

THE REWORKING OF THE EARLIEST LATIN  
TEXTS ON GEOMANCY (*ARS GEOMANTIAE*,  
*ESTIMAVERUNT INDI, SI QUIS PER ARTEM GEOMANTICAM*,  
*DESIDERANTIBUS*) IN THE CONTEXT OF GEOMANTIC  
COLLECTIONS AND COMPILATIONS

ALESSANDRO PALAZZO

1. Introduction

The first Latin texts on geomancy that appeared in the Middle Ages are believed to be translations from Arabic originals. The *Ars geomantiae*, usually regarded in modern scholarship as the first geomancy to circulate,<sup>1</sup> was translated into Latin by Hugo of Santalla around the mid-twelfth century.<sup>2</sup> The work known as *Estimaverunt Indi*, so named from its incipit, is a translation of an anonymous Arabic text; even though we do not have certain information about when exactly the text was translated nor about the name of the translator, it is nevertheless likely that the translation took place sometime in the twelfth century. Another early geomantic text, known as *Si quis per artem geomanticam*

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<sup>1</sup> P. TANNERY, “Le Rabolion” II. “L’introduction de la géomancie en Occident et le traducteur Hugo Sancelliensis”, in *Mémoires Scientifiques*, publiés par J.L. HEIBERG, vol. IV, Toulouse-Paris 1920, 318-353: 328, 343 Only after completing the present paper did I have the opportunity to read a study by Charles Burnett (“Gerard of Cremona’s Involvement in Alchemy, Divination and the Occult: A Study with Sample Texts”) arguing that the *Estimaverunt Indi* should be attributed to Gerard of Cremona. Moreover, I also learned that David Juste, in another study, argues that the *Si quis per artem geomanticam*, usually attributed to Gerard of Cremona, was actually a *reportatio* composed by his listeners.

<sup>2</sup> P. ARFÉ, “Attorno all’edizione dell’*Ars geomantiae*: le fonti esplicite e implicite”, in *Quaestio*, 19 (2019), 101-128: 113, 122, based on a number of elements (a quotation from Plato of Tivoli’s translation of the *Centiloquium*, the dedication to the bishop Michael of Tarazona, and two documents connecting Hugo with Tarazona), hypothesizes the time frame between 1145 and 1151 or, more likely, towards 1147.

from its incipit, was ascribed to Gerard of Cremona and achieved wide currency, being preserved in a large number of manuscripts.<sup>3</sup> Finally, another important geomantic treatise that appeared rather early was the *Desiderantibus verum et certum iudicium dare*, whose composition is believed to date from the first half of the thirteenth century. The text circulated initially in anonymous form and was then attributed to Peter of Abano, but it is unclear whether it was written originally in Latin or translated from an Arabic source.<sup>4</sup>

These first geomantic texts are technical treatises illustrating the steps of the geomantic technique. As is well known, this divinatory method consists of two main stages. In the first operative phase four figures (*matres*) are obtained from sixteen rows of dots traced on sand or similar material, without counting them, moving from right to left (“casting of the dots”), and from these first four images are then derived, according to a numerical automatism, the images occupying the other compartments (*domus*) of a chart divided into fifteen slots. The second stage is the interpretation of the geomantic tableau according to specific rules and complex methods. This part of the procedure also involves a psychological analysis of the mind of the consultant by the geomancer.

A comparison of the above texts in terms of their contents and structure shows that while all deal with the geomantic method and its technicalities, they are generally not exhaustive, since they do not cover all the elements and parts of geomancy, but, depending on their primary intention, tend to focus on some of its aspects at the expense of others. This selective approach is a consequence of the fact that all these texts have a modular structure. In other words, they are comprised of independent textual units examining different steps of the geomantic technique.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The list of Gerard’s translations drawn up by his disciples includes an entry on geomancy: see *Commemoratio librorum*, in C. BURNETT, “The Coherence of the Arabic-Latin Translation Program in Toledo in the Twelfth Century”, in *Science in Context*, 14 (2011), 249-288: 280: “De geomantia <68> Liber geomantie de artibus divinatoriis”. Only the manuscript Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, 4° 1148, ff. 223v-234v adds “qui incipit: estimaverunt Indi” after those words.

<sup>4</sup> T. CHARMASSON, *Recherches sur une technique divinatoire: la géomancie dans l’Occident médiéval*, Genève-Paris 1980, 121-122. Other geomantic treatises, which are believed to have been composed rather early – e.g. Plato of Tivoli’s translation – are not taken into consideration here as, unlike the above mentioned texts, they seem to have been less influential for subsequent geomantic literature.

<sup>5</sup> The same happens with other types of technical literature on divination and astrol-

In what follows, I intend first to set forth the results of a comparative analysis of these texts from which their individual and common characteristics in terms of content and structure will emerge. I will claim that the internal structure of these writings has an impact on their manuscript transmission. As a consequence, I will also briefly take into account some features of their manuscript tradition. Then, I will focus on the reception of these texts in larger geomantic collections such as the one preserved in London, British Library, Harley MS 4166. I will conclude with some remarks on the process of “re-organization” that the textual material of these earliest geomantic writings underwent in subsequent Latin geomantic compilations such as in the *Geomantia* ascribed to William of Moerbeke and in the *Compilatorium sive aggregatorium totius artis geomantiae* by Rolandus Scriptoris.

## 2. *Ars geomantiae* (inc. *Rerum opifex Deus*)

In nine of its witnesses, the *Ars geomantiae* is preceded by a prologue in which geomancy is placed within a metaphysical framework.<sup>6</sup> God, the creator of all things, pre-established, before their coming into existence, their future state in His mind and distributed to each, at His will, what he deemed appropriate to attribute to rational creatures. Having in His thought (“imaginarie”) all creatures, before they are made, God placed a superior intellectual cognition of the creatures in the recess of the hearts (“archano cordium”).<sup>7</sup> Then, the prologue sets out the histori-

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ogy: e.g., D. JUSTE, “Reading Birth Horoscopes in the Middle Ages: Latin Judgements on Nativities 1100-1450”, in *Les Moyen Âge et les sciences*, éd. D. JACQUART, A. PARAVICINI BAGLIANI, Firenze 2021, 549-593, describes the standard structure of the *iudicia on nativitates*.

<sup>6</sup> P. ARFÉ, “Le dimore delle stelle nel *Prologus super Artem geomantiae* di Ugo di Santalla”, in *Studi Magrebini*, Nuova serie, 12-13 (2014-2015), Labor limae. *Atti in onore di Carmela Baffioni*, a cura di A. STRAFACE, C. DE ANGELO, A. MANZO, Tomo 1, 41-71: 42, n. 4-5. According to Arfé, the *Prologus* unfolds according to the patterns of creationism: 49.

<sup>7</sup> ARFÉ, “Le dimore delle stelle”, 65,3-10: “Rerum opifex deus, qui sine exemplo noua condidit uniuersa, ante ipsam generationem de illorum futuro statu mente diiudicans, haec quidem etiam, que de sue uniuersitatis thesauro rationali creature largiri dignatur, singulis prout ipse uult distribuit. [...] Imaginarie, priusquam fierent, cuncta habens, eorundem noticiam archano cordium quasi suspectam et intellectualem infudit [...]”. The prologue had already been published by TANNERY, “Le Rabolion” II. “L’introduction de la géomancie en Occident et le traducteur Hugo Sancelliensis”, 324-326.

cal reasons for the emergence of geomancy (namely the need to correct the defects of astrology) and addresses the conceptual background of this divinatory art (namely the correspondence between the configurations of the superior world and the sublunary realm), emphasizing the link between geomantic figures and lunar mansions.<sup>8</sup> Towards the end the prologue contains a dedication to the Bishop of Tarazona,<sup>9</sup> suggesting that the prologue is something more than a mere translation and includes Hugo's own material. According to Charles Burnett, "the preface is likely to be a mixture of prefatorial material in the Arabic original and Hugo's own input".<sup>10</sup>

After the prologue the text itself begins, whose structure I will present according to the reconstructions of Thérèse Charmasson and Pasquale Arfé, both of whom base their analyses on the oldest witness, Paris, BnF, lat. 7354.<sup>11</sup> It must be kept in mind, however, that due to

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Both Tannery and Arfé base their editions solely on Paris, BnF, lat. 7354, which is believed to be the oldest witness of the *Ars geomantiae*.

<sup>8</sup> ARFÉ, "Le dimore delle stelle", 65,15-66,50.

<sup>9</sup> ARFÉ, "Le dimore delle stelle", 66,53-58: "Quia huiusmodi artificium antiquissimum fore et aput sapientum quamplurimos dignos et indignos in usu fuisse philosophorum antiquitas refert, ego Sancecelliensis geomantie inscriptionem aggredior et tibi mi domine Tirasonensis antistes, ex priscorum opulentia huiusmodi munusculum adporto, aeremantia et piromantia, quas audiui, sed minime contigit reperiri, postpositis, deinceps idromantiam tractaturus".

<sup>10</sup> C. BURNETT, "Hermetic Geomancy, «Ratione certis experimentis usitata»", in *Geomancy and Other Forms of Divination*, ed. A. PALAZZO, I. ZAVATTERO (Micrologus Library 87), Firenze 2017, 135-141: 136, n. 6, which also provides a thorough analysis of the prologue. On this text, see also C. BURNETT, "The Translating Activity in Medieval Spain", in ID, *Magic and Divination. Texts and Techniques in the Islamic and Christian Worlds*, Aldershot 1984, IV, 1036-1058: 1042-1043. For an analysis of Hugo's translations, notably of their prologues, see, in addition to Paul Tannery's essay (above, n. 1), C. H. HASKINS, *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science*, Cambridge 1924, 67-81; G. BRAGA, "Le prefazioni alle traduzioni dall'arabo nella Spagna del XII secolo: la valle dell'Ebro", in *La diffusione delle scienze islamiche nel medio evo europeo* (Roma, 2-4 ottobre 1984), Roma 1987, 322-354: 337-354; C. BURNETT, "A Hermetic Programme of Astrology and Divination in mid-Twelfth-Century Aragon: The Hidden Preface in The *Liber novem iudicum*", in *Magic and the classical tradition*, ed. by C. BURNETT, W. F. RYAN, London-Torino 2006, 99-118; J. M. GÁZQUEZ, *The Attitude of the Medieval Latin Translators Towards the Arabic Science* (Micrologus' Library 75), Firenze 2016, 51-61.

<sup>11</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 99-106; P. ARFÉ, "L'*Ars geomantiae* di Ugo di Santalla. Il testo e la sua tradizione", in *Geomancy and Other Forms of Divination*, 65-91:

textual differences among the manuscript witnesses it is hard to establish what was the original form of this treatise.<sup>12</sup> In particular, Arfé has ascertained that the manuscript tradition is subdivided into three different branches and that there are substantial discrepancies between the witnesses of the same family tradition: for instance, the text preserved in the manuscript from Paris diverges considerably, from a certain point on, from that of Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 5508, which is another important witness of the same family.<sup>13</sup>

1. f. 1r-v: *Incipit prologus super artem geomantie secundum magistrum Ugonem Sanctelliensem interpretem qui eam de arabico in latinum transtulit. Rerum opifex deus, qui sine exemplo noua condidit uniuersa ...*

Prologue.

2. ff. 2r-3r: *Modus operandi in geomantia.*

This section describes the casting of the points, the production of the figures, and the placing of them within the chart. Moreover, the text at this point makes remarks on the preconditions of the geomantic procedure (i.e., weather conditions, the ritual preparation, the state of mind of the geomancer and the consultant).

3. ff. 3r-17r: *Comprehensum intus omnium figurarum primum que conponitur ex stellis Arietis ...*

Analysis of the meanings of the 16 figures.

4. ff. 17v-37r: *Significatio figurarum parium et imparium quae ab inuicem procedunt.*

This section provides an analysis of the triplets, i.e., the *procreatio* of each figure from two progenitors and the specific meanings each figure acquires depending on the different pairs of parents. The end of the section is indicated by an explicit: *Explicit generatio figurarum parium et imparium.*

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77-79. TANNERY ("Le Rabolion" IV. "La géomancie chez les Latins", 373-412: 373-402) had already offered the first partial transcription of the *Ars geomantiae* from the Parisian manuscript in his study of medieval geomancy.

<sup>12</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 108: "Il est donc difficile, dans un tel cas, de déterminer quelle a pu être la forme primitive du traité de Hugues de Santalla".

<sup>13</sup> ARFÉ, "L'*Ars geomantiae* di Ugo di Santalla", 80-86.

5. f. 37r-v: *De masculinis atque feminis (sic) que etiam fortunata que infortunata figurarum signa.*

Short section on gender and value (fortunate or unfortunate) of the figures.

6. ff. 37v-41v: *De acquirenda pecunia.*

Examples of geomantic questions (that is, the meanings that a figure takes on under certain conditions, namely combined with other figures appearing in the chart, with regard to a specific issue).

7. ff. 41r-42r: *Item aliud capitulum de cogitatione agnoscenda.*

This section deals with the identification of the *intentio* of the consultant, or, in other words, with the identification of the house that reveals what is in the mind of the consultant.

8. ff. 42r-49v: *Iterum de significatione figurarum* [f. 45r: *De bonitate et malicia figurarum* / f. 47r: *De situ domorum*].

This section deals with the meanings of the figures, the meanings of the houses, and the value of the figures depending on their progenitors.

9. ff. 49v-55v: *De itinere determinato.*

Examples of geomantic questions. The judgments are based on the figure related to the subject of the question and on the Judge, which is the figure of the fifteenth house.

After the words “Liber geomantiae explicit”, there is an epilogue which is a short text in the Gothic writing used in the rest of the Parisian manuscript (ff. 55v-56v).<sup>14</sup> The fact that the epilogue is preserved by only one – albeit the oldest – of the manuscripts led Paul Tannery to regard it as a later addition by another author.<sup>15</sup> On the contrary, Pasquale Arfé believes that the text is part of the *Ars geomantiae*. The intention of the epilogue is to correct the defects of astrology (its obscurity and verbosity) by condensing its many obscure statements into a collection of few useful sentences, thereby making those statements more evident.

*Intentio autem huius auctoris est obscuras et multiplices sententias astronomie utilibus et paucis sermonibus in unum colligere et eorum*

<sup>14</sup> ARFÉ, “L’*Ars geomantiae* di Ugo di Santalla”, 69.

<sup>15</sup> TANNERY, “Le Rabolion” II. “L’introduction de la géomancie en Occident et le traducteur Hugo Sancelliensis”, 326, n. 4.

obscuritatem et tenebrositatem certis limitibus ueritatis aperire et ad lucem id est ad maiorem euidenciam reuocare. [...] *Causa intentionis* est difficultas astronomie et eius librorum multiplicitas. Multi enim conati sunt iudicia astrorum et significationes tam in bono quam in malo certis rationibus et probabilibus argumentis aperire quod in paucis uoluminibus facere non potuerunt. Iterumque iste ad hoc nititur ut stellarum significationes in rebus mundanis breuiter et utiliter nobis aperiat et omnem scrupulum dubitationis in his a nobis longe repellat.<sup>16</sup>

The epilogue ends with a remark clarifying the titulus of the text: *Ars geomantie*. “Geomantia” is said to derive from “ge”, earth, and “mantia”, divination, meaning divination in or above the earth. This name is preferred to “ars punctatoria”, the art of making dots.<sup>17</sup> We find an analogous etymology of “geomantia” in other Latin sources.<sup>18</sup> In general, it should be noted that the concern with finding the exact denomination of this newly imported divinatory technique was shared by almost all chief medieval texts on geomancy. The term “geomantia”, which had already been in use to refer to one of the forms of divination related to the four elements, as witnessed by Isidor’s *Etymologiae*, soon became the favorite option, even though alternative proposals were also advanced.<sup>19</sup> In light of all of this, the concluding remark on the name of the technique seems to suggest that the epilogue is a Latin addition aimed at accommodating the *Ars geomantiae*, a translation of an Arabic original, within a Latin context.

As is clear from this outline, the *Ars geomantiae* focuses on the analysis of the figures, their procreation, the houses and the relationships between figures and houses. In other words, it is a geomancy mainly based on figures and houses and their interactions. It also offers a number of examples of solutions to geomantic questions based on the interpretation of the combinations of different figures and their appearance in the different houses. Even though some sections seem to repeat

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<sup>16</sup> ARFÉ, “L’*Ars geomantiae* di Ugo di Santalla”, 89,4-14.

<sup>17</sup> ARFÉ, “L’*Ars geomantiae* di Ugo di Santalla”, 90,49-53: “*Titulus* incipit: *Ars geomantie*. ‘Ge’ namque grece, terra latine <dicitur>, ‘mantia’, diuinatio: inde geomantia, id est diuinatio in terra uel super terram; et a quibusdam male intelligentibus punctatoria ars nuncupatur, quia per punctos eius effectus conprobatur”.

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., GUILLELMI DE MORBECA *Geomantia I-IV,4*, ed. E. RUBINO (Corpus philosophorum medii aevi. Testi e studi 26), Firenze 2021, 9,35-36.

<sup>19</sup> On the name of the technique, see CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 9-14.

what has already been discussed in previous parts of the work, the text develops in a linear fashion: the analysis of the meanings of the figures is carried out in section 3 (each figure is considered separately) and 8 (the figures are examined in relation with each other); the examples of geomantic questions gathered in section 6 are based on the combinations of figures, while those collected in section 9 revolve around the interaction between the figure which refers to the issue of the question and the Judge.

As we have already said, the textual tradition of the *Ars geomantiae* is extremely intricate, with its manuscripts witnessing different versions of the text and showing contaminations with other geomantic texts (e.g., the *Si quis per artem geomanticam* ascribed to Gerard of Cremona).<sup>20</sup> Moreover, some parts of the text seem to have enjoyed independent circulation. For example, as noticed by Charmasson, section 3 is preserved in later geomantic collections and in the work by Rolandus Scriptoris.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. *Estimaverunt Indi*

In the Late Middle Ages, the *Estimaverunt Indi* was regarded as one of the most – if not the most – authoritative treatises on geomancy. It is well known that in his *Breviloquium* Bartholomew of Parma maintains that the geomantic art had originated with the *Estimaverunt Indi*, which was considered to be an all-embracing work containing the *Estimaverunt Indi* itself, the *Ars geomantiae* and the *Si de statu corporis*, which was the second part of the text ascribed to Gerard of Cremona.<sup>22</sup> Paradoxically, the importance of the *Estimaverunt Indi* is confirmed by the fact that, along with Andreas Capellanus' *De amore*, it was the only

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<sup>20</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 107-108.

<sup>21</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 98, n. 5. Other parts of the *Ars geomantiae* seem to have been incorporated into other geomantic works, among which there are the treatise attributed to Plato of Tivoli and, again, Rolandus Scriptoris' *Compilatorium sive Aggregatorium*: see CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 99, n. 2.

<sup>22</sup> On the perception of the *Estimaverunt Indi* as the seminal text of the geomantic art, see A. PALAZZO, "Origin, Development, and Decline of the Western Geomantic Tradition", in *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale*, 31 (2020), 417-441: 430-432.

work explicitly targeted by Étienne Tempier in the 1277 condemnation.<sup>23</sup> The text has a complex, multilayered structure, as outlined next.<sup>24</sup>

1. f. 1ra: *Estimaverunt Indi, quod quando lineantur linee absque numero et prohiciuntur pares et eriguntur.*

Prologue: Construction of the Mothers; Intention and psychological dimension of geomancy; ritual elements.

2. ff. 1rb-2vb: *Et scias, quod ex figuris quedam sunt, que sunt fortunate ... Completus est sermo super 12 domos.*

Analysis of the values – fortunate or unfortunate – of the figures, the factors influencing their values, the meanings of the houses.

3. ff. 2vb-3ra: *Figura prima est figura singularis in sorte ... et est ultimus finis earum et eorum status.*

This section deals with sophisticated notions such as the intention of the inquirer, the *aspectus* of the houses, the meanings of the twelve houses; the prophetic origin of the science of the line, namely geomancy.<sup>25</sup>

4. ff. 3ra-4rb: *Procreatio.*

Illustration of the process of generation of the figures.

5. ff. 4rb-5vb: Abusaid Tripolitanus.

At the outset of this textual segment, the *Estimaverunt Indi* declares that the real intention of this part is to integrate Abusaid's exposition of the operation of the line with all other aspects related to the production of the figures, the properties of the figures and the houses, and their relationship. This textual segment also includes the analysis of the as-

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<sup>23</sup> On the relationship between *Estimaverunt Indi* and Tempier's condemnation, see: A. PALAZZO, "L'*Estimaverunt Indi* e la condanna del 1277", in *Geomancy and Other Forms of Divination*, ed. by PALAZZO, ZAVATTERO, 167-221.

<sup>24</sup> I am summarizing here the results of the analysis of Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 30.29, ff. 1r-24r carried out in A. PALAZZO, "*Et ego quidem nunc fabricabo circulum. Images and Diagrams in the Geomantic Treatises Estimaverunt Indi*", in *Per cognitionem visualem. The Visualization of Cognitive and Natural Processes in the Middle Ages. Acts of the XXV Annual Colloquium of the SIEPM Porto 14-15 and 21-22 June 2021*, ed. J. HIGUERA RUBIO, Turnhout 2023, 133-172: 146-167.

<sup>25</sup> On the religious (notably Islamic) roots of the *Estimaverunt Indi*: see PALAZZO, "Origin, Development, and Decline", 426-429.

endant, namely the figure formed in the first house, as well as further details on *communicatio*, *commixtio*, and *procreatio*.

6. ff. 5vb-10va: Questions related to specific areas of life and solutions based on the different meanings which the figures acquire when they occur in the houses.

Towards the beginning of this section, we find the explicit of the text that was transcribed by Bishop Tempier in his *Syllabus* (“Ratiocinare ergo super eum, et inuenies, etc.”), which probably means that he had access to a shorter version of the text.

7. ff. 10va-15va: *Capitulum in proprietate operationum figurarum 16 in 15 cum significatione earum singularium cum domorum proprietatibus*.

Analysis of the sixteen figures when positioned in the fifteenth house as well as their meanings in relation to each house.

8. ff. 15va-16ra: *Procreatio* of *Populus*, which is the only figure composed of 8 dots.

9. ff. 16rb-17rb: Position *in ascendente* or *in occasu* of the figures.

This section highlights the connection between geomantic figures and the stars by providing a visualization of the position of figures with respect to the celestial sphere and the earth. Then the values of fortunate/unfortunate figures are examined in connection with the fortunate/unfortunate houses, and an allusion is made to the prologue. The very last sentence suggests that the treatise ends here, as it states that every issue regarding geomancy has been shown, explained, abbreviated, and expounded in this work.

10. f. 17rb: Short chapter associating the organs of the human body with the twelfth houses.

11. ff. 17rb-18ra: *Intentio*.

Examples of the meaning (*intentio*) which certain figures acquire when they appear repeatedly in several houses.

12. ff. 18rb-19ra: *Pars fortunae*.

13. ff. 19ra-21vb: *Paternitas*.

Procreation of the Judge: since the Judge must be a figure with an even number of dots, only the triplets comprising of even-numbered

figures are considered. This segment is introduced by the title “In hoc libro deerant ista que secuntur capitula”.

14. ff. 21vb-22ra: Geomantic figures are linked to planets and specific human physiognomies.

This section ends with a reference to Johannes Albusaiz, which is probably another form of the name Abusaid.

15. ff. 22rb-24ra: Addition, Diminution, *scientia puncti* and *proiectio*.

It is hard to say where exactly to locate the explicit of the *Estimaverunt Indi* because the text seems to be transmitted in various manuscripts with a different explicit and some manuscripts add other texts or fragments which seem to be somehow related to the *Estimaverunt Indi*. However, it is highly likely that the explicit coincides with the end of chapter 88 (*Considera ergo illud et iudica illud quod significat figura*),<sup>26</sup> namely with the end of the section 15.

As is clear from this outline, what at first may look like an unsystematic arrangement full of repetitions, upon careful examination turns out to be a spiral structure with levels of increasing sophistication. For instance, the procreation of the figures from pairs of progenitors is discussed first in section 8 and then in 13. The figures are discussed first in section 2 and then, more extensively, in section 7 (in relation to the houses) and in section 9 in connection with the position in *ascendente* or *occasu* and with astrological factors.

Despite this structure, the text gives an accurate account of the geomantic art, from the casting of the points to the most sophisticated methods of interpretation (*pars fortunae* and *via puncti*) of the chart. The text seems to be a compilation or an abridgment of different sources and heterogenous material. Some parts are ascribed to Albusaid Tripolitanus, who is mentioned several times throughout the *Estimaverunt Indi* under different forms. The name Alatrabulucus also occurs in the

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<sup>26</sup> The division into chapters is based on the table of chapters found in one of the witnesses of the *Estimaverunt Indi*: London, British Library, Harley MS 4166, f. 12v. On the problem of the explicit, see I. ZAVATTERO, “*Estimaverunt Indi*: la tradizione testuale di un anonimo trattato di geomanzia”, in *Geomancy and Other Forms of Divination*, 31-63: 51-54; PALAZZO, “*Et ego quidem nunc fabricabo circulum*”, 166-167.

incipit of Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 30.29.<sup>27</sup> I am inclined to think that Abu Sa‘id al-Tarabulusi – this is the Arabic form of this name – is not the author of the *Estimaverunt Indi* but either an important source or an illustrious name in the Islamic geomantic tradition evoked to lend more authority to the text.

The *Estimaverunt Indi* is preserved in full by only four manuscripts,<sup>28</sup> whereas another four contain parts of the text.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, there is a large number of fragments or excerpts contained in several manuscripts. The prominence of the *Estimaverunt Indi* within the geomantic tradition is also confirmed by the quantity of explicit and implicit quotations in other geomantic works: the text is heavily quoted in the *Geomantia* ascribed to Moerbeke, in the treatises by Bartholomew of Parma, and in the *Compilerium* by Rolandus Scriptoris. As has been said above, the *Estimaverunt Indi* was praised by Bartholomew of Parma as the seminal source on geomancy.

The manuscript tradition of the *Estimaverunt Indi* is characterized by a high rate of fluidity.

A. We find the text combined somehow with other geomantic writings within larger geomantic collections. This is the case with München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 547, which is a late geomantic collection (sixteenth century) that also includes an incomplete version of the *Estimaverunt Indi*.<sup>30</sup> In particular, the manuscript has two parts with different numerations of the folia. The former contains (1) Bartholomew of Parma’s *Verba collecta de libro geomancie* (ff. 1-85v); (2) the *Estimvaverunt Indi* (ff. 86r-159r); and (3) some geomantic notes

<sup>27</sup> *Estimaverunt Indi*, Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 30.29, f. 1r, “Incipit liber geomantie nove Magistri Ugonis Satiliensis editus ab Alatrabuluci translatione”. The attribution to Hugo of Santalla is today dismissed as untenable.

<sup>28</sup> Aix-en-Provence, Bibliothèque Municipale, ms. 1298, ff. 1-96v (= A); Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 30.29, ff. 1ra-24ra (= Fl); Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Magliabechiano XX,9, ff. 1ra-19va (= Fm); Firenze, Biblioteca Riccardiana, cod. 829, ff. 43ra-76vb (Fr).

<sup>29</sup> Erfurt, Universitätsbibliothek, Dep. Erfurt, CA 4° 365, ff. 53-82 (= E); Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Palat. 945, ff. 239ra-252vb (= Fp); London, British Library, Harley MS 4166, ff. 1-12 (= L); München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 547, ff. 86r-159r (M).

<sup>30</sup> D. JUSTE, *Les manuscrits astrologiques latins conservés à la Bayerische Staatsbibliothek de Munich*, Paris 2011, 74.

(ff. 159v-162r). Interestingly, the *Verba collecta* and the *Estimaverunt Indi* are regarded as one single treatise in 288 chapters, as is clear from the *tabula* of their contents (ff. 163r-172r). The conflation of the two texts in the *tabula* could be a consequence of the fact that Bartholomew draws heavily on the *Estimaverunt Indi*.

The latter part of the manuscript contains (4) another geomantic treatise (*Geomancia dicitur a geos grece quod latine interpretatur terra ...*) (ff. 1r-69r)<sup>31</sup> which is followed by (5) further geomantic notes (ff. 72r-83v).

Moreover, large sections of the *Estimaverunt Indi* were incorporated within geomantic collections. As we will see when analyzing one of these cases, these collections were conceived of as structured complexes of textual units, and therefore the sections of *Estimaverunt Indi* must be considered as constituent parts of a whole.

B. London, British Library, Harley MS 4166, ff. 1-12 (see below).

C. Firenze, Biblioteca nazionale, Palat. 945 is a heterogeneous miscellany of alchemical and magical writings, geomantic texts – among which an incomplete version of the *Estimaverunt Indi* –, and medical and veterinary recipes. The *Estimaverunt Indi* (f. 239ra-252vb), recorded as “Frammento acefalo di un’Operetta di Geomanzia in latino” in the nineteenth-century catalogue of the *Codici Palatini* of the *Biblioteca nazionale di Firenze*, is the second in a list of four geomantic texts, the last of which is Gerard of Cremona’s *Si de statu corporis*.<sup>32</sup>

Fragments of the *Estimaverunt Indi* also circulate as independent textual units within collections or merged into other texts.

D. Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M. ch. f. 212, ff. 166-214v contains a number of extracts from the *particulae* 4-6 of the *Geomantia* ascribed to Moerbeke. Mixed in with these extracts are some texts from other unknown sources. At least one of these passages is a quotation from section 9 of the *Estimaverunt Indi* dealing with the position of the figures in the celestial circle (*in ascendente* or *in occasu*).

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<sup>31</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 294.

<sup>32</sup> *Indici e cataloghi. IV. I Codici Palatini della r. Biblioteca nazionale di Firenze*, II, fasc. 6, Roma 1899, 436-437.

*Estimaverunt Indi*, Biblioteca Medicea Laur., Plut. 30.29, f. 16rb

Et ego quidem nunc fabricabo circulum, in quo significantur secundum modos earum et formam ascensionis earum et *ipsarum* (*om. Fl*) occasus, ut videantur visione oculi et discernantur earum ascensiones ab ipsarum occasibus et earum forme.

Iste autem figure secundum hanc formam in ascensione et descensione in circulo ad occasum, que sunt a cardine terre ad medium celi, sunt ascendentes. Et que ex eis sunt ex medio celi ad occasum, sunt descendentes converse.

Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M. ch. f. 212, f. 167r

Nunc fabricamus circulum, in quo manifestabitur forma eorum, situs et ortus et occasus, natura et qualitas secundum modum earum et complexionem, <ut> visuali discretione et oculo videantur earum forme.

Et sciendum, quod ex eis sunt a cardine terre, id est a medio inferius usque ad medium celi superius, sunt erecte et ascendentes, et que a medio celi ad occasum, sunt descendentes et converse.

Tibi patet in hoc circulo visuali.

The short passage quoted by the Würzburg manuscript belongs to a textual segment of the *Estimaverunt Indi* aimed at clarifying the meaning of a complex circular diagram that located the geomantic figures with respect to the celestial circle and attributed them their names and qualities. Since the diagram was not copied in the Würzburg manuscript, the textual passage taken from the *Estimaverunt Indi* turns out to be incomprehensible.<sup>33</sup>

E. Kraków, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, cod. 839, ff. 23r-36r, contains a composite geomantic treatise which starts with an incomplete and poor version of the proem of the *Estimaverunt Indi*. Apparently, only the *incipit* and section 15 dealing with the *scientia puncti* have been copied from the *Estimaverunt Indi*.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> For a description of the diagram, see PALAZZO, “*Et ego quidem nunc fabricabo circulum*”, 159-160; Firenze, Biblioteca Riccardiana, cod. 829, f. 52ra, shows the same circle, but uses a different nomenclature for the geomantic figures inside it: see A. PALAZZO, “La geomanzia medievale latina: sapere operativo per immagini”, in *Per una filologia integrata dei testi e delle immagini. Prospettive genealogiche ed ermeneutiche*, a cura di C. BOLOGNA, A. FORTE, Roma, 2024, 247-267: 259.

<sup>34</sup> ZAVATTERO (“*Estimaverunt Indi*: la tradizione testuale di un anonimo trattato di geomanzia”, 36-37, n. 28) has drawn attention to the fragment preserved in Firenze, Biblioteca Riccardiana, cod. 905, ff. 40r-46r, which covers the section of the *Estimaverunt Indi* pertaining to the *via puncti*. Moreover, ZAVATTERO (“*Estimaverunt Indi*: la diffusion d’un texte geomantique condamné”, in *Medioevo. Rivista di filosofia medievale*, 42 [2017], 57-80: 69-75) has documented some geomantic collections containing a text dealing with the *via puncti* which is generally ascribed to a certain Zacharias Albasarith and is said to have been translated from Hebrew, or Arabic, into Latin by

F. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 24940, is a rich geomantic collection dating from the end of the fifteenth century.<sup>35</sup> The collection includes early chief Latin sources and anonymous treatises on geomancy, such as (1) the *Geomancia nova* (Inc.: *Secundum precepta priorum inventorum et usu Sarracenorum*) (ff. 1r-25v);<sup>36</sup> (2) the *Desiderantibus verum ac certum iudicium dare* (ff. 98r-105r); (3) the second and first parts of the *Si quis per artem geomanticam* by Gerard of Cremona (ff. 110r-154v and 168r-189v); and (4) the *Quicumque vult habere artem de geomancia* (ff. 155r-161r). In addition to these texts and (5) a number of geomantic notes, the manuscript also contains (6) excerpts from the *Estimaverunt Indi* (ff. 25v-30r): “Dicitur in libro quod Estimaverunt Indi, quod quando figura multiplicetur...”.

G. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Bodley 625, is structured in several parts containing astrological, astronomical, and geomantic material.<sup>37</sup> The first part contains a collection of geomantic works, including (1) the anonymous *Acquisicio in Ariete continetur*;<sup>38</sup> (2) the second part of Gerard of Cremona’s text, known as *Si de statu corporis questio proponatur*; and (3) Hugo of Santalla’s *Ars geomantiae*. In addition, there are also (4) extracts from the *Estimaverunt Indi*, which are apparently contrasted with Hugo of Santalla’s translation (ff. 10v-11v).<sup>39</sup>

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Salio of Padua. Even though Zacharias’ text is clearly a geomantic translation different from the *Estimaverunt Indi*, it coincides, in terms of content, with the section relating to the *via puncti* of the *Estimaverunt Indi*. On Salio’s translation, see CHARMASSON, *Recherches sur une technique divinatoire*, 198-199.

<sup>35</sup> JUSTE, *Les manuscrits astrologiques latins conservés à la Bayerische Staatsbibliothek de Munich*, 162-163.

<sup>36</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 297. The table of content at ff. 91r-97r registers other anonymous texts preserved in the manuscript as parts of the *Geomancia nova*, namely the *Si de statu corporis alicuius componatur utrum debet meliorari an non* (ff. 31r-90r), the *Quidam quesivit de... (?) utrum possit et debeat vincere in causa vel non* (ff. 190v-197v), and the *Desiderantibus verum ac certum iudicium dare* (ff. 98r-105r).

<sup>37</sup> For the description of the content of the manuscript, see <https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript1631>

<sup>38</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 293.

<sup>39</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 98-99.

4. *Si quis per artem geomanticam*

The *Si quis per artem geomanticam*, believed to be a translation by Gerard of Cremona, is subdivided into two parts: part one illustrates the geomantic method, while part two offers a collection of geomantic questions which, depending on their subjects, are grouped according to the houses. The treatise is preserved in a large number of manuscripts, most of which transmit it in full, while others only part two,<sup>40</sup> which is introduced by the *incipit* “*Si de statu corporis...*”.

Based on London, British Library, Sloane MS 310,<sup>41</sup> we can outline the structure of the text as follows:

## Part One:

1. f. 1r: *Incipit: In nomine illius qui maior est. Incipit liber Geomancie magistri Girardi Crimonensis ab auditoribus via astronomica composita.*

The prologue (ff. 1r-2r) addresses preliminary issues, such as the reasons for the emergence of geomancy, the invocation of God (termed “inspector” of the future), and the state of mind of the geomancer (*simpliciter et intente questionem proponat et omnino caveat ne nimis prompto anima cuiquam respondeat neque iuxta libitum vel opinionem iudicare presumat*). Moreover, the science transmitted by God is at the origin of the human science of stars. Geomancers (*magistri*) must be cautious.

2. ff. 2r-5v: *De numero signorum ad hanc scientiam pertinentium. Ad cuius igitur artis scientiam 16 figurarum significantium (recte signis utimur), que per 12 domorum mansiones secundum astronomicam doctrinam locamus.*

<sup>40</sup> On the manuscript tradition of this text, see L. THORNDIKE, *History of Magic and Experimental Science During the First Thirteen Centuries of our Era*, New York 1923, vol. 2, 119, n. 6; and CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 130, n. 4, 131, n. 1.

<sup>41</sup> The manuscript belonged to Thomas Allen (1540-1632), a book collector who was associated with important figures (mathematicians such as Thomas Harriott, Robert Recorde, John Dee) and was himself a mathematician: see A. G. WATSON, “Thomas Allen of Oxford and his manuscripts”, in *Medieval scribes, manuscripts & libraries. Essays presented to N.R. Ker*, ed. by M. B. PARKES, A. G. WATSON, London 1978, 279-313: 310.

This section sheds light on the astrological background of geomancy by focusing on astrological technicalities, the zodiac signs (starting with Aries) and the planets. The section ends with a visual representation of the twelve signs in a circle (f. 5v).

3. ff. 5v-7r: *Capitulum quomodo 16 signa geomancie conficiuntur et formantur ex motu firmamenti et cursu et coniunctione planetarum cum stellis aliis* (f. 5v); *De significatione signorum geomancie, et primo de Constricto et postea de aliis per ordinem* (f. 6v).

This section deals with the figures by analyzing their connections with the planets and the zodiac signs; the qualities of the figures (*stabiles, mobiles, mediocres*); and their meanings.

4. ff. 7r-12r: *De domibus et earum significationibus, et primo de questionibus ad primam pertinentibus* (f. 7r).

This section describes the houses and their meanings. It also analyzes other technical concepts (angles, triplicities, aspects, *translatio, locatio, receptio, conspiratio, prohibitio*) and the Judge.

5. ff. 12r-13r: Figures-signs and their elemental qualities.

6. f. 13v: *Capitulum qualiter questio debet proponi et qualiter iudicium et questio formatur.*

Formation of the geomantic tableau starting from the casting of the dots.

7. ff. 14r-17v: Description of the sixteen figures.

8. ff. 18r-20r: Specific meanings of the figures in relation to various questions.

#### Part Two

9. ff. 20r-65r: *Incipit 2 pars huius voluminis, que est de iudiciis ordinis super 12 domos astronomie, et primo de questionibus prime domus vel de inquisit', que continet [1]2 capitula, et est primum de statu, vel qualitate vel de statu hominis futuro prospero vel adverso.*

As has been said above, the latter part of the text consists of a collection of questions dealing with topics related to the domains of the houses.

As is clear from this description, the *Si quis per artem geomanticam*

does not address the issue of the procreation of the figures (triplets).<sup>42</sup> It does explore the astrological background of the geomancy in much greater depth than Hugo of Santalla's *Ars geomantiae* and the *Estimaverunt Indi*, but, on the other hand, it gives few details on the interpretation of the chart.<sup>43</sup>

Thérèse Charmasson has noticed that almost all its manuscript witnesses have additions to the text after the explicit.<sup>44</sup> This is also the case with Sloane MS 310 which we used for our reconstruction of the content of the treatise: at f. 66r, after “Sufficit ad presens. Explicit” we find a chapter about the meanings of the houses that occupies almost the entire page:

De intentione et racione domorum quantum ex maiorum dictis nostri ingenii capacitas potuit retinere, pauca et utilia breviter perstringimus. Sciendum igitur quod 12 sunt in hac scientia mansiones, quarum 1 dicitur esse vite et est 1 cardo et est ascendens; 2 acquisitionis et est succedens; 3 fratrum et propinquorum et est cadens; 4 est et cardo et est angulus terre et est patrum et hereditatum, et est sic de aliis 12 domibus. Sunt igitur 12 domus in geomantia ad similitudinem 12 signorum celestis spere, que a philosophis colora rationibus ymagine dicuntur, ut Aries Taurus Gemini Cancer etc. Et est sciendum, quod signa ista nichil sunt aliud quam celi certa spacia ex stellarum positione et ordine calculatorum sagacitate quasi quibusdam limitibus perclarata vel determinata, per que Sol et Luna et ceteri planete faciunt suum cursum. Sunt namque planete 7. Supremus Saturnus, sub ipso Iupiter, deinde Mars, deinde Sol, qui positus in medio firmamenti est, unde quidam philosophus sic ait sic nomen domini, qui posuit Solem in medio firmamenti et 3 stellas sursum et tres deorsum sub Sole, Venus, deinde Mercurius, deinde Luna, que aliis planetis est velocior. Et sic est finis huius operis.

Contaminated versions of Gerard's text with other works have come down to us.<sup>45</sup> Its most salient characteristic, however, is its bipartition. This structural articulation had also an impact on the manuscript transmission. Since it is anonymous in most manuscripts, the *Si de statu corporis*, the second part, was regarded as a complete work in itself and had an independent circulation. Moreover, Thérèse Charmasson has pointed out that the collection of questions forming the second

<sup>42</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 133.

<sup>43</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 139.

<sup>44</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 137.

<sup>45</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 137.

part is the most quoted section of Gerard's text, with some or all of its questions copied at the end of or within other treatises in several manuscripts.<sup>46</sup> Significantly, as mentioned above, Bartholomew of Parma quotes the *Si de statu corporis* as one of the three seminal texts of geomancy beside the *Estimaverunt Indi* and Hugo's *Ars geomantiae*.<sup>47</sup> It must also be noted that Gerard's text achieved currency in the vernacular thanks to a translation into Italian preserved in at least two manuscripts.<sup>48</sup>

### 5. *Desiderantibus verum et certum iudicium dare*

In an appendix to her book, Thérèse Charmasson offers a transcription of the *Desiderantibus verum et certum iudicium dare* on the basis of München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 489, ff. 222-230. In the version witnessed by this manuscript, the text has the following structure:

1. f. 222:

Prologue, which contains both an invocation to God to disclose the meaning of the figures and reveal the occult property of the houses, and a list of the nine points to be addressed in the text.

2. ff. 222v-223v: *De bonitate et malitia figurarum*.

Analysis of the quality (favourable or unfavourable) of the figures and their changing value depending on their positions and their mutual relationships.

3. ff. 224-227: *De cognitione inventionis significatorum*.

Analysis of the meanings of the houses, namely the fields covered by each of the twelve geomantic houses.

4. ff. 227v-228v: Interaction between the *significatores* and its im-

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<sup>46</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 136-137.

<sup>47</sup> See above, n. 22.

<sup>48</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 138-139. One of the two manuscripts (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale II. I. 372 [former Magliab. XX-13]) is an Italian geomantic collection containing, among others, the vernacular versions of the *Geomantia* of Bartholomew of Parma, Gerard of Cremona's geomancy (ff. 61r-97v), William of Moerbeke's *Geomantia*, and Abdallah's *Geomantia*: on this manuscript and its content, see E. RUBINO, "An Italian Translation of William of Moerbeke's *Geomancy*", in *Medioevo. Rivista di storia della filosofia medievale*, 42 (2017), 81-98.

pact on the interpretation of the geomantic chart. (f. 227v *De occupatione figurae*; ff. 227v-228r: *De coniunctione figurarum*; ff. 228r-228v: *De mutatione significatorum*; f. 228v: *De translatione figurarum*).

5. f. 229r-v: *De bonitate vel malitia iudicis et testium*.

Witnesses and Judge.

6. f. 229v: *De sextadecima figura*.

The section deals with the sixteenth figure, the so-called Super-Judge, which is sometimes necessary, in addition to the figures occupying the first fifteen houses, to clarify the meaning of the geomantic chart.

7. ff. 229v-230r: *De cito et tardo fine questionis*.

Time required for the geomantic prognostication to take place.

The text completely omits what are standard sections of other geomantic treatises: for instance, it does not contain any section explicitly dedicated to the description of the figures, it says nothing about the operations leading to the formation of the tableau, it does not mention the procreation of a figure from two progenitors (triplets).<sup>49</sup> Most of the notions discussed (the changing values of the figures depending on their reciprocal position in the tableau; the houses; the *significatores* and their interactions; the value of the Judge and the Witnesses, the function of the Super-Judge) suggest that the text was rather meant to provide someone who was familiar with geomancy with the essential instructions for interpreting an already formed geomantic tableau. In this respect, it is significant that the above notions are made clear through concrete examples of geomantic questions.

Eight witnesses are known to preserve the text.<sup>50</sup> As in the case of the other geomantic texts that have already been analyzed, this treatise too has a complex and fluid tradition characterized by contamination with other works. For instance, after the *Desiderantibus*, München, Staatsbibliothek Clm 24940, which we have already mentioned with regard to the *Estimaverunt Indi*, copies a few chapters on technicalities (*prohibitio*, *via puncti*, *projectio*, *continuatio*, etc.) which are also preserved in other geomantic works. Charmasson offers a tentative ex-

<sup>49</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 123.

<sup>50</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 121.

planation of this situation claiming that these chapters were part of an original long version of the *Desiderantibus*. However, she does not rule out the hypothesis that these chapters derive from a common source and that only the München manuscript – among the witnesses of the *Desiderantibus* – was contaminated by it.<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, it should be noted that the *Desiderantibus* had a relevant influence on later geomantic literature, as it was incorporated into the works of Bartholomew of Parma, William of Moerbeke, Jean des Murs, and Rolandus Scriptoris, and was largely quoted by anonymous Latin and vernacular geomancies.<sup>52</sup>

## 6. Geomantic Collections

What can we make out of the analysis of the text structure and the manuscript transmission of these early geomantic writings? They share a few common characteristics. Generally, they are not endowed with a systematic and orderly structure similar to that of later works and compilations, such as the *Geomantia* ascribed to Moerbeke or, in the second half of the fifteenth century, the *Compilatorium sive aggregatorium totius artis geomantiae* by Rolandus Scriptoris. By contrast, the writings which we have just examined are less concerned with a well-ordered and all-encompassing presentation of geomancy and more focused on some aspects of the technique, which are investigated far more in depth than others.

Moreover, these early geomantic texts have an extremely complex manuscript tradition: their manuscripts witness various textual versions, arrange the matter in a different order (e.g., *Ars geomantiae* and *Estimaverunt Indi*), and have different explicits. In the course of the manuscript transmission, these texts lose their clearly defined identity and become fluid: they circulate in parts, are supplemented by additions, get contaminated by each other, are merged and incorporated into other treatises and compilations. There can be many reasons for this process of explosion of the manuscript tradition, but I am persuaded that the main reason lies in the very nature of these texts, which are characterized by both a selective approach to geomantic matter and a modular structure.

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<sup>51</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 122, 126-127.

<sup>52</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 122.

Evidence of this is offered by many medieval and early-modern geomantic collections, which are compiled from fragments or sections of geomantic writings, entire treatises, geomantic notes, visual devices. The earliest geomantic writings we have just examined are among the most common texts found in collections of this type, where they are incorporated in whole, in part, or in fragments, and recombined with other texts to provide a comprehensive treatment of the art of geomancy.

A collection of this kind is found in London, British Library, Harley MS 4166, dating to the fourteenth-fifteenth century. It is a miscellaneous manuscript collecting several texts of divination. Among other items, it also contains a *Sphere of Life and Death*,<sup>53</sup> a fragment of William of Aragon's treatise on oneiromancy (*De prognosticatione sompniorum libellus*),<sup>54</sup> and fragments from a treatise of fortune-telling.

The first part of the manuscript (ff. 1-70v) is a geomantic collection that according to Charmasson<sup>55</sup> is subdivided into three sections, containing respectively a partial version of the *Estimaverunt Indi* (ff. 1-12v), six different anonymous geomantic texts copied by the same hand (ff. 13-51v), and another anonymous geomantic writing (*Comprehensum intus omnium figurarum prima*, ff. 52r-70v). The ancient catalogue of the Harleian manuscripts only makes a general mention of five treatises of geomancy and astrology.<sup>56</sup> These discrepancies alone demonstrate how hard it is to establish where one work ends and the next begins within a geomantic collection.<sup>57</sup> To adequately describe the

<sup>53</sup> It is an onomantic device: on this type of texts, see D. JUSTE, "A medieval treatise of onomancy: The *Spera sancti Donati*", in *Geomancy and Other Forms of Divination*, ed. by PALAZZO, ZAVATTERO, 291-329; IDEM, *Les Alchandreana primitifs. Étude sur les plus anciens traités astrologiques latins d'origine arabe (Xe siècle)*, Leiden-Boston 2007, 206-217.

<sup>54</sup> See R. A. PACK, "De pronosticatione sompniorum libellus Guillelmo de Aragonia adscriptus", in *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge*, 33 (1966), 237-293. Pack, however, does not mention the fragment in the Harleian manuscript among the witnesses of this treatise of oneiromancy.

<sup>55</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 309.

<sup>56</sup> *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 4 vols., London, 1808-1812, vol. III (1808), 121: "1. *Artis geomanticae et astrologicae tractatus quinque*; 2. *Ars memoriae*; and 3. *De insomniorum interpretatione*".

<sup>57</sup> On the difficulty of distinguishing textual units within geomantic anthologies or manuscripts, see M. HEILES, *Das Losbuch. Manuskriptologie einer Textsorte des*

content of geomantic manuscripts and collections we must abandon the traditional concept of a geomantic treatise as a self-subsistent and autonomous work and adopt the more flexible notion of textual segment or unit, which may consist of either an entire geomantic writing, or one or more modules (parts) of the same writing, or fragments or geomantic notes. The following is the exact content of the geomantic collection in Harley MS 4166.

A. ff.1-12v: *Estimaverunt Indi*

This section of the manuscript contains the final part of the *Estimaverunt Indi* and adds the *tabula* listing the chapters of the work (12v).<sup>58</sup> In particular, the fragment covers the sections 11 to 15, namely, the most technical ones, dealing respectively with the *intentio* (11: f. 1r-v); the *pars fortunae* (12: ff. 1v-2r); the *paternitas* of the Judge (13: ff. 2r-7r); the *modus* of the figures, i.e., their connection with planets and human physiognomy (14: ff. 7r-8r); and addition, diminution, *scientia puncti*, and *proiectio* (15: ff. 8r-11v). However, since the *tabula* lists all the chapters, it is likely that originally the manuscript preserved a complete version of the *Estimaverunt Indi*.<sup>59</sup>

We have already referred to the fact that the sections pertaining to the *pars fortunae* and *scientia puncti* were among the most cited parts of the *Estimaverunt Indi* and also had an independent circulation. This is not surprising since only the *Estimaverunt Indi*, among the early geomantic writings mentioned above, covers these complex and important aspects of the geomantic procedure, through which it is possible to identify the fortunate house (*pars fortunae*) and detect the true intention of the consultant (*scientia puncti*).

After what seems to be the explicit of the *Estimaverunt Indi* (f. 11v: *Considera ergo illud et iudica per illud quod significat figura*), the Harleian manuscript provides, without interruption, a text dealing with geomantic technicalities, namely the method for discovering a name, the method for finding out the *intentio* of the consultant, the *proiectiones*, and the nature of the figures (ff. 11v-12r: [*Nota autem ad*

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14. bis 16. Jahrhunderts, Wien-Köln-Weimar 2018 (Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 83), 127-134.

<sup>58</sup> See ZAVATTERO, “*Estimaverunt Indi*: la tradizione testuale di un anonimo trattato di geomanzia”, 37-40.

<sup>59</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 114.

*sciendum certissime nomen, debemus primo facere 4 lineas et de illis facere figuram et litere illius erunt principium nominis; deinde facere aliam figuram de aliis 4 lineis et litere illius erunt alie litere sequentes nominis habendi [...] §Et totum istud apparet obscure in isto tractatu. §Nota, quod ad sciendum intentionem querentis sufficit via puncti, prout scis, vel prima proieccio et sunt novem proiecciones [...] Figure mediocres neque bone neque male sunt iste: Via, Populus, Candidus, Coniunctio. Nota, quod Rubeus in itineribus et visitationibus et proposito et expeditione impedimentum et prohibitionem negotii significat, et maxime in prima et secunda domo, si ibi inveniatur]).*

B. ff. 13-17v?: *De nomine inveniendo*<sup>60</sup>

1. f. 13r: The geomantic figures are linked with numbers and letters.

*De nomine inveniundo primo Adquisitio habet de literis, scilicet s. et v. et de numero 31. Unde, si questio numero fiat, quod prima domus offert nobis, prima namque domus representat cogitationes secretas ....*

2. ff. 13v-14v: Names and meanings of the figures (Of each figure are reported several different names).

f. 13v: *Ista sunt nomina figurarum. Fortuna maior, Omen maius, Tutela intrans, Auxilium intus idem sunt .... Hic incipiunt significaciones de cogitationibus interrogantium secundum proprietatem figurarum et primo de acquisitione ...*

3. ff. 14v-16r: The sixteenth figure (the so-called Super-judge).

f. 14v: *Nota quod hoc capitulum est de 16 figura, quae formatur ex prima et 15<sup>a</sup> figura ...*

ff. 14v-16r: *Alia 16 capitula ...*: the meanings of the figures when they are Super-judge.

At f. 16r there is a reworking of a passage from the *Estimaverunt Indi*:

<sup>60</sup> This anonymous geomantic text does not seem to coincide with the chapter transmitted after the explicit of the *Estimaverunt Indi* in some of its manuscripts: see PALAZZO, “*Et ego quidem nunc fabricabo circulum*”, 167.

*Estimaverunt Indi*, Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 30.29, f 2rb London, British Library, Harley MS 4166, f. 16r

Cum ergo percuteas lineas, pone 7, que sunt super dexteram tuam querenti, et 7, que sunt super sinistram tuam ei, de quo queritur, et que remanet in manu est iudex linearum et ad illud convertitur iudicium figurarum, quod est minimum vel quod est magnum earum.

Nota ex libro, qui dicitur *Estimaverunt Indi* etc., quod prime 7 figure sunt, scilicet ex parte querentis, significantes bonum vel malum ex parte sua et secundum eorum significationes accidentales; et 7 figure sequentes ex sinistra parte semper sunt ex parte rei quesite vel ex parte adversarii querentis, et iudex est medians inter illas, et secundum quod iudex magis convenit cum primis 7 vel discordat et convenit cum aliis 7, est iudicium bonum vel malum de querente et re quesita.

4. ff. 16v-17v: Illustration of the meanings and values of the figures and instructions on how to interpret the chart.

f. 16v: *De modis autem iudicandi sciendum quod 9 debent considerari principaliter.*

f. 17v: *Cauda vero commixtum saturninum et mercurialem colorem etc. Explicit etc.*

### C. Anonymous text

f. 18r: *Hec ars autem geomancia proprie nuncupatur, et alio modo filia astronomie, tertio modo vocatur scientie arene secundum quod tibi dicam, propter quod magistri experti, qui hanc artem invenerunt, de astronomia eam ast (?) tractaverunt, quando voluerunt certificari de alia re dubia, protraxerunt questiones suas in munda arena, secundum quod dicam tibi postea. Modo ostendam tibi breviter, quomodo tu debes petere et quomodo tu debes operari, quando et quid debes petere.*

1. ff. 18r-19v: *In principio debes deum rogare omnipotentem, quod ipse certificet de illo, quod tu velles scire.*

Construction of a geomantic tableau starting from the casting of the points; meanings of the houses; and instructions on how to interpret the chart.

2. ff. 19v-25v: Geomantic questions.

f. 19v: *Si vis scire cogitationem hominis, respice 13<sup>am</sup> figuram ...*

*Si vis scire si homo vivet diu vel non, respice primam figuram. Si illa significat bona, vivet bene; si vero mala, male ...*

3. ff. 26r-27r: Tables grouping the figures according to their characteristics (connections with zodiac signs and the elements).

4. ff. 27v-34v: Meanings and qualities of the figures and analysis of the figures related to the houses.

5. ff. 34v-36v: Further information on the meanings of the houses, the characteristics of the figures, and the values of the figures in relation to the houses.

At the bottom of f. 34v, a passage from another anonymous geomancy is quoted (*Nota hic ex alia geomancia quod prima domus figurarum est domus vite ...*).

6. ff. 36v-37r: Geomantic questions.

f. 36v: *Quando lineas in itinere in mari aut in loco fluminum magnorum, in quibus currunt naves, et exit Diminutus aut Rubeus in prima ...*

7. ff. 37r-38r: Geomantic tables and wheel.

At the bottom of f. 37r there is a table with the 16 figures, their letters and numerical values, while ff. 37v-38r are occupied by a circle which is subdivided into 16 slices, each for any of the geomantic figures. The circle, or wheel, contains a series of concentric circles that cross the slices, so that each figure is associated with several other factors (gender, value, planet, zodiac sign, cardinal direction, elemental quality, number, letter/letters, colour, flavour, and two names).

8. ff. 38v-39r: Meanings of the houses.

f. 38v in marg. sup.: *De proprietatibus domorum.*

f. 38v: *Prima domus significat vitam et nuntium operis et cogitationem ...*

9. ff. 39r-43r: Geomantic questions.

f. 39: *Si vis scire cogitationem hominis, respice primam domum et figuram eius ...*

10. ff. 43r-46v: Meanings of the some figures related to the houses.

f. 43r: *Hic incipiunt naturales proprietates figurarum et primo de Via.*

11. ff. 47r-50r: How to know the *intentio* of the consultant.

f. 47r: *Questio quomodo homo debet cognoscere cognitionem petentis per 18<sup>am</sup> (?) figuram. Si vis scire questionem interrogantis vel interrogationem petentis secundum rationem predictorum, accipe primam figuram, que est domus vite et cogitationis, et 15<sup>am</sup> figuram, que vocatur iudex, et fac de illis duobus unam figuram ...*

D. ff. 48v-50v: *De inveniendo intentionem petentis secundum Spatam* (f. 48v)

1. f. 48v: *Iste sunt regule, quibus Spatam peritus astrologus operatus est in vita sua. Post eum Usion (?) Arabicus et Egiptii et alii sapientes. Iste sunt 4 regule, que nos docent, quid homines volunt vel quid cogitant.*

2. ff. 49r-50v: Geomantic questions.

3. ff. 50v-51v: Procreation of the Witnesses and the Judge (the analysis of the triplets and their meanings is limited to the figures *Populus* and *Via*).

f. 50v: *Consequenter dicendum est de testibus et iudice collectionis et de que existunt (?) ex duabus collectionibus. Sunt hee.*

E. ff. 52r-70: This unit is copied by a single hand, which is very different from that or those to which we owe the previous parts of the manuscript. According to Charmasson, the whole unit transmits an anonymous geomancy.<sup>61</sup> As a matter of fact, the first part (ff. 52r-63r) is a partial witness, hitherto neglected, of the *Ars geomantiae* and covers only section 3 devoted to the analysis of the figures.

1. ff. 52r-63r: Analysis of each figure (*Comprehensum intus, Comprehensum foris, Auxilium intus, Auxilium foris, Barbatus, Transversus, Imberbis, Mundus facie, Candidus, Rubeus, Limes interius, Limes exterius, Coniunctio, Constri<c>tus, Congregatio, Via*).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> CHARMASSON, *Recherches*, 293.

<sup>62</sup> *Imberbis* (=Puer) and *Mundus facie* (=Puella) occupy seventh and eighth place respectively in the sequence of the sixteen figures examined. ARFÉ, “L’*Ars geomantiae* di Ugo di Santalla”, 84-85, has identified this as a common mistake of the manuscripts depending on the antigraphs *a* and *β*. Therefore, the position of these two figures within the text seems to provide us with a clue as to the relationship of ms. Harley 4166 with rest of the witnesses of the *Ars geomantiae*.

f. 52r: *Comphensum intus omnium figurarum prima, que componitur ex stellis Arietis et eadem est facies Solis et domus vite, omnium figurarum indicatur potissima ....*

2. f. 63r-v: Analysis of the meanings of the houses (14 houses mentioned).

This part is similar, but not identical, with section 8 of the *Ars geomantiae*, which is dedicated to the description of the houses.

3. ff. 64r-65v: Geomantic questions.

f. 64r: *Si vis scire quod domino seu populo accidit, si aliqua civitas vel aliquod castrum ...*

4. f. 66r-v: Tables grouping the figures according to their qualities (*stabiles, mobiles, mediocres; masculine, feminine; optime, pessime, permixte, declinantes ad bonum, declinantes ad malum; etc.*).

5. ff. 67r-70v: Procreation of the figures from pairs of progenitors starting from *Via* (Triplets).

From my analysis it emerges that the geomantic collection preserved on the ff. 1r-70v of London, British Library, Harley MS 4166 consists of at least five macro-units, which are in turn subdivided into several sections. The collection incorporates at least two of the major geomantic writings examined above, namely the *Estimaverunt Indi* (A) and *Ars geomantiae* (E.1). In spite of some repetitions and its disorder, the collection offers, by combining all its texts and fragments, a comprehensive analysis of all the aspects and steps of the geomantic method.

## 7. Organized Compilations: the *Geomantia* attributed to Moerbeke and the *Compilerium* by Rolandus Scriptoris

In addition to being incorporated into larger geomantic collections, the earliest Latin texts on geomancy (the *Ars geomantiae*, the *Estimaverunt Indi*, the *Se quis per artem geomanticam*, and the *Desiderantibus*) were also largely quoted by subsequent geomantic works, such as the treatises by Bartholomew of Parma, the *Geomantia* ascribed to Moerbeke, and the *Compilerium* by Rolandus Scriptoris. In all these cases, we are dealing with works conceived as elaborate compilations which re-arrange previous sources in an orderly way, combining and intertwining them variously.

Turning to the *Geomantia*, recently published by Elisa Rubino,<sup>63</sup> the debate on its authenticity has unfortunately overshadowed other important characteristics of the text that have become clear thanks to the edition.<sup>64</sup> The *Geomantia* has been convincingly described by Alessandra Beccarisi as a compilation of the earliest Latin geomantic texts, which, as already mentioned, were the seminal sources of the Latin geomantic literature: the *Ars geomantiae*, the *Estimaverunt Indi*, the *Si quis per artem geomanticam*, and the *Desiderantibus verum et certum iudicium dare*. Many quotations can now be identified on the basis of the critically reconstructed text.<sup>65</sup>

The *Geomantia* offers a comprehensive, systematic and orderly treatment of the geomantic art.<sup>66</sup> The author arranged the material within a solid and coherent architecture: the text has two prologues, is structured into eight *particulae*, which are in turn subdivided into *distinctiones* and chapters. A general index of the headings (*tituli*) of the *particulae* follows the *prologus maior*, the second one; in addition, each *particula* is preceded by a table listing the headings of its *distinctiones* and chapters.

Each *particula* is dedicated to a specific aspect of geomancy: the first deals with preliminary issues, the casting of the points, and the sixteen geomantic figures, their meanings, qualities, and connections

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<sup>63</sup> GUILLELMI DE MORBECA *Geomantia I-IV,4*, ed. RUBINO; *Geomantia IV,5-VIII*, ed. E. RUBINO (Corpus philosophorum medii aevi. Testi e studi 28), Firenze 2023.

<sup>64</sup> Doubts about the authenticity of this work have been raised by P. BEULLENS, “Why William of Moerbeke is not the Author of ‘His’ *Geomantia* (and Why that does not Make the Text Less Interesting)”, in *Mediterranea. International Journal for the Transfer of Knowledge*, 4 (2019), 239-244. On the authorship of the text, see also A. BECCARISI, “Guglielmo di Moerbeke e la geomanzia”, in GUILLELMI DE MORBECA *Geomantia I-IV,4*, ed. RUBINO, XXIX-XXXVI. On Moerbeke, see the recent monograph by Pieter BEULLES, *The friar and the philosopher: William of Moerbeke and the rise of Aristotle’s science in Medieval Europe*, London-New York 2023.

<sup>65</sup> BECCARISI, “Guglielmo di Moerbeke e la geomanzia”, XXXVI-LVI. See also EAD., “Qualche considerazione sulla *Geomantia* attribuita a Guglielmo di Moerbeke”, in *Quaderni di Noctua. La tradizione filosofica dall’antico al moderno*, vol. 5 (2019): *Tra antichità e modernità. Studi di storia della filosofia medievale e rinascimentale - Studi e testi*, a cura di F. AMERINI, S. FELLINA, A. STRAZZONI, 554-603, available at URL=<http://www.didaschein.net/ojs/index.php/QuadernidiNoctua>.

<sup>66</sup> GUILLELMI DE MORBECA *Geomantia I-IV,4*, ed. RUBINO, prolog., 6,73-75: “Hiis prenotatis videamus huius codicis ordinationem, quem propter sententiarum varietatem atque scientie profunditatem in octo divisimus particulas [...]”.

(with elements, sexes, parts of the day, seasons, planets, human physiognomy, etc.); the second deals with the figures from a genetic point of view by analyzing their formation from the lines (*De figurarum formatione*), the qualities of each figure generated from pairs of progenitors (*De generatione figurarum*), and the motions of the figures (*De motibus figurarum*), i.e., their reiteration in other positions of the chart; the third concerns the astrological background of geomancy (zodiac signs and planets and their characters), the filling of the houses in the geomantic chart (*De creatione figurarum*), the geomantic houses, their meanings and qualities; the fourth is a list of geomantic questions and solutions which are collected in groups related to the twelve geomantic houses (each house covers an area of reality and related aspects); the fifth *particula* examines some technicalities used in interpreting the chart (*proiectio*, *cardo*, the *termini* of the question, *communicatio*, etc.); the sixth focuses on understanding the *intentio quaestionis* and reading the consultant's mind through the technical procedure of the *via puncti*; the seventh deals with the meanings of the figures in relation to each house; the eighth deals with the judgment based on only the figure appearing in the first house, which is the strongest in geomancy. Indeed, by producing the heads of the four Daughters, the first Mother initiates the process that leads to the creation of any other figure in the chart, which is thus related to (*annexa*) and partly caused by Her (*ab ea partim erigitur*).<sup>67</sup> The two prologues, the general table of content, and internal cross-references are also meant to emphasize the unity and cohesion of the *Geomantia*. The effort of systematization and “rational organization” of the content of the earliest geomantic sources made by the *Geomantia* is evident.

Another example of a compilation that reworks and reorganizes earlier material is the *Compilatorium* by Rolandus Scriptoris.<sup>68</sup> Rolandus is a fifteenth-century physician who participated in a controversy with Laurent Musteon concerning the choice of the days appropriate

<sup>67</sup> GUILLELMI DE MORBECA *Geomantia IV,5-VIII*, ed. RUBINO, 8, 161,15-22.

<sup>68</sup> On Rolandus' biography and scholarship, see, at least, the fundamental thesis by Thérèse CHARMASSON: *Sciences et techniques divinatoires au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle: Roland l'Ecrivain, médecin, astrologue et géomancien*, 2 vols, Positions des Thèses, École Nationale des Chartes, Paris 1973, and lately M. FARELO, “Roland Scriptoris ou de Lisbonne: un médecin, un professeur et un clerc portugais au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle”, in *Medievalista Online*, 25 (2019), 1-23 available at <http://journals.openedition.org/medievalista/1750>

for bloodletting and laxatives<sup>69</sup> and authored compendia on arithmetic (*Aggregatorium sive compendium artis arismetrice*)<sup>70</sup> and physiognomy (*Reductorium Phisionomie*),<sup>71</sup> and, probably, astrological dossiers.<sup>72</sup> He also composed a compendium of geomancy that, as he himself states at the outset of his work, aimed at embracing the concise rules and the secret thoughts that had been veiled (“sub nube”) by some on account of the great depth of this art. Rolandus acknowledges his heavy reliance on the major sources of the geomantic tradition, namely on the ancient Arabs – by which the *Ars geomantiae* by Hugo of Santalla and the *Estimaverunt Indi* are meant – and on the modern experts, i.e., William of Moerbeke, Bartholomew of Parma, and Gerard of Cremona.

Incipit Compilatorium sive Aggregatorium totius artis *geomantiae* (*add. ad astronomiam redactae R*), cuius *compilatorii (om. R) sunt duae partes* (: partes sunt duae S), scilicet *prooemialis et exsecutiva* (*add. secundum M. Ro. B. R*)

Artem geomantiae sub brevibus et claris verbis compilare intendo, ut de ea senserunt Arabes antiquissimi et sapientes moderni Guillelmus de Morbeca, Bartholomaeus de Parma, Gerardus Cremonensis et alii plures, ipsam artem reducendo ad canones et regulas astrologiae, ex qua ipsa orta est et cuius ipsa filia nuncupatur, allegando dicta astro-

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<sup>69</sup> T. CHARMASSON, “L’établissement d’un almanach médical pour l’année 1437”, in *Comptes-Rendus du 99<sup>e</sup> Congrès National des Sociétés Savantes (Besançon 1974)*, section des sciences, fasc. V, Paris 1976, 217-234.

<sup>70</sup> T. CHARMASSON, “L’Arithmétique de Roland l’Ecrivain et le Quadripartitum numerorum de Jean de Murs”, in *Revue d’histoire des sciences*, 31,2 (1978), 173-176.

<sup>71</sup> D. JACQUART, *La médecine médiévale dans le cadre parisien XIV<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris 1998, 444-447; J. ZIEGLER, “Médecine et physiognomonie du XIV<sup>e</sup> au début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle”, in *Médiévales*, 46 Printemps (2004), *Éthique et pratiques médicales*, available at <https://doi.org/10.4000/medievales.805> (last access: 18.12.25); ID., “Measuring the Human Body in Medieval and Early Renaissance Physiognomy”, in *Micrologus. Nature, Sciences and Medieval Societies*, 19 (2011), 349-368; H. AVELAR, L. C. RIBEIRO, “Fisionomia e astrologia: o manuscrito de Rolando de Lisboa”, in *Luz, cor e ouro. Estudos sobre manuscritos iluminados*, ed. C. F. BARREIRA, Lisboa 2016, 235-248; J. ZIEGLER, L. C. RIBEIRO, “Astral Physiognomy in the Fifteenth Century: The Case of the Illuminated Opening Folio of Rolandus Scriptoris’s *Reductorium phisionomie*”, in *The Body as a Mirror of the Soul. Physiognomy from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. L. DEVRIESE, Leuven 2021, 183-206.

<sup>72</sup> J.-P. BOUDET, T. CHARMASSON, “Une consultation astrologique princière en 1427”, in J.-P. BOUDET, *Astrologie et politique entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance* (Micrologus Library 102), Firenze 2020, 247-271.

logorum, ut Ptolemaei, Haly, Albumasaris et aliorum, conformia secundum mei parvi ingenii capacitatem. Et ideo ista summa Aggregatorium seu Compilatorium totius artis geomantiae nuncupari potest, quia breves regulas et considerationes secretissimas complectitur, quae sub nube ab aliquibus sunt scriptae propter artis ingentem profunditatem.<sup>73</sup>

As is clear from these words, Rolandus emphasizes the derivation of geomancy from astrology, on whose canons and rules it is based.

Like the *Geomantia*, the *Compilatorium* has a solid and sophisticated architecture. It is divided into two parts, the first of which is a preface in two chapters in which the author explores the philosophical background of divination and provides a theoretical justification for the geomantic technique. The second practical part (“executiva”), divided into 6 *summae*, which are in turn subdivided into parts and chapters, provides a comprehensive and organized account of all the notions and aspects of the geomantic procedure: 1. astrological connections of the figures and meanings of the twelve houses; 2. formation and interpretation of the tableau; 3. nature and meanings of each figure considered separately in itself; 4. meanings of the figures in relation to the houses; 5. Witnesses and Judge; and 6. geomantic questions.<sup>74</sup>

Rubino’s investigation also gives us a clearer picture of the state of the manuscript tradition of the *Geomantia*. It is preserved in full in four manuscripts, while eleven witnesses are known to contain it in incomplete form, and three of them are described as reworkings.<sup>75</sup> As Rubino remarks in her introduction, the fact that in most of these manuscripts

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<sup>73</sup> The text above is based on the collation of two out of the three manuscripts which are known to transmit the work: London, British Library, Royal 12-C-XVI, ff. 3r-6r (= R) and London, British Library, Sloane MS 3487, ff. 1r-4v (= S). The *Compilatorium* contains numerous references to Moerbeke as the author of the *Geomantia*, thereby providing reliable, albeit late, evidence of the attribution of the *Geomantia* to Moerbeke. Moreover, the inclusion of Gerard of Cremona among the “modern” experts is also noteworthy, which seems to imply that Rolandus does not regard the *Si quis per artem geomanticam* as a translation, but as an original work of Gerard. This point, however, needs further investigation.

<sup>74</sup> On the characteristics and the content of the *Compilatorium*, see CHARMASSON: *Sciences et techniques divinatoires au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, vol. 1, 103-156, vol. 2, 32-60; EADEM, *Recherches*, 178-193.

<sup>75</sup> E. RUBINO, “Introduzione al testo critico”, in GUILLELMI DE MORBECA *Geomantia I-IV*, 4, ed. RUBINO, LIX-LXVII.

the scribes do not copy the text in full is something that usually does not happen with the transmission in the medieval manuscripts of authors of philosophy, theology, law, or medicine. The *Geomantia* seems to lie somewhere between the official academic literature, usually copied faithfully, and the “Wissensliteratur” (encyclopedias, magical-alchemical writings, collections of medical recipes, texts of spirituality, sermons, lives of saints, etc.) that is pragmatic and has a fluid, and often anonymous, transmission.<sup>76</sup>

If we take a step forward and examine the “Mitüberlieferung” of the *Geomantia*, we notice a situation similar to those of the earliest geomantic writings. Of the fifteen witnesses of the *Geomantia*, three preserve it as the only text in whole (Erfurt, Universitätsbibliothek, Dep. Erfurt CA 4° 384 [= E3]<sup>77</sup> and Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek, 666 [= E]<sup>78</sup>) or in part (Kassel, Universitätsbibliothek, Landesbibliothek und Murhardsche Bibliothek der Stadt Kassel, 2° Ms. Astron. 3 [= K1]<sup>79</sup>); two manuscripts preserve it in full (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, 76.1 Aug. 2° [= G]<sup>80</sup>) or partially (München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 905 [= M2]<sup>81</sup>) in connection with astrological and astronomical texts. The rest of the manuscripts include sections of the *Geomantia* in larger geomantic collections or transmit the text in connection with other geomantic texts (Erfurt, Universitätsbibliothek, Dep. Erfurt CA 4° 373 [= E1] and 377 [= E2];<sup>82</sup> Firenze, Biblioteca

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<sup>76</sup> RUBINO, “Introduzione”, LXVII-LXIX.

<sup>77</sup> See W. SCHUM, *Beschreibendes Verzeichniss der Amplonianischen Handschriften-Sammlung zu Erfurt*, Berlin 1887, 641.

<sup>78</sup> Description from H. FISCHER, *Katalog der Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen. 2. Band: Die Lateinischen Papierhandschriften*, Erlangen 1936, 410-411.

<sup>79</sup> Digitisation and description of the content of the manuscript at <https://orka.bibliothek.uni-kassel.de/viewer/image/1395315098279/1/> (last access: 15.12.25).

<sup>80</sup> See O. VON HEINEMANN, *Die Handschriften der Herzoglichen Bibliothek zu Wolfenbüttel, Zweite Abtheilung: Die Augusteischen Handschriften III*, Wolfenbüttel 1898, 391 (Nachdruck unter dem Titel: *Die Augusteischen Handschriften*, Bd. 3: *Codex Guelferbytanus 32.7 Augusteus 2° bis 77.3 Augusteus 2°* [Kataloge der Herzog-August-Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel 6], Frankfurt a.M. 1966).

<sup>81</sup> See JUSTE, *Les manuscrits astrologiques latins conservés à la Bayerische Staatsbibliothek de Munich*, 88.

<sup>82</sup> SCHUM, *Beschreibendes Verzeichniss*, 624-625, 631-633.

Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 89 sup. 34 [= F];<sup>83</sup> Kassel, Universitätsbibliothek, Landesbibliothek und Murhardsche Bibliothek der Stadt Kassel, 4° Ms. Astron. 16 [= K];<sup>84</sup> München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 242 [= M1];<sup>85</sup> München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 588 [= M];<sup>86</sup> Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 3059, ff. 93r-105r [= W1] and ff. 136r-172v [= W2];<sup>87</sup> Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 5508 [= W3];<sup>88</sup> Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M. ch. f. 212 [= W]<sup>89</sup>).

In other words, the *Geomantia*, which was meant to be a comprehensive and well-ordered treatment of geomancy, ended up sharing the same type of manuscript transmission as the earliest geomantic writings, which, as said, were often transmitted in parts that had an independent circulation and were incorporated into larger geomantic collections or associated with other geomantic texts.

The collections which include parts of the *Geomantia* contain a large variety of geomantic writings and fragments. The most present is Hugo of Santalla's *Ars geomantiae*, which is transmitted, in full, in parts or fragments by five witnesses of the *Geomantia* (E3, F, K, M, and W3); Gerard of Cremona's text appears four times in manuscripts

<sup>83</sup> D. JUSTE, "MS Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 89 sup. 34", in *Ptolemaeus Arabus et Latinus. Manuscripts*, URL = <http://ptolemaeus.badw.de/ms/419>.

<sup>84</sup> Digitisation and description of the content of the manuscript at <https://orka.bibliothek.uni-kassel.de/viewer/image/1357121750174/>.

<sup>85</sup> JUSTE, *Les manuscrits astrologiques latins conservés à la Bayerische Staatsbibliothek de Munich*, 61. The *liber geomanticus* contained in this manuscript, however, is a treatise compiled on the basis of William's *Geomantia* rather than an actual witness of the *Geomantia*.

<sup>86</sup> JUSTE, *Les manuscrits astrologiques latins conservés à la Bayerische Staatsbibliothek de Munich*, 75-77.

<sup>87</sup> *Tabulae codicum manu scriptorum praeter graecos et orientales in Bibliotheca Palatina Vindobonensi asservatorum*, ed. Academia Caesarea Vindobonensis, Vol. II: *Cod. 2001-3500*, Wien 1868, 187-188.

<sup>88</sup> *Tabulae codicum manu scriptorum praeter graecos et orientales in Bibliotheca Palatina Vindobonensi asservatorum*, ed. Academia Caesarea Vindobonensis, Vol. IV: *Cod. 5001-6500*, Wien 1870, 140.

<sup>89</sup> H. THURN, *Die Handschriften der Universitätsbibliothek Würzburg. Zweiter Band, zweite Hälfte. Handschriften aus benediktinischen Provenienzen; II Die Handschriften aus St. Stephan zu Würzburg*, Wiesbaden 1986, 67-68.

of the *Geomantia* in both its complete text, the *Si quis per artem geomanticam* (E1), and its second part, the *Si de statu corporis* (F and W1-2). The presence of the *Estimaverunt Indi* in the Mitüberlieferung of the *Geomantia* is limited to both the fragment in W, to which we have referred above (see section 3), and to the chapter *De via puncti ex libro Yndorum* in M, which has a relationship with the section *de via puncti* of the *Estimaverunt Indi* (see above, n. 34). The fact that the *Estimaverunt Indi* is widely quoted in the *Geomantia* itself may be the reason why no need was felt to add sections or parts of the *Estimaverunt Indi* in addition to the *Geomantia* in the geomantic collections that include the latter text. The *Desiderantibus*, on the other hand, is contained in two manuscripts of the *Geomantia* (F and W3), even though it was also extensively quoted in this work.

## 8. Conclusion

Medieval Latin treatises of geomancy are fluid texts with particularly intricate manuscript transmissions. This is especially true of the earliest texts, which were translations from Arabic originals (the *Ars geomantiae* translated by Hugo of Santalla, the *Estimaverunt Indi*, the *Si quis per artem geomanticam* and probably the *Desiderantibus verum et certum iudicium dare*). The manuscripts of these writings witness various textual versions, have different explicits, and show contaminations between them and also with other geomantic texts. Moreover, parts or fragments of these seminal texts on geomancy had an independent circulation. While there can be many reasons which explain the complexity of each single text and the specific characteristics of its manuscript tradition, I think that the nature and structure of these texts played a major role in determining what I have defined as the explosion of their manuscript tradition: these earliest documents of the dissemination of geomancy in the West have a selective approach to the geomantic method as they cover only some aspects or some more thoroughly than others; moreover, they generally provide an unsystematic treatment of geomancy, sometimes addressing the same topics more than once; furthermore, they are made up of independent textual units.

In light of all of this, it is not surprising that the earliest Latin texts on geomancy were so often incorporated in full or in part into later larger geomantic collections and assembled with other geomantic texts and

fragments. Upon careful examination, most of these collections reveal a well-thought-out architecture. As the manuscript Harley 4166 shows, they do not pile up geomantic material mechanically, but bring texts, chapters, notes, and fragments together according to a precise plan: all the elements gathered are carefully selected so that they complement each other and cover the different aspects and phases of the geomantic technique. In other words, a text or a fragment included in a collection should not be considered in its individual self-contained identity, but as an item in the broader context of a set of texts, as a textual unit in a larger whole. In terms of content, it should be emphasized that almost all geomantic collections contain at least one or more of those earliest Latin texts on geomancy, which, being translations from Arabic into Latin, were held as authoritative sources that conveyed the wisdom of this art in its most authentic form.

The relevance of these earliest texts on geomancy is confirmed by the prominence they achieve within later elaborate compilations such as the *Geomantia* ascribed to Moerbeke and the *Compilatorium* by Rolandus Scriptoris. Both these works are comprehensive attempts to provide a systematic and well-ordered analysis of the geomantic art, its technicalities, its conceptual implications, and its structural links with astrology. To this purpose, they appropriate large passages and entire sections from those texts and re-arrange them within an elaborate architecture. As time went by, the *Geomantia* ascribed to Moerbeke and the works by Bartholomew of Parma, namely Latin compilations based on the earliest Arabic-Latin translations, also became authoritative. Therefore, Rolandus' *Compilatorium*, since it relies on the entire corpus of authoritative sources, both on Arabic and Latin, should be considered the latest and most complete product of the medieval Latin geomantic tradition.

*Università di Trento*

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