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THE EVIL EYE IN TODAY'S EGYPT*

1. Folk beliefs in the evil effects of certain people's eyes and glances afflicting other people in forms of illness or material losses are common in the Middle East as well as all over the world ¹. The evil effect is largely attributed to envy taken in its broadest sense. If someone becomes envious of another person's property his enviousness itself may harm the owner. It is enough to cast an admiring glance at something or express one's admiration in words, that is to *berufen* — as is said in German — someone's beauty or well-being ².

Not everybody possesses the evil eye ability. It is attributed mostly to people of blue eyes — rather uncommon in the Middle East — or people with a gap between their fore-teeth, or people with meeting eyebrows, and men without any hair on their faces ³. The eyes of certain animals, first of all those of the viper,

* This is the enlarged version of a paper read at the Congress of Polish Orientalists in Warsaw, June 1971.

¹ For the evil eye in general see S. Seligmann, *Die Zauberkraft des Augen und das Berufen*, Hamburg 1922.

² *Ibid.*, 2 sqq; H. Bächtold-Stäubli, *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*, Berlin—Leipzig 1927 I, 685 sq; R. Kriss — H. Kriss-Heinrich, *Volks Glaube im Bereich des Islam*, Wiesbaden 1962 II, 17; E. A. W. Budge, *Amulets and Talismans*, New York 1961, 354 sq.; A. Amin, *Qāmūs al-'ādāt wa-l-taqālīd wa-l-ta'ābir al-miṣriyya*, Cairo 1953, 293; E. Doutté, *Magie et religion dans l'Afrique du Nord*, Alger 1909, 320.

³ L. Einszler, *Das böse Auge*: „Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palaestina-Vereins“, XII, 1889, 200 sq.; Doutté, *op. cit.* 319; A. Hermann, *Die Welt der Fellachen*, Hamburg 1952, 26. For the Arabic names of

the gecko and the genii are also considered as dangerous⁴. There are otherwise benevolent people who can not help being harmful⁵. It is worth mentioning that the evil effect need not necessarily come from both eyes. Professor Posener said to me once that he had known a man in Cairo, one of whose eyes was always blind-fold as he did not want to exert any damaging influence on the property of his friends⁶. Especially children, animals and new property e.g. cars, houses, furniture, must be protected against evil eyes⁷.

2. Among the Arabs beliefs in evil eyes have long traditions and can be traced back to the Koran: „I fly for refuge unto the Lord of the daybreak... that he may deliver me from the mischief of the envious when he envieth“ — says *Surah* 113 where Muḥammad must have thought of the evil eye⁸. According to the *hadith* collections the Prophet himself believed in the power of the evil eye. The Egyptian Ibn Wahb, a contemporary and disciple of Malik ibn Anas, published in his *Jāmi'* — the manuscript of which dates from the middle of the IIIrd century after the Hijra and was found in Edfu — a tradition based on different authorities and also known from other sources where Muhammad declared: „the eye (i.e. evile eye) is reality (*al-'ayn ḥaqq*)“⁹. Another tradition has it that one day when Sahl ibn Hunayf, a contemporary of the Prophet, was washing stripped to waist 'Āmir ibn Rabī'a

the evil eye (*'ayn al-ḥasūd* etc.) see I. Goldziher: *Einige arabisch-Ausrufe und Formeln*, „Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes“, XVI, 1902, 140 sq; Doutté, *op. cit.* 317 sq; Seligmann, *op. cit.* 21 sqq. For the names used by different peoples see Budge *op. cit.* 363.

⁴ Doutté, *op. cit.* 318.

⁵ Goldziher, *op. cit.* 145; Seligmann, *op. cit.* 94 sq.

⁶ For stories about damages caused by the evil eye see Einszler, *op. cit.* 201 sq; E. Lane, *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, London—New York 1963, 259; A. Jaussen, *Coutumes des Arabes au pays de Moab*, Paris 1908, 377; Kriss, *op. cit.* 13. For people well-known for the evil effect of their glances see Seligmann, *op. cit.* 97 sq, 102 sq, 146; Budge, *op. cit.* 365.

⁷ Seligmann, *op. cit.* 2; Cf. also Doutté, *op. cit.* 321.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 320.

⁹ J. David-Weill, *Le Djāmi' d'Ibn Wahb*, Le Caire 1939, I (Textes et planches), 93.

caught sight of his smooth, white skin and immediately expressed his wonder saying that he has never seen such beauty. Sahl fell ill in the same moment and he did not recover until Muḥammad ordered 'Āmir to wash his body¹⁰.

As a matter of fact Muḥammad permitted the usage of spells (*ruqya*), as long as there was no polytheism in them¹¹. The *Jāmi'* includes several spells that are said to have been used by the Prophet himself. One of them goes like this: *Bismi-l-lāh arqīk wa-l-lāh yaṣfīk min kulli nafs aw 'ayn* („I use magic on you in the name of God and God will cure you of all souls or eyes“) ¹². The papyrus preserving the *Jāmi'* here is unfortunately badly corrupted, but its curiosity is greatly enhanced by the fact that it could be completed with approximate accuracy on the basis of a spell published by Aḥmed Amīn in his *Qāmūs al-'ādāt* and accordingly still in use today¹³.

The evil eye and its influence were also the recurring themes of Arabic literature in later times¹⁴. In the opinion of Ibn Ḥaldūn, contrary to every other sort of magic, the damaging effect is not necessarily the result of deliberateness, so if somebody kills by eye he is not supposed to get a death sentence¹⁵.

The fear from the force of the evil glance is reflected also in modern Egyptian proverbs, as e.g. in the following: *'ēn il-ḥabīb tibān wa lahā dalāyil wa 'ēn il-'aduw tibān wa lahā dalāyil*¹⁶ which means in an approximate translation: „what you have inside appears in your eyes however hard you try to conceal it“, or *'ēn il-'aduw tibān wa lahā zabān*¹⁷ (this proverb makes a comparison between the envy in the eye of the enemy and the sting of a scorpion), or *'ēn il-ḥasūd fihā 'ūd* that is „there is a stick in the eye

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 94 sq.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹² *Ibid.*, 105.

¹³ Amīn, *op. cit.* 127.

¹⁴ For a bibliography see e.g. A. Taymūr Bāshā, *Al-amthāl al-'āmmiyya*, Cairo 1970, 341, under number 2017.

¹⁵ D. B. MacDonald, *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam*, Beirut 1965, 119.

¹⁶ Taymūr Bāshā, *op. cit.* 341, under number 2017.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 342, under number 2020.

¹⁸ Amīn, *op. cit.* 293.



Fot. 1

of the envious". The perniciousness of the blue eyes is referred to in the following: „*ēnek iṣ-ṣāfiya mā hallat ʿāfiya*¹⁹ which means literally „your blue eye took health away“. The adjective *ṣāfiya* here alludes to the clear colour of the blue sky.

The evil eye belongs to a special territory of magic since in this case the magical force which is the active agent of every magic act works only by itself, there is no sort of rite to accompany it, which is otherwise a quite common occurrence²⁰. There are two ways of protection against the evil glance, one, trying to avoid all its attention to ourselves, two, trying to divert its attention once it has been drawn. Good examples of the first are provided by well-to-do children wearing poor and dirty clothes in order to avert others' envy or the plain façades of houses²¹. Amulets on the other hand aim at drawing the attention, catching the first glance and thus neutralizing the envious look, so that it can wander now innocuously on the object protected by the amulet²². The intention of the present paper is to examine some amulets of this kind not dealt with so far in the literature.

3. No one travelling by taxi in Cairo or the country can help noticing amulets or sometimes amulet-collections hung, painted or written on the cars. It is quite common to see *Allāh akbar* („God is most Great!“) on the rear bodyworks of the cars, or the characteristic *mā šaʿa-l-lāh* („What God wills“) inscription arranged in a tear-drop-like form with a conical upper part and a round lower part. It is also customary to write the names of the driver's children as well as the farewell words *maʿa-s-salāma* or *alfi salāma* („Good-bye“) along with the driver's name on the back window of the car. In other cases small children's shoes or stuffed, lizard-like animals are tied to the radiator grill together with horse-shoes or Allāh's name. Among the inscriptions inside the car we can read the following: *yā rabb sitrak* („Oh Lord defend

¹⁹ Taymūr Bāshā, *op. cit.* 343, under number 2027.

²⁰ Doutté, *op. cit.* 317.

²¹ Lane, *op. cit.* 58; Seligmann, *op. cit.* 24; W. S. Blackman, *Les fellahs de la Haute-Égypte*, Paris 1948, 184.

²² Lane, *op. cit.* 259; Amīn, *op. cit.* 195. For the Arabic names of the amulet (*ḥarz*, *ḥijāb* etc.) see e.g. Doutté, *op. cit.* 147; J. Marquès-Rivière, *Amulettes, talismans et pantacles*, Paris 1938, 122.

me!"), *tawakkaltu 'alā-l-lāh* („I trusted in God"), *ista'antu bi-l-lāh* („I asked for God's help"), and *bismi-l-lāhi-r-raḥmāni-r-raḥīm* („In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful"). Driving mirrors often have small Korans and rosaries with fringes attached to them. The Koran is kept in a small bag decorated with small fringes as well as with pendants consisting of, for instance, small, light, green fishes or miniature blue horse-shoes.

All these objects and inscriptions functioning as amulets are applied in order to protect the driver and his car. Among them the most interesting ones are the amulets against the evil eye. Their simplest and most common form can often be seen on the front wings of the cars on both sides. These are mostly blue eyes with an eyebrow above and with an arrow beneath pointing at its centre²³ or penetrating through it. One can come across such amulets on other vehicles like tricycles, mobile food stalls, or swing boats.

During my stay in Egypt this year I could notice some amulets that I did not see five years ago, which is quite understandable as amulets often change according to fashion, the more popular and fashionable taking the place of the old ones. The amulet in question is to be seen mostly on the rear of the cars, but it is not uncommon on dashboards either. It is in the form of a 14 cm large and 8 cm wide open hand with closed fingers, in the middle of the palm a 6 cm wide and 2,5 cm large eye with an eyebrow can be seen. Above the eye there are words in two lines that read: *il-ēn šābitnī wi rabbu-l-irš naggānī* („The eye hit me but the Lord of the Throne saved me"). At the wrist part of the hand the following 2,5 cm wide and 10 cm long inscription arranged in a semi-circle is to be read: *yā nās yā šarr kifāya qarr* which means „Oh you evil people stop talking enviously!". The colour of the palm is orange, the eye is black, the inscriptions and the outlines are red (Fig. 1). In its other version the hand and the bottom inscription are missing, instead the eye, against the background of a blue sky represented by cloud-like white outlines, is hit by a winged arrow from below, while three red tears drop from the

eye (Fig. 2). Both left and right eyes are represented in these variants and they usually occur in pairs protecting the cars from both eyes.



Fot. 2

Such amulets are remarkably frequent on taxis parked at the Northern side of the Cairo Railway Station, especially on those which come from the Delta of the Nile. Incidentally here I met the amulet-seller who was also the manufacturer of the amulets. He told me that he had been dealing in these amulets for about two years and that he produced them in transfer forms. In drawing the amulets he followed the orders of taxi drivers.

²³ For its picture see L. Kákósy, *Varázslás az ókori Egyiptomban* [*Sorcery in Ancient Egypt*], Budapest 1969, Picture 22.

4. The phrase *yā nās yā šarr kifāya qarr* which may be regarded as a sort of charm, a *ruqya*, is nothing but an ordinary colloquial sentence formed with the prohibitive *kifāya qarr*, a construction which is widely used in Egyptian colloquial Arabic. *Qarr* (pronounced 'arr) is a special colloquialism for which there is no exact equivalent in literary Arabic. Most probably it comes from a secondary meaning of the literary *qarra* used in the following sense: *qarra-l-kalām fī udnihi* that is „he poured forth the speech into his ear“ or „he spoke secretly into his ear“²⁴. The word can be found in the Syrian-Lebanese colloquial as well with the meaning *grommeler*, *radoter* and *coasser*²⁵. Its meaning can be paraphrased in Egyptian colloquial by *al-ḥasad bi-l-kalām* that is „envy expressed in words“²⁶. This is what other occurrences in several idioms and proverbs make think of. *Qarr 'alē lihadd mā ḥarab bētu* that is „He was so envious of him that he destroyed his house“ — has one of the proverbs. If a well-to-do person falls ill, he is told *qarr 'alēk in-nās* that is „People envied you“²⁷. The pagan Arabs, too, attributed such destroying influence to the word: they regarded the *ḥijā'* (satire) recited by the poets before the armed collision as an important part of the actual fighting, in their opinion the pronounced word hit the man as a flying arrow²⁸.

The magic force of the words is increased by the application of similar terminations, rhymes, by the use of words of similar shape except for one letter²⁹ as e.g. in the case of *qarr-šarr*.

The hand raised against the evil eye and depicted in a defensive gesture represents an example of the imitative magic. The hand stretched out is a natural way of defence against the evil

²⁴ Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, London 1885, I/7, 2499.

²⁵ Cl. Denizeau, *Dictionnaire des parlers arabes de Syrie, Liban et Palestine*, Paris 1960, 409.

²⁶ Amin, *op. cit.* 319.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 319.

²⁸ Goldziher, *Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie*, I, Leiden 1896, 26 sqq., 30 sq.; Doutté, *op. cit.* 103.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 104. For rhymed spells see e.g. al-Suyūṭī, *al-Rahma fi-l-tibb wa-l-hikma*, Cairo, 73 sqq; Lane, *The Manners and Customs of modern Egyptians*, 511, n. 1.

glance and its influence is hoped to be destroyed through representation alone³⁰. This hand, called *ḥamsa u-ḥmēsa*³¹ (literally: five and little five) in Arabic — a term to be applied to a series of amulets which have some connection with number 5, i.e. the number of the fingers — is one of the best known of the amulets against evil eyes.

Our hand amulet with an eye in its palm is, in fact, a drawing representation of a curse widely used in all Arabic countries in one form or another. *Ḥamsa fī 'ēn il-'aduw* („Five into the eye of the enemy“), *ḥamsa fī 'ēnek* („Five in your eye“), *ḥamsa fī wujh il-'adā'* („Five into the face of the enemies“) are the different forms against envy, and they are often shortened to *ḥamsa* („five“)³². As a matter of fact, the amulet linking the inscriptions with the figure of the hand combines on oral and a manual rite and the point in having their representation in a drawing form is probably to provide permanent protection³⁴.

It is interesting that hands and eyes occur simultaneously because hands with spread fingers generally appear individually either formed of tin-plate or painted with red paint on food-sellers' stalls or shopwindows³⁵. House walls, doors, too, bear rusty coloured hand-prints sometimes³⁶. These are painted on with hands dipped into the blood of sheep killed at Great Bairam³⁷. In connection with this a similar practice I myself experienced in Deir el-'Adrā in Upper-Egypt is worth mentioning. The Copt inhabitants of the village, when killing a sheep as a sacrifice or to give it to the poor, paint a cross with its blood on either side of the church walls. The antiquity of this custom is showed by an

³⁰ Doutté, *op. cit.* 59 sqq.

³¹ Amin, *op. cit.* 195. In Italy the *mano cornuta* has a similar role to play (Kriss, *op. cit.* 7).

³² *Ibid.*, 7.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3, 9; Einszler, *op. cit.* 212.

³⁴ Amulets worn by people serve the same purpose: Kriss, *op. cit.* For hands with inscriptions see *ibid.* 5, 6.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3, 6; Hermann, *op. cit.* 25.

³⁶ For their appearance in other countries see Marquès-Rivière, *op. cit.* 123.

³⁷ Handprints made by the blood of the sacrificed animal have also a role to play in the ceremony of the *zār* (Kriss, *op. cit.* 175).

order of the Bible according to which the Jews had to take a lamb home on the loth day of the paschal month and after the lamb had been killed on the 14th day they had to sprinkle the blood on the door-posts and the lintel ³⁸. An apparently aetiological tradition attributes the usage of handprints to Muḥammad saying that the Prophet put his inky handprint on paper in order to compensate his disciples who were discontented with his oppressing the statues of gods. Mohammedans call this hand Fāṭima's hand after the daughter of the Prophet, while according to a symbolic interpretation it represents the five pillars and the five dogmas of Islam ⁴⁰.

Individuals may wear hand amulets, too, and these are small hands of blue glass with stretched fingers ⁴¹. The blue colour is very important because it is not only characteristic of the evil eyes but also of amulets protecting against them ⁴².

The combination of the small blue hands and the hands printed on the walls of the houses could have inspired, consciously or not, the blue hands daubed on walls at the time of election campaigns below which inscriptions advertise the different candidates, completing in this way the series of emblems designed to help the illiterate in voting.

As for the amulets representing an arrow pointed at the eye, we are faced in this case, too, with an instance of the imitative magic but here the desire to destroy the eye appears perhaps even clearer than in the hand amulet.

5. In examining the amulets I have so far taken general phenomena into consideration. They have, however, specific charac-

³⁸ Exodus xii 3—7. For customs slightly resembling this see J. G. Frazer, *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*, London 1923, 321 sq.

³⁹ Marquès-Rivière, *op. cit.* 122; Kriss, *op. cit.* 2.

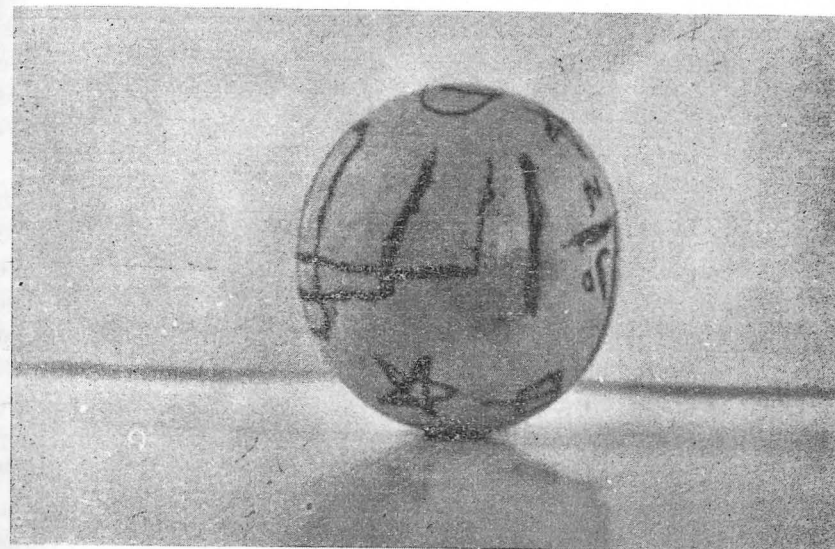
⁴⁰ Budge, *op. cit.* 467 sqq. The fingers of the hand of Fāṭima symbolize the members of the Prophet's family. For a Jewish parallel see Marquès-Rivière, *op. cit.* 53. By naming the hand amulet after Fāṭima, Islam has, in fact, expropriated an ancient tradition: Kriss, *op. cit.* 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴² Einszler, *op. cit.* 206; Hermann, *op. cit.* 24; Kriss, *op. cit.* 4.

teristics which back the hypothesis that certain elements take their origin in Pre-Islamic Egypt ⁴³.

One of the most popular amulets in ancient Egypt was the blue *udjat* eye drawn with the eyebrow above and two tendril-



Fot. 3

like extensions below ⁴⁴. The latter was, perhaps, to represent tears dropping from the eyes. Possessing such an amulet provided the owner with health, wealth and security. From the end of the Old Kingdom onwards *udjat* eyes appear on sarcophagi ⁴⁵, too,

⁴³ For the survival of ancient Egyptian tradition in modern folklore see M. Ghallab, *Les Survivances de l'Égypte antique dans le folklore Égyptien moderne*, Paris 1929; Kriss, *op. cit.* 1; Hermann, *op. cit.* 23 sq; Budge, *op. cit.* 67.

⁴⁴ F. Lexa, *La Magie dans l'Égypte antique* (Paris 1925), III, Pl. XLVI, fig. 73, Pl. LXIII, fig. 108. For eyes in pairs see *ibid.*, Pl. LXIII, fig. 111—114. For the importance of the eye in ancient Egypt see Kákosy, *op. cit.* 158 sqq; A. Wiedemann, *Die Amulette der alten Aegypter*, „Der Alte Orient“ 12, 1910, 16 sqq, Budge, *op. cit.* 141 sq, 360 sq; Lexa, *op. cit.* I, 90 sq.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, III, Pl. XXXIX, fig. 52, Pl. XL, fig. 53—54.

because the dead was believed to be able to look out through them. Later the *udjat* eyes gained a more and more protective character as the great quantity of *udjat* eyes found in tombs testify, showing that people used them against the evil eye, too. The boatmen, too, painted the protective eye on their sailing vessels⁴⁶ just as the taxi-drivers of modern Egypt do it. Looking at the form of the *udjat* eyes it appears most likely that the misinterpretation of the tendril-like extensions served as basis of the taxi amulets showing the eyes with the arrows, and the tear-drops⁴⁷.

The eye in general played an important part in Egyptian mythology. When Seth and Horus fought each other Seth ripped out his enemy's eyes which were later healed by Thoth, the scribe-god⁴⁸. It is not inconceivable that this incident of the mythological battle appears completely degenerated in the amulet of the eye wounded by an arrow.

In mythology both the Sun and the Moon appear as the two eyes of the Sky-god whose shape is taken first by Horus then by Re. In a myth Re sent his own eye to punish his enemies⁴⁹. This image of the eye wandering through the sky like a celestial body is precisely what the amulet of the eye moving in a cloud reminds us of.

The ancient Egyptians were also fond of the hand amulets to which they attributed a preventive ability⁵⁰. Such amulets have

⁴⁶ L. Borchhardt, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs SA³HU-RE*, (Leipzig 1913), II, Taf. 9, 11, 12. Cf. also Kákosy, *op. cit.* 160.

⁴⁷ The form of the *udjat* eyes served as basis for the shape of the Mohammedan disk amulet furnished with 5—6 holes: Kriss, *op. cit.* 9. The desire to destroy the eye appears together with the method of imitative magic in the description of a Graeco-Roman magical operation: Lexa, *op. cit.* I, 162.

⁴⁸ H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte*, Berlin 1952, 473.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 472; Lexa, *op. cit.* I, 90. For the eye as an independent celestial body see also Bonnet, *op. cit.* 734. For the tears of the Horus-eye see Wiedemann, *op. cit.* 17; G. Roeder, *Urkunden zur Religion des alten Ägypten*, Jena 1915, 108.

⁵⁰ Bonnet, *op. cit.* 19; Wiedemann, *op. cit.* 14 sq; Lexa, *op. cit.* III, Pl. LXVI, fig. 134—135.

come to light in big quantities from tombs. On a scarab amulet the figures of a crocodile, a hand and a grotesque god, Bes, can be seen⁵¹. Obviously both the hand and Bes were to disarm the crocodiles which so often represented danger for the Egyptians⁵². The basic idea of this representation is identical with what appears in the form of the hand guarding against the eye. The hand of Fāṭima may have been influenced also by the hand position of the praying figures so frequently appearing on Egyptian monuments⁵³.

It is not very uncommon to see hands and eyes together since hands were sometimes attached to the *udjat* eyes⁵⁴. On the Metternich stele⁵⁵, for instance, the left and right *udjat* eyes symbolizing the Moon and the Sun with their raised hand-pairs give the impression of confronting each other. Thot is represented in the form of a monkey with the eye of the Sun-god in his hands just as he is returning it⁵⁶. The eye had left the Sun-god in its anger and the Sun sent Thot after it. These representations may of course have exerted influence on today's amulets independently of their original meanings, i.e. by their appearance only.

6. The inscription *mā šā'a-l-lāh* which can be seen on the taxis serves also for the counteraction of envy. Namely, if someone admires something it is useful to add this exclamation or e.g. the following: *šallā 'a-n-nabī* („Bless on the Prophet!") in order to avoid that praise is attributed to envy⁵⁷. There are many other ways and the most different talismans to defend oneself

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, I, 92, III, Pl. LXVI, fig. 137.

⁵² For Bes see Bonnet, *op. cit.* 104; Lexa, *op. cit.* I, 82; Wiedemann, *op. cit.* 10.

⁵³ See e.g. J. Leipoldt — W. Grundmann, *Umwelt des Urschientums*, Berlin 1967, III, Abb. 216, 217, 219.

⁵⁴ Lexa, *op. cit.* III, Pl. LXIII, fig. 109; Bonnet, *op. cit.* 855.

⁵⁵ Lexa, *op. cit.* III, Pl. XXIX, fig. 40, Pl. XXX, fig. 41.

⁵⁶ Budge, *The Greenfield Papyrus in the British Museum*, London 1912), 44; Kákosy, *op. cit.* picture 21.

⁵⁷ Cf. Blackman, *op. cit.* 186; Seligmann, *op. cit.* 81; Lane, *op. cit.* 256; Kriss, *op. cit.* 12; Einszler, *op. cit.* 203 sq. 210. The drop-like shape is a favourite form of the amulets in the Middle East: Kriss, *op. cit.* 40. In connection with the other amulets on the taxis for the Koran see Budge, *Amulets and Talismans*, 51 sqq; Amin, *op. cit.* 25; Kriss, *op. cit.* 33; W. Déonna, *Amulettes de l'Égypte contemporaine*,

against the evil eye⁵⁸, from among them I wish to examine only an amulet of plant origin which I acquired five years ago in the Cairene Sūq al-Ghūriyeh from a merchant of drug plants and incense. Suspended in his shop hung the melon-like, but much smaller fruits of the colocynth (in Arabic *hanḏal*, in colloquial *handal*) with 8—10 cm in diameter⁵⁹. Its shape resembles the ostrich-egg, which can also be used as talisman against the evil eye⁶⁰. The bitter fruit of the *handal*, cut into two halves and attached to the heels, is also good — according to the merchant — to suck out the illness from someone's body.

The suspended fruit balls of the *handal* were covered by magical signs on their dried rinds (Fig. 3). The description of one of the fruit balls the merchant gave me is the following: Up, on the top, there are two crescents and two pentagrams opposed to each other. Because of its shape, the crescent is in connection with the horn and the horse-shoe, which are also in use against the evil eye⁶¹. The pentagram — also called the seal of Solomon since, according to the tradition, Solomon made the genii obey him with the help of this sign⁶² — appears frequently together with the crescent⁶³.

Around the amulet the name of Allāh can be read in stylized script. The fact that the characters of God's name are inscribed not cursively but separately, strengthens the force of the word⁶⁴. The letters *m*, *h*, *k*, *l* and *h* are also present. Generally the charac-

„Revue d'Ethnographie et des traditions populaires“, 7, 1926, 239.; for the rosary see Kriss, *op. cit.* 54 sqq; Budge, *op. cit.* 79 sqq. Open Korans can also be seen in the shopwindows of Cairene shops.

⁵⁸ H. A. Winkler, *Ägyptische Volkskunde*, Stuttgart 1936, 46 sq; Jaussen, *op. cit.* 376 sqq; Seligmann, *op. cit.* 26; Blackman, *op. cit.* 184 sqq, M. Kamāl, *Āthār ḥadārat al-farā'ina fi ḥayātinā al-hāliyya* (Cairo 1956), 15 sq; Lane, *op. cit.* 58 sq, 257 sqq, 510 sq, 513; Kriss, *op. cit.* 21, 25 sq, 28 sq passim; Einszler, *op. cit.* 212 sqq; Amīn, *op. cit.* 127. For protection against the evil eye at the Jews see *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York—London 1903, 280 sq.

⁵⁹ For the *handal* as a plant see *Al-Munjid*, Beirut 1956, 158; for as an amulet see Hermann, *op. cit.* 27; Kriss, *op. cit.* 27.

⁶⁰ Hermann, *op. cit.* 27; cf. Seligmann, *op. cit.* 394.

⁶¹ Einszler, *op. cit.* 206; Douthé, *op. cit.* 325; Kriss, *op. cit.* 19.

⁶² Amīn, *op. cit.* 118 sq; Kriss, *op. cit.* 74 sqq.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁶⁴ Einszler, *op. cit.* 202; Douthé, *op. cit.* 174.

ters have a magic force⁶⁵, and those mentioned above are particularly important because they occur among the initials of God's 99 names (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*)⁶⁶: e.g. *Al-Malik* (The King), *Al-Ḥamīd* (The Laudable), *Al-Laṭīf* (The Subtle), *Al-Karīm* (The Generous), *Huwa* (He)⁶⁷. The *m*, *l*, *k*, together give the name *Malik*. There is another *m* which can refer to one of God's names beginning with *m*.

Similarly to the letters, the numbers are also thought to have hidden values and forces⁶⁸ and we can explain by this the appearance of three numbers in the following form: $\frac{3}{52}$. The magic

force of 2 is implied in the Koran where it is said that God created two of everything, 3 is generally important not only for the Mohammedans but also for primitive peoples. 5 has a very significant role to play in the magic of numbers since it expresses the number of the fingers, of the points of the pentagram, of the dogmas and pillars of Islam and of the daily prayers. The 7 coming from the amount of 5 and 2 has an equally extraordinary significance and the 10 given by the addition of 5, 2 and 3 also has a magic effect⁶⁹. The point of interest in the arrangement of the numbers and its force are greatly intensified that by subtracting 2 from 5, 3 remains, subtracting 3 from 5, 2 remains and adding 2 to 3 we get 5.

On the lower part of the amulet there is again a crescent facing a pentagram.

In brief, an amulet strengthened by all possible means defended the merchant's shop. On the occasion of my last visit this year to the merchant, I did not see the suspended fruit balls of the *handal* either here or elsewhere.

⁶⁵ For the magic of letters see Douthé, *op. cit.* 171 sqq; Marquès-Rivière, *op. cit.* 127 sq.

⁶⁶ The names of God exercise their influence by the magical force of name and script alike. See Douthé, *op. cit.* 199 sqq; Marquès-Rivière, *op. cit.* 130 sqq; Budge, *op. cit.* 46 sqq; Kriss, *op. cit.* 68 sqq; al-Būnī, *Kitāb šams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā*, Cairo, II, 16 sqq, IV, 31 sqq.

⁶⁷ See especially Kriss, *op. cit.* 72 sq.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 242 sq, Index s. v. Zahlen.

⁶⁹ Douthé, *op. cit.* 181 sqq; Marquès-Rivière, *op. cit.* 133; Budge, *op. cit.* 44 sqq.