

The "Elder Sign" and its Occult Associations in Arab Magic

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The *Elder Sign* is sometimes confused with the *Pnakotic Pentagram* and the swastika-like *Sign of the Old Ones*. However, the actual *Elder Sign* is a symbol which is often compared to a tree or tree-branch, and consists on a central line with three lines branching off to the left and two lines branching off to the right:



This symbol seems to be all but completely unknown to western occultists. However, it is easily recognizable as a relatively common symbol in Arabic magical traditions. It appears to be one of the 28 graphemes attributed to the first century Turkish physician *Disaqoridos* (ديسقوريدوس).¹ The symbol became more popular in Arab occult traditions in the mid-9th century because of its inclusion in the text *_Shuq al Mastaham Fi Ma'arifat Rumuz al Aqlaam_* (معرفة رموز الأعلام) (شوق المستهام في) by *Ibn Wahshiyya* (ابن وحشية). *Wahshiyya* is famous for his contributions to the Arabic grimoire known in the West as *_Picatrix_*² which he made via his text *_Kitab al Falaha al Nabatiyya_* (كتاب الفلاحة النبطية). He is likewise famous for his decipherment of many Egyptian hieroglyphs centuries before a similar breakthrough occurred in the west.³

Below is a summary of the esoteric associations of the *Elder Sign* based on the writings of *Wahshiyya*,⁴ and supplemented with additional material, primarily from *Ibn 'Arabi* (ابن عربي).⁵ Hopefully, this might provide some insight into the significance and use of this symbol within Arab magical traditions, and perhaps by extension, the magick of the Cthulhu mythos:

The name of the sign is "Zai" (زاي)

It is a Solar Grapheme [*huruf ash-shams* (حروف الشمس)]

Its numeric value is 7 (٧)

It is associated with the 19th lunar mansion [*manzil* (منزل)] which is called "The Sting" [*ash-shaula* (الشولاء)]

Its zodiacal sign is Scorpio [*burj al 'aqrab* (برج العقرب)]

The divine name associated with this sign is "The Living One" [*al Hayy* (الحي)]

Terrestrially it is associated with the element Water and celestially it is associated with the element of Air.

¹ A transliteration of *Διοσκορίδης* into Arabic.

² Originally titled *_Ghayat al-Hakim_* (غاية الحكيم) attributed to *al-Majriti* (المجريطي)

³ See: <http://muslimheritage.com/topics/default.cfm?ArticleID=712> accessed 6-28-2010. See also <http://www.muslimheritage.com/topics/default.cfm?ArticleID=481> accessed 6-28-2010

⁴ See: *_Shuq al Mastaham Fi Ma'arif al Fumuz al Aqlaam_* (شوق المستهام في معرفة رموز الأقاليم) pg 38

⁵ Especially, but not exclusively *_al Futuhat al Makiyya_* (الفتوحات المكية) by *Ibn 'Arabi* (ابن العربي).