

Arabic Manuscripts
*on **Magic***

MS ARA 72 (1-2)

(Inv. SA 108102)

MS ARA 72 (1)

Kaṣf al-asrār al-rabbāniyya fī ṣarḥ al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya

by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 858/1454)

Copied by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Miṣrī | Completed on 5 Šaʿbān 1028/30 March 1619

Egyptian manuscript | Occult sciences; science of the letters (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*); magic squares (*awfāq*)

MS ARA 72 (2)

Untitled poem by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Egyptian manuscript | Religious poetry

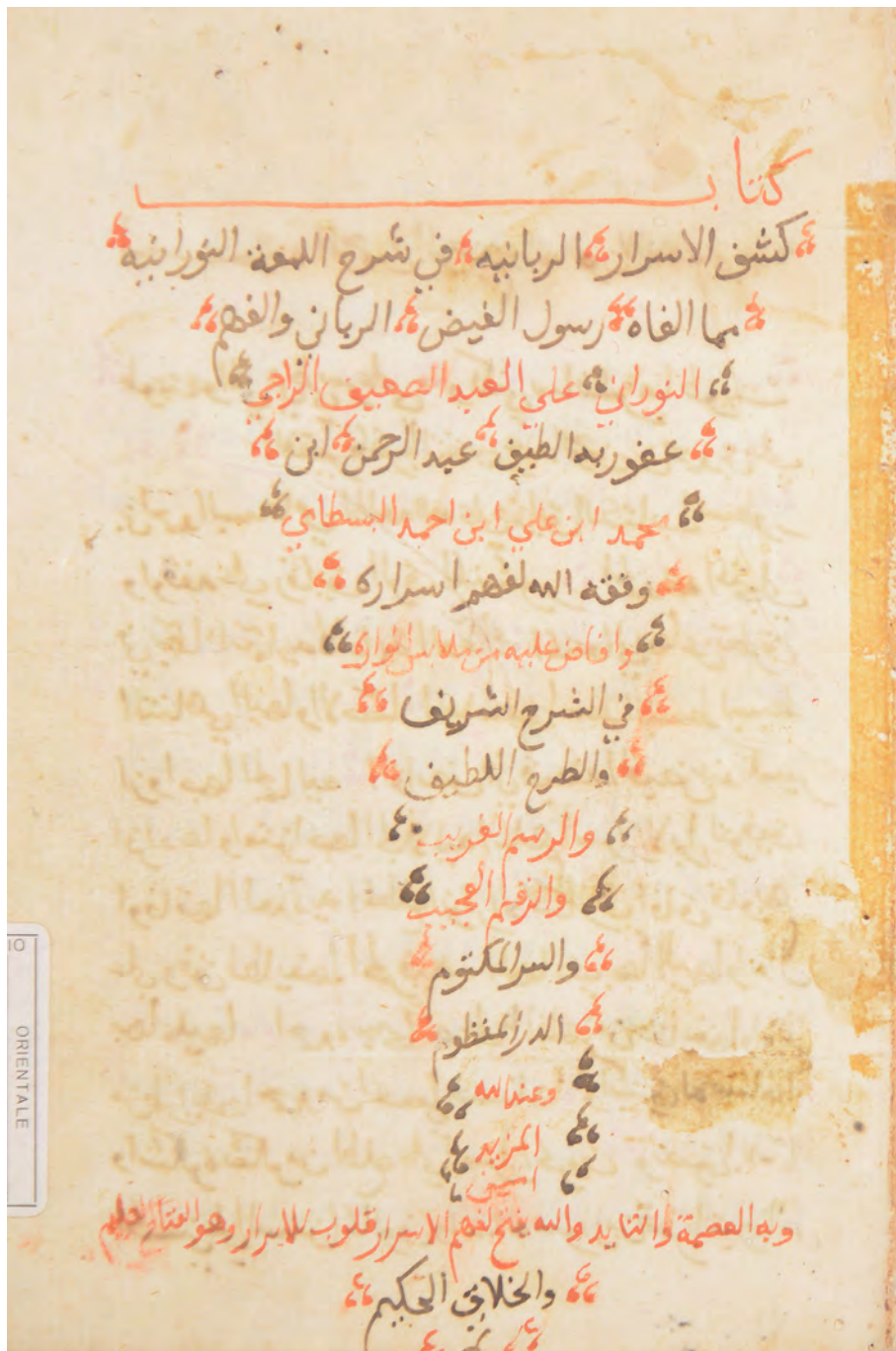
The main work contained in the manuscript, that is ARA 72 (1), is a commentary by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 858/1454) on the treatise by Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad al-Būnī (d. 622/1225 or 630/1232–33) entitled *al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya fī al-awrād al-rabbāniyya*. al-Biṣṭāmī studied al-Būnī’s *al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya* in Cairo with ʿIzz al-Dīn b. Ġamāʿa (d. 819/1416–1417) (Gardiner 2012:115–116; Gardiner 2017:22). By matching the records in the colophon of MS ARA 72 (1) with those of another manuscript witness of the same work present on the Internet, but not physically located (<https://www.scribd.com/document/548042444>; accessed 30.05.2025), we learn that al-Biṣṭāmī completed his commentary in Ġazīrat al-Ḥaḍraʿ, a locality near Alexandria, on 17 Šafar 822/15 March 1419.

ff. 1r-166v; black folios: 100v-104v, 114r-118v, 121r-123v, 149v-152v, 158r-159v, ff. I-II (the latter added during restoration). Dimensions: 195 × 150 mm. Written surface: 160 × 85 mm. Quinions. Previous foliation in Arabic numerals. A colophon dated 5 Šaʿbān 1028/30 March 1619 on f. 163v. Ink: Black ink with headings and rubrications in red ink (ff. 1r–163v); brown ink with gold powder (ff. 163v–165v). Diagonal catchwords in black ink, often trimmed during bookbinding. Marginal glosses in red ink. Binding: Half leather binding with red paper on the covers. Inner boards covered with white paper from an old restoration; traces of the original text’s joints to the marbled paper cover are still visible. Script: Cursive *nashī* (ff. 1r–163v); *nashī* (ff. 163v–165v). Paper: European laid paper with various watermarks, partially obscured due to tight sewing. From the third quire onward: f. 23: <cross within a drop-shaped circle>; f. 93 and following: <[crown?] surmounted by a six-pointed star and crescent>; f. 114: <heart within a circle surmounted by [...]>; ff. 117–118

and following: <six-petalled flower with two leaves> with countermark <ALARO-SA>; f. 121: <Latin cross within an oval surmounted by a crown, flanked by two rampant griffins>; flyleaf II with blind-stamped mark <BATH>.

Illustrations: The text is interspersed with figures, especially *awfāq*. Notable illustrations are found on the following folios: 14r, 15r-16r, 17v-18v, 20r-22r, 23r-24r, 25v-29v, 31r, 32r-v, 34r-v, 37r, 44v, 52v-63r, 64r-70r, 71r-72v, 74r-76v, 78r-83r, 84r, 85v-88v, 89v-96r, 105r-107v, 108v-111r, 112r-113r, 119r, 120r-v, 131r-v, 134v-135v, 136v, 138v-140r, 141r, 142r-145v, 147r-148r, 153r-154v, 156r, 160r-161v.

Purchased by the Instituto Universitario Orientale in Cairo in 1971.



MS ARA 72, f. 1r: Title page including the name of author

MS ARA 139 (1-18)

(Inv. SA 108315)

*Composite manuscript of Yemeni provenance***MS ARA 139 (1)** ff. 1v–16v, incomplete at the end*Untitled work by anonymous*

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magic

MS ARA 139 (2) ff. 17r–32v, incomplete at the end*Kitāb al-amrāḍ wa-huwa in sa'ala-ka marīḍ 'an maraḍ la-hu fa-is'al-hu 'an ismi-hi wa-ism ummi-hi... by anonymous*

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magical astrological medicine

MS ARA 139 (3) ff. 33v–40v, incomplete at the end*Untitled work by anonymous*

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Astral magic; science of letters (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*); gematria (*ḥisāb al-ḡumal*)**MS ARA 139 (4)** ff. 41v–44r*Untitled work by anonymous (Bāb ḥisāb al-sā'il)*

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magical astrological medicine

MS ARA 139 (5) ff. 44v–45r*Untitled work by anonymous (Bāb 'azīma wa-'atf wa-ḡiha li-man yurīd yarā 'aḡab^{an})*

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magical astrological medicine

MS ARA 139 (6) ff. 46r–51v, acephalous and incomplete at the end*Untitled magical work by anonymous*

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magical astrological medicine

MS ARA 139 (7) ff. 52r–71v

Untitled work by anonymous (Bāb fī ma‘rifā ??? al-nuḡūm li-l-riḡāl wa-l-nisā’)

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Astrology

MS ARA 139 (8) ff. 72r–95r

Untitled work by anonymous (Kitāb mašhūr al-baraka fī al-adwiya min al-ṭibb ‘an al-Azraq wa-Abī ??? wa-ḡayri-him (sic) min al-ḥukamā’)

Copyist unknown | Completed in Šā‘bān 1343/February 1925

Yemeni manuscript | Magical astrological medicine

MS ARA 139 (9) ff. 96v–107v

[al-Ṭarīqa al-wāḍiḥa ilā asrār al-Fātiḥa]

by anonymous (possibly Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Mahdī, d. unknown)

Copyist unknown | Completed on 14 Rabī‘ al-Āḥar 1344/Sunday 1 November 1925

Yemeni manuscript | Qur’ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*); theurgy; prayers (*ad‘iya*)

MS ARA 139 (10) ff. 110r–117r

Kitāb al-ibṣār fī ma‘rifat al-nuḡūm fī-mā yattaḥiq min al-marīḍ min al-raḡul wa-l-mar’a min maraḍ wa-‘araḍ by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magical astrological medicine

MS ARA 139 (11) ff. 117v–123v, incomplete at the end

Untitled work by anonymous (Hādā al-kitāb yadullu li-l-ittnā ‘aṣar al-naḡm bi-anna li-kull naḡm qabīla)

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Astrological Magic

MS ARA 139 (12) ff. 124r–131r

Kitāb al-fa‘l istaḥraḡa-hu min al-Qur’ān al-‘aẓim al-imām Ġā‘far b. Muḥammad attributed to Ġā‘far b. Muḥammad al-Šādiq (d. 148/765)

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Divination; bibliomancy (*fa‘l al-Qur’ān*)

MS ARA 139 (13) ff. 131v–132r

Notes by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magic

MS ARA 139 (14) ff. 132v–225v

Untitled work by anonymous (Faṣl fī ṭabāʾiʿ al-aḡḡdiya wa-l-aḡwiya wa-sāʾir al-mufradāt)

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Medicine; pharmacopoeia; magic

MS ARA 139 (15) ff. 225v–230v, incomplete at the end

Untitled work by anonymous (wa-li-nabdaʾ bi-kitāb āḡar maḡmūʿ min kutub al-ṭibb)

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Medicine; magic

MS ARA 139 (16) ff. 233r–310v, incomplete at the end

Untitled work by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Spiritual medicine; healing and exorcism spells against epilepsy and other evils; talismans; astrological magic

MS ARA 139 (17) f. 312r

Notes by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magic; Talismanic figure

MS ARA 139 (18) ff. 312v–327v, incomplete at the end

Kitāb al-ṭibb min kitāb al-rūḡānī by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magical medicine; spiritual medicine

Most of the works comprised in the codex are anonymous, untitled, incomplete, and undated, with rare exceptions (see above). Despite this, the collection of fragmentary texts denotes a certain coherence. The writings contained in it deal mainly with medical and magico-astrological themes. Often, these two themes are united in the texts, in which magico-astrological means are proposed both for the diagnosis and for the prevention and treatment of both physical and psychic ailments. Most of the works contained in the codex include several talismanic figures, seals, magic squares, and more (for a brief discussion of the subjects and images of some of the figures see Chapter 5 *Arabic Manuscripts on Magic at L'Orientale*). The presence of a text such as the fragment of a Qurʾānic bibliomancy work attributed to Ġaʿfar al-Šādiq (no. 12) within this collection should most likely be read within the framework of occult

practices for diagnostic purposes. Even a work such as no. 9, ostensibly focused on the analysis of a Qur'anic chapter (*Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*), falls properly within the rationale of the collection. It is in fact a text that discusses the beneficial properties (*manāfi'*)—including prophylactic and curative—of the Opening Sura, which also includes a protective talismanic figure with instructions for making it (f. 97v), and a Latin square of the name Allāh (f. 103r).

ff. I, 1v–327v, II, (ff. I+II added during an old restoration). Blank folios: ff. 33r, 41r, 46v, 95v–96r, 108–109, 231–232, 311. Dimensions: 243 x 180 mm. Variable written surfaces. A colophon dated *Ša'bān* 1343/February 1925 on f. 95r. A colophon dated 14 *Rabī' al-Āḥar* 1344/Sunday 1 November 1925 on f. 107v. Marginal glosses in Arabic, written in black ink. Quaternions, but mutilated in many leaves. Ink: black, with diagonal catchwords in black ink, rubrication in red or violet ink. Script: unvocalized, mostly without rule of *miṣṭara*. Texts in different hands, in *nashī*, cursive *nashī*, and *riq'ā* scripts (ff. 46r–51v et al.). Binding: brown leather with an envelope flap, decorated with corners and cartouches with floral motifs. Paper: brownish Oriental, watermarked with a crescent moon with a human profile inscribed within a shield with a double border and three points, and a countermark in two lines: < بياض ابو شباك اسطبولي > “Beyāḍ Abū Šubbāk Iṣṭambūlī” and < عالي اصيلي > “ālī ašīlī”. On f. 1r, an Arabic note in blue ink: “هذا الكتاب للسيد عبد الرحمن ???” (*Hādā al-kitāb ??? li-l-sayyid ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ???*). A note of donation in Italian on f. 1r: “Dono di Seif el Islam | Alī figlio dell’Imam | Sanaa 14/9/31- 9°” (“Gift of Sayf al-Islam ‘Alī, son of the Imam, Sanaa, 14/9/1931-9°”) written in pencil. The donor mentioned in this note was most likely ‘Alī b. Yahyā, a less-known son of the king of Yemen Yahyā Muḥammad Ḥamīd al-Dīn (r. 1918-1948). On the same f. 1r a note of possession of the manuscript to Dr. Sarnelli, in Arabic, in black ink, dated 1350/1931.

Illustrations: The text is interspersed with figures, especially talismanic figures, seals, and *awfāq*. Notable illustrations are found on the following folios: 5r, 7r, 8r, 9v, 11r, 12r, 13r, 14r, 15r-v, 16v, 38r, 44v–45r, 51r, 67v–68v, 84r, 87v, 103r, 114v, 226v, 236r, 238r, 262r, 263v–264v, 267r–268v, 271r, 272v, 275v, 296v, 307v, 312r, 321v, 322v–323r, 326r, 327v. Some noteworthy figures from this MS are reproduced in Chapter 5 *Arabic Manuscripts on Magic at L’Orientale*.

Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 107 and no. 354, written in pencil. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.



MS ARA 139, f. 7r. Seals and instructions for summoning creatures from the unseen world





MS ARA 139, ff. 1v–2r.
 First two text pages of the
 manuscript with extensive
 notes in the margins



MS ARA 139, leather cover



MS ARA 244 (1–9)

(inv. SA 110440)

*Composite manuscript of Yemeni provenance.***MS ARA 244 (1)** ff. 1r–15v*Kitāb al-mandal al-Sulaymānī li-riyāḥ al-ġānn ‘alā al-iṭnā ‘aṣar al-burūġ*
by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magical medicine; invocations; prayers of request (*ad’wiya*)**MS ARA 244 (2)** ff. 16r–20v, acephalous and mutilated at the end*Untitled work* by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Dietetics (medical properties of aliments)

MS ARA 244 (3) ff. 21r–25r, acephalous and mutilated at the end*Untitled work* by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magic

MS ARA 244 (4) ff. 25v–42v*Ḥirz al-aqsām* by Ġaʿfar b. Muḥammad [al-Ṣādiq] (d. 148/765) (ascribed)

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Theurgy; protective talisman (*ḥirz*); prayers of request (*ad’wiya*)**MS ARA 244 (5)** ff. 43v–46r, acephalous*Untitled work* by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magic

MS ARA 244 (6) ff. 46v–50r*al-Hayākil al-sab’a* by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Theurgy; prayers of request (*ad’wiya*)

MS ARA 244 (7) ff. 50r–51v

al-Hirz al-Ğa'farī by anonymous

(possibly ascribed to Ğa'far b. Muḥammad al-Šādiq, d. 148/765)

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Theurgy; protective talisman (*hirz*); prayers of request (*ad'wiya*)

MS ARA 244 (8) f. 52r–v, acephalous and mutilated at the end

Fragment of a magical work by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magic

MS ARA 244 (9) ff. 53r–55v, acephalous and mutilated at the end

Untitled work by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Theurgy; prayers of request (*ad'wiya*)

All works comprised in the codex are incomplete and undated except for one (no. 6). Of some of them the title is provided (nos. 1, 4, 6, 7). All works are anonymous except one, most likely apocryphal, ascribed to Ğa'far b. Muḥammad al-Šādiq (d. 148/765) (no. 4), and a second text that from its title seems like it could be ascribed, again as a pseudepigraph, to the same Ğa'far b. Muḥammad al-Šādiq (no. 7). Despite this, the collection of fragmentary texts denotes a certain coherence. The writings contained in this codex deal with medicine, magic and religious prayers and invocations, especially for protective purposes. Some of the works contained in the codex include figures (magic squares, Solomonic seals, etc.) and lines of occult and cipher alphabets (or, perhaps, pseudo alphabets). For a brief discussion of the subjects and images of some of the figures, see Chapter 5 *Arabic Manuscripts on Magic at L'Orientale*. Both in terms of content and codicological characteristics, this manuscript bears similarities to the other Yemenite medical-magical codex in the Sarnelli Collection (MS ARA 139). Included in this manuscript are texts and prayers ascribed to Abū Ṭālib b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (d. 619) (f. 2r), 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) (f. 2r–v), and Ğa'far b. Muḥammad al-Šādiq (d. 148/765) (nos. 4, 7), and repeated invocations of 'Alī's name (f. 10r–v). This, coupled with the Yemeni provenance, suggests the hypothesis that the codex was produced in a Shi'ite context.

ff. I, II, 1r–55v, III (flyleaves I and III added during restoration). Blank folios: f. 43r. Title on the spine. f. IIr: some texts intentionally erased and abraded. f. IIv: two notes with recipes for pharmaceutical preparations based on natural substances. Few marginal glosses in Arabic, written in black ink. Notes on both doublures in

black ink in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish. Ink: Black, headings and rubrication in black, red and yellow ink. Horizontal and diagonal catchwords. Script: Multi-text manuscript written by different hands in various styles of *nashī*, with headings in *tulū*, sometimes approaching *riqāʿ*. Binding: Brown half leather, with a secondary light brown leather spine featuring a paper label, partially readable < *Kitāb | al-iršād | qīl Ibn H... | Allāh | 44* >. Paper: ff. 1–13: brownish European paper with watermark; ff. 14–20: brownish Oriental paper; ff. 21 onwards: brownish European paper with watermark *Tre lune* and three-petalled flower with initials V and C/E?>, same watermark as ARA 72.

Illustrations: the manuscript contains several figures, especially *awfāq* (magic and Latin squares), “Spectacle letters” (Brillenbuchstaben), “the seven signs”, and Solomonic seals. A talismanic figure is also included (f. 45r). Some figures from this MS are reproduced in Chapter 5 *Arabic Manuscripts on Magic at L’Orientale*.

Ex Libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 142 and no. 363, written in pencil. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.

[illegible]

Università degli Studi di Napoli
"L'Orientale"

N. inventario 110440
DSA - Biblioteca "MAURIZIO TADDEI"

قرصا علی

MS ARA 244, f. 55v. The last text page of the manuscript featuring “Spectacle letters” (*Brillenbuchstaben*) in the first line, followed by an incantation against harmful magic (*siḥr*) consisting of various elements, including Qurʾānic quotations and a series of numbers (line 6)



MS ARA 244: Text block attached to a leather cover, with visible ex libris of Sarnelli



MS ARA 244: Spine of the manuscript with a label indicating a title that does not correspond to the actual content of the volume

