

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

A section “on properties” (*fi zikri’l-havâs*), part of the chapter on medicine, from *Tarjama-i ‘Acâib al-mahlûkât*, an adaptation of Qazwîni’s and Muhammad Tûsî’s Persian cosmographies composed in the first half of the fifteenth century:

Know that God has put properties in every existing thing. These properties are of various sorts. Some work by touch, for instance if someone keeps a spider hot for three days he will be saved; some by seeing, for instance if someone sees a salamander die; some come with chance meetings, for instance if the shadow of a butterfly falls upon a hyena, it will go out of its mind; some work with hearing, e.g. if one hits bronze or silver utensils, animals will run away; some with smell, as when a donkey smells a lion and runs away; some work with consent (*muvâfakat*), for instance if a leopard raises its young the snake gives birth alongside it; and some work with writing: for instance if we scratch a circle [on the ground] with a branch of hazel tree and put a scorpion inside, it will not step outside of it.

These properties, however, come from their accordance with a specific moment in the movement of heavens (*felek hareketinde bir sâ’ate muvâfık geldüğinden ola*), so that if these instances happen in another hour the properties will not be present.

---

Copyright: © 2020 The Institute for Mediterranean Studies/FORTH and the Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

*Acâ’ib: Occasional papers on the Ottoman perceptions of the supernatural* is an open access journal published by the Institute for Mediterranean Studies/FORTH.

Sariyannis, Marinos. 2020. “Examples of translated materials for the study of Ottoman occultism I”. *Acâ’ib: Occasional papers on the Ottoman perceptions of the supernatural* 1, 123–131.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26225/1p35-pb19>

The rotation of the soul (*gönül dönme kligi*) resembles the rotation of a mill: if one puts some clay on its wheel and attempts to aim at it with another piece of clay with a bow, one will find the target once every hundred times. Now this sky also turns all the time; if an hour is auspicious and a person acts in accordance with it, he will think that this time will come again [and that he will be always lucky], but there is a time which will not [be auspicious]... We said again that the science of stars and zodiac signs is very important. Nobody knows its secrets but God. And we said this much about the knowledge of properties, because it comes out of experience (*mücerrebdür*) that yellow amber attracts the straw.

SOURCE: B. Sarıkaya with G. Kut (ed.), *Tercüme-i Acâ'ibü'l-mablúkât ve garâ'ibü'l-mevcûdât* (Istanbul 2019), 360.



Excerpts on the jinn and ghouls from *Dürr-i meknûn*, the famous cosmology from the second half of the fifteenth century often attributed to Aḥmed Bîcân (d. after 1466): after the creation of Man, the jinn were exiled to islands, but

now from time to time they remember their old abodes and return, settling in the roots of trees or near waters and sources. These places are called *ayazma* [sacred fountain, Gk. ἀγίασμα]... most unbelievers believe in these, saying that this or that source or tree is exalted (*ulu*).

A section about ghouls (*gûl*) from the same cosmology:

Some say, they are also [another] creature. And some say, they are jinn. When this tribe of jinn wants to climb up to the sky, the angels that reside between earth and sky hit the jinn with the fire they have in their hands; as soon as they see the jinn, they throw the fire and hit them. The jinn fall [on the earth], they are forgiven and become ghouls, they say. At nights they appear in front of travellers in the mountains, taking a human form; the travellers think they are men and ask for the road, and thus they get lost; even if they find their way, they do so with great pains. Some have seen [ghouls] in the form of a hairy dervish (*saçlı derviş*) who rides stags and wanders in the mountains. When he is seen outside of the road, he disappears. The stupid, the ignorant, the light-headed see him and make stories, that a saint rides a stag in the mountain. Most of them are these irreligious (*bî-namaz*) dervishes (*işık*) or these wanderers (*gurbetler*; *kurbet çingeneler* in Sakaoğlu's ms.) who go with a stag from door to door asking for alms, saying that the stag is the saint's horse... Hey stupid, ignorant ones! What kind of story is this, saints who ride a stag and wander in the mountains! This is the job of jinn and ghouls. Or [what about] those who arrive at *ayazma* sources, hoping to get some

ture? Wherever there is a source or a well, some jinn will come and settle. People come and... ask for their wishes. What kind of miracle (*keramet*) can be in water? They say there are saints here: the jinn are the saints of the ignorant...

Now it is evident that the jinn and the demons (*şeytan*) are enemies of mankind. They make people lose their way with a thousand ruses and tricks. The ignorant search for a reason to believe in vain things. Most of these [jinn and ghouls] are to be found in the Balkans (*Rum ili*), they do not live in other places...

These jinn and demons (*şeyâtîn*) are [a sort of] creatures. But the *peris* are a different kind of creature. Some say that *peris* also are of this kind; [but] the *peri* is friendly to man and close to humans. It can be killed, whereas the jinn and the demons cannot. The Sultan of the *peris* is Kâzeb. And they are also called Nîlüter. The *peris* are abundant in the mountain of Akır, in Isfahan and in Mazenderan; they can also be found in Russia and Europe (*Frengistan*).

Source: L. Kaptein (ed.), *Dürr-i meknun. Kritische Edition mit Kommentar* (Asch 2007), 125/403 and 281–285/534–537; A. Demirtaş (ed.), *Dürr-i meknun (Tıpkıbasım – İnceleme – Çevriyazı – Dizin)* (Istanbul 2009), 122 and 201–203.



Excerpts from Firdevsî-i Tāvîl (Firdevsî-i Rümî, Uzun Firdevsî, Türk Firdevsî; 1453–after 1517)’s *Da‘vet-nâme* (“Book of conjurations”), an essay on angels, jinn and the ways to invoke them, composed in 1487:

Apollonius (Belinās Hâkîm) says that there are eight conditions for the science of conjuration. The first condition is that [the practitioner] must eat no meat and must make his passions (*nefs*) obedient to oneself. And to punish his passions, he must keep by all means his spiritual self (*nefs-i ruhânî*) in power. When his spiritual self is prevalent, then this person is close to the jinn (*ervâb*). He must eat vegetables and two pieces of bread every day, of a hundred dirhem each. And he must always walk in cleanliness and never stop praying... The second condition is that the conjurer needs to have seven bottles; and in every one of them there shall be [notes with?] the name, the figure, the seal, the incantation (*‘azîmet*), the spy, the interpreter, the question and the answer of the angel appointed to each day of the week; because a conjurer must know all these. God willing, we will explain this later. The third condition is that, after learning the hours and the incense [of these angels], a conjurer must have seven chairs and seven incense burners and seven halters (*carîr*) and garments of seven kinds, each one in the colour of the seven planets; and he must know the seven sermons (*hutbe*) and the

seven handkerchiefs and praises of seven kinds and the names of the seven angels and of the seven highest of the jinn (*cinnî uluları*). God willing, we will explain this in the appendix. The fourth condition is that the conjurer should stand on a high place, or on a high hill, or in a high kiosk; or near running water, or near an old fountain, or near a well. And when he makes the conjuration, he must write on a paper or on the surface of the wall the forms of the 24 prophets, or at least their holy names... The fifth condition is that the conjurer shall not keep at home dogs, mules, roosters, monkeys, snakes and other similar animals, for the jinn get offended by them and do not answer the conjuring; the voice of a dog must not be heard from a neighbor either. And corrupt, irreligious (*bî-namaz*) or women must not be accepted in the house where the conjuring takes place. And he must not keep at home bows, swords, guns and other weapons; the jinn are afraid of these. The sixth condition is that when the conjurer travels, he must carry various handkerchiefs, and know incantations of seven sorts. And in every town he enters in order to make a conjuration, he must recite the *Ahd-name* of Suleyman and burn incense, so as for the appointed [jinn] of this town, which are to be conjured, get obedient to him and like him. Similarly, he must recite the *Ahd-name* of Suleyman and burn incense at the beginning of every month. If you ask what is this incense: aloeswood, sugar, labdanum, mastic, white hemp and gentian; incense is made from these six elements and burnt, while [the conjurer] recites the *Ahd-name* of Suleyman nine times. The seventh condition is the following: every month, that is every thirty days, the Sun passes from one sign of the zodiac... The conjurer must conjure the seven angels [appointed to each sign]... The eighth condition is that a conjurer must necessarily know the *Ahd-name* of Suleyman b. Davud. Without the *Ahd-name* it is impossible to make any deed...

Because if somebody wishes to conjure [jinn or angels] (*da'vet*) or to act through charms (*nâr-ı necât*; recte *narencat*) or talismans or magic squares and other ways, all these actions cannot be valid unless one knows the hours, the mansions, the auspicious and unlucky times of the moon, and also the situation of the six planets....

When the Sun arrives at the sign of Sagittarius, with God's order an angel descends from the highest stratum of the seventh heaven and becomes appointed to the Sun. Under his orders, there are 800,000 [times] 80,000 angels; under each one's orders, 200 times 22,000 angels; and under each one's orders, 125,000 jinn, which come to earth and influence it. And the name of this greatest angel is Kefhatayil. His form resembles that of a human; he has one head and two hands; he holds a javelin on one hand and a mirror on the other. This is his form: [illustration]

And this angel has his seal (*hâtem*) too. If someone has no familiarity with his woman [the woman he loves], he writes this seal upon a piece of paper with musk and saffron, and buries it inside this house [of hers]; and thus they love each other greatly. The seal is this: [illustration]

And also this angel has his praise to God (*tesbîh*), and with the power of this praise he becomes appointed to the Sun and reads [it; *âfitâba müvekkel olup okur*]. And whoever wishes to obtain authority and asceticism [? *zühd ü salâhiyyet üzere ola*], may repeat this praise at the first hour of Thursday. God the Highest will grant him success in all his deeds. And if you wish that everybody in the world talk about your kindness, write this talisman on a piece of paper and carry it inside your cap. The talisman is thus: [illustration]

And again for love you can write this tablet (*levh*) on a piece of tinfoil in the hour of Jupiter, together with the name of your beloved, and leave it in the treasury of the bathhouse; this person will instantly love you. This is the tablet: [illustration]

And his praise of God (*tesbîh*) is also the praise [told by] Jupiter. But in this place his praise was not written; we did not write it either. But his incarnation (*tekvîn*) has the features of Jupiter; he sits on a prayer rug and says the praise. This is his picture: [illustration]...

There is a story that a certain Süleyman Mağribî, from among the masters of the Maghreb, was very competent in talismanic science. He was observing the skies and found a star of destiny (a conjunction? *bir tâli' buldı*), when the sun was in the sign of Aries [etc. etc.]. He called for a goldsmith and gave him some gold, asking him to make a golden box and a figure. The goldsmith indeed built a small golden box and a figure; he brought them and put them in front of Süleyman. Süleyman, at this [specific] hour, put the figure in the box and asked the goldsmith: "Can this box move by itself?" To which the goldsmith answered: "How can a soulless thing move?" Then Süleyman-i Mağribî put a golden coin beneath the box and the box immediately started to move by itself. As soon as he took the coin from beneath the box, it stopped.

The goldsmith asked in awe: "O master of the world! What is the essence of this figure that moves as soon as it sees the coin?" Süleyman-i Mağribî answered: "For thirty years now I was looking for this hour and this contiguity. I just reached it. And I was granted such a miracle (*ve bir kerâmete vâsıl oldum ki*) that now I can find a treasure, wherever it is hidden: as soon as I put this box upon it, it moves". The goldsmith remained in awe, and Süleyman left the city.

I put this story here so as to show what power people of knowledge (*erbâb-ı ma'ârif*) may attain, were they to wish it.

SOURCE: F. Büyükkarcı (ed.), *Firdevsî-i Tavîl and his Da'vet-nâme: Interpretation, Transcription, Index, Facsimile and Microfiche* (Cambridge 1995), 149–151 (instructions and the *Ahd-name*), 113 (need to know the celestial signs), 160–161 (the Sun on Sagittarius), 175 (story of Süleyman Mağribî).



### Notes on occult practices contained in miscellanies (*mecmua*):

Section on the knowledge of magic (*nârencât*): If you want to enchant (*teshîr idesin*) somebody, first you calculate [the *ebced* number of] his/her name and the name of his/her mother. [Then] you subtract by twelve. If the remainder is one, then Aries is his sign, Mars is his star, he is male, Tuesday is his day, Tuesday is his night, he is dependent upon fire (*oda müte'allıkdır*). If the remainder is two, Taurus is her sign, Venus is her star, she is female, Friday is her day, Tuesday is her night, she is dependent upon earth. If the remainder is three, Gemini is his sign, Mercury is his star, he is male, Wednesday is his day, Sunday is his night, he is dependent upon air. If the remainder is four, Cancer is her sign, Moon is her star, she is female, Monday is her day, Friday is her night, she is dependent upon water. If the remainder is five, Leo is his sign, Sun is his star, he is male, Sunday is his day, Thursday is his night, he is dependent upon fire. If the remainder is six, Virgo is her sign, Mercury is her star, she is female, her day is Wednesday, her night is Sunday, she is dependent upon earth. If the remainder is seven, Libra is his sign, Venus is his star, he is male, Friday is his day, Tuesday is his night, he is dependent upon air. If the remainder is eight, Scorpio is his sign, Mars is his star, he is male, Tuesday is his day, Saturday is his night, he is dependent on water. If the remainder is nine, Sagittarius is his sign, Jupiter is his star, he is male, Thursday is his day, Wednesday is his night, he is dependent upon fire. If the remainder is ten, Capricornus is her sign, Saturn is her star, she is female, her day is Saturday, her night is Wednesday, she is dependent upon earth. If the remainder is eleven, Aquarius is his sign, Saturn is his star, he is male, Saturday is his day, Wednesday is his night, he is dependent upon air. If the remainder is twelve, Pisces is her sign, Jupiter is her star, she is female, her day is Thursday, her night is Monday, and she is dependent upon water.

The small calculation (*cümel-i sağırdır*): *elif* 1, *be* 2, *cim* 3, *dal* 4, *he* 5, *vav* 6, *ze* 7, *ha* 8, *ti* 9, *ye* 10, *kâf* 8, *lam* 6, *mim* 4, *nun* 2, *sin* zero (*sâkıt*), *ayn* 10, *fe* 8, *şad* 3, *kağ* 4, *rı* 8, *şın* zero, *te* 4, *se* 8, *hı* zero, *zel* 4, *dad* 8, *zı* zero, *gayn* 4.<sup>1</sup> For instance, according

1 Actually, this is a version not of the “small calculation” (*cümel-i sağır*) but of the “smallest” one (*cümel-i asğar*); but there too, the values of the letters from *şad* onwards differ slightly: M. Mercanlıgil, *Ebced hesabı* (Ankara 1960), 25–26.

to the small calculation, if your beloved's (*matlûbun*) name is Muḥammed and his mother's name is 'Â'îşe: *mim* 4, *ḥa* 8, *mim* 4, *dal* 4, *'ayn* 10, *elif* 1, *ye* 10, *şin* zero, *he* 5. We subtracted twelve from the total, 36 was gone, the remainder is nine [*sic*; in fact, it is  $46-12-12-12=10$ , and it is according to this remainder that the following result is deduced]. We learnt that the beloved's ascendant is Capricornus, and his star is Saturn.

...Great subjugation (*teshîr-i azîm*): Take a hair from the beloved's (*matlûbun*) hair, read upon it this Quranic verse twenty-one times and throw it to fire; he will get conquered (*musabḥar*); this is tested (*gayet mücerrebdür*): [Quran 44/10–11]

Subjugation of the heart (*teshîr-i kalb*): To conquer a heart, recite after the evening prayer the holy prayers seventy times, the Fatiha a hundred twenty-one times, the Duha [Q. 93] forty-one times, the holy prayers again another seventy times, the Ihlas [Q. 112] seven times, the verse of Kursi [Q2/2256] three times, and then pray. Recite this in prayer for eleven full days. If it does not work, then count another eleven nights. If it does not work again, count another eleven nights for a third time; he will be conquered for sure. If he is not, then it is not possible and he will die (*mümkün değıldür belâk ola*). With God's permission, this is tested.

SOURCE: A. Esen, "An Ottoman Miscellany Compiled in the Eighteenth Century (Textual Analysis, Transcription and Comparative Text)", unpublished MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2019, 267–268 (f. 75a) and 270–271 (f. 76a).

If someone for example cuts a garment on Sunday, he will suffer grief and sadness: it is not auspicious. On Mondays it is according to one tradition blessed, according to another there will be disturbance. When cut on Tuesdays, it will remain over, burnt in fire, or drowned in water: It will not be auspicious. When cut on Wednesdays, good fortune will come easily. When cut on Thursdays, a wise man's knowledge and an ignoramus' property will increase. When cut on Fridays, he'll have a long life and find dignity. When cut on Saturdays, someone will become ill; as long as he wears this garment the manifold pain in his body will not cease, unless he donates (something). For example, the rules of wearing clothes are like this. This should be known. Do not be careless about it...

Remedy (*fâ'ide*): Against toothache shave on Saturday, collect the hair, [burn it], fumigate the teeth, and take an oath. Do not shave again on that day. It is approved (*mücerrebdür*)...

Do not go eastwards Monday and Saturday, or westwards Sunday and Friday. O my most faithful friend, by no means go northwards on Tuesday and Wednesday! Do not plan to go southwards on Thursday: this is what Bū Alî [Ibn Sîna] advises...

This is the *Surḥubād* prayer:<sup>2</sup> One day [someone] came to the prophet Solomon and said, “I am one of the torments of God—may he be exalted!- My name is Surḥubād.” The prophet Solomon asked, “What are you doing and where is your homeland?” He answered, “O messenger of God, my residence is in the human body, there I stay, and I flow in the same way that the blood flows in the 360 veins. First of all, I cause headache, then loss of hair, I make him bald [...]” When Solomon heard this he said, “Don’t set him free, kill him!”—this he said, and Surḥubād said, “O Solomon, you cannot kill me.” [...] And Solomon gave up. And as there came no prayer against Surḥubād from God the Almighty, no remedy was found against him.

[God sends a prayer to Muhammad in order to cure ‘Umar from erysipelas/Surḥubād]: In the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful! In the name of God, come out, in the name of God, come out, in the name of God [...] come out! In honor of the Quran of the Prophet—peace be upon him—come out! Come out in honor of the hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets, come out in honor of the three hundred messengers, come out in honor of Gabriel, Michael, Israfil and Azrail! Come out in honor of the Eight Paradises and in honor of the Seven Hells! Come out in honor of the sun and the moon! Come out in honor of Harut and Marut, come out in honor of the Seven Sleepers. Come out in honor of the saints of Syria and Khorasan, come out in honor of the saints of the land of Rum, come out in honor of the saints sleeping in Mecca and Medina! [...] *Ḥasanātin felekin, ḥasanātin felekin, ḥasanātin felekin! Şerr ber-aşiyen, şerr ber-aşiyen, şerr ber-aşiyen, qarqaraşiyen qarqaraşiyen qarqaraşiyen, bi-ḥużzetin bi-ḥużzetin, müllḥaqan müllḥaqan müllḥaqan, untafan untafan untafan, bibi bibi bibi*, keep silent, keep silent, keep silent! Come out by these words, come out by the six thousand six hundred and sixty-six verses and the three hundred and sixty tenths of the Quran! Come out, if you are a wind or a wolf, if you are a moving wind, if you are a white or a black wind, if you are a hemorrhoid or one of the fairies (*perî*) of Muhammad Mustafa, if you are one of the fairies behind the mountain Kaf, if you are from this world, come out! If you are at the top or the base of the well, if you are on the foot of a tree or under a roof, if you are near a tree or if you are one of the fairies who are near old houses, on the ground of fig-trees or on a strand, come out! If you are one of the fairies who are crossroads, mills, and in the dark, if you are the pain in the heart, if you are one who has come and mixed with the

2 “Red wind”, a translation of the Arabic *rīḥ al-aḥmār*; the name of a demon but also erysipelas, the well-known skin disease. See Gisela Procházka-Eisl and Hülya Çelik, *Texts on Popular Learning in Early Modern Ottoman Times*, vol. I: *Hidden Treasures: Selected Texts from Ottoman Mecmūas (Miscellanies)* (Cambridge 2015), 200–201.



red wind, if you are pain in the heart or pain in the back, the tyranny of the whole world, which is predestined [?] should get you if you don't leave!...

Excerpt from a treatise on geomancy, authored by Şemseddin (copied in the early seventeenth century):

This is the treatise about geomancy of Şemseddin, may God have mercy upon him [...]. Because I found a treatise about geomancy now / I shall explain it to you entirely graciously. / The Prophet Daniel drew lots. / It is known that there are sixteen signs: / A skillful, understanding person saw it, / And made a book about it, you shall know. [...]

If there appear four dashes, / Know that this is the sign of *cemâ'at*, it is the apogee. / O man, your horoscope is Mercury. / I will tell you what your affair is: / Sometimes it is weak, sometimes it is strong. / This *cemâ'at*-sign is a house of mixed quality. [?] / For an ill person there is fear and danger; / It is very good if you make a journey. [...]

First, speak aloud the intention (*niyyet eyleyüb*). Then recite the noble *ihlâş* (the 112<sup>th</sup> *sûre* of the Quran) three times and set down four lines of dots on a paper, like this: [illustration] After this sign, proceed according to the rules.

SOURCE: Gisela Procházka-Eisl and Hülya Çelik, *Texts on Popular Learning in Early Modern Ottoman Times*, vol. I: *Hidden Treasures: Selected Texts from Ottoman Mecmû'as (Miscellanies)* (Cambridge 2015), 191, 193, 195, 201–203, 209–221 (translations by the authors).

Translations by M. SARIYANNIS, unless otherwise indicated.