



AUTHOR'S NOTE:

In writing this book, I have attempted to deal with a subject which in modern jargon would be called 'interdisciplinary'. Themes and concepts from architecture, geometry, geography, cosmology, art, archaeology, metrology, numerology, astronomy, astrology, surveying, religion and mythology, all complex subjects in their own right, can be seen to have a common root in certain ancient practices which related them to a special place, time, cosmic position and purpose.

Evidence from a great number of sources indicates that there is certainly something linking all these enigmatic facts and universal practices, an age-old and venerable science which may be called geomancy. This system of belief and activity, although obliterated in the West, still survives in some other places, and can give us insight into such disparate and puzzling phenomena as the siting of churches, the alignments of sacred buildings, mystical geometry, earth effigies, holy wells, early city planning, and the omphalos.

I have tried to demonstrate the interconnection between these and other products of the sacred history of mankind, drawing on the researches of many who have dedicated their lives to the discovery of the key to the ancient, largely lost art of geomancy.

Nigel Pennick. Cambridge, 1978

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Concurrently with the remodelling of the countryside, the transformation of architecture took place. The use of sacred geometry was confined, by the late seventeenth century, to the few educated architects who still had access to the old masonic secrets. The architecture of Sir Christopher Wren was still in the ancient tradition, but much work of later architects falls far short of the old canon. The average architect still had a working knowledge of proportion, largely based upon the teachings of Vitruvius and Palladio, but the esoteric gnosis upon which the arts of the cathedral builders of the Middle Ages was based was no longer available. Geometry was now largely applied to the field of battle, as military engineers refined the niceties of fortress construction. Sacred geometry retreated to the pages of Rosicrucian and other magical treatises, being finally committed to print as the fear of prosecution for heresy receded.

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Traditions still extant in Scottish Freemasonry record the same procedure. W. A. Laurie, in *The History, of Freemasonry and the Grand Lodge of Scotland* (1859), wrote as follows :

On the evening previous, the Patrons, Ecclesiastics and Masons assembled and spent the night in devotional exercises: one being placed to watch the rising of the sun, gave notice when his rays appeared above the horizon. When fully in view, the Master Mason sent out a man with a rod, which he ranged in line between the altar and the sun, and thus fixed a line of orientation.

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A fundamental mystery in sacred geometry and alchemy was the squaring of the circle. By this is meant the production of a square with the same area as a circle, or the same circumference. It was implicit in the mysteries of alchemy. In the *Rosarium Philosophorum*, an ancient alchemical treatise, we find the following:

*Make a round circle of the man and the woman,
and draw out of this a square, and out of the
square a triangle. Make a round circle and you
will have the stone of the philosophers.*

The image of the circle squared represents in psychological terms the archetype of wholeness. The triangle and square are natural products of the construction of the vesica. The achievement of the reconciliation of the incommensurable is the starting-point for temple construction, and buildings whose geometry contains both square and circle occur in every continent. The goal of geomancer and alchemist is ultimately the same: the reconciliation of disparate elements leading to the knowledge of God.

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The Temple of Solomon was said to be astrologically ruled by the square of Saturn, and the Temple of Zeus at Olympia by Jupiter. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon belonged to the square of Mars, the Colossus of Rhodes was controlled by the square of the Sun, and the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus by Venus. Mercury's magic square was the controlling sigil of the Pyramids of Egypt, and the Moon ruled the Temple of Diana at Ephesus. How much these

ruling attributes were geometrical, and how much they were esoteric remains an enigma. This system substitutes Solomon's Temple for the Pharos of Alexandria in the usual list of the Seven Wonders, as the latter was not a sacred building. John Michell has shown that the elevation of Lichfield Cathedral was based upon the hidden ratios of the upper portion of the magic square of Mars, the dedicated ruler of this former omphalos of England, and there are most likely many other sacred buildings of Europe and the Near East whose construction involved the use of this strange method of planning which determined, by esoteric geometry derived from the mathematics of the squares, the proportions and forms of the buildings.

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Like many a decline and fall, the loss of geomantic knowledge and expertise has been a slow and irregular descent. Certain areas of knowledge and expertise have always been the preserve of a small elite of specialists, and in earlier times this was no exception. Indeed, then there was a greater rigidity in society, with every person willing his or her ordained niche, whether king or serf, craftsman or cleric. The practitioners of geomancy were intimately interwoven with the fabric of society, and vulnerable to the changes within it. In a society which did not commit its knowledge to writing, continuity depended exclusively upon the continuity of the bodies dedicated to its survival. Perhaps because of such changes, the expertise of the megalith builders was totally lost by 1000 B.C. The secrets of the later Druids also largely perished when that order was destroyed. The basic knowledge of geomancy, transmitted orally among initiates, in England retained its underlying principles until the late Middle Ages.

By the Reformation, the knowledge was in the hands of the operative freemasons. At this time, the patronage of the church was suddenly withdrawn from them, and the intellectual climate altered abruptly. The sacred buildings which had formerly been planned and tended with the utmost care suddenly became the butt of vicious attacks. Monasteries, once havens of learning, were suppressed. Their buildings were demolished for their valuable materials, and their treasures were carried away to enrich the aristocracy, who were busy converting monastic lands into country estates. Ancient knowledge, preserved in the monastic libraries, was destroyed as worthless. The manuscripts were sold for use as cleaning materials, for binding books, or even just tossed into the rutted Tudor roads to facilitate the passage of the aristocrats' carriages.

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