Magic, Moses and Manuscripts: The digital archaeology of a Timbuktu text

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A humidor of mysteries

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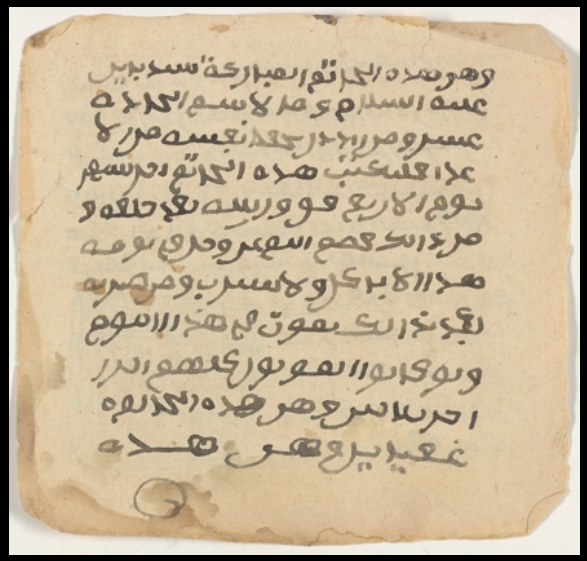

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One Manuscript or 5+ texts?

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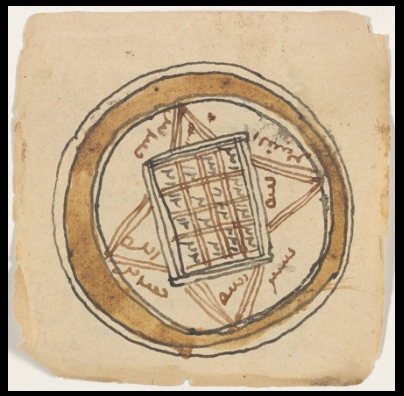

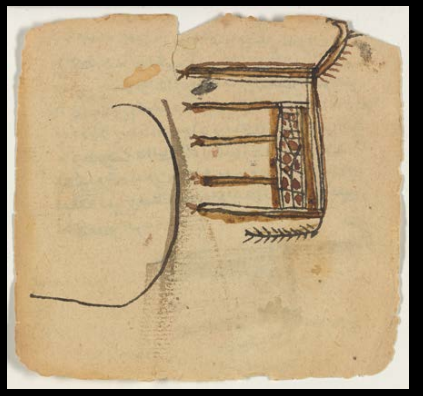

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Image categories

- Magic squares
- Representational
- Zoomorphic
- Geometric
- Psuedo epigraphic
- Circular/rectilinear
- Abstract
- Word Art

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Peculiarities

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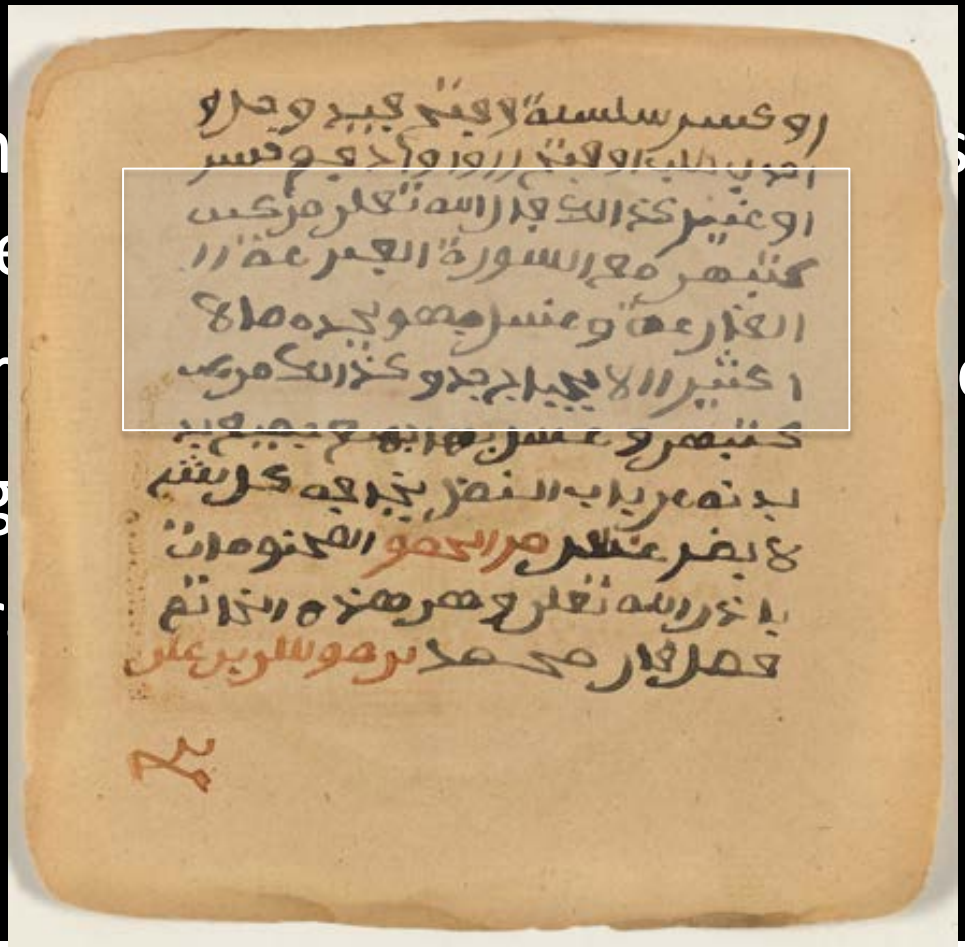
Data Collection and Digital Analysis

- Initial m sting into a digital re
- Structur egories
- Tracking
- Compar



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Text Encoding

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218       <handShift medium="red ink"/>
219     </ab>
220     <ab type="page" n="4v">
221       <figure><figDesc>four circles or wheels after text</figDesc></figure>
222       <lb n="1"/>
223       <unclear reason="illegible"/>
224       وجعله معه ما
225       <lb n="2"/>
226       له
227       <unclear reason="illegible"/>
228       كل شيء
229       <unclear reason="illegible"/>
230       <lb n="3"/>
231       <unclear reason="illegible"/>
232       وهى هذه الا
233       <lb break="no" n="4"/>
234       سم
235       <w type="faṣl-unknown">فصل</w>
236       وهى هذه الح وف الـ نة ف
237       <lb n="5"/>
238       <w type="faṣl-unknown">فصل</w>
239       كتبها فى
240       <time>ساعة الاولى</time>
241       ما يوم ا
242       <lb break="no" n="6"/>
243       لا د
244       <date>يوم-الا د</date>
245       م هى هذه
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247       <lb n="7"/>
248       <unclear reason="illegible"/>
249       تعلى وهذ
250       <lb break="no" n="8"/>
251       ه الخاتم و
252       <w type="khātm"></w>
```

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Magical Practice? Healing?

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Use of Qur’an

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Esoteric Knowledge

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Questions still to pursue

- Authorship and audience
- Intellectual climate of Timbuktu in the late pre-colonial era
- Arabic and linguistic influences
- Religious syncretism
- Object biographies – manuscripts as material culture

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