



AN INTRODUCTION TO THE
EGYPTIAN
TAROT
OF
THELEMA

OLIVER ST. JOHN

An Introduction to the Egyptian Tarot of Thelema

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Egyptian Tarot of Thelema

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2.75" x 4.75" (70 mm x 120 mm)

78 cards



Preface

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

The *Egyptian Tarot of Thelema* was three years in the making, but it has taken a lifetime of study and practice. The Tarot of Marseille was our introduction to the esoteric field at the very beginning. From there we went on to enthusiastically collect most of the better-known decks, including the popular Rider-Waite and Crowley-Harris versions. Until the winter solstice of 2018 we did not consider for one moment that we would even take on a work of such scale. It is not simply a matter of design—although there are of course hundreds of completely fake Tarot decks that have no serious basis to them—it is all about having the ideas and knowledge to justify producing something ‘new’ when Tarot decks have existed for at least five centuries. The turning point, at that winter solstice, came after a year of what might be termed as spiritual and magical ‘interventions’, disrupting the usual course of our study and work up to that time. The (Egyptian) Book of the Law has its source with Thebes (Egyptian Waset) at least two and a half millennia ago and in reality, the knowledge tradition that we know as Thelema is much older than that.

The first card’s prototype was thus *Set XV*, produced at the Capricorn solstice. This was originally intended to be a one-off experiment until a month later when the Sun entered Aquarius. The ideas for *Nuit XVII* sprang forth spontaneously; from thereon, a zodiacal trump was produced each month in that first year. Completing the 22 major arcana came next, and after that, the 56 minor arcana.

The Rose Cross on the backs of the cards, which includes the keys to the rituals of the Order and the colour scales used in the Tarot, was modelled from the first lamens we made and painted by hand, as according to the Golden Dawn tradition.

Love is the law, love under will.

Oliver St. John,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Oliver St. John". The signature is stylized, with the first letter 'O' being particularly large and decorative, and the 'S' and 'J' being connected and flowing.

Penwith Peninsula Sol in ♄ Luna in ♃ Anno V-6 (December 2020)



Prince of Wands

The Egyptian Tarot of Thelema

The Egyptian Tarot of Thelema is suitable for use in ritual, meditation and divination. In every true act of divination, in every true act of magick, something of the soul is born into the world. The system of Qabalistic correspondences transform the Tarot from a card game or fortune telling device into a spiritual, intellectual and magical vehicle of the highest order.

Unique to this Tarot is the use of British surrealist artist and occultist Ithell Colquhoun's interpretation of the magical correspondences. This enabled us to produce the first figurative Tarot that is fully colour-integrated as according to the Golden Dawn schema. The intuitive possibilities afforded by this mean that study and interpretation are taken to a new level. This is especially the case with divination, where colour plays a new and vital rôle in the every-changing dynamic interactions of the cards. To further assist interpretation, the symbols for all the zodiacal, planetary and elemental correspondences are placed on the cards, including the constellational court card assignments.

The *Egyptian Tarot of Thelema* is the official Tarot of the O. T. O. Its primary purpose is to reveal Esoteric Thelema through the pictorial vehicle of the Tarot. According to the book that will accompany this Tarot:

Crowley's *Thoth* Tarot embodies his interpretation of Thelema, and serves as a vehicle for its expression. Since Esoteric Thelema has superseded the latter's philosophical basis, we were impelled to take on the task of designing a new Tarot. The justification for so doing is to assist the restoration of Thelema to its ancient Egyptian source. The task requires that we first liberate our minds from the baneful curse of modernism and of post-modernism within the occult, which has suppressed all genuine tradition. When we refer to an ancient Egyptian source we are not speaking of the Egyptian civilisation as such. We are alluding to that Great Mind, whose heirs preceded the race of humans and established their divine image on the earth in times of unimaginable antiquity. It is our foremost aim to assist them in their great purpose, which is to reclaim the earth from the present mutant race of terrestrials and restore her to her true place among the stars.

The book, *Egyptian Tarot of Thelema*, is expected to be released early in 2021, and will include a complete description and explanation of the deck, along with illustrations of all 78 cards and a section on divination.

This booklet is designed to serve as a unique introduction and guide to the Tarot's structure and use.

Importance of Colour

The colour scheme begins with the Aces as these correspond to Kether in the four worlds: Atziluth (Wands), Briah (Cups), Yetzirah (Swords) and Assiah (Discs). Next come the Tarots of the paths, commencing with Aleph, the Spirit of Aethyr, traditionally named the Fool o. Aleph reflects something of the *Ace of Swords* and is the root of the Air element through the rest of the cards.



Next come the Princes, as we work down the middle pillar of the Tree of Life. The Princes all reflect something of the Aces. The Sixes and Nines follow on to complete the middle pillar.

After that we move to the left hand pillar, and commence, in the case of the suit of Swords, with the Queen of the Thrones of Air (*Queen of Swords*) as the Queens all correspond to Binah. We complete the pillar with the Threes, Fives and Eights (Binah, Geburah and Hod).

Next we deal similarly with the right hand pillar. First come the Kings, then the Twos, Fours and Sevens in each suit.

Then come the Princesses in each element, as these are Assiah, the Kingdom of Earth. The Princesses are the Thrones of the Aces according to the Golden Dawn. The Tens follow on from the Princess in each suit, completing that suit in Malkuth.

Those who wish to study and fully appreciate the dynamics of the colour correspondences in the four worlds of Qabalah should try placing the deck as described above. However, for the sake of easy familiarity, the traditional order of cards in the deck is not changed. We begin with the 22 major arcana, commencing with *The Seer o* (traditionally named the Fool), then *The Ass I* (Magician), *The Priestess II*, *Isis-Urania III* (Empress) and so on to *The World XXI*. After that come the four suits headed by the Kings, Queens, Princes and Princesses following the ShMATH order of Wands (Fire), Cups (Water), Swords (Air) and Discs (Earth).

Design of the Tarot

When Ithell Colquhoun painted her abstract TARO she used brush and paint effects to mix and subtly blend the Golden Dawn colour scales of the Tree of Life in the four worlds of Atziluth, Briah, Yetzirah and Assiah. Many of the first drafts of the designs for the major arcana of the *Egyptian Tarot of Thelema* consisted of pen and ink line drawings in a notebook. The designs were implemented using vector graphic software and put together in a photographic application. We did not want to create fake paint effects so decided to make full use of what the graphic space can do ‘naturally’. So colour blending was achieved using photographic lighting effects on the drawings. This effect is particularly in evidence with the backgrounds of the major arcana cards, but it is used on all cards. This is never for a decorative effect and is always in strict accordance with the magical correspondences.¹ For example, in the order of the colour scheme, *The Seer o* follows the *Ace of Swords*, which is the root of Air and Kether of Yetzirah, which is ‘white-flecked gold’. This is followed through to Aleph, *The Seer o*, from the centre of the design and leading out to the emerald green of the path’s King Scale colour.

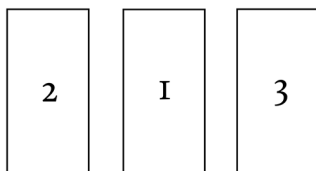
The printed final result will always look different from an image viewed on a computer or device screen in RGB mode. It was intentional during the final production to create a sophisticated, darker and more sensuous look and feel than would be the case if we had designed the images exclusively for screen viewing. The first edition has a linen finish on the cards. This also helps when the cards are being handled, facilitating easy shuffling without ‘sticking’ while retaining a tactile feel. Other card and packaging options may be made available in the future.

Use of the Tarot for Divination

When the deck is opened for the first time the cards are in the natural Tarot order, commencing with *The Seer o* to *The World XXI*, followed by the King, Queen, Prince and Princess in the Wand suit, then the *Ace of Wands* and the decanates from 2–10 of Wands. The suits of Cups, Swords and Discs follow this pattern so that the *Ten of Discs* is the last card (78th). Unless you are a regular professional card-sharp, it takes a considerable amount of shuffling to get the deck sufficiently mixed so as to prepare it for any serious attempt at divination.

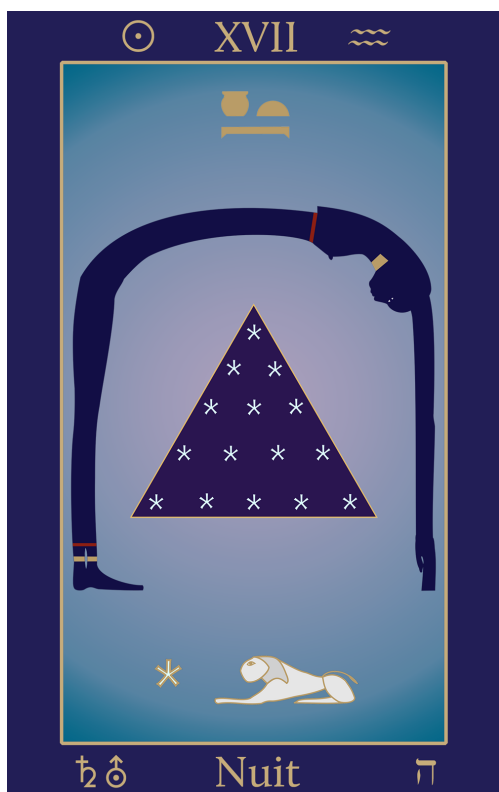
¹ Nothing in this Tarot is in any way decorative; all symbolism is essential to the meanings of the cards and of the Egyptian gods, priests and priestesses.

We would therefore recommend that some time should be spent initially shuffling the cards, looking at them, thinking on their meanings, playing with them and in every way getting to know them. Very quickly the magnetic nature of the Tarot will begin to impress itself at quite a deep level. This is the first type of 'consecration' of the deck, and a very effective one. Theurgists may want, in addition, to consecrate their deck ritually by the 'Z' means or Magick of Light. For a while, experiment with the cards as much as possible. Practice the method of 'dignities' by laying out cards in threes:



The cards on either side will modify the meaning of the centre card, as according to the rules of Tarot dignities. This is 'practice only'; no question is put and one aims for an evaluation of the relative strength and weakness of the cards and to determine in what way their natures are altered by proximity. Those familiar with previous decks such as the Rider-Waite and Crowley-Harris *Thoth* Tarots will appreciate that the correspondences of the Golden Dawn have not been altered here, other than the assignments of *Nuit XVII* (the Star) to Hé and path 15, and *Hrumachis IV* (the Emperor) to Tzaddi and path 28, as advised in the (Egyptian) Book of the Law, I: 57.

All these old letters of my Book are aright; but Ʒ is not the Star.



There are some additional correspondences that do not appear on other decks. For example the trumps for the primary elements of Air, Fire and Water are given to Uranus, Pluto and Neptune as well as their respective element. The most immediate impact made when using this deck for divination, though, is with the interplay of the colours. This has a direct impact on the subconscious mind, even when the person does not yet know or fully understand all the intricacies of how the scheme is worked out on the Tree of Life model. There is one additional colour correspondence that was created through the inspired work of Ithell Colquhoun, which is that all cards of the suit of Earth include indigo.²



The Wands suit features the Egyptian sceptre, which is the symbol of *sekhem* or magical power.

The Cups suit features the vessel of Nu, the container of all and the reach of the heavens.

The Swords suit features the Egyptian sickle *ma'a*, 'truth', which also has a correspondence with Ursa Major and from there directly to Aleph *The Seer O*, which is the first trump to follow the Ace of Swords in the colour scheme.

The Discs suit features the Egyptian 'cross-mark' determinative for an actual place, *nome* centre or physical location.

The four Kings all depict an elemental aspect of the hawk-headed Ra-Hoor, for the ideal asserts that the pharaoh is the incarnation of Horus-on-earth.

The four Queens all depict an elemental aspect of Mut wearing the vulture headdress, for that is the primary divine ideal of the Queen as protectress and mother. She also embodies the principle of divine parthenogenesis.

The four Princes are priests and scribes in effect, and all depict an elemental aspect of Ankh-af-na-khonsu, modelled on the figure depicted on the Stele of Revealing. He is the "priest of the princes".³

The four Princesses are oracular priestesses. All depict Isis-Babalon bearing a serpent in each hand, coloured as according to the appropriate elemental combination: Fire of Earth, Water of Earth, Air of Earth and Earth of Earth. An additional hieroglyphic symbol of the Aset or Isis Throne is included, as the Princesses are the "Thrones of the Aces".

² The key rôle of indigo as the 'fourth primary colour in nature' is explained in 'Ultraviolet Light of Set-Typhon', *Babalon Unveiled! Thelemic Monographs*.

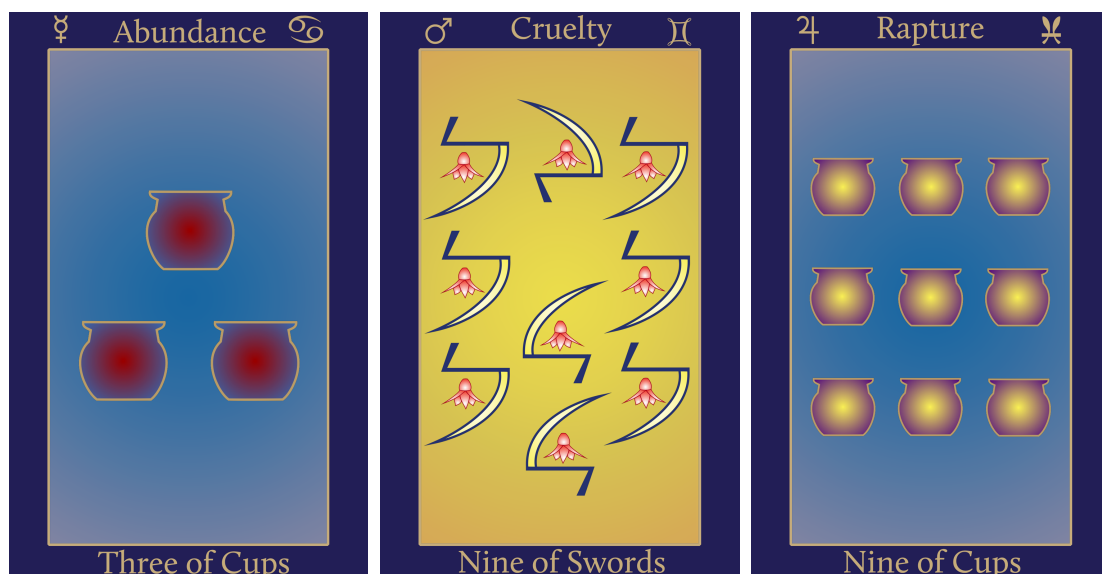
³ In the Book of the Law, the titles afforded Ankh-af-na-khonsu, the priest and scribe of the book, and Aiwass, who delivered the book, are not 'poetic' but are statements of literal fact.

Divining Small Cards or Decanates

The small cards of the *Egyptian Tarot of Thelema* are designed to be more neutral than was the case in previous modern decks, such as Crowley's or the Rider-Waite. The arrangement of the symbols, the Wands, Cups, Swords and Discs, are descriptive in themselves. When this is added to the Qabalistic placements, the colour scheme, the elemental and astrological correspondences, a very complete understanding of each may readily be obtained. However, in divination, it is essential to 'dignify' a card by the cards in immediate proximity. This eliminates the very weak method of 'reversed' meanings for each. Such reversed meanings are fixed and so quite useless, and are redundant in our Tarot. We would encourage the diviner to keep all the cards the right way up when shuffling.

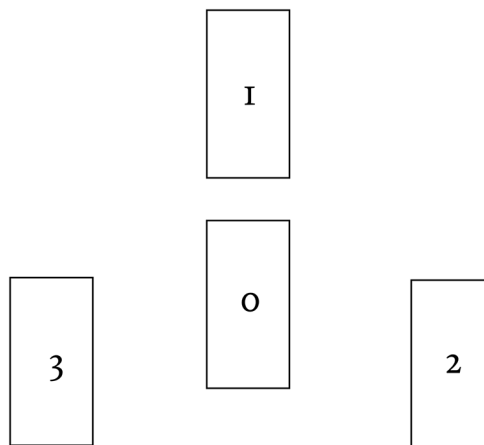
In the previous modern decks mentioned, the design on the small cards was beautifully done but far too prescriptive to help with divination, where the companions on each side dignify or modify a card's meaning. They tended to carry very 'good' or 'evil' assignments in the colour and imagery. For example, let us say the *Nine of Swords*, the Lord of Cruelty, was to appear accompanied by the *Nine of Cups* and the *Three of Cups*. The *Nine of Swords* is no longer a destructive and hateful force, for it is modified by the other two. One interpretation might be something like, 'The publisher's book launch had much lively discussion (Mars in Gemini); afterwards there was a wonderful party (Jupiter in Pisces, Mercury in Cancer)'. The same reading done with Crowley's deck, for example, would be difficult visually because there we have a nightmarish image of nine cruel swords all dripping blood and tears. The powerful image remains no matter what other cards accompany it. With our Tarot this difficulty is eliminated as a small card can be read, visually and in other ways, as 'good' or 'evil' depending on how it is modified by the cards on either side.

While, for the sake of clarity, we have provided an example here of a mundane question, we have found this Tarot to be remarkably well suited to questions of very arcane or esoteric matters.



The Pyramid Tarot Spread

This Tarot spread was devised by the Order and uses the symbol of the Pyramid of Initiation. The first three numbers may correspond to the supernal sephiroth and thus form the triangular base of the pyramid. Da'ath, figured zero, is the apex of the tetrahedron. If more detail is required, then additional cards may be drawn to dignify the first three. The counting continues, 4 (to the right of the 1st), 5 (to the right of the 2nd), 6 (to the right of the 3rd), 7 (to the left of the 1st), 8 (to the left of the 2nd), 9 (to the left of the 3rd).



- 0.** This will become known in due course.
- 1.** The beginning or root of the matter.
- 2.** Manifestation or development.
- 3.** Truth of the matter, or advice.