



PALM READING

PALM READING (chiromancy or palmistry; Pers. *Kaf-bini*), a form of physiognomy that deduces personal characteristics from the form of the lines on the subject's palm. The Persian term *kaf-bini* is a compound made of the words *kaf*, "palm," and *bini* (from the infinitive *didan*), "looking into." In general, it is not used for divining the future, although one of the lines on the palm, called *kaṭṭ-e 'omr*, "longevity line," is associated with how long the subject is expected to live.

The practice must have been known to Muslims at least as early as the Middle Ages because there are a number of terms for it in Arabic: *'elm al-asārīr* (the science of the lines of the hand), *koṭuṭ al-yad* (lines of the hand), as well as *naẓar fi'l-yad*, *ferāsat al-kaff*, and *'alāmāto asārīr al-kaff* (Fahd, p. 393). In spite of this, there are virtually no references to chiromancy in classical Persian literature. Even in books that deal with physiognomy, the section that concerns human limbs (*dast o pāy*) has no information about the lines on the palm (e. g., Jamāli Yazdi, p. 241). This is quite odd in view of the practice's importance among the Indians and Chinese with whom Iranians had extensive cultural contacts.

Chiromancy has made a niche for itself in Iranian culture in recent times, probably having entered the culture through contact with the West. Nothing else could explain the virtual absence of reference to it in classical Persian poetry and prose.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

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