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Table of Arabic Terms

Transliterated Arabic	Arabic	Common Latin Spelling	Meaning
<i>al-d'af</i>	الضعف	<i>Adirof</i>	"Weakness"
<i>al-darjān</i>	الدرجان	<i>Dorungez</i>	"Two steps"?
<i>al-'insirāf</i>	الإنصراف	<i>Alinchirat</i>	"Separation"
<i>al-'ittisal</i>	الإتصال	<i>Alitjfal, alitisal</i>	"Application"
<i>al-bust</i>	البست	<i>Albuim, albuith</i>	Perhaps from San. <i>visti</i>
<i>al-bisāra</i>	الحصار		"Besiegement," "containment"
<i>al-i'tirād</i>	الإعتراض	<i>Halintirad</i>	"Resistance"
<i>al-idbār</i>	الادبار	<i>Aliber</i>	"Retreat"
<i>al-intikāth</i>	الإنتكاث	<i>Alicicbae</i>	"Restraint"
<i>al-iqbāl</i>	الإقبال	<i>Icbel</i>	"Advance"
<i>al-jam'</i>	الجمع	<i>Algemei</i>	"Gathering, bringing together"
<i>al-kadukhadāh</i>	الكدخذه	<i>Alcochoden</i>	Giver of years
<i>al-man'</i>	لمنع	<i>Almana</i>	"Prohibition, prevention"
<i>al-mawārith</i>	الموارث	<i>Almuerith</i>	"Inheritance"
<i>al-mintaqab</i>	المنطقة	<i>Almantica</i>	"Zone, area, territory"
<i>al-mubtazẓ</i>	المبتز	<i>Almuten</i>	"The victor"
<i>al-mudābit</i>	ضابط	<i>Almudebit</i>	"Governor, official"
<i>al-muwājahab</i>	المواجهة	<i>Almuguea</i>	"Facing"
<i>al-qaT' al-nūr</i>	القطع النور		"Cutting the light"
<i>al-qawwiah</i>	القوية	<i>Alcoerab</i>	"Strength"
<i>al-qubūl</i>	القبول	<i>Alcobol</i>	"Reception, admission"
<i>al-nusūl</i>	الوصول	<i>Alcobol</i>	"Arrival, reaching destination"
<i>an-namūdār</i>	النموذار	<i>Animodar</i>	"Indicator"?
<i>an-naql</i>	لنقل	<i>Annecad</i>	"Transfer, relaying"
<i>an-nanbah</i>	النوبة	<i>Anauba</i>	"The deputyship"
<i>ar-radd</i>	الرد	<i>Alteat</i>	"Returning"
<i>ar-radd al-nūr</i>	الرد النور		"Reflecting the light"
<i>at-tariqab</i>	الطريقة		"Course, journey"
<i>at-tasirāt</i>	التسيرات	<i>Athazir</i>	Primary direction (from Gr. <i>aphesis</i>)
<i>awj</i>	اوج	<i>Aux</i>	"Summit"
<i>badr</i>	بدر	<i>Bederem</i>	"Full Moon"
<i>daf al-qawwāh</i>	دفع القوة		"Pushing power"
<i>daf al-Tabii'a</i>	دفع الطبيعة		"Pushing nature"
<i>daf al-Tabii'ain</i>	دفع الطبيعتين		"Pushing two natures"
<i>daf t-adbir</i>	دفع التدبير	<i>Dafaaredbit</i>	"Pushing management/counsel"

Transliterated Arabic	Arabic	Common Latin Spelling	Meaning
<i>dastūrīya</i>	دستورية	<i>Dustoria</i>	“Security” (from Gr. <i>doruphoria</i>)
<i>fawt</i>	الفوت		“Evasion”
<i>firdariab</i>	فردارية	<i>Firdaria</i>	Term of art from Gr. <i>periodos</i>
<i>ghafra l-qubūl</i>	غفر القبول	<i>Gafraalqobol</i>	“Pardoning of the admission”
<i>halb</i>	حلب		Uncertain
<i>hayyīz</i>	حيز	<i>Haym</i>	“Domain”
<i>hūlāj</i>	هيلاج	<i>Hyleg</i>	Giver of life (based on Gr. <i>aphetēs</i>)
<i>jārbakhtār</i>	الجاربختار	<i>Algebuthar</i>	Used in directing the Ascendant
<i>jawzahīr</i>	الجوزهر	<i>Genzabar</i>	Ecliptical point crossed by planet
<i>kasmimī</i>	كصممي	<i>Cazimi</i>	“As if in the depth”
<i>khāl as-sayr</i>	خال السير	<i>Galaalocir</i>	“Void of course”
<i>khamalu l-qamar</i>	خمل القمر	<i>Gnaymel alchamaur</i>	“Weakness of the Moon”
<i>sālkhudāy</i>	السالخداي		“Lord of the Year”

INTRODUCTION

§1: The *Book of Astronomy*

We live in an exciting time for traditional astrology. After a pretty universal hiatus that has lasted several centuries, we are in the midst of what could be counted as the third world-historical translation wave of traditional astrological learning. The first major wave took place in and after the 8th Century AD, after the Arab Muslims conquered the Near and Middle East, when primarily Greek-language astrological and other materials were translated into Arabic and Persian. The second major wave took place primarily in the 11th and 12th Centuries AD, as primarily Arabic (but also Persian and Hebrew and Greek) writings were translated into Latin by the medieval Europeans. Such writings were instrumental in the success of the new European universities.

Currently, this Greek, Arabic, Persian, Hebrew and Latin material is now being translated again into modern languages (primarily English), but with one key difference: many of the translations are now coming directly from the source languages and not just the intermediary ones (or in some cases from both, for purposes of comparison). With this translation, the *Book of Astronomy* takes its place alongside translations by Project Hindsight of the Hellenistic Greeks, and those of Burnett, Pingree, and many others of important medieval Persian, Jewish, and Arab writers like Māshā'allāh, Abū Ma'shar, al-Kindī, Abu 'Ali al-Khayyat, and so on. The number of translations that still have to be made far exceeds those already completed, but over the next ten years we will see quite an outpouring of new materials for use by contemporary astrologers. The *Book of Astronomy* is an important addition to the current wave.

This is the first complete translation of the *Book of Astronomy* (*Liber Astronomiae*) into any modern language, and the first complete printed edition in about 450 years. Compiled by the famous medieval Italian astrologer Guido Bonatti¹ over 700 years ago, it is one of the most well-known and influential astrological compendia in the West. Among medieval works it is matched in length only perhaps by *On the Judgments of the Stars* by 'Ali ibn al-Rijāl,² and perhaps later by the post-medieval reformer Jean-Baptiste Morin de Villefranche. This internally-consistent, complete translation is based on the edition of 1550, with certain corrections based on the 1491 edition (see below).

¹ Lat. *Guido Bonatus*.

² Also known as Haly Abenragel.

But the value of this translation goes beyond its completeness. Among its other benefits are:

- Citations and commentary for much of Bonatti’s source material.
- Accurate transliterations of Bonatti’s Latinized Arabic (with Arabic script in footnotes), both for some proper names and all technical concepts.
- A single, internally-consistent rendering of Bonatti’s Latin, with footnotes and indexing that cross-reference the entire text.
- English-based semantic fields that avoid technical jargon (such as the use of “transfer of light” for “translation of light,” “restraining” for “refraction,” “bound” for “term,” and “likeness” for “similitude”).
- Comparisons and corrections based on the original Hellenistic material on which the medieval Arabic texts were based, using the latest translations of the Greek from Project Hindsight.
- Citations of all currently identifiable source texts throughout the book.
- New light shed on technical concepts, such as whole-sign houses and aspects, the *al-mubtazz* (also known as the *almuten*), sect, and others.
- A comprehensive, research-oriented index that includes concepts, predictive techniques, source text citations, and much more.

Although many astrologers since the 13th Century have read and drawn from the *Book of Astronomy*, only small portions have ever been translated or reprinted. Of these portions, the most well-known is Henry Coley’s selective paraphrase of Treatise 5 (on the “146 Considerations”) from 1676, entitled *Anima Astrologiae* or “Soul of Astrology.” Those familiar with Coley’s edition will be pleased by the fullness and fluidity of Bonatti’s own version, and surprised with respect to portions he left out or attributed to his teacher William Lilly. Other published portions include Robert Hand’s and Robert Zoller’s joint translation of Trs. 1-3, and Hand’s own partial translation of Tr. 6. Zoller has issued some of the 7th House material from Tr. 6 as *Bonatti on War*, as well as excerpts of several Treatises for his New Medieval Astrology Correspondence Course.

Totally new for this translation are Trs. 4, the latter half of 6, all of 7, most of 8 and 9, and all of 10. If we add in the accurate, word-for-word translation of Tr. 5, then about seventy-five percent of this *Book of Astronomy* will be new for modern readers. With its extensive footnoting, commentary, updated charts,

comprehensive index, decoded Arabic, and many other features, it supersedes all existing partial versions.

Why have translations been so rare? For one thing, few people can read the older texts any more due to the gradual decline of Latin instruction. For another, fewer people have cared to read it, since there has been a regrettable loss of interest in medieval thought and astrology due to modern prejudices and fantasies about the meaning of freedom, evolution, and human nature. Fortunately, we are in a period of rediscovery which will revolutionize our current practice and understanding of astrology. I hope the *Book of Astronomy* will play its proper role in realizing this transformation.

The *Book of Astronomy* was a popular one in the medieval and Renaissance period, and not solely as a single volume. Its individual Treatises were often copied and distributed under their own titles. For this reason, some bibliographies of Bonatti's work list more writings than he actually made. So far as we know, it is the only book he ever wrote.

The first printed edition was by Ratdolt in Augusta (1491). It is 422 pages in a gothic-style typeface, and this edition states that it has been "corrected" by an astrologer named Johannes Angelus. It does not, however, state what corrections were made. In the future perhaps, this question will be cleared up by a critical edition using the earlier manuscript editions. I have used this edition as the source for correcting some of the word endings pertaining to astrological houses (see below), but Angelus himself may be responsible for altering even some of the material from his manuscript sources.

The second printed edition was by Sessa in Venice (1506), printed on 181 pages in double columns. I myself do not have a copy of this edition. However, the 1550 edition is obviously based on the earlier 1491 edition (including some problems with pages printed in the wrong order, see below), so unless the 1506 edition is based wholly on manuscripts, this translation represents all three editions as a whole.

The last edition was printed in Basel (1550), in 212 pages of double columns. It includes the *Centiloquy* of pseudo-Ptolemy, with accompanying commentary by Georgius Trapezuntius (Giorgio de Trabisona). This edition forms the basis for my translation, in part due to its more modern and readable typeface.

There have also been some private, partial, and even imaginary copies. They include a private copy said to be made for Henry VII of England, and an abbreviated edition in German (1572, Basel). According to Boncompagni, it is also said by L'Hendrich that there were two other Basel editions (1530, 1536)

and another from Augusta (1581), but to my knowledge these have never been discovered. In Boncompagni it is suggested that L'Hendrich invented these editions because he wanted to make his own collection appear bigger than it was. But perhaps his claim is due partly to error: in these spurious editions, the title and publishing information reads so as to make Johannes Engel (the "corrector" of the 1491 edition) the nephew to whom Bonatti dedicates the book itself! Perhaps L'Hendrich had bad information that conflated the earlier editor with the dedicatee, but that does not explain the imaginary dates.

§2: Bonatti's Life

Bonatti's life spanned most of the 13th Century, a volatile and critical time in Italian politics. All of his employers were Ghibellines (working against the Papal authority and armies), combating the Guelphs (pro-Papal forces). All of his employers seem to have been excommunicated at one time or another. We do not have his year of birth or death, but he was probably born around 1207 and died sometime before 1296, which would have made him in his eighties when he died (see below). Dante has immortalized Bonatti by placing him in Hell: the eighth Circle, fourth Ring, the Fortune Tellers and Diviners. There, the damned souls who have tried to divine the future are placed with their heads turned completely around (facing the past, as it were), their eyes blinded with tears.

What we do know (or think we know) about his life comes from three types of sources: first, statements made by Bonatti himself; second, the records and annals of Florence and Forlì; third, a handful of questionable stories told about him and repeated by later writers. In what follows I will rely mostly on Boncompagni's 1851 work *On the Life and Works of Guido Bonatti, Astrologer and Astronomer of the Thirteenth Century*. Boncompagni conveniently includes Latin, Italian, and French citations from many sources, including the important 14th Century work of Filippo Villani, and the names below largely reflect the material in his book. First I will describe something about Bonatti's personality and stories about him, then I will describe his employers, and finally I will construct a timeline of rather certain events in his life up until his death.

Bonatti is said to have been a hot-tempered man, and somewhat self-aggrandizing (as is also confirmed by statements in the *Book of Astronomy*). He is said to have owned property called the Campo della Quercia (perhaps near Forlì). A painting of him hangs in Florence, although Boncompagni (p. 90) does not state its location. He was also said to be a trickster, especially playing

unspecified tricks on women, although this comment is made on the “back of a page” of a codex in Florence and Boncompagni (p. 135) is not clear on who wrote it or how it appears. Bonatti mentions his family only a couple of times: his father claimed to be 107 years old (see below for his father’s profession), an uncle 120 years old; his mother claimed that a contemporary of hers had given birth to a cat; and he had at least one nephew, whose nativity is given in Tr. 9 (see Table of Figures). We learn nothing about his siblings.

There are also a number of stories about him, some undoubtedly invented. For example, a contemporary of Bonatti’s, a Franciscan named Salimbene of Parma, claims that when a Franciscan named Hugo came into the town where Bonatti was at the time, Bonatti was so intimidated by Hugo’s learning and preaching that he went into hiding. The excerpt from Salimbene in Boncompagni does not say what city this was in or even the year, but it is not very believable. Salimbene relates the story with some sense of triumph, noting that in normal circumstances Bonatti had disdain for the Franciscans—so the story seems to have a merely polemical origin. Besides, Bonatti himself enjoyed the patronage of counts, tyrants, and perhaps even the Emperor, and stood up to charlatans and bullies—what would he have to fear from a preacher passing through town?

Villani relates another story reported by a Dante scholar named Rambaldo in 1391. Rambaldo is describing what sort of physiognomy Scorpio signifies, and cites as evidence a trip allegedly made by Bonatti to Arabia! There, he says, Bonatti had seen an astrolabe of miraculous size, on which all the zodiacal signs were configured. In the sign of Scorpio was carved or placed the figure of an Ethiopian holding manure to his nose, to indicate that one born with Scorpio ascending will enjoy the smell of dung.³ This story too seems false. If Bonatti had been to Arabia, he not only would have mentioned it, but would have had access to astrological manuscripts which he would have used in writing the *Book of Astronomy*. But Bonatti never mentions it, and there is no evidence in the *Book of Astronomy* that *any* of its source material relies on manuscripts not already translated into Latin and available in Italy. Also, it would likely have had to take place before about 1276, the date of the last event mentioned in the book. By that time Bonatti would have been in his sixties, an unlikely age at which to have taken such a trip (especially with the scene of the faltering Crusades having become so dangerous).

³ Bonatti does mention that those with Ascendants ruled by malefics may enjoy odors like this (Tr. 5, the 127th Consideration).

Another unlikely and unclear story deriving from Salimbene is that while both Bonatti and his later employer Count Guido da Montefeltro were in Forlì, Bonatti worked as a roofer or roof repairman. One authority, Trotti, says this is just a legend, and that it was begun by a man named Recanati. Recanati, who was writing about Villani, mentions the story as a way of describing how Bonatti could have met Piero della Vigna in Bologna (see below). Since Piero had grown up poor, Recanati's story tries to connect Bonatti, Bologna, Piero, and their obscure backgrounds. But Bonatti never actually says he knew Piero, and it would seem that the original story not only leaves out Montefeltro but takes place in another city.

Finally, another story of Rambaldo's but related by Boncompagni (pp. 130-33) describes an encounter designed to make Bonatti look bad. On a very clear day Montefeltro was on a plain outside Forlì, when a peasant approached and offered him some pears. Then the peasant said he wanted to hurry home before it rained, because there was sure to be great rainfall that day. Montefeltro called Bonatti to him (apparently Bonatti was there with him) to ask him for the forecast, and Bonatti said it would only rain moderately. But, going back to his study, he took out his astrolabe, made some calculations, and decided it would not rain at all. The peasant insisted it would rain. "How do you know?" asked Bonatti. The peasant explained that his donkey was shaking and pricking up its ears more than usual—which in his experience was always a sign of rain. And it would be a great rainfall, because the donkey's ears were turning around and rotating more than usual. Then the peasant left. Soon it began to rain so hard there was practically a flood. Distraught, Bonatti shouted out, "Who has deluded me? Who has confounded me?" The Latin text suggests that the Count created a new position for the peasant, that of Groom to the Great Master Astrologer (*Agaso magno Magistro Astrologo*), obviously so that the donkey could be used for weather prediction. The moral of the story is that even a jackass is better than an astrologer.

From these fanciful and polemical stories we move into the realm of pretty certain fact. Bonatti had three main employers, all powerful men, and he perhaps also was in the employ of Frederick II. In chronological order of employment, they are:

Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor. Frederick (b. December 26, 1194, d. December 13, 1250) was a towering figure in medieval history. A Hohenstaufen, he was the son of Emperor Henry VI and Constance, Queen of Sicily. Both of his parents died early and Pope Innocent III assumed responsibility for his

guardianship. He was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in Rome in 1220. Frederick spent much of his time in Sicily or on Crusade, during which time his assets and kingdoms flourished: he was said to be a wise and intelligent ruler, a speaker of many languages, and his court was famous for encouraging the arts and sciences (including astrology). The famous astrologer Michael Scot was attached to his court, and is found next to Bonatti in Dante's Hell. Two episodes in Frederick's later life are mentioned by Bonatti: first, his betrayal in 1249 by his friend Pietro (or Piero) della Vigna, who either committed suicide or was executed after he was discovered embezzling and possibly plotting against the Emperor; second, the plot against him by close associates (encouraged by Pope Innocent IV) in 1245. Bonatti's description of this latter situation⁴ seems to be the only reason for historians to assume Bonatti actually worked for Frederick in some capacity, but it rests on shaky foundations. First of all, although Bonatti claims to have foreseen the plot, he never actually says he warned Frederick or was even in a position to do so. He never describes situations in which he aided the Emperor. And, even though he mentions Michael Scot as a contemporary of his, he never expressly shows knowledge of Michael's works. For instance, Michael wrote a famous commentary on the *Sphere* of Sacrobosco, but Bonatti's knowledge of the same topics seems to come from an earlier translation of al-Farghānī, whom he recommends to the reader. There is no evidence for his being in Frederick's employ, even though at least one authority (Gavinet) says that Bonatti was receiving an annual stipend from Frederick. Surely Bonatti, who loves relating the details of his consultations with local lords like Guido Novello, would have openly boasted about being hired by an Emperor.

Ezzelino da Romano III (April 25, 1194–October 7, 1259). Ezzelino was of German origin, an ally of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II against the Guelphs, and in 1236 became Frederick's son-in-law. He was the ruler of Verona several times over (as cities passed from one political party to another), and by 1238 ruled over many territories from the Mark of Treviso in eastern Italy up into northern Italian territory, either as the civil authority or as a commander on Frederick's behalf. He was excommunicated in 1254 by Pope Innocent IV, who launched a crusade against him (Ezzelino prevailed). In 1258–1259 he launched a series of battles against a number of opponents, and was captured near Bergamo. He died in prison on October 7, 1259. He is mentioned several times in the *Book of Astronomy* as a man of great cruelty, and

⁴ See Tr. 5, the 58th Consideration.