

## About Tarot cards

Historically, the first Tarot cards were discovered in Italy sometime around the year 1430, approximately 60 years after regular playing cards entered Europe from Ancient Arabia. Playing cards are believed to have derived from the pieces of a Chinese chess game for four people. They came from China through Arabia to Europe and quickly became widespread. The royal families of renaissance Italy were not satisfied with playing with ordinary cards, so they had their private painters at court create special sets of cards. For the general entertainment of the dynasties, the painters used motifs from the Bible and other sources. These elegant sets of playing cards have been kept for posterity, while the playing cards of the peasants were exchanged when they were worn out.

Around this time, many people rediscovered the philosophy and the thoughts of the Antiquity. Through the crusades in the Near East, the Europeans became acquainted with the masters of the Antiquity, whose writings had been systematically burned and banned as heresy by the Catholic church for thousands of years. Luckily, the Arabs had translated these writings with great respect and they were subsequently translated back to Latin and thus made available to the European elite. While Christianity is a monotheistic religion that places all attributes in one God only, the gods of the Antiquity were a maze of personified character traits that were all woven together in exciting tales of gods and goddesses that illustrate the evolution and psychology of mankind.

The mythological tales reflect the hidden esoteric knowledge that will always be concealed by the exoteric shape of a religion. The figures found on the 22 trump cards of the Tarot can be interpreted through Gnosticism (the ability to know and experience the divine), Alchemy (a practice of combining the worldly and the divine) as well as depth psychology (a psychology that includes spiritual aspects), while at the same time the images hold symbols from many different spiritual traditions.

Tarot cards originated in a time where the majority of the European population could neither write, nor read. A picture says more than a thousand words, and as a means of supporting the memory, the philosophers of those days could illustrate their theories with the pictures of the Tarot cards, thus using them as a mnemonic way of understanding society, life and death.

Many modern mystics would like to believe that Tarot cards were developed with a purpose of describing the occult and supporting the human being in its quest for self-development. However, it is considered far more likely that a couple of bright people were able to find a meaningful system in something that was already available to them as a game.