

Key 2: The Priestess

<i>Prevailing Energy:</i>	Intuitive knowledge
<i>Power Cultivated:</i>	Prophetic dreams
<i>Attribute Manifested:</i>	Esoteric Knowledge
<i>C.C. de Saint-Germain:</i>	Gate of the Sanctuary
<i>Spirit's Journey:</i>	Creative Power
<i>Hermetic Title:</i>	Priestess of the Silver Star



Card Description:

The veiled priestess of the Goddess holds the Holy Book of Knowledge, accessed through the icon of the Merkabah star. Upon her crown is the triple moon and centered upon it, Inanna, the Sumerian goddess who is sovereign over the dichotomy of love and war, procreation and destruction. Inanna was the goddess who brought knowledge and culture to the people. Her mythology has been connected to that of the goddess Demeter and Persephone. At present archaeologists have a running theory that Inanna and Isis are also connected.

Boaz

בְּעֹז

Bo 'az

ב א

Key 1: The Magus
Mercury



Jachin

יָכִין

Yakin

י כ

Key 9: The Erudite
Virgo

The twin pillars featured in The Priestess card represent Jachin [יָכִין yakin] on the onlooker's right, when facing the entrance into the Temple of Solomon, and the pillar to the left is Boaz [בְּעֹז bo 'az]. In the RWS High Priestess card, these pillars are represented by "B" on the left and "J" on the right. The letter B, *beth*, per Golden Dawn correspondences, is linked to Key 1: The Magus, while J, *yod*, is linked to Key 9: The Erudite (Hermit card). Here, the Phoenician letters for *beth* and *yod* are inscribed upon the dark and light pillars.

In the Book of Kings, Boaz and Jachin are described as freestanding pillars made of bronze or copper with lilies carved into the capitals, or tops, of each pillar, along with checkerwork. Here, following the dark and light pillars featured in the RWS High Priestess, the pillar on the left is of a darker bronze and the one on the right is lighter. The Phoenician letter corresponding with Key 1: The Magus is featured on the dark pillar and the letter corresponding with Key 9: The Erudite is featured on the light pillar. Together, Boaz and Jachin stand at the vertical axis where the microcosm and the macrocosm meet.

Historians believe that the Temple of Solomon stood around 960 BC. The Biblical King David had wanted to build the First Temple, but God assigned that task to Solomon, because David had been tainted by too much bloodshed, violence, and war to have been deemed worthy of building God's temple.

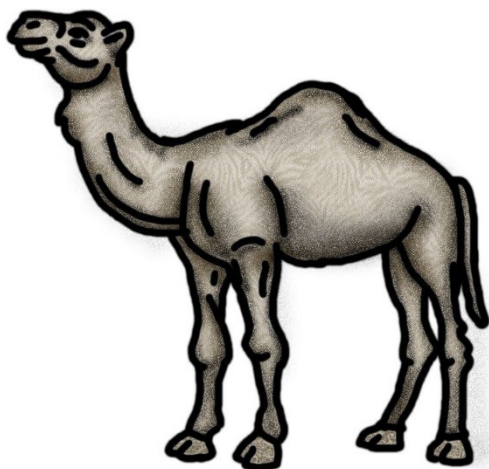
References to building materials for the temple include gold, silver, bronze, and iron, and the colors purple, crimson, and blue. Within the temple was housed the sacred treasures, including the ark of the covenant.

In the Book of Kings, there's also a reference to King Solomon later worshipping Ashtoreth, goddess of the Sidonians (now modern-day Lebanon). Ashtoreth's Akkadian equivalent is Ishtar, and in Sumer was known as Inanna. Inanna was the patron goddess and source of King Solomon's magical powers.



Bottom foreground of the Thoth Priestess

Featured in the bottom left foreground is the She-Camel of God (ناقة الله), a miracle Allah sent to the Arabian tribe of Thamūd. The prophet Saleh split open a stone and from it the She-Camel of God came alive. The people were told to care for the she-camel, but one tortured and crippled the animal. As punishment, Thamūd was destroyed. According to Bedouin lore, God has 100 names, but only 99 are known to us; the 100th name is a secret kept by the camel—that is why the camel's expression is always smug.



Here, Key 2 features the She-Camel to signify a promise and offer from Spirit. Care after the gifts that Spirit endows you with; do not desecrate those divine gifts, and you will be rewarded with plenitude.

The camel here is also symbolic of a kept secret, and an homage to the foreground iconography in the Crowley-Harris Thoth Priestess.

The priestess is Sanctum Sophia, the personification of wisdom and intelligence. This is the spirit of Holy Wisdom. She is the Queen of the Angels. This Key marks the threshold into the Sanctuary of Isis. The codification of this Key is also a portal by which Artemis can come through.

Thus, in the Crowley-Harris Thoth rendering of Key II: The Priestess, presented by the priestess's waistline is Artemis's bow and arrow. Here, the wings of the veiled priestess call to mind the form of Artemis's bow illustrated in The Sharpshooter, Eight of Scepters.



Left: Bow of Artemis cloaking the priestess. Right: Artemis in the Eight of Scepters

In the foreground, upon the waters of consciousness floats a crescent moon and pomegranates, guarding the front entrance, from which the two pillars arise. Then a horizon line of mountains awaits the seeker, signifying the labor and toil of ascension. Beyond that and concealed by the veil is the inner sanctum of the Temple. The depiction here implies that the temple is in the skies, thus revealing how you access the temple: by astral flight.

Key 1: The Magus featured the four elements corresponding with the four alchemical phases mastered through the magician's four altar tools. In other words, Key 1 encompasses the four tarot Aces. Here, by implication, Key 2: The Priestess is the dwelling place of the four Aces mastered by The Magus.

Concealed by the veil and inside the Temple is the illuminated chalice, a metaphor for the bronze basin inside the Biblical Temple of Solomon. The Bread of Life, or Ace of Orbs, is kept on the altar for the Bread of the

Presence. The ten lamp stands lighting the Temple correspond with the Sacred Fire, or Hallowed Flame expressed in the Ace of Scepters.

The prominent symbolism of the pomegranate (the foreground, the pomegranate seeds in the relief of the pillars, and the pomegranates adorning the top of each pillar) associates the Key with the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. It is symbolic of esoteric knowledge, wisdom, and divine teachings. According to the Torah, images of pomegranates are woven into a High Priest's robes. The pomegranate here symbolizes spiritual and psychic abundance.

Woven into the Major Arcana is coded revelation of the Eleusinian Mysteries, an occult religious rite that reenacts Persephone's descent into the underworld.

Card Meaning:

Key 2 is a pictorial representation of the shekhinah, the dwelling place of God, per rabbinic literature, and a reference to the feminine attributes of the Divine. When you are immersed in studying the Torah, you manifest the divine presence of God. (Hence the classical RWS illustration of the priestess holding the Torah scroll.) The shekhinah is present over the headboard of a sick man's bed, and accompanies any who has been exiled. The shekhinah is also referenced as the most exalted form of sacred fire.

The Priestess appears to you as an affirmation that Divinity is present with you right now, at this moment of your life's journey.

If Key 1: The Magus is associated with skill, the physical manifestation of craft, and handiwork, then Key 2: The Priestess is associated with specialized, obscure knowledge. When The Priestess appears in your reading, the guardian spirit at the gates of your subconscious is calling to you: a deeply held secret is awaiting your clearance to pass through into your conscious awareness.

Where The Magus would affirm mastery over the external elements, The Priestess affirms mastery over the inner elements. In Mongolian shamanism, *hiimori*, or your windhorse, is your personal psychic power. Key 1: The Magus expresses the active engagement of your windhorse, while Key 2: The Priestess reveals its presence and deep reservoir of potential.

In common tarot card interpretation, Key 5: The Hierophant is construed as a gatekeeper, but I disagree. It's The Priestess in Key 2 who is a gatekeeper, but

not so much to block you from entering as she is here to ascertain whether or not you're ready. The implication is you are always and will for all perpetuity be granted invitation and access, *but only* if and when you are ready.

In a way, the spirit of The Priestess is a librarian with duties of management over the Akashic Records.

When The Priestess appears to you, she instructs on the cultivation of your wisdom and intuition. The summation of choices you have made and the landscape of thoughts you have painted for yourself have taken you to the threshold of a particular Path, and now is the time to venture deeper, farther. Here is the wellspring of magic.

In fortune-telling tarot, the High Priestess card is sometimes interpreted as relating to sex or sexuality. The esoteric link to that interpretation is found in the Key's reference to Inanna. Unless Key 2 appears in a reading ill-dignified or reversed, it is a positive omen for love and relationships.

In a mundane reading about your professional life or career path, The Priestess is advising you to advance your specialized knowledge.

Eliphaz Levi assigns the Sacred Seven planets in traditional astrology to the Seven Angels, whose epithets are as follows:

The Sacred Seven of traditional astrology correspond with Seven Angels. Eliphaz Levi expresses these seven angels as:

1. The Angel of Light, ruling the sun;
2. The Angel of Aspirations and Dreams, ruling the moon;
3. The Destroying Angel for Mars;
4. The Angel of Loves for Venus;
5. The Angel of Progress for Mercury;
6. The Angel of Power for Jupiter; and
7. The Angel of the Wilderness for Saturn.

When The Priestess appears in your reading, the Angel of Aspirations and Dreams is present. This is the Angel bringing blessings of prophetic dreams, of omens and signs that will guide you to realize your aspirations and true potential.

Artist Notes:

For depicting the High Priestess, I was inspired by the Akkadian/Sumerian *kalû* (or *gala*) priestess of Ishtar/Inanna. Cuneiform records of the *gala* date back to 3000 to 2000 BC. The gender of the *gala* was fluid. They were typically born male, though took on female and specifically priestess roles in their societies and at the goddess Inanna's temples.

While records suggest that some priests may have been gay, others cross-dressed for the role of the priestess, but took wives and had children. Women also took on the role of *gala* priestesses. When serving their ritual role as priestess for Inanna, all priestesses looked alike, with a feminine form, and the lay would not have been able to discern any differences among them beyond that presented feminine form.

Centuries later in ancient Greece and Rome, the *galli* were gender-fluid priests/priestesses of the goddess Cybele. They wore elaborate, colorful, and ornate costumes and would dress like women. During the Roman festival of Sanguinaria, or Day of Blood, in an ecstatic state during ritual, some *galli* would castrate themselves in a form of initiation rite. The plant belladonna, or nightshade, was used to induce hallucinations (or communion with the goddess).

These priests/priestesses (the scholarly texts on the *galli* I consulted were inconsistent with references to "priest" or "priestess") were oracles and were believed to be divinely possessed by the goddess and thus receiving prophetic messages from the divine.

In South Asian traditions, the *kinnar* and *aravani* were transgender mystics, though within the culture were considered a third and distinct gender. The *jogti hijras* were male-to-female priestesses dedicated to certain goddesses, such as Bahuchara Mātā, the Hindu maiden goddess of chastity, fertility, and awakening kundalini, represented by a serpent with two mouths. Another venerated goddess, or *devi*, is Renuka (also known as Ekvira), goddess of the damned), often depicted with a lion. Those who have been cursed or who are shunned by their communities would seek sanctuary and divine protection from Renuka (Ekvira).

Key 1: The Magus and Key 2: The Priestess both depict mystics who are cross-dressing. If you return to Key 1, you'll note that the shaman in The Magus is wearing what would have traditionally been men's clothing.

2. THE PRIESTESS 1



Sanctuary of Isis



In the two preceding editions of SKT, I included the scroll bearing the word TORA, implying that the H was concealed, just as it was in the RWS Key II: High Priestess. The TORA, with the H omitted, is also a reference to Postel's ROTA Key, which will appear again in Key 10: Wheel of Life.

Over the decades, with the RWS deck imagery dominating in popularity, we've come to associate that scroll bearing TORA with the High Priestess card, almost inextricably. I've always felt the same way, and so of course it was featured in the SKT.

For this third edition, I hoped that the illustration, without words, would be enough to convey the same point. The scroll the priestess is holding in her arms represents the Torah, while the book featuring the Merkabah star represents reading the Talmud. Across her chest is the priestly breastplate (*hošen*, חֹשֶׁן).





Excerpt from
A Hymn to Inanna
by Enheduanna (circa 2300 BC)
trans. by The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature

The great-hearted mistress, the impetuous lady, proud among the Anuna gods and pre-eminent in all lands, the great daughter of Suen, exalted among the Great Princes, the magnificent lady who gathers up the divine powers of heaven and earth and rivals great An, is mightiest among the great gods -- she makes their verdicts final.

...

At her loud cries, the gods of the Land become scared. Her roaring makes the Anuna gods tremble like a solitary reed. At her rumbling, they hide all together. Without Inana great An makes no decisions, and Enlil determines no destinies. . . . She keeps the door of the house of wisdom, she makes known its interior. . . . You ride on seven great beasts as you come forth from heaven.

...

Lady, pre-eminent through the power of An and Enlil. Without you no destiny at all is determined, no clever counsel is granted favour.

...

To open up roads and paths, a place of peace for the journey, a companion for the weak, are yours, Inanna.

To keep paths and ways in good order, to shatter earth and to make it firm are yours, Inanna.

To destroy, to build up, to tear out and to settle are yours, Inanna.

To turn a man into a woman and a woman into a man are yours, Inanna.

Desirability and arousal, bringing goods into existence and establishing properties and equipment are yours, Inanna.

Profit, gain, great wealth and greater wealth are yours, Inanna.

Profit and having success in wealth, financial loss and reduced wealth are yours, Inanna.

Choice, offering, inspection and embellishment are yours, Inanna.

Assigning virility, dignity, guardian angels, protective deities and cult centres are yours, Inanna.



Excerpt from

The Exaltation of Inanna

by Enheduanna (circa 2300 BC)

trans. by The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature

Lady of all the divine powers, resplendent light, righteous woman clothed in radiance, beloved of An and Urac! Mistress of heaven, with the great pectoral jewels, who loves the good headdress befitting the office of en priestess, who has seized all seven of its divine powers! My lady, you are the guardian of the great divine powers! You have taken up the divine powers, you have hung the divine powers from your hand.

...

Raining blazing fire down upon the Land, endowed with divine powers by An, lady who rides upon a beast, whose words are spoken at the holy command of An! The great rites are yours: who can fathom them?

...

Like the light of the rising moon, she exudes delight. . . . The door posts greet her. Everyone's speech to the mistress is exalted. Praise be to the destroyer of foreign lands, endowed with divine powers by An, to my lady enveloped in beauty, to Innana!



Source: Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Fluckiger-Hawker, E, Robson, E., and Zólyomi, G., *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* (<http://www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk/>), Oxford 1998- .



Ishtar, from the Library of Ashurbanipal in Nineveh (700-601 BC)

NOTES

“the Anuna gods” is a reference to the Anunnaki, or the seven most important deities of the Sumerian pantheon: An, Enlil, Enki, Ninhursag, Nanna, Utu, and Inanna.

“An and Ura” is a reference to Anu, supreme god of the skies, and Uras, the goddess of the earth.

Enheduanna (2285-2250 BCE), daughter of Sargon the Great, was an Akkadian poet and high priestess in ancient Sumer, credited by contemporary historians as the world’s first author.