The Formation of the Classical Islamic World

General Editor: Lawrence I. Conrad

Volume 42

Magic and Divination in Early Islam

edited by
Emilie Savage-Smith
CONTENTS

10. The Role of the Astrologer in Medieval Islamic Society
   George Saliba 341

General Index 371

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 10: George Saliba, “The Role of the Astrologer in Medieval Islamic Society”, Bulletin d’études orientales 44 (Damascus, 1992), pp. 45-67. Figs. 1, 2,
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The pagination of articles originally published in English has been maintained for this volume. In articles translated into English, the original pagination has been indicated in the text in bold-face type.
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 ʿiṣḥr (magic) or ʿiḥānā (divination). Yet the boundaries between the categories are indistinct and shifting. ʿIṣḥr, 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 plagues, 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

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 hadith, 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-Kindi (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. 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. The topics of magic and divination are only occasionally included in Carl Brockelmann's multi-volume Geschichte der arabischen Literatur (1889-1949) and (with the exception of early astrology and astrometeorology) completely overlooked by Fuat Sezgin in his continuation and supplement to Brockelmann. For magic in general and for astrology (but not other forms of divination), the basic

\[ \text{xiv} \]

\[ \text{INTRODUCTION} \]

\[ \text{xxv} \]

\[ \text{INTRODUCTION} \]

bibliographic starting point should be Manfred Ullmann's Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam. 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 (1986), 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. 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.

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
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. The recent editions and translations of astrological treatises by al-Kindi and Abu 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 Ludwik Kalus are detailed epigraphic studies with relatively little historical context. The extensive study by Kries and Kries-Heinrich of modern amulets and magical equipment is an example that is primarily anthropological. 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.

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. 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.

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 (shayāţīn) and demons (jinn, "shape-shifting" supernatural creatures the existence of which was already recognized in the Qur'an)—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 countering them.

The study by Edmond Doutté, prepared nearly a century ago, is still useful as a general guide to magical practices in Islam. The recent study by Dorothee Pielow, though based on a thirteenth-century text, is highly useful. 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. 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." Emile Savage-Smith, "Magic and Islam," in Francis Maddison and Emile 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.

INTRODUCTION

of treatises by the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwan al-Safa'). 22 Francis Peters (Chapter 2) discusses the rise of this esotericism in late antiquity and the role played by the Sabians of the city of Harrán in its transmission into early Islam. 23 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 "Pagan and Gnostics" by Michael Morony in his book Iraq after the Muslim Conquest is highly useful. 24 For Aramaic magical practices the work of Joseph Naveh and Shaal Shaked is indispensable. 25 On the difficulty of disentangling the various influences, see the article by Peter Joosse. 26

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)—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. 27 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 khawfa literature from the plural of the word khawfa meaning "special property". 28 The ba-

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23 See also "The Ikhwan al-Harran", in the article "$b\"il\"a" (Tofic Fahd), in EI2, VIII, 675-78.


27 See Manfred Ullmann, "Khadis", in EI1, IV, 1087-96. Qur'anic verses and phrases were also said to have occult properties (khawfa), for which see Toufic Fahd, "Khawfa al-kur\'ân", in EI2, IV, 1133-34.
The 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 (khamis al-adwāya) were favorite topics, though possibly the most popular and distinct form of khamis 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 Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Tamimi, who lived in Jerusalem; the chapter concerned with the khamis of stones has been edited and translated by Jutta Schöpfeld. Later treaties 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. This type of magic did not usually involve prayers or invocations, for it 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 by the time they are attested in Islamic culture very fundamental changes have taken place, so much so that their derivation 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 of Solomon, amongst others, were commonly named as originators of various arts, sometimes accompanied by tales of material being discovered in graves or caves. 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. For him, the definitive summary of everything known about magic and sorcery was the Arabic magical-astrological treatise compiled around 1004, the Ghayat al-hikm, commonly known as the Picatrix, that was falsely attributed to the Spanish astronomer al-Majrūf (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. For most later writers, the acknowledged authority in the field of magic was the Egyptian Ahmad ibn 'Ali al-Buni, 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. Dorothée Pielow has published a study against the evil eye or evil in general. 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.

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

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29 For an example of this genre, see A.F.L. Beeston, "An Arabic Hermetic Manuscript", The Bodleian Library Record 7 (1962), 11-23.
INTRODUCTION

of its principle features and their historical roots, while Lory has examined the latter magic. 35

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. saharā) who addressed their invocations to demons. His chapter concern with exorcists (inu'ūzīnān), 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 demons.

Virtually all Religious scholars tended to recognize that appealed only to God, but not the illicit forms addressed to jinn and demons. 37 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. 38 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'ānic quotations and prayers. In this respect they differ substantially from Byzantine, Roman, early Iranian and other pre-Islamic magic.

Talismans and amulets (there being no distinction between the two English terms) were used not only to ward off the evil eye and misfortune, but also could be used to gain good fortune, or increase fertility 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 tilāsīm (Greek telesma, derived from a root meaning to endow a thing with potency) and ḫīz, suggesting protection. 39 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 suplications to God to aid and protect the bearer. Islamic magic has been defined by Michael Dols as "a supercharged prayer," 40 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'ānic verses, pious phrases, and invocations, often employing the 99 "Beautiful Names of God" (al-asma‘ al-husna) 41 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. 42 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 symbolically traditionally called the "Seal of Solomon". The seven magical symbols together represented the sigla of God's Holy Name,

36For healing shrines in Islam, see Dols, Majnūn, 243-50; Josef W. Meri, The cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria (Oxford, 2002).
37Dols' discussion of the theory of therapeutic magic
38Michael 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-jibb al-nabawī), which has many folkloric and magical elements but will be discussed in the volume on medicine forming part of the present series.
40See Julius Riuska, Bernard Carra de Vaux, and C.E. Bosworth, "Tilasim", in EI 2, X, 500-502, an excellent article except for over-use of the word "charm" and over-emphasis on the difference between talismans and amulets.
41Louis Gardet, "al-Asma‘ al-Husna", in EI 2, 1, 714-17.
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. 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 Wahshiyah composed the illustrated essay on magical scripts entitled Kitāb shawq al-mustahām fi maʿrifat rumāţ al-aqlām (“The book of the frenzied devotee’s desire to learn about the riddles of ancient scripts”). The tenth-century treatise by Jaʿfar ibn Manṣūr al-Yaman on deciphering ancient symbols has been edited twice and is a useful guide to early knowledge of esoteric symbols. 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”. By employing the magical properties of the letters themselves (an art called ‘ilm maʿrifat al-fāmin), 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 (khatam) 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. The occurrence 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 kabīkah (“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” (kabīkah) 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 (waṣf in Arabic) was a 3 x 3 square having nine cells in which the letters/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 kabīkah), 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”).

See Duncan Black MacDonald, "Budūh", in El7, Suppl., 153-54.
INTRODUCTION

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 Abü l-Wafāʾ al-Buzjānī (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.49

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, waṣq 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 Qurʾān) 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.50 See Chapter 6 by Venetia Porter for the magical associations of such squares, names of the four archangels were frequently associated with the square, and it was often placed within a larger talismanic design.

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 Nur al-Dīn ibn Zangi), 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 that 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.52 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 Qurʾānic 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.53

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


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

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’an. 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. 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. There was, however, a tradition traceable to the ninth century of wearing a mirror, a surprising or inexplicable discrepancy between them. A methodology, however, that examines both the material culture and the literature helps us understand a surviving artefact, and sometimes there are insights can also be gained by comparison with recent studies of magicians in countries such as India.

Magic as Trickery and Conjuring

Magic also included the art of trickery or forgery. Several Arabic terms could be used for this activity: niranj (from a Persian word for creating illusions), sha’badha (a magician was called a musha’bidha), ‘ilm al-hijal, “the science of tricks”, or ‘ilm sāsāniya, derived from the designation of the medieval Islamic sciences of swindlers and rogues as Banū Sāsān. 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-Mubhtār fi kawn al-‘asrār (“The Selection in Unveiling Secrets”), written in the first half of the thirteenth century by ‘Abd al-Raḥmīn al-Jawbārī, a dervish of Damascus and ex-magician. It is, al-Jawbārī exposes the practices of charlatans and magicians. The scholarly edition and study of this important work by Stefan Wild has not yet been published. Meanwhile, there is an unsatisfactory printed version and French translation available (though copies are often hard to locate). Insights into the study of this important work by Stefan Wild has not yet been published. Meanwhile, there is an unsatisfactory printed version and French translation available (though copies are often hard to locate). Insights into the study of this important work by Stefan Wild has not yet been published. Meanwhile, there is an unsatisfactory printed version and French translation available (though copies are often hard to locate).

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. 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”. These accounts of the sensational and wondrous included manmade structures such as the pyramids, as well as natural phenomena, travellers’ tales of underside of the earth.

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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-Mujawir's thirteenth-century guide to Arabia.65

Divination

Divination is concerned with the prediction of future events or gaining information about things unseen.66 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.67 The relatively overlooked subject of Armenian divinatory practices has been addressed by Robert Thompson.68 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 Sufi association with divination being an example.69 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 role. A factor may have been that for, 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.70 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).71

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,72 as was hydromancy—interpreting patterns appearing on the surface of water (or oil, ink, or any shiny surface).73 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-Kindi and others to the elusive "Hermes".74

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 (orienromancy) passed from

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66For 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 divination in Da'if, also on "Da'if" in EI 3, II, 768-769.
67Ann Jeffers, Magic and Divination in Ancient Syria and Egypt (Leiden, 1996). See also Morony, Iraq under the Muslim Conquest.
68Robert W. Thomson, "Let Now the Astrologers Stand Up": the Armenian Christian Reaction to Astrology and Divination", Dumbarton Oaks Papers 48 (1992), 303–12. This study includes an excellent discussion of terms used for various techniques.
69See for example Meri, Cult of Saints, where Chapter 3 is particularly relevant. For the distinction between divination and prophecy, see Toufic Fahd, "Nabuwat", in EI 7, VIII, 93-95.
70Toufic Fahd, "'iyafa", in EI 7, IV, 200–91; Fahd, Divination arabe, 408–510.
71The water-diviner's art was called 'iyafa; see Toufic Fahd, "'iyafa", in EI 7, VIII, 562.
72For Babylonian liver omens preserved on Assyrian coneiform tablets, see Ulla Koch-Westenholt, Babylonian Liver Omens: the Chapters Manzâr, Pâdûnân and Pân tâkâtî of the Babylonian Extropy Series, Mainly from Assurunâ's Library (Copenhagen, 2000).
73On 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-Fattâh al-Sayyid al-Tâkî, who claims to have used manuscript material in the Dar 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 Magico-Psychic Papyrus", in Proceedings of the Colloquium on Popular Customs and the Monotheistic Religions in the Middle East and North Africa, ed. Alexander Fodor and Aviha Shvivet (Budapest, 1994); The Arabist, 9–10, 73–101.
late antiquity into Islam through a number of treatises. John Lamoreaux has published an excellent study of dream interpretation in early Islam. 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-fidāḥa al-nabāṭiyya) attributed to Ibn Waḥṣiya. 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. Such a form of divination has been termed astrometeorology. Alexander Fodor has published a study of one example from a group of texts concerned with meteorological divination circulating under the title malhama or malāḥīm and attributed to the prophet Daniel. 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 Tār 'Abdin, 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.

Lunar mansions were also given astrological and divinatory significance outside the realm of weather prediction. They played a prominent role particularly in non-horoscopical 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. 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.

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.

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 Qurʾān two practices involving chance were prohibited: istiqlām, a pre-Islamic use of rods to settle disputes or give simple omens; and magiṣr, literally, "the game of the left-handed", involving arrows and the slaughtering of animals and later extended to include all kinds of gambling (gīmār). Nonetheless, the casting of lots (qurʿa) was considered legitimate. Dice, Zeitschrift für Ethnologie 79 (1954), 82–117; repr. with additions in Joseph Henninger, Arabica Sacra (Göttingen, 1981), 45–117.

See above, n. 22, 33, and, for geomantic use of lunar mansions, Chapter 8.


French Fahl classifies under the term "cleromancie" (les procédés cléricomantiques) both sortilege and letter-number interpretation, as well as the meteorological divination in the texts called malāḥīm discussed above; see Fahl, Dîvination arabe, 177–245. Such a classification blurs fundamental distinctions.


See T. Fahl, "Kuʿrā", in EI 2, V, 308–99; idem, Dîvination arabe, 214–19. Note that throughout Fahl's discussions there is a confusion of the term "rhapedomancy" (an otherwise unattested word apparently meaning divination from verses) and "habdomancy", from a Greek root meaning divination using darts or rods. See also Rosenthal,
as well as arrows or rods or grains, could be used. A variant form (bibliomancy) involved opening a book and selecting a passage at random, with the Qurʾān being the most commonly used volume. The Arabic term for bibliomancy was usually ḫaṣṣ al-istikhārāt ("the method of choices"), the term istikhāra meaning entrusting to God the choice between several options. 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-Maʿāmūn.

Geometry (ʿilm al-rajul, "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 Ṭūḥa al-Kindī is related in Chapter 8. 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." It appears to be the only example we have of a divinatory technique for which a mechanical device was constructed. The fact that geomancy did not require astronomical observations and calculations as did astrology no doubt contributed to its great popularity.

The numerical values of letters forming a word could constitute the basis of a divinatory reading. The general terms for this technique were ʿilm al-hurūf ("the science of letters") and sīmiyāʾ. 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-nām ("calculation by name"). 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 desired object. Astrological elements of possible Indian origin were also introduced into the art of jafr. The "authority" most often associated with jafr was Imām Jaʿfar al-Sadīq, who died in 765.

An even more complicated form of letter-number manipulation was called zāʾirja. 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 Hājjī Khalīfa: "It is said that no one is capable of understanding its true meaning except the Mahdi, expected at the end of..."
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. The Sabian inhabitants of Harran 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. In a divinatory text, *The Book of the Zodiac*, preserved in the Mandaic language of lower central Iraq, one sees the blending of Babylonian, Sassanian, 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 techniques can be seen in many of the Arabic astrological treatises preserved today.

Astrology (*‘ilm al-nujum, “the science of the stars”*) was understood and practiced at several levels. Non-horoscopic astrology (what Toufic Fahd has termed “natural astrology”\(^\text{101}\)) 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 geographical 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-ikhtiyār, “the science of the judgments of the stars”) or sometimes catachastic astrology. This form of astrology in turn breaks up into four categories:

1. The determination of the fate of an individual based on nativities (*mawālid* 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”). 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 (*mawālih*). The questions could concern innermost thoughts (*damir*), 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.\(^\text{103}\)


\(^{99}\) Ulmann’s guide is particularly useful on this point; Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaftern, 271-358.

\(^{100}\) For Hermetic influences on astrological thought, see Chapter 2; Burnett, *Magic and Divination in the Middle Ages*, item V; Aristoteles/Hermes, *Liber Antimagas*, ed. Charles Burnett in *Hermetica Triumquisi astrologica et divinatoria*, 177-221.

\(^{101}\) Toufic Fahd, *Nujum* (*‘ilm al-*), in *EF* , VIII, 105-108.


\(^{103}\) As, for example, George Saliba has done in Chapter 10 (pp. 58-60), where he enumerates yet more subdivisions of astrology.
INTRODUCTION

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. A treatise of Greek origin on the astrological virtues of the fixed stars, attributed to Hermes, has been edited by Paul Kunitzsch, while Charles Burnett recently published an essay on judicial astrology by al-Kindi (d. ca. 870). Yūhanna ibn al-Salt’s essay on astrological medicine written at the end of the ninth century has been edited and studied by Felix Klein-Franke. 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-mudhkhar al-kabir (known in Latin as Introductorium maiores) 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. In 2000, Abū Ma’shar’s treatise “On the Great Conjunctions” was published. 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 Māshāʾallāh written in the eighth century, which included a horoscope of the Prophet.


INTRODUCTION

From the turn of the tenth to eleventh century we have the important introductory treatise by Kūshyār ibn Lābbān (d. 1029), recently edited and translated. 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-tafhīm) written in 1029 by al-Bīrūnī and translated into English by R. Ramsey Wright in 1934.

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 fatwas (Chapter 9). 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. Vedet provide excellent introductions to such arguments. 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. 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

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. 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. 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. Ikhtilāf, for example, was the art of divining the future from twitching eyelids or involuntary movement of a limb or other part of the body. 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-asrār) were, and still are, popular. These tech-

118 Note that scaphiognomy, discussed above, uses the shoulder blades of sheep and does not involve human anatomy.
119 A Turkish elaboration of ikhtilāf drew omens from the form of battle wounds or accidental archery wounds. See Toufic Fahd, “Ikhtilāf”, in EI2, II, 1061.

iques, 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-Ṣādiq) as well as in their methodologies.121 Their intent is not to determine a hidden character by analyzing 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 (fīrāsā) 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 fīrāsā 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 physiognomonia when Ḫunayn ibn Ishāq translated a small treatise on the subject incorrectly ascribed to Aristotle.122 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 fīrāsā forms part of the “Secret of Secrets” (Sirr al-asrār).123 The latter was an immensely influential treatise intended as a
INTRODUCTION

The study of physiognomy, or the study of the relationship between physical appearance and character, has a long history. In the early tenth century, we find physiognomy forming a small chapter in a medical compendium by Muhammad ibn Zakariya' al-Razi (d. 925). 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 consistent 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-Din al-Dinawishi (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 *firasa* play in portraiture and figurative drawing? What role did it have in the reception and interpretation of figurative 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 *firasa* 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 *firasa* 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 "Secrets of Secrets" (or in al-Dinawishi's physiognomy) and Abu Zayd and other figures in Hariri's *Maqamat* 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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Magic


Antecedents

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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TALISMANS AND LETTER MAGIC


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DIVINATION

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**ASTROLOGY: GENERAL**


**ASTROLOGY: BASIC TEXTS**


**PHYSIOGNOMY**


BELIEFS IN SPIRITS AMONG THE PRE-ISLAMIC ARABS
Joseph Henninger

Contents

Introduction: Animism among the Semites; Links to totemism?; Starting point for the development of religion?; Defining the subject matter.

I. Belief in Spirits among the Present-Day Arabs: Literature on the contemporary belief in spirits; Origin of the spirits (jinn); Their nature; Forms in which they appear; Dwelling places (according to the views of the sedentary folk; according to the views of the bedouins); Their effect on nature and humans; Defensive strategies; Sacrifices; Differences between the views of the sedentary and nomadic population; Foreign elements in the present-day belief in spirits.

II. Belief in Spirits in Pre-Islamic Arabia: Literature on the pre-Islamic belief in spirits; Nature of the spirits; Forms in which they appear; Dwelling places; Effects on nature and humans; Friendly relations (especially with soothsayers, poets and musicians); Defensive strategies; Jinn worship?; The jinn in relation to the gods; The attitude of Islam towards the ancient Arabian belief in spirits; Influence of Islam on contemporary popular beliefs.

III. Problems of Cultural History: Etymology of the word jinn; Originally Arabic or a loan word?; Aramaic g-n-y and Arabic jinn; Common Semitic beliefs in spirits; Stronger among sedentary people than among nomads; Belief in spirits in relation to polytheism and the belief in a supreme God.

Introduction

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,¹ it was well

¹See 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 Religionengeschichte (Münster in Westfalen, 1930), 78–86; Wilfred Dilke, A Standard Text of Astrology (London, 1925), 174–89; and 184–
received by many Semitic scholars. It is understandable that when scholars undertook to collect all instances of beliefs in spirits, 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. It was also on this basis that the development of Semitic religion from polydeity 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

that these jinn clans were originally nothing more than animal species that were—in a totemistic sense—connected to one particular group of humans. Most supporters of the animist theory, however, did not accept this view, and the arguments adduced by Smith are not conclusive, as has been shown elsewhere, 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 beings....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


transition between polytheism and monotheism...It is noteworthy that the Arabs never say "the gods" in the sense of Greek "hôs theon" 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 favor of a monotheistic instinct among the Semites, if it were not for the Hebrew "elohim" and the pluralis majestaticus, which clearly prove otherwise...

While these observations (quoted in much abbreviated form here) do contain much that is disputable, they are undoubtedly most brilliant. By comparison, the views contained in some modern works are often meager and far too simplistic, as for example in Adolf Käselau, 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.

Maurice Gaudez-Denombynes (in, 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 worshipers 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 "arabd" (masters) of certain tribes, the jinn who have not succeeded in becoming truly gods. They are all worshipped in rites that are only distinguished one from another by their greater or lesser complexity and the number of believers. The change from jinn to great gods 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...10

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1Maurice Gaudez-Denombynes, Malommet (Paris, 1957), 29; cf. the context, 25-29, 32-33.

11Concerning the zar 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 religionstgeschichtliche Quelle?" Anthropos 50 (1955), 130-96, to which the following must be added: Bulletin des études arabes 3 (1943), 100-106 (various authors); Maxime Rodinson, review of Ernst Littmann, "Arabische Geisterbeschwörungen aus Ägypten" (Leipzig, 1950), in Journal asiatique 240 (1952), 129-33; idem in Comptes rendus des séances de l'Institut français d'anthropologie 7 (1953), 21-24. A wealth of material on the zar (and bori) ceremonies is furthermore collected in Rudolf Kree and Hubert Kris-Henirich, Volksglaube im Bereich des Islam, II: Auslässe, Zaubersichten und Beschworungen (Wiesbaden, 1962), esp. 140-204.

12Concerning criticism see, for the time being, Marie-Joseph Lagrange, Etudes sur les religions sémitiques, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1905), 16-20, esp. 16-18, Zaydred, Der Totemismus und die Religion Israels, 128-29. For further information see below, 311-16.

13Concerning the change from idolatry to monotheism see, for the time being, Marie-Joseph Lagrange, "Les religions sémantiques," 2nd ed. (Paris, 1905), 16-20, esp. 16-18, Zaydred, Der Totemismus und die Religion Israels, 128-29. For further information see below, 311-16.

14Concerning the change from idolatry to monotheism see, for the time being, Marie-Joseph Lagrange, "Les religions sémantiques," 2nd ed. (Paris, 1905), 16-20, esp. 16-18, Zaydred, Der Totemismus und die Religion Israels, 128-29. For further information see below, 311-16.

15Concerning the change from idolatry to monotheism see, for the time being, Marie-Joseph Lagrange, "Les religions sémantiques," 2nd ed. (Paris, 1905), 16-20, esp. 16-18, Zaydred, Der Totemismus und die Religion Israels, 128-29. For further information see below, 311-16.
Beliefs in Spirits among the Pre-Islamic Arabs

There is a particular abundance of material concerning the northern border areas, especially Palestine and Syria, which may be due to accidental gaps in the research. We also have abundant material on the Arabian peninsula and its neighbors. However, it requires close examination and continuation in the form of further, more detailed studies.

I. Belief in Spirits among the Present-Day Arabs

The extent to which people believe in the jinn consistently increases with the number of jinn, and is the reason for the particular abundance of material concerning the northern border areas, especially Palestine and Syria. Among the Arabs:

1. Among the Pre-Islamic Arabs:

- The title of Westermarck’s article (n. 5 above) can raise misplaced expectations in the reader. Westermarck does distinguish clearly between Arabian and non-Arabian elements in modern Moroccan beliefs in jinn and djinn.
- The word “jinn” is found synonymous with both concepts in the modern Arabic language.
- The extent to which people believe in the jinn will be only natural if we consider the context in which 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.
- The following presentation takes into account the Arabian peninsula and its neighbors.

2. Among the Present-Day Arabs:

- The extent to which people believe in the jinn is found consistent in the following countries: 1°. The Arabic-speaking countries of the Arab world, especially Palestine and Syria; 2°. The Muslim-speaking countries of North Africa, especially Morocco and Algeria;
- There is a particular abundance of material concerning the northern border areas, especially Palestine and Syria.
- The title of Westermarck’s article (n. 5 above) can raise misplaced expectations in the reader. Westermarck does distinguish clearly between Arabian and non-Arabian elements in modern Moroccan beliefs in jinn and djinn.
- The extent to which people believe in the jinn will be only natural if we consider the context in which 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.
- The following presentation takes into account the Arabian peninsula and its neighbors.

I. Belief in Spirits among the Present-Day Arabs

The extent to which people believe in the jinn consists in the following:

1. Among the Pre-Islamic Arabs:

- The title of Westermarck’s article (n. 5 above) can raise misplaced expectations in the reader. Westermarck does distinguish clearly between Arabian and non-Arabian elements in modern Moroccan beliefs in jinn and djinn.
- The extent to which people believe in the jinn will be only natural if we consider the context in which 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.
- The following presentation takes into account the Arabian peninsula and its neighbors.

2. Among the Present-Day Arabs:

- The extent to which people believe in the jinn is found consistent in the following countries: 1°. The Arabic-speaking countries of the Arab world, especially Palestine and Syria; 2°. The Muslim-speaking countries of North Africa, especially Morocco and Algeria;
- There is a particular abundance of material concerning the northern border areas, especially Palestine and Syria.
- The title of Westermarck’s article (n. 5 above) can raise misplaced expectations in the reader. Westermarck does distinguish clearly between Arabian and non-Arabian elements in modern Moroccan beliefs in jinn and djinn.
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- The following presentation takes into account the Arabian peninsula and its neighbors.
MAGIC AND DIVINATION IN EARLY ISLAM

Joseph Henninger

for Arabia proper, namely the north (which, in this instance, has to include Jordan, the Sinai and the Hijaz in its whole length), and also for the south and the southeast of the peninsula.

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. Among these are, above all, the creation of the jinn from fire and the classification of fallen angels in the same or a [285] similar category. In the instances where the ghosts of the dead 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 (wa'il, pl. awliya') in Syria and Palestine is often so blurred as to be indistinguishable, but according to better sources these cases are quite rare and popular belief generally distinguishes quite clearly between the two.

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. In most cases they are not described as im-

20Concerning fallen angels in the Islamic doctrine see Canaan, Aberglaube, 12; idem, Dämonenleugung, 7, 28-29; Eichler, Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran, 40-42; Zbinden, Die Djinns des Islam, 41; Henninger, "Spirits christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten im Koran", 129-30, 284-93 (book edition, 57-58, 70-79) and the literature quoted therein; Fohd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 175-85 passim. Cf. also below, nn. 91, 119, 120, 206.

21Canaan, Aberglaube, 11-12; idem, Dämonenleugung, 5-6; Zbinden, Die Djinns des Islams, 44-54 passim.

22Thus Curtiss, Ursemittische Religion, 94, 99-100, 230, 231; cf. also Cook in Smith, Religion, 538-39. Concerning a wali who is considered to be a moluk (angel or spirit), see Somers, 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, Mosch., 302-303, 330-35 (cf., however, ibid., 318, also here, the comments and references in the next note below).

23According 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 wali and sometimes a jinn, 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, Dämonenleugung, 2). Jaussen (Mosch., 295, 319) also distinguishes clearly between the ghost of a dead person and a jinn. Researching borderline cases of this kind cannot be the subject of the present study.

24Canaan, Dämonenleugung, 5-9 passim; Musil, Manners and Customs, 411; Zbinden, Die Djinns 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. 15-21 above, as that would be going too far.


necrotic, but can be killed or indeed die a natural death. There are male and female spirits, which produce offspring among themselves or with human partners. They eat and drink [286] and, at least occasionally, wear clothes, which they borrow from humans. 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 Rwâla, "the only true bedouin tribe of northern Arabia", 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

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28Canaan, Aberglaube, 10; idem, Damonenglaube, 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.

29Canaan, Démonenglaube, 9-10, 21-24; Musil, Arabia Petraea, III, 320-33 passim; Doughty, II, 221-12 (= 1888 ed., II, 191); Jaussen and Savignac, "Coutumes", 61; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 34-36. Cf. also nn. 51-53 below.

30Canaan, Aberglaube, 13, 14-15; idem, Démonenglaube, 21, 23-34; Musil, Arabia Petraea, III, 320, 323; Doughty, II, 221-12 (= 1888 ed., II, 191); Jaussen and Savignac, "Coutumes", 60-61; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 34, 47. A human animal can be exchanged with a spirit child: such a substituted child is called al-mubadda', "changing child" (Musil, Arabia Petraea, III, 323; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 52; cf. also Smith, Religion, 17 n. 2).

31Curtiss, Uremitische Religion, 120-21, 124; Musil, Arabia Petraea, III, 321-22, 327-28; Canaan, Aberglaube, 13-14; idem, Démonenglaube, 21-25; Jaussen, Napoleone, 230-34; Doughty, II, 221-14 (= 1888 ed., II, 191-93); Jaussen and Savignac, "Coutumes", 61; Grancay, Child Problem, 101, 213; 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 Raubgebiete", 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. Chaîne, Le Livre de la Croyance (Paris, 1949), 101-105, esp. 103-104 (he quotes Jaussen, Napoleone, 230-34).

32Canaan, Aberglaube, 13, idem, Démonenglaube, 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.

33Canaan, Aberglaube, 13, idem, Démonenglaube, 11-12; Einszler, "Der Name Gottes und die bösen Geister im Aberglauben Palästinas", 174-76.

34The Rwâla 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.

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References and further reading:

35Musil, 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).

36Musil, Manners and Customs, 411, 413, 415-17.

37Ibid., 413.

38Ibid., 413; cf. also 415-16.

39Ibid., 413. It is different in Palestine: see, e.g., Jaussen, Napoleone, 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.

40Canaan, Aberglaube, 15; idem, Démonenglaube, 13-18 passim; Doughty, II, 210-11 (= 1888 ed., II, 190-91); 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, 40-48; Serjeant, "Two Yemenite Djinn", 4-5. Cf. also n. 47 below, on the subject of the black dog.

41Canaan, Aberglaube, 15; idem, Démonenglaube, 13-15; Musil, Arabia Petraea, III, 322, 324; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 35, 47, 52.

42Canaan, Démonenglaube, 13-14; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 35, 43. Cf. n. 94 below.


44Canaan, Aberglaube, 55-56; idem, Démonenglaube, 13; Hess, Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens, 4; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 35. According to Cholod in Objets et mondes 5 (1965), 152, among the Néger bedouins a woman's body parts are used as defence against jinn. The Yemenite jinn "Udhrûl", on the other hand, is also able to assume the form of a wolf (Serjeant, "Two Yemenite Djinn", 4-5), which is most remarkable.

45Canaan, Aberglaube, 14-15.

46Ibid., 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"). Male spirits usually in a frightening form, e.g. as giants. Sometimes they appear as ordinary humans, but then they can be recognised from the shape of their eyes. Jinn can also appear as monstrous hybrid beings, in particular the ghul[a], a man-eating female spirit. Certain female spirits are particularly dangerous to unborn or newborn children and usually also appear in a frightening guise. The most widely known member of this category is the jorna. Spirits can change their shape very quickly at will; no spirit is at any time tied to a particular shape.

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. They are frequently described in analogous (comprehensive) terms, e.g. ahl al-arḍ, "people of the earth," etc. 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. 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. A different kind of entrance to the underworld is found in caves, rock chambers, dark valleys, gorges, graves etc. Someone who digs the foundations for a house

Beliefs in Spirits among the Pre-Islamic Arabs

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 Djinne des Islams, 34, 36, 47, 54. Doughty, I, 301, II, 200 (= 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, II, 323, 325; Canaan, Dämonenglaube, 14, 22-23; Zbinden, Die Djinne des Islams, 52; cf. also Kremer, Studien, III-IV (as n. 131 below), 30-35. Cf. also nn. 79, 91, 103, 107, 108, 123, 135-60 below.

Canaan, Dämonenglaube, 22, 25; Zbinden, Die Djinne des Islams, 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 

"Peasant Folklore of Palestine", 204; Canaan, "Peasant Folklore and Water Spirits in Palestine", 153-70; idem, "Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine" (1924), 37, 63, 66-68, (1935), 171-72; idem, "Dämonenglaube", 35, 30-33; Cook in Smith, Religion, 538-39; Dalman, Arabie et l'Arté de la Cité en Palestine, I, 537-38; Musil, Arabia Petraea, II, 320; Zbinden, Die Djinne des Islams, 35-38. Cf. also Alois Musil, The Northern Heights (New York), 1926, 153; Doughty, I, 211-12 (= 1888 ed., II, 190) (narrative about a well in Jiddah, inhabited by jinn). In Hams (Syria) an 'afiri, a particularly evil spirit, lives in the lock chamber of a water wheel (Curtius, "Dämonenglaube", 192, 260). General information about spring spirits among the Semites can be found in Smith, Religion, 165-76. Cf. also nn. 68 and 165 below.

Baldensperger, "Peasant Folklore of Palestine", 210; Condor, Heth and Mosb, 335; Curtius, "Dämonenglaube": 94-95, 99, 230; Musil, Arabia Petraea, II, 416-17; Jaussen, Mosb, 321, 359-60; Cook in Smith, Religion, 538-39; Canaan, Aberglaube, 17; idem, Dämonenglaube, 32; Zbinden, Die Djinne des Islams, 38.

Curtius, "Dämonenglaube", 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 Djinne des Islams, 37. In the region around the gulf of Alaqaba people fear evil spirits in caves and ruins (T.G. Charles, Transactions of the Bombay Geographic Society, 1836-39 [1844], 182). 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 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. 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. Spirits drawn by the blood of someone who died a violent death will remain in the place where that person died, some particularly evil or monstrous spirits, such as the ghyl, are assumed, by sedentary peoples, to wander about the desert. Still others of these beings are so close to humans that they adhere to a particular house and could with some justification be called house-spirits. 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.

Just like all dark places, all dirty, festid and undiy places such as latrines, dung-heaps, oil presses etc. are popular dwelling-places among the jinn. Public baths in cities are also popular. As the jinn can come out of the earth and their other hiding places in the dark, night is a particularly dangerous time. 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. The beliefs of the bedouins do not go quite so far. According to the Rwala, the possible dwelling-places of the spirits are much more restricted. They are sedentary, 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. Snakes living in old ruins are often inhabited by 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
will act alone when attacked. 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. Certain kinds of trees and bushes are inhabited by spirits, 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 Mawahib in the northern Hijāṣ and among neighbouring tribes (concerning the practices of worship customary among these tribes, see below, 295). They also like to dwell in caves,76 wells and ponds 77 - 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 Rwala).78

73Musil, 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.

74Doughty, I, 316, 411 (= 1888 ed., I, 273, 385) 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, groves and thickets (manzel, pl. manzil [written Arabic: manhal, pl. manzil]) where the melāqā (pl. melāqā; lit. "angel", spirits of the air; Doughty, I, 497, 530, II, 407 [= 1888 ed., I, 440; 482; II, 379] dwelled at times, see Doughty, I, 495, 496, 538-39, 588; II, 550 (= 1888 ed., I, 448, 443-50, 490-91, 548; II, 516). Concerning the kind of worship taking place there, see no. 87, 117, 118 below. Cf. also Musil, Arabien Petrea, [II, 169]; Chethod (Objets et mondes 5 [1963], 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 Kramer, Studies, III-IV (as no. 131 below); 15; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 50-51.

75Cf. Hess, Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens, 2-3; Philby, Arabian Journal, 139-40; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 50-51.

76Dickson, The Arab of the Desert, 538-39; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 50-51.

Beliefs in Spirits among the Pre-Islamic Arabs

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, mountains, tops, rocks, valleys, streams, trees, lakes, springs, wells, caves, groctoses and ruins are dwellings of the jinn."79 It follows from the context that this remark refers to the first instance to the south Arabian border countries mentioned above.80 [291] It can be confirmed by further evidence from south (and southost) Arabia.81 It seems that there is less information concerning belief in spirits in central south Arabia, the desert Rub' al-Khali (the "Empty Quarter").82

The northeastern border countries, which were called Arabia Petraea in Antiquity—namely the Sinai peninsula with its northern frontier and an...
Beliefs in Spirits among the Pre-Islamic Arabs

Disorders, but also convulsions, lameness, fevers and slow wasting away. It is worse still if a spirit enters a human; in that case the human becomes possessed. A madman is called majnūn ("possessed by jīmūn"). In such a case a professional exorcist will have to exorcise the evil spirit. These exorcists can also tell fortunes and work magic with the aid of the spirit. 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" (jībīs) or "Satan" (šayṭān) are usually used.

As the jīmūn can trouble humans in so many ways, there are also many defensive practices against them. Among these are a) [289] to avoid ev

84. See a. 20 above and the quotations from both authors in nn. 27-34, 41-70 passim.
85. See Musil, Arabia Petraea, III, 4-5; Musil, Manners and Customs, 18-19; Hess, Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens, 195; Canaan, Dāmūmanglaube, 12, 10-17; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 37, 47. Will-o'-the-wisps are also attributed to jīmūn (Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 52). The idea that sand-spouts (trombes de poussiere) are caused by jīmūn is also found among city-dwellers in Sam'ā; see Claudie Fayen, Une Francaise Medecin au Yemen (Paris, 1956), 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 Moab (the border country between Arabia Petraea and the northern Hijaz) that a "sand pyramid" resounds with music when the caravan of Mecca pilgrims passes it and that this is why sacrifice are offered; see The Land of Midian Revisited (London, 1879), I, 65-66. We can assume that once again the music is ascribed to jīmūn in this case.


87. The practice of "healing sleep" is also well known. People would lie down in places that they know to be inhabited by jīmūn, just under trees sacred to them (see n. 75 above); see Doughty, I, 457 (= 1886 ed., I, 449-50); Musil, Arabia Petraea, III, 325; Hess, Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens, 59-60; Canaan, Dāmūmanglaube, 19-21, 37-38; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 35, 37, 40-41, 47, 52.

88. Joseph Henninger, "The Beduine and that ancient Midian (the border country between Arabia Petraea and the northern Hijaz) that a "sand pyramid" resounds with music when the caravan of Mecca pilgrims passes it and that this is why sacrifice are offered; see The Land of Midian Revisited (London, 1879), I, 65-66. We can assume that once again the music is ascribed to jīmūn in this case.

89. 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, Maa, 319-20; Musil, Arabia Petraea, III, 322-23, 423, 425; Musil, Manners and Customs, 399; Canaan, Aberglaube, 23-24; idem, Dāmūmanglaube, 19, 22, 26, 45-47; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 40, 47, 50, 52; Wrede, Reise, 180. Seminal emission while asleep is ascribed to jīmūn or the devil; see Toufik Canaan, "Gott im Glauben der palästinischen Araber", Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palastina-Vereins 78 (1962), 14-15. An impotent man is bound by demons (ibid., 15).

90. 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, 190); Curtius, Umrischliche 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 Savigac, "Coutumes", 61-62; Hess, Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens, 4, 157-66; Sonnen, Die Beduinen am See Genesareth, 122-25; Canaan, Dāmūmanglaube, 45-47; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 47, 52-54; Himmel, Gestroll, Muslim Death and Burial (Helsinki, 1963), 28-33; Oehlschloß in Objets et mondes 5 (1965), 163-66; Lutfyya, Bayt, 71-72; Westphal-Hellwich, Die Mātān. However, among the 'Udaya in central Arabia majnūn refers to a ghost rather than a possessed person (Hess, Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens, 155-66); Zbinden (Die Djinn des Islam, 54) mentions the assumption that the exercising ceremonies of this tribe show urban influence. The zamān jīmūn (see n. 13 above) is not exorcised in the true sense of the word, at least not always. Michel Lerais, 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 zamān jīmūn, as here the aim is to make a pact with the spirit rather than to expel it".


92. Canaan, Dāmūmanglaube, 41.
MAGIC AND DIVINATION IN EARLY ISLAM

20

Joseph Henninger

MAGIC AND DIVINATION IN EARLY ISLAM

21

verses from the Qur’an and others. Rather than appealing to God or another exalted power, people can also address the spirits directly and seek to plateulate them. This involves formulating such as dastūr yā sāḥib al-muhammad (‘With your permission, O master of this place’), which will be spoken when building a house, pitching a tent and on similar occasions. Someone who extinguishes fire will need similar formule to warn or appease the spirits. Finally, sacrifices to spirits are most important 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. Among sedentary peoples, sacrifices at the dedication of a building play an important part; in some cases their link with spirits is still clearly apparent from the

20Canaan, Aberglaube, 19, 49-56; 77-133 passim (esp. 77-83, 99-115); idem, Dämonenauge, 21, 49; Winkler, Sehens und Charaktere, passim; Musil, Arabica Petraea, III, 315; Jaussen and Savignac, “Coutumes”, 62; Zbinden, Die Djinne des Islam, 42-43, 53-54; Chelheid in Objets et mondes 5 (1965), 153-58. Cf. also n. 217 below.

21Jaussen, Musil, 330, 349; Canaan, “Mohammedanische und Sanktuarien in Palästina” (1924), 164 n. 1; idem, Dämonenauge, 5, 26; Dalman, Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina, VII, 95; Zbinden, Die Djinne des Islam, 34, 38-39, 49, 53; Wrede, Reise, 125. Cf. also no. 71, 81 above.

22Canaan, Dämonenauge, 5; idem, Aberglaube, 11; Zbinden, Die Djinne des Islam, 34, 51.


24Bury (Abdullah Mamri), 22, 26; Zbinden, Die Djinne des Islam, 49. Sacrifices to mountain spirits are also mentioned in connection with the inland-dwelling Sheikhs on the Muhammeda peninsula in Canaan; see Handbook of Arabia, I (London, n.d. [1925]), 594 (according to which source!). On the subject of further jinn sacrifices in South Arabia, see Sertong, “Heiligenkult in Südwestarabien”, no. 2, 17a.


26Smith, Religion, 171. Zbinden (Die Djinne des Islam, 38) quotes two passages from Canaan, where, however, this detail is not mentioned. Canaan, Aberglaube, 8, n. 3, mentions the same verse, which is quoted in Smith, Religion, 171.
a spirit who needs to be honed with a sacrifice. Some customs among coastal-dwelling and sea-faring people tend to give spirits of the sea occasional life. Treating them with respect and food is often done. The sacrifices to "angels" mentioned by Doughty belong in the same category. The sacrifices to the devil (iblis) said to take place in the oasis of Taymī in the northern Hijāz, and among bedouins in

113 See n. 57 above. The "Afrit in Hamah" (see ibid.) receives an annual sacrifice of a rain (Curtais, Usurimatische Religion, 22, 200). There are also spring spirits, however, who are not given sacrifices, although people do believe in their existence; see Jauess, Meah, 321; Cook in Smith, Religion, 538-39.

114 In Gaza (according to Baldensperger, "Peasant Folklore of Palestine", 216) people used to throw bread into the sea, as a votive offering (waqf) for the safety 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: khit nešrān yā bahh, "Take what has been promised you, O sea" (Cassan, Abeggglaube, 75-76; also his "Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine" [1926], 12). Cf. also Cassan, "Das Blut in Sitten und Abeggglauben", 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 Israel, 156-57 (although in this instance it is a tradition that originated among the Bedouin population rather than bedouins; cf. ibid., 254).

115 Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, Reisen in Arabien (Weimar, 1830), 650 writes about sailors on the Red Sea who throw a handful of food into the sea whenever they have a meal, "for fear of water spirits". On the subject of "precautions for the sea" see also C.H. Becker, "Religiöse Schichten" (Arabischer Schiffe"), Archiv für Religionswissenschaft 11 (1909), 157-59; Doughty, 1, 407; Cassan, "The Countries and Tribes of the Peninsula", 333-34, 37; Murray, The Sons of Israel, 155, 156; Doughty, Die Djinn des Islam, 1. 449, has a similar description of sailors passing Cape Musmann 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 gale 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 adrift a model ship, more or less elaborate, or even a coconut shell, filled with fragments of food and sweetmeats 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 cast up, dire forebodings fill their minds; these models were often met with by ships far out at sea in calm weather.

116 Cf. n. 62 above, esp. Doughty, 1, 411, 497 (1888 ed., 1, 305, 449-50) on the subject of hanging sacrificial meat, goats' horns, pieces of cloth, etc., into these trees. Cf. also Wellhausen, Reste arabischer Heidentum, 106. Concerning similar sacrifices offered by sick people in a case, see Hess, Von den Beduinen des inneren Arabiens, 3; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 50.

117 Doughty, 1, 488-89; cf. also Le Comte de Landburg, Etudes sur les dialectes de l'Africar Méridionale, 3, 131-137 (cf. the context, 1709-14): an account by 'Abd Allah Mīshār from Uwayzā (in Qāshūn in central Arabia) according to which the inhabitants of Taymī sacrificed several sheep to the devil each year. They then carried the head of the sacrifice, and killed the rest at the same time.
the Najd (central Arabian upland)\textsuperscript{120} 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 a reason to fear such a disaster, for instance after a dawn containing bad omens.\textsuperscript{121} The Rwāla leave blood for the spirits whenever they slaughter an animal.\textsuperscript{122} [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.\textsuperscript{123} 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.\textsuperscript{124} 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\textsuperscript{125} (concerning the colour green see also 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\textsuperscript{126} and other gifts, e.g. a silver coin that is buried under the doorstep.\textsuperscript{127} Sometimes incense is burnt for such rites.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{120}Landberg, *Etudes*, II, 3, 1772: similar sacrifices occur in cases of disease. From the context it is perfectly clear that we are dealing with a jinni here.

\textsuperscript{121}Jassem, *Mubd*, 219–26; Jassem and Savigarc, *Continuums*, 70.

\textsuperscript{122}Mendi, *Manners and Customs*, 411. See n. 36 above.


\textsuperscript{124}Mendi, *Manners and Customs*, 417.

\textsuperscript{125}See Henninger, *"Huhnsopfer"*, 339, 343–44, 345–46.

\textsuperscript{126}See Canaan, *Dummenegratie*, 31, 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" (*Dummenegratie*, 25–26, with nn. 237 and 238; ibid., 39). In addition to the literature quoted there see also Jassem, *Mubd*, 252–53; Mendi, *Arabia Petrana*, III, 201; Dallen, *Arab and Stile in Palatina*, 1, 574–79; J.G. Freer, *The Golden Bough*, 2nd ed., Part IV: *Adonis, Attis, Osiris* (London, 1914), II, 48, 96; Part V: *Spirits of the Corn and the Wild*, I, 138; Zbinden, *Die Dynasten des Islam*, 44.

\textsuperscript{127}Canaan, *Dummenegratie*, 39; Zbinden (*Die Dynasten des Islam*) considers silver to be a defence that works in the same way as iron (see n. 92 above).

\textsuperscript{128}Doughty, II, 211 (= 1885 ed., II, 100); Jassem, *Napoleon*, 164, 214—but as a sacrifice or a defence?. Cf. n. 89 above on the subject of rites of exorcism. Jassem, *Napoleon*, 164, 214 gives a similar account (takhtan). It is however, for some reasons...
Beliefs in Spirits among the Pre-Islamic Arabs

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. [298] Useful material (albeit sparse) can be found in the pre-Islamic poets, also in the Qur’an, Muhammad’s biography and the other older Islamic literature, and still further in later Islamic literature, namely those collected in the fields of tradition (hadith), Qur’anic exegesis (tafseer), jurisprudence (fiqh), etc. It is advisable to apply caution to these works as well, just as on the whole these sources have been critically appraised in the extant systematic studies. [131]

Based on these well-researched and


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. [132] They eat and drink, [133] they can be wounded and killed. [134] There are male and female spirits; [135] they have offspring. They can have human partners and even enter


Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 148-49, 151-52, 154; Smith, Religion, 119- 20; Eliezer, "Die Dschinn, Truof und Engel in Koran", 38; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 176-177; Ryckmans, Rehen abe prétalasique, 208. All: Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 149; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 720-21, Zbinden, Die Dijinn des Islam, 71, 72, 98. Their food is excrement: Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 150; cf. also Eliezer, Die Dschinn, Truof und Engel in Koran, 32; Zbinden, Die Dijinn des Islam, 93.

Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 149, 153-54; Smith, Religion, 120, 172 n. 2, 128.

Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 149, 153-54; Gaufecol-Demons, Meton, 28. Cf. also nos. 152 and 153 below.

Lam, Arabic Society, 33.
into true marriages with them.\(^{137}\) Like humans they are organised into clans and tribes; the collective is more important than the individual among jinn and Arabs alike,\(^{138}\) and this community acts in solidarity whenever necessary, as, e.g., in the case of a blood feud.\(^{139}\) 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.\(^ {140}\) Besides quadrupeds such as the panther, jackal, wildcat, donkey, dog, cat and mouse,\(^ {141}\) birds play a certain part here, e.g., the raven, owl, green woodpecker, hoopoe and ostrich,\(^ {142}\) but especially snakes\(^ {143}\) and creeping animals in general, such as lizards.

\(^{137}\) Willhauzen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 154; Smith, Religion, 50, 128; Cook, ibid., 514.


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 Sturz at Dschidoun (55), vs. 56, 77; where the Jinn (angels of paradise) are said

\(^{139}\) to have been touched before, by man or jinn” (cf. Canaan, 164 below)–Zbiden (ibid., 94) already suspects Syriac influence. On the subject in general cf. n. 44, 47, 65 above; n. 163 below.


\(^{142}\) Willhauzen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 152, 154.

\(^{143}\) Willhauzen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 149, 152; Smith, Religion, 120, 129; Beduinenleben, 123; Titthin, “Spirits and Demons in Arabia,” 719, 721.

\(^{144}\) Willhauzen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 152, 154; Smith, Religion, 120, 129; Beduinenleben, 123; Titthin, “Spirits and Demons in Arabia,” 719, 721.

\(^{145}\) Willhauzen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 150–52; Lane, Arabian Society, 34–35. Cf. also n. 140 above, n. 185 below.

\(^{146}\) Willhauzen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 152, 154; Smith, Religion, 120, 129; Geyer, “Die Katze auf dem Kamel,” 66–67; Ryckmans, Religions arabes préislamiques, 203b.


\(^{148}\) “Arabs, Anciens” (1606); Lane, Arabian Society, 34–35; 14–53, 750–51, 759–59.

\(^{149}\) “Arabs, Anciens” (1606); Lane, Arabian Society, 34–35; 14–53, 750–51, 759–59.
an animal, a weather phenomenon, or calamity, terror, etc. in general.\(^{151}\)

The man-eating ghaf\(^{152}\) and several other particular species of demonic beings were known under the same names in pre-Islamic Arabia as they are today.\(^{153}\)

The jinn’s abode is the desert,\(^{154}\) especially certain little-known areas that are difficult to reach,\(^{155}\) and generally all places of decay and filth, such as latrines.\(^{156}\) Spirits live in the earth,\(^{158}\) and whoever cultivates wasteland, digs a well or foundations for a building etc. will disturb the spirits and may incur their wrath.\(^{159}\)

\(^{151}\) Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 149; Smith, Religion, 119-20, 121 with n. 2, 124-32 passim.

\(^{152}\) Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 149-50, 154, 155; Smith, Religion, 126 n. 1, 128 n. 3, 129 n. 2, 131; Jacob, Beduineneuben, 122-23, Lane, Arabian Society, 41-42, 104; Tritton, “Spits and Demons in Arabia”, 721; Chelchol, Sacrifice, 105; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 97. The word “ghaf” in Gauddefroy-Demombynes, Mahomet, 28, is undoubtedly a misspelt for ghaf. Cf. also n. 51 above.

\(^{153}\) Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 149; Lane, Arabian Society, 43-46; Tritton, “Spits and Demons in Arabia”, 715-16; Eicher, Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran, 13-14.

\(^{154}\) Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 149-50; Smith, Religion, 120-22; Tritton, “Spits and Demons in Arabia”, 717-18; Chelchol, Sacrifice, 105; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 75. Cf. also n. 255 below.

\(^{155}\) Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 150 (ibid., 106, more generally: “in caves, mountains and valleys”); Smith, Religion, 121-22, Tritton, “Spits 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 “naturalis daemon” (III-IV, 26; Gauddefroy-Demombynes might be applied to it (cf. nn. 71-73, 99 above). Fahd, “Anges, Dämons et djéïns en Islam”, 160 n. 160 (211), also compares a jinni to a genius loci. Eicher, 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 jinni 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 Arab, the holy stones, and the jinn cannot be established”. When Gauddefroy-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. Wellhausen, Die Djinn des Islam, 80).

\(^{156}\) Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 150; Chelchol, Sacrifice, 105; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 76; Ryckman, Religions arabe préislamiques, 203b.

\(^{157}\) Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 150, 158.

\(^{158}\) Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 151-52; Smith, Religion, 198; Ryckmans, Religions arabe préislamiques, 203b. Cf. also Toufic Fahd, La divination arabe (Leiden, 1965), 174-78.

\(^{159}\) Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 151, 153; Smith, Religion, 133, 135, 150 n. 1; Kremer, Studien, 111-1V, 26; Tritton, “Spits and Demons in Arabia”, 717-18; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 76.

Beliefs in Spirits among the Pre-Islamic Arabs

It is not clear whether caves play a particular part as habitation of the jinn.\(^{160}\)

However, they do not live exclusively in the desert, but also in areas that are rich in water and vegetation,\(^{161}\) in trees and thickets.\(^{162}\) 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.\(^{163}\) Jinn are also found as house spirits in human habitations, where they sometimes appear in the shape of snakes.\(^{164}\) It

\(^{160}\) Wellhausen, Reste arabischen heidentums, 106 mentions caves (see n. 155 above), but he does not give a source.

\(^{161}\) Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 106, 151; Smith, Religion, 121-32; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 75. Smith (Religion, 131) writes explicitly: “while the jinn frequent water 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 neighborhood of trees and groves, especially the crevices between thickets that occupy the places in the bottoms 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 hibb, the holy district, from its having been the spirits’ abode, which was only later taken over by the gods. Cf. Henninger, “Die unheilvige Tierwelt der osmanischen Araber in ethnologischer Sicht”, Paedanea 4 (1950), 181 with nn. 7-12, 187 with n. 51.

\(^{162}\) Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 104-106, 151, 164; Smith, Religion, 120 n. 1, 132-33 (cf. also 442); Kremer, Studien, 186; Gauddefroy-Demombynes, Mahomet, 27, 29; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 76. Cf. also n. 161 above.

\(^{163}\) 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 jinn of Al-Assaf, which is in Syria). Gauddefroy-Demombynes (Mahomet, 26) also mentions spirits living in springs only in a general way. Chelchol (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. (Chelchol, Sacrifice, 105 n. 8). This is the article “Hallacks (Semitic) by Owen G. Whitehouse (loc. cit., 723-726). Whitehouse’s note that the “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 emphasizes 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 Al-Assaf, 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 (Bazel, 1975), 273-332. Cf. n. 190 below.

\(^{164}\) Wellhausen, Reste arabischen Heidentums, 151, 164; Smith, Religion, 120 n. 1; Tritton, “Spits and Demons in Arabia”, 717; Zbinden, Die Djinn des Islam, 76.
Beliefs in Spirits among the Pre-Islamic Arabs

They abduct people, children as well as adults, taking them into the desert.

Besides this harassment and interference, there are also other more amicable variants of possession as well as other relationships between humans and jinn. There was an idea that every human has a Doppelpäger among the jinn, maybe even a belief in a personal guardian spirit, but most certainly one finds the belief that some very favoured human beings can have close and friendly relationships with jinn. One such individual is the soothsayer (kárín), the point here being that the jinn have secret knowledge.

173 Wolfhagen, "Arabische Heidentümer, 156; Smith, Religion, 120, 127 n 2, 128, 129 n 2; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 722-24; Chelhood, Sacrifice, 155-96; Gaudelfrey-Dehombures, Mahomet, 27-38; Eichler, Die Dachsh, Teufel und Engel im Koran, 23-38; Professor, Religions arabes prophétiques, 20; Zbinden, Die Djin die des Islam, 77; Fahd, "Anges, démons et djinns en Islam", 191-92. Cf. also ed. 231-33 below.


175 Wolfhagen, "Arabische Heidentümer, 156; n. 1; he refers to modern ideas according to which a human being can be a kind of mawšah (cf. n. 75 above), on the authority of Doughty (II, 127, 1888 ed., 11, 109). Jinn can also be helpful to humans: Wolfhagen, "Arabische Heidentümer, 154-55; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 722; Nöddleke, "Arab (Ancient)", 659b; Chelhood, Sacrifice, 103; Zbinden, Die Djin die des Islam, 78.

176 Wolfhagen, "Arabische Heidentümer, 156-58; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 722. Gaudelfrey-Dehombures (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 (shrine); he is a person's good or evil genius. It appears possible to discern (and, if possible, to change) a jinn's personality. (We shall not, however, discuss in any detail connections with ancient Arab beliefs concerning the soul.) When Eichler (Die Dachsh, 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'an, 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.

177 Wolfhagen, "Arabische Heidentümer, 156; Kremer, Studien, 11-14, 63; Eichler, Die Dachsh, Teufel und Engel im Koran, 16; O. D. Hornblower, "Traces of a Ka-Belief in Modern Egypt and Old Arabia", Ancient Egypt 8 (1953), 67-70, esp. 69-70, conjoins an ancient Arabian belief in a guardian spirit, similar to the ancient Egyptian beliefs concerning Ka.

178 Wolfhagen, "Arabische Heidentümer, 154-35 (esp. 134, 137-38), 157 n 1; van Vloten, "Dämonen, Geister und Zaubern bei den alten Arabern" (1893), 183-84; Jacob, Altarabische Paralleliten, 15-16; Nöddleke, "Arab (Ancient)", 671a; Eichler, Die Dachsh, Teufel und Engel im Koran, 23-38; C. Snouck Hurgronje, "Der Islam", in P.D. Champepi de la Sausasse, Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte, 4th ed. (Tübingen, 1924), I, 651, 601; Tritton, "Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 724, 726; H.S. Nyberg, "Bemerkungen zum..."
Beliefs in Spirits among the Pre-Islamic Arabs

describe causes and can therefore enable a human partner to interpret dreams as well.\(^{181}\)

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 an. 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,\(^{182}\) 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 defensive strategies to keep them at bay.\(^{183}\)

1) Just like nowadays, \(^{204}\) people had to avoid whistling, because spirits call one another by whistling.\(^{184}\)

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.\(^{185}\)

3) People would also wear amulets\(^{186}\) and some ancient Arabian incantations may well have been directed against the jinn.\(^{187}\) We do not find any evidence in pre-Islamic times of invoking the protection of more exalted powers against the jinn,\(^{188}\) but there are 4) some invocations addressed to the jinn themselves, which bring to mind the modern dastur ya sâhib al-makhail (see


\(^{182}\) Weissenfels, Reste arabischer Heidentums, 149; Eichler, Die Dschin, Teufel und Engel im Koran, 3–4, 8–9.


\(^{184}\) Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Mohamet, 27 (without giving a source); Weissenfels (Reste arabischer Heidentums, 130) reports this only about present-day Arabs, according to Touffy (see n. 53 above).

\(^{185}\) Weissenfels, Reste arabischer Heidentuns, 162–63; Jacob, Beduinenleben, 154–55; Rudolf Geyer, “Das Fieber von Jibbar und der Eid”, Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kundte des Morgenlandes 17 (1903), 301–302; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Mohamet, 43–44; Fehdi, La divination arabe, 475.

\(^{186}\) Weissenfels, Reste arabischer Heidentuns, 160–67; Smith, Religion, 129 n. 2, 133 n. 4 (amulets made from the body of a hare, because this animal is not related to spirits); Lazen, Arabian Society, 36–37, 40 (iron); Chlebiod, Sacrifice, 174 with n. 7 (menstrual blood chase the spirits away); Zbinden, Die Djinns des Islam, 77–78; Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Mohamet, 42–43; Fehdi, La divination arabe, 213 n. 7 (hare’s bones as a defence). On the use of iron, see Goldtiter, “Eisen als Schutz gegen Dämonen”, 41–46, esp. 42–43.


\(^{188}\) The idea that God is greater than all other powers is sometimes already conveyed by pre-Islamic poets; see Carl Brockhaus, “Allah und die Götter. Der Ursprung des islamischen Monotheismus”, Archiv für Religionswissenschaft 21 (1922), 99–121, esp. 107–
Beliefs in Spirits among the Pre-Islamic Arabs

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 Qur'ān that jinn worship was the nucleus of Arab polytheism (pp. 252). 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.  

Joseph Henninger

n. 99 above).  

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., 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 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 Qur'ān states explicitly that there were Jinn in Muhammad'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-Saffat 37, v. 158). [305] I.e. treated them as deities.  

Similar statements are found in...
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. Chel hod'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 of 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.  

This, according to Chel hod, is the reason why there is hardly any public worship among the nomads; it only begins when they settle and deities become personalised.

If we wish to subscribe to this view, however, the Qur'anic 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, and we encounter major difficulties when interpreting these passages as referring to deities. 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 Muhammad'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 God) over the spirits and demons (who intercede with humans).

Beliefs in Spirits among the Pre-Islamic Arabs

God. 300 [306] J. Starcky writes: "Present-day Arabs who believe in jinn consider them to be mainly evil spirits, but for Muhammad's contemporaries, the jinn were gods (Sūrat al-An'am 6, 11 [sic. Read: v. 100])". 201 Starcky, like Dussaud, 202 quite obviously bases his statement on the fact that there was a class of minor deities in Palmyra, called ginnyae, a name that is undoubtedly related etymologically to Arabic jinn (see below, 310–11). Gaudefroy-Demboines 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). Zhidden 203 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 unrestrained 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...". 204 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.

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300Macdonald, "Djinns", 1091b.
302René Dussaud, La pénétration des arabs en Syrie avant l'Islam (Paris, 1955), 90–91, 94, 98, 101, 110–13, 169, with Fig. 26 (p. 111) and Fig. 27 (p. 114).
303W. Becher, Die Djinns des Islam, 79–80, 84.
304W. Becher, Recht arabischer Rechtsnormen, 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 Windfuhr, Völkerpsychologie, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1900–1909), VI.3, 50–51, 64–65, 312–15, 412–48 (esp. 412–20).
Beliefs in Spirits among the Pre-Islamic Arabs

spirits inherited from the Biblical religions) is fairly clear.\[^{200}\] There is not always such a clear distinction among evil spirits.\[^{207}\] Thus it is not quite clear from the Qur'an whether jinn (djinns, or jinn, in Arabic) was originally counted among the angels or among the jinn.\[^{208}\] There are at least three categories of evil spirits whose names are cast into hell after the Last Judgment: 1) fallen angels ("asatān", the word translated as "Satan", also appears in the plural "asatān") and 2) the unbelievers among the jinn; and 3) pagans (deities).\[^{211}\] Thus we can see that the latter are seen as 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'ān (with the exception of very sporadic instances), but their divine nature. Upsiring divine nature is their sin, just as ascribing it to beings other than God is the sin of their worshipers (the sin of shirk, "having a companion"). This has remained the term for polytheism in Islamic theology. For this sin, these "companions" (of God), "shuraqā", 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 im Koran", 100 (n. 57), and the literature cited therein; Zähner, *Die Djinne des Islams* (2395); and *Die Djinne des Islams* (2395). The term *doppelgänger* is frequently blurred in popular Islam; cf. cannabis, albergella, 7, idem, Darmenenglaube, 3:4; also n. 78 above.


Eichler, *Die Djinne, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 48, 56-64, 75; Henninger, "Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten im Koran", 236-85 (n. 57), and the literature cited therein; Zähner, *Die Djinne des Islams*, 87-89.


Eichler, *Die Djinne, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 48, 56-64, 75; Henninger, "Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten im Koran", 236-85 (n. 57), and the literature cited therein; Zähner, *Die Djinne des Islams*, 87-89.


Eichler, *Die Djinne, Teufel und Engel im Koran*, 48, 56-64, 75; Henninger, "Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten im Koran", 236-85 (n. 57), and the literature cited therein; Zähner, *Die Djinne des Islams*, 87-89.

to burn in hell.212 [309] The Qur’an 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 Shaytans.213

Moderate popular belief in the Arab-Islamic countries has of course been influenced by the position occupied by Muhammad and the oldest traditions regarding belief in jinn,214 but in different ways. The distinction between believing and unbelieving jinn is mentioned in popular literature,215 and occasionally elsewhere,216 but on the whole the evil jinn, often grouped with the Shaytans, play a much more important part in popular beliefs than the good ones. Defence strategies against these “evil spirits” (see nn. 92–98, using Qur’anic passages for incantations and amulets.217 Another typical Islamic belief is that Ramadān, the month of fasting, commands special power to keep the jinn at bay, for instance that all the jinn are banned to the end of the month. Even then they cannot enter a house that still contains anything left over from Ramadān (e.g. bread baked in this month218). 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

Beliefs in Spirits among the Pre-Islamic Arabs219

Islam.220 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.220 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’an dealing with jinn worship (see above, n. 191) simply as relating to pagan deities. Zbieden is probably right209, 210 right when he maintains that gods as well as jinn were worshipped in pre-Islamic Arabia211 (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 define 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 Arabized later. This includes some elements that, as Albright has demonstrated, are neither late nor early Semitic but more recent and sometimes only of Hellenistic origin.222 If, for instance, the jinniya inhabiting a spring in Palestine is just called ‘arīsh ("bride"); “young woman"), this is the exact translation of Greek οἰκυμή,223 and indicates influences from Hellenistic times. If, moreover, in some places the spirits appear in the form of cokellets, 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.224

212[al-Damārī in Smith, Religion, n. 1. n. 1.; Kremer, Studien, 1–11, 48; Eichler, Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran, 2, 16; Triton, “Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 177; Zbieden, Die Djinns of Islam, 99.
215See above, n. 212.
216See above, n. 212.
217See above, n. 212.
218[al-Damārī in Smith, Religion, 199 n. 1.; Kremer, Studien, 1–11, 48; Eichler, Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran, 2, 16; Triton, “Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 177; Zbieden, Die Djinns of Islam, 99.
219See above, n. 212.
220[al-Damārī in Smith, Religion, n. 1. n. 1.; Kremer, Studien, 1–11, 48; Eichler, Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran, 2, 16; Triton, “Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 177; Zbieden, Die Djinns of Islam, 99.
221[al-Damārī in Smith, Religion, 199 n. 1.; Kremer, Studien, 1–11, 48; Eichler, Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran, 2, 16; Triton, “Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 177; Zbieden, Die Djinns of Islam, 99.
222[al-Damārī in Smith, Religion, 199 n. 1.; Kremer, Studien, 1–11, 48; Eichler, Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran, 2, 16; Triton, “Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 177; Zbieden, Die Djinns of Islam, 99.
223[al-Damārī in Smith, Religion, 199 n. 1.; Kremer, Studien, 1–11, 48; Eichler, Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran, 2, 16; Triton, “Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 177; Zbieden, Die Djinns of Islam, 99.
224[al-Damārī in Smith, Religion, 199 n. 1.; Kremer, Studien, 1–11, 48; Eichler, Die Dschinn, Teufel und Engel im Koran, 2, 16; Triton, “Spirits and Demons in Arabia", 177; Zbieden, Die Djinns of Islam, 99.
Beliefs in Spirits among the Pre-Islamic Arabs

assumed the derivation from the root jnn as 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 the man is no longer himself but the spirit that is upon him; the action is a genuine incarnation. 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.

What the explanations so far have in common, despite all their differences, is that they consider the word jinn to be purely Arabic. W. Albright is of a different opinion, which begins with the observation that Theodor Nöldeke and Mark Lidzbarski had already noticed that there is an Arabic word *genet", *hidden", *plural genin, *hidden things", and the emphatic plural genaya, that 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. The word is also found in Arabic magic texts from the sixth century AD, meaning "evil spirit". The Fathers of...

226 For a more precise explanation of this rather ambiguous term, see Wessinck, "Etymology", 510-513, and his "Supplementary Notes", 514c-514e.
228 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).
229 Albright, "Islam and the Religions of the Ancient Orient", 222.
230 Ibid., 292 with n. 30; more detailed reports have since emerged: Daniel Schlumberger, La Palmyre du Nord-Ouest (Paris, 1951), 25, 67, 121-22, 123 (b), 127-28, 133-37, and Plate XXIX; 1, Dussaud, Pénétration, 90-91, 98, 99, 101, 110-13, and Fig. 26 (p. 111); Fig. 27 (p. 114); Starcky in Brillant et Aigrain, IV, 210; Hanoki Inhoudt, Henri Seyrig, Jean Starcky, Revue des études de Palmyre, with additional remarks by André Cazogu, Paris (1955), 32, no. 235 (226) and 35 (no. 249), also Cazogu, ibid., 182. In ibid., 30 no. 211, we also find a word g-n-y, but not as the name of a deity; cf. Cazogu, ibid., 143, on the roots g-n-y and g-n-y, and Frans Rosenthal’s review of this work in Journal of the American Oriental Society 75 (1955), 1098-200a. Cf. also Jean Starcky, review of Dussaud, Pénétration, in Revue biblique 63 (1956), 276 (with the sources, ibid., n. 2-4).
the Syrian church (fourth–sixth centuries) and the Syriac translation of the Bible (Peshitta) use the derived noun [311] geniō < geniātī < feminine geniātīth < *geniātīth, "demon", to Arabic: jinnī(y) [jinnī] or jinnā(y) [jinnā] 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 depersonalized 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 Arabic Nights, creatures of smoke, intermediate between the fiery devils of hell and the angels of light.239

239 [Ibid.], 292–93. In a letter dated 16/111904, 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". In my view, there is no link whatsoever between Palmyrene gny, Syriac geniātī, and Al-Iskandarī's explanation of the root $j-n-n meaning "to hidden" (as well as doubled). The of jinn 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. incūs). The Aramaeans gny are chthonic deities, altogether different from Arabic jinn who live in the open air (I should think that in those cases where they appear as subterranean spirits, we are dealing with deities that are not purely Arabic). The fact that the two roots $g-n-y and $j-n-n may well have been related originally, as a proto-Semitic time, Levi della Vida into account, Prof. Fritz Meier expresses himself with similar, or possibly even more, reluctance: "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: that this is a parallel case to incudus, they might just as well be protective deities (giving cover), but there are other possibilities as well." (Letter dated 5/111908. See now the detailed discussion of the origin of the word jinn in Fritz Meier. "Ein Arabisches "Bet- Rat", Annalische Studien 33 (1979), 189–98. Having given numerous instances, Meier, 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
parison of the ancient Semitic deities carried out during a symposium in Rome in 1858 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. In the oldest conjectured Semitic nomadic religion, we find initially only the god El (Lagarde’s characterisation: “El, the common god, primitive and most probably unique to the Semites”, is largely correct, although some modification will be necessary), then also protective deities for individual tribes and groups, and finally, “animist” ideas. Just as the ancient Semitic supreme God survives in the animists of later polytheism, with all its astral, climate, and fertility deities.

If the word “animism” is in quotation marks in this study, and in the literature quoted here, 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 schematic 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; on the contrary, behind them 247

247 Cf. also Joseph Henninger, Über Lebensraum und Lebensformen der Frühkunden (Cologne and Opladen, 1986), esp. 7-14, 43-48, and the literature quoted there.

248 See Sabatino Moscati, ed., Le antiche divinità semitiche (Rome, 1958); also the review in Anthropos 55 (1960), 300-308.


251 Moscati, op. cit., 133; Brelich, op. cit., 135-40; Anthropos 55 (1960), 907-908.

252 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 (Paris, 1972), 201-15.

253 Moscati, op. cit., 135; Brelich, op. cit., 139-40.

254 wellhausen, Reste arabischer Heidentum, 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 mnemonic explanation in this phannagnostic field

Beliefs in Spirits among the Pre-Islamic Arabs is [313] that very nature, which is often mysterious and dangerous, and not subject to man.255

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.256

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 beduins, whereas among the sedentary population there are also some who are spirits of the dead (see Bödker, Die Djinns des Islam, 47-48, 51-52; cf. n. 25 above). This, in turn, partly influenced beduin beliefs (Bödker, Die Djinns des Islam, 52-53). Thus there are indications (reasons of a 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 Mezâa (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 indirectly with the tent pitched therein.

256 wellhausen, Reste arabischer Heidentum, 157 (text quoted in n. 154 above), more explicitly: Smith, Religion, 120-23, also: Moscati, op. cit., 134-60 above; Nüßle, Araber (Abeceten), 659b-670a; Macdonald, "Dijinn", 1091b, and the literature cited therein; Haldr, Cultus Prophetiae, 25; Eichler (Die Dschinn, Tschuf und Engel im Koran, 13) 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, 297, and here, 313-15.

MAGIC AND DIVINATION IN EARLY ISLAM

Joseph Henninger

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 known and feared in Egypt inhabited by demons. Does this attitude remain unchanged until the present day? At the beginning of the eleventh 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. By the beginning of the [314] eighteenth century, this attitude had not changed to any remarkable extent. 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 the urban character at every step. It has been said that the people in the towns who moved about the streets and bazaars of the cities, as soon as they leave the city, the world of spirits and adventures begins. d) Consequently, it is not surprising that belief in, and worship of, spirits is much more intense 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. Occasionally we even find explicit proof that the bedouin fear spirits much less than the sedentary 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 jellub would fear them. Now, wolves are really dangerous.' (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, 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 to the centre—are members of a culture completely different from that 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. In other words, these are semi-bedouins, 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. 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. 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.

Beliefs in Spirits among the Pre-Islamic Arabs

Cf. Alfred Helmer, "Die Beduinen im Osten der Arabischen Halbinsel" (Uppsala and Leipzig, 1909); summary in Anthropos 46 (1951), 624.

Edward William Lane, An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians (London, 1861), 1, 364.

Cf. Ewald Reuss, "Das Beduinenwesen (Berlin, 1831), vi, 24-26, idem, "Von der Bedouinenwesen" (Stuttgart, 1921), 24-26, idem, "Von der Bedouinenwesen" (Stuttgart, 1921), 24-26, idem, "Von der Bedouinenwesen" (Stuttgart, 1921), 24-26, idem, "Von der Bedouinenwesen" (Stuttgart, 1921), 24-26.

See Henninger, "Von der Bedouinenwesen" (Stuttgart, 1921), 24-26, idem, "Von der Bedouinenwesen" (Stuttgart, 1921), 24-26, idem, "Von der Bedouinenwesen" (Stuttgart, 1921), 24-26, idem, "Von der Bedouinenwesen" (Stuttgart, 1921), 24-26.

Cf. Constance E. Padwick, "Notes on the Jinn and the Ghost in the Peasant Mind of Palestine" (Die Jinn der Islam, 48, with reference to Th. Bent and Abdullah Mansur (see n. 21 above).)

See Henninger, "Die Beduinen im Osten der Arabischen Halbinsel", 161 n. 150. On the subject of jinn beliefs among the Al Murra, who are true bedouins (see n. 83 above), cf. the remarks by Donald Powell, Cole in his Nomads of the Nomads: the Al Murra Bedouins 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 jinn (ibid., 31, 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 Al Murra, the name only means that there are no permanent settlements (ibid., 31). They believe in the existence of the jinn, spirits, and shaitans, devils, because the Koran says they exist and because they have numerous folk tales about them. But many of the Al Murra knew that they were not borne, because they had never individually come into contact with the jinn beings." (Ibid., 31, 93).
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. It is impossible to view the pre-Islamic monotheism, 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, but most certainly not all of them. Most importantly, we must not count the heavenly deities to be the last result in a development from jinn through terrestrial deities to become, finally, heavenly deities, as Weilhausen and others attempted to do (see above, 280–82).

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:

"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."

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

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265 Cf. Brockhaus, "Allah und die Götter", 105; Zhinden, Die Djina des Islam, 79–80; on the subject of pre-Islamic deities in general see Henninger, "La religion bedouine prislamique", 119–40 passim, esp. 126–34, 139–40. Zhinden (Die Djina des Islam, 79–80) attaches great importance to the circumstance that the local Arabian deities are often illustrated in trees and rocks, like the jinn. There are, however, no reliable pre-rock worship"; see Henninger, "La religion bedouine prislamique", 121 with n. 32, 126–40, which are in pre-Islamic times some local deities were reduced to the status of jinn or similar intermediate beings; thus Qur'an, 11, 56 (with reference to Sūrat Yasin [10], v. 18; Sūrat al-Tāmr [39], v. 4). Dussaud (Préhistoire, 106) might also be interpreted in Kühn's inspiration by jinn (see n. 178 above) shown an instance of this denomination: at first a jinn. Cf. van Vloten, "Dämenen, Geister und Zauberei bei den alten Arabern" (1893, 134; Nyberg, "Bemerkungen zum Buch der Göttenschilder von Ibn al-Kalībī", 357–63 (esp. 359–60), 362–63; Haldar, Cult of Prophets, 163, 180, 182, 186. 

266 See Henninger, "La religion bedouine prislamique", with the literature quoted there, against Weilhausen's view (Reste arabischen Heidentums, 211–14; see above, 281) that the heavenly deities of the Semites were originally terrestrial beings. Cf. also n. 247–52 above.
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, bikramat 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 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 titles: they were dandevil 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 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 intellectuals but no dominant clergy on the Jewish or Babylonian model. For the garbulous 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 mujāhab.

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 heartenked 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!

It was not necessary to be a philosopher to indulge in 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 Hermès, 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 Hermès and whose literary expression is known collectively to modern scholars as the Corpus Hermeticum. Just as there was none originally to Hermès 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 barbarian. "From the East, light," it was said, to which one could add, "and wisdom and salvation." This was not Aristotle to be reckoned 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 embroiled upon the process of making the cultural goods of the Byzantines and Sassanians their own. Greek science and philosophy, Persian ethical and political ideals, Indian medicine and mathematics all quickly became part of the Arab intellectual experience. 

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 profoundly religious society such as Islam, but the ancient Greek sages from Empedocles and Pythagoras down to Apollonius of Tyana, the Arabs' "Balams," 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 Wahshiyah claimed that they were merely translators or exegetes of a rediscovered ancient tradition, while others like Jabir ibn Hayyân disappeared behind a cloud of legend as homegrown pseudopigraphomena. 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 Rédéction 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 Trismegistus was no different from what passed in Late Antiquity as the wisdom of Zoroaster or of Apollonius of Tyana. 

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. Where probes have been made by Ruska, Kraus, Ritter, Massignon, Fieseler, and Marquet, 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 pseudographically, 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
In Abu Ma'shar's narrative the Sassanians have nothing to do with the restoration of Iranian wisdom. The books concealed by Tahmura at Isfahan were discovered quite by accident some years before Abu Ma'shar's day (d. A.D. 866), and they formed the basis of his own astrologically oriented history, *The Book of Thousands*. There were further discoveries in A.D. 951 and again in 961 (*Fisirist, 247/Dodge, 578-79*). These books were seen in Baghdad; some of them were unscrupulous, 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 elder of the two authorities, was an Iranian who specialized in translations from the Pahlavi in Harun al-Rashid's "Treasure House of Wisdom" (*Fisirist, 247/Dodge, 651*), while his father had been the court astrologer at al-Mansur and had assisted in that capacity in laying out the city of Baghdad. Abu Ma'shar may have been somewhat more the Hellenophile, 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 Ma'shar knew three personages of that name, encouraged, doubtless, by the stereotyped epithet *trismegistos* applied to Hermes in the sources. The earliest of the three lived before the Flood. He was the first to study the sciences and— the practical element entered 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 Dahaq ibn Qay founded a city, likely Babylon, and constructed in it seven (or twelve) astronomical shrines for seven scholars, among them Hermes. 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 Ma'shar, Ibn Junjul and Ibn Abi Usayyibah, 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 Abbasid times there was some
interest in Greek philosophy, to be sure. Under Mansur, Ibn al-Muqaffa (d. 757) or his son was responsible for the first Aristotelian translations into Arabic. The event was, however, isolated. Mansur was certainly interested in the "foreign sciences"—Jurjīs ibn Jibra'il ibn Bakhtishū came from Junidshāpur to Baghdad as caliphal physician in 765—but that interest was merely an entirely philosophical or merely Greek in its object.

Jurjīs and his successors for the Bakhtishū family were Hellenically trained, but another family that came into prominence in Mansur's reign, the Nawbahāk, looked, as we have seen, in quite different directions. The founder of that line, Nawbahāk, was an Iranian convert from Zoroastrianism to Islam and an astrologer of considerable influence at court. And it was from his grandson, Abu Sahāl al-Fadlī, likewise an astrologer and bilingual in Pahlavi and Arabic, that Ibn al-Nadīm drew the account of the early history of science.

Harun too was interested in Greek science and philosophy. The Bakhtishū retained their position at court but were joined by another Junidshāpur 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 (Qift, 380). Abu Nuh, the secretary of the Nestorian Catholicus Timotheus, edged forward the still relatively unsophisticated translation work on the Aristotelian logic, and another obscure scholar, Sallām al-Abrāshī, is alleged to have translated the Physics (Fībrīst, 244/Dodge, 587).

Sallām probably had the patronage of the Barmacd family, but those recent converts from Buddhism to Islam had interests far more Catholic than Greek science. Yahya ibn Khalīd, the Barmacd who commissioned the translation of Proclus' Almagest, was personally responsible for having Indian medical works translated into Arabic (Fībrīst, 503/Dodge, 710, 826–27). Other scholars connected with either the Barmacids or Harun's Khizamat al-Bikmah labored at turning both Sanscrit and Pahlavi works into Arabic (Fībrīst, 244–45/Dodge, 589–90). Abu Sahāl al-Fadlī was among those latter, in the words of the Fībrīst (274/Dodge, 651), "he was relied upon because of his knowledge of the books of Fars," which included (Fībrīst, 239/Dodge, 651) works of "Hermes the Babylonian" translated into Pahlavi during the reign of Shapur.

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-Bītrīq, Ibn Bahār, Ibn Nāfīmān, and Theodore Abu Qurrah, all Christians, began the work of translating Aristotle, Plato, and the Neoplatonists. 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-Fādī and Abu Ma'shar bear eloquent, if symbolic, witness. More, they underline an important element in the cultural development of Islam: Hermes Trismegistus 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 Trismegistus 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 sapientialization 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. 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 Fībrīst, 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 Mandaeans, Syrian Christian groups like the Daysanes, the theologians of the well-established Babylonian rabbinate, the Hellenized pagan priesthoods which were still active in Babylon and elsewhere in the first Christian century, or in later times the Hellenic and Hellenized philosophers at the court of Khusraw Anushirvan.

Of all these groups it is the Mandaeans 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" (Fībrīst, 540–43/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 Islam, but was pre-Christian in its ascetic, anti-social, and anti-establishment tendencies, as well as in its belief in a transcendent spirit. This sect, which was called " Nasrani Jews," may have been absorbed into the Jews of the east after their arrival in Iraq. The sect was known as the "Sabians," and its members were known as the "Sabians." Their beliefs and practices were similar to those of the Jews, but they were more anti-social and anti-establishment in nature. The sect was eventually absorbed into the Muslim community, and the Sabians were assimilated into it.

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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 built that tended to usurp the center of their discussions of transmigration.

The alleged Shi‘ite affiliations to Hermeticism carry us back to the marshlands of lower Iraq. The territory there occupied by the Mandean-Sabians 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‘ils, 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 (Fibrast, 186–87/Dodge, 462–63). The charge appears somewhat unlikely. There was nothing in the Edessan theologian Bar Daysan (d. 222) of the batilinostis approach to knowledge, no spiritual emanations, no continuing revelation through an Imam.44 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 Stoas, 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 context of Isma‘ili Shi‘ism had drunk deeply of just such a system. The earliest Isma‘ili doctrine 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 dhi‘l in Rayy and Jibal, Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Nasafi (d. 942), his counterpart in Khurasan, and then somewhat later, during the reign of Mu‘izz (955–79), among the Fatimid Isma‘ils 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.45 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.46 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, Porphyry and Proclus. 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 Neoplatonized 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—i.e., to Abdallah ibn Maymun, for example, who flourished early in the second half of the eighth century—then it would anticipate 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‘ils 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, John ibn Sahl (d. 745), who lived even earlier than Abdallah ibn Maymun, apparently had access to some version of Neoplatonism, and others of the earliest mutakallimin 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 assemble their immediate associations with the pagan Sabians of Harran, 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 artifacts of that inheritance, like those of the pseudepigraphers of the Corpus Hermeticum and the Corpus Aretopagmeticum, 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 Platonian 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 rasalah in their 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 Fibrast (318-27/Dodge, 745-53) Ibn al-Nadîm has his own lengthy description of the sect. He names as its 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 (Fibrast, 320/Dodge, 750).

After the Kindi-Sarakhsi account, Ibn al-Nadîm proceeds to his other source on the Sabians of Harran, including a Christian’s narrative (320-21/Dodge, 751-53) of how Ma‘mur 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 themselves as the Mandeans “Sabians” mentioned in the Qur’an, 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 melange, 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. The planet cult at Harran, of which authors such as Ibn al-Nadîm, Mas‘udi, the Brethren of Purity, Shahrazuri, and Dimashqi all produced detailed descriptions, was likewise very old there, and its assimilation to 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-Nadîm’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 monk antiquity stands in absurd contrast to the patently old cult practices at Harran.

Sabianism was far more than mere worship; the Harranians possessed a physics and a theology as well. Kindi’s account in the Fibrast 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 Shahrazuri’s report (Milal II, 662 ff.), with which it essentially agrees, 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 “temple” 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 ascent, 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 Ishmili Brethren of Purity called the “realities” (baqa‘a), 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 Shahristani 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 pietry 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 “A斯塔” (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‘īd 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‘l 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 Luqmān. Among Empedocles’s successors Sa‘īd mentions only Pythagoras, who was initiated into philosophy in Egypt among 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 Nicholas was a student of Pythagoras.45

The Greeks’ own view of that history reads quite differently, of course. Sa‘īd 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 inverdate 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‘īd.46

Sa‘īd’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 “corrupters of the philosophers,” an attitude that went back to the philosophers of the generation before Cicero, where 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; \( \text{Sa'\text{f}d} \) was not, however, writing history but obscurely eulogizing 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 \( \text{Sa'\text{f}d} \), in Empedocles's own lifetime popular opposition forced his philosophy to go underground where it was cultivated by what were called in Arabic \textit{bat\text{\char 6}n\text{\char 6}y\text{\char 6}yah}, 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,\(^4\) who, in \( \text{Sa'\text{f}d} \)'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 \( \text{Sa'\text{f}d} \) or his source ispatently Neoplatonic. Aristotle, it appears, was not the only thinker used as a pseudopedagogical cover for Neoplatonism. Empedocles was cast in precisely that role in the Neoplatonic doxography preserved in Arabic under the title of \textit{The Opinions of the Philosophers} and attributed to Ammonius.\(^4\) And though he does not appear in the early Arabic literature on Harran, Empedocles does figure in Islam's most considerable piece of \textit{Hermetica}, the \textit{Qabat al-bakh\text{\char 5}m}, 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 \textit{Fibris\textit{t}} are chiefly alchemical and astrological.\(^4\) Similar works were earlier circulating under his name in Greek as well, but the \textit{Corpus Hermeticum} published by Pesugäre and Nock is far more philosophical than occult in its contents, and its theology bears a marked resemblance to both Stoicism and Platonism.\(^5\) None of the \textit{Fibris\textit{t}}'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): "\text{Al-Kindi} said that he saw a book which these people [the Sabians] authorized. It was the \textit{Discourse of Hermes on Unity} \textit{(\textit{ta\text{w}b\text{\char 6}d})}, which he [Hermes] wrote for his son... No philosopher exercising himself can dispense with them... and agreement with them."\(^6\)

The "\text{Discourses on Unity}" have been identified, without evidence, as the tract called "\text{Poin\text{d}m\text{\char 6}ndes}" in \textit{our Corpus Hermeticum}.\(^7\) If we recall, on the other hand, that the information—and the editorial comment—comes from \text{al-Kindi}, a philosopher with known Mu'tazilite leanings,\(^8\) and that \textit{ta\text{w}b\text{\char 6}d} Allahu, the unity of God, was the paramount Mu'tazilite issue of the time,\(^9\) we are no closer to locating the "\text{Discourses}" in the \textit{Corpus Hermeticum}, but we have probably uncovered Kindi's motive in praising whatever he read in the "\text{Discourses}" and can perhaps conjecture what he did read there. In \textit{al-Kindi}'s bibliography we find among his controversial works (\textit{Fibris\textit{t}}, 259/Dodge, 622) various refutations of the Manicheans and other dualists, a work on \textit{ta\text{w}b\text{\char 6}d}, together with commentaries, and finally, a treatment of the differences that exist between the various sects on the subject of \textit{ta\text{w}b\text{\char 6}d}, and this despite the fact that they are all supporters of the divine unity.

\textit{Al-Kindi} had already attempted, as we have seen, to locate Sabian theology in the context of the \textit{ta\text{w}b\text{\char 6}d} question by what must have been a highly Neoplatonic reading of the \textit{Metaphysics}, just as \text{Sa'\text{f}d} al-Andalusi was to do with a similar reading of Empedocles. \text{Sa'\text{f}d} 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 \text{Sa'\text{f}d}'s judgment,\(^5\) except to note that the \textit{kalam} formulated by Abu al-Hudhayl, who despite the date of his death belonged to the generation of thinkers before \text{al-Kindi}, had not yet been exposed to the scholastic tradition in philosophy.\(^5\)

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 Wasi\text{\char 7}n ibn 'Ata', but in one of his contemporaries, Ja'\text{\char 8}m ibn Safwan (d. 745). Ja'\text{\char 8}m 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 "\text{Discourses on \textit{ta\text{w}b\text{\char 6}d}}", for example, when he presented his own radical portrait of Allah as absolutely transcendent, beyond accidents, properties, or qualifications, and indeed, beyond being itself.\(^6\)

Farther back in Islam it is impossible to go. Ja'\text{\char 8}m anidates all the known translations of Greek \textit{philosophics} 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 Syria since the sixth century in the translation of Sergius of Reshayna—or those of Harran whose God Kindi described as "\textit{ta\text{w}b\text{\char 6}d}, 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 Harraniyahs to reach Baghdad and leave his mark there was Thabit ibn Qurra (d. 901).\(^7\) Again according to the \textit{Fibris\textit{t}} 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 Mut"adid (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 Hellenistic 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, but it was 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 (Mas'udi, 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 Fibrist does not make explicit use of information from Thabit ibn Qurrah for his 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. 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 bias, as the later Platonists were well aware. Its effects were already evident in Philo, and both Porphyry (Vita Pyth. 43–45 Nauck) and Simplicius (In Phys., 230–31) cite long extracts from Modestus of Gades, a Pythagorean of the first Christian century, whose theses, if they are his, anticipated positions generally characterized as Neoplatonic.

One of the most remarkable features of Modestus'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 Modestus 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. Modestus 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-Platonic 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 (Fibrist, 2:101; Dodge, 643), but his other major work, the Introduction to Arithmetic, which became a standard textbook in the later Platonic schools, 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  2  d, here numbers, in the mind of the Creator God (18 Kutsch; 12 Hoche).

Thabit's scientific interests are well attested; 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 most sought-by students 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). 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 fiysikawi he cites is Thabit ibn Qurrah. 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 Muqaddir (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 Fibrist (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, 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 Hizal (d. 995), became the chief secretary of the Buyid dynasty and used his influence on behalf of his conference. 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 Sina (d. 975), were literary men rather than scientists, the latter a historian of some distinction and with a marked Hellenic cast to his work.

What was the impact of the Sabians upon Islam? As is the case in the parallel instances of the Manicheans and the Dayashiyah, we do not possess the books of the Harran sect nor even their history but must rely on what can be read in the oblique testimonia of Ma’rudi, Ibn al-Nadim, the Brethren of Purity, Shahrazuri, 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 “zindigs,” those suspected of some clandestine form of Manichaeism.

Ibn Hazm (Fat 1, 137) ranked the Sabians among the thanawiyah 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 Mandaeans of Iraq, who themselves had no greater claim to antiquity but who 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 Mandaeans, 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 sacred text 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 pseudographs, and particularly the Nabatean Agriculture of Ibn Washshiyah.

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 Ma’rudi 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.23 Razi identified his own philosophy as Platonic, at least as it concerned his famous dialogue with the Isma’ili dar’i Abu Hatim al-Razi who in Muhammad ibn Zakariyya’s view was holding the Aristotelian, and incorrect, view of time.24 Razi did not subscribe to it, and 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.25 Each one of his five eternal principles—the demurge, 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 Platonist schools, to be sure, but the only commentator explicitly connected with Razi’s understanding of that dialogue is Plutarch of Chaeronea,26 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.27 Katibi was by no means the first to connect Razi with the Sabians. The charge appears especially as Ma’rudi 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 (tanassukh) from the same Sabians. Ibn Hazm (Fat I, 76–77) likewise mentions Razi among the partisans of tanassukh, a group that includes the Mu’azzilite Ahmad ibn Habib28 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, Marzudi describes (Tanbih, 122) how the Christian Yahya ibn Sadi (d. 974) studied the theology of Razi as a prime exemplar of Pythagoreanism.

The Sabians, Manicheans, Brahmins, Plato, and Pythagoras were all charged by Muslim authors with the responsibility of having shaped the irreverent 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.77

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.78 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 demigod and provident, and the human intellect for Razi was no mere conglomeration of atoms but part of the divine substance.79 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 coprinicli, 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,80 nor does his version of the “fall” of the soul—a consequence of its lust (lidadhah) for matter—bear any but the most superficial resemblance to Plotinus’s rolma.81

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.82 Neither an esoteric 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, 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, 868) and, in the defense of 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 Chaîdaan 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 Greek-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” (baytah). The theme is a common one in Greek Hermeticists like Lamblichus, and it must stand in one form or another behind Shahrastani’s detailed exposed of Harranait 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” (mustahahib), in short, a Plato or an Aristotelic whose accomplishments were the result of investigation and not inspiration. Although gravely heterodox in Islam, Razi’s position would not have been uneasy 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 Platonist, 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 Shi‘i is, in the present state of our knowledge, to say nothing. Like the Judaeism of the first century, the late philosophical tradition was a more mortified 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 Urkagepetat 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 religious-philosophical hybrids the more relaxed—and less historically sophisticated—climate of Islam brought reprieve and even rejuvenation. The Sabians of Harran, the Mandaeans, Daynaians, Helenism, Jahn, 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 scholar, 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.44

Notes
1 This final stage in the history of Greek philosophy is traced in my Harvest of Hellenism (New York, 1970), 671–81.
2 I have described the process in my Allah's Commonwealth (New York, 1973), 286–331.
5 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.
7 The account is preserved in Ibn Julluj, Tabaqa al-atibba (Cairo, 1955), 5, written in the same year as the Fibrist.
8 The citations from the Fibrist are from Fluegel's edition, the parallel passages from Bayard Dodge refer to his English translation based on an improved manuscript collation. The Fibrist 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.
9 See David Pingree, The Thousands of Abu Ma'shar, (London, 1958), 2m.4
10 On parallel stories from other sources, see Pingree, Thousands, 1n3.
11 al-Mas'udi, Muruj al-dhabab, ed. Charles Pellat (Beirut, 1956–), 8:290; al-Khathib al-Baghdadi, Ta'rikh Baghdad (Beirut, 1966), 1:67. His son Timadhi may have played a similar role in the same proceedings, cf. Yaqut, Mu'jam al-balad (Cairo, 1936–38), 5:184.
12 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. Fibrist, 275/Dodge, 666.
14 Two of the others, "Tinkaulus" and "Tingurus," probably refer to the same Greek astronomer, Teucros, see Pingree, Thousands, 11, and cf. Dodge, 643.
16 For his work, see P. Kraus, RSO 14 (1953): 11–13. Dodge's identifications systematically confuse him with a later translator, Ibrahim ibn al-Salat.
17 Kraus, RSO 14 (1953): 11n3.
18 According to the Fibrist, 268/Dodge, 659, Yahya received his instruction on the Almagest from "Salm, the director of the Bayt al-kalam." 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-Brasah. On Salm see note 57 below.
19 Another Greek author who came into Pahlavi during the same period was "Dorotheus the Syriac." One of al-Fadl's contemporaries, Umayr ibn Zarranan, who worked both Harun and Ma'mun, was responsible for the Arabic version of Dorotheus's Pentateuch (Fibrist, 268/Dodge, 641). The Arabic text has been edited with an English translation by David Pingree, Dorotheus Sidonius Carmen Astrapogicum (Leipzig, 1976).
21 See Festugière, Révélation 17, 81–88.
learning of the rabbis, and cf. 2:183–84 on the gnostic “style” of those same Iraqi rabbis.


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


28 *Masudi*, *Munj* 1, 78.


31 On Dhu al-Nun and Ibn Wahabihaym, see S. K. Hamarneh, *Catalogue of Manuscripts on Medicine and Pharmacy at the British Museum* (Cairo, 1975), 26–51, 57–64. Shalmaghani, who appears in *Fibrst*, 147, 176;Dodge, 323, 340, belonged to an intellectual circle which included, not always on friendly terms, Thabit ibn Qurra and two later members of the Nawbihadi family, Abu Sahl Isma’ili and his nephew al-Hassan ibn Musa.

32 The attribution was earlier denied by Julius Rasku, *Arabische Alchemisten* (Heidelberg, 1924), 2:40, but now compare Seggin, GAS 1, 529.


34 There was, however, among Bar Dayson’s followers, though not perhaps in Bar Dayson 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. Dijver, *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 sexual emanation system descending from a single, transcendent power.

35 Bar Dayson 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 Dayson 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 Dayson must have arrived within Islamic 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.


39 Their attempt at concealing their rationalism behind the veil of a divinely revealed shurfah is precisely the charge leveled against “the Brethren” by the contemporary faylasuf Abu Sulayman al-Sijistani and reported by Tawhidi, *Imāl* (Cairo, 1959–69), 2:6ff.


41 Among them (*Fibrst*, 327;Dodge, 772) a Syriac book about the Sabians which the Qādi of Harran, Harun ibn Ibrahim (d. 940) found there, had translated and sent to the vizier ʿAli ibn Ṭaba.


46 Sabāʾī’s source has likely confused Aristote’s father with Nicomachus of Jerash, the Neopythagorean mathematician of the Roman Empire.

47 And almost so to Ibn al-Nadim. The name Parmenides appears in the *Fibrst* only in a list which comes from John Philoponus and which names the most famous physicians before Galen: *Fibrst*, 286;Dodge, 675.

48 Ibn Massarah’s connection with the eastern Mus’azilis was probably through his friend Ḥabūl Allāh (d. 899) who had earlier spent some time in Basra, see M. Cruz Hernandez, *Historia de la Filosofía Española* (Madrid, 1957), 1:221–22.


50 They are analyzed by L. Massignon in A. J. Festugière, *Révolution*, 390–92.


54 Compare the tendentious dream of Ma’mun reported by Ibn al-Nadim (*Fibrst*, 243;Dodge, 583–84), where Aristotle appears to the caliph and advises him to appreciate灌(yaḥd), that is, support the Mus’azilis.

As represented in the first instance by the syllogistic method expounded in the Aristotelian Analytics. The pre-Ashʿarite muṣṭakalimīn reasoned dialectically rather than syllogistically; see J. van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre des Ḥādataddam al-Iṣṭ (Wiesbaden, 1966), 19-22, and for the identification of ʿIṣām and Ḍāwūd, 57-59.

See the analysis, set against the parallel passages in Plotinus, in R. M. Frank, *Neoplatonism of Jahm ibn Ṣafwān*, *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 (59).

The *Fihrist* (cf. 243/Dodge, 584) does speak in a number of places of a certain Salm (or Salman) who was in charge of Maʿmūn'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 Maʿmūn into Byzantine territory in search of Greek manuscripts, is described in one of them (Beirut ms 81 Joseph 330) as a "Harranīn." This may have been so, but Maʿmūn inaugurated his Bayt al-hikmat sometime about 850 and did not "discover" the Sabarans until his own final expedition into Byzantine territory somewhat later. If Salm was a Sabaran as well as a Harranīn, he kept the knowledge exceedingly private; cf. P. Kraus, *RSO* 14 (1933): 11.


The Arabs, on the other hand, knew Pnyxagoras chiefly as a moralist, as the author of the *Golden Verses* which found their way into a number of Arabic gnomicomological collections like Miskawayh's *Al-Hikmat al-Khalīdah* (225-28 Badawi). On the other appearances of the *Golden Verses* in Arabic, see Badawi's edition (Cairo, 1952), 44-46 of the introduction.


On the possibility of the theory's appearing in the *Poinandres*, see Festugière, *Réolution IV*, 40-42 and, more generally, 36-40.


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. Pareti, *Nouvelle bibliographique*, *Byzantion* 29-30 (1959-60): 425n2.


See L. Massillon in *Réolution IV*, 385-86.

On his illustrious political position, see H. Busse, *Chatif und Grosskönig* *Die Byzantin im Iraq* (Beirut, 1969), 301-3.
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. Magic is obviously heavy-laden with prejudice. 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 focusing supernatural powers to fulfill a supplicant’s desire, especially for healing. 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.

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

1 e.g., Samuel M. Zwemer in his *The Influence of Animism on Islam* (London, 1920) gives a description of magic, sorcery, and amulets (pp. 165–227), 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, 8: 6: 2: Leiden, 1973), ch. 6.

2 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., Oстер, ‘*Sorcery’,* 356–61.

used their expertise to combat it. But good magic was uncomfortably close to malign 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. And the ‘medicine-man’, with its connotations of magical powers, was a common figure in North Africa.

There is a vast and daunting array of ancient 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 uninterruptedly 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.6 Beside these divinae membra, manuals for the use of magic were continually produced in Islamic society, the most famous of which is al-Buni’s (d. 614/1215) Shams al-ma’arif al-kubra.7

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.8 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-Christian’ who carried their superstitious fear of demons with them. Very much the same arguments have been used about Middle

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1 The ʿabbāsī mentions a Jew who practised both medicine and magic (quoted in Morony, Iraq, 420).
2 Doost, Magic as religion, 16–40. The scope of this work is far wider than the title implies; it is a fundamental study of Islamic magic and its literature.
3 See the convenient survey of magical formulae in K. Krispel, Völksbräuche im Bereich des Islam, ii, chs. 1 and 2. For three modern examples of such talismans and an extensive (Machete de Moppii), Annales islamologiques, 11 (1971), 172–73.
4 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 (2 vols., Chicago, 1974).
5 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 occurrence.9 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.10 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.11 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 inhuman.12 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.13 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,
The Theory of Magic in Healing

The century and the context in which they were used. Following a section dealing with works on philosophy and the sciences, Ibn an-Nadim says the following about books on exorcists, jugglers, magicians, and those who use incantations (as-nirinijib), tricks, and talismans:

The exorcists and magicians [al-mu`azzimin was-sabara] assert that the devils, jinn, and spirits (sh-shayatin mul-jinn wa-`arumush) 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 Allah, 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 Allah, may His name be magnified, or on account of their power; 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 His, uplifted and glorified is He.

The [other] magicians [as-sabara] 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 Allah, 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 [system] has told me that there still remain men and women of God, magicians, and that all of the exorcists and magicians assert that they have seals, charms of paper, sandal, jazib, smoke, and other things used for their arts.17

Ibn an-Nadim 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 response for the benevolent ones. A pious bookish Muslim, Ibn an-Nadim concedes the permisibility 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.18 As described by Ibn an-Nadim, the Muslim magicians,
Healing Natural and Supernatural

either licit or illicit, claimed that they were effective because of the
obedience of the spirits to themselves. The illicit magicians or sorcerers,
att-asha' was, 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-Nadim 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-Nadim includes the art of illusion in this general category.
Moreover, Ibn an-Nadim recognises the fact that magic was practiced
by the Indians, whose books had been translated into Arabic, as well as
by the Chinese and the Turks. Ibn an-Nadim attributes the ancient
magical tradition, which was largely Hellenistic, to Solomon19 on
the authority of the Qurān, although he recognized the differing legendary
founders of magic among the Persians and the Jews.20 Solomon was said
was to be the first to subjugate the jinn to his will. Licit magic, the
'praiseworthy method' (att-tariqā al-madhīnūtā) in Islam is usually traced
back to Solomon, and illicit magic (att-tariqā al-madhīnūtā) to Iblīs
through his daughter or his son's daughter, Baydakh.21

After naming the seventy demons that attended Solomon, Ibn an-
Nadim 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 Arais al-Rāmi, a Byzantine who was skillful with scrolls and books on
magic; one of his books enumerated the children of the Devil,

20: the bibliography is Anawati, 'Trois talismans musulmans', 311-2; Toufik Fahd, 'Le Monde du sorcier en Islam', Sources orientales, 7 (1966), 301-33; and SEI, 1: 'al-asrān al-adhūnātā' (L. Gardet).
21: SEI, s.v. 'Sūrah b. Dāwūd' (J. Walker).
22: The locus classicus on magic is Qurān 8:1-323: 'And they [the unbelievers in general and Jews in particular] followed what the shaitān taught them to do so as to make the demons appear to them as if they were angels, and the unbelievers followed what [the demons] taught them. They did not do anything except what they were taught' (SEI).
24: SEI, s.v. 'Sūrah'.
however, Ibn Khaldûn accepted its reality but rejected its use. Still, he presents a useful framework for understanding magic in medieval Muslim culture.

According to Ibn Khaldûn, 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 Khaldûn says that the ‘philosophers’ call the first magic, the second therapeutics, and the third predestination.\(^{23}\) There were different kinds of magic, with the potential magician developed by training. Moreover, the first two degrees of magic were real and the third was not real.\(^{24}\) The magical sciences were, however, forbidden by Islamic law, according to Ibn Khaldûn, because they cause harm and because they do not rely on sorcery. Furthermore, Ibn Khaldûn 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’anic phrases were common and essential parts of Islamic magic, especially in healing and exorcisms. He also disapproves of sufs who seek magical powers through dhikr.\(^{25}\) It is some measure of Ibn Khaldûn’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 Syria, particularly, is common in many Arabic incantations. Ibn Khaldûn attributes the creation of magic in the Islamic period to the legendary figure Jibrîl ibn Khayyâm, who is also reputed to have established alchemy, which Ibn Khaldûn considered to be a psychic phenomenon like magic and not a practical science. Later, the Spanish scholar Maslama ibn Ahmad al-

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\(^{23}\) Cf. Lane’s division of magic in his Arabian Society, pp. 80-96, where he distinguishes two kinds of magic, which includes divination. Natural magic was basically illusion caused by magic. See also his Manners and Customs, 1860 ed., 365-73.

\(^{24}\) The Magaddud, Rosenthal trans., iii. 156, 164.

\(^{25}\) Ibid. 171-82.

\(^{26}\) 160-1.

\(^{27}\) The Magaddud, Rosenthal trans., iii. 156, 164.

\(^{28}\) Ibid. 156, 159, 169-70.

\(^{29}\) Ibid. 160.

\(^{30}\) Ibid. 160-1.

\(^{31}\) Douxet (Magie et religion, 51-64) 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.32 Inadvertently, Ibn Khalūd’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). Conversely, Ibn Khalūd represents well the reluctance to see the benefit of the sick and distressed. In sum, Ibn Khalūd 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.’34 Sorcery was unbelief and practitioners should be killed.

Ibn Khalūd’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 conjuration 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 Abu Hanifa, who, like the Mu’tazilites, 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 Qudamah, a Hanbalite, said: ‘Our doctors consider them to be practitioners of sorcery, but one reports that Ahmad Ibn Hanbal suspended his

33 See Turner, Weber and Islam, 68.
34 The Muqaddimah, Rosenthal trans., i. 197.

The Theory of Magic in Healing

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, Abu Hanifa, 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’ānic (hadd) or a matter of lex talionis, only ash-Shafi’i believed it to be the latter; the other three considered it to be Qur’ānic because it was a right of God that had been injured. The division of opinion was potentially significant because there was no pardon to a decision in favour of hadd. In the case of a Muslim sorcerer, Abu Hanifa 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 Abu Hanifa did; they were liable, according to other jurists, to corporal punishment or to death if they had harmed a Muslim.35

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 because of the Jewish isolation and the Hellenistic period; the more obvious precedent is the Magians’ exceptional intolerance of sorcerers.36 The early Muslims pursued the policy of executing sorcerers, beginning with ‘Umar’s instructions to Jaz’ ibn Mu’awiyah in Dāsī-i Maysan in AD 643 to kill every magician and sorcerer; subsequently, three were executed.37 Slightly later, in 306/640–1, occurred an incident that reveals more fully Muslim ambivalence toward magic. According to the historian at-Tabari, the governor of Kufa, al-Walid ibn ‘Uqba, was confronted by the question of what to do about a magician (sibgh) whom he had apprehended.38 So the governor

37 Morony, Iraq, 191–4, 196–7; Brooks and Harvey, Holy Women, 61, 74–5.
38 Morony, Iraq, 397.
asked Ibn Mas'ud whether the hadd punishment was appropriate. After Ibn Mas'ud had ascertained from the man that he was a genuine magician—who performed for him—Ibn Mas'ud declared that the man should be killed. But al-Walid freed the magician, and he appears to 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 'Uthman, who declared that they were mistaken about Islamic teaching. 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.' Finally, in the seventeenth century the Ottoman bureaucrat and historian Haji Khalifa gave in his Arabic bibliographical dictionary even more refined classification of magic as a science than Ibn an-Nadim Khalidân. As regards exorcism, 'azâdîm, he distinguishes it from sorcery or sympathetic magic, ruqayâ. Haji Khalifa says that exorcism, 'azâdîm, 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 'azâdîm 'alayka, 'I adjure you' or 'I enjoin you.' Thus, one speaks very to the man who is well versed in this art. Whenever the exorcist them obedience and submission, subjection and humiliation to himself. Haji Khalifa continues his description in the following manner:

This activity is possible and permitted by reason and [Islamic] law. Whoever denies these two should not he 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 obedience to mankind is one of the wonders of God's creation. 'Ask Ibn Barkhîyya was asked: Do the jinn and demons obey man

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"Kâfîf qâmûnîn, iv (1836), 105-7."
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THE ROD OF MOSES IN ARABIC MAGIC

A. Fodor

It is well-known that Jewish influence played a paramount role in the shaping of Islamic ideas ever since their birth. 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. 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-Baţîn’s (d. 1225) Shams al-ma’rūf, the most widespread manual of Arabic magic, certain Jewish elements of which were expounded by G. Vajda,2 the main source of this analysis is another work which is also attributed to al-Baţîn, the Masba’ wa’il al-bi’âma.3

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 recognisable forms. Although the names El-esb el-esb, Addandî nîbî, El Shaddai, El, Elîdôn, Îdd he had

1 For literature see e.g. Encyclopaedia Judaica 10. (Jerusalem), pp. 1196 sq. s. v. Korân.
2 For Arabic influence on Judaism see e.g. N. Wieder, al-Tâbârî’s al-istâfâs: al-bida el-gehadîsîyya (Cairo 1965).
4 al-Baṭîn, Masba’ wa’il al-bi’âma (Cairo, n. d.). Cf. also the list of al-Baṭîn’s works / Brockelmann, Ö.A.L. 1, p. 677, 3 1. p. 910 and M. Ulisse, Die Texte und Gestalten der Zauberschriften im Islam (Leiden 1975), pp. 100 sq. The book was published by the al-Qâhirah Bookshop near al-Ash’ar in as-Sandûqîyya Street and contains four treatises: al-Usûl wa-d-dawâbîj al-mu̲hâmmâ (it is concerned with the magic of letters), Bayghil al-mawâdîh fi nûr al-ma’rûf al-mu’âsir (on magic quadrates), Shâhsh daw‘al-Shâhshîyya (a commentary on an inscription) and Shâhsh daw‘al-Jâlîsîyya (a commentary on an inscription). For a recent study on al-Baṭîn see M. El-Ganbary, Die Gottesnamen im magischen Gebrauch in den Al-Baṭîn zugewiesenen Werken, Phil.-Hist., (Bonn 1968).
already been identified by Grünbaum, Gobehir, Winkler, and Vajda, it is necessary to reveal some details and connections 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, thus 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.4

Post-biblical Jewish literature enlarged further on the circle of legends about Moses' rod5 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 story of the rod as the Bible, but 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.6

Arab authors trace the origin of the rod either to the myth-tree of the Paradise saying that Adam brought it with him upon his expulsion from Eden and afterwards his descendants inherited it from him6 or state that Moses himself cut it from the 'a'wan-tree7 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,8 a character that clearly reveals the influence of Aaron's rod.

In a Jewish legend a reference can also be found to Moses' cutting his rod from the Tree of Life8 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.9

It is a characteristic element in the Arabic Moses story that Jethro (Ar. Sh'mu), 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 his possession. Jethro tried as he would, but could not even move the rod, while Moses picked it up easily.10 This is very similar to the Jewish legend, in which Jethro plants the rod in his garden and promises 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.11

(Cairo n. d.), p. 106; M. Grünbaum, Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft (Leiden 1895), p. 162. For the myth as material of magic rods see T. Wage, op. cit. II/3, pp. 1877, 1896 sq.; J. Schoenwetter, All-Persönlichkeit des Burschens (Munster 1925), p. 85; H. Westermarck, Survivals impones dans la civilisation méditerranéenne (Paris 1892), p. 128.11


6-ath-Thālabī, op. cit., p. 190. For the importance of the almond tree, see ibid., op. cit., p. 21 sq.


8-A. Rossmann, Moses im Licht der Aggadot (New York 1922), p. 75 sq. See also Grünbaum, op. cit., II, pp. 163; Ginsberg, op. cit. III, p. 66 and V, p. 413. Similarly to the rod, the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments were also made of sapphire (Rossmann, op. cit., p. 169; Ginsberg, op. cit. VI, p. 51): and the Throne of God was also created from the same material (Grünbaum, op. cit. 15; Ginsberg, op. cit. V, p. 411). The stone tablets were created at the same time as the rod (Rossmann, op. cit., p. 113). The idea that the tablets of the Ten Commandments were made of sapphire can also be found in the Arabic tradition: al-'Tabari (op. cit. I, p. 436) mentions green tablets of chrysoprase, al-Kāmil (op. cit. I, p. 329) and al-Ya'qūbī, Tawārīkh-i 2 (Seurat 1909), p. 37 speak of tablets of emerald.


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.\(^{17}\) 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.\(^{18}\)

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.\(^{19}\) As is well-known the promised land was characterized 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.\(^{20}\) The Arabs highly appreciate these two important foods even today, assuming e.g. that milk possesses bariaka, blessing,\(^{21}\) and as for honey, Bedouins prefer to feed the newly abducted child on it.\(^{22}\) Among the cases presented by the classical tradition, Dionysus' rod could also be recalled from which wine and honey flowed\(^{23}\) or the thyrsus which could be used to bring forth milk, wine and honey from the earth.\(^{24}\)

According to the Arabic legend, the length of Moses' rod measured 10 cubits, the exact height of its owner,\(^{25}\) on their part the Jewish sources establish the identity between the weights of the rod and the two tablets of the Ten Commandments.\(^{26}\) The rod of human height must also have had a magical significance and this conclusion can be arrived at through another case furnished by medieval Europe: Thomas Ebendorfer of Haselbach

\(^{17}\) as-Tabari, op. cit. I, p. 401; ast-Tha'labi, op. cit., p. 190.


\(^{19}\) According to Grosenworn (Einhorn von Moses und die eterna Schlange: Zeitschrift d. Vereins f. Volkswunde und Volkerpsychologie XXIII, 1912, pp. 21 sq) the handle of Moses' rod represented a serpent.

\(^{20}\) as-Tabari, op. cit. I, p. 191.

\(^{21}\) Jirjis, op. cit., p. 22 sq.

\(^{22}\) Westernrock, op. cit., p. 135.

\(^{23}\) Jirjis, op. cit., p. 37.

\(^{24}\) Roscher, op. cit. VI, p. 544 sq.


\(^{27}\) Ginsberg, op. cit. VI, p. 84, Romarin, op. cit., pp. 75 sq.

\(^{28}\) L. Thorndike, A history of magic and experimental science IV (New York 1963), pp. 294 sq.


\(^{31}\) al-Bun, Musul', p. 140.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 146. For the prophylactic character of the red colour see also Schuch-owitz, op. cit., p. 81; W. Blackman, Les talisman de la Haute-Egypte (Paris 1848), p. 156. A trace of the idea about the magic character of the red colour can also be found in the Bible (Deutsh, op. cit. p. 19). For its role played in Jewish tradition, see Ginsberg, op. cit. VII, Index, s. v. Red.

\(^{33}\) ast-Tha'labi, op. cit. I, p. 190. Musa might have something to do with the popular etymology of the name Moses (Musa): red means 'water', ad is equal to 'wood' (Ibn al-Athir, op. cit. I, p. 74).

\(^{34}\) ast-Tha'labi, op. cit., pp. 190 sq.

\(^{35}\) For the luminous rod, see also al-Kim'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) 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 ancestors and of the twelve tribes. 21

2. In al-Budd's work mentioned previously as Moshe 'al-bikna 22 the author presents a description of Moses' rod in connection with a verse on the inscription of the so called Al-Jalalstiyah. He proceeds from that can be accomplished through their assistance. Treating the bismiastich 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 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: Partak, Pudak, Pudal, (Qayyum) Purak, Shalak, Shalak, Dalak, Shal, Nar, Saf, Arahad, Arshad, Shalak, Ratak (1), Idak, Shmiskh, 'Asin, Reshad, Nidal, Ras, Rasak, Rasak, Gidak, Shalak, Zadak, Sharhad, Shefath, Shidak, 'Ah, 'Aila, Gav, Nidak, and Kabk.

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 beginning 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 mouth of river, the water of coriander, the water of willow, rose-water and saffron while he increases (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

21 Ginsberg, op. cit. II, p. 322.
23 al-Budd, Moshe, pp. 104 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 Misa ibn 'Amrân (Peace be upon him!) and upon the smile 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 unbound 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 balsam, then the wife will appear before her husband humbly and obediently, and will never oppose him again.

Should anybody write (these names) on an unbound potsherd and incense it with kaawa then break the potsherd and disperse its dust on the place where the ains and oppressors meet, these will be dispersed and never come together again.

Should anybody write (these names) on a piece of paper and place it into an inflated gushtak 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.
MAGIC AND DIVINATION IN EARLY ISLAM

A. FODOR

"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.

"Show 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‘ârif, al-Bûnî relates the passage concerning Moses’ rod in a way slightly different from the above-mentioned.34 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. Daniel’s sword, accompanied by Abraham to the fire and Jesus taught those names to his disciples. The uses attributed to these names partly agree with those enumerated in the Manah, 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).35

According to another version of al-Bûnî’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.36 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 sky and that among those who could do so was the sculptor of the skull. Qâdir (‘Powerful’), Shâdîq (‘Splitting’), Sâlih (‘Good’), Shâdîshîr (‘Loofty’), ‘Âfîn (‘Great’), Rahmâ (instead of Rahmân, ‘Compassionate’), ‘Âdâr (‘Race’), Qâwî (‘Strong’), ‘Âidî (‘Calling’), Kabîr (‘Great’).

On the basis of Schwabe’s onomastic dictionary the following names can be identified: Nûr (Ar. ‘Light’) is identical with Nûr El (‘The Light of God’), one of the names of angels charged to separate the seasons;37 and Nûr El (‘The Light of God’), the name of the angel who is in charge of the month of Tammûz;38 Sâliq (Ar. ‘Righteous’) is identical with Sâliq (‘Righteousness’), the name of Jupiter;39 and Sûdût (‘Divine Righteousness’) which is among others – the name of one of the angels of the second sheikh(fa);40 Nûr (Ar. ‘Fire’) is identical with Nûr El (‘The Fire of God’), this name is used to him that God’s greatest name which consisted of 12 letters was written on Moses’ rod.41 Then the master showed the circle of the name drawn in Hebrew characters. (According to the figure in al-Bûnî’s work it contained the Arch-auto, the Ba‘thûn 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 Eshir Eshir, Ablûdû, Sûdûtè, and El Shaddî appear in the middle of the circle.42

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 Manah’s tilâ al-hikma 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.43 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.

The following names reveal a pure Arabic origin: Fûlî (‘Feathering the skull’), Qâdir (‘Powerful’), Shâdîq (‘Splitting’), Sâlih (‘Good’), Shâdîshîr (‘Loofty’), ‘Âfîn (‘Great’), Rahmâ (instead of Rahmân, ‘Compassionate’), ‘Âdâr (‘Race’), Qâwî (‘Strong’), ‘Âidî (‘Calling’), Kabîr (‘Great’).

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34 al-Bûnî, Shams II, pp. 94 sq.
35Ibid. I, p. 49
36 For this technique, see L. Bâo, Das altjüdische Zauberwesen (Budapest 1899), p. 133.
37Ibid., p. 132.
39Ibid., p. 191.
40Ibid., p. 228.
41Ibid., pp. 228 sq.
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 segula display similar traits, 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 Shemshah Tahlimh 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, and by an invocation of this name every wish or prayer addressed to God will gain hearing. Among the forms attributed to the hidden divine name, which also appears as the Great Names (ha-khdm ha-qadd), the special names of 12, 42, and 72 letters respectively enjoy an extraordinary importance. 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 inaneogate onomata, the ‘great names’ and often present the different transcriptions of the Tetragrammaton. The mystical divine name which is above every other is mainly called snn Alah al-aztm, ‘The Greatest Name of God’ in Arabic magic literature, but the forms snn al-azjm, ‘The Great Name’ or smn Alah al-azjm al-aztm, ‘God’s Greatest Great Name’ also occur. Arabic tradition was seemingly well aware of the fact that this idea was of Jewish origin: al-Kisfi27 relates that when the disobedient Jews did not want

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27 For the structure of amulets see e.g. A. Fodor, Notes on an Arabic Amulet Scroll, Ars Orientalis, XVII (1973), pp. 271 sq, for the segula see Enc. Jud. II, p. 711.
28 For the Jewish divine names see Blau, op. cit., pp. 110—128. For stories exhibiting the miraculous power of the divine names, see Ginsburg, op. cit., III, pp. 35, 55, 59, 132, 209, 459.
29 See Blau, op. cit., pp. 137—146.
30 Shéhoret—Shabibi, op. cit., VI, p. 684, s. v. Mosia. See also Peresendorf, FGM, passim.
31 Blau, op. cit., pp. 128—137.
32 E.g. al-Kisfi, Shama, passim. For a profound analysis of the problem of Muslim divine names see O. van Kooten, Le nom sacré de Dieu: Esthétique chamanique du coran arabe, Leiden 1963 (Napoli 1967).
33 Shéhoret, Shama IV, pp. 25, 36. The attribute quddi from the Biblical shdm ha-qadd (1 Kings 5 : 42, 2 Chron. 6 : 32, Jer. 44 : 30) is translated by ‘qism in Arabic.
34 al-Kisfi, op. cit., p. 127. See also al-Kisfi, Shama IV, p. 73 and Yafa‘i, op. cit., p. 388.
to fight the giants, Moses went to the Bâl al-Hâṭta4 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 asked by this name4 and 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.50

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 these 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 Ith Ith Ith, an expression mentioned in another place. These three facts might easily be interrelated 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 combination6 of Ith (a frequent substitute of the Tetragrammaton) was preserved: consequently the name Allah Allah Allah can be only the Arabized 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. However, since the close connection between Moses’ rod and the shape of a serpent is generally accepted,62 the origin of the idea that took shape in Arabic magical tradition can perhaps be sought after in that Jewish group of amulets from

4 Quoting Wahh ibn Mundahlîh, al-Kišî’ adds that Sâhat in Hebrew means ‘forgiveness’ (it might have been originally Heb. hâta’).
5 See e.g. this motif in the presentation of Bîl-bîl’s story (at-Tabarî, op. cit. I, pp. 437 sqq).
6 al-Kitb, Shama I, p. 88.

7 E.g. a 42-letter divine name is composed of 3 × 7 Ith: L. H. Schiffmann, Jewish Sources II (1977), pp. 57 sqq. According to Arnold, p. 90 12th century He in the God’s Name concerns independently in the form of Allâh (al-Bîlîn, Shama IV, p. 18) and also Ith Allâh al-Salâm (Cairo, n. d.), p. 47.

8 For an illustration of the rod, see e.g., E. R. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Greek-Roman Period 1/II (New York 1964), Pl. XII.

9 According to Grossmann, op. cit., pp. 18 sqq the rod and the iron serpent erected in the desert are identical. See also Dresch, op. cit., pp. 45 sqq. The motif of the rod with the serpent can also be found in Egypt: On a representation from the Late Period a hook can be seen as he drives four calves with a rod ending in a serpent shaped head (P. Montet, Des dieux égyptiens et de la Bible (Zürich 1960), pp. 153 sqq, Abb. 18). For the explanation of this scene see A. M. Blackman – H. W. Fairman, "The Significance of the Ceremony HWT RâBâH in the Temple of Horus at Edfu: The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology 56 (1960), pp. 76 – 81.

10 Goodenough, op. cit. I (New York 1952), p. 209, 5, picture 1144. For the motif of the serpent on the rod, see ibid. 2, pp. 207 sqq.

11 See the text, op. cit., p. 189. The identity of rod and serpent is also indicated by a story in the Khadrâdhisb, which relates that in the time of the Toulan, a mummy tablet was found in Egypt and bore the picture of three men among whom the figure holding a serpent was identical with Moses (H. Wici, Der Jagdtempel von Tell el-Dabâb, Paris 1953, Introduction, p. 94).


13 According to the legend, Solomon’s ring also bore the divine names and those gave it the miraculous power that Moses’ rod had possessed (G. Sartorius, Die Schlangen in der romantischen Literatur I, Berlin 1907, pp. 117 sqq). Arabs showed a particular interest in the inscriptions on stones, horses, animals and people (O. Reiner, Zum islamischen Volksbraun: Der Islâm 14, 1924, pp. 303 sqq).


15 For the popularity of this motif in Jewish legends see Ginsberg, op. cit., pp. 218 sqq. 321, 311, pp. 114, 137, 419, 448.

16 al-Bîlîn, Shama I, pp. 45 sqq. cf. also III, pp. 58 sq. For the Shî'ite tendencies in al-Bîlîn’s works see Glavich, op. cit., pp. 14 sqq, 64 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 Kudh Qudus al-bakhsa (The Book of the Sage Khaled) and other works of similar characters. 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. In addition, the idea of the heavenly tablets 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 Manus' wakil al-khamsa and covered with Hebrew letters indicates that the shape of Moses' rod in the Shams al-warif can probably be traced back to Jewish origin. The text consisting of indecipherable 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 quadrato script, and partly recall the writing of Egyptian manuscripts of the 12th century. There are three more occurrences of these Hebrew letters in the Manus', namely in the commentaries on different lines of the al-jalalitsiga: in a magic-letter quadrato the words Khalil Bi'bi ("Creator") also written in Arabic are reproduced with these letters, while in another letter-quadrato the components of the word fatujah and in the third case the word Nealir are presented in this script in addition to the Arabic forms (Figs. 3, 4, 5).

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84 The waṣṣal of the luminous tablet appears in the Jewish and Egyptian traditions alike (the Book of Ra'shet and the Magic Book of Tao, see Fodor, Arab legend in the pyramidal, Arabian Legends in the Pyramids, in Hung.: Budapest 1971, pp. 56-70).
85 al-Balānī, Māsūba, p. 125.
86 Ibid., p. 120. According to Māsūba, p. 99, this is a Syriac word and it means "The Living".
87 Ibid., p. 151. According to Māsūba, p. 99, this is also a Syriac word and means "The Light".

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The circles of the figure, in accordance with ancient Jewish and Middle Eastern tradition in general might symbolize the light 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. 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 widespread over the whole Middle East.

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. 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, but as to the operations carried out with it, only the transformation of the water of the Nile into blood is mentioned.

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 drew 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. With the exception of the last one he threw the sheets into the river, upon which Joseph's coffin emerged from the water.

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88 For the symbol of circle, see Goodman, op. cit. 5 (New York 1950), pp. 62 sqq.
91 See e.g. Kíns, op. cit., passim. The contour of the tear-drop may also symbolize the pine-cone, another favourite amulet of Jews and Arabs alike. The Migrasa of Dionysus also had a pine-cone shaped head (Parker: Wonsoc: op. cit. 31, p. 190).
92 al-Ya'qi, op. cit. 1, p. 216, Ibn lby' in, op. cit., p. 128 sq. According to the Arabic legends, the magicians filled their rods and ropes made of cow-leather with quicksilver and those started to move under the effect of the heat (al-Ya'qi, op. cit. 1, p. 35).
95 al-Ya'qi, op. cit. 1, p. 3.
Aggadah knows only about the carrying of the coffin, but the four figures can most probably be traced back to the four living creatures in Ex. 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 smile 12 ways in the sea and the story of smiting the rock to bring forth water is likewise well-known in the Arabic legends.

According to a passage in the Talmud, O.g. the giant, wanted to annihilate the Jews and placed a big mountain on his head to throw it upon them. God, however, sent ants to the mountain and they made a huge hole in it so that it fell upon O.g. shoulders, whereas 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.

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. 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. According to Christian Arabian tradition, however, Aaron’s rod was preserved there, while the Syrians believe that the horizontal stem of Jesus’ cross was carved from Moses’ rod.

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. In the Thousand and One Nights, a figurepossesses a rod with which he can evoke the obedient hosts of the
geni from under the earth. The form of Moses’ rod, as described in the Arabic sources, can perhaps be recognized in the frill-tailed rod used in Egyptian and Sudanese ad-f-ceremonies. 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.
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 ..." (1).

In the following we have to deal with the different kinds of ḥudyab or ḥudūjib (pl. of ḥudūjib), ṣawfīq (pl. of ṣawfīq), ḥamādāq (pl. of ḥamādāq), ṣawtāq (pl. of ṣawtāq) and ḥirāz (pl. of ḥirāz). The expressions ḥudūjib (1) and ḥirāz 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 cuneiform 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 (2) 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 ḥudyab are widely known, but they are not so highly esteemed as written ones.

1 Arabic-English Lexicon, vol. V, p. 1867. 3 The black stone of en-mah Mūzā is preferred. The preference of black stones seems to be an old one; cf. Macalister, Gezer, III, 326, 4 ff.
2 From ḥudyab, to conceal.
Most metal talismans are known by the collective name of māshēh (māshēh). The explanation of this expression is founded in the belief that it holds the focus of a pregnant woman in situ, i. e. it prevents abortion, therefore māshēh from māshēh, to hold.

Exceptions to this rule are coins and metal cases. Coins are either the māshēh (or Mōsār) and Muslim talismanic coins with the inscription lā hilāk bin illā hašā. A māshēh as a rule is a golden coin of the time of St. Helena. Silver māshēh (pl. of māshēh) 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 talismans. Without damaging the same (māshēh). 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 Qurʾān, 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 circumcised, 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. Qurʾānic 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 ritual

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4 Canaan, "Aberglaube und Volksmedizin im Lande der Bibel", pp. 52, 91.

5 This expression is unknown in this sense to māshēh and Lane.

6 This expression is unknown in this sense to māshēh and Lane.

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clean water or with some other specified liquid and this solution is given to the patient to drink. Examples are ṭaqāšīt written on dishes, pieces of glass or paper. In other cases the "inscribed" egg is boiled or the "written" bone is cooked (māshēh). 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 Four Cups which have been recently described elsewhere (māshēh).

2. The māshēh 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 māshēh (māshēh).

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 ṭaqāšīt, 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 some 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:

1. Texts of continuous intelligible sentences.
2. Talismans of single words, which either denote some intelligible meaning or are quite meaningless.
3. Letters and numbers.
4. Signs and figures. In this category we have to include signs and scratches which are unintelligible.

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I. INSCRIPTIONS MADE OF CONTINUOUS INTELLIGIBLE SENTENCES.

1. These may be taken from the Qurʾān, or the Old and New Testament.

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Books on magic acknowledge that all holy books are active. In bahāt fāh, al-saḥb al-qādim (11) one finds on page 18 the following verse:

By every strik of God's books and His verses, as well as (by) the heavenly letters,

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8 Examples of all above named talismans are represented in my collection.

9 JPOS, XVI, pp. 79 ff.

11 Abu-Ja'Abbas Ahmad al-Buliw.
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 role 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. This belief is also shared by the Christians of the Eastern churches. The use of verses of the Qur'an 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 Qur'an is often carried in miniature as the best and strongest protection. Every ṣawād, aye 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 Qur'an which are used more than others as curative and protective measures are:


These passages are marked with * in this list. Other portions of the Qur'an are said to possess special powers in other fields such as producing love, finding a lost object, establishing the favour of rulers, etc.

The basm, i.e. the first sūrat of the Qur'an and the fāṭiḥah (i.e. the first sūrah of the Qur'an) play a very important role in invocations. En-Nāṣirī (22) devotes the greater part of 33 pages of his book expounding the merits of ṣūrat-al-fāṭiḥah and the basmilah, while more information about them is found more or less throughout the whole book. The fāṭiḥah is to the Mohammedan what the Lord's Prayer and the sign of the cross are to the Christian.

The basm, i.e. "in the name of God", was borrowed by Mohammed from the religious phraseology of Jews and Christians (24). He later formulated it in

22 The suggestion of M. Finney, Mos. Welt, VII, 169, that these prayers are not offered to God, but to the evil spirits, is wrong.

23 See also S. M. Zwemer, The Influence of Antiquity on Islam.

24 Mohammed Hoq, en-Nāṣirī, μεταφρ., άναλογος, djalālī, έπαθης. This book will be referred to in the future simply as Nāṣirī.
full as ام الله الرحمن الرحيم. Slowly the use of the same in speech and in documents as a prelatory formula became part of the religious practice of all adherents of Islam (28). The basmalah (26) is composed of 19 letters corresponding to the 19 spirits guarding the doors of hell (ex-aljannah). 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. Buni (28) 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 Quran is the best book, the fathah the foundation stone of the Quran and the basmalah that of the fathah. Other hadits speaking of the importance of the fathah are: “The fathah is a cure from every disease” (29). The fathah is a cure from every poison” (28). The fathah has among its many names the following, which point to its curative power: 

- "The surah of enchanting" 
- "The Protectores" 
- "The fathah of Healing" 
- "The Curing" (28) 

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 (28). The fathah 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 as-sah madafil (28). It is void of the seven letters, known as sawaij al-fathah. One of them is the letter f (28) which points to misfortunes (الإطاع) (28). 

The Mohammedan creed لا إله إلا الله 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 Quranic verses widely used in talismans are: سورة يس (Sura. 66-61) which is also called سورة البقرة, by the name of سورة يس. The verse of those seeking refuge: سورة البقرة, "The verse of those seeking help"; سورة البقرة, "The fortifying verse"; سورة البقرة, "The verse driving out Satan"; سورة البقرة, "The verse of "Guarding and Refuge" (29). These verses of (28) are believed to be very powerful in curing disease. They are سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة. 

The prophet used these two verses while he was suffering severely from the results of the bewitchment caused by the Jew Labeid and his daughter. These tied eleven knots in a cord and hid it in a well. He sent the archangel Gabriel with these two surahs 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. 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 (29).

"The verses of "Healing" are سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة. Every one of these passages contains a derivative of the noun في, to cure. أَيْسُوْلُ ُبَسَطَاء, "The verses of preserving", contain some derivative of سايعاس, to preserve. Dérâbî (29) mentions 17 verses. Buni (29) adds three others, two of which contain the verb استفاف, and one sawaij. Talismans which are said to help in warts have to contain the "first five verses of the Quran with the fifty ninety, (29). They are سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة, سورة البقرة. It is evident that in سورة البقرة and سورة البقرة two verses are counted as one. In the four first passages the text contains in each verse some derivative of دِنْتَ. The verses have to be written together (29).
The writing is at times executed in a curious way. Thus the text of Surah 2:139 is engraved on a round, silver miskh from left to right. A miskh is broad, also in my collection, has the inscription engraved in the same way. This hand belonged to a ḥabāb 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' (Surah 61). O Mohammad! O Compassionate! O Merciful!" (64).

In analyzing the different Qur'anic verses and the various names of God (see below) used in talismans one finds that they can be divided into the following categories:
a. They describe God as the omnipresent, omnipotent, protector, compassionate, helper, healer and the loving One.
b. They proclaim the Mohammedan creed of the unity of God.
c. They contain expressions with an external resemblance to the desired help (65). Thus a talisman carried to increase the daily income has to contain as a rule one of the following words: إِنَّهُ غَنِيٌّ مِنَ اللَّهِ (He is sufficiency from Allah) to cure a disease: دُكَارَةٌ (Dukhara) to protect against demons: إِنَّهُ غَنِيٌّ مِنَ اللَّهِ (He is sufficiency from Allah) for victory in a fight: دُكَارَةٌ (Dukhara) to cure a disease; 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 (66): Ex. 2:16, Num. 14:30, Deut. 7:15; Ps. 121:5, Ps. 121:5, Ps. 81:37-72. 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 (67). The names of the Qur'anic parts had to be given as they are often used in talisman books and in hujjahāt. Such names would be unintelligible to the student who has not studied Moslem theology.

46 3 1/2 = 2 1/2 + 1/2
47 Al-imāmābād ibn makhādatul-l-mah- wālā ibn rashīd (the name of the author is not given). 29. 4. 86. This book will be referred to as "hujjahāt.")
48 The following verses were used as amulets: Gen. 1:10 (the last verses only) to preserve a person against pollution; Gen. 2:15 and Ex. 19:24 to ease child birth; Gen. 5:14 to guard against child damage; Ex. 1:15 to protect against a fierce dog; Ex. 17:30 to stop the bleeding. Ex. 17:30 to protect against witchcraft; etc. See also Jewish Exch., III, pp. 323, 203; S.M. Zwemer, The Influence of Animism on Islam, pp. 25, 34.
51 One is called "kabār al-bāyīs al-hamal" the other "kabār al-ayn al-damīr" (from the Greek word Kuraíios).
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, ıkıra and ıkıra. 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, Mari, daughter of Karrin. Be responsible, O ye servants of this day and this hour, O spiritual angels of God to guard this human body from all malefic causes by human beings, djinn, satans, sorcery, craft, treachery, şıkım, tawâîb (pl. of tâbib), injurers, and guards [her] from every evil and from the mischief and injury of all that is created by God, which may benefall her heart, her bone and her blood. And by the truth of these names and talismans: God, Al, Yaah, Aâluh, Barâhâh, Sarahâh, Adanâh ishâh, Æl Sadâh, . . . 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' (64).

Doubtless this amulet was written by a Mohammedan for a Christian patient. It is characteristic that neither Quranic 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 ıkıra are mentioned. We meet with this invocation in the first place on metal vessels manufactured in Persia, such as fear cups, silver cases for talismans and copper trays and vases. This invocation has been thoroughly described in another place (64).

Many of the rings-seals of the ıkıra and of important Mohammedan personalities bear short invocations (66). 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 (50 x 30 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: "... in this magic formula that I call the word of the Lord, and in the power of this Seal, I command the spirits and all evil beings to flee before me, Amen, ..."

55 The angels are called on in the last line, "... and the power of the angels of God."

56 Hammer-Purgstall, Die Singel der Araber, P slated and Turkey, p. 8.

57 Already in Talmudic times the name of the Almighty used to be written on amulets. Encyclo. Judaica, I, 738.

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:

1. The Names of God.

Among all His names 'aliqe 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 'aliqe is 66 (+1 +2 +3 +4 +5 +1 = 26 + 1 = 27), we meet with seals giving this number, as may be seen in a seal engraved on a guided mukhras of my collection (fig. 2). The sum of each

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 Quran sanctions calling God with his names. Surah 11:59 says: "God's are the most excellent names, call on Him thereby and leave those who pervert His name" (99). The hundredth and at the same time "greatest name" (al-asmul 'azim), or "the secret (hidden) Name" (al-asmul al-mukhras) is unknown to men. This name is at times abbreviated, . . .
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. In most talmusim only few are mentioned. Mohammedans have assigned to each name a special sphere of action and power.

The mighty name of the Lord also plays an important part in Christian prayers and Christian amulets. In the Adasjmorez, p. 191, we read in the prayer used to drive out demons: "The Great Name of God which cannot be supported"; on p. 195: "They took some of the names, the angels of death and the dangers of the night, we find the passage: "Do not call, 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 talmusim we find that a special system is often followed. The names have frequently the same meter as those used in hymns. At times a seal is made of several names of God, which begin with the same letter, as in the 4 x 4 squares seal containing the names. As a rule, the first horizontal line and the second, third and fourth lines of the name 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 ש and the second with a כ, making כ שכ, "let it be", as כו and כו. Names, the numerical value of which are the same, are believed to possess high potential powers and they are written together as כו and כו.

The names of the four archangels, Djoberiz, Michael, Sarafir and Irauif, are found in most hiddoth. They are known as "laminas ha-makul", "the sultans of the angels". This appellation is not widely used. Djoberiz is said to be the messenger of God to the prophets. He brought down the Qur'an. Michael presides over rain and plants. Sarafir (Irauif) stands beside the Throne and guards the heavenly trumpet. Irauif is the angel of death and is therefore dreaded by every human being. Djoberiz is the angel ruling over Monday and Michael is assigned to Wednesday. The angels governing the other five days are: Riggal (M) for Sunday, Samari (M) for Tuesday, Sarafir—Thursday, Irauif—Friday, and Irauif—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 talmusim. These names are well known in Hebrew angology. They are also there assigned to the days of the week. Riggal is sometimes written as Rinqu and Jardal; Samari is often quoted as Sarnia; Sarafir as Sarufir and Irauif as Irauif. Rinqu, the guardian of paradise, and Michael, 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 "u". Many of them are probably taken from Hebrew Cabalism, 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 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.
The letter is written as it is pronounced, thus an l is written "l. The numerical value of these three letters is 1 for 1, 30 for ج and 80 for ف = 111. This number is divided into its decimal powers, i.e. in 100, 10, 1. 100 is the numerical value of ج 30 of ي and 1 of l. Arranging these three letters so that the letter with the highest value stands at the beginning one has الق. Add (ق) to the letter the spiritual name of which one is looking for, in this case the l, at the beginning and the angelic syllable جال (dal) at the end. The result is القال which is the angel's name for the letter l (ق). That of ب is د جال = ج جال = ج بن وان 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 المطلف = لمطلف (later) of this seal. Add this number 3 to 1440 (ق). The letter number is: 1440 multiplied by the degrees of a circle, 360 by 4 (the cardinal points). Subtract from 1443 the number 11 which is the numerical value of the angelic ending "د". 1329 remains. 1000 stands for غ 300 for ق 90 for ص and 2 for ب. The letters make together غصص. Add the angelic ending "د" and one has the spiritual name of the words المطلف. This name is used only to attain a material or a spiritual benefit. In revenge one gets the spiritual name من المطلف in the same way. But the letters represented by the number 1329 are arranged by beginning with the letter of the lowest (ب) and ending with that of the highest value (غ = 1000). In this way one gets the spiritual name من المطلف. To get the name of the spirit of the lower word which serves this sentence one has to subtract the numerical value of ل which is the demonic ending, namely 319. The rest of the procedure remains the same (ق).

Esthe abt.J-Mu'ayyad mentions in his book دجيمهندس الملاك angels with different names for the letters of the alphabet (ق). Some of these names are al-Mu'ayyad for ج, Darguil for إ, Imadр for ل, Sarhah for س, Taqwil for ج. etc. It was impossible for me to find out how these names were coined. Buni (ق) assigns to the alphabetic angels with still different names.

70 The technical expression is ل ج, to crown.
71 See also Bustell, دجيمهندس الملاك (Arabic Encyclop). VII. vidu. حرف.
72 See also Patrick Hughes, Dictionary of Bani, s. v. دعما.
73 At-yaghy, pp. 14, 15.
74 Volume, III, 49 ff.
75 See also Patrick Hughes, Dictionary of Bani, s. v. دعما.
76 The name Barqivi is found in Mandean magic texts. It was the name of a good angel. H. Pogson, Inscriptions Mentones des Copps de Khorsabad, P. 94.
77 Jeroch Ensym, I. 594.
78 Muhammad el-Rahawi, At-Jalul, p. 17, p. 35, p. 24. This book will be referred to in future as Rahawi.
79 Beitrage zur vergleichendem Mythologie aus der Hebraser, ZDMG, XXXI, 872.
80 III, 93.
81 Not Bevan as Budde, I. c. 43.
BARQAN (البارقان) — Wednesday; SAMHURIS (سَمْحُرِيْس) — Thursday; ABU HADAY (أَبُو حَدَّيْ) — Friday and ABU NAJIB (أَبُو نَاجِب) — Monday.

All the above names are of Arabic origin. ABU HADAY is a name of the lion. It was impossible for me to ascertain if that name is still in use today. ER-RASHMI (أَرْ-رَاشْمِيْ) teaches the same. His successor is MUNASKH (أَمْنِسْكِيْ).

In tales, as well as in society, the ruling angel is asked to force the demon to obey his orders. A name is called asafr, meaning to obey. All these names are commonly employed by the demon to express his obedience. According to the name of the ruling angel, 82 the demon's name is changed. The demon is called in the name of the angel of light, al-THAHAB (الثالثاب), meaning to obey. The demon's name is MUNASKH (أَمْنِسْكِيْ), meaning to obey.

82 Winkler, I. e., p. 104, heard asafr.

83 In the Arabic, the name was transcribed MUNASKH, which pronunciation is generally used by the Arabs.

84 The dajjal's name was MUNASKH, which pronunciation is generally used by the Arabs.

85 The difference between the first three names is probably due to mistakes in the manuscripts. The first name is only written in the second, and the second, on the margin of the volume II of the manuscript of al-Qurtubi al-Bustami, p. 159.

Page 42.

In the Arabic, the name was transcribed MUNASKH, which pronunciation is generally used by the Arabs.

86 ajadid al-majdulii, on the margin of the volume II of the manuscript of al-Qurtubi al-Bustami, p. 159.

87 According to ar-Rashmi (أَرْ-رَاشْمِيْ), p. 267, the name of the angel of light, al-TAHAB (الثالثاب), before it was driven out of paradise, was as-Sattel.

88 al-THAHAB is the name of the angel of light, al-TAHAB (الثالثاب), the name of the angel who destroys the ritual washings of the believers.

89 II, 66.

90 The difference between the first three names is probably due to mistakes in the manuscripts. The first name is only written in the second, and the second, on the margin of the volume II of the manuscript of al-Qurtubi al-Bustami, p. 159.

91 According to ar-Rashmi (أَرْ-رَاشْمِيْ), p. 267, the name of the angel of light, al-TAHAB (الثالثاب), before it was driven out of paradise, was as-Sattel.
The already quoted book *Djauhiri* assigns 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. A great many names of evil spirits end with *w*s or *s*s. In the *Súhrah al-Inshyad*, pp. 2 and 3, we read the following: وَبِالسَّبَاطِينَ أَعُوْمَعْمَعَmü
inscription (108) on a silver māshēh. In a printed talisman 112 All talismans with the above faulty orthography are pieces of my collection. 113 Υποτάσσω, Ἰουστίνου, Ἰσλάμ, Ξενία, pp. 71, 74. 114 S. Olsmann, Das Skhema-Totem, p. 177. 115 Doutté, p. 158, gives a slightly different pronunciation. 116 At times one or two of these names are found among several unexplainable terms; see nā-asri, nā-ta, nūsi-nū,, etc., p. 19.
which used to be carried by a Christian woman against the Qorînîc we read in one place (p. 45).

In another place we read (p. 48) that the name of the alphabet is "Qorînîc" and that it is used as a rule in its complete form. Sometimes one word or more is used separately (p. 82).

Books on magic admit in different places that the science of magic has borrowed Syrian and Hebrew words. Some such admissions taken from Ibn el-hâidj et-Talmasînî (p. 153) are:

أُنَسَبَ إِلَى الْإِسْرَائِيْلَةِ رُيْقَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ: (53)

وَفَقَّدْ عَلَى الْبُلُوطِ الْفِيْضَةِ (73)

قَصَّرَ عَلَى ثُوبِ الْإِسْرَائِيْلَةِ (72)

Ibn el-hâidj et-Talmasînî (p. 153)

There is a list of words which seem to have no meaning whatsoever. But thorough examination of Arabic works on magic helps the student to clear the darkness surrounding some of them. In general they are the language of some letters of the alphabet according to special mystic rules. In the following the most important expressions of this category will be discussed.

The word trê� (p. 72) is an example of such names. This word is not translated into Arabic and is used in the following sense (p. 72):

1. Hebrew names are used in Arabic.
2. Arabic terms are used in Hebrew.

A written basket (p. 55) and a written basket (p. 55) are examples of such names. They are supposed to be the names of seven angels who carry the throne (p. 72).

These so-called names are assigned to the seven days of the week: 1st being for Sunday, 2nd for Monday, etc. According to other authorities the alphabet is divided into eight and seven names (p. 72). These combinations of letters are better known than the seven names.

The word trêm (p. 72) is made up of the letters with the even numerical values: 2, 4, 6, 8. The former is looked upon

118 M. Rainaud, Description des Monuments Musul., etc. I, 186, 187.
119 Nüsh, p. 74.
120 W. Weidt, Der Geschichte des Hebräischen, ZDMG, LXVI, 301; S. Seligmann, Der Islam, V, 267.
121 I. Goldscher, ZDMG, XLVIII, p. 159.
123 H. A. Winkler, Stieg und Charaktere, p. 31.
124 W. Budge, Anušaid and Supernatural, p. 373.

An-sârî, n. 442; manâdik, v. 91.4; as-sârî, v. 92.

The following formulae are examples taken from books on magic:

1. A written basket (p. 55) and a written basket (p. 55) are examples of such names. They are supposed to be the names of seven angels who carry the throne (p. 72).

2. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

3. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

4. According to the inscription in ZDMG, XLVIII, p. 373, this letter is used by the people of the "Christian" community in the town of el-Madâyn as a sign of agreement.

5. We have seen similar words in the inscriptions of the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

6. We have seen similar words in the inscriptions of the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

7. According to the inscription in ZDMG, XLVIII, p. 373, this letter is used by the people of the "Christian" community in the town of el-Madâyn as a sign of agreement.

8. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

9. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

10. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

11. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

12. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

13. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

14. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

15. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

16. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

17. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

18. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

19. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

20. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

21. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

22. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

23. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.

24. An inscription found in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.
as a lucky seal. On the other hand, it is said to be unlucky, and is therefore used to impose upon a person some mischief (133). Badak, has to be discussed again later. Suffice it to say at present that بَوْح is 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 sakh، سَحِيَّة الإِسْمَإْلَيْمَيْنِ (134). The following seal of بَوْح، بَوْح, where every letter with its corresponding numerical value is placed in a square, is used to make a person sick (135) (Fig. 7). It is clearly seen that the number 4 for the letter ي takes wrongly the place of 5.

The letters are divided into four parts. Seven letters are assigned to each element. This is done in assigning the first letter of the abjad، بَوْح، i.e. the ي for fire, the second (و) for earth, the third (ع) for air, the fourth (ی) for water, the fifth (ئ) for fire, the sixth (ل) for earth, etc. In this way the letters of بَوْح، بَوْح are assigned for fire, بَوْح for earth, بَوْح for air, and بَوْح for water. These expressions are more often met with in magic books than in رَضْئَل. In some talismans the two words of each element are connected to one word, thus بَوْح for earth. These words are mixed with other inexplicable words or with the name of the patient.

138 These are the seven letters called "the letters of بَوْح" (137). 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 2 x 7 squares seal and are believed to be lucky. Others write بَوْح under an address on the envelope, either alone or combined with the numerical value of the letters placed on the other—1468 or 8642—to ensure safe arrival of the letter. At times the numbers are found alone. We meet with them also in talismans.

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: 1111, 1222, 3333, 4444, 5555, 6666, 7777, 8888, 9999. They are the seven letters known as سَبَاخُ وَفَضْطِل. More will be said about them later.

The words رَح (رَح) and رَفَد (رَفَد) are said to be "the loving letters" (136). The numerical value of رَح is 220 and that of رَفَد is 284. Both numbers are divisible by several factors. The sum of the results of such a division of رَح gives 284, which is the numerical value of رَفَد, and the sum of the results of رَح is 220, which is the numerical value of رَح. This gave them the appellation "loving letters". The following shows this procedure:

\[
\begin{align*}
220 \text{ divided by } 2 &= 110 \\
&= 4 \times 55 \quad 284 \text{ divided by } 2 &= 142 \\
&= 4 \times 71 \\
&= 5 \times 44 \\
&= 71 \times 4 \\
&= 10 \times 22 \\
&= 142 \times 2 \\\n&= 11 \times 20 \\
&= 284 \times 1 \\
&= 20 \times 11 \\
&= 22 \times 10 \\
&= 44 \times 5 \\
&= 55 \times 4 \\
&= 110 \times 2 \\
&= 220 \times 1 \\
\end{align*}
\]

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 رَح, as it has the higher numerical value, and gives B the cake with رَفَد. In a short time B will come running to A driven by the flame of love.

Attention may still be called to the 24 عَلِمُ الرَّحْيَة (الإِسْرَأْيْل) 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 in Syriac

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Explanation given in Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>تَبْلَيْش</td>
<td>the Heaved</td>
<td>الجديد</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>مُنْتَزِرُ</td>
<td>the Exalted</td>
<td>المَتْرِيْر</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>بَزَجَال</td>
<td>the Affectionate</td>
<td>وَدُود</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>تَراَطِب</td>
<td>the Watcher</td>
<td>نَظَرِيْر</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

133 Rahawi, 17. 134 This seal has been described in JROS, XVI, 95. 135 Talmuṣāni, 76. 136 Rahawi, p. 43, gives چ, which is a mistake. 137 Divān-i-muatarij, VII, 6 ff. 138 Divān-i-muatarij, VII, 6 ff. 139 In some manuscripts we find it given as مَرْئِيْر, چ, and چ as مَرْئِيْر.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic as given in the books</th>
<th>Transcription in Syriac</th>
<th>Explanation of Syrian word</th>
<th>Explanation given in Arabic books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>almad</td>
<td>almaid</td>
<td>the Glorious</td>
<td>جليل (Glorious)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gilamad</td>
<td>gilamad</td>
<td>the Hearer</td>
<td>رجل (Hearer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>barfân ( fils)</td>
<td>barfân</td>
<td>the son of the Surrounding</td>
<td>كنز (Surrounding)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>namûlah</td>
<td>namûlah</td>
<td>the Mighty, the Honoured</td>
<td>ملك (Mighty, Honoured)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>barîkîlî</td>
<td>barîkîlî</td>
<td>the son of the lower world</td>
<td>بیکیلی (lower world)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qifrat</td>
<td>qifrat</td>
<td>the Wise</td>
<td>智慧 (Wise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gudakäh</td>
<td>gudakäh</td>
<td>the Bright</td>
<td>سهیل (Bright)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thamânhîr</td>
<td>thamânhîr</td>
<td>the glorious name</td>
<td>جلال (Glorious)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every one of these words has been assigned to a letter of the alphabet.

The texts of many talismans finish with the words of the ḥurūf al-qawûl, the Arabic letters, in written ḥudâb in my collection the word the 'answer', added to the ḥudâb, is repeated two or three times. In written ḥudâb, is at times wrongly written ḥudâb. This orthography, ḥudâb, is unknown to the Arabic dictionaries. The word ḥudâb, is, as stated above, a very important word, and is frequently repeated in talismans. This repetition is a means of increasing the efficacy of the talismans. The supernatural powers are ordered to obey and fulfill the orders quickly as possible.

The Crowning Words of the Qurʾān 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: "By God, I invoke ḥudâb, the most mighty, of all ḥudâb, etc. They are thus primarily of religious importance, which importance was the reason for their extensive use in magic. They are (144): ḥudâb beginning with one of these words, are called "Mother ḥudâb" (144). The fourteen letters from which these crowning words are composed are known as the "letters of light" (144), the main ḥudâb, to distinguish them from the remaining letters, the ṭanînûn (144). The fourteen letters of the alphabet compose the "letters of darkness" (144), while the remaining fourteen letters of the alphabet are used more often than the others. I have seen ḥudâb written as it is spoken, namely, the ḥudâb of and the ḥudâb of The ḥudâb of and the ḥudâb of are written in the same way, as the ḥudâb of is the ḥudâb of The ḥudâb of and the ḥudâb of are written in the same way, except for the ḥudâb of which begins with ḥudâb. In analyzing some of these curious words we find that the word, pronounced mân, is the only letter which has a meaning connected with the contents of the ḥudâb which it crowns. It means a fish and ḥudâb, which the ḥudâb heads, speaks of ḥudâb, which is called ḥudâb, and other words, e.g., is pronounced tâ ḥudâb is a male name (Ṭâhâ); so is also ṭâ which is pronounced ẓâ (Ṭâsh). 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 ḥudâb of was represented by a name of ḥudâb, which name began with the letter of this word: Ḥa was represented by ẓâ, ẓâ by by by, ẓâ by by, ẓâ by by.

In summing up the results of our inquiry, we find that the "magic" words are either derived from a foreign language, or represent a combination of letters according to mystical principles or they are undeciphered expressions (144). 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 pronounciation. But there is doubtless a deeper reason for the use of
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, have there been examples showing this irregularity (148). In a hidabb with three 'hidab', 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 in a talisman are often written in disconnected letters. It is believed that a force of intrinsic power of the letter which is written in its full extent. As an example the word 'hidabb', repeated 9 times and the numerical value of the letters are given, we see: [Arabic text]. 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 should 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 the word "hidabb" is written as and as . Some times a word is written backwards. Thus I have met with for and for , one of the names of (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 hidabb (in my collection) written on cheap paper in a curious script and having many mistakes, may serve as an example: [Arabic text]. It reads:

At times the letters are so distorted that it is difficult to read them. Fig. 8 gives a part of a hidabb in my possession which was difficult to decipher. It reads as follows: A star has been placed at the beginning of every line.

The dots have been replaced by the present writer to make the reading of the text easier for the student. According to some books (150) the words should 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 the word "hidabb" is written as and as . Some times a word is written backwards. Thus I have met with for and for , one of the names of (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 hidabb (in my collection) written on cheap paper in a curious script and having many mistakes,

147 Alberthausen, pp. 105 ff.
148 JPOS, XVI, pp. 82, 83.
150a The words in parentheses are correction of the mistakes.
151 For corresponding Hebrew talismans see Judge, 210, 211.
is combined with the name of God شَاءُ اللَّهُ we have the following letters (182):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ل</th>
<th>م</th>
<th>م</th>
<th>م</th>
<th>ف</th>
<th>ل</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Fig. 9

In case a person is sick with a nasl (183) he is treated by a ḥidżāb in letters of the alphabet which are assigned to the element of fire (184). The example given by Douté (185) seems at first sight to be an exception to this rule (186). But if we remember that the article إِن is counted as one letter we see that there is no irregularity. The words the child and the roebinder are written as 

The science of letters is one of the secret sciences known only to the authorities in divine learning (187). At present only the most important groups 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 (188):

In a talisman made of the prayer of Abū al-Qādir ed-Dīlānī we read:

In future references this book will be quoted as Awghaniātūn.

Nasīrī, pp. 157, 158. He gives another verse:

letters given by this author are scarcely meet with in talismans. Consult also ʿawānār, p. 43.

In many old manuscripts we meet with this abbreviation. I Golder, Jburna, Nirmālah

Prayer of Religion and Ethics, II, 1366, 1667.

Rūh and other authors expound on the special virtues of the letters. See also Fugell, ZDME, VII, 89. The other
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 *kadhir* (166).

The letters are accredited with certain virtues (166). They are said to possess two secrets: the secret inherent in the letter itself, and the numerical secret. In the study of the relations of the letters to the elements, the planets, the twelve Zodiac constellations and to their outer form. Thus each of the four elements has seven letters, which letters possess the same characteristics as those of the elements to which they belong. This (pl. of *nallah*). They are also used to increase the fiery nature of love or of a Jupiter (the planet of war, whose element is fire) by making use of the fiery talisman and incense.

Letters with an outer resemblance are called حرف متاخم, "brotherly letters". These are ج ح د خ ز س ص ط ع, Anybody who carries these letters, written with saffron, rosewater and milk of a primipara becomes attractive and beloved.

Letters are also divided into سماحة, "quiet", i.e. all letters which have no dots, and بطاقة, "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: "م (ما) م, (ما) م, (ما) م, (ما) م, (ما) م, (ما) م, (ما) م, " and "م, " are the most important, as the first and third letters of the spell name are the same. Bani tells us that they are written on the Tablet. This belief may explain why they are so extensively used. " and " are more important than the ".

The second, fourth, sixth and eighth letters of the *abdallayh* are known,

166 Bani teaches that the letter ج is used in war and revenge.
of the "bad" and their respective numerical values are placed in the four corners of the "bad". In one case I found the small squares of this 3 x 3 seal to contain dots, the number of which corresponded to the numbers of the "bad" seal (fig. 16). The sum of every horizontal, vertical and diagonal line is 15. This seal which is also known as m stil na-gharzali is met with in every poison century. Probably Djebir bin Hassain of the 8th century was the first to make use of it. As the numerical value of the word tad al is 45, i.e. the same as the sum of all numbers of the seal, it is believed that this "bad" was Adam's own seal.

The word dhaatu may be divided into two words, each of two letters. This is attained by dividing the first letter into ٣ (inclination, affection) and the second into ٰ (love). Each word has the numerical value of ٣. They are used to produce love.

The nine first letters of the adjudah may also be arranged in the three words daal dhaatu, dhaatu dhaatu, and dhaatu dhaatu, each word having the numerical value ٣۵. Er-Rahawi (98) gives a "bad" combining the letters with their corresponding numerical values (fig. 17). There are eight different ways in which the numbers ٣ ۹ can be arranged in the diagonal line of the "bad". In some cases the number ٣ is set after the word dhaatu, which means that this word has to be repeated ٣ times.

Many "bad"s are built on the "bad" seal. This is accomplished by adding the numbers ٣ ۹, i.e. the numbers of this "bad", to any other number. The addition of the same result. As an example the following "bad" may be given which is made up of the numerical values of the letters of the word al. Thus we have the combination of these two vertical and oblique lines of this "bad" is ٣٩.

The sum of each line of the seal gave ٣٩ which is the numerical value of the verse ٤٩. In order to attain this sum

the number ٣۹ was added to the numbers of the "bad". In this way the required seal (fig. 19) arose (99).

The "bad" is said to belong to Usrm (100), that of Israk (101) is the ٣ ۹ 诉求

Fig. 18  Fig. 19  Fig. 20

the same time this seal is assigned to suhaal and Awhhanisali (102) tries to find the proof in the fact that the numerical value of the word 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 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" (103).

It is believed that letters will exert a greater power if they are written in special ways. Thus Bnai (104) 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, ج. This method was never used in fear cups. Some forms of the letters are preferred to others in writing talismans. Thus the ج is written as a rule as ، the س as س and the ج as ج. This method is often met with when the text is written with disconnected letters.

The description of the seal of ج. leads us to the discussion of the numerical values of the letters, which values are given in the following list:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ب</td>
<td>١</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ج</td>
<td>١٠</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ح</td>
<td>١٤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>خ</td>
<td>١٨</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>د</td>
<td>٦</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ر</td>
<td>٢٥</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ض</td>
<td>٣٠</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ط</td>
<td>٣٥</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ل</td>
<td>٤٠</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>م</td>
<td>٤٤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ن</td>
<td>٤٩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ع</td>
<td>٥٣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ہ</td>
<td>٥٨</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ل</td>
<td>٦٣</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then we have the combination of these two vertical and oblique lines of this seal is ٣٩.

171 Some say that ج is the name of a د. Since his services are secured by writing his name in the form of a seal, D. D. Macdonald, Ensys. of Islam. I, 779, 771.
172 JPOS, XVI, p. 91.
174 Dīrāsitul-Iṣrā'īl, VII, 6 ff.
175 Awhhanisali, p. 44.
176 Page 13.
177 W. Ahrens, M., Der Islam, VII, 190.
180 Page 10.
181 Ensys. of Rel. and Ethics, side, Charn. III, 36.
This characteristic of letters is still used in poetry for dating an event. 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 copied from a talisman in my collection, as 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 
\[\text{God} = 8 + 1 + 8 = 17, 10 + 4 = 14, 400 = 900.\]

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 in some seals one number may stand for two. The first line of a ḫāṭīm in 70 for 1 and 90 for 3. There is no letter with a numerical value of 15. This number is made of 10 which stands for 5 and 5 = 5. The seal stands thus for the word مَلَحَمَة (salmah).

In some talismans a word may be written partly by numbers and partly by letters, as in the case of مَلَحَمَة. The 8 stands for 5, thus the seal means مَلَحَمَة. Other amulets letters may take the place of numbers. Such letters stand for their numerical values, as the following seal (fig. 23) shows. The letters 3 stand for μ and σ (σ) (40 + 6 = 46) and the μ for 40. This

\[\text{Figure 22}
\]

\[\text{Figure 23}
\]

183 The sum of the numerical values of the letters following a derivative of =color{#7f9fd6}ح, must give the required year.

184 Siehe über die magischen Quadrate der Araber, "Magische Quadrate der Araber, Der Islam, VII, 186 ff.; Die magischen Quadrate des Islam, Der Islam, XII, 157 ff.

185 Page 99.

186 Talmaszki, 89.

The seal is made by adding 33 to the numbers 1–9, i.e., the numbers of mutāšāba, the number 111 follows the name of God 585. This number is the numerical value of the word أَلْهَةَ (alaha). 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 أَلْهَةَ فِي مَثَلِ الْمَكَارِق (alaha fi ma’il al-makarir). 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 الطَّيْر (tayir), which is followed in some places by the number 129 and in others by 16641 (187). The first number stands for the numerical value of the word الطَّيْر 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 kullan, "the world of constriction". They are used to produce some injury. These numbers are 111 (which represents the numerical value of the letters 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 1), 333 (3, 3, 3), 555 (5, 5, 5), 777 (7, 7, 7), 999 (9, 9, 9) and 222 (2, 2, 2). The numbers of the even series, 4, 6, 8, 10, "the world of expansion" bring luck. They are 222 (2, 2, 2), 444 (4, 4, 4), 666 (6, 6, 6), 888 (8, 8, 8). The letters of any of these words are called mutāšāba and are used to intensify the power of the others. Thus the letter μ (with the numerical value 400) intensifies the action of μ (20) and μ (2), while μ can intensify the action of μ only.

Some hāṭām 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.

In the original it was written several times 16641 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 it 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 $\mathbf{ب}$
2 stands for $\mathbf{ص}$
3 stands for $\mathbf{ج}$
4 stands for $\mathbf{د}$
5 stands for $\mathbf{ذ}$
6 stands for $\mathbf{ق}$
7 stands for $\mathbf{غ}$
8 stands for $\mathbf{ح}$
9 stands for $\mathbf{ط}$

Thus بس الم رحيم is represented by 181 1 2 3 4 5

This method is rarely met with, nevertheless it should be tried in every set of letters.

Besides the simple numerical value of the letters each letter enjoys a “higher numerical value” which is obtained by the method of تكم العرف. 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 I is obtained by writing it as it is pronounced, الله. The numerical values of these three letters added together is 111. This method is also called حساب الحرف الكبیر (higher value of letters). The ‘high numerical value’ of the letters of the alphabet is given here (189):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to this method it was possible to decipher some lines of numbers 1060.

189 Aali ibn Sālih, Šī‘a’s-rūm fi ‘ulūm, J., 192. 18.

Some āwālīm, which seem to contain senseless numbers, are read in this way. The $3 \times 3$ seal (190) illustrated above is an example (fig. 21). The sum of every horizontal, vertical and diagonal line is 111, which number stands for the letter I. 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 the word الجود. This āwālīm, with the sum of 111, stands also for the name of God كُل. The numerical value of which is also 111. The mystic science has thus appointed the name of God للطيف for the letter I. At times the high numerical value of a letter is written directly after the same, as 32 گ. Every letter is treated at times according to ات-تاسف, ات-تاسک and ال-باش. تاجیف means writing the letter down as it is spelled, i.e. ات الف. تاجک is the spelling of each one of these three letters: ات الف, ات الف, ات الف. The باش is writing in letters the numerical value of each letter of ات-تاسک (191). At times the numerical values of the letters of a word treated according to ات-تاسک are squared. The result is supposed to be highly active. Treating the word الله according to ات-تاسک results in الله (الله). 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.

190 Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Abī Jā‘ib, کِل. 191 Reul, IV, 3 ff. 192 Deunst, p. 167.
There are a few other methods which, being unimportant, have been omitted. Nevertheless there remain many numbers which cannot be deciphered. The horizontal lines give 180, 114 and 100 respectively. Those of the vertical lines the numerical value of which is 104. No one of these numbers corresponds with the square.

As times the old forms of the numbers are preferred. Many texts show written in, and is met with in this form engraved on metal amulets. The reason for the preference of the number 9 remains unknown to me.

An analysis of all the seals found in the four volumes of Bami, Samu, shows that out of 137 seals 248 are square ones. Those seals are the 248 square seals considered, 160, i.e. 64% contain 4x4 squares, 19-3x3, and, in a seal was 25. There were among the 248 square seals 15 containing which the three horizontal ones, squares, 99 seals do not belong to the 30 square seals described above. Of these 13 proportions of the various forms of square seals to each other is different in smaller equal squares in the vertical and horizontal lines were 47 or 31% squares. The high proportion of the 3x3 is accounted for by the fact that the square seals.

The most important names for a seal are the is the smallest number found in which is the number of small squares in one line, 4. a had is the sum of the seal. For the better understanding of those expressions, the following example is given. The had 15 is t, the had 10 is the and the hada 45. Whenever the sums of the numbers placed in the squares of each perpendicular line and those of each horizontal line are equal, the is said to be a true one (الحجة), all others are known as the hada (الحوسبة). According to

to the contents of the square of a seal we differentiate a koji (numerical) from a koji (with letters) and a koji (with words).

Awghanistani (199) 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. Bami who also accepts this teaching says in another place (200) that all planets have the same 7 x 7 seal, with the same contents, namely the letters of so’ul al-falah. 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 knowing the planet the seal belongs. The following list shows the relation of the seven letters to the planets:

From the Sun, to the Sun, to the Moon, to Mercury and to Saturn (see later).

Beside the square seals there are circular, triangular and quadrilateral seals. The circular are the most important. A circle played formerly and still plays an important rôle in magic and superstition. It-tawwul, the “enchanting”, of a person in danger is still used in Palestine to protect that person from evil spirits and wild animals. This may be done by uttering words like: . . . . . . حيحتطك يسرب الرب الحرم وآلا وآلا والرب الرب الرب طبيعيين والرب الruby

Page 9.

This theory prevailed also among the Hebrews, Judges, 193 ff.

I, 98.

The same custom is described in Thesaurus and One Night, t. 28, line 10o (Sanskrit edition, Breyouth).

Awghanistani, 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 ḫaṣṣat er-radjisch (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 bishābāt. 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.

MAGIC AND DIVINATION IN EARLY ISLAM

THE DECIPHERMENT OF ARABIC TALISMANDS

(Continued from vol. 19)

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 "jutenas" or "crowns". They are to be found in Arabic talismans and originate in Jewish magic (206). A list 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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{א} & \text{ב} & \text{ג} & \text{ד} & \text{ה} & \text{ו} & \text{ז} & \text{ח} & \text{ט} & \text{ י} \\
\text{ק} & \text{ל} & \text{מ} & \text{נ} & \text{נ} & \text{ס} & \text{ת} & \text{ץ} & \text{ם} & \text{ף} \\
\end{align*}
\]

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 "jutenas".

203 H. Pogon, L. c.
204 Such designs were also employed in
205 JPOS, XVI, pp. 29 ff.
206 Daudè, 891.
those with a value 100–900 have two "lunettes", and the ج, with the numerical value 1000, has three "lunettes" on the number i. This idea seems to be recognized in some books on magic. I have found a doubtful reference to it by Muhammad Ahmad Abi-l-Qasim. He writes:

If you place a zero (probably a lunette is meant) on the 1 it becomes a 9 and if two zeros are placed on it, it turns into a 9 and if three, a ج. In the old edition of Ibn I 1291 H (299) one finds some signs of the above alphabet.

But despite this key and those of Ibn el-Wahli and al-Djakhshi it is practically impossible to decipher texts written with these secret letters. In fig. 28 a strange and curious script is seen. This same curious seal is repeated three times in one and the same alif of my collection. The first seal is followed by the words: das...]alif, "They serve me the secrets of this magic seal."

"Be responsible, ye servants of these lovely 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 powers. But the inscription after the second seal, which seal is a true "Answer, O Meimun", and one is led to think that the seal contains the name of this demon.

![Image](image-url)

Fig. 28

It is to be noted that a comparison of the new edition of Ibn i 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 Ibn I may serve as an illustration (fig. 29). The two talismans are prescribed for the same ailment. The first 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) (299).

These changes are a decisive proof that the editors of this book did not believe in the supposed 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 Intari 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 talismans and figures are in the first place the result of imagination or of blindly copying strange alphabets incomprehensible to the copyist which are 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 Mohammedans works on magic have also in this respect borrowed from Judaism (299).

The seven signs assigned to the seven days and the seven planets are well known in magic (fig. 30a) and are to be found in many written talismans. They are supposed to be the seals of different prophets and represent, when placed


208 II, 102.

209 Some other irregularities are: vol. II, p. 85 of the new edition gives a 9 x 10 squares seal; the old edition, on the other hand, has an 8 x 10 square seal. The new two seals on the same page have been replaced in the new edition by completely different ones. The numbers placed in the grid on page 86 (old edition, II) differ from those of the new edition (II, II).

together, the mysterious name and seal of the Almighty (p.232). Their arrangement in the signs (p.232). The star is described in books (p.232) as a pentagram, šāmu' hadari,

but we as often find a hexagram. This last is believed by Mohammedans to be the eight-sided tin nibah where the seven signs are engraved in a primitive manner eight-pointed (fig. 30b). In some books I found it represented as a circle (fig. 30c). In a hand written hajib, the šāmu' of which was given above, the star was given as beyond the scope of this treatise to go more fully into the description of these signs. Attention should be called to the fact that the lists of the seven days with the powers which are given by Doutet (p.232) and Winkler are practically never found in magic. They must be regarded in first place as a key to guide the magician which planets to use while preparing a talisman for a patient in order to exert the 7 x 7 objects as a magic seal believed to possess supernatural powers and used demons, planets, metals, words, letters, characters, prohets and minerals belonging to the seven signs of the zodiac, to each day. It is borrowed from the pamplet šerûn, l-šerûn fi šəhārî, šerûn, i-dîman. Other authors differ in some respects. This combination is given to help in a better analysis and understanding of talismans.

214 Abergelbus, p. 132. 215 p. 75.
212 See examples given by Doutet, pp. 254, 255.
213 This is clearly seen in the old editions of of Ta'rikh Muluki-Sunna, 1756.
214 Bâni, I, 85.
215 Doutet, p. 258, claims that Jews and Mohommedans regard the hexagram as the seal of Solomon.
216 See also Winkler, pp. 155, 156.

211 Abergelbus, p. 132; in this case it is written as a two pointed star.
212 This is clearly seen in the old editions of of Ta'rikh Muluki-Sunna, 1756.
213 Bâni, I, 85.
214 Doutet, p. 258, claims that Jews and Mohommedans regard the hexagram as the seal of Solomon.
215 See also Winkler, pp. 155, 156.

211 Abergelbus, p. 150; SH, XV, 153; ZEN, XVI, pp. 94 ff.
212 Page 154.
214 It describes also this combination as an

beside the seal with the seven signs described above and which represents the Holy Name, there is also a šāmu' shari' (p.232), "the seal of evil", which is represented by the letters l. The U is also written as l. The old edition of Bâni gives it as l. Sometimes three l take the place of a. One rarely meets with all these signs written together, and they should not be confounded with the letters l which appear repeatedly in the karmalak (p.232). One might think these signs are some which have not yet been deciphered.

222 K. Rahman, p. 46. Gives other names.
223 Winkler and Doutet have a slightly different order. Cannan, Abergelbus, gives the order, as it is here.
224 See Doutet, sp. 19.
225 This is copied from Rahman, idem, l-šəhārî, l-šəhārî, šəhārî, šəhārî.
226 Copied from Abu-Ma'bar.
227 Abu-Ma'bar assigns copper.
228 Here Abu-Ma'bar passes iron.
229 See Doutet, sp. 19.
230 The seven signs have been omitted.
231 Winkler, ext. of Charakuta, p. 77.
232 Cannan, JPOS, pp. 97 ff.
They are made of irregular lines running in every direction, as well as cryptographic signs of no meaning. Such uninterpretable scratches and signs are found both on metal amulets, and in written talismans.

On fear cups and occasionally on metal amulets, some or all the zodiac circles with magic formulae or Qur'anic verses take the place of the twelve figures. The representation of the sun and moon are the only figures of the planets which may possibly be distinguished as the one as a male and the other as a female face, or figure, as a crescent (244). Near the figure representing the sun one finds sometimes the word بال (bal), fire; and near that of the moon the word بال (bal) (al-balad), the calf. بعين (bi'nab) refers, as has been shown elsewhere, to the sun, and لجل (al-jil) to the moon. This word بال (bal) should not be confounded with بال (bal) (al-balad) which has already been described in connection with the ro'ajumul-saadah.

Astrological bodies have played an important rôle in the life of all nations since the earliest times. The most important heavenly bodies were the seven planets all of whose phases carried as a protection. The crescent predominates also in these with references to the heavenly bodies (248).

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 lion are also seen in some printed hajibah, e.g., in سجد (sujud) es-sulaimaniyyah they are shown on a bitten person (248). On a silver plate, which used to be carried in a man's arms two lions are also represented (244). I have never seen lion representations on printed hajibah.

233 In a guided notebook of a collection the sun was represented on a star with 31 rays.

234 In the time of Gnostics the crescent and the full moon were also used as amulets. Budge, 210.

235 Is. 1: 11; Jude, 1: 8.

236 According to Talmud, p. 59, the moon has several names which are used in magic. Some are لبل (al-balad), لبل (al-balad), لبل (alu-abd), لبل (alu-abd), لبل (alu-abd). Note that every name begins with its J. I have never seen these names in written talismans.

237 Ageredast, p. 69. An analysis of such inscriptions on poison cups has been given in JPOS, XVI, p. 194 ff. See also M. G. Wes, Catalogue Général du Musée d'Abu el-Abbas, Cairo.

238 Revised, monuments qadiya, persons et town, II, 317 describes the ritual as a day.

At times an ark, a bird or some other object is pictured by the intricate writing of the text. Thus Zweier (29) describes a talisman of this sort with the words: "In true Arabic fashion the drwma...kurs, master and sibis is made of arabesques, i.e. Arabic quotations from the Quran 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 د (j-fajir), the م (al-bahd), the Dome of the Rock, the Kabah, 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 Ramasan bread of ا (al-fajir) Ahn Madian (249) and which was hung over the candle of a child. Representations of the hand are painted on the outer surface of door lintels and jaubs. As times it is even carved in the stone. More seldom it is painted on the inner walls of houses and مم (al-bahd). Even in the embroidery of many districts of Palestine the hand is taken as a motive. The Shita ا (al-fajir) the fives fingers of the hand as standing for the five members of the Mohammedan holy family (a. above). The Mohammedans believe that such a representation stands for the hand of ا (al-fajir), the Christians for that of St. Mary and the Jews believe it is the hand of ا (al-fajir). I have never seen the representation of the hand in a written مم. But talismans manufactured by ا (al-fajir), especially those of important mosques, show it freely. Thus I possess several talismans with hand-seals impressions. These talismans show beside the hand figures representing the sword د (j-fajir), a balance and simply or elaborately finished circular seals. The metal seals with which the above named impressions were made, are the property of ا (al-fajir). Every ا (al-fajir) endowed 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 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, _يا إبراهيم إبراهيم يا إبراهيم يا إبراهيم _ يا ابن إبراهيم يا ابن إبراهيم يا ابن إبراهيم ya ibn aibrahim ya ibn aibrahim ya ibn aibrahim ya ibn aibrahim ya ibn aibrahim ya ibn aibrahim. On one hand had ا (al-bahd) on his arms two lions and ا (al-bahd) on his feet. On the swords which are also seen in the مم (al-bahd) and ا (al-fajir) we find ا (al-bahd) مم (al-bahd) ا (al-fajir) ا (al-fajir) ا (al-fajir) ا (al-fajir). This sword, often represented as a three-pointed and which belonged to ا (al-bahd) تلب (tibh), derives its name د (j-fajir), from the undulations on its blade, which are said to have resembled the vertebrae...
of the spire. Others believe that this sword belonged originally to el-ṣābi bin Munabbah who was killed in the battle of Badr. The prophet then took possession of it (38). Seal No. 60 of Hammer-Purgstall shows this sword and gives the name ‘Ali.’

A round seal with Muhammad is in its centre has the seven names of Allah: al-‘Abid with the name of his dog surrounding the central inscription. These names were executed in a beautiful octahedral 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 مهاجر، the other has a straight line with the two ends of crescent touching at its end. Here we read the word مهاجر.

This seal has also the inscriptions:

1. "He may peace be upon him, said if any lord wishes to see a spot of heaven let him behold the Holy City" (29). This seal is 7 cm in diameter. Another round seal, 9.5 cm in diameter, has the Verse of the Throne written around the periphery. The centre is divided into 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 كن مسرح بالله من نعمة لا ميرجع له عنبق من الله صلى الله عليه وسلم. The eighth line has again letters and the ninth gives the signs of "the seal of God." The hexagram which is contained 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 only 11 such circles. One of the squares has an eight-pointed star, probably a representation of the sun. All these seals have a square border with Qoranic verses. Around the periphery of each of these two rows of circles is a circular script of the first verse of the 94th surah. The larger of these two octahedrons is 5 cm. The measurements of the smaller seal are 16 cm of the square 7.7 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 قنادس م(tuple the foot print of the prophet) and تكسي� (a stone of luck) on the larger seal and only qadams-n-nai on the smaller one. Outside the plan of the Mosque some of the holy places are indicated: مسجد al-ṣafi, al-embarak.

On some printed textiles (39), on metal cases, as well as on some sculptures (38), the student may see the representation of one or more minarets with or without the 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 (39). On Christian metal cases we find, as a rule, representations of St. Mary, with or without the child Christ, St. George (39) fighting with the dragon, the cross (39), etc.

It may be stated at this point that Šumi Mohommadsen, or traditionalists, employ only some of the figures described above, while the Shi’is, or "free thinkers," adopt more or less all of them (39).

We may now turn to the description of mukhaddasat al-maṣūdī (38). 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, mukhaddasat—may peace and blessings be upon him—his names, the names of abd Badr, the prayer of my lord ‘Abd-Allāh el-Dīnār, 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 field (fig. 32) contains 5 large and 14 smaller circles. The small circle contains the names: ملعون دايع—ع بد – ع بد – ع بد – ع بد – ع بد – ع بد – ع بد – ع بد – ع بد – ع بد – ع بد – ع بد – ع بد – ع بد – ع بد – ع بد

The middle large circle contains شهيد 123 in beautiful arabesques surrounding the words الله بلد الحرام which are written in the centre of an eight-rayed star. The right circle contains شهيد 146 and 293, the left one شهيد 35 and 39. Two semicircles in this part contain the inscriptions لا يَعْبُد الله الا الله ولَيْدَ لَهُمَا الْحَرَامَةَ which is repeated on the inverse side of the talisman. The second field (see fig. 32) is taken up mostly by the figure of the talisman which is two-pointed. Above this one sees the words الميسرة وحقك للأبلا وكفى به الله ورسوله who are written on the small circular field. This field has four small circles and the two semicircles. The latter bear the inscriptions الله ورسوله. The four small circles are filled with ع ملك وملك وملك وملك which is repeated several times.

243 Cuvae, Plütscher etc. JPOS. VII. 10 pp.
244 The illustration in the Cuvae is a bit different. VII. 410.
245 A sketch by the author.
246 An inscription on the wall of the Mosque.
247 El-Ashsh, a priest in his dress and order to their followers.
249 Since the beginning of the 7th century the cross is regarded as a powerful amulet. Reiseber. für prot. Theologie und Kirche I, 1. v. Anblend.
250 See also Budge, 67.
251 In the Arabic of the instructions to use the talisman. Amanat, Gen. 294; Judg. 18, 24; 1 Sam. 19, 13.
verse, makes some additions to the above. These are: a shield, three cups, a donkey named Yafir, two striped garments, a fawn coloured shirt, a single stained shirt, a wrapped cap, a javelin, half of the land Fadl, a part in the third of Haithir and his part of the land of banu-Nadir. The left hand big circle contains the prayer said to originate with Abdull-µ-Qadir el-Djilani. 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." The small circles contain: [verse 285] - وَقَدْ خَلَفَ سَأَلَ (0) - وهو أمر الراحمين - لا اله الا الله الملك المحسن، رضوو الله الصادق. [verse 286] - والمهدوء الأمين.

This talmun has been described in detail to prove the fact underlying most talismans, which is important for the understanding of the composition of most hadjub. 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 (206). I possess a certificate which used to be issued by some fiqh of the Dome of the Rock to Mohammedan pilgrims visiting Jerusalem. It contains, beside some invocations and the hadij 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), Mirpa 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 cabalistic 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 fiqh has more or less his own peculiarities in writing letters, signs and figures.
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 hermatite 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 validate and amuletic functions of seals, and then goes on to discuss a variety of magical seals and amulets.

The word *khāṭam* as described in Ibn Manẓūr’s dictionary *Lišān al-‘Arab* in ‘that which is placed on clay’ and *al- khāṭam* the clay which is used to seal documents (*khāṭād*). Living in the 13th-14th century, Ibn Manẓūr worked in Tripoli in North Africa in the *Dīwān al-Iṣbaḥ* where documents are likely to have still been sealed possibly

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1 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.
with clay. While there are often references in historical texts to the sealing of documents in the various chanceries of the 'Abbāsids or the Šāhāls, for example, clay seals still sometimes attached to papyrus documents only tend to survive from the early Islamic period.2

The term ḥātam grew to encompass a whole range of meanings and thus when Allan wrote the entry ḥātam in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, he describes it as 'a seal, signet ring, the impression (also ḥāsam) 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 suspicious character; in addition to meaning a ring, it covers virtually any small seal-like object which has been stamped with some mark.'3 The other terms that we find in the literature in connection with seals are ḥass, the engraved stone of a ring, and ṭabūd 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 illāh), 'I put my faith in God' (swākmahkt 'ala ʿllah) or 'such and such a person trusts in God' (ṣulān yashiq illāh). 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 imbued amuletic aspect to them.4


4 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-Birrī, Kūkā al-šamalī fi murāj al-šamālīj, +īyād, al-jāfr, Cairo, 1977. Carnelian, for example, is said to have been particularly favoured by the Prophet Muhammad.
University Lectures in Islamic Studies 2

wa muqashha khâsimihi or wa kâna naqsh bâ’d ismihi and then the phrase, The Caliph 'Ali (656-661), for example, according to al-Mas‘ûdi, had his ring engraved al-mulk illah by his scribe, 'Ubaidallah ibn Abi Râfî’, who had been a slave of the Prophet.11 The inscriptions as described in the texts, vary in length; some are short: al-‘azâzillah ('Glory belongs to God'), Marwân I, 684-5),12 hashî Allah ('My trust is in God'), al-Mahdi, 775-85),13 while others are longer: al-‘uzmau wa-l-qadr al-lâh ‘azza ma jalla (Hârûn al-Rashid).14 While most inscriptions are generally pious in nature, some are specific verses or paraphrases of verses from the Qur’ân. Al-Mu‘âmî’s seal (833-42) for example, was a phrase of which the second part (underlined) is a direct quote from the Qur’ân: al-bundu lâlîh allaahi layya kamatisbi shay’ wa huwa khalil hul shay’. This phrase, according to al-Mas‘ûdi, was also engraved on the seal of al-Mu‘amî (892-902) and al-Muqtâfi (1136-60).15

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 illah, belonged to the Caliph ‘Ali, or ones with hashî Allah belonged to the Caliph al-Mahdi. It does, nevertheless, suggest two things: firstly, that unlike European ‘royal’ seals which are recognizable because they will have a royal name on them, these seals, with their popular pious but quite impersonal phrases, would have been recognizable because of the context in which they were used; but how could we be sure of recognising a caliphal seal today? Secondly, the appearance 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 these seal legends. As Kalus and Gignoux have argued, in the context of the

11 al-Mas‘ûdi, Kišâb al-Tanzîh, p. 286 and 349.
13 al-Mas‘ûdi, Kišâb al-Tanzîh, p. 312; Kalus and Gignoux, p. 139.
17 This is also clear from some of the clay seals on papyrus. An anonymous name without a seal only becomes known if the same name appears on the document. See Porter, in Colton, Seals, 1997, p. 182.
18 Islamic Seals: Magical or Practical?

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.18 As seals, we can postulate tentatively that this group belongs to the category of ‘alâma, a religious motto which took the place of a signature on documents from at least ‘Abbasid times and very common on Fatimid documents. These phrases are, for example, al-bundu lâlîh wa-l-‘ulami ('Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe') used by all the Fatimid caliphs or, closer to the seals, short phrases such as al-mulk lâlîh used by viziers.19 It is not clear how the ‘alâma corresponded if at all to the use of a seal as a means of authentication. In Stern’s survey on ‘the signature’ in his Fatimid Decrees, he only once links the ‘alâma with a seal and that is in reference to seals of the Sa‘îd sharîf of Morocco where ‘the alâma was impressed by means of a stamp’.20 What is interesting is that the same pious phrases continued in use on both seals and ‘alâmas. It is evidently the case that the ‘alâma, 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 beneficary, supplicatory phrases or Qur’ânic 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 homogeneous 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

20 Stern, Fatimid Decrees, p. 142.
Latin and known in the west as *Picatrix* includes a story attributed to the Tulûnad period in Egypt, to Khumárassaway (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 (tasbih) 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 (fayz) a bezoar stone on which appeared the scorpion. I asked him about the secret of the seal (khodim) 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 wonderfull things before all the world.24

The word magic (*silah*) in the Islamic world has complicated connotations. It is not as could be supposed anti-religious although Ibn Khaldoûn made his disapproval known of it. In the *Muqaddimah* he opens on 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 magic towards astral beings or other things rather than in the direction of God.25

There are believed to be two kinds of magic, licit and illicit. While licit magicians according to the 10th century writer Ibn al-Nadîm, author of the *Fihrist*,26 constrain the spirits by obeying and supplicating Allah, illicit magicians enslave the spirits by offerings

26 *Fihrist*, p. 345, for biographical notice and p. 307 for the story and Ghaïat al-Hakim, Ruzier, p. 55 (the translation here is based on the Arabic text).

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 signs: 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.'

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. In the British Museum's collection and elsewhere are magical seals and amulets which fall into a number of different categories. There are those, mostly engraved in positive, with verses from the Qur'an or parts of verses, and these tie in with the negatively inscribed seals with phrases, Qur'anic or otherwise, discussed earlier. Fig. 8.4 is a ca. 18th century chalcocodony seal from the 'throne verse', known as the ayat al-mustas 'idin', the verse of those seeking refuge, and in the centre, from sura 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 ilha huma al-hopp, 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. Chalcocodony, 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) were thought to have talismanic properties and are frequently found sewn into clothing.

Another category of magical seals consists of inscriptions which draw on the power of individual letters and the divine names, the so-called al-asma' al-husna (of which there are 99 or more depending on the texts). This is the focus of the work of al-Bunt (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. 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-huruf) is a highly complicated subject in which letters have particular properties that cannot be gone into here. 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 Jabir ibn Hayyān. 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 budah, an artificial word made from the equivalent letters at the four corners of the square. 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. Canaan's discussion of the square, mostly based on al-Bunt, shows it to have several different

35 Paul Krauz, 'Jabir ibn Hayyân', Mémoires présentés 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 among Safaitic inscriptions in Wadi Miqqat 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. Laneke, Hardings, Inscriptions from Safaitic Cairns, Toronto, 1978, pp. 219-20, no. 3790.
37 It is also known as the mushallahu Ǧazhâlī after the philosopher al-Ghazâlī, Canaan, 'The Decipherment', 1937, pp. 102.
meanings: this includes the splitting up of the word into two: hubb (love) and uddil (affection). Associated with healing, as it is on the brass seal in fig. 8.6, here the Qur’anic verses inscribed in reverse around the seal are verses known for their healing properties: sûra 16:69 and sûra 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 bubb 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.

The squares can be very complex and, as in fig. 8.7, sometimes bear the names of the archangels Jibrîl, Mikâyîl, Isrâ’îl, and Uzrafrî around the sides. Derived from Hebrew angelology, each angel is believed to be endowed with special gifts and functions: for example Jibrîl (Gabriel), the messenger to the Prophets who brought down the Qur’ân, Mikâyîl, who presides over rain and plants; Isrâ’îl who guards the heavenly trumpets and stands by the throne of God; Uzrafrî the angel of death. All the verticals in this magical square, except two, add up to 473. 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’ân. On the first line and subsequent lines in different orders can be seen kaf ha’ yâ’ ‘ayn sa’d which begin surat Maryam (sûra 19) and which are frequently found on amulets. These letters are found immediately before the texts of 29 of the 114 surats of the Qur’ân. 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’; other theories include the suggestion that they may be mnemonics for remembering the subject matter of the sûras. 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. Rehansek in his article on magic, 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. 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. 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. They are found engraved in positive and negative on paper simulacral 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-Bûnî, as they belong in the discussion of the names of God, are the ‘seven magical signs’ (fig. 8.10). A description and explanation of these is given by the theologian al-‘Razi (d. 1209) as follows: three sticks lined up after a seal (the so-called Solomon’s...

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45 They do not just appear on the seals and amulets. A bronze bust illustrated in J G C Aitken, Museum Calixtum Scriptorum Vatini, published in Rome in 1789, plate X, described as a Druze idol, shows lines of numbers and letters as well as lines of Kufic (Microfilin Bodlton Library). I am grateful to Michael Macdonald for pointing this out to me.
48 This is concurred by Savage-Smith, Science, p. 62.
seal) at their head is like a bent head of a lance; a mimm 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 haa' in half then a tavv bent over like a tube (sandub) of a cupper (hijam) 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 Allah may his glory be exalted ...' Al-Razi goes on to describe how these signs possess seven names amongst the great names of God and seven which have been omitted from the Fat'hah, the opening chapter of the Qur'an (the saraqat al-fat'ah). These letters, fadd, jam, thun, daal, khaad and saayn, are also the beginning letters of some of the divine names of God; Fard (the Only One), Jabbai (the Omnipotent) and so on. It is also said, adds al-Razi, that these signs refer to the name al-Rahman 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.' But al-Razi's text indicates how the signs may have been used in everyday 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. 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? Emile 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-Buni's, whose Shams al-Ma'tarif 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 Nur al-Din Zangi in 1167).53

Islamic Seals: Magico-Practical?

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 'spell's in al-Buni's Shams al-Ma'tarif are in this form.54

The final group of magical seals discussed here are inscribed in Arabic script in a style which Casanova first described as Koufique linéaire.55 They are characterised by continuous lines, made up of Kufic letters, so that individual words cannot easily be differentiated, if at all.56 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 haa', are written in a very early form which first appears on Dome of the Rock inscriptions. Although it is generally possible to date Arabic inscriptions from their epigraphic style because of the amount of dated or datable 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 Rehatske57 which includes panels of this script which contrasts with the cursive nasuki script of the rim. The contrast can be seen again on a paper amulet where there is a crude


54 Casanova, M., 'Alphabets magiques arabes,' Journal Arabe, 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. dinting, Sinaiische Inschriften, Berlin 1981, 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.

55 Some of al-Buni's formulae are written with an artificial base, for example Shams, p. 243.


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.61

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.62 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.63

61 The only word I have been able to identify tentatively is the last which may be al-qāil ('speed'), sometimes found on amulets to hurry up their efficacy. Canaan, 'The Declension', 1937, p. 94.

62 Kalus has suggested that a group of seals with this type of inscription were made for salvaging. L. Talus, Catalogue des cachets, bulles et talismans Islamiques, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1981, p. 916. L. Kalus, 'Rock crystal talismans against drought' in N. Broth (ed.), Jewellery and Goldsmithing in the discuss by A. Shafir, 'Arms, Sources of Light: the meaning of medieval Islamic rock crystal lamps', Musical Theory XI, 1994, pp. 1-11. Regarding their provenance, I understand from Mr Content that a number have an Egyptian

63 The question has been raised by colleagues as to whether they are in fact in the Arabic language. Ibn al-Nadim in his Peshrat, 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'.

Islamic Seals: Magical or Practical?

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: 1.0 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'an (sura 33 v. 29): '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, scarab with inscription in Kufic style, 9th-10th century.
Dimensions: 3.0 x 2.5 x 0.8cm
BM (OA) 1900 13.141

Fig. 8.4 Quartz, chalcedony amulet engraved in cursive script with Qur'anic inscriptions, margin: stra 2 v. 255 and centre sura 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 sura 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 budufu around the margin six Qur'anic verses associated with healing, sura 16 v. 69, 10 v. 37, 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. 'Abdallah Guchkání has suggested that this may be an abbreviated form of the phrase al-dunya sa'ab wa ja'ala sa'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 reverse 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 it.
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 reverse with invocations to bizarrely named angels or jinn.
Dimensions: 3.5 x 0.6cm
BM (OA) OA + 11435
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. 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.

In Arabic the science is called al-`abdāh 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 Iḥṣāq al-Kindī (ca. 800–after 866). 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. 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

1. For fuller details concerning the topics covered in this essay, see Garret Bess and Charles Burnett, Scientific Weather Forecasting in the Middle Ages: The Writings of al-Kindī (London and New York, 2000).

2. For Arabic texts on weather forecasting see Fast Sergin, Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums, VII: Astrallogie, Meteorologie und Veinschema in ca. 410 H (Leiden, 1979) where 80 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, 'Astro-aeronautics in the Middle Ages', Int., 74 (1983), 185–210.

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. 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 the 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. But several of its signs reappear in Proclus' 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 based on the calendar, in which changes of weather were associated with the risings and settings of different stars and constellations throughout the course of the solar year. In the ancient Greek context, this is called a 'parapigma', so-called because the first parapigma were stone inscriptions set up in the city square, showing the risings and settings of constellations and the associated weather, 'fixed beside' (from parapigmai) which were pegs indicating the corresponding dates of the civil calendar. A written form of the parapigma appears in Greek in Proclus' Phaenomena and works attributed to Quintilian and Actius of Aarida, and in Latin in Columella's De rustica and Pliny's Natural History, book 18. 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 dusk, its opposite rose. This setting star marked the beginning of a new 'plural awal' which lasted until the setting of the next prominent star, thirteen days later. Each new' had weather characteristics of its own which lasted for a certain number of days from its beginning (or, according to some, until the beginning of the next new'). This led Charles Pellat to describe this system as 'une météorologie rudimentaire'. 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. Unlike the zodiacal divisions, however, the awal' 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 awal' 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 new' of each star was necessarily accompanied by rain, cold, wind or heat... Those with which they found bringing rain they compared to fertile women, those not bringing rain, to sterile [women] and useless men. ... The pre-Islamic authors frequently mention the awal' in their poems and proverbs... When they see lightning flashing in the direction of the south and its neighbouring regions, the Arabs [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 togethert 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.

As an example one may take the awal' of April:

New' of al-Simak al-Azal [a Virgin; Spica], which lasts five nights... It is a new' abundant [in rain], which early deceives. The rising of its opposite - Batin al-Ha [a Andromeda, Mirach] - is at dawn. The Arabs say that the rain of this...
Weather Forecasting in the Arabic World

arithmetic, and the subject-matter of Aristotle’s *Phvsis*, *On the Heavens*, and *On Generation and Corruption*. But the Meteorologia 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’. 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 Išāq al-Kindi. Al-Kindi was the leading figure in a group of scholars (the ‘al-Kindi circle’) who were involved in translating texts of Greek philosophy and adapting them to an Islamic context. He wrote most of his philosophical works in the form of ‘letters’ (naskh), 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’. Two substantial letters are specifically on weather forecasting: ‘On moisterues and rain’, also entitled ‘TheSufficient One’, which he composed for his student Habib, and ‘On the causes of the forces attributed tothe 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, though 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, Kalûnûmûn ben Kalûnûmûn ben Meir; (2) a Latin version, titled *De mutationibus 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-Kindi. 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

14 Occasionally Aristotle refers in the Meteorologia 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 Meteorologia. Note, too, that the fourth (last) book of the Meteorologia 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.


in thirty manuscripts and two Renaissance editions.\(^1\)

Al-Kindi 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-dāhir al-aḥbarīya, 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-dāhir al-aḥbarīya. There is no doubt that he uses Aristotle's work, probably in the translation of Yabīṣ ibn al-Bīrūq who belonged to his circle. But, rather than summarising the text, al-Kindi brings into service meteorological theories and doctrines from other works by Aristotle, for predicting changes in the weather.

Al-Kindi'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 the zenith and its position on its eccentric circle\(^4\) 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-Kindi 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: its phases 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-

\(^7\) Bos and Burnett, *Scientific Weather Forecasting in the Middle Ages* (above note 1) includes editions and transcriptions of the Hebrew texts, and an edition of the *De motions temporum*.

\(^8\) The Sun is imagined as being carried round the earth on a circle whose centre is not the centre of the earth.


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.31

Al-Kindi's second letter deals with a topic which relates more directly to the information in the Calendar of Córdoba: namely, the ansa. He gives the same pre-Islamic names to the twenty-eight ansas as those found in the Calendar of Córdoba, calling them the 'lunar mansions' (mansūt al-gamar). Like the ansa, 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'.32 They, too, were taken into consideration in weather forecasting in Indian astrology. For example, clouds are said to 'conceal' when the Moon is in certain nakṣatras, and rain falls when the Moon is in particular nakṣatras in particular months.33 Al-Kindi, like the Indians, but unlike the authors of the ansa-texts, classifies the lunar mansions. But his classification system is totally different: namely, into moist, very moist, dry, and moderate, and no textual similarities with Indian doctrine have yet been found. Nevertheless, al-Kindi specifically states that he is reproducing an 'Indian system', 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-Kindi, which has survived only in two Latin translations, one called 'The Book of Rain's' of 'Ifar Indus', the other known only by its incipit 'Ciascatur Indian...'.34

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:

31 Bos and Burnett, Scientific Weather Forecasts in the Middle Ages (above note 1), 201.
34 Bos and Burnett, Scientific Weather Forecasts in the Middle Ages (above note 1), 253.
35 Both texts are edited in Burnett, 'Lunar Astrology' (above note 8). The situation is complicated by the fact that the work of 'Ifar Indus' is said to have been 'improved and abbreviated by the Hindus'. A hermetic root for this 'Indian' material is not implausible, since the 28 lunar mansions are also characteristic of hermetic works on working talismans.
8

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).1 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.2

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*,3 possibly first used by

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1. For a complete list of earlier illustrations and discussions of this device, see our monograph, *Emilie Savage-Smith and M.B. Smith, IslamicGeomancyand aThirteenth-Century Divinatory Device* [Studies in Near Eastern Culture and Society, 2] (Malibu, CA 1989), vii, notes 1 and 2. It was also exhibited in Paris in 2001-2; see *Pour le Salut de l’Art et des Apprêts: Exposition présentée à l’Institut du monde arabe, Paris du 23 octobre 2001 au 10 mars 2002* (Paris, 2001), 219 items 222.

2. The authors wish to thank those who have contributed corrections and suggestions following the initial publication. These include Lawrence S. Conrad, Twoface Fahl, Helmut Gärke, Bernard Goldreich, Bruce Innes, David King, Paul Knirsch, and Joseph von Haus.

3. Editor of *Sativab* (ed. ad 636) used the term *geomantia* in *Bijunakutra*, LXXVII, 7, 12–13, where he cites the Roman scholars Varro (97 BC) as saying that divination was divided into four categories corresponding to the four elements: earth, water, air, and fire: *Varro dictiusque quattuor essent genus, terram, aquam, aerem et ignem. Hinc geomantia, hydromantia, aeromantia, pyromantia dictom*. Of these four divinatory arts, only hydromancy, however, is actually described by laisdes, 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 geophysical phenomena, has no connection with and seems to have had no influence upon the history of the Islamic divinatory art *takhlīt al-mawrūd*.
Hugo Szentágothai (Hugh of Santalla), working at Taraz as in Aragon in the thirteenth century, first a translation of the Arabic term 'ilm al-rumi' 'the science of the sand', is the most common name in Islam for this art. The origins of this system of divination prior to the Islamic era are shrouded in various traditions. The most common tradition, which altogether places the origin of the art with the archangel Gabriel (Jibril) who taught the practice to Idris. The latter was a common name to which to attribute authority in occult and divinatory subjects, and Idris is frequently cited as an authority on geomancy. Idris is then said to have taught Tummat al-Hindi, another legendary figure very frequently cited by geomantic authors. Other legendary and quasi-legendary figures, such as Hermes and the prophet Daniel, are also occasionally cited as geomantic authorities.

4 For a survey of extant Latin treatises, see Thérèse Charmasson, Breskreae sur le technique divinatoire, le gnososkopos (Antiquité orientale [Hauts Études Médééales et Médiéenes], 44) (Paris, 1990). See also Laurent Meunier, 'A Translation of Mārit of Smyrna’s De geomantia' in Popular and Learned Magical, ed. Lister M. Matheson (Medieval Texts and Studies, 11) (East Lansing, 1994), 61-121.

5 Other Arabic terms were occasionally employed as well, such as dar al-rum 'the realm of sand' or karat al-rum 'the realm of sand'.

6 For the interchange 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, Falsafa and the Occult: Idris is probably to be identified with the Biblical Enoch rather than with the vivid image of the geomancer, see 'Abd al-Rahim al-Jawbari, Kitāb al-almakhi fi ḫālid al-ʿarāʾ (Cairo, 1919), 46-61.

7 For example, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Oriental Collections, MS Arab.436 and MS Marsh Bibliotheca nationale de France, MS arabe 2361 and 2352.

8 Alchemical, astrological, and talismanic Arabic treatises are also attributed to this figure. See A. GENTIPOH (1969), 457-72; and I. Goldzweig, "Tummat al-Hindi", in Ormariq, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS arabe 2361 and 2352.

9 For a suggestion of a possible confusion between Hindi and hindu, see Kuba, 'La geomancie chez les asdris' in Paul Tourney, Mélanges Sophien von der Gabelentz (1910), 476-491. As no treatise survives attributed to Hindi (geometrician), see Cairo, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS arabe 2361 and 2352, and KUBA, 'La geomancie chez les asdris' in Paul Tourney, Mélanges Sophien von der Gabelentz (1910), 476-491. As no treatise survives attributed to Hindi (geometrician), see Cairo, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS arabe 2361 and 2352, and KUBA, 'La geomancie chez les asdris' in Paul Tourney, Mélanges Sophien von der Gabelentz (1910), 476-491. As no treatise survives attributed to Hindi (geometrician), see Cairo, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS arabe 2361 and 2352, and KUBA, 'La geomancie chez les asdris' in Paul Tourney, Mélanges Sophien von der Gabelentz (1910), 476-491.
There are inclusions in the names of these legendary and quasi-legendary figures of a possible Hindu or Berber origin of the art. The legendary Tumum al-Hindi implies an early connection with India, a symbol of antiquity and hence authority. The names Khafif al-Barbari, Nafs al-Din al-Barbari, al-Zarif, and presumably also Abū Sa‘īd al-Tanzibli, 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. The peoples of North Africa were well known for their mastery of various occult and divinatory practices. The Zanît tribe, for example, practiced prognostication by the inspection of shoulder blades (scapularism, ’ibn al-kaffî) 15. 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 because it was committed to writing and in which we may in fact have originated in the pre-Islamic Near East or India. 16

Somewhat outside the above traditions is the attribution of a geomantic treatise to the Imam Ja‘far al-Sâdiq who died in 765 (148 AH), the last Imam


16 It is uncertain whether al-maqub al-kaffî mentioned by al-Mas‘ūdī (see above note) refers to what came to be called the-external geomancy. The word cameel, though not necessarily meaning ‘diviner in sand’, occurs as a personal name, either as a sobriquet derived from his trade, or preceded by ibn – that is, part of the maqhul or list of ancestors – in sixteen pre-Islamic Sassanid graffiti in North African dialect have been found in Safa, Hitira, and Leij east of Damascos and date from the third to sixth centuries AD. See G. Lanckoronski Harding, An Index and Concordance of pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions (Toronto, 1977), 287.

Islamic Geomancy: Another Look

recognized by both Twelvers and Ismā‘īlī Shī‘ah. 17 Many treatises on divination, magic, and astrology have been, perhaps incorrectly, attributed to him, and he is considered the teacher of the alchemical author Jābir ibn Ḥayyān known in Europe as Geber. 18 The tradition of ascribing the origins of geomancy to Ja‘far al-Sâdiq was still prevalent in nineteenth-century East Africa from the following statement of Richard F. Burton: ‘The Arabs call it El Ramil, and ascribe its present form to the Imam Ja‘far al-Sâdiq; amongst them it is a ponderous study connected as usual with astrology.’ 19

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-Salṭî (the Brethren of Purity), a sect of the Ismā‘īlī who were instrumental in the early propagation of astrology and numerology in the Islamic world. 20 A treatise attributed to Ja‘far al-Sâdiq on the divinatory practice of ṣaff is included in some of the modern prints of one of the Zanît texts mentioned earlier. 21

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 ‘Abd Allāh ibn Māhīf al-ma‘ṣūmī (the astronomer) who lived before 1265 (664 AH). 22 His treatise, which is quite extensive and
in Persian an encyclopaedia of Muslim science, jam’ al-‘ilm, that contains a section on the science of geomancy. In addition, an extant Arabic manuscript concerned in part with geomancy, and in another manuscript, a didactic poem (arjūq) on the same subject are both attributed to al-Ra‘d. 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-Baldūnī, known to the West as Albucasis (d. 886/272 AH). The book is entitled ‘Book of the Meticulous Investigator’, the Greek Philosopher known as Abū Ma‘shar the Astronomer (Kitāb al-Muhabbat al-‘arbudsus al-Yamānī al-‘arabī bi- Abī Ma‘shar al-Falakī). No treatise of such a type is attributed to Abū Ma‘shar in the medieval biographical dictionaries. 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 table. The printed text appears to be identical with Abū Ma‘shar’s tract ‘On the Nativities of Men and Women’ (Kitāb Tāh al-munādūd al-mu‘ajjil wa-‘l-musinā) in which each zodiacal sign is discussed along with its three decans (arqāq), with one important exception. The printed book has an additional paragraph on a related geomantic figure discussing 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 Tāh al-munādūd al-mu‘ajjil wa-‘l-musinā which the present authors have examined. 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 of the earliest known dates for a geomantic treatise, Al-Ghazzālī has had little to attribute some manuscripts on geomancy and magic figures as well as some clearly astrological texts. See Ullman, Natan (note 8), 227 and 274; W. Ahrens, Studien über die ‘magischen quadrate’ des Arabers, Der Islam (1917), 186–219 esp. 203–5; and Abu Hāmid Muhammad ibn al-Ghazzālī (puny 7), al-Anṣārī, 9, 15, 350, 360 (entry nos. 392.

Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Ms. 539 and on arjūq in Vieville, Bibliotheca Arabica, Ascoli Piceno, Ms. 1106, fol. 131a-136b.

Pratt, in a number of times, including 1905 (1355/1087) and 1910 (1362/1073), and in Beirut in 1982. See also J. M. Fadel, Leitrim, Notice sur un petit traité d’astrologie attesté à Abū Ma‘shar (note 7), Journal Asiatique 213 (1925), 156–84, who does not, however, mention its geomantic context.


Los Angeles, UCLA Near Eastern Library, Ms. 83, fol. 60.29
of the procedures for forming a geometrical figure or casting a tableau are lacking in the treatise. Since the tradition of the text of K̲hād Ṭalī al-mdul-faṣlī apparently varies considerably in some of the extant manuscripts, the text and its relation to the printed pamphlet deserve further study, while the manuscript versions of other treatises by Abū Maʿṣār should be searched for geometrical references.

There are only three known references in the geometrical literature to Abū Maʿṣār as an authority.42 All of these citations occur within discussions of any geometrical works. At this point, then, it seems that the geometrical references in the printed text are interpolations by the modern editor and inventor of the fanciful title, and that Abū Maʿṣār may not have been a possible source for geomancers. Consequently, a final assessment of Abū Maʿṣār’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 ʾīm al-ramūl, and some, such as those by Nashir al-Dīn al-Nīsabūrī, might not have been available in Mosul opposite the site of ancient ʾīm al-ramūl. The upper Tigris River in the fourth decade of the thirteenth century, when the geometrical 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 geometrical 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 geometrical lot-books are geomancers 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 geometrical figures. In some of these methods, dots were made 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.43 There is considerable confusion in much of the

32 Ulmann, Natur (note 8), 322 et seq.
33 One reference is to Paris, RoB, MS arabo 2730, see Carev de Vaxa, 'La geomancie' (note 8), 165 (1992) 204, also cites Abū Maʿṣār as an authority for geomancy (geometric treatise written about AD 1330). Y. Melcari, 'La grammatica del divinare' in Saggi di Archeologia e di Storia della Sicilia (2, 1939), 227-250, esp. 239.
34 Three Turkish manuscripts are extant of geometric lot-books supposedly written by Abū ʿAbd Allāh ibn Arbaʿ (or Arbaʿ) for the eighth-century caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (London, British Library, OI00602; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, 5509; and Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, Turkish MS 1509).
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 inscription 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 tablets of geomantic figures were produced. 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. 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 Alī ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Madīnī, ʿAlī al-ʿAbd al-Qadr [The Thousand and One Nights] to a geomantic tablet used with a style of brass to form the figures is probably evidence of the early use of such a dust board or tablet, although it is possible the references are later interpolations into the stories. Such a tablet or takht for the surface which you mark with a stylus, will, once called it takht-lam dustboard. In completed sixteen-place tableaux of geomantic figures from which the reader is destined, it is dusted off and from the first four figures, see al-Madīnī, ʿAlī al-ʿAbd al-Qadr [note 13, copy 15, 20, p. 16].

38 For example, Los Angeles, UCLA Near Eastern Coll. 889, MS 88, p. 51, uses the term takht for the board of sacred texts attributed to al-Zarqālī; the word is more frequently used for the also used as a tablet of sand (takht min al-ṣawām) on which you mark with a stylus; palm, the row of dated (1280 AH); 18-24-5, p. 20. 39 Kühly ibn Labīnāh, Principles of Hindu Reckoning. Kīthā ṭi wīl hīthā al-bīlid; ed. and trans. Comprehensive Work in Mathematics and Dust and Dust by Nāšī al-Dīn al-Ṭāhir, al-Madīnī who suggests that the tablet may not necessarily have been covered with dust but rather covered with a tablet or takht in an EP (note 6), III, 468-9, with which figure could have been marked and erased by a stylus.

A collection of Arabic manuscripts discussing the Thousand and One Nights appears to have formed about a Persian framework and to have developed with many additions from various locations from the midst and tenth centuries AD, taking final shape in the thirteenth century (see P. Lucas, "The Thousand and One Nights," Int. 59, 1929, 39-40). A tablet of Alī ʿAbd al-Qadr [note 20, 21, p. 22].

39 Islamic Geomancy: Another Look, 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. futuristic

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 (ummaḥāt), 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 permutations 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 odd number of dots. Each pair of dots is then interpreted as meaning one of the 16 different Madīnī, ʿAlī al-ʿAbd al-Qadr, The Arabian Nights: II. Sindbad and Other Tales, London, 1955, 210-11. The tales of Žandru the Fireman, Žandru and Žandru, Ghidrib and his brother Afūb, and Dellaib the Crafty also mentioned a geomantic dustboard or tablet; see O. Rescher, "Tables über der falsch von 1001 Nacht", Der Islam 9 (1919), 1-94, esp. 36-64. 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. Zonberg, "Histoires d'Ali al-Dschârîh en la lampo mouschel.-ific" (Paris, 1888), IV, 62-31, and R.P. Burton, Supplemental Nights to the Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night, Revised Edition, 3 vols (London, n.d.), I, 11, 156-67 and 177-80; and Handkiewicz, The Arabian Nights II. Sindbad, 81-163.

Also very different from the present device is the thin brass astrological/geomantic plate from a late Ottoman workshop, now in the Khāliṣ Collection, Acc. No. 10699. Its design is engraved on both sides with numerous Persian inscriptions, laid out in concentric circles, presenting a pattern 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.

![Diagram](image)

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,

![Diagram](image)

Fig. 2. An example of a complete geomantic tableau, with Roman numerals marking the number of the position or "house".

...
Islamic Geomancy: Another Look

MAGIC AND DIVINATION IN EARLY ISLAM

E. Savage-Smith and M.B. Smith

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 manic writers as early as the thirteenth century, and, furthermore, they gave arguments explaining the reason for this characteristic. 82 Because of the method of combining geomantic figures as used in the production of figures to occupy houses IX through XVI, described above, all sixteen geomantic figures forms, under the ‘addition’ process, an algebraic 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. 83

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 Muhammad ibn Abi-l-Qasim ibn Mussa'i al-Ashrâfī al-Harsîî in 1225-6 (622 AH) for the Ayyûbid ruler of Egypt al-Mâlik al-Kâmil, the nephew of Salâh al-Dîn [Saladin]. Even more fruitful is a comparison with the fine astrolobes made by Abb al-Karim al-Miṣrî who worked for the last Ayyûbid and the first Mamûlûk rulers of Egypt, which display similar decorative bands. 84 It is the purpose of the present study to elaborate upon the importance of this tablet to the history of the minor arts and metalurgy, 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

82 For readers interested in mathematical proofs of these properties, see R. Jaffé, La Géomantie ong veut (Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études, Serbonnes, Cahiers de l’Hermos, n.s., 9) (Paris, 1956), 203-217.
86 Museo Nazionale, Naples; see Savage-Smith, Celestial Globes (note 47), 218-9 no. 3.
87 Two such astraboles are extant, one dated 625 AH (1227-8) and the other 633 AH (1234-5). 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 J.A. Mayer, Islamic Astraboles and Their Works (Geneva, 1956), 29-30 and pl. xii; and Allan, ‘Mohammed ibn Khathath’ (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 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.\(^5\) The decorative triangular projection attached to the top edge of the frame (Pl. 1) is like the kurriti (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 ʿarresa (handle) consists of a nearly closed circular arc whose ends are joined by a straight pin passing through the upper part of the kurriti, thus allowing the tablet to swing on this pin. The ʿarresa or handle then receives the ḫalda (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, ṣās, as was done with astrolabes.

The suspensory device is somewhat reminiscent of the kurriti found on a thirteenth-century Persian astrolabe with geared calendar movement made by Muhammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muhammad al-Rashidi Al-Hasari al-Iṣfiḥānī in 1221 (618 AH).\(^6\) There is also similarity with an enormous suspensory device of kurriti form whose purpose is unknown but which was made by one Shīkār ibn ʿAbd al-Damāss about the same time as this device.\(^7\) There

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\(^6\) Oxford Museum of the History of Science, Inv. no. IC 5.

\(^7\) London, Khalili Coll., Acc. no. 1928, 828; see Mudawwīn and Savage-Smith, Talisman, Tools of Magic (note 37), 1, 206–9; and J. Onjomas de Salomax (note 1), 209 no. 221.
Islamic Geometry: Another Look

seems, consequently, a strong possibility that the metalworker who executed this geometric tablet—Muhammad ibn Khuthlab al-Mawsili—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.\(^3\)

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 cogg'd 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\(^\circ\) 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 center 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 intervened 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 Muhammad ibn Khuthlab al-Mawsili in the year 639 [=1241-2].

The equivalent of the Latin *opus* in the signature is the noun *sanaei* (written with diacritical dots over the *ā* 'mudhjar'), which occurs frequently on scientific instruments.\(^4\) On the incense-burner also made by him, the signature is

\(^3\) Allan, 'Muhammad ibn Khuthlab' (note 46), 33.
\(^4\) *Sanaei* is clearly the most frequently employed term on Islamic celestial globes, while the noun *sanaei* 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 *ṣana‘ahu* (made it) rather than as a noun since it lacks dots over the *‘* of *‘arabah.*55

Whether or not Muhammad ibn Khuththuh al-Mawulli 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 metalwork.56 Hence there is some possibility that Muhammad ibn Khuththuh al-Mawulli 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 Nasīḥi 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 [il-nashr] Muhammad al-Muhtasib 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.57 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 Muhammad al-Muhtasib al-Bukhārī we know only what can be gleaned from his name. It can be assumed he had some association with Bukhārī, a city on the lower course of the Zarafshān river in present-day Uzbekistan. From the name al-Muhtasib we could surmise that he was an inspector of the markets and weights and measures—that is, an official of that branch of the legal system referred to as the *fīdah system.*58 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-fīdah 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.59

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55 See C. Cahen, *Ulbis* in *ES* (note 6), 485-93.
56 For such a discussion, see J.C. Hebert, "Analyse structurale des géomancies comoriennes, malgaches, et ethiopiennes", *Journal de la Société des Africains* (1961), 115-208, esp. 121-2.
57 The name could also be read as Muhammad al-Muhabib al-Bukhārī, since the final *‘* of *al-muha´ib* is not well formed.
59 For example, see Mayer, *Islam, Astronomie, Astrologie* (note 49), 13-14 and 21.
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inscription</th>
<th>Figure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>al-jama’a</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṣariq</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nuṣra kha[ṣja]</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nuṣra dā[kiša]</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qabd dā[kiša]</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qabd kha[ṣja]</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bāṣăd</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ḥumrus</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-hijān</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inkīs</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘atasha dā[kiša]</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘atasha kha[ṣja]</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awās’</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jawdala</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jihimā’</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘uqla’</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first figure, which contains the maximum number of points (eight) you can have in a figure, is given the common Arabic term al-jama’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-salama (‘well-being’) given by Ibn Mahfûz.60

The second figure, which has the minimum number of points (four), is called ṣaràb meaning ‘way’ or ‘path’; and it is the only term used for the figure. Nava ‘behind’ has somewhat obscure meaning, possibly ‘diminishing visibility’ or ‘external help’, while mrsâ dakhla means something like ‘increasing victory’ or ‘internal help’; these names are nearly universal terms for the two figures, though al-nabûs ‘the ruler’ and sabrân ‘preparing or despatching something’ are provided respectively by Ibn Mahfûz.

Qabd dakhil is also a term whose meaning is not altogether clear. Qabd means ‘the act of taking or seizing something’ and can sometimes mean ‘prize’ or possibly ‘possession’. Hence qabd dakhil might be translated as ‘incrneting seizure’ or as ‘diminishing seizure’ or possibly ‘external prize or property’. Qabd khâzî might similarly be translated bama ‘red’. The latter two, as well as the previous two, are essentially the only terms employed in the literature for these figures, though Ibn Mahfûz adds al- iber ‘mulk’ and al-damûm ‘blood’ for the last two.

The name al-ṣaràb appears to be one of several variant spellings of the word al-layyûn, the latter spelling being more the commonly found. The word means the two jawbones, upper and lower, and, in a man on the part which the beard grows. The misspelling found on the device occurs, but very infrequently, in geomatic treatises, one of which is by Ibn Mahfûz.61 Another name for this

60 For more detailed discussions of these terms, see Kaminska (note 15) and Cairns de Vaux. Oxford, British Library, Oriental Collections, MSS Greses 40, Arab. 33, 16, Bodl. Or. Or. 233, 23 and Or. 12555, Paris, Bibl. MSS ambr. 2716, 2758, and ambr. 27752; FD. Los Angeles, CLA, Research Library, Near Eastern Coll. 699, MSS 788 and 689, and Near Eastern Wellcome Coll. MS 142, Cambridge, Brown Coll. MS 32429. The following printed texts were also compared: Abu Shams, R. K. printed in 1863,1280, and al-Aqâbil al-muhadib (note 13), Doûl al-Andalûs, Tadhkara anwâr wa sâlih Khattâsh al-dâhârân-i-takhtib xaluq usbûn xirand ar-akhûn, ed. 28; al-Zâmit, R. al-Foc R., al-Madâh (note 30), Faîlûr al-Din al-Kitâb, Fâlûr al-Dîn (note 28) and al-Saràb (note 13). The figures for the latter example were compared by Mahfûz Ibn Muhammad al-Ôuriyûn, Muhammend al-Ôuriyûn (Amber, 1919). The word ‘al-ṣaràb’ in the latter example is translated as ‘the ruler’.

61 Ibn Mahfûz calls al-ṣaràb ‘the Berber’ term (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Oriental Collections, MS Greses 40, fed. 178a, and MS Arab. 332, fed. 101b), giving as the Arabic Arabic ‘al-ṣaràb’ the Greek word ‘alxos’ (see also Klein-Franke, The Geomatics of Ahmad b. ‘Ali Zunbl (note 10), 32, whose reading of alxos in the text by Ibn Zunbl writes...
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 circles generate the geometric triplet.

**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.
directly to the slide. Each slide moves independently and contains the geometric 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 Nashkh script and inlaid in silver (see Pl. 4 and Appendix, item 6):

We have placed these arcs in order to generate the figures,\(^{64}\) 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 river inserted in the process of constructing the tablet has marred the inscription at the point \(\text{fa-yu\textsuperscript{t}ah\textsubscript{b}iy\ 'u/they are to be considered, so that a precise reading is not possible at this point.}\(^{65}\)

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):

\(^{64}\) Shaf\(\text{b} (\text{shokh al-shaf\(\text{b}\)})\) is the usual term for the geometric figures. See Mohammed ‘Ali al-Tah\(\text{h}naw\(\text{i}, \text{Kashf \textit{tibh}hat al-\textit{tawab}, A Dictionary of Technical Terms Used in the Sciences of the Mathematicians,}\text{ ed. Mawkwies Muhammad Wajih, Abd al-Haq, and Ghulam Kashef \textit{Bibliotheca Indica}, 17, 3 vols.\text{ (Calcutta, 1853-63), I, 704.}}\)

\(^{65}\) Other readings have also been suggested, such as \(\text{fa-yu\textsuperscript{t}ah\textsubscript{b}iy\ 'u/they will become clear.}}\)
Pl. 6. Detail of eastern half of the large central dial, with the southern-summer quadrant of figures at the top. [Rev. Mus. Neg. No. 046.124]

Pl. 7. Composite photograph showing the complete central dial with the four quadrants of figures labelled.
From my intricacies there comes about an 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 gold 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 'indications' 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 siltla of an astrolabe, which is the disk on which is engraved a stereographic projection of the heavens. 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 20. 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 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lunar mansion /</th>
<th>Geomantic name and figure</th>
<th>Indication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North-west water quadrants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at-lahba, setting</td>
<td>al-jaldad</td>
<td>mixed, tendering toward good omen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at-kadi'a, rising</td>
<td>al-kadiad</td>
<td>increasingly mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at 'awal, rising</td>
<td>al-madi</td>
<td>mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at-tharaj, setting</td>
<td>muwara dihari</td>
<td>increasing good fortune</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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50 Frisbee, 'Principle and Use of the Astrolabe' (note 50), 295 and 300.
### Table 1. Inscriptions on Large Rotating Dial (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lunar mansion</th>
<th>Geomantic name and figure</th>
<th>Indication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>al-sinaih, al-hafr</td>
<td>/ al-qeish</td>
<td>Constant ill luck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rising and setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-luna, il-bali</td>
<td>/ qobul khani</td>
<td>Decreasing ill fortune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-qubdani, al-shul</td>
<td>/ sabul kharija</td>
<td>Decreasing ill luck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-daburne, setting</td>
<td>/ indiis</td>
<td>Increasing bad luck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-kasib, rising</td>
<td>/ amarti</td>
<td>Increasingly mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-ding, rising</td>
<td>/ afsharz</td>
<td>Ill fortune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-mal-ulam, rising</td>
<td>/ al-jumal-a</td>
<td>Serious adversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-shiraz, setting</td>
<td>/ mursul kharija</td>
<td>Decreasing good fortune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-shirazi, al-abfah / al-sifim</td>
<td>/ atal</td>
<td>Mixed, neither increasing nor decreasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>srd al-kif</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-keb, rising</td>
<td>/ qobul dkhbel</td>
<td>Increasing good fortune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-qubdani, al-shul setting</td>
<td>/ sutubu dkhbel</td>
<td>Increasing good fortune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-shabane, rising</td>
<td>/ al-yida</td>
<td>Decreasing good fortune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 events so as to locate winter and spring grazing lands whose locations varied greatly depending upon the rainfall. The pre-Islamic system called *annu* was based upon a series of prominent stars whose coximal 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. The stars themselves were held responsible for weather conditions. Sometimes 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' (*manazil*) of the moon. These mansions corresponded to places in the sky through which the moon passed in its course from 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 *manazil* upon the Bedouin grouping of fixed stars, the Arabs applied *annu* 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 *annu*-*manazil* system began with a star group in Aries (probably to be identified with *by Aruniz*) which corresponded to 0° House of Aries, at the

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**Notes:**

* The inscription actually reads *khâshish*, intended by the present authors to read *khâji*.
* The engraver has written *srdul khâji* instead of *srul khâji*.
* The engraver has made *annu*/*mazani* mixed alongside the name of the figure *gimáa*; it should be read with the indication or interpretation of the figure rather than the name.
interval from its heliacal rising. When a lunar mansion sets in the West as the sun rises, then it is termed a heliacal setting, and this occurs on the same day as its heliacal rising. Similarly, the heliacal 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.⁷⁷

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-Bīrūnī as well as the thirteenth-century cosmographer and geographer al-Qazwīnī have extensive sections on the lunar mansions illustrated with configurations of dots or squares which are suggestive of geomantic figures, although neither mention geomancy in their treatises.⁷⁸ An Arabic brass celestial globe⁷⁹ dated 718 h [= 1318-19] and signed by ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Burhān al-Mawṣūlī 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 Experientiarum, said to have been translated in the twelfth century from Arabic by Bernard Sāvīsteb of Tours.⁸⁰

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

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⁷⁹ Oxford, Museum of the History of Science, inv. no. 57-84/181, Bilsen Collection. There see, however, reasons for questioning the dating of this globe, see Savage-Smith, Celestial Globes (note 47), 247-8 no. 60 and fig. 7.

⁸⁰ In the Experientiarum associated with Bernard Sāvīsteb (see note 36 above), the lunar mansions are used to designate the 28 topics of inquiry such as illness, marriage, violence, and so forth, each having 28 lines of responses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of the Lunar Mansions</th>
<th>Position in Zodical House</th>
<th>Modern Identification</th>
<th>Experimentarium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>al-dawasir (36 00)</td>
<td>0° 0' 0&quot; Aries</td>
<td>al-Zajjadd (fl. 416)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>al-hurais</td>
<td>12° 51' 26&quot; Aries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>al-ashwarra</td>
<td>25° 12' 32&quot; Aries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>al-thakbird</td>
<td>5° 24' 18&quot; Taurus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>al-sha'a</td>
<td>21° 25' 44&quot; Taurus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>al-sha'a</td>
<td>4° 17' 10&quot; Gemini</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>al-dhawar</td>
<td>17° 35' 30&quot; Gemini</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>al-ethana</td>
<td>0° 0' 0&quot; SUMMER SOLSTICE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>al-sir</td>
<td>12° 51' 26&quot; Gemini</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>al-jibha</td>
<td>25° 42' 52&quot; Leo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>al-gha'a</td>
<td>8° 24' 18&quot; Leo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>al-shafa</td>
<td>21° 22' 41&quot; Leo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>al-ta'aww</td>
<td>4° 17' 10&quot; Virgo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Experimentarium**

1. Asaesi 3
2. Albaria 7
3. Albaria 18
4. Albaria 2
5. Albaria 2
6. Albaria 3
7. Albaria 5
8. Albaria 3
9. Albaria 10
10. Albaria 2
11. Albaria 4
12. Albaria 6
13. Albaria 3
14. Albaria 5
15. Albaria 3
16. Albaria 2
17. Albaria 3
18. Albaria 4
19. Albaria 6
20. Albaria 9
21. Albaria 7
22. Albaria 3
23. Albaria 5
24. Albaria 6
25. Albaria 7
26. Albaria 8
27. Albaria 9
28. Albaria 10
29. Albaria 11
30. Albaria 12
from the number of stars associated with that mansion. For example, the twenty-first mansion, entitled al-bulda, is uniformly recognized by writers as referring to a stellar region of the sky. The pattern, however, associated with this mansion varies greatly, consisting of four, five, or even twelve dots.

Table 3 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 designers. In the chart presented in Table 2, the sequence of seven mansions begins, as is customary, with al-shurafta, the first set. Occasionally a listing begins with a different mansion, but even then the same sequence is maintained. The position of the nodal houses in Table 3 is that given by al-Biruni (d. 1050/442 AH) in which the mansions represent the six equinoxes and disregarding the positions in the sky of the asterisms for which the houses are named. The seasonal divisions in the third and fourth columns of Table 3 are also derived from al-Biruni.

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-Rahman al-Sufi who in his tenth-century treatise on the stars in the asterisms. Column 6 presents the most commonly accepted modern identifications of the stars. Columns 7 and 8 give the names of the asterisms found in the thirteenth-century writings of al-Qazwini and al-Biruni. Column 9 gives the designs of the asterisms found in the twelfth-century Latin Excerpted by Bernard Silvester with the Latin names and

Islamic Geomancy: Another View

NORTHERN WINTER

al-bulda, 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 winter, in keeping with the seasonal quadrant in which it is placed on the device, while its heliacal rising would be in the summer.

al-hay'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 heliacal rising would occur near the beginning of winter, while its heliacal rising would be near the beginning of the summer.

al-annuz, 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 heliacal rising and setting in the spring—neither in the winter.

The Quadrants

al-thurayya, rising: The third lunar mansion refers to the open star cluster called the Plesades. It is a very old Arabic star name of obscure origin and etymology, but was most commonly associated with the pre-Islamic image

49 For example, the Excerpted chart begins with the 28th mansion, which it calls Amurak, and listing Amadu the 2nd in the list. Some sources have begun this discussion with al-Masri, the 3rd mansion, as Pallas, "Diocles' names" (note 73), 19.
50 al-Biruni, Chronology (note 81), 355, and for further discussions of the lunar mansions, see Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi, Sijjar azamsh al-Urjazwani (Hyderabad, 1954), passim; partial Arabic translation by H.R. Scawbel, "Astronomical Dissections of the Earth's Face as Perfected in the Middle Ages," Translations from the Vernacular Cultures of the Islamic World, ed. E. Khuri, (St. Petersburg, 1874).
51 See Khattab, "The Constellations" (note 77), and Savage-Smith, Celestial Gaze (note 47), 121-32.
52 Sidiqri, The Arabic manuscript is taken from the text given by L.P.E. (London, 1889), 111, 550-62, which states that they were omitted in the Winterfold edition of al-Qazwini (see note 78). Al-Qazwini 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
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 helical rising is in the spring, not the winter, and its cosmical rising in the autumn.

**Western Autumnal**

al-šimāt and al-ghaṣṣ, rising and setting: The name al-šimāt was applied to two stars, one we call Spica and the other Arcturus, which in the ansā' tradition were seen as forming the hind legs of a large lion. Only the star Arcturus, however, comprised the asterism associated with a lunar mansion, the fourteenth. Many etymologies are presented in the early astronomical literature for the word ghaṣṣ, 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 helical risings and settings would be in the autumn.

al-ban'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-haṣṣa', discussed earlier. Its cosmical setting would occur in early winter.

al-qaḥdān and al-ṣiḥṣ, rising: The name of the sixteenth lunar mansion, al-qaḥdān, (the two claws) reflected the ancient, probably Babylonian, conception of the constellation known today as Libra. The traditions are not consistent regarding the identification of the asterism associated with the seventeenth lunar mansion, al-ṣiḥṣ (the crown). Five different interpretations emerge from the early literature, and the most common opinion probably being that it referred to the three stars in a row in the Ptolemaic constellation Scorpio. The helical risings of both lunar mansions occur in the autumn.

al-bahṣ, 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.

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given by al-Bīrūnī for the sixth lunar mansion, and also for the seventeenth and nineteenth mansions, is in fact a geometric figure, and others could, were a person so inclined, be interpreted as parts of geometric figures. The twentieth mansion, al-adəb, is said by al-Bīrūnī to consist of ‘eight bulls, four of them lying in the Milky Way in a square, which are the Descending Ostriches, outside the Milky Way, and four of them lying outside the Milky Way, also in a square, which are the ascending ostriches.’ That description does not disagree greatly with the pattern given by al-Qazwīnī and suggests the association of the geometric figure al-jama’a (²⁄₃) with that lunar mansion, which is in fact the assignment given by the device in an Arabic calendar written in Spain in AD 961, which presents the annals’ traditions regarding natural phenomena, the Pleiades are illustrated by a series of dots closely resembling the geometric figure named nurra dikēkēla (³⁄₄) 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 geometric figure, it does contain six dots which both al-Sulh and al-Bīrūnī gave as the number of stars in this asterism.

Even though certain of the asterism designs would seem to suggest geometric figures or parts of them, explicit alignments of the lunar mansions with geometric figures are quite uncommon in Islamic literature. In fact, in the alignment. Both are late, anonymous, Persian manuscripts. These two assignments differ from each other, and neither in any way corresponds with that of the geometric device by Muḥammad ibn Khudūk al-Mawāzīn.

In the Latin geometric treatises, on the other hand, an assignment of lunar mansions to the geometric figures occurs in the earliest literature. Hugo part translated, an Arabic work which has not yet been identified. By means of his writing Hugo aligned the geometric figures with twenty different lunar mansions, which are given in their order of occurrence along the ecliptic.

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98 al-Bīrūnī, Chronology (note 81), 348.

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Islamic Geomancy: Another Look

with no lunar mansions repeated. Only three figures are assigned to the same lunar mansions in both the geometric device and the treatise by Hugo Sanctallis (3). These are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Similarities between Geometric Device and Hugo Sanctallis (3) Tract

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geometric name and figure</th>
<th>Latin names</th>
<th>Asterism</th>
<th>Lunar Mansion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nurra dikēkēla</td>
<td>Fortuna major</td>
<td>Pleiades</td>
<td>third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-bīrūnī</td>
<td>Barbatus</td>
<td>Aldebaran</td>
<td>fourth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-jama’a</td>
<td>Looisina</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-adəb</td>
<td>Congregatio</td>
<td>2120</td>
<td>twelfth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A later English manuscript on geomancy gives the geomantic figures attributed to the fixed stars in the eighth sphere, which is, in fact, an alignment very similar to that of Hugo Sanctallis; except that only eighteen lunar mansions are named and Fortuna minor (³⁄₄) (nurra khāfīq) is assigned to the Pleiades. The geomantic device assigns both (⁵⁄₆) and (⁴⁄₆) 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. Many of the figures 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 Darb al-ramal (‘Book on Geomancy’) by the shaykh ‘Abd al-
Hindi.99 The volume appears to be a compilation from various sources, with several authorities cited (in addition to Ṭahmūn al-Hindi), such as the šaykh al-Zanāšī and Khalaf al-Barbāri. In both a square diagram and an accompanying text, contained in a section concerned with finding lost objects,100 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 helical 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 autumn quadrants. 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 inconsistence comes to light when one examines the sequence in which the lunar mansions are listed. Those that appear on the dial

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100 Ibid., fols. 36b-38b.
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 astronomical. A simple re-labelling of the quadrants, however, will not put the mansions in a 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 a geomantic figure by the device, which would be clearly unnecessary if the aim of the designer were to establish a correspondence between all twenty-eight mansions and the sixteen 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 "jūliyya" (یلییا). 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 (jūliyya) 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°. Nowadays in the literature we have 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 is 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 annual equinox. The invariance of the figure under rotation seems a
particular 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
assignment with others found in the literature. In particular the assignment of al-
jamā'ī’s to the twentieth mansion, myrā dakhīla to the third, and qīnāʾī to the
over the large dial, would seem to indicate that the designer of the device was
using, at least in 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 ancient 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 auto-
symmetric 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 FORMS

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 Nasī’ī script, inlaid with silver.

I am the possessor of eloquence and the silent speaker
and through my speech [a]riq) desires and fears.
The audacious one hides his secret thoughts, but I disclose them,
just as if hearts were created as my parts.97

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 Nasī’ī 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 Nasī’ī script, inlaid in silver, and entwined with decorative vines,
around the edge of the geomantic tablet is a poem in five ājīj 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

97 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 (kamr) separating the two half-verses of the last verse (see Ps. 8, 9, 10, and 11, and Appendix, item 13).

Examine the tablet and memorise it, for in it there is meaning from the table of [God in Heaven] when it was marked with the pen. It [the geometric tablet] shows hidden secrets of the unseen, 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.

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 in strength and nobleness of character.

This poem is filled with religious imagery, using throughout the word tablet, al-
sakh, in two senses, that of the geometric 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 geometric tablets 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.

The word gil'mi usually means reed-pen or stylus. In this case two meanings could be intended in parallel with the traditions interpreting Sura LXVIII (al-sakh or sakh al-aqbat) as the 'gates of light, as long as the distance from heaven to earth, which were down all things that are to happen until the last judgement' (C. Horsa and A. G. Hez al-Masalih, 'Kalam' in IEP, note 6, IV, 471). 99 Or possibly both, the geometric tablet and the tablet of God (or Mosaic tablets).

The word al-sakh is a very common word in the Qur'an, again indicating that the poem is filled with religious ideas and parallels.

According to the Slaves of the Front of the geometric tablet from which the random does. Asad's is the usual word for the geometric figures, but the word in the inscription 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 present author, however, prefers the former interpretation.

The word al-insan meaning 'mankind' is used here in the sense of the common
Islamic Geomancy: Another Look

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 Muhammad al-Muhtasib al-Bukhari.

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 side 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, 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 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. 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 and 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

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107 Because of the relationship between the first four figures and figures five through eight, the figure in Houses XII 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 two of these, is always an even figure. This fact was known to some of the Islamic authors of geomantic treatises, such as Ibn Majid, see Corbin, Bédouins Irlandais, Oriental Collections, MS 450, fol. 106b.
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 process, 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 interpretive 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 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, matthalah, and the figure which is the ‘sum’ is called the mirdaq, ‘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. I). 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 mirdaq, 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 analyzed 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.

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 takshin, and whichever section it falls in, then that person will be the victor; should it occur in the last four positions of the takshin, 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 takshin (sing. takshin), vary to some extent

169 Los Angeles, UCLA, Research Library, Near Eastern Coll. 898, MS 618, fol. 65b.
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 tasks most frequently found in the treatises, presented here reading right to left:

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{I} & \quad \text{II} & \quad \text{III} & \quad \text{IV} \\
\text{V} & \quad \text{VI} & \quad \text{VII} & \quad \text{VIII} \\
\text{IX} & \quad \text{X} & \quad \text{XI} & \quad \text{XII} \\
\text{XIII} & \quad \text{XIV} & \quad \text{XV} & \quad \text{XVI} \\
\text{XVII} & \quad \text{XVIII} & \quad \text{XIX} & \quad \text{XX} \\
\end{align*} \]

In geomantic manuals, this ordering is frequently called the 'tas\(k\)in of the circle'\(^{104}\). 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 million. 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 tas\(k\)in 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:

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{I} & \quad \text{XIV} & \quad \text{XV} & \quad \text{XVI} \\
\text{II} & \quad \text{XIII} & \quad \text{XVII} & \quad \text{XVIII} \\
\text{III} & \quad \text{XII} & \quad \text{XIX} & \quad \text{XX} \\
\text{IV} & \quad \text{XI} & \quad \text{IX} & \quad \text{I} \\
\end{align*} \]

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 tas\(k\)in 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

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\[^{104}\text{It is also called 'the geomantic tas\(k\)in (tas\(k\)in al-

Islam)'. See al-Zarq\(a\), K. al-Fad\(l\) wa ana (note 13, printing of 1280/1863), 5-8, 24-5, 31, 34-5, Da\'ddil al-A\(n\)s\(b\)li, Tash\(k\)h\(a\) (note 59), 284; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Oriental Collections, MS Graevius 40, fol. 177b and MS Marsh 216, fol. 15; and Los Angeles, UCLA, Near Eastern Coll. 899, MS 678, fols. 78a and 114b.}

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subject of frequent questions in the literature. There is a complicated procedure attributed to T\(u\)m\(t\)m al-H\(a\)endi that occurs quite frequently in the manuals.\(^{105}\) 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, the element of air 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 'tas\(k\)in of the letters', he finds the figure that occupies the same position in

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\[^{105}\text{Paris, BNF, arabe MS 2697, fol. 16a-16b, and Los Angeles, UCLA Research Library, Near Eastern coll. 899, MS 678, fols. 63b-65b. Compare Los Angeles, UCLA, Near Eastern Coll. 898, MS 43, fols. 11b-12a, by Ibn T\(a\)h\(d\)li al-H\(a\)sn\(a\)i al-

Dh\(i\)h\(a\).}
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. 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
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 Muhammad ibn Khushkhul al-Mawgull 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. They are beautifully executed manuscripts, highly decorated, and with striking miniatures. The metal geomantic tablets we have been examining would seem to be an Islamic parallel to these European royal geomantic manuscripts, for it is beautifully ornamented and skillfully crafted and, one may safely assume, intended for a highly placed person interested in the geomantic art.

Appendix

Transcription of Inscriptions

1: صلعة محمد بن شفط الموصل
في سنة ١٣٣٨

[written entirely without diacritical dots]

2: في نوت محمد الحبيب البخاري

3: [redacted]

4: [redacted]

5: تولد في هذه الجهة [ - الملل ] دوارة منडة [ - الرمل ]

6: قد وضع هذه الفسيفسة لتشهير الأشكال فيبكر [ - ينثي ] ما يظهر منها من الحظ الفعال إلى موضع الظهور فيبكر منها الأشكال

7: قد وضع هذه النافازة لتشهير منها حماية صور الأشكال من سور المدار الطاغية وغارة ثم ينثي الحكم عليها [ - آله ] الحکم

8: الغرب الشرقي

9: يسوع من طول الحلم في من كتب في درس المكية

10: [redacted]

119 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 John's College MS 16) and Wenceslaus (Yasch IV), King of Bohemia and Holy Roman Emperor, 1378-1400 (Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, MS 2355).
LA yhibbu 1-l-ufîma ...  
(Qur'ân, 6.76)

INTRODUCTION

According to Avicenna, the famous Abû 1-Anbas al-Saymari, was, in his time, the smartest man as far as swindling (zarq) 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 (umakhra) mentioned and others were amazed by his statements, as we have mentioned. Such is also the case of those swindlers (zarqâ) who run about in places and roads and dupe (makhra) 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 ('îmân akâmat al-mu'ajjam)."
During this third/fourth century when al-Saymari taught astrology as a useful technique for charlatans, Abū Ma'shar al-Balkhī argued that the greatest medieval astrologers, advocates of the scientific character in terms of a late Neo-Platonic interpretation of Aristotle's natural philosophy. Despite its very uncertain nature, astrology never ceased to be widely practised in classical Islam, either in relation to magic, occultism and charlatanry, or in relation to cosmography, astronomy and falsafah. Of course, demonstrations, not only by theologians or jurists, but also by philosophers, mathematicians or astronomers, themselves threatened by astrology. However, demand for the astrologers' services never dried up, in palaces and among the élites or in the streets, among the lowest social classes. 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 religious 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.'

French version (Vues) is not a scholarly translation but what he himself calls a "comprendre-vouloir." It also contains several mistakes. For example, in the passage here in the Leiden manuscript, (on the confusion in the sources between zaqz and rizq, although the latter is clearly the reading see C. A. Nallino, Zaqq, and C. E. Bosworth, Underworld, ii, 257-8. Avicenna, Abū 'l-ʿAšārī's book and the evidence of the litic definition of the Leiden manuscript lead me to prefer zaqq to rizq, in opposition to Nallino's and C. E. Bosworth's opinions.)

2 See R. Lemay, Abū Ma'shar, i, 2-49.
3 As accurately argued by J. Lemay (Islam, 28-9), Abū Ma'shar al-Balkhī's activity, if we are to accept the astrologers' sources, to synthesize the astrological heritage of the Middle East (Egypt, Mesopotamia, Iran) and the Greek falsafah, recently brought into vogue in Baghdad under the inspired by Aristotle's Physics and Metaphysics as well as by the adoption of his distinction of causes (Causa; and provided the theoretical framework on the basis of which astrologers were able to build their doctrines. In more than one text, he clearly affirms the all processes of generation and corruption, including animal generation. (See the references given by G. Saliba, Astrology, 297-8.)

5 See G. Saliba, The Astrologers, 46-7. See also History, 55-61.
6 Ibn Khaldūn offers a psychological explanation for the phenomenon and shows his importance in the various social classes. See his Muqaddimah, trans. Rosenthal, Introduction, 19-38.
7 See G. Saliba, Astrology, 66.
the Science of Judicial Astrology and, a fortiori, Ptolemy's Almagest and Tetrabiblos.

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/nineteenth century, Ibn al-Ukhruwī 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. 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". As for Ibn Taymiyya (Harrān, 661/1263–Damascus, 728/1328), the most famous mufti and theologian of the Mamluk period, whose writings remain particularly influential in modern Islam, he does not speak of astrology in his own hisba. As with many other topics, he nevertheless examines the question in several writings, in which he does not hesitate to repeat his analyses and condemnations. We can also see that, on some occasions, he provoked astrologers and attacked them publicly. He himself reports one such confrontation in Damascus, without unfortunately giving any date. 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 mufti in his explanations of the religious Law. However, because they share the same character of juridical response 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.

14 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) considers astrology as dead in his time and its practitioners as simply rehearsing (taflid) the sayings and errors of the astrologers of the past, without always understanding them (Miftāḥ, ii, 148).

15 See Ibn al-Ukhruwī, Ma‘ālim, 67–8, 182–4; G. Saliba, Role, 49, 61.

16 See M. Izzī Dīn, Theory, 128.

17 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).

18 See for example Ibn Taymiyya, Radd, 286–9; MF, xxx, 198–201; FK, v, 73–4.

19 See below, p. 161.


15 See I. Goldziher, Attitude, 196–8.


17 See C. A. Nullino, Astrologia, 33, n. 3. Ibn Taymiyya is also absent from M. Ullman, Nature.

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. Nullino quoted the names of al-Fārizī (d. 339/950), Abū I-Qasīm ʿIsā b. ʿAli (d. 391/1001), Avicenna (d. 428/1037), Ibn Hazm (d. 456/1064), al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), Averroes (d. 595/1198) and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350). Later on, I. Goldziher mentioned al-Shāfīʿī (d. 204/820), the Shiʿ Muʿtazilī theologian Hasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (d. 310/920), the theologian Abū I-Hasan al-Aṣḥārī (d. 324/935), al-Khāṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) and Ibn Hājar al-Haytāmī (d. 974/ 1567). During the last decade, G. Salība added the names of the grammarian Abū al-Khālīb b. ʿAbd al-Muʿtāl (d. 170/786), the poet Abū Tammānī (d. 231/845), the mathematician, physicist and astronomer Thābit b. Qorra (d. 288/901), the mathematician Uqūdī (mid 4th/10th c.), the Ashʿārī theologian al-Baqīllānī (d. 403/1013), the philosopher and man of letters Abū Hayyān al-Ṭawāfī (d. 1024/13), the astronomer and specialist in optics Ibn al-Haytham (d. 430/1039), the astronomer al-Bīrūnī (d. 442/1050), the geographer al-Samawāʾl al-Maghribī (6th/1069), the philosopher Abū I-Barākāt al-Baghdādī (d. 1164), the biographer Khalīl al-Safādī (d. 1163), the astronomer Ibn al-Shātīr al-Dimashqī (d. 777/1375), the encyclopaedist Muḥammad al-Damirī (d. 808/1405) and the historian Ibn Khalīdūn (d. 808/ 1406). From G. Salība's list, as in Nullino's, Ibn Taymiyya's name is omitted. In 1908, in a brief footnote reference to the longest of the three fatwas he presented, Nullino had observed that Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's master, 'il famoso banbanīa Ibn Taymiyyah' had also fought against astrology. In 1992, G. Salība 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.
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 dīr al-sa‘ādāt), which Nallino compared to Pico della Mirandola’s *Adversus astrologiam*, and G. Saliba called ‘the most elaborate and comprehensive attack on astrology’ or the ‘culminating point’ in the history of systematic religious attacks on astrology in Islam. This examination of the positions of the master should, however, contribute to a better appreciation of the views of his famous disciple.

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 multifaceted Shaykh al-Islam’s style knows, moreover, how prone he is to demurrer to 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’an be used as arguments in favour of astrology? Can astrology be related to Idrisi? What about the tutelary star of the Prophet? He nevertheless indulges in digressions about eclipses, the phenomenon of historical forgeries and pseudepigraphic writings, or Islam’s grandeur. The second fatwa is, as he answers, and this time without digressiveness: is astrology forbidden, be taken by authorities and individuals alike to ban the practice of should one adopt as 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-Kindi, al-Farabi and Avicenna, or philosophizing theologians like al-Ghazali and


26 Ibid., 56.


28 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*.


30 MF, xxxv, 166–90, 191–7, 197.

31 KMF, i, 323–36.

32 FK, i, 37–55.

Fakhru al-Din al-Razi, 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’an 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 Ashtari 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-Ghazali does also remain, essentially, a medieval thinker. How 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?


I have compared the first fatwa in F to the texts of two other editions:

• the edition of Faraj Allah Zakzaki I-Azhari in the first volume of K. Majma‘at al-fatawā Shuykh al-Islam Taqī al-Din Ibn Taymiyya, Cairo, 1326/1908 (hereafter, M).

• the edition of Muhammad and Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭa‘ in the first volume of al-Fatawā al-kubrā, Beirut, 1407/1987 (hereafter, K). 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 presents the better readings. In the *apparatus criticus* following the translation, I have not reported all these differences, but only the
FATWA I

QUESTION

[166,7] concerning the person 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) and says that these words are 'the art of Idris', peace be upon him. [This person] also says, 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 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

INTRODUCTION

The stars as signs of God and means of His action

'The praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds' (Q. 1.1)

The stars are among the signs of God that demonstrate His power. He proclaims Himself 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 are the proofs' (Q. 2.18). The distinction here makes it obvious that He did not refer to the prostration simply for reason of its encompassing demonstration of His lordship, 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 of the kind special to the believer and by which [the believer] is distinguished from the unbeliever, who deserves the torment. 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 of fruits, the creation of animals, plants and minerals. The same for what He also sets up by it, for them, such as moistening, drying and other observed affairs. He sets likewise radiance and burning in the fire, purification and irrigation in the river, 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 the life of some of His creatures by others. Thus said He, the Exalted: '... what We thereby revive a dead land' (Q. 25.49). Also: 'And He 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 and thereby revives the earth after its death, and disperses therein all kinds of beasts' (Q. 2.164).

Whoever among the theologians of the Kalam says that God does these affairs with (‘inda) them, or by (bi) them, his expression is in conflict with the Book of the Exalted God and with the observed facts.
affairs. Likewise, whoever pretends that [these things] are acting independently is an associational in conflict with reason and religion. Concerning the uses of the stars, He has also 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 although the noun ‘stars’ brings them together as the noun ‘beast’ and ‘animal’ bring together the angel, the Adamic [beings], the brutes, the flies and the mosquitoes.

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 become eclipsed for the death of anybody nor for his birth.’ And [another] reports: ‘...two of the signs of God by which He frightens His servants.’ He said this to refute what some ignorant people were saying, i.e. that the sun had become eclipsed because of the death of Ibrahim, the son of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace. The sun indeed became eclipsed on the day of his death, 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-Shabibi, Ahmad b. Hanbal and others. Those who reject the force and the natures also reject the causes and say that God acts with (inda) them, not by (hi) them, the seed grow by the water but acts with that, not by that.’ These people are not only with clear reason and sense perception.’ (MF, i, 287–8.)

According to Ibn Taymiyya, al-Waqidi (d. 207/822) reports that Ibrahim’s death and the solar eclipse associated with it happened on the tenth day of some lunar month. The Shaykh al-Islam 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-Waqidi is a mistake. Whoever allows this foresees 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 (Tabaqat, i, 1, 92) also dates the two events on the tenth day of a lunar month: Tuesday 10 Rabī’ 1, 10. Although pretending to follow him, L. Caetani (Chronographe, i, 99) speaks of the Sunday 16 June 631, with the solar eclipse happening on the 28 or 29 Rabī’ 1, 10 (4 or 5 July 631), that time the same day! M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes (Mahomet, 252) proposes the date 27 Jan. 632 (19 Sha’wwal, 10).

In my opinion, the 28 Sha’wwal, 10 (Sunday 26 Jan. 632) could be more correct; the horoscope provided by the astronomer and astrologer Abu al-Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Jalil al-Sijzi (Shirāz, 14th/15th c.) in his Book of Conjunctions, as studied by D. Pingree, Thesaurus, 118–19, iv 9 (the solar eclipse in question is wrongly presented as ‘indicating the death of the Prophet and the accession of Abī Bakr’).
strong stormwinds. And that only happens because God made it a cause of what He sends down[6] to the earth. Whoevers means, by saying that [the stars] have an influence, that which is known by the senses and by these other affairs, is this true. God has however commanded the [various] acts of worship that repel from us whatever evil is sent by thu. 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[7] 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.'

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.'[8] 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 [no follow] (al-sanna); in the case of the apparent causes of the good, 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 the evil. As for what is hidden in 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[9] 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 rectifying over Solomon's reign. Solomon did not 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, Harut and Marut,[40] 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).[5] 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 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 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; this is the great triumph' (Q. 10:62-4).[6] 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 bestowed 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

[40] See G. Vajda, E1, 'Harut wa Marut'.
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. 41

REFUTATION OF ASTROLOGY

The two species of magic astrology

Magic is forbidden by the Book,  the Tradition and the consensus. The [science of the] stars (nabṭ) which pertains to magic is indeed of two species.

One is scientific (‘ilm) 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. 5:5.)

The second is practical (‘amal). It refers to their saying that the celestial forces depend on the passive terrestrial forces like talismans 42 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. 43

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 by experience and through recurrent reports, that in the [predictive] knowing than of telling the truth and that, in this respect, they belong to the various species 44 of diviners. In the Sunan, 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 which hears it and 45 he puts it in the ear of his friend. 46

41 See Abū Dā’ūd, Sunan, Tīdb, iv, 16 (‘Ālam. 3406).
43 See Mīr, trans. Michot, Musulmān, 98.
44 See al-Bukhārī, Sahih, Tāwühl, iv, 162 (‘Ālam. 7006); Muslim, Sahih, Salam, vii, 36 (‘Ālam. 4135).
45 See also Muslim, Sahih, Salam, viii, 36-7 (‘Ālam. 4134, 4136).
46 See al-Bukhārī, Sahih, Bad’ al-khaqā’iq, iv, 111 (‘Ālam. 2971); trans. Khān, Sahih, iv, 291-2, 432): Narrated ‘A‘ishah: ‘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 neveress add it to one hundred lies of their own.’— See also Muslim, Sahih, Salam, vii, 36-7 (‘Ālam. 4134, 4136).
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 it cared for and it might not, [some of] the grapes might be eaten or sultanas and similar things ...

The proofs 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 Sahih, it is established of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, that he said: 'Whoever frequents a astrologer (arrâf) and asks him a question about anything, no soothsayer (arrâf) is a general name for the diviner (kāhin), the astrologer (mumajjam), the geomancer (rammâl) and their like: whoever speaks of foreknowledge 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 other things may be among the causes, this is also speaking without knowledge. They have no proof for that; neither Legal proofs nor others. On, rather, the texts prove the contrary of that, as in the hadith which is [reported] in the Sahih from 'A'isha, may God be pleased with her: the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, looked to the moon and said: 'O 'A'isha, take refuge with God from the evil of this, as this is [that which is alluded to by] "the darkness when it gathers."' [64] This was also the case, earlier, in the

hadith about the eclipse, wherein he informed [us] that God frightens his servants by two of them. 59

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, it is to deny an active cause. It is like for the other hadith which is in Muslim's Sahih, from Ibn 'Abbâs,61 about some men of the Helpers (ansâr): 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 (jahiliyya)?' They said: 'We use to say: "Tonight, someone important was born" or "someone 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].' 62 [The Prophet] also mentioned the hadith concerning the [devils] sharpening their hearing. 63,64 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 hadiths, it is [stated] that neither the death of some 65 nor their birth is a cause of eclipse of sun and moon, nor [a cause] for the casting of the shooting stars; 62 and [this] even if the death of some men implicates the advent of something in the heavens, as it is established in the [various] Sahihs: 'The Throne— the Throne of the Compassionate—shook because of the death of Sa`d ibn Mu`ādh.' 63 As for the fact that an eclipse or other things can be a cause of an event on earth—a torment that entails

A'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 ghâsîq 'ind waqâqa, "The meaning of his words", Ibn Qatîya said, "is: take refuge with God from its evil when waqâqa, 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. Harmer in A. Abel, Places, 312-3.

56 i.e. the lunar and solar eclipses. See above, p. 136 and n. 36.

57 Great scholar of the first generation (d. 68/688-8); see also L. Vecchia Vaglieri, EI', "Abd al-Azîz b. 'Abd al-Mu'âwiyah.

58 See Muslim, Sahih, Salim, vi, 36 (Sahih 4136); al-Tirmidhi, Sunan, Tafsîr 35, v. 362, 3224 (Sahih 3148); Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, i, 218 (‘Alam 1785).

59 See the hadith, 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.

60 Al-Fârâbî has a similar opinion; see his Maqâlla, 60-1.

62 Al-Bukhârî, Sahih, Mumâlikh al-anâjar, v, 35 (Sahih 3519); Muslim, Sahih, Tafsîr al-‘ulamâ, vi, 150 (‘Alam 3512).
YAHYA J. MICNOT

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 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 night [to be a source of] stillness, and the sun and the moon [to be] computation (Q. 6:96). He also said, Exalted is He: ‘The sun and the moon follow a computation’ (Q. 55:5); ‘He is in phases, that you might know the number of years and computation’ (Q. 10:5); They ask you about the crescents. Say: ‘They are So, when some of the common people saw the astrologer hit them, they came to hold the opinion that the information he was giving out about events [generally] was of the same kind. Such is ignorance! The first is indeed the same type [of information] as his telling us first [of the month] and that is a [routine] matter in accordance with

Avcenna 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” the astrologers say [as if the people]: “We know of the of the new moon.”] We do not know when the eclipse will be because of your character as [hitab] and solving a zij table. Yes, the astrologer is far from grasping anything like a the zij is a summary of the Almagest. The book of the Almagest and that observation (tulas), and geometrical demonstration (al-buruhm al-bundusi) establishes which contains is indeed known through observation (mouahalada), i.e., astronomical the validity of such a process. [For] knowing an eclipse and judging that it will truly it will necessarily rain. The first [affirmation] is indeed demonstrated, while the second is not so.” (Ibn Sina, Nisölm, 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, [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 makhlila, i.e. a cloud imagined to hold rain, he would pace to and fro, his face changing. ‘Aisha said to him: ‘When people see such a cloud, they rejoice.’ He said: ‘O ‘Aisha, what guarantees my safety? The people of ‘Ad saw the torment heading for their valleys and said: “This is coming to bring us rain.”’ God said: ‘Not rather is it what you sought to hasten: a wind wherein is a painful torment’” (Q. 46:24).

Similarly, the times during which God sends down [His] mercy, like the ten last days of Ramadán and the first [days] of Dhul-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.

56 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 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 the book of [geological] judgement (al-abkam), in which he calls less true than true. 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 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 foreright], for the astrologer? (FK, iv, 425-6).

57 See al-Bukhārī, Sahīh, Tafsīr, vi, 134 (‘Ālam 4454); Muslim, Sahīh, Iḥṣā‘iṣ, iii, 26 (‘Ālam 1497).
Eclipses and God's manifestation

In some of the versions of the hadiths about the eclipse, there appears this report by Ibn Mâja and others of a 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. But when God manifests Himself (tajallâ) to something of His creation, it submits to Him. 39

Abû Hâmid [al-Ghazâlî] and his like have contested this hadith and refuted that [whole idea]. Not from the point of view of the science of hadith however—they indeed had little 40 knowledge of it, Abû Hâmid saying for example about himself: I myself have an uncertain stock in the science of hadith 41—[177,1] 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. 42

**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 the day, the sun, the moon, etc. This 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 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. 43

**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. 44 And if somebody believes 45 that this [planet] is what administers [muḍâbâr] him, he is an unbeliever. 46 Similarly, if, in addition 47 to that, he invokes it and seeks its aid, 48 it is pure unbelief and associationism.

41 This discussion about God's oath by the stars in some Qur'anic verses may have been directed against Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî, who appears to have based an argument for the lawful character of astrology on such verses. See Ibn Qayyim al-Jâwzîyya, Miftâh, ii, 189; C. A. Dallin, Astrologia, 15–6.

42 The planets are rational spiritual beings capable of intelligence and speech, and [themselves] cause and administer [muḍâbâr] everything in this world by the order of the Prime Creator who controls all. Abû Kâmil, quoted by G. Saïha (History, 33) 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 Kindî's contemporaries and by the following generations of believers.'

43 There is no lack of basic information on culvine devotion to the planets in medieval Islam, although most often relating to the self-styled Sabians of Harrân (see note 68 below) and their like. See for example the Liber de locitione eorum spirituum planetarum of Abû Hâfîz Umar b. al-Farrukhân al-Tabari (815–1975/62–726), ed. D. Pingree (Tabari, 112–16), the three treatises on the copulatons of the planets attributed to al-Kindî (trans. Veccia Vagliani and Celestano, Epitres), or the famous Ghiyât al-bûkm, Disc. iii, ch. 7, in which parts of al-Tabari's Liber de locitione are embedded (al-Majrit, Ghayha, 193–228; trans. Ritter and Pleissner, Picatrix, 306–41). See also S. Gunduz, Knowledge, 164–84.

Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî, who sometimes defended astrology, got himself interested in such astral rituals and for example describes the suffumigants that, according to Hermet, 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-Sûr al-mâkhûm fi muḥâshabat al-nujûm). Trans. Pingree, Tabari, 116–17. (On this book, see also Ibn Taymiyya, Radd, 286.)
Genethliology and obscurantism

The very furthest [178,1] anyone who says such things [as] can go to build his [a] theory, on the fact that the new-born, when he was born, had such an ascendant (tali'). However, it is impossible that such a fate alone could be what influences the future circumstances of this new-born. Rather, it might, at very most, constitute a fraction of the sum of the causes. Such a fate does not necessarily imply what has not been mentioned. Rather, the things known to have the parents and of the country in which he lives. That indeed of the new-born. It is not, however, something independent.

It has been said that the earliest of those associations: Sabians, to take note of the ascendant of this new-born are things such as the circumstances of constitutes a tangible cause, regarding the future circumstances of the new-born. It is not, however, something independent.

According to al-Biruni (Tafhim, trans. Wright, Elements, 149, 245), 'that portion the sign of the ascendant (tali') or horoscope.'

Namely, that the new-born's life should be completely predetermined by the stars themselves dependent on causes of a higher level. The Sabians of Harran were able to maintain an ancient planet cult long after the spread of Islam to that region. They are to be distinguished from the Sabians referred to in the Qur'an (2:2, 5:69, 22:17), whose identity they most probably assumed.

The Sabians and Babylonian, Greek and monastic elements, their transcendent deity considered as a first cause, astrology, magic and mystery played especially chapters ii and vi; see also C. G. Jung, 'Conceptions of the Sabians as adherents of a 'national religion', see MF, XX, 64, 71, Muslim scholars, Ibn Taymiyya often uses the term Sabian for any idol- and star-worshipers, ancient or otherwise, from Greece to China.

In other words, they used to care about baby's horoscope and give him a name al-fawhar provides an excellent illustration of the procedure described by Ibn Taymiyya. See his Rasih, trans. Khawam, Voile, 1, 278–9.

178 [178,1]  (also ibid'at, Greek katharchai, Latin electrones), hemerology or catachistic astrology, is one of the main parts of judicial astrology as it was practised in Islam, the others being maqadd, 'nativities' (Latin nativitates), or genethliology, alfus al-sin, 'revolutions of the stars' or astrological history, and masdil, '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 see plus ultra of astrology, hemerology is more esoteric as it informs somebody without drawing his horoscope. Masdil deal with responses to queries. See T. Kahl, El, 'Ighayriyat', Abū Ma'shar, Mudhab, Div. viii, ch. 2, 615; D. Pingree, Astrology, 290–1; G. Alibar, Astrologia, 70–2; J.-C. Vade, Aphorismes, 32–3; D. Pingree, 'L'astrologie des 'élections' à l'égard de une histoire et de philosophie', Revue d'histoire des sciences et de philosophie, 1938, 110, 67, where '... sera: les étoiles ... 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 royautés et des pays. [Il s'agit aussi] des météores et des événements; des prédications calculées sur la base de trajectoires astre diskräfte (Athen: see O. Schirmer, El, 'Tarifet'; and G. Alibar, Astrologia, 72), des élections et des interrogations.

179 i.e. the fact that they case a horoscope for whatever action they perform.

According to astrology, it is not in Cancer but in Taurus (3°) that the moon attains its maximum influence or 'exaltation' (shamsh). 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 declination, or 'depression' (hukbat), and its influence becomes negligible. See W. Hartman, Yade, 104–5.

73 See also Almansi's aphorism 47: 'Pour les voyages... les signes mobiles (Bélier, Cancer, Balance, Capricorne) sont recommandés' (trans. J.-C. Vade, Aphorismes, 77). See also the explanations given by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Miṣfah, ii, 215–16.

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 hadith scholars.

THE SO-CALLED 'ART OF IDRIS'

Four arguments against relating the origin of astrology to Idris

Idris and Hermes

As for the affirmation of one who says that this is 'the art of Idris', it will be said, firstly, that this is talking without knowledge. Such a thing could by no means be known except through an authentically transmitted tradition; yet, for the [person] saying this, there is no

75 The Prophet Idris' identity is not clearly known though he is twice mentioned in the Qur'an (19:36, 21:83). Summit tradition places him between Adam and Jesus, al-Khidr, while some orientalists connect him with Ezra, the apostle Andrew, or the Qur'an, Idris' personality is usurped by some syncretists thinkers (for example Abu Al-Aswad) or groups who identified him with Hermes and credited him with a number known to al-Jahiz around 229-232/842-845 (see his Tariq, 26, 940, trans. Kadi, 33:14). See G. Vajda, 'Epistrophes', ibid.ianneke.

The claim that astrology goes back to Idris had already been refuted by Avicenna: 'If one moves from Idris, and what a Messenger of God says is true and incontestable'. We will 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 God. Exalted is He, it is one and for another Prophet to say that God is two. Yet, to the principles. And the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, denied such a thing. 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, is of those things as those that the [astrologers] say' (Ibn Sina, C. A. Nallino, Astrologia, 29, 33).

According to al-Jawharis, it is gnosticism which is Idris' art. It was revealed to him by the Hermes, forty disciples whom he had chosen among the heads of his people's tribes. See his Kitab, trans. Khawam, Voile, 281-6.

way leading to that! Sure, in the books of those, reference is made to the Hermes of the Hermeneus or Hermes of the Hermesians and they pretend that it is Idris! 'The Hermes' is, among them, a generic name and this is why they say 'The Hermes of the Hermesians'. 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.

Prophecy science versus experience and analogy

Secondly, it will be said that if the basis of astrology is taken from Idris, it was with him, a miracle and a science that God had given him. It is thus among the Prophecy sciences. Yet, it is only through arguments concerning experience and analogical reasoning, not information coming from the Prophets, blessing and peace be upon them!

A 'Prophecy 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 Idris' 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

76 During the first centuries AD, an extensive literature of a syncretist character, mainly concerned with philosophies, sciences, magic, astrology and other occult disciplines, developed in Greek under the name of Hermes, the Triple-Great, 'Trismegistos'. According to these writings, Hermes was both the divine revealer of the gods and the teacher of wisdom. Hermeneutic 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 epiphon 'Trismegistos', the astrologer Abu Ma'shar hypothesized these different Hermes, whose respective mythological biographies were developed by several posterior Muslim authors (see D. Pingree, Thousanda, 14-19). According to al-Sharharaith, the pagans of Harrân 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 intermedaries with the supreme God, Hermes and Agathodaimon were supposed to have taught the Harrânians the true way and to have given them their Laws. See M. Plessner, Epist., 'Hermes'; M. Ullmann, Natur (index); S. Gündüz, Knowledge, 157-8, 208-11; D. Pingree, Astrology, 292. Hermes of the Hermesians 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-Dimashqi, Nuhubat, 44, trans. Mehmet, Manuel, 47; S. Gündüz, Knowledge, 157). While Ibn al-Taymiyya regards Hermes as a generic name (im-pan), Ibn Jufil (Corbola, 332/944 - after 384/994) writes that 'the name Hermes is a title (tābi), like Caesar or Caesarus' (cited in D. Pingree, Thousanda, 14).
vain elements that [one finds] among the Jews and the Nazarenes, as far as the things that they report about 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’an. And indeed, God has made it compulsory for us to believe in what He sent down unto us and in what He sent down to 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).

The Prophets, and in spite of that, God has informed us that the People of the Book have distorted and replaced [some of its content]. Revelation and of Books that have certainly been sent down, although they belong to an age closer to us than Idris and although their transmitters were greater than the transmitters of [the science of] the stars (muṣūm), 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 astral occult material] if it contains something that is transmitted from Idris? We indeed know that it contains more important lies, vain elements and distortion than which [can be found] in the sciences of the People of the Book.

In al-Bukhārī’s Šaḥīth, 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 liars 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.”’

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 what which we know to be vain, how could one consider these [astrologers] as veracious concerning that which they pretend to be transmitted from Idris, peace upon him, when they are, in this matter, further from knowing something reliable than [even] the People of the Book?

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-muṣūm) is of two species: computation (biṣāb) and judgements (ābdām).78

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, however, requires much toll 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 Idris, 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 (ābdām) 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 nāmūn (nawāḍim), i.e. the Laws (šarā’ī’) and the Traditions (sunūn). Some of these things consist in invoking the planets and in worshipping them, as well as in several species of associationism that whoever believes in God and in His Messenger obligatorily knows none of the Prophets ever commanded [182,1], nor had knowledge of. To attribute to that 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

78 For Ibn Taymiyya, al-muṣūm, ‘the stars’, to be understood as ‘al-ṣamb, ‘the science of the stars’, encompasses both astronomy and astrology. Hence the need to introduce some complementary parameter to differentiate the two. ‘Computation’ (biṣāb) refers to astronomy, which is indeed a part of mathematics. ‘Judgements’ (ābdām) 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 fara’ah (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 as a sage. 79 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 unbelieving: they were teaching men magic. [They have also followed] that which had come down on the two angels in Babylon, Hárida and Măsûr ... to the end of the verse' (Q. 2.102-3). 80

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 [little] it contains of the truth, the case is similar to what the imām 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. 82

79 See for example Ibn Ḥabbā, Sitva, ii, 138, tran. Guillaume, 2:55: 'One of the rabbis said: "Don't you wonder at Muhammad? He alleges that Solomon concerning that: "Solomon did not disbelieve".'

80 See above, p. 158–9, n. 40.

81 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. Walters, EI, 'Al-Fārābī'.

82 Ibn Taymiyya refers to, and adequately paraphrases, the following passage of 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 concerning the nativities (masūln), the interregnations (masā'all) and the revolutions [of the years] (tabludān). If he then finds that some of these things are valid while others invented, he will surely know that [the whole of that] is [more] opinion and conjecture.

A similar argument can also be found in the refutation of astrology: 'For none of the things that [the astrologers] mention is there either an argument or a proof, rejected. If somebody came and reversed all their principles, each for each, and these contrary, composed a book in conformity with the truth said and their judged

according to their method on the basis of that book, he would inevitably hit the truth in some [of their 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 Sīnā, Nāfṣat, ms. Leiden, f. 58v.)

83 The greatest Greco-Philosopher (Coni, c. 460 ac-Larissa, c. 375), well-known to the Arabs not only as the type of 'the true philosopher' but as a master of alchemy, astrology and magic. See A. Dietrich, EI, Suppl., 'Bukrât'.

84 Ja'far al-Sadiq, 'the veracious' (Madina, c. 83-148/703-765), the sixth imām of the Twelve Shi'is (the fifth of the Imām 'Ali). While regarded by the Twelve as their spiritual teacher of faith, 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, EI, 'Ja'far al-Sadiq'.

85 Qasa is the plural of qasab, which means 'a coloured band of yellow, red and green'. It also designates a god of the pre-Islamic Arabian pantheon. 'Qasab'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 qasab Qasab, for Qasab is the name of a demon, but say qasab Allāh!' See T. Fahd, E. Wiedemann, EI, 'Kaws Kurash'.

86 In sosory, 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 Rāḍīdīs ṣultān built up their error, although it is a lie fabricated about him. It was fabricated about him by ‘Abd Allāh, son of his person, and his importance for him. Likewise have been attributed to him the Book of the Lamb (al-Jafar), 93 and The Seven (al-Ṣaḥāla), 94 but all this is lies told about him: the people who have knowledge about him are in agreement with al-Sa‘ūdī. 95 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 (763) whereas these Epistles were composed

given by al-Bīrūnī, Shams, 319, 344; E. Graeae, D. B. Macdonald, M. Plessner, E2, 96 "Djwād".

See Mi‘ī, trans. Michot, Textes spirituels XII, XIII, and XIV, 25.

A great-grandson of ‘All’s brother, Ja’far, who revoked in Kāfū 127/744.

Having preserved both his divinity and his prophetic character, he was joined by many followers. He gained control over large regions of Iran but, in 1297/744, was presumed that he had not died, others believed in his reincarnation. See K. V. Zettersten, E3, ‘Abd Allāh b. Mu‘āwiyah. 97 Al-Jafar is the generic name of an esoteric—and sometimes apocalyptic—literature concerned with the fate of the world and proposing various disasters to acquire knowledge of its speculations on the numerical value of the letters in the alphabet (huṣab al-Infallīl); see further, n. 125 below, p. 186., astrological characteristics of the K. al-Jafar which circulated under Ja’far’s name and among which trans. Rosenthal, introduction, n. 220-100. Ibn Khaldūn also speaks of another 218-19.

I was unable to identify this work. Could al-Bīrūnī be a scribal error for Ibn Wahab’shiyya (d. 297/910)?

91 The Book of the Seven and the Shadows (K. al-Haṣib wa l-ʾaṣlāl), attributed to questions of his disciple, Ja’far, develops in relation to Quḍāsī’s verses, esoteric the Prophets, the devils, cycles, and mephitomorphosis, faith and unbelpief, the different sexes, eschastiology, inamodogy, brothethood, etc. According to the reader of the book, graphic. Hašib must be understood as the Persians number ‘seven’, in relation to the see his introduction at al-Mufaddal al-Juʿlī, Hašib, 18-19.

89 Antiquarian, philosophical society of the 4th/10th c. See Y. Marquet, E2, ‘Ikhwan al-Safa’.

under the dynasty of the Bāyūdīs, 93 during the fourth (tenth) century, at the beginning of the dynasty of the ‘Ubaydīs who built Cairo. 94 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, 95 Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna 96 and their like among the imāms—Islam’s imāms—are innocent of these lies. [84,1]

Similarly, a lot of what the shaykh Ābū ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Salāmī mentions about Ja’far in the book The Realities of Excess (Hašib al-taṣfīr) 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 Rāḍīdīs 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 than the Rāḍīdīs since they appeared. 97 The first to have started the rif‘ innovation was a hypocrite, a free-thinker (zandīq) called ‘Abd Allāh b. Saba’. 98 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.


95 Theodorian and jurist, after whom one of the four schools of Sunni Law is named (d. Madina, 1779/96); see J. Schacht, E2, ‘Mālik b. Anas’.

96 Traditionist and Qu’ran commentator (Kūfah, 1077/25-Makkah, 196/811). See S. A. Spenceley, E3, Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna’.

97 Important Qu’ran commentator, biographer and theologian of Sufism (Nishāpūr, c. 330-412 / c. 940-1021). Hašib al-taṣfīr, his principal commentary on the Qu’ran, was probably finished and in 370/980. Some extracts only have been published and studied. See G. Böwerer, E2, ‘Al-Salāmī’.

98 A Yemeni Jew considered as the founder of the most extreme wing of the Shi‘a. He is said to have proclaimed ‘All’s divinity or, at least, denied his death and taught that he would in the end come again from the clouds. Sunni sources also make him the instigator of the first dissensions among the Prophet’s Companions and accuse him of having raised the opposition against ʿUthmān on the ground of ‘All’s special rights. He is already compared with Paul of Tarsus by Sahl b. ʿUmar (d. after 193/809) in his K. al-Radda wa l-Insāf Book of the Apology and the Conquestes (see Ridda, 132-8). See also M. G. S. Hodgson, E2, ‘Abd Allāh b. Saba’.
He was a Jew and he apparently adopted Nazarenism, hypocritically, with the purpose of corrupting it. Similarly, Ibn Saba' was also a Jew. He also had that purpose and he endeavoured to create a dissension, with the purpose of corrupting the Muslim faith. Although he was unable to do so, discord and dissension did arise among the believers, during which 'Uthmân was killed, may God be 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 Sahîhs99 about the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace.

'Ali and the Shi'ites' innovations

When the Shi'ites' innovations were made to occur, during the caliphate of the commander of the believers 'Ali, son of Abî Tâlib, may God be pleased with him, he rejected them. There were three groups: exaggrators (ghâlîya), insulators (sâhîbâh) and those who preferred [somebody to others] (mu'addâdîn).100

[185,1] The exaggrators, 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, 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.101

[One reads] in al-Bukhârî's Sahîh that their free-thinkers (zinidîq) were brought to 'Ali and that he burnt them. That news reached Ibn 'Abbâs, 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], and grant him peace, said: 'Whoever replaces his religion [by something else], kill him.'102

99 Among other traditions, see al-Bukhârî, Sahîh, 1st Isâm, Tawhid, iv, 101, 136 Hanbal, Masmâd, n. 34, 269, 278, 279 (Alam. 16276, 21286, 21369).
100 A freedman of 'Ali.
101 Among other traditions, see al-Bukhârî, Sahîh, Jihâd, iv, 61-2 (Alam. 2794).
102 A town in al-Jazira, on the left bank of the Euphrates, close to the confluence of the Khabar, on the site of the important Roman fortress of Caracena, corresponding to the modern Syriac Bussayra. See M. Streck, E2, 'Karkisîya'.
103 See al-Bukhârî, Sahîh, Fisilî'd l-a'sâbîn, v, 7 (Alam. 3395).
104 A son of 'Ali and Khawla, a woman of the tribe of the Banû Hanîfa who had come into his possession as a prisoner of war (Madina, 16–81/637–700). See Fr. Buhl, E2, 'Muhammad Ibn al-Hanafiya'.
105 Author of al-Samun, one of the most important hadîth collections [c. 275/ 888]; see A. J. Wensinck, E2, 'al-Tirmîdî'.
106 One of the Isâmîllî sects; see W. Mietel, E2, 'Karmatî'.
107 To Ibn Taymiyya, all those who, Shi'is, Sufis or philosophers, reject the manifest meaning of the Scripture in favour of an esoteric meaning (bidûn); see M. G. S. Hodgson, E2, 'Bâtimîyyâ'.
108 Khurramîyya, or Khurramdîyya (from the Persian khurrâm-i-din, '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 Manichean beliefs as well as by extremist Shi'i doctrines.
MAGIC AND DIVINATION IN EARLY ISLAM

YAHYA J. MICHOT

180

the Mazdaks, the Isma'ilis and the Nasu'iris 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 (sindiq) 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, that is of the Rāfidī and Qarmātī 'Umaydīs. They had religiously embraced these philosophical sciences and this is why you find between those, the Rāfidīs and their like, in respect of being far from knowing the prophethood (mubā'ihat), a connection and an affiliation. 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.

Khurramiyah were often identified with the Muslimiyyah, partisans of the anti-Unmāyīd leader Abu Muslim (d. 137/755), who regarded the latter as their imām, prophet or incarnation of the divine spirit. See W. Madelung, IF, 'Khurramiyah', hechoronist and gnostic revolutionary religious movement in Mazarpaq Sāsānid Iran at the end of the fifth and beginning of the sixth century AD. After the spread of Islam in Iran, 'Neo-Mazdak' sects appeared in association with various gnostic Shi'i groups.

They tend to be credited with a special interest in number and letter mysticism. See M. Guit, M. Momen, EI, 'Mazdak'.

Extremist Shi'i sect named after Muhammad b. Nusayr al-Fihri i-Lumayari, a disciple of the tenth or eleventh Twelver Shi'i imam, still existing today (Alawis of Syria); see also S. H. Alavi, IF, 'Nasrīyyah'. Ibn Taymiyyah refuses their doctrines in a famous fatwa in which he denounces their alliance with the Crusaders and the Tatars. Les Nosairis ou plusieurs noms en vogue parmi les Musulmans, Tantâon els appelle Nosairis, tantâon Khorrâmis, tantâon enfin Mohammâdâr [...] Leur religion a leurs dehors du fond est l'incertitude pure et simple' (Nasrîyyah, trans. Guyard, Fetteh, 189).

See Avicenna's autobiography, trans. W. E. Gomlman, Life, 19; 'My father was one of those who responded to the propaganda of the Egyptians and was reckoned among the Isma'ilīya ... According to Dr. Gutas (Avicenna, 333), Avicenna was in reality a Hamānī Sunni.'

IBN TAYMIYYA ON ASTROLOGY

Idris' innocence
Over this period close to us, 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 (milad), despite the existence of people who expounded their falseness, prohibited that and defended the false (milad) 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 Idris or to other Prophets—to say nothing of the length of the time passed, the diversity of the traditions, the differentiation of the faiths (milad) 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 ... This is among the clearest insanities as the 112 Ibn Khlatūn, Nuqadhima, trans. Rosenblatt, Introduction, 213–16: 'Jirāb b. Ahmad al-Hassāb 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 significant. The birth of the Prophet took place when the two superior planets were in conjunction in the sign of Scorpio” [...] Jirāb 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 Idris (of Muhammad) 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 (Conjunctions, in Loth, Astrol. 280), al-Kindī (Mulk, ed. Loth, Astrol. 273), al-Mas'ūdī (Marājī, trans. Pellas, Prairies, i, 70), al-Birrī (Tafhim, 253), al-Masūdī (see G. Roscher, Verzeichnis ders, 129–30), Ibn Abī l-Rājī (see Loth, Astrol. 288), Yaqūt (Mujām, i, 43), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (Sīr, ms. Oxford, E. 54). Among these authors, al-Birrī (Tafhim, 253) and, perhaps, al-Kindī (see Secrets, trans. Veecka Vaghiën and Celenbrok, 340) are the only ones who explicitly
circumstances of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, and of his community were different 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 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 reached the world than the nómos that Muhammad brought, God bless him and grant him peace. His community is also the most link Jupiter to Christianity. The debate concerning the identity of the tetraktys planets linked Venus to the law of Islam, which he considered as sola voluptas et venebra but the complexity of the Polemical theory of the motion of the planet Mercury, being more analagous representation of the Christian domgas and mysteries (see J. North, Astology, 68). In the Islamic world, Jesus was linked to Mercury by Ibn-'Arabî (see Alkâma, 31–3) and ibn-Iskâf, trans. and, as proposed by Ibn Taymiyya, to Venus by the Alkâma al-Safaî, who reserve Jupiter for Abraham and link the Prophet Muhammad to Mercury (Rasâ'îd, trans. Michot, Resurrection, 140–1).

113 In this passage, Ibn Taymiyya clearly uses Nâmis, the Arabic translation for the Greek nómos, in the sense of shar'a (see M. Messori, 'E', 'Nâmis'). It is of interest al-Safaî, Avicenna et alii (see Y. J. Michot, Destinée, 39, n. 37; see also al-Shâfî, explicit assimilation of the Sharâ'î to the Greek law offers a good illustration of the extent of the circulation between the classical Greek and Islamic usulanswâbets, as L. Strauss (see R. Brague, Athenes, 330).

114 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 Adhâbâsiyya (85), that the Law (shar'a) is an essential part of theComplete Messengers. Avicenna's philosophy is one of the reasons why Ibn Taymiyya considers them to be superior to Aristotle. In addition, where the Shahîd al-Ilâm affirms the belief in these philosophers to be universally accepted in relation to them, he has the same quality of his belief with the apologetic approach to Islam by Ibn Taymiyya, and with the.ps of the Prophet (shâbî al-Ilâm). This through the trans. of an excerpt from Avicenna's Adhâbâsiyya.

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 Hanifism, 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 Sabians—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 Jawâb, 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.

115 On Islam's rationality according to Ibn Taymiyya, see his Letter to Abû-l-Fida', trans. Michot, Lettre, and MF, xx, 62–73, trans. Michot, Textes spirituels XIV.

116 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 Quérir, trans. Michot, Roi croisé, 145–6.

117 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 'Abî al-Dîn al-Jawâysi, typical of the Mongols. To assimilate the religions to the Muslim madhâbbâh is an accusation that Ibn Taymiyya raises in particular against the Ilkhanid vizier Rashîd-al-Dîn, whom he calls a 'philosophizing Jew'. See MF, 523–4, trans. Michot, Textes spirituels XIV, 26–7. That said, he himself sometimes assimilates, 'from some viewpoints', the multiplicity of madhâbbâh in Islam to the multiplicity of the prophetic ways (mindâh) (MF, trans. Michot, Ummî, 27).

118 The obvious allusion is to al-Fârîubi's philosophical religion. See his Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Eminent City (A'qîdât), in R. Walzer, State in the Qur'an, the true, primordial, Abrahamic monotheism; see Montgomery Watt, 'E', 'Hadîtî. For Ibn Taymiyya's definition, see MF, trans. Michot, Musâque, 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: ‘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 the hereafter he shall be amongst 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 you for [this] religion. So, do not die but submitting [to Him] (muslim)” (Q. 2.130–2). He also said: ‘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 (islama) judged for those who were Jews’ (Q. 5.44). Balîqîs said: ‘My Lord, I wronged myself and I submit with Solomon to God, the Lord of the worlds’ (Q. 27.44). He said about [89,1] the apostles: ‘“Believe in Me and in My Messenger!” They said: “We believe. Bear witness that we 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-islam)’ (Q. 3.18). He also said: ‘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). [And] ‘Whoever seeks something else than submission (islam) 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 is of a manifestly corrupt nature.

This is why their judgements do not cease to lie and to rebut each other. The great philosopher whom they call the ‘philosopher of Islam’, Ya’qûb b. Ishaq al-Kindi, even made a forecast (tasyr) for this religion (milla), claiming that it would come to an end in the year 693 (1294). That was adopted, after him, by somebody who produced the product of the deduction from the letters of a discourse which had appeared, during unveling (kashf), to someone whom he was rehabilitating.

And with them agreed, about that, somebody who claimed that he had deduced the remaining duration of this

120 The ‘Philosopher of the Arabs’ (c. 185-232/ *c. 801-866*) See J. Lovere, R. Rashed, E.F., ‘al-Kindi’.

121 On tasyr, see n. 70, p. 169.

122 By means of universal apotelesmatic (apotelesmatikè katholikè), the astrologers tried 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 Sasanian astrology, preferred to base their calculations on conjunctions of the superior planets: Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. (See Ibn Khaldûn, 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, Thoughts, 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-Kindi to a Letter on the rule of the Arabs and it is not correct to say that it failed (fi mulk al-‘Arab wa karnamayti-hi) written at the request of an ‘Abbasid caliph, probably al-Mu’tasim (reigned 252–255/866–869). Al-Kindi’s letter was long thought to have been plagiarized by the greatest Muslim astrologer, Abû Ma’shar (d. 275/886), in his Book of the Great Conjunctions, Disc. ii, ch. 8. R. Lemaître has demonstrated (convincingly, in my opinion) that it was in fact Abû Ma’shar’s Great Conjunctions, most probably written between 247/861 and 251/865, that influenced al-Kindi in this matter. See al-Kindi, Madû, ed. Luth, Astrology, 274–5; Abû Ma’shar, Conjunctionibus, ii, 8, Latin trans in Luth, Astrology, 281); on the anti-Iranian shi‘âbîyâ cultural and political circumstances in which al-Kindi wrote his Risalâ and on the controversy surrounding its relation to Abû Ma’shar’s Great Conjunctions, see R. Lamaty, Abû Ma’shar, i, 211–35; Lamaty, 21.

Al-Kindi 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 Jupiter and Mars in Cancer on Sunday 21 March 622, the space 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. Louth, Astrology, 294–7; Ibn Khaldûn, Muqaddima, trans. Rosenthal, introduction, ii, 215; C. A. Nallino, Astrologia, 15–16; D. Pingree, Thousends, 80, horoscope i, 3; C. Burnett, Astrology, 68.

123 B’d man a’da-ba. I found the source uncertain here.
religion (milza) from the reckoning [addition] of the numerical values (bath al-jumam'). 123 that are those of the letters that are at
[190] the beginnings of the surs [of the Qur'an]; when discounting
the repetitions, there are 14 such letters
124 and their reckoning
in the great calculation, amounts to 693. Related to this is also the
following story, mentioned in [Qur'an] exegesis: when God sent
down 'Afif. Lám. Mím.', some Jews said: 'The duration of this religion

123 Hith al-jumal, literally 'comparative by means of a mean of a rope', is the technical
term for calculation by means of the numerical values of alphabetical letters, writing
letters and other procedures reminiscent of the cabala. Hith al-jumal in the first
letters not found in the Fatiha, the mysterious letters' [of the Qur'an] here mentioned by
diviners, are. See G. S. Colin, EI, 'Hith al-jumal'; T. Fahd, EI, 'Dafar'.
124 On the mysterious letters opening 29 of the Qur'an basic surs 2-3, 7, 10-15,
19-20, 26-52, 36, 38, 40-46, 50, 68, see A. T. Welch, EI, 'al-Kur'ân': 4.6. '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 all the whole Arabic alphabet: h, t, m, n,
m, n, r, s, z, q, j, l, b, y, r, m, n, g. Like every letter of the Arabic alphabet, these 14
letters were designated as a supplement of the Arabic and in the Western Arabic
language, sometimes different in the Eastern and in the Western Arabic
worlds, as for example explained by the Ilhan
G. Weil and G. S. Colin, EI, 'Abjad' and effectively referred to here by Ibn Taimiyya,

hamsa 1 sin 60 'ayn 70 lám 30 hâ' 5
ha' 1 šin 60 qâf 70 lám 30 hâ' 5
râ' 20 kaf 100 mim 40 yâ' 10
nâ' 20 pâ' 20 nâm 50

As noted by Ibn Taimiyya, the total of these values is 693 'in the great calculation',
that the numbers representing tens and hundreds are given their full numerical
278-9, 297-5, 215, regarding al-Kindi, Mukh, ed. Luth, Astrologie, 215. Considering the argument of God, which He has provided,

123 The great calculation of the Eastern numerical values of hamsa (1),
lám (30) and mim (40) is 71. See also al-Kindi, Mukh, ed. Luth, Astrologie, 276.
124 The great calculation of the Eastern numerical values of hamsa (1),
lám (30), mim (40) and râ' (200) is 231. The great calculation of the Eastern numerical values of hamsa (1),
lám (30), mim (40) and râ' (200) is 271.
125 See Ibn Ishaq, Shî, ii, 139-40; trans. Guillaume, Life, 256-7. Also in al-Kindi,

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 Sabians—
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 capability [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 (milza).

That which is vain, regarding existence, does not sell well but is blended
with some element of the truth. Similarly, the People of the Book clothed
the truth in vain things. Because of the slight
ingredients which 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 expose the argument of God, which He has provided
by means of His Messengers—and that is why the Dennison arises. We have
spoken extensively about these vain things, etc., elsewhere. And
God knows best!
What do the masters, the legislers, the imams of the religion, may God be pleased with them all, say about those astrologers who hold seances on the thoroughfares, (11) 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 (sīla'a at-tariq). They write out magic squares (waq'id), practice magic, write talismans (t flick), 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 (12) 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, Powerfull 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 it forbidden or not? Is it permitted to whoever is [in some way] attached to a shop—as Cairo, Damascus and the other main cities of the Muslim 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. 11: 120, 39. (12) See the “Title of Qamar al-Zamun” in the Nights (R. Irwin, Nights, 190) or the contemporary first-hand testimony produced by Saff al-Din al-Hilli (Qatida, trans). Bosworth, Underworld, ii, 297–8, verses 33, 42–3, 45. And how often have I posed as an astrologer (kussal) and composed a magic circle (miwand), by means of which I have demonstrated that the jinn are my brethren [i.e. elixi. And how often have I stood up in the circle of onlookers, speaking out with great (mu‘addal), writing out my formulae of incantation by using alum and onion juice as invisible inks (on the use of onion juice as invisible ink, see al-Jawhari, Kadsh, ffr. Khawam, Voile, 1, 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 [i.e. 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 next translated above, p. 147, Avicenna had already underlined, three centuries earlier, the importance of women among the astrologers’ clientele. 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? (121) And when the authority does not act to condemn the [astrologers], does the matter fall within the compass of the threat of the authentic hadith 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.’ (122) 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 hadiths that were present in their mind about that matter. Rewarded would they then be, the Exalted God willing!

He answered:

The Book, the Traditions 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-taqqia)’ (Q. 4:51). Umair and others said: ‘Al-jibt means magic.’

In his Sunan, Abū Dā'ūd has reported with a good chain of transmitters from Qăbasa b. Mukhrariq (134) about the Prophet, (11) See al-Bukhari, Sahih, Abkarum, 8, ix, 64 (Alam, 6617); Muslim, Sahih, Imam, i, 88 (Alam, 205). (114) A Companion who lived in Basra; see Ibn al-Athir, Usd, iv, 192–3.
God bless him and grant him peace, that he said: ‘Mantic interpretation of the flight and the cries of birds (‘ad‘a),’ 135 of as negative (tira) 137 pertains to sorcery (jibr). 138 ‘Awf, 139 [193,1] flight (zaf al-tayr). 140 Al-tayr, i.e. the lira which is traced on the earth. 141 The contrary has also been said. 142 If tracing lines and the to sorcery, how [must] things be, a fortiori, for astrology (najâma) pertain [iself]? The fact is indeed that they generate figures on the earth

in the strict sense, ‘ad‘a means ornithomancy, i.e. the art of divining omens

135 In the absolute, tira designates three divinatory methods of divine nature: throwing pebbles and observing how they scatter on the ground (al-tayr bi-l-baht); al-tayr bi-l-samti, and mixing cotton with wool (khat bi-l-samti). In the following lines, developed into geomancy and enjoyed prodigious popularity in the figure of the pattern supposedly drawn by random marks traced in dust or sand. In used to generate one of the six geomantic figures, or random markings would be interpreted in relation to the horoscope of the enquirer and other astrological configurations of the celestial sphere. See T. Fahd, Divination, 193-204; 137 Elyaqomi, in correlation with ‘the Earth-Smooth, Science’, i. 149-51; R. Irwin, Night, 190-1. 138 On this baht, see Aba Da‘ud, Sunan, Tibb, iv, 16, 3907 (‘Alam. 3408). See also T. Fahd, Divination, 195.
139 ‘Awf b. Abi Jamila Aba‘ Sab‘a al-arab (d. 146/763).
140 Zaf originally consisted in causing a bird to fly away by shooting or throwing a stone at it, in order to be able to give a mantic interpretation of its flight. Like tira, it eventually referred, not only to ornithomancy in general, but to all kinds of omens.
142 See Abu Da‘ud, Sunan, Tibb, iv, 16, 3908 (‘Alam. 3409).
143 Ibid. 3907 (‘Alam. 3408); trans. Hasán, Sunan, iii, 1096, ch. 1481, 3899; ‘The geomancy by drawing lines’.

Ahmad [ Ibn Hanbal], Aba Da‘ud, Ibn Maja and others have reported from Ibn ‘Abbas, 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.’ 143 The Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him peace, has clearly declared that astrology (‘ilm al-najâma) pertains to magic. And God said, Exalted is He: ‘The magician, 450-2, wherever he comes’ (Q. 20.69). And so does it happen: induction proves that the people who deal in astrology (abi al-najâma) do not thrive, neither in this world nor in the hereafter.

Ahmad [ Ibn Hanbal] and Muslim, in the Sahih, have reported from Sahuya, 144 daughter of [Abu] 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 (‘arraf) and asks him a question about anything, no prayer is accepted from him for forty days.’ 145 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 Sahih, from Mu‘awiyah b. al-Hakam al-Sulami, that he said: ‘O Messenger of God,’ I said, ‘there are people among us, who frequently diviners.’ He said: ‘Do not frequent them!’ 146 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-Khattabi 147 [194,1] and other scholars, this [assemblage] 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’].
In the Sahih, 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" (hulusat) of a divorcer is disgusting." His "tip" is what the common people call his 'sweetener' (balataa). In what is meant by this is also included that which is given to the astrologers, to the [fortune-teller] using devices, by means of which he casts lots (for example a wooden piece on which A, B, C, D are inscribed), to the [fortune-teller] throwing pebbles and to their like. What is given to those is of a forbidden nature. More than one of the 'ulama', like al-Baghwawi, al-Qadi 'Iyad and others, have spoken of a consensus as far as forbidding it is concerned.

In the two Sahih, it is [reported] from Zayd b. Khalid that he said: 'The Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him peace, spoke to us at al-Hudaybiyya, 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 disbeliefing in Me. He who said: 'We have had a rainfall due to God's favour and His mercy' is believing in Me and disbeliefing in the planets." [153]

In Muslim's Sahih, it is [reported] from Abu Hurayra, 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 disbeliefing in it. God sends down abundant rain and they say: "It is due to such a planet, or to such a one!"' [154]

In Muslim's Sahih, 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 (jahiliyya): boasting of noble pedigrees, reviling [others'] lineages, wailing and asking the stars for rain.' [155]

In it is also reported from Ibn 'Abbas, about the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, that he said: '"And do you make it your livelihood to announce it as lies?'" [Q. 56:82]; this [verse] refers to asking the stars for rain.' [160] Or as he said, [161]

THE PRACTICAL MEASURES TO TAKE AGAINST ASTROLOGERS

[153] The texts reported on the authority of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, his Companions and the rest of the imams, 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

[154] See al-Bukhari, Sahih, Al-Bukhari, I, 169 (A'lam 801); Muslim, Sahih, Al-Imam b. 59 (A'lam 104).

[155] A Companion (d. c. 58678); See J. Robinson, El, 'Abu Hurayra'.

[156] See Muslim, Sahih, Al-Imam b. 59 (A'lam 106).


[158] See ibid. Im, 60 (A'lam 107); trans. Siddiqui, Al-Imam, i, 45, 153; Ibn 'Abbas told me this. [Owe], 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'an, 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 announce it as lies!'" (Q. 56:75-82).

[159] 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 pervers, for such a use, shops owned [by them] or established as waqfs, etc., if this dammed 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 in 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 knew. 'Why do not the rabbis and the doctors prohibit them from saying things that are indeed, according to the consensus of the Muslims, say the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, following a report related about him by the Truthful [Abu Bakr] that he said: 'When about to extend over them all a chastisement of His,' and what disgusting people see something condemnable and do not change it, God is condemnable thing could be more so than the actions of those of the Messengers and the offshoots of the Sabians, the planet-worshippers? Was not the mission of [Abraham] the Friend of [the true monotheists (hanif)], directed but against the ancestors of their kings, and the doctors of the Sabians are indeed the astrologers 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?"  

162 See Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, al-`Abhar, i, 2 (ibid. 16); Ibn Maja, Sunan, p. 75, ii, 1327, 4001 (ibid. 3995).

163 The Nimaour of the Bible who, without being named, is alluded to in the Qur'an in Islam, borrowing only not only from the Bible but from the Jewish, Hellenic, and Persian where Ibn Taymiyya seems in some way to assimilate Nimaour to the Buddha.

164 For Ibn Taymiyya, idolatry most often derives from astrology. The Greeks and the Romans were associated, 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 them of the same kind as [that practised by] Nimrod, Kana'an's son, and his people, to whom Abraham, the Friend of God, God's blessings and peace be upon him, was sent.

[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 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 believe but the devils unbelieved: they were teaching men magic [and had] followed that which had come down on the two angels in Babylon, Harut and Marut; 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 do they 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, ancient and modern, 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 Khith [China] and the Turks. They make idols that have the form of Nimroud. These idols are very big and they attach rosaries to their necks. They praise the name of Nimroud and intail 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 (waqtu la'mar), 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 [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 (iḥād) in the way of God. And God knows better!

APPARATUS CRITICUS

P. 166. "mas'ala fit-man MK: wa su'ilā rahima-hu Lāl-lāh 'an-man F. He was also asked, may God have mercy upon him, about the person... ḍa'ūlū F: yaqūlūna MK They also say, cīmat MK: hārād law F And even if it... al-jawāb MK: fa-ajāba F He answered: rabb al-‘lāmin+MK: b-i-l-lāh F
P. 167. "rubbiyātayi-hi MK: rubbiyātayi F ḍadr MK: qawwāl F ... is something said in addition, of... cūdāj MK: nūdāj F la-hum F: - MK ... by it such... ḍashīhūdā F: masīhūtta MK well known ḍayār F: - MK ... up some...
P. 168. "mā anžalā Lāh min al-sāmāt min K (Q. 2:164): anžalā min al-sāmāt F And He sends down water from the sky... anžal-nā min al-samā' M And We send down water from the sky... ḍashīhūdā F: masīhūtta MK well known "mushrīk F: shīrkh MK ... independently, this is associationism conflicting with... al-nūjūm F: al-najm MK ‘star’

P. 169. "āk-mā F qād + MK ... may happen... na'af F: nāhā MK He refused death... cīthār MK: athār F ḍī-i-an Allāh MK: bi-anha-hu F yunzilu-hu MK: yunzilu F min+MK: nas'alu-ha F
P. 170. "min MK: wa F yattaq MK (Q. 6:52): yattaq F ḍī only quotes the beginning and the end of this passage of the Qur’an D – MK: fi F
P. 171. "al-hum MK: la-humā F ḍī only quotes the beginning of this verse "So-i-kitāb F: fi l-kitāb MK ... in the Book, P. 172. "‘anwū F: nāw’ MK ... the species of... ḍa-yuyirāt-hu MK: yu’yiru-hu F al-samā’ MK: al-samā’ ḍī ... of the heaven al-samā’ F: samā’ MK ... to this world’s heaven ḍī wa rubuḥa-mā adrakha-hu l-shiḥāb F: - MK ... them, after He pronounces that word. He has... ḍī inni lamā M: inni Fārāt (-) lamā M Qal-i+MK: qālā F
P. 173. "āl-adilla MK: al-dalālā F ḍīqāl F: yuqāl Allāh MK, God does not accept from him any prayer for... ‘andqāma MK: ṭaqadādhum F
P. 174. "ābāl MK: fa-inna F The texts indeed prove... ḍīmustariqā MK: mustariq F C – MK: min F ḍī ba’d + MK: mutaww F ... of people... li-l-rāmi bi-l-nūjūm MK: al-rāmi bi-l-najm F
P. 176. A – MK: alladhī F ḍī l-shu’ul MK: wa l-shu’ul F the first ḍī min qawwāl al-nābī MK fi qawwāl-hi F qalīla K: qalīla FM
P. 178. "ābāna ḍāhādā ḍāhādā MK anha-hu F qalād MK: al-qadr F ḍīsharāfli-hi F: shurufī-hi K ... rise, shurufī-hi M
P. 179. "āsafūr F nusāfūr MK al-ḥaramiṣa F: - MK ... to Hermes and... sašul-hi F: - MK ... if this... ḍī’mānā yahiṭājūna F: mā yahiṭājūn ‘alay-hi MK Yet, what those argue for depends on experience and analogical reasoning, not on information... (?)
P. 180. "āqila F: - an MK from F
P. 182. "bāl-i+MK: nabiyyan F ... Prophet and a sage ḍī only gives the beginning of the verse ḍī’azam min-mā MK: nazīr M F ... finds vain things and elements of error similar to what is found... ḍīla+: kān MK ... they exonerate... ḍīmartaba MK: nishā F
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-See also Mehren, M. A. F., Vnes.

-See also: Ibn Sīnā, Risāla fi ibrāhīm ash-Muhammad al-najmī; Epistles on the vanity of astrology, F. S. L. C. C., 1720 (Or. 1020), f. 91v-98r. [Najmī].


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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 Maʿṣar. 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, xxxii’), 2000). This magisterial work is a very important contribution to the study of astrology in Islam and had, it would have 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 Maʿṣar’s interest in Aristotelian natural philosophy, see i. 607-9.

n. 112 (p. 181): on Abū Maʿṣar’s linking of the Arabs to Venus, see i. 66-7, 126-7, 606, ii. xii.

n. 123 (p. 185): on Abū Maʿṣar and al-Kindī’s nepotistications of the date when the rule of Islam would end, see i. 126-7 (Abū Maʿṣar’s Arabic text, with English transl.), ii. 83 (Abū Maʿṣar’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 Maʿṣar can have copied from the other on this matter and it is ‘highly probable’ that both were drawing from a third source, perhaps MasḥāʾAllāḥ.

n. 126 (p. 186): on the calculation of Islam’s duration by means of the ‘mysterious’ letters of the Qurʾān, see i. 534-7 (al-Kindī’s Arabic text, with English transl.).
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. 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-Balūṭī (d. 886, Latin Alpumassa) 2, and was later studied in great detail in an excellent dissertation by Richard Lemaï 3. From that perspective, one can assert that astrology enjoyed a status similar to that of medicine 4, 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 Coelo, II, 266a; 3-266b; 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-Balūṭī (787-886, all dates are given in AD), Khidr al-mudhayli fi 'ilm ahkâm al-najān wa 'lilāhāt wa kasīfiyyātāt wa mā ışlāhīf fihi al-nadr wa l-rudā ʾal-ahkām, Casiubah Ms. 1508, « al-qawā i-al-wālī ».


4. In the formulation of Abū Hamlīd al-Gazzālī (d. 1111), Ḥiyā 'alām al-din, al-Makhātī al-Ṭabarīyya (Egypt edition), vol. I, p. 20, he says: « Astrology (ahkâm) in summary depends on induction (īnštāf) based on events through the causes (aštāb), and that is similar to the physician's induction from the pole 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-dīn), however, has disapproved of it (dīmmābu). »
This theoretical position however does not really reflect the status of astrology in Islamic history. In fact, astrology and magic were both considered a sacred practice in Islamic thought, with many scholars dedicating their lives to the study of the subject. The Islamic world was home to some of the greatest astrologers and astronomers of the time, and the science was widely regarded as a way of understanding the universe and the将会 affairs of the world. Among the most famous astrologers of the Islamic world were al-Biruni, al-Suhrawardi, and al-Biruni. These scholars made significant contributions to the field of astrology, and their works are still studied today.

One of the most famous examples of astrology in Islamic history is the work of the Persian astrologer al-Biruni. He was known for his ability to predict the future, and his predictions were highly regarded by his contemporaries. Al-Biruni's work on astrology was highly influential, and his ideas were adopted by other scholars in the Islamic world.

Islamic astrology was also influenced by the works of the Greek astrologers, especially those of Ptolemy. Ptolemy's work on astrology was highly regarded in the Islamic world, and it was translated into Arabic and became the basis for much of the Islamic astrological tradition.

In conclusion, astrology was an important part of Islamic culture, and it played a significant role in the lives of many people. While the practice of astrology has declined in recent times, its influence can still be seen in the way people think about the world and their place in it.
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 today. 

Sources

Since our focus is on the social perception of the astrologer, and not on the analysis of not deal with the technical aspects of astrology, although some use was made in a very general 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 considered in great detail the procedures necessary for preparing the horoscope of the newly born. But those same sources do not provide the exclusion of the others. For that social perspective one had to return to other

Biographical sources tell more about the practice and the circumstances of astrology issues regarding, for example, the extent to which astrologers were integrated in the society, the conditions under which they operated, their clientele, their clients, the salaries they received 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 significant in and of itself, for example, for those astrologers, like physicians, scientists, and other worthy of such attention despite the fact that their discipline was not always condoned by the public. For our purposes, the most famous of such surviving biographical works is the History of the Astrologers) of Radil al-Din Abū al-Qāsim 'All b. Mūsā b. Qāfar b. Abū al-Qāsim and Muhammad b. Tawās (d. 1266). We will have more to say about this work in the course of our discussion. They mostly consist of 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. On the same astrologers regarding the predictions of the Feth-Samat astrologers and the conditions under which the predictions were made are quite revealing of the astrologers' circumstances under which astrology was practiced, but at times they also reflect the opinion of the astrologer on the subject of astrology. That opinion, whether supportive of or antagonistic to astrology, is

23. A report of a formal opinion passed against astrology in this century only confirms the existence of astrology, Cairo, Mushafā' al-Diryā, 1965, vol. 1, p. 197. 
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 and 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 stile of 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 holding a painting depicting the judgment of Skylesvod (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 painter 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 32; 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 smiple 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 Uqilddi was warning against.
42. *Ibid.* See also the reference to an astronomical treatise written by the jurist (al-aqlī), Abū like Abraham ibn Tawās, none other than the Aṣṣīt theologian Abū Hāmid al-Gazālī himself 44.

43. The Making of an Astrologer

How did one become an astrologer in medieval Islamic society? One could study a major astronomical text, such as the Tezabibios of Ptolemy, learn some basic astronomy and mathematics in order to tune or even construct an astrolabe, then step by step learn how to cast a horoscope. The use of an astronomical instrument was inevitable, if for no other reason master this material so well and go beyond it to determine new parameters by constructing 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 astrolabe to tell the positions of the planets for the required moment, and a dust board or the like to conduct the computational operations of.

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'ārīr interrupted his pilgrim in order to study at the house of 'Abī b. Yāhya b. al-Mansūr (d. 845), the famous astronomer/astrologer during the caliphate of al-Ma'mūn (813-833), and his grandfather Abū Ma'ārīr, who was the astrologer of the caliph al-Mansūr (754-775) 46. Obviously, Abū Ma'ārīr found there the book and the teacher, and he stayed at 'Abī's house studying astrology until he became an atheist (alaḥda), and that was his last contact with pilgrimage.

44. *Ibid.* p. 176, and Nallino, *op. cit.*, p. 90. Gazālī's acknowledgement of Gāmar's correct astronomical predictions is strange to mean that he knew of some prevailing belief in the validity of astrology. As we have 45. reminded the reader that it was legally disapproved of. Ibn Tawās, however, adds another source different from the *Ijtihad*, for he said in his book, al-Turūs al-mushahdāt fi maṣūf al-makhtūmat, “And after him Garmas the sage who was versed in the science of the stars and had corrected judgement, he used to tell, ‘Astronomy and Madrīs, and his son, Abū al-Ma'ārīr, who was an astrologer as well as a famous mathematician and was the first to introduce the astrolabe into the Islamic world, 46. is a famous example.

47. *Nīẓāmar IV, p. 66.*

48. See, for example, the biographies of 'Abī ʿAllāh b. Maṣūr in al-Ma'mūn, Kiāh, of al-Fārābī, ed. R. Tadjadod, Textes bachiques de l'Iran, tome 2, 1936, and Ibn Sinā, Abū Ma'shar, ibid., p. 377, who had both apprenticed under Abū Ma'ārīr.


50. The term *sīn*‘ādha, here translates the Greek term *sidēρη*, where the meaning could imply those arts or crafts that do not belong to the demonstrative sciences, such as astrology.

51. Revan 1062, ed. 16r, dated 1317.

52. This reference was brought to my attention by Bernhard Goldstein of the University of Pittsburgh.

the elder had persecuted the partisans of the foreign sciences, and the lack of interest of Ibn al-Ghazwi the younger in such subjects. The artist who depicted this scene was at least known by the name of Slihim an-Dawla (949-983) as he used to brag about the fact that he had studied astrology under the 968). 54

We also know of several astronomers who became famous as students of other astronomers, meaning that they either followed their methods in interpreting certain astrological documents or that they were tutored by them directly. We are told by the author of a book on astrology, Abu al-Hasan b. Ahmad al-Ismaili, the famous astrologer of Mosul, used al-Dawla's astrology, al-Qabisi, mentioned earlier, where he says that he was asked by one of his students to write a treatise attacking those who had cast horoscopes by using the method of the *nabid* al-`asr. 56

There is some evidence that astronomy could also be acquired in a school setting. The school was usually in an observatory or attached to one. The several observatories known to us date back to the 13th century. The observatory of Uqba in Sfax, which was built by the Fatimids, was to have had several astronomers and astrologers on its staff. We possess a list of such astronomers and astrologers. The school in which the students were taught is not known. We possess a list of such astronomers and astrologers, the study of astronomy, the specialized subject of the founder. There is no other corroborating evidence to settle the issue either way.

One other way of teaching astrology was through a teaching course or school, the astrologer also had to excel at least in elementary astronomy an astronomer should master. That list covers two full printed pages of mainly astronomical subjects. 59 al-Qabisi'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 at least. 60

In similar situations, astrologers proclaiming to study their astronomy and mathematics very likely would have had to answer charges levied by someone like the Moroccan mathematician, al-Samaw' al (c. 1175), who left a treatise on the subject called *Kall' `irr al-munaqqit wa gahi`ir il-mutah *al-a`m wal-`a`kh (Exposing the Imperfections of the Astrologers and their Mistakes in most of their Computations and Judgements) 61. In this treatise, he requires a full mastery of mathematical astronomy of the astrologer, and 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 62. We are told that al-Mutanabbi (870-928) asked Abu Al Ma`arra and another astrologer, both of whom were accompanying him in his campaign against the rebellious sultan, 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 63.

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 Muhammad Halil was dedicated to the *Gabbaddar Bati* (chief of the amin) instead of the astrologer at court as one would have expected. The identity of the astrologer, however, was rarely found, and the sources report a variety of charlatans posing as astrologers. In a well-known story, we are told that the famous Abu Al Ma`arra passed by a charlatan one day as he was practicing in one of the streets of Samarra. Abu Al Ma`arra 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 Abu Al Ma`arra was on his way to look for the owner of a person who had been 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, Abu Al Ma`arra is reported to have said: "If I do not know how this charlatan predicted 59 Farag, p. 152-153.
60. al-Samaw`al, op. cit., gives a description of four types of astrologers all of which but one who was supposed to be highly proficient in astrological 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 ephemerides.
61. Leiden, Arabic Ms. Or. 98.
62. Farag, p. 159.
63. Ibid.
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 like and tawżīm (ephemeria) in order to deceive people. But he went on to say that he had guessed mentioned above, which he had learned from the beduin Arabs. He went on to instruct Abū Maṣʿūr on the methods he followed in this kind of divination. 65

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 astrologers who were engaged in casting the horoscope of a prince (figure 5). The astrologer Abū Maṣʿūr’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 considered as part of the native sciences since they were supposed to have originated in pre-Islamic religious law. wished to pitch those two forms of science against each other and to imply that the native may be, we must conclude that such a charlatan could not have used an ephemeris properly. had discussed somewhere else. 68

Range of Astrological Predictions

In principle, astrologers claimed that they could answer any question that could occur to place in the subhuman region. The practically oriented astrologer, however, cared more about 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. In this text, the use of the dust board as a symbol of astrology, see Dīgglāsī, op. cit. ed. Eittt, p. 133, and al-Qīrī (d. 1248), Gāmil al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥassān Abū b. Yūsuf, Tārīkh al-ḥukmā, 66. See infra for a similar implication from the text of the nubābīn Ibn al-Uṣūrāwī.

67. It had been frequently published by Ernst H. G. Zangemeister, Richard, Arab Painting, New York, 1977., p. 121. For the depiction of a group of astrologers at childbirth, see Εἰσφρόγη, M. Φ, Saray-Alben Dietische Kiehlebende aus den Berliner Sammlungen, Weisbaden, Steiner, 1904, p. 16, corr. texts, tab. VIII.


70. Ibn Ḥūṣain, Abū Iṣḥāq, op. cit., text, p. 132.


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, (fig. 5), see, for example, the depiction in the miniature painting already published by Ernst H. G. Zangemeister, Richard, Arab Painting, New York, 1977., p. 121. For the depiction of a group of astrologers at childbirth, see Εἰσφρόγη, M. Φ, Saray-Alben Dietische Kiehlebende aus den Berliner Sammlungen, Weisbaden, Steiner, 1904, p. 16, corr. texts, tab. VIII.

73. Farāb, p. 155.

74. Idem., 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.

astrologers had predicted that no caliph would ever die in the city of Baghdad. 66 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 cornerstone of his house 77.

3. Muṣ'īl wa ʾiḥtiyārat (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 muṣ‘īl 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. ʾiḥtiyārat, 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 variety of questions could be answered. These ranged from the caliph al-Mu'tamid (883-912) consulting with his astrologer al-Mardî b. Bahar (d. 818) according to his war with his brother al-Amin as to whether he should surrender or not 78, 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 79. From later textual sources, we know of astrologers being either consulted before the engagement of armies 80 or levied to seal the factual direction of battles 81. Similar activities were carried out by an astrologer from thirteenth century Italy 82. Miniature paintings from 15th and 16th century Persia 83 confirm such functions. Moreover, astrologers decided on the opportune time for a journey 84 and acted as consultants to rulers together with other diviners. Their opinions were weighed against each other 85.

Caliphs consulted their astrologers every time they needed to decide an important matter, as was done by al-Mukhtar (902-906) when he wanted to declare his son heir to the

76. With the death of al-Amin (813) and al-Mutawakkil (861) in the same city, this prediction became a laughing matter for the opponents of astrology. See, for example, Ibn Qiyam al-Kindiyyi, op. cit., p. 120.


78. Farābī, p. 133.

79. Ibid., p. 143. Joshua's supposing of the sun is supposed to have confused the computations of this woman and hence the city could be conquered.

80. Sayhū, op. cit., p. 204, note 73, for an astrologer being consulted before the commencement of hostilities.

81. The astrologer Sāmī al-Dīn (1321) was supposed to have determined the time for the army's attack under the king al-Kāmil al-Nāṣir al-Dīn (1228), see Ibn Sūdād, Al-ʾAḥād al-ḥāšt, vol. II, p. 552-553.


83. The fact that such practices did take place in the Islamic world as well is illustrated by miniature paintings from 15th century Persia which depict astrologers in the midst of battles with astrological readings as if Chobino and Khaṣṣār Piriya, Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, published in Gray, Basíl, Persian Painting, NY, Rizzoli, 1977, p. 134. Another earlier 15th century painting depicting a similar battle with an unfamiliar, as far as I can tell. More about this below.

84. Farābī, p. 156.

85. Ibid., p. 208.

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-Sahāratī (d.1288), Nashāt al-arwaḥ wa rawdat al-ṣair fi taʾrīḫ al-balad al-islāmiyya, Al-Balad al-islāmiyya, Beirut, 1938, p. 22.


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 death of William II in a Sicilian painting from the 12th century published in Seward, Desmond. Alhambra, NY, New York, 1974, p. 56.

91. Ibn al-ʿIrī (Barbeau), Bābqūṣ al-taʾrīḫ al-dawlāt, ed. Sāḥibī, Beirut, 1900, repr. Dār al-Rāʾī al-

92. Farābī, p. 133.

MAGIC AND DIVINATION IN EARLY ISLAM

GEORGE SALIBA

The customs and practices connected with the natural year on the day of Núrúz (i.e., Persian New Year) required the presence of an astrologer who in all likelihood produced the already mentioned Buwayhid ruler, 'Adud al-Dawla, leave no doubt regarding the practice of 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 maglis (audience), « kiss the ground in front of him, and the other people in order to share in the festivities.

5. Mathematical problems. Since astrologers were skilled in astronomy and mathematics, they were sometimes asked to determine the astrological questions such as the require a rather sophisticated knowledge of spherical trigonometry. That such requests were determined by the otherwise unknown astrologer Bahrum.

6. Miscellaneous. In a curious story from the Sáhna, the astrologers were brought in to determine the parenthood of two children. In another story, we are told by Biruni that the astrologers had decided 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.

In summary, the range of astrological predictions and activities encompassed almost all aspects of human life.

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THE ROLE OF THE ASTROLOGER IN MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC SOCIETY

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, 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 came to their own horoscopes, at times even predicting their own times of death.

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 'Adud al-Dawla used to brag about being the student of 'Ali. We also have several paintings of multiple chroniclers in one picture, who are themselves depicted in the position of an astrologer, or contemplating the stars with a raised astrolobe in their hand. In the same category of iconographic representation, we note that the famous astronomer/astrologer Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (d. 1274) was represented in the same posture, thereby leaving no doubt that such characters with astrolobes 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.

Those astrologers who could not find a patron resorted to practicing on their own and in public, usually on a much lower level. 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-Uhuywa, mentioned above, which was apparently written for the muhākab-s of Egypt and Syria towards the beginning of the fourteenth century during the Mūmūnīk, the astrologer/chronicler Sahl bin al-Mu'min (Pirmikin), whose art was forbidden anyway, were to practice in the street and not inside the shops. 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 not 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.

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94. We are told that during the sickness of 'Adud al-Dawla, when his yearly horoscope had signaled a bad year for him, he was visited daily by al-Sadi al-Qadi in order to console him, but al-Sadi would be denied entrance, that he might not add to the astrologer's distress. (See: Ibn Sina, "Al' in his book and he told him that 'Adud al-Dawla would live against the predictions of the astrologers. But it is undeniable that the same story also confirms the existence of the sirk of the same dream such as the daily horoscope. Other day-by-day clemers were also executed by the astrologer al-Fadil. Farāg, p. 135.


96. Farāg, p. 209.

97. Figure 2. The text reads thus: « King Khosrow then looked for men who observed the star (i.e., astrologers) and was of friendly manner summoned them into his presence. He inquired how they were and the trouble with Amlawar (his father). The king was told that the duties of the police in his absence for the guards and the astrogamic troops. His art was forbidden anyway, were to practice in the street and not inside the shops. 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 not 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.


100. One such patron is depicted on a metal bowl, published in Islam and the Arab World: Faith, People, Culture, ed. J. W. Lewis, NY, Xicar, 1976, p. 263.


102. The famous sons of Mūsā b. Ṣulaim, who were themselves quite proficient in astrological matters, acted as confidential agents of the king of the Khurasan (847-861) and Mūsā b. Nebi (862-866). See G. Saliba, The History of Al-Tahab: The Crisis of the Abbasid Caliphate, NY, SUNY, 1985, p. 2, n. 3, Abū al-Qāsim Yūsuf b. Yūsuf al-Munājam was in charge of the hospital in Baghdad whose budget was in the order of 600 dinars per month because Sālim b. Thīb did not want to have anything to do with money. Qisr, 73/13, op. cit., p. 195.

103. Ibn al-Uhuywa, Ma'allum, op. cit., p. 182 f.
The painting by Ibn al-Uthaywa 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-Uthaywa 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-Uthaywa was writing. A century or so earlier, al-Qitî reports that the famous physician Ibn Rûqâyûd (d. 1008) of Egypt was a street astrologer before he took up medicine. Yet, earlier, al-Maqdashi (c. 960) reports in his geographical work, Asas al-tabaqāt that the astrologers of Damascus had their own quarters near Bāb Gāyūn. 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′tasim (833-842) 106. We should recall the charlatan astrologer who tricked Abū Maʿṣar 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. There were also those who practiced astrology as a hobby as they derived their income from elsewhere. Among those, one found physicians 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.

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.

Others would simply walk the streets shouting their services very much like the grocery cart-haulers in modern Middle Eastern cities. 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. One can easily detect the level of bargaining in such an ambiguous and unchanged trade which is quite understandable within a legal system that did not allow trading in undefined and useless commodities.

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 114; yet, another would not even refrain from going into a school of Islamic jurisprudence to cast horoscopes in public.

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.

The most secure and lucrative position, however, remained the holding of an office. From the first appointment of Abū Maṣar to the office of chief astrologer under al-Muʿazzz (966-969) 115, to the muqâṣṣâm bâlî under the Safavid sultans (c. 1700), to the Ottoman Turks of the nineteenth century 116, 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 Maṣar who used to claim that he predicted correctly and received a beating for his prediction 112.

Remuneration
As we have just mentioned, the most lucrative position was that of the chief astrologer (muqâṣṣâm bâlî) at some court. We have some evidence of the amount of pay the astrologer received in such circumstances. When Abū Maṣar was invested with that position under al-Muʿazzz, he received the following remunerations per month:

- 1 000 dinars in land revenues
- 3 000 dirhams in real estate.

On top of that, he received 1 000 dinars as an outright gift 113.

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 Gibrîl b. Baḥtîtĩ 111, the physician of Hārûn al-Rašîd (786-809), we find that amount to be rather modest. The body guards of Hārûn al-Rašîd also received some fabulous sums of money, in

104. Qīṭī, Taʿrîf, op. cit., p. 443.
106. Farâq, p. 190.
107. Ibid., p. 143.
108. Ibid., p. 144.
110. Cf. infra, taʿrîf.
111. Farâq, p. 196.
112. Ibid.
the order of 25 000 dinars, the sum being understandable since the caliph’s life was at stake.

But when this income is compared to that of the street astrologer who would cast a horoscope for two dinhars 123 or for as little as the price of one fish which was considerably less than ten dinhars 124, we find that Abū Ma‘ṣṣar’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 muqaddim ballī.

Around a century later, the salary of a vizier’s son was 500 dinars per month while that of a judge, chief of market police, was 100 dinars per month 125. Allowing for a decline in salaries during that century 126 and some exaggeration in the story of Abū Ma‘ṣṣar, 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 muhātīzah.

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 127. At a later period, we have a report that ʿAlī al-Dīn (1169-93) paid his astrologer 30 dinars per month 128. He paid an equal amount to his physician 129.

If the monthly salaries paid by ʿAlī 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 Nīrī hospital in Damascus at that time 130.

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 taṣīl (investment). The story of

122. Fargh Ibn al-Qazwī, Abār al-adhkūs, Cairo, Aḥrams edition, 1970, p. 185, says that the pay was 500 000 dinhars.
123. Fargh, p. 190.
124. Ibid., p. 196. An ophthalmologist was making about 70 dinars per month under al-Ma‘ṣṣar (813-833). Qutb, Tārīkh, p. 152.
126. Achatz, p. 269.
129. ʿAbd al-Lālīf al-Baghdādī, al-Infaq, op. cit.,., p. 539.
131. Abū Ma‘ṣṣar’s investiture as the chief astrologer at the court illustrates this technique very well. The title of the story in the Nīsāḥr wa ʿAbd al-Ma‘ṣṣar ʿuṣṣāfīthīn `inda al-Mu‘azzīn ʿaṣil, 817, al-Buḫārī, a famous ‘Abbāsīd poet, and Abū Ma‘ṣṣar invest an investment (ṣafī) with al-Mu‘azzīn here, hence our technical term taṣīl. The story goes on to say: "At one time al-Buḫārī and Abū Ma‘ṣṣar were facing a severe financial hardship. While on the road together, it occurred to them to visit al-Mu‘azzīn, who was in jail, and gain favor with him (yatāwaddadānī iḥläṣ) and invest with him (qāʾisāṭīn ṣindān ʿaṣil)." The story goes on to say that Abū Ma‘ṣṣar predicted that al-Mu‘azzīn 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‘azzīn (sallāmu ʿalāika iḥläṣ wa ʿinṣāfdūha). Obviously, Abū Ma‘ṣṣar did not get paid for his services at that time, and, as an investment, his services were probably volunteered.

Years later, al-Mu‘azzīn did indeed assume the caliphate and the whole prediction of Abū Ma‘ṣṣar came to be true. Abū Ma‘ṣṣar 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 (agraytul taka) a hundred dinars per month as an allowance (risqan) and thirty in real estate (nasūn) and I have made you the chief astrologer at the caliphate and ordered for you an immediate gift of one thousand dinars.

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. Nawbāt (d. 815) to the position of court astrologer under al-Manṣūr 133. This Nawbāt was the one who participated in casting the horoscope of the city of Baghdad in 815. In a different report we are told that he even accompanied al-Manṣūr on his last pilgrimage together with al-Manṣūr’s physician 134.

Another taṣīl is told of an astrologer who volunteered his services to ‘Ali b. ʿAbd al-Mūmīn when he set out to fight against al-Maʿmūn in Ṭūrān 135.

The last example of a taṣīl is reported about the only female astrologer as a historical personality that we know of to date. Bawrān, the daughter of al-Ḥasan b. Sālih b. Nawbāt (d. 845) and the wife of al-Mu‘azzīn 136 used to lift the astrolobe and look at the horizon of the caliph, al-Mu‘tāṣim. One day she noticed that a crisis (qaf) 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 clothing, chief of guards, 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‘azzīn, had confiscated from her 136.
Other techniques of upward mobility involved the father-son recommendation, as was done by various members of the Nawaib family 139, 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.

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 ephebemeter. Shâh-nâmeh, 16th century. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913 (13.228.14 fol. 578a).

Figure 2: Astrologers at the judgement of Sylvan. The first astrologer on the left-hand side of the painting is distinctly holding an astrolabe. Two of the others may be holding ephebemeters. Shâh-nâmeh, 16th century. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Arthur A. Hougham, Jr., 1970 (1970.301.24 fol. 164 v).

Figure 3: Astrologer on Nadir’s ark, the uppermost figure on the left-hand side with a raised astrolabe in his left hand. Courtesy of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, N.256. Akbar period. Attributed to Mihhâ. Colors and gold on paper: 28.5 x 15.6 cm.

Figure 4: Sai’d being instructed in the mathematical sciences, including astrology. From the Kitâb al-Ukhul of Sai’d. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the Estate of Sarah B. Hearst, 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 ‘necropolis’ 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 ephebemeter in a book form. The fourth seems to be arguing with the third, perhaps over the compassions. Al-Sam‘arabî, 16th century. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913 (13.228.27).

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. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913 (13.228.14 fol. 578a).
Figure 2: Astrologers at the judgement of Styvovsh. The first astrologer on the left-hand side of the painting is definitely holding an astrolabe. Two of the others may be holding ephemeris. Shah-namah, 16th century. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Arthur A. Moughon, Jr., 1970 (1970.361.24 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. Colored and gold on paper: 28.1 x 15.6 cm.
Figure 4: Sa'di being instructed in the mathematical sciences, including astrology. From the Kitabiyd of Sa'di.

Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Alexander Smith Cockran, 1913 (13.3281.10).

Figure 5: Astrologers working in a group to cast the horoscope for the birth of a prince. There seems to be a little crowd in the center foreground 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 the other two are holding an ephemeris in a book form. The fourth seems to be arguing with the third character over the composition.

Rose-Croix Collection, courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest, Acc. #17.31.12, North India, Mogul, late 16th-early 17th century. Opaque watercolor on paper: 83 x 271 mm.
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 *đ*) are ignored for purposes of alphabetization. Page numbers in italics refer to plates and illustrations.

Aaron, rod of 104, 105
*Abdul-Basid, legitimation of 315 n. 123
*Abd al-Karim al-Miri 226
*Abd Allah ibn Anis (or Ani) 218–20 n. 35
*Abd Allah ibn Khair al-Munajij 216–17, 320, 238 n. 61, 236 n. 88
*Abd Allah ibn Maqriz 349 n. 48
*Abd Allah ibn Maymun 65, 67
*Abd Allah ibn Mu'awiyah 208
*Abd Allah ibn Saba' 307–308, 309
*Abd Allah al-Asif (or al-Asfli) 218–19 n. 35
*Abd al-Rahman ibn Burhak al-Mawali 247
*Abd al-Rahman ibn Sa'id 260, 336 n. 94, 357
Administration by jins 33
Abydos alphabet and numerals 147, 148, 187
Abraham and divine names 110, 156; and Jupiter 312 n. 112; name on amulets 143, 144, Prophet on 314; sacrifices to jins redirected to 22
Abu 'Abd Allah ibn Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Lakhni al-Andalus 218 n. 54
Abu l-Anbas al-Šaybani 277
Abu Bakr, caliph 305
Abu Bakr ibn 'Abd al-Tawh 75
Abu Basri al-Baghdiri 281, 342 n. 9
Abu Dh'ud 96, 97, 290, 319–20
Abu Huyayn al-Tawhidi 345
Abu l-Husayn Badi 73
Abu l-Hasan al-Bakr 73
Abu l-Hasan al-Balkhi (AbuLHaitham al-Balkhi) 73
Abu l-Hasan al-Balkhi (AbuLHaitham al-Balkhi) xv, xvi, xxxviii, xix–x, 348
apprenticeship 348–49; on Aristotelian basis of astrology 60, 61, 278, 279–80, 338, 341; and charlatans 351–52, 354, 356; claims to ancient tradition 56; defence of astrology 347; on duration of Islam 315 n. 123, 338; geometric text attributed to 217–18; on Hermes 60, 61, 360 n. 75, 301 n. 76; Iranian sources 60, 61; and al-Kūsī 315 n. 123, 338; al-Mu'tamid's testing of 331; and al-Mu'tamid 359, 361; on Naturalia 217-18, remuneration 359; on Venus as planet of Isra' il 311 n. 112, 338; on weather forecasting 359; and **s** xxvi
Abū l-Muqaddas 138
Abū 'Umar al-Sissan 140
Abū Muslim 77, 310 n. 108
Abū Nūr, secretary of Nestorian Catholicus Timotheus 62
Abū Qurrā, Theodore 62
Abū Tammam 281, 342
Abū l-Walī al-Bijjini xxi
Abū l-Wafā' al-Baṣbāṣī ibn Fāzik al-Qa'id 349 n. 49
Abyssinia, zār ceremonies 25
Acker, Plato's 86
'Ād, people of 285
'Abd, belles-lettres works 344–45
'Abd al-Dawla 350, 356 and n. 94, 357
'Abd al-Malik 262
Africa, North xxi
geography xxi; jins 5–6; medicine men 58
Africa, sub-Saharan, zār ceremonies 25
Agathodaimon 60, 301 n. 76
Aggaš, 108, 324 n. 163
agriculture, jins and 50
ahl ('judgesn'), astrology 303
ahl al-šari'ī, jins described as 13
ahl al-banā', 143, 175
ahl al-banā', 144, 145–46, 174
Ahnaf ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān see under al-Rahmān
Ahnaf ibn Shabīb 77
Ahnaf ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Jalīl al-Sijjāt 287 n. 37
Ahnaf ibn al-Zayyāt, Abū Tālib 64

Figure 6: A astrologer on a ship. He is kneeling on the raised platform on the right-hand side with a ring-like jar being lowered into the water. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Alexander Smibl Cochran, 1933 (13.238.27).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>376-377</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ornithology also see birds
oryx in talismanic design xxiii
Ostanes 65
ostich agh and jinn 28, 29
Ottoman sultans 359
padlocks, talismanic xxvii
paintings, miniatures of Scholars 345–46, 348 n. 45, 349, 354, 355 n. 90, 357, 359, 364, 365–70; recommendations for study 363
panistry or chimnery (ibn-az-zirr) xi-
xil
Palmyra 39, 45, 47
papry
Egyptian magical 88; Helenistic Greek 113; seals on rivers 182
Paradise, trees of 104, 105, 107
paragrapheography ("enrolled-writing") xix-xxv paragraphegy 202
Patricians, three 108
patronage, under astrology
Paul of Tarsum 307–08
pay for astrologers
fines on legality 318, 325, 326; levels of 358–59, 359–60, 361
pentagram xxii
People of the Book
Ibn Tayyina on errors of 302–312, 317; see also Christianity; Jews; Mandaeans
Periatic philosophers 279, 309; see also Aristotle
Persuitt 46
Philip II
Philippus, John 77, 84 n. 63
philosophy
Abu Ma‘shar’s synthesis with astronomical traditions 278; associated with astrology 349, 352; Brethren of Purity and 66–68, 79; at court of Khwarazm-Shah ‘Alam; and syncretism of late antiquity 64–65, 70–71, 79–80; view of knowledge 50–57; see also individual philosophers, especially Aristotle; Plato; Plotinus; Priscian; Pythagoras; phylactery, Hebrew and Christian 128 physicians
licensing 75; practice astrology as hobby 358; remuneration 350, 360
physica
Aristotelian 62, 79, 204, 209, 278 n. 4; Greek Hermetic 57; al-Ilkî and 77; of Sabi-
ans of Harrân 60–71
physiognomy (ibn-al-xil) blending with other practices xii, xiii, in classical antiquity xii, xiii, and medicine xii, xiii
Picosare (Qâqût al-bahîn) xiv, xxii, 72, 184–85, 279, 207 n. 64
Pico della Mirandola, Adversus astrologiam
282
plagues of Egypt, ten 104, 108, 117
planets
as cause and administrators of events 207 n. 63; conjunctions 315 n. 123, 353, 355; cults of 69, 70, 297 n. 64; elemental natures 207; in geomancy 207; Helenistic doctrines on influences 343; Mandaeans and 64; Sabians of Harrân and 69, 70, 207 n. 64; seals of 105; seven xii, 25, 64, (Babylonians traditions) 64, (and days of week) 170–71, (iconogra-
phy) xiii, xxiii–xxiv, (letter correspondences) 105, (spirits) 170, 171; (spirits) of 16 n. 72, 25; tutelary of Islam 263, 311–17; and weather forecasting 205
plate, late Safavî astrological/geomantic, Kâhid Collection xi, 41
Plato and Platonism and Aristoi 77; Babylonian member of Academy 56; Brethren of Purity and 67; Ibn Tayyina on error of 305; I mam All 66; and Neoplatonism 74; and occultism 57; Placitus 63, al-Ilkî and 77, 78, 79, Republic 74; Sa’id ibn al-Andalusî on 71; Thabit ibn Qurra and 74; Timaeus 77; translation under al-Ma’ani ibn-62; see also Neoplatonism
Pléiades 248, 251, 253, 254, 255
Pleiôご紹介, Natural History 201–02
Plutarch 57, 67, 71, 81
poising, and jinn 14
Pitarch of Chaeronea 77, 78
poetry
inspiration by jinn 34; on those ignoring or defying astrology 362; pre-Islamic, and jinn 20
Poianaandras (Hermetic tract) 72
poison cups xxvi, 156, 172
police astrology 280, 318, 319, 342, 345, 357–58, 350
polyhedra 3–4, 41–42, 52–53
Pospányi, Philosophiae Historia 71, 74
possession by jinn 16, 10, 32–33, 90, 96–97, 110
prayers
amulets and talismans xxii, xxiii, 129, 133– 34, 175; Christian 136; defence against jinn 20; magic as form of 87, 129; times of 270
preaching 12, 33; see also chidhr; pre-Islamic period xxvi–xxvii
amulets and talismans xxii; annum; 1–2
Aramaic magical xvii; beliefs in spirits xvii,
takht (plast boxed) 220–21, 342 no. 10, 346, 348, 352, 369
takir (spelling out of names of letters) 163
tamilnic equipment xxvi–xxvii; see also individual items; especially anumals; beak; cloth; clothing; cup; road; seals
Talhad, on giant O.114
al-Tamimi, Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-
Tandrettah (transmigration) 65–66, 77
al-Tanakh, Al Abbas al-Musawi 345
al-Tarikh, Abu I Qasim al Ibn Muhammad
365
Tatf al-Din, observatory of, Istanbul 350
al-Tariqul, Abu Sa'id 213, 214
{arabic} ("bibliomania") xxiv
Tarik (divinatory method) 330
Tarik (Investment of work in hopes of reward) 300–301
Tatai (21, atlas, fixed ordering of geometric
figures) 205–70, 270–71
Tawars 310 n. 111
Tawhid Allah ("purity of God") 72–73, 132
al-Tawhid, Ali ibn al-Jayybi 281
Tayyab 23–24
tear-drop, figure of 117
Teeat 22, tears on an opening of 25, 24, 40 n. 257
Tegartnmentation 150, 110, 112
Tefik 10, 100
al-Thalit al Qura 65, 73, 74, 75, 82, 83, 281
Thalit al-Soum 76
Thaumaturgy xxiv–xxxiv, 74
109, 354
Thaupas 30
thaupas, angels connected with 111–12
Thaupas 30, 76
109, 354
Thaupas 30
thapa, object having a stamp 180
thauwa, bearing revelations 150 n. 14, 106, 116; see also genetical tables
Tabrin, Bashkir school 355
Tafrj (writing letter as spotted) 163
Tafir (Qur'anic exegesis) on jinn 26
Taha (name on talisman) 151
Tahmasp, Bald 60, 61
14, 17, 19 n. 98, 23, 28, 31, 52 no. 208; palm, on amulets 175; of Paradise 104, 105, 107
tribes of jinn 2, 16–18, 28; twelve, names on rod of Moses 108
trickery, magic as xxiv–xxvi
troplets, geometrical 216, 236, 237, 268–69, 275
Tripoli, al-Mu'tah al-makdah 179–80
truth and falsehood, divining of xxv
Tustum al-Hindhi xxiv, xxv, 212, 213, 214, 245, 256, 271
Tutori al-Makkah 30
Turks 92, 325 n. 164
al-Tusi, Naufal al-Din 216, 218, 350, 357
twelfth century interest in magic xxiv, 190
"Abd Allah Allah ibn Rafi 182
"Uqilah (Yemenite jinn) 11 n. 45
"Ugail Beg, observatory of, Saragord 350
"Ummar Ibn al-Khattab, caliph 57, 209
"Ummar II Ibn al-Asa, caliph 98
"Ummar Ibn al-Farrakhah al-Tabari 81 n. 109, 207, 209, 264 n. 64
"Ummar Ibn al-Sunnah 280
underworld, jinn and 12–14, 15, 36, 50
unity of God (Ikhwan al-Athf) 72–73, 132
al-Uqitish 281, 342
"Uwhad Ibn Muhammad 245 n. 29
"Usayd, Abu Ahmad 19
"Ushman, caliph 98, 307 n. 98, 308
"Uthman, "Uralis (archangel) 137, 159, 188, 197
"Umar, Marcus Terentius 211 n. 3
Venus, planet 283, 311–17, 338, 340
visual art conventions xx, xxiii–xl, xliii; see also paintings, miniature
"Uwais ("magic square") xxv, 164–65
rashid ("false") xxvi, 164–65
ra'is (pl. analogue) see as snakes
al-Walid ibn Uqba 97–98
al-Waqi', Abu "Abd Allah Muhammad 267 n. 37
warfare 107, 351, 354
"Wasil ibn "Abd 73
wasteland, cultivation of 22, 30, 36
weather, divining by animal behaviour xxx–xxxi; geomy on 267; jinn and 13, 15, 16, 17–22, 33, 30, 31, 36; objects retrieved from 117–18; rod of Moses and 104, 117, 118; underground 13, 107, 207; walking on xxiv, 110
al-Wâqi', caliph 355
weather forecasting ("ibn asbâfit al-jânu)
xxii, 201–10; "souf" system 202–204, 244–45; astronomical 201–205, 244–45; Calendrical of Córdoba and 207–208; in classical antiquity 201–202; in Europe 209–10; geometry and 271; al-Kifâ and xxvi, 205–10; Mesopotamianomen on tests 201; meteorological 201–205, 207–208; popular lore 200, 208; miscellaneous 201–
205, 244–45
weather phenomena, names of jinn denoting
week, seven days of angels and demons of 137, 139–40, 142, 170–71, 180; names 147; signs as
ignosed to 169–70, 178
wills of Diwaykan, in Mirdas 85; jinn and 13, 16, 17, 22–27, 30, 31; rod of Moses draws up water from 107
windwinds 18, 32
whislung, and jinn 20, 35
William II of Sicily 355 n. 90
wîlo-"the-wipes in 85
wind: Aristotel on origin of 204; astrology and xxiv; Byzantine division by xxvi; God's use to frighten communities 287, 288, 295; jinn responsible for 18, 32; Muhammad and 288; Théophraste on direction of 207; whirlwinds 18, 32
witchcraft
bewitching of Prophet 95, 131; Christianity and 89 n. 11; Qur’an on 90; social function 89; ‘Umar II and punishment for 98; Zoroastrians punishments 89 n. 11
wolves and jinn 11, 29
women
amulets 145–47, 155–56; astrologers 354, 361; astrologers’ clients 318, 352, 367, 358; magicians 87, 97; seal of Moses makes obedient to husbands 109
wonder-working, magic as xxix–xxx
wool, mixing with cotton 320 n. 136
words, mystic, on talismans and seals 145–52; see also names and under Hebrew
wounds, Turkish divination by al n. 119
writing, magic xxix–xxx
on amulets and talismans xxii, xxi–xxv; without dots 152–53; see also scripts
YAHWH (Jewish name of God) 136, 146
Yahya ibn Abi Marzik 348
Yahya ibn ‘Amit 78
Yahya ibn al-Rajiq xlix, 62, 204, 200
Yahya ibn Khalid 62
Yahya 311 n. 112
Yasin (name on talismans) 151
yawning, jinn admitted by 32 n. 172
year, divisions of see seasons
Yahyâ ibn al-Salt xxviii
Yahya 143
za’irja (letter-number interpretation) xxv–
xxvi
zafr (divinatory technique) 320 n. 140, 343,
352
Zakia bint ‘Ammâma, amulet of 155–56
al-Zarakhshiy 235
Zâmita (tribe) 215, 214
al-Zawâid, Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad ibn
‘Uthmân 213, 214, 256, 272
sr ceremonies 5, 17 n. 81, 19 n. 89, 25, 119
zar (“swindling”) 277
Zayd, Banû (hera) 17 n. 81
Zayd ibn Khalid 322
al-Zaydi, Abu ‘Abd Allah Ahmad 64
Zen of Verona 137 n. 64
50 254 n. 56
zidd ("free-thinker") 310
zodiac xxvi, xlii, 225, 245, 343
Book of the Zodiac xxvi; iconography on amulets xix, xxi–xxv, 172
Zoroastrians 57, 89 and n. 11
Zosimus 65