies in Islamic Art*, 10 (1995), 111–54; for so-called "geomantic dice", see Savage-Smith, "Divination", 148–51, 156–59.

<sup>87</sup>See Savage-Smith, "Divination", 154–57.

<sup>88</sup>It is preserved in at least five Arabic copies and a popular Latin version was known as *Liber Alfadhōl*; see Paul Kunitzsch, "Zum *Liber Alfadhōl*. Eine Nachlese", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 118 (1968), 297–314.

<sup>89</sup>Chapter 8 is a revised version of a study published nearly 25 years ago: Emilie Savage-Smith and Marion B. Smith, *Islamic Geomancy and a Thirteenth-Century Divinatory Device* (Malibu, CA, 1980).

<sup>90</sup>Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, I, 228–29.

<sup>91</sup>If one does not count an astrolabe or the instrument for the calculation of *tasyīr*, both of which only provided part of the data necessary for a divinatory prognostication.

geomancy did not require astronomical observations and calculations as did astrology no doubt contributed to its great popularity.

### Letter-Number Interpretation

The numerical values of letters forming a word could constitute the basis of a divinatory reading. The general terms for this technique were *'ilm al-ḥurūf* ("the science of letters") and *sīmiyā'*.<sup>92</sup> The method could flourish only in a culture that used alphabetical numerals—that is, Greek, Syriac, Hebrew, and Arabic—and its legendary origins were traced back to Pythagoras. The numerical value of a name had particular significance, and if that is the focus of the technique, then the art is known as onomancy. An onomantic table often present in divinatory treatises was used to determine the victor and the vanquished by calculating the numerical value of the names of the contenders, dividing each by nine, and finding the remainders on the chart. The technique was usually called *ḥisāb al-nīm* ("calculation by nine").<sup>93</sup> There were similar procedures for determining the outcome of an illness, the success of a journey, the truth or falsity of a matter, or whether or not an event would occur.

More complicated techniques of interpreting numerical values of words or phrases soon developed. The form of letter-number interpretation known as *jafr* included combining the letters of a divine name (one of the 99 names of God) with those of the name of the desired object.<sup>94</sup> Astrological elements of possible Indian origin were also introduced into the art of *jafr*. The "authority" most often associated with *jafr* was Imām Ja'far al-Šādiq, who died in 765.

An even more complicated form of letter-number manipulation was called *zā'irja*.<sup>95</sup> It employed concentric circles, letters of the alphabet, elements of astrology, and poetry, while requiring the calculation of the degree of the ecliptic on the eastern horizon at the time of forming the intricate circular chart. After various manipulations, a phrase was formed whose meaning was then interpreted. So complicated was this method that according to the Ottoman historian Ḥājji Khalifa: "It is said that no one is capable of understanding its true meaning except the Mahdī, expected at the end of

<sup>92</sup>See Fahd, "Ḥurūf ('ilm-)", 395–36; MacDonald and Fahd, "Sīmiyā'", 612–13.

<sup>93</sup>Franz Rosenthal comments on the term *nīm* and the history of this technique in Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, I, 235 n. 359.

<sup>94</sup>Fahd, "Djafr", 375–77.

<sup>95</sup>See Toufic Fahd and Anne Regourd, "Zā'irdja", 404–405.

time."<sup>96</sup> The "history" of *zā'irja*, like geomancy (see Chapter 8), was associated with the legendary Ṭumṭum al-Hindī, and while it was mentioned by early writers, such as the astrologer Abū Ma'shar, it was not fully developed until the late thirteenth century. The diagram and technique used in *zā'irja* also greatly influenced Ṣūfism.

The extant treatises on *jafr* and *zā'irja* are voluminous, yet none have been translated and studied in their entirety. One of the most useful introductions is the chapter on *zā'irja* in Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah*.<sup>97</sup> Number symbolism also infiltrated the general culture of the population, resulting in the quantities and measurements given by medieval authors being often determined by a number's magical significance.<sup>98</sup>

### Astrology

Horoscopic astrology, as well as simpler forms of zodiacal associations, were practiced throughout late antiquity and continued in the Islamic period, while the Alexandrian astronomer Ptolemy's defence of astrology in his *Tetrabiblos*, written in the second century AD and later translated into Arabic, was crucial in establishing astrology as the most important learned form of divination. There were, however, many other pre-Islamic influences on the development of the art in the early Islamic world.<sup>99</sup> The Sabian inhabitants of Ḥarrān in northern Iraq were particularly famous for the practice of astrology, and their influence extended well into the early Islamic period—a topic addressed in part by Francis Peters in Chapter 2. The influence of Hermetic literature from late antiquity is also evident.<sup>100</sup> In a divinatory text, *The Book of the Zodiac*, preserved in the Mandaic language of lower central Iraq, one sees the blending of Babylonian, Sasanian, and Hellenistic traditions in a popular form of astrological divination that also employed onomancy and omens drawn from natural phenomena. A similar blending of divinatory

<sup>96</sup> Ḥājīr Khalfā (Kātib Çelebi), *Kashf al-zunūn*, ed. Gustav Flügel (Leipzig, 1835–58), II, 603.

<sup>97</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, II, 182–214.

<sup>98</sup> Lawrence I. Conrad, "Seven and the *Tasbī'*: On the Implications of Numerical Symbolism for the Study of Medieval Islamic History", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 31 (1988), 42–73.

<sup>99</sup> Ullmann's guide is particularly useful on this point; *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften*, 271–358.

<sup>100</sup> For Hermetic influences on astrological thought, see Chapter 2; Burnett, *Magic and Divination in the Middle Ages*, item V; Aristoteles/Hermes, *Liber Antimagis*, ed. Charles Burnett in *Hermetis Trismegisti astrologica et divinaria*, 177–221.

techniques can be seen in many of the Arabic astrological treatises preserved today.

Astrology (*ilm al-nujūm*, "the science of the stars") was understood and practiced at several levels. Non-horoscopic astrology (what Toufic Fahd has termed "natural astrology")<sup>101</sup> did not require a knowledge of mathematics and was a much simpler technique that I have placed amongst the intuitive forms of divination. It involved the prediction of events based upon the rising or setting of certain star groups (usually lunar mansions) or geophysical events such as earthquakes or winds. Astrology that involved calculating the positions of planets and the mathematical production of horoscopes is often called judicial astrology (*ilm al-ḥkām al-nujūm*, "the science of the judgments of the stars") or sometimes catarchic astrology. This form of astrology in turn breaks up into four categories:

1. The determination of the fate of an individual based on nativities (*mawālīd* in Arabic), that is, a horoscope representing the planets at time of birth. Historians have given this branch of astrology the awkward name of genethliology.
2. The production of horoscopes for determining the course of events for a country or dynasty or even longer periods of time.
3. The determination of auspicious and inauspicious days and whether action should or should not be taken, based upon a horoscope drawn up for the day in question. In Arabic this method was referred to as *ikhtiyārāt* ("choices").<sup>102</sup> There were also other means of determining auspicious and inauspicious days based on calendrical considerations, to which the term hemerology is often applied.
4. The construction of horoscopes with the intent of answering specific questions (*masā'il*). The questions could concern innermost thoughts (*damīr*), or the location of lost objects, or the diagnosis and prognosis of disease, or numerous others concerns. Sometimes entire treatises were composed just on finding lost objects by astrological methods or on astrological medicine. This form of astrology, usually termed Interrogations, is sometimes combined with the previous type when classifying astrological practices.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Toufic Fahd, "Nudjūm ('ilm al-)", in *ET*<sup>2</sup>, VIII, 105–108.

<sup>102</sup> See David Pingree, "Ektārāt", 291–92.

<sup>103</sup> As, for example, George Saliba has done in Chapter 10 (pp. 58–60), where he enumerates yet more subdivisions of astrology.

In the past twenty years a number of important editions and translations of early texts have appeared. The Arabic version of a first-century AD Greek tract on judicial astrology by Dorotheus has been edited and translated by David Pingree.<sup>104</sup> A treatise of Greek origin on the astrological virtues of the fixed stars, attributed to Hermes, has been edited by Paul Kunitzsch,<sup>105</sup> while Charles Burnett recently published an essay on judicial astrology by al-Kindī (d. ca. 870).<sup>106</sup> Yuhannā ibn al-Ṣalt's essay on astrological medicine written at the end of the ninth century has been edited and studied by Felix Klein-Franke.<sup>107</sup> The writings of the most famous of all Arabic astrologers, Abū Ma'shar (d. ca. 893), have received much scholarly attention in recent years. His most influential *Kitāb al-mudkhal al-kabīr* (known in Latin as *Introductorium maius*) was recently edited by Richard Lemay, while Abū Ma'shar's own abbreviation of this same work was edited and translated by Charles Burnett, Keiji Yamamoto and Michio Yano.<sup>108</sup> In 2000, Abū Ma'shar's treatise "On the Great Conjunctions" was published.<sup>109</sup> The latter treatise is not concerned with individual horoscopes, but with predictions for countries and dynasties.

In the eighth and ninth centuries there were several efforts to compose astrological histories of the caliphate, one of the most complete being that of Māshā'allāh written in the eighth century, which included a horoscope of the Prophet.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Dorotheus Sidonius, *Carmen Astrologicum*, ed. and trans. David Pingree (Leipzig, 1976).

<sup>105</sup> [Hermes] *Liber de stellis fixis* [Asrār al-nujūm / Fī l-kawākib al-bābāniya], ed. by Paul Kunitzsch in *Hermes Trismegisti Astrologica et Divinatoria*, 9–99.

<sup>106</sup> Charles Burnett, "Al-Kindī on Judicial Astrology: the Fifty Chapters", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 3 (1993), 77–117.

<sup>107</sup> Felix Klein-Franke, *Iatromathematics in Islam: a Study on Yuhannā Ibn Ṣalt's Book on "Astrological Medicine"* (Hildesheim, 1984).

<sup>108</sup> Abū Ma'shar, *Kitāb al-mudkhal al-kabīr ilā 'ilm al-kāfī al-nujūm, Liber introductorii maioris ad scientiam iudiciorum astrorum*, ed. and trans. by Richard Lemay, 9 vols. (Naples, 1995) and *The Abbreviation of "The Introduction to Astrology": Together with the Medieval Latin Translation of Adlard of Bath*, ed. and trans. Charles Burnett, Keiji Yamamoto, and Michio Yano (Leiden, 1994).

<sup>109</sup> Abu Ma'shar on *Historical Astrology: the Book of Religions and Dynasties (On the Great Conjunctions)*, ed. and trans. Keiji Yamamoto and Charles Burnett, 2 vols. (Leiden, 2000).

<sup>110</sup> E.S. Kennedy and David Pingree, *The Astrological History of Māshā'allāh* (Cambridge MA, 1971). See also the astrological history composed by al-Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (fl. 900–13) recently edited by Ana Labarta (*Mūsā ibn Nawbakht, al-Kitāb al-Kāmil. Horóscopos históricos* (Madrid, 1982); and A.R. Nykl, "Alī ibn Ṭālib's Horoscope", *Ars Islamica* 10 (1943), 152–53.

From the turn of the tenth to eleventh century we have the important introductory treatise by Kūshyār ibn Labbān (d. 1029), recently edited and translated.<sup>111</sup> For an initial guide to basic astrological concepts in early Islam, however, the most useful starting point still remains the translation of the astrological manual (*Kitāb al-taḥḥīm*) written in 1029 by al-Bīrūnī and translated into English by R. Ramsey Wright in 1934.<sup>112</sup>

In addition to these varied uses, astrology also provided an explanation of the structure of the universe and man's role within it. For some, astrology offered dangerous competition to religion. Yahya Michot explores these complicated issues through an analysis of three legal decisions or *fatwās* (Chapter 9).<sup>113</sup> Some astrologers also were concerned to provide proofs as to the validity of astrology and offer defence against critics. The articles by Charles Burnett and J.-C. Vadet provide excellent introductions to such arguments.<sup>114</sup> The topic is also taken up in the study by George Saliba (Chapter 10).

Astrological associations also had a major impact upon artistic conventions. The important study by Willy Hartner demonstrates the influence of the "lunar nodes" on Islamic artisans.<sup>115</sup> The two points where the course of the moon crosses the ecliptic (and hence associated with eclipses) were traditionally known as the "head of the dragon" (ascending node) and the "tail of the dragon" (descending node). This non-Ptolemaic concept played a prominent role in astrological associations, with the nodes even serving as extra "planets" in the formation of astrological horoscopes. The representation of the constellation Sagittarius with a dragon-headed tail is, according to Hartner, often to be interpreted as an iconographic reference to the descending

<sup>111</sup> Kūshyār ibn Labbān, *Introduction to Astrology*, ed. and trans. Michio Yano (Tokyo, 1997).

<sup>112</sup> Abū l-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī, *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*, trans. R. Ramsey Wright (London, 1934). Another astrological treatise by al-Bīrūnī has also been recently published: F.I. Haddad, David Pingree, and E.S. Kennedy, "Al-Bīrūnī's Treatise on Astrological Lots", *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften* 1 (1984), 9–54.

<sup>113</sup> See also John W. Livingston, "Science and the Occult in the Thinking of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112 (1992), 598–610.

<sup>114</sup> Charles Burnett, "The Certitude of Astrology: the Scientific Methodology of al-Qabīṣī and Abū Ma'shar", *Early Science and Medicine* 7 (2002), 198–213; Jean-Claude Vadet, "Une défense de l'astrologie dans le Madḥal d'Abū Ma'shar al-Balḥī" *Annales islamologiques* 5 (1963), 131–80.

<sup>115</sup> Willy Hartner, "The Pseudo-Planetary Nodes of the Moon's Orbit in Hindu and Islamic Iconography: a Contribution to the History of Ancient and Medieval Astrology", *Ars Islamica* 5 (1938), 112–54; repr. in Willy Hartner, *Oriens-Occidens*, I, 349–404.



node of the moon's course. One of the most famous and richly decorated Arabic astrological treatises is the *Kitāb al-bulhān*, apparently produced at the end of the fourteenth century. Stefano Carboni published a preliminary examination of the imagery in this remarkable compilation.<sup>116</sup> Much still needs to be done, however, in tracing the earlier influences on the imagery and the techniques incorporated into this non-horoscopic astrological and divinatory treatise that claims the authority of Abū Ma'shar.

Of the numerous practices attempting to foretell future events or discern hidden things, astrology was by far the most popular. George Saliba, in his essay on the role of the astrologer (Chapter 10), amply demonstrates the widespread popular acceptance of astrology. He also presents evidence regarding the symbols that came to represent astrologers (and fortune-tellers in general), the training of astrologers, their status in society, and the conditions in which they worked.

All the non-intuitive techniques—sortilege, letter-number interpretation, astrology—were employed to answer more or less the same questions: the nature and course of an illness, the outcome of a journey, the fate of an absent person, the prospect of improved resources, and so forth. One of the most common queries seems to have been the location of lost objects or finding buried treasure. Geomancy was used for this purpose (see Chapter 8), and it is a common procedure in astrological manuals. See, for example, the essay on finding buried treasure attributed to al-Kindī.<sup>117</sup> Occasionally *jinn* were summoned to assist in this important matter (see Chapter 1).

### Physiognomy

There were also various divinatory practices employing specific parts of the human body.<sup>118</sup> *Ikhtilāj*, for example, was the art of divining the future from twitching eyelids or involuntary movement of a limb or other part of the body.<sup>119</sup> There were divinatory practices using birthmarks and moles. Chiromancy (divination from the shape and appearance of the hands, joints, and nails—*ilm al-kaff*) and chiromancy or palmistry (employing lines on the hands—*ilm al-asārīr*) were, and still are, popular.<sup>120</sup> These tech-

<sup>116</sup>Stefano Carboni, *Il Kitāb al-bulhān di Oxford* (Torino, 1988).

<sup>117</sup>Charles Burnett, Keiji Yamamoto, and Michio Yano, "Al-Kindī on Finding Buried Treasure", *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 7 (1997), 57–90.

<sup>118</sup>Note that scapulimancy, discussed above, uses the shoulder blades of sheep and does not involve human anatomy.

<sup>119</sup>A Turkish elaboration of *ikhtilāj* drew omens from the form of battle wounds or accidental archery wounds. See Toufic Fahd, "Ikhtilāj", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, III, 1061.

<sup>120</sup>Toufic Fahd, "Kaff (*ilm al-*)", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, IV, 406–407.

niques, however, should not be classed with physiognomy, for they are quite different, both in their literary sources and traditions (which look to figures such as Ja'far al-Šādiq) as well as in their methodologies.<sup>121</sup> Their intent is not to determine a hidden character by aligning physical characteristics with character traits, but rather to read the future from a bodily part. For example, the success or failure of an enterprise might be indicated by a twitching eyelid or a certain line on the palm.

On the other hand, the major impetus of physiognomy (*firāsa*) was to decode the inner character by developing a grammar of observable bodily features. It was not concerned with predicting future events, except in terms of the effect one's character has on future behaviour. In contrast to other forms of prognostication where a consultation with a specialist is necessary, it appears from the literature that anyone could use physical features as a guide to inner character after reading a treatise on physiognomy.

The term *firāsa* came from the vocabulary of Sūfism, where it designated a type of mystical intuition and form of wisdom. It was employed already in the ninth century as a translation of the Greek word *physiognomonika* when Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq translated a small treatise on the subject incorrectly ascribed to Aristotle.<sup>122</sup> Since its inception in Greek and Roman literature, physiognomy was not just a taxonomy of human expressions or the codifying of bodily features, but it was a means of classifying people so as to gain knowledge of their internal ideas and motives. It played a major role in the rhetoric of the day, and its principles were applied also to the practical problems of medical diagnosis and prognosis, how one could choose a good physician, or who would be a reliable and honest servant. In physiognomy (through its use of external physical clues), one passed directly from knowledge of the known to the unknown, and for this reason it was incorporated into many general divinatory manuals.

A chapter on the topic of *firāsa* forms part of the "Secret of Secrets" (*Sirr al-asrār*).<sup>123</sup> The latter was an immensely influential treatise intended as a

<sup>121</sup>Here I differ with Fahd, who considers these practices a part of physiognomy; see Toufic Fahd, "Firāsa", in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, II, 916–17; *idem*, *Divination arabe*, 369–429.

<sup>122</sup>Antonella Gheretti, *Il Kitāb Aristūṭalīs al-faylasūf fī l-firāsa nella traduzione di Ḥunayn b. Ishāq* (Venice, 1999).

<sup>123</sup>Mahmoud Manzalaoui, "The Pseudo-Aristotelian *Kitāb Sirr al-asrār*: Facts and Problems", *Oriens*, 23–24 (1974), 147–257; M. Grignaschi, "L'origine et les métamorphoses du *Sirr al-asrār*", *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen-Age* 43 (1976), 7–112. The earliest copy of the physiognomic chapter would have been London, British Library, OIOC, Ms. Or. 12,070, fols. 39b–43b, were its colophon stating that it was copied in 330/941 to be believed. Although the manuscript was described by G. Meredith-Owens



guide to kings and rulers purporting to be written by Aristotle for Alexander the Great. No Greek original of the *Sirr al-asrār* exists, though there are claims in the Arabic treatise that it was translated from the Greek into Syriac and from Syriac into Arabic by a well-known ninth-century translator, Yaḥyā ibn al-Biṭrīq. It is likely that the treatise gradually evolved over a long period through the accretion of material on a wide range of topics, including statecraft, ethics, physiognomy, astrology, alchemy, magic, and medicine.

In the early tenth century we find physiognomy forming a small chapter in a medical compendium by Muḥammad ibn Zakarīyā' al-Rāzī (d. 925).<sup>124</sup> This chapter is distinctive in terms of the physiognomic literature in having the order of the parts of the body given from top to bottom, starting with the hair and then proceeding to the colour of the face and eyes and ending with the feet—an order of presentation common in medical manuals. Indeed, several Hippocratic writings were influential in later physiognomic thought, since they employed physiognomic indicators. The Hippocratic tract on prognosis and signs of death used physical characteristics as guides (e.g. if the nose became sharp and the eyes sunken, and if the fingernails were a greenish colour, then death may be expected). In the Hippocratic treatise *Airs, Waters, Places*, the physical characteristics of people or races living at different locations were described, and it was said, for example, that people living near stagnant water in marshes and lakes have large and firm spleens with hard bellies and tend to have dropsy with a fever (characteristics that today we consider symptomatic of malaria). Thus the boundaries between medical and physiognomic literature are blurred.

Most astrological manuals had chapters aligning the twelve zodiacal signs and the seven planets with particular physical conformations and with certain character traits and professions. The geomantic manuals are also conspicuous in their use of physiognomic material and alignments. In the thirteenth century there were a number of Arabic monographs devoted solely to physiognomy. If the number of preserved copies is an accurate indication, the most popular treatise on physiognomy was that by Shams al-Dīn

shortly after it was acquired by the British Library (in the *British Museum Quarterly* 20 [1955], 33–34), it has only recently been shown to be a forgery produced about 1940 by a well-known studio in Iran.

<sup>124</sup>This chapter, part of *Kitāb al-Manṣūrī*, has been published in *Kitāb al-firāsa li-Falīmūn al-ḥakīm wa-jumal al-ḥakām al-firāsah li-Abī Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakarīyā' al-Rāzī*, ed. Muḥammad Rāghib al-Ṭabbākh (Aleppo, 1929). See also Youssef Mourad, *La physiognomie arabe et le Kitāb al-firāsa de Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Paris, 1934).

al-Dimashqī (d. 1327), an imam in Rabwa, Syria, best known for his cosmological writings.

There is an on-going project, headed by Simon Swain, to survey the early Greek and Islamic written treatises on physiognomy. Following the completion of this project, scholars might then formulate and address a number of questions regarding the interaction of this type of literature, in all its various forms, with other aspects of Islamic culture. For example, the relationship between the physiognomic literature and medical discourses, or the role of physiognomy in guides to purchasing slaves, and the role played by physiognomy in rhetorical literature. What role did *firāsa* play in portraiture and figural drawing? What role did it have in the reception and interpretation of figural painting by the observer? Did the ethical ideals, and the external manifestations associated with these ideals, remain unchanged in the Arabic (and Persian or Turkish) traditions? If the physical descriptions in such treatises remained constant over centuries and large geographical areas, then their direct influence on changing conventions of portraiture is problematic. On the other hand, if they were changing, were they doing so in a way consistent with the artistic conventions of a given location and time? Did *firāsa* reflect a society's notion of an ideal man, or did it help form the notion? Or did it do neither; was it only a literary and rhetorical tradition? Did *firāsa* play a role in the mimicry of stock characters employed in storytelling? For example, is there a demonstrable relationship between the physical characteristics of certain personality types in the "Secret of Secrets" (or in al-Dimashqī's physiognomy) and Abū Zayd and other figures in Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt* written in the eleventh to twelfth century, or characters in the *Thousand and One Nights*? Do we have the name of a single practitioner of physiognomy in the Islamic lands? Are we justified in asserting that the physiognomic writings had any influence outside the literary, fictional, medical, or divinatory environment in which it was created?

Though physiognomy is perhaps the most conspicuous example of a divinatory method forming part of a large spectrum of genres, the same broad approach should be applied to all the divinatory and magical material. There are broader questions to be asked once more texts and artefacts are carefully analysed and published—a task made the more difficult because the lines separating the different forms of divination, as well as magic, were very fluid, and techniques were often combined. The indebtedness to pre-Islamic concepts and practices is certainly an important aspect of the study. Equally important, however, are the subtle changes and adaptations to Islamic culture and beliefs, the differences in procedures advocated by various

authors, and the changing relationship of magical and divinatory material with other genres and practices. Systematic comparison of treatises needs to be undertaken. Were some of the magical and divinatory treatises merely literary and rhetorical traditions, not reflected in actual practice? Did some practices arise that were not incorporated into the written traditions? How are discrepancies between treatises and artefacts to be resolved? What was the relationship between the formal literature and the makers of artefacts and the practitioners of the art? What was the intended readership for the magical and divinatory treatises? To what extent did the ideas expressed in the magical/divinatory literature invade or reflect the realms of poetry, history, biography, and storytelling?

Fortunately, through the work of Sezgin, Ullmann, Fahd, and many others, the groundwork has been laid for further investigation. It is evident that magic and divination in the classical Islamic world is now attracting the serious consideration of historians. Yet much work remains to be done. No full survey of all the Arabic literature has been published, not even a listing of the preserved manuscript sources, and the Persian and Turkish sources are for the most part overlooked by historians. More written sources need to be studied and compared in detail, with more artefacts examined. Consideration needs to be given to the inter-relationship of magic and divination with other ideas and practices. The work of the scholars reprinted in this volume and listed in the bibliography can provide a basis for tackling the rather daunting task of understanding the role of magic and divination, in all its manifestations, in the early Islamic world.

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# BELIEFS IN SPIRITS AMONG THE PRE-ISLAMIC ARABS

*Joseph Henninger*

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## Introduction

[280] Beliefs in spirits play an important part in accounts of pre-Islamic Arabia as well as in descriptions of present-day popular religion of Arabia and its border areas. Nearly a century ago, when Edward Burnett Tylor proposed his theory of animism as the origin of all religions,<sup>1</sup> it was well

<sup>1</sup>See Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom* (London, 1871); Wilhelm Schmidt, *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee*, 2nd ed. (Münster in Westfalen, 1926), 20-55, 69-133; idem, *Handbuch der vergleichenden Religionsgeschichte* (Münster in Westfalen, 1930), 78-86; F.K. D. ...

received by many Semitic scholars. It is understandable that when scholars undertook to collect all instances of beliefs in spirits,<sup>2</sup> they searched not only in the Old Testament and its oriental surroundings, but also among the Arabs; this was because it was assumed that the Arabs—especially the Arab bedouins—were still closest to the original Semitic culture and religion.<sup>3</sup> It was also on this basis that the development of Semitic religion from polydeism through polytheism to monotheism was to be reconstructed.

A variant of this theory linked these beliefs in spirits to totemism. William Robertson Smith argued that Arabian natural spirits (*jinn*) are collective and anonymous rather than individual; they form clans that act in solidarity; and finally, they prefer to appear in animal form. He concludes

89; Robert H. Lowie, *The History of Ethnological Theory* (New York, 1937), 68–85, esp. 82–85; Wilhelm E. Mühlmann, *Geschichte der Anthropologie* (Bonn, 1948), 118–20, 205–209; Alfred Bertholet, *Wörterbuch der Religionen* (Stuttgart, 1952), s.v. "Animismus"; Paul Schébesta, article "Animismus" in Franz König, ed., *Religionswissenschaftliches Wörterbuch* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1956), cols. 52–54; Joseph Goetz, article "Dämonen" (general), in *ibid.*, cols. 154–56; Joseph Henninger, article "Dämon: I. Religionsgeschichtliches", in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 2nd ed., III (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1959), cols. 139–41, and the literature cited therein.

<sup>2</sup>See above, n. 1, esp. Schmidt, *Ursprung der Gottesidee*, 2I, 69–133 *passim*; also R. Campbell, *Semitic Magic: Its Origins and Development* (London, 1908); Anton Jirku, *Die Dämonen und ihre Abwehr im Alten Testament* (Leipzig, 1912); J. Scheftelowitz, *Alt-Palästinensischer Bauernglaube in religionsvergleichender Beleuchtung* (Hannover, 1925), esp. 3–31 *passim*, 38–52 *passim*; Walther Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart and Göttingen, 1961), 152–56 (and the literature quoted there); Herman Wohlstein, "Zur Tier-Dämonologie der Bibel", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 113 (1963), 483–92; André Caquot, "Anges et démons en Israël", in *Sources orientales* 8 (Paris, 1971), 113–52. On Syria and Canaan see Wolfgang Röllig, "Götter und Mythen im Vorderen Orient", in Hans Wilhelm Haussig, ed., *Wörterbuch der Mythologie*, I.1 (Stuttgart, 1965), 274–76. On Mesopotamia, see Dietz Otto Edzard in Haussig, ed., *op. cit.*, 46–49; Marcel Leibovici, "Génies et démons en Babylonie", in *Sources orientales* 8 (Paris, 1971), 85–112. Concerning gods and demons among the Sumerians, see Erich Ebeling, article "Dämonen" in Ebeling *et al.*, eds., *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, II (Berlin and Leipzig, 1938), 107a–113a; J. van Dijk, article "Gott", *op. cit.*, III.7 (Berlin, 1969), 537b–538a. For pre-Islamic Arabia cf. Ernst Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam und der altorientalische Geisterglaube* (Bern and Stuttgart, 1953), esp. 101–10, 120–30; Toufic Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", in *Sources orientales* 8 (Paris, 1971), 153–214. General information concerning the belief in demons and defence against demons in the countries surrounding Israel (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Phoenicia, Arabia) is available in Herbert Haag, *Teufelsglaube* (Tübingen, 1974), 143–62; concerning Israel: *ibid.*, 163–80, 218–62 *passim*. See also the relevant articles in biblical and general theological encyclopaedias and the literature cited therein.

<sup>3</sup>Julius Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums* (1st ed. Berlin, 1887; 2nd ed. Berlin, 1897; unaltered reprint of the 2nd ed. Berlin and Leipzig, 1927; this last edition will be quoted in the following) and William Robertson Smith (see below, n. 4) are of fundamental

that these *jinn* clans were originally nothing more than animal species who were—in a totemistic sense—connected to one particular group of humans.<sup>4</sup> Most supporters of the animist theory, however, did not accept this view,<sup>5</sup> and the arguments adduced by [281] Smith are not conclusive, as has been shown elsewhere,<sup>6</sup> and consequently will not be taken into consideration in the following.

Wellhausen formulated the theory of the development of the Semitic religion mentioned above in the following classic words:

... the gods are of a kind with the demons, and where they are linked to a particular locale on earth, they have grown from demons, from the spirits of a place, a tree, a spring, a serpent... Demons live only in a holy place; people refrain from disturbing them but do not worship them. As soon as they are approached and worshipped there, they undergo the transition to being gods... At that point they emerge from the shadow of their kind and become individuals... As patrons or indeed ancestors they assume a position at the head of a closed group in society... In the same measure that their relationship with humans within a context of worship develops, their relationship with the elements recedes... After cult-gods that are worshipped have thus freed themselves from the elements that originally linked their worship to a particular place, there is nothing to prevent them from being associated with heavenly phenomena... Polytheism results of necessity from the ethnicity of the religious cult, from the separate relationship of the deity with the Arab community... Syncretism, which is usually considered to be the original polytheism, is in truth a dissolved polytheism, at any rate a dissolved ethnic particularism of religion on which the syncretism is founded. Still, it is a step forward, for it is the

<sup>4</sup>William Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (London, 1889; 3rd ed., with an Introduction and Additional Notes by Stanley A. Cook, London 1927; this edition will be quoted in the following), esp. 119–39; on the same subject see Cook, *ibid.*, 538–41.

<sup>5</sup>See Edward Westermarck, "The Nature of the Arab Ġinn, Illustrated by the Present Beliefs of the People of Morocco", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 29 (1899), 252, 264–68; Vinc. Zapletal, *Der Totemismus und die Religion Israels* (Freiburg/Schweiz, 1901), 116–37, esp. 116–19, 124–28; Arnold van Gennep, *L'état actuel du problème totémique* (Paris, 1920), 234–36.

<sup>6</sup>See Joseph Henninger, "Über das Problem des Totemismus bei den Semiten", *Wiener*

transition between polytheism and monotheism. . . . It is noteworthy that the Arabs never say "the gods" in the sense of Greek *hoi theoi* or Latin *dii*. They did not put the whole collection of individual gods into a plural, but rather raised the singular *nomen generis*, the idea, to be the hypostasis. This would argue in favour of a monotheistic instinct among the Semites, if it were not for the Hebrew *Elohim* and the *pluralis majestaticus*, which clearly prove otherwise. . . .<sup>7</sup>

While these observations (quoted in much abbreviated form here) do contain much that is disputable,<sup>8</sup> they are undoubtedly most brilliant. By comparison, the views contained in some modern works are often meagre and far too simplistic, as for example in Adolf Käselauf, who simply explains the belief in spirits and magical beliefs as being the primitive religion of the bedouins and traces their emergence back to their environment.<sup>9</sup>

Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes (in, 1957, i.e. 70 years after the first edition of Wellhausen's work) adds hardly anything new, compared to the latter, when he writes:

Step by step, the *jinn* were replaced in the eyes of their worshippers by more distinct deities. . . . Thus we seem to see the *jinn* at the lower end of the chain, at the higher end some deities endowed with a distinct and powerful personality, and between them the vague gods who are the *arbāb* (masters) of certain tribes, the *jinn* who have not succeeded in becoming truly gods. They are all [282] worshipped in rites that are only distinguished from one another by their greater or lesser complexity and the number of believers. The change from *jinn* to great god takes place imperceptibly with the flow of circumstances. Thus the passage from idolatry to monotheism is prepared by the regard for the *jinn* together with the old ritual forms. . . .<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 211–24 (the quoted passages: 212, 213, 214, 215, 217, 219; the emphasis is Wellhausen's). George Aaron Barton (*Semitic and Hamitic Origins: Social and Religious* [Philadelphia, 1934], 120–21) also derives everything, in accordance with Tylor, from animism.

<sup>8</sup>Concerning criticism see, for the time being, Marie-Joseph Lagrange, *Etudes sur les religions sémitiques*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1905), 16–20, esp. 16–18; Zappet, *Der Totemismus und die Religion Israels*, 128–29. For further information see below, 311–16.

<sup>9</sup>Adolf Käselauf, *Die freien Beduinen Nord- und Zentral-Arabiens* (Diss. Hamburg, 1927), 95–98, 101–102.

<sup>10</sup>Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet* (Paris, 1957), 29; cf. the context, 25–29, 32–33.

Joseph Chelhod, on the other hand, must be commended at least for attempting, in his book *Introduction à la sociologie de l'Islam. De l'animisme à l'universalisme* (the subtitle is significant), which appeared in 1958, to prove parallels between social and religious developments, despite a most mechanical presentation of the course of history.<sup>11</sup>

The view that the belief in spirits by the bedouin Arabs was the origin for the whole of their religious development has been endorsed by several modern authors. The latter usually draw more or less extensively on the literature on contemporary popular or folk religion, research that has grown significantly over recent decades, as well as on the accounts of pre-Islamic Arabia. Consequently, if we wish to attain a critical appreciation of this theory of development, both of these fields have to be taken into consideration.

We will not, however, take any account of the Arabic-speaking population of modern Egypt and North Africa. These peoples are not originally Semitic and only became Arabicized as a consequence of the Muslim conquest of the area. Beliefs in spirits among them frequently present themselves as a very complicated mixture of indigenous ancient Egyptian and Libyan-Berber and ancient Arabian-Islamic elements.<sup>12</sup> Added to this are recent influences from Black Africa, which have entered as a consequence of the slave trade.<sup>13</sup> Thus it would be futile to expect to find original Arabian

<sup>11</sup>Joseph Chelhod, *Introduction à la sociologie de l'Islam* (Paris, 1958), 15, 42–64 *passim*, 163–66, 174, 180–81, 184–85.

<sup>12</sup>I shall only indicate a few of the most important works on the subject: Winifred S. Blackman, *The Fellahin of Upper Egypt* (London, 1927); Ester Panetta, *Pratiche e credenze popolari libiche* (Rome, 1940); *eadem*, *Cirenaica sconosciuta* (Florence, 1952); Edmond Doutté, *Magie et religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1909); Marie-Louise Dubouloz-Laffin, *Le Bou Mergoud. Folklore tunisien* (Paris, 1946); Edward Westermarck, "The Nature of the Arab Ġinn", 252–69; *idem*, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco* (London, 1926), esp. 1, 262–413; Françoise Legey, *Essai de folklore marocain* (Paris, 1926). Cf. also the summaries in Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 1–33, 111–19.

<sup>13</sup>Concerning the *zār* and *bori* ceremonies see the relevant passages in the literature quoted in n. 12 above; and further the bibliography given in Joseph Henninger, "Ist der sogenannte Nilus-Bericht eine brauchbare religionsgeschichtliche Quelle?", *Anthropos* 50 (1955), 130–36, to which the following must be added: *Bulletin des études arabes* 3 (1943), 104–106 (various authors); Maxime Rodinson, review of Enno Littmann, *Arabische Geisterbeschwörungen aus Ägypten* (Leipzig, 1950), in *Journal asiatique* 240 (1952), 129–32; *idem* in *Comptes rendus sommaires des séances de l'Institut français d'anthropologie* 7 (1953), 21–24. A wealth of material on the *zār* (and *bori*) ceremonies is furthermore collected in Rudolf Kriss and Hubert Kriss-Heinrich, *Volks Glaube im Bereich des Islam*, II: *Amulette, Zauberformeln und Beschwörungen* (Wiesbaden, 1962), esp. 140–204.



ideas in their pure form in these countries;<sup>14</sup> these can only be identified through comparison and then separated from the conglomerate.

The following presentation takes into account the Arabian peninsula only, including its border areas in Palestine, Syria and Iraq, some of which were already Arabicized in pre-Islamic times.

[283] Where belief in spirits is discussed within this context, the subject will be only natural *spirits*, not the *ghosts* of dead persons. If both these concepts were studied, we would also have to include the complex problem of the pre-Islamic Arabs' idea of the soul and their views on life after death, which, within the framework of the present article, would lead too far. The terms "spirit" and "demon" are used interchangeably in the following (concerning possible specifications see n. 205 below).

### I. Belief in Spirits among the Present-Day Arabs

The extent to which people believe in the *jinn*<sup>15</sup> is well documented for contemporary Arabia (in the sense of the geographical region defined above).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup>The title of Westermarck's article (n. 5 above) can raise misplaced expectations in this context; in fact, Westermarck does distinguish clearly between Arabian and non-Arabian elements in modern Moroccan beliefs in spirits.

<sup>15</sup>The word *jinn* is a collective noun. An individual is called *jinnī*, fem. *jinnīya*; *jann* is found synonymous to *jinn*, occasionally denoting an individual (D.B. Macdonald, art. "Djinn" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed., I [1913], 1091b, refers to E.W. Lane's dictionary, 492c, which should read 462c). For further information about the origin and original meaning of the word, see nn. 225–42 below. Modern colloquial Arabic does not appear to pronounce the word *jinn* consistently with the double n, which is the reason for the transcriptions *jin* (in Jaussen, see n. 20 below) and *jān* (in Doughty, see n. 16 below).

<sup>16</sup>General information about (modern as well as pre-Islamic) belief in *jinn*: Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 147–59; cf. also *ibid.*, 211–24 *passim*; Smith, *Religion*, 119–39, 159 n. 1, 198, 441–46; Cook in *ibid.*, 538–41; Charles Montagu Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, New and Definitive Edition (London, 1936), I, 87, 177, 213, 296, 300–301, 316, 355, 495–97, 500, 530, 598, 607, 642; II, 16–17, 28, 118, 121, 184, 201, 209–15, 246 (= Original Edition [Cambridge, 1888]: I, 47, 136, 170–71, 254, 257–59, 273, 311, 448–50, 452, 482, 547–48, 556, 590–91; II, 2–3, 14, 100, 103, 164, 180, 188–94, 223; see also the index under 'Afrit, Jān, Mejnūn, Menhēl (II, 581b, 629b, 646b, 647a; 1888 ed., II, 547b, 606a–b, 628b); Westermarck, "The Nature of the Arab Ginn", 252–69, esp. 260–68; Samuel Ives Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion im Volksleben des heutigen Orients. Forschungen und Funde aus Syrien und Palästina* (Leipzig, 1903), 353–54 (see index under "Dschinen"); Thomas Patrick Hughes, *A Dictionary of Islam* (London, 1895), 133–38 (article "Genii"); Macdonald, "Djinn", 1091a–1092b; Paul Arno Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran* (Diss. Leipzig, 1928), esp. 8–39, 59–61; Hans Alexander Winkler, *Siegel und Charaktere in der muhammedanischen Zauberei* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1930), *passim*. Zbinden's study (see n. 2 above) deals with a subject which is too far-reaching for a dissertation and thus cannot take the whole corpus of literature into consideration (cf. the review in *Anthropos* 53 [1958], 1039–40). The book can provide

There is a particular abundance of material concerning the northern border areas, especially Palestine and Syria;<sup>17</sup> [284] less about Iraq,<sup>18</sup> which may be due to accidental gaps in the research.<sup>19</sup> We also have abundant material

many a service, but it requires close examination and continuation in the form of further, more detailed studies. It is not possible to fulfil this task within the scope of the present study, which will emphasise a few characteristic details that may assist in classifying the belief in *jinn* within the framework of cultural history.

<sup>17</sup>See Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, *passim*; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 34–45, as well as the literature quoted there; Eijūb Abela, "Beiträge zur Kenntnis abergläubischer Gebräuche in Syrien", *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 7 (1884), 79–118. There is an abundance of material for Palestine; see for example Lydia Einszler, "Der Name Gottes und die bösen Geister im Aberglauben Palästinas", *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 10 (1887), 160–81; Philip J. Baldensperger, "Peasant Folklore of Palestine", *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, 1893, 203–19, esp. 204–208, 214–15; *idem*, *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, 1899, 147–50; Claude Reignier Conder, *Tent Work in Palestine*, New Edition (London, 1889), 312–13; *idem*, *Heth and Moab*, 3rd ed. (London, 1892), 334–35, 338; J.E. Hanauer, *Folklore of the Holy Land* (London, 1907), 188–214; Taufik Canaan, *Aberglaube und Volksmedizin im Lande der Bibel* (Hamburg, 1914), esp. 6–27; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube im Lande der Bibel* (Leipzig, 1929); *idem*, "Haunted Springs and Water Demons in Palestine", *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 1 (1921–22), 153–70; *idem*, "Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine", *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 4 (1924), 36–37, 45–46, 63–65, 73; 6 (1926), 64; Nikolaus Pan. Bratsiotis, "Der Monolog im Alten Testament", *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 74 (1962), 32–34, 37, 40, 42; Stephan H. Stephan, "Lunacy in Palestinian Folklore", *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 5 (1925), 1–16; Antonin Jaussen, "Le cheikh Sa'ad ad-Din et les djinn, à Naplouse", *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 3 (1923), 145–57; *idem*, *Naplouse et son district* (Paris, 1927), esp. 164, 202–207, 214, 225–36; Gustaf Dalman, "Die Schalensteine Palästinas in ihrer Beziehung zu alter Kultur und Religion", *Palästina-Jahrbuch des Deutschen Evangelischen Instituts für Altertumswissenschaft des Heiligen Landes zu Jerusalem* 4 (1908), 49–51; *idem*, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*, I.2 (Gütersloh, 1928), 637–39, 641–42; Hilma Granqvist, *Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village*, II (Helsingfors, 1935), 156–58, 164–65; *eadem*, *Birth and Childhood Among the Arabs: Studies in a Muhammadan Village in Palestine* (Helsingfors, 1947), 30–33, 63, 216–20; *eadem*, *Child Problems Among the Arabs: Studies in a Muhammadan Village in Palestine* (Helsingfors and Copenhagen, 1950), 49, 81, 100–104, 231, 232; Johannes Sonnen, *Die Beduinen am See Genesareth* (Cologne, 1952), 95, 112, 114–27, 133–34, 137, 139; concerning Syria see Anne Blunt, *A Pilgrimage to Nejd* (London, 1881), II, 65–67 (on Palmyra); Jean Cantineau, *Le dialecte arabe de Palmyre* (Beirut, 1934), II, 103–10; August Hafner, "Erinnerungen aus dem Orient", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 18 (1904), 169–84; 19 (1905), 271–88, esp. 271–81; Abdulla M. Lutfiyya, *Baytūn: a Jordanian Village* (The Hague, 1966), 69–74; Joseph Chelhod in *Objets et mondes* 5 (1965), 149–74 (on the Negev, see esp. 149–58, 163–66, 170–71).

<sup>18</sup>Ethel Stefana Stevens, *Folk-Tales of Iraq* (Oxford and London, 1931), xv–xvii, 91–92, 103–13; Sigrid Westphal-Hellbusch, *Die Ma'dan* (Berlin, 1962), Index s.vv. "Geisterglaube" (350b), "Besessenheit" (349a).

<sup>19</sup>Beliefs in spirits from this region have found expression in, for example, some of the tales of the *Thousand and One Nights*; see n. 130 below.

for Arabia proper, namely the north (which, in this instance, has to include Jordan, the Sinai and the Ḥijāz in its whole length);<sup>20</sup> and also for the south and the southeast of the peninsula.<sup>21</sup>

There are several prevailing theories concerning the *origin* of the *jinn*, but as these can generally be proved to be clearly Islamic theories, there is no need to go into them in any detail in the present study.<sup>22</sup> Among these are, above all, the creation of the *jinn* from fire<sup>23</sup> and the classification of fallen

<sup>20</sup>Concerning the Najd (central Arabia) and the Ḥijāz (western Arabia): Doughty (see n. 16 above); Antonin Jaussen and Raphaël Savignac, "Coutumes des Fuqarā" (Paris, 1914; pub. 1920—supplement to vol. II of *Mission archéologique en Arabie* [Paris, 1914]), esp. 59–62; H.St.J.B. Philby, *The Heart of Arabia* (London, 1922), II, 221; *idem*, *Arabia of the Wahhabis* (London, 1928), 259 (quoted in A.S. Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1934, 717); *idem*, *Arabian Jubilee* (London, 1952), 139–40; J.J. Hess, *Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens* (Zurich, 1938), 2–3, 4, 157–60, 165–66; H.R.P. Dickson, *The Arab of the Desert: a Glimpse into Badawin Life in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia*, 2nd ed. (London, 1951), 208, 286–87, 537–39; Alois Musil, *The Manners and Customs of the Ruwala Bedouins* (New York, 1928), 18–19, 166, 181–82, 389–90, 398–99, 400–404, 406, 411–17; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 46–54 *passim* and the literature cited therein. Concerning the northwestern border countries ("Arabia Petraea", see nn. 83 and 84 below): Alois Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III (Vienna, 1908), 196, 303, 318–28, 413, 415, 416–17, 540 (index under "Geister"); Antonin Jaussen, *Coutumes des Arabes au Pays de Moab* (Paris, 1908), 318–23, 339–44, 359–60; W.E. Jennings-Bramley, "The Bedouin of the Sinaitic Peninsula", *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, 1906, 103–105 (Sinai Peninsula); G.W. Murray, *Sons of Ishmael* (London, 1935), 155–56 (Sinai Peninsula); Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 46–54 *passim*.

<sup>21</sup>Adolph von Wrede, *Reise in Hadramaut, Beled Beny 'Yssā und Beled el Hadschar*, ed. Heinrich Freiherr von Maltzan (Braunschweig, 1873), 83, 125–26, 131, 147, 153, 179–80, 195, 213, 232, 242–44, 246–47, 266; Theodore and Mrs Theodore Bent, *Southern Arabia* (London, 1900), 219, 260–61, 273–74, 415; G. Wyman Bury (Abdullāh Maṣṣūr), *The Land of Uz* (London, 1911), 22, 26, 202–203, 316–20 *passim*; Bertram Thomas, *Arabia Felix* (London, 1932), 194–96, 246–51, 258–59, 277–81; D. von der Meulen and H. von Wissmann, *Hadramaut: Some of Its Mysteries Unveiled* (Leiden, 1932), 167–68, 170; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 46–54 *passim*; R.B. Serjeant, "Heiligenverehrung in Südwestarabien", *Bustan* 5 (1964), no. 2, 17a; *idem*, "Two Yemenite Djinn", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13 (1949–50), 4–6.

<sup>22</sup>Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 10–12; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 5–8; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, esp. 35–39; Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 411; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 34.

<sup>23</sup>Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 10–11; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 5; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 35–36; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 34, 84–85, 86, 88, 91–92, 97; Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 186–96 *passim*. Cf. also Joseph Henninger, "Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten im Koran", *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 4 (1948), 130, 286 and nn. 26–28 (book edition: Schöneck 1951, 58, 72 and nn. 26–28). The idea that the *jinn* (or at least some of them) live in the fire is widely held; see Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 10–11; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 5; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 320.

angels in the same or a [285] similar category.<sup>24</sup> In the instances where the ghosts of the dead<sup>25</sup> are included among the *jinn*, we are probably dealing with a later confusion of concepts. In the predominant pre-Islamic views, the realm of the spirits is something quite distinct from the human world, although the two worlds have many connections with one another. There are sources according to which the dividing line between natural spirits and Muslim saints (*walī*, pl. *awliyā'*) in Syria and Palestine is often so blurred as to be indistinguishable,<sup>26</sup> but according to better sources these cases are quite rare and popular belief generally distinguishes quite clearly between the two.<sup>27</sup>

Using the term "spirits" for these beings must not lead us to assume that their *nature* was altogether non-physical and immaterial. While they are usually invisible, they are without exception invested with an—albeit subtle—physical corporeality.<sup>28</sup> In most cases they are not described as im-

<sup>24</sup>Concerning fallen angels in the Islamic doctrine see Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 12; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 7, 28–29; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 40–80; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 41; Henninger, "Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten im Koran", 129–30, 284–93 (book edition, 57–58, 70–79) and the literature quoted therein; Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 175–86 *passim*. Cf. also below, nn. 91, 119, 120, 206.

<sup>25</sup>Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 11–12; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 5–6; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 48.

<sup>26</sup>Thus Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 94, 99–100, 230, 231; cf. also Cook in Smith, *Religion*, 538–39. Concerning a *walī* who is considered to be a *malak* (angel or spirit), see Sonnen, *Die Beduinen am See Genesareth*, 103, 109–10; concerning the frequently identical or similar duties of natural spirits and saints towards their habitat, see also Jaussen, *Moab*, 302–303, 330–35 (cf., however, *ibid.*, 319; also here, the comments and references in the next note below).

<sup>27</sup>According to Canaan, whose research is more thorough than that of Curtiss, saints and *jinn* in Palestine are more clearly distinguished than Curtiss suggests. See Canaan, "Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine", 36–37, on "inhabited" trees; *ibid.*, 45–46, on "inhabited" caves. Springs are usually inhabited by spirits, only very rarely by saints or even sacred to them; see Canaan, "Haunted Springs and Water Demons in Palestine", 158–59, 167–68. In contrast to Curtiss, Canaan also states clearly that he never heard of a spring whose inhabitant is sometimes a *walī* and sometimes a *jinnī*, and that he assumes that in these cases there must be two different inhabitants ("Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine", 66). Some springs are inhabited by two spirits, one good and one evil (*ibid.*, 37, 66–67; see also Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 2). Jaussen (*Moab*, 295, 319) also distinguishes clearly between the ghost of a dead person and a *jinnī*. Researching borderline cases of this kind cannot be the subject of the present study.

<sup>28</sup>Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 5–9 *passim*; Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 411; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 47. (This note, and the ones that follow as far as n. 129 incl., does not make exhaustive use of the literature detailed in nn. 16–21 above, as that would be going too far).

mortal, but can be killed or indeed die a natural death.<sup>29</sup> There are male and female spirits;<sup>30</sup> they produce offspring<sup>31</sup> (among themselves or with human partners).<sup>32</sup> They eat and drink<sup>33</sup> [286] and, at least occasionally, wear clothes, which they borrow from humans.<sup>34</sup> Spirits can remove everything that has not been protected from them by invoking the name of God or in any other way (see below, 293–94).

Among the Rwāla, “the only true bedouin tribe of northern Arabia”,<sup>35</sup> the idea of the *jinn* is less coarsely physical. While they are believed to need sustenance (their favourite food is raw meat, their favourite drink fresh

<sup>29</sup> Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 10; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 17–18, 21, 24, 27–28; Doughty, II, 212 (= 1888 ed., II, 191; the subject is views from Medina); Jaussen and Savignac, “Coutumes”, 60; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 40. According to Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 320 (cf. also *ibid.*, 321), a spirit cannot be killed, only the animal in which he was hiding. He does not say whether a spirit can die a natural death according to the views predominant in Arabia Petraea.

<sup>30</sup> Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 9–10, 21–24; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 320–23 *passim*; Doughty, II, 212–13 (= 1888 ed., II, 191–92); Jaussen and Savignac, “Coutumes”, 61; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 34–36. Cf. also nn. 51–53 below.

<sup>31</sup> Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 13, 14–15; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 21, 23–24; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 320, 323; Doughty, II, 212–13 (= 1888 ed., II, 191–92); Jaussen and Savignac, “Coutumes”, 60–61; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 34, 47. A human child can be exchanged with a spirit child; such a substituted child is called *al-mubaddal*, “changeling” (Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 323; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 52; cf. also Smith, *Religion*, 174 n. 2).

<sup>32</sup> Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 120–21, 124; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 321–22, 327–28; Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 13–14; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 21–25; Jaussen, *Naplouse*, 230–34; Doughty, II, 212–14 (= 1888 ed., II, 191–93); Jaussen and Savignac, “Coutumes”, 61; Granqvist, *Childhood Problems*, 101, 232; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 36, 52–53; Smith, *Religion*, 50; Cook in *ibid.*, 514, and the literature cited therein. Further instances are in Joseph Henninger, “Die Familie bei den heutigen Beduinen Arabiens und seiner Randgebiete”, *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie* 42 (1943), 145 and nn. 11–14, 146 and n. 24. See also n. 137 below.

These and similar views are frequently referred to in order to explain Genesis 6:1–4; e.g. in Smith, *Religion*, 50; J. Chaine, *Le Livre de la Genèse* (Paris, 1949), 101–106, esp. 103–104 (he quotes Jaussen, *Naplouse*, 230–34).

<sup>33</sup> Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 13; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 9–11; Einszler, “Der Name Gottes und die bösen Geister im Aberglauben Palästinas”, 161–65; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 322; Jaussen and Savignac, “Coutumes”, 61; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 34.

<sup>34</sup> Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 13; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 11–12; Einszler, “Der Name Gottes und die bösen Geister im Aberglauben Palästinas”, 174–76.

<sup>35</sup> “The Rwāla are recognized by all their neighbors as the only true Bedouin tribe of northern Arabia” (Musil, *Manners and Customs*, XIII). For more information on the terms “pure bedouin” (= camel breeders), “semi-bedouin” (= breeders of small livestock), and so forth, see Henninger, “Die Familie bei den heutigen Beduinen Arabiens”, 3–4 and nn. 9–15.

blood),<sup>36</sup> to have bodies and to be of either male or female sex,<sup>37</sup> they cannot fall ill or die, nor do they produce offspring, neither among themselves nor with human partners.<sup>38</sup> Even according to the beliefs of the Rwāla, however, sexual intercourse between humans and *jinn* is possible;<sup>39</sup> a virgin who is raped by a spirit will remain physically intact.<sup>40</sup>

The forms in which the spirits appear (normally they are invisible) are many and varied. Animals are most frequent: quadrupeds, e.g. camels, donkeys, billy goats, monkeys, dogs, cats, hedgehogs, hyenas;<sup>41</sup> birds, e.g. ravens, owls, cockerels, hens with their chicks;<sup>42</sup> lower beasts, e.g. scorpions<sup>43</sup> and especially snakes.<sup>44</sup> There are some animals whose form the *jinn* never [287] assume, e.g. the wolf, who is very dangerous to them (its name alone is enough to send them flying).<sup>45</sup> White or green birds are never inhabited by spirits, but black ones, however, frequently are;<sup>46</sup> black dogs, black snakes etc. are also “spirit animals”.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 411. “The raw meat they get from fallen animals, the blood is left for them by the Bedouins every time an animal is killed” (*ibid.*). The *jinn* also breed sheep and goats, but no camels or horses (*ibid.*, 411–12).

<sup>37</sup> Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 411, 413, 415–17.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 413.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 413; cf. also 415–16.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 413. It is different in Palestine; see, e.g., Jaussen, *Naplouse*, 233, which explicitly mentions a girl being deflowered by a spirit. Apparently this is also a presupposition in the other instances quoted in n. 32 above.

<sup>41</sup> Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 15; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 13–18 *passim*; Doughty, II, 210–11 (= 1888 ed., II, 189–90); Jaussen, *Moab*, 321; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 321; Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 413–14; Hess, *Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens*, 157; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 35, 38, 46–48; Serjeant, “Two Yemenite Djinn”, 4–5. Cf. also n. 47 below, on the subject of the black dog.

<sup>42</sup> Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 15; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 13–15; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 322, 324; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 35, 47, 52.

<sup>43</sup> Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 13–14; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 35, 43. Cf. n. 94 below.

<sup>44</sup> Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 13–14, 26–27, 37; Doughty, II, 215 (= 1888 ed., II, 194); Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 320–21, 324; Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 414–15; Hess, *Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens*, 157; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 35, 43, 46, 48.

<sup>45</sup> Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 55–56; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 13; Hess, *Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens*, 4; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 35. According to Chelhod in *Objets et mondes* 5 (1965), 152, among the Negev bedouins a wolf’s body parts are used as defence against *jinn*. The Yemenite *jinn* ‘Udhruṭ, on the other hand, is also able to assume the form of a wolf (Serjeant, “Two Yemenite Djinn”, 4–5), which is most remarkable.

<sup>46</sup> Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 14–16.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 14–16; Doughty, II, 213 (= 1888 ed., II, 191); Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 321; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 35–36.

When spirits do not appear as animals, female spirits often appear as beautiful young women ("brides"),<sup>48</sup> male spirits usually in a frightening form, e.g. as giants.<sup>49</sup> Sometimes they appear as ordinary humans, but then they can be recognised from the shape of their eyes.<sup>50</sup> *Jinn* can also appear as monstrous hybrid beings, in particular the *ghūl*[a], a man-eating female spirit.<sup>51</sup> Certain female spirits are particularly dangerous to unborn or newborn children and usually also appear in a frightening guise.<sup>52</sup> The most widely known member of this category is the *qarīna*.<sup>53</sup> Spirits can change their shape very quickly at will; no spirit is at any time tied to a particular shape.<sup>54</sup>

While spirits can make themselves known in certain natural phenomena, this should be considered to be part of their activities rather than their appearance (see below, 291).

Among the sedentary population in Palestine and Syria the *habitat* of the *jinn* is thought to be the earth, the underworld.<sup>55</sup> They are frequently

<sup>48</sup>Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 8; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 12; Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 415–16; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 35. These female spirits often lure men to them and force them to dance until they die with exhaustion; or they suck the men's blood; see Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 415–16.

<sup>49</sup>Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 15; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 112–13; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 35, 36, 47. Cf. also Doughty, II, 17 (= 1888 ed., II, 3).

<sup>50</sup>Doughty, II, 211, 214 (= 1888 ed., II, 190, 193); Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 144; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 35, 48.

<sup>51</sup>On the subject of the *ghūla* and other monsters, see: D.B. Macdonald, art. "Ghūl" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, II (1927), 175b–176a; Doughty, I, 90, 92–93, 131, 173; II, 17, 612b (index see "Ghröl", "Ghrül") (= 1888 ed., I, 51, 53–54, 91, 131; II, 3, 585a); Conder, *Heth and Moab*, 334–35; Ulrich Jasper Seetzen, *Reisen durch Syrien, Palästina, Phönicien, die Transjordan-Länder, Arabia Petraea und Unter-Ägypten* (Berlin, 1854–59), I, 273–74; III, 20; Kremer, *Studien*, III–IV (as n. 131 below); Jennings-Bramley, "Bedouin", 103–104; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 326–28; Jaussen, *Moab*, 321–23; Jaussen and Savignac, "Coutumes", 60; Granqvist, *Marriage Conditions*, II, 169; Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 15; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 17–19; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 35, 36–37, 46–47, 50. Cf. also nn. 52 and 53 below.

<sup>52</sup>Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 319–20, 326–28; Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 416–17; Hess, *Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens*, 4, 159; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 35, 46–47.

<sup>53</sup>Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 26–27, 51–54; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 47–49; Hans Alexander Winkler, *Salomo und die Qarīna. Eine orientalische Legende von der Bezwungung einer Kindbettdämonin durch einen heiligen Helden* (Stuttgart, 1931); Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 41–42. See also Kriss, *Volksglaube*, II, 22–25, 75–80, 110–24, 147–49 (based, however, in many cases on Winkler).

<sup>54</sup>Jaussen, *Moab*, 320–22; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 326–27; Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 413–14; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 18–19, 26–27.

<sup>55</sup>Baldensperger, "Peasant Folklore of Palestine", 204; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 320; Dalman, "Schalensteine Palästinas", 49–50; Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 8–10; *idem*, "Haunted

described in analogous [288] (comprehensive) terms, e.g. *ahl al-ard*, "people of the earth", etc.<sup>56</sup> This is the reason why they are found mainly where there is a connection with the underworld. These are, above all, springs, wells, cisterns and indeed all places linked to underground water.<sup>57</sup> Hot springs are even more mysterious than ordinary ones and are consequently even more likely to be inhabited by spirits, to whom is attributed the ability to heat the water and to endow it with healing qualities.<sup>58</sup> A different kind of entrance to the underworld is found in caves, rock chasms, dark valleys, gorges, graves etc.<sup>59</sup> Someone who digs the foundations for a house

Springs and Water Spirits in Palestine", 153–54; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 25–27, 35; Doughty, II, 213 (= 1888 ed., II, 192); Hess, *Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens*, 157; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 34, 36, 37, 47, 54. Doughty, I, 301, II, 209 (= 1888 ed., I, 259; II, 188) recounts a tradition from an urban background that the *jinn* inhabit seven floors under the earth. When they inhabit the underworld, they are also guarding hidden treasures; see Doughty, I, 213; II, 121 (= 1888 ed., I, 179–80; II, 103); Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 322, 325; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 14, 32–33; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 52; cf. also Kremer, *Studien*, III–IV (as n. 131 below), 30–35. Cf. also nn. 79, 91, 103, 107, 108, 123, 158–60 below.

<sup>56</sup>Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 22, 25; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 36, 37. This name is also used in Central Arabia: Doughty, I, 177; II, 16 (= 1888 ed., I, 136; II, 3); Hess, *Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens*, 157, and also among the *fugārā* in the northern Hijāz (Jaussen and Savignac, "Coutumes", 60, 61).

<sup>57</sup>In Palestine most springs are thought to be guarded by spirits; see Baldensperger, "Peasant Folklore of Palestine", 204; Canaan, "Haunted Springs and Water Spirits in Palestine", 153–70; *idem*, "Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine" (1924), 37, 63, 66–68; (1925), 171–72; *idem*, *Aberglaube*, 16–17, 21–22; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 25, 30–33; Cook in Smith, *Religion*, 538–39; Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*, I.2, 637–38; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, II, 320; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 35–38. Cf. also Alois Musil, *The Northern Hejaz* (New York, 1926), 155; Doughty, II, 211–12 (= 1888 ed., II, 190) (narrative about a well in Jiddah, inhabited by *jinn*). In Ḥamā' (Syria) an 'afrit, a particularly evil spirit, lives in the lock chamber of a water wheel (Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 229, 260). General information about spring spirits among the Semites can be found in Smith, *Religion*, 165–76. Cf. also nn. 68 and 163 below.

<sup>58</sup>Baldensperger, "Peasant Folklore of Palestine", 210; Conder, *Heth and Moab*, 335; Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 94–95, 99, 230; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 416–17; Jaussen, *Moab*, 321, 359–60; Cook in Smith, *Religion*, 538–39; Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 17; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 32; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 38.

<sup>59</sup>Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 100, 208, 257, 263; Canaan, "Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine", 45–46; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 19–20, 35; Jaussen and Savignac, "Coutumes", 61; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 37. In the region around the gulf of 'Aqaba people fear evil spirits in caves and ruins (T.G. Charles, *Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society*, 1836–38 [1844], 172). Occasionally the caves are inhabited by well-meaning spirits with whom sick people find a cure; see Hess, *Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens*, 2–3.

will disturb the spirits living in the earth<sup>60</sup> and therefore must take special precautions against them (see below, 293–94). Cracks in the ground caused by great heat, and even a scratch in the ground made with a plough, can be sufficient opening to allow the spirits access to the surface of the earth.<sup>61</sup> Trees (and shrubs) reach into the underworld with their roots and are consequently often inhabited by *jinn* as well. However, there are distinctions similar to those made in the case of animals: some species of trees are favoured by the spirits, while they avoid others.<sup>62</sup> Spirits drawn by the blood of someone who died a violent death will remain in the place where that person died;<sup>63</sup> some particularly evil or monstrous spirits, such as the *ghūl*, are assumed, by sedentary peoples, to wander about the desert.<sup>64</sup> Still others of these beings are so close to humans that they adhere to a [289] particular house and could with some justification be called house-spirits.<sup>65</sup> While these spirits are often kindly and well-intentioned, spirits living at the doorstep to a house are usually dangerous, which explains why doorsteps are surrounded by most particular precautions and ceremonies.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>60</sup>Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 36–38; Jaussen, *Moab*, 339, 343; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 44. Cf. nn. 103–105 below.

<sup>61</sup>Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 25; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 37.

<sup>62</sup>Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 96; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 324, 325; Jaussen, *Moab*, 334; Canaan, "Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine" (1924), 36–37; (1928), 162–63; *idem*, *Aberglaube*, 17–18; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 34–35; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 36, 37, 38–39; Cook in Smith, *Religion*, 562–63.

<sup>63</sup>Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 17; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 5–6, 35; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 36. Concerning Yemen see Serjeant, "Two Yemenite Djinn", 4.

<sup>64</sup>Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 18; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 35. Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 326 (cf. Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 51) mentions a large black rock inhabited by a spirit. Cf. also nn. 51–53 above.

<sup>65</sup>Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 66; Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 18–20; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 36–39; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 44; Karl Jäger, *Das Bauernhaus in Palästina* (Göttingen, 1912; Diss. Tübingen, 1912), 50; concerning spirits in ovens see *ibid.*, 46; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 5.

<sup>66</sup>Einszler, "Der Name Gottes und die bösen Geister im Aberglauben Palästinas", 170–71; Baldensperger, "Peasant Folklore of Palestine", 205; Conder, *Heth and Moab*, 302; Jäger, *Das Bauernhaus in Palästina*, 50; Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 19–20; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 36–38; *idem*, "Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine" (1926), 64; Granqvist, *Marriage Conditions*, II, 126; *idem*, *Birth*, 87, 239; *idem*, *Child Problems*, 101–102, 107, 231–32; Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*, VII, 97–98, and the instances given there; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 36, 44; J.G. Frazer, *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament* (London, 1918), III, 1–18 (esp. 1, 2, 4, 16). Cf. also nn. 103–105 below.

Just like all dark places, all dirty, foetid and untidy places such as latrines, dung-heaps, oil presses etc.<sup>67</sup> are popular dwelling-places among the *jinn*. Public baths in cities are also popular.<sup>68</sup>

As the *jinn* can come out of the earth and their other hiding places in the dark, night is a particularly dangerous time.<sup>69</sup>

According to the beliefs of the sedentary people, spirits can be virtually everywhere. Humans are surrounded by them at every step they take and must always be on their guard against them.<sup>70</sup>

The beliefs of the bedouins do not go quite so far. According to the *Rwāla*, the possible dwelling-places of the spirits are much more restricted. They are sedentary (*ḥaḍar*), and live on high mountains in inaccessible chasms and old ruins. Unlike the bedouins themselves, they never possess tents. Their hiding places are beneath the earth, in crevices, in caves and in the vaults of deserted buildings. The further away such a crevice or ruin is from a water-hole, the better the *jinn* like it because they know they will not be disturbed therein.<sup>71</sup> Snakes living in old ruins are often inhabited by [290] spirits. Someone who kills a snake will make enemies of the spirits (as they are, just like the bedouins, organised in tribes, clans and families but

<sup>67</sup>Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 20; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 20–21, 26, 38; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 39.

<sup>68</sup>Einszler, "Der Name Gottes und die bösen Geister im Aberglauben Palästinas", 172–80; Jaussen, *Naplouse*, 164; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 38–39; *idem*, *Aberglaube*, 20–21; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 38. Cf. also Lane, *Arabian Society* (see n. 130 below) 37–38, 179, 182–83.

<sup>69</sup>Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 8, 22; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 19–20; Jaussen, *Moab*, 320; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 320, 323; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 37. Spirits are particularly dangerous in graveyards at night: Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 20–21; concerning a graveyard in Kuwait see Dickson, *The Arab of the Desert*, 208.

<sup>70</sup>Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 66, 107, 258, 265, 267; Jaussen, *Moab*, 319, 339, 343; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, *passim*. "Out of the depths of the earth the spirits rise to the surface of the earth and fill the atmosphere so completely that if a needle dropped down from the sky, it would of necessity touch them"; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 27; *idem*, *Aberglaube*, 10.

<sup>71</sup>Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 411; cf. *ibid.*, 412–417 *passim*. We find that the bedouins in northeastern Arabia (Kuwait and neighbouring countries) also mention particular places where *jinn* are likely to live; in one case a meteorite crater is such a place, in another a spring rich in sulphur and therefore stinking (Dickson, *The Arab of the Desert*, 538–39). Cf. also n. 155 below. On the subject of mountain spirits see also nn. 80, 81, 120 below. Fulgence Fresnel, "L'Arabie vue en 1837–1838", *Journal asiatique*, Ser. 6, 17 (1871), 118, relates the statement by bedouins in the Hijāz that they scratch their *wasm* (tribal mark) into rocks to ensure the mountain spirits' protection for their cattle. Accounts of the *fugara* in the northern Hijāz state on the one hand that they believe spirits to dwell in particular places, such as old graves (Jaussen and Savignac, "Coutumes", 61), on the other hand that the spirits are "everywhere" (*ibid.*, 62).

will act alone when attacked<sup>72</sup>). If someone roasts and eats such a snake, the spirit will enter him and he will be possessed. In the wide flat desert, however, spirits would never live; and snakes may be killed and eaten there without any danger.<sup>73</sup> Certain kinds of trees and bushes are inhabited by spirits,<sup>74</sup> but the open desert is apparently not only free from trees but is completely free from spirits, who also keep away from water-holes.

Other (camel-breeding) bedouins appear to hold similar beliefs; Doughty mentions particular trees, groves and thickets where angels and fairies dwell, in the country of the Mawāhib in the northern Ḥijāz and among neighbouring tribes<sup>75</sup> (concerning the practices of worship customary among these tribes, see below, 295). They also like to dwell in caves,<sup>76</sup> wells and ponds<sup>77</sup>—unlike the views of the Rwāla in the case of the latter. On the other hand, the belief that some wells, especially deep ones, were dug by spirits, is held widely (also among the Rwāla).<sup>78</sup>

<sup>72</sup>Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 411. The idea that the *jinn* are organised in tribes is widely held, but in many different forms. Some sedentary people, e.g. in Medina, talk of a sultan of the *jinn*; see Doughty, II, 209–10 (= 1888 ed., II, 188–89). According to a widespread belief there are seven tribes ruled by different spirit princes or kings. We can recognise the seven planet spirits in these. See Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 22–23; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 27–30, 39–40; Winkler, *Siegel und Charaktere*, 86–109, esp. 92, 97–108; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 42–43, 64.

<sup>73</sup>Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 414. On the other hand, in Arabia Petraea it is said that “in every snake there lives an evil spirit” (Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 324; cf. Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 46); this, however, does not apply to the Rwāla.

<sup>74</sup>Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 416; cf. Dickson, *The Arab of the Desert*, 537–38.

<sup>75</sup>Doughty, I, 316, 411 (= 1888 ed., I, 273, 365) mentions an acacia tree inhabited by *jinn* (see also the narrative *ibid.*, II, 231 [= 1888 ed., II, 209–10], which is about a fraud based on the belief that there are trees from which spirits give oracles). On the subject of trees, thickets and groves (*menhēl*, pl. *menāhil* [written Arabic: *manhal*, pl. *manāhil*]) where the *melāika* (pl. of *melūk*, lit. “angel”, spirits of the air; Doughty, I, 497, 530, II, 407 [= 1888 ed., I, 449, 482; II, 379] descend at times, see Doughty, I, 495, 496, 538–39, 598; II, 550 (= 1888 ed., I, 448, 449–50, 490–91, 548; II, 516). Concerning the kind of worship taking place there, see nn. 87, 117, 118 below. Cf. also Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 320. Chelhod (*Objets et mondes* 5 [1965], 160) states that according to the belief of some Negev bedouins the blood of sacrificial animals is drunk by the angels; this is certainly the Islamised version of an idea that originally referred to *jinn* (cf. n. 36 above). On the subject in general see Kremer, *Studien*, III–IV (as n. 131 below), 13; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 50–51.

<sup>76</sup>Cf. Hess, *Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens*, 2–3; Philby, *Arabian Jubilee*, 139–40; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 50–51.

<sup>77</sup>Dickson, *The Arab of the Desert*, 538–39; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 50–51.

<sup>78</sup>Doughty, II, 246 (= 1888 ed., II, 223); Charles Huber, “Voyage dans l’Arabie centrale: Hamād, Šammar, Qaṣm, Hedjāz”, *Bulletin de la Société de géographie*, Ser. 7, 6 (1885), 113; Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 413; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 51.

The bedouins in the mountains along the south and southeast Arabian borders also appear to believe that the *jinn* have very close ties to certain places. Zbinden writes: “According to the bedouin population of Arabia, mountain tops, rocks, valleys, streams, trees, lakes, springs, wells, caves, grottoes and ruins are dwellings of the *jinn*”.<sup>79</sup> It follows from the context that this remark refers in the first instance to the south Arabian border countries mentioned above.<sup>80</sup> [291] It can be confirmed by further evidence from south (and southeast) Arabia.<sup>81</sup> It seems that there is less information concerning belief in spirits in central south Arabia, the desert *Rub’ al-Khālī* (the “Empty Quarter”).<sup>82</sup>

The northeast border countries, which were called Arabia Petraea in Antiquity—namely the Sinai peninsula with its northern frontier and an-

<sup>79</sup>Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 49. Concerning caves, see *ibid.*, 53.

<sup>80</sup>The instances quoted (*ibid.*, 49–50) are several passages from Abdullāh Maṣṣūr (Bury) and Th. Bent (cf. n. 21 above).

<sup>81</sup>Cf. esp. Thomas, *Arabia Felix*, 209, 269, concerning descendants of *jinn*; *ibid.*, 258–59, concerning an acacia grove that is never touched because there are *jinn* dwelling there. *Ibid.*, 246–51, is a story about the hero Banū Zayd killing a *jinn* in the shape of a serpent; *ibid.*, 277–81, is a similar story from the cycle of the Banū Hilāl; *ibid.*, 194–96, concerns *zār* ceremonies (see n. 13 above). On the subject in general see also Thomas, “Anthropological Observations in South Arabia”, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 62 (1932), 88–90; furthermore, from the older literature, especially the information by Wrede that Zbinden did not evaluate: spirits live in certain valleys and rock chasms (Wrede, *Reise*, 83, 147), in ruins (153, 195), in a grotto (125–26), in a river (179–80), in a mimosa bush (131), in the “sea of sands” (242, 244, 246–47). A valley that is a playground for evil spirits remains uninhabited despite its rich vegetation (83). The spirits are guarding treasures (126, 195, 242, 246–47). There is a serpent wearing a diamond on its head; it takes the diamond off while drinking and if a human can seize this diamond, he will have power over the spirits; Solomon was such a one (266). Wrede himself had the reputation of being a tamer of spirits and treasure hunter (126, 195, 213, 242, 246–47) and people believed there was a demon imprisoned in his pocket watch. Another traveller, who had travelled through the same regions approximately ten years earlier, had the same reputation and was murdered (232). Wrede does not give us any information on the worship of *jinn*; he mentions only that the bedouins, when they entered a cave, addressed themselves to the *jinn*, calling loudly asking permission (125). In his *Reise nach Südarabien* (Braunschweig, 1873), 304, Heinrich Freiherr von Maltzan also mentions a warm spring inhabited by a spirit. Cf. Smith, *Religion*, 168 n. 3. Concerning mountain spirits in Oman see n. 102 below.

<sup>82</sup>The accounts by Thomas (see n. 81 above) refer to the border areas. Dickson (*The Arab of the Desert*, 286–87) has some information about the belief in *jinn* among the Murra in the great South Arabian desert. These people are said to attribute the phenomenon of the “singing sands” and other noises in the desert to the spirits. H.St.J. Philby, *The Empty Quarter* (London, 1933), also mentions that the “singing sands” (204, 295) and other inexplicable noises (191–92, 295) are attributed to the spirits.

cient Edom and Moab, now divided among Jordan, Israel and Egypt<sup>83</sup>—are particularly well known, thanks to the research by Antonin Jaussen and Alois Musil. Beliefs in spirits among the semi-bedouin peoples show more similarities with those found among the sedentary peoples in Palestine and Syria<sup>84</sup> (see below, 294–96, on the subject of sacrifices).

The activities of spirits can be observed in nature: mirages, whirlwinds, sand-spouts, mists, etc. are attributed to them.<sup>85</sup> Above all, [292] however, they play tricks on humans, sometimes harmless, sometimes malicious ones, in which way they frighten humans (and animals).<sup>86</sup> We have already mentioned (above, n. 32) sexual relations between humans and *jinn* (which frequently end badly for the human partner), as well as female spirits who appear to men in alluring guises and then lead the men to their ruin (above, n. 48). Dreams are also, at least partly, attributed to the influence of spirits.<sup>87</sup> If a *jinnī* is provoked by a human—and humans can provoke *jinn* even unwittingly—the *jinnī* will “strike” him (some *jinn* even attack without provocation, as in the case of the evil female spirits mentioned in nn. 51–53 above), and the consequence is disease, sometimes even immediate death. *Jinn* are thought to be the cause, in the main, not only of nervous

<sup>83</sup>On the subject of the term Arabia Petraea, which was used in the geography of antiquity ever since Ptolemy, see the instances quoted in Henninger, “Die Familie bei den heutigen Beduinen Arabiens”, 2 with nn. 1–3; Musil *Arabia Petraea*, III, 1; *idem*, *Northern Hejaz*, 44; H. von Wissmann, “Geographische Grundlagen und Frühzeit der geschichte Südarabiens”, *Saeculum* 4 (1953), 70 with n. 12.

<sup>84</sup>See n. 20 above and the quotations from both authors in nn. 27–34, 41–70 *passim*.

<sup>85</sup>See Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 4–5; Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 18–19; Hess, *Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens*, 159; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 12, 16–17; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 37, 47. Will-o'-the-wisps are also attributed to *jinn* (Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 52). The idea that sand spouts (trombes de poussière) are caused by *jinn* is also found among city-dwellers in Šan'ā'; see Claudie Fayein, *Une Française Médecin au Yémen* (Paris, 1955), 85. The explanation of the “singing sands”, which is not restricted to Southern Arabia, also belongs here (see n. 82 above). Richard F. Burton reports from ancient Midian (the border country between Arabia Petraea and the northern Hījāz) that a “sand pyramid” resounds with music when the caravan of Mecca pilgrims passes it and that this is the reason why sacrifices are offered here; *The Land of Midian Revisited* (London, 1879), I, 65–66. We can assume that once again the music is ascribed to *jinn* in this case.

<sup>86</sup>Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 320, 323; Jaussen, *Moab*, 319–20; Jaussen and Savignac, “Coutumes”, 61; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 19–21, 37–38; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 35, 37, 40–41, 47, 52.

<sup>87</sup>Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 21, 41; Hess, *Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens*, 159. The practice of “healing sleep” is also well known. People would lie down in places that they know to be inhabited by *jinn*, especially under trees sacred to them (see n. 75 above); see Doughty, I, 497 (= 1888 ed., I, 449–50); Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 325; Hess, *Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens*, 2–3; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 50–51.

disorders, but also convulsions, lameness, fevers and slow wasting away.<sup>88</sup> It is worse still if a spirit enters a human; in that case the human becomes possessed. A madman is called *majnūn* (“possessed by *jinn*”). In such a case a professional exorcist will have to exorcise the evil spirit.<sup>89</sup> These exorcists can also tell fortunes and work magic with the aid of the spirits.<sup>90</sup> If moral weaknesses and failings are blamed on spirits, this is due to Islamic influence, which is also evident in the fact that in such cases the terms “devil” (*iblis*) or “Satan” (*shayṭān*) are usually used.<sup>91</sup>

As the *jinn* can trouble humans in so many ways, there are also many defensive practices against them.<sup>92</sup> Among these are a) [293] to avoid ev-

<sup>88</sup>Doughty, I, 301, 496 (= 1888 ed., I, 258–59, 449), specifically because of violation of a sacred tree (*ibid.*, I, 496 [= 1888 ed., I, 449]); Jaussen, *Naplouse*, 225–36; Jaussen, *Moab*, 319–20; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 322–23, 423, 425; Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 399; Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 23–24; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 19, 22, 26, 45–47; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 40, 47, 49, 52; Wrede, *Reise*, 180. Seminal emission while asleep is ascribed to *jinn* or the devil; see Toufik Canaan, “Gott im Glauben der palästinischen Araber”, *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Verems* 78 (1962), 14–15. An impotent man is bound by demons (*ibid.*, 15).

<sup>89</sup>Doughty, I, 296, 300–301, 355, 598, 607, 642; II, 16–17, 28, 201, 212 (= 1888 ed., I, 254, 257–59, 311, 548, 556, 590; II, 2–3, 14, 180, 191); Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 170, 172; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 322–23; Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 398, 400–404, 412–17 *passim*; Jaussen, *Naplouse*, 225–36; Jaussen and Savignac, “Coutumes”, 61–62; Hess, *Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens*, 4, 157–60; Sonnen, *Die Beduinen am See Genesareth*, 122–25; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 45–47; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 47, 52–54; Hilma Granqvist, *Muslim Death and Burial* (Helsinki, 1965), 28–32; Chelhod in *Objets et mondes* 5 (1965), 163–66; Lutfiyya, *Baytīn*, 71–72; Westphal-Hellbusch, *Die Ma'dan*. However, among the 'Utayba in central Arabia *majnūn* refers to a ghost rather than a possessed person (Hess, *Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens*, 165–66). Zbinden (*Die Djinn des Islam*, 54) mentions the assumption that the exorcising ceremonies of this tribe show urban influence. The *zār* ceremonies (see n. 13 above) are not exorcism in the true sense of the word, at least not always. Michel Leiris, *La possession et ses aspects théâtraux chez les Ethiopiens de Gondar* (Paris, 1958), 34 n. 2, says with perfect justification: “‘Exorcism’ is an inappropriate term when applied to the practices of the *zār* brotherhoods, as here the aim is to make a pact with the spirit rather than to expel it”.

<sup>90</sup>Doughty, II, 209–10 (= 1888 ed., II, 188–89); Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 318–19; Jaussen, *Naplouse*, 202–207, 214; Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 24–26. Cf. also Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 159–67.

<sup>91</sup>Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 41.

<sup>92</sup>A very simple practice is spitting, for which see Doughty, II, 184 (= 1888 ed., II, 164); Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 46; Hess, *Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens*, 159; clearing the throat is also mentioned (*ibid.*). In addition, iron is a defence against demons; even a needle can be sufficient, see Kremer, *Studien*, III–IV (as in n. 131 below), 37; Ignaz Goldziher, “Eisen als Schutz gegen Dämonen”, *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 10 (1907), 41–46; Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 51, 83–84; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 11–12; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 39, 42, 44, 54. On the subject in general, see also Kremer, *Studien*, III–IV, 36–38 (n. 186 below). Zbinden (*Die Djinn des Islam*, 54) writes, with reference to



everything that could call or provoke them. Whistling is most strictly forbidden.<sup>93</sup> Carla Bartheel offers the following explanation: "There is a bedouin proverb: 'You must not whistle in the desert, lest you summon the devil'. Indeed, whistling and similar noises attract serpents and scorpions, as I was to find out later."<sup>94</sup> It is, however, uncertain whether this rationalistic explanation is sufficient. Occasionally the spirits themselves are said to whistle (above, n. 93), and consequently we might think of the howling of the storms and similar eerie noises, which are interpreted as voices of the spirits and must consequently not be imitated. b) Further protection against spirits is afforded by prayer of various kinds: it is possible to pray to Muslim saints, but particularly powerful is the name of God spoken repeatedly<sup>95</sup> or, for Christians, making the sign of the cross.<sup>96</sup> (However, there are certain warm springs where the name of God must not be spoken by the person seeking to be cured through bathing, as it would anger the *jinn* and the cure would fail.<sup>97</sup>) c) Carrying *amulets* plays a most important part. Here age-old oriental practices and post-Biblical Jewish tradition (Solomon and David as masters of the spirits) are merged with Islamic elements (reciting

Max Freiherr von Oppenheim's *Vom Mittelmeer zum Persischen Golf*, II (Berlin, 1900), 134: "Red-hot iron is widely used among them (i.e. among the Shummar in Iraq). It is applied to many body parts, e.g. in the case of fever to the head. Here we obviously have the belief that the *jinn* causing the disease are afraid of iron. By heating the iron they may be trying to outdo the fever *jinn*, who is heating up the head, and thus annoy him so much that he will leave the body." These attempts at explanations are, however, purely speculative. Oppenheim does not mention *jinn* in the passage quoted. Cf. now also Peter W. Schienerl, "Eisen als Kampfmittel gegen Dämonen. Manifestationen des Glaubens an seine magische Kraft im islamischen Amulettwesen", *Anthropos* 75 (1980), 486–522.

<sup>93</sup>Doughty, I, 607 (= 1888 ed., I, 556); Jaussen, *Moab*, 320; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 305, 313. Cf. also Philby, *The Empty Quarter*, 191; n. 184 below.

<sup>94</sup>Carla Bartheel, *Unter Sinai-Beduinern und Mönchen* (Berlin, 1943), 52. Musil already mentions (*Arabia Petraea*, III, 313) that one of the local tribes, the Liathneh, believe that snakes, scorpions and poisonous spiders are attracted by whistling.

<sup>95</sup>Einszler, "Der Name Gottes und die bösen Geister im Aberglauben Palästinas", 160–81, esp. 161–65, 166–69; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 322; Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 416; Jaussen and Savignac, "Coutumes", 61; Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 8, 17; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 10, 37, 38, 41–42, 47; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 38, 41–42. See also Serjeant, "Two Yemenite Djinn", 5; Hess, *Beduinen*, 159, where a further defensive formula is mentioned: "There are good spirits (*ajwād*) in the tent", which may be pre-Islamic.

<sup>96</sup>Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 322; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 23.

<sup>97</sup>Einszler, "Der Name Gottes und die bösen Geister im Aberglauben Palästinas", 179–80; Smith, *Religion*, 171. Zbinden (*Die Djinn des Islam*, 38) quotes two passages from Canaan, where, however, this detail is not mentioned. Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 8 n. 3, mentions the case of an ordinary spring

verses from the Qur'ān) and others.<sup>98</sup> d) Rather than appealing to God or another exalted power, people can also address the spirits directly and seek to placate them. This includes formulae such as *dastūr yā ṣāhib al-mahall* ("[With your] permission, O master of this place"), which will be spoken when building a house, pitching a tent and on similar occasions.<sup>99</sup> [294] Someone who extinguishes fire<sup>100</sup> will need similar formulae to warn or appease the spirits. e) Finally, sacrifices to spirits are most important,<sup>101</sup> and are still found, sometimes very clearly, sometimes only in a weakened form. In southern Arabia, a mountain spirit whose territory is being entered will receive a sacrifice of an animal, e.g. a goat.<sup>102</sup> Among sedentary peoples, sacrifices at the dedication of a building<sup>103</sup> play an important part; in some cases their link with spirits is still clearly apparent from the formula

<sup>98</sup>Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 19, 49–56, 77–133 *passim* (esp. 77–93, 99–115); *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 21, 49; Winkler, *Siegel und Charaktere*, *passim*; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 319; Jaussen and Savignac, "Coutumes", 62; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 42–43, 53–54; Chelod in *Objets et mondes* 5 (1965), 153–58. Cf. also n. 217 below.

<sup>99</sup>Jaussen, *Moab*, 339, 343; Canaan, "Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine" (1924), 164 n. 1; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 5, 26; Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*, VII, 95; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 34, 38–39, 49, 53; Wrede, *Reise*, 125. Cf. also nn. 71, 81 above.

<sup>100</sup>Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 5; *idem*, *Aberglaube*, 11; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 34.

<sup>101</sup>For general information on sacrifices to spirits see Doughty, I, 500 (= 1888 ed., I, 452); Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 2, 21, 37–38; Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 68, 214, 229–30, 243, 257; Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*, VII, 90–91, 94, 97–98; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 38 and nn. 7, 44, 50, 53; Canaan, "Das Opfer in palästinischen Sitten und Gebräuchen", *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 74 (1962), 34, 37, 40, 42; *idem*, "Gott im Glauben der palästinischen Araber", 14–15; *idem*, "Das Blut in den Sitten und im Aberglauben des palästinischen Arabers", *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 79 (1963), 22–23.

<sup>102</sup>Bury (Abdullāh Mansūr), 22, 26; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 49. Sacrifices to mountain spirits are also mentioned in connection with the inland-dwelling Shihūh on the Musandam peninsula in Oman; see *Handbook of Arabia*, I (London, n.d. [1920]), 594 [but according to which source?]. On the subject of further *jinn* sacrifices in South Arabia, see Serjeant, "Heiligenverehrung in Südwestarabien", no. 2, 17a.

<sup>103</sup>See Doughty, I, 177, II, 118 (= 1888 ed., I, 136; II, 100); Einszler, "Der Name Gottes und die bösen Geister im Aberglauben Palästinas", 170; Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 66, 68, 208, 219, 228–29, 265–67 (cf. also *ibid.*, 73 n. 2, 218, 281); Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 136, 313; Jaussen, *Moab*, 319, 341–44; Jaussen, *Naplouse*, 21–22, 175; Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 19; Jaussen and Savignac, "Coutumes", 68; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 36; *idem*, "Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine" (1926), 62–63; Paul Kahle, "Die moslemischen Heiligtümer in und bei Jerusalem", *Palästina-Jahrbuch* 6 (1910), 84; *idem*, "Gebräuche bei den moslemischen Heiligtümern in Palästina", *Palästina-Jahrbuch* 8 (1913), 154; Dalman, "Schalensteine Palästinas", 49–50; *idem*, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*, VII, 90–98; Granqvist, *Birth*, 153; *eadem*, *Child Problems*, 121, 132; Wellmann, *Die arabischen Heidentümer*, 177; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 44, 53.



spoken with the sacrifice.<sup>104</sup> In other cases, the sacrifices have been reinterpreted to such an extent in the Islamic context that the sacrifice is dedicated to al-Khalīl (Abraham), other Muslim saints, or God himself.<sup>105</sup> Among the semi-bedouin tribes in Moab, there are similar sacrifices on pitching a tent.<sup>106</sup> Someone who cultivates a piece of wasteland<sup>107</sup> or digs a well<sup>108</sup> will also have to make an animal sacrifice to the *jinn* whose quiet he is disrupting. As certain spirits favour doorsteps as their dwelling (see n. 66 above), this is the place for apotropaic sacrifices<sup>109</sup> on such occasions as moving into a new house,<sup>110</sup> or a bride being introduced into her husband's or her in-laws' house.<sup>111</sup> If you wish to stay in a cave for a longer or shorter period, the *jinn* will also have to be placated by means of a sacrifice.<sup>112</sup> As hot springs are heated by *jinn* (see n. 58 above), [295] these will have to have sacrificial gifts from someone seeking a cure from bathing in the water.<sup>113</sup> It is also possible that an ordinary well (or irrigation system) is linked with

<sup>104</sup> See Jaussen, *Moab*, 339, 343; cf. also Taufik Canaan, "The Palestinian Arab House: Its Architecture and Folklore", *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 13 (1933), 61–62, 64, 65.

<sup>105</sup> Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 73, 228; Jaussen, *Moab*, 341–42; Jaussen, *Naplouse*, 21–22; Canaan, "Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine" (1926), 62 with n. 2; Kahle, "Moslemischen Heliqutümer", 84; *idem*, "Gebräuche", 154, 158; Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*, VII, 95, 97. Canaan, "The Palestinian Arab House", 62 n. 4, 64, 65, has some corrections of Jaussen, *Moab*, 341–42 and Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 73, 228.

<sup>106</sup> Jaussen, *Moab*, 319, 339–41, 344; Dalman, "Schalensteine Palästinas", 49; Canaan, "Studies in the Topography and Folklore of Petra", *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 9 (1929), 202; *idem*, "The Palestinian Arab House", 64; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 37; Murray, *The Sons of Ishmael*, 155; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 44. This sacrifice is also, however, found among the *fugārā* in the northern Hijāz; see Jaussen and Savignac, "Coutumes", 68 n. 3.

<sup>107</sup> Doughty, I, 177, 499 (= 1888 ed., I, 136, 452).

<sup>108</sup> Doughty, I, 499; II, 219 (= 1888 ed., I, 452; II, 198); Jaussen and Savignac, "Coutumes", 69. Similar sacrifices were offered to spirits in Palestine on the occasion of turning over the first spade of earth for the construction of the railway (Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 209, 212, 229) and of roads (*ibid.*, 229).

<sup>109</sup> See n. 66 above, esp. Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 21, 37–38.

<sup>110</sup> See Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 57, 265–67; Kahle, "Gebräuche", 158; Jaussen, *Naplouse*, 22; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 36–37; Canaan, "The Palestinian Arab House", 64; Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*, I.1, 30–31, 32; VII, 94–95.

<sup>111</sup> Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 37–38; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 44.

<sup>112</sup> Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 208, 257; Kahle, "Gebräuche", 158 (cf. also *ibid.*, Plate 12 facing 140: the door of a cave dwelling with blood marks); Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 297; Canaan, "Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine", 45–46; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 53.

<sup>113</sup> Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 416–17; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 32; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 28–44. Cf. also Jaussen, *Moab*, 341–42.

a spirit who needs to be honoured with a sacrifice.<sup>114</sup> Some customs among coast-dwelling and seafaring people bring to mind spirits of the sea;<sup>115</sup> occasionally this is even stated explicitly.<sup>116</sup> Trees inhabited by spirits are often places of sacrifice;<sup>117</sup> the sacrifices to "angels" mentioned by Doughty belong in the same category.<sup>118</sup> The sacrifices to the devil (*iblis*) said to take place in the oasis of Taymā' in the northern Hijāz<sup>119</sup> and among bedouins in

<sup>114</sup> See n. 57 above. The 'Afrīt in Ḥamā' (see *ibid.*) receives an annual sacrifice of a ram (Curtiss, *Ursemitische Religion*, 22, 260). There are also spring spirits, however, who are not given sacrifices, although people do believe in their existence; see Jaussen, *Moab*, 321; Cook in Smith, *Religion*, 538–39.

<sup>115</sup> In Gaza (according to Baldensperger, "Peasant Folklore of Palestine", 216) people would throw bread into the sea, as a votive offering (*nadhr*) "for the inhabitants of the sea". Another report from southern Palestine (from near Ascalon) mentions that sheep were slaughtered on the beaches. The blood would flow into the sea and the head, entrails, lungs and feet were thrown into the sea with the words: *khud nidhrak yā baḥr*, "Take what has been promised you, O sea" (Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 75–76; also his "Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine" [1926], 12). Cf. also Canaan, "Das Blut in Sitten und Aberglauben", 21, where he writes: "Whether they believe that there are good or evil spirits in the sea remains unknown to me", but the context indicates that it is more likely that they believed in good spirits in the sea. On the subject of sea-worship in the northern Sinai see Murray, *The Sons of Ishmael*, 156–57 (although in this instance it is a tradition that originated among the sedentary population rather than bedouins; cf. *ibid.*, 252).

<sup>116</sup> Johann Ludwig Burckhardt (*Reisen in Arabien* [Weimar, 1830], 650) writes about sailors on the Red Sea that they throw a handful of food into the sea whenever they have a meal, "for fear of water spirits". On the subject of "presents for the sea" see also C.H. Becker, "Arabischer Schiffszauber", *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 11 (1908), 157–59. Samuel Barrett Miles, *The Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf* (London, 1919), II, 449, has a similar account of sailors passing Cape Musandam in Oman: "The weathering of this cape has always been regarded with dread by Arab navigators passing in and out of the Gulf on account of the gales of wind and the strong currents that prevail here. In order to propitiate the spirits of the deep they have long been accustomed to send afloat a model ship, more or less elaborate, or even a coconut shell, filled with fragments of food and sweetmeats and to watch its career with keen anxiety, for if the toy boat reaches the shore in safety, they augur a prosperous voyage, but should it be capsized, dire forebodings fill their minds; these models were often met with by ships far out at sea in calm weather."

<sup>117</sup> Cf. nn. 62, 81 above.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. n. 75 above, esp. Doughty, I, 411, 497 (= 1888 ed., I, 365, 449–50) on the subject of hanging sacrificial meat, goats' horns, pieces of cloth, etc., into these trees. Cf. also Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 106. Concerning similar sacrifices offered by sick people in a cave, see Hess, *Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens*, 3; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 50.

<sup>119</sup> Jaussen and Savignac, "Coutumes", 59–60; cf. also Le Comte de Landberg, *Etudes sur les dialectes de l'Arabie Méridionale*, II.3 (Leiden, 1913), 1711 (cf. the context, 1709–14): an account by 'Abd Allāh Mizyad from 'Unayza (in Qāsim in central Arabia) according to which the inhabitants of Taymā' sacrificed several sheep to the devil each year. They are slaughtered on the tops of mountains and left for animals and birds to feed on.

the Najd (central Arabian upland)<sup>120</sup> also bring to mind spirits of nature. Sacrifices to spirits are not always linked to certain places. Sacrifices might also be offered when there occurs a disaster that is blamed on the spirits, or even when there is reason to fear such a disaster, for instance after a dream containing bad omens.<sup>121</sup> The *Rwāla* leave blood for the spirits whenever they slaughter an animal.<sup>122</sup> [296] This should not, however, be considered a sacrifice, but rather an attempt at explaining the Islamic rule that when an animal is slaughtered, its blood has to be left to run out in order for the meat to be ritually pure food.

Most such cases concern blood sacrifices, especially of small livestock (sheep and goats). Sacrifices of chicken and other fowl are also closely connected to spirit worship.<sup>123</sup> It is significant that the *Rwāla*, in order to protect new-born boys from a she-demon, have to slaughter a cockerel that must have green feathers on its neck.<sup>124</sup> The fact that a cockerel is needed points to this practice having originated among sedentary people, as cockerels are not domesticated animals among nomad peoples<sup>125</sup> (concerning the colour green see n. 46 above). In addition there are cases in which genuine sacrifices—those involving the shedding of blood—are replaced by bloodless sacrifices such as vegetable food<sup>126</sup> and other gifts, e.g. a silver coin that is buried under the doorstep.<sup>127</sup> Sometimes incense is burnt for such rites.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>120</sup>Landberg, *Etudes*, II.3, 1712: similar sacrifices occur in cases of disease. From the context it is perfectly clear that we are dealing with a *jinnī* here.

<sup>121</sup>Jaussen, *Moab*, 319–20; Jaussen and Savignac, "Coutumes", 70.

<sup>122</sup>Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 411. See n. 36 above.

<sup>123</sup>See Joseph Henninger, "Über Huhnopfer und Verwandtes in Arabien und seinen Randgebieten", *Anthropos* 41–44 (1946–49), 337–46, esp. 339–40, 342–43, 345–46. Doughty, II, 121 (= 1888 ed., II, 103) relates a story about a North African treasure hunter who sacrificed a black cockerel to the spirits guarding the treasure.

<sup>124</sup>Musil, *Manners and Customs*, 417.

<sup>125</sup>See Henninger, "Huhnopfer", 339, 343–44, 345–46.

<sup>126</sup>See Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 21, concerning a mixture of seven different grains that is scattered about the doorstep. Canaan also considers the custom of burying the last sheaf (which cannot be treated at length here) "a sacrifice to the spirits of the field whose property has just been harvested" (*Dämonenglaube*, 25–26, with nn. 237 and 238; *ibid.*, 58). In addition to the literature quoted there see also Jaussen, *Moab*, 252–53; Musil, *Arabia Petraea*, III, 301; Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*, I.2, 574–79; J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 3rd ed., Part IV: *Adonis, Attis, Osiris* (London, 1914), II, 48, 96; Part V: *Spirits of the Corn and the Wild*, I, 138; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 44.

<sup>127</sup>Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 39. Zbinden (*Die Djinn des Islam*, 44) considers silver to be a defence that works in the same way as iron (see n. 92 above).

<sup>128</sup>Doughty, II, 211 (= 1888 ed., II, 190); Jaussen, *Naplouse*, 164, 214—but as a sacrifice or a defence? Cf. n. 89 above on the subject of rites of exorcism. Jaussen, *Naplouse*, 164, mentions a candle or torch (*Sambar*) lit in honour of spirits.

This overview, which was of necessity very brief, of beliefs in spirits and spirit worship among the present-day Arabs already offers an opportunity for some general remarks of basic importance.

1. While beliefs in spirits are present among all groups of the population (nomads, peasants, city-dwellers), there are certain differences that prevent us from treating the population of present-day Arabia as a united whole. There are several details establishing that the belief in the *jinn* is less intensive among the pure bedouin tribes (the camel breeders): the *jinn* are sedentary and are only encountered in particular places, they are much less coarsely physical, they are immortal, and while they can be of male or female gender, they do not beget offspring, etc. (see nn. 35–40, 71–82 above).

2. These distinctions are equally evident in the forms of worship. Thus sacrifices on the occasion of pitching a tent, which are almost exclusively found among the semi-bedouins in Moab [297] (see n. 106 above), quite clearly recall the sacrifices at the construction of a building among sedentary people (see above, nn. 103–105); similarly the *Rwāla* ceremony in the course of which a cockerel is slaughtered (see nn. 124 above and 135 below).

3. Numerous details are not of Arab origin, in part not even of Semitic origin. Among these are the *zār* ceremonies that originated in Abyssinia or sub-Saharan Africa (see nn. 13 and 89 above). The idea that there are seven demon princes originated in learned astrology (see n. 72 above) and under Hellenistic influence, and, indeed, many details of popular superstition were influenced by literature and are therefore, at least in their present form, more recent.<sup>129</sup> Other details, such as the belief in Solomon and David's power over the spirits and the application of this belief to the use of amulets and protective formulae (see nn. 95 and 98 above), originate from post-Biblical Jewish sources. All these have to be excluded from the attempt at reconstructing a proto-Semitic state of affairs.

4. Having eliminated all the foreign elements, we are now left with the question: where is the origin of those elements of beliefs in spirits and spirit worship that are common to nomads and sedentary people? Did they develop *independently* among both groups, or did one group adopt them from the other? Which one is giving and which receiving, or are there interchanges? Before we can approach these questions, however, we have to investigate how the modern popular belief in the *jinn* is related to pre-Islamic as well as to formal Islamic spirit beliefs.

<sup>129</sup>See W.F. Albright, "Islam and the Religions of the Ancient Orient", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 62 (1942), 282–291, esp. 281–82, 284.

## II. Beliefs in Spirits in Pre-Islamic Arabia

It is not possible to consider all works of Arab-Islamic literature, without reservations, to be sources on the subject of the pre-Islamic *jinn*, for many details regarding beliefs in spirits found there are of foreign origin and only made their way into Arab culture quite late. One instance of this can be seen in the beliefs as they appear in the collection of stories of the *Thousand and One Nights*.<sup>130</sup> [298] Useful material (albeit sparse) can be found in the pre-Islamic poets, also in the Qur'ān, Muḥammad's biography and the other older Islamic literature, and still further in later Islamic literature, namely those collected in the fields of tradition (*ḥadīth*), Qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), etc. It is advisable to apply caution to these works as well, but on the whole these sources have been critically appraised in the extant systematic studies.<sup>131</sup> Based on these well-researched and

<sup>130</sup> See Alfred von Kremer, *Culturgeschichte des Orients unter den Chalifen*, II (Wien, 1875), 255–64; Edward William Lane, *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages*, ed. Stanley Lane-Poole (London, 1883), 25–46, 179, 182–83; Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 158; Gerlof van Vloten, "Dämonen, Geister und Zauber bei den alten Arabern. Mittheilungen aus Djāhītz' *Kitāb al-haiwān*", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 7 (1893), 169–87, 233–47; 8 (1894), 59–73; A.S. Jayakar, "Some Notes on the Arab Belief in the Metamorphosis of Human and Other Beings", *The Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay* 6 (1902–1903), 181–92, esp. 183–86 (details about *jinn* according to al-Qazwīnī, al-Damīrī and other Muslim authors); Oskar Rescher, "Über das 'Geister- und Teufelsbuch' des Schiblī (Cairo 1326 [= 1908])", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 28 (1914), 241–52; *idem*, "Studien über den Inhalt von 1001 Nacht", *Der Islam* 9 (1919), 1–94, esp. 42–50, 63–64 (Judaean-Christian influence: 42; Indo-Persian influence: 45; mentally ill people considered mad: 63–64); René Basset, *Mille et un contes, récits et légendes arabes*, I (Paris, 1924), 55–57, 59–60, 151–52, 159, 175, 180–81; III (1927), 205–207, 233–34, 240–41, 271–72, 309–11; Joseph Henninger, "Mohammedanische Polemik gegen das Christentum in 1001 Nacht", *Neue Zeitung für Missionswissenschaft* 2 (1946), 289–304 (esp. 290–96: literature about the different parts of this collection of stories); Joseph Henninger, "Über die völkerkundliche Bedeutung von 1001 Nacht", *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde* 44 (1947), 35–65 (esp. 37–38, 64 n. 2 and the literature on spiritual beliefs etc. quoted there); Joseph Henninger, "Der geographische Horizont der Erzähler von 1001 Nacht", *Geographica Helvetica* 4 (1949), 214–29 (esp. 227–29: Legendarische und mythische Geographie); Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 59–72, 132–37; cf. also *ibid.*, 141–62 *passim*. Concerning the *Thousand and One Nights*, see also Macdonald, "Djinn", 1092a, at the conclusion of which he writes: "Still nearer to the ideas of the masses [than the *jinn* stories in the 1001 Nights] are the Märchen collected orally by Artin, Oestrup, Spitta, Stumme, etc. In these the folklore elements of the different races overcome the common Muslim atmosphere. The spirits appearing in them are more North African, Egyptian, Syrian, Persian and Turkish than Arabian or Muslim."

<sup>131</sup> See in particular Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 106, 147–59, 211–14; Smith, *Religion*, 119–39, 159 n. 1, 198, 441–46; Cook, *ibid.*, 538–41; Zapletal, *Der Totemismus und die Religion Israels*, 116–20, 123–28; Ignaz Goldziher, *Abhandlungen*

source-oriented studies, we can thus give a brief description of pre-Islamic beliefs about the *jinn* that will enable us to answer several cultural-historical questions.

In pre-Islamic Arabia the nature of the *jinn* was no more confined to the spirit domain than it is in modern popular belief. While the *jinn* are not made of flesh and blood but are mysterious and generally invisible, they are, in some way, physical beings.<sup>132</sup> They eat and drink,<sup>133</sup> they can be wounded and killed.<sup>134</sup> [299] There are male and female spirits;<sup>135</sup> they have offspring,<sup>136</sup> they can also have human partners and even enter

zur arabischen Philologie (Leiden, 1896–99), esp. I, 1–27, 41–42, 59, 77, 106–17, 126, 133, 197–212; II, cviii (addenda on I, 199–212); Theodor Nöldeke, art. "Arabs (Ancient)" in James Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, I (Edinburgh, 1908), 659a–673a, esp. 669b–672a; Alfred von Kremer, *Studien zur vergleichenden Culturgeschichte, vorzüglich nach arabischen Quellen*, I–II (Sitzungsberichte der Phil.-Hist. Classe der Kaiserl. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 120 [Vienna, 1890], 3rd essay; III–IV, *ibid.*, 8th essay, esp. 26–44, 53–55; Edward Westernmark, "The Nature of the Arab Ginn", 260–64; Hubert Grimme, *Mohammed*, II (Münster in Westfalen, 1895), esp. 63–71; Macdonald, "Djinn", 1091a–1092b; H. Reinfried, *Bräuche bei Zauber und Wunder nach Buchari* (Karlsruhe, 1915; Diss. Freiburg im Breisgau, 1914), esp. 16–47 *passim*, 55–56; A.J. Wensinck, "Animismus und Dämonenglaube im Untergrunde des jüdischen und islamischen rituellen Gebets", *Der Islam* 4 (1913), 219–35; Samuel S. Zwemer, *The Influence of Animism on Islam* (New York, 1920), esp. 125–45; A.S. Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1934, 715–27; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, esp. 8–39, 59–61; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 75–80 (cf. also 81–99 *passim*); Rudi Paret, *Mohammed und der Koran* (Stuttgart, 1957), esp. 21–23, with the literature listed; Joseph Chelhod, *Le sacrifice chez les Arabes* (Paris, 1955), esp. 104–106, 174, 176, 195, 196; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, 25–29; G. Ryckmans, *Les religions arabes préislamiques*, 3rd ed. in M. Gorce and R. Mortier, *Histoire générale des religions*, IV (Paris, 1960), 201–28, with the bibliography at 593–605; and especially Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam"; on his Arabic sources see *ibid.*, 157–59. See also nn. 2–11 and 16 above. The literature on beliefs in spirits in pre-Islamic Arabia mentioned here (nn. 130 and 131) has not been completely evaluated in the following notes (132–221); neither has the literature on modern Arabia (cf. n. 28 above). In any case, the same original instances tend to be quoted again and again in the relevant literature.

<sup>132</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 148–49, 151–52, 154; Smith, *Religion*, 119–20; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 38; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 716–17; Ryckmans, *Religions arabes préislamiques*, 203b.

<sup>133</sup> Lane, *Arabian Society*, 33; Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 149; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 720–21; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 71, 77, 98. Their food is excrement: Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 150; cf. also Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 33; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 93.

<sup>134</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 149, 153–54; Smith, *Religion*, 120, 127 n. 2, 128.

<sup>135</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 149, 154; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, 28. Cf. also nn. 152 and 153 below.

<sup>136</sup> Lane, *Arabian Society*, 33.

into true marriages with them.<sup>137</sup> Like humans they are organised into clans and tribes; the collective is more important than the individual among *jinn* and Arabs alike,<sup>138</sup> and this community acts in solidarity whenever necessary, as, e.g., in the case of a blood feud.<sup>139</sup> While spirits can live in plants, especially trees and shrubs (see n. 162 below), the form they assume most frequently is that of an animal, more particularly a wild animal, but occasionally also a domestic one.<sup>140</sup> Besides quadrupeds such as the panther, jackal, wildcat, donkey, dog, cat and mouse,<sup>141</sup> birds play a certain part here, e.g. the raven, owl, green woodpecker, hoopoe and ostrich,<sup>142</sup> but especially snakes<sup>143</sup> and creeping animals in general, such as lizards,

<sup>137</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 154; Smith, *Religion*, 50, 128; Cook, *ibid.*, 514; William Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, 2nd ed. (London, 1907), 240; van Vloten, "Dämonen, Geister und Zauber bei den alten Arabern" (1893), 245–47; (1894), 64–65; Ignaz Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam*, 2nd ed. (Heidelberg, 1925), 68, 319–20 n. 131; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 721–22; Chelhod, *Sacrifice*, 105; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 71–72, 78, 85, 98. Cf. also n. 32 above. It is not clear from all the instances whether this belief is said to be pre-Islamic, but it is sufficiently clearly documented for pre-Islamic times. One instance in favour of this view is *Sūrat al-Rahmān* (55), vs. 56, 77, where the *Ḥūrīs* (virgins of paradise) are said "never to have been touched before, by man or *jānn*" (cf. Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 21; Henninger, "Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten im Koran", 132–33 [= book edition, 85–86]; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 85, 98). See also Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 193. Similar relations are possible between domestic animals of the *jinn* and those of humans (e.g. camels); *ibid.*, 193–94 with nn. 154 and 155 [210].

<sup>138</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 148; Smith, *Religion*, 126–27; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 717.

<sup>139</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 148–49, 153–54; Smith, *Religion*, 127, 128; Chelhod, *Sacrifice*, 176.

<sup>140</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 106, 151–55, 157; Smith, *Religion*, 119, 127–32 (also Cook, *ibid.*, 541); Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 718–20; Chelhod, *Sacrifice*, 105; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 76–77; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Ma-homet*, 26; cf. also Rudolf Geyer, "Die Katze auf dem Kamel. Ein Beitrag zur altarabischen Phrasologie", in Carl Bezold, ed., *Orientalische Studien Theodor Nöldeke zum 70. Geburtstag gewidmet* (Giessen, 1906), I, 57–60, esp. 66–67. On the cat as a demonic animal, see Menahem Naor, "Über die arabische Katze", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 35 (1928), 276–89; 36 (1929), 87–107, esp. 35: 278–80, 36: 227–29.

<sup>141</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 150–52; Lane, *Arabian Society*, 34–35. Cf. also n. 140 above, n. 185 below.

<sup>142</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 152, 154; Smith, *Religion*, 120, 129; Geyer, "Die Katze auf dem Kamel", 66–67; Ryckmans, *Religions arabes préislamiques*, 203b.

<sup>143</sup> Theodor Nöldeke, "Die Schlange nach arabischem Volksglauben", *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* 1 (1860), 412–16; *idem*, "Arabs (Ancient)", 669b; Lane, *Arabian Society*, 34–35; Kremer, *Studien*, III–IV, 26–28; Georg Jacob, *Altarabische Parallelen zum Alten Testament* (Berlin, 1897), 5–6, 16; *idem*, *Altarabisches Beduinenleben*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1897), 24; Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 108–109, 149 n. 2, 151–55, 163–64, 212, 214; Smith, *Religion*, 120 with n. 1, 127 with

scorpions and beetles etc.<sup>144</sup> The association of a spirit with an animal body is sometimes closer, sometimes less so; in some cases the animal body is only an assumed mask.<sup>145</sup> Spirits can change their appearance; many possess [300] a multitude of forms.<sup>146</sup> Frequently they are also thought to be riding, especially on ostriches and foxes.<sup>147</sup> While according to modern popular belief spirits can appear in human form (see n. 50 above), it is not possible to determine from the sources<sup>148</sup> whether they could already appear in human form, or indeed in some terrifying form, e.g. as giants,<sup>149</sup> according to ancient Arab beliefs. Some demons, however, do appear in monstrous hybrid forms, e.g. as a wolf or hyena<sup>150</sup> (this detail is remarkable as according to modern popular belief the wolf is the *jinn*'s worst enemy; see n. 45 above).

It seems that the boundaries between *jinn* and animals are fluid in some cases, as there are several names for a certain class of demon that also denote

n. 2, 129–30, 133, 168, 176, 177 (cf. also *ibid.*, 442–43); Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 717–20; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 11–12; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 71, 76–77, 78, 81, 85–86, 93–94 (cf. also *ibid.*, 75); Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 188–89, 194–95. In the belief in house snakes—good spirits in the form of snakes (cf. n. 164 below)—Zbinden (*ibid.*, 94) already suspects Syriac influence. On the subject in general cf. nn. 44, 47, 65 above; n. 163 below.

<sup>144</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 151–54 *passim*; Smith, *Religion*, 128, 129–30; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 77; Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 188–89.

<sup>145</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 152, 154.

<sup>146</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 149, 152; Smith, *Religion*, 120; Jacob, *Beduinenleben*, 123; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 719, 721.

<sup>147</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 152; Smith, *Religion*, 129; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 719–20; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 76; Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 192.

<sup>148</sup> See nn. 49 and 130 above.

<sup>149</sup> Wellhausen (*Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 156) only mentions the present-day popular belief in this context. While Smith (*Religion*, 120, 127, 129 n. 1) mentions the possibility of a spirit appearing in human form, he only has one instance (*ibid.*, 129 n. 2) and that from al-Damīrī, who could have been reflecting medieval Islamic ideas. Tritton ("Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 725) does not give a source. In Islamic collections of traditions this form of appearance is mentioned (Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 93), frequently also in the *1001 Nights* (*ibid.*, 61–62, 64), but Zbinden believes this to have been caused by Persian influence (*ibid.*). For information on pre-Islamic Arabia, Zbinden (*ibid.*, 77) refers to the story of 'Antar, which, however, must not be considered without reservation as a source for this time because it was composed only between the eighth and the twelfth centuries AD; see the instances in Joseph Henninger, "Menschenopfer bei den Arabern", *Anthropos* 53 (1958), 750–51, 758–59.

<sup>150</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 152; Smith, *Religion*, 129; Chelhod, *Sacrifice*, 105; Ryckmans, *Religions arabes préislamiques*, 203b; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 76.

an animal, a weather phenomenon, or calamity, terror, etc. in general.<sup>151</sup> The man-eating *ghul*<sup>152</sup> and several other particular species of demonic beings were known under the same names in pre-Islamic Arabia as they are today.<sup>153</sup>

The *jinn*'s abode is the desert,<sup>154</sup> especially certain little-known areas that are difficult to reach,<sup>155</sup> also old ruins,<sup>156</sup> [301] graveyards and generally all places of decay and filth, such as latrines.<sup>157</sup> Spirits live in the earth,<sup>158</sup> and whoever cultivates wasteland, digs a well or foundations for a building etc. will disturb the spirits and may incur their wrath.<sup>159</sup>

<sup>151</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 149; Smith, *Religion*, 119–20, 121 with n. 2, 124–32 *passim*.

<sup>152</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 149–50, 154, 155; Smith, *Religion*, 126 n. 1, 128 n. 3, 129 n. 2, 131; Jacob, *Beduinleben*, 122–23; Lane, *Arabian Society*, 41–42, 104; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 721; Chelhod, *Sacrifice*, 105; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 97. The word *dhul* in Gaudfroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, 28, is undoubtedly a misprint for *ghul*. Cf. also n. 51 above.

<sup>153</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 149; Lane, *Arabian Society*, 43–46; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 715–16; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 13–14.

<sup>154</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 149–50; Smith, *Religion*, 120–22; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 717–18; Chelhod, *Sacrifice*, 105; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 75. Cf. also n. 255 below.

<sup>155</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 150 (*ibid.*, 106, more generally: "in caves, mountains and valleys"); Smith, *Religion*, 121–22; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 717. Macdonald ("Djinn", 1091b) considered the *jinn*'s "localisation in a fixed place" as so strongly characteristic that the classical definition of the Roman *genius loci* [guardian angel of a place] "*naturalem deum uniuscuiusque loci*" might be applied to it (cf. nn. 71–73, 99 above). Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 195, with n. 160 [211], also compares a *jinnī* to a *genius loci*. Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 17, argues against Macdonald, but not convincingly. When Zbinden writes (*Die Djinn des Islam*, 75): "They are hidden in every chasm and behind every stone", he appears to be guilty of an unjustified exaggeration. I do not know of any positive instance from pre-Islamic Arabia of a *jinnī* living among stones (rocks) (in modern times there are sporadic cases, see n. 64 above). Wellhausen (*Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 212) states clearly: "A connection between the Ansāb, the holy stones, and the *jinn* cannot be established". When Gaudfroy-Demombynes (*Mahomet*, 26) and Zbinden (*loc. cit.*) talk about *jinn* living among the rocks, we can assume this to be an inference from deities localised in rocks back to earlier *jinn* (cf. Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 80).

<sup>156</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 150; Chelhod, *Sacrifice*, 105; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 76; Ryckmans, *Religions arabes préislamiques*, 203b.

<sup>157</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 150, 158.

<sup>158</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 151–52; Smith, *Religion*, 198; Ryckmans, *Religions arabes préislamiques*, 203b. Cf. also Toufic Fahd, *La divination arabe* (Leiden, 1966), 174–76.

<sup>159</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 151, 153; Smith, *Religion*, 133, 135, 159 n. 1; Kremer, *Studien*, III–IV, 26; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 717–18; Zbinden,

It is not clear whether caves play a particular part as habitation of the *jinn*.<sup>160</sup>

However, they do not live exclusively in the desert, but also in areas that are rich in water and vegetation,<sup>161</sup> in trees and thickets.<sup>162</sup> A particular connection between *jinn* and springs and wells, as nowadays (see nn. 57, 58, 77, 79, 80, 81, 113, 114), is less frequent in ancient Arabia than it was in Syria or Palestine.<sup>163</sup> *Jinn* are also found as house spirits in human habitations, where they sometimes appear in the shape of snakes.<sup>164</sup> It

*Die Djinn des Islam*, 76. Cf. also Werner Caskel, *Ġamharat al-nasab* (Leiden, 1966), II, 408b (art. Mirdās ibn Abī 'Āmir), 497a (Sa'd ibn 'Ubāda); Toufic Fahd, *Le panthéon de l'Arabie centrale à la veille de l'hégire* (Paris, 1968), 34; *idem*, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 187–88.

<sup>160</sup> Wellhausen (*Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 106) mentions caves (see n. 155 above), but he does not give a source.

<sup>161</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 106, 151; Smith, *Religion*, 131–32; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 75. Smith (*Religion*, 131) writes explicitly: "while the *jinn* frequent waste and desert places in general, their special haunts are just those where wild beasts gather most thickly—not the arid and lifeless desert, but the mountain glades and passes, the neighbourhood of trees and groves, especially the dense untrodden thickets that occupy moist places in the bottom of the valleys". Wellhausen (*Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 106–108) and Smith (*Religion*, 112 with n. 1, 142–51 *passim*) also explain the institution of the *himā*, the holy district, from its having been the spirits' abode, which was only later taken over by the gods. Cf. Henninger, "Die unblutige Tierweihe der vorislamischen Araber in ethnologischer Sicht", *Paideuma* 4 (1950), 181 with nn. 7–12, 187 with n. 51.

<sup>162</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 104–106, 151, 164; Smith, *Religion*, 120 n. 1, 132–33 (cf. also 442); Kremer, *Studien*, III–IV, 26; Gaudfroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, 27, 29; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 76. Cf. also n. 161 above.

<sup>163</sup> Wellhausen (*Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 106) writes, generally: "They live in water", but does not give a source nor a concrete example (212–13: he mentions only the spring in Afaka, which is in Syria). Gaudfroy-Demombynes (*Mahomet*, 26) also mentions spirits living in springs only in a general way. Chelhod (*Sacrifice*, 105) mentions sacred springs that were guarded by spirits in the shape of giant pythons; the only instance given is in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, VI, 751ff. (Chelhod, *Sacrifice*, 105 n. 6). This is the article "Holiness (Semitic)" by Owen C. Whitehouse (*loc. cit.*, 751b–759b). "Serpent *jinn*" is mentioned once, but without a source. It is obviously based on the remarks on the subject by Smith (*Religion*, 135–36 and 165–212, esp. 166–79). He emphasises explicitly that sacred springs and wells were of less importance among nomadic Arabs than in Syria and Palestine (167, cf. 169–77 *passim*). Concerning the spring in Afaka, see *ibid.*, 168–69; concerning ancient southern Arabia, *ibid.*, 168, 176, 177 (partly only indirect references); concerning spring spirits in the shape of serpents, *ibid.*, 168, 176, 177 (only ancient southern Arabia and Syria-Palestine). Concerning the worship of springs in Mesopotamia, Asia Minor and Syria, cf. now Friedrich Muthmann, *Mutter und Quelle* (Basel, 1975), 279–332. Cf. n. 190 below.

<sup>164</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 151, 164; Smith, *Religion*, 120 n. 1; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 717; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 76.

has not been possible to determine whether the belief that the doorstep is a favourite abode of spirits (cf. nn. 66, 109–11) originated in ancient Arabian times.<sup>165</sup> "They are present everywhere, one is always in danger of disturbing them".<sup>166</sup> They are up to their tricks in particular in the dark and disappear at the coming of light.<sup>167</sup>

[302] Their impact can be detected in nature, especially in extraordinary and inexplicable phenomena, such as in strange noises heard at night in the desert,<sup>168</sup> in mirages, in whirlwinds etc.<sup>169</sup> They interfere in the lives of animals<sup>170</sup> and humans, they disturb and frighten them. Animals can feel their presence, even before humans notice them, and react to them.<sup>171</sup> In humans, they cause illness, especially fever, epidemics, epilepsy etc., and disturb their sexual functions (causing impotence in a man, sterility or miscarriage in a woman).<sup>172</sup> A madman is called *majnūn*, "possessed by the

<sup>165</sup> While Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, 27, maintains that this is so, I do not know a single positive instance from ancient Arabian times.

<sup>166</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 151.

<sup>167</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 151 (cf. also 149–50); Smith, *Religion*, 131; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 718; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 76; Ryckmans, *Religions arabes préislamiques*, 203b. Irene Grütter, "Arabische Bestattungsbräuche in frühislamischer Zeit", *Der Islam* 32 (1955–57), 98, assumes that the reason for accompanying a funeral procession with lights was (also) to keep at bay spirits who are up to their tricks in the dark. The idea that the crowing of a rooster drives the demons away seems to be of Persian origin and entered Arabian soil from there; cf. Henninger, "Huhnopfer", 341 with nn. 35–38 and the instances given therein; also Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 725; Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina*, I.2, 637–38.

<sup>168</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 150, 154–55; Smith, *Religion*, 130; Jacob, *Beduinenleben*, 122.

<sup>169</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 151, 205–206; Smith, *Religion*, 134; Lane, *Arabian Society*, 36; Kremer, *Studien*, III–IV, 29; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 16–17. On the same idea among the Berbers and other peoples, see Werner Vycichl, "Der Teufel in der Staubwolke", *Le Muséon* 69 (1956), 341–46.

<sup>170</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 155; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 77. Various evil practical jokes by *jinn*: Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 723–24; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, 28.

<sup>171</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 151.

<sup>172</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 151–51, 163; Smith, *Religion*, 120, 128, 135; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 722, 724; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, 27–28, 43–44; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 77; Ryckmans, *Religions arabes préislamiques*, 203b. See also Tadeusz Kowalski, "Nase und Nieren im arabischen Volksglauben und Sprachgebrauch", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 31 (1924), 193–218, esp. 203 (disease demons entering through the nose), 212 (ejecting the demons by sneezing; cf. also 218), 213 (demons entering through a yawn). Concerning sneezing and yawning, see also Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 163.

*jinn*".<sup>173</sup> They abduct people, children as well as adults, taking them into the desert.<sup>174</sup>

Besides this harassment and interference, there are also other more amicable variants of possession as well as other relationships between humans and *jinn*.<sup>175</sup> There was an idea that every human has a Doppelgänger among the *jinn*,<sup>176</sup> maybe even a belief in a personal guardian spirit,<sup>177</sup> but most certainly one finds the belief that some very favoured human beings can have close and friendly relationships with *jinn*. [303] One such individual is the soothsayer (*kāhin*),<sup>178</sup> the point here being that the *jinn* have secret knowl-

<sup>173</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 156; Smith, *Religion*, 120, 127 n. 2, 128, 129 n. 2; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 722–24; Chelhod, *Sacrifice*, 195–96; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, 27–28; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 23–29 *passim*; Ryckmans, *Religions arabes préislamiques*, 203b; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 77; Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 191–92. Cf. also nn. 231–33 below.

<sup>174</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 154, 155; Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 192.

<sup>175</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 156 with n. 1; he refers to modern ideas according to which a human being can be a kind of *manhal* (cf. n. 75 above), on the authority of Doughty (II, 127; 1888 ed., II, 109). *Jinn* can also be helpful to humans: Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 154–55; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 722; Nöldeke, "Arabs (Ancient)", 669b; Chelhod, *Sacrifice*, 105; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 78.

<sup>176</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 156–56; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 722. Gaudefroy-Demombynes (*Mahomet*, 28) says: "It appears that the *jinn* haunting graveyards were the doubles of dead people. Muslim belief has preserved the idea that everybody has a double among the *jinn*, who is his or her close companion (*qarīn*): he is a person's good or evil genius. It appears possible to discover this double in the *jinn*, invisible or changed into a bird, roaming about the grave." (We shall not, however, discuss in any detail connections with ancient Arabian beliefs concerning the soul.) When Eichler (*Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 35–39) also speaks of "*jinn* as the doubles of humans", the meaning is a different one. He understands it to say that, according to ideas expressed in the Qur'ān, *jinn* are on the same level as humans, that they are a class of creatures like humans (and quadrupeds, birds, etc.), but that they are no longer demonic beings (and have no superhuman powers). Cf. n. 205 below.

<sup>177</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 156; Kremer, *Studien*, III–IV, 43; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 16. G.D. Hornblower, "Traces of a Ka-Belief in Modern Egypt and Old Arabia", *Ancient Egypt* 8 (1923), 67–70, esp. 69–70, conjectures an ancient Arabian belief in a guardian spirit, similar to the ancient Egyptian beliefs concerning Ka.

<sup>178</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 134–40 (esp. 134, 137–38), 157 n. 1; van Vloten, "Dämonen, Geister und Zauber bei den alten Arabern" (1893), 183–84; Jacob, *Altarabische Parallelen*, 15–16; Nöldeke, "Arabs (Ancient)", 671a; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 23–29; C. Snouck Hurgronje, "Der Islam", in P.D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, 4th ed. (Tübingen, 1924), I, 651, 661; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 724, 726; H.S. Nyberg, "Bemerkungen zum



edge,<sup>179</sup> some of which they impart. The poet (*shā'ir*) and the musician were assumed to be favoured with a similar inspiration, which contributed to the great esteem in which poets were held in pre-Islamic Arabia and to the faith in the immanent power of the poet's words, his curse and his satire against the enemy.<sup>180</sup> In some way related to this is the belief that the *jinn*

<sup>179</sup> 'Buch der Götzenbilder' von Ibn al-Kalbī, in *Dragma: Martino P. Nilsson A.D. IV Id. Jul. Anno MCMXXIX dedicatum* (Lund, 1939), 346–66, esp. 357–60, 362–63; Alfred Haldar, *Associations of Cult Prophets among the Ancient Semites* (Uppsala, 1945), 161–98, esp. 167, 179–83, 186; Rosa Klinke-Rosenberger, *Das Götzenbuch (Kitāb al-Aṣnām) des Ibn al-Kalbī* (Zurich and Leipzig, 1942), 59, 135 nn. 391 and 392; Paret, *Mohammed und der Koran*, 21–23, 156; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 78–79, 83; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, 29, 39–42; Joseph Henninger, "La société bédouine ancienne", in Francesco Gabrieli, ed., *L'antica società beduina* (Rome, 1959), 69–93, esp. 83 with n. 61; Joseph Henninger, "La religion bédouine préislamique", in *ibid.*, 115–40, esp. 137 with nn. 88–90, 138–39 with nn. 94–97. Muḥammad, whose appearance was like a *kāhin*, was thought to be inspired by a *jinnī*, according to his opponents; see Snouck Hurgronje, "Der Islam", 661; Richard Ettinghausen, *Antiheidnische Polemik im Koran* (Gelnhausen, 1934; Diss. Frankfurt am Main, 1931), 15–19, 25–27; Johann Fück, "Die Originalität des arabischen Propheten", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 90 (1936), 509–525, esp. 516–17 and the literature cited therein. See Fritz Meier, "Quelques aspects de l'inspiration par les démons en Islam", in Roger Caillois and G.E. von Grunebaum, eds., *Le rêve et les sociétés humaines* (Paris, 1967), 418–25; Fahd, *La divination arabe*, 68–76 *passim*; *idem*, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 191 (Muḥammad was regarded in this way as well: *ibid.*).

<sup>179</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 137–38, 155; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 24–27, 30–32; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 726; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 78–79, 83–84; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, 29, 41; Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 191. The myth that there are *jinn* listening in on Heaven, who are driven away by shooting stars is, however, not ancient Arabian but rather Islamic (with Jewish influence); see Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 137–38; Kremer, *Studien*, III–IV, 39; Grimme, *Mohammed*, II, 65; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 30–32; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 83–84, 87, 91.

<sup>180</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 135 n. 3, 156, 157 n. 1; Ignaz Goldziher, "Die Ginnen der Dichter", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 45 (1891), 685–90; *idem*, *Abhandlungen zur Arabischen Philologie*, I, 1–121 (esp. 1–27, 41–42, 59), 133; Jacob, *Altarabische Parallelen*, 15–16; Rescher, "Studien über den Inhalt von 1001 Nacht", 48–49; Nöldeke, "Arabs (Ancient)", 671a; Snouck Hurgronje, "Der Islam", 651, 661; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 23–29; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 718, 723; Haldar, *Cult Prophets*, 178, 182–83, 187–89; Chelhod, *Sacrifice*, 105, 131 with n. 5; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 72, 28–29, 82–84, 98; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, 23–24, 29; Paret, *Mohammed und der Koran*, 21, 156; Henninger, "La société bédouine ancienne", 83–84 with n. 62; Robert C. Elliot, *The Power of Satire* (Princeton, 1960), esp. 15–18, 103 n. 6 and the literature cited therein; Meier, "L'inspiration par les démons en Islam", esp. 420–22; Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 191.

cause dreams and can therefore enable a human partner to interpret dreams as well.<sup>181</sup>

On the whole, however, humans find them disagreeable. *Jinn* are not "evil" spirits in the moralistic sense, which can be found in the Biblical religions as well as Islam (see nn. 206–209 below), but are morally neutral. They are helpful or harmful according to whim, depending on whether they are friendly or hostile to a person,<sup>182</sup> and this is why people are reluctant to have any dealings with them. One never knows how they will react, and consequently one needs to use various defence strategies to keep them at bay.<sup>183</sup>

1) Just like nowadays, [304] people had to avoid whistling, because spirits call one another by whistling.<sup>184</sup> 2) Another protective strategy could be to imitate animals considered to be either demonic themselves or gifted with particular powers against the demons, e.g. the braying of a donkey.<sup>185</sup> 3) People would also wear amulets,<sup>186</sup> and some ancient Arabian incantations may well have been directed against the *jinn*.<sup>187</sup> We do not find any evidence in pre-Islamic times of invoking the protection of more exalted powers against the *jinn*,<sup>188</sup> but there are 4) some invocations addressed to the *jinn* themselves, which bring to mind the modern *dastūr yā ṣāhib al-maḥall* (see

<sup>181</sup> Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, 41–42. Cf. also Toufic Fahd, "Les songes et leur interprétation selon l'Islam", in *Sources orientales* 2 (Paris, 1959), 125–57.

<sup>182</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 149; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 3–4, 8–9.

<sup>183</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 157–67 (including some practices only introduced by Islam, cf. n. 217 below); Nöldeke, "Arabs (Ancient)", 670b; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 717, 718, 720, 724–26.

<sup>184</sup> Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, 27 (without giving a source); Wellhausen (*Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 150) reports this only about present-day Arabs, according to Doughty (see n. 93 above).

<sup>185</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 162–63; Jacob, *Beduinenleben*, 154–55; Rudolf Geyer, "Das Fieber von Ḥaibar und der Esel", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 17 (1903), 301–302; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, 43–44; Fahd, *La divination arabe*, 475.

<sup>186</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 160–67 *passim*; Smith, *Religion*, 129 n. 2, 133 n. 4 (amulets made from the body of a hare, because this animal is not ridden by spirits); Lane, *Arabian Society*, 36–37, 40 (iron); Chelhod, *Sacrifice*, 174 with n. 7 (menstrual blood chases the spirits away); Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 77–78; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, 42–43; Fahd, *La divination arabe*, 213 n. 7 (hare's bones as a defence). On the use of iron, see Goldziher, "Eisen als Schutz gegen Dämonen", 41–46, esp. 42–43.

<sup>187</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 160–67 *passim*; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 77–78; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 717.

<sup>188</sup> The idea that God is greater than all other powers is sometimes already expressed by pre-Islamic poets; see Carl Brockelmann, "Allah und die Götzen. Der Ursprung des islamischen Monotheismus", *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 21 (1922), 99–121, esp. 107–

n. 99 above).<sup>189</sup> 5) There are also reports of rites that might be called sacrifices, namely slaughtering animals and sprinkling their blood on occasions such as the building of a house, the digging of a well, cultivating wasteland etc.,<sup>190</sup> similar to modern times (see nn. 103–108), although instances from pre-Islamic Arabia are rather rare. It is doubtful whether this should indeed be called a sacrifice (in the sense of a gift) or whether it is only a defensive rite. This question is linked to that of what exactly the relationship was between the ancient Arabian *jinn* and the pre-Islamic gods, and whether it is possible to presume genuine *jinn* worship in pre-Islamic Arabia.

On first consideration, this question would appear to be superfluous, because the Qurʾān states explicitly that there were Arabs in Muḥammad's day who worshipped the *jinn* (Sūrat Saba' 34, v. 40, Sūrat al-Jinn 72, v. 6) or linked them to God (Sūrat al-An'ām 6, v. 100; Sūrat al-Šaffāt 37, v. 158), [305] i.e. treated them as deities.<sup>191</sup> Similar statements are found in

11, 114–15, but people do not appear to have drawn the practical consequence of praying to him for protection from the *jinn*.

<sup>189</sup>Lane, *Arabian Society*, 38–39; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 16–17; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 47; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 717, 722; Chelhod, *Sacrifice*, 105–106.

<sup>190</sup>Smith, *Religion*, 159 n. 1; Kremer, *Studien*, I–II, 48; Nöldeke, "Arabs (Ancient)", 670b; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 16, 18; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 717 n. 6; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 78; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, 271 cf. also n. 159 above. We can assume that Sūrat al-An'ām (6), v. 128, is also talking about sacrifices to the *jinn* (cf. Macdonald, "Djinn", 1091b; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 88). It is also possible that the pouring of the blood into a hollow at the feet of the idol (see Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 39, 103, 116) is linked to the chthonic demons (Klinke-Rosenberger, *Götzenbuch*, 99 n. 151). Concerning building sacrifices according to al-Damīrī, see Canaan, "Das Blut in Sitten und Aberglauben", 22; for other information about building sacrifices to *jinn*, see Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 190 with n. 129 (209). A soothsayer from Yemen always made great sacrifices before soothsaying, apparently in honour of the spirit inspiring him; see van Vloten, "Dämonen, Geister und Zauber bei den alten Arabern" (1893). On the subject of sacrifices near springs in ancient southern Arabia see Smith, *Religion*, 177 (cf. *ibid.*, 168, 176); also Joseph Henninger, "Das Opfer in der altsüdarabischen Hochkulturen", *Anthropos* 37–40 (1942–45), 795 n. 38, 797 n. 49, 805 n. 104. Cf. also David Heinrich Müller, "Die Burgen und Schlösser Südarabiens nach dem *Ikhl* des Hamdānī", *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Phil.-Hist. Classe* 94 (1879), 366–67 (Arabic text: *ibid.*, 401); Ludwig Forrer, *Südarabien nach al-Hamdānī's "Beschreibung der arabischen Halbinsel"* (Leipzig, 1942), 111 n. 2, 223–25.

<sup>191</sup>Sūrat al-An'ām (6), v. 100 (cf. also v. 128); Sūrat Saba' (34), v. 40; Sūrat al-Šaffāt (37), v. 158; Sūrat al-Jinn (72), v. 6. See Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 16–18, 25, 34, 38–39; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 726; Haldar, *Cult Prophets*, 182 with nn. 5–8; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 79–80. Concerning the *jinn* in pre-Islamic Arabia and their relations to the deities, see now Fahd, *Le panthéon de l'Arabie centrale*, 9 (continuation of n. 3), 12 n. 1, 44, 80, 88, 116 n. 1; *idem*, "Anges, démons et

early Islamic tradition.<sup>192</sup> Consequently earlier Western scholars of Islam assumed a genuine "*jinn* worship". Thus e.g. Alois Sprenger, against whom Wellhausen writes:

It is not correct that the Arabs made no distinction between gods and demons, as Sprenger assumes. He believes that it is perfectly clear from the Qurʾān that *jinn* worship was the nucleus of Arab polytheism (I, 252).<sup>193</sup> It is just as clearly evident from the Church Fathers that the Greeks, Romans, Teutonic peoples etc. worshipped demons and other unclean spirits, or from Leviticus and the Book of Chronicles that on ancient Israelite hills sacrifices were offered to satyrs and demons of the wilderness. In fact it was only with the advent of Islam that the gods were reduced to demons. However, just as they sank to being demons in the end, so they had risen from being demons in the beginning...<sup>194</sup>

*djinns en Islam*", 190. It seems, however, that Fahd is not always consistent in his ideas. In one instance he distinguishes between *jinn* and deities (190: "How... could such spirits, who had neither individuality nor personality, be compared to the individualised and personified gods?"), but on the other hand he appears to admit that a *jinnī* could *sometimes* be regarded as a god (*ibid.*: "... the *jinnī*, while not individualised or personified, is all the same permanently linked to the individual or the community, *although he is not always regarded as a god*" (emphasis added). The latter passage is in agreement with the idea that he considers *Allāh* to be the appellative for all the higher deities and *jinn* the appellative for the lower deities: "In short, in pre-Islamic times, *Allāh* appears to have been an appellative that could be used for all the higher deities of the Arab pantheon, just as *jadd*, the deified ancestor, and *jinn*, the genius loci, referred to lower deities" (Fahd, *Panthéon*, 44; cf. also *ibid.*, 8 n. 3, 12 n. 1, 116 n. 7). In order to support this view, he points out that lower deities were denoted by the Aramaic term *ginnayē* (*ibid.*, 80 n. 2; cf. n. 236 above). Fahd's statements on the relation between the terms *jadd* and *jinn* are not quite clear either (cf. *Panthéon*, 44, as opposed to *ibid.*, 80–81). While the passage quoted above (*Panthéon*, 44) distinguishes between the deified ancestor *jadd* and the *jinn*, we later find (*ibid.*, 80): "In Aramaean lands, the *jadd* was the equivalent of the Canaanite Baʿl and, in Arab lands, the equivalent of a certain class of *jinn*" (emphasis added). In the note he says: "*Jadd* and *jinnī* are equivalent generic terms" (*ibid.*, 80 n. 2). However, it is certain that even for Fahd, pre-Islamic deities and *jinn* are not generally identical, but only partly so.

<sup>192</sup>E.g. Ibn al-Kalbī. Cf. Klinke-Rosenberger, *Götzenbuch*, 48, 113 n. 248; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 79–80. It is, however, necessary sometimes to ask whether similar reports in *ḥadīth* have an independent value or whether they are based on and commenting on Qurʾānic passages.

<sup>193</sup>The passage quoted is Alois Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammed*, I (Berlin, 1861), 252.

<sup>194</sup>Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 211–12.



Such was the predominant view among Islamic and Semitic scholars studying the history of religion towards the end of the nineteenth century: spirits and gods do not differ in their nature, but only in the relations they have with humans; spirits are feared and their habitat to be avoided, whereas gods command trust and their dwellings are visited for the express purpose of worshipping them and receiving help.<sup>195</sup> Chelhod's view is similar, based on the theory of a linear development beginning (not with the spirits but) with the idea of the impersonal-sacred:

The same absence of personalisation can be observed in the idea a nomad has of the divine...the analysis of the basic ideas of ancient Semitic religion leads us to believe that the notion as such of a personalised deity is only a late acquisition. In its place we find a non-differentiated sacred entity that is essentially represented by the *jinn*...Everything in the desert is animated and wondrous, but nothing to such an extent as to become a genuine object of worship.<sup>196</sup>

This, according to Chelhod, is the reason why there is hardly any public worship among the nomads; it only begins when they settle and deities become personalised.<sup>197</sup>

If we wish to subscribe to this view, however, the Qur'ānic passages about *jinn* worship mentioned above would have to be interpreted rather brutally. While there is no theological precision to be found in the Qur'ān, there is a clear differentiation between the deities of Arab polytheism on the one hand and the *jinn* on the other,<sup>198</sup> and we encounter major difficulties when interpreting these passages as referring to deities.<sup>199</sup> Consequently, several more recent authors have not followed Smith's and Wellhausen's theory. Macdonald, while accepting the Qur'ānic passages on *jinn* worship without reservation, interprets them in accordance with his idea that by Muḥammad's time there was no longer any genuine paganism in Mecca. Rather, there was a syncretism, "a kind of Christian faith in which saints and angels had come between God and his servants". Macdonald appears to count the *jinn* among these intermediate beings (who intercede with

<sup>195</sup> Smith, *Religion*, 119, 121–24, 126, 130; Cf. also Cook, *ibid.*, 539; Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 211–14 *passim* (see 280–82); Nöldeke, "Arabs (Ancient)", 670b.

<sup>196</sup> Chelhod, *Sociologie*, 42–43.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>198</sup> Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 17, 37–38, 76–78; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 79–80, 84.

<sup>199</sup> Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 726.

God).<sup>200</sup> [306] J. Starcky writes: "Present-day Arabs who believe in *jinn* consider them to be mainly evil spirits, but for Muḥammad's contemporaries, the *jinn* were gods (Sūrat al-An'ām 6, v. 11 [sic. Read: v. 100])."<sup>201</sup> Starcky, like Dussaud,<sup>202</sup> quite obviously bases his statement on the fact that there was a class of minor deities in Palmyra, called *ginnaye*, a name that is undoubtedly related etymologically to Arabic *jinn* (see below, 310–11). Gaudefroy-Demombynes also assumes pre-Islamic *jinn* worship, but on the premise of a gradual and fluid transition from *jinn* to deities who were indeterminate at first and only later acquired clear personalities (see above, 281–82, with n. 10). Zbinden<sup>203</sup> is the strongest champion of pre-Islamic *jinn* worship.

However, it may be that the difference of opinion is not quite as sharp as it seems to be at first sight. The contrast between demons as fearsome and gods as friendly and helpful beings as postulated by Smith is probably exaggerated, because of his general theory of Semitic gods (gods are, in a totemistic sense, blood relations of their clans). There are, in fact, even among the *jinn* friendly and helpful beings in pre-Islamic Arabia (see nn. 175–80 above), and not even Smith (see n. 190 above) assumes a complete absence of *jinn* worship. This alone would be reason enough not to accept unreservedly Smith's absolute statements. Wellhausen has a suggestion that might help us here: "...There is also devotion to demons, but it is entirely private and barely rises above the level of magic; it is not a starting point for progress..."<sup>204</sup> Leaving aside the theory that is always attempting to arrange everything along an ascending line of development, this expresses an important distinction: the private worship of spirits (*jinn*, demons) on the one hand and public communal worship of deities on the other can exist alongside one another (and one does not necessarily result from the other—certainly not always).

Before turning to this problem of cultural history, a brief account of how Islam influenced ancient Arab beliefs in the *jinn* would be useful.

<sup>200</sup> Macdonald, "Djinn", 1091b.

<sup>201</sup> Jean Starcky, "Palmyréniens, nabatéens et arabes du nord avant l'Islam", in Maurice Brillant and René Aigrain, *Histoire des religions*, IV (Paris, n.d.), 219.

<sup>202</sup> René Dussaud, *La pénétration des arabes en Syrie avant l'Islam* (Paris, 1955), 90–91, 98, 99, 101, 110–13, 169, with Fig. 26 (p. 111) and Fig. 27 (p. 114).

<sup>203</sup> Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 79–80, 83–84, 99.

<sup>204</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 213 n. 1. [Emphasis added: J.H.]. Cf. also Cook in Smith, *Religion*, 539, who assumes the absence of *jinn* worship in principle, but, on the other hand, stresses the fact that the boundaries are fluid. See also Wilhelm Wundt, *Völkerpsychologie*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1900–1909), VI.3, 50–51, 64–65, 312–15, 412–48 (esp. 412–20).

Muhammad shared his compatriots' and contemporaries' beliefs concerning the *jinn* and integrated them into the Qur'an without qualms insofar as they did not endanger God's uniqueness. Everything that looked remotely like *jinn* worship, or ascribed divine (or semi-divine) nature to the *jinn* (e.g. their genealogical connection with God: Sūrat Saba' 37, v. 158), was eliminated on principle. According to Islam, the *jinn* are on the same level as humans: they are God's creations, they have a life in this world and one in the next and they are faced with the decision whether they want to accept the Islamic revelation (Muhammad himself preached to the *jinn*; see Sūrat al-Aḥqāf 46, vs. 28–31; Sūrat al-Jinn 72, vs. 1–19). Depending on their decision, they are either good (believing) or evil (unbelieving) *jinn*; the good ones will enter Paradise after the Last Judgement, the evil ones will go to hell. Since the Islamic revelation, *jinn* are not allowed to visit Heaven anymore, where earlier they could have listened and consequently revealed hidden and future things to soothsayers [307] (Sūrat al-Jinn 72, vs. 8–10, etc.).<sup>205</sup> While the difference between good *jinn* and angels (good

<sup>205</sup> Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 137–38, 153; Kremer, *Studien*, III–IV, 27–28, 38–39; Lane, *Arabian Society*, 34–35, 37–38, 39; Grimme, *Mohammed*, II, 63–71, esp. 63–66, 69–71; Smith, *Religion*, 135 n. 1; Macdonald, "Djinn", 1091b–1092a; Snouck Hurgronje, "Der Islam", 664; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 5, 8–39, esp. 17–19, 30–39; Henninger, "Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten im Koran", 130 (= book edition, 58); Ryckmans, *Religions arabes préislamiques*, 203b with n. 34; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 71, 81–93. Cf. also Fahd, *Panthéon*, 79 n. 1; Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 175–86 with nn. 105–63 (207–11). On the assimilation of the belief in *jinn* into the Islamic framework, Prof. Erwin Gräf observes the following (letter dated 3/2/1964): "concerning the *jinn* in Sūras 46 and 72: it is perhaps not altogether a coincidence that the tradition has moved the sermons to outside the ḥaram in Mecca. Are *jinn* not allowed into the holy places? (but see Sūras 113 and 114!). This would be important for the problem of their relations with Allah and the gods known in Mecca. However, I believe that before Muhammad and outside Mecca there was little reflection on these correlations. (In my view the *jinn* sermons might be inspired in a way by Christ's sermon in Hades)" [cf. I Peter 3:19–20]. On the subject of Jewish (and Christian) elements in Arabian *jinn* lore, see Lane, *Arabian Society*, 39–40; Kremer, *Studien*, III–IV, 39–44; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 8, 16, 18–23; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 82–99 *passim*, 120–30 (see the critical remarks by Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 6 [1954], 369); on the teachings about the *jinn* in Islamic tradition and theology, see Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 93–99, 141–62; also Otto Spies in *Orientalische Literatur-Zeitung* 50 (1955), cols. 536–38; Johann Fück, review of Zbinden's *Die Djinn des Islam* in *Der Islam* 32 (1955), 105. Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 3, 8–39, stresses the importance of distinguishing between three different theories in the Qur'an concerning the *jinn*, and Zbinden (*Die Djinn des Islam*, 81–87) agrees with him to a large extent, the three being "*jinn* as demons" (8–29), "*jinn* as intermediate beings" (30–35) and "*jinn* as *doppelgänger* of humans" (35–39). This triad, however, is valid only in the context of the (Qur'anic and later formal)

spirits inherited from the Biblical religions) is fairly clear,<sup>206</sup> there is not always such a clear distinction among evil spirits.<sup>207</sup> Thus it is not quite clear from the Qur'an whether Iblīs (*diabolos*, the devil) was originally counted among the angels or the *jinn*.<sup>208</sup> There are at least three categories of evil spirits who will be cast into hell after the Last Judgement: 1) fallen angels ("satans"; the word *shayṭān*, "Satan", also appears in the plural *shayṭān* in the Qur'an, while *iblis* is found only in the singular);<sup>209</sup> 2) the unbelievers among the *jinn*;<sup>210</sup> 3) pagan deities.<sup>211</sup> Thus we can see that the latter are seen as a kind of evil spirits, and the question arises whether they are not also part of the category of evil *jinn*.

One thing is clear: it is not the existence of these beings that is denied in the Qur'an (with the exception of very sporadic instances), but their divine nature. Usurping divine nature is their sin, just as ascribing it to beings other than God is the sin of their worshippers (the sin of *shirk*, "having a companion", which has remained the term for polytheism in Islamic theology). For this sin, these "companions" (of God), *shurakā*, are condemned

Islamic doctrine, not of popular religion. In both cases the term *doppelgänger* does not exclude demonic character (superhuman powers) (cf. n. 176 above). Furthermore, the term "intermediate being" is not a very happy choice; cf. Henninger, "Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten", 130 (= book edition, 58) with n. 10. Consequently this distinction is not made here.

<sup>206</sup> Kremer, *Studien*, III–IV, 40–44; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 1–7, 81–131; Henninger, "Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten im Koran", 129–41 (= book edition, 57–69) and the literature cited therein; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 89–90. This distinction is frequently blurred in popular Islam; cf. Canaan, *Aberglaube*, 7; *idem*, *Dämonenglaube*, 3–4; also n. 75 above.

<sup>207</sup> Grimme, *Mohammed*, II, 69–71; Kremer, *Studien*, III–IV, 39–41; Lane, *Arabian Society*, 25, 27–28, 32–33; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 1–80 *passim*; Henninger, "Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten im Koran", 284–93 (= book edition, 70–79) and the literature cited therein; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 87–89.

<sup>208</sup> Lane, *Arabian Society*, 29–32; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 11, 33–34, 36, 53–54, 59–61; Henninger, "Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten im Koran", 130 n. 11, 286–89 (book edition, 58 n. 11, 72–75); Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 88–89.

<sup>209</sup> Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 48, 56–64, 75; Henninger, "Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten im Koran", 284–86 (book edition, 70–72).

<sup>210</sup> See Sūrat al-A'rāf (7), v. 36; Sūrat Hūd (11), v. 120; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 37–38; Henninger, "Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten im Koran", 130 with n. 8; (1949), 243 with n. 164 (book edition, 58 with n. 8, 97 with n. 164); Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 85, 99.

<sup>211</sup> Grimme, *Mohammed*, II, 63–71, esp. 65–66, 69–71; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 78; Henninger, "Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten im Koran" (1949), 293 with n. 163 (book edition, 97 with n. 163), and the literature cited therein. Concerning the real existence of pagan deities according to the Qur'an see also Rudi Paret, *Mohammed und der Koran* (Stuttgart, 1957), 95.

to burn in hell.<sup>212</sup> [308] The Qur'ān does not, however, tell us what kind of beings these pagan deities really are; only in later Islam were they ranked among the evil *jinn* or *shayṭāns*.<sup>213</sup>

Modern popular belief in the Arab-Islamic countries has of course been influenced by the position occupied by Muḥammad and the oldest traditions regarding belief in *jinn*,<sup>214</sup> but in different ways. The distinction between believing and unbelieving *jinn* is mentioned in popular literature,<sup>215</sup> and occasionally elsewhere,<sup>216</sup> but on the whole the evil *jinn*, often grouped with the *shayṭāns*, play a much more important part in popular beliefs than the good ones. Defence strategies against these "evil spirits" (see nn. 92–98, 183–88 above) were enriched by some typically Islamic elements, such as using Qur'ānic passages for incantations and amulets.<sup>217</sup> Another typically Islamic belief is that Ramaḍān, the month of fasting, commands special powers to keep the *jinn* at bay, for instance that all the *jinn* are banned to behind the mountain of Qāf, at the edge of the world, and only return after the end of the month. Even then they cannot enter a house that still contains anything left over from Ramaḍān (e.g. bread baked in this month<sup>218</sup>). Of course, every manner of worshipping the *jinn*, with prayer or, even more so, with sacrifices (see nn. 99–128, 190–93 above) are in flagrant opposition to

<sup>212</sup>Karl Ahrens, *Muḥammad als Religionsstifter* (Leipzig, 1935), 88–90; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 17, 38–39, 76–78; Henninger, "Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten im Koran", 286 with n. 21 (book edition, 72 with n. 21); Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 85, 88.

<sup>213</sup>Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 17. Cf. also *ibid.*, 2, 5; Haldar, *Cult Prophets*, 181–82, 186; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 84. Wellhausen (*Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 157–59, 211–12) and Smith (*Religion*, 120–21) do not say explicitly when, according to their theory, this classification among the *jinn* took place. General reading on reducing gods to demons: Cook in Smith, *Religion*, 539 with n. 2; cf. also nn. 1 above, 239 below. On reducing the gods of vanquished religions to the status of demons, cf. also Franz Joseph Dölger, "'Teufels Großmutter'. *Magna Mater Deum und Magna Mater Daemonum*. Die Umwertung der Heidentümer im christlichen Dämonenglauben", *Antike und Christentum* 3 (1932), 153–76.

<sup>214</sup>Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 157–59; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 97–99.

<sup>215</sup>Concerning believing and unbelieving *jinn* in the *1001 Nights* see Henninger, "Mohammedanische Polemik gegen das Christentum in 1001 Nacht", 298 with n. 42; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 59–70, esp. 66; other information on popular Arabic literature: *ibid.*, 70–72.

<sup>216</sup>Doughty (I, 301; II, 209; = 1888 ed., I, 259; II, 188) heard the view that half the *jinn* are unbelieving and evil, the other half faithful Muslims and good. This, however, seems to be due to the influence of urban views.

<sup>217</sup>See also Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 67–69, 72, 95–96, 98. Concerning amulets, etc., now also Kriss, *Volks Glaube im Bereich des Islam*, esp. 1–139 *passim*.

<sup>218</sup>Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 21; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 45, 130.

Islam.<sup>219</sup> So how is it possible that, in spite of this, sacrifices to the *jinn* play such a major part in popular religion in present-day Arabia and that there is, in fact, much more profuse and conclusive literary evidence than in pre-Islamic Arabia? Scholars have tried to explain this by pointing out that, when the pagan gods were reduced to demons, the importance and size of the spirit world increased and so attracted all that remained of the worship of pagan gods.<sup>220</sup> This is largely correct, although it does not justify the conclusion that there were no sacrifices at all to *jinn* in pre-Islamic Arabia. As it is only in later Islam that pagan gods are called *jinn* (see n. 213 above), we must not interpret the passages in the Qur'ān dealing with *jinn* worship (see above, n. 191) simply as relating to pagan deities. Zbinden is probably [309] right when he maintains that gods as well as *jinn* were worshipped in pre-Islamic Arabia<sup>221</sup> (with sacrifices and in other ways), while it is not possible to agree completely with his arguments (see below, 312).

### III. Problems of Cultural History

The preceding overview of present-day and pre-Islamic beliefs in the *jinn* has put into relief similarities as well as differences. Our task is now to attempt to delimit still more clearly the native Arabian elements in pre-Islamic *jinn* belief. Firstly, we must exclude everything that is not found in pre-Islamic Arabia and occurs only in countries that were Arabicized later. This includes some elements that, as Albright has demonstrated, are neither Arabian nor early Semitic but more recent and sometimes only of Hellenistic origin.<sup>222</sup> If, for instance, the *jinnīya* inhabiting a spring in Palestine is just called 'arūsa ("bride", "young woman"), this is the exact translation of Greek *nymphe*,<sup>223</sup> and indicates influences from Hellenistic times. If, moreover, in some places the spirits appear in the form of cockerels, hens and chicks, this idea cannot be very old either, as the domestic chicken only became common in Syria and Palestine during the first century BC.<sup>224</sup>

<sup>219</sup>Al-Damīrī in Smith, *Religion*, 159 n. 1; Kremer, *Studien*, I–II, 48; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 2, 16; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 717; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 99.

<sup>220</sup>Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 157. Cf. also nn. 212 and 213 above.

<sup>221</sup>Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 79–80.

<sup>222</sup>Albright, "Islam and the Religions of the Ancient Orient", 283–301, esp. 284–87, 289–95, 300–301.

<sup>223</sup>*Ibid.*, 291. Cf. also Martin Ninck, *Die Bedeutung des Wassers in Kult und Leben der Alten* (Darmstadt, 1960); Muthmann, *Mutter und Quelle*, 77–278 *passim*.

<sup>224</sup>Albright, "Islam and the Religions of the Ancient Orient", 291–92. The view of John P. Peters, "The Cock", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 33 (1913), 363–70, that chicken domestication only became known in Palestine after the Exile, can no longer be

However, we cannot confine ourselves to the exclusion of such secondary details; there is even the question of whether the word *jinn* itself and the notion linked to it is at all ancient and originally Arabic. Consequently the question of etymology and origins of the word *jinn* will have to be dealt with at length.<sup>225</sup>

Medieval lexicographers of Arabic derive the word from the root *janna* (= "to cover", "hide", "veil") and thus explain *jinn* as a "hidden, mysterious being".<sup>226</sup> As this explanation, however, meets with various difficulties,<sup>227</sup> the possibility of its being a loan-word was also considered, possibly from Ethiopic,<sup>228</sup> or possibly from an Indo-European [310] language. The similarity to Latin *genius* repeatedly gave rise to this theory, although it was not assumed to have been a direct loan, but rather reflected a possible related Iranian root.<sup>229</sup> This explanation is now generally rejected.<sup>230</sup> Wensinck<sup>231</sup>

maintained. There are already instances from the seventh century BC; see W.F. Albright and P.E. Dumont, "A Parallel between Indic and Babylonian Sacrificial Ritual", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 54 (1934), 108–109. Cf. also Henninger, "Huhnopfer", 337–46.

<sup>225</sup> See Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 148–49; Nöldeke, "Arabs (Ancient)", 669b–670a; Macdonald, "Djinn", 1091b; A.J. Wensinck, "The Etymology of the Arabic Djinn (Spirits)", *Verslagen en Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde*, 5e Reeks, IV, 506–14 (Amsterdam, 1920); and his "Supplementary Notes on the Etymology of the Arabic Djinn (Spirits)", 514a–514e; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 9–11; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube*, 4, 51 n. 35; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 75.

<sup>226</sup> See the instances quoted in the literature given in n. 225 above.

<sup>227</sup> Macdonald, "Djinn", 1901b. Cf. also nn. 231–33 below.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 148 n. 3; Macdonald, "Djinn", 1091b; Albright, "Islam and the Religions of the Ancient Orient", 292; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 9.

<sup>229</sup> Macdonald, "Djinn", 1091b; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 9–10. Cf. n. 230 below.

<sup>230</sup> Nöldeke, review of Wellhausen's *Reste arabischen Heidentums* in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 41 (1887), 717; Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 148 n. 3; Wensinck, "Etymology", 506; Eichler, *Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 9–10; Nyberg, "Bemerkungen zum 'Buch der Götzenbilder' von Ibn al-Kalb", 358 n. 21; Schlumberger (as in n. 236 below), 121 n. 1; Dussaud, *Pénétration*, 90, 110 n. 8; Starcky in Brillant and Aigrain, IV, 219. More recently Jacques Numa Lambert, in his most debatable book: *Aspects de la civilisation à l'âge du patriarcat* (Algiers, 1958; see the review in *Anthropos* 56 [1961], 974–76), has derived not only the Palmyrene form *g-n-y* (see n. 236 below) but also Arabic *jinn* from Greek *gennaïos* (*loc. cit.*, 85–141, esp. 85, 123–24). Dussaud's view (*Pénétration*, 110–13) that there never was a god named Gennéas (Gennaïos) but that *g-n-y* always was appellative is rejected as being hypercritical by Lambert, but it does not appear to be possible to refute it. Cf. also Meier, "L'inspiration par les démons en Islam", 421.

<sup>231</sup> See the passage quoted in n. 225 above, and the supplement.

assumed the derivation from the root *janna* to be correct, but explained it in the active sense rather than the passive: something that causes illness or madness, and based it on the following reasoning:

I. In the Semitic conception psychic affections and certain bodily actions are caused by spirits. II. The dealings of spirits with men are usually expressed by verbs meaning "to cover". III. The action of covering is conceived in this way, that the spirit comes upon a man, takes its abode in him and overpowers him, so that he is no longer himself but the spirit that is upon or within him; the action is a genuine incarnation.<sup>232</sup> IV. Poetic and prophetic inspiration is thus to be considered as caused by incarnated spirits. V. The etymology of the word *jinn* is to be viewed in this light.<sup>233</sup>

What the explanations so far have in common, despite all their differences, is that they consider the word *jinn* to be purely Arabic. F.W. Albright is of a different opinion, which begins with the observation that Theodor Nöldeke and Mark Lidzbarski had already noticed<sup>234</sup> that there is an Aramaic word *genē*, "hidden", plural *genēn*, "hidden things", and the emphatic plural *genayyā*.<sup>235</sup> This term is used to describe a group of lower deities in inscriptions dating from the third century AD in Dura on the Euphrates and in the Palmyra region.<sup>236</sup> The word is also found in Aramaic magic texts from the sixth century AD, meaning "(evil) spirit".<sup>237</sup> The Fathers of

<sup>232</sup> For a more precise explanation of this rather ambiguous term, see Wensinck, "Etymology", 510–513, and his "Supplementary Notes", 514c–514e.

<sup>233</sup> Wensinck, "Etymology", 513–14. Cf. Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 213.

<sup>234</sup> Nöldeke, Wellhausen review, 717; Mark Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik*, II (1903–1908), 82 (quoted in Albright, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 57 [1937], 319–20; cf. also *ibid.*, 60 [1940], 292 with n. 29).

<sup>235</sup> Albright, "Islam and the Religions of the Ancient Orient", 292.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 292 with n. 30; more detailed reports have since emerged: Daniel Schlumberger, *La Palmyrène du Nord-Ouest* (Paris, 1951), 25, 67, 121–22, 123 (b), 127–28, 135–37, and Plate XXIX, 1; Dussaud, *Pénétration*, 90–91, 98, 99, 101, 110–13, and Fig. 26 (to p. 111), Fig. 27 (p. 114); Starcky in Brillant and Aigrain, IV, 219; Harold Ingholt, Henri Seyrig, Jean Starcky, *Recueil des tessères de Palmyre*, with additional remarks by André Caquot (Paris, 1955), 32 (nos. 225 and 226), 35 (no. 248), also Caquot, *ibid.*, 182. In *ibid.*, 30 no. 211, we also find a word *g-n-y*, but not as the name of a deity; cf. Caquot, *ibid.*, 143, on the roots *g-n-y* and *'-g-n*, and Franz Rosenthal's review of this work in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75 (1955), 199b–200a. Cf. also Jean Starcky, review of Dussaud, *Pénétration*, in *Revue biblique* 63 (1956), 276 (with the sources, *ibid.*, nn. 2–4); Maria Höfner, art. "Gennéas" in Haussig, ed., *Wörterbuch der Mythologie*, I.1, 439–40.

<sup>237</sup> Albright, "Islam and the Religions of the Ancient Orient", 292, and the instances listed therein.

the Syrian church (fourth–sixth centuries) and the Syriac translation of the Bible (Peshittā) use the derived noun [311] *genyāthā* (emphatic feminine plural) to denote pagan sanctuaries and pagan deities or demons.<sup>238</sup> All this leads Albright to draw the following conclusion:

*The jinn themselves were probably introduced into Arabic folklore in the late pre-Islamic period.... The passage from Aramaic ganyā or genyā, feminine genīthā, "demon", to Arabic jinnīy(un), jinnīyat(un) offers no difficulty whatever when one remembers that Aram. genā and Arab. janna are synonymous and that a slight morphological adaption would therefore be normal. The occult figures of depotentized pagan deities with which the imagination of the Christian Aramaeans peopled the underworld, the darkness of night, ruined temples and sacred fountains, were organized by Arab imagination into the jinn of the Arabian Nights, creatures of smoke, intermediate between the fiery devils of hell and the angels of light.*<sup>239</sup>

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 292–93, and the instances listed therein.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 292–93. In a letter dated 16/1/1964, Prof. Giorgio Levi della Vida rejects most emphatically the etymology suggested by Albright. He stresses most urgently that we have here two different roots: the Aramaic words mentioned are derived from the root *g-n-y* = "to be hidden", whereas Arabic *jinn* is derived from the root *j-n-n* = "to cover". Consequently he considers Wensinck's explanation (see above, nn. 231–33) to remain valid. "In my view, there is no link whatsoever between Palmyrene *gny*, Syriac *genyāthā* and Arabic *jinn*; ... the Aramaic words are derived from a root meaning "to be hidden" (as also maintained by Albright) and the *y* is part of the root. *Jinn* is derived from a root *jnn* with doubled *n* (the *r* of *jinnī* being, of course, the adjectival suffix and not part of the root) meaning "to cover" (I believe Wensinck's explanation to be still valid; cf. *incubus*!) The Aramaean *gny* are chthonic deities, altogether different from Arabian *jinn* who live in the open air (I should think that in those cases where they appear as subterranean spirits, we are dealing with beliefs that are not purely Arabian). The fact that the two roots *g-n-y* and *j-n-n* may well have been related originally, at a proto-Semitic time, of course has nothing to do with the present question." Having taken this statement by Levi della Vida into account, Prof. Fritz Meier expresses himself with similar, or possibly even more, reticence: "As for the etymology of *jinn*, I believe it to be Arabic, but it is still not at all clear what the name means. There are too many possible interpretations: active 'covering', passive 'covered', but how? and what? ... I am by no means certain that this is a parallel case to *incubus*, they might just as well be protective deities (giving cover), but there are other possibilities as well." (letter dated 5/11/1968). See now the detailed discussion of the origin of the word *jinn* in Fritz Meier, "Ein Arabischer 'Bet-Ruf'", *Asiatische Studien* 33 (1979), 189–98. Having given numerous instances, Meier rejects all non-Arabic (whether Indo-European, Ethiopian or Aramaic) etymologies (*ibid.*, 189–92) and considers the Arabic derivation to be more likely (*ibid.*, 192–98), but still only with reservations (*ibid.*, 198). Even if the Arabic etymology were certain, it would

It is uncontested that Arabic *jinn* is related to the Aramaic words mentioned. Other authors, however, consider the Palmyrene *genayya* (or *gin-nayā*), a group of lower deities who are only known in this appellative form, to have been introduced there by Arab nomads, and consequently derived from Arabic.<sup>240</sup> This would also explain the incidence of the term in Christian Literature in Syriac, but maybe not in Aramaic magical texts, for which no other Arabic influence can be proved.<sup>241</sup>

There are arguments in favour of Albright's view, according to which the word *jinn*, as well as the idea of the *jinn*, was a loan from the Aramaic linguistic and cultural region, especially as it is, after all, possible to prove many other Aramaic loans in Arabia.<sup>242</sup> It is impossible to refute it directly, if only because literary documents in Arabia begin comparatively late and consequently direct literary evidence of beliefs in the *jinn* dates from the time just before that of Muḥammad, and is therefore more recent than the Palmyrene reports mentioned above. Still, it is improbable that there should have been no earlier beliefs in spirits at all in Arabia. Smith has already pointed out that the belief in hairy desert spirits can also be shown to have existed among North Semites and thus is likely to be part of the common stock of early Semitic religion.<sup>243</sup>

Of course, it must be taken into account that the belief in demons in Mesopotamia, as illustrated in considerable wealth in cuneiform literature,<sup>244</sup> is not purely Semitic but may contain many foreign, particularly Sumerian, elements.<sup>245</sup> After all, the distinction made between the Semites at a stage conjectured to be common to all of them, on the one hand, and the (later) individual Semitic peoples who were already mixed, both racially and culturally, on the other, is perfectly justified.<sup>246</sup> [312] However, the com-

still be possible for non-Arabian elements to have infiltrated the contents of the idea. This possibility must be taken into account, especially for modern beliefs concerning the *jinn* in Syria and Palestine.

<sup>240</sup> Schlumberger, *La Palmyrène du Nord-Ouest*, 136; Dussaud, *Pénétration*, 90–91, 99, 113–14.

<sup>241</sup> Albright, "Islam and the Religions of the Ancient Orient", 292 n. 31.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. Henninger, "Menschenopfer", 800 with n. 357, and the instances listed therein.

<sup>243</sup> Smith, *Religion*, 120, 198, 441–446; also Cook, *ibid.*, 538–39.

<sup>244</sup> Cf. n. 2 above; nn. 245 and 257 below.

<sup>245</sup> See the instances quoted in n. 2 above. Cf. also Stephen Herbert Langdon, *The Mythology of all Races, V: Semitic [Mythology]* (Boston, 1931), 354–74 (many details of which, however, are open to challenge), and n. 257 below; *idem*, "Babylonian and Hebrew Demonology", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1934, 45–56, and n. 257 below.

<sup>246</sup> See Sabatino Moscati, "The Semites: a Linguistic, Ethnic and Racial Problem", *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 19 (1957), 421–34 (summary in *Anthropos* 53 [1958], 626–

parison of the ancient Semitic deities<sup>247</sup> carried out during a symposium in Rome in 1958 produced the following results: There is no proof of a firmly constructed early Semitic pantheon; on the contrary, it appears that at the earliest time Semites become identifiable (third millennium BC), a number of deities were just beginning to take shape, a process that progressed parallel to the nomads becoming sedentary.<sup>248</sup> In the oldest conjectured Semitic nomadic religion, we find initially only the god *El* (Lagrange's characterisation: "*El*, the common god, primitive and most probably unique to the Semites", is largely correct, although some qualification will be necessary<sup>249</sup>), then also protective deities for individual tribes and groups,<sup>250</sup> and finally "animist" ideas.<sup>251</sup> Just as the ancient Semitic supreme God survives in an exalted form in Israelite and Islamic monotheism, so these "animist" ideas are the origins of later polytheism, with all its astral, climate, and fertility deities.<sup>252</sup>

If the word "animism" is in quotation marks in this study, and in the literature quoted here,<sup>253</sup> this is an indication that, despite recognition of the belief in natural spirits as a fact, it is understood completely differently from the view held by Tylor and those immediately following him (see n. 1 above). It is impossible to present all these differences in detail; only a few will be emphasised:

1. The schematising view that knowledge of the human soul is primary, and only secondarily projected outwards, must be abandoned. The Arabian *jinn* are not originally spirits of the dead;<sup>254</sup> on the contrary, behind them

27). Cf. also Joseph Henninger, *Über Lebensraum und Lebensformen der Frühsemiten* (Cologne and Opladen, 1968), esp. 7–14, 43–48, and the literature quoted there.

<sup>247</sup> See Sabatino Moscati, ed., *Le antiche divinità semitiche* (Rome, 1958); also the review in *Anthropos* 55 (1960), 906–908.

<sup>248</sup> Moscati in *Le antiche divinità semitiche*, 119–35, esp. 135; Angelo Brelich, *ibid.*, 135–40, esp. 135, 139–40; *Anthropos* 55 (1960), 907–908.

<sup>249</sup> Moscati, *op. cit.*, 121–22, 135; Brelich, *op. cit.*, 137; *Anthropos* 55 (1960), 907.

<sup>250</sup> Moscati, *op. cit.*, 134–35; *Anthropos* 55 (1960), 907.

<sup>251</sup> Moscati, *op. cit.*, 135; Brelich, *op. cit.*, 135–40, esp. 139–40; *Anthropos* 55 (1960), 907–908.

<sup>252</sup> Moscati, *op. cit.*, 121–22, 134–35; Brelich, *op. cit.*, 137, 139–40; *Anthropos* 55 (1960), 907–908. But this presupposes that nomadism was the oldest way of life of all the Semites, a view that has been questioned most strongly again only recently; cf. Henninger, *Lebensraum und Lebensformen*, 43–48; *idem*, *Les fêtes de printemps chez les sémites et la pâque israélite* (Paris, 1975), 201–15.

<sup>253</sup> Moscati, *op. cit.*, 135; Brelich, *op. cit.*, 139–40.

<sup>254</sup> Wellhausen (*Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 157) is of the opinion that the *jinn* are "in many cases spirits of the dead", but the reasons he gives are not all conclusive. Furthermore, he himself adds (*ibid.*): "We must not, however, attempt to derive all the varied company of *jinn* from this origin; any monistic explanation in this phantasmagoric field

is [313] that very nature, which is often mysterious and dangerous, and not subject to man.<sup>255</sup>

2. This should not be understood in the exclusively rationalistic way that man, in philosophic contemplation, is searching for causal explanations and finds these in personification, but rather with reference to the trepidation inspired by whatever is mysterious and awesome.<sup>256</sup>

3. Beliefs in spirits should no longer be considered to be the sole origin of all ideas of higher beings, but just one phenomenon among several (see below, 315–16).

The consideration that the belief in spirits is the manifestation of the thrill of the awesome and mysterious gives rise to yet another question that has already been hinted at above (296), namely: Did the Semitic belief in spirits originate with the nomadic or with the sedentary population? It is not likely that this question can be solved completely, but it is possible to point out the following: It is often assumed that the belief in *jinn*, the inhabitants of the desert, originated with the nomads and moved from them to sedentary peoples. However, it is hardly likely to have happened in such a way. Nomads are at home in the desert, and therefore emotions of fear

is unnecessary and most dangerous. Hidden origins and centres of subjective or objective phenomena and effects are personified; they are imagined in analogy to the human soul, but not generally and exactly like human souls." It might be possible to continue this train of thought in the following way: According to modern popular belief, the *jinn* are exclusively natural spirits among the bedouins, whereas among the sedentary population there are also some who are spirits of the dead (see Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 47–48, 51–52; cf. n. 25 above). This, in turn, partly influenced bedouin beliefs (Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 52). Thus there are indications (reasons of a general cultural-historical kind, among others) that the combination of spirits of the dead and *jinn* originates with the sedentary population. Alfred Loisy points out correctly (*Essai historique sur le sacrifice* [Paris, 1920], 372), where he comments on Jaussen's report on "sacrifices for the tent" in Moab (see n. 106 above) that the sacrifice does not make the *jinn* a protective spirit for the tent; his natural relationship is with the place (cf. nn. 99, 155, 189 above) and only indirectly with the tent pitched therein.

<sup>255</sup> Cf. Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 157 (text quoted in n. 154 above); more explicitly: Smith, *Religion*, 120–23; cf. also nn. 154–69 above; Nöldeke, "Arabs (Ancient)", 669b–670a; Macdonald, "Djinn", 1091b, and the literature cited therein; Haldar, *Cult Prophets*, 182. Eichler (*Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 15) does not interpret Smith's view quite correctly: Smith does not say that it was only Islam that drove the spirits into the desert, but that, as nature becomes more and more subject to man, especially in the field of agriculture, the realm of the spirits (similarly to the realm of wild beasts) becomes more and more restricted to the desert. Still, this view contradicts some known facts as well, e.g. that sedentary people are everywhere particularly afraid of spirits—who come from the underworld; see above, 287, and here, 313–15.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. J. Henninger, art. "Le mythe en ethnologie" in *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, VI (Paris, 1957), cols. 225–46 and the literature cited therein.



awaken only at certain places and at certain times; inhabitants of towns and villages are much less familiar with the desert. This might be rejected as a psychologising theory, but there are several facts in favour of this view. a) Even in ancient Mesopotamia, city dwellers saw the desert as an unknown and fearsome region inhabited by monsters and demonic beings.<sup>257</sup> b) This attitude has remained unchanged until the present day. At the beginning of the nineteenth century E.W. Lane reported how strange the desert seemed to Egyptian city-dwellers at the time; even a short journey into the desert was considered to be a great adventure.<sup>258</sup> By the beginning of the [314] twentieth century, this attitude had not changed to any remarkable extent.<sup>259</sup> c) For medieval Islam, the stories of the *Thousand and One Nights* are an interesting document about the Islamic Middle Ages. The collection received its final form in urban surroundings and betrays this urban character at every step.<sup>260</sup> It has been said that the people in the stories move around the streets and bazaars of the cities; but as soon as they leave the city, the world of spirits and adventures begins.<sup>261</sup> d) Consequently it is not surprising that belief in and worship of spirits is much more intensive among the present-day sedentary population than among the bedouins (see above, 283–97). The special relationship between the spirits and the earth, the underworld, and their presence wherever there is a connection with the underworld, appears to be another characteristic of the sedentary culture that is dependent upon agriculture.<sup>262</sup> Occasionally we even find explicit proof that the bedouin fear spirits much less than the sedentary

<sup>257</sup> Cf. Alfred Haldar, *The Notion of the Desert in Sumero-Accadian and West-Semitic Religions* (Uppsala and Leipzig, 1950); summary in *Anthropos* 46 (1951), 624.

<sup>258</sup> Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1836), I, 384.

<sup>259</sup> Cf. Ewald Banse, *Wüsten, Palmen und Basare* (Braunschweig, 1921), 24–25; *idem*, *Das Beduinenbuch* (Berlin, 1931), vi.

<sup>260</sup> See Henninger, "Über die völkerkundliche Bedeutung von 1001 Nacht", 35–65, esp. 40–45; *idem*, "Der geographische Horizont der Erzähler von 1001 Nacht", *Geographica Helvetica* 4 (1949), 214–29, esp. 215–19.

<sup>261</sup> Constance E. Padwick, "Notes on the Jinn and the Ghoul in the Peasant Mind of Lower Egypt", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 3 (1923–25), 426.

<sup>262</sup> Zbinden (*Die Djinn des Islam*, 80 n. 9) writes: "The chthonic demons, *ahl al-arḍ*, are part of any agriculturally based society". He refers to Smith, 151 (and means the German translation by Stübe; the original passage is Smith, *Religion*, 198), where, however, there is no explicit reference to the link between subterranean spirits and agriculture. Furthermore, the idea that there are subterranean spirits is not completely foreign to the bedouins either. Still, the view found in Palestine (that spirits can rise to the surface of the earth through even the tiniest opening in the ground, see above, 288) appears to be typical of a farming culture. According to Levi della Vida (letter cited above, n. 239), the Arabian *jinn* were not originally subterranean beings (as opposed to the Aramaean *gny*).

population does. Murray reports about bedouins from eastern Egypt (between the Nile and the Red Sea): "... But on the whole, they are not very much afraid of their *jinn*. The Ma'aza sheikh, Salem Faraj, said: 'The *jinn* abound in our mountains, but nobody but a *fellah* would fear them. Now, wolves are really dangerous!'"<sup>263</sup> (cf. n. 258 above). And if, on the other hand, it is said about south Arabian bedouins that their religion was mainly or even completely *jinn* worship,<sup>264</sup> it is a statement that cannot be relied upon too highly. Apart from all else, these south Arabian "bedouins"—the statement refers to the border areas in the south and east rather than the centre—are members of a culture completely different from the culture of the camel breeders of central and north Arabia. Frequently they do not live in tents, but rather in caves; the centre of tribal life is usually a kind of fortress where the shaykh resides.<sup>265</sup> In other words, these are semi-bedouin, or semi-sedentary, similar to those in the northwest Arabian border areas (see nn. 83 and 84 above), and consequently they do not provide sufficient evidence to allow us to draw any conclusions relevant to originally bedouin circumstances. In the case of pre-Islamic Arabia, differentiating between the views of nomadic and sedentary populations is more difficult, because of the nature of the sources available. [315] If, however, we begin with present-day conditions and take into consideration the circumstances mentioned above, the indications are in favour of the view that belief in spirits was stronger and older among the sedentary population than among the nomads, and it is quite possible that the nomad's beliefs in spirits were strengthened secondarily by influences from the sedentary population. Looking at it in this light, Albright's theory as described above (310–11) is undoubtedly correct in its core assumptions.

<sup>263</sup> Murray, *The Sons of Ishmael*, 156.

<sup>264</sup> Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 48, with reference to Th. Bent and Abdullāh Mansūr (see n. 21 above).

<sup>265</sup> Instances listed in Henninger, "Die Familie bei den heutigen Beduinen Arabiens", 161 n. 150. On the subject of *jinn* beliefs among the Āl Murra, who are true bedouins (see n. 81 above), cf. now the remarks by Donald Powell Cole in his *Nomads of the Nomads: the Āl Murra Bedouin of the Empty Quarter* (Chicago, 1975). While the legend of their origin maintains that they are descended from an ancestor of the name of Murra and a *jinnīya* (*ibid.*, 93; mentioned already in n. 81), their belief in the *jinn* does not appear to be very strong. Among the sedentary population, the "Empty Quarter" is believed to be deserted (i.e. empty of humans) and the home of spirits (*ibid.*, 31, 93); according to the Āl Murra, the name only means that there are no permanent settlements (*ibid.*, 31). "They believe in the existence of the *jinn*, spirits, and *shetan*, devils, because the Koran says they exist and because they have numerous folk tales about them. But many of the Āl Murra I knew were skeptical, because they had never individually come into contact with these beings." (*ibid.*, 126).

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Belief in spirits must not be seen as the central core of the religion of the Arabian bedouins (and the early Semites in general), nor was it the starting point for all further developments.<sup>266</sup> It is impossible to view the pre-Islamic God as the last and latest result in a development from polytheism towards monotheism,<sup>267</sup> as there is a supreme god El in the proto-Semitic period before the age of polytheism (see above, 312). This does not exclude the possibility that some pre-Islamic deities developed out of *jinn*,<sup>268</sup> but most certainly not all of them. Most importantly, we must on no account consider the heavenly deities to be the last result in a development from *jinn* through terrestrial deities to become, finally, heavenly deities, as Wellhausen and others attempted to do (see above, 280–82).<sup>269</sup>

More recent study in the history of religion has resulted in the knowledge that not all phenomena can be arranged in a linear development. While a study of the Semites does not take us as far back as the beginnings of humanity, it is well able to confirm a statement by the celebrated scholar to whom this publication is dedicated. Paul Schebesta stated in a book review:

<sup>266</sup> Cf. Henninger, "La religion bédouine préislamique", 115–40, esp. 123 with nn. 33–35, 127–30 with nn. 57–64, 132 with n. 71.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 133–36, 139–40; see also nn. 188, 247–52 above; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 80. More detailed research into this subject will have to be left for a different study.

<sup>268</sup> Cf. Brockelmann, "Allah und die Götzen", 1051; Zbinden, *Die Djinn des Islam*, 79–80; on the subject of pre-Islamic deities in general see Henninger, "La religion bédouine préislamique", 119–40 *passim*, esp. 126–34, 139–40. Zbinden (*Die Djinn des Islam*, 79–80) attaches great importance to the circumstance that the local Arabian deities are often thought to be living in trees and rocks, like the *jinn*. There are, however, no reliable pre-Islamic instances of *jinn* living in rocks (see n. 155 above). On the subject of pre-Islamic "rock worship" see Henninger, "La religion bédouine préislamique", 122 with n. 32, 126–27, with nn. 52–56. On the other hand, the possibility has to be taken into account that even in pre-Islamic times some local deities were reduced to the status of *jinn* or similar intermediate beings; thus Grimme, *Mohammed*, II, 66 (with reference to Sūrat Yūnus [10], v. 19; Sūrat al-Zumar [39], v. 4); Dussaud (*Pénétration*, 160) might also be interpreted in this way. Most importantly, it has been pointed out repeatedly that the belief that the *kāhin* is inspired by *jinn* (see n. 178 above) shows an instance of this demotion: at first, he was thought to be inspired by a god (as among the North Semites), and only later by a *jinnī*. Cf. van Vloten, "Dämonen, Geister und Zauber bei den alten Arabern" (1893), 183; Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 134; Nyberg, "Bemerkungen zum 'Buch der Götzenbilder' von Ibn al-Kalbi", 357–63 (esp. 359–60), 362–63; Halder, *Cult Prophets*, 163, 180, 182, 186.

<sup>269</sup> See Henninger, "La religion bédouine préislamique", with the literature quoted there, against Wellhausen's view (*Reste arabischen Heidentums*, 211–14; see above, 281) that the heavenly deities of the Semites were originally terrestrial beings. Cf. also nn. 247–52 above.

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I do, however, agree with the author in that it is in vain to try and defend the priority of theism over dynamism, or of dynamism over animism, for all three flow from the same [316] source that is the human soul. Inside the soul they walk side by side from the earliest of times, and are only differentiated among individual peoples.<sup>270</sup>

The present paper (sketchy, and by no means exhaustive, though it is) intends to contribute to answering the question of how this "differentiation" must be understood with reference to the Semitic peoples.

<sup>270</sup> Paul Schebesta, review of Kunz Dittmer, *Allgemeine Völkerkunde* [Braunschweig, 1954], in *Anthropos* 49 (1954), 722. Joseph Goetz expresses the same view in F.-M. Bergounioux and Joseph Goetz, *Les religions des préhistoriques et des primitifs* (Paris, 1958), 79–80, 113. Cf. also Paul Schebesta, "Die Religion der Primitiven", in Franz König, ed., *Christus und die Religionen der Erde* (Vienna, 1951), I, 539–78, esp. 546, 557–61; *idem* in *Anthropos* 49 (1954), 696.



## HERMES AND HARRAN: THE ROOTS OF ARABIC-ISLAMIC OCCULTISM

*Francis E. Peters*

THE OCCULT is what is hidden. But not to everyone. Wherever there is something hidden, there is necessarily someone who knows. Nor is the occult something that is merely ignored. It has, by implication, been concealed, by some agent and to some purpose, to all except those same inevitable knowers. Thus to ignore the occult would be folly, the equivalent, in parabolic terms, of failing to submit a bid on the Pearl of Great Price.

The occult is doubly occult: it is a hidden knowledge of hidden truths or powers. These latter were concealed, it is agreed, by the Maker of Truths who appears to have been generally reluctant to cast his Pearl before swine, while those who do possess them are careful to keep a close guard on their treasure. Indeed, in many societies those "knowers," who everywhere and always constitute an elite, banded together in guilds and brotherhoods to stand guard over the extremely useful and valuable knowledge that was theirs.

The secret knowledge these adepts possessed—*gnosis* for the Greeks, *hikmah* to the Arabs—was more than useful; it was highly sensitive and indeed dangerous, having passed, as it did, from the dimension of the divine, the Other, into the realm of the human. The clergy—and this was the normal form of self-association among the Knowers—were the conductors of this divine electricity. They were not consumed by their knowledge: they could enter the Holy of Holies, handle the Sacred Species with impunity, go up to the Sacred Mountain, eat of the Tree of

Knowledge, even peer into the Abyss. If the clergy grew rich on their privy knowledge of what they discerned in the Abyss and then passed it out in regulated dosages to the profane and unknowing laymen, they probably deserved their tithes: they were daredevil tightrope walkers on what their societies generally conceded were high-voltage lines. For our own part, we are more inclined to regard the priestly guilds of Egypt and Babylonia and Israel as confraternities of skilled technicians or even as mere charlatans who knew full well that there was no power in those circuits. To us their fees appear exorbitant and their priestly secrecy no more than oppression since we have, at least on the philosophical level, a very different view of knowledge: science is an open and public enterprise, self-achieved rather than bestowed, dialectical, cumulative.

These latter notions are not entirely nor even chiefly our own. We got them from the Greeks, who had an intelligentsia but no dominant clergy on the Jewish or Babylonian model. For the garrulous Hellenes talk and reasoning were both expressed by the same word, *logos*. Like us they cherished a moving and perhaps even naive belief in the value of education, and they thought that wisdom was something that could be learned not by passing through dark rites but by attending open lectures, or through public debates and discussions on the subject. Whatever else wisdom was, it was not revealed; it had to be acquired by what the Arabs later called a "striver," a *mujtahid*.

Or nearly so. The Greeks no less than their eastern contemporaries knew there was electricity in the universe. For them, however, it was more a question of each man watching his own step rather than running the power lines through a temple-conductor. But the gods assuredly had access to a knowledge of things unknown to men, the future, for instance, and so the Greeks too indulged, not terribly consequentially, in the minor occult arts of divination by natural signs and dreams. There were seers and prophets in Athens even in its glory days. The Athenians hearkened but continued to go to school.

The records indicate that there was a Babylonian enrolled in the most prestigious Athenian school of all, Plato's own Academy. This is an interesting and suggestive piece of information since toward the end of Plato's life near the midpoint of the fourth pre-Christian century there are indications of an increased interest among Greek intellectuals in what other peoples liked to think was *their* wisdom. Earlier the Greeks had dismissed such claims with an almost Chinese disdain for the wit and wisdom of the "barbarians." The Greeks were curious about foreigners and were eager, as no other people in the world were eager, to learn *about* others. The notion of learning *from* those non-Hellenes remained, however, simply laughable.

Times and attitudes were changing in fourth-century Athens, however, and the young Aristotle was willing at least to entertain the notion of a history of wisdom that began before the Greeks and included such an unlikely figure—unlikely a mere generation earlier—as the Iranian sage Zoroaster. By Aristotle's death the world itself had changed. In the wake of Alexander the Greeks found themselves masters of a political empire that included, for the first time in the Hellenes' history, non-Greeks, those same *barbaroi* of the clergy-lands of Iran, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Egypt. It should have been a moment of Hellenic triumph; it signaled instead the beginning of a period of profound and shattering self-doubt.

The progress of Hellenism into the vitals of the indigenous religious societies of Western Asia is not very well known, except perhaps in the case of the Jews, who recorded their own resistance to the new ideology. But the reciprocal changes that were wrought inside the Hellenic enclaves in the East can be traced in some detail. There were early turnings toward the occult within the Greek philosophical schools, in the growth of an astral theology, for example, but they did not at the outset destroy the faculties' conviction that philosophy was, and remained, a public and acquired good. There were signs of other, more portentous stirrings, however, notoriously the resurrection of a long-dead Pythagoras in the new guise of miracle worker and proponent of the occult. The historical Pythagoras may have been just that—we cannot tell with certainty—but the scholastic masters of the fourth century, Plato and Aristotle, preferred to think of and about him as a philosopher and a scientist.

In the end the Platonists, who were the chief survivors among the Greek philosophical schools, embraced the occult with a passion. Plotinus in the third Christian century stood almost alone in his resistance to what most of his philosophical contemporaries and successors judged to be an alternative, and superior, way to truth, a conning of the great oracular collections like the *Chaldean Oracles* in an attempt to extort and master the secrets of nature. The stars and planets, divinities all, were scanned and implored to work their wills benignly on men. Proclus, the head of the Platonic Academy at Athens in the fifth Christian century, fancied he might be the reincarnation of the Pythagorean numerologist Nicomachus of Jerash.<sup>1</sup>

It was not necessary to be a philosopher to indulge an interest in the occult in Late Antiquity. The Hellenic scientific establishment was likewise riddled with alchemists, astrologers, and a new breed of physicist who studied and manipulated the hidden powers of natural substances. Their work was generally under the patronage of the Greek god Hermes, who had begun his career modestly enough as a messenger for the other Olympian gods but now in his latest role as Hermes "Thrice Great" was

crossed with the Egyptian deity Thoth and had become a latter-day Prometheus, the bearer of divine wisdom to the world of men. It was Hermes, the tradition ran, who built the pyramids, founded Babylonian science, and, finally, inspired the whole line of Greek sages. He was architect, alchemist, physician, and philosopher. And he was the Revealer.

There was no shape to Hermeticism, the body of teachings attributed to Hermes and whose literary expression is known collectively to modern scholars as the *Corpus Hermeticum*, just as there was none originally to Hermes himself. Some of its musings were constituted of thinly disguised Greek theological speculation placed at the service of a Hermetic revelation; some of it was science, Greek and Babylonian in the main; the rest was magical recipes, parlor tricks, sleight of hand. The whole was cast over with an elaborate veneer of Egyptian antiquity, and this cachet of oriental antiquity helped sell Hermeticism in a world that now revered rather than despised the eastern *barbaroi*. "From the East, light," it was said, to which one could add, "and wisdom and salvation." Isis not Aristotle was the name to reckon with in Late Antiquity.

The sixth-century Arabs were sublimely ignorant of all this. Some of the frontier tribes were Christian and served as mercenary auxiliaries for the Byzantines and Persians, but the greater number of the Arabs continued to live isolated from the high cultures of Alexandria, Antioch, and Seleucia-Ctesiphon as nomads within the Syrian steppe or as dwellers in the towns of the Hejaz. Their sciences had to do with survival, and their magic and demonology was that of a folk culture. By the eighth century, however, these same Arabs, now Muslims, were in possession of the great urban centers of the Near East by right of conquest and were already embarked upon the process of making the cultural goods of the Byzantines and Sasanians their own. Greek science and philosophy, Persian ethical and political ideals, Indian medicine and mathematics all quickly became part of the Arab intellectual experience.<sup>2</sup>

Absorbed by the Muslims with the rest of this prodigious inheritance was the later Greek fascination with the occult, as well as the object of that fascination, an unknown quantity of Hermetic literature. Indeed, as we shall see, the Arabs learned to be Hermeticists even before they learned to be philosophers. They were helped in their education by a peculiar community of people over whom the transforming wave of Near Eastern Christianity appears to have passed unavailing, the so-called Sabians of the northwestern Mesopotamian city of Harran.

There were few outright and confessed Hermeticists in Islam. Such confessions were likely to prove dangerous in a professedly religious society such as Islam, but the ancient Greek sages from Empedocles and Pythagoras down to Apollonius of Tyana, the Arabs' "Balinus,"<sup>3</sup> had for

some Muslim intellectuals both prestige and an attractive remoteness and so might serve the prudent believer as convenient candidates for attribution for his own thoughts. Some Hermetic devotees like Abu Ma'shar and Ibn Wahshiyyah claimed that they were merely translators or exegetes of a rediscovered ancient tradition, while others like Jabir ibn Hayyan disappeared behind a cloud of legend as homegrown pseudepigraphomena. The "Brethren of Purity" wisely preferred to remain anonymous, as did the author who concealed himself behind the name of al-Majriti.

The result of this mystification is that it is as little possible to write the history of Islamic Hermeticism as it is to trace the career of its Hellenic prototype. In the four dense volumes of his *Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* Festugière undertook to disengage a number of the basic themes and motifs of Greek Hermeticism and to show their similarity to what was evolving in the philosophical schools of Late Antiquity. He did not, however, succeed in converting myth into history or in piercing the anonymity of the authors of the body of *Hermetica*. Hermeticism is in fact a historical mirage, and the body of science and near-science circulating under the name of Hermes Thrice Great was no different from what passed in Late Antiquity as the wisdom of Zoroaster or of Apollonius of Tyana.<sup>4</sup> One is confronted in fact only by a sprawling and amorphous tradition of disguised origins to which the later Greeks and Romans continued to add, but always in the name of other sages remote in time and space.

Nothing comparable to Festugière's work has been undertaken on behalf of Islamic Hermeticism.<sup>5</sup> Where probes have been made by Ruska, Kraus, Ritter, Massignon, Plessner, and Marquet,<sup>6</sup> Greek origins are invariably indicated, even though exact sources or routes of transmission are difficult to come by. There is no example to date of a forthright Arabic translation of a Hermetic work preserved in Greek. The fact is not remarkable, however, since where we do possess Arabic translations of Greek originals, it is generally a question of school books passing through some type of curricular channel, where teachers, students, and editors have all left their distinguishable marks upon the text. The Hermetic tract, on the other hand, deliberately effaced its birthmarks and circulated anonymously or pseudepigraphically, and often on a quasi-popular level.

Together with the mass of Hermetic lore the Arabs received a number of stories on the person of Hermes himself. They were taught by their Iranian informants that the original Hermes dated from antediluvian times, that he was in fact a grandson of Adam, and that one or the other of the Hermes known to them was a migrant bearing the wisdom of Babylon into Egypt (*Fihrist*, 351–52). That was the received version, but in the end Islam more comfortably synthesized Hermes into the already composite portrait of the Qur'anic Idris and the Jewish Enoch. It is not certain when

this transmigration of Hermes into an Islamic setting took place, but as early as A.D. 845 Jahiz knew of the identification of Hermes-Idris (*Tarbi*, 55, Pellat), and Abu Maʿshar writing about the same time confidently states that the Harranian sage Hermes was the grandson of the Hebrews' Adam and the Persians' Gayomart and so identical with the biblical Khanukh (Enoch) and the Qur'anic Idris.<sup>7</sup> Masʿudi (*Muruj* I, 73) likewise says that Enoch-Idris is the same as Hermes and adds that this identification was made by the Sabians. If the Sabians were responsible for inserting Hermes into the Idris-Enoch complex, then it is likely that the identification began to be diffused at a time when, as we shall see, the *Dar al-Islam* took official notice of the Sabians of Harran, during the final days of the Caliph Ma'mun. Abu Sahl al-Fadl al-Nawbakhti, Harun's Iranian librarian, who was familiar with Hermes, knew nothing of the Idris association, at any rate.

In Ibn al-Nadim's *Fihrist* the sketchy description of the passage of the Platonic and Aristotelian school corpus into Islam is preceded by a series of somewhat disjointed narratives that provided the Muslim reader of the tenth century with an account of the origins of science and of Greek philosophy. The first and second of Ibn al-Nadim's narratives, those derived from Abu Sahl al-Fadl ibn Nawbakht (238–39/Dodge, 572–75),<sup>8</sup> and from Abu Maʿshar (240–41/Dodge, 576–78), purport to return to the very origins of scientific knowledge. And though they were reporting on different parts of the story, both men drew from some common or complementary source.

According to their composite account, science originated in Babylon and passed thence into Egypt and India. The substance of this "science" was primarily cosmogonical, but its understanding was unaccountably blurred by some "original sin," and it was not until some later time that the true understanding of the origins of the universe was recalled and restored. Centuries afterward, during the reign of the King Tahmurath according to Abu Maʿshar, there came to Babylon reports of a flood "in the west." Alarmed, Tahmurath ordered the construction of a repository on the citadel of Jayy near Isfahan and had concealed there the books of accumulated human wisdom.

This was not quite the Iranian version of events, as reported by al-Fadl and a parallel account in the *Denkart*: it was Alexander, so it was said, who destroyed most of the works of learning in Iraq and Iran, but only after having sent to Egypt translations of them in Greek and Coptic. The Persian kings had earlier been warned of some such catastrophe and had dispatched exemplars of these same books into India and China, whence the Sasanians retrieved them after their accession to power in A.D. 226.

In Abu Maʿshar's narrative the Sasanians have nothing to do with the restoration of Iranian wisdom. The books concealed by Tahmurath at Isfahan were discovered quite by accident some years before Abu Maʿshar's day (d. A.D. 866), and they formed the basis of his own astrologically oriented history, *The Book of Thousands*.<sup>9</sup> There were further discoveries in A.D. 951 and again in 961 (*Fihrist*, 241/Dodge, 578–79).<sup>10</sup> These books were seen in Baghdad; some of them were undecipherable, but others were in Greek.

Greece plays little or no role in this version of the origins of science, nor is there any reason it should. Ibn al-Nadim was using two sources who were both committed to a Babylonian and Iranian origin of learning. That the learning in question was chiefly astrological is no less obvious. Al-Fadl (d. 815), the older of the two authorities, was an Iranian who specialized in translations from the Pahlavi in Harun al-Rashid's "Treasure House of Wisdom" (*Fihrist*, 247/Dodge, 651), while his father had been the court astrologer of al-Mansur and had assisted in that capacity in laying out the city of Baghdad.<sup>11</sup> Abu Maʿshar may have been somewhat more the Hellenophile,<sup>12</sup> but he too was an astrologer and relied far more earnestly on Iranian than Greek sources in his work.

However much these men inclined toward Iran, they both knew of at least one Greek sage, namely, Hermes. Indeed, Abu Maʿshar knew three personages of that name, encouraged, doubtless, by the stereotyped epithet *trismegistos* applied to Hermes in the sources.<sup>13</sup> The earliest of the three lived before the Flood. He was the first to study the sciences and—the practical element enters early—he constructed the pyramids of Egypt. The second was identical with the Hermes of al-Fadl's account of post-diluvian Iraq. A king called Dahhaq ibn Qay founded a city, likely Babylon, and constructed in it seven (or twelve) astronomical shrines for seven scholars, among them Hermes.<sup>14</sup> The coming of an unnamed prophet shattered this golden age of learning in Iraq, and Hermes eventually left for Egypt where he became king. Later authors, who were obviously copying Abu Maʿshar, Ibn Juljul and Ibn Abi Usaybiʿah, connected this Hermes with Pythagoras, one as the teacher and one as the student of Hermes.

The latest of the Hermes was the Egyptian sage associated with a body of Greek (and Latin) texts which bear his name, the so-called *Corpus Hermeticum*, the preserved Egyptian *summa* of gnosticism and alchemical science. This same Hermes was the sire of Asclepius, who passed his father's scientific and philosophical learning to the Greeks.

This view of intellectual history was put together in scholarly circles in the court of Harun al-Rashid (A.D. 786–809), well before the days of Hunayn ibn Ishaq and of al-Kindi, and so earlier than the full impact of scholastic Hellenism upon Islam. Earlier in ʿAbbasid times there was some

interest in Greek philosophy, to be sure. Under Mansur, Ibn al-Muqaffa<sup>c</sup> (d. 757) or his son was responsible for the first Aristotelian translations into Arabic.<sup>15</sup> The event was, however, isolated. Mansur was certainly interested in the "foreign sciences"—Jurjis ibn Jibra'il ibn Bakhtishu<sup>c</sup> came from Jundishapur to Baghdad as caliphal physician in 765—but that interest was neither entirely philosophical nor entirely Greek in its object.

Jurjis and his successors from the Bakhtishu<sup>c</sup> family were Hellenically trained, but another family that came into prominence in Mansur's reign, the Nawbakhti, looked, as we have seen, in quite different directions. The founder of that line, Nawbakht, was an Iranian convert from Zoroastrianism to Islam and an astrologer of considerable influence at court. And it was from his grandson, Abu Sahl al-Fadl, likewise an astrologer and bilingual in Pahlavi and Arabic, that Ibn al-Nadim drew his account of the early history of science.

Harun too was interested in Greek science and philosophy. The Bakhtishu<sup>c</sup> retained their position at court but were joined by another Jundishapur alumnus, Yuhanna ibn Masawayh, the Christian to whom Harun entrusted the task of translating the medical works discovered and confiscated during the various Muslim forays into Anatolia (Qifti, 380). Abu Nuh, the secretary of the Nestorian Catholicus Timotheus, edged forward the still relatively unsophisticated translation work on the Aristotelian logic,<sup>16</sup> and another obscure scholar, Sallam al-Abrash,<sup>17</sup> is alleged to have translated the *Physics* (*Fihrist*, 244/Dodge, 587).

Sallam probably had the patronage of the Barmacid family, but those recent converts from Buddhism to Islam had interests far more catholic than Greek science. Yahya ibn Khalid, the Barmacid who commissioned the translation of Ptolemy's *Almagest*,<sup>18</sup> was personally responsible for having Indian medical works translated into Arabic (*Fihrist*, 303/Dodge, 710, 826–27). Other scholars connected with either the Barmacids or Harun's *Khizanat al-bikmah* labored at turning both Sanscrit and Pahlavi works into Arabic (*Fihrist*, 244–45/Dodge, 589–90). Abu Sahl al-Fadl was among these latter; in the words of the *Fihrist* (274/Dodge, 651), "he was relied upon because of his knowledge of the books of Fars," which included (*Fihrist*, 239/Dodge, 651) works of "Hermes the Babylonian" translated into Pahlavi during the reign of Shapur.<sup>19</sup>

The Muslim savants of the late eighth century were well versed in Persian, Indian, and Greek astronomy, astrology, medicine, and alchemy, and this at a time when they knew Aristotle only in an epitome and apparently possessed no knowledge of Plato at all. Within a few years Ibn al-Bitriq, Ibn Bahriz, Ibn Na'imah, and Theodore Abu Qurrah, all Christians, began the work of translating Aristotle, Plato, and the Neoplatonists.<sup>20</sup> This scholastic tradition, patronized by the Caliph Ma'mun,

came into Arabic textually from Syriac or even Greek prototypes and without the notable Iranian contamination to which the stories told by al-Fadl and Abu Ma'shar bear eloquent, if symbolic, witness. More, they underline an important element in the cultural development of Islam: Hermes Trismegistos and the works associated with him were domesticated in Islam a generation before either Plato or Aristotle found a firm base there, assisted, it would seem, by Iranian astrologers.

Scholastic philosophy did nothing to impede the growth and diffusion of Hermeticism in Islam. Indeed, their coming together was like the rediscovery of an old ally. The Greeks and Romans at the end of antiquity were persuaded of the identification of Hermes with the Egyptian god Thoth—the Theuth of Plato's *Phaedrus*—and were equally convinced that the works circulating in Greek under the name of Hermes Trismegistos were genuine reflections of a remote Egyptian antiquity. Not that those sunset Fathers of Hellenism had become antiquarians as such; it is rather more likely to think that their sapientalization of the past arose from their own failing confidence that they could add something new or true or certain to the sum of human wisdom. The philosophers of the European Renaissance embraced the Egyptian imposture with equal enthusiasm, though perhaps from different motives, and it was only in relatively recent times that western scholarship judged the *Corpus Hermeticum* as essentially the creation of late Greek learning and piety.<sup>21</sup>

The problems of analysis—and their proposed solutions—in that great age of religious syncretism reflect upon the search for the origins of parallel phenomena in Islam. The routes whereby Hellenic *scholastic* material passed into Islam are well marked in the *Fihrist*, and to go down them leads directly to Farabi studying the text of the *Metaphysics*. But the *occult* knowledge possessed by Farabi's contemporaries did not necessarily travel through parallel, albeit underground, channels. Indeed, much of what has been described as Hermeticism may have been on that same terrain long before Islam, in the hands of people like the Mandeans, Syrian Christian groups like the Daysanites, the theologians of the well-established Babylonian rabbinate,<sup>22</sup> the Hellenized pagan priesthoods which were still active in Babylon and elsewhere in the first Christian century,<sup>23</sup> or in later times the Hellenic and Hellenized philosophers at the court of Khusrav Anushirvan.

Of all these groups it is the Mandeans who are of most interest here since they too, like the formidable occultists of Harran, were known as "Sabians." They lived, and still uncertainly survive, in the marshlands of southern Iraq, whence they were also known as "Sabians of the marshes" (*Fihrist*, 340–41/Dodge, 811), or even as "Nabateans," another archaic denomination in Islam. According to modern estimates, these curious and

isolated marsh people almost certainly constituted a gnostic sect that had its origins within later (though possibly pre-Christian) Judaism as an ascetic, baptist society with its centers in the east Jordan, the former haunts of the Nabateans. Some of these so-called "Nasorean Jews" may have been absorbed within Judeo-Christianity, but another branch of the "baptizers" (cf. the Arabic SBY, to immerse, baptize) migrated eastward sometime before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in A.D. 70, and after passing through Harran found their final refuge in the marsh areas of lower Iraq.

The Mandeans may well have been gnostics before they departed from their camps in the Transjordan, but their preserved literature, at any rate, dates from after their arrival in Iraq and testifies to the incorporation into a very early form of Jewish gnosticism of ideas derived from both Babylonian and Iranian sources, the importance of the seven planets, for example, and the Mandaean form of the gnostic savior myth.<sup>24</sup>

None of this painfully—and uncertainly—reconstructed history of the Mandeans was evident to Ibn al-Nadim who contented himself with a few brief comments on their practices and who seems to say that they were originally Manicheans. The reality was, in fact, quite the reverse: there was a Mandaean sacred literature before 300, or in any event early enough for Mani to have borrowed from it.<sup>25</sup> And it must surely have been the existence of those Scriptures that prompted Muhammad to include the "Sabians" in the Qur'an (2:62; 5:69; 22:17) as "People of the Book."<sup>26</sup>

It would appear most unlikely that Muhammad had direct access to the Sabian-Mandaean Scriptures. Ibn al-Nadim credited them with no specific titles, though he did know of other, more secular "Nabatean" works, chief among them the *Nabatean Agriculture*,<sup>27</sup> a work purportedly written by Ibn Wahshiyyah (*Fihrist*, 311–12, 358/Dodge, 863–65) but more likely the creation of the Shi'ite Abu Talib Ahmad ibn al-Zayyat (d. ca. 951). The purpose of the *Nabatean Agriculture* remains obscure, but it is obviously Hermetic, and like the *Hermetica* in Greek, its pretended antiquity—it claims to be merely a translation from the original Nabatean (Aramaic) of the older Semitic learning from Babylonia—is largely a literary fable.

Most of the material in the *Nabatean Agriculture* is, in fact, pre-Islamic, though it does not return to the remote patriarchal times that the medieval Muslims imagined.<sup>28</sup> Much of the material contained in it appears in fact to be Greek, but there are also traces of Mesopotamian lore, a combination that points once again to the besetting problem of Near Eastern syncretism. In the five-odd centuries spanning the birth of Jesus, the Near East presents a series of religious and quasi-religious movements compounded out of motifs drawn from all over Western Asia. Gnosticism is one of them, Mandeism another, and the typology can be multiplied through various

Jewish and Christian sects and the occult sciences like astrology and chemistry. Scholars' attempts at disengaging and assigning to their appropriate sources the various elements operating within these complexes have been only partially successful at best,<sup>29</sup> and least of all when they have attempted to speak with historical precision on the when and where of these obvious syncretisms.

The Arabs possessed, on the testimony of the *Fihrist*, a wide range of *Hermetica* which included versions of the Hermes myth as well as works of theology, cosmology, and physics that were the substance of the Hermetic "revelation." The extent of the latter may be measured in the alchemical Book Ten of the *Fihrist* (351–60/Dodge, 843–68) with its bewildering profusion of names and titles.<sup>30</sup> The major figures are Hermes—the Babylonian Hermes of Abu Sahl—Ostanes, Zosimus, Khalid ibn Yazid, Jabir ibn Hayyan, the Sufi master Dhu al-Nun al-Misri (d. 860), Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi (d. 925), Ibn Wahshiyyah (d. 904), his contemporary al-Ikhmimi, a Christian monk named Stephen, the 'Alid Sufi al-Sa'ih al-'Alawi, Kindi's student Dubays, and the "extremist" Shi'ite al-Shalmaghani (d. 934).<sup>31</sup>

The list in the *Fihrist* points to some of the directions penetrated by Hermeticism in the late tenth century. The Shi'ite 'Ali consistently claimed the Hermeticist Jabir as one of their own (*Fihrist*, 255/Dodge, 853) and linked him with the Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765), who was himself credited with alchemical works.<sup>32</sup> Ja'far's other companions are not, in fact, very well known except for what can be read on them in the Sunni heresiographers. Abu al-Khattab (d. 755) came to rest in those collections as an early example of the Shi'ite *ghulat* or "extremists" by reason of his divinization of both Ja'far and himself.<sup>33</sup> The *Fihrist* (186–87/Dodge, 462–63) connects two other famous members of the Imam Ja'far's circle with Abu al-Khattab, namely Maymun al-Qaddah and his son 'Abdallah, the reputed founders of the Isma'ili wing of the Shi'ah. Another man who belonged to the same group around Ja'far was the early Shi'ite *mutakallim* Hisham ibn al-Hakam (d. 795) (*Fihrist*, 175–76/Dodge, 437–38).

Whatever may be true of Jabir and Ja'far themselves, there is nothing to link any of the other followers of the Imam directly to the Hermetic tradition save a common belief in the transmigration of souls (*tanasukh*), a notion that had its supporters in 'Alid circles as far back as Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah (d. 700) and his champion al-Mukhtar. But unlike the Pythagorean theory of transmigration which was later thought to stand behind the views of men such as Thabit ibn Qurrah and al-Razi, the early Shi'ite *tanasukh* was actually *bulul*, the divine infusion into the Imam. The followers of Abu al-Khattab did believe, as Ash'ari explained, that they would not die, that is, that their souls would survive their passage from

the body, much as the Pythagoreans held. But the heresiographers were far more interested in the Shi'ite theories of the Imamate, and so it was *bulul* that tended to usurp the center of their discussions of transmigration.

These alleged Shi'ite affiliations to Hermeticism carry us back to the marshlands of lower Iraq. The territory there occupied by the Mandeans-Sabi'ans in the second or third Christian century was the breeding ground in the ninth of the Qarmatian wing of the Isma'ili Shi'ah. None of the earliest Isma'ilis, those associated with Ja'far al-Sadiq in the eighth century, were explicitly connected with the Mesopotamian Sabians, though Maymun al-Qaddah was accused of being an adherent of the Christian sect of the Daysanites who were once strong in those regions (*Fibris*, 186–87/Dodge, 462–63). The charge appears somewhat unlikely. There was nothing in the Edessan theologian Bar Daysan (d. 222) of the *batin*gnosis approach to knowledge, no spiritual emanations, no continuing revelation through an Imam.<sup>34</sup>

Whatever its claims to political and dynastic legitimacy, theoretical Isma'ilism was the creation of those obscure men connected in one way or another with the Imam Ja'far. None of their works has been preserved intact, but something of their theories can be put together from the heresiographers. Hisham, for example, was proposing a view of material being not unlike that of the Daysanites and the Stoa, and more than one member of the Isma'ili circle embraced the hypothesis of the transmigration of souls, though not, as has been noted, in the same manner as Pythagoras had preached that doctrine. Of Platonic metaphysics there is no trace in those quarters, but within the next century Isma'ili Shi'ism had drunk deeply of just such a system. The earliest Isma'ili literature was largely a dispute over the nature of the Imam, and the argument was pursued over the terrain of the history of prophetism. With Abu Hatim al-Razi (d. 933), the Isma'ili *da'i* in Rayy and Jibal, Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Nasafi (d. 942), his counterpart in Khurasan,<sup>35</sup> and then somewhat later, during the reign of Mu'izz (953–79),<sup>36</sup> among the Fatimid Isma'ilis in Egypt, a new era begins: the Imam becomes a cosmic and transcendent figure as well as a historical one, a position henceforward supported by recourse to a type of late Platonic metaphysics.

The degree to which Neoplatonism invaded the preserves of Isma'ili Shi'ism in the mid-tenth century can be observed in the highly systematized theories of the "Brethren of Purity" at Basrah.<sup>37</sup> A quasi-secret society which sought to use philosophy for political ends, the Brethren, their true identity almost perfectly concealed, published their encyclopedic *Rasa'il* in the latter half of the tenth century. And though they could invoke Hermes on occasion, the greater part of the *Rasa'il* belongs to the *falsafah* tradition rather than to Hermeticism.<sup>38</sup> There was, of course, a

wisdom beyond what was revealed here, the wisdom of the prophets, but the entire project of the *Rasa'il* was one of *public* education, to support the revelation of Islam by an intellectually appropriate philosophy. Their society operated secretly, but the philosophy of the Brethren was open to all who had the ability to comprehend.

The main body of the philosophy and science propagated by the Brethren derives from the usual scholastic sources known to the medieval Muslims: Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Euclid and Ptolemy. Their occultism, on the other hand, comes, on their own admission, from the Sabians of Harran, who, according to the Brethren, were the teachers of the Greeks and a link in the chain of wisdom that began in Egypt and Babylon and ended in the Greek philosophical schools, or, rather, in the teachings of the Brethren themselves. Whether that first, more public strain of philosophy, a highly Neopythagoreanized version of the late standard mix of Plato and Aristotle, likewise passed through the hands of the Sabians, seems somewhat unlikely on the face of it since, as we shall see, the two groups did not share the same metaphysics.

For their part, the Brethren of Purity were exceedingly sparing in their citations of Greek philosophers, particularly the later ones. But a great deal of the Hellenic material can be identified, and if the *Rasa'il* were composed in the second half of the tenth century, as the few names supplied by al-Tawhidi seem to suggest, the Brethren already had available for their purposes the greater part of Greek philosophy and science that would eventually pass into Arabic. If, however, the nucleus of the collection goes back to the earliest Imams, as the Isma'ili tradition insisted it did—to 'Abdallah ibn Maymun, for example, who flourished early in the second half of the eighth century—then it would antedate most of the formal translation activity from Greek into Arabic. In this event the possibility of a Sabian intermediary for even the scholastic material would be a far more attractive notion.

How the Sabians of Harran could have passed to the early Isma'ilis a substantial body of Greek learning is not suggested by our sources, which are chiefly concerned with the scholastic *falsafah* tradition. But we obviously do not have the whole story. As we shall see below, Jahm ibn Safwan (d. 745), who lived even earlier than 'Abdallah ibn Maymun, apparently had access to some version of Neoplatonism, and others of the earliest *mutakallimun* show signs of Stoic influences. Sabian philosophical literature was almost certainly in Syriac, though it was not necessarily constituted on integral translations. The Sabians showed no interest in the purely scholastic accomplishments of Alexandria and Athens until certain of them moved into Islamic circles in Baghdad at the beginning of the tenth century. We must think, then, that they were drawing on syntheses rather



than on the textual bases of an Olympiodorus or a Farabi. The Proclan Neoplatonism of Pseudo-Dionysius, available in Syriac, was one such synthesis, and the Greek *Corpus Hermeticum* was another. The encyclopedic system of the Brethren of Purity was far more ambitious than either of those collections, and so too was that of the Sabians, even though this latter can now be read only in Arabic summaries.

There were grounds enough for the Brethren at Basrah to dissemble their immediate associations with the pagan Sabians of Harran,<sup>39</sup> but their silence on their Greek sources may have arisen from a more genuine ignorance. They had inherited a synthesis rather than created one, and the artificers of that inheritance, like those of the pseudepigraphers of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and the *Corpus Areopagiticum*, were little inclined to reveal either their sources' or their own identity. The Brethren's theology and cosmology was not, however, identical with that of the Sabians. The former stood closer to late Platonic orthodoxy in positioning the two Plotinian hypostases of Universal Intelligence and World Soul, while they relegated the other spiritual beings, gods in the Sabians' eyes, to the acceptable Muslim status of angels.

The Brethren acknowledged the prophethood of Hermes, an admission rendered easier by the Sabians' prior identification of Hermes with the Qur'anic Idris. But the most overt expression of Hermeticism in the *Rasa'il* is reserved for the fifty-second and final *risalah* in our collection. It is here, in this assemblage of magic and theurgy, that the debt to the Sabians is explicitly confessed, the Sabians' connection with the Greeks asserted, and the ultimate origins of science traced, as they were in the various Hermes legends, to Egypt and Babylon.

The entire passage (*Rasa'il* IV, 295–306) is an important source on this still mysterious group of scientists and adepts at Harran who flourished, if only for a brief time, in Islam under the name of Sabians, and who left their profound mark on Isma'ili Shi'ite and Sunni alike. In the first part of the ninth chapter of the *Fihrist* (318–27/Dodge, 745–73) Ibn al-Nadim has his own lengthy description of the sect. He names as his first source al-Sarakhsi (d. 899), who derived his account in turn from his teacher al-Kindi. This initial part of the narrative describes some of the rituals and taboos of the Sabians, but the hand of al-Kindi is most evident in the final equation of Sabian physics and theology with the contents of the Aristotelian school curriculum (*Fihrist*, 320/Dodge, 750).

After the Kindi-Sarakhsi account, Ibn al-Nadim proceeds to his other source on the Sabians of Harran,<sup>40</sup> including a Christian's narrative (320–21/Dodge, 751–53) of how Ma'mun first became aware of their existence. The caliph insisted upon the conversion of these obvious pagans, but the Harranians devised a way out of the impasse: they identified them-

selves as the Mandeian "Sabians" mentioned in the Qur'an,<sup>41</sup> and so sought to move under the shelter reserved in Islam for the "Peoples of the Book." It was the same motive, doubtless, that brought Hermes into the orbit of the Qur'anic Idris.

There was a justice in this. The original invocation of both Hermes and Thoth in connection with the occultism of the *Corpus Hermeticum* was itself a subterfuge to convince the Hellenic reader of the impeccable eastern antiquity of what was actually the creation of the religious and intellectual sensibilities of late Greco-Roman antiquity. Just as Hermes-Thoth was used to conceal the true nature of the original philosophical-theosophical mélange, so now Idris was summoned to give Hermes a protective Islamic coloration by serving as a pseudepigraph for a pseudepigraph.

Enoch and Hermes were late Islamic arrivals at Harran. During the Greco-Roman period the spiritual founding fathers there were Hermes and Agathodaimon, to whose patronage the local ritual and, somewhat more successfully, the considerable Harranian skill in the theory and practice of alchemy and astrology was committed. The alchemy may have been a local growth; its constant and almost exclusive concern with minerals has suggested some kind of association with a metal-working guild.<sup>42</sup> The planet cult at Harran, of which authors such as Ibn al-Nadim, Mas'udi, the Brethren of Purity, Shahrastani, and Dimashqi all produced detailed descriptions, was likewise very old there,<sup>43</sup> and its assimilation of the sophisticated techniques of Babylonian astrology could have occurred on either of two occasions when northern Syria and Babylonia were parts of the same political organization, during the rule of the Achemenians or, more probably, that of the Seleucids.

Ibn al-Nadim's description of the various rituals practiced at Harran has unmistakably to do with something exceedingly primitive, survivals from another age which managed to escape at Harran the oblivion which Christianity visited upon similar rites all across northern Syria and Mesopotamia. Hermeticism, on the contrary, was not, despite appearances and constant professions of antiquity, a primitive survival from a vanished world, and its mock antiquity stands in absurd contrast to the patently old cult practices at Harran.

Sabianism was far more than mere star worship; the Harranians possessed a physics and a theology as well. Kindi's account in the *Fihrist* reduced the Sabian philosophy to a somewhat too perfect image of Aristotelianism, but the Brethren's explanation of the philosophical premises of the Sabians' astrology, taken together with Shahrastani's report (*Millal* II, 662 ff.), with which it essentially agrees,<sup>44</sup> reveals something quite different. The Sabians believed in a creator God, remote in his transcen-



dence. He is the One in his essence but is likewise present by infusion in other spiritual beings who are his creatures, whether the angels or the souls of men.

Seven of the divine spiritual beings who are not mixed with matter were assigned the direction of the planets. Although the Sabians called the planets the "temples" of spiritual beings, these divine beings did not inhabit them in the manner of souls or inherent forms but ruled them from without, while the planets in turn directed the rest of the material universe. The universe is the meeting place of the goodness of light—the One God was identified with Light by the Sabians—and the evil of darkness. The human soul is consubstantial with the divine beings but does not always realize its powers because of its mixture, as form with matter, with the material universe.

God has mercy on some men and these are the prophets. But for the rest of humanity a return to their homeland among the spiritual beings is attained only by a veritable Platonic *askesis*, the putting off of the influences of the lower part of the tripartite soul. How a man conducts himself in life determines his role in the next cycle of creation. In the Sabian view the species cease their reproduction at the end of a Great Year of 36,435 solar years. At that point begins a new cycle of material beings. The purified souls have since rejoined the spiritual beings on high, but those whose purification is incomplete must suffer another reincarnation, either as men, or, for the substantially impure, as lower beasts.

Although it is not stated explicitly, this body of cosmology, physics, and psychology probably constituted the esoteric teachings of the Sabians of Harran, what the Isma'ili Brethren of Purity called the "realities" (*baqa'iq*), while their elaborate rituals were designed for esoteric purposes. That the two were born at the same time or arose from the same religious sensibilities defies belief, however. We can only surmise that at some point which cannot at present be determined, but likely during Hellenistic times, the pagans at Harran fashioned for themselves a theology, that is, they attempted to explain their beliefs in terms of Hellenic rational discourse, albeit in a late, syncretized, and occult form of that discourse. The experiment cannot be judged a complete success. The old cult and the new theology sat uneasily together, uncomfortably enough for Shahrastani to deduce the existence of two Sabian sects, the "spirituals" and the "idolaters," the latter likely the original "Sabians" of Harran, and the former equally likely the product of a contact with Hellenistic piety and science.

Kindi was correct when he thought he could detect Aristotle through the outlines of Harranian theology, but only half so. What he did not understand was the highly syncretized nature of the Harranians—and his

own—philosophical inheritance. He says (*Fihrist*, 320/Dodge, 750): "The saying that God is unity, to whom no attribute applies and about whom no affirmative statement can be made, or any syllogism related, is similar to what is said in the *Metaphysics*." Kindi knew the *Metaphysics*—it had been translated for him by a certain "Astat" (Eustathius?)—and so too did his Sabian contemporary Thabit ibn Qurrah. But Kindi had before him another text masquerading as Aristotle which expressed sentiments far closer to the Sabian insights than was the *Metaphysics*, the abridgment of parts of Plotinus's *Enneads* known as the "Theology of Aristotle."

There existed another Arab tradition on the origins of the Harranian version of the *theologia negativa*. Sa'id al-Andalusi's account of the history of Greek philosophy in his *Tabaqat al-umam* (22–26 ed. Cairo/Blachère, 57–62) opens with the remark, already seen in the *Rasa'il* of the Brethren of Purity, that the Greeks' religion was like the Sabians'. How this came about historically is revealed shortly after: the earliest Greek philosopher was Empedocles, who learned his wisdom in Syria from King David's vizier Luqman. Among Empedocles's successors Sa'id mentions only Pythagoras, who was initiated into philosophy in Egypt by certain companions of Solomon who fled there, then Socrates and Plato, who were both students of Pythagoras, and finally Aristotle, the student of Plato but also in a sense of Pythagoras since his father Nicolaus was a student of Pythagoras.<sup>45</sup>

The Greeks' own view of that history reads quite differently, of course. Sa'id or his source has reversed the correct chronology of Empedocles and Pythagoras to confer priority on the former. Later Greek lives of Pythagoras, like that in Porphyry's *Philosophical History*, do make him into an inveterate traveler over the Near East, and according to Porphyry, Pythagoras derived his wisdom from the Egyptians, Phoenicians, and Chaldeans, as well as from the Arabs and Jews who instructed him in the interpretation of dreams (*Vita Pyth.*, 22–23 Nauck). There are, however, no similar traditions in the case of Empedocles, and the tiny fragment preserved from Porphyry on Empedocles (*Vita Pyth.*, 7) does nothing more than state that he was a student and lover of Parmenides, the latter unknown to Sa'id.<sup>46</sup>

Sa'id's characterization of Socrates is another departure from the later Greek tradition. Despite the fact that later Platonists paid little or no attention to the ethical philosophy or political concerns of Socrates, he held nonetheless a central position in their understanding of the *history* of philosophy. Socrates was against, according to Porphyry, the "coryphaeus of the philosophers," an attitude that went back to the philosophers of the generation before Cicero, when the ethically oriented Stoics and Platonists came to regard Socrates as the founder of "modern" philosophy

and claimed him as their own. That interest in ethics did not survive among the later Platonists, but the historical position granted to Socrates did.

Sa'îd was not, however, writing history but obscurely enunciating a philosophical attitude which had its origins in the east and located its Greek ancestry chiefly in the long-dead Empedocles and Pythagoras. According to Sa'îd, in Empedocles's own lifetime popular opposition forced his philosophy to go underground where it was cultivated by what were called in Arabic *batiniyyah*, that is, esotericists. In Islam the reappearance of this Empedoclean legacy was connected with the Spaniard Ibn Massarah (d. 931) and the early Mu'tazilites,<sup>47</sup> who were, in Sa'îd's view, the chief beneficiaries of Empedocles's insistence on the unity of God and his denial of the reality of the divine attributes.

The historical Empedocles did attempt, by all accounts, to resist the current Greek anthropomorphism in the name of Parmenidean monism; but the interpretation of that stand by Sa'îd or his source is patently Neoplatonic. Aristotle, it appears, was not the only thinker used as a pseudepigraphical cover for Neoplatonism. Empedocles was cast in precisely that role in the Neoplatonic doxography preserved in Arabic under the title of *The Opinions of the Philosophers* and attributed to Ammonius.<sup>48</sup> And though he does not appear in the early Arabic literature on Harran, Empedocles does figure in Islam's most considerable piece of *Hermetica*, the *Ghayat al-hakim*, falsely attributed to Ibn Massarah's fellow Spaniard al-Majriti. Here the Sabians, Hermes, Empedocles, and the Hermetic Aristotle all have their places, and Aristotle the most prominent place of all.

The titles attributed to Hermes in the *Fihrist* are chiefly alchemical and astrological.<sup>49</sup> Similar works were earlier circulating under his name in Greek as well, but the *Corpus Hermeticum* published by Festugière and Nock is far more philosophical than occult in its contents, and its theology bears a marked resemblance to both Stoicism and Platonism.<sup>50</sup> None of the *Fihrist*'s titles points in that direction, however, but at the end of the already cited Kindi-Sarakhsi account of the Sabians, Ibn al-Nadim adds (320/Dodge, 750): "Al-Kindi said that he saw a book which these people [the Sabians] authorized. It was the *Discourse of Hermes on Unity [tawhid]*, which he [Hermes] wrote for his son. . . . No philosopher exerting himself can dispense with them . . . and agreement with them."

The "Discourses on Unity" have been identified, without evidence, as the tract called "Poimandres" in our *Corpus Hermeticum*.<sup>51</sup> If we recall, on the other hand, that the information—and the editorial comment—comes from al-Kindi, a philosopher with known Mu'tazilite leanings,<sup>52</sup> and that *tawhid Allah*, the unity of God, was the paramount Mu'tazilite issue of the time,<sup>53</sup> we are no closer to locating the "Discourses" in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, but we have probably uncovered Kindi's motive in praising

whatever he read in the "Discourses" and can perhaps conjecture what he did read there. In al-Kindi's bibliography we find among his controversial works (*Fihrist*, 259/Dodge, 622) various refutations of the Manicheans and other dualists, a work on *tawhid*, together with commentaries, and finally, a treatment of the differences that exist between the various sects on the subject of *tawhid*, and this despite the fact that they are all supporters of the divine unity.

Al-Kindi had already attempted, as we have seen, to locate Sabian theology in the context of the *tawhid* question by what must have been a highly Neoplatonic reading of the *Metaphysics*, just as Sa'îd al-Andalusi was to do with a similar reading of Empedocles. Sa'îd was far more explicit, however, in drawing the historical conclusions: the Empedoclean (read: Neoplatonic) version of Hermeticism had a direct influence on the theology of the Mu'tazilite Abu al-Hudhayl (d. ca. 840–50). We do not know enough about the intellectual formation of Abu al-Hudhayl properly to comment upon Sa'îd's judgment,<sup>54</sup> except to note that the *kalam* formulated by Abu al-Hudhayl, who despite the date of his death belonged to the generation of thinkers before al-Kindi, had not yet been exposed to the scholastic tradition in philosophy.<sup>55</sup>

And yet the signs of exposure to some type of speculative theology on the Greek model are unmistakable, not, as might be expected, in the Mu'tazilite pioneer Wasil ibn 'Ata', but in one of his contemporaries, Jahm ibn Safwan (d. 745). Jahm must be read through the mercies of his opponents, but it is difficult to believe that he was not meditating (Pseudo-) Empedocles or some other Neoplatonic source, the Hermetic "Discourses on *Tawhid*," for example, when he presented his own radical portrait of Allah as absolutely transcendent, beyond accidents, properties, or qualifications, and indeed, beyond being itself.<sup>56</sup>

Farther back in Islam it is impossible to go. Jahm antedates all the known translations of Greek *philosophica* into Arabic. He may have been relying upon Syriac rather than Arabic material, it is true, either Neoplatonizing Christian theologians—Pseudo-Dionysius had been available in Syriac since the sixth century in the translation of Sergius of Reshayna—or those of Harran whose God Kindi described as "*tawhid*, to whom no attribute applies and about whom no affirmative statement can be made or any syllogism related."

By all accounts the first of these Harranians to reach Baghdad and leave his mark there was Thabit ibn Qurrah (d. 901).<sup>57</sup> Again according to the *Fihrist* (272/Dodge, 647), Muhammad ibn Musa of the famous family of savants and patrons of learning found Thabit employed in Harran as a money changer, admired his style, and took him into his translation circle, which at that time included the celebrated Hunayn ibn Ishaq. Thabit

trained with Muhammad, was eventually introduced to the Caliph Mu'radid (892–902), and became the effective head of the Sabian community in Iraq.

Thabit was comfortable in Greek, Syriac, and Arabic and had an active scholarly life as a translator, epitomizer, and commentator of Hellenic scientific material, chiefly in mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. His interest in Aristotle centered on the *Organon*, but at least one Platonic study is cited among his works, "An explanation of the Allegories in Plato's *Republic*" (Qifti, 120, 7). It was not Thabit's only work on politics,<sup>58</sup> nor was it the last time that a member of the family wrote on the *Republic*. His son, the physician Sinan ibn Thabit (d. 942), wrote a world history which began, on the testimony of Mas'udi's somewhat critical notice (*Muruj* I, 15–16), with a preface in the manner of Plato's *Republic*, that is, it proceeded from an analysis of the faculties of the soul to an understanding of the governance of the state.

The *Fihrist* does not make explicit use of information from Thabit ibn Qurrah for its account of the Sabians, but al-Qifti's bibliography of his works (116–20) credits Thabit with a number of tracts on the Sabians and their beliefs, mostly in Syriac. And even though al-Kindi belonged to the scholastic rather than the Harranian tradition in philosophy, it is possible that Thabit, who shared both traditions, the Harranian by birth and the scholastic through his contact with the Banu Musa, was the source of Kindi's philosophically oriented version of Sabianism.

It would be a mistake to characterize the entire Harranian tradition as Hermetic. In philosophy the line between Middle Platonism's flirtation with Neopythagoreanism and a full-blown Hermeticism was, in any event, a thin one. Pythagoras was extravagantly admired by his Neoplatonic biographers, and as much for his wondrous powers as for his philosophical perspicacity.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, Pythagoreanism had been closely linked with thaumaturgy since its revival by Nigidius Figulus in the late Roman Republic. By the first century of the Empire, however, Pythagoras represented a metaphysics as well as a *bios*, as the later Platonists were well aware. Its effects were already evident in Philo,<sup>60</sup> and both Porphyry (*Vita Pyth.*, 43–45 Nauck) and Simplicius (*In Phys.*, 230–31) cite long extracts from Moderatus of Gades, a Pythagorean of the first Christian century, whose theses, if they are his,<sup>61</sup> anticipated positions generally characterized as Neoplatonic.

One of the most remarkable features of Moderatus's theory as described by Simplicius is the immediate derivation of matter from the One by the latter's "withdrawing" or "contracting" itself and so producing, from its own substance as it were, a "quantity" without form, distinction, or figure. Iamblichus knew of this theory but attributed it not to Moderatus

but to the Egyptians (*De Myst.* VIII, 3), a judgment which by the time of Proclus (*In Tim.* I, 386) was more precisely credited to Hermes Trismegistus.<sup>62</sup>

Moderatus was unknown to the Arabs, and so too was this peculiarly Pythagorean theory of the creation of matter; Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi, who was thought to have taken his inspiration from both the Harranians and Pythagoras, held a very different view on the subject (see below). Thabit did know the work of another pre-Plotinian Pythagorean, Nicomachus of Jerash, whom the Arabs fairly consistently confused with Aristotle's father. Nicomachus's *Arithmetical Theology* was apparently unknown to the scholars of the tenth century (*Fihrist*, 272/Dodge, 643), but his other major work, the *Introduction to Arithmetic*, which became a standard textbook in the later Platonic schools,<sup>63</sup> was translated into Arabic by Thabit. And in its introduction he could read the familiar philosophical premises of Middle Platonism, the preexistence, for example, of the Platonic *eid*, here numbers, in the mind of the Creator God (18 Kutsch; 12 Hoche).

Thabit's scientific interests are well attested;<sup>64</sup> assessing his work as a philosopher is considerably more difficult. His bibliography shows that he devoted a great deal of attention to Galen, one of the chief routes whereby scholastic philosophy passed into Islam. Galen's *On Demonstration*, which had been translated into Syriac by a certain Ayyub and then into Arabic by Hunayn ibn Ishaq and his assistants, was given close study by Thabit (Qifti, 118, II, 6–7).<sup>65</sup> Only a few years later an otherwise unknown philosopher of Mosul, Abu Bakr ibn abi Thawr, was exercised by the same tract and wrote against it. There are strong Platonic reminiscences in Abu Bakr al-Mawsili, and yet the only post-Islamic *saylasuf* he cites is Thabit ibn Qurrah.<sup>66</sup> On the face of it both Thabit and his son Sinan had an abiding interest in ethical and political questions, an interest that went back, through Galen as seems likely, to a study of Platonic psychology.

Thabit's son Sinan (d. 942) enjoyed an equally prestigious position in Baghdad, where he was in charge of the licensing of physicians for the practice of medicine in the capital. Despite his closeness to both Muqtadir (908–32) and Qahir (932–34), Sinan's Sabianism provoked difficulties. He resisted the importuning of Qahir, even to the point of fleeing to Khurasan, but Sinan ended his days as a Muslim. Others of his coreligionists were feeling the same pressure. The *Fihrist* (326/Dodge, 768–69) has preserved a list of "headmen" at Harran reaching from the time of 'Abd al-Malik (685–705) down to the beginnings of Ibn al-Nadim's own lifetime, when the succession appears to grow somewhat uncertain. From another source we learn that the last head of the Sabian community died in 944,<sup>67</sup> though

his position, and that of his immediate predecessors, may not have been official. There was a temporary respite in 965 when a prominent Sabian, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Hilal (d. 995), became the chief secretary of the Buyid *diwan* and used his influence on behalf of his confreres.<sup>68</sup> By Ibrahim's day the chief Sabians were cultivating the perhaps safer domain of belles lettres and history: both Ibrahim and Thabit ibn Qurrah's grandson, Thabit ibn Sinan (d. 975), were literary men rather than scientists, the latter a historian of some distinction and with a marked Hellenic cast to his work.<sup>69</sup>

What was the impact of the Sabians upon Islam? As is the case in the parallel instances of the Manicheans and the Daysaniyyah, we do not possess the books of the Harranian sect nor even their history but must rely on what can be read in the oblique *testimonia* of Mas'udi, Ibn al-Nadim, the Brethren of Purity, Shahrastani, Maimonides, and Dimashqi, all of whom, with the exception of the sympathetic Brethren, regarded the Sabians as a manifestation of a somewhat exotic paganism given to the worship of planets and idols. Individual Sabians, by way of contrast, operated within the intellectual circles of tenth-century Islam with what appears to be considerably greater freedom than contemporary "zindiqs," those suspected of some clandestine form of Manicheanism.

Ibn Hazm (*Fasl* I, 137) ranked the Sabians among the *thanawiyyah* or pluralists. The characterization may have been technically correct as argued by Ibn Hazm in the pages of a heresiography, but by all appearances the Sabianism described in the Muslim sources was a myth, a *roman* as Massignon called it, founded upon the historical survival in northern Mesopotamia of a pagan sect whose antiquity was obvious but not historically identifiable by the Muslims. Trading on this ignorance, the Harranians managed to associate themselves with the Mandeans of Iraq, who themselves had no greater claim to antiquity but who had the inestimable advantage of being accepted, on the testimony of the Qur'an itself, as "People of the Book." Thus both groups, Harranians and Mandeans, were drawn into the biblical complex of Enoch and Abraham, and by linking Enoch, Idris, and Hermes, the Harranians could assume the role of possessors of a wisdom that was both patriarchal and attractively Hellenic.

One philosopher who accepted the historical claim but not the conclusions to be drawn therefrom was Maimonides. He had seen, he tells us, the Sabians' books and found them interesting in that they provided the precise pagan context against which the precepts of the Torah were revealed. The *Guide* (III, chap. 29) dwells upon a number of those books: a defense of the community of the Sabians and a book of their rituals by a certain Ishaq the Sabian, a clutch of Hermetic Aristotelian pseudepigraphs, and particularly the *Nabatean Agriculture* of Ibn Wahshiyyah.

Maimonides was little interested in the speculative side of Sabian Hermeticism; his obvious intent was to connect Sabian cult and ritual with the theurgic practices that rendered the Sabian reprobate to the Jew. Earlier Muslim authors such as Ibn al-Nadim and Mas'udi were less concerned with drawing a moral than in describing what was a received element of ancient history, an element that had curiously survived in living form into the tenth century: the Hermes of whom the Muslims' Greek and Iranian sources spoke was represented in contemporary Baghdad by the Sabians from Harran.

The most notorious product of Sabian influence was the already cited philosopher-physician Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi (d. 925), the director of a hospital at Rayy who also spent at least part of his life in the medical circles at Baghdad.<sup>70</sup> Razi identified his own philosophy as Platonic, at least as it concerned his famous dialogue with the Isma'ili *da'i* Abu Hatim al-Razi who in Muhammad ibn Zakariyya's view was holding the Aristotelian, and incorrect, view of time.<sup>71</sup> Razi did not subscribe, it appears, to one of the most cherished myths of later scholasticism, the essential agreement of Plato and Aristotle.

That Razi's physics derived from some later version of Platonism is beyond reasonable doubt.<sup>72</sup> Each one of his five eternal principles—the demiurge, soul, matter, the void, and eternity—had Platonic antecedents which find their origins in Plato's *Timaeus*. The *Timaeus* was read in a variety of ways in the later Platonic schools, to be sure, but the only commentator explicitly connected with Razi's understanding of that dialogue is Plutarch of Chaeronea,<sup>73</sup> a partisan, no less than was Razi, of the creation of the world in time.

Razi's position on the temporal creation of the universe, an attitude which ranged him with Plutarch and John Philoponus—and the Qur'an—against the main body of the later Platonists, was not the result of Islamic piety nor a desire to do justice to the Qur'anic account of creation; for Razi, God's creation of the world was necessary, not willed, and it came about in a specific moment of time by reason of the freely willed choice of the soul to bind itself to matter.

The most elaborate description of Razi's cosmology is provided in a late work by al-Katibi (d. 1276) who says that it is identical with the teachings of the Sabians of Harran.<sup>74</sup> Katibi was by no means the first to connect Razi with the Sabians. The charge appears as early as Mas'udi who cites (*Muruj* IV, 68) Razi as the author of a work on the Sabians, and far more explicitly in Sa'id al-Andalusi (*Tabaqat*, 33) who derives Razi's belief in transmigration (*tanasukh*) from the same Sabians. Ibn Hazm (*Fasl* I, 76–77) likewise mentions Razi among the partisans of *tanasukh*, a group that includes the Mu'tazilite Ahmad ibn Habit<sup>75</sup> and Abu Muslim.

Transmigration had well-known antecedents among the Indians, but in the case of Razi the inspiration was felt to be Greek, not Empedocles but another thinker who held, as we have seen, an important and well-defined position within later Platonism, Pythagoras. Indeed, Mas'udi describes (*Tanbih*, 122) how the Christian Yahya ibn 'Adi (d. 974) studied the theology of Razi as a prime exemplar of Pythagoreanism.

The Sabians, Manicheans,<sup>76</sup> Brahmans, Plato, and Pythagoras were all charged by Muslim authors with the responsibility of having shaped the irreligious and heterodox philosophy of Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi. Many of the source attributions were provided by Razi himself and may in fact have been intended to deflect readers down an antique path. Islam knew other instances of putting difficult or unlikely doctrines into the mouth of an alien tradition.<sup>77</sup>

Razi's Platonism was real enough, however. Its most curious ingredient is doubtless the atomism which was central to his physics. Despite Pines's suggestion that Razi may have acquired it from his reading of Galen, its origins remain obscure.<sup>78</sup> A Middle Platonist like Plutarch of Chaeronea might still be concerned with the influence of Epicureanism, but Razi stood, for all his atomism, remote from the tradition of Epicurus. His God was both demiurge and provident, and the human intellect for Razi was no mere conglomeration of atoms but part of the divine substance,<sup>79</sup> all of them propositions recognizably Platonic and infinitely remote from the mind of Epicurus and his followers.

Its atomism apart, Razi's Platonism, with its five eternal and hypostatic copinciples, was not that of Plotinus, Porphyry, or Proclus. To cite a single obvious example, in Razi there is no intellectual hypostasis corresponding to the *nous* of Plotinus,<sup>80</sup> nor does his version of the "fall" of the soul—a consequence of its lust (*ladhdhab*) for matter—bear any but the most superficial resemblance to Plotinus's *tolma*.<sup>81</sup>

But for Razi, no less than for his Platonic predecessors, the soul did in fact fall. But not irremediably. At the heart of Razi's philosophy is a paradoxical and abortive soteriology. The Creator, he explains, was moved with pity for the fallen soul and provided it with the means for its salvation, a part of the divine substance whereby the soul might remind itself of its origins. At first view the attitude appears gnostic in the manner of the Manicheans, but upon investigation Razi's cure for mortality is not a secret *gnosis* but the public *falsafah* available to everyone according to his abilities.<sup>82</sup> Neither an elitist *gnosis* nor an Islamic prophet are necessary to restore the soul to its spiritual homeland.

Razi's denial of the need for prophecy brought him into conflict with Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims alike,<sup>83</sup> but it makes him equally remote from the oracle-ridden theology of Proclan Platonism. And yet Razi stood

athwart a similar tradition that sought to relate philosophy not to oracles but to the occult powers of nature. He was undoubtedly an alchemist (*Fihrist*, 358/Dodge, 863), and he defended its study as a necessary propaedeutic to philosophy. It was not, however, alchemy that brings a man to that "other world" but rather philosophy, the supreme science. Proclus ventured into the *Chaldean Oracles* after theology (*Vita* XXVI); for Razi the quest for wisdom and salvation ended in speculative theology.

Razi's resistance to prophecy, whether in its usual Judeo-Christian-Islamic form of a public and social revelation or in its esoteric Shi'ite manifestation in the person of an Imam, held him close to a naturalistic theory of knowledge. The Platonist Farabi developed a theory of naturalistic prophecy out of late Peripatetic speculation on the imaginative faculty, but the Platonism of Razi was tethered far too closely to physics to permit such development. More, Razi denied the basic propositions governing the greater part of the Greco-Islamic "wisdom" literature. The first was that God (or the gods) could be summoned earthward to take up residence in an idol, or, as the Islamic Hermeticists preferred, in a "temple" (*baykal*). The theme is a common one in Greek Hermeticists like Iamblichus, and it must stand in one form or another behind Shahrastani's detailed exposé of Harranian idol worship. The second possibility of descent from above is that which directs itself not into idols but into living men, the divinely inspired sages, poets, and philosophers of the Greek tradition, the prophets of Sunni Islam, and the Imams of Shi'ism.

Razi acknowledged the sage but denied the prophet. His wise man was not, however, the divinely inspired bard or the oracles so highly praised by later Platonism but the intellectual "striver" (*mujtabid*), in short, a Plato or an Aristotle whose accomplishments were the result of investigation and not inspiration. Although gravely heterodox in Islam, Razi's position would not have been unseemly among the pagan but ostentatiously secularist schoolmen of fifth-century Alexandria. No one there was teaching Razi's brand of physics, not on the philosophy faculty at any rate, though we cannot speak with the same assurance about the Alexandrian physicians. More likely Razi was an original: the material was Greek, principally Platonic, in its inspiration, but his use of it was his own. The late Greek Platonists took their physics from Aristotle, just as Ibn Sina and the Brethren of Purity did, but Razi had other perceptions. But to call them Sabian is, in the present state of our knowledge, to say nothing.

Like the Judaism of the first century, the late philosophical tradition was a more mottled creature than its scholastic rabbis permit us to apprehend. Syncretism was constantly and pervasively at work, and if its effects are so visible at Athens and Alexandria where *Urlagepietät* was at

its strongest and most protective, we can perhaps grasp the complexity of the peculiar mutants that were thrown up elsewhere. Many, like Gnosticism, were suppressed by Christian orthodoxy and pinned, like so many exotic butterflies, to the pages of the heresiographies, but for others of the religio-philosophical hybrids the more relaxed—and less historically sophisticated—climate of Islam brought respite and even rejuvenation. The Sabians of Harran, the Mandeans, Daysanites, Isma'ilis, Jahm, Hisham, Razi, and the Brethren of Purity all had access to philosophical sources, themselves already hybridized as seems likely, about which we can only guess. Farabi, the good scholastic, explicitly linked himself with the masters of the schools; the others, each in his own degree alien to the scholastic tradition of Late Antiquity, acknowledged only Hermes as their father.<sup>84</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This final stage in the history of Greek philosophy is traced in my *Harvest of Hellenism* (New York, 1970), 671–81.

<sup>2</sup> I have described the process in my *Allah's Commonwealth* (New York, 1973), 286–331.

<sup>3</sup> See M. Plessner, "Balinus," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New edition (hereafter *EP*), 1:994–95.

<sup>4</sup> A. J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*. Vol. I: *L'astrologie et les sciences occultes*, third edition (hereafter *Révélation I*) (Paris, 1950), 355–56.

<sup>5</sup> Much of what follows I have already sketched in *Allah's Commonwealth*, 271–86, though without reference to either the sources or the secondary literature on the subject.

<sup>6</sup> Julius Ruska, *Tabula Smaragdina. Ein Beiträge zur Geschichte der hermetischen Literatur* (Heidelberg, 1926); Paul Kraus, *Jabir ibn Hayyan. Contribution à l'histoire des idées scientifiques dans l'Islam*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1941–42), esp. 2:270–303; Helmut Ritter, "Picatrix. Ein arabisches Handbuch hellenistischer Magie" in *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* (1921–22), 94–124; Louis Massignon, "Inventaire de la littérature hermétique arabe" in *Révélation I*, 384–99; Martin Plessner, "Hermes Trismegistus and Arab Science," *Studia Islamica* (hereafter *SI*) 2 (1954): 45–59, "Hirmis" *EP* 3:463–65, and *Vorsokratische Philosophie und griechische Alchemie* (Wiesbaden, 1975); Yves Marquet, "Sabéens et Ikhwan al-Safa," *SI* 24 (1966): 35–80, and 25 (1966): 77–109.

<sup>7</sup> The account is preserved in Ibn Juljul, *Tabaqat al-atibba* (Cairo, 1955), 5, written in the same year as the *Fihrist*.

<sup>8</sup> The citations from the *Fihrist* are from Fluegel's edition; the parallel passages from Bayard Dodge refer to his English translation based on an improved manuscript collation: *The Fihrist of al-Nadim*, 2 vols. (New York and London, 1970). Abu Sahl's account is interrupted by a brief excerpt from an anonymous source and is followed by an equally brief citation from a certain Ishaq the monk who is cited elsewhere (15/Dodge, 28, 594) on questions of chronology concerning Socrates and Plato.

<sup>9</sup> See David Pingree, *The Thousands of Abu Ma'shar*, (London, 1968), 2n4.

<sup>10</sup> On parallel stories from other sources, see Pingree, *Thousands*, 1n3.

<sup>11</sup> al-Mas'udi, *Muruj al-dhahab*, ed. Charles Pellat (Beirut, 1965–), 8:290; al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Ta'rikh Baghdad* (Beirut, 1966), 1:67. His son Timadh may have played a similar role in the same proceedings; cf. Yaqt, *Mu'jam al-buldan* (Cairo, 1936–38), 1:684.

<sup>12</sup> Earlier in his life Abu Ma'shar had been a rather conservative student of hadith and a critic of al-Kindi's penchant for philosophy. He underwent a "conversion" to philosophy at the latter's instigation, however, but in the end Abu Ma'shar gave himself over to astrology. *Fihrist*, 275/Dodge, 656.

<sup>13</sup> Pingree, *Thousands*, 14–18, and M. Plessner, *SI* 2 (1954): 56–57.

<sup>14</sup> Two of the others, "Tinkalus" and "Tinqarus," probably refer to the same Greek astronomer, Teucros; see Pingree, *Thousands*, 11, and cf. Dodge, 643.

<sup>15</sup> P. Kraus, "Zu Ibn al-Muqaffa," *Rivista degli studi orientali* (hereafter *RSO*) 14 (1933): 1–14. But the question remains an open one; cf. S. M. Stern in *Journal of Semitic Studies* 7 (1962): 236 ff. and particularly the studies of Mario Grignaschi in *Bulletin d'études orientales* 19 (1965–66): 7–83 (hereafter *BEO*) and *Le Muséon* 80 (1967): 211–64, where he makes the case for an Umayyad translation of some of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Letters to Alexander*. Grignaschi's choice of translator, Salim Abu al-'Ala' (*Fihrist*, 11/Dodge, 257–58), is based on highly circumstantial evidence, but if true, requires a serious revision of the history of the Arabic translations from the Greek; F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* 4: *Alchemie-Chemie, Botanik-Agrikultur* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1971), 24. By a somewhat curious coincidence, this alleged oldest translation from Greek into Arabic would also be the earliest known piece of *Hermetica* to come into Arabic; cf. Grignaschi, *BEO* 19 (1965–66): 49–51. Here too the argument is circumstantial rather than explicit.

<sup>16</sup> For his work, see P. Kraus, *RSO* 14 (1933): 11–13. Dodge's identifications systematically confuse him with a later translator, Ibrahim ibn al-Salt.

<sup>17</sup> Kraus, *RSO* 14 (1933): 11n3.

<sup>18</sup> According to the *Fihrist*, 268/Dodge, 639, Yahya received his instruction on the *Almagest* from "Salm, the director of the Bayt al-bikmah." This cannot be correct since both Salm and the "House of Wisdom" date from Ma'mun's reign. Possibly the reference is to Sallam al-Abrash. On Salm see note 57 below.

<sup>19</sup> Another Greek author who came into Pahlavi during the same period was "Dorotheus the Syrian." One of al-Fadl's contemporaries, 'Umar ibn al-Farrukhan, who served both Harun and Ma'mun, was responsible for the Arabic version of Dorotheus's *Pentateuch* (*Fihrist*, 268/Dodge, 641). The Arabic text has been edited with an English translation by David Pingree, *Dorotheus Sidonius Carmen Astrologicum* (Leipzig, 1976).

<sup>20</sup> See F. E. Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs: The Aristotelian Tradition in Islam* (New York, 1968) and "The Origins of Islamic Platonism: The School Tradition," in P. Morewedge, ed., *Islamic Philosophical Theology* (Albany, 1979), 14–45.

<sup>21</sup> See Festugière, *Révélation I*, 81–88.

<sup>22</sup> See the remarks of J. Neusner, *History of the Jews in Babylonia* (Leiden, 1969), 4:316–17, on the extremely private quality of the esoteric theological



learning of the rabbis, and cf. 2:183–84 on the gnostic "style" of those same Iraqi rabbis.

<sup>23</sup> See K. Rudolph, "Probleme einer Entwicklungsgeschichte der mandaischen Religion" in U. Bianchi, ed., *Le Origine dello Gnosticismo* (Leiden, 1967), 304–5.

<sup>24</sup> On these Babylonian and Iranian elements in Mandeism, see G. Widengren, *Handbuch der Orientalistik* 8 (Leiden, 1961), 92–96.

<sup>25</sup> See Widengren, *Handbuch*, 96–97.

<sup>26</sup> See K. Rudolph, "Entwicklungsgeschichte," 588, and Widengren, *Handbuch*, 97.

<sup>27</sup> C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 1:280–81; Supplbd. 1:430–31; L. Massignon, *Révélation* I<sup>3</sup>, 396.

<sup>28</sup> Mas'udi, *Muruj* I, 78.

<sup>29</sup> To cite but two well-known examples, see the remarks of Neusner, *History of the Jews*, 4:423–25, on the possibility of Iranian influences on Palestinian Judaism, and K. Rudolph, "Zum Problem: Mesopotamien (Babylonien) und Gnostizismus," in Bianchi, *Le Origine*, 302–6.

<sup>30</sup> For some of the identifications, see Johann Fück, "The Arabic Literature of Alchemy According to Ibn al-Nadim," *Ambix* 4 (1951): 81–144.

<sup>31</sup> On Dhu al-Nun and Ibn Wahshiyyah, see S. K. Hamarneh, *Catalogue of Manuscripts on Medicine and Pharmacy at the British Museum* (Cairo, 1975), 26–31, 57–64. Shalmaghani, who appears in the *Fihrist*, 147, 176/Dodge, 323, 340, belonged to an intellectual circle which included, not always on friendly terms, Thabit ibn Qurrah and two later members of the Nawbakhti family, Abu Sahl Isma'il and his nephew al-Hasan ibn Musa.

<sup>32</sup> The attribution was earlier denied by Julius Ruska, *Arabische Alchemisten* (Heidelberg, 1924), 2:40, but now compare Sezgin, *GAS* I, 529.

<sup>33</sup> Ash'ari, *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin* 1:10–11; cf. M. Hodgson, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75 (1955): 7–8.

<sup>34</sup> There was, however, among Bar Daysan's followers, though not perhaps in Bar Daysan himself, a belief in the "Father and Mother of Life," who by their sexual union brought forth either two daughters or seven sons; H. J. W. Drijvers, *Bardaisan* (Assen, 1965), 131 ff. These mythical expressions derive from either astrological or agricultural motifs—the Father and the Mother are identified with the sun and the moon and the two daughters with the earth and the sea—but are in no way similar to the Isma'ili asexual emanation system descending from a single, transcendental power.

Bar Daysan is not to our eyes a very clearly defined figure. Some of that obscurity may have arisen from the shifting positions of those who claimed his name over the following eight centuries. Though interested in theology, he was not, it appears, part of the occult Hermetic tradition associated with the city of Harran. Bar Daysan was a Christian and so his myth was a Christian and not a Hermetic one, even though it was invaded by the sensibilities of his highly syncretized milieu. The knowledge of the doctrines of Bar Daysan must have arrived within Islam though Syrian Christian channels, even though the Muslim heresiographers preferred to associate him with Mani because of their own preoccupation with the

problem of dualism. Ibn al-Nadim appears not even to have been aware that he was a Christian.

<sup>35</sup> See S. M. Stern, "The Early Isma'ili Missionaries in North-West Persia and in Khurasan and Transoxania," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London* 23 (1960): 56–90.

<sup>36</sup> See W. Madelung, *Der Islam* 25 (1960): 87–101.

<sup>37</sup> See Y. Marquet, "Ikhwan al-Safa'," *EP* 3:1071 ff.

<sup>38</sup> Their attempt at concealing their rationalism behind the veil of a divinely revealed *shari'ah* is precisely the charge leveled against "the Brethren" by the contemporary *fatwas* of Abu Sulayman al-Sijistani and reported by Tawhidi, *Imta'* (Cairo, 1939–49), 2:6ff.

<sup>39</sup> Marquet, *SI* 25:107–8.

<sup>40</sup> Among them (*Fihrist*, 327/Dodge, 772) a Syriac book about the Sabians which the Qadi of Harran, Harun ibn Ibrahim (d. 940), found there, had translated and sent to the vizier 'Ali ibn 'Isa.

<sup>41</sup> On these and other varieties of Sabians, see Carra de Vaux, "Sabi'a," *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. by H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers (Leiden: E. J. Brill), 477–78, and Dodge, 922–23, with the older literature cited there. Other etymologies are proposed for the name by Marquet, *SI* 25:109n1.

<sup>42</sup> See J. Lindsay, *The Origins of Alchemy in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (London, 1970), 313–22.

<sup>43</sup> See note 33 above and Marquet, *SI* 25:77–103.

<sup>44</sup> See Marquet, *SI* 24:62–80.

<sup>45</sup> Sa'id's source has likely confused Aristotle's father with Nicomachus of Jerash, the Neopythagorean mathematician of the Roman Empire.

<sup>46</sup> And almost so to Ibn al-Nadim. The name Parmenides appears in the *Fihrist* only in a list which comes from John Philoponus and which names the most famous physicians before Galen: *Fihrist*, 286/Dodge, 675.

<sup>47</sup> Ibn Massarah's connection with the eastern Mu'tazilites was probably through his father 'Abdallah (d. 899) who had earlier spent some time in Basrah; see M. Cruz Hernandez, *Historia de la Filosofía Española* (Madrid, 1957), 1:221–22.

<sup>48</sup> See S. M. Stern, "Anbaduklis," *EP* 1:483–84; and for a later Gnostic reading of Empedocles by a Christian heresiographer, H. Diehls, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, sixth edition by W. Kranz (Zurich, 1952), 356–57.

<sup>49</sup> They are analyzed by L. Massignon in A. J. Festugière, *Révélation* I<sup>3</sup>, 390–92.

<sup>50</sup> On the Stoic themes in the cosmic religion of the *Corpus*, see Festugière, *Révélation* II: *Le Dieu Cosmique*<sup>2</sup> (Paris, 1949); and for its version of the transcendent One of the Neoplatonists, *Révélation* IV: *Le Dieu Inconnu et la Gnose* (Paris, 1954).

<sup>51</sup> H. Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique* (Paris, 1964), 1:180.

<sup>52</sup> See R. Walzer, *Greek into Arabic* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), 176 ff.

<sup>53</sup> Compare the tendentious dream of Ma'mun reported by Ibn al-Nadim (*Fihrist*, 243/Dodge, 583–84), where Aristotle appears to the caliph and advises him to appreciate *tawhid*, that is, support the Mu'tazilites.

<sup>54</sup> See A. S. Nyberg, *EP* 1:128.

<sup>55</sup> As represented in the first instance by the syllogistic method expounded in the Aristotelian *Analytics*. The pre-Ash'arite *mutakallim* reasoned dialectically rather than syllogistically; see J. van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre des 'Adudaddin al-Ici* (Wiesbaden, 1966), 19–22, and for the identification of *kalam* and *dialexis*, 57–59.

<sup>56</sup> See the analysis, set against the parallel passages in Plotinus, in R. M. Frank, "The Neoplatonism of Jahm ibn Safwan," *Le Muséon* 78 (1965): 395–424. In drawing the parallels Frank does not mean to suggest that Jahm's theology was derived immediately from Plotinus (398).

<sup>57</sup> The *Fihrist* (cf. 243/Dodge, 584) does speak in a number of places of a certain Salm (or Salman) who was in charge of Ma'mun's "House of Wisdom" and was an associate of Sahl ibn Harun (120/Dodge, 262–63), the Iranian specialist who did translations from the Pahlavi and who was in charge of the library. Salm, who was one of those sent by Ma'mun into Byzantine territory in search of Greek manuscripts, is described in one of them (Beirut ms. St. Joseph 338) as a "Harranian." This may have been so, but Ma'mun inaugurated his *Bayt al-hikmah* sometime about 830 and did not "discover" the Sabians until his own final expedition into Byzantine territory somewhat later. If Salm was a Sabian as well as a Harranian, he kept the knowledge exceedingly private; cf. P. Kraus, *RSO* 14 (1933): 11.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. al-Qifti, *Ta'rikh al-bukama'* (Leipzig, 1903), 120, 4.

<sup>59</sup> The Arabs, on the other hand, knew Pythagoras chiefly as a moralist, as the author of the *Golden Verses* which found their way into a number of Arabic gnomonological collections like Miskawayh's *Al-Hikmah al-Khalidah* (225–28 Badawi). On the other appearances of the *Golden Verses* in Arabic, see Badawi's edition (Cairo, 1952), 44–46 of the introduction.

<sup>60</sup> See P. Boyance, "Études philoniennes," *Revue des études grecques* 76 (1963): 64–110.

<sup>61</sup> See E. R. Dodds, *Classical Quarterly* 22 (1928): 129–42, and P. Merlan in A. H. Armstrong, ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1967), 94.

<sup>62</sup> On the possibility of the theory's appearing in the *Poimandres*, see Festugière, *Révélation* IV, 40–42 and, more generally, 36–40.

<sup>63</sup> It was commented upon by Iamblichus, Philoponus, and Proclus, the last of whom considered himself the reincarnation of Nicomachus (*Vita XXVIII*).

<sup>64</sup> *GAL* I<sup>2</sup>, 241–44; Suppl. 1:384–86; M. Ullmann, *Die Medizin im Islam* (Leiden, 1970), 123–24; Hamarneh, *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts*, 46–48.

<sup>65</sup> Another student of both science and things Sabian, Muhammad al-Razi, likewise interested himself in Galen's treatise, and his refutation is still extant; cf. R. Paret, "Notes bibliographiques," *Byzantion* 29–30 (1959–60): 425n2.

<sup>66</sup> See S. Pines, "La doctrine de l'intellect selon Abu Bakr al-Mawsili" in *Studi orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi della Vida* (Rome, 1956), 2:350–64; cf. R. Paret, *Byzantion* 29–30:434–36.

<sup>67</sup> See L. Massignon in *Révélation* I<sup>3</sup>, 385–86.

<sup>68</sup> On his fluctuating political position, see H. Busse, *Chalif und Grosskönig. Die Buyiden im Iraq* (Beirut, 1969), 301–3.

<sup>69</sup> On Thabit as a historian, see M. S. Khan, "Miskawayh and Thabit ibn Sinan," *ZDMG* 117 (1967): 303–17. The historiographical tradition in the family actually began with Sinan who was commissioned by Mu'tadid to write a world history for the education of the caliph's two sons; see F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*<sup>2</sup> (Leiden, 1968), 48; and for Mas'udi's criticism of the work, 507–8. The relationship between this history and the *History of the Kings of Syria* mentioned among Sinan's works by Qifti (195) is unknown.

<sup>70</sup> Ibn Juljul, *Tabaqat*, 77–78 (Sayyid) and n3 on the incorrect connection of Razi with the 'Adudi *bimaristan* there. On Razi as a physician, see Ullmann, *Die Medizin im Islam*, 128–36.

<sup>71</sup> P. Kraus, *Razis Opera Philosophica* (Cairo, 1939), 305; cf. S. Pines, *Beiträge zur Islamischen Atomenlehre* (Berlin, 1936), 69.

<sup>72</sup> See Pines, *Beiträge*, 60–78.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 69, 73n2.

<sup>74</sup> P. Kraus, *Opera Philosophica*, 203 ff.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. n127 in the Nyberg-Nader edition of the *Kitab al-intisar* (Beirut, 1957).

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Pines, *Atomenlehre*, 69.

<sup>77</sup> See J. van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre des Ici*, 260; Pines, *Atomenlehre*, 67.

<sup>78</sup> Pines, *Atomenlehre*, 74n2. The atomist physicians Erasistratos and Asclepiades both figure as adversaries in Galen, and his fellow Platonist Plutarch directed a treatise against the earlier Epicurean atomist Colotes. Later Platonism remained, nonetheless, generally unconcerned with Epicurean physics, and if the reputation of Colotes was still alive in Porphyry and Proclus, it was only because of his attack on Plato's use of myth; cf. R. Westman, *Plutarch gegen Colotes* (Helsinki, 1955), 37. On Erasistratos in Arabic, see Ullmann, *Die Medizin im Islam*, 69.

<sup>79</sup> Kraus, *Opera Philosophica*, 285.

<sup>80</sup> Shahrastani, *Milal* (Cairo, 1899), 2:95 ff. does, however, enumerate the five Sabian principles as Creator, intellect, soul, space, and void.

<sup>81</sup> See Armstrong, *Later Greek Philosophy*, 242–45, and H. Corbin, *Étude préliminaire pour le "Livre" réunissant les deux sagesse* (Teheran and Paris, 1953), 132 ff.

<sup>82</sup> Kraus, *Opera Philosophica*, 285.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. the controversy on the need for prophets that went on between him and the contemporary Isma'ili *da'i* Abu Hatim al-Razi. Kraus, *Opera Philosophica*, 295–316.

<sup>84</sup> The later history of Hermeticism in Islam is still only imperfectly known, but the materials are all available to the scholar; cf. F. Sezgin, *GAS* IV, and M. Ullmann, *Die Natur und Geheimwissenschaften in Islam* (Leiden, 1972).



## THE THEORY OF MAGIC IN HEALING

Michael W. Dols

Magical beliefs and practices played a large role in Muslim societies, but they have been largely ignored because of their intrinsic obscurity and a learned antipathy toward the subject, both medieval and modern, Muslim and non-Muslim.<sup>1</sup> Magic is obviously heavy-laden with pre-judgement. It is almost always assumed to be bad—essentially evil, popular, and irrational—although magic was a pervasive aspect of medieval society and was closely allied with religion, which was also popular and irrational. Nor was its primary intention evil; magic was usually a more forceful method of supplication or a supercharged prayer. For magic was a means of forcing supernatural powers to fulfil a supplicant's desire, especially for healing.<sup>2</sup> The use of such therapeutic magic by Muslims was sanctioned by *hadith*: there was no harm in magical incantations that were employed for healing as long as they were not polytheistic.<sup>3</sup>

At the heart of the matter, magic was a sensitive issue because it shared or encroached—depending on one's point of view—upon the preserve of established religion. Magicians often drew upon non-Muslim sources for invoking God's intervention; they even claimed saint-like powers; and they were often women—all of which created suspicion. Magic also highlighted the notion of supramundane beings that infringed on the austere monotheism of orthodox Muslim belief. Furthermore, while Muslim theologians tended to ignore the question of evil, magicians assumed its palpable existence, offered a plausible explanation for it, and

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Samuel M. Zwemer in his *The Influence of Animism on Islam* (London, 1920) gives a description of magic, sorcery, and amulets (pp. 163–207), but the account is inspired by the author's anti-Muslim point of view, which considers Islam as lightly-veiled pagan animism. On the other hand, an exception to this scholarly neglect is Morony's fine survey of therapeutic magic in pre-Islamic and early Islamic Iraq: *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest*, 384–430, with an emphasis on the pagan legacy. Moreover, the best introduction to Islamic magic and guide to the literature is Manfred Ullmann's *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam* (Handbuch der Orientalistik, 1: 6: 2; Leiden, 1972), ch. 6.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that most modern psychological interpretations of magic, perhaps beginning with Freud, assume that magic is an expression of suppressed aggression, hostility, and capriciousness, rather than the conscious expression of benign desires; e.g. Oztürk, 'Folk Treatment', 356–61.

<sup>3</sup> A. Guillaume, *The Traditions of Islam* (Oxford, 1980 reprint), 119.

used their expertise to combat it. But good magic was uncomfortably close to malignant magic or sorcery, and the fear of such occult power was probably the major reason for the magician's bad reputation. Still, proper Muslim magic was a recognized form of healing. Medicine itself was often understood as counter-sorcery, and the Arabic word for medicine, *tibb*, often signified magic in the medieval period.<sup>4</sup> And the 'medicine-man', with its connotations of magical powers, was a common figure in North Africa.<sup>5</sup>

There is a vast and daunting array of antique magical texts, mainly papyri from Egypt, as well as magical amulets and talismans—the 'technology' of spent magic. This type of material continued to be produced uninterrupted into the Islamic era; gradually, as one would expect, an Islamic, or at least an Arabic, element was added to the material and became predominant by the later Middle Ages.<sup>6</sup> Beside these *disiecta membra*, manuals for the use of magic were continually produced in Islamic society, the most famous of which is al-Bunī's (d. c. 622/1225) *Shams al-ma'arif al-kubrā*.

Despite this abundant evidence for Islamic magic, there appears to have been a 'cover-up' about the actual practice of magic. Aside from the study of the odd amulet or talisman, the subject has received very little serious attention from modern Islamic scholars. It has usually been discussed, if at all, as a symptom of the so-called decline of classical Islamic civilization in the later Middle Ages.<sup>7</sup> This judgement by Islamic historians is strikingly similar to that made by ancient historians of late antiquity. Both periods were scarred, we are told, by the decline in the Greek scientific tradition, the debasement of formal religion, and the corruption of morals. The general reasons for the nadir—a good Arabic term—for Roman culture in the fourth century AD and a corresponding rise in magical practices are said to have been the misery and insecurity of the period, the decay of traditional religions, and the rise to power of a class of 'semi-Christians' who carried their superstitious fear of demons with them. Very much the same arguments have been used about Middle

<sup>4</sup> Tha'ālibī mentions a Jew who practised both medicine and magic (quoted in Morony, *Iraq*, 420).

<sup>5</sup> Doutté, *Magie et religion*, 36–40. The scope of this work is far wider than the title implies; it is a fundamental study of Islamic magic and its literature.

<sup>6</sup> See the convenient survey of magical formulae in Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich, *Volks Glaube im Bereich des Islam*, II, chs. 1 and 2. For three modern examples of such talismans and an extensive bibliography, see Georges C. Anawati, 'Trois talismans musulmans en arabe provenant du Mali (Marché de Mopti)', *Annales islamologiques*, 11 (1972), 287–339.

<sup>7</sup> I do not wish to enter into the controversy about the supposed cultural decline in Islamic society; one should see, however, the refutation of this standard view by M. G. S. Hodgson in his magisterial *The Venture of Islam* (3 vols.; Chicago, 1974).

Eastern society from the eleventh century and the power of 'semi-Muslims'. In fact, magic has been ubiquitous in Middle Eastern society since antiquity. In the fourth century we simply know more about sorcery from the historical record because the opposition to the pagan aristocracy at the imperial court wielded a weapon that had been forged and lay to hand in the *demi-monde*, where the Christian Church 'pullulated saints and sorcerers'.<sup>8</sup>

In recent years, social anthropology has helped historians to deal more fairly with magic as a natural part of social life and not to see it as an exotic or embarrassing excrescence.<sup>9</sup> Beginning at least with Evans-Pritchard, it has been accepted that magic has a discernible function within society; witchcraft is one way in which men and women may conceptualize their relationships with one another and cope with everyday misfortune.<sup>10</sup> Benefiting from this anthropological point of view, Peter Brown has successfully placed late antique sorcery in its historical context, in which it served as an explanation for misfortune; more precisely, it was the cause of ill-fortune.<sup>11</sup> On the positive side, magic was also a means of removing or preventing ill fate. For both the pagan and the Christian, misfortune was unambiguously the work of suprahuman agents—the daemons, whether the ambivalent spirits of pagan belief or the exclusively hostile spirits of Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and the Gnostic sects. In this regard, Islam restored some ambivalence to the spirit world—the jinn were not entirely evil and inhumane.<sup>12</sup> Brown generously remarks that sorcery in the Islamic era 'has been engulfed in the study of religion and of occult sciences', and he refers to the study of Armand Abel on the role of the occult sciences in Islamic decline, where magic is roundly condemned.<sup>13</sup> (Abel's brief account does obscure the issue by its conventional unsympathetic view of the occult.

Abel begins with the a priori assertion that the occult is a sign of decadence when it wells up from the intellectually inferior masses,

<sup>8</sup> Peter Brown, 'Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity: From Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages', in his *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine* (London, 1972), 123–9.

<sup>9</sup> The muted effect of this point of view on Islamists may be seen in Guillaume, *Prophecy*, 233–89.

<sup>10</sup> E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*, abridged and intro. by Eva Gillies (Oxford, 1985 reprint).

<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note in relationship to Brown's discussion of the emergence of Christian witches in the 6th cent. ('Sorcery', 140–1) that accusations of sorcery were a recurrent theme in the Christian hagiographical texts from Sassanian Persia; the cruel treatment of witches may have been due to the punishment decreed for them by Zoroastrian law. (Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient*, 65; see pp. 74–6 for the story of three Christian women who were arrested on suspicion of casting a spell on the queen in the 4th cent.)

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Brown, 'Sorcery', 136.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 121.

bringing a decline of traditional ethics and intellectual standards.<sup>14</sup> In short, this phenomenon occurred from the eleventh century in the Middle East, where 'le déclin se manifeste dans le domaine du savoir créateur, de l'organisation de la vie sociale, de la vie économique, et, surtout, peut-être, dans l'efficacité de la pensée religieuse'.<sup>15</sup>

As Abel remarks, the Qur'ān recognizes the belief in sorcery, but it is not true to say that the Qur'ān forbids magic, nor does it prescribe any punishment for its practitioners. The Qur'ānic passage (II 3: 1-5, see above) implies that the witches have a power that gives way only to the power of God. It was only a short step from this Qur'ānic revelation to its use as an invocation to God in talismans and amulets. Aside from the availability of Christian magic, Islamic magical beliefs and practices surely increased with the Arab conquests and the subsequent widespread conversions to Islam. Although magic, like sufism, was essentially esoteric, everyday handbooks on magic were composed in Arabic, as were amulets and talismans of all descriptions. In the process, Arabic as a sacred language was ideally suited to magical practices, whether written or oral.

The following *ḥadīth* deals directly with the Prophet's attitude toward magic and its practitioners. Reportedly, a man from the Yemen named Ḍimād, who was a magician (*rāqī*), came to Mecca, and he heard the people calling the Prophet a *majnūn*. He went to Muḥammad and offered to treat him, but the Prophet responded that he trusted entirely in God and that he was God's messenger. As a result, Ḍimād was converted by the Prophet, and he professed that the Prophet's speech was finer than any soothsayer, magician, or poet.<sup>16</sup> The intent of the pious legend appears to be that Islam is superior to magic. Historically, it suggests what may have been the Muslim apprehension of the relationship between magic and Islam in the early Middle Ages: magic was not bad, but Islam was far better. The *ḥadīth* also conveys concisely the orthodox answer to Muḥammad's reputed possession by spirits and assumes that magicians commonly exorcized the possessed.

The rich literature on magic that was created by Muslims in the early Middle Ages strongly suggests its actual practice. The *Fihrist*, which was written by Ibn an-Nadīm between AD 987 and 1010, is an extensive bibliographical listing of contemporary literature, and it reveals both the abundance of magical texts that were available at the end of the tenth

<sup>14</sup> Armand Abel, 'La Place des sciences occultes dans la décadence', in *Classicisme et déclin culturel dans l'histoire de l'Islam*, Actes du Symposium international d'histoire de la civilisation musulmane, Bordeaux, 1956 (Paris, 1957), 291-318.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 292.

<sup>16</sup> 'Uqalā', Cairo edn., 11-12; Najaf edn., 8-9.

century and the context in which they were used. Following a section dealing with works on philosophy and the sciences, Ibn an-Nadīm says the following about books on exorcists, jugglers, magicians, and those who use incantations [*an-nīranjīyāt*], tricks, and talismans:

The exorcists and magicians [*al-mu'azzimūn was-saḥara*] assert that the devils, jinn, and spirits [*ash-shayāṭīn wal-jinn wal-arwāḥ*] obey and serve them, being directed by their command and their prohibition. The exorcists, who pretend to observe the sacred laws, claim that this [power] is because of obedience to Allāh, may His name be magnified.

Thus invocation is addressed to Him, and oaths by the spirits and devils are by His help, with the abandoning of lusts and by consequence of religious practices. Moreover, [they claim] that the jinn and the devils obey them, either because of obedience to Allāh, may His name be magnified, or on account of [their making] oaths by Him, or else for fear of Him, blessed and exalted is He. For He has subjugated and humiliated them [the devils and jinn] by the potency of His holy names and because of mention of Him, uplifted and glorified is He.

The [other] magicians [*as-saḥara*] assert that they enslave the devils by offerings and prohibitive acts. They [claim] that the devils are pleased by the committing of acts which are forbidden and which Allāh, may His name be magnified, has prohibited. Thus the perpetrating of things such as abandoning prayer and fasting, permitting blood, marrying forbidden women, and other kinds of evil actions is also pleasing. This is common practice in Egypt and the nearby regions; the books which are written there are many and extant. The Babylon of the magicians is in the land of Egypt. A person who has seen this [state of affairs] has told me that there still remain men and women magicians and that all of the exorcists and magicians assert that they have seals, charms of paper, sandal, *jazāb*, smoke, and other things used for their arts.<sup>17</sup>

Ibn an-Nadīm was apparently not uncritical about the panoply of magical books and the claims of their authors, but his remarks indicate the existence of practising magicians and his guarded respect for the benevolent ones. A pious bookish Muslim, Ibn an-Nadīm concedes the permissibility of the first group of magicians and is condemnatory of the second—'white magic' versus 'black magic'. The first group, including exorcists, claimed its legitimacy because they were the instruments of God's power; they were good Muslims, observing the sacred law, and they performed their magic by invoking God or taking oaths in His name. Particularly powerful was the use of the sacred names of God, which were almost always used in Muslim amulets and talismans.<sup>18</sup> As described by Ibn an-Nadīm, the Muslim magicians,

<sup>17</sup> *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, ed. and trans. Bayard Dodge (2 vols.; New York, 1970), ii. 725-6 = *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. Gustav Flügel (Leipzig, 1871), i. 308-9.

<sup>18</sup> For the divine names of God, see Goldziher, 'Zauberelemente im islamischen Gebet', 315-

either licit or illicit, claimed that they were effective because of the obedience of the spirits to themselves. The illicit magicians or sorcerers, *as-sahara*, believed that they controlled the demons by offerings and deeds that were displeasing to God, which were essentially those actions that violated the sacred law. This black magic was believed to be centred in Egypt.

Aside from the magicians who used their personal supernatural powers licitly or illicitly, Ibn an-Nadīm goes on to describe another group of magicians who are distinguished by their use of astrology and other occult sciences and their making and employing talismans. This distinction is more clearly drawn by Ibn Khaldūn in his later description of magic, which will be discussed below. Unlike Ibn Khaldūn, however, Ibn an-Nadīm includes the art of illusion in this general category. Moreover, Ibn an-Nadīm recognizes the fact that magic was practised by the Indians, whose books had been translated into Arabic, as well as by the Chinese and the Turks. Ibn an-Nadīm attributes the ancient magical tradition, which was largely Hellenistic, to Solomon<sup>19</sup> on the authority of the Qur'ān, although he recognized the differing legendary founders of magic among the Persians and the Jews.<sup>20</sup> Solomon was said to be the first to subjugate the jinn to his will. Licit magic, the 'praiseworthy method' (*aṭ-ṭarikā al-mahmūda*) in Islam is usually traced back to Solomon, and illicit magic (*aṭ-ṭarikā al-madhmunā*) to Iblis through his daughter or his son's daughter, Baydakh.<sup>21</sup>

After naming the seventy demons that attended Solomon, Ibn an-Nadīm mentions a number of writers on magic and their books in roughly chronological order, which suggests a well-known tradition of legitimate magic, especially exorcism, in early Islamic society. First of all is Arius al-Rūmī, a Byzantine who was skilful with charms and wrote books on magic; one of his books enumerated the children of the Devil,

20; the bibliography in Anawati, 'Trois talismans musulmans', 321–2; Toufy Fahd, 'Le Monde du sorcier en Islam', *Sources orientales*, 7 (1966), 180–3; and *EI*2, s.v. 'al-asmā' al-ḥusnā' (L. Gardet).

<sup>19</sup> *SEI*, s.v. 'Sulaimān b. Dāwūd' (J. Walker).

<sup>20</sup> The *locus classicus* on magic is Qur'ān 2: 102: 'And they [unbelievers in general and Jews in particular] followed what the *shaitāns* used to recite in the reign of Sulaimān [or against the reign of Sulaimān]—and Sulaimān was never an unbeliever but the *shaitāns* were unbelievers—teaching mankind magic [*sihr*]; and [they followed] what was revealed to [or by means of] the two angels in Bābil, Hārūt and Mārūt; and they do not teach any one until they say to him: We are only a temptation [*fitna*]; so do not disbelieve. So they [the learners] learn from the two that by which they may divide a man from his wife, but they do not harm by it any one except by the permission of Allāh. They learn that which harms them and does not aid them, having knowledge, indeed, that he who purchases it has no portion in the world to come' (MacDonald's trans. in *SEI* and *EI*1, s.v. 'Sihr').

<sup>21</sup> *SEI*, s.v. 'Sihr'.

their dispersion in the world, and the way in which they specialized in diseases—spirits, deaths, actions, and the relationships of the jinn. An early shadowy figure was Lawhaq ibn 'Arfaḥ, who wrote on the jinn and epilepsy. More recently, Ibn Hilāl is said to have started the interest in magic in Islam and to have written books on the jinn. 'He was served and also spoken to [by the jinn], and was known for wonderful deeds and actions of goodness, as well as for seals of tested value.' Among the exorcists who worked with the names of God was Ibn al-Imām, who lived during the reign of the caliph al-Mu'taḍid, who reigned in Baghdad from AD 892 to 902. Ibn al-Imām's 'system was praiseworthy rather than subject to criticism'. Ibn an-Nadīm, then, names four men whose 'system' was commendable and who did good deeds; presumably, they were exorcists and good Muslims, but they did not write any books on the subject. Furthermore, Ibn an-Nadīm had met Ibn Abī Raṣṣāṣa, who was a leader in the art of exorcism. Ibn an-Nadīm relates an encounter with him in the following way: 'One day I questioned him, saying, "Oh, Abū 'Amr, I would place you above this showing!" He replied, "May Allāh be glorified, I am over eighty years old. If I did not know that this affair was true, I would have left it, but I do not doubt its validity." So I said, "But, by Allāh, you have not been successful." He had many books and achievements. Those engaged in this art regarding him as superior and preeminent.'<sup>22</sup> Finally, Ibn an-Nadīm turns to illicit magic that was derived, in one way or another, from the Devil. Ibn an-Nadīm mentions a number of men from antiquity, such as Apollonius of Tyana, and his own time who practised this kind of magic and wrote books about it.<sup>23</sup>

Magic appears to have been even more common in Islamic societies in the later Middle Ages because of the large number of Islamic magical devices that have survived and the fact that most of the major works in Arabic on magic were written at that time. It may be an illusion. The vast majority of peoples in the Islamic world had become Muslim by the late medieval period, and they needed their own magic—as they needed mosques. There is, however, no way of gauging the extent of magical practices since the advent of Islam. Magic does seem to have come out of the closet in the later Middle Ages; like sufism, and often allied with it, magic appears to have gained a modicum of respectability. Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), who wrote an important commentary on the Qur'ān, and Ibn Khaldūn openly acknowledged magic as a psychological activity that had physical effects.<sup>24</sup> Typical of an educated Muslim,

<sup>22</sup> *The Fihrist*, Dodge trans., ii. 729–30.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* ii. 726–33; for books on amulets, see p. 743.

<sup>24</sup> *SEI*, s.v. 'Sihr'. Duncan B. MacDonald's *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam* (London,

Not a sorcerer, if good.

however, Ibn Khaldūn accepted its reality but rejected its use. Still, he presents a useful framework for understanding magic in medieval Muslim culture.

According to Ibn Khaldūn, human souls are part of one species, but they differ in personal qualities or powers, which allows some individuals to be prophets and others to be magicians and soothsayers. There were three degrees of men with magical powers; in descending order, they are those who exercised their power only by their minds or spirits over others and the natural world; those who used astrology and various techniques to make talismans; and thirdly, those who played on other people's imagination by creating phantoms and illusions. Ibn Khaldūn says that the 'philosophers' call the first magic, the second theurgy, and the third prestidigitation.<sup>25</sup> There were different kinds of magic, which the potential magician developed by training. Moreover, the first two degrees of magic were real and the third was not real.<sup>26</sup> The magical sciences were, however, forbidden by Islamic law, according to Ibn Khaldūn, because they cause harm and because they do not rely on God but on stars and other things.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, he views all magic as sorcery. Furthermore, Ibn Khaldūn says that letter magic is a kind of magic that is legal, but he disapproves of it. The use of Arabic letters and numerals, the names of God, and Qur'ānic phrases were common and essential parts of Islamic magic, especially in healing and exorcisms. He also disapproves of sufis who seek magical powers through *dhikr* exercises and prayer.<sup>28</sup> It is some measure of Ibn Khaldūn's antipathy toward the subject that he says that books dealing with magic were almost non-existent in his day. Yet, he alleges that these sciences were cultivated by the ancients and by the Syrians (Eastern Christians), Copts, and others, and their books on the subject were still extant but very few were translated into Arabic. We know that Christians were noted for their practice of magic in the Islamic era, and Syriac, particularly, is common in many Arabic incantations. Ibn Khaldūn attributes the creation of magic in the Islamic period to the legendary figure Jābir ibn Ḥayyām, who is also reputed to have established alchemy, which Ibn Khaldūn considered to be a psychic phenomenon like magic and not a practical technique. Later, the Spanish scholar Maslamah ibn Aḥmad al-

1985 reprint) is largely a commentary on selected portions from Ibn Khaldūn that deal with religion.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Lane's division of magic in his *Arabian Society*, 80–96, where he distinguishes two types of magic, spiritual and natural. The former is divided, in turn, into divine or good magic and satanic magic, which includes divination. Natural magic was basically illusion caused by drugs, especially opium. Between the two types of magic were various forms of astrological magic. See also his *Manners and Customs*, 1860 edn., 263–75.

Majritī abridged all the books on magic, and Ibn Khaldūn believed that he was the last to have written on the subject.

Nevertheless, Ibn Khaldūn asserts that no intelligent person doubts the existence of sorcery and its influence, and he quotes the Qur'ān (2:102). Even the Prophet was bewitched, according to *ḥadīth*: the spell against him was placed in a comb, in tufts of wool, and in the spathe of a palm, and it was buried in the well of Dharwān in Medina. Therefore, God revealed to Muḥammad the verse in the *Mu'awwidhatān*: 'And (I take refuge in God) from the evil of the women who blow into knots' (113: 4). 'A'isha said: 'As soon as he recited the Qur'ān over one of those knots into which a spell against him had been placed, that particular knot became untied.'<sup>29</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn declares that he had himself seen how a sorcerer

formed the picture of a person who was to be cast under a spell. He represented in it the characteristics of things he intended and planned (to make) that person adopt, as already existing in him in the shape of symbols of names and attributes in homonym fashion [?]. Then he spoke (magic words) over the picture he had made to take the place of the person who was to be cast under a spell, concretely or symbolically. During the repeated pronunciation of the evil words, he collected spittle in his mouth and spat upon (the picture). Then he tied a knot over the symbol in an object that he had prepared for the purpose, since he considered tying knots and (making things) stick together to be auspicious (and effective in magical operations). He also entered into a pact with the jinn, asking them to participate in his spitting during the operation, intending to make the spell forceful. This (human) figure and the evil names have a harmful spirit. It issues from (the sorcerer) with his breath and attaches to the spittle he spits out. It produces (more) evil spirits. As a result, the things that the sorcerer intends (to happen to) the person who is cast under a spell, actually befall him.<sup>30</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn mentions the feats of sorcerers in other lands, and he describes various types of talismans, whose purposes are not malevolent.

Returning to the theory of sorcery and talismans, Ibn Khaldūn draws a parallel with the *karāmāt* of the saints.<sup>31</sup> The latter are inspired and supported by God while the sorcerers do their work by their own psychic powers and sometimes with the support of devils. The first are done by good men for good purposes while the second are done by evil people and usually for evil ends. Naturally, the miracles of the saints are

<sup>26</sup> *The Muqaddimah*, Rosenthal trans., iii, 156, 164.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 171–82.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 160.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 156, 159, 169–70.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 160–1.

<sup>31</sup> Doutté (*Magie et religion*, 52–4) draws more than a parallel between the two; he asserts that a marabout was originally a magician who had exactly the same powers as the latter-day saint.

more powerful than the sorcerers' deeds.<sup>32</sup> Inadvertently, Ibn Khaldūn's comparison of the saint and the magician brings out forcefully their close kinship: the saint was more of a magician and the magician was more of a saint than is commonly acknowledged. The power of the saint, *baraka*, which seems to defy definition by anthropologists especially, is essentially benign or sanctified magic; this view of *baraka*, rather than equating it with Christian terms like 'blessedness' or 'grace', helps to explain many of its peculiar characteristics, such as its preservation and transmission through physical contact (via spittle, sweat, and semen).<sup>33</sup> Conversely, Ibn Khaldūn represents well the reluctance to see the magician as a saintly figure who intervenes successfully with God for the benefit of the sick and distressed. In sum, Ibn Khaldūn pulls many threads together; as a medieval intellectual, however, he was critical without being sceptical. He affirmed the existence of magic and gave a remarkable theoretical discussion of it, but he emphasized the malignant forms of magic. By excluding the benign forms, he was able to condemn all magic as sorcery although he appears not to have been deeply knowledgeable about its literature. 'All [the magician's] actions are evil and done for evil purposes.'<sup>34</sup> Sorcery was unbelief and practitioners should be killed.

Ibn Khaldūn's harsh judgement of magic, particularly the punishment that he believed should be meted out to sorcerers, calls for some comment. The issue is rarely discussed in the Islamic law-books, or only in passing; yet, the brief legal discussions of sorcery do help to clarify its meaning. Sorcery was understood to be the enchantments, evil spells, and various types of conjuring that either produced injury to the body, mind, or spirit of their victim, so that the person became ill and died, or caused dissension between husband and wife. Similar to the opinion of Ibn Khaldūn, three of the founders of the Islamic law schools believed that sorcery was real; the exception was Abū Ḥanīfa, who, like the Muta'zilites, denied its existence. None the less, sorcery was unanimously prohibited. According to some legalists, this included consulting a diviner, teaching oneself its methods, or teaching it to others. Three of the legal authorities considered learning or teaching sorcery to be apostasy. There was some reservation, however, about those who exercised their talents on epileptics, claiming that they could conjure up the demons and that the demons obeyed them. Ibn Qudāma, a Ḥanbalite, said: 'Our doctors consider them to be practitioners of sorcery, but one reports that Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal suspended his

<sup>32</sup> Doutté, *Magie et religion*, 167–9.

<sup>33</sup> See Turner, *Weber and Islam*, 68.

<sup>34</sup> *The Muqaddimah*, Rosenthal trans., i. 191.

judgement on this subject.' Sa'id ibn al-Mushaib was questioned about the matter, and he declared: 'God has only prohibited what is harmful, not what is useful. If it is possible for you to be useful to your brother, do it.' Consequently, one who does such a helpful thing as exorcising the possessed should not be severely punished.

There was no question about the punishment of the harmful magician: three of the legal authorities said that the sorcerer should be put to death if he has killed by means of his sorcery; the fourth, Abū Ḥanīfa, placed conditions on such a judgement. These legalists were divided about the repentance of the sorcerer. On the question of whether the punishment of a sorcerer was Qur'anic (*ḥadd*) or a matter of *lex talionis*, only ash-Shāfi'i believed it to be the latter; the other three considered it to be Qur'anic because it was a right of God that had been injured. The difference of opinion was potentially significant because there was no pardon to a decision in favour of *ḥadd*. In the case of a Muslim sorceress, Abū Ḥanīfa is the only one of the four jurists who says that she should be imprisoned in lieu of execution. As far as Christian and Jewish sorcerers were concerned, three of the legalists believed that they should not be executed while Ab Ḥanīfa did; they were liable, according to other jurists, to corporal punishment or to death if they had harmed a Muslim.<sup>35</sup>

Behind this legal thinking, there has been very little historical investigation of sorcery in medieval Islamic societies. It appears misleading to assert that the death penalty for magic in Islam should be attributed to Jewish influence<sup>36</sup> because of the Jewish tolerance of magic from the Hellenistic period; the more obvious precedent is the Magians' exceptional intolerance of sorcerers.<sup>37</sup> The early Muslims pursued the policy of executing sorcerers, beginning with 'Umar's instructions to Jaz' ibn Mu'āwiya in Dast-i Maysan in AD 643 to kill every magician and sorceress; subsequently, three were executed.<sup>38</sup> Slightly later, in 30/650–1, occurred an incident that reveals more fully Muslim ambivalence toward magic. According to the historian at-Ṭabarī, the governor of Kufa, al-Walid ibn 'Uqba, was confronted by the question of what to do about a magician (*sāḥir*) whom he had apprehended.<sup>39</sup> So the governor

<sup>35</sup> G.-H. Bousquet, 'Fiqh et sorcellerie', *Annales de l'Institut d'études orientales*, 8 (1949–50), 230–4; see also, Doutté, *Magie et religion*, 337.

<sup>36</sup> G. R. Hawting, 'The Significance of the Slogan *Lā ḥukmā illā lillāh* and the References to the *Ḥudūd* in the Traditions about the Fitna and the Murder of 'Uthmān', *BSOAS*, 41 (1978), 453–63.

<sup>37</sup> Morony, *Iraq*, 291–2, 396–7; Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women*, 65, 74–5.

<sup>38</sup> Morony, *Iraq*, 397.

<sup>39</sup> At-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh ar-Rusul wa 'l-Mulūk (Annales)*, 3rd ser., ed. M. de Goeje et al., i: 14–32 (Leiden, 1897–1901), 2845–7.

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asked Ibn Mas'ūd whether the *ḥadd* punishment was appropriate. After Ibn Mas'ūd had ascertained from the man that he was a genuine magician—who performed for him—Ibn Mas'ūd declared that the man should be killed. But al-Walīd freed the magician, and he appears to have stayed with the governor. This incensed a group of Muslims in the mosque, and being led by Jundab ibn Ka'b, they sought out the magician and Jundab killed him. Jundab was put in prison, and the matter was referred to Caliph 'Uthmān, who declared that they were mistaken about Islamic teaching.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, a governor of Oman is reported to have written to 'Umar II: 'A witch was brought to us; we threw her into the water, and she floated.' The caliph wrote back: 'We have no concern with water. If there is proof, punish her; if not, let her go.'<sup>41</sup>

Finally, in the seventeenth century the Ottoman bureaucrat and historian Ḥājī Khalīfa<sup>42</sup> gave in his Arabic bibliographical dictionary an even more refined classification of magic as a science than Ibn an-Nadīm had done. Ḥājī Khalīfa is also more objective and informative than Ibn Khaldūn. As regards exorcism, '*azā'im*', he distinguishes it from sorcery or sympathetic magic, '*ruqyā*'.<sup>43</sup> Ḥājī Khalīfa says that exorcism, '*azā'im*', is taken from *al-'azm*, i.e. resoluteness of opinion; thus, it is a command with a clear intention that is obligatory on others, so that one says '*azamtu 'alayka*, 'I adjure you' or 'I enjoin you.' Thus, one speaks very harshly to the jinn and demons, compelling them to do what seems good to the man who is well versed in this art. Whenever the exorcist pronounced the phrase '*azamtu 'alayka*, 'I adjure you', he imposed on them obedience and submission, subjection and humiliation to himself. Ḥājī Khalīfa continues his description in the following manner:

This [activity] is possible and permitted by reason and [Islamic] law. Whoever denies these two should not be listened to because what he says leads to the denial of God's omnipotence. Also the subjection and humiliation [of the jinn and demons] to Him and their obedience to mankind is one of the wonders of God's creation. 'Āṣf ibn Barkhiya was asked: Do the jinn and demons obey man

<sup>40</sup> A quite different version of the story is given by Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, ii (Beirut, 1960), 190; see Morony's interpretation of this version: *Iraq*, 297.

<sup>41</sup> Tritton, 'Spirits and Demons in Arabia', 727. A glimpse into the interworkings of medieval sorcery is provided by C. van Arendonk in his 'An Initiation Rite of the Sorcerer in Southern Arabia', in *A Volume of Oriental Studies Presented to Edward G. Browne*, ed. T. W. Arnold and Reynold A. Nicholson (Cambridge, 1922), 1–5.

<sup>42</sup> *Elz*, s.v. 'Kātib Çelebi' (Orhan Shaik Gökyay).

<sup>43</sup> *Kashf az-zunūn 'an al-Asāmi wa 'l-Funūn/Lexicon Bibliographicum et Encyclopaedicum*, ed. G. Flügel (7 vols.; London, 1835–58), i, 35. On the comparison of the two descriptions, see Toufy Fahd, 'Le Monde du sorcier en Islam', 157–204, although Fahd appears to have misunderstood Ibn Khaldūn's interpretation of magic and its relationship to Ḥājī Khalīfa's categories.

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since [the time of] Solomon? He said: They obey men as long as the world lasts, but it is well-ordered by the ninety-nine names of God, His great exorcism, His mighty divisions, and approaching Him in sickness. Moreover, its origin and method are of two kinds: the hazardous [*makhṭūr*] and the permitted [*mubāḥ*]. The first is the forbidden magic [*sihr*]. As for the second, it is the direct opposite, and then it is ineffectual unless there is perfect piety, complete abstinence, solitary happiness, isolation from the world, and devotion to God Almighty [on the part of the exorcist]. [The submission of the jinn and demon to God was well known], but the learned disagreed on the way of applying this divine power that is bestowed on men. Some said that only God could subject the spirits, and others said that it is by conjuration, like prayer and its fulfilment; some believed it is by conjuration and a satisfactory way of life, and other believed by compliant and prepared spies; still some thought it is by computation and the planets, and others thought it is by inhabitation [by the spirits]. This is what is derived from the discussion of the learned. According to the opinion of Fakhr [ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī], when one created the proper conditions and directed the conjuration [*'azā'im*], God Almighty made it a great and consuming fire against the jinn and demons that encircled them. Then, the four corners of the earth narrow around them, and there is no escape for them but to submit to what God orders them to do. Even better, when the exorcist is skilful and leads a good and blameless life, God sends tough, strong angels against the jinn and demons to rebuke them and force them to obey and serve him. The theologians and others have confirmed these principles where they said: What prevents God, when certain words are remembered or spoken, such as the divine names and others that are found in books, conjurations and talismans, from making use of a sincere and obedient jinni that He chooses in order to make known to a man what he wants to know about existing things? This is a statement of those who believe that there are armed spirits and spies, and they said that the spirits' obedience to man is not inconceivable, either from the point of view of reason or from the point of view of what is commonly recognized.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *Kashf az-zunūn*, iv (1835), 205–7.



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# THE ROD OF MOSES IN ARABIC MAGIC

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It is well-known that Jewish influence played a paramount role in the shaping of Islamic ideas ever since their birth.<sup>1</sup> The relationship between Islam and Judaism in the course of later developments is also characterized by close contacts in a number of fields among which magic and popular beliefs in general take a prominent place.<sup>2</sup> The international character of magic and popular beliefs that recognize no barriers separating different communities explain this peaceful co-existence as being only too natural. The aim of the present paper is to deal with certain Jewish elements in Arabic magic, by following the path of a popular biblical motif until its full integration into Islam.

Beside al-Būnī's (d. 1225) *Shams al-ma'ārif*, the most widespread manual of Arabic magic, certain Jewish elements of which were expounded by G. Vajda,<sup>3</sup> the main source of this analysis is another work which is also attributed to al-Būnī, the *Manba' usūl al-hikma*.<sup>4</sup>

The motif of Moses' rod cannot be treated properly without touching upon the problem of biblical divine names which were frequently resorted to in Arabic magical prescriptions in more or less recognizable forms. Although the names *Ehieh asher ehieh*, *Adōnāi Šebāōt*, *El Shaddai*, *El*, *Elōhīm*, *Iāh* had

<sup>1</sup> For literature see e.g. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*<sup>2</sup> 10. (Jerusalem), pp. 1196 sq. s. v. Koran.

<sup>2</sup> For Arabic influence on Judaism see e.g. N. Wieder, *at-Ta'ṭhīrāt al-islāmīya -l-'ibāda al-yahūdīya* (Cairo 1965).

<sup>3</sup> G. Vajda, *Sur quelques éléments juifs et pseudo-juifs dans l'encyclopédie magique Būnī: Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume I* (Budapest 1948), pp. 387–392.

<sup>4</sup> al-Būnī, *Manba' usūl al-hikma* (Cairo, n. d.). Cf. also the list of al-Būnī's works / Brockelmann, *GAL* I, p. 497, *S* I. p. 910 and M. Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam* (Leiden 1972), pp. 390 sq. The book was published by the al-Qāhira Bookshop near al-Azhar in as-Šanādiqiya Street and contains four treatises: *al-Uṣūl wa-ḡ-ḡawābiḡ al-muḡkama fi-l-'ulūm al-ḡarfiya* (it is concerned with the magic of letters), *Buḡhyat al-muṣṭāḡ fi ma'rifa al-awṣāḡ* (on magic quadrates), *Sharḡ da'wat al-Barḡatiya* (a commentary on an incantation) and *Sharḡ da'wat al-Jalḡalūtiya* (a commentary on an incantation). For a recent study on al-Būnī see M. El-Gawhary, *Die Gottesnamen im magischen Gebrauch in den Al-Būnī zugeschriebenen Werken*, Phil.-Diss., (Bonn 1968).

already been identified by Grünbaum, Goldziher, Winkler and Vajda,<sup>5</sup> it is necessary to reveal some details and connotations that passed unnoticed so far in related studies and to show the ideological background that made the borrowing of the motif in question possible.

1. The rod of Moses has an important role to play in the Bible: God turns it into a snake in order to demonstrate the divine mission of Moses and the rod assists in bringing about the plagues that descended upon Egypt. Moses uses this rod to divide the Red Sea and smites a rock in the desert with it to bring forth water. There is another famous rod in the Bible which belonged to Aaron: before Pharaoh it is turned into a snake which devours the rods of the Egyptian magicians, then it bursts into bloom and bears almonds. The importance of rods in general is also showed by several references in the Bible to rods of magic power.<sup>6</sup>

Post-biblical Jewish literature enlarged further on the circle of legends about Moses' rod<sup>7</sup> and as it will be seen in the following, these served as a base for the development of Arabic tradition. Practically, the Koran relates the same about the rod as the Bible,<sup>8</sup> in later Arabic literature, however, we are confronted by a far-reaching set of legends.

Arabic sources make no distinction between Moses' rod and Aaron's, and are solely concerned with the former one, but this identification can already be found in the Jewish tradition.<sup>9</sup>

Arabic authors trace the origin of the rod either to the myrth-tree of the Paradise saying that Adam brought it with him upon his expulsion from Eden and afterwards his descendants inherited it from him<sup>10</sup> or state that

<sup>5</sup> Vajda, *op. cit.*, pp. 387 sq with literature; H. A. Winkler, *Siegel und Charaktere in der muhammedanischen Zauberei* (Berlin—Leipzig 1930), pp. 31—36.

<sup>6</sup> For the motif of the rod in the Bible see A. Jirku, *Materialen zur Volksreligion Israels* (Leipzig 1914), pp. 6 sqq; for the serpent see G. Donáth, *A kígyó és babonás jelentősége* [The serpent and its superstitious significance in the Scripture, in Hung.] (Budapest 1942); I. Löw, *Aramäische Schlangennamen. Fauna und Mineralien der Juden*. Ed. A. Scheiber (Hildesheim 1969), pp. 25—49. For the magic staff in general see Pauly—Wissowa, *Realenzyklopädie II/3* (Stuttgart 1929), pp. 1894 sqq s. v. Stab; W. H. Roscher, *Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie VI* (Leipzig 1890), s. v. Zauberstab.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. *Enc. Jud.*<sup>2</sup> 14, p. 219. The figure of Moses was already invested with supernatural characteristics in the antiquity, secret treatises and sciences were attributed to him and Artapanus stated that the rods kept in the sanctuaries of Egyptian temples were modelled after his rod; see H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin 1952), p. 256. For Moses see also H. Bächtold-Stäubli, *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens VI*, p. 584.

<sup>8</sup> H. Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran* (Hildesheim 1961), pp. 254 sq, 258 sq, 263 sqq, 288 sq, 293.

<sup>9</sup> *Enc. Jud.*<sup>2</sup> 14, p. 219.

<sup>10</sup> al-Kisā'i, *Qisāṣ al-anbiyā* I, ed. I. Eisenberg (Leiden 1922), p. 208. Cf. also Ibn al-Athir, *Ta'riḫ al-kāmil-I* (Cairo 1301 A. H.), p. 76; ath-Tha'labi, *Qisāṣ al-anbiyā*

Moses himself cut it from the 'awsaj-tree<sup>11</sup> which is most probably identical with the burning bush. A third opinion, on the other hand, endows the rod with the ability of blossoming and producing almonds,<sup>12</sup> a character that clearly reveals the influence of Aaron's rod.

In a Jewish legend a reference can also be found to Moses' cutting himself his rod from the Tree of Life<sup>13</sup> the more general opinion being, however, that God created the rod from sapphire at nightfall on the sixth day of the creation of the world and Moses received it from Jethro to whom it was bequeathed through Adam's descendants.<sup>14</sup>

It is a characteristic element in the Arabic Moses story that Jethro (Ar. *Shu'aib*), having handed over the rod to Moses, regrets his generosity and spares no effort to retrieve the precious object, the legacy of the Prophets. He persuades Moses to ask the first creature passing by them to decide in the dispute. An angel happens to arrive in the figure of a man and suggests to the opponents that they should put the rod down on the earth and then he who can take it up should hold its possession. Jethro tried as he would, but could not even move the rod, while Moses picked it up easily.<sup>15</sup> This is very similar to the Jewish legend, in which Jethro plants the rod in his garden and promise the hand of his daughter, Zipporah, to the man who can pull it out of the earth. And thus, Moses, the only one to stand the test, won the girl's hand.<sup>16</sup>

(Cairo n. d.), p. 190; M. Grünbaum, *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sagenkunde* (Leiden 1893), p. 161. For the myrth as material of magic rods see Pauly—Wissowa, *op. cit.* II/3, pp. 1897, 1906 sq; J. Scheftelowitz, *Alt-Palästinensischer Bauernglaube* (Hannover 1925), p. 82; E. Westermarck, *Survivances païennes dans la civilisation mahomédane* (Paris 1935), p. 138.

<sup>11</sup> at-Tabarī, *Ta'riḫ I* (Cairo n. d.), p. 402; ath-Tha'labi, *op. cit.*, p. 190; cf. also Ibn al-Athir, *op. cit.* I, p. 76; Grünbaum, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

<sup>12</sup> ath-Tha'labi, *op. cit.*, p. 190. For the importance of the almond tree, see Jirku, *op. cit.*, pp. 21 sqq.

<sup>13</sup> L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews III* (Philadelphia 1947), p. 477.

<sup>14</sup> A. Rosmarin, *Moses im Lichte der Agada* (New York 1932), pp. 75 sq. See also Grünbaum, *op. cit.*, p. 163; Ginzberg, *op. cit.* III, p. 52 and V, p. 411. Similarly to the rod, the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments were also made of sapphire (Rosmarin, *op. cit.*, p. 109; Ginzberg, *op. cit.* VI, p. 54) and the Throne of God was also created from the same material (Grünbaum, *op. cit.*, p. 16; Ginzberg, *op. cit.* V, p. 411). The stone tablets were created at the same time as the rod (Rosmarin, *op. cit.*, p. 112). The idea that the tablets of the Ten Commandments were made of sapphire can also be found in the Arabic tradition: at-Tabarī (*op. cit.* I, p. 426) mentions green tablets of chrysolite, al-Kisā'i (*op. cit.* I, p. 220) and al-Ya'qūbi, *Ta'riḫ I* (Beirut 1960), p. 37 speak of tablets of emerald.

<sup>15</sup> at-Tabarī, *op. cit.* I, pp. 398 sq, Ibn al-Athir, *op. cit.* I, p. 76, ath-Tha'labi, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

<sup>16</sup> Rosmarin, *op. cit.*, pp. 76 sq, Grünbaum, *op. cit.*, pp. 163 sqq, Ginzberg, *op. cit.* II, pp. 292 sq. For the same motif see also A. Scheiber, *Antike Elemente in der Agada: Acta Antiqua* 18 (1970), p. 419.

As to the shape of the rod Arabic descriptions mention that it was like a two-pronged fork with a crook under the meeting point of the twigs and when it was turned into a serpent, the two twigs formed the mouth of the serpent with its forked tongue, while the crook took the shape of its crest.<sup>17</sup> Seemingly the starting point of this idea was provided by the actual form of a serpent on the model of which the rod came to be imagined. For the sake of a parallel, reference can be made here to the popular magic instrument of the classical world, the staff of Hermes (*kerykeion*) which in its original form appeared as a forked rod and symbolized the prophylactic horns of an animal.<sup>18</sup>

Ancient tradition, Semitic and classical alike can be discerned in the statement that honey flowed from one of the twigs of the rod and the other one produced milk.<sup>19</sup> As is well-known the promised land was characterised by the milk and honey abundantly flowing there but in addition to these, a number of references to milk and honey are to be found not only in the Bible, but in the literature of the Ancient Near East in general.<sup>20</sup> The Arabs highly appreciate these two important foods even today, assuming e.g. that milk possesses *baraka*, blessing,<sup>21</sup> and as for honey Bedouins prefer to feed the newly ablactated child on it.<sup>22</sup> Among the cases presented by the classical tradition, Dionysus' rod could also be recalled from which wine and honey flowed<sup>23</sup> or the *thyrsus* which could be used to bring forth milk, wine and honey from the earth.<sup>24</sup>

According to the Arabic legend, the length of Moses' rod measured 10 cubits, the exact height of its owner,<sup>25</sup> on their part the Jewish sources establish the identity between the weights of the rod and the two tablets of the Ten Commandments.<sup>26</sup> The rod of human height must also have had a magical significance and this conclusion can be arrived at through another case furnished by mediaeval Europe: Thomas Ebendorfer of Haselbach

<sup>17</sup> at-Tabarī, *op. cit.* I, p. 401; ath-Tha'labī, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>18</sup> Pauly-Wissowa, *op. cit.* II/3, pp. 1918 sqq; Roscher, *op. cit.* VI, pp. 657 sq. According to Gressmann (*Zauberstab des Moses und die eiserne Schlange: Zeitschrift d. Vereins f. Volkskunde und Völkerpsychologie XXIII*, 1913, pp. 21 sq) the handle of Moses' rod represented a serpent.

<sup>19</sup> ath-Tha'labī, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

<sup>20</sup> Jirku, *op. cit.*, pp. 29 sqq.

<sup>21</sup> Westermarck, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>22</sup> Jirku, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>23</sup> Roscher, *op. cit.* VI, pp. 546 sq.

<sup>24</sup> Pauly-Wissowa, *op. cit.* II/3, p. 1913.

<sup>25</sup> at-Tabarī, *op. cit.* I, p. 431; ath-Tha'labī, *op. cit.* p. 190; Ibn al-Athīr, *op. cit.* I, p. 84. According to al-Kisā'i (*op. cit.* I, p. 235) it measured 20 cubits.

<sup>26</sup> Ginzberg, *op. cit.* VI, p. 54, Rosmarin, *op. cit.*, pp. 75 sq.

(1387–1464) in a pamphlet against superstition spoke out against those who use such a rod to tend their flocks.<sup>27</sup>

It seems that the motif of the alleged red colour of the rod which came from the trees of Paradise and was found by Moses in Jethro's house<sup>28</sup> cannot be traced back to Jewish tradition, although the choice of this particular colour could by no means have been a mere coincidence. Primarily, the classical world sought to discover a connection between the idea of blood, death, war and the red staff, since these notions were easily associated with the red colour. Thus the Romans, e.g. threw a lance of red wood on to the territory of their enemies as a sign of a declaration of war.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, Arabic magic attributes a prophylactic character to the red colour: among prescriptions for the preparation of amulets references to the use of red leather<sup>30</sup> or red sherd<sup>31</sup> frequently occur and there is a general preference to write amulets in red ink and to place them in amulet holders made of red leather.

The effort to give the rod a special name can be considered as of Arabic origin, and according to the different opinions it could be *māsā* (Heb. *matfeh*, 'rod'?), *naf'a* (Ar. 'usefulness'), *ghiyāth* (Ar. 'help') or '*ullaiq* (a reference to the burning bush).<sup>32</sup> This motif is in perfect agreement with the Arabic custom which likes to give proper names to objects belonging to celebrated persons (thus, e.g. the sword of Ali received the name of Dhū-l-Fiqār).

The different uses of Moses' rod are enumerated by ath-Tha'labī as follows:<sup>33</sup> its two twigs gave light at night in the desert<sup>34</sup> (an evident allusion to the pillar of fire in Ex. 13: 21–22), water could be drawn up with its help from the well, when Moses stuck it in the ground it bore fruit, food and almonds, if an enemy approached then two serpents appeared on the two twigs, Moses broke his way with the rod, divided the rivers, made himself transported wherever he wanted to, the rod indicated the presence of robbers,

<sup>27</sup> L. Thorndike, *A history of magic and experimental science* IV (New York 1953), pp. 294 sq.

<sup>28</sup> al-Kisā'i, *op. cit.* I, p. 208, Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' az-zuhūr* (Cairo, n. d.), pp. 122 sq, 124, 126.

<sup>29</sup> Pauly-Wissowa, *op. cit.* II/3, pp. 1907, 1914.

<sup>30</sup> al-Būnī, *Manba'*, p. 140.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155. For the prophylactic character of the red colour see also Scheftelowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 81; W. Blackman, *Les fellahs de la Haute-Egypte* (Paris 1948), p. 188. A trace of the idea about the magic character of the red colour can also be found in the Bible (Donáth, *op. cit.*, p. 19). For its role played in Jewish tradition, see Ginzberg, *op. cit.* VII, Index, s. v. Red.

<sup>32</sup> ath-Tha'labī, *op. cit.*, p. 190. *Māsā* might have something to do with the popular etymology of the name Moses (*Māsā*): *mā* means 'water', *sā* is equal to 'wood' (Ibn al-Athīr, *op. cit.* I, p. 74).

<sup>33</sup> ath-Tha'labī, *op. cit.*, pp. 190 sq.

<sup>34</sup> For the luminous rod, see also al-Kisā'i, *op. cit.* I, p. 226.

fought against enemies, had a delightful scent, chased away the lions (in a Jewish legend, with his rod Moses rendered two lions guarding Pharaoh's palace harmless)<sup>35</sup> insects and serpents, Moses knocked down the leaves for his flock with this rod and carried his belongings on it.

The motif regarded by the Aggadah as the most important characteristic of Moses' rod and which plays a prominent part in Arabic magical literature, did not appear in the Arabic legends and pieces of historical literature so far cited. Namely, the Aggadah relates that the rod bore an inscription of the Tetragrammaton, the initials of the ten Egyptian plagues, the names of the three Patriarchs, of the six ancestresses and of the twelve tribes.<sup>36</sup>

2.a. In al-Būnī's work mentioned previously as *Manba' uṣūl al-ḥikma*<sup>37</sup> the author presents a description of Moses' rod in connection with a commentary on the incantation of the so called al-Jaljalūtiya. He proceeds from verse to verse of the text and enumerates in a detailed way the magic aims that can be accomplished through their assistance. Treating the hemistich about Moses' rod («With the names of Moses' rod darkness disappeared») he depicts the rod like this:

«Know that most of our masters did not explain the names on Moses' rod (Peace be upon him!) because they are so wonderful and majestic. Even if somebody explained them he did so only after he had made a vow about his intention to guard them against the ignorant and to clarify them only to the initiated disciples. Several strange things were accomplished with them. These noble names are the following: *Faiūkh, Fādikh, Faiūm, (Qayyūm?) Qādir, Shaliūkh, Shālikh, Dalūm, Ṣāliḥ, Nār, Ṣādiq, Arshakh, Shaliūkh, Shālikh, Satūkh (?)*, *Iādikh, Shāmikh, 'Azīm, Raḥmā, Nādir, Nākh, Kalūsh, Ah, Iāiūh, Shāh, Shalūsh, Zahdaj, Sharāhaiā, Sharūsh, Shūsh, 'Āl, 'Alīy, Qawiy, Nādī and Kabīr*.

«They are inscribed in ancient Hebrew characters, and the picture of the rod and the writing of the names looks like this as you can see it in the following form at the beginning of the next page [Fig. 1]:

«These (names) have a number of strange characteristics. Should anybody inscribe them during the time of exaltation of the Sun or Jupiter on parchment with the water of Prophets, the water of the menth of river, the water of coriander, the water of willow, rose-water and saffron while he incenses (a material smelling sweet), then he hollows the rod, places the names inside it and finally seals it with the (wedding) candle of a virgin bride, then should he stay in a dreadful place and robbers, brigands or greedy, harmful beasts appear before him, but he beats with the rod three times on the earth

<sup>35</sup> Ginzberg, *op. cit.* II, p. 332.

<sup>36</sup> Rosmarin, *op. cit.*, pp. 75, 267. See also Ginzberg, *op. cit.* II, pp. 292 sq.

<sup>37</sup> al-Būnī, *Manba'*, pp. 154 sqq.

and says 'Oh my God I pray to you (with reference to) the blessing of these great names which were on the rod of Mūsā ibn 'Amrān (Peace be upon him!) and upon the smite of which the sea divided itself and every opening became like a big mountain keep off from me this and this — here he mentions which people or animals he wishes to stop — then he says 'Stop them!' If he asks them they will stop if God (May He be exalted!) be willing.

«You can write (these names) in order to (acquire) love and to sow the seeds of discord. Inscribe around them the commission on an unbaked potsherd, place it in the house on the highest wall and then you will see a miracle.

«Should anybody write these (names) on a piece of rag coming from the person wanted, put it inside a lamp (as a wick) with the tincture of quicksilver or rose, then the wanted person comes to him sooner than the glance of the wanted person.

«Should anybody write (these names) on a paper and the name of the wanted object on the back of it and hang it in the air on the spot where the escaper or a thief went out from, then the object will be returned soon.

«Should anybody write these (names) on a paper then wash them off with rain-water and spray the walls of the house of the tyrant with this, he will perish quickly.

«Should anybody write (these names) on a red potsherd with the name of his creditor and bury it in the fireplace of the bath or in the oven, then the person in question will be seized by fever and it will not leave him until you do not take the potsherd out and do not put it in cold water and you do not write the names in a vessel and do not wash them off with a pleasant water and do not make him drink it.

«Should anybody write (these names) on a paper and the name of his enemy on the back of this, then hang it under the wing of a kite or a crow or any other bird, then the person in question will become demented, will stroll around on the roads as a fool and will not find the right way until the bird is shot down and you do not remove that piece of paper and do not wash it off.

«Should anybody write (these names) on a piece of rag coming from the skirt of a woman who was disobedient to her husband, afterwards throw it into the fire with sandarac and blue bdellium, then the wife will appear before her husband humbly and obediently, and will never oppose him again.

«Should anybody write (these names) on an unbaked potsherd and incense it with *ḥantil* then break the potsherd and disperse its dust on the place where the sinners and oppressors meet, these will be dispersed and will never come together again.

«Should anybody write (these names) on a piece of paper and place it into an inflated goatskin then tie it up and place it where something was stolen from, the stomach of the thief will become distended and he will not recover until he returns the stolen thing to its place.

«Should anybody write (these names) and suspend them on an enchanted person, then the spell will be broken or (if he suspends it) on a fever-patient then he will recover or (if he suspends it) on somebody who is possessed by a demon then he will leave him or (if he suspends it) on somebody who is being envied, then envy will be gone or (if he suspends it) on a sick person God will restore him to health or (if he suspends it) on somebody who is afraid of something then he will reach safety.

«Know that the writing (of these names) can be accomplished in Arabic and Hebrew characters alike. Become acquainted with their power and guard them from the ignorant!»

In his *Shams al-ma'arif*, al-Būnī relates the passage concerning Moses' rod in a way slightly different from the above-mentioned.<sup>38</sup> The author explains that after many inquiries and a period of fasting for forty days he received a piece of paper from his master which contained the names on Moses' rod. He also came to know that these names were inscribed on Joseph's garment, Daniel's sword, accompanied Abraham to the fire and Jesus taught these names to his disciples. The uses attributed to the names partly agree with those enumerated in the *Manba'*, even the figure of the rod is identical, although in place of the Hebrew characters there is an Arabic text, verses from the Koran, Arabic numerals and in the middle of the figure the word Allah (Fig. 2).<sup>39</sup>

According to another version of al-Būnī's work, among the clothes of his master (who is not identical here with the one mentioned previously) a piece of paper was found by the corpse washer which contained the great names.<sup>40</sup> Among other things the author also mentions that through the help of the names one was able to walk on water or fly in the air and that among the names the form *Iāh Iāh Iāh* also occurred. In the Jewish legend, Moses would like to fly up in the air with the help of God's unutterable name to see the promised land<sup>41</sup> and Bil'am also raised himself to the sky using the Tetragrammaton when he tried to flee from Moses' army.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, the motif of walking on water in al-Būnī's work might recall the well-known event in Jesus' story.

From a third version in the *Shams al-ma'arif* we are informed that the famous scholar, al-Khwārizmī had tried during seven years in vain to discover God's greatest name until he finally met a blind Chinese sage who disclosed

<sup>38</sup> al-Būnī, *Shams* II, pp. 94 sq.

<sup>39</sup> The figure in the *Shams al-ma'arif* is also reproduced in E. Doutté, *Magie et religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Alger 1909), p. 196.

<sup>40</sup> al-Būnī, *Shams* II, pp. 95 sq. The motif of the amulet discovered on the dead forms the frame-story of the *Ḥirz Murjāna* (Doutté, *op. cit.*, p. 153).

<sup>41</sup> Ginzberg, *op. cit.* III, p. 442.

<sup>42</sup> Rosmarin, *op. cit.*, pp. 129 sq.

to him that God's greatest name which consisted of 12 letters was written on Moses' rod.<sup>43</sup> Then the master showed the circle of the name drawn in Himyarite characters. (According to the figure in al-Būnī's work it contained the Throne-verse, the *Fātiḥa* and the word Allah arranged in close lines.) Enumerating the different uses of the circle, the sage also revealed that the greatest name was *Allah Allah Allah*. In another version of the story the names *Ehieh Asher Ehieh*, *Adōnāi*, *Ṣebāōt*, and *El Shaddai* appear in the middle of the circle.<sup>44</sup>

b. On the basis of the above-mentioned it might seem clear that the magic power of Moses' rod was attributed not to the person of its owner or to the gesture made with the rod, or not even to the shape of the rod or to its material, but to the words inscribed upon it. This idea came to be formulated with special clearness in Arabic magical literature.

In the *Manba' usūl al-ḥikma* the names on the rod can be divided into four distinct groups: those which are completely obscure, those which have a meaning in Arabic, those which could be considered as Jewish and Arabic alike, and those which seem to be of pure Jewish origin. The purpose of assembling these different kinds of names was to strengthen their mutual influence.<sup>45</sup>

It is well-known that the use of names — which look as if they are absolutely unintelligible, but are frequently alliterative and as such tend to produce their effect in the sounding — is a basic characteristic of magic.<sup>46</sup>

The following names reveal a pure Arabic origin: *Fāḍikh* ('Fracturing the skull'), *Qāḍir* ('Powerful'), *Shālikh* ('Splitting'), *Ṣāliḥ* ('Good'), *Shāmikh* ('Lofty'), *Aẓīm* ('Great'), *Raḥmā* (instead of *Raḥmān*, 'Compassionate'), *Nādir* ('Rare'), *Qawīy* ('Strong'), *Nāḍi* ('Calling'), *Kabīr* ('Great').

On the basis of Schwabe's angeological dictionary the following names can be identified: *Nūr* (Ar. 'Light') is identical with *Nēr ʿEl* ('The Light of God', one of the names of the angels charged to separate the seasons)<sup>47</sup> and *Nēr Iāh* ('The Light of God', the name of the angel who is in charge of the month of Tammuz);<sup>48</sup> *Ṣādiq* (Ar. 'Righteous') is identical with *Sedeq* ('Righteousness' the name of Jupiter);<sup>49</sup> or *Ṣadqiḗl* ('Divine Righteousness' which is — among others — the name of one of the angels of the second *thequfa*);<sup>50</sup> *Nār* (Ar. 'Fire') is identical with *Nūr ʿEl* ('The Fire of God', this name is used

<sup>43</sup> al-Būnī, *Shams* IV, pp. 25 sq.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* I, p. 49.

<sup>45</sup> For this technique, see L. Blau, *Das altjüdische Zauberwesen* (Budapest 1898), p. 133.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>47</sup> M. Schwabe, *Vocabulaire de l'angéologie* (Paris 1897), p. 191.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 228 sq.

in invocations for rain in the first *thequfa*<sup>51</sup> or *Nūr ʿĒl* ('The Angel of Fire' in addition to several things, he is in charge of the first *thequfa*),<sup>52</sup> or *Nūr Iāh* ('Divine Fire' one of the agents of the *thequfa* of Tammuz);<sup>53</sup> *Shāh* (Ar.-Pers. 'Shah') is identical with *Shāh* (one of the elements in the divine name of 72 letters);<sup>54</sup> *ʿĀl*, *ʿAtiy* (Ar. 'High') is identical with *ʿĀl al Iāh* (The Most High God', the 49th name of Metatron)<sup>55</sup> or *ʿĀl ʿĒl* ('The Most High God', identical with the influence exercised by the star al-Dirai on people).<sup>56</sup> The Arabic borrowing of these names is disclosed by the fact that most of them are connected in one way or another with the division of the year, mainly with the *thequfa*, the idea that also frequently occurs in the *Shams al-maʿārif*.<sup>57</sup> The Jewish origin of the names of the angels can perhaps be indicated by the presence of two 'i'-s (*kesra*) at the end of most of the names, even after those of non-Jewish origin. This indication might also be taken for one of the usual Jewish abbreviations of the Tetragrammaton and accordingly, angel names with the common ending of *ʿĒl* or *iāh* might be concealed behind the words no matter how they appear as Arabic in form. Practitioners of Jewish and non-Jewish magic alike were of the opinion that the names connected with the divine name were endowed with a special power.<sup>58</sup> The expression *Ehieh asher ehieh*, which belongs to the group of pure Jewish names, is easily discernible in the word *Sharāhaiā*, *Ah* could be the first syllable of *Ehieh*, although it occurs independently on a Jewish amulet made of meaningless words.<sup>59</sup> and *Iāiūh* is most probably a corrupted form of the Tetragrammaton.

c. In the borrowing of the idea about the names that gave a magic power to Moses' rod an isolated motif of Arabic magic must not be envisaged. It becomes clear from the magic operations accomplished through the help of the rod that in order to attain the highly coveted aim stress was laid on the methods of demoniac magic, although support from the means of sympathetic magic is quite frequently solicited. According to the general idea, one could force demons to fulfil orders by evoking certain names. It is only natural that in this manner of thinking, the magic of names and interest in the divine

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 184 sq.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211. See also in the form of *ʿElyōn* as the name of God in the Bible (*Enc. Jud.* 7, p. 675).

<sup>57</sup> Seemingly, the work knows the real meaning of the word, on the other hand it mentions it several times as a mystical name deprived of its original meaning (*Vajda*, *op. cit.*, pp. 390 sq.).

<sup>58</sup> For this procedure of non-Jewish magic, see Blau, *op. cit.*, pp. 118, 120, 135.

<sup>59</sup> Schwabe, *op. cit.*, p. 140, s. v. *Iah Ah* . . .

names as the most powerful means to rule the demons played an important role. Moreover, Muhammad's statement about the beautiful names of Allah (Koran 7 : 180) also officially legalized the formation and cultivation of literature treating the 99 names of Allah.

Arabic magic was strongly influenced in this respect by Jewish tradition, however, not excluding the possibility of interaction. Not only does the structure of Arabic amulets and Jewish segullōt display similar traits,<sup>60</sup> but also several identical genres of the literature on magic. Suffice it to mention here only the works containing the different uses of the Koranic verses or the pieces of Shimmūsh Tehillim on the use of Psalms for magical purposes!

In addition to the miraculous magic power of the Jewish divine name that can be used in several ways, its most important characteristic for the Arabic tradition is that God imparted its knowledge to the chosen ones only, and by an invocation of this name every wish or prayer addressed to God will gain hearing.<sup>61</sup> Among the forms attributed to the hidden divine name, which also appears as the «Great Name» (*ha-shēm ha-gādōl*), the special names of 12, 42, and 72 letters respectively enjoy an extraordinary importance.<sup>62</sup> The popularity of the belief in the supernatural power of the Jewish divine name is shown by the frequent references in the Hellenistic Greek papyri to the *ta megala onomata*, the 'great names'<sup>63</sup> and often present the different transcriptions of the Tetragrammaton.<sup>64</sup> The mystical divine name which is above every other is mainly called *ism Allāh al-aʿzam*, 'The Greatest Name of God' in Arabic magic literature,<sup>65</sup> but the forms *al-ism al-aʿzim*, 'The Great Name' or *ism Allāh al-aʿzim al-aʿzam*, 'God's Greatest Great Name' also occur.<sup>66</sup> Arabic tradition was seemingly well aware of the fact that this idea was of Jewish origin: al-Kisāʾi<sup>67</sup> relates that when the disobedient Jews did not want

<sup>60</sup> For the structure of amulets see e.g. A. Fodor, *Notes on an Arabic Amulet Scroll*: *Acta Orient. Hung.* XXVII (1973), pp. 271 sq. for the segullōt see *Enc. Jud.* 11, p. 711.

<sup>61</sup> For the Jewish divine name see Blau, *op. cit.*, pp. 116–128. For stories exhibiting the miraculous power of the divine name, see Ginzberg, *op. cit.* III, pp. 39, 55, 99, 132, 269, 409.

<sup>62</sup> See Blau, *op. cit.*, pp. 137–146.

<sup>63</sup> Bächtold–Stäubli, *op. cit.* VI, p. 584, s. v. *Mosis*. See also Preisendanz, *PGM*, *passim*.

<sup>64</sup> Blau, *op. cit.*, pp. 128–137.

<sup>65</sup> E.g. al-Būnī, *Shams*, *passim*. For a profound analysis of the problem of Muslim divine names see G. Anawati, *Le nom suprême de Dieu: Estratto degli atti del III° congresso di studi arabi e islamici*, Ravello 1966 (Napoli 1967).

<sup>66</sup> al-Būnī, *Shams* IV, pp. 25, 26. The attribute *gādōl* from the Biblical *shēm ha-gādōl* (1 Kings 8 : 42, 2 Chron. 6 : 32, Jer. 44 : 26) is translated by *aʿzim* in Arabic.

<sup>67</sup> al-Kisāʾi, *op. cit.* I, p. 227. See also al-Būnī, *Shams* IV, p. 76 and Vajda, *op. cit.*, p. 388.



to fight the giants, Moses went to the Bāb al-Ḥaṭṭa<sup>68</sup> which bore the following inscription in Hebrew characters: «In the Greatest Name of God». Similarly to the Jews, the Arabs were quite sure that God fulfils every wish when invoked by this name<sup>69</sup> and were of the opinion that only the chosen ones could become acquainted with it: an incantation addresses itself to God with those names He made himself known only to one human being.<sup>70</sup> The allusion here to Moses and the well-known event in Ex. 3: 14 is quite unambiguous.

Concerning the Arabic borrowing of the Jewish divine names, it is worth noting those statements of the magic tradition about Moses' rod which claim as mentioned earlier that the greatest name is composed of 12 letters and that it may consist of the words *Allah Allah Allah* or *Iāh Iāh Iāh*, an expression mentioned in another place. These three facts might easily be inter-related with each other: the memory of the 12 letter divine name survived, while the Jewish tradition which preferred to conceive the divine names as a multiple combination<sup>71</sup> of *Iāh* (a frequent substitute of the Tetragrammaton) was preserved, consequently the name *Allah Allah Allah* can be only the Arabicized form of this procedure.

d. No example of Jewish magic is known which actually presented an illustration of Moses' rod with the divine names written on it.<sup>72</sup> However, since the close connection between Moses' rod and the shape of a serpent is generally accepted,<sup>73</sup> the origin of the idea that took shape in Arabic magical tradition can perhaps be sought after in that Jewish group of amulets from

<sup>68</sup> Quoting Wahb ibn Munabbih, al-Kisā'i adds that *ḥaṭṭa* in Hebrew means 'forgiveness' (it might have been originally Heb. *ḥaṭṭat*).

<sup>69</sup> See e.g. this motif in the presentation of Bil'am's story (at-Ṭabari, *op. cit.* I, pp. 437 sqq).

<sup>70</sup> al-Būnī, *Shams* I, p. 88.

<sup>71</sup> E.g. a 42-letter divine name is composed of 3×7 *Iah*-s: L. H. Schiffmann, *A Forty-two Letter Divine Name in the Aramic Magic Bowls: Bulletin of the Institute of Jewish Studies* I (1973), pp. 97 sqq. According to Manba', p. 90 *Iāh* means «He is the God». *Ehieh* occurs independently in the form of *Ahiāh* (al-Būnī, *Shams* IV, p. 18) and *iehī* ('let there be') in the Arabic form *kun* also appears among the divine names (at-Tūkhī, *Ism Allāh al-a'zam* (Cairo, n. d.), p. 47).

<sup>72</sup> For an illustration of Moses' rod, see e.g. E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Graeco-Roman Period* 11/III (New York 1964), Pl. XII.

<sup>73</sup> According to Gressmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 18 sqq the rod and the iron serpent erected in the desert are identical. See also Donāth, *op. cit.*, pp. 43 sqq. The motif of the rod with the serpent can also be found in Egypt: On a representation from the Late Period a king can be seen as he drives four calves with a rod ending in a serpent shaped head (P. Montet, *Das alte Ägypten und die Bibel* (Zürich 1960), pp. 152 sq, Abb. 18). For the explanation of this scene see A. M. Blackman—H. W. Fairman, *The Significance of the Ceremony HWT BHSW in the Temple of Horus at Edfu: The Journal of Egyptian Archeology* 36 (1950), pp. 76—81.

the Graeco-Roman period which depict naked Hermes with a big snake in his left hand.<sup>74</sup> Both figures were covered with Greek letters and the word *Iao* could easily be read on the serpent, while Hermes himself bears the inscription of *Iao Sabaoth*, and on one occasion the snake was replaced by a sceptre.

In Arabic tradition it becomes clear not only from the description of the rod that it was brought into direct contact with the shape of serpent but also from that event of the story which claimed that in Jethro's house the rod jumped by itself into Moses' hand.<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, Arabic popular belief regarded snakes as the favourite form of appearance for the genii, the demons.<sup>76</sup> Evidently, this magic which used the methods and means of demoniac magic — through the names written on the rod — was also aimed at forcing the demon residing in this snake-rod into its service.

e. Considering that Moses' rod is only one of the possible sources to which the divine names of miraculous power can be traced back,<sup>77</sup> magic which was tolerated, but always treated with suspicion by official religion, had to seek an appropriate form to legalize its teachings and to be able to propagate them openly.<sup>78</sup>

It was not found satisfactory in every case to repeat the biblical story about Moses' coming into possession of the secret divine names<sup>79</sup> and this explains why other more islamized stories of revelations were also made use of. According to a passage in al-Būnī's *Shams al-ma'ārif*,<sup>80</sup> one of the imams of the Mosque of Aleppo regularly visited a dark chamber of the mosque where

<sup>74</sup> Goodenough, *op. cit.* 2 (New York 1953), p. 269, 3, picture 1144. For the motif of the serpent on the rod, see *ibid.* 2, pp. 267 sq.

<sup>75</sup> ath-Tha'labī, *op. cit.*, p. 189. The identity of rod and serpent is also indicated by a story at Ibn Khuradādhbeh, which relates that in the time of Ibn Tulūn, a marmor tablet was found in Egypt and it bore the picture of three men among whom the figure holding a serpent was identical with Moses (G. Wiet, *L'Égypte de Murtadi fils du Gaphiphe*, Paris 1953, Introduction, p. 94).

<sup>76</sup> Th. Nöldeke, *Die Schlange nach arabischem Volksglauben: Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* I (1860), pp. 412 sqq.

<sup>77</sup> According to the legend, Solomon's ring also bore the divine names and these gave it the miraculous power that Moses' rod had possessed (G. Salzberger, *Die Salomosage in der semitischen Literatur* I, Berlin 1907, pp. 117 sqq). Arabs showed a particular interest in the inscriptions on stones, plants, animals and people (O. Rescher, *Zum islamischen Folklore: Der Islam* 14, 1924, pp. 383 sqq).

<sup>78</sup> For this effort of the adherents of secret sciences, see also Fodor, *The Origins of the Arabic Legends of the Pyramids: Acta Orient. Hung.* XXIII (1970), pp. 335—363, *passim*.

<sup>79</sup> For the popularity of this motif in Jewish legends see Ginzberg, *op. cit.* II, pp. 318 sq, 321, III, pp. 114, 137, 419, 446.

<sup>80</sup> al-Būnī, *Shams* I, pp. 45 sq, cf. also III, pp. 58 sq. For the Shi'ite tendencies in al-Būnī's works see El-Gawhary, *op. cit.*, pp. 14 sqq, 54 sqq.

no light entered and prayed incessantly to God to reveal His greatest name. One night an illuminating tablet appeared suddenly in front of him which he was frightful at first to look at because of the fear that he would turn away from God through this, but a voice ordered him to examine it and so he discovered that there was a circle in the middle of the tablet with different figures. Shortly afterwards the Imam fell into a deep sleep, then the Caliph Ali appeared and disclosed to him that the greatest name of God was inscribed on the tablet.

This story with the motif of a revelation which took place in a mosque and with the allusion to the luminous tablet, shows surprising similarities with the frame-stories of an Arabic alchemist work, the *Kutāb Qarāṭis al-ḥakīm* (The Book of the Sage Krates) and other works of similar characters.<sup>81</sup> Moses' rod was illuminating like these tablets, in that it possessed the distinguishing mark which is generally considered as the characteristic trait of objects of revelations.<sup>82</sup> In addition, the idea of the heavenly tablet also coincided with speculations about the origin of the Koran, and the author, through making Ali appear on the scene renders the authenticity of the story even more acceptable.

f. The figure reproduced in the *Manba' uṣūl al-ḥikma* and covered with Hebrew letters indicates that the shape of Moses' rod in the *Shams al-ma'ārif* can probably be traced back to Jewish origin. The text consisting of undecipherable letters was appropriated by Arabic tradition, which replaced the original with Koran-verses and Arabic numerals. As a result of the several transcriptions they underwent, the Hebrew characters appear in rather corrupted forms. They partly preserve the traits of the quadrate script, and partly recall the writing of Egyptian manuscripts of the 13th century. There are three more occurrences of these Hebrew letters in the *Manba'*, namely in the commentaries on different lines of the *al-Jaljalūtiya*: in a magic letter-quadrangle the words *Khallāq Bārī* ('Creator') also written in Arabic are reproduced with these letters<sup>83</sup> while in another letter-quadrangle the components of the word *ṭaiṭaḡḡat*<sup>84</sup> and in the third case the word *tākīr*<sup>85</sup> are presented in this script in addition to the Arabic forms (Figs. 3, 4, 5).

<sup>81</sup> Cf. also Fodor, *op. cit.*: *Acta Orient Hung.* XXIII (1970), pp. 337 sq.

<sup>82</sup> The motif of the luminous tablet appears in the Jewish and Egyptian traditions alike (the Book of Raziel and the Magic Book of Thot, see Fodor, *Arab legends of a pyramisokról* [*Arabic Legends on the Pyramids*, in Hung.], Budapest 1971, pp. 56, 76).

<sup>83</sup> al-Būnī, *Manba'*, p. 126.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126. According to *Manba'*, p. 99. this is a Syriac word and it means 'The Living'.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151. According to *Manba'*, p. 99. this is also a Syriac word and means 'The Lights'.

The circles of the figure, in accordance with ancient Jewish and Middle Eastern tradition in general might symbolize the light<sup>86</sup> and consequently express the luminous character of the rod. As mentioned earlier God's greatest name and the figure of the circle were connected with each other in Arabic magic, but beyond all these a special prophylactic effect was also attributed to the circle.<sup>87</sup> The figure of the tear-drop made of a half-circle and the two lines of the figure ending in a point is a favourite amulet form wide-spread over the whole Middle East.<sup>88</sup>

3. From the Biblical and later Jewish tradition attached to Moses' rod, Islam also borrowed the motif of duel with the magicians of Pharaoh in an interesting version, saying that the rods and ropes of the magicians were swallowed by Moses' rod, which on this occasion took the form of a seven-headed serpent.<sup>89</sup> Instead of the ten Egyptian plagues Arabic legend refers only to nine so called 'signs' sent by God as an admonition to the Egyptians. Curiously enough, the rod is given the first place,<sup>90</sup> but as to the operations carried out with it, only the transformation of the water of the Nile into blood is mentioned.<sup>91</sup>

Moses wished to carry Joseph's coffin with him during their Exodus, and when he came to know that it lay under the Nile, he took four golden sheets and draw the picture of an eagle on the first one, a lion on the second, a man on the third and a bull on the fourth, then inscribed God's greatest name on each of them.<sup>92</sup> With the exception of the last one he threw the sheets into the river, upon which Joseph's coffin emerged from the water.

<sup>86</sup> For the symbol of circle, see Goodenough, *op. cit.* 5 (New York 1956), pp. 62 sqq. For the motif of a rod decorated with rings, see Goodenough, *op. cit.* 7 (New York 1958), pp. 200 sq. Cf. also for the explanation of the staff of Hermes R. Ferwerda, *Le Serpent, le noeud d'Hercule et le caducée d'Hermès*: *Numen* XX (1973), pp. 104–115.

<sup>87</sup> For the Arabic magic circles, see Goldziher, *Zauberkreise*: *Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Sprachgeschichte, vornehmlich des Orients*, Ernst Kuhn zum 70. Geburtstag 7. II. 1916. *gewidmet*, pp. 83–86. For its importance in Jewish tradition see Ginzberg, *op. cit.* III, p. 418, Rosmarin, *op. cit.*, p. 134, A. Scheiber, *Antikes und Aggada*: *Acta Antiqua* 17 (1969), pp. 455–457. For the circle in magic in general: Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* II, D 1272 (Magic circle).

<sup>88</sup> See e.g. Kriss, *op. cit.*, passim. The contour of the tear-drop may also symbolize the pine-cone, another favourite amulet of Jews and Arabs alike. The *thyrsus* of Dionysus also had a pine-cone shaped head (Pauly—Wissowa, *op. cit.* II/3, p. 1910).

<sup>89</sup> al-Kisā'i, *op. cit.* I, p. 216, Ibn Iyās, *op. cit.*, pp. 125 sq. According to the Arabic legends, the magicians filled their rods and ropes made of cow-leather with quicksilver and these started to move under the effect of the heat (al-Ya'qūbī, *op. cit.* I, p. 35).

<sup>90</sup> al-Kisā'i, *op. cit.* I, p. 216, al-Ya'qūbī, *op. cit.* I, p. 35, Ibn Iyās, *op. cit.*, pp. 126 sq, see also Speyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 278 sqq.

<sup>91</sup> al-Kisā'i, *op. cit.* I, p. 215.

<sup>92</sup> al-Ya'qūbī, *op. cit.* I, p. 35.

Aggadah knows only about the carrying of the coffin,<sup>93</sup> but the four figures can most probably be traced back to the «four living creatures» in Ez. 1: 10, or to the «four beasts» in Rev. 4: 6—7. The motif of the object retrieved from the water through a magic operation can also be found in the Bible (2 Kings 6: 1ff) where precisely the rod plays the part of the instrument that makes the sunken axe float on the water.

In strict conformity with the legend of the Aggadah Arabic tradition makes Moses smite 12 ways in the sea<sup>94</sup> and the story of smiting the rock to bring forth water is likewise well-known in the Arabic legends.<sup>95</sup>

According to a passage in the Talmud, Og, the giant, wanted to annihilate the Jews and placed a big mountain on his head to throw it upon them.<sup>96</sup> God, however, sent ants to the mountain and they made a huge hole in it so that it fell upon Og's shoulders, whereupon Moses killed the helpless giant with his rod. Arabic tradition adopts this story in every detail, but replaces the ants with a hoopoe, the bird that was later so very dear to Solomon.<sup>97</sup>

Arabic sources do not particularly dwell upon the question of what happened to the rod after the death of Moses, but seem to know the Jewish tradition which claimed that the rod marked with the divine name or the unutterable name was kept in the Ark of the Covenant, together with the tablets of the Ten Commandments.<sup>98</sup> The commentaries on Koran 2: 248 also state that the stone tablets and Moses' rod were placed among other things in the Ark of the Covenant.<sup>99</sup> According to Christian Arabic tradition, however, Aaron's rod was preserved there,<sup>100</sup> while the Syrians believe that the horizontal stem of Jesus' cross was carved from Moses' rod.<sup>101</sup>

4. Examining the spread of the motif of Moses' rod and the magic rod in general, it transpires that the rod also appears as a magic instrument without the reference to the divine names on it: in incantations, the magician symbolically held it in his hand to achieve his aim.<sup>102</sup> In the Thousand and One Nights, a figure possesses a rod with which he can evoke the obedient hosts of the

<sup>93</sup> Rosmarin, *op. cit.*, p. 95, B. Heller, *Egyptian Elements in the Haggadah: Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume I* (Budapest 1948), pp. 414 sq.

<sup>94</sup> Grünbaum, *op. cit.*, pp. 166 sq, Ibn Iyās, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>95</sup> See e.g. at-Tabarī, *op. cit.* I, pp. 426, 430.

<sup>96</sup> D. Sidersky, *Les origines des légendes musulmanes* (Paris 1933), pp. 101 sq.

<sup>97</sup> al-Kisā'i, *op. cit.* I, p. 235.

<sup>98</sup> Ginzberg, *op. cit.* III, p. 310, 157; Blau, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>99</sup> See e.g. *Tafsīr al-Jalīlāin* (Cairo n. d.), p. 32, at-Tabarī, *op. cit.* I, p. 468.

<sup>100</sup> Kebra Nagast, ed. C. Bezold: *Abhandlungen der philos.-philol. Klasse der Kgl. Bayer. Ak. d. W.* XXIII/I. 1905, p. XLIX.

<sup>101</sup> Grünbaum, *op. cit.*, pp. 162 sq. Cf. also Bezold, *op. cit.*, pp. XLIV sqq.

<sup>102</sup> Winkler, *op. cit.*, 17, 31, see also *ibid.*, p. 138.

genii from under the earth.<sup>103</sup> The form of Moses' rod, as described in the Arabic sources, can perhaps be recognized in the fork-tailed rod used in Egyptian and Sudanese *zār*-ceremonies.<sup>104</sup>

A modern survival of the motif of the serpent-rod covered with the divine name is probably offered by an inscription I had the opportunity of seeing in the neighbourhood of Aswan on the island of Seheil on a Nubian house: a picture above the entrance door bore the letters of the word Allah arranged in a serpent like form. With this drawing of a serpent, the master of the house might have wished to not only keep off dangerous animals, especially serpents, but also wanted to make the serpent demon, beaten and strengthened at the same time by the divine name, obey his orders and to secure its protection for his house.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>103</sup> N. Elisséef, *Thèmes et motifs des Mille et une nuits* (Beyrouth 1949), p. 174, s. r. Baguette magique.

<sup>104</sup> Kriss, *op. cit.*, pp. 183, 193 and Abb. 135, 136, 143. The forked rod as the weapon of demons also occurs in the Thousand and One Nights. According to M. Ghallab, *Les survivances de l'Égypte antique dans le folklore égyptien moderne* (Paris 1929), pp. 281 sq, this motif can be traced back to Ancient Egypt: in the Demotic novel of Setna e.g. Setna-Hamuas had to give the magic book of Thot back to Nanoferkaptah with a forked rod in his hand and a burning pan on his head as a sign of penitence.

<sup>105</sup> For the role played by the serpent in the beliefs of ancient and modern Egypt in general, see L. Keimer, *Histoires de serpents dans l'Égypte ancienne et moderne* (Le Caire 1947). For the sake of comparison it is worth mentioning that in a codex of the Library of Ivres dating back to the 11th century, in the initials *Ds* (Deus) there is a centaur in the letter *D* holding his tail ended in a serpent's head, the letter *s* is represented by a serpent having a head on both of his ends (Kaposy V., *Adalék románkori emlékeink ikonográfiájához* [A Contribution to the Iconography of Our Monuments from the Roman Period, in Hungarian]: *Bulletin du Musée des Beaux-Arts* 6, 1955, p. 83, n. 41). The symbol of death and Satan is represented here in the service of God.

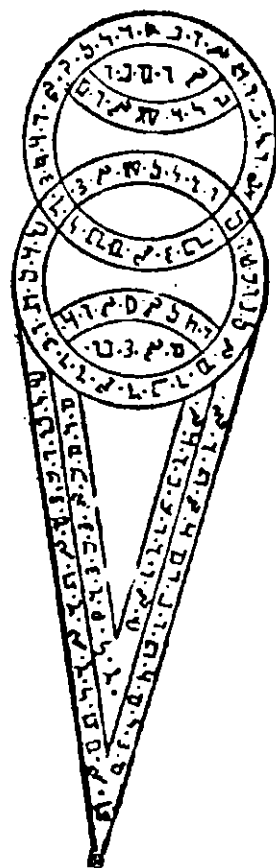


Fig. 1

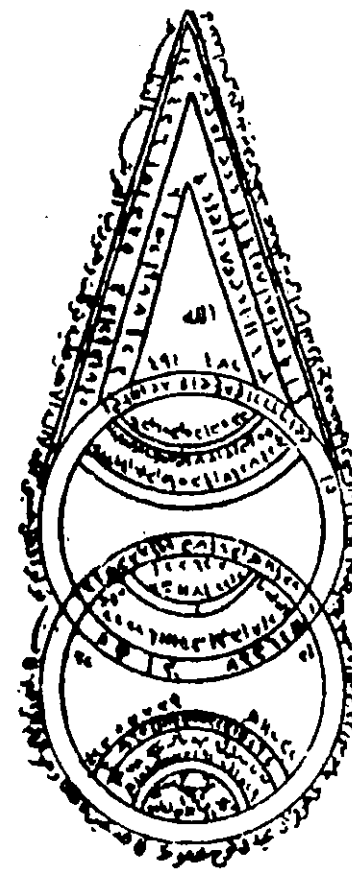


Fig. 2

خ	لا	ق	با	ري
٣٦	٢٤	٣٦	٢٤	٣٦
٣٦	٢٤	٣٦	٢٤	٣٦
٣٦	٢٤	٣٦	٢٤	٣٦
٣٦	٢٤	٣٦	٢٤	٣٦

Fig. 3

٢	١	٢	١	٢	١
ط	ي	٢	ط	٣	ت
ط	ي	٢	ط	٣	ت
ط	ي	٢	ط	٣	ت
ط	ي	٢	ط	٣	ت
ط	ي	٢	ط	٣	ت

Fig. 4

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
 سراج يقاتل النور سراج يقاتل النور  
 سراج يقاتل النور سراج يقاتل النور  
 سراج يقاتل النور سراج يقاتل النور

Fig. 5

## THE DECIPHERMENT OF ARABIC TALISMANS

*Tewfik Canaan*

A student engaged in deciphering magic formulae is encountered on every step of his study with difficulties. The aim of this treatise is a modest attempt to overcome some of these difficulties. A great many questions will remain unanswered. All reference books which were consulted give an outline of the history, development and divisions of talismans. They further describe the relations of Arab talismans to those of other nations. But nowhere can the reader find real data to help him understand the writings which are at times very intricate. Talismans are according to Lane: "a seal, an image, or some other thing upon which mystical devices or cartouches, astrological or of some other kind are engraved or inscribed..."<sup>(1)</sup>.

In the following we have to deal with the different kinds of *hūdjuh* or *hidjābāt* (pl. of *hidjāb*), *ʿawfāq* (pl. of *wifq*), *hamāyil* (pl. of *hamīlah*), *taʿāwīd* (pl. of *taʿwīdah*) and *hrūzeh* (pl. of *hirz*). The expressions *hidjāb*<sup>(2)</sup> and *hirz* are also used by Palestinian Arabs for uninscribed amulets.

Most of the inhabitants of the Orient believe in the protective power of talismans. This explains their extensive use among Mohammedans, Oriental Christians and Jews. The use of talismans was widely spread among the ancient inhabitants of the East. The decipherment of Egyptian and cuniform texts show how widely known they were. There are many points of resemblance between ancient and modern talismans.

Talismans are at present inscribed on paper, leather, glass, bone, porcelain and earthenware dishes and pitchers, also on wood and stone<sup>(3)</sup> and on all kinds of metal. The writing is often beautifully executed; at other times it is difficult or impossible to decipher the text. In many cases the writing is composed of meaningless scratches. Printed *hūdjuh* are widely known, but they are not so highly esteemed as written ones.

1 *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. V, p. 1867.

2 From *hadjaba*, to conceal.

3 The black stone of *en-nabī* Mūsā is preferred. The preference of black stones seems to be an old one; cf. Macalister, *Gezer*, III, 226, 4 ff.

Most metal talismans are known by the collective name of *māskeh* (4) (pl. *marwāsik*) (5). The explanation of this expression is founded in the belief that it holds the foetus of a pregnant woman in situ, i. e. it prevents abortion, therefore *māskeh* from *masaka*, to hold.

Exceptions to this rule are coins and metal cases. Coins are either the *maṣḥaṣ* (6) or Mohammedan coins with the inscription *lā ʾilāhā illa llāh*. A *maṣḥaṣ* as a rule is a golden coin of the time of St. Helena. Silver *maṣāḥeṣ* (pl. of *maṣḥaṣ*) are also known, but they are believed not to be so active. In order to possess full active power the heads on both sides of the coin must face in the same direction and the perforation by which the coin is fastened must lie between or above the heads, without damaging the same (7). Metal cases are protective coverings for paper talismans. The silver and the golden ones are generally decorated with inscriptions, symbols and figures which are as a rule not intended to be simple decorations but protective talismans.

Written talismans belong to one of the following categories:

- I. Those carried on the body;
- II. those hung upon the bed of the patient or placed somewhere else in the house;
- III. those used in one way or another as an internal or external medication.

A few explanatory words have to be said about the two last categories. Whenever a person is seriously ill a Qorʾān, a Bible, a cross, a holy picture or some written talisman is placed under the cushion or fastened on the head-end of the bed. Such a precaution is also taken whenever a boy is circumcized, when a woman gives birth to a child and whenever a couple is newly married. In the last case it is less used than with the others. Several unwritten amulets are added to the above. Qoranic verses hung up in houses have to be regarded not only as a decorative feature, but also as a protective measure. Talismans may be buried under the door lintel, so that every time the inhabitants of that house pass in or out they have to step over the same.

Talismans of the third category may be discussed under two subdivisions.

1. Talismans serving for internal use. The writing is washed with ritually

4 Canaan, *Aberglaube und Volksmedizin im Lande der Bibel*, pp. 52, 91.

5 This expression is unknown in this sense to *muḥīṭ* and Lane.

6 This expression is unknown in this sense to *muḥīṭ* and Lane.

7 In Byzantine times coins of Alexander the Great were regarded by the Christians as powerful (Chrysost. ad illum Catech. 2, 5, Montf. 2, 243 f. *Realencycl. für protest. Theologie und Kirche*, I, 469). In the Middle Ages the coins of St. Helene were also esteemed as an amulet, *Chamber's Encycl.*, vol. i, s. v. *Amulets*.

clean water or with some other specified liquid and this solution is given to the patient to drink. Examples are *raqūāt* written on dishes, pieces of glass or paper. In other cases the "inscribed" egg is boiled or the "written" bone is cooked (8). The hard boiled egg and the soup of the bone serve as a cure. In all these cases the intrinsic power of the writing is believed to go into the liquid. To this category belong also the Fear Cups which have been recently described elsewhere (9).

2. The *maṣḥaṣ* is either carried with other amulets or placed in bathing water for a woman who has recently given birth to a child or for a child believed to suffer from *el-kabseh* (10).

The above description had to be given in order to explain the fundamental uses of talismans. But as the aim of this paper is an analysis of the text it is impossible to go into further description of the origin of *ḥudjub*, by whom and how they are made, the way they act, etc.

The texts of many talismans can be deciphered, even if the writing is badly executed, while in others it is impossible to read the text or, if read it is utterly meaningless. In order to reach a somewhat satisfactory solution the many talismans of my collection were analyzed, several Arabic books on magic and popular medicine were studied and such authoritative European books as were accessible were consulted. The best way of approaching the problem is to study separately the different categories into which the texts of talismans can be divided. There are:

- I. Texts of continuous intelligible sentences.
- II. Talismans of single words, which either denote some intelligible meaning or are quite meaningless.
- III. Letters and numbers.
- IV. Signs and figures. In this category we have to include signs and scratches which are unintelligible.

#### I. INSCRIPTIONS MADE OF CONTINUOUS INTELLIGIBLE SENTENCES.

1. These may be taken from the Qorʾān, or the Old and the New Testament. Books on magic acknowledge that all holy books are active. In *kitāb sarḥ el-ʾahd el-qadīm* (11) one finds on page 18 the following verse:

بما في كتب الله من كل سورة  
وتوراة موسى والزبور وما حوى  
واياته ثم الحروف العوالي  
وانجيل عيسى والذي كان تاليا

"By every *sūrah* of God's books  
and by His verses, as well as (by) the heavenly letters,

8 Examples of all above named talismans are represented in my collection.

9 *JPOS*, XVI, pp. 79 ff.

10 *Aberglaube und Volksmedizin*, pp. 37, 39, 69.

11 Abu-l-Abbās Aḥmad el-Būnī.



(by) Moses' Torah, the Psalms and what they contain,

(by) Christ's Gospel and (by) what followed the same".

This is an old custom which was practised by Christians and Jews long before the Mohammedans. The phylacteries<sup>(12)</sup> and the Mezuzah<sup>(13)</sup> of the Hebrews were a kind of religious talismans. The Mishna believes in talismans, differentiating approved from non-approved ones<sup>(14)</sup>. The practice of carrying portions of the Holy Scripture as phylacteries by the early Christians is mentioned by St. Jerome, St. John Chrysostom<sup>(15)</sup> and others. The Mohammedans find in the Qor'ān and in the *ḥadīṭ* the excuse for the use of *ḥidjābāt*. *Sūrah* 17,84 reads: "We send down of the Qor'ān that which is a medicine and a mercy unto the believers". *Sūrah* 41,44 runs: "It (the Qor'ān) is unto those who believe a sure guide and a remedy". According to *er-Rāzī* the prophet is said to have exclaimed: "May God not heal the person who does not seek his cure in the Qor'ān"<sup>(16)</sup>. Some other sayings are: "The Qor'ān is God's words and (thus) a protection from Satan"<sup>(17)</sup>. "Take from the Qor'ān what you like to (cure) whomsoever you choose"<sup>(18)</sup>. "The best medicines are the two cures, honey and the Qor'ān"<sup>(19)</sup>. "The Qor'ān is the healing antidote and the sufficing medicine"<sup>(20)</sup>. Even the use of some parts of the Qor'ān in *er-raqī* (enchanting) is allowed. *El-Quṭrubī* said "enchanting with God's words and His names is allowed". *Er-Rabī* informs us "I have asked *eš-Šāfi* if it is permitted to use a spell. He answered 'Yes with the book of God'". *Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī*, *al-Baghawī*, *Mudjahid* *abū Qallābeh* and *al-Awzā* assure that "it is allowed to wash texts of the Qor'ān which were written on wood or on a vessel and to give the water thereof to the sick". *En-Naḥā* did not approve of this method<sup>(21)</sup>.

12 Ex. 3<sup>8</sup>; 1<sup>6</sup>; Deut. 6<sup>8</sup>, 11<sup>8</sup>.

13 Deut. 6<sup>8</sup>; 11<sup>20</sup>.

14 Sab. VI, 2; Tos. Sab. IV, 9. 10. See also *Encycl. Judaica*, s. v. *Amulet*.

15 See *Catholic Encycl.*, s. v. *Amulet*.

16 *Er-Rāzī*, V, 428. من لم يستشف بالقرآن فلا شفاء لله.

17 القرآن كلام الرحمن وحرر من الشيطان.

18 خذ من القرآن ما شئت لمن شئت.

19 خير الدواء الشفاين العسل والقرآن (عن ابن ماجه). Another saying is شفاء امي في ثلاث اية من كتاب الله او كاس من (Būnī, *Sumūsu-l-*

*ma'ārifi-l-kubrā*, II, 54. This book will be referred to in future as *Būnī*.)

20 ان القرآن هو الترياق الشافي والدواء الكافي (Būnī, II, 53). Another saying is خير الدواء القرآن (عن ابن ماجه عن علي رضي الله عنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم). Some of these quotations are also found in *ibn el-Hādī et-Talmasānī*, *kitāb sumūsu-l-anwār wa kunūzu-l-asrār el-kubrā*. This book will be referred to simply as *Talmasānī*.

21 *Al-Qaḍī Husein* and *al-Baghawī* allow parts of the Qor'ān to be written on pieces of sweets or some other food and given to the sick. All these quotations are taken from *Talmasānī* p. 68. See also *Miškāt*, XXI, chapt. 1; *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Buhārī), p. 854; Th. Patrick Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, s. v. *da'weh*.

This fact shows how deeply religion and popular medicine are dependent on each other. It is nearly impossible to separate one from the other without mutilating both. This is why religious leaders play an important rôle in popular medicine, many therapeutic measures are nothing but religious ceremonies, and the amulets which a person wears and loads upon his children are nothing but his continuous prayer for help and protection<sup>(22)</sup>. This belief is also shared by the Christians of the Eastern churches. The use of verses of the Qor'ān is doubtless based on the widely spread belief that diseases are caused by superhuman powers, the presence and the evil action of which can not be prevented by human power. This openly acknowledged weakness has driven the ancient peoples as well as the present inhabitants of the Orient to resort to superhuman beings who are believed to be stronger than the evil powers causing disease and misfortune, namely to God, angels, prophets, saints and holy books. Thus prayer arose in which the weak human nature sought refuge in a higher and more powerful Being. Talismans are in reality nothing but prayers written and continually carried by the person seeking protection. The power of talismans, i. e. of written parts of holy books and of prayers, is therefore stronger and its action more prolonged than the spoken word.

The Qor'ān is often carried in miniature as the best and strongest protection<sup>(23)</sup>. Every *sūrah*, ay even every verse possesses powerful force in counteracting the work of the evil, but some verses are thought to be more active than others. The parts of the Qor'ān which are used more than others as curative and protective measures are: *Sūrah* 1\*, 2160; 256-259\*, 284-286, 312, 28\*, 69\*, 752-54, 1541, 1782, 109-111, 3658, 371-7, 481-20, 5538-36, 4921-24, 701-4, 6118, 7621-22, 841-4, 94, 109\*, 112\*, 113\*, 114\*. Parts marked with \* are the most used. Other portions of the Qor'ān are said to possess special powers in other fields such as producing love, finding a lost object, establishing the favour of rulers, etc.

The *basmalah* (i. e. *bism-il-lāhi-r-raḥmāni-r-raḥīm*) and the *fātiḥah* (i. e. the first *sūrah* of the Qor'ān) play a very important rôle in invocations. *En-Nāzili*<sup>(24)</sup> devotes the greater part of 35 pages of his book expounding the merits of *el-fātiḥah* and the *basmalah*, while more information about them is found more or less throughout the whole book. The *fātiḥah* is to the Mohammedan what the Lord's Prayer and the sign of the cross are to the Christian.

The *bism-il-lāh*, "in the name of God", was borrowed by Mohammed from the religious phraseology of Jews and Christians<sup>(25)</sup>. He later formulated it in

22 The suggestion of M. Finney, *Mosl. World*, VII, 367, that these prayers are not offered to God, but to the evil spirits, is wrong.

23 See also S.M. Zwemer, *The Influence of Animism on Islam*.

24 Mohammed Haqqi en-Nāzili, *ḥazīnatu-l-asrār, djalilatu-l-aḥkār*. This book will be referred to in the future simply as *Nāzili*.

25 Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qor'āns*, I, 116 ff.

full as *بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ*. Slowly the use of the same in speech and in documents as a prefatory formula became part of the religious practice of all adherents of Islam<sup>(26)</sup>. The *basmalah*<sup>(27)</sup> is composed of 19 letters corresponding to the 19 spirits guarding the doors of hell (*ez-zabāniyah*). It is said that it was written on the wings of Michael, on the rod of Moses, on the tongue of Jesus and on the ring of king Solomon. Būnī<sup>(28)</sup> teaches that the Almighty has promised to cure every patient upon whom this verse is uttered. If it is said upon an object it will be blessed. It is further taught that the Qorʾān is the best book, the *fātiḥah* the foundation stone of the Qorʾān and the *basmalah* that of the *fātiḥah*<sup>(29)</sup>. Other *ḥadīṣ* speaking of the importance of the *fātiḥah* are: "The *fātiḥah* is a cure from every disease"<sup>(30)</sup>; "The *fātiḥah* is a cure from poison"<sup>(31)</sup>. The *fātiḥah* has among its many names the following, which point to its curative power:

"The *sūrah* of enchanting" *السورة الراقية*

"The Protectress" *الواقية*

"The *sūrah* of Healing" *سورة الشفاء*

"The Curing"<sup>(32)</sup> *الشافية*

No good Mohammedan will begin any work without saying first "in the name of God". Christians invoke St. Mary, Christ or the Cross. The greater part of all talismans begin with or contain in their text the *basmalah*. At times it is written in disconnected letters. In one occasion it was inscribed in the following way<sup>(33)</sup> *بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحِيمِ*. The *fātiḥah* is composed of seven sentences, thus corresponding with the seven heavens, 7 earths, 7 planets, 7 days of the week, etc. Therefore it was called *es-sabʿ maṭānī*<sup>(34)</sup>. It is void of the seven letters, known as *sawāqit-ul-fātiḥah*. One of them is the ف (f)<sup>(35)</sup> which points to misfortunes (الافات)<sup>(36)</sup>.

26 I. Goldziher, *Bismillah*, in *Enycl. of Religion and Ethics*, II, 666–667.

27 The *basmalah* crowns all *sūrahs* of the Qorʾān except the ninth *sūrah*.

28 II, 32. See also *kitāb mudjarrabāt* Aḥmad ed-Dērabi, known as *fatḥu-l-mulki-l-madīd*, p. 8. This book will be referred to simply as Dērabi.

29 According to ibn ʿAbbās. See also Būnī, II, 54.

30 فاتحة الكتاب شفاء لكل داء (عن أحمد والبيهقي عن أحمد عبد الله بن جابر عن رسول الله).

31 فاتحة الكتاب شفاء من السم (عن سعيد بن منصور والبيهقي عن أبي سعيد الخدري عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم). These two quotations are to be found also in Talmasānī, p. 67; see also Nāzili p. 67.

32 For other names see Canaan, *Arabic Magic Bowls*, JPOS, XVI, pp. 79 ff; Nāzili, pp. 100, 101.

33 Būnī, II, 54.

34 Some give this name to the *basmalah*.

35 *Sūrah* 111 does not have the letter f.

36 Dērabi, p. 8; Būnī, I, 68.

The Mohammedan creed *لا اله الا الله* and *محمد رسول الله* are much used in talismans. Their supernatural power is apparent in the fact that each verse is made of 12 letters thus corresponding to the numbers of the months, hours of the day and those of the night.

Other Qorʾānic verses widely used in talismans are: *āyatu-l-kursī* (*Sūrah* 2<sup>256</sup>) which is also known by the names *āyatu-l-mustaʿīdīn*, "The verse of those seeking refuge"; *āyatu-l-mustaʿīnīn*, "The verse of those seeking help"; *al-āyātu-l-muḥaṣṣinah*, "The fortifying verse"; *al-āyātu-l-muḥridjah liš-šaiṭān*, "The verse driving out Satan"; *saiyidatu āyi-l-Qorʾān*, "The mistress of the Qorʾān"<sup>(37)</sup>. *Sūrah* YS (36, pronounced *Yāsīn*) is also called *qalbu-l-Qorʾān*, "The heart of the Qorʾān"<sup>(38)</sup>. The verses of "Guarding and Refuge" (آيات الحرس والحزن)<sup>(39)</sup> are believed to be specially powerful in curing disease. They are *Sūrah* 2<sup>1-4</sup>, 256-259, 284-286, 7<sup>52-54</sup>, 17<sup>100-111</sup>, 37<sup>1-11</sup>, 55<sup>33-36</sup>, 59<sup>21-24</sup>, 70<sup>1-4</sup>. *Al-Muʿawwadatīn*<sup>(40)</sup> are *Sūrah* 113 and 114. The prophet used these two verses while he was suffering severely from the results of the bewitchment caused by the Jew Lubaid and his daughter. These tied eleven knots in a cord and hid it in a well. God sent the archangel Gabriel with these two *sūrahs* and instructed him to teach Mohammed how to use them and where to find the cord. The prophet recited over the 11 knots the 11 verses of the two chapters<sup>(41)</sup>. At the end of each recital one knot was untied by an unseen power. As soon as all the knots were loosened the prophet was freed from his serious illness<sup>(42)</sup>.

"The verses of Healing" are *Sūrah* 9<sup>15</sup>, 10<sup>57</sup>, 16<sup>69</sup>, 17<sup>82</sup>, 26<sup>80</sup>, 41<sup>44</sup>. Every one of these passages contains a derivative of the verb *šafa*, to cure. *Āyātu-l-ḥifz*, "The verses of preserving", contain some derivative of *ḥafaza*, to preserve. Dērabi<sup>(43)</sup> mentions 17 verses. Būnī<sup>(44)</sup> adds three others, two of which contain the verb *nadjdja* and one *tarwakkaltu*. Talismans which are said to help in war have to contain the "five verses of the Qorʾān with the fifty q, (ق)". These are *Sūrah* 2<sup>246</sup>, 3<sup>181</sup>, 4<sup>76,77</sup>, 5<sup>31</sup>, 13<sup>17,18</sup>. It is evident that in *Sūrahs* 4 and 13 two verses are counted as one. In the four first passages the text contains in each verse some derivative of *qatala*. The verses have to be written together<sup>(45)</sup>.

37 Nāzili, p. 96; Būnī, II, 67.

38 Nāzili, p. 96.

39 Dērabi, pp. 39, 40.

40 JPOS, XVI, 84; here *Sūrah* 112 was mentioned wrongly.

41 The *basmalah* of *Sūrah* 114 is not counted as a verse.

42 See also Wallis Budge, *Amulets and Superstitions*, pp. 66, 67.

43 Page 13.

44 II, 69.

45 Nāzili, p. 75. Nāzili enumerates on

p. 115 the moral advantages of different *sūrahs* and their help in life and even at death. The following is a short list:

*Sūrah* 44 prevents the dread of resurrection;  
67 " the torture in the grave;  
119 " unbelief at the moment of death;  
96 neutralizes the grudge of envious people;  
36 prevents thirst at resurrection;  
56 " poverty and need;  
108 " quarrel;  
114 protects against Satan.

The writing is at times executed in a curious way. Thus the text of *Sūrah 2<sup>56</sup>* is engraved on a round, silver *māskeh* from left to right. A *māskeh* is never intended to be the negative of a seal. A copper hand (10.50 cm long, 8 cm broad), also in my collection, has the inscription engraved in the same way. This hand belonged to a *ṣāḥib* who used to seal his talismans with the same. The text is "O Healer, O God. 'Assistance from God and a speedy victory. And bear good tidings to the true believers' (*Sūrah 61*). O Mohammend! O Compassionate! O Giver! There is no (true) young man except 'Alī, and no true sword except *Ḍu-l-fiqār*. O God, O Living One, O Selfexisting, O High and Honoured, O Compassionate, O Merciful!" (46).

In analyzing the different Qoranic verses and the various names of God (see below) used in talismans one finds that they can be divided into the following categories:

- They describe God as the omnipresent, omnipotent, protector, compassionate, helper, healer and the loving One.
- They proclaim the Mohammedan creed of the unity of God.
- They contain expressions with an external resemblance to the desired help (47). Thus a talisman carried to increase the daily income has to contain as a rule one of the following words *رحم*, *عطوف*, *كافي*; to cure a disease *اطيف*, *شفاء*, *شفا*; to protect *حفظ*, *نجى*; against demons *اعوذ*, *اخرج*; for victory in a fight *قدير*, *مقتدر*, *جبار*; etc.

This practice of using special passages of Holy Scriptures as a protection is practiced also by Jews and Christians. The following verses, which were extensively used by Jews, spoke of healing and protection (48): Ex. 15<sup>26</sup>, Num. 6<sup>24-26</sup>, Deut. 6<sup>4</sup>, Ps. 91<sup>16</sup>, 97, 121.

The Christians of the Byzantine time and in later periods believed in the protecting power of St. John's gospel, the most active part of which was said to be the first verses of the first chapter (49). The names of the Qoranic parts had to be given as they are often used in talisman books and in *hidjābāt*. Such names would be unintelligible to the student who has not studied Moslem theology.

46 يا شافي يا الله نصر من الله وتفتح قريب وبشر المؤمنين  
يا محمد يا حنان يا منان لا انا (1) الا على ولا سيف  
الا ذر الفقار يا الله يا حي يا قيوم يا ذا الجلال  
والاكرام يا رحمن يا رحيم

47 *Al-ḥināyat al-ilāhiyah fī muṣāḥabāt al-ar-  
uḥ al-rūḥāniyah* (the name of the author  
is not given), pp. 4, 24. This book will  
be referred to as *ḥināyah*.

48 The following verses were used as

49 *Realencycl. für protest. Theologie und  
Kirche*, I, s. v. Amulet.

amulets: Gen. 1<sup>1-6</sup> (the last letters only)  
to preserve a person against pollution;  
Gen. 21<sup>1</sup> and Ex. 11<sup>8</sup> to ease child  
birth; Gen 25<sup>14</sup> to sooth crying children;  
Ex. 11<sup>7</sup> to protect against a fierce dog;  
Ex. 17<sup>10</sup> to stop bleeding; Ex. 23<sup>28</sup> to  
protect against witchcraft; etc. See also  
*Jewish Encycl.*, III, pp. 202, 203; S.M.  
Zwemer, *The Influence of Animism on  
Islam*, pp. 23 24.

2. Talismans composed of prayers. Some are in booklet form and are made of several pages (16 to 24). Others have a roll form, 150 cm. long and 9.5 cm. broad, and still others are very short. Some belonging to the first two groups are: *ḥirz 'Okkāseh, es-sabe' 'uhūd es-suleimāniyeh* (50), *ḥirz edj-djōšan el-mubārak, du'ā sayidi 'Abdallah ibn es-sultān, a tahwīyah* containing beside several prayers and Qoranic verses the names of *muḥallafāt en-nabī, ḥirz el-ghassāleh*, etc. These are all, printed in Egypt and are distributed in all Arabic speaking countries. One *hidjāb* of my collection in booklet form, هذا حجاب عظيم الشأن جليل القدر والبرهان (28 pages), was printed in Jaffa (مطبعة الترقى). The two Christian *hidjābāt* were printed in Jerusalem (61). Several have had many editions (62). Few characteristics of printed talismans have to be mentioned. In *du'ā 'Okkāseh* the sentence *اقول لا اله الا الله ومحمد رسول الله* follows every invocation as is shown in the following part: اللهم ان دخل الشك في ايماني بك ولم اعلم به ثبت عنه واقول لا اله الا الله ومحمد رسول الله. اللهم ان دخل الشك والكفر في توحيدى اياك ولم اعلم به ثبت عنه واقول لا اله الا الله ومحمد رسول الله... This sentence is repeated thirteen times.

Another characteristic is conjuring God by holy objects, His holy names, by angels and prophets. The following is an example: وبحق العرش وعظمته وبحق الكرسي وسعته وبحق القلم وجريته وبحق اللوح وحفظته وبحق الميزان وخفته وبحق الصراط ورقته وبحق جبرائيل واماته وبحق رضوان وجنته وبحق مالك وزبائنه وبحق ميكائيل وشفقته وبحق اسرافيل ونفخته وبحق عزرائيل وقبضته وبحق آدم وصفوته... Sixteen prophets are then mentioned.

Most of these printed *hidjūb* are composed as follows:

- The first part describes the approved benefits and at times gives also a resumé of their origin.
- The second part is the *du'ā*.
- Finally every talisman gives one or more of the following:— the beautiful names of God, the seven redeeming verses, other verses of the Qor'ān, the names of prophets, angels, companions of the prophet and those of the inhabitants of the cave (the Seven Sleepers), seals and pictures.

Smaller prayers are as a rule hand-written. Of these there are innumerable examples. In the following we have the translation of a talisman (63) written for a Christian woman named Mariā bint Katrinā: "In the name of God, the Healer, the

50 S.M. Zwemer, *The Infl. of Animism on  
Islam*, pp. 192 ff. gives a short and in-  
complete translation of this talisman.

51 One is called كتاب ماري كبريانوس الشهيد,  
the other كتاب صلاة القديس كبريانوس.

52 I possess four different editions of *as-sab'  
'uhūd*. In *JPOS* XI, pp. 130 ff. the  
differences of the various editions have  
been given.

53 This talisman is in my collection.

Sufficient, the Curer, by (the power of) whose name nothing on earth or heaven can do any injury. He is the Listener and the Omniscient. O my God, I ask you by your name which you have preferred to all names to heal, cure and cleanse the bearer of this book, *hirz* and *hidjāb*. And by the sacredness of your name, O God, with which (name) you cured and healed Job and Jacob, may peace be upon them, to cure the bearer of this book, Mariā the daughter of Katrīnā. Be responsible, O ye servants of this day and this hour, O spiritual angels of God to guard this human body from all malice caused by human beings, *djinn*, satans, sorcery, craft, treachery, *quranā*, *tawābi* (pl. of *tābi'ah*), injurers, and (guard her) from every evil and from the mischief and injury of all things created by God, which may befall her heart, her bone and her blood. And by the truth of these names and talismans: God, *Ah*, *Yāh*, *Ahiā*, *Barāhiā*, *Šarāhiā*, *Adonāi iṣbaōt*, *āl Šadāi*. . . who spoke to Moses on the mountain of Sinai and said: 'O Moses, I am God, there is no God beside me'. And by the honour of Solomon and David, may peace rest upon them" (54).

Doubtless this amulet was written by a Mohammedan for a Christian patient. It is characteristic that neither Qoranic verses nor the names of Christ, St. Mary or the cross are mentioned. The seals are typical Mohammedan seals.

To this category belong also invocations in which the eleven *Ši'it a'imnā* are mentioned. We meet with this invocation in the first place on metal vases manufactured in Persia, such as fear cups, silver cases for talismans and copper trays and vessels. This invocation has been thoroughly described in another place (55).

Many of the ring-seals of the *ḫulafā* and of important Mohammedan personalities bear short invocations (56). The greater part of verses, which are hung in houses as decorations, belong to this category.

54 This is the greater part (29 cm) of the writing on the first page of a talisman in my collection (34x8 cm). It is written on both sides. The remaining 5 cm of the first page and the whole second page are inscribed with four seals and some conjuring sentences. The Arabic text runs  
بسم الله الشافي الكافي المعافي الذي لا يضر مع اسمه  
شيء لا في الارض ولا في السماء وهو السميع العليم  
اللهم انني اسالك باسمك الذي فضلك على كل الاسماء  
ان تبرئ وتشفى وتعافي حامله هذا الكتاب والحرز  
والحجاب وبسر اسمك يا الله الذي اشفيت وابريت  
به ايوب ويعقوب عليها السلام ان تبرئ حامله هذا  
الكتاب ماريًا بنت كثرينا. توكسلوا يا خدام هذا

النهار وهذه الساعة يا ملائكة الله الروحانية  
يحفظ هذه الجثة الانسانية من شر الانس والجان  
والشياطين والسر والمكر والقدر والقرنا والتوابيع  
والموذين ومن كل شر ومن شر ما خلق الله وضرها  
واذاها في قلبها وعظمها ودمها وبحق هذه الاسماء  
عليكم والطلائع الله اياه اياها براها شرها ادوناي  
اصباوت آل شداي الذي كلم موسى على جبل الطور  
وقال يا موسى انا الله لا اله غيري وبحق سليمان وداود  
عليها السلام.

55 JPOS, vol. XVI, pp. 85 ff.

56 Hammer-Purgstall, *Die Siegel der Araber, Perser und Türken*, p. 8.

## II. SINGLE WORDS.

Words stand often quite alone. In many cases it is impossible to assign any meaning to such words. Single words belong to one of the following groups:

### I. THE NAMES OF GOD.

Among all His names 'allah' is the one used most. It is composed of four letters corresponding to the 4 elements, 4 cardinal points of the compass, 4 seasons, 4 archangels, etc. In some talismans the outer lines of a seal are made by the elongation of the letters of this name. In others all the horizontal and perpendicular lines of the seal are made by them, as may be seen in Fig. 1. This method of making squares is well known in magic. As the numerical value of the word الله is 66 (l=1 +J=30+J=30+š=5) we meet with seals giving this number, as may be seen in a seal engraved on a gilded *māskeh* of my collection, (fig. 2). The sum of each

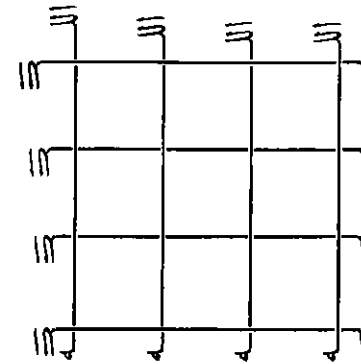


Fig. 1.

٢١	٢٦	١٩
٢٠	٢٢	٢٤
٢٥	١٨	٢٣

Fig. 2.

horizontal, vertical and diagonal line is 66. But God is said to have one hundred beautiful names of which 99 are known to men. The Qor'ān sanctions calling God with his names. *Sūrah* 7<sup>179</sup> runs: "God's are the most excellent names, call on Him thereby and leave those who pervert His name" (57). The hundredth and at the same time "greatest Name" (الاسم الاعظم), or "the secret (hidden) Name" (الاسم المكنون) is unknown to men. This name is at times abbreviated, *سظم*. It possesses absolute magic virtues. The Almighty has revealed it to some of His chosen prophets. As this holy name is at present unknown, it is often referred to in a special way, as may be seen from the following sentences taken from *hirz el-ghassāleh*:

57 Already in T'annaitic times the name of the Almighty used to be written on amulets. *Encycl. Judaica*, I, 738.

بِحَقِّ الْأَسْمَاءِ الَّتِي دَعَاكَ بِهَا آدَمُ — بِحَقِّ الْأَسْمَاءِ الَّتِي دَعَاكَ بِهَا الْخَضِرُ by which Adam called upon Thee" — "(I conjure Thee) by the names by which el-Hader called upon Thee". This sentence is repeated with the following prophets, Abraham, Ismā'il, Moses, Noah, Idrīs, Jacob, Joseph, David, Solomon, Job, Christ and Mohammed.

The idea of a name of God that can not be spoken or heard is clearly connected with the Jewish custom of declining to pronounce the name YAHWH. The importance of the ninety nine names lies in the belief that God is bound to answer whenever He is called by any one of them. There are printed amulets containing all the beautiful names of God<sup>(58)</sup>. In most talismans only few are mentioned. Mohammedans<sup>(59)</sup> have assigned to each name a special sphere of action and power<sup>(60)</sup>.

The mighty name of the Lord also plays an important rôle in Christian prayers and Christian amulets. In the *Adjazmātūrī*, p. 191, we read in the prayer used to drive out demons: "الاسم الالهي العظيم الذي لا يطاق", "The great Name of God which cannot be supported"; on p. 195: "يستترك ايها الشيطان الرب باسمه المخوف", "The Lord drives you, O Satan, out with His fearful Name". In *kitāb ṣalātu-l-qiddīs Kabriānus*<sup>(61)</sup> carried against the *qarīneh* and the dangers of the night, we find the passage: "لا تدع الشيطان النجس الملعون يتسلط على كتابي هذا ولا يضره بقوة اسمك العظيم", "Do not allow (O God), by the power of Your great Name, the unclean and accursed Satan to prevail over or injure (the person carrying) this book".

In analyzing the names of the Almighty which are used in talismans we find that a special system is often followed. The names have frequently the same meter as فتاح، وهاب، غفار، تواب، جبار. At times a seal is made of several names of God, which names begin with the same letter, as in the 4 x 4 squares seal containing the names جميل، جامع، جاعل، جليل in the first horizontal line. In the second, third and fourth lines the name جواد takes the place of one of the other names. Such a use of the names of God is believed to be stronger than other combinations.

Still more powerful is the combination of two names, where the first name begins with a ك and the second with a ن, making كن, "let it be", as كافي and نافع. Names, the numerical value of which are the same, are believed to possess high potential powers and they are written together as الله and

58 *Muḥallaṣātu-n-nabī; Asmā'u-l-lāhi-l-husnā.*

59 Talmasānī, pp. 6 ff.

60 The different authors do not agree on

these 99 names.

61 Printed in Jerusalem, edited by el-ḥadjjah Hanna Tūmā.

62 Talmasānī, p. 94.

وکیل, each name having the numerical value of 66; حميد and عفو (156); قيوم, etc. Such words are often met with in seals.

The seven names of God which begin with one of the letters of *sawāqīṭ el-fātiḥah*, namely شاهد، خير، زكي، شكور، جبار، فرد play a very important rôle in talismans. We often find them arranged in a 7 x 7 square seal. Each name is assigned to a planet, a day of the week and an angel (s. later).

## 2. NAMES OF ANGELS.

The names of the four archangels, *Djubrā'il*, *Mikā'il*<sup>(64)</sup>, *Sarāfā'il* and *Uzrā'il* are found in most *ḥudjub*. They are known as سلاطين الملائكة, "the sultans of the angels"<sup>(65)</sup>. This appellation is not widely used. *Djubrā'il* is said to be the messenger of God to the prophets. He brought down the Qorān. *Mikā'il* presides over rain and plants. *Sarāfā'il* (*Isrāfā'il*) stands beside the Throne and guards the heavenly trumpet. *Uzrā'il* is the angel of death and is therefore dreaded by every human being. *Djubrā'il* is the angel ruling over Monday and *Mikā'il* is assigned to Wednesday. The angels governing the other five days are: *Ruqā'il*<sup>(66)</sup> for Sunday, *Samsamā'il*—Tuesday, *Sarāfā'il*—Thursday, *Anā'il*—Friday, and *Kasfā'il* for Saturday. The names of these angels are less met with than those of the archangels. But their exact knowledge is necessary for the understanding of talismans. These names are well known in Hebrew angeology. They are also there assigned to the days of the week<sup>(67)</sup>. *Ruqā'il* is sometimes written *Rufā'il* and *Radqīā'il*; *Samsamā'il* as *Samā'il*<sup>(68)</sup>; *Sarāfā'il* as *Ṣarāfā'il* and *Isrāfā'il*<sup>(69)</sup>. *Riḍwān*, the guardian of paradise, and *Mālik*, the guard at the gates of hell, are often mentioned especially in long invocations, but they seldom stand alone.

There are still innumerable angel names which are completely strange. They have the angelic ending of "īl" (إيل، آئيل، نيل). Many of them are probably taken from Hebrew Cabbalism, and were with time so distorted that their origin can scarcely be detected at present. This is also true of other words used in amulets which will be mentioned later. In the following one way of coining the angelic names for the letters is given. Magic books assert that every letter has its own "spiritual name". Such names are determined after the following intricate method.

63 See also *ḡināyah* pp. 5. 6.

64 According to Zeno of Verona the archangel Michael was regarded as healer of human diseases; *Realencycl. für protest. Theologie und Kirche*, I, s. v. *Amulet*.

65 Talmasānī, p. 108.

66 The Hebrew name is Raquel.

67 H. A. Winkler, *Siegel und Charaktere in der muhammedanischen Zauberei*, p. 109.

68 Būnī, I, 114.

69 Būnī II, 90.

The letter is written as it is pronounced, thus an *l* is written *الف*. The numerical value of these three letters is 1 for *l*, 30 for *ل* and 80 for *ف* = III. This number is divided into its decimal powers, i.e. in 100, 10 and 1. 100 is the numerical value of *ق*, 10 of *ي* and 1 of *ل*. Arranging these three letters so that the letter with the highest value stands at the beginning one has *قيا*. Add <sup>(70)</sup> the letter the spiritual name of which one is looking for, in this case the *l*, at the beginning and the angelic syllable *ئيل* (*il*) at the end. The result is *اقيائيل* which is the angel's name for the letter *ل* <sup>(71)</sup>. That of *ب* is *بجيائيل*; *ج* = *ججيائيل*; *د* = *ددهائيل*; etc.

Even words placed in a seal can receive a spiritual name. One has first to know in which part of a square seal the words are to be placed as they are governed by the numerical value of that part. If the words *الله لطيف* are to be placed in a 3x3 square seal we have to deal with the number three which is the *muftāh* (s. later) of this seal. Add this number 3 to 1440 <sup>(72)</sup>. The latter number is gained by multiplying the degrees of a circle, 360 by 4 (the cardinal points). Subtract from 1443 the number 51 which is the numerical value of the angelic ending "*il*". 1392 remains. 1000 stands for *غ*, 300 for *ش*, 90 for *ص* and 2 for *ب*. The letters make together *غشصب*. Add the angelic ending "*il*" and one has the spiritual name of the words *غشصبائيل*. This name is used only to attain a material or a spiritual benefit. In revenge one gets the spiritual name of *الله لطيف* in the same way. But the letters represented by the number 1392 are arranged by beginning with the letter of the lowest (*ب* = 2) and ending with that of the highest value (*غ* = 1000). In this way one gets the spiritual name *بصشغائيل*. To get the name of the spirit of the lower word which serves this sentence one has to subtract the numerical value of *طيش* which is the demonic ending, namely 319. The rest of the procedure remains the same <sup>(73)</sup>.

Eṣ-ṣeḥ *abū l-Mu'ayyad* mentions in his book *djawāhiru l-ḥamsah* angels with different names for the letters of the alphabet <sup>(74)</sup>. Some of these names are *alkā'il* for *ج*, *Daryā'il* for *ه*, *Ismā'il* for *ط*, *Sarkikā'il* for *ي*, *Ṭaṭā'il* for *ل*, etc. It was impossible for me to find out how these names were coined. Būnī <sup>(75)</sup> assigns to the alphabet angels with still different names.

70 The technical expression is *توج*, to crown.

71 See also Bustānī, *dā'iratu l-ma'ārif* (Arabic Encycl.), VII, vide *حرف*.

72 This number is often represented by *غم*, the letters of which have the numerical value of 1440.

73 *Al-ḥināyah*, pp. 14, 15.

74 See also Patrick Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, s. v. *da'weh*.

75 Volume, III, 49 ff.

Beside the angel names of Būnī and *abū l-Mu'ayyad* there are many other names both in books on magic and in talismans, which remain a puzzle. According to Būnī each of the four cardinal points is ruled by an angel. The angel for the north is *Asiā'il*, for the east *Daniā'il*, south *Ḥazqīā'il* and for the west *Dardiā'il*. It is to be noted that the last named angel is, according to *abū l-Mu'ayyad*, assigned to the letter *د*. Many angel names seem to have been formed by adding the angelic ending *ائيل* to an Arabic word. Some words treated in this way are; *روبايل*—*روبا*; *مرقيايل*—*مرقي*; *مبدعايل*—*مبدع*; *لطفائيل* (and *لطفائيل*)—*لطف*; *كرميايل*—*كرم*; *منيايل*—*منهي*; *وليايل*—*ولي*; *شرطيايل*—*شرط*; *عجبايل*—*عجب*; *مرقديايل*—*مرقد*; *هوايل*—*هوا*; *تقيايل*—*تقي*; *طيفيايل*—*طيف*; *مطريايل*—*مطر*; *دهريايل*—*دهر*; *برقيايل*—*برق* <sup>(76)</sup>.

Doubtless this way of forming angel names has been taken by Arabs from the Hebrews. Every student going through a list of Hebrew angel names finds that a great many have been formed in this way <sup>(77)</sup>. While the Hebrews kept the names thus formed for the angel ruling the sphere expressed by the original word, the Arabs deviated from this important rule.

*Metatrōn* (*ميطatron*, *ميطatron*) is said to be the archangel who rules over the upper (*alawiyeh*) and the lower (*suftiyeh*) angels <sup>(78)</sup>. He is sometimes assigned to Jupiter, and on other occasions to Mercury. At times he is identified with the archangel *Mikā'il*. His name is clearly taken from the Hebrew as Grünbaum has already shown <sup>(79)</sup>. In Greek he was known as *μεταθρονος*. Būnī <sup>(80)</sup> calls him also *Ṣarā'il bin 'Abdallah*.

### 3. NAMES OF DEMONS.

Demons are ordered in talismans to follow the instructions and to leave the patient whom they inhabit. Only the most important names will be mentioned. A spirit of the lower world is assigned to every day of the week. EL-MUDHIB <sup>(81)</sup> known as *abū 'Abdallāh Sa'id* rules over Sunday; MURRAH *el-Abiad* *abū l-Hāret* (*Abū n-Nūr*) over Monday; *abū Mihriz* (or *abū Ya'qūb*) EL-AHMAR—Tuesday;

76 The name *Barqīā'il* is found in Mandaean magic cups. It was the name of a good angel; H. Pognon, *Inscriptions Mandaites des Coupes de Khoubir*, p. 94.

77 *Jewish Encycl.*, I, 594.

78 Muhammad er-Rahawī, *Al-ḥuṭuṭ al-man-zūm fī l-ḥalāsīm wan-nudjūm*, p. 24. This

book will be referred to in future as Rahawī.

79 *Beiträge zur vergleichenden Mythologie aus der Hagada*, ZDMG, XXXI, 272.

80 III, 93.

81 Not Buskan as Budge, *l. c.*, p. 43.

BARQĀN<sup>(82)</sup> *abū l-ʿAdjāyib*—Wednesday; ŠAMHŪRIŠ (*et-Tayyār*)—Thursday; *abū Ḥasan ZŌBAʿAH* (*el-ʿAbiad*)—Friday and *abū Nuḥ*<sup>(83)</sup> MEIMŪN rules over Saturday. As a rule only that name written in capitals is mentioned in talismans. Every one of these archdemons has many tribes of *djinn* under his sovereignty. All the above given names, except *Šamhūriš*, are of Arabic origin. *Abū Murrah* is also a name for Satan<sup>(84)</sup>. *Abū l-Ḥareṭ* is the nickname of the lion. It was impossible for me to ascertain if this demon was thought to have the form of a lion<sup>(85)</sup>. It is commonly believed that *Šamhūriš* died some years ago. Er-Rahawī<sup>(86)</sup> teaches the same. His successor is named *Mutawakill*<sup>(87)</sup>.

In talismans as well as in sorcery the ruling angel is asked to force the demon ruled by him to obey and fulfill the orders expressed in the talisman. This is clearly seen in the following talisman of my collection where we read: "Answer O *Meimūn* by the force of the angel ruling over you, *yāuah*, *Roqiā'il* and *Kasfiā'il*"<sup>(88)</sup>. As *Kasfiā'il* is the angel ruling over *Meimūn* it is curious that *Roqiā'il*, who rules over *Mudhib*<sup>(89)</sup> should also be called upon.

Būnī<sup>(90)</sup> assigns four *ʿafārūt* to the four archdemons. Some authors think that these names are only synonyms to those of the four archangels. The names of the *ʿafārūt* are: *Damriāt* (*Ṭamriāt*) for *Mudhib*, *Manʿiq* (or *Šanʿiq*) for *Meimūn*, *Wahdelbād* (or *Wahdeliād*)<sup>(91)</sup> for *Barqān* and *Šoghāl* for *el-Aḥmar*. But I have not yet met with these names in written talismans. *El-Aḥmar* is also called *abu l-Tawābi*, the father of all *tawābi* (pl. of *tābi*, the masc. of *tābiʿah* = *qarīneh*).

The names of the "four Heads" (الأربع رؤوس), also called the "four Helpers"

(الأعوان الأربعة), play a very important rôle in talismans. They are *Māzar* (مازر) the lord of East, *Kamīam* (كطم) the lord of West, *Qasūrah* (قسورة) the lord of South and *Ṭaykal* (طيكال) the lord of the sea. Some authors and talismans wrongly use *Ḥaraz* (خرز) instead of *Māzar*; *Kaṭam*, *Kaṭmah* and seldom *Kaḍmah* (كطم, كطمة, كضمة) for *Kamīam*; and *Ṭabkal* for *Ṭaykal*. These names are often met with in talismans. *El-Ṣeḥ* Maḥmūd abu l-Mawāhib el-Ḥalūtī el-Ḥanafī<sup>(94)</sup> devotes several pages to the description of their seals, names, field of action etc. Every one of the four heads has a special servant from among the seven above named demons. *El-Aḥmar* serves *Māzar*, *Mudhib*—*Kamīam*, *Šamhūriš*—*Qasūrah*, and *Murrah* serves *Ṭaykal*. These four names are found as a rule around square seals. At times one meets with one name alone written with unexplicable words or with the name of the person for whom the talisman was written. The "four Heads" are called upon to take revenge upon an enemy.

*El-Qarīneh* and *imm eṣ-Šubiān* are well known demons, who play a great rôle in Oriental superstition<sup>(95)</sup>. Their names are often met with in talismans. The belief in *el-Qarīneh* is also taken from Jewish demonology. Djalālud-Dīn es-Siūtī<sup>(96)</sup> gives a list of names for these two spirits, the enumeration of which may serve in the understanding of obscure names. The supposed names of *at-Tābiʿah* are: عقود, دوس, خلص, لولبن, ملطوس, سيوس, سلباس, طوح, طوسد, قروح, مقلوش, قلنوش, قرقوش, قوش, قطنوش. Those of *imm eṣ-Šubiān* are: سليمان, قروح, ام ملدم, ايلاقوش, عمروش, مقرقوش, هيلوش. How thoroughly confused the different authors are, may be seen from the fact that as-Siūtī makes a difference between *el-Tābiʿah* and *el-Qarīneh* giving each one a list of new names, while it is generally recognized that these two expressions stand for one and the same female demon. He further pretends that *imm eṣ-Šubiān* is a synonym for *el-Qarīneh* but a few lines later mentions *imm eṣ-Šubiān* as a separate *djinniyeh*. The list of by-names given to *el-Qarīneh* are (97) دنوس, مهروس, عصروس, مروس, ابعروس, فيوس, ملعونة. Ed-Damīrī<sup>(98)</sup> writes that God promised to increase the demons by one for every new-born human being. These are the *quranā* (pl. of *qarin*).

82 Winkler, l. c., p. 104, heard *abū Nuḥ*.

83 In *Aberglaube* the name was transcribed *Maḡhab*, which pronunciation is generally used by the *ṣeḥs*.

84 Sirādj ed-Dīn abu Ḥafṣ ʿOmar ibn el-Wardī, *ḥarīdatu l-ʿadjāyib*, p. 267. It is said that Satan appeared to the people of Qoreiš in the personality of a *ṣeḥ* from Nedjd, named *Abū Murrah*, and advised them to attack unitedly the prophet and kill him. See also *dāʿiratu l-maʿārif*, VI, 558; Canaan, *Dämonenglaube im Lande der Bibel*, p. 23.

85 *ʿAdjāyib el-maḥlūqāt*, on the margin of volume II of *ḥayātu l-ḥayāuān el-kubrā*, p. 159.

86 Page 42.

87 According to *ḥarīdatu l-ʿadjāyib*, p. 267, the name of Iblīs (Satan), before he was driven out from paradise, was ʿAzāzil.

88 اجب يا ميمون بحق الملك الغالب عليك يا ره روقيانيل وكسفيانيل.

89 *Al-Mudhib* is according to *muḥīl el-muḥīl* (I, 727), the name of that demon who destroys the ritual washings of the believers.

90 II, 66.

91 The difference in the first three names arose probably from mistakes of the copyist. In the first name a ط was substituted for the د, in the second the د was read as a م, and in the third the received another dot and became a م. Such mistakes are met with repeatedly.

92 *Muḥīl el-muḥīl* explains *gaswarah* as the mighty and lion, and *gaswar* as a young man. The other words are not mentioned in this dictionary.

93 *Ṭaykal* is at the same time the name of one of the angels which carry the throne (see later).

94 *Kitābu maṣāṭiḥi l-kunūz fī ḥallī l-ḥalāsīmi war-rumūz*.

95 Other female demons are: فاطمة السحابة.

ياقوتة بنت الملك الأكبر، كحلة بنت برقان، شمس القراميد بنت الملك الأبيض، رقية بنت الأحمر، يالوشة بنت ممرديال. Their names are well known in books on magic, but they are very seldom met with in talismans. There are other less important *djinniyāt*.

96 *Ar-rahmah fī-ṭibbi ual-ḥikmah*, p. 194. This book will be referred to as Siūtī.

97 Op. cit., p. 193.

98 *Dāʿiratu l-maʿārif*, I, 340.



The already quoted book *ḡawāhiru'l-ḡamsah* assigns to every letter a spirit of the lower world. Their enumeration is not necessary. The student is referred to the *Dictionary of Islam*. It was impossible to detect any rule for the formation of their names<sup>(99)</sup>. A great many names of evil spirits end with *وش*, *وش* or *طيش*. In *el-sināyah*, pp. 2 and 3, we read the following: *والشيطان اسمه* . . . . *مختوم بطيش* تاخذه من اسم الروحاني ولك ان تبدل طيش بهوش او هيش او هاش او هوش . . . . *او طاش او طوش* فهذه كلها اسماء المارد لعنه الله "The name of Satan . . . is taken from the name of the spiritual power with the addition of *طيش* at its end. The following endings may take the place of *طيش*<sup>(100)</sup> as they are all names for the devil, may he be cursed by God: *hūš, hīš, hāš, hūš, īāš, īūš*". *Ṭīš* is the most used and the regular ending<sup>(101)</sup>.

The following names may at times also be met with in talismans. *فقطش* is the physician of the *ḡinn*<sup>(102)</sup>; *Ismā'īl*<sup>(103)</sup> is the secretary and *Abū Dībādī*<sup>(104)</sup> the king of the *quranā*<sup>(105)</sup>.

In reviewing what has been said we see:

1. That with the exception of the names of the seven angels which rule over the days of the week, those of the seven *ḡinn* and a few other names, there is no uniformity in nomination. An angel or demon assigned by one authority for a special sphere of work is assigned by another for a completely different one.

2. Many of the strange names are formed, as in Gnosticism in doublets, i.e. in the same way as Gog and Magog in Biblical literature and *Yadūdī-madūdī* and *Hārūt-Mārūt* in Arabic. As examples the following doublets may be cited:

سلطام . . . . مشطام	شعاب . . . . شعباب
حوسم . . . . دوسم	هلوثا . . . . شيلوثا
ديوم . . . . جيوم	شيعوب . . . . شاغوب
	سيطوس . . . . بسطوش

3. Many of the names discussed above show clearly a foreign influence, generally a Hebrew one.

4. With the exception of a few rules there is no method whatsoever to help in determining the origin or the way of forming the names of the supernatural powers.

99 In one case the same demon, namely *Latyūs*, is assigned once for the letter *ت*, which is said to be ruled by the planet *Zuhā*, and another time for *ف*, ruled by *Muḡhib*.

100 *طيش* is made of the three first letters of *شيطان* read from left to right.

101 *Al-sināyah*, p. 15.

102 *Talmasānī*, p. 78.

103 *Rahawī*, p. 41.

104 *Rahawī*, p. 41.

105 There are several traditions saying that every human being has a *qarīn*. Some are: *فليس من ولد آدم أحد الا وله شيطان قد قرن به*; *وما منكم أحد الا وقد وُكِّلَ به قرينه من الجن*; *Damirī*, II, 242, 246.

#### 4. THE NAMES OF PROPHETS.

The names of prophets and companions of the prophet Mohammed are greatly used in talismans. Beside the already named Shi'it invocation with the names of the eleven *ḡaimmā*, we meet in the first place with the name of the prophet Mohammed alone or combined with *rasūl-allah*. Mohammed is at times abbreviated by the letter *م*<sup>(106)</sup>. There is an oval silver plate in my collection, 6.75 cm long, bearing on one side 41 times the word *محمد* and once *محمود*. At times two words of the name *محمد* are interwoven in an arabesque way, (Fig 3). This kind of writing is widely used in talismans. Thus the words *يا حافظ يا امين* are treated in the same way on an oval silver *māskeh*, (5 cm long)<sup>(107)</sup> (s. fig. 4.)

Often the names of the Mohammedan holy family, i.e. *محمد*, *علي*, *فاطمة*, *حسن*, *حسين* are inscribed on talismans. This combination is found on magic bowls, talismans and decorative pictures hung in houses. The names of the *ṣaḡābeh*, companions, are used in printed talismans (s.l.). All or some of the following are met with *عبد الرحمن*, *طلحة*, *الزبير*, *ابو بكر*, *عمر*, *عثمان*, *علي*, *عاصم*, *ابن الجراح*, *سعد*, *سعيد*.

Many amulets contain the names of *ḡahl Badr*. All Qor'ānic prophets may be called on for help. Some talismans contain few, others many names. The most important prophets are: Adam, Abraham, Isaak, *Ismā'īl*, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, *Yūnis*, David, Solomon, Jesus and Mohammed. Talismans made by the *ṣḡḡs* of the Dome of the Rock are often impressions of seals. These will be described later. Attention may here be called to a few smaller seals containing the names of some prophets. Thus one round seal, 6 cm in diameter, has the



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

106 This abbreviation is unknown to *muḡīl el-muḡīl*.

107 S. Seligmann gives on p. 377 of *Der Islam*, V, a rosette which shows in the centre the word *يا فتاح* treated in the same way. *Maḡmūd abu'l-Mawāhib el-*

*ḡalūti el-Hanafī*, *maḡāṭṭhu'l-kunūzi fī hall it-talāsīmī war-rumūz*, p. 40 gives a seal in which the name of the prophet was written in about the same way. This book will be referred to as *al-Hanafī*. See also H. H. Spoer, *Arabic Magic Medicinal Bowls*, *JAOs*, LV, p. 238; *Canaan*, *Arabic Magic Bowls*, *JPOS*, XVI, p. 101.

inscription<sup>(108)</sup> رسول الملك العزيز العلام ابراهيم خليل الرحمن عليه الصلاة والسلام. Another oval one, 4 x 3.2 cm, bears the writing كرم الله موسى. On a triangular black stone we read on one side يا شافي يا عافي<sup>(109)</sup> يا نبي موسى عليك السلام.

A talisman in my collection, originally from Hebron, shows three pairs of seals of the Mosque of Abraham. The names of the patriarchs buried in the *ghār* (cave) are inscribed between every two transverse and opposite every two vertical seals of the right side. Opposite to each patriarch's name the name of his wife is written. The patient with fever is fumigated each day with one part of this talisman. The sacred paper is cut at the dotted line. This dotted line is not found in the original. A translation of this talisman<sup>(110)</sup> is:

seal	His wife chosen by God	The prophet of God Abraham, may peace be with him.	seal
	His wife Rifqā chosen by God	The prophet of God Isaak, may peace be with him.	
seal	His wife Lāiqā chosen by God	The prophet of God Jacob, may peace be with him.	seal
	His wife Zlīḡah chosen by God	The prophet of God Joseph, may peace be with him.	
seal	The imprint of the foot of the prophet.	The holy cave.	seal

Fig. 5

Before describing another part of our subject some mistakes in the orthography should be mentioned. Such major errors complicate the decipherment. Thus on a six-sided *ḥiārah*<sup>(111)</sup> case we encounter the word *هفيا* which stands for

108 Another *māskeh*, 4 cm in diameter, has the same inscription, omitting only the word *عزير*.

109 Should be *معافي*.

110 *Aberglaube und Volksmedizin*, p. 130.

111 For the explanation and description of *ḥiārah* see *Aberglaube*, p. 115.

توكلت. In a printed talisman *اسماء* was changed into *اسماك*. On a silver *māskeh* *يا شافي* for *يا شافي* is erroneously written *توكلة*. A black stone *hidjāb* gives *جبرائيل* for *جبرائيل*. On a metal talisman *عزرائيل*<sup>(112)</sup> etc.

### 5. MYSTIC WORDS.

Strange non-Arabic expressions or mystic combinations of letters into senseless words are found in most talismans. Many words are corrupted Hebrew or Greek names. The names of *ahlul-kahf* play an important rôle in magic. They are according to Nāzili<sup>(113)</sup>: *Doḡiānōs*, *Jamlīḡā*, *Makslīmā*, *Malšīmā*, *Marnōš*, *Dabernōš*, *Sādñōš*, *Kašsaḡiḡōš* and the dog *Qīmūr*<sup>(114)</sup>. I have seen the names *Makslīmā* and *Malšīmā* changed in some *hudjub* into *Maklīmā* and *Malīnā* (*Mašlīmā*) respectively<sup>(115)</sup>. In a talisman book of my collection with beautiful handwriting which used to be carried by an epileptical Mohammedan woman, the names of *ahlul-kahf* were written with unpunctuated letters. I read, *Maklīmšīnā*, *Jamlīḡā*, *Martōš*, *Sūs*, *Sadnōš*, *Dōnwānōš*, *Falsafōš* and *Qatmūr*<sup>(116)</sup> (or *Qīmūr*). On a gilded oval *māskeh* in my collection, where the writing is beautifully executed, one finds in the centre of a circular writing the names of *ahlul-kahf* executed in beautiful arabesque. This rosette (fig. 6) surrounds the name of God *yā Ḥāfiḡ*, "O Preserver". The same rosette may be found on talismans made by the impressions of seals of the *ṣṡḡs* of the Mosque of the Rock (s. later)<sup>(117)</sup>.



Fig. 6

These names are taken from the Greek. They are: Maximilianus (Maximianus,

112 All talismans with the above faulty orthography are pieces of my collection.

113 *Ḥazīnatu-l-ʿasrār djalīlatu-l-ʿadkār*, pp. 73, 74.

114 Siūṡī, p. 177, gives the following names: *Jamlīḡā*, *Ṣōnis*, *Ṣayūsā*, *Djāmūsā*, *Arbaṡās*, *Akṡīṡīṡīnus*, *Dōnwānus*.

115 Doutré, p. 198, gives a slightly different pronunciation.

116 At times one or two of these names are found among several unexplicable terms; see *an-nūru-l-sāḡī fī ʿasrārī-n-nudjūmi uat-tawālī*, p. 30.

117 S. Seligmann, *Das Siebenschlāfer-Amulett, Der Islam*, V, pp. 377 and 378, gives three such rosettes.



as a lucky seal. *اجهرط* on the other hand is said to be unlucky, and is therefore used to impose upon a person some mischief<sup>(133)</sup>. *Badūh* has to be discussed again later. Suffice it to say at present that *بدوح* plays a part of such great importance in talismans that it is found with the name of God, *الله*, in a seal in every edition of the *sabʿ uḥūd es-suleimānīyeh*<sup>(134)</sup>. The following seal of *اجهرط*, where every letter with its corresponding numerical value is placed in a square, is used to make a person sick<sup>(135)</sup> (fig. 7). It is clearly seen that the number 4 for the letter *ه* takes wrongly the place of 5.

ط	٩	ز	٧	ه	٤	ج	٣	ا	١
و	٥	ط	٩	ز	٧	ه	٤	ج	٣
ز	٧	ه	٤	ج	٣	ا	١	ط	٩
ه	٤	ج	٣	ا	١	ط	٩	ز	٧
ج	٣	ا	١	ط	٩	ز	٧	ه	٤
ا	١	ط	٩	ز	٧	ه	٤	ج	٣

Fig. 7

The letters are divided into four parts. Seven letters are assigned to each element. This is done in assigning the first letter of the *abjadīyeh*, i.e. the *ا* for fire, the second (*ب*) for earth, the third (*ج*) for air, the fourth (*د*) for water, the fifth (*ه*) for fire, the sixth (*و*) for earth, etc. In this way the letters of *اهط فشد* are assigned for fire, *بوين صتض* for earth, *جرك سقنظ* for air, and *دحلع رخغ* for water. These expressions are more often met with in magic books than in *hidjābāt*. In some talismans the two words of each element are connected to one word, thus *اهط فشد* for *اهط فشد*. These words are mixed with other inexplicable words or with the name of the patient.

*فقيج نمجت*<sup>(136)</sup> are the seven letters called "the letters of *bahteh*"<sup>(137)</sup>. Should these words be written on an envelope or a petition the enclosed wish will be fulfilled. These seven letters are often arranged in a 7 x 7 squares seal and are believed to be lucky. Others write *بدوح* under the address on the envelope, either alone or combined with the numerical value of the letters placed one beside the other—2468 or 8642—to insure safe arrival of the letter. At times the numbers are found alone. We meet with them also in talismans.

*جش ثاخر* are the seven letters known as *sawāqīḥu-l-fātiḥah*. More will be said about them later.

Letters standing for numbers and their decimal factors have been put together into words which are used in talismans and in magic books. These are: ٩٩٩ طصظ, ٨٨٨ حفص, ٧٧٧ زعذ, ٦٦٦ وسخ, ٥٥٥ هنت, ٤٤٤ دمت, ٣٣٣ جلش, ٢٢٢ بكر, ١١١١ ايقع.

133 Rahawī, 37.

134 This seal has been described in *JPOS*, XVI, 93.

135 Talmasānī, 76.

136 Rahawī, p. 43, gives *فقيج*, which is a mistake.137 *Dāʾiratu-l-maʾārif*, VII, 6 ff.

The words *rak* (رك) and *rafad* (رقد) are said to be "the loving letters"<sup>(138)</sup>. The numerical value of *رك* is 220 and that of *رقد* 284. Both numbers are divisible by several factors. The sum of the results of such a division of *رك* gives 284 which is the numerical value of *رقد*, and the sum of the results of *رقد* is 220, which is the numerical value of *رك*. This gave them the appellation "loving letters". The following shows this procedure:

220 divided by	2	=	110	284 divided by	2	=	142
"	"	4	=	55	"	"	71
"	"	5	=	44	"	"	71
"	"	10	=	22	"	"	142
"	"	11	=	20	"	"	284
"	"	20	=	11			220
"	"	22	=	10			
"	"	44	=	5			
"	"	55	=	4			
"	"	110	=	2			
"	"	220	=	1			
				284			

The two words are used to induce love. The procedure is as follows. The person A seeking the love of B writes these two words on two cakes. He, i.e. A, eats the cake with *رقد*, as it has the higher numerical value, and gives B the cake with *رك*. In a short time B will come running to A driven by the flame of love.

Attention may still be called to the 24 *al-asmāʾu-l-barḥatiyeh* (الاسماء البرهتية) which play some rôle in magic and in talismans. They are said to be names of God in the Syriac language. Thanks to the help of a Syrian Catholic priest the following words of these names could be brought back to their Syriac origin:

The name in Arabic as given in the books.	Transcription as pronounced in Syriac	Explanation of Syriac word	Explanation given in Arabic books
تَقْلِيَّة	<i>taklieh</i>	the Heaved	مجيد Glorious
طَوْرَانِي	<i>ṭawrānī</i> <sup>(139)</sup>	the Exalted	حي Living
بَزْدَجَل	<i>bazdjal</i>	the Affectionate	ودود Affectionate
تَرْقِب	<i>trāqeb</i>	the Watcher	سلام Peaceful

138 *Dāʾiratu-l-maʾārif*, VII, 6 ff.139 In some manuscripts we find it given as *تقلىة* as *طوران*.

The name in Arabic as given in the books.	Transcription as pronounced in Syriac	Explanation of Syriac word	Explanation given in Arabic books
عَلَمَش (140)	almaš	the Glorious	مجيد Glorious
قَلَنَهَوْد	qalanhad	the Hearer	سميع Hearer
بَرَشَان	baršan	the son of the Surrounding	محيط Surrounding
نَمُوشَلَخ	namuṣlah	the Mighty, the Honoured	عزیز قوي Mighty, Honoured
بَرَهِيُولَا	barhiōla	the son of the lower world	سبحان الله May God be praised
قُفْرَات	qufrāt	the Wise	حليم Wise
غَيَاها	gayāhā	the Bright	كريم Generous
شَمَخَاهِر	shem'aphūr	the glorious name	علي Glorious (141)

Every one of these words has been assigned to a letter of the alphabet.

The texts of many talismans finish with the words *الوفا، العجل، الساعة*. Sometimes they are combined with *الحريق* or *القوة*. In a written *hidjāb* in my collection the word *الاجابة*, 'the answer', is added to *العجل*. As a rule every word is repeated two or three times. *الوفا* is at times wrongly written *الوجا*. This orthography, *الوفا*, is unknown to the Arabic dictionaries. *وحي، توحية، وحي* mean "to send a messenger, to hasten, to urge. . . . ., to rouse". Each of the above mentioned expressions repeats one and the same idea, of "quick, make haste", thus increasing its effectiveness (142). The supernatural powers are ordered to obey and fulfill the orders as quickly as possible.

"The Crowning Words" of the *Qor'ān* are widely used in talismans. It is believed that they represent the heavenly language used by the Almighty from whom they derive their supernatural power. Others believe that they are names of the Almighty himself. This explains why they are used at times in the following way: *بحق الحمص، بحق حمص، بحق كعبص*, etc. They are thus primarily of religious importance, which importance was the reason for their extensive

140 It is also found written backwards, as *شَلَخ*.

141 Other words with their Arabic translation in parenthesis as found in Arabic books are: *كربر* (the God of every thing), *مزلجل* (Selfexisting), *برهش* (O God, answer your servant), *خوطل* (Strong), *كظير* (Glory be to Him), *بشكيلخ* (Believer),

142 *JPOS*, XVI, 89.

*انلابل* (Great One, Compassionate), *شماهير* (Lofty), *شماهير* (Powerful), *كيدولا* (Everlasting), *بكطونية، بكطونية* (Powerful), *بشارش* and *طرش، طوش، طونش* (Powerful), *طوياش* (Thankful), *شمتا باروخ* (Mighty), *طوياش* (the Holy).

use in magic. They are (143): *الر، المر، المص، حمص، كعبص، ص، ن، ق، طس، حم، طه*, *Sūrahs* beginning with one of these words, are called "Mother *Sūrahs*" (الامهات), i.e. the main *Sūrahs*, to distinguish them from the remaining chapters, the *tatmīmāt* (144). The 14 letters from which these crowning words are composed are known as the "letters of light" (الحروف النورانية، حروف النور), while the remaining 14 letters of the alphabet compose the "letters of darkness" (الحروف الظلمانية، حروف الظلمة). In many talismans and in some magic books the crowning words are personified. As a rule the words are pronounced and written by their disconnected letters, as is the rule when reciting the *Qor'ān*. *حمص* and *كعبص* are used more often than the others. I have seen *حم* written as it is spoken, namely *الحاوميم*, i.e. the *طاوسين*. The *ط* and *س* are written in the same way, as *الطاوسين*. The expression *الحاوميم* is also given to all *sūrahs* which begin with *حم*. In analyzing some of these curious words we find that the *ن*, pronounced *nūn*, is the only letter which has a meaning connected with the contents of the *sūrah* which it crowns. *نون* means a fish and *sūrah* 68, which the *ن* heads, speaks of Jonas who is called *صاحب الحوت* and *ذو النون* (145). *طه* pronounced *tā hā* is a male name (*Tāhā*); so is also *يس* which is pronounced *yā sīn* (*Yāsīn*). In talismans these words are placed as a rule at the end of the invocation, at times between the sentences. Many seals containing letters of these words are known. In one case every letter of *كعبص* was represented by a name of God, which name began with one letter of this word: *يا صادق* by *ص*; *يا عليم* by *ع*; *يا باري* by *ي*; *يا هادي* by *ه*; *يا كافي* by *ك*.

In summing up the results of this analysis we find that the "magic" words are either derived from a foreign language, or represent a combination of letters according to mystic principles or they are undecipherable expressions (146). No doubt a great many of such expressions have their origin in a foreign language, but they have been so badly distorted that their origin can in most cases no longer be determined. This is especially true of words of Greek origin. The aim of the sorcerer is to impress his clients with unknown words of a curious, strange and unknown pronunciation. But there is doubtless a deeper reason for the use of

143 The *الر* is found in *sūrahs* 10, 11, 14, 15; *الر* in 13; *المص* in 2, 3, 29, 30, 31, 32; *حم* in 7; *طس* 38; *حمص* 42; *كعبص* 40, 41, 43, 44, 45, 46; *طه* 26, 28; *يس* 68; *ن* 19; *كعبص* 50; 36.

144 *Dā'iratu'l-ma'ārif*, VII, 8.

145 Th. Nöldeke-Schwally, *Geschichte des Qor'āns*, II, 68 ff.

146 Winkler, *l. c.*, pp. 27, 29.

strange words. It is the belief that Hebrew, Syriac and Greek words are more efficacious than their equivalent in Arabic.

Whenever a talisman is written for a specific person it contains the name of the person combined with that of his mother, and never with the name of his father. The reasons for this old custom have been given elsewhere (147).

Certain irregularities have to be noted. They make decipherment still more difficult. Orthographic mistakes have been mentioned. Often, especially in talismans engraved on metal, a verse may end abruptly for lack of room. I have several examples showing this irregularity (148). In a *hidjāb* with three *hiārāt* the text of the first was continued on the second, and that of the second on the third.

### III. LETTERS AND NUMBERS.

Letters and numbers play a very important rôle in talismans. They are either written in continuous lines or in cartouches. The latter may represent seals or decorative designs of various characters. Both will be described later. The words in a talisman are often written in disconnected letters. It is believed that the force of such a talisman is increased as it adds to the power of the talisman itself also the intrinsic power of the letter which is written in its full extent. As an example a part of a talisman of my collection may be quoted. After the word *حي*, repeated 9 times and the numerical value of *بدوح* are given, we see: *رب. يا. رب.* The dots have been placed by the present writer to make the reading of the text easier for the student. According to some books (150) the words *تعالى* and *عبدك* must never be treated in this way. I have seen the first word written in disconnected letters. At times the letters of one and the same word are arranged in different ways. Thus *الرحيم* is written as *ميرح الر* and as *ميرح الر*. Some times a word is written backwards. Thus I have met with *طزرجا* for *اجزط* and *شلملغ* for *لغلمش*, one of the names of *el-barhatiyeh* (see above).

Writing the words without dots is regarded to be still more powerful, as this way of writing is the older one. The following, a part of a *hidjāb* (in my collection) written on cheap paper in a curious script and having many mistakes,

147 *Aberglaube*, pp. 105 ff.

148 *JPOS*, XVI, pp. 82, 83.

149 The letters in parentheses are correction of the mistakes.

150 *Al-ḡināyah fī muṣāḥadati-l-arwāḥi-r-ruḥā-niyah*, p. 7.

may serve as an example: *بسم الله (الله) الرحمن الرحيم اللهم (الله) اصرف (الرحمى) ولوجع (والوجع) (150a).* It reads *بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم اللهم اصرف عن حامل كتابي هذا الحى والوجع*.

At times the letters are so distorted that it is difficult to read them. Fig. 8 gives a part of a *hidjāb* in my possession which was difficult to decipher. It reads as follows. A star has been placed at the beginning of every line.

طيش طيش طاش \* لطوش لطوش طشني  
طشني اجب ايها الملك \* زوبعة خادم يوم الجمعة واخرس  
قبائك \* وقبائل الجن عن حامل حجابي هذا جليل  
(خليل or) بن زينب \* لا يقربوه ولا يؤذوه \* ولا  
يضره ولا في الليل \* ولا في النهار ولا في اكل \* ولا في  
شرب ولا في قيامه ولا في قعوده بجمعة هذه الاسماء  
عليك وبحق ايها شراها ادونا \* اى اصوات الشداي

"Tatīš . . . (names of supernatural powers). Answer O king Zōbā'ah, the servant of Wednesday and make your tribes and the tribes of the *djīm* dumb, (keep them away) from the bearer of this my talisman Djalīl (or Ḥalīl) the son of Zēnab. They should not come near him, nor injure him, nor hurt him, neither in the night nor in the day, neither while eating nor while drinking, neither in his getting up, nor in his sitting down. (I adjure you) by the sacredness of the words, which (words) should be upon you, and by the truth of Abiā Sharāhiā Adonāi 'Aṣḥā'ōt 'al Shadāi".

When a word has to be written in a square seal, it is generally divided into its letters and these are arranged in the square. A silver amulet worn on the arm illustrates this method. The letters of *لطيف* have been placed into a *ḥātim*, (Fig. 9). In one case the word *الله* was written in the manner seen in Fig. 10.

At times one letter of one of the names of God is followed by a letter of the name of the patient. Not knowing this custom one may not be able to read such a combination of letters. For example, if *علي* (151) the name of the patient

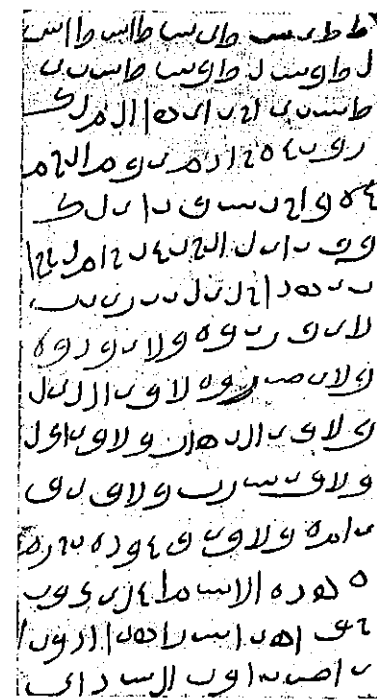


Fig. 8

150a The words in parentheses are correction of the mistakes.

151 For corresponding Hebrew talismans see Budge, 220, 221.

is combined with the name of God شافي we have the following letters <sup>(152)</sup>:  
 شع ال في ي.

ل	ط	ي	ف
ف	ي	ط	ل
ط	ل	ف	ي
ي	ف	ل	ط

Fig. 9

In case a person is sick with a *nazleh* <sup>(153)</sup> he is treated by a *hidjāb* in which the letters of his name are written in the above described way with those letters of the alphabet which are assigned to the element of fire <sup>(154)</sup>. The example given by Douitté <sup>(155)</sup> seems at first sight to be an exception to this rule <sup>(156)</sup>. But if we remember that the article ال is counted as one letter we see that there is no irregularity. The words المقتدر and الرقيب are written as الالرمق ق ق ي ت بدر.

"The science of letters is one of the secret sciences known only to the authorities in divine learning" <sup>(157)</sup>. At present only the most important groups will be discussed <sup>(158)</sup>. The letters of the alphabet are divided, as was already mentioned, into letters of light and letters of darkness. The letters of light are used to produce unity, love and cooperation, while those of darkness produce hatred, misunderstanding and war. This is clearly expressed in the following verse <sup>(159)</sup>:

الله  
 لله  
 له  
 ا

Fig. 10

7. gives the following verse which expresses the same idea:

العلم بالحروف علم الله بذكره  
 من كان بالكشف والتحقيق متصفا  
 In future references this book will be quoted as *Awghanistānī*.

159 Nāzilī, pp. 117, 118. He gives another verse:

حروف النور للتأليف منها  
 بها كل القلوب اليك تجذب  
 والتفريق تكتب ما سواها  
 فهذا كله صدق مجرب

حروف النور للتأليف منها  
 كذا فباقي الحروف فظلمات  
 الى ما شئت من داعي الوصال  
 تؤثر في القطيعة والوبال

The letters of darkness <sup>(160)</sup> are divided into seven letters of the lower world (*suftiyeh*) and seven of the upper one (*alawiyeh*). The *suftiyeh* letters are ف ج ز ث ش خ ظ and the *alawiyeh* letters are ب ت د ذ ض غ و. The seven first are known as *sawāqītu l-fātiḥah*, as they do not come in the leading chapter of the Qor'ān (*al-fātiḥah*). Every letter stands for a name of the Almighty. The ف stands for فرد; ج — جبار; ش — شكور; ز — زكي; ث — ثابت; خ — خير; ظ — ظهير. These letters with their corresponding names of God are assigned to the different days of the week and to the seven planets.

Beside these seven letters every other letter of the alphabet is said to stand for a name of God. The substitution of the names of God by such letters does not occur often. The following are more frequently met with than others: <sup>(161)</sup>

حافظ and حي	ح	الله and ا	ا and اه
سلام	س	رحمن	ر
علم and عليم	ع	صادق	ص
كافي	ك	قوي and قيوم	ق
ملك	م	لطيف	ل
دوام	د	هادي <sup>(162)</sup>	ه
		بسم	بسم

In a talisman made of the prayer of *Abd-el-Qāder edj-Djilānī* we read "By the truth of the 'm' of *malik* (king) and the 'd' of *dawām* (Everlasting)". The letters ق and م are said to belong to the "great name of God". Therefore the name of God قيوم is said to be most powerful <sup>(163)</sup>. One often reads in talismans بيق كاف من كافي وصاد من صادق. Nevertheless it is not always possible to find out the cause for using some letters. In a talisman of my collection written for *Zakiyeh bint 'Ammūneh* to cure the headache from which she was

160 The letters of light are united in the words: طرق سمك الصيحة; those of darkness in the words: غض شبح ثب خذ وزد فظ.

letters given by this author are scarcely met with in talismans. Consult also *an-nūru s-sāfi*, p. 43.

161 Būnī and other authors expound on the special virtues of the letters. See also Flügel, *ZDMG*, VII, 89. The other

162 In many old manuscripts we meet with this abbreviation. I GOLDZIEHER, *Bismillah Encycl. of Religion and Ethics*, III, 666, 667.

163 *Ināyah*, p. 4.

152 Būnī, I, 40, gives other examples.

153 *Aberglaube*, pp. 34 ff.

154 Dērabī, p. 9.

155 Page 174.

156 See also *kitābu l-faiḍi l-mutawālī fī sarḥi mutallaṭi l-Ghazālī*, p. 16.

157 علم الحروف من العلم المخزون لا يعرفه الا العلماء الربانيون.

158 Yūsif el-Awghanistānī, *adj-djawharu l-ghālī fī ḥawāṣi l-mutallaṭi l-Ghazālī*, p.



suffering, we find the seal illustrated in Fig. 11. It is to be noted that the numbers of the letters in each square correspond to the number of the seal of *badūh* (164).

$\begin{matrix} \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \\ \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \\ \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \\ \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \uparrow\uparrow \\ \uparrow\uparrow \end{matrix}$
$\begin{matrix} \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \\ \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \\ \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \\ \uparrow \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \\ \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \\ \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \end{matrix}$
$\begin{matrix} \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \\ \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \\ \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \uparrow \\ \uparrow \end{matrix}$	$\begin{matrix} \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \\ \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \\ \uparrow\uparrow\uparrow \end{matrix}$

Fig. 11

explains their action. The letters of fire cure diseases caused by cold, like *nazlāt* (pl. of *nazleh*). They are also used to increase the fiery nature of love or of a planet. During war a magician is supposed to be able to increase the heat of Jupiter (the planet of war, whose element is fire) by making use of the fiery letters<sup>(166)</sup>. It is further taught that every letter has its own angel, *djinn*, invocation, talisman and incense.

Letters with an outer resemblance are called **حروف متاخية**, "brotherly letters". These are **ع.ظ.ع.خ.د.ز.س.ش.ص.ض**. Anybody who carries these letters, written with saffron, rosewater and milk of a primipara becomes attractive and beloved.

Letters are also divided into *صامطة*, "quiet", i.e. all letters which have no dots, and *ناطقة*, "speaking", those having one, two or three dots. The first are used to get rid of pain and trouble (166).

The names of letters written with three alphabetical letters, i.e. when written as they are spelled are believed to be more active than the others. These are: (الف) ا, (جيم) ج, (ذال) ذ, (دال) د, (زين) ز, (سين) س, (شين) ش, (صاد) ص, (ضاد) ض, (عين) ع, (كاف) ك, (قاف) ق, (غين) غ, (واو) و, (نون) ن, (ميم) م, (لام) ل. Of these the ن, م and و are the most important, as the first and third letters of the spelt name are the same. Būnī tells us that they are written on the Tablet. This belief may explain why they are so extensively used. ف and م are more important than the ن.

The second, fourth, sixth and eighth letters of the alphabet

The second, fourth, sixth and eighth letters of the *abdjadiyeh* are known,

164 Būnī teaches that the letter ب is used  
in war and revenge.

165 James Robson, *The Moslem World*, XXIV, 33.  
166 Ibid., p. 33.

166 *Dā'iratu'l-ma'ārif*, VII, 6 ff.

as was already mentioned, as **بدوح**. They make a lucky seal and play an important rôle in talismans. They are usually arranged in a *wisq* either alone or with the first, third, fifth, seventh and ninth letters. The seal with the letters of **بدوح**

ح	و	د	ب
د	ب	ح	و
ب	د	و	ح
و	ح	ب	د

Fig. 12

Λ	Γ	Σ	Υ
Υ	Σ	Γ	Λ
Γ	Λ	Υ	Σ
Σ	Υ	Λ	Γ

Fig. 13

د	ط	ب
ج	ع	ز
ح	ا	و

Fig. 14

alone is said to belong to the letter ب<sup>(167)</sup>. It is seen in fig. 12<sup>(168)</sup>. On the upper side of an octahedral silver *hidjāb* case<sup>(169)</sup> we find the numerical seal of بدوح as shown in fig. 13. The seal of the first nine letters of the *abdjadiyeh*<sup>(170)</sup>,

ε	ι	υ
γ	ο	φ
λ	ι	τ

Fig. 15










		
		
		

Fig. 16

ب ۲	ط ۹	د ۴
ز ۷	ح ۵	ج ۳
و ۶	ا ۱	ح ۸

Fig. 17

i. e. the seal of **اجهزط** and **بدوح**, is shown in fig. 14. The numerical values of these letters arranged in a 3 x 3 squares seal is given in fig. 15. The letters

167 Būnī I, 5.

the numbers of the horizontal, vertical  
and diagonal.

168 It is to be noted that the arrangement of the numbers representing the numerical values of the letters of *badūh* in seal fig. 15 do not correspond with the arrangement of the letters in seal fig. 17. There are several ways in which the numbers can be arranged and still have equal results when adding

169 This silver case is in my collection.

170 H. H. Spoer, *Arabic Magic Medicinal Bowls*, *JAOS*, LV, pp. 237 ff. has also described this seal. It is to be noted that the numbers of the seal fig. 13 are not placed in the same squares as the respective letters for which they stand, as seen in fig. 12.

of  $\text{بدوح}$  (171) and their respective numerical values are placed in the four corners of the  $\text{hātīm}$ . In one case I found the small squares of this  $3 \times 3$  seal to contain dots, the number of which corresponded to the numbers of the  $\text{بدوح}$  seal (fig. 16). The sum of every horizontal, vertical and diagonal line is 15. This seal which is also known as  $\text{mulallaṭu l-Ghazālī}$  is met with in every poison cup (172) and in many talismans. But it is older than el-Ghazālī who lived in the 11th century. Probably Djāber bin Haiyān of the 8th century was the first to make use of it (173). It is said that Aṣāf bin Barahīā found it on the ring seal of Adam. As the numerical value of the word  $\text{ادم}$  is 45 (174), i.e. the same as the sum of all numbers of the seal, it is believed that this  $\text{hātīm}$  was Adam's own seal.

The word  $\text{بدوح}$  may be divided into two words, each of two letters. This is attained by uniting the last and the first letters into  $\text{حب}$  (love), and the third and second into  $\text{ود}$  (inclination, affection) (175). Each word has the numerical value of 10. They are used to produce love.

The nine first letters of the  $\text{abjadiyeh}$  may also be arranged in the three words  $\text{واج}$ ,  $\text{زهج}$  and  $\text{بطد}$ , each word having the numerical value 15. Er-Rahawī (176) gives a  $\text{hātīm}$  combining the letters with their corresponding numerical values (fig. 17). There are eight different ways in which the numbers 1-9 can be arranged in a  $3 \times 3$  squares seal, giving always the sum 15 in every horizontal, vertical and diagonal line (177). In some cases the number 45 is set after the word  $\text{بدوح}$ , which means that this word has to be repeated 45 times.

Many  $\text{hawātīm}$  are built on the  $\text{بدوح}$  seal. This is accomplished by adding the numbers 1-9, i.e. the numbers of this  $\text{wifq}$ , to any other number. The addition of the horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines of any seal, produced in this way, gives the same result. As an example the following  $\text{wifq}$  may be given which is made by adding the number 66 to each of the numbers 1-9. 66 represents the numerical value of the letters of the word  $\text{الله}$ . Thus we have the combination of these two important words in their numerical values (fig. 18). The sum of each horizontal, vertical and oblique lines of this seal is 213.

The sum of each line of another seal gave 1467 which sum is the numerical value of the verse  $\text{ان كل نفس لما عليها حافظ}$ . In order to attain this sum

171 Some say that  $\text{بدوح}$  is the name of a  $\text{djinn}$ , whose services can be secured by writing his name in the form of a seal; see D.B. Macdonald, *Encycl. of Islam*, I, 770, 771.

172 JPOS, XVI, p. 91.

173 W. Ahrens, *Studien über die magischen Quadrate der Araber*, *Der Islam*, VII, 186 ff.

174 *Dā'iratu l-ma'ārif*, VII, 6 ff.

175 Awghanistānī, p. 44.

176 Page 53.

177 W. Ahrens, *l. c.*, *Der Islam*, VII, 190.

the number 484 was added to the numbers of  $\text{بدوح}$ . In this way the required seal (fig. 19) arose (178).

The  $\text{بدوح}$  seal is said to belong to 'Uzrā'il (179), that of *Isrāfā'il* is the  $4 \times 4$  squares seal, of *Djubrā'il* the  $7 \times 7$  and of *Mikā'il* the  $8 \times 8$  squares seal. At

٧٠	٧٥	٦٨
٦٩	٧١	٧٣
٧٤	٦٧	٧٢

Fig. 18

٤٨٨	٤٩٣	٤٨٦
٤٨٧	٤٨٩	٤٩١
٤٩٢	٤٨٥	٤٩٠

Fig. 19

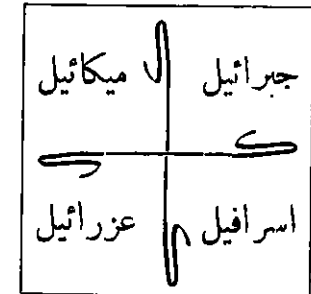


Fig. 20

the same time this seal is assigned to *zuḥal*, and Awghanistānī (180) tries to find the proof in the fact that the numerical value of  $\text{زحل}$  is 45, which corresponds to the numerical value of the nine letters of the seal. A detailed description of this seal has been given by the present writer in the JPOS, XVI. The description above leads us to the study of seals in general. This will be done in a more thorough way later. "The false art of talismans may be said to pay homage to real science, the construction of magic squares being a nice and intricate question of arithmetic" (181).

It is believed that letters will exert a greater power if they are written in special ways. Thus Būnī (182) has a special chapter teaching how to attain this goal. In talismans we meet with arrangements of letters as seen in fig. 20 and 21. In some cases the letters are written upside down,  $\text{ج ٢ ج}$ . This method was never used in fear cups. Some forms of the letters are preferred to others in writing talismans. Thus the  $\text{ك}$  is written as a rule as  $\text{ك}$ , the  $\text{خ}$  as  $\text{خ}$  and the  $\text{ع}$  as  $\text{ع}$ . This method is often met with when the text is written with disconnected letters.

The description of the seal of  $\text{بدوح}$  leads us to the discussion of the numerical values of the letters, which values are given in the following list:

ا	ب	ج	د	هـ	و	ز	ح	ط	ي	ك	ل	م	ن	س	ع	ف	ص	ق	ر
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	200
ش	ت	ث	خ	ذ	ض	ظ	غ												

178 *Al-huḥū' ual-murdjān fī tashīri mulūki l-djān*, no author name is given, p. 21.

179 Būnī, I, 33.

180 Page 10.

181 *Encycl. of Rel. and Ethics*, vide, Charms.

182 III, 36.

This characteristic of letters is still used in poetry for dating an event<sup>(183)</sup>. It is believed that a talisman, where numbers are substituted for letters, is more active than one with letters alone. Every magic book and nearly every talisman shows examples of this category. As a rule the numbers are placed in square seals. The following, copied from a talisman in my collection, is an example (fig. 22). The sum of every horizontal, vertical and diagonal line is 998, which is the numerical value of the letters of the name of God  $\text{حفيظ}$  ( $\text{ح}=8+\text{ف}=80+\text{ي}=10+\text{ظ}=900$ ).

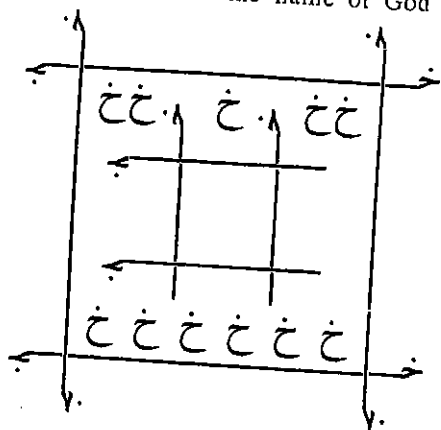


Fig. 21

٩٠٠	١٠	٨٠	٨
٨	٨٠	١٠	٩٠٠
١٠	٩٠٠	٨	٨٠
٨٠	٨	٩٠٠	١٠

Fig. 22

٣٧	٤٢	٣٥
ول	لح	م
٤١	٣٤	٣٩

Fig. 23

In many seals the addition of the numbers of the horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines do not give equal results. This is due to errors in copying. Such mistakes are innumerable, and Ahrens has already called attention to the same<sup>(184)</sup>. In some seals one number may stand for two. The first line of a *hātīm* in Talmasānī<sup>(185)</sup> gives the following numbers: 15, 90, 70 and 40. 40 stands for م, 70 for ع and 90 for ص. There is no letter with a numerical value of 15. This number is made of 10 which stands for ي and 5 = 8. The seal stands thus for the word *معصية* (sin).

In some talismans a word may be written partly by numbers and partly by letters, as in the case of *اللؤلؤ*. The 8 stands for ح, thus the seal means *اللوح* (tablet). In other amulets letters may take the place of numbers. Such letters stand for their numerical values, as the following seal<sup>(186)</sup> (fig. 23) shows. The letters ل ح stand for  $(30 + 8 =) 38$ , ول  $(30 + 6 =) 36$  and the م for 40. This

183 The sum of the numerical values of the letters following a derivative of *الخ* must give the required year.

184 *Studien über die magischen Quadrate der Araber*, *Der Islam*, VII, 186 ff; *Die*

*magischen Quadrate el-Būnī's*, *Der Islam*, XII, 157 ff.

185 Page 99.

186 Talmasānī, 89.

seal is made by adding 33 to the numbers 1-9, i.e., the numbers of *mutallāḥ* (بدوح). The sum of every horizontal, vertical and diagonal line is 114, which number stands for جامع.

When numbers stand after a word, they indicate as a rule that that word is to be repeated as often as the number indicates. As an illustration the following is given which is met with in every book on magic and in many talismans: *الوحا ٣ الساعة ٣ العجل ٣*. In many cases such a number is at the same time the numerical value of the word or verse to be repeated. Thus in one *hidjāb* the number 111 follows the name of God *الكافي*. This number is the numerical value of the word *الكافي*. It indicates at the same time that this name of God has to be repeated 111 times. At other times a whole sentence is followed by a number, as in the case of *سلام قولا من رب رحيم ٨١٨*. Here the number 818 stands for the numerical value of the sentence and indicates at the same time the number of times the sentence has to be repeated. At times one and the same word is connected at different places with various numbers. Such is the case in one amulet with the word *لطيف*, which is followed in some places by the number 129 and in others by 16641<sup>(187)</sup>. The first number stands for the numerical value of the word *لطيف* while 16641 is the square of 129.

Attention should be called to the fact that the Orientals prefer to use one of the holy numbers 3, 5, 7 or one of their powers. This rule is also followed in talismans whenever a word, a verse, a prayer, etc., is to be repeated. The influence of numbers on magic and superstition has been described by several authors.

The numbers are divided according to their numerical values into an odd and an even series. Letters represented by 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and by these numbers multiplied by 10 and 100 belong to the odd series and are called *عالم القبض*, "the world of constriction". They are used to produce some injury. These numbers are 111 (which represents the numerical value of the letters *ايغ*), 333 (*جلش*), 555 (*هنت*), 777 (*زغد*) and 999 (*طصظ*). The numbers of the even series, *عالم البسط*, "the world of expansion" bring luck. They are 222 (*بكر*), 444 (*دمت*), 666 (*وسخ*), 888 (*حفص*). The letters of any of these words are called *mutasābihāt* and are used to intensify the power of the others. Thus the letter ر (with the numerical value 200) intensifies the action of ك (20) and ب (2), while ك can intensify the action of ب only.

Some *hāwātīm* contain in the first line the letters of a word, while all other lines are filled with numbers, which as a rule represent the numerical value of the letters of the first line. The seal illustrated in (fig. 24) may serve as an example.

187 In the original it was written several times 166141 and as often 16641. The

last number being the correct one.

Some books on magic follow a completely different way in transcribing letters to numbers. The method seems to be simpler than the older one described above, but is in reality more difficult to decipher. All letters of the alphabet are replaced by the numbers 1-9 in the following way:

1	stands for	ا, ي, ق, غ
2	"	ب, ك, ر
3	"	ج, ل, ش
4	"	د, م, ت
5	"	ه, ن, ث
6	"	و, س, خ
7	"	ز, ع, ذ
8	"	ح, ف, ض
9	"	ط, ص, ظ

Thus *Bismillah* *بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم* is represented by

٤ ١ ٨ ٢ ٣ ١ ٥ ٤ ٨ ٢ ٣ ١ ٥ ٣ ٣ ١ ٤ ٦ ٢  
 ب س م ا ل ل ه ا ل ر ح م ن ا ل ر ح ي م

This method is rarely met with, nevertheless it should be tried in every set of letters<sup>(188)</sup>.

Beside the simple numerical value of the letters each letter enjoys a "higher numerical value" which is obtained by the method of *تكسير الحروف*. By this rule the letter is first written down as it is spelled, and the numerical values of the letters are added. Thus the 'high numerical value' of *ا* is obtained by writing it as it is pronounced, *الف*. The numerical values of these three letters added together is 111. This method is also called *حساب الجمل الكبير*<sup>(189)</sup>. The 'high numerical value' of the letters of the alphabet is given herewith<sup>(190)</sup>:

ا ب ج د ه و ز ح ١ ١١١ ٣ ٦٧ ١٣ ٦ ٣٥ ٥٣ ٣  
 ي ك ل م ن س ع ف ص ق ر ش ث خ ذ ض ظ  
 ٩٠١ ٨٠٥ ٧٣١ ٦٠١ ٥٠١ ٤٠١ ٣٦٠ ٢٠١ ١٨١ ٩٥ ٨١ ١٣٠ ١٢٠ ١٠٦ ٩٠ ٧١ ١٠١ ١١ ١٠  
 غ. According to this method it was possible to decipher some lines of numbers  
 ١٠٦٠

188 M. Casanova, *Alphabets Magiques Arabes*, *Journal Asiatique*, XVIII, 1921, 37-55.

189 'Alī ibn Sīnā, *Šifā' al-ʿasqām fi ʿulūmi-l-ḥurūfi ual-ʿarqām*, p. 18.

190 Muḥammad bin Aḥmad bin Abi-l-Qāsim, *al-djawāhiru-l-lammāʾah fi taṣṣiri mulūki l-djinni fil-uagti uas-sāʾah*, p. 9.

which seemed in the first moment to be meaningless. The following is an example: 1111353116401131111237153401106111. These numbers represent:

١١١ ١٣ ٥٣ ١١ ٦ ٤٠ ١ ١٣ ١١١ ١٣ ٣ ٧١ ٥٣ ٤٠ ١ ١٠ ٦ ١١١ = ان تجلبوا وتيجروا  
 ا ن ت ج ل ب و ا و ت ه ي ج و ا  
 "to bring and to excite (to love)". At another place the following numbers were found: 81111071—. They represent 71 = ل; 10 = ط; 11 = ي; 81 = ف = لطيف.

ق	ل	ا	ح
١٠٠	٣٠	١	٦٠٠
٦٠٠	١٠٠	٣٠	١
١	٦٠٠	١٠٠	٣٠

Fig. 24

٣٦	٤١	٣٤
٣٥	٣٧	٣٩
٤٠	٣٣	٣٨

Fig. 25

ل	ع	ا	ج
٣	٤	٩٢	٨١
٥	٣	٦٨	٣٨
٦٩	٢٣	٦	٢

Fig. 26

Some *ḥawātim*, which seem to contain senseless numbers, are read in this way. The 3 x 3 seal<sup>(191)</sup> illustrated above is an example (fig. 25). The sum of every horizontal, vertical and diagonal line is 111, which number stands for the letter *ا*. The groups of numbers standing in each separate small square (33-41) have by themselves no meaning. This seal is formed by adding the number 32 to the numbers 1-9, the numerical values of *بدوح*. This *ḥātim*, with the sum of 111, stands also for the name of God *كافي*, the numerical value of which is also 111. The mystic science has thus appointed the name of God *لطيف* for the letter *ا*. At times the high numerical value of a letter is written directly after the same, as *ج ٥٣*.

Every letter is treated at times according to *et-tafṣīl*, *et-taksīr* and *el-baṣṭ*. *Tafṣīl* means writing the letter down as it is spelled, i.e. *ا* as *الف*. *Taksīr* is the spelling of each one of these three letters: *الف*, *لام*, *ف*. The *baṣṭ* is writing in letters the numerical value of each letter of *et-taksīr*<sup>(192)</sup>. At times the numerical values of the letters of a word treated according to *et-taksīr* are squared. The result is supposed to be highly active. Treating the word *الله* according to *et-taksīr* results in *الف*, *لام*, *لام*, *ه*. The numerical value of these letters is 259. Multiplying this number by itself gives 67081, which number is occasionally met with.

The most important data for reading numbers and letters has been given.

At times the old forms of the numbers are preferred. Many texts show some numbers written upside down. This is especially true with the 9 which is written 6, and is met with in this form engraved on metal amulets. The reason for the preference of the number 9 remained unknown to me.

The most important names for a seal are *wisq*, *ḥātim*, *djadual*. Every numerical *ḥātim* has: 1. a *muftāḥ* (key) which is the smallest number found in that seal; 2. a *mughlāq* (closing stone) which is the highest number; 3. a *wisq* which is the number of small squares in one line; 4. a *ʿadl* is the sum of the *muftāḥ* and *mughlāq*; 5. *al-masāḥah* is the sum of all numbers in all the squares of the seal. For the better understanding of these expressions, the following example is given. The *muftāḥ* of the *badūḥ* seal (fig. 15) is 1, the *mughlāq* = 9, the *wisq* = 3, the *ʿadl* = 10 and the *masāḥah* = 45.

193 Awghanistānī, 8.

Awghanistānī<sup>(194)</sup> says that the seal of Saturn is the one with 3 x 3 squares, that of Jupiter 4 x 4 squares, of Mars 5 x 5, of the Sun 6 x 6, of Venus 7 x 7, of Mercury 8 x 8 and that of the Moon 9 x 9<sup>(195)</sup>. Būnī who also accepts this teaching says in another place<sup>(196)</sup> that all planets have the same 7 x 7 seal, with the same contents, namely the letters of *sawāqīʿul-fātiḥah*. The only difference is the arrangement of the letters. The first letter in the right square of the uppermost horizontal line gives the clue by which the student knows to which planet the seal belongs. The following list shows the relation of the seven letters to the planets: ف is assigned to the Sun, ش to Mars, ظ to Jupiter, ج to Moon, ث to Mercury خ to Venus and ز to Saturn (see later).

194	Page 9.	198	Page 13.
195	This theory prevailed also among the Hebrews, Budge, 393 ff.	199	III, 58 ff. The Qorʾān points in several verses to the encircling and protecting power of God: <i>Sūrah</i> 85 <sup>20-22</sup> , 48 <sup>26</sup> , 17 <sup>62</sup> , 65 <sup>12</sup> .
196	I, 98.	200	See also I. Goldzieher, <i>ZDMG</i> , 1916, 272.
197	The same custom is described in <i>Thousand and One Nights</i> , I, 78, line 10 (Jesuit edition, Beyrouth).	201	<i>Awghanistānī</i> , p. 46.

Beside circles one finds drawings representing spirals. I have seen such representations in written talismans as well as on inscribed metal amulets. Sometimes the spirals are represented by a spiral writing, as is seen in *ḥāsāt er-radīfeh* (202). Most of the Mandaean inscriptions on magic bowls run in a spiral way (203).

The text of a talisman is often found to be written in cartouches of different designs (204). They are met with in fear cups, metal amulets and in some printed *ḥidjābāt*. Only rarely does one encounter them in written talismans. As cartouches have already been described by the present writer in another place (205) they will not be treated in this paper.

(to be continued)

TEWFIK CANAAN.

## THE DECIPHERMENT OF ARABIC TALISMANS

(Continued from vol. IV)

### IV. SIGNS AND FIGURES.

One rarely finds an amulet which does not contain at least one representative of this group. Such signs are probably cryptographic alphabets of various forms. Some of these alphabets are not purely imaginary. As a rule foreign alphabets have suffered so badly by the negligence and ignorance of the copyist that their original form has changed completely and they can hardly be deciphered at present. The Hebrews had the same custom of using foreign alphabets in their talismans, as well as changing their own letters in such a way as to become incomprehensible to the layman. The twists and flourishes which often finish the strokes are called "lunetts" or "crowns". They are to be found in Arabic talismans and originate in Jewish magic (206). A *ḥāḥ* of Jerusalem gave me several mystic alphabets, which he said were used in talismans. The alphabet illustrated in fig. 27 is one of the simplest. It is

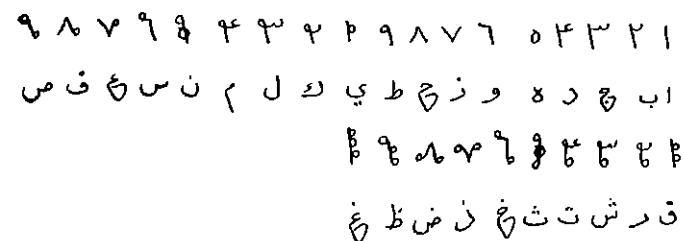


Fig. 27

constructed by using the numerical values of the letters. The letters with numerical values from 1-9 are given as simple numbers; those from 10-90 receive one "lunette",

206 Doutré, 293.

202 JPOS, XVI, p. 103.

203 H. Pognon, *l. c.*

204 Such designs were also employed in

Aramaic Magic Bowls (Budge, 283 ff) and in Hebrew talismans (*Jew. Encycl., Amulets*).

205 JPOS, XVI, pp. 79 ff.

those with a value 100-900 have two "lunetts", and the غ, with the numerical value 1000, has three "lunetts" on the number 1. This idea seems to be recognized in some books on magic. I have found a doubtful reference to it by Muḥammad Aḥmad Abī-l-Qāsim<sup>(207)</sup>. He writes: (ق) وإذا جعلت عليه صفرين بقي (غ) . . . . (غ) "If you place a zero (probably a lunette is meant) on the 1 it becomes a 1 and if two zeros are placed on it, it turns into a 100 and if three, a 1000". In the old edition of Būnī (1291 H) (208) one finds some signs of the above alphabet.

But despite this key and those of ibn el-Wahṣī and edj-Djaldakī it is practically impossible to decipher texts written with these secret letters. In fig. 28

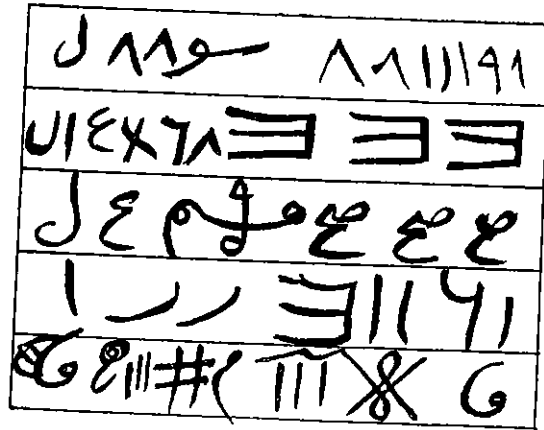


Fig. 28

a strange and curious script is seen. This same curious seal is repeated three times in one and the same *hidjāb* of my collection. The first seal is followed by the words: *توكلوا يا خدام هذه الاسماء الربانية بمنع الضرر والاذية عن هذه (ال) الجسد الانسانية*, "Be responsible, ye servants of these lordly names, and prevent injury and mischief from befalling this human body". This text leads one to think that the preceding seal contains names of the Almighty or of some heavenly supernatural powers. But the inscription after the second seal, which seal is a true copy of the first, leads the student to change his opinion. It reads *اجب يا ميمون*, "Answer, O Meimūn", and one is led to think that the seal contains the name of this demon.

207 *Al-djawāhiru-l-lammā'ah fī tashīri mulūki-l-djinni fil-waḡti was-sā'ah*, p. 11.

208 II, 102.

It is to be noted that a comparison of the new edition of Būnī with older ones reveals fundamental differences in many of the prescribed talismans. These differences comprise numbers, letters, the so-called "lunette" signs as well as the external form and composition of talismans. On no account could they be accounted for exclusively by errors in copying the original text, for, first they are too numerous to be explained in this way, and secondly they comprise figures where no mistake in copying should be expected. The two following lunette talismans taken from the same paragraph of two different editions of Būnī may serve as an illustration (fig. 29). The two talismans are prescribed for the same ailment. The first

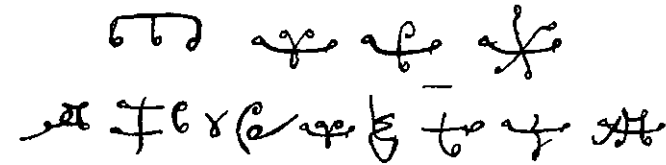


Fig. 29

comes from the edition 1290 H. (= A.D. 1873-4, vol. II, p. 76) while the second is a copy from the edition 1347 H. (= A.D. 1927-8, vol. II, p. 72)<sup>(209)</sup>.

These changes are a decisive proof that the editors of this book did not believe in the expounded supernatural powers of such talismans, else they would not have been so negligent in substituting for well approved and original formulae new ones with no proof of their action. It is further curious that the editors of the later edition give no explanation whatsoever for the changes and no one of the hundreds of *ṣūfīs* and magicians who make daily use of this book has ever called attention to these changes. Thus one is forced to the conclusion that most of these signs and figures are in the first place the result of imagination or of blindly copying strange alphabets incomprehensible to the copyist which he unknowingly changed radically. But as long as such signs act on the reader in a mysterious way they have fulfilled their purpose. It is characteristic that Mohammedan works on magic have also in this respect borrowed from Judaism<sup>(210)</sup>.

The seven signs assigned to the seven days and the seven planets are well known in magic (fig. 30,a) and are to be found in many written talismans. They are supposed to be the seals of different prophets and represent, when placed

209 Some other irregularities are: vol. II, p. 88 of the new edition gives a 7 x 10 squares seal; the old edition, on the other hand, has an 8 x 10 square seal. The next two seals on the same page have been replaced in the new edition

by completely different ones. The numbers placed in the *ḥātīm* on page 86 (old edition, II) differ from those of the new edition (II, 81).

210 S.M. Zwemer, *The Influence of Animism on Islam*, p. 255.



together, the mysterious name and seal of the Almighty<sup>(211)</sup>. Their arrangement in seals differs in different books<sup>(212)</sup>. At times lunette figures are placed in between the signs<sup>(213)</sup>. The star is described in books<sup>(214)</sup> as a pentagram, *ḥātim ḥumāsī*,

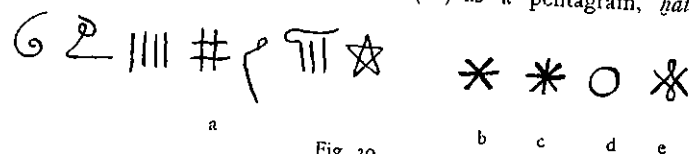


Fig. 30

but we as often find a hexagram. This last is believed by Mohammedans to be the sign of king Solomon, while the Jews call it the shield of king David<sup>(215)</sup>. In an eight-sided tin *māsheli* where the seven signs are engraved in a primitive manner the star is represented (as seen in fig. 30,b) six-pointed; only one representation was eight-pointed (fig. 30,c). In some books I found it represented as a circle (fig. 30,d). In a hand written *hidjāb*, the *ḥātim* of which was given above, the star was given as seen in fig. 29,e<sup>(216)</sup>. Talmasānī gives the sign + for the ladder<sup>(217)</sup>. It would lead us beyond the scope of this treatise to go more fully into the description of these signs, especially as Winkler<sup>(218)</sup> has lately made a thorough study of the same<sup>(219)</sup>. Attention should be called to the fact that the lists of the seven days with the corresponding signs, letters, names of God, planets, good and bad supernatural powers which are given by Doutté<sup>(220)</sup> and Winkler are practically never found in written talismans carried by patients, although they are found in some books on magic. They must be regarded in first place as a key to guide the magician to know which angel to call upon, which letters, signs, names of God to write and which planets to use while preparing a talisman for a patient, in order to exert the necessary power on certain evil spirits. It is a mistake to regard this combination of 7 x 7 objects as a magic seal believed to possess supernatural powers and used as an amulet<sup>(221)</sup>. The following list gives the days of the week with the angels, demons, planets, metals, words, letters, characters, prophets and minerals belonging to each day. It is borrowed from the pamphlet *ṣirru-l-ʿasrār fī istihdārī-l-djinni waṣarfi-l-ʿummār*. Other authors differ in some respects. This combination is given to help in a better analysis and understanding of talismans.

- 211 *Aberglaube*, p. 112.  
 212 See examples given by Doutté, pp. 154, 156.  
 213 This is clearly seen in the old editions of *es-sabʿ al-ḥūd es-sulaimāniyyah*.  
 214 Būnī, I, 84.  
 215 Doutté, p. 166, claims that Jews and Mohammedans regard the hexagram as the seal of Solomon.  
 216 See also Winkler, pp. 115, 116.  
 217 p. 75.  
 218 *Siegel und Charaktere in der muh. Zauberei*, p. 116; Doutté, 155.  
 219 *Aberglaube*, p. 112, 113; JPOS, XVI, pp. 94 ff.  
 220 Page 154.  
 221 E. Greife, *Encycl. of Islam*, I, 992-993, describes also this combination as an amulet.

Day	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Angels	Rōqīʿāʾil	Djubrāʾil	Samsamāʾil	Mikāʾil	Sarafāʾil	ʿAnīʾāʾil	Kasfīʾāʾil
Djinn <sup>(222)</sup>	Mudhib	Murrah	Aḥmar	Barqān	Šamhūrīš	Abiaḍ	Meimūn
Planet	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn
Letters <sup>(223)</sup>	ف	ج	ش	ث	ظ	خ	ذ
Names of God <sup>(224)</sup>	فرد	جبار	شكور	ثابت	ظهير	خير	ذكي
Sex <sup>(224)</sup>	mascul. <sup>(225)</sup>	fem. <sup>(225)</sup>	mascul.	mascul. with men, fem. with women	mascul.	femin.	mascul.
Character <sup>(226)</sup>	hot and dry	cold and moist	hot and dry	varying	hot and moist	cold and dry	cold and moist
Minerals	gold	silver	iron <sup>(227)</sup>	mercury	tin	red copper <sup>(228)</sup>	plumb
Prophet <sup>(229)</sup>	Jesus	David	Solomon	Jacob	Adam	Muḥammad	Moses
Heaven <sup>(230)</sup>	4th	1st	5th	2nd	6th	3rd	7th

Beside the seal with the seven signs described above and which represents the Holy Name, there is also a *ḥātimu-l-šarr*<sup>(231)</sup>, "the seal of evil", which is represented by the signs ۞۞۞۞۞۞۞۞. The ۞ is also written as لا. The old edition of Būnī gives it as لا. Sometimes three ۞ take the place of 4. One rarely meets with all these signs written together, and they should not be confounded with the letters ممم الم لل لرحح which appear repeatedly in the *basmalah*<sup>(232)</sup>.

Beside these signs there are some which have not yet been deciphered.

- 222 Er-Rahawī, p. 26, gives other names.  
 223 Winkler and Doutté have a slightly different order. Canaan, *Aberglaube*, gives the order, as it is here.  
 224 This is copied from Rahawī *el-ḥudʿu-l-manẓūm fī-l-ḥalāsīmī wan-nudjūm*.  
 225 It is curious that the sun is regarded as masculin and moon as female; although every other indication and folkloristic idea teaches the contrary.  
 226 Copied from Abī Maʿšar.  
 227 Abī Maʿšar assigns copper.  
 228 Here Abī Maʿšar puts iron.  
 229 See Doutté, 187.  
 230 The seven signs have been omitted.  
 231 Winkler, *Siegel und Charaktere*, p. 77; Spoer, *Arabic Magic Medicinal Bowls*, JAOS, LV, p. 241. Būnī, I, 82.  
 232 Canaan, JPOS, pp. 97 ff.

They are made of irregular lines running in every direction, as well as cryptographic signs of no meaning. Such unintelligible scratches and signs are found both on metal amulets, and in written talismans.

On fear cups and occasionally on metal *mawāsik*, some or all representations of the twelve signs of the zodiac are engraved. At times twelve circles with magic formulae or Qoranic verses take the place of the twelve figures. The representation of sun and moon are the only figures of the planets which may also be found. They are usually represented as two human faces. It has been possible to distinguish the one as a male and the other as a female face, or figure. The sun is at times represented as an eight or many-pointed<sup>(233)</sup> star, and the moon as a crescent<sup>(234)</sup>. Near the figure representing the sun one finds at times the word النار, fire; and near that of the moon the word العجل (al-*idjil*), the calf. *En-nār* refers, as has been shown elsewhere, to the sun, and *el-idjil* to the moon. This word *العجل* should not be confounded with *العجل* (al-*adjal*) which has already been described in connection with *الوحا العجل الساعة*.

Astrological bodies have played an important rôle in the life of all nations<sup>(235)</sup> since oldest times. The most important heavenly bodies were the seven planets and the 12 constellations of the zodiac. We find the representation of the moon in all its phases carried as a protection. The crescent predominates also in these unwritten amulets. Even in the daily speech of the Orientals one meets continuously with references to the heavenly bodies<sup>(236)</sup>.

True poison cups show also the representations of a lion, a serpent, a scorpion and two fighting dragons whose bodies are interlaced. The serpent and the scorpion are also seen in some printed *hidjābāt*, esp. in *es-sab' uhiūd es-suleimāniyeh* and in *hīrz el-ghassāleh*. Poison cups and such printed talismans say clearly that they cure every bitten person<sup>(237)</sup>. On a silver plate, which used to be carried by a Bedouin *šēh* on his arms two lions are also represented<sup>(238)</sup>. I have never seen lion representations on printed *hudjūb*.

233 In a gilded *māskeh* of my collection the sun was represented as a star with 21 rays.

234 In the time of Gnostics the crescent and the full moon were also used as amulets, Budge, 204.

235 Is. 3<sup>18</sup>; Judg. 8<sup>26</sup>.

236 According to Talmasānī, p. 59, the moon has several names which are used in magic. Some are *lāhīm*, *lāhghō*, *lāfūr*, *lārōs*, *lārōc*, *lārōš*, *lāstāš*. Note that

every name begins with *lā* ل. I have never seen these names in written talismans.

237 *Aberglaube*, p. 67. An analysis of such inscriptions on poison cups has been given in *JPOS*, XVI, pp. 104 ff. See also M.G. Wiet, *Catalogue Général du Musée Arabe du Caire, Objets en Cuivre*.

238 Renaud, *Monuments arabes, persans et turcs*, II, 337 describes the animal as a dog.

At times an ark, a bird or some other object is pictured by the intricate writing of the text. Thus Zwemer<sup>(239)</sup> describes a talisman of this sort with the words: "In true Arabic fashion the drawing . . . hulk, master and sails is made of arabesques, i.e. Arabic quotations from the Qor'ān with letters lengthened or distorted in order to form the outline of the ship." In the same way names of God, verses etc. are written in a beautiful arabesque style. They are not always easy to decipher.

Other representations are the hand, the sword *du-l-Fiqār*, the *muḥallaṣātu n-nabī*, the Dome of the Rock, the Ka'bah, etc. The hand plays an important rôle in popular medicine throughout the Orient. In ancient times it was also esteemed as an amulet. There are glass, mother-of-pearl and metal hands which are carried by patients, especially by children, as a protection against the evil eye. I did possess a hand made of Ramaḍān bread of *es-šēh* Abū Madiān<sup>(240)</sup> and which was hung over the cradle of a child. Representations of the hand are painted on the outer surface of door lintels and jambs. At times it is even carved in the stone. More seldom it is painted on the inner walls of houses and *maqāms*<sup>(241)</sup>. Even in the embroidery of many districts of Palestine the hand is taken as a motive. The Shī'a *šēhs* interpret the five fingers of the hand as standing for the five members of the Mohammedan holy family (s. above). The Mohammedans believe that such a representation stands for the hand of Fāṭmeh, the Christians for that of St. Mary and the Jews believe it is the hand of God. I have not seen the representation of the hand in a written *hidjāb*. But talismans manufactured by *šēhs*, especially those of important mosques, show it freely. Thus I possess several talismans sealed with hand-seal impressions. These talismans show beside the hand figures representing the sword *du-l-Fiqār*, a balance and simply or elaborately finished circular seals. The metal seals with which the above named impressions were made, are the property of *šēhs*. Every *šēh* endeavoured to produce better seals; and thus the student meets with hands, swords, circular seals, etc. of different sizes, execution and containing more or less different texts. A copper seal of the hand in my collection has been already described on page 76. All seal representations are filled with writings. Beside those described on pages 88 we find the following: the Verse of the Throne, the Mohammedan creed, لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله. One hand had يا كريم الاحسان يا الله يا رحمن يا رحيم يا حنان يا منان يا سلطان. On the swords which are also seen in the *sab' uhiūd es-suleimāniyeh* and in *hīrz el-ghassāleh* we find لا فتا (242) لا فتا (242) لا فتا (242). This sword, often represented as two-pointed and which belonged to 'Alī ibn abi Tālib, derives its name, *du-l-Fiqār*, from the undulations on its blade, which are said to have resembled the vertebrae

239 Chinese Amulet, *The Moslem World*, XXV, 217 ff.

240 *Aberglaube*, p. 86.

241 Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries*, p. 33.

242 لا فتا is often written wrongly فقا.

of the spine. Others believe that this sword belonged originally to el-ʿĀsī bin Munabbih who was killed in the battle of Badr. The prophet then took possession of it (243). Seal No. 60 of Hammer-Purgstall shows this sword and gives the name ʿAlī.

A round seal with ما شاء الله in its centre has the seven names of *ahlul-kahf* with the name of their dog surrounding the central inscription. These names were executed in a beautiful octahedron arabesque seal like that described on page 89 and fig. 6. There are two round seals (one 6.5 cm in diameter and the other 6.1 cm), each with a balance. One has a crooked line designated as *الصراط*, the other has a straight line with the two ends of a crescent touching it at about its end. Here we read the word *الصراط*. This seal has also the inscriptions: 1. *قال عليه السلام من اراد ان ينظر بقعة من بقاع الجنة فينظر الى بيت المقدس*, "He, may peace be upon him, said if anybody wishes to see a spot of heaven let him behold the Holy City" (244). 2. *السيد احمد الشريف اشجادة*. Another round seal, 9.5 cm in diameter, has the Verse of the Throne written around the periphery. The centre is divided by nine lines. The upper three lines contain letters, the meaning of which I was unable to decipher. The 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th lines give the inscription *قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم حفرة بيت المقدس من الجنة صدق رسول الله*. The eighth line has again letters and the ninth gives the signs of "the seal of God". The hexagram which is omitted in this line is found in the centre of the third line.

The most important of all seals are two larger ones showing in the centre an octahedron representing the Dome of the Rock. The octahedron is surrounded in both seals by a square and this by a number of smaller circles. The larger seal shows 12, the smaller one only 11 such circles. One of the eleven has an eight-pointed star, probably a representation of the sun. All these smaller circles are filled with Qoranic verses. Around the periphery of each of these two rows of circles is a circular script of the first verse of the 17th *sūrah*. The larger of these two is 21 cm. in diameter, the square is 8.5 x 8.5 cm. and the diameter of the octahedron is 5 cm. The measurements of the smaller seal are: the diameter of the whole seal is 16 cm; of the square 7 x 7 cm. and of the octahedron 3.5 cm. In the centre of the octahedron the representation of the Holy Rock is seen with the inscription *qadamu-n-nabī* (the foot imprint of the prophet) and *ḥaḍjar saʿd* (a stone of luck) on the larger seal and only *qadamu-n-nabī* on the smaller one. Outside the plan of the Mosque some of the holy places are indicated: *maḥkamāt Dāḥūd*, *el-manbar*.

On some printed talismans (245), on metal cases, as well as on some *ʿidjāzāt* (246) the student may see the representation of one or more minarets with or without the

243 There are still other traditions, *dāʾiratu-l-maʿārif*, VIII, 410.

244 A *ḥadīṣ* invented by the Omayyads.

245 As in *es-sabʿu-ḥūd es-suleimāniyah*, *ḥirz*

*el-ghassāleh*.

246 *Idjāzāt* are written certificates given by *ṣāḥs* of some *derwīṣ* order to their followers.

crescent. Other representations on metal cases are palm trees, the hexagram, the sun, the moon and flowers. While the latter have only a decorative purpose the others play an important rôle in popular medicine. The palm tree is regarded by the Arabs as the tree of life. Palm branches are carried in funeral processions. They are stuck on the grave and painted in mosques, houses and on the grave (247).

On Christian metal cases we find, as a rule, representations of St. Mary, with or without the child Christ, St. George (248) fighting with the dragon, the cross (249), etc.

It may be stated at this point that *Sunnī* Mohammedans, or traditionalists, employ only some of the figures described above, while the *Shīʿa*, or "free thinkers", adopt more or less all of them (250).

We may now turn to the description of *muḥallaḥātun-nabī* (251). The printed part of this talisman measures 50 x 35 cms. It begins: "This talisman contains the beautiful names of God, the Verse of the Throne, the seven saving Verses, *muḥallaḥātun-nabī*—may peace and blessings be upon him—his names, the names of *ahl Badr*, the prayer of my lord ʿAbdu-l-Qāder el-Djilānī, a prayer for dispersing difficulties and other things suitable for protecting against devils". On the periphery three rows of inscriptions encircle a central part which is divided into four fields. The upper one (fig. 32) contains 3 large and 14 smaller circles. The small circles contain the names: محمد — أبوبكر — عمر — عثمان — علي — طلحة. The large middle circle contains *sūrah* 112 in beautiful arabesques surrounding the words *بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم*, which are written in the centre of an eight-rayed star. The right circle contains *sūrah* 1156 and 2960, the left one *sūrah* 352 and 398. Two semicircles in this part contain the inscriptions *ما شاء الله* and *لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله*. The second field (see fig. 32) is taken up mostly by the figure of a sword which is two-pointed. Above this one sees the words *لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله*. This field has four small circles and two semicircles. The latter bear the inscriptions *ما شاء الله* and *لا قوة الا بالله*. The four small circles are filled with *عليه توكلت واليه انيب — وما توفيقي الا بالله — سيدنا علي كرم الله وجهه*

247 Canaan, *Plantlore etc.* JPOS, VIII, pp. 152 ff.

248 It is a very old custom to carry figures of deities as amulets; *Reallexicon der Vorgeschichte*, s. v. *Amulet*. Gen. 31, 19; Judg. 18, 24; 1 Sam. 19, 13.

249 Since the beginning of the Vth century the cross is regarded as a powerful

amulet. *Realencycl. für prot. Theologie und Kirche*, I, s. v. *Amulet*.

250 See also Budge, 67.

251 هذه تحويلة مشتملة على أسماء الله الحسنى وأيات الكسبي والديع آيات المتجات ومخلفات النبي عليه الصلاة والسلام وأسمائه وأسماء أهل بدر ودعاء سيدي عبد القادر الجيلاني ودعاء لتفريج الكرب وغير ذلك من الأشياء النافعة للحفظ من الشياطين.

— هذه صفة سيف ذو الفقار — The third field gives the pictures of *muḥallaḥāt* *n-nabī* with their names. They are: a Qorʾān, a rosary (252), a mattress (253), a carpet (254), a stick, a shirt, a spear, a tooth pick, a cup, a mule (255), a water pitcher (256), two date trees, a collyrium bottle, a ring, a pair of shoes (257), a helmet (258), a handmill (259), a crown, a sword, a coat, a comb (260), two flags, and a



Fig. 32

pulpit. The lowest field contains two large and six small circles. In the right large circle the *muḥallaḥāt* are named again. This list, which is written in

252 The second list of *muḥallaḥāt* *n-nabī*, given in the fourth field, mentions two rosaries. The differences between the two lists are given in the following notes.

253 Three mattresses.

254 Two carpets.

255 The mule had a white colour and was called Duldul.

256 This object is repeated twice.

257 Mentions only one pair.

258 *Mighfar* (*mighfariyeh*) means also the head dress worn below the helmet.

259 It is written رجا instead of رحى.

260 Called also طراق.

verse, makes some additions to the above. These are: a shield, three cups, a donkey named Yaʿfūr, two striped garments, a fawn coloured shirt, a single stranded shirt, a wrapped cap, a javelin, half of the land Fadk, the land of wādī-l-Qirā, his part in the third of Ḥaibar and his part of the land of banī-n-Naḍir. The left hand big circle contains the prayer said to originate with ʿAbdu-l-Qāder el-Djilānī. The invocation here is interesting: "I have sealed myself, my religion, my parents, and all things given to me by my lord, by the strong seal by which He has sealed all parts of heaven and earth" (261). The small circles contain: — يا حافظ — يا أمين — والله خير حافظا (1) — وهو ارحم الراحمين — لا اله الا الله الملك المبین — محمد رسول الله الصادق الوعد الامين.

This talisman has been described in detail to prove the fact underlying most talismans, which is important for the understanding of the composition of most *hūdjub*. The Oriental tries to combine in one and the same amulet several "approved" forces in order to assure himself of the benefit. There are of course simple amulets which contain only one type. But the rule is to call upon several supernatural powers in as many ways as possible. This idea goes so far that Mohammedans wear at times amulets which contain beside Arabic invocations also Hebrew words written in Hebrew. Such amulets have been described by the present writer elsewhere (262). I possess a certificate which used to be issued by some *ḫēḫs* of the Dome of the Rock to Mohammedan pilgrims visiting Jerusalem. It contains, beside some invocations and the *ḥadīṭ* about Jerusalem being a spot of Paradise (see above), a list of Mohammedan holy places which a pious Moslem should visit while in Palestine. This certificate is carried also as a protective amulet. On each perpendicular side of the Arabic text there are five seals of Jewish holy sites with their names in Hebrew. This certificate used to be issued long before the war, when Jewish influence in Palestine was still very negligible. The Jewish sanctuaries pictured in this amulet are: the tombs of the kings, the tomb of Rachel, two pictures showing the mosque of Hebron (the cave of Machpelah), Mizpa Samuel, the tomb of Absalom, Mount Zion and the Wailing Wall. One seal has no inscription and the writing of the last one could not be deciphered. This is another proof of Hebrew cabbalistic influence on Arabic talismans.

Despite the analysis of talismans given in this paper the present writer has to admit that many texts remain obscure and undecipherable. No doubt the greater part of such writings are not based on any scientific or fixed system. Every *ḫēḫ* has more or less his own peculiarities in writing letters, signs and figures.

261 ختمت على نفسي ودينى واهلى وعلى كل شى اعطانيه  
ربى بختام الله المتبع الذي ختم به افطار السموات  
والارض.

262 Canaan, *The Curse in Palestinian Folklore*,  
JPOS, XV, p. 243.

## ISLAMIC SEALS: MAGICAL OR PRACTICAL?

*Venetia Porter*

In public and private collections there are many thousands of seals that can be broadly defined as Islamic. They are made from a range of materials such as carnelian, chalcedony, rock crystal and hematite and carry a variety of types of inscriptions in Arabic script. There are names of owners, pious inscriptions which include invocations to God or Shi'ite imams. Some carry symbols such as stars or single letters, numbers sometimes in squares, letters and numbers mixed together. Others have obscure and difficult inscriptions in Kufic script, generally relegated to the 'undeciphered inscription' category. All these inscriptions are engraved in reverse and are, therefore, made with the intention of stamping onto something. However, the same inscriptions or symbols often appear engraved in positive, and these objects are generally regarded as talismans. This paper considers firstly the overlap between the validating and amuletic functions of seals, and then goes on to discuss a variety of magical seals and amulets.

The word *khâtam* as described in Ibn Manẓūr's dictionary *Lisân al-'Arab*<sup>1</sup> is 'that which is placed on clay' and *al-khiṭām* the clay which is used to seal documents (*kitāb*). Living in the 13th-14th century, Ibn Manẓūr worked in Tripoli in North Africa in the *Diwān al-Inshā'* where documents are likely to have still been sealed possibly

<sup>1</sup> I am very grateful to Robert Hoyland, Nitzan Amitai-Preiss, Robert Irwin and Emilie Savage-Smith for their most helpful comments on the text of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Manẓūr died in 711/1311-12. *Lisân al-'Arab*, Beirut, 1994, vol. 12, p. 163. J W Fück, Ibn Manẓūr, *ET*<sup>2</sup>, vol. III, p. 864.

with clay. While there are often references in historical texts to the sealing of documents in the various chanceries of the 'Abbāsids or the Saljūqs, for example, clay seals still sometimes attached to papyrus documents only tend to survive from the early Islamic period.<sup>2</sup>

The term *khātam* grew to encompass a whole range of meanings and thus when Allan wrote the entry *khātam* in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, he describes it as 'a seal, signet ring, the impression (also *khatm*) as well as the actual seal-matrix; it is applied not only to seals proper, engraved in incuse characters with retrograde inscriptions, but also in the very common seal-like objects with regular inscriptions of a pious or auspicious character,' in addition to meaning a ring, it covers virtually any small 'seal-like object which has been stamped with some mark.'<sup>3</sup> The other terms that we find in the literature in connection with seals are *faṣṣ*, the engraved stone of a ring,<sup>4</sup> and *ṭabī*<sup>5</sup> as something which has been stamped on.

The first group of seals with which we are concerned here are a large group with inscriptions of a pious nature, sometimes, but not always, with a name attached: phrases such as 'sovereignty belongs to God' (*al-mulk lillāh*), 'I put my faith in God' (*tawakkalt 'ala Allāh*) or 'such and such a person trusts in God' (*fulān yathiq billāh*). It can be said that although these are personal seals, as will be shown below, through their references to God, and through the use of particular stones with known amuletic functions these seals have an inbuilt amuletic aspect to them.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Lead as well as clay seals were used from the early Islamic period. Porter, V, 'Islamic seals' in D Collon (ed.), *7000 Years of Seals*, London 1997, p. 182. For a group of seals on documents from Afghanistan, G Khan, 'An Arabic legal document from the Umayyad period', *JRAS*, 4 pt. 3 1994, p. 365. Seal practice is discussed by J M Rogers in 'Islamic Seals Part 2' in Collon, *Seals* 1997, pp. 185-195f, D Sourdel, *Le vizirat 'Abbāside*, Damascus, 1959, vol. II, p. 607, J A Boyle (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran, The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, vol. 5, Cambridge, 1968, p. 259.

<sup>3</sup> J Allan, '*Khātam, Khātim*', *Et* vol. IV, pp. 1102-1105.

<sup>4</sup> See for example in al-Washsha, *Kitāb al-Muwashshā*, ed. A N al-Jamali and M A al-Khauji, Cairo, 1323/1905-6, p. 132f.

<sup>5</sup> In the *Ghāyat al-Hakīm*, H Ritter, *Pseudo-Magriti Das Ziel des Weisen*, Leipzig and Berlin, 1933, vol. I, p. 55. In modern Arabic this also refers to a postage stamp.

<sup>6</sup> For the various properties of stones see for example B A Donaldson, *The Wild Rue*, London, 1938, pp. 152-4. Arabic texts which discuss stones and their properties include al-Birūnī, *Kitāb al-jamāhir fī mar'ifat al-jawāhir*, Hyderabad, AH 1355; and Ahmad b. Yusuf al-Tayfāshī, *Kitāb azhār al-afkār fī jawāhir al-ahjār*, Cairo, 1977. Carmelīan, for example, is said to have been particularly favoured by the Prophet Muḥammad.

### *Islamic Seals: Magical or Practical?*

The ambiguity between seal and talisman alluded to by Allan has a very long history. Finkel in his discussion of ancient near-eastern seals suggests that: 'Early stamp seals probably derived from amulets and it is likely that seals, whether stamps or cylinders, never lost their amuletic meaning and were always invested with magical properties in the eyes of their owners. Images of gods and other symbols carved on a seal undoubtedly bestowed on it an amuletic function in addition to the material.'<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in reference to Aegean bronze age seals, Betts writes, 'it is rarely possible to distinguish gems cut to serve sphragistic purposes from those to be used as amulets or talismans or those which were simply decorative jewellery. Most probably served at least two of those functions, if not all three.'<sup>8</sup> In the Islamic context we can simply substitute the 'images of God' of the near-eastern seals for words of God—that is the Qur'ān, or words referring to God.

The ambiguous amuletic aspect of seals can be seen from some of the earliest extant examples. An early lead sealing (fig. 8.1), probably from the 7th or 8th century on the basis of the epigraphic style, is inscribed simply *al-mulk lillāh*, 'sovereignty belongs to God'. Lead sealings such as this were probably attached to sacks containing taxes in the form of coin or grain.<sup>9</sup> But how did seals with pious phrases and without personal names work? This becomes clear from the references in texts such as al-Mas'ūdī's *Kitāb al-Tanbīh* and Ibn 'Arabī's *Muḥāḍarāt al-Abrār* which have been gathered together by Kalus.<sup>10</sup> In these texts we find references to the phrases engraved on seals of early Islamic caliphs often at the end of the account of a caliph's reign. The reference might be given in the following manner:

<sup>7</sup> I Finkel, 'Magic and Jewellery' in Collon, *Seals*, 1997, p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> J Betts, 'Magic and Jewellery' in Collon, *Seals*, 1997, p. 65.

<sup>9</sup> We know this to be the case on account of the imprint of cloth on the backs of many of them. They also have a hole for a wire to go through. In the case of fig. 8.1 the sealing is a simple flat disc. No seal matrices for lead seals are yet known to survive. They may have taken the form of *boulloteria* used by the Byzantines; G Zacos and A Vegler, *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography: Lead Seals*, Basle, 1972, for *boulloteria*, plates I-IV; Porter, in Collon, *Seals*, 1997, fig. 11/16, p. 198; P Casanova, 'Sceaux arabes en plomb', *Revue Numismatique*, 1895, pp. 97-126.

<sup>10</sup> al-Mas'ūdī, *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa'l-Ishrāf*, ed. M J de Goeje, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, Leiden, 1967 (reprint), and Ibn 'Arabī, *Muḥāḍarāt al-abrār wa musammarāt al-abhār*, ed. M M al-Khuli, Cairo, 1972; Ph. Gignoux and L Kalus, 'Les formules des sceaux Sasanides et Islamiques: Continuité ou Mutation?', *Studia Iranica*, II, 1982, pp. 139-150.

*wa nuqisha khātimihī* or *wa kāna naqsh khātimihī*<sup>11</sup> and then the phrase. The Caliph 'Alī (656-661), for example, according to al-Mas'ūdi had his ring engraved *al-mulk lillāh* by his scribe, 'Ubaidallāh ibn Abī Rāfi', who had been a slave of the Prophet.<sup>12</sup> The inscriptions as described in the texts, vary in length: some are short: *al-'izzat lillāh* ('Glory belongs to God', Marwān I, 684-5);<sup>13</sup> *hasbī Allāh* ('My trust is in God', al-Mahdī, 775-85),<sup>15</sup> while others are longer: *al-'uzmat wa'l-qudrat lillāh 'azza ma jalla* (Hārūn al-Rashid).<sup>16</sup> While most inscriptions are generally pious in nature, some are specific verses or paraphrases of verses from the Qur'ān. Al-Mu'taṣim's seal (833-42) for example, was a phrase of which the second part (underlined) is a direct quote from the Qur'ān: *al-ḥamdu lillāh alladhī laysa kamithlihi shay' wa huwa khālīq kull shay'*. This phrase, according to al-Mas'ūdi, was also engraved on the seal of al-Mu'taḍid (892-902) and al-Muqtafi (1136-60).<sup>16</sup>

Many of the phrases on the caliphal seals appear on the extant seal-matrices in the British Museum collection and elsewhere. However this does not mean that *all* seals with the inscription *al-mulk lillāh*, belonged to the Caliph 'Alī, or ones with *hasbī Allāh* belonged to the Caliph al-Mahdī. It does, nevertheless, suggest two things: firstly, that unlike European 'royal' seals which are recognisable because they will have a royal name on them, these seals, with their popular pious but quite impersonal phrases, would have been recognisable because of the context in which they were used; but how could we be sure of recognising a caliphal seal today? Secondly, the sheer numbers of these seals extant in various collections and the appearance of the inscriptions on some of the rare clay sealings attached to papyrus documents, suggests that the use of what appear today to us anonymous religious phrases for seal legends was widespread practice (fig. 8.2). It was the context that mattered for all these seals.<sup>17</sup> As Kalus and Gignoux have argued, in the context of the

<sup>11</sup> al-Mas'ūdi, *Kitāb al-Tanbih*, p. 286 and 349.

<sup>12</sup> al-Mas'ūdi, *Kitāb al-Tanbih*, p. 297.

<sup>13</sup> al-Mas'ūdi, *Kitāb al-Tanbih*, p. 312; Kalus and Gignoux, p. 139.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn 'Arabi, *Muḥāḍarāt*, p. 114; Kalus and Gignoux, p. 142.

<sup>15</sup> Ibn 'Arabi, *Muḥāḍarāt*, p. 115; Kalus and Gignoux p. 139.

<sup>16</sup> Qur'ān 6:102. It also occurs in other places: Kalus and Gignoux, 'Les formules', p. 140.

<sup>17</sup> This is also clear from some of the clay seals on papyri. An anonymous name without a *nisbah* only becomes known if the same name appears on the document. See Porter, in Collon, *Seals*, 1997, p. 182.

links between Sasanian and Islamic seals, not only was the presence of the religious text an expression of a person's direct link with God, but furthermore, it provided in itself a mark of authenticity for the object being sealed.<sup>18</sup> As seals, we can postulate tentatively that this group belongs to the category of '*alāma*', a religious motto which took the place of a signature on documents from at least 'Abbāsid times and very common on Fātimid documents. These phrases are, for example, *al-ḥamd lillāh rabb al-'ālimin* ('Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe') used by all the Fātimid caliphs or, closer to the seals, short phrases such as *al-mulk lillāh* used by viziers.<sup>19</sup>

It is not clear how the '*alāma*' corresponded if at all to the use of a seal as a means of authentication. In Stern's survey on 'the signature' in his *Fātimid Decrees*, he only once links the '*alāma*' with a seal and that is in reference to seals of the Sa'did *sharifs* of Morocco where 'the '*alāma*' was impressed by means of a stamp.'<sup>20</sup> What is interesting is that the same pious phrases continued in use on both seals and '*alāmas*'. It is evidently the case that the '*alāma*', the seal and an actual signature varied at different times as the principle means of authenticating documents. In a wider context, it is interesting to note the limited number of benedictory, supplicatory phrases or Qur'ānic verses being used on the seals. The relatively homogeneous nature of such inscriptions in the context of inscriptions on rock, has recently been commented on by Robert Hoyland. He has noted that there is a 'common stock of words and phrases' which 'crop up time and again in many different places.' He notes additionally that the style of the language used, as well as the epigraphy, is on the whole consistent across a wide geographical area. This suggests, Hoyland believes, 'that the early Muslims formed a homogenous elite who were united by a shared ideology and common religious idiom.' He suggests that presumably this is due to the homogeneity of the Arabs' tradition and the strength of their adherence to it, but it may also be in part because this religious idiom was, to some degree at least, controlled from the

<sup>18</sup> Kalus and Gignoux, 'Les formules', p. 138f.

<sup>19</sup> S M Stern, 'Three petitions of the Fātimid period', reprinted in *Coins and Documents from the Medieval Middle East*, Variorum 1986, VI, p. 186, and *Fātimid Decrees: Original Documents from Fātimid Chanceries*, London, 1964, pp. 123-166; al-Mas'ūdi, in his *Kitāb al-Tanbih*, does not describe the mottoes as '*alāmas*'.

<sup>20</sup> Stern, *Fātimid Decrees*, p. 142.

centre and thence disseminated to the periphery.<sup>21</sup>

The use of a Qur'anic inscription on a seal emphasising its amuletic aspect, is seen on an interesting South Arabian seal in the British Museum (fig. 8.3) made of sardonyx which has been published at various times.<sup>22</sup> From the Himyarite period in Yemen (ca. 3rd-6th century AD) it is inscribed in reverse in South Arabian characters with the name Nadim, an eagle grasping the tail of a serpent is in the centre, and then around the sides, an inscription in Kufic in what is believed to be a ca. 8th century epigraphic style, which is a paraphrase of a verse from the Qur'ān. ('Oh Lord, Glory to thee, keep me from the punishment of the fire,' *sūra* 3:191. Walker in his publication of the seal<sup>23</sup> suggested that the Arabic may have been carved by a later owner of the seal as a prophylactic. Evidence for this is that the engraver has changed 'keep us' (*qinā*) to 'keep me' (*qini*). The seal may also have had special amuletic properties on account of the Himyarite script. For, this was regarded as a 'magical script' by some medieval writers such as Ibn Waḥshīya for example.<sup>24</sup> The fact that it was old and mysterious at the time the Arabic was inscribed on it is also likely to have lent it some further *baraka*.

Having looked at the amuletic aspect of personal or administrative seals, we now turn to those seals which lead us unequivocally into the more esoteric world of magic. These are seals with symbols, numbers, magic squares or obscure inscriptions. The same symbols, letters and scripts can be found engraved in positive on 'amulets'. These inscriptions are also found in all sorts of different contexts from magic bowls to letters or tombstones.<sup>25</sup> A story in the text of the Ghāyat al-Hakim, a medieval text on magic translated into

<sup>21</sup> Robert G Hoyland 'The Content and Context of Early Arabic Inscriptions', *JSAI*, vol. 21, 1997, pp. 77-102.

<sup>22</sup> Most recently in Porter, Collon, *Seals*, fig. 11/3, p. 197 and p. 179. The most comprehensive discussion is in J Walker, 'A South Arabian gem with Sabeian and Kufic legends', *Le Muséon* 75 3/4, 1962, pp. 455-8.

<sup>23</sup> Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 456.

<sup>24</sup> Casanova, 'Alphabets magiques Arabes', *Journal Asiatique* 11e série vol. XVIII, 1921, p. 46, fn. 1. Ibn Waḥshīya also mentions a magical Sabeian alphabet, S Matton, *La Magie Arabe Traditionnelle*, p. 238. There has been some debate as to whether the South Arabian image and the Arabic were engraved at the same time. A later date for the Arabic seems the most plausible.

<sup>25</sup> V Grassi, 'L'epigrafia araba nelle isole maltesi, materiali per lo studio della pieśeuza araba nella regione', *Studi Maghrebini*, vol. XXI, 1989, no. 16, p. 49. For magical symbols on a tombstone, and for use of cryptography based on the *abjad* system, see G S Colin, 'Notes sur le système cryptographique de Aḥmad al-Manṣūr', *Hesperis*, 1927.

Latin and known in the west as *Picatrix*<sup>26</sup> includes a story attributed to the Tūlūnid period in Egypt, to Khumārawayh (r. 884-96) about the use of seals in magic which goes as follows: a person in the Egyptian court saw a young man who, having heard someone complaining about a scorpion sting, took out a cloth in which was a collection of seals (*ṭawābi'*) made from something like incense. He took one of these seals, ordered that it should be pulverised and given to the wounded man. This was done and he then quietened down. Wanting to find out more about this, I looked carefully at the seals and I found that on each one was the likeness of a scorpion. He (the young man) then took out a gold ring, its seal (*faṣṣ*) a bezoar stone on which appeared the scorpion. I asked him about the secret of the seal (*khātim*) and how it was made. He told me that it was engraved while the moon was in the second face of Scorpion. I went ahead and made one and started sealing with it. I would alter the material that I stamped the signet onto fearing that it was the material (i.e., the incense) that was having the effect. Afterwards with seals and seal impressions I did wonderful things before all the world'.<sup>27</sup>

The word magic (*sihr*) in the Islamic world has complicated connotations. It is not as could be supposed anti-religious although Ibn Khaldūn made his disapproval known of it. In the *Muqaddimah* he opens the section on magic and talismans thus: 'magic and talismans show how the human spirit can act upon the elements either directly—and that is magic—or by celestial intervention—and these are the talismans. These sciences are forbidden by different religions because they are dangerous and because they turn the spirit towards astral beings or other things rather than in the direction of God'.<sup>28</sup>

There are believed to be two kinds of magic, licit and illicit. While licit magicians according to the 10th century writer Ibn al-Nadīm, author of the *Fihrist*,<sup>29</sup> constrain the spirits by obeying and supplicating Allāh, illicit magicians enslave the spirits by offerings

<sup>26</sup> R Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*, London, 1994, ch. 8, p. 318, fn. 5; S Matton, 'Picatrix' in *La Magie Arabe Traditionnelle*, Paris, 1977, pp. 243-317.

<sup>27</sup> Matton, 'Picatrix', p. 245, for biographical notice and p. 307 for the story and *Ghāyat al-Hakim*, Ritter, p. 55 (the translation here is based on the Arabic text).

<sup>28</sup> Monteil, V, *Ibn Khaldūn Discours sur l'Histoire Universelle*, Beyrouth, 1968, vol. III, p. 1087. For discussion on magic, see D B Macdonald, 'Sihr' *Et* vol. IV, 1934, p. 409. See also 'Sihr' in *Et* vol. IX, 1996 pp. 567-571.

<sup>29</sup> B Dodge (ed.), Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadīm*, New York, 1970.



and evil deeds. He also says 'all the exorcists and magicians (in other words licit and illicit magicians) assert that they have seals, charms, paper, ... sandalwood and other things used for their arts,' adding, 'one group of philosophers and servants of the stars assert that they have talismans based on astronomical observations for all things desired in connection with wonderful actions ... They also have designs on stones stringed beads and signet stones.' He adds bafflingly, 'the talismans of the lands of Egypt and Syria are numerous and their forms well known, although their use has been rendered vain because they are out of date.'<sup>30</sup> Sorcerers and magicians form a key part of storytelling in Islamic societies. This is exemplified in the tales of the Arabian Nights with its stories full of supernatural elements where magicians make predictions on the basis of the signs of the letters, the use of Solomon's Seal and so on.<sup>31</sup> In the British Museum's collection and elsewhere are magical seals and amulets which fall into a number of different categories.<sup>32</sup> There are those, mostly engraved in positive, with verses from the Qur'ān or parts of verses, and these tie in with the negatively inscribed seals with phrases, Qur'ānic or otherwise, discussed earlier. Fig. 8.4 is a ca. 18th century chalcedony seal from the Sloane collection, inscribed in positive with *sūra* 2:255, the 'throne verse', known as the *āyat al-musta'idīn*, the verse of those seeking refuge, and in the centre, from *sūra* 13, 'thunder repeats his phrases and so do the angels with awe.' The throne verse has particular potency and is very frequently found in a variety of contexts. It is often enough just to have tiny fragment of it. The cowrie shell (fig. 8.5) is inscribed *illā huwa al-hayy*, a few words near the beginning of the verse. In addition to the inscriptions, as has already been mentioned, the stones themselves had particular properties. Chalcedony, for example, was believed to protect from the evil eye and to give a person a peaceful disposition; while cowries (in addition to representing money in some cultures) too were thought to have talismanic properties and are frequently found sewn into clothing.

Another category of magical seals consist of inscriptions which draw on the power of individual letters and the divine names,

<sup>30</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, vol. II, p. 726.

<sup>31</sup> R. Irwin, *Companion*, pp. 178-213.

<sup>32</sup> The most accessible and comprehensive work on talismans and the different types of inscriptions and their meanings is T. Canaan, 'The Decipherment of Arabic Talismans', *Berytus*, 1937, pp. 69-110, and 1938, pp. 141-51.

the so-called *al-asmā' al-ḥusnā* (of which there are 99 or more depending on the texts). This is the focus of the work of al-Būnī (d. 1225) author of the *Shams al-Ma'ārif*, the most popular treatise on occult practice, talismans and so on, whose work was repeatedly copied across the Islamic world.<sup>33</sup> In this category of seals we find magic squares with individual letters or numbers or linear compositions of numbers and letters mixed (figs. 8.6-9).

The science of letters (*ilm al-ḥurūf*) is a highly complicated subject in which letters have particular properties that cannot be gone into here.<sup>34</sup> What concerns us are magic squares which feature on a variety of objects: they are engraved both in positive or negative on seals and amulets, on magic bowls, paper amulets and so on. They are constructed on the basis of the numerical value of letters according to the ancient order of the Semitic alphabet known in Arabic as *abjad*. In this system a = 1, b = 2, j = 3, d = 4 and so on. The earliest recording of a magic square at its simplest—3 x 3—is referred to by the 8th century alchemist Jābir ibn Ḥayyān.<sup>35</sup> This square (he mentions it in the context of assisting in childbirth) is the one most popularly used (fig. 8.6). With numbers totalling 15 in whichever direction they are added up, it is known as *budūh*, an artificial word made from the equivalent letters at the four corners of the square.<sup>36</sup> There are various stories connected to it: that it was the seal of Adam on account of the numerical value of the word Adam which totals 45—the sum of all the numbers of the seal.<sup>37</sup> Canaan's discussion of the square, mostly based on al-Būnī, shows it to have several different

<sup>33</sup> E. Savage-Smith, *Science, Tools and Magic*, London, 1997, p. 65.

<sup>34</sup> *EP* articles: D. B. Macdonald, 'Budūh', vol. II pp. 153-4 and T. Fahd, 'Ḥurūf', vol. III, pp. 595-6; Canaan, 'The Decipherment', 1937, p. 98f.

<sup>35</sup> Paul Kraus, 'Jābir ibn Ḥayyān', *Mémoires présentées à l'Institut d'Égypte*, vol. 45, Cairo, 1942, vol. II, p. 73, fn. 1. The text is thought to have been compiled in 9th-10th century. Savage-Smith, *Science*, p. 106; Canaan, 1937. An imperfect square (6 x 9) is recorded amongst Safaitic inscriptions in Wādī Miqāt in southern Jordan. It bears curious markings neither Safaitic nor Arabic which have yet to be explained. Winnet believed it to be some form of magic square. Although this is doubtful, it is not possible to date but could conceivably be pre-Islamic. I am grateful to Michael Macdonald for pointing this out to me. Winnet and G. Lankester Harding, *Inscriptions from Safaitic Cairns*, Toronto, 1978, pp. 519-20, no. 3790.

<sup>36</sup> D. B. Macdonald 'Budūh', pp. 153-4, and Savage Smith, *Science*, 1997, p. 106.

<sup>37</sup> It is also known as the *muthallathu Ghazālī* after the philosopher al-Ghazālī, Canaan, 'The Decipherment', 1937, p. 102.

meanings: this includes the splitting up of the word into two: *hubb* (love) and *wadd* (affection).<sup>38</sup> Associated with healing, as it is on the brass seal in fig. 8.6, here the Qur'ānic verses inscribed in reverse around the seal are verses known for their healing properties: *sūra* 16:69 and *sūra* 10:57, 'and there issues from their bodies a drink of varying colours wherein is a healing for men.' The illnesses that can be cured with the *budūh* square are quite specific: stomach pains, temporary impotence and it has the additional property of being able to render a person invisible. Amongst its other uses, Macdonald notes that the square itself is found engraved at the beginnings of books as a preservative and is thought to ensure the safe arrival of letters and packages.<sup>39</sup>

The squares can be very complex and, as in fig. 8.7, sometimes bear the names of the archangels Jibrā'il, Mikāyil, Isrāfil and Uzrafil around the sides.<sup>40</sup> Derived from Hebrew angelology, each angel is believed to be endowed with special gifts and functions: for example Jibrā'il (Gabriel), the messenger to the Prophets who brought down the Qur'ān; Mikāyil, who presides over rain and plants; Isrāfil who guards the heavenly trumpet and stands by the throne of God; Uzrafil the angel of death. All the verticals in this magical square, except two, add up to 473.<sup>41</sup> There are in fact different kinds of magical squares. This example is a Latin square. In each of the individual cells (fig. 8.7) are pairs of letters which include some of the 'mysterious letters' of the Qur'ān.<sup>42</sup> On the first line and subsequent lines in different orders can be seen *kāf hā' yā'* 'ayn *ṣād* which begin *sūrat Maryam* (*sūra* 19) and which are frequently found on amulets. These letters are found immediately before the texts of 29 of the 114 *sūras* of the Qur'ān. Much has been written on this subject in trying to understand their purpose and function. Alan Jones has come to the conclusion that 'these are intentionally mysterious and have no specific meaning';<sup>43</sup> other theories include the suggestion that they

<sup>38</sup> Canaan, 'The Decipherment', 1937, p. 101f.

<sup>39</sup> 'Budūh', *EP*, supplement, p. 153 and Diadwal, vol. 2, p. 370.

<sup>40</sup> For a discussion of the angels, see Canaan, 'The Decipherment', 1937, p. 81f, *EP*, 'Malā'ika', vol. 6, pp. 216-9.

<sup>41</sup> I am grateful to Dr Hans Kind for his help with the seals with magic squares in the British Museum collection. For a definition of different types of magical squares, see Savage-Smith, *Science*, pp. 106-7.

<sup>42</sup> Schuster, 1972, p. 20, for a similar use of the mysterious letters on a square.

<sup>43</sup> A Jones, 'The mystical letters of the Qur'ān', *Studia Islamica* XVI, 1962, pp. 5-12.

may be mnemonics for remembering the subject matter of the *sūras*.<sup>44</sup> Whatever their original intention, they continue to have special religious significance and magical connotations.

Numbers and letters do not just occur in squares but often in horizontal lines, again engraved in positive and reverse.<sup>45</sup> Rehatsek in his article on magic,<sup>46</sup> working from Avicenna's *Book of Treasures*, sets out groups of individual letters and numbers which contain the names of the seven angels who govern the days of the week.<sup>47</sup> Similar kinds of clusters can be found on figs. 8.8-9, for example, but not exactly. It is virtually impossible, I believe, to correlate the texts with the objects.<sup>48</sup> We can only gain a generalised impression of the sort of meaning they might have. Individual letters, often repeated, are believed to have particular potency or to hasten the action of a spell.<sup>49</sup> They are found engraved in positive and negative on paper amulets and elsewhere (figs. 8.8-9). The form of the letters too was important as will be discussed below.

One of the most mysterious of the groups of symbols, which leads us back to al-Būnī, as they belong in the discussion of the names of God, are the 'seven magical signs'<sup>50</sup> (fig. 8.10). A description and explanation of these is given by the theologian al-Rāzī (d. 1209) as follows:<sup>51</sup> 'three sticks lined up after a seal [the so-called Solomon's

<sup>44</sup> M Seale, 'The Mysterious letters of the Qur'ān' in *Qur'ān and Bible*, London, 1978, pp. 29-46.

<sup>45</sup> They do not just appear on the seals and amulets. A bronze beast illustrated in J G C Adler, *Museum Cuficum Borgianum Velutris*, published in Rome in 1782, plate X, described as a Druze idol, shows lines of numbers and letters as well as lines of Kufic (Microfilm Bodleian Library). I am grateful to Michael Macdonald for pointing this out to me.

<sup>46</sup> E Rehatsek, 'Magic', *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. XIV, 1878-80, pp. 199-298.

<sup>47</sup> Rehatsek, 'Magic', p. 215.

<sup>48</sup> This is concurred by Savage-Smith, *Science*, p. 62.

<sup>49</sup> Canaan, 'The Decipherment', 1937, p. 96f.

<sup>50</sup> al-Būnī, *al-Shams al-Ma'ārif al-Kubrā*, Beirut, n.d., p. 86ff. There is much literature on this subject. See for example A H Winkler, *Siegel und Karacters in der Muhammidanischen Zauberei*, Berlin, Leipzig, 1930, pp. 55-149; G C Anawati, 'Le nom suprême de Dieu', *Atti del Terzo Congresso di Studi Arabi e Islamici*, Naples, 1967, pp. 20-58; J Dawkins, 'The seal of Solomon', *JRAS*, 1944, pp. 145-50; Savage-Smith, *Science*, pp. 60.

<sup>51</sup> G C Anawati, 'Le nom suprême', p. 23f. and fn 2. G C Anawati, 'Noms divins de Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Le Lawāmi' al-baiyināt fī 'l-asmā' wa 'l-ṣifāt' in *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honour of Hamilton A. Gibb*, Leiden, 1965, pp. 36-52.

seal]<sup>52</sup> at their head is like a bent head of a lance; a *mim* squashed and amputated, then a ladder which leads to every hoped for object but which is nonetheless not a ladder; four objects resembling fingers have been lined up, they point towards good things but [they are] without a fist; a *hā'* in half then a *wāw* bent over like a tube (*anbub*) of a cupper (*hijām*) but which is not a cupping glass.' His explanation is as follows: 'this is the name which is supreme in its power and if you did not know this before, know it [now] ... Here is the name of Allāh may his glory be exalted ...' Al-Rāzi goes on to describe how these signs possess seven names amongst the great names of God and seven letters which have been omitted from the *Fātiḥa*, the opening chapter of the Qur'ān. (the *sawāqit al-fātiḥa*). These letters, *fā'*, *jīm*, *shīn*, *thā'*, *zā'*, *khā'* and *zayn*, are also the beginning letters of some of the divine names of God; *Fard* (the Only One), *Jabbār* (the Omnipotent) and so on. It is also said, adds al-Rāzi, that these signs refer to the name *al-Rahmān* which may in fact be the 'greatest name' of all. However, its true meaning is unknowable, he says, except by the most holy.

Where do we find these symbols and what is their power? Solomon is believed to have exercised power over the jinn by virtue of a talismanic ring engraved with 'the most great name of God'.<sup>53</sup> But al-Rāzi's text indicates how the signs may have been used in every-day life: the presence of these signs inscribed on a boat was believed to save it from sinking, on someone's house prevented it from destruction by fire and marked on goods protected them from theft. He says they were also inscribed on seals.<sup>54</sup> Nothing on the carnelian seal illustrated in fig. 8.10 provides any clue for dating purposes. Carnelian is still used today for amulets. It is from the Christy collection and these came into the British Museum in 1878. How early can it be? Emilie Savage-Smith has suggested that these symbols, in addition to the magic squares, do not appear on objects before the 12th century. This would appear to coincide with the proliferation of magical texts beginning with that of al-Būnī's, whose *Shams al-Ma'ārif* was written in the late 12th or early 13th century, and with the interest in magical healing bowls (one of the earliest known examples of which was made for the Zengid ruler Nūr al-Dīn Zangī in 1167).<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> A five or six pointed star. The whole of the seven signs have been called 'the seven seals of Solomon', Savage-Smith, *Science*, 1997, p. 60.

<sup>53</sup> R. Irwin, *Islamic Art*, London, 1997, p. 207.

<sup>54</sup> Anawati, 'Le nom suprême', p. 26-7.

<sup>55</sup> Savage-Smith, *Science*, p. 60, and for an essay on magic-medicinal bowls, pp. 72 ff.

In addition to letters and numbers, another category of seals and amulets contains bizarre words inscribed in positive and reverse which end in *il* and resemble Hebraic words (fig. 8.11 and 12). The so-called lunette script where loops are attached to letters was also popular, many of the 'spells' in al-Būnī's *Shams al-Ma'ārif* are in this form.<sup>56</sup>

The final group of magical seals discussed here are inscribed in Arabic script in a style which Casanova first described as *Koufique linéaire*.<sup>57</sup> They are characterised by continuous lines, made up of Kufic letters, so that individual words cannot easily be differentiated, if at all.<sup>58</sup> Even when there are breaks the meaning is often difficult to fathom. The letters themselves are simply written with no ornaments; on many of the seals some letters, such as the letter *hā'*, are written in a very early form which first appears on Dome of the Rock inscriptions.<sup>59</sup> Although it is generally possible to date Arabic inscriptions from their epigraphic style because of the amount of dated or dateable material, care has to be taken with magical inscriptions. We have already alluded to the fact that the form of the letter was important in amulets and these inscriptions were often written in a deliberately archaistic manner. This is emphasised by a magic bowl published by Rehatsek<sup>60</sup> which includes panels of this script which contrasts with the cursive *naskhī* script of the rim. The contrast can be seen again on a paper amulet where there is a crude

<sup>56</sup> Irwin, *Islamic Art*, p. 205f; al-Būnī, *Shams*, p. 251, for example. J Marquès-Rivière, *Amulettes, talismans et pentacles dans les traditions orientales et occidentales*, Paris, 1950, p. 125f. Canaan, 'The Decipherment', 1938, p. 143f. Magical alphabets are found in Ibn Waḥshiya, Matton, *La Magic*, 1977, pp. 129-243.

<sup>57</sup> Casanova, M., 'Alphabets magiques arabes', *Journal Asiatique*, 1921, p. 52f. An intriguing parallel with this style of script can be made with a number of pre-Islamic Nabatean inscriptions from Sinai which, completely uncharacteristically for Nabatean inscriptions are underlined, J Entling, *Sinaitische Inschriften*, Berlin 1891, plate 6. I am grateful to Michael Macdonald for pointing this out. Unlike the Arabic examples they are legible, bearing names of persons with additional phrases such as 'May he be remembered'. Whether there is a link or this is coincidence we cannot say at present.

<sup>58</sup> Some of al-Būnī's formulae are written with an artificial baseline, for example *Shams*, p. 243.

<sup>59</sup> A Grohman, *Arabische Paläographie*, vol. II, Vienna, 1971, chart facing p. 72.

<sup>60</sup> Rehatsek, 'Magic', 1880, plate following p. 218. Similar groups of letters are found on pottery incantation bowls, J B Segal and E C D Hunter, *Catalogue of Aramaic and Mandaic Bowls in the British Museum*, London, 1998.

rendering of magical script in diagonal lines (fig. 8.13). The seals and amulets bearing these inscriptions are made from a number of different materials: carnelian, metal, with a large number in rock crystal. In the Content collection of rock crystal seals are a number of these presently incomprehensible inscriptions often engraved on both sides in reverse. One small group of them are particularly interesting because they have a standard pious inscription on one side, while on the other, are the strings of letters. Fig. 8.14, for example, has on one side the inscription 'glory to God, forgiveness belongs to God, sultans and dignitaries belong to God,' on the other, five lines of strings of Kufic letters.<sup>61</sup>

There is much yet to be learnt about this particular group of seal inscriptions regarding their meaning and function. It is not yet clear whether the fact that so many are found in rock crystal is significant. Because of the archaising nature of magical inscriptions, nor is it possible to date them with any certainty although 'early medieval'—ca. 10th–11th century—might be suggested. The examples in the Content collection and those in the Bibliothèque Nationale published by Kalus certainly bear strong similarities to each other in terms of their simple epigraphic style, the engraving technique and the cutting of the rock crystal.<sup>62</sup> When some of the configurations of letters are compared there are often similarities in the letter order. However, whether this was simply a form of *abracadabra* or whether by trying to put 'linear Kufic' inscriptions from many different contexts together and comparing them might help us crack the code, is hard to say at present.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> The only word I have been able to identify tentatively is the last which may be *al-'ajal* ('speed'), sometimes found on amulets to hurry up their efficacy, Canaan, 'The Decipherment', 1937, p. 94.

<sup>62</sup> Kalus has suggested that a group of seals with this type of inscription were made for rainmaking, L Kalus, *Catalogue des cachets, bulles et talismans Islamiques*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1981, p. 91f; L Kalus, 'Rock crystal talismans against drought' in N Brosh (ed.), *Jewellery and Goldsmithing in the Islamic World*, Jerusalem, 1987, pp. 101–5. Rock crystal and its properties is discussed by A Shalem, 'Fountains of light: the meaning of medieval Islamic rock crystal lamps', *Muqarnas* vol. XI, 1994, pp. 1–11. Regarding their provenance, I understand from Mr Content that a number have an Egyptian provenance.

<sup>63</sup> The question has been raised by colleagues as to whether they are in fact in the Arabic language. Ibn al-Nadīm in his *Fihrist*, vol. II, p. 865, in the context of magical inscriptions says, 'often these scripts were transliterations into the Arabic language so it is necessary to study them so as to make those scripts correspond with it'.

Magical or practical? Magic in one form or another is a subtle part of Muslim life. The seals and amulets that have been described here reflect the complexity but pose as many questions as they can answer. This is particularly true for those unequivocally magical seals with bizarre words and symbols. The texts provide us with no explicit rules about how they were used, only intriguing, but in the end unsatisfactory, hints generally shrouded in mystery and fantasy. However, it is also true for those apparently practical seals, used in such prosaic contexts as attachments to grain sacks, but making use of religiously charged expressions that undoubtedly had magical connotations in a wide variety of contexts.



Fig. 8.1 Lead sealing inscribed in Kufic script  
'sovereignty belongs to God', ca. 7th-8th century.  
Dimensions: 1.6 x 1.4 x 0.1cm  
BM (OA) 1983 5-172



Fig. 8.2 Quartz red jasper seal inscribed in reverse in Kufic script with a  
phrase from the Qur'ān (sūra 33 v. 25): 'they cannot know my end (i.e. my  
death), God knows it all and is able to enforce His will.'  
Dimensions: 1.9 x 1.4 x 0.5cm  
BM (OA) 1880 3636 Masson collection  
(Image reversed)



Fig. 8.3 Quartz, sardonyx South Arabian seal  
engraved in reverse with an eagle grasping the  
tail of a serpent, Nadim in epigraphic South  
Arabian and around the sides a ca. 8th-century  
Kufic inscription, 'O Lord, glory to Thee, keep  
me from the punishment and the fire.'  
Dimensions: 1.7 x 1.25 x 0.6cm  
BM (WAA) 120304  
(Image reversed)

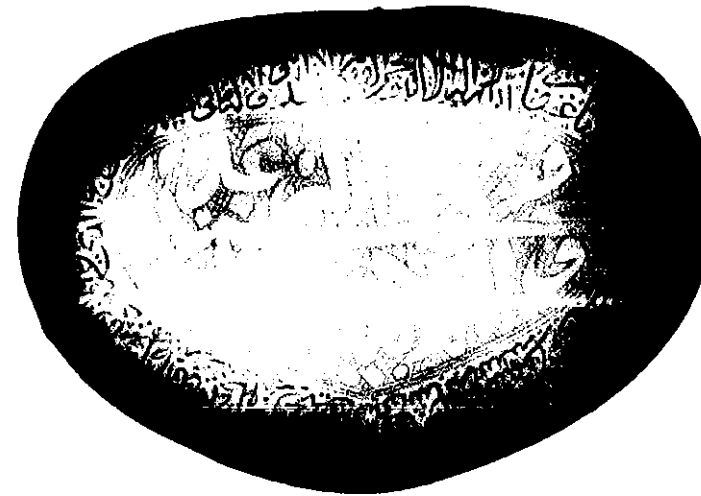


Fig. 8.4 Quartz, chalcedony amulet engraved in positive in  
cursive script with Qur'anic inscriptions, margin: sūra 2 v. 255  
and centre sūra 13 v. 13, ca. 18th century.  
Dimensions: 4.1 x 3.2cm  
BM (OA) Sloane amulet 8



Fig. 8.5 Cowrie shell amulet engraved in positive with the words 'except He the Living' from Qur'an sūra 2 v. 255 ca. 8th century.  
Dimensions: max. length 1.7cm  
BM (OA) 1861 6-28 4

Fig. 8.6 Brass seal engraved in reverse on both sides in cursive scripts. In the centre the magical square known as *budūh* around the margin six Qur'ānic verses associated with healing, sūra 16 v. 69, 10 v. 57, 9 v. 14, 17 v. 82, 26 v. 80, 41 v. 44, 16 v. 11.  
Dimensions: 7.0 x 0.3cm  
BM (OA) 1893 2-15 1  
(Image reversed)

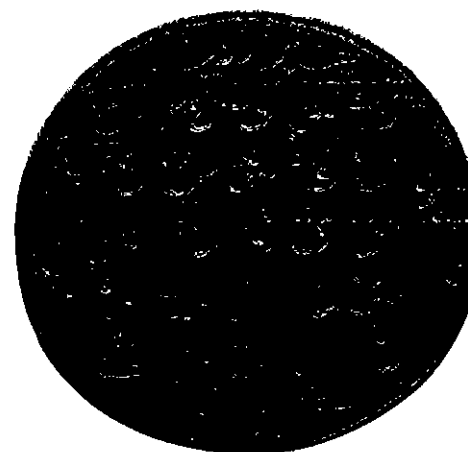
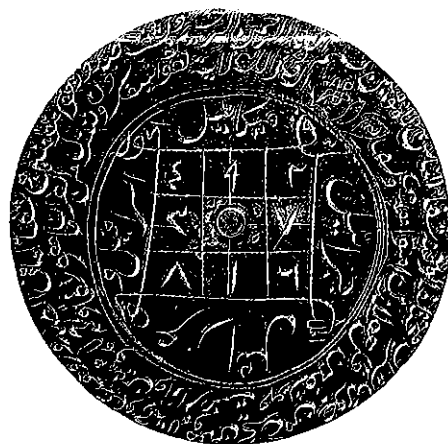


Fig. 8.7 Brass seal engraved in reverse with a 5 x 5 magical square. In each of the individual squares are pairs of letters which include the 'mysterious letters' of the Qur'an. Around the sides are the names of the archangels.  
Dimensions: 4.5 x 4.5 x 0.2cm  
BM (OA) 1893 2-5 101  
(Image reversed)



Fig. 8.8 Lapis lazuli engraved with horizontal lines consisting of a mixture of numbers and letters. It is difficult to be certain whether it is a positive or negative inscription. Round seals of this kind are generally thought to date from about the 15th century.  
Dimensions: 1.1 x 0.3cm  
BM (OA) 14278

Fig. 8.9 Quartz, carnelian engraved in reverse with horizontal lines consisting of letter and numbers. It also includes the word *ja'ala* on the fourth line.

'Abdallāh Gūchāni has suggested that this may be an abbreviated form of the phrase *al-dunyā sā'ah wa ja'alahā ṭa'a* ('the world is transitory and He has imposed obedience on it').

Dimensions:  
1.4 x 1.3 x 0.4cm  
BM (OA) Marsden 8  
(Image reversed)

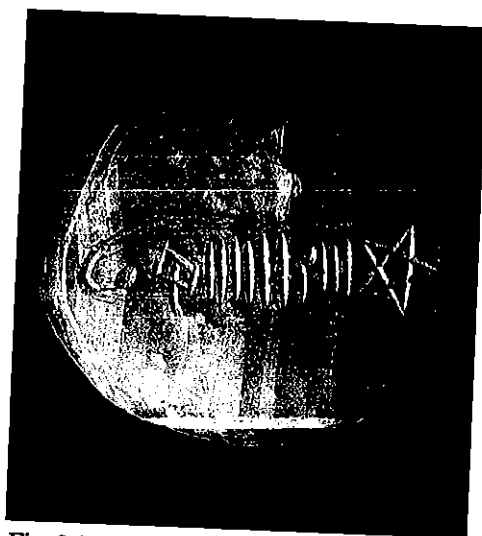


Fig. 8.10 Quartz, carnelian engraved in positive with the 'seven magical signs'.

Dimensions: 1.5 x 1.2 x 0.3cm  
BM (OA) 1878 12-20 68 Christy collection



Fig. 8.11 Rock crystal engraved both sides in reverse, the side shown here has three lines with bizarre names ending in *il*.

Dimensions: 2.2 x 2.1 x 0.6cm

BM (OA) 1883 10-31 16 presented by Revd Greville Chester

(Image reversed)



Fig. 8.12 Obsidian engraved in positive with invocations to bizarrely named angels or jinns.

Dimensions: 3.5 x 0.6cm

BM (OA) OA + 11435



Fig. 8.13 Paper amulet from a silver Yemeni amulet holder, it is crudely written in black and pink ink which has run in places. The inscriptions include the 'seven magical signs' and 'Solomon's seal' separately, a 4 x 4 magical square and bands of diagonal lines with numbers and letters.

Dimensions: 40 x 8cm

Presented by Michael Macdonald



Fig. 8.14 a-c Rock crystal seal engraved on both sides in reverse. On one side, the inscription reads 'Glory to God' (*al-'izzatu lillāh*), 'Forgiveness belongs to God' (*al-'idhratu lillāh*), 'Sultans belong to God' (*al-salāṭin lillāh*), 'Elders belong to God' (*al-kibriyā lillāh*), 'Greatness belongs to God' (*al-'izmatu lillāh*), while on the other are strings of letters in Kufic scripts. Dimensions: 2.4 x 1.4 x 0.6cm  
Collection Derek Content  
(a = seal, b and c = impressions)

## 7

## WEATHER FORECASTING IN THE ARABIC WORLD

Charles Burnett

The prediction of the weather is a subject which has always concerned a wide spectrum of society, from the farmer preparing for the seasonal rains, and the sea-captain setting sail when there is a prospect of good weather, to the general going into battle with a favourable wind. Many kinds of prediction are based on everyday experience or the cumulation of popular wisdom. But in the Arabic world an attempt was made to establish weather forecasting as a systematic science, on a par with medicine, music and astrology, in which mathematical principles are applied to physical effects.<sup>1</sup> It is to this 'science' of weather forecasting that this article will be devoted, taking as its source material the large number of texts on the subject written in Arabic, and the Hebrew and Latin writings which derive from them.<sup>2</sup>

In Arabic the science is called *'ilm aḥdāth al-jaww* ('the science of the occurrences in the atmosphere'). It reached its fully-fledged form in the mid-ninth century in the works of the 'Philosopher of the Arabs', Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kindī (ca. 800–after 864). Several strands can be seen as contributing to the science, all having ancient roots. The oldest are the weather forecasts included in Mesopotamian omen texts.<sup>3</sup> In these the positions of heavenly bodies are simply juxtaposed to meteorological events, without any attempt to draw up universal rules. A similar juxtaposition of astronomical and meteorological events can be found in Pliny, *Natural History*, Book 18, which includes chapters on forecasts from the Sun, from the Moon, and from the stars. Pliny's principle

<sup>1</sup> For fuller details concerning the topics covered in this essay, see Gerrit Bos and Charles Burnett, *Scientific Weather Forecasting in the Middle Ages: The Writings of al-Kindī* (London and New York, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> For Arabic texts on weather forecasting see Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums. VII: Astrologie-Meteorologie und Verwandtes bis ca. 430 H* (Leiden, 1979) where 69 texts are enumerated. The fullest list of Latin translations of Arabic texts and other Latin works on weather forecasting of the Middle Ages (162 texts) is that of Stuart Jenks, 'Astrometeorology in the Middle Ages', *Isis*, 74 (1983), 185–210.

<sup>3</sup> H. Hunger, 'Astrologische Wettervorhersagen', *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 66 (1976), 234–60.



source is a text belonging to the Lyceum (though probably not by Aristotle himself), 'On signs (indicating weather)', which included the astronomical signs alongside indicators from animals, plants and inanimate objects.<sup>4</sup> For example, among the signs of rain are ants carrying their eggs out of their nests and a cow chewing its foreleg. Astronomical signs include 'when the sky has a reddish appearance before sunrise, this indicates rain within three days, if not on that very day', and 'in the [constellation of] the Crab there are two stars called the Asses, and the nebulous space between them is called the Manger: if this appears dark, it is a sign of rain.' The whole of *On signs* was translated into Latin to complete the corpus of Aristotle's works on natural philosophy by Bartholomew of Messina in the mid-thirteenth century.<sup>5</sup> But several of its signs reappear in Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, the second century AD book on astrology, and via this route or others, are found in Arabic contexts. The very title 'signs' indicates that these predictions were not concerned with causes, and they could be arranged in any order.

A more orderly kind of weather forecasting was that based on the calendar, in which changes of weather were associated with the risings and setting of different stars and constellations through the course of the solar year. In the ancient Greek context this is called a 'parapēgma', so-called because the first *parapēgmata* were stone inscriptions set up in the city square, showing the risings and settings of constellations and the associated weather, 'fixed beside' (from *parapēgnūmi*) which were pegs indicating the corresponding dates of the civil calendar. A written form of the *parapēgma* appears in Greek in Ptolemy's *Phaseis* and works attributed to Quintilian and Aetios of Amida, and in Latin in Columella's *De re rustica* and Pliny's *Natural History*, book 18.<sup>6</sup> A parallel can be seen in the Arabic world. Already in pre-Islamic times the Arabs had observed twenty-eight fixed stars which went in pairs: when one star set at dawn, its opposite rose. This setting star marked the beginning of a *naw'* (plural *anwā'*) which lasted until the setting of the next prominent star, thirteen days later. Each *naw'* had weather characteristics of its own which lasted for a certain

<sup>4</sup> Pseudo-Aristotle, *De signis*, ed. and trans. A. Hort, in Theophrastus, *Enquiry into Plants*, trans. A. Hort (London/New York, 1916), vol. 2, 391–433, and P. Cronin, 'The Authorship and Sources of the *Peri semeion* Ascribed to Theophrastus', in Theophrastus: *His Psychological, Doxographical, and Scientific Writings*, ed. W.W. Fortenbaugh and D. Gutas [Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities, 5] (New Brunswick, NJ, 1992), 306–45.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Kley, *Theophrasts Metaphysisches Bruchstück und die Schrift περὶ σημείων in der lateinischen Übersetzung des Bartholomaeus von Messina* [Inaugural-Dissertation, Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität] (Berlin, 1936).

<sup>6</sup> Charles Burnett, 'An Unknown Latin Version of an Ancient *parapēgma*: the Weather-forecasting Stars in the *Iudicia* of Pseudo-Ptolemy', in *Making Instruments Count: Essays on Historical Scientific Instruments Presented to Gerard L'Estrange Turner*, ed. R.G.W. Anderson, Jim A. Bennett, and William F. Ryan (Aldershot, 1993), 27–41.

number of days from its beginning (or, according to some, until the beginning of the next *naw'*). This led Charles Pellat to describe this system as 'une météorologie rudimentaire'.<sup>7</sup> These thirteen-day periods (with one fourteen-day period) divided the solar year of 365 days into 28 divisions, which provided an alternative to the twelve divisions of the signs of the zodiac.<sup>8</sup> Unlike the zodiac-divisions, however, the *anwā'* were always intimately associated with the weather. The preface to an Arabic calendar in use in Córdoba in the late tenth century (AD 961) makes this clear:

[The calendar includes] the theories of the [pre-Islamic] Arabs concerning the *anwā'* and rains, because they were particularly concerned with determining the date of the rising and setting of the stars, and to distinguish those which brought rain from those which did not keep their promises, in order to decide where to move their camps and look for food. ... They considered that the *naw'* of each star was necessarily accompanied by rain, cold, wind or heat. ... Those which they found bringing rain they compared to fertile women, those not bring rain, to sterile [women] and useless men ... The pre-Islamic authors frequently mention the *anwā'* in their poems and proverbs ...<sup>9</sup>

When they see lightning flashing in the direction of the south and its neighbouring regions, the Arabs [i.e. pre-Islamic Arabs] take this as a good omen for irrigating-rain because they are certain that it accompanies irrigation. When it flashes from the direction of the north, they call it 'deceiving'. When they see redness on the horizon at the time of the rising or setting of the Sun together with thick clouds, they take this as a good omen for fertility. When they see redness without clouds or with little cloud they posit with this drought.<sup>10</sup>

As an example one may take the *anwā'* of April:

*Naw'* of al-Simāk al-A'zal [α *Virginis*, Spica], which lasts five nights ... It is a *naw'* abundant [in rain], which rarely deceives. The rising of its opposite – Baṭn al-Hūt [β *Andromedae*, Mirach] – is at dawn. The Arabs say that the rain of this

<sup>7</sup> *Le Calendrier de Cordoue*, ed. R. Dozy, revised Charles Pellat (Leiden, 1961), x. See also Daniel Martín Varisco, 'The Origin of the *Anwā'* in Arabic Tradition', *Journal for the History of Arabic Science*, 9 (1991), 69–100, reprinted in D.M. Varisco, *Medieval Folk Astronomy and Agriculture in Arabia and the Yemen* [Variorum Reprints] (Aldershot, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Charles Burnett, 'Lunar Astrology: The Varieties of Texts Using Lunar Mansions, with Emphasis on *Jafar Indus*', in *Micrologus XII: Il sole e la luna* (Turnhout, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> *Le Calendrier de Cordoue* (above note 7), 4–7. The proverbs mentioned here are of the same genre as the weather signs referred to above, and include 'redness on the horizon' as a sign of coming rain.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–9.

*naw'* reunites the *khaṭā'it*: a *khaṭā'it* is a land which does not receive rain, placed between two lands which receive it. Its *naw'* belongs to those of spring, and its rain is called *ṣayyif*.<sup>11</sup>

Distinctive of these *anwā'* texts is the fact that the star was normally depicted graphically in respect to its neighbouring conspicuous stars (the 'asterism'), so that it could easily be recognized in the night sky. Their observation was straightforward in any society in which the sky was usually unclouded, and did not require sophisticated knowledge of astronomy or mathematics.

But there exists also a more learned tradition which derives its scientific bases from Aristotle's physics, and from the mathematical tradition which culminated in Ptolemy's *Almagest*. A good starting-point for investigating this tradition is the *Meteorologica* of Aristotle, which was well-known in Arabic, both through a paraphrase made by Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq, and through a more literal translation by Yahyā ibn al-Bīṭrīq. In this work Aristotle had promised to deal with

everything which happens naturally, but with a regularity less than that of the first of the elements of bodies (i.e. *the fifth element*), and which takes place in the region which borders most nearly on the movement of the stars: e.g. the Milky Way, comets, shooting stars and meteors, all phenomena that may be regarded as common to air and water ... and the causes of winds and earthquakes.<sup>12</sup>

Aristotle explains how meteorological phenomena are the product of mixtures of the four primary qualities, the hot, the cold, the dry and the moist. Rain is caused by vapour (the product of the cold and the moist) rising, cooling, condensing again as a result of the loss of heat and the altitude, and hence turning from air into water, and falling again onto the earth. On the other hand, 'exhalation' (the product of the hot and the dry), on being moved, becomes wind. He then explains meteorological phenomena one by one, in terms of the movements of the four qualities, and in regard to how they appear to the sight.

Two things are to be noticed here about the *Meteorologica*. First, that it is the most 'astrological' of Aristotle's works, in that it contains the most explicit statements that the heavenly bodies influence sublunar events.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, its subject-matter is stated to follow on from studies of 'number, kinds and mutual transformations of the four elements, and growth and decay in general' (i.e.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 66–7.

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, ed. and trans. H.D.P. Lee [Loeb Classical Library] (Cambridge, MA, 1952), I, i, 338b19–339a1. For the Arabic tradition, see P. Lettinck, *Aristotle's Meteorology and its Reception in the Arab World* (Leiden, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> See *Meteorologica*, I, ii, 339a23–4 and 339a28–33, and I, iii, 341a18–10.

arithmetic, and the subject-matter of Aristotle's *Physics*, *On the Heavens*, and *On Generation and Corruption*). But the *Meteorologica* is not concerned primarily with weather forecasting. It seems that Aristotle intentionally reserved a general survey of weather signs for a separate work, traces of which survive in the abovementioned 'On signs'.<sup>14</sup> However, one has to wait until the ninth-century development of Peripatetic philosophy in an Islamic context before one finds a serious attempt to create a science of weather-prediction that is distinct from meteorology.

We owe this development to Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kindī. Al-Kindī was the leading figure in a group of scholars (the 'al-Kindī circle') who were involved in translating texts of Greek philosophy and adapting them to an Islamic context.<sup>15</sup> He wrote most of his philosophical works in the form of 'letters' (*rasā'il*), or essays, on particularly philosophical problems. Among these letters are several devoted to the subject of rain: e.g. 'On the reason why in some places it does not rain', 'On the reason for the formation of clouds', and 'The cause of thunder, lightning, snow, cold, lightning-bolts and rain'.<sup>16</sup> Two substantial letters are specifically on weather forecasting: 'On moistures and rain', also entitled 'The Sufficient One', which he composed for his student Ḥabīb, and 'On the causes of the forces attributed to the higher bodies, which indicate the origin of rains, by the decree of God'. Unfortunately neither of these texts has been identified in the original Arabic, but there exist (1) very literal translations of both letters in Hebrew, made in 1314–15 by the prolific Provençal translator of Arabic scientific and philosophical texts, Kalonymus ben Kalonymus ben Me'ir; (2) a Latin version, titled *De mutatione temporum*, of a treatise in eight chapters which had probably already been compiled in Arabic from the two letters, and has some extra material from authors other than al-Kindī. The date of the Latin translation and the identity of the translator are not known, but the earliest manuscript dates from ca. 1250. In both languages the Letters were popular, surviving in Hebrew in a dozen manuscripts, in Latin

<sup>14</sup> Occasionally Aristotle refers in the *Meteorologica* to phenomena as *signs* of the weather that follows; e.g. in respect to comets and halos round the Sun, but these passages do not fit into the general scheme of the *Meteorologica*. Note, too, that the fourth (last) book of the *Meteorologica* has always been regarded as being concerned with a different subject from that of the first three, and may originally have been a separate work.

<sup>15</sup> See Gerhard Endress, 'The Circle of al-Kindī', in *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism*, ed. G. Endress and R. Kruk (Leiden, 1997), 43–76, and Peter Adamson, *Plotinus Arabus* (London, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> These works are listed in the tenth-century *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist* (Cairo, 1928), 374 and 377–9. Summaries of the surviving letters are included in William John Sersen, 'Arab Meteorology from Pre-Islamic Times to the Thirteenth Century AD' [unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London] (London, 1976), 220–6.

in thirty manuscripts and two Renaissance editions.<sup>17</sup>

Al-Kindī begins his first letter by saying that he will explain the principles of meteorology, the phenomena of the atmosphere and the weather, and the causes of moisture, dryness, heat and cold. This list of topics, and his specific mention of meteorology (*al-āthār al-ʿulwīya*, literally 'higher impressions') might lead us to expect that he was putting into his own words the doctrines of Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, whose Arabic title was also *al-āthār al-ʿulwīya*. There is no doubt that he uses Aristotle's work, probably in the translation of Yahyā ibn al-Biṭrīq who belonged to his circle. But, rather than summarising the text, al-Kindī brings into service meteorological theories and doctrines from other works by Aristotle, for predicting changes in the weather.

Al-Kindī's argument runs as follows. The heavenly bodies cause heat by their movement. The amount of heat depends on the speed and the closeness of that movement, and our latitude on earth. The Sun's movement is most influential, and it is easy to see how its distance from our zenith and its position on its eccentric circle<sup>18</sup> causes the variation of temperature between the four seasons. The fact that every year is not the same is due to the planets, whose influence, again, increases with their closeness to the earth as they go round their orbits. Following a medical tradition that was originally developed by Galen, al-Kindī sets up a detailed scheme for measuring the amount of heat generated by the planets and the Sun together. Each elemental quality is measured on a scale of one to four. 'Hot to the end of the fourth degree' signifies the maximum degree of heat; 'hot to the beginning of the first degree' the least. If one can work out the planetary combination that gives the maximum and minimum heat, then one can grade the intermediate planetary combinations correspondingly. The simplest of these combinations is taken as an example: each of the planets in each of the four quadrants of its circle, both at its apogee and at its perigee, combined with the Sun in each of its four quadrants (= 32 combinations altogether). But other factors should also be added, such as the number of planets in combination and the duration of the effect (e.g., if two hot periods follow each other the second will be hotter than the first). To these factors must be added the situation of the Moon, since it has a particularly close association with earth and water: its effects depend on which of twelve positions it has in respect to the Sun (its 'phases'). The heat of a region, in turn, affects the wind-direction. For heat causes air to expand, cold to contract. So the expanding air in a hot region will stream towards the contract-

<sup>17</sup> Bos and Burnett, *Scientific Weather Forecasting in the Middle Ages* (above note 1) includes editions and translations of the Hebrew texts, and an edition of the *De mutatione temporum*.

<sup>18</sup> The Sun is imagined as being carried round the earth on a circle whose centre is not the centre of the earth.

ing air in a cold region.

Up to now, al-Kindī has rigorously followed Aristotelian principles. He has avoided attributing elemental qualities to the planets, which would have been contrary to Aristotle's doctrine (which he espouses) that the universe beyond the sphere of the Moon consists of a fifth essence, and therefore cannot be hot, cold, dry or moist. Instead, he has attributed celestial influence entirely to the movement of the heavenly bodies or to the relationship between them as expressed in geometrical terms (trine aspect, quartile aspect, opposition etc.). But whilst he has been faithful to Aristotelian principles of physics, he has not taken his account of the causes of changes of temperature and of winds from Aristotle himself. His explanation of wind direction is, rather, closer to that of Theophrastus,<sup>19</sup> while his description of the twelve lunar phases can be found in the work of one of the first generation of astrologers to write in Arabic: 'Umar ibn al-Farrukhān al-Ṭabarī (late 8th century AD).<sup>20</sup>

Much of the rest of the first letter gives weather forecasting based on astrological lore current in his time. Al-Kindī himself wrote several texts specifically on astrology, and he refers his reader to his own fuller discussions of the subject. He admits that, although the planets are all made of a fifth essence, nevertheless they have individual elemental natures, so that Saturn is predominantly cold and dry, Jupiter hot and moist, Mars hot and dry, Venus cold and moist, and Mercury cold and slightly dry. Moreover, they have effects depending on their position in respect to the signs of the zodiac in which they are 'at home' (i.e. their domiciles or houses). One theory which is found in several astrological texts and reproduced here is that of the 'opening of the doors' (*fath al-abwāb*) whose effect is coincidentally the same as that of the popular expression: 'the heavens opened'. This is based on the conjunctions and aspects of the planets whose houses are opposite each other (e.g. Sun and Moon with Saturn; Jupiter with Mercury; and Venus with Mars). The letter ends with a collection of weather signs, most of which have been taken from Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, but they include others of apparently a more popular native Arabic source that recur in the Calendar of Córdoba:

Lightning in the South always indicates the occurrence of rains ... Similarly, redness at sunrise and sunset with clouds at the very edge of the horizon is a sign of water. When the redness is accompanied by lightning in the north, but without clouds, it is a sign of dryness ... When you see the fixed stars brighter

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Theophrastus, *De ventis*, ed. V. Coutant and V.L. Eichenlaub (Notre Dame, IN, and London, 1975), ch. 10, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> 'Umar ibn al-Farrukhān al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb mukhtaṣar al-masā'il* (Book of the Abbreviation of the Questions), chapter 84, edited in Appendix IVB of Bos and Burnett, *Scientific Weather Forecasting in the Middle Ages* (above note 1), 440 and 447.

and larger than usual, it indicates a wind that will arise in whichever angle of the north and south they are in. When they are dense and dark, it indicates waters and clouds.<sup>21</sup>

Al-Kindī's second letter deals with a topic which relates more directly to the information in the Calendar of Córdoba: namely, the *anwā'*. He gives the same pre-Islamic names to the twenty-eight *anwā'* as those found in the Calendar of Córdoba, calling them the 'lunar mansions' (*manāzil al-qamar*). Like the *anwā'*, the lunar mansions are seen as pre-eminently providing information concerning changes in the weather. However, the situation is complicated by the fact that, aside from pre-Islamic lore, there was another available source for the belief that twenty-eight lunar divisions of the zodiac indicated the weather. This was the Indian doctrine of *nakṣatras*, which were twenty-seven (sometimes twenty-eight) divisions marked out by the Moon in its monthly course, classified into 'fixed, sharp, fierce, swift, soft, common' and 'unstable'.<sup>22</sup> They, too, were taken into consideration in weather forecasting in Indian astrology. For example, clouds are said to 'conceive' when the Moon is in certain *nakṣatras*, and rain falls when the Moon is in particular *nakṣatras* in particular months.<sup>23</sup> Al-Kindī, like the Indians, but unlike the authors of the *anwā'*-texts, classifies the lunar mansions. But his classification scheme is totally different: namely, into moist, very moist, dry and moderate, and no textual similarities with Indian doctrine have yet been found. Nevertheless, al-Kindī specifically states that he is reproducing an 'Indian system',<sup>24</sup> and this statement is corroborated by the fact that we find exactly the same 'doctrine of the Indians' in another Arabic text, independent of that of al-Kindī, which has survived only in two Latin translations, one called 'The Book of Rains' of Jafar Indus', the other known only by its incipit '*Sapientes Indiae...*' ('The Wisemen of India...').<sup>25</sup>

According to this doctrine, observations must be made four times a month, and the weather is indicated by the nature of the mansion in which the Moon is located at that time, as well as its relationship to the planets. For example:

<sup>21</sup> Bos and Burnett, *Scientific Weather Forecasting in the Middle Ages* (above note 1), 201.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. al-Bīrūnī, *India*, trans. C. E. Sachau (2 vols., London 1910), ch. 56, II, 81-9, and David Pingree, 'The Indian and Pseudo-Indian Passages in Greek and Latin Astronomical and Astrological Texts', *Viator*, 7 (1976), 141-95, esp. 174-6. The variation between 27 and 28 mansions is discussed both by al-Bīrūnī and by al-Kindī.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. the weather predictions in the *Bṛhatsamhitā* of Varāhamihira (6th century AD), trans. N.C. Iyer, 2nd ed. (New Delhi, 1987), chapters 3, 21-8 and 34-5.

<sup>24</sup> Bos and Burnett, *Scientific Weather Forecasting in the Middle Ages* (above note 1), 253.

<sup>25</sup> Both texts are edited in Burnett, 'Lunar Astrology' (above note 8). The situation is complicated by the fact that the work of Jafar Indus' is said to have been 'improved and abbreviated by the Cyllenian Mercury' (i.e., Hermes). A Hermetic route for this 'Indian' material is not implausible, since the 28 lunar mansions are also characteristic of Hermetic works on using talismans.

When the Moon enters a moist mansion and is aspected by a planet or in conjunction with it, it indicates rainfall ... When the planet is Saturn, the rain will be weak and quiet; when it is Mars, it indicates thunder, lightning, rain and hail, when it is Mercury, there will be rain, a strong wind and intermittent, very changeable rain. When the Sun and the Moon are in one mansion, it indicates rain with large drops and hail.<sup>26</sup>

Al-Kindī started off in his first Letter on weather forecasting with the aim of replacing 'the confusing and erroneous arguments' of his predecessors with 'clear proofs and syllogisms'. He could not sustain this scientific method, but, as we have seen, resorted to an eclecticism in which he combined Aristotelian physics with popular lore, astrological doctrine and a system of the Indians. Nevertheless, he tries to distance himself from astrology and make weather forecasting, as a 'spiritual' science, the culmination of philosophical study. For, he says, 'one only deserves to be called a "philosopher" when one has acquired comprehensive knowledge of meteorology and the effects of the heavens,' which can only be reached after learning the mathematical and physical sciences.<sup>27</sup> The majority of works on weather forecasting in Arabic were, in fact, by astrologers. These included not only 'Umar ibn al-Farrukhān (whose doctrine of twelve lunar phases appears in al-Kindī's work), but also 'Umar's associate Māshā'allāh, and al-Kindī's colleague, Abū Ma'shar.<sup>28</sup> The translation of these astrological texts into Hebrew and Latin from the tenth century onwards ensured the continuation of the genre, and no medieval compendium of astrology was complete without a section on weather forecasting.<sup>29</sup>

The Latin version of al-Kindī's two letters (*De mutatione temporum*) also brought the text into the field of astrology, by omitting much of the theoretical and philosophical material and including further excerpts from 'Umar's *Book of the Abbreviation of the Questions*, Māshā'allāh and Abū Ma'shar. Nevertheless, the special nature of al-Kindī's text was recognised. It provided the main source for Firminus de Bellavalle's *De mutatione aeris* (mid-fourteenth century), which was printed in 1485 as a work whose method was as much 'meteorological as

<sup>26</sup> Bos and Burnett, *Scientific Weather Forecasting in the Middle Ages* (above note 1), 254-6.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 161-2. A more detailed account of the order in which the sciences should be studied is given at the beginning of his second Letter: *ibid.*, 243-5.

<sup>28</sup> Several of these texts are included as appendices in Bos and Burnett, *Scientific Weather Forecasting in the Middle Ages* (above note 1), 385-466.

<sup>29</sup> E.g., the late twelfth-century treatise *Book of the Nine Judges: Liber Novem Iudicum* (Venice, 1507), the late thirteenth-century treatise by Guido Bonatti, *Decem tractatus astronomiae* (Venice, 1506), and, from the fourteenth century, Leopold of Austria's *Compilatio de astrorum scientia* (Augsburg, 1489) all devote their last section to weather forecasting.

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astrological'.<sup>30</sup> Al-Kindī's work itself was singled out by biographers, from the author of the *Speculum astronomiae* in the mid-thirteenth century to Bernardino Baldi in his bibliography of mathematicians (1588), for description and praise.<sup>31</sup> And it is perhaps not a coincidence that Girolamo Cardano, just before he lists al-Kindī amongst the twelve 'outstanding men in the scientific disciplines', exalts weather forecasting in terms that al-Kindī would have approved of:

The noblest part [of the science of nature] is that which teaches how to know in advance the nature of the weather and the temperament of the air. For it is useful to farmers, sailors, merchants, generals—in short, it is both a delight and a boon to the whole human race.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> [Firminus de Bellavalle], *Opusculum repertorii pronosticon (De mutatione aeris)* (Venice, 1485), without the name of the author. Rubric to the edition made by Erhard Ratdolt in Venice in 1485: *Opusculum repertorii pronosticon in mutationes aeris tam via astrologica quam meteorologica uti sapientes experientia comperientes voluerunt* ('The little work collecting prognostications concerning changes in the air, using a method as meteorological as it is astrological, according to the opinion of wise men who make discoveries through their experience').

<sup>31</sup> *Speculum astronomiae*, ed. P. Zambelli in *The Speculum Astronomiae and its Enigma* (Dordrecht, 1992), 230–2 and Bernardino Baldi, *Le vite de' matematici*, ed. Elio Nenci (Milan, 1998), 118–21. See Charles Burnett, 'Al-Kindī in the Renaissance', in *Sapientiam amemus: Humanismus und Aristotelismus in der Renaissance. Festschrift für Eckhard Kessler zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Paul Richard Blum (Munich, 1999), 13–30.

<sup>32</sup> Hieronymus Cardanus, *De subtilitate* (Nuremberg, 1550), XVI, 310–311.

## ISLAMIC GEOMANCY AND A THIRTEENTH-CENTURY DIVINATORY DEVICE: ANOTHER LOOK

Emilie Savage-Smith and Marion B. Smith

THE FOCUS OF THIS STUDY is an Islamic metal tablet from the thirteenth century AD in the possession of the British Museum (Department of Oriental Antiquities, Inv. No. 188.5-26.1).<sup>1</sup> The analysis of this unique device attempts to place it within the context of Islamic geomantic theory, practice, and historical development. The authors gratefully acknowledge the support of the G.E. von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, both for the initial study and publication and for this opportunity to reprint major portions of the original monograph with corrections and updating to incorporate material published in the intervening years.<sup>2</sup>

### I. Survey of Islamic Sources and Traditions of Geomancy

The art of divination known in the West as geomancy appears to be a distinctly Islamic development which later reached the Byzantine and Latin worlds. The term 'geomancy' comes from the Latin word *geomantia*,<sup>3</sup> possibly first used by

<sup>1</sup> For a complete list of earlier illustrations and discussions of this device, see our monograph, E. Savage-Smith and M.B. Smith, *Islamic Geomancy and a Thirteenth-Century Divinatory Device* [Studies in Near Eastern Culture and Society, 2] (Malibu, CA 1980), vii, notes 1 and 2. It was also exhibited in Paris in 2001–2; see *l'Orient de Saladin l'art des Ayyoubides. Exposition présentée à l'Institut du monde arabe, Paris du 23 octobre 2001 au 10 mars 2002* (Paris, 2001), 210 item 222.

<sup>2</sup> The authors wish to thank those who have contributed corrections and suggestions following the initial publication. These include Lawrence I. Conrad, Toufic Fahd, Helmut Gätje, Bernard Goldstein, Bruce Inksetter, David King, Paul Kunitzsch, and Josef van Ess.

<sup>3</sup> Isidore of Seville (d. AD 636) used the term *geomantia* in his *Etymologiarum*, Lib. VIII, ix, 12–13, where he cites the Roman scholar Varro (d. 27 BC) as saying that divination was divided into four categories corresponding to the four elements: earth, water, air, and fire: *Varro dicit divinationis quattuor esse genera, terram, equam, aerem et ignem. Hinc geomantiam, hydromantiam, aeromantiam, pyromantiam dictam*. Of these four divinatory arts, only hydromancy, however, is actually described by Isidore, the other three – geomantia, aeromantia, and pyromantia – being coined to complete the parallel. In any case, the use of the term *geomantia* in this context, sometimes interpreted as divination from earthquakes or other geological phenomena, has no connection with and seems to have had no influence upon the history of the Islamic divinatory art 'ilm al-raml.

Hugo Sanctallensis (Hugh of Santella), working at Tarazona in Aragon in the twelfth century,<sup>4</sup> as a translation of the Arabic term *'ilm al-raml* 'the science of the sand,' the most common name in Islam for this art.<sup>5</sup> The origins of this system of divination prior to the Islamic era are shrouded in various traditions. The most common traditional account places the origin of the art with the archangel Gabriel (Jabrā'il) who taught the practice to Idrīs.<sup>6</sup> The latter was a common name to which to attribute authority in occult and divinatory subjects, and Idrīs is frequently cited as an authority on geomancy.<sup>7</sup> Idrīs is then said to have taught Ṭumṭum al-Hindī, another legendary figure very frequently cited by geomantic authors.<sup>8</sup> Other legendary and quasi-legendary figures, such as Hermes and the prophet Daniel, are also occasionally cited as geomantic authorities.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For a survey of extant Latin treatises, see Thérèse Charmasson, *Recherches sur une technique divinatoire. la géomancie dans l'occident médiéval* [Hautes Études Médiévales et Modernes, 44] (Paris, 1980). See also Laurel Means, 'A Translation of Martin of Spain's *De geomancia*' in *Popular and Practical Science of Medieval England*, ed. Lister M. Matheson [Medieval Texts and Studies, 11] (East Lansing MI, 1994), 61-121.

<sup>5</sup> Other Arabic terms were occasionally employed as well, such as *ṣarb al-raml* 'the striking of sand' or *khaff al-raml* 'the line of sand'.

<sup>6</sup> For the importance in Islamic thought of the archangel Gabriel, who is the bearer of revelations, appearing in the form of an ordinary man to all but the Prophet, see J. Pedersen, 'Jabrā'il' in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 11 vols. [hereafter *EP*] (Leiden, 1960-2002), II, 362-4. The name Idrīs is probably to be identified with the Biblical Enoch rather than with Hermes Trismegistus; see G. Vajda, 'Idrīs' in *EP*, III, 1030-1. For the legend of Idrīs and Gabriel and the origin of geomancy, see 'Abd al-Rahīm al-Jawbarī, *Kitāb al-Mukhtār fī kashf al-asrār* (Cairo, n.d. [1918]).

<sup>7</sup> For example, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Oriental Collections, MS Arab. f.36 and MS Marsh 216; Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MS Mq. 49, fols. 68b-213b (Ahlwardt no. 4201), and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MSS arabe 2631 and arabe 2632.

<sup>8</sup> Alchemical, lapidary, and talismanic Arabic treatises are also attributed to this figure. See A. Hauber, 'Ṭumṭum (Ṭimṭim) = Δανδαιμύς = Dindymus?', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 63 (1909), 457-72; and I. Goldziher, 'Ṭumṭum al-Hindī', *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 13 (1910), cols. 59-61. For a suggestion of a possible confusion between Hindī and *hindasi* (geometer), see Carra de Vaux, 'La géomancie chez les arabes' in Paul Tannery, *Mémoires Scientifiques*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1920), IV, 299-318, esp. 303. See also F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, IV: *Alchemie-Chemie-Botanik-Agrikultur bis ca 430 H.* (Leiden, 1971), 118-9; and M. Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam* [Handbuch der Orientalistik, I, vi, 2] (Leiden, 1972), 298-9. Willy Hartner in a book review suggests that Ṭumṭum may be identified as Kanakah, see *Der Islam* 43 (1967), 174-80.

<sup>9</sup> For Hermes as an authority, see *Lectura Geomantia*, ed. Thérèse Charmasson in *Hermetis Trismegisti Astrologica et Divinatoria*, ed. G. Bos, C. Burnett, T. Charmasson, P. Kunitzsch, F. Lelli, and P. Lucentini [Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, 144c, Hermes Latinus, 4.4] (Turnhout, 2001), 349-97; Hermes is also cited in Paris, BnF, MS arabe 2697, item 1. Ptolemy is cited in London, British Library, OIOC, MS Or. Sloane 2650, and Daniel in Los Angeles, UCLA Near Eastern Coll. 898, MS 88. In the case of Daniel, entire treatises are sometimes ascribed to him, such as Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, MS arab. 1106 item 3; Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, MS arab. 1814 (Cod. Vind. Palat. A.F. 554); British Library, OIOC MS Or. Add. 9702; and Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MS Turk. 157 item 7.

A certain Khalaf al-Barbarī the Elder is said to have been a contemporary of the Prophet Muḥammad and to have travelled to India where he lived for 120 years, studying thoroughly the works of Ṭumṭum al-Hindī. He is supposed to have given, when he died in AD 634 (13 AH) at the age of 186, the book of Ṭumṭum to his pupil, a shaykh Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Barbarī the Younger.

From the latter a series of masters and pupils is traced<sup>10</sup> until reaching Abū Sa'īd al-Ṭarābulūsī<sup>11</sup> who in turn was the teacher of the acknowledged master of geomancy, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān al-Zanā'ī. Nothing is known of the latter's life, but his name would seem to indicate that he was from the North African Berber tribe of Zanāta. It is certain, however, that he lived before 1230 (629 AH), for he is cited as an authority on geomancy by 'Abd al-Rahīm al-Jawbarī. The latter, at the request of al-Malik al-Mas'ūd of the Artuqid dynasty which ruled parts of Diyār Bakr, the upper basin of the Tigris, from 1222 to 1231 (619-29 AH), wrote a treatise on all the frauds, deceptions, and charlatans he had encountered while travelling throughout the Islamic lands.<sup>12</sup> In this treatise he cited al-Zanā'ī as an authority on geomancy after Ṭumṭum. Shaykh al-Zanā'ī is cited extensively by almost all later geomantic authors, and treatises under his name have been printed in Cairo under various titles.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> For some accounts of the early masters, see F. Klein-Franke, 'The Geomancy of Aḥmad b. 'Alī Zunbul: A Study of the Arabic Corpus Hermeticus', *Ambix* 20 (1973), 26-35; and Carra de Vaux 'La géomancie' (above note 8), 301-2.

<sup>11</sup> He is an author frequently quoted in the geomantic treatises. A treatise entitled *Thamart al-fu'ād al-muḥaddith 'an al-murād fī l-bawāqin wa-l-akbād* is extant in Paris, BnF, MS arabe 5834, fols. 110a-119b. Paris, BnF, MS arabe 2716, fols. 112a-113b, contains a didactic poem (*urjūza*) under his name, while Escorial, Bibl. Monasterio de San Lorenzo el Real, MS arab. 924, fols. 9a-13b contains a chapter (*ḥaṣṣ*) from a geomantic tract by al-Ṭarābulūsī. Algiers, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS 1531, consists of a tract by al-Ṭarābulūsī redone by Abū 'Abd Allāh ibn Hārūn al-Sūsī. Several manuscripts are extant of a Latin geomantic tract by one Alatrabulucus apparently derived from an Arabic original; see P. Tannery, 'La Rabolion' in P. Tannery, *Mémoires scientifiques* (note 8), IV, 324-8, 339-44, and 373-403.

<sup>12</sup> *Kitāb al-Mukhtār fī kashf al-asrār* (note 6), 3. See also M.J. de Goeje, 'Gaubarī's "entdeckte Geheimnisse"', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 20 (1886), 485-9. The treatise by al-Jawbarī does not present a detailed discussion of the method of geomancy, although it does give an account of the legendary origins of the art.

<sup>13</sup> These texts are rare in Western libraries. There are two printed treatises attributed to al-Zanā'ī, one of which is entitled *al-Aqwal al-marṭiya fī l-ahkām al-ramiya li-l-shaykh al-Zanā'ī fī 'ilm al-raml* ('Pleasing Statements on the Geomantic Principles of Shaykh al-Zanā'ī concerning the Art of Geomancy'); a copy printed in Cairo in 1908 (1328 H) is now at the New York Public Library. The second treatise is titled *Kitāb al-Faṣl fī ṣulūḥ 'ilm al-raml 'alā ḥukm al-qawā'id al-aṣliya al-idrisiya* ('The Chapter on the Principles of the Art of Geomancy Based on the Authority of the Original Idrisian Principles') and was printed several times with slight variations; one copy dated 1280 AH (1863) is at the New York Public Library, another dated 1345 AH (1926) was at the École Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes in Paris but is now lost, and a third undated printing is in the Princeton University Library. For a summary of a printed text with the same title as the second work, but with remarkably different contents, see Aboubekr Abdesselam Ben Choaib, 'Le bonne aventure chez les musulmans du Moghrib', *Le Revue Africaine* 1 (1906), 62-71. Yet

There are intimations in the names of these legendary and quasi-legendary figures of a possible Hindu or Berber origin of the art. The legendary Tūmṭum al-Hindī implies an early connection with India, a symbol of antiquity and hence authority. The names Khalaf al-Barbarī, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Barbarī, al-Zanāṭī, and presumably also Abū Saʿīd al-Ṭarābulṣī, suggest Berber connections. Moreover, in several extant treatises there are purported Berber names given along with the Arabic names for the basic geomantic figures. These terms, however, appear to be more frequently incorrect or simply unintelligible Arabic than actual Berber.<sup>14</sup> The peoples of North Africa were well known for their mastery of various occult and divinatory practices. The Zanāta tribe, for example, practised prognostication by the inspection of shoulder blades (scapulimancy, *ilm al-kaṭif*).<sup>15</sup> It is not outside the realm of possibility that some North African peoples did in fact develop such a system of divination as geomancy, but on the other hand the Maghrib might be a reasonable area to which to attribute the development of an art whose origins had become obscure by the time it was committed to writing and which may in fact have originated in the pre-Islamic Near East or India.<sup>16</sup>

Somewhat outside the above traditions is the attribution of a geomantic treatise to the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq who died in 765 (148 AH), the last Imām

surprisingly few manuscripts are preserved of a geomantic treatise attributed to al-Zanāṭī. An edition of the available manuscripts is being undertaken by Anne Regourd; see her preliminary study, 'Au sujet des sources manuscrites de l'ouvrage imprimé au Caire sous le titre d'*Al-faṣl fi ṣūl ʿilm al-raml* d'al-Zanāṭī', *Annales islamologiques* 35 (2001), 393-407. See also P. Kunitzsch, 'Die "Unwettersterne" und die "Geomantie" des Zanāṭī', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 60 (1967), 309-317 (repr. P. Kunitzsch, *The Arabs and the Stars* [Variorum CS 307], Northampton, 1989, item XV).

<sup>14</sup> See Carra de Vaux, 'Le géomancie' (note 8), 306-8 and 311-14. Thomas Penchoen, Professor of Berber at UCLA, kindly studied the so-called Berber terms employed in some of the treatises. To date only one of the *barbari* names can with certainty said to be Berber: *ābrīd* 'path' used for the Arabic *ṭarīq* which has the same meaning. An additional term may possibly be from a Berber root.

<sup>15</sup> E. Doutté, *Magie et religion dans l'Afrique du Nord. La société musulmane du maghrib* (Algiers, 1909); R. Pottier, *Initiation à la médecine et à la magie en Islam* (Paris, 1939), 85; D.S. Margoliouth, 'Divination (Muslim)' in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. J. Hastings and J.A. Selbie, vol. 4 (New York, 1912), 816-8. On the other hand, al-Mas'ūdī (d. 956/345) speaks of *wujūd al-nuqat* ('the finding of points') being associated with the Berbers, while scapulimancy (*al-naẓar fi al-kaṭif*) he says is something all peoples engaged in; see al-Mas'ūdī, *Kitāb Murāj al-ihāb wa-ma'ādun al-jawhar*, ed. Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille, rev. by Ch. Pellat, 5 vols. (Beirut, 1966-79), II, 203.

<sup>16</sup> It is uncertain whether *wujūd al-nuqat* mentioned by al-Mas'ūdī (see above note) refers to what came to be called *ilm al-raml* or geomancy. The word *rammal*, possibly though not necessarily meaning 'diviner in sand', occurs as a personal name, either as a *nisba*, derived from his trade, or preceded by *ibn* – that is, part of the *nasab* or list of ancestors – in sixteen pre-Islamic Safaitic inscriptions. Safaitic graffiti in North Arabian dialect have been found in Ṣafā, Harra, and Lejā east of Damascus and date from the third to sixth centuries AD. See G. Lankester Harding, *An Index and Concordance of pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions* (Toronto, 1971), 287.

recognized by both Twelvers and Ismāʿīlī Shīʿites.<sup>17</sup> Many treatises on divination, magic, and astrology have been, perhaps incorrectly, attributed to him, and he is considered the teacher of the alchemical author Jabīr ibn Ḥayyān known in Europe as Geber.<sup>18</sup> The tradition of ascribing the origins of geomancy to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq was still prevalent in nineteenth-century East Africa from the following statement of Richard F. Burton: 'The Arabs call it El Raml, and ascribe its present form to the Imam Jaafar al-Sadik; amongst them it is a ponderous study connected as usual with astrology'.<sup>19</sup>

Although the preserved geomantic tract ascribed to him may not be genuine and his name is seldom cited in later geomantic treatises, the attribution does raise the possibility of there having been some relations between geomancy and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' (the Brethren of Purity), a sect of the Ismāʿīlī who were instrumental in the early propagation of astrology and numerology in the Islamic world.<sup>20</sup> A treatise attributed to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq on the divinatory practice of *jāfr* is included in some of the modern printings of one of the Zanāṭī texts mentioned earlier.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to the writings of the authorities mentioned above, there were other sources of knowledge concerning geomancy that were available in the Islamic world by the middle of the thirteenth century. One of the great codifiers of geomancy was ʿAbd Allāh ibn Maḥfūf *al-munajjim* ('the astronomer') who lived before 1265 (664 AH).<sup>22</sup> His treatise, which is quite extensive and

<sup>17</sup> An incomplete manuscript of five folios is at the Princeton University Library, Garrett Coll. MS 929 (547 AH), while Gotha, Forschungsbibliothek, MS arab. 74, fol. 24b, contains a short discussion of geomancy attributed to Jaʿfar.

<sup>18</sup> See J. Ruska, *Arabische Alchemisten II: Ġafar al-Ṣādiq der sechste Imām* (Heidelberg, 1924; repr. Wiesbaden, 1967), 28-9, and M.G.S. Hodgson, 'Dja'far al-Ṣādiq' in *EP* (note 6), II, 374-5. The best-known and most authoritative treatise on *ja'f-nama*, a type of sortilege practiced in the Middle East, is that which goes under the name of the Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq; see H. Massé, 'Fāl-nama' in *EP*, II, 760-1. See also, R.Y. Ebied and M.J.L. Young, 'A Treatise on Hemerology ascribed to Ġafar al-Ṣādiq', *Arabica* 23 (1976), 296-307.

<sup>19</sup> Richard F. Burton, *First Footsteps in East Africa or, Exploration of Harar* (London, 1856), 55-6.

<sup>20</sup> V. Marquet, 'Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' in *EP* (note 6), III, 1071-6; and S.H. Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (Cambridge MA, 1964), 25-106.

<sup>21</sup> al-Zanāṭī, *Kitāb al-Faṣl fi ṣūl ʿilm al-raml* (note 13) in the 1863/1280 printing. See also, T. Fahd, 'Djafr' in *EP* (note 6), II, 375-7.

<sup>22</sup> In the colophons of two Istanbul manuscripts (Esat. Ef. MS 1988 and Rāgip Pāṣā MS 964) the scribes state that both copies were made from a copy dated 664 AH (= AD 1265-6); see T. Fahd, *La divination arabe. études religieuses, sociologiques et folkloriques sur le milieu natif de l'Islam* (Leiden, 1966), 201 nt. 4. In addition, Birmingham, Selly Oaks, Mingana Coll. MS 911 was copied in 1300 [= 1883] from a copy made in 1159 [= 1746] from one made in 664 [= 1265-6]. The author's name is clearly written in all recorded copies as 'Abd Allāh (ibn Abī/ʿAlī) ibn Maḥfūf, often prefaced by *al-Mamlūk*, and it is unlikely that he is to be identified with the astronomer Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Qāsim ibn Maḥfūf al-Baghdādī, whose *zīj* was completed in 1285; for Ibn Maḥfūf, see C. Jensen, 'The Lunar Theories of al-Baghdādī', *Archive for History of Exact Sciences* 8 (1972), 321-8.



detailed, is extant in several Arabic manuscripts.<sup>23</sup> The title of his treatise is often given simply as *Kitāb fi 'ilm al-raml* ('Book on the Art of Geomancy'), but, according to some manuscript copies and the Ottoman historian Kātib Çelebi (Ḥajjī Khalifa), the title should be *Kitāb al-Muthallath fi 'ilm al-raml* ('The Book of Triplets in the Art of Geomancy').<sup>24</sup>

The great astronomer, mathematician, and philosopher Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1275/672AH), also wrote on the art of geomancy. A small Arabic tract under his name entitled *al-Risāla al-Sulṭāniyya fi khaṭṭ al-raml* ('The Royal Epistle on Geomancy') as well as a lengthy treatise on the same subject entitled simply *Kitāb fi 'ilm al-raml* ('Book on the Art of Geomancy') are extant.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, several Persian treatises or parts of treatises on geomancy by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, as well as a Turkish version, are also found in libraries today,<sup>26</sup> and he is occasionally cited as an authority on the subject in later compilations.

A knowledge of geomancy is also to be found in the writings of one of the most celebrated theologians of Islam, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī who was born in 1149 (543 AH) at Rayy near modern Tehran.<sup>27</sup> In 1178 (574 AH) he composed

<sup>23</sup> In addition to the three mentioned in the previous note, there are Los Angeles, UCLA Near Eastern Coll. 898, MS 129; Oxford, Bodleian, MSS Arab.f.36 and Marsh 216; Manchester, John Rylands Library, Arabic MS 373; Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Arabic MS 5273; Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MSS Mq. 49, fols. 12a-63b (Ahlwardt 4200) and Or. qu. 1734, fols. 1-59b; Patna (Bankipore), Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Arabic MS H.L. 2077 (cat. 2487); and Cairo, Dār al-Kutub, MSS *ḥurūf* 42, *ḥurūf* 43, and *ḥurūf mim* 70 (fragments); Damascus, Maktabat al-Asad al-Wafāniyya MS 6226; and Princeton, Garrett Coll., Yehuda Arabic MS 4216, fols. 40b-80a.

<sup>24</sup> Manchester, John Rylands, Arabic MS 373 and Oxford, Bodleian, MS Arab.f.36; Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kaṣṣ al-qunūn: Lexicon bibliographicum et encyclopedicum*, ed. G. Flügel, 7 vols. (Leipzig, 1835-8), V, 373, no. 11365. Note that Oxford, Bodleian, MS Marsh 216 bears the title *Kitāb Bughyat al-āmāl fi sin'at al-raml wa-taqwīm tadāyūf al-ashkāl wa-l-'alāma* ('The Desire of Hopes concerning the Art of Geomancy and the Schema of Figures and Attributions of Meanings') with the author given as Abū Naṣr ibn Ṭarḥān al-Farābī. This attribution is certainly incorrect, for the manuscript is clearly an incomplete copy of the treatise by Ibn Maḥfūf.

<sup>25</sup> Algiers, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS 1530, fols. 25b-27a, and Princeton, Garrett Coll., Yehuda Arabic MS 2748, fols. 38b-39b, contain the shorter tract whereas Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS arab. 880, presents the more extensive work in 90 folios. See Muḥammad Taqī Mudarris Razavi, *Khawāṣṣ Ṭūsī* (Tehran, 1956/1335 sh), 57-8; and S.H. Nasr, 'al-Ṭūsī in *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. C.C. Gillispie (hereafter *DSB*), 14 vols. (New York, 1970-6), XIII, 508-14.

<sup>26</sup> For example, Oxford, Bodleian, MS Laud. Or. 313, fols. 75b-77b and MS Walker 55, fols. 41b-47b; Patna (Bankipore), Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Persian MS 1066; and Madras, Government Oriental Manuscript Library, Persian MS 509. An Arabic translation by 'Abd al-Muḥsin Aḥmad ibn al-Mahdī of part of a Persian tract is in Paris, BnF, MS arabe 2716, fols. 113b-118b. A Turkish translation (from Arabic or Persian?) of a lengthy treatise by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī on geomancy is now at Hamburg, Stadtbibliothek, MS Orient. 253 (cxlii), fols. 41b-163b.

<sup>27</sup> For his life and writings, see G.C. Anawati, 'Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī' in *EP* (note 6), II, 751-5. A treatise on geomancy is also attributed to the theologian and philosopher Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazzālī who died in 1111 (505 AH); the treatise is extant in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MS We. 1218, fols. 1a-11b (Ahlwardt 4204). If this is a valid attribution (which is unlikely), it would be

in Persian an encyclopaedia of Muslim science, *Jāmi' al-'ulūm*, that contains a section on the science of geomancy.<sup>28</sup> In addition, an extant Arabic manuscript concerned in part with geomancy and, in another manuscript, a didactic poem (*urjūza*) on the same subject are both attributed to al-Rāzī.<sup>29</sup>

There is a small text containing some geomantic material which has been printed several times in this century and which bears the name of the well-known ninth-century astrologer Abū Ma'shar al-Balkhī, known to the West as Albumasar (d. 886/272 AH). The booklet is entitled 'Book of the Meticulous Investigator, the Greek Philosopher known as Abū Ma'shar the Astronomer' (*Kitāb al-Muḥaqqiq al-mudaqqiq al-Yūnānī al-faylasūf al-shabīr bi-Abī Ma'shar al-Falaki*).<sup>30</sup> No treatise of such a title is attributed to Abū Ma'shar in the medieval biographical dictionaries.<sup>31</sup> The approach to geomancy in this work is an unusual one in the Islamic world in that the sixteen geomantic figures are discussed exclusively in relation to the twelve zodiacal houses without any use of the customary geomantic tableau. The printed text appears to be identical with Abū Ma'shar's tract 'On the Nativities of Men and Women' (*Kitāb Ṭālī' al-mawḥūd li-l-rjāl wa-l-nisā'*) in which each zodiacal sign is discussed along with its three decans (*nujūh*), with one important exception. The printed booklet has an additional paragraph on a related geomantic figure following the discussion of each zodiacal house in the section on the nativities of men, and these extra paragraphs are not to be found in the manuscript copy of *Kitāb Ṭālī' al-mawḥūd li-l-rjāl wa-l-nisā'* which the present authors have examined.<sup>32</sup> The author of these paragraphs was clearly well acquainted with the sixteen geomantic figures and the various meanings and attributes attached to them, although the details

one of the earliest confirmed dates for a geomantic treatise. Al-Ghazzālī has had attributed to him some writings on number symbolism and magic squares as well as some clearly spurious alchemical tracts. See Ullmann, *Natur* (note 8), 227 and 274; W. Ahrens, 'Studien über die "magischen quadrate" der Araber', *Der Islam* (1917), 186-219 esp. 203-5; and Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī (spurious?), *al-Awṣāf*, ed. Maḥmūd Ḥamdī (Cairo, n.d., c. 1973).

<sup>28</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Jāmi' al-'ulūm* (Bombay, 1323/1905), 187-9. Compare Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kaṣṣ al-qunūn* (note 24), II, 560 entry no. 3923.

<sup>29</sup> Florence, Biblioteca Laurentiana, MS Or. 329 and an *urjūza* in Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, MS arab. 1106, fols. 131a-136b.

<sup>30</sup> Printed in Cairo several times, including 1905 (1323 H) and 1910 (1328 H), and in Beirut in 1982. See also J.-M. Faddegon, 'Notice sur un petit traité d'astrologie attribué à Albumasar (Abū Ma'shar)', *Journal Asiatique* 213 (1928), 150-8, who does not, however, mention its geomantic contents.

<sup>31</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1871), I, 277 and *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm. A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, trns. Bayard Dodge, 2 vols. (New York, 1970), II, 656-8; Ibn al-Qifī, *Ta'rikh al-bukamā'*, ed. J. Lippert (Leipzig, 1903), 154. See also D. Pingree, 'Abū Ma'shar' in *DSB* (note 25), II, 32-39, esp. 38, who aligned the printed tract with a work entitled *Kitāb al-Mawḥūd al-saghir* ('The Small Book of Nativities') which is not extant today in manuscripts of that title.

<sup>32</sup> Los Angeles, UCLA Near Eastern Coll. 898, MS 60.



of the procedures for forming a geomantic figure or casting a tableau are lacking in the treatise. Since the tradition of the text of *Kitāb Ṭālī' al-mawlid li-l-rijāl wa-l-nisā'* apparently varies considerably in some of the extant manuscript copies,<sup>33</sup> the text and its relation to the printed pamphlet deserve further study, while the manuscript versions of other treatises by Abū Ma'shar should be searched for geomantic references.

There are only three known references in the geomantic literature to Abū Ma'shar as an authority.<sup>34</sup> All of these citations occur within discussions of strictly astrological material and relate to his mastery of astrology rather than to any geomantic wisdom. At this point, then, it seems that the geomantic references in the printed text are interpolations by the modern editor and inventor of the fanciful title, and that Abū Ma'shar may not have been a possible source for geomancers. Consequently, a final assessment of Abū Ma'shar's role in the diffusion of geomancy must await further investigation.

Of the writings just discussed, some are not very detailed in their information regarding *'ilm al-raml*, and some, such as those by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, might not have been available in Mosul opposite the site of ancient Nineveh on the upper Tigris River in the fourth decade of the thirteenth century, when the geomantic device which is the object of this study was executed. No doubt, in the first part of the thirteenth century there were additional sources for the knowledge of geomancy, whose titles and authors are not known to us today.

Lot-books that employ geomantic figures were apparently known in the thirteenth century, but they have not been included in the summary just presented, for they represent a very different form of geomancy and were not at all likely to have influenced the maker of this device. The geomantic lot-books are geomantic in name only, for the basic procedures are different. The methods employed in the lot-books do not make use of tableaux and sometimes not even of geomantic figures. In some of these methods, dots were made at random and then the number divided by twelve with the remainder giving the page and line where the answer to the inquiry would be given for any one of a list of 144 questions.<sup>35</sup> There is considerable confusion in much of the

<sup>33</sup> Ullmann, *Natur* (note 8), 322 nt. 4.

<sup>34</sup> One reference is in Paris, BnF, MS arabe 2730; see Carra de Vaux, 'La géomancie' (note 8), 302 nt. 1. An Arabic geomantic treatise by Abū 'Abd Allāh ibn Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Lakhmī al-Andalusī, written in 1875 (1292 AH), also cites Abū Ma'shar as an authority (Los Angeles, UCLA Near Eastern Coll. 898, MS 618, fol. 2a), and he is cited as well in a Provençal geomantic treatise written about AD 1330 (P. Meyer, 'Traité en vers provençaux sur l'astrologie et la géomancie', *Romania* 26 (1897), 225-75, esp. 262).

<sup>35</sup> Three Turkish manuscripts are extant of geomantic lot-books supposedly written by 'Abd Allāh ibn Anīs (or Anī) for the eighth-century caliph Hārūn al-Rashid (London, British Library, OIOC MS Harl. 262 and MS Harl. 5522 as well as Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, Turkish MS 1509).

literature, both primary and secondary, between the counting of points any time they have been put down at random and what one might call the classical type of *'ilm al-raml*, consisting of the sixteen possible geomantic figures with the production of a tableau from them according to precise rules.<sup>36</sup>

To add to the confusion, in Persian treatises the term *raml* is applied to two types of divination: the traditional form of geomancy — the type employed on this device — and the throwing of brass dice strung together in groups of four. Although these are commonly called 'geomantic dice', their markings do not produce a geomantic figure, and divination using such dice is a form of lot-casting related to the *sortes* of classical antiquity rather than true geomancy.<sup>37</sup>

The author is possibly to be identified with 'Abd Allāh al-Ansī (or al-Ansī) named in Arabic lot-books, which are not, however, geomantic; see P. Kunitzsch 'Zum *Liber Alfadhōl* ein Nachlese', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 118 (1968), 297-314, and 'Der *Liber Alfadhōl* ein arabischen Losbuch und seine Schicksale im Morgen- und Abendland', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Suppl. I, 2 (1969), 667-72. Kunitzsch argues that the Arabic (non-geomantic) lot-books, related to the *Liber Alfadhōl* of the Latin tradition, do not predate the twelfth century. For further discussion of Latin geomantic lot-books going under the name of *Alfadhōl* or *Alfadhol*, see Lynn Thorndike's articles, '*Alfadhōl* and *Almadel*. Hitherto Unnoted Medieval Books of Magic in Florentine Manuscripts', *Speculum* 2 (1927), 326-331, '*Alfadhōl* de merengi again', *Speculum* 4 (1929), 90, and '*Alfadhōl* and *Almadel* once more', *Speculum* 20 (1945), 88-91. Gerhard Eis has edited a medieval German lot-book in which one of the sixteen geomantic figures is produced to determine the answer (G. Eis, *Wahrsagetexte des spätmittelalters aus Handschriften und Inkunabeln* [Texte des späten Mittelalters, 1], Berlin, 1956).

<sup>36</sup> Also in the class of lot-books there should be placed the so-called 'manual of geomancy' entitled *Experimentarius* written or translated by Bernard Silvester of Tours written in the twelfth century. This treatise does not cast a geomantic tableau or even one geomantic figure, but rather describes a procedure for setting down points at random, dividing by 7, and using the remainder to determine the answer selected from the lot book. See M.B. Savorelli, 'Un Manuale di Geomancie presentato da Bernardo Silvestre da Tours (XII Secolo): L'*Experimentarius*', *Rivista Critica di Storia della Filosofia* 14 (1959), 283-342, and C.S.F. Burnett, 'What is the *Experimentarius* of Bernardus Silvestris? A preliminary survey of the material', *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 44 (1977), 79-125. The Oxford, Bodleian Library, Western Manuscripts, MS Digby 46, a fourteenth-century copy of the *Experimentarius*, has set into the inside front cover of the volume two interlocking wooden cogged wheels with twenty-eight and thirteen teeth, by which one can find a random number, rather than by counting random points. This rather mechanical way of obtaining a number is very different in principle from the determination of the geomantic figures on the device by Muḥammad ibn Khutlukh al-Mawṣilī now at the British Museum.

<sup>37</sup> For a study of so-called 'geomantic dice', see E. Savage-Smith, 'Divination' in F.R. Maddison and E. Savage-Smith, *Science, Tools & Magic* [The Nasser D. Khalili Coll. of Islamic Art, 12], 2 vols. (London/Oxford, 1997), I, 148-57. Confusion in the use of the term *raml* for geomancy and for a form of sortilege employing dice has caused such errors as that of Nasr, who labels a photograph of two sets of such dice as 'Instruments used in geomancy'; see S. Nasr, *Islamic Science. An Illustrated Study* (London, 1976), 207. Furthermore, the circular plate pictured by Nasr in the same photograph as another geomantic instrument is in reality unrelated to *raml* in either sense, but rather is a plate closely resembling the back of a compass used for finding the *qibla*, the direction towards Mecca. That is, the plate gives the names of 34 cities and their corresponding directions and *inḥirāf*, which is the angle that determines the direction toward Mecca. Such a plate is used neither in *'ilm al-raml* (geomancy) nor in sortilege with dice.

The device studied here contains some features apparently not found in extant Arabic, Persian, or Turkish writings on geomancy dating from before the middle of the thirteenth century. It seems clear that the designer of the instrument was quite familiar with written treatises on the subject, for in one inscription he has the device say of itself: 'from my intricacies there comes about insight superior to books concerned with the study of the art.'

In view of the confused and not overly large corpus of geomantic writings prior to the fourteenth century, this intricate device proves to be of considerable importance for the history of the occult sciences, complementing its value as a fine example of thirteenth-century Islamic metalwork. In addition, the tablet itself is a unique concept in the history of geomancy, since there seem to be no writings before or after this device containing any mention of a mechanical contrivance for establishing a geomantic reading and supplying information necessary for its interpretation. There is no other known geomantic device from any culture remotely similar to it.

It does seem likely that a dust board was employed by some geomancers, for the word *takht* occurs frequently in geomantic treatises where it could mean either the abstract sixteen-place tableau or a dust board on which the tableaux of geomantic figures were produced.<sup>38</sup> The word *takht* occurs in medieval Arabic mathematical writings as a term for a small board lightly covered with sand on which one could mark down numerals and then erase them by smoothing over the sand or dust or by covering it with additional dust.<sup>39</sup> It is entirely likely that such a board would have been used for marking down the geomantic figures until paper and pen later became sufficiently available to replace it. The several references in *Alf layla wa-layla* ('The Thousand and One Nights') to a geomantic tablet used with a stylus of brass to form the figures is probably evidence of the early use of a dust board or tablet, although it is possible the references are later interpolations into the stories.<sup>40</sup> Such a tablet or

<sup>38</sup> For example, Los Angeles, UCLA Near Eastern Coll. 898, MS 88, p. 31, uses the term *takht* for the surface which you mark with a stylus, *mil*, once calling it *takht lawh* 'dustboard'. In one of the printed texts attributed to al-Zanā'ī the word is more frequently used for the completed sixteen-place tableau of geomantic figures from which the reading is derived, but it is also used as a tablet of sand (*takht min al-raml*) on which you mark with a stylus, *qalam*, the row of dots and form the first four figures; see al-Zanā'ī, *Kitāb al-Fayl fī usūl 'ilm al-raml* (note 13, copy dated 1280 AH), 18, 24-5, *et passim*.

<sup>39</sup> Kūshyār ibn Labbān, *Principles of Hindu Reckoning. Kitāb fī usūl ḥisāb al-hind*, ed. and trans. Martin Levey and Marvin Petrucci (Madison, WI, 1965), 5-6 *et passim*, A.S. Saidan, 'The Comprehensive Work on Computation with Board and Dust by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī', *al-Abḥāth* 20 (1967), 91-163 and 213-92. See also M. Souissi, 'Ḥisāb al-ghubār' in *EP* (note 6), III, 468-9, who suggests that the tablet may not necessarily have been covered with dust but rather covered with clay in which figures could have been marked and erased by a stylus.

<sup>40</sup> A collection of Arabic stories comprising *The Thousand and One Nights* appears to have formed about a Persian framework and to have developed with many additions from various

dust board is quite different, however, from a device designed to generate the geomantic figures mechanically, which is the nature of the instrument we are here discussing.<sup>41</sup>

## II. Principle Method of Casting a Tableau

In Islamic geomancy, divination is accomplished by forming and then interpreting a design consisting of sixteen positions, each of which is occupied by some geomantic figure. This design is referred to as the geomantic tableau. The figures that occupy the first four positions are of primary importance in constructing the tableau, for they determine the occupants of the other twelve places. Consequently, the formation of these first four figures, called the Mothers (*ummahāt*), is of great significance. Ordinarily each of the Mothers is made by marking in the dust or sand or on a piece of paper four horizontal lines of dots, one row below another (see Fig. 1). Among some practitioners of geomancy these rows of dots are made by the person seeking advice or the answer to some question, whereas in other practices the diviner or geomancer being consulted puts down the marks. It is always stressed that the dots should not be counted as they are made, but rather the hand should make the marks while the conscious mind is totally absorbed in reflection on the question or problem.

Since there are four Mothers to be formed, sixteen rows of dots must be made in all (see Fig. 1). After this has been done, each row is examined in turn and the dots are grouped in pairs so as to find whether the row has an even or

locations from the ninth and tenth centuries AD, taking final shape in the thirteenth century (see E. Littmann, 'Alf layla wa-layla' in *EP* (note 6), I, 358-64). A tablet of sand (*takht raml* or *takht al-raml*) and a stylus of brass (*qalam min nuḥās*) figure prominently in the story of 'Alī Shār and Zumurrud (the 320th to 326th night), while a gift of a geomantic sand board of gold (*takht raml min dhahab*) is mentioned in the tale of Qamar al-Zamān (the 202nd night); see *Kitāb Alf layla wa-layla*, 4 vols. (Bulāq, 1862/1279AH), II, 18-19, 196-8, and 200-3; *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, trans. Richard F. Burton, 6 vols. (London, 1885; rpr New York, 1962), 1117-8, and 1464-74; and Husain Haddawy, *The Arabian Nights II: Sindbad and Other Popular Stories* (New York, 1995), 197. The tales of Jawda the Fisherman, Shūmās and Jalī'ād, Gharīb and his brother Ajīb, and Delīlāh the Crafty also mentioned a geomantic dustboard or tablet; see O. Rescher, 'Studien über der Inhalt von 1001 Nacht', *Der Islam* 9 (1919), 1-94, esp. 36-8. The practice of geomancy with a square box of sand plays an important role in the story of Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp, which is not usually grouped as one of the Thousand and One Nights; see H. Zotenberg, *Histoire d'Alā al-Dīn ou la lampe merveilleuse* (Paris, 1888), 11, 62-3, and 76; R.F. Burton, *Supplemental Nights to the Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, Bossaorah Edition, 3 vols. (London, n.d.), III, 68, 156-7 and 179-80; and Haddawy, *The Arabian Nights II: Sindbad*, 81-163.

<sup>41</sup> Also very different from the present device is the thin brass astrological/geomantic plate from a late Safavid workshop, now in the Khalili Collection, Acc. no. SC133. It is engraved on both sides with numerous Persian inscriptions, laid out in concentric circles, presenting a gazetteer as well as astrological alignments and an arrangement of geomantic figures. See Savage-Smith, 'Divination' (note 37), I, 158-9.

an odd number of dots. If the number of dots in the row is even, then that row is represented by a pair of dots; if the number is odd, then by only one dot. In this way there is obtained, for each Mother, a vertical column of four marks, each of which is one or two dots.

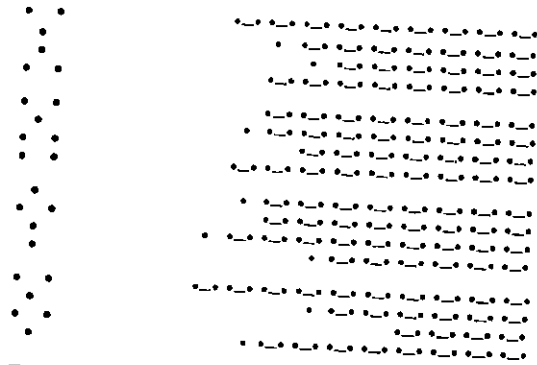


Fig. 1. The formation of the first four figures of a geomantic tableau.

The four geomantic figures thus formed are then placed side by side, with the first one on the right, the second one immediately to the left of it, and so on. From these four Mothers occupying positions I through IV in the tableau,

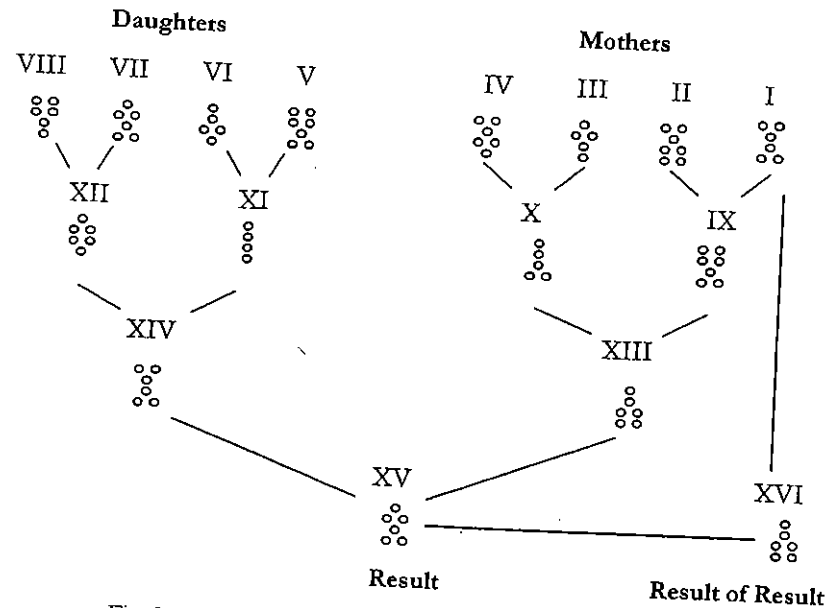


Fig. 2. An example of a complete geomantic tableau, with Roman numerals marking the number of the position or 'house'.

the remaining figures in the tableau are produced as shown in Fig. 2.

The figure for position V is formed by taking the top row of marks in the Mothers from right to left and writing them as a column from top to bottom. The ones for positions VI, VII, and VIII are obtained similarly by taking the second, third, and fourth rows respectively, in the Mothers, always going from right to left, and turning them into columns. The figures thus produced and placed in positions V through VII are commonly known as the Daughters (*banāt*).

For position IX a figure is produced in an entirely different way, for here only the first and second Mothers are used, and they are in a sense 'added' together. Starting with the top row, the marks of the two figures are combined. If the sum is even, then two dots are placed in the top row of the new figure; if the sum is odd, only one dot is put there. By adding in this way the dots in the second row of the two Mothers, the number of dots for the second row of the new figure is determined, and likewise the number of dots for rows three and four. All the remaining figures are formed by combining a previously determined pair of figures: for example, by adding figures in positions III and IV we find the figure for position X, the figure V 'plus' the figure in VI yields the figure for XI, and so forth. Finally, when one has obtained the figure for position XV from those occupying positions XIII and XIV, the final figure, the one in position XVI, is found by combining in this same manner the figures in positions XV and I, and this completes the formation of the geomantic tableau.

The device that we are examining was designed so that it was unnecessary to put down the sixteen rows of dots as the first step in finding the four Mothers. Instead it is clear that these four figures are obtained by moving the four curved slides which are located in the upper right-hand portion of the face of the device (see Pl. 1).

Since each geomantic figure consists of four marks, and each mark consists of either one or two dots, there is a total of sixteen (i.e.,  $2^4$ ) possible figures. Each figure has a name and various meanings. Furthermore, the geomantic treatises give numerous alignments between the figures and such items as the planets, the zodiacal signs, the four classical elements, parts of the human body, and so forth. These alignments play a role in the interpretation of a particular tableau, but the alignments and interpretive methods vary considerably from author to author. The sixteen figures are described in the next section, where the name of each and the unique alignment of the figures found on the device under consideration are discussed.

There are sixteen positions or 'houses' (*bayt*; sing. *bayt*) in the complete tableau. Although there are also sixteen different geomantic figures, it can be proved that it is impossible for all sixteen figures to appear in a tableau. In other words, in a properly drawn tableau some figure must be in more than one

house. Another feature of every correct tableau is that the geomantic figure in position XV is an even figure – that is, the figure must have an even number of dots. Observation of this property of the tableaux was stated by Arabic geomantic writers as early as the thirteenth century, and, furthermore, they gave arguments explaining the reason for this characteristic.<sup>42</sup>

Because of the method of combining geomantic figures as used in the production of figures to occupy houses IX through XVI, described above, Islamic geomancy has a pronounced mathematical structure. In fact, the set of all sixteen geomantic figures forms, under the 'addition' process, an algebraic structure known as a finite commutative group. Although the topic has been relatively ignored by historians of science, some attention has recently been given to it by ethnologists, and there has been an attempt at a structural analysis. It would seem, however, that there is still a considerable amount of research to be done before much of a definitive nature can be said regarding the structures underlying the practice of geomancy.<sup>43</sup>

### III. Detailed Description of the Geomantic Tablet

The Islamic geomantic device now in the possession of the Department of Oriental Antiquities of the British Museum is signed by Muḥammad ibn Khutlukh al-Mawṣilī and dated 639 AH (= AD 1241-2). From the maker's *nisba* (the part of the name derived from the location or trade) one might infer that he was born in Mosul and very likely connected in some manner with the prominent metalworking centre, especially renowned for its inlaid brass vessels,<sup>44</sup> which flourished there during the first half of the thirteenth century. The fact that the maker's *nisba* is al-Mawṣilī is not, however, conclusive evidence that he resided and worked in Mosul, for there were artisans from that locality who worked in Cairo, Damascus, and elsewhere in the thirteenth century.<sup>45</sup>

A second piece of metalwork also signed by Muḥammad ibn Khutlukh al-Mawṣilī has recently been discovered – an undated incense-burner that is stated

<sup>42</sup> For readers interested in mathematical proofs of these properties, see R. Jaulin, *La Géomancie, analyse formelle* [École Pratique des Hautes Études, Sorbonne, Cahiers de l'Homme, n.s., 4] (Paris, 1966), 20-3 and 27.

<sup>43</sup> See M. Pedrazzi, 'Le Figure della Geomanzia: Un Gruppo Finito Abeliano', *Physis* 14/2 (1972), 146-61; M. Ascher, 'Malagasy Sikidy: A Case in Ethnomathematics', *Historia Mathematica* 24 (1997), 376-95; and the monograph by the French structural anthropologist Robert Jaulin, *La Géomancie* (note 42). For a critical study of the latter work, see M.B. Smith, 'The Nature of Islamic Geomancy with a Critique of a Structuralist's Approach', *Studia Islamica* 49 (1979), 5-38.

<sup>44</sup> D.S. Rice, 'Inlaid Brasses from the Workshops of Ahmad al-Dhakī al-Mawṣilī', *Ars Orientalis* 2 (1957), 282-326.

<sup>45</sup> R. Harati, 'Metalwork after the Early Islamic Period' in A.U. Pope, *A Survey of Persian Art*, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1938-9), V, sec. xii, 2466-2539 esp. 2495 and VI, plates 1276-1396.

to have been produced in Damascus, possibly made a few years before the geomantic device.<sup>46</sup> It is unusual amongst incense-burners because of the architectural nature of its design, and it possibly reflects Sasanian influences on craftsmen working in Greater Syria in the early thirteenth century. No other examples of his work are recorded and no information on him is available except what can be gleaned from the objects themselves.

From the standpoint of design and metallurgical craftsmanship, the geomantic tablet is very similar to the incense-burner bearing his name and compares favourably with some twenty-five pieces of metalwork associated with Mosul, including a celestial globe made by Muḥammad ibn Hilāl al-Munajjim al-Mawṣilī in 1275-6 (674 AH) that was produced after the centre of metalwork began to decline following the sack of the city by the Mongol Hülāgu in 1260.<sup>47</sup> A comparison might also be made with some of the outstanding and roughly contemporary examples of Syrian-Egyptian scientific instruments, such as the celestial globe<sup>48</sup> made by the Egyptian architect and mathematician Qayṣar ibn Abī l-Qāsim ibn Musāfir al-Ashrafi al-Ḥanaḥī in 1225-6 (622 AH) for the Ayyūbid ruler of Egypt al-Malik al-Kāmil, the nephew of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin). Even more fruitful is a comparison with the fine astrolabes made by 'Abd al-Karīm al-Miṣrī who worked for the last Ayyūbid and the first Mamlūk ruler of Egypt, which display similar decorative bands.<sup>49</sup>

It is not the purpose of the present study to elaborate upon the importance of this tablet to the history of the minor arts and metallurgy, but it is evident that this geomantic tablet is an exceptionally fine example of the inlaid metalwork produced by the craftsmen of thirteenth-century Greater Syria, Egypt and Iraq. The device is of a brass alloy having a rich reddish colour and is in three basic pieces – front plate with attached dials, back plate, and the frame enclosing them. The device is amply covered with inscriptions, decorative devices, and arabesque inlaid in gold and silver. The instrument measures 33.7 cm in length and 19.6 cm in height, not including the 5.4 cm

<sup>46</sup> James Allan, 'Muḥammad ibn Khutlukh and the History of Early Islamic Incense-burners' in James W. Allan, *Metalwork of the Islamic World: The Aron Collection* (London, 1986), 25-34 and 66-9.

<sup>47</sup> British Museum, Dept. of Oriental Antiquities, Inv. no. 71.3.1. See R.H. Pinder-Wilson, 'The Malcolm Celestial Globe' in *The British Museum Handbook*. Vol. I: *The Classical Tradition* (London, 1976), 83-101; and E. Savage-Smith, *Islamicate Celestial Globes: Their History, Construction, and Use* (Smithsonian Studies in History and Technology, 46) (Washington, D.C., 1985), 219-20 no. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Museo Nazionale, Naples; see Savage-Smith, *Celestial Globes* (note 47), 218-9 no. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Two such astrolabes are extant, one dated 625 AH (= 1227-8) and the other 633 AH (= 1235-6). The former is now at the Museum of the History of Science, Oxford, and the latter in the Department of Oriental Antiquities of the British Museum. Unfortunately the inscription on the latter has been reworked and hence is unreliable. See L.A. Mayer, *Islamic Astrolabists and Their Works* (Geneva, 1956), 29-30 and pl. xiib; and Allan, 'Muḥammad ibn Khutlukh' (note 46), 33.

high projection by which it can be suspended (see Pl. 1 for an overall view of the front of the device).

The front plate has nineteen small circles, each of a diameter of 3 cm surmounted by a window exposing a sector of a small dial that rotates beneath the plate (see Pls. 1 and 3). A large dial near the centre rotates beneath a semi-circular window of diameter 8 cm (see Pls. 1, 5, and 6). Four sliding arcs are nested at the right of the front plate behind openings in the front plate, the largest of radius 8 cm (see Pls. 1 and 4). The numerous inscriptions are inlaid in either gold or silver wire.

The front plate of the tablet, with dials attached to it from behind (see Pl. 2), is recessed in a metal frame which holds it in the manner of a picture frame. To the top of the frame is attached a device for hanging the tablet, and on the four sides of the frame there is a poem engraved and inlaid in silver against a background of arabesque (see Pls. 8–11). The front edge of the frame is decorated with a silver inlaid band formed of a trefoil alternately upside down between pairs of interlaced stems, and the narrow margin nearest the front plate is engraved in a chain pattern with centres inlaid with silver (see Pl. 1).

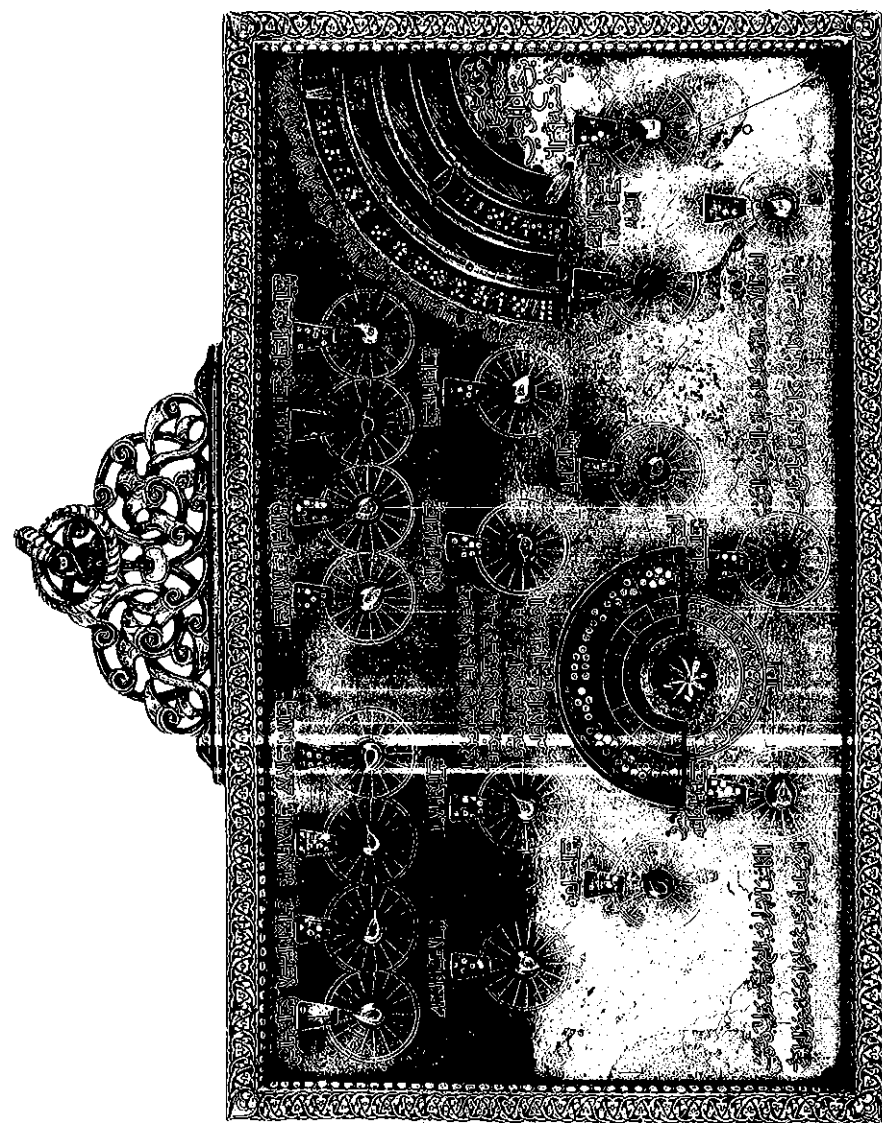
The manner in which the geomantic tablet was designed to be suspended closely resembles that common in astrolabes.<sup>50</sup> The decorative triangular projection attached to the top edge of the frame (Pl. 1) is like the *kursī* ('throne') projecting from the upper part of an astrolabe. It is 5.4 cm in height and 13.5 at the base, and the edges are engraved and inlaid in arabesque (see Pl. 11). The *'urwa* ('handle') consists of a nearly closed circular arc whose ends are joined by a straight pin passing through the upper part of the *kursī*, thus allowing the tablet to swing on this pin. The *'urwa* or handle then receives the *ḥalqa* ('ring') of diameter 3.4 cm. Both the ring and the handle are decoratively engraved. To this ring would probably have been attached a cord, *'ilāqa*, as was done with astrolabes.

The suspensory device is somewhat reminiscent of the *kursī* found on a thirteenth-century Persian astrolabe with geared calendar movement made by Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad al-Rāshidī al-Ibarī al-Isfahānī in 1221 (618 AH).<sup>51</sup> There is also similarity with an enormous suspensory device of *kursī* form whose purpose is unknown but which was made by one Shākir ibn Aḥmad in Mosul or Damascus about the same time as this device.<sup>52</sup> There

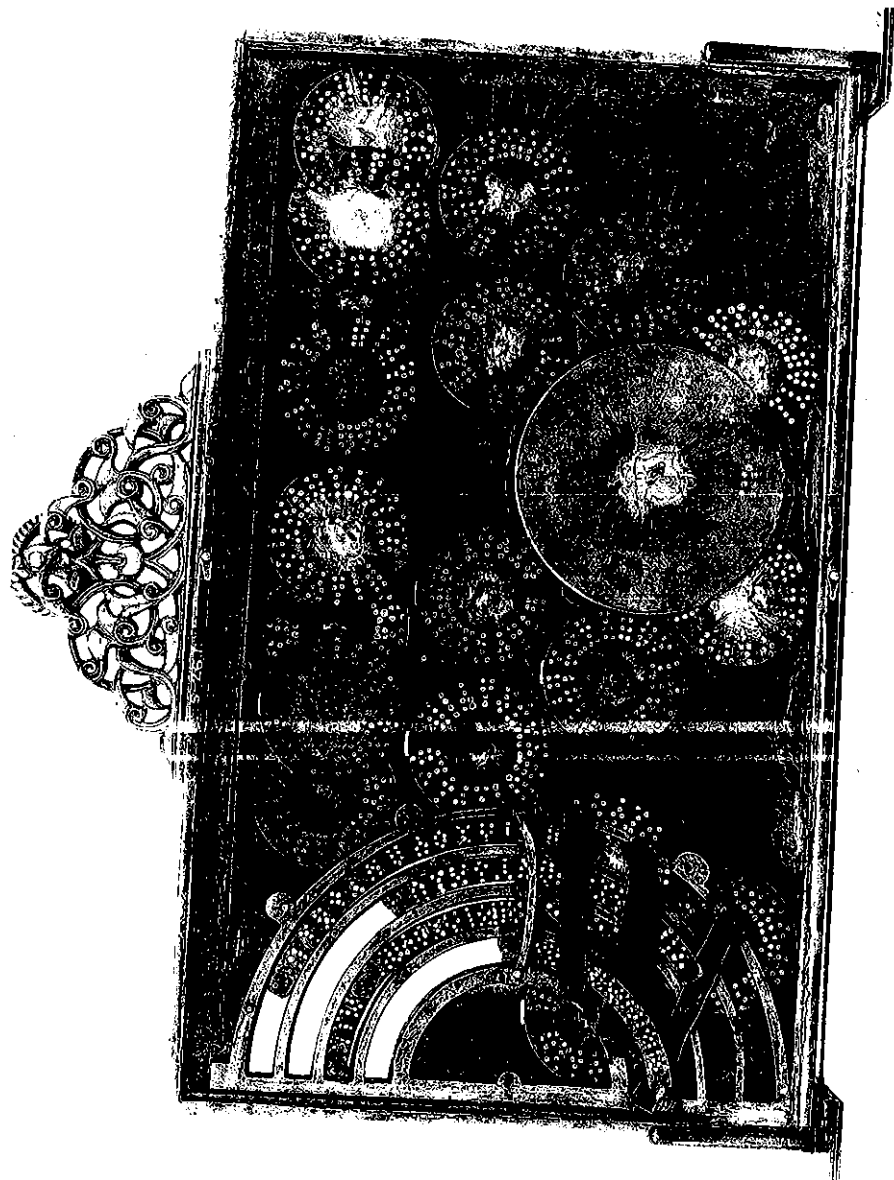
<sup>50</sup> See W. Hartner, 'The Principle and Uses of the Astrolabe' in Pope, *Survey* (note 45), III, 2539–54 and VI, plates 1397–1404; reprinted with additions in W. Hartner, *Oriens-Occident. Ausgewählte Schriften zur Wissenschafts- und Kulturgeschichte Festschrift zum 60 Geburtstag* [Collectanea 3] (Hildesheim, 1968), 287–311, esp. 292.

<sup>51</sup> Oxford, Museum of the History of Science, Inv. no. IC 5.

<sup>52</sup> London, Khalili Coll., Acc. no. MTW825; see Maddison and Savage-Smith, *Science, Tools & Magic* (note 37), I, 206–9; and *l'Orient de Saladin* (note 1), 209 no. 221.



Pl. 1. Front view of geomantic device. [Brit. Mus. Neg. no. 015009]



Pl. 2. View of inside of geomantic device, with back removed. [Brit. Mus. Neg. no. XXXII 9]

seems, consequently, a strong possibility that the metalworker who executed this geomantic tablet – Muḥammad ibn Khutlukh al-Mawṣilī – was also an astrolabe maker, though no astrolabes bearing his name are known to be extant. An association with the astrolabe industry is further borne out by the fact that the incense-burner that he is known to have made also has decoration similar to that on astrolabes.<sup>53</sup>

To the back of the front plate are attached nineteen small independent dials of diameter 4.4 cm (see Pl. 2). The dials are not cogged nor interrelated in any way. One larger dial of diameter 8.7 cm is also attached to the front plate. The significance of these rotating dials becomes evident in the following discussion. Four semicircular channels contain four 90° sliding arcs, the largest having a radius of 8 cm. On the back of the front plate, four metal strips have been placed across the channels to keep the sliding arcs within the channels.

The back plate (Pl. 12) sits within the back of the frame and is held in place by two small pins, one in the middle of each of the long sides, which can be turned over the edge of the back plate to retain it in the frame. The back plate is bordered by a rectangular inscription, the background of which is filled with arabesque and some letters terminating in arabesque; it is inlaid with silver, with decorative devices placed at the four corners and at the centre of the two longer sides. In the middle of the back is a diamond-shaped band containing a second inscription inlaid in silver against a background of engraved and inlaid arabesque. This band is intertwined by two other bands which are filled with spiralling vines of inlaid silver. These bands form within the lozenge a central circle containing a short engraved inscription.

#### THE MAKER AND AN OWNER

Nothing is known of the maker of this elaborate device except his name which is inscribed in Naskh script, inlaid in silver, on the front of the device beneath the four sliding arcs in the upper right-hand corner (see Pls. 1 and 4; for a transcription, see Appendix, item 1):

The work of Muḥammad  
ibn Khutlukh al-Mawṣilī  
in the year 639 [= 1241-2].

The equivalent of the Latin *opus* in the signature is the noun *ṣana'a(t)*, written with diacritical dots over the *tā'* *marbūṭa*, which occurs frequently on scientific instruments.<sup>54</sup> On the incense-burner also made by him, the signature is

<sup>53</sup> Allan, 'Muḥammad ibn Khutlukh' (note 46), 33.

<sup>54</sup> *Ṣana'a(t)* is clearly the most frequently employed term on Islamic celestial globes, while the noun *'amal* occurs only twice on globes before the sixteenth century; see Savage-Smith, *Celestial*

virtually identical, except that the first word can be read as the verb *ṣanaʿahu* ('made it') rather than as a noun since it lacks dots over the *tā'* *marbūṭa*.<sup>55</sup>

Whether or not Muḥammad ibn Khutlukh al-Mawṣilī was also the designer of this unusual concept for producing a geomantic reading, and hence was well read in the geomantic literature and a practicing geomancer himself, is an open question. His name is not mentioned in any of the geomantic literature surveyed. From the employment and design of a suspensory apparatus resembling that of an astrolabe – a feature not required for the functioning of the geomantic tablet as it is for an astrolabe – it seems quite possible that the designer and/or maker was an astrolabe maker. There is evidence that some astronomers (defined broadly in the sense of all concerned with timekeeping) were also metalworkers who made their own astronomical instruments such as astrolabes as well as some other metal objects having nothing to do with astronomy.<sup>56</sup> Hence there is some possibility that Muḥammad ibn Khutlukh al-Mawṣilī could have been an astrolabe maker and even possibly an astronomer-astrologer and a geomancer.

A second personal name appears in an inscription engraved in Naskh script on the back of the device in the centre circle formed by the intertwining bands of arabesque (see Pl. 12 and Appendix, item 2). This inscription, which is the only one on the entire device not inlaid in gold or silver, reads as follows:

In the possession of [*fi nawbat*] Muḥammad al-Muḥtasib al-Bukhārī

The entire inscription is written without any diacritical dots and hence can be read in several ways, but this interpretation appears the most reasonable.<sup>57</sup> Since there is no date given in this inscription we cannot know with certainty whether it was in his possession immediately after its execution or whether it came into his possession sometime later during the intervening six centuries before it came into the collection of the British Museum. Since it is the sole inscription on the tablet which is engraved only, not inlaid in gold or silver, and it employs a slightly different style of calligraphy from the rest of the device, it is likely that it was added later.

Of this Muḥammad al-Muḥtasib al-Bukhārī we know only what can be gleaned from his name. It can be assumed he had some association with Bukhārā, a city on the lower course of the Zarafshān river in present-day Uzbekistān. From the name al-Muḥtasib we could surmise that he was an

*Globes* (note 47), 214. L.A. Mayer, however, asserts that the noun *ṣanaʿa* rarely occurs on astrolabes; Mayer, *Islamic Astrolabists* (note 49), 13 nt. 1.

<sup>55</sup> Allan, 'Muḥammad ibn Khutlukh' (note 46), 33 and 66-8.

<sup>56</sup> For example, see Mayer, *Islamic Astrolabists* (note 49), 13-14 and 21.

<sup>57</sup> The name could also be read as Muḥammad al-Mukhlis al-Bukhārī, since the final *bā'* of *muḥtasib* is not well formed.

inspector of the markets and weights and measures – that is, an official of that branch of the legal system referred to as the *ḥisba* system.<sup>58</sup> If indeed he was the person for whom this geomantic device was actually designed and executed, the high quality of the metalwork and a reference to the owner being superior to the rest of mankind in an inscription on the edge of the frame would indicate that he was a very wealthy and important person.

#### THE SMALL DIALS

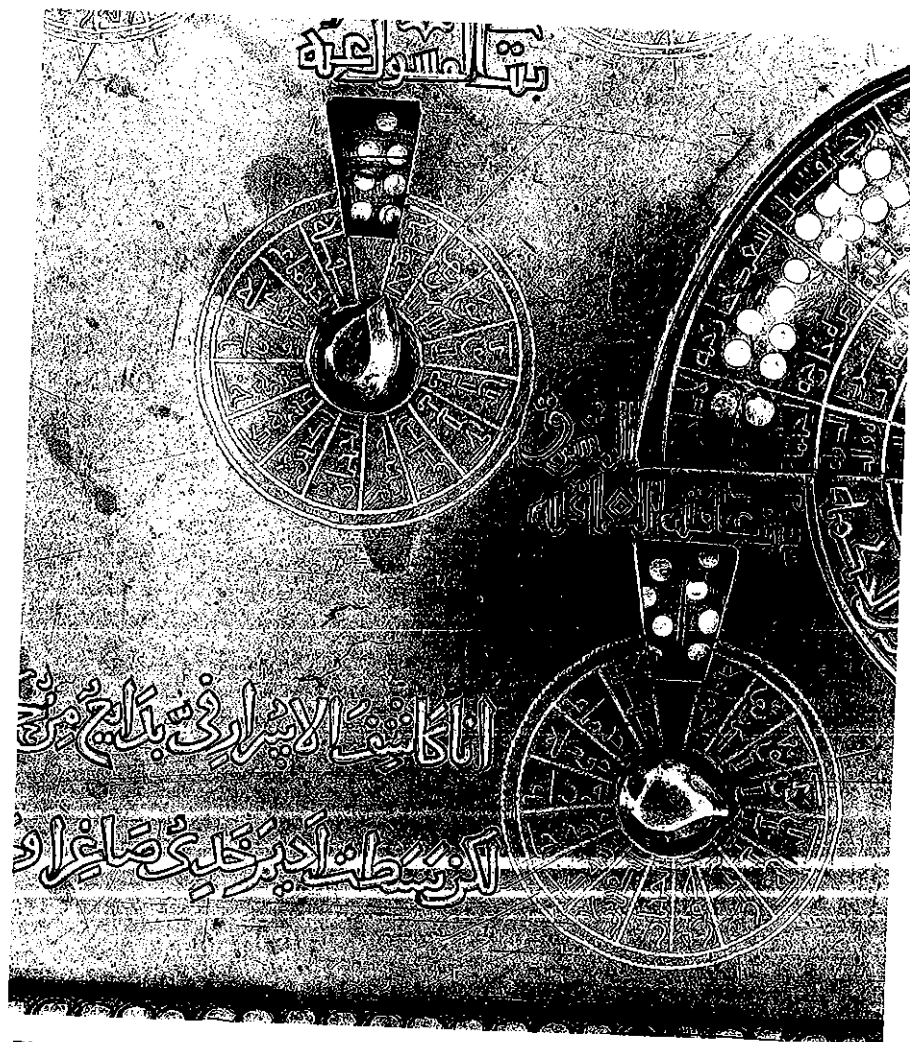
On the front of the tablet there are nineteen small circular regions. The border of each region is represented by two finely drawn concentric circles of inlaid silver wire. In the centre of each circle is a small knob which serves as a pointer and rotates a dial behind the engraved circle, causing individual geomantic figures to appear in the open window. Each engraved circle is divided by inlaid silver wire into sixteen sectors, in addition to the open window. In these sixteen sectors are inscribed in gold inlaid wire in Kufic script the names of the sixteen geomantic figures, while on the plate beneath, each figure is represented by configurations of inlaid silver dots. Since the order of the figures on the plate is the same as that which occurs on the dial beneath, it seems that the purpose of the pointer was to indicate the name of the figure visible in the window. Considerable care was obviously taken in the design and placement of these small plates so that none of the sixteen figures on a plate would appear in the window when the pointer was aligned with the open window itself. The device seems, however, to have been repaired many times, the circular plate being re-soldered onto the pointer – obviously at times by people unfamiliar with the principle of the device, for many of the dials are no longer in proper alignment with their pointer.

All of the nineteen dials have the same inscriptions with the same spellings presented in the same order (see Pl. 3 and Appendix, item 3). All of these names for the sixteen figures are found extensively in the geomantic literature, and, with two exceptions, they seem to be the most frequently used terms. The meaning of some of the names is a bit obscure, and it is difficult to give precise English equivalents of them. For a few figures, such as that having the name *al-tariq* meaning 'path', the name might be explained by the very form of the figure itself. However, to approach the meanings of most of the names in this manner seems to lead to highly questionable interpretations.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> See C. Cahen, 'Hisba' in *EP* (note 6), III, 485-93.

<sup>59</sup> For such a discussion, see J.C. Hébert, 'Analyse structurale des géomancies comoriennes, malgaches, et africaines', *Journal de la Société des Africanistes* 31 (1961), 115-208, esp. 121-2.





Pl. 3. Detail of one of the nineteen small dials. [Brit. Mus. Neg. no. 046131]

The following list presents the inscriptions around the small engraved circles, reading clockwise from the open window, along with the corresponding geomantic figure which appears on the rotating dial:

<i>al-jamā'a</i>	⊙⊙⊙⊙
<i>ṭarīq</i>	⊙⊙
<i>nuṣra khā[rīja]</i>	⊙⊙⊙
<i>nuṣra dā[khila]</i>	⊙⊙⊙
<i>qabḍ dā[khil]</i>	⊙⊙⊙
<i>qabḍ khā[rīj]</i>	⊙⊙⊙
<i>bayāḍ</i>	⊙⊙⊙
<i>ḥumra</i>	⊙⊙⊙
<i>al-ḥiyān</i>	⊙⊙⊙
<i>inkīs</i>	⊙⊙⊙
<i>'ataba dā[khila]</i>	⊙⊙⊙
<i>'ataba khā[rīja]</i>	⊙⊙⊙
<i>awrā'</i>	⊙⊙⊙
<i>jawdala</i>	⊙⊙⊙
<i>ijtimā'</i>	⊙⊙⊙
<i>'uqla</i>	⊙⊙⊙

The first figure, which contains the maximum number of points (eight) you can have in a figure, is given the common Arabic term *al-jamā'a* meaning a collection or assemblage of things or people. This is virtually the only term found in the literature for this figure, except for the so-called 'Berber' term and



the additional name *al-salāma* ('well-being') given it by Ibn Maḥfūf.<sup>60</sup>

The second figure, which has the minimum number of points (four), is called *ṭariq* meaning 'way' or 'path'; and it is the only term used for the figure. *Nuṣra khārīja* has a somewhat obscure meaning, possibly 'diminishing victory' or 'external help', while *nuṣra dākhila* means something like 'increasing victory' or 'internal help'; these names are nearly universal terms for the two figures, though *al-sultān* 'the ruler' and *tashmīr* 'preparing or despatching something' are provided respectively by Ibn Maḥfūf.

*Qabḍ dākhil* is also a term whose meaning is not altogether clear. *Qabḍ* means 'the act of taking or seizing something' and can sometimes mean 'prize' or 'possession'. Hence *qabḍ dākhil* might be translated as 'increasing seizure' or possibly as 'internal prize or property'. *Qabḍ khārīj* might similarly be translated as 'diminishing seizure' or possibly 'external property'. *Bayāḍ* means 'white' and *ḥumra* 'red'. The latter two, as well as the previous two, are essentially the only terms employed in the literature for these figures, though Ibn Maḥfūf adds *al-laban* 'milk' and *al-damm* 'blood' for the last two.

The name *al-hiyyān* appears to be one of several variant spellings of the word *al-lahyān*, the latter spelling being the most commonly found. The word means the two jawbones, upper and lower, and, in a man, the part on which the beard grows. The misspelling found on the device occurs, but very infrequently, in geomantic treatises, one of which is by Ibn Maḥfūf.<sup>61</sup> Another name for this

<sup>60</sup> For more detailed discussions of these terms, see Kunitzsch (note 13) and Carra de Vaux, (note 8). For the present discussion the following texts have been most frequently consulted: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Oriental Collections, MSS Greaves 40, Arab.f.36, Marsh 216, Bodl. Or. 505, Hunt. 456, Ouseley 156, and Hunt. 193; London, British Library, OIOC, MSS Sloane 2650, Or. 2332, and Or. 12395; Paris, BnF, MSS arabe 2716, arabe 5014, arabe 2758, and arabe 2732; Princeton, University Library, Garrett Coll. MSS 954 (547 H III), 929 (547 H IV), and 962 (548 H); Los Angeles, UCLA, Research Library, Near Eastern Coll. 895, MSS 678 and 686, Near Eastern Coll. 898, MSS 88, 618, and 685, and Near Eastern Wellcome Coll. MS 142; Cambridge, University Library, MSS Add. 3613(10), Add. 3624(8), Or. 901(8), Or. 431(7), Corpus Or. 80, and Browne Coll. MS Q.2(9). The following printed texts were also compared: Abū Ma'shar, *K. al-Muḥaqqiq* (note 30); Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Jāmi' al-'ulūm* (note 28); al-Zanāfi, *K. al-Faṣl fi ṣūl wa-l-jāmi' li-l-'ajab al-'uḥḥāb* (Būlāq, 1282 [1865]), part 4, 234-42; Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Tūnisi, *Tashhīḥ al-adhbān bi-sīrat bilād al-'arab wa-l-sūdān*, ed. Khalīl Maḥmūd 'Asākir and Muṣṭafā Muḥammad Mus'ad (Cairo, 1965); 'Abd al-Qādir al-Ḥusaynī al-Adhamī, *Risāla miṣṣan al-'adl fi maqāsid al-ḥakam al-raml*, in *K. Shams al-ma'arīf al-kubrā wa-l-ṭaṭā'if al-'awārif li-Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Būnī* (Cairo, n.d. [1945]), 1-14; Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Murtaḍā al-Yazdī, *Nafahāt al-asrār fi 'ilm al-raml* (Bombay, 1308 [1890]); and 'Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Sayyid al-Tūkhī, *Manba' ṣūl al-raml, al-mushtamil 'alā thamānin darsan fi ṣūl 'ilm al-raml* (Cairo, 1376 [1956]). Berber terms are beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>61</sup> Ibn Maḥfūf calls *al-hiyyān* a 'Berber' term (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Oriental Collections, MS Greaves 40, fol. 178a, and MS Arab.f.36, fol. 101b), giving as the Arabic *kathīr al-hayba* 'of great esteem' and *al-raḥul al-kabīr* 'the great man'. See also Klein-Franke, 'The Geomancy of Ahmad b. 'Alī Zunbul' (note 10), 32, whose reading of *hiyyān* in the text by Ibn Zunbul written in

figure is *dāḥik*, an adjective meaning 'laughing', which occurs in the literature about as frequently as *al-lahyān* and its variants. The name *inkīs* is probably not of Arabic origin, though it might be interpreted as an unusual form derived from the root *n-k-s* meaning to turn something upside down. It is the most common term for the corresponding figure, although the passive participle *mankūs* meaning 'inverted' and hence 'unfavorable' and *nakīs*, 'inverting', occur as well as *rakīza* meaning a pole or peg or buried treasure.<sup>62</sup>

The word *'ataba* can mean either the lintel or the threshold of a doorway, and so *'ataba dākhila* is the outside lintel of a doorway while *'ataba khārīja* is the outside threshold of the doorway. These are the two most common terms for these figures, although *rāya fariḥ* 'joyful banner' and *rakīza thābita* 'fixed pole or peg; fixed treasure' also occur respectively for these two figures.

The term *awra'* ('the cautious ones') comes from the root *w-r-* 'meaning to be timid',<sup>63</sup> but it is far from the most frequent word in geomantic manuals for the figure, the common one being *naqī l-khadd* meaning something like 'pure of cheek' or 'pure of visage'. The name *jawdala* is a bit of a puzzle, for it is from a quadriliteral root which is not otherwise attested in medieval or modern dictionaries. While it is a common name for this figure, of almost equal incidence is the name *kūṣaj* or *kawsaj*, meaning to be scanty-bearded.

The word *ijtimā'*, meaning the act of being arranged or assembled, is the only term to be used in the literature for this geomantic figure. The name *'uqla*, 'a bond or shackle', is the most common label for the last figure in the listing above, although the term *thikāf* occurs occasionally. The latter word refers both to an instrument for straightening objects such as spears as well as to the art of fighting with a sword.

Sixteen of the nineteen small circles have an inscription in Kufic script inlaid in silver written above the open window, and these form the sixteen positions or houses of the geomantic tableau. The names provided for the houses agree with those that are often found in Arabic geomantic treatises. The labels over the first eight houses – that is, the eight small circles across the top of the device – reading right to left are as follows (see Pl. 1 and Appendix, item 4):

[I]	The House of Soul and Life
[II]	The House of Property and Wages
[III]	The House of Brothers and Sisters

the sixteenth century seems to imply the same reading as *hiyyān*, which is the verbal noun from the third form of the root *h-y-n* and as such means 'a certain period of time'; see E.W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 8 vols. (London, 1863; rpr Beirut, 1968), II, 689.

<sup>62</sup> Ibn Maḥfūf gives *al-raḥul alladhi l-aṣl* 'the man who is most strong of character'.

<sup>63</sup> Various arrangements of diacritical dots are found on the word, such as *awrā'*, but the most common spelling is *awra'* or *aurā'*.

- [IV] The House of Fathers and Mothers
- [V] The House of Offspring and Children
- [VI] The House of Illness and Disease
- [VII] The House of Women and Sexual Matters
- [VIII] The House of Slaughter and Death

The next row of four houses, reading right to left:

- [IX] The House of Movement and Changes
- [X] The House of Power and Glory
- [XI] The House of Hope and Expectations
- [XII] The House of Enemies and Envious People

The small dial to the right of the centre large dial:

- [XIII] The House of the Questioner

The dial to the left of the large centre dial:

- [XIV] The House of the Object of the Inquiry

The small dial on the right below the large centre dial:

- [XV] The House of the Result

The small dial on the left below the large centre dial:

- [XVI] The House of the Result of the Result

The three remaining small dials do not bear individual labels and are grouped in an inverted triangular formation at the lower right of the device. Between the two upper dials of this group is the engraved statement that follows, written in Kufic script and inlaid in silver (see Pl. 4 and Appendix, item 5):

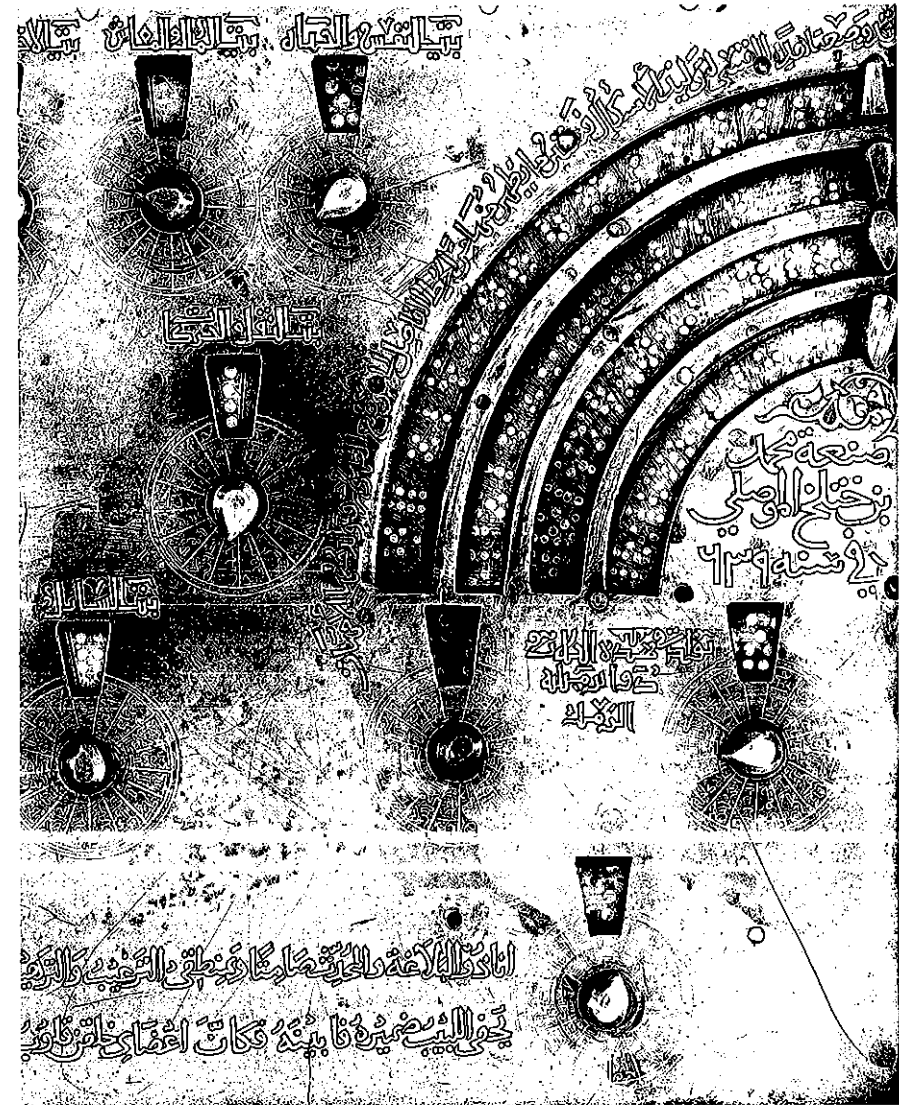
In these locations<sup>64</sup> circles generate the geomantic triplet<sup>65</sup>.

#### THE SLIDING ARCS

Each of the four nested 90° arcs in the upper right-hand portion of the tablet (see Pl. 4) contains a slide which may be moved by a small knob attached

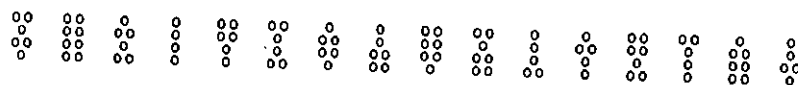
<sup>64</sup> Reading *al-mahallāt* instead of *al-balāt* as engraved.

<sup>65</sup> The term *muthallatha*, translated here as triplet, occurs frequently in geomantic literature in the specialized sense of a group of three *raml* figures, one of which is derived from the other by combining, or 'adding', them. The word *muthallath*, as well as *muthallatha*, also appears as the title of the treatise by Ibn Maḥfūf, a treatise devoted in large part to the interpretation of triplets (see notes 22–24 above). The term *muthallatha* (and the plural *muthallathāt*) also occurs in astrological literature, but in the very different sense of trines (*triplicitates* in Latin treatises) of 120° alignments; see al-Bīrūnī, *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*, ed. and trans. R. Ramsay Wright (London, 1934), 230 sec. 379; and Ullmann, *Natur* (note 8), 356.



Pl. 4. Detail of sliding arcs on front of device, with signature of maker and date beneath the smallest arc. [Brit. Mus. Neg. no. 046130].

directly to the slide. Each slide moves independently and contains the geomantic figures inlaid in silver dots. All sixteen figures appear on each arc in the same order of presentation, and, read in an anti-clockwise, direction they form the following sequence, listed here from right to left:



As one goes from the outermost arc to the innermost, the figures become increasingly crowded as the length of the arc becomes shorter.

Over the four slides is the following statement, inscribed in Naskh script and inlaid in silver (see Pl. 4 and Appendix, item 6):

We have placed these arcs in order to generate the figures,<sup>66</sup> and so those that appear next to the separating line at the point of visibility are to be considered, and then from them you generate the Mothers.

A small rivet inserted in the process of constructing the tablet has marred the inscription at the point *fa-ya'tabiru* 'it/they are to be considered', so that a precise reading is not possible at this point.<sup>67</sup>

#### THE LARGE DIAL

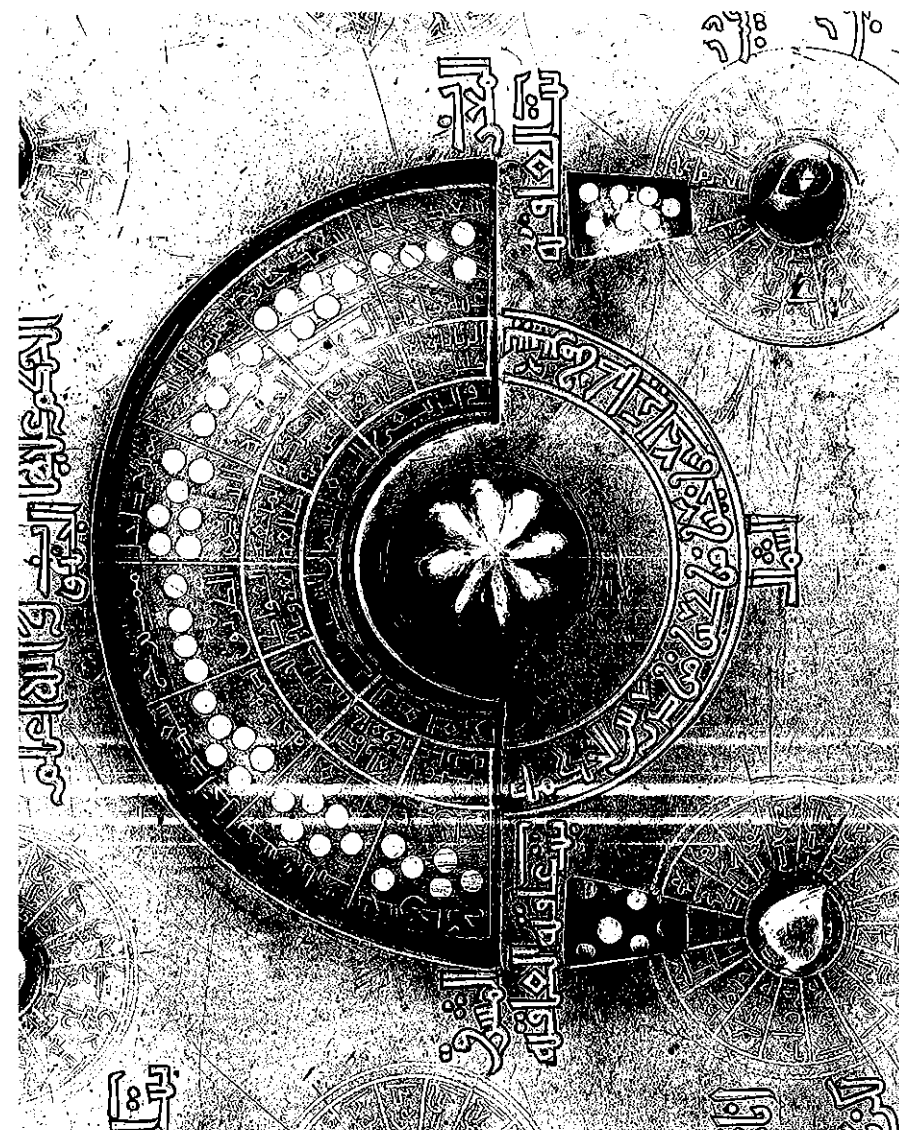
Above the large central dial is a four-line inscription, in Kufic script and inlaid in silver, which reads as follows (see Pl. 1 and Appendix, item 7):

- [1] We have established this circle so that you might learn from it the
- [2] correspondences of the forms of the figures with the forms of
- [3] the lunar mansions, rising and setting. Thereupon the power to interpret
- [4] might belong to it [the circle], but God knows best.

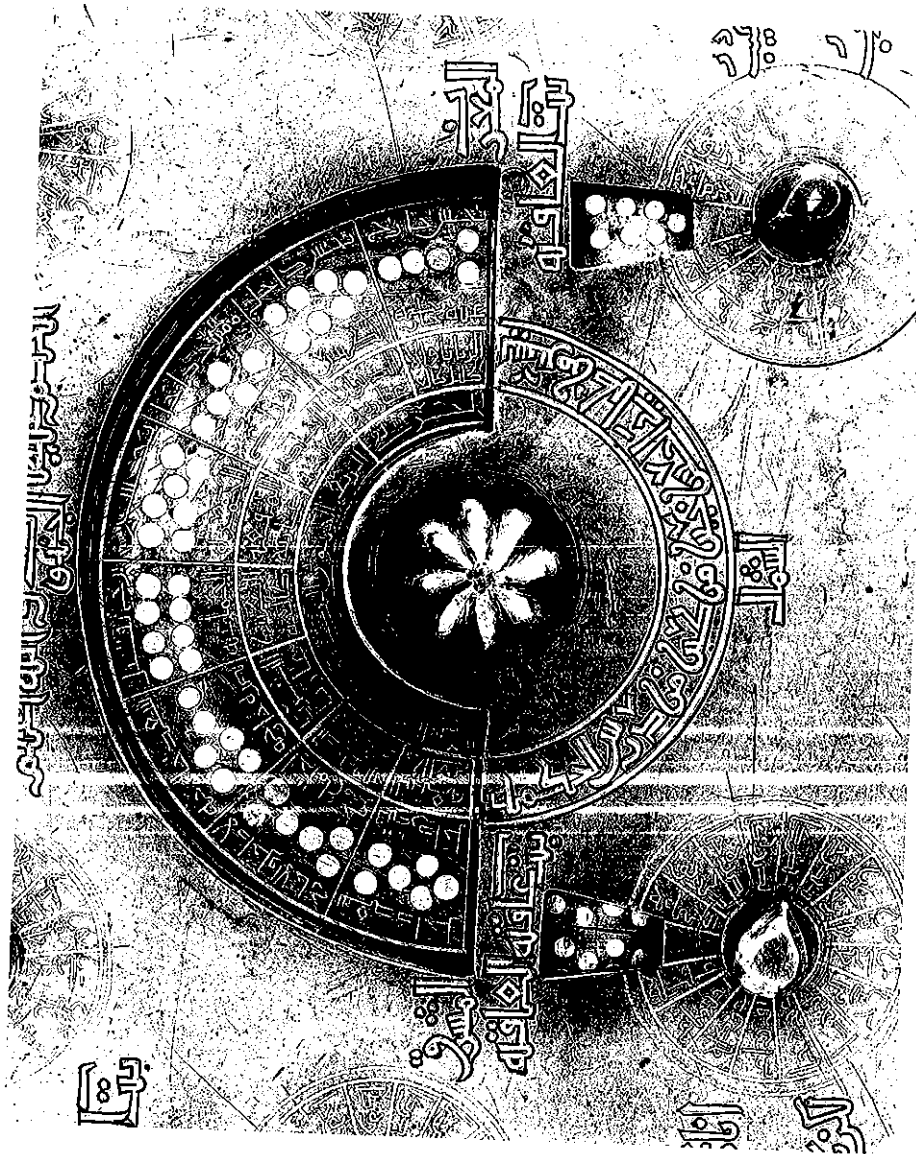
On the front plate around the large dial engraved in Kufic script and inlaid in silver are the four cardinal points. These names are stable and do not turn with the dial (see Pls. 1–5 and Appendix, item 8). Below the hemispherical window exposing the large circular plate on the front of the device is a semicircular band, containing an inscription inlaid in silver and in Kufic script. In this inscription the device, or possibly the large circular plate, is made to speak the following words (see Pls. 5 and 6 and Appendix, item 9):

<sup>66</sup> *Shakl* (plural *ashkāl*) is the usual term for the geomantic figures. See Muḥammad 'Alī al-Tahānawī, *Kashāf iṣṭilāḥāt al-funūn. A Dictionary of Technical Terms Used in the Sciences of the Muslims*, ed. Mawlawies Muhammad Wajih, Abd al-Haq, and Gholam Kadir [Bibliotheca India, 17], 3 vols. (Calcutta, 1853–62), II, 784.

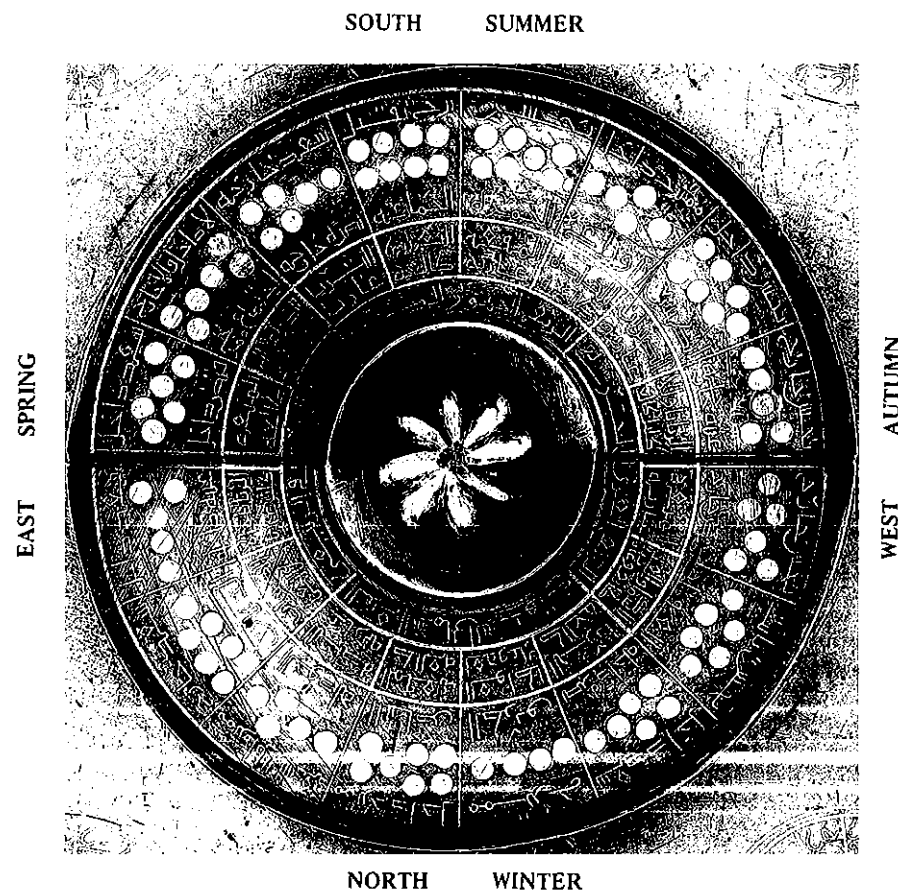
<sup>67</sup> Other readings have also been suggested, such as *fa-yatabayyanu* 'it/they will become clear'.



Pl. 5. Detail of one half of the large central dial with the northern-winter quadrant of figures at the top. [Brit. Mus. Neg. no. 046128]



Pl. 6. Detail of other half of the large central dial, with the southern-summer quadrant of figures at the top. [Brit. Mus. Neg. no. 046129]



Pl. 7. Composite photograph showing the complete central dial with the four quadrants of figures labelled.

From my intricacies there comes about insight superior to books concerned with the study of the art [of geomancy].

Behind the window rotates a large circular plate turned by an eight-lobed knob on the front of the plate. In Pl. 7 the circular plate is shown in its entirety. Of course, only half of the plate is visible at any one time through the window seen in Pls. 5 and 6. The circular plate edged with inlaid silver wire contains five concentric bands: in four of the bands are inscriptions written in Kufic script with inlaid gold wire, and in the fifth are the sixteen geomantic figures formed by inlaid gold dots. In the outermost band are inscriptions giving the 'indication' or omen associated with the adjacent geomantic figure. The figures themselves occupy the second concentric band. The third band from the outside gives the name of the adjacent geomantic figure. These three bands are separated from the two inside bands by a second circle of inlaid silver wire. The next innermost band of writing presents the names of certain lunar mansions and states whether their rising or setting is intended. In this way an alignment of the geomantic figures with some of the lunar mansions is clearly indicated. Silver inlaid lines separate the sixteen items in these four bands, but the innermost band (separated from the adjacent band by another inlaid silver circle) is divided by silver lines into four equal quadrants. In this way the inscriptions in the innermost band group the geomantic figures into four sets corresponding to the seasons and the directions of the compass.

As the dial is turned clockwise, the four quadrants, or groupings of figures, appear in the window in the order southern, eastern, northern, and western and consequently have the same relative position on the plate as do the four stationary cardinal points engraved about the large dial. The arrangement of the stationary directions of the compass about the large central dial is the same as that of the quadrants on the back of an astrolabe and the orientation of a *ṣafīḥa* of an astrolabe, which is the disk on which is engraved a stereographic projection of the heavens.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, the placement of South at the top is in keeping with the procedures followed by astrolabe makers and astronomers.

For a transcription of the inscriptions on the large dial, see Appendix, item 10. Note that in Pls 5, 6, and 7, the geomantic figures represented by inlaid silver dots are displayed horizontally rather than in the usual vertical manner. The only explanation we can offer for this arrangement is the maker's need to conserve space. Also note that in Pls 5 and 6 the symbols of the figures in the southern and eastern quadrants, although still horizontal, have been reversed in their direction — that is, the symbols in the southern and eastern quadrants run in the opposite direction from those of the other two quadrants. To put it

<sup>68</sup> Hartner, 'Principle and Uses of the Astrolabe' (note 50), 295 and 302.

another way, the figures in the southern and eastern quadrants have their heads (their topmost marks) at the right end, while the figures in the northern and western quadrants have their heads at the left. In all likelihood this is because the metalworker held the plate steady in one position when inserting the silver studs. If the entire plate were viewed all at once, as in Pl. 7, the figures as placed by the maker would read properly. But as the plate is turned and viewed through the semicircular window, the figures in the bottom half are inverted, since the maker failed to take into consideration the effect that the rotating movement of the dial would have on the appearance of the figures when displayed in the window.

























Since one of the more distinctive features of this device is the association of geomantic figures with lunar mansions, it is important that we consider in detail this alignment. Before doing that, however, some preliminary remarks on the origin and nature of the lunar mansions are necessary.

Table 1. Inscriptions on Large Rotating Dial

Lunar mansion / Geomantic name and figure <sup>69</sup> / Indication					
Northern winter quadrant	<i>al-balda</i> , setting	/	<i>al-jawdala</i>	○○○○	Mixed, tending toward good omen
	<i>al-haq'a</i> , rising	/	<i>al-bayād</i>	○○○○	Increasingly mixed
	<i>al-'awwā'</i> , rising and setting	/	<i>al-ṭariq</i>	○○○○	Mixed
	<i>al-thurayyā</i> , rising	/	<i>nuṣra dākhila</i>	○○○○	Increasing good fortune

<sup>69</sup> We have interpolated the geomantic figures within vertical dotted lines so as to show the reader the figures in their normal orientation.

Table 1. Inscriptions on Large Rotating Dial (Continued)

Lunar mansion /		Geomantic name and figure /		Indication	
Western autumnal quadrant	<i>al-simāk, al-ghafr</i> rising and setting	/	<i>al-'uqla</i> 		Constant ill luck
	<i>al-ban'a, setting</i>	/	<i>qabḍ khārīj</i> 		Decreasing ill fortune
	<i>al-zubānā, al-iklīl</i> rising	/	<i>'ataba khārīja</i> 		Decreasing ill luck <sup>70</sup>
	<i>al-dabarān, setting</i>	/	<i>inkīs</i> 		Increasing bad luck
Southern summer quadrant	<i>al-balda, rising</i>	/	<i>awrā'</i> 		Increasingly mixed
	<i>al-haq'a, setting</i>	/	<i>al-ḥumra</i> 		Ill fortune
	<i>al-na'ā'im, rising</i>	/	<i>al-jamā'a</i> 		Serious adversity
	<i>al-thurayyā, setting</i>	/	<i>nuṣra khārīja</i> 		Decreasing good fortune <sup>71</sup>
Eastern spring quadrant	<i>al-dhira', al-na[thra]</i> and <i>al-ṭarf</i>	/	<i>al-ijtimā'</i> <sup>72</sup> 		Mixed, neither increasing nor decreasing
	<i>al-ban'a, rising</i>	/	<i>qabḍ dākhil</i> 		Increasing good fortune
	<i>al-zubānā, al-iklīl</i> setting	/	<i>'ataba dākhila</i> 		Increasing good fortune
	<i>al-dabarān, rising</i>	/	<i>al-ḥiyān</i> 		Decreasing good fortune

The origin of the system of lunar mansions is obscure and complex. The Bedouins of the Arabian peninsula in pre-Islamic times had a primitive system by which they estimated the passage of time and predicted meteorological

<sup>70</sup> The inscription actually reads *khārija*, amended by the present authors to read *khārij*.

<sup>71</sup> The engraver has written *sa'd khārija* instead of *sa'd khārij*.

<sup>72</sup> The engraver has written *mumtazaj* 'mixed' alongside the name of the figure *ijtimā'*. It should be read with the indication or interpretation of the figure rather than the name.

events so as to locate winter and spring grazing lands whose locations varied greatly depending upon the rainfall. The pre-Islamic system called *anwā'* was based upon a series of prominent stars whose cosmical settings (setting in the west as the sun rises in the east) and heliacal risings (rising in the east with the sun) delineate the solar year by breaking it into about twenty-eight periods.<sup>73</sup> The stars themselves were held responsible for weather conditions. Sometime before the advent of Islam the Bedouins assimilated from India a system in which the zodiac, or ecliptic, was divided into twenty-seven or twenty-eight 'mansions' (*manāzil*) of the moon.<sup>74</sup> These mansions corresponded to places in the sky through which the moon passed in its course from new moon to new moon in twenty-seven or twenty-eight nights. The course of the moon is inclined to the ecliptic at an angle only slightly more than 5°, but its brilliance is such that nearby stars cannot be observed; hence the mansions were named for stars in the vicinity of but not directly along the ecliptic. Each mansion represents one day's travel of the moon, and corresponds, therefore, to roughly 13° along the ecliptic beginning at the vernal equinox.

In superimposing the system of *manāzil* upon the Bedouin grouping of fixed stars, the Arabs applied *anwā'* star names to the Hindu lunar-mansion divisions of the ecliptic. These two systems are not entirely compatible, however, for one is calculated on the basis of the risings and settings of fixed star groups and the other reckoned on regular intervals of the ecliptic taken from the vernal equinox. With the precession of the equinoxes, no fixed star will maintain the same distance from the vernal equinox. The most commonly accepted value in the medieval world for the precession was 1° per 66 years. Consequently one star group cannot be successfully aligned with one segment of the ecliptic measured from the vernal equinox for an extended period of time. The resulting *anwā'*-*manāzil* system began with a star group in Aries (probably to be identified with βγ *Arietis*) which corresponded to 0° House of Aries, at the

<sup>73</sup> A confusion in the use of the term 'acronychal' has occurred in much of the literature on lunar mansions; hence we have taken care to avoid the term and consequently have used only heliacal and cosmical (see Fig. 3). See also C. Pellat, 'Anwā'' in *EP* (note 6), I, 523-4.

<sup>74</sup> The number of lunar mansions seems to have been originally less than 28. Several theories have been put forward as to the origin of this system: that it is Chinese and spread from China to India, that it was originally Indian, that it was Babylonian in origin and extended thence to India, and that Hellenistic astronomy played a role in the diffusion either as a point of origin or through Hellenistic astronomical and trigonometric techniques current in India. See W. Whitney, 'The Lunar Zodiac', *Oriental and Linguistic Studies* 2 (1874), 340-421; P. Yampolsky, 'The Origin of the Twenty-Eight Lunar Mansions', *Osiris* 9 (1959), 62-83; F. Hommel, 'Über den Ursprung und das Alter der arabischen Sternnamen und insbesondere der Mondstationen', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 45 (1891), 592-619; S. Weinstock, 'Lunar Mansions and Early Calendars', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 69 (1950), 48-69; and R. Mercier, 'Studies in the Medieval Conception of Precession: Part II', *Archives Internationales d'Histoire des Sciences* 27 (1977), 33-71.



vernal equinox, in about 300 BC.<sup>75</sup>

Following the advent of Islam and the reception and elaboration of Greek astronomy and astrology, the earlier Bedouin star groupings were overlaid with the Ptolemaic constellations which we recognize today. In most of the later prognostication using lunar mansions (which continued to be employed to predict rainfall and other meteorological phenomena), the system was interpreted in such a way that it was not affected by the precession of the equinoxes – that is, each zodiacal house, or 30° division of the ecliptic, was assigned two and one-third lunar mansions. In the Islamic system, the twenty-eight mansions are numbered, the first one coinciding (if the system is not precessed) with the vernal equinox, the second one occurring about thirteen days further into the zodiacal house of Aries. Each lunar mansion was given the name attributed to one of the twenty-eight *anwā'* star groups, even though the star groups were no longer in the segments of the ecliptic bearing their names. The rising of a lunar mansion is most often interpreted as the heliacal rising.<sup>76</sup> An interval of approximately thirteen days passes between the rising of two adjacent lunar mansions. When one lunar mansion is rising in the East with the sun (heliacally), the fourteenth one from it in the order of the twenty-eight lunar mansions will be setting (see Fig. 3). The setting of a lunar mansion in the West as the sun rises is called the cosmical setting and occurs at a six-month

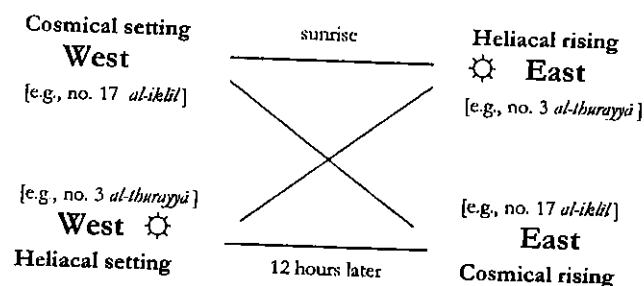


Fig. 3. Heliacal and cosmical risings and settings of lunar mansions.

<sup>75</sup> This attempted compounding of the *anwā'* with the lunar mansions (*manāzil*) gave rise to a type of Arabic literature, known as *anwā'* literature, in which lexicographers recorded the Bedouin associations of meteorological phenomena with this system. These works, besides containing an explanation of the *anwā'* star groups and the lunar mansions with the visibilities and settings, would include a discussion of the system of rains, winds, cold, and other weather conditions, illustrated with appropriate proverbs and poetry. See C. Pellat, 'Dictionnaire rimes, *anwā'*, et mansions lunaires chez les arabes', *Arabica* 1 (1955), 17-41.

<sup>76</sup> Since the sun's brightness makes it impossible to see the actual rising of the lunar mansion occupied by the sun, the person observes between the beginning of dawn and the appearance of the sun the rising of the second lunar mansion preceding it in the established sequence. For example, the third lunar mansion is said to be rising if the first mansion is the last one whose rising is visible before the sun rises.

interval from its heliacal rising. When a lunar mansion sets in the West as the sun sets, then it is termed an heliacal setting, and this occurs on the same day as its heliacal rising. Similarly, the cosmical rising of a star (in the East as the sun is setting) occurs on the same day as its cosmical setting.

Many of the Arabic terms applied to lunar mansions were so ancient that when the lexicographers recorded them in the ninth century their significance had already been lost. Frequently, therefore, only a tentative translation can be given. The names appear to be older than many of the pre-Islamic Arabic star names, and the imagery behind them more obscure.<sup>77</sup>

There was a tradition in the Islamic and Latin worlds of associating with the lunar mansions abstract patterns of dots or stars in small geometrical designs (see Table 2). The thirteenth-century writer on occult sciences al-Būnī as well as the thirteenth-century cosmographer and geographer al-Qazwīnī have extensive sections on the lunar mansions illustrated with configurations of dots, some of which are suggestive of geomantic figures, although neither mention geomancy in their treatises.<sup>78</sup> An Arabic brass celestial globe<sup>79</sup> dated 718 H [= 1318-19] and signed by 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Burhān al-Mawṣilī represents the lunar mansions by patterns of inlaid silver dots along the ecliptic apparently in the same tradition. This particular globe appears to be unique amongst the Islamic celestial globes in this feature. Also, patterns of dots obviously related to the twenty-eight lunar mansions, though the term is not used, are found in the Latin *Experimentarius*, said to have been translated in the twelfth century from Arabic by Bernard Silvester of Tours.<sup>80</sup>

In many cases there is little similarity between the various patterns of dots assigned to a lunar mansion and the actual appearance of the stars in that region of the sky. Even the number of dots used in a design may be quite different

<sup>77</sup> See Savage-Smith, *Celestial Globes* (note 47), 119-32; M. Steinschneider, 'Über die Mondstation (*Naxatra*) und das Buch Arcandum', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 18 (1864), 118-201; and P. Kunitzsch, *Arabische Sternnamen in Europa* (Wiesbaden, 1959) and *Untersuchungen zur Sternnamenklatur der Araber* (Wiesbaden, 1961).

<sup>78</sup> Ahmad ibn 'Alī al-Būnī, *Kitāb Shams al-ma'arīf al-kubrā wa-lafā'if al-awārif* (Cairo, n.d. [1945]), 10-25. It is noteworthy that al-Būnī, the acknowledged master of the occult sciences in Islam, did not include in his encyclopaedia any mention of geomancy. For al-Qazwīnī, see *Kitāb 'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā'ib al-manjūdat: al-Qazwīnī's Kosmographie. I: Die Wunder der Schöpfung*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1849), 42-51; a German translation of al-Qazwīnī's discussion of lunar mansions and the constellations was published by C.L. Ideler, *Untersuchungen über den Ursprung und die Bedeutung der Sternnamen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der gestirnten Himmels* (Berlin, 1809).

<sup>79</sup> Oxford, Museum of the History of Science, Inv. no. 57-84/181, Billmeir Collection. There are, however, reasons for questioning the date of this globe; see Savage-Smith, *Celestial Globes* (note 47), 247-8 no. 60 and fig. 7.

<sup>80</sup> In the *Experimentarius* associated with Bernard Silvester (see note 36 above), the lunar mansions are used to designate the 28 topics of inquiry such as illness, marriage, victories, and so forth, each having 28 lines of responses.

Table 2. Positions and Interpretations of Lunar Mansions

	Names of the Lunar Mansions	Position in Zodiacal Houses	Season		No. of Stars	Modern Identification	al-Qazwini	al-Būnī	Experimentarius
			Rising	Setting					
1	al-sharātān (al-na'ith)	0° 0' 0" Aries VERNAL EQUINOX	SPRING	AUTUMN	2(3)	β γ Arietis (α β γ Arietis)	• •	• • • •	Anatha 3 stars
2	al-buḥayn	12° 51' 26" Aries			3(4)	ε δ ρ Arietis (FL 41[c], 39, 35, 36 Arietis)	• •	• •	Albatio 7
3	al-thurayyā	25° 12' 52" Aries			6(7)	Pleiades open star cluster	• • • •	• • • •	Athuria 18
4	al-dabarān	8° 34' 18" Taurus	SUMMER	WINTER	1	α Tauri (Aldebaran) (Hyades) (all the Hyades)	• • • •	• • • •	Adoran 2
5	al-haq'a	21° 25' 44" Taurus			3	λ φ <sup>1</sup> φ <sup>2</sup> Orionis	• •	• • • •	Almusan 5
6	al-han'a	4° 17' 10" Gemini			2(5)	γ ζ Geminorum (γ ζ η μ ν Geminorum)	• • • •	• • • •	Atha 2
7	al-dhirā'	17° 8' 35" Gemini	AUTUMN	SPRING	2	α β Geminorum or α β Canis minoris	• •	• •	Arian 10
8	al-nathra	0° 0' 0" Cancer SUMMER SOLSTICE			3	γ δ Cancrī and open cluster M44 [Praesepe]	• • • •	• • • •	Anathra 2
9	al-tarf	12° 51' 26" Cancer			2	λ Leonis, ν. Cancrī	• •	• •	Altraf 4
10	al-jabha	25° 42' 52" Leo	WINTER	SUMMER	4	ζ η α Leonis	• •	• • • •	Albuza 5
11	al-zubra	8° 24' 18" Leo			2	δ θ Leonis	• •	• •	Adchoretem 4
12	al-sarfa	21° 25' 41" Leo			1	β Leonis	• •	• • • •	Arfa 1
13	al-'awwā'	4° 17' 10" Virgo	SPRING	AUTUMN	5(4)	β γ δ ε Virginis (β γ ε Virginis)	• • • •	• • • •	Alaua 5

	Names of the Lunar Mansions	Position in Zodiacal Houses	Season		No. of Stars	Modern Identification	al-Qazwini	al-Būnī	Experimentarius
			Rising	Setting					
14	al-simāk	17° 8' 35" Virgo	AUTUMN	SPRING	1	α Virginis [Spica]	• •	• •	Asioneth 5
15	al-ghafr	0° 0' 0" Libra AUTUMNAL EQUINOX			3(2)	ε κ λ Virginis (ε κ λ Virginis)	• •	• •	Alagafar 3
16	al-zubānā	12° 51' 26" Libra			2	α <sup>1,2</sup> Librae	• •	• •	Azavenem 2
17	al-iklīl	25° 42' 52" Libra	WINTER	SUMMER	3(5)	δ ε π Scorpii (δ ε π Sco plus two not identified)	• •	• •	Alaguiul 7
18	al-qalb	8° 34' 18" Scorpio			1	α Scorpii	• •	• •	Alcalu 3
19	al-shaula	21° 25' 14" Scorpio			2	λ υ Scorpii	• •	• •	Aleura 6
20	al-na'ā'im	4° 17' 10" Sagittarius	SPRING	AUTUMN	8	γ δ ε η θ τ ζ Sagittarii	• •	• •	Annea 9
21	al-balda	17° 8' 35" Sagittarius			0	[space below ζ and ρ υ Sagittarii]	• •	• •	Alvelde 7 (no design)
22	sa'd al-dhābiḥ	0° 0' 0" Capricorn WINTER SOLSTICE			2	α <sup>1,2</sup> β Capricorni (α β Cap nearby)	• •	• •	Cataue 3
23	sa'd bula'	12° 51' 26" Capricorn	SUMMER	WINTER	2	ε υ Aquarii (ε υ Aquarii between)	• •	• •	Cadabula 2
24	sa'd al-su'ūd	25° 42' 52" Capricorn			3	β ε Aquarii and c' Capricorni	• •	• •	Cadacaud 2
25	sa'd al-akhbiya	8° 34' 18" Aquarius			4	γ η ζ η Aquarii	• •	• •	Cadalaū 12
26	al-farḡ al-muqaddam	21° 25' 44" Aquarius	AUTUMN	SPRING	2	α β Pegasi	• •	• •	Algarfavar 2
27	al-farḡ al-mu'akkhar	4° 17' 10" Pisces			2	δ γ Pegasi	• •	• •	Algarfavar 2
28	batn al-hūt (al-riḥā')	17° 8' 35" Pisces			1	β Andromedae [Mirech]	• •	• •	Almazene 3



from the number of stars associated with that mansion. For example, the twenty-first mansion, entitled *al-balda*, is uniformly recognized by writers as referring to a starless region of the sky.<sup>81</sup> The pattern, however, associated with this mansion varies greatly, consisting of four, five, or even twelve dots.

Table 2 summarizes information regarding the lunar mansions which is important in attempting to understand this device and the fourteen mansions chosen for this large dial by the designer. In the chart presented in Table 2, the sequence of lunar mansions begins, as is customary, with *al-sharāṭān*. Occasionally a listing begins with a different mansion,<sup>82</sup> but even then the same sequential order is maintained. The position of the zodiacal houses in Table 2 is that given by al-Bīrūnī<sup>83</sup> (d. 1050/442 AH) in which the mansions represent twenty-eight arbitrary divisions of the ecliptic beginning at the vernal equinox, disregarding the positions in the sky of the asterisms for which the lunar mansions are named. The seasonal divisions in the third and fourth columns of Table 2 are also derived from al-Bīrūnī.

In column 5 of Table 2, the chart gives the usual number of stars assigned to the asterism associated with a lunar mansion and, in parentheses, differing traditional versions of the number of stars. All this information is derived from the text of 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Šūfī who in his tenth-century treatise on the constellations used the Ptolemaic star catalogue in his identification of most of the stars in the asterisms.<sup>84</sup> Column 6 presents the most commonly accepted modern identifications of the stars.<sup>85</sup> Columns 7 and 8 give the designs of the asterisms found in the thirteenth-century writings of al-Qazwīnī and al-Būnī.<sup>86</sup> Column 9 gives the designs of the asterisms found in the twelfth-century Latin *Experimentarius* attributed to Bernard Silvester along with the Latin names and

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, al-Bīrūnī, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations. An English Version of the Āthār-ul-Bākiya of Albiruni or 'Vestiges of the Past' Collected and Reduced to Writing by the Author in AH 390-1, AD 1000*, trans. E.C. Sachau (London, 1879), 348 and 356.

<sup>82</sup> For example, the *Experimentarius* begins with the 28th mansion, which it calls *Almazene*, making *Anatha* the 2nd in the list. Some *anwā'* authors began their discussion with *al-thurayyā*, the 3rd mansion; see Pellat, 'Dictionnaire rimes' (note 73), 19.

<sup>83</sup> al-Bīrūnī, *Chronology* (note 81), 351, and for further discussions of the lunar mansions, see 335-65. See also al-Bīrūnī, *Book of Instruction* (note 65), 81-7, sec. 164-6.

<sup>84</sup> 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Šūfī, *Ṣuwaru'l-kawakib or Uranometry* (Hyderabad, 1373 [1954]), passim; partial French translation by H.C.F.C. Schjellerup, *Descriptions des étoiles fixes composées au milieu du dixième siècle de notre ère, par l'astronome persan Abd al-Rahman Al-Sufi* (St Petersburg, 1874).

<sup>85</sup> See Kunitzsch, *Untersuchungen* (note 77); and Savage-Smith, *Celestial Globes* (note 47), 121-32.

<sup>86</sup> The patterns given by al-Qazwīnī are taken from the text given by L.P.E.A. [Louis-Amélie] Sédillot, *Matériaux pour servir à l'histoire comparée des sciences mathématiques chez les grecs et les orientaux*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1849), II, 550-62; they were omitted in the Wüstenfeld edition of al-Qazwīnī (see note 78). Al-Būnī gives two different designs for some of the lunar mansions, in which case both are given on the chart; he does not, however, state the number of stars composing an asterism, as did al-Šūfī; see al-Būnī, *Shams al-ma'arif* (note 78), 18-24.

the number of stars stated in that text.<sup>87</sup> The three writings were selected from a considerable number of treatises in which the lunar mansions are illustrated by abstract patterns because of the importance of the works. They are offered only as illustrations of the numerous designs associated with the asterisms and are not to be interpreted as the only representations found in the literature.

We now consider each of the fourteen lunar mansions named on the large dial. Throughout our discussion, these mansions are treated as segments of the ecliptic, and the season in which that segment would rise or set is indicated. See Fig. 3 to distinguish heliacal from cosmical risings and settings. If the mansions are viewed as asterisms and their locations with respect to the equinoxes are calculated for the thirteenth century, one finds that the seasonal rising or setting of the fourteen mansions mentioned on this device would differ from those given in Table 2 in only one instance, which is noted in the discussion of that mansion. The seasons associated with the mansions on the large dial (see Table 1), however, frequently fail to coincide properly with either a heliacal or cosmical interpretation of the rising or setting.

## THE QUADRANTS

### NORTHERN WINTER

*al-balda*, setting: The twenty-first lunar mansion is named 'the place', referring to an area behind the head of the Ptolemaic constellation Sagittarius which was said to contain no stars. Its heliacal setting would occur in the winter, in keeping with the seasonal quadrant in which it is placed on the device, while its cosmical setting would be in the summer.

*al-haq'a*, rising: The name of the fifth lunar mansion means a tuft of hair, a branding mark, or any other distinguishing mark of a horse. Its cosmical rising would occur near the beginning of winter, while its heliacal rising would be near the beginning of the summer.

*al-'anwā'*, rising and setting: The meaning of the name of the thirteenth lunar mansion is uncertain, but it appears to be from a root meaning to howl or yelp, or to twist or bend. It was sometimes said that the name referred to dogs barking behind a large lion visualized in the sky. Its heliacal rising and setting would occur in the autumn, and its cosmical rising and setting in the spring — neither in the winter.

*al-thurayyā*, rising: The third lunar mansion refers to the open star cluster called the Pleiades. It is a very old Arabic star name of obscure origin and etymology, but was most commonly associated with the pre-Islamic image

<sup>87</sup> The edition by Savorelli has been used for this chart (see note 36). Compare Burnett (note 36), 118-20.

was of a woman, her head composed of the Pleiades, with one arm and hand passing through Perseus and Cassiopeia and her other hand in the area where the head of Cetus is now visualized. Its heliacal rising is in the spring, not the winter, and its cosmical rising in the autumn.

#### WESTERN AUTUMNAL

*al-simāk* and *al-ghafr*, rising and setting: The name *al-simāk* was applied to two stars, one we call Spica and the other Arcturus, which in the *anwā'* tradition were seen as forming the hind legs of a large lion. Only the star in Virgo (Spica), however, comprised the asterism associated with a lunar mansion, the fourteenth. Many etymologies are presented in the early Arabic astronomical literature for the word *ghafr*, the name of the fifteenth lunar mansion, the most common being that the name, from a root meaning to conceal, was applied because the stars were inconspicuous. Since these mansions are on or near the autumnal equinox, their heliacal risings and settings would be in the autumn.

*al-han'a*, setting: The name of the sixth lunar mansion is derived from the root meaning either to fold or to bend, or to brand a camel on the neck. Explanations of the word from both meanings appear in the early astronomical literature, although the most common is the latter, which maintains a parallel with the fifth mansion, *al-haq'a*, discussed earlier. Its cosmical setting would occur in early winter.

*al-zubānā* and *al-iklīl*, rising: The name of the sixteenth lunar mansion, *al-zubānā* (the two claws) reflected the ancient, probably Babylonian, conception of a scorpion larger than the now familiar Scorpio, its claws formed by the constellation known today as Libra.<sup>88</sup> The traditions are not consistent regarding the identification of the asterism associated with the seventeenth lunar mansion, *al-iklīl* (the crown). Five different interpretations emerge from the early literature, the most common opinion probably being that it referred to the three stars in a row in the Ptolemaic constellation Scorpio. The heliacal risings of both lunar mansions occur in the autumn.

*al-dabarān*, setting: The name of the fourth lunar mansion, from the root meaning to follow, was associated with the famous star called today Aldebaran. The name refers to the fact that it follows the Pleiades. The cosmical setting of this lunar mansion occurs in the late autumn. If the position in the thirteenth century of the corresponding asterism of Aldebaran is considered, the setting would then be in the early winter.

<sup>88</sup> See Hommel, 'Über den Ursprung' (note 74), 597, and Savage-Smith, *Celestial Globes* (note 47), 175.

#### SOUTHERN SUMMER

*al-balda*, rising: The twenty-first lunar mansion rises heliacally in the winter rather than summer, though its cosmical rising would be in the summer.

*al-haq'a*, setting: The fifth lunar mansion sets heliacally in early summer and cosmically in early winter.

*al-na'ā'im*, rising: The name of the twentieth lunar mansion means 'the ostriches' and refers to an early conceptualisation of the Milky Way as a river passing through the area now called Sagittarius, with four ostriches going toward the river and another four leaving on the other side. Its cosmical rising is in the summer, though its heliacal rising is in winter.

*al-thurayyā*, setting: The heliacal setting of the third lunar mansion, associated with the Pleiades, would be in the spring, with its cosmical setting in the autumn – neither in the summer.

#### EASTERN SPRING

*al-dhirā'*, *al-nathra*, and *al-tarf*: These are the names of the seventh, eighth, and ninth lunar mansions, respectively. In the *anwā'* tradition a large lion – much larger than the Ptolemaic Leo – was visualized in the sky with its forelegs in the Ptolemaic constellations of Gemini and Canis Minor, the nose in Cancer, and the eye, forehead, neck, shoulder, and tail tuft in Leo, while its hind legs were in Boötes and Virgo. The names of lunar mansions numbered seven through eleven as well as number fourteen all reflect the image of this enormous lion. *Al-dhirā'* means the foreleg, *al-nathra* the cartilage of the nose belonging to the large lion, and *al-tarf* means the glance or vision, also of the large lion. The maker of the geomantic device has not indicated whether the risings or settings are to be considered, for he clearly ran out of room. In fact, he had so little space that he omitted two letters of the name *al-na[thra]*. The heliacal risings of all three of these mansions occur in the middle of the summer, being around the summer solstice.


*al-ban'a*, rising: The sixth lunar mansion rises heliacally in the early summer.


*al-zubānā* and *al-iklīl*, setting: The sixteenth and seventeenth lunar mansions have their cosmical settings in the mid to late spring.

*al-dabarān*, rising: The heliacal rising of the fourth lunar mansion occurs in the late spring. If the position in the thirteenth century of the actual asterism is considered, the rising would occur in the early summer.

#### PATTERNS IN THE ALIGNMENTS

The similarity between the abstract pattern for an asterism and a geomantic figure is in some cases quite pronounced. For example, one of the patterns

given by al-Būnī for the sixth lunar mansion, and also for the seventeenth and nineteenth mansions, is in fact a geomantic figure, and others could, were a person so inclined, be interpreted as parts of geomantic figures. The twentieth lunar mansion, *al-na'ā'im*, is said by al-Bīrūnī to consist of 'eight stars, four of them lying in the Milky Way in a square, which are the Descending Ostriches, descending to the water, which is the Milky Way; and four of them lying outside the Milky Way, also in a square, which are the ascending ostriches'.<sup>89</sup> That description does not disagree greatly with the pattern given by al-Qazwīnī and suggests the association of the geomantic figure *al-jamā'a* ( ) with that

lunar mansion, which is in fact the assignment given by given by the device. In an Arabic calendar written in Spain in AD 961,<sup>90</sup> which presents the *anwā'* traditions regarding natural phenomena, the Pleiades are illustrated by a series of dots closely resembling the geomantic figure named *nuṣra dākhila* ( ) with which it is associated by the maker of this device. Although al-Qazwīnī's pattern for the Pleiades (the third lunar mansion) does not particularly resemble this geomantic figure, it does contain six dots which both al-Šūfī and al-Bīrūnī gave as the number of stars in this asterism.

Even though certain of the asterism designs would seem to suggest geomantic figures or parts of them, explicit alignments of the lunar mansions with geomantic figures are quite uncommon in Islamic literature. In fact, in the manuscripts and printed sources surveyed, only two items contain any such alignment. Both are late, anonymous, Persian manuscripts.<sup>91</sup> These two assignments differ from each other, while neither in any way corresponds with that of the geomantic device by Muḥammad ibn Khutlukh al-Mawṣilī.

In the Latin geomantic treatises, on the other hand, an assignment of lunar mansions to the geomantic figures occurs in the earliest literature. Hugo Sanctallensis in the twelfth century based his geomantic treatise upon, and in part translated, an Arabic work which has not yet been identified. By means of this work it is possible that Hugo introduced the art into the Latin West.<sup>92</sup> In his writing Hugo aligned the geomantic figures with twenty different lunar mansions, which are given in the order of their occurrence along the ecliptic,

<sup>89</sup> al-Bīrūnī, *Chronology* (note 81), 348.




<sup>90</sup> *Le calendrier de Cordoue*, ed. R. Dozy, new ed. with French trns by C. Pellat [Medieval Iberian Peninsula Texts and Studies, 1] (Leiden, 1961), 15 and 164.

<sup>91</sup> Los Angeles, UCLA Research Library, Minasian Coll. 1493, fol. 9b, copied in 1031 [= 1621] from a copy dated 812 [= 1409], and Minasian Coll. MS 1495, fol. 4a, dated 1285 [= 1868].




<sup>92</sup> C.H. Haskins, *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science* (Cambridge, MA, rpr New York, 1960), 77-8.

with no lunar mansions repeated.<sup>93</sup> Only three figures are assigned to the same lunar mansions in both the geomantic device and the treatise by Hugo Sanctallensis. These are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Similarities between Geomantic Device and Hugo Sanctallensis Tract

Geomantic name and figure	Latin names	Asterism	Lunar Mansion
<i>nuṣra dākhila</i> 	<i>Fortuna major</i> <i>Auxillium intus</i>	Pleiades	third
<i>al-ḥiyān</i> 	<i>Barbatus</i> <i>Laelitia</i>	Aldebaran	fourth
<i>al-jamā'a</i> 	<i>Congregatio</i> <i>Populus</i>	γδϵζησφτζ <i>Sagittarii</i>	twentieth

A later English manuscript on geomancy<sup>94</sup> gives 'the geomantical figures attributed to the fixed starres in the eighth Sphaere' which is, in fact, an alignment very similar to that of Hugo Sanctallensis, except that only eighteen

lunar mansions are named and *Fortuna minor*  (*nuṣra khārīja*) is assigned to the Pleiades. The geomantic device assigns both  and  to the Pleiades,

the former rising and the latter setting in the winter and summer according to the device, though actually in the spring and autumn. This feature of the correspondences found on the device – namely, assigning a geomantic figure to the rising or setting of a lunar mansion – appears entirely unique, for all other correspondences we have found elsewhere do not refer to risings and settings.

In contrast with the lunar mansions, alignments of geomantic figures with the directions of the compass and/or the seasons are very common in the Islamic geomantic manuals. Of the many found in the manuals studied, however, only one association of geomantic figures with cardinal points and with the seasons bears much resemblance to that presented on the geomantic tablet, but in that instance the similarity is remarkable. It occurs in a manuscript entitled *Kitāb Ḍarb al-raml* ('Book on Geomancy') by the *shaykh* Ṭumṭum al-

<sup>93</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, Western Manuscripts, MS Digby 50, fol. 2r-2v, a thirteenth- or possibly twelfth- century manuscript. See also P. Tannery, 'La Rabolion' (note 11), 324-8, who gives the pertinent section of Paris, BnF, MS lat. 7354, which is also a thirteenth-century copy.

<sup>94</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, Western Manuscripts, MS Ashmole 434, fol. 17r.

Hindī.<sup>95</sup> The volume appears to be a compilation from various sources, with several authorities cited (in addition to Ṭumtum al-Hindī), such as the *shaykh* al-Zanāfī and Khalaf al-Barbarī. In both a square diagram and an accompanying text, contained in a section concerned with finding lost objects,<sup>96</sup> the groupings of the figures with the four directions and the four seasons are identical with those given on the geomantic device. In the text accompanying the diagram, not only are the figures grouped with the seasonal and directional quadrants, but there are indications or portents given to each figure, such as 'good omen' or 'increasingly mixed'. While the significations ascribed to the figures are not precisely the same as those on the geomantic device, the terms used, when not identical, are very similar.

The alignment of geomantic figures, lunar mansions, and seasons on the large dial possesses a number of remarkable features (see Fig. 4). With the quadrants of the dial bearing the labels of the seasons, it would be natural to assume that the designer intended for the entire dial to be interpreted chronologically, with each geomantic figure occupying a sector corresponding to one-fourth of a season, and consecutive sectors (in a clockwise direction) denoting consecutive time periods. That assumption would seem justified by the fact that for twelve of the sixteen sectors the rising (or setting) of a lunar mansion is placed diametrically opposite its setting (or rising). Such an arrangement could be interpreted as indicating the six-month alternation of the heliacal rising/setting and the cosmical rising/setting of a lunar mansion.

There are, nevertheless, serious inconsistencies which make this chronological interpretation of the dial quite unsatisfactory. The first inconsistency concerns the use of the terms 'setting' and 'rising' and whether heliacal or cosmical is intended. The correspondence of a single sector with both rising and setting of a lunar mansion (as is done in two sectors, one containing the thirteenth mansion and the other the fourteenth and fifteenth mansions) must of course refer either to the heliacal rising and setting together or the cosmical rising and setting together. In the case of the fourteenth and fifteenth mansions, heliacal must be intended since they are placed in the autumnal quadrant. In the case of the thirteenth mansion, however, the rising and setting are said to occur in winter, which is inappropriate by either interpretation. In several other instances neither heliacal nor cosmical yield a satisfactory interpretation of the rising or setting in terms of the season specified.

An even more serious inconsistency comes to light when one examines the sequence in which the lunar mansions are listed. Those that appear on the dial

<sup>95</sup> Los Angeles, UCLA Research Library, Near Eastern Coll. 895, MS 678; copy dated 12 Jumādā I 1133 [= 11 March 1721].

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, fols. 36b-38b.

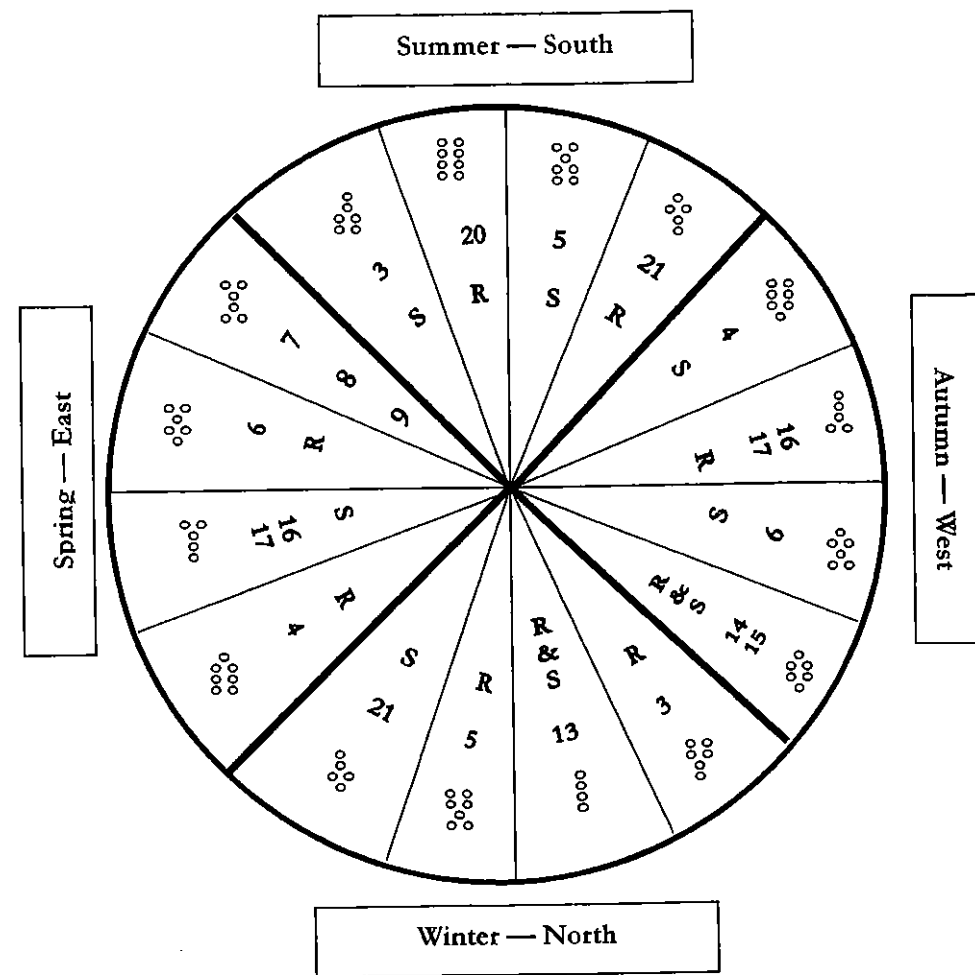



Fig. 4. The alignment of seasons, directions, geomantic figures, and risings and settings of lunar mansions found on the large dial. The lunar mansions are indicated by a number representing their position in the sequence of twenty-eight mansions. The letters 'R' and 'S' represent the rising and setting respectively.


180° from the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth mansions (which as stated above are close to the autumnal equinox) are not the ones near the vernal equinox, but rather the ones that occur at or near the solstices. Furthermore, the sectors of the dial marked with the rising (and setting) of the thirteenth and fourteenth mansions do not occur consecutively on the dial, but instead the

sector containing the figure marked as the rising of the third mansion is placed between them. Similarly, the rising of the fourth mansion is within the spring quadrant, although the risings of the third and fifth mansions are listed in the winter quadrant. In other words, the order of the mansions as listed on the dial, when read either clockwise or anti-clockwise, does not agree even remotely with the true sequence of the lunar mansions along the ecliptic.

In examining the lunar mansions named in the quadrants of the dial, one finds that of the sixteen seasonal assignments, nearly half are incorrect regardless of whether they are interpreted as heliacal or cosmical. A simple relabelling of the quadrants, however, will not put the mansions in a chronologically correct sequence, since, for example, the rising of the fourth mansion will still occur in a sector other than that between the third and fifth ones. Consequently, it is evident that the difference between the correct order and that found on the device is so pronounced that it cannot be explained on the basis of scribal error or the accidental reversal by the maker of the winter and summer quadrants.

If the sectors of the dial were not intended to represent a chronological sequence of lunar mansions, how can the sequence of mansions and their alignment with geomantic figures be explained? It should be noted that more than a single lunar mansion is assigned to certain geomantic figures by the device, which would be clearly necessary if the aim of the designer were to establish a correspondence between all twenty-eight mansions and the sixteen geomantic figures. That is not, however, his goal for he only employed half of all the lunar mansions. A possible reason for his assignment of more than one mansion to a figure is found by examining the seventh, eighth, and ninth mansions, which are listed together on the large dial with the figure named *ijtimā'* (  ). Al-Qazwīnī and al-Būnī agree in their configurations for the

seventh and ninth mansions, as is shown in Table 2. They differ in regard to the eighth mansion, but this is the asterism containing the open cluster Praesepe whose representation has varied greatly. Consequently, it seems likely that the



choice of the figure  for these three mansions is based on the combination of the three patterns, the top and bottom of the figure being formed by the seventh and ninth mansions, and the two middle dots representing the open cluster Praesepe associated with the eighth mansion.

From this it would seem that the primary concern in assigning geomantic figures to lunar mansions was agreement between the design of the figure and the appearance in the sky of the corresponding asterism or group of asterisms. That concern would be in keeping with the inscription the designer of the







device placed over the large dial: 'We have established this circle [dial] so that you might learn from it the correspondences of the forms of the figures with the forms of the lunar mansions, rising and setting'. Here the designer clearly speaks of aligning the shapes of the geomantic figures with the shapes of the lunar mansions; the word he has employed for shapes or forms (*ṣuwar*) means also images or appearances and is frequently used for the outlines of constellations.

This concern on the part of the designer would also explain a very distinctive feature of the dial. In six instances the setting of a lunar mansion is assigned to a geomantic figure which is the inverted image of the figure assigned to that same mansion's rising. It is as though the rising in the east of an asterism was being pictured as a geomantic figure and its setting in the west represented by the figure turned 180°. Nowhere in the literature have we found such an alignment of the geomantic figures, nor one so clearly tied to visual representations.



If one focuses attention on how the geomantic figures, rather than the lunar mansions, are arranged on the dial and the correspondence of these figures with the lunar mansions and seasons, one finds great consistency and unquestionable evidence of purposeful design. To assist in our analysis of this design, we call two geomantic figures a symmetric pair if the 180° rotation of

one of the figures yields the other figure; for example,  and  form a symmetric pair. In the set of sixteen geomantic figures there are six symmetric pairs and four figures that are not changed by the 180° rotation. We call these four figures autosymmetric.

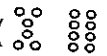
For the purposes of this study, two figures are termed opposites if in each of their four rows they differ from each other in the number of dots displayed.

For example,   are opposites. There are among the geomantic figures eight pairs of opposite figures, and two of these pairs are also symmetric pairs — that is,   and  .

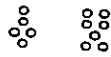
On the large dial each of the six symmetric pairs are placed so that the two figures in a pair are diametrically opposite, one figure of the pair assigned to the rising of a certain lunar mansion and the other figure corresponding to the setting of the same mansion. In both instances on the dial where the rising and setting of lunar mansions are assigned to a single geomantic figure, one finds


that the figures (   ) are autosymmetric and the lunar mansions at or near the autumnal equinox. The invariance of the figure under rotation seems a


particularly appropriate property for a figure assigned to both rising and setting.

The other two autosymmetric figures (  ) lie on the dial opposite these two and are assigned to mansions occurring at or near the solstices. However, the first of these two autosymmetric figures is the sole figure on the large dial that lacks any indication of the rising or setting of the associated lunar mansion.

The partition of the set of sixteen geomantic figures into the four subsets associated with the seasons is remarkable in its symmetry. Each season is assigned a pair of opposite figures, one of the four figures whose opposite is symmetric to it, and one of the four autosymmetric figures (see Fig. 4). For example, for winter:

the pair of opposite figures 

the opposite-symmetric figure 

the autosymmetric figure 

Certainly such an arrangement indicates considerable familiarity with the geomantic figures and at least an intuitive awareness of the relations of symmetry and opposition which exist within the set of sixteen geomantic figures. On the other hand, it would seem the designer of this device was acquainted to some extent with certain traditional views of the lunar mansions. Evidence of this would be the partial agreement, mentioned above, of his alignment with others found in the literature. In particular the assignment of *al-jamā'a* to the twentieth mansion, *nuṣra dākhila* to the third, and *ijtimā'* to the combined seventh, eighth, and ninth lunar mansions, as well as his statement over the large dial, would seem to indicate that the designer of the device was using, at least to some extent, sources like those of the cosmologist al-Qazwīnī which represented the lunar mansions by designs of dots. Bearing in mind the great variation in the representations of the asterisms given in such literature, it is impossible to say at this point whether the particular assignment of geomantic figures to lunar mansions found on this dial was obtained completely from some source not known to us, or whether it was an alignment original with him.

The pronounced regularity in the groupings of the figures by seasons, and the obvious attempt on the part of the designer to graphically represent certain of the lunar mansion asterisms by means of geomantic figures, seem to suggest that the correspondences on this dial are to be viewed as independent and unrelated. In other words, the seasons are each assigned four geomantic figures, and each figure is aligned on the basis of likeness in appearance to the rising or setting of a lunar mansion. The two correspondences, however, are not

intended to give alignment of the seasons and lunar mansions. The curious anomaly mentioned earlier regarding the consistent positioning of autosymmetric figures and yet the inconsistent treatment of their associated lunar mansions suggests that the designer was more concerned with the figures as abstract designs and the relationships between them than he was of the chronological sequence of lunar mansions. Certainly, he appears more intent on preserving relationships between geomantic figures, and also graphically representing with these figures certain lunar mansions, than he is with maintaining an astronomically correct sequence. If our interpretation is correct, then this device affords an interesting example of geomantic considerations taking precedence over astronomical, and consequently astrological, concerns.

## TWO POEMS

To the right and below the large dial (see Pl. 4) is a poem in *kāmil* metre, in which the tablet is speaking in the first person (see Appendix, item 11, for a transcription). The calligraphy is Naskh script, inlaid with silver.

I am the possessor of eloquence and the silent speaker  
and through my speech [arise] desires and fears.  
The judicious one hides his secret thoughts, but I disclose them,  
just as if hearts were created as my parts.<sup>97</sup>

On the lower left-hand side of the tablet, to the left of the small dial labelled 'House of the Result of the Result', there is another poem in *kāmil* metre, also in Naskh script and inlaid in silver, in which the tablet again speaks in the first person (see Pl. 1 and Appendix, item 12).

I am the revealer of secrets; in me are marvels  
of wisdom and strange and hidden things.  
But I have spread out the surface of my face out of humility,  
and have prepared it as a substitute for earth.

## THE FRAME

Engraved in Naskh script, inlaid in silver, and entwined with decorative vines, around the edge of the geomantic tablet is a poem in five *baṣīṭ* verses, in which, apparently, the maker is speaking to us concerning the device. The inscription begins at the upper right-hand corner as you view the tablet from the front and runs clockwise about the edge. The right-hand edge contains the first verse, the bottom edge two verses, the left-hand edge one verse, and the top edge one

<sup>97</sup> The idea apparently being, just as if the device's internal parts were hearts — i.e., as if the tablet were a living and hence perceptive being.

verse, with the suspensory device (*kursi*) separating the two half-verses of the last verse (see Pls. 8, 9, 10, and 11, and Appendix, item 13).

Examine the tablet and memorize it, for in it  
there is meaning from the tablet [of God in Heaven] when it was  
marked with the pen.<sup>98</sup>

It [the geomantic tablet]<sup>99</sup> shows hidden secrets of the unseen<sup>100</sup>  
which were determined from time immemorial.

It [the tablet before us] agrees with geomancy in meaning but  
differs from it

because it generates the figures from nothing.<sup>101</sup>

The tablets of Moses were made valuable by what  
wisdom and authority God gave them.

But it is sufficient honour for it [the tablet before us] that a hand  
touched it

which is superior to the hands of men<sup>102</sup> in strength and  
nobleness of character.

This poem is filled with religious imagery, using throughout the word tablet, *al-lawh*, in two senses, that of the geomantic tablet before us and the Mosaic tablets or the tablet of God in Heaven. The Mosaic tablets were made valuable by the wisdom and authority God gave them, but it is sufficient for the geomantic tablet that a hand touch it which is superior to that of other men – a clear reference to the fact that this device was being constructed for the use of an important personage.

<sup>98</sup> The word *qalam* usually means reed-pen or stylus. In this case two meanings could be intended in parallel with the traditions interpreting Sūra LXVIII (*sūrat nūn* or *sūrat al-qalam*) of the Qur'ān. The word *qalam* according to the traditions meant both an implement for writing and a 'qalam of light, as long as the distance from heaven to earth, which wrote down all things that are to happen until the last judgement' (C Huart and A. Grohmann, 'Kalam' in *EP* (note 6), IV, 471).

<sup>99</sup> Or possibly both the geomantic tablet and the tablet of God (or Mosaic tablet).

<sup>100</sup> The word *al-ghayb* is a very common word in the Qur'ān, again indicating that the poem is filled with religious ideas and parallels.

<sup>101</sup> Apparently a reference to the slides on the front of the geomantic tablet from which the figures are instantly selected rather than having been formed in the usual manner of counting random dots. *Ashkal* is the usual word for the geomantic figures, but the word in the inscription is not well formed, for it looks more like *ashāl*, which does not seem appropriate in this context. Another possible interpretation of this verse might be 'geomancy agrees [with the tablet of God] in meaning, but differs from it because it [the tablet of God] creates forms from nothing – the sense in this case being that while God can create from nothing, the geomancer must physically generate the figures. The present authors, however, prefer the former interpretation.

<sup>102</sup> The word *al-warā* meaning 'mankind' is used here in the sense of *hoi polloi*, the common people.



Pl. 8. Right-hand edge of frame, with beginning of poem. [Brit. Mus. Neg. no. 046126]



Pl. 9. Bottom edge of frame. [Brit. Mus. Neg. no. 046125]

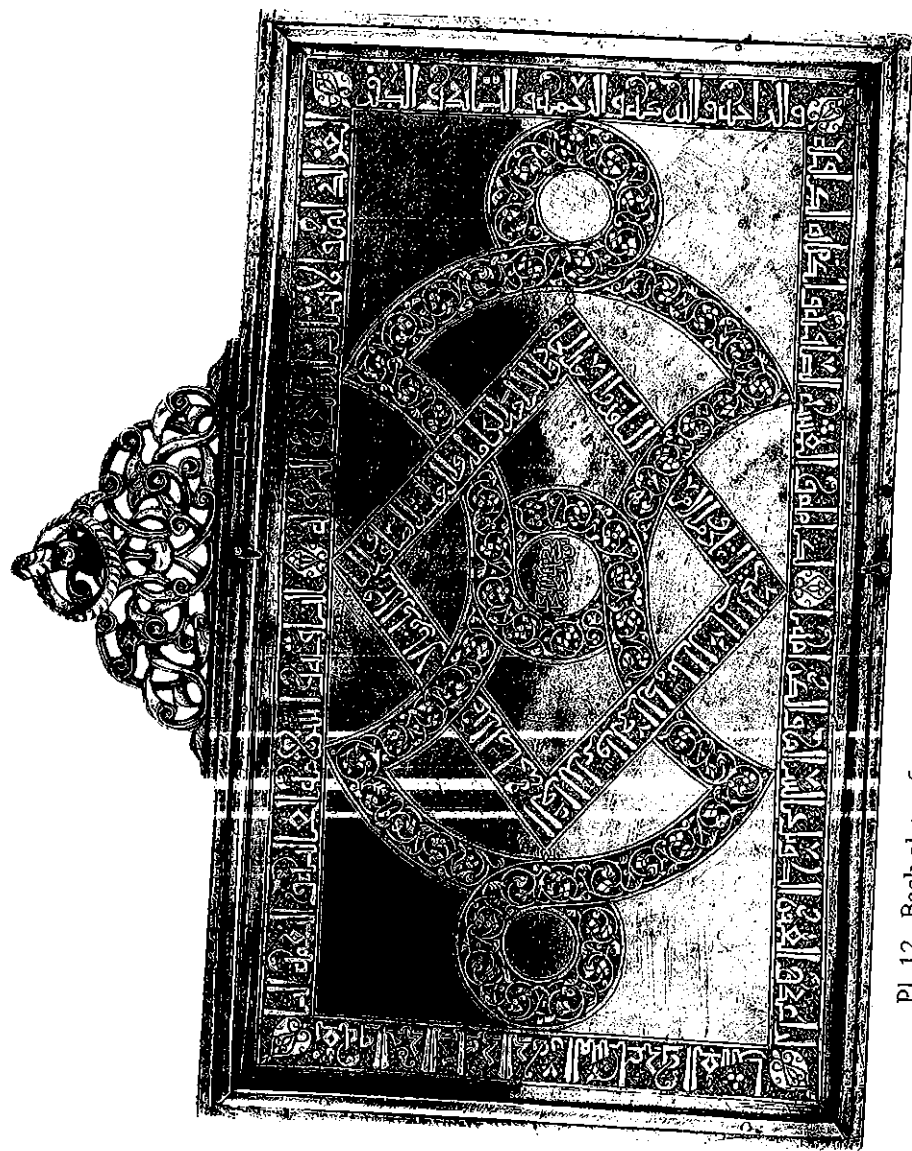


Pl. 10. Left-hand edge of frame. [Brit. Mus. Neg. no. 046127]



Pl. 11. The edge of frame with end of poem on either side of the suspensory device.  
[Brit. Mus. Neg. no. 046124]





Pl. 12. Back plate of geomantic device. [Brit. Mus. Neg. no. 015010]

## THE BACK OF THE DEVICE

The back of the geomantic tablet contains two inscriptions giving blessings to the owner. The band forming the rectangular frame contains the following inscription written in Kufic script and inlaid in silver, beginning in the top right-hand corner of the back and proceeding anti-clockwise (see Pl. 12 and Appendix, item 14).

Everlasting glory, continual and abiding prosperity, constant power, supreme peace, perpetual well-being, increasing good fortune, favourable fate, a comfortable manner of life, a long unimpaired life, complete honour, a pure manner of life, sufficient satisfaction, peace of mind, blessing, compassion, support [from God] and success.

The inscription around the centre diamond is engraved in Naskh script and inlaid in silver, beginning at the left-hand corner and proceeding anti-clockwise (see Pl. 12 and Appendix, item 15).

Everlasting glory, a long unimpaired life, outstanding character, efficacious power, fortunate omens, complete honour, a pure manner of life, support [from God] and victory over the enemies for its owner.

Bands filled with decorative arabesque entwine the diamond and encircle the small centre inscription containing an owner's statement (see Pl. 12 and Appendix, item 2). As discussed above (pp. 21-2), this is likely not the name of the patron for whom the device was executed but rather than of a later owner:

In the possession of Muḥammad al-Muḥtasib al-Bukhārī.

## IV. Operation and Interpretation of the Tablet

This geomantic tablet presents only a small amount of information about the procedures intended for its operation. In the two poems on the front of the tablet, the device speaks in the first person telling us that it is a 'silent speaker' who is not judicious since it discloses innermost thoughts as if it were a living being. It continues in the second poem to say it is the revealer of secrets and has humbly spread out the surface of its face to serve as a substitute for earth — that is, the front of the device is to be used instead of the ground or a dust board for the formation of the geomantic tableau.

More specific directions are found in the engraved statement over the four curved slides. They leave no doubt that the tablet was designed so that the first four figures, the Mothers, would be obtained by using these slides rather than in the customary manner of making marks on the ground or on a dust board. The poem on the tablet's edge states that the device 'agrees with geomancy in



meaning but differs from it because it generates the figures from nothing,' referring, no doubt, to this manner of generating these four figures from the slides.

Consistently in the practice of geomancy, the first four figures are supposed to be derived in a manner free of purposeful or even conscious selection. Consequently, it seems reasonable to assume that, prior to the determination of the Mothers, all the slides would be in a 'closed position' – that is, pushed down so that no figures were visible. Then each slide in turn would be moved up an arbitrary amount, an action analogous to spontaneously putting down in the sand four rows of dots without counting them. It was probably the designer's intention that the slides be moved blindly so as to insure the purposelessness of the selection. Once the slides have been moved, the Mothers can be obtained following the directions given above the slides, which clearly describe which figure on each slide is to be selected. It is the one closest to the place where the slide disappears under the front plate, or, in other words, the visible figure closest to the horizontal edge of the aperture through which the slide is visible. Hence, if we are correct in assuming that initially all the slides would be in a 'closed position,' then it would require some movement of each slide upward in order to produce a figure, since at the start all the figures would be out of sight. Although the tablet is explicit about where to locate the figure to be used, there is no indication of which slide provides the first figure, which the second, and so on. Nevertheless, in view of the ordering from right to left given in a geomantic tableau to the four Mothers, it would seem most likely that the nested sequence of slides would be read from the innermost outward – that is, from right to left along the horizontal margin of the slides, where the figures are located which the device instructs the user to take as the Mothers.

Having by means of the slides produced the Mothers, and having adjusted the dials for the first four houses so that each Mother was visible in the appropriate house, the other dials were doubtless turned so as to display the correct figures, in accordance with the procedures for forming a geomantic tableau discussed above (pp. 11–13). The device itself is totally silent with regard to how these additional twelve figures of the tableau are formed. The absence of instruction on how the figures in the various houses are derived is significant, for it clearly indicates that the tablet was intended for someone already acquainted with the process of casting a geomantic tableau.

For the interpretation of the tableau, the remaining parts of the device would be used: the large dial and the three small ones in the lower right-hand quadrant. The large dial obviously gives the interpreter information on the good or ill portent of each geomantic figure and its alignment with a season, a direction of the compass, and a lunar mansion. This information was clearly intended to assist the interpreter in divining the significance of a certain figure

occurring in a particular house.

From the nature of extant geomantic treatises themselves and from the observation of practicing geomancers in more recent times,<sup>103</sup> it may be presumed that geomancers in the thirteenth century customarily used a geomantic manual for assistance in the interpretation of the tableau. These manuals present a variety of materials such as alignments of the figures with numbers, elements, letters, planets, directions, seasons, illnesses, masculine and feminine, good or ill fortune, moisture or dryness, parts of the body, professions, animals, minerals, and other things, sometimes presented in chart form. Frequently the significance of each individual house and the basic subject it covers are enumerated; for example, House I is the house of the soul, life, strength, stability, pride, prestige, self-motivation, creative matters, initiative, ingenuity, organization, and all matters involving the mind and will. In addition, the characteristics and significations of each figure occurring in the various houses will sometimes be given, eliminating for the odd figures House XV.<sup>104</sup> Interpretative procedures, as distinguished from the meanings of figures and houses, were rarely described outside the context of discussing a specific question. Sample questions would be stated with detailed directions for the interpretation of the tableau.

Authors differ greatly with regard to what is assembled in a manual and to their individual interpretation of the nature of a figure or a house. Enormous variety is found in the characteristics or significations attributed to the figures, as well as in the procedures for actually interpreting a tableau, which vary from the simple to the extraordinarily complex and involved.

There is not as much variation in the types of questions asked, for certain ones dominate the manuals, such as – to name only a very few – who will win, the questioner or his adversary; who loves more, the questioner or the object of the question; whether a wife is intimate with another and if so with whom; what kind of pregnancy and delivery a pregnant woman will have; whether a pregnant woman will deliver a male or female child and how many; whether it is safe to travel by boat and what will occur during the voyage; whether an absent one will return or not; where to find the lost or hidden; how to determine the depth of water underground; whether it will rain or not; in what

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, C. Monteil, 'La divination chez les noirs de l'Afrique occidentale française', *Bulletin de Comité d'Études Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française* 14 (1931), 27–136; and Ben Choaib, 'Le bonne aventure' (note 13).

<sup>104</sup> Because of the relationship between the first four figures and figures five through eight, the figures in Houses XIII and XIV are not totally independent of one another. Both are even or both are odd. Consequently, the figure in House XV, being the 'sum' of these two, is always an even figure. This fact was known to some of the Islamic authors of geomantic treatises, such as Ibn Mahfūf; see Oxford, Bodleian Library, Oriental Collections, MS Arab.f.36, fol. 100b.

part of the body lies a person's illness; and what will be the course of an illness.

From the evidence provided by the ordering of the figures on the slides, the significations given to the houses and figures, the names of the figures, and from the reference in the inscription under the large dial to 'books concerned with the study of the art', it is clear that the designer of this tablet was well versed in the geomantic literature of his day. The tablet itself, however, contains no information at all about the interpretive *processes*, which are customarily presented in the geomantic manuals, nor does it give even basic information about how to form a tableau. Obviously, either the designer intended for a geomantic manual to be employed along with the tablet, or he assumed that the user would be sufficiently familiar with the art to at least form a tableau and devise a method for producing a reading or interpretation from just the labelling of the houses.

From the extant geomantic treatises no single interpretative method for geomancy emerges, but rather the method frequently depends upon the nature of the question. From a large number of procedures which varied in complexity, one was chosen depending upon the nature of the question. If the tablet were to be used without the aid of a geomantic manual which would explain the procedures for answering a given question, it is likely that the geomancer would employ a very simple method such as inspecting the figures that appear in the House of the Result (position XV) or in the House of the Result of the Result (position XVI) together possibly with the figure occupying the house most closely related to the question being asked. House XV was usually considered to give the immediate result, while XVI was thought to give the long-range consequences of the result. Unfavourable figures, in terms of the attributions given on the large dial, would certainly indicate unfavourable immediate and future results. Favourable or mixed figures in such positions could be modified by any unfavourable signs appearing in the house whose subject covers the objects of the inquiry, such as illness or property. In addition, the portents associated with the figures in the House of the Questioner or in the House of the Object of the Inquiry (positions XIII and XIV, respectively) could also have direct bearing upon the ultimate favourable or unfavourable outcome for the questioner or the person who is the object of the question. Quite possibly the figure occupying the first house, which governs the soul of the questioner, would be taken into consideration as well, for this was generally thought to be a significant house no matter what the topic of the question happened to be.

If, however, the interpretation was limited to the procedures just discussed, then it is somewhat difficult to explain the function of the three small dials, which have over them the statement that 'the geomantic triplet' is formed by these circles. Any two figures and the 'sum' of those figures is referred to by

some writers as comprising a geomantic triplet, *muthallatha*, and the figure which is the 'sum' is called the *miẓān*, 'the balance'. In casting any geomantic tableau several triplets are involved, but on this device the dials for the houses are located so that the figures to be 'added' would already be closely adjacent to one another and there would be no advantage in using the small dials in the lower right-hand corner (see Pl. 1). Only in the case of forming the figure for House XV (by 'adding' those in XIII and XIV), and especially in forming the final figure (by 'adding' those in XV and I), would these small dials be of some value in allowing one to place the figures in close proximity to one another for ease of calculating the *miẓān*, which then would be displayed on the lowest of the three dials and then transferred to its appropriate position in the tableau.

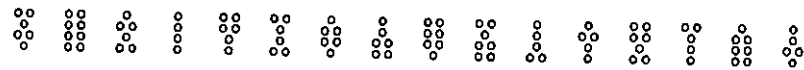
On the other hand, it should be noted that in the manuals there are interpretive methods described using other special triplets to a considerable degree. For example, there are procedures in which after the tableau is completed the figure in a specific house is combined with the figure found in another certain house of the tableau, and the resulting figure analysed for its meaning. Sometimes many triplets were formed besides those necessary for the basic tableau. The following is an example of an elaborate, but not unusually complex, procedure in which the three small dials would have been useful.<sup>105</sup>

If the question is about who will win – the questioner or the adversary – the geomancer is told to 'add' together the figure in the first house (the House of Soul) and the figure in the eighth house (the House of Slaughter and Death) so as to form a new figure. Then he is to 'add' together the figure in the ninth house (the House of Movement and Change) and the figure in the twelfth house (the House of Enemies and Envious People) to form a new figure. These two newly produced figures the geomancer then 'adds' together to derive a third figure. If this third figure is present in the section of the tableau belonging to the questioner (positions I through VI) then the questioner will win; if it is present in the section of the tableau belonging to the object of the question (positions VII through XII), then the adversary will win. If it occurs in both sections, it will be even between the persons. If it is not present in either section, then the geomancer is to see what position it occupies in a fixed ordering of all the sixteen geomantic figures, called a *taskīn*, and whichever section it falls in, then that person will be the victor; should it occur in the last four positions of the *taskīn*, neither party will be victorious. The consequences of the victory are to be interpreted from houses XIII through XVI in the tableau.

Fixed orderings of all sixteen geomantic figures play a significant role in many treatises. These orderings, called *tasākīn* (sing. *taskīn*), vary to some extent

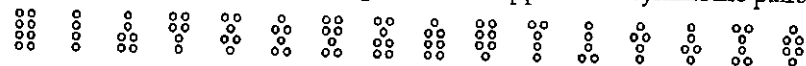
<sup>105</sup> Los Angeles, UCLA, Research Library, Near Eastern Coll. 898, MS 618, fol. 63b.

from author to author, but certain ones seem to have been especially popular and widely circulated. The order in which the figures occur on each sliding arc of this device (see Pl. 4), reading them in an anti-clockwise direction, is one of the *taskīns* most frequently found in the treatises, presented here reading right to left:



In geomantic manuals, this ordering is frequently called the '*taskīn* of the circle'.<sup>106</sup> This is further evidence of the designer's acquaintance with the geomantic treatises or traditions. It could scarcely be coincidence that this same ordering occurs repeatedly elsewhere, for there is an extremely large number of possible orderings of the sixteen geomantic figures. In fact, the total number of arrangements exceeds twenty million millions. What is curious to note is that on this device this ordering is used for a part of the process not concerned with interpretation at all, but solely with the selection of the Mothers. This is particularly interesting in view of the fact that the entire geomantic process rests on the assumption that the Mothers are not consciously selected. Therefore, a less well-known arrangement of the figures on this part of the device would seem more suitable since it would be more likely to avoid a purposeful selection of certain figures for the first four figures. On the other hand, the presence of this *taskīn* on these slides may be owing to certain theories about this ordering which are not known to us at present.

The order in which the figures are presented on each of the nineteen small dials seems to be of no particular significance and is seldom, if ever, encountered in the extant treatises on geomancy. There is a pronounced pattern to the ordering, however, for the figures are in opposite or symmetric pairs:



The failure to encounter this ordering elsewhere would seem to indicate that either it was an invention of the designer, who arranged the figures in these pairs in order to assist the user in locating a particular figure on one of these dials, or it represents a *taskīn* that has not survived in the written discussions of geomancy.

Since the device presents the directions of the compass aligned with the geomantic figures, we can assume the designer intended it to be used for locating lost or stolen objects and concealed or buried items, which are the

<sup>106</sup> It is also called 'the geomantic *taskīn* (*taskīn al-raml*) belonging to al-Zanāfi'. See al-Zanāfi, *K. al-Faṣl fī uṣūl* (note 13, printing of 1280/1863), 5-8, 24-5, 31, 34-5; Da'ūd al-Anṭakī, *Tadhkirah* (note 59), 234; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Oriental Collections, MS Greaves 40, fol. 117b and MS Marsh 216, fol. 1a; and Los Angeles, UCLA, Near Eastern Coll. 895, MS 678, fols. 78a and 114b.

subject of frequent questions in the literature. There is a complicated procedure attributed to Ṭumṭum al-Hindī that occurs quite frequently in the manuals.<sup>107</sup> It is impossible to know whether the designer assumed the user of the device would employ this procedure or whether the designer intended to simplify the method by having the user read the direction corresponding to the figure occupying, say, the fifteenth or sixteenth house.

The method as presented in the treatises begins with a square diagram assigning the figures to the four cardinal points (see Fig. 5). It is assumed the geomancer knows that the top row or rank of a geomantic figure is called 'fire' and is assigned a value of one, the second rank 'air' with value two, the third rank 'water' with value three, and the bottom row 'earth' with value four. Near the location where the item is thought to be, the geomancer is told to make a tableau and then to count how many waters are in it (i.e., to count the figures have a single dot in the third rank and to multiply this number by three). If less than eight, then there is nothing there. Otherwise the geomancer should proceed to produce a new tableau, after marking the directions of the compass on the ground. He then counts all the elements in the tableau, multiplying the number of single dots in each rank by the value of the rank. The sum is divided by 128, the remainder divided by 16, that remainder divided by 9, and finally that remainder divided by 4. If one is left, the direction is East; if two West; if three North, and if four South.

The geomancer then faces that direction and draws a square on the ground and follows the same procedure to produce a new tableau, and the numerical process is repeated until one, two, three, or four is left. Then the geomancer looks at the Mother in the tableau which corresponds to this remainder (that is, occupies the corresponding position in the tableau) and locates that figure in the square diagram (Fig. 5) and notes the direction. The corresponding position on the square which he has drawn on the ground in front of him then determines where the object is. In the case of one using this metal tablet rather than a manual, the geomancer would locate the corresponding direction from the large dial. If it is buried, then the depth can be determined by knowing that the element of fire is assigned the depth of a finger, air the depth of the breadth of a hand, water the length of a cubit, and earth the length of a human body.

The geomancer then looks at the figure of the Mother which was found to be the indicator, counts the ranks containing only one dot, and adds up the corresponding lengths. Then, using a certain ordering of the figures known as the '*taskīn* of the letters', he finds the figure that occupies the same position in

<sup>107</sup> Paris, BNF, arabe MS 2697, fols. 16a-16b, and Los Angeles, UCLA Research Library, Near Eastern coll. 895, MS 678, fols. 63b-65b. Compare Los Angeles, UCLA, Near Eastern Coll. 898, MS 43, fols. 11b-12a, by Ibn Ṭarāhī al-Hanafī al-Dhākīr.

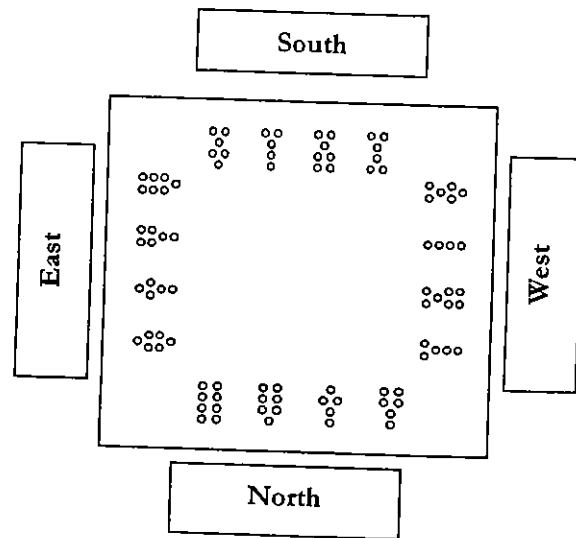


Fig. 5. Square relating geomantic figures with the four cardinal points for use in finding hidden or lost objects.

the *taskīn* that the Mother occupied in the tableau. He counts the ranks of that figure which contain a single dot and adds the corresponding lengths. Finally, he finds the sum of the lengths obtained from the Mother and the lengths found from the figure in the *taskīn*. This then is the depth at which the object is located.

A simpler version of the procedure for locating lost objects is given in a printed al-Zanāṭī text where it is said that at the suspected location the geomancer should put down a tableau and then add all the points of the figures together and subtract thirty-one.<sup>108</sup> Using the remainder he then casts off one number for each of the houses until the number runs out. The geomancer should then take the figure in the house where the number stops and 'add' it to the figure in the fifteenth house to produce a third figure (on the device, the geomancer could use the three small dials for this purpose). Then the geomancer is to see what direction is assigned to that resulting figure in the diagram (Fig. 5), and in that direction lies the lost or hidden object.

Just as the alignment of the figures with cardinal directions would have been of significance in responding to questions concerning spatial location, it is reasonable to assume that the seasonal groupings were intended for the interpretation of tableaux cast in an attempt to answer questions about time

<sup>108</sup> al-Zanāṭī, K. *al-Faṣl fī ṣūl* (note 13, printing of 1280/1863), 30-1.

and when an event would occur. The lunar mansion designation, on the other hand, may have only been meant to convey something of the quality of the figure and not to be used in the temporal location of events. The designer perhaps assumed that the user of this device would be acquainted with the association of particular lunar mansions with indications of weather conditions and good or ill portents, such as are given by al-Bīrūnī.<sup>109</sup> Nothing, however, on the device itself can guide the user in the application of the lunar mansions toward the interpretation of a geomantic reading. Nor is there any indication in the few treatises that align lunar mansions with geomantic figures of how the lunar mansions were to be applied in a geomantic reading.

Several remarkable features about the device from the standpoint of the practice of geomancy should be noted. The use of slides for producing the four initial figures, rather than marking down sixteen rows of dots which are then converted into four figures of four rows each, is striking in its uniqueness – a uniqueness the designer recognized when he said in the verse along the edge that the tablet 'agrees with geomancy in meaning but differs from it because it generates the figures from nothing'. Furthermore, the very concept of designing a mechanical device or tablet for the production and interpretation of a geomantic tableau appears to be entirely unique in the history of geomancy.

The alignments of the figures given on the large dial are notable for several reasons. The very insignificant role played by the lunar mansions in geomantic treatises makes their alignment here with geomantic figures surprising. Furthermore, in contrast with the remarkably logical patterns exhibited in the arrangement of geomantic figures and the seasons and cardinal points on the large dial, the sequence of the lunar mansions appears illogical and incorrect, unless, as suggested above, the maker were concerned only with aligning the shapes of the geomantic figures with the general appearances of the lunar mansion asterisms and did not intend the seasons and directions of the compass to also be attributed to the lunar mansions. While such an alignment based only on graphic representation of the lunar mansions is in keeping with the statement over the large dial, it does not reflect any known practice in geomancy current either then or later. It was quite possibly an original contribution by the designer and may offer some indication of his attitude toward geomancy as opposed to astrology. The maker was well aware of and proud of the tablet's unique features, as shown in the remark over the large dial that 'from my intricacies there comes about insight superior to books concerned with the study of the art'.

Because of the relative lack of Islamic geomantic manuscript material prior to the fourteenth century, the design of this tablet is quite important to the

<sup>109</sup> al-Bīrūnī, *Chronology* (note 81), 351.

history of geomantic practices. The device ranks as one of the earliest dated sources for a complex system of divination that was clearly fully developed and established by the time Muḥammad ibn Khutlukh al-Mawṣilī made it in 1241. It is also indicative of the importance given to the practice of geomancy in the thirteenth-century Islamic world that so meticulously designed and executed a piece would have been produced.

In medieval Europe geomantic treatises were on occasion produced for royal persons. Two examples are the geomancies written expressly for Richard II of England and Charles V of France.<sup>110</sup> They are beautifully executed manuscripts, highly decorated, and with striking miniatures. The metal geomantic tablet we have been examining would seem to be an Islamic parallel to these European royal geomantic manuscripts, for it is beautifully ornamented and skilfully crafted and, one may safely assume, intended for a highly placed person interested in the geomantic art.

### Appendix

#### Transcription of Inscriptions

- 1: صنعة محمد  
بن ختلخ الموصلي  
في سنة ٦٣٩
- 2: في نوبت محمد المحتسب البخاري [written entirely without diacritical dots]
- 3: الجماعة ٥٥٥٥ // طريق ٥٥ // نصرة خا ٥٥٥ // نصرة دا ٥٥٥ //  
قبض دا ٥٥٥ // قبض خا ٥٥٥ // بياض ٥٥٥ // حمرة ٥٥٥ //  
الحيان ٥٥٥ // انكيس ٥٥٥ // عتبة دا ٥٥٥ // عتبة خا ٥٥٥ //  
اوراع ٥٥٥ // جودلة ٥٥٥ // اجتماع ٥٥٥ // عقلة ٥٥٥
- 4: بيت النفس والحياة // بيت المال والمعاش // بيت الاخوة والاخوات // بيت الآباء  
والأمهات // بيت الافراخ والاولاد // بيت الاعلال والامراض // بيت النساء  
والمواصلات // بيت الخوف والموت // بيت النقل والحركات // بيت السلطان والعز  
// بيت الرجاء والآمال // بيت الاعداء والحساد // بيت السائل // بيت المستول عنه  
// بيت العاقبة // بيت عاقبة العاقبة

<sup>110</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, Western Manuscripts, MS Bodl. 581 and Cambridge, Trinity College, MS 1447, respectively. See also the geomancies prepared for John Duke of Bedford (Oxford, St Johns College MS 18) and Wenceslaus (Vaclav IV), King of Bohemia and Holy Roman Emperor, 1378-1400 (Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, MS 2352).

- 5: تولد في هذه الحلات [= المحلات] // دوائر مثلثة // الرمل
- 6: قد وضعنا هذه القسنى لتوليد الاشكال فيعتبر [ or فيتبين ؟ ] ما يظهر منها من  
الخط الفاصل الى موضع الظهور فتولد منها الامهات
- 7: قد وضعنا هذه الدائرة لتعلم منها  
محاكاة صور الاشكال من صور  
المنازل طالعة وغاربة ثم يقع  
الحكم عليها والله اعلم
- 8: الجنوب  
المغرب  
المشرق  
الشمال
- 9: يسير من طياني الحسّ خير من كتب في درس الحكمة
- 10: الربع الشمالي الشتوى:
- |                    |                |                           |
|--------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| البلدة غاربة       | الجودلة ٥٥٥٥   | ممتزج مائل الى السعد ٥٥٥٥ |
| النفقة طالعة       | البياض ٥٥٥٥    | ممتزج داخل ٥٥٥٥           |
| العرا طالعة وغاربة | الطريق ٥٥٥٥    | ممتزج ٥٥٥٥                |
| الثريا طالعة       | نصرة داخل ٥٥٥٥ | سعد داخل ٥٥٥٥             |
- الربع الغربي الخريفى:
- |                 |                 |                        |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| السماك والغفر   | العقلة ٥٥٥٥     | نحس ثابت ٥٥٥٥          |
| طالع وغارب      | قبض خارج ٥٥٥٥   | نحس خارج ٥٥٥٥          |
| الزبان والاكليل | عتبة خارجة ٥٥٥٥ | نحس خارج [- خارج] ٥٥٥٥ |
| الدبران غاربا   | انكيس ٥٥٥٥      | نحس داخل ٥٥٥٥          |

الربع الجنوبي الصيفي:			
البلدة طالعة	اوراع	ممتزج داخل	○○○
الهقعة غاربة	الخمرة	نحس	○○○
النعائم طالعة	الجماعة	بوح ثقيل	○○○
الثريا غاربا	نصرة خارجة	سعد خارجة	○○○

الربع الشرقي الربيعي:			
الذراع والنخلة	اجتماع ممتزج	لا داخل ولا خارج	○○○
والطرف	قبض داخل	سعد داخل	○○○
المنفعة طالعة	عتبة داخلية	سعد داخل	○○○
الزبانا والاكيل	الحيان	سعد خارج	○○○
غاربا			
الدبران طالعا			

- 11: انا ذو البلاغة والمحدث صامتا  
يخفي اللبيب ضميره فأبينه  
ومعنطقى الترهيب والترهيب  
فكان أعضائي خلقت قلوب
- 12: انا كاشف الاسرار في بدائع  
لكن بسطت اديم خدي صاغرا  
من حكمة وغرائب وغيوب  
وجعلته عوض التراب ينوب
- 13: انظر الى اللوح واحفظه فان به  
يبدى من الغيب اسرارا محجبة  
معنى من اللوح لما خط بالقلم  
كانت مقدرة في سالف القدم  
قد وافق الرمل في المعنى وخالفه  
كان الواح موسى قد حسنت بما  
انها الله من حكمة ومن حكم  
تفوق ابدى الورى في البأس والكرم  
وحسبه شرفا ان لامسته يد

- 14: العز الدائم والاقبال خالد آبد والدولة الباقية والسلامة العالية والنعم التابعة الجدة  
الصاعد [و] الدهر المساعد والعيش الراغد والعمر الطويل السالم والكرامة الكاملة  
والعيشة الصافية والكفاية الكافية والراحة والبركة والرحمة والتأييد والظفر
- 15: العز الدائم والعمر الطويل السالم [و] الخير القادم والامر النافذ والسعد الجاد الكرامة  
الكاملة والعيشة الصافية والتأييد والظفر بالأعداء للصاحبه

## 9

# IBN TAYMIYYA ON ASTROLOGY: ANNOTATED TRANSLATION OF THREE FATWAS

Yahya J. Michot

*Lā uḥibbu l-afilāna ...*  
(Qur'ān, 6.76)

## INTRODUCTION

According to Avicenna, the famous Abū l-'Anbas al-Ṣaymarī<sup>1</sup> 'was, in his time, the smartest man as far as swindling (*zarrāq*) is concerned. He wrote a book in which he provided instruction in swindling to every group of those [...] who held seances on the thoroughfares. He therefore also dealt with the astrologers, enumerating [for them] the various classes of people—men, women, children, the young and old, servants and others—and mentioning things appropriate for each. [The astrologers] memorized that book and, when they saw somebody, recited to him what they had memorized. Of course, the circumstances of the person [listening] were inevitably alluded to by some of what that fraudster (*mumakhrīq*) mentioned and others were amazed by his statements, as we have mentioned. Such is also the case of those swindlers (*zarrāq*) who run about in places and roadways and dupe (*makhrāqa*) women and children by telling them things of that sort. The veracity of such a fraudster is, however, greater than the veracity of one who pretends to possess the science of astrology ('ilm al-ḥkām al-nujūm).'<sup>2</sup>

\* Author's note: My thanks to the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies where a Visiting Fellowship and the support of an Easa Saleh al-Gurg Scholarship enabled me to undertake this work. Also: to L. A. I owe much of my interest in stars as in more earthly realities. *Fa-jazā-hā Allāhu khayr al-jazā' wa ḥafīza-hā!*

<sup>1</sup> Humorist and astrologer admitted to the court of the 'Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil (Ṣaymara, near Baṣra, 213/828 – Baghdad, 275/888). See C. Pellat, *Et*<sup>2</sup>, Suppl., 'Abū l-'Anbas al-Ṣaymarī'.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Sīnā, *Nujūm*, ms. Leiden, f. 96r. H. Z. Ülken's edition of Avicenna's refutation of astrology (*Opusculum*, 49–67) is generally very bad. M. A. F. Mehren's

During this same third/ninth century when al-Ṣaymarī taught astrology as a useful technique for charlatans, Abū Ma'shar al-Balkhī (Balkh, c. 170/786–Wāsit, 272/886),<sup>3</sup> the greatest medieval astrologer, advocated its scientific character in terms of a late Neo-Platonic interpretation of Aristotle's natural philosophy.<sup>4</sup> Despite its very uncertain nature, astrology never ceased to be widely practised in classical Islam, either in relation to magic, occultism and charlatanry,<sup>5</sup> or in relation to cosmography, astronomy and *falsafa*. Of course, astrologers became the target of regular attacks and numerous condemnations, not only by theologians or jurists, but also by philosophers, mathematicians or astronomers, themselves threatened by association with astrology.<sup>6</sup> However demand for the astrologers' services never dried up, in palaces and among the élites or in shops, markets and streets, among the lowest social classes.<sup>7</sup> As G. Saliba, in his excellent investigation of the social status of astrologers in medieval Islamic society, rightly concludes: 'while trading in a craft which was both religiously and legally frowned upon, they still managed to carve a niche for themselves which was not too different from that occupied by other professional classes in that society.'<sup>8</sup>

French version (*Vues*) is not a scholarly translation but what he himself calls a 'compte-rendu'. It also contains several mistakes. For example, in the passage here translated, Mehren reads *rizq* instead of *zarq*, although the latter is clearly the reading in the Leiden manuscript. (On the confusion in the sources between *zarq* and *rizq*, see C. A. Nallino, *Zarq*, and C. E. Bosworth, *Underworld*, ii, 257–8. Avicenna's exposition of Abū l-'Anbas' book and the evidence of the *lectio difficilior* of the Leiden manuscript lead me to prefer *zarq* to *rizq*, in opposition to Nallino's and C. E. Bosworth's opinions.)

<sup>3</sup> See R. Lemay, *Abū Ma'shar*, i, 2–49.

<sup>4</sup> As pertinently argued by J. Lemay (*Islam*, 28–9), Abū Ma'shar al-Balkhī's *K. al-Mudkhal al-kabīr*, in its version of 262/876, showed a serious and worthy effort to synthesize the astrological heritage of the Middle East (Egypt, Mesopotamia, Iran and India) and the Greek *falsafa*, recently brought into vogue in Baghdad under the patronage of the 'Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mūn; with the consequence that the book is visibly inspired by Aristotle's *Physics* and *Metaphysics* as well as by the adaptation of Peripatetic naturalism to astrology accomplished by Ptolemy. It is indeed Aristotle himself who provided the theoretical framework on the basis of which astrologers were able to build their doctrines. In more than one text, he clearly affirmed the responsibility of the sun, the planetary spheres or the planets and their movements, in all processes of generation and corruption, including animal generation. (See the references given by G. Saliba, *Role*, 45; D. Pingree, *Astrology*, 297–8.)

<sup>5</sup> See for example Abū Dulaf (4th/10th c.), *Qaṣida*, trans. Bosworth, *Underworld*, ii, 204, verses 88–9.

<sup>6</sup> See G. Saliba, *Role*, 46–7. See also *History*, 55–61.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn Khaldūn offers a psychological explanation for the phenomenon and shows its importance in the various social classes. See his *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, *Introduction*, 19–38.

<sup>8</sup> See G. Saliba, *Role*, 66.

Around 700/1300, ideas and debate reached an unprecedented level of sophistication and interdisciplinarity in the Mamluk sultanate. Philosophy, theology (*kalām*), sciences and even Sufism interacted on each other as if all the resources available had to be dialectically explored in order to find an exit from the cul-de-sac into which Peripatetic rationalism and Ptolemaic cosmography appeared to have led most Muslim intellectuals.<sup>9</sup> Though perhaps inspired by despair, various disciplines relating to the sciences and wisdom (*hikma*) indeed appear to have experienced at that time some sort of 'Golden Age'.<sup>10</sup> It is undoubtedly the case with mathematics and astronomy, the latter having then become, in D. King's phrase,<sup>11</sup> an 'astronomy in the service of Islam', i.e. clearly distinguished from astrology and therefore Islamically acceptable by the community of believers, increasingly dependent on the patronage of religious institutions, and dedicated to the lunar calendar, the times of prayer, *qibla* computations, etc., as well as to questions like the necessary reform of the Ptolemaic geocentric planetary model, all of which required high standards of mathematical sophistication.

Mamluk astronomers employed by mosques no longer needed to practise astrology to earn a living. The majority were able to concentrate on purely astronomical research, theoretical and practical. D. King, who catalogued 2,500 scientific manuscripts in Cairo's Dār al-Kutub, affirms: 'There is in fact remarkably little astrology in the [...] Mamluk scientific treatises known to me.'<sup>12</sup> Astrology nevertheless persisted. Though Mamluk society as a whole had become antipathetic to their functions, astrologers retained many of their clients, not only in the streets but also, sometimes, in the citadels of the ruling military class. However as their craft, definitely repudiated by astronomers, could no longer depend on them for precise celestial and mathematical data, it inevitably became more of an occult practice, closer than ever to magic, divination and charlatanry, getting its inspiration from the sorcerer's manual *The Goal of the Sage* (*Ghāyat al-hakīm*) of the pseudo-Majrītī or from al-Būnī's *Summa magica*, *The Sun of Supreme Knowledge* (*Shams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā*),<sup>13</sup> rather than from Abū Ma'shar's *Great Introduction to*

<sup>9</sup> See Y. J. Michot, *Vanités*.

<sup>10</sup> See G. Saliba, *History*, 65; D. Gutas, *Thought*, 172.

<sup>11</sup> D. King, *Muwaqqit*, 155; *Astronomy*, 534–5.

<sup>12</sup> D. King, *Muwaqqit*, 155; *Astronomy*, 550.

<sup>13</sup> See A. Abel, *Place*, 301–4; E. Savage-Smith, *Science*, i, 59–71: 'Magic and Islam'. It is the kind of astrology described in *The 1001 Nights*; see R. Irwin, *Nights*, ch. 8: 'The Universe of Marvels', especially 190–1, 202.

the *Science of Judicial Astrology* and, a fortiori, Ptolemy's *Almagest* and *Tetrabiblos*.<sup>14</sup>

It is not surprising that such astrologers attracted the particular attention of jurists preoccupied with market inspection and the enforcement of public moral behaviour. At the beginning of the eighth/fourteenth century, Ibn al-Ukhuwwa deals directly with astrology in his famous treatise on *hisba*: astrologers, whose art is forbidden anyway, must practice on main streets, not inside shops or in byways.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, 'Umar al-Sunāmī forbids the study of the stars 'except to determine the direction of the *qibla* and the going down of the sun'.<sup>16</sup> As for Ibn Taymiyya (Harrān, 661/1263–Damascus, 728/1318), the most famous muftī and theologian of the Mamluk period, whose writings remain particularly influential in modern Islam, he does not speak of astrology in his own *Hisba*.<sup>17</sup> As with many other topics, he nevertheless examines the question in several writings,<sup>18</sup> in which he does not hesitate to repeat his analyses and condemnations. We can also be sure that, on some occasions, he provoked astrologers and attacked them publicly. He himself reports one such confrontation in Damascus, without unfortunately giving any date.<sup>19</sup> He was also consulted in his capacity as a religious authority, and delivered at least three fatwas on the subject.

It is these three fatwas that are translated here, in the order in which they are published in volume XXXV of the collection of the Shaykh al-Islām's fatwas. Neither their context nor date of composition is known. They are very dissimilar in length, the first being twenty-five pages long, the second six, the last only a few lines—a fact of interest in that it reveals the latitude enjoyed by a muftī in his explanations of the religious Law. However, because they share the same character of juridical responsa intended to provide decisive guidance to the community, these three fatwas form a more homogeneous set of texts than pages that might have been selected from works of different kinds. Also, even if they do not constitute an exhaustive presentation of Ibn Taymiyya's doctrinal positions on astrology, they shed very useful light on the diverse elements of the debate

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) considers astrology as dead in his time and its practitioners as simply rehearsing (*taqlid*) the sayings and errors of the astrologers of the past, without always understanding them (*Miftāh*, ii, 148).

<sup>15</sup> See Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Ma'ālim*, 67–8, 182–4; G. Saliba, *Role*, 49, 61.

<sup>16</sup> See M. Izzi Dien, *Theory*, 128.

<sup>17</sup> He only refers to 'the performance of magical tricks and natural sleight-of-hand and other ways of counterfeiting the miracles and signs of grace peculiar to the Prophets and Saints.' (Ibn Taymiyya, *Hisba*, trans. Holland, 59.)

<sup>18</sup> See for example Ibn Taymiyya, *Radd*, 286–9; *MF*, xxv, 198–201; *FK*, v, 73–4.

<sup>19</sup> See below, p. 161.

concerning this and other divinatory and magical arts within the Mamluk society of his time.

The reader will surely share my view that these fatwas entitle their author to full membership in the club of classical Muslim writers who attacked astrology. Yet, the Damascene Shaykh al-Islām has been, to date, almost completely ignored in the history of anti-astrology literature in Islam. During the last century, the list of representatives of this literature studied by Western islamologists has grown longer. In 1908 for example, C. A. Nallino quoted the names of al-Fārābī (d. 339/950?), Abū l-Qāsim 'Isā b. 'Alī (d. 391/1001), Avicenna (d. 428/1037), Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), Averroes (d. 595/1198) and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350).<sup>20</sup> Later on, I. Goldziher mentioned al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820), the Shī'ī Mu'tazilī theologian Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (d. c. 310/920), the theologian Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935), al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) and Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 974/1567).<sup>21</sup> During the last decade, G. Saliba added the names of the grammarian al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad (d. c. 170/786), the poet Abū Tammām (d. c. 231/845), the mathematician, philosopher and astronomer Thābit b. Qurra (d. 288/901), the mathematician Uqlīdisī (mid 4th/10th c.), the Ash'arī theologian al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), the philosopher and man of letters Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawhīdī (d. 414/1023?), the astronomer and specialist in optics Ibn al-Haytham (d. 430/1039), the astronomer al-Bīrūnī (d. after 442/1050), the algebraist al-Samaw'al al-Maghribī (6th/12th c.), the philosopher Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. after 560/1164), the biographer Khalīl al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363), the astronomer Ibn al-Shātir al-Dimashqī (d. 777/1375), the encyclopaedist Muḥammad al-Damirī (d. 808/1405) and the historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406).<sup>22</sup> From G. Saliba's lists, as in Nallino's, Ibn Taymiyya's name is omitted. In 1908, in a brief footnote reference to the longest of the three fatwas here presented, Nallino had observed that Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's master, 'il famoso hanbalita Ibn Taymiyyah' had also fought against astrology.<sup>23</sup> In 1992, G. Saliba failed to pick up on this observation. I hope that the present work will go some way towards admitting Ibn Taymiyya to the history of anti-astrological polemic in classical Islam.

<sup>20</sup> See C. A. Nallino, *Astrologia*, 19–38.

<sup>21</sup> See I. Goldziher, *Attitude*, 196–8.

<sup>22</sup> See G. Saliba, *Role*, 46–7; *History*, 55–61, 63–4.

<sup>23</sup> See C. A. Nallino, *Astrologia*, 33, n. 3. Ibn Taymiyya is also absent from M. Ullman, *Natur*.



To be sure, Ibn Taymiyya's three fatwas will never supplant the long refutation developed by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya in *The Key to the House of Happiness* (*Miftāḥ dār al-sa'āda*), which Nallino compared to Pico della Mirandola's *Adversus astrologiam*,<sup>24</sup> and G. Saliba called 'the most elaborate and comprehensive attack on astrology'<sup>25</sup> or the 'culminating'<sup>26</sup> point in the history of systematic religious attacks on astrology in Islam.<sup>27</sup> The examination of the positions of the master should, however, contribute to a better appreciation of the views of his famous disciple.<sup>28</sup>

That said, one should not expect to find, in Ibn Taymiyya's three fatwas, well-structured and systematic refutations of astrology. The form and content of a fatwa are very much dependent on the nature and detail of the questions submitted to the muftī. Anyone acquainted with the Shaykh al-Islām's style knows, moreover, how prone he is to digression. In the first fatwa, after an introductory general condemnation of astrology and magic, he does address the particular questions that were put to him: What about astral determinism? Can God's oaths by the stars in the Qur'ān be used as arguments in favour of astrology? Can astrology be related to Idrīs? What about the tutelary star of the Prophet? He nevertheless indulges in digressions about eclipses, the phenomenon of historical forgeries and pseudographic writings, or Islam's grandeur... The second fatwa is, also, mainly structured in relation to the various aspects of the question it answers, and this time without digressiveness: Is astrology forbidden, and by virtue of which *hadiths*? What are the practical measures to be taken by authorities and individuals alike to ban the practice of astrology from the public and private spheres? What personal position should one adopt vis-à-vis the phenomenon? As for the third fatwa, it is a short, direct and clear answer to the question raised.

As usual with him and typical of many debates around 700/1300, Ibn Taymiyya's interests and knowledge prove very wide. His fatwas are not only informed by the religious disciplines of Islam but also by his reading of the works of philosophers like al-Kindī, al-Fārābī and Avicenna, or philosophizing theologians like al-Ghazālī and

<sup>24</sup> See C. A. Nallino, *Astrologia*, 33.

<sup>25</sup> G. Saliba, *History*, 69.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 56.

<sup>27</sup> See Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Miftāḥ*, ii, 125–233. This work has been analyzed in C. A. Nallino, *Astrologia*, 33–7, and, more recently, by J. W. Livingston in *Ibn Qayyim and Science*.

<sup>28</sup> It is particularly disappointing that J. W. Livingston, who knows Ibn Taymiyya's longest fatwa against astrology, does not exploit it more in his analysis of Ibn Qayyim's *Miftāḥ*.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, as well as by an impressive familiarity with the exact sciences, history, occultism and comparative religion. Religiously speaking, he remains the doctor of strict obedience we know from other texts, opposed to any deviation from the Qur'ān and the Sunna of the Prophet, whether among scholars or the common people, in the form of doctrinal aberrations, pseudo-scientific mystifications or popular superstitions. That is precisely why, for example, he refuses to assimilate astrology to astronomy and, as a Peripatetic philosopher would also do for eclipses, defends the efficacy of secondary causes against Ash'arī occasionalism, speaks of the timing of God's action and, among other and more important determinisms, acknowledges some tiny celestial influence on newborns. Being a realist and a rationalist, the great Damascene Shaykh al-Islām does also remain, essentially, a medieval thinker. How else can one explain why, in the polemical controversy on the identity of the tutelary planet of Islam, he prefers Jupiter to Venus, instead of denouncing the whole debate as nonsense?

To the best of my knowledge there is no complete translation of Ibn Taymiyya's three fatwas against astrology into any European language.<sup>29</sup> The present translation is based on the texts published by 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Muḥammad b. Qāsim in vol. XXXV of the *Majmū' al-fatāwā*, Rabat, 1401/1981 (hereafter, *F*).<sup>30</sup>

I have compared the first fatwa in *F* to the texts of two other editions:

- the edition of Faraj Allāh Zakī l-Kurdī l-Azharī in the first volume of *K. Majmū'a fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Taqī l-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya*, Cairo, 1326/1908 (hereafter, *M*).<sup>31</sup>
- the edition of Muḥammad and Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Atā' in the first volume of *al-Fatāwā al-kubrā*, Beirut, 1407/1987 (hereafter, *K*).<sup>32</sup>

Apart from a few corrections and misreadings, *K* is a mere re-edition of *M*. It varies mostly in matters of layout and punctuation, but is of interest in that it identifies the Qur'ānic verses and the Prophetic traditions cited in the text.

The differences between *F* and *MK* are quite numerous and *MK* often present the better readings. In the *apparatus criticus* following the translation, I have not reported all these differences, but only the

<sup>29</sup> A few lines of the longest fatwa (I) are translated in a footnote by J. W. Livingston, *Ibn Qayyim*, 102, n. 39.

<sup>30</sup> *MF*, xxxv, 166–90, 191–7, 197.

<sup>31</sup> *KMF*, i, 323–36.

<sup>32</sup> *FK*, i, 57–75.

corrections I have adopted and the most significant variants. These are signalled in the translation by superscripted characters (<sup>A</sup>, <sup>B</sup>, etc.). I have supplied section headings in order to make the divisions in the text more intelligible. The pagination of *F* is indicated in square brackets and used with the references in the *apparatus criticus*. References to the Qur'ān are indicated by a *Q* followed by sūra and verse numbers.

## FATWA I

## QUESTION

[166,7] concerning the person<sup>A</sup> who believes that the planets have an influence on existence, or says that he has a star in the heaven thanks to whose fortunate character he is happy and because of whose unfortunate character he is unhappy, advances as an argument the words of God, Exalted is He: 'The ones administering an affair' (*Q*. 79.5) as well as His words: 'I swear by the locations of the stars!' (*Q*. 56.75) and says that these [things] are 'the art of Idris', peace be upon him. [This person] also says<sup>B</sup>, about the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, that his star was dependent on Scorpio and Mars. Is this part of the religion of Islam or not? If it<sup>C</sup> is not part of the religion, what must be done with one who says these things? Are those who rebuke such persons among the people who command what is to be acknowledged and prohibit what is to be condemned, or not?

ANSWER<sup>D</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

*The stars as signs of God and means of His action*

'The praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds'<sup>E</sup> (*Q*. 1.1)

The stars are among the signs of God that demonstrate Him, praise Him and prostrate before Him, as God the Exalted said: 'Do you not see that to God prostrates whoever is in the heavens and on the earth, [167,1] the sun, the moon and the stars, the mountains and the trees, the beasts and many of mankind?' Thereupon He said: 'And many deserve the torment' (*Q*. 22.18). The distinction here makes it obvious that He did not refer to the prostration simply for reason of its encompassing demonstration of His lordship<sup>A</sup>, as certain groups of

people say. All creatures indeed have in common to provide such a demonstration, and such is provided by mankind as a whole. He made a distinction and [therein] taught us that this is an added value<sup>B</sup> of the kind special to the believer and by which [the believer] is distinguished from the unbeliever, who deserves the torment.<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, [God] has set in the [stars] uses for His servants and has subjected them to the latter, as He has said, Exalted is He: 'He subjected to you the sun and the moon, both diligently pursuing their courses, and He subjected to you the night and the day' (*Q*. 14.33). He also said: 'The sun, the moon and the stars, made subservient by His command ...' (*Q*. 7.45). And He said: 'He subjected to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all of it, as deriving from Him' (*Q*. 45.13). Among their apparent useful effects is what He sets up, Praised is He, by the sun: heat and cold, night and day, the maturation<sup>C</sup> of fruits, the creation of animals, plants and minerals. The same for what He also sets up by it, for them<sup>D</sup>, such as moistening, drying and other observed<sup>E</sup> affairs. He sets likewise radiance and burning in the fire, purification and irrigation in the water, and the other similar blessings that He mentions in His Book, as He has said, Exalted is He: 'We sent down pure water from the sky, that We may thereby revive a dead land, and give to drink thereof to many of the [beings] We have created, cattle and men' (*Q*. 25.48–9).

God has informed [us] in various places that He sets up<sup>F</sup> the life of some of His creatures by others. Thus said He, the Exalted: '... that We may thereby revive a dead land' (*Q*. 25.49). Also: 'And He is Who sends the winds as a glad tidings heralding His mercy—so that, when they have brought heavy clouds, We drive them to a dead land, then We send down the water thereby, and thereby do We bring forth [168,1] fruits of every kind' (*Q*. 7.57). And likewise: '... the water which God sends down from the sky<sup>A</sup> and thereby revives the earth after its death, and disperses therein all kinds of beasts' (*Q*. 2.164).

Whoever among the theologians of the *Kalām* says that God does these affairs *with* ('*inda*') them, not *by* ('*bi-*') them,<sup>34</sup> his expression is in conflict with the Book of the Exalted God and with the observed<sup>B</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Creatures, good or bad, by the mere fact of being creatures and totally submitted to the ontological will of God, demonstrate His absolute lordship (*rubūbiyya*). In Ibn Taymiyya's opinion, the prostration referred to in *Q*. 22.18 is not an aspect of this ontological dependence of all creatures on their Lord but a religious act, which must be understood in relation to God's godhead (*ilāhiyya*), i.e. His right to be loved, feared and worshipped, and which, distinguishing faith and unbelief, is therefore not universal. See the pages of *MF* translated in Michot, *Textes spirituels II, III, IV*.

<sup>34</sup> 'There are people who reject the forces and the natures, as is the case with Abū l-Ḥasan [al-Ash'arī] and those who followed him, among the companions of Mālik,

affairs. Likewise, whoever pretends that [these things] are acting independently is an associationist<sup>C</sup> in conflict with reason and religion. Concerning the uses of the stars, He has also informed [us], Praised is He, in His Book [that men] are guided 'by them in the darkneses of the land and the sea' (see Q. 6.97). He has informed [us] that they are the adornment of the lowest heaven (see Q. 37.6, 67.5), and He has informed [us] that the Satans are stoned by the stars (see Q. 57.5). However, the stars by which the Satans are stoned are of another species, different from the stars fixed in the heaven by which men are guided. Indeed, these do not leave their location, contrary to the former. And these have a reality which differs from those, although the noun 'stars'<sup>D</sup> brings them together as the nouns 'beast' and 'animal' bring together the angel, the Adamic [beings], the brutes, the flies and the mosquitos.

### *The function and wisdom of eclipses*

It is established about the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, by the valid information about which the savants are in agreement, that he commanded prayer in the event of an eclipse of the sun and of the moon, and commanded invoking [God at that time] and asking [His] forgiveness, giving alms and freeing slaves. 'The sun and the moon, he said, are two of the signs of God. They do not become eclipsed for the death of anybody nor for his birth.'<sup>35</sup> And in [another] report: '... two of the signs of God by which He frightens His servants.'<sup>36</sup> He said this to refute what some ignorant people were saying, i.e. that the sun had become eclipsed because of the death of Ibrāhīm, the son of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace. The sun indeed became eclipsed on the day of his death<sup>37</sup> and, when it became eclipsed, some people offered the opinion that its eclipse was due to his death and that his death was [169,1] the cause of its eclipse,

al-Shāfi'ī, Ahmad [b. Ḥanbal] and others. Those who reject the forces and the natures also reject the causes and say that God acts *with* ('inda) them, not *by* (bi-) them. "God", they say, "does not satiate *by* the bread, nor irrigates *by* the water, nor makes the seed grow *by* the water but acts *with* that, not *by* that." These people are not only in conflict with the Book, the Tradition and the consensus of the Ancients but, also, with clear reason and sense perception.' (MF, ix, 287–8.)

<sup>35</sup> See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kusūf*, iii, 27 ('Ālam. 1499); Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, *Kuḥfīyyūn*, iv, 245 ('Ālam. 17472); Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, i 1, 91.

<sup>36</sup> See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Jum'a*, ii, 36 ('Ālam. 990); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Kusūf*, iii, 29 ('Ālam. 1504).

<sup>37</sup> Ibrāhīm (8–10/630–631–2; see Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, i 1, 86–93), the son of Prophet Muhammad and Mārya the Copt died a few months before the Prophet on a date which has been much debated although it should be easy to specify as a solar eclipse happened on that day.

just as disasters happen<sup>A</sup> among people as a result of the death of some great men. The Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, therefore made it obvious that the eclipses of the sun and of the moon do not result from the death of anybody among the inhabitants of the earth nor from his birth. He denied<sup>B</sup> death and life having any influence<sup>C</sup> on an eclipse of the sun and of the moon and informed [us] that both are among the signs of God and that He frightens His servants [thereby].

He reminded [us] that the wisdom of such [events] consists in frightening the servants [of God], just as frightening them is [what happens] in the case of other signs like strong winds and earthquakes, droughts, uninterrupted rains and similar phenomena that can be a torment. God tormented likewise [various] communities by the wind, the roaring blast and the deluge. The Exalted said: 'Each one We seized for his sin; of them was he on whom We sent a tornado, and of them was he who was caught by the roaring blast, and of them was he whom We caused the earth to swallow, and of them was he whom We drowned' (Q. 29.40). He also said: 'We gave Thamūd the she-camel as a clear portent, but they treated her unjustly. We do not send [Our] signs but to frighten [them]' (Q. 17.59).

### *Celestial influences, their limits and how to protect oneself against some of them*

The fact that [the Prophet] informs [us] that God<sup>D</sup> frightens His servants by such a [phenomenon] clearly establishes that it may be a cause of some torment that He sends down [onto us], similarly to

According to Ibn Taymiyya, al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822) reports that Ibrāhīm's death and the solar eclipse associated with it happened on the tenth day of some lunar month. The Shaykh al-Islām considers this to be an error, because solar eclipses only happen at the end of a lunar month: 'It is known that this [affirmation by al-Wāqidī] is a mistake. Whoever allows this forecasts something of which he has no knowledge, and whoever argues about that argues about something of which he has no knowledge.' (FK, iv, 426).

Ibn Sa'd (*Ṭabaqāt*, i 1, 92) also dates the two events on the tenth day of a lunar month: Tuesday 10 Rabi' I, 10. Although pretending to follow him, L. Caetani (*Chronographia*, i, 99) speaks of the Sunday 16 June 631, with the solar eclipse happening on the 28 or 29 Rabi' I, 10 (4 or 5 July 631), thus not on the same day!

M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes (*Mahomet*, 252) proposes the date 17 Jan. 632 (19 Shawwāl, 10).

In my opinion, the 28 Shawwāl, 10 (Sunday 26 Jan. 632) could be more correct; see the horoscope provided by the astronomer and astrologer Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Jalīl al-Sijzī (Shīrāz, 4th/10th c.) in his *Book of Conjunctions*, as studied by D. Pingree, *Thousands*, 118–19, iv 9 (the solar eclipse in question is wrongly presented as 'indicating the death of the Prophet and the accession of Abū Bakr').

strong stormwinds. And that only happens because God made it a cause of what He sends down<sup>E</sup> to the earth. Whoever means, by saying that [the stars] have an influence, that which is known by the senses and by these other affairs, this is true. God has however commanded the [various] acts of worship that repel from us whatever evil is sent by this. The Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, has likewise commanded, at the moment of a lunar eclipse, prayer and giving alms, invoking [Him], asking [His] forgiveness and freeing slaves. When the wind blew, the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, would also pace to and fro, [his face] changing. And while it was blowing, he commanded [us] to say: 'My God, we ask<sup>F</sup> of You the good of this wind and the good that [170,1] You have sent by it; and we take refuge with You from the evil of this wind and the evil of what You have sent by it.'<sup>38</sup>

He also said: 'The wind participates of the spirit of God. It brings mercy and it brings torment. So, do not curse it but ask of God the good of it and take refuge with God from its evil!'<sup>39</sup> He thus informed [us] that [the wind] brings mercy and brings torment, and commanded us to ask of God the good of it and to take refuge with God from its evil.

### *The prohibition, and failure, of magic*

Concerning the causes of the good and the evil, this is the tradition [to follow] (*al-sunna*): in the case of the apparent causes of the good, the servant accomplishes some<sup>A</sup> of the righteous actions because of which God brings about the good and, in the case of the apparent causes of the evil, some of the acts of worship because of which God repels from him the evil. As for what is hidden of the causes, the servant is not commanded to take upon himself to know that. Yet, when he does what he is commanded and renounces what he is prohibited, God spares him the burden of the evil and facilitates for him the causes of the good. 'And whoever fears<sup>B</sup> God, He appoints a way out for him and provides for him from whence he does not reckon. And whoever trusts in God, He suffices him. Lo! God brings His command to pass. God has appointed a measure for everything' (Q. 65.2-4).

Concerning those who are engaged in magic in order to grasp the uses of this world, He has said, Exalted is He: 'They have followed what the devils were reciting over Solomon's reign. Solomon did not

<sup>38</sup> See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Istisqā'*, iii, 26 ('Ālam. 1496).

<sup>39</sup> See Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, *Adab*, iv, 326, 5097 ('Ālam. 4433); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, *Adab*, ii, 1228, 3727 ('Ālam. 3717).

unbelieve but the devils unbelieved: they were teaching men magic. [They also have followed] that which had come down on the two angels in Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt,<sup>40</sup> although these two taught no one till they had said: "We are but a trial; therefore do not unbelieve!" So people learn, from these two, things by which they bring division between a man and his wife. They are however injuring no one thereby, except by God's permission. They are thus learning things that harm them and do not profit them! And surely they do know that he who trafficks therein, for him there is no share [of happiness] in the Hereafter. And evil indeed is that for which they have sold their souls! Had they but known! If they had believed and feared [God], a reward from God would indeed have been better! Had they but known! (Q. 2.102-3).<sup>C</sup> He has informed [us], Praised is He, that whoever takes that as a substitute [for the proper way of life] knows that for him there is no share [of happiness] in the Hereafter. He only hopes, as he claims, to profit himself in<sup>D</sup> this world; just as [some] hope, by that which they practice of the magic attached to the planets, etc., for things like leadership and wealth. He said furthermore: 'If they had believed and feared [God], a reward from God [171,1] would indeed have been better! Had they but known!' (Q. 2.103). He thus made it obvious that to believe and to fear [God] would have been better for them<sup>A</sup> in this world and in the Hereafter.

He has said, Exalted is He: 'Surely the friends of God, no fear on them, neither shall they sorrow. They who believe and are Godfearing, for them there is the glad tidings in the life of this world and in the Hereafter. There is no changing the words of God; that is the great triumph' (Q. 10.62-4).<sup>B</sup> He also said, Exalted is He, in the story of Joseph: 'So We established Joseph firmly in the land, dwelling therein wherever he willed. We bestow Our mercy on whomsoever We will, and We do not waste the wage of the good-doers. Yet is the wage of the Hereafter better for those who believe and are Godfearing' (Q. 12.56-7). So has He informed [us] that the wage of the Hereafter is better for the Godfearing believers than what they are given of the royalty and wealth in this world, just as Joseph was given.

In several verses, He also informed [us], Praised is He, about the bad outcome, in this world and in the Hereafter, of whoever gives up believing and Godfearing. This is why He said, Exalted is He: 'The magician thrives not, wherever he comes' (Q. 20.69). The thriving one is he who attains what must be sought after and saves himself from what must be feared. Now, for the magician, that does

<sup>40</sup> See G. Vajda, *Et*<sup>2</sup>, 'Hārūt wa Mārūt'.

not happen. In Abū Dā'ūd's *Sunan* it is reported of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, that he said: 'Whoever seeks to learn anything from the stars, seeks to learn something from magic.'<sup>41</sup>

## REFUTATION OF ASTROLOGY

### *The two species of magic astrology*

Magic is forbidden by the Book<sup>C</sup>, the Tradition and the consensus. The [science of the] stars (*nujūm*) which pertains to magic is indeed of two species.

One is 'scientific' (*ilmī*) and consists in inferring indications as to events from the movements of the stars. [It is of the same] genus [of practice] as seeking to cast lots by arrows. (See Q. 5.3.)

The second is practical (*'amalī*). It refers to their saying that the celestial forces depend on the passive terrestrial forces like talismans<sup>42</sup> and other such. This is among the highest species of magic. Nevertheless, all that God and His Messenger have forbidden, its harmfulness is greater than its usefulness.<sup>43</sup>

### *The lies of the astrologers*

[172,1] If somebody deems that, in the second [species of astrology], there is foreknowledge of events and that this is useful, [his] ignorance concerning that is double and the harmfulness of that is greater than its usefulness. This is why the élite and the common people know, by experience and through recurrent reports, that in the [predictive] judgments (*ahkām*) that the astrologers pronounce there is far more of lying than of telling the truth and that, in this respect, they belong to the various species<sup>A</sup> of diviners. In the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it is established about the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, that it was said to him: 'There are, among us, people who frequent the diviners.'—'They are nothing!'—'O Messenger of God, they sometimes tell us something and it comes true!' The Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him peace, then said: 'This utterance of the truth, it is the jinni who hears it and<sup>B</sup> he puts it in the ear of his friend.'<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> See Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, *Tibb*, iv, 16 ('Ālam. 3406).

<sup>42</sup> On the 'science' of talismans, see Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, *Introduction*, iii, 166–7, 174–5, 178, and al-Majritī, *Ghāya*, trans. Ritter-Plessner, *Picatrix*.

<sup>43</sup> See MF, trans. Michot, *Musique*, 98.

<sup>44</sup> See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Tawḥīd*, ix, 162 ('Ālam. 7006); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Salām*, vii, 36 ('Ālam. 4135).

He has also informed [us] that when God decides an affair, the angels beat their wings in submission to His word, as if it was a chain on some rocks, 'so that when fright is lifted from their hearts, they say: "What did your Lord say?"—"The truth!" they say' (Q. 34.23). And all the inhabitants of one heaven<sup>C</sup> inform the inhabitants of the heaven who follow them, so that the information gets ultimately to the lowest heaven<sup>D</sup>. But [devils] are there, sharp of hearing, the ones above the others, and they sometimes hear a word<sup>45</sup> before the shooting stars catch them or, at other times, the shooting stars catch them after He pronounces that word<sup>E</sup>. He has said, God bless him and grant him peace: 'If they only said the affair as it is! But to a single word, they add one hundred lies!'

Such is also the case with the astrologers. It gets to the point that, when<sup>F</sup> I addressed them in Damascus, their leaders being present with me, and exposed the corrupt nature of their art by means of the rational proofs whose validity they recognized, a leader of theirs said to me<sup>G</sup>: 'By God, we lie one hundred times in order to say the truth in one word.'

### *A pseudo-science*

[173,1] That is because the edifice of their science is based on [the premise] that the superior movements are the cause of events [in this world] and that knowing the cause necessarily yields the knowledge of what is caused (*musabbab*). But this only happens when one knows the complete cause, whose rule does not fail to be implemented. The most those know, however, is that they know [only] a tiny part of the sum of the many causes and do not know the rest of the causes, nor their conditions, nor the things hindering them.<sup>46</sup> It is for example like somebody who knows that the sun in summer rises high above his head, so that the heat becomes intense, and wants for example to know thereby if, at that moment, the grapes that are on such and such ground become sultanas ... Although there are grapes there, although they ripen and although their owner spreads them in the sun when it is hot so that they become sultanas, despite all this and even if it happens often, to infer

<sup>45</sup> See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Bad' al-khalq*, iv, 111 ('Ālam. 2971; trans. Khān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iv, 291–2, 432); Narrated 'Ā'isha: 'I heard the Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him peace, saying: "The angels come down in the clouds and mention this or that affair decided in the heaven. So the devils sharpen their hearing, hear it and reveal it to the diviners. The latter nevertheless add to it one hundred lies of their own."' See also Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Salām*, vii, 36–7 ('Ālam. 4134, 4136).

<sup>46</sup> Compare Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhiyyāt*, Bk x, ch. i, 440, trans. Avicenna Latinus, *Philosophia*, 529–30.

that from only the heat of the sun is severe ignorance. Indeed, there might be grapes and there might not, that vine might bear fruit if cared for and it might not, [some of] the grapes might be eaten or might be pressed out, they might be stolen, they might be dried into sultanas and similar things ...

The proofs<sup>A</sup> proving the corrupt nature of this art and its forbidden character are many and this is not the place for [mentioning] them. In Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it is established of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, that he said: 'Whoever frequents a soothsayer ('*arrāf*) and asks him a question about anything, no prayer is accepted<sup>B</sup> from him for forty days.'<sup>47</sup> It has been said that 'soothsayer' ('*arrāf*) is a general name for the diviner (*kāhin*), the astrologer (*munajjim*), the geomancer (*rammāl*) and their like: whoever speaks of foreknowledge<sup>C</sup> by these methods. If it is said that, in the [Arabic] language, it is [only] a name for some of these species, the rest of them are encompassed in it by way of generalization of [its] meaning, as it has been said of wine, gambling and their like. (See Q. 5.90.) [174,1]

### CELESTIAL PHENOMENA, CAUSALITY AND TIME

#### *The real cause of eclipses and shooting stars*

As for the denial, by some people, that any of the movements of the planets or of other things may be among the causes, this is also speaking without knowledge. They have no proof for that, neither Legal proofs nor others. Or, rather<sup>A</sup>, the texts prove the contrary of that, as in the *ḥadīth* which is [reported] in the *Sunan*<sup>48</sup> from 'Ā'isha, may God be pleased with her: the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, looked to the moon and said: 'O 'Ā'isha, take refuge with God from the evil of this, as this is [that which is alluded to by] "the darkness when it gathers".'<sup>49</sup> [This was also the case], earlier, in the

<sup>47</sup> See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Salām*, vii, 37 ('Ālam. 4137).

<sup>48</sup> See al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, *Tafsīr sūra* 94, v, 452, 3366 ('Ālam. 3288); Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vi, 215 ('Ālam. 24619).

<sup>49</sup> See Q. 113.3: 'From the evil of the darkness when it gathers' (*min sharri ghāsiqin idhā waqaba*). This conventional translation of Q. 113.3 is not very helpful in understanding the *ḥadīth* just quoted. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (*Tafsīr*, xxxii, 195) provides a more interesting interpretation: "The *ghāsiq idhā waqaba* is the moon. "The *ghāsiq*", Ibn Qutayba [d. 276/889] said, "is the moon. It was called like this because it gets eclipsed and darkens (*ghasaqa*), i.e. its light fades away and it blackens. The fact that it *waqaba* is its entering in that blackening process." Abū Salma reported about

*ḥadīth* about the eclipse, wherein he informed [us] that God frightens His servants by the two of them.<sup>50</sup>

It is also obvious that the meaning of the saying of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, 'They do not become eclipsed for the death of anybody nor for his birth', i.e. the eclipse is not caused by [any] death, is to deny an active cause. It is like for the other *ḥadīth* which is in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, from Ibn 'Abbās,<sup>51</sup> about some men of the Helpers (*anṣār*): they were with the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, when a shooting star was cast and it lit up. He said: 'What did you use to say about this during the Age of Ignorance (*jāhiliyya*)?' They said: 'We use to say: "Tonight, somebody important was born" or "Somebody important died".' He then said: 'These are not cast for the death of anybody, nor for his birth. However, when God decides an affair, the carriers of the Throne praise [Him].'<sup>52</sup> [The Prophet] also mentioned the *ḥadīth* concerning the [devils] sharpening their hearing<sup>B</sup>.<sup>53</sup> The Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, has thus denied that the casting [of the shooting stars] is due to the fact that an important one has been born or died; rather, it happens because of the devils sharpening their hearing.

In each of the two *ḥadīths*<sup>C</sup>, it is [stated] that neither the death of some<sup>D</sup> people nor their birth is a cause of eclipse of sun and moon, nor [a cause] for the casting<sup>E</sup> of the shooting stars,<sup>54</sup> and [this] even if the death of some men implicates the advent of something in the heavens, as it is established in the [various] *Ṣaḥīḥs*: 'The Throne—the Throne of the Compassionate—shook because of the death of Sa'd [175,1] Ibn Mu'adh.'<sup>55</sup> As for the fact that an eclipse or other things can be a cause of an event on earth—a torment that entails

'Ā'isha that the Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him peace, took her hand and, pointing to the moon, said: "Take refuge with God from the evil of this, as it is the *ghāsiq idhā waqaba*". "The meaning of his words", Ibn Qutayba said, "is: take refuge with God from his evil when it *waqaba*, i.e. when it enters into an eclipse". On the possible astrological meaning of this and the following verse, see also the remarks of W. Hartner in A. Abel, *Place*, 312–3.

<sup>50</sup> i.e. the lunar and solar eclipses. See above, p. 156 and n. 36.

<sup>51</sup> Great scholar of the first generation (d. 68/686–8); see L. Vecchia Vaglieri, *El*<sup>2</sup>, "Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās".

<sup>52</sup> See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Salām*, iv, 36 ('Ālam. 4136); al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, *Tafsīr sūra* 35, v, 362, 3224 ('Ālam. 3148); Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, i, 218 ('Ālam. 1785).

<sup>53</sup> See the *ḥadīth*, p. 161 above and n. 45, which is indeed repeated in the last part of this one, after the evocation of the carriers of the Throne.

<sup>54</sup> Al-Fārābī has a similar opinion; see his *Maqāla*, 60–1.

<sup>55</sup> Anṣārī Companion of the Aws tribe (d. 5/627). See W. Montgomery Watt, *El*<sup>2</sup>, 'Sa'd b. Mu'adh'; al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Manāqib al-anṣār*, v, 35 ('Ālam. 3519); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Faḍā'il al-ṣaḥāba*, vii, 150 ('Ālam. 3512).

a death or some other thing—this has been established by the *hadith* itself.

*The precise timing of God's actions*

What the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, has informed us about does not contradict the fact that an eclipse has a delimited time in which to occur, so that there is no solar eclipse but at the end of the month, on the night[s] of concealment of the moon, and there is no lunar eclipse but in the middle of the month, on the nights of full moon. Whoever pretends the contrary, among *fiqh* scholars or the common people, does so for want of knowledge of computation. It is thanks to computation that it is possible to know of the eclipses that occurred in the past and those that are to occur in the future, as it is possible to know the crescents [of the new moon] that occurred in the past and those to occur in the future. All that is indeed owed to computation, as the Exalted said: 'He made the night [to be a source of] stillness, and the sun and the moon [to be according to some] computation' (Q. 6.96). He also said, Exalted is He: 'The sun<sup>A</sup> and the moon follow a computation' (Q. 55.5); 'He is Who made the sun brightness and the moon light, and measured for it phases, that you might know the number of years and computation' (Q. 10.5); 'They<sup>B</sup> ask you about the crescents. Say: "They are fixed marks of time, for mankind and for the pilgrimage"' (Q. 2.189).

So, when some of the common people saw the astrologer hit the truth with information he was giving out about a future eclipse, they came to hold the opinion that the information he was giving out about events [generally] was of the same kind. Such is ignorance!<sup>56</sup> The first is indeed the same type [of information] as his telling us that the crescent rises either on the night of the thirtieth or thirty-first [of the month] and that is a [routine] matter in accordance with

<sup>56</sup> Avicenna has a similar analysis: 'If [the astrologers] say—"We inform of the [future] occurrence of an eclipse and it will prove true. Similarly for other things."—we will say: "You do not know when the eclipse will be because of your character as astrologers (*aṣḥāb al-aḥkām*)."' Whoever knows that only knows it by computation (*ḥisāb*) and solving a *zīj* table. Yet, the astrologer is far from grasping anything like a *zīj* table. The construction of the *zīj* is based on a valid and demonstrated principle, as the *zīj* is a summary of the book of the *Almagest*. The book of the *Almagest* and that which it contains is indeed known through observation (*mushāhada*), i.e. astronomical observation (*raṣād*), and geometrical demonstration (*al-burhān al-handasī*) establishes the validity of such [a process]. [Fore]knowing an eclipse and judging that it will truly happen is therefore not like the [astrologers'] saying that if the Moon is in Scorpio, it will necessarily rain. The first [affirmation] is indeed demonstrated, while the second is not so.' (Ibn Sīnā, *Nujūm*, ms. Leiden, f. 95v.)

which God has caused what is customary to happen and which never gets disturbed. It is the same type [of information] as [the astrologer] telling us that the sun sets at the end of the day, etc. Whoever knows the position of the sun and of the moon, as well as their courses, knows that, even if it is a science of little usefulness.<sup>57</sup>

[176,1] Even if, for an eclipse, there is a determined moment, that does not exclude God making [this eclipse], at that moment, a cause of something He decides—a torment, etc.—for whoever God is tormenting at that moment or for some other among those on whom God sends that down. In the same way, God's tormenting the people He was tormenting by a strong cold wind—such as the people of 'Ad—would happen at the moment convenient [for it], namely at the end of winter—as mentioned by the exegetes and in the stories about the Prophets.

When the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, saw a *makhīla*, i.e. a cloud imagined to hold rain, he would pace to and fro, his face changing. 'Ā'isha said to him: 'When people see such a cloud, they rejoice.' He said: 'O 'Ā'isha, what guarantees my safety? The people of 'Ad saw the torment heading for their valleys and said: "This is coming to bring us rain."<sup>58</sup> God said: "No! rather is it what you sought to hasten: a wind wherein is a painful torment"' (Q. 46.24).

Similarly, the times during which<sup>A</sup> God sends down [His] mercy, like the ten last days of Ramaḍān and the first<sup>B</sup> [days] of Dhū l-Hijja, as well as like the middle of the night, etc., are delimited times, neither to be brought forward nor put back, during which something comes down, of His mercy, that does not come down at other times.

<sup>57</sup> 'For the sun and the moon, there are nights marked by certain regular phenomena. Whoever knows these knows the solar and lunar eclipses, just as whoever knows how many [days] of the month have passed knows that the crescent [of the new moon] will rise during that particular night or during the one preceding it. The knowledge of that which is regular concerning the crescent is, however, general knowledge that all men share, while the knowledge of that which is regular concerning the solar and lunar eclipses is only possessed by the people who know the computation of their two courses. The information given about that by the calculator does not belong to the science of the unknown, nor does it belong to the kind of information he gives through [astrological] judgements (*aḥkām*), in which he tells more lies than truths. That is indeed speaking without a firm science, and it is built on something else than a valid foundation [...] The diviners have more science in that which they say than the astrologers in [their] judgements. And in spite of this, it is validly reported, about the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, that he forbade to frequent them and to consult them. How then, [a *fortiori*], for the astrologer?' (FK, iv, 425–6).

<sup>58</sup> See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Tafsīr*, vi, 134 ('Ālam. 4454); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Istisqā'*, iii, 26 ('Ālam. 1497).



*Eclipses and God's manifestation*

In some of the versions of the *ḥadīths* about the eclipse, there appears this report by Ibn Māja and others of a saying<sup>C</sup> of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace: 'They do not become eclipsed for the death of anybody nor for his birth. But when God manifests Himself (*tajallā*) to something of His creation, it submits to Him.'<sup>59</sup>

Abū Hāmid [al-Ghazālī] and his like have contested this *ḥadīth* and refuted that [whole idea]. Not from the point of view of the science of *ḥadīth* however—they indeed had little<sup>D</sup> knowledge of it, Abū Hāmid saying for example about himself: 'I myself have an insufficient stock in the science of *ḥadīth*'<sup>60</sup>—[177,1] but because they believed that, if the cause of an eclipse of the sun was, for example, that its light was prevented from reaching the earth when the moon was opposite it, [God's] manifestation could not be given as the cause thereof.

Still, the mentioned manifestation [of God] does not contradict the mentioned cause. The submission of the sun and of the moon to God at that moment, when to its light happens the interruption that [then] happens, removes its influence from the earth and sets a bar between it and between the place of its authority, the site of its diffusion and influence. The king freely acting in a far place, if prevented from doing so, is humiliated because of that.<sup>61</sup>

## GOD'S OATHS BY THE STARS

As for these words of God, Exalted is He: 'The ones administering an affair' (Q. 79.5), the 'administering ones' are the angels.

As for the fact that God swears by the stars—He has done so for example when saying: 'Nay, but I swear by the revolving stars, that run and hide' (Q. 81.15)—it is like His swearing by others of the things created by Him—He has, for example, sworn by the night and

<sup>59</sup> See Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, *Iqāma*, i, 401, 1262 ('Ālam. 1252); al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, *Kaṣāf*, 16, iii, 145, 1487 ('Ālam. 1468).

<sup>60</sup> Al-Ghazālī did not write any book on the science of *ḥadīth* and his knowledge of it was indeed very deficient. The fact was pointed out by several authors, for example Ibn al-Jawzī and al-Subkī; see G. Makdisi, *al-Ghazālī*, 52. It is therefore with some satisfaction that Ibn Taymiyya writes that al-Ghazālī, after his Sufi period, at the end of his life, adopted the way of *ḥadīth* scholarship and died while studying al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*; see *Dar'*, i, 162, trans. Michot, *Vanités* (forthcoming).

<sup>61</sup> See also the refutation of al-Ghazālī's objection proposed by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Miftāḥ*, ii, 213–14.

the day, the sun, the moon, etc. This<sup>A</sup> implies an amplification of the value of that by which He is swearing and a notification about what it contains of signs, lesson, usefulness for mankind, blessing bestowed upon them, etc. That does not make it obligatory that the hearts should become attached thereto, or that one should hold the opinion that it is what gives happiness and misfortune, just as nobody would hold any such opinion<sup>B</sup> about 'the night, when it covers up' (Q. 92.1) and 'the day, when it manifests itself' (Q. 92.1), 'the dust-scatterers' (Q. 51.1) and 'the load-bearers' (Q. 51.2), 'the Mount' (Q. 52.1), 'a Book inscribed' (Q. 52.2–3), and other such.<sup>62</sup>

FAITH IN ASTRAL DETERMINISM  
AND UNBELIEF

The belief that one of the seven stars is in charge of one's good fortune or misfortune is a corrupt belief<sup>C</sup>. And if somebody believes<sup>D</sup> that this [planet] is what administers (*mudabbir*) him, he is an unbeliever.<sup>63</sup> Similarly if, in addition<sup>E</sup> to that, he invokes it and seeks its aid,<sup>64</sup> it is pure unbelief and associationism.

<sup>62</sup> This discussion about God's oaths by the stars in some Qur'ānic verses may have been directed against Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, who appears to have based an argument for the lawful character of astrology on such verses. See Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Miftāḥ*, ii, 189; C. A. Nallino, *Astrologia*, 35–6.

<sup>63</sup> 'The planets are rational spiritual beings capable of intelligence and speech, and [themselves] cause and administer [*mudabbir*] everything in this world by the order of the Prime Creator who controls all.' Al-Kindī, quoted by G. Saliba (*History*, 55) who comments: 'In spite of the fact that the ultimate control of human destiny remains in the hands of God, it is not hard to see why such a doctrine smacks of polytheism, if not outright atheism. There is no doubt that it was perceived as such by Kindī's contemporaries and by the following generations of believers.'

<sup>64</sup> There is no lack of basic information on cultic devotion to the planets in medieval Islam, although most often relating to the self-styled Sabians of Harrān (see note 68 below) and their like. See for example the *Liber de locutione cum spiritibus planetarum* of Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar b. al-Farrukhān al-Ṭabarī (fl. 145–197/762–812), ed. D. Pingree (*Ṭabarī*, 112–16), the three treatises on the pneumas of the planets attributed to al-Kindī (trans. Veccia Vaglieri and Celentano, *Ēpîtres*), or the famous *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, Disc. iii, ch. 7, in which parts of al-Ṭabarī's *Liber de locutione* are embedded (al-Majrīṭī, *Ghāya*, 195–228; trans. Ritter and Plessner, *Picatrix*, 206–41). See also Ş. Gündüz, *Knowledge*, 164–84.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, who sometimes defended astrology, got himself interested in such astral rituals and for example describes the suffumigants that, according to Hermes, must be used for each of the seven planets. See the page of his *Book of the hidden secret, as far as addressing oneself to the stars is concerned* (K. *al-Sirr al-maktūm fī mukhāṭabat al-nujūm*), trans. Pingree, *Ṭabarī*, 116–17. (On this book, see also Ibn Taymiyya, *Radd*, 286.)



*Genethliology and obscurantism*

The very furthest [178,1] anyone who says such [things] can go is to build his [theory] on the fact that<sup>65</sup> this new-born, when he was born, had such an ascendant (*tālī*).<sup>65</sup> However, it is impossible that such a fate<sup>66</sup> alone could be what influences the [future] circumstances of this new-born. Rather, it might, at very most, constitute a tiny fraction of the sum of the causes. Such a fate does not necessarily imply what has been mentioned.<sup>66</sup> Rather, the things known to have real influence on a [new-born] are things such as the circumstances of the parents and of the country in which he lives. That indeed constitutes a tangible cause, regarding the [future] circumstances of the new-born. It is not, however, something independent.<sup>67</sup>

It has been said that the earliest of those associationist Ṣābian<sup>68</sup> astrologers and their followers, when a baby was born to them, used to take note of the ascendant of this new-born and give him a name indicating it.<sup>69</sup> Then, when grown up he was asked his name, his questioner would take into consideration the situation of [the] ascendant. The adherents of such ways would thus start asking people their names and the names of their mothers, and pretend to be drawing from that an indication as to their circumstances. Such things are darknesses piled on top of each other and contradict reason as well as religion.

<sup>65</sup> According to al-Bīrūnī (*Taḥfīm*, trans. Wright, *Elements*, 149, 245), 'that portion of the zodiac which arises on the eastern horizon at any particular time is called the sign of the ascendant (*tālī*) or horoscope'.

<sup>66</sup> Namely, that the new-born's life should be completely predetermined by the stars. i.e. the circumstances of the parents, the state of the country and so on, are themselves dependent on causes of a higher level.

<sup>68</sup> The Ṣābians of Ḥarrān were able to maintain an ancient planet cult long after the spread of Islam to their region. They are to be distinguished from the Ṣābians referred to in the Qur'an (2.62, 5.69, 22.17), whose identity they most probably usurped at the end of al-Ma'mūn's reign (218/833) to preserve the existence of their pagan community. Mixing Assyro-Babylonian, Greek and monotheistic elements, their system of belief eventually combined astrolatry and idolatry with worship of a transcendent deity considered as a first cause. Astrology, magic and mystery played an important role in their religion. See the synthesis of Ş. Gündüz, *Knowledge*, especially chapters ii and vi; see also C. Genequand, *Idolâtrie*. For Ibn Taymiyya's conception of the Ṣābians as adherents of a 'rational religion', see *MF*, xx, 64, 71, trans. Michot, *Textes spirituels XIV*, 25, 28; see also *Radd*, 284. Like other late Muslim scholars, Ibn Taymiyya often uses the term *Ṣābian* for any idol- and star-worshippers, ancient or otherwise, from Greece to China.

<sup>69</sup> In other words, they used to cast the baby's horoscope and give him a name whose letters transcribed the figures composing his horoscope. A story told by al-Jawbarī provides an excellent illustration of the procedure described by Ibn Taymiyya. See his *Kashf*, trans. Khawam, *Voile*, i, 278–9.

*'Alī and hemerology*

As for their elections,<sup>70</sup> i.e. the fact that they take into consideration the ascendant<sup>71</sup> for whatever action they perform—they for example choose, [as favourable] for travelling, the moon's being in its exaltation<sup>72</sup>, i.e. Cancer,<sup>72</sup> and not in its dejection, i.e. Scorpio<sup>73</sup>—it belongs to this blameworthy category [of beliefs].

When 'Alī, son of Abū Tālib, wanted to travel to fight the Khārijīs, an astrologer blocked his path and said: 'O commander of the believers! Do not travel! The moon is indeed in Scorpio and, if you travel [179,1] while the moon is in Scorpio, your companions will be defeated'—or as he said. 'On the contrary, said 'Alī, I will travel<sup>74</sup>, trusting in God, relying on God, and calling you a liar!' So he travelled and was blessed in that journey to the point of *en masse* killing of the Kharijīs, which was one of his greatest

<sup>70</sup> *Ikhtiyārāt*, 'choices', 'elections' (also *ibtidā'āt*, Greek *katarchai*, Latin *electiones*), hemerology or catarchic astrology, is one of the main parts of judicial astrology as it was practised in Islam, the others being *mawālīd*, 'nativities' (Latin *nativitates*), or genethliology, *tahāwīl al-sinīn*, 'revolutions of the years' or astrological history, and *masā'il*, 'interrogations' (Latin *interrogationes*). Hemerology is concerned with determining, in relation to the position of the stars, the auspicious and inauspicious times for initiating ventures. While genethliology can in some way be considered as the *nec plus ultra* of astrology, hemerology is more expeditious as it informs somebody without drawing his horoscope. *Masā'il* deal with responses to queries. See T. Fahd, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 'Ikhtiyārāt'; Abū Ma'shar, *Mudkhal*, Disc. viii, ch. 2, 615; D. Pingree, *Astrology*, 290–1; G. Saliba, *Astrology*, 70–2; J.-C. Vadet, *Aphorismes*, 32–43: *L'astrologie des 'élections' du point de vue historique et philosophique*. See also Avicenna, *Aqsām*, 110, trans. Michot, *Sciences*, 67, where '... sera: les états ... les problèmes' (lines 7–9) must be corrected to '... sera. Il s'agit des états [divers] des cycles du monde et de la royauté, des royaumes et des pays. [Il s'agit aussi] des *nativitates* et des *revolutiones*; des prédictions calculées sur la base de trajectoires astrales artificielles [*tasyīr*; see O. Schirmer, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 'Tasyīr'; and G. Saliba, *Astrologie*, 72], des *electiones* et des *interrogationes*'.

<sup>71</sup> i.e. the fact that they cast a horoscope for whatever action they perform.

<sup>72</sup> According to astrology, it is not in Cancer but in Taurus (3°) that the moon attains its maximum influence or 'exaltation' (*sharaf*). Ibn Taymiyya in fact confounds the moon's exaltation sign and its domicile (*bayt*). The moon is indeed the lord of Cancer as its domicile; when the moon stands in it, its influence is also particularly great. On the contrary, when the moon stands in the sign diametrically opposite to Taurus, i.e. Scorpio, it is said to stand in its dejection, or 'depression' (*hubūt*), and its influence becomes negligible. See W. Hartner, *Vaso*, 104–5.

<sup>73</sup> See Almansor's aphorism 47: 'Pour les voyages ... les signes mobiles (*Bélier*, *Cancer*, *Balance*, *Capricorne*) sont recommandés' (trans. J.-C. Vadet, *Aphorismes*, 77). See also the explanations given by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Miftāḥ*, ii, 215–16.

<sup>74</sup> See J. Livingston, *Ibn Qayyim*, 101.

contentments, as he had been fighting them on the command of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace!

As for what some people say, i.e. that the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, would have said: 'Do not travel while the moon is in Scorpio!', it is a fabricated lie, according to the unanimous agreement of the *ḥādīth* scholars.

### THE SO-CALLED 'ART OF IDRIS'

#### *Four arguments against relating the origin of astrology to Idrīs*

##### *Idrīs and Hermes*

As for the affirmation of one who says that this is 'the art of Idrīs', it will be said, firstly, that this is talking without knowledge.<sup>75</sup> Such a thing could by no means be known except through an authentically transmitted tradition; yet, for the [person] saying this, there is no

<sup>75</sup> The Prophet Idrīs' identity is not clearly known though he is twice mentioned in the Qur'ān (19.56, 21.85). Sunnī tradition places him between Adam and Noah. Muslim sources also identify him, frequently, with Enoch (*Akhnākḥ*), Elijah (*Ilyās*) or al-Khidr, while some orientalist connect him with Ezra, the apostle Andrew, or the cook of Alexander the Great. In addition, just as happened with the Ṣābiāns of the Qur'ān, Idrīs' personality was usurped by some syncretist thinkers (for example Abū Ma'shar) or groups who identified him with Hermes and credited him with a number of more or less occult writings and inventions. This confusion of identities was already known to al-Jāhiz around 229–232/842–845 (see his *Tarbi'*, 26, §40, trans. Adad, *Tarbi'*, 33–4). See G. Vajda, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 'Idrīs'.

The claim that astrology goes back to Idrīs had already been refuted by Avicenna: 'If [the astrologers] say: "What we say was revealed by God, Exalted is He, to Idrīs, peace be upon him, and what a Messenger of God says is true and incontestable", we will say: "These are not the sayings of Idrīs but something of your invention that you attribute to him." The proof of the truth of what I say is that it is not permitted [for the sayings of one Prophet] to contradict the sayings of another Prophet in matters to do with the principles. Do you not see that it is not permitted for one Prophet to say that God, Exalted is He, is one and for another Prophet to say that God is two? Yet, to wonder if man does, or does not, perceive that which is hidden (*al-ghayb*) belongs to the principles. And the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, denied such a perception. In the Book of God, Exalted is He, it is mentioned that none knows that which is hidden but God [see for example Q. 27.65] and the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "The things that I fear the most for my community are two: belief in the stars and unbelief in [God's] Decree." One knows, because of this, that Idrīs, peace be upon him, is innocent of things such as those that the [astrologers] say' (Ibn Sīnā, *Nujūm*, ms. Leiden, f. 95v.). See also al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, i, trans. Faris, *Knowledge*, 75; C. A. Nallino, *Astrologia*, 29, 33.

According to al-Jawbarī, it is geomancy which is Idrīs' art. It was revealed to him by Gabriel and he himself taught it to the Hermes, forty disciples whom he had chosen among the heads of his people's tribes. See his *Kashf*, trans. Khawam, Voile, i, 281–6.

way leading to that! Sure, in the books of those, reference is made to the Hermes of the Hermes<sup>B</sup> (*hirmis al-harāmisa*)<sup>76</sup> and they pretend that it is Idrīs! 'The Hermes' is, among them, a generic name and this is why they say 'The Hermes of the Hermes'. The believer definitely knows that the volume of things that they mention about their Hermes is not properly taken from any of the Prophets, on account of the lies and vain elements that it contains.

#### *Prophetic science versus experience and analogy*

Secondly, it will be said that if the basis of<sup>C</sup> [astrology] is taken from Idrīs, it was, for him, a miracle and a science that God had given him. It is thus among the Prophetic sciences. Yet, those only advance as arguments<sup>D</sup> experience and analogical reasoning, not information [coming] from the Prophets, blessing and peace be upon them!

#### *A 'Prophetic message' more corrupt than the sciences of the People of the Book*

[180,1] Thirdly, it will be said that even if some part of this [so-called 'art of Idrīs'] is taken from a Prophet, it is definitely known that it contains far more lies and vain elements than things taken from that Prophet. It is also definitely known that the lies and the vain elements that it contains are far more numerous than the lies and the

<sup>76</sup> During the first centuries AD, an extensive literature of a syncretist character, mainly concerned with philosophy, sciences, magic, astrology and other occult disciplines, developed in Greek under the name of Hermes, the Thrice-Great, 'Trismégistos'. According to these writings, Hermes was both the divine messenger and revealer of the gods and the teacher of wisdom. Hermetic literature exerted a great influence on the development of occultism and gnosticism among Muslims, Hermes becoming the alleged author of numerous astrological treatises. Presumably thinking of the epithet 'Thrice-Great,' the astrologer Abū Ma'shar hypothesized three different Hermes, whose respective mythical biographies were developed by several posterior Muslim authors (see D. Pingree, *Thousands*, 14–19). According to al-Shahrastānī, the pagans of Harrān adopted Hermes as one of their two principal divine masters, the other being Agathodaimon, also a famous Greek mythological figure. Acting as intermediaries to the superior beings and interceders with the supreme God, Hermes and Agathodaimon were supposed to have taught the Harrānians the true way and to have given them their Laws. See M. Plessner, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 'Hirmis'; M. Ullmann, *Natur* (index); Ş. Gündüz, *Knowledge*, 157–8, 208–11; D. Pingree, *Astrology*, 292.

*Hirmis al-harāmisa* is one of the various forms of his name by which Hermes Trismegistus was known to Muslim authors. In Ibn Taymiyya's time, it is also found in the geographer al-Dimashqī (654–727/1256–1326; see Sh. D. al-Dimashqī, *Nukhbat*, 44, trans. Mehren, *Manuel*, 47; Ş. Gündüz, *Knowledge*, 157). While Ibn Taymiyya regards *hirmis* as a generic name (*ism jins*), Ibn Juljul (Cordoba, 332/944 – after 384/994) writes that 'the name Hermes is a title (*laqab*), like Caesar or Khusrāu' (cited in D. Pingree, *Thousands*, 14).

vain elements that [one finds] among the Jews and the Nazarenes, as far as the things that they report about<sup>A</sup> the Prophets are concerned. Of the Jews and the Nazarenes, we are definitely certain that the basis of their religion is taken from the Envoys and that God sent down the Torah, the Gospel and the Psalms as He sent down the Qur'ān. And indeed, God has made it compulsory for us to believe in what He sent down onto us and in what He sent down onto the people who lived before us, as He has said, Exalted is He: 'Say: "We believe in God, and that which has been sent down to us, and that which has been sent down to Abraham and Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus were given and that which the Prophets were given from their Lord. We do not differentiate between any of them and to Him we are submitting."' (Q. 2.136).

Thereupon, and in spite of that, God has informed us that the People of the Book have distorted and replaced [some of its content], lied and concealed [things]. Such, then, is the situation of a certified Revelation and of Books that have certainly been sent down, although they belong to an age closer to us than Idrīs and although their transmitters were greater than the transmitters of [the science of] the stars (*nujūm*), further from any deliberate invention of lies and vain things and further from unbelief in God, His Messenger and the Last Day. So, *a fortiori*, what opinion [must] one hold about this amount [of astrological material] if it contains something that is transmitted from Idrīs? We indeed know that it contains more important lies, vain elements and distortion than that which [can be found] in the sciences of the People of the Book.

In al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it is established about the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, that he said: 'When the People of the Book talk to you, do not consider them as veracious nor as lying! Say instead [181,1]: "We believe in God and in that which has been sent down to us and that which has been sent down to you. Our God and your God are one and to him we are submitting."' <sup>77</sup> As we are commanded, concerning that which the People of the Book tell us, to consider as veracious nothing but that which we know to be true, nor to consider anything as a lie but that which we know to be vain, how could one consider these [astrologers] as veracious concerning that which they pretend to be transmitted from Idrīs, peace upon him, when they are, in this matter, further from knowing something reliable<sup>A</sup> than [even] the People of the Book?

<sup>77</sup> See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *I'tisām*, ix, 111 ('Ālam. 6814), quoting Q. 29.46.

*The science of astronomy versus the magic of judicial astrology*

Fourthly, it will be said that there is no doubt that the [science of the] stars (*al-nujūm*) is of two species: computation (*ḥisāb*) and judgements (*ahkām*).<sup>78</sup>

As for computation, it consists in the knowledge of the sizes of the spheres and of the planets, their attributes, the measures of their movements and what follows from that. This is, fundamentally, a valid science, about which there is no suspicion, just as is the knowledge of the earth, its description, etc. The mass of its details,<sup>B</sup> however, requires much toil and is of little interest, as is the case with one knowing for example the measures of the minutes, the seconds and the thirds in the movements of the seven planets, 'the revolving stars that run and hide' (Q. 81.15). If the basis of this is taken from Idrīs, this is possible and God knows better the truth of that. It is similar to people saying that the basis of medicine is taken from one of the Prophets.

Regarding, on the other hand, the judgements (*ahkām*) that belong to the genus of magic, it is impossible that any one of the Prophets could have been a magician. Yet, these people mention several species of [things] belonging to magic and say: 'This is good for implementing the *nōmoi* (*nawāmīs*)', i.e. the Laws (*sharā'i*) and the Traditions (*sunan*). Some of these things consist in invoking<sup>C</sup> the planets and in worshipping them, as well as in several species of associationism that whoever believes in God and in His Messenger<sup>D</sup> obligatorily knows none of the Prophets ever<sup>E</sup> commanded [182,1], nor had knowledge of. To attribute that to some of the Prophets is to act like those who attribute similar things to Solomon, peace be upon him: as God had made jinn, mankind and birds subservient to him, some people pretended that that had been done by means of several species of

<sup>78</sup> For Ibn Taymiyya, *al-nujūm*, 'the stars', to be understood as '*ilm al-nujūm*, 'the science of the stars', encompasses both astronomy and astrology. Hence the need to introduce some complementary parameter to differentiate the two. 'Computation' (*ḥisāb*) refers to astronomy, which is indeed a part of mathematics. 'Judgements' (*ahkām*) refers to astrology or, more particularly, to what is traditionally understood as the second of its two main parts, judicial astrology, the first part being natural astrology. While natural astrology consists in the observation of the influences of the stars on the natural elements, the purpose of judicial astrology is to know their influences on human destiny. Ibn Taymiyya alluded to the heavenly influences studied in natural astrology at the beginning of his fatwa (see above, p. 155). He also explained earlier how he divides judicial astrology into a 'scientific' and a 'practical' disciplines (see above, p. 160). On the ambiguity of the Arabic vocabulary for astrology and the place of the latter in Muslim classifications of sciences, see C. A. Nallino, *Astrologia*, 1-4; S. Pines, *Distinction*; T.-A. Druart, *Astronomie*.

magic. Certain groups of Jews and Nazarenes even do not consider him as a Prophet but<sup>A</sup> as a sage.<sup>79</sup> God has however exonerated him from that. He said, Exalted is He: 'They have followed what the devils used to recite over Solomon's reign. Solomon did not unbelieve but the devils unbelieved: they were teaching men magic. [They have also followed] that which had come down on the two angels in Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt ...' to the end of the verse<sup>B</sup> (Q. 2.102-3).<sup>80</sup>

In a similar way, drawing indications as to events from the things from which they draw them from—[i.e.] the superior movements—or choosing [in relation thereto] the actions to perform, it is definitely known that none of the Prophets ever commanded that. Indeed, it contains lies and vain elements from which the intelligent are already exonerated, who are far below the Prophets! As for what [little] it contains of the truth, the case is similar to what the imām of these and their 'second teacher', Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī,<sup>81</sup> has said when saying something whose content is: 'If you reversed the inventions of the astrologers and substituted misfortune in place of good fortune and good fortune instead of misfortune, or cold instead of hot and hot instead of cold, or female instead of male and male instead of female, and then judged, your judgement would be of the same kind as their judgements: at times it would be correct and, at other times, it would be wrong.'<sup>82</sup>

<sup>79</sup> See for example Ibn Ishāq, *Sira*, ii, 138; trans. Guillaume, 255: 'One of the rabbis said: "Don't you wonder at Muḥammad? He alleges that Solomon was a Prophet, and by God he was nothing but a sorcerer (*sāḥir*)."' So God sent down concerning that: "Solomon did not disbelieve ..."

<sup>80</sup> See above, p. 158-9, n. 40.

<sup>81</sup> Al-Fārābī is known as the 'second teacher', the first being Aristotle, because of his vast knowledge of Greek thought and the importance of his own philosophical production, especially in logic. See R. Walzer, *EL*<sup>2</sup>, 'al-Fārābī'.

<sup>82</sup> Ibn Taymiyya refers to, and adequately paraphrases, the following passage of al-Fārābī's *Notes concerning that which, among the astrological judgements, is valid and that which is not valid*: 'Whoever is of the opinion that it is after experiences\* with them that such [things] have been found to be indications and testimonies of these stars, let him apply himself to the rest of what was invented [by the astrologers], take the opposite of each element and judge on the basis of that, reversed as it then is, concerning the nativities (*mawālid*), the interrogations (*masā'il*) and the revolutions [of the years] (*taḥāwil*)! If he then finds that some of these things are valid while others are not, just as was the case with what had [first] been invented, the way it had been invented, he will surely know that [the whole of] that is [mere] opinion and conjecture, interest and illusion.' (*Maqāla*, 64, 30) [\*bi-tajārib *ap. cr.*: tājārib.]

A similar argument can also be found in Avicenna's refutation of astrology: 'For none of the things that [the astrologers] mention is there either an argument or a proof, and the statements of whoever would say the contrary of what [they say] could not be rejected. If somebody came and reversed all their principles, each for each, these and their contraries, composed a book in conformity with what we said and then judged

From [errors and lies] of that kind they exonerate Hippocrates,<sup>83</sup> Plato, Aristotle and his companions, the Peripatetic philosophers, in whose discourses one finds graver<sup>C</sup> vain things and elements of error than are found in the discourses of the Jews and of the Nazarenes. So, if they do not<sup>D</sup> exonerate from this those Ṣabians and their prophets who have a lesser rank<sup>E</sup> and are further from knowing the reality than the Jews and the Nazarenes, how would it be permitted to ascribe it to a noble Prophet?

*A common feature through history: the invention of lies and pseudepigraphs*

*Ja'far al-Ṣādiq*

[183,1] We know ourselves, from the history of our imāms<sup>A</sup>, that to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq,<sup>84</sup> who was not even one of the Prophets, things have been attributed that belong to this genus of affairs and are lies told about him, anybody knowing the situation of Ja'far, may God be pleased with him, knows that. The lies told about him are indeed among the gravest. Judgements have even been ascribed to him concerning the inferior movements such as the shaking of the limbs and atmospheric events<sup>B</sup>—thunder and lightning, the halo, the rainbow (*qaws Allāh*, 'God's bow'), which is called 'Quzah's bow' (*qaws Quzah*), etc.<sup>85</sup> Yet the scholars know that [Ja'far al-Ṣādiq] is innocent of all that. Similarly ascribed to him is the table (*jadwal*)<sup>86</sup> on which

according to their method on the basis of that book, he would inevitably hit the truth in some [of his judgements] and lie in others, and the veracity of his statements would probably be even greater. It is therefore true that the principles [of the astrologers] are not to be trusted.' (Ibn Sinā, *Nujūm*, ms. Leiden, f. 95r.)

<sup>83</sup> The greatest Greek physician (Cos, c. 460 BC–Larissa, c. 375), well-known to the Arabs not only as the type of 'the true physician' but as a master of alchemy, astrology and magic. See A. Dietrich, *EL*<sup>2</sup>, Suppl., 'Bukrāt'.

<sup>84</sup> Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, 'the veracious' (Madina, c. 83–148/703–765), the sixth imām of the Twelver Shi'is (the fifth of the Ismā'ilis). While regarded by the Twelvers as their greatest teacher of *fiqh*, he is respected by the Sunnis themselves as an authority in several fields: Tradition, Law, theology, Sufism ... He is also the supposed author of numerous works dealing with occult sciences. See M. G. S. Hodgson, *EL*<sup>2</sup>, 'Ja'far al-Ṣādiq'.

<sup>85</sup> *Quzah* is the plural of *quzḥa*, which means 'a coloured band of yellow, red and green'. It also designates a god of the pre-Islamic Arabian pantheon. 'Quzah's bow' is still one of the most common expressions used in Arabic to denote the rainbow, in spite of this saying attributed to the Prophet: 'Do not say *qaws Quzah*, because Quzah is the name of a demon, but say *qaws Allāh*!' See T. Fahd, E. Wiedemann, *EL*<sup>2</sup>, 'Qaws Quzah'.

<sup>86</sup> In sorcery, *jadwal*, 'table', 'plan', 'chart', means geometrical figures into which names and signs supposedly possessing magic powers are inserted. See the examples

a group of the Rāfidīs<sup>87</sup> built up their error, although it is a lie fabricated about him. It was fabricated about him by 'Abd Allāh, son of Mu'āwiya,<sup>88</sup> one of the persons famous for lying in spite of his position of leader and his importance for his followers. Likewise have been attributed to him the *Book of the Lamb (al-Jafr)*,<sup>89</sup> *The Card (al-Bitāqa)*,<sup>90</sup> and *The Seven (al-Haft)*,<sup>91</sup> but all this is lies told about him: the people who have knowledge about him are in agreement on that. To him have even been attributed the *Epistles* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'<sup>92</sup> and this is the utmost of ignorance. In fact, the *Epistles* were only composed over two hundred years after his death. He passed away in the year 148 [765] whereas these *Epistles* were composed

given by al-Būnī, *Shams*, 319, 344; E. Graefe, D. B. Macdonald, M. Plessner, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 'Djadwal'.

<sup>87</sup> Pejorative appellation for the Shī'īs, who 'refuse' (*rafada*) the three first caliphs. See MF, trans. Michot, *Textes spirituels* XII, 30 and XIII, 25.

<sup>88</sup> A great-grandson of 'Alī's brother, Ja'far, who revolted in Kūfa in 127/744. Having proclaimed both his divinity and his prophetic character, he was joined by many followers. He gained control over large regions of Iran but, in 129/747, was eventually executed by the 'Abbasid Abū Muslim. While some of his followers pretended that he had not died, others believed in his reincarnation. See K. V. Zetterstēen, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 'Abd Allāh b. Mu'āwiya'.

<sup>89</sup> *Al-Jafr* is the generic name of an esoteric—and sometimes apocalyptic—literature concerned with the fate of the world and proposing various divinatory methods to acquire knowledge of it: speculations on the numerical value of the letters of the alphabet (*ḥisāb al-jummal*; see further, n. 125 below, p. 186), astrological predictions, mystical interpretation of the Qur'ān, etc. Such an esoteric exegesis characterizes the *K. al-Jafr* which circulated under Ja'far's name and about which al-Būnī and Ibn Khaldūn give long reports (see *Shams*, 342–4 and *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, *Introduction*, ii, 209–10). Ibn Khaldūn also speaks of another *K. al-Jafr*, supposedly composed by al-Kindī on the conjunctions affecting Islam (ibid. 218–19).

<sup>90</sup> I was unable to identify this work. Could *al-Bitāqa* be a scribal error for *al-Filāha*, i.e. the famous *al-Filāḥat al-Nabatiyya* (*Nabatean Agriculture*) attributed to Ibn Wahshiyya (d. 291/903)?

<sup>91</sup> *The Book of the Seven and the Shadows (K. al-Haft wa l-azilla)*, attributed to al-Mufaddal b. 'Umar al-Ju'fī, a disciple of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. In order to answer the questions of his disciple, Ja'far develops, in relation to Qur'ānic verses, esoteric doctrines concerning the creation and the disobedience of the creatures, the sending of the Prophets, the devils, cycles and metempsychosis, faith and unbelief, the different situations of the believers and the unbelievers in this world and their hostile relations, sexes, eschatology, imāmology, brotherhood, etc. According to the editor of the book, A. Tamer, this work has clear Nusayrī characters and is most probably pseudographic. *Haft* must be understood as the Persian number 'seven', in relation to the seven heavens, and not as the Arabic 'fall' or 'peaceful earth' as suggested by A. Tamer; see his introduction to al-Mufaddal al-Ju'fī, *Haft*, 18–19.

<sup>92</sup> Gnostic philosophical society of the 4th/10th c. See Y. Marquet, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 'Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'.

under the dynasty of the Būyids,<sup>93</sup> during the fourth [tenth] century, at the beginning of the dynasty of the 'Ubaydids who built Cairo.<sup>94</sup> A group of people composed them, and pretended that they had thereby made a synthesis between the Law and philosophy. They strayed and led astray!

The companions of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq who acquired knowledge from him, such as Mālik b. Anas,<sup>95</sup> Sufyān b. 'Uyayna<sup>96</sup> and their like among the imāms—Islam's imāms—are innocent of these lies. [184,1] Similarly, a lot of what the shaykh Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī<sup>97</sup> mentions about Ja'far in the book *The Realities of Exegesis (Ḥaqā'iq al-tafsīr)* is made up of lies about whose mendacious nature nobody among the people who have knowledge thereof has any doubts. Such is also the case of a lot of the vain doctrines that the Rāfidīs report about him: they are among the most obvious lies told about him.

#### 'Abd Allāh Ibn Saba' and Paul of Tarsus

Amongst the various sects of the community, none has been more lying and fabricating<sup>A</sup> than the Rāfidīs since they appeared<sup>B</sup>. The first to have started the *rafā* innovation<sup>C</sup> was a hypocrite, a free-thinker (*zindīq*) called 'Abd Allāh b. Saba'.<sup>98</sup> In doing so, he wanted to corrupt the religion of the Muslims as Paul, the author of the *Epistles* that are in the hands of the Nazarenes, had done in starting for them some innovations by means of which he corrupted their religion.

<sup>93</sup> The Twelver Shī'ī Iranian dynasty of the Būyids controlled the 'Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad from 334/945 until 447/1055. See C. Cahen, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 'Buwayhids'.

<sup>94</sup> The Fātimid dynasty, founded in 297/909 by the Ismā'īlī 'Ubayd Allāh al-Mahdī in North Africa. Jawhar, general of the fourth Fātimid caliph, al-Mu'izz, conquered Egypt and begun building Cairo in 358–359/969–970. See M. Canard, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 'Fātimids'.

<sup>95</sup> Theologian and jurist, after whom one of the four schools of Sunnī Law is named (d. Madina, 179/796); see J. Schacht, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 'Mālik b. Anas'.

<sup>96</sup> Traditionnist and Qur'ān commentator (Kūfa, 107/725–Makka, 196/811). See S. A. Spector, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 'Sufyān b. 'Uyayna'.

<sup>97</sup> Important Qur'ān commentator, hagiographer and theoretician of Sufism (Nishāpūr, c. 330–412 / c. 940–1021). *Ḥaqā'iq al-tafsīr*, his principal commentary on the Qur'ān, was probably finished in 370/980. Some extracts only have been published and studied. See G. Böwering, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 'al-Sulamī'.

<sup>98</sup> A Yemeni Jew considered as the founder of the most extreme wing of the Shī'a. He is said to have proclaimed 'Alī's divinity or, at least, denied his death and taught that he would in the end come again from the clouds. Sunnī sources also make him the instigator of the first dissensions among the Prophet's Companions and accuse him of having roused the opposition against 'Uthmān on the ground of 'Alī's special rights. He is already compared with Paul of Tarsus by Sayf b. 'Umar (d. after 193/809) in his *K. al-Ridda wa l-futūḥ—Book of the Apostasy and the Conquests* (see *Ridda*, 132–8). See also M. G. S. Hodgson, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 'Abd Allāh b. Saba'.

He was a Jew and he apparently adopted Nazarenism, hypocritically, with the purpose<sup>D</sup> of corrupting it. Similarly, Ibn Saba<sup>E</sup> was also a Jew. He also had that purpose<sup>E</sup> and he endeavoured to create dissension, with the purpose of corrupting the [Muslim] faith (*milla*). Although he was unable to do so, discord and dissension did arise among the believers, during which 'Uthmān was killed, may God be pleased with him, and thus happened what happened, in the matter of dissension. However, God did not make this community reach a consensus, praise be to Him, on an error. Rather, a group did not cease existing in it who will stand up for the Truth, without being harmed by those opposed to them nor by those abandoning them, till the Hour rises—thereof witness the superabundant texts that are [collected] in the *Ṣaḥīḥs*<sup>99</sup> about the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace.

*'Alī and the Shī'ī innovations*

When the Shī'ī innovations were made to occur, during the caliphate of the commander of the believers 'Alī, son of Abū Tālib, may God be pleased with him, he rejected them. There were three groups: exaggerators (*ghāliyya*), insulters (*sabbāba*) and those who preferred [somebody to others] (*mufaddila*).

[185,1] The exaggerators, he burnt them with fire. As, one day, he was going out from the Kindah gate, people prostrated themselves before him. He said: 'What is that?'—'You are God!' they said. Three times he called on them to repent but they did not come back [to the sound religion]. The third time<sup>A</sup>, he commanded trenches. They were dug and set on fire. Then he threw them in it and said:

When I saw the matter to be a reprehensible one,  
I lit my fire and called Qanbar.<sup>100</sup>

[One reads] in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* that their free-thinkers (*zindīq*) were brought to 'Alī and that he burnt them. That news reached Ibn 'Abbās, 'who said: "Myself, if it had been me, I would not have burnt them, since the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, prohibited tormenting [people] the way God torments [them]. I would rather have beheaded them as the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, said: 'Whoever replaces his religion [by something else], kill him!'"<sup>101</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Among other traditions, see al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *I'tisām*; *Tawḥīd*, ix, 101, 136 ('Ālam. 6767, 6906); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Imāra*, vi, 52–3 ('Ālam. 3544, 3547, 3548); Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, v, 34, 269, 278, 279 ('Ālam. 16276, 21286, 21369).

<sup>100</sup> A freedman of 'Alī.

<sup>101</sup> Among other traditions, see al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Jihād*, iv, 61–2 ('Ālam. 2794).

As for the insulters, when the news reached him that Ibn Saba<sup>B</sup> insulted Abū Bakr and 'Umar, he tried to kill him. He escaped to Qarqīsiyā<sup>102</sup> and hid<sup>C</sup> there while 'Alī treated gently his emirs, as he had no firm power and they did not obey him in everything that he commanded them.

As for those who preferred [him to others, 'Alī] said: 'I will not have somebody who prefers me to Abū Bakr and 'Umar brought to me without whipping him the way slanderers are [Legally] sanctioned!' It is also reported about him, from more than eighty sources, that he said: 'The best [person] of this community, after its Prophet, is Abū Bakr, then 'Umar.'

[One reads] in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*,<sup>103</sup> about Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya<sup>D</sup>,<sup>104</sup> that he said to his father:

— O father, after the Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him peace, who is the best of the humans? [186,1]

— O my son, don't you know?

— No.

— Abū Bakr.

— And then, who?

— 'Umar.

In al-Tirmidhī<sup>105</sup> and others, [one reads] that 'Alī reported this order of preference on the authority of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace.

The point here is that various species of lies have been told about 'Alī, the son of Abū Tālib, such as<sup>A</sup> could not be ascribed to the least of the believers. The Qarmatīs,<sup>106</sup> the Bāṭinīs,<sup>107</sup> the Khurramīs,<sup>108</sup>

<sup>102</sup> A town in al-Jazīra, on the left bank of the Euphrates, close to the confluence of the Khābūr, on the site of the important Roman fortress of Circesium, corresponding to the modern Syrian Busayra. See M. Streck, *El<sup>2</sup>*, 'Karkīsiyā'.

<sup>103</sup> See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Fadā'il al-aṣḥāb*, v, 7 ('Ālam. 3395).

<sup>104</sup> A son of 'Alī and Khawla, a woman of the tribe of the Banū Hanīfa who had come into his possession as a prisoner of war (Madīna, 16–81/637–700). See Fr. Buhl, *El<sup>2</sup>*, 'Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya'.

<sup>105</sup> Author of *al-Sunan*, one of the most important *ḥadīth* collections (d. c. 275/888); see A. J. Wensinck, *El<sup>1</sup>*, 'al-Tirmidhī'.

<sup>106</sup> One of the Ismā'īlī sects; see W. Madelung, *El<sup>2</sup>*, 'Qarmatī'.

<sup>107</sup> To Ibn Taymiyya, all those who, Shī'īs, Sufīs or philosophers, reject the manifest meaning of the Scripture in favour of an esoteric meaning (*bāṭin*); see M. G. S. Hodgson, *El<sup>2</sup>*, 'Bāṭiniyya'.

<sup>108</sup> *Khurramiyya*, or *Khurramdiniyya* (from the Persian *khurram-dīn*, 'joyous, agreeable religion'), originally meant the religious movement of Mazdak in general. Later it became used for several Iranian, anti-Arab and frequently rebellious, sects influenced by Mazdaki and Manichaean beliefs as well as by extremist Shī'ī doctrines.

the Mazdakī,<sup>109</sup> the Ismā'īlīs and the Nuṣayrīs<sup>110</sup> have even attributed to him their doctrines, which are among the most corrupt doctrines of the worlds, pretending that these were sciences inherited from him.

#### *Avicenna and the free-thinkers*

All these things, it is only the hypocrites who brought them about, the free-thinkers (*zindīq*) who aimed to appear to adopt what the believers believed in, while inwardly hiding the opposite. They were urging [people] to follow the groups who were backing out of the Legal prescriptions. They had dynasties [who supported them] and, because of them, [several] ordeals swept down upon the believers. Avicenna even said: 'I only occupied myself with the sciences of the philosophers because my father was an adherent of the missionary movement (*da'wa*) of the Egyptians,'<sup>111</sup> that is of the Rāfīdī and Qarmaṭī 'Ubaydids. They had religiously embraced these philosophical sciences and this is why you find between those, the Rāfīdīs and their like, in respect of being far from knowing the prophethood (*nubuwwāt*), a connection and an affiliation<sup>B</sup>. They are united in this matter by their genuine ignorance of the straight path, the path of those to whom God has been gracious—the Prophets, the veracious, the martyrs and the righteous.

Khurramiyya were often identified with the Muslimiyya, partisans of the anti-Umayyad leader Abū Muslim (d. 137/755), who regarded the latter as their imām, prophet or incarnation of the divine spirit. See W. Madelung, *Et*<sup>2</sup>, 'Khurramiyya'.

<sup>109</sup> Dualist sectarian movement named after Mazdak, the leader of an egalitarian, hedonist and gnostic revolutionary religious movement in Mazdaean Sasanid Iran at the end of the fifth and beginning of the sixth century AD. After the spread of Islam in Iran, 'Neo-Mazdaki' sects appeared in association with various *ghulāt* Shī'ī groups. They tend to be credited with a special interest in number and letter mysticism. See M. Guidi, M. Morony, *Et*<sup>2</sup>, 'Mazdak'.

<sup>110</sup> Extremist Shī'ī sect named after Muḥammad b. Nuṣayr al-Fihri l-Numayrī, a disciple of the tenth or eleventh Twelver Shī'ī imām, still existing today ('Alawīs of Syria); see H. Halm, *Et*<sup>2</sup>, 'Nuṣayriyya'. Ibn Taymiyya refutes their doctrines in a famous fatwa in which he denounces their alliance with the Crusaders and the Tatars. 'Les Nosairīs ont plusieurs noms en vogue parmi les Musulmans. Tantôt on les appelle Molāhidah (hérétiques), tantôt Ismaélis, tantôt Karmathes, tantôt Bātinis, tantôt Nosairīs, tantôt Khorramīs, tantôt enfin Mohammars [...] Leur religion a les dehors du Rafédhisme, et au fond c'est l'incrédulité pure et simple' (*Nuṣayriyya*, trans. Guyard, *Fetwa*, 189).

<sup>111</sup> See Avicenna's autobiography, trans. W. E. Gohlman, *Life*, 19: 'My father was one of those who responded to the propaganda of the Egyptians and was reckoned among the Ismā'īliyya ...' According to D. Gutas (*Avicenna*, 333), Avicenna was in reality a Ḥanafī Sunnī.

#### *Idrīs' innocence*

Over this period close to us<sup>C</sup>, which is shorter than 700 years, such lies were thus told about the [Prophet's] family, his Companions and others. Elements of the doctrines of the philosophers and the astrologers were attributed to them of which [187,1], every intelligent person knows, they are innocent. And this sold well among many groups belonging to this faith (*milla*), despite the existence of people who expounded their fallaciousness, prohibited that and defended the faith (*milla*) with their heart, their body and their tongue. So, *a fortiori*, what must one's opinion be concerning matters, related to [the science of] the stars and to philosophy, that are attributed to Idrīs or to other Prophets—to say nothing of the length of the time passed, the diversity of the traditions, the differentiation of<sup>A</sup> the faiths (*milla*) and the religions, the absence of people who might have expounded the reality of the matter by means of arguments and demonstrations, and the fact that it includes countless lies and slanders—?

#### ISLAM'S PLANET: VENUS OR JUPITER?

Such is also the case of the allegation of whoever alleges that the star of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, was dependent on Scorpio and Mars, [that] of his community on Venus, and similar things ...<sup>112</sup> This is among the clearest insanities as the

<sup>112</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, *Introduction*, ii, 213–16: 'Jirāsh b. Aḥmad al-Ijāsib said in the book that he composed for Nizām al-Mulk: "The return of Mars to Scorpio has an important influence upon the Muslim religious group, because it is its signifier. The birth of the Prophet took place when the two superior planets were in conjunction in the sign of Scorpio" [...] Jirāsh said: "I have seen in the books of the ancients that the astrologers informed Khosraw that the Arabs would gain royal authority and the prophecy (of Muḥammad) would appear among them. The signifier of the Arabs is Venus, which was then in its exaltation" [...] Abū Ma'shar said in the *Book of Conjunctions*: "When the section reaches the twenty-seventh (degree) of Pisces, in which Venus has its exaltation, and when, at the same time, the conjunction occurs in Scorpio, which is the signifier of the Arabs, then the Arab dynasty will make its appearance, and there will be a Prophet among them. The power and duration of his rule will correspond to the remaining degrees of the exaltation of Venus".'

The following authors link the Arabs and/or the Muslims to Venus: Abū Ma'shar (*Coniunctionibus*, in Loth, *Astrolog*, 280), al-Kindī (*Mulk*, ed. Loth, *Astrolog*, 273), al-Mas'ūdī (*Murūj*, trans. Pellat, *Prairies*, i, 76), al-Bīrūnī (*Taḥfīm*, 253), al-Majrītī (see G. Rotter, *Veneris dies*, 129–30), Ibn Abī l-Rijāl (see Loth, *Astrolog*, 288), Yāqūt (*Mu'jam*, i, 43), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (*Sirr*, ms. Oxford, f. 54r). Among these authors, al-Bīrūnī (*Taḥfīm*, 253) and, perhaps, al-Kindī (see *Secrets*, trans. Vecchia Vaglieri and Celentano, 540) are the only ones who explicitly



circumstances of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, and of his community were different<sup>B</sup> from what they allege, with respect to these judgements. Amongst the clearest lies is indeed their affirmation that the star of the Muslims is dependent on Venus while the star of the Nazarenes is dependent on Jupiter, adding that Jupiter demands science and religion while Venus demands entertainment and play. Every intelligent person indeed knows that the Nazarenes are, among the religions (*milla*), the most ignorant and the most erring, the furthest<sup>C</sup> from the knowledge of reason and tradition, the most preoccupied with entertainments, and the ones who worship the most by means of the latter.

*The greatest nómos, according to the philosophers*

The philosophers all agree on the fact that no greater nómos<sup>113</sup> reached the world than the nómos that Muḥammad brought, God bless him and grant him peace.<sup>114</sup> His community is also the most

link Jupiter to Christianity. The debate concerning the identity of the tutelary planets of Islam and Christianity passed to the Latin Middle Ages. In Oxford, Roger Bacon linked Venus to the law of Islam, which he considered as *tota voluptea et venerea* but refused Jupiter's patronage for Christianity. For the latter, he preferred Mercury as the complexity of the Ptolemaic theory of the motion of the planet Mercury, being more difficult to understand for the human intellect, was in his opinion a sound analogical representation of the Christian dogmas and mysteries (see J. North, *Astrology*, 68). In the Islamic world, Jesus was linked to Mercury by Ibn 'Arabī (see *Kīmīyā*), trans. Ruspoli, *Alchimie*, 63–72; T. Burckhardt, *Astrology*, 31–3) and al-Būnī (*Shams*, 336), and, as proposed by Ibn Taymiyya, to Venus by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', who reserve Jupiter for Abraham and link the Prophet Muḥammad to Mercury (*Rasā'il*, trans. Michot, *Résurrection*, 140–1).

<sup>113</sup> In this passage, Ibn Taymiyya clearly uses *Nāmūs*, the Arabic transliteration for the Greek nómos, in the sense of *sharī'a* (see M. Plessner, *El<sup>2</sup>*, 'Nāmūs'). It is of interest to note that such a usage, far from being exclusive to philosophers—the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', Avicenna *et alii* (see Y. J. Michot, *Destinée*, 39, n. 57; see also above, p. 173)—is also accepted by a religious scholar like the Shaykh al-Islām. Such an explicit assimilation of the *Sharī'a* to the Greek law offers a good illustration of the extent of the continuity between the classical Greek and Islamic *weltanschauungs*, as analyzed by L. Strauss (see R. Brague, *Athènes*, 330).

<sup>114</sup> This rather extreme, yet very interesting, statement has to be understood in relation to Avicenna's philosophy of religion, something that Ibn Taymiyya knows well. Avicenna indeed states explicitly, in his *Adhawiyya* (85), that the Law (*sharī'a*) brought by Muḥammad is the most eminent and the most perfect, which justifies his quality of Seal of the Messengers. Avicenna's prophetology is one of the reasons why Ibn Taymiyya considers him far superior to Aristotle. In addition, when the Shaykh al-Islām affirms the philosophers to be unanimously favourable to this religion, it is most probably because he cannot imagine them not sharing the prophetology developed by the *faylasūf* who, in his judgement as in that of their great majority, is really the best: *al-shaykh al-ra'is*. This apologetic approach to Islam by Ibn Taymiyya is also found in *Qubruṣ*, trans. Michot, *Roi croisé*, 190 (with the trans. of an excerpt from Avicenna's *Adhawiyya*).

perfect in rationality, religion and science, according to the unanimous agreement of the philosophers, even the philosophers of the Jews and of the Nazarenes. They indeed do not doubt the fact that the Muslims are the most eminent in rationality and religion<sup>115</sup> [188,1] and each of them only holds on to his religion either because he follows his caprice and allegedly preserves his interest in this world,<sup>116</sup> or because he is of the opinion that it is permissible to adhere to whatever religion (*milla*) it may be and that the religions (*milla*) are similar to the Islamic *madhhabs*.<sup>117</sup> The masse of the philosophers—the astrologers and their like—say this, and they treat the religions (*milla*) as if equivalent to righteous nations (*dawla*) of which some might, at most, be more eminent than others.<sup>118</sup>

*God accepts no other religion than Islam*

As for the heavenly Books successively transmitted on the authority of the Prophets, blessing and peace be upon them, they explicitly say that God does not accept, from anybody, any religion but Hanīfism,<sup>119</sup> i.e. the general Islam: worshipping God alone, without associates, and believing in His Books, His Messengers and the Last Day, as He said, Exalted is He: 'Surely those who believe and those who are Jews, the Nazarenes and the Ṣābiāns—those who believe in God, in the Last Day and act righteously—shall have their reward with their Lord. No fear on them, neither shall they sorrow' (Q. 2.62).

In his *Jawāb*, Ibn Taymiyya also explains how the Muslims are preferred to the Christians by the Jews and to the Jews by the Christians; see A. Morabia, *Ibn Taymiyya II*, 104.

<sup>115</sup> On Islam's rationality according to Ibn Taymiyya, see his *Letter to Abū l-Fidā'*, trans. Michot, *Lettre*, and *MF*, xx, 62–73, trans. Michot, *Textes spirituels XIV*.

<sup>116</sup> Ibn Taymiyya is convinced that a lot of ecclesiastics no longer believe in Christianity but keep up appearances in order to preserve their wealth and power. See *Qubruṣ*, trans. Michot, *Roi croisé*, 145–6.

<sup>117</sup> To consider the various religions as equivalent is, in Ibn Taymiyya's mind as well as for other authors of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, for example 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Juwaynī, typical of the Mongols. To assimilate the religions to the Muslim *madhhabs* is an accusation that Ibn Taymiyya raises in particular against the Ilkhānid vizier Rashīd al-Dīn, whom he calls a 'philosophizing Jew'. See *MF*, xxviii, 523–4, trans. Michot, *Textes spirituels XII*, 26–7. That said, he himself sometimes assimilates, 'from some viewpoints', the multiplicity of *madhhabs* in Islam to the multiplicity of the prophetic ways (*minhāj*) (*MF*, trans. Michot, *Unité*, 27).

<sup>118</sup> The obvious allusion is to al-Fārābī's political philosophy of religion. See his *Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Eminent City (Ārā')*, in R. Walzer, *State*.

<sup>119</sup> In the Qur'ān, the true, primordial, Abrahamic monotheism; see W. Montgomery Watt, *El<sup>2</sup>*, 'Hanīf'. For Ibn Taymiyya's definition, see *MF*, trans. Michot, *Musique*, 80, n. 2, and *Textes spirituels XVI*, 23.



We have also been informed about that concerning the earlier Prophets and their communities. Noah said: 'If you turn away ..., I have not asked you for any wage. My wage does not fall on anyone but God, and I have been commanded to be amongst those who submit (*muslim*)' (Q. 10.72). He said about Abraham<sup>A</sup>: 'And who would forsake the religion (*milla*) of Abraham but one who makes a fool of himself? Indeed, we elected him in this world and in<sup>B</sup> the hereafter he shall be among<sup>C</sup> the righteous. When his Lord said to him: "Submit!", he said: "I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds!" And Abraham recommended that to his sons, and Jacob also: "O my sons, God elected for you [this] religion. So, do not die but submitting [to Him] (*muslim*)" (Q. 2.130–2). He also said<sup>D</sup>: 'And Moses said: "O my people, if you believe in God, in Him put your trust, if you are submitting [to Him] (*muslim*)"' (Q. 10.84). 'Surely We sent down the Torah, wherein are guidance and light. Thereby the Prophets who had submitted (*aslama*) judged for those who were Jews' (Q. 5.44). Balqīs said: 'My Lord, I wronged myself and I submit with Solomon to God, the Lord of the worlds' (Q. 27.44). He said about [189,1] the apostles<sup>A</sup>: "'Believe in Me and in My Messenger!" They said: "We believe. Bear witness that we<sup>B</sup> are submitting"' (Q. 5.111). He indeed said, in an absolute manner: 'God bears witness that there is no God but He—and so do the angels and those possessing the science—upholding justice. There is no God but He, the Mighty, the Wise. The religion is indeed, with God, the submission [of oneself] (*al-islām*)' (Q. 3.18). He also said: 'Say: "We believe in God, and that which has been sent down to us<sup>C</sup>, and that which has been sent down to<sup>D</sup> Abraham and Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus were given and that which the Prophets were given<sup>E</sup> from their Lord. We do not differentiate between any of them and to Him we are submitting"' (Q. 2.136). [And:] 'Whoever seeks something else than submission (*islām*) as religion, it will not be accepted from him and he will be, in the hereafter, amongst the losers' (Q. 3.85).

Since the Muslims are, as all those who have intelligence unanimously agree, the adherents to a religion (*milla*) who are the most involved in science and rationality, justice and similar things that, in their view, correspond to the influences of Jupiter, whereas the Nazarenes are further from that and more involved in entertainment, in play and in things that correspond, in their view, to the influences of Venus, what [some people] have mentioned<sup>120</sup> is of a manifestly corrupt nature.

<sup>120</sup> Namely, that Venus is Islam's tutelary planet.

### *Al-Kindī's prognostication of Islam's duration*

This is why their judgements do not cease to lie and to rebut each other. The great philosopher whom they call 'the philosopher of Islām', Ya'qūb b. Ishāq al-Kindī,<sup>121</sup> even made a forecast (*tasyīr*)<sup>122</sup> for this religion (*milla*), claiming that it would come to an end in the year 693 [1294].<sup>123</sup> That was adopted, after him, by somebody who produced the product of the deduction from the letters of a discourse which had appeared, during unveiling (*kashf*), to someone whom he was rehabilitating.<sup>124</sup> And with them agreed, about that, somebody who<sup>F</sup> claimed that he had deduced the remaining duration of this

<sup>121</sup> The 'Philosopher of the Arabs' (c. 185–252? / c. 801–866?). See J. Jolivet, R. Rashed, *El<sup>2</sup>, 'al-Kindī*.

<sup>122</sup> On *tasyīr*, see n. 70, p. 169.

<sup>123</sup> By means of universal apotelesmatic (*ápotelesmatikē katholikē*), the astrologer tries to predict the future of entire peoples, regions, cities, dynasties and thus, also, wars, epidemics, floods, etc. While Ptolemy founded such predictions on solar and lunar eclipses only, the majority of Arab astrologers, probably influenced by Sasanid astrology, preferred to base their calculations on conjunctions of the superior planets: Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. (See Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, *Introduction*, ii, 211–31; D. Pingree, *Astrology*, 294.) Some of these universal apotelesmatic prognostications could have a great ideological or political impact. For example when astrologers were asked to present the new 'Abbasid regime as ordained by the stars and, hence, ultimately, by God (see D. Gutas, *Thought*, 45–52). Or when they claimed to know the exact date when the rule of the Arabs, or of Islam, would end. The most famous prediction of this kind is the one to which Ibn Taymiyya refers here. It was formulated by al-Kindī in a *Letter on the rule of the Arabs and its length* (*Risāla fī mulk al-'Arab wa kammiyyati-hi*) written at the request of an 'Abbasid caliph, probably al-Mu'tazz (reigned 252–255/866–869). Al-Kindī's letter was long thought to have been plagiarized by the greatest Muslim astrologer, Abū Ma'shar (d. 272/886), in his *Book of the Great Conjunctions*, Disc. ii, ch. 8. R. Lemay has demonstrated (convincingly, in my opinion) that it was in fact Abū Ma'shar's *Great Conjunctions*, most probably written between 247/861 and 251/865, that influenced al-Kindī in this matter. See al-Kindī, *Mulk*, ed. Loth, *Astrolog*, 274–5; Abū Ma'shar, *Coniunctionibus*, (ii, 8, Latin trans. in Loth, *Astrolog*, 281); on the anti-Iranian *shu'ūbiyya* cultural and political circumstances in which al-Kindī wrote his *Risāla* and on the controversy surrounding its relation to Abū Ma'shar's *Great Conjunctions*, see R. Lemay, *Abū Ma'shar*, i, 211–35; *Islam*, 21.

Al-Kindī announced the end of the Arab empire for 693/1294 in relation to the 11°33' = 693' through which Venus had to travel from the moment of a conjunction of Saturn and Mars in Cancer on Sunday 21 March 622, the spring equinox closest to the date of the Hijra, until it left the zodiacal sign of Pisces—the sign of its exaltation—in which it was. See also O. Loth, *Astrolog*, 294–7; Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, *Introduction*, ii, 215; C. A. Nallino, *Astrologia*, 15–16; D. Pingree, *Thousands*, 80, horoscope i, 3; C. Burnett, *Astrology*, 98–9.

Bacon, who knew of this forecast, suggested that it agreed with the Number of the Beast in *Apocalypse* xii, namely 663, 'less than the aforesaid by 30 years' (see J. North, *Astrology*, 68).

<sup>124</sup> *Ba'd man a'āda-hu*. I found the sense uncertain here.

religion (*milla*) from the reckoning [addition] of the numerical values (*hisāb al-jummal*)<sup>125</sup> that are those of the letters that are at [190,1] the beginnings of the *sūras* [of the Qur'ān]: when discounting the repetitions, there are 14 such letters<sup>126</sup> and their reckoning, in the great calculation<sup>A</sup>, amounts to 693. Related to this is also the [following story], mentioned in [Qur'ān] exegesis: when God sent down 'Alif. Lām. Mīm', some Jews said: 'The duration of this religion

<sup>125</sup> *Hisāb al-jummal*, literally 'computation by means of a rope', is the technical term for calculation by means of the numerical values of alphabetical letters, writing figures instead of letters or, conversely, writing numbers (for example, dates) by means of letters and other procedures reminiscent of the cabbala. *Hisāb al-jummal* in the first sense, applied on the letters composing the most beautiful names of God, the seven letters not found in the *Fātiha*, the 'mysterious letters' of the Qur'ān here mentioned by Ibn Taymiyya, etc., played an important role in Muslim mysticism, esotericism and divinatory arts. See G. S. Colin, *El<sup>2</sup>*, 'Hisāb al-djummal'; T. Fahd, *El<sup>2</sup>*, 'Djafr'.

<sup>126</sup> On the 'mysterious' letters opening 29 of the Qur'ānic *sūras* (2-3, 7, 10-15, 19-20, 26-32, 36, 38, 40-46, 50, 68), see A. T. Welch, *El<sup>2</sup>*, 'al-Kur'ān': 4.d. 'The mysterious letters'.

These letters, 78 in all, can in fact be reduced to 14 representing the various basic consonantal forms of written Arabic, hence of the whole Arabic alphabet: *k* and *n*, that both appear only once, alone, and ' , *h*, *r*, *s*, *ṣ*, *t*, ' , *q*, *l*, *m*, *b* and *y*, that appear more than once, singly or in combination with one or more other letters.

Like every letter of the Arabic alphabet, these 14 letters were designated as a numerical value, sometimes different in the Eastern and in the Western Arabic worlds. According to the Eastern *Abjad* system, as for example explained by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' (*Rasā'il*, I: 'On Numbers', i, 26-7; trans. Goldstein, *Number*, 138; see also G. Weil and G. S. Colin, *El<sup>2</sup>*, 'Abjad') and effectively referred to here by Ibn Taymiyya, the values of these 14 letters are the following:

<i>hamza</i>	1	<i>sīn</i>	60	' <i>ayn</i>	70	<i>lām</i>	30	<i>hā'</i>	5
<i>hā'</i>	8	<i>ṣād</i>	90	<i>qāf</i>	100	<i>mīm</i>	40	<i>yā'</i>	10
<i>rā'</i>	200	<i>tā'</i>	9	<i>kāf</i>	20	<i>nūn</i>	50		

As noted by Ibn Taymiyya, the total of these values is 693 'in the great calculation', i.e. when the letters representing tens and hundreds are given their full numerical value, without reduction of the tens to units. See al-Kindī, *Mulk*, ed. Loth, *Astrolog*, 275-6, 297-9; see also Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, *Introduction*, ii, 215, regarding al-Kindī's astrological forecasting of the 693 years long duration of Islam: 'He said (further): "This is the duration of Islam as generally agreed upon by the philosophers. The figure is supported by the letters that occur at the beginning of certain *sūras*, if one omits the repetitions and counts the numerical value of the letters." I say: This is what was mentioned by as-Suhaylī. The most likely assumption is that al-Kindī was as-Suhaylī's source.'

Ibn Taymiyya must have particularly enjoyed denouncing the double failure of the astrological and numerological forecast of the end of the Muslim empire for 693/1294 as, in his opinion, Islam was then going through a phase of renaissance, particularly thanks to the Mamluks (see MF, trans. Michot, *Textes spirituels* XIII, 26-27; *Qubrus*, trans. Michot, *Roi croisé*, 180). It is true that the Crusaders had just been definitively ousted from Palestine in 690/1291 and that the Mongol efforts to invade Syria, at the turn of the century, would all fail.

(*milla*) will be 71<sup>B</sup> years';<sup>127</sup> when, afterwards, He sent down 'Alif. Lām. Rā'<sup>128</sup> and 'Alif. Lām. Mīm. Rā'<sup>C</sup>,<sup>129</sup> they said: 'He has us confused'.<sup>130</sup>

## PROHIBITION OF ASTROLOGY IS OBLIGATORY

These affairs that exist in the errors of the Jews and of the Nazarenes, as well as in the errors of the associationists and of the Ṣābiāns—people who philosophize and astrologers—include vain things of this kind that no one would know but God, the Exalted. These affairs and their like are outside the religion of Islam and forbidden in it. It is thus incumbent [upon us] to condemn them. To prohibit them is incumbent on the Muslims—on everyone who has the capacity [to do so] by means of [his] science and of clear explanation, with his hand and with his tongue. This is indeed among the most important things that God has made incumbent, as far as commanding what is to be acknowledged and prohibiting what is to be condemned are concerned. Those people and their like are the enemies of the Messengers and the vermin of the religions (*milla*).

That which is vain, regarding existence, does not sell well but blended<sup>D</sup> with some element of the truth. Similarly, the People of the Book clothed the truth in vain things. Because of<sup>E</sup> the slight truth they have with them, they lead many creatures astray from the truth in which it is incumbent to believe and invite them to adopt the numerous vain things to which they adhere. And how frequent it is that against them stand, among the adherents of Islam, people who do not distinguish well between the truth and that which is vain, do not provide the argument which would refute their vain claims nor expounds the argument of God, which He has provided by means of His Messengers—and that is why dissension arises. We have spoken extensively about those vain things<sup>F</sup>, etc., elsewhere. And God knows better<sup>G</sup>!

<sup>127</sup> The great calculation total of the Eastern numerical values of *hamza*, (1), *lām* (30) and *mīm* (40) is 71. See also al-Kindī, *Mulk*, ed. Loth, *Astrolog*, 276.

<sup>128</sup> The great calculation total of the Eastern numerical values of *hamza* (1), *lām* (30) and *rā'* (200) is 231.

<sup>129</sup> The great calculation total of the Eastern numerical values of *hamza* (1), *lām* (30), *mīm* (40) and *rā'* (200) is 271.

<sup>130</sup> See Ibn Ishāq, *Sira*, ii, 139-40; trans. Guillaume, *Life*, 256-7. Also in al-Kindī, *Mulk*, ed. Loth, *Astrolog*, 275; Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, trans. Rosenthal, *Introduction*, ii, 204-7; Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, ii, 10.

## FATWA II

[191,1] HE WAS ASKED, may the Exalted  
God have mercy upon him:

What do the masters, the legists, the imāms of the religion, may God be pleased with them all, say about those astrologers who hold seances on the thoroughfares,<sup>131</sup> in shops and elsewhere, and with whom women sit, as well as the perverts, because of the women? These astrologers claim to give information about the hidden affairs, relying in this matter on the art of astrology (*ṣināʿat al-tanjīm*). They write out magic squares (*wifq*), practice magic, write talismans (*tilasm*), and teach magic to women, for [use upon] their husbands and others. Because of that, women, and men, assemble at the doors of their shops. The situation may even lead, sometimes, to other kinds of deeds that women commit against their husbands<sup>132</sup> and to the corruption of the people's beliefs, to their voracious attachment to magic and to the planets, to their turning away from God, Powerful is He and Majestic, and from trusting in Him concerning events and accidents. Is that licit or not?

Is the art of astrology forbidden or not? Is it permitted to get a wage for it? And to offer [such a wage], is that forbidden or not? Is it permitted to whoever is [in some way] attached to a shop—as

<sup>131</sup> Cairo, Damascus and the other main cities of the Mamluk sultanate had a very animated street life into which the *Nights* and other sources offer many insights. Apart from the astrologers, there were innumerable entertainers of all kinds soliciting the attention and the money of the common people; see R. Irwin, *Nights*, ch. 5: 'Street Entertainments', 120–39.

<sup>132</sup> See the 'Tale of Qamar al-Zamān' in the *Nights* (R. Irwin, *Nights*, 190) or the contemporary first-hand testimony produced by Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (*Qaṣida*, trans. Bosworth, *Underworld*, ii, 297–8, verses 33, 42–3, 45):

'And how often have I posed as an astrologer (*kassāb*) and composed a magic circle (*mandal*), by means of which I have demonstrated that the Jinn are my brethren [...]

And how often have I stood up in the circle of onlookers, speaking out with great eloquence, and how often have I sold favourable horoscopes and auguries to people (*mufawwil*), writing out my formulae of trickery by using alum and onion juice as invisible inks! [On the use of onion juice as invisible ink, see al-Jawbarī, *Kashf*, trans. Khawam, *Voile*, i, 272.]

And on how many a day have I wandered round the houses, encouraging people to have their horoscopes cast and their fortunes told, with my staff, my two rolls of cloth embroidered with magical patterns, and my beggar's garments! [...]

And I have come to know the stories and conversations of women, being able to interpret what they say by means of speech which has come to me directly from their mouths.'

As attested by the text translated above, p. 147, Avicenna had already underlined, three centuries earlier, the importance of women among the astrologers' clientèle.

inspector, owner, trustee—to let it for rent for that purpose, or not? And is the rent [itself] of a forbidden nature, or not? On the authorities, and on every Muslim able to do so, is it incumbent to put an end to it, or not? [192,1] And when the authority does not act to condemn the [astrologers], does the matter fall within the compass of the threat of the authentic *ḥadīth* reported on the authority of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, namely this saying: 'There is no authority with whom God entrusts a flock, who makes no effort on their behalf, nor gives them advice, but will not enter the Garden with them.'<sup>133</sup> When, [on the contrary], an authority condemns this reprehensible phenomenon, does it come under His words, Exalted is He: 'And there may be from you a community who invite to the good, command what is to be acknowledged and prohibit what is to be condemned. These are the successful' (Q. 3.104). And, when [an authority] condemns that, will it be plentifully rewarded for doing so or not?

Would they also mention, if they thought [it appropriate], the threatening *ḥadīths* that were present in their mind about that matter. Rewarded would they then be, the Exalted God willing!

## HE ANSWERED:

THE BOOK, THE TRADITION AND THE  
CONSENSUS FORBID ASTROLOGY

'The praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds!' (Q. 1.1)

None of those things is licit. The art of astrology, whose purport is judgements and influence—i.e. drawing indications from the states of the celestial spheres as to terrestrial events, and combining the forces of the celestial spheres with terrestrial receptacles—is an art forbidden by the Book, by the Tradition and by the consensus of the community. Moreover, it was forbidden by the tongue of all the Messengers, in all the faiths (*milla*). God said, Exalted is He: 'The magician thrives not, wherever he comes' (Q. 20.69). He also said: 'Have you not regarded those who were given a share of the Book? They believe in sorcery (*al-jibt*) and the devil (*al-tāghūt*)' (Q. 4.51). 'Umar and others said: '*Al-jibt* means magic.'

In his *Sunan*, Abū Dā'ūd has reported with a good chain of transmitters from Qabīṣa b. Mukhāriq,<sup>134</sup> about the Prophet,

<sup>133</sup> See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Aḥkām* 8, ix, 64 ('Ālam. 6617); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Imān*, i, 88 ('Ālam. 205).

<sup>134</sup> A Companion who lived in Baṣra; see Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd*, iv, 192–3.

God bless him and grant him peace, that he said: 'Mantic interpretation of the flight and the cries of birds (*'iyāfa*),<sup>135</sup> of lines that one traces (*tarq*),<sup>136</sup> and of fortuitous events considered as negative (*ṭira*)<sup>137</sup> pertains to sorcery (*jibt*).<sup>138</sup> 'Awf,<sup>139</sup> [193,1] the reporter of the *ḥadīth*, said: 'Al-*'iyāfa*, i.e. to cause a bird to take flight (*zajr al-ṭayr*).<sup>140</sup> Al-*tarq*, i.e. the line which is traced on the earth.<sup>141</sup> The contrary has also been said.<sup>142</sup> If tracing lines and the like belonging to the [various] branches of astrology (*najāma*) pertain to sorcery, how [must] things be, *a fortiori*, for astrology (*najāma*) [itself]? The fact is indeed that they generate figures on the earth

<sup>135</sup> In the strict sense, *'iyāfa* means ornithomancy, i.e. the art of divining omens from the flight of birds, their cries, their posture or even their name. See T. Fahd, *El<sup>2</sup>*, 'Iyāfa'.

<sup>136</sup> In the absolute, *tarq* designates three divinatory methods of cleromantic nature: throwing pebbles and observing how they scatter on the ground (*al-ṭarq bi-l-ḥasā*), tracing lines in sand or dust (*al-khaṭṭ bi-l-raml*), and mixing cotton with wool (*khalt al-quṭn bi-l-ṣūf*).

The second method, which is the one Ibn Taymiyya refers to, as will become evident in the following lines, developed into geomancy and enjoyed prodigious popularity in Muslim countries. At its most elementary level, it consisted of guessing the future from the figure or pattern supposedly drawn by random marks traced in dust or sand. In more sophisticated forms of the art, combination of random lines of dots would be used to generate one of the sixteen geomantic figures, or random markings would be interpreted in relation to the horoscope of the enquirer and other astrological considerations; or, as explained here by Ibn Taymiyya, in correlation with 'the configurations of the celestial sphere'. See T. Fahd, *Divination*, 195–204; E. Savage-Smith, *Science*, i, 148–51; R. Irwin, *Nights*, 190–1.

<sup>137</sup> Etymologically, *ṭira* refers to the observation and mantic interpretation of the spontaneous flight of birds, as practised in pre-Islamic Arabia. This was progressively extended and *ṭira* assumed the wider significance of divining omens, good or ill, in all kinds of manifestations of animate or inanimate beings, especially in the sphere of domestic life. As a method for divining ill omens, *ṭira* was condemned by Islam as pagan. The new religion did, however, accept comparable techniques for divining favourable omens, under the name of *fa'l*. See T. Fahd, *El<sup>2</sup>*, 'Iyāfa'; *Divination*, 436–8, 450–2.

<sup>138</sup> On this *ḥadīth*, see Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, *Ṭibb*, iv, 16, 3907 ('Ālam. 3408). See also T. Fahd, *Divination*, 195.

<sup>139</sup> 'Awf b. Abī Jamīla Abū Sahl al-A'rabī (d. 146/763).

<sup>140</sup> *Zajr* originally consisted in causing a bird to fly away by shouting or throwing a stone at it, in order to be able to give a mantic interpretation of its flight. Like *ṭira*, it was thus a technique of *'iyāfa*. The term progressively received a broader sense and eventually referred, not only to ornithomancy in general, but to all kinds of omens divined in animate or inanimate beings. See T. Fahd, *El<sup>2</sup>*, 'Iyāfa'; *Divination*, 438–50.

<sup>141</sup> See Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, *Ṭibb*, iv, 16, 3908 ('Ālam. 3409).

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. 3907 ('Ālam. 3408; trans. Hasan, *Sunan*, iii, 1096, ch. 1481, 3898: 'Ṭarq: It is used in the sense of divination in which women threw stones. *'Iyāfab*: It means geomancy by drawing lines').

on the [claim] that those are engendered by the configurations of the celestial sphere.

Aḥmad [Ibn Ḥanbal], Abū Dā'ūd, Ibn Māja and others have reported from Ibn 'Abbās, with a sound chain of transmitters, that he said: 'The Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him peace, said: "Whoever seeks to learn anything from the stars seeks to learn something from magic, and the more he seeks it the more he does."<sup>143</sup> The Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him peace, has clearly declared that astrology (*'ilm al-nujūm*) pertains to magic. And God said, Exalted is He: 'The magician thrives not, wherever he comes' (Q. 20.69). And so does it happen: induction proves that the people who deal in astrology (*ahl al-nujūm*) do not thrive, neither in this world nor in the hereafter.

Aḥmad [Ibn Ḥanbal] and Muslim, in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, have reported from Safiyya,<sup>144</sup> daughter of [Abū] 'Ubayd, from some of the wives of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, about the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, that he said: 'Whoever frequents a soothsayer (*'arrāf*) and asks him a question about anything, no prayer is accepted from him for forty days.<sup>145</sup> Yet, the astrologer comes under the term 'soothsayer', according to some scholars while, according to others, it has the same meaning. That being the situation of the person who puts the question, how then, *a fortiori*, [must] things be for the one questioned?

[Muslim] also reported in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, from Mu'āwiya b. al-Ḥakam al-Sulamī,<sup>146</sup> that he said: "O Messenger of God," I said, "there are people, among us, who frequent diviners." He said: "Do not frequent them!"<sup>147</sup> The Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, thus prohibited the frequentation of diviners. Yet, the astrologer comes under the term 'diviner' according to al-Khaṭṭābī<sup>148</sup> [194,1] and other scholars, this [assimilation] being related from the Arabs. According to others, [the astrologer] belongs to the genus of the diviner and is in a worse situation than him. Thus, from the viewpoint of [its] meaning, ['astrologer'] comes after ['diviner'].

<sup>143</sup> See Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, i, 227 ('Ālam. 2697); Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, *Ṭibb*, iv, 15–16, 3905 ('Ālam. 3406); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, *Adab*, ii, 1228, 3726 ('Ālam. 3716).

<sup>144</sup> Daughter of one of the great Followers, who lived in Madina; see Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, trans. Bewley, *Women*, 305.

<sup>145</sup> See Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, iv, 68; v, 380 ('Ālam. 16041, 22138); for Muslim, see p. 162, n. 47.

<sup>146</sup> A Companion, who lived in Madina; see Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd*, iv, 384–5.

<sup>147</sup> See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Masājid*, ii, 70 ('Ālam. 836).

<sup>148</sup> A traditionist who, *inter alia*, authored a *Book of the Strange Traditions—K. Gharīb al-ḥadīth* (Bust, 319–388? / 931–998?). See *El<sup>2</sup>*, 'al-Khaṭṭābī'.

In the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it is also reported about him, God bless him and grant him peace, that he said: 'The price given for a dog is disgusting, the "dower" of a prostitute is disgusting and the "tip" (*ḥulwān*) of a diviner is disgusting.'<sup>149</sup> His 'tip' is what the common people call his 'sweetener' (*ḥalāwa*). In what is meant by this is also included that which is given to the astrologer, to the [soothsayer] using devices<sup>150</sup> by means of which he casts lots (for example a wooden piece on which A, B, J, D are inscribed),<sup>151</sup> to the [fortune-teller] throwing pebbles<sup>152</sup> and to their like. What is given to those is of a forbidden nature. More than one of the 'ulamā', like al-Baghawī,<sup>153</sup> al-Qāḍī 'Iyād<sup>154</sup> and others, have spoken of a consensus as far as forbidding it is concerned.

In the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*, it is [reported] from Zayd b. Khālīd<sup>155</sup> that he said: 'The Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him peace, spoke to us at al-Ḥudaybiyya, after a rainy night. "Do you know," he said, "what your Lord has said this night?" We said: "God and His Messenger know better!" He said: "Some of My servants entered this morning believing in Me and, some, disbelieving in Me. He who said: 'We have had a rainfall due to God's

<sup>149</sup> Ibn Taymiyya in fact mixes the two following *ḥadīths* reported by Muslim: '[The Prophet] prohibited giving a price for a dog, a "dowry" to a prostitute and a "tip" to a diviner' (Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Buyū'*, v, 35; 'Ālam. 2930). '[The Prophet] said: "The price given for a dog is disgusting, the 'dower' of a prostitute is disgusting and the earning of a cupper is disgusting."' (Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Buyū'*, v, 35; 'Ālam. 2932; trans. Ṣiddiqī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, iii, 825, 3806. On this last kind of earning, see R. Brunschwig, *Métiers*, 47–50.)

<sup>150</sup> *Ṣaḥīb al-azlām*, i.e., literally, 'the [soothsayer] using arrows'. This expression, which refers to a divinatory technique condemned in the Qur'ān (see 5.3, 5.90), eventually designated all kinds of lot-casting procedures, in which the forbidden arrows were replaced by other things, for example the alphabet letters here mentioned by Ibn Taymiyya. See T. Fahd, *Divination*, 181–8.

<sup>151</sup> See the two lot-casting pieces, made of solid brass and bearing letters and cryptic symbols on their four faces, reproduced in E. Savage-Smith, *Science*, i, 159, no. 111.

<sup>152</sup> On the popularity of lot-casting, particularly that employing dice, in medieval Islamic society, see *ibid.* 151.

<sup>153</sup> Ibn al-Farrā' (Bagh, near Harāt, c. 432/1040 – Marw al-Rūdh, 516/1122?), Shāfi'ī doctor, traditionist and commentator of the Qur'ān, whose *The Lamps of the Sunna* (*Maṣābīḥ al-Sunna*), a collection of traditions arranged according to their subject-matter, still enjoys a certain popularity. See J. Robson, *El*<sup>2</sup>, 'al-Baghawī'.

<sup>154</sup> The famous and strictly orthodox Mālikī traditionist and *faqīh* of the Almoravid period (Ceuta, 476/1088 – Marrakesh, 544/1149). See M. Talbi, *El*<sup>2</sup>, 'Iyād b. Mūsā'.

<sup>155</sup> A Companion (d. 78/697?); see Ibn al-Athīr, *Uṣd*, ii, 228.

favour and His mercy' is believing in Me and disbelieving in the planets."<sup>156</sup>

In Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it is [reported] from Abū Hurayra,<sup>157</sup> about the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, that he said: 'God does not send down any blessing from the sky but a group of people enter the morning disbelieving in it. God sends down abundant rain and they say: "It is due to such a planet, or to such a one!"'<sup>158</sup>

In Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it is also [reported] from him, God bless him and grant him peace, that he said: 'There are, in my community, four things that belong to the Age of Ignorance (*jāhiliyya*): boasting of noble pedigrees, reviling [others'] lineages, wailing and asking the stars for rain.'<sup>159</sup>

In it is also reported from Ibn 'Abbās, about the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, that he said: "And do you make it your livelihood to denounce it as lies?" (Q. 56.82): this [verse] refers to asking the stars for rain.'<sup>160</sup> Or as he said.<sup>161</sup>

## THE PRACTICAL MEASURES TO TAKE AGAINST ASTROLOGERS

[195,1] The texts reported on the authority of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, his Companions and the rest of the imāms, that prohibit [astrology] are too numerous for us to be able to mention them in this place. Yet it is already obvious, by virtue of what we have mentioned, that the wage got for such an [activity], any gift or [act of] generosity [related to it], are of a forbidden nature, for the payer as well as for the payee. For owners, inspectors and

<sup>156</sup> See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ādhān*, i, 169 ('Ālam. 801); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Imān*, i, 59 ('Ālam. 104).

<sup>157</sup> A Companion (d. c. 58/678). See J. Robson, *El*<sup>2</sup>, 'Abū Hurayra'.

<sup>158</sup> See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Imān*, i, 59 ('Ālam. 106).

<sup>159</sup> See *ibid.* *Janā'iz*, iii, 45 ('Ālam. 1550).

<sup>160</sup> See *ibid.* *Imān*, i, 60 ('Ālam. 107; trans. Ṣiddiqī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, i, 45, 135): 'Ibn 'Abbās told me this. [Once], at the time of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, people were showered with rain. The Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, then said: "Some people have entered the morning thanking [God] and others as unbelievers. These indeed said: 'This is God's mercy', while the others said: 'Such and such stars were veracious.'" The following verses, he said, then came down: "I swear by the locations of the stars. And this is indeed a mighty oath, if you but knew! It is indeed a noble Qur'ān, in a hidden Book. None shall touch it but the purified. A sending-down from the Lord of the worlds! Is it such a discourse that you would scorn? And do you make it your livelihood to denounce it as lies?"' (Q. 56.75–82).

<sup>161</sup> This formula is used when one reports faithfully the meaning of some saying but is uncertain of the exact wording.

trustees, it is also forbidden to let to these unbelievers and perverts, for such a use, shops owned [by them] or established as *waqfs*, etc., if in their opinion the [feeling] prevails that they will practice therein this damned sorcery.

It is also incumbent, on the authorities and on every [Muslim] able to do so, to endeavour to put an end to it and to prevent them from holding seances in shops or on the thoroughfares, or from coming into people's houses, in their homes, for such a purpose. If one does not do that, let these words of the Exalted suffice for him: 'Nor did they prohibit one another from the condemned actions which they committed' (Q. 5.79), as well as these words, Praised and Exalted is He: 'Why do not the rabbis and the doctors prohibit them from saying sinful things and devouring unlawful gains?' (Q. 5.63). Those damned people do indeed, according to the consensus of the Muslims, say sinful things and devour unlawful gains. It is also established about the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, following a report related about him by the Truthful [Abū Bakr] that he said: 'When people see something condemnable and do not change it, God is about to extend over them all a chastisement of His.'<sup>162</sup> And what condemnable thing could be more so than the actions of those disgusting people, the vermin of the religions<sup>A</sup> (*milla*), the enemies of the Messengers and the offshoots of the Šabians, the planet-worshippers? Was not the mission of [Abraham] the Friend [of the Merciful], God's blessing and His peace be upon him, the imām of the true monotheists (*hanīf*), directed but against the ancestors of those [planet-worshippers]? Nimrod,<sup>163</sup> Kana'ān's son, was indeed their king, and the doctors of the Šabians are indeed the astrologers and their like. And the idols, were they not worshipped, most of the time, but because of the views of this disgusting species of individuals, who devour people's wealth by vain procedures and divert from the way of God?<sup>164</sup>

<sup>162</sup> See Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, *al-ʿAshra*, i, 2 ('Ālam. 16); Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, *Fitan*, ii, 1327, 4005 ('Ālam. 3995).

<sup>163</sup> The Nimrod of the Bible who, without being named, is alluded to in the Qur'ān (2.258, 29.24) in relation to the story of Abraham. Many legends developed about him in Islam, borrowing not only from the Bible but from the Jewish Haggada and Persian epic. See B. Heller, *EP*<sup>2</sup>, 'Namrūd'. See also the text translated in the following note, where Ibn Taymiyya seems in some way to assimilate Nimrod to the Buddha.

<sup>164</sup> For Ibn Taymiyya, idolatry most often derives from astrolatry. 'The Greeks and the Romans were associators, as mentioned earlier. They worshipped the sun, the moon and the planets. They built temples for them on the earth and represented them in the form of idols, that they considered as talismans of them. It was an associationism of the [same] kind as [that practised by] Nimrod, Kana'ān's son, and his people, to whom Abraham, the Friend of God, God's blessings and peace be upon him, was sent.

## THE PERSONAL POSITION TO ADOPT VIS-À-VIS ASTROLOGY

[196,1] For whoever, among those people who claim some connection with practising the religion of a Book, seeks strength from [such condemnable practices] it would be appropriate to make their own this part of the words of [God]: 'And when a Messenger from God came to them, confirming what was with them, a group of those who had been given the Book cast the Book of God behind their backs, as if they did not know. They followed what the devils were reciting over Solomon's reign. Solomon did not unbelieve but the devils unbelieved: they were teaching men magic. [They also followed] that which had come down on the two angels in Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt, although these two taught no one till they had said: "We are but a trial; therefore do not unbelieve!" So people learn, from these two, things by which they bring division between a man and his wife. They are however injuring no one thereby, except by God's permission. They are thus learning things that harm them and do not profit them! And surely they do know that he who trafficks therein, for him there is no share [of happiness] in the Hereafter. And evil indeed is that for which they have sold their souls! Had they but known! If they had believed and feared [God], a reward from God would indeed have been better! Had they but known!' (Q. 2.101–3)

Likewise, the leaders of the astrologers, ancients and moderns, have in fact recognized that those who have faith, accomplish the acts of worship and invoke [the Lord], God relieves them by virtue of the blessing of their acts of worship, their invocations and their trust in Him, from things that the astrologers claim to be necessarily implied by the celestial spheres. They also recognize that the people accomplishing the acts of worship, invoking God and having trust in Him are given, as far as the reward of this world and of the hereafter are concerned, something the getting of which is not in the power of the celestial spheres.

The praise, then, be to the God Who has put the best [thing] of this world and of the hereafter in following the Messengers and Who has made the best community those who command what is to be acknowledged and prohibit what is to be condemned. (See Q. 3.110.) He said, Exalted is He: 'God will bring people whom He will love

There are remains of such an associationism in the countries of the Orient—the countries of the Khīṭā [China] and the Turks. They make idols that have the form of Nimrod. These idols are very big, and they attach rosaries to their necks. They praise the name of Nimrod and insult Abraham, the Friend of God.' (*Radd*, 283–4.)

and who will love Him, lowly with the believers, mighty against the unbelievers. They will fight in the way of God and will not fear the blame of any blamer. That [197,1] is God's favour. He gives it unto whom He will. And God is All-Embracing, All-Knowing.' (Q. 5.54).

God supports and helps [one] to be religious and to follow the way of the believers. And God, Praised and Exalted is He, knows better and is Wiser.

## FATWA III

[197,3] HE WAS ASKED, may the Exalted God have mercy upon him:

about the art of astrology and the drawing of indications from the [stars] as to the events. Is it licit or forbidden? Is it licit to get a wage [for it], and to offer the same, or not? And is it incumbent, on the authority (*walī l-amr*), to prevent the [astrologers from practising] and to make them cease holding seances in [their] stalls?

## HE ANSWERED:

Of course, this is forbidden by the consensus of the Muslims, as is getting a wage for it. To prevent<sup>A</sup> [the astrologers] from holding seances in [their] shops and on the thoroughfares, to prevent people from engaging them and to oppose that has a share in the most eminent striving (*jihād*) in the way of God. And God knows better!

## APPARATUS CRITICUS

- P. 166. <sup>A</sup>mas'ala fi-man MK: wa su'ila rahima-hu Llāh 'an-man F *He was also asked, may God have mercy upon him, about the person...* <sup>B</sup>yaqūlu F: yaqūlūna MK *They also say*, <sup>C</sup>matā MK: hattā law F *And even if it...* <sup>D</sup>al-jawāb MK: fa-ajāba F *He answered*: <sup>E</sup>rabb al-'ālamīn + MK: li-Llāh F
- P. 167. <sup>A</sup>rubūbiyyati-hi MK: rubūyyati-hi F <sup>B</sup>qadr MK: qawl F ... *is something said in addition, of...* <sup>C</sup>indāj MK: nidāj F <sup>D</sup>la-hum F: - MK ... *by it such...* <sup>E</sup>mashhūda F: mashhūra MK *well known* <sup>F</sup>hayāt F: - MK ... *up some...*
- P. 168. <sup>A</sup>mā anzala Llāh min al-samā' min K (Q. 2.164): anzala min al-samā' F *And He sends down water from the sky...* anzal-nā min

- al-samā' M *And We send down water from the sky...* <sup>B</sup>mashhūda F: mashhūra MK *well known* <sup>C</sup>mushrik F: shirk MK ... *independently, this is associationism conflicting with...* <sup>D</sup>al-nujūm F: al-najm MK *'star'*
- P. 169. <sup>A</sup>ka-mā F: qad + MK ... *may happen...* <sup>B</sup>nafā F: nahā MK *He refused death...* <sup>C</sup>athar MK: atharan F <sup>D</sup>bi-ann Allāh MK: bi-anna-hu F <sup>E</sup>yunzilu-hu MK: yanzilu F <sup>F</sup>min + MK: nas'alu-ka F
- P. 170. <sup>A</sup>min MK: wa F <sup>B</sup>yattaqi MK (Q. 65.2): yattaqi F <sup>C</sup>F only quotes the beginning and the end of this passage of the Qur'ān <sup>D</sup> - MK: fi F
- P. 171. <sup>A</sup>la-hum MK: la-humā F <sup>B</sup>F only quotes the beginning of this verse <sup>C</sup>bi-l-kitāb F: fi l-kitāb MK ... *in the Book*,
- P. 172. <sup>A</sup>nawā' F: naw' MK ... *the species of...* <sup>B</sup>fa-yuqirru-hā MK: yuqirru-hā F <sup>C</sup>amā' MK: al-samā' F ... *of the heaven* <sup>D</sup>al-samā' F: samā' MK ... *to this world's heaven* <sup>E</sup>wa rubba-mā adraka-hu l-shihāb F: - MK ... *them, after He pronounces that word. He has...* <sup>F</sup>innī lammā M: innī F atā (?) lammā K <sup>G</sup>li + MK: qāla F
- P. 173. <sup>A</sup>al-adilla MK: al-dalāla F <sup>B</sup>tuqbal F: yaqbal Allāh MK, *God does not accept from him any prayer for...* <sup>C</sup>taqdima MK: taqaddum F
- P. 174. <sup>A</sup>bal MK: fa-inna F *The texts indeed prove...* <sup>B</sup>mustariqqa MK: mustariqq F <sup>C</sup> - MK: min F <sup>D</sup>ba'd + MK: mawt F ... *of people...* <sup>E</sup>li-l-ramy bi-l-nujūm MK: al-ramy bi-l-najm F
- P. 175. <sup>A</sup> - MK (Q. 55.5): wa F <sup>B</sup> - MK (Q. 2.189): wa F
- P. 176. <sup>A</sup>allatī MK: alladhī F <sup>B</sup>wa l-uwlā MK: wa l-awwal F *the first* <sup>C</sup>min qawl al-nabī MK: fi qawli-hi F <sup>D</sup>qalilū K: qalilū' FM
- P. 177. <sup>A</sup>wa dhālika + MK: dhālika F <sup>B</sup>mithl + MK: yazunnu F ... *hold that opinion about...* <sup>C</sup>i'tiqād MK: i'tiqādu-hu F <sup>D</sup>i'taqada MK: al-mu'taqid F <sup>E</sup>indamma MK: anzama F
- P. 178. <sup>A</sup>anna hādhā: hādhā MK anna hunā F <sup>B</sup>al-qadar MK: al-qadīr F <sup>C</sup>sharafi-hi F: shurūqi-hi K ... *rise*, shurūfi-hi M
- P. 179. <sup>A</sup>usāfiru F: nusāfiru MK <sup>B</sup>al-harāmisa F: - MK ... *to Hermes and...* <sup>C</sup>aṣlu-hu F: - MK ... *if this...* <sup>D</sup>inna-mā yahtajjūna F: mā yahtajjūna 'alay-hi MK *Yet, what those argue for depends on experience and analogical reasoning, not on information...* (?)
- P. 180. <sup>A</sup>alā F: 'an MK *from*
- P. 181. <sup>A</sup>'ilmi-him al-muṣaddaq F: 'ilm al-ṣidq MK ... *knowing the truth than...* <sup>B</sup>al-daḡīq MK: al-tadqīq F <sup>C</sup>du'ā' M: di'āya F du'āh K <sup>D</sup>rasūli-hi F: rusuli-hi MK *Messengers* <sup>E</sup>lam MK: lā F
- P. 182. <sup>A</sup>bal + MK: nabiyyan F ... *Prophet and a sage* <sup>B</sup>F only gives the beginning of the verse <sup>C</sup>a'zam mim-mā MK: nazīr mā F ... *finds vain things and elements of error similar to what is found...* <sup>D</sup>lā +: kānū MFK ... *they exonerate...* <sup>E</sup>martaba MK: nisba F



- P. 183. <sup>A</sup>a'immati-nā F: ummati-nā MK *community* <sup>B</sup>hawādith F: jawādhīb MK ... *and the attraction forces of the atmosphere(?)*
- P. 184. <sup>A</sup>ikhtilāqan MK: ikhtilāfan F ... *and differing in opinion than...*  
<sup>B</sup>nabaghū fa-awwal F: taba'ū ilā awwal K ... *since they followed the first who had started the rafḍ innovation. He was...* tabaghghaw (?)  
 ilā awwal M <sup>C</sup>ibtada'a MK: itbada'a F <sup>D</sup>li-qaṣd MK: fa-qaṣada F <sup>E</sup>fa-qaṣada F: fa-fasada MK ... *also corrupted that [religion] and...*
- P. 185. <sup>A</sup>fi F: al-yawm + MK *The third day*, <sup>B</sup>anna Ibn Saba' yasubbu MK: man sabba F <sup>C</sup>katama: kallama FMK ... *and spoke about him, while...* <sup>D</sup>al-Hanafiyya MK: al-Hanīfa F
- P. 186. <sup>A</sup>allatī MK: alladhī F <sup>B</sup>ittiṣālan wa inḍimāman MK: ittiṣāl wa inḍimāmāt F <sup>C</sup>hādḥā l-zamān al-qarīb MK: al-zamān F *Over a period which...*
- P. 187. <sup>A</sup> – MK: al-mulk wa F ... *of the royal rules, the faiths...* <sup>B</sup>li-mubāyanat aḥwāl al-nabī ṣallā Llāh 'alay-hi wa sallama wa ummati-hi MK: al-mubāyina li-aḥwāl al-nabī ṣallā Llāh 'alay-hi wa sallama F <sup>C</sup>ab'adu-hā MK: ab'adu-hum F
- P. 188. <sup>A</sup>fi F: āl + MK ... *about Abraham's family*: <sup>B</sup>fi + MK (Q. 2.130): inna-hu F <sup>C</sup>la-min MK (Q. 2.130): 'an F <sup>D</sup>wa qāla + MK: muslimūna F
- P. 189. <sup>A</sup>al-ḥawāriyyīna MK: al-ḥawārīna F <sup>B</sup>bi-anna-nā K (Q. 5.111): bi-annā FM <sup>C</sup>ilay-nā MK (Q. 2.136): 'alay-nā F <sup>D</sup>ilā MK (Q. 2.136): 'alā F <sup>E</sup>mā ūtiya + MK (Q. 2.136): wa F <sup>F</sup> – MK: man F
- P. 190. <sup>A</sup>al-jummal al-kabīr MK: al-jumlat al-kathīr F <sup>B</sup>sab'ūna: thalāthūna FKM ... *be 31 years*. <sup>C</sup>almr (see Q. 13.1): alm FKM <sup>D</sup>bi-shawb FM: yathūbu K (bi-thawb? ... *but in the garb of some element... ?*) <sup>E</sup>fa-bi-sabab MK: bi-sabab F <sup>F</sup>al-bāṭil F: al-bāb MK ... *about this topic*, <sup>G</sup>a'lamu F: wa l-ḥamdu li-Llāhi rabbi l-'ālamīna wa ṣalawātu-hu wa salāmu-hu 'alā Muḥammad wa āli-hi ajma'īna + MK ... *better! The praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds! His blessing and His peace be on Muḥammad and on all his family!*
- P. 195. <sup>A</sup>al-milal: al-mulk F
- P. 197. <sup>A</sup>man': min F

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## ADDENDUM

I had already corrected the first proofs of this article when K. Yamamoto and C. Burnett published their edition and translation of *Abū Ma'shar. On Historical Astrology. The Book of Religions and Dynasties (On the Great Conjunctions)*. i: The Arabic Original; ii: The Latin Versions (Leiden: Brill, 'Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, xxxiii', 2000). This magisterial work is a very important contribution to the study of astrology in Islam and, had it been available earlier, I would certainly have had frequent recourse to it. Here, I cannot do more than indicate passages that are particularly worth consulting in relation to the following notes to my translation.

- n. 4 (p. 148): on Abū Ma'shar's interest in Aristotelian natural philosophy, see i. 607–9.
- n. 112 (p. 181): on Abū Ma'shar's linking of the Arabs to Venus, see i. 66–7, 126–7, 606, ii. xii.
- n. 123 (p. 185): on Abū Ma'shar and al-Kindī's prognostications of the date when the rule of Islam would end, see i. 126–7 (Abū Ma'shar's Arabic text, with English transl.), ii. 83 (Abū Ma'shar's Latin text) and i. 532–3 (al-Kindī's Arabic text, with English transl.). For the authors (i. 525–6, 606, 613), neither of al-Kindī and Abū Ma'shar can have copied from the other on this matter and it is 'highly probable' that both were drawing from a third source, perhaps Māshā'Allāh.
- n. 126 (p. 186): on the calculation of Islam's duration by means of the numerical values of the 'mysterious' letters of the Qur'ān, see i. 534–7 (al-Kindī's Arabic text, with English transl.).

## ADDENDA ET CORRIGENDA (JUNE 2003)

- p. 166, §2: on al-Ghazālī's position concerning this eclipse *ḥadīth*, see his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa—The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, ed. and trans. M. E. Marmura (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2000), 6–7; *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl—Erreur et délivrance*, ed. and trans. F. Jabre (Beirut: Librairie Orientale, 1969), 76, 22 ar.
- n. 72 (p. 169): on the most favourable period of the year for travelling, see also (Pseudo-)al-Ghazālī, *Sirr al-'Ālamayn* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jandī, n.d.), ch. vii, 20, who prefers 'the Sultān to face the disturbances of a trip when the Sun dwells in Cancer'.
- n. 76, p. 171: on Hermeticism in Islamic thought, see also F. E. Peters, 'Hermes and Harran: The Roots of Arabic-Islamic Occultism', in M. M. Mazzaoui and V. B. Moreen (eds.), *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays written in Honor of M. B. Dickson* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 185–215.
- n. 89 (p. 176): on Ja'far al-Šādiq and *al-Jafr*, see also T. Fahd, *Divination*, 219–24; on *al-Jafr* and al-Ghazālī, see I. Goldziher, *Le Livre de Mohammed ibn Toumert, mahdi des Almohades* (Algiers: Imprimerie orientale Pierre Fontana, 1903), 15–7.
- n. 90 (p. 176): the suggestion I make about *al-Bitāqa* is incorrect. In his *Dar'* (ed. Sālim, v. 26), Ibn Taymiyya writes: 'The followers of *The Card (ahl al-bitāqa)*, among other adepts of heresy, attribute it to 'Alī, and so also do the esotericist (*bāṭiniyya*) Shī'īs—the Ismā'īlīs and the Nuṣayrīs.' In his *Minhāj al-sunnat al-nabawiyya fī naqḍ kalām al-Shī'at al-qadariyya*, ed. M. R. Sālim, 9 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, 1409/1989), viii. 28, he refers to 'the pronouncements (*kalām*) of the adepts of *The Card (aṣḥāb al-bitāqa)*' about an incorrect doctrine of absolute existence. *Al-bitāqa* could in fact be a copist (or editor) mistake for *al-balāgh*, as the two words are graphically similar. It would then refer to *al-Balāgh al-akbar wa-l-nāmūs al-a'zam—The Greatest Proclamation and the Major Law*, an important pseudo-Ismā'īlī treatise already known in the 4th/10th century (see W. Madelung, 'The Fatimids and the Qarmatis of Bahrayn', in F. Daftary (ed.), *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 21–73; 43–45, 66–68), which Ibn Taymiyya mentions in various works (see Y. Michot, 'Vizir "hérétique" mais philosophe d'entre les plus éminents: al-Tūsī vu par Ibn Taymiyya', in *Farhang* (Tehran, Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 2003), text B1

- (forthcoming); Ibn Taymiyya, *Futūḥ fī l-Nuṣayriyya*, trans. S. Guyard, 'Le Fetwa d'Ibn Taymiyyah sur les Nosairis', in *Journal Asiatique*, 6/18 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1871), 158–98; 191–2).
- n. 112 (p. 181–2): In *Sirr*, (Pseudo-)al-Ghazālī links Muḥammad to Friday and Venus, for whom the Prophet is said to have burnt incense (xiii, 45; xvii, 70; xviii, 75). As for Jesus, he links him to Sunday and the Sun (ch. xiii, 45), or also to Thursday (xviii, 75) and to Jupiter, for whom he is also said to have burnt incense (xvii, 70).
- n. 125 (p. 186): on *ḥisāb al-jummal*, see also T. Fahd, *Divination*, 217–8.
- p. 194, §2: on the importance of astrology in the life of Mamlūk officers, see A. Schimmel, 'Some Glimpses of the Religious Life in Egypt during the Later Mamlūk Period', in *Islamic Studies*, 4, (1965), 353–92; 382.

## 10

THE ROLE OF THE ASTROLOGER IN  
MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC SOCIETY

George Saliba

## Introduction

The object of this paper is to investigate the social status of the astrologer in medieval Islamic society. Therefore, I will not investigate the theoretical status of astrology in medieval Islam, nor will I attempt to analyze the numerous arguments either pro or contra astrology which have been preserved in the classical sources. On that score, I only wish to say that the theoretical framework of the astrological doctrines that were known in medieval Islam were mainly derived from the major tenets of Aristotelian philosophy<sup>1</sup>. In some ways they shared the same fate of that philosophy, but in other ways they developed an independent existence of their own and were integrated within the larger intellectual picture of medieval Islam. The evidence for the connection with Aristotelian natural philosophy was brilliantly argued by one of the most famous astrologers of medieval Islam, namely Abū Ma'shar al-Balḥī (d. 886, Latin Albumassar)<sup>2</sup>, and was later studied in great detail in an excellent dissertation by Richard Lemay<sup>3</sup>. From that perspective, one can assert that astrology enjoyed a status similar to that of medicine<sup>4</sup>, in the sense that both disciplines were considered non-demonstrative natural philosophical sciences, as those sciences were understood within the larger Aristotelian framework.

1. In particular one can refer to the following works of Aristotle, for example, in order to establish the direct connection between the celestial objects and the events in the sublunar region that the astrologers could very easily use to their advantage: *Generation and Corruption*, II, 10, 336a; 15–336b; 25, where the sun is held as the efficient cause of all coming-to-be and passing-away, *De Caelo*, II, 286a; 3–286b; 10, where the planetary spheres themselves and the planets are made responsible for everything that comes-to-be and passes-away, and *Generation of Animals*, IV, 10, 777b; 16–778a; 10, where generation of things including animal generation are « controlled by the movements of these heavenly bodies ».

2. Abū Ma'shar al-Balḥī (787–886, all dates are given in AD), *Kitāb al-maḍhal fī 'ilm al-ḥkām al-nuḡūm wa 'ilālihā wa kayfiyyātihā wa mā iḥṭalafa fīhī al-nās wa l-radd 'alayhim*, Carullah Ms. 1508, « al-qawl al-awwal ».

3. Lemay, Richard, *Abu Ma'shar and Latin Aristotelianism in the Twelfth Century: a Recovery of Aristotle's Natural Philosophy through Arabic Astrology*, Beirut, American University of Beirut, 1962.

4. In the formulation of Abū Ḥamid al-Gazzālī (d. 1111), *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, al-Maktaba al-Tiḡāriyya (Egypt) edition, vol. 1, p. 29, he says: « Astrology (*al-ḥkām*) in summary depends on induction (*isṭidlāl*) based on events through the causes (*asbāb*), and that is similar to the physician's induction from the pulse regarding the future development of the disease. In effect it is the knowledge of the unfolding of God's custom in regard to his creatures. The Law (*al-ṣar'*), however, has disapproved of it (*ḍammahu*). »



This theoretical position however does not really reflect the status of astrology in practice. For in that arena, although astrology remained popular throughout medieval Islamic history it was never really held with the same respect that was afforded to medicine. One could find only very few people attacking the veracity of medicine, but could easily list a whole host of others attacking astrology. Moreover, the ranks of those protagonists were not confined to specific social classes, or ideological affiliations. One finds among the attackers theologians, jurists, philosophers, mathematicians, and even astronomers, as well as others. In this context, I can only list the names of those who have written against astrology in order to illustrate the intellectual spectrum to which they belonged. From the grammarian al-Ḥalil ibn Aḥmad (c. 786)<sup>5</sup>, to the poet Abū Tammām (d. 850)<sup>6</sup>, to the philosophers al-Fārābī (d. 950)<sup>7</sup>, Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037)<sup>8</sup> and Ibn Rušd (d. 1198)<sup>9</sup>, to the mathematician Uqlidīsī (c. 952)<sup>10</sup>, to the logician scholar and politician 'Isā b. 'Alī

5. al-Ḥaḥīb al-Baḡdādī, Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Ṭābit (d. 1072), in his *Risāla fī 'ilm al-nuḡūm*, Asr Effendi Ms. 190, fol. 16r, reports that al-Ḥalil b. Aḥmad is supposed to have composed the following lines of poetry:

balligā 'annī l-munaḡḡima annī  
mu'minun anna mā yakūnu wa mā kāna  
(Tell the astrologer on my behalf that I  
A believer in that all that was and will be

kāfirun bi-l-laḡī qaḡathu l-kawākibu  
qaḡā'un minā l-muḡaymini wāḡibu  
am an unbeliever in the judgement of the stars  
is the necessary decree of the all powerful.)

In an alternate reading, he is supposed to have also said:

abliḡā 'annī l-munaḡḡima annī  
'ālimun anna mā yakūnu wa mā kāna  
mūqinun anna man takahhana aw  
(O! ye tell the astrologer that I  
Informed that all that was and will be  
Certain that those who divine or

kāfirun bi-l-laḡī qaḡathu l-kawākibu  
qaḡā'un minā l-muḡaymini wāḡibu  
naḡḡama kullun 'alā l-maḡāḍiri kāḡibu  
am an unbeliever in the judgement of the stars  
is the necessary decree of the all powerful,  
judge by the stars are all lying about fates.)

6. The reference is made here to the famous poem of Abū Tammām: « The sword is more telling than the books [of the astrologers]... » which he recited at the occasion of the conquest of 'Ammūriyya (Ammorium) by al-Mu'taṣim (833-842), when the astrologers had falsely predicted that it would not be conquered.

7. Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Nuḡat Abi Naṣr al-Fārābī fī mā yaṣuḡḡu wa mā lā yaṣuḡḡu min aḡkām al-nuḡūm*, hrsg. by Fr. Dietrich in *al-Fārābī's Philosophische Abhandlungen*, Leiden, 1890, p. 104-113, and T. A. Druart, « Astronomie et Astrologie selon al-Fārābī », *Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale*, Louvain, (1978) 20 : 43-47.

8. M. A. F. Mehren, « Vue d'Avicenne sur l'astrologie et sur le rapport de la responsabilité humaine avec le destin », *Museon*, (1884) 3 : 383-403.

9. Ibn Rušd, Abū al-Walid Muḥammad, *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, ed. S. Dunya, Dār al-Ma'ārif, Egypt, 1981, 2 vols, vol. 2, p. 768, where he says: « Astrology is not from among them [i.e. the sciences according to Aristotle], rather it is a foreknowledge of future events, and thus is a kind of divination (kahāna) and augury (zaḡr). » This is also quoted by Nallino, C. A., « Sun, Moon, and Stars », *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. J. Hastings, vol. 12, p. 88 ff. For a similar attack on astrology, see also Abū al-Barakāt al-Baḡdādī, *Kiṭāb al-mu'tabar fī al-ḡikma*, Hyderabad, Osmania Publication Bureau, 1938-9, vol. 2, p. 232 ff.

10. In an incidental remark this tenth century Damascene mathematician warns the reader against using the dust board lest he be considered an astrologer. Saidan, A. S., *The Arithmetic of al-Uqlidīsī*, Dordrecht and Boston, Reidel, 1978, p. 247. The text of Uqlidīsī reads thus: « In this book we state all that is done by Hindi [schemes], not with takht or erasure, but with inkpot and paper. This is because many a man hates to expose the takht between his hands when he finds the need to use this art of calculation, for fear of the misinterpretation of the attendants or whoever may see it. It belittles him, for it is seen between the hands of the misbehaved who earn their living by astrology in the streets. » The importance of this remark is manifold. First, it allows us to appreciate the precarious existence of the astrologer in the public eye, where one does not want to be associated with him. Second, it signals the existence of the astrologer as practicing on public thoroughfares. Thirdly, it demonstrates the importance of the technological development to theoretical science, for here we see how the discipline of arithmetic is responding to the introduction of paper and ink.

(d. 1001)<sup>11</sup>, to the astronomer Bīrūnī (c. 1050)<sup>12</sup>, to the encyclopedist, theologian and jurist Ibn Hazm (d. 1064)<sup>13</sup>, to the Aṣ'arite theologians al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013)<sup>14</sup> and Abū Ḥāmid al-Gazzālī (d. 1111)<sup>15</sup>, to the historian Ibn Ḥaldūn (d. 1406)<sup>16</sup>, and to the Hanbalite theologian Ibn Qayyim al-Ḥawziyya (d. 1350)<sup>17</sup>. Even those who could defend astrology in some respects, such as Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209), had to attack it at other occasions<sup>18</sup>.

On the strictly technical side, the formulations of astrological doctrines, such as the government of individual horoscopes, the properties of the zodiacal signs, the planets and their influences, were inherited from Hellenistic astrological doctrines<sup>19</sup>, while others, like the cyclical government of universal world events, came from eastern Persian and Indian sources<sup>20</sup>. These traditions were obviously later conflated with the divinatory practices of pre-Islamic Arabia, such as *zaḡr*, *fa'l*, *'iyāfa*, *'irāfa*, and *anwā*, which were so ably studied by Toufic Fahd in his *La Divination Arabe*<sup>21</sup>.

As I have already mentioned, this paper will not deal with the theoretical aspects of astrology. Instead, it will be confined to the social role of the astrologer as it was perceived by members of the society who were not themselves practicing astrologers. I will focus on the social, economic and at times folkloric role of the astrologer, and, for the first time, I will solicit evidence from outside the written word to support some of the perceptions that were commonly accepted in medieval Islamic society.

The chronological period that I will deal with covers mainly the centuries between the ninth (when we begin to have solid evidence regarding the practices of the astrologers), and the eighteenth (when the primary sources begin to dwindle and the evidence begins to come

11. Quoted extensively by Ibn Qayyim al-Ḥawziyya, *Miftāḥ dār al-sa'āda*, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, Beirut, n.d., 2 vols, vol. 2, p. 148 ff.

12. For the references to the works of Bīrūnī see, Saliba, G., « The Development of Astronomy in Medieval Islamic Society », *Arab Studies Quarterly*, (1982) 4 : 211-225, esp. p. 218-220.

13. See Ibn Hazm, *Risālat marātib al-'ulūm*, published together with other treatises by Ihsān 'Abbās, *Rasā'il Ibn Hazm al-Andalusī*, Maktabat al-Ḥāḡḡī (Cairo) and Maktabat al-Muṭannā (Baghdad), n.d., p. 59-90, esp. p. 68-70, and Ibn Hazm, *al-Faṣl fī al-mīlāl wa l-ahwā' wa l-nihāl*, Dār al-Ma'rifa (Beirut), 1975, 5 vols in 3, vol. 2, p. 91 ff, and vol. 5, p. 36-40, esp. p. 37-40.

14. al-Bāqillānī, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Tayyib, *Kiṭāb al-tamhīd*, ed. Joseph McCarthy, publications of Ġāmi'at al-Ḥikma (Baghdad), Beirut, al-Maktaba al-Sarqiyya, 1957, p. 48-59. In a slightly different vein, see the work of 'Alī b. Abi 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Taglabī Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 1233), *Abkār al-afkār*, chap. 5, summarized in *Ġāyat al-murām fī 'ilm al-kalām*, by the same author, edited by Hasan Maḥmūd 'Abd al-Laṭīf, al-Maḡlis al-'Alā li l-Šu'ūn al-Islāmiyya, Cairo, 1971, p. 203-212.

15. Cf. *Ihyā'*, op. cit., where he classifies astrology as disapproved by law.

16. Ibn Ḥaldūn, *al-Muqaddimah*, tr. Franz Rosenthal, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1958, vol. 3, p. 258 ff.

17. *Miftāḥ dār al-sa'āda*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 125 ff.

18. See, for example, *Munāzarāt Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī fī bilād mā warā' al-Nahr* (A Study on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and His Controversies in Transoxania), ed. Fathalla Kholeif, Beyrouth, Dar El-Machreq, 1966, p. 32-38 text, and 55-62 translation.

19. The development of horoscopic astrology during Hellenistic times was already argued by Otto Neugebauer in his now classic text, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity*, Providence, Brown University Press, 1957, p. 171, et passim.

20. See, for example, Kennedy, Edward S., « The World-Year Concept in Islamic Astrology », *Académie Internationale d'Histoire des Sciences, Collection des Travaux, No. 15 : 1, Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of the History of Science*, Paris, Herman, 1964, p. 23-45, reprinted in *Studies in the Islamic Exact Sciences*, by E. S. Kennedy, Colleagues and Former Students, Beirut, American University of Beirut, 1983, p. 351-371, and E. S. Kennedy and B. L. van der Waerden, « The World-Year of the Persians », *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, (1963) 83 : 315-327.

21. Leiden, Brill, 1966, reprinted, Paris, Sindbad, 1987.

under the influence of European travellers' reports and the like). This does not mean that the actual practice of astrology was in any way diminished, for it was reported as being alive and well in nineteenth-century Egypt<sup>22</sup>, and can still be observed in many Muslim cities of today<sup>23</sup>.

### Sources

Since our focus is on the social perception of the astrologer, and not on the analysis of the astrological doctrines themselves, the sources that we sought were mainly those which did not deal with the technical aspects of astrology, although some use was made in a very general way of the scope of practice implied by these sources. The nature of the astrological predictions themselves sometimes were very useful in determining the areas in which astrology was applied to real situations. Childbirth, for example, was obviously one of those areas, and the technical treatises describe in great details the procedures that should be followed in order to determine the horoscope of the newly born. But those same sources do not tell us whether such horoscopes were cast only for the rich, or for a specific class of society to the exclusion of the others. For that social perspective one had to resort to other sources.

Biographical dictionaries tell more about the practice and the circumstances of astrology than the technical treatises. By consulting them, one could have some appreciation of various issues regarding, for example, the extent to which astrologers were integrated in the society, the conditions under which they operated, their clientele, their teachers, the salaries they obtained and many other similar matters of extreme importance for the location of the astrologer within the larger social panorama. One may not be able to answer all these questions with respect to every astrologer, but if considered as a class enough information can be garnered from such sources to paint a fairly representative picture. Moreover, it is significant in and of itself, for example, that astrologers, like physicians, scientists, and other professionals had their own biographers as a class, and were treated as a professional group worthy of such attention despite the fact that their discipline was not always condoned by the larger society. For our purposes, the most famous of such surviving biographical works is *Farağ al-mahmūm fī ta'riḥ 'ulamā' al-nuğūm* (Comfort of the Concerned Regarding the History of the Astrologers) of Raḍī al-Dīn Abū al-Qāsim 'Alī b. Mūsā b. Ġa'far b. Muḥammad b. Tāwūs (d. 1266)<sup>24</sup>. We will have reason to refer to this veritable mine of information at various occasions in the course of our discussion.

Literary sources, known as *adab* (belles-lettres) works, are also useful in this regard. They mostly contain anecdotes about the social, cultural and literary life of the period they cover, and most of the time they shed a slightly different light on the picture of the astrologer. In some, the anecdotes regarding the predictions of the astrologer and the conditions under which such predictions were made are quite revealing of the actual circumstances under which astrology was practiced, but at times they also reflect the opinion of the belletrists on the subject of astrology. That opinion, whether supportive of or antagonistic to astrology, is

22. Lane, Edward, *Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians*, London, 1st. ed., 1836, repr. of 1860 ed. by Dover, NY, 1973, chp. xii.

23. A report of a *fatwā* (legal opinion) passed against astrology in this century only confirms the existence and spread of the latter. See, for example, Ḥasanayn Muḥammad Maḥlūf, *Fatāwā šar'iyya wa buḥūṭ islāmiyya*, Cairo, Muṣṣafā Ḥalabi, 1965, vol. 1, p. 197.

24. Naḡaf, al-Maṭba'a al-Ḥaydariyya, 1368 H = 1949 A.D., hereafter called *Farağ*.

valuable on its own for it reflects at least one of the dimensions of the social perception that we are seeking. In this regard, such works as those of 'Amr b. Baḥr al-Ġāḥiṭ (869)<sup>25</sup>, Tanūḥi (d. 994)<sup>26</sup>, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 1009)<sup>27</sup>, and others will be sampled as representative specimens of that genre of literature.

Of special significance for all practicing professionals, astrologers included, are the various sources on law enforcement called *ḥisba*, where the duties of the police, the market inspector and the general enforcer of public moral behavior are enumerated. In particular, we will have recourse to the most comprehensive book in that category, namely, the fourteenth-century text of Ibn al-Uḥuwwa (d. 1329), where the behavior of the astrologers in the market place is regulated<sup>28</sup>. Other sources of similar nature may also yield more information on that aspect of the profession, but the ones consulted by the present author did not yield any additional information which is not mentioned in the text of Ibn al-Uḥuwwa<sup>29</sup>.

A similar type of sources frequently used by historians of the professions is called *miḥna* literature, that is, texts written specifically for the examination of the members of the intended profession<sup>30</sup>. Since astrologers form a professional group, they too had their own *miḥna* texts. One such text which has survived comes from the tenth century, and was written by the practicing astrologer, al-Qabiṣi (fl.c. 960), for his patron Sayf al-Dawla al-Ḥamdāni (d. 967)<sup>31</sup>. In it he not only enumerates the kind of tricky problems that astrologers could face during their practice, but goes on to give an overview of the kind of astrologers who were practicing during his time. The kind of questions which he suggests that they should be tested with were similar to the ones used by *muḥtasib-s*, i.e. administrators of the *ḥisba* duties, to test the physicians and members of other professions.

Of the non-textual categories, the most productive source has been the various miniature paintings which were produced in varied geographical areas and at various chronological periods, and in which there are depictions of astrologers at work. A small but representative sample of that kind of evidence is reproduced here in order to illustrate the idiom of

25. Reference will be made mainly to his *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Ḥārūn, Beirut, al-Maḡma' al-'Ilmiyy al-Islāmiyy, 3rd. ed., 1969.

26. Abū 'Alī al-Muḥassin b. 'Alī al-Tanūḥi, *Niṣwār al-muḥādara wa aḥbār al-muḥākara*, ed. A. Šalḡi, Beirut, 1971-1973. This text was partially translated by D. S. Margoliouth, Oriental Translation Fund, N. S. XXVI, XXVIII, London, 1921, under the title *The Table-Talk of a Mesopotamian Judge*. For other references to this work, see Brockelmann, Carl, *Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur*, Leiden, Brill, 1898-1902, and 1937-1939, Supplement I, 1937, p. 253.

27. 'Alī b. Muḥammad Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-imṭā' wa l-mu'ānasa*, ed. Aḥmad Amin and Aḥmad al-Zayn, Cairo, Laḡnat al-Ta'lif wa l-Tarḡama, 1953, reprinted 3 vols in one by al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, Beirut-Šaidā, n.d.

28. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Quraṣi known as Ibn al-Uḥuwwa, *Ma'ālim al-qurba fī aḥkām al-ḥisba*, ed. Reuben Levy, London, Gibb Memorial Series, N.S. XII, Luzac, 1938.

29. In particular, the following works were consulted: 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Naṣr al-Šayzari (d. 1193), *Nihāyat al-ruḥba fī talab al-ḥisba*, ed. al-Sayyid al-Bāz al-'Arīnī, Beirut, Dār al-Taḡāfa, n.d.; Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb al-Māwardī (d. 1058), *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya wa l-wilāyāt al-dīniyya*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1982.

30. See, for example, Albert Aziz Iskandar, « An Attempted Reconstruction of the Late Alexandrian Medical Curriculum », *Medical History*, (1976) 20 : 235-258, note 76.

31. 'Abd al-'Aziz b. 'Uṣmān Abū Šaqr al-Qabiṣi, *Fī imṭihān al-munaḡḡimīn*, Damascus, Zāhiriyya Ms. Arabic 4871, fols. 66v-72r. Another similar text on *miḥna* is attributed to 'Uṭārid b. Muḥammad by Birūnī. Cf. A. Sa'idān, « Kitāb taṣṭiḥ al-ṣuwar wa tabṭiḥ al-kuwar li-Abi al-Rayḥān al-Birūnī », *Dirāsāt*, (1977) 4 : 7-22, esp. p. 11.

representation and the kind of information that can be derived from such paintings. In most instances, the scene in which the painter represents the character of an astrologer is usually confirmed by other sources, mainly the literary ones, as being the usual setting where an astrologer is supposed to practice. But the additional information that the painter offers brings to life the function of this important character, and when the paintings are taken together they work to reproduce the *mise en scène* from a social perspective. By learning to read the artistic vocabulary of such paintings, we can then share the vision of the painter as he perceived the social setting of the astrologer. Since the painter's symbols were presumably readily understood by the society at large, his vision of the astrologer could then be indicative of the society's vision of that character. This underscores the importance of miniature paintings for our study.

In the domain of paintings, the astrologer is usually depicted as holding a circular object in his hand, usually lifted slightly as if to measure an altitude with it. From the literary sources, we know that the circular object is supposed to be an astrolabe. In some instances, the simile of such an astrolabe is depicted, but in others, any circular object, including a simple ring, was supposed to convey the message intended by the artist. See, for example, the character kneeling just behind the shoulder of the dead Alexander in figure 1, and the one seated on the left hand side of the painting depicting the judgement of Siyāvosh (figure 2) and the character on the raised platform at the back of the ship near the mast of Noah's ark (figure 3). See also the depiction of the teacher of Sa'di with a ring in his hand in figure 4, which, in this instance, is used as a symbol to indicate that the teacher is instructing the young Sa'di in the mathematical sciences, of which astrology would have been considered a main component. Whether the lesson dealt with mathematical sciences only or whether it included some instruction in astrology as well is hard to tell. But the fact that the painter chose to depict the teacher in the same posture usually associated with astrologers must indicate that, at least as far as the painter is concerned, there was no distinction between the mathematical and the astrological sciences.

In other instances, the artist depicts a group of astrologers all cooperating to produce a horoscope. The artist also wishes to tell us that astrologers usually divided the labor among themselves such that each of them would complete one phase of the process. In figure 5, depicting the birth of a prince, a group of astrologers, at street level, are huddled together, and three of them are handling the following objects: the dust board lying on the ground in the center of the group being fingered by the third character from the right<sup>32</sup>, the circular ring-like object, barely seen, carried by the character on the left side of the dust board, an ephemeris held by the second man from the right of the group, which was obviously needed for the determination of the planetary positions for the presumed horoscope. Other depictions of such ephemeris usually include a rolled out scroll with the simile of writings on it. The message, however, is still the same. In order to cast a horoscope, one needs to determine the time, which is usually measured by taking the altitude of the sun or any visible stellar object, and the mean position of the planets at that moment, usually read from an ephemeris, and finally compute the actual positions by reading the equations from the ephemeris and adding them to the mean positions by using the dust board. We will return to these iconographic depictions later on.

32. This is obviously the dust board that Uqlidisi was warning against.

### *Social Integration of the Astrologer*

Despite the religious attacks against astrology in Greek, Latin and Syriac sources<sup>33</sup> which were in all likelihood known towards the beginning of the translation movement that took place during the Umayyad and the 'Abbāsid eras, astrology had apparently already acquired some ground in early Islam, for it appears in connection with the prophet Muḥammad himself and his immediate successors, especially the caliph 'Alī<sup>34</sup>. Thereafter, and according to the detailed account of Ibn Ṭāwūs, who was himself a Shiite, astrology took hold among the Shiites and was protected at least in those religious circles<sup>35</sup>.

At a still later stage, astrology began to be perceived as a handmaiden of the foreign sciences that were coming into the Islamic domain through the translation movement and through contact with the heirs of the more ancient civilizations of Persia and Byzantium. In fact, as we have stated above, the defense of astrology by Abū Ma'šār al-Balḥī had demonstrated that astrology received its greatest support from the well-reasoned accounts of Aristotelian philosophy. As a result there developed an intimate relationship between astrology and the foreign sciences<sup>36</sup>, and astrology was then perceived as the Achilles heel through which one could launch attacks against these imported foreign sciences and philosophies<sup>37</sup>.

It was in this environment that, to an orthodox Muslim, astrology began to be either associated with the schismatic Shiites and Bāṭiniyya, or with the highly suspicious foreign sciences, or with outright atheism<sup>38</sup>. By the time of Ibn Ḥaldūn, astrology could no longer be studied in the open. One could study it only in « a secluded corner of his house »<sup>39</sup>. As mentioned above, even astronomers and mathematicians openly objected to astrology and tried to dissociate themselves from the practicing astrologers who became notorious for their impiety<sup>40</sup>.

In sum, this was the official position of astrology. In reality, astrological practice was much more widespread than these remarks would lead us to believe. It seems to have recruited among its ranks rulers, princes, governors, philosophers, and even mu'tazilite philosophers such as al-Ġubbā'i who in the same breath would also attack it<sup>41</sup>. It also

33. Boll, F., *Studien über Claudius Ptolemäus*, Leipzig, Teubner, 1894, p. 181 ff.

34. *Farağ*, p. 58.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 1-150.

36. Although I disagree with his analysis, see Hodgson, Marshall, *The Venture of Islam*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1974, vol. 1, p. 419, for his remark concerning the connection between astrology and philosophy.

37. See, for example, the historical survey of these attacks in Nallino's article, *op.cit.* More can be added to them from recently discovered sources.

38. See, for example, how Abū Ma'šār was described to have continued to study astrology until he became an atheist, implying that such atheism was the ultimate end of astrological studies. Tanūḥi, *Niṣwār*, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 66, and Yāqūt, *Mu'ğam al-udabā'*, London, Gibb Memorial Series, Luzac, 1908-1927, vol. 5, p. 467.

39. Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 263.

40. See, for example, Birūnī, Abū al-Rayḥān, *Chronology of Ancient Nations*, tr. E. Sachau, London, Oriental Translation Fund, 1879, and *al-Aṣṣār al-bāqiya 'an al-qurūn al-ḥāliya*, ed. E. Sachau, Leipzig, Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, F. A. Brockhaus and Otto Harrassowitz, 1923, p. 26-27, al-Samaw'al, *infra*, and Uqlidisi, *supra*.

41. *Niṣwār*, I, p. 20, II, p. 329, and *passim*.

recruited even jurists such as Abū al-Qāsim 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Tanūḥī<sup>42</sup>, the students of a religious school<sup>43</sup>, as well as rabbis, and according to Ibn Ṭāwūs, none other than the Aš'arite theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazzālī himself<sup>44</sup>.

### *The Making of an Astrologer*

How did one become an astrologer in medieval Islamic society? One could study a major astrological text, such as the *Tetrabiblos* of Ptolemy, learn some basic astronomy and mathematics in order to use or even construct an ephemeris, then step by step learn how to cast a horoscope. The use of an astronomical instrument was inevitable, if for no other reason than to determine the time of the required event. Of course, an ambitious astrologer could master this material so well and go beyond it to determine new parameters by conducting new observations. In principle, one could open his own practice by simply mastering the basic theoretical foundation for the determination of the horoscope, being able to use an astrolabe or its equivalent to tell time, an ephemeris to determine the positions of the planets for the required moment, and a dust board or the like to conduct the computational operations<sup>45</sup>.

Another approach to the subject of astrology, probably the one which was most frequently followed by medieval astrologers, was to apprentice at the hands of a famous astrologer. We know, for example, that the famous Abū Ma'šār interrupted his pilgrimage in order to study at the house of 'Alī b. Yahyā al-Munaḡḡim (d. 888), who was himself a boon companion of the caliph al-Mutawakkil (847-861). This 'Alī had apparently turned his personal library to public use. The library was obviously strong in the foreign sciences since it was in all likelihood inherited from his father Yahyā b. Abī Maṣṣūr (d. 845), the famous astronomer/astrologer during the caliphate of al-Ma'mūn (813-833), and his grandfather Abū Maṣṣūr, who was the astrologer of the caliph al-Manṣūr (754-775)<sup>46</sup>. Obviously, Abū Ma'šār found there the book and the teacher and « he stayed at 'Alī's house studying astrology until he became an atheist (*alḥada*), and that was his last contact with pilgrimage,

42. *Ibid.* See also the reference to an astrological treatise written by the jurist (*al-faqīh*) and judge (*al-qāḍī*), Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Mu'ād of Spain, in A. I. Sabra, « A Note on Codex Bibliotheca Medicea-Laureniana Or. 152 », *Journal for the History of Arabic Science*, (1977) 2 : 276-283, esp. p. 281.

43. *Faraḡ*, p. 187.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 176, and Nallino, *op. cit.*, p. 90. Ḡazzālī's acknowledgement of Ḡamāsp's correct astrological predictions is taken to mean that he in some sense believed in the validity of astrology. As we have mentioned before, Ḡazzālī did indeed think of astrology as being on the same footing as medicine, but he also reminded the reader that it was legally disapproved of. Ibn Ṭāwūs, however, quotes another source thus : « And of those who have acknowledged the validity of astrology is Abū Ḥāmid al-Ḡazzālī, the author of *al-Iḥyā'*, for he said in his book, *al-Tibr al-masbūk fī naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, in the first chapter where he mentioned the kings : 'And after him Ḡamāsp the sage who was versed in the science of the stars and had correct judgements in that field. He ruled for one year and six months' » (p. 176).

45. Note the use of the astrolabe, or altitude ring, the ephemeris and the dust board, the three basic tools of the profession, in the miniature painting depicting the birth of a prince, figure 5.

46. For the role of the caliph al-Manṣūr in the support and promulgation of astrology, see Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī al-Mas'ūdī (d. 957), *Murūḡ al-dahab wa ma'ādīn al-ḡawhar*, ed. tr. by C. Barbier de Meynard, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1874, vol. 8, p. 290 ff. See also Abū al-'Abbās Šams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr b. Ḥallikān (d. 1283), *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa anba' abnā' al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās, Beirut, Dār al-Ṭaḡāfa, 1977, vol. 6, p. 79, for the relationship of the astrologer Abū Maṣṣūr to the caliph al-Manṣūr. For the administration of that library and Abū Ma'šār's sojourn in it, see Eche, Youssef, *Les Bibliothèques arabes publiques et semi-publiques en Mésopotamie, en Syrie et en Égypte au Moyen Âge*, Damas, Institut Français de Damas, 1967, p. 59 ff. Note also that the public were also supplied with sustenance while studying at that library.

religion, or Islam »<sup>47</sup>. The popular perception of Abū Ma'šār's atheism must have become so notorious that a few centuries later we find al-Birūnī trying his best to dissociate himself from him as was noted earlier.

Apprenticeship must have been the common mode of instruction for we have several textual references attesting to such a relationship<sup>48</sup>. These sources are further confirmed by several portraits of famous teachers, posing as instructors, and who were usually associated with foreign sciences. Or, so at least was the common perception by the artists, and by extension the society at large. In the famous pseudo-biographical account of Aristotle, preserved by al-Mubaššir, Aristotle is depicted by the artist as holding an astrolabe in his hand<sup>49</sup>. The miniature painting is inserted in the text just after the sentence « and in his hand is the instrument of the stars and the arts (*šinā'āt*) »<sup>50</sup>. Interestingly, the instrument of the stars is the same rounded object, looking like an astrolabe, which we have seen in other miniature paintings. Moreover, the posture assumed by Aristotle, with his hand half raised as if trying to measure the altitude of an object with the astrolabe, is the same as the one used by artists to depict astrologers. What is clear here is that in the mind of the artist, Greek philosophy was associated with astrology in an integral fashion, in particular, it was Aristotelian philosophy that was perceived to be so closely connected. A similar connection made between such symbols, like a man holding an astrolabe in his hand, and foreign sciences, as exemplified by Greek philosophy, is also repeated in another manuscript of the Topkapı Serayı<sup>51</sup> where the artist depicts a solitary man with an astrolabe in his hand. The picture is placed next to that part of the text where the debate between a Greek and a Muslim has the Greek bragging about the philosophy and the sciences of his nation. The miniature is entitled « A picture of a Greek man with an observational instrument (*raṣād*) in his hand »<sup>52</sup>. What should be stressed at this point is that the association between astrology, on one hand, and Aristotelian philosophy and the foreign sciences, on the other, was not only theoretical and textual, but was so widely perceived to be so by the artists and the society at large.

Similarly, the other painting referred to earlier (figure 4) illustrates how actual instruction in the foreign sciences, including astrology, was done on a one-to-one tutoring basis. It shows the famous Persian poet, Sa'dī (d. 1294), being instructed in the foreign sciences by his teacher who also exhibits a ring-instrument in his hand. According to the text of Sa'dī<sup>53</sup>, the teacher is supposed to be Šams al-Dīn Abū al-Faraḡ b. al-Ḡawzī, who could be identified with Ḡamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Faraḡ b. al-Ḡawzī (d. 1200) or his grandson, from his daughter, Šams al-Dīn Abū al-Muzaḡffar Yūsuf b. al-Ḡawzī (d. 1256) also known as Sibṭ. Whichever one was intended here, it is still hard to believe that any of them could have instructed Sa'dī in the foreign sciences, because of the vehement zeal with which Ibn al-Ḡawzī

47. *Niṣwār*, IV, p. 66.

48. See, for example, the biographies of 'Abd Allāh b. Maṣrūr, in al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, ed. R. Taḡaddud, Tehran, 1971, p. 336, and Ibn Sim'ān, Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh, *ibid.*, p. 337, who had both apprenticed under Abū Ma'šār.

49. Abū al-Wafā' Mubaššir b. Fātik al-Qā'id (c. 1054), *Muḥtār al-ḥikam wa maḥāsin al-kalim*, Topkapı Serayı, Ahmet III, 3206, fol. 90r, published in Franz Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1975, plate II, facing p. 45.

50. The term *šinā'āt*, here translates the Greek term *τεχνή*, where the meaning could imply those arts or crafts that do not belong to the demonstrative sciences, such as astrology.

51. Revan 1062, fol. 161r, dated 1317.

52. This reference was brought to my attention by Bernard Goldstein of the University of Pittsburgh.

53. Eastwick, E. (tr.), *The Rose-Garden of Shekh Muslihu'd-Din Sadi of Shiraz*, London, 1979, p. 89.

the elder had persecuted the partisans of the foreign sciences, and the lack of interest of Ibn al-Ġawzī the younger in such subjects. The artist who depicted this scene was at least convinced that, whoever the teacher was, the subject matter of the lesson was undoubtedly in the foreign sciences, and more particularly in astrology.

In similar situation regarding tutorship, we are told that the famous Buwayhid ruler 'Aḡud al-Dawla (949-983) used to brag about the fact that he had studied astrology under the tutorship of the equally famous astronomer of the tenth century 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Šūfi (d. 986) <sup>54</sup>.

We also know of several astrologers who became famous as students of other astrologers, meaning that they either followed their methods in interpreting certain astrological dogmas or that they were tutored by them directly. We are told by the author of *al-Fihrist* that Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Aḡmad al-'Imrānī, the famous astrologer of Mosul, used to be sought after by students from distant places <sup>55</sup>. Add to that the direct evidence of Sayf al-Dawla's astrologer, al-Qabišī, mentioned earlier, where he says that he « was asked by one of those who were reading [astrology] with him to write a treatise attacking those who would cast horoscopes by using the method of the *namūdār* » <sup>56</sup>.

There is some evidence that astrology could also be acquired in a school setting. The school was usually in an observatory or attached to one. The several observatories known in medieval Islam such as those from al-Ma'mūn's time in Baghdad to the observatory of Ulūġ Beg (d. 1449) in Samarqand of Central Asia, to the observatory of Taqī al-Dīn (d. 1586) in Istanbul, were all known to have had several astronomers and astrologers on their staff. We even know that actual teaching of astronomy was taking place in some of them, and that some provisions were made in some cases to have a chair of astronomy or of foreign sciences endowed to them <sup>57</sup>. After all, we know that the Marāġa Observatory, which was founded in 1259 under the directorship of Našīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī (d. 1274), was ostensibly founded to carry out astrological research for the Ilḡānid ruler of the time.

Another instance of probable teaching of astrology in a school which did not seem to be affiliated to an observatory comes from a cryptic note by the most famous medieval traveller in the world of Islam, Ibn Baṡṡūṡa (c.1350), about the father of Hibat Allāh b. al-Falakī al-Tabrizī <sup>58</sup>. His father, al-Falakī (the astronomer), was the one who built the Falakiyya school in Tabriz. If his name is at all indicative of his profession, which is quite possible in light of medieval Islamic custom to call people by their professions such as *munaġġim* (astrologer), *ḡayyāt* (taylor), etc, then one would think that the Falakiyya school may have included at least the study of astronomy, the specialized subject of the founder. There is no other corroborating evidence to settle the issue either way.

Once an astrologer's education was completed, whether he acquired it by himself or through a teacher or school, the astrologer also had to excel at least in elementary astronomy in order to be able to cast a horoscope. Ibn Tāwūs reports part of a list of topics that an astrologer should master. That list covers two full printed pages of mainly astronomical

54. *Faraġ*, p. 145.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 127-128. According to Ibn Tāwūs, he is the author of *Kiṡāb al-mawālid* which is not mentioned in the *Fihrist*. See al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, *op.cit.*, p. 341.

56. al-Qabišī, *op. cit.*, fol. 69v.

57. Aydın Sayılı, *The Observatory in Islam and its Place in the General History of the Observatory*, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1960, p. 228-9, 254-5, 269, 273, *et passim*.

58. Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḡammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Muḡammad b. Ibrāḡim al-Lawātī known as Ibn Baṡṡūṡa (d.1377), *Riḡla*, Beirut, Dār Šādīr, 1964, p. 509.

subjects <sup>59</sup>. al-Qabišī's text on the examination of astrologers, mentioned above, does indeed confirm that it contains a list of highly technical astronomical subjects in which astrologers were supposed to be tested <sup>60</sup>.

Astrologers failing to study their astronomy and mathematics very likely would have had to answer charges levelled by someone like the Moroccan mathematician, al-Samaw'al (c. 1175), who left a treatise on the subject called *Kašf 'iwār al-munaġġimīn wa ġalaṡim fi aḡtar al-a'māl wa l-aḡkām* (Exposing the Imperfections of the Astrologers and their Mistakes in most of their Computations and Judgements) <sup>61</sup>. In this treatise, he requires a full mastery of mathematical astronomy of the astrologer, and he demonstrates by mathematical proof where they err. Astrologers should also possess a full mastery of mathematics for they should be able to perform the most intricate mathematical procedures relating to mathematical interpolation before they could use an ephemeris properly.

However, there is no evidence to suggest that astrologers were ever tested in theoretical issues. They had to face their hardest tests while they were already practicing their profession. There were several instances when astrologers were tested by their patrons either for entertainment purposes or to check on their veracity, usually when they were unprepared for the task <sup>62</sup>. We are told that al-Mu'tamid (870-892) asked Abū Ma'sar and another astrologer, both of whom were accompanying him in his campaign against the rebellious *zanġ*, to take the ascendant (*i.e.* cast a horoscope) concerning something he thought about the day before. In this way, he intended to test them on the spot. The story goes on to say that he had thought of a pregnant cow, and that the astrologers were able to describe the newly born calf down to the fact that it had a white spot on its forehead. The story concludes by saying that they were both correct and that they were both rewarded <sup>63</sup>.

The importance of this anecdote is related more to the circumstances it describes rather than to the testing of the astrologers. For, as we shall see below, this anecdote illustrates very well how the astrologers were involved in military campaigns and with armies as part of their regular duties. At a much later date, 1698, an astrolabe made by Muḡammad ḡalīl was dedicated to the *Ġabbādār Bāšī* (chief of the arsenal) instead of the astrologer at court as one would have expected <sup>64</sup>.

The ideal astrologer, however, was rarely found, and the sources report of a variety of charlatans posing as astrologers. In a well-known story, we are told that the famous Abū Ma'sar passed by a charlatan one day as he was practicing in one of the streets of Samarra. Abū Ma'sar jokingly asked the charlatan to look up his horoscope and to tell him about the business he was engaged in at the time. The charlatan guessed correctly that Abū Ma'sar was on his way to look into the affair of a person who was held in prison and that he would find that person free by the time he arrived at his destination. Finding the prediction to have come true, Abū Ma'sar is reported to have said : « If I do not know how this charlatan predicted

59. *Faraġ*, p. 152-153.

60. al-Qabišī, *op. cit.*, gives a description of four types of astrologers all of which but one who were supposed to be highly proficient in astronomical matters. In fact, he states that 'the perfect astrologer' is supposed to know astronomy so well that he would need no one else to help him develop his own observations and ephemeris.

61. Leiden, Arabic Ms. Or. 98.

62. *Faraġ*, p. 159.

63. *Ibid.*

64. Saliba, George, « The Buffalo Astrolabe of Muḡammad Khalīl », *al-Abḡāt*, (1973-1977) 26 : 11-18, esp. p. 12, and note 17.



correctly I would lose my mind, tear up my books, and believe in the falsehood of astrology. » He then rushed to the charlatan and introduced himself to him and was immediately recognized. The charlatan kissed his hand and addressed him as « our master ».

The charlatan then confessed that he knew nothing of astrology, and said : « I lie and deceive women and I place in front of me this *taht* (dust board), this astrolabe, and this *taqwim* (ephemeris) in order to deceive people. » But he went on to say that he had guessed correctly on account of his knowledge of *zağr, fa'l* and *'iyāfa*, the three modes of divination, mentioned above, which he had learned from the beduin Arabs. He went on to instruct Abū Ma'sār on the methods he followed in this kind of divination <sup>65</sup>.

This is the only instance I know of where the three symbols of the astrologer's paraphernalia are mentioned together in a textual source. We have seen above that the artist indeed corroborated the use of such instruments by the astrologers when he depicted the astrologers who were engaged in casting the horoscope of a prince (figure 5). The astrolabe alone, or in conjunction with an ephemeris, is mentioned in several other instances <sup>66</sup>.

Abū Ma'sār's story is also important on another account. It indicates the circumstances under which this charlatan was operating. He worked on the street and in the open air. His clients were mainly women <sup>67</sup>. He knew *zağr, fa'l* and *'iyāfa*, three forms of divination considered as part of the native sciences since they were supposed to have originated in pre-Islamic Arabia, and, as a result, were not technically disapproved of by Islamic religious law. The source reporting this story may have had another ulterior motive. That is, the author wished to pit those two forms of science against each other and to imply that the native sciences were just as good as Abū Ma'sār's astrology, if not superior to it. Whatever the case may be, we must conclude that such a charlatan could not have used an ephemeris properly. The one he was exhibiting was probably a simplified one of the type that the present author had discussed somewhere else <sup>68</sup>.

### Range of Astrological Predictions

In principle, astrologers claimed that they could answer any question that could occur to the human mind. As such, theirs was a comprehensive science that could explain events taking place in the sublunar region. The practically oriented astrologer, however, cared more about the problems that he thought would be in high demand and that he had some chance of finding answers for, than about more theoretical problems dealing with the philosophical bases of astrology and its relationship to more complex theological issues.

Besides writing a few treatises concerning elementary statements regarding the principles and methods of computation, the astrologer of medieval Islam seems to have dealt with the following main categories of astrological practices :

65. Nišwār, IV, p. 324 ff. For the use of the dust board as a symbol of astrology, see Uqlidisi, *op. cit.*

66. Farāğ, p. 133, and al-Qiftī (d. 1248), Ġamāl al-Din Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Yūsuf, *Ta'riḥ al-ḥukamā'*, ed. Lippert, J., Leipzig, Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Leipzig, 1903, p. 427.

67. See *infra* for a similar implication from the text of the *muḥtasib* Ibn al-Uḥuwwa.

68. Saliba, George, « The Planetary Tables of Cyriacus », *Journal for the History of Arabic Science*, (1978) 2 : 53-66 ; *idem*, « Computational Techniques in a Set of Late Medieval Astronomical Tables », *Journal for the History of Arabic Science*, 1977, 1 : 22-32 ; *idem*, « The Double Argument Lunar Tables of Cyriacus », *Journal for the History of Astronomy*, 1976, 7 : 41-46.

1. Omen astrology. This type is not very different from the earliest known type of Babylonian astrology <sup>69</sup>. In this domain, one passed judgements on the future of kingdoms, nations, and at times the whole world <sup>70</sup>. One studied the appearance of shooting stars, comets, and the conjunctions of major planets, especially those of Saturn and Jupiter, in order to predict the future from their timing and behavior. We are told that even the flow of the Nile was predicted by astrologers from observing the shooting stars (*nayāzik*) in the heavens <sup>71</sup>.

2. Horoscopic astrology. This was probably the most important branch of astrological predictions. It touched on the conditions of the individual as they could be read by consulting the positions of the stars at the time of one's birth. In general, the same principle could be applied to predict the future unfolding of any event that has a beginning at a specific moment in time.

The birth of a child, however, or the moment of its conception, were of paramount importance for predicting the future of that child despite the long-winded debates that went on regarding the preference between the moment of birth or that of conception as being the appropriate moment to mark the beginning of life. Whichever point was accepted in theory mattered very little in practice and the actual birth of a child called for the presence of the astrologer, especially when the child was of some political significance <sup>72</sup>.

We also know from textual evidence of horoscopes being cast for relatively unimportant personalities. In one instance, we have a lively account of a young man who was in the service of the famous mu'tazilite al-Ġubbā'i (850-915), and whose wife was in labor. al-Ġubbā'i is supposed to have sent a man of his company to go with the servant and 'take the altitude', presumably to find the exact time of birth in order to cast the horoscope of the child <sup>73</sup>. A skillful use of the astrolabe could in principle yield such information.

Ibn Tāwūs quotes on the authority of al-Zamaḥṣārī's (d. 1144) *Rabī' al-abrār* that the Sassanian kings used to bring the astrologers and place them apparently just outside their bed chambers. The kings would signal to them at the right moment to lift their astrolabes and take the ascendent for the moment of conception <sup>74</sup>.

Even horoscopes of cities were considered like childbirths and they were cast with the same care as that of human horoscopes. Historical reports by Ya'qūbi and Birūni preserve such horoscopes for Baghdad and al-Mahdiyya in Tunis, among others, with Birūni reproducing the actual chart for the city of Baghdad <sup>75</sup>. It was on the basis of that chart that

69. Thompson, R. C., *The Reports of the Magicians and Astrologers of Nineveh and Babylon*, London, Luzac, 1900.

70. Birūni, *Āṭār*, *op. cit.*, text, p. 132.

71. al-Bağdādī, 'Abd al-Laṭīf, *Kitāb al-ifādah wa l-i'ibār*, ed. De Sacy, Paris, 1810, p. 338 ff.

72. The artistic depictions of astrologers being present either individually or in groups at the time of childbirth are extremely numerous. In addition to the miniature painting depicting the birth of a prince, (figure 5), see, for example, the depiction in the miniature painting already published by Ettinghausen, Richard, *Arab Painting*, New York, Rizzoli, 1977, p. 121. For the depiction of a group of astrologers at childbirth, see Ipşiroğlu, M. Ş., *Saray-Alben Diez'sche Klebebände aus den Berliner Sammlungen*, Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1964, post p. 16, hors texte, tafel VIII.

73. Farāğ, p. 155.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 209. Although this story could be apocryphal, it reflects the interest that was paid at the moment of conception as being the appropriate moment for the horoscope.

75. Birūni, *Āṭār*, *op. cit.*, p. 270-281. See also Nallino, C., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, *op. cit.*, p. 93 and *idem*, *Ilm al-falak : ta'riḥuhu 'inda al-'arab fi al-qurūn al-wusṭā*, Roma, 1911, p. 144-145.

astrologers had predicted that no caliph would ever die in the city of Baghdad <sup>76</sup>. And if horoscopes of cities could be cast, why should houses and palaces be any different? In fact, we have a report that the vizier Ibn Muqla (d. 935) consulted with the astrologers in order to determine the time when he should lay the corner stone of his house <sup>77</sup>.

3. *Masā'il wa ihtiyārāt* (Interrogations and Elections). This type of astrological prediction is not as important as the first two, and less supported theoretically, but, even so, it was much more widely practiced. The *masā'il* type produced answers to questions similar to the ones asked by the caliph al-Mu'tamid and by Abū Ma'shar above, as well as to questions concerning theft, lost husbands, etc. *Ihtiyārāt*, on the other hand, dealt with questions relating to the opportune time for the performance of a specific task.

Under these two general rubrics, a whole variety of questions could be answered. These ranged from the caliph al-Ma'mūn (813-833) consulting with his astrologer al-Faḍl b. Sahl (d. 818) regarding his wars with his brother al-Amin as to whether he should surrender or not <sup>78</sup>, to the more legendary woman astrologer who surveyed the army before it marched on to battle and selected only those soldiers who were destined to survive <sup>79</sup>. From later textual sources, we know of astrologers being either consulted before the engagement of armies <sup>80</sup> or involved in the actual direction of battles <sup>81</sup>. Similar activities were carried out by an astrologer from thirteenth century Italy <sup>82</sup>. Miniature paintings from 15th and 16th century Persia <sup>83</sup> confirm such functions. Moreover, astrologers decided on the opportune time for a journey <sup>84</sup> and acted as consultants to rulers together with other diviners. Their opinions were weighed against each other <sup>85</sup>.

Caliphs consulted their astrologers every time they needed to decide an important matter, as was done by al-Muktafi (902-908) when he wanted to declare his son heir to the

76. With the death of al-Amin (813) and al-Mutawakkil (861) in that same city, this prediction became a laughing matter for the opponents of astrology. See, for example, Ibn Qayyim al-Gawziyya, *op. cit.*, p. 136 ff.

77. Hamdāni, Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Malik, *Takmilat Ta'riḥ al-Ṭabari*, ed. A. Y. Kan'ān, Beirut, Catholic Press, 1958, vol. 1, p. 94.

78. *Faraḡ*, p. 133.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 143. Joshua's stopping of the sun is supposed to have confused the computations of this woman and hence the city could be conquered.

80. Sayil, *op. cit.*, p. 204, note 73, for an astrologer being consulted before the commencement of hostilities.

81. The astrologer Šams al-Dīn (1231) was supposed to have determined the time for the army's attack under the king al-Kāmil Nāṣir al-Dīn (1238), see Ibn Šaddād, *al-A'lāq al-ḥaṭira*, vol. III: 2, p. 552-523.

82. The Italian astrologer, Guido Bonatti, who may have resided at the court of Frederick II (1194-1250) was supposed to have conducted a battle « from a campanile with the precision of a fire alarm: first bell, to arms; second, to horse; third, off to battle ». Quoted by Haskins, C. H., *Studies in the History of Medieval Science*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1924, reprinted, NY, Ungar, 1967, p. 258, from Boncompagni, *Della vita e delle opere di Guido Bonatti*, Rome, 1851, p. 6 ff.

83. The fact that such practices did take place in the Islamic world as well is illustrated by miniature paintings from 16th century Persia which depict astrologers in the midst of battles with astrolabes raised as if to measure altitudes. See, for example, the 16th century Persian painting depicting the battle between Bahram Chubina and Khusrāw Parwiz, Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, published in Gray, Basil, *Persian Painting*, NY, Rizzoli, 1977, p. 134. Another earlier 15th century painting depicting a similar battle with an astrologer performing similar duties is British Museum 1925-9-2-1, dated Širāz 1490 which is still unpublished, as far as I can tell. More about this below.

84. *Faraḡ*, p. 156.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

throne <sup>86</sup>. The same vizier Ibn Muqla, just mentioned, must have consulted with experts in these two types of astrological predictions because at one time he arranged to meet secretly with the caliph al-Rāḍi (934-940) when the moon was under the rays of the sun, hence being especially auspicious for secretive affairs <sup>87</sup>. This is the same caliph who, in the year 937, granted one of his commanders a gift when Scorpio was ascending <sup>88</sup>. At an earlier time Ibn Muqla had arranged to meet with al-Qāhir (932-934) at the ascension of Capricorn for that was considered to be an opportune time <sup>89</sup>.

Finally, astrologers were supposed to be around their patrons at the critical moment, namely, at the death bed. They were either to cast the horoscope for the future state of the kingdom, to tell the patron whether the sickness was fatal or not (probably advising on the writing of the will as well), or simply advising the attending physicians regarding the time when the cure should be effected <sup>90</sup>. According to the report of Barhebraeus, when the caliph al-Wāṭiq (842-847) became very ill, he called in his astrologers, al-Ḥasan b. Sahl b. Nawbaḥt being amongst them. They looked at his horoscope and they decided that he would live another fifty years; he died ten days after that <sup>91</sup>.

The textual evidence for the presence of astrologers at deathbeds is best illustrated by the following anecdote from the work of Ḡāḥiz. While discussing the dog, al-Ḡāḥiz mentions the diminutive form of the name, i.e. *kulayb*. At this occasion he reports that al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ (d. 714), the ruler of Iraq whose name at birth was Kulayb (a name which he changed later on), had called his astrologer when he felt that his end was near ('*indamā qaruba an yamūt*). He asked him whether he saw a king (*malik*) dying. The astrologer answered that he did see a king dying but his name was Kulayb and not Ḥaḡḡāḡ. Hearing that, Ḥaḡḡāḡ is supposed to have said: « By God! You are right for my name was Kulayb. » <sup>92</sup>

4. World cycles. A different kind of birth is that of cyclical rebirths of periodic events such as the natural year, i.e., when the sun returns to the vernal equinox or the repeated conjunctions of two planets such as the cycle of Saturn and Jupiter which takes place approximately once every twenty years. Such recurring events gave rise to the occasion of recasting fresh horoscopes. Astrologers of medieval Islam occupied themselves extensively with the casting of such horoscopes <sup>93</sup>.

86. The astrologer consulted was the famous translator of Greek astronomical and mathematical texts, Ishāq b. Hunayn, whose father was equally famous for his translations of Greek medical texts. See Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-Šahrāzūrī (d.c.1288), *Nuzhat al-arwāḥ wa rawḡat al-afrāḥ fī ta'riḥ al-ḥukamā' wa l-falāsifa*, Hyderabad, Osmania, 1976, vol. 2, p. 2-3.

87. al-Ḥamdāni, *op. cit.*, events of the year 937 A.D., p. 109.

88. *Ibid.*

89. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

90. The iconographic evidence for such practices is plentiful. See, for example, figure 1, where the astrologer is found next to the head of the dying Alexander. An astrologer is depicted in a similar position by the deathbed of William II in a Sicilian painting from the 12th century published in Stewart, Desmond, *Alhambra*, NY, Newsweek, 1974, p. 86.

91. Ibn al-'Ibri (Barhebraeus), *Muḥtaṣar ta'riḥ al-duwal*, ed. Šālḥāni, Beirut, 1890, repr. Dār al-Rā'id al-Lubnāni, Beirut, p. 245.

92. Ḡāḥiz, *Ḥayawān*, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 324.

93. For a discussion of the literature relating to such events see Kennedy, E.S., « Ramifications of the World-Year Concept in Islamic Astrology », *op. cit.*, and *idem et al*, *The Astrological History of Mašā'allāh*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1971.



The customs and practices connected with the natural year on the day of Nürüz (i.e., Persian New Year) required the presence of an astrologer who in all likelihood produced the year's horoscope as it related to the life of his patron. Several events connected with the already mentioned Buwayhid ruler, 'Aḍud al-Dawla, leave no doubt regarding the practice of casting such yearly horoscopes<sup>94</sup>. This same ruler used to celebrate his own yearly transfer as well, i.e., the time when the sun reaches the same point on the zodiac which it occupied at the time of his birth. He would perfume himself and put on his new regalia. The astrologer would be the first to enter his *mağlis* (audience), « kiss the ground in front of him, and congratulate him » on his astrological birthday. He would stay around together with the other people in order to share in the festivities<sup>95</sup>.

5. Mathematical problems. Since astrologers were skilled in astronomy and mathematics, they were sometimes asked to determine non-astrological questions such as the *qibla* (i.e., the direction of Mecca) of a mosque. This is a problem that would, in principle, require a rather sophisticated knowledge of spherical trigonometry. That such requests were indeed honored is confirmed by the report about the main mosque of Baghdad whose *qibla* was determined by the otherwise unknown astrologer Bahrām<sup>96</sup>.

6. Miscellanea. In a curious story from the Šāhnāme, the astrologers were brought in to determine the parenthood of two children<sup>97</sup>. In another story, we are told by Birūnī that the astrologers had determined that there could not be a prophet of God beyond the latitude of 33° for that is the farthest northern distance any planet could reach<sup>98</sup>.

In summary, the range of astrological predictions and activities encompassed almost all aspects of human life.

94. We are told that during the sickness of 'Aḍud al-Dawla, when his yearly horoscope had signaled a bad year for him, he was visited daily by al-Šūfī in order to console him, but al-Šūfī would be denied entrance. Finally, al-Šūfī managed to convince the gate keeper to let him in whereupon he rushed to tell 'Aḍud al-Dawla that he need not worry for he saw Imām 'Alī in his dream and he told him that 'Aḍud al-Dawla would live. *Farağ*, p. 198-199. The ulterior motive of the story is probably to assert the validity of the saintly dream against the predictions of the astrologers. But it is undeniable that the same story also confirms the existence of such yearly horoscopes. Other day-by-day ephemeris were also executed by the astrologer al-Faḍl. *Farağ*, p. 135.

95. *Niṣwār*, IV, p. 88 ff.

96. *Farağ*, p. 209.

97. Figure 2. The text reads thus : « King Kāvus then looked for men who observed the stars [i.e., astrologers] and in a friendly manner summoned them into his presence. He inquired how they were and seated them on golden chairs [no such chairs appear in the painting], the talk being concerned with Sudāba and the struggle with Hāmāvarān [her father]. The purpose was that they might be informed of the question affecting her and with full knowledge understand her behaviour. He said much about the two babes, bringing the secret into the light. Thereupon they took out their almanacs and astrolabes [in the picture, at least two seem to be opening almanacs, one carrying an astrolabe] and for a whole week pondered the matter. At last they said :

'How could wine ever be poured into a cup that has once been filled with poison ? These two children are the offsprings of a person not the Shah, nor are they the offsprings of this mother. Had they been of royal origin, that would easily have been revealed by these almanacs. But the secret that lies behind all this is not patent either in the heavens now nor in the earth. It is a strange thing which you must realize.'

They described the features of the ill-designing and sinful woman to the king and the assembled company. » *The Epic of the Kings : Shāh-nāma the national epic of Persia by Ferdowsi*, tr. R. Levy, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967, p. 89.

98. In this case Venus, which reaches a maximum latitude of around  $\pm 8,56^\circ$ , Birūnī, in « *Ergänzungen zu Sachaus Ausgabe...* », von C. Garbers and J. Fück, *Documenta Islamica Inedita*, Berlin, 1952, p. 33.

### Clients and Working Conditions

It is safe to assume that people interested in astrology would also make excellent clients. In fact, the astrologer himself was probably his own first client, provided he could determine, after the fact, his exact time of birth or better yet his own moment of conception. Even though such information is hard to come by, we still know of many instances where people cast their own horoscopes, at times even predicting their own times of death<sup>99</sup>.

Next to the astrologer, but of considerably greater importance, comes the patron, who was usually a man of political power. A good number of such patrons were themselves well versed in astrology and could practically perform the same functions as the astrologer. We have already referred to the pride with which 'Aḍud al-Dawla used to brag about being the student of al-Šūfī. We also have several paintings of multiple chronology and provenance, where princes and patrons are themselves depicted in the position of an astrologer, or contemplating the stars with a raised astrolabe in their hand<sup>100</sup>. In the same category of iconographic representation, we note that the famous astronomer/astrologer Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274) was represented in the same posture<sup>101</sup>, thus leaving no doubt that such characters with astrolabes in their hands were intended to represent people who were knowledgeable about astrology.

Astrologers who were famous enough to have patrons were also taken at times as political consultants or even put in charge of major projects where their expertise in the mathematical sciences would be called upon<sup>102</sup>.

Those astrologers who could not find a patron resorted to practicing on their own and in public, usually on a major thoroughfare. Several reports from medieval sources help us appreciate the situation of these practicing astrologers who must have been a common feature of medieval Islamic cities.

In the text of Ibn al-Uḥuwwa, mentioned above, which was apparently written for the *muḥtasib*-s of Egypt and Syria towards the beginning of the fourteenth century during the Mamlūk reign, we are told that the duties of the police included making sure that the astrologers (*munağğimūn*), whose art was forbidden anyway, were to practice in the street and not inside the shops<sup>103</sup>. The reasons he gives for this injunction are moral ones. In the shops, he says, letter writers usually sit and women would frequent such shops. Young men who have nothing else to do and have no business being there would come and eavesdrop on the horoscopes being cast for those women. They would then use that occasion to approach them. For that reason, he continues, the astrologer should be taken out of the shop, made to practice on a major thoroughfare, and should be even prohibited from practicing in a side street or alleyway.

99. See, for example, the story of Barhebraeus in Nöldeke, Th., *Sketches from Eastern History*, Beirut, Ḥayyāt, repr., 1965, p. 253, *Farağ*, p. 167, 168, 171 f, and Šahrāzūrī, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 83.

100. One such patron is depicted on a metal bowl, published in *Islam and the Arab World : Faith, People, Culture*, ed. Bernard Lewis, NY, Knopf, 1976, p. 263.

101. Sayılı, Aydın, *Observatory*, *op. cit.*, plate 2.

102. The famous sons of Mūsā b. Šākir, who were themselves quite proficient in astrological matters, acted as confidants of al-Mutawakkil (847-861) and al-Musta'in (862-866). See G. Saliba, *The History of al-Ṭabarī : The Crisis of the Abbasid Caliphate*, NY, SUNY, 1985, p. 2, n. 3. Abū al-Qāsim Yūsuf b. Yahyā al-Munağğim was put in charge of a hospital in Baghdad whose budget was in the order of 600 dinars per month because Sinān b. Ṭābit did not want to have anything to do with money, Qifū, *Ta'riḥ*, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

103. Ibn al-Uḥuwwa, *Ma'alim*, *op. cit.*, p. 182 ff.

The picture painted by Ibn al-Uḡwwa confirms the practice while condemning it. On the one hand, he says that the whole craft of astrology is religiously disapproved of, and on the other hand, he goes on to regulate its practice and to indicate that it was flourishing in the small shops of medieval cities as well as on public thoroughfares. Moreover, this report also indicates that most of the clients of such astrologers were women and young men who would hang around such places. It is also interesting that the astrologers discussed by Ibn al-Uḡwwa seem to have shared their practice with another group of professionals, namely, the letter writers.

To practice astrology on a public thoroughfare was not a novelty on the streets of Egypt and Syria during the fourteenth century when Ibn al-Uḡwwa was writing. A century or so earlier, al-Qifī reports that the famous physician Ibn Riḍwān (d. 1068) of Egypt was a street astrologer before he took up medicine <sup>104</sup>. Still earlier, al-Muqaddasī (c. 960) reports in his geographical work, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm* <sup>105</sup>, that the astrologers of Damascus had their own quarters near Bāb Ḡayrūn. From Baghdad, we know of at least one astrologer who used to sit on one of the bridges of the city and cast horoscopes for two dirhams; he even cast a horoscope for the caliph al-Mu'taṣim (833-842) <sup>106</sup>. We should recall the charlatan astrologer who tricked Abū Ma'sār with his astrolabe, dust board, and ephemeris and who was sitting on a public thoroughfare of Samarra. This is only part of the abundant evidence for the presence of astrologers on the streets of medieval Islamic cities.

Astrologers who occupied official positions at the court presumably devoted full time to the practice of their craft. Others who were not lucky enough to occupy such posts did not refrain from performing other odd jobs in order to sustain themselves <sup>107</sup>. There were also those who practiced astrology as a hobby as they derived their income from elsewhere. Among those, one found physicians <sup>108</sup> and even chief rabbis, as was the case with the chief rabbis of Mosul and Tiberias at the time when they were visited by Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela towards the end of the twelfth century <sup>109</sup>.

When facing financial hardships, some astrologers would resort to imaginative solutions such as visiting a jail in order to cast the horoscope of an important person there. They could only hope that they would be rewarded when that person was eventually freed <sup>110</sup>.

Others would simply walk the streets shouting their services very much like the grocery cart-haulers in modern Middle Eastern cities <sup>111</sup>. The street astrologer of Baghdad included dream interpretation in his services. We are told that he had initially asked for a thousand dirhams in order to cast a horoscope, but later settled for a fish worth less than ten dirhams <sup>112</sup>. One can easily detect the level of bargaining in such an ambiguous and

104. Qifī, *Ta'riḥ*, op. cit., p. 443.

105. De Goeje, M. J. (ed.), *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, Leiden, Brill, 1877, p. 172.

106. *Faraḡ*, p. 190.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

108. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

109. Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, *The Itinerary of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela (12th century)*, text and trad. by M. N. Adler, New York and London, 1907, p. 45, 52, 80; also available in another translation in Komroff, M. (ed.), *Contemporaries of Marco Polo*, NY, Dorset, 1989, p. 280, 285, 309.

110. Cf. *infra*, *ta'sīl*.

111. *Faraḡ*, p. 196.

112. *Ibid.*

uncondoned trade which is quite understandable within a legal system that did not allow trading in undefined and useless commodities <sup>113</sup>.

Astrology was obviously held with such ambivalence that one astrologer would warn against casting horoscopes in public for fear of angering the uneducated audience. He says that he was almost killed by such a crowd <sup>114</sup>; yet, another would not even refrain from going into a school of Islamic jurisprudence to cast horoscopes in public <sup>115</sup>.

One place we find them depicted in paintings, but not yet described in texts, is on ships, as we can easily see from the representations in figures 3 and 6. In both paintings, a character carrying an astrolabe in his hand, assuming the usual posture of an astrologer, is located on the raised platform towards the back of the ship. These two paintings, however, come from Mughal India, and are quite late. They may therefore already exhibit some foreign influences, but further research should be conducted in order to establish the extent of the relationship, if there was any, between the astrologer's craft and navigation.

At various points, we encounter reports of astrologers acting in groups. We have many textual references to that effect; a few paintings from various periods and localities corroborate the practice as well <sup>116</sup>.

The most secure and lucrative position, however, remained the holding of an office. From the first appointment of Abū Ma'sār to the office of chief astrologer under al-Mu'tazz (866-869) <sup>117</sup>, to the *munaḡḡim bāṣī* under the Safavid sultans (c. 1700), to the Ottoman Turks of the nineteenth century <sup>118</sup>, the astrologer reported daily to the Palace and cashed his salary and his gifts at the appropriate times. We are told that pay was not always a reward; we know of the famous cry of Abū Ma'sār who used to claim that he predicted correctly and received a beating for his prediction <sup>119</sup>.

#### Remuneration

As we have just mentioned, the most lucrative position was that of the chief astrologer (*munaḡḡim bāṣī*) at some court. We have some evidence of the amount of pay the astrologer received in such circumstances. When Abū Ma'sār was invested with that position under al-Mu'tazz, he received the following remunerations per month:

- 100 dinars in land revenues
- 30 dinars in real estate.

On top of that, he received 1 000 dinars as an outright gift <sup>120</sup>.

We do not know very much about the comparative salaries in that period. But if we compare that salary to the fabulous income made half a century earlier by Ḡibril b. Baḥtīšū <sup>121</sup>, the physician of Hārūn al-Raṣīd (786-809), we find that amount to be rather modest. The body guards of Hārūn al-Raṣīd also received some fabulous sums of money, in

113. Nallino, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, op. cit., p. 93.

114. *Faraḡ*, p. 161.

115. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

116. *Ibid.*, p. 160, 208, 186-187. Cf. also the miniature painting mentioned above, Ipşiroğlu, op. cit.

117. *Faraḡ*, p. 158.

118. Nallino, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, op. cit., p. 93.

119. *Faraḡ*, p. 158, and Qifī, *Ta'riḥ*, p. 153.

120. *Faraḡ*, p. 158.

121. Qifī, *Ta'riḥ*, op. cit., p. 142 ff.

the order of 25 000 dinars, the sum being understandable since the caliph's life was at stake <sup>122</sup>.

But when this income is compared to that of the street astrologer who would cast a horoscope for two dirhams <sup>123</sup> or for as little as the price of one fish which was considerably less than ten dirhams <sup>124</sup>, we find that Abū Ma'sar's income was quite impressive. Of course, we have no idea as to how many horoscopes the street astrologer would cast per month. If he were lucky enough to complete, say five horoscopes a day, he would then be within the comfortable bracket, i.e., making some 30 dinars per month, however, he would still be making considerably less than the *munaḡḡim bāṣī*.

Around a century later, the salary of a vizier's son was 500 dinars per month while that of « judge, chief of market police » was 100 dinars per month <sup>125</sup>. Allowing for a decline in salaries during that century <sup>126</sup> and some exaggeration in the story of Abū Ma'sar, we could safely say that within the ninth and tenth centuries, the chief astrologer was paid a salary comparable to that of a professor of law or that of a judge, here probably a *muhtasib*.

We have one citation from the first half of the tenth century where we are told that an astrologer was paid 200 dinars for one consultation <sup>127</sup>.

At a later period, we have a report that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (1169-93) paid his astrologer 30 dinars per month <sup>128</sup>. He paid an equal amount to his physician <sup>129</sup>.

If the monthly salaries paid by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn to his astrologer and physician were indicative of the general conditions at the time, and if those conditions continued to prevail towards the beginning of the thirteenth century, then we can stipulate that the astrologer's income was also around five dinars per month, for that was the salary derived by physicians working at the Nūri hospital in Damascus at that time <sup>130</sup>.

We lack the data for later centuries as well as the ability to compare the astrologer to other officials because the changes implemented by the Mamlūks from the thirteenth century on introduced considerable variations in the administration and in the relative positions of government officials. Therefore, it is very difficult to tell with any certainty how much an astrologer would make during these later centuries. But further research in that area specifically should reveal some more interesting data.

### *Social Mobility of Astrologers*

The sources inform us that the most frequent technique for social upward mobility of an astrologer was accomplished through a procedure called *ta'sīl* (investment). The story of

122. Faraḡ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Aḡbār al-aḡkiyā'*, Cairo, Ahram edition, 1970, p. 185, says that the pay was 500 000 dirhams.

123. Faraḡ, p. 190.

124. *Ibid.*, p. 196. An ophthalmologist was making about 70 dinars per month under al-Ma'mūn (813-833), Qifṭī, *Ta'riḡ*, p. 152.

125. Ashtor, E., *A Social and Economic History of the Near East in the Middle Ages*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1976, p. 154.

126. *Ibid.*

127. Ḥamdānī, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

128. Ashtor, E., *Histoire des prix et salaires dans l'Orient Médiéval*, Paris, École Pratique des Hautes Études, 1969, p. 264.

129. 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baḡdādī, *al-Ifṣāḡ*, *op. cit.*, ap. x, p. 539.

130. Ziadeh, N., *Urban Life in Syria under the Early Mamluks*, Beirut, American University of Beirut, 1953, p. 160.

Abū Ma'sar's investiture as the chief astrologer at the court illustrates this technique very well. The title of the story in the *Niṣwār* is « *al-Buḡturī wa Abū Ma'sar yu'aṣṣilānī 'inda al-Mu'tazz aṣṣan* » <sup>131</sup> (i.e., al-Buḡturī, a famous 'Abbāsīd poet, and Abū Ma'sar invest an investment (*aṣl*) with al-Mu'tazz), hence our technical term *ta'sīl*. The story goes on to say : « At one time al-Buḡturī and Abū Ma'sar were facing a severe financial hardship. While on the road together, it occurred to them to visit al-Mu'tazz, who was in jail, and gain favor with him (*yatawaddadānī ilayhi*) and invest with him (*yu'aṣṣilānī 'indahū aṣṣan*). » The story goes on to say that Abū Ma'sar predicted that al-Mu'tazz would obtain the caliphate after several wars and struggles. The implication in the story is that he had that prediction written down on a piece of cloth and handed it over to al-Mu'tazz (*sallamtu ḡālika ilayhi wa inṣarafnā*). Obviously, Abū Ma'sar did not get paid for his services at that time, and, as an investment, his services were probably volunteered.

Years later, al-Mu'tazz did indeed assume the caliphate and the whole prediction of Abū Ma'sar came to be true. Abū Ma'sar reports to the caliph and the latter receives him thus : « I have not forgotten you and your prediction came to be true. I grant you (*aḡraytu laka*) a hundred dinars per month as an allowance (*rizqan*) and thirty in real estate (*naṣṣan*), and I have made you the chief astrologer at the caliphate and ordered for you an immediate gift of one thousand dinars. » <sup>132</sup>

Under very similar circumstances down to the writing of a prediction on a piece of cloth, a story is told of the ascension of the grandfather of Abū Sahl b. Nawbaḡt (d. 815) to the position of court astrologer under al-Manṣūr <sup>133</sup>. This Nawbaḡt is the one who participated in casting the horoscope of the city of Baghdad <sup>134</sup>. In a different report we are told that he even accompanied al-Manṣūr on his last pilgrimage together with al-Manṣūr's physician <sup>135</sup>.

Another *ta'sīl* is told of an astrologer who volunteered his services to 'Alī b. 'Isā b. Māḡhān when he set out to fight al-Ma'mūn in Ḥurāsān <sup>136</sup>.

The last example of a *ta'sīl* is reported about the only female astrologer as a historical personality that we know of to date. Bawrān, the daughter of al-Ḥasan b. Sahl b. Nawbaḡt (d. c. 845) and the wife of al-Ma'mūn <sup>137</sup> « used to lift the astrolabe and look at the horoscope of the caliph, al-Mu'taṣim. » One day she noticed that a crisis (*qaṭ'*) was about to befall the caliph through a wooden instrument. She sent her father al-Ḥasan, who had fallen out of favor with the caliph, to the court with the ominous news. At the appointed time, every precaution was taken so that the caliph would not come near any wood. When his servant brought him his comb and tooth picks, al-Ḥasan ordered the servant to use them before offering them to the caliph. As soon as he did, his head swelled and he fell dead. Needless to say, al-Ḥasan was then taken back into the service of the caliph as a reward and Bawrān was allowed to repossess her villages and estates that Ibn al-Zayyāt (d. 847), the vizier of al-Mu'taṣim, had confiscated from her <sup>138</sup>.

131. *Niṣwār*, *op. cit.*, vol. VIII, p. 56.

132. The story goes on to say that he paid al-Buḡturī 1 000 dinars for each line of poetry. His immediate gift was 6 000 dinars. Then al-Mu'tazz advised al-Buḡturī on how to invest that money.

133. Faraḡ, p. 211-212.

134. Nallino, *'Ilm al-falak*, *op. cit.*, p. 144-145.

135. *Ibid.*, p. 144, Qifṭī, *Ta'riḡ*, *op. cit.*, p. 439.

136. Faraḡ, p. 192.

137. Ibn Ḥallikān, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 287 ff.

138. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

Other techniques of upward mobility involved the father-son recommendation, as was done by various members of the Nawbaht family<sup>139</sup>, which guaranteed the job of the father for the son.

### *Concluding Remarks*

The evidence collected here, despite its fragmentary nature, seems to indicate that astrologers played a very complex role in medieval Islamic society. While trading in a craft which was both religiously and legally frowned upon, they still managed to carve a niche for themselves which was not too different from that occupied by other professional classes in that society. Like other craftsmen, artists, and professionals they had to depend on a patronage system for their sustenance, and they seem to have exploited that system with some success.

Theoretically, the discipline of astrology was based on foundations that could be ultimately derived from Aristotelian philosophy. The close relationship with that philosophy was articulated as early as the ninth century, and that may have contributed to the popular identification between astrology, Greek philosophy and the foreign sciences which were themselves derived mainly from Greek natural philosophy. The larger perception of astrology, therefore, was that it was the offspring of the Greek intellectual tradition which has always had a tense relationship with the native Arabic and religious sciences. For the members of the intellectual class of medieval Islamic society, who took upon themselves the role of preserving the native Arabic and religious traditions, astrology was definitely anathema. For the other members of the intellectual elite, who identified themselves with the incoming Greek philosophical tradition, astrology was, like medicine, just another applied discipline within that tradition. But due to the power which was wielded by the religious class throughout medieval Islamic times, astrology was on the defensive for most of its history in that society.

Practical astrology, however, witnessed a widespread acceptance within that society despite the numerous theoretical and religious attacks against its theoretical foundations. The circles which seem to have given it refuge were mainly the political circles, for it was in those circles that the services of astrologers were mostly needed. Princes, rulers, caliphs, and local officials consulted with astrologers before embarking on actions of any major import. Those courageous ones who carried grave actions of the state without consulting astrologers, or by going against their predictions, were celebrated in great poetic odes, which simply indicated that those daring leaders were the exception rather than the rule.

On the popular level, people resorted to astrologers for various reasons connected with the anxieties of everyday life. All major transitional points of one's life were deemed important enough for an astrological consultation. The most important of those transitional points was naturally the moment of birth, and there is abundant evidence that astrologers were consulted at such times. The evidence surveyed here, however, indicates that those moments were not unique, and other concerns of great variety were also deemed worthy of the astrologers attention. This same evidence also suggests that members of a major segment of medieval Islamic society, namely the Shiites, were especially attracted to astrological predictions. This may in some way explain the general sympathy exhibited by the members of this group towards the foreign sciences as it is often claimed.

139. Nallino, *ʿIlm al-falak*, op. cit., p. 144.

These remarks should in no way be interpreted to mean that the role of the astrologer in medieval Islamic society is fairly well understood or that these conclusions will not be invalidated by future research. On the contrary, the fragmentary nature of the evidence does indeed call for more intensive efforts in that regard before we can explain the actual functioning of the astrologers as a class within medieval Islamic society. On the level of documentation we realize that the sources which we have consulted here were only a selective sample, and more work needs to be done on various fronts before we can say that these sources were actually fully exploited.

Most importantly, however, the great majority of the sources consulted here were produced by the highly literate class of medieval Islam. The members of this class did not necessarily share the same visions as those of the society at large. The attempt to include the miniature paintings with these sources is only a limited attempt to go outside the domain of the literary class. But I hasten to say that I am fully cognizant of the fact that the painters either worked for the same members of this class or for the political authority which patronized them, and thus can not be really considered as independent evidence. Accordingly, the visual sources considered here should be taken as supplementary to the written word, and it is in that capacity that I tried to see within the paintings instances which are not documented in the literary sources. The existence of such instances, as in the case of the astrologer/astronomer on ships, that are not fully understood yet simply invite further research in order to understand the manner in which the various members of that society functioned. It is not without interest to single out, for example, for further investigation the exact role of the astrologer/astronomer in connection with navigation.

On the methodological level, the complementary relationship between miniature paintings and the written word, which was only partially exploited in this study, should be of some interest to historians of Islamic art as well. This is especially in light of the fact that those historians sometimes try to investigate these and other similar miniature paintings in total isolation from the surrounding text, or from the general literary tradition.

## FIGURES 1-6

- Figure 1 : Astrologer by the deathbed of Alexander. He is just behind the head of Alexander with an astrolabe raised in his left hand. In his right hand, he seems to be holding an ephemeris. *Shāh-namēh*, 16<sup>th</sup> century. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Arts, Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913 (13.228.14 fol. 578a).
- Figure 2 : Astrologers at the judgement of Siyāvush. The first astrologer on the left-hand side of the painting is definitely holding an astrolabe. Two of the others may be holding ephemeris. *Shāh-namēh*, 16<sup>th</sup> century. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Arts, Gift of Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., 1970 (1970.301.24 fol. 164 v).
- Figure 3 : Astrologer on Noah's ark, the uppermost figure on the left-hand side with a raised astrolabe in his left-hand. Courtesy of the Freer Gallery of Art, 48.8 : « Noah's Ark », Indian painting. Mughal, Akbar period. Attributed to Miskin. Colors and gold on paper : 28.1 x 15.6 cm.
- Figure 4 : Sa'di being instructed in the mathematical sciences, including astrology ? From the *Kulliyāt* of Sa'di. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Arts, Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913 (13.228.10).
- Figure 5 : Astrologers working in a group to cast the horoscope for the birth of a prince. There seems to be four of them in the central 'medallion' at the bottom of the picture. One is holding a ring-like object in his left hand, the second is fingering what looks like a dust board and one of the other two is holding an ephemeris in a book form. The fourth seems to be arguing with the third character over the computation. Ross-Coomaraswamy Collection, courtesy of The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Acc # 17.3112, North India, Mughal, late 16<sup>th</sup>-early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Opaque watercolor on paper : 163 x 271 m.
- Figure 6 : Astrologer on a ship. He is kneeling on the raised platform on the right-hand side with a ring-like astrolabe in his left hand. Indian 16<sup>th</sup> century painting, Mughal Pers. *Khamsa*. Alexander the Great in a glass jar being lowered into the water. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Arts, Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913 (13.228.27).

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FIGURE 2

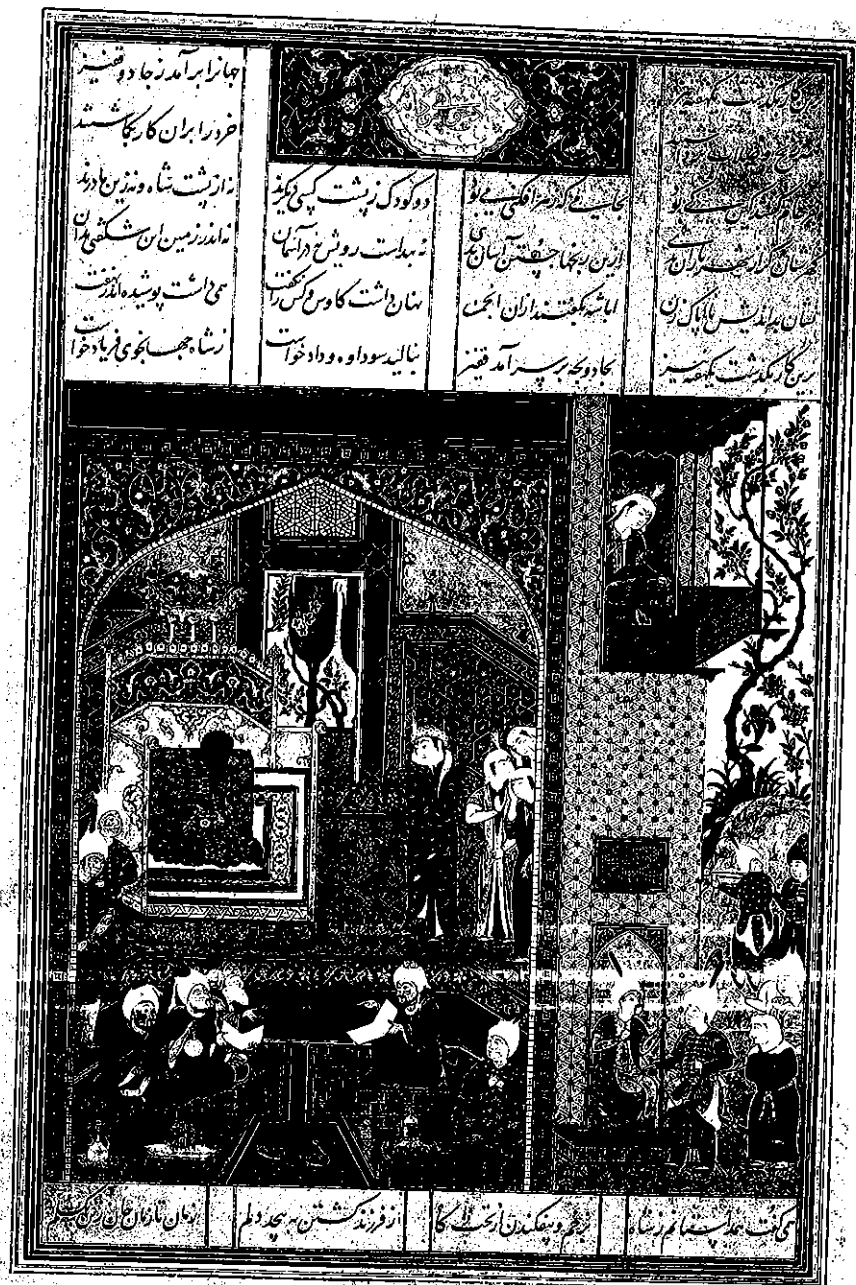


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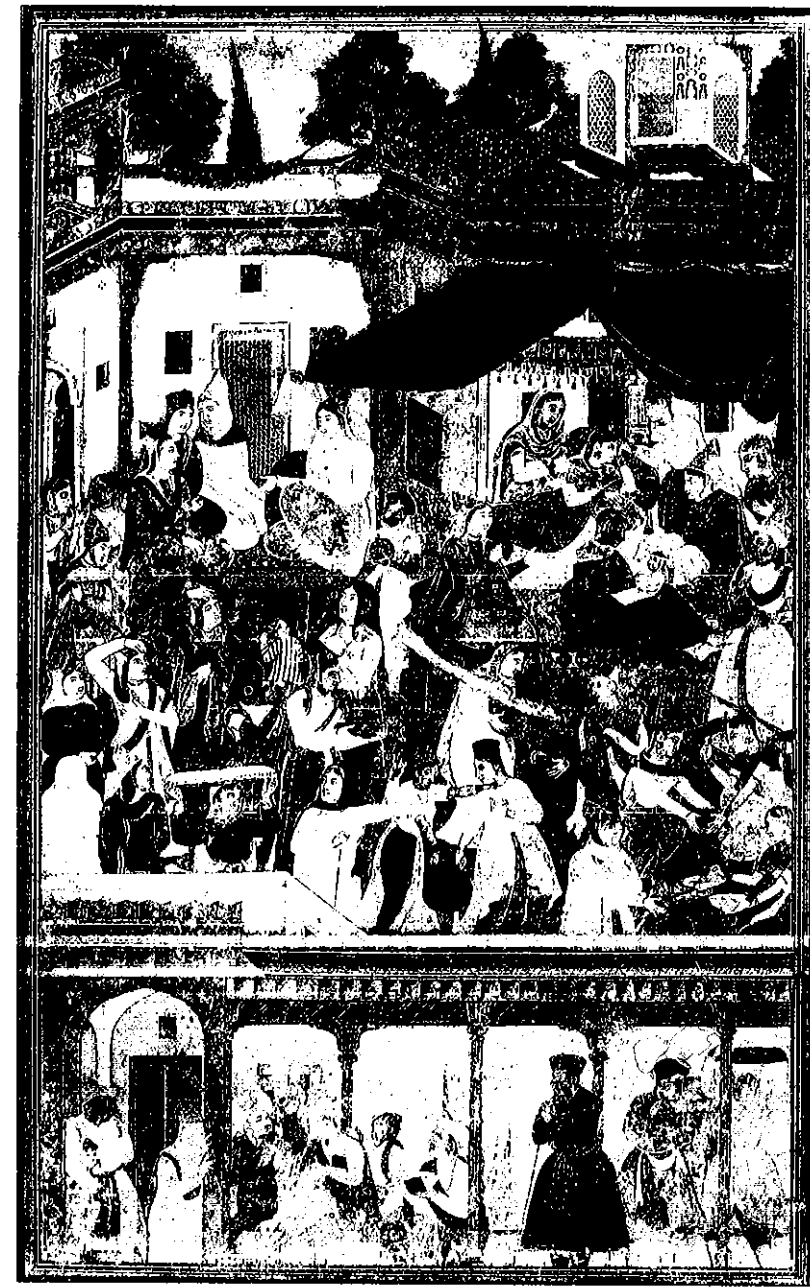


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## General Index

In the arrangement adopted here, the Arabic definite article (*al-*) at the beginning of an entry, the transliteration symbols for the Arabic letters *hamza* (') and *'ayn* ('), and distinctions between different letters transliterated by the same Latin character (e.g. *d* and *ḍ*) are ignored for purposes of alphabetization. Page numbers in italics refer to plates and illustrations.

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