PRELIMINARY REMARKS: The following presents Arabic text and facing English translation of chapter vii of al-Ashraf ʿUmar’s Kitāb al-Tabṣira fī ʿilm al-nujūm (fol. 15b,22-16b,8 in manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, Huntington 233, hence: H; fol. 97a,11-99a,9 in manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, arabe 2601.2, hence: P). This is followed by a brief study.

In the Arabic text, *hamza*, *madda*, *shadda*, and diacritical points have been silently added. The punctuation marks follow the manuscript by presenting paragraph marks either by dots (in case of a blank space), by [١] [٢] (in case of a هـ), by one centred or three dots arranged as triangle, · and ··, respectively, as in the manuscript. Spelling mistakes of numerals are not corrected. Due to its overall condition, its age and its reliability, P is not taken into consideration for the critical apparatus, only consulted, when readings are difficult. In the English translation, parentheses ( ) have been inserted to assist the flow of the text. Emphasis by rubrication in the Arabic text follows the manuscript and are rendered by bold, red script in the English translation.
1 Arabic text and English translation


[3] مثل ذلك إن يكون طالع وقت من الأوقات النارية ما بين أول الحمل إلى عشر درجات منه أو الأسード إلى عشر درجات منه أو القوس إلى عشر درجات منه فإنّ المثلّة للشمس وإن كان الوقت ليلاً فإنّ المثلّة للمشتري وإن كان الطالع من عشر درجات إلى عشرين من البروج المذكورة نهاراً فإنّ المثلّة للمشتري وإن كان ليلًا فإنّ المثلّة للشمس فإن كان الطالع من عشرين درجة إلى تمام البرج من البروج المذكورة فإنّ المثلّة لزحل في أيّ الوقتين كان نهاراً أو ليلًا وعلى هذا النسق سائر المثلتات.


[10] فإذا كان الكوكب في مثلته كان له قوتان وصار حينئذ كالرجل في منزله أو سلطانه أو ضييعه.
[1] The seventh chapter on the account of the lords of the triplicities and the account of the decans.

[2] The signs are subdivided into four divisions. Known planets, which are called the lords of their triplicities, belong to each division.

[3] The first division of them is the fiery triplicity. These are Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius. Each sign is subdivided into three divisions. Each division is ten degrees. It is the third (?) (al-muthallatha) of the planet.\(^1\) \(\text{<H,16a>}\) The lords of this first, fiery triplicity when (?) ascending by daytime (fi tawāli\(^\circ\) fi l-awqāt al-nahāriyya) are the Sun, then Jupiter, then Saturn – e(nd).\(^2\) When (?) ascending by nighttime (fi ṭawāli\(^\circ\) fi l-awqāt al-layliyya) (they are) Jupiter, then the Sun. Saturn is their partner during the times of day and night.

[4] Example of this. If an ascendant by daytime (ṭāli\(^\circ\) waqt min awqāt al-nahāriyya) is between the beginning of Aries and ten degrees of it, (between the beginning of) Leo and ten degrees of it or (between the beginning of) Sagittarius and ten degrees of it, then this third (?) (al-muthallatha) belongs to the Sun. If the time is at night, then this third (?) (al-muthallatha) belongs to Jupiter. If the ascendant is by day between ten and twenty degrees of the signs mentioned, then this third (?) (al-muthallatha) belongs to Jupiter. And if it is at night, then this third (?) (al-muthallatha) belongs to the Sun. If the ascendant is between twenty degrees and the end of the signs (tamām al-burūj) mentioned, then this third (?) (al-muthallatha) belongs to Saturn at both times, be they by day or at night. According to this order (we proceed) for all thirds (?) (al-muthallathā).\(^3\)

[5] The earthy triplicity: Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn. Their lords are by day Venus, then the Moon, then Mars, and at night the Moon, then Venus, then Mars.

[6] The airy triplicity: Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius. Their lords are Saturn, then Mercury, then Jupiter by day, and at night Mercury, then Saturn, then Jupiter.

[7] The watery triplicity: Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces. Their lords are by day Venus, then Mars, then the Moon, and at night Mars, then Venus, then the Moon.

[8] If the planet is in its triplicity, it has two powers.\(^4\) (The planet) is at that time like a man in his house, or his dominion or his estate.\(^5\)
ذكر الوجوه في أجزاء ثلاثة من كل برج بالنهار والليل بالسوية

فأتنا الوجوه فإنها أجزاء ثلاثة من كل برج بالنهار والليل بالسوية

فإذا كان الكوكب في وجهه كان من أجزاء القوة جزء واحد لا غير ومتله كالرجل في زيه ولباسه فيهب (?). عند اختيار الطالع لسائر الأعمال النظر والتفكير والبحث عن أقوى الكواكب بكترة الخطوط وهي هذه القوى المقدم ذكرها.

مثال ذلك إن يكون في بعض الطوالع كوكب في بيته وفي حدة فلمبته خمس قوى وللحد ثالث يكن له ثمانية أجزاء من القوة وكوكب آخر في بيته وشرفه فيهكون له تسع قوى. ومنها أقل وأكثر فيسمي أكثرها المستو بكترة الخطوط ويسمي أيضاً الليل ومن الكواكب ما يكون في موضع غربة لا في بيته ولا شرهه ولا حده ولا مملكته ولا وجمه فلا حظه له وهو حينئذ كالرجل الغريب في بلد غريب.

[10] Concerning the decans, they are three parts of equal size of each sign by day and night.

[11] The first ten degrees of Aries belong to Mars, the ten following to the Sun, and the ten following to Venus. **Taurus:** The first ten of it belong to Mercury, the middle (ten) to the moon, and the last (ten) to Saturn. **Gemini:** The first ten of it belong to Jupiter, the middle (ten) to Mars, and the last (ten) to the Sun. **Cancer:** The first ten of it belong to Venus, the middle (ten) to Mercury, and the last (ten) to the Moon. **Leo:** The first ten of it belong to Saturn, the middle (ten) to Jupiter, and the last (ten) to Mars. **Virgo:** The first ten of it belong to the Sun, the middle (ten) to Venus, and the last (ten) to Mercury. **Libra:** The first ten of it belong to the Moon, the middle (ten) to Saturn, and the last (ten) to Jupiter. **Scorpio:** The first ten belong to Mars, the middle (ten) to the Sun, and the last (ten) to Venus. **Sagittarius:** The first ten of it belong to Mercury, the middle (ten) to the Moon, and the last (ten) to Saturn. **Capricorn:** The first ten degrees belong to Jupiter, the middle (ten) to Mars, and the last (ten) to the Sun. **Aquarius:** The first ten of it belong to Venus, the middle (ten) to Mercury, and the last (ten) to the Moon. **Pisces:** The first ten of it belong to Saturn, the middle (ten) to Jupiter, and the last (ten) to Mars.

[12] If the planet is in its decan, it has only one part of its powers. (The planet) is like a man in his uniform or his livery. When (?) choosing (?) the ascendant (‘inda ikhtiyār al-ṭāli’) for all activities it is necessary to consider (?) (al-naẓar), to deliberate and to search for the most powerful planets with most shares. It is that power mentioned above.

[13] Example of this: If at some of the ascendants a planet is in his domicile and his term, and the domicile has five powers and the term three, (the planet) has eight parts of the power. Another planet is in his domicile and his exaltation, (then) it has nine powers. [14] There are (planets that have) less and (planets that have) more (powers). Those (with) more (powers) are called “ruling” by most of the shares. It is also called ‘the indicator’. Concerning the planets that are in a place of alienation, (i.e. they are) not in their domicile, not in their exaltation, not in their term, not in their triplicity, and not in their decan. They have no share. At that time (the planet) is like a stranger in a strange land.
2 Study

2.1 Synopsis

In chapter vii of his *Tabšira* al-Ashraf ˁUmar deals first with the lords of the triplicities and second with the decans. Both systems were used to associate planets with zodiacal signs, or subdivisions of them, not only in pre-modern astrology in Islamicate societies. In these parts of the ecliptic, they are more, or less, potent. Together with, mainly, domiciles, exaltation and dejection as well as the terms they form the shares of a planet that possess graduated powers.

Without any explanation for grouping three signs to a triplicity, al-Ashraf ˁUmar begins listing them together with their lords by day and night, and their partners (see Table 1). He only elaborates the first entry for the fiery triplicity, first by introducing a trisection of a zodiacal sign whose meaning is not completely clear (see also n. 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>triplicity</th>
<th>zodiacal signs</th>
<th>lord of the day</th>
<th>lord of the night</th>
<th>partner</th>
<th>ascendant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fiery</td>
<td>Aries, Leo, Sagittarius</td>
<td>Sun, Jupiter</td>
<td>Jupiter, Sun</td>
<td>Saturn</td>
<td>by day at night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earthy</td>
<td>Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn</td>
<td>Venus, Moon</td>
<td>Moon, Venus</td>
<td>Mars</td>
<td>by day at night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>airy</td>
<td>Gemini, Libra, Aquarius</td>
<td>Saturn, Mercury</td>
<td>Mercury, Saturn</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
<td>by day at night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watery</td>
<td>Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces</td>
<td>Venus, Mars</td>
<td>Mars, Venus</td>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>by day at night</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The triplicities, their lords, and their partners according to al-Ashraf ˁUmar’s *Tabšira*.

Second, he attaches an example that apparently describes another system for associating planets and subdivisions of the zodiacal signs different to the triplicities with their lords and to the decans, that are discussed in detail in the second part of chapter vii. It links each 10° of those three zodiacal signs that belong to one triplicity, the first section with its lord of the day for an ascendant by day or its lord of the night for an ascendant at night. For the second it works *vice versa*, by associating it with its lord of the night for an ascendant by day or its lord of the day for an ascendant at night. The third section belongs to its partner for an ascendant by day as well as at night (see Table 2 and also n. 3). The passage ends with a metaphor comparing a planet in its triplicity with a man in his house, dominion, or estate.
In the second part of chapter vii, al-Ashraf ʿUmar lists the decans that are associated with the seven planets of pre-modern astronomy, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, and Moon, with 10° subdivisions of the zodiacal sign. The first decan of Aries belongs to Mars. Then the following associations proceed repeatedly according to the order of the spheres from the outmost to the innermost planet (see Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Triplicity</th>
<th>Zodiacal Signs</th>
<th>Ascendant by Day</th>
<th>Ascendant at Night</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Firey</td>
<td>Aries, Leo, Sagittarius</td>
<td>0°-10° Sun</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10°-20° Jupiter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20°-30° Saturn</td>
<td>Saturn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earthy</td>
<td>Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn</td>
<td>0°-10° Venus</td>
<td>Moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10°-20° Moon</td>
<td>Venus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20°-30° Mars</td>
<td>Mars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airy</td>
<td>Gemini, Libra, Aquarius</td>
<td>0°-10° Saturn</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10°-20° Mercury</td>
<td>Saturn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20°-30° Jupiter</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watery</td>
<td>Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces</td>
<td>0°-10° Venus</td>
<td>Mars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10°-20° Mars</td>
<td>Venus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20°-30° Moon</td>
<td>Moon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: The thirds (?) (al-muthallathāt) and their lords according to al-Ashraf ʿUmar’s Tabṣira.

The passage in the Tabṣira continues with a metaphor that compares a planet in its decan to a man wearing his uniform or livery. After an example that explains the
different amounts of powers due to a share, the chapter concludes with a metaphor comparing a planet not being in any one of them with a stranger in a strange land.

The information proper on the triplicities and the decans al-Ashraf ˁUmar provides in lists. Concerning the first, he strings their lords and partners like beads by *thumma* ("then"). In the second case, however, he numerates them by "first", "middle" and "final". At least, H supports this list characteristics by its mise-en-page. It sets off the entries against each other by rubricating single words and inserting paragraph marks in red ink, mainly centred dots or three dots arranged as triangles, · and , respectively.

2.2 Analysis

While al-Ashraf ˁUmar discusses the decans only in chapter vii, several other chapters of the *Tabṣira* also mention the triplicities, though not their lords and partners. Chapter i discusses them when dealing with the conditions, natures, and characteristics of the zodiacal signs. Chapter iii introduces first the triplicities before coming to its major topic, the domiciles. Chapter v mentions first the zodiacal signs including the information of their triplicity and focusses then on lunar elections.12

Chapter vii does not mention any of its sources. Nevertheless, what al-Ashraf ˁUmar presents, might be considered as a basic canon of pre-modern astrological knowledge widespread in Islamicate societies and therefore found, e.g., in introductions into astrology. Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos*, translated for the first time into Arabic in the 8th century, already discusses the triplicities and their lords, but not their partners.13 They appear then in the *Mudkhal al-kabīr ilā ʿilm aḥkām al-nujūm* (“The great introduction to astrology”) by Abū Maˁshar (787-886) and further introductory texts such as his *Mukhtaṣar al-Mudkhal* (“The abbreviation of the Introduction [into astrology]”), the *Kitāb al-Mudkhal ilā šināʿat aḥkām al-nujūm* (“Book of the introduction to the craft of astrology”) by al-Qabīṣī (fl. 2nd h. of 10th c.), the *Kitāb al-Tafhīm li-awāʾil fi šināʿat al-tanjīm* (“The book of instruction in the elements of the art of astrology”) by Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (b. 973), and the *Mujmal al-uṣūl fī aḥkām al nujūm* (“The compendium of the principles in astrology”) by Kūshyār b. Labbān (fl. 1000),14 the latter three more or less familiar with Abū Maˁshar’s two astrological treatises.15 In comparison to the *Tabṣira*, all these texts provide more details, e.g., concerning the attributes of the triplicities or their indications. Apart from al-Bīrūnī in his *Tafhīm*, they all use the same chain link, *thumma*, to connect lords and partners as al-Ashraf ˁUmar does in his *Tabṣira*.

The decans that al-Ashraf ˁUmar introduces in the second part of chapter vii belong to non-Ptolemaic astrological traditions, nevertheless common and widespread not only in pre-modern Islamicate societies.16 They also found their way into the introductory literature to astrology.17 Only Kūshyār b. Labbān’s *Mujmal* omits them, probably due to its close relationship to Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos*.18 In comparison to the
first part of chapter vii, there are greater varieties in the presentation of the knowledge. Apart from of Abū Maˁshar’s Mukhtaṣar that integrates the decans in the general introduction to the signs, they concentrate mainly on explaining the classification system that links planets with decans and list instead examples of only a couple of the zodiacal signs. Accordingly, these presentations are more concise than al-Ashraf ˁUmar’s complete, tidied up list. They require a greater knowledge of astronomical basics to determine the lord of a decan. One might speculate that the presentation of the decans, as found in the Tabṣira, is more convenient for beginners, since it simplifies looking them up instead of counting them off. It therefore fits the claim al-Ashraf ˁUmar makes in his preface:19

“I put (the Kitāb al-Tabṣira fī ʿilm al-nujūm) down (in writing) as an enlightenment for the beginner in the science of the stars (ʿilm al-nujūm) and as an (aide-mémoire) for the (re)searcher in these sciences.” (H,3b)

The similarities between these introductory texts and al-Ashraf ˁUmar’s Tabṣira establish once more his familiarity with basic astrological knowledge that is also reflected on the back of his astrolabe, be it the instrument itself or the depiction in his Instrument Book.20 In three circular tables, al-Ashraf ˁUmar presents the terms, the decans, and the triplicities with their lords and partners.21 These engravings also illustrate that al-Ashraf ˁUmar knows how to make a table of the decans and the triplicities with their lords and partners. Nevertheless, he decides to present this topic in the Tabṣira in a different way. While a concise table is very suitable for engraving on an instrument, reasons for the detailed, iterative, and redundant text in the Tabṣira are not that obvious. It might be related to the audience his text addresses.

Finally, two issues mentioned in chapter vii, however, suggest that al-Ashraf ˁUmar’s possesses knowledge of further astrological traditions beyond these introductory texts, the “thirds” with their lords (see Table 2 and also n. 3) and the metaphors he uses to describe a planet’s being in one of its shares (see n. 5-9).

3 Bibliography
Abū Maˁshar, Mukhtaṣar: see Burnett, Yamamoto & Yano, Abbreviation, 1994.
Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī, Tafhīm: see Wright, Tafhīm, 1934.
al-Bīrūnī, Tafhīm: see Wright, Tafhīm, 1934.
Burnett, Charles; Yamamoto, Keiji; Yano, Michio (eds.): Abū Maˁšar. The abbreviation of the Introduction to astrology. Together with the medieval Latin translation


HOW TO CITE THIS TEXT? Petra G. Schmidl: al-Ashraf ˁUmar’s Tabṣira: Chapter vii (H,15b,22-16b,8) – Lords of the triplicities, decans. Published 2020-06-06 on http://tabsira.hypotheses.org/.
Similar reading in P. The meaning of this sentence describing a decan as the “third” or “triplicity of the planet” is not completely clear. It might be related to the example given in the following paragraph (see also n. 3). A corruption appears less plausible despite the similarities with the reading in Abū Maʿšar (Burnett & Yamamoto), Mudkhal al-kabīr, 2019, vol. 1, V.15, p. 512-513:

أَنَّ كُلَّ رِجْلٍ عَنْ عَمَّامٍ عَسَمُهُ كُلَّ فَصِّ عَسَمُهُ وَمَا يُسْمَى وَهُوَ مَنْسوبٌ: 13

“Each of the twelve signs is divided into three divisions. Each of these divisions is 10 degrees and is called a ‘decan’. It is related to a planet.”

A similar wording to describe the time in question is used by Kūshyār b. Labbān (Yano), Mujnāl, 1997, l.15, p. 36-37:

١٨١٤ - “by day” and “by night”.

Abū Maʿšar (Burnett & Yamamoto), Mudkhal al-kabīr, 2019, vol. 1, V.16, p. 514-515, returning to the issue al-Qabīṣī (Burnett, Yamamoto & Yano), Mudkhal, 2004, IV.18, p. 130-131 and also discussed by al-Bīrūnī (Wright), Taḥfīn, 1934, §451, p. 263, who introduces in the following paragraph (§452, p. 264), another trisection attributed to Ptolemy and headed: "هل استعمل بطليموس ثلاث قسم كل برج من البوج الأثني عشر - did Ptolemy use the “sign-thirds”?

The thirds and their lords are neither identical with the decans discussed in the second part of chapter vii nor with the darījān, another trisection of the zodiacal signs into 10° mentioned in Abū Maʿšar (Burnett & Yamamoto), Mudkhal al-kabīr, 2019, vol. 1, V.16, p. 514-515, returning to the issue al-Qabīṣī (Burnett, Yamamoto & Yano), Mudkhal, 2004, IV.18, p. 130-131 and also discussed by al-Bīrūnī (Wright), Taḥfīn, §451, p. 263, who introduces in the following paragraph (§452, p. 264), another trisection attributed to Ptolemy and headed: ‘ءَهْلَ اسْتَعْمَلَ بَطِليُّمُ ثَلَاثَ قَسْمَاتٍ كُلَّ بُرجٍ مِنَ البَوُجِ الأثْنَيْнَاء’

‘هل استعمل بطليموس ثلاث قسم كل برج من البوج الأثني عشر - did Ptolemy use the “sign-thirds”?;

Abū Maʿšar (Burnett & Yamamoto), Mudkhal al-kabīr, 2019, vol. 1, V.22, p. 32-33 gives the lord of the triplicity three powers, but reports additionally another tradition, and the reasons behind, giving him only two; Kūshyār b. Labbān (Yano), Mujnāl, 1997, l.22, p. 66-67 talks instead of “power” (qawaḍ) or “witness” (or: “dignity”; shahāda) and distinguishes two lords of the triplicity, conceding to the first two, to the second one witness.

Relying on al-Kindī’s Forty Chapters al-Qabīṣī (Burnett, Yamamoto & Yano), Mudkhal, 2004, l.23, p. 32-33 describes with similar wording the being of a planet, however, in its own domicile: “كَانَ الْكُوكَبُ فِي بَيْتِهِ كَرِيمٌ وَشُعَورُهُ وَسُلْطَانُهُ” - "[... the presence of the planet in its house is like the man in his home and estate; [...]”;

Kūshyār b. Labbān (Yano), Mujnāl, 1997, l.19, p. 54-55 compares the being of a planet, however, in its exaltation with a man in his dominion: "وَهُوَ كَرِيمٌ وَشُعَورُهُ وَسُلْطَانُهُ وَلِيَ عَلَمَ أَ نِ ٍالشُّرَكَاءَ الَّتِي مَعَ أَ رَبِّ المَثَلَاتِ لَا أَ عْرُفُ لَهَا وَلَمْ تَعَدِّلْهَا بَطْلِيُّمُ صَاحِبُ الْأَخْمَامِ" - “when it is in its exaltation, it is like a man in his power, honor, kingship, and rulership”.

Cf., e.g., al-Kindī (Dykes), Forty Chapters, 2011, chap. 1.1.13, p. 43: “The individual [signs] of these partitions [each] receive a division into three parts, each of which gets 10°. These are called ‘faces’, because they seem to signify the faces of animals.”

Neither al-Qabīṣī (Burnett, Yamamoto & Yano), Mudkhal, 2004, l.23, p. 32-33 nor Kūshyār b. Labbān (Yano), Mujnāl, 1997, l.19, p. 54-55 presents the metaphor of a person in different types of livery. Apparently, the same holds for al-Kindī in his Forty Chapters (for the Latin versions the English translation in al-Kindī [Dykes], Forty Chapters, 2011, l.3.3., p. 62-64; for the Arabic version the analysis in Burnett, Forty Chapters of al-Kindī, 1993, p. 80-81).

With more details on the ruling planet al-Qabīṣī (Burnett, Yamamoto & Yano), Mudkhal, 2004, l.77, p. 58-61.

Neither al-Qabīṣī (Burnett, Yamamoto & Yano), Mudkhal, 2004, l.23, p. 32-33 nor al-Bīrūnī (Wright), Taḥfīn, 1934, §493, p. 306 and Kūshyār b. Labbān (Yano), Mujnāl, 1997, l.19, p. 52-55 compare a planet being in an alien place with a stranger in a strange land; al-Kindī (Dykes), Forty Chapters, 2011, l.3.3., p. 63 describes it “like one who is detained in a foreign journey”, a metaphor not discussed in Burnett, Forty Chapters of al-Kindī, 1993, p. 80-81.

For an introduction Schmidl, Astral Sciences, to appear.

E.g., al-Qabīṣī (Burnett, Yamamoto & Yano), Mudkhal, 2004, l.22, p. 32-33.

Also Schmidl, al-Ashraf ‘Umar’s Taḥṣīra: The table of contents.

Ptolemy (Robbins), Tetrabiblos, 1940, I.18, p. 82-87; cf. also Kūshyār b. Labbān (Yano), Mujnāl, 1997, l.15, p. 38-39:

Cf. also Kūshyār b. Labbān (Yano), Mujnāl, 1997, l.15, p. 38-39: “Let it be known that I personally do not recognize the participants which are with the lords of the triplicities, and Ptolemy, the authority in judgments omitted them.”


