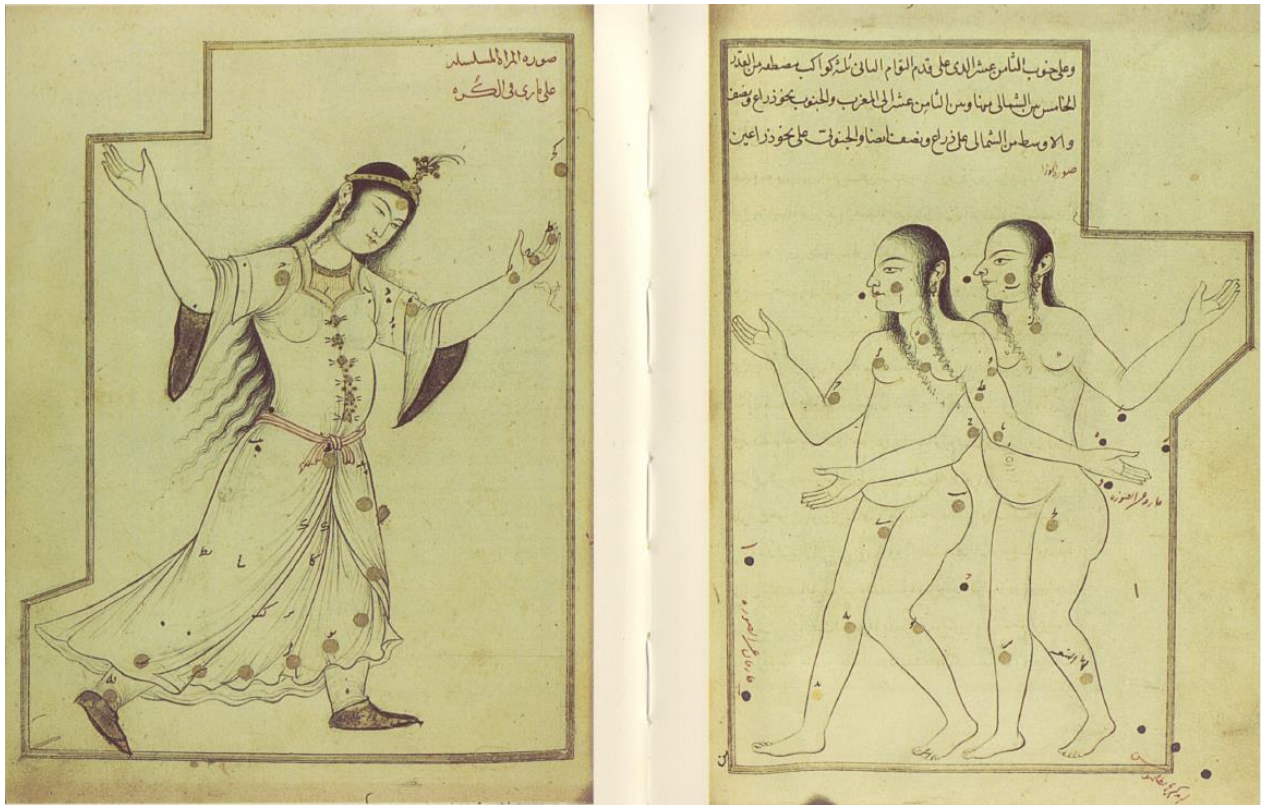


Licit Magic – GlobalLit Working Papers

No. 7

ARBITRARY CONSTELLATIONS: WRITING THE IMAGINATION IN MEDIEVAL PERSIAN ASTROLOGY, WITH TRANSLATIONS FROM *TANKLŪSHĀ* (11TH - 12TH CENTURY)



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Cover image: © “The Chained Woman (*mar’at al-musalsala*) [The Andromeda Galaxy]” (left) and “The Twins (*jawzā’*, also *al-taw’amān*) [Gemini Constellation]” according to a sixteenth century Persian manuscript, *Suwar al-Kawākib* (Shape of Stars), written by astronomer Abd al-Rahmān al-Sūfi around 960 (Chester Beatty Library, Dublin). The image is found in Titus Burckhardt, *Mystical Astrology According to Ibn ‘Arabi*, tr. Bulent Rauf (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2001).

Arbitrary Constellations: Writing the Imagination in Medieval Persian Astrology¹

Only a fortuitous encounter between translation and pseudepigrapha could connect ancient Egyptian sky maps to the poetic imagination of Muslim translators in a book of medieval horoscopic astrology. These links are revealed in a manuscript commonly today the *Book of Tanklūshā* (*Kitāb-i Tanklūshā*), Arabic and Persian versions of which can be found in the libraries of Saint Petersburg, Leiden, Tehran, and Mashhad. The book is attributed to a Tanklūshā al-Bābilī al-Qūfānī (meaning Tanklūshā from Babylon from Qūfān [modern 'Aqar-Qūf, in Baghdad, Iraq]). Different sources cite the author's name in a variety of other forms such as Tinkalūs, Tinkalūsh, and Tinkalūshā who Claude Saumaise (also known as Claudius Salmasius) in 1648 speculated and Franz Boll in 1903 confirmed was the same person as Teucer of Babylon, the Egyptian astrologer possibly of the first century CE who was cited by major astrologers, such as Antiochus of Athens, Rhetorius, and Abū Ma'shar al-Balkhī.²

In his catalog of extant Arabic manuscripts, *al-Fihrist* (The Catalogue), Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 990) introduces a Tinkalūs al-Bābilī and a Ṭinqarūs al-Bābilī in two separate entries as one of the seven sages who were appointed by Ḥaḥḥāk³ in charge of the seven houses he had built in the name of the seven stars. Ibn al-Nadīm introduces the former as the author of the book *Kitāb al-wujūh wa al-ḥudūd* and the latter as the author of *Kitāb al-mawālid 'ala al-wujūh wa al-ḥudūd*. Teucer the Babylonian's work is extant in excerpts that Boll published along with other newly discovered works of Vettius Valens, Antiochus of Athens, and a chapter of Abū Ma'shar's *al-Mudkhal al-kabīr* (Great Introduction) in 1903. These long-forgotten excerpts, for Boll, testified to an alternative representation of the sky and its constellation, which was called *Sphaera Barbarica* by the Greek to emphasize the non-Greek, non-Ptolemaic origins of the Egyptian and Babylonian description of the heavens. In *Sphaera* (1903), Boll elaborated on how the barbarian map of the sky relied on a constellation system of *paranatellonta* (παρاناτέλλοντα), meaning "stars rising alongside," and used technically in reference to constellations that rise simultaneously with zodiacal signs.

The books that bear their author's name as their title are books that write up their authors rather than the vice versa. Such is the story of Tanklūshā the Babylonian's book in Arabic and Persian. Tanklūshā the Babylonian existed among medieval Muslim scholars,

¹ The author wishes to thank Rebecca Ruth Gould and Kristof D'hulster for their valuable review and feedback.

² See Carlo Alfonso Nallino, *ʿIlm al-falak ʿinda al-ʿArab fī al-qurūn al-wusṭā* (Roma: np, 1911), 198; and Franz Boll, *Sphaera. Neue griechische Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Sternbilder* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903), 491.

³ Ibn al-Nadīm refers to the evil king in Persian mythology, also called by the epithet *mār-dūsh* for the snakes on his shoulders.

such as Abū Ma‘shar (787–886), Ibn Hibintā (fl. 950), al-Qiftī (ca. 1172–1248), and Naṣīr al-Din al-Ṭūsī (1201–1274), only as a name cited with a few unverifiable excerpts attributed to his book. It was a Nabataean agriculturalist and toxicologist, Ibn Waḥshiyyah (d. ca. 930), the author of an influential Arabic treatise on the Nabataean Agriculture (*Kitāb al-filāḥa al-nabaṭiyya*), who claimed to have translated *Kitāb-i tankalūshā al-bābilī al-qūfānī fī ṣuwar-i daraj al-falak wa ma tadullu ‘alayhi min aḥwālī l-mawlūdīn* (The Book of Tanklūshā the Babylonian, from Qūfān, on the Constellations of the Degrees of the Sphere and What They Indicate about Nativities) from Nabataean language into Arabic. In the Leiden manuscript of this book, ‘Abd al-Malik Zayyāt is identified as the one to whom Ibn Waḥshiyyah dictated his translation.⁴ Philological scholarship proves Ibn Waḥshiyyah’s work to be a pseudo-translation without no relation to the Teucer’s original work, which was translated presumably in the Sassanian era from Greek into Pahlavi and reached Muslim astrologers in an Aramaic translation, all non-extant except for a few Arabic citations in Abū Ma‘shar’s *al-Mudkhal al-kabīr* or the Pahlavi anthology *Bazīdaj*. To add to the crisis of authorship around the book *Tanklūshā*, scholars have expressed doubt as to the historical existence of the Nabataean author of *Kitāb al-filāḥa al-nabaṭiyya* (Book on Nabataean Agriculture) and *Kitāb al-sumūm wa al-tiryāqāt* (Book on Poisons and Antidotes), born in Qussīn, near Kufa in Iraq and dead around 930, Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī Ibn Waḥshiyyah. Some of these theories assume Ibn Zayyāt the copyist to be the one who forged either Ibn Waḥshiyyah’s writings or Ibn Waḥshiyyah himself.⁵

Real or unreal, Ibn Waḥshiyyah’s *Book of Tanklūshā the Babylonian* was a pseudo-translation from a non-existent original text, most likely produced out of imaginary reconstructions, which was translated into Persian by an anonymous translator, on an unknown date in the medieval past at the order of an unnamed king. In Persian, the work is known as *Tarjuma-yi ṣuwar-i daraj* (Translation of the Constellations of Degrees) or *Tang-i Lūshā*. The latter variation on the name *Tankilūshā* originates in an etymological reading of

⁴ Rahim Reza-zadeh Malek (ed.), *Tanklūshā az mu‘allif nā-shinākhta ba ḡamāma-yi madkhal-i manzūm az ‘Abd al-Jabbār Khujandī* (Tehran: Miras-e Maktub, 2005), cvii.

⁵ For scholarly speculations on the origins of *Tanklūshā*, see D. Chwolson, *Über die Überreste der altbabylonischen Literatur in arabischen Übersetzungen* (St. Petersburg, Buchdruckerei der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1859), 130ff; Alfred von Gutschmid, “Die Nabatäische Landwirtschaft und ihre Geschwister,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* Vol. 15, No. 1 (1861): 1-110, 177; Carlo Alfonso Nallino, *‘Ilm al-falak ‘inda al-‘arab fī al-qurūn al-wustā* (Roma: np, 1911), 196-203; A. Borissov, “Sur le nom ‘Tankaloūchā,’” *Journal Asiatique* 226 (1935): 300–5; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 71-73. Reza-zadeh Malek finds evidence as to a Middle Persian lineage (cxxxiv). Mahmud Tavusi and Minu As‘adi Zahra‘i discern Sabian undercurrents in *Tanklūshā* in “Mu‘arrif va taḥlīl-i pīshīna-yi nuskha-yi Tanklūshā-yi 1074,” in *Pajūhish-i zabān va adabiyāt-i fārsī* 41 (2016): 155-177.

the word as meaning “The Book of Lūshā,” with *Tang* (meaning “the book”) added to “Lūshā,” which was believed to be the author’s name. The Persian poet from the Caucasus, Khāqānī Shirvānī (d. circa 1190) alludes to this variation in his well-known Christian *qaṣīda*.⁶

Tanklūshā is structured like a manual of natal astrology. Following an introductory note on the nature and use of talismans, the twelve zodiacal signs (*ṣūrat*), each in thirty degrees, are listed. Each degree is reported in a double paragraph comprising firstly of a description of co-rising constellations on the sky, including a central image surrounded by images to the right and the left, and second, a precept on the character or fate the person who is born on that degree would acquire. The described heavenly images provide a rich source of medieval iconography in Arabic and Persian. Also, the manual’s double structure in which an imagined constellation gives rise to interpretation provides a valuable example of contingent hermeneutics in Islamic literatures along with other examples such as dream writing (*khwāb-nāma*) and bibliomancy (*fāl-nāma*).⁷

In *Tanklūshā*, the dream-like conjunction of arbitrary objects gives rise to medieval versions of a Surrealist aesthetics of the “beautiful as the chance meeting on a dissecting-table of a sewing-machine and an umbrella.”⁸ It is in these arbitrary constellations that the sky — variously rendered as *charkh*, *gardūn*, *falak*, all meaning “turning,” and all representing fate in classical Persian literature — shows its aleatory face in an extremely graphic way.

Whereas, according to several unknown Greek texts Boll discovered and published in *Sphaera*, Teukros the Babylonian mapped each of the twelve zodiacal signs only in three decans (10° spans), thereby generating maximum thirty-six images, *Tanklūshā* offers a far wider variety with three hundred and sixty images depicted. Compare the representation of Aries in three decans in the following translation of an excerpt attributed to Teukros with the first draft of my translation of the first ten degrees of the sign Aries (*burj-i ḥamal*) in *Tanklūshā*.

⁶ In the “I’ll compose in the name of Caesars many books better than the Chinese Artang and Tang-i Lūsha.” (Khāqānī Shirvānī, *Dīvān*, ed. Ziya al-Din Sajjadi (Tehran: Zavvar, 2003), 27.

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به از ارتنگ چین و تنگلوشا

⁷ For a study on aspects of the Islamic aesthetics of the aleatory, see Massumeh Farhad, Serpil Bağcı, and Maria V. Mavroudi, *Falnama: The Book of Omens* (Washington D. C.: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2009).

⁸ Famous quote from *Les Chants de Maldoror (The Songs of Maldoror)*, a long prose poem by Uruguayan-born French author Isidore-Lucien Ducasse, published under the pseudonym Comte de Lautréamont in 1869. French surrealist André Breton used the quote (from canto VI, verse III) as a formula of surrealist creativity. See Comte de Lautréamont, *Maldoror and Poems*, tr. Paul Knight (New York: Penguin, 1978), 216-217.

Aries — with its first decan there arise Athena and the Tail of the Whale and the third part of the Triangle and the Cynocephalus bearing torches and the head of the Cat of the Dodecahōros. With the second decan there arise Andromeda and the central part of the Whale and the Gorgon and Perseus' Harpe sword and half of the Triangle and the central part of the Cat of Dodecahōros. With the third decan there arise Cassiopeia sitting on the throne and Perseus upside down and the head of the whale and the rest of the Triangle and the tail of the Cat of the Dodecahōros.⁹

The comparison relates the *Teukrotex* and the Arabic/Persian *Tanklūshā* in terms of interpolation not of translation. The Arabic and Persian texts correspond in terms of translation—in a literalist sense. The Persian text bears nuances of and references to a dialect spoken on the Southern shores of the Caspian Sea.¹⁰ This paper does not contribute to outlining the genealogy of *Tanklūshā*; the occultist aspects of the work, which characterize it in relation to practices of alchemy and talisman, call for a comparative anthropological research, which is not intended by this paper either.

I have chosen to situate *Tanklūshā* within a literary context, explore the production of images in the text, and examine the arbitrary links that relate the described images to the prescribed judgement, which also involves a sort of interpretation, on that image. Under this lens, *Tanklūshā*'s intra-textual relations appear astonishingly arbitrary on two levels: not only in the symbolic irrelevance of the described images and the deduced characters attributed to the people born under those images but also in the very original formation of the images out of the chaotic infinite potentials offered by “the starry heavens above,” one of the two things that had filled Kant's mind “with ever new and increasing admiration and awe.”

Astrological constellations have been a generative trope in modern critical thought, and have been used to signify the relativity of representation. Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno have projected constellation as a model of critical thinking most enthusiastically.¹¹ In an oft-cited analogy from the ‘Epistemo-Critical Prologue’ to *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (1928), Benjamin suggests, “Ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars,”¹² thereby highlighting the projective construction of our truths. The lines that connect groups of stars in a constellation project an earthly observer's will to allegorize. The semblance of an

⁹ Quoted in Lucia Bellizia, “[The Paranatellonta in Ancient Greek Astrological Literature](https://www.apotelesma.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The-Paranatellonta-in-ancient-greek-astrological-literature.pdf),” tr. Margherita Fiorello, *Apotelesma*, at: <https://www.apotelesma.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The-Paranatellonta-in-ancient-greek-astrological-literature.pdf> [accessed 9 November 2021].

¹⁰ Reza-zadeh Malek, cxxviii.

¹¹ For philosophies of constellation, see the collected essays in *Modern Language Notes (MLN)*, Vol. 126, No. 3, GERMAN ISSUE: Constellations /Konstellationen (2011), including Andrea Krauß, “Constellations: A Brief Introduction,” *MLN*, Vol. 126, No. 3, GERMAN ISSUE: Constellations /Konstellationen (2011): 439-445; Graeme Gilloch, Walter Benjamin: *Critical Constellations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002); Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: The Free Press and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1977): 90-101.

¹² Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, tr. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1999): 34.

animal, a person, or an object in the night sky reflects desire to interpret, rather than represent any truth about the stars surrounded by thick darkness which Khāqānī, in one of his prison poems, described as “un-pipped dice [*ka‘batayn-i bī-naqsh*],”¹³ that is, blank on all sides. In contrast to much classical Persian poetry in which the firmament (*falak*) stands for predetermined destiny, Khāqānī describes the firmament as a *tabula rasa*, containing a full range of potentialities.

Adorno uses constellations to draw attention to the instability of truth and the volatility of all representation: “Truth is a constantly evolving constellation, not something running continuously and automatically in which the subject’s role would be rendered not only easier but, indeed, dispensable.”¹⁴ Constellations provide useful conceptual frameworks in literary studies, especially when focused on how arbitrary connections and aleatory causes partake in the formation of the idea and making of the text and its interpretations. On its textual surface, without regard of its astrological origins and talismanic uses, *Tanklūshā* offers a radical allegorization of fate in the images it inscribes on the blank dark night sky. The author’s imagination is at times so nuanced that it discerns the constant trembling of a dead body (Taurus. 11), or recognizes the ethnicity of a Turkish man and a woman from Kabul (Taurus. 13), or elaborates the story of a murdered body—“There arises in this degree a man murdered on the mountain. Nobody knows who he is and who killed him. People have learned by experience when they take the dead body to the desert, it will rain if there are any clouds in the sky; otherwise clouds will come, rain will fall, less in the summer, more in the winter” (Capricorn. 15); or makes the terrifying declaration that no one is born in the last degree of Aries because “it is empty and dark, and nothing in it but a handful of pebbles.”

Allusions to *Tanklūshā* in medieval Persian poetry evoke the work in close association with imagination (*khayāl*). Persian poet Nizāmī Ganjavī (d. 1209) refers to “Tanklūshā” twice in *Haft Peykar* (Seven bodies) as a superior work of the imaginative faculty.¹⁵ Once, he

¹³ Khāqānī Shirvānī, *Dīvān*, ed. Ziya al-Din Sajjadi (Tehran: Zavvar, 2003), 173.

این فالک کعبتین بی نقش است
همه بر دستخون قمار کند

For an analysis of this verse in the context of medieval Iranian prison poetry, see Rebecca Ruth Gould, *Persian Prison Poem: Sovereignty and the Political Imagination* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 107-109.

¹⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, tr. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 131.

¹⁵ Ziva Vesel, “Teucros in Nizami’s Haft Paykar,” in *A Key to the Treasure of the Hakim: Artistic and Humanistic Aspects of Nizami Ganjavī’s Khamsa*, ed. Johann-Christoph Bürgel and Christine van Ruymbeke (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2011), 245–52.

describes the Palace of Khavarnaq¹⁶ as a “Tanklūshā of one hundred thousand *khayāl*.” And near the end of *Haft Peykar*, he encourages ambitious imagination in his readers by addressing them as “Tanklūshā of this *khayāl*.”¹⁷

“You are the key to all locks.
You are the Tanklūshā of this imagination.
All take their images from you.
Why should you take those images your omens?”

تنگی جمله را مجال تویی
تنگلوشای این خیال تویی
هریک از تو گرفته تمثالی
تو چه گیری ز هر یکی فالی (829)

While inviting his readers to abandon fatalist attitudes, Nizāmī identifies astrological constellations as human projections, and questions the absurdity implied in human beings’ submission to the creations of their own imagination. Nizāmī’s humanism defines a point of future reference for *Tanklūshā* even when the book has long lost its pseudo-scientific authority: a handbook of literary imagination.

In another medieval Persian allusion to *Tanklūshā*, Khāqānī Shirvānī, a contemporary and acquaintance of Nizāmī mentions *Tanklūshā* once in the Christian *qaṣīda*.¹⁸ Beginning with a complaint of the heavens’ crooked paths, the Christian *qaṣīda* can be read as Khāqānī’s ethology of the sky in its twists of fate.¹⁹ At the peak of his boasting of his vast knowledge in Christian scriptures and interpretation, theology, medicine, astrology, Khāqānī, who has already expressed his disappointment with his Muslim patron, weighs up, in a tongue-in-cheek manner, the option of taking refuge in a Christian ruler’s court in Rūm and presenting

¹⁶ The castle purportedly built by the Arab king Nu‘mān and regarded in medieval period as one of the “Thirty Wonders of the World.” See Renate Wüsch, “KAWARNAQ,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica Vol. XVI, Fasc. 2*, pp. 143-145.

¹⁷ “One firmament sitting cross-legged;
Nine other firmaments flying around it.
A pole of bodies in the north and the south,
A Tanklūshā of one hundred thousand imaginary figures.”

فلکی پای گرد کرده به ناز
نه فلک را به گرد او پرواز
قطبی از بیکر جنوب و شمال
تنگلوشای صد هزار خیال

Nizāmī Ganjavī, *Dīvān*, ed. Hasan Vahid Dastgerdi (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1956), 632.

¹⁸ In the “I’ll compose in the name of Caesars many books better than the Chinese Artang and Tangelusha.” (Khāqānī Shirvānī, *Dīvān*, ed. Ziya al-Din Sajjadi (Tehran: Zavvar, 2003), 27.

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¹⁹ “The sky’s paths are more crooked than the Christian script.
They keep me in chains forever.”

فلک کز روترست از خط ترسا
مرا دارد مسلسل راهب آسا
(23)

his unbounded poetic talents by creating a book superior to Parthian prophet Mani's acclaimed illustrated holy book, *Arzhang* and to what he calls *Tangilūshā*. The reference to *Tanklūshā* marks a turning point in the course of Khāqānī's interior monologue: Immediately, Khāqānī comes to himself and repents of his "corrupt thought [*sawdā-yi fāsīd*]" and satanic inspiration (*talqīn*).

My translation of *Tanklūshā*, presented here, contains the accounts of the entire thirty degrees of the sign Aries (*burj-i ḥamal*), according to Rahim Reza-zadeh Malek's edition. At the time of this translation, I did not have access to the illustrated manuscript edited by Rokn al-Din Homayunfarrokḥ and published under the title *Tang-i Lūshā yā ṣuwar-i daraj* (Tehran: Entesharat-e daneshgah-e melli-ye Iran, 1979). For the original text, see the scanned images from a late seventeenth century manuscript (MS. 63173, Majles Library, Tehran, Iran) I have interposed between my translations.

Suggested readings:

Persis Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2011).

Titus Burckhardt, *Mystical Astrology According to Ibn 'Arabi*, tr. Bulent Rauf (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2001).

Edward S. Kennedy, "A Survey of Islamic Astronomical Tables," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series, 46/2 (1956): 123–77.

David A. King and Julio Samsó (with a contribution by Bernard R. Goldstein), "Astronomical Handbooks and Tables from the Islamic World (750–1900): An Interim Report," *Suḥayl: International Journal for the History of the Exact and Natural Sciences in Islamic Civilisation* 2 (2001): 9–105.

Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "Astrology, Lettrism, Geomancy: The Occult-Scientific Methods of Post-Mongol Islamicate Imperialism," *The Medieval History Journal* 19/1 (2016): 142-150.

Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "Introduction: De-orienting the Study of Islamicate Occultism," *Arabica* T. 64, Fasc. 3/4 (2017): 287-295.

Farid Qasemlu, "Tanglūshā," in *Dānish-nāma-yi jahān-i islām*, vol. 8 (Tehran: Bonyad-e da'erat al-ma'aref-e eslami, 2004), 328-331.

Rahim Reza-zadeh Malek (ed.), *Tanklūshā az mu'allifī nā-shinākhta ba zamīma-yi madkhal-i manzūm az 'Abd al-Jabbār Khujandī* (Tehran: Miras-e Maktub, 2005).

Benno Van Dalen, *Islamic Astronomical Tables: Mathematical Analysis and Historical Investigation* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013).

Keiji Yamamoto and Charles Burnett (eds.), *The Great Introduction to Astrology by Abū Ma šar*, vol. 1. The Arabic Original and English Translation (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019).

Keywords:

Constellation – *Tanklūshā* – astrology – pseudepigrapha – pseudotranslation – imagination

اینها را داشتن این علم برهمنی و نجات نیفتن تا هیچ
نااهل یا درین صلح دیدار نیفتد تا اینست اسباب
مستور داشتن این علم که یا در کرم بشیخ دارن
صورتها و خاصیتها هر چه از درجات فلک
البروج به ترتیب نخستین درجه حمل تا آخر درجه
انجوت چنانکه تکنوش در کتاب پیش آورده
است **درجه اول از برج حمل** برای درین درجه
کتاب غلط شوی بنیشت بشکرت بر رخ نیکو و در
میان و لاق این کتاب و هانها ده بالوان مختلف
انجوت علامت را و انجانب راست این درجه
بر آید و خادم نیکو روی و پارسا و انجانب
چپ او بر او بر مردی ساقها او برهنه
سید خرمه ترو نوران گفته هر که
بدین درجه زاید نیک مرد و پارسا باشد و تنک
عیش و بد خو و پشیمان بود **درجه دوم از**

برج حمل برای درین درجه پوستها گس درین
و ورقهای گس در آن نبشته که هیچ کس نداند زیرا
باختناهل ساما است و بر آید از انجانب راست این
درجه طاس بر بنجیه با کوشه و بر جان چپ او
دست او پاره موی تا گیسو بند کند هر که برین
درجه زاید بفر دبا شد و شکارد دست و فرج
درجه سوم از برج حمل زاید درین درجه کسوف
نیکو و فاخر بارنگهای بسیار و قصبه خیران
زان انجمله شلوار بند بر آید از انجانب راست
این درجه نوم بر و کانی و بر آید از انجانب
او کاسد بر سبوس هر که برین درجه زاید فاسق
و خدیس باشد و تنک روزی و بد عیش و مستور
درجه چهارم از برج حمل برای درین درجه
لکن سفالین پر خاک در و چوبی سبز رسته و بر
آید از انجانب راست او مردی که سخن حق میگوید

و میزد و بر آید از انجانب چپ او دایر مصلح نیکو
هر که برین درجه زاید خوش خلق و مقبل بود
و لکن زاید و بد افعال **درجه پنجم از**
برج حمل برای درین درجه بی روی استار و کانی
که در دینها بیرون قانداورد و بر آید از انجانب
راست او طوبی یا بعضی از انجانب چپ و بر آید
مندره سید برهنه هر که بدین درجه زاید
در آن بالا باشد و نیکو روی **درجه ششم از**
برج حمل برای درین درجه زنی با مروارید و آق
و بر آید از انجانب راست او ستار و از انجانب چپ
او بر آید و میخای آهنین هر که برین درجه زاید
نیک بخت و مرزوق و موقوف باشد و مقبل و در
عمد **درجه هفتم از برج حمل** برای درین درجه
فراخ چشم دست چپ او برهنه و بر آید از انجانب
چپ او بر آید بر ابا ان نقره و مسن دانود هر

بر این درجه زاید بازی و تند برونیک باشد و درگاه
بسیار کند و کاهن و صاحب بخت بود **درجه هشتم از**
برج حمل برای درین درجه بازی سرخو
میخیزد و از انجانب راست او بر آید از انجانب
و از انجانب چپ او بر آید درود کهای آهنین هر که
برین درجه زاید کراف کار و ضول باشد و در خیر
مزاغت نبود **درجه نهم از برج حمل** برای درین
درجه دست سحر بق تر سبز و زنی که و بر آید
از انجانب راست او کوبت ز بول خرم که پیری
بیرون انداخته باشد و از انجانب او بر آید زنی
میخای آهنین هر که برین درجه زاید تنگ
عقل و بسیار رحمت باشد و قدا و نزدیک مرگ
بر زاید بود **درجه دهم از برج حمل** برای درین
درجه کور که در دست او کفک دریا و در دست
چپ او دوات و بر آید از انجانب راست او کفک

Translations:

From *Tanklūshā* by an anonymous writer²⁰

Aries. 1

There arise in this degree:

A codex written in majestic letters in fine red cinnabar with feathers resting between the pages for bookmarks.

On the right, there rise two servants—good-looking and devoted.

On the left, a man, his legs uncovered, beside fresh dates and killed bees.

Anyone who is born in this degree is righteous, pious, lives a good life, and is ill-humoured and disobedient.

Aries. 2

There arise in this degree:

Ancient parchments torn apart and folia worn out with a writing no one can read because it is in the language of the people from Samos.

On the right, there rises a bowl with a handle.

On the left, a woman, in her hand a lock of hair she puts in a hair tie.

Anyone who is born in this degree is mindless, loves hunting, and is ugly.

Aries. 3

There arise in this degree:

A robe—beautiful and rich—in many colors, and a bamboo reed for scabbard.

On the right, there rises an owl next to a crow.

On the left, a bowl full of bran.

Anyone who is born in this degree is evildoer, despicable, poor, and bold.

Aries. 4

There arise in this degree:

A clay tub full of soil, with a green sprout.

On the right, there rises a man who says the truth and shivers.

On the left, a tray of unskimmed milk.

Anyone who is born in this degree is good-tempered and happy but a sneak thief and wrong-doer.

Aries. 5

There arise in this degree:

An old high priest who conjures many magics.

On the right, there rises a *tūnāyā*, that is, fig tree.

On the left, the skinned trunk of a white lamb.

Anyone who is born in this degree is tall and very good-looking.

²⁰ This excerpt is translated from *Tanklūshā*, edited by Rahim Reza-zadeh Malek (Tehran: Miras Maktub, 2005), 7-15.

Aries. 6

There arise in this degree:
A woman in pearls and rubies.
On the right, there rises an anvil.
On the left, black nails.

Anyone who is born in this degree is fortunate, blissful, successful, happy, and lives long.

Aries. 7

There arise in this degree:
A bride with big eyes and naked left arm.
On the right, there rises the bride's husband.
On the left, ornaments of silver and gold-plated copper.

Anyone who is born in this degree has good judgement, is intelligent, prays a lot, and is a priest who performs miracles.

Aries. 8

There arise in this degree:
A red goshawk eating meat.
On the right, there rise iron and a boat.
On the left, iron carpentry tools.

Anyone who is born in this degree is extravagant, nosy, and not fond of charity.

Aries. 9

There arise in this degree:
A bunch of fresh green hellebores in an old basket.
On the right, there arises a handful of pistachios and a palm leaf thrown out by an old woman.
On the left, iron nail tips.

Anyone who is born in this degree reasons little and respects much, and he is of high status among people.

Aries. 10

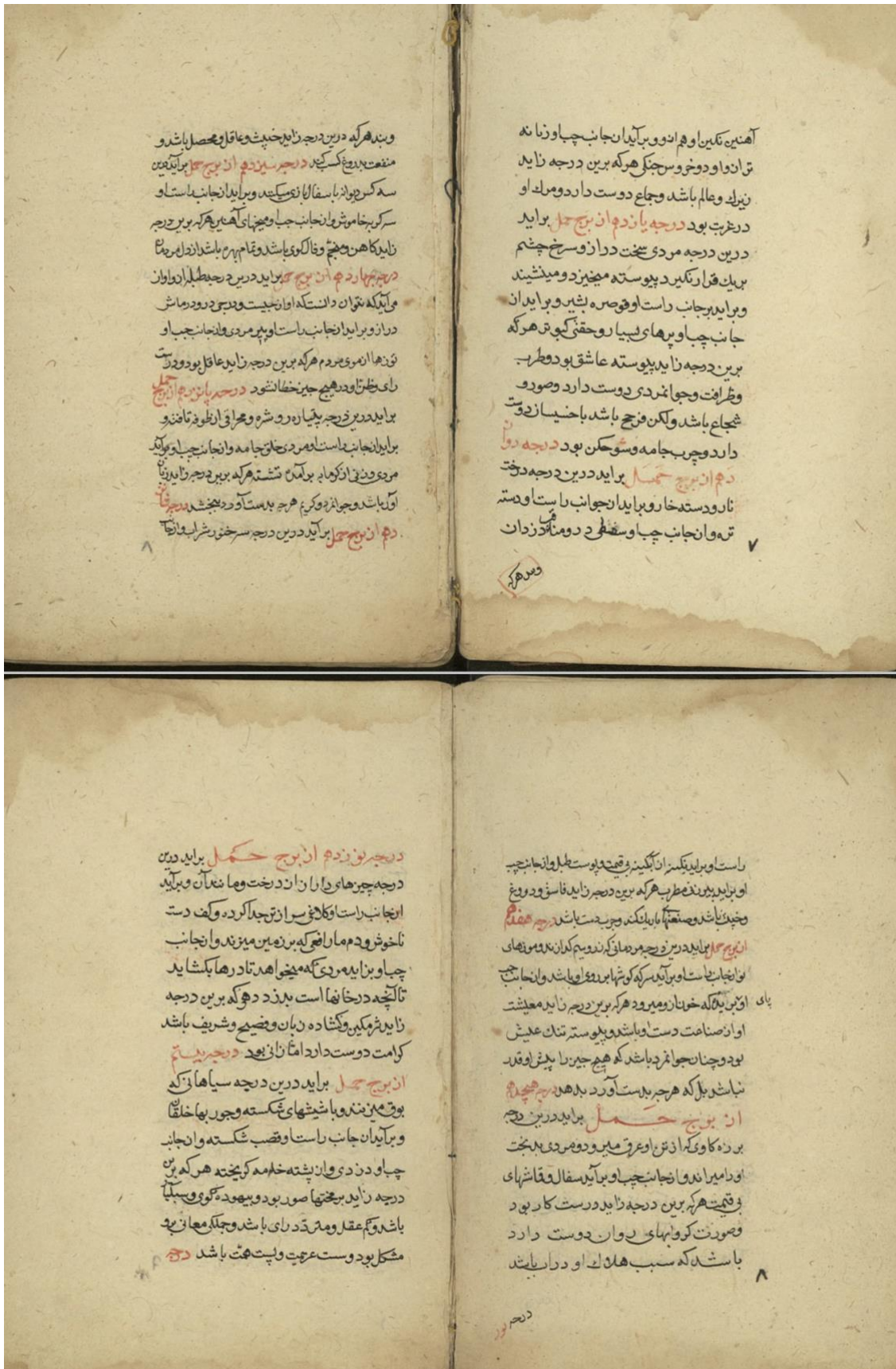
There arise in this degree:
A child with a cuttlebone in the right hand, and an inkpot in the left hand.
On the right, there arises an iron ring with its own stone.
On the left, the fulcrum of a scale and two fighting roosters.

Anyone who is born in this degree is smart, educated, lustful, and will die in exile.

Aries. 11

There arise in this degree:
A very tall man with red eyes, who is restless, keeps sitting down and standing up.
On the right, there arises a basket of copper coins.
On the left, many feathers and a pair of doves.

Anyone who is born in this degree is always in love, is joyful, delicate, magnanimous, patient, and brave, but ugly.



Aries. 12

There arise in this degree:

A pomegranate tree and bunch of thorns.

On the right, there arises a bunch of leeks.

On the left, a basket full of burglars' augers and chains.

Anyone who is born in this degree is despicable, crafty, a gatherer who seeks interest through lies.

Aries. 13

There arise in this degree:

Three men—mad—playing with clay pieces.

On the right, there arise three silent cats.

On the left, iron nails.

Anyone who is born in this degree is a priest, astrologer, and diviner, and is perfectly aware of people's hearts.

Aries. 14

There arise in this degree:

A box, a sound—no one knows what— comes from it. The box contains a chest containing a pearl the size of a mung bean seed.

On the right, there arises a man's head.

On the left, dishes of people's heads.

Anyone who is born in this degree is intelligent, of good judgement, and infallible.

Aries. 15

There arise in this degree:

A bright star and a whip woven of loincloth.

On the right, a man in ragged clothes.

On the left, a man and a woman having come out of the bath—thirsty.

Anyone who is born in this degree is eloquent, valiant, and generous, and he donates whatever he earns.

Aries. 16

There arise in this degree:

Three bowls of wine.

On the right, a bezel with a worthless glass and drum skin.

On the left, a singing old woman.

Anyone who is born in this degree is evildoer, liar, despicable, does delicate tricks, and is skilful.

Aries. 17

There arise in this degree:

People who melt gold and silver wearing new shoes.

On the right, a head with ears front.

On the left, severed bleeding leg.

Anyone who is born in this degree lives on his hand labour and always in poverty.

Aries. 18

There arise in this degree:

A sweating cow herded by a miserable man.

On the right, all kinds of vegetables.

On the left, worthless shards and clothes.

Anyone who is born in this degree is righteous, an artist, who likes flowing waters, hence will perish in water.

Aries. 19

There arise in this degree:

All long things such as trees and so on.

On the right, there arise a crow's head severed from the body, and the palm of a hand laid on a bad soil, and a python beating its tail on the soil.

On the left, a man who is opening doors to steal all that is in the houses.

Anyone who is born in this degree is shy, eloquent, articulate, witty, fond of generosity, but an adulterer.

Aries. 20

There arise in this degree:

Soldiers who blow horns with broken bottles and ragged socks.

On the right, there arises a broken reed.

On the left, a thief on the run with a pile of clothes.

Anyone who is born in this degree bears with afflictions, talks in vain, frivolous, light-minded, indecisive, finds every meaning difficult, is irresolute, with low ambitions.

Aries. 21

There arise in this degree:

A camel, its flesh opened up, blood running away from its veins, and an old man crippled in the left leg.

On the right, a basket made of palm leaves containing pieces of bread and short hard iron nails.

On the left, a reed with wool threads and three thin strong chains.

Anyone who is born in this degree is brave, generous, valiant, with long beard, and is bold.

Aries. 22

There arise in this degree:

A man hanged in a black worn-out garment.

On the right, there arise egg shells and bitter salt and lots of saltpetre.

On the left, there arise a shivering old man, and a young man now in front of and then behind him, lagging with frail hands and legs.

Anyone who is born in this degree is miserable, evildoer, and needy.

پنجمت و یکم از بیج حمل براید درین درجه

اشتری که گوشت آن و بان کرده باشند و خون آن نگاه
او میرد و مردی بیکه پای چسب و معیوب باشد و
براید از جانب راست او سببی از برك خرد و
پاره های نان و میخهای آهنین کوتاه و سبز و از چنان
چسب و قصبه و رسته های پشمین و سه سلسله باریک
حکم هر که برین درین زاید شجاع و بیخشنده و جوانند
و دران ریش و تهو را باشد **درجه پنجمت و دوم**

از بیج حمل براید درین درجه مردی برآمد دل
کرده جامه سیاه گهنه پوشیده و براید از جانب
راست او پوستهای خایه مرغ و نمک تلخ و شوره
بسیار و براید از جانب چپ او پیری که میزد و
پس و پیش او مردی جوان گاه ضعیف دست و پای
هر که برین درجه زاید بیخبت و بدکار و تنگ

سیم باشد **درجه پنجمت و سیم از بیج حمل**

براید درین درجه قدحهای حور در آن رس و
مردی که کوهی که دستار میبافند و یکدیگر را دران
یاری میدهند و از جانب راست او براید در سه
دو سخ مصری و سه بن کرب با برکها و از جانب چپ
او سرشده و توده خاکستر و توده خاک هر که
برین درجه زاید کاهل و شوم بی و تنگ روز باشد
و خاق و رانق خویش را نشناسد **درجه پنجمت و**

چهارم از بیج حمل براید درین درجه دود رخ
سرخ موی سبز چشم بد دل و از جانب راست
او براید متاعی که ایشان دن دین باشند و از جانب
چپ او درختی فندوق درختی کور و یک بن
حریق و یک بن بد نوع هر که برین درجه زاید رنگین
عقل و کردن کش و خشم کین باشد **درجه پنجمت**

و بیج از بیج حمل براید درین درجه زنی طرار و
مختال و هر دی با و خرو سرنابینا و میخو اهد که مرد

را بدین خرو سرنابینا و از جانب راست
او براید قعه بزرگ و مردی بد حال و بیخبت
و ریش آهنین و از جانب چپ او انشا قان و در قوه
هر که برین درجه زاید صبور و جلدی باشد
و قوی طبع و غلیظ و خدای نافرمان باشد **درجه پنجمت**

ششم از بیج حمل براید درین درجه پیری بزرگ
و طنبور و بریط و دسته کلیدها و از دست
راست او براید درخت موز و از جانب چپ او
براید چوبی تراشیده و پلهای قزاز و هر که برین
درجه زاید بزرگ قدر و عظیم محل و فراخ رو
و تنگ دل و دشوار کار باشد **درجه پنجمت و هفتم**

از بیج حمل براید درین درجه یکم دل و چوپان
و تکرک بسیار سبید و از جانب راست او براید
سایط تاریک در وحشرات بسیار و از جانب چپ
او بالخر و سناخون چوره بدست مالین هر که

برین درجه زاید مردی بیخبت باشد و ضعیف
تن در دقام خوش چشم در اساع و ساق **درجه**

پنجمت و هشتم از بیج حمل براید درین درجه پیره زنده
منظر باوقصره بزرگ و از جانب راست او براید
لکنی رویین رنگار گرفته و از جانب چپ او براید
سبیله ذو شمشه و خودد سبیا حره برین درجه
زاید رخ کثر و بسیار خوف و کاهل باشد و از هر
چیزی بترسد و فال و ریح بسینا رنگار دارد **درجه**

پنجمت و نهم از بیج حمل براید درین
درجه بالشی بربون بزرگ و بستم کند درو پرها
و از جانب راست او براید چیزی تاریک و عجیب که
فداند که ان چیز چیست و از جانب چپ او در راه
براید هر که برین درجه زاید زنی باشد ترسناک
و صناعتی دان که بدان کسب کند بیخ بسیار و فقر
چنانک او با شوی نفقه کند **درجه نهم از بیج حمل**

Aries. 23

There arise in this degree:

Small copper bowls, and a man and a child who weave turbans in collaboration.

On the right, there arises Egyptian reeds and three bulbs of cabbage with leaves.

On the left, three bottles, and a heap of ashes, and a heap of dust.

Anyone who is born in this degree is lazy, unfortunate, poor, and does not know his creator and sustenance-giver.

Aries. 24

There arise in this degree:

Two thieves with red hair, green eyes, and evil hearts.

On the right, the goods they have stolen.

On the left, a hazelnut tree, a walnut tree, a hellebore and a ripened fruit.

Anyone who is born in this degree is ill-minded, disobedient, wrathful, and frivolous.

Aries. 25

There arise in this degree:

A woman—a deceitful thief—and a man with two roosters (who is blind and is going to deceive people with those roosters).

On the right, there arises a huge jar and man, miserable and unhappy—with iron beard.

On the left, Shaqulānī trousers in a basket.

He who is born in this degree is patient, agile, determined, strong, and does not fear God.

Aries. 26

There arise in this degree:

A big old man, and a *tanbur*, and a lute, and a bunch of keys.

On the right, there arises a banana tree.

On the left, carved wood and scale pans.

Anyone who is born in this degree is highly respected, of high status, wealthy, melancholic, and in trouble.

Aries. 27

There arise in this degree:

A wooden bucket, and very white hail.

On the right, there arises a dark tent full of insects.

On the left, a rooster's wing and a chicken's bones rubbed in hands.

Anyone who is born in this degree is unfortunate, weak, pale, with beautiful eyes, long forearms and ankles.

Aries. 28

There arise in this degree:

An old woman, ugly and saucy, carrying a big basket.

On the right, there arises a rusty brazen tub.

On the left, a basket filled with pieces of glass and teak wood.

Anyone who is born in this degree is a sufferer, terrified, lazy, fears everything, and relies on divination a lot.

Aries. 29

There arise in this degree:

A big silk pillow filled with wood and feathers.

On the right, there arises something dark—no one knows what.

On the left, two paths diverge.

Anyone who is born in this degree is a terrified woman, making an income from her own business with much difficulty, and whatever she earns she sacrifices to her husband.

Aries. 30

There arise in this degree:

Worn-out red cotton robes and strings of the lute and the *tanbur*.

On the right, there arises a big woman who weaves canvas fabric.

On the left, a tightly tied scarf and a scorpion.

No one is born in this degree as it is empty and dark, and nothing in it but a handful of pebbles.

