

“Science and Craft: the relations between the theoretical and practical sides of the occult and esoteric sciences in the Islamic World”

Abstracts

A Conference convened by Godefroid de Callatay and Liana Saif as part of the Advanced ERC project

The origin and early development of philosophy in tenth-century al-Andalus: the impact of ill-defined materials and channels of transmission

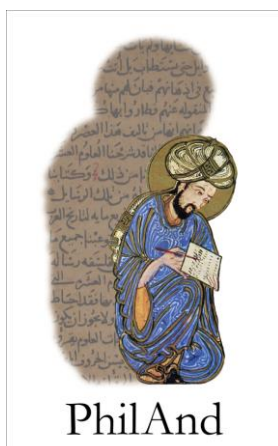
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Crafting Knowledge through Wonder

This paper explores the interdependent relationship between knowledge and craft in Persianate material culture through Qazwini's lens of wonder in his 13th-century cosmology, *Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa gharāyib al-mawjūdāt*. Through an object such as a jade cup, a metal astrolabe, a lustre-painted ceramic dish, or a fragment of *nasij* cloth — selected for its materiality, properties, and/or transformative nature through craftsmanship (the latter mainly alluded to in the scholar's Persian version of this text) — the paper will investigate how each of these characteristics exhibits “wonder” as described by Qazwini. [Will resend after polishing this part to clarify that I am basically thinking about works that exhibit materials described by Qazwini as having certain properties, i.e., jade, and then establishing that it is not just the jade itself that carries meaning, or this power to transform (think of detecting poison, for example), but the way it is carved and crafted, the way it can also be imbued with the power or essence of a previous owner, which also gives it meaning and renders it "transformative" in nature... considered within a larger context of how knowledge/science as theory is also reflected in craft/practice. Or through an astrolabe -- which holds meaning both as a scientific instrument *and* as an object that would evoke wonder in its craftsmanship, which — as has also been noted in the *Ikhwan al-safa* as discussed by Margaret Graves — takes value from the craftsmanship itself over the metal from which it is crafted.] How does wonder, as a vehicle to discovery, knowledge, or the making of meaning, determine craft? How does craft, in turn, determine or create wonder? And how does craft-making reflect knowledge in practice? These explorations will ultimately consider how wonder and human engagement with the natural world (i.e. through elements or minerals such as jade, silver, gold) propelled artistic production and innovation and inspired the proliferation of material culture in premodern Iran and Central Asia.

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How to Be Things with Words: Ibn ‘Arabī’s Theory and Practice of Language.

What is language? Is it merely a tool for communicating ideas and things, or can we understand it as something more – as a medium that structures our engagement with the universe? These are some of the questions that underpin Ibn Arabī’s magnum opus *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, ‘The Meccan Openings’. Ibn ‘Arabī (1165-1240 AD) was a prolific thinker and poet. His work not only integrates ‘mystical’ and ‘philosophical’ currents, in addition to approaches from the Islamic East and West, but also covers a wide range of subjects – from the everyday rituals of cleansing to the structure of the created world. In *The Meccan Openings*, in addition to a number of his shorter treatises, Ibn ‘Arabī constructs a linguistic cosmology that draws a network of correspondences between Arabic letters, numbers, celestial spheres, elements, natures, and beings.

Studies of theories of language in the Islamic tradition have tended to focus on its relevance to logic and grammar. However, recent work by scholars has prompted a much-needed reconsideration of cosmological approaches to language and their vital significance not only in the development of premodern and early modern Islamic thought, but also in the social and political realms. This paper discusses how Ibn ‘Arabī attributes different levels of signification, from the elemental to celestial, to the written word, thus building a schema of correspondence and combination that allows letters to act in, and upon, the material world with diverse effects. *The Meccan Openings* would later provide the metaphysical framework for practical techniques developed by key intellectual figures working within the political elites of the early modern Ottoman, Timurid, and Mughal empires.

By drawing on the autograph manuscript of *The Meccan Openings*, in addition to manuscripts and editions of shorter treatises by Ibn ‘Arabī and other authors, this paper examines Ibn ‘Arabī’s cosmological approach to language and its reception in later practical techniques. In this way, this paper offers a site for reflection on the relationship between the theoretical and practical aspects of esoteric sciences in the Islamic world.

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“Practical magic: *nayranjāt* and magical recipes?”

‘Nairanjāt’ (a Persian word taken over into Arabic) describe the actions involved in doing magic. They consist of recipes with a large range of ingredients, which are burnt, while the practitioner adds prayers and incense and other elements to the ceremony. This talk examines the contexts in which they are mentioned and, in particular, their connection with the magical practice associated with the teaching of Hermes and the use of talismans.

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‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī’s *Waṣf al-dawā’ fī kaṣf āfāt al-wabā’* and its sources

The Ottoman occultist ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 1454) wrote a concise treatise entitled *Waṣf al-dawā’ fī kaṣf āfāt al-wabā’* about epidemics, compiling stories, anecdotes, invocations and remedies. As the Arabic words for plague *ṭā’ūn* and *wabā’* can be applied to any epidemic and not only the plague, strictly speaking, these anecdotes from other historical contexts seem to be applied here to the Black Death. This talk aims at exploring the various sources used or mentioned by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī. Although it was a minor work in ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī’s production, it had an important influence in later treatises on the subject.

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“Qiyāsan li-ṣan’ati-nā”: Craft Techniques and Sciences in the Arabic Alchemical Dialogues

Arabic alchemical literature includes a series of didactic dialogues, which present a wise master answering questions from a disciple, usually of royal lineage. The characters systematically bear foreign names – notably Greek, Persian and Indian – and constantly rely on the authority of Greek alchemists. Some of these dialogues are presented as translations from Greek.

This literary form seems to be by nature a privileged form for studying the transmission of the occult sciences in the Arab-Muslim world. However, even if it is a priori an open and explicit teaching, the occult character of the art is not different from that of other forms of alchemical treatises.

Nevertheless, when faced the disciple’s perplexity, the master may have recourse to comparisons (*qiyās*) with other craft techniques or sciences, whose concreteness contrasts with the authoritative argument of the Ancients. On the technical side, textile dyeing is the most frequently mentioned, but comparisons are also made with bread making, glass making, cooking, pharmacology, agriculture or even carpentry. As far as the sciences are concerned, most of the comparisons relate to the natural sciences: human generation and nature, medicine and botany. Alongside this, there are also some references to astronomy and arithmetic.

In this paper, I will present some rich examples of these comparisons, taken from different alchemical dialogues. I will then try to show in which contexts and with which objectives these comparisons are used by the authors of these texts. Finally, I will study what status the master gives to these sciences and craft techniques in relation to alchemy.

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‘Kitāb al-Uṣūl fī-l-Nujūm’ in Cairo – A 15th century appropriation of ‘Umar ibn al-Farrukhān al-Ṭabarī’s astrological treatise

In this paper I will present a 15th century text written by the Syro-Egyptian astrology/astronomy scholar Aḥmad ibn Aḥmad Timurbāy (fl. late 15th C.). At first sight, this text is a fragmentary copy of the Persian scholar ‘Umar ibn al-Farrukhān al-Ṭabarī’s (d. 813) ‘*Kitāb al-uṣūl fī-l-nujūm*’ (Derenbourg 1884, Vol. II, p. 29). I will discuss the fragmentary copy itself, with regard to the topics discussed and the choices made by the copyist. On a second level, I will draw attention to Ibn Timurbāy’s own additions to the text. These include marginal notes as well as a horoscope for a contemporary event. Furthermore, I will contextualise the function of this text within the multiple text manuscript of which it is a part (i.e. Ms. San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Real Bibliotheca del Monasterio, Árabe 922). Treating the multiple text manuscript as a small library in itself (following the approach discussed in Friedrich & Schwarke 2016, p.16, as well as Hirschler 2019, p. 119-120), I will develop a hypothesis regarding the copyist’s scholarly interests. The marginal notes will provide further traces related to the intellectual network in which these interests can be situated. As such, I will show how this text was not merely a copy made from a theoretical point of view, but an astrological instrument that was actively used in the fifteenth century Sultanate of Cairo.

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From Theory to Practice: The Alchemical Curriculum of the *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*

In the first *maqāla* of the *Rutbat al-ḥakīm*, an alchemical text written in all likelihood by Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī in 339-342/950-953, we find a curriculum of the sciences to become a sage (*ḥakīm*), together with a list of books and authors to be read for each science (ed. Madelung 2017, pp. 25-27). Being a sage implies, in the author's view, to manage the two "conclusions" (*natījatān*), namely alchemy (*kīmiyā*) and astral magic (*sīmiyā*). Knowing only one of them makes you only half a sage (*niṣf ḥakīm*). Although the progression towards these two conclusions is presented from a theoretical perspective in the first place, it then turns to become a more practical issue. Alchemy and astral magic are considered by the author as arts and sciences. In fact, it appears that while describing this curriculum, the author seeks to explain the link between theory and practice (*al-'amal*), and the way the apprentice should train both his mind (*dhihn*, representing theory) and his hand and eyes (*yad, naẓar*, representing practice) to understand the knowledge that the Ancients hid behind codenames (*al-rumūz al-latī li-al-awā'il*). In this presentation, we will explain how the author of the *Rutbat al-ḥakīm* considers the path to wisdom, and how he accordingly articulates theory and practice in this journey to knowledge.

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“Do everything that I taught you and do not transgress my prescriptions”: the alchemical programme of the *On Alums and Salts* and its later readers.

The *Book on Alums and Salts* is undoubtedly one of the most successful alchemical treatises of the Middle Ages. Composed in Arabic probably in 12th-century Al-Andalus, and almost immediately translated into Latin, the *On Alums and Salts* became “a classic of chemistry” (R. Steele 1929) and an important source of chemical information for medieval Latin encyclopaedists. The treatise circulated under the name of Al-Rāzī, and the medical fame of the Persian physician was undoubtedly one of the reasons for its wide circulation, but—as I will argue in my paper—not the only one, and possibly not even the most crucial. At least three features make the *On Alums and Salts* stand out among medieval Arabic and Latin alchemical text: the presence of a strong overarching structure that provides organization and authority to the text; the accomplished harmonisation of theory and practice in its pages; the substantial plainness of its language and exposition, a particularly relevant and rather rare feature in the treatment of alchemical operations. What may appear at first sight as a simple collection of recipes organised by main ingredient and interspersed with theoretical explanations reveals itself to be the written record of a well-defined practical alchemical programme, where recipes describe consequentially interconnected operations that together contribute to the plan laid out in the theoretical sections. I will argue that these features of the *On Alums and Salts* were crucial for its successful transmission. That the *On Alums and Salts* was received and read as an effective (and yet improvable) handbook becomes clear when we consider the only extant Hebrew translation of the work produced in early modern Northern Italy. The margins of the Hebrew manuscript talk about an active involvement with the alchemical materials of the work, offer a glimpse into the reading practices and practical engagement of an early modern alchemist, and may help us understand the reasons of the fame of the *On Alums and Salts*.

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Strange Crafts in Qazvīnī's Persian '*Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*

Among the most widely produced books from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries across the Islamic world, Zakariyya b. Muhammad al-Qazvīnī's (d.1283) cosmography, '*Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt*', was an essential component of a cosmopolitan education. Unlike the Arabic '*Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*' which is primarily dedicated to descriptions of the natural world, the scantily studied corpus of illustrated Persian '*Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*' manuscripts dating from 1300 onwards, contain lengthy additional chapters on human customs and craft practices. Amongst the 37 sections unique to the Persian cosmography, the chapter on crafts (*ṣinā'at*) include scribal skills of poetic meter, writing and arithmetic, esoteric skills of practical astrology, magic squares, and talismanic formulas, everyday skills such as medicine, agriculture, and artisanal trades, and finally the wiles of women and thieves. The inclusion of crafts within Qazvīnī's cosmography sanctified and systematized human innovation into an emanationist framework, leading to a variety of ethical implications. Its sections on magic squares (*awfāq*), talismans (*tilismāt*), and incantations (*nīranjāt*) in particular, offered elites, intellectuals, and bureaucrats an opportunity to alter or control their circumstances by cultivating skills which harnessed earthly, celestial, and spiritual powers. As was the case globally in the early modern period, occult currents moved across all levels of Safavid life, from the precise tracking of cosmological phenomena by court scholars to peddlers and sorcerers selling talismans in bazaars and city squares. Within his cosmography, Qazvīnī situates the pursuit of the unknown as part of the human soul's progression towards deeper understanding, which after studying morality and gaining expert knowledge in the sciences, one can only then attempt to approach divine wonders ('*ajā'ib*) and engage with powers or properties (*khawāṣṣ*) of the strange (*gharīb*). Therefore, illustrations of talismans and incantations within the Persian cosmography were not only used as tools for praxis but also for the cultivation of ethical behavior. This talk will explore how illustrated manuscripts of Qazvīnī's Persian '*Ajā'ib*' informed popular knowledge and moral pedagogy of occult practices in Safavid Iran.

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The Science of Supplication in the Eighteenth Century Sahara

In the mid-eighteenth century, a Saharan Sufi named Sīdī al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī consolidated the diverse branches of his family, established control over Saharan trade routes, and developed a far-flung network of students across the desert and the West African savana. Regionally, Sīdī al-Mukhtār became known as a Sufi friend of God (*walī*), and his teachings and writings shaped the development of Sufism in West Africa. Moreover, both he and his son, Sīdī Muḥammad al-Kuntī were at the heart of a debate among eighteenth-century Saharan scholars about the role of the friends of God and the acceptability of the sciences of the unseen (*‘ulūm al-ghayb*) or the sciences of the secrets (*‘ulūm al-asrār*). In contrast to Saharan scholars who rejected the *charismata* and intercessory role of the friends of God, or who denounced the sciences of the secrets as “the sciences of evil,” Sīdī al-Mukhtār and Sīdī Muḥammad placed the invisible realm (*‘ālam al-ghayb*) and the sciences connected to it at the center of their teachings. Sīdī Muḥammad promoted the sciences of the unseen as permitted and efficacious Muslim practices. As one method of defending these sciences against the charges of sorcery, Sīdī Muḥammad places them within the greater category of supplicatory prayer (*dū‘a*). This paper takes this categorization seriously by examining various categories of supplicatory prayers attributed to Sīdī al-Mukhtār al-Kuntī. I argue that the manuscript versions of these short, devotional aids were simultaneously oral and written, which allowed for a pedagogical encoding and facilitated their diffusion throughout Saharan society. By attending to the materiality, genre, and inter-textual context of these devotional aids we can excavate both the theoretical underpinnings that supported the Kunta scholars sciences of the unseen and the practical pedagogical techniques they used to transmit their teachings to their students.

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Art and Artifice in the Jabirian Corpus

This paper thematizes and theorizes artifice and artificiality within the Jābirian corpus (the 8th -10th century alchemical, magical, pharmacological, and philosophical texts attributed to Jābir ibn Ḥayyān) according to a model structured around meanings, uses, and resonances of the term *ṣanʿa*. The root ṣ-n-ʿ refers to handiwork, craft, manufacture, creation, and art; the specific term *ṣanʿa* is used by alchemists to denote the entire alchemical enterprise. It also has a rich usage beyond alchemy, appearing in a variety of religious and theological texts, in philosophical discourse, in literary criticism, in treatises on crafts and trades, and in encyclopedias of sciences. Major works of scholarship have considered the Jābirian corpus in relation to natural philosophy, the organization of knowledge, and theology. However, despite the presence and importance of *ṣanʿa* to Islamic alchemical works, material-cultural/craft discourse, and *adab*/literature and its associated critical theory, these discourses are not routinely placed together in conversation. “Alchemy as material culture” and “alchemy as literature” –both tropes in studies of medieval and early-modern European alchemical texts and traditions– are thematizations only beginning to be explored in the study of Islamic alchemy. Therefore, I explore the insights generated by placing Jābirian discussions of *ṣanʿa* into conversation with contemporaneous craft, material culture, literary, and literary-critical discourses that themselves center around *ṣanʿa*. In these readings, I synthesize how artifice and artificiality were modeled and consider how alchemy might have been incorporated into contemporaneous discourses around aesthetics (material-cultural and literary). I argue that the invocation of *ṣanʿa* in craft and literary genres presents artifice as cosmologically-scalable, planned, fine making or crafting which perpetually makes reference to an aesthetic of wonder (*ʿajab*). Within this aesthetic, artifice is modeled as a devotional imitative process that harkens back to the wonders of divine creation. Subsequently, I consider if and how Jābirian alchemy partakes in this aesthetics of *ʿajab* that we find in literary and material-cultural discourse through its invocation of *ṣanʿa*. Finally, I argue that while artifice is a theorized, recognized aspect of creation, “artificiality” does not exist conceptually in these texts in the same way it does in our contemporary thought-worlds.

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Theory and Practice in John of Rupescissa's Alchemy

The fourteenth-century Franciscan friar and prophet John of Rupescissa is best known to historians of science and medicine for his two chymical treatises--both of them practical and preparative: the *Liber lucis magni magisterii* (1354) which deals with chrysopoeia and the *De famulatu philosophie* (1350/51) which treats chymical medicine. Contrary to some previous claims in the literature (and thanks to new critical editions produced by the present author) these works clearly witness John's extensive and first-hand practical laboratory experience, possibly carried out while he was in confinement at Avignon. John is unusually interested in linking the specifics of his alchemical practices with theory and especially in demonstrating practically (*ad sensum*) the validity of his theoretical claims and methods. His practices and methodologies may derive in part from his apparent experience as an assayer or goldsmith and in part from his remarkable conceptions of material composition which stand in stark contrast with the contemporaneous Scholastic Aristotelianism he would have learned at Toulouse. John even designs a specialized furnace for his operations, and casts it in the context of a "technological progress" guided by divine providence. This talk will survey the interplay between the theoretical and practical dimensions of John's work, and link (in part) his laboratory methodology to his exegetical and prophetic work.

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There is Something about Stones... Occult Properties and Wondrous Usages of Stones and Minerals

The Mediaeval Arabic world of minerals and stones –as depicted by a large and varied number of sources that span kingdoms are fluid and permeable, minerals and animals, in particular, produce remarkable encounters over many centuries– is a privileged field to observe the conceptualization and exploitation of occult properties. Magnets, for instance, became a standard example in the debate concerning the status of properties. The boundaries of the natural such as animal stones and bezoars. The properties of stones and minerals lived between literary wonder, scientific erudition, and commercial applications. Either in their natural state, crafted in various objects and tools or turned into talismans and amulets, stones and minerals were a wondrous presence in everyday life.

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The Professionalisation of Talismanry in the Jābirian *K. al-Nukhab* ('The Compendium')

This paper seeks to look at the relationship between occult practices and *bāṭiniyya* (Islamic esotericism) by looking at one of the most understudied texts attributed to the scientist-occultist Jābir ibn Ḥayyān (d. c. 815) is *Kitāb a-Nukhab*. It is one of the sources of *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* ('The Goal of the Sage'), attributed to the Andalusian occultist and esotericist Maslama al-Qurṭubī (d. 353/964). Whereas Maslama expends considerable effort to provide esoteric foundations to talismanry (soul-sublimation, occult Qur'anic exegesis, controlled disclosure and coding), the Jābirian text is concerned with its de-esotericisation. The author writes: "as for the objective of this science, it is evident from its definition; that is, artificial actions that resemble natural actions, and indicating the possibilities involved and the ability to perform them and their various ways. We did this without code or concealment." *Kitāb al-Nukhab*, MS Istanbul, Carullah 1721, Fol. 1v. Using the author's own categories of knowledge, he defines esoteric knowledge (*al-ilm al-bāṭin*) as "knowledge of the causes of these prescriptions and their special goals, available to divine intellects", revealing "the veiled purpose".

The author achieves this de-esotericisation in a way unique to it – compared with other surviving medieval magic texts – in two aspects: first, the author reveals a programmatic approach to teaching the craft which graduates from elementary knowledge on talismans to higher expertise and specialisation. The text, in fact, presents itself as teaching material. Second, he situates talismanry as it is discussed in the text on an explicitly exoteric level suitable for a novice. In the case of alchemy, we can observe its mobilisation in writing and teaching practical skills (dying, treatment of minerals, etc.). Highlighting talismanry as a non-esoteric science in *K. al-Nukhab* enables us how it was integrated into early medieval educational conventions and aids glean into the socio-economical context of the craft of talismans.

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Block Printed Talismans and the Matter of Valid Magic

Virtually all surviving medieval Arabic block prints constitute talismans. They draw heavily on qur'anic quotations for their mystical power and, as such, bear witness to a particular conception of how magic is to be exercised if it to be considered valid and licit and therefore effective. At the same time, many examples contain non-textual elements from the vast vocabulary of magic available to medieval Muslims. What are these elements and why are they chosen while others are not? What might these features tell us about the creation of the block prints and who created them?

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Paper instruments: An example from 13th-century Yemen

When thinking of occult sciences and instruments, several examples come to mind, from alchemical equipment and medical supplies to astrological plates and astrolabes. Often witnessing an elaborated craftsmanship, many of these instruments are made of brass and survived in collections and museums, for example the unique geomantic device by Muḥammad b. Khutlukh al-Mawṣilī from 13th century Egypt, Syria, or Iraq and now in the British Museum, London. But there were also instruments made of a cheaper, but less enduring material, namely paper, and therefore with fewer examples surviving. For instance, the History of Science Museum, Oxford, lists online about 150 astrolabes, four of them made of paper, all of European provenance, three from the 16th century providing the cusps of the houses on their plates.

Besides paper astrolabes, there are also less elaborated paper instruments documented that might have been also used in prognostic practices. One example is included in the *Kitāb al-Tabṣira fī ‘ilm al-nujūm* written by al-Ashraf ‘Umar (d. 1296), who ruled during the last two years of his life over the Yemen as the third of the Rasūlid sultans. In chapter xxvii he includes a diagram depicting according to the description originally a volvelle that relates zodiacal signs and lunar mansions. After shortly presenting the author and his scholarly oeuvre including the *Tabṣira*, this talk will introduce the instrument described in this text and ask for its possible use in prognostic practices. It will conclude with a look out to related texts and objects.

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Look at it and Ponder it Well: The Power of the Well-Made Image in Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī's *Book of the Complete*

The *Book of the Complete* (*Kitāb al-Shāmil*), an Arabic grimoire attributed to Sirāj al-Dīn al-Sakkākī (d. 1229 CE), contains a diverse collection of incantations, recipes, and instructions for creating talismans. These instructions offer detailed practical advice on the creation of the images (often statues or engravings to be worn as jewelry), describing, for example, substitutions that can be made in the absence of certain materials, and admonitions to polish, file, and securely affix images that should be rendered “as accurately as possible.” This advice on the practicalities of artistic craftsmanship go hand-in-hand with detailed astrological calculations and the proper application of aromatics necessary to imbue the image with planetary influences. Such instructions are often attributed to famous thinkers associated now most strongly with the history of science, e.g. Hippocrates and Ptolemy. In focusing on several evocative examples of these instructions, this paper will explore the following questions: what can we discern about the implied readership of Sakkākī's grimoire and the types of artistic and scientific skills they were expected to have? Who is the implied audience of the striking jewelry and statuettes whose creation is advised? How can their efficacy be linked with that of poetry (“*ḥalāl* sorcery”) which, through a combination of proper lexico-grammatical technique, effective use of symbolism, and artistic inspiration, influenced the spirit of its listener? Special attention will be allotted to a talisman which, through depicting scenes of lovemaking, was intended to arouse love and lust. How does the genre of erotology help shed light on this talisman and on magical texts like the *Book of the Complete* in general?

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Printing Talismans: Instructions in Crafting Magic from 19th-century Lithographs to the present day

Transmission of the making of Islamicate talismans and amulets in 19th- and 20th-century South Asia is a practice documented in chapbooks that circulated widely throughout the subcontinent and drew on previous manuscript and lithographic occult instruction manuals. My paper will investigate the materials and methods of crafting these occult technologies as transmitted through these popular sources, and will argue that a shift in the transmission of making amulets and other magical instruments occurred with the dissemination of print and lithograph technologies in South Asia that continues to the present day.

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Transmitting Occult Knowledge in Rural Morocco

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the spread of transmitted and natural sciences in Morocco was institutionalized in rural areas to an unprecedented extent through the founding of numerous Sufi lodges that functioned as spiritual destinations, social and political centers, and places where scholars taught, studied, and wrote. In prior work (Stearns 2021a, Stearns 2021b), I have examined the ways in which occult knowledge played a meaningful role within the scholarly circles associated with at least one such lodge, the Dila' zawiya in the Middle Atlas, and specifically the work of Abu Sa'id al-Mirghiti (d. 1089/1678). This paper builds on my discussion of al-Mirghiti to discuss the work of two earlier seventeenth century scholars, the first Abu Qasim al-Ghul al-Fishtali (d. 1059/1649) a teacher of al-Mirghiti, who taught him astrology among other occult sciences, and Ahmad al-Maqqari (d. 1041/1632), the famed historian of al-Andalus, who during his fourteen year stay in Fes between 1604-18 was friendly with members of the Dila' lodge and would maintain contact with its ruling family into the 1630s, shortly before his death, even after he had moved to Cairo (al-Yusi, 2020). It is in the context of these local and transregional intellectual ties that the paper will examine a previously thought lost work of al-Maqqari's (Fierro & Molina, 2009) on predicting the future, alongside al-Fishtali's shorter writings on lettrism and alchemy - which themselves reached back to the writings of the fifteenth century North African scholar al-Jazna'i (fl. 911/1505). The contribution here is in elucidating the broader institutional and social networks that facilitated the production, study, and transmission of such occult works. By demonstrating the presence and movement of such texts from traditional urban centers of learning to both rural Sufi lodges and then along transregional networks of learning, pilgrimage, and trade, this paper contributes to the broader contextualization of the occult in the early modern Islamic West.

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Reading the Brethren of Purity in Farsi. A mysterious history of *Mujmal al-Ḥikmah* and its fourth Epistle on Music

A number of fascinating studies and new perspectives have been published on the Brethren of Purity's *Epistles* (*Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*) during the last thirty years to the extent that mystery and controversy have emerged as academic foes that scholars contend with when meeting the Brethren. While these great efforts are meant to clarify ideas and perceptions around the *Epistles*, this lecture is likely to prompt more questions and raise the possibility of doubt. In fact, by looking at the Persian tradition of the so-called Baradaran-e Rowshan (AR: Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'), it is possible to multiply the number of questions about the *Epistles* transmission. Even with the mystery and the controversy which persist in the Persian tradition of the *Epistles*, *Mujmal al-Ḥikmah*, a summary in Farsi of *Rasā'il Ikhwan al-Ṣafā'*, has not yet piqued much interest among western scholars. As part of my contribution to the conference, I will be providing an overview of the treatise edited by Muhammad Taqi Daneshpazhuh and Iraj Afshar in 1996, based on Iranian and European catalogued manuscripts. I will then take the participants through some passages from the fourth epistle (*On Music*) by Baradaran-e Rowshan so they can recognize on what basis the *Mujmal's* author has chosen to delete some passages and keep others. As part of the examination, it will take into consideration passages in both the *Mujmal* and the *Rasā'il* where music - defined as "the" art of composition (*sina'at al-ta'lif*) ruling on natural and crafted things - is discussed. As a consequence, another topic will be why music is regarded in the *Epistles* more as a means of effective influence (*'alamiyya*) rather than an object of speculative reference (*'ilmiyya*).

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The Horoscopes for Mosque Construction and Forgotten Experts of the Early Modern Ottoman Empire

This paper focuses on a curious text and its even more curious author from the sixteenth-century Ottoman world. The text in question was produced as a booklet to designate the auspicious moment for beginning the construction of the imperial mosque complex named after its benefactor Suleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520-1566). Unlike many later Ottoman examples of astrologers' memos written in one or half-page-long archival documents, the text in question is produced and presented as a book consisting of nine separate chapters. Not only demonstrate these chapters the scope of the author's technical expertise and scientific inspirations. They also include several short poems of autobiographical and emotional nature that help us put some real flesh on astrologers as otherwise obscure individuals. Taking this text as a point of departure and exploring other extant works written, copied, or possessed by its author, I will reconstruct the lives and troubles of astrologers as forgotten experts of their time.

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The Motif of the Seven Seals of Solomon in Southeast Asia

The talismanic motif known as the Seven Seals of Solomon is a set of seven symbols believed to represent the Most Exalted Name of God. The symbols are: a pentagram/hexagram, three vertical lines topped by a horizontal line, the letter *mim*, “the ladder”, four vertical lines, the letter *ha*’ and the letter *waw* with its tail going above itself. These seven symbols are also associated with the prophets, the seven days of the week and the seven planets. They are discussed in texts such as al-Bunī’s *Shams al-ma’ārif*, al-Tilimsanī’s *Shumūs al-anwār* and al-Dayrabī’s *Kitāb al-mujarrabāt*, and appear on amulets as well as objects such as mirrors.

The motif of the Seven Seals is also known in Southeast Asia. It can be found in texts such as Malay translations of al-Dayrabī’s work and in various Malay manuscripts on magic. In addition, the symbols appear on a variety of objects including seals, clothing, flags and weapons.

This paper will examine the tradition of the Seven Seals of Solomon in Southeast Asia from the perspective of both texts and objects. In doing so it aims to explore how and why the motif was used, and investigate possible relationships between the textual tradition and material culture. This approach may help shed further light into the connections between theory and practice in the occult sciences within Muslim societies.