

ALEISTER CROWLEY'S THOTH TAROT DECK



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Includes an essay by Lady Frieda Harris
and commentary by Stuart R. Kaplan

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*“The Tarot could be described as
God’s Picture Book, or it could be likened to
a celestial game of chess, the Trumps being
the pieces to be moved according
to the law of their own order over a
checkered board of the four elements.”*

—Lady Frieda Harris

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by Stuart R. Kaplan and Donald Weiser.

ALEISTER CROWLEY'S THOTH TAROT DECK

THE THOTH TAROT DECK was designed by Aleister Crowley and painted by Lady Frieda Harris. Their original intent was to correct and update the classic, medieval tarot, giving it a more esoteric aspect. The project, however, grew into a restructuring of the traditional pictorial symbolism.

Aleister Crowley is often described as the most advanced and influential occultist of the twentieth century. His life's work was an attempt to synthesize the diverse teachings of the world's religions by extracting the essential kernel of truth shared by them—which he called “Scientific Illuminism.”

Crowley's ideas on tarot incorporated the latest discoveries in science, mathematics, philosophy, and anthropology. His devotion to tarot began with his initiation into the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, an English Rosicrucian society founded in 1888. The tarot played a prominent part in the Order's course of ritual, meditation, and study. Members were sworn to secrecy regarding the Order's deck.

Crowley was born October 12, 1875, and he joined the Golden Dawn in 1898, rising

rapidly through the grades of the Order. In April of 1904, in Cairo, Egypt, Crowley received voice transmissions from the Hierarchical Forces, which heralded the Age of Aquarius. Transcribed as *The Book of the Law*, the communication formed the cornerstone of Crowley's teaching. The book also profoundly influenced the imagery of Crowley's deck, particularly the kabbalistic attributions of the Major Arcana. Each of the 22 Major Trumps of the tarot is assigned a Hebrew letter and a path on the Tree of Life, as well as an astrological sign, element, or planet. *The Book of the Law* announced changes in some of the traditional correspondences.

Aleister Crowley's voluminous body of writing is now appreciated for its depth, scope, and clarity. His work, particularly his tarot deck, was a testament to his genius.

Lady Frieda Harris (née Bloxam) was born in 1877 and died in 1962. She was married to Sir Percy Harris, a member of the British Parliament. Information on her life is scant, but it is clear that she had more to do with the actual design of the Thoth Tarot than has been commonly assumed. She worked from Crowley's rough sketches and

verbal descriptions, reading between the lines of the older decks and often repainting the same card multiple times. Crowley attributed his own deep involvement with the creation of a new deck to her tenacity and artistic genius. Because of her, each card is an individual masterpiece.

In order to maintain the integrity of the deck, a border, which had been omitted in the original printing, has been copied from the paintings and is included in this edition.

Mr. William Breeze helped locate the essay written by Lady Harris which was based on Crowley's writings.

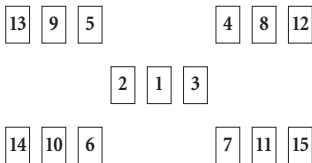
THE TAROT AND ITS APPLICATIONS

The tarot is a series of seventy-eight pictorial images based on the teachings of the *kabbalah*, a meditative path to the higher planes of consciousness. The Tree of Life, which forms the outline of the *kabbalah*, summarizes all knowledge in its ten spheres and twenty-two interconnected paths of consciousness. In using the tarot for divination, the reader develops an essential familiarity with the symbols as well as an affinity with the aspects of consciousness that the cards represent.

The 15-card spread presented in this booklet offers a simpler layout than the more popular Celtic Cross spread. The Golden Dawn method of reading does not use reversed meanings, but does consider the relationships and influences between the cards. Since card meanings may be affected by neighboring cards, those resultant meanings are identified here as “influenced.”

Before beginning any divination, the reader traditionally makes an invocation to the higher forces for greater understanding and higher consciousness through the cards.

After the invocation, shuffle the cards thoroughly. Then lay out fifteen cards in the sequence shown in the diagram below.



CARD 1 This card represents the querent and the primary issue or question. A court card (knight, queen, prince, princess) in this position may refer to a dominant individual or influence in the querent's situation.

CARDS 2 and 3 in conjunction with **CARD 1**, are the key cards describing the nature of the situation and the personality of the querent.

CARDS 13, 9 and 5, and 4, 8 and 12 in the upper left and right indicate two potentials for the future. They may complement each other, in which case, the cards on the upper left are a development of the cards on the upper right. If they are in conflict, the cards on the upper right may be considered the direction the querent's life will naturally flow unless action is taken to change this course. The cards on the upper left would then be possibilities of alternative action.

CARDS 6, 10 and 14 assist the querent in making whatever decision may be necessary. They indicate the psychological basis and implications of the issue.

CARDS 7, 11 and 15 show forces operating beyond the querent's control—destiny or karma—to which the querent can adapt. In this sense, they constitute advice as well.

Princes and queens most often indicate actual men and women connected with the matter. Knights may mean the coming or going of a matter, or arrival or departure, depending upon the direction in which they face. Princesses may indicate ideas, thoughts, or opinions related to the subject.

After laying out the cards, the first thing to look for is a grouping or majority of cards. Wands indicate great energy; cups, love and emotions; swords relate to intellectual matters; and disks, business affairs. A majority of Trumps indicates higher forces at work. Court cards indicate social events, while aces denote new beginnings, great energy, and strength.

A card's meaning is strengthened by neighboring cards of the same suit. Cards of opposite nature are weaker. Swords are adverse to disks. Wands oppose cups. Swords are friendly to cups and wands. Wands complement swords and disks. A card falling between two contrary cards is affected by neither.

MAJOR ARCANA CARD MEANINGS

O THE FOOL. In spiritual matters, denotes ideas and thoughts. *Reversed:* May reveal impulses, eccentricity, even mania.

I THE MAGUS. Skill. Wisdom. Adroitness. Craft. Cunning. Deceit. Theft. Sometimes esoteric wisdom or power. Messages. Business transactions. *Reversed:* Learning interfering with the matter in hand.

II THE PRIESTESS. Pure, exalted and gracious influence enters the matter, bringing change, alternation, increase or decrease, fluctuation. Exuberance should be tempered and careful balance maintained.

III THE EMPRESS. Love. Beauty. Happiness. Pleasure. Success. Fruitfulness. Good fortune. Graciousness. Elegance. Gentleness. *Reversed:* Idleness. Sensuality. Promiscuity.

IV THE EMPEROR. War. Conquest. Victory. Government. Strife. Power. Stability. Energy. Ambition. *Reversed:* Rashness. Arrogance. Megalomania.

V THE HIEROPHANT. Divine wisdom. Inspiration. Toil. Endurance. Persistence. Teaching. Help from superiors. Patience. Organization. Peace. Goodness of heart.

VI THE LOVERS. Inspiration. Intuition. Intelligence. Innocence. Attraction. Beauty.

SAMPLE



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