

Postscript: Cutting Ariadne's Thread, or How to Think Otherwise in the Maze

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[I]f I may say so, we have diseased language ...

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You can't fix this 'cause I'm in the same mix.

M.I.A.²

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1 *Theōria / Nazar*

A hallmark of scholastic classifications of knowledge, the conceptual division between theory and practice has long shaped philosophical discourses on the relationship between contemplation and action. In the context of Islamic intellectual history, the distinction notably guides the psychology and ethics of Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950).³ So too does it shape the classificatory thought of the philosopher-physician Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), who, throughout his writings, follows a venerable tradition of dividing the various branches of knowledge

1 *Lectures on the Science of Language*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, 1861–1864), 2:358.

2 “Warriors,” in studio album *Matangi* (2013).

3 See, for instance, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Ārā' ahl al-madīna al-fādila*, ed. 'Alī Bū Muḥim (Cairo: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1995), 102, 107, 121; al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-madaniyya al-muqallab bi-mabādī' al-mawjūdāt*, ed. Fawzī Mitri Najjār (Beirut: al-Maṭba'a al-Kāthūlikiyya, 1964), 73–74; al-Fārābī, *Tahṣīl al-sa'āda*, ed. 'Alī Bū Muḥim (Beirut: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1995), 25, 47, 49, 72–73, 79, 87–88; al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*, ed. 'Alī Bū Muḥim (Beirut: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1996), 18, 50, 51, 61, 84. See also Abū 'Abdallāh al-Khwārazmī (d. 387/997?), *Mafātīḥ al-'ulūm*, ed. Gerlof van Vloten (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1895), 131–132.

(*ilm*) into the theoretical (*nazarī*) and the practical (*‘amalī*).⁴ Such classificatory systems are often buttressed by the argument that the fullest application of theoretical knowledge, as an abstract mode of contemplating and deriving general principles, is the ethical pursuit of human flourishing (*eudaimonia* > *sa‘āda*).⁵

A good deal of postmodern critique has sought to upend the often-explicit hierarchies that govern the neat bifurcation between observation and action implied by the binary of *theōria* and *praxis*. As the wide-ranging contributions in the present volume repeatedly demonstrate, locating exactly where magic and the occult fit into such evaluative, classificatory, and performative schemas is anything but straightforward.⁶ The ontology of magic, its epistemic significance, and its moral value are as mercurial as they are ambiguous. The path is tortuous and labyrinthine by design.

So what might theory and practice mean today for the study of the Islamic occult sciences as they are staged in the intellectual and material frameworks of the Western academy? Theory, in the etymological sense suggested by both *theōria* and *nazar*, points not just to contemplation or abstraction but specifically to ocular forms of observation and speculation. One of the most salient features of modern critical theory is the realization that the objects of our inquiries are constantly unfolding, as they respond dynamically to observation itself. Observation is never neutral but rather contextual, decisive, and determinative. The ideal of distanced objectivity is an ideological construct that serves as an authorizing agent, not an actual state of independent impartiality.⁷ Sociologists, for instance, have long realized that they do not simply observe society but also shape it through the questions they pose, the surveys

4 For example, Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā’, al-Ilāhiyyāt*, ed. Georges Anawati and Sa‘īd Zāyid (Cairo: al-Hay’a al-‘Āmma li-Shu‘ūn al-Maṭābi‘ al-Amīriyya, 1960), 3–4; Ibn Sīnā, *Dānish-nāma-yi ‘Alā’ī, Ilāhiyyāt*, ed. Muḥammad Mu‘īn (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āthār-i Millī, 1331sh/1952), 2; Ibn Sīnā, “Fī aqsām al-‘ulūm al-‘aqliyya,” in Ibn Sīnā, *Tis’ rasā’il* (Cairo: Maṭba‘a Hindiyya, 1908), 104–118, 105; Ibn Sīnā, *al-Qānūn fī l-ṭibb*, ed. Muḥammad Amīn al-Ḍannāwī, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1999), 1:12.

5 For more on the division of sciences in Persian manuals of ethics see, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), *Akhlāq-i Nāṣiri*, ed. Muḥtabā Minuwī and ‘Alī Riḍā Ḥaydarī (Tehran: Zar, 1356sh/1978), 37–41.

6 On the shifting status of various occult fields of learning in Arabic and Persian encyclopedias of sciences over the centuries, see Matthew Melvin-Koushki, “Powers of One: The Mathematicalization of the Occult Sciences in the High Persianate Tradition,” *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 5 (2017): 127–199.

7 For the production of objectivity as an authorizing force in modern scientific discourse, see Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 17–53.

they conduct, and the categories they create.⁸ Attention to such feedback and reflexivity can help us fathom how the Western academic study of Islam, with its historical fixation on the “backward” practices and “superstitious” beliefs of Muslims, has itself come to shape the various patterns of modern Islamic reform. Modern scholarship has long been making magic as much as observing it, by carving out and labeling particular domains and activities as rational, authentic, and normative, while marginalizing others as primitive, folkloric, and deviant. In some basic sense, we labor under the weight of the analytical categories and the concepts behind them inherited from high colonialism that serve to both authorize and disqualify. Magic-talk is never impartial or disinterested.⁹

It is in this light that attending to the historical contingencies of the categories and concepts we employ has been an enduring strategy in critical theory. In recent years, various fields of Islamic studies have come to face with renewed attention the challenges and unstated logic posed by the master categories we use to analyze the world and our place in it. This increased attention has benefited from theoretical insights developed in anthropology, sociology, the study of religion, and the history of science, which have tackled the unstated grammar of modernity that governs such master categories as science, religion, secularism, magic, and reason. As with all historical inquiry, our sphere of analysis may intersect in various ways with the conceptual vocabularies of others. But, as in a Venn diagram, such areas of confluence are never coterminous. The locations that deserve attention are precisely the spaces that are orthogonal to our own unstated conceptions of the normal, the authoritative, or the real.

As with superstition and magic, such second-order analytical terms as “occult,” “esoteric,” “mystic,” and “gnostic” have served as important foils for framing and affirming the rational and scientific basis of Western modernity. While such analytical categories often have parallels in Islamic intellectual history, their use and application as trans-historical or trans-cultural signifiers or as nodes for comparative analysis is, as with all acts of translation, by no

8 See Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); for this collection and more observations pertinent to the topic, particularly as it relates to the study of religion, see Jason A. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 11–13.

9 For the intellectual contexts shaping such formulations in the western academy, see broadly Randall Styers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic, and Science in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3–24; Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 164–177.

measure self-evident. Just as modern Western scholarship has been busy making magic, as it were, through classificatory hierarchies and various strategies for producing qualified knowledge, so too have Muslim intellectuals long been occupied with identifying, evaluating, and categorizing the diverse branches of what we may term here occult learning. In many notable ways these classificatory practices overlap. Yet the historical, ethical, and basic evaluative premises of these enterprises have often been radically distinct.

As an organizational rubric, the occult—foregrounded in the present volume and in a growing body of recent scholarship—points historically to hidden, invisible, and secret forces in nature binding the cosmos together. At a sociological level, the occult also suggests the actual status of certain bodies of knowledge and forms of practice that are hidden from view.¹⁰ Across the diverse contours of Islamic thought, an obvious parallel with the occult, at least ontologically, is *ghayb*, a catchall for the hidden world of the unseen. The category notably plays a significant role in the Qur'an and throughout the development of Islamic cosmography. Yet the status of *'ilm al-ghayb*, as a form of epistemic authority, is generally restricted to the realm of angels, demons, and jinn, often associated with knowledge obtained through dreams or revelation. As such, it does not readily account for the full array of disciplines implied by the term "occult sciences," which include—at least in the vocabulary of Renaissance philosophy—alchemy, astral learning, and natural magic.

The semantic field predicated in the distinction between *bāṭin* and *zāhir*, the hidden and the manifest, is also generative. The distinction highlights the secretive dimensions often associated with occult learning. The language of unveiling as an elite strategy of esoteric disclosure has been important throughout the development of Islamic thought and authority. As an authorizing strategy for both containment and concealment, the esoteric has obvious structural and conceptual parallels with a vast array of historical contexts and cultural practices; there are also real and measurable points of confluence between what we could identify as Islamic, Jewish, and Christian esoteric writings and discourses of authority.¹¹ Furthermore, the esoteric is notable, in

10 For the Latinate discourses on the occult implied here, see Hanegraaff, *Esotericism*, 177–180; Hanegraaff, "Occult/Occultism," in *The Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 884–889.

11 See, e.g., Moshe Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and Its Philosophical Implications*, trans. Jackie Feldman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); see also Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "The Globalization of Esotericism," *Correspondences* 3, no. 1 (2015): 55–91.

comparative terms, for its current use in the burgeoning study of Western esotericism as a discrete field of analysis. Yet, here again the category of the *bāṭin* and its nominalized form *bāṭiniyya* are sensu stricto not only narrower in their classificatory roles in the development of Islamic learning but are also shaped by distinct sectarian valences that are easily lost in their elision with esotericism.¹²

Similarly generative in the development of Western scholarship on Islam and in modern Islamic reformist discourses has been the pervasive category of the mystical, with its roots in the hidden, secret, and mysterious implied in the Greek etymology of such terms as *mystēs*, *mystērion*, and *mystikos*. As for the modern construction of mysticism as a distinct and even universal field of religious activity and its conflation with Islamic discourses of *taṣawwuf*, the chief problem has been the reifying force implied in the category itself. Above all, the nominalization of mysticism serves to exclude certain beliefs and practices as distinct from other domains of normativity and orthodoxy in such a way as to make much of Islamic intellectual and cultural history unintelligible.¹³

Likewise, despite the direct semantic parallels between *ʿirfān* in Arabic and *gnōsis* in Greek as conceptualizations for divine, secret, or hidden knowledge, the modern category of gnosticism as either a coherent religious movement or a clearly defined cosmological disposition is vexing. While there are numerous examples in which early Arabic translations of the classical Greek corpus affirm the semantic overlap between *gnōsis* and *ʿirfān* or *maʿrifa*, in comparative terms the utility of gnosticism, as constituted in nineteenth-century Western scholarship, and its application to Islamic intellectual history are anything but evident. This is particularly the case in contexts in which gnosticism is used as a broad umbrella for a set of transhistoric beliefs putatively shared by various religious communities across time and place.¹⁴

12 For an overview of the problem of the universalization of esotericism and hopes for its rehabilitation, see Liana Saif, "What Is Islamic Esotericism?," *Correspondences* 7, no. 1 (2019): 1–59; see also Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "Magic in Islam between Religion and Science," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 14, no. 2 (2019): 255–287, 259 n. 5, 280–281.

13 Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Post-Colonial Theory, India and 'The Mystic East'* (London: Routledge, 1999), 7–34. For more on the Iranian context, see Ata Anzali, "Mysticism" in *Iran: The Safavid Roots of a Modern Concept* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2017), 197–235.

14 For the relevant scholarship on the problem of gnosticism as a comparative field of study, see Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 215–218; for a similar formulation in the context of Arabic "hermeticism," see Kevin van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 19.

These tensions extend beyond merely emic and etic distinctions of the insider/outsider variety. Evaluative hierarchies, which are designed to authorize certain ways of knowing and being while silencing and ridiculing others, govern the syntax that animates our analytic categories. In some basic sense, there is no way out of this labyrinth, for knowledge production is invariably staged in relationship to what is right and what is wrong through various discursive exercises of power that stigmatize others as unfit, unqualified, or unreasonable.¹⁵ In today's vocabulary, our epistemic demarcations—inherent in all group formation—are marked by such master divisions as gender, class, race, creed, and nation. It is not that we should do away with our terms of engagement, most of which, as far as the Western academy is concerned, have been inherited and fashioned in the course of European colonial history. The notion that we could remove from our conceptual frameworks the productive power of naming is a practical absurdity. Words are useful, they are powerful, and they are, one might even say, alchemical—in their capacity to produce something out of nothing through the slippage between being and language, in that Joycean illusion of the world within a word.¹⁶ What any history of language would demand of us, however, is that we analyze the conceptual grammar underwriting our categories—what it forecloses and makes impossible to see.¹⁷

Even the new terms we invent in an attempt to account more fully for the intricacies and complexities of being inevitably have unintended consequences that come to condition our conceptual horizons. An influential example for our field is the term “Islamicate,” coined by Marshall Hodgson.¹⁸ The category has been immensely productive as a means of labeling in broad civilizational terms a host of activities that extend beyond what “Islamic” (in the narrow sense of pertaining solely to the interiorized domain of belief) could

15 On the matter of disqualification in the sociology of knowledge, see Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 82–86. For the postcolonial implications, see, for instance, Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 43; Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 159–160.

16 See Jeri Johnson, “Introduction,” in James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), ix–xxxvii, esp. xxxix–xxx.

17 For the strategy of tracing the grammar of concepts as developed by Ludwig Wittgenstein, see Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular, Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 25 n. 9.

18 Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1:45–46, 57–60.

apparently achieve on its own. It is in this sense that the term has long served as an organizing rubric for a wide array of scholarship, the present volume included. Yet, despite its practical advantages as a means of highlighting areas that extend beyond merely the religious or confessional, the term “Islamicate” carries with it palpable limitations. Foremost, the cognitive divide between the Islamic and the Islamicate proceeds from a demarcation between religion and society, between an inner belief and outward expression. Demonstrably shaped by specific Protestant formulations, this division, in turn, creates a space for separating what is normative or orthodox from what is not authentically Islamic as such. For both Muslims and non-Muslims alike, everything that in today’s terms is viewed as not pertaining to Islam proper can be lumped together in the waste bin of non-normative or heterodox beliefs and practices. Here we may find shrine visitation, Sufi piety, occult learning, millenarian sovereignty, wine drinking, image making, and general merriment. The retrievable repertoire meant to betoken authenticity necessitates a potent variety of oppositional logic. Stripping all such purportedly non-orthodox layers away from a nominally authentic core of Islam makes it all but impossible to understand the historical centrality of numerous areas of devotion and learning that, from a modern vantage, are generally not conceived of as authentically Islamic.¹⁹

The upside to all this is that the unfolding power of language, in its messy reality, means that both categories and the concepts behind them are in a continual state of flux. We may take some solace in the recognition that, as scholars, we can do with our conceptual armature what we wish.²⁰ It is also worth stating though that jargon and other terms of art often serve to distinguish those in the know from those who know nothing, as notably on display in the various linguistic strategies for affirming medical, legal, and scientific authority. This ability to name, codify, and classify is precisely what generates scholarly authority through specialized knowledge. Critique does not end by merely abandoning outdated categories and the ideas that animate them or by simply fashioning new ones. Rather, the task at hand demands recog-

19 For a sustained critique of the term “Islamicate” and its broader implications, see Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 113–175. On the mimetic tokens that constitute the properties of Islam, see Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* (London: Verso, 1993), 24–26. For further on this oppositional logic, see also Joseph Massad, *Islam in Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

20 For more on this observation in the context of the category of religion, see Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 269–284, esp. 281–282.

nizing that second-order forms of conceptualization invariably foreclose certain possibilities of thinking in other terms. The challenge posed by our taxonomies thus extends beyond solely a matter of accounting for the surplus and deficit inherent in all translation; we must also mind how knowledge is generated and how power is exercised. Attention to the conceptual frameworks we have inherited is powerful, as it offers possibilities for thinking otherwise.²¹

2 Passing Strange

When speaking of magic and the occult, there is much to be gained by accounting for the performative and material conditions that animate the intellectual and cultural lives of the subjects we study. So too should we attend to the diverse contexts that frame, guide, and make possible our own scholarly endeavors. The parallels between scholarly taxonomic systems across time often prove uncanny. Practices of naming, defining, and classifying magic are quite old. In the diverse contexts of Islamic history, these stretch back to before the days of the Baghdadi bookman Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380/990), who opens his famed bio-bibliographical survey with a comparative history of scripts and writing found across the world and closes with a chapter on the global history of alchemy and its mysterious ciphers and scripts. Along the way, Ibn al-Nadīm dedicates a section to writings on magic, charms, talismans, and tricks, which also includes works on summoning jinn and demons. In Ibn al-Nadīm's schema, there are licit and illicit forms of magic. Here Ibn al-Nadīm uses the word *sihr* for magic, which can also have the sense of enchantment or sorcery. Many of the titles and authorities grouped in his treatment of magic and spells also overlap with the cognate disciplines of alchemy and astral science, though Ibn al-Nadīm treats each of these fields separately.²²

21 On this discursive maneuver, see Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, 42–63.

22 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid, 4 vols. in 2 (London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2009), 1:9–49 (scripts), 2:207–266 (astral learning included along with mathematics, mechanics, and music, etc.), 2:333–342 (magic, talismans, *nī-ranjātiyyāt*, etc.), 2:441–466 (alchemy). For a study and translation of the final *maqāla* of the *Fihrist*, see Johann Fück, “The Arabic Literature on Alchemy according to an-Nadīm (A.D. 987). A Translation of the Tenth Discourse of *The Book of the Catalogue (al-Fihrist)* with Introduction and Commentary,” *Ambix* 4, nos. 3–4 (1951): 81–144. For more on the organizational principles of the *Fihrist* as they relate to both writing and alchemy, see Travis Zadeh, “Uncertainty and the Archive,” in *Digital Humanities and Islamic and Middle East Studies*, ed. Elias Muhanna (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 11–64, esp. 55–59.

But there were other bibliographic and classificatory efforts at bringing together various branches of the occult sciences. In the course of later classical Islamic learning, one of the more enduring forms is represented by the rubric *al-'ulūm al-gharība*, a phrase often used to group alchemy, astrology, and various divinatory and magical practices. The equation of *gharīb* with occult, however, is not entirely straightforward. The adjective *gharīb* evokes at once the strange, extraordinary, rare, difficult, foreign, remote, and uncanny and can even be put into the service of the noble or elite, as in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d. 606/1210) pairing of *gharīb* with *sharīf* (noble, honorable, august).²³ Regardless of the broad associations, the term *gharīb* is read above all as pertaining to actual phenomena that exist in the world and that can be verified and affirmed through scientific authority.

Here and throughout a growing body of recent scholarship, the label has been read as an autochthonous category for the occult sciences in particular and occult phenomena in general. There is a case to be made for doing just this, particularly in light of the significant role that *occulta philosophia* played in early modern discourses of natural history and mathematical science, where we can trace a parallel move to affirm the many "marvelous" and "wondrous" phenomena of existence as entirely natural and thus the basis for scientific study and rationalization. In the idioms of Islamic learning, the strange or extraordinary sciences are often paired conceptually with such adjectives as "obscure," "hidden," and "secret" (*ghāmiḍa*, *khafīyya*, *sirriyya*).²⁴ To be sure, something of the strange implied by the phrasing might be lost when eliding *gharīb* into "occult." As with magic, though to a different degree and for distinct

23 The identification is made in the context of physiognomy (*'ilm-i firāsa*), described as both *sharīf* and *gharīb*, see Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Jāmi' al-'ulūm (Sittīnī)*, ed. Sayyid 'Alī Āl Dāwūd (Tehran: Thurayyā, 1382sh/2003), 268. Cited in Melvin-Koushki, "Magic in Islam," 281 n. 55. The pairing is part of a general semantic field that evokes the celebrated status of occult learning, as in the phrase "the noble extraordinary sciences and the wondrous subtle arts" (*al-'ulūm al-gharība al-sharīfa wa-l-funūn al-'ajība al-laṭīfa*), in Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī, *al-Shāmil fī l-baḥr al-kāmil*, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, MS Walter 91, fōl. 135^b.

24 For a further discussion of the labels *ghāmiḍa*, as "obscure," and *khafīyya*, as "hidden," earlier synonyms for *al-'ulūm al-gharība*, see the discussion of this topic in the introduction to the present volume by Liana Saif and Francesca Leoni. See also Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "De-Orienting the Study of Islamicate Occultism," in "Islamicate Occultism: New Perspectives," ed. Matthew Melvin-Koushki and Noah Gardiner, special double issue of *Arabica* 64, nos. 3–4 (2017): 287–295, esp. 288–289; Melvin-Koushki, "Powers of One," 128 n. 2; Melvin-Koushki, "Persianate Geomancy from Tūsī to the Millennium: A Preliminary Survey," in *Occult Sciences in Pre-modern Islamic Culture*, ed. Nader El-Bizri and Eva Orthmann (Beirut: Orient-Institut Beirut, 2018), 151–199, esp. 152 n. 3.

ends, the occult likewise has its own troubled history as a modern placeholder for a variety of practices and beliefs that are set in opposition to reason and science.²⁵ Yet, as with all such attempts at cross-cultural equivalence, the equation between *al-ʿulūm al-gharība* and the occult sciences opens up numerous venues for comparison and for tracing direct lines of contact, even while closing off others.

As for its own synchronic significance, while *gharīb* and its direct variants do not form part of the Qurʾanic lexicon,²⁶ the term appears in numerous sayings ascribed to the prophet Muḥammad, such as the eschatologically portentous hadith that “Islam began as a stranger, and it will return just as it began a stranger, so may there be blessings upon strangers.”²⁷ As for its categorical value, *gharīb* comes to serve as a meaningful index for a host of semantic fields. From works on rare or difficult lexical material in a variety of corpora (e.g., *gharīb al-ḥadīth*, *gharīb al-Qurʾān*, *gharīb al-lughā*) to collections dedicated to preserving the passing graffiti of strangers and documenting their hardships (e.g., *adab al-ghurabāʾ*), the adjective is used in the early formation of Arabic literature to organize numerous phenomena.²⁸ Notably, *gharīb* evokes such cognitive and emotive registers as the remote, obscure, peculiar, uncommon, rare, difficult, foreign, and strange, just as it can be glossed as both queer and curious.²⁹

Most salient in the present context is the taxonomical significance of *gharāʾib* (sing. *gharība*), as a default placeholder for discourses on the wonders of creation. The term is generally coupled with *ʿajāʾib* (wonders, marvels, and other natural curiosities). An early work to use these terms in its

25 See Hanegraaff, *Esotericism*, 181–191; Egil Asprem, “Science and the Occult,” in *The Occult World*, ed. Christopher Partridge (London: Routledge, 2015), 710–719.

26 Elsaid M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qurʾanic Usage* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 661–662, s.v. *gh-r-b*.

27 “*Badaʾa l-islāmu gharīban wa-sayaʿūdu kamā badaʾa gharīban, fa-ṭūbā li-l-ghurabāʾi*,” Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875), *Saḥīḥ*, 2 vols. (Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Jamʿiyyat al-Maknaz al-Islāmī, 2000), “Kitāb al-Imān,” 1:83, §§ 389–390; for more on the circulation of this saying, along with its apocalyptic variants and connotations, see the editorial note in Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), *Musnad*, ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnāʿūṭ, 52 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1993–2001), 6:325–326 n. 2, § 3784.

28 For early examples, see Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Salām (d. 224/838), *al-Gharīb al-muṣannaf*, ed. Muḥammad al-Mukhtār al-ʿAbīdī, 2 vols. (Tunis: Dār Saḥnūn li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 1996); Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. 356/967), *Kitāb al-Adab al-ghurabāʾ*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1982).

29 See, for instance, Reinhart Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1881), 2:205; Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1961), 783.

title is the Persian encyclopedia of natural history by the courtier Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī (fl. 562/1166), titled the *Kitāb ‘Ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā’ib al-mawjūdāt* (“The wonders of all creation and the rarities of all existence”). In addition to a full account of the world, stretching from the macrocosmic workings of the heavenly spheres to the microcosmic marvels of insects, al-Ṭūsī also includes in his cosmography sections on angels, jinn, demons, idols, and talismans, along with the unique, hidden properties (*khawāṣṣ*) of plants, animals, and minerals.

By al-Ṭūsī’s day the treatment of hidden properties had already been clothed in the language of wonders and rarities. Medical, philosophical, and alchemical writings on *khawāṣṣ* drew inspiration from earlier works in Greek on *physika*, which covered a vast field of topics including stones, plants, animals, agriculture, medicine, as well as crafts and tricks. In the Arabic translation of classical philosophy and medicine, the term *khāṣṣa* (pl. *khawāṣṣ*) was also frequently associated with the Greek *idios* and *idiotētes*, the unique physical qualities or properties that could influence other forms of matter.³⁰

The concept plays an important role in the medical writings of Galen who uses the expression *idiotētes arrētoi*, “indescribable properties,” to refer to phenomena with discernable effects but which cannot be explained by the manifest elemental forces of the humors in their various combinations and mixtures. For Galenic medicine, this included not only a variety of substances and conditions but also amulets and charms. In medieval Latin medical and scholastic writings, the phrase was generally rendered as *qualitates occultae*, the hidden properties which represented the immediate agent or efficient cause behind a given physical phenomenon. These hidden forces were beyond direct perception or sensation and could only be witnessed indirectly through their effects on substances, such as the manifest force of magnets, the power of various drugs, or the influence of planetary movements. They also played part in the physical push and pull of sympathy and antipathy that governed the cos-

30 For literature on *khawāṣṣ*, see Paul Kraus, *Jābir ibn Ḥayyān: Contribution à l’histoire des idées scientifiques dans l’Islam*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1942–1943), 2:61–95; Manfred Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972), 393–416; Lucia Raggetti, “The ‘Science of Properties’ and its Transmission,” in *In the Wake of the Compendia: Infrastructural Contexts and the Licensing of Empiricism in Ancient and Medieval Mesopotamia*, ed. J. Cale Johnson (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 159–176. See also William Newman, “The Occult and the Manifest Among the Alchemists,” in *Tradition, Transmission, Transformation: Proceedings of Two Conferences on pre-Modern Science Held at the University of Oklahoma*, ed. F. Jamil Ragep et al. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 173–200.

mos and with it the efficacy of talismans.³¹ The vocabulary of the strange and marvelous, evoked by the likes of the physician and alchemist Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 313/925) frequently accompanied discussion of the unique physical properties found throughout existence. Rāzī notably viewed Galen as an authority for the efficacious use of incantations and amulets.³²

Wonders and rarities abound in philosophical and medical discussions of the physical world that often touched on various occult practices. In a discussion of Zoroastrian ritual observances and magic performances, the famed polymath at the Ghaznavid court Abū l-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (d. 440/1048) refers to his *Kitāb al-ʿAjāʾib al-ṭabīʿiyya wa-l-gharāʾib al-ṣināʿiyya* (“Book of natural wonders and amazing arts”). According to al-Bīrūnī’s description, his collection focused on, among other topics, incantations, natural magic, and talismans (*al-ʿazāʾim wa-l-nīranjāt wa-l-ṭilasmāt*). In al-Bīrūnī’s hands we can see how the generic organization of the strange and extraordinary could be imbued with scientific authority.³³ Unlike al-Bīrūnī’s unfinished book of wonders, however, al-Ṭūsī’s collection survives in various manuscripts, several of them lavishly illustrated. The work showcases amusing anecdotes of the strange and uncanny, as does it contain a good deal of practical information on meteorology, medicine, and pharmacology, concluding with a chapter on poisons and antidotes.³⁴ As with many earlier compilations of natural marvels, al-Ṭūsī’s col-

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- 31 For the Galenic treatment of properties and its roots in Stoic philosophy, see Tobias Reinhardt, “Galen on Unsayable Properties,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 40 (2011): 297–317. For the later influence of these categories, see Brian Copenhaver, “The Occultist Tradition and its Critics,” in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 454–512, esp. 459, 504 n. 16; and Hanegraaff, *Esotericism*, 178–182. For Galen’s treatment of amulets and charms, Caroline Petit, “Galen, Pharmacology and the Boundaries of Medicine: A Reassessment,” in *Collecting Recipes: Byzantine and Jewish Pharmacology in Dialogue. Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Cultures*, ed. Lennart Lehmann and Matteo Martelli (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 53–79.
- 32 See Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-khawāṣṣ wa-l-ashyāʾ al-muqāwima li-l-amrāq wa-dhikr ʿajāʾib al-buldān*, Dār al-Kutub, Cairo, MS Taymūriyya Ṭibb 264, pp. 1–3 (introduction), 33–40 (*ʿajāʾib al-buldān*), 43–46 (Hermetic talismans), 50 (Galen). For his citation of Galen, Rāzī copies from Alexander of Tralles, *Therapeutica = Alexander von Tralles. Original-Text und Übersetzung nebst einer einleitenden Abhandlung*, ed. and trans. Theodor Puschmann, 2 vols. (Vienna: Braumüller, 1878–1879), 2:473–475. The relevant Greek passages are treated in Petit, “Galen,” 71–73.
- 33 Referred to in Abū l-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī, *al-Āthār al-bāqīya ʿan al-qurūn al-khālīya*, ed. Parwīz Adhkāyī (Tehran: Mīrāth-i Maktūb, 1380sh/2001), 285–286, § 77.
- 34 Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī, *ʿAjāʾib-nāma*, ed. Manūchihr Sutūda (Tehran: Nashr-i Kitāb, 1966), 5 (for the full title), 336–369 (idols, images, and talismans), 496–512 (jinn and demons), 615–637 (poisons). For a study of illuminated manuscripts on wonders of

lection is guided by a teleological argument for God's existence through the manifest order of creation, itself a common theme that can be traced back through antiquity.³⁵

Of the many cosmological compendia organized around *'ajā'ib wa-gharā'ib*, one of the most widely disseminated and arguably most influential is the Arabic natural history by Abū Yaḥyā Zakariyyā' al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283), which takes the same title as al-Ṭūsī's collection. Al-Qazwīnī likewise follows a well-trodden path in natural philosophy, starting with the premise that, through contemplating the wonders of creation, one ultimately comes to know the existence of the divine Creator. Similar discussions can be traced back to the earliest stages of Greek philosophy and are found throughout Islamic intellectual history, such as the argument deployed by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' (Brethren of Purity) to describe the development of monotheism from polytheism as based on the awe that humans feel in the face of the wonders and rarities of creation.³⁶

In the context of the occult, al-Qazwīnī's collection is particularly useful, as he opens his cosmography, in true scholastic fashion, with a definition of the key terms of his title, namely wonders, creations, rarities, and beings (i.e., *'ajā'ib, makhlūqāt, gharā'ib, mawjūdāt*). As for his understanding of *gharīb*, al-Qazwīnī notes:

The extraordinary is every seldom-occurring wondrous matter (*kull amr 'ajīb qalīl l-wuqū'*) that diverges from customary phenomena and commonly witnessed experiences (*mukhālif li-l-'ādāt al-ma'hūda wa-l-mushā-*

creation, with a focus on al-Ṭūsī and al-Qazwīnī, see Persis Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011). For another early Persian collection, covering similar material with attention not only to various occult phenomena but also to uncovering tricks and deceptions, see the work ascribed to the astronomer and mathematician Muḥammad b. Ayyūb al-Ṭabarī, *Tuhfat al-gharā'ib*, ed. Jalāl Matīnī, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Mūza wa-Markaz-i Asnād-i Majlis-i Shūrā-yi Islāmī, 1391sh/2012), 19–25 (editor's introduction on the question of authorship and dating); see also Clifford Edmund Bosworth and Iraj Afshar, "Ajā'eb al-Maklūqāt," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

35 For an early Arabic example of this discourse in the realm of alchemy, see, e.g., ps.-Apollonius, *Sirr al-khalīqa*, ed. Ursula Weisser (Aleppo: Ma'had al-Turāth al-'Ilmī al-'Arabī, 1979); in the framework of traditionalist hadith scholarship, see also Abū l-Shaykh al-Iṣfahānī (d. 369/979), *Kitāb al-Aḥzama*, ed. Riḍā Allāh b. Muḥammad Idrīs al-Mubārakfurī, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-Āṣima, 1998).

36 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1957), "Risāla fi l-ārā' wa-l-diyānāt," 3:482. For more on this topic, see Travis Zadeh, "The Wiles of Creation: Philosophy, Fiction, and the *'Ajā'ib* Tradition," *Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures* 13, no. 1 (2010): 21–48.

hadāt al-ma'lūfa).³⁷ This occurs from the influence (*ta'thīr*) of powerful psyches (*nufūs qawīyya*), celestial phenomena (*umūr falakīyya*), or elemental bodies (*ajrām 'unṣuriyya*), all of which are determined by the power of God almighty and His will.³⁸

To illustrate the point further, al-Qazwīnī lists as examples the miracles of prophets and saints (*mu'jizāt al-anbiyā'/karāmāt al-awliyā'*), the prophecies of soothsayers (*akhbār al-kahana*), the power of jinn, the evil eye, the mental capacity (*himma*) associated with certain Indian sages, and various forms of divination. Here too are rare astral, meteorological, and geological phenomena, such as comets, meteors, blizzards in the middle of the summer, violent hailstorms, and powerful earthquakes, as well as prodigious births, speaking infants, and talking animals.

Al-Qazwīnī concludes his treatment of the topic by observing that philosophers (*ḥukamā'*) have established three categories for “strange phenomena” (*al-umūr al-gharība*): 1) psychic influences and subsidiary reactions (*al-āthār al-nafsāniyya wa-l-infi'ālāt al-tābi'a*) on the faculties of the imagination that occur without any direct, natural intermediary—when used for good these are either Prophetic miracles (*mu'jiza*) or saintly wonders (*karāma*), when used for ill they are the illicit magic (*siḥr*) of evil souls; 2) talismans that function through their connection by form, shape, and location with unique celestial forces and elemental bodies (*quwā samāwiyya wa-ajsām 'unṣuriyya*); 3) *nīran-jāt* that produce strange phenomena through the power of terrestrial bodies, as in the way lodestones (*maghnāṭīs*) attract iron.³⁹

37 For the significance of habit or custom (*'āda*) as a dominant category in theological discussions of miracles, see Harry Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Kalām* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 544–558; see also Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 194–201.

38 Abū Yahyā Zakariyyā' al-Qazwīnī, *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt*, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, MS Cod.arab. 464, fol. 6^b (the third *muqaddima*). For the dedication in al-Qazwīnī's redaction for the Ilkhanid statesman 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Juwaynī (d. 681/1283), otherwise missing from the Munich recension (copied 678/1280), see al-Qazwīnī, *'Ajā'ib*, British Library, London, Or. 14140, fol. 2^a. This dedication appears in al-Qazwīnī, *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lami, 2000), 9. As with the *editio princeps* by Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1848), this popular edition is lacunose and contains notable errata. A critical edition or even a diplomatic edition of just the Munich manuscript, the oldest dated manuscript known to survive, are still desiderata.

39 Al-Qazwīnī, *'Ajā'ib*, Munich, fol. 6^b; Wüstenfeld's edition ascribes this statement to the *ḥukamā'* (12), as does the Beirut edition (17), which parallels here British Library, MS Or. 14140, fol. 6^a. For Ibn Sīnā in this passage, cf. Syrinx von Hees, *Enzyklopädie als Spiegel des*

Neither the language used in this classification of the strange or extraordinary nor the ideas developed are especially novel. But a focus on originality would largely miss the significance of al-Qazwīnī's collection of wonders, which represents a pious distillation of natural philosophy in an accessible, concise, and entertaining form. The category *al-umūr al-gharība*, the tripartite division, and the examples given all parallel directly the treatment of the topic in the final section of the famed philosophical primer *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt* ("Pointers and reminders") by Ibn Sīnā. Here, the great teacher of the philosophy of Aristotle offers a scientific basis for extraordinary phenomena, which includes a general theory of prophecy and miracles. In earlier writings, Ibn Sīnā develops other divisions of the extraordinary, but in this particular work he makes exactly the same division as listed by al-Qazwīnī, namely: 1) paranormal causation through the power of the soul or psyche as the basis for both miracles and magic; 2) *nīranjāt*; and 3) talismans.⁴⁰ Except for transposing slightly the order of the list, al-Qazwīnī follows closely Ibn Sīnā's classification. Perhaps equally important, he fully accepts the naturalization of magic and miracle, itself a central tenet of Avicennan metaphysics. The *Ishārāt*, a succinct text, which represents the last significant articulation of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy, enjoyed several major commentaries over the course of history.⁴¹ This specific taxonomy became well known, as the *Ishārāt* circulated widely in scholastic philosophical circles and in *madrassa* education.⁴² A good example is the commentary by the renowned philosopher and occultist Fakhr al-Dīn al-

Weltbildes. Qazwinis Wunder der Schöpfung: eine Naturkunde des 13. Jahrhunderts (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 100 n. 49.

- 40 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt*, ed. Muḥtabā Zārī'ī (Qum: Bustān-i Kitāb-i Qum, 2002), 390, §10.30. For more on Ibn Sīnā's earlier classifications and his use of the term *nīranj*, see Charles Burnett's chapter in the present volume. See also Charles Burnett, "Nīranj: A Category of Magic (Almost) Forgotten in the Latin West," in *Natura, scienze e società medievali: studi in onore di Agostino Paravicini Bagliani*, ed. Claudio Leonardi, Francesco Santi, and Agostino Paravicini Bagliani (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2008), 37–66, esp. 43–44.
- 41 For the place of this work in Ibn Sīnā's oeuvre, see Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works*, 2nd rev. ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 130–133, 155–159 (work 11). On the long commentarial tradition associated with the *Ishārāt*, as well as Ibn Sīnā's treatment of the paranormal, see Michael Rapoport, "The Life and Afterlife of the Rational Soul, Chapters VIII–X of Ibn Sīnā's *Pointers and Reminders* and Their Commentaries" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2018), 203–215, 358–368.
- 42 For more on Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt* in the context of *madrassa* education, see Gerhard Endress, "Reading Avicenna in the *Madrassa*: Intellectual Genealogies and Chains of Transmission of Philosophy and the Sciences in the Islamic East," in *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy: From the Many to the One*, ed. James E. Montgomery (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 371–422.

Rāzī (d. 606/1210), who, when discussing this passage, refers to his own detailed treatment of the topic in *al-Sirr al-maktūm* ("The hidden secret"), a study of theoretical and practical astral magic.⁴³

Al-Qazwīnī, who served as chief judge of the provincial city of Wasit, near Baghdad, and taught at a *madrasa* there until his death, does not directly identify his classification of *gharīb* with Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt*, but he does not need to.⁴⁴ By this point, the major arguments developed by Ibn Sīnā on the naturalization of both magic and miracle as derived from the singular metaphysical power of the soul would have been fully legible to his audience, as they had been largely absorbed in authoritative circles of teaching and learning.⁴⁵ As for his own intellectual maturation, al-Qazwīnī trained with the astronomer and natural philosopher Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī (d. 663/1264) in Mosul. Al-Abharī, in turn, studied Ibn Sīnā's philosophy in the mold of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. Al-Abharī, like many among his generation, is known to have read the *Ishārāt*, along with many of Ibn Sīnā's other works.⁴⁶ By now, the once radical claim, with its obvious Neoplatonic resonances, that what distinguishes illicit magic

43 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt*, ed. 'Alī Riḍā Najafzāda, 2 vols. (Tehran: Dānīshgāh-i Tīhrān, 1384sh/2005–2006), 2:663–664. For al-Rāzī's classifications of paranormal phenomena (*al-umūr al-gharība*), see Tariq Jaffer, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Taxonomy of Extraordinary Acts," in *Light upon Light: Essays in Islamic Thought and History in Honor of Gerhard Bowering*, ed. Jamal J. Elias and Bilal Orfali (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 347–365. For more on al-Rāzī's collection of astral magic, see Michael-Sebastian Noble, "The Perfection of the Soul in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *al-Sirr al-Maktūm*" (PhD diss., Warburg Institute, University of London, 2017) and his chapter in the present volume.

44 For early biographical material on al-Qazwīnī, see the history ascribed to Ibn al-Fuwaṭī (d. 723/1323), *al-Ḥawādith al-jāmi'a wa-l-tajārib al-nāfi'a fi l-m'a al-sābi'a*, ed. Maḥdī Najm (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 2003), 299; for more on al-Qazwīnī's teachers and Sufi lineage, see Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma' al-ādāb fi mu'jam al-aqāb*, ed. Muḥammad Kāzīm, 6 vols. (Tehran: Mu'assasat al-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr, 1416/1995), 4:261, § 3806, 5:372, § 5290; see also Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), *Tārīkh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhūr wa-l-a'lām*, ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmurī, 53 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1987), 51:101–102, § 85. For his studies with al-Abharī, see al-Qazwīnī, *Athār al-bilād fi akhbār al-'ibād* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1960), 463, 536. For more, see Berlekamp, *Wonder*, 46–50; von Hees, *Enzyklopädie*, 56–57, 257.

45 See, for instance, Frank Griffel, "Al-Gazālī's Concept of Prophecy: The Introduction of Avicennan Psychology into Aṣ'arite Theology," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2004): 101–144.

46 See Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣafādī (d. 764/1363), *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, ed. Aḥmad al-Arnā'ūṭ and Turkī Muṣṭafā, 29 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2000), 2:101, § 499; Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Majma'*, 3:356 n. 1. Endress, "Reading Avicenna," 396, 404–405, 407, 410–416. Elements of this particular line of transmission of the *Ishārāt* quoted in al-Ṣafādī are put into question by Ayman Shihadeh, *Doubts on Avicenna: A Study and Edition of Sharaf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī's Commentary on the Ishārāt* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 14–15.

from Prophetic and saintly miracles was not a matter of ontology but a question of ethics—whether the act is for good or for evil—had been largely routinized across broad swaths of society.⁴⁷ Al-Qazwīnī merely glosses these points as accepted facts of nature.

Just before presenting this three-part division of strange phenomena, al-Qazwīnī refers to the account of how the famed philosopher and Ash‘arī theologian Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) sought out assistance to summon jinn. Elsewhere, al-Qazwīnī identifies Ghazālī’s guide to the world of the unseen as the occultist and religious authority Abū l-Faḍl Muḥammad al-Ṭabasī (d. 482/1089). Al-Qazwīnī knew al-Ṭabasī above all for his grimoire, *al-Shāmīl fī l-baḥr al-kāmīl* (“The comprehensive compendium on the entire ocean”), an influential Arabic handbook of practical magic, which survives in multiple manuscript copies. It is a collection dedicated to commanding demons, jinn, and angels largely through incantations (*‘azā’im*) and talismans.⁴⁸ The centrality of such practices and beliefs can be measured not only in the high discourses of natural philosophy and speculative theology or in the continued significance of *karāmāt* but also through a growing body of literature dedicated to harnessing strange or extraordinary powers for various practical ends, at times cloaked in the language of the Qur’an and pious invocations to God and other celestial powers. Here the cognitive and emotive value that conditions the language of the strange and the wondrous is located in its veridical ontological status, the “there-ness of the event,” based in empirical observation and scientific reality.⁴⁹

Al-Qazwīnī’s collection of wonders and rarities is a useful index of the diffusion of these attitudes, as it made available an authoritative body of sci-

47 See, for instance, Travis Zadeh, “Magic, Marvel, and Miracle in Early Islamic Thought,” in *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West*, ed. David Collins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 235–267; Frank Griffel, “Muslim Philosophers’ Rationalist Explanation of Muḥammad’s Prophecy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Muhammad*, ed. Jonathan Brockopp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 158–179; Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958), 30–91.

48 Al-Qazwīnī, *‘Ajā’ib*, Munich, fol. 7^a. The story referred to here is repeated in greater detail in al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār*, 406–407. For more on al-Ṭabasī, see Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften*, 188, 386–387, 392. See also Travis Zadeh, “Commanding Demons and Jinn: The Sorcerer in Early Islamic Thought,” in *No Tapping around Philology: A Festschrift in Honor of Wheeler McIntosh Thackston Jr.’s 70th Birthday*, ed. Alireza Korangy and Daniel J. Sheffield (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014), 131–160, esp. 144–150.

49 A useful parallel with the emotive register of *ta‘ajjub* are medieval Latin discourses on *admiratio*, for which see Walker Bynum, “Wonder,” *American Historical Review* 102, no. 1 (1997): 1–26, esp. 24 on facticity and “there-ness.”

entific learning in a concise and readily transportable form. This natural history traveled through both courts and *madrāsas*. The countless manuscripts of the work—both lavish presentations copies for wealthy patrons and modest redactions for more humble readers, as well as the numerous translations in Persian, Turkish, and Urdu—all signal its status as a canonical collection that continued to delight and edify, inspiring, in turn, other notable imitations and expansions over time. The increasing attention that these cosmological collections of wonders and rarities pay to the various fields of practical magic is merely another indication of the central status that the extraordinary sciences commanded.⁵⁰ The illuminated star catalog that opens the collection is itself tied to talismanic visual imaginary of astral science.⁵¹ And here lies one of the main challenges when addressing the sciences of extraordinary or paranormal phenomena that animate classical Islamic learning and authority. While these extraordinary forces may well be occulted from view, their power to condition the boundaries of the possible are visible, located in measurable and qualitative ways in normative expressions of Islamic learning and piety.

3 Ambiguity, Uncertainty, and Circularity

None of this is to argue that there were not detractors, that the practices and beliefs associated with occult learning were uniform across time and place, or that these bodies of knowledge enjoyed equal levels of prominence or acceptance. There is much to be said, as Liana Saif and Francesca Leoni note in the

⁵⁰ On the significant expansions of the text, in both Arabic and Persian, see Julius Ruska, “Kāzwinistudien,” *Der Islam* 4 (1913): 14–66, 236–262, esp. 244–251. For more on these transformations, see Karin Rührdanz, “Illustrated Persian *‘Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt* Manuscripts and Their Function in Early Modern Times,” in *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East: Studies on Iran in the Safavid Period*, ed. Andrew J. Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 33–47. This can also be measured by the inclusion of extensive marginalia, many of them concerned with the occult sciences. See, for example, al-Qazwīnī, *‘Ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt*, copied in Lahore in 1270/1854, British Library, MS I.O. Islamic 3243, which contains marginal treatises on, among other subjects, geomancy, divination, and alchemy, described in Hermann Ethé and Edward Edwards, *Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Horace Hart and Clarendon Press, 1903–1937), 1:369–374, § 714. For an important Ottoman example, see the partial Turkish redaction by the courtier Musliḥaddin Muṣṭafā Sürūrī (d. 969/1562), completed in 960/1553, which survives in several manuscript copies and contains notable continuations in the fields of occult learning, such as British Library, MS Add 7894 and Library of Congress, Washington, DC, MS G93.Q3185.

⁵¹ See Berlekamp, *Wonder*, 119–151.

introduction to this volume, about uncertainty and ambiguity. The question of the probity and veracity of magic and the extraordinary shaped early Islamic discussions of the occult in taxonomical, juridical, and theological terms.⁵² As Saif and Leoni also observe, this ambiguity extends beyond matters simply of ontology or cosmology, as it also shapes the historical reception of occult learning itself.⁵³ One of the most important chapters in Islamic history is the spirited endeavor by Muslim modernists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to combat “superstition” in all its varieties, taking up the challenge posed by the punishing discourses of Western rationality. Yet, as with the broader myth of modern disenchantment, it would be wrong to say that the sustained efforts at reform—at casting out or at least radically circumscribing the demons, saintly wonders, and occult forces that have long governed Islamic normativity—were ever fully or uniformly successful.⁵⁴ The strategies of containment are no less interesting, predicated, as they are, on rejecting and occulting from view whole swaths of history as not authentically Islamic.

As far as these intellectual pathways are concerned, part of the problem is that much of Western scholarship, which had long been invested in an exotic image of the Orient as the esoteric font for both enchantment and deception, also became a willing participant in this project. The numerous orientalist writings on Islamic magic, such as those by the scholar Duncan Black MacDonald (d. 1943) or the Protestant missionary Samuel Marinus Zwemer (d. 1952), while often peppered with erudition, were profoundly polemical.⁵⁵ If

52 On ambiguity concerning the reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of the various branches of the occult sciences in classificatory discussions of knowledge, see, e.g., Ibn Farīghūn (fl. 340/951), *Jawāmiʿ al-ʿulūm*, ed. Qays Kāzīm al-Janābī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 2007), 261–263. For a useful example of the theological rejection of the existence of magic as nothing but trickery, see the arguments developed by the Muʿtazili Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣās (d. 370/981), *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq Qamḥāwī, 5 vols., reprint (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1992), 1:50–72 (Q 2:102). Large parts of Jaṣṣās’s argument here feature in the reformist treatment of magic by Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1323/1905) and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1354/1935), *Tafsīr al-manār*, 2nd ed., 12 vols., (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1367–1372/1947–53), 9:45–60.

53 On ambiguity, see Saif and Leoni’s introduction to the present volume.

54 Numerous examples abound. Germane to the present volume are observations by Christiane Gruber in her contribution. Likewise, a productive example of the enduring power of the occult, as well as an index of how much the scholarship on this topic has changed in eighty years, is a comparison of Bess Allen Donaldson, *The Wild Rue: A Study of Muhammadan Magic and Folklore in Iran* (London: Luzac, 1938) with Alireza Doostdar, *The Iranian Metaphysicals: Explorations in Science, Islam, and the Uncanny* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

55 See Samuel Marinus Zwemer, *The Influence of Animism on Islam: An Account of Popular Superstitions* (New York: Macmillan, 1920). Also of note is *The Moslem World*, founded

the “woman question” was for orientalists and missionaries a cause célèbre for railing against the putatively illiberal and oppressive manifestations of Islamic society, the occult offered grounds for repeated efforts at exposing the decadence, decay, and decline that kept Muslims from becoming truly modern. Such scholarship aimed to reform the “Muslim mind.” This could, as the logic went, be achieved only through conversion, if not to Christianity then to secular modernity itself, which, through a mischievous tautology, were largely coterminous.⁵⁶

Viewed in this light, Marshall Hodgson’s vocabulary represents a sympathetic attempt at seeing Muslims in more nuanced terms, by creating spaces for orthodoxy and normativity that he deemed authentically Islamic. This entire conceptual arena, in turn, could be contrasted with all the other accretions that mounted over time through external contacts, sources, and agents that were not properly Islamic. Here we can place all the magic that various reformists—in their debates with orientalists, Christian missionaries, and fellow Muslims—would hold out as untrue to their religion. Among the abiding strategies in the course of modern Islamic reform have been the efforts to cordon off the various branches of magic, astrology, mysticism, divination, etc., as imported from foreign sources, or to silence them as mere expressions of the backward folkloric superstitions of women and the ignorant masses antithetical to the rationalizing, scientific, and modernizing forces of authentic Islam. The pages of orientalist scholarship dedicated to tracing the ancient Indic, Greek, Persian, Egyptian, Christian, or Jewish roots of many beliefs and practices nourished the argument—though for very different ends—that proper Islam must be isolated, for reformist purposes or for positivist pursuits, from foreign influences.

by Zwemer in 1911 and edited by him until 1947. Zwemer dedicated the journal to tracking the progress of Christian missions to Muslim lands and published in it numerous articles focused on exposing Muslim superstitions. The occult is treated extensively in Duncan Black Macdonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam, Being the Haskell Lectures on Comparative Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1909); much of the same material is repeated in Duncan Black Macdonald, “Sihr,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed.; also relevant in this context is Duncan Black Macdonald, “Concluding Study,” in *The Vital Forces of Christianity and Islam: Six Studies by Missionaries to Moslems*, intro. Samuel Marinus Zwemer (London: Oxford University Press, 1915), 215–239. Countless other examples can be adduced.

56 See Gil Anidjar’s syllogistic thesis, based on his reading of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, “Secularism is Orientalism. And Orientalism is Christianity. It is Christian imperialism,” in Gil Anidjar, “Secularism,” *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 1 (2006): 52–77, esp. 66; for a reflection on this formula touching on the present topic, see Robert Yelle, *The Language of Disenchantment, Protestant Literalism and Colonial Discourse in British India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3–4.

The reductionist assertion that authentic Islam is located solely in scripture and law, as manifested in the Qur'an and Sunna, is largely a result of these twin processes of essentialization.

Ironically, such reifying gestures were only reinforced by Wilfred Cantwell Smith's famous formulation that anything that scholars say about Islam as a living faith is valid only in so far as Muslims consent to it.⁵⁷ Indeed both Hodgson and Smith, influential scholars of Islamic history and society, steeped in the *Religionsgeschichte* at the time in vogue among North American liberal Protestants, were reacting, in different ways, to the often offensive and jingoistic character of orientalist scholarship, anticipating the sweeping critiques that Edward Said famously leveled at the entire discursive edifice of orientalism as a monument to Western supremacy. Yet the notion that "Islam is whatever Muslims say it is" turns out to be a conceptual cul-de-sac, not only for historical inquiry but also for social analysis.⁵⁸ As with all group formations, we are dealing here with discursive processes that are not stable, flat, or homogeneous but are constantly unfolding and becoming, through contestation and reformulation.

4 Facing Down Demons

When under siege, the stranger is all the more threatening. Much of the defensive posture guiding Muslim reformist discourses on modernization is formed through the dialogical pressure of Western hegemony. The influential synthesis of magic and miracle as ontologically equivalent in metaphysical terms rationalized the extraordinary as rooted in science and thus licensed a host of practices and beliefs that went largely unchallenged until the rise of European colonialism in the nineteenth century. The search for authenticity in the contours of modernity can never reach that vanishing horizon of unadulterated purity.

57 Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Comparative Religion: Whither—and Why?," in *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, ed. Mircea Eliade and Joseph Kitagawa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 31–58, esp. 43–44.

58 See Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 246–297. Here Ahmed builds on, but also challenges, Talal Asad's notion of Islam as a discursive tradition; see Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (Washington, DC: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1986). For an insightful critique of Ahmed's reading of Asad, see Zareena Grewal, "The Problem with Being Islamic: Definitional and Theoretical Limits and Legacies," August 23, 2016, *Marginalia: Los Angeles Review of Books*, marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org.

The charge of the “foreign” sticks, for there is much truth behind it, as large-scale group formations and ideologies are hybrid by nature, products of mixed parentage. Much of the conceptual vocabulary and epistemic power of the occult sciences are indeed born of exotic origins. The *ṭilasm* is from the Greek *telesma*, the *nīranj* is related to the Middle Persian *nērang*, and the *mandal*, which Ṭabasī and others use as a term of art for the sorcerer’s circle, can be traced to the Sanskrit *maṇḍala*, signifying both circle and realm. The high learning of judicial astrology is not only ancient but stretches back and forth across Asia, Mesopotamia, and the Mediterranean basin. Also cut from foreign cloth are Galenic medicine, Ptolemaic geography and cosmography, and the metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle—all of which shape indelibly the course of Islamic history. The appeal to ancient wisdom, languages of hidden and secret knowledge, stories of ascension, unveiling, and disclosure, and practices of summoning celestial hosts, and binding demonic forces find so many commonalities across the numerous contact zones that Muslims have historically shared with others that pointing them out in comparative terms borders on the banal.

Identifying the ways in which Muslims have long shared in the broad thought-worlds of others is certainly a humanizing gesture, but arguably more pressing are the diverse ways that such exchanges and points of contact are transformed over time and authorized in distinctly Islamic terms. We are confronted here with processes of appropriation, naturalization, and transformation that, like all large-scale social forces, are continually reconstituted and restated.⁵⁹ Practices of defining the occult, pinning down its slippery nature and indeterminacy, represent merely one arena for affirming external boundaries while attending to internal divisions, be it in grand cosmological terms or in more mundane practical matters of daily life. Neither the fields of Islamic learning, the practices they demanded, nor the vocabulary that shaped them have been static over time.

Take, for instance, *nīranj* in Ibn Sīnā’s categorization. His identification of the word with a body of forces connected to earthly elements echoes discussions of *nērang* in the *Dēnkard* (“The acts of religion”), a compendium of Mazdean beliefs and practices written in the tenth century CE in Book Pahlavi. The priestly authors of the compilation treat *nērang* as a form of ritual spell or incantation (*afsōn*) that seeks to activate and harness elemental influences of water, air, fire, and earth in both the visible (*gētīy*) and invisible worlds (*mēnōy*),

59 For an overview of these processes as related to the Abbasid translation movement, see A.I. Sabra, “The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam: A Preliminary Statement,” *History of Science* 25 (1987): 223–243.

two cosmological planes central to Mazdean dualism. In the visible world, *nērang* react with the elements of the body (*āmēzišn ītan*), while from the invisible world they draw on the wondrous acts of the Amahraspands, the divine entities emanating from the supreme lord Ohrmazd. In addition to propitiating deities (*yazdān*) and vexing demons (*dēw*), the *nērang* of the *Dēnkard* are connected to the movement of constellations (*axtar*) and planets (*abāxtar*), as well as to the conditions of the various regions (*kišwarān*) on earth.⁶⁰ The treatment of the elements is refracted through the authority of medicine, shaped in the Sasanian context and in early Islamic society through the absorption of the Galenic system of the humors.⁶¹ The discussion in the *Dēnkard* invests *nērang* with natural powers to ward off various diseases, to maintain health, and to serve as an antidote to poisons. Present throughout the valances of *nērang* is the association with the efficacious power of ritual recitation from the Avesta, which functions as a sacred formulary (Avestan *maθra*, compare Sanskrit *mantra*). Yet, even in Zoroastrian contexts the semantic value of *nērang* is by no means stable across time, as it also takes on several different valences within the realm of ritual performance.⁶²

- 60 See *Dēnkard*, Book III, in *DkM = The Complete Text of the Pahlavi Dīnkard*, ed. Dhanjishah Meherjibhai Madan, 2 vols. (Bombay: Fort Printing Press, 1911), 1:157–158, 399–400; translated as *Le troisième livre du Dēnkard*, trans. Jean de Menasce (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1973), 158–159, 372–373. For a transcription, translation, and discussion of *DkM* III, 399–400, see Harold Bailey, “Iranian Studies III,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 7, no. 2 (1934): 275–298, esp. 276–283.
- 61 Richard Payne, *A State of Mixture: Christians, Zoroastrians, and Iranian Political Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 89. For a broader discussion of conceptions of medicine and the body in the *Dēnkard*, see Paolo Delaini, *Medicina del corpo, medicina dell’anima: la circolazione delle conoscenze medico-filosofiche nell’Iran sasanide* (Milan: Mimesis, 2013), 155–168. For examples of *nērang* as earthly amulets in both Pahlavi and Pāzand, see Antonio Panaino, “Two Zoroastrian Nērangs and the Invocation to the Stars and the Planets,” in *The Spirit of Wisdom = Mēnōg ī xrad: Essays in Memory of Ahmad Tafazzoli*, ed. Touraj Daryaei and Mahmoud Omidsalar (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2004), 196–218; Antonio Panaino, “Magic. i. Magical Elements in the Avesta and Nērang Literature,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
- 62 See, for instance, the treatment of the *nērang ī drōn* and the broader use of *nērang* as a “ritual direction,” in *The Hērbedestān and Nērangestān*, ed. and trans. Firoze Kotwal and Philip Kreyenbroek, 3 vols. (Leuven: Peeters, 1992–2002), 1:84, (§ 20.2), 2:13–14 (editorial introduction), 2:62 (§ 10.14), 2:68 (§ 10.28), 3:80 (§ 23). For further variants in usage, see Mary Boyce, “*Padyāb* and *Nērang*: Two Pahlavi Terms further Considered,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 54, no. 2 (1991): 281–291. *Nērangs* are often collected at the end of prayer books of the *Khordeh Avesta*. In daily ritual performance, the most common use of *nērang* by Zoroastrians today is in the *nērang ī kustīg*, the formula recited when washing and retying the sacred girdle. My reading of this material has benefited from conversations with Daniel Sheffield.

Needless to say, while *nīranjāt* in early Arabic and New Persian sources echo a good deal of this discussion, the larger Mazdean cosmography is entirely suppressed and largely abandoned, as the term takes on a life of its own.⁶³ Undoubtedly, part of the significance originally associated with the category as adapted and repurposed by early generations of Persian converts lay in its liminal if efficacious power, drawn from the cosmic language and rituals of others. This is not entirely distinct from, say, the etymology of the word “magic,” from the Greek *mageia*, the activity of the *magos*, coded largely as a derogatory reference to Zoroastrian priests (Old Persian *magu-*) and their ritual activities.⁶⁴ In this sense, the label “magic” has itself long been a way of infusing the religious beliefs and practices of outsiders with exotic power.

If, in the case of the *nīranj*, these pathways of exchange and transformation are readily visible, a contrapuntal example would be the *mandal*. As noted above, given its consonantal form and lexical meaning as foremost a circle (*dā'ira*), the word is clearly related to the Sanskrit *maṇḍala*, meaning a disk, circle, halo, orbit, and, by extension, a region, both cosmic and terrestrial, connected also to the zodiac and used as a general label for cosmic diagrams prominent in various Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu ritual practices for summoning deities and astral powers.⁶⁵ The early Arabic and New Persian accounts that describe the use of the *mandal* in incantations (*‘azā'im*) appear, however, to be several stages removed from any direct discourses or engagement with earlier Indic theurgic practices. Even al-Bīrūnī, who has a good grasp of *nīranj* as a form of sacred incantation practiced by Zoroastrian priests, gives no sense of the *mandal* as connected to esoteric diagrams or magical incantations, though he recognizes in it a cosmological meaning of a celestial realm, explaining the Sanskrit term at one point as equivalent to *wilāya* (region, dominion).⁶⁶

63 For more, see Burnett, “Nīranj,” 38–44, and his chapter in this volume. See also the synchronic description of the word and its meanings in Toufic Fahd, “Nīrandj,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. See further the comments on the Persian origin of the *nīranj* in Muḥammad al-Fullānī al-Kashnāwī (d. 1154/1741), *al-Durr al-manẓūm wa-khulūṣat al-sirr al-maktūm*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Muṣṭafā l-Bābī l-Ḥalabī, 1961), 1:317–319.

64 On this see, Albert de Jong, *The Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 222, 387–413.

65 See Theodor Benfey, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (London: Longmans, Green, 1866), 677; cf. John Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindī, and English* (London: Oxford University Press, 1884), 1074, s.v. *mandal*; Manfred Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen*, 3 vols. (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1986–2001), 2:294, s.v. *maṇḍala*.

66 Abū l-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb Taḥqīq mā li-l-Hind*, ed. Edward Sachau (London: Trübner, 1887), 196, cf. 219. For his identification of Zoroastrian priests as *aṣḥāb al-nīranjāt*, see al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār*, 266–267 (§§ 11, 17), 273–274 (§ 39), 278–279 (§§ 51, 57).

Yet, notable for our purposes, references to making *maṇḍalas* survive in the fragmentary Sogdian literary corpus from Central Asia.⁶⁷ Centered in the cities of Samarqand and Bukhara, ancient Sogdiana sat at the crossroads of Asia and the Iranian plateau. The religious landscape of the region was notoriously fluid, with Buddhist, Nestorian, Mazdean, and other indigenous practices and beliefs existing side by side and often comingling.⁶⁸ A relevant example is a scroll discovered in the caves of Dunhuang on the Silk Road, which contains a composite text shaped by Iranian, Indic, and Turkic vocabulary and cosmography. Often referred to in modern scholarship as a shamanistic manual of magic, the short tract opens with a description of the use of stones for their apotropaic and healing powers and concludes with directions for preparing a rainmaking ceremony that involves the construction of a four-cornered mandala (*mnr* > *mandal*) to be decorated with the images of planets, constellations, and the zodiac.⁶⁹ The *maṇḍala* as a ritual diagram designed to attract deities is also found in Sanskrit Buddhist materials that circulated in Central Asia, well before the Arab invasions.⁷⁰

We must imagine numerous vectors by which the *mandal* ultimately became an Islamic technology for harnessing occult forces, particularly in light of the functional parallels with cosmic diagrams developed and deployed across Asia

67 For the references to the *maṇḍala* in the surviving Sogdian corpus, see Badr al-Zamān Qarīb [Gharīb], *Sogdian Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Farhangān Publications, 1995), 214, §5288, s.v. *mnr*².

68 See Étienne de la Vaissière, *Histoire des marchands sogdiens*, 2nd rev. ed. (Paris: De Boccard, 2004); Crone, *Nativist Prophets*, 96–105.

69 See Émile Benveniste, *Textes sogdiens, édités, traduits et commentés* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1940), 66 (P. 3, l. 162), cf. 258 (glossary). Housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (Pelliot Sogd. 3), this scroll has been the subject of extensive scholarship. See W.B. Henning, “The Sogdian Texts of Paris,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 11, no. 4 (1946): 713–740, esp. 726–730. The text has been reedited and translated by Samra Azarnouche and Frantz Grenet, “Thaumaturgie sogdienne: Nouvelle édition et commentaire du texte P. 3,” *Studia Iranica* 39, no. 1 (2010): 27–77, esp. 47, 56; Samra Azarnouche and Frantz Grenet, “Where Are the Sogdian Magi?” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 21 (2007 [2012]): 159–177, esp. 172. See also Frantz Grenet, “The Circulation of Astrological Lore and Its Political Use between the Roman East, Sasanian Iran, Central Asia, India, and the Türks,” in *Empires and Exchanges in Eurasian Late Antiquity Rome, China, Iran, and the Steppe, ca. 250–750*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo and Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 235–252, esp. 250–251.

70 See the edition and translation by Seishi Karashima and Margarita Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya, “The *Avadāna* Anthology from Merv, Turkmenistan,” in *Buddhist Manuscripts from Central Asia: The St. Petersburg Sanskrit Fragments*, ed. Seishi Karashima and Margarita Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya, 1:145–523 (Tokyo: Soka University, 2015), 182 (fol. 15^r, l. 1), 183 n. 48.

and the Indian subcontinent in various Tantric traditions. Despite notable transformations and adaptations over time, the preparation of such ritual diagrams often involved the use of sacred invocations, rites of purification, the kindling of sacred fire, and the burning of incense and other medicinal substances, all undertaken at auspicious astral moments, with the aim of harnessing otherworldly powers.⁷¹ These practices have direct corollaries with the *mandal* as described in early Arabic and Persian manuals for conjuring astral spirits, demons, angels, and jinn.

In light of the early history of sustained contacts across Central Asia and through South Asia, such linguistic and scientific zones of exchange and interaction offer numerous routes for the incorporation of the *mandal* into the occult repertoire of Islamic incantations. The power of the category lies not so much in its foreign origin, which can at once be divested of earlier associations and entirely repurposed in a new idiom through distinct practices and cosmological concerns. Rather, it is precisely the proven efficacy of these diagrams and the rituals associated with them that lends the *mandal* universal, scientific authority.

A normative example of the preparation of such diagrams for harnessing occult powers is found in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's classification of the sciences, where he offers a detailed description of the various rituals associated with the science of incantations (*'ilm al-ʿazā'im*).⁷² Al-Rāzī's account of this science, with its diagrams, sacred Qur'anic recitations, fumigations, and bodily purifications, echoes many of the procedures described by al-Ṭabasī, who, in his manual of magical recipes and formulas, offers several examples of the *mandal* as a set of diagrams that an enchanter (*mu'azzim*) can use to summon demons and spirits from the other world in order to subjugate them.⁷³ Throughout this

71 See Gudrun Bühnemann, "Maṅḍala, Yantra and Cakra: Some Observations," in *Mandalas and Yantras in the Hindu Traditions*, ed. Gudrun Bühnemann (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 13–56; Jeffrey Kotyk, "Buddhist Astrology and Astral Magic in the Tang Dynasty" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2017), 21–54; Ellen Marie Gough, "Making a Mantra: Jain Superhuman Powers in History, Ritual, and Material Culture" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2015), 1–36; Marko Geslani, *Rites of the God-King: Śānti and Ritual Change in Early Hinduism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 148, 152–153, 245; Koichi Shinohara, *Spells, Images, and Maṅḍalas: Tracing the Evolution of Esoteric Buddhist Rituals* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014). I thank Phyllis Granoff for offering comparative insights and suggestions.

72 Al-Rāzī, *Jāmi' al-ʿulūm*, 438–447. For al-Rāzī's classification of this branch of learning within the mathematical sciences (*'ilm al-riyāḍiyyāt*), see Melvin-Koushki, "Powers of One," 145–146.

73 See, e.g., the diagrams of *mandals* in al-Ṭabasī, *Kitāb al-Shāmil*, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MS Or. Fol. 52, 12, 72, 85 (paginated), copied 833/1430; al-Ṭabasī, Princeton University Library, Islamic Manuscripts, New Series, no. 160, fols. 14^a, 73^{a-b}; al-Ṭabasī, Salar Jung Museum,

literature the *mandal* is associated with Solomon's prophetic mastery over jinn, where it became one of the many techniques in the arsenal for conjuring occult forces.⁷⁴

Not only were these diagrams fully naturalized in a distinctly Islamic cosmography, but they were often treated in the social imagination as a tested means of summoning occult forces. A colorful testimonial of the power of the *mandal* is preserved in an autobiographical report by the Ḥanbali jurist of Baghdad Abū l-Wafā' Ibn 'Aqīl (d. 513/1119), who relates the story of a house in the city that had been haunted by jinn. In order to expel the evil spirit, Ibn 'Aqīl seeks to employ an enchanter, who captures the jinn, which has taken the form of a serpent dangling from the roof. The enchanter does so by reciting verses from the Qur'an and casting a *mandal* (*ḍaraba l-mandal*) on the ground into which the jinn falls and is captured.⁷⁵

In Ibn 'Aqīl's account, the diagram serves to trap forces from the invisible world. However, there is general variance over how the actual ceremony of casting a *mandal*, its form, and its purpose would proceed. It is often the enchanter who sits within the diagram itself, where the lines drawn on the ground serve as a form of protection against the harm of the demons and jinn summoned.⁷⁶

Hyderabad, MS 2208 (*Ulūm-i sirriyya*, §12), fols. 9^a, 49^b. The Salar Jung copy of al-Ṭabasī is in a collection along with Aḥmad al-Būnī (d. c. 622/1225), *Shams al-ma'ārif*. For a partial Persian translation of al-Ṭabasī's *Shāmil*, see Bodleian Library, Oxford University, MS Walter 91, fols. 63^a, 89^a.

- 74 For more on the Solomonic associations in this body of literature, see Anne Regourd, "Le *Kitāb al-Mandal al-Sulaymānī*, un ouvrage d'exorcisme yéménite postérieur au ve/xi^e siècle?," *Res orientales* 13 (2001): 123–128; Anne Regourd, "Images de djinns et exorcisme dans le *Mandal al-Sulaymānī*," in *Images et Magie: Picatrix entre Orient et Occident*, ed. Jean-Patrice Boudet, Anna Caiozzo, and Nicolas Weill-Parot (Paris: Honore Champion, 2011), 253–294.
- 75 Reported in Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256), *al-Juz' al-thāmin min Mir'āt al-zamān*, facsim. reprod., ed. James Jewett (Chicago: University of Chicago University Press, 1907), 53–54; al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, 35:355–356; Badr al-Dīn al-Shiblī (d. 769/1367), *Ākām al-marjān fī aḥkām al-jān*, ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Salām (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, n.d.), 97.
- 76 See al-Rāzī, *Jāmi' al-'ulūm*, 442. For an early Persian definition of the *mandal* in similar terms, see Abū Maṣṣūr al-Ṭūsī (d. 465/1073), *Lughat-i furs*, ed. 'Abbās Iqbāl (Tehran: Chāpkhāna-yi Majlis, 1319sh/1940), 322. Similarly useful in the later Mughal context is Mīr Jamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Injū Shīrāzī (d. 1035/1625), *Farhang-i Jahāngīrī*, ed. Raḥīm 'Afifī, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Mashhad: Dānishgāh-i Mashhad, 1980), 2:1904–1905. See also Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū Fayḍ Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1790), *Tāj al-'arūs min jawāhir al-qāmūs*, ed. 'Alī Shīrī, 20 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1993), 15:727. The idea of the lines of the *mandal* as a form of protection against the forces summoned is treated in Muḥammad al-Fullānī al-Kashnāwī, *Bahjat al-āfāq*, al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya, Cairo, MS 37/45594, fols. 212^a–213^a; al-Kashnāwī also gives a useful description of the general rules for producing the *mandal* in his *al-Durr al-manzūm*, 2:317–319. The procedure of drawing a circle (*dā'ira*) and sitting within

Regardless of the multiplicity of forms, these diverse practices that are united by a single name have in common the power of drawing a design, usually coupled with recitation of sacred speech, as a means of summoning occult forces. This performance is often accompanied by the preparation of various natural materials possessing special properties that are activated by fumigation.

A series of vivid illustrations of the *mandal*, in the sense of a diagram for harnessing spirits from the other world, feature in the *Nujūm al-ʿulūm* (“The stars of the sciences”), an illuminated Persian encyclopedia produced for ‘Alī ‘Ādil Shāh I, the ruler of Bijapur (r. 965–987/1558–1579). A royal copy of this collection, dated 978/1570, is preserved in the Chester Beatty Library of Dublin. While the codicological record of the text is lacunose, the surviving manuscripts of this vast compendium focus largely on occult science. The work draws from a body of knowledge deeply connected with Indian cosmography, portions of which appear to have been written by ‘Alī ‘Ādil Shāh himself.⁷⁷ On display here is, however, also an entire section ascribed to the learned Ḥanafī scholar of Central Asia Sirāj al-Dīn Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sakkākī (d. 626/1229), who, like al-Ṭabasī has long been identified with writings on talismans and incantations for subjugating occult powers. The Timurid historian Ghiyāth al-Dīn Khwāndamīr (d. 942/1535) describes al-Sakkākī as a master of the extraordinary sciences and the wondrous arts (*ʿulūm-i gharība va funūn-i ʿajība*), listing specifically the subjugation of jinn (*taskhīr*), *nīranjāt*, the summoning of astral forces (*daʿvat-i kavākib*), talismans, and magic and enchantment (*siḥr va sīmīyāʿ*).⁷⁸

it in order to conjure astral spirits is described, but without use of the term *mandal*, in Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (d. 353/964), *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, ed. Hellmut Ritter (Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1933), 298, 299.

77 The Chester Beatty Library in Dublin has two copies of the work, 1N2 and 1N54, both of which are incomplete. For a detailed description of their contents, see Linda Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library*, 2 vols. (London: Scorpion Cavendish, 1995) 2:819–889, 891–903. A third copy is in the Wellcome Institute, London, Per. MS 373, described in Emma Flatt, “The Authorship and Significance of the *Nujūm al-ʿulūm*: A Sixteenth-Century Astrological Encyclopedia from Bijapur,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 131, no. 2 (2011): 223–244. For more on the historical context of the *Nujūm*, see Emma Flatt, *The Courts of the Deccan Sultanates: Living Well in the Persian Cosmopolis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), esp. 210–267.

78 For this biographical account of al-Sakkākī as a sorcerer and his ultimate downfall, see Ghiyāth al-Dīn Khwāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Humāī, 4 vols. (Tehran: Khayyām, 1333sh/1954), 3:80–81. Al-Sakkākī was also held out, even in occult literature, as an object lesson for transgressing the bounds of probity; see, for instance, the opening of the astrological treatise, *Hayāt al-aflāk*, British Library, MS Or. 5416, fol. 4^b. For more, see Zadeh, “Commanding Demons,” 133–134.

Al-Sakkākī's Arabic collection takes the same title, *al-Shāmīl fī l-baḥr al-kāmīl*, as al-Ṭabasī's earlier manual. As with al-Ṭabasī, al-Sakkākī was celebrated as a skilled enchanter (*mu'azzim*), hailed as a *muftī* to both humanity and the jinn, so it is not a surprise to find their writings collected side by side.⁷⁹ The surviving Arabic and Persian writings associated with al-Sakkākī on the occult arts remain in manuscript form and await detailed study.⁸⁰

In the Bijapur manuscript, the section ascribed to al-Sakkākī on subjugating (*taskhīrāt*) astral and planetary spirits, demons, jinn, and angels, illuminates in lavish detail what was meant visually by casting a *mandal*. Here we encounter several paintings that depict an enchanter, referred to as the master of the summons or assembly (*ṣāḥib-i da'vat*). In the illustrations, the master summons spirits while seated within a *mandal*, reciting sacred formulas, having prepared various recipes to be thrown into a sacred fire, with angels or demons standing outside the magical boundaries of the diagram waiting to be commanded for any purpose. These illustrations closely follow the directions provided in the text itself that are often noted as proven (*mujarraba*) to be efficacious. In addition to drawing the *mandal* in the form of concentric circles or rectangular patterns, the directions for incantations to bind spirits usually involve the

79 See Bodleian Library, MS Walter 91, an illustrated Persian miscellany produced in India before 1200/1786, titled on the flyleaf, *Majmū'a-yi nuskhā-yi Sakkākī dar 'ilm-i da'vat*, containing: 1) a treatise on jinn and astral talismans, fols. 1^b–36^a; 2) a treatise by Tankalūshā (i.e., Teukros), the legendary Babylonian astral authority, fols. 36^b–52^a; 3) a Persian selection from al-Ṭabasī's *Shāmīl*, fols. 52^b–101^b; 4) the *Taskhīrāt* of al-Sakkākī, fols. 102^a–134^b; 5) Persian selections from al-Sakkākī's *Shāmīl*, fols. 136^b–181^b; 5) material drawn from a collection titled *Sirr al-asrār*, also related to al-Sakkākī's *Shāmīl*, fols. 182^b–211^b. Much of this is repeated in British Library, MS Or. 11041, an illustrated Persian manuscript titled *Sirr al-asrār fī 'ilm al-ṭilasmāt*.

80 For Arabic manuscripts of the *Shāmīl*, see British Library, MS Delhi Arabic 1915, fols. 70^b–240^a, itself a miscellany that opens with the *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, once held in the Mughal royal archive in Delhi; John Rylands Library, Manchester, MS 402; School of Oriental and African Studies, London, MS 46347. In addition to the Persian manuscripts cited above, see also the Royal Asiatic Society, London, MS Ellis Persian 11, fols. 41^b–82^b, the *Kitāb Miyyālātīs al-Akbar*, a Hermetic treatise on the stations (*manāzil*) of the moon purportedly translated for Aḥmad b. Ṭulūn (d. 270/884), included in the *Shāmīl*, MS Delhi Arabic 1915, fols. 91^a–114^b. Discussed in Emily Selove and Taro Mimura, "Sex and Trickery in a Sorcerer's Encyclopaedia: A Sampling of al-Sakkākī's *Kitāb al-Shāmīl wa-baḥr al-kāmīl*," (forthcoming). I thank Emily Selove for sharing with me a draft copy of the article. For published Persian materials, see al-Sakkākī, *Kitāb Nafā'is al-funūn*, lith. ed. (Bombay: Mirzā Muḥammad Shirāzī, 1892); al-Sakkākī, *Khutūmāt va taskhīrāt-i jinn va a'māl-i qirtās va-'ulūm-i ghariba*, photostatic copy of a manuscript (Quetta: Maktaba 'Arabīyya, n.d.). Emily Selove of the University of Exeter is leading a Leverhulme Trust research project on the work of Sakkākī, "A Sorcerer's Handbook," to create an edition, translation, and literary study of al-Sakkākī's *Shāmīl*.

recitation of various sacred phrases known for their blessings (*baraka*), taken from the Qurʾan, the names of God, and other pious supplications, the invocation of strange demonic and/or angelic names, the sacrifice of various animals, the fumigation of incense and medicaments (*adwīya*), the use and placement of specific tools, and the writing of ciphers and seals (*khātam*, pl. *khawātim*), generally to be conducted at specific astral timings.⁸¹ Such is the case with the incantation designed to subjugate Queen ʿAyna, a demon said to control thousands upon thousands of demons and jinn; she was known in early Islamic demonology as the daughter of Iblīs, an identification grounded in a theological belief that demons were the Devil's progeny (Figure 14.1).⁸²

Given the clearly Indic context of the production of the *Nujūm al-ʿulūm* and much of the character of its contents, which draws freely from various Indic sources, particularly *jyotiṣa* traditions of astral science, it is not surprising that this section on summoning spirits has been read as an example of syncretistic engagements with "Hindu" thought and practice, especially in light of the *maṇḍala* as a Sanskrit word.⁸³ Leaving aside the categorical problem of syn-

- 81 *Nujūm al-ʿulūm*, Chester Beatty, MS IN2, fols. 114^a–126^b, 221^a–226^b. The manuscript is both lacunose and sometimes out of order, this treatise included. The later section (fols. 221^a–226^b) is actually the opening of the treatise in question, on conjuring or summoning spirit beings (*iḥḍārāt-i rūḥāniyān*), which starts with a general description of the practice of preparing the *mandal* and opens with directions for summoning the astral spirit of the Sun. Also notable is a folio that was removed from the manuscript and became a part of the Edwin Binney Collection, now in the San Diego Museum of Art, 1990.435, the provenance of which is discussed in Edwin Binney, "Indian Paintings from the Deccan," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 127, no. 5280 (1979): 784–804. The Persian treatise *Taskhūrāt* cited here and ascribed to al-Sakkākī, can be found in MS Walter 91, fols. 102^a–134^b; Kashmir University Library, MS 2746, fols. 1^a–31^b; Salar Jung, Hyderabad, MS 1529 (*ʿUlūm-i sirriyya* § 13).
- 82 *Nujūm al-ʿulūm*, fols. 124^b–125^b; MS Walter 91, fols. 125^b–127^a. The spelling ʿAyna is used here, though the vocalization of the name is uncertain. The figure accompanying the demon in the illustration is identified explicitly in the directions for the incantation as a *parī* seated on a lion with long hair, evidently among the legions of demons and jinn that ʿAyna controls, referred to in the incantation's description of her powers. This folio is described and reprinted in Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings*, 845, 851 (9.182), and in Deborah Hutton, *Art of the Court of Bijapur* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 55, fig. 2.13. Both appear to be unfamiliar with earlier Islamic practices of casting *mandals* to summon occult powers. Likewise, Leach's identification with "Hindu" elements, echoed by Hutton, is probably not as direct as they imply, given the circulation of similar material in eastern Iran several centuries earlier. While Iblīs is known to have other daughters, ʿAyna appears with some frequency. For more examples, see MS Walter 91, fols. 91^a, 190^b–191^b, 202^b; MS Delhi Arabic 1915, fols. 141^b, 164^b, 193^b; al-Kashnāwī, *al-Durr*, 59, 63–64. For the earlier demonology associated with ʿAyna, see al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmīl*, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MS. Or. Fol. 52, 71–74 (paginated). On *shayāṭīn* (demons) as the offspring of Iblīs, see al-Rāzī, *Jāmiʿ al-ʿulūm*, 440.

- 83 See Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings*, 2:847; Hutton, *Art of the Court*, 59.



FIGURE 14.1 An incantation (*‘azīma*), requiring the sacrifice of two cocks, performed in a *mandal* designed to subjugate the queen demon ‘Ayna, accompanied by a *parī* mounted on a lion. *Nujūm al-‘ulūm*, Bijapur, India, dated 978/1570. Ink and colors on paper. Page 26.1 × 16.9 cm. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, MS IN2, fol. 125^b

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cretism,⁸⁴ it would appear that of the many direct Indic influences on this collection, this is not one of them. Rather, the *mandal* had long been calibrated in the language of Islamic cosmography as an efficacious technique for harnessing spirits, well before Muslim religious authorities crossed the Subcontinent and reintroduced it into India in a form entirely shaped by discourses on Solomonic magic and Qur’anic theurgy. When Muslim authorities in South Asia began to draw extensively on esoteric dimensions of yoga and tantra, both before and after the production of such texts as the *Nujūm al-‘ulūm*, they already possessed a vocabulary of astral knowledge and occult power that had been drawn from Indic learning centuries earlier.⁸⁵

84 See Saif and Leoni’s discussion of syncretism in the introduction to the present volume.

85 For examples, see Kazuyo Sakaki, “Yogico-Tantric Traditions in the *Ḥawāḍ al-Ḥayāt*,” *Journal*

As with the flow of people, ideas and practices travel circuitously, often in ways that obfuscate direct lines of transmission and exchange. In this way, the metaphor of genealogy, as a means of tracing the linear descent of an idea or practice back to its source, following all its permutations and ramifications in a hierarchical taxonomy, can quickly obscure the multiple movements and transformations across time and place. The alchemical condition of language resists a stable, closed, archive of monogenetic material, which is not fixed but rather polyvalent and polygenetic.⁸⁶

As in many other arenas of occult practice and authority, the Islamic vocabulary of the *mandal* has important afterlives among both Christians and Jews.⁸⁷ Moreover, the ritual form and content of the *mandal* are themselves unstable, even as the word circulates among Muslims through time and place. Particu-

of the *Japanese Association for South Asian Studies* 17 (2005): 135–156, esp. 148, 152 n. 15, n. 21. For the *mandal* and the discourses of *taskhīr al-arwāh*, the subjugation of spirits, in this context, see Carl Ernst, *Refractions of Islam in India: Situating Sufism and Yoga* (New Delhi: Sage, 2016), 208, 227–228 (chart. 10.7), 315 (§ 3.1). I thank Supriya Gandhi for our conversations about the later Persian reception of Nath Yoga in the Indian subcontinent as a means for harnessing occult power. For earlier currents, see, for instance, David Pingree, *From Astral Omens to Astrology from Babylon to Bīkāner* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente, 1997), 51–62, 79–90; David Pingree, “The Indian and Pseudo-Indian Passages in Greek and Latin Astronomical and Astrological Texts,” *Viator* 7, no. 1 (1976): 141–195; David Pingree, “Some of the Sources of the *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980): 1–15; cf. van Bladel, *Arabic Hermes*, 115–118.

86 For the classic formulation of the rhizome as a metaphor to collapse epistemic hierarchies, see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 3–25; see also David Greetham, “Phylum-Tree-Rhizome,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (1995): 99–126.

87 See David Pingree, “Learned Magic in the Time of Frederick II,” *Micrologus* 2 (1994): 39–56, esp. 42, 48; Jan Veenstra, “The Holy Almandal: Angels and the Intellectual Aims of Magic,” in *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Jan Veenstra (Leuven: Peeters: 2002), 189–229; Jan Veenstra, “Venerating and Conjuring Angels: Eiximenis’s *Book of the Holy Angels* and the *Holy Almandal*: Two Case Studies,” in *Magic and the Classical Tradition*, ed. Charles Burnett and W.F. Ryan (London: Warburg Institute, 2006), 119–134; see also the Latin edition, *L’Almandal et l’Almadel latins au Moyen Âge. Introduction et éditions critiques*, ed. Julien Veronese (Florence: Sismel, 2012). See the comments by Bernd-Christian Otto, “Historicising ‘Western Learned Magic,’” *Aries* 16 (2016): 161–240, esp. 195–196 n. 150. Also see Dora Zsom, “A Judeo-Arabic Fragment of the Magical Treatise *Kitāb Dā’irat al-aḥruf al-abḡadiyya*,” *The Arabist: Budapest Studies in Arabic* 38 (2017): 95–120, esp. 102, 115; and *A Fifteenth-Century Manuscript of Jewish Magic: Ms New York Public Library, Heb. 190*, ed. Gideon Bohak, 2 vols. (Los Angeles: Cherub, 2014), 1:166, l. 1 (edited text), 2:166 (facsim., with diagram). My discussion here has benefited from conversations with Alessia Bellusci.

larly in the west, the expressions *ḍarb* and *fath al-mandal* came to be associated with divinatory practices of scrying, which involve gazing into a goblet, kettle, or a circle of ink to summon jinn who can then help uncover knowledge of the unseen. The Syrian alchemist and all-around occultist, ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Jawbarī (fl. 619/1222) has this form of casting a *mandal* in mind when he describes the various tricks that enchanters use, often through chemical means, to swindle the unsuspecting. The British orientalist Edward Lane (d. 1876) witnessed several instances of this form of *mandal* divination while living in Egypt, which he referred to as the “Mirror of Ink.” Lane was famously convinced by the divinatory performances he observed.⁸⁸ The slippery nature of the sign, as it moves both within and beyond various communities, reflects how practices are renamed, reconstituted, and reinvented continually in new discursive systems.

The fact that such wordplay can extend in countless directions is merely one indication of the ebb and flow of theories and practices and the concepts and words that condition them. Many of these routes have been obscured from sight, repurposed and naturalized, often beyond recognition. These processes of occultation are often deliberate, as they are tied to mechanisms for claiming ownership, appropriating, and possessing, while also rejecting and effacing. Like the word *naẓar*—which can evoke both the philosophical language of theoretical observation and the widespread use of amulets to guard against the evil eye—these currents of human effort move in multiple directions forward and backward across the globe. Such patterns are not only part of the diverse landscapes of Islamic intellectual and cultural history, they continue to abide the world over. Our systems of knowledge are conditioned by the global movement of bodies, capital, and ideas, which are invested simultaneously not only in languages of rationalized disenchantment but also in enduring commitments to the strange and uncanny powers of the unseen.⁸⁹

88 ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Jawbarī, *Kitāb al-Mukhtār min kashf al-asrār*, published as *Al-Ġawbarī und sein Kašf al-asrār*, ed. Manuela Höglmeier (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2006), 233–235, §§ 13.1, 3; Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), *al-Muqaddima*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām al-Shaddādī, 4 vols. (Casablanca: Bayt al-Funūn wa-l-‘Ulūm wa-l-Ādāb, 2005), 2:149–150. For examples, see ps.-Ibn Sīnā, *al-Mujarrabāt al-rūḥāniyya* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Nūr, 2005), 63, 68–69, 233, 245. See also Edward Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, ed. Edward Stanley Poole (London: John Murray, 1860), 263–275, 275 n. 1; William Worrell, “Ink, Oil and Mirror Gazing Ceremonies in Modern Egypt,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 36 (1916): 37–53.

89 See the discussion of market forces driving the production and consumption of amulets in Gruber’s Chapter 13 in this volume.

Knowledge production is as much a question of what we decide to tuck away as what we keep on view. The distinction between archive and canon can offer an encouraging path, if not out of the labyrinth, then at least further along its twisting arteries.⁹⁰ When facing the vast volumes of Islamic literature and material culture preserved in the archives of modern institutions, we must recognize that all forms of possession and curation are governed by specific values and material conditions. The production of memory, of what is preserved and commemorated communally, is also a curatorial process of leaving out, ignoring, and even destroying. Such forces have shaped profoundly the study of Islam in general and the occult sciences in particular. Much of the field has been hidden by successive generations of forgetting and abandonment. Even so, the surviving archives are immense, and, despite growing efforts, increased interest, and important interventions, vast bodies of physical labor and textual capital remain unrecognized and unexplored, awaiting consideration. To reconsider what others have abandoned demands that we ask the simple question why it has been forgotten at all. The power of our scholarship lies not only in the ability to name but in our capacity to think otherwise and to do so with clarity and sympathy. For a host of reasons and motivations—even if unstated, unrecognized, or posed for radically different ends—the occult has never been so clearly in view.

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90 See Aleida Assmann, “Canon and Archive,” in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 97–107.

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