INTRODUCTION

This is the third and probably final volume of Persian Nativities, the natal installment of my Essential Medieval Astrology, a projected series of translations which will redefine the contours of traditional astrology. It contains On the Revolutions of the Years of Nativities (On Rev. Nat.) by Abū Ma’shar, one of the most famous of medieval astrologers. Later in 2010 I will begin to release horary works and new translations of introductory works such as al-Qabīsī’s Introduction to Astrology and Abū Ma’shar’s Abbreviation of the Introduction.

Please note: readers new to the vocabulary of profections, distributions, and so on, may find it best to begin with §§1-2, then to familiarize themselves with the particular techniques in §§6-14, finally returning to the delineation principles in §§3-5 and the final remarks in §§15-16.

§1: Abū Ma’shar

Abū Ma’shar Ja’far bin Muhammad al-Balkhi was born around 10:00 p.m. on August 10, 787, near Balkh, Afghanistan. He was initially an astrology skeptic, but around the age of 47 he is said to have been introduced to astrology by the famous Arab polymath, al-Kindī. From that point on, Abū Ma’shar became a prolific astrological writer and wielded great influence in both the Arabic and Latin astrological worlds. Several important works of his were translated into Latin by the mid-1100s, but many more still exist in Arabic alone. His work may even have been instrumental in introducing Aristotelian philosophy into the Latin West, courtesy of his Great Introduction to the Knowledge of the Judgments of the Stars (Gr. Intr.), a large work defending astrology as a science and presenting all aspects of astrology’s basic concepts and ways of looking at signs, houses, planets, and Lots. He died on March 8 or 9, 886.

On Rev. Nat. presents Abū Ma’shar’s version of what had by his time become a standard suite of regular predictive techniques. Most of these techniques had been described by earlier Greek-speaking astrologers, though not always in the same books or as techniques to be used together. But by

1 See Appendix E.
2 See his nativity (established as such by Pingree) in III.1 below.
3 Based on a comparison of Abū Ma’shar with ‘Umar’s Carmen and parallel texts on transits in Schmidt 1995 (p. 5), it is evident that Abū Ma’shar had access to a different edition of Dorotheus—perhaps Māshā’allāh’s text or even a Greek version. See below, §8.
the mid-7th Century (at the latest), Persian astrologers had worked these techniques into a package which fell under the general scheme of the “cycle” or “revolution” or “change-over” of the year. Nowadays we often refer to solar “returns,” but traditionally the cycle or revolution was a time to re-appraise the nativity in light of several overlapping techniques, some of which lasted more than a year and were not strictly related to the Sun’s annual return. The revolution was also a time at which certain planets were said to hand over responsibility for the native’s life to other planets, which “took turns” at “steering” the native’s life in various respects—hence it was sometimes spoken of as the “handing over” of the year.

The current translation does not represent all of On Rev. Nat. By the time Pingree wrote his 1968 critical edition of the medieval Greek version, at least four complete Arabic manuscripts were known to exist, along with an epitome by one of Abū Ma’ṣhar’s students in the 10th Century (al-Sijzī). There may be more yet. But these complete and epitomized Arabic versions have never been translated: instead, in the late 10th Century it was partially translated into Greek, and that work was the basis of a Latin version in about 1262 AD. Persian Nativities III is based on this Latin version, with references to Pingree’s Greek.

The fact that On Rev. Nat. was never fully translated, and that it only appeared in Latin in the 1260s, is significant for medieval astrology. For the majority of the key Latin translations of Perso-Arabic astrology had been completed in the 1100s, with others by people such as Salio of Padua in the early 1200s. Māshā’allāh’s own briefer but similar account of the Persian methods had indeed been translated by Hugo of Santalla in 1140 or 1141 as Book IV of the Latin Book of Aristotle, but as I mentioned in my introduction to it in Persian Nativities I, Hugo’s style was difficult and unpopular: thus an early opportunity for Western astrologers to practice the Persian methods was largely lost. So it was that influential astrologers and encyclopediasts such as Guido Bonatti did not have robust versions of this material, but instead had to rely on the thumbnail sketches found in the translations of ʿUmar al-Ṭabarī, Abū Bakr, and al-Qabīṣī.4

Modern people interested in and practicing traditional astrology still feel this lack of a complete translation, because much material pertaining to

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4 I have translated the material by ʿUmar and Abū Bakr in Persian Nativities II, and will publish my own translation of al-Qabīṣī in 2010. Abū Bakr did write his own short work on revolutions which contains much of the basic material, but it does not seem to have been popular in its Latin incarnation, and I do not know when it was originally translated.
techniques such as transits and profections is still unavailable. To give the reader a sense of what is missing from this translation, consider the following table of contents originally in Arabic, which represent the missing portions (except for the italicized IX.7, which does appear in this work):

**VI. On the Conditions of the Planets and Signs**
VI.1: On the Lord of the period
VI.2. On the periods of the signs in the nativity, and on the assigning of degrees
VI.3: On the significations of the sign of the year or of the horoscope of the revolution
VI.4: On the significations of the arrival of the year in a sign
VI.5: On the significations of the planets in the pivots of the nativity
VI.6: On the significations of the Lords of the places

**VII. On the Motion of the Planets through the Signs of the Year**
VII.1: On the significations of the planets from the signs and places
VII.2-9: On the significations of the planets and Nodes transiting the twelve places

**VIII. On the Conditions of the Planets in the Parts of the Signs**
VIII.1-7: On the significations of the planets in the domiciles of the planets
VIII.8-14: On the significations of the planets in the bounds of the planets
VIII.15: On the significations of the planets in the wells of the signs

**IX. On the Knowledge of the Conditions of Men in the Months, Days, and Hours**
IX.1: On the knowledge of the indicators of the months
IX.2: On the knowledge of the condition of the first month
IX.3: On constructing the chart of the revolution of the month
IX.4: On temperaments
IX.5: On investigation the significations of the [other] eleven months

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5 Or perhaps, the “proper interpretive mixtures” of different parts of the chart.
IX.6: On the significations of the planets with respect to stable matters

IX.7: On the indicators of the days and hours

IX.8: On things breaking up

IX.9: On the special indicators

It is easy to see that plenty of valuable material (and indeed the entire book) still needs to be translated from the Arabic.

§2: The Persian annual predictive system

On Rev. Nat. exemplifies well the suite of predictive techniques which we already saw in Book IV of Māshā’allāh’s B.A. But whereas B.A’s treatment was often compressed and brief (especially given the style of Hugo’s translation), On Rev. Nat. bursts with details and interpretive hints despite the large amount of missing material. Following are the main stages in a complete version of the annual predictive system according to On Rev. Nat.: 7

1. The Ptolemaic Ages of Man. 8
2. The profected Ascendant and its Lord (called the Lord of the Year or the sālkḥudāy).
3. The distributor and its partner. The distributor is the bound Lord of the directed Ascendant (here called the jārbakhṭār), 9 while the partner is any planet or ray encountered by the directed Ascendant.
4. The solar revolution (or solar “return”), noting especially where the calculated Ascendant of the year falls in the nativity, what its Lord is, and planets transiting in it. One also notes the prominence of the Lots in the revolutionary chart, according to both their natal and annually recalculated positions.
5. The Lords of the firdāriyyāt or “periods,” and their sub-Lords.

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6 Interrumpentibus.
7 These will all be described in some detail below.
8 Described by Ptolemy in Tēt. IV.10.
9 Māshā’allāh restricted the use of “jārbakhṭār” to the bound Lord of the directed hilāj. In III.3, Abū Ma’shar does include the directions of all of these hilājes, with their own jārbakhṭārs and partners, but he seems not to emphasize them as much as he does the Ascendant. On the other hand, perhaps Abū Ma’shar means his delineation texts for the Ascendant’s distributors and partners to be templates applicable to the other hilājes.
6. Transits at and throughout the solar revolution, particularly if a planet returns to its natal sign.

7. The Moon at and throughout the solar revolution.\(^\text{10}\)

8. Directions of points within the charts of the annual and monthly revolutions, around the entire chart for that particular period. The effects will primarily hold only for that period.


For easy reference, the following table gives the locations of the major treatments of this material across *Persian Nativities* and al-Qabisi. In the last rows I have included passages which describe the monthly and daily rulers, as well as natal directions generally (i.e., not strictly as part of the distributor-partner technique):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BA</th>
<th>TBN</th>
<th><em>Abū Bakr</em></th>
<th><em>On Rev. Nat.</em></th>
<th><em>Al-Qabisi</em></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ages of Man</td>
<td></td>
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<td>I.7-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Profection</td>
<td>IV.1-7</td>
<td>II.4-6</td>
<td>II.1-22, II.24</td>
<td>IV.8</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Distributor-partner</td>
<td>III.1.10, IV.8-13</td>
<td>II.2</td>
<td>I.17</td>
<td>III.1-8</td>
<td>IV.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Solar revolution</td>
<td>IV.14-15</td>
<td></td>
<td>I.6, II.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <em>Firdāriyyāt</em></td>
<td>III.17-25</td>
<td>I.16</td>
<td>IV.1-8</td>
<td>IV.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ingresses, returns</td>
<td>IV <em>passim</em></td>
<td>V.1-9</td>
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<td>IV.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Moon</td>
<td>IV.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>II.22, III.8, V.10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Directions in the revolution</td>
<td>II.3, II.5-6</td>
<td>II.1, III.1</td>
<td>IV.13</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Much of the rest of my Introduction will be devoted to Abū Ma’shar’s instructions and method, with occasional references to Māshā’allah. But first I would like to get a few technical points out of the way.

First of all, Abū Ma’shar goes further than BA in its treatment of the revolutionary chart and house systems. In BA there were no explicit instructions to erect a separate revolutionary chart. Rather, Māshā’allah gave the impression that the revolution should be considered as a set of annual transits, as though marked around the edges of the natal chart, with the calculated Ascendant of the year as a special point. In On Rev. Nat. we have the opposite: not only are we instructed to erect a separate chart, but in I.5 Abū Ma’shar practically suggests that natal positions should be marked around the edges of the revolutionary chart! Likewise, Māshā’allah did not explicitly suggest or seem to use any house cusps in the revolution, apart from noting the location of the calculated Ascendant of the year (or “east of the year”). Abū Ma’shar explicitly endorses the use of quadrant-style house cups. I do not know whether Abū Ma’shar himself decided upon these changes, or whether he was drawing upon older authors: only the translation of more works from Arabic will help us. But the difference between these two approaches is significant, both in the theoretical emphasis on the revolutionary chart and in the actual interpretations of houses.

Second, although Abū Ma’shar concentrates on the profection of the Ascendant, he does also profect the Lot of Fortune and other key areas of the figure, just as in Hellenistic astrology. In addition, like ‘Umar al-Tabarī but unlike Māshā’allah, Abū Ma’shar explicitly profects in 30º increments.11

Third, in III.7 he mentions briefly, but otherwise does not emphasize, the use of ascensional times in combination with the planetary years. This too is Hellenistic and can be found throughout Vettius Valens. Perhaps the missing Arabic chapters contain more information on them.

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11 IX.7.
Fourth, in I.9 Abū Ma’shar does allow the possibility of using a dead native’s chart to continue speaking about his or her children, as a “second report”; and one may use a dead native’s chart to continue speaking about his or her still-living father. One occasionally reads cryptic comments along these lines in medieval natal astrology, but rarely with such explicitness.

Fifth, *On Rev. Nat.* gives advice on how to differentiate between public and private expressions of the planets,12 as well as the source of the effects. As to their public nature, the angularity of a planet (especially if in both the nativity and the revolution) makes the effects not only stronger, but more public and evident; cadence (especially if cadent in both) diminishes evils and makes them less public, even if they are still evident to those close to the native. If the planets are in aversion to the Ascendant,13 they are more clandestine. But if the planets are in aversion and yet aspected by an angular planet, something of the effect will be public over time; if the planet in aversion is actually conjoined with the angular planet, then the native will be the one to disclose it.14

As to the sources of the effects, this is often a function of dignities:15 if the planet (usually the Lord of the Year)16 is in one of its own dignities, the effects will come from some known direction or a friend; but if in a peregrine or alien sign, from a stranger or an unexpected or unknown direction, or while in a foreign land. However, other classifications are useful: if in a watery sign, while on or near water; if in a four-footed sign, from animals.17

§3: Approaching the chart: stages and principles

In the first part of Book I, Abū Ma’shar provides a general way of approaching the chart during any given year. The first step is to determine the native’s age according to the Ptolemaic Ages of Man, and to analyze the

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12 See I.3.
13 That is, in signs which cannot aspect the rising sign (whether in the nativity or the revolution): the twelfth, eighth, sixth, and second, but with emphasis on the first three.
14 This must assume that the planet in aversion represents the native—either by being the profected Lord of the Year or the distributor.
15 See for example II.4 and *BA* IV.2.
16 In II.4 he uses the Lord of the Year in an example with the Lot of Fortune: if the Lord of the Year aspects or rules the Lot, then the Lord’s own dignities where it is will show the source, just as described here.
17 II.5.
planet ruling that age, both natally and by transit. Then, one should analyze the empirical circumstances of the native’s life, such as his social status, habits, character, capacities— which, one supposes, might simply involve asking the native. This provides us an opportunity to emphasize that astrology is not a form of psychism, but is a consulting profession akin to medicine or law. For doctors do not simply look at charts and perform tests, but they interview patients in order to obtain the context for the consultation: this allows doctors to diagnose and offer advice. Likewise, attorneys cannot simply predict how a case will unfold, or how to argue their case, until they can go beyond affidavits and documents and interview actual witnesses. Astrologers too must ask questions and obtain biographical information which may not be strictly contained in the chart, and sometimes one needs to know how a given feature of the chart has actually manifested. For instance, a chart may show someone of higher status, but status is often relative to one’s own community and not absolute. Thus a nativity might show someone actually middle-class or of average influence, but astrologically there is evidence of being very influential within one’s own middle-class group. Or, some predictive techniques make it difficult to know whether someone is sick, or dead, or just having a disastrous year: it helps to know how the native is actually doing, in order to provide a general context for delineation and prediction.

After establishing the general context, Abū Ma’shar divides the various significators into three groups, in order to help the astrologer identify how the native will be affected by each feature of the charts. The first group identifies significators of the native’s body: all of these are places receiving aspects and influences, just as matter is traditionally thought to be passive and receptive of other things, without being active on its own. These significators allegedly show such influences and therefore effects on bodily health. The second group identifies significators of the native’s soul and attitudes, and they are especially the Lords of the aforementioned places: they are understood to be more active, just as reason and spirit are active as compared to passive matter. If all or many of the significators of the body and soul are in good places or unharmed, then there will not only be a favorable concord between body and soul for that time, but they will have

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19 See II.2.
durability and a good bearing in life. The third group identifies significators pertaining to “movements and operations,” which could refer to combinations of the first two types of effects, or rather how the mind and body cooperate together to produce actions.

Although this threefold classification is intriguing and has precedents in other medieval material, I am skeptical of its use simply because the delineations given later by Abū Ma’shar often deal indiscriminately with effects on the body, soul, actions, other people, and so on. Of course, it is also possible that some of these delineations are simply archetypal, and one may use the threefold classification to distinguish the bodily from the mental effects within the range of possibilities listed.

Nevertheless, one might reasonably ask how to tell which significations matter or are more likely to manifest. For especially if we are dealing with two separate charts (the nativity and the revolution), we will have dozens of different aspects, placements, planetary conditions, and so on—how can we sort the wheat from the chaff? A close reading of On Rev. Nat. and other sources yields three basic delineation principles, which I will illustrate with examples:

1. The priority of the nativity. The nativity provides the basic pattern for life, setting the tone for general goods and evils. Any feature of the revolution shows variations, occasional and temporary trends, and intensifications or slackenings of what is already signified or possible in the nativity, not only for absolute issues such as having children or not, but for the changes in ongoing matters such as wealth and reputation. So, if a planet signifies something in both the nativity and the revolution, it will perfect that signification in a great way, and it might be inevitable and unchangeable. If however a planet signifies something in the nativity, but the indications in the revolution prevent it (or vice versa), one should go with the chart with the stronger signification, but its influence will still be moderated: for “the signification of the nativity does not become inactive on account of a revolution.”

\[\text{II.2.}\]
\[\text{II.5.}\]
\[\text{II.5.}\]
\[\text{I.3.}\]
concubine.\textsuperscript{24} Māshā’allah provides the example that if the Lord of the Year and/or the distributor are in a bad condition in the nativity but in a good one in the revolution, there will still be some good even though the nativity for the most part does not signify it.\textsuperscript{25} Let me draw this out a bit with a few examples:

- If the Ascendant of the revolution (or the sign of the prefection) falls on a \textit{natal} configuration (especially on an important one), then what it indicates will be activated in a more lasting and powerful way than if there were only a planet there \textit{by transit} at the revolution.\textsuperscript{26} So, the Ascendant on a natal configuration involving Mars will activate that Mars more strongly than if Mars only happened to be transiting on the Ascendant of the revolution.
- Likewise, if the Ascendant of the year (or the sign of the prefection) is on a natal planet, then that planet can (possibly) act more powerfully as a substitute Lord of the Ascendant of the year precisely because it is a natal planet.\textsuperscript{27}
- Remember that in a revolution there are \textit{three} Ascendants to watch: the natal Ascendant, the sign of the profected Ascendant, and the Ascendant of the year. While the sign of the prefection and the Ascendant of the year are each relevant to how the year as a whole goes, the Ascendant of the year and its Lord are \textit{partners} to the prefection because the prefection is more closely tied to the original meaning of the nativity.

This notion of the revolution as a temporary variation on the nativity also provides Abū Ma’shar a model for criticizing other approaches to the revolution—in this case, I believe he is criticizing ‘Umar al-Tabari\textsuperscript{28} and Māshā’allāh.\textsuperscript{29} Now, Abū Ma’shar recommends\textsuperscript{30} that we direct many points within and around the revolutionary chart, both in that of the annual revolution and that of monthly revolutions: for example, one should direct the

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\textsuperscript{24} I.9.
\textsuperscript{25} B.IV.14.
\textsuperscript{26} Extrapolating from many statements in II.24.
\textsuperscript{27} III.8.
\textsuperscript{28} See TBN II.
\textsuperscript{29} See B.IV.1.
\textsuperscript{30} III.1.
Ascendant of the year around the whole circle for that year, noting what planets or aspects are encountered, and converting those encounters into dates throughout the year; or, one might do the same for a monthly revolution, directing the Ascendant around the whole circle in one month. And this method of directing around the annual revolution is in fact endorsed by ʿUmar and Māshāʾallāh. However, Abū Maʾshar criticizes this approach for its incompleteness, since it treats the annual revolution as dispositive for everything in the whole year, without going down to the detail of the monthly revolutions. I have reconstructed his argument as follows:

“The nativity is a basic plan for life, establishing its basic themes and possibilities. But the natal configurations are not equally active at any given time, so we must apply predictive techniques to show when they are activated. But even important techniques like profections are still rather static variants on the nativity which never changes. Therefore, in order to track the changes in the native’s life more fully, we must use a variety of techniques such as revolutions which track changes at important symbolic times. The annual revolution is essentially a set of ongoing transits measured once a year, and we can use directions and transits within the revolutionary chart to examine trends throughout the year. However, some authorities want to use these transits and directions only at the annual revolution, as though the positions at the revolution and the directions in the annual chart will be dispositive for all actions and events throughout the year. And this makes the same mistake as someone who believes that the nativity alone can provide the timing for everything. If we only used the chart of the annual revolution, then it would be as though only one kind of thing (signified by a planet at that moment) was possible throughout that year. But that is contrary to experience. So even though directions and transits within the annual revolution are important, in order to identify the most important events and their timing, we must do similar things in smaller units of time such as in monthly revolutions.”

Abū Maʾshar’s approach requires that two interpretive elements be interrelated: the likelihood of an event, and when it will happen. For on the one hand, an event becomes more likely if it is reinforced by repetition: say, a feature in the nativity being repeated in the revolution. But on the other hand, the
reason for the event’s likelihood is the very reason for predicting when it will happen: since the revolution takes place at a certain time, the reinforcement of its likelihood in the abstract coincides with the reason for it happening at that time. So, what happens is inextricably linked to when it happens.

However, this interrelation is perhaps also a source of problems. For there is no rationale given for stopping at monthly revolutions and not going further, nor for the extent to which the planets and configurations in the smaller units of time need to mirror the larger ones. For instance, if some direction in the annual revolution is mirrored in the monthly revolution, is that enough to be certain that it will happen? Or must we go to weekly and daily rulers to be sure of its likelihood, not to mention when it will transpire? And if so, is it in every case, or only in some, and why? Perhaps experimentation will supply some guidelines.

On the other hand, although multiple charts and smaller units of time would lead to greater certainty and accuracy, it would also imply that the world is more thoroughly deterministic. For even if the world and human affairs are in fact determined down to the smallest detail, our astrological understanding of that would remain only somewhat general if we had to predict from the nativity alone. If the nativity indicated a Martial-type action or event (say, by an annual profection), there would still be great variety in the possible outcomes: in other words, we could still believe that there is great power to choose otherwise or for events to be highly varied, so long as they were still Martial. But the use of many layers of charts and techniques would imply that determinism is more widespread and deep, and would require astrological recognition of that fact. For we would not only be more certain of an event’s likelihood, not to mention its timing, but each successive chart or technique would lead to even greater descriptive detail in how it would come about, greatly restricting alternative outcomes.

2. Reinforcement by repetition, across charts and across techniques. In these methods, indications will be more powerful the more they are repeated, whether across charts or techniques. Thus, similar indications in the nativity and in the revolution will be emphasized, but so will similar indications in both the current profection and the current firdāriyyah. So for instance, a planet which signifies something in both the nativity and the revolution will produce it to the greatest extent it can; and if a planet signifies something bad in both charts—even if joined by a good aspect to a benefic—it accentuates failure
and difficulty. Likewise, a planet which is aspecting a benefic in both times will strengthen the significations of good. On the other hand, if two planets are in a bad condition but only joined in one of the times, then the evils will be lesser due to the lack of repetition. Let me provide some further examples:

- If the natal, profected, and revolutionary Ascendants are the same sign, with both a natal and transiting malefic in them, then the indications for the year as a whole are very negative, especially if the Lord of the Year and the Lord of the Ascendant of the year are in poor condition.
- Malefics transiting in the sign of the profection and also squaring the Ascendant of the year, is a very bad indication.
- If Venus is the distributor, and also happens to be the Lady of the Year (or if the profected Ascendant comes to the Lot of Marriage), then Venusian and particularly marital indications will be more certain and powerful.
- If a natal malefic harms some planet, then that harm will be especially activated when (a) the Ascendant of the year is on that natal malefic, and (b) the harmed planet happens to be the distributor or Lord of the Year at that time.
- If some planet impeded the nativity, it will be especially bad for the year if it also did any of the following: transited in the natal Ascendant, or in the Ascendant of the year, or the place of the distribution, or it were with the Lords of these. The same is true for good indications if a benefic were helping the nativity and in one of these places.

31 I.3, II.5.
32 II.4.
33 II.5.
34 II.23. This is an extreme example of duplicating significations, but underscores that these Ascendants set the tone for the whole year.
35 II.24.
36 III.6.
37 III.8.
38 An example might be a contrary-to-sect malefic in the tenth sign, squaring the natal Ascendant by degree.
39 III.8.
BOOK III: DIRECTIONS IN REVOLUTIONS

Chapter III.1: On undertaking directions in revolutions

In the revolutions of years it is good to direct many places, some according to the nativity but others according to the revolution: for each one has its own proper signification in these things, which another one does not signify. For if some planet or place signified good or evil in the nativity, then the signification will appear when the planet rules over the distribution by some circuit of years, and when it steers by [its] body or by the hurling of rays, or it applied to benevolents or malevolents.

Therefore it is good to make a direction of the five hilājes separately: for the first hilāj indicates the years of life, illness, even the quality of death; but the remaining hilājes signify soundness or illness or dangers and the remaining affections, concerning which we will make mention in what follows below.

Likewise it is good to direct all the Lots, and the particular twelfth-parts, and the twelve places, both those of the nativity and of the revolution, and also to put together the figures of the months, and to make their directions, and to take the degrees in the Ascendant of the nativity for years, but in the figure of the revolution for months or days, and indeed in the figure of the months for days or hours.2

But for knowing the place of the distribution and the distributor in the revolutions of years, you will make a direction thusly: look at the degree of the Ascendant of the nativity, to see which planet’s bound it is and how many degrees remain (of the degrees of the bound3 of the planet), and turn that bound into degrees of ascensions of the city in which he was born, and you will write down how many they were. Then, look at the following bounds to see how many degrees they are, and turn those into ascensions, and thus you will do it through individual bounds, both from the Ascendant

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1 That is, the primary hilāj found in the longevity calculations. Most traditional authors have us direct many or all of the hilājes for different purposes.
2 See TBN II.5-6.
3 Reading “bound” as singular in this sentence for clarity’s sake. But there is some precedent in Valens for calling each degree of the bound a “bound.”
and from the remaining hilājes, planets and Lots, so that thus a complete direction comes to be. But the bound to which the year arrives is the place of the distribution, and its Lord is the distributor, whether it aspects [the bound] or not.

Now, the direction of the Ascendant and of those which are in it to be through the ascensions of the city in which someone was born; but a direction of the Midheaven [and] even of the fourth and of those which are in them, comes to be through the ascensions of the right sphere. But for the other places the direction comes to be just as we have shown before in our treatises. Then, look to see how many degrees [in ascensions] are collected, and you will make each degree into one year, but 5’ into a month, and 1’ into six days, and 10” into a day, and twenty-five sixtieths [of a second] into an hour.

The Persians used to call the distributor (namely [the bound Lord] who is found from the direction of the Ascendant by ascensions) the jārbakhtār, which is translated as [meaning nothing] else than “distributor [of the time].”

But when you have directed the bounds it is good to consider both the places of the planets and the hurling of their rays. Often indeed the body or ray of a planet touches in some place, and when the direction reaches one of these, that planet itself is taken as the partner with the distributor, until another planet occurs [in a later degree], whether by body or by rays, and from this the disposition is changed from the first [partnering] planet to the next; and this [next one] even becomes the partner to the distributor, whether the encounter were by body or by rays.

However, it is good to know both the places of the Lots and of the particular twelfth-parts, and where their direction arrives. For if they arrived to benevolents or malevolents, by rays or by body, their signification appears (whether it were good or wicked).

Therefore, let us make an example to signify the direction and the distribution, [and] even of the disposition of the Lots and the particular twelfth-parts:

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4 See for instance al-Qabīsī IV.11-12, and Gansten.
5 Reading with Schmidt for tertia.
6 Abū Ma’shar may very well be following ‘Umar in using “jārbakhtār” in a wider sense; Māshā’llāh restricts the jārbakhtār to being the bound Lord of the directed hilāj of the nativity.
7 This is essentially ‘Umar’s method in TBN II.2.
8 This chart appears to be that of Abū Ma’shar’s own nativity, approximately 10:00 p.m. on August 10, 787 AD, near Balkh, Afghanistan. See Pingree (1962 p. 487, 1968 p. 7).
A certain man was born in the fourth clime in a certain city, whose latitude is 36°. But Taurus was ascending with 2° 54’, and the Moon in it by 12° 43’, Mars in Leo by 10° 29’, The Sun in Leo [by] 25° 57’, Mercury retrograde in Leo [by] 22° 7’, Venus in Libra [by] 2° 14’, Jupiter retrograde in Capricorn [by] 20° 26’, Saturn retrograde in Aquarius [by] 23° 26’, the Head of the Dragon in Virgo [by] 21° 24. But we formed the figure, and we put the locations of the planets in order in it, and their sendings of rays, even the Lots falling in them, and the rest, so that the knowledge of them would be easier.

Therefore, wanting to know the place of the distribution and the distributor (which is called the järbakhṯār), and to direct the degree of the Ascendant for knowing when it arrives at the bodies of the good ones and bad ones,

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9 This is my reconstruction of the Arabic diagram which originally accompanied the text: see Pingree 1968, pp. 127-28.
10 Reading “25” for “15,” against the text, in order to match the calculated value.
and even the rays themselves, and the particular twelfth-parts and the Lots, [I worked as follows.] I found Taurus on the Ascendant, at 2° 54', which is the bound of Venus, nor did I find the body of any planet or [its] ray from the beginning of the sign up to the degree of the Ascendant. And if I had found something of this kind, I would have said that the degree of the Ascendant is disposed by that planet, and I would have received that planet as the partner of the järbakhtär (namely, the distributor). And since I found neither the body of a planet nor a ray from the beginning of the sign up to the degree of the Ascendant, I took Venus as the sole distributor. I even found 4° 20' between the degree of the Ascendant and the Lot of Boldness or Courage, which are 3° 02' by the ascensions of the fourth clime. So, Venus disposed 3 years and 12 days according to her bound, then the degree of the Ascendant adheres to the Lot of Courage and Boldness, with 46' yet remaining to Venus from her degrees, which are 32° 12” by ascensions. And through this we said that in her distribution Venus disposed the Lot of Courage and Boldness for 6 months and 13 days, which are 3 years, 6 months, and 25 days in total.

Next then, the direction comes to the bounds of Mercury, and he receives the distributor, and disposes the Lot of Courage and Boldness for 1 year and about 8 days, and the direction reaches the sextile ray of Saturn after 4 years, 7 months, and about 3 days, and Saturn disposes the Lot of Courage and boldness through his sextile ray in the distribution of Mercury, for 1 year, 10 months, and about 17 days. And then occurs the Lot of Success and Victory, namely after 6 years and about 12 days, and through his sextile ray Saturn will dispose the two Lots (namely that of Courage and Boldness, and of Success and Victory) with the partnership of Mercury for 5 months and 29 days, which are in total 7 years and near 21 days.

11 *Animositatis*. This is the Hermetic Lot of Courage (attributed to Mars) from Paul of Alexandria Ch. 23: from Mars to the Lot of Fortune by day (and the reverse by night), projected from the Ascendant. The Lot of Fortune in this chart is at 16° 08' Leo, which would put the Lot of Courage at 8° 33' Taurus, almost exactly 1° later than the value given above. From this point on I will take Abū Ma’shar’s values for granted without correcting them.

12 This should be a square.

13 *Profectus*. Schmidt reads “advancement” for the Greek, a valid alternative in the Latin as well. This is the Hermetic Lot of Victory (attributed to Jupiter), by day from the Lot of Spirit to Jupiter (and at night the reverse), projected from the Ascendant. The Lot of Spirit is at 9° 40’ Capricorn, making the nocturnal Lot of Victory at 22° 08’ Aries. Abū Ma’shar has mistakenly turned it into the diurnal Lot, which should be at 13° 40’ Taurus but is a little off here.

14 This should be a square.
Then the Moon regards the disposition corporally from the sextile\textsuperscript{15} raying of Saturn, and she disposes the two Lots by her own body, with Mercury partnering, through 11 months and 16 days. The distribution of Mercury is perfected after 7 years, 11 months, and about 27 days. Then the distribution crosses over to Jupiter, and together with the Moon he disposes the Lot of Courage and Boldness and the Lot of Success and Victory, through 4 months and 24 days, and the direction arrives at the Lot of Prudence and Reason\textsuperscript{16} after 8 years, 4 months and about 21 days. Then through the distribution of Jupiter the Moon disposes corporally the Lot of Prudence and Reason, and the aforesaid two Lots (namely the Lot of Courage and Boldness, and the Lot of Success and Victory) through 1 year, 6 months, 8 days.

And the square aspect of Mars receives the corporal disposition of the Moon after 9 years [and] about 11 months, and Mars disposes the said three Lots through his own square ray and the distribution of Jupiter up to 14 years, 2 months and about 3 days.

Then the distribution is changed to Saturn, and Mars disposes the said three Lots through his square ray and the distribution of Saturn through 2 years, 6 months, [and] about 6 days, and he hands over the disposition to the trine ray of Jupiter for 8 months and about 8 days; then Jupiter disposes the said three Lots by his own trine ray and in the distribution of Saturn, until he hands the disposition over to the square ray of the Sun.

And the directions of the bodies and rays of the planets come to be in such a way, with the Lords of the bounds partnering. We move even the Lots and likewise the particular twelfth-parts through up to the end of the man’s life. But often, some diverse things come about in the bound of a planet, or in the disposition of a planet’s body or its ray. And if the dispositor or steerer of them were a benevolent, it signifies goods according to its nature. But if a malevolent, contrary [things]. And if the dispositors were diverse, you should make a commingling of their signification.

\textsuperscript{15} This should be a square.

\textsuperscript{16} The Hermetic Lot of Necessity (attributed to Mercury), from Mercury to the Lot of Fortune by day (and the reverse by night), projected from the Ascendant. The Lot should be at 8° 53’ Taurus.
Chapter III.2: On the signification of the good and bad planets appearing as the Lords of the bounds, and of those who partner with them, whether by body or by rays

Distributors (both benevolents and malevolents) have their own proper signification in the disposition of the distribution, and likewise those partnering with them by body and also rays, for they even have a certain power and more effective significatio than the Lord of the Year:17 for the Lord of the Year signifies accidents for a [single] time,18 but the distributor signifies the passions which are signified in diverse times, and likewise the planet which partners with it, with the sign of the profection and its Lord and the Moon testifying to it, and the rest of the things which we said before.

Therefore it is good to look at the place of the distribution, and to consider whose bound it is, and the condition of its Lord, both according to the nativity and according to the revolution, and if it is oriental or occidental, or if quick in course or retrograde, and if it were of a good condition or bad, and in what place the bound is from the Ascendant in the nativity, even in what sign in the figure of the profection, and in which one from the Ascendant of the revolution, and whose domicile or exaltation it is, or triplicity or decan, even the sign to which the distribution arrived, and which of the benevolents or malevolents will be in it according to the nativity and the revolution, and the way in which each one has strength or weakness, and which it had according to the nativity, which according to the revolution, and [whether] it signified good or bad things, and is it a benevolent or malevolent. Likewise one must consider which ones of the planets are ejecting [their] rays, and in whose ray the distributor appears, and which of the planets was in their bounds, both in the nativity and in the revolution.

The seven kinds of distribution should even be considered:

[1] Of which the first one is if the distributor were alone and a benevolent;

[2] Second, if it were alone and malevolent;

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17 Omitting inopinabilem, following Schmidt.
18 Reading tempori for termino.
[3] Third, if the distributor were malevolent and its partner a benevolent;

[4] Fourth, if the distributor were benevolent and its partner a malevolent;

[5] Fifth, if the distribution were of a benevolent and malevolent together;\(^{19}\)

[6] Sixth, if the distributor and its partner were both malevolent;

[7] Seventh, if they were both benevolent.

[1] If therefore the distributor were a benevolent alone, and well disposed in the nativity and also the revolution, and the Lord [of the Year] and the Moon [and the Lord of]\(^{20}\) the Ascendant of the year were unencumbered by the bad ones, they signify good things and manifest and famous prosperities. Moreover, if the distributor were a benevolent and it were of a bad condition according to the nativity, in a contrary place, and the Lord of the Year and the Moon and [the Lord of] the Ascendant of the revolution were impeded, it signifies contrarieties in those years. But if the place of the distribution were unfortunate according to the nativity, but fortunate according to the revolution, the good things will be moderate in that year. But if it were fortunate according to the nativity but unfortunate in the revolution, the goods will be diminished, but they will not be wholly pointless on account of the signification of the figure of the nativity being firmer and more certain than that of the figure of the revolution. And if it were partially of a bad condition, and partially a good one, the outcomes will be similar in kind. In the same way, it is good for you to consider the partners and dispositors and the rest of the significations of the planets having some relation\(^{21}\) or dignity in the year.

[2] We stated that the second type of distribution was like if the distributor is a malevolent and it alone signifies the condition of the distribution, and it is well disposed in a good place according to the nativity, or in a sign in

\(^{19}\) That is, if both benevolents and malevolents were in or aspecting the bound. See below.
\(^{20}\) Adding with Schmidt, here and below.
\(^{21}\) Reading relationem for rationem.
which it has some dignity, or in the sign of its planetary friends, or in a benevolent sign, looked at by benevolent planets, and that he would be disposed in such a way in the revolution, inspected even by benevolents, and that the Lord of the Year and the Moon and the Ascendant of the revolution and its Lord are fortunate. Therefore, all of these being disposed in such a manner, that malevolent is made just like one denying its own proper nature, because of the victory and triumph and prosperity [it signifies]. But if the distribution belonged to a malevolent, and it were of a bad condition both in the nativity and in the revolution of years in which it distributes, and a benevolent did not aspect the bound itself (whether in the nativity or in the revolution), [and] in addition to these even the Moon were impeded in the Ascendants of the revolutions of years, the Lords [of the Ascendants] being inspected by malevolents by the opposite or the square, the native will die in that distribution, namely in that year in which all [figures] of this kind will occur. Indeed as we stated, the figures of nativities are stronger than the figures of revolutions, and [have] a greater possibility for doing good (and vice versa) than they do.

[3] We have stated the third type: if the distributor were a malevolent, but the one which partnered with it by rays or by body [is] a benevolent, [the benevolent] will rescue him whose revolution it is from death, but the malevolent will subject him to dangers, and his condition will be commingled with goods and evils, and sometimes he will be afflicted, but sometimes it will be made easier and he will be expanded; sometimes also he will be sick, but sometimes he will rejoice in good health, and sometimes he will be saddened, and sometimes he will rejoice, and at some time adversities will rush in, in another he will be saved, and he will be prospering. For example, Saturn was the distributor in a certain nativity, but Venus was partnering with him in the division by rays, and both were of equal power: on account of the nature of Venus and her benevolence, he who had the revolution will find riches and be conjoined to a wife, and will beget children; but on account of Saturn’s nature his children and wife will die, and he will cry much, and he will be saddened over these things. But if Venus were stronger, it does not indicate death.

Moreover, if it were the distribution of some malevolent, and the body or ray of a benevolent partners with it, and it were inspected by some malevolent according to the nativity, and it happened [that] the sign of the

22 Omitting amisit.
profection and the Ascendant of the revolution and all of [their Lords were] impeded by a malevolent of this kind according to the nativity, and the [malevolent] were going to be restored [to its natal place] at the time of the revolution, if even the Moon and the bound in which the distribution is were found to be in contrary places or impeded in those years, and deprived of the testimony of benevolents, a figure of this kind will be very vicious, and he will either die or will approach death.

And if it were the distribution of a malevolent, nor were there the body or ray of a benevolent according to the nativity, and that malevolent or its ray happened [to be there] in the revolution, it signifies the most difficult misfortunes. But if in addition the sign of the profection and the Ascendant of the revolution and their Lords were of a bad condition, [and] were even the Moon inspected by malevolents, the danger will be greater, and he will either die in that year or he will be close to death.

[4] We have stated the fourth type: if the distributor were a benevolent, but its partner a malevolent. And if it were such a figure, it signifies the commingling of his condition, and the mediocrity of goods and evils, joy and sorrow, illness and health. But if it were the distribution of a benevolent, and a malevolent partnered with it, and the malevolent were configured with a malevolent according to the nativity, and the malevolent fell in the sign of the profection or in the Ascendant of the revolution, or their Lords were made fortunate by that benevolent, and the Moon and the bound in which the distribution is, were in benevolent places, it signifies many goods, and manifest prosperities, or the goods will be moderate on account of the partnership of the malevolent. And if it were the distribution of a benevolent, and a malevolent or the ray of a malevolent fell in it at the time of the revolution, it signifies prosperity on account of it being the distribution of a benevolent, but adversities on account of the ray of the malevolent, and especially if the distributor and their Lords and the Moon were of a bad condition and not in their own places.

[5] We have stated the fifth type: if it were the distribution of a benevolent or malevolent planet, and the distributor according to the nativity were in a place not its own, and [there were] a ray or body of a malevolent in [the bound] (from whatever aspect the ray is), nor were the bound inspected by

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23 Adding with Schmidt.
24 Reading with Schmidt.
25 Applicuerit.
26 Reading divisor for divisio.
some benevolent appearing in a strength,\textsuperscript{27} or if it is being inspected by a benevolent [but] vaguely, [and the benevolent] were in fewer degrees than the malevolent, and the malevolent occurred in signs in which the distribution is according to the nativity, at the same time impeding the distributor according to the nativity or the sign of the profection or the Ascendant of the revolution (or at two of those times),\textsuperscript{28} and it were restored in the revolution when the distribution reached the body or ray of the planet, the man will inevitably be killed.

But if it were the distribution of a benevolent or malevolent, and the body or ray of a benevolent were in it, [and] even the body and ray of a malevolent, and the Lords of those years happened to be of a good condition [and] likewise with the distributor\textsuperscript{29} and the Moon, he will incur dangers, nevertheless he will be safe; but if the good figures were weak and the contrary ones stronger, he will not be safe. And if the aforesaid figures bore themselves in such a manner and there were a malevolent in the bound (or the ray of a malevolent) at the time of the revolution, he will not be saved but he will die in an honorable manner.

[6] We have stated the sixth type: if it were the distribution of a malevolent, and another malevolent partnered in it by body or ray. And if it were such a figure, it indicates great misfortunes and the illnesses of bodies, and impediments with respect to mundane cycles,\textsuperscript{30} and it must be feared lest he die in that year in which the distributor and the Moon and the Ascendant of the revolution and its Lord, and the Lord of the Year, were of a bad condition, and especially if the sign in which the distribution was is the place of a malevolent according to the nativity or according to the revolution (namely, at the time of the revolution).

And if the distributor were a malevolent and a malevolent partnered with it (whether by body or by ray), and at the time of the revolution a benevolent sent its ray to it, the man will not be liberated from death, but he will be honorable in his illness, and his condition will be prosperous up to the time of his death. But if at the time of the revolution a malevolent hurled its own ray, he will suffer compulsion before his death, and he will be tormented in illness, and it will be difficult for those who cured him of the infirmity, and he will die a perverse death. And if the aforesaid significators were in their

\textsuperscript{27} This must mean that it is in one of its own dignities.
\textsuperscript{28} Reading with Schmidt. The Latin reads “two of their Lords.”
\textsuperscript{29} Reading \textit{divisore} with Schmidt for \textit{divisione}.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Mundanas conversiones}. Not in the Greek.