

THE ARABIC CHESS MANUSCRIPTS IN THE JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY

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CONSIDERING the great importance of medieval Muslim chess in the history of the game, the two Arabic chess manuscripts of the John Rylands Library deserve our full attention. They have been summarily reviewed three times : first, by N. Bland in his article " On the Persian Game of Chess " in *J.R.A.S.* (1852), pp. 27-31 ; then by H. J. R. Murray in his monumental work *A History of Chess* (Oxford, 1913), pp. 175-7;¹ and lastly by A. Mingana in the *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library* (Manchester, 1934), nos. 766 and 767, cols. 1015-20. However, a detailed analysis of them in the light of modern research is highly important for two reasons. First, as works of the post-classical period of Arabic literature they, summarizing the previous literature of chess, testify to the great significance of the game as a constituent of the *adab* in Arabic literature and Arab social life alike. Secondly, they contribute not a little to our knowledge of the Muslim practical game.

I

Ryl. Arabic MS. 766 : " Kitāb an-nuzhat fi 'sh-shaṭranj " by Abū Zakariyā Yaḥyā ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥakīm.

The original title of the manuscript is somewhat longer, " Nuzhat arbāb al-'uqūl fi 'sh-shaṭranj al-manqūl " (" Delight of the Intelligent in the Known (Game of) Chess "). Yet, as a note on the obverse of 1f, 2a, 1 assigned to the work the title " Kitāb an-nuzhatfi 'sh-shaṭranj " (" The Book of the Delight of Chess "), we may, for the sake of brevity, accept this shorter title for the work.

¹ As James Robson pointed out in his paper " A Chess *Maqāma* in the John Rylands Library ", *BULLETIN*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (September, 1953), p. 111, n. 4, the catalogue numbers were changed by mistake in Murray's work.

Concerning the date of its composition, Mingana¹ points out that the *terminus a quo* is 817/1414, the year of death of al-Fīrūzābādī, whose “Qāmūs” is quoted on fol. 4a, l.16, whereas the *terminus ad quem* is fixed by the reference to it of Ibn abī Ḥajala,² who died in 776/1375. Therefore, the work was probably finished between 750 and 770 A.H., i.e. in the third quarter of the eighth/fourteenth century.

The Excellence of the Game

After the author's name, Abū Zakariyā Yaḥyā ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥakīm (2b, 3), it is stated (ibid. 12-13) that his work on chess was compiled from different books. After praising the qualities inherent in the game, the author states that it had already been played by Alexander the Great (3a, 12), and quotes Qur'ān 18:83. When Sulaymān—the Biblical Solomon—lamented the loss of his son, he consoled himself with chess-playing (3b, 11. 3-4). According to the Greek scholars, Aristotle was the first man to play chess (4a, 2). After quoting a verse of Abū Nuwās (4a, 3-6), he states that, according to the “Kitāb fi'sh-shaṭranj” of al-Jāḥiẓ (4a, 12), Adam was the first man to play chess in order to console himself for the loss of his son. All these legendary statements are adduced to prove the excellence of chess.

The Derivation of the Word *shaṭranj*

The Arabic word *shaṭranj*, a derivation from Sanskrit *chatur anga* (“the four members of the army”),³ has several popular derivations in Arabic, three of which are being quoted by our author. Both al-Ghazālī in his “Durrat al-ghawwāṣ” (4a, 12) and al-Fīrūzābādī in his “Qāmūs” (4a, 16) derive it from *mushāṭara*, “halving”, the first also stating that the word *shaṭranj* has the measure *jardaḥl*, “a large camel”.⁴ Two other opinions derive the word from Persian, one from *sha-sh ranj*, “six colours”, i.e. the six kinds of chessmen, and the other

¹ Loc. cit.

² See under II.

³ For explanation see my paper “Muslim Table Games” in *The Islamic Quarterly*, iii, no. 4 (London, 1957), 241, n. 3.

⁴ But Ibn abī Ḥajala (see under II) and ad-Damīrī (cf. my paper, p. 240) prefer the spelling *shiṭranj*.

from *hasht ranj*, "eight colours" for the 8 times 8 squares of the chessboard (4b, 1-6).¹

The Invention of the Game

In the Muslim legend the invention of chess is closely interwoven with that of backgammon. Our author too states that whereas the Persians boasted of their king Ardashīr ibn Bābak having invented backgammon (*nard*), also called *nardashīr* after him, and having devised it so as to symbolize the world and its people (4b, 7-5a, 7), the inventor of chess was the Indian prince Ṣiṣṣa, who invented it for King Balhīt of India; the scholars of that age held chess as superior to backgammon (5a, 7-10). In this connection the author also relates the well-known story of why it was impossible to reward the inventor (5a, 10-5b, 4). Here, the statement of Ibn Khallikān is quoted for the size of this sum which, even if counted in grain, would be impossible to be paid (5b, 5-6a, 5). Although the author does not mention his source for this narrative, it is a wellnigh literal excerpt, except for Ibn Khallikān's statement, from ad-Damīrī's treatise on chess and backgammon.²

However, in addition to this best-known and generally adopted theory, there are also other opinions about the invention of chess. According to them, chess was invented to console a queen for the loss of her son in war (6a, 5-8); or, it was invented for a king who wanted a game similar to war (6a, 8-13). The two famous chess-writers aṣ-Ṣūlī and al-'Adlī are quoted concerning the Greek and Byzantine views on the invention of the game (6a, 13-16). The Persians, especially Khusrau, played it frequently (6a, 16-6b, 1).

The Best Time to Play Chess

Galen likened chess to fever and considered it as the best pastime for leisured people. One of his confidants earned a fortune and bought an estate by his skill in chess; chess is indeed the most agreeable *adab* and way of earning (6b, 2-6). Hippocrates recommended the game for the purpose of healing

¹ For other fanciful explanations, cf. my paper, pp. 240-1, n. 3.

² See my paper, pp. 238-40.

diarrhoea (6b, 7-13). Aḥmad al-Ḥarbānī stated that Yuḥannā ibn Māsawayh ordered chess to be played at the time of ar-Rashīd when pestilence was raging. Not all the seasons were proper for playing it, especially not spring (6b, 14-7a, 11). According to the Indian books, rainy weather is the best time for playing it (7a, 12-3). Abū Nuwās also recommended chess-playing and wine-bibbing as the best pastimes in rainy weather (7a, 14-7b, 4).

Chess was considered as a game for kings and notables, not for the common people (7b, 5-9). Mahrārīs, when asked by his pupils, gave the medical opinion that chess is “ non-essential and hot ”, otherwise it would not cause joy and dispel cares (7b, 9-12). There then follows the enumeration of various appreciative opinions on the game (7b, 13-14b, 15) by Barzūya, Ibn ‘Abbās, al-Ma’mūn, Hārūn ar-Rashīd, al-Akḥṭal, Ardashīr, Shabīb ibn Shubba, Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥaḍīb, Abū Nuwās, Di‘bul ibn ‘Alī, Abū ‘Isā, ‘Abdalmalik ibn Marwān, ash-Sha‘bī, Jarīr, Abū ‘Abdarrahmān al-Baghdādī, al-Māwardī, aṣ-Ṣūlī, Abū ‘Uthmān, Abū ‘ṣ-Ṣilt, ‘Ubādat al-Miḥnath, ‘Abdallāh ibn Mas‘ūd, Abū Yūsuf, Yaḥyā ibn Bukayr, ‘Ikrima, Ṣāliḥ ibn Ḥassān, az-Zubayr, ad-Dauraqī, Muḥammad ibn as-Sābiya al-Kalbī.

The Legal Aspects of the Game

On the much-discussed problem of the licitness or illicitness of the game, ad-Damīrī is quoted (14b, 17) as an authority on the legal aspects of chess. Indeed, the whole subchapter entitled *ishāra*, “ reference ” from the article *‘aqrab*, “ scorpion ” in his “ Kitāb ḥayāt al-ḥayawān ” (“ Book of the Lives of Animals ”), is copied literally ¹ (14b, 18-16a, 7).

The Etiquette of the Play

Much attention was paid in Muslim chess literature to the proper behaviour of the players towards each other. The author, with reference to a “ Kitāb al-futuwwa ”, gives advice as to how a confidant should behave towards a partner superior in rank (16a, 7-16b, 3).² This is followed by a few general hints as

¹ See the subchapter “ The Licitness of the Game ” in my paper, pp. 241-3.

² Cf. Murray, *op. cit.* p. 233.

to how to play the game (16b, 3-17b, 19), on the authority of Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣūlī, ar-Rāzī, al-'Adlī, Abul-Aswad ad-Du'alī, ad-Dardā'u, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, and Abū Dā'ud.

The Ranks of the Players

According to their skill, the chessplayers are divided into six classes (*ṭabaqāt*). The highest class is the '*ālīya*, "grandees", comprising very few names in each generation; the most famous were Rabrab, Jābir, Abu'n-Na'am (in the text, Abu-n-Na'āyim), al-'Adlī, and ar-Rāzī. Next come the *mutaqāribāt*, "proximes", who receive the odds of a Pawn from the grandees. The third class comprises the players who receive the odds of a Queen from the grandees. The players of the fourth class receive a Knight, those of the fifth class a Rook as odds, while those of the sixth class receive odds greater than the Queen and less than the Knight (17b, 19-18a, 7).¹

The Values of the Chessmen

Our author gives the values of the chessmen in exactly the same manner as the other authorities do (18a, 7-18).² He similarly quotes the opinions of al-'Adlī and ar-Rāzī about the considerable changes these values undergo in the end-games (*dusūt*, 18a, 18-19a, 17).

The Varieties of the Game

With reference to al-'Adlī, our author also enumerates and gives diagrams of the different varieties of the game which were usual in his time. Of these he describes (1) *ash-shaṭranj al-murabba'*, "the Square Chess", the ordinary type of the game, played on a board of 64 squares with twice 16 chessmen; (2) *ash-shaṭranj at-tāmma*, "the Complete Chess", played on a board of 100 squares with twice 20 chessmen, the additional pieces on both sides being 2 *dabbābas* (one standing between the King and the Bishop and the other between the Queen and the Bishop) and 2 Pawns in front of them: a diagram (19a) showing the ground position of the chessmen; (3) *ash-shaṭranj ar-rūmiyya*, "the Byzantine Chess", played on a circular board of 4 times 16

¹ Cf. Murray, *op. cit.* pp. 231-2.

² *Ibid.* pp. 227-8.

squares in concentric circles with twice 16 chessmen, of which the Pawns cannot queen (19a, 17-20a to the end).¹

A Collection of End-game Positions

Then there follow seventy-three diagrams with marginal analyses, showing various positions (20b, 1-40a, 5). Most of them are taken from the books of aṣ-Ṣūlī and al-‘Adlī. Seventy diagrams show end-game positions (*maṣṣūbāt*), which were the prototypes of the modern chess problem, and three showing Knight’s Tours, for the solution of the second of which Ibn al-Manī’a’s poem is quoted (39a).

An Anthology of Chess Poems

Next the manuscript contains a section entitled “Bāb az-zahr”, “A Collection of Flowers”.² It is an anthology of poems on the game of chess (40a, 5-50a, 19). The poets, named or anonymous, and the verses quoted are as follows :

Abū Zayd ibn al-‘Āmma, the Andalusian poet (40a, 6-7),
al-Ḥasan ibn Abi’n-Najl (mentioned in al-Mas‘ūdī’s work,
40a, 10-11),

Ibn ar-Rūmī, *qaṣīda* (40a, 16),
the *Kitāb al-ghasaq* (by ‘Asalān al-Miṣrī, 40b, 1),

Maḥmūd ibn al-Ḥasan (40b, 8),
an anonymous poet (40b, 13),

Abū Nuwās (40b, 18 ; 41a, 11 ; 73 b, 8),

Abū ‘Amr ar-Ramādī, *qaṣīda* in praise of the vizier ‘Abdar-
raḥmān ibn al-Mubashshir (41a, 18-19),

another *qaṣīda* (41b, 17),

Ibn Waqī’ at-Tamīmī (42b, 7. 23),

‘Aṣalān al-Miṣrī (42b, 19),

Kuthayyir ‘Azza (44a, 18),

an anonymous Damascene poet (44b, 18),

a poet from Ḥijāz, perhaps identical with al-Khālid al-Qannās
(45a, 9),

¹ Cf. Murray, op. cit. p. 276 and, for the diagrams and their solutions, pp. 282-338, especially p. 318, subchapter III.

² My reading for *Bāb azhar* in the text.

“ a man from among the physicians descended from Sind ”
(46a, 1),

an anonymous poet (49a, 6),

Zīrīn al-Ma'rūfī (49a, 11),

al-Faqīh Muḥammad's poem from the *Kitāb al-ḥadīqa*,
supposed to be the work of 'Abdallāh ibn Sharaf al-Qayra-
wānī (50a, 15),

Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad al-Miṣrī (50a, 19).

An Enumeration of the Odds

A separate section (50b, 1-51a, 8) is devoted to the proper gradation (*kḥaṭṭ*) of the odds (*kharjāt*) given by a player to his inferior opponent.¹ A list of excellent players follows (51a, 8-16) on the authority of Abul-'Abbās ibn Jurayj.

An Addition to the Treatise on the Game

The work ends with a chapter entitled “ Ḥawāshī al-kalām 'an al-la'b ” (“ Additions to the Treatise on the Game ”), containing verses for tricks on the chessboard (51b, 1-54b, 18). For poets are quoted Abul-Bazzār (52a, 15), Abul-Faḍl at-Tamīmī (52a, 19), Ibn Sūrūn (52b, 7), 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl az-Zamzamī al-Makkī (54a, 20). The appendix includes a table of computing the number of grains the inventor of the game wanted for himself in reward for his invention (53a-b).

II

Ryl. Arabic MS. 767 : “ Anmūdhaj al-qitāl fī naql al-'iwāl ”
by Ibn abī Ḥajala.

This is the original title of the work (“ Example of Warfare ² in the Movement of Chess-contenders ”) but it is more commonly quoted as “ Anmūdhaj al-qitāl fī la'b ash-shaṭranj ” (“ Examples of Warfare in the Game of Chess ”).³ Its author, Ibn abī Ḥajala, died in 776/1375 ; therefore, he was a contemporary of Ibrāhīm al-Ḥakīm, the author of Ryl. Arabic MS. 766.

The work consists of an Introduction, 8 chapters, and a Conclusion. The number of the chapters is designed to conform to the number of the rows of squares as well as the number of the

¹ Cf. Murray, op. cit. pp. 232-3.

² N. Bland, op. cit. p. 28, aptly put it in Latin, “ Exemplum rei militariae ”.

³ Thus in Murray, op. cit. p. 176.

squares in each row, so that " each *bayt* could have its *bāb* " (5a, 6-9). This is a pun on the double meaning of both the Arabic words, *bayt* meaning " house " and " square (of chessboard) ", and *bāb* meaning " door, gate " and " chapter ".

After the eulogy and preface (3b, 1-6b, 10), the Introduction (6b, 10-14b, 13) deals with (1) the stories of early Muslim players, (2) the problem of the licitness of the game, and (3) the correct spelling of the word *shaṭranj* (6b, 10-15). The only *imām* not to forbid chess was ash-Shāfi'ī (6b, 15-7a, 6). Al-Bayhaqī in the " Kitāb ash-shādhāt " of his " Sunan " mentions that Sa'īd ibn Jubayr played chess with his back turned on the board (7a, 6-12). According to ash-Shāfi'ī, Ibn Sīrīn and Hishām ibn 'Urwa also used to play chess without seeing the board (7a, 12-14). Ash-Shāfi'ī himself was a chessplayer who, according to the work of Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Shākir al-Qatān, also preferred to play with his back turned on the board (7a, 15-7b, 2). Al-Māwardī in his " Ḥāwī " alluded to the licitness of chess since it was not forbidden by either 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb or Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī. Abū Hurayra even played it with one of his pages (7b, 2-11). 'Abdallāh ibn 'Abbās and 'Abdallāh ibn Zubayr, also Companions of the Prophet, were also chessplayers (7b, 11-15). From among the Followers of the Prophet, Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab, Sa'īd ibn Jubayr, Ibn al-Ḥusayn, ash-Sha'bī, and Ibn Sīrīn are named as chessplayers by al-Māwardī in his " Ḥāwī " (7b, 15-8a, 14).¹ The author of " Al-bayān " refers to chess being called a game of war. When once 'Ā'isha, together with the Prophet Muḥammad, passed by a group of Ethiopians throwing lances, Muḥammad stopped and observed the sport from behind (8a, 14-8b, 6). This tradition is not out of place here ; it is quoted as a proof of the Prophet's liking for warlike games—consequently, he would not have disapproved of chess, had it been known to him.

As to the much-contended problem of the licitness of chess, the commentator of the " Mashāriq al-anwār " considered the game as licit on three conditions : (1) it should not be played for gambling or a stake, (2) the player should not neglect his prayers or other religious duties, (3) no improper language at play ought

¹ Cf. Murray, op. cit. pp. 191-2.

to be used—such was the opinion of the Companions as well (8b, 6-15). Already the followers of ash-Shāfi‘ī added a fourth condition also, that it should not be played in the street or public places (8b, 15-9a, 3).¹ However, the other three *imāms* were not so liberal as ash-Shāfi‘ī was. Abū Ḥanīfa considered chess as disapproved (*maḵrūh*), whereas Mālik ibn Anas and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal forbade it as illicit (*ḥarām*)² (9a, 3-9), which was also the opinion of al-Māwardī (9a, 9-9b, 9). The canon law problem of licitness allows of an interesting comparison between chess and backgammon. According to Ibn Taymiyya (9b, 9-11a, 4), backgammon and similar gambling games, like *maysir* and *qumar*, were considered as absolutely illicit by all the four *imāms*, except for a few Shāfi‘ites who permitted the game of backgammon. On the contrary, Mālik ibn Anas regarded chess as worse than backgammon because it detracts man’s mind from the prayer more than backgammon does; but the other three *imāms* regarded chess as better than backgammon. Such liberal Shāfi‘ites as permitted backgammon, set up the condition that it is not played for a stake.³ Al-Ghazālī’s opinion was the same (11b, 13-12a, 4).⁴

As to the origin of the word *shaṭranj* (12a, 4-14b, 13), al-Jawālīqī in his “Kitāb al-Mu‘arrab” (12a, 6) regarded it as a word of Persian origin. Some authorities, like al-Ḥarīrī in his “Durrat al-ghawwāṣ” (12a, 8), spell it with an *i* but the majority spell it with an *a*. There is also a divergence of opinions as to the spelling of the initial consonant of the word. Ṣalāḥaddīn aṣ-Ṣafadī (12a, 14) and others pronounce it with an *s* instead of an *sh*. As Jamāladdīn ibn Mālik (12b, 6-7) puts it, both spellings occur, *s* and *sh* as well as *i* and *a*. Aṣ-Ṣafadī (12b, 10) accepted *s* as more correct, the word being derived from the verb *saṭara*, and the infinitive of its 2nd stem, *taṣṭīr* meaning “dividing up the chessboard into squares by straight lines”; but this is an error because the word is Persian. The spelling *sa* was accepted by al-Ḥarīrī in his “Durrat al-ghawwāṣ” (13a, 5, 12), Ibn as-Sikkīt in his “Iṣlāḥ al-manṭiq” (13b, 12), and Sībawayh (13b, 8),

¹ Cf. Murray, op. cit. pp. 189-90.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. p. 188-9.

⁴ Cf. ad-Damīrī’s more detailed discussion of the subject; see my paper pp. 242.

whereas the spelling *si* is advocated by Ibn Barrī (13a, 4 ; 13b, 5). Also al-Baṭalyūsī in his “Sharḥ Adab al-kātib” (13b, 13-14) quotes Ibn al-Jinnī in favour of the spelling *si*, in order to make it conform to the metre of the word *jirdaḥl*, “a large camel”. The pertinent opinions of Ibn Hishām al-Ḥaḍrāwī in his “Sharḥ al-īdāḥ” (14a, 6) and the poet Ibn al-Labbāna (14a, 14) are also quoted. According to Sībawayh (14a, 9) there is an analogy with spelling *firzān*, “Queen (in chess)”, with an *a*. Other derivations of the word *shaṭranj* are from Persian *shash rank*, “six colours” denoting the six kinds of chessmen (14b, 8) or from Persian *shad ranj*, “the passing of cares” (14b, 13).

All the eight chapters end with a small collection of five diagrams showing (1) an opening, (2) a game won by White, (3) a game won by Black, (4) an easy draw, (5) a hard draw.¹

I. The first chapter (14b, 14-26a, 4) deals with *the invention of the game*. Four stories are related on it. The first story is narrated on the authority of Zamakhsharī² (15a, 3-15b, 8). A certain king of India of peaceful intentions procured the invention of chess in order that his fellow-monarchs might settle their disputes over the board without effusion of blood. According to the second story (15b, 9-16a, 1),³ it was invented for a certain king for the purpose of giving him the opportunity to learn military tactics. The invention was due to a certain sage⁴ who also taught the king fourteen *ta'biyāt*, “openings”. The third story (16a, 1-16b, 6) connects the invention of chess with that of backgammon. The latter game (*nard*) was invented by King Ardashīr ibn Bābak of Persia, for which reason he was also called Nardashīr.⁵ After detailing the symbolism inherent in backgammon⁶ and referring to Ibn Taymiyya's statement (16a, 15) that backgammon was better than chess, the story continues. When the Persians boasted of backgammon, the King of India commanded Ṣiṣṣa ibn Dāhir to invent a game superior to that ; thus chess was invented. The fourth—erroneously quoted as the fifth—story (16b, 6-18b, 15) attributes the invention of chess

¹ Cf. Murray, *op. cit.* p. 279.

² *Ibid.* p. 212 where erroneously b, Makhsharī is given instead of az-Zamakhsharī.

³ *Ibid.* p. 212.

⁴ His name was Ṣiṣṣa, or according to others, Ṣaṣṣa, ibn Dāhir.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 208-10.

⁶ See my paper, pp. 239-40.

to the order of a king of India that, the Persians having invented backgammon, a game symbolizing the world, a game of war should in return be invented by the Indians, symbolizing the operations of two armies on a board.¹ Then (18b, 15-22b, 10) it is related how the inventor was rewarded, with reference to Ibn Taymiyya (18a, 14). There are five systems of computing the total sum of grains : one according to Ibn Khallikān (19a, 3)² in grain, two according to the “ Kitāb muḥāḍarāt al-udabā wa muḥāḍarāt al-bulaghā ” of Abul-Mufākhir Muḥammad al-Iṣfahānī (20a, 5) in *dirhams*, the fourth according to Quṭbaddūn ibn ‘Abdalqādir in his “ Risāla ad-durrat al-mādiya ”³ (21b, 2) in years, and the fifth according to al-Akfānī (22a, 1) in distances of miles.

The first of the collection of diagrams (22b, 11-26a, 4) is the opening called *muraddad*. It appears from a reference (23b, 10) that aṣ-Ṣūlī’s work was used.

II. The second chapter (26a, 5-31a, 5) contains *the classification* of the chessplayers.⁴ Five or six classes are enumerated on the authority of al-‘Adlī (26b, 10) and aṣ-Ṣūlī (26b, 11); (1) the ‘*āliya*, “ the grandees ”, whose number never surpasses three at any time; (2) the *mutaqāribāt*, “ proximes ”, who have won two to four games in ten, when playing with a grandee from whom they receive odds, mainly the QKtP or the RP; (3) those who receive the odds of the Queen from the grandees; (4) that of the Knight, (5) that of the Rook, (6) odds greater than the Queen but less than the Knight. Al-‘Adlī said: “ He who can play *shāh rukh* or *shāh māt* cannot receive the odds of the Knight ” (26b, 10) Aṣ-Ṣūlī is also referred to as the authority on the relative values of the chessmen as calculated for their original positions (26b, 15-27a, 15).⁵ Finally, the classification of the chessmen with special stress on their symbolism (27b, 13-28b, 5) is dealt with, on the authority of ‘Abdalmalik az-Zayyāt (28a, 1) and another author (28a, 10).⁶

¹ See the literal translation of the passage in Murray, op. cit. p. 222.

² Cf. Murray, op. cit. pp. 217-18.

³ Not “ Durrat ul Muziyah ” as quoted by N. Bland, op. cit. p. 30.

⁴ Cf. Murray, op. cit. pp. 231-2.

⁵ Ibid. p. 227, in literal translation.

⁶ Ibid. pp. 221-2, in literal translation.

The first of the collection of diagrams (28b, 6-31a, 5) is the opening called *hiṣā Fir'aun*, "the Pharaoh's pebbles".

III. The third chapter (31a, 5-41b, 4) contains a long extract from aṣ-Ṣūlī (31a, 6) giving *maxims and advice* to the chessplayers, with the critical commentary of our author. Advice is given as to (1) how to post the King (31a, 11-32a, 6), (2) how to play with the Pawns (32a, 6-33a, 14), (3) the best position of the chessmen (33a, 14-34b, 9). Finally, our author, referring to his own work entitled "Kitāb sukkardān as-sultān" (36a, 14), relates several stories connected with chess.

The first of the collection of diagrams (39a, 10-41b, 4) is the opening called *mashā'ikh*.

IV. The fourth chapter ¹ (41b, 4-46b, 7) treats of the chessplayers' *adab* and the most suitable *time* of the game. A chessplayer should be carefree, well-groomed, of good memory and manners, who must not play when he is troubled by anything. He should not play with a person superior in rank to him. Ibn Māsawayh (42a, 10) adds that his speech should be elegant, he ought to be quick at answer and a truth-teller. Other physicians hold the rainy season as the most suitable for the game. Likewise, Saturday is the most appropriate day and autumn the most suitable season for playing chess. The "four temperaments" which, on Greek examples, played so prominent a part in Arab medicine also, were symbolized by the King; the Queen, the Bishop, and the Rook. Hippocrates (42b, 13) said that chess can cure illnesses for which there were no other remedies. Galen (42b, 15) related that Hippocrates had cured a certain king from his absence of mind by playing chess before him. Galen (43a, 13) himself recommended chess as the best pastime for carefree people.

The first of the collection of diagrams (43b, 2-46b, 6) is, with reference to aṣ-Ṣūlī (43b, 9), the opening called *mu'aqrab*.²

V. The fifth chapter ³ (46b, 7-43a, 1) is on the *praise and blame of chess*. It is related that India has produced three excellent things in which she is superior to other lands : the game of chess,

¹ Wrongly quoted as Chapter V in Murray, op. cit. p. 176.

² Ibid. p. 239, n. 16.

³ Wrongly quoted as Chapter VI in Murray, op. cit. p. 176.

the book "Kalīla wa Dimna", and the nine arithmetic figures. Ibn Māsawayh (47a, 10) referred to chess as the necklace of wisdom. Alexander the Great was warmly recommended by his tutor to play chess as the best of comforters. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥakīm states in his "Kitāb al-manṣūbāt" (47b, 3) that a man can only be expert in the art of war if he has learned the game of chess. The anonymous work entitled *Al-fatāwā* (47b, 5) also states that there is wisdom, refinement, computation, and order in chess. Then there follow poetical quotations (47b, 15-51a, 6) on the same subject by the following poets :

Ibn al-Mu'tazz (47b, 15),

Muḥammad ibn Sharaf al-Qayrawānī (48a, 6 ; 48b, 7 ; 49b, 11),

an anonymous poet (48b, 12),

Abū 'Ubayda (48b, 14),

ash-Sha'bī (49a, 2),

ath-Tha'ālibī, "Kitāb yatīmat ad-dahr" (49a, 12).

The first of the collection of diagrams (51a, 6-54a, 2) is the opening called *mūshaḥ*, often played by aṣ-Ṣūlī (51a, 8-9).

VI. The sixth chapter ¹ (54a, 2-70a, 3) deals with *the varieties of chess*, and contains various *exercises and puzzles*.

Of the many varieties of the game our author mentions only three : (1) *ash-shaṭranj at-tāmma*, "the Complete Chess" of 80 (8 times 10) squares ² (54a, 7-54b, 8), on which the chessmen are arranged along the oblong sides, on rows 1, 3, 6, 8 ; (2) *ash-shaṭranj al-mamdūda*, "the Oblong Chess" of 64 (4 times 16) squares (54b, 8-9), on which the chessmen are arranged across the narrow ends of the board ; ³ (3) *ash-shaṭranj ar-rūmiyya*, "the Byzantine or Circular Chess" (54b, 9-12), which is only mentioned briefly. ⁴

The collection of *mikhrāqs* (plural : *makhārīq* ⁵) contains quasi-mathematical problems or puzzles in the following groupings ; (1) the *mikhrāq* of the two Rooks (55a, 1-55b, 2) ; ⁶ (2) the

¹ Wrongly quoted as Chapter VII by Murray, op. cit. p. 176.

² Ibid. pp. 341-2, but *ash-shaṭranj at-tāmma* is a wrong name, for it denotes the chessboard of 100 (10 time 10) squares.

³ Ibid. p. 340.

⁴ Ibid. p. 342-3.

⁵ Not *mikhārīqs*, as mentioned by Murray, ibid. p. 335.

⁶ Ibid. p. 337, no. 565.

mikḥrāq of the two Knights (55b, 2-7);¹ (3) the *mikḥrāq* of seven Pawns (55b, 8-56a, 2);² (4) the *mikḥrāq* of the eight Pawns and a Knight (56a, 2-5);³ (5) the *mikḥrāq* of all the chessmen and a Knight (56a, 6-57a, 13);⁴ all the chessmen are arranged in one half of the board, and the problem is how to take all of them with a Knight posted on the right-hand Rook's square. A poem (57a, 2-13) is also quoted in praise of this *mikḥrāq*; (6) the *mikḥrāq* of the two Bishops (57a, 14-57b, 10);⁵ (7) the *mikḥrāq* of the Rook (57b, 14-58a, 12);⁶ (8) aṣ-Ṣūlī's *mikḥrāq* of the eight Pawns (58a, 13-58b, 12).⁷

A separate section (58b, 13-70a, 3) describes various tricks with chessmen. With reference to the "Ṣarḥ lāmi'at al-'ajam" of Ṣalāḥaddīn aṣ-Ṣafadī (59a, 1; 61b, 7) and a poem by Majdaddīn ibn Naṣrallāh (61b, 11; 62a, 3), first follow ten tricks with thirty chessmen arranged round the two Kings on a circular board (59b, 1-62b, 12), with ten diagrams. Then there follow four tricks, with four diagrams (63a, 1-65a, 3) with the thirty-two chessmen arranged in different groupings on the four edges of the board of 64 squares.

The enumeration of these tricks is preceded with a story related by aṣ-Ṣafadī (59a, 2-14). According to it, once a ship with Muslim and Christian passengers was in danger of sinking amidst the ocean. In order to save the ship, the casting out of some passengers was necessary. It was proposed to cast lots for this purpose: on whomsoever the lot would fall he would be cast into the sea. But the captain objected to the proposal and suggested instead that every ninth person should be cast into the sea, on which all agreed. The counting and the following execution resulted in all the Christians perishing and all the Muslims remaining alive. This is shown on Diagram 1 (59b).

The collection ends with a group of nine tricks (65a, 4-67b, 11) which are arithmetical puzzles not all connected with the game of chess, in the form of questions and answers.

The first of the five diagrams (67b, 12-70a, 3) is the opening

¹ Not *mikḥāriqs*, as mentioned by Murray, *ibid.* p. 337, no. 562.

² *Ibid.* p. 337, no. 563. ³ *Ibid.* p. 337, no. 560. ⁴ Not mentioned in Murray.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 338, no. 568, with a different arrangement of the chessmen.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 337, no. 567.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 337, no. 564.

called *watad al-'anz*, "goat-peg", so named by aṣ-Ṣūlī (67b, 15 ; 69a, 12).

VII. The seventh chapter (70a, 3-76b, 9) contains stories and anecdotes (*al-munāẓara wal-muḥāḍara*) in prose and verse. Aṣ-Ṣūlī (70a, 8), about whom ad-Dāraquṭnī and al-Marzubānī (both 70a, 11) reported, was the first authority on chess of his age, and the author of numerous works. Some people, thus Ibn Khallikān (70b, 2), attributed to him also the invention of the game, but this is an error, the inventor having been the Indian Ṣiṣṣa ibn Dāhir. Then, with reference to al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj adh-dhahab* (70b, 5), aṣ-Ṣafadī (71a, 8 ; 71b, 15), and Shamsaddīn al-Munajjim ash-Shā'ir (72a, 6), eight anecdotes (ending on 74a, 13) are narrated.

The first of the five diagrams (74a, 12-76b, 9) is the opening *al-mutalāḥiq* taken from aṣ-Ṣūlī (74b, 5 ; 76a, 2).

VIII. The eighth chapter (76b, 9-81a, 11) contains *poetical quotations on chess* by the following poets :

al-Qādī al-Fādīl (76b, 15 ; 77a, 6),

Ibn Qalānis (77a, 14),

Abul-Fadl at-Tamīmī (77a, 10),

Ibn al-Habbāriya (77b, 2),

Muḥammad ibn Sharaf al-Qayrawānī (77b, 7),

Nāṣiraddīn ibn an-Naqīb (77b, 11),

the author himself (78a, 3, 8, 13 ; 78b, 3).

The first of the five diagrams (78b, 7-81a, 11) is the opening *al-'ajā'iz*. (78b, 7-81a, 11).

The Conclusion (*khātima*) of the work is the Chess *maqāma*, (81a, 11-86b, 11) edited and translated by Professor J. Robson.¹

87a, 10-88b to the end contain a collection of cabbalistic and magic formulae, not connected with chess. They were evidently written by a later hand.

III

Ryl. Arabic MS. 791 : An Arabic Manuscript of Mixed Contents,
Fols. 234-5.

¹ Op. cit. pp. 111-13 for the author, the literary form of the *maqāma*, and the manuscript ; pp. 114-21 for the translation, and pp. 122-7 for the text of the Chess *Maqāma*.

This digest of various manuscripts (see Mingana's "Catalogue", pp. 1103-4, D) contains the fragment of a chess manuscript under the title "Faṣl fī maudū' ash-shaṭranj wa mā fīhi min al-ḥikam" ("A Section on the Subject of Chess and on Its Purport of Wisdom"). It consists of a long quotation from the poem "Urjūza sha'riyya". Its author is Ibn al-Habbāriya whose full name is Abū Ya'lā Muḥammad Ibn al-Habbāriya (died in 504/110).¹

The poem belongs to the category of the usual chess poetry praising the game. As it is a fragment, which was written, according to 235b, 13-14, in 1181/1767, it cannot be considered for its content without collating it with fuller and older manuscripts.

¹ Cf. Ch. Brockelmann, *GAL*, I, 252-3.