PRELIMINARY REMARKS: The following item presents Arabic text and facing English translation of chapter ii in al-Ashraf ‘Umar’s Kitāb al-Tabṣira fī ʿilm al-nujūm (fol. 11a-11b in manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, Huntington 233, hereafter: H; omitted in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, arabe 2601.2). This is followed by a short study.

In the Arabic text, hamza, madda, shadda, and diacritical points have been silently added. The punctuation marks mainly follow the manuscript by presenting paragraph marks by dots (in case of blank spaces) and by three dots arranged as triangle when this is found in the manuscript. Orthographical irregularities in numerals are not corrected. The critical apparatus includes editorial deviations from the text preserved in H. In the English translation, parentheses ( ) have been inserted to assist the flow of the text. Emphasis by rubrication in the manuscript is represented in bold red script in the Arabic text and English translation.
1 Arabic text and English translation

[1] البـلاـب الطاغي في تقسيم البروج المتقلبة والثابتة والمتجيلة ::


[4] والسبب فيها أن يته الفصول الأربعة على حلول الشمس في البروج فإذا نزلت رأس الحمل انتقل الفصل من الشتاء إلى الربيع :: وإذا نزلت رأس السرطان انتقل الفصل من الربيع إلى الصيف :: وإذا وصلت الميزان انتقل فصل الصيف بدخول فصل الخريف :: وإذا وصلت الجدي انقلب الخريف بدخول فصل الشتاء حتى يعود الزمان كما تقدم ذكره ولذلك ستتم ذكره

[5] والسبب فيها أن يته الفصول الأربعة على حلول الشمس في البروج فإذا نزلت رأس الحمل انتقل الفصل من الشتاء إلى الربيع :: وإذا نزلت رأس السرطان انتقل الفصل من الربيع إلى الصيف :: وإذا وصلت الميزان انتقل فصل الصيف بدخول فصل الخريف :: وإذا وصلت الجدي انقلب الخريف بدخول فصل الشتاء حتى يعود الزمان كما تقدم ذكره ولذلك ستتم ذكره

[6] وأما الثابتة فإن الشمس إذا وصلت برج الثور انتقل فصل الربيع وقوى حكمه وظهرت دلالته واستحتمت طباعته :: وكذلك إذا وصلت الشمس الأسد انتقل فصل الصيف وقوى حكمه وظهرت دلالته واستحتمت طباعته :: وكذلك إذا وصلت الشمس العقرب انتقل فصل الخريف وثبت :: وإذا وصلت رأس الدلو قوي حكم فصل الشتاء كما تقدّم ذكره من الفصول فسُميت هذه البروج ثابتة

[7] وأما البروج المتجيلة فإن الشمس إذا وصلت الجوزاء انتقل فصل الربيع بالصيف واضطرت طباعته لتوسط الشمس ما بين آخر الفصل الأول وأول الفصل المستقبل :: وإذا وصلت الشمس السمناء انتقل الصيف بالخريف :: وإذا وصلت القوس انتقل الخريف بالشتاء :: وإذا وصلت الدلو انتقل الشتاء بالربيع فإن انتقلت هذه ذوات جسدين ففقين ذلك ::

H repeats.
[1] The second chapter on the division into the tropical, the fixed, and the (bi-)corporeal signs.

[2] Four of (the signs) are tropical. These are Aries, Cancer, Libra, <11b> and Capricorn. [3] Four of them are fixed. These are Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, and Aquarius. [4] Four of them are (bi-)corporeal. These are Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, and Pisces.

[5] The reason for that is that it explains the four seasons according to the halts of the sun in the signs. When (the sun) stations at the beginning of Aries, the season changes from winter to spring. When (the sun) stations at the beginning of Cancer, the season changes from spring to summer. When (the sun) arrives in Libra, the summer season changes due to the entering of the autumn season. When (the sun) arrives in Capricorn, the autumn season changes due to the entering of the winter season until the time (period) returns as mentioned above. Because of this, (these signs) are called “tropical”.

[6] Concerning the fixed (signs): The sun when it arrives in the sign of Taurus, the spring season is fixed. Its regime becomes strong, its influence becomes obvious (?) (zaharat dalālatih), its natures are strengthened. Accordingly, when the sun arrives in Leo, the summer season is fixed. Its regime becomes strong, its influence becomes obvious (?) (zaharat dalālatih), its natures are strengthened. Accordingly, when the sun arrives in Scorpio, the (regime of the) autumn season becomes strong, and it is fixed. When (the sun) arrives in the beginning of Aquarius, the regime of the winter season becomes strong as it is mentioned above respective the seasons. These signs are called “fixed”.

[7] Concerning the (bi-)corporeal signs: The sun when it arrives in Gemini, the spring season is mixed with the summer. Their natures become confused because of the sun’s middle position between the end of the first season and the future season. When the sun arrives in Virgo, the summer is mixed with the autumn. When (the sun) arrives in Sagittarius, the autumn is mixed with the winter. When (the sun) arrives in Pisces, the winter is mixed with the spring. Because of this, (these signs) are called “bicorporeal”. And understand this!
2 Study

2.1 Synopsis

In chapter ii of the Tabṣira al-Ashraf ˁUmar introduces the division of the zodiac into tropical, fixed, and bicorporeal signs, one of the classification systems used in pre-modern astrology in Islamicate societies. It organizes the zodiacal signs into groups that share similar features, characteristics, responsibilities, associations, and correspondences. Seasons and zodiacal signs are related in two ways, length- and crosswise. The former associates three consecutive signs of the zodiac with each of the four seasons (see Table 1). The latter groups the four signs at the beginning, the middle, and the end of each season, respectively, and calls them “tropical”, “fixed”, and “bicorporeal” (see Table 2), the classification al-Ashraf ˁUmar deals with in chapter ii of the Tabṣira. He begins by mentioning for each group the respective zodiacal signs. Then he explains the division into tropical, fixed, and bicorporeal signs by relating the seasonal changes and the sun’s position in the zodiac, i.e., its ecliptic longitude. Finally, organized according to these three groups, he describes what happens with regard to the seasons when the sun enters each of the zodiacal signs. When it stations in one of the tropical, or movable, signs, the seasons change from one to the next, when in one of the fixed, or stable, the season is established. Stationing in one of the bicorporeal, mutable, individual, mixed, common, balancing signs marks the end of the previous and the start of the next season. This information al-Ashraf ˁUmar presents in parallel paragraphs with repeating chains of if-then-clauses. The concise presentation of the information, the iterative, almost redundant characteristics of the text and their neat arrangement might point to an audience with none or only very basic astrological knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>season</th>
<th>zodiacal signs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>spring</td>
<td>Aries, Taurus, Gemini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>summer</td>
<td>Cancer, Leo, Virgo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>autumn</td>
<td>Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>winter</td>
<td>Capricorn, Aquarius Pisces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The signs associated with spring, summer, autumn, and winter in al-Ashraf ˁUmar’s Tabṣira.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>zodiacal signs</th>
<th>season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tropical</td>
<td>munqalib</td>
<td>Aries, Cancer, Libra, Capricorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fixed</td>
<td>thābit</td>
<td>Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, Aquarius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bicorporeal</td>
<td>mujassad*</td>
<td>Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, Pisces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Tropical, fixed, and bicorporeal signs in al-Ashraf ˁUmar’s Tabṣira (*: Or mujassad[?]; also dhū al-jasadayn).
2.2 Analysis

Chapter xliv of the *Tabsira* also discusses tropical, fixed, and bicorporeal signs, but with the discussion embedded in a longer chapter, whose focus lies on the signs of straight and crooked risings as well as on the determination of the ascendant. In chapter iii al-Ashraf ṢUmar introduces another classification system of the zodiacal signs, according to the four elements of Greek tradition.

Chapter ii does not mention any of its sources. Its content, however, belongs to what one might consider a basic canon of pre-modern astrological knowledge widespread in Islamicate societies. The topic had already been discussed in the *Tetrabiblos* by Ptolemy (fl. 2nd c.), 3 first translated into Arabic in the 8th century by Abū Yahyā al-Bīṭrīq (fl. 8th c.) and again in the 9th century by Ibrāhīm b. al-Ṣalt (fl. 9th c.). They fostered the engagement in particular with general and horoscopic astrology, obvious in the commentaries written about this treatise, e.g., in the 10th century by al-Battānī (d. 929). He organizes his chapter parallel to that in the *Tetrabiblos* and follows its distinction of the tropical signs into solstitial (*mungalid*) and equinoctial (*mu’tadil*), information that al-Ashraf ṢUmar omits. Further, al-Battānī changes Ptolemy’s explanations where these terms come from in favour of a more etymological derivation and therefore in a way more similar to al-Ashraf ṢUmar’s explanations. 5

It is, however, also discernible in the genre of introductory treatises for which the *Tetrabiblos* provided the main source. They comprise basic astrological knowledge including the classification into tropical, fixed, and bicorporeal signs. 6 Abū Ma`shar (787-886) dedicates a separate chapter to this topic in his *Mudkhal al-kabīr ilā ‘ilm aḥkām al-nujūm* (“The great introduction to astrology”), the earliest of these introductions from the 9th century. Similar to al-Ashraf ṢUmar, he omits the distinction between solstitial and equinoctial signs. But in contrast to him, he discusses, in a second section, the tropical, fixed, and bicorporeal signs according to their chronological order. 7 In his *Mukhtasar al-Mudkhal* (“The abbreviation of the *Introduction [into astrology]*”), as the title says, a concise version of his *Mudkhal al-kabīr*, Abū Ma`shar includes the information if a sign is tropical, fixed, or bicorporeal in the chapter with the general descriptions of the zodiacal signs and their features. 8 al-Qabīṣi (fl. 2nd h. of 10th c.) nearly a century later lists them only briefly in his *Kitāb al-Mudkhal ilā šīnā‘at aḥkām al-nujūm* (“Book of the introduction to the craft of astrology”), 9 while slightly later Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (b. 973) deals with this topic in his *Kitāb al-Tafhīm li-awā’il fī šīnā‘at al-tanjīm* (“The book of instruction in the elements of the art of astrology”) in a short paragraph, when considering the question how zodiacal signs and seasons are related. 10 Similar to al-Ashraf ṢUmar, he does not distinguish between solstitial and equinoctial signs. But in contrast to him, al-
Bīrūnī omits most of the explanations related to the derivation of the technical terms and focuses instead on what the tropical, fixed, and bicorporeal signs indicate, a subject also missing in chapter ii of the *Tabṣira*. His contemporary, Kūshyār b. Labbān (fl. 1000) in his *Mujimal al-uṣūl fī ṣaḥāḥ al-nujūm* (“The compendium of the principles in astrology”) includes a separate chapter that keeps the distinction into solstitial and equinoctial and equates them with the tropical signs. But he omits most of the explanations and all indications.

All these treatises provide information that might have allowed al-Ashraf ˁUmar to compile chapter ii of the *Tabṣira*, but none of them is related closely enough to be his direct and sole template or source. Having compiled his chapter from several sources might be one reason for not referring to them, in particular with respect to the commonality and generality of the astrological knowledge presented. Another reason might be that they were authorless. Noteworthy, too, is the terminology al-Ashraf ˁUmar uses to denote the bicorporeal signs. While all these treatises refer to them by *dhū jasadayn* (lit. “of two bodies”), the author of the *Tabṣira* uses this term only once. Instead, he prefers the participle *mujassid* (or: *mujassad*?) of the verb *jassada* “to make corporal, to invest with a body, to embody”.

## 3 Bibliography


1 Cf. al-Bīrūnī (Wright), *Tafhīm*, 1934, §380, p. 231: “The influence of the fixed signs according to what has been said is obvious, [...]”


3 Ptolemy (Robbins), *Tetrabiblos*, 1940, I.11, p. 64-69.


10 al-Bīrūnī (Wright), *Tafhīm*, 1934, §380, p. 231.