

IDRĪS/ENOCH AS A PROMETHEAN SCIENTIST IN THE ARABIC TRADITION
- THE CASE OF GEOMANCY AND AUTHORSHIP -



Ne l'ora che non può 'l calor diurno
intepidar più 'l freddo de la luna
vinto da terra e talor da Saturno

quando i geomanti lor Maggior Fortuna
veggiono in Orïente, inanzi a l'alba
surger per via che poco le sta bruna,

mi venne in sogno una femmina balba
ne li occhi guercia, e sovra i piè distorta,
con le man monche, e di colore scialba.

(Purgatorio XIX, 1-9)

HERMES I – IDRĪS - ENOCH

Abū Maʿšar al-Balḥī the astrologer said in the *Book of the Thousands*: “There are three Hermes. The first one of them is the Hermes who lived before the Flood. ‘Hermes’ is a title (*laqab*), the same as ‘Caesar’, and ‘Ḥusraw’. The Persians named him ʾbnğhđ (the Just) in their biographies of the kings. The Ḥarrānians recognised his wisdom; the Persians states also that his grandfather was Ğayūmart, that is Adam. The Hebrew speaking people (*Ibrāniyyūn*) state that he is Enoch (*Ḥunūh*), which is Idrīs in Arabic.”

Abū Maʿšar said: “He was the first to discuss the celestial phenomena of the movements of the stars, and his grandfather Ğayūmart taught him the hours of the night and the day. He was the first who built temples and glorified God in them. He was the one who first investigated medicine and to discuss it. He composed for his contemporaries odes in poetic meter and renowned verses on terrestrial and celestial things. [...]”

It is reported by the account transmitted from the early Muslims (*al-salaf*) that Idrīs was the first to study books and to investigate sciences. God sent thirty leaves (*ṣaḥīfa*) down to him. He was the first to sew clothing and to wear it. God raised him to a high place.

Ibn Ğulğul (m. 994 ca.) *Ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ wa-l-ḥukamāʾ*

(The Generations of the Physicians and the Philosophers)

Historians, experts in stories of the prophets and authors of *tafsīr* have already mentioned Idrīs. However, I will report what the sages said in particular about his birth, his place of origin, and from whom he learnt science before receiving the prophecy. It is said that Egypt was his birthplace, and that he was called ‘the Hermes of the Hermeses’. In Greek he is called *Irmīs*, name which has been given the Arabic form of *Hirmis*. The meaning of *Irmīs* is Mercury (‘*Uṭārid*). Others said that his Greek name was *Ṭirmīs*. Among those who speak Hebrew he is called him *Ḥunūḥ* (Enoch), *Aḥnūḥ* in Arabic, and God—May his Majesty be exalted—mentioned him as Idrīs in His Book in eloquent Arabic. [...]

Some others said that he was born in Babylon, where he grew up and learnt in his childhood from Šayt son of Adam, the great-great grandfather of his father Yārid. [...]

And God taught him all the 72 different languages spoken by the people in his times, so that he could teach them. He taught them how to build cities and how to live there, he himself built cities in all the parts of the world, and they were at least 188. He taught the sciences and he was the first to discover philosophy and astronomy (*ḥikmat wa ‘ilm al-nuġūm*). God—May his Majesty be exalted—revealed him the secrets of agriculture and of all the celestial bodies.

Ibn al-Qiftī (m. 1248) *Tāʾrīḥ al-ḥukamāʾ*
(History of the Learned Men)

UNVEILING OF THE SECRETS OF THE STREET ASTROLOGERS.

‘You should know that the people of this group are called ‘the strangers’, and their matters have nothing to do with rational analogical thinking. They have complicated tricks, which cannot be identified nor described. In fact, among them there are those who sell talismans, those who speak the secret language of the letter *sīn*, or speak in quatrain, or in other similar ways, and this is mentioned in the appropriate place of this book. To them belong those who make birth horoscopes, those who use the illustrated book (*bulhān*), diviners, those who use a magic box, and those who use the wand (dowsers). But among them there are also those who master the different kinds of divination: among these practices there is the divination with the ringstones ascribed to the sixth Imam Ġa‘far al-Sādiq, may God be pleased by him. Among those practices, there is the divination by birds (ornithomancy), the divination by cities, by food, by circles, houses/lunar mansions, by names, by the propitious stars. There are many other kinds of divination that we are not going to mention for the sake of brevity. Among the diviners, there are those who use sheets of paper: these are left to float on the water and then a piece of writing appears on them; and among them there are those who warm the sheets of paper (on a flame), and then the written response appears either with good news or with a warning. You should know that the experts of these sheets are more despicable than the astrologers, and the astrologers of the hours in the same way. In fact everyone has an aversion for those who have tricks and secrets. And now I will mention these many different varieties in a concise and abridged form, if it is God’s will.’

al-Ġawbarī (fl. 1222) *Kitāb al-muḥtār fī kašf al-asrār*

(The Book of the Selected Disclosure of Secrets)

REVELATION OF GEOMANCY TO IDRĪS

1. A DISGUISED PROPHET

ABOUT THE UNVEILING OF THE SECRETS OF THE SAND AND ITS SCIENCE.

You should know that geomancy is a noble kind of knowledge, belonging to the most outstanding sciences. It was taught by God, may His majesty be exalted, to His prophet Idrīs, the Peace and the Prayer of God upon our Prophet and upon him.

In these circumstances, God revealed him his prophecy as well, and this happened when God sent Idrīs, in a time of false prophecy. Idrīs did not use to demonstrate his prophecy, nor to speak through it, out of fear of being killed. He used to hide from his people and worship God on the shores of the sea.

2. THE MEETING WITH GABRIEL

One day he was worshipping God, when Gabriel—Peace be upon him—appeared to him in the form of a man, he greeted Idrīs and then they sat together talking. Then Gabriel levelled the sand and traced some lines on it.

Then he looked at Idrīs and said:

- “Your name is Idrīs.”, and he answered:

- “Yes, it is.”

- “You are a prophet, and you are concealing your prophecy”, and Idrīs answered:

- “Yes, I am.”

- “This and that has been accomplished by you”, and Idrīs answered:

- “Yes”, and then Gabriel said:

- “You will show your prophecy and this and this will be part of your task.”

And then Gabriel explained him everything about it. Idrīs was amazed by the speech he had just heard and asked:

- “Oh brother, how have you learnt all this?”, and Gabriel answered:

- “This is something called science of the sand (*‘ilm al-raml*)”.

And it is called science of the sand only because Gabriel explained it on the sand, and it was learnt through this mean, but Gabriel should have called it rather science of the accurate analysis (*‘ilm al-ramm*).

3. THE TEACHING

Then Idrīs said:

- “I ask you, in the Name of God, to teach me what you have learnt.” and Gabriel answered:

- “With great pleasure. And if you want to do this, let’s meet everyday in this very place and then I will teach you.” And Idrīs took his leave.

The heart of Idrīs was overwhelmed by what had happened, so when the morning arrived he went to the place they had arranged, and there found Gabriel, who was standing to greet him. Idrīs greeted back, then they sat together. So Gabriel started to teach Idrīs for several days, until it appeared clear to him that Idrīs had mastered the science. Then he told him:

- “You have really learnt this science.” So Idrīs traced the geomantic lines to ask whether Gabriel was on the earth or in the sky. So Idrīs traced the signs, observed them and said:

- “Now Gabriel is on the earth”, and Gabriel said:

- “So check in every climate to see where he is.” So Idrīs looked at the sand, then at him and said:

- “If Gabriel were human, you would be Gabriel...”, and Idrīs turned to look at him, but he could not find him, and he was deeply amazed by this.

4. THE HARĀMISA

Then he went to his people and gathered the elders and said them:
- “I have learnt a precious science.” Everyone who had some thought in his heart or some issue kept secret from him was transparent to Idrīs. He himself in turn kept secret from all of them what he had in his own heart. Then he started to reveal them what he could read in their hearts, and they were amazed by this.

So they told him:

- “We ask you to teach us this science.” So he selected forty of them, who were the leaders of the different tribes and started to instruct them. These people were the famous ‘Hermeses’ (*Harāmisa*), the disciples of Idrīs, Peace be upon him. He taught them regularly until he was sure that they had reached his same level in this science.



Hermes Trismegistos, Cathedral of Siena (particular)

5. IDRĪS' STRATAGEM

When Idrīs realized this, he gathered all of them and said:

- "I want you to know that yesterday I was walking on the sand, when it appeared to me that God has sent a prophet, and he is a true prophet". So everyone of them drew on the sand asking about this, and all of them traced the lines with a complete agreement among all of them. And Idrīs said:

- "If there is agreement and this is true, then cast the geomantic lines to understand in which climate he is, so that we can find him. And then we will believe in him. "

So all of them drew the geomantic lines all together, and all of them had the same answer:

- "He is in our climate", and Idrīs said:

- "Praise be to God, who does not trouble us (with a complex search)."

So they traced the geomantic lines to know in which country the prophet was, and they said:

- "He is in this very country", and Idrīs asked:

- "In which house is he?", and they answered:

- "In this very house, where we are", and they kept on inquiring until they said:

- "He is among us!" "You are the prophet!" "Of course!". And they added:

- "We will keep it secret until we have reached the tribes we are leading, and have given them this joyful news. Then we will make them swear and will bring them to you; whereas we will kill those who refuse and oppose you."

Then they separated, went to their tribes and told them this story. The great majority of people said:

- "You will lead us and what pleases your soul, and so we will be with you in subordination."

The great majority of the people believed in Idrīs, Peace be upon him, and God the Highest showed his porphecy through the sand.

6. AL-ĠAWBARĪ'S LAST REMARKS

In fact in the poem in *raġaz* verses, which was composed on the science of sand, it is said:

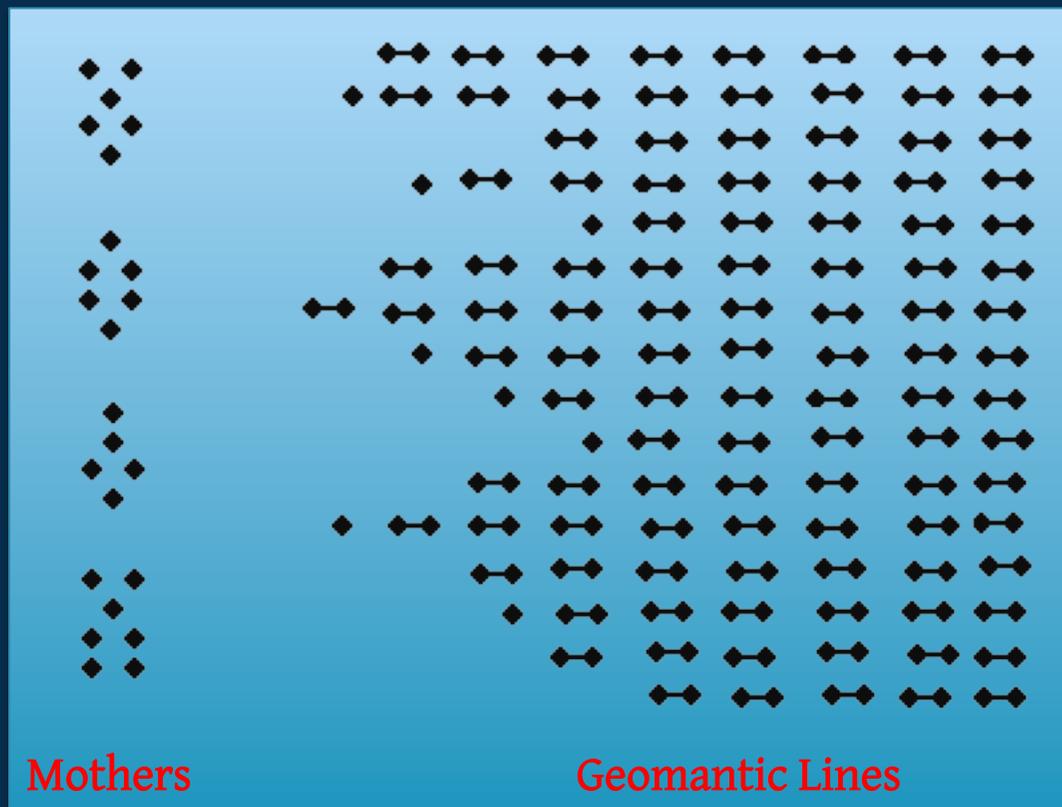
“And with this God revealed to a Hermes * his mission, when he had lost his hope.”

And also the Lord of the emissaries and seal of the prophets said to a believer who asked about the science of the sand: “There was a prophet who used to draw on the sand, and what his lines said, was to be considered true”.

Among the ones who practice this knowledge to obtain profit, no one has obtained something equal to the knowledge of divination and birth horoscope. And when he draws sixteen figures, he leaves the science going back to the foolishness, and cannot perform it correctly, in spite of all his efforts. And this means that every speech of the people is resumed by four signs/words. And these signs mean that your question is asked in the house of the movements, connected to the house of the result, which means a movement, looking for the connection and asking about the result. Then it is heard, considered, answered, but the answer is not based at all on the principles of the science, but rather on palpitations of the heart. So because of this, they throw science behind their backs, they base it on falsehood, and this way science gets lost. And this implies that this science is not perfect. Since a true science cannot be discredited, and the error has to be found in those who pretend to know it without the requirements to practice it, and the same can be said for all the sciences.

CASTING A GEOMANTIC TABLEAU (step by step)

Casting the Points – The Mothers



- Sixteen lines of points, from left to right

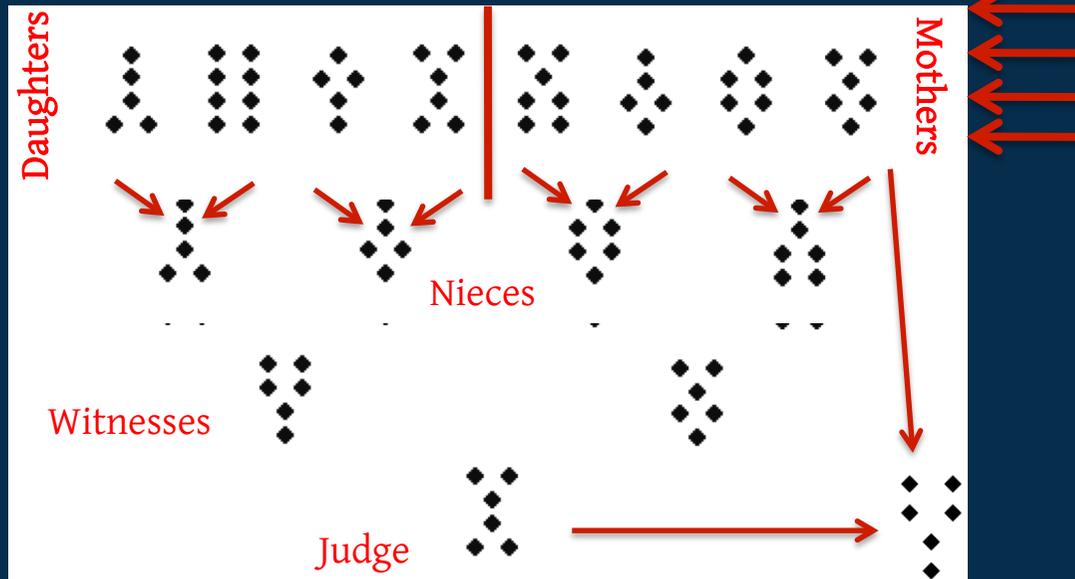
- No effort to count the dots

- A single dot is associated with an odd line, two dots to a even line

- In groups of four, the lines and the dots associated with them form the first four figures, called “the Mothers” (*Matres*)

DAUGHTERS AND NIECES

(not to speak about the others)



Add the point of the mothers sideways from left to right to obtain the *Daughters*

Add together the points of the figures in pairs, from left to right to obtain the *Nieces*

One last figure and a second judge can be created from the 1st and the 15th figures.

With the same system, other four figures are created in turn: the witnesses (*testes*) and the judge (*iudex*)

THE GEOMANTIC FIGURES

al-Ġawdala
(Puella)



al-Iḥyān
(Laetitia)



Rāyat al-farḥ
(Caput Draconis)



al-Bayād
(Albus)



al-Naqī
(Puer)



al-ʿAtaba al-ḥāriġa
(Cauda Draconis)



al-Ḥumra
(Rubeus)



al-Inkīs
(Tristitia)



al-Naṣrat al-ḥāriġa
(Fortuna Minor)



al-Tiqāf / al-ʿUqla
(Carcer)



al-Iġtimāʿ
(Coniunctio)



al-Ṭarīq
(Via)

al-Naṣrat al-dāḥila
(Fortuna Maior)



al-Qabḍ al-ḥāriġ
(Amissio)

al-Ġamāʿa
(Populus)



al-Qabḍ al-dāḥil
(Acquisitio)

GEOMANTIC HOUSES

1. BAYT AL-NAFS
Vita
(life, innermost, happiness)

2. BAYT AL-MĀL
Lucrum
(property and profit)

3. BAYT AL-IḤWA
Fratres
(siblings, law, religion, duty)

4. BAYT AL-ABNĀʿ
Genitor
(fathers, house, reading)

5. BAYT AL-AFRĀH
Nati
(offspring, book and writings)

6. BAYT AL-IʿLĀL
Valetudo
(Illnesses, chronic or not)

7. BAYT AL-NISĀʿ
Uxor
(bed, intercourses, women desires)

8. BAYT AL-MAWT
Mors
(fear, inheritnce, passionate love, loss of mind.)

9. BAYT AL-SAFAR
Iter
(travel, movement, road, religion, ḡihād, religious law, books)

10. BAYT AL-SULṬĀN
Regnum
(King&Sultan, rising and fall)

11. BAYT AL-WAĠĀʿ
Benefacta
(success in every effort and trade)

12. BAYT AL-AʿDĀM
Carcer
(distress, fall, jail, enemies)



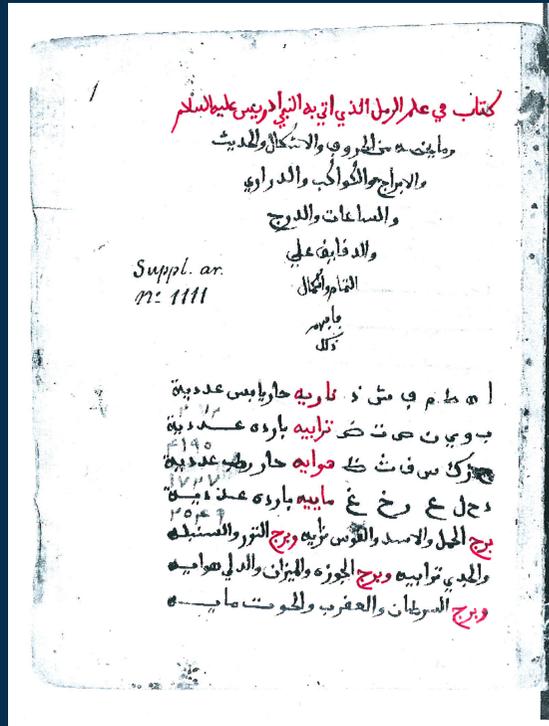
13. QUESTIONER

14. OBJECT OF INQUIRY

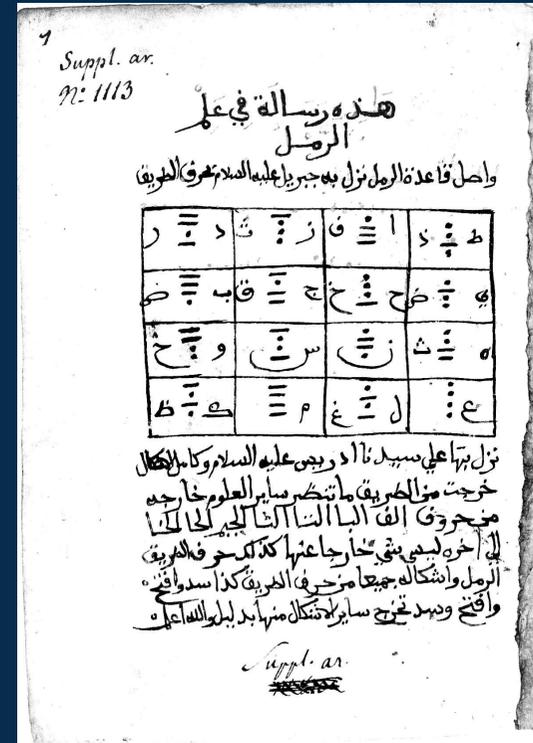
15. RESULT

16. RESULT OF THE RESULT





Book on the ‘Science of Sand’ which was given to the Prophet Idrīs, Peace be upon him, and the letters, the forms, the tales, the zodiac signs, the celestial bodies, the hours, the cycles, the minutes specifically associated to it in a perfect way. So learn this...



This is the composition on the ‘Science of Sand’ and Gabriel—peace be upon him—descended with the origin of the foundation of the (science of) the sand together with the letters, and he descended upon our Lord Idrīs —peace be upon him—completed with the figures which are not included among the letters used by the other sciences, namely *al-alīf*, *al-bāʾ*, *al-tāʾ*, *al-ṭāʾ*, *al-ḡīm*, *al-ḥāʾ*, *al-ḥāʾ*, until their end.

PARIS AR. 2631 – LIST OF CONTENTS

[1r] Frontispice, stating the authorship of Idrīs/Enoch, the letters connected to the figures, and their physical nature (warm, cold, moist, dry, etc).

[1v] List of the geomantic figures.

[9r] Table of relations among the geomantic figures.

[11r] Geomantic practice following ‘Abd Allah al-Zanātī.

[16v] Triplets, or how a geomantic figure has a particular meaning when influenced by its generative componenets.

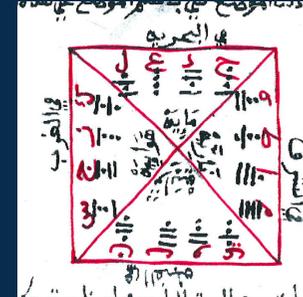
[56v-57r] Description of the geomantic Houses and their attributes.

[60r] Figures in association with colours, food, cereals, trees, gardens, water, spices.

[63r-64v] Figures in association with body parts and illnesses.

[67v] ‘Late Prologue’, sequence of the figure in the revelation.

[71v] Systems to determine the position of the moon in its mansions and in the zodiac signs.



Paris Ar. 2631, f. 65r

PARIS AR. 2631 – ‘*De liceitate Geomantiae*’
(*De Liceitate Geomantiae*)

[67v] Geomancy is so useful because this science is a noble science, that can show the past and the future. Indeed the prophets have already dealt with this science, and it is said that they were the first ones to do so. Some learned men say that the origin of this science is to be attributed to Daniel, Noah, Jeremiah and Idrīs—Peace be upon them.

And the very first to deal with this science was the prophet Jeremiah—Peace be upon him—and it happened in this way: there were people who used to observe the stars, and everything that was not connected to this issue was simply ignored. They had mastered this practice and God—may He be praised and exalted—ordered to reveal them a science capable to distract them from this, that is from the motions of the stars.

So God sent Gabriel—Peace be upon him—with this science. And this is the science of the signs that God the Highest made descend in circumstances similar to those of this Quranic verse “Bring me a scripture [revealed] before this or a [remaining] trace of knowledge, if you should be truthful” (*al-Aḥqāf*, Qur. 46:10). And God the Highest said: “and had taught him from Us a [certain] knowledge” (*al-Kahf*, Qur. 28:65).

And Jeremiah—Peace be upon him—practiced this science and the result/calendar, the hidden secret. He shared them with his people, who were astonished by such secrets. And everything revealed by Gabriel—Peace be upon him—came in the form of a geomantic figure.

AL-NUṢRAT AL-DĀḤILA - FORTUNA MAIOR



PARIS AR. 2631

[7r] SECTION ON THE FIGURE *FORTUNA MAIOR*

(*al-Nuṣrat al-dāḥila*):

this figure is the master of the 12th house, the house of destruction, envy, devastation. This figure has the favour of the planet Venus and is related to Fridays, and God knows best about the joy given to the hearts by the desire of the object of inquiry: peace and protection, favours from women, travel and pilgrimage, visits to friends and holy places, the multiplication of benefits. Since all these things are harmful obstacles, but the questioner will take it as a good omen, a coming good and a future luck.

And if you ask about his trade or craft, then you will be satisfied.

And if you ask about the Sultan, then you will obtain a high position at his court.

And if you ask about sea travels or explorations into the wild, then you will be successful.

And if you ask about your need to obtain power, then you will triumph over your opponents, and may thanks be given to God for what he has sent to you.

[7v] And now pay attention to the words that the narrator has for you:

“Victory comes from God and success is close • Your enemies are advancing but you are lucky

The Fortun Maior tells you so • and so offer thanks to God, the Responder to prayers”.

PARIS AR. 2631

[26v] SECTION ON THE *FORTUNA MAIOR*

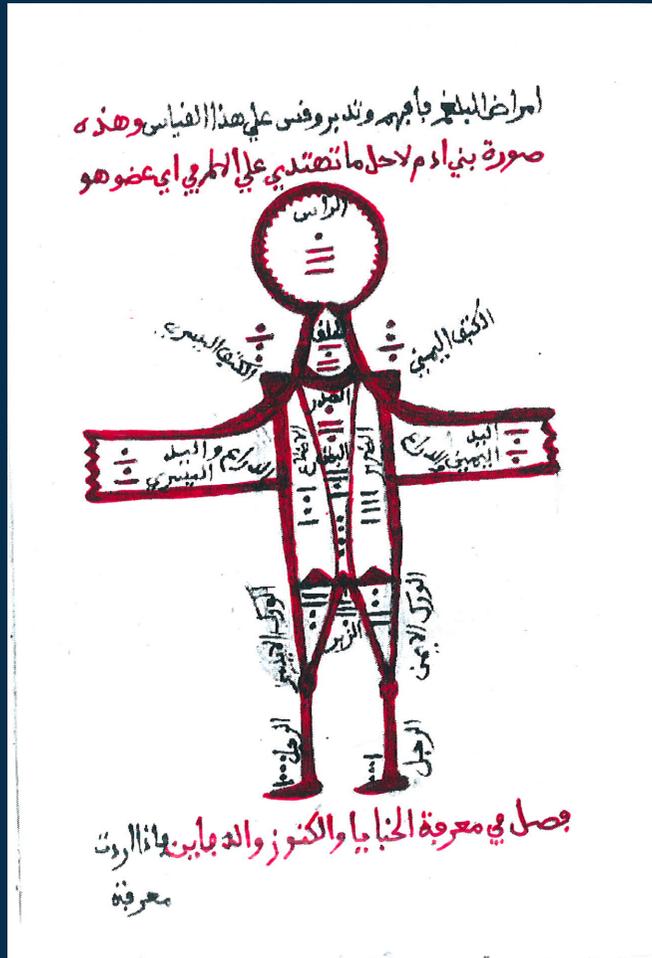
(*al-Nuṣrat al-dāḥila*):

to this figure the letter *wāw* is associated from above, while the letter *tā'* from below. If it appears in the first house, then the questioner has been defeated, or humiliated, or imprisoned, or he is ill. Or maybe he asks about a loss and he receives the information for which he has asked, since the figure appears in the sixth house, that is the house of loss.

Or maybe the *Cauda Draconis* (*al-ʿatabat al-ḥāriḡa*) appears, and this is a sign of loss since it is the fifth.

And if the *Fortuna Maior* appears [27r] either in the first or in the fifteenth house, then the object of inquiry comes from the impeding request, and this is the inquiry which prevents from fulfilling a desire, since it is the fourteenth house. If the *Fortuna Maior* appears in the sixteenth house, then the questioner leaves his home land for the apparition of a conjunction, which means emptiness, since the *Amissio* (*al-qabḍ al-ḥāriḡ*) come after the *Laetitia* (*al-aḥyān*).

GEOMANCY AND MEDICINE



[63r] SECTION ON THE BODY PARTS:

That is the disposition of the figures described by the experts in this science, through which one can obtain information about a sick man, in this way one can discover the illness and the part of the body involved, and God knows best.

And the way to do it is: if you are asked about a sick man, and you want to know about his sickness, in any part of the body, and which part is suffering, then cast a geomantic tableau with this purpose. As first thing, trace the signs in the sixth house and obtain a figure. Then check which figure you have obtained, and so you will know that the illness is in a certain part.

However, every figure is connected with an illness as well, but with a different system of association.



ONLY ON WEDNESDAYS

Thank you