The constellation Perseus, after Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi. It is depicted as if on a globe; that is, the mirror image of the way the stars appear in the sky. The brightest star in the severed head of Medusa is labelled 'al-ghul' ('Algol'), an abbreviation of the Arabic 'ra's al-ghul', 'the Demon's Head' (for Ptolemy's 'Gorgon-head'). Algol is a variable star and this was recognized in the West in the seventeenth century (see page 203), but there is no convincing evidence that the earlier use of the word 'demon' implies that Ptolemy or his Islamic successors knew of this variability.

from early in the fourteenth century, were to dominate this aspect of Latin astronomy into the Renaissance.

The first revision of the star catalogue in the Almagest was due to an astronomer who worked in Persia and in Baghdad, Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi (903–86). In his Book on the Constellations of Fixed Stars he gave improved magnitudes, and Arabic versions of the identifications, but left both the stars themselves and their (often inaccurate) relative positions unchanged. This is a symptom of the lack of commitment to observation that was common among Islamic astronomers: despite their industry in applying mathematics to astronomy, their workplace was often the