Part II

CONTEXTUALIZING THE ORIENT

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TRACING THE SORCERER'S CIRCLE: DEMONS, POLYSEMY, AND THE BOUNDARIES OF ISLAMIC NORMATIVITY

Encircling a Field

This article proceeds, more or less, as an extended gloss on the use of circles and other diagrams in Islamic ritual practices for commanding jinn, demons, angels, and planetary forces, or for obtaining otherworldly states, powers, and knowledge[1]. Early examples of these diagrams feature in the Arabic compendium of incantations by Fakhr al-A'imma al-Ṭabasī (d. 482/1089) from eastern Iran[2]. What follows also addresses the question of normativity, in that it asks how we may think of these materials and techniques as Islamic. In doing so, I turn to some early prosopographical accounts and codicological materials

1. The following has benefited from conversations and exchanges with Phyllis Granoff, Lillian McCabe, Matthew Melvin-Koushki, Omer Michaelis, Michael Noble, Liana Saif, Emily Selove, Nicholas Sims-Williams, and Kevin van Bladel. This article supplements materials discussed in Travis Zadeh, «Postscript: Cutting Ariadne's Thread, or How to Think Otherwise in the Maze», in *Islamicate Occult Sciences in Theory and Practice*, ed. Liana Saif et al. (Leiden 2021), 628-39; 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 2015), 235-67; and 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 Dan Sheffield (Wiesbaden 2014), 131-60.

2. Al-Ṭabasī's collection, *al-Shāmil min al-baḥr al-kāmil fī l-dawr al-ʿāmil min uṣūl al-taʿzīm wa-qawāʿid al-tanjīm*, remains unedited. It survives in various manuscript copies. The following Arabic manuscripts of the collection were consulted: B = Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, MS Or. fol. 52, copied 833/1430; E = Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial, Madrid, perhaps an eighth-/fourteenth-century copy; P = Princeton University Library, Princeton, Islamic Manuscripts, Islamic MSS, New Series 160; and the following Persian translation: N = Suleymaniye Yazma Eser Kutuphanesi, Istanbul, Nuruosmaniye 2827.

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of those who, like al-Ṭabasī, were in some fashion connected to the study of incantations and spells (*'ilm al-'azā'im wa-l-ruqā*).

The diagrams in question often feature in writings associated with the science of incantations. One of the primary aims of this field is to subjugate (*taskhīr*) intermediary beings so as to produce various results. Generally, these results range from the therapeutic, prophylactic, divinatory, and revelatory, to diverse forms of love magic, the incitement of enmity, and the infliction of harm on enemies. A notable category in the repertoire of those who practiced the science of incantations is the word *mandal*, a polysemous term with a complex genealogy. The term made its way from Sanskrit through Arabic, Persian, Judeo-Arabic, Hebrew, Latin, and various European vernaculars. Even with all these transformations, the movement of the *mandal* across sectarian and linguistic divides speaks to an elite, transregional script for communicating with intermediary beings. Various discourses on the *mandal* overlapped, as they could be mutually intelligible, or radically divergent. Outside an Indic milieu, they all represent, to some degree, the absorption of a foreign word as a catchment for and mechanism of enchantment.

Before proceeding, a few words about the state of the field and terms of art. The discipline under consideration is often referred to in modern portrayals as "jinn magic". While this shorthand gets to the gist of the matter, the field of study and body of practice are not limited solely to jinn. Moreover, the classical Islamic science of adjurations and incantations was not uniformly thought of as magic, if by that we mean a discursive arena starkly opposed to science or religion. As for the modern study of this discipline in the frameworks of the Western academy, a good deal of work has been done, particularly in the last decades. Yet much remains unedited, unexamined, and under theorized. And so, by way of a caveat, the following observations must be, as with so much else, provisional[3].

The *mandal* emerged in Arabic and early New Persian as a technical term for diagrams used in complex ritual performances to summon or engage with unseen forces. In one sense of the word, the

3. Many of the primary materials under consideration here remain unedited. There is, however, a growing body of scholarship on the Arabic science of incantations. This includes the ongoing work of Emily Selove on the handbook of practical magic ascribed to Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī, which is of direct relevance to the topic at hand.

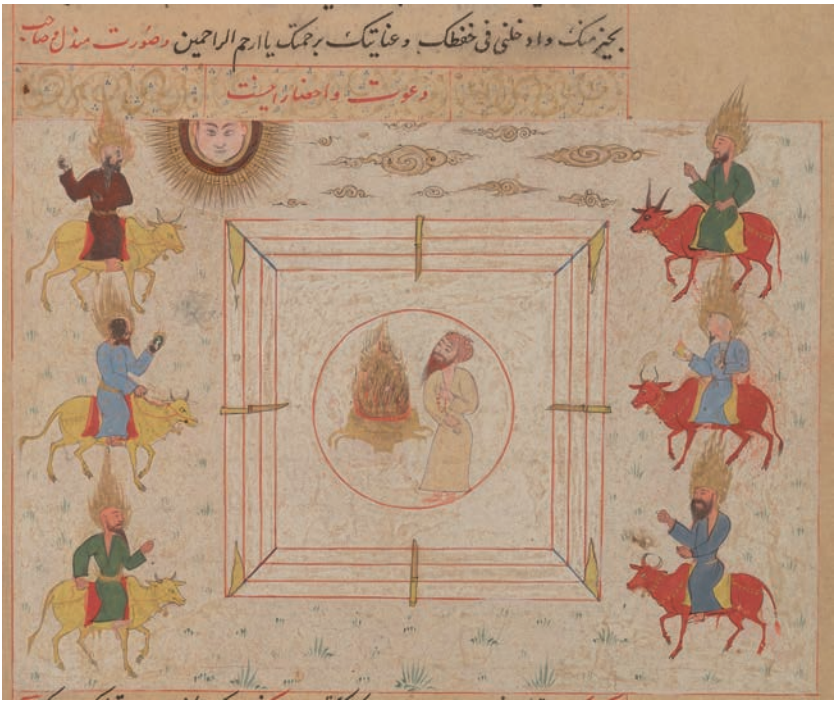

Figure 1. From the Persian *Taskhīrāt* [Subjugations] of Muḥammad b. Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī (fl. seventh/thirteenth century), illustrated in the *Nujūm al-ʿulūm*, a compendium produced in Bijapur India, dated 978/1570. Six luminous celestial beings on bovines appear outside of a *mandal* designed to subjugate the sun. The recipe calls for five days of fasting and prayers, the use of flags and blades, a fire, and sacrifices. The master of ceremonies (*ṣāḥib-i daʿvat*) sits in the middle of the diagram during the course of the ritual. Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, MS IN2, fol. 223b.

term represents a kind of "magic circle". In what appear to be the earliest attestations, this took the form of a practitioner who would sit within a *mandal* diagram, often surrounded by ritual objects and implements, including the use of fire for suffumigation (see figure 1).

But in addition to protection, the *mandal* could attract and harness intermediary beings. As a technical term employed by conjurers, the word appears to have already been in use in Arabic during the second/eighth century. It may well have made its way there orally through contacts with Persian speakers in the East, though other routes are equally plausible. The exact process by which the word

mandal, which is connected etymologically to the Sanskrit *maṇḍala*, became both a multivalent term and a technique in the toolkit for the science of incantations is not entirely clear, though the pages that follow offer some broad suggestions[4].

There are pre-Islamic Buddhist texts from Central Asia that address the *maṇḍala* in Sanskrit; the word also makes its way into Sogdian and Khotanese (eastern Middle Iranian languages), as a powerful diagram used for communing with unseen forces. A reasonable surmise would be that the word also entered into Bactrian, another eastern Iranian language. In the course of the Arab conquests of Central Asia, during the late first/seventh and early second/eighth centuries, Muslims developed extensive military, economic, and social connections with the region; so too followed high-ranking conversions among Buddhist elites, most notably the Barmakids of Balkh, a capital city of Bactria, in modern-day Afghanistan. The city was a major center of Buddhist learning, populated with monks, monasteries, stupas, relics of the Buddha, and statues of powerful deities. Moreover, cave art in Afghanistan and Central Asia preserves paintings of the Buddha seated in circular *maṇḍala* diagrams surrounded by Bodhisattvas; Muslims from the region were long aware of Buddhist iconography and architecture. All of which points to a broad, interconnected landscape where the term could circulate in the form of sacred diagrams[5].

4. For general identifications with Sanskrit, see Johann August Vullers, *Lexicon Persico-Latinum etymologicum*, 2 vols. (Bonn 1855-64), 2:1217; Reinhart Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, 2 vols. (Leiden 1881), 2:652-53; David Pingree, «Learned Magic in the Time of Frederick II», in *Micrologus* 2 (1994), 48; Constant Hamès, «Maṇḍalas et sceaux talismaniques musulmans», in *De l'Arabie à l'Himalaya: Chemins croisés en hommage à Marc Gaborieau*, ed. Véronique Bouillier and Catherine Servan-Schreiber (Paris 2004), 156-57.

5. See Takayasu Higuchiand and Gina Barnes, «Bamiyan: Buddhist Cave Temples in Afghanistan», in *World Archaeology* 27:2 (1995), 282-302. For descriptions of the statutes of Bamiyan and surrounding temple iconography, see ʿImād al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-bilād fī l-akhbār al-ʿibād* (Beirut 1960), 154; Shams al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *ʿAjā'ib al-makhlūqāt*, ed. Manūchihr Sutūda (Tehran 1966), 338, cf. 114. For further context, see Kevin van Bladel, «The Bactrian Background of the Barmakids», in *Islam and Tibet: Interactions along the Musk Routes*, ed. Anna Akasoy et al. (New York 2011), 43-88; Étienne de la Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders: A History*, trans. James Wood (Lieden 2005), 263-90. See also Johan Elverskog, *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road* (Philadelphia 2010), 25-64; Christopher Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* (Princeton 1987), 55-83.

The incorporation of the *mandal* as a diagram used in Islamic practices of adjuration, however, almost entirely strips away these associations, leaving, as it were, only a few traces as to how or when the word made it into the Arabic and Persian literary record. There were clearly other ways of referring to the practice of magical encirclement. To confound matters, casting, striking (*ḍarb*), or opening up (*fatḥ*) a *mandal* came to be applied, particularly in Iraq, the Levant, and North Africa, to practices of exorcism and divination through reflective surfaces, akin to scrying, involving various vessels used to commune with jinn, often with the aid of a child medium; boys appear in the literary record to have been common, though girls also are attested[6]. Thus, in addition to a protective enclosure in which one sat, the *mandal* could refer to diagrams or even reflective surfaces used to summon spirits.

At the outset, I should also note that the word "circle" does not entirely capture the full range of diagrams in question. While the shapes drawn on the ground when addressing intermediary forces enclosed in some fashion, they were not just circular. Polygons of numerous sides and configurations were also used, and various labyrinthine patterns emerge. Moreover, the expressions "sorcerer's circle" or "magic circle" are of course not neutral modifiers. At least in our modern vocabulary, they risk narrowing the diverse meanings and contexts that animated diagrams for communing with and commanding otherworldly forces. The conceptual grammars of modernity carve out sorcery and magic from religion and science in ways that often obscure even as they reveal. As in the diverse fields of antiquity and the broad realms of Latin Christendom, scholars of Islamic history have questioned the heuristic utility of the category of "magic" as a second order form of theorization. Part of the problem, as far as historical inquiry is concerned, is that our scholarly vocabulary is itself designed to distinguish the past from the present in distinctly metaphysical and ethical terms.

6. See the modern collection by the Egyptian occultist, ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-Sayyid al-Ṭūkhī, *al-Mandal wa-l-khātam al-sulāymānī wa-l-ʿilm al-rūḥānī li-l-imām al-Ghazālī* (Cairo n.d.), 44, cf. 72, 83-90. On al-Ṭūkhī and the Maʿhad al-Futūḥ al-Falakī l-ʿAmm of Egypt, see Alexander Fodor, «Arabic Bowl Divination and the Greek Magical Papryi», in *Arabist* 9-10 (1994), 76, 89, 93; Emily Selove, «Magic as Poetry, Poetry as Magic, A Fragment of Arabic Spells», in *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 15.1 (2020), 34, 36-37. Cf. ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Mushʿabī, *al-Tanjīm wa-l-munajjimīn wa-ḥukmuhum fī l-Islām* (Taif 1994), 139.

One way of bridging the gap, frequently invoked in the modern field of ancient magic, is the concept of the "coefficient of weirdness", coined by the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (d. 1942). The coefficient of weirdness, in Malinowski's usage, applies not only to speech, but also to the full array of activities and gestures designed to mark, in any given cultural matrix, a particular act, performance, object, or phenomenon, as magical, and thus beyond the ordinary. Rather than an end, the magic of something, in this sense, represents a spectrum, moving from weirdness to what Malinowki refers to as "a coefficient of intelligibility". Thus, it is with unintelligible speech, the use of *charaktēres*, the invocation of *nomina barbara* and *voces magicae*, phallic emblems, *defixiones*, drawings of demons, and the like. This stuff, we are frequently reminded, is just weird. Even the technical vocabulary is strange and open to conflation, metonymic shift, and wholesale appropriation, often of foreign import. Such is the *mandal*, a loanword encircled with many different meanings – diagrams, traps, portals, reflections, mirrors of ink, magic circles, wax tablets, aloes-wood, as well as even regional centers of coastal India. The word produces its own obscurity through estrangement[7].

In some sense, the frameworks of classical Islamic metaphysics would appear to support an affective turn to emotions and sensibilities, with recourse to the central category of *gharīb*, which can be glossed variously as strange, uncanny, paranormal, extraordinary, queer, monstrous, miraculous, rare, and of course weird[8]. This is all on display in early Arabic and Persian writings on incantations, known classically as *'ilm al-'azā'im*, the science of summoning and commanding all forms of demons, jinn, angels, and planetary forces. Various encirclements and vessels feature, as do talismans, signets, seals, fires, sacred tools, pin dolls, libations, suffumigations, sacrifices,

7. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*, 2 vols. (New York 1935), 2:218-23; cf. Stanley Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge, MA 1990), 65-83. Malinowksi's coefficient provides a steady heuristic, for instance, in Radcliffe Edmonds, *Drawing Down the Moon: Magic in the Ancient Greco-Roman World* (Princeton 2019), 18, 33, 48, 87-88, 90, 114, 136, 144, 147, 169, 175, 182, 225, 413. See also David Frankfurter, «Spell and Speech Act: The Magic of the Spoken Word», in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, ed. David Frankfurter et al. (Leiden 2019), 621, 623-24.

8. See Travis Zadeh, *Wonders and Rarities: The Marvelous Book that Traveled the World and Mapped the Cosmos* (Cambridge, MA 2023), 28-29, 121-26.

aromatics, ascetic practices of fasting, purification, and supplications to planets, demons, and angels.

On the one hand, this discursive body of learning is all quintessentially Islamic in the sense of being firmly rooted in the power of the Qur'ān, the life of the Prophet, and a frequent appeal to God as the supreme power in a world where evil itself has no ontological reality. Yet the field also builds on and refashions in a host of obvious ways pre-Islamic and non-Islamic materials. The prayers drawn from Hebrew and Aramaic are perhaps the most conspicuous. Thus, for instance, one of the earliest surviving Arabic handbooks in the field of jinn magic by Fakhr al-A'imma al-Ṭabasī is filled with invocations to *Ehyeh ašer ehyeh* ("I-am-who-I-am"), *Adonai Ṣbā'ōt* ("Lord of Hosts"), *El Šaddai* ("God Almighty"), and the angel Metatron, known to al-Ṭabasī as the chief of the angelic emissaries (*ra'īs al-sufarā'*).

Such phrases were clearly drawn from a Jewish cosmography of sacred language and divine power, but transposed into the Arabic script and an explicitly Islamic cosmology[9]. So too, the Aramaic Lord's Prayer appears as a spell in al-Ṭabasī's handbook, where it is identified with Christians[10]. Likewise, al-Ṭabasī records invocations for summoning the devil (known by various names including Iblīs and ʿAzāzīl) and his offspring and hosts, who include the mighty

9. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, with transliteration reflecting an oral transmission, *hiyā shirā hiyā, adhūnay aṣbāwūth, al shadday*, B 7, 38; E fol. 9a, etc. These phrases and other similar ones are found throughout the collection. For similar formulations, see Alexander Fodr, «The Rod of Moses in Arabic Magic», in *Acta Orientalia* 32 (1978), 9. Countless other examples of Hebrew and Aramaic phrases can be adduced in the collection. On Metatron, see al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 134b; B 126; N fol. 111b. For Metatron in Jewish lore, see broadly, Steven Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam* (Princeton 1995), 181–205; cf. Daniel Boyarin, «Beyond Judaisms: Meṭaṭron and the Divine Polymorphy of Ancient Judaism», in *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 41.3 (2010), 323–65.

10. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, B 102; N fol. 101b. Al-Ṭabasī describes the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic as the *fātiḥa* of the Christians. His transcription, rendered here with minor modifications, is vocalized in B and likely reflects an oral transmission, with close attention to the underlying original prayer: *abūn d-bashmayyā nataqaddash smākh tī tī malakūtākh nahawī ṣabyānākh aykannā d-bashmayyā abbarʿā; hab lan laḥmā d-shunqānā yawmānā; wa-shūqi [l]anna ḥawbayn wa-ḥaṭṭāhanī aykannā d-shaqan laḥḥā īn w-ḥaṭṭāhīn; w-lā taʿlan l-nasyūnā yawmānā aylā [b]aṣṣān min bīshiyā miṭul d-dīlākh-ī [*missing: *malkūtā] u-ḥaylā u-tīshbuḥtā l-ʿālam ʿālmīn āmīn*.

demon king Mahākāl al-Hindī. This particular demon corresponds to the Sanskrit *mahākāla*, meaning "great time", one of the epithets for the god Śiva, the destroyer and giver of life, who made his way into the Arabic pantheon of jinn controlled by Solomon well before al-Ṭabasī's time[11]. Importantly for the present discussion, the key ceremony that opens al-Ṭabasī's collection is the performance of the *mandal* ceremony, a practice with parallels in a variety of Indic esoteric discourses, including Śaiva and Buddhist Tantra[12].

Incantations and spells were certainly weird, in the sense of strange and paranormal, as they could be linguistically and socially transgressive. Yet the theological and philosophical vocabulary that emerges in Arabic to describe both magic and miracle makes the analytical task of accounting for these practices and beliefs all the harder. By definition the miraculous strips the boundaries of *ʿāda*, a theological and philosophical concept encompassing the customary, the normal, the quotidian, and the habitual. Many towering Muslim authorities sought to naturalize magic as a physical force that could be explained scientifically and harnessed empirically.

Magic also came to be defined in terms of ruptures with the ordinary. And in this regard, what separated magic from miracle was often not ontology, but rather ethics and morality; what determined the value of a given procedure, act, or ritual, was not merely a question of form, but also of intent. The problem with the "coefficient of weirdness" as a definition for magic is that it can easily merge the

11. On Mahākāl, see al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 53a; P fol. 58a; B 61; N fol. 58a; cf. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Sirr al-maktūm*, Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, MS Petermann I 207, fols. 145a, 151a, 183a, same as Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī (d. 626/1229), *Kitāb al-shāmil wa-baḥr al-kāmil*, Markaz Jumʿat al-Mājid, Dubai, microfilm 1735 (a deaccessioned manuscript from the Dār al-Kutub of Cairo now in a private collection), fols. 172b–173a; see also the invocation (*daʿvat*) to Mahākāl and the gloss on him, appended to Muḥammad b. Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī, *Taskhīrāt*, Kashmir University Library, MS 2746, fols. 31b–32a. For further background, see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid, 3 vols. (London 2009), 2:335 (for Mahāqāl as a jinn controlled by Solomon); 2:429 (for al-Kindī's report on the Indian deity Mahākāl, described as an *ʿifrīt*). Cf. Vladimir Minorsky, «Gardīzī on India», in *BSOAS* 12.3/4 (1948), 635.

12. For more on the Indic background and interconnections between the *mandal* ceremony, Tantric practices, and mantra recitation, see Supriya Gandhi and Travis Zadeh, «From India to Syria and Back Again: Demons, Deities, and the Mysterious Vocabulary of Islamic Incantations», in *The Sorcerer's Handbook*, ed. Emily Selove (Leiden forthcoming).

ways in which religion and science could be invested in similar epistemic and emotive processes. Thus, in one sense, to call the circles and diagrams under consideration magic is to prejudge their social, theological, and metaphysical value.

Yet it is also the case that the diverse uses of circles for controlling demons, angels, and planetary powers indeed would appear to many today to be analogous to the sorcerer's circles of medieval lore. The "magic circle" lives on among us in sundry forms, from intimate Wicca rituals to the big screen of Dr. Strange and Marvel's multiverse, as a technique for porting between worlds. While one can draw a line connecting ancient diagrams for summoning spirits and traversing unseen realms to modern manifestations and portrayals, the path is circuitous and each turn proceeds with its own cosmic values and historical sensibilities. In this way, to trace after the sorcerer's circle is to follow distinct formations of ideology and cosmology.

The challenge, at least for Islamic normativity as reconstituted and contested in the course of modernity, is that communing with jinn and otherworldly forces is rooted in prophetic authority and the precedent of Muḥammad. Thus, to assign these diagrams the name of sorcery is to predetermine their moral and soteriological value. Moreover, throughout classical Arabic and Persian letters, techniques for subjugating jinn and angelic forces were also closely associated with *umūr gharība*, extraordinary or paranormal phenomena, itself a category that features in high-level discussions of classical Islamic metaphysics.

Following a common scholarly usage in modern Buddhist studies on *maṇḍalas*, we may describe what follows as an esoteric practice, generally of initiates who sought to obtain access to hidden realms[13]. As with all of our conceptual frameworks for imagining past cosmologies, esoterism brings both benefits and limitations[14]. The social value of collections of incantations that feature *mandal* diagrams and the associations attached to those who used them could well be transgressive. The practices of summoning otherworldly forces were

13. See Koichi Shinohara, *Spells, Images, and Maṇḍalas: Tracing the Evolution of Esoteric Buddhist Rituals* (New York 2014); Gudrun Buhnemann, «Maṇḍala, Yantra and Cakra: Some Observations», in *Mandalas and Yantras in the Hindu Traditions*, ed. Gudrun Buhnemann (Leiden 2003), 13-56.

14. See Liana Saif, «What is Islamic Esotericism», in *Correspondences* 7.1 (2019), 1-59.

designed, by definition, to transcend the limits of the ordinary and quotidian. All of which is to say that in the movement of *mandal*s we are dealing with a shifting terrain of normativity over a vast expanse of time. Jinn, demons, and angels are all unambiguously part of the cosmology of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, just as they feature in the basic creedal structures of Islamic theology. In this sense, the art of commanding or subjugating forces of the unseen was also aligned to normative understandings of what reality was and how the world worked.

Diagrams for conjuring unseen forces feature in the early Arabic literature on talismans and incantations. Much of the Islamic-era material, in turn, exhibits parallels with a variety of practices from late antiquity. These include the use of *charaktēres*, cyphers, amulets, diagrams, seals, goblets, mirrors, adolescent mediums, as well as divine, angelic, and demonic names. Spells and incantations in Arabic and Persian handbooks of magic regularly evoke ancient sacred words and phrases in a divine language. Many materials were drawn from Aramaic and Hebrew, often transcribed in surprisingly legible forms into the Arabic script.

Terms of Art

In Arabic, the word *mandal* connotes a range of activities associated with the discipline of incantations. The early Arabic lexicons do not discuss the *mandal* as a technical term in the art of summoning intermediary forces. They do, however, define the term as a type of moist fragrant wood (*ʿūd*), said to derive from the word *mandal*, a region, usually littoral, in India. In his Arabic-English dictionary, the Jesuit priest Joseph Hava (d. 1916) set these two associations side-by-side, explaining *mandal* as both "odiferous wood" and "witchcraft", without giving any insight into how, or if these two meanings were related[15]. Hava's witchcraft is certainly too broad. Moreover, by this point the *mandal* had long been connected not only with diagrams drawn on the ground, but also with the use of mirrors, goblets, and ink for scrying, as a form of divination through summoning spirits from the unseen.

15. Joseph Hava, *al-Farā'id al-durriyya fī l-lughatayn al-ʿArabiyya wa-l-Inkilīziyya* (Beirut 1899), 752.

Several later medieval works that circulated in Arabic give directions for constructing *mandal*s as a form of summoning demons and jinn through goblets, diagrams, and the aid of prepubescent (*dūna l-bulūgh*) mediums. Many are pseudepigraphic collections ascribed to the likes of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), the famed mystic al-Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), and the Umayyad-era conjurer ʿAbdallāh Ibn Hilāl[16]. There is also the Arabic *Kitāb al-mandal al-Sulaymānī*, which identifies the ritual with ancient Solomonic practice. This particular collection on jinn magic enjoyed further adaptations that circulated in Yemen and Ethiopia[17].

It was this practice of scrying, documented in such later works, that the British orientalist Edward Lane (d. 1876) witnessed while living in Cairo. Lane referred to the *mandal* used in the ceremony as the "mirror of ink". In addition to reflective surfaces for divining, these versions of the *mandal* often involved the use of a young boy as a medium to attract jinn. This was the form known to Lane, who was famously convinced of the efficacy of the divinatory performances he observed[18]. As a means for summoning jinn with goblets,

16. See al-Ghazālī (ascribed), *ʿAmaliyyāt wa-l-mujarrabāt*, [published in] *al-Asrār al-makhzūna fī l-ṭibb al-rūḥānī*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ghanī l-Fāsī (Beirut 2018), 153-54, 224, 240-41, 253; Ibn Sīnā (ascribed), *Mujarrabāt* (Beirut 2005), 60, 62-63, 68, 233-34, 246. See also Ibn Hilāl (ascribed), *Kitāb nūr al-muqal fī l-dakk wa-l-ḥiyal*, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Landberg 191, fol. 20a; for further copies, see Kūrkīs ʿAwwād, *al-Dhakhā'ir al-sharqiyya*, 7 vols. (Beirut 1999), 4:420, section 277; Imtiyaz Ali Arshi, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the Raza Library, Rampur*, 6 vols. (Rampur 1963-77), 5:586 (MS 6839 M.). The *Kitāb nūr al-muqal* is also ascribed to al-Ḥallāj in a manuscript dated 1021/1612-63 from the University of Riyadh, a digital copy of which is held in the Markaz Jumʿat al-Mājid, Dubai, inventory no. 537792.

17. Anne Regourd, «Le *Kitāb al-Mandal al-sulaymânî*, un ouvrage d'exorcisme yéménite postérieur au V^{e}/XI^{e} siècle?», in *Res orientales* 13 (2001), 123-28; 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 2011), 253-94; Anne Regourd, «A Twentieth-Century Manuscript of the *Kitāb al-Mandal al-sulaymānī* (IES Ar. 286, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)», in *Amulets and Talismans of the Middle East and North Africa in Context Transmission, Efficacy and Collections*, ed. Marcela Garcia Probert and Petra Sijpesteijn (Leiden 2022), 47-77; Hans Daiber, *From the Greeks to the Arabs and Beyond*, 6 vols. (Leiden 2022), 5:521-23.

18. See Edward Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, ed. Edward Stanley Poole (London 1860), 263-75, 275 n. 1; William Worrell, «Ink, Oil and Mirror Gazing Ceremonies in Modern Egypt», in *JAOS* 36 (1916), 37-53.

the *mandal* features in the Arabic book of secrets by ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Jawbarī (fl. 619/1222) who reveals the various tricks and devices used in a wide array of professions. For al-Jawbarī, the *mandal* is connected to practices for communing with jinn, but it is not identified with detailed ritual diagrams[19]. More research remains to be done on links between *mandal* diagrams found in the handbooks of practical magic produced in eastern lands by the likes of al-Ṭabasī, al-Rāzī, and al-Sakkākī, and the diagrams associated with the later development of "the science of letters and theophoric names" (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf wa-l-asmāʾ*), which appear to have first emerged in the West. Notably, in its westward movement, the term *mandal* transforms from a pattern drawn on the ground in which one sits – quite similar, say, to cognate Tantric practices found in South Asia – into an esoteric diagram used for scrying through visionary contemplation of a design (often patterned with and/or out of letters and *charaktēres*), so as to open the world of the unseen and to summon intermediary beings[20].

Though the same word is used, we are some distance from encirclements drawn around an individual enchanter. Through a process of linguistic abstraction, the *mandal* came to refer not only to a phys-

19. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jawbarī, *Kitāb al-mukhtār min kashf al-asrār*, [published as] *Al-Ǵawbarī und sein Kašf al-asrār*, ed. Manuela Höglmeier (Berlin 2006), 233-35, sections 13.1, 13.3.

20. For a study of diagrams associated with the science of letters, see Noah Gardiner, «Diagrams and Visionary Experience in al-Būnī's *Laṭāʾif al-ishārāt fī l-ḥurūf al-ʿulwīyat*», in *Visualizing Sufism: Studies on Graphic Representations in Sufi Literature (13th to 16th Century)*, ed. Giovanni Maria-Martini (Leiden 2023), 16-50. See also the introduction to the *Dāʾirat al-aḥruf al-abjadiyya*, edited and translated as *Le Cercle des lettres de l'alphabet*, ed. Cécile Bonmariage and Sébastien Moureau (Leiden 2016), 11-27. Notably, the term *mandal* is missing from the *Dāʾirat al-aḥruf*. The term however features as a device for scrying in Judeo-Arabic material drawn from this later Arabic collection, as discussed in Dóra Zsom, «A Judeo-Arabic Fragment of the Magical Treatise *Kitāb dāʾirat al-aḥruf al-abǧadiyya*», *The Arabist: Budapest Studies in Arabic* 38 (2017), 97, 102, 115 (*mandal*). For a more general study of Islamic diagrams from the perspective of art history, see David Roxburgh, «Islamicate Diagrams», in *The Diagram as Paradigm: Cross-Cultural Approaches*, ed. Jeffry Hamburger et al. (Washington, DC 2022), 33-53. Purely visual parallels can also be made with cosmic diagrams of the geocentric universe at the heart of classical astronomy, made of concentric circles of the celestial spheres (*aflāk*), on which see Sonja Brentjes, «Islamic Cosmological Diagrams», in *The Diagram as Paradigm*, ed. Hamburger et al. (Washington, DC 2022), 227-52.

ical catchment meant to protect, but also to a form of conjuring by gazing at surfaces, such as goblets, and more broadly as a mechanism for trapping spirits, often with the use of diagrams, *charaktēres*, magic squares, and talismanic objects. All of these forms require summoning and subjugating; but each application suggests an elastic array of meanings for the *mandal* itself. When applied to scrying, often with the assistance of an adolescent child, the term suggests a portal into the unseen realm of spirits.

The use of an adolescent medium for the *mandal* ceremony is attested in sixth-/twelfth-century Iraq. It features in a Judeo-Arabic treatise by Joseph b. Shimʿon (d. 1226) defending his famed teacher the Jewish physician-philosopher Moses Maimonides (d. 1204)[21]. The epistle quotes the Gaon of Baghdad, Samuel b. ʿEli (fl. 1194), who according to Ibn Shimʿon upheld the position that the spirits of the dead can speak. One of the justifications the Gaon offered was the tested and verified use of the *mandal* by skilled practitioners in Baghdad, who through the aid of adolescent boys were able to communicate with spirits[22].

In addition to medieval Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic, by the end of the sixth/twelfth century the *mandal* made its way into Latin through the translation and adaptation of Arabic materials on summoning demons, angels, and planets and the wider workings of Solomonic magic[23]. Several Christian collections on summoning

21. See Reimund Leicht, «A Maimonidean Life: Joseph ben Judah Ibn Shimʿon of Ceuta's Biography Reconstructed», in *Maimonides Review of Philosophy and Religion* 1 (2022), 1–48; Marina Rustow, «Ibn al-Dastūr, Samuel ben ʿAlī», in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, ed. Norman Stillman, 5 vols. (Leiden 2010), 2:450–51.

22. Sarah Stroumsa, «Twelfth Century Concepts of Soul and Body: The Maimonidean Controversy in Baghdad», in *Self, Soul and Body in Religious Experience*, ed. Albert Baumgartner (Leiden 1998), 319–20, 324; Yosef b. Shimʿon, *Risālat al-iskāt fī ḥasr al-amwāt*, [published as] *Beginnings of the Maimonidean Controversy in the East: Yosef ibn Shimʿon's Silencing Epistle concerning the Resurrection of the Dead: Arabic and Hebrew Texts*, ed. and trans. Sarah Stroumsa (Jerusalem 1999), 34–40 (Judeo-Arabic); Y. Tzvi Langermann, «Samuel b. ʿEli's Epistle on Resurrection», in *Qovez al yad* 15.25 (2001), 41–94 (Hebrew), 90–94 (appendix with further examples). See also Haggai Ben-Shammai, «From Rabbinic Homilies to Geonic Doctrinal Exegesis: The Story of the Witch of En Dor as a Test Case», in *Exegetical Crossroads: Understanding Scripture in Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Pre-Modern Orient*, ed. Georges Tamer et al. (Berlin 2019), 185.

23. See Zsom, «A Judeo-Arabic Fragment», 97, 102, 115; Gideon Bohak, *A*

intermediary beings survive. These include the *Liber Almandal*, a significant medieval Latin work on ritual magic. The use of the *mandal* in these Latin texts points to both parallels with and areas of divergence from the Arabic materials. In Latin, *almandal* came to connote a small table, wax tablet, or altar on which diagrams were drawn. The ritual associated with *almandal* involved various states of purification, the lighting of candles, suffumigation, and the recitation of sacred names and prayers. In Latin Christendom, the form of the term also shifted: *almadel*, *almandel*, *alimandel* are all attested[24]. The word could even be replaced with the equally ambiguous Latin *areola*, meaning an area, space, or ring. Over time, the Latin adaptations shifted away from *algin et assaiatin* (jinn and *shayāṭīn*), in a process of Christianization that focused on summoning angels, rather than jinn or demons, to hover above an altar[25].

As for the history of the *mandal*'s westward journey, classical Arabic dictionaries do not offer much help. The early lexicographers document the word, but they do not identify it with any form of enchantment or exorcism. Rather, they define *mandal* as a fragrant wood imported from India and used for incense and perfume. The association with aloes-wood (*'ūd*) is old. The word features with this meaning in early Arabic poetry as part of a larger array of aromatics and exotica acquired through distant trade. The Baghdadi traditionist and man of letters Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) defines the word *mandal* as a region; he quotes the Medinan traditionist Muḥammad

Fifteenth-Century Manuscript of Jewish Magic: MS New York Public Library, Heb. 190, ed. Gideon Bohak, 2 vols. (Los Angeles 2014), 1:166, line 1 (edited text), 2:166 (facsimile with diagram).

24. See Pingree, «Learned Magic», 41, 48-54. See the Latin edition, *L'Almandal et l'Almadel latins au Moyen Âge: Introduction et éditions critiques*, ed. Julien Veronese (Florence 2012). See also 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 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 2006), 119-34.

25. See Vajra Regan, «The *De consecratione lapidum:* A Previously Unknown Thirteenth-Century Version of the *Liber Almandal Salomonis*», in *Journal of Medieval Latin* 28 (2018), 277-333; Bernd-Christian Otto, «Magie im Islam Eine diskursgeschichtliche Perspektive», in *Die Geheimnisse der oberen und der unteren Welt Magie im Islam zwischen Glaube und Wissenschaft*, ed. Sebastian Günther and Dorothee Pielow (Leiden 2019), 521 n. 32.

b. Isḥāq (d. ca. 151/768), who stated that when Adam and Eve were expelled from paradise they alighted near Mandal in India. Ibn Qutayba explains that the Arabs claim that perfume and aloes-wood derive from this region[26].

The Arabic geographers provide further details. ʿImād al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283), for instance, observes that Mandal is a city in India whence aloes-wood is imported. He further notes that the source of this exceptionally fragrant and moist wood is actually to be found in islands south of the equator in Qāmrūn, among the archipelagoes of Southeast Asia[27]. The identification is noteworthy as the Sanskrit *maṇḍala* was indeed used as a toponymic element for various cities, districts, provinces, territories, and regions across the Indian Ocean. As a loanword into Arabic, it highlights ancient mercantile and linguistic exchanges. The *maṇḍala*, in the sense of circle, domain, and region, had long served as a term for a political organization, a kind of "circle of states", not only in India, but also throughout Southeast Asia[28]. Notably, the famed polymath Abū l-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (d. 440/1048), who had extensive knowledge of India, does not identify the *mandal* with esoteric diagrams or incantations, though he recognizes in the Sanskrit term a cosmological meaning of a celestial realm and also explains it as equivalent to a *wilāya* (region or dominion)[29].

While there is this explicit association with India, the classical Arabic geographers and lexicographers do not describe the *mandal* as a technical word for diagrams used in incantations. The polysemy of the term forms part of the problem. As the scholar and statesman al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād (d. 385/995) notes, *mandal* is also an accepted

26. Ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb al-maʿārif*, ed. Thawrat ʿUkāsha (Cairo 1969), 15-16. See Anya King, «The Importance of Imported Aromatics in Arabic Culture: Illustrations from Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Poetry», in *JNES* 67.3 (2008), 181 n. 47.

27. Al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-bilād*, 124; copying from Yāqūt al-Rūmī (d. 626/1229), *Muʿjam al-buldān*, 7 vols. (Beirut 1955-57), 3:447, 5:209. On Qāmrūn, see Robin Donkin, *Dragon's Brain Perfume: An Historical Geography of Camphor* (Leiden 1999), 128 n. 119.

28. See Richard Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age, 1000-1765* (Oakland, CA 2019), 24-29; Stanley Tambiah, «The Galactic Polity: The Structure of Traditional Kingdoms in Southeast Asia», in *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 293.1 (1977), 69-97.

29. Abū l-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb taḥqīq mā li-l-Hind*, ed. Edward Sachau (London 1887), 196, cf. 219.

apocopated form of *mandīl*, a piece of cloth or hand towel. This word, too, is a foreign import, related to the Greek *mandēlion*, for tablecloth, kerchief, and the like[30]. The proximity between *mandal* and *mandīl* may well have led to a certain semantic ambiguity, though the two words clearly form part of a distinct register of activities. It is not hard to imagine how the *mandīl*, as a handcloth, could be associated with the legerdemain and prestidigitation frequently ascribed to magicians and tricksters, with whom conjurers were often identified. Confounding matters, the orthography of *mandal* can be easily mistaken for *ṣandal*, as in sandalwood, which has also led to some notable confusion[31].

Lane does not address the word in any depth in his ambitious, though unfinished, *Arabic-English Lexicon*. However, in his *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, he offers a good deal of insight regarding its use in Cairo[32]. In contrast, one of Lane's most important primary sources for his dictionary provides a fair measure of detail. The Indian lexicographer Abū l-Fayḍ al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791), in his sprawling Arabic lexicon, discusses the *mandal* as used in incantations. This is unlike his esteemed predecessors, such as Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933), al-Azharī (d. 370/981), al-Jawharī (d. ca. 400/1010), Ibn al-Manẓūr (d. 711/1311), and al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1415), none of whom give any hint that the *mandal* is connected to practices of summoning intermediary beings[33]. The absence of

30. Al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād, *al-Muḥīṭ fī l-lugha*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Āl Yāsīn, 11 vols. (Beirut 1994), 9:312. See Dozy, *Supplément*, 2:653, s.v. *mandīl*; Franz Rosenthal, «A Note on the Mandīl», in *Four Essays on Art and Literature in Islam* (Leiden 1971), 63–99.

31. See Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, ed. Gustav Flügel, 2 vols. (Leipzig 1871–72), 1:309, reading *ṣanādil* instead of *manādil*. A similar slip can be found in the modern Arabic translation of the Persian treatise by Muḥammad b. Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī, *Funūn tashkhīrāt al-kawākib*, trans. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Ḥamrānī (Beirut 2011), 7 (*lā takhrūj min al-ṣandal*).

32. See Edward Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 8 parts (London 1863–93), 8:3030.

33. Abū Bakr Ibn Durayd, *Jamharat al-lugha*, ed. Ramzī Baʿlbakī [Ramzi Baalbaki], 3 vols. (Beirut 1987–8), 2:682; Abū l-Manṣūr al-Azharī, *Tahdhīb al-lugha*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 16 vols. (Cairo 1966–76), 2:153; Abū Naṣr al-Jawharī, *Tāj al-lugha wa-ṣaḥāḥ al-ʿarabiyya*, ed Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Ghafūr ʿAṭṭār, 6 vols. (Beirut 1979), 5:1827; Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, 15 vols. (Beirut 1968), 11:654; Majd al-Dīn al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1415), *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*, ed. Muḥammad Nuʿaym al-ʿIrqsūsī (Beirut 1998), 1061–62.

these associations is not because the word lacked these meanings by this point, or that the lexicographers shied away from discussions of subjugating demons or jinn; rather, the classical dictionaries were generally concerned with documenting the semantic foundations of the Arabic language and the *mandal*, in this form, evidently was not part of the pre-Islamic or early Arabic lexicon. This would appear to suggest that the word only became a technical term for incantations during the early Islamic period.

Comments by Aḥmad Taymūr Pāshā (d. 1930) in his modern lexicon of colloquial or popular (*ʿāmmiyya*) Arabic are helpful for determining the social register evoked here, at least in Arabic. According to Taymūr, the *mandal* is a type of sorcery (*siḥr*); it is also a name of a book on spirits (*rūḥāniyyāt*); it is frequently discussed in modern reformist journals; it was known to the likes of al-Jawbarī in his *al-Mukhtār fī kashf al-asrār* [An anthology for revealing secrets]; and, contrary to those who might see in it an Arabic etymology, it is highly unlikely that the term is derived from the Arabic *nadala*, to remove, snatch, grab. Taymūr was clearly responding to the likes of al-Zabīdī who sought an Arabic origin to the *mandal* used by conjurers[34].

For his part, al-Zabīdī was not bound by the same semantic horizons as his predecessors and he took on a much more encyclopedic purview when documenting the vast evolution of the Arabic language[35]. Al-Zabīdī does not view the *mandal* as aloes-wood to be related to the *mandal* as an esoteric diagram. But his intimacy with India provides more insight into how the word *mandalī* came to mean a type of fragrant wood. He notes that in India *mandal* can refer to a region along the coast; he points to Sumatra and Java and specifically to the traveler Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. ca. 779/1377), who reached "Mul Jāva", where aloes-wood is obtained[36].

But al-Zabīdī also knew the *mandal* to be a tool used in incantations and his gloss is particularly telling:

34. Aḥmad Taymūr, *Muʿjam Taymūr al-kabīr fī l-alfāẓ al-ʿāmmiyya*, ed. Ḥusayn Naṣṣār, 6 vols. (Cairo 2002), 5:401–2.

35. See Ramzi Baalbaki, *The Arabic Lexicographical Tradition: From the 2nd/8th to the 12th/18th Century* (Leiden 2014), 397–401.

36. See Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār fī gharāʾib al-amṣār*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-ʿIryān, 2 vols. (Beirut 1987), 2:633, 636.

Al-Azharī notes that waiters are called *nudul*, for they bring food to those who come to an invitation (*man ḥaḍara al-daʿwa*). I say that this is the etymology of the *mandal*, which is what the people of summoning use (*ahl al-daʿwa*). They have various means of constructing it (*lahum fī fatḥihi ṭuruq shattā*), which are mentioned by al-Kashnāwī, the master of our masters, in the *Bahjat al-āfāq* [The splendor of horizons][37].

There is much here to unpack. First, al-Zabīdī, who ultimately settled in Cairo, had traveled widely and studied with some of the leading authorities in the science of incantations in Egypt and the Hijaz. As for Muḥammad al-Kashnāwī (d. 1154/1741-2), he took up residence in Cairo a generation earlier, after leaving his native West Africa. Al-Kashnawī was trained in Ashʿarī theology and Mālikī *fiqh*; he resided for years in Mecca and Medina and wrote extensively. In addition to the *Bahjat al-āfāq*, al-Kashnāwī also authored a commentary on *al-Sirr al-maktūm* [The concealed secret], the handbook of practical magic by the famed Ashʿarī theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210). In both works, al-Kashnāwī describes the *mandal* in depth as a diagram that a conjurer constructs and sits within[38].

Al-Zabīdī's etiology, which links the word to waiters (*nudul*), gives some sense of how the history of the *mandal* was imagined in Arabic among those interested in the origins of words. It is true that *daʿwa* in Arabic, as in the Persian and Urdu *daʿvat*, can have the meaning of a banquet, convivial meeting, or dinner party. A key component of the *mandal* ritual is indeed summoning (*daʿwa*) spirits, just as the person overseeing the entire exercise designed to harness intermediary beings is often referred to as the *ṣāḥib al-daʿwa*, the master of ceremonies, as it were. Taymūr, though, is certainly right to be suspicious of this type of explanation posing as an etymology.

Unlike their classical Arabic counterparts, early New Persian lexicons define the *mandal* explicitly in terms of incantations, and it is clear that it had this sense for some time. Thus, Abū Manṣūr al-Ṭūsī (d. 465/1073) in his *Lughat-i furs* [The lexicon of the Persians],

37. Abū l-Fayḍ al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791), *Tāj al-ʿarūs fī jawāhir al-Qāmūs*, ed. ʿAbd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj et al., 40 vols. (Kuwait 1965-2001), 30:474-75.

38. See Muḥammad al-Kashnāwī, *al-Durr al-manẓūm wa-khulāṣat al-sirr al-maktūm fī l-siḥr wa-l-ṭalāsim wa-l-nujūm*, 2 vols. (Cairo n.d.), 1:2-5 (autobiographical account). See also Dahlia Gubara, «Muḥammad al-Kashnāwī and the Everyday Life of the Occult», in *Islamic Scholarship in Africa: New Directions and Global Contexts*, ed. Ousmane Oumar Kane (Suffolk, UK 2022), 41-60.

defines the *mandal* as "a diagram for an incantation which conjurers draw" (*khaṭṭ-i ʿazīmat būd kih muʿāzzimān kashand*)[39]. Al-Ṭūsī offers as an example a verse from Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Rūdakī (d. 329/941), one of the most celebrated Persian poets of the Sāmānid court in Bukhara:

nadīda tunbal-i vāy o-bidīda mandal-i vāy
digar numāyad o-digar buvad bi-sān-i sarāb

[Not having seen his sorcery, but only his *mandal*,
At once it showed itself, at once it seemed like a mirage][40].

Though al-Ṭūsī is less explicit, later Persian lexicons invariably describe the *mandal* as a circle in which a conjurer sits while performing incantations; little mention is made of scrying or other divinatory practices that work through reflective surfaces[41]. The attestation of the word in the formative stages of early New Persian poetry suggests that the association with conjuring had been operative for some time, at least in a Persian speaking milieu in the East. The geographical setting in Central Asia is also significant, as it was home, in al-Rūdakī's day, to Christians, Muslims, Jews, Manicheans, Mazdeans, and Buddhists. There is reason to believe that it is precisely in these kinds of environments that the Sanskrit *maṇḍala* made its way into Persian and Arabic practices of communicating with intermediary spirits.

References to the *mandal* survive in the fragmentary Sogdian corpus from Central Asia[42]. Ancient Sogdiana sat at the crossroads of Asia and the Iranian plateau. Sogdian, an eastern Middle Iranian language, was written in a variety of different scripts, including variations of Aramaic. Particularly noteworthy here is a scroll discovered

39. Abū Manṣūr al-Ṭūsī, *Lughat-i furs*, ed. ʿAbbās Iqbāl (Tehran 1319Sh/1940), 322.

40. As only this verse survives, the antecedent to the pronoun is ambiguous, see Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Rūdakī, *Dīvān*, ed. Saʿīd Nafīsī (Tehran 1373Sh/1994), 129. On the meaning of *tunbal* here and variants to the verse, see also ʿAlī Akbar Dihkhudā, *Lughat-nāma* (Tehran 1998), 5:5011.

41. For the later Mughal context, see Mīr Jamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn Injū Shīrāzī (d. 1035/1625), *Farhang-i Jahāngīrī*, ed. Raḥīm ʿAfīfī, 2 vols. (Mashhad 1980), 2:1904–5. Further examples cited in Dihkhudā, *Lughat-nāma*, 14:21619.

42. For the word *maṇḍala* in the surviving Sogdian corpus, see Badr al-Zamān Qarīb [Gharīb], *Sogdian Dictionary* (Tehran 1995), 214–15, section 5388, s.v. *mntr*².

in the caves of Dunhuang on the edge of the Gobi Desert. The scroll contains a composite text shaped by Iranian, Indic, and Turkic vocabulary and cosmography. Modern scholars have often referred to the scroll as a shamanistic manual of magic. The short text describes 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 (*mntr* > *mandal*) to be decorated with the images of planets, constellations, and the zodiac[43]. As a ritual diagram designed to attract intermediary beings the *maṇḍala* is also found in Sanskrit materials that circulated among Buddhists in Central Asia, well before the Arab invasions[44]. A major hub of commerce, Dunhuang is noteworthy as it was home to a vibrant tradition of Buddhist *dhāraṇī* sutras, incantations often used with *maṇḍalas*. In addition to a vast trove of written documents, the famed cave of Dunhuang also preserved various *maṇḍala* diagrams and paintings (see figure 2), produced during and shortly after the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE). The region between Samarqand and Bukhara and the edge of the Gobi Desert was connected by postal routes and the regular commerce of Sogdian merchants, who also carried out trade with India[45].

The Sanskrit term *maṇḍala* is attested in Khotanese, also an Iranian language. The kingdom of Khotan in the southern edge of the Tarim Basin remained under the control of Buddhists until the conquests at the beginning of the fifth/eleventh century by the Qarā-khānids, a Turkic Muslim dynasty. The Buddhists of Khotan used the word in a variety of contexts, including as a celestial portal to the Buddha.

43. See Émile Benveniste, *Textes sogdiens, édités, traduits et commentés* (Paris 1940), 66 (text 3 line 162), cf. 258 (glossary). See also W. B. Henning, «The Sogdian Texts of Paris», in *BSOAS* 11.4 (1946), 713-40, esp. 726-30; Samra Azarnouche and Frantz Grenet, «Thaumaturgie sogdienne: Nouvelle edition et commentaire du texte P. 3», in *Studia Iranica* 39.1 (2010), 27-77, esp. 47, 56; Samra Azarnouche and Frantz Grenet, «Where Are the Sogdian Magi?» in *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 21 (2007), 159-77, esp. 172.

44. 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 2015), 182 (fol. 15r, line 1), 183 n. 48.

45. Michelle Wang, *Mandalas in the Making: The Visual Culture of Esoteric Buddhism at Dunhuang* (Leiden 2018), 23, 122-94. See also de la Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders*, 43-91.

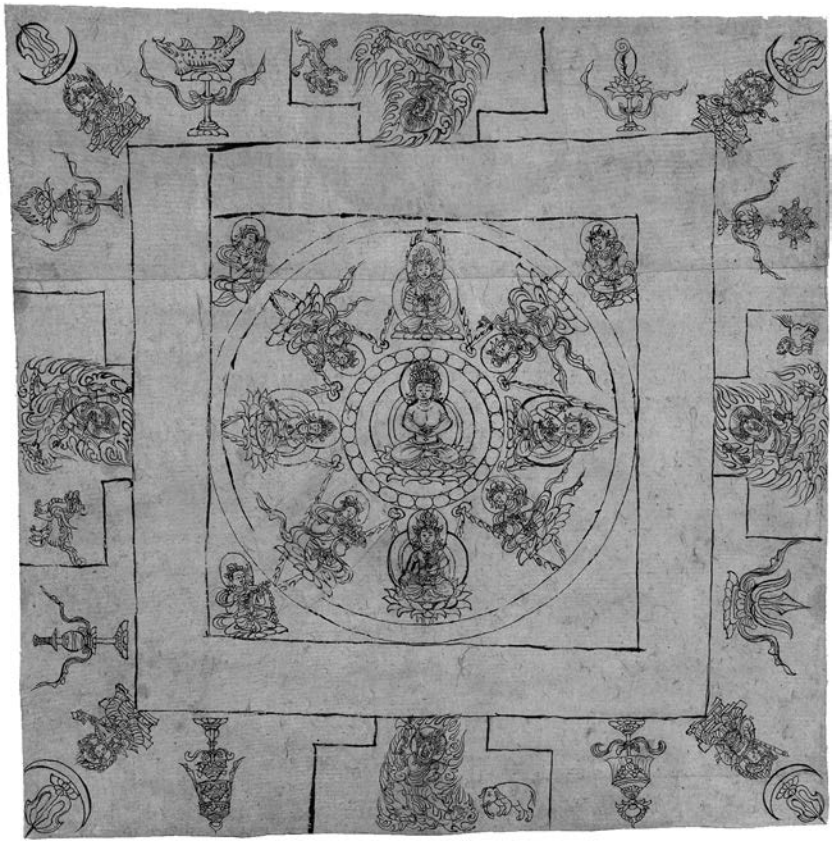

Figure 2. Diagram of a *Maṇḍala* of Five Dhyani-Buddhas, late ninth century, from Dunhuang. British Museum, London 1919, Museum number 1919,0101,0.173. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Like other Buddhist communities, they also cultivated a host of esoteric practices, including *dhāraṇī* incantations, amulets, and a sophisticated cosmography populated with bodhisattvas and demons[46].

46. See *The Book of Zambasta, A Khotanese Poem on Buddhism*, ed. and trans. Ronald Emmerick (London 1968), 362 line 161; Mark Dresden, «The *Jatakastava* or 'Praise of the Buddha's Former Births': Indo-Scythian (Khotanese) Text, English Translation, Grammatical Notes, and Glossaries», in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 45.5 (1955), 429, fol. 13r, line 54. For examples of incantations, see Prods Oktor Skjærvø, «A Khotanese Amulet», in *Iranian Languages and Texts from Iran and Turan*, *Ronald E. Emmerick Memorial Volume*, ed.

All of this highlights a shared arena in which the *maṇḍala*, as a word and as a representational form, circulated throughout Central Asia. The city states lining the Tarim Basin were connected by merchants and missionaries, often Jews, Christians, and Buddhists. They encountered a religious landscape marked by Iranian dualism and various Turkic practices and beliefs, and a textual world in which Sanskrit was itself a language of high prestige. The Muslim presence in Transoxiana dates to the history of the Umayyad conquests. It only continued to grow with the arrivals of the ʿAbbāsids, who at the beginning of their caliphate sought to check the westward expansion of the Tang into the region[47].

Early Formations and Prophetic Models

The *mandal* as a form of jinn magic was already in use in Iraq more than a century before al-Rūdakī drew on it in Bukhara. Indeed, the routes I propose move from east to west, probably via Iranian languages, such as Sogdian and Khotanese where it is documented. Here the word reflects contact with the religious practices of communities in Central Asia who had adopted the *maṇḍala* as an esoteric technology for summoning otherworldly spirits, just as it was used in the Indian Subcontinent. With only a fragmentary documentary record, there is still much uncertainty. We can imagine, however, diverse and crisscrossing pathways by which the Sanskrit *maṇḍala* emerged in New Persian and Arabic as a technique for harnessing intermediary beings.

By all measures the term was available to the early ʿAbbāsid literati, such as the luminary Abū ʿUthmān al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868-9), who mentions the *mandal* among the devices used by those who commune with jinn and demons. It is a group he refers to as "the

Maria Macuch et al. (Wiesbaden 2007), 387-401; on demons in Khotanese, see Mauro Maggi, «A Chinese-Khotanese Excerpt from the *Mahasahasrapramardani*», in *La Persia e l'Asia centrale da Alessandro al X secolo* (Rome 1996), 123-37, particularly 125 n. 8 (on *maṇḍala* fragments). For an example of loanwords from the region into Arabic, see Harold Walter Bailey, «The Word 'But' in Iranian», in *BSOAS* 6.2 (1931), 279-83.

47. For further context, see Beckwith, *Tibetan Empire*, 108-42; de la Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders*, 263-90.

people of spells, charms, incantations, sorcery, and trickery" (*aṣḥāb al-ruqā wa-l-ukhadh wa-l-ʿazā'im wa-l-siḥr wa-l-shaʿbdha*)[48]. The term appears in al-Jāḥiẓ's treatment of jinn in his *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* [Book of animals], as part of an invective poem that he cites by his master, fellow Basran Muʿtazilī theologian and man of letters, Abū Isḥāq al-Nazẓām (d. ca. 220/835) against another Basran, the poet Abū l-Jaʿfar Yasīr al-Riyāshī (d. 218/833), who was himself hostile to the field of dialectical theology. Al-Jāḥiẓ explains that al-Riyāshī had claimed for himself mastery of the art (*iddaʿā hādhihi al-ṣanāʿa*), which according to the poem included controlling and exorcising demons with seals (*khawātīm*) and *mandal*s, but also using sleight of hand deceptions. This point is of note, as the Muʿtazila held rather unsympathetic views of magic as nothing but trickery performed by charlatans. Though al-Jāḥiẓ uses the word, he does not explain its actual meaning, other than a general association with controlling jinn and demons[49].

We gain a bit more insight with the reference to *mandal*s by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' (Brethren of Purity), the otherwise anonymous collective that according to some accounts emerged out of the emanationist philosophical circles associated with disciples of Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī (d. 252/866)[50]. Their famed parable on the enmity that arose between jinn and humans provides further background to the identification of the *mandal* as a quintessential tool for commanding jinn and demons. God forgave Adam and Eve after expelling them from heaven and sent an angel to teach them plowing, sowing, milling, graining, baking, cooking, sewing, and how to fashion

48. Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, ed. Muḥammad Hārūn, 7 vols. (Cairo 1938–45), 6:231. On *ukhdha*, pl. *ukhadh* as a form of fascination, see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, 3:472–73.

49. Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, 6:233. Hārūn reads *manādīl*, however, see Sülaymaniye, Istanbul, Köprülü 995/5, p. 324, where it is *manādil*. Similar wording is repeated in al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tarbīʿ wa-l-tadwīr*, ed. Charles Pellat (Damascus 1955), 78 n. 141.

50. For the hypothesis linking the collection to al-Kindī's circle, see Guillaume de Vaulx D'Arcy, «Aḥmad b. al-Ṭayyib al-Saraḫsī, réviseur de *l'Introduction arithmétique* de nicomaque de Gérase et rédacteur des *Rasā'il Iḫwān al-Ṣafā'*», *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 29.2 (2019), 261–83; cf. Aziz Hilal, «Vaulx d'Arcy, Guillaume de, *Les Épîtres des Frères en Pureté (Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā). Mathématique et philosophie. Présentation et traduction de six épîtres*», *Mélanges - Institut dominicain d'études orientales du Caire* 35 (2020), section 15, online: http://journals.openedition.org/mideo/6262 (accessed 16 March 2024).

clothes. Their offspring multiplied and their children mixed with jinn, who in turn taught them various other crafts, including how to determine beneficial and harmful substances. They trusted and befriended each other, living together in tranquility for a time. But all the while the family of Adam recalled what occurred with the deception of ʿAzāzīl and his enmity toward them. And when Cain killed Abel, the children of Abel blamed the jinn and sought every stratagem to protect themselves. This included, the epistle notes, "incantations, spells, and *mandal*s", along with the smoke of oil and sulfur. With these devices, humans could trap jinn in bottles (*qawārīr*) and torture them with various forms of smoke and painful fumes (*bukhārāt*)[51].

Unlike al-Jāḥiẓ, who held a rather jaundiced view of the craft, the Brethren took the reality of incantations, talismans, and techniques for communing with jinn and angels quite seriously. Following an emanationist philosophical system, the epistles conclude with a study on the quiddity of magic (*māhiyyat al-siḥr*) as the final culmination of an investigation into the rarities of philosophy (*gharā'ib al-ḥikma*)[52]. A similar move to naturalize magic as a force in the cosmos features prominently in the *Enneads* of Plotinus (d. 270 CE), known in Arabic generally as the *Theology of Aristotle*. This work, which circulated in al-Kindī's circle, had demonstrable influence on the development of Islamic emanationism and it preceded later efforts to situate magic in the frameworks of natural philosophy[53].

The Adamic context given by the Brethren links the various techniques to subjugate and command jinn and demons squarely in the prophetic tradition of sacred history. The character of ʿAzāzīl in the epistles is another name supplied by many early Muslim exegetes for Iblīs, the devil figure of the Qur'ān. The name features throughout a much larger repertoire of demons and fallen angels shared across

51. Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity. The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn. An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 22*, trans. Lenn Goodman and Richard McGregor (Oxford 2009), 76 (Arabic); cf. 136 (English).

52. See Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity, On Magic I. An Arabic Critical Edition and English translation of Epistle 52*, ed. and trans. Godefroid de Callataÿ and Bruno Halflants (Oxford 2011), 87-88 (English), 5-6 (Arabic).

53. See Liana Saif, *The Arabic Influences on Early Modern Occult Philosophy* (New York 2015), 15, 31-32, 34-35; Zadeh, *Wonders and Rarities*, 42, 118, 193-94.

the Near East prior to the advent of Islam[54]. The integration of the *mandal* as a term of art in this discursive arena of prophetic history appears by all measures to be a later addition to what was a very old set of practices and beliefs for guarding against and gaining power over demons.

This process of assimilation is on display in *al-Fihrist* [The catalogue] by the Baghdadi bookman Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380/990), who makes a sharp distinction between conjurers (*muʿazzimūn*) and sorcerers (*saḥra*). The sciences (*ʿulūm*) of both groups call for the use of "seals, incantations, charms, *mandal*s, receptacles, suffumigation, and other such matters"[55]. However, for Ibn al-Nadīm what distinguishes the conjurer from the sorcerer are their beliefs and practices. The first group, rooted in the lawful, prophetic history of monotheism, follows what Ibn al-Nadīm refers to as the praised method (*al-ṭarīqa al-maḥmūda*). They draw from the precedent of Solomon and use the names of jinn that he commanded, a list of which Ibn al-Nadīm provides. By this time, lists of demons and angels formed part of a much larger set of discursive practices drawn from the ancient Near East, designed to enumerate, name, and control intermediary beings[56]. Ibn al-Nadīm explains that the praiseworthy path was followed by conjurers who professed religious legal norms (*yantaḥilu al-sharāʾiʿ*). In contrast, the condemned method (*al-ṭarīqa al-madhmūma*) practiced by sorcerers involves summoning the devil and his daughter, blood sacrifices, and various forms of polluting depravity. The distinction is noteworthy, though the boundaries between these two idealized types of magic – one sanctioned by religious law, the other not – were not rigid or stable[57].

54. Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writing in Ancient Judaism* (Cambridge 2020), 42, 72, 198; Patricia Crone, «The Book of the Watchers in the Qur'ān», in *Exchange and Transmission across Cultural Boundaries: Philosophy, Mysticism and Science in the Mediterranean World*, ed. H. Ben-Shammai, S. Shaked, and S. Stroumsa (Jerusalem 2013), 29-30.

55. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, 2:334 (*khawātīm wa-ʿazāʾim wa-ruqā wa-manādil wa-jarāb wa-dakhn wa-ghayra dhālika*).

56. On *Listenwissenschaft* in this context, see Reed, *Demons*, 79-80, 98, 228-40.

57. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, 2:333-4, 337. For example, al-Ṭabasī includes incantations for summoning the daughter of Iblīs, whose name is unvocalized, but which we may render as ʿAyna, following an eastern Aramaic pronunciation for the evil eye (*ʿyn*'). See al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fols. 66a-70a; P fols. 72b-76b; B 71-74. A word long associated with exorcism, cf. Ethel S. Drower, «*Shafta d Pishra d Ainia*», in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great*

None of these early allusions give us actual insight into the form, procedure, or purpose for producing a *mandal*, though cumulatively they point to its use in the science of summoning and controlling intermediary beings. The later literary evidence suggests that the *mandal* could be deployed both to protect the *muʿazzim* and to trap demons. Take, for instance, the story reported by the Ḥanbalī jurist of Baghdad Ibn ʿAqīl (d. 513/1119), writing at the end of the fifth/eleventh century about a house in the city that was haunted by a jinn. To expel the evil spirit, Ibn ʿAqīl employed a local *muʿazzim* to capture the jinn, who had taken the form of a serpent dangling from the roof. The conjurer did so by reciting verses from the Qur'ān and casting a *mandal* on the ground into which the jinn fell and was ultimately trapped, before being placed safely into a basket[58].

The ritual here looks quite similar to other esoteric procedures used to trap animals. Thus, the *ʿAjā'ib al-Hind* [Wonders of India] ascribed to the otherwise unknown Buzurg b. Shahriyār, describes how Indian soothsayers (*kahana*) trapped birds and other animals by drawing a circle on the ground (*fa-khaṭṭa fī l-arḍ dā'ira*). Once animals crosssed the circle, they could not escape[59]. The power to trap a flock of flying birds through such a device was also ascribed to Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī (d. 626/1229), the famed Central Asian rhetorician and mage. According to the Tīmūrid historian of India Ghiyāth al-Dīn Khwāndamīr (d. ca. 942/1535), al-Sakkākī ingratiated himself with Chaghatay Khān (d. 642/1244-45), by preforming

Britain and Ireland (1937), 589-611; (1938), 1-20; James Ford, «Ninety-Nine by the Evil Eye and One from Natural Causes», in *Ugarit-Forschungen* 30 (1998), 201-78.

58. Reported in Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256), *al-Juz' al-thāmin min Mir'āt al-zamān*, facsimile, ed. James Jewett (Chicago 1907), 53-54; Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), *Tārīkh al-islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-l-aʿlām*, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī, 53 vols. (Beirut 1987), 35:355-56; Badr al-Dīn al-Shiblī, *Ākām al-marjān fī aḥkām al-jānn*, ed. Edward Badeen (Beirut 2017), 236-37.

59. Buzurg b. Shahriyār (ascribed), *Kitāb ʿajā'ib al-Hind*, Süleymaniyye, Istanbul, Aya Sofya 3306, fol. 52b (emending *dāra* to *dā'ira*); edited as *Kitāb ʿajā'ib al-Hind = Livre des merveilles de l'Inde*, ed. Pieter Antonie Van der Lith, trans. Louis Marcel Devic (Leiden 1883-6), 104-5. The authorship of this work is highly problematic; large portions of it appear in the *Masālik al-abṣār* of Faḍlallāh al-ʿUmarī (d. 749/1349) ascribed to the Muʿtazilī theologian Abū ʿImrān Mūsā b. Rabāḥ al-Sīrāfī (fl. 377/987), edited as *al-Ṣaḥīḥ min akhbār al-biḥār wa-ʿajā'ibihā*, ed. Yūsuf al-Hādī (Damascus 2006).

this spell before the Mongol lord. Neither report uses the word *mandal*, but both highlight a diagram on the ground. In terms of comparisons, circles used for magical purposes, both for trapping and protecting, are not only ubiquitous, they are quite old. Numerous examples of the use of encirclements to guard and to contain are found in antiquity. They can be seen, for instance, in ritual incantations in Sumerian and Akkadian recorded on clay tablets, in spells used by Egyptian priests preserved in Greek and Demotic papyri, and in clay incantation bowls inscribed in Aramaic buried throughout Mesopotamia[60].

This leads us back to Abū Manṣūr al-Ṭūsī's concise definition in his Persian lexicon of the *mandal* as a *khaṭṭ* (a line or diagram) drawn by conjurers in the performance of an incantation. First there is no way of distinguishing from this definition alone what kind of *khaṭṭ* was meant. Notably, the practice of drawing a *khaṭṭ* on the ground is itself connected in the early *ḥadīth* corpus with ancient divinatory techniques of geomancy. The Arabic root, like its counterparts *ḥ-ṭ-ṭ* in various forms of Aramaic, has the sense of digging, ploughing, excavating, and by extension carving out a line of writing[61].

The Baghdadi authority Ibn Qutayba notes that *khaṭṭ* was a pre-Islamic science of the Arabs used for divination, practiced by a *khaṭṭāṭ*, a geomancer who would draw lines in the sand (*raml*) with his finger for purposes of augury[62]. Here the morphological form of *khaṭṭāṭ*, as a noun of intensiveness (*ism al-mubālagha*), suggests a skilled profession or trade. Ibn Qutayba's account serves as a gloss for a canonical *ḥadīth* that affirms that there was a prophet who practiced this form of divination (*kāna nabiyyun min al-anbiyā' yakhuṭṭu*) by drawing lines on the ground. Though not named, the prophet in question was frequently identified with Idrīs, who according to the Medinan authority Muḥammad b. Isḥāq was the first to write with

60. See Ghiyāth al-Dīn Khwāndamīr (d. ca. 942/1535), *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Humā'ī, 4 vols. (Tehran 1333Sh/1954), 3:80.

61. See Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, 2 vols. (London 1903), 1:448, s.v. «ḥ-ṭ-ṭ».

62. Ibn Qutayba, *Faḍl al-ʿArab wa-l-tanbīh ʿalā ʿulūmihā*, ed. Walīd Maḥmūd Khāliṣ (Abu Dhabi 1998), 143-44; Ibn Qutayba, *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*, ed. ʿAbdallāh al-Jubūrī, 3 vols. (Baghdad 1977), 1:403-4. See also Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, 7:288.

a reed pen[63]. Early exegetes also linked the practice of divining through *khaṭṭ* with the Qur'ānic verse (Q. 46:4), "a trace of divine knowledge" (*athāratin min ʿilm*). These associations were themselves used as a basis for grounding the field of geomancy, referred to as *ʿilm al-raml*, in prophetic history[64].

But there is good reason to believe that *khaṭṭ* in al-Ṭūsī's definition refers to diagrams drawn on the ground for guarding against or controlling intermediary forces. Again, in this sense ancient Arabia looms large, at least as preserved in the literary record. According to established lore, among the many tools that desert travelers used to guard against jinn and *ghūl*s was a protective circle drawn on the ground, matched with a decent command of poetry and sacred speech. Stories of besting jinn in Arabic literature often involve just this. They feature, for instance, in this form in the famed natural history on the wonders of creation by the Shāfiʿī judge and *madrasa* professor of Wasit, ʿImād al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī.

In his chapter on jinn and demons, al-Qazwīnī notes as an established fact that jinn could whisk off humans, often for sexual pleasure. Among the tales of such encounters al-Qazwīnī preserves the following anecdote said to have been related at an assembly of the caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644). There a traveler reported that on the way back from Damascus, while journeying by camel in the middle of the Hijaz, he lost sight of his party at dusk. Soon he came upon a woman alone by a tent. What was she was doing in such a desolate place? It turns out that an *ʿifrīt* (a class of powerful jinn), who would return at any moment, had abducted her. Fearless, the traveler convinces the captive woman to escape with him. They set off, journeying until the rise of the moon, whereupon a cloud of

63. See Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Wāḥid (Mecca 1988), 80; Ḥājjī Khalīfa (d. 1067/1657), *Kashf al-ẓunūn ʿan asāmī l-kutub wa-l-funūn*, ed. Muḥammad Sharaf al-Dīn Yāltqāyā and Rifʿat Bīlga al-Kilīsī, 2 vols. (Istanbul 1941–43), 1:912, s.v. *ʿilm al-raml*.

64. See Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), *Musnad*, ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnā'ūṭ, 52 vols. (Beirut 1993–2001), 15:58–6, 39:175–79, 183–85 nos. 9118, 23762, 23767 (with *takhrīj* in notes); Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875), *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2 vols. (Vaduz 2000), «Kitāb al-masājid», bk. 6, ch. 8; «Kitāb al-salām», bk. 40, ch. 35, 1:215–17, 2:964–65 nos. 1227, 5951. For efforts to limit this particular canonical *ḥadīth* as a license for geomancy, see Abū l-Walīd Ibn Rushd (d. 520/1126), *Fatāwā*, ed. al-Mukhtār b. al-Ṭāhir al-Talīlī, 3 vols. (Beirut 1987), 1:249–61; Abū Zakariyyā' al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 18 vols. (Cairo 1994), 5:32, 14:323.

dust picked up. Knowing that the jinn would soon appear, the traveler sets his camel and the woman on the ground. "I drew around them a circle (*khaṭaṭtu ḥawlahā*) and began reciting the Qur'ān and seeking refuge in God". A poetic parley ensues with an exchange of verses. Wrestling follows, three boons are offered, which the traveler rebuffs; finally, he bests the jinn, and sets off with the woman, whom he ultimately marries[65].

There is a lot that is interesting in this story. The jinn, forlorn with love sickness, evokes in verse the zephyrs of Najd – a tried motif of pre-Islamic poetry. Similar themes of possession and rivalry feature in numerous Arabic stories on jinn, famously memorialized, for instance, in *Alf Layla wa-layla* [A thousand and one nights]. Most notable, at least for our purposes, is the protective circle drawn on the ground with an accompanying recitation of the Qur'ān. This defensive move would have been immediately intelligible to al-Qazwīnī's readers, as drawing a circle to guard against jinn finds no better a model than the Prophet Muḥammad himself.

There are several *ḥadīth* reports of the Prophet using a circle for its protective force during the so-called *laylat al-jinn*, the night when Muḥammad headed into the desert to convert a group of jinn. The Damascene Ḥanafī jurist Badr al-Dīn al-Shiblī (d. 769/1367), in his treatise on jinn, notes that tradition preserves several occasions during which the Prophet set out to the convert the jinn, with accounts set in both Mecca and Medina[66]. As with other fragmented narratives in the *ḥadīth* corpus, many of these reports smuggle in tangential legal matters. Thus, the proliferation of occasions when the Prophet met delegations of jinn often served to either bolster or undermine various juridical positions. Notably, one cycle that circulated widely in Hijazi and Iraqi circles included the presence of a young Ibn Masʿūd (d. ca. 32/652). In addition to the matter of reciting to the jinn, this version of the night is wrapped

65. Al-Qazwīnī, *ʿAjā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa-l-gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt*, British Library, London, Or. 14140, fols. 101b-2a (with two illustrations); edited as *Die wunder der schöpfung*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen 1848), 373-75; referenced in Arthur Stanley Tritton, «Spirits and Demons in Arabia», in *JRAS* 66.4 (1934), 721-22; illustrations reproduced in Stefano Carboni, *The Wonders of Creation and the Singularities of Painting: A Study of the Ilkhanid London Qazvīnī* (Edinburgh 2015), 76-77, 297-98.

66. Treated with extensive references in al-Shiblī, *Ākām*, 108-22.

up in the legal dispute of whether the Prophet, having no water with him to perform ablution, instead used *nabīdh*, a fermented beverage of questionable legal status. The probity of using *nabīdh* for ablution was a Kufan position adopted by later Ḥanafīs. Most of the accounts, with or without *nabīdh*, feature the use of a line drawn in the sand as a protective measure. None of the juridical disputes raised by these *ḥadīth* question the circle drawn by the Prophet as a point of contestation.

The Iraqi traditionist Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) records several versions, including one via Muḥammad b. Isḥāq, the famed compiler on the epic history of the Prophet, his family, and his followers. The Prophet takes along a young Ibn Masʿūd. Parenthetically, it is of note that jinn and demons were well known to be attracted to adolescents, who often served as mediums, though the sources give no indication that this was the reason that Ibn Masʿūd came along. As mediums, boys in particular feature in divinatory practices for communing with intermediary beings[67]. To protect the child, the Prophet draws a circle on the ground around him (*khaṭṭa ḥawlahu*). He warns that should Ibn Masʿūd step outside the circle, the jinn will surely seize him. Muḥammad then proceeds to walk off with the delegation, reciting the Qurʾān through the course of the night, while Ibn Masʿūd listened on from the safety of the circle[68].

This account features not only in early *ḥadīth* collections, but also in numerous Qurʾān commentaries. Moreover, it also forms the basis for the name of a mosque in Mecca known as the Mosque of the Jinn (Masjid al-Jinn). The name of the mosque features in the respective histories of Mecca by Abū l-Walīd al-Azraqī (fl. 250/865) and Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Fākihī (fl. 272/885) in their topography of the sacred city. Both authorities identify the Mosque of the Jinn as having been built on the spot where Ibn Masʿūd sat in the circle the Prophet had drawn to protect the boy. It is here, too, that jinn

67. See Sarah Iles Johnston, «Charming Children: The Use of the Child in Ancient Divination», in *Arethusa* 34.1 (2001), 97–117; Edmonds, *Drawing Down the Moon*, 213–14.

68. See Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 7:367, 390–91, nos. 4353, 4381; Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥākim al-Nīshābūrī (d. 405/1014), *al-Mustadrak ʿalā l-ṣaḥīḥayn*, 5 vols. (Cairo 1997), 2:592–93, no. 3915; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-islām*, 2:199–200.

pledged an oath of allegiance (*bayʿa*) to Muḥammad and thus the mosque also became known as the Mosque of Allegiance[69].

In this sense, the practice of drawing a circle on the ground as a precaution when engaging with jinn represents a veritable *sunna* of the Prophet. The main thrust of these accounts, as with the Qur'ānic treatment of the topic (e.g., Q. 72), is not only that jinn can convert and find faith in God, but that there are sacred means of communicating with them. Jinn are thus conceptually related to the *daimones* ubiquitous in classical Greek cosmology. In this regard, it is not surprising that during the course of the ʿAbbāsid absorption of Greek learning into Arabic, often via Syriac intermediaries, *jinn* was one of the words used to render the Greek *daimōn*. To be sure, as intermediary beings, *daimones* could be harmful and destructive. But far from the demonic associations that early Christians ascribed to them in polemical terms, they could also be quite helpful, serving, as it were, as guardian spirits and sources of divine inspiration[70].

The use of circles and diagrams for both guarding against and communing with intermediary beings is so ubiquitous across the various contact zones that Muslims inhabited with others that drawing them all out would border on the banal[71]. There was the famous Jewish miracle worker from Jerusalem named Ḥoni (first century CE), who, according to Rabbinic sources, could summon rain by drawing a circle, standing inside it, and calling upon God, whence his honorific *ha-meʿagel*, "circle maker"[72]. The practice of using pro-

69. Al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka*, ed. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Duhaysh, 2 vols. (Mecca 2003), 2:814-15; al-Fākihī, *Akhbār Makka*, ed. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Duhaysh, 6 vols. (Beirut 1994), 4:20-24; Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī (d. 487/1094), *al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*, ed. André Ferré and Adrian van Leeuwen, 2 vols. (Beirut 1992), 1:398.

70. See, for instance, the Arabic adaptation of Plotinus, *Enneads* as pseudo-Aristotle, *Uthūlūjiya* [*The Theology of Aristotle*], Süleymaniye, Istanbul, Aya Sofya 2457, fol. 146a (*jinn*); translated in *Plotiniana Arabica*, trans. Geoffrey Lewis, in *Plotini Opera, Tomus II: Enneades IV-V,* ed. Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer (Paris 1959), 145 line 43. For the classical philosophical background, see Charles Stang, *Our Divine Double* (Cambridge, MA 2016), 185-230.

71. See Reginald Campbell Thompson, *Semitic Magic: Its Origins and Development* (London 1908), lvii-xl; for this and further references, see Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic* (Cambridge 2008), 286 n. 165.

72. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 45, 53, 401; and more broadly Aaron Panken, «Telling Retellings: Honi the Circle Maker and the Development of Rabbinic Narrative Discourse», in *From Scrolls to Traditions: A Festschrift Honoring Lawrence H. Schiffman*, ed. Stuart Miller et al. (Leiden 2021), 408-49.

tective circles when summoning demons is preserved in the Greek, Demotic, and Coptic corpus of magical papyri. Many of these materials feature diagrams that parallel, in iconographic terms, the Ouroboros, the ancient symbol of a snake that eats its own tail, which was common in alchemical texts as well as a host of amulets and signets from antiquity[73]. Even further back there was the *zisurrâ*, the ancient Babylonian ritual of the magic circle of flour, drawn on the ground to guard a ritual space against evil spirits. Practices aimed at demarcation through encirclement, burying, and entrapment were also at play in Aramaic incantation bowls used for trapping demons[74].

Buried upside down in courtyards, thresholds, and the corners of rooms, incantation bowls were designed to trap demons. They feature inscriptions lining their interior circumference forming concentric circles of increasing size. Many of the centers foreground diagrams of demonic figures who have been trapped or bound within the circular lines that are made up by the inscription of the incantation[75]. Archeological evidence points to the everyday use of incantation bowls, seals, and amulets by Christians, Jews, Mandaeans, Manicheans, and Mazdeans across Iraq and Iran prior to and concomitant with the rise of Islam. Furthermore, numerous literary sources, such as Christian Syriac writings on the lives of saints and Rabbinic accounts in the Babylonian Talmud, give further context to a shared cosmography of spirits and demons inhabiting Mesopotamia.

73. See the use of circles and enchantments in protective spells against daimons and phantasms in *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, ed. Hans Dieter Betz (Chicago 1986), 130 (PGM VII, l. 579-90, British Library, London, Papyrus 121, fol. 3a) and 141 (PGM VII, l. 846-61, British Library, Papyrus 121, fol. 5a); see also Angelicus Kropp, *Ausgewahlte koptische Zaubertexte*, 3 vols. (Brussels 1930-1), 3:100.

74. See *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, 21 vols. (Chicago 1956-2010), 21:137-38; JoAnn Scurlock, *Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost-Induced Illness in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Leiden 2006), 57-59; for comparisons, see Judah Segal and Erica Hunter, *Catalogue of the Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls in the British Museum* (London 2000), 176-79; Charles Haberl, «The Production and Reception of a Mandaic Incantation», in *Afroasiatic Studies in Memory of Robert Hetzron*, ed. Charles G. Häberl (Newcastle 2009), 133.

75. See Naama Vilozny, «The Art of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls», in *Aramaic Bowl Spells: Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls*, ed. Shaul Shaked et al. (Leiden 2013), 29-37. Compare the wood boards with demons trapped in encirclements in Bactrian and Brahmi script, in Nicholas Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan*, 3 vols. (Oxford 2000-12), 3:35, plates 240-41, the second features a mantra in the Brahmi script.

In these ways, the Arabic uses of *khaṭṭ* as a protective measure to guard spaces against demons and jinn clearly parallel earlier forms of protection through encirclement. Notably, these cases developed entirely without utilizing the word *mandal*. The encirclement suggested by the word *khaṭṭ* and its variants can be traced back to the formative development of Islamic writings on the Prophet and the early community. In addition, a variety of handbooks of practical magic do not refer to the word *mandal*. Thus while the Andalusian grimoire *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* [Aim of the sage] does not use the word, it does speak of the procedure of drawing a *dā'ira* (circle) to sit in while conjuring astral spirits[76]. A similar observation can be made about the Arabic collection of spells that circulated under the name Andahriyūsh(?) the Babylonian on the subjugation of jinn and demons and on curing various ailments, a pseudepigraphic collection that was purportedly drawn from the magic of ancient Mesopotamia. The handbook is filled with incantations that evoke an array of demonic and angelic names drawn in part from Aramaic. The *mandal* does not feature here, but there are supplications, *charaktēres*, the construction of an enclosed pavilion (*qubba*) for summoning intermediary forces, goblets for scrying, protective circles referred to as *khaṭṭ*, and bowls marked with inscriptions[77].

And yet it is clear that over time, the term *mandal* became an entirely naturalized category in the standard repertoire of incantations. And it is in this regard that al-Ṭūsī's Persian definition is significant. Not only does it refer to the use of diagrams, but it also addresses the *mandal* as part of an incantation or enchantment (*'azīmat*) used by a conjurer or enchanter (*mu'azzim*). As a term of art, the *mandal* tells us a good deal about the formation of the science of incantations, and it lends some insight into the social and religious values associated with those who sought to wield its power.

76. See Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī [ascribed], *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, ed. Hellmut Ritter (Berlin 1933), 298, 299.

77. See Andahriyūsh al-Bābilī, *Kitāb fī 'ilājāt al-jinn*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, MS Arabe 2630, fols. 16a, 17a, 18a–b, 20a, 26a, 27b, 35a (protective circles); 36a (*charaktēres*); 21b–23a (*qubba*). The vocalization of the purported author's name is conjectural.

Handbooks of Practical Magic

To date, the earliest Arabic accounts that are known to survive on how to construct the *mandal* as a protective diagram are found in the interrelated handbooks of practical magic by Fakhr al-A'imma al-Ṭabasī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī, all produced in the East. These works each describe the *mandal* as one of the techniques used when summoning intermediary forces. This takes the form of an encirclement on the ground in which one sits to perform various incantations and ritual acts. The materials preserved in these handbooks, I would suggest, go back several generations and reflect an even older body of practices for communicating with and gaining mastery over intermediary beings.

In this form, the *mandal* as the sorcerer's circle also features in the development of Persian works on practical magic. In his influential Persian classification of the sciences, the *Jāmiʿ al-ʿulūm*, al-Rāzī describes how to construct such a diagram and the requisite ceremonial steps that accompany it. His account notably does not use the term *mandal*. However, his description very closely parallels the *mandal* ceremony that opens al-Ṭabasī's Arabic manual[78]. There is also the Persian treatise, the *Taskhīrāt* [Subjugations] by Muḥammad, the son of Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī, who may well have been a compiler and publisher of his father's handbook; in it the *mandal* forms a mechanism for harnessing intermediary forces, with intricate and labyrinthine diagrams (see figure 2)[79].

As a technique of drawing circles on the ground to summon beings, the *mandal* is also elaborated in detail in an illuminated Persian compendium of practical magic complied for the Seljuq court of Anatolia by Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm (fl. 671/1273). The compiler is otherwise unknown, though notably he took,

78. For the procedure, see Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Jāmiʿ al-ʿulūm*, ed. Sayyid ʿAlī Āl Dāwūd (Tehran 1382Sh/2003), 441-46; al-Rāzī's Persian paraphrases the second chapter of al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fols. 8a-10b; P fols. 5b-8a; B 5-6; N fols. 6b-8a. For similar ceremonies referred to by the term *mandal*, see al-Rāzī, *Sirr*, fols. 133b, 136b, 149a, 150a, 169b, 176a.

79. For this manuscript collection, see Emma Flatt, «Spices, Smells and Spells: The Use of Olfactory Substances in the Conjuring of Spirits», in *Journal South Asian Studies* 32.1 (2016), 3-21.

among other honorifics, the titles geomancer (*rammāl*) and conjurer (*muʿazzim*)[80]. The unique manuscript contains labyrinthine diagrams marked with gates and clear indications where the conjurer was to sit. The instructions evince a broad repertoire of practices and techniques that include the use of music, various forms of fasting and breaking the fast, along with ritual objects, including knifes and spears. His square *mandal* diagram for summoning the angel Metatron contains eight spaces in which to conduct the ceremony, each bisected by eight gates (see figure 3). These eight locations are identified for the footwear the conjurer removes and the offering; the water used in the ritual; the space where the conjurer sits; the placement of reed pipes (*mūsīqāl*); a plate of dates; a Qur'ānic codex; incense; and weapons. Other diagrams call for the use of books, candles, and bread. These works describe similar ceremonies and conventions, though with some clear expansions and adaptations. Such is the case with the use of musical accompaniment in the form of a reed (*nay*) and drum (*daf*) in Nāṣir al-Dīn's Persian handbook produced in Anatolia, where music often formed an established part of Sufi piety[81].

The handbooks also describe special means for preparing the *mandal* diagram in which the devotee sits. The ceremony may call for particular astral timings or locations, along with various forms of purification, suffumigation, the fashioning of charms, amulets, seals, signets, or talismans, the sacrifice of animals, and the recitation of sacred formulas and names, often in unintelligible forms. The ritual can involve days of recitation, sleeping, and fasting. Though there is good deal of variation, this form of the *mandal* ceremony is attested in generations of writing. The eighteenth-century West African savant Muḥammad al-Kashnāwī treats the broad outlines of the ceremony in detail. Al-Kashnāwī explains how to construct the *mandal* diagram in his commentary on al-Rāzī's famed collection *al-Sirr al-maktūm* and in his own handbook of letterism and numerology, the *Bahjat al-āfāq*.

Foremost, as al-Kashnāwī makes explicit, the *mandal* is meant to guard the individual trying to summon intermediary beings and

80. For the name of the author (*muṣannif*), see Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris MS Persan 174, fol. 51a, 75a, 79b, 81a; discussed in Andrew Peacock, «A Seljuq Occult Manuscript and its World: MS Paris Persan 174», in *The Seljuqs and Their Successors*, ed. Sheila Canby et al. (Edinburgh 2020), 167, 170.

81. MS persan 174, fols. 74b, 79a.

Figure 3. *Mandal* diagram for subjugating the angel Metatron, with eight gates along with ritual objects and the location for the conjurer to sit, accompanied by divine names (*nām-hā*), citing the authority of ʿAbdallāh b. Hilāl. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, MS Persan 174, fol. 74b, manuscript compiled for the Seljuq court of Anatolia, ca. 671/1273.

thus, it serves above all as a protective device. He cautions that the utmost care is to be taken when constructing one. We can trace a similar concern back to al-Ṭabasī, who describes the lines (*khuṭūṭ*) as a form of fortification and protection (*taḥṣīn wa-iḥrāz*) used during the course of the ritual. Al-Ṭabasī explains that no part of the petitioner's body should leave the design (*khaṭṭ*) during the ceremony, as there is "the risk of death, illness, possession, dumbfoundedness, muteness, blindness, and other things which God might ordain"[82].

The rite can only begin in a state of ritual consecration and purification. Al-Ṭabasī explains that one has to strip away the baseness of ambition, and the weakness of intention, for it is only through "determination (*himma*) that a man can soar". The prolonged practices of fasting and recitation represent forms of theurgic purification. Stressing the ritual in gendered terms, al-Ṭabasī notes: "whoever lacks determination lacks manliness (*murū'a*), and whoever lacks manliness, has no comeliness (*ruwā'*), and without comeliness, one is of no consequence"[83]. The language speaks to larger discourses of Islamic piety, ethics, and epistemology in general terms. Al-Ṭabasī's handbook, in this way, reflects the diverse routes by which religious authorities cultivated the science of incantations as a practical means for communicating with the realm of the unseen.

Al-Kashnawī, like al-Ṭabasī centuries before, offers a normative account of the *mandal* ritual. Seven circles are to be drawn on the ground starting with the one furthest from the practitioner (see figure 4). The lines should be drawn with steel (*fūlād*)[84]. Al-Rāzī notes that it is also possible to use a knife. Al-Ṭabasī gives a detailed list of divergences akin to legal differences of opinion (*ikhtilāf*) in various forms of positive ritual law. Iron or steel is requisite, a spear is preferable, followed by a lathe, or a knife; al-Ṭabasī cites the authority of Ibrāhīm al-Fallāḥ who also allowed the use of large needles, pins, the metallic end of a scabbard, and the like.

Each line should be drawn with the right hand in a continual action without lifting up the point. At the moment when the ends of the lines join, a new line should be started, proceeding in smaller concentric circles. However, not all *mandal*s are circular; various

82. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fols. 17b–18a; P fol. 14a; B 12; N fol. 13b.

83. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fols. 7b–8a; P fol. 5b; B 6; N fol. 6b.

84. See al-Kashnāwī, *al-Durr*, 2:208–212; al-Kashnāwī, *Bahjat al-āfāq*, Beinecke Library, Yale University, Arabic MSS suppl. 29, fols. 97a–99a.

Figure 4. Diagram for the first *mandal* ceremony described in al-Ṭabasī's handbook, Salar Jung Museum Library, Hyderabad, ʿUlūm-i Sirriyya 14, p. 17, copied in India in the eighteenth century.

squares and rectangular shapes can be used, a point made clear in the rectilinear designs for *mandal* enclosures that al-Ṭabasī preserves[85]. As the illuminated Persian grimoire of Nāṣir al-Dīn the conjurer highlights, *mandal* diagrams can also combine shapes into significantly complicated patterns and forms. The diagrams also frequently include various numbers of gates or doors that bisect in some fashion the catchment of lines. Prayers and supplications are to be recited at each stage of the drawing. The supplicant is to fast, wear white robes, and is required, generally, to remain in the *mandal* during the procedure. Supplications could include reciting verses of the Qur'ān, prayers, and incantations. Instructions could call for kindling a fire, burning various substances and aromatics, breaking fasts, and even the use of

85. See al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 66b; P fol. 73b; B 72; N fol. 114a.

music. The ceremony could take days, and much of it was to be conducted outdoors at night, in an open space, away from others.

In the opening to his treatment of *tanjīm*, another technical term in the toolkit of incantations, al-Ṭabasī gives a detailed account of one version of the ritual, which he notes can take various forms. The word *tanjīm* here does not have the same sense used in judicial astrology, in which it refers to observing the course of stars for the purposes of divination. Rather, as becomes clear from the way al-Ṭabasī, al-Rāzī, and al-Sakkākī use the term, *tanjīm* serves as a basis for forming connections with heavenly bodies and thereby activating spells and incantations in the form of astral enchantment.

In this way, seals, signets, and talismans are brought into the *mandal* and are then activated through their exposure to astral forces. The incantations summon the jinn and demons, while exposure to the stars then subjugates these forces from the realm of the unseen within an object and compels them into obedience. This transference is done, al-Rāzī suggests, so that the conjurer need not actually unite with the jinn or demon in a form of possession[86]. The central importance of *tanjīm*, in this sense of astral enchantment or activation by the stars, for the *mandal* ceremony can be seen in the subtitle to al-Ṭabasī's collection, *uṣūl al-taʿzīm wa-qawāʿid al-tanjīm* ("the foundations of adjuration and the rules for astral activation").

In his opening account of how to perform the ceremony, al-Ṭabasī explains that an astrologer (*munajjim*) is a scholar trained to determine the course (*maysīr*) of the stars, their felicities (*suʿūd*), calamities (*nuḥūs*), ascents and descents (*ṣuʿūd wa-hubūṭ*). He then notes the necessity of consulting an authority of astral science who possesses precise knowledge of the movement of stars (*ʿāliman bi-l-nujūm*) before performing the *tanjīm* ceremony within the *mandal*. This is all to ensure that the procedure is done when the stars are in auspicious positions. Al-Ṭabasī's advice is noteworthy for it suggests a clear division of labor between astrologers and conjurers. It also highlights that the discipline of incantations, as al-Ṭabasī sees it, does not require, in itself, detailed knowledge of astral science; rather the mastery of spells and incantations, and the rituals used to activate them through special prayers and procedures, represents its own form of specialization[87].

86. Al-Rāzī, *Jāmiʿ*, 441.
87. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fols. 8a-b; P fols. 5b-6a; B 6; N fols. 6b-7a.

Prophetic Pedigrees and Pious Lineages

The opening of al-Ṭabasī's collection provides a sacred history of the science of incantations that stretches back to Adam and the torments inflicted on him by Iblīs. After expelling Adam from heaven, God revealed to him the sacred names so that he and his progeny could defend themselves against Iblīs and his minions, an idea explicitly rooted in the Qur'ānic account (Q. 2:31) of how God taught Adam all the names (*'allama ādama l-asmā'a kullahā*). Al-Ṭabasī further explains that these names were recorded in the *Sifr Ādam* (Book of Adam), which was then passed on to Seth. We are told that Adam used these names to subjugate demons and that the phrases were established through authenticated transmission (*riwāya*). This explanation parallels, in very general terms, the story provided by the Brethren of Purity discussed above[88].

Ibn al-Nadīm knew an Arabic book by this same title, which he reports contained accounts of angels and operations based on their names. The *Sifr Ādam* appears in Ibn al-Nadīm's list of writings on amulets and spells (*al-ta'āwīdh wa-l-ruqā*). Though its author was unknown (*majhūl*), Ibn al-Nadīm notes that Jews claimed it as their own. Al-Jāḥiẓ also lists the title among the works consulted by conjurers. However, the illuminist philosopher Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī (fl. 687/1288) comments that by his day the collection was no longer available, having long been lost. This may speak more to its rarity than to its survival. Al-Ṭabasī appears to have had access to some version of the collection, which he describes as containing details of angels and divine names. Moreover, references to the work are made by the likes of the Ottoman polymath Ḥājjī Khalīfa (d. 1067/1657) and later manuscripts with the title *Sifr Ādam* survive in Arabic and Persian. The extent to which they match what circulated in the book markets of Baghdad during the time of Ibn al-Nadīm remains to be seen. These later materials, however, exhibit notable parallels with the Hebrew *Sefer Ha-Razim* [Book of secrets], particularly in the use of sacred Hebrew and Aramaic phrases and in the enumeration of the celestial inhabitants of the seven heavens. In this

88. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 6b.

way the *Sifr Ādam* highlights early shared techniques for harnessing angels and demons that were, in turn, rooted in prophetic history[89].

From Seth, al-Ṭabasī traces the prophetic science of incantations and talismans through Idrīs, whom Ibn al-Nadīm and others knew as Enoch, and who was frequently identified as Hermes. Again, there is vast body of Jewish and Christian literature on Enoch that points to his celestial powers over demons. Next for al-Ṭabasī comes Ezekiel (Ḥizqīl), followed by Solomon, who forms a backbone to the elaboration of the field with his mastery of demons and jinn. In the genealogy of the prophetic discipline from Adam to Solomon, al-Ṭabasī identifies jinn with the high mountains of India.

Al-Ṭabasī notes that Solomon's chief minister among the jinn, Āṣif b. Barkhiyā, had befriended Faqṭiṭiyūs, the ruler of the jinn and demons. This king was said to dwell in a hidden garden in India, one blooming with rare fruits, in the middle of which was a pool of pure spring water (*ghadīr mā' ma'īn murawwaq*) in front of towering mountains. Notably, in India the association between high mountains, particularly the Himalayas, and various intermediary beings, including not only deities, but demons and ghosts, was quite old. Al-Ṭabasī explains that there was a dispute over the name of the king of the jinn; some claimed that it was actually Fuqṭus. Others maintained that Fuqṭus was merely a brother who made the trek each year to hear the king's council. Meeting on the summit of one of the peaks, the king preached, dispensed advice, and gave commands and prohibitions that Fuqṭus then relayed to the other jinn far and wide, east and west. Faqṭiṭiyūs features in a cycle of incanta-

89. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 5a; P 116b; B 4, 128. On the *sifr* of Adam, see al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, 6:232; al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tarbī'*, 80; Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, 2:353; noted as the *sifr* of Seth son of Adam in al-Jawbarī, *Kitāb al-mukhtār*, 82. See Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī, *Rasā'il al-Shajara al-ilahiyya*, ed. Najafqulī Ḥabībī, 3 vols. (Tehran 1383/2004-5), 3:519; Ḥājjī Khalīfa, *Kashf*, 1:591, 655, cf. 650-51; al-Kashnāwī, *Bahjat al-āfāq*, fol. 7b. An Arabic text by this title is published in 'Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Sayyid 'Abduh Ṭūkhī, *al-Siḥr al-'aẓīm*, 3 vols. (Cairo n.d.), 1:11-96. For an eighteenth-century Arabic copy, see Rampur Raza Library, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts*, 5:500 (8695 M). See also Dóra Zsom, «Another Arabic Version of *Sefer Ha-Razim* and *Ḥarba De-Moše*: A New *Sifr Ādam* Manuscript», in *Arabist* 37 (2016), 179-201; Alexander Fodor, «An Arabic Version of *Sefer Ha-Razim*», in *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 13:4 (2006), 412-27; Alexander Fodor, «An Arabic Version of 'The Sword of Moses'», in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, ed. Gideon Bohak et al. (Leiden 2011), 341-85.

tions later in al-Ṭabasī's handbook. This, in turn, highlights how a larger mythology of *historiolae* on the lives of demons, jinn, and prophets came to envelop a range of spells[90].

This king of the jinn, al-Ṭabasī observes, appeared five generations after Iblīs. He dragged the impudent jinn and demons to Solomon, who, in turn, took their vows (*ʿuhūd*), namely, the secret names of God by which He commanded them. In this way Solomon learned the incantations (*ʿazā'im*) that would subjugate them[91]. India emerges as a *locus classicus* in early Arabic letters as an abode of jinn filled with ascetics and magicians who, through the powers of the mind, work wonders. Al-Jāḥiẓ, for instance, knew that jinn and powerful demons abounded in India. In addition, there is a well-known report in early Arabic sources that India was the first terrestrial home of Adam, an idea that has analogues among Jews and Christians in antiquity[92].

This larger prophetic framework guides al-Ṭabasī's opening chapter on the definition of *taʿzīm*, the act of commanding demons and jinn by adjurations. The practice, al-Ṭabasī explains, is both possible and permitted by reason and by religious law (*sharʿ*). Moreover, he continues, whoever denies the reality that these entities can be commanded, risks placing a limit on the power (*qudra*) of God, for subjugation and making jinn and demons subservient to humans is part of God's marvelous design and wonderous decree (*min badīʿ ṣanʿihi wa-ʿajīb amrihi*). These acts of subjugation are lawful, al-Ṭabasī concludes, as they are done through God, not through some other power, all in harmony with His beautiful names (*bi-asmā'ihi al-ḥusnā*), His mighty commandments (*ʿazā'im*), His most sublime vows (*ʿuhūd*), and His magnificent oaths (*aqsām*). At its foundation, there are only two types of practice in this field of learning: that which is forbidden (*maḥẓūr*) and that which is permitted (*mubāḥ*). Al-Ṭabasī refers to the first as condemned and rejected sorcery (*siḥr*) based on

90. On Faqṭiṭiyūs, see al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fols. 70a-73a; B 74-76; P 76b-79.

91. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 5b; P fols. 3b-4a. For a similar story of Fuqṭus and Solomon, see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, 3:335.

92. Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, 6:232. Carl Ernst, «India as a Sacred Islamic Land», in *Religion of India in Practice*, ed. Donald Lopez (Princeton 1995), 556-63. For the ancient associations between India and Adam, see Elizabeth Price, *The Barāhima's Dilemma: Ibn al-Rāwandī's Kitāb al-Zumurrud and the Epistemological Turn in the Debate on Prophecy* (PhD diss., Yale University 2021), 77-82, 107-11.

infidelity and polytheism. As for the permitted, it is rooted in complete piety (*waraʿ kāmil*), total probity (*ʿafāf shāmil*), and it is undertaken through the purity of seclusion (*ṣafāʾ khalwa*), and by devoting oneself to God (*inqiṭāʿ ilā llāh*). Al-Ṭabasī's division between lawful enchantment and condemned sorcery and the Solomonic origins of the field find notable parallels in Ibn al-Nadīm's treatment of the topic[93]. These points of confluence likely reflect an early written discourse justifying in Islamic terms the discipline, which in al-Ṭabasī's hands contains spells to summon and subjugate the devil and his many progeny through the use of sacred incantations, bejeweled signet rings, written seals, and *mandal* diagrams.

Just as there were many among the past nations (*al-umam al-sābiqa*) who learned to subjugate jinn, al-Ṭabasī explains that the discipline then continued on "in our nation". The genealogy presented is designed not only to situate the field within the frameworks of prophetic history, but also to advance a particular set of Muslim authorities. This, in turn, reveals a good deal about al-Ṭabasī's own traditionalist and Sufi allegiances. Al-Ṭabasī's line of authorities begins with the son-in-law and nephew of the Prophet, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), who we are told was renowned in the field. ʿAlī is followed by his great-grandson Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (d. 95/713). At this stage Sufi mystics frequently turned to the sacred linage of ʿAlī as a basis for esoteric knowledge[94].

By al-Ṭabasī's day, Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) had become one of the primary frameworks for the development of Sunni piety. Notably, al-Ṭabasī follows this list of masters of incantations with the famed ascetic Abū Muḥammad Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), whom he identifies as one of the shaykhs of the Sufis. Al-Ṭabasī credits al-Tustarī with a powerful invocation (*daʿwa*) that was passed down from the Prophet Seth. In addition to his piety, al-Tustarī is remembered for his commentary of the Qurʾān, in which he discusses how, through seclusion (*khalwa*), one can befriend angels and jinn. Moreover, al-Tustarī also reports in a gloss on Sūrat al-Jinn, that during his own travels he came across a long-lived jinn who had met Jesus and was among the delegation of jinn who had converted upon hearing the Prophet recite the Qurʾān. Al-Tustarī then inquired whether jinn also enter

93. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fols. 3a–4a; P fols. 2a–3a; B 3–4; cf. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, 3:332–35.

94. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 6a; P fol. 4a; B 5.

paradise, to which his otherworldly interlocutor replied that he believed that indeed they did. Al-Ṭabasī reports that al-Tustarī called for forty days of spiritual discipline (*riyāḍa*) and acts of worship (*ʿibāda*) in preparation for procedures to summon forces from the unseen[95].

Next on al-Ṭabasī's list comes al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922). By this point, the image of al-Ḥallāj in Sufi circles was transforming from an impudent heretic and crass charlatan to a pious miracle worker. A key element in the earliest biographies of al-Ḥallāj are his extensive travels, not only in Khurasan and Central Asia, but also in India. The association of India with ancient sages and occult learning is old and reflects a storied discourse of traveling to India to master esoteric knowledge[96].

Al-Ṭabasī praises al-Ḥallāj for magnificent wonders (*al-ʿajā'ib al-ʿaẓīma*), which nonetheless led to his execution. Al-Ṭabasī's placement of al-Ḥallāj is an important, if overlooked, testament to the historical metamorphosis of al-Ḥallāj into a Sufi martyr and a master of jinn. A key figure in this process of rehabilitation among Sufis of Khurasan was Ibn Bākuwayh (d. 428/1036), whose treatise on al-Ḥallāj's life and death served to combat the image of al-Ḥallāj as an imposter. Ibn Bākuwayh reports that al-Ḥallāj's wonders originated not in deceptions (*ḥiyal*) or sleight-of-hand trickery (*shaʿūdha*); rather he was served (*makhdūm*) by jinn. While in Nishapur, Ibn Bākuwayh resided in the Sufi cloister (*duwayra*) of Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), one of the key figures in the development of Sufi piety in the East. Al-Sulamī included al-Ḥallāj in his collection on Sufi lives, though he stresses that there was still debate about him among leading authorities. For his part, al-Sulamī also knew of reports that al-Ḥallāj had mastery over jinn. Notably, al-Ṭabasī's own network of teachers included both Ibn Bākuwayh and al-Sulamī[97].

95. See al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr*, ed. Muḥammad Bāsil ʿUyūn al-Sūd (Beirut 2002), 114 (Q. 25:28), 179 (Q. 72:1); al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī*, trans. Annabel Keeler and Ali Keeler (Louisville, KY 2011), 139–40, 251; cf. al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, 10 vols. (Cairo 1932–8), 10:198–212, section 546.

96. Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallāj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, trans. Herbert Mason (Princeton 1982), 1:11, 18, 26, 170–73, 178–89. See broadly John Walbridge, *The Wisdom of the Mystic East: Suhrawardī and Platonic Orientalism* (Albany 2001), 5, 8, 13.

97. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 6b; B 5. Ibn Bākuwayh (d. 428/1036), *Bidāyat ḥāl al-Ḥallāj*, in *Quatre textes inédits relatifs à la biographie d'al Ḥosayn-Ibn Manṣoūr*

Al-Ṭabasī's lineage of masters of jinn points to ways in which al-Ḥallāj's miracles were rationalized and his authority was bolstered in Sufi circles, even while the martyr continued to be a polarizing figure[98]. Al-Ḥallāj's treatise *Ṭāwāsīn*, redacted after his death, highlights how the strange master (*al-ʿālim al-gharīb*) powerfully reimagined the purpose and piety of Iblīs with the use of circular diagrams and letter symbolism as the basis for obtaining higher levels of spiritual gnosis[99]. The point deserves noting, for it is with al-Ḥallāj that al-Ṭabasī ends his list of those who had attained the highest ranks in the art of controlling jinn.

From here the chain of authorities moves to those who did not reach the same degree as the sanctified masters (*al-sādāt al-mutaḥarramīn*), and were not among the abodes of the saints (*maḥāll al-awliyāʾ*), and thereby failed to obtain the same stations (*maqāmāt*), or produce the same saintly miracles (*karāmāt*). The vocaculary used here is drawn from normative Ashʿarī theology and Sufi cosmology. Al-Ṭabasī's spiritual genealogy from Adam through Solomon and from ʿAlī to al-Ḥallāj advances a very particular claim to the science. In addition to the precedent of the prophets, al-Ṭabasī roots the discipline in the authority and the miraculous power associated with the lineage of Muḥammad and with the *awliyāʾ*, the pious saints who followed.

al Ḥallāj, ed. Louis Massignon (Paris 1914), 38–39, 46, sections 11, 21; cited in Abū Bakr al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), *Tārīkh Baghdād*, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf, 17 vols. (Beirut 2001), 8:703–4; clarified as to pertaining specifically to the jinn by al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnāʾūṭ et al., 24 vols. (Beirut 1996), 14:322; cf. Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallāj*, 1:293–94, cf. 1:154. On Ibn Bākuwayh in Nishapur, see ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (d. 529/1134), *al-Muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, ed. Muḥammad Kāẓim al-Maḥmūdī (Qom 1983), 26–27, section 35. See also Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Tārīkh al-ṣūfiyya*, in *Quatre textes*, 18, sections 4–6; cf. al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn Shurayba (Cairo 1953), 307–11. For al-Ṭabasī with Ibn Bākuwayh and al-Sulamī, see ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Samʿānī (d. 562/1166), *al-Muntakhab min muʿjam shuyūkh al-Imām Abī Saʿd ʿAbd al-Karīm*, ed. Muwaffaq b. ʿAbdallāh, 4 vols. (Riyadh 1996), 1:554; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 18:558, no. 309.

98. By al-Ṭabasī's day, the restoration of al-Ḥallāj was by no means complete, even in the East; see the negative portrayal of al-Ḥallāj, with details of his writings in Sharaf al-Zamān Ṭāhir al-Marwazī (fl. 523/1128), *Ṭabāʾiʿ al-ḥayawān*, ed. Yūsuf al-Hādī, 2 vols. (Tehran 2020), 1:19–20.

99. See al-Ḥallāj, *Kitāb al-ṭawāsīn*, ed. Louis Massignon (Paris 1913), 25–28 (*Ṭāsīn al-dāʾira*), 41–55 (*Ṭāsīn al-azal wa-iltibās*).

After the saints, al-Ṭabasī turns to a lower, but still powerful tier. This includes Ṣāliḥ al-Mudaybirī, known to al-Jāḥiẓ, and counted by Ibn al-Nadīm as among the conjurers (*muʿazzimīn*) who followed the praiseworthy path (*al-ṭarīqa al-maḥmūda*) and who could produce lofty results and noble actions (*afʿāl jalīla wa-aʿmāl nabīla*). Then follows Maymūn, whose name means auspicious. Al-Ṭabasī notes that Maymūn had a signet ring activated through astral enchantment (*tanjīm*). He could draw a diagram on the ground with the aim of reaching a particular place. As soon as Maymūn set his feet inside the diagram he could project himself into that location and witness the events going on there. Maymūn is then followed by ʿAbdallāh b. al-Hilāl, the *ṣadīq iblīs* (companion of the devil), the famed Umayyad-era conjurer. He could travel in one night from Baghdad to Samarqand and back. Al-Ṭabasī notes that there were indeed multiple figures by the name Ibn al-Hilāl. The appellation may well have become a kind of guild name[100]. The use by Ibn Hilāl and Maymūn of diagrams to travel vast distances is a practice with clear analogues in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Judeo-Arabic[101]. The others listed as having obtained high stations are Ibn al-Faraj al-Anbārī, Khalaf b. Yūsuf, and Ibn Qanān, otherwise obscure names. This ends al-Ṭabasī's overview of early Muslim practitioners who had achieved a level lower than saints and prophets[102].

100. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fols. 6b-7a; P 5a; B 5. See the authority Awḥad al-Dīn Maḥmud b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad b. Ilyās al-Andalusī, who claimed descent from ʿAbdallāh b. Hilāl. Awḥad al-Dīn features as a primary authority of Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī, see Awḥad al-Dīn al-Andalusī, *Tarjuma-i Sirr al-asrār*, British Library, London, Or. 11041, fol. 86a-b; Bodleian Library, Oxford University, MS Walker 91, fol. 183a. This Persian miscellany also contains selections from al-Ṭabasī, al-Rāzī, al-Sakkākī, and al-Sakkākī's son and great-grandson. For two further copies held in the Reza Rampur Library, see Waqār al-Ḥasan Ṣiddiqī, *Fihrist nuskhahā-yi khaṭṭī-i Fārsī-i kitābkhāna-yi Riḍā-Rāmpūr*, 3 vols. (Rampur 1996-2000), 1:520, 522, sections 1714, 1715.

101. Compare Mark Verman and Adler Shulamit, «Path Jumping in the Jewish Magical Tradition», in *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 1.2 (1993/4), 131-48; Fodor, «An Arabic Version of the 'Sword of Moses'», 353; Gideon Bohak, «Specimens of Judaeo-Arabic and Arabic Magical Texts from the Cairo Genizah», in *Amulets and Talismans of the Middle East and North Africa in Context*, ed. Marcela Garcia Probert and Petra Sijpesteijn (Leiden 2022), 24-26. For further references to Maymūn, see Zsom, «A Judeo-Arabic Fragment», 98, 103.

102. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 7b; P fol. 5b; N fol. 2a; the spelling of Ibn Qabān's name is conjecture, cf. al-Jawbarī, *Kitāb al-mukhtār*, 8.

It is noteworthy that al-Ṭabasī explicitly identifies al-Mudaybirī, an authority know to al-Jāḥiẓ, as giving ritual instructions for the *mandal* ceremony. Al-Jāḥiẓ, followed by the Brethren and Ibn al-Nadīm, identified the *mandal* as a tool used by early conjurers in the course of communing with jinn and demons. It may well be the case that the *mandal* which the early conjurers were using was identical to the procedure spelled out by al-Ṭabasī as a magic encirclement, though we cannot know from the earliest literary references. But al-Ṭabasī's treatment would suggest that both the term and this particular form of the ceremony date to the late Umayyad period in Iraqi circles. This certainly risks a bit of circular reasoning, were it not for the other attestations by earlier literary authorities. Al-Ṭabasī's genealogy is meant to trace these practices through a continual, unbroken chain across Islamic history, all the way back to Adam – cast out of paradise only to land in India, known to al-Ṭabasī as the abode of the king of the jinn.

Finally, al-Ṭabasī turns to the recent authorities (*muta'akhkhirūn*). Here we move from the Hijaz and Iraq to eastern Iran. Al-Ṭabasī starts with his own teacher, Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī, who exhibited magnificent splendor in this matter; al-Anṣārī was honored as the great master (*al-ustādh al-akbar*). Al-Ṭabasī quotes him as teaching that "the path of conjuration" (*ṭarīq al-taʿzīm*) is the same as the path (*ṭarīq*) of the Sufis, and that the spiritual disciplines (*riyāḍāt*) of one are the same as the other, in an explicit bid to align the science of incantations with Sufi spiritual practice. Al-Anṣārī envisions one to two years of continual preparation to undertake the *mandal* ceremony, while other authorities reduce the preparation time down to a number of days[103].

Al-Ṭabasī does not give his teacher's name in full. However, one Arabic manuscript copy adds after al-Anṣārī's name the customary benediction, "may God sanctify his spirit" (*qaddasa llāhu rūḥahu*), indicating that the master was deceased[104]. If so, this would appear to rule out the Ashʿarī theologian, Shāfiʿī jurist, and leading Sufi ascetic of Nishapur, Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī (d. ca. 512/1118). Al-Anṣārī ran the library of the Niẓāmiyya *madrasa* in the city, was a stu-

103. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fols. 15b-16; P fol. 12b; B 11.

104. See al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, P fol. 5b; N fol. 6a, both have prayers that are missing from E fol. 7b; B 6.

dent of the famed Ashʿarī authority Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), and became a renowned authority in his own right. Al-Anṣārī the theologian was also known to have the power to speak with jinn, and his surviving theological critique of philosophers teaches that jinn, demons, and angels surround people at all times. Al-Anṣārī upholds the reality of demon possession and takes an interest in the unique properties of physical substances. He also encouraged the formal study of sorcery (*siḥr*) as a way of distinguishing it from prophetic miracles (*muʿjiza*)[105].

For al-Ṭabasī's teacher to be the same renowned Ashʿarī authority, though, the prayer indicating that al-Anṣārī was deceased would need to be a later addition by the compiler or copyist of al-Ṭabasī's handbook. It could also be that the date of 482/1089 for al-Ṭabasī's death in his hometown is wrong. Later biographers merely note that al-Ṭabasī was a contemporary of al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111); this is likely based on the famed story of their encounter referenced by al-Qazwīnī[106]. A later date for al-Ṭabasī would also make the dedication in the opening of his grimoire to Abū l-Barakāt ʿAbdallāh al-Furāwī (d. 549/1155), a powerful Nishapuri notable, all the more reasonable. Al-Furāwī was renowned for his knowledge of legal contracts (*shurūṭ*) and court records (*sijillāt*). But he would have been just eight years old when al-Ṭabasī died, an age that would appear discordant with the august description of al-Furāwī's assembly given in al-Ṭabasī's introduction[107]. Notably, in the biographical literature, al-Ṭabasī is referred to as a compiler who had produced many books (*muṣannafāt*). In the dedication to al-Furāwī, al-Ṭabasī stresses that the collection was made at the end of years of travel and consultation, drawn from previous notes (*taʿlīqāt*), recollections (*maḥfūẓāt*), and compositions (*muṣannafāt*). The introduction also notes that the compendium was based on an earlier work al-Ṭabasī had composed, entitled *Nuzhat al-āfāq* [The pleasure of the horizons], a title that al-Ṭabasī said was intended to obscure the nature of the work[108].

105. See the following passages in Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī, *al-Ghunya fī l-kalām*, ed. Muṣṭafā Ḥasanayn ʿAbd al-Hādī (Cairo 2010), 1:225, 1:236, 2:723, 2:941.

106. On this see, Zadeh, *Wonders and Rarities*, 27, 346 n. 1.

107. Al-Samʿānī, *al-Muntakhab*, 2:953–54, section 517.

108. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 2b; P fol. 1b; B 1; N 1b–2a. In the Persian translation the last name of the dedicatee, Abū l-Barakāt, has been smudged out and replaced with al-Sakkākī.

Shifting the date of composition forward would also better fit with al-Ṭabasī's two primary transmitters. The first is Abū l-Futūḥ al-Shādhyākhī (d. 535/1141), a Sufi from a prominent family in Nishapur[109]. The second is Abū l-Qāsim al-Qāyinī (d. 547/1153), known as the "tanner" (*dabbāgh*), who studied with al-Ṭabasī in the master's hometown of Ṭabas, an outpost in the southwest of Khurasan. A trained Shāfiʿī jurist and scholar of *ḥadīth*, for forty years al-Qāyinī headed a group of Sufis in a monastic lodge (*ribāṭ*) outside Herat[110]. Another possible indication for a later date is that al-Ṭabasī transmits material from the *ḥadīth* collection on charms and amulets, the *Kitāb al-ruqā wa-l-tamā'im* by Abū ʿAbdallāh Ibn Fanjawayh (d. 414/1023), a religious authority who resided in Nishapur[111]. Al-Ṭabasī heard the collection from the muezzin Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ṣandalī (d. 494/1100), a Shāfiʿī jurist and ascetic from Nishapur who transmitted the work directly from Ibn Fanjawayh[112].

A final redaction of al-Ṭabasī's compilation toward the end of the fifth/eleventh or beginning of the sixth/twelfth century also makes al-Anṣārī the theologian a more likely candidate. Whether Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī the conjurer, who features throughout al-Ṭabasī's handbook as an authoritative teacher in the *mandal* ceremony, was the same as Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī, the Ashʿarī theologian of Nishapur, remains uncertain. What is clear is that al-Anṣārī the theologian was also a contemporary of al-Ṭabasī and a leading Sufi, who was also known to command jinn. Moreover, he had a deep distrust of natural philosophers. This may help explain the entire absence of Hermetic and more studied astrological discourses for summoning spirits from al-Ṭabasī's collection. Al-Ṭabasī makes no reference to Hermes, Aristotle, Apollonius, Ṭumṭum al-Hindī, or Teukros (Tankālūshā) the Babylonian, all standard authorities in the repertoire of natural philosophers; he also neglects such authorities as Ibn Waḥshiyya (fl. 318/930), the famed Iraqi esotericist frequently identified as a Sufi[113].

109. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Yaḥyā l-Muʿallimī, 12 vols. (Hyderabad 1962-82), 7:241.

110. The list of works Dabbāgh transmitted from al-Ṭabasī does not include the *Shāmil*, see al-Samʿānī, *al-Muntakhab*, 1:551-60, section 218; 3:1144, 1488, 1828-29, 1893. On Dabbāgh, see al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 20:272-73, section 171.

111. Al-Fārisī, *al-Muntakhab*, 291-92, section 556.

112. Al-Fārisī, *al-Muntakhab*, 586, section 1037; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 19:157-59, section 84.

113. See Liana Saif, «A Preliminary Study of the Pseudo-Aristotelian Her-

Many of these authorities were well known to Ibn al-Nadīm and the markets of Baghdad; they would come to find a welcome home in the succeeding generation of handbooks by the likes of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī, who in addition to the jinn magic of al-Ṭabasī, showcase an array of ancient writings associated with pagan philosophers and scholars of the stars. The distance between al-Ṭabasī and this succeeding generation is also marked by differing sensibilities and theological dispositions. It is a period that witnessed the absorption of Ibn Sīnā's metaphysics of the soul into the frameworks of Ashʿarī theology. Al-Rāzī, among others, played a pivotal role in this process.

Where the *mandal* fits into this journey is not entirely evident as it moves across the east and west. However, the following formations stand out. Al-Ṭabasī foregrounds the *mandal* as a chief means for mastering jinn and demons in a cosmology that highlights the high mountains of India as an abode of jinn. As a term, the *mandal* was known to al-Jāḥiẓ, who knew of enchanters from India. Further, the *mandal* has parallels in Sogdian and Khotanese (Iranian languages) before it made its way into early New Persian documented already in the third/ninth century, as seen in the poetry of al-Rūdakī. Moreover, Muslims had sustained significant contacts in Central and South Asia starting in the early Umayyad period. These details underscore the multiple routes the *mandal* could travel from the East to Iraq and then back again. It may well be that the *mandal* as al-Ṭabasī knew it represented only one particular form of ritual practice. Yet it is also clear that al-Ṭabasī cites a variety of authorities in the construction of the *mandal*. All this suggests a broader set of practices stretching back generations.

Toward Multiple Ends

Al-Ṭabasī frequently discusses divergences of practice in a discursive style that is at times shaped by a spirit of juridical inquiry. His

metica: Texts, Context, and Doctrines», in *ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā: Journal of Middle East Medievalists* 29 (2021), 20-80; Manfred Ullmann, *Die Natur-und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam* (Leiden 1972), 278-79, 298-300, 368, 374-75, 379-81. See also Jaakko Hameen-Anttila, «Ibn Waḥshiyya and Magic», in *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes* 10 (1999), 39-48.

emphasis on the correct construction of the *mandal* and proper pronunciation of the incantations finds parallels with debates over normative forms of Islamic ritual activity. Particularly prominent here in this wider context are discussions on the proper recitation of the Qur'ān. These fit into larger discourses of sacred speech as *sui genius* and efficacious in its correct form[114]. Indeed, much anxiety on the topic of incantations, expressed by such traditionists as the Ḥanbalī Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), focused on Muslims reciting material that they did not understand. Underlying such critiques was the concern that unintelligible spells could very well contain illicit statements steeped in idolatry and disbelief[115].

In contrast, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī had a vision of language in which the unintelligibility of incantations and the use of unknown symbols served a psychic purpose of quieting the mind and stilling the soul, so as not to be distracted by the external meanings of the expressions. Al-Rāzī also notes that there were those who venerate these unknown words in a strange foreign language (*bi-lugha gharība ajnabiyya*). This group holds that incantations and spells (*al-ʿazā'im wa-l-ruqā*) were revealed by pure and powerful souls (*arwāḥ*) to the ancients who had perfected spiritual discipline and exercises of purification (*riyāḍāt*) in order to gain knowledge of spells and incantations[116].

Al-Ṭabasī and his teachers clearly followed this mold, viewing the correct pronunciation of the incantations as vital to the performance of the ritual. Yet al-Ṭabasī also documented divergences of pronunciation among those in Marw and Ghazna and others in Transoxiana, Nishapur, and Iraq. The diligent practitioner, he explains, must be able to distinguish the correct form of these expressions from mistaken ones, and be able to discern truth from falsehood. One

114. See Travis Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qur'an: Translation and the Rise of Persian Exegesis* (Oxford 2012), 97–99, 102–5, 107, 148, 164, 289–90; Shady Nasser, «(Q. 12:2) We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'ān: Praying behind the Lisper», in *Islamic Law and Society* 23 (2016), 23–51.

115. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ al-fatāwā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad and Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, 37 vols. (Riyadh 2004), 19:45–46, 61; al-Shiblī, *Ākām*, 248. For more on Ibn Taymiyya as an exorcist and master of jinn, see Zadeh, «Magic, Marvel, and Miracle», 256–61.

116. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 32 vols. (Beirut 1981), 1:161; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya min al-ʿilm al-ilāhī*, ed. Aḥmād Ḥijāzī l-Saqqā, 9 vols. (Beirut 1987), 8:183–84.

point of contention involved the correct pronunciation of *yashmakh* (?) versus *bashmakh*, evidently drawn from an Aramaic form of "in your name". The disputes also included allegations of substituting words, accusations of distorted interpretation (*tafsīr*) of the incantations, and claims that some forms were not truly Hebrew. Al-Ṭabasī does not elaborate on why Hebrew should feature, nor does he comment on its significance, though its association with incantations was already well established. Notably Ibn al-Nadīm observed that the demons of Solomon wrote incantations in both Hebrew (*ʿibrānī*) and Persian (*fārsī*), highlighting what was already, by his day, a multilingual field of writing[117].

In terms of the networks of practitioners, the biographical dictionaries note that though al-Ṭabasī taught in his hometown, he also traveled to Nishapur and to Marw. In Marw, he studied with Abū Ghānim al-Kurrāʿī (d. 444/1052), a renowned transmitter of the city who died at over a hundred years old. In the introduction to his handbook, al-Ṭabasī also notes that he had gathered these materials together during his various journeys, and thus it is likely that the disputes he recorded reflect actual regional divergences. Such comments suggest that practitioners exchanged materials and compared notes, and that different chains of authority, from master to disciple, also shaped the course of the field[118].

Al-Ṭabasī's teachers, ʿAbdallāh of Ṭabas and Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī, are also evoked in these disputes. The discussion of correct pronunciation raises the problem of distortions in oral recitation and through textual corruption, with the explicit accusation of *taṣḥīf* (misspelling) in the course of written transmission[119]. Notably, the surviving manuscripts of al-Ṭabasī's collection frequently utilize diacritical marks to transcribe incantations, evidently so that readers could intone them correctly. In this way, his work is similar to many other Arabic and Persian collections of incantations. And there is reason to believe from his treatment of the material that al-Ṭabasī himself did not have a mastery of Hebrew or Aramaic, but knew key phrases and terms, at least in a general form. Moreover, al-Ṭabasī

117. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, 3:335.

118. Al-Samʿānī, *Ansāb*, 10:374, al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 17:607, section 406; al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 3b; P fol. 1a; B 1.

119. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 9b; P fol. 7a; N fol. 7b.

clearly had a command of Persian, which he used in incantations with some frequency.

The surviving manuscripts exhibit what are at times obvious parallels with Jewish theophoric vocabulary; yet they are also clearly riddled with various distortions, and they speak to the inherent problem of textual transmission. The vocabulary of the spells shows that engagements with Jewish magical literature and Jewish authorities or recent converts were crucial in the formative transmission of incantations. Even before reaching al-Ṭabasī's hands, these discourses likely had already been fully Islamicized. Al-Ṭabasī's handbook is polyphonic and multilingual. But other than a passing reference to Hebrew, he does not identify the many elements of incantations with Hebrew or Aramaic parallels. Rather he seamlessly envelops Arabic prayers and Qur'ānic verses with mysterious and foreign words and phrases. No doubt there were significant, if largely obscure, contacts, exchanges, and forms of intelligibility that made such a collection possible.

One spell calls for summoning not only the jinn who live among the Muslims, but the jinn among the Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians, whom al-Ṭabasī refers to as *ahl al-dhimma*, tolerated religious minorities[120]. The identification suggests a certain mutual intelligibility, as do the prayers taken from Christians. The same is true of the invocations that al-Ṭabasī explicitly identifies with Persian, such as *bi-nām-i mihtrān* (in the name of lords), or *bi-nāma-i īzad khudāyā pādhshāh* (in the name of God the lord, emperor). These spells evoke the names of the *mihtrān*, the great ones, the lords of powerful *dīvān* and *parīyān* (demons and jinn), as rendered in a distinctly Persian cosmology. So too does the name Jamshādh appear – the ancient Iranian king of mythical lore, famed for his command of demons and angels and his foundational inventions for the development of civilization[121].

It is also true that the graveyards of Jews and the ossuaries (*nāwūs*) of the Magi feature as regular locations for the performance of incantations, but the cemeteries of Muslims also make an appear-

120. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 74b, 104a, 131a; P fol. 81a, B 77.

121. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 70b; P fol. 77a; B 75. See Prods Oktor Skjærvø, «The Myth of Jamshīd», in *EIr*; Sarah Savant, *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran* (Cambridge 2013), 149.

ance. Indeed, cemeteries were, like toilets and baths, long associated with transgressive spirits. Much of this reflects a broad idiom shared across sectarian divisions[122]. Yet, despite the clear points of intersection with the religious vocabulary of spirits and angels deployed by Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians, there is clearly a good deal of boundary work that takes place in the collection, separating Muslim behavior, belief, and soteriological status from the practices and beliefs of non-Muslims. Notably, the only figure actually signaled as a Jew in the text is Labīd b. al-Aʿṣam, the magician who tried to cast a spell on the Prophet Muḥammad. This appears in a *historiola* for a therapeutic incantation. Throughout antiquity various groups identified Jews as magicians and religious outsiders, often thought to possess access to ancient secrets[123].

For all its universal ambitions, al-Ṭabasī's cosmic system, with *mandal*s, enchanted rings, seals, and talismans, expresses a distinctly Islamic vision of existence. In addition to the Qur'ānic phrases, prophetic *ḥadīth*, and pious Arabic prayers, al-Ṭabasī makes ample use of *historiolae* drawn from a formative Islamic repertoire, such as Ibn Masʿūd's night of the jinn (*laylat al-jinn*), when the Prophet guarded the boy through the use a circle on the ground. These moves of absorption point to a broader historical process of crafting an Islamic vocabulary for communing with intermediary beings[124].

Al-Ṭabasī's handbook marks a key stage in the development of Islamic ritual magic, through the preservation and absorption of earlier, otherwise lost materials in Arabic, which focused on specific names and formulae for commanding demons and jinn. This collection represents, as it were, a continuation of the writings of conjurers identified by Ibn al-Nadīm as following the praiseworthy path. But in addition to the divide that Ibn al-Nadīm makes between conjurers and sorcerers – the praiseworthy and the condemned –

122. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 13a, 54b-55a; P fol. 10a, 60b. Cf. Raʿanan Boustan and Joseph E. Sanzo, «Christian Magicians, Jewish Magical Idioms, and the Shared Magical Culture of Late Antiquity», in *Harvard Theological Review* 110.2 (2017), 217-40; Bohak, «Specimens», 40.

123. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 75b; P fol. 82a; B 78. See Ibn Hishām (d. ca. 218/833), *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām al-Tadmurī, 4 vols. (Beirut 1987), 2:157; Ibn Saʿd (d. 230/845), *Kitāb al-ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿUmar, 11 vols. (Cairo 2001), 2:175-78. See Naomi Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World* (London 2001), 1, 12, 18, 25-26.

124. Al-Ṭabasī, *Shāmil*, E fol. 75b; P fol. 82a; B 78.

there is a third category in Ibn al-Nadīm's typology, the philosophers (*falāsifa*) and worshipers of the stars. They construct talismans by observing the movement of the stars and are capable of producing amazing results with powerful rings and the like. If we were to follow Ibn al-Nadīm's scheme forward in time, then al-Ṭabasī's handbook represents the absorption and further elaboration in the East of earlier jinn magic by subsequent generations of Sufis. A key element to this field of learning was the use of *mandal* diagrams. In contrast, al-Rāzī and al-Sakkākī drew these streams altogether, leaning heavily on al-Ṭabasī's jinn magic, but also turning to Ṣābian star devotion and other forms of Hermetica, which Ibn al-Nadīm associated with philosophers[125]. Here too the use of the *mandal* features as a technique for harnessing spirits (*rūḥāniyyāt*) long identified with astral forces.

As for the social status of those who commanded and summoned intermediary beings through *mandal* diagrams, context is key. From al-Jawbarī's uncovering of the tricks of various charlatans, we get a sense of an underworld of rogues. This provides one take on the various craft or guild names of those who entered into al-Ṭabasī's orbit – the seller of sheep trotters (*kurrāʿ*), the farmer (*fallāḥ*), the tanner (*dabbāgh*), and the like. But such figures, despite various professional appellations, could also represent notables who had gained mastery, through Arabic, of scripture and law. Very few appear with the name conjurer (*muʿazzim*) in the literature dedicated to memorializing the religious elite[126]. But nor were al-Ṭabasī, al-Rāzī, or al-Sakkākī identified in these terms. In this sense, for many, knowledge of how to engage with intermediary beings reflects part of what it meant to be an *ʿālim* (sage), or a *pīr* (master). It is true that there were those who eschewed incantations with foreign words, phrases of questionable origin, and ritual ceremonies of dubious pedigree, but who were nonetheless skilled at commanding jinn. Yet many adepts encountered so much divine power in these ancient practices, prayers, and intricate diagrams that they sought to make them their own.

125. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. Sayyid, 3:334. See Michael-Sebastian Noble, *Philosophising the Occult Avicennan Psychology and 'The Hidden Secret' of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Berlin 2021), 8–25.

126. See, for instance, Ibn Fuwaṭī, *Majmaʿ al-ādāb fī muʿjam al-alqāb*, ed. Muḥammad Kāẓim, 6 vols. (Tehran 1995), 2:93, 4:500, 5:128.

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ABSTRACT

Travis Zadeh, *Tracing the Sorcerer's Circle: Demons, Polysemy, and the Boundaries of Islamic Normativity*

In the development of Islamic practices of summoning and controlling intermediary beings, the *mandal* features as part of a broader repertoire of rituals and diagrams designed to control unseen forces. As a term of art, this multivalent category is connected etymologically to the Sanskrit *maṇḍala*, for a circle or catchment, itself often used in Tantric esoteric rituals. This article traces the history of the *mandal* as it first emerged in the science of incantations (*ʿilm al-ʿazāʾim*), by drawing parallels with earlier practices of encirclement, as well as by following later developments and adaptations. In doing so, it also addresses the various manners in which incantations and the rituals surrounding them came to be understood in distinctly Islamic terms, rooted in ancient prophetic techniques for communing with otherworldly powers.

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