

## Articles Written in Persona

### Concerning Gemstones

*In the name of ALLAH,  
The Merciful, the Compassionate,  
Who is sufficient unto us,  
upon Whom we depend and Whose aid we invoke,  
by Whose mercy this work may serve the people of the Six Kingdoms  
(for it is for that, that it is intended);  
and it is written "Upon ALLAH we rely,"  
and from Him also do we invoke the peace  
on all of His prophets and worshippers,  
who are sincere in obeying Him,  
for there is no strength and no power  
except with ALLAH,  
The Exalted, the Almighty!*

The Philosopher wrote concerning gemstones, and Theophrastos, and Pliny, and after them many wise men in the East and the West, that is to say among the Arabs, the Persians, and the Moors, as for instance Ibn al-Jezzar and Abu Ali ibn Sina, and also some philosophers of the Franks have written about stones. Many attribute magical properties to certain gemstones, and according to others these stones have such properties but they are not magical, being according to the nature of the stone. And Allah alone knoweth all.

It is my purpose to tell a little of how gems are cut, and into what shapes, and what gems are used among the different peoples of the earth; it is my hope thus to be of service to the people of the Six Kingdoms, most especially to those who would know what sorts of jewelry it is most fitting to give as gifts to friends of other nations, and also to such as themselves desire to work with gemstones.



### Concerning their Shaping

There are two ways I know of, that gems may be worked to the desired shape. The first is told by Theophilus, a Frankish craftsman; these are his words:

*Rock crystal is water hardened into ice, which is then hardened through many years into stone. It is cut and polished in this way. Take some chaser's pitch, about which we spoke above, and put it into the fire until it melts. Then cement the crystal with it to a long piece of wood of comparable thickness. When it is cold, rub it with both hands on a piece of hard sandstone, adding water,*

*until it takes on the shape you want to give it, then on another stone of the same kind but finer and smoother until it becomes completely smooth. Now take a flat, smooth lead plate and on it put a moistened tile (which has been abraded [to dust] with saliva on a hard hone) and polish the crystal until it becomes brilliant. Lastly, put some tile dust moistened with saliva on a goat skin that is neither blackened nor greased, stretched on a piece of wood and fastened on the underside with nails. Rub on this until it is completely clear.*

*In the same way onyx, beryl, emerald, jasper, chalcedony, and the other precious stones are cut, ground and polished. A very fine powder is also made from fragments of crystal. This is mixed with water and put on a smooth flat piece of lime wood and the same stones are rubbed on it and polished. Hyacinth, which is harder, is polished in the following way. There is a stone called emery, which is crushed until it is like sand, then placed on a smooth copper plate and mixed with water and the hyacinth is shaped by rubbing on this. The washings which run off should be carefully collected in a clean basin and allowed to stand overnight. On the following day the water should be entirely removed and the powder dried. Afterwards put it on a smooth flat limewood board, wet it with saliva, and polish the hyacinth on it. Gems made of glass are also ground and polished in the same way as rock crystal.*

With regard to hard stones, it should be said that sapphire and ruby are very hard, and also certain sorts of the stone called asterias, that has a star in it; these would certainly require the use of emery. The stone chrysoberyl, that some call chryselectrum, is golden or pale green and has a line shining in it like the eye of a cat, and it is very hard, and so is the golden stone that Pliny calls chrysolithus, but that is called topazos by later writers, and also the stone balas, that some say is a sort of ruby. It may be that all of these would require emery for their polishing, but I cannot say for I have not polished stones in this fashion.

The other way in which stones may be shaped is on a wheel, and it is done so for the most part in civilized lands. The wheel may be of stone, or of wood or metal or wax and have on it powdered emery or other such stuff mixed with water. Tripoli is also used for polishing stones. Sometimes the wheel is turned by a bow; the string wraps around the shaft of the wheel and the craftsman turns the wheel by moving the bow back and forth with one hand, while with the other he shapes the stone against the turning wheel. I have heard also of wheels turned by the feet, and even of great stone wheels turned by water, but those I have not seen.



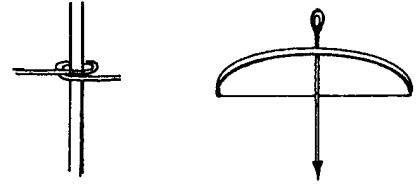
The stone adamant is so hard that it is said that it cannot be shaped or polished, but it is set in its natural shape, sometimes flat, sometimes like two pyramids joined at their bases, and then it is set with a sharp point upright, and will write on glass. Others say that adamant may be polished, or even shaped, by rubbing one against another, but this I have not seen or done. Also I have heard that certain men have the art of striking the stone so that it breaks in two pieces, the break as smooth as if it had been cut with a saw and then polished.

Concerning the sawing of stones, Theophilus writes:

*If you want to cut up a piece of crystal, fix four wooden pegs on a bench so that the crystal lies firmly between them. They should be spaced so that each of the pairs is so closely fitted above and below that a saw can just be drawn between them and cannot be deflected anywhere. Then insert an iron saw and throw on sharp sand mixed with water. Have two men stand there to draw the saw and to throw on sand mixed with water unceasingly. This should be continued until the crystal is cut into two parts; then rub and polish them as above.*

Also concerning the engraving of stones, this may be done in several ways. In the simplest, a small sapphire or adamant is fixed to the end of a rod and with it designs are cut into the stone.

Then again the rod may be rotated with a bow; this is called a bow drill. One can use in the same way a drill of wood, and a paste of water mixed with emery or some other such stuff. Also the stone can be engraved against a turning wheel. All of these methods have been used in the countries of the East and the West and among the Romans. Theophilus says little about engraving stones and I do not know how it is done among the Franks, or if they have the skill for such work.



Sometimes when a stone is being shaped, the lapidary discovers a flaw, or some foreign matter within the stone. If the stone is of little price he may elect to grind it down on the wheel until the flaw is gone. To do this with a stone of great value would be costly, as the weight would be reduced by the grinding away of much that was perfect and whole in order to remove a little that was imperfect; no man of sense would so waste his money or his patron's. Instead it is common practice to make a cut in the surface of the stone where it is flawed, removing the flaw and polishing the sides of the cut. It is for this reason that one often sees a stone with such polished cuts in the top of it. And as for emeralds, those of great size are never flawless, and so the flaws are permitted to remain.



### Concerning their Shapes



Gemstones are for the most part cut in one of two ways. Either the stone is cut with a rounded top and bottom (I have heard that the Franks call such a stone a cabochon, for that it resembles in their eyes a small cabbage) or it is polished all over, keeping the natural shape of the stone that no weight be lost (and this is of special importance in stones of great price, for they are valued in large part by their weight) and a hole drilled through it. Stones of the first of these two sorts are set in jewelry, held by a bezel or by claws; the second sort can be strung on a necklace, or affixed to a piece of jewelry by a wire through the hole, as is done among the Romans. And the stones cut in the first way have sometimes their backs hollowed instead of domed, and then polished, that the color may be more clearly seen, and this is done especially with garnets. Also in setting stones often a foil, of gold or of some other metal, is put behind the stone to brighten it and improve its color. Among certain Frankish peoples, and especially the English, it was of old the custom to cut and polish garnets in thin slices, and set them upon a foil of gold marked like a game board, and done so fine that there might be eighty lines to the inch. I have seen this work myself and it is most skillfully done, so that it is a wonder to me that it was done by men who know nothing of the Prophet (on him be the peace and the blessings of Allah!) or of the philosophers.

There are other ways in which stones are cut, but these are for the most part new fashions and I doubt whether a man of good judgment ought to follow them. Some take stones that are to be drilled and cover them all over with small flat surfaces, polished, called facets, taking care always to follow the shape of the stone (if it be a valuable one) and waste as little weight as may be. Others, who have stones that are to be set and not drilled, instead of cutting them rounded, put facets of the same sort on them. This I have seen done in two ways. With some stones (it may be those of greatest price) there are many small facets, following the shape of the stone as with drilled stones, and having no special pattern. With others there are only a few; the top may be one facet, and the four sides each flat, and perhaps as many as eight facets on the bottom side. All this work is done in Persia, and I have seen the stones; I do not know what the fashion may be among the Franks, but doubtless they will in time copy it, for stones cut in such ways sparkle in the sunlight, and are pleasing to the taste of simple people. Another way in which stones are cut is to take the form of the stone as it comes from the earth, and this for some (most especially emeralds, but also rock crystal and others) is, as it were, a solid of Euclid, with its surfaces plane, and to polish these surfaces, and then drill the stone. It may be that from this ancient practice the

idea of faceting arose. As for how stones are set, that would be a matter for a treatise on jewelry, and that (if Allah is willing!) I shall do at another time.

### **Concerning the Different Peoples**

All stones were known to the Romans in the old days when they ruled both Romes, the old and the new, for Pliny wrote of them all. In these times still the Romans know many stones, and whether any known to the old Romans are lost to them I cannot say. Certain stones they favor most especially, and these are emeralds and pearls, also garnet and crystal they make much use of. They use other stones also, but the especial skill of their jewelers is with enamels, and none in the East or the West is more skilled in that craft.

The Franks in the old times, and especially those of England, who were very great jewelers, used agate and almandine (that is a kind of garnet), also amethyst and amber and jet, the last two being found on the coasts of England. Also I have heard that onyx and crystal were known to them. It may be that they knew other stones also, but that I cannot say.

In these days the Franks know the use of many stones. But often for one stone they use many names, and at other times one name signifies stones that are wholly different. Thus the ruby and the ballas ruby and the garnet are all at times called by the one name: carbuncle, that signifies a red stone. And their philosophers cannot agree among themselves concerning the naming of stones.

The Northmen are a people who live north of the Franks; I have seen a little of their work and it is very fine. I have heard that they use garnets and crystal and also amber and walrus ivory, but I think they must know the use of other stones also, for many of them are pirates and raid very far. They have even raided in the West, in al-Andalus. It is said that the fighting there was very bloody; many women, children, and Northmen were killed. Also some of them take service with the Romans and doubtless bring treasures from New Rome, which they call the Great City.

The Irish are a people that live at the end of the world, beyond the English. It is said they use amber and crystal, and make fine jewelry.

As to the peoples of the East and the West, that is the Persians, the Arabs, and the Moors, they know all stones and make use of them.

Thanks be to ALLAH, the Merciful, the Compassionate, that it has been granted to me to complete this treatise to serve the people of the Six Kingdoms, as is the will of ALLAH, the One, the Only.

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### **Notes & Bibliography**

The above description of medieval lapidary technology is in part conjectural, based on what is known about classical technology and about “traditional” (i.e., modern pre-industrial) Persian techniques. In general, techniques are described as “rumors”, etc., if it is reasonably certain that they existed prior to A.D. 1600, and possible (but not certain) that they existed in the author’s period: the 11th or 12th century. Water-driven lapidary wheels are an example.

There is no way to be certain that a particular natural gemstone was not used in a given historical period. Even if all modern sources are in areas which were then inaccessible, some other deposit might have been known in the past and either lost or exhausted. Similarly, even if no jewelry

using the stone exists from the period, that might mean only that it was sufficiently rare that no pieces survived. But where no positive evidence exists, neither in contemporary writings nor in surviving pieces, that a particular stone was used, and where the presently known sources would in the past have been difficult of access, one may reasonably suppose that it was either totally unknown or at least rare—and in the latter case probably confused with some more common stone that it resembled. Stones which I believe would not have been known in the Middle Ages have been omitted from the list of medieval gemstones appended to these notes. Such stones are:

*Alexandrite*: First known discovery was in the 19th century, but it is found in Ceylon, which was an important source of gem rough in period. *Black Opal*: First known discovery was in Australia. *Jade*: Although prehistoric jade weapons are known from Europe, and although jade was used extensively in China from very early times, it does not seem to have been known as a distinct stone in Europe until the 16th century, when it was introduced from South America by the Spanish. In the Middle East it probably became known about the 13th century as a result of the Mongol conquest of Persia. Individual objects containing jade from earlier periods have been reported, but according to Ogden all of the specimens he checked turned out to be other green stones. Jade would presumably have been misidentified as some other green stone, possibly jasper, plasma, or chrysoprase. *Labradorite*: A novelty when it was discovered in Labrador in 1780. Deposits also exist in Norway, Finland, and Madagascar, but were apparently unknown until recently. *Star Diopside*: While it might be one of the stones referred to as “asterias,” there seems to be no evidence that it was known prior to the 20th century. *Tanzanite*: African in origin, apparently first discovered in the 20th century. Its color is the result of heat treatment. *Tiger Eye*: The main sources are in southern Africa and were discovered in the 19th century—it was regarded as a novelty at the time. *Tourmaline*: Gem tourmaline is said to have been introduced to Europe by the Dutch (from Ceylon) in 1703. Since it occurs in areas mined for other gems from an early period, it seems likely that individual stones were known earlier but misidentified. Ogden describes one definite example from classical antiquity and two others of uncertain date, one of which may be medieval. I have also seen stones identified, I think correctly, as tourmaline in period Persian pieces in a display at the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

*Facetting*. The widespread belief that facetting originated in the 15th century appears to be an error, caused by considering only European stones. Persian faceted stones of the sorts described above appear to date back at least to the 12th century; there is an example (a faceted sapphire in a gold ring) in the Walters collection in Baltimore. In the 15th century faceted stones began to replace cabochons in western European jewelry. The table cut and the earliest forms of the rose cut appear to have originated about 1500, the systematic rose cut, the Mazarin, and the early forms of the brilliant cut in the early 17th century. Beads with polished flat surfaces were made in classical antiquity.

*Diamonds*. Diamond crystals are normally either platelets or octahedra; the latter, set point up, is the *point naif* or writing diamond, the form commonly used before the invention of the table cut. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance diamonds were sometimes backed with black foil; Cellini recommends tinting the back surfaces with lamp black, backing the stones with a reflector, or both. Large irregular stones, at least in the East, were “faceted” in such a way as to minimize weight loss—covered with facets conforming to the original shape of the stone. Neither procedure gave anything like the effect of modern cuts. It was only in the 17th century that the diamond began to become the most important gemstone.

*Names of Stones Known in Period*. In the list below, stones are given by their modern names; other names are also listed, usually in their Latin form (from Pliny). Nomenclature was neither consistent nor stable over time; in many cases a writer such as Albertus had to guess which of the

stones he knew corresponded to particular stones listed by Pliny. Chrysolite and (golden) topaz exchanged names sometime during the Middle Ages. Sapphire was originally the name of the stone now called lapis lazuli. Modern names first documented after A.D. 1600 are marked with an asterisk; names in brackets probably referred to several gems; a question mark designates an uncertain identification:

<i>agate</i>	<i>malachite</i> [smaragdus]
<i>almandine</i> (a variety of garnet)	<i>moonstone</i> [silenites] [asterias?]
<i>amber</i> [succinas] [chryselectrum]	<i>mother of pearl</i> , celontes [silenites]
<i>amazonstone</i> *, eumentres	<i>obsidian</i>
<i>amethyst</i>	<i>onyx</i>
<i>aquamarine</i>	<i>opal</i> , exacontalitus, pantherus
<i>aventurine</i> *	<i>pearl</i> , margarita
<i>beryl</i>	<i>peridot</i>
<i>carnelian</i>	<i>plasma</i>
<i>chalcedony</i>	<i>prase</i>
<i>chrysoberyl</i> , cat's eye [chryselectrum]	<i>rock crystal</i> , crystallus, iris [beryllus]
<i>chrysolite</i> (exchanged names with topaz during the Middle Ages)	<i>rose quartz</i>
<i>chrysoprase</i>	<i>ruby</i> [carbunculus] [jaqut (Arabic)]
<i>citrine</i> [chryselectrum] [topasion]	<i>sapphire</i> [hyacinth] [adamas] [jaqut (Arabic)]
<i>coral</i>	<i>sard</i>
<i>diamond</i> [adamant]	<i>sardonyx</i>
<i>emerald</i> [smaragdus]	<i>spinel</i> , balas ruby [carbunculus]
<i>garnet</i> [carbunculus]	<i>star garnet</i> [asterias?]
<i>heliotrope</i> , bloodstone	<i>star ruby</i> [asterias?]
<i>hematite</i>	<i>star sapphire</i> [asterias?]
<i>ivory</i>	<i>sunstone</i> (probably known in Roman and medieval times, but identification not certain)
<i>jasper</i>	<i>topaz</i> (the yellow variety of topaz exchanged names with chrysolite during the Middle Ages)
<i>jet</i> , kacabre [gagates] [succinus]	<i>turquoise</i>
<i>lapis lazuli</i> [sapphire (in classical antiquity, and to some degree in the Middle Ages)] zamech, ultramarine	<i>zircon</i> , jargoon, jacinth [hyacinth] [lycurium] zargun (Persian)

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## Concerning Trees and their Fruit

*In the name of ALLAH,  
The Merciful, the Compassionate;  
I rely upon ALLAH,  
the Unique, the Victorious.  
It is said, "Upon ALLAH we rely,"  
and from Him also do we invoke a benediction  
for all his Prophets and worshippers  
who are sincere in obeying Him,  
for there is no strength and no power  
except with ALLAH,  
the Exalted, the Almighty*

It is known to all who have studied the writings of the ancients concerning natural history, or have enquired of wise and learned men experienced in the arts of the orchard, that fruit trees do not grow true to their seed. So it is that one may find a tall and sturdy apple, bearing fruit sweet as the milk of paradise and fair as the breasts of the maidens that there delight the spirits of the blessed, and yet when the seeds of those apples are planted they grow up, perchance, into dwarvish and twisted trees, bearing fruit ugly to the eye and sour to the taste. It is for this reason that wise men long ago devised the art of grafting, by which a portion of a branch cut from a fruit tree of surpassing virtue is grafted to a tree of more common sort, and even as the son of a noble man grows up like unto his father although raised among beggars, heretics, or Franks, so does that branch grow and flower and put out the selfsame fruit as the tree from which it was cut. It is by this art that the finest fruits known to man are multiplied by a thousand times, and so it is that when a tree is long dead its scions may yet flourish and cuttings from them be grafted to yet more trees, and the same tree may live in its descendants until the day of judgment and be then (Inshallah) born away into paradise. So it is, by man's wisdom and the Mercy of Allah (the Compassionate, the Merciful) that we may even today eat of those self same cherries that were written of by Pliny (upon whom be Peace), he who wrote much concerning the art of grafting in the seventeenth book of his *History of the World*, although the tree from which he plucked those cherries, and the trees grafted of that tree, are long ago dust blown in the winds of the world.

Now it is one of my delights to have meals prepared according to the teaching of those who have written before me concerning the art of cookery, and so I bethought myself that rather than having recourse to the common fruits of the market I would seek out for myself those ancient strains which delighted the master cooks of times gone by (upon whom be Peace), and discover whether scions of those trees could still be found beneath the dome of Heaven. After search and long study, I discovered certain orchards where such trees grew, and men of wisdom and discernment who made it their life work to find such strains of fruit as have been praised by the learned aforetime, to seek them out where they might grow and take cuttings of them, that their line not perish utterly from the earth. I discovered also merchants who dealt in such trees, offering them for a small price to such as delight in things ancient and noble. From one such I procured three trees, two apples and a plum, to set about my house, and even as I write these words, the apples bloom outside the window of my chamber.

Having so, by the Mercy of Allah, satisfied my desires in these matters, I bethought myself of others of the folk of the Seven Kingdoms, and most especially of those who delight in the art of cookery, and it seemed to me fitting that I set down for them what I had discovered, and so I have done. But it is Allah who knows all things.

### Notes to the Above

My trees were purchased from J. E. Miller Nurseries, which carries at least two apples and one plum of varieties dating from before 1650; I have found their trees, service, and prices entirely satisfactory. The most extensive collection of old and unusual varieties of fruit trees in the country is said to be that of Southmeadow Fruit Gardens; they carry about a hundred and eighty varieties of apples as well as many varieties of other fruits. Their illustrated catalog costs eight dollars and is well worth it; it is the best source for information on old fruit varieties that I know of.

The following list of varieties which may reasonably be supposed to have existed before 1650 is drawn mainly from the Southmeadow catalog; where dates are given, they represent the earliest definite mention of the variety.

### Pre 1650 Fruits

#### Apples

Calville Blanc D'Hiver (1627)  
Court Pendu Plat (16th century—possibly Roman)  
Devonshire Quarendon (1690)  
Drap d'Or (=Coe's Golden Drop?)  
Lady Apple (1628)  
Old Nonpareil  
Pomme Royale  
Reinette Franche  
Roxbury Russett (Early 17th century)  
Scarlet Crofton  
Sops of Wine  
Summer Rambo (16th century)  
Winter Pearmain  
Fenouillette Gris  
Golden Reinette

#### Peach

Grosse Mignonne (1667)

#### Nectarine

Early Violet (1659)

#### Pears

Buerre Gris (1608)  
Rousselet de Reims (1688)  
Bartlett (Williams Bon Chretien)  
“of ancient origin”—may or may not be pre-1600.

#### Plums

Green Gage (Reine Claude)  
Prune d'Agen

### Nurseries Said to Carry “Antique Apples”

Adams County Nursery and Fruit Farms, Aspers, PA 17304. [www.acnursery.com]  
Bountiful Ridge Nursery, Princess Anne, Maryland 48009.  
C & O Nursery, 1700 North Wenatchee Avenue, Wenatchee, Washington 98801.  
Lawson's Nursery, Route 1, Box 294, Ball Ground, Georgia.  
Henry Leuthardt Nursery, East Moriches, New York 11904.  
J.E. Miller Nurseries, Canandaigua, New York 14424. [www.millernurseries.com]  
New York State Fruit Testing Association, Geneva, New York 14456.  
Southmeadow Fruit Gardens, 2363 Tilbury Place, Birmingham, Michigan 48009.  
[www.southmeadowfruitgardens.com—their catalog is now webbed!]  
Stark Bro's Nurseries, Louisiana, Missouri 63353. [www.starkbros.com]  
Waynesboro Nurseries, P.O. B. 987, Waynesboro, Va 22980. [www.waynesboronurseries.com]  
[For more useful links, see [www.sas.upenn.edu/~dailey/byfg.html](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~dailey/byfg.html)]

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## Some Receyptes

*Praised be ALLAH,  
Creator of days and appointer of times,  
Who hath brought every creature to life  
and provided all manner of sustenance;  
beasts has He fashioned, and made herbs to grow;  
and he encompasseth all mankind with His manifest blessings.  
For them sent He down water from heaven, whereby He brought forth every kind of fruit;  
and He hath made it lawful for man to taste of wholesome things,  
and hath permitted him to enjoy such foods and potions as be not unlawful.  
ALLAH bless His chosen prophet our lord Mohammad and his family.  
Verily, he heareth prayers.*

But it is known that the Franks (cursed be they for unbelievers) go against the law of Allah; unclean meats they eat, and they are great drunkards. Therefore, that all men may see and know these things, in writing receyptes of the Franks I shall not refrain from putting down those that make use of unclean meats or drinks forbidden by the law. For it is my purpose in these writings to show a little of the cookery of many peoples, those of the East and the West, and also the Franks, and if any who read this know concerning the cookery of the Romans, I pray that they write it down and send it to me, for I know it not.

And since the receyptes of the Franks, who are ignorant of learning, are less clear than those of al-Islam, I shall write a little concerning their meaning, and with one or two show how I have found they may best be done, and what quantities are to be used. But Allah alone knoweth all.

### Receyptes of the English Franks

#### Caboges

Take fayre caboges, and cutte hem, an pike hem clene and clene washe him, and parboyle hem in fayre water, an panne presse hem on a fayre bord; an þan choppe hem, and caste hem in a faire pot with goode freysshe broth, an wyth mery-bonys, and let it boyle: panne grate fayre brede and caste þer-to, and caste þer-to Safron and salt; or ellys take gode grwel y-mad of freys flesshe, y-draw þorw a straynor, and caste þer-to. An whan thou seruyt yt inne, knock owt the marw of the bonys, an ley the marwe ii gobettys or iii in a dysse, as þe semyth best, & serve forth.

#### Fylettys en Galentyne

Take fayre porke, þe fore quarter, and take of þe skyne; an put þe porke on a fayre spete, and rost it half y-now; þan take it of, an smyte it in fayre pecys, & caste it on a fayre potte; þan take oynonys, and schrede hem, and pele hem (an pyle hem nowt to smale), an frye in a panne of fayre grece; þan caste hem in þe potte to þe porke; þan take gode broth of moton or of beef, an caste þer-to, an þan caste þer-to poudre pepyr, canel, clowys, an macys, an let hem boyle wyl to gederys; þan tak fayre brede, an vynegre, an stepe þe brede with þe same brothe, an strayne it on blode, with ale, or ellys sawnderys, and salt, and lat hym boyle y-now, and serve it forth.

#### Rys

Take a porcyoun of Rys, & pyke hem clene, & sethe hem welle, & late hem kele; þen take gode Mylke of Almaundys & do þer-to, & sethe & stere hem wyl; & do þer-to sugre an hony, & serue f.

### **Mortrewys de Fleyssh**

Take Porke, and sethe it wyl; thanne take it uppe and pulle a-way the Swerde, an pyk owt the bonys, an hakke it and grynd it small; thenne take the sylf brothe, & temper it with ale; than take fayre gratyd brede, & do there-to, and sethe it, an coloure it with Saffroun, & lye it with yolks of eyroun, & make it even salt, & caste pouder gyngere, a-bouyn on the dysshe.

### **Tannye**

Take almaunde Mylke, & Suge, an powdere Gyngere, & of Galyngale, & of Canelle, and Rede Wyne, & boyle y-fere: & þat is gode tannye.

### **Cryspes**

Take Whyte of Eyroun, Mylke, & Floure, & a lytel Berme, & bete it to-gederys, & draw it þorw a straynore, so þat it be renneng, & not to styf, & caste sugre þer-to, & salt; þanne take a chafer ful of freysshe grese boyling, & put þin hond in the Bature, & lat þin bature renne down by þin fyngerys in-to þe chafere; & whan it is ronne to-gedere on þe chafere, & is y-now, take & nym a skymer, & take it up, & lat al þe grece renne owt, & put it on a fayre dyssche, & cast þer-on Sugre y-now, & serue forth.

Now those who are accustomed to the receyptes of al-Islam will at first find these of the Franks strange, that they say not how much of each thing goes into the dish, and for that reason I will give the quantities that I use with two of the dishes. But for those who are accustomed to cooking it will not seem difficult to try the receyptes with such quantities as they think right, and whether in the East or the West or among the Franks I have not found much in a dish to be the same when two different cooks have made it, save the name only. It happened once to me that I traveled in the land of al-Baran, I and my brothers and our ladies together, and we were gusted by the folk of that land. And after the dinner I spoke to the cook, saying "Noble Ivan, master of your craft, what is this most excellent dish you have set before me, for all of this feast of yours is such as I hope for when I feast with the blessed in paradise, but this dish is the crown of all." And he answered "Oh my lord, what have I accomplished save with your aid; this is your own receypte that I had from the hand of one for whom you wrote it." And I tell you it was true; it was my receypte but my dish it was not.

But before I began that tale I had promised to tell the quantities I use with certain of the Frankish dishes. And one is the dish Caboges, and for that I use one head of Caboge, neither very large nor very small, and 2 ratl of beef broth and 4 ratl of marrow bones. The Caboge head I cut in four pieces, and put it into boiling water, and when the water boils again, or a little later, I take the cabbage out and let it cool until I can touch it with my hands, then press the water out of it (and with it goes some of the flavor that might be too strong) and chop it, and then boil it with the broth and bones until it is soft, a third of an hour it might be, and then add salt to taste and a very little saffron and half a ratl or so of bread crumbs, enough to make it thick, and simmer a little longer before I serve it.

And as for the crispes, if you use the whites of four eggs, one quarter ratl (that is three uqiya) of milk, three or four uqiya of flour, something less than one uqiya of berme, about one uqiya of sugar and a dirham of salt, and after frying your crispes in hot oil you turn them over, drain away the oil when they are done, and sprinkle them with more sugar, you will find no better dish for a meal's end, not even the sweets of the East and the West, concerning which I will write another day.

### Notes

The recipes given above are all from *Two Fifteenth Century Cookery-Books*, Thomas Austin Ed., EETS. The edition was first published in 1888 and reprinted in 1964; it was still in print when I last checked and is also included in Volume I of the collection of source material we sell. Since the purpose of this article is to give readers who do not have access to primary sources on period cookery a chance to try working from the original recipes, I have reproduced them without modernizing the spelling. Understanding fifteenth century recipes is not as hard as it seems; the main trick is to sound the words out instead of trying to recognize them by how they are spelled. The spelling is not only very different from modern spelling but inconsistent from one recipe to another. It is also useful to know that “u” is often used where we would use “v” (serue it forth) and that “þ” is pronounced “th.” As a further aid, you may find the following sample translation useful, as well as the glossary at the end of this note.

### Crispes (Dessert Pancakes)

Take egg whites, milk, and flour and a little yeast and beat them all together, and put it through a strainer so that it is running and not too stiff, and cast sugar therto, and salt; then take a frying pan full of fresh oil boiling, and put your hand in the batter, and let your batter run down by your fingers into the pan; and when it has run together on the pan and is done, take a pancake turner and take it up and let all the oil run out and put it on a clean dish and cast thereon sugar enough and serve it.

For those who find the article's measurements somewhat obscure, a ratl is sixteen ounces or a pint, an uqiya is a twelfth of a ratl, and a dirham (which is a silver coin as well as a weight) is a tenth of an uqiya (about 1 tsp.).

Anyone with information to offer on Roman cookery should realize that to a medieval Moor “Roman” means Byzantine; I already have Apicius. Anyone who wishes to correspond on period cookery or who is interested in translating period cookbooks (from medieval French, medieval German, medieval Portuguese, medieval Dutch, or modern Spanish) should write to me.

### Glossary

*Berme*: Yeast. In this recipe you could use nutritional yeast, since it is not being used to raise anything.

*Canel* or *Canelle*: Cinnamon

*Clowys*: Cloves

*Galyngale*: Galingale, a root which breaks spice grinders. Get it (ground) from oriental grocery stores (“Galingas”).

*Gyngere*: Ginger

*Lye*: Mix or combine.

*Macys*: Mace

*Marw*: Marrow

*Mary Bonys*: Marrow bones

*Mylke of Almoundys*: The simplest form is made by dissolving finely ground almonds in water and straining off the residue. The result looks like milk and is used in many medieval recipes.

*Nym*: Take

*Pepyr*: Pepper

*Ratl*: 16 ounces=1 pint=12 Uqiya= 120 Dirham

*Rys*: Rice

*Sethe*: Boil

*Stepe*: Soak

*Sawnderys*: Saunders, a condiment used for its red coloring.

*Swerde*: Rind

*Temper*: Mix with

*y-fere*: Together

*y-now*: Enough

### **Some Receyts**

*In the Name of ALLAH  
The Compassionate, the Merciful,  
Lord of the Three Worlds;  
I rely upon ALLAH,  
The Unique, the Victorious.  
It is said "Upon ALLAH we rely,"  
and from Him also do we invoke a benediction for all of His prophets and worshippers  
who are sincere in obeying Him,  
for there is no strength and no power  
except with ALLAH,  
The Exalted, the Almighty.*

Now in my first chapter I wrote concerning the receyts of the English Franks. In this chapter I shall write some of the receyts of the Italian Franks. But lest you think that I concern myself only with the doings of the unbelievers, in the next I will give some of the receyts that we use in al-Andalus.

The island of Italy is attached to the southern coast of Frangistan. In the north of that island is the dwelling of the Caliph of the Franks, and he rules in the city that was the capital of the Romans before the Franks conquered it from them. Much of the south was for a long time held by the Romans, and there also were settlements of our people. But of late it has been seized by a warlike tribe of the Franks, and also most of the island of Sicily, the holding of the Aghlabids. Even so in our fathers' time was Sicily seized by the Romans, yet we won it back. And so shall it be again, Inshallah.

But I said that I would write concerning the receyptes of the Italian Franks, and so I must do so. I set them out as they came into my hands.

### **Pottage from Meat**

Take lean meat and let it boil, then cut it up finely and cook it again for half an hour in rich juice, having first added bread crumbs. Add a little pepper and saffron.

When it has cooled a little, add beaten eggs, grated cheese, parsley, marjoram, finely chopped mint with a little verjuice. Blend them all together in a pot, stirring them slowly with a spoon so that they do not form a ball. The same may be done with livers and lungs.

### **Mirause of Catalonia**

Put together on a spit capons or pullets or pigeons well cleaned and washed and turn them over the hearth until they are half cooked. Then remove them and cut them in pieces and put them in a pot. Then chop almonds that have been toasted under warm ashes and cleaned with some cloth. To this add some bread crumbs lightly toasted with vinegar and juice and pass all this through a strainer. This is all put in the same pot with cinnamon and ginger and a good amount of sugar and left to boil on the live coals with a slow fire until it is done, all the time being stirred with a spoon so that it does not stick to the pot. It is quite nourishing, long in being digested; it warms the liver and kidneys and fattens the body and stirs the belly.

Catalonia, from which this recipe is reputed to come, is a Frankish province on the border of al-Andalus. It lies to the north of Valencia, the city ruled by Roger Canbitur (curses be upon him for an unbeliever), a wicked man but a marvel of Allah for valor and prowess. It is said that he is now dead; Allah grant that it be so.

## Fried Gourd

Scrape off the skin from the gourd and cut it sideways in thin slices. When it has boiled once, transfer it from the pot onto the board and leave it there until it has dried out a little. Then roll it in salt and good white flour and fry it in oil; when it is done and put on a platter, pour a garlic sauce over it, with fennel blossoms and bread crumbs so dissolved in verjuice that it looks thin rather than thick. It would not be amiss to pass this sauce through a strainer. There are those, too, who use only verjuice and fennel bloom. If you like saffron, add saffron.

### A Garlic Sauce with Walnuts or Almonds

To almonds or walnuts that have been coarsely ground, add as much cleaned garlic as you want and likewise, as need be, grind them up well, sprinkling them all the while so that they do not make oil. When they are ground up, put in white bread crumbs softened in juice of meat or fish, and grind again. And if it seems too stiff, it can be softened easily in the same juice. It will keep very readily for a long time, as we said about mustard. This dish is little nourishing, remains a long time in the stomach, dulls the eyesight and warms the liver.

### Fricella from apples

Morsels of apples that have been cleaned and cored, you fry in liquamen or a little oil, and spread them on a board so that they dry. Then roll them in a preparation such as we have described earlier, and fry again. If you lick this up, be advised that it will be bad for you.

*In an earlier recipe, the preparation in which the fricellae are rolled is described thus: To grated cheese, aged as well as fresh, add a little meal, some egg whites, some milk, a bit more sugar, and grind all this together in the same mortar.*

As to the liquamen which this recipe speaks of, that is the clarified fat of pork, which the Franks use in their cooking, being ignorant of the laws of Allah (the Compassionate, the Merciful). I believe that tail, such as we use to fry with both in the East and the West, would do as well.

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## Notes

In order to give readers a chance to work out period recipes for themselves, I have given them in their original forms. The following is a worked out version of the first recipe—which has become our favorite period soup.

### Meat Pottage

Take 2 1/2 lb of stew beef and simmer it in enough water to cover for about 20 minutes. Drain it, reserving the broth, and cut it in 1" cubes. Add to the broth 2 cans (21 ounces) of beef bouillon. Stir in 1 cup of bread crumbs and simmer it for half an hour, then add 1/2 t pepper and a very small pinch of saffron.

Let the liquid cool slightly. Stir in 3 beaten eggs, 1 cup of ground cheese (half Mozzarella, half Monterey Jack), 1/4 cup of parsley, 1/2 t dried marjoram, 1 T chopped fresh mint, and 1/4 c verjuice (2 T wine vinegar + 2 T water). Stir it all together and serve.

Verjuice is the juice of unripe grapes, crabapples, or other sour fruits. I frequently substitute dilute vinegar. "Tail" (referred to by Cariadoc, not Platina) is fat from sheep tails, commonly used as a cooking oil in medieval Islamic recipes. Liquamen in Platina is pork fat; it seems to

have no connection with the liquamen used extensively in Roman cooking. Rodrigo Diaz el Compeador (hence Roger Canbitur to Moorish contemporaries), more commonly known as el Cid, died in 1099.

“Island” (*Jazīrah*) in Arabic also means “Peninsula,” and causes much confusion in geographical matters. Richard Burton, *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*.

The source for the recipes is Platina, *De honesta voluptate*, Venice, L. De Aguila, 1475, Elizabeth Buermann Andrews tr., Volume V from the Mallinckrodt Collection of Food Classics, ©Mallinckrodt Chemical Works 1967. The comments are from the perspective of Cariadoc, c. 1100. “It is Allah that knoweth all things.”

(Originally published in *Tournaments Illuminated* #86, Spring 1988)

### Norse Riddles

(Written for Patri ibn Cariadoc)

Because I was overlooked  
One who could  
Gave me to one who could not  
To use as he did not intend.  
Who am I?

I was a hostage for him  
Who being brave broke faith;  
Now I and my twin brother are parted forever.  
Who am I?

Two men I bound to their deaths  
Yet would not for a third a weapon make.  
Who am I?

My sting is in my tail.  
I only bite when I have shed my skin.  
What snake am I?

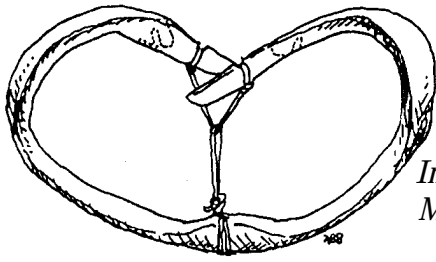
Part of me  
Bought all of me  
From a bloody weapon's hold;  
Whose head am I?

Could not bear up  
The foe of a mouse,  
As a bright eyed bride  
Broke up the house.

We held to our oath though things looked black;  
Defenseless men may still attack.  
Battling bound blooded the foe;  
By our courage caught, for our courage let go.

I am the cup still full, though the hall drink me dry.  
I weave the web no sword can cut, no shield deny.  
I am the treasure and tale of its taking.  
I am the longest lived of all man's making.

The snake with one wing and forty legs  
Sheds its scales on the sand.

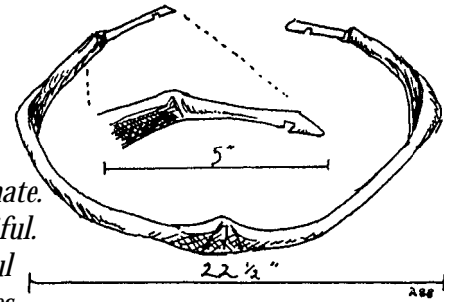


Final Stage of construction. Dotted line shows finished form of nock

## Concerning the Archery of al-Islam

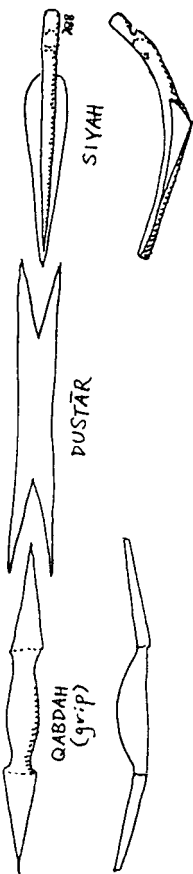
*In the name of ALLAH, the Merciful, the Compassionate.  
My Lord, ease my task for me, O Thou who art bountiful.  
Praise be to ALLAH, just, all knowing, all powerful  
He who protects His friends, He who shatters his foes,  
Who grants victory to the Faith, who subdues Unbelief  
He who pays to all mankind its due, punishment or reward*

*Praise to him that has rendered His supporters victorious and subdued His enemies  
And blessing and peace of ALLAH upon our lord Muhammad, Bearer of the True Message, and to his Family  
and his Companion train.*



Now I have heard that among the Franks, when a man desires a bow, he hacks off a branch from a tree, cuts in each end a notch, strings it, and that they call a bow. But among us it is otherwise.

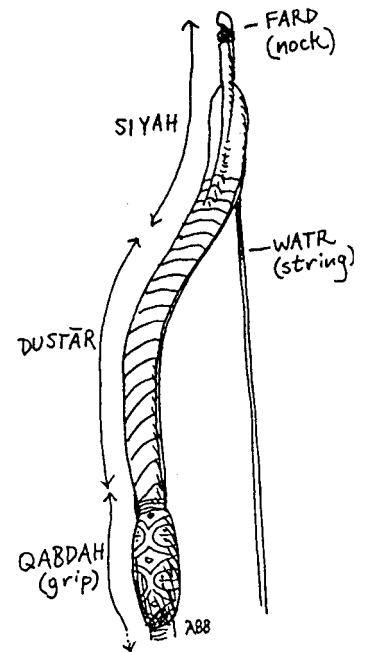
To make a bow is the work of a year. The core is made of wood, most commonly in five parts, although some use more or less. These parts are the grip, the two limbs, and the siyahs. The parts are spliced together and glued with great care; when the bow is complete, one cannot see where one ends and the next begins. This work is done in autumn, and then also the horn is sawed and fitted to the core. In the winter the horn is glued to the belly of the bow and bound there, and the glue is permitted to dry for some months. In spring the sinew is applied to the back of the bow. During the summer the bow is strung and shaped, and at the last painted.



Those familiar with the bows of al-Islam will know that they bend one way unstrung and the opposite way when they are strung. And when the bow is strung and held to be shot, the belly of the bow is towards the archer, and that is horn; the back of the bow is away from the archer, and that is sinew. And a bow is like a man, for it may be bent bellywise, but if it is bent backwards it will snap. The bow is made of wood, horn, and sinew even as a man is made of bone, flesh, and arteries and is bound together by glue as the man by blood. As to the size of the bow, it is commonly about one cubit and two thirds and one quarter of a cubit (50.2 inches total), measured from nock to nock, but some are longer or shorter. And the measure used is the carpenter's cubit, for that is of the same length throughout al-Islam.

The string is best made from raw wound silk; some bind it with glue. Others make it out of animal hide suitably treated. The long arrow should have a length that permits the head to come to the thumb on the bow hand when the middle of the right index finger is brought right back to the lobe of the ear. This comes to one and one-eighth cubits and one-half of a qirat (30 inches) for a man of medium height. The short arrow, which is used with the sipar, is about half of that length.

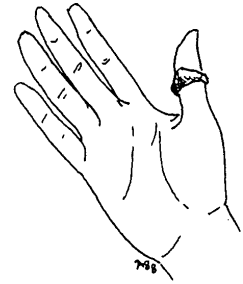
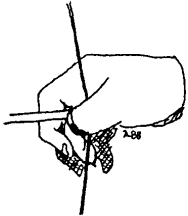
The sipar is a sort of small shield which straps onto the wrist of the archer's bow hand. The point of the arrow can then be drawn back behind the bow, resting on the sipar; when the arrow is released the sipar guides the arrow back to the bow and from there where it is aimed, *inshallah*. There are other sorts of arrow guides as well. With such devices, short arrows or darts can be shot great distances to annoy the horses of the enemy.



It is established in authentic tradition that the Prophet said, "The angels attend no human sport save archery." Therefore one should regard going to the shooting range as going to the mosque, being aware of the exalted status of the guests that there attend you, and should make the lesser ablution before beginning to shoot.



To use the bow, the arrow goes on the right side above the bow hand, and the string is gripped with the thumb. The end of the thumb is held down by the middle part of the first finger. The nock of the arrow lies in the notch between the thumb and the fleshy part of the hand just below the first finger. Some archers wear a thumb ring to protect the ball of the thumb from the string when it is released. Others use a leather guard for the thumb. There are even some who shoot without any thumb guard at all.



In shooting for sport, there are many games. One is flight shooting, in which the contest is not in striking a target but in casting an arrow as far as may be. Those very skilled in this art can shoot an arrow for half a mile, or it may be a little more.

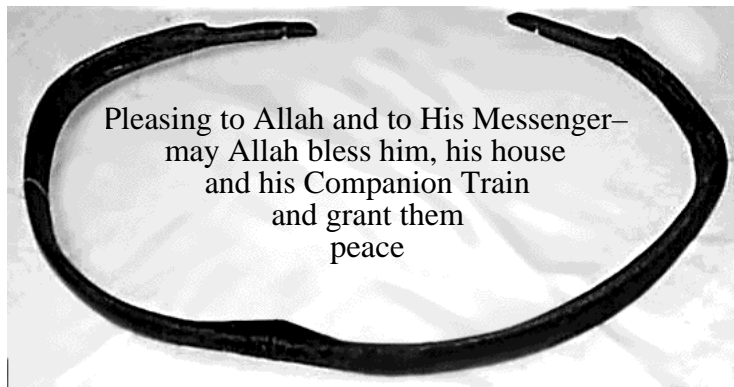
Another game is gourd shooting, in which the target is on the top of a tall pole. The archer rides past the pole and shoots up at the target, as if he were hunting a bird. The story is told of one archer who had a saddle made for him with a low back. At a great festival, while competing in the gourd shoot, he rode past the mast so that all watching thought he had missed his shot, then leaned right back with his head on the rump of his horse and, shooting up and back, struck and broke the gourd.

As to accuracy, a good archer shooting at sixty bows distance (*75 yards*) should be able to put his arrows into an object five spans across (*about 3 feet*).

When hunting lions, one must remember that the lion is also hunting, and his manner of doing so is to run behind the horse, leap up, and drag down the rider. Therefore he who would hunt lions prepares for it by riding along, shooting arrows into the hoofprints made by his horse. In this way he develops skill in shooting a target just behind him.

For this exercise, and also for shooting an enemy in a well, or at the bottom of a wall, or an enemy close beside you when you are mounted and he is not, it is well to be skilled in the manner of shooting that is called *jarmaki*. To do this, after drawing your bow you tuck your head under your right arm so that your bow hand lies against the nape of your neck. In this position you can shoot an arrow straight down without leaning out, or to the rear of your horse on either side.

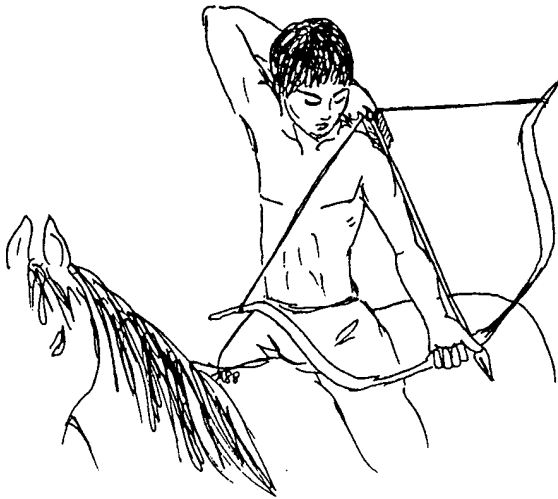
I write with the purpose of sharing my small knowledge of these matters with those desirous of wisdom, but it is Allah only that is all-knowing. May my words be





“Every time the archer shoots he should invoke God—exalted be He—with the words, 'in the name of God' and, whenever he makes a hit, he should praise Him to whom belongs all power and glory. He should regard accurate shooting as proceeding from the bounty of God—exalted be He—and the divine guidance and assistance. If he misses, he should not become exasperated or despair of God's refreshing justice, nor should he revile himself or his bow or his arrows. To do so is to commit an outrage and a violation of all that is just because a man who behaves in this way in his ignorance attributes his failure to those persons and things to which no blame attaches. Those who do this sort of thing, therefore, will incur the rancor of both angels and mankind and sin to no avail. Anger is, furthermore, the chief cause of low scoring.”

Taybugha.



The Manner of Shooting that is Called Jarmaki



An Archer

Figures by Lady Alessandra Aldobrandini di Firenze (Alessandra Kelley)

### Notes to the Above

Most of the material above is based on (or lifted almost verbatim from) *Saracen Archery*, an annotated translation of *The Complete Manual of Archery for Cadets*, written in the fourteenth century by Taybugha al-Baklamishi al-Yunani. Anyone seriously interested in the subject of Islamic archery should read both it and Klopsteg.

Some readers may be interested in the range of the Middle Eastern bows and how they compared to the English longbow. In discussing range, it is important to distinguish between the range achieved in flight shooting, a sport in which the objective was to shoot an arrow as far as possible, and the range at which a bow was effective in combat. So far as flight shooting is concerned, the best information available is from the Ottomans. Interpretation of the records is somewhat confused by uncertainty over the exact length of the units in which they were measured, but it appears that Ottoman archers in the eighteenth century achieved shots of over 900 yards. So far as I know, there is no similar evidence for either Taybugha's period (fourteenth century) or Cariadoc's (c. 1100 A.D.); I have simply assumed comparable ranges. In the

eighteenth century, English longbow enthusiasts regarded 350 yards as about the maximum distance that a bow could throw an arrow (Payne-Gallwey, Klopsteg). As of 1967, the modern world record (for a hand bow) was 851 yards 2 feet 9 inches.

Latham and Patterson conclude, from a variety of sources, that short arrows, fired using an arrow guide of some sort, could be used for harassing fire at ranges of about four hundred yards; full length arrows would have had a shorter effective range. It appears from Payne-Gallwey's observations of English castle architecture that the effective range of the longbow was less than three hundred yards and may have been less than a hundred and seventy.

Readers of Payne-Gallwey should be warned that his book contains at least one important error. The illustration of how a thumb ring is worn and used has the ring upside down, as judged by all other sources I have seen and my own experience. Use of the ring as shown might be hazardous to the user's thumb. It is worth noting that the book also contains an illustration of the author shooting a Turkish bow. He is using the standard modern release (three fingers on the string) and shooting off the left side of the bow in the European fashion.

### References

Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey, Bt, *The Crossbow*, Bramhall House, N.Y.

J. D. Latham and W. F. Paterson, *Saracen Archery*, Holland Press, London 1970.

Paul E. Klopsteg, *Turkish Archery and the Composite Bow*, published by the author, Evanston, IL 1947.

(This was published in the *Compleat Anachronist* pamphlet on Archery in 1988)

### Concerning Knighthood

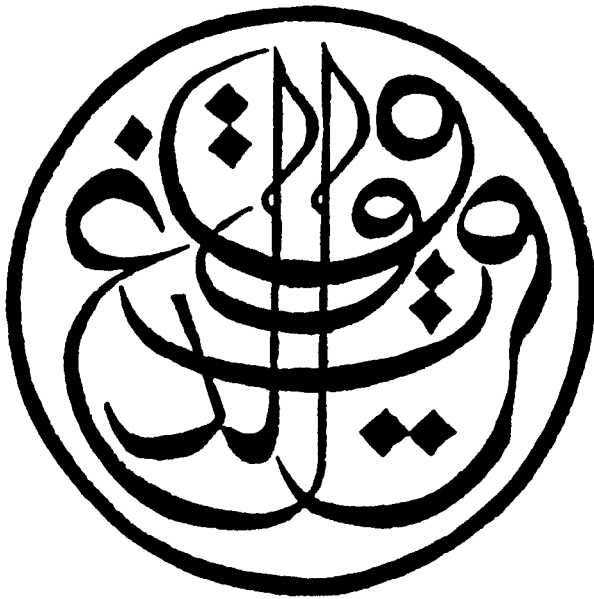
If a man act in honorable wise when he gains thereby glory, repute, or the love of a fair lady, none may know if he is in truth an honorable man. When he chooses between honor on the one hand and all that he desires on the other, then may his honor be known. The man who, fighting for a crown he fiercely desires, yet accepts without dispute the blow that ends his hopes, is in truth honorable—the more so when no soul but himself would have known the blow was true had he said otherwise. He who refuses to accept the blow until he can no longer do so without open shame is no honorable man, howsoever gentle and courtly he may appear in other lists, where there is nothing to be won or lost save that reputation which men miscall honor.

It has been the custom in certain lands that, when a knight is to be dubbed, the King calls the knights to assemble, whereat the eldest approaches the throne to complain that there is one absent who has by right a place among their company. To this the King assents, and calls out him who is to be dubbed. And all this is in token that a knight is made neither by King nor all the chivalry assembled; their part is but to recognize that he has made himself a knight. Neither belt, spurs, nor chain makes up a knight, nor yet the accolade of any King.

And as kings and knights are but men and fallible, so may they be mistaken, and some may wear the three tokens who are not knights, and some be truly knights who wear neither belt, spur, nor chain. But Allah alone knoweth all.

My name was originally intended as a variant on the name of Carahue of Mauritania, a Muslim character in the chanson *Ogier le Danois* (and in Poul Anderson's modern fantasy *Three Hearts and Three Lions*). Many years later, when I had learned more about medieval Islam and become more concerned with historical accuracy, I asked a friend in the Society who was (and is) a professional linguist if he could find an Arabic name that would be mispronounced "Cariadoc" by Europeans, on the model of names such as "Saladin" and "Avicenna." The following letter to T.I. was the result; I am not its author.

## *An Epistle*



In the name of ALLĀH ,  
the Compassionate, the Merciful,  
written to the People of the six Kingdoms,  
be they True Believers in the Revelation  
granted to our holy Prophet Mohammad  
(upon Whom be the Peace and the  
Blessings of Allāh!) or be they  
of the Faith of the Nazarenes  
or of the Jews, or yet of  
any other faith, that they  
intercede with his Grace,  
Sir Cariadoc, Duke Tregirtsee,  
Shaykh among Kings, on behalf of al-Ḥajj  
ʿAbd-al-Rahman ibn al-Raʿ is  
that he show Princely Grace to that  
humble Slave of the Pen, but more, if  
aught in this incur his Princely Wrath,  
that he might throw the Kerchief of Pardon  
to his Servant in the Name of ALLĀH,  
the Compassionate, the Merciful!

And afterwards. Be it known to all who read this missive that it befell upon a day some two years past that his Grace was journeying through the Kingdom of the East, and he came to take rest and respite in a city of the cities of that kingdom, and that in the very city nearby which this scribe ekes out a meager living plying the pen. Now at the hour of his evening ease, after he had partaken of a sumptuous feast and was of merry humor, I approached him begging permission to ask of him a question—for long had it been my aspiration to win his favor (and some little reward to sweeten life for myself and my ḥarīm) by fashioning for him a monogram seal in the manner of the nobles of al-Islām. For albeit men of the Nazarene faith may bear arms in which are portrayed a multitude of living beings, such images are forbidden to us with the certainty that on the day of judgement Allāh will call upon the makers of images to give their creatures life and verily they shall be confounded. Now this *amīr*, being of our faith, bears the bow in his arms and no living creature yet, as a muslim of great nobility and widespread fame, such a monogram seal would be most fitting to his use. Yet I was uncertain in this as the name Cariadoc is unfamiliar to the ʿArab tongue, and spoke thusly to him: “O shaykh among kings, long have I studied written knowledge and heard the words of wise men and am amazed and have long wondered that a son of the Moghreb and a follower of the ordinances of our Lord Mohammad (upon whom be the peace and the blessings of Allāh) should bear the name Cariadoc. How came this to be?” To this the *amīr* responded: “Are thou in fact a man of the pen and a learner of all things, open and hidden?” To this I answered: “O bastion of the faith and protector of the faithful, what am I if not

that which thou even hast said?” Then spake his Grace: “Then ask me further no askings, but within one month return to me with the true answer to thine own question and receive a boon of me—or know it not and learn instead the measure of my disfavor!” I fell to my knees quaking with fear for my life and pleaded: “O flowing fountain of mercy, o waterfall of generosity, too short is the time allowed. To this task would scarcely suffice a full year!” Spake the *amīr*: “Take then a year—take two, but bring me then proof of thy wisdom and erudition or surely I shall put a swift end to thy insolence!”

Thereupon I fled from the presence and came at last by I know not which streets and byways to mine own house, wherein dwelt with me as my *ḥarīm* my wife, a Frankish lady, met and won on my travels in the lands of the Franks and very wise (although sharp of tongue as is the custom among Frankish women), and told to her all that had transpired to the last word. “O thou great tub of lard!” spake she, “o thou fool of the fools, who will never learn to keep his chattering mouth shut tight in the presence of the wealthy and the powerful—this time thou hast at last encompassed thine own destruction! Who bade thee pester and importune princes with thy accursed questions? Better shouldst thou stay at home where thou canst do little harm—or better yet, betake thy complacent butt out into the marketplace and set it down along the wall of the mosque in the hope that some greater fool and sluggard than thou may come to thee and require thee to ply thy pen in his business, and thus earn us aught to place some food on our empty table, o father of useless questions, o paragon of sloth!”

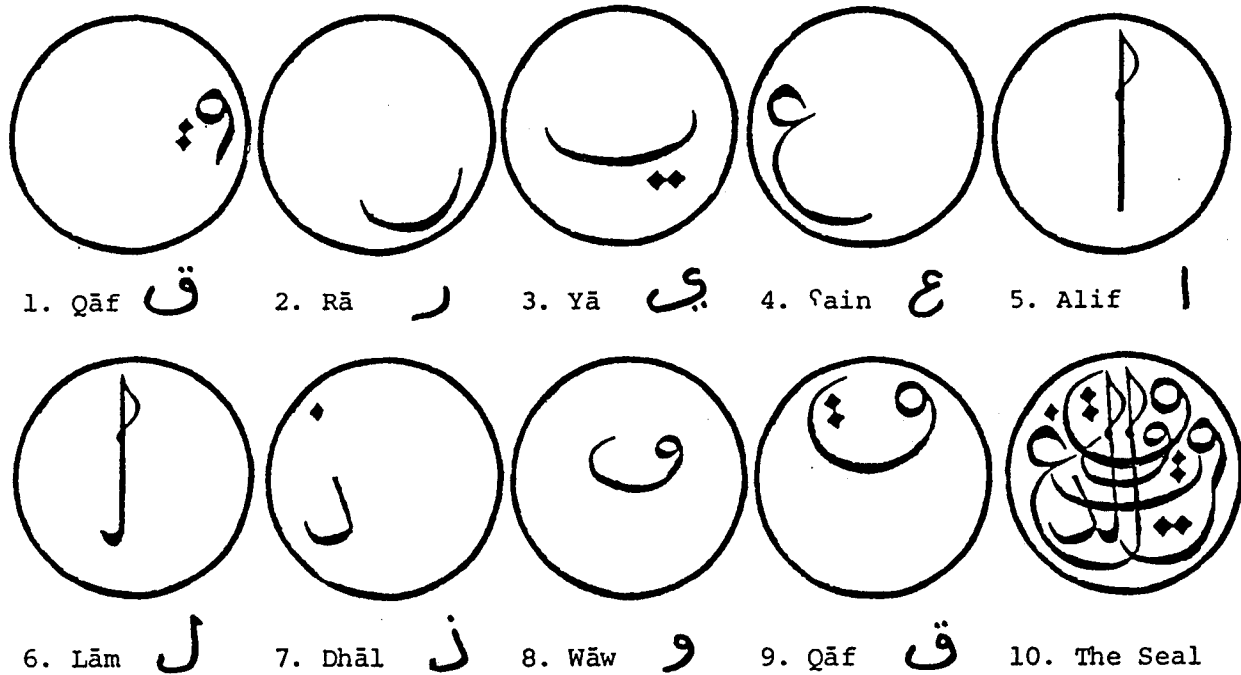
To these endearments (for the Franks are indeed a strange people) I responded: “O joy of my liver, do not yet despair. Recall the tale of the wise man who was given a term of five years within which to teach a donkey to speak with the language of men. When asked why he did not despair, he answered: ‘Five years is a long time. Before they have passed the *Ṣultān* may die—or the donkey may die—or I may die—or the donkey may learn to talk!’ With a full two years before me I may yet find the answer to this riddle.” Thus answered my *ḥarīm*: “So hie thee to thy books (clutter enough to break the spirit of full ten of the strongest of baggage camels) and rummage about for thy life’s sake, o father of phrases worth little in dirhams or *dinārs*”

Now long I searched in the works of the great historians but found no man from among the true believers who bore the name Cariadoc. Thence I turned to wise and learned men among the Franks and they assured me that this be a Frankish name and one at home in the farthest northwestern reaches of Frankland. Since I reasoned that no Moorish prince and true believer might have from birth such a Frankish name, I concluded that Cariadoc is in truth not his name at all—but rather nothing more nor less than the *amīr*’s true name as it sounded in the ears and reissued mispronounced by the tongues of the Franks. For his Grace has twice worn the crown of the Middle and twice the crown of the East, and as a muslim prince ruling over a land of several beliefs he has kept the covenant according to the sunnat of the Prophet (upon whom be the peace and the blessings of Allāh) treating all with tolerance and justice. What could be more natural than that the Franks of his realm, hearing their King’s name spoken in the ṢArab tongue, a language foreign to their ears, should imitate it with a name of similar sound?

This once granted, it remained to me to ascertain which of our names might be mispronounced by the Franks as Cariadoc. Certainly there is no such name—but there is an attribute which has a similar sound. And is not a ruler often called by his attribute rather than by his given name? Does one not speak of the great *khalīf* Harūn calling him by his attribute, *al-Rashīd*? The attribute hidden in the pronunciation Cariadoc can be none other than the ṢArab tongue’s *Qarī* Ṣ-*al-Dhūq*, meaning nothing other than: ‘he whose taste is exquisite’. And is not that a most fitting attribute for an *amīr* renowned far and wide for his exquisite taste, both aesthetic and gastronomic?

With the end of the second year approaching and a great quaking of fear arising within me as the day of finality looms up before me, I set about the task of preparing the monogram seal which would contain my answer to his Grace’s riddle. It is the nature of such seals to arrange the letters of the text not as they flow from the pen in writing, but rather so as to please the eye of the beholder. After consultation with a master better schooled than I in the calligraphy of seals with heart in mouth I prepared the monogram. For those who read this missive and are not familiar

with the writing of the ṢArab tongue, let me explain. The attribute *Qarī Ṣ-al-Dhūq* is written with nine letters since short vowels are not written unless they stand first in a syllable; the nine letters are: q, r, ī, Ṣ, a, l, dh, ū and q. They are placed into the seal area from right to left, beginning across the lower part of the area and progressing upward. The initial q and r are joined as in normal writing, but to fit the seal all other letters are written in their unjoined forms (the joining of Ṣ to a being a flourish of the design):



In the name of Allāh the Compassionate, the Merciful, I beseech ye, o people of the Six Kingdoms, to intercede on my behalf with his Grace, shaykh among kings, to accept this monogram seal as the correct answer to the riddle he gave me—for who might learn the *amīr*'s personal name when it is kept a secret from all? And I beseech ye to entreat his Grace on my behalf that he grant me the lowly position of *qādī* in my own village of Al Nīyya so that I may serve the *amīr* and all true believers here through my performing weddings, witnessing wills, and settling minor civil disputes, and therewith support myself and my *ḥarīm* with the income therefrom so that I no longer need importune the wealthy and the powerful with pleas for alms in the name of Allāh the Compassionate, the Merciful!

[Letter, Tournaments Illuminated no. 46, Spring 1978]

One day al Fadl ibn al-Rabī', the vizier of al-Amin, asked the scholars Abū 'Ubaida and al Asma'ī what each had written on the subject of the horse. "Fifty volumes," Abū 'Ubaida replied. "And thou?" al Asma'ī replied that he had written only one volume.

The vizier then called for a horse, and invited Abū 'Ubaida to identify and name its parts. He declined to do so, saying that he was a philologist, not a farrier. When al Asma'ī was asked the same he went over the horse, naming every part, limb and bone—and the bedouin have a name for everything—and quoting ancient verses to prove each word.

The vizier gave the horse to al Asma'ī and ever after, so he tells us, when he was going to visit Abū 'Ubaida and wished to annoy him, he would ride that horse.

(Based on an account in A. J. Arberry's *The Seven Odes*)