

Word of God, Art of Man

The Qur'an and its Creative Expressions

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8

A magic mirror in the Louvre and additional observations on the use of magic mirrors in contemporary Yemen

ANNE REGOURD

A circular 'magic mirror' in the Louvre (inv. no. MAO 161) poses an interesting conundrum, in that it is a mirror which does not reflect an image. On one side, it bears a representation of confronted dragons embossed in relief. On its obverse, which is smooth, where one would normally expect to see one's reflection, a 'magic square' with a prayer in Arabic is inscribed instead. There is evidence that medieval mirrors made in Iran and Anatolia, from as early as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, some decorated with similar Chinese-style animal designs, have been re-engraved on their polished sides. Such engravings, added perhaps two centuries after the mirrors were originally made, include elements such as Arabic prayers, suras from the Qur'an, magic squares, representations of animals or the star of Solomon. How, then, should we attempt to analyse the properties and practices of 'magic mirrors' if, indeed, it is impossible to see one's reflection in them? What are the connections between mirrors and magic in practice? Finally, is the term 'mirror' still valid in this context?

A 'magic mirror' in the Louvre

The Louvre mirror (inv. no. MAO 161), made of cast bronze, has a diameter of 12 cm and is 4 mm thick.¹ The mirror bears an image of confronted dragons embossed in relief on one side (Fig. 8.1), which we shall call our 'side A', and engravings of a 'magic square' and prayers on the other side (Fig. 8.2), hereafter referred to as 'side B'. Side A also includes a central knob, which is broken. The mirror may date to the twelfth century, with Iran as its likely provenance. It was bequeathed to the Louvre by Count François Chandon of Briailles in 1955. The collection of the Count of Briailles, which includes the mirror under discussion, appears to have been originally purchased in 1936 from a certain Dr Ziyadeh in Beirut.

- It occurs, however, a number of times in the Qur'an and sometimes appears on amulets with some of the 'Names'. J. W. [James William] Redhouse lists it as no. 35 in his 'The Most Comely Names', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 12 (1880), pp. 1-69. See also Louis Gardet, 'al-Asmā' al-ḥusnā', *ET*, vol. I, pp. 714-17.
- 36 Nabil Safwat, *Art of the Pen: Calligraphy of the 14th to 20th Centuries*, The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, vol. V (London, 1995), p. 46.
 - 37 The phrase has its basis in the Qur'an (Q. 18:39) and is included in the phrase: 'As you went into your garden why did you not say God's Will (be done), there is no power but with God'.
 - 38 British Museum, Coins & Medals, 1849, 11-21 358. Collection of C.A. Murray. See Porter, 'Amulets' (forthcoming), for illustrations of this and the next example in n. 39.
 - 39 British Museum, Coins & Medals, 1875, 5-2 155.
 - 40 British Museum, Coins & Medals, 1994, 9-15 888. Gilbertson Bequest. A similar example is in Canaan, 'The Decipherment', p. 145, Fig. 6.
 - 41 It cannot be accidental in this context that the star could also be interpreted as Solomon's seal.
 - 42 Edward W. Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, 2 vols. (The Hague and London, 1836; reprinted in 1973 as one volume), pp. 250-1.
 - 43 The names are in reverse order on the Victoria and Albert Museum fireplace. For an illustration see Tim Stanley, *Palace and Mosque: Islamic Art from the Middle East* (London, 2004), p. 107.
 - 44 Jacques Damase, ed., *La calligraphie islamique en Turquie depuis le 12^e me siècle* (Brussels, 1976), p. 46.
 - 45 Topkapı palace textile collection 24/1996. I am grateful to Hülya Tezcan for drawing this to my attention and for the use of the image.
 - 46 New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division. Arab ms 22 dated AH 1291/AD 1874, fol. 163. I am extremely grateful to Dr Christy Gruber for drawing this to my attention. In the University of Pennsylvania Library there is an Ottoman prayer book which includes the names of the 'Sleepers', in addition to magical elements such as magic squares and Solomon's seal. I am grateful to Yasmine al-Saleh for showing me her research paper on this manuscript, 'An Ottoman Prayer Book Goes to War'.
 - 47 Doris Behrens-Abouseif, 'The 'Abd al-Raḥmān Katkhuda Style in Eighteenth-century Cairo', *Annales Islamologiques* 26 (1992), p. 126.

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Side A

Side A is decorated with confronted dragons; in between them sits a tripod and an incense burner (Fig. 8.1). The dragons' heads are rendered differently from one another and it may be that each represents a specific symbol. The theme of confronted dragons, or playing among cloud-scrolls, is common in the Chinese artistic repertoire. The eight-lobed design of the mirror's rim seems to have been directly inspired by a Chinese form that was very popular in the T'ang period (seventh to the tenth centuries), which recurs, though with less frequency, as late as the fourteenth-century (Mongol) Yüan period.² However, neither the treatment of the dragons, nor the background infill, are attributable to Chinese iconographic models. Moreover, this specific type of central knob on the Louvre mirror is foreign to Chinese designs, as is the yellow metal used in its manufacture. These factors would appear to exclude the likelihood of a Chinese origin for this mirror.³

On the other hand, the symmetrical representation of the dragons and the distinct design of their tails closely resemble the iconography of a Korean bronze mirror in the Musée Guimet (inv. no. MG 14282) dated to the Koryo period (AD 918–1392).⁴ The Chinese artistic repertoire often served as a source of inspiration for Korean mirrors, including the use of multi-lobed shapes, amongst other decorative elements.⁵ However, the Louvre and the Guimet mirrors reveal differences in the treatment of the decoration in the lower areas, beneath the tripod and the two dragons. In addition to this, the floral and vegetal motifs which appear on the Guimet mirror are specifically in keeping with a Korean artistic aesthetic, while the

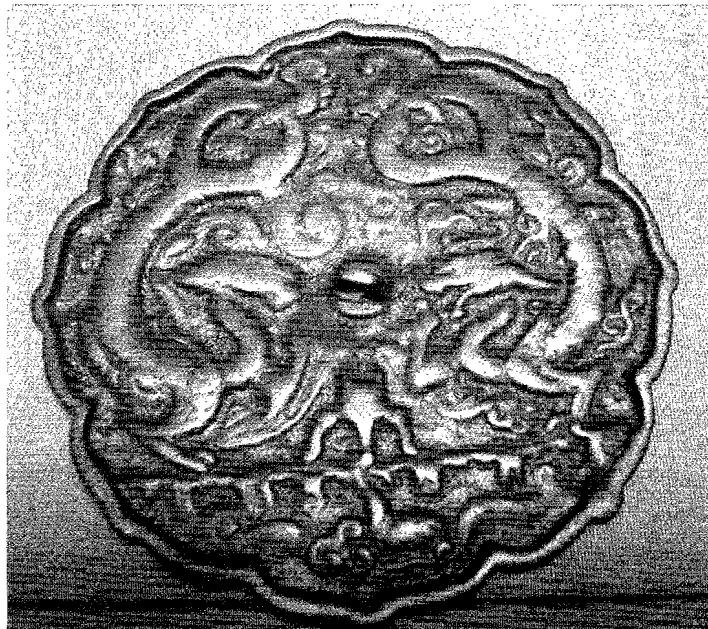


Fig. 8.1
Bronze mirror, Side A, 12th
c., Iran, 12 cm diameter.
Side A bears cast represen-
tations of facing dragons.
Department of Islamic Art,
Musée du Louvre, Paris,
MAO 161.

Fig. 8.2
Bronze mirror, Side B, 12th
c., Iran, 12 cm diameter.
Side B features later engrav-
ings of a verse square and
various Qur'anic inscrip-
tions and prayers. Depart-
ment of Islamic Art, Mus-
ée du Louvre, Paris, MAO 161.

Louvre mirror is completely devoid of any floral motifs.⁶ Nevertheless, it is above all else the broader similarities between the Louvre and Korean mirrors that are important (rather than the presence or absence of a particular motif) in allowing us to build a typology of the existing corpus of mirrors. As Pierre Cambon states: 'In the future, it would be interesting to be able to establish – using solid and more systematic criteria – the types [of mirrors] of Chinese origin and those of Korean origin, in order to trace their routes of diffusion and the centuries-long exchanges that took place, since these objects are, by definition, mobile.'⁷ The Louvre mirror encourages renewed interest in this kind of research, particularly in view of what was discovered on the mirror's 'side B'.

Side B

The square on side B of the Louvre mirror is comprised of a grid of 100 smaller squares. Because of the way the words are arranged in rows and columns, this type of square is more accurately called a 'verse square' as opposed to a 'magic square' or a 'Latin square'. According to Savage-Smith and Maddison,

The cells of such squares are filled with words but are not arranged as they would be in a Latin square. Rather, in each consecutive row one word is dropped on the right side and a new one added on the left side, so that an entire verse from the Qur'an is worked into the square, and can be read in its entirety by reading across the top row and down the left-hand column of the square. The size of such a square is determined by the length of the verse selected.⁸

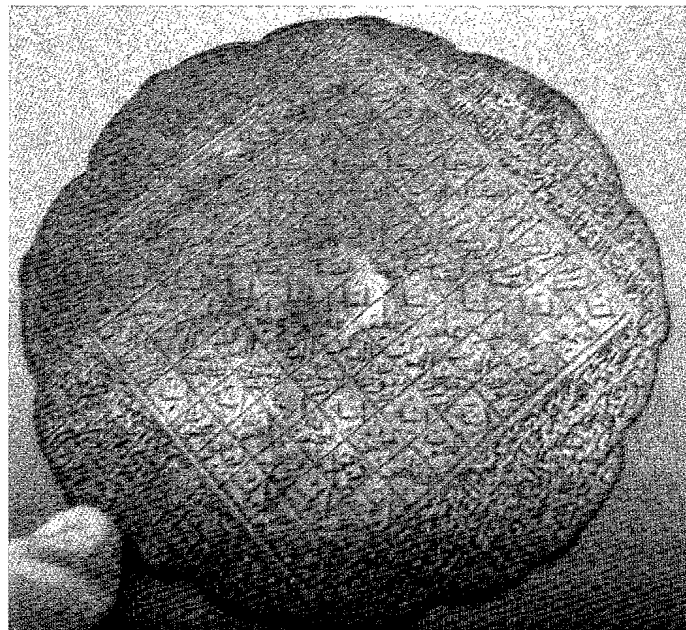


Fig. 8.2
Bronze mirror, Side B, 12th
c. Iran, 12 cm diameter.
Side B features later engrav-
ings of a verse square and
various Qur'anic inscrip-
tions and prayers. Depart-
ment of Islamic Art, Musée
du Louvre, Paris, MAO 161.

The verse square includes the *basmala* and two verses from *Sūrat al-Qalam* (Q. 68:51–52): ‘In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. The Unbelievers would almost trip thee up with their eyes when they hear the Message; and they say: “Surely he is possessed!” But it is nothing less than a message to all the worlds’ (Figs. 8.2–8.4).⁹

The remaining inscriptions around the four sides of the verse square have been deciphered as follows, clockwise beginning with the *basmala* (please note that direct quotations of Qur’anic text are highlighted in bold in the English translations).¹⁰

A (Arabic text)

1. بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ اللَّهُمَّ يَا كَاشِفَ الضَّرِّ وَالْبَلَاءِ وَيَا سَامِعَ

2. الدُّعَاءِ يَا مُجِيبَ دَعْوَةِ الْمُسْتَظْهِرِينَ وَيَا غِيَاثَ الْمُسْتَغِيثِينَ اغْنِنَا يَا مَالِكَ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ وَأَنْتَ قَادِرٌ عَلَى

3. كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ بِحَقِّ مُحَمَّدٍ الْمُصْطَفَى اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ عَالِمٌ عَلِيٌّ وَأَنْتَ قَادِرٌ عَلِيٌّ مَنْ لَا يَحْتَاجُ إِلَى

A (English translation)

Line 1: **In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.** Oh God, oh Unveiler of harm and affliction, oh Hearer

Line 2: of supplication[s], oh You who responds to the supplication of those who aspire to purity. Oh You who helps those who seek your assistance, come to our aid! Oh Lord of the Day of Judgement, You are Powerful,

Line 3: Powerful over all things, by Muhammad the chosen, Oh God, you are [the] Knower, [the] Most High, and You have power over those who do not need...

B (Arabic text)

1. اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ وَالْبَصِيرَ وَأَنْتَ أَعْلَى حَاجَاتِ تَجِيبَ بَلَاءِ نَصِيبٍ "إِنِّي مُسْنِي

2. الضَّرِّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ" وَأَنْتَ شَانِي عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ... (?)

3. قُلْ هُوَ بِحَقِّ رَحْمَنٍ (?) قُلْ وَبِحَقِّ هُوَ سَامِعٌ قُلْ وَهُوَ ... قُلْ وَهُوَ بَصِيرٌ قُلْ وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ

B (English translation)

Line 1: [...] tongue or sight. You are the greatest Provider of [our] needs, You fulfil [our prayers] without gain! “**Truly distress has seized me,**

Line 2: **but You are the most Merciful of all who show mercy**”

(Q. 21.83). ‘You have the will, the power over all things’ [...]

Line 3: Say, truly He is Merciful; Say, Truly He is [the] Hearer; Say, He is [...]; Say, He is the All-Seeing; Say, He is the Good.

C (Arabic text)

1. قدير على كل شيء...بحق كلها...

2. ... نورا كرد وليحق بني ادم ربك كرد انك كشفت (؟) ا[ل]باطل كرد بحق لا اله

3. الا الله محمد رسول الله علي ولي الله وبحق هذا ... يوم ... وبحق سبحانه وتعالى

C (English translation)

Line 1: Powerful over all things [...]truly all of them [...]

Line 2: [...send?] a light to refute [falsehood] so that mankind believes in your Lord, as [the One who] refutes [falsehood], You have unveiled [?] the false as a proof. Truly, there is no god

Line 3: but God, Muhammad is His messenger, 'Ali is the friend of God. Truly this [...]day [...] truly may He be praised and exalted.

D (Arabic text)

1. ... "هذا لسحر مبين" واذا حرم محمد رسول

2. الله صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم "وقال موسى ما جئتم به السحر" "والقى السحر" [ساجدين]

3. قالوا امنا رب العالمين "وقل جاء الحق وزهق الباطل ان الباطل كان زهوقا وننزل"

D (English translation)

Line 1: [...] [When the Truth did come to them from Us, they said] 'This is indeed evident sorcery!' (Q. 10:76), and Muhammad, the Messenger

Line 2: of God (may God bless and save him and his family) declared it illegitimate.[...]Moses said, 'What you have brought is sorcery' (Q. 10:81),¹¹ But the sorcerers fell down prostrate in adoration.

Line 3: They said, 'We believe in the Lord of the Worlds' (Q. 7:120-1). And say: 'The Truth has come, and falsehood has vanished away. For falsehood is (by its nature) bound to vanish!' We send down [...] (Q. 17:81-82).¹²

This is a Shi'i prayer. It affirms the superiority and power of truth (*al-haqq*) over falsehood (*al-bāṭil*) and associates magic with falsehood. The prayer is also an acknowledgement by magicians of the evidence of a divine power, which is that of the God of Moses; thus not that of Moses himself. Undoubtedly, this prayer asserts that the true power over all things belongs to God and not mankind. The latter theme often recurs on magical objects.¹³

C (Arabic text)

1. قدير على كل شيء...بحق كلها...

2. ... نورا كرد وليحق بني ادم ربك كرد انك كشفت (٧) ا[ل]باطل كرد بحق لا اله

3. الا الله محمد رسول الله علي ولي الله وبحق هذا ... يوم ... وبحق سبحانه وتعالى

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Line 1: Powerful over all things [...]truly all of them [...]

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Line 3: but God, Muhammad is His messenger, 'Ali is the friend of God. Truly this [...]day [...] truly may He be praised and exalted.

D (Arabic text)

1. ... "هذا لسحر مبين" واذا حرم محمد رسول

2. الله صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم "وقال موسى ما جئتم به السحر" "والقى السحر" ساجدين

3. قالوا امنا برب العالمين "وقل جاء الحق وزهق الباطل ان الباطل كان زهوقا ونزل"

D (English translation)

Line 1: [...] [When the Truth did come to them from Us, they said] 'This is indeed evident sorcery!' (Q. 10:76), and Muhammad, the Messenger

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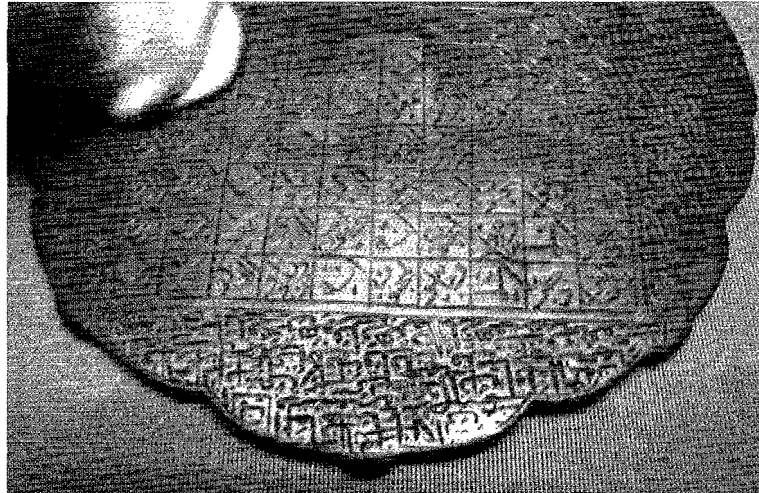


Fig. 8.3
Bronze mirror, Side B, 12th c., Iran, 12 cm diameter. Inscriptions in the verse square feature verses from *Sūrat al-Qalam* (Q. 68:51-52). Department of Islamic Art, Musée du Louvre, Paris, MAO 161.

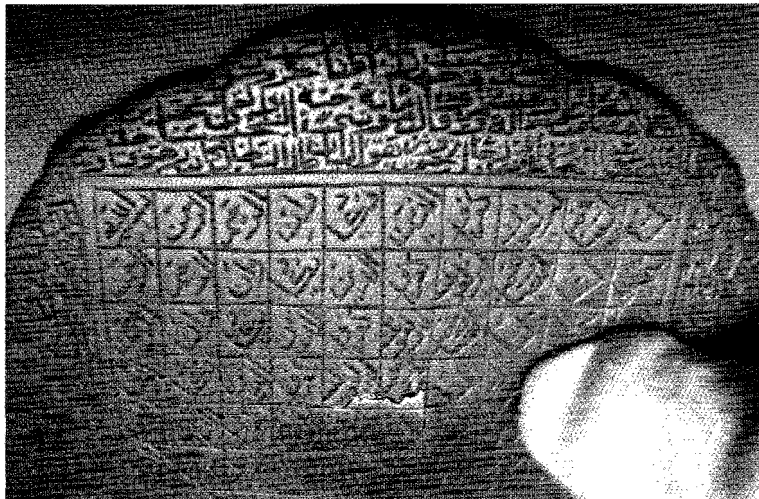


Fig. 8.4
Bronze mirror, Side B, 12th c., Iran, 12 cm diameter. Details of inscriptions around the verse square. Department of Islamic Art, Musée du Louvre, Paris, MAO 161.

The origins of the Louvre mirror

What are the origins of the Louvre mirror? One possibility is that it was originally made in Korea, with its side B being engraved at a later date in the Islamic world. Another is that the mirror could have been made by a Muslim craftsman who used a Korean model, and, therefore, the engravings on side B could have been added when the mirror was produced or at any time after that. Additionally, the mirror may actually belong to an already defined type studied by Charritat and others:

A number of circular mirrors, for which the initial inspiration came to the Muslim bronze smiths most probably from Chinese models, are kept in various public and private collections. On one side they are decorated in relief, often

with an animal design... [that is] laid out around a central knob, whereas the other [side] is neatly polished. Based on their iconography, these pieces are roughly dated from the twelfth–fourteenth centuries, and are attributed to Khurāsān, north-western Iran or Anatolia. However, in addition to their usage as personal grooming items (*objets de toilette*), some of these mirrors were also used for magical or talismanic purposes. Thus, on the polished side we may find Qur’anic verses and incantations (often engraved long after the object was produced).¹⁴

Another mirror in the Louvre collections (inv. no. AA 273), dated to the twelfth century with Iran or Anatolia as a likely provenance, is a good example of the practice described by Charritat.¹⁵ The mirror includes a Chinese-inspired animal motif on one side and a magic square surrounded by Arabic inscriptions, engraved at a later stage, on the other side.¹⁶ Based on the evidence available, it seems that on the whole, the practice of re-engraving talismanic designs and inscriptions on the flat surface of early thirteenth-century mirrors was a common practice in the Shi’i communities of fifteenth-century Iran and later.¹⁷

A particularly illustrative example of a re-engraved mirror belongs to the Cernuschi Museum. On one side, the decoration comprises ‘Chinese style’ dragons and vegetal motifs carved in relief, and an Arabic inscription dated to AH 111/AD 729–30 around its outer circumference. On the smooth side, we see ‘a zodiacal sign accompanied by a legend written in large Kufic lettering and an inscription indicating the name and the genealogy of Sharif Idris II, who reigned in Morocco from AH 177–213 (i.e. AD 793–828)’.¹⁸ Although the inscription bears the date AH 111 (AD 729–30), the style of the epigraphy is more suggestive of the fifth/eleventh century, as well as of an eastern provenance, perhaps Iran or Central Asia.¹⁹

It is very likely that Korean mirrors found their way into the Muslim world and were used as models, especially during the Koryo period, during which time Korea was annexed as a Mongol protectorate under the Yüan dynasty which ruled from Peking.²⁰ Indeed, there is another mirror from the Koryo period at the Musée Guimet said to have been found in Iran (inv. no. MG 24287).²¹ In a broader context, Chinese mirrors considered to be from the Sung period (AD 960–1276) have been found in many locations far from their place of origin including in Korea, Iran, Mongolia, Southern Russia and Vietnam.²² The Louvre mirror (inv. no. MAO 161) should certainly be added to Pierre Cambon’s corpus of evidence with regard to the circulation and diffusion of Chinese and Korean mirrors to various parts of the globe.²³

Magical, talismanic and divinatory mirrors

As we recall from a passage quoted earlier from Charritat, 'in addition to their usage as personal grooming items (*objets de toilette*), some of these mirrors were also used for magical or talismanic purposes. Thus, on the polished side we find Qur'anic verses and incantations (often engraved long after the object was produced).'²⁴ The Louvre's collection includes a number of magical or talismanic mirrors.²⁵ Generally, the smooth, reflective sides of such mirrors include magical squares, Qur'anic verses, strings of underlined letters, representations of six-pointed stars, scorpions and Chinese-inspired animals, including dragons.²⁶ Emilie Savage-Smith and Francis Maddison also cite examples of re-engraved mirrors from Iran and Anatolia, including a bronze mirror dated to the thirteenth century from the Khalili collection, and they have noted that the practice of re-engraving mirrors must have been rather common given the number of extant examples from the medieval period.²⁷

These mirrors are variously referred to as 'magical', 'talismanic' and sometimes as 'protective amulets'.²⁸ Yet, if additional engravings (i.e. magic squares, Arabic inscriptions, and so on) are added at some point onto an object that originally functioned as a personal item to view one's reflection, how should we understand this new role? What are the practical connections between mirrors and magic? Furthermore, how can we speak of a 'magic mirror' if we are unable to see our reflection on its surface? Is it more appropriate to refer to it as a 'circular talismanic plate', devoid of any handles and in which its 'mirror aspect' is no longer part of its function? If, as we have seen, the later engravings were applied to its smooth surface two centuries after the mirror's original date of manufacture (from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries), and that the handle has since disappeared, should we assume that the process of 'recycling' the object as a talismanic plate stripped the mirror of all its original functions, thus separating its function as a mirror from its magical function?²⁹

Mirrors in medieval Chinese, Indian and Iranian contexts

In contrast to the re-engraved Islamic mirrors discussed previously, magic mirrors produced in medieval China retained their reflective surfaces.³⁰ In a marital context, a cord was often tied to the ring attached to a central knob on a mirror in order to bring luck and increase the longevity and unity of a married couple.³¹ The mirror was thought to symbolise love, while the ring attached to the central knob represented the union of the couple. The object itself also played a role in symbolising the perpetuation of the family unit.³² Such a connotation prevailed from

the Western Han to the T'ang period, even though the forms and decorative elements of the mirrors changed over that time.

There was also a long-established Chinese tradition of ascribing cosmological significance to mirrors from the Han period (BC 202–AD 220) to the Five Dynasties (AD 907–60). The mirror was seen as a favoured tool in helping to establish contact with gods and celestial beings. Hence, mirrors were adorned with representations of specific gods with inscriptions describing their powers. These pious gestures would in turn ensure the longevity, prosperity and high social standing of the mirror's owner, and grant him or her protection from ill fortune.

It is interesting to note that the Korean Guimet mirror (inv. no. MG 14282) was found together with other objects buried in a tomb excavated by the Edouard Chavannes archaeological mission in 1907. There are other instances in which mirrors were placed in tombs in the Koryo period, a practice probably connected with the notion that mirrors attracted good fortune (even for the deceased) and drove away evil.³³

A divinatory practice (a type of lecanomancy), using the reflective side of mirrors was observed in India at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as recorded by an anonymous Arabic author in a treatise from the seventeenth century.³⁴ In this instance, talismanic inscriptions or magic squares are attached to the surface of, or are inscribed directly on to, the smooth reflective surface of the mirror. The object serves both a symbolic and functional role in practice. However, the relation between the practice outlined in the treatise, and extant mirrors – many of Safavid and Mughal origin – remains uncertain as 'the artefacts themselves provide no proof'.³⁵ Nevertheless, there may be a connection between the Mughal and Safavid objects as these periods witnessed a great number of cultural and artistic exchanges. Further research into these areas is required if we are to shed some light on such issues.³⁶

A bronze mirror with a diameter of 14.5 cm, attributed to fifteenth or sixteenth century Iran, is a later example of what has been described as a 'wedding mirror'.³⁷ On one side are magic engravings, while its polished side features six lines of verse around its rim. The designs on the non-reflective side bear no relation to Chinese or Korean models and the inscriptions on the polished side, which appear to date from when the mirror was first made, do not obscure the reflective side. This mirror may be interpreted in light of a modern contemporary wedding custom in Afghanistan, named the *Shiriburi*, in which the newly married couple gaze at their reflection in a polished bronze mirror.³⁸ Although the use of ethnographic sources is a valid approach to understanding the function of medieval mirrors, the evidence put forward for this particular study was too brief for conclusions to be drawn.³⁹

A mirror from the Yemeni highlands

As a comparative case-study, let us take the example of a 'magic mirror' from the Yemeni highlands, which was still in use at the end of the 1990s (Fig. 8.5). The slightly curving circular mirror, referred to in the Arabic vernacular as *mirāya* (meaning 'mirror'), is made of iron. The wooden handle was welded to it at a later date.⁴⁰ The diameter of the mirror is 13 cm (Fig. 8.6). Its smooth side (obverse) is unpolished and does not reflect one's image. Inscribed on its other side (reverse) is an inscription in 'magical writing', which is placed around two-thirds of the way from the centre in a circular format (Fig. 8.7). Housed in a mosque, together with other therapeutic or magico-therapeutic objects, the mirror has the status of a *waqf* (religious endowment). One of the mirror's trustees has suggested that the inscription in 'magical writing' is in Himyarite and is composed of 'names' (*asmā*), although he is at present unable to specify what those names are. Yet Michel Garcia, from the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) in Paris, has confirmed that the characters are not Himyarite. The text remains to be deciphered (Fig. 8.7). The Yemeni mirror is supposed to be endowed with a unique therapeutic quality that cures facial paralysis (*lawāqa* or *tashannuj*).⁴¹

The mirror is lent for three days to those in need of it and is accompanied by the following two-step prescription:

1. The family of the patient must prepare a poultice with the following ingredients:⁴² *ṣalīṭ tartar* or *khardal* (mustard oil); *waraq ḥarmal* (herbal remedy reputed to cure facial paralysis);⁴³ *Abū Fās* (a balm used to treat colds and sore throat); and twenty grains of black pepper

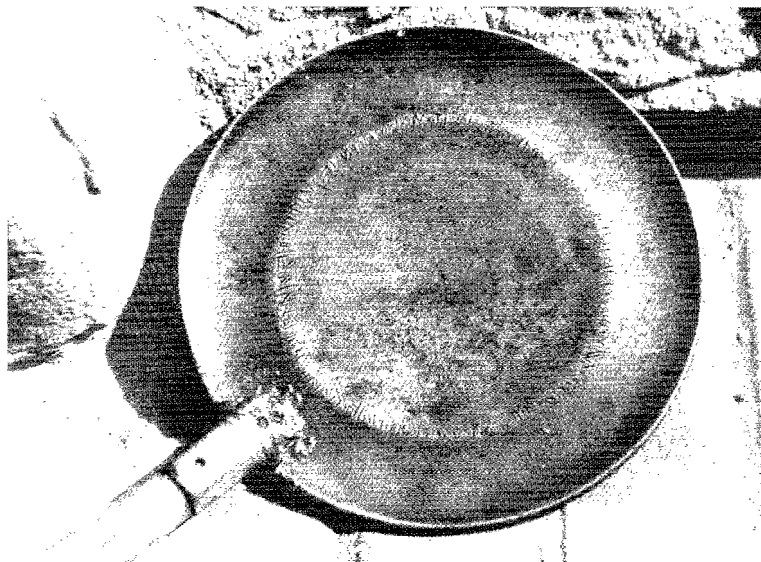
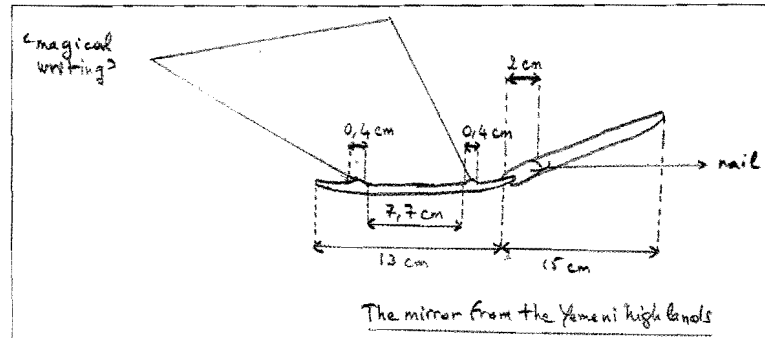


Fig. 8.5
Iron mirror, n.d., Yemeni
highlands, 13 cm diameter.

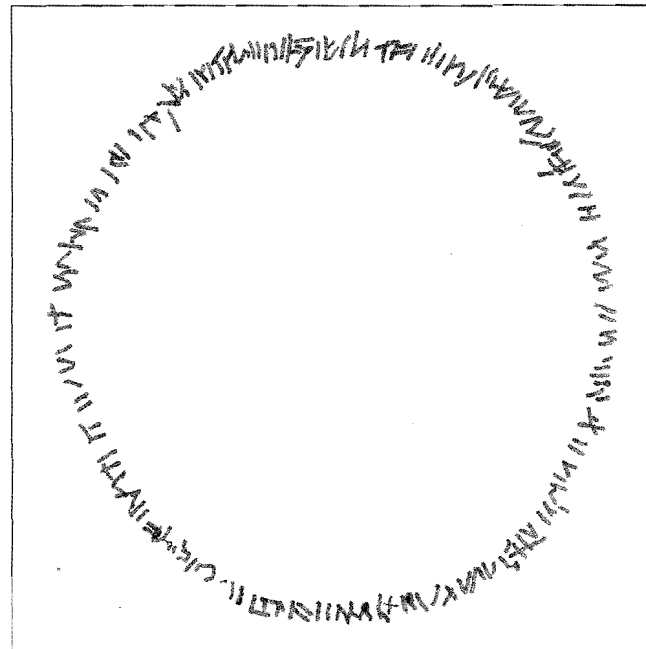
Fig. 8.6
Profile drawing of the mirror from the Yemeni highlands.



(*filfil aswad*). First, the leaves of *harmal* and the pepper are ground together, followed by the mustard oil and Abū Fās balm, which are added to the mixture and boiled. The mixture is applied to the paralysed face while it is still hot, just before the patient goes to bed. The poultice must stay on his/her face throughout the night. This process is repeated until the patient is cured, although the standard practice is to prescribe a treatment of three days, after which time, on average, the mirror is returned to the mosque.⁴⁴

2. In addition to the application of the hot poultice, the patient must gaze at the interior of the circle formed by the magical writing, three times a day: precisely before sunrise and sunset, and right in between the two, i.e. at the time of the *zuhr* prayer.⁴⁵

Fig. 8.7
Circular inscription on the Yemeni mirror.



The two most commonly cited causes of *lawāqa* in San'a' and its neighbouring regions are djinns (spirits) and the cold weather. The ingredients used in the poultice are often used, individually or in combination, to treat other ailments related to, or aggravated by, the cold weather, from influenza to rheumatism.⁴⁶

Thus, the poultice seems to function as a warmer.⁴⁷ This treatment, derived from traditional Arabic medicine (*ṭibb 'arabī*), corresponds to the Hippocratic principle of removing excess cold by introducing heat. According to a practitioner from Wadi Dahr, *lawāqa* (facial paralysis) 'originates from a contraction of the nerves (*'aṣab*) so that the muscles of the face are pulled to one side and produce a distortion on the other side. Therefore, the balance must be restored by applying heat to the contracted part of the face. There are plant compounds which act this way.' Moreover, a female practitioner of moxibustion (*makwa*) in Wadi Dahr confirmed that *lawāqa* results either from tension (*tawattur*) or from the cold. This, she explained, is treated in hospitals by using electricity to generate heat. She also pointed out that there is a *makwa* point on the face, which can serve to cure the *lawāqa*.

Should we conclude that, apart from the specific area of the face to which the heated iron is applied, that the heat itself plays a certain role? It is also possible that the vegetal plaster is a vesicant.⁴⁸ In any case, the treatment is meant to act upon the vascular system and to bring relief by dilating or decongesting the affected area. The aim is to combine warming and revulsive properties, in order to ward off any unforeseen outcomes, in accordance with *ṭibb sha'abī* (lit. folk-medicine).

However, the remedy does not only work on the physical level. Among the ingredients used, the leaves of *ḥarmal*, for example, are used in Yemen as a protection against the evil eye, particularly in a concoction (*harūm*) that is given to a mother and child during the ceremonies following birth (*wilāda*).⁴⁹ On a symbolic level, this contemporary treatment recalls the drug-based prescriptions recommended by al-Suyuti (d. AH 910/AD 1505) which are used to drive away or extinguish djinns who have possessed a human being. Al-Suyuti's treatment, known as *ḥarq al-jinn*, literally meaning 'the burning of the djinn', also involves the use of *ḥarmal* leaves.⁵⁰

The treatment of facial paralysis, as outlined in the Yemeni prescription, makes it clear that the effectiveness of the poultice relies on the use of the magic mirror to guarantee a cure. Facial paralysis, like any other form of paralysis and other nerve-related maladies (*'aṣab* or *tawattur*), all have a somatic expression (causing sudden comas), and are part of a group of maladies which people often attribute to djinns or the evil eye. According to one of our informants, the use of the Yemeni mirror supposedly drove away a djinn that possessed his sister. At Sana'a' and its

environs, there are numerous narratives which associate 'Himyarite writing' with magical contexts, often in connection with the presence of djinn or various other-worldly forces.⁵¹ The abundant use of the names of Allah (*al-Asmā' al-Husnā*), or those of angels, djinn and demons as talismans, is well-documented in this context and their effectiveness is considered very strong.⁵²

So how does the Yemeni mirror function in the process of curing the *lawāqa*? While I do not have any direct oral commentaries from my informants, the words of the French ethnographer, Jean Lambert, based on the oral literature of San'a' is pertinent to our study: 'In the parallel world where the djinn reside, which is a reflection of our own world, the only ornamental instrument that is missing is the mirror; thus, not knowing their own image, the djinn are startled when they unexpectedly discover their own reflections in the human realm.'⁵³ The 'names' on the mirror are in a 'Himyarite' language that supposedly only the djinn can comprehend. The names may be divine prophylactic names, or perhaps those of the chief djinn in charge of his troops. Moreover, the inscription is circular, like the shape of the mirror itself. The three precise moments when the patient must gaze into the mirror are moments of transition, during which time humans are reportedly vulnerable: thus, they become the privileged prey of the djinn, who may then possess them. The 'names', engraved in a circular form, and the 'medication' – placing oneself in front of the mirror three times a day for three consecutive days – may function to prevent the djinn from returning after having been frightened off the first time.

The mirror is neither a talisman nor is it used for a divinatory purpose. Rather, it is an instrument used for magico-therapeutic practice. Both the mirror (a *waqf*) and the prescription for the poultice itself is handed over by the mosque's trustee, who has no 'competence' in magic.⁵⁴ As it was made for public use, anyone may borrow the mirror, although we know nothing about its maker. The mirror belongs to a group of magico-therapeutic or therapeutic objects in the mosque, including two cups, all of which have the status of *waqf* items.⁵⁵ However, how can we be sure that the magico-therapeutic rituals involving these items have not undergone any modifications since the items became *waqf*? Would it not be necessary for the mirror to be handled by an experienced man of magic in order to bring about a cure? Is the mirror's magical power now contained in the object itself – or, more precisely, in the object and the poultice – through a modification of the practice? Unfortunately, these questions remain unanswered until further comparative data is found.

Magico-therapeutic cups

Gaston Wiet has published some interesting findings regarding a twelfth-century bronze mirror (d. 17 cm), which bears an inscription that perfectly matches the phrasing of legends inscribed on certain magico-therapeutic cups:

A (arabic text)

بسمله عملت هذه المرأة المباركة في طالع سعيد مبارك وهي إن شاء الله تتفجع للوقية
والمطلقة وسائر الأوضاع والألام تبرا بإذن الله تع وذلك في شهر سنة ثمان وأربعين
 وخمسمائة الحمد لله وحده وصلواته على سيدنا محمد وآله وصحبه
 وسلم تسليما كثيرا

A (English translation)

'In the name of God, this mirror was made during an ascendancy of auspicious and blessed forecasts and, God willing, it will be useful [in curing] the paralysis of the mouth, for the pains of childbirth, and for other forms of suffering and pain, which will be cured with the permission of God. It was made in the months of the year AH 548 [AD 1153]'

B (Arabic text)

B (English translation)

عمل في مرور الشمس ببرج الحمل سبع معادن

'Made of seven (different) metals, at the time of the passage of the sun in the sign of the Ram'.⁵⁶

It is particularly interesting to note the use of the passive voice 'This mirror was made ('*umilat* and '*umila*'), so that the maker remains anonymous, and also the use of the term *mirā'a* for 'mirror'. Like our mirror, the one deciphered by Wiet cures facial paralysis and also relieves the pains of childbirth (*al-muṭlaqa*), as well as 'any other suffering and pain'. In the case of our mirror, which is prescribed only for facial paralysis, it is possible that we are dealing with a progressive diminution of the ills that can be cured by any one instrument. For example, when experts and non-experts from the Yemeni highlands sit together to discuss the ills cured by magico-therapeutic cups, they speak only of the easing of labour. This contrasts with the list of remedies engraved on the cups, which is clearly more extensive. The Wiet mirror is dated as AH 548/AD 1153–54 and is ascribed a Mesopotamian provenance. When Wiet wrote his reference study, published between 1937 and 1954, it was then the oldest datable

mirror he recorded. It attests to the survival and continuity of magico-therapeutic practices employing 'the magic mirror' in the Muslim world, although it is not possible to determine whether customs and practices remain the same.

Conclusion

The twelfth-century Louvre mirror (inv. no. MAO 161) belongs to an established typology of circular mirrors embossed with decoration in the Chinese style, or in this case perhaps Korean style, on one side, and engravings or re-engravings comprising Qur'anic verses, prayers, magic squares and other symbols on its obverse polished side. Our study seeks to highlight the importance of determining the specifically Korean aspects of the decoration, in order to trace the diffusion of these mirrors to the Islamic world and elsewhere. Given that re-engraving twelfth- and thirteenth-century mirrors was a common practice in parts of Iran and Anatolia, we have attempted to locate instances where magical and divinatory practices involving mirrors were in use. Here, we should recall the use of mirrors to strengthen the bonds of matrimony in Chinese marriage rituals – a practice dating from the Western Han to the T'ang period.

In contrast to the mirrors dating from the medieval period, we examined a mirror inscribed with 'magical writing' from the Yemeni highlands, in which it was impossible to see one's face, and yet a patient with a facial paralysis (*lawāqa*) is required to 'gaze' into the mirror in order to drive away the harmful djinn that has caused the ailment. The three-day treatment of *lawāqa* requires the application of a warming vegetal plaster to the affected area and, indeed, the other cause of facial paralysis is the cold weather. However, one must not assume that one remedy corresponds to only one specific illness. It is also possible that the plaster performs a magical role which assists in driving away the djinn or burning them (*ḥarq al-djinn*). Thus, we should speak not of an addition but rather of an overlap of medications. Although it bears no trace of this, the mirror is part of an elaborate and complex magico-therapeutic practice and is inextricably linked to the prescription to treat the malady. The Yemeni mirror is an interesting contemporary case-study on the use of magico-therapeutic mirrors today, and, when it is considered in association with a twelfth-century magic mirror studied by Wiet, it attests to the longevity of the usage of such instruments in the Islamic world.

NOTES

- 1 This information is based on the object's registration card at the Louvre. My warmest thanks to Francis Richard and Sophie Makariou (Department of Islamic Arts, Musée du Louvre, Paris) for their particularly friendly welcome and immense help, especially for the illustrations for this paper. I would also like to thank Pierre Cambon and Catherine Delacour (Chinese Section and Korean Section, Musée Guimet, Paris) for their assistance.
- 2 For examples of mirrors from the T'ang and Sung periods with lobed edges, see Toru Nakano, Tseng Yuho Ecke and Suzan Cahill, *Mirrors from Ancient China* (Hong Kong, 1994), cat. nos. 89, 91–7, 99 (T'ang); 107, 109 (Sung), BN Chinois 1114.
- 3 Personal communication from Catherine Delacour, Curator of the Chinese Section, Musée Guimet, Paris.
- 4 The Koryo mirror, inv. no. MG 14282, is published in Pierre Cambon, *L'art coréen au Musée Guimet* (Paris, 2001), pp. 59, 188, cat. no. 16 and plate. The diameter of the Louvre mirror (12 cm) is smaller than the diameters of the Korean mirror and other Koryo mirrors. See for example Nakano *et al.*, *Mirrors*, cat. no. 112 (d. 16.5 cm).
- 5 See, for example, the mirrors in Cambon, *L'art coréen*, pp. 188 and 205, cat. nos. 16 and 35.
- 6 Cambon, *L'art coréen*, pp. 59, 188, cat. no. 16 and plate.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 188.
- 8 For an explanation of the differences between 'magic-', 'Latin-' and 'verse squares', see Emilie Savage-Smith, 'Talismanic Charts' in Francis Maddison and Emilie Savage-Smith, *Science, Tools and Magic*, Part 1: *Body and Spirit. Mapping the Universe*, The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, vol. XII, 1 (London, 1997), pp. 106–7.
- 9 In general the Qur'anic translations are taken from A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an* (Birmingham, 1946, first edn Lahore, 1934), with minor modifications.
- 10 There are no inscriptions around the edges of the Louvre mirror. In addition to the Qur'anic verses and prayers mentioned on the Louvre mirror, various other verses and prayers have been deciphered on re-engraved mirrors which are published in the studies by Maguy Charritat and Tewfik Canaan. Based on Charritat's work, these are: Q. 112 (*al-Tawhīd/al-Ikhlāṣ*); Q. 113:1, 5 (*al-Falaq*); Q. 110:1 (*al-Naṣr*); Q. 21:22 (*al-Anbiyā'*): 'If divinities, other than God, existed, heaven and earth would be corrupted. Glory to God, Lord of the Throne (*al-'arsh*), so far from their ravings!'; Q. 43:82 (*al-Zaghraf*): 'Glory to the Lord of heaven and earth! Lord of the Throne (*al-'arsh*), so far from what they imagine'. See Maguy Charritat, 'Miroir à la ronde de poissons', *Arabesques et jardins de paradis. Collections françaises d'art islamique, Musée du Louvre, Paris, 16 Octobre 1989 – 15 Janvier 1990* (Paris, 1989), p. 111. See also the list of verses inscribed on magic vessels in Canaan's study, which includes Q. 112 and Q. 113. Canaan states that Q. 112 is used more often than others; see Tewfik Canaan, 'Arabic Magic Bowls', *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 16 (1936), esp. pp. 83–5. Emilie Savage-Smith mentions a magic-medicinal bowl (Safavid Iran, 16th–17th c.), a talismanic chart (Iran, AH 1300/AD 1882–3), and also an amulet case (probably Iran, 19th c.), all of which bear Q. 68:52; Emilie Savage-Smith, 'Magic and Islam' in Francis Maddison and Emilie Savage-Smith, *Science, Tools and Magic*, Part 1, see Table 1 on pp. 61–2 and cat. nos. 31, 48 and 90.

- 11 In the engraved text the word used is *janna* and not the correct word *jā'a bi* (to bring).
- 12 The verse is incomplete. The text of side 'D' is linked to the beginning of side 'A' starting with the *basmala*, without any apparent interruption in the flow of the text.
- 13 The verse from *Sūrat Yūnus* (Q. 10:81) also appears on a magico-therapeutic cup from Syria dated AH 565/AD 1169–70; see Savage-Smith, 'Magic and Islam', Table 1 and cat. no. 25.
- 14 Charritat, 'Miroir', p. 111, my own translation.
- 15 For the Louvre mirror, inv. no. AA 273, see Charritat, 'Miroir', p. 111.
- 16 Charritat, 'Miroir', p. 111; Sophie Makariou, 'Miroir à décor zodiacal et talismanique', *L'Étrange et le merveilleux en terres d'Islam, Paris, Musée du Louvre 23 avril – 23 juillet 2001* (Paris, 2001), no. 154, pp. 228–9. The registration card of the mirror, inv. no. AA 273, says 'Iran or Anatolia'.
- 17 Emilie Savage-Smith, 'Talismanic Mirrors and Plaques' in Francis Maddison and Emilie Savage-Smith, *Science, Tools and Magic*, Part 1, pp. 124–5.
- 18 Studied by Max van Berchem, 'La coupe d'Innsbruck' in Max van Berchem and Joseph Strzygowski, eds, *Amida. Matériaux pour l'épigraphie et l'histoire musulmanes du Diyar-Bekr* (Heidelberg and Paris, 1910), pp. 126–8 and n. 5 (no registration number included); Savage-Smith, 'Talismanic Mirrors', p. 125, n. 8.
- 19 The tentative provenance and dating assigned here may be readjusted following progress in epigraphic studies and awaits further study. See van Berchem, *Amida*, p. 128.
- 20 Korea was a Mongol protectorate until 1258. Other examples of Mongol Chinese dragons in the arts appear in the catalogue by Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni, eds., *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353* (New Haven and London, 2002). However, none of them are placed on metal objects, nor interpreted in the way the Louvre mirror is.
- 21 See the mirror from the Koryo era, Guimet MG 24287 (donation of Mohsène Foroighi, 1971), said to have been found in Iran, presently on display (MG 14282).
- 22 Cambon, *L'art coréen*, p. 188, cat. no. 16.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Charritat, 'Miroir', p. 111, my translation.
- 25 For two bronze 'magic mirrors' without handles see Louvre, Salle Arts de l'Islam, room 5/case 2, objects nos. 16–20.
- 26 The mirrors which exhibit these elements were mentioned earlier. In addition, scorpions are found on the Louvre mirrors AA 274 and OA 6652. A mirror at the British Museum was examined by Kalus in connection with a series of talismans to protect against drought. See Ludvík Kalus, 'Rock-Crystal Talismans Against Drought' in Na'ama Brosh, ed., *Jewellery and Goldsmithing in the Islamic World. International Symposium, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, 1987* (Jerusalem, 1991), p. 104, figs. 6, 7a–b; see also Savage-Smith, 'Talismanic Mirrors', p. 124 and n. 8.
- 27 Savage-Smith, 'Talismanic Mirrors', p. 124, n. 8; p. 128 and cat. no. 52, n. 2. Venetia Porter mentions a twelfth-/thirteenth-century medieval Iranian mirror (BM 1963 7–18 1) on the polished side of which are inscribed the names of the 'Seven Sleepers', magic squares, 'seven signs', and other symbols; see her discussion in Chapter 7, this volume.

- 28 The square Louvre mirror, inv. no. AA 10, is described in these terms; see Makariou, 'Miroir talismanique', p. 229, no. 155.
- 29 Savage-Smith, 'Talismanic Mirrors', pp. 124–5.
- 30 Nakano *et al.*, *Mirrors*, chapter on 'The Bronze Mirror and its Uses'.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 22, Fig. 20 (Qing period).
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- 33 Cambon, *L'art coréen*, p. 188; Nakano *et al.*, *Mirrors*, p. 20.
- 34 Savage-Smith has drawn on the work by Northcote W. Thomas, *Crystal Gazing. Its History and Practice, with a Discussion of the Evidence for Telepathic Scrying* (London, 1905), p. 51, and on the Arab treatise, BNF MS 2705 (formerly 1203), folio 226a; see Savage-Smith, 'Talismanic Mirrors', p. 125, nn. 11–12. The magic mirror is a sort of eye that is supposed to provide access to 'parallel' or other sublunary worlds. See Polignac concerning the magic mirror which, according to tradition, was placed on top of the Alexandria Lighthouse 'allowing to see all the ships sailing from any shore, or, who knows, the entire sea and Constantinople' (François de Polignac, 'Al-Iskandariyya: Œil du Monde et frontière de l'inconnu', *Images et mythes de la ville médiévale, mélanges de l'École française de Rome, Moyen-Âge – Temps modernes* 96 (1984), p. 429).
- 35 Savage-Smith, 'Talismanic Mirrors', p. 125.
- 36 Savage-Smith has made an interesting suggestion regarding the significance and spread of the talismanic mirrors or plates from Iran and India (which are not inspired by Chinese decorative models). These objects are inscribed with prayers for the twelve Shi'i Imams and the five members of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (the Prophet's family), and therefore, their production could have 'evolved among the mystical orders of the Mongol and Timurid eras, which were characterised by the veneration of the Twelve Imams, ... [and] their production then spread throughout the Shi'i as well as Sufi communities in both Iran and India' (Savage-Smith, 'Talismanic Mirrors', pp. 125 and 129, cat. no. 53). Unfortunately, we know nothing about the practices in which these mirrors were used.
- 37 *Art Islamique dans les Collections Privées Libanaises. Exposition organisée par le Musée Nicolas Sursock du 31 Mai au 15 Juillet 1974* (Beirut, 1974), pp. 139–40 and Fig. 143. Many thanks to Sophie Makariou for bringing this item to my attention.
- 38 *Collections Privées Libanaises*, pp. 139–40 and Fig. 143.
- 39 The notes in this catalogue are very brief and incomplete, referring mainly to the study by Schuyler Camman, 'Ancient Symbols in Modern Afghanistan', *Ars Orientalis* 2 (1957), pp. 5–34. The focus in the catalogue is on the objects used in the *Shiriburi* and the symbolism of their motifs, rather than on the rituals involving the mirror. Melikian-Chirvani describes the magico-astrological side of a thirteenth-century mirror (*āyīne*) from Khurasan at the Victoria and Albert Museum; see Asadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World, 8th–18th Centuries*, exhibition catalogue (London, 1982), cat. no. 59. The metal mirror described by Joseph Toussaint Reinaud, *Monuments Arabes, Persans et Turcs, du Cabinet de M. le Duc de Blacas et d'Autres Cabinets*, vol. II (Paris, 1828), pl. 8, is mentioned by Rehatsek in his article on magic; see Edward Rehatsek, 'Magic', *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 14 (1878–80), pp. 209–10. It is adorned with two griffins and a circular inscription with blessings for its owner, for felicity, health and long life. This is similar to the inscription

- mentioned by Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork*, pp. 130–1, cat. no. 58. It is possible to see one's reflection in the 'magic mirror' discussed by Reinaud and Rehatsek.
- 40 See *Collections Privées Libanaises*, pp. 139–40, Fig. 143, and Savage-Smith, 'Talismanic Mirrors', pp. 124, 129–31, cat. nos. 55–56; these mirrors have similar holes where a handle was once attached.
- 41 Note that in dialect we find *awshāh lūq* (wry faces) and *lawagān* (mouth distortion), and that the *qāf* is pronounced as *gāf*. Translations by Moshe Piamenta, *Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic*, 2 vols. (Leiden and New York, 1990–91), vol. II, p. 455, under the radicals *l.w.q*.
- 42 All the ingredients are sold by the local herbalist at the souk, which is near to the mosque.
- 43 See al-Malik al-Muzaffar Yusuf b. 'Umar al-Rasuli, *al-Mu'tamad fi al-adwiya al-mufrada* (Beirut, n.d.), p. 92, who quotes Abu'l-Fadl Hasan b. Ibrahim al-Tiflisi. The passage is translated by Armin Schopen in *Traditionelle Heilmittel in Jemen* (Wiesbaden, 1983), pp. 30–1: 'es ist heilsam bei Plegie (*fālig*), Gesichtslähmung (*laqwa*), Krämpfen (*tashannuj*).' This is one of the reasons why we have identified *harmal* as *Peganum harmala*. *Harmal* (*harmil* or *harmel*) is used in the vernacular and may also refer to *Rhazya stricta* Decaisne; see Anthony G. Miller and Miranda Morris, *Plants of Dhofar. The Southern Region of Oman. Traditional, Economic and Medicinal Uses* (Oman, 1988), p. 34 and plate; J.R.I. Wood, *A Handbook of the Yemen Flora* (Kew, 1997), p. 212; and Hanne Schöning, *Schminken Düfte und Räucherwerk der Jemenitinnen. Lexikon der Substanzen, Utensilien und Techniken* (Beirut, 2002), p. 89 (Freya Stark's list).
- 44 According to Schopen, *ṣaliṭ tartar* is: 'das aus den Samen von hardal – Brassica campestris...oder Brassica napus... – gewonnene fette Öl'; and 'Das in den arabischen Pharmakopoeen aufgeführte hardal und duhn al-hardal ist die Bezeichnung für Senf resp. Senföl (Brassica nigra Koch)' (Schopen, *Traditionelle Heilmittel*, pp. 93–4, n. 2). For botanical specifications, see Anthony G. Miller and Theo A. Cope, *Flora of the Arabian Peninsula and Socotra*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1996), vol. I, p. 390, Figs. 1.6, 74, A and map 523; see also Wood, *A Handbook of the Yemen Flora*, p. 123, Fig. 1.2. For Piamenta, the *tartar ṣaliṭ* (or *ṣaliṭ tartar*) is 'mustard oil' (*Oleum sinapis pingue*) or 'sesame oil'; see Piamenta, *Yemeni Arabic*, vol. I, p. 229. For Schopen, *harmal* is '*Peganum harmala*, Harmalraute (Zygophyllaceae)'; see Schopen, *Traditionelle Heilmittel*, pp. 30–1. For botanical specifications see Wood, *Handbook*, p. 204, Fig. 4. The *harmal* does not feature at the herbalist in San'a' studied by Honda *et al.*, but at the shop of a herbalist in Damascus; see Gisho Honda, Wataru Miki, and Mitsuko Saito, *Herb Drugs and Herbalists in Syria and North Yemen* (Tokyo, 1990), pp. 3, 19–20, 26, B4, Fig. 16. Abū Fās is a type of inexpensive balm used to treat colds and sore throat and is similar to Tiger balm in its qualities and price; see Schopen *Traditionelle Heilmittel*, p. 136. The *filfil aswad*, *Piper nigrum* L., features in the San'a' herbalist studied by Honda *et al.*, *Herb Drugs*, p. 19, Y31.
- 45 My informants have never mentioned which side of the mirror the patient was meant to gaze at.
- 46 Schopen points out that *ṣaliṭ tartar* is used mainly for illnesses caused by the cold weather and to treat rheumatism; see Schopen, *Traditionelle Heilmittel*, pp. 93–4. In San'a' and its neighbouring regions, rheumatism is often referred to as '*bard*'; while explaining it, the speaker touches or massages his or her

- painful joint. In San'a', the herbalist, al-Nashiri, includes *ṣalīṭ tartar* as part of his recipe to treat head-colds (*zūkām*); see Honda *et al.*, *Herb Drugs*, p. 79, no. 9. The *ḥarmal* leaves also act on rheumatic pains, since the plant has an effect on lowering the temperature of the brain and the body (*bard al-dimāgh wa'l-badan*). See al-Rasuli, *al-Mu'tamad*, p. 92; also Ibn al-Baytar, *al-Jamī' li-quwa al-adwiya wa'l-aghḍhiya*, translated by Lucien Leclerc as *Traité des Simples par Ibn el-Beithar* (Paris, 1877), p. 425; and Schopen, *Traditionelle Heilmittel*, pp. 30–1. Schopen describes two different compounds using *Piper nigrum* L.: *ṣalīṭ tartar* and *ḥarmal* (as grains) to ease menstrual pain, aching joints, and other pain caused by rheumatism. See Schopen, *Traditionelle Heilmittel*, pp. 204–6, nos. 20, 27, 31.
- 47 For the *khardal*'s warming properties see al-Rasuli, *al-Mu'tamad*, pp. 120–1; and Ibn al-Baytar, *Traité des Simples par Ibn el-Beithar*, p. 18. Sanagustin describes a *khardal* poultice using black mustard (*brassica nigra*), for its warming properties; see Floreal Sanagustin, 'Contribution à l'étude de la matière médicale traditionnelle chez les herboristes d'Alep', *Bulletin d'études orientales* 35 (1983 [1985]), p. 80, no. 95. For black pepper's warming properties see al-Rasuli, *al-Mu'tamad*, pp. 367–9, who quotes Ibn al-Baytar and Ibn al-Jazla.
- 48 See al-Rasuli, *al-Mu'tamad*, pp. 120–1; Jacques Fleurentin and Jean-Marie Pelt, 'Repertory of Drugs and Medicinal Plants of Yemen', *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 6 (1982), pp. 93–4, no. 21, *Brassica napus* L., revulsive.
- 49 Schönig, *Schminken Düfte*, p. 92, in the Hadhramawt. See also Fleurentin and Pelt, 'Repertory', pp. 92–3, no. 52.
- 50 Jalal al-Dīn al-Suyūṭi, *al-Rahma fi'l-tibb wa'l-ḥikma* (Beirut, n.d.), pp. 241–42, 'Faṣl fi ḥarīq al-jinn bi'l-'aḡāqir wa'l-sa'ūt'. Doutté points out that in al-Suyūṭi's work 'medical substances [matières médicales] used in the treatment of epilepsy maintain a magical aspect (such as in the use of substances like incense, *ḥarmal*, *asafoetida* and so on)', although he describes this as 'a beautiful example of the transition from magic to science', that is the purely medical treatment of epilepsy. Doutté does not provide the scholarly name, nor does he give a description of *ḥarmal*. He simply describes a plant often employed in fumigations and in lotions, which enjoyed a great reputation across Northern Africa. A Hadith stating that this plant is guarded by angels is probably apocryphal. See Edmond Doutté, *Magie et religion dans l'Afrique du nord* (Paris, 1994), pp. 222–4.
- 51 Himyarite writing is also associated with buried treasure, which is often guarded by djinn incarnated as snakes. See Hayim Habshush, *Yémen*, trans. S. Naïm-Sanbar (Paris, 1995), pp. 35, 37 and 55.
- 52 See the classic account in Doutté, *Magie et religion*, p. 194ff.
- 53 Jean Lambert, 'L'œil des envieux et la clairvoyance du juste: regard social et Islam au Yémen', *Quaderni di studi arabi* 13 (1995), p. 112.
- 54 On the *waqf* status of this object see Anne Regourd, 'Deux coupes magico-thérapeutiques, biens de fondation pieuse (Nord du Yémen): transmission du savoir et efficacité' in Constant Hamès, ed., *Coran et talismans: textes et pratiques magiques en milieu musulman* (Paris, 2007), pp. 357–99.
- 55 These are discussed in Regourd, 'Deux coupes'. Reinaud reproduces a mirror whose planet iconography resembles that of the magic cups with astrological decoration described by Spoer. See Reinaud, *Monuments Arabes*, vol. II, pp. 404–20, pl. X; and Henry H. Spoer, 'Arabic Magic Bowls II: An Astrological Bowl', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*.

58 (1938), esp. pp. 375–6; see also Rehatsek, 'Magic', pp. 209–10; and Savage-Smith, 'Talismanic Mirrors', p. 124 and n. 9. Often the inscriptions on the cups include a recommendation to repeat the operation three times; see Canaan, 'Arabic Magic Bowls', pp. 105–7 and 125, cups 3–6, and see also Savage-Smith, 'Talismanic Mirrors', p. 128, cat. no. 52.

56 Gaston Wiet *et al.*, *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe*, 10 vols. (Cairo, 1937–54), vol. VIII, p. 265, no. 3160.