

Arabic and Pahlavi Astrological Vocabulary

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This short PDF is a student research guide to common medieval Arabic and Pahlavi astrological terms. I have not included all possible terms here, nor are they discussed at great length. For the most part I have offered brief definitions, with references to key medieval works for the student to consult. Most of the sources listed below are still in print and available, including my own translations (which are available at www.bendykes.com). Bonatti's *Book of Astronomy* is now available in paperback reprints.

Almost all of the terms are defined and discussed in my *Introductions to Traditional Astrology (ITA)*, and I have updated my translation of Arabic terms to new standards there.

I. Sources

- Anth.* Valens, Vettius, *The Anthology*, vols. I-VII, ed. Robert Hand, trans. Robert Schmidt (Berkeley Springs, WV: The Golden Hind Press, 1993-2001)
- BA* Māshā'allāh bin Atharī, *The Book of Aristotle*, in Benjamin N. Dykes trans. and ed., *Persian Nativities I* (Minneapolis: The Cazimi Press, 2009)
- BOA* Bonatti, Guido, *Book of Astronomy*, trans. and ed. Benjamin N. Dykes (Golden Valley, MN: The Cazimi Press, 2007)
- ITA* Dykes, Benjamin, *Introductions to Traditional Astrology* (Minneapolis, MN: The Cazimi Press, 2010)
- Instr.* Al-Bīrūnī, Muhammad ibn Ahmad, *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*, trans. R. Ramsay Wright (London: Luzac & Co., 1934)
- Introduct.* Sahl bin Bishr, *Introduction*, in Benjamin N. Dykes trans. and ed., *Works of Sahl & Māshā'allāh* (Golden Valley, MN: The Cazimi Press, 2008)
- JN* Al-Khayyāt, Abū 'Alī, *The Judgments of Nativities*, in Benjamin N. Dykes, trans. and ed., *Persian Nativities I* (Minneapolis: The Cazimi Press, 2009)
- Nativities* Māshā'allāh bin Atharī, *On Nativities*, in Benjamin N. Dykes trans. and ed., *Works of Sahl & Māshā'allāh* (Golden Valley, MN: The Cazimi Press, 2008)
- PN3* Abū Ma'shar al-Balhi (attr. Hermes), *On Revolutions of the Years of Nativities*, published as *Persian Nativities III* by Benjamin N. Dykes trans. and ed. *Persian Nativities II* (Minneapolis: The Cazimi Press, 2010)
- TBN* Al-Tabarī, 'Umar, *Three Books on Nativities*, Benjamin N. Dykes trans. and ed., *Persian Nativities II* (Minneapolis: The Cazimi Press, 2010)
- Tet.* Ptolemy, Claudius, *Tetrabiblos* vols. 1, 2, 4, trans. Robert Schmidt, ed. Robert Hand (Berkeley Springs, WV: The Golden Hind Press, 1994-98)

Abū Bakr, *On Nativities*, in Benjamin Dykes trans. and ed., *Persian Nativities II* (Minneapolis: The Cazimi Press, 2010)

Paul of Alexandria, *Late Classical Astrology: Paulus Alexandrinus and Olympiodorus*, trans. Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum, ed. Robert Hand (Reston, VA: ARHAT Publications, 2001)

Rhetorius of Egypt, *Astrological Compendium*, trans. and ed. James H. Holden (Tempe, AZ: American Federation of Astrologers, Inc., 2009)

Schmidt, Robert H., trans. and ed. *Definitions and Foundations* (Cumberland, MD: The Golden Hind Press, 2009)

II. Key Arabic/Pahlavi Terms

Dustūriyyah (Lat. *adusturia, dustoria*), Arabic for a Pahlavi term for the Gr. *doruphoria*, “spear-bearing, bodyguarding.” In Arabic it means “constitutionality,” and seems to come from Ar. *dast*, “place of honor, seat of honor, position of prestige, front.” In Farsi, *dast* means “hand, arm, skill, authority,” which introduces the notion of authority and strength, and as though one is stretching one’s arm out; and Ar. *dustūr* means “instructions, orders, permission” and “minister, rule, law.” So the concept implies both a skillful authority and the issuing of orders, along with the notion of being or standing out front, like bodyguards in front of the one whom they protect. There are traditionally three kinds of *dustūriyyah*, which are sometimes mixed or simplified in medieval texts. See *ITA* III.28, Schmidt pp. 49-50, *BA* II.12, *Tet.* III.5, Paul Ch. 14, Rhetorius Chs. 23-25.

Firdāriyyah (pl. *firdāriyyāt*; Lat. *alfardaria*), from a Pahlavi term transliterating the Gr. *periodos*, “period.” The *firdāriyyāt* were a Sassanian set of time lords governing periods of life. See *PN3*, *BA* IV.17-25, *BOA* pp. 1387-89.

Hilāj (Lat. *hyleg, hylech*), from the Middle Persian *hīlāk*, “releasing.” Refers to the Gr. *apheta* (Ptolemy) and *epikeratētor* or predominator (Valens), which is directed for the purpose of longevity calculations. See *ITA* VIII.1.3, *BA* III.1.5-10, *JN* Chs. 2-4, *TBN* I.4, Abū Bakr I.15, *Nativities* §§2-4, *Tet.* III.11, *Anth.* III.1, III.3.

Ḥalb (Lat. *haiḡ, haym*, not often distinguished from *ḥayyiz* below), precise meaning unknown. According to al-Qabīsī I.78, when a diurnal planet is above the earth by day but below it by night, and when a nocturnal planet is below the earth by day but above it by night. This is a “sect-related rejoicing condition” inherited from Hellenistic astrology. See *ITA* III.2, Paul Ch. 6, *Anth.* III.5.

Ḥayyiz (Lat. *haiḡ, haym*), “domain,” a transliteration of Gr. *hairesis* (“sect, school of thought”). According to al-Qabīsī I.78, when a planet already in *ḥalb* is also in a sign of the same gender as itself. See *ITA* III.2, Paul Ch. 6.

ʾIttiṣāl (Lat. *alitiḡal, alictiṣal*), “connection.” Equivalent to an applying connection by degree, whether in the same sign or by aspect. See *ITA* III.7, *Introduct.* §§5.0, 5.3.

Jārbakhtār (Lat. *aliarbohtar*). From the Pahlavi “distributor of time,” equivalent to the Gr. *chronokratōr*, “time lord.” In practice it denotes the bound Lord of any directed releaser or *hīlāj*. See *BA* III.1.0 and IV.8-13, *TBN* II.2, Abū Bakr I.17, *PN3* III.1-8.

Kadukhūdhāh (Lat. *alcodhoze*, often spelled *alcocoden*). From the Arabic version of the Pahlavi *dakag xwaday*, which itself translates the Gr. *oikodespotēs*, “master of the house.” A Lord of the *hīlāj* (preferably the bound Lord), which confers a certain number of years of life to be compared with the primary direction of the *hīlāj*. It is also equivalent to the “distributor,” the bound Lord of a directed releaser in distributions. See *ITA* VIII.1.3 and references for the *hīlāj* above.

Kašmīmī (Lat. *cašimī*), “as if in the depth.” When a planet is about 16’ or less in longitude from the Sun, said to greatly benefit and strengthen the planet. See *ITA* II.9, *BOA* p. 211, *Introduct.* §5.14.

Mubtazz (Lat. *almuten*, *almubtez*), “victor,” probably translating the Gr. *epikeratētōr*, “prevailer, predominator.” This word appears not at all in *BA*, and only three times in *JN* (and implicitly in Ch. 22). Unlike in later texts, where each type of ruler is awarded a different number of points, there is no evidence in *JN* of such a weighted system. *JN* Ch. 1 (and its source in *Nativities* §1) seems to favor the best planet from a list of bad candidates, which simply means it is the planet which predominates; *JN* Ch. 37 wants one or more significators with “the more powerful” dignities. Therefore these particular texts give us no reason to believe that the notion of a weighted *mubtazz* was standardly recognized as part of the Sassanian inheritance. See *TBN* (books I-II *passim*). For the weighted *mubtazz*, see *ITA* I.18 and VIII.1.4, *BOA* pp. 72 and 145-46.

Namūdār (Lat. *animodar*), “indicator, significator” (Pahlavi). Refers to the procedure of rectifying a birth chart (and sometimes determining the time of conception) by examining such things as the pre-natal lunation or the relation of the assumed birth-Moon to the assumed birth-Ascendant. See e.g. *ITA* VIII.1.2, Abū Bakr I.4, *BA* III.1.10 p. 67, *BOA* pp. 261-62 and 1114-18, *Tet.* III.3.

Sālkhūdhāy (Lat. *axelhodze*), Pahlavi for “Lord of the Year.” The domicile Lord of the projected sign of the year. See *PN3* II, *BA* IV.2-7, *BOA* pp. 1394ff.

Tasyīr (Lat. *attazīr*), “setting out, dispatch,” the Arabic term for primary directions or releasing, which translates the Gr. *aphesis*. From the Ar. *sayir*, “to set out, get going, march.” This term is found throughout the texts, but the best guide to traditional directions is Gansten.¹ Medieval instructions based on al-Qabisi can be found in *ITA* VIII.2.2 and its Appendix E.

III. Less Common Terms

Aḥwālu-l-qamar (Lat. *wanuelbalcamar*). “The condition of the Moon.” See *ITA* IV.5, *Introduct.* §5.0.

Awj (Lat. *aux*), “summit.” Refers to a planet’s apogee relative to the earth, normally on the deferent circle. See *ITA* II.1.

Biyābāniya (Lat. *beibenie*), from the Pahlavi *amiyābāniḡ*, “fixed.” Refers to fixed stars.

Buht/bust (Lat. *albust*, *albuim*, *albuith*). A transliteration of the Sanskrit *bhukṭi*, the ecliptical distance traveled in a particular time. In *BA* II.4 it is defined as 12°, roughly the average distance traveled by the Moon in one day. But in *ITA* VIII.4 and Bonatti (described throughout *BOA* as the “combust hours,” see also pp. 1392-93), it is defined in terms of seasonal hours: for instance, the first 12 seasonal hours after the New Moon are “combust,” and the next 72 not combust. They are used in deciding to undertake (not combust) or avoid (combust) actions. Some Latins seem to

¹ Gansten, Martin, *Primary Directions: Astrology’s Old Master Technique* (England: The Wessex Astrologer, 2009).

have thought that *bust* was related to Lat. *bustum* (“pyre”), and thus to *combustus* (“combust, burned up”), which in the case of the Moon is not far off.

Ḍaʿf (Lat. Lat. *adof*. Gr. *astheneia*). “weakness.” Refers to the various weakened conditions of the planets. See *ITA* IV.3, *Introduct.* §5.0, 5.15.

Dafʿ al-quwwah (Lat. *dapha alchia*. Gr. *paradosis tēs dunameōs*, “pushing power/strength/virtue.”) When a planet is already in one of its own dignities, and applies to another planet, it commits or pushes its strength onto the other planet. See *ITA* III.16, *Introduct.* §5.0, 5.12.

Dafʿ al-ṭabīʿah, “pushing nature.” When a planet is applying to one of its dispositors (of any dignity). See *ITA* III.15. Sahl calls this “pushing *arrangement/disposition and nature*” (*dafʿ al-tadbīr wa-al-ṭabīʿah*, Lat. *dapha aredir*, Gr. *paradosis tēs kubernēseōs*, “bequeathing/transmission of the steering”), *Introduct.* §5.0, 5.13.

Dafʿ al-ṭabīʿatāin, “pushing two natures.” There are two kinds: (1) If a planet in one of its own dignities applied to one of its dispositors (of any dignity). (2) If a planet applies to another of its own sect, and they are both in a place of the sect. See *ITA* III.17.

Darijān (Lat. *dorungez*), exact translation uncertain. A division of each sign into three parts, each of which is assigned to one member of that sign’s triplicity. See *ITA* VII.6.

Fawt, “escape.” If a planet applies to another planet, but before the application is perfected the second planet changes signs, and when the first planet follows it completes a connection to some third planet before it can completed it with the second one. See *ITA* III.22, *BOA* p. 234.

Ghayr al-qubūl (Lat. *gairalcobol*), “[not]-reception.” When the Moon or the Lord of the Ascendant is joining with a planet which has no dignity in the place of the Moon or the Lord of the Ascendant. Or, if the Moon or the Lord of the Ascendant is joining with a planet while being in the fall or descension of that other planet. See *Introduct.* §5.0, 5.9.

Ḥaṣr (Lat. *alhicbir*), “confinement, enclosure, encirclement,” equivalent to “besiegement.” See *ITA* IV.4.2, *BA* II.6, *BOA* pp. 244-45, *Introduct.* §5.15.

ʿIḏbār (Lat. *alidber*. Gr. *to achrematiston*, “unbusy, disadvantageous”), “retreat.” Refers to places which are cadent from the angles. See *ITA* III.4, *Introduct.* §5.0, 5.2.

Inṣirāf (Lat. *alinciraf*, *alinchirat*. Gr. *aporroia*, “separation”), “disregard, separation.” Refers to the separation of planets from a connection in the same sign or bay aspect. See *ITA* III.8, *Introduct.* §5.0, 5.4.

Intihāʾ (Lat. *alentiphe*), “completion, conclusion.” The terminal point to which a profection has come for a particular year. It might be taken directly from Ptolemy’s account in *Tet.* IV.10 p. 47, where the profected Lord of the Year is the “ruler of the *final* sign.” For an example, see *ITA* VIII.3.2, *BA* IV.15.

Intikāth (Lat. *alichibae*), “revoking,” also known as “refrenation” in Renaissance astrology. When a planet applies to another planet, but turns retrograde before it can complete the connection. See *ITA* III.20.

ʿIqbāl (Lat. *alichel*. Gr. *to chrematistikon*, “busy, advantageous”), “advancement.” Refers to being angular or succedent. See *ITA* III.3, *Introduct.* §§5.0, 5.1.

Iqtibāl (Lat. *aligtibel*), “opposition.” This word can also mean “reception,” because of the act of meeting someone face-to-face. Sahl uses *istiqbāl* and *muqābila* (“exchange, recompense”) in *On Elect*. It might also be related to the notion that the Moon fully *receives* the Sun’s light when she is full and thus *opposed* to him.

Iʿtirād (Lat. *alintirad*), “obstruction.” If one planet is applying to a second planet, but before the connection is completed, another planet in a later degree turns retrograde and joins with the second planet first. See *ITA* III.21, *BOA* pp. 232-34.

Jam^c (Lat. *algemmee*), “collection.” The corresponding Gr. is *theriōdēs*, “reaping, harvesting,” but *sunagōgē* (“gathering together”) might also be appropriate. When two planets which are in aspect by whole sign are each connecting to a third planet in a later degree than they. See *ITA* III.12, *BOA* p. 266, *Introduct.* §§5.0, 5.6.

Jār kanār (Lat. *albarconar*), probably “limit of time,” but the exact Pahlavi meaning is uncertain. Refers to a last-resort *hilāj* when other options are exhausted. See *BA* III.1.10.

Jārzamān (Lat. *gerizemenia*, *ariarżemenie*, *gerizemenie*, *żemengerie*). From the Arabic transliteration of the Pahlavi “hour of the time,” indicating the so-called “cutting” point or degree indicating death by primary directions. Generally, the *jārzamān* will be one of the directed conjunctions and aspects of the malefics. See *BA* III.1.7 and the references for the *hilāj* above.

Jawzahirr (Lat. *genzahar*), the point on the ecliptic which a planet crosses when moving from northern to southern latitude and *vice versa*. For the Moon, this is equivalent to her Nodes.

Ḫalā al-sayr (Lat. *galaacen*. Gr. *kenodromia*), “emptiness of the course,” i.e., being “void in course.” Medievally, when a planet does not complete a connection with any other planet before it leaves its current sign. Hellenistically, when a planet (especially the Moon) does not complete a connection within the next 30°. See *ITA* III.9, *Introduct.* §§5.0, 5.10; *BOA* pp. 214, 270; Rhetorius Chs. 39, 112.

Man^c (Lat. *almane*. Gr. *empodismos*, “impediment, hindrance”), “barring” or “blocking.” When a planet applies or wants to apply to another planet, but a third planet bars it from doing so with its own body or ray, so that the first planet must connect with the third planet. Barring can also break an enclosure or besiegement. See *ITA* III.14, *Introduct.* §5.0, 5.7; *BOA* pp. 220-22.

Mudabīr (speculative, see also Ar. *ḏābiṭ*, “officer, governor”; Lat. *almudebit*), “manager, director, ruler.” The most important planet governing the places in the second type of birth for purposes of rearing a child. See *BOA* p. 1125 for the reference, but see *TBN* I.3.2 and Abū Bakr I.12.2 for a description of the type.

Muwājahah (Lat. *almuguea*), “facing.” When a planet bears the same relation to the Sun or Moon in a chart, as its domicile does to Cancer or Leo. See *ITA* II.11, *Tet.* I.23, *BOA* pp. 205-06.

Naql (Lat. *annacl.* Gr. *metakomide*, “transporting, conveying”), “transfer.” Sometimes called “translation of light.” When one planet separates from a second planet, and applies to a third, it transfers the light of the second planet to the third. See *ITA* III.11, *Introduct.* §§5.0, 5.5; *BOA* 215-17.

Nawbah (Lat. *anauba*), “shift, turn, rotation, period.” A parenthetical comment in *JN* Ch. 1 identifies the “lord of the *nawbah*” as the luminary ruling the current sect, which alternates according to day and night. But based on *BA* and *Nativities* I believe this is an incorrect explanation added by the medieval Latin translator. The previous paragraph had already addressed the luminaries, and this notion of a “shift” or “turn” recalls numerous instances in *BA* where the translator Hugo denotes planets which “take a turn” at fulfilling a given signficatory role. Moreover, the parallel passage in *Nativities* §1 p. 394 clearly identifies this “lord” as the *mubtazz*, the best planet from a list given earlier. Thus the “lord of the *nawbah*” is only the best planet which takes its turn fulfilling the role of signifying the native’s life in *this* nativity.

Nawbahrah (pl. *nawbahrāt*), Lat. *nawbahrat*. The “ninth-parts,” divisions of the signs into nine parts. See *ITA* VII.5, *PN3* III.9-10, *BOA* pp. 1406-07.

Qaṭʿ al-nūr, “cutting the light.” Several ways of preventing a connection from being completed. Type #1 is really obstruction (*iʿtirād*) from the following sign; Type #2 is essentially escape (*fawt*) within the same sign; Type #3 seems to be identical to barring (*manʿ*). See *ITA* III.23, *BOA* pp. 218-19 and 236-38.

Qismah (Lat. *alkizma*). “Distribution, division,” a general term used in time lord systems.

Qubūl (Lat. *alcobol*), “reception.” What a planet does when another planet pushes nature, power, two natures, or management to it. There are several types with different dimensions. Classical reception is the same as “pushing nature” (for example, the Moon applying to Jupiter while she is in Pisces). See *ITA* III.25, *Introduct.* §§5.0, 5.8; *BOA* pp. 223-26.

Quwwah (Lat. *alcdetib*, *alcoevah*. Gr. *dunamis*, “power/strength”), “strength, virtue.” Refers generically to planetary conditions which confer strength. See *ITA* IV.2, *Introduct.* §5.0, 5.14, but also *dafʿ al-quwwah* above.

Radd (Lat. *airchad*. Gr. *apostrophē*, “turning back/away”), “returning.” When a planet applies to a retrograde or cadent planet, the retrograde or cadent planet cannot accept the light, and returns it, “destroying the purpose.” See *ITA* III.19, *Introduct.* §§5.0, 5.11; *BOA* pp. 227-230.

Radd al-nūr, “reflecting the light.” Equivalent to transfer or collection from a position of aversion. (1) When two planets are in aversion to each other, but the first applies to a third planet which then transfers the light between them. (2) When two planets are in aversion to each other, but they apply to a heavier planet in a later degree than they; the heavier planet collects the light but then reflects it on to some other place. See *ITA* III.13.

Tamrīn (Lat. *thaymirin*), from Pers. *nīmburīn*, the quarters of the Moon. See *BA* II.9, *Instr.* §253.

Wabāl (Lat. *alwabil*), “unhealthiness, evil results, harm, a plague.” Equivalent to a planet being in its own detriment. See *Introduct.* §5.15, *BA* II.8.