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GEOMANTIC INITIATION: BARAKA

"God guides towards His Light those whom He wills, and he gives symbols for all mankind."

Koran: XXIV: 35

In black Africa as in North Africa not everyone can practice geomancy. Julien Alapini in his "Les Noix Sacrees, a complete study of Fa Ahidegoun, genius of the Wisdom and of the Divination of Dahomey", Henri Jaulin in " Formal analytical essay of a geomantic procedure" and above all Bernard Maupoil, in "Geomancy of in the ancient Slave Coast", demonstrate this to us in a definite way.

One can take note in the preceding pages of the initiatic Certificate of a great Tunisian geomancer, Sheikh Sidi Naceur, who held a filiation, endorsed by the grand mufti of Tunis, affirming the powers of signs, letters, and of healing medicines. In this initiatic transfer all was included; geomancy, talismans, mirrors of ink etc, But this virtual initiation necessarily assumed an Islamic aspect, and was not transferable to anyone other than a Muslim, Naceur confirmed.

Some may doubt this affirmation. The admiral Leon de Labored recounts in his short article of 1842: "Research in Egyptian Magic", how in Cairo he literally purchased from an Arab magician, the sheikh Abd el Kader el Mougreby, known under the name of Achmed, in that town, but originally from Algeria, the ritual of initiation to the practice of "darb el mandel", the celebrated "mirror of ink". Now we have in our archives the complete text of the same ritual that Naceur Ben Ahmed ben Ali Bourezgue had delivered to Robert C, without the slightest difficulty, a document signed with his full name. Also, in diverse letters we communicated, without any further difficulty, many "magic squares" to use in geomantic divination. (Footnote: It is necessary to mention his reception into the Rectified Martinist Order of J. Boucher, as S.I. due to the attention of Robert C., having established lines of initiatic fraternity between him and all Martinists, regardless to which Order they belong. His confident understanding was that we were all brothers in Louis-Claude de Saint Martin.)

But the initiation into this science does not always assume a semi-religious or Islamic aspect. In black Africa it is of a fetishist nature, then in Morocco and in Berber circles it is typically necromantic. If according to tradition it is Azrael, the Angel of Death, the servant of God, who responds to the geomancer, and who was the first to teach this divinatory art to Idris, who is Enoch in Islam, then Geomancy is the higher aspect of Necromancy, which we will see in the chapter dedicated to geomantic mirrors, and then we are very far from table turning. But let us return to the initiatic transmission in this domain.

About 1954, I made the acquaintance of Professor Jean S., who was then an ethnologist, through the help of a mutual friend Albert R. Both of them came to my place one afternoon, and having established shared philosophic links immediately a total communication existed between us. Jean S. had been interested in a book which I published in 1939: "Magical Geomancy", relating the ritual Judaic form, but resting on the Western method of interrogation. Jean S. confirmed to me that in Northern Africa, it was exactly the same as Robert C. had been able to verify at Tunis through Naceur. And it is the account of Jean S. initiation that we will now examine. Let us see what he has to say , since my notes from that era allow us to exactly reproduce his account.

"I must have been about seventeen years of age. I was worried about the results of the examination I had to sit for my matriculation (in French this is called the baccalaureate). Having noticed that on my way from my home to school in Algiers there was a native geomancer, squatting on the ground in a dirty djellaba, in front of a tray containing the divinatory sand. I resolved to ask him about my chances of success.

"First give me two francs " he said to me. I did so . Having interrogated the sand according to the ritual he confirmed that I could be certain of receiving my degree. That evening at home I searched through my father's library and found a study on Geomancy. I studied it attentively for some days and finally I decided to return to ask the divine for some clarification about the process.

"Ah" he said in a surprised manner, "The French man wants to know more?"

I responded affirmatively. Then he told me that I must return to see him every day and that he would complete my instruction with the help of an old worn manual, which he had in his djellaba. About 12 days later he told me at the end of our meeting that he had nothing more to teach me, but that on the other hand he had something more he had to do for me. And he gave me a time and a place to rendezvous with him that evening at 9pm on a bridge situated in the midst of old Algiers. At 9pm having told my parents that I was going to the movies, I met the geomancer. He led me to an old Muslim cemetery and stopped in front of an abandoned tomb. There, he made me crouch and told me to say these words:

"Oh Death, if you were a man, I would name you my father. If you were a woman I would name you my mother"

Slowly I repeated these words. Then taking my hand he made me throw some marks on the earth of the tomb. Then he bent over and slowly deciphered them by the light of the glimmering moon.

"It is good" he said to me. "You are accepted"

And without allowing me to get up, he brutally opened my mouth and spat in it! We set out again and on the way he again spoke to me:

"If tonight you dream of horses, you do not need to be afraid"

I did not dream of horses, but on the other hand, followed this by practicing geomancy many times for my friends at high school, I noted that I unchangingly obtained exact responses.

Of course, on returning to my home I drank a large quantity of rum, and carefully washed my mouth! (Footnote 1: This is perhaps why Jean S never had the confirmative dream of horses, this cleansing of the mouth and stomach expresses an unconscious rejection of baraka.) Because it is in this manner that one transmits baraka, that is to say the occult force: or also by plunging into the mouth of the recipient a finger moistened with saliva, or by partaking food or drink with them. Later when I was making genealogical enquiries in Kabylie, the families never failed to take away my dishes away before we finished them. They then served them to the eldest son of the household so that he would become as wise as the Frenchman (Footnote 2: The Semitic regions of the Middle East have always known the occult role of saliva. In Mark (VII: 33, VIII: 23) and in John (IX: 6), we see Jesus use his saliva to transfer an influx of healing. Now saliva is directly linked to the hypothalamus, a region of the encephalus situated at the base of the skull. It is the centre of activity of sympathy, of waking and sleep, and of the regulation of warmth: it contains the diastase ptyaline. But the Islamic tradition of Baraka confirms for us its occult role, symbolized by the Christian gospels as sacramental.)

Such was the account by Jean S. Then the meeting came to an end in the late afternoon, after a final cup of tea, a glass of armagnac and a last biscuit, when we separated and I saw my friends to the door. Going back dreamily I finished my cup of tea and half-eaten biscuit.

Then towards the dawn of the night which followed, I had a strange dream. I was walking along a footpath and was passed by a chariot drawn by four white horses. The one at the head, closest to the footpath reared suddenly and embraced me with its forelegs. Then I did not see anymore and slept.

In the morning of the next day, reflecting on this dream I remembered what Jean S. had told me concerning the dream of horses which the geomancer from Algiers had told him.

I attributed my dream to the possible influence of his recounting of his tale on my unconscious. Suddenly I returned to look around the table where my two friends and I had our conversation with the cups, saucers, glasses of alcohol and dry, uneaten cakes. And I stupefyingly realized that it was Jean S.'s cup of tea and biscuit that I had consumed on my return to the room.

In this manner I had somehow realized an involuntary transmission of the geomantic initiation received in Algiers by Jean S. But it is quite evident that other elements had intervened, since a simple exchange of drink and biscuits would be insufficient to assure such an occult initiation. This wasn't the first time that Jean S. had seen his food shared out.

In the esoteric Arab tradition, the occult force, whatever its nature and orientation, which can be transmitted is called baraka, a word signifying blessings, sanctity, sacralisation etc. In fact it simply expresses a quality, as Edward Westermack tells us in his book "Pagan Survivals in Muslim Civilization" p113. But baraka can be transmitted from one person to another against the will of its recipient (Op cit p114). This author gives some celebrated examples on p115 of the same work. It can equally be transmitted involuntarily by simple contact. But, in every case it is the Djinns, or genies who are the helpers, if not the actual vehicles of this occult transmission.

In Islam, the horse is the most noble of all animals. It is the vehicle itself of baraka and it confers this to its saddle (op cit p128) and we will see that the horse of the Angel Gabriel, the instructor of Mohammed, is evoked in the geomantic ritual for sanctifying the divinatory sand. Elsewhere, Anahita, the Zoroastrian goddess, has a chariot drawn by four white horses of the same origin (the same mother and father). It is without doubt the same divinity as the goddess "amorreenne" Anat., born of the god of heaven Anu. One encounters this name in the Phoenician texts of Cyprus, and in the name of the Canaanite sites mentioned in the Bible. Equally in the Egyptian texts, it is seen, costumed as Egyptian, on a basalt stele discovered at Beisan, as noted by E. Dhorme in his "Biblical and Oriental Studies". But I never knew these details until 30 years later

Returning to baraka, we observe it can be reduced or rendered effective by the dirt of the earth (op cit p 166) . It is probably from this, that the custom of making the vanquished warrior touch their shoulders to the earth comes.

To summarize, baraka can be transmitted voluntarily or involuntarily or against the will of the recipient , since it is the Djinns who are the artisans of this transmission. At Tangier, schoolchildren were protected by spending the morning at the seaside (op cit p168). This was due to Djinns , not allied to Islam or the Koran! Now the geomantic sand is ritually collected at the seaside, in the morning, where it is "licked" by the waves according to the words of Naceur.

The geomantic filiation transmitted by the Berber divine to Jean S. was typically Moroccan, since it came from Mogador. It was not attached to Islam, nor depended upon the religious Islamic Baraka, and the form utilised for this transmission demonstrates this even more to the contrary, no matter what the Islamic theologian may now say. There again we find the role of Azrael, Angel of Death and instructor of the geomancers, one of the four Angelic "Prophets" with Gabriel, Mikael, and Ezraphiel.

Let us add, in summary that Jean S. never returned to the geomancer his initiator. On the next day he left Algiers. And I myself lost sight of Jean S. who went on to live in the South West of France.

This initiation which I had received unawares, I have never transmitted not wanting to cut myself off from my friends. Perhaps, when the time comes to prepare for the final journey, I will take the precaution of not allowing it to disappear, to the profit of one of them. Again it will be necessary that the Intelligences which people the "Parallel World" , the fourth dimension , will be in accord with my choice since they are the veritable agents of all transmission .

COMPLEMENTARY NOTE

On the divinatory diagrams that I have revealed in my treatises on Arab Geomancy, and those which I have translated , these four Angelic entities are constantly figured. Mikael forms with Gabriel one square of the angle, and Azrael and Ezraphiel (Raphael) another. They each have a particular orientation which is implicate in the diagram. But if Azrael is the Angel of Death, Ezraphiel is the Angel of Resurrection, since it will be he who blows the trumpet of the last Judgement. It is easy to understand that his presence in a ritual of Evocation and of Divination is linked to this function of "Resurrector". Azrael assures the presence, Ezraphiel assures the Awakening of these dead who will respond to the geomancer. One comprehends why such theories attract the hostility of the current religious officials as much as current materialists ! Add to that the importance given to the Djinn , and here is why the geomancer justifies the condemnation of the Jesuit father Claude- Francois Menetrier, who in his "Philosophy of Enigmatic Images"(Lyon 1694) assures us that all geomantic operations "are diabolical operations, and truly spells which nothing can justify."