

Ralf Schmitt "blowjob"

"...And from the evil of the women who blow on knots,..."

translates the Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an the fourth verse of the 113th Meccan sura "'al-Falaq" (The Crack) of Qur'an synopsizing evil.¹ It "...refers to the blowing upon knots made in the proper fashion (i.e. tied nine or eleven times), a magical practice much in use in Semitic circles, above all Canaanite, Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Hebrew, but also found in many tribes of central Asia. It was particularly popular in Jewish circles, despite its rigid prohibition in the Pentateuch. An allusion to this practice is found in the Sumerian Maqlu (The Burnt Tablets), where we read: "His knot is open, his witchcraft has been cancelled, and his spells now fill the desert." The blowing itself, the bad breath and the spit, are considered an enemy's curse. Along these lines, Babylonian writings define an "evil one" as "the one with an evil face, mouth, tongue, eye, lip, and saliva." Well known in Arabia long before the advent of Islam, these knots were used to tie good and evil forces in equal measure. As he left his home, an Arab would tie a knot around a branch of a hedge. If upon his return he discovered that the knot had been undone, he understood that his wife had betrayed him. A similar practice is followed today in the oases of the Sahara desert, where healers make eleven knots in a red or black woolen thread, reciting at each knot the appropriate invocations in a soft voice. They then wrap the thread around the head of anyone who wishes to be healed of eye discomfort. Muslim tradition mentions a particular situation of this in relation to Muhammad. A sorcerer had made eleven knots in a rope, reciting spell-like formulas in order to do harm to the Prophet, who then became ill. He returned to normal health only after having recited Q 113 and 114 eleven times."²

Shawkat M. Toorawa terms it as Supernatural Evil: "These sorceresses tied knots in cord or rope and then whispered incantation and imprecation upon them. Certain commentators actually identify these sorceresses, naming among others the daughters of a certain Labid: this is the very same man whose casting of a spell on the Prophet Muhammad is said to have occasioned the revelation of suras 113 and 114. Labid and his daughters are reported to have tied eleven knots in a cord which they hid in a well. The cord was retrieved (by Ali in some accounts) and they came undone, one by one, as each successive verse was recited, five in Sura 113, and six in Sura 114."³

Jusuf Al-Qaradawi writes on Islam's verdict on magic: "The Prophet says: *Those who blow on knots engage in magic, and those who engage in magic commit Schirk (paganism).*"⁴

"If Sura 113 from the Qur'an warns against knot blowers, this is an indication of the presence of mystical thought in Vico's sense, for as is thought by many peoples, including the Arabs, the starting point of all linguistic magic lies in breath as the site of the soul and the beginning of all language."⁵

In this context, Navid Kermani points out that in Arabic the two words "soul" and "breath" derive from the same root (*nafs* for soul and *nafasa* for breathe). The link between soul and breath can be seen very nicely in the Qur'an formulation *ida nafahtu fihi min ruhi* (When I blow into him from My spirit) that stands for God's act of creation.



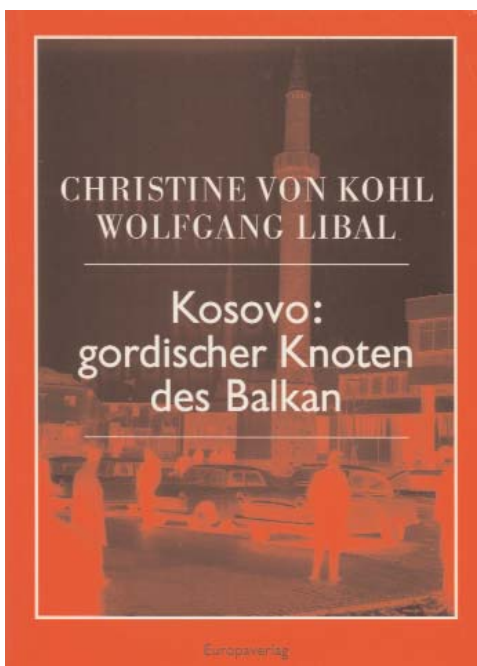
Together with Yard. Doc. Dr. (Assistant Professor) Ahmet Hamdi FURAT at Istanbul University, Faculty of Theology, Nov. 2007

Prof. Dr. Mevlut Gungor from Istanbul University, Faculty of Theology, mentions that the word "ukad" at the 4th verse derives from "akide" which basically means "the faith" and it is also possible to take "the faith" as a knot between God and man. It is not a common islamic interpretation, actually it is his own opinion.

Already in 1956 Toshihiko Izutsu wrote: "The fourth verse speaking of *'the blowers upon the knot's "an-naffathatu fi l-'uqad"* refers to the very wide-spread custom of witches who, 'in the darkness of night when it is intense', tie knots in string and blow upon them with imprecatory words in order to injure the persons they hate and envy. We are now in a position to understand the reason why in the world of animistic practice the human voice is universally considered so sacred and awful. If the soul-stuff of man may be so easily sent out of his bodily frame, still more must this be the case with his breath, for a man's breath, as we have just seen, is, in primitive mode of thinking, even directly identified with his soul. And if, further, the soul-breath may escape through sneezing, yawning, or blowing, the same can hardly fail to happen in the act of uttering the voice; every time a man utters a voice, something of his soul is sure to go out of his body."⁶

And Annemarie Schimmel linked this motif to the Gordion knot asking: "The Gordian knot? What is of the kind that women knew to weave and into which they blew curses? Still today there are women with such powers, for feelings in the Orient are tempestuous in love and hate. In Gordion, I began to realize that the art of tying ruin-bringing knots had not been banned from the world by Alexander's sword."⁷

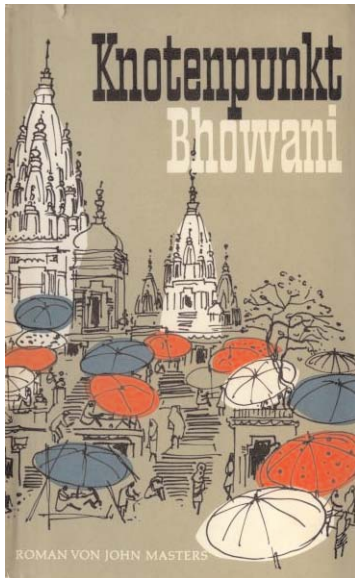
knotty



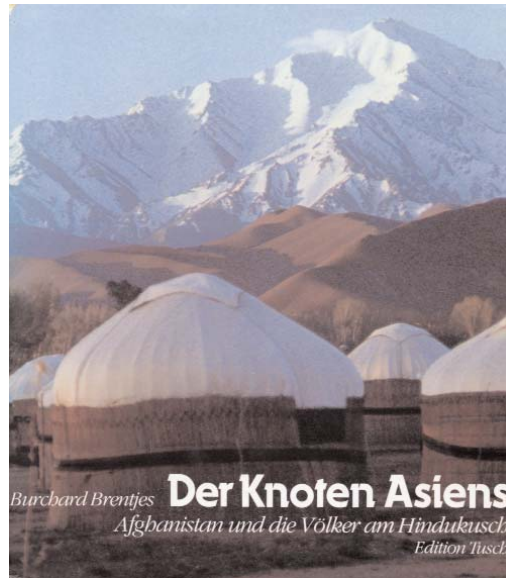
Ernst Jünger described it as follows: "The Gordian knot is to be understood as a question of fate: it ties itself over and over again as the question is constantly posed anew. Alexander's sword appears in a new light, enlightenment in a higher, solar sense, doubt, mental power. The point is not that it is a sword: the myths are full of images in which the early encounter of substance and spirit is described. The weapons of the great conqueror: Hercules' bow, Perseus' shield, and Sigurd's sword are signs of light. In them is reflected the double symmetry of the mind, while the symmetry of the vegetative system is reflected in webs, labyrinths, and serpent's bodies."⁸

In 1992, 7 years before NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the Kosovo War, Christine von Kohl and Wolfgang Libal relocated this allegory to *Kosovo: Gordian knot of the Balkans*.

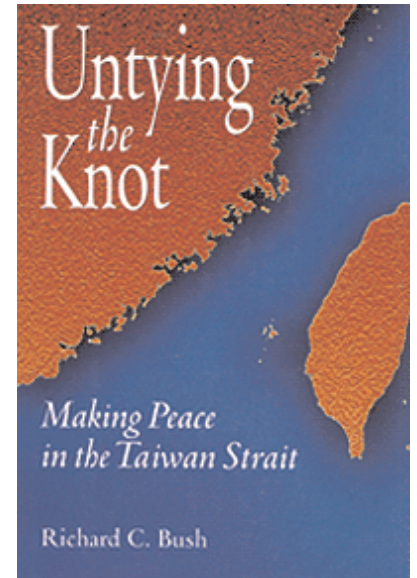
It is not surprising that this knot motif is used over and over again as a symbol: for example, when John Masters titles his novel about the situation in India in 1946 just before the withdrawal of the British after the fictive railroad junction Bhowani, when Burchard Brentjes speaks of the the "knot" of Asia in referring to Afghanistan and the peoples of Hindu Kush, or when Richard C. Bush labels the paradoxical relationship between Taiwan and China "Untying the Knot - Making Peace in the Taiwan Strait". And it is not for nothing that Ernst Jünger refused to title his 1953 study *East and West*, instead calling it *The Gordian Knot*.



Masters, John:
Bhowani Junction.
Blanvalet Berlin 1955,
book cover



Brentjes, Burchard:
The knot of Asia.
Edition Tusch, Vienna 1984,
book cover



Bush, Richard C.:
Untying the Knot.
The Brookings Institution,
Washington 2005, book cover

The expression Gordian knot refers to the legend of the artfully knotted ropes of King Gordios of Phrygia from Greek antiquity, tied by the gods. They were supposed to link inseparably the draw bar of the wagon blessed by Zeus from the yoke. According to legend, an oracle prophesied that only the person who could untie the knot could achieve domination over Asia. Many clever and strong men tried themselves at this task, but none succeeded. In Spring 334/333 BC, Alexander the Great is supposed to have broken through the knot simply using his sword, then beginning his victorious march through Asia. Aristobulus, who is to have consulted Alexander on his campaigns, is later supposed to have suggested an alternate solution:

"One could also have just pulled out the peg that holds together the yoke from the draw bar, and then separate the yoke from the wagon. The knot would then have opened on its own."



Jean-Simon Berthélemy (1743 - 1811)
Alexander cuts the Gordian knot

Regarding this question one could also follow Piotr Pieranski and Andrzej Stasiak's idea of a **Gordian unknot**. Keith Delvin reports in the September 13, 2001 Guardian that "A Polish physicist [Piotr Pieranski of Poznan] and a Swiss biologist [Andrzej Stasiak of Lausanne] have used computer simulation to recreate what might have been the Gordian knot." His piece is entitled "Unravelling the myth." Pieranski and Stasiak argue that the knot could not have had any free ends, so the cord was actually a circle. But if the circle had been topologically knotted, the problem would have been mathematically impossible, and therefore not a fair challenge. So the circle itself was tied into what had to be an unknot, and only the thickness of the cord made it impossible to loosen it.



For example, the knot might have been tied in a wet cord which was then allowed to dry, and perhaps to shrink itself into an impossible configuration. Pieranski and Stasiak, motivated by interest in string theory and in the knotting of biological molecules, respectively, used a computer program to simulate the manipulation of such knots, and have found one so obdurate that maybe it has the structure of the original puzzle that Alexander "solved". Pieranski and Stasiak have been studying knots that can be constructed from real, physical material, that has, in particular, a fixed diameter. This restriction makes the subject very different from the knot theory traditionally studied by mathematicians. Pieranski has developed a computer program, called SONO (Shrink-On-No-Overlaps) to simulate the manipulation of such knots.

Using this program, he showed that most ways of trying to construct a Gordian knot will fail. SONO eventually found a way to unravel them. But recently he discovered a knot that worked. SONO - which had not been programmed to make use of an algorithmic sword - was unable to unravel it. Maybe, just maybe, he had discovered the actual structure of the Gordian knot! Here it is:

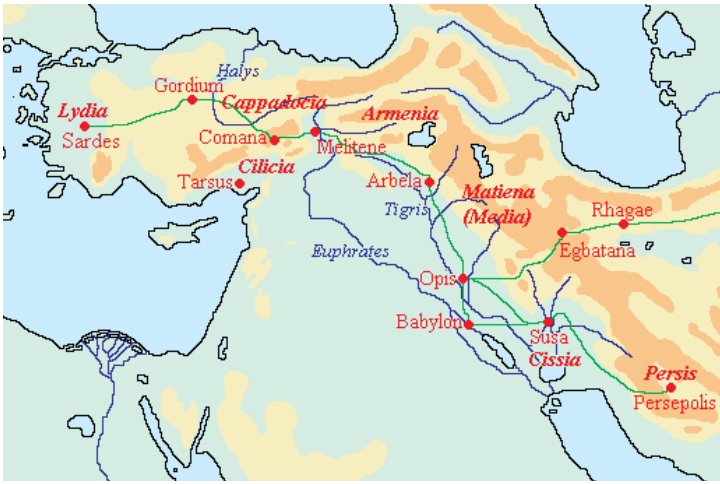
To construct Pieranski's knot, you fold a circular loop of rope and tie two multiple overhand knots in it. You then pass the end loops over the entangled domains. Then you shrink the rope until it is tight. With this structure, there is not enough rope to allow the manipulations necessary to unravel it.⁷⁹

Or was the Gordian knot of animal nature, worms that mate in intricately knotted masses called Gordius (Nematomorpha: Gordioidea)? Do - by each try to cut them - new worms come into being? Dr. Birger Neuhaus, curator "Vermes" at the Museum of Natural History in Berlin negates: she says this species is not able to regenerate after division.



2 images of the worm shot by Jochen Lempert 2006¹⁰

Is there a link between the Gordian knot and the ancient Arabian motif of women blowing imprecations into knots which we know from the 113th sura "al-Falaq" of the Qur'an and could it be considered as another form of a "**blowjob**" which we know and practice in a different connotation today?



Being knot sura about this case we finally decided to make our own research heading for Gordium in autumn 2007, the capital of ancient Phrygia, modern Yassihüyük. It is located about 100 km near town Polatli southwest of modern Ankara, the capital of Turkey. The ancient city is also called Gordiyon in Turkey. Gordium is situated on the place where the ancient Royal road between Lydia and Assyria/Babylonia crosses the river Sangarius (Sakarya), which flows from central Anatolia to the Black Sea. Remains of the road are still visible....

...on 9th of October 2007 - just two days after the killing of 13 Turkish soldiers in southeastern Turkey by Kurdish radicals of the PKK¹¹ - we entered the Republic of Turkey by plane landing in Antalya; we first went by car to the Lycian shore to Çukurbag peninsula near Kas, meaning “eyebrow”, where we stayed for two weeks facing the small Greek island Meis. And like Alexander the Great we received a friendly reception from the locals. Thus on a trip to the sunken city of Kekova it was like a broad hint to discover an uncommon book between the numerous tourist guides displayed in a supermarket in the small village of Üçađız. It's title **“The Kurdish knot”** by Hannes Reichmann & Alexander Foggensteiner caught my eye. It is a book about the genocide in the shadow of the First Gulf War published in Vienna in 1988.





Leaving Kas on 23th of October we took the night bus via Fethiye to Ankara; at dawn of the next day we settled in Ankara Citadel. The Old City and its fortress, the Ankara Kalesi, besieged and stormed on many occasions, are built on a 120m/394ft high andesite ridge facing the oldest of Ankara's gecekondu quarters, AltinDag. In Turkish, "gece" means night and "kondu" means placed or put; thus the term "gecekondu" literally means placed (built) overnight. In common usage, it refers to the low cost apartment buildings or houses that were constructed in a very short time by people migrating from rural areas to the outskirts of the large cities. Robert Neuwirth writes in his book "Shadow Cities"¹² that these squatters are exploiting a legal loophole which states that if one starts building after dusk and moves into a completed house before dawn the same day without having being noticed by the authorities, then the next day the authorities are not permitted to tear the building down but instead must begin a legal proceeding in court (and thus it is more likely one can stay).



On 25th of October we rented a car driving to Yassihüyük, climbing the hill to Gordion excavations...