



Notes on angelic number symbolism in the Arabic alphabet

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THE DIVINE 'Throne' which surrounds all worlds (*al-Arsh al-Muhît*) is represented by the figure of a circle, as is easily understood. In the center is *ar-Rûh* [the Spirit], as we explained in the last chapter, and the 'Throne' is supported by eight angels positioned on the circumference, the first four at the four cardinal points and the other four at four intermediary points. The names of these eight angels are formed by various groups of letters arranged according to their numeric values in such a way that, taken together, the names comprise all the letters of the alphabet.

It should be recalled that in this case of course the alphabet in question has 28 letters; but it is said that at the very beginning the Arabic alphabet had only 22 letters, corresponding exactly to those of the Hebrew alphabet; in doing so, the distinction is made between the lesser *jafr*, which uses only 22 letters, and the greater *jafr*, which uses 28 and conceives of them all with distinct numerical values. Moreover, it can be said that 28 ($2 + 8 = 10$) is contained in 22 ($2 + 2 = 4$) as 10 is contained in 4, according to the formula of the Pythagorean *Tetraktys*: $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$; and, in fact, the six supplementary letters are only modifications of the original six letters from which they are formed by a simple addition of a dot, and to which they are restored immediately by the suppression of this same dot. These six supplementary letters are those which comprise the last two of the eight groups just mentioned; it is evident that if one does not consider them as distinct letters, these groups would be modified, either as to their number or as to their composition. As a result, the passage from the alphabet of 22 letters to the alphabet of 28 letters must necessarily have led to a change in the angelic names in question, and thereby a change in the 'entities' which these names designate; but, strange as it may seem to some, this is actually normal, for all modifications of traditional forms, and in particular those affecting the constitution of their sacred languages, must effectively have their 'archetypes' in the celestial world.

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This having been said, the distribution of letters and names is as follows:

At the four cardinal points:

East: A B Ja D
West: Ha Wa Z
North: Ha Ta Y
South: Ka L Ma N

At the four intermediate points:

North-East: Sa 'A Fa S
North-West: Qa R Sha T
South-East: Tha Kha Dh
South-West: Da Za Gh

It will be noticed that each of the two groups of four names contains exactly half of the alphabet, or 14 letters, which are distributed respectively in the following fashion:

In the first half: $4 + 3 + 3 + 4 = 14$
In the second half: $4 + 4 + 3 + 3 = 14$

The numeric values of the eight names formed from the sum of those of their letters are, taking them naturally in the same order as above:

$1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$
 $5 + 6 + 7 = 18$
 $8 + 9 + 10 = 27$
 $20 + 30 + 40 + 50 = 140$
 $60 + 70 + 80 + 90 = 300$
 $100 + 200 + 300 + 400 = 1,000$
 $500 + 600 + 700 = 1,800$
 $800 + 900 + 1,000 = 2,700$

The values of the last three names are equal to those of the first three multiplied by 100, which is clear enough if one notices that the first three contain the numbers from 1 through 10, and the last three the hundreds from 100 to 1,000, both groups being equally distributed into $4 + 3 + 3$.

The value of the first half of the alphabet is the sum of those of the first four names: $10 + 18 + 27 + 140 = 195$. Similarly, that of the second half is the sum of the last four names: $300 + 1,000 + 1,800 + 2,700 = 5,800$. Finally, the total value of the entire alphabet is: $195 + 5,800 = 5,995$.

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This number 5,995 is remarkable for its symmetry: its central part is 99, the number of the 'attributes' of Allâh; the outside numbers form 55, the sum of the first ten numbers, the denary moreover being in turn divisible into two halves ($5 + 5 = 10$); besides, $5 + 5 = 10$ and $9 + 9 = 18$ is the numerical value of the first two names.

One can better account for the way in which the number 5,995 is obtained by apportioning the alphabet according to another division, in three series of nine letters, plus one isolated letter; the sum of the first nine numbers is 45, the numerical value of the name *Adam* ($1 + 4 + 0 = 45$, that is, from the point of view of the esoteric hierarchy, *al-Qutb al-Ghawth* [the Supreme Pole] at the center, the four *Awtâd* [pillars] at the cardinal points, and the 40 *Anjâb* on the circumference); the sum of the tens, from 10 to 90, is 45×10 [450]; and that of the hundreds, from 100 to 900, is 45×100 [4,500]; altogether, the sums of these three series of nines is thus the product of $45 \times 111 = 4,995$, the 'polar' number which is that of *alif* 'developed'; one must add to that the number of the last letter, 1000, or unity to the fourth degree, which terminates the alphabet, just as unity of the first degree begins it, giving, finally, 5,995.

Finally, the sum of the digits of this number is $5 + 9 + 9 + 5 = 28$, which is the very number of the letters in the alphabet of which it represents the total value.

One could assuredly develop still other considerations starting from these givens, but these few indications will suffice to give at least an idea of certain procedures of the science of letters and numbers in the Islamic tradition.