

Foreword by Colin Low

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Approaching the Kabbalah of Maat explores three radical expressions of modern goddess-inclusive occult theory and practice that evolved in the late twentieth century. Drawing from the same broad esoteric lineage that produced Aleister Crowley, Frater Achad, and Kenneth Grant, Maat magicians and theosophists such as Nema, Aion, 416 and others, developed new concepts of personal and cultural evolution, weaving æonic theory and kabbalah into revolutionary tenets and practices.

Approaching the Kabbalah of Maat reproduces transcriptions of original documents, diagrams and artwork by individuals and groups involved in Maatian practice, including a significant collection of material from the Thelemically-inclined occult order, the OAI. The book also offers a well-researched history of the esoteric streams that gave rise to the progressive/subversive methods of Maat magick, and the broader cultural movements and upheavals which contributed to them.

—from the back cover

"A long overdue and welcome history and analysis of the development and practice of the Maat current, from its origins in the writings and magick of Aleister Crowley, Frater Achad (Charles Stansfeld Jones) and Kenneth Grant. The latter provides the link between the Thelema of the early twentieth century and the work of Maat-focussed magickians such as Nema, Aion, and 416. One of the significant aspects of Maat magick is that it injects the divine feminine and goddess-oriented spirituality into ceremonial magic, just as Wicca emphasises the primacy of woman and the Goddess. Karr's extensive study and knowledge of Kabbalah is of prime importance in this respect, with regard to the Shechinah, the presence or indwelling of the Divine, understood to be feminine."

"The book includes previously-unseen documentation and art written or created by individuals or groups whose practice is Maat-focussed, including a substantial amount of material from the Thelemic order, the OAI."

—Treadwell's Bookshop. London

"Yet some unorthodox Thelemites, like Achad, have accepted the possibility of a premature dawning of the Aeon of Maat—for example, Kenneth Grant in his Typhonian Trilogies, the Thelemic magical order Ordo Adeptorum Invisiblum, and Nema—whose received text *Liber Pennae Penumbra* and system of Maat magick is perhaps the most influential result of the Maatian speculations. Don Karr's book, *Approaching the Kabbalah of Maat*, provides the best account of these recent currents in speculative occultism."

—Nicholas Laccetti, "The Curious Conversion of Frater Achad," in *The Light Invisble* (2017) at http://thelightinvisible.org/2017/02/02/the-curious-conversion-of-frater-achad/

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Approaching the Kabbalah of Maat

[pages 3-17]

WITHIN THE WELTER which could be called alternatively the "spiritual awakening" or the "occult revival," the second half of the twentieth century brought a great mass and variety of material published in English incorporating—if not referring to itself as—*kabbalah*, *qabalah*, *cabala*, and so on. In rough terms, the sources for this *kabbalah* material were

- (α) Jewish, consisting of studies, such as the works of Gershom Scholem, Joseph Dan, Moshe Idel, and Elliot R. Wolfson; texts, e.g., Sefer Yezirah, Sefer ha-Bahir, the Zohar, and The Palm Tree of Deborah, translated by Jewish scholars; and some practical instruction, as in the works of Aryeh Kaplan and Work of the Chariot.
- (β) Western occult, primarily the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn,¹ Aleister Crowley (OTO [Ordo Templi Orientis] and A. A. [Astrum Argentum]),² and their descendents, consisting of practical instruction, some studies, and a couple of kabbalistic texts rendered from Latin translations, namely Westcott's *Sefer Yezirah* from Rittangelius (Amsterdam: 1642) and Mathers' sections of the *Zohar* from Knorr von Rosenroth's *Kabbala denudata* (1677 & 1684).

A familiarity with the term *kabbalah* and the implications of the variant spellings of the word as *qabalah* and *cabala* is assumed here. Very broadly, *kabbalah* is Jewish esoteric teaching, a grand commentary on the Torah elaborating on the

Founded in 1887 by S. L. MacGregor Mathers, William Wynn Westcott, and William R. Woodman, The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was "[t]he foremost esoteric, and later magical, initiatic Order in the late 19th and early 20th centuries," Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ed., *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, Vol. I, (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2005) p. 544. Among its members were luminaries such as W. B. Yeats, Arthur Edward Waite, and Aleister Crowley.

For sources of *kabbalah*—both Jewish *and* Christian—in English (and a few in French) available to the early Golden Dawn, see Part 2 of my *Study of Christian Cabala in English*, at http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/Biblios/ccinea.pdf.

The OTO (Ordo Templi Orientis) is an "[o]ccultist and initiatic Order ... founded at the beginning of the 20th century ... [whose] origins can be traced to the activities of a group of German-speaking occultists," Hanegraaff, *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, (Vol. II, p. 898), Early members of the group included Rudolph Steiner and H. Spencer Lewis. Not long after being inducted (around 1910-12), Aleister Crowley commandeered the organization. The A. A. (usually Astrum Argentum: Silver Star) is a magical order formed by Crowley following his expulsion from the Golden Dawn.

relationship of man and the infinite creator. *Qabalah* is "Hermetic" in that it is the narrow practical version of *kabbalah* originating in nineteenth-century Western esoteric schools such as the Golden Dawn which is centered on the Tree of Life and its connections with other schemes, especially the *tarot*. *Cabala* is something of a catch-all for both Christian interpretations of *kabbalah* from the Renaissance and Reformation periods and magic in general, such as that described by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535).³

This section of the book is concerned with developments following upon (β) . The present survey focuses on

- (1) forms and uses of the kabbalistic Tree of Life.
- (2) notions connected with the Procession of the Æons.

It will be shown that (1) and (2) are not independent topics.

ALTERED TREES

The Tree of Life is familiar to anyone who has picked up a popular book on *kabbalah* from either the Jewish or Western occult tradition. Within Western occultism, the Tree has been called the "Western Mandala," and it has served as the basis for systems of theosophy, divination, meditation, and magic. It depicts the universe—*any* universe—in all its parts, but also as an all-encompassing unity.

It should be noted at the outset that, in the Western occult streams surveyed here, the correlation of *tarot* and *kabbalah* is assumed.

Especially when viewed as a manifestation of *philosophia perennis*, *kabbalah* has been taken as a tradition independent from Judaism. The original wave of Christian kabbalists in the Renaissance (*e.g.*, Pico della Mirandola and Johannes Reuchlin) viewed *kabbalah* as an expression of *Christian* truth entrusted to the Jews before Christ's incarnation.

Even within Judaism, some developments of later *kabbalah* spin free of dependence on Torah. The *Zohar* was a supposed commentary on the Torah, and Lurianic *kabbalah* was a commentary on the *Zohar*. Indeed, Hayim Vital, whose writings are among the most important representations of Lurianic *kabbalah*, "restlessly recast the essential Lurianic doctrine in ways that increasingly abandoned the *Zohar* as proof text" (—Pinchas Giller, *Reading the Zohar* [Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 2001], p. 23). Subsequent Luria-based kabbalists, *e.g.*, Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto (author of *Kelah Pithei Hokhmah*) and Shneur Zalman of Lyady (author of *Tanya*), offered bodies of teachings that are even further removed from Scripture.

The Tarot being a pictoral representation of the Tree of Life, each of the cards represents an aspect of that diagram. The Court cards are referred to the Sephiroth—the Aces representing the first Sephira [keter], the Twos representing the second [binah], and so on. The Trumps are referred to the interconnecting Paths between the Sephiroth and assume all attributions already associated with the paths [i.e., Hebrew letters, signs of the zodiac, etc.].⁴

This conjunction of *tarot* and *kabbalah* filtered into the Golden Dawn by way of the French occult scene of the nineteenth century,⁵ which included such characters as Jean-Baptiste Alliette (Etteilla),⁶ Eliphas Levi,⁷ Gerard Encausse (Papus),⁸ and Paul Christian.⁹

A V

Is there an ideal Tree of Life, one which represents creation before its corruption *or* after its restoration? Various sources indicate that there is. By way of an introduction to some of the concerns which are taken up in detail later in this book, a few Tree arrangements will be briefly considered here.

Of the various versions of the Tree of Life which predate the Golden Dawn, one of the more relevant in the present context is that of Elijah ben Solomon, or Rabbi

⁴ Caradoc Elmet, "'Tzaddi is Not the Star': The Problem of the Thoth Tarot," in *Starfire: A Journal of the New Aeon*, The Official Organ of the Typhonian Order, Volume II, Number 3 (London: Starfire Publishing., 2008), p. 71.

This period is skillfully treated in Ronald Decker, Thierry Depaulis & Michael A. E. Dummett, A Wicked Pack of Cards: The Origins of the Occult Tarot (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996). More recent developments are covered in Ronald Decker & Michael A. E. Dummett, History of the Occult Tarot: 1870-1970 (London: Duckworth, 2002), which discusses and reproduces a number of versions of the Tree of Life, several of which (reproduced below) bear on the topic at hand.

Etteilla [Jean-Baptiste Alliette], Cours Theoretique et Pratique du Livre de Thot; pour entendre avec justesse, l'Art, la Science et la Sagesse de render les Oracles (Paris: Vezard et Le Normant, 1790). Refer to "Part Three – Tarot and Cartomancy" of Ronald Decker's more recent book, The Esoteric Tarot (Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House, 2013), pp. 181-220, for more on Etteilla's "Career" and "Cartomancy."

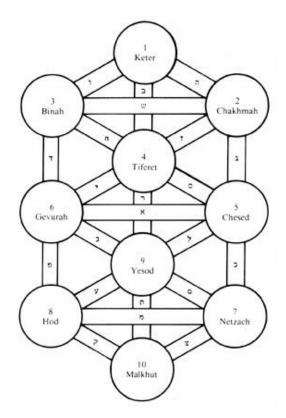
Eliphas Levi, *Transcendental Magic*, translated by A. E. Waite (London: George Redway, 1896), reprinted frequently; refer in particular to the "kabalistic key of the Tarot" on pp. 99-103.

Refer in particular to Papus [Gérard Encausse], *Tarot of the Bohemians*, translated by A. P. Morton, with a preface by A. E. Waite (London: Chapman and Hall, 1892); reprinted frequently.

Paul Christian, Histoire de la Magie: De Monde Surnaturel et de la Fatalité a Travers les Temps et les Peuples (Paris: Furne Jouvet et Cie, 1870); English translation: The History & Practice of Magic (London: Forge Press, 1952, 2 Vols.) Refer in particular to Book Two, Chapter III.

Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman (1720-1797), the Gaon of Vilna, known as the GRA, or ha-GRA, an acronym for ha-Gaon Rabbi Eliyahu.

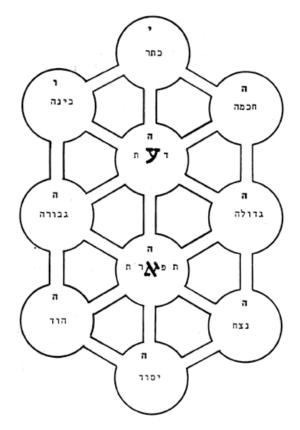
Being vertically *and* horozontally symmetrical, the general structure of the GRA Tree is similar to the TREE OF LIFE / TREE OF PEACE / TREE OF PERFECTION presented by Work of the Chariot (1970-1971)¹⁰ and the Perfected Tree of the Maat-oriented 416 (1982).



The 32 paths according to the GRA¹¹

Work of the Chariot [7], Book of the Names (Hollywood: Work of the Chariot, 1971), pp. 163-168

From Aryeh Kaplan, Sefer Yetzirah, Figure 5, p. 30.



עץ חיים – עץ שלום – עץ שלם TREE OF LIFE -- TREE OF PEACE --TREE OF PERFECTION

Work of the Chariot, *Book of Names*, p. 166. Meditations on the y (*ayin* or O) are oriented toward the *Vast Face* (*arikh anpin*). Meditations on the x (*aleph* or AU) are oriented toward the *Small Face* (*zeir anpin*).

While the configurations of the GRA and Work of the Chariot Trees are the same—save that the Work of the Chariot Tree shows no horizontal paths—the arrangements of the *sefirot* are not. The GRA Tree has no *da'at*. Rather, *tiferet* is at position 4 in the usual place of *da'at*, above *hesed* (also called *gedulah*) and

gevurah (also called din). Yesod (still number 9) is in the usual place of tiferet. Malkut (10) is in the usual place of yesod. This is uncommon.

Interestingly, the general order of the *sefirot* in the GRA Tree all but matches one of the arrangements used by the Maatian group Ordo Adeptorum Invisiblum (OAI): In OAI's *Liber K* (1982) and *Liber ANDANA* (1983), the fourth, fifth, and sixth *sefirot* are shown as *tiferet*, *hesed* and *gevurah* respectively, rather than as the more usual *hesed*, *gevurah* and *tiferet*. In OAI's arrangement, however, *hod* as no. 7 and *nezach* as no. 8, reverse of the GRA order. 12

On the other hand, the attributions of Hebrew letters to the paths in the GRA Tree are identical to 416's Perfected Tree, except that the \neg -resh and \neg -tav paths are switched: On the GRA Tree, \neg -resh crosses \aleph -aleph at the exact center, whereas, on 416's Perfected scheme, \neg -tav crosses \aleph -aleph at the exact center of the Tree. (The corresponding OAI arrangement of path attributions is totally different, following an ascending scheme.)¹³

Two other often-reproduced Trees pertain to our discussion: *A Tree according to Luria*, ¹⁴ which matches in all aspects the "Lurianic Tree of Life," (shown below in § The Perfected Tree), and *A Lurianic Tree with Daath*, ¹⁵ which matches in all aspects the "Golden Dawn Perfected Tree" shown in the seminal Golden Dawn document known as the "Cypher Manuscript," apparently extracted from *Kabbala denudata* (see below, § A Golden Dawn Perfected Tree).

As we shall see later in this book, the Golden Dawn Perfected Tree is considered the Tree "before the fall," whereas the well-known conventional arrangement is the Tree "after the fall."

Decker & Dummett, *History of the Occult Tarot*, *Figure 3*, p. 13, which is the same as *Figure 4* in Kaplan's *Sefer Yetzirah*, p. 29, except that Kaplan's version does not show *da'at*.

Lurianic, *i.e.*, from Luria = Isaac Luria (1534-1572), the single-most influential figure in the history of *kabbalah*. Lurianic *kabbalah* generally displaced the classical *kabbalah* of the *Zohar* (13th century).

Refer to my "Notes on the Study of Later Kabbalah in English" at *Hermetic Kabbalah*, http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/Biblios/lkie.pdf.

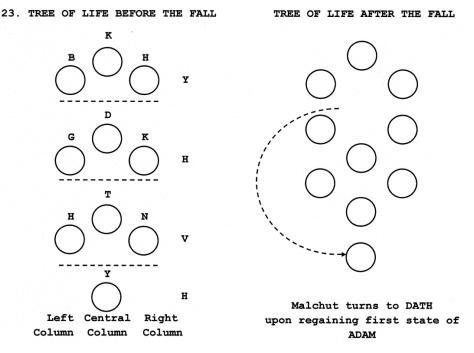
.

See below, § Ordo Adeptorum Invisiblum, and Methods of Maat, where Libri K and ANDANA are reprinted in full.

Refer to OAI: *Liber K* – The Paths, below § Ordo Adeptorum Invisiblum.

Decker & Dummett, History of the Occult Tarot, Figure 6, p. 21.

Work of the Chariot also refers to Trees *before* and *after* the fall in a note to the Zoharic verse, "And because the Ancient Holy One is formed in three, so also, all the other lights which shine from Him are formed into three." ¹⁶



Work of the Chariot, Lesser Holy Assembly, p. 13, note 23.

Here, the Tree before the fall is shown with no *malkut*; the Tree after the fall shows *da'at* descending into the pendant position *outside* the tree as *malkut*. The quote added, "Malchut turns into Dath upon regaining first state of Adam," suggests that upon restoration (*tikkun*) the Tree will return to its prelapsarian form.

The significance of all these seemingly arbitrary details will come clear as the various tree arrangements and designs are treated in turn. What should be noted is that proponents of Maat, such as Frater Achad, the OAI, and 416, did not accept

Work of the Chariot [2], Lesser Holy Assembly (n.p. n.d. [ca. 1970]), p. 6.

the "traditional" or *exoteric* Golden Dawn tree in either its design or attributions. Also, along with whatever innovations OAI and 416 may have contributed, both drew on older (Jewish) *kabbalah* for key features of their Trees.

THE PROCESSION OF THE ÆONS

The Procession of the Æons is rather more esoteric than the Tree of Life. Very generally, an æon is a period of about 2000 years. In the simplest rendition, these periods are symbolized by a sequence of four Egyptian deities: Isis, Osiris, Horus, and Maat.¹⁷

Crowley summarizes the Procession of the [named] Æons in his *Confessions* ¹⁸ within § "'The Advent of the Aeon of Horus': The Historical Conception on which *The Book of the Law* Is Based."

To recapitulate the historical basis of *The Book of the Law*, let me say that evolution (within human memory) shows three great steps: 1. the worship of the Mother [Isis], when the universe was conceived as simple nourishment drawn directly from her; 2. the worship of the Father [Osiris], when the universe was imagined as catastrophic; 3. the worship of the Child [Horus], in which we come to perceive events as a continual growth partaking its elements of both these methods.¹⁹

Crowley compares the age of the Father and the age of the Child in *Magick in Theory and Practice*. ²⁰

Aleister Crowley, The Confessions of Aleister Crowley, Crowley's "autohagiography." I am using the Bantam edition, edited by John Symons and Kenneth Grant (New York: Bantam Books, 1971).

Aleister Crowley, *Magick in Theory and Practice* (Paris: The Lecram Press, 1929).

I am using an undated edition (ca. 1973) from Castle Books (New York). The quote is on p. 37 in the midst of a chapter entitled "The Formula of I.A.O.," which discusses the "*Aeon of Isis*. Matriarchal Age. The Great Work conceived as a straightforward simple affair"; the "*Aeon of Isis*.

¹⁷ Kabbalah and the æons can be interconnected *via* the *tetragrammaton*, YHVH (הוה): Y ≈ Osiris, H ≈ Isis, V ≈ Horus, and the final H ≈ Maat; these also correspond to the kabbalistic *parzufim* (FACES) *aba, aima, zeir anpin*, and *nukva*, and the *sefirot hokhmah, binah, tiferet* and *malkut*, respectively. Note, however, that there is a mismatch in the order, namely, the Æon of Isis *precedes* that of Osiris.

See below, § Frater Achad.

¹⁹ Crowley, *The Confessions*, p. 420.

In the Aeon of Osiris it was indeed realized that Man must die in order to live. But now in the Aeon of Horus we know that every event is a death; subject and object slay each other in "love under will"; each such death is itself life, the means by which one realizes oneself in a series of episodes.

In *Confessions*, Crowley speaks briefly of what is to come after Horus.

We learn that Horus will in his turn be succeeded by Thmaist, the Double-Wanded One; she who shall bring the candidates to full initiation, and though we know little of her peculiar characteristics, we know at least that her name is justice.²¹

Needless to say, Thmaist, "the Double-Wanded One" whose "name is justice," is Maat.

Kenneth Grant's formulation of the named æons is summarized thus:

Aeons three to six comprise the phases of evolution of the life-wave on this planet through the formulae of (a) Parthenogenesis (Isis); (b) Self-Sacrifice (Osiris); (c) Analysis, or Disintegration (Horus); (d) Synthesis, or Re-integration (Maat).²²

T Polyphilus outlines Maatian developments through the twentieth century in "Aeons Beyond the Three." ²³

The familiar Egyptian form of the goddess of Justice who is the characterization of the fourth Aeon is Maat. And it was the Aeon of Maat or "Ma-Ion" that Crowley's student Frater Achad (Charles Stansfeld Jones) later came to advocate as prematurely succeeding that of Horus. Kenneth Grant and his school later confused the issue further by suggesting that Maat was the "daughter" complement of Horus the son, and promoting the idea of a "double current" in which those two godforms were coeval. Probably the most interesting and consequential outgrowth of this premise has been the Maatian magick of Nema, with its own inspired scripture *Liber Pennae Penumbra* [sic] and its independent body of magical technique.

Kenneth Grant also proposed three prehistorical Aeons, of the Void, of Chaos, and of the Earth, which would have preceded that of Isis. Nema, writing in *The Cincinnati*

Osiris. Patriarchal age. Two sexes. [The letter] I conceived as the Father-Wand (Yod of Tetragrammaton)"; and the "Aeon of Horus. Two sexes in one person."

²¹ Crowley, *The Confessions*, p. 421.

²² Grant, Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God, p. 57.

On-line at The Hermetic Library, www.hermetic.com/dionysos/beyond3.htm. Material from this site, including "Aeons Beyond the Three," appears in T Polyphilus' book, *Thelema for the People* (forthcoming).

Journal of Ceremonial Magick (No. VII),²⁴ telescoped these three into the "Nameless Aeon," characterized by the Egyptian god Bes. In addition, she added a "Wordless Aeon" to succeed the double Aeon of Horus and Maat, so that Harpocrates as silence would complete the cycle. Thus, the full sequence proposed by Nema is Bes—Isis—Osiris—Horus—Maat—Harpocrates.

According to procession doctrine, the current Æon of Horus began in 1904 with Aleister Crowley's reception of *The Book of the Law*²⁵ from the præternatural intelligence Aiwass (or Aiwaz). In the present context, receiving prophesies or profound secrets from otherworldly entities such as Aiwass is not at all strange. The generation preceding Crowley's saw Mme. Blavatsky's "hidden mahatmas" and Golden Dawn co-founder S. L. MacGregor Mathers' "secret chiefs."²⁶

Specifically, Nema "Panaeonic Magick," in *The Cincinnati Journal of Magick*, Issue VII (Cincinnati: Black Moon Publishing, 1989).

The word *Ceremonial* was dropped from the title of this journal for Volume II in 1985. At the same time, the publishers changed their name from Conquering Child Publishing to Black Moon Publishing. It was rumored that this change was in response to the lecture given by 416 on June 16, 1984, in which "the crowned and conquering child," *i.e.*, Horus, was characterized as proprietary, objectifying, and narcissitic. More on this below in § The Perfected Tree.

The Book of the Law; there are numerous editions, both printed and online, e.g., http://lib.oto-usa.org/libri/liber0220.html.

Most biographies of Crowley contain accounts of the reception and import of *The Book of the Law, e.g.,* Chapter Four: "The Birth of the New Aeon (1904-05)," in Lawrence Sutin's *Do What Thou Wilt: A Life of Aleister Crowley* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

Refer to Colin Low's foreword to the current work.

William Wynn Westcott, another Golden Dawn co-founder, fabricated a not-so-otherworldly "high continental adept" named Anna Sprengel, AKA Soror Sapiens Dominabitur Astris (SDA), who was the supposed Imperatrix of the German Rosicrucian Order Die Goldene Morgenröte at the temple Licht, Liebe und Leben (Light, Love and Life). Westcott needed an entity which possessed the pedigree and authority to approve the establishment of the Golden Dawn in England. See R. A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians: The Rise and Fall of a Magical Order* (Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press, 1983), and Christopher McIntosh, "Fräulein Sprengel' and the Origins of the Golden Dawn: A Surprising Discovery," in *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism*, Volume 11, Number 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

In the 1980s, a period highlighted in the present work, the extra-terrestrial contact of moment was Lam. See Zossian 393 ∴, *Lam-Ed* (Seattle: Axil Press, n.d. [ca. 1981]); this booklet was sent out with every copy of *Mezla: Official Organ of the Ordo Templi Orientis*. Volume I, N°. 13 (Cincinnati: Mezla, n.d. [ca. 1981]), which included "An Official Statement of the O.T.O. Concerning the Cult of Lam, The Dikpala of the Way of Silence," submitted by Kenneth Grant using the name "Aossic Aiwass 718 ∴ O.H.O. of O.T.O." (O.H.O. = Outer Head of the Order).

The Æon of Maat, or at least the Maat current, has been assumed by a quite a few recent followers of Thelema (\approx Crowley/OTO) in two ways:

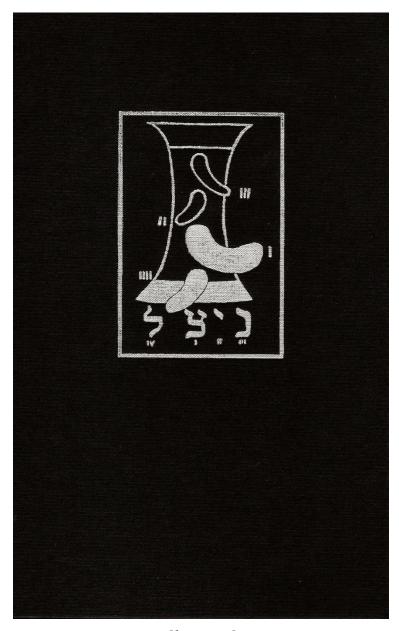
- *via* the notion of the "Double Current," which allows for the concurrent manifestations of Horus and Maat, namely, HML.
- *via* the more radical notion that the Maat current—if not the Æon of Maat—should be realized now, bringing its characteristic *truth and justice* to replace (overthrow?) the current age of Horus, the acquisitive "Crowned and Conquering Child," as in some of the proclamations of Frater Achad and OAI.²⁷

There have been non-affiliated (non-thelemic) advocates of Maat as well, such as 416.

Also included was a picture of Lam drawn by Aleister Crowley, who had been in contact with Lam in 1919.

Crowley's drawing of Lam, with the title "The Way," originally appeared in "Liber LXXI: The Voice of the Silence by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky with a commentary by Frater O.M. $7^{\circ} = 4^{\circ}$," special supplement to *The Equinox*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Detroit: The Universal Publishing Company, 1919).

The OAI describe themselves as "a British thelemicist order aligned to the Maat current" and "a Maatian Thelemic/thelemicist magickal order ... that finds its focus in the concept of Maat." (See below, § ORDO ADEPTORUM INVISIBLUM.) In other writings (e.g., Book of Maat), however, OAI proclaims that we now live in the Aeon of Zayin, the Twins, namely Horus and Maat.



[front cover]