

ARABIC BOWL DIVINATION AND THE GREEK MAGICAL PAPYRI

Alexander Fodor

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

Bowl divination or lecanomancy, a specific sort of hydromancy, has always been a favourite practice in the Middle East. It is generally agreed that its origins can be traced back to the inhabitants of ancient Mesopotamia, from whom it spread to the Egyptians, Jews, Greeks, Persians, Arabs and Turks, arriving finally at Europe¹. Naturally, the idea of looking at shining surfaces like water, oil, ink, mirrors etc. in order to obtain oracular answers to questions asked about future events might have easily arisen anywhere in the world, but in the case of this “Babylonian type” of lecanomancy there are some distinct features which clearly reveal the possible interrelationships between the different methods.

The basic elements of the Babylonian ritual were the following²: On a propitious day the performer, an official priest (called *bārū*) who acted upon the request of a client, had to go through certain purificatory rites such as cleaning himself and putting on fresh garments, then he had to offer a sacrifice to the gods Šamaš and Adad. After this he placed the bowl filled with water and oil to the left side of the statues of Šamaš and Adad, in the direction of the rising sun. Having finished these preparations the *bārū* anointed his eyes with oil from the bowl, and by examining the different formations of the oil on the water he gave the oracles. Accordingly, this kind of lecanomancy can be termed as inductive³ since, apart from the physical phenomena produced by the

¹ For lecanomancy in general, see Ganszyniec 1925.

² Ganszyniec 1925:1879f. For Babylonian oil magic, see also Hunger 1903, Contenau 1940:292f, Pettinato 1966.

³ For this term, see Bouché-Leclercq 1879:185.

oil, no other means of obtaining inspiration were employed by the performer.

Research concerned with the lecanomantic tradition of different ancient peoples has generally been content with vague allusions to this Babylonian background. An important exception to this attitude is offered by Daiches' work on the connections between Babylonian and Jewish oil magic (Daiches 1913). However, comparing the main components of the Babylonian and late Jewish divinatory procedures, he seems to put too much emphasis on the direct Babylonian influence upon the Jewish practice represented by works in rather late manuscripts, mainly from the 16th to the 18th centuries⁴. In reality, these late Jewish texts contain some additional, new elements which were not characteristic of Mesopotamian lecanomancy but are clearly shared by Egyptian and Arabic descriptions of bowl divination. Into this category we may include such motifs as the prescriptions about the use of mediums, the introduction of spirits, demons, or gods as transmitters of oracles, the order in which they were required to eat and drink before answering the questions. Actually, we shall see that direct parallels to these Jewish texts can easily be found in the Arabic descriptions of similar operations, a fact that has so far remained unnoticed by research⁵. So, if we are to group the various lecanomantic operations, we seem to be more justified in giving priority to the interrelatedness of Egyptian, Jewish and Arabic traditions, which can be separated from the Babylonian in many aspects.

In fact, one of the most characteristic traits of popular religion in Greco-Roman Egypt was people's eagerness to know the future through the means of divination⁶. Thus it is not surprising that this form of

⁴ Daiches 1913:13. To show the antiquity of lecanomancy among the Jews it is worth referring to an amulet from the Greco-Roman period on which Solomon is represented as he performs the rites of hydromancy (Goodenough 1953:232).

⁵ See Trachtenberg 1939:219-222 and Schäfer 1990:89f. Cf. also Dan 1963:360f where Rabbi Hayyim Vital refers to Arab sorcerers as his source for descriptions of the princes of this divinatory procedure.

⁶ See Dunand 1979:19, 22.

folk piety has long survived the Islamic conquest of the Nile Valley. In illustration of this, the present paper wishes to examine Arabic practices of bowl divination as presented by magic literature and to show their reliance upon the Egyptian tradition reflected by the magical papyri from Greco-Roman Egypt which go back mainly to the first centuries A.D.⁷ In this respect, to the best of my knowledge, Hull was the first and only scholar to allude to such striking similarities as can be discovered, for example, in *PGM* V.1-53, and in a modern account of a divinatory ceremony given by Lane⁸. Hull, however, only wanted to demonstrate through this example the antiquity and persistence of magical traditions and understandably had no further interest in other possible Arabic sources.

An interesting piece of evidence about medieval Arab authors' unconscious awareness of some connection between this kind of divination and ancient Egypt is, however, demonstrated by stories claiming that several ancient rulers had magic mirrors in which they could foresee different events (Carra de Vaux 1898:201). Looking at the state of research on Arabic lecanomancy, mirror gazing or other related modes of divination from the Arabists' side, we usually find descriptions of the procedures but nothing more⁹. Fahd's standard work on Arabic divination in the period of the birth of Islam only briefly mentions lecanomancy as one of those divinatory practices which were not characteristic of Central Arabia due to the lack of water¹⁰.

⁷ For their edition, see *PGM*, for their translation, see Betz 1992. For lecanomancy in *PGM*, see Hopfner 1990:228-268.

⁸ See Hull 1974:21ff. The very same type of lecanomancy also survived among the Greeks as the texts published by Delatte demonstrate it (Delatte 1927: s.v. *lecanomanteia* in Index). For a study on the latter, see Hopfner 1932. For bowl divination among the Copts, see Kropp 1930:269-274. Cf. also *CE* s.v. "Lecanoscopia", 1507f.

⁹ See e.g. Reinaud 1828:401f; Doutté 1908:389-393; Lane 1917:274-282. Worrell 1917: 41 refers to the parallel Jewish texts published by Daiches.

¹⁰ Fahd 1966:405f. For Ibn Haldūn's theoretical view of lecanomancy, see *ibid.*, 47-49.

Generally speaking, the customary Arabic recipes for lecanomantic operations are concerned with the following phases of the magical act: conditions to be met by the performer, preparations for the ritual, adjuration of the spirits and finally their dismissal. To present a typical description of such a divination ceremony I have chosen a text from a modern Arabic magic book published in Egypt (aṭ-Ṭūhī, *Bār Nūh* 6-11). The author, °Abd al-Fattāḥ as-Sayyid aṭ-Ṭūhī, was for a long time the busiest compiler of magic books in Egypt and the Arab World in general. The pieces of this semi-underground literature have reached the remotest parts of the Arab World and even India. aṭ-Ṭūhī, now an old man, retired as a practising magician – a kind of popular healer of personal and social problems – in the autumn of 1993. In the course of my visit to him in Cairo in 1989, he told me that he had copied his works from the manuscripts of the Egyptian National Library. At any rate, that he relied on sources containing ancient material is, I think, beyond doubt, as the passage to be quoted will testify. In addition to occasional references to other descriptions of bowl divination which offer more relevant material or complementary details concerning certain points of the ritual, the following text will supply the basis for an examination of the striking parallels with the magical papyri.

باب في دعوة الملك يونس الحكيم

إذا أردت أن يكون لك خديم لقضاء الحاجة وتسأله عما تريد بأفصح لسان ويظهر لمن يستخدمه بالبيان وطوله ثلاثة أشبار أى ذراع وملبوسه مثل عساكر الأفرنج وتسمع كلامه كأنه من وراء الحائط جميل في الحسن كأنه من سبع سنين وصحته في غاية الصداقة وهو لبيب حاذق لا يفتر عن صاحبه بعد المعاهدة منه ولا يفترق عنه قط مادام على الشرط الذي يشترط عليه فإذا أردت حضوره خذ طشت من النحاس مبيض واقلاه ماء صافي ثم قص حفة شخص من ورق أحمر وتكتب على رأسه مهر قوش ٢ وعلى صدره طقطقوش ٢ وعلى يده اليمنى طارش ٢ وعلى يده اليسار قارش ٢ وعلى بطنه هارش ٢ وعلى خلفه اليمنى عيجلوش ٢ وعلى خلفه الأيسر كرووش ٢ ثم تأخذ السببه من عيدان الرمان الحامض وعلق الشخص المذكور من رجله منكساً وعزم عليه بالعزيمة والبخور عمال وهو من محلب وجاوى ولبان ذكر وسندروس وعود قاقلى فعند تمام العدد ٢١ مرة من القراءة إلا وقد طلع الملك يونس الحكيم من قلب الطشت على وجه الماء بالصفة المتقدمة فيخطبه ويخاطب بكل ما تسأله عنه وبعدها تصرفه بالاصراف الآتى ذكره وهذه العزيمة تقول (أقسمت وعزمت عليكم يا معاشر الأرواح الروحانية بهز عز الله وبنور

وجه الله وبما جرى به القلم من عند الله إلى خير ما خلق الله محمد بن عبد الله
إلا ما أجبتم دعوتي وأسرعتم وظهروتم لي بحق أسماء الله العظام وآياته الكرام
وبحق الأنوار المضيئة والأسماء البهية والشعاعات العرشية والكلمات الربانية
والتساويح اليونانية والعزائم العبرانية والأقسام المكتوتية وبالأسماء
المكتوبة على قلب الشمس وبالأسماء المكتوبة على قلب القمر وبحق من قال
للسموات والأرض انثيا طوعاً أو كرهاً قالتا أتينا طائعين .

عجلوا يا معاشر الأزواج الروحانية بالظهور ٢ بأهياش ٢ ياهوش ٢
رهاطيل ٢ شعيايل ٢ صهيايل ٢ عسقايل ٢ صمصيايل ٢ عزقيايل ٢
طوطيايل ٢ حنقيايل ٢ سمسمايل ٢ طسمائيل ٢ أجبوا أعواني
وافعلوا ما تؤمرون به بحق شيناب ٢ شيناب ٢ هليوه ٢ أه ٢ مرهه ٢
مريها ٢ مره ٢ سراه ٢ مصنها ٢ أسرعوا بحق شليطاه أمرموش شقشفيق
شقشوق وبحق مشطنة أم موسى بطميس مهبالموش شقشاقش ولا حول
ولا قوة إلا بالله العلي العظيم .

أجبوا دعوتي واقضوا حاجتي بحق هذه الأسماء دملبخ ٢ دميلبخ ٢
دملاخ ٢ براخ ٢ قال رب احكم بالحق وربنا الرحمن المستعان على ما تصفون
أجبوا وتوكلوا يا حضار الملك يونا الحكيم بحق هذه الأسماء هيهان ٢
هيموت ٢ أشاث ٢ هو الكبير المتعال أجب يارقيايل ويا جبرائيل
ويا سمسمايل ويا ميكائيل ويا صرفيايل ويا عنيايل ويا كصفايل .

أجبوا وأمروا خدامكم وأعوانكم بطاعتي والزموهم بقضاء حاجتي في

وقتي هذا أهايا شراها أدوناي أصباوت آل شدای وبحق والطور وكتاب
 مسطور . في رق منشور . والبيت الممور . والسقف المرفوع . والبحر
 المسجور . إن عذاب ربك لواقع . ما له من دافع . فلا أقسم بمواقع النجوم .
 وإنه لقسم لو تعلمون عظيم . يا قومنا أجيئوا داعي الله وآمنوا به يففر لكم
 من ذنوبكم ويحرك من عذاب أليم .

أجيئوا يا خدام هذه الأسماء وأحضروا الملك يونا من الحكيم بحق أشمخ
 شماخ نوخ شـنـاخ ٢ جيوخ ٢ عيوخ ٢ ميوخ ٢ موخ ٢ روخ ٢
 شمخ ٢ لمخ ٢ خنخ ٢ شخر خيخ ٢ خياخيخ ٢ اخمدى خمدى بروخيا
 شرى شراخين هو الله البارئ الذي تخضعون له وتخرون له سجداً .

أجيئوا بحق شماخ ٢ رماخ ٢ مشلخ ٢ مشليخ ٢ ميرنخ ٢ برانيخا
 الاميخا لبيخا شبحاشنا أشنا مليخا ماليخا ويشليخا إيششاليخا لخلود
 ويطاش طاش طاشين أطشين طيوش أهياش ٢ هماشاهوش طشوش
 بقشوش هيش أليخا أملايخا سلمنا حيوم قيوم ديوم طلسم .

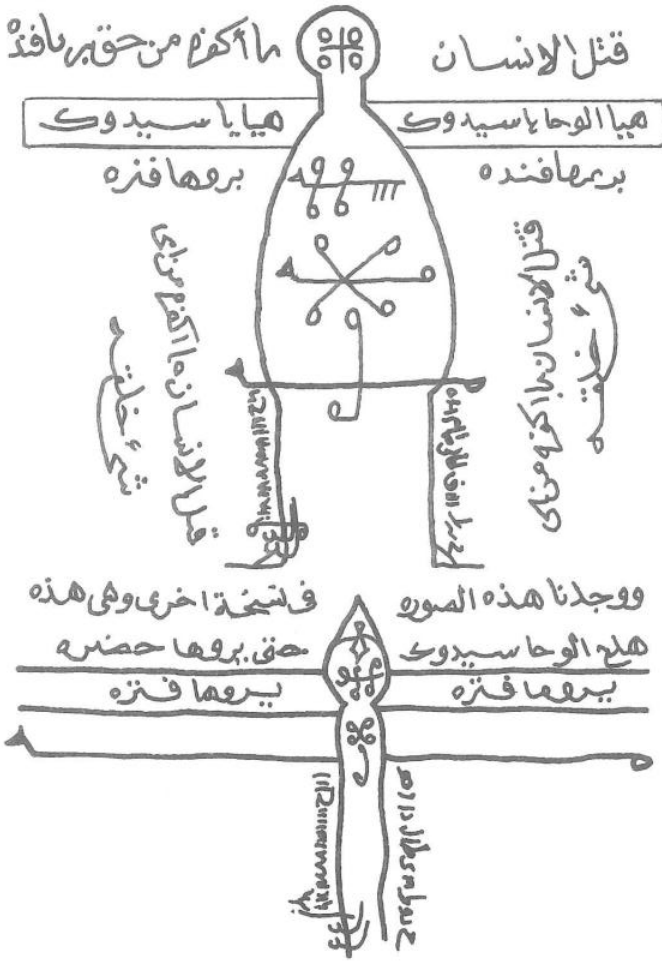
أجيئوا أيها الأرواح الروحانية خدام هذه الدعوة وأحضروا لي
 الملك يونا من الحكيم بحق هذه الأسماء عليكم ألوحا ٢ العجل ٢ الساعة ٢
 وما أمر الساعة إلا كلمح البصر أو هو أقرب إن الله على كل شيء قدير .
 إن كانت إلا صيحة واحدة فإذا هم جميع لدينا محضرون . العجل يا سيدوك
 وافمل ما أمرك به بألف ألف لا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله العلي العظيم)
 تمت الدعوة .

وهذه صفة انصرافه تقول طهاطيش ٢ ططايوش ٢ طفاردش ٢

طفاردش ٢ شتقمهوش ٢ انصرف أيها السيد يونس الحكيم بحق ما أتيت به طامعاً انصرف لأجله معزوزاً مكرماً معظماً بحق من قال يا أيها الذين آمنوا إذا نودي للصلاة من يوم الجمعة فاسعوا إلى ذكر الله وذروا البيع ذلكم خير لكم إن كنتم تعلمون . فإذا قضيت الصلاة فانتشروا في الأرض وابتغوا من فضل الله واذكروا الله كثيراً لعلكم تفلحون . وإذا رأوا تجارة أو طواً انفضوا إليها وتركوا قائماً قل ما عند الله خير من اللهو ومن التجارة والله خير الرازيين .

وهذه صفة الشخص الذي ترسمه في قعر الطشت وهو خلاف الذي سبق شرحه الذي تعلقه في السببه أما هذا ترسمه في الطشت قبل وضع الماء والكتابة تكون بالخبير وتلى عليه الدعوة ٢١ مرة فإنه يحضر فاحتفظ عليه جهدك ولا تبيح به أبداً لأحد من الجهال والله هو الموفق للصواب أقلب تجد الشخص .

وهذه صفة الشخص المشار اليه كما ترى :



“Chapter on the Invocation of King Yūnās, the Wise

If you want to have a servant to settle an affair and to ask him about anything you want in the most eloquent language and (if you want him) to appear for him who asks for his service with the (clear) declaration (of intent) and (if you want) his height to be three *šibrs*, i.e. one cubit, and his clothing to be like (that of) the troops of the Franks (Europeans), and (if you want) to hear his speech as if it were from behind the wall and (if you want) him to be handsome in his beauty as if he had the age of seven years and (if you want) his company to represent (the sign of) the maximum of friendship and (if you want) him to be assiduous, clever, one who will not flee from his companion after the pact (is concluded) with him and who will never desert him as long as the condition which he will prescribe for him remains (in existence), then if you want his presence, take a white basin from copper and fill it with pure water. Then cut out the figure of a person from red paper and write on his head MHRQWŠ 2 (i.e. twice) and on his breast TQTQWŠ 2 and on his right hand ṬARŠ¹¹ and on his left hand QARŠ 2 and on his belly HARŠ 2 and on his right thigh ʿYGLWŠ 2 and on his left thigh KRWWŠ 2. After this, take the tripod (made) from the rods of sour pomegranate and hang the aforementioned person on it by his leg (with his head) turned downwards.

And adjure him by the following adjuration while incense is fumigated. This should be (mixed) from *prunus mahaleb*, benzoin, male frankincense, sandarach and aloe-wood. After completing the recitation 21 times, King Yūnās, the Wise will rise instantly in the above-mentioned form from the depth of the basin to the surface of the water. Then you¹² can speak to him and he can speak about anything you ask from him. After this, dismiss him with the dismissal to be mentioned later.

¹¹ In the transcription of the demon names *alif* is indicated by “A”.

¹² The original reads here “he can speak”, which seems to be a misprint.

And this is the adjuration you are supposed to recite: 'I adjure and invoke you, O hosts of incorporeal spirits by the power of the power of God, and by the light of the face of God, and by what the pen moved with from God until the best of the creatures of God, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh, (punishment will befall you) unless you respond to my call and hasten and appear to me by the great names of God and His noble signs and by the illuminating lights, and the bright names and the rays of light (emanating) from the Throne and the divine words, and the Greek hymns of praise and the Hebrew incantations, and the heavenly oaths, and by the names inscribed on the heart of the sun, and by the names inscribed on the heart of the moon, and by the right of he who said to the heaven «and to the earth, 'Come willingly, or unwillingly!' They said, 'we come willingly'» (Q 41.10).¹³

Be swift, O hosts of incorporeal spirits, to appear! BAHYAŠ 2 YAHWŠ 2 RHAṬYL 2 ŠAʿYA'YL 2 ŠAHYA'YL 2 ʿSQYA'YL 2 ŠMŠYA'YL 2 ʿZQYA'YL 2 ṬWTYA'YL 2 ḤNQYA'YL 2 SMSMA'YL 2 ṬSMA'YL 2 respond to my assistants¹⁴ and do what you are ordered (to do) by the right of ŠBĠAB 2 ŠYGAB 2 HLHYWH 2 A H 2 MRHH 2 MRYHA 2 MRAH 2 SRAH 2 MŠNHYA 2. Hasten by the right of SLYṬAH AMRMWŠ ŠQŠFYQ ŠQAŠWQ and by the right of the rope of the mother of Moses BṬMYS MHYALMWS ŠQŠAQWŠ and there is neither might nor power but in God, the most High, the Great.

Respond to my invocation and settle my affair by the right of these names: DMLYH 2 DMYLYH 2 DMLAH 2 BRAH 2. «He said: 'My Lord, judge Thou with Truth! And our Lord is All-merciful; His succour is ever to be sought against that which you describe'» (Q. 21.112). Respond and be charged with bringing in King Yūnās, the Wise, by the right of these names HYHAN 2 HYMWT 2 AŠAT 2. He is «the All-great, the All-exalted» (Q 13.10). Respond O RQYA'YL, and O

¹³ For the rendering of the Koranic verses Arberry 1980 was used.

¹⁴ The word *aʿwānī*, "my assistants" is most probably a misprint for *daʿwatī*, "my invocation" which is more logical.

Ġibrā'īl, and O SMSMA'YL, and O Mikā'īl, and O ŠRFYA'YL, and O 'NYA'YL, and O KSFYA'YL!

Respond and order your servants and assistants to obey me and compel them to settle my affair in this time of mine. AHYA ŠRAHYA ADWNAY AŠBAWT AL ŠDAY and by the right of «By the Mount and a Book inscribed in a parchment unrolled, by the House inhabited and the roof uplifted and the sea swarming, surely thy Lord's chastisement is about to fall; there is none to avert it» (Q 52.1-8). «No! I swear by the fallings of the stars, and that is indeed a mighty oath, did you but know it» (Q 56.74-75). «O our people, answer God's summoner, and believe in Him, and He will forgive you some of your sins, and protect you from a painful chastisement» (Q 46.30).

Respond O servants of these names and bring in King Yūnās, the Wise, by the right of AŠMH ŠMAH NWH ŠNAH 2 HYWH 2 'YWH 2 MYWH 2 MWH 2 RWH 2 ŠMH 2 LMH 2 HNĦ 2 ŠHR HYH 2 HYAHYH 2 AHMDY HMDY BRWHYA ŠRY ŠRAHYN. «He is God, the Maker» (Q 59.24) to whom you will humble yourselves and «fall down prostrate» (a variant on Q 12.102).

Respond by the right of ŠMAH 2 RMAH 2 MŠLĦ 2 MŠLMYH 2 MYRNĦ 2 BRANYHA ALAMYHA LYBHA ŠYHAŠTA AŠNA MLYHA MalyHA WYŠLYHA AYŠŠALYHAL HĦWD WYTAŠ TAŠ TAŠYN AŦŠYN ŦYWŠ AHYAŠ 2 HMAŠA HWŠ ŦŠWŠ BQŠWŠ HYHŠ ALYHA AMLALYHA SL'SA HYWM¹⁵ QYWM¹⁶ DYWM¹⁷ DYMWM ŦLSWM¹⁸.

Respond O incorporeal spirits, servants of this invocation, and bring in King Yūnās, the Wise, by the right of these names (recited)

¹⁵ Probably constructed from *ḥayy* ("Living") on the analogy of *qayyūm*.

¹⁶ This must be the well-known name of God, *qayyūm* ("Self-existing").

¹⁷ Probably constructed from *dā'im* ("Everlasting") on the analogy of *qayyūm*. This may also be true of the following word DYMWM.

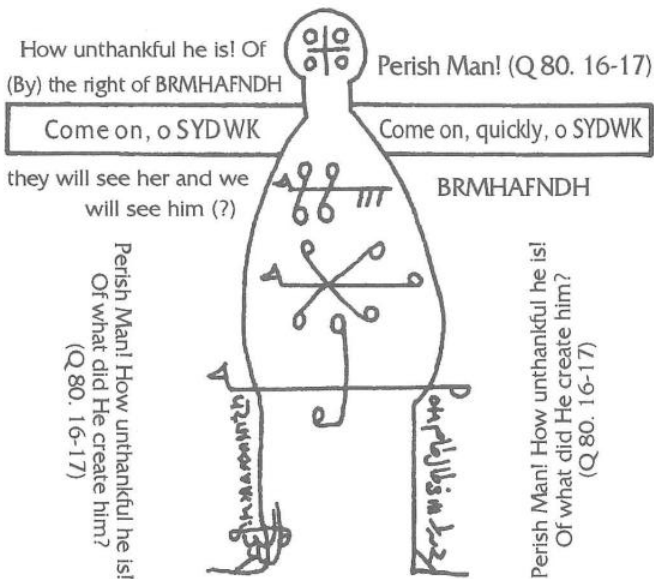
¹⁸ This is perhaps constructed from *ṭilasm* ("talisman") upon the analogy of the preceding words.

upon you: Quickly 2, swiftly 2, immediately 2. «And the matter of the Hour is as a twinkling of the eye, or nearer. Surely God is powerful over everything» (Q 16.79). «It was only one cry; then behold, they are all arraigned before us» (Q 36.53). Quickly O SYDWK and do what I have ordered thee to do by a thousand times a thousand 'There is neither might nor strength but in God, the most High, the Great.' End of the invocation.

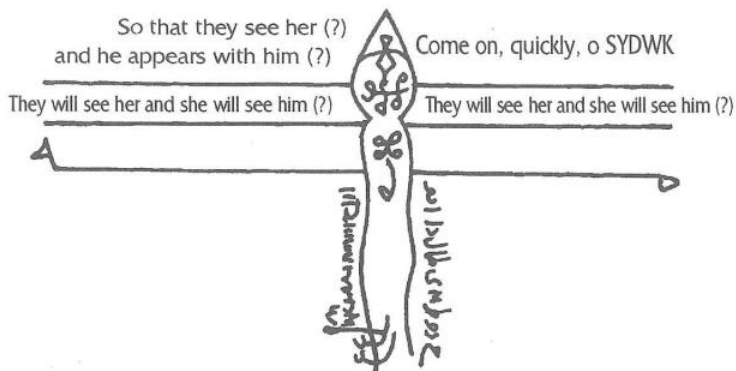
And this is the description of his dismissal. You should say: TMAṬYŠ 2 ṬṬAYWŠ 2 ṬFARDŠ 2 ṬĠARDŠ 2 ŠṬQMHMWŠ 2. Be dismissed O Lord Yūnās, the Wise, by the right of what «you came for willingly» (a variant on Q 41.10), be dismissed for the sake of this (while you are) glorified, honoured, exalted, by the right of He who said: «O believers, when proclamation is made for prayer on the Day of Congregation, hasten to God's remembrance and leave trafficking aside: that is better for you, did you but know. Then, when the prayer is finished, scatter in the land and seek God's bounty, and remember God frequently; haply you will prosper. But when they see merchandise or diversion they scatter off to it, and they leave thee standing, say: 'What is with God is better than diversion and merchandise, God is the best of providers'» (Q 62.9-11).

And this is the description of the person whom you should draw on the bottom of the basin. He is different from the one that was described earlier whom you should hang on the tripod. As for this, you should draw it in the basin before pouring water in it. The writing should be done with ink and you should recite the invocation 21 times and then he will appear. Preserve this to the utmost of your ability and never reveal it to anybody from among the ignorants! God is the One who directs (you) to rightness.

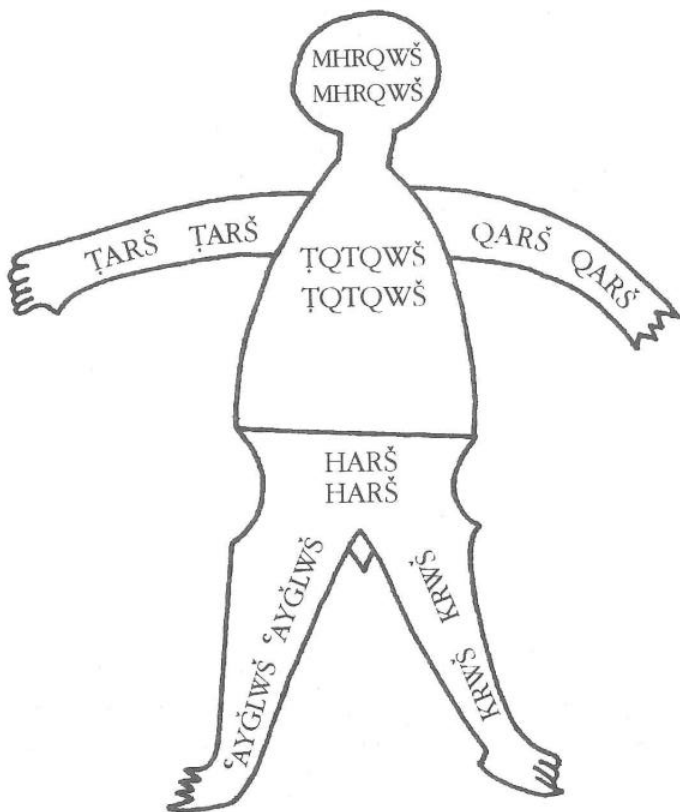
And this is the above-mentioned figure as you see it:



And we have found this figure in another copy and it is this:



And as for the figure which should be hung on the tripod, it is this as you see. If you understand it you will be guided.



End of the Invocation of Yūnās, the Wise, and (the description of) his figures. But God knows best!"

Although this whole complicated procedure is presented by the compiler as a simple *da'wa*, invocation, it offers a full description of bowl divination in which a spirit is forced to appear to foretell the future. Thus we are dealing with a typical case of intuitive divination¹⁹. The enactment of similar rituals is termed by Arabic magic literature *darb mandal*²⁰ ("pitching a *mandal*"), or simply *mandal*²¹ or *mandal nafsī*²² (literally "spiritual *mandal*"). The word *mandal* itself may also refer to the place of the magical act separated from the outer world by a circle²³. Other frequent names include *kašf*²⁴ ("the removal of the veil") *istinzāl*²⁵ ("asking for the descent of demons") *talbīs al-kašf*²⁶ (also *talbīs al-yad*, meaning perhaps the "clothing or concealing the palm or the hand to transform it into an oracle-giving device"). Irrespective of the technical equipment (water, ink, oil, mirror etc.) employed in these rituals, they have in common the recourse to the use of compelling means when the spirits are summoned to impart knowledge of future events.

Although our text does not specify the requirements to be fulfilled by the practitioner, other sources inform us that he must meet several criteria. Thus the performer (termed *tālib hādā l-'ilm*, "he who is seeking this science") had to be wise, had to know the necessary times for the operation, was not supposed to speak too much to the ignorant, had

¹⁹ For this term see fn. 3.

²⁰ See, e.g. aṭ-Ṭūhī, *Kubhān* 145. For possible origins of the word *mandal*, see Worrell 1917:38f.

²¹ See, e.g. aṭ-Ṭūhī, *Kubhān* 54.

²² See, e.g. *ibid.*, 81.

²³ See, e.g. aṭ-Ṭūhī, *as-Siḥr al-'azīm* 181.

²⁴ See, e.g. aṭ-Ṭūhī, *as-Siḥr al-'ağīb* 147. For the Sufi background of this term, see Ibn Haldūn, *Muqaddima* (transl. Rosenthal) 215, n. 315.

²⁵ See, e.g. aṭ-Ṭūhī, *Bār Nūh* 28.

²⁶ See, e.g. aṭ-Ṭūhī, *as-Siḥr al-'ağīb* I, 139.

to observe seclusion from the world and fasting, he was to possess perfect purity and was not to become disquieted if the response to his questions was delayed. Fasting meant that he was not allowed to eat food despised by the spirits, so he had to be content with the plants of the land (aṭ-Ṭūḥī, *as-Siḥr al-ʿazīm* I, 175). For the breaking of his fast, a source refers to raisins or thin, unleavened bread as the substances to be eaten (aṭ-Ṭūḥī, *as-Siḥr al-ʿağīb* I, 149). Purity in the broad sense of the word also included the cleanness of garments and of the place where the ritual was to be enacted (*ibid.*, II, 77).

The time and direction of the operation does not seem to be a major point in the Arabic descriptions, but we can find some clues which suggest that the orientation towards the East and the establishment of a certain connection with the rising sun must have been considered important to the success of the procedure. In the first place, magical formulae tend generally to choose the East (or *qibla*) as the favourite direction for any operation. Secondly, and this is even more informative, *mandal* descriptions usually require the recitation of the *Sūrat aš-Šams wa-ḍuḥābā* ("The Sun and his morning brightness") either before the process is started or during the course of it²⁷.

If we look for parallels in the Greek magical papyri, we may come upon several points of contact. The observance of purity for a specific number of days (e.g. 3 or 7) preceding the ritual together with the insistence on the cleanliness of the performer's clothing and of the place seem to be basic conditions²⁸. An obvious effort to guarantee the state of complete purity for the whole ritual is found in prescriptions which advise the practitioner not to place the basin directly on the floor²⁹.

²⁷ On the subject of turning to the East during a procedure, see e.g. aṭ-Ṭūḥī, *as-Siḥr al-ʿağīb* II, 57. For the recitation of the *Sūrat aš-Šams*, see e.g. *ibid.*, I, 122; II, 157; aṭ-Ṭūḥī, *Tashīr* 102.

²⁸ See, e.g. *PGM* IV, 213, 3209; VII, 334; XIII, 650f; *PDM* XIV, 841-850.

²⁹ The practitioner holds the vessel on his knees in *PGM* IV, 228; or places it on bricks in *PDM* XIV, 410-415.

As for the timing and the orientation of the ceremony, the introductory part of one of the most characteristic descriptions of lecanomancy in the *PGM* is revealing when it orders the magician "to attach" himself to Helios by climbing to the top of the house at sunrise and by facing towards the sun before starting the ritual (*PGM* IV, 168-179).

The call for purity can be explained by an ambiguity in the magician's attitude towards the demons with whom he will come into close and dangerous contact during the divination: on the one hand, he is inclined to look upon them as impure creatures against whose harmful effects the state of purity will provide protection. On the other hand, however, he tries to associate himself with the demons, presumably to appease them, as the Arabic instruction on fasting makes clear³⁰. We shall see that this contradictory position will remain a permanent feature which tends to determine the magician's acts during the whole ritual.

Of all the preparatory and complementary rites and technical accessories which were supposed to serve to subdue the demons, the "Invocation of Yūnās" mentions a particularly interesting one when it prescribes the use of a tripod made of the rods of sour pomegranate. This tripod (denoted by the colloquial Egyptian Arabic word *sība*), a favourite instrument in Arabic magic, is also frequently mentioned in the magical papyri³¹. In ancient magic it might have helped the magician to communicate with the spirits of the underworld, as is suggested by the well-known story of the Pythia, who used to give her oracles while seated on her famous tripod cauldron³². Arabic magic must have preserved some hark-backs to similar ideas, since instructions make a dis-

³⁰ For this attitude, see especially Greenfield 1988:287-290. For the importance of purity in the magical papyri, see also Hopfner 1921:838-868.

³¹ See, e.g. *PGM* III, 193, 291; IV, 1890f; V, 200f, etc.

³² For the tripod, in general, see e.g. Burkert 1972:137ff. In a Jewish description of lecanomancy the magician is seated on a three legged stool (Daiches 1913:21f). In a Greek recipe the medium sits on the tripod (Hopfner 1932:222).

inction between the kind of pomegranate wood used for good purposes and the kind employed for achieving evil aims³³.

In the "Invocation of Yūnās" the basic equipment for the magician is the white copper basin, on the bottom of which he was to trace the figure of a spirit before filling the vessel with water. A surprisingly similar instruction can be found in the Demotic Magical Papyrus which orders the magician to bring a copper cup and engrave a figure of the god Anubis in it³⁴. The white colour of the vessel must have had a significance for both Egyptian and Arabic magic since a passage in the Great Magical Papyrus specifically prescribes the use of a white saucer on which the performer had to write certain magical names³⁵.

The figure inscribed on the bottom of the basin was supposed to rise to the surface of the water and appear in the role of Yūnās who curiously enough took the shape of a Frangi soldier³⁶. Here Yūnās, similarly to Anubis, is supposed to act as a servant spirit, a *paredros*, for the main demon to whom the performer has addressed himself. To ensure his appearance the magician resorts to different means. First of all, in accordance with the basic concepts of sympathetic magic, he should have looked at the red image of the demon, hung on the tripod as instrumental in summoning the other figure from the depths of the water. An examination of their representations reveals an emphasis on phallic features as well as simple similarity of form.

³³ See, e.g. aṭ-Ṭūhī, *Kubhān* 138; *as-Siḥr al-ʿağīb* II, 56, where *rummān ḥāmid* "sour pomegranate" is mentioned for malevolent actions.

³⁴ *PDM* XIV, 395-427. For the figure drawn on the base of the bowl to serve as a compelling force, see Hopfner 1990:258. For a seemingly unique bowl used in lecanomanicy, see Daniel-Maltomini 1992: N° 65. In a Coptic lecanomantic text of the magical figure is supposed to protect the bowl (Kropp 1930:271).

³⁵ *PGM* IV, 3209-3254. For other Arabic occurrences, see e.g. aṭ-Ṭūhī, *as-Siḥr al-ʿağīb* I, 123. *Id. Kubhān* 40.

³⁶ This strange description of Yūnās may indicate the late addition to the text and might have been the work of an Egyptian who must have looked at "Frangi" soldiers with contempt. This attitude and the expression itself may point to the late 19th century as a possible date for its inclusion.

In the case of the colours, the idea of contrast or complement must have been at work, which may explain the marked use of white and red. To set the scene in a broader context, we are tempted to recall that white and red were the colours of the Crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt and that their symbolic unification played a significant role in the fundamental ideas of ancient Egyptian history and religion³⁷. In addition, among the names written on the red figure, there were three which represented MHRQWŠ, ṬQTQWŠ and Ṭāriš, who were regarded as the main demons involved in any bowl divination. The members of this divine or demonic triad were brothers and had distinctive colours: MHRQWŠ was white, ṬQTQWŠ was blue, while Ṭāriš appeared as black (aṭ-Ṭūsī, *as-Siḥr al-ʿazīm* I, 175f). The idea of a divine triad³⁸ and the association of its members with different colours is another motif which may point to the world of ancient Egypt³⁹.

In our text the magician acts alone as the main performer of the ceremony, but a number of other descriptions show the widespread use of mediums. They were always young boys or girls who had not yet reached the age of puberty⁴⁰. The employment of mediums is an equally common phenomenon in the magical papyri, which usually prefer

³⁷ For this idea in the context of lecanomancy, see DuQuesne 1991:149. The author examines *PGM* IV, 1-25 and considers the *conjunctio oppositorum* as the principal subject of this spell (*ibid.*, 144). For the use of the colour red in magic, see e.g. Griffiths 1972:81-90. Red may indicate something dangerous but at the same time can also be used as an apotropaic (see e.g. Daniel-Maltomini 1992 II, 78). Red ink, red paper, red thread and red rags are favourite objects in Arabic magic (see e.g. aṭ-Ṭūhī, *Bār Nuḥ* 20 and *Kubhān* 68, 144). The preference of the use of red leather for amulet cases is also well-known.

³⁸ For another triad, see aṭ-Ṭūhī, *Kubhān* 86 where al-Abyaḍ, al-Aḥmar and Šamhūraš, three of the seven kings of the seven days, are mentioned.

³⁹ For the connection between colours and Egyptian gods, see Hopfner 1990:266. Cf. also DuQuesne 1991:152-157. The Arabic demon kings of the seven days are also associated with colours (Kriss & Kriss-Heinrich 1962:82).

⁴⁰ See, e.g. aṭ-Ṭūhī, *as-Siḥr al-ʿazīm* I, 175 and *Tashīr* 102.

young boys in this role⁴¹. Obviously, the requirement of purity had a major part to play in their selection⁴².

The rituals connected with Yūnās and Anubis present cases of auto-phancies, the personal apparition of the invoked deities or spirits in their physical reality. To make the picture of the divinatory technique applied in lecanomancy more complete, reference must also be made to cases in which the shining surface of the water, oil, or mirror only served as a point of concentration to induce the medium to fall into a trance⁴³.

The protection of the medium and of himself was a constant concern for the magician, who had to deal with the dangers that might arise from the encounter with demons. This is why he resorted to additional protective measures apart from the observance of purity. These included occasionally wearing apotropaic amulets or covering the medium with a clean white cloth. All of these practices can be attested in both the Arabic sources and the magical papyri⁴⁴.

As regards the final appearance of the god or demon, the magician implored him to assume a beautiful shape (which obviously would not frighten him) and to give true answers to his questions. The Arabic recipes and the magical papyri contain the same injunctions⁴⁵. The

⁴¹ See, e.g. *PGM* IV, 88-93; *PDM* XIV, 1-92. The use of young girls is a new development (Hopfner 1932:220).

⁴² On this see especially Greenfield 1988:290.

⁴³ See, e.g. *at-Tūhī*, *as-Sihr al-ʿaḡīb* I, 138. For Ibn Ḥaldūn's ideas on this technique see Fahd 1966:45-50.

⁴⁴ For the wearing of amulets, see e.g. *PGM* IV, 78-82, 256-261; for covering the medium, see e.g. *PDM* XIV, 70ff, 414; *at-Tūhī*, *Kubhān* 41. For the use of Koranic verses to protect the practitioner, see *at-Tūhī*, *as-Sihr al-ʿaḡīm* I, 181.

⁴⁵ For parallels in the papyri, see e.g. *PGM* IV, 3222 which mentions "lovely shape" and *PDM* XIV, 275 where "beautiful face" is alluded to. In a Jewish spell, the invoked "prince" appears as a "beautiful and good looking man" (Daiches 1913 Text 6). For the truthfulness of the predictions, see e.g. *PDM* XIV, 40-45, 50, 410. Cf. also Hopfner 1990: 248.

“Invocation of Yūnās” does not go into details about the circumstances which accompanied and ultimately even made possible the appearance of the spirits. Other descriptions, however, offer important clues which help us to understand how this way of magical thinking operated and how it conceived the enactment of this scene, the culminating point of the whole ritual. In a spell, e.g., the practitioner adjures “the incorporeal spirits endowed with luminous essences” to show themselves and “to pierce the veils” (aṭ-Ṭūhī, *Hārūt* III, 112). Light overcoming darkness must have been the idea underlying the invocation. It is as if the Muslim magician only wanted to imitate his ancient counterpart who expressed his wish in such phrases: “(O god) Put the light and breadth in my vessel ... Open to me, o earth ... O darkness, remove yourself” etc.⁴⁶.

In several Arabic recipes we frequently find the magician or his medium ordering the servant demon to sweep the floor, sprinkle water on it, bring in the thrones (of the demons) then to sacrifice a black bull, prepare its meat, finally to call in the demons (literally “the kings, the viziers and the princes”) to make them eat and to offer them coffee⁴⁷. In a spectacularly similar way, the medium in the Demotic Magical Papyrus summons Anubis to bring in the gods of the city, to let them sit at a table and to offer them wine and bread⁴⁸. The aim of this divine banquet is to appease the gods and to honour them, so, from the “methodological” point of view it could be compared to the sacrifice offered by the Mesopotamian priest to Šamaš and Adad. The scene itself, how-

⁴⁶ *PDM* XIV, 4f, 3035. For the idea of widening the vessel in Arabic practice, see aṭ-Ṭūhī, *Hārūt* III, 154. The act of “opening” or “being removed”, expressed in Arabic by *kašf*, is usually thought to be realizable through the use of the so called *āyat al-kašf* (Q 50.21), see e.g. aṭ-Ṭūhī, *Kubhān* 40.

⁴⁷ See, e.g. aṭ-Ṭūhī, *Hārūt* III, 154f. The thrones of the demons are also mentioned in a Coptic spell (Kropp 1931:M 52).

⁴⁸ *PDM* XIV, 50-60. For Jewish parallels, see Daiches 1913 Texts 1-4, 6. For the motif in Byzantine practice see Greenfield 1988:214f.

ever, is different and its origin is more likely to be found in ancient Egyptian religious practice⁴⁹.

The text of Yūnās makes it clear that during the course of the ritual the practitioner had to rely on two powerful means to bring about the emergence of the demon from the netherworldly depths of the water: the burning of incense and the recital of the adjuration.

In practical terms, the incense acted as a compelling force for the demons regardless of the fact that they probably found delight in the smell. The obvious preference in Arabic lecanomancy of the use of *lubān dakar*⁵⁰, “male frankincense”, rather than other types, cannot be a mere coincidence since the magical papyri also mention the male *libanos* in the instructions on fumigation⁵¹. They claimed that frankincense was the proper incense for Helios (PGM XIII, 18) who, as we have seen, had close connections with bowl divination.

Both the “Invocation of Yūnās” and the magical papyri attribute great importance to the adjurations and this explains why they give the texts of them with such care. The adjuration in our text is cleverly islamized, but in spite of this there are several points which disclose a fundamental relationship with the relevant passages of the papyri. The invoked spirits are adjured by their names, which are occasionally

⁴⁹ Apart from the fact that the feeding of the gods belonged to the daily duties of Egyptian priests, this special divine banquet reminds one of such a gathering as the tribunal of the gods of the netherworld to judge the dead. In this ceremony Anubis played a leading role. For this scene, see also Hopfner 1990:266f and DuQuesne 1991:155. The final Arabic portrayal of the banquet with the procession of the participants, the pitching of tents, the hoisting of flags and the common meal, however, seems to be influenced by the typical Sufi practices observed by the *ṭarīqas* during *mūlids*.

⁵⁰ See, e.g. at-Ṭūhī, *Kubhān* 40 and *Hārūt* III, 154f. For fumigation as a compelling force, see e.g. *id. Tashīr* 127, for the use of incense for the pleasure of demons, see e.g. *id. as-Sihr al-ʿağīb* I, 123.

⁵¹ PGM VII, 320; XLVI, 135. For incense as a means of sympathy or antipathy, see Hopfner 1921:541. Cf. also Greenfield 1988:253f.

referred to as “great names”⁵². The Arabic text itself seems to favour rhythmical, occasionally rhymed prose, which appears not only in the evident case of the Koranic verses but also in the long enumeration of the names which are grouped according to their endings⁵³.

Similarity is likewise detectable in the occurrence of such linguistic solutions as the doubling of words to express a superlative or extreme urgency⁵⁴. The repetition of a *vox magica* with minor alterations to generate a new demon’s name was also a preferred technique in the magical papyri⁵⁵.

The dismissal (*apolyxis*) of the servant demons represents the closing ceremony in the “Invocation of Yūnās” and in this respect it follows again the structure of the spells in the papyri⁵⁶. Just as in a commercial transaction, after the fulfilment of the pact, when the demons had accomplished their task, they had to be released or “untied” in this formal way, otherwise they could have seriously harmed the practitioner.

Finally, the detailed description of the magical figures also imitates the practice adopted by the spells of the papyri⁵⁷.

The text of the “Invocation of Yūnās” went through a remarkable process of islamization at the hands of the Arab transmitters. This is especially evident in their reliance upon the Koranic verses in the adjuration. The “theory” behind the selection of the different verses was based on the principles of sympathetic magic which in their case meant that

⁵² For the *megala onomata* in the papyri, see *PGM* IV, 3236. The use of names of Hebrew origin was considered by the papyri as especially effective (DuQuesne 1991:70). Arabic spells particularly prefer the AHYA ŠRAHYA ADWNAY ŠBAWT AL ŠDAY form derived from Hebrew *ehye ašer ehye* (Exod. 3.14) *adōnāy šebāōt* (1. Sam. 17.45) *ēl šadday* (Exod. 6.3).

⁵³ For the use of rhythmic forms of speech in divination, see Fahd 1966:150-159.

⁵⁴ Betz 1992:194, fn. 139. For the triple expression as a call for immediate action, see e.g. *PGM* VII, 330f.

⁵⁵ For this, see Daniel-Malomini 1992 II, commentary to line 1, formulary 96.

⁵⁶ See, e.g. the *apolyxis* in *PGM* IV, 252-254.

⁵⁷ See, e.g. the figure with inscriptions in *PGM* II, 166.

any Koranic word was thought to be able to bring about the effect required by the adjuration irrespective of the original context of the word. The adaptors' full awareness of the seriousness of their work is clearly shown by the fact that the chosen verses included words which were identical to the basic expressions of the magical vocabulary (like *aqsama* for "to adjure", *qasam* for "oath", *dā'ī* for "invoker", *aḡāba* for "to respond").

The importance of the dismissal of the demons is well illustrated by the selected verse. Practically speaking, this assisted the magician to release the demons by comparing them to the believers who, obeying the call, gathered to the Friday prayer but after it necessarily took their leave and dispersed.

The last instruction of the spell includes a serious warning to the practitioner to preserve the secrets of the procedure for himself and not to divulge it to the uninitiated. This admonition perfectly mirrors the requirements stressed by the parallel passages in the magical papyri⁵⁸.

The original Greco-Egyptian magical lore probably reached the Arab customers through a long chain of transmission. at-Ṭūḥī himself frequently indicates variants which he found in different manuscripts⁵⁹. This method of collecting material from different manuscripts and this kind of remark inserted by the copyist into the main text are quite familiar from the magical papyri⁶⁰. At any rate, our text also reveals that at-Ṭūḥī's Arab predecessors must have been conscious of the fact that they drew on and made ample use of a syncretistic *materia magica* when they referred to the "Greek hymns of praise", the "Hebrew incantations" or even "Syriac names"⁶¹.

⁵⁸ See, e.g. *PGM* IV, 75f, 84f, 254f.

⁵⁹ For a similar custom observed by Jewish copyists, see Daiches 1913:14.

⁶⁰ See e.g. *PDM* XIV, 285-290. Cf. also Hull 1974:23.

⁶¹ For the latter, see at-Ṭūḥī, *as-Siḥr al-azīm* I, 180.

REFERENCES

- Arberry, A. J. 1980. *The Koran Interpreted*. London.
- Betz, H. D. 1992. *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation Including the Demotic Spells*. Chicago & London.
- Bouché-Leclercq, A. 1879. *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*. Vol. I. Paris.
- Burkert, W. 1972. *Homo Necans*. Berlin & New York.
- Carra de Vaux, transl. 1898. *L'Abrégé des Merveilles*. Paris.
- CE = Aziz S. Atiya, ed. 1991. *The Coptic Encyclopaedia*. Vol. V. New York, Toronto & Sidney.
- Contenau, G. 1940. *Le divination chez les Assyriens et les Babyloniens*. Paris.
- Daiches, S. 1913. *Babylonian Oil Magic in the Talmud and in the Later Jewish Literature*. London.
- Dan, J. 1963. "The Princes of Thumb and Cup". *Tarbiz* 32.356-369.
- Daniel, R. W. & F. Maltomini, eds. 1992. *Supplementum Magicum*. Vol. II. Opladen.
- Delatte, A. 1927. *Anecdota Atheniensia*. Vol. I. Liège & Paris.
- Doutté, E. 1908. *Magie et religion dans l'Afrique du Nord*. Alger.
- Dunand, F. 1979. *Religion populaire en Égypte romaine*. Leiden.
- DuQuesne, T. 1991. *A Coptic Initiatory Invocation*. Thame Oxon.
- Fahd, T. 1966. *La divination arabe*. Leiden.
- Ganszyniec, R. 1925. "Lekanomanteia". *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie* 12. 1879-1889. Stuttgart.
- Goodenough, E. R. 1953. *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*. Vol. II. New York.
- Greenfield, R. P. H. 1988. *Traditions of Belief in Late Byzantine Demonology*. Amsterdam.
- Griffiths, J. G. 1972. "The Symbolism of Red in Egyptian Religion". C. J. Blecker, ed. *Ex Orbe Religionum. Studia Geo Widengren*. Leiden.
- Hopfner, T. 1921. *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber*. Vol. I. Leipzig.

- . 1932. "Mittel- und neugriechische Lekano-, Lychno-, Katapetro- und Onychomantien". *Studies Presented to F. Ll. Griffith*. 218-232. London.
- . 1990. *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber*. Vol. II/2. Amsterdam.
- Hull, J. M. 1974. *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition*. London.
- Hunger, J. 1903. *Becherwahrsagung bei der Babyloniern*. Leipzig.
- Ibn Haldūn, *Muqaddima*. = Franz Rosenthal. *Ibn Khaldūn, The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. 3 vols., London, 1958.
- Kriss, R. & H. Kriss-Heinrich. 1962. *Volks Glaube im Bereich des Islam*. Vol. II. *Amulette, Zauberformeln und Beschwörungen*. Wiesbaden.
- Kropp, A. M. 1930. *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte*. Vol. III. Brussels.
- . 1931. *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte*. Vol. I. Brussels.
- Lane, E. 1917. *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. London.
- Pettinato, G. 1966. *Die Öl wahrsagung bei den Babyloniern*. 2 vols. Roma. PDM = *Demotic Magical Papyri*. = Betz 1992.
- PGM = Preisendanz, K. *Papyri Graecae Magicae*. 2 vols. Leipzig & Berlin, 1928-31.
- Reinaud, J.-T. 1828. *Descriptions des monumens [sic!] musulmans du Cabinet de M. le Duc de Blacas*. 2 vols. Paris.
- Schäfer, P. 1990. "Jewish Magic Literature in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages". *Journal of Jewish Studies* 41.75-91.
- Trachtenberg, J. 1939. *Jewish Magic and Superstition*. New York.
- at-Ṭūhī, *Bār Nūh* = ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ as-Sayyid at-Ṭūhī, *Sīhr Bār Nūh*. Cairo: Maktabat Ṣubayh, n.d.
- at-Ṭūhī, *Hārūt* = ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ as-Sayyid at-Ṭūhī, *Sīhr Hārūt wa-Mārūt*. Vol. III. Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, n.d.
- at-Ṭūhī, *Kubhān* = ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ as-Sayyid at-Ṭūhī, *Kitāb sīhr al-kubhān*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Ġumhūriyya, n.d.
- at-Ṭūhī, *as-Sīhr al-ʿaġīb* = ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ as-Sayyid at-Ṭūhī, *as-Sīhr al-ʿaġīb*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, n.d.
- at-Ṭūhī, *as-Sīhr al-ʿazīm* = ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ as-Sayyid at-Ṭūhī, *as-Sīhr al-ʿazīm*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, n.d.

at-Ṭūhī, *Tashīr* = ʿAbd al-Fattāh as-Sayyid at-Ṭūhī, *Tashīr aš-šayātīn*.

Beirut: al-Maktaba aš-Šaʿbiyya, n.d.

Worrell, W. H. 1917. "Ink, Oil and Mirror Gazing Ceremonies in Modern Egypt". *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 36.37-53.