

**PIERPONT MORGAN  
VISCONTI-SFORZA  
TAROCCHI DECK**

**Stuart R. Kaplan**

*The author is indebted to  
Thierry Depaulis for the revisions on  
pages 12 through 15 in this booklet.*

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# PIERPONT MORGAN VISCONTI-SFORZA TAROCCHI DECK

## INTRODUCTION

Reproduction of the Pierpont Morgan Visconti-Sforza Tarocchi deck is an important event for tarot collectors and researchers of art history. These rare cards have been reproduced in authentic color tones from the extant Visconti-Sforza Tarocchi deck dating from mid-fifteenth century Milan.

Italy holds the honor of producing several of the earliest known hand-painted playing card packs that contain the twenty-two mystical and allegorical trump cards called *trionfi*. The incomplete extant packs include seventy-four cards from the Visconti-Sforza Tarocchi pack, sixty-seven cards from the Cary-Yale Visconti Tarocchi pack, and forty-eight cards from the Brera Gallery or Brambilla Visconti pack. Artists in Ferrara and Florence also hand painted fifteenth century tarocchi cards. The connection of cards to the Visconti and Sforza families of fifteenth century Milan is based upon the heraldic devices and mottos appearing on the cards.

The term *tarocchi* was used in Italy in the early sixteenth century, and quite probably in the late fifteenth century, to describe the complete seventy-eight card deck consisting of twenty-two *trionfi*, or trump cards, and fifty-six suit cards. The words *tarocchi* and *tarocco* are often used interchangeably although *tarocchi* is actually the plural of *tarocco*. The French word *tarot*, a derivative of *tarocchi*, has come into widespread use in the English language.

The term *trumps* is derived from the Latin *triumphi*. *Arcana* is a Latin word meaning mysterious or secret; the Italian word *arcano*, derived from the Latin, has the same meaning. The twenty-two trump cards are known today by tarot deck collectors as the Major Arcana or Greater Arcana cards, and each card depicts a symbolic, allegorical picture.

The trump cards also are known as *atouts* in French and *tarocchi* in Italian. The fifty-six suit cards, also known as the Minor Arcana or Lesser Arcana cards, are divided into four suits of swords, wands (batons, staves, scepters, or clubs), cups (chalices), and coins (pentacles). Each suit comprises fourteen cards consisting of king, queen, knight, page, plus pip cards numbered ten to one.

## THE MAJOR ARCANA CARDS

The twenty-two symbolic and allegorical Major Arcana cards depict and create continuous and ever-changing stories of physical and spiritual forces affecting humanity. To some persons, the cards present a pictorial processional of life's fateful events.

The twenty-two Major Arcana cards generally follow an established sequence. The card titles in English, French, and Italian are as follows:

No.	English	French	Italian
	The Fool, The Foolish Man	Le Mat, Le Fou, Le Fol, L'Excuse	Il Matto, Il Folle
I	The Magician, The Juggler, The Thimble-rigger, The Cups Player, The Mountebank, The Pagad, The Pagat	Le Bateleur, Le Joueur de Gobelets	Il Bagatino, Il Bagatto, Il Bagattel, Il Bagat, Il Begatto
II	The High Priestess, The Female Pope, The Popess, Junon, Bacchus	La Papesse	La Papessa
III	The Empress	L'Impératrice	L'Imperatrice
IIII	The Emperor	L'Empereur	L'Imperadore, L'Imperatore
V	The Hierophant, The Pope, Jupiter, Spanish Captain	Le Pape	Il Papa

VI	The Lovers, Marriage	L'Amoureux	L'Amore, Gli Amanti, Gli Innamorati
VII	The Chariot	Le Chariot	Il Carro
VIII	Justice	La Justice	La Giustizia
VIII	The Hermit, Father Time, The Hunchback	L'Ermite	L'Ermita, Il Gobbo, Il Vecchio, L'Eremita
X	The Wheel of Fortune	La Roue de Fortune	La Ruota, Rota di Fortuna, Ruota della Fortuna, La Fortuna
XI	Strength, Force, Fortitude	La Force	La Fortezza, La Forza
XII	The Hanged Man, The Hanging Man, The Traitor	Le Pendu	Il Traditore, L'Impiccato, L'Appeso
XIII	Death	La Mort	La Morte
XIII	Temperance	La Temperance	La Temperanza
XV	The Devil	La Diable	Il Diavolo
XVI	The Tower, The Falling Tower, The Lightning Struck Tower, The House of God, The Hospital, The Tower of Babel, Fire of Heaven, The Devil's House	La Maison-Dieu, La Foudre	La Casa del Diavolo, La Torre, Il Fuoco, La Saetta
XVII	The Star	L'Etoile	Le Stelle
XVIII	The Moon	La Lune	La Luna
XVIII	The Sun	Le Soleil	Il Sole
XX	Judgment, The Last Judgment, The Angel	Le Jugement, La Trompette, L'Ange	Il Guidizio, Le Trombe, L'Angelo
XXI	The World, The Universe	Le Monde	Il Mondo

## THE MINOR ARCANA CARDS

The fifty-six Minor Arcana or Lesser Arcana are divided into four suits containing fourteen cards each—four court cards plus ten pip or numeral cards from ten to one. The suits correspond to an ordinary deck of playing cards; swords are spades, wands are clubs, cups are hearts, and coins are diamonds. Some card-makers, from earliest times to the present, have sought to introduce a variety of different suit signs including stars, arrows, birds, dogs, falcons, mirrors, columns, moons, anchors, etc., but they did not strike the popular fancy.

The playing card suit signs prevalent today in tarot card packs published in the United States, United Kingdom, France, Italy and certain other countries are:

English	French	Italian	Corresponding to
Swords	Epées	Spade	Spades
Wands, Staves, Scepters, Batons, Clubs	Batons	Bastoni	Clubs
Cups, Chalice, Goblets	Coupes	Coppe	Hearts
Coins, Money, Pentacles, Circles	Deniers	Denari	Diamonds

The four court cards in each suit are:

English	French	Italian
King	Roi	Re
Queen	Reine	Regina
Knight, Horseman	Cavalier	Cavallo
Page, Knave	Valet	Fante

Some scholars believe the modern fifty-two card playing card deck derives from the early tarocchi packs—the knight and page having been combined to form the jack, and the twenty-two trump cards having been dropped, with the exception of The Fool which survives as the Joker. However, there is nothing to substantiate this theory.

There is no direct link between The Fool of the tarot pack and the Joker of standard playing cards, except the obvious humorous connotation. Jokers in standard playing card decks are a mid-nineteenth century adaption popularized by card gamblers. Additionally, it is uncertain whether the twenty-two trump cards and the fifty-six court and pip cards were originally devised as a complete seventy-eight card deck. It is more likely that the court and pip cards were developed independently of the trumps, and at a later date the groups of fifty-six and twenty-two cards were combined to form the complete seventy-eight card tarocchi pack.

The current viewpoint about the development of the courts is that the earliest packs had only three courts, all male. The 1377 'Ludus chartularum moralisatus' by John of Rheinfelden describes three male courts that correspond to the German figures, *König*, *Ober* and *Unter*. And if we accept the idea that the Latin-suited cards were the very first, they had (and still have) Kings, Knights and Jacks, but no Queens. It is the (ever gallant) French who put Queens instead of Knights.

When Tarot was invented, the court cards were 'multiplied': in the Cary-Yale pack the male knights and pages had female counterparts (therefore six courts per suit). In the 'standard' Tarot pack, the only female remaining is the Queen, making four courts, King, Queen, Knight and Page.

## THE VISCONTI AND SFORZA FAMILIES AND HERALDIC DEVICES

The Visconti family dominated a wide area around Milan for over one hundred years—from the mid-fourteenth to the mid-fifteenth century. Bernabo Visconti, one of the most ruthless tyrants in the latter half of the fourteenth century, was Lord of Milan. Bernabo Visconti shared power with his brother, Galeazzo—a quiet, reserved figure in contrast to the lusty, ebullient Bernabo. Galeazzo's son, Giangaleazzo Visconti was born in 1351 but he did not wish to remain in the background as his father did.

During a coup in 1385, he deposed his uncle Bernabo and assumed sole rule over Milan. For the next seventeen years, Giangaleazzo extended his territorial dominance across Northern Italy from Piedmont to the Adriatic. He brought all of Lombardy and Emilia under his rule and became known as the “despot of Milan.”

In 1395, Giangaleazzo Visconti purchased, from Emperor Wenceslas of Germany, the hereditary title of Duke of Milan, and adopted the imperial eagle as part of his coat of arms. Giangaleazzo served as the first Duke of Milan until his death from the plague in 1402. Although the three sons of his first marriage all died in infancy, Giangaleazzo had two sons—Giovanni Maria and Filippo Maria—from his second marriage to his first cousin, Caterina Visconti.

The second Duke of Milan, Giovanni Maria Visconti, a vicious ruler, was assassinated in 1412. His younger brother Filippo, born in 1391, who had been relegated to Pavia, now seized power and became third Duke of Milan. In 1413, Filippo married Beatrice di Guglielmo Ventimiglia Lascaris, conte di Tenda, widow of Faccino Cana of Pisa. In 1418, he beheaded her on trumped up charges of adultery.

During Filippo’s long reign he restored unity and authority in the duchy. In 1428 he was married again—this time to Maria de Savoy—but there were no children born in wedlock. Filippo’s illegitimate daughter, Bianca Maria Visconti, was born in 1423 to his mistress, Agnes del Maino. Bianca was betrothed in 1432, at age nine, to Francesco Sforza, an effective condottiere in the Visconti service. His father, Muzio Attendolo, a powerful condottiere in Italy, earned the nickname Sforza, (Force), when he assisted Duke Giangaleazzo Visconti in defeating the della Scala family in 1387. Francesco was the first to bear Sforza officially as a family name. The marriage of Francesco and Bianca took place nine years after their betrothal, in 1441, at the Church of St. Sigismund, in Cremona. The bride was eighteen and the bridegroom forty. It proved to be a lasting and happy marriage.

In 1447, six years after the marriage of Francesco and Bianca Maria, the last of the ducal Visconti—Duke Filippo—died leaving no male heir. Milan did not pass

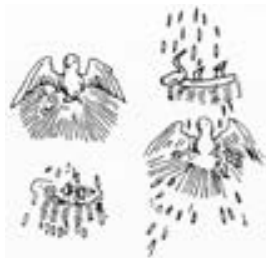


smoothly to Francesco by inheritance, and it was not until 1450 that Francesco realized his ambitions and became the fourth Duke of Milan. He was the first Sforza to hold such a title and the only condottiere to rise from humble origins to become a duke. All of the Visconti heraldic devices were taken over by Francesco, who ruled Milan peacefully and efficiently for the remaining sixteen years of his life.

## Visconti Heraldic Devices

The link between the Visconti and Sforza families and the several Visconti-Sforza decks is based upon heraldic devices that are found on the trump, court and pip cards. The heraldic devices of the Visconti family that appear in the Pierpont Morgan Visconti-Sforza deck are:

1. A bird, possibly a dove, with straight, radiating lines, is seen on the King, Queen and Page of Staves. Beneath the bird is a nest containing three young birds. This device also appears in the Cary-Yale deck in the suit of coins.



2. The ducal crown with branches or fronds, as seen on The Empress, The Emperor, and the horse's caparison on the Knight of Cups.



3. The sun with a mixing of wavy and straight-lined rays that end in a scalloped shell pattern appears on The Hierophant, The Lovers, The Chariot, Justice, The Wheel of Fortune, Judgment, the horse's caparison on the Knight of Staves, the court cards of the suit of cups, and all the coin cards except the ace.



4. The black eagle appears on The Emperor and The Empress cards and is derived from Emperor Wenceslas, 1395. This could conceivably be representative of the Emperor himself.



5. The motto "*A bon droyt*," which Gertrude Moakley (*The Tarot Cards Painted by Bonifacio Bembo for the Visconti-Sforza Family*) believes was suggested by Petrarch to the first Duke of Milan, Giangaleazzo Visconti, appears on the 5, 4, 3, 2 and Ace of Swords, the 5, 4, 3, 2 and Ace of Staves, the 5, 4, 3, and 2 of Coins, and the 4 of Cups. This Visconti motto means "*To the good belongs the right*" or "*On the side of the law.*" The meaning of the French saying (which is still used) is "*With good reason; by right.*"



Two heraldic devices that do not appear in the Pierpont Morgan Tarocchi pack are writhing serpents and a serpent partially devouring a Saracen. These heraldic devices appear on The Lovers card in the Cary-Yale Visconti deck at Yale University and on the coat-of-arms card in the so-called Von Bartsch group.

The heraldic devices of the Sforza family that appear on the cards in the Pierpont Morgan deck are:

1. A lion, as seen on the King of Swords;
2. Three interlocking diamond rings appearing on The Empress and The Emperor cards.



## THE VISCONTI AND VISCONTI-SFORZA DECKS

Based upon differences in size and artistic style of the cards, there appear to be two hundred and sixty-six Visconti and Visconti-Sforza Tarocchi cards divided into fifteen distinct groups. The Milanese cards are sometimes called *Lombard Tarocchi* packs because they were produced in what is now called the Province of Lombardy. All the cards are hand painted on heavy cardboard.

Each distinct group is known by one or more names, usually the name of one or several former owners, or the name of the artist believed to have painted the cards.

Description or Popular Name	No. of Cards	Present Location	Measurement (Millimeters)
<b>'MILANESE' GROUP I (authenticated)</b>			
Visconti-Sforza; Colleoni; Colleoni-Baglioni; Pierpont Morgan Bergamo (or PMB)	26	Accademia Carrara Bergamo, Italy	175 x 87
	35	Pierpont Morgan Library (now Morgan Library & Museum), NY	175 x 87
	13	Colleoni Collection, Bergamo, Italy	175 x 87
Visconti di Modrone; Cary-Yale (or CY); Visconti	67	Cary Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT	189 x 90
Brambilla; Brera	48	Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, Italy	180 x 90
<b>'MILANESE' GROUP II (from 'perhaps authentic' to 'very dubious')</b>			
Fournier	5	Museo Fournier de Naipes de Álava, Vitoria, Spain	171 x 87
Fournier Popess	1	Museo Fournier, Vitoria, Spain	170 x 85
Guildhall A*	1	London Metropolitan Archives, London	138 x 66
Von Bartsch; Tozzi-Von Bartsch	2	Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal	170 x 70
	11	Previously Piero Tozzi, NY	170 x 70
Lombardy IIa	2	Private Collection	170 x 87
Marzoli/Kaplan	1	Collector Unknown	171 x 88
Lombardy I	23	Private Collection	168 x 86
Rosenthal	23	Collector Unknown	Size Unknown
Biedak/Kaplan	1	Collector Unknown	171 x 87
<b>'MILANESE' GROUP III (not for Visconti or Sforza)</b>			
Victoria & Albert; Colleoni/V&A	4	Victoria & Albert Museum, London	170 x 85
Lombardy IIb	2	Private Collection	169 x 86
Andrioletti/Kaplan	1	Collector Unknown	171 x 88

*\*The card has never been owned by the Guildhall Library, it belongs to The Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards, London.*

The **Pierpont Morgan Visconti-Sforza** pack is the most nearly complete of all the fifteenth-century decks that have survived. Twenty-six cards are at the Accademia Carrara, Bergamo, Italy; thirty-five cards at the Pierpont Morgan Library (now Morgan Library & Museum), and thirteen cards in a private collection. There are seventy-four extant cards, and four cards are lost: The Devil, The Tower, Three of Swords, and Knight of Coins. These four cards have been professionally recreated to most closely resemble what might have been the design of the original cards. Thus, the pack accompanying this booklet is a complete seventy-eight card deck.

The **Cary-Yale Visconti** pack has sixty-seven extant cards consisting of eleven Major Arcana and fifty-six Minor Arcana cards. This pack has three unusual cards: the three Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, which normally do not appear in tarocchi packs. The Major Arcana cards are The Empress, The Emperor, The Lovers, The Chariot, Strength, Death, Judgment, The World, plus Faith, Hope and Charity. This unique deck also has sixteen instead of fourteen cards in each of the four suits. The increase is due to two additional court cards per suit; female counterparts to the male knight and page, also known as mounted lady and maid. This brings the total Minor Arcana to sixty-four cards instead of fifty-six in the original, complete deck.

The **Brera Gallery** or **Brambilla** pack has only forty-eight cards remaining today. Of these, two are Major Arcana cards—The Emperor and The Wheel of Fortune—and forty-six are suit cards. The extant suit cards include seven court cards—King, Queen and Knight of Staves and Knights and Pages in the suits of cups and coins—and thirty-nine pip cards, only the Four of Coins is lacking. The court figures in the suit of staves appear to be holding arrows with quill and arrowhead clearly distinguishable. This suggests that the courts might be from the suit of swords, not staves.

The **Fournier** cards consist of The Popesse, The Emperor, 7 of Staves, 8, 2 and Ace of Coins. The Popesse cannot belong to the same series: it has a quite different back, and its size is slightly smaller.

The one card at **London Metropolitan Archives**, London, is The World (still called Guildhall A), from the “Milanese” Group II. There are three cards (Guildhall B), whose identification is less clear and not included in the table: an Ace of Cups, and what looks like an Ace of Swords, plus a Jack of uncertain suit (Staves?). The three “Guildhall B” cards, to which we cannot assign a clear place of origin, also belong to The Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards, London, and are stored at the London Metropolitan Archives.

The **Von Bartsch** cards total thirteen and comprise five trumps: The Pope, The Chariot, The Wheel of Fortune, Temperance and Judgment. There are also the King, Knight, 5 of Swords; King, Knight, Page of Cups; Queen of Coins; and one unusual card bearing the coat-of-arms of the Visconti-Sforza family which depicts a large, crowned serpent partially devouring a human figure. This card may have been an identification card for the deck’s ownership.

The **Lombardy IIa** cards are The Star and the King of Cups. The Star is almost the same as The Star of the Pierpont-Morgan Visconti-Sforza pack. The King of Cups is also, in pose and composition, very similar to its counterpart in the Pierpont-Morgan Visconti-Sforza pack.

The single card whose previous owners were **Marzoli/Whitten/Kaplan/Christies** is the Page of Staves, much restored but clearly suggestive of the Bembo school.

The twenty-three **Lombardy I** cards precisely match fifteen Major Arcana and eight courts of the thirty-five cards owned by the Morgan Library & Museum.

There are however some differences between the two sets. Lombardy I cards are judged of inferior quality. For this reason some think they are modern forgeries. Since all Lombardy I cards derive from cards preserved in New York (and not from the other cards that are in Bergamo), it has been suggested they were copied after 1911, when the Morgan Library & Museum acquired the cards from an antique dealer.

Lombardy I is not the Rosenthal set (although they both have 23 cards). They are both considered dubious.

The **Rosenthal** cards total twenty-three and comprise a Falcon card suggestive of The Fool, The Emperor, Justice, The Star, The Sun, Knight, Page, 5, 4 and Ace of Swords; Queen, Knight, Page, 5 of Staves; King, 5 and Ace of Cups; King, Page, 5, 3 and Ace of Coins and an extra card showing the coat-of-arms of the Visconti-Sforza family (the Visconti Viper), perhaps an identification card for the deck's ownership. (Like in the Von Bartsch series.) The Rosenthal cards show all signs of being forgeries.

The single card whose last known owner was **Biedak/Kaplan/Christies** is the King of Cups.

The four cards at the **Victoria & Albert Museum**, London, are Death, The Star, Ace of Cups and Page of Coins. The Ace of Cups (for image, see *The Encyclopedia of Tarot* by Stuart R. Kaplan, Vol. I page 104) looks like a fountain. At the right of the base, a heraldic shield shows the strange coat of arms (three testes) of the *condottiere* Bartolomeo Colleoni, c. 1395-1475. The trunk of the fountain reads "*nec spe, nec metu*" (neither hope nor fear), which was adopted in 1504 by Isabella d'Este (1474-1539) when she became Duchess of Mantua.

The **Lombardy IIb** cards are: Death and the Knight of Cups. These cards do not belong to the same deck that comprises The Star and the King of Cups (see Lombardy IIa).

The Knight of Cups does not match anything in the Visconti-Sforza pack. The vessel he holds is distinctly different from the one the Lombardy IIa King of Cups holds. Either this card is a very poor (modern?) copy of a Visconti-Sforza Knight of Cups, or it belongs to some unknown 15th-century tarot pack. The Death card is clearly not Visconti-Sforza too. Actually it resembles the same card in the Victoria & Albert Museum.

The single card whose previous owners were **Andrioletti/Kaplan/Christies**, is the Page of Coins, which resembles the same card at the Accademia Carrara, Bergamo, Italy.

## The Artists

There have been many attempts to identify the painters of the different Visconti-Sforza tarocchi cards. It is possible that the incomplete seventy-four card Pierpont Morgan Tarocchi pack, the sixty-seven card Cary-Yale pack and possibly the forty-eight card Brera Gallery Tarocchi pack were rendered by the same hand, with the exception of six replacement *trionfi* cards in the Pierpont Morgan Tarocchi deck, namely: Strength, Temperance, The Star, The Moon, The Sun, and The World.

For many years it was thought the artist of the Pierpont Morgan cards was Antonio Cicognara, a theory promoted by one of his nineteenth-century descendants, Leopoldo Cicognara. However, most scholars now think that the artist was Bonifacio Bembo, a Cremonese painter believed to have been born around 1420, who was favored with many commissions from the Visconti and Sforza families. It is believed that Bembo did not paint all the cards, but was helped by his brothers. This would explain why six of the Visconti-Sforza cards have a different style (Strength, Temperance, The Star, The Moon, The Sun and The World): they might have been painted at the same time, though by a different hand.

## Dating the Decks

There is also considerable controversy about which of the Visconti-Sforza decks is the oldest. Some scholars believe that the incomplete 48-card Brera Gallery deck, dating from about 1445, is the oldest because the artwork appears stiff and less professional than the Pierpont Morgan and Cary-Yale packs.

Other researchers maintain that the incomplete sixty-seven card Cary-Yale pack is the oldest deck because of the presence of the arms of the family of Maria de Savoy on The Lovers card. Filippo Visconti, the third Duke of Milan, married his second wife, Maria de Savoy, in 1428. However, the marriage was never consummated and Filippo held his bride political prisoner, which would seem to preclude Filippo's pro-



moting the heraldic device of the Savoy family. Since the cards are firmly attributed to Bonifacio Bembo, it is assumed they date at least to the 1440's, so 1428 would be much too early. Also the style of painting is not that of the early 15th century. The expense and time involved in completing the Visconti cards suggests the decks were commissioned to honor special occasions. One hypothesis is the sixty-seven card Cary-Yale pack may have served as a wedding present for the marriage of Filippo Visconti to Maria de Savoy in 1428 and the forty-eight card Brera pack may have been a wedding present for the marriage of Francesco Sforza to Bianca Maria Visconti in 1441. The presence of recognizable Sforza emblems on the Stave and Sword suits, like Arrows on the Stave pips, quinces on the gowns of the Maid (female Jack) and female Knight of Swords, as well as fountains on the Stave courts, would mean the 'long' suits represent the Sforza family, while the 'round' suits, showing typical Visconti emblems—radiant suns and ducal crowns—would represent the Visconti family. The male figure on The Lover has fountains again on his coat, thus designating him as a Sforza. Another hypothesis is that he is Francesco Sforza himself, and that the sixty-seven Cary-Yale pack may have served as a wedding present for the marriage of Francesco Sforza to Bianca Maria Visconti in 1441. Francesco and Bianca Maria were married in Cremona, the very city where Bonifacio Bembo and his brothers were starting their business. The Brambilla pack would have been painted later, between 1442 and 1447, but we do not know on which occasion.

Michael Dummett (*The Game of Tarot*) held the Cary-Yale pack, with its unusual trumps and extra courts, for a kind of early attempt before the 'standardization' of the Tarot pack, perhaps in the mid-15th century. The seventy-four card Pierpont Morgan pack might have been commissioned in celebration of Francesco Sforza's assumption of the ducal crown of Milan in 1450 or as a tenth anniversary present to Bianca Maria from Francesco Sforza. Despite the apparent value of the cards, at some point they were either displayed individually on nails, as evidenced by the hole(s) on each card, or stored on a nail in a group. Curiously, a few cards have holes at the bottom.

## THE PIERPONT MORGAN VISCONTI-SFORZA TAROCCHI DECK

The earliest pack of tarot cards with numbers on the twenty-two Major Arcana is a French deck by Catalin Geoffroy (possibly prepared for export to Germany) which dates from about 1556 or 1557. The same sequence is still popular today and, as the cards of the Visconti-Sforza pack are neither numbered nor titled, we have adopted the Geoffroy sequence for the following presentation of the cards.

### The 22 Major Arcana Cards



**THE FOOL.** The young man depicted as the Fool stands barefooted; his white stockings are worn through at the feet. The Fool is dressed sparingly in white undergarments and a thin, ragged coat. His right hand holds a club that rests on his right shoulder. Seven feathers protrude through his curly hair. His unshaven face has a shaggy, forked beard.

The background design of this card, as in most Major Arcana cards of the Pierpont Morgan deck, consists of a decorative, rectangular paneled border containing repetitive tooled dots—generally seven dots in a circle and one center dot. The border surrounds an overall gold background decorated by repeating suns with eight wavy rays, within a diamond or lozenge-shaped pattern.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Beginning of an adventure. Enthusiasm. Initiative. New opportunities beckon. Unlimited possibilities. Innocence. Passion. Rashness. Impulsiveness. Obsession. Mania. Folly. Thoughtlessness. Lack of discipline. Immaturity. Irrationality. Frivolity. Capricious actions. Spontaneity. Unrestrained excess. Carelessness. Inattentiveness to important details. Infatuation. Indiscretion. Tendency to start a project without carefully considering all the details. Reluctance to listen to advice. The person drawing this card should be careful not to be

tempted by that which appears better than it really is. Care must be taken to avoid foolishness.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Faulty choice or a bad decision. Indecision. Apathy. Hesitating instead of diligently proceeding ahead.



**THE MAGICIAN.** The Magician or Juggler sits at a small table on which are a knife, two coins or pieces of bread, a cup and a large white dish. His right hand is cupped over the ornate, covered dish which is speckled with grey. In his left hand the Magician holds a rod. The symbols of all four suits are depicted in this card: the knife or sword represents spades; the rod or baton—staves; the cup—hearts; and the bread—coins. The

Magician wears a richly-colored red robe. His hat, the edge of his coat and cuffs are trimmed in white ermine. His feet are covered with loose fitting slippers. The floor seems to be an expanse of green grass broken by an occasional leaf pattern. The background of the card is a decorative diapered, or lozenge-shaped design framing the familiar sunburst—the sun emitting wavy rays. The border panel of the card contains the usual decorative design repeated with minor alterations on almost all the cards—dots, usually seven in a circle around one center dot. Moakley views this card as the Carnival King in the triumphal processional before Lent.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Originality. Creativity. Ability to utilize one's capabilities in order to accomplish a task. Imagination. Self-reliance. Concentration. Skill. Willpower. Self-confidence. Dexterity. Ingenuity. Flexibility. Craft. Guile. Masterfulness. Self-control. Sleight of hand. Master of oneself. Determination to see a task through to completion. Capable of influencing other people.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Weakness of will. Indecision. Ineptitude. Insecurity. Disquiet. Delay. Lack of imagination. The use of one's skills for destructive ends. Willpower applied to evil ends.



**THE HIGH PRIESTESS.** The figure of the High Priestess is seated upon a gold bench on a trapezoidal platform. She is draped in a brown, monastic cloak and wears a tiara over the white wimple on her head. In her right hand she holds a thin scepter topped with a cross. In her left hand, and balanced on her knee, is a sacred book. In the bottom corners of the card are floral patterns on grass. This motif is found on cards throughout the deck. Some scholars

believe this card represents the Female Pope or Popess. Moakley believes her religious habit is from the Umiliata Order and that the figure is Sister Manfreda, a relative of the Visconti family who was actually elected Pope by the small Lombard sect of the Guglielmites. According to Moakley, their leader—Guglielma of Bohemia—died in Milan in 1281. Guglielma's followers believed Sister Manfreda was the incarnation of the Holy Spirit, sent to inaugurate the New Age of the Spirit prophesized by Joachim of Flora.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Wisdom. Sound judgment. Serene knowledge. Common sense. Learning. Objectivity. Penetration. Education. Foresight. Intuition. Comprehension. Perception. Self-reliance. Hidden emotion. Trusting intuition. Open to the unknown. Platonic relationships. Avoids emotional entanglements. Practical. Teacher.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Ignorance. Shortsightedness. Lack of understanding. Selfishness. Acceptance of superficial knowledge. Improper judgment. Shallowness. Conceit.



**THE EMPRESS.** The regal figure of the Empress sits upon her throne. She wears a gold crown over a yellow headscarf that drapes softly across her shoulders. Her hands are gloved in green velvet-like fabric, and in her left hand is a shield—either just decorative or possibly her husband's jousting shield. It is emblazoned with the black eagle of Emperor Wenceslas, a device the Viscontis

and later the Sforzas adopted. Three interlaced diamond rings, a Sforza heraldic device, are repeated on her royal robe; the rings symbolize eternity and the diamonds, invincibility. The Visconti crown is depicted with two fronds or twigs, possibly a palm and a laurel. The robe is completed with a dotted border design and is lined in a rich blue. This is the first Major Arcana card that bears the heraldic devices of the combined Visconti-Sforza families.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Feminine progress. Action. Development. Fruitfulness. Fertility. Attainment. Accomplishment. Interest in day-to-day details. Mother. Sister. Wife. Marriage. Children. Feminine influence. Material wealth. Evolution. Spendthrift. Capable of motivating others. A leader. Makes informed decisions. Generous spirit. The motivation behind a successful partner or husband. Business woman. Level-headed. Practical. Decisive.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Vacillation. Inaction. Lack of interest. Lack of concentration. Indecision. Delay in accomplishment or progress. Anxiety. Frittering away of resources. Loss of material possessions. Infertility. Infidelity.



**THE EMPEROR.** The aged, male figure of the Emperor is seated upon an unseen throne on a trapezoidal platform. He is heavily bearded with gray hair. His robe matches the royal garment of the Empress, repeating the three interlaced diamond rings of the Sforza family and the Visconti crown. The Emperor wears a large ornate hat with the black eagle on its front. In his left hand he holds a globe with a cross, the *globus cruciger* (cross-bearing orb), a Christian symbol of authority during the Middle Ages. In his right hand he holds a thin scepter. Several trees appear adjacent to a grassy clearing on the lower portion of the card. Similar depictions of treed areas appear on cards throughout the deck—apparently at random.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Worldly power. Accomplishment. Confidence. Wealth. Stability. Authority. Indomitable spirit. Leadership. War-making tendencies. Paternity.

Father. Brother. Husband. Male influence. Direct pressure. Conviction. Intelligence and reason over emotion and passion. Strength. Patriarchal figure. Attainment of goals. Desire to expand dominion. Systemic pursuit. Strong masculine development. Worthy of exercising authority. A capable person who is knowledgeable and competent. Willing to listen to counsel.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Immaturity. Ineffectiveness. Lack of strength. Indecision. Inability. Weak character. Feebleness. Failure to control petty emotions.



**THE HIEROPHANT.** The aged, bearded figure of the Hierophant appears wearing a triple crown. He gives the sign of a blessing with his right hand. In his left hand is a long scepter with a cross at its top. The Hierophant's robe is lined in rich green. A blue, hexagonal ribbon pattern running throughout the robe encircles a sun pattern with mixed wavy and straight-lined rays. At the ends of the wavy, scalloped rays are blue dots. This may be a Visconti device. The wavy rays seem to transform into straight rays as if passing through a prism. The throne of the Hierophant rests upon a trapezoidal platform.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Ritualism. Ceremonies. Mercy. Humilities. Kindness. Goodness. Forgiveness. Inspiration. Alliance. Commitment to a cause. Tradition. Compassion. Servitude. Timidity. Captivity to one's own ideas. Tendency to cling to outdated ideas and principles. A person to whom one has recourse. Orthodoxy. Conformity. A religious or spiritual leader. Inability to adapt to changes. A person with a sense of historical importance.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Over-kindness. Susceptibility. Impotence. Vulnerability. Frailty. Unorthodoxy. Renunciation. Unconventionality.



**THE LOVERS.** Some scholars believe the two figures on this card represent Francesco Sforza and Bianca Maria Visconti. The male figure is shown wearing a flat hat. He is dressed in a robe decorated with the heraldic device of sun and rays. The female figure is dressed in a long robe patterned with the same wavy rays and a sun surrounded by straight prismatic rays. She may be wearing a lace net with her hair protruding slightly in front, or the gold has flaked off revealing the underlying white pigment. She has removed the glove from her right hand and the two figures are shaking hands. Their faces are attentive and pleasant. The winged figure of Cupid, blindfolded and nude, stands on a pedestal and, without deliberation or selection, prepares to throw an arrow with his right hand. In his left hand, Cupid holds a thin rod or scepter. The coloring of the background suggests that the background originally may have been done in inferior gold. Another possibility is that the card may have been exposed to the elements for a greater period of time while on display, thus leaving the background colors so different from the other cards.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Love. Beauty. Perfection. Harmony. Unanimity. Trials overcome. Confidence. Trust. Union. Honor. Possibly the beginning of a romance. Infatuation. Kinship. Deep feeling. Optimism. Letting oneself go. Freedom of emotion. The necessity of testing or subjecting to trial. Struggle between sacred and profane love. Establishing bonds. Examining. Yearning. A person deeply involved in the emotions and problems of a friend or relative. A meaningful affair. Desire.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Failure to meet the test. Unreliability. Separation. Frustration in love and marriage. Interference by others. Fickleness. Untrustworthiness. Rejection.



**THE CHARIOT.** Sitting upon a flat chariot drawn by two winged, white horses seems to be the same female figure who appeared on The Lovers card. The woman wears a crown over her golden hair. In her left hand she holds a globe topped with a cross and in her right hand, a thin scepter. Her garment is decorated with a sun emanating wavy and straight rays which terminate in a scalloped rim.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Adversity, possibly already overcome. Conflicting influence. Turmoil. Determination. Sustained effort. Establishing a plan. Success. Possible voyage or journey. Escape. Riding the crest of success or popularity. This card suggests that one can achieve greatness when physical and mental powers are maintained in balance.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** To be unsuccessful. Defeat. Failure. At the last minute to lose something otherwise within your grasp. Sudden collapse of plans. Conquered. Overwhelmed. Failure to face reality. Confusion.



**JUSTICE.** The female figure of Justice holds in her left hand the scales of justice and in her right hand, a two-edged sword. This female figure seems to be the same person depicted on the previous card—The Chariot—and on several other cards. This suggests that the cards may have been intended to illustrate the many facets of Bianca Maria Visconti. She wears a gold crown, barely visible against the golden backdrop that rises in a gothic arch behind her head. The background and color of her garment appear to match The Emperor card. Above Justice, and as if in a dreamlike sequence, is a figure dressed in full-body armor carrying an upraised sword. The knight-like figure on a white stallion appears to be in rapid motion as if charging. The rays of the sun appear in both the upper left and upper right corners of the card. Justice is one of the four cardinal



virtues to appear as a trump card, the others are: Strength, The Hanged Man (Prudence?) and Temperance.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Fairness. Reasonableness. Justice. Proper balance. Harmony. Equity. Righteousness. Virtue. Honor. Just reward. Sincere desire. Good intentions. Well-meaning actions. Advice. Self-satisfaction. The eventual outcome, whether favorable or unfavorable, will truly be fair for the person concerned. Equilibrium. Poise. Impartiality. Capability of perceiving temptation and avoiding evil. This card suggests a person who responds favorably to the good nature of others. A considerate person.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Bias. False accusations. Bigotry. Severity in judgment. Intolerance. Unfairness. Abuse.



**THE HERMIT.** The blue robe worn by the Hermit, or Father Time, is trimmed in gold fur, suggesting he is a man of some means. He wears on his head an unusual fluffy, two-tiered hat also trimmed in gold fur. The Hermit has a long white beard. He appears to be wearing white gloves and has on the same loose-fitting slippers as the Magician. In his right hand the Hermit carries a large hourglass to mark time as might the

Father of Time. In other popular tarot cards he often is depicted holding a lantern. The Hermit supports himself with a long rod held in his left hand.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Counsel. Knowledge. Solitude. Prudence. Discretion. Caution. Vigilance. Circumspection. Self-denial. Withdrawal. Retreat. Annulment. Unexpressive. A loner or person incapable of participating with another person. Withdrawal. Tendency to withhold emotion. Personal quest. Possessor of secrets. Seeking knowledge without utilizing it, but sometimes willing to share it.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Imprudence. Hastiness. Prematurity. Foolish acts. Incorrect advice. Failure caused by rashness. Excessive prudence resulting in unnecessary delay. Over-analyzing a situation.



**THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE.** The winged, female figure of fortune within the center of the wheel is the same person previously depicted on *The Lovers*, *The Chariot* and *Justice*. However, on this card her robe is similar to the blue, hexagonal ribbon pattern of the Hierophant's robe with the exception that the color of the pattern is silver, rather than gold. Straight rays emit from a sun with scalloped smaller rays and blue dots. There are four

symbolic figures around the wheel. The young figure on a platform at the top of the wheel has ass ears and is clothed in a gold garment with the heraldic device of the sun. The lettering near the figure reads *Regno*—"I reign."

The figure clothed in green, rising on the left side of the wheel, also has ass ears, and the lettering reads *Regnabo*—"I shall reign." The figure descending on the right has not ass ears but has a tail, and the lettering reads *Regnavi*—"I reigned." The figure of a full-grown, aged man on his hands and knees is beneath the wheel. He has a heavy gray beard and is dressed in a ragged white garment. His stockings are worn through at the feet, similar in manner to the depiction on *The Fool* card. The lettering by the aged man reads *Sum sine regno*—"I am without reign."

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Destiny. Fortune. Fate. Outcome. Felicity. Opportunity. Special gain or unusual loss. Culmination. Conclusion. Approaching the end of a problem. The influences affecting the outcome. Good or bad sign, depending upon influences of other nearby cards. Inevitability. Unexpected events may occur. The entire sequence of the Wheel suggests the course of things from beginning to end.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Failure. Ill luck. Broken sequence. Impasse. Interruption due to unexpected events. Outside influences not contemplated.



**STRENGTH.** This card, also called Fortitude, is the first of the six trump cards believed to have been painted by a different artist, possibly Antonio Cicognara. The figure of a strong man, perhaps Hercules, wields a club above his head. The green club is rough with nubs. The man wears a dark blue tunic with a red-violet scarf, sleeves and knee-high stockings. Both the man and an animal crouching in front of him, probably a lion,

stare intently in the same direction and bear the same facial expression. The Strength card in most tarot decks depicts a man or woman controlling a lion, but in this card from the Visconti-Sforza pack, the man and the animal appear poised for battle against a common enemy. Some interpretations suggest the lion is cowering under the blows of the man's club. The features of the man are harsher than the sweet facial features rendered in the preceding Major Arcana cards. The background of this replacement card contains a repetitive sun pattern with its rays appearing straight rather than wavy as in the other trump cards. The tooling on the gold background is not as clearly defined as on the majority of the other cards.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Strength. Courage. Fortitude. Conviction. Energy. Determination. Resolution. Defiance. Action. Awareness of temptations and the necessary abilities to overcome them. Confidence. Innate ability. Fervor. Physical strength. Mind over matter. Accomplishment. Attainment at considerable peril. Conquest. Hidden forces at work which are challenged. Heroism. Virility.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Weakness. Pettiness. Impotency. Sickness. Tyranny. Lack of faith. Abuse of power. Indifference.



**THE HANGED MAN.** This card depicts a young figure hanging upside down by his left ankle from a wooden gallows. The face of the figure is similar to the face that has appeared in several other cards, including *The Lovers* and *Justice*. The hanging figure wears a pair of green tights with high hips and a white blouse with balloon sleeves and buttons down the center.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Life in suspension. Transition. Change. Reversal of thinking. In a passive sense, apathy and dullness. Boredom. Abandonment. Renunciation. The changing of life's forces. The period of respite between significant events. Sacrifice. Repentance. Readjustment. Efforts may have to be undertaken toward the success of a goal. Regeneration. Improvement. Rebirth. The approach of new life forces. This is the time to condition oneself for new experiences. Surrender. Lack of progress. Unappreciated sacrifice. Unnoticed development.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Lack of sacrifice. Unwillingness to make the necessary effort. Failure to give of one's self. Pre-occupation with the ego. False prophecy. Useless sacrifice.



**DEATH.** The animate figure of a skeleton stands upon the ground. The white shrouds around his head may have been a blindfold removed or remnants of a bandage. The skeleton holds in his left hand a large bow; it is a weapon. In his right hand is a thin arrow feathered at the top. The funeral figure of death smiles with piercing eyes, glaring from his skull. At the bottom of the card the ground is shown with crevices and cracks at the edge of a precipice.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Transformation. Clearing away the old to make way for the new. Unexpected change. Loss. Failure. Alteration. Abrupt change of the old self though not necessarily physical death. The ending of a familiar

situation or friendship. Loss of income or financial security. Beginning of a new era. Illness, possibly even death.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Stagnation. Immobility. Slow changes. Partial change. Inertia. Narrowly missing a serious accident.



**TEMPERANCE.** This card is also done by a hand other than that of Bonafacio Bembo—the artist may be Antonio Cicognaro. The tooling in the background is similar to the Strength card. The figure of Temperance is shown as a woman. She is symbolically pouring a liquid from one ornate ceramic urn into another. Draping the figure is a deep blue peplum drawn across the bodice by a fine ribbon belt. The garment is patterned with eight-rayed gold stars. This is the first appearance of this pattern. Her sleeves are red-violet and the faded red stockings on her feet are sagging. Temperance stands at the edge of a crevice or precipice. There is a decorative grass pattern at her feet. The artist who painted this card did not include on the garment any of the heraldic devices common to Visconti or Sforza. However, the background design remains compatible with the other cards.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Moderation. Temperance. Patience. That which can be accomplished through self-control. Accommodation. Harmony. The mixing or bringing together into perfect union. Management. Compatibility. Fusion. Adjustment. Good influence. Fortunate omen. Consolidation. Successful combination. Ability to recognize and utilize available resources. Highly regarded. Mother image. Exuding confidence and complacency. Possibly too yielding to achieve a goal presently out of reach.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Discord. Disunion. Conflict of interest. Hostility. Inability to work with others. Difficulty in understanding others. Impatience. Overindulgence. Frustrations.



**THE DEVIL.** This is one of the four cards lost from the extant Visconti-Sforza Tarocchi pack. The first five hundred Visconti-Sforza decks, reproduced in 1975 by Grafica Gutenberg and U.S. Games Systems, Inc. contained a composite line drawing of The Devil card from other popular tarot decks. The second edition of the reproduced Visconti-Sforza deck, also published in 1975, utilized a recreated card of The

Devil as it may have originally appeared in the fifteenth century. The recreated card shows a fierce Devil—half animal and half human—standing on an open stone well. The Devil is winged and has long spiral horns. It carries in its right hand a thin stick with an open hand on top, while its left hand gives a sign. In front of the Devil are two smaller figures, both half animal and half human, one male and one female. They both have horns and the male has a visible tail. The female figure has a lighter skin tone. She is clothed with a loose green garment lined in white fur. The male figure wears red tights and a short tunic trimmed in gold fur. A heavy rope tied around her neck and his wrists goes through a ring affixed to the base of the well.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Subordination. Ravage. Bondage. Malevolence. Subservience. Downfall. Lack of success. Bleak experience. Bad outside influence or advice. Unexpected failure. Seeming inability to realize one's goals. Dependence upon another person, which leads to unhappiness. Violence. Shock. Fatality. Self-punishment. Temptation to evil. Self-destruction. Disaster. Astral influence. Materialism. An ill-tempered person. Lack of humor except at another's expense. Lack of principles. Entrallment.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Release from bondage. Throwing off shackles. Respite. Divorce. Recognition of one's needs by another person. Overcoming insurmountable handicaps. The beginning of spiritual understanding.



**THE FALLING TOWER.** This is the second card missing from the original deck. In the first reproduction of five hundred decks, a line drawing of a popular Falling Tower card was substituted. In the second edition of the reproduced deck, an artist recreated The Falling Tower card as it might have appeared at the time of the original Visconti-Sforza deck. A blazing purple sun with scalloped rays appears in the upper right section of the card. A

group of rays strikes the Tower and separates the gold, crown-shaped tower top from the stone battlement. Two figures fall headlong to the ground while holding hands. The aged, bearded male wears a similar outfit to the Hanged Man. The female has golden hair and wears a red garment. The fingers on her left hand and her body below the waist are hidden behind the Tower.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Complete and sudden change. Breaking down of old beliefs. Abandonment of past relationships. Severing of a friendship. Release. Unexpected events. Disruption. Adversity. Calamity. Misery. Deception. Bankruptcy. Termination. Havoc. Downfall. Ruin. Disruption. Loss of stability. A sudden event that destroys trust. Loss of security. Loss of love and affection. Setback.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Continued oppression. Following old ways. Living in a rut. Inability to affect any worthwhile change. Entrapped in an unhappy situation. Imprisoned.



**THE STAR.** This is the third card of the Major Arcana not painted by Bembo.

The female figure reaches out with her left hand to touch an eight-rayed star. The rays of the star vary in length. The design on her blue peplum—in contrast to that pictured on the card of Temperance—depicts horizontal rays above four or five vertical rays; this suggests heavenly radiance or light from above. Her green-lined cape has red outside with gold stars

having the eight-rayed pattern, similar to the design on the Temperance card. The figure on The Star card appears to be wearing some form of brown stocking footwear. Like Temperance, she is standing at the edge of a precipice.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Hope. Faith. Inspiration. Bright prospects. Mixing of the past and present. Promising opportunity. Optimism. Insight. Good omen. Spiritual love. Ascending star. Influence of the stars on your birth. Astrological influence. Accumulation of past knowledge for use in the present. Results from energies expended. Fulfillment. Enlightenment. Pleasure. The proper balancing of desire and work, hope and effort, love and expression. A favorable card suggesting that desire and energy are essential to happiness.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Unfulfilled hopes. Disappointment. Pessimism. Bad luck. Lack of opportunity. Stubbornness. Hopelessness. Imbalance. Conclusion of an unsatisfactory business experience or social friendship.



**THE MOON.** This is the fourth trump by a different hand. The figure is that of a young woman, possibly the goddess Diana, holding a crescent moon in her right hand. She carries a broken bow in her left hand, a sign of her defeat. The classical Greek garment worn by Diana—a high-waisted, red-violet robe without sleeves—is worn over a long blue dress. The design on the red-violet robe consists of a series of three gold diagonal lines being repeated across the length of the garment. Interestingly, the hem of the red-violet robe lines up perfectly with the mountainscape in the distance. The figure of the goddess stands at the edge of a crevice, her bare feet clearly painted, in contrast to the previous cards. A castle appears in the distance.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Deception. Twilight. Obscurity. Trickery. Dishonesty. Disillusionment. Error. Caution. Warning. Bad influence. Ulterior motives. Confusion. Insincerity. False friends. Selfishness. Deceit. Double-



dealing. Craftiness. False pretenses. Disgrace. Slander. Libel. Being taken advantage of. An insincere relationship. Superficiality. Unknown enemies. The meeting of many divergent influences. Falling into a trap. Being misled. Failure to avoid dangers.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** A minor deception recognized before damage is done. Trifling mistakes. Overcoming bad temptations. Gain without paying the price. Taking advantage of someone.



**THE SUN.** A winged child—*putto*—appears to be standing with his right foot on a dark blue cloud. He has a pair of small wings, also in blue. Both hands hold aloft a radiant human head resembling the color of blood. A long, purple scarf swirls around the child's neck and between his thighs. A thin, beaded necklace, perhaps a good luck charm, hangs around his neck. The foreground of this card is a cliff's edge. A castle sits

atop the mountain at the bottom left. This card was painted by the same hand as the preceding Strength, Temperance, Moon, Star and The World card.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Satisfaction. Accomplishment. Enthusiasm. Contentment. Success. Favorable relationships. Love. Joy. Devotion. Unselfish sentiment. Engagement. Favorable omen. A happy marriage. Pleasure in daily existence. Earthly happiness. The contentment derived from extending oneself to another human being. A good friend. High spirit. Warmth. Sincerity. Pleasures derived from simple things. Achievement in the arts. Liberation. Appreciation of small favors. Acceptance of life.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Unhappiness. Loneliness. Possibly a broken engagement or marriage. Cancelled plans. Triumph delayed although not necessarily completely lost. Clouded future. Giving up.



**JUDGMENT.** A godly figure similar to the Hierophant appears at the top of the card. Judgment holds a sword in his right hand and a globe topped with a cross in his left hand. He is bearded and wears a crown. His blue garment is interlaced with a silver ribbon. A heraldic device, possibly the sun, appears beneath the waist of his garment in the center of the gold diapered background. In front of Judgment appear two angels blowing trumpets with hanging

banners. At the bottom of the card, from a rose-colored marble tomb, rise two nude young figures, possibly meant to represent Francesco Sforza and Bianca Maria Visconti. Between these two figures is an aged man who resembles the Hermit; he appears at rest at the bottom of the tomb.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Atonement. Judgment. The need to repent and forgive. The moment to account for the ways we have used our opportunities. Karma. The possibility that present conduct towards other people is unfair and unkind. Rejuvenation. Rebirth. Improvement. Forgiveness. Development. Promotion. The desire for immortality. The possibility exists that someone is taking unfair advantage of you. Legal judgment in one's favor. The outcome of a lawsuit or personal conflict. One should carefully consider present actions as they affect other persons.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Delay. Disappointment. Failure to face facts. Revenge. Indecision. Divorce. Procrastination. Theft. Blame.



**THE WORLD.** This is the sixth and final card not painted by Bembo; the tooling on the background of this card appears to be significantly more visible than on the other non-Bembo cards. Two naked children either point to or support a gigantic circular object, possibly a globe, within which is a vision of a heavenly walled city floating on a turbulent sea. In the blue sky above the city are 18

eight-pointed gold stars, similar to the design on the garment worn by Temperance. The two winged cherubic figures have red scarves loosely draped across their shoulders.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Involvement. Completion. Integration. Perfection. Ultimate change. The end result of all efforts. Success. Assurance. Synthesis. Fulfillment. Capability. Triumph in undertakings. The rewards that come from hard work. The path of liberation. Eternal life. The final goal to which all other cards have led. Admiration of others. This is a very favorable card, especially if surrounded by other favorable cards.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Imperfection. Failure to complete the task one starts. Lack of vision. Misdirection. Disappointment. Withdrawal.

## THE 56 MINOR ARCANA CARDS

The Minor Arcana or Lesser Arcana of the Pierpont Morgan Visconti-Sforza pack total fifty-six cards comprising fifty-four extant cards and two missing cards—3 of Swords and Knight of Coins—which were recreated for the 1975 reproduction of the deck.

The four suits of the Minor Arcana in Italian tarocchi packs are:

**Spade** (swords)

**Bastoni** (staves, batons)

**Coppe** (cups)

**Denari** (coins)

Each suit contains fourteen cards: four court cards—king, queen, knight and page—and ten pip cards from 10 to one.

The four figures on the court cards of the suit of Swords are dressed in armor and each figure carries a large sword as a symbol of his suit.

The figures on the four court cards of the suit of Staves wear silver pleated garments. Each carries a long stave or rod with a large vessel at either end, except for the king and queen whose rods have a finial only at the top.

The four figures on the court cards of the suit of Cups wear gold garments decorated with the heraldic device of sun and rays. Each figure holds a large cup or chalice as a symbol of his or her suit.

Three figures on the court cards of the suit of Coins are dressed in garments decorated with blue, hexagonal ribbons that wind around circular suns with straight rays. The Knight of Coins has been recreated to replace the missing original.

The court figures are viewed in varying positions—full face, left profile and right profile. The King of Cups is shown in right profile; the other kings are depicted full face. With the exception of the kings, which do not have a left profile figure, all the court figures are depicted in each of the positions. The court figures are all pictured wearing gloves. The four court figures in the suit of Swords are right-handed. In the suit of Staves only the knight and page are right-handed and in the suit of Cups the queen, knight and page are right-handed. In the suit of Coins only the queen is right-handed, and since the Knight card is missing it is not known whether this figure was right or left-handed.

The diapered, diamond-shaped backgrounds on the sixteen court cards are essentially alike. However, the wavy rays within the diapered pattern vary from clockwise to counterclockwise without apparent consistency.

### Suit of Swords



The **King of Swords**, crowned and in full body armor, sits upon a six-sided bench with a quatrefoil in a diapered pattern. The bench is on a platform, which appears trapezoidal in shape. The king holds a raised sword in his right hand. His left hand rests upon a shield bearing the heraldic device, possibly of Sforza origin, of a haloed lion holding a book. However, since the city crest of Venice also was a haloed lion holding a book, the probability

of this being a Sforza device remains uncertain. The King of Swords is the only one of the four kings to have a shield beside him. The background of the card contains the same diapered or lozenge-shaped design found on the Major Arcana cards.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** An active and determined person. Experienced. Authoritative. Controlled. Commanding. A professional man. Someone proficient in their field. Highly analytical. Justice. Force. Superiority. A person having many ideas, thoughts and designs.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** A person who may pursue a matter to ruin. Cruelty. Conflict. Selfishness. Sadism. A dangerous or wicked person. One who causes unnecessary disturbance and sadness.



The **Queen of Swords** is seated, apparently on a throne which rests upon a platform. She is facing the right side of the card and wears a crown similar in size and shape to the one worn by the king, with some modification in design. She wears a high-waisted white gown belted beneath the bodice and lined in royal blue. Her gown is solid colored with faint red piping and bears none of the familiar heraldic devices associated with either the Visconti or Sforza families. Her forearms, elbows and hands are clad in armor. Along her upper arm is the Sforza device of a lion, conferred upon Muzio Attendolo, the first Sforza, in 1401 by Emperor Rupert. The lion may be a costume design intended to match the haloed lion on the king's shield. The queen is shown in profile and holds a sword upright in her hand. With her left hand she seems to give a benediction or greeting.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Sharp. Quick-witted. A keen person. Intensely perceptive. A subtle person. May signify a widow or woman of sadness. Mourning. Privation. Absence. Loneliness. Separation. Abandonment. One who has savored great happiness but who presently knows the anxiety of misfortune and reversal. Short-lived happiness. Brief pleasure.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Narrow-mindedness. Maliciousness. Bigotry. Deceitfulness. Vengefulness. Prudishness. A treacherous enemy. An ill-tempered person.



The **Knight of Swords** is shown in left profile astride a white horse with a yellow saddle. The knight, clad in full body armor, wears a light orange cape with white trim. He holds an upright sword in his right hand. His hat is made of peacock feathers, once colorful. This is the only one of the four knights who wears a hat, assuming the missing original Knight of Coins is hatless. The horse wears a caparison bearing an emblematic shield known as *party per pale*—divided down the middle. A second *party per pale* appears beneath the horse's neck. Some scholars believe that the division of the shield—red on the left side and perhaps white or silver on the right side—was added at a later date to cover a heraldic device, possibly the Visconti lion, a serpent, or a plumed helmet. The horse's caparison is covered with a repetitive floral design within circles, similar to the design on the garments of the King, Queen and Page of Coins.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Bravery. Skill. Capacity. The strength and dash of a young man. Heroic action. Opposition and war. Impetuous rush into the unknown without fear. The surrounding cards will indicate the influences around the knight in his gallant pursuit. The knight is a master in his art of action and warfare.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Incapacity. Imprudence. Dispute or ruin due to a partner. Impulsive mistakes. Conceited fool. Simplicity.



The **Page of Swords** is shown full face and dressed in armor similar to that worn by the king and knight of this suit. He wears a colorful hat of peacock feathers, similar to the knight's hat. His right hand rests on the hilt of his sword. An ornamental design appears on the breastplate worn over a leather or mail shirt. He stands erect almost in ballet-like position. The ground beneath his feet contains small clumps of green grass. In the background appear rolling hills, probably once blue in color.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** This card symbolizes a person adept at perceiving, discerning and uncovering the unknown or the obscure. The quality of insight. Vigilance. Agility. A discreet person. An active youth. A lithe figure alert and awake to unknown dangers. A versatile person capable of adjusting to changing conditions.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Revealed as an imposter. Unforeseen events which may come to pass in the near future. Illness is also possible. Powerless in the face of stronger forces. Lack of preparation.



The pip cards 10 to 1 in the suit of swords are depicted by numerically repeating swords indicating the value of the card. The hilts and blades are gold and the bodies of the swords are a deep blue, except at the points where the swords intersect, which are gold. An assorted floral decoration of flowers, leaves and branches decorates each card. The Visconti motto, "*A bon droyt*," appears within a ribbon scroll on the 5, 4, 3, 2 and Ace of Swords.

The position of the motto "*A bon droyt*" indicates that the pip cards of the suit of swords are in an upright position when the sword tips point *downward*. This is the opposite of most modern tarot packs, which have the blade of the sword pointing upward to indicate the card is in an upright position. This is evidenced in many packs by the Ace of Swords, which is depicted by a hand holding an upright sword.

The 3 of Swords is the only pip card missing from the original Visconti-Sforza deck. In order to recreate the missing card, two inside swords were removed from the 5 of Swords.

**TEN OF SWORDS:** Ruin. Pain. Affliction. Sadness. Mental anguish. Desolation. Tears. Misfortune. Trouble. Disappointment. Self-pity.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Benefit. Profit. Temporary gain. Improvement. Passing success. Temporary favor. Momentary advantage.

**NINE OF SWORDS:** Misery. Concern. Heartbreak. Unhappiness. Anguish. Anxiety over a loved one. Worry. Despair. Suffering.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Doubt. Suspicion. Slanderous gossip. Shame. Scruple. Timidity. Shady character. Reasonable fear.

**EIGHT OF SWORDS:** Disquiet. Conflict. Feeling persecuted or trapped. Imprisonment. Turmoil. Bad news. Censure. Criticism. Sickness. Powerlessness. Restrictions.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Treachery in the past. Difficulty. Hard work. Seeking guidance. Taking action.

**SEVEN OF SWORDS:** Fortitude. Perseverance. Attempt. Endeavor. Confidence. Design. Independence. Shirking responsibility. Procrastination. Manipulation. Deception.



**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Arguments. Uncertain counsel or advice. Cooperation. Being responsible.

**SIX OF SWORDS:** A trip or journey. Travel. Voyage. Route. Overcoming difficulties. Expedient manner. Success after anxiety. Learning to cope.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Stalemate. Unwanted proposal. No immediate solution to present difficulties. Listlessness. Stuck in despair.

**FIVE OF SWORDS:** Conquest. Defeat. Destruction of others. Degradation. Adversaries may arise. Revocation. Infamy. Self-interests.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Uncertain outlook. Chance of loss or defeat. Weakness. Possible misfortune befalling a friend. Integrity. Harmony.

**FOUR OF SWORDS:** Respite. Rest after illness. Repose. Replenishment. Solitude. Exile. Retreat. Temporary seclusion. Contemplation.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Activity. Circumspection. Precaution. Guarded advancement. Desire to recover what is lost. Overexertion.

**THREE OF SWORDS:** Absence. Disappointment. Strife. Removal. Loss. Rejection. Opposition. Separation. Betrayal.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Distraction. Confusion. Error. Commitment. Mistake. Incompatibility. Intimacy. Forgiveness. Affection.

**TWO OF SWORDS:** Balanced force. Harmony. Firmness. Offsetting factors. Stalemate. Avoidance.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Duplicity. Falsehood. Misrepresentation. Disloyalty. Dishonor. Treachery. False friends.

**ONE OF SWORDS:** Great determination. Initiative. Strength. Force. Activity. Triumph. Power. Success. Justice. Prosperity. Deep emotional feeling. Love. Championship.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Debacle. Embarrassment. Obstacle. Disruption. False start.

## Suit of Staves



The **King of Staves** sits upon a hexagonal throne similar to the thrones of the other kings. The low platform beneath the throne is also hexagonal. The king wears a crown and in his left hand he holds a long, regal scepter topped with an ornate vessel or finial. In his right hand he holds a small rod. The king's legs are crossed just above the ankles and he is shown full face. On the breastplate of his armor appears the Visconti heraldic device of a bird or dove with flaming rays—derived from Emperor Wenceslas in 1395. Below his belt is a nest—also a Visconti heraldic device.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** An honest and conscientious person. Mature. Wise. Devoted. Friendly. Sympathetic. Educated. A gentleman. Generally married. Fatherly.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Severity. Austerity. Somewhat excessive and exaggerated ideas. Dogmatic. Deliberate.



The **Queen of Staves** is seated upon her throne on a platform which appears trapezoidal in shape. She wears a royal crown. In her left hand she holds a regal scepter topped with an ornate vessel similar to the one held by the king. In her right hand she holds a small rod. The queen wears a high-waisted gown belted beneath the bodice that bears the Visconti heraldic devices of a bird with blazing rays and the bird's nest. The nest motif on the front of her dress is discernible. The gown either has billowing sleeves reaching to the ground or is covered by a flowing cape. Her undergarment, visible at her arms, is green with an alternating design. She wears red stockings or slippers.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** A sympathetic and understanding person. Friendly. Loving. Honorable. Chaste. Practical. Full

of feminine charm and grace. Capable of meaningful expression and love. Gracious hostess. Sincere interest in others.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Jealousy. Deceit. Possible infidelity. Unstable emotions. Fickleness. Resistance. Obstacles. Opposition.



The **Knight of Staves** is shown in profile mounted on a yellow saddle on a rearing white horse. In his right hand the knight holds a long scepter fitted at both ends with ornate vessels. He wears green gloves and a gold ring on his right index finger. The horse's caparison contains the Visconti heraldic device of a sun with blazing rays. Additionally, two escutcheons or armorial shields, similar to those on the Knight of Swords, are brown on the left side and either silver, bronze or brown on the right side. Around the large shield appears a quatrefoil less ornate than the one depicted on the caparison of the Knight of Swords.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Departure. A journey. Advancement into the unknown. Alteration. Flight. Absence. Change of residence.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Discord. Interruption. Unexpected change. Quarreling. Breakup of personal relationships. Rupture.

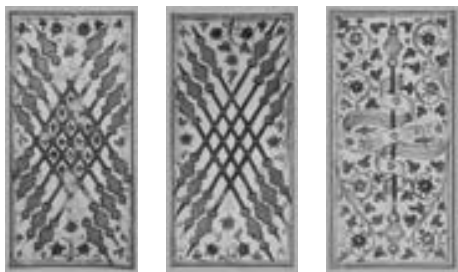


The **Page of Staves** stands in profile. He wears a short, pleated coat trimmed in fur over a shirt bearing the heraldic device of the sun with rays, visible at the neck. His green-gloved right hand holds a long scepter fitted at both ends with ornate finials similar to those on the scepter held by the Knight of Staves. His stockings bear an ornate design below the knee.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** A faithful and loyal person. An envoy. Emissary. Entrusted friend. A stranger with good intentions. A consistent person. A bearer of important news. Someone

who can be trusted. A person with whom you may share confidences.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Indecision in proceeding. Reluctance. Instability. Unable to make decisions. A gossip. Bearer of bad tidings. A person who may break your heart. Displeasure.



The pip cards 10 to 1 in the suit of staves are depicted by repeated crossed scepters or rods, indicating the value of the card. The scepters protrude through the ornate gold finials at both ends. The scepters are blue except at the points where they intersect, there they are gold. An assorted floral design of flowers, leaves and branches decorates the pip cards. The 10, 9, 7 and 6 of Staves have sixteen, six, two and three green floral leaves respectively within the diamonds formed by the intersected scepters. The 5, 4, 3, 2 and Ace of Staves contain the Visconti motto, "*A bon droyt*," within a scroll. Only the 8 of Staves contains no additional design within or around the scepters.

**TEN OF STAVES:** Overburdened. Excessive pressures. Problems soon to be resolved. Striving to meet a goal or to maintain a certain level or position. Possibly using power for selfish ends.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Difficulties. Intrigues. Duplicity. Treachery. A traitor. Deceiver. Subterfuge. Some losses will occur.

**NINE OF STAVES:** Expectation of difficulties and changes. Awaiting tribulation. Anticipation. Hidden enemies. Deception. Discipline. Order. A pause in a current struggle.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Obstacles. Adversity. Problems. Delays. Displeasure. Surrender. Disaster. Barriers to overcome. Ill health.

**EIGHT OF STAVES:** Swift activity. Sudden progress or movement. Speed. Hastily made decisions. Too rapid advancement.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Thorns of dispute. Jealousy. Harassment. Discord. Delay. Stagnation. Domestic quarrels.

**SEVEN OF STAVES:** Success. Gain. Overcoming obstacles and challenges. Defiance. Surmounting overwhelming odds. Advantage.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Consternation. Anxiety. Perplexity. Passivity. Indecision. Hesitancy causing losses. Uncertainty.

**SIX OF STAVES:** Conquest. Triumph. Good news. Gain. Advancement. Expectation. Desires realized—the results of efforts.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Indefinite delay. Fear. Apprehension. Disloyalty. Superficial benefits. Inconclusive gain.

**FIVE OF STAVES:** Unsatisfied desires. Struggle. Labor. Endeavors. Violent strife. Conflict. Obstacles.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Trickery. Contradictions. Complexity. Involvement. Caution against indecision.

**FOUR OF STAVES:** Romance. Society. Harmony. Newly acquired prosperity. Peace. Tranquility. The fruits of labor.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Loss of full tranquility. Unfulfilled romance. Insecurity. Incomplete happiness. Tarnished beauty.

**THREE OF STAVES:** Practical knowledge. Business acumen. Strength. Enterprise. Negotiations. Commerce. Trade. Exploration.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Indecision. Treachery. Diminishing adversity. Beware of help offered.

**TWO OF STAVES:** Mature individual. Ruler. Attainment of goals and needs. Courage in undertakings. A dominant personality. Influence.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Powerlessness. Trouble. Restraint caused by doubt. Loss of faith. Unexpected surprise. Reticence.

**ONE OF STAVES:** Creation. Beginning. Invention. Start of an undertaking. Fortune. Enterprise. Gain. Inheritance. Beginning of a meaningful endeavor. An adventure.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** False start. Cloudy outlook. Empty existence. Unrealized goal. Decadence. Cancellation of plans.

### Suit of Cups



The **King of Cups** is shown in profile. He is seated upon a six-sided throne decorated with a quatrefoil in a diapered or lozenge-shaped pattern. The platform beneath his feet appears to be square rather than hexagonal as depicted on the Kings of Swords and Clubs. The king is wearing the ducal crown of Milan. His short coat, trimmed in fur, bears the Visconti heraldic device of a sun with wavy and straight rays which end in a scalloped pattern. His left hand holds aloft a large ornate cup or urn with a six-sided top that comes to a point like a steeple. He may be holding a small object in his right hand, but it is not distinguishable.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Responsibility and creativity. Learned person. Professional. Businessman. Lawyer. Diplomacy. Religious or spiritual person. Scientist. A considerate person. Kindly. Reliable. Liberal in manner. Charity work. Patron of the arts. Generous.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Artistic temperament. Dishonesty. Double-dealing. Scandal. Loss. Ruin. Injustice. A crafty person without virtue. Shifty in dealings.



The **Queen of Cups** is seated upon her throne. She is shown full face and wearing a crown. Her high-waisted gown bears the Visconti heraldic device of a sun with intermixed wavy and straight rays. She wears green gloves and holds, in her right hand, a large ornate cup or urn with a pointed top. With her left hand she appears to be giving a blessing or gesturing.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** A warm-hearted and fair person. Poetic. Beloved. Adored.

Good friend and mother. Devoted wife. Practical. Honest. Intuitive. Possesses loving intelligence. Gift of vision.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Inconsistency of honor. Possible immorality. Dishonesty. Unreliability. Vice. A person not to be trusted.



The **Knight of Cups** is mounted upon a horse with a blue saddle, the only horse in the deck painted in yellow. The knight's short, gold coat is trimmed with gray fur and bears the Visconti heraldic sun device. He also wears an undergarment of royal blue, visible at the neck and arms, and similar in design to the undergarment of the Page of Cups. He wears knee socks with a ribbed band bearing an unidentified design. The knight's right foot rests

in a stirrup and a six-pointed spur appears attached to the back of his heel. In his right hand he holds a large cup or urn similar to those held by the queen and king of his suit. The caparison worn by his horse bears Visconti heraldic devices—the ducal crown of Milan with two branches or fronds and the Visconti sun with wavy rays and straight rays forming scalloped edges.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** An invitation or opportunity may soon arise. Arrival. Approach. Challenge. Proposal. Advancement. Attraction. Inducement. Appeal. Request. Opportunity. New event.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Subtlety. Artifice. Trickery. Deception. Fraud. A sly and cunning person. A person capable of swindling.



The **Page of Cups** stands facing toward the left of the card. He wears a short, gold coat trimmed in gray fur, similar to the frock worn by the knight of his suit. He wears white gloves. His right hand holds aloft a large cup or urn lacking the windows and some of the decorative dotted design of the cups depicted with the knight, queen and king of his suit. The page wears a red stocking on his right foot and a white stocking on his left foot. These colors—red and white—may be related to the colors appearing on the armorial shields depicted on the knights of swords and staves and the Ace of Coins.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** A studious and intent person. Reflective. Meditative. Loyal. Willing to offer services and efforts towards a specific goal. A helpful person.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Temperamental. Deviation. A flatterer. Susceptibility. Temporary distraction. Seduction. Melodramatic.



The pip cards 10 to 1 in the suit of cups are depicted by large, ornate cups numbering the same as the value of the



card. The cups are gold. The hexagonal bases are decorated with a floral design in deep blue; the stems taper upward toward the bowls. The bowls of the cups are round and have a gold ribbon against a deep blue turreted background running the circumference of the vessel. The rims or lips of the cups are hexagonal and the inside of the cups are green. An assorted floral design of flowers, leaves and branches decorates the pip cards.

The 4 of Cups bears the Visconti motto, "*A bon droyt*," in a ribbon. The 2 of Cups contains a ribbon proclaiming "*amor myo*," my darling or my love. The motto "*amor myo*," found only on this card, may signify the consummation of the love of husband and wife through the drinking of wine from two chalices. The Ace of Cups depicts a large fountain with an ornate stem rising from the center. A blue liquid flows from two spigots. The Visconti dove rests atop the fountain.

**TEN OF CUPS:** Home. Abode. Happiness. Joy. Pleasure. Peace. Love. Contentment. Good family life. Honor. Esteem. Virtue.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Loss of friendship. Unhappiness. Family quarrel. Pettiness. Rage. Combat. Strife. Opposition.

**NINE OF CUPS:** Success. Material attainment. Advantage. Well-being. Abundance. Good health. Victory. Luxury. Contentment.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Mistakes. Material loss. Imperfections. Misplaced truth. False freedom. Differences. Dispute.

**EIGHT OF CUPS:** Discontinuance of effort. Disappointment. Abandonment of previous plans. Modesty. Letting go.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Happiness. Effort continued until full success is attained. Festivity. Joy. Gaiety. Feasting.

**SEVEN OF CUPS:** Fantasy. Unrealistic expectations. Imagination. Daydreams. Foolish whims. Wishful thinking.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Desire. Determination. Strong will-power. A goal nearly attained. Intelligent choice. Desire.

**SIX OF CUPS:** Memories. Past influences. Things that have vanished. Childhood passed. Nostalgia. Blessings. Longing.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** The future. Opportunities ahead. Coming events. New vistas. Plans that may fail. Cynicism.

**FIVE OF CUPS:** Partial loss. Regret. Friendship without real meaning. Marriage without real love. Imperfection. Flaw. Delayed inheritance. Incomplete union or partnership.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Hopeful outlook. Favorable expectations. New alliances. Affinity. Return of an old friend. Reunion.

**FOUR OF CUPS:** Weariness. Aversion. Disgust. Disappointment. Unhappiness. Bitter experience. Stationary period in one's life. Apathy.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** New possibilities. New relationships. New approaches to old problems. New acquaintance. New knowledge.

**THREE OF CUPS:** Resolution of a problem. Conclusion. Solace. Healing. Joyful result. Friendship. Celebration.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Excessive pleasures. Overabundance. Superfluity. Loss of prestige. Delays. Lack of appreciation.

**TWO OF CUPS:** Love. Friendship beginning or renewed. Passion. Union. Engagement. Understanding. Cooperation. Attraction.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Unsatisfactory love. False friendship. Troubled relationship. Divorce. Separation. Crossed desires. Opposition. Disunion. Misunderstanding.

**ONE OF CUPS:** Great abundance. Fulfillment. Beauty and pleasure. Joy. Perfection. Fertility. Opulence. Favorable outlook. Fullness. Happiness. Productiveness. Goodness overflowing.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Change. Alteration. Erosion. Instability. Sterility. Unrequited love. Clouded joy. False heart.

## Suit of Coins



The **King of Coins** sits upon a six-sided throne on a raised trapezoidal-shaped platform; the platform has protruding semi-circles. The king wears a large, wide-brimmed, plumed hat. His short robe displays the same floral pattern as seen on the Knight of Staves. In his left hand the king holds a large coin, which rests on his left leg just above the knee. The coin bears the Visconti heraldic device of a sun with wavy rays and straight rays scalloped at the ends. A thin rod is in his right hand. His ankles are crossed. The stocking on his left leg is red on top and apparently was blue from the calf down. The blue paint has worn off revealing the white undercoat. The right stocking appears to have been green.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** An experienced and successful leader. A person of character and intelligence. Business acumen. Mathematical ability. Loyal friend. Reliable in marriage. Successful entrepreneur. Wise investments. Affinity to acquire money and valuable possessions.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Corruption. Using any means to achieve the desired end. Vice. Avarice. Unfaithfulness. An old and vicious man. Peril. Danger. Thriftlessness.



The **Queen of Coins** wears a crown and is shown in profile facing to the left of the card. Her high-waisted gown and long cape bear the same design as the robe that clothes the king of her suit. With her right hand she holds a large coin—her suit sign, similar to those on the other court cards of this suit.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Prosperity and well-being. Wealth. Abundance. Luxury. Opulence. Extreme comfort. Generosity. Security. Liberty. Magnificence. Grace. Dignity. A rich person who is generous and charitable. A noble soul.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Suspense. Suspicion. False prosperity. Responsibilities neglected. Vicious person. Untrusting person.



The **Knight of Coins** is the only court card missing from the original deck. In the first five hundred Visconti-Sforza decks reproduced in 1975 by U.S. Games Systems, Inc., New York, and Grafica Gutenberg, Bergamo, Italy, a composite line drawing of a popular Knight of Coins was substituted. In the second edition of the reproduced deck, the Knight of Coins was recreated by using a reversed print of the Knight of Cups and substituting a coin for the cup in the knight's hand. The caparison on the horse depicts the heraldic devices of the ducal crown of Milan with two branches or fronds and the Visconti sun with scallops and rays. The garment worn by the Knight of Coins in the original card, now lost, probably was similar to the short robe worn by the Page of Coins rather than the gold garment of the Knight of Cups, although the heraldic design differs.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** A mature and responsible person. Reliable. Methodical. Patient. Persistent. Able to conclude a task. Laborious. Organized. Capable. A dependable person.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Stagnation. Carelessness. Inertia. Lack of determination or direction. Narrow-mindedness. Distraction. Idleness.



The **Page of Coins** is shown in profile facing toward the left of the card. He wears a short robe trimmed in fur, which bears the same hexagonal ribbons and floral suns shown on the king and queen cards of the coin suit. The page wears a wide-brimmed hat with curled plumes. The stocking on his left leg was probably blue below the knee; the right stocking probably red. However, now both are worn out, revealing the white undercoating.

**DIVINATORY MEANINGS:** Deep concentration and application. Study. Scholarship. Reflection. Respect for knowledge. Desire for learning and new ideas. A do-gooder. Bearer of news. Common sense.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** An unrealistic person. Failure to recognize obvious facts. Dissipation of ideas. Loss. Illogical thinking. Rebelliousness. Wastefulness. Unfavorable news.



The pip cards numbered 10 through 1 in the suit of coins are depicted by numerically repeating large coins indicating the value of the card. The coins in cards 10 through 2 contain the Visconti sun with wavy and straight rays within a blue, turreted border set inside a rust-colored circle. The pip cards are further decorated with an assortment of flowers, leaves and branches. Cards 5 and 3 contain two ribbons each, bearing the words “*A bon droyt.*”

Cards 4 and 2 contain only one ribbon each, bearing the same famous motto. The ace of coins contains an armorial device similar to the *party per pale* shown on the horses' caparison of the knights of swords and staves. The left side of the shield is red and the right side appears washed out but was probably white or silver. Interestingly, the right side of the *party per pale* contains the outline of a design. The hidden design may be the Sforza helmet—a winged dragon with a man's head, possibly set on top of two or three horizontal rings.

**TEN OF COINS:** Prosperity. Riches. Security. Safety. Family. Family matters. Ancestry. Inheritance. Home. Dwelling.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Poor risk. Bad odds. Possible loss. Hazard. Robbery. Loss of inheritance. Dissipation. Gambling.

**NINE OF COINS:** Accomplishment. Refinement. Love of nature. Discretion. Foresight. Safety. Prudence. Material well-being.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Threat to safety. Dissipation. Danger. Storms. Bad faith. Possible loss of a valued friendship or a treasured possession.

**EIGHT OF COINS:** Apprenticeship. Craftsmanship. Quick to learn. Candor. Frankness. Modesty. Handiwork. Personal effort. Diligence.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Lack of ambition. Vanity. Conceit. Disillusionment. Usury. Hypocrisy. Flattery. Intrigue.

**SEVEN OF COINS:** Ingenuity. Growth. Hard work. Progress. Successful dealings. Wealth. Treasure. Gain. Money.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Anxiety. Impatience. Uneasiness. Imprudent actions. Loss of money. Unwise investments.

**SIX OF COINS:** Generosity. Philanthropy. Charity. Kindness. Gratification. Gifts. Material gain.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Avarice. Selfishness. Envy. Jealousy. Ungiving of one's self. Bad debts. Unpaid loans.

**FIVE OF COINS:** Material trouble. Destitution. Loss. Failure. Error. Impoverishment. Mistress. Rejection. Hard times.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Reversal of bad trend. New interest in matters. Improvement in health issues. Renewed energy.

**FOUR OF COINS:** Love of material wealth. Hoarder. Usurer. Possessiveness. Miser. Ungenerous person. Inability to share.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Setbacks in material holdings. Obstacles. Opposition to further gain. Suspense and delay. Spendthrift.

**THREE OF COINS:** Great skill in trade or work. Mastery. Perfection. Artistic ability. Dignity. Renown. Rank. Power. Teamwork. Recognition.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Sloppiness. Mediocrity. Lower quality. Money problems. Commonplace ideas. Lack of skill.

**TWO OF COINS:** Literary ability. Agility in handling matters. Simulated enjoyment. Gaiety. Letter. Message. Missive. Flexibility. Developments.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Difficulty in launching new projects. Difficult situations arising. New troubles. Worry.

**ONE OF COINS:** Perfection. Attainment. Prosperity. Felicity. Great wealth. Riches. Bliss. Ecstasy. Gold. Valuable coins or artifacts. Treasures. The combination of material and spiritual prosperity.

**REVERSE MEANINGS:** Prosperity without happiness. Misused wealth. Wasted money. Corruption by money. Miserliness. Greed. Fool's gold.

## **SPREADING THE TAROT DECK**

The various known methods of spreading the twenty-two Major Arcana cards are numerous and some of them are exceedingly complicated. Nothing written in mid-fifteenth century Italy about spreading the Visconti-Sforza packs for divination has descended to us. Dating back several centuries, the Celtic Cross spread explained here is one of the earliest and most effective methods. After a few practice readings this method will become quite natural and easy to use.

### **Celtic Cross Spread With Twenty-Two Major Arcana Cards**

The ten-card Celtic Cross spread may be used with the entire seventy-eight-card tarocchi deck or with a lesser number of cards. In the following explanation we will use only the twenty-two Major Arcana cards.

The fifty-six Minor Arcana cards are set aside. The diviner, also known as the reader or interpreter of the deck, places the twenty-two Major Arcana cards in numerical sequence. The unnumbered card, The Fool, is placed either at the beginning of the deck, in the middle of the deck, between the twentieth and twenty-first numbered cards, or at the end of the deck. Generally, The Fool is best placed at the beginning of the deck, preceding The Magician, facing out. Arrange the pack so that upon placing the twenty-two Major Arcana cards face down on the table, The Fool is closest to the table.

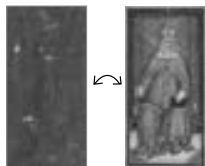
The person seeking an answer to a question is known as the questioner. The questioner sits at a table opposite the diviner and both persons maintain a serious mental attitude. The questioner puts all other thoughts and desires from his mind except the specific question that he states aloud to the diviner, while simultaneously shuffling the face-down deck. The person who handles the cards suffuses them with his own personal magnetism and thereby creates a rapport between his subconscious and the cards. The cards may be shuffled either hand over hand or by riffing (separating the



deck into two parts and riffing with the thumb so the cards intermix). The shuffling must be done by the person who wishes to have an interpretation or prediction concerning himself—not by the diviner. When the questioner is satisfied with his shuffling, he places the deck face down in front of the diviner. The cards are always viewed from the diviner's position. Beginning with the top card as number one, the second card as number two, and so on, the diviner turns up the first six cards, one at a time and places them face up on the table in the sequence shown in the diagram.

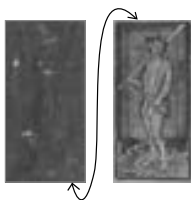
The diviner should turn the cards over from left to right, thereby assuring that the cards continue to point in the same direction as placed on the table by the questioner. The cards that face the diviner are said to be positioned for a strong, positive reading. The cards that face the questioner are said to be upside down or inverted and, therefore, have a weak, delayed or even reversed meaning. In the event the first card turned over by the diviner is upside down, the diviner should reverse the first card so that it is upright. The remaining cards should be turned over from the bottom to the top in such a manner as to reverse the direction of each of the cards since the questioner may have inadvertently placed the entire pack upside down before the diviner. Similarly, if during a spread the majority of the cards are reversed, the diviner may elect to place the cards upright if it seems more natural and gives a more meaningful reading. The correct manner of turning over the cards is illustrated in the following diagram:

### Turning the cards



DIVINER TURNING  
CARDS FROM LEFT  
TO RIGHT

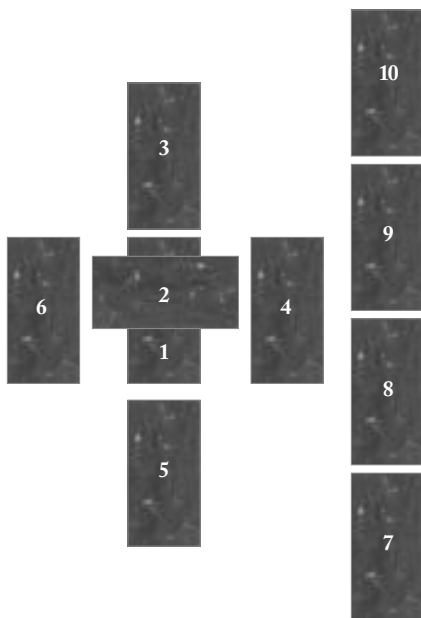
DIVINER TURNING CARDS  
FROM BOTTOM TO TOP



## Sequence and Meanings

The sequence of laying out the cards in the ten-card spread is as follows:

### The Ten-Card Celtic Cross Spread



**Card Number 1 — Present Position:** Atmosphere in which the questioner is presently working and living. Shows the area of influence in which the questioner presently exists and the atmosphere in which other currents are working. This card represents the questioner.

**Card Number 2 — Immediate Influence:** Shows the nature of the influence or immediate sphere of involvement or obstacles which lie just ahead. This card crosses the questioner.

**Card Number 3 — Goal or Destiny:** Shows the ultimate goal or destiny of the questioner. Indicates the best that can be accomplished by the questioner based upon existing circumstances. This card may also represent the questioner's aim or ideal within his present frame of reference. This card crowns the questioner.

**Card Number 4 — Distant Past Foundation:** Shows the broad and basic events and influences that existed in the distant past and upon which the present events are taking place. It is the basis of fact already passed into actuality and which is embodied within the questioner. This card is behind the questioner.

**Card Number 5 — Recent Past Events:** Shows the most recent sphere of influence or events that have just passed or that are just now passing. This card may also represent distant past influences that exert pressure on recent influences of an inordinately strong nature. This card is beneath the questioner.

**Card Number 6 — Future Influence:** Shows the sphere of influence that is coming into being in the near future, in a broad sense. This card is before the questioner.

After the diviner has read the foregoing six cards, he then proceeds to turn over the next four cards from the deck. They are placed one above the other, in a line to the right of the previous six cards, as shown in the diagram.

**Card Number 7 — The Questioner:** Shows the questioner in his present position or attitude within the circumstances surrounding him. This card attempts to place the questioner in proper perspective.

**Card Number 8 — Environmental Factors:** Shows the questioner's influence on other people and his position in life. Reveals those tendencies and factors that exist with respect to other persons who may have an effect on the questioner.

**Card Number 9 — Inner Emotions:** Shows the inner hopes, hidden emotions and secret desires, fears and anxieties of the questioner—including those thoughts that will come to the mind of the questioner in the future.

This card may also reveal secrets that the questioner keeps from other people and ulterior motives that concern the questioner.

**Card Number 10 — Final Result:** Shows the culmination and results that will be brought about from all of the influences as revealed by the other cards in the divination, provided events and influences continue as indicated.

After reading each individual card, the diviner should go back and interpret the cards as they relate to each other. For example, Card Number 4—*Distant Past Foundation*, may show a similarity to Card Number 5—*Recent Past Events*. Likewise, a striking connection may exist between Card Number 1—*Present Position* and Card Number 7—*The Questioner*. Card Number 6—*Future Influence* and Card Number 3—*Goal or Destiny*, may reveal a trend in future possibilities. Card Number 9—*Inner Emotions*, frequently reveals an insight about the inner emotions, fears and anxieties of the questioner, which helps explain the significance of the other cards. The relationship between several cards may indicate a trend or pattern. The cards may reveal the changing life pattern of the questioner and the areas of new direction into which he is advancing.

## Interpretations

The interpretations revealed in the Celtic Cross spread may vary slightly from reading to reading, since the questioner may have one or more overlapping influences. Thus, the diviner should seek to interpret the cards, as spread, in the manner which feels most comfortable. Always bear in mind that the titles on the cards, the divinatory suggestions for each card, and the descriptive name of each of the ten sequential spaces in the card spread are meant as *suggestive* references. The cards frequently reveal considerably more about the questioner than solely a response to the original question. Therefore, the diviner, through practice and intuition, should read the cards freely, allowing personal interpretations and ideas to come to mind.

The symbolic cards may suggest emotions, feelings and desires. They may stand for objects and persons. They may indicate circumstances and duration of time. The interpretation of each card, singularly and in connection with other cards, is limited only by the total responsiveness and capability of the diviner or interpreter.

After a reading is completed, and before starting a new reading, the diviner should remember to place the cards back in their original sequence, in order to wipe away the currents and influences remaining in the cards from the completed reading. A questioner should be allowed no more than one reading per day so as to avoid any confusion that may arise due to continuously adjusting currents and influences. This is not meant to suggest that a second reading produces an interpretation inconsistent with the previous reading. Rather, influences and currents at one moment may vary in intensity from the vibrations of the next moment and thus cause confusion. One interpretation per day, per questioner, yields the most perceptive and concise reading.

### **Celtic Cross Spread With Forty-Two Cards**

The ten-card Celtic Cross spread may also be employed with a forty-two-card pack—using the Major Arcana cards, the sixteen court cards and the four aces in each suit. Thus, the diviner should eliminate from the pack the thirty-six pip cards from ten to two in each of the four suits.

Before the questioner shuffles the forty-two-card pack, the diviner should arrange the cards in the following sequence: The Ace of Swords, followed by the Page, Knight, Queen and King of that suit; the Ace of Staves followed by the court cards in the same sequence; the Ace of Cups and its court cards, and the Ace of Coins and its court cards. The Fool follows the King of Cups and is followed by the Major Arcana cards from I to XXI. Thus, the Ace of Swords lies face down on the table before shuffling.

## Ten-Card Spread With Seventy-Eight Cards

The same spread may also be used while employing the entire seventy-eight cards of the tarot deck. First the diviner must arrange the cards in the following sequence: the Suit of Swords, Ace through King; the Suit of Staves, Ace through King; the Suit of Cups, Ace through King; the Suit of Coins, Ace through King; followed by the Fool and then the Major Arcana cards from I to XXI. Thus, the Ace of Swords is the card that lies face down on the table when placed before the questioner for shuffling.

### Location of Each Extant Visconti-Sforza Card

The Pierpont Morgan Library (now Morgan Library & Museum) houses all the Major Arcana with the exception of cards III, VIII, XV through XVIII, XXI, Faith, Hope and Charity; the Minors in the Library are King, Queen, 10, Ace of Swords; King, 9, 4, Ace of Staves; Queen, Knight, Page, 9, 5, 3, Ace of Cups; and King, Queen, 10, 8, 7 of Coins.

The Accademia Carrara houses the Major Arcana cards III, VIII, XVII, XVIII and XXI; Knight, Page, 8, 6, 5, 4 of Swords; Queen, Knight, Page, 7, 6, 5, 3 of Staves; King, 10, 6, 2 of Cups; and Page, 9, 5, Ace of Coins.

A private collector holds the 9, 7, 2 of Swords; 10, 8, 2 of Staves; 8, 7, 4 of Cups; and 6, 4, 3, 2 of Coins.

The four lost cards are Major Arcana XV and XVI, 3 of Swords and Knight of Coins.



## *Notes*

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