CARL W. ERNST

Orientalist views of yoga and Sufism

From the beginning of Orientalist studies of the Muslim world, it was axiomatic to define certain religious phenomena in terms of their origins. Because of the tendency to view all Eastern doctrines as essentially alike, Orientalist scholars of the Romantic period invariably defined Sufism as a mysticism that was Indian in origin; from the first appearance of the term in European languages, “Sufism” was characterized as essentially different from the dry Semitic religion of Islam.² Looking back at this early scholarship today, it is surprising that this unanimous belief in the Indian origin of Sufism was almost entirely unconnected to any historical evidence. From the days of Sir William Jones and Sir John Malcolm to relatively recent times, this opinion has had a remarkable longevity, despite the ludicrous appearance of some of these claims today. As an example one may consider the outrageous claim of Max Horkheimer, in a 1928 study that sought to explain Sufism as a pure expression of Vedanta: “No doubt can any longer remain that the teaching of Hallaj (d. 922) and his circle [in Baghdad] is identical with that of Shankara around 820.”³ Another pertinent example is found in an observation of William James in his 1902 Gifford Lectures, published as The Varieties of Religious Experience:

In the Mohammedan world the Sufi sect and various dervish bodies are the possessors of the mystical tradition. The Sufis have existed in Persia from the earliest times, and as their pantheism is so at variance with the hot and rigid monotheism of the Arab mind, it has been suggested that Sufism must have been insculpted into Islam by Hindu influences.⁴

James’s remark illustrates, innocently enough, how widely this opinion was shared at the time by the academic world in Europe and America. It is easier to see from the perspective

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¹ This article is part of a forthcoming study, The Pool of Nectar: Muslim Interpretations of Yoga. It is based on part of the monographic introduction to any translation of the Arabic text. An earlier version of this article was presented at the Trans-Mediterranean Religions Conference, New York University, April 1-3, 1998.
of the later twentieth century that this opinion was conditioned by nineteenth-century racial attitudes as well as assumptions about the unchanging nature of religions.

Most specialists in Islamic studies today would find the explanation of Sufi mysticism cited by James to be quaint or objectionable, since the preponderance of evidence permits us to understand the Sufi tradition perfectly well without the slightest reference to the literary and religious traditions of India. There is really no reason to maintain, as did Edward Sachau in 1888, that in the Arabian Sufism the Indian Vedanta reappears.6 The question then arises, if there is no intrinsic reference to India or Hindu texts in Sufism, what led scholars to seek such an external explanation?

Theories of cultural diffusion from a single source (like Pan-Babylonianism) had a certain logical appeal, doubtless because of their simplicity. This kind of reductionism inevitably attracted criticism. Louis Massignon's classic study of the vocabulary of Sufism contained a major section devoted to "The Role of Foreign Influences", which he rejected, on the whole.7 In a critical review of theories of Indian "influence" on Islamic mysticism, Moreno rightly characterized approaches like Horden's as "Indophile or Indomaniac zeal".8 In a similar vein, Derndighen maintained that

The surprising thing would be if we did not find in Moslem countries something analogous to Hindu Yoga, since here are two traditions claiming the authenticity of primordial tradition. Nor is it any more surprising that, whereas these methods present a whole gamut ranging from pure intellectual contemplation to orgies of rhythm and sound. Modern Europe is almost alone in having renounced, out of bourgeois respectability and Gallican purism, the participation of body in the pursuits of the spirit. In India as in Islam, music, poetry, and the dance are spiritual exercises.9

He went on to observe, "This does not mean that Hindu Yoga is at the source of Moslem Sufism".10 Thus it has been possible for scholars such as Gardet and Elide to entertain a comparative study of mysticism that was not historically reductive, but phenomenological (and occasionally theological) in approach.11

But part of the genetic view of Asian religions was the habit of viewing non-Christian cultures primarily in terms of their difference from European Christianity. This


6 Louis Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du Sufisme en Orient* (Leiden, 1905), pp. 63-68, where the case of India is discussed on pp. 81-86.


9 Ibid.

was particularly prominent in the intellectual climate of nineteenth-century colonialism. Theories of evolution and race were freely applied in the comparative study of religion, originally understood as a disingenuous comparison intended to reveal which religion was superior.¹¹ The study of religion in Christian theological faculties initially exempted Christianity from this kind of historical investigation, since Christianity (in whatever form the theorist professed) was assumed to be still pure and integral, despite such arguably revolutionary events as the Protestant Reformation. If, however, other religions could be shown to be hybrids composed of various "Oriental" influences, that was a testimony to their dependent and inferior nature. In Zaehner's words, "Muslim mysticism is entirely derivative."¹² Regardless of the later progress of historical research into the relation of Christianity to the cultural and religious worlds into which it was born, the colonial legacy of condescension toward "Oriental religions" still lingers.

This is not to say that Sufi, particularly in India, were unaware of the ascetic and meditative practices of yoga.¹³ But it is almost impossible to find any Indian textual sources on yoga that were widely known in the Muslim world. Nevertheless, in observing that the thesis of the Indian origins of Sufism was almost entirely unconnected to any historical evidence, it is important to note the single piece of evidence that forms the exception to this rule. It was Alfred von Kremer, in a wide-ranging 1873 study of Islamic civilisation, who first drew attention to a short passage in a fourteenth-century Persian encyclopedia (the *Nigāh-i al-fa'īm* of Anwār) that described yogic techniques of breath control on the basis of an obviously Indian text. From this observation, which he linked with breathing practices found in Central Asian Sufi groups, von Kremer leapt to the familiar Orientalist conclusion: "We are, indeed, constrained to ascribe to Indian influences the rise of that Muslim mysticism which appears so much later and bears such a close external and internal resemblance to the teachings of the Vedanta school."¹⁴ What von Kremer neglected to point out, in his enthusiasm, was that the passage on breath control occurred in the section on natural and occult sciences; the author of this encyclopedia had separately categorised Sufism as one of the Islamic sciences along with literature, law, theology, and history.¹⁵ The connection between Indian breath control and Sufi practice was not recognised by Muslim authors, who classified the two items under different categories (this question of categorisation will be raised again below). The European Orientalist assumed a genetic relationship between the two on the basis of modern prejudices extrinsic to the text. But the important thing was that von Kremer

¹¹ Eric sharp ("Comparative Religion", *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. III, pp. 575–580) links the terms "influence" to evolutionist schemes that rank religions, and he pessimistically considers the term to be now "seldan used".


noticed a distinctively yogic text being circulated in learned Islamicate circles. This can now be identified as a version of *The Kalamppa Seed Syllables*, which is described below.

Again, as von Kremper shows, the automatic assumption of the purely Indian origin of Sufism was axiomatic in Orientalist scholarship. In a similar case, Hartmann in 1915 noticed a report in a late Arabic text stating that one of the early founders of the Naqshbandi order in Central Asia, 'Abd al-Khaliq Ghijduwan (d. 1220), was inspired by the immortal prophet Khidr to introduce the practice of breath control into Sufism. Hartmann could not resist speculating that this report concealed an Indian origin for this practice. The chink of inspiration marked the more prosaic point that Ghijduwan’s native city of Bokhara was “the point of communication with Buddhist and Brahmanic Asia”, and that at this formative period in the development of the Sufi orders, they necessarily passed on the influences of their Indian environment to the rest of the Islamic world. One must simply pass over with astonishment the European parochialism that places Bokhara in the same neighbourhood as India (it is roughly 1,000 miles from Lahore and 2,000 miles from Bengal). Here too, the argument for influence was ultimately meant to demonstrate which system is original and authentic, and which is derivative. Such a tendentious motivation is also apparent in a late nineteenth-century Russian Orthodox text, which treats both yogis and Sufis as having borrowed (and bungled) the meditative techniques of the church fathers as outlined in the *Philokalia*: “It was from them [the Greek Orthodox saints] that the monks of India and Bokhara took over the ‘heart method’ of interior prayer, only they quite spoiled and garbled it in doing so.”

From the point of view of the study of religion, it is disappointing enough to see lack of historical rigour that too often accompanied Orientalist speculations about the Indian origins of Sufism. Even more problematic was the pervasive positivism and condescending Eurocentrism that increasingly replaced Romantic enthusiasm as the colonialist mentality intensified in the late-nineteenth century. Von Kremper concluded his review of Islamic civilisation with a heavy indictment of the errors of the Oriental:

“The more the Muslim is constrained to learn to adapt himself to the needs of the age and indeed learn them from the Europeans, whose powerful superiority he no longer fails to recognize, the more will he be induced to take the right and proper course, that of a practical life from which he has been estranged by superstitions, mystic visions and theological speculations.”

Here I would like to take a different point of view, one that takes seriously the views of those who are engaged with the religious questions under discussion. If there was a text on yogic practice that was transmitted and studied in Muslim countries, how was it in fact understood? The remarks that follow are based on the study of the highly complex history of a text known by the Sanskrit title *Anubthakara or The Pool of Nectar*, which survives in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Udiya translations in multiple recensions (see Chart 1). Evidence has recently come to light of a Judeo-Arabic version produced in Yemen. This textual history indicates that the readers of this text engaged it in a process of Islamisation, involving

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18 von Kremper, p. 133.
scriptural Islamic themes, philosophical vocabulary, and the terminology and concepts of Sufism. What remained was a very narrow window onto the world of Indian religions, and one that to many readers was hardly distinguishable from the standard occult and mystical practices found in Islamicate society. In short, the history of the single textual source for yogic practice in the Muslim world tells us a great deal more about its Muslim readers than it does about yoga.

Chart 1
Manuscript Symbols for the Translations of The Pool of Nectar

I. Arabic
   The editions of Yusuf Husain: A.
   Family A, the earlier and fuller existing recension: B-1 (9 MSS).
   Family B, the later, revised recension: K-Y (13 MSS).
   Fragments: Z'-Z", based on a, containing only the beginning of the "Hymn of the Soul" passage.
   Other known manuscripts not used in this study: MSS AA-UU.
   Total: 40 copies.

II. Persian (Per^4 and Per^5 are based on a lost recension of the Arabic predating both a and b, while Per^6 is the source of the Arabic text)
   Per^4, the translation of Muhammad Ghawri: Per^A-Per^4 W (21 MSS plus two lithographed editions).
   Per^5, the translation of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Razzag: Per^A-Per^5 C (1 MSS, each a separate recension).
   Per^6, The Kamrupa Seed Syllables (anonymous), incorporating The 50 or 51 Verses of Kamalipa (2 complete MSS plus one abridgement).
   Total: 29 copies.

III. Turkish
   Tur^1, based on family a: Tur^A-Tur^1 D (5 MSS plus the printed version).
   Total: 8 copies.

IV. Urdu: Only one copy (Ur), based on Per^4.

The textual transmission of The Pool of Nectar

The Amritkanda or The Pool of Nectar was the name of a Sanskrit or Hindi work, the original text of which is now lost. The Pool of Nectar was also known by the title Kannubhada or The Kamrupa Seed Syllables, which circulated in an independent Persian translation that seems to represent the earliest stage of transmission of this text by Muslim authors (see below). The Pool of Nectar was ostensibly translated into Persian, and then Arabic, according to the introduction, in 1210 in Bengal, under the title Hadd ma' al-ha'at, or The Pool of the

Water of Life. The initial translation was accomplished by a Muslim scholar, Rukn al-Din al-Samarqandi, aided by a yogi who converted to Islam after losing a disputation. At an unspecified later date, the text was redacted in Arabic by an unknown author, with the aid of another yogi who converted to Islam.20

For reasons too complex to discuss here, I suggest that this account is fictitious. The earliest phase of the text (perhaps going back to the early thirteenth century) is probably represented by 'The Kamanaka Seed Syllables.' This eclectic Persian text contained breath control practices relating to magic and divination, rites of the yogini temple cult associated with Kaula tantrism, and the teachings of hatha yoga according to the tradition of the Nath yogis (popularly called yogis). All of this was placed in a context of the supremacy of the goddess Kamakhya, with frequent reference to her main temple in Assam (Kamrupa). This text was adapted by an anonymous Arabic translator, who was trained in the Illuminist (Ishraqi) school of philosophy in Iran, probably in the fifteenth century. This anonymous Arabic translator completely rewrote the Persian text, incorporating into his introduction two symbolic narratives, one deriving ultimately from the "Hymn of the Pearl" from the Gnostic Acts of Thomas, the other being a partial translation from a Persian treatise, On the Reality of Love, originally written by the Illuminist philosopher Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi al-Maqtul.21 From the dissemination of the manuscript copies of the Arabic text, it is clear that Hasan al-haqqi was fairly well known in the Islamic world; at least forty-five copies are found in libraries in European and Arab countries, the majority being in Istanbul. None of the manuscripts is older than the late sixteenth century. The content of the text was so unusual that, almost by default, it has been frequently assigned to the authorship of the Andalusi Sufi master Muhyi al-Din Ibn al-Arabi; this attribution is clearly erroneous, but it served to give the text a certain canonical authority, particularly in Ottoman lands.22 The vocabulary of the text is mostly formed on the Arabic technical terminology of Hellenistic philosophy, with some Islamic overtones derived from the Qur'an and Sufism. The translator worked strenuously to render the yogic practices in a way that was understandable to a philosophically oriented reader of Arabic. The oldest recension of the Arabic version no longer exists, and the two existing later recensions show an increasing amount of Islamisation of the text.

The Pool of the Water of Life stands out from other Arabic and Persian translations from the Sanskrit, by emphasising Indian spiritual practices rather than doctrines. Although al-Biruni (d. 1013) had translated Patañjali's Yogasūtra into Arabic, he had focused on philosophical questions and omitted the topic of mantra altogether, and his Indological works were not widely read.23 Most of the Sanskrit texts translated into Persian during the Mughal period

20 The text was first edited from 5 MSS by Yousef Hosain in 'Hama al-hayaq, la version arabe de l'Amritkund', Journal Asiatique CCXV (1933), pp. 205-244. Unfortunately this edition contains numerous errors and omissions. My forthcoming translation is based on a superior text established by comparison of 25 MSS. I plan to publish my diplomatic edition of the Arabic text separately.
21 Typically, the only scholar to notice these Gnostic and Illuminist elements in the Assaratul translation was Henry Corbin, in 'Pour une morphologie de la spiritualité dhâ'ta', Essais jahâneens, XXX (Zürich, 1966), esp. pp. 102-107, repeated with some variations in his Ein Islamische, Aspekt spirituel et philosophiques, vol. II, Suhrawardi et les Manuscrits de Paris (Paris, 1974), pp. 328-334.
23 Helmut Ritter, ed., 'Al-Biruni's Übersetzung des Yoga-sūtra des Patañjali', Oriens XX (1957), pp. 165-200; Bruce B. Lawrence, 'The Use of Hindu Religious Texts in al-Biruni's India with Special Reference to Patañjali's
were likewise chosen either for political or philosophical interest and had little relevance to
religious practice. The Arabic text of The Pool of the Water of Life was known to various
Muslim mystics of India, some of whom had watched with interest the breathing exercises
and chants of the yogis, and noticed similarities with their own meditative practices. A
Chishti master, Shaykh 'Abd al-Quddus Gangoji (d. 1557), who was familiar with the
yoga of the Nathas and wrote Hindi verses on the subject, taught The Pool to a disciple. Shaykh Muhammad Ghawth Gwalyari (d. 1563), an Indian Sufi master of the Shattari order,
translated The Pool from the oldest Arabic version into Persian under the title Bahr al-hayat
(The Ocean of Life). Sufis from the Qadiri, Mewlevi, and Suhrawardi orders in Sind, Turkey,
and North Africa continued to refer to The Pool well into the nineteenth century. The
Arabic text was twice translated into Ottoman Turkish, and Muhammad Ghawth's Persian
translation was itself rendered into Dakhani Urdu (see Chart 2). The Arabic version is still in
use today; a Damascus Sufi shaykh who is an expert on the works of Ibn al-'Arabi regards it
as a very important treatise.

A document such as The Pool of Nectar, the only known Arabic translation of a work
on hatha yoga, would seem to offer an ideal case study for determining how yoga was
conceived in relation to Islamic mysticism, and what relation it had with Sufi practice. It
is a concrete example of how a Muslim writer interpreted a characteristically Indian set
of religious practices. A quick glance at the text is enough to indicate that it was definitely
prepared for a Muslim readership; the text opens with an invocation of God and the Prophet
Muhammad, and it is sprinkled with terms and phrases from the Islamic religious vocabulary.
The translator has carefully attempted to describe practices that include Sanskrit chants or
mantras, breathing techniques, postures for meditation, a version of kundalini meditation
with depictions of the seven chakras or psychic centres, invocation of female divine deities,
and other specific practices. My analysis of the relationship between Islamicate and Indic features of this text indicates, however, that generalities about Hinduism and Islam are relatively
useless for shedding light on the significance of the text, nor does the text provide any
insight into overarching questions of inter-religious exchange. Many different strands of
meaning have been interwoven by the translator, who ecclesiastically drew together practices
of yoga and divination from different sources that cannot be identified with any particular
surviving text on hatha yoga, providing in any case a very limited picture of hatha yoga
practice.

description of India exist in unique manuscripts, indicating a limited circulation. See the
analysis and description of Arabic and Persian translations from Suhrawardi inscriptions in
26 For bibliographic references see S. A. A. Rizvi, "Nûrûz and Nâthâ Yoga in Medieval Northern India (XII to
XVI Centuries)" (p. 133, quoting Rukhs al-Daw' Lâbi 'Abd al-Qadir Lâbi (Delhi, 1943), p. 41; cf. A. History of Sufism in
India, vol. 1; Early Sufism and its History in India to about A.D. (Calcutta, 1947), p. 23. Gangoji's knowledge of yoga is
27 See my 'Sufism and Yoga according to Muhammad Ghawth', Studi XCVI (Spring, 1990), pp. 9-43.
Nevertheless, the different translations of *The Pool of Nectar* are unanimous in affirming that this is the most famous and respected scripture of India, despite the fact that no trace of it can be found today in any Indological literature. The anonymous Arabic translator concealed his identity behind a highly suspicious account of the circumstances surrounding the translation of the text, in which a leading role is played by yogis who convert to Islam and announce that their teachings are fundamentally identical with the Qur’an. The translation is prefaced with a narrative framework that adapted materials from Christian Gnosticism and Islamicate Neoplatonism, producing a complex interpretation of the religious significance and goal of yogic practice that avoids mentioning any of the principal categories of Indian metaphysics. In addition, the translator inserted into the text materials that clearly derive from standard Islamic sources. The different redactions of the Arabic text, and the subsequent translations into Persian, Turkish, and Urdu contain further interpretative differences, which
mostly transform Greco-Arabic philosophical concepts in the direction of Sufism. All these symbolic strategies tended to remove any sense of otherness from the yogic teachings for Muslim readers. *The Pool of Nectar* does not attempt to describe Hinduism as an autonomous religious system beyond the boundaries of Islam. In late interpretations of it, such as the description of Sufi orders by Muhammad al-Sanusi (d. 1859), yogis ended up being described as a subset of a Sufi order. In this respect, the Muslim understanding of yoga resembled the case of the enigmatic group called *Bahrains* in Islamic heresiographies, whom some commentators have identified as Indian Brahmins. But a recent analysis has concluded that there is not a single dogmatic item in the agenda of Bahrains beliefs that evokes the beliefs of Hinduism... the Bahrains were a sect completely explicable in terms of the Islamic environment and its Judeo-Christian heritage, and not Indians at all.” 20 When translators and interpreters overuse the technique of familiarisation, no trace of otherness remains, and readers see only what their training and education have prepared them to see. This over-familiarisation seems to have happened with the Arabic version of *The Pool of Nectar*.

On a less sophisticated level, the Persian text of *The Kampana Seed Syllables* also demonstrates an unconscious domestication of yogic practices in an Islamicate society. Among the breath prognostications, for instance, one learns that one should only approach “the *qadi* [Islamic judge] or the *amir* [Arabic term for ruler]” for judgement or litigation when the breath from the right nostril is favourable. Casual references mention Muslim magicians, and practices that may be performed either in a Muslim or a Hindu graveyard (47b), or else in an empty temple or mosque (49b), and occasionally one is told to recite a Qur’anic passage such as the Throne Verse, or to perform a certain action after evening prayer. We even hear of a Muslim from Broach who successfully summoned a yogini goddess and participated in the rites of her devotees (171). The text is provided with an overall Islamic frame, through a standard invocation of God and praise of the Prophet at the beginning:

Praise and adoration to that God who brought so many thousands of arts and wonders from the secrecy of non-existence into the courtyard of existence, and who adorned the sublime court with luminous bodies, who made the abodes of spiritual beings, and who commanded the manifestation of the sublunar world with varieties of plants and minerals, and who made the residence and nests of animals, and who chose from all the animals humanity, creating it in the best of forms, giving the cry: "We have created humanity in the finest of stations" (Qur. 95:14), "to bless God, the finest of creators" (Qur. 23:14). Many blessings and countless salutations on the pure and holy essence of the leader of the world [i.e., the Prophet Muhammad], the best of the children of Adam, the blessings of God and peace be upon him, and upon them all.

Likewise at the end, a quotation of a hadith saying of the Prophet and some mystical allusions furnish a religious colouring for magical practices (550). These practices remain fundamentally ambiguous, however. “If one to whom this door is opened makes the claim, he will be a prophet; if he is good, he will be a saint; and if he is evil, he will be a magician” (554). As a generalization, I would like to observe that for the average Persian reader, the contents of *The Kampana Seed Syllables* probably fell into the category of the occult sciences, and its Indic origin would have only enhanced its esoteric allure. The text employs standard

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Arabic terms for astral magic (tanjín), the summoning of spirits (ilmat) (32b, 33b), and the subjugation (tādhīb) of demons, fairies, and magicians. Thus there would be a familiar quality about the text, even when these techniques are employed for summoning the spirits known in India at yoginis. The chants or mantras of the yogis are repeatedly referred to as spells (ajurám), a Persian term of magical significance. We also read of recognizably magical techniques such as one using a nail made from bone (51a), which is employed nefariously with a voodoo-type doll (51b). Another recipe uses a comb made from the right paw of a mad dog killed with iron, in rituals performed at a cremation ground (48b–49a).

Chart 3

Planets, Cakras, Mantras, Dhākṣas, and Yoginis in The Pool of Nectar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter VII</th>
<th>Chapter IX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planet</td>
<td>Cakra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mars</td>
<td>Maṅg/g/Merik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Brha/Mani/Raṭ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venus</td>
<td>Vaṅga/Naṅga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>Badd/Urāl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>Candra/Quan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B.: The spellings of Indic names and terms in Arabic script differed formidable difficulties to copyists, and as a result frequently they are corrupted or confounded in manuscripts. Arabic terms are italicized while Arabic terms are in bold. Common Hindi planar names marked with an asterisk (*) have been restored from the Persian translation, and mantras marked with a plus sign (+) are reconstructed according to Sanskrit parallels.

Although the planets in ch. VII are given both Indian and Arab names (the former sometimes garbled), in ch. IX two planets (Venus and the Moon) are given Indian names while the other five planets have just Arabic names; presumably this is due to the inconsistency of copyists. The names of the yogini goddesses in Chapter IX are mostly unrecognizable, except for Kali and Saraswati.

Chart 4

Indian Names and Terms in The Pool of Nectar with Arabic Translations (terms in brackets are speculative reconstructions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hīnaṁ</td>
<td>ʿalīm (lit. 2): “scholar”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ṛg</td>
<td>murtad (lit. 3): “insect, person of discipline”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhūma &amp; Viṣnu</td>
<td>ʿalām (lit. 2): Raḥma and Raḥmān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al-lāhad: unconditioned</td>
<td>Allah (lit. 2): God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Īṣṭa (yogī)</td>
<td>Īṣṭa (lit. 2): favorite pet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Īṣūmāno (yogī)</td>
<td>Yūmūs (lit. 2): Yūmūs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Īṣūyā (yogī)</td>
<td>Yūyā (lit. 2): Yūyā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khrīḍ (yogī)</td>
<td>Khadr (lit. 2): kindless prophet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khrīḍ (yogī)</td>
<td>Khadr (lit. 2): kindless prophet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yūmūs (yogī)</td>
<td>Yūmūs (lit. 2): Yūmūs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Qur'anic references</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The spirit &quot;is from the command of my Lord&quot; (17:25)</td>
<td>IV.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;a single soul&quot; (4:1, etc.)</td>
<td>III.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;root tree of the boundary&quot; (53:14)</td>
<td>IV.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;fairest mosque&quot; (17:3)</td>
<td>III.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;companions of the right hand&quot; (56:27, etc.)</td>
<td>III.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;companions of the left hand&quot; (56:41)</td>
<td>III.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;right-hand valley&quot; (28:30)</td>
<td>III.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God &quot;does what he wants&quot; (Qur. 1:40)</td>
<td>IV.8(b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God &quot;orders what he wishes&quot; (Qur. 5:1)</td>
<td>IV.8(b)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (hadith)</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;He who knows himself knows his lord&quot;</td>
<td>I.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Hearts are between two fingers of the Merciful one&quot;</td>
<td>II.1-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Islamic law and theology</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>obligatory (wajib)</td>
<td>IV.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greatest Name of God</td>
<td>IV.4(b), VII.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>names of God</td>
<td>VII.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prayer (du'a)</td>
<td>IX.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>invocation (uzman)</td>
<td>IX.10</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Pious phrases</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>praise of God and the Prophet</td>
<td>I.1, X.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God's mercy upon him</td>
<td>IV.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;the weakest of the servants of God most high&quot;</td>
<td>Int.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;God willing&quot;</td>
<td>Int.6, VII.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the creator (may his majesty be exalted)</td>
<td>I.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the creator (there is no god but he)</td>
<td>I.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God, who is great and mighty</td>
<td>II.5, IV.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blessings of God on saints and prophets</td>
<td>III.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blessings of God on Sofit</td>
<td>III.4(b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God knows best</td>
<td>IV.8(b), VII.15(b), VIII.5(b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by the command of God</td>
<td>VI.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taking refuge with God from the accursed Satan</td>
<td>III.3, VI.4(b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge or power from God</td>
<td>VII.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Islamic cosmological terms</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>thrones</td>
<td>I.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>canopy</td>
<td>I.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jinn</td>
<td>IV.7, VII.6-8, VII.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>angel</td>
<td>Int.10.4, III.3, IV.6, VII.6, VII.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devil</td>
<td>Int.10, III.2-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spirit</td>
<td>I.3, IV.8, VI.3, VI-5, VII.11, IX.1, IX.9, X.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hidden world</td>
<td>Int.3, II.2, IV.5, V.4, VII.3, VII.6, VII.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water of life</td>
<td>Int.14, II.7, V.4, VI.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*References are to chapter and section of the text. References followed by (b) indicate manuscripts from the 1st recension of the Arabic text.*
### Chart 5 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophical terms and concepts</th>
<th>III.4, V.2, X.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>contraries (dhiddin)</td>
<td>I.1, I.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>causes (furid)</td>
<td>VI.2, X.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>four qualities (hot, cold, wet, dry)</td>
<td>VI.1, VI.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>four humours</td>
<td>II.2, VI.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>five elements</td>
<td>IV.1, VII.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modes of being (al-nafs al-asath)</td>
<td>Int.1, I.3, IV.1, V.2, VI.2, X.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rational soul (al-nafs al-nafs)</td>
<td>I.2, I.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>universal intellect ('aql al-hail)</td>
<td>VI.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni atmabilla post colonum triste</td>
<td>Int.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sufi terms

| gnosis of reality (muqaddasa al-haqq) | III.1, IV.8/9 |
| disciple (muta')                       | V.1           |
| annihilated (munabhad)                 | Int.8         |
| spiritual state (fik)                  | III.4         |
| constellations of the heart            | III.1         |
| unveiling (mukonahf)                   | III.4         |
| discipline (nija')                     | III.4         |
| striving (majahid)                      | III.4         |
| station (maqam)                        | III.4         |
| little food, little speech, little sleep| IV.4          |
| path (tariq)                           | IV.4          |
| "taste" or experience (al-janah)       | IX.2          |
| recollection or chant (dhikr)          | IX.2          |
| meditative practice (tirghah)          | IX.2          |

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It should be added that except from the philosophical texts are contained in the Arabic Pool of Nectar 3 (revised Arabic version of the Goethic Hyman of the Soul [I.2, I.3, IV.1, X.1]), and an Arabic translation of the central section of Subhān Allāh's Persian allegory, On the Reality of Love (Int.4-12). There are also quotations from the Arabic Epitaph of the Brethren of Purity (I.2, VI.2).

### Islamic elements in the text

The Pool of Nectar contains numerous Arabic formulas and references that locate the text in reference to standard Islamic religious themes (see Chart 5). There are six clear quotations from the Qur'an in the earlier extant Arabic recension, to which the later recension adds two more. One hadith saying of the Prophet Muhammad is quoted, and another is implicitly referred to. Terms from the vocabulary of religious practice, particularly those relating to the names of God and prayer, are prominent. The text is, in addition, studded with pious phrases and blessings, which occur in over half of the chapters. Cosmological terms relating to standard Qur'anic sources appear with remarkable frequency. And there are at least a dozen places where specific Sufi terms and themes are invoked. All these are instances of deliberate Islamisation, in which the translator decided to use familiar terms and conventions to normalise the foreignness of the Indian text. These chapters (I, III, and X) contain no Indic material whatever. When combined with the quotations from Islamicate philosophical texts in the preface (see below), the net result is that over one third of the Arabic version of The Pool of Nectar consists of the translator's additions to the text.

The process of Islamisation was a cumulative one. The earlier extant version of the Arabic text (manuscript family α) represents a stage in this process, which is clearly accelerated by
the later version (family b). Not only does family b add more Islamic scriptural passages and themes, it also strips away, truncates, and distorts many Indian references. Indian names for the planets have been garbled or omitted in both Arabic recensions, though they are clearly preserved in the Persian translation, perhaps because Indo-Persian scribes were familiar with the Hindi terms (see Chart 3). The later recension (family b) omits altogether the identification of Brahma and Vishnu with Abraham and Moses (ibn 3), the yogic term ḍhak and its translation as Allah (IV.4), the three yogis identified with esoteric Islamic figures (V.4), the description of urethral suction (VI.5), and most of the description of the seventh yogini (IX.9). The manuscripts of family b also add further extraneous textual materials, including an Arabic verse, inserted at the beginning of the preface, and a treatise on the heart according to Sufi psychology, added as an appendix after Chapter X. The Islamisation of the text even proceeded on the visual level. The Arabic translation includes fourteen diagrams for visualisation during meditation, of which nine relate to the cakras. Comparison of manuscripts indicates a subtle but unmistakable process of grammatisation, in which diagrams increasingly turn into Arabic letters or the cabalistic figures common to Arabic works on occultism.

The insertion of Islamic materials into the translation of The Pool of Nectar was accompanied by another technique, in which Indic names and themes were given Islamic equivalents (see Chart 4). The Sanskrit term ḍhak, “the unconditioned”, is translated as Allah, doubtless because of the tempting similarity of sound, and their nearly identical appearance in Arabic script.29 Brahma and Vishnu are translated as Abraham and Moses, and three legendary yogis are equated with Islamic prophets. This list (identification) is made in the context of a discussion of attaining complete control over the breath:

> When you have reached this station, and this condition becomes characteristic of you, closely examine three things with thought and discrimination: 1) the embryo, how it breathes while it is in the placenta, though its mother’s womb does not require; 2) the fish, how it breathes in the water, and the water does not enter it; 3) and the tree, how it attracts water in its veins and causes it to reach its height. The embryo is Shaykh Gorik, who is Khidr (peace be upon him), the fish is Shaykh Minauth [Mansurana], who is Jonah, and the tree is Shaykh Chaurangi, who is Ilyas, and they are the ones who have reached the water of life (IV.4).

Several technical terms are given in their Sanskrit forms along with Arabic translations: ḍauna or “sacrifice” is translated as duʿa or “prayer”, ḍaya or “counted prayers” becomes azima or “invocation”, and the key term ḍajik (in its north Indian form ḍajj) is munād or “person of discipline”. Badushah, the term for the priestly caste, is translated as ‘allim or “scholar”. But as noted above, several of these equivalences have evaporated from the later recension of the Arabic text. The very attempt to translate an Indian name or term with an Islamic one has been abandoned in these instances. In later recensions, or in quotations of the text, we find that the passage identifying the Sanskrit word ḍhak with Allah has a radically different appearance. A mid-nineteenth-century Arabic treatise on Sufi orders by the North African author Muhammad al-Samānī (d. 1859) includes a section on the yogis (al-fuṣṣāl) as a subset

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29 The identification of Allah with ḍhak is also found in an eighteenth-century Daksh Udu text by a Sufi writer named Shah Tahāb al-Ḥāfīz; see his Man tashīr ḍauna, ed. Sayyidah Jafīra, Shībī-1 Notmūr-1 Abo al-Kalīm Avivī, (Hyderabad, 1956), p. 15: ḍauna ḍhak munād ḍajj raḥīm.
of the Ghawthiyah branch of the Shattariyya Sufi order; for this he clearly draws both on the writings of Muhammad Ghawth and on the Arabic text of The Pool of Nectar. When he reaches the passage in question, he states, "If one wishes to witness the hidden world, it is incumbent on him to cross his eyes over his nose, and imagine in his heart the word Allah, Allah, without moving his tongue. If he reaches the level of perfection in this practice, then magic and potion will have no influence on him, disease will not affect him, the hidden worlds will be unveiled, his prayer will be answered, and he will be famous among men for deeds of piety". At this point it is no longer possible to see any Indian "influence" in a portrait of a practice that is indistinguishable from standard Sufi technique.

**Philosophical formations**

It is evident that the Arabic version of The Pool of Nectar was composed by an Iranian philosopher familiar with the Illuminationist school, because of the characteristic Illuminationist vocabulary in the treatise. The most persuasive evidence in this regard is the extensive revised Arabic version (Int.9-12) of an extract from Suhrawardi's Persian treatise On the Reality of Love, which is integrated with the fragmentary "Hymn of the Pearl" frame story. We also find a distinctive term from Avicennan-Illuminationist psychology, "the cognising and distinguishing rational soul for the managing of states" (Int.14), or more briefly, "the managing rational soul" (IV.1). The prominent location of this passage in the preface is clearly meant to exercise a dominant role in determining the significance of the yogic teachings of the main text. This has the distinct effect of proleptically assimilating the psychophysiology of yoga to the basic categories of Aristotelian and Avicennan psychology, even though this assimilation is not actually carried out in the text. Specifically, the text in the preface enumerates the standard Greco-Arabic list of the five internal senses, the five external senses, the seven vegetal faculties, and the two animal motor-sensory faculties, which would be familiar to any reader of later Aristotelian texts in Arabic. At the same time, the narrative suggests an overall framework for interpreting yogic practices as a means of discovering the true self through discipline of the body and mind. But there is no indication of any familiarity with philosophical anthropologies that might be found in other Sanskrit materials connected to the yogic tradition.

In addition to these explicit references to the Illuminationist school of philosophy, the Arabic version as a whole calls on a more diffuse kind of Arabic philosophical vocabulary, which was shared and recognised by many schools. The philosophical terms in the treatise are primarily of a cosmological significance, and they include such items as the four qualities (hot, cold, wet, dry) (IV.2-3, X.2), moderation (al-anwar al-arba'ah) (IV.1, VIII.1), contraries (dhilian) (III.4, V.2, X.2), the rational soul (al-nafs al-natiya) (I.3, V.2, VI.1, X.4), the universal intellect (afa'il al-khali) (I.2, 1.3), and the creator (al-bari) (I.2, 1.3).

31 These narratives are discussed in detail in The Pool of Nectar.
Intellectuals trained in the Arabic scientific curriculum would have recognised in The Pool of Nectar some explicit references to commonplace themes from the tenth-century encyclopedia known as The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity. The theme of the correspondence of the human body as microcosm and the larger cosmos as macrocosm had been well developed in Greek thought from an early period.\textsuperscript{32} The Brethren of Purity gave an early expression to this doctrine in their encyclopedia, with strong leanings toward Pythagorean teachings. From the prominent first chapter of The Pool of Nectar (I.2), we can glean the following list of microcosmic-macrocosmic correspondences:

1. nostrils, eyes, ears, and mouth
2. senses
3. head
4. body (\textit{jundha})
5. bone
6. nerves
7. veins
8. hair
9. skin, blood, flesh, ligaments, muscle, bone, and brain
10. walking
11. sleep
12. happiness
13. sadness
14. hunger
15. satiety
16. weeping
17. laughing
18. heart
19. brain
20. soul
21. intellect
22. arteries
23. chief limbs
24. brain
25. limbs

seven planets
stars
sky
earth
mountains
oceans
rivers
trees (\textit{adhjur})
seven climes
day
night
spring
winter
summer
fall
water
lightning
throne
canopy
universal intellect
creator
springs
mountains
mine
animah

To this list some manuscripts from family \textit{b} add the following items:

This list may be compared with a similar series of microcosmic-macrocosmic equivalences found in The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity (repeated or similar terms are marked in bold,

with reference to the numbers in the list just given:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>body (jāsid)</td>
<td>earth (variant of no. 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bones</td>
<td>mountains (variant no. 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brain</td>
<td>mines (variant of no. 24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belly</td>
<td>ocean (partial; no. 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intestines</td>
<td>rivers (partial; no. 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>veins</td>
<td>streams (partial; no. 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flesh</td>
<td>dust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hair</td>
<td>plants (subsh) (variant of no. 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>head to foot</td>
<td>civilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>back</td>
<td>desert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>front</td>
<td>east</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>back</td>
<td>west</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>right</td>
<td>south</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>left</td>
<td>north</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>breathing</td>
<td>herbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speech</td>
<td>thunder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cries</td>
<td>thunderbolts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laughing</td>
<td>lightning (variant of no. 17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weeping</td>
<td>rain (variant of no. 16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misery and sorrow</td>
<td>dark of night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sleep</td>
<td>death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waking</td>
<td>life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>childhood</td>
<td>spring (partial; no. 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>youth</td>
<td>summer (partial; no. 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maturity</td>
<td>fall (partial; no. 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>old age</td>
<td>winter (partial; no. 11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The list of the Brethren of Purity continues with an additional twelve equivalences between the human condition and planetary movements, of particular relevance to astrology. The series of twenty-five microcosmic-macrocosmic correspondences in *The Pool of Nectar* is introduced primarily in the context of the yogic teaching regarding the sun and moon (1.1), and their association with the two opposed breaths of the right and left nostrils. As shown by the items marked in bold above, six of these correspondences are variations on correspondences given by the Brethren of Purity, and another seven give correspondences that include one of the terms in the list of the Brethren of Purity. Items 18 to 21 contain terms deriving from standard Islamicate cosmology. Manuscripts from the later recension of family b add four more terms, one from the list of the Brethren of Purity, indicating a further stage in the domestication of the text. The Persian translation of Muhammad Ghawth (which differs widely from the Arabic text at this point) contains another four equivalences from the list of the Brethren of Purity that do not occur in any of the Arabic manuscripts.

11 *Ras'ul illahon al-saf'a*, vol. ii, pp. 466-467.
of *The Pool of Nectar*, but which probably reflect the earlier Arabic recension from which his Persian translation derives.

This passage is then followed (1,3) by further reflection on the microcosm and the macrocosm, joining the language of Islamicate philosophy to citations from the Qurʾan and *hadith*. Speculations on the microcosm and the macrocosm have certainly played an important role in Indian thought, and they are frequently found in yogic writings, but the material in this Arabic version (1,2–3) appears to be wholly unrelated to Indian sources. In Indian texts one would normally expect specific references to correspondences between sections of the body and multiple worlds, specific geographical sites in India, etc. It is hard to avoid concluding that the translator of *The Pool of Nectar*, perhaps inspired by something comparable in the yogic teaching, at this point eliminated the Indic narrative and substituted materials from exclusively Arabic sources to make the yogic teachings more comprehensible.

This is not the only place in the treatise where the Brethren of Purity are invoked. A description in *The Pool of Nectar* (VI.3) regarding the prediction of the sex of the embryo in the womb, according to which direction it is facing, appears to draw directly on a passage in the writings of the Brethren of Purity.36

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**Chart 6**

Sample Variations in Arabic Transcription of Mantras in *The Pool of Nectar*

The following mantras, transliterated in Arabic script, occur in chapter IX, “On the Knowledge of the Subjugation of Spirits,” where they invoke seven chief yogini goddesses who are assimilated to the seven planets. Notable variations occur in all MSS. Some Indic terms can be distinguished, including standard seed syllables (anu, hnu), the concluding phrase *hadith svaḥa*, and references to divinities, demons and spirits (śaνtā, dνi, sανtανα, bλνt pνf).

1. Ṣaṁvara
   Ḥusain: Ṣaṁkha tani ṣaṁkar ṣaṁkar varbha rabi vakna man daśaraha rabi anuṃ kalfa yodin fum bat svaḥa
   Paric: anuvan kalka varbha rabi vakna man daśaraha rabi anuṃ kalfa yodin fum bat svaḥa

2. Maha
   Ḥusain: tira devi tukhar mara bhūṣaka saṅkhar ti deva devata nari humum tira devi tukhar nari naṃ naṃ naṃ bat svaḥa
   Paric: hum tira deva tukhar mara bhūṣaka saṅkhar deva devata arai hum tira devi naṃ naṃ naṃ bat svaḥa

3. Jupiter
   Ḥusain: naṃ riśi kal kala devi 'iṣṇu mνṃh naṃ hnu bat svaḥa bhvati kahir kahir hnu riśi
   Paric: anuṃ riśi kalka devi naṃ naṃ bat svaḥa

4. Sun
   Ḥusain: narayan bawaya anuṃ tukhari hum budamiya devi naṃ naṃ bat svaḥa
   Paric: anuṃ hauri bhn hum budamah evi mark lγανi hνs kuri tukhi bhn

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Chart 6 continued

3. Venus
Husain: aum aum sarasati devi aum nam nam but svaha
Paric: aum a lī vacations devi aum nam nam thunum but svaha

6. Mercury
Husain: aum yam tara hu tala ichha rahi des das tara & moksha bhut preet tarani adham hum tara devi adham nam nam hum but svaha
Paric: aum yam tara devi maha tana ri das des maha rikhes bhut preet aum baram nara devi aum nam tam but svaha

7. Moon
Husain: aum tum tawa natari das des tara & rikhesh bhut preet tawani adham yum adi adham nam nam sva ha nima hwayna tuha devi nam nam sva ha
Paric: aum hansa tuha devi nam nam but svaha


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**Chart 7**

Yogic Elements in the Arabic Translation of The Pool of Nectar

- Sun and moon breaths
- Five breaths
- Propheticiation by breath
- Sex practices from divinatory and magical texts
- Retention of semen
- Khuruti, drinking nectar
- Prevention of disease
- Axut postures
- Eighty-four Siddhas
- Kundalini
- Three breaths
- Measuring breath, breath control
- Celibacy
- Vajroli mukha, medial suction
- Monitors
- Seven cakras
- Occult powers (siddhas)
- Predicting time of death (pre-hatha yoga kriya tantra)
- Yoginis
- Mandala
- Hamsa
- Japa

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**Yogic elements in the text**

The Arabic version of *The Pool of Nectar* contains a variety of practices. Some are not distinctively Indian or restricted to yoga, but are widely found in other traditions. This is the case with the recommendation of fasting (IV.3), vegetarian diet (V.3), and sexual abstinence (VI.3, VII.11). But other practices are clearly associated with hatha yoga (see Chart 7). Very prominent is the description of breath control, with reference to the sun and moon breaths as associated with the left and right nostrils (I.11). The concepts of breath underlying these passages are not clearly related to standard Indian cosmologies, however.
Later Indian texts such as the Yoga Upanisads often employ the time unit of the *nata* to count the duration of breaths. In contrast, The Pool of Nectar measures breaths by fingers, in two passages using a spatial measurement rather than a temporal one. The first passage gives a list of five breaths associated with the elements, and it describes the directional orientation of four: "The breaths are five: fiery, watery, airy, earthly, and heavenly. The fiery rises up, the airy spreads out, the watery descends the extent of four fingers, the earthy descends the extent of eight fingers" (II.3). Although the number five is characteristic of Indian medical and yogic approaches to the breaths, and while some of the breaths are associated with upward and downward movement, it is otherwise hard to recognize any resemblance to the Indian traditions on the breaths in this brief list. The association with the elements is not found in standard Indian texts, and may be an Aristotelian touch added by the translator.

The second passage details the effects of exhalation and inhalation, and recommends the increase of the latter in order to prolong life: "You will find it [breath] rising in exhalation the amount of about twelve fingers with power, and in inhalation it descends the amount of four fingers. It decreases at every breath by the power of eight fingers. So see how much it decreases every day. That is the decrease of one's life. It is appropriate that you reverse that by kindness, sympathy, and gradual approach. That is, you should inhale the breath with power and exhale it with gentleness and mildness, to the point where you inhale twelve fingers, and exhale four" (V.3). In the Persian translation of Muhammad Ghawth, this passage reads: "Twelve fingers of breath enter, then eight fingers return, four fingers of cold wind (sonar), and four of cold (sand)... When walking on foot, breath of twelve fingers enters, and two warm and two cold ones return. When exerting effort, running, or having sex, twenty-four fingers go out, and four return to place". Oddly, the spatial measurements are missing from the account of breath in the oldest Persian translation, the portions of the kamadhātu preserved in the fourteenth-century encyclopedia of Amuli. In any case, the basic idea is apparent control of the quantity of breath in order to maximize inhalation for long life. There are occasional references to the finger as a spatial measure of length related to breath control in the Yoga Upanisads, but these do not correspond with the life-preservation technique mentioned here.

Physiological techniques mentioned in the text include the purification of body by postures recognisable as yogic *anata* (IV.4–8). The Arabic text acknowledges the traditional number of 84 postures, but describes only five (although the Persian translation of Muhammad Ghawth, relying on an earlier version of the Arabic, describes twenty-one postures). These are difficult to match with the descriptions of *anata* in standard hatha yoga texts, but from the descriptions we may recognize the Virasana, Kukkuurasana, and Ustrasana Kurmassana among these five. The Arabic text emphasizes the physical and psychic health benefits of these postures. It is notable that the yogic word *alub* is repeated in each position; this reinforces the association with the Nath or Kānchiya yogī, for whom this is a

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28. In the *Trikākhyapañjandita*, 53–55 (ibid., p. 268), the vital breath is described as being twelve "digit-lengths" longer than the body, which is thirty-six "digit-lengths", evidently meaning a unit the size of the fingernail. The recommendation in this case, however, is to shorten the air to the length of the body in order to know breath.
characteristic utterance. Among these physiological techniques appears to be a version of the khecarī mudrā, described as staring at the tip of the nose and drinking the “nectar” of saliva (II.5, II.7). Unlike standard hatha yoga accounts of this practice, this description emphasizes the crossing of the eyes (vividly illustrated in some manuscripts) as the chief element, which permits the retention of semen during sexual intercourse; the swallowing of nectar is also modestly credited with curing sores and headache. Another yogic technique that occurs here is a variation of the vajra mudra, which makes possible return of the semen via urethral suction (VI.3). Curiously, the discussion of retention of semen is embedded in a lengthy section on procreation and embryology according to Galenic medical principles, leading to the equivalent of the philosophical proverb, “Every animal is sad after sex” (VII.4).

Visualization is another prominent feature of The Pool of Nectar, particularly in the lengthy Chapter VII on the magical imagination (vañchā), treated as a generic term for mental and magical powers. Normal Islamic discourse gives vañchā the pejorative meaning of “illusion” or “prejudice”, and vañchā also has various technical meanings in Aristotelian philosophy as the “estimative faculty” (Lat. aetimatio, Gk. synesis, phonestēs) and “composite imagination” (Gk. phantastēs logos). But vañchā in the sense of “magical imagination” seems to presuppose a correspondence with some untutored Indic term, possibly dhānta or hālpana. It is defined in The Kaumāpa Seed Syllables as “the knowledge of breaths” (166), and in the translator’s introduction magical imagination is also linked with the term “discipline” (ṣrijadat), which is the standard Arabic-Persian translation for yoga (below, p.8). I am open to suggestions about other interpretations of this term. At any rate, this practice takes the form of the visualization in sequence of seven locations corresponding to the standard yogic cakras, from the seat to the crown of the head. Each cakra is described in terms of a colour and a diagram, but instead of being linked to Hindu gods and letters of the devanāgarī alphabet, the cakras are connected with the planets. While some of the bija-mantras contain phonemes recognizable to Indologists, others are beyond retrieval, doubtless due to the difficulties of preserving the chants in Arabic script (see Chart 1). The demythologisation of the cakras, and their planetary placement, has the effect of likening the cakra meditation and the implicit upward movement of the kundalini to the ascension of the self soul through the planetary spheres, a major theme in Islamic, Persian, and Jewish traditions.

The seven Sanskrit mantras or chants associated with the seven cakras are all boldly declared to be translations of the Arabic invocations of the names of God. Thus the Sanskrit syllable hum is translated as “O Lord” (ya nabi), and am is translated as “O Ancient One” (ya qadim). In introducing these seven great mantras, the Arabic translator remarks that “they are like the greatest names of God among us”. Muhammad Ghawrih goes one better, however, in his Persian translation, providing two Arabic phrases for each Sanskrit term; he translates hum as ya nabi ya hafez, “O Lord, O Protector”, and am as ya qadir ya qadib, “O All-powerful, O Wrathful”. In a discussion of breathing techniques that does not appear in the Arabic version, Muhammad Ghawrih also finds equivalents for the yogic terms hums and so hums, which are pronounced during the two phases of exhalation and inhalation; the
first is "an expression for the spiritual lord (mubh nahu)" while the second stands for "the lord of lords (mubh al-arhab)". There are many other examples of this kind. Semantically, such "translations" make no sense whatever; they are, rather, functional equivalents between the yogic words of power and the names of God as used by the Sufis; this is especially evident in the case of the seven great mantras, for which the Arabic equivalents are presented in a vocative form used in the Sufi dhikr repetitions of the names of God.

Chapter IX of The Pool of Nectar amplifies on the cakra meditations in Chapter VII with elaborate instructions for summoning seven female deities or "spiritual beings" (Ar. mahaity) who are evidently the chief yoginis (there are a total of 64 of these entities). These seven are usually called Mother Goddesses in yogic circles. In this text, however, they are assimilated to the seven planets, as in Chapter VII. Here as well, it seems that the planetary organization is a deliberate attempt by the translator to familiarise the subject, in this case by likening the summoning of Indian goddesses to well-known Middle Eastern occult practices involving planetary spirits. The phrase "subjugation of spirits" (tarkhit al-anab) in the title of Chapter IX is the normal Arabic name for this kind of occultism. The yoginis are summoned with incense and mandalas. Instructions here call on the practitioner to act like a son and a brother with the goddesses, in order to obtain the numerous favours they can bestow. Long and Sanskrit mantras addressed to these beings must be repeated thousands of times (see Chart 6).

The worship of the female deities known as yoginis seems to have been at its height in India from the ninth to the twelfth centuries, but it continued in various places until at least the eighteenth century. Vidya Dehejia has described at length the open-air yogini temples found at remote sites where these deities were worshipped. While the description of the yoginis in The Pool of Nectar is brief, The Kamanapuri Sanskrit Transliteration describes them at length as the key to knowledge of all things. At the beginning of the section on breath, we are told:

So say those sixty-four women, "By the command of God (who is great and majestic), who one day gave us this science, we shall not speak of this science. By the God by whose command the 18,000 worlds exist, this is an oath, that this is the science of magical imagination, for whatever is in the earth and heaven is in the grasp of the children of Adam. We tell everything, for everything that goes on in all the world is all known and made clear by the science of magical imagination" (160).

Furthermore, they say:

By the command of God most high, and the masterful teaching they have taught us, between the moon and the sun one can know whatever goes on in all the world. We teach a science of who comes, and from where, and what he asks. Also know that this science lengthens life and makes one near immortal (170).

The knowledge the yoginis confer makes poison harmless, cures the sick, removes desire, and enables one to control all persons and things in the world. These "spiritual beings" are  

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41 Bah al-awqa, ch. 4, India Office Library MS, PP. 35-36; Gang Bhabh MS, p. 35; Ch. 7; Gang Bhabh MS, P. 39.
42 W. W. Kranbichler, "Mayurabhadra and his yogini Cult", Indian Historical Quarterly XXXI (1955), P. 160.
43 Vidya Dehejia, Yogini Cult and Temple: A Tantric Tradition (New Delhi, 1965).
inulnerable to injury by sword or fire, their hair and nails cannot be cut, they hear from a
distance and travel anywhere in an instant (33b). Each of the sixty-four yoginis has a particular
spot in India, and they go to delightful places to enjoy themselves at feasts, dressed in gold
and jewels, wearing crowns and wreaths, revered by the deities; they will never die, grow old,
or get sick before the day of judgment, but all appear to be twenty years of age (30b–31a).
These beings are in fact the principal objects of worship among the Hindus, who carve
idols of them. "Just as we have prophets, saints, and miracle workers, so the Hindus have
faith in them" (31a). Many of their names are given, though the Persian script leaves many
ambiguities: Tutla, Karkala, Tira, Chalab, Kamak, Kaila, Diba, Darba (31b), Anaanaki
(44b, 46b), Chirnai (45a), Ganga Mata (45a), Sri Manohar (45a), Katri (30a), Nawari (49b),
Sarrani (44b), Sutandri (44b), Taba (31a). Of course, as Vidyā Dehejia has pointed out,
no two lists of names of yoginis are the same. Sometimes adepts may have sexual relations
with the yoginis (39a), but at other times they regard them as sister and mother (46b). "She
is the yogini and you are the yogi" (48b). Benefits of association with them include money
(44b) and food (48b).

As a comprehensive description of Indian religious practices, a narrative limited to
Kamakhya and the yoginis might seem a bit eccentric. Brahmins are mentioned, but only as
occasional sources of information about The Kamarupa Seed Syllables and its interpretation.
This is clearly a narrow sample, but what is it based on? In terms of the categories that are
available today, we could probably say that this text reflects practices of the yogini temple
cult that are associated with Kailash tantrism.44 There is also some connection with the Nath
or Kamhata yogis, as indeed Ocamanu and Amanu are usually considered the introducer of the
yogini cult among the Kailash, and the name of Gopakam is invoked once (31a) in the
text.45 Beyond that general indication, we find multiple strands of Hindu tradition popping
up in an incidental fashion. This text assumes a system of nine cakras rather than the seven
cakras current in most Nath yoga writings (30a, 30b, 25a). Meditative exercises are given
that concentrate on raising the Sakti from the navel up the spinal column (17a, 19a, 18a).
A standard list of supernormal powers (siddhis) is provided (54b).46 Occasional mantras appear
to contain the phrase "Kruch avatar" (48b, 51b). We are told of the temple of Mahakala
in Ujjain where many siddhis or magicians are said to live (34b, 37b). The story of Siva
(Mahadev) and the churning of the ocean is told at length (31b–32a). While long accounts
are given of the temple of the goddess Kamakhya, nothing is said about the animal sacrifices
associated with that site today. The basic teachings of The Kamarupa Seed Syllables, however,
are the use of breath for divination and the summoning of yoginis to obtain various goals;
hatha yoga meditation is certainly linked to these practices.

The representation of yogic practices in The Poem of Nectar and The Kamarupa Seed Syllables
was highly selective, to say the least. In one sense, this is not surprising, if these texts are
the result of the adventurous contact of one or two enterprising Muslim scholars with a
mixture of esoteric Indian teachings. It includes unusual practices not attested elsewhere,
such as a combined visualization of all seven cakras into a composite diagram (VII.14,

44 Ibid., pp. 30, 36.
46 See Blaise, Yuga, p. 88, n.
VIII.1). Among the benefits of the practices mentioned in *The Pool of Nectar* are familiar yogic powers (*siddhis*), such as taking on an animal form or another human body, whether living or dead (*panduro-pandavi)* (VII.12–13). At the same time, there are non-yogic powers, such as the prediction of the time of death by visual meditation, a practice common in early tantric works on sorcery (*kanti tantra*) that predate hatha yoga (VIII.1–5). There are also sexual practices that use breathing techniques derived from early Indian magical and divinatory texts (II.4). There are two different accounts of the breaths that are pretty much incompatible (five breaths in II.2; three breaths in V.3). The Arabic version of *The Pool of Nectar* has an otherwise unattested selection of five *asana* postures, while the Persian translation of Muhammad Ġazvīnī provides twenty-one, the names of which do not overlap with any known work on hatha yoga.\(^7\) It is difficult to identify the *bhūja-mantras* in Chapter VII, though here, as with the longer mantras of Chapter IX, the problem may lie in part in the inherent difficulty of representing Sanskrit (especially short vowels) in Arabic script. In any case, despite the translators’ claims regarding the scriptural authority of their texts, the representation of yogic practices that they provided was arbitrary and selective, and it was heavily coloured both in content and in interpretation by a strongly established set of Islamic conventions.

**Translation as Hermeneutics**

What is the function of a translation such as *The Pool of Nectar*? The account of the origin of the text domesticates it in an Islamic context through the conversion of yoga to Islam. The two prose stories invoke particular interpretive approaches linked to the Gnostic myth of the soul and the Illuminatist allegory of the senses and psychic faculties. The actual mechanism of translation is applied unevenly throughout the text. Sometimes purely Islamic terms and symbols are unconsciously placed in the text as adequate descriptions of Indian originals. This has the result that many of the original Indian terms and symbols can only be recovered by the use of resources of modern Indology outside of this text. The Islamising tendency is most evident in the later stages of manuscript production; there, the most common recension of the Arabic dispenses with most of the Indian elements of the text. Sanskrit originals are also dropped when techniques are being introduced that would be new to Arabic readers, particularly in the sections on chanting, visualisation, and postures. In an intermediate stage of translation, Indic names and terms are retained alongside their Islamic “translations”. Yet there is a certain residue that remains unintelligible, particularly in the Sanskrit mantras that are transmitted in Arabic script. In short, *The Pool of Nectar* exhibits conflicting tendencies in its modes of translation, which are never fully resolved. In approaching his task, the Arabic translator seems only to have felt the limitations imposed by the audience’s unfamiliarity with technical terminology; he was not limited by social and religious constraints. A glance at the Indian names and terms that are transmitted in the text along with their Arabic translations (Chart 5) shows that major theological

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\(^7\) Several manuscripts of the Persian translation contain miniature illustrations of the twenty-one *asanas*. One of these MSS is in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, another is in the Salar Jung Library in Hyderabad, a third is in the private collection of Simon Digby, and the fourth has recently been acquired by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
translations relating to God and the prophets are entertained without hesitation. It must be repeated, however, that some of the Indic terms can only be recovered with difficulty through recourse to modern Indological sources. Given the almost exclusively extra-Indian distribution of manuscripts (only one of forty-five is found in India), it is hard to believe that any readers of the Arabic text would have been in a position to recognize that the text contained Sanskrit terms.

In other cases, the translator evidently felt that it was pointless to retain the Indian originals for a cluster of other important terms. "Mantra" is almost certainly the term underlying the Arabic term dhikr or "recollection", referring to the seven powerful "words" or "names" in chapter VII, which consist of seed-syllables like aum. "Yantra" is probably the Indic original translated as shol or "diagram". Curiously, the term "yoga" is only mentioned by implication once in the text, in the title to Chapter IV on yogic postures; there it is represented by the Arabic term nijda or "exercise", which is from the same root as found in the Arabic word (nimmah) used as a translation of "yoga". The mutated Indian term with the most theological baggage is probably yadhe, "female yoga", which in the text refers to semi-divine beings rather than humans. The translator renders this as nihayyah or "spiritual being", which might seem equivocally to conceal polytheistic goddesses behind an innocuous looking front. Still, it is worth noting that earlier Arabic translators of Greek authors such as Plotinus used the same Arabic term nihayyah to translate the Greek term theos or "god".

Jan Assmann has proposed a model of translation with respect to the Hellenistic age that is suggestive for the Islamicate translations of Indic texts. The complete and self-conscious translations of divinities from one culture to another was a common feature of ancient near eastern societies. The best known such case was Herodotus' translation of the Egyptian gods into familiar Greek ones: Amun was Zeus, Re was Helios, etc. Where there is easy translation from one pantheon to another, Assmann argues, conversion is not an issue. As long as there is the possibility of translation there is no need of conversion. If all religions basically worship the same gods there is no need to give up one religion and to enter another one. This possibility only occurs if there is one religion claiming knowledge of a superior truth. It is precisely this claim that excludes translatability. If one religion is wrong and the other is right, there can be no question of translating the gods of the one into those of the other. Obviously they are about different gods. It is only when one insists on the untranslatability of key religious figures that "the cosmological link between god and world, and god and gods, is categorically broken". Thus Jewish and Christian views of the incompatibility of God precluded identification with the interchangeable "pagan" deities of the Hellenistic world. Following an idea put forward by G. W. Bowersock, Assmann maintains that the Greek culture of Hellenism was a vehicle through which many non-Greek cultures forcefully expressed their own distinctiveness. From the Jewish or Christian perspective, however, differences between Hellenistic religions were so trivial as to be meaningless. Hellenism,

50 Assmann, p. 31.
by furnishing an overarching system of equivalences, created a cosmopolitan consciousness of a fairly unified pagan world.

A number of the features described by Assman in the Hellenistic case have parallels in the Islamicate cultures where *The Pool of Nectar* was produced and read. As with the Hellenistic age, the Arabic culture of the high caliphate and the Persianate culture of the middle periods of Islamic history were characterised by the creation of vast ecumenic imperial structures, in which minorities of many kinds expressed themselves through the dominant language. The ethnic identities of non-Arab peoples found expression through the Arabic language in the Saba’iyya movement, and non-Muslims made use of Persian for both religious and historical purposes. In Islamicate societies the legal authority of the Islamic religion continually existed in tension with universalising tendencies of Hellenistic origin embodied in the philosophical tradition. As a consequence, there were always significant aspects of the Islamicate cosmos that were not exclusively Islamic; this is the justification for Hodgson’s term “Islamicate”. Indeed, from the perspective of the most thoroughgoing exponents of philosophy (e.g., Ibn Sina), all religious (including Islam) were special modifications of the universal truths of philosophy, intended for mass consumption. The standard minimalist concept of Islam current in the mass media today identifies it with authoritarianism, legalism, and violent iconoclasm. The Muslim equivalents of Tertullian would doubtless be horrified by the contents of *The Pool of Nectar* and would reject out of hand any consideration of murmuring Sanskrit mantras to feminine deities. Yet the sophisticated Neoplatonism of the Muslim Illuminationists (like that of, say, the Christian Platonist Marsilio Ficino in Renaissance Italy) permitted the translation and assimilation of “pagan” themes, deities, and practices, without a sense of radical difference. Still, the text makes a kind of concession to the absolute demands of Islamic religious authority, by making sure that the bearers of foreign knowledge (the yogis) become converted Muslims, and even authorities on Islamic law.

In a way the fortunes of *The Pool of Nectar* resemble the important texts that Robert E.Buswell has called Chinese Buddhist apocrypha. These were often original texts composed in China, but presented as translations of important and authentic Buddhist scriptures from India. “Such texts were sometimes written in association with a revelatory experience, but often were intentionally forged using false ascriptions as a literary device both to enhance their authority as well as to strengthen their chances of being accepted as canonical”. They took a strategy of making Buddhism intelligible by explaining it in terms that would be familiar to Chinese readers, even to the extent of creating new scriptures out of whole cloth. The analogy with *The Pool of Nectar* is not exact; there was some kind of textual basis for the translations of *The Pool of Nectar*, even if it may have been primarily an esoteric teaching restricted to oral transmission. But the Arabic translator clearly wanted to establish the canonical authority of his work, and part of his technique consisted of adding enough

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21 The Persian scholar Mulla Zayn al-Din of Lur, from whom Pietro della Valle obtained a manuscript of *The Korang for the Sylphides* in 1622, belonged to a sect “which attributed intelligences to the sun, moon and stars, and venerated them as angels of a superior order who would intercede with God and seek his protection” (J. D. Gossen, *Pietro della Valle: The Limits of Perception*, BSOAS XLIX [1986], p. 111).

of the familiar Islamicate structures of authority to convince his readers to pay attention. He opened his translation with the following sentence: "Now in the land of India there is a respected book, known to its religious scholars (madras) and philosophers (mathana), called Amritakunda, that is, The Pool of the Water of Life (int.2)". The primary task was to draw attention to the book's credentials. The Chinese Buddhist apocrypha sometimes adopted another technique found in The Pool of Netari, that is, overcoming the distance between Buddhism and Chinese thought by declaring that Lao Tzu and Confucius were theophanies of Buddha and Bodhisattvas.55 This is precisely the hermeneutic of equivalence adopted by the translator of The Pool of Netari, when he has the yogic announce that Brahma and Vishnu are Abraham and Moses, or when he identifies major yogis with Islamic prophets. In each case, this approach permits the use of a dominant discourse (Chinese or Islamicate) to render the foreign Indian teachings.

A similar translation strategy can be seen in the remarks of the earlier Persian translator of the related The Kanangya Seed Syllables:

Then says the translator of the book: In India I saw many books with complete information about every science. Most of their books are in verse, because they memorize verse better, and one's nature inclines to it more. I found a book which they call Kausudhaha, which is one of their choicest books; they have great faith in this. It contains two types of science. One is the science of magical imagination (njula) and discipline (njudda); they have no kind of science that is greater or more powerful than this. On the basis of this science they affirm things that intellect does not accept, but they believe in it, and among them it is customary. For each of these things they adduce and show a thousand proofs and demonstrations. Regarding the subject of this science, this is a summary, which they have affirmed.

The other is a science that they call sifanda [i.e., divination]. Their scholars and sages observe their breath; if their breath goes well, they perform their tasks, but if the breath goes ill, they do no work, but strenuously avoid it. They have taken this subject to the height of perfection. The common people of India know nothing of this, and they are not privy to this secret, nor do they know anything. They call this the science of reading thought (Arabia damit) (fols. 2a–1b).

As with the Arabic version of The Pool of Netari, here we are confronted with a powerful book, alleged to be of the highest authority in India, though in the same breath we are told that it is secret and known only to a few. The Persian translator frequently returns to both the themes of the book's scriptural authority and its hidden esoteric character. Thus in another passage he writes,

This book is known throughout India, and among the Hindus no book is nobler than this. Whoever learns this book and knows its explanation is counted as a great scholar and wise man. They serve him, and whoever is excepted with the theory and practice of this they call a yogi and respect him greatly. They serve him just as we respect the saints and the masters of struggle and discipline (15b).

The translator speaks of information gathered from Brahmin informants, regarding practices such as employing the "greatest name" of God (43b) and summoning the goddess Lakshmi for sexual relations (43b), and he testifies to his own success in employing these techniques.

55 Ibid., p. 10.
In addition, on several occasions the translator cites another text, which he calls "the thirty-two verses of Kanak Dev", which may have been a separately circulating text with similar contents. He frequently emphasizes the verse character of the original, and several Hindi doha verses are quoted in Persian script (268, 272, 292). The translator stresses the difficulty of the task of translation. "Then I rendered it from the Indian language to the Persian language, taking many pains, and it was read to a group of brahmins and scholars, and it was compared, corrected, and clarified (160)". Despite this advertisement of scholarly authority, which makes suspicious use of the terminology of Arabic literary production, on other occasions the translator confesses that the material he is dealing with is more than obscure. After giving a lengthy Hindi passage in Arabic script, he remarks, "I presented these verses to a group of the scholars of India, brahmins, and jajas, and they could not explain it, but were incapable of understanding it, for the words are strange and difficult" (275). Thus it is not clear to what extent this represents a single text or a selection from yogic verses available from oral sources but represented as scripture.

A comparable case of translation and scriptural authority can be found in the sixth-century Persian physician Burzoy, who travelled to India in search of wonderful plants that can restore the dead to life. He eventually learned from Indian sages that the miraculous plant was really an allusion for wisdom. He returned to Persia with a strongly ascetic inclination and an aversion to religious dogma, bringing with him a selection of Indian literature (Patanjarstra, Hitopadesa) that he translated into Middle Persian. This was later translated into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa under the title Kāliḥu va Dīnaat, eventually becoming one of the greatest popular transmitters of literature prior to the invention of print. It is striking to see how the Arabic version of this text preserves the strategies of treating this book of wisdom as divinely inspired and a source of great benefit: "The cause of the copying of this book and its transmission from the land of India to the kingdom of Persia was an inspiration from God Most High, by which he inspired Choosesh Ardashavan [the Persian king]." Or again: "Regarding his desire for knowledge and devotion to it, he heard of one of the books of the philosophers of India, among their kings and scholars, rare and highly praised by them. It was the root of all their culture and the head of all their knowledge, the guide to every benefit and the key to the search for the hereafter and the work of salvation." This highly charged religious language, and the frequent reference to the philosophers and sages of India in other passages, became a well-known literary pattern in Islamicate literature (including the account of Burzoy in the Persian Book of Kings by Firdausi); this popular book was several times translated into Persian and many other languages. This is the same language and the same geographic trajectory employed by the Arabic translator of The Pool of Nectar, when he announced that "in the land of India there is a respected book, known to its religious

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34 In one place (268) the translator says, "Know that thirty-two verses in the Indian language have been transmitted from the sayings of Kanak. Now Kanak chose a certain kind from these, and added something else to it, and this part is called Kanak bhai tajaula (2)." Elsewhere he adds, "This is all a commentary on the thirty-two verses, which some one has written in the Indian language, in which many practices are mentioned, and in which are strange and wonderful sciences which all the practitioners of imaginations (mujahins and magicians) are agreed upon and pleased with" (290). Once (53b) he says, "Now they put this book into 85 verses, and verified it in the Indian language."


36 ibid., p. 90, col. 2, lines 30-31.

37 ibid., p. 91, col. b, lines 61-65.
scholars (islām) and philosophers’. The fame of Kaila wa Dinna in Arabic would have made the theme of the mysterious book from India a familiar echo.

Looking over the many different versions and recensions of the Annals and translations produces a peculiar aesthetic effect, characterised by sensations of erasure and overwriting. There is a palimpsest effect when one can see the earliest versions and chart the changes that have taken place in later ones, many of them by whitewashing and then writing over their predecessors. This experience would not have been available to readers of the separate versions of this text, but remains a luxury only accessible today through retrospective scholarly researches. The Islamicising tendency is the most notable overall effect in the transmission of the text, and it clearly becomes stronger in the later versions.

Early Orientalist theories of the Indian origins of Sufism have never been supported by documentation, although that lack of historical evidence hardly seems to have troubled the most ardent upholders of this view. This single historical document on hatha yoga, through its multiple translations, has indeed furnished a channel for certain Indian practices into the Islamic world. But the net result has been that the popularisation of this text has been achieved primarily by adding Islamic terms, names, and even whole chunks of texts to make the text more accessible; it has even been ascribed to the authorship of one of the great Sufi theorists, Ibn al-Arabi. Although it may have appeared that one irreducibly foreign element remained in the text, i.e., the Sanskrit mantras in Chapter IX, even these could be assimilated to the category of non-Arabic divine names or placed alongside occult talismans alleged to be in Hebrew, Syriac, or Chaldean. Thus when Mevlevi dervishes抄 out the Ottoman Turkish version of this text a hundred years ago, they thought of it as a familiar genre of Sufi text with some interesting occult applications; they did not have the slightest notion that they were chanting garbled Sanskrit mantras addressed to Hindu goddesses. That conclusion would be left to foreign scholars, who alone had the resources and the motivation to re-Indianise the text. Influence is in the eye of the beholder.