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Arabic Astrology

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Arabic Astrology

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Introduction

When in the West we speak of Medieval Astrology it is to Arabic Astrology that we inevitably refer. It was from the Arabs that the Medieval Christian West received astrology during its reintroduction into Europe during the 12th Century Renaissance.

Yet when we use the term "Arabic", it is not necessarily to authors who were ethnic Arabs that we refer but rather to writers who wrote in the Arabic languages and to their works in that language. Thus, the term "Arabic" does not refer to the author's religion or ethnic origin. Messahala, for instance, wrote in Arabic but was Jewish. Ibn Hibinta wrote in Arabic but was Christian. Abu Ma'shar was Persian. Alkindi, on the other hand, both wrote in Arabic and was Arabian.

The chief representatives of Arabic astrology are: Alboali (Abu `Ali al-Khayyat-see below), Albumasar (Abu Ma'shar - see below), Alcabitius (al-Qabisi, fl. C. 960), Alchindus (Alkindi, 813?-870, teacher of Abu Ma'shar), Aomar (`Umar ibn al-Farrukhan al-Tabari, fl.c 800), Hali Heben Rodan (`Ali ibn Ridwan ibn `Ali ibn Gaf`ar Abu'l-Hasan), Messahala (Masha`allah c. 740-815), and Zahel (Abu `Utman Sahl ibn Bistr ibn Habib ibn Hayi al-Isra`ili d.c. 845) .

Decline of Western Learning: Entering the Dark Ages

Science in the West had evaporated with other forms of learning following the fall of the Roman Empire. Monasteries (especially those of the Benedictine Order) can be credited with preserving learning during the Dark Ages however, the learning they preserved was dictated by two considerations.

Firstly, **What was essential to the smooth running of Christian culture?** Secondly, **What was available to them?** Nevertheless the hermetic traditions survived (though barely) in the West via Martianus Capella, Firmicus Maternus, the *Picatrix* and the *Asclepius*. Arabic Astrology was imbued with Hermeticism and was eagerly received in the West largely because of the pre-existing Hermetic - Neoplatonic background of many of the Western intellectuals.

Still, the general intellectual climate of the West was impoverished during the 6th - 8th centuries. It was during the following centuries leading to the 12th century in which learning slowly increased and in which esoteric doctrines were increasingly cultivated.

Many things available to the cosmopolitan Roman of 500 AD be he Christian or Pagan were not preserved during the centuries of upheaval as the barbarian hords sacked, resettled and redefined Roman civilisation.

During the three centuries that followed the Vandal conquest and occupation of Rome (455 AD) until the coronation of Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor (800 AD) the structure of Roman society and, in particular of Roman education disintegrated. As Christianity supplanted Paganism pagan institutions were systematically deconstructed or simply allowed to die out. From its very beginning, Christianity was opposed to science and pagan philosophy. It valued the works of Plato, Aristotle and other philosophic and scientific writers only in so far as they supported Christian theology. As a direct consequence, the Christians made no concerted effort to copy, save or study such subjects.

Neglect meant that what was saved and preserved in the dark monastic libraries (such as they were) were only works that contributed to the coming Kingdom of Heaven. Thus, as homiletics were a basic need of the Church, works on grammar, logic and rhetoric were copied and saved while works on scientific subjects were not.

Even medicine, so often, as in the case of Galen and Hippocrates, intertwined with Pagan philosophy were often neglected. This soon led to a dearth of medical knowledge in the Latin West. It directly resulted in the populace falling back, of necessity upon Germanic tribal magical medicine or some form of indigenous Mediterranean herbal lore which itself was not far removed from witchcraft and the superstitions of the pagan past. Thus, in her zeal to make a clean break with the evil past, *Mater Ecclesia* furthered the spread of diabolism and ensured the continuation of a grass roots folk magic which she has never succeeded in extirpating.

In the Greek speaking Eastern Roman Empire¹, which remained more stable, the cultural and economic continuity ensured that the Arts and Sciences were never eradicated despite the intensely zealous Christianity of the later Byzantine Empire. This was especially the case in Alexandria and Syria. Even after the Emperor Justinian closed the Pagan schools in Athens in 527 it was possible for the philosophers to find welcome in Persia and Alexandria where the old traditions flourished until the rise of Islam in the first half of the 7th century.

The Rise of Islam

The spread of Arabic Astrology and Arabic Hermeticism was intimately linked to the spread of Islam. In 635 Syria fell to the Moslem Arabs. Iraq by 637. Persia by 641 and Egypt by 642. The caliphs now held the centre of civilisation in their hands and held a critical place on the globe linking India and China to Egypt and Africa, Byzantium and, via the Mediterranean, the West. By 670 they had spread west in (formerly Roman, later Barbarian) North Africa to Algeria. In 711 they conquered Visigothic Spain and in 732 invaded France where they were stopped by the Franks at Poitiers (Tours) under Charles Martel.

The intellectual world the Arabs had taken possession of was rich in philosophy and science. Unlike the Germanic Barbarian invasion, the Arab conquest of the East was swift and left the society mostly intact.

¹ The Empire had split in the third century under Diocletian and, despite Constantine's effort to reunite it, it split permanently in 395 AD. The language and culture of the East being Greek and that of the West being Latin a substantial schism existed which was exacerbated by the events of the ensuing centuries which led to a Germanic domination of the Western Empire but not to the Eastern.

The desert Arabs were considered a rude and ignorant people and, according to Ibn Khaldun who wrote in the 14th century; before the Prophet, totally ungovernable and wild. Islam imposed itself and with it a semblance of civilisation. By 762 Baghdad had been founded and by 813 the *Bait ha Hikma* (House of Knowledge) was established creating a place in which to assimilate the wealth of wisdom the Arab Empire had inherited. Observatories were constructed near Damascus and Baghdad and translation of Greek, Syriac, Persian and Sanskrit literary, scientific and philosophical works were avidly pursued.

This flurry of translation brought to the ken of the Arabs the mathematical and astronomical works of the Indians (the Siddhantas, called by the Arabs the Sindhind), the astrological doctrines of the Babylonians, Chaldeans, Persians and others; and the philosophical works of the Greeks; notably the Neoplatonic writings, the Hermetic writings and the scientific writings of Aristotle which the Christians assiduously avoided.

The prejudices of Islam being different than those of Christianity, science, philosophy and medicine flourished under the Arabs and, due to their ideal location in Baghdad and Damascus their trade grew apace. Very soon they were more wealthy than they had ever dreamed they would be and controlled a vibrant, dynamic and complex cosmopolitan culture.

The ideas introduced into Islamic society gave rise to numerous heterodox interpretations of Islam. Their adherents quickly found it necessary to present the “new” interpretations as esoteric doctrines circulated in small, discreet communities or not at all. Moslem orthodoxy kept a wary eye out for heterodox opinions that had any potential for unseating the religious status quo and especially for any resurgence of astrological polytheism.

Nevertheless, in the eighth and ninth centuries numerous *Batineeyeh* (esoteric) movements arose from exposure either to Greek philosophical ideas or from crypto-polytheisms. Some of these sects (e.g. the Druze and Sufis) and others who were survivals of older sects (such as the Mandaean, Manichee; and Harranian Sabians) seem to have played a seminal role in Western Christian lands at later dates after Islamic religious reaction suppressed all but the most orthodox views in the Mid-East.

The Hermetic tradition continued under the Sabians, especially in Harran, where it was accorded religious toleration despite its clearly heathen, polytheistic and idolatrous character until about 1100 AD (for further reading in this refer to *Hermetica As Ancient Science* and *The Hermetic Tradition*). But already in the 9th century the Hermetic tradition had its adherents among Moslems as well as Sabians as we will be dealt with in more detail when discussing Abu Ma'shar.

Influence of Hermetic Tradition

There can be little doubt that the astrological tradition was very powerfully shaped by this Hermetic tradition. Western Astrology, as stated above, was re-learned from the Arabs and most if not all Arabic astrological writers acknowledge their debt to Hermes.

The first page of Messahala's *Astrological History*, reconstituted by the historian David Pingree from the Christian astrologer Ibn Hibinta's work cites "Hermes and others" as Masha'allah's source for judgements based on conjunctions (of Jupiter and Saturn) and world year transfers (i.e. Ingress Figures). Abu Ma'shar repeatedly mentions Hermes as his source for various astrological techniques. His teacher, Alkindi certainly knew Hermes's works. Al-Biruni also cites Hermes and the Sabians in his *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology* (1029 AD). Abu Ali Al-Khayyat mentions Hermes in the 46th chapter of his *Judgement of Nativities*.

The three ancient authorities the Arabic authors most frequently mention (apart from unnamed "Ancients", "Babylonians, Chaldeans, Indians and Egyptians") are Hermes, Ptolemy, and Dorotheus. (for fuller discussion refer to the above article *The Hermetic Tradition*)

With few, if any exceptions, the Hermetic astrological texts are pragmatic in nature with no philosophy. Of the three authors mentioned, only Ptolemy waxes theoretical while Dorotheus explicitly states that he has "collected the sayings of the wise."

The Impact of Ptolemy on Astrology

Claudius Ptolemy was born in 70 AD. He lived and worked in Alexandria in Egypt at that time a Roman Province. He was reputed to have had access to the great Alexandrine Library. By the end of the 3rd century his *Tetrabiblos* became an authoritative text on astrology in the Hellenistic world. This was probably because his *Megiste Syntaxis*, a work on geography and astronomy, was so widely used. By accident of history it was this work which was chosen for translation by the Medieval Arabs (who referred to it as the *Almagest*). This ensured its renown in the Dark Ages when, due to the loss of science in the West, the centre of astronomy, cartography and trade shifted to the Islamic lands.

Thus, the Arabs had the *Almagest* and the *Tetrabiblos*, which gained prestige by virtue of the fame of the former book. By the first book, the Arabs achieved renown as astronomers. Their astrology was not dependent solely on the second book, but they knew the reputation it had enjoyed in the Hellenistic world and deferred to it. Since they were the most advanced astronomers and astrologers of their day, others shared their opinions.

James Holden, in his excellent translation of Abu Ali Al-Khayyat's *The Judgements of Nativities*, Tempe, 1988, on pages 9 and 10 points out that following Ptolemy's writing of *Tetrabiblos* there were really two "traditions" of Greek Astrology: the old "Greek" astrology (so called because Greek was the language in which the astrological literature was written) of which Dorotheus's 1st century *Carmen Astrologicum*, also called the *Pentateuch* because it has five books, is a good example ; and the Ptolemaic version as embodied in the *Tetrabiblos* (comprised of four books).

Holden argues that, while Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* does not accurately represent astrology as it was practised in Ptolemy's own day, by the end of the 3rd century, Ptolemy had become recognised as the premier astrologer and geographer of the classical world. He thus became, for many (especially in the Renaissance), the paradigm of astrological practice against which all other practices were to be measured.

Holden, on page 12 lists the astrological techniques that Ptolemy left out of the *Tetrabiblos* as follows:

- i) the influences of the planets in signs
- ii) the influences of the planets in houses
- iii) the influences of the mutual aspects of the planets
- iv) the Arabic Parts - which were mentioned a century before Ptolemy by Dorotheus
- v) use of derived houses, house rulers, and dispositors - some of which were features of Dorotheus's astrology.

He also points out that Ptolemy introduced a significant change in the art by adopting the vernal equinox as 0 degrees Aries. More than this he simplified the calculation for finding the Hyleg which he directs to find the length of the life of the native showing an important difference between the Ptolemaic predictive technique and the Arabic approach. More than this the precise nature of his method of progression has haunted astrologers for centuries and given rise to the complex system of Primary Directions.

In the Renaissance, many claimed that the "pure Greek astrology" had become sullied by the false doctrines of the Arabs. Pico della Mirandola declared in his condemnation of astrology, for instance, that Ptolemy did not know of the Alcocoden Method of predicting the length of life. This method depends upon locating the "giver of years" (alcocoden), a planet which, depending on its location and zodiacal state gives so many years, months or days of life (determined from a table called the Years of the Planets Table).

We know today that at least some of the techniques (including the Arabic Parts - *Bonatti on Arabic Parts*) condemned by Pico and others are to be found in the works of Ptolemy's predecessor Dorotheus. In this sense, they are a legitimate part of the "Pristine Greek Astrology" after all.

The matter of the Alcocodon Method is otherwise. The word "*kadkhudah*" which the Latin translators of Arabic astrological works rendered *alcocoden* does appear in Pingree's translation of Dorotheus's *Carmen Astrologicum* (discussed below).

Pingree includes it in the translation no doubt because it is in the original Arabic text however, the question is: What is it doing there is? It is used only once in the text itself and in an ambiguous manner at that. Pingree does not seem to know what to do with it and fumbles for a place in the text where it may be referred to (and in so doing, errs, as we will see). This important but still controversial issue of the origin of the Alcocoden Method is remains unsettled.

It may be said that the true method of predicting the length of life is still a secret for the documents relating to this issue, which I have studied (see references at end of paper), are by no means unambiguous. Indeed, they are down right confusing. Yet, if we disregard the references in Dorotheus to the "*kadkhudah*" we may yet find an helpful suggestion in his Direction Method (for a fuller discussion and description of the Method see: www.new-library.com/zoller/courses Diploma Course).

Holden correctly states that Ptolemy was no authority on astrology. There is no evidence that he was a practising astrologer. He gives no case studies (as we get with Vettius Valens, as but one example) nor does he give a complete picture of the art. Modern Western Astrology as far as it rests upon Ptolemaic foundations is thus necessarily incomplete. In fact, Dorotheus gives us more insight into the real state of astrology as practised in the Classical World.

Dorotheus and The *Carmen Astrologicum*

Dorotheus of Sidon was a Hellenized Phoenician writing in the first century AD. Though he was not Arab, for the reasons sketched out above, an understanding of his astrological work is necessary if we are to properly appraise Arabic Astrology.

Reference should be made to David Pingree's translation of *Carmen Astrologicum* by Dorotheus of Sidon , published by Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft, 1976. the following is a examination of the work with a view to its use to the practising astrologer.

Book I

The opening paragraph reads like as a hermetic treatise. Dorotheus, represented as an Egyptian (in Book V, he is represented as a King of Egypt), has written this work for his son, Hermes. He has travelled to Babylon and to cities in Egypt. He has collected the best of the sayings of their wise men as a bee gathers honey from trees and plants; for from it comes the honey of medicine.

We are told, right at the start to know the triplicities and their rulers. This feature of Arabic Astrology was passed down through Masha'allah, Abu 'Ali al-Khayyat and others but was not passed down to those who followed Ptolemy. Dorotheus says

"I tell you that everything which is decided or indicated is from the lords of the triplicities and as for everything of afflictions and distress which reaches the people of the world and the totality of men, the lords of the triplicities decide it, in an eclipse of the Sun or the Moon in which they indicate the things that will happen and for how long it will be and of what kind it will be."

Apart from relying on the rulers of triplicity, Dorotheus also notes whether a planet is angular, succedent or cadent. He places a good deal of importance on this as is apparent in Book I chapter twenty-three in which he states

"If you find Jupiter in a bad nativity in a cardine, it drives away the evil for 12 years, but if it is what follows a cardine (i.e. a succedent house), then it will obstruct the calamity until it reaches a sign in which Jupiter indicates calamity."

He has similar rules for Venus and the other planets.

Whether a nativity is diurnal or nocturnal is important for Dorotheus, as we might expect, for he distinguishes between diurnal and nocturnal rulers of triplicity. The lord of the Midheaven is as important as the lord of the Ascendant and the lord of property in determining the excellence of fortune (Ptolemy calls this the *Rank of Fortune* in *Tetrabiblos* Book IV.3). He wants to see them angular, in which case *"the native will possess fortune, eminence, commendation, praise, and a good livelihood."* He also uses dispositors. Thus, in Book I, chapter twenty-six, on the magnitude of fortune and property, he looks at the lords of both luminaries and if he finds them in a bad place, tells us to observe the *pars fortunae* ... if its lord aspects it from a bad place *"then there is no good for the native."*

Dorotheus notes the aspects to houses. In Book I, chapter fourteen when discussing the *Lot of the Mother*, he tells us to observe if the planets Venus and Jupiter aspect the fourth cardine. If they do then an increase of good is predicted for the mother.

The houses are used but are not accorded the emphasis they receive in later astrological practice. Thus, in Book I, chapter twenty-seven, when he examining the position of the malefics. he concludes that if found in the second house or aspecting it by square or opposition then there will be a decline in property and livelihood.

He uses the rulers of houses but more for finding the Arabic Parts than for themselves, in contrast to many modern-day astrologers. In Book I, chapter twenty-seven when examining the status of decline and disaster Dorotheus tells us (line 19)

"Look which is the lord of the second, then count from it the second place (and add to it the degrees of the Ascendant) as from that place the matter of livelihood will be made clearer to you."

Retrograde planets are debilitated and an adverse indication while it is unclear which system of the Terms Dorotheus uses.²

At the beginning of Book I, in chapter 4 he deals with the matter of whether the mother's pregnancy will be difficult or easy. He then discusses whether the child will be nourished or not. Pingree renders this "*Judgement concerning the matter of the upbringing of the native.*" but this is not so much a matter of education as to whether or not the child survives infancy.

It corresponds to Bonatti's *Liber astronomiae Tractatus Decimus, De Nativitatibus, Differentiae Prima et Secunda* in which he deals with the question of whether a child will be born alive or be still born (*Differentia Prima*) or if the child lives, whether it will survive for any appreciable time (*Differentia Secunda*).

The method given by Dorotheus is detailed though not as lengthy as that given by Bonatti. Dorotheus, and those that follow him, employ the rulers of triplicity in this matter as in all judgements regarding the viability of the native.

² see Pingree's translation, p. 168 & p. 234 line 7-8.

Stated as briefly, the rulers of the triplicities of the principle rulers of life: Sun, Moon, Ascendant, Ruler of the Ascendant, *pars fortunae*, Lord of the conjunction or prevention (i.e. New or Full Moon) prior to birth, and occasionally the place of Jupiter and Venus are studied. An *Almutem*³ is taken from these - that is, a planet is searched for which has the greatest number of dignities in these places and if it is not cadent, the indications are that the child lives.

Yet, it is also important if the rulers of the triplicities of the places mentioned above are also not cadent. They should be angular. They can be succedent. If they are cadent, the life force is weak in the native. Dorotheus's method is related to this but has unique features. Curiously, the *Almutem*, so characteristic a feature of Arabic Astrology, is missing in Dorotheus' method. (again this is further examined www.new-library.com/zoller/books Tools and Techniques and www.new-library.com/zoller/courses Foundation Course and Diploma Course.

Dorotheus, like Firmicus and the *Liber Hermetis*, deals a lot with horoscopes indicating slavery. Institutional slavery is no longer a major feature of our modern world but it is likely that the same configurations still occur. An interesting study would be to take Firmicus and Dorotheus and correlate the configurations spoken of in their works to modern people's lives. This would help to answer what experience in modern lives these configurations foretell.

Another feature of Dorotheus's astrology is an all but total lack of interest in the native's psychology. We do not find out anything about the native's intelligence (or, really, even his character) until Dorotheus starts dealing with the planets' significations (in particular, Mercury's in Book II). In its place he emphasises the family line, i.e. slave, base, or free. Also marriage: if it is a good marriage and objective physical characteristics, colour of eyes, etc and objective deeds.

Dorotheus deals with the hour of birth. He tells us that males are born in masculine hours. The *dodecamoria* of the Moon are also taken into consideration as well as the masculinity and femininity of the sign in which the Sun, Moon and Ascendant are found.

³ *Almutem*, *Almuten*, *Almutes*, *Almutez* transliterated from the Arabic *al-mubtazz*, the victorious (planet). Cf R. R. Wright, The Elements of Astrology by al-Biruni, (London, 1934) p. 307.

From Book I, chapter thirteen on we run into the "Lots" or "Arabic" Parts. When these mathematical fictions were dubbed "Arabic" is unknown, to me at least, but Dorotheus relies on them as much as any Arabic writer. My guess would be that the moniker "Arabic Parts" dates from no earlier than the Renaissance. Again, this are dealt with at length in *Bonatti on the Arabic Parts* and in the practical lessons found in the Foundation Course and the Diploma Course on Medieval Astrology.

Book II

This focuses on marriage and children. Venus and its triplicity rulers are emphasised. Planets aspecting Venus are next analysed. Then planets in the house of Venus and planets aspecting them. It is only when we get to line 16 that we hear anything of the "*sign of marriage which is the seventh from the ascendent*". Planets aspecting this sign are important. The ruler of this sign (=house, since equal houses are used) is also very important. The outcome is determined by the nature of this planet. These are house rulers, as we know them in the modern sense.

Book II contains chapters detailing the planets mutual aspects and positions in houses. It also details the significance of one planet in the house of another.

Book III

This deals with longevity and treats of the Hyleg and (supposedly) with the Alcocoden.

Chapter One gives a method that does not use the Years of the Planets Table so frequently met with in Medieval Astrology. Instead it seems to be a Directional Method employing Oblique Ascension in which the Ascendant is directed to the planets' aspects. In this Dorotheus pays attention to the term in which the aspect falls to which the Ascendant is directed. If it is the term of a benefic, or if benefic planets are present, Dorotheus does not predict death.

At the beginning of this chapter we read of a "*governor of the nativity*" but it turns out not to be a traditional *Almutem* but Saturn, Mars or Jupiter who were in one of their stations *seven days before or after the nativity!* Likewise, if, three days after the birth a benefic and the lord of its term are in a good location and aspect the Moon with a trine while the Moon is angular ("*in a cardine*") "*then, say that all of the Nativity's condition is good.*" This **configuration** carries the force of an *Almutem* but we do not find an *Almutem* as in later Arabic texts.

Chapter Two says it deals with the hyleg and alcocoden. He will take the hyleg to be the Sun by day, the Moon by night, the part of fortune, the place of the conjunction or prevention {Pingree conjectures it may be the *kadkhudah* and puts it in square brackets with a question mark. It can be clearly stated now that it is not the *kadkhudah* }. Dorotheus wants the Sun, for instance, to be *in the ascendant in the degrees above the earth* {the five degrees above the Ascendant Ptolemy mentions?}, *in the Midheaven, or in the eleventh house. It should not be cadent.* {which rules out the twelfth house but permits the eighth}. *Should the Sun be cadent in a diurnal figure* {he seems to deny any house below the horizon}, *and the Moon to be in an approved position, the Moon can be hyleg. Likewise in a nocturnal figure, if the Moon is not in an approved place but the Sun is, the sun is hyleg.*"

Once you find the hyleg, if the lord of the term of the Sun or Moon is cadent, this hyleg is no good. If a malefic aspects the hyleg, the native will be injured in the period during which this malefic is governor of the prorogation or ray. Dorotheus wants the lord of the term to aspect the hyleg, or the lord of the house {i.e. sign}, or of exaltation, or of triplicity, or of its decan. In the absence of "a witness" {i.e. of such an aspecting lord}, the hyleg is any planet which aspects - seems to be the sense of what Dorotheus is saying. In an example he gives the Ascendant turns out to be hyleg because all of the candidates are cadent.

His system of prorogation is, again, one of directing by terms. The example he gives has the Ascendant as hyleg. It becomes hyleg because the Sun is in it but interestingly he does not make the Sun itself hyleg.

Dorotheus's system is not entirely clear.

Firstly, he does not direct a planet on the Midheaven or in an intermediary house, but we may make the presumption that his practice is similar to Ptolemy's - who does do these things.

Secondly, though Dorotheus makes mention of the *kadkhudah* (alcocoden) he seems to be limiting it to the place of the New or Full Moon before birth. The alcocoden is not presented as the *giver of years*, but merely as the *governor of the matter of life*.

Thirdly, the hyleg must be aspected by one of its rulers (house, exaltation, triplicity, term and decan) but these rulers do not give years as they do in Medieval Arabic Astrology. In Guido Bonatti's 13th century *Liber astronomiae*, which uses earlier Arabic astrological techniques, the planets aspecting the hyleg are candidates for being chosen as alcocoden (if they have one or more of the five dignities in the place of the hyleg). Should a planet meet the criteria set forth in Bonatti's book, it will, depending upon the specifics of its placement, give so many years of life. According to Dorotheus, if the intended hyleg is not aspected, it ought not be considered hyleg, as in later Arabic practice.

Dorotheus's directing of the Ascendant as hyleg is by ascensions of the region of birth and in practice he seems to judge death on the basis of the directed Ascendant coming to the conjunction or aspect of a malefic unattended by any benefics. It is significant too that he does refer to a method that calculates the number of years (reference should be made to Dorotheus in *Carmen Astrologicum*, David Pingree translation, London 1993, from page 235 for further investigation of this matter.)

Were it not for the fact that a method of finding the length of life by direction is given, it would be natural to assume that something has been lost from the text. As it is, it appears that the term *kadkhudah* has been added at a later date by an Arab or Persian writer but unfortunately to no effect.

Book IV

This is on the Transfer of Years.

Chapter One is on Profection and on the interpretation of the rulers of profected years. The chapter is long, reflecting the importance the ancients put on this technique. A good deal more detail is given on this technique than I have seen in other texts. In particular the matter of delineating illnesses is gone into in some detail. Profection is a powerful technique that the modern astrologer who wishes to make accurate prediction must master. Again, for those wishing to learn the technique reference may be made to the Foundation Course and the Diploma Course in Medieval Astrology.

On line 15 of Book IV "Valens" is quoted. If this is Vettius Valens it is anachronistic. It looks like an interpolation. The name comes up again on line 15 of Book V as "Valens the Philosopher".

Book V

This book is on *Questions* better known to the modern practitioner as Horary Astrology.

The use of the third person pronoun makes it apparent that this Book V was added at a later date by someone other than Dorotheus

The astrology of these chapters is fairly straight-forward. The hour of the action is considered, as is the place of the Moon and its dispositor. The author considers what planets are aspecting or conjunct the Moon. The houses are of little, if any, consequence in many of the entries, though the Ascendent and the cardines are mentioned.

Chapter 41 is from Qitrinus the Sadwali and deals with illness.

The book ends with a chapter on the cheapness or expensiveness of things bought under the Nodes of the Moon.

Conclusions on Dorotheus' Astrology

Dorotheus's astrology is largely complete, lacking little found in the works of the later Arabic astrologers, save a clear *Almutem*, Years of the Planets Table and the alcocoden. All other differences being in the main are matters of emphasis.

It is worthy of note that of extant astrological *opera*, only Manilius's Stoic *Astronomica* (circa 14 AD) is older than the *Carmen Astrologicum*. For while less than a century lies between these two works, the *Astronomica* is impractical, being largely symbolical and incomplete. This being in contrast with the elaborate and detailed *Carmen Astrologicum* which provides a practical tool to the astrologer.

One wonders if Manilius' poem were intended to be more than symbolic and if there was a more articulated and developed astrology behind it. The first horoscope with an Ascendant dates from only 4 BC according to Neugebauer and Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes*, Philadelphia, 1959. According to the same source, the first Greek horoscope dates from 61 BC. According to van der Waerden, *Science Awakening*, Oxford, 1974, the first known individual's horoscope was back in 409 BC. This means that, since the Greeks seem to have given astrology the form we have it in today, and they seem to have gotten it together certainly by 4 BC, the Roman Stoic Manilius, with his symbolic constellation based "astrology" was not presenting a complete system for some reason. Complete astrological systems had already existed for several centuries.

Dorotheus's work with those attributed to Hermes and Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* laid the foundation upon which Arabic (and possibly Persian) astrologers built their practice.

The absence of a true *Almutem* (the most powerful planet in the figure as a whole) as well as several other points (e.g. the hylegeical places in matters of longevity) is of importance. The *Almutem* is a characteristic feature of later Arabic astrological writings.

Firmicus Maternus in his *Mathesis* (circa 350 AD) writes of the "Ruler of the Horoscope". This is the first planet the Moon applies to after birth. Yet in the 2nd century, Ptolemy, in *Tetrabiblos* (*Book III,10*) advises us to find a planet which is the most powerful in the hylegeical places in cases where the Sun and Moon are not clearly the Hyleg. Ptolemy does not use the Arabic word "*Almutem*", of course, that being appellation which later Middle Eastern writers gave to this planet. It would seem that the idea of "the ruler of the chart" evolved along two different lines. The configuration approach exhibited in Firmicus and Dorotheus being one line and Ptolemy's planet with the most testimonies being the other line. Ptolemy's being adopted by the Arabs.

Masha'allah's Work

Masha'allah (c740- c815) was the foremost of the early Arabic astrologers. He worked in Basra and, together with the Persian astrologer al-Naubakht, astrologically elected the time for the founding of the new city of Baghdad in 762 by the Caliph Al-Mansur.

For detailed discussion of the work of Masha'allah see *[Jewish Astrology]* His debt to Dorotheus is evident. It is of value to show how, as a prelude to investigating the work of Abu 'Ali Al-Khayyat and that of Abu Ma'shar.

Masha'allah's *On Conjunctions, Religions and Peoples*, a work on mundane astrology analysed in the above article exhibits a number of features taken from Dorotheus. His use, for instance, of triplicity rulers is right out of the *Carmen Astrologicum*. Like Dorotheus, he closely attends to whether a figure is diurnal or nocturnal, handling each differently; in particular, applying nocturnal triplicity rulers in nocturnal figures and diurnal ones in diurnal figures. Likewise, he emphasises the Moon in nocturnal figures and the Sun in diurnal figures.

The position of the planets in houses plays a big role and planets as rulers/ dispositors are also considered but are of secondary importance with respect to position - as in Dorotheus.

Both Masha'allah and Abu Ma'shar wrote on the Great Conjunctions and on Ingresses of the Sun into Aries (called "Transfers of Years or "Revolutions of Years of the World"). In both cases, they seem to have based their teachings on doctrines attributed to Hermes and preserved by the Harranian Sabians. Abu Ma'shar, in fact, seems to have been heavily influenced by them. Both men acknowledge Hermes as their source for these teachings.

Masha'allah's *Nativities* (Arabic title: *Kitab Almawalid*) published as Appendix 3 in Pingree's *The Astrological History of Masha'allah* (as cited above), in as much as the subject is the same as Dorotheus's *Carmen Astrologicum*, shows the parallel methodologies much clearer.

In chapter one, Masha'allah would have us judge the survival of the infant native by looking at the rulers of the triplicity of the Ascendant and the rulers of the luminaries, new or full moons. Like Dorotheus, he is concerned if these rulers are cadent. The *Almutem* plays the traditional role we expect it to play in an Arabic work.

Masha'allah's method of determining the length of life under the different *Differentiae* (which he doesn't clearly itemise as Bonatti does) is far closer to Bonatti's method than to Dorotheus. But then, Bonatti relies on Masha'allah. Like Dorotheus, the matter or whether the figure is diurnal or nocturnal is of importance to Masha'allah equally in Nativities as in mundane figures.

Rulers, dispositors and planetary positions above or below the horizon are of great importance; so to their house position.

Finally, the Hyleg/Alcocoden doctrine is well developed by Masha'allah. He clearly cites the Years of the Planets Table for reckoning the length of life of the native. This technique apparently evolved between Dorotheus (1st century) and Messa'allah (8th century).

Abu 'Ali Al-Khayyat

Masha'allah's student, Abu 'Ali Al-Khayyat (c.770- 835 AD) was known to those intimate with him as Abu 'Ali Yahya ibn Ghalib or as Isma'il ibn Muhammad. He was one of the leading astrologers of his day. He wrote an Introduction to Astrology; works on horary astrology, political works on forms of Governments, a work entitled *On The Revolution of Years of Nativities* (Solar Returns), a scientific work on the prism, and a work called *The Rod of Gold*. According to Holden, only his horary work *On Questions* and *The Judgements of Nativities* survive in Arabic. The latter was translated into the Latin by Plato of Tivoli in 1136; and by John of Seville in 1153. Holden has used the latter.

Abu 'Ali Al-Khayyat's *The Judgements of Nativities*, (translated by Holden, as cited above) follows his master's lead very closely, though Holden holds the opposite opinion. I have compared the Latin text of Masha'allah's *Nativities* (as found in Pingree) with Holden's translation and found that, while differences do exist between the two works they are the sort that one would expect when a master passes on his teaching to a student.

Even accepting that we only have the first six chapters of Masha`allah's work, it is still possible that we do not have all that Masha`allah taught in the parts that we do have. Ancient authors did not always publish everything they knew. Abu 'Ali, the student, may have published more of his teacher's doctrines than the teacher did. This would account for the more detailed and varied character of Abu 'Ali's works in that part which corresponds to Masha`allah's

Masha`allah's work is only six chapters long while Abu Ali's is fifty and Holden takes this as one indication that Abu 'Ali's text is superior. My opinion is that it may in fact be superior but not because Abu 'Ali wrote something novel or better than his teacher. Rather more of Abu 'Ali's work has survived. Comparison of the two works shows that the first six chapters of both works are very similar. There are some differences but they are not critical and nothing to hang one's hat on as showing that Abu 'Ali is not copying or repeating his teacher's doctrines.

The names of the first few chapters are almost identical. The differences may indeed be due to translation. The subjects are the same. The methods are identical with the same triplicity rulers; the same approach and the same longevity method.

Holden presents the following fifty chapters:

1. Raising of Children.
2. Hyleg (note: the hyleg given differs from Ptolemy's (as does Masha'allah's))
3. Alcocoden
4. Adding and Subtracting Years from the Alcocoden
5. Quality of Mind
6. Nativities of Kings
7. Prosperity and Adversity
8. Time of Native's Good Fortune
9. Sources of Native's Prosperity
10. Native's Circumstances/1st House
11. 2nd House
12. 3rd House/Siblings
13. Number of Brothers
14. Reputation of the Brothers
15. Mutual Friendship or Hatred of Brothers
16. Fortune of Parents
17. Length of Life of the Father
18. Length of Life of the Mother
19. Hyleg for the Life of the Parents
20. Status of Children and 5th House
21. Time of Children
22. Native's Slaves
23. Native's Luck with Animals and Cattle
24. Illness
25. Matrimonial Matters 7th House
26. Part of Marriage
27. Native's Travel
28. Utility or Loss of Trip
29. Law or Religion and Dreams
30. Work/10th House
31. Native's Place in the Kingdom
32. Prosperity and Power.
33. Profession
34. Audacity and Courage
35. Friends
36. Enemies 12th House
37. Quality of Death
38. How to Judge the 12 Houses
39. Saturn in its own Domicile & those of Other Planets in Diurnal and Nocturnal Figures
40. Jupiter in its own Domicile & those of Other Planets in Diurnal and Nocturnal Figures

41. Mars in its own Domicile & those of Other Planets in Diurnal and Nocturnal Figures
42. Sun in its own Domicile & those of Other Planets in Diurnal and Nocturnal Figures
43. Venus in its own Domicile & those of Other Planets in Diurnal and Nocturnal Figures
44. Mercury in its own Domicile & those of Other Planets in Diurnal and Nocturnal Figures
45. Moon in its own Domicile & those of Other Planets in Diurnal and Nocturnal Figures
46. Lord of the Hour of Birth
47. Planets in the Ascendant
48. North and South Nodes of the Moon
49. Effects or Indications of *pars fortunae* in 12 Houses
50. Rest of Accidental Dignities and Debilities of the *pars fortunae*

Holden suggests that the *On Nativities* of Messa'allah might have been a 6th century work that he re-worked. In this was indeed so then I should contend that Abu 'Ali repeated the task. If it is true that the work is from the 6th century, it would be interesting to find who the author was and what the full history of the work is.

Holden states that Abu 'Ali's astrology is based upon pre-Ptolemaic Greek Astrology. This seems indeed right however, he passes over any discussion of Abu 'Ali's longevity method which, like Messa'allah's, is the near complete hyleg/alcocoden method with the Years of the Planets Table⁴.

Holden insightfully published Joachim Heller von Weissenfels's 1546 Preface and letter to the great Melancthon. The principles of delineation related by Joachim are as good today as they were in the German Renaissance and one can only hope that readers of Holden's work will be moved to emulate the older practice.

Abu Ma'shar

The famous Persian astrologer Abu Ma'shar (full name: Abu Ma'shar Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn `Umar al-Balkhi) (787-886 AD) is an example of Hermetic influence on Arabic Astrology. His works (written in Arabic) represent a curious fusion of Sabian Hermeticism, Persian chronology, Islam, Greek Science and Mesopotamian Astrology.

⁴ See my article on the years of the planets table.

He was instrumental in fostering the identification of the Antediluvian Islamic Prophet Idris with the Jewish Prophet Enoch and the Hellenistic Hermes. He was an extremely successful practitioner of the astrology who travelled throughout the Mid East in service to numerous Indian, Persian, Arab, and Egyptian chiefs of state.

His reputation was established in the Christian West by Peter of Abano in the 13th century in his *Conciliator differentiarum philosophorum et precipue medicorum* (Diff. 156) where he quotes the *Al-Mudsakaret* or (Memorabilia) of Abu Sa'id Schadsan, a student of Abu Ma'shar's who recorded his teacher's answers to students and astrological deeds. *The Memorabilia* -which have come to be known among scholars as "*Albumasar in Sadan*" due to traditional corruption of both men's names, is analysed by Lynn Thorndike in *Isis* 1954 pp 22-32.

It will suffice to say here that it is perhaps the only example of a medieval astrological hagiography. It portrays "the master" as a nearly omniscient wise man learned not only in the techniques of all branches of the Art but also in its traditional history and aware of the contributions of his predecessors. He is quoted in *Albumasar in Sadan* (p.29 of *Isis* article) as saying that he follows Messahala's method of projecting rays and in other locations admits to following other methods of Messahala (Masha'allah).

Abu Ma'shar's astrological works are of the greatest importance for the history of astrology and from the practical point of view. It is not the purpose of this paper, though, to examine these beyond relating Abu Ma'shar's to the Arabic tradition as a whole. His astrological works were widely translated in the 12th century, widely circulated in manuscript, and exerted a very powerful influence on the development of Western Astrology, though, in some respects, Masha'allah is perhaps of equal importance.

The known astrological works of Abu Ma'shar are:

1. *The Greater Introduction to Astrology*
2. *The Flores Astrologicae*
3. *On The Great Conjunctions and On Revolutions of the World*
4. *On Revolutions of Nativities*
5. *The Thousands*

Pingree mentions two treatises by Abu Ma'shar on the subject of astrological history: *Kitab al-Uluf* and *Kitab al-Qiranat*. The first is number five in the list above; the second may be the Arabic title for number three.

Again to suit the purpose of this paper discussion needs examine Abu Ma'shar's *The Thousands* as it forms the basis of a great deal of Abu Ma'shar's mundane astrological theory and practice.

Abu Ma'shar

In the following discussion I refer to David E. Pingree's *The Thousands of Abu Ma'shar*, Warburg Institute, London, 1968.

Pingree points out in his preface that Abu Ma'shar's system of chronology as set forth in his *Thousands* is based upon the Sindhind tradition and therefore on Indian and Iranian sources. His astrological history is of Sassanian origin.

Pingree calls it a corruption of the pristine Hermetic tradition. Indeed he regards it a "brazen imposture" intended to support the idea of the possibility of an astrological history and Abu Ma'shar's reputation as a great astrologer. While this raises much legitimate debate whether it is correct or not is largely irrelevant to our central purpose which is to understand the foundations of Abu Ma'shar's astrological theory.

Abu Ma'shar builds his astrological history around the Deluge which he dates at midnight, Thursday - Friday, 17-18 February 3101 BC. This happens to be the beginning of the Kali Yuga according to the Hindus. Pingree tells us that this is no mistake as the Arabs and Persians had become familiar, by Abu Ma'shar's day with the Siddhantas in which the entire system of Hindu chronology was contained.

Thus, Abu Ma'shar, knowing the Yuga systems of the Hindus, calculated (Pingree uses "assumes") a grand conjunction of mean planets at 0 degrees of Aries in 183,101 BC; 3101 BC; and in 176,899 AD thus showing that he is working with a Great Year of 360,000 solar years. This cycle appears in Ismaili sources and in the 4th century Sanskrit *Vishmupurana* (translated by H. H. Wilson, ed. Vasudeva Aina pure, Bombay Saka 1824 (1902) 4.24,40-41; London 1840; reprinted 1961 Calcutta, see page 391)

Abu Ma'shar himself acknowledges Indian sources for his chronology but argues that his system is better than theirs because:

Each planet moves an integer of degrees in 1000 years in it
 The length of the year is 6,5; 15,32,24 or 365.259 days and 259 days is
 equal to the minimum gestation period of the human foetus.

He also employs a number of astrological periods:

I. Tasyirat

- a. mighty *qisma* = 1 degree moves along the equator in 1000 yrs
- b. big *qisma* = 1 degree moves along the equator in 100 yrs
- c. middle *qisma* = 1 degree moves along the equator in 10 yrs
- d. small *qisma* = 1 degree moves along the equator in 1 yr

II. Intiba

- a. mighty *intiba* = 1 sign moves along the equator in 1000 yrs
- b. big *intiba* = 1 sign moves along the equator in 100 yrs
- c. middle *intiba* = 1 sign moves along the equator in 10 yrs
- d. small *intiba* = 1 sign moves along the equator in 1 yrs

III. Fardar

- a. mighty *fardar* = 360 solar years. Each *fardar* is ruled by one sign and one planet. The series begins with Aries and Saturn.
- b. big *fardar* = 78 years. This is allotted to the signs in an uneven manner:

Aries	12	Leo	8	Sagittarius	4
Taurus	11	Virgo	7	Capricorn	3
Gemini	10	Libra	6	Aquarius	2
Cancer	9	Scorpio	5	Pisces	1

The total is 78.

- c. middle *fardar* = 75 years. Each *fardar* is ruled by one of seven planets or the two lunar nodes in the order of their exaltations. Thus one cycle = $9 \times 75 = 675$ Years. The order is:

Sun, Moon, North Node, Jupiter, Mercury, Saturn, South Node, Mars, Venus.

- d. small *fardar*

Begin the attribution in a diurnal figure from the Sun; in a nocturnal figure from the Moon in the following order:

Sun (10), Venus (8), Mercury (13), Moon (9), Saturn (11),
Jupiter (12), Mars (7), North Node (3), South Node (2), Sun...etc

Professor Kennedy gives the broad outlines of Abu Ma'shar's astrological theories in the *Kitab al-uluf* in his very good article entitled *Ithaca* published in *Studies in Islamic Exact Sciences*. American University of Beirut, 1983.

The transmission of astrological technique from the Arabs to Europe involved the transmittal of both the Dorotheus tradition and the Ptolemaic tradition but not as clearly distinct traditions. Medieval authors tended to combine both and did not recognise a difference between the two.

Bonatti, compiling Latin translations of Arabic astrological treatises for inclusion in his magnum opus the *Liber astronomiae*, cites many authors. Ptolemy's opinions are often held in veneration but often are given along side other opinions, which seem to have almost equal weight.

Though the *Tetrabiblos* was translated from Arabic in 1138 it was not widely known apart from such references until the Renaissance when the original Greek version was translated. It was only then that western scholars discovered that this work lacked many features of Arabic Astrology and emphasised others either not dealt with by the Arabs or handled differently. They concluded that the Arabs had perverted the "pristine Greek Astrology" by the addition of superstitious practices.

A different conclusion could have been arrived at but they were led to this point of view by two factors.

Firstly, Greek had only recently been re-introduced into Italy and this re-introduction had opened to western scholars an entire secular and pagan literature containing ideas totally new and seductive to the intellectually starved west. These ideas ranged from erotic literature, democratic society, medical science and heliocentricity.

Secondly, the Turks had conquered Constantinople in 1453 and were at the gates of Vienna in 1529 and again in 1683.

Contemporary Europe (at both of these times as well as prior and even afterwards) lived in dread and hatred of not just the Turk but of all Islam. As early as the latter part of the 15th century, Marsilio Ficino had written to King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary exhorting him to stop the advance of the Turk and thereby save Christendom (meaning Italy, primarily).

Thus the decision of western scholars to castigate Arabic Astrology must be seen in the context of a long standing anti Islamic sentiment. This related to the Crusades, centuries of Arab pillaging of the European Mediterranean coasts and the very real possibility in the Renaissance and Post Renaissance periods of the total eclipse of Roman Christian culture in Western Europe.

The following is a synopsis of Arabic Astrological doctrines. The question for the reader is to decide if they are indeed innovations:

1. Arabic Parts (actually Greco-Egyptian in origin).
2. Primary Directions - as with Alchabitius (Midheaven by Right Ascension; Ascendant by Oblique Ascension; inter-planetaries by proportion). This system appears to be a restating of Ptolemy's method.
3. Triplicity rulers - as with Dorotheus
4. Alcocoden
5. *Almutem*
6. Secondary Progressions
7. Planetary Periods (e.g. Abu Ma'shar mentioned above) numerous kinds of *firdaria*, *imntaba* and *qisma*, etc.
8. Continued astrological magic tradition. Pingree believes the Harranians may have invented it.
9. Arabic Astrology is fatalistic (except that God can intervene and sanctification can enable one to transcend astrological influence.)

NOTES

The method of predicting the length of a person life needs careful study and analysis. Those wishing to explore this field further may wish to consult the following works. But please note this is a preliminary rather than being exhaustive list.

Bonatti, Guido, *Liber astronomiae*, Basel 1550, *tractatus de nativitatibus*, cap.1-6, col.672-687.

Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, trs F. E. Robbins, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1964. Book III, chapters 8-10.

Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, trs J. M. Ashmand, Foulsham, London, 1917, chapters 9-15.

Abu`Ali al-Khayyat, *The Judgment of Nativities*, trs James H. Holden, American Federation of Astrologers, Tempe, 1988, chapters 1-4.

John of Spain (Joannes Hispalensis), *Epitome totius astrologiae, Norimbergae, 1548. Liber Secundus de nativitatibus, cap 1-6.*

Kusyar ibn Labban ibn Basahri al-Jili, *al-Madkhal fi Sina`at Ahkam al-Nujum*, trs M. Yano, Brill, 1997, Section III, chapter 6.

Abu'l-Rayhan Muhammad ibn Ahmad Al-Biruni, *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*, trs R. Ramsay Wright, London, 1934, pp324-330.

Firmicus Maternus, *Ancient Astrology Theory and Practice*, Park Ridge, Noyes, 1975, *Liber Secundus*, cap. 25.

Lilly, William, *Christian Astrology*, London, , 1985, pp 525-531.

Coley, Henry, *Clavis Astrologiae Elimata*, 2nd edition 1676 transcribed, Issaqua Washington, 1996, pp. 529-533.

Alcabitius, *Isagoge, Parisiis, 1521, fol.20v-24r.*

Sibly, Ebenezer, *New and Complete Outline of the Occult Sciences*, 1790 & 1791.

SPECIAL NOTE: digital copies of many of the original texts referred to in the main body of this Study may be obtained by application to the New Library archivist:
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