

INTRODUCTION

§1: *The Forty Chapters* & the *EMA* series

I am happy to present the first complete translation in 850 years of a famous volume of traditional horary and electional astrology, al-Kindī's *The Book of the Judgments of the Stars*, popularly known as *The Forty Chapters* (hereafter, *Forty Chapters*). It is the second horary volume in my *Essential Medieval Astrology (EMA)* translation cycle,¹ and is a companion to both *The Search of the Heart* (2011) and *The Book of the Nine Judges* (2011). Hermann of Carinthia's *Search* is a valuable guide to a little-known and distinct branch of horary practice, called the "understanding of thoughts," as well as the finding of hidden or lost objects, timing procedures, and the use of numerical procedures to identify special significators or "victors" (also known as a *mubtazz* or *almuten*). Hugo of Santalla's *Judges* is a collection of several important horary works (including material on thoughts and victors). Together, these three volumes present a well-rounded picture of all areas of traditional horary practice.²

Unlike most other books in the *EMA* cycle, al-Kindī begins his work with an introduction to some basic principles in traditional astrology. Still, it is not quite a beginner's book, and students would do well to accompany it with my *Introductions to Traditional Astrology* (hereafter, *ITA*), which has much commentary and information on all basic topics, not to mention a longer glossary than is contained here. Throughout *Forty Chapters* I make reference to it.

So, while not a beginner's course, *Forty Chapters* is a good introduction to questions and elections, and was used by such famous astrologers as al-Rijāl³ and William Lilly. It contains a number of sections with valuable advice on general approaches to interpretation, and will repay much study.

¹ See Appendix A.

² In fact, there are important overlaps between these three volumes, since Hermann relied on one of the two Latin translations of *Forty Chapters* for some of his material, and most of *Forty Chapters* was used by Hugo for *Judges*.

³ Often known in the Latin West as "Haly Abenragel." See below.

§2: Al-Kindī's life, work, & influence on later astrology

The famous philosopher and scientific author, Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb bin Ishāq al-Kindī, known as the “first philosopher of the Arabs,” was born in about 801 AD, at a time of increasing sophistication, luxury, and learning in the Muslim world. Charlemagne and the Carolingian Renaissance held sway in the West, and the court of the *1,001 Arabian Nights*, scientists, and astrologers were creating legendary figures in the East. Al-Kindī belonged to a noble branch of the Kinda tribe in the Yemen. His family, which claimed one of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad as an ancestor, would have been proud of his accomplishments as his fame and connections grew. After some education in Kūfa or Basra, he completed his training in Baghdad, where he coordinated an early circle of translators and writers, rendering texts from Greek and other languages into Arabic (sometimes as exact translations, sometimes as interpretive paraphrases). It was the perfect time for such activities, since the ‘Abbasid Caliphate was well known for its support of Greek and Persian learning. Since the 760s, leading elites had hired professional Persian astrologers (such as Māshā'allāh, ‘Umar al-Tabarī, and Sahl bin Bishr) and administrators, and particularly under Caliphs Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786-809) and al-Mā'mūn (r. 813-833) they sponsored the famous “House of Wisdom”—which was not a building, but a broad movement of translation, study, archiving, and scientific work.

Some time after arriving in Baghdad, the Arab al-Kindī came to be connected with the court of al-Mā'mūn, putting his professional dates at the court right after the deaths of the astrologers Māshā'allāh and ‘Umar al-Tabarī (ca. 815 AD), and during the career of the astrologer Sahl bin Bishr (who is said to have worked for al-Hasan, a vizier under al-Mā'mūn).⁴ Al-Mā'mūn's brother and successor, al-Mu'tasim (r. 833-842) made al-Kindī the tutor to his own son.

Al-Kindī himself seems not to have been a translator, but as part of overseeing a circle of translators he wrote many works explaining Greek and Persian thought to an Arabic-speaking world. Philosophically, he claimed to be an Aristotelian; but the Aristotle of that time was heavily filtered through numerous layers of Neoplatonic thought. At any rate, al-Kindī was not

⁴ For modern translations of works by Māshā'allāh and Sahl, see my *Works of Sahl & Māshā'allāh* (2008) and *Persian Nativities I* (2009). For a short natal work by ‘Umar, see *Persian Nativities II* (2010). *The Book of the Nine Judges* (2011) contains much or all of a horary work by ‘Umar.

narrowly ideological, and moreover wrote in virtually every possible discipline: from comparing Euclid and Aristotle on optics, to writing numerous shortish works on astrology (in addition to *Forty Chapters*), to influential pieces on the proper proportions to be used in mixing medicines,⁵ and much more. Most of these hundreds of short works and letters are lost in Arabic, but many of the more important ones survive, some in Latin translation.

Astrologically, he is well known for five things. First, *Forty Chapters* presented him as an accomplished astrological authority: it was not only used rather extensively by al-Rijāl (known in the West as Haly Abenragel) and al-Qasrānī,⁶ but was one of the three major works incorporated into the 12th-Century *Judges*. Al-Bīrūnī borrows from §§44-55 of al-Kindī, in his own §§486-88, and much later, William Lilly’s *Christian Astrology* contained long, uncredited passages from *Forty Chapters* (see below).

Second, al-Kindī used Persian mundane astrology to predict the end of Arab dominion in about 1293 AD.⁷ There were various Islamic dynasties and sultanates in addition to the Caliphate at that time, but the Mongols had overthrown the ‘Abbasids about 35 years earlier, in 1258 AD. Al-Kindī first uses gematric methods to establish 693 years, then compares this with cycles of Saturn-Mars conjunctions in Cancer. At any rate, his dates are tantalizingly close.

Third, al-Kindī wrote two letters (combined into one in Latin) on astrological weather prediction, which were foundational for later work on this topic in the Latin West.⁸

Fourth, al-Kindī has the dubious distinction of impelling the famous Abū Ma’shar towards astrology.⁹ According to the standard story, Abū Ma’shar

⁵ The Arabic heading of the letter claims that al-Kindī had “actually used” these formulas in practice (Burnett 1993, p. 100).

⁶ For a late 9th-Century compilation made from seven astrologers’ works, called the *Book of Questions on the Science of the Judgment of the Stars*: see Sezgin pp. 134 and 138. Burnett (1993, p. 86) says that some of al-Qasrānī’s excerpts do not match the Arabic manuscript of *The Forty Chapters* itself.

⁷ See Burnett and Yamamoto (2000), pp. 525-43 for a translation and discussion of this letter.

⁸ I will translate this material for my forthcoming mundane installment of the *EMA* cycle, *The Astrology of the World*.

⁹ Al-Kindī was also claimed to be among the best astrologers in judicial astrology (see below), but to me that sounds unlikely. Al-Kindī was already known more as a compiler and philosophical writer than as a practicing astrologer, and the few charts from his lifetime (Ch. 7.3 below) were cast just before his death, at unlikely morning hours for an elderly astrologer to take questions about missing objects—especially so many of them in

was an astrology skeptic who made his views known to al-Kindī. Al-Kindī responded wisely that one should study a subject before criticizing it. Abū Ma'shar took his advice and the rest, as they say, is history: Abū Ma'shar was certainly known in the Latin West as one of the best and most authoritative astrologers of all time. Nevertheless I say that this distinction of al-Kindī's is "dubious," because some other Arabic-speaking astrologers of the Middle Ages rather wished that Abū Ma'shar had stayed away from astrology. The scholar al-Bīrūnī criticized Abū Ma'shar's scholarly honesty,¹⁰ and al-Rijāl moans that Abū Ma'shar is frequently inaccurate, and is like a man trying to collect firewood at night!¹¹

Fifth, through his *On the Stellar Rays*,¹² al-Kindī was also known as a scientific theorizer on how astrology and magic work. The basic idea of the book is that the stars become influential, and have causal interactions with the world, due to rays which they emit and which may be studied geometrically.

As for his views on astrology in general, al-Kindī may think (in his *Discourse on the Soul*) that the soul comes to be associated with the planetary spheres after death; but at any rate he views the heavens as instruments of Divine Providence. In fact, the stars have rational souls and move in obedience to God's command. By the heavens enclosing the whole world, this means that God's Providence is universal, and suggests that a science like astrology can be used to interpret that Providence. In terms of how the stars produce their changes, in one work al-Kindī says that the motions of the stars produce generation and corruption in the sphere below the Moon (our world) through friction that is physically communicated to our lower regions. But in the work on the stellar rays mentioned above, the stars influence matters through their geometric rays.

In this very brief description of his general astrological attitudes, we can discern two sets of classical conflicts in astrology and traditional philosophy. First, note the strain between reasoning and commanding: if the stars (or perhaps their souls) were rational, they would not need to be commanded; or

such a short time. My sense is that these charts were either cast by him as theoretical examples, or inserted by someone else.

¹⁰ Al-Bīrūnī 1983, pp. 29-31.

¹¹ See Burnett 1993, p. 92 and al-Rijāl II.2. Nevertheless, I will be translating much of Abū Ma'shar for upcoming works on elections and mundane astrology.

¹² The only full English translation I am aware of, is by Robert Hand and Robert Zoller in an out-of-print edition for Project Hindsight (1993). I will produce my own translation and commentary in 2012-2013.

rather, if God were also rational, then by their rationality the stars would understand what God or goodness required, and act voluntarily¹³—but the need to be commanded suggests that God is either not rational (in a recognizable sense), or is somehow beyond reason (in which case one wonders how the stars benefit by being rational).¹⁴ Next, there is also a strain in his understanding of what astrology is. The friction-based view falls squarely into the Ptolemaic-Aristotelian picture of astrology as a subdivision of physics, but his account of interpretation and Providence is closer to the Stoic conception of astrology as an interpretive discipline, which applies rational rules to the appearances of the heavens in order to discern the Providence and intentions of Cosmic Reason or the Divine Mind. We should not really blame al-Kindī for these internal conflicts in his thought: they appear again and again throughout the history of Western astrology, with individual astrologers frequently believing both sides of each conflict at the same time.

Following are some notable astrological works by al-Kindī:¹⁵

- *The Book of the Judgments of the Stars*, that is, *The Forty Chapters*, on questions and elections.
- *On the Rays of the Stars* (or *On the Stellar Rays*), on a theory of magic and astrology.
- Several letters on weather and meteorology, of which the two found in separate Hebrew translations were combined in the well-known Latin version, *De mutatione temporum, On the Changing of the Weather* (or: *On the Changing of Seasons*).
- *Treatise on the Judgment of Eclipses*.
- *Treatise on the Dominion of the Arabs and its Duration*. This was the book used to predict the end of Arab rule above.
- *The Choices of Days*, on elections.
- *Essay on the Revolutions of Years*. This is probably a mundane work, but may include natal revolutions.
- *De signis astronomiae applicatis ad medicinam*,¹⁶ *On the signs of astronomy as applied to medicine*. This is possibly the well-known medical work on the “degrees” of medicinal combinations mentioned above.

¹³ Classically, reason is closely associated with the Good, so someone who is rational is also impelled to do the Good.

¹⁴ I explore this problem further in my *Logos & Light* audio lectures (www.bendykes.com).

¹⁵ Sezgin pp. 131-34 lists several others.

¹⁶ This seems to be only in Latin.

- *Treatise on the Spirituality of the Planets*. This could be the work in which he suggests that the soul is associated with one of the planets after death.

Although al-Kindī enjoyed popularity and esteem for many years, his relations with the court were not as close under al-Mu'tasim's son al-Wāthiq (r. 842-847). They improved somewhat under his brother, al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-861), but al-Kindī soon met with disfavor from rivals, and also probably because of his association with a certain group of theologians called the Mu'tazilites, whom the Caliph was persecuting. Among other beliefs, the Mu'tazilites argued for atomism in their physics (with which al-Kindī disagreed), and an absolute unity of God and the inseparability of His attributes (with which he agreed). He was perhaps beaten by the authorities, and his library was taken away for a time. In fact, his prologues sometimes make it seem as though he has to struggle with an unfavorable readership. He died more or less in obscurity in about 870 AD.

However, al-Kindī's astrological story does not end there. For, apart from the translations of *Forty Chapters* by Hugo and Hermann, al-Kindī's material was adopted in widespread ways by al-Rijāl, al-Qasrānī, by Hugo in the *Book of the Three Judges*¹⁷ and *The Book of the Nine Judges*, William Lilly, and to a lesser extent al-Qabīsi. But first, let us turn to *Forty Chapters* itself.

§3: The Forty Chapters

Forty Chapters is a no-frills book on horary and electional astrology, with virtually no philosophical reflections.¹⁸ But this mixture of questions and elections is important for two reasons. First, in a sense it reflects astrological history itself, since some late ancient and early medieval horary material is really electional material rewritten in the form of a question. As Pingree has pointed out,¹⁹ instructions that describe *when* to do something are sometimes rewritten as *whether* something will happen if a horary chart contains those

¹⁷ The precursor to *The Book of the Nine Judges*: it contains translated excerpts from *Forty Chapters* (by Hugo of Santalla), a horary work by 'Umar al-Ṭabarī (by Hugo), and Sahl's *On Questions* (by Hermann of Carinthia). These three texts were supplemented with excerpts from other Arabic authors (and with Sahl's material being reworked by Hugo), for the *Book of the Nine Judges*.

¹⁸ For such reflections, see Bonatti's *Book of Astronomy* Tr. 6 and Sahl's *On Quest.*, parts of which I have included as Appendices in *Judges*.

¹⁹ Pingree 1997, p. 47.

CHAPTER 5: ON RELATIONS BETWEEN PEOPLE

Chapter 5.1: Significators ☞ overview

§150. Those things which are confirmed to happen most frequently between two people, are: controversies, any causes of action,¹ dissensions, wars, friendships, [and] betrothals.² Therefore, once a question has arisen concerning these and what is like these, one must note that the Ascendant itself signifies the agent of the whole affair (namely of the cause of action). But the seventh [signifies] him with whom the matter is done.³

§151. But the Midheaven suggests the mediator between each. But if a back-and-forth matter of controversy is being undertaken, it claims the judge; if a negotiation, a helper in the matter. If about nuptials, the bridesman;⁴ if the action is about war, victory and success; if partnership and friendship, it regulates the cause of their benevolence and esteem. Also, the fourth sign determines the end of the question.⁵

§152. Likewise, the Moon assumes the mediator of the two. But the star from which she recedes, [indicates] the chief of the cause;⁶ but the one to which she applies, the adversary. Also, the lord of the Moon decides the end of the matter.

¹ Especially in the sense of legal causes.

² For more on these, see Chs. 10-12 for wars, Ch. 22 for friendships, and Ch. 20 for betrothals.

³ This description assumes that the querent is the one undertaking the action (or thinking about undertaking it).

⁴ Traditionally, this is a man who arranges (and often pays for) the wedding, usually on behalf of the groom; sometimes this is the one who walks the bride down the aisle and presents her.

⁵ See §§165-72 below.

⁶ That is, the querent (assumed to be the one initiating the action).

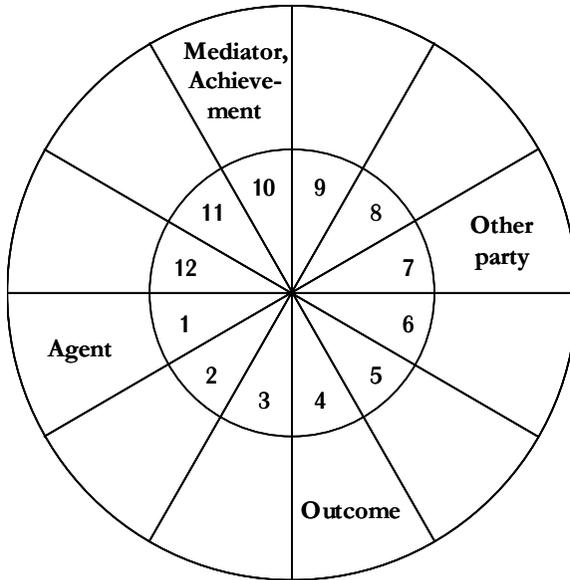


Figure 45: Angles of the chart & parties in relationships

Chapter 5.2: The agent of the action

§153. Therefore, the force of the Ascendant and the one from who the Moon recedes (in the way it was described above with respect to strength),⁷ provided that the Ascendant obtains some likeness with the nature of the quaesited matter,⁸ and if it acquires the comfort of the fortunate ones (namely their presence or regard) or some shared bearing,⁹ [and] even [if] the strength and prosperity of the Moon [is present],¹⁰ they convey victory in the cause, and success to its agent—particularly if the weakness and misfortune of the seventh and the one with whom the Moon’s application comes to be, is discovered.

§154. Even the lord of the Midheaven and the Midheaven itself seems to confirm this if the prosperity and robustness of each is made clear. And let there be a regard between these and the Ascendant and its lord, or some

⁷ See the end of §139, §§63-72, §§77-78, and *ITA* IV.2.

⁸ See §142 above.

⁹ See §144 above.

¹⁰ See esp. *ITA* IV.5.

bearing of this kind. Also, the Moon manages the same thing as the Midheaven does, if sustained by her witnesses.

Chapter 5.3: The judge or mediator

§155. Again, the robustness and luckiness of the lord of the Midheaven [indicates] the kindness of the mediator in those things which pertain to him. But his regard (or some bearing) proves the truth of the judgment. Moreover, with the lord of the Midheaven being corrupted, the judge's fraud is diagnosed.

§156. But [if the lord of the Midheaven is] fortunate and weak, it bequeaths trustworthiness to the judge, but removes the effect and power of the judgment. Moreover, it being unlucky and strong testifies to the power of frauds and trickery. The same [lord] being retrograde [indicates] he is uncertain, and wavering [in] what he should do about the judgment, nor does he allow what is suitable to have the power of coming to pass.

§157. Moreover, if Mars is the lord of the Midheaven¹¹ [and] regarded by Venus, it corrupts the judge with a bribe. Being regarded by Saturn adds that he is underhanded, with one thing in his heart, but another in his mouth. Being in the regard of Jupiter, he wants a just judgment but it shows that he is powerless. In the regard of Mercury,¹² [it signifies] astute orators and those of great counsel, but with no perseverance in it. Regarded by the Sun, it introduces a royal judge.

§158. Again, with the Moon obtaining the rulership of the Midheaven, [and estranged from the fortunes],¹³ although she introduces many changes and wrongfully [introduces] various little annoyances, still she suggests it is brought together [even though] with public bribes—unless the regard of the fortunate ones reinforces [her]. In this way one will even have to judge the mediator according to its counsel.

¹¹ Adding with *Judges* §7.50; Burnett's version omits "if...is the lord of the Midheaven."

¹² Reading the rest of this sentence with Robert.

¹³ Adding with Robert.

Chapter 5.4: The other party

§159. Also, the lord of the seventh gets a judgment similar to the lord of the Ascendant, in those things which belong to its own signification.

Chapter 5.5: The origin of a war¹⁴

§160. Again, with a question being made about war, should the lord of the Midheaven or the Moon be seen to rejoice in (or rather support) the lord of the Ascendant or of the west, or the star from which the Moon recedes, or the one with whom her application comes to be (I say, whichever one of these two [it was])—without a doubt it enriches [that side] with the triumph of victory. Even the friendly support of Mars means the same thing. But the equality of each [significator] introduces the hope of peace, if their lords enjoy the regard (and a friendly one) of the other.¹⁵ But the degree of the mutual application makes manifest the time of making the peace firm (likewise the Moon assumes [the role of] the mediator between the two).

§161. Moreover, if Mars could corrupt either of [these places] or their lord, particularly from an adverse aspect, it threatens death in the present war, but [the degrees of] their mutual application asserts the terminal point of death. Again, Mars in a pivot indicates a public death in the war. Again, Mars corrupting either one from the eighth, frequently teaches he is going to die while sleeping at night.¹⁶ But if the corruption by Mars were made from the second, it introduces the death of the masters [of the war] and their co-helpers, with fraudulence—especially with Mars [not]¹⁷ holding onto a share or possession¹⁸ in the second.

§162. Also, the figure of the sign which Mars possesses, describes the murderer. But with Mars corrupting [a significator] from the sixth, provided that the sign represents a wild animal, he incurs death from a beast of that kind. But corruption made from the twelfth threatens destruction after

¹⁴ This section really seems to pertain to feuding and violent conflicts in general, not a national war complete with standing armies.

¹⁵ For more on peacemaking, see Ch. 10.2.

¹⁶ Robert adds: “and the time of it will be perceived from the quantity of the degrees of their conjunction.”

¹⁷ Adding with Robert.

¹⁸ *Faciem* (drawing on Niermeyer’s medieval usage). That is, if Mars is peregrine in the second.

difficulties from enemies. Again, [corruption] from [the four] signs which naturally make a regard to others ([that is], from the pivots), [he will in no way escape the danger of destruction].¹⁹ Should the corruption by Mars proceed from the ninth, it testifies he achieves death by a public judgment of the law, or some journey or foreign travel, sometimes a hunt or some plundering²⁰ or what is like these.

§163. But if [Mars were] in the ninth [and] the house of the Moon would be exhibited [there], law and social custom give a capital sentence. And so, the same house being that of Venus, the law indicates death because of [his] libido or joking, and sexual immorality carried out with women. If the same [place] would be found to be a house of Mars, it confers destruction on some journey. If however [it is] a house of Saturn, he incurs death by fraud and flattery. Again, if the house of Mercury comes to be in the same [place], he will lay down [and die] because of words and books.

§164a. Mars corrupting [a significator] from the fifth: he meets death because of children [or a change of affection].²¹ Also, from the eleventh²² it signifies that he dies from the king's underofficials or his own friends, [and this apart from what was hoped for].²³ Again, the misfortune of Mars being recognized from the third, brothers or some journey or a common judgment of the law introduces the cause of death.

§164b.²⁴ Even the lord of the seventh (with the attacking stated above), being unlucky in all things which belong to its signification, gets a similar judgment.

§164c. The retrogradation of either one of them teaches that the man whom that significator indicates, is going to be conquered.

¹⁹ Adding missing parts from Robert.

²⁰ *Depraedatione*. Or, "devastation." The sense is of marauding soldiers traveling from place to place.

²¹ Reading with Robert for Hugo's "or his own will." Hugo repeats *propriae voluntatis* in the eleventh house as well, which leads me to believe there has been a manuscript error.

²² Reading with Robert for *decimo*.

²³ Again, reading with Robert for Hugo's "an attack of his own will, [or] because of some expected thing."

²⁴ So far, al-Kindī has described Mars's effect on the lord of the Ascendant (namely, the querent); here he simply means that the same rules apply to harming the lord of the seventh (the opponent).