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UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PARMA



STUDIO FIRMANO
PER LA STORIA DELL'ARTE MEDICA E DELLA SCIENZA

CSMBR
ONLINE
EVENTS



CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF
MEDICINE AND THE BODY
IN THE RENAISSANCE

ORBS OF BLOOD IN 14TH-CENTURY PERSIA

THE «TĀNKSŪQNĀMAH» AND ITS THEORY OF THE ROTATIONAL MOTION OF BLOOD

BEN KAVOUSSI • Ecole Normale Supérieure de Paris – University of San Francisco

28
MAY
2026

5.00 PM

CENTRAL EUROPEAN TIME

A 14th-century Persian medical manual on the the Medicine of Cathay (Northern China) known as the *Tānksūqnāmah-yi Īlkhān dar funun-i 'ulūm-i Khatā'i* (*Tānksūqnāmah*) explicitly states that blood “makes rounds” within the body, flowing from the liver to the heart, then to the lungs, and returning again to the liver. This manual, which was commissioned by the vizier and physician Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī (1247–1318) during the Mongol

rule in Iran, is an attempt to explain the medicine of the Chinese to a Persian readership by translating a book which was itself a summary of the Chinese medical knowledge of the time. The work contains a didactic poem called *Māi Jué*, which is dedicated to pulse diagnosis. This account, grounded in a model that links bodily processes to celestial movements, does not correspond to Ibn al-Nafīs's (1213-1288) philosophical

description of pulmonary transit, nor does it anticipate Harvey's quantitative theory of systemic circulation, for it is rooted in an astrological understanding of motion and causality. The book draws on Chinese cosmology and medicine as well as the Graeco-Arabic medical heritage, yet ultimately advances its own conception of blood movement, indicating deliberate reinterpretation rather than simple continuity. The *Tānksūqnāmah* is therefore best understood as a product of Mongol-era Iran's distinctive cross-cultural milieu, in which heterogeneous concepts were consciously recombined within a shared intellectual setting.

The event is free to attend but registration is required. Info at csnbr.fondazionecomel.org