

## D. Sources

### Examples of translated materials for the study of Ottoman occultism III

Descriptions of various occult sciences in Ahmed Taşköprüzade's (d. 1561) encyclopaedia, *Miftāḥ al-sa'āda* ("Key to felicity"), completed in 1557:

[fourth tree, related to essences (*al-a'yān*) – branch of "natural science" (*'ilm al-ṭabī'ī*)]

The science of dream interpretation (*'ilm ta'bīr al-ru'yā*):

It is a science by which the relation (*munāsaba*) between the imaginations of the soul (*al-takḥayyulāt al-naḥsāniyya*) and the affairs of the unknown (*al-umūr al-ghaybiyya*) is recognised, in order to be moved (*yantaqal*, "to be transported") from the first to the second (!), in order to obtain information from it [i.e. from knowledge of the unseen], regarding the conditions of the soul in the material world.

Know that the dream is an act of the rational faculty of the soul (*fi'l li-l-naḥs al-nāṭiqa*). If there were no truth to it, there wouldn't be any point in bringing about these faculties in the human being. But God, the Wise, the High, is free from anything that is in vain.

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Dreams are of two kinds: The first kind, which is the prevalent one, are confused dreams (*adḡbāth aḡlam*) and sayings of the soul (*aḡādīth al-naḡs*) from lowly thoughts (*min al-khawāḡir al-radiyya*), because the soul—in this state—is like water that is surging with waves, not admitting of any form [i.e. not allowing for the imprint of any clear image]. The second kind, which is the less common one, are true dreams. And those are of two kinds: (1) a kind which does not require interpretation; (2) a kind which does require interpretation. And therefore an interpreter is needed to be skillful [in understanding] the difference between confused dreams and [real] dreams, and other things, in order to distinguish between spiritual and material expressions (*al-kalimāt al-rūḡāniyya wa-l-jismāniyya*), and to differentiate between the different classes of men—because there are men whose dreams are not true, and there are men whose dreams are true; then there are those who confirm this for them. And there are those who explain that they encountered things while asleep that were great to be imagined. And there are those among them who do not describe anything like it. Therefore, the Greeks said: the interpreter must apply himself to express the dreams of philosophers (*al-ḡukamā'*, lit. wise men) and kings, to the exclusion of [those of] low people (*dūn al-ḡaḡām*). That is because their dreams are part of prophecy. As the Prophet said: The true dream (*al-ru'yā al-ḡādiqa*) is part of the forty-six parts of prophecy.

The science of the principles of the stars (*'ilm aḡkām al-nujūm*, lit. knowledge of the precepts of the stars):

It is a science by which the shapes of the celestial spheres are deduced from their situations, that is the locations of the celestial spheres and the stars, by opposition (*muqābala*), conjunction (*muqārana*), trigon (*taltḡlīth*), hexagon (*tasḡīs*) and quadrature (*tarbī'*), and according to the events that come to pass in the world of generation and corruption—such as weather conditions, minerals, plants, animals  
...

Know that many scholars consider the science of astronomy absolutely forbidden. And some of them consider forbidden the belief that the stars have an impact in themselves. It has been transmitted on the authority of al-Shāḡī'ī, may God have mercy upon him, that he said: If the astronomer believes that there is no *mu'atḡḡhir* (i.e. no thing that effects) except God, but that God makes things run according to His custom, in that this or that comes about, and the *mu'atḡḡhir* is God, then there is, in my opinion, no harm in this. And as for blame, it must be brought upon those who believe in the power of stars to affect [the course of events].

The science of magic (*ʿilm al-siḥr*):

Know that magic is that of which the cause is hidden to the majority of minds and which is difficult to discover. The truth of it is everything, all the sayings and deeds, which enchant the minds and which guide the souls towards them, by wonder (*taʿajjub*) and appreciation and attentiveness. It is a science which explores the knowledge of the celestial states and the conditions of the stars and their connection with earthly matters (*irtibāṭihā maʿa al-umūr al-arḍiyya*) and in particular the three kingdoms of nature, so that from this mixture strange deeds appear and wondrous secrets, the reasons and causes of which are hidden.

And the benefit of magic lies in learning to guard oneself against it, because engaging in it is forbidden in the Law. Oh God, in order to defend against a magician who alleges to be a prophet. As for the science of it (i.e. as for the knowledge of magic), most declared it to be permissible. Some of them [even] declared it to be a collective duty (*farḍ kifāya*), because of the possibility that a magician might appear who claims to be a prophet, to show extraordinary things (*khawāriq*) by magic. So it is necessary for there to be someone who can defend the community against him.

And there are different “ways” in it [different kinds of magic]:

1. The Indian way: the purification of the soul —see the book *Mirʿāt al-maʿānī fī idrāk al-ʿālam al-insānī* (“The Mirror of Meanings concerning the Grasping of the Human World”).
- 2. The way of the Nabateans: using spells (*ʿamal al-ʿazāʿim*, doing incantations, lit. “firm resolutions”) at appropriate times. See the book *Siḥr al-nabaṭ* (“The Magic of the Nabateans”) by Ibn Waḥshiyya.
- 3. The way of the Greeks: Making the celestial spheres and the stars subservient spiritually (*taskhīr rūḥānī al-aflāk wa-l-kawākib*). See the *Kitāb al-wuqūfāt li-l-kawākib* (“The Book of the Investigations into the Stars”); *Kitāb Ṭīmāūs li-Aṣṭūṭālīs* (the *Timaeus* of Aristotle [*sic!*]); his letters to Alexander; the *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* of al-Majrīṭī.
- 4. The way of the Hebrews and the Copts and the Arabs: To invoke names, the meaning of which are unknown, as if they were oaths (*aqsām*) and spells (*ʿazāʿim*), as if they (the Hebrews, Copts and Arabs) were determined to make powerful angels subservient to the *jinn* by way of these spells. Works written on this type of magic include: the *Kitāb al-jambara* by al-Khwārizmī, *al-Īdāḥ* by al-Andalusī, *Kitāb al-ʿAmā* (“The book of blindness”) by Khalaf b. Yūsuf al-Dasmāsānī, *Kitāb al-basātīn li-istikhdām al-uns li-arwāḥ al-jinn wa-l-shayāṭīn* (“The book of the Gardens to

make human beings subservient to the spirits of the *jinn* and the *shayṭāns*”), *Bughyat al-nāshid* (“The object of desire of the one who seeks”), *Maṭlab al-qāṣid* (“The [object of the] search of the one who pursues [something]”).

The science of talismans (*ilm al-ṭilasmāt*):

The meaning of the word *ṭilasm* is: a knot that cannot be untied (*‘aqd lā yunḥall*). It is said that the name is inverted (i.e. the word needs to be read backwards), i.e. *musallit*, because it is of the essential substance(s) of subjugation and ruling over (*min jawābir al-qabr wa-l-tasalluṭ*) [i.e. the essence of a talisman is that it has the power to subjugate and rule over that against which it is used or for the purpose of which it is used]. It is a science that seeks to explore the quality (*kayfiyya*, lit. “the how-ness”) of the mixture of the heavenly, active faculties (*al-qiwā al-samāwiyya al-fā‘āliyya*) with the earthly, passive faculties (*bi-l-qiwā al-arḍiyya al-munfa‘ila*), at appropriate times, in terms of the desired acts and effects, together with appropriate, invigorating incense (*bakhūrāt*), which draws towards the spirituality of that talisman (*jālība li-rūḥāniyyat dhālika al-ṭilasm*), so that from these matters strange acts might come about in the world of generation and corruption. And the science of talismans is easier to handle than the science of magic, because its principles and causes are known.

The science of *sīmiyā*?

This is a name applied to types of magic that are not real (*yutlaq ‘alā ghayr al-ḥaqīqī min al-sīḥr*), as is well-known. The main substance of it is occurrences of fantastic images (*mithālāt khayāliyya*) in the atmosphere (*fī-l-jaw*), which do not have an existence in sense-perception (*fī-l-ḥiss*). And it is applied to the bringing into existence (*ijād*) of these images in their forms (*ṣuwar*, “images”, “shapes”) in sense-perception; and they are [or become] forms in the substance [or element] of air (*fī jawhar al-bawā*). Because of this, their passing is quick, according to the speed of the transformation (*taghayyur*) of the substance of air... It is quick to receive and quick to pass, because of its humidity.

As for the quality (*kayfiyya*, the “how-ness”) of the occurrences of these forms (*ṣuwar*) and their causes (*‘ilalubā*), it is a hidden matter—only the “people of *sīmiyā*” examine these things.

Our aim here is not to uncover the confusion from these images (*amthāl*) and to summarize the situation, so that the magician (*al-sāḥir*) might pursue some-

thing—from special properties (*khawāṣṣ*) or oils (*adhān*) or special liquiscents (*māʾiʿāt kbāṣṣa*) or special words (*kalimāt kbāṣṣa*), which bring about special visions (*mukhayyālāt*) and a perception of the senses, by eating and drinking [some substances prepared in a special way] or something along these lines. And there is no truth to it ... The benefit of this science and its aim are both very obvious. The word *ṣimiyāʾ* is Arabicised Hebrew (*ʿibrānī muʿarrab*); its origin is *ṣim yab*, which means “the name of God”.

The science of *kīmiyāʾ* (“alchemy”):

It is a science the aim of which is to strip from mineral gems (*al-jawābir al-maʿdaniyya*) their special properties (*khawāṣṣ*) and to put them to use for special purposes, which they didn’t have. The word alchemy (*al-kīmiyāʾ*) is Arabicised Hebrew (*ʿibrānī muʿarrab*); its origin is *kīm yab*, which means “a sign from God” (*āyatun min Allāh*). People disagree greatly with regard to it. Many hold the opinion that it is impossible, except that they do not provide evidence for the fact that it is impossible... As for those who say that it is possible: among them is Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. He argued for the possibility of it in his two books, *al-Mabāḥith al-mashbriqiyya* and *al-Mulakḥkhaṣ*. The upshot of his argument is that the nonprecious metals (*filizzāt*) are all combined in the specificity (*mushtaraka fi-l-nawʿiyya*, lit. “sharing in the characteristics relative to the type”) and their external character traits (*al-akhlāq al-ẓāhira*) are only earthly matters (*umūr arḍiyya*), the transformation of which is permissible. Because trying to change [things] in nature (*al-istiḥāla fī al-ṭabīʿa*) is not forbidden. And from among those who claim that it is impossible are Ibn Taymiyya and al-Jawharī and Ibn al-Ṣāʾigh, except that they did not provide any convincing argument that would bolster their opinion that it is impossible, let alone [anything that would provide] certainty. And in this vein, Yaʿqūb al-Kindī wrote a treatise on the impossibility of it. But if only he had actually provided an argument that would support this supposition!

Know that this science was a miracle (*muʿjiza*) of Moses, which he taught to Qārūn, and what happened happened. Then it [i.e. the science of alchemy] appeared among the giants (*jabābira*) of the people of *Hūd* and they practiced it. They built a city of gold and silver, the like of which had never been created in the lands. And among those who became famous for attaining it [i.e. the science of alchemy] was Muʿayyid [al-Ṭughrāʾī], of whom it was said: He attained the elixir (*al-iksīr*), which is the medicine the philosophers (*al-ḥukamāʾ*) prepare; they cast it onto the body, when it is affected by dissolution [when it is in a passive state of melting away]; and it transforms it, like poison transforms the body when it is poured over it (or: when

it comes into contact with it). But it does so to make it better, not worse (lit. “for renovation, to the exclusion of corruption”). They call the material of this medicine “the philosopher’s stone” (*al-ḥajar al-mukarram*); often they also say: “the stone of Moses”, because it was Moses who taught it to Qārūn. The condition (*ḥāl*) of this medicine differs according to the strength of the preparation or its weakness, to the extent that al-Ṭuḡhrāʾī cast a *mithqāl* of the elixir onto sixty-thousand other minerals, and it turned to gold ...

If you know this, then know that the origin (*aṣl*) of this art is that the non-precious metals, which are the essences (*al-jawāhir*), are not burnt by fire, but melt instead—and, once fire leaves them, they return to their initial state. They are these seven objects (? *munṭariqāt*): gold, silver, copper, iron, tin, lead and zinc. They are the same in their essences (*fi dhawātibā*). The difference between them is not in their quiddities (*mā-hiyyāt*), but in their accidents (*aʿrād*, “contingent, non-essential characteristics”) ... The fabrication (*ṣanʿa*, lit. “work”, “manufacture”, “art”) [of gold and silver] does not stand in the place of the act of nature (*fiʿl al-ṭabīʿa*), despite the fact that in nature there are also many conditions, so that the chance of them coming about is rare. It is because of this that gold and silver are [in fact] rare among the minerals ... That is to say, mercury, which is the origin of gold and silver, must be of utmost purity in the mineral, and its maturity completed; then pure sulphur is mixed with it, so that the atoms (*ajzāʾ*) of the two of them become according to the original proportion (*ʿalā al-nisba al-aṣliyya*). And the heat of the mineral must be in equilibrium, no accident of coldness or dryness should be exposed to them, nor any of the things that are salty (*mulūḥāt*, “saltinesses”) and bitter (*marārāt*, “bitternesses”) and sour (*ḥumūḍāt*, “acidities”, “sournesses”). Then, from that, over the course of [a long] time—with the permission of God, the Creator, the Wise, the Powerful and Knowing—pure gold will be produced. And, in the same way the other precious stones—God, the Ultimate Effective Cause, bless whatever He wishes!

[sub-branches of natural sciences; sub-branches of physiognomy]

The science of fortune-telling (*ʿilm al-ʿirāfa*):

It is the knowledge of inference (*istidlāl*) from some current occurrences to some future occurrences, by correlation (*munāsaba*) or by the hidden resemblance (*mushābaha*), or the connection, which exists between the two; either because of their nature as known [aspects] of *one* matter. Or because of the nature of that which is in the present an indication for that which is in the future (*mā fi-l-ḥāl ʿilla li-mā fi-l-mustaqbal*). On the condition that the connection between the two

of them is hidden; that it can only be seen by (very unique) individuals—either through experience, which they witnessed in the likes of them, or through a very gentle condition in their souls (*bi-ḥāla mūdīʿa fī anfusihim*), in their *fiṭra* (natural condition), inasmuch as a share of the unseen overpowers the one who looks at them, whom the Prophet called “speaker” (*muḥaddith*, “narrator”), and he is the one “afflicted” in supposition and physiognomy (*muṣīb fi-l-ẓann wa-l-firāsa*)—as we have explained in the [section on the] science of physiognomy.

[sub-branches of astrology]

Know that the decrees (*ahkām*, “rules,” “principles”) of the stars are not the same as the science (*ʿilm*) of the stars, because the latter is known by arithmetic (*ḥisāb*), which is a branch of mathematics (*min furūʿ al-riyāḍī*); while the former is known by the evidence (*dalāla*, “sign,” “indication”) of nature (*ṭabīʿa*), according to the “traces” (*āthār*), i.e. it is a branch of the natural sciences (*furūʿ al-ṭabīʿī*).

The science of choices (*ʿilm al-ikhtiyārāt*):

It is a science which looks into the decrees (*ahkām*) of every moment (*waqt*) and time (*zamān*)—of the good and the bad—of times one needs to be careful to start things, times at which it is recommendable to pursue things, and times at which the pursuit of things is “so-and-so” (*bayn wa bayn*). Every moment has a special relation to some good things, and some of them to bad things, depending on the occurrence (*kawn*) of the sun in the zodiac (*fi-l-burūj*), and the moon in its mansions (*fi-l-manāzil*), and the positions occurring (*al-awḍāʿ al-wāqīʿa*) between the two of them, in terms of opposition (*al-muqābala*), quadrature (*tarbīʿ*), hexagonal relation (*tasdīs*) and the like. It is even possible—because of the exactitude (*dabt*) of these conditions (*aḥwāl*)—to determine a [good] moment for every affair one intends: like travel and building [things] and cutting clothes and other matters. The benefit of this science is evident in a way that is not hidden from anyone.

The science of geomancy (*ʿilm al-raml*):

It is the inference [of evidence] (*istidlāl*) by way of the twelve shapes [of sand] (*bi-ashkālībi al-itḥnā ʿashar*), according to the conditions of a given matter at the time of the question (*ʿalā aḥwāl al-masʿala ḥīna al-suʿāl*). Most of the matters are affairs of clear estimation, pursuant to insufficient experiences (*ʿalā tajārib ḡhayr kāfiyya*). That is because they say that there are twelve signs of the zodiac, and each one of them necessitates (*yaqtaḍī*, “makes necessary”) a particular letter, and

a particular shape of the shapes mentioned. So the time of the question of what is desired necessitates [some particular] positions of the signs of the zodiac and the faculties of the particular shape from the sand. These shapes—because of their meanings (*madlūlāt*) from the signs of the zodiac—indicate special decrees (*aḥkām makḥṣūṣa*), which correspond to the positions of the signs of the zodiac. But they are relative (*umūr taqrībiyya*), not certain (*lā yaqīniyya*) ... This science [i.e. geomancy] was Idrīs' miracle (*mu'jiza*). The external meaning of the *ḥadīth* is that it is possible to examine sand when it comes to some matters. But that is not the case. If the miracle had made it possible for humans, then there would not be a difference between the miracle and the art [of geomancy]. And then the prophet would not be different from anyone else. Yet, it is possible for a saint to bring about (*zūbūr*, to make appear) extra-ordinary things (*khawāriq li-l-ʿādāt*).

The science of omens (*ʿilm al-fāl*):

It is a science by which one learns of coming events, by way of a sudden occurrence of a matter, by speech, or by hearing of it from someone, or by opening a copy of the Qurʾān, or by words of someone who believes in it from the prophets or saints. The subject matter of this science is obvious from its definition. Its benefit and advantage are like those of geomancy. But the most correct [thing about it], which the Law bears witness to, is its permissibility; while experience [bears witness] to its truthfulness. Drawing omens (*al-tafāʿul*) is done with the holy Qurʾān. The practice of drawing omens this way has been passed down from the companions of the Prophet and from the pious forefathers, may God be pleased with them all. The practice of “opening” (*fath*) an omen from a copy of the Qurʾān is very widespread among the people. But the best is the expression of meanings (*al-iʿtibār bi-l-maʿāni*) without words and letters. The Prophet used to draw omens; and good omens used to please him. But he would not draw bad omens (*lā yataṭayyir*, “he would not practice *ṭīra*”). When he emigrated to Medina and drew close to the town, he heard a man shout: “Oh Sālim!” So he said to his companions: “He greeted us” (lit. *sallamanā*, “he extended peace and blessing upon us”, “he protected us from harm”). And when he entered Medina, he heard another man say, “Oh Ghānim!” So the Prophet said: “He granted us [booty]” (*ghanamanā*). Then, when he descended, he came with fresh dates and said: “the town is *ḥalāl* for us.” There are many examples of this.

As for drawing bad omens (*al-taṭayyur*): The Prophet forbade it, saying: “No *ṭīra*, no *hāmma* and no *ṣifr*!”<sup>1</sup>

1 “Do not engage in *ṭīra*, observing owls (or prognosticating based on venomous reptiles)

## The science of casting lots (*‘ilm al-qur‘a*):

It is a science by which one seeks to learn what will happen in the future, by way of dropping (*wuqū‘*) shapes (*shakl min al-ashkāl*), with letters written on them (*allatī tuktab ‘alayhā ḥurūf*). In this way information about what one wants is sought. This is exactly like geomancy. You can have an appreciation of its conditions from it. It’s just weaker than geomancy, in terms of the indications it can give—although geomancy is weak already, as we have mentioned.

## The science of *ṭira* and *zajr*

This is the opposite of *fāl*. While the aim of *fāl* is to find out whether or not one should go ahead with a matter, in the case of *zajr* it is the question of whether one should “flee” from a matter. It is the inauspicious feeling (*tashā‘um*) one gets from a thing that repels the eyes and ears—that from which the soul flees, that which is not natural (*mimmā laysa bi-ṭabi‘ī*). As for the aversion of the eyes and ears from what is natural, like man’s aversion from the screeching of iron and the sound of the donkey, it does not belong to this...

## [sub-branches of magic (*fī furū‘ al-siḥr*)]

Know that, seeking to bring about events—when it is only by the influence of the soul (*al-ta‘thīr al-naḥṣānī*, lit. by effects produced by the soul)—is [called] magic (*al-siḥr*). If it is [carried out] by way of seeking the help of (*isti‘āna*, “resorting to”) the celestial spheres, it is “calling upon the stars” (*da‘wa al-kawākib*, “the invocation of the stars”); if it is by way of mixing heavenly and earthly powers, it is [the science of] talismans; if it is by way of seeking help from special natural properties (*isti‘āna bi-l-khawāṣṣ al-ṭabi‘iyya*), either by recitation—then it is the science of special properties (*‘ilm al-khawāṣṣ*); or by writing—then it is *nīranjāt*; or by actions other than the two [i.e. other than recitation or writing]—then these are spells (*al-ruqā*, “incantations,” “charms,” “magic”); if it is by way of seeking help from innocent spirits (*al-arwāḥ al-sādhija*, “plain spirits”), it is [called] incantation (*al-‘azā‘im*); if it is by making appear these spirits in the forms (*qawālib*) of ghosts (*ashbāḥ*), it is [called] the science of summoning (*istiḥdār*, “seeking to bring into the presence”); it is [also] called “the subjugation of the *jinn*” (*taskhīr al-jinn*). As for reports about events which have not come about, either in the

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or that which is “void” (*ṣifr*, lit. “empty,” “zero”)!” For *ṭira* see *EI2*, “*Fa’l*” and “*Iyāfa*” (T. Fahd); for *hām* or *hāma/hāmma*, see *EI2*, “*Ṣadā*” (T. Fahd).

past, or the present, or the future, that is the science of divination (*'ilm al-kihāna*, “sooth-saying”).

Furthermore, human beings—just as they are able to make incorporeal things (*mu-jarradāt*) appear (*istiḥdār*), they can also make that which is present disappear from sense perception (*taghyīb al-ḥādir 'an al-ḥiss*). This is called the science of concealing (*ikhfā'*, lit. “hiding”, “making disappear”). And likewise the act of making matters disappear that are present (*ikhfā' al-umūr al-ḥādira*), from [before the eyes of] those who are present (*'an al-ḥādirīn*); this is called tricks (*ḥiyal*). There are many examples of it. So let us list these sciences in this manner.

The science of divination (*al-kihāna*):

It is the coming together (*munāsaba*, lit. “convenience”, “relation”, “agreement”) of human spirits with incorporeal spirits—from *jinn* and demons (*shayāṭīn*)—and seeking to learn from them (*isti'lāmuhā minhā*) about the particular states (*al-aḥwāl al-juz'iyya*, the states that are characterised by particularities) occurring in the world of generation and corruption. But they pertain especially to future affairs. There was a lot of that among the Arabs ...

Yet it is understood from what Imām Rāzī has said in his book *al-Sirr al-maktūm* (“The hidden secret”) that divination is of two categories: One category stems from the particular characteristics of some souls. This cannot be acquired. Another category is attained by occupying oneself with incantations and the invocation of the stars. There are various ways of this mentioned in *al-Sirr al-maktūm*. But it is clear from this book that engaging in this is forbidden in our *sharī'a*. One has to guard oneself against acquiring and attaining it. Know that the first category, which cannot be acquired (actively or on purpose), is part of the science of fortune-telling (*'ilm al-irāfa*, “divination”). We have warned you about it here, so don't be heedless!

The science of *nīranjāt*:

This is the Arabicised form of “*nīrang*”, which means falsifying (*al-tamwīb*) and making belief (*al-takhyīl*). It is to produce (*izḥār*) strange harmonies (*gharā'ib al-imtizājāt*) between active and passive faculties, composed, altogether, from the macrocosm and the microcosm (*al-qiwā al-fā'ila wa-l-munfa'ila wa bi-l-jumla mu'allifa bayna al-ālam al-akbar wa-l-aṣghar*), in order to produce desired effects of love and hate, of attraction and aversion. Examples for it can be found in special

writings (*kitābāt makḥṣūṣa*), composed by spiritual forces (*rūḥāniyyāt*), unfolded (*mabthūtha*) in the world. Though the written signs [used in this science] have unknown significations (*kitābāt majhūla al-dalālāt*), it is as if they were the numbers and letters of primordial [forces?] (*li-l-awāʿil*), and though it is unknown why the specific properties [of these signs] cause the effects they cause, the effects [themselves] are known (*khawāṣṣuhā majhūla al-limmiyya, maʿrūfa al-anniyya*).

Majrīṭī's *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* and Ibn Waḥshiyya's *Asrār al-shams wa-l-qamar* have been written about this [i.e. in this field].

The “science of secret properties” (*ʿilm al-khawāṣṣ*) [meaning the properties of the names of God and of Qurʾanic excerpts]:

It is a science which examines the special properties connected to the recitation (*qirāʾa*) of the names of God, Almighty, or His book—from the psalms and the gospel and the Qurʾān. It follows (methodically, in terms of arrangement) (*yatarat-tab*) all of these names and the invocations (*daʿwāt*) of special properties that relate to them (*munāsaba labā*, “that are appropriate to them”). Know that the soul, because it busies itself with the names of God and the invocations that appear in His revealed books, turns to His Holiness and empties itself of all other matters that preoccupy it. So, by way of this turning towards [God] and emptying itself [of other preoccupations], it is inundated by effects (*āthār*, lit. “traces”) and lights (*anwār*) which match its readiness, which is produced due to its occupation with these matters. [There is also] the resort to (*istiʿāna*, “seeking the help of”) the special properties of medicines, inasmuch as the observer [thinks that this is because of an act of magic. As was related, that in a church in the lands of the Rūm, six stones of magnetite, equal in power, were put on its four walls, its roof and its ground; and an iron cross was put into the air, to the extent that the attraction of these six stones was equal, so that no one stone was stronger than the others in attraction. The cross persisted suspended in the air—always—without any tool that was holding it apparently. So a group of Christians was enthralled.

The science of *ruqā* (“spells”, sg. *ruqya*):

It is a science that seeks the pursuit of (*mubāshara*, “the direct/physical cause”, “direct contact”, “applying oneself to”) specified actions (*aʿfāl makḥṣūṣa*), which are arranged (*tatarattab*, “put into a specific order”) through a special attribute (*khāṣṣiyya*) by specific “traces” (*āthār makḥṣūṣa*), like knots of string (*ʿuqūd al-khayṭ*) and hair and the like. *Ruqya* is often used in the case of illnesses: like ailments of the eye,

or toothache, or other kinds of afflictions of the eye, and the like. In Persian, *ruqya* is “*afsūn*”, i.e. “*āb sūn*” (“like water”), because they mostly recite it over water. And the one afflicted drinks it, or it is poured over him ... They claim that it was unveiled from the *jinn* or heard in a dream, while asleep. And that is what the word of God indicates: “[I seek refuge] from the evil of those who blow on knots (*al-naffāthāt fi-l-‘uqad*)” (Q 113:4). But the Law permits *ruqya*, in as much as the Prophet said, when he saw a girl with yellowness in her face: “Have recourse to *ruqya*—she has been affected by the evil eye (*al-naḡra*).”

The science of incantations (*‘azā’im*):

It is a science through which the subjugation of spirits is known (*kayfiyya taskbīr al-arwāḡ*, “the way spirits are made subservient”) and how they are used for one’s own purposes, like the subjugation of angels and *jinn*. To this belongs what the masters of [delusive] imaginations (*aṣḡāb al-awḡām*) do, and strong souls (*al-nufūs al-qawiyya*), which have an effect upon a thing, when they become incorporeal (*tajarradat*, “strip themselves”, “free themselves”) and turn towards it. The closest witness to this, in the *sharī‘a*, is the [acceptance of the idea of the] affliction by the evil eye (*iṣbat bi-l-‘ayn*). For the Prophet confirmed it, saying: “It is true.” ...

The science of summoning (*‘ilm al-istiḡḡār*):

It is the attempt to make descend the spirits, in the forms of men (*istinzāl al-arwāḡ fi qawālīb al-aṣḡā*). Know that the subjugation (*taskbīr*) of *jinn* or angels is something other than making them corporeal (*min ḡayr tajassudihā*) and making them appear (*ḡudurihā*, “making them present”) in front of you. It [i.e. the subjugation of them] is called “the science of spells” (*‘ilm al-‘azā’im*), provided that you attain your goals by way of these two things. As for the presence (*ḡudūr*) of *jinn* before you and their materialisation (*tajassuduhā*) in your sense perception, it is called the science of “summoning” (*istiḡḡār*). It is not dependent on whether you achieve your goals by way of it or not. As for the summoning (*istiḡḡār*) of angels, if it is a heavenly one, his “materialisation” (*tajassudubu*, “his assumption of corporeal form”) can only be achieved by prophets. If it is an earthly angel, it depends.

The science of invoking stars (*‘ilm da‘wa al-kawākib*):

Know that you have just learnt that summoning *jinn* and some angels is possible. Likewise, it is possible to subjugate the spirituality (*rūḡāniyya*) of the stars, especially the one of the “seven moving ones” [i.e. the seven planets]. One can achieve

by way of its important goals ... And this is called “calling upon the stars.” It is the magic of the Sabians, to whom God had sent Abraham, in order to invalidate their position and refute them.

As was related: a king occupied himself with calling upon (*da‘wa*, “invoking”) Saturn. An enemy—a great king—appeared, but he was not able to fight him. His manservant was at a loss at this, while the king occupied himself with calling upon Saturn, rather than preparing for war. While he was sitting with his close associates and boon companions, something came down from the sky. The people at the gathering were scared and scattered, but the king remained fixed in his place. When it descended and fell down on the ground, in front of the king, he called his companions and they saw a vessel of copper, triangular in shape. In it was the head of the king, who had fought him, cut off. They rejoiced at this, and the army fled. So the king was victorious through the spiritual power (*rūḥāniyya*) of Saturn. And he said: “You deemed me foolish to busy myself by calling upon [Saturn]. But this is the immediate benefit of doing so”. So all of them believed firmly in invocation. And they desisted from contesting the king in engaging in it. As for the nature of the vessel, being of copper and of a triangular shape, it is due to the necessity of the nature of Saturn from that mineral and that shape. And God knows best regarding the truth.

The science of “spectacled scripts” (*‘ilm al-falaqīrāt*, Gk. *χαρακτήρες*):<sup>2</sup>

These are long lines (*kbuṭūṭ ṭawīla*), which are joined by letters and shapes, i.e. rings (*ḥalaq*) and circles (*dawā‘ir*). They claim that they have effects by sympathetic quality (*lahā ta’tbīrāt bi-l-khāṣṣiyya*).<sup>3</sup> Some of them are read (*maqrū‘*). We have seen many of them on diverse papers, but we have not seen a single work written about them. Nor have we considered the way in which they are made. We have not tested if they have an effect or not. They remain obscure to us.

The “science of making disappear” (*‘ilm al-ikḥfā‘*):

It is a science by which one knows how a person can make himself disappear from those present, in as much as he (still) sees them, but they do not see him. There are invocations and spells that belong to this science (*lahā da‘wāt wa-‘azā‘im*), but

2 See M. Ullmann, *Natur- und Geheimmwissenschaften* (Leiden 1972), 362, as well as M. Günther and D. Pielow (eds.) *Die Geheimnisse der unteren und oberen Welt* (Leiden 2019), index: “Brillenbuchstaben”.

3 For *khāṣṣiyya* as “sympathic quality” see Ullmann, *Natur- und Geheimmwissenschaften*, 395.

most of it is conjecture [i.e. not certain]. For this is not possible, except by saints (*wilāya*), by way of tearing the custom of nature (*bi-ṭarīq kharq al-‘āda*), not by applying oneself directly to the occasions along which that custom [of nature] is organised (*lā bi-mubāsharat asbāb yatarattab ‘alayhā dhālika al-‘āda*). We hear about this often. But we have not seen it happen, nor have we seen anyone do it. However, instances of extraordinary feats or occurrences (*khawāriq al-‘ādāt*) cannot be denied. Especially on the part of the saints of this *umma*. May God sanctify their secrets!

[Sixth tree, religious sciences – branch of Qur’anic exegesis (*tafsīr*) – sub-branches of Qur’anic exegesis]

The science of the numbers of harmonious agreement (magic squares) (*‘ilm a‘dād al-wafq*):

Harmonious agreement (*al-wafq*): quadratic tables (*jadāwil murabba‘a*) with quadratic squares (*buyūt*), into which numbers are placed, or letters instead of the numbers—provided that the sides (*adlā‘*) of these tables and their diagonals (*aqṭār*) are equal in number, and [provided] that there is no recurring number in these squares [i.e. each number should feature only once in the table]. There are many beneficial properties (*khawāṣṣ fā‘ida*) of this equilibrium of numbers, coming from the spiritual quality (*rūḥaniyya*) of these numbers or letters. And from them derive wondrous effects and strange effluences, provided that the appropriate moments and noble hours are chosen ... This science is from among the branches of the science of numbers (*‘ilm al-‘adad*), in terms of arithmetic (*ḥisāb al-a‘dād*), and from among the branches of the science of special properties (*‘ilm al-khawāṣṣ*), in terms of its effects and benefits ... In fact, this science is a sea, with no shore. It ends in the science of unveiling (*mukāshafa*), in whose seas the minds of the scholars and wise men have drowned.

The science of the properties of letters (*‘ilm khawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf*):

Know that the letters mentioned in the openings/beginnings of the chapters of the Qur’ān, indeed the letters generally (*muṭlaqan*), have great secret properties (*khawāṣṣ jalīla*) and abundant advantages, which are known by the experts in this science. The Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī has set forth this science in the books he composed about it.

The science of spiritual properties (*‘ilm al-khawāṣṣ al-rūḥāniyya*):

Of the agreements of numbers and letters (*al-awfāq al-‘adadiyya wa-l-ḥarfīyya*) and the fractions of numbers and letters (*al-taksīrāt al-‘adadiyya wa-l-ḥarfīyya*). It is a science that seeks to examine the quality (*kayfiyya*) of the mixture of the numbers and letters, according to a proportional and even (harmonious) relationship (*‘alā al-tanāsub wa-l-ta‘ādul*); in so far as active spirits (*arwāḥ mutaṣarrifa*), connected to this equilibrium (*ta‘dīl*), influence the opposites (*qawābil*), according to what is desired and aimed at, from the arrangement (*tartīb*) of numbers and letters, and their qualities (*kayfiyyātībā*). Its object [i.e. the subject of this science] are the numbers and letters; its aim is to reach the religious or worldly or other-worldly objectives; its goal, aim and benefit are obvious. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Maghribī wrote something beneficial in this area; and, likewise, the Shaykh Aḥmad al-Būnī; and others. This science can be considered a branch of arithmetic (*‘ilm al-ḥisāb*), in view of the arrangement of numbers (*tartīb al-a’dād*), and a branch of geometry (*‘ilm al-handasa*), from the point of view of the harmonious arrangement (*ta‘dīl*) of these numbers or letters in tables of “agreement” (*fi-l-jadāwil al-wafqīyya*). But because of the fact that it can also be considered from among the [science of the] special properties of letters, considering that the agreement can be made in terms of letters, too, we have mentioned it [here] as part of the science of letters, which are from the special/secret properties of the Qur’ān.

The science of manipulating the letters and names [of God] (*‘ilm al-taṣarruf bil-ḥurūf wa-l-asmā’*)<sup>4</sup>:

This is a noble science, which is reached by diligent perseverance, according to specific conditions and a special exercise (*riyāda khāṣṣa*) applied to the special (secret) properties that pertain to these letters and names. Its subject matter and aim are obvious to the one who knows. It is said: This science covers 148 sciences. The books of the above-mentioned Shaykh ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and [those] of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Būnī are well-known in this science.

The science of the letters of light and darkness (*‘ilm al-ḥurūf al-nūraniyya wa-l-ḡulmāniyya*):

Know that they [i.e. certain scholars] have categorised some letters as “letters of light” and some as “letters of darkness” and they have judged it so, because neither

4 For *taṣarruf*, see p. 172, fn. 10, below.

in the *Fātiḥa*, nor at the beginnings of the [other] chapters [of the Qur'ān which contain the “mysterious letters”] are there any “letters of darkness”. The detailed explanation of this science [can be found] in the books of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Būnī. There are some who declare it invalid. The benefit of this science is: doing good deeds with “light” letters and evil deeds with “dark” letters ...

The science of manipulating the greatest name (*‘ilm al-taṣrīf bi-l-ism al-a‘ẓam*)<sup>5</sup>:

This is from among the sciences which have rarely been reached by any human being, save prophets or perfect saints, from among the masters of unveiling and witnessing. Therefore, they have not written any work about it, in which that name is specified. Because revealing it to a single person is not allowed—absolutely not. Because the corruption of the world lies in revealing it and in “lifting” (i.e. doing away with) the order of humanity (*irtifā‘ niẓām banī ādam*). Indeed, Shaykh Yāfi‘ and others collected traditions that had appeared regarding it; but not in so far as certainty could be seen from the horizon ...

The science of “breaking” and “unfolding” (*‘ilm al-kasr wa-l-baṣṭ*)<sup>6</sup>:

It is a science by which the disconnected (i.e. mysterious) letters [of the Qur'ān] are laid down; [this is done] in that the letters of one of the names of God are cut up, mixed together with the letters of the thing you desire, and laid out on a line; the letters are then manipulated in certain ways known to the experts, so that the order of the letters on the first line is changed in the second line. Then [this is done] again and again, until the “essence” (*‘ayn*) of the first line is organised and—at that point—one obtains the names of angels and prayers, with which to busy oneself until one obtains what one wishes.

The science of knowledge of *zāyirja* (*‘ilm ma ‘rifat al-zāyirja*):<sup>7</sup>

It is a part of [the science of] “breaking” and “unfolding” (*huwa qism al-kasr wa-l-baṣṭ*), with special methods and particular conditions, so that/until letters appear (*ḥattā takbruj hurūf*), [and] [so that] words appear from them, which indicate the how-ness of what you desire in the future—i.e. either what you *want* to happen or

5 *Taṣrīf*, like *taṣarruf*, has the meaning of “disposing of”, i.e. the practitioner’s way of acting: his handling of the process of letterist operation. See below, p. 172, fn. 10.

6 For the related term *taksīr*, see p. 170, fn. 8, below.

7 Cf. Anne Regourd, “Zā’irdja”, *EP*.

what you *don't* want to happen; so that the name of the person who will carry out your wish appears, as well as the name of the person who is preventing it from happening. I have seen some methods, in which the words of the desired thing appear as verses of poetry, strung together in Arabic, in one single meter, and with one and the same rhyme. And this science is strange (*ʿajīb*); [it is] put in tables. I have rarely met anyone who knows it. I have rarely seen anyone who practices it and is not stingy with it. And God is the one whose help is and should be sought in ever matter.

The science of divination and “bringing together” (*ʿilm al-jafr wa-l-jāmiʿa*) [Tr. *cifr*]:

It is an expression that refers to the comprehensive knowledge of the tablet of predestination (*ʿibāra ʿan al-ʿilm al-ijmālī bi-lawḥ al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar*), which contains everything that was and everything that will be—comprehensively (*kullīyyan*) and in all particulars (*juzʿīyyan*). *Jafr* is the expression used for the tablet of the divine decree (*qaḍāʾ*), which is the universal intellect (*ʿaql al-kull*); and *al-jāmiʿa* [refers to] the tablet of fate (*qadar*), which is the universal soul (*naḥs al-kull*).

One group has claimed that the Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, may God be pleased with him, laid down (*waḍaʿa*) the twenty-eight letters, by way of the “great extension” (*alā ʿarīq al-baṣṭ al-aʿzam*, “according to the great spreading” or “unfolding”) in a leather-volume of *jafr* (*fī jild al-jafr*, “in a hide of *jafr*”), to extract from them, by specific ways and particular conditions, specific words; and to extract from these word that which is on the tablet of predestination.

This science is from the legacy of the house of the prophet, and those who trace their descent to them (those who possess it as an inheritance); the perfect *shaykhs* learnt it from them; and they would hide it from others, completely. It is said: Nobody studies this book really, except the Mahdī, who is expected to appear at the end of time. This can be found in the books of the ancient prophets, as transmitted on the authority of Jesus, may the blessings of God be upon him: “We are a band of prophets and have come to you with the revelation. As for the interpretation, the Paraclete (*al-fārqlīt*), who will come to you after me, will bring it.” ...

Ṭāshkubrī-zādah, *Miftāḥ al-saʿādah wa-miṣbāḥ al-siyādah fi mawḍūʿāt al-ʿulūm*, ed. Kāmil Bakrī and ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Abū al-Nūr (Cairo: Dār al-kutub al-ḥadīthah, 1968), 1:335–336 (*taʿbīr al-ruʿyā*), 338–345 (*aḥkām al-nujūm*, *al-siḥr*, *al-ṭilasmāt*, *sīmiyāʾ*), 357 (*ʿilm al-ʿirāfā*), 359–368 (on astrology, *al-ikhtiyārāt*, *al-*

*raml, al-fāl, al-qur'a, ʿīra and zajr, branches of magic, al-kihāna, nīranjāt, al-khawāṣṣ, ruqā, ʿazā'im, al-istiḥdār, da'wa al-kawākib, al-ikhfā*), 395–396 (*wafq*), 2: 591–594 (*kbawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf, al-khawāṣṣ al-rūḥāniyya, al-taṣarruf bi-l-ḥurūf wa-l-asmā'*), *al-ḥurūf al-nūraniyya wa-l-ẓulmāniyya, al-taṣrīf bi-l-ism al-a'ẓm, al-kasr wa-l-baṣṭ, al-zāyirja, al-jafr wa-l-jāmi'a*); cf. Taşköprülüzāde Ahmed Efendi, *Mevzuat'ül-ulûm (İlimler ansiklopedisi)*, tr. Mümin Çevik (Istanbul 2011), 1:305–313, 323, 326–337, 359–360, 2:1030–1032.

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Additions or emendations to Taşköprüzade's entries by Kâtib Çelebi (d. 1657) in *Kashf al-ẓunūn* ("The unveiling of doubts" or "The survey of suppositions").

On *cifr* (Tr.; Ar. *jafr*):

Ibn Ṭalḥa said: "*al-jafr* and *al-jāmi'a* are two great books (*kitābān jalilān*). One of them was mentioned by Imām 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, may God be pleased with him, when he was giving a sermon in Kufa, from the *minbar*. The other was kept a secret by the Messenger of God, may God's peace and blessing be upon him. He commanded him ['Alī] to write it down (*tadwīn*). So 'Alī wrote it in letters different from the book of Adam (*sifr* Ādam), in *jafr*, i.e. on parchment that had been tanned from the skin of a camel. It became well-known among the people by [that name], because whatever had come to pass to the first and last ones was to be found in it."

People differ regarding the question of how it was written down and "transposed" (*fī waḍ'ihī wa-taksīrihī*).<sup>8</sup> There are some who transposed it in the "small fashion" (*bi-l-taksīr al-ṣaḡhīr*); namely, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, who put the following in the hidden part of "the great opening" (*waḍa'ahu fī kbāfiyat al-bāb al-kabīr*): a – b – t – th

8 In Grammar, *taksīr* usually refers to the so-called "irregular" or "broken" plural (*jam' al-taksīr*); in mathematics, it means "fraction"; it may also refer to the area of a circle. In the context of the occult sciences, however, it seems to denote a particular kind of procedure: Toufic Fahd refers to it as "transposition" in his article on "Ḥurūf" (*EP*) and glosses it as "a procedure which performs a basic function in all forms of *jafr*." Noah Gardiner translates *taksīr* as "decomposition," in his study of Ibn Khaldūn's critique of lettrism. See Gardiner, *Ibn Khaldūn versus the occultists at Barqūq's court* (Berlin 2020), 36–37, fn. 74, referencing Kraus, *Jābir ibn Ḥayyān, Contribution à l'histoire des idées scientifiques dans l'islam, Volume II: Jābir et la science grecque* (Cairo 1945), 253, fn. 2 and 300, fn. 7. The general sense of the term is that of "fracturing" or "fragmentation".

– etc. In the “lesser opening” (*al-bāb al-ṣaghīr*) [he put] the *abjad* until *qarshat*.<sup>9</sup> Some scholars have called the “great opening” (*al-bāb al-kabīr*) “the great divination” (*al-jafr al-kabīr*) and the lesser one “the lesser divination” (*al-jafr al-ṣaghīr*). A thousand sources (*maṣdar*) emerge from the greater one; and from the lesser one seven hundred.

There are others who write it by the “middle transposition” (*bi-l-taksīr al-muta-wassit*). This is the most appropriate and best [way of writing *jafr*]. The secret orbit of the moon and the sun circle on the axis of [this way of writing] (*‘alayhi madār al-khāfiya al-qamariyya wa-l-shamsiyya*). This is the way the lettrist magic squares have been written down.

There are others who write it according to the “great transposition” (*bi-l-taksīr al-kabīr*). This is the way from which all the words (or languages; *luḡbāt*) and names (or nouns; *asmāʾ*) emerge.

There are others who write it according to the order of the letters (*al-tarkīb al-ḥarfī*). This is the way of Plato (*maddhab aflātūn*).

There are others who write it according to a numerical arrangement (*al-tarkīb al-‘adadī*). This is the way of the rest of the people of India.

### On the science of letters and words (*‘ilm al-ḥurūf wa-l-asmāʾ*)

It examines the secret properties of letters (*khawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf*), individually and when composed together [into words]. Its object are the letters of the alphabet. Its material [are] the agreements (*awfāq*, “conjunctions”, “tables”, magic squares) and arrangements (*tarākīb*, “structures”); its form (*ṣūra*) their division, like “what” and “how”; the composition of oaths and spells (*al-aqsām wa-l-‘azāʾim*), and what is produced by them. The practitioner (of the science of letters) is called *mutaṣarrif* (“the one who acts [in a particular way]”, “the one who disposes of”, “the one who maneuvers [a process or a thing]”), its goal is called *taṣarruf* (“way of action”, “manipulating [something in a particular way]”), with regard to obtaining [by way of it it] what one seeks, by “letting fall” and “removing” (*īqāʿan wa-intizāʿan*). The rank (*martaba*) at which it [i.e. the science of lettrism] is situated is after the spiritual matters (*rūḥāniyyāt*), the [science of the] celestial spheres (*falak*) and astrology ...

9 A way of ordering the letters of the Arabic alphabet, different from the first.

Ibn Khaldūn said in the *Muqaddima*: The science of the secrets of the letters, which is called *al-sīmiyā'* in this age: the name of this science was transferred, in usage, from [initially designating the science of] talismans to a technical term used by the practitioners [of the science of letters], from among the Sufis. A general term thus came to be used for a specific sub-branch [of the occult sciences]. This science came about after the first period of Islam (*ba'da al-ṣadr al-awwal*), when the *ghulāt* (“extremists”, “exaggerators”) appeared among the Muslims, with their inclination towards the lifting of the veil of sense-perception, bringing about extraordinary phenomena and [extraordinary] ways of manipulating the world of the elements (*taṣarrufāt fī 'ālam al-ʿanāṣir*). They claim that the *loci*, where the perfection of the divine names manifests itself, are the spirits of the celestial spheres and the stars, and that the natural characteristics of the letters and their secrets pervade the divine names (*sāriya al-asmā'*, “are effectively in force in the names”). They pervade all beings (*al-akwān*, “the existent things”, “the cosmos”). It [i.e. the science of letters] is [therefore] one of the branches of the sciences of *sīmiyā'*—a science whose object cannot be grasped, and the number of questions it raises is infinite.

The writings of al-Būnī, Ibn ʿArabī and others in this field are numerous. In their opinion, the upshot and fruit of this science is the effective force of the divine souls (*taṣarruf al-nufūs al-rabbāniyya*) in the natural world (*fī 'ālam al-ṭabī'a*) by the beautiful names of God (*bi-l-asmā' al-ḥusnā*) and the divine expressions (*al-kalimāt al-ilāhiyya*), which grow from the letters, which are surrounded by the secrets pervading all the things in existence. Then they differ regarding the secret of the effective force (*sirr al-taṣarruf*), which [is] in the letters *b-m h-w*.<sup>10</sup>

There are those who ascribe it [i.e. the secret of the effective force] to the mixture (*li-l-mizāj*, also “temperament”) which is in it, and divide the letters into four categories, following the division of the natural characteristics (of the humours), like

10 Noah Gardiner translates *taṣarruf* as “occult efficacy,” see *Ibn Khaldūn*, 33; Franz Rosenthal translates it as “activity” and “activeness,” see Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: And Introduction to History*, trans. F. Rosenthal (Princeton 1958), vol. 3., 172: “the divine souls are active in the world of nature” for *taṣarruf al-nufūs fī 'ālam al-ṭabī'a*, and “as to the secret of the (magic) activity lying in the letters” for *sirr al-taṣarruf*. The term *taṣarruf* seems to indicate, potentially, *both* the effective force of the secret and the practitioner’s handling or manipulation of processes of letterist operation, i.e. the practitioner’s way of acting, on the one hand (cf. Gardiner’s “occult operations” on 29), and the effect brought about by the secret’s “way of acting” in the world, on the other. Ultimately, the two are connected. Indeed, the fact that the term *taṣarruf* is used for both seems indicative of that intrinsic connection.

the elements. They are classified, according to a rule that pertains to that particular craft (*qanūn šināʿī*), which they call “transposition” (*al-taksīr*).

Then there are others who maintain that this secret is due to the numerical proportion (*jaʿala bādhā al-sirr li-l-nisba al-ʿadadiyya*), i.e. that the letters of the alphabet indicate the numbers they are known for, conventionally and naturally, and that words have “correspondences” (*wa-li-l-asmāʾ awfāq*)<sup>11</sup>, like the numbers. Each category of letters distinguishes itself by a category of “correspondences” (*awfāq*), with which it agrees (in a proportional relationship), in terms of the number or the shape of the letters. The effect (*taṣarruf*) of the secret of the letters is mixed up with the secret of the numbers, on account of the proportional relationship (*tanāsub*), which exists between the two of them.

As for the secret of this proportional relationship, which exists between the letters and the mixtures of the natural temperaments, or between the letters and the numbers, it is difficult to understand (*ʿasr ʿalā al-fahm*), since it does not belong to the realm of the sciences and analogies, but rather, its support rests, for them, on “taste” and unveiling.

al-Būnī said: Certainly, do not think that the secret of the letters is from among the things which can be reached by intellectual analogy. Rather, it is by way of witnessing (*mushāhada*) and divine gift (*tawfīq ilāhī*). As for the effect (*al-taṣarruf*) of these letters and words in the natural world (*fī ʿālam al-ṭabīʿa*), and the influence (*taʿthīr*) they exert upon existing things (*al-akwān*), it cannot be denied, because it is established [as true], on the authority of many from among them, by [the principle] of “uninterrupted transmission” (*tawātur*). It may be (wrongly) supposed that what those [who practice the science of letters] do and what the “masters of talismans” (*aṣḥāb al-ṭīlasimāt*) do is the same. But that is not the case. Then he [al-Būnī] explained the difference between the two—extensively. We have mentioned a part of the detailed explanation [of this] in our book entitled *Rūḥ al-ḥurūf* (“The spirit of the letters”).<sup>12</sup>

On the “science of making disappear” (*ilm al-ikbfāʾ*):

I say: It being a science, in terms of it being a branch of magic, not in terms of [it being] a grace from God, there is no reason for thinking that it is most likely

11 Cf. “harmonious agreements” in magic squares (*awfāq*). See above, p. 166.

12 For a translation and extensive analysis of the entire chapter on letterism by Ibn Khaldun, see Gardiner, *Ibn Khaldūn*, 27–57.

impossible. For, by way of magic, it is possible! There is no doubt in it. Indeed, by way of invocation and [the use of] spells it is also possible, as the people who practice it maintain. And not seeing something does not mean that it does not occur.

### On the science of properties (*'ilm al-khawāṣṣ*):

I say: The secret properties of things are fixed and their occasions (*asbāb*, lit. “causes”) are hidden, because we know [for instance] that magnetite attracts iron, but we do not know how and why. Likewise with all the secret properties, except that the causes (*'ilal*, “occasions”) of some of them can be grasped by the intellect, while the meaning of the causes of others cannot. Furthermore, these secret properties are divided into many parts: there are, for instance, the secret properties of the “names” mentioned [above], which are included in the category of the rules of the science of the letters; likewise, the secret properties of the letters, from which the names are composed, and the secret properties of the supplications used in spells, and the secret properties of the Qurʾān.

### On *zā'irja*:

It belongs to the laws of the art [of the occult sciences] (*al-qawānīn al-ṣinā'iyya*), [used] for the purpose of extracting the unknown things, which are related to the world of the known (*al-ghuyūb al-mansūba ilā al-'ālam al-ma'rūf*). [It is a science associated with] Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad al-Sabtī, who was one of its most excellent practitioners of it in the Maghrib. He lived at the end of the sixth century in Marakesh, during the reign of Ya'qūb b. Maṣṣūr, of the Almohad kings. [These laws have] many secret properties, which they [the practitioners of this science] give evidence of, in making use of the unknown through them, by the knowledge of them, and their form, which they work with: a great circle, on the inside of which are concentric circles for the celestial spheres, the elements, the material entities (of this world), the spiritual entities and other categories of beings and sciences. Each circle of these is divided by its celestial sphere into the signs of the zodiac, the elements, etc. The lines of each lead to the center; they are called “strings” (*awtār*), and on each string are letters, laid down in sequence. Some of them are by drawings of a “bridle” (*zimām*), which are from among the most difficult of numbers, according to the chancery officials and mathematicians of the Maghrib. Others are by trivial drawings in the *ghubār* script. On the inside of the *zā'irja* [the table used in this divinatory technique], between the circles, are the names of the sciences and the positions of [the various, different] beings (*mawāḍi' al-akwān*, “the

ranks of existences”); and at the backs (*ḡubūr*, “rear parts”) of the circles is a chart (*jadwal*, “table”), with intersecting (?) squares (*buyūt al-mutaqāṭi‘a*) increasing in length and width, comprising 55 squares in width and 131 in length. The sides of the chart are “populated” (*ma‘mūra*) by squares [too], some filled with numbers, others with letters, others are empty. The proportion (*nisba*) of these numbers in their positions is not known, nor the division, which is assigned to the squares. On the two sides of the *zā’irja* are verses, written in *ṭawīl* (meter), and with the rhyming letter *lām*, in the accusative. These [verses] comprise that which is sought from the *zā’irja*, what is sought to be brought forth. However, they [these verses] are in the form of nonsense (*laghw*, “gibberish”), characterised by a lack of clarity. ...

The answers to the questions asked can be extracted by it, according to the rules [of this art]. This is because there is a correlation (*muṭābaqa*) between the answer and the question, because the unknown can in no way be grasped by a matter of the art (*bi-amr šinā‘i*), of course! The correlation between the question and the answer is only in terms of understanding (*ifhām*, “making understood”) and this comes about, in this art, by the “transposition” (*taksīr*) of the letters of which the question is composed... Some of the sharp-witted ones have examined the proportional relation (*tanāsub*), reaching an understanding of the unknown (*al-majhūl*) by way of the proportional relation between things. This is the secret of arriving at the unknown from the known (*al-ḡuḡūr ‘alā al-majhūl min al-ma‘lūm*), which happens to the soul by way of coming about (*al-ḡāṣil li-l-naṣṣ bi-ṭarīq ḡuṣūlibi*), like in mathematics. It benefits the mind a lot. Therefore, [the science of] *zā’irja* has mostly been attributed to mathematicians. *Zā’irja* is also traced back to Sahl b. ‘Abd Allāh. It is [considered] one of the “strange crafts” (*al-a‘māl al-ḡharība*), in the history of Ibn Khaldūn. He said: It is a strange business, the practice of which is wonderful. Many [persons?] of secret properties engage in it, in order to benefit from that which is hidden. Unravelling it is difficult for the one who is ignorant of it.

On magic (*‘ilm al-siḡr*):

The magician (*al-sāḡir*) gathers together and arranges, at appropriate moments of [given] celestial conditions and planetary situations, the three realms of nature with each other, and then makes appear wondrous conditions and strange deeds, the effect of which is great, and the cause of which remains hidden, so that the minds are perplexed and the thoughts of [even] brilliant people are unable to solve the secrets [of these phenomena] ...

On conjuration of *jinn* ('*azā'im*):

The *muḥaqqiqūn* differ regarding the way it is possible to communicate with the *jinn*. Some say: it is done in a way that is not possible for anyone, to the exclusion of God. Others say: By way of a spell, like a prayer, which is answered by God. Others say: By way of [spells] and pleasing behaviors. Others say: By obedient spies, who forbid what is wrong, and stand ready to fight! (*bi-l-jawāsīs al-ṭā'irīn al-munhiyīn al-mutabayyi'in*). Others say: By self-reckoning and with the help of the stars (*wa-l-sayyāra*). Others say: By righteousness ...

Fakhr al-A'imma [al-Rāzī] said: In my opinion, when the [necessary] conditions are met and the spells proceed correctly, God makes spells against the *jinn* in a great burning fire for them, constricting the regions of the world against them, so that no place remains for them to seek refuge in, and only "presence" and obedience to what he commands them to do is sufficient. Higher than that, if one is skillful and acting pleasing [to God], and if his behavior is praiseworthy and satisfying, then God sends very strong and harsh angels against the *jinn*, in order for them to restrain them and lead them to be obedient to him and serve him [i.e. the person who practices the spells].

The theologians and other *muḥaqqiqūn* confirmed these principles, saying: "It is not forbidden that a human memorises and says words from the names of God and other than these, in books and spells and talismans, so that God subdues a *jinnī* and forces him to obey the person [who had memorised these words] and he chooses him for that which he seeks [to obtain or do] of the affairs that are" ... They say: the obedience of these [*jinn*] to humans is not impossible rationally, nor in terms of revelation, completely.

On alchemy (*kimiyā'*)

Those who deny [the validity of alchemy] say that: if gold produced artificially were equal to (*mathal*, "likeness", "like") natural gold, then that which is [made] by art would be equal to (or: like) that which is [made] by nature. And if that were conceivable, then it would also be conceivable that what is [made] by nature is like that which is artificial, and we would find swords and beds and seal-rings in nature, which is absurd ... Then, by the estimation that that which does not exist artificially, does not exist in nature (*bi-taqdīr anna lā yūjad bi-l-ṭabī'a mā lā yūjad bi-l-ṣinā'a*), apodictic judgement (*al-jazm*) does not impose on us to deny this, nor does the possibility that the natural thing might have come about artificially

impose on us [the necessity to admit] the possibility of the opposite. Rather, the matter depends on the proof (*al-amr mauqūf ‘alā al-dalīl*) ...

Then, [also] know that a group of philosophers, like the wise Hermes, Ostanos and Pythagoras, when they wanted to bring forth (*istikbrāj*) this divine art, they put themselves in the place of nature, and they knew, by way of the logical faculty and the experiential sciences, what happened to each of these bodies, in terms of heat and cold, humidity and dryness, and also what parts of other bodies they were mixed (up) with. They did the trick (*al-ḥīla*) of decreasing that which was in excess, and adding [to] what was lacking (*tanqīṣ al-zā’id wa-tazyīd al-nāqīṣ*), in terms of active and passive<sup>13</sup> qualities, because of the deficiency (*‘illa*) of these bodies, according to what they needed, in terms of different elixirs of the earth, of animals and of plants, depending on time and place.

Kâtib Çelebi, *Keşf-el-zunun*, eds Şerefettin Yaltkaya – Kilisli Rifat Bilge (Ankara 2014 [1941]), 1:591–592 (*cifr*), 650–651 (*al-ḥurūf wa-l-asmā’*), 716 (*al-ikḥfā’*), 726 (*al-kbawāṣṣ*), 2:1137–1138 (*‘azā’im*), 948–949 (*zā’irja*), 980 (*siḥr*), 1528–1531 (*kimiya’*); cf. Kâtib Çelebi, *Keşfü’z-zunûn*, tr. Rüştü Balcı (Istanbul 2007), 2:498, 543–544, 594, 602, 764–765, 788, 3:909, 1218–1220.

Translations by Katharina A. Iványi.

13 There are three adjectives here: *fā’il*, *maf’ul* and *munfa’il*, but the latter two both have the sense of “passive.”