

THE CRYPTOPEDIA

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE SUPERNATURAL & PARANORMAL

**By
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#3: DIVINATION

It was not long after man assumed his dominion over the Earth that the problems began. Things occurred that he did not understand; the world seemed full of mysteries; the unknown was too vast. Despite his perceived importance, he still lacked control over his most basic needs. Man could not control life or death, the positive availability of food, the weather, or the guarantee of fire, warmth and shelter. It is in the nature of man to want to control his environment, bend it to his will, or when things are beyond his control, to at least understand why.

Many early religions had dozens, even hundreds, of gods, monsters, angels, demons, and spirits, largely because their existence helped explain why the universe works the way it does. If a hurricane destroyed a valley full of crops, it was easier to blame a spiteful storm demon than to assume that weather patterns are arbitrary. Conversely if the harvest yields unexpected abundance, then it is a time to celebrate the beneficence of a god or patron spirit.

As time passed and man became more familiar with his many gods, he came to the conclusion that these gods had something to say, and he sought ways to connect with the secret language of the unseen world. They sought, by various

means, to *divine* hints, portents, omens, and other clues to the mysteries that surrounded them.

Divination is general term for any of a large number of methods by which cultures around the world glean information from supernatural or celestial sources. The practice cuts across all cultural and historic lines, and has been in constant practice since the birth of civilization. Divination is still practiced today in even the most modern of cultures. Tarot cards, palmistry, astrology, and many other forms are part of our everyday life. Whether we just read the horoscopes for fun, or put credence in the position of the stars at pivotal points in our lives, many people believe that there are secrets to be learned by means other than through science or the evening news.

The vestiges of divination are with us today, where we settle our differences with games of paper, rock and scissors or by flipping coins and casting lots to make fair decisions. To our more “sophisticated” mind, it is the randomness of these acts that makes them fair methods, but ancient minds beheld the same randomness and saw inside it a divine order. Messages from the spiritual world written for us, requiring only that we master the precise technique and subtlety of thought to perceive them.

Following are nearly eighty different forms of divination, many of them ending in the suffix ‘-mancy’, which is derived from the Greek ‘manteia’, and from ‘manteuesthai’, to prophesy.

METHODS OF DIVINATION

Aeromancy -- Divination by the study of the sky, as well as an interpretation of the shapes of taken by clouds and other astral phenomena.

Alectryomancy -- In this practice, a cock is permitted to eat grains of corn that have been spread over an area that has been divided into sections, with each section representing a unique letter, thought or idea. The outcome of the reading depends upon which grains of corn have been consumed from what area. In a variation of this practice, the letters of the alphabet are read aloud while listening to see if a cock crows upon the recitation of particular letters.

Aleuromancy -- From the Greek *aleuron*, for flour, and *manteia*, divination, the simplest description of this practice would be of the traditional Chinese Fortune Cookie where answers to questions are written on small scraps of paper, which are then folded into dough and baked. An alternative to this practice consists of the study of the patterns of flour in a bowl into which some water has been added.

Alomancy -- Also called also called **adromancy**, **ydromancie**, **idromancie**, and **halomancy**, divination by observing the actions of salt that has been cast into the air. Because of its rarity in ancient times, salt has always been associated with luck and wealth -- which is most likely the basis for superstitions pertaining to salt, such as throwing some over the shoulder when it is spilled to ward off bad spirits.

Alphitomancy -- This practice is akin to a trial by fire where a group of men suspected of committing a crime are all given a piece of bread to eat. Supposedly, this bread will cause the perpetrator of the crime to become ill, while not affecting the innocent. Exactly how the bread is made unpalatable is a fact perhaps best left to posterity.

Anthropomancy -- The practice of divination by human sacrifice practiced by the ancient Egyptians, Romans, Aztecs, etc., where the entrails of a victim are studied. Also called **splanchomancy**.

Apantomancy -- This type of divination is two-fold. First, the diviner works him or herself into a spiritual frenzy until they see visions of various animals. The result of the practice depends upon what type of animal is seen. The significance of various animals is unique to the culture. For example, it is said that the site which is now Mexico City was first founded when Aztec magicians envisioned an eagle flying from a cactus carrying a snake in its beak. This symbol can still be found on pottery, blankets and crafts, as well as on the Mexican flag.

Astraglomancy -- A form of divination in which dice bearing various letters and numbers are used. It is the predecessor of games of chance involving dice.

Augury -- A form of divination practiced in ancient Rome where the movements of animals and birds were said to portend future events. Those who practiced were

called augurs. This term can also be applied to the appearance of signs or omens of any type.

Austromancy -- The observation or study of the wind for purposes of divination.

Axiomancy -- Divination through the interpretation of the quivering movements of an axe blade that had just been thrust into a table, block of wood or a tree.

Belomancy -- Practiced by the Babylonians, Greeks and Arabs, in this practice, arrows are marked with various occult symbols or possible outcomes to a situation. These arrows are then fired from bows and their trajectory was studied. The arrow that travels the farthest distance, or in some cases the least distance, indicated the answer to the query. In a variation of this practice, marked arrows are mixed in a quiver and one is drawn at random, indicating the answer to a question -- although this is closer to casting lots.

Bibliomancy -- In this practice a book, usually the Bible or other sacred text, is opened and a passage is read at random. The chosen passage is then studied for possible significance or relevance to a current problem, a pondered (or vocalized question), or a mystery. Also called **stichomancy**.

Botanomancy -- A practice in which branches and leaves are burned and the actions of the fire, smoke and winds are studied.

Capnomancy -- While all of us can be entranced watching a fire, this practice concerns the observation of smoke from a cooking fire or sacrificial blaze. Also called **libanomancy**.

Cartomancy -- Divination through the use of cards. These may be simple playing cards or ones specifically created for this purpose, such as Tarot cards.

Catoptromancy -- A form of the wider practice of "crystal gazing," this practice involves gazing at a reflection of the moon in a mirror. It is said that the answers to questions appear in blood on the surface of the moon.

Causimomancy -- Divination by fire. In some cultures, this was as simple as placing a questionable object into a fire to see if it would burn. Items immune to the effects of fire were said to be a good omen.

Cephalomancy -- Literally "head divination" this practice involves using the head of goat or donkey to predict future events. However, this term would indicate the use of a head (human or otherwise) for purposes of divination.

Ceraunoscopy -- The observation of thunder, lightning and other features of the atmosphere to predict future events. This general practice has been narrowed down to those who look specifically to lightning or thunder alone for such signs.

Ceromancy -- Anyone who has ever poured the contents of a burning candle into cool water are very familiar with this form of divination. The patterns yielded from this practice can be ominous and beautiful indeed, and there are those that look deep into these swirling patterns to predict the future. The object is to look for specific shapes of day to day items such as broomsticks, hats and animals -- and each shape has special significance.

Chiromancy -- Another term for palm reading.

Chirognomy -- Rather than looking at the lines of the palm, this practice involves an examination of the shape, size and appearance of the hand. This method is rather telling in that not only do a person's hands reveal much about them, but many diseases and conditions manifest themselves in the hands as well.

Clairaudience -- Literally "clear hearing," this is the perception of voices and sounds outside of the normal spectrum of hearing. A form of ESP, or extra sensory perception.

Clairvoyance -- Literally "clear seeing," the perception of visions beyond the normal spectrum of sight. Also a form of ESP.

Cleromancy -- Also called **sortilege**, this practice similar to "casting lots" where objects such as seashells, stones or pebbles are cast to the ground and examined.

Clidomancy -- This practice involved taking a key and placing it within the pages of a book (usually a bible) so it is able to move. Then, a question is proposed and the key is said to move, indicating the answer to the question. This term also describes the use of a pendulum where the direction of the swinging is used for divination.

Critomancy -- The choice of divination for those with a sweet tooth. In this practice, barley cakes are examined for flour swirls and patterns that are said to indicate the future.

Cromniomancy -- Continuing with food related divination, this practice involves predicting the future by the observation of onion sprouts.

Crystallomancy -- The observations of crystals for divination. This practice is related to the well-known art of crystal ball gazing, also referred to as **scrying**.

Cyclomancy -- Divination through the observation of a wheel, top or other spinning object. This practice was often used to choose a direction when travelers came to a fork in the road. Cyclomancy is also the precursor to the game of "spin the bottle."

Dactylomancy -- A practice similar to **clidomancy**, but a ring, rather than a key, is used.

Daphnomancy -- The practice of divination where one listens to the crackling sound of burning laurel branches to predict future events.

Demonomancy -- When the aid of demons is used for purposes of divination.

Dowsing -- The use of a "divining rod" or forked stick to find sources of water or precious minerals beneath the earth. It is said that a divining rod will quiver under its own power when held over an underground source of water.

Gastromancy -- Literally "divination from the stomach," this practice is a form of ventriloquism where a voice seems to emanate from the belly of the practitioner. Indeed, the modern practice of ventriloquism seems to have been created from this exercise.

Geloscopy -- Divination by examining the tones and nuances of someone's laughter.

Genethliology -- Divination by the notation and study of the exact position of the stars at the time of one's birth. This isn't too far from conventional astrology, and if you're aware of the exact time of your birth, it is said to be possible to get a more intuitive reading.

Geomancy -- A system of divination that involved casting stones, pebbles and sand and interpreting their shapes and positions. The Chinese version of this practice is called Feng-Shui (meaning wind and water) and is employed by interior engineers and designers today.

Graphology -- Divination through the analysis of handwriting. Rather than predicting one's future, this practice is purported to reveal hidden aspects of the writer's personality and intent.

Gyromancy -- One of the more amusing methods of divination, the diviner may either spin in place or walk repeatedly around the circumference of a circle inscribed with various letters and symbols. Once the person becomes dizzy and falls into the circle, the symbol where he or she landed is noted.

Heptascopy -- Also called **haruspication**, this is predicting the future by examining the entrails of various types of animals. The prefix hepta denotes the more exact practice under this banner, the examination of the liver in particular.

Hippomancy -- Divination by the study and cataloguing of the behavior of horses. This may be as simple as noting the actions of horses before a coming storm, or before special events.

Hydromancy -- Divination by the examination of water in a pool or basin where pebbles or small stones are dropped. Subtleties such as any change in the color and appearance of the water after the stones have been dropped are also considered.

Ichtyomancy -- Examining the entrails of fish to predict future events.

Lampadomancy -- The use and employment of lamps from divinatory purposes.

Libanomancy -- Commonly practiced by the ancient Babylonians, this method of divination is based on studying the behavior of incense smoke as it rises and changes shape in the air. To the diviner each set of shapes connotes a different possible meaning about the path future events will take.

Lithomancy -- The practice of divination by the examination of crystals or stones of various types. In some cases, two stones of different colors might be drawn from to answer a yes or no question, while other stones symbolized astrological signs.

Margaritomancy -- A unique method of divination or "trial by fire" used in ancient Rome, where a pearl is placed beneath a vase and placed near a fire while the names of supposed wrongdoers were read aloud. Upon mentioning the name of the guilty party, the pearl is purported to pierce the vase.

Metagnomy -- Practitioners of this craft study visions that come to them while in a trance-like state to predict future events.

Meteoromancy -- Divination by the notation and the study of the appearance and behavior of meteors.

Metoposcopy -- The discovery and examination of a person's character by studying the lines of their forehead.

Moleosophy -- The study of the placement, size and number of moles (the skin formation, not the burrowing animal) is believed in some cultures to be an indicator of a person's character.

Molybdomancy -- In some cultures, it is believed that prophecy can be gleaned by listening the hiss and crackle of molten metal.

Myomancy -- Examining the behavior of rats and mice for purposes of divination

Numerology -- The study of numbers, dates, times and values assigned to various letters of the alphabet for purposes of divination.

Omphalomanacy -- While it is said that eyes are the windows of the soul, those who practice omphalomanacy claim they can be granted prophecy by the study of someone's eyes.

Oinomancy -- While we all feel a bit more prophetic after a glass or two of wine, it is believed that wine can be used to predict the future. In ancient Rome, seers studied the patterns made by the crusting of sugar and other residues as it dried around the rim. In Ancient Greece and early Rome it was believed that wine took away a person's ability to tell lies, which led to the phrase "In vino veritas", or "There is truth in wine."

Omphalomanacy -- The practice of counting the amount of knots in the umbilical cord to predict how many children a woman may have in her lifetime.

Oneiromancy -- The reliance on the interpretation of dreams to predict future events.

Onomancy -- This practice looks for significance in the names of people or historic figures. The application of this practice is called onomantics.

Onychomanacy -- Divination by the study and examination of fingernails.

Oomantia -- Also called ooscopy and ovomancy, it is divination by the study and examination of various types of eggs.

Ophiomanacy -- Divination by observing the behavior of snakes.

Orniscopy -- Also called orinithomanacy or apantomancy, divination by studying omens associated with birds in flight.

Pegomanacy -- Even when a brook is simply babbling, it's best to listen. This practice of divination examines and studies springs and naturally running sources of water.

Phrenology -- The practice of "reading" the bumps and other imperfections that appear on the human head has its roots in ancient Greece. Phrenology's heyday, however, was in the late 19th Century when it was accepted as a genuine science by the Victorian community.

Phyllorhodomancy -- A practice in which a rose is slapped against an open hand. The volume of the sound is said to portend the future.

Physiognomy -- This practice of divination works by examining a person's physical features.

Rhabdomancy -- Using a divining rod or a stick to predict future events This was the predecessor of dowsing, the search for water or lost objects.

Rhapsodomancy -- Also called **stichomancy**, this is a practice where a book is thrown open and a random passage is read aloud. This passage is then considered in relation to any question, prayer, mystery, or issue that has been raised.

Sciomancy -- The employment and use of "spirit guides" to predict the outcome of future events. Any appearance of such spirit guides who offer aid can fall into this category.

Spodomancy -- Divination by the examination of soot and cinders from a freshly burned pyre or fireplace.

Stolisomancy -- Perhaps one of the few methods of divination still practiced on the "red carpets" for a variety of award shows, it is said one can predict the future by study of the way people dress.

Sycomancy -- A practice in which messages are inscribed on the leaves of trees. The more time it takes of the leaves to dry, the more fortunate the omen. A more modern variation of this practice is to write possible responses on parchments which are then rolled up and held over a boiling pot. The first answer to unroll is said to be significant.

Tasseography -- The famous practice of "reading tea leaves." The diviner looks for various shapes in the remnants after someone has finished drinking a cup of tea and turns it upside down for a short period of time.

Tephramancy -- A practice in which the bark of trees is burned, and the ashes are examined for omens.

Tiromancy -- Divination by the study of cheese.

Xylomancy -- Despite its musical sounding name, this practice of divination concerns observing the behavior of wood while it burns.

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