



Magic Circles

in the Grimoire Tradition



*'The greatest power is attributed to the Circles;
For they are certain fortresses to defend the
operators safe from the evil Spirits'*

- HEPTAMERON

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ABOUT THE IMAGE ON THE TITLE PAGE: In his *Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, Christopher Marlow describes the circle of arte wherein Faustus makes his famous compact with Mephistopheles.

The playwright provides us with exceptional details regarding the connection of the circle with the stars and spirits as well as mentioning the divine names and magical characters used in its construction. In the well known woodcut, which accompanied the text, Faustus stands within the circle during his conjuration of Mephistopheles and can be seen holding a rod or staff and his grimoire.

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Marlow's Doctor Faustus.
Act I. Scene iii.

Enter Faustus to conjure.

FAUSTUS. *Now that the gloomy shadow of the earth,
Longing to view Orion's drizzling look,
Leaps from th' antartic world unto the sky,
And dims the welkin with her pitchy breath,
Faustus, begin thine incantations,
And try if devils will obey thy best,
Seeing thou hast pray'd and sacrific'd to them.
Within this circle is Jehovah's name,
Forward and backward anagrammatiz'd,
Th' abbreviated names of holy saints,
Figures of every adjunct to the heavens,
And characters of signs and erring stars,
By which the spirits are enforc'd to rise:
Then fear not, Faustus, but be resolute,
And try the uttermost magic can perform.--
Sint mihi dei Acherontis propitii! Valeat numen triplex Jehovoe!
Ignei, aerii, aquatani spiritus, salvete! Orientis princeps
Belzebub, inferni ardentis monarcha, et Demogorgon, propitiamus
vos, ut appareat et surgat Mephistophilis, quod tumeraris:
per Jehovaham, Gehennam, et consecratam aquam quam nunc spargo,
signumque crucis quod nunc facio, et per vota nostra, ipse nunc
surgat nobis dicatus Mephistophilis!*

INTRODUCTION

MAGIC CIRCLES have been depicted in popular expressions of magic and witchcraft as well as detailed with full rubrics in traditional manuals of magic such as the *Heptameron*, *Clavicula Solomonis* or *Liber Juratus*. Using narrative, visual and textural material available to us in European grimoires and manuscripts, this monograph will discuss the various forms and functions of this important apparatus employed by magicians in Western Esotericism. I intend to show the role such circles played in providing authority and protection to the operator in their dealings with the spirit world. Numerous examples reveal their use in divination and treasure finding. In addition, geometric and linguistic analysis of the form and content of these circular diagrams is augmented by explanation of the relevant traditional occult symbolism in the writings of magicians and the grimoires themselves. Interspersed among the text are several examples where I comment in depth on the arrangement of particular magic circles.

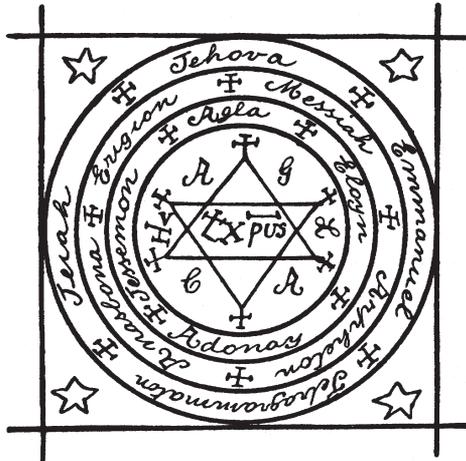


Figure 5. Grand Circle of Solomon. *Grimoire of Pope Honorius*.

Grimoires are special manuals of occult practice wherein the 'kernel of magic art' is recorded for the convenience of the initiated practitioner. Although magicians were the primary owners of these books, there were others putting them to use as well. During the early renaissance the lines between the sciences were more blurred than they are today. Thus natural philosophers, astrologers, clergy and scribal trades people were among those who sought to gain knowledge by way of these tomes. Grimoires were first put down on paper, vellum and parchment, but continued to be produced after the invention of the printing press. Spanning a period of centuries [circa 13th to 20th centuries] these books are repositories of the long lists of spirits, angels and demons, which have come to be associated with the black arts. In addition to these spiritual beings, the books also delineate the seals or sigils of the spirits, the tools necessary for the work as well as the conjurations and invocations requisite for their appearance to the operator. Our focus will be on one particularly important piece of apparatus found among the textbooks of the magician, the Magic Circle.

A cursory glance of these so-called 'necromantic manuals' of magic reveals litanies of invocations, conjurations and practical instructions accompanied by images of circles, crosses and other sigla as a visual supplement to the text. The images themselves, from which we derive our magic circle, are also composed of geometric figures, divine names, and accompanied by crosses, pentagrams, squares and triangles. In addition to these, there are also sigillic devices such as the lineal figures of angels or spirits with whom congress was intended to be shared. The combination of geometric figures with textural material tempts us to compare these diagrams with mnemonic systems developed by figures such as Giordano Bruno or Ramon Llull, but we shall confine ourselves to the ceremonial use as described by the grimoires themselves.

It is accepted that the authorship of these manuals is spurious. Historical precedents are nonexistent for the factual authorship of the Lemegeton, for instance, to King Solomon of biblical lore. The

ascription of such famous figures; Solomon, Moses, St. Cyprian or even Popes, was designed to lend authority to the information given in the book. Other books in the western esoteric tradition were also pseudonymously attributed as in the case of the *Corpus Hermeticum* being assumed to be penned by the mythical Hermes Trismegistus.

We know from the production of other grimoires and books of magic that the practice of pseudonymous authorship became a tradition all its own. Certainly the fame of Abano, engendered by his writings on medicine and astronomy, secured a place of authority to his name thereby bringing attention and influence to the *Heptameron* regardless of its actual authorship. Despite this there still is evidence in Abano's writings that certainly resonate with some of the ideas put forth in *Heptameron*, but we have historical documentation [1] that assures us that Pietro de Sclavione, the son of Costanzo de Sclavione being the actual person known as Peter Abano is not the pseudo-Abano who wrote the text under discussion. The notion that Peter Abano was a magician and necromancer was strengthened by the tales and supporting comments by such luminaries as Pico della Mirandola, Trithemius and Agrippa, the latter perhaps being the most largely responsible due to the *Heptameron* being so credited and published along with his own work. The idea that specific names can lend authority is a theme that will be discussed in more detail later on in this monograph.

The 13th century theologian William of Auvergne was particularly forthcoming about the books of magicians and sorcerers that he had encountered while studying Natural Magic in his pursuit of knowledge. In his *De Universo*, William notes that such sorcerous books described the existence of armies of spirits in the sky and particulars as to how congress with them was achieved by those who experimented with them. Mentioning the necromantic text, *The Major Circle* by name he explained that four demon kings were to be called from the four quarters of the earth, each appearing with great numbers of attendants. Writing as a bishop in Paris, William of Auvergne pronounced such works to be idolatrous and that there was no divinity in the angles of Solomon's pentagon [2].



Figure 6. Faustus in his study. Rembrandt.

While certainly a rewarding and fascinating area of research, a comprehensive history of such magical books is beyond the scope of this work [3]. Thus for the present purpose the focus will be upon magic circles as one of the principle visual elements found therein. In order to contextualize the practical use of the magic circle I will discuss the divine names and figures illustrated in European grimoires, and the means through which these figures gave the operator divine authority and protection, as well as their use in

such activities as the Invocation of Angels or Evocation of Spirits, Divination and Treasure Finding. The latter two amount to the acquisition of spiritual and material treasures, the attributes of kings and patriarchs.

Kings are meant to rule over the masses while the patriarchs were meant to mediate between lay people and the divine. In a iconographical analysis, the material and spiritual dimensions are reflected symbolically in the geometric form of the square and the circle. The analogy being extended to the rulership of the king over the kingdom and the clergy over the spiritual world. It was this dominion over spiritual and material worlds that the rituals in grimoires were set to reward a practitioner who was willing to prosecute the work. It was by virtue of divine names and figures that the operator claimed authority and this authority was only bestowed upon these things due to their relationship with God. God was the agent behind the operations the magician performed.



Figure 7. Pact with the Devil. *Compendium Maleficarum*.

Figure 7 derives from *Compendium Maleficarum* in an exposition on the details of making a pact with the Devil. As the author is

commenting from a theologically Christian position it does not hold the same weight as would comment from an initiated practitioner. Nonetheless it shows an interesting observation in its reporting that the magic circle was used in such pacts, “because a circle is the symbol of divinity, and the earth is God’s footstool; and so he wishes to persuade them that he is God of heaven and earth.”

OPERATIVE PRAXIS

What was the purpose of the magic circle and how was it employed in ceremonial magic? As an investigation into the use of magic circle will show they have been used for a substantial variety of purposes. Here a general survey of examples will serve to convey the many variations of use. Later specific purposes will be explored in more detail as in the use of the circle for theurgic operations or treasure finding.

According to Pliny [4], magic circles are sometimes inscribed with a sword around a plant when it is being gathered according to certain celestial times and under the strict observance of magical procedure. He also mentions how plants themselves are used to draw protective circles as in Heliotrope against scorpions [5] or Betony to torment snakes [6]. Roger Bacon will reaffirm this in the 13th century [7], followed by Agrippa in the 15th century: ‘It is said also in gathering of roots and herbs, we must draw three circles round about them first with a sword, then dig them up, taking heed in the mean time of a contrary wind.’ [8] Other manuscripts suggest using implements of ivory, gold, silver, the tooth of a wild boar or the horn of a bull.

In one set of ritual instructions, ascribed to Michael Scot [9], the operator is advised to observe the proper astrological times and other requisites of the ceremonies proper. The instructions include directing the operator to use blood from the bleeding heart of a white dove to inscribe the magic circle. This use of avian blood to draw circles is also to be found in the Munich Necromantic Grimoire as described by Kieckhefer [10], this time to inscribe a double circle

for the magical purpose of acquiring knowledge of all the liberal arts from the instruction of a spirit.

In another Solomonian manuscript in the British Library [11] an explanation of the ceremonial use of the magic circle is detailed. It is noted that the calling and commanding of spirits requires several considerations and apparatus. All the orations, conjurations, exorcisms and other parts of the 'experiment' are to be memorized and all the necessary components assembled together before the

ceremony proper begins. The specific days and hours of the spirits are to be observed or else they will fail to appear. A sword is used both to draw the circle on the ground as well as to draw a cross in the air just prior to performing the exorcism. By drawing the circle in the earth and a cross in the air the union of the macrocosm and microcosm is implied, for the circle being applied to the earth places the celestial upon the terrestrial whereas a cross, a symbol of earth drawn in the air suggests raising the earth to the heavens. This is the solve et coagula formula well known to alchemical adepts. Richard Kieckhefer mentions [12] the Rawlinson Manuscript as an example of the protective use of a circle in conjunction with the sword as a means of dealing with a spirit who refuses to depart. In the case cited the magician draws a circle and strikes the spirit with the sword. This suggests that a spirit can be struck with the sword. Whether this is due to the consecration of the sword or the possibility that the spirit has taken on corporeality has not been stated. In either case the concern is

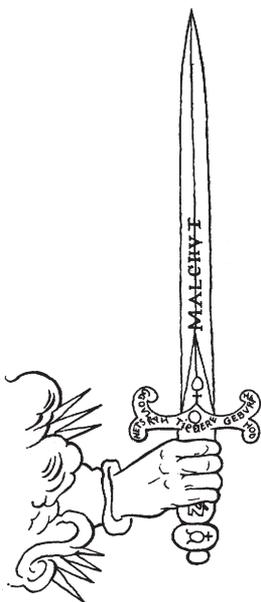


Figure 8.
Ceremonial Sword
after Eliphas Levi.

to protect the operator from the attack of an unruly spirit.

King Solomon [13] states that the operator and assistants should be purified with water and hyssop and suffumigated, or consecrated, with incense. After this the participants are to assume comfortable positions while being supported by the orations and conjurations of the officiant. Special pentacles are then employed when the spirits appear in order to show that the operators cannot be harmed and that they can command the spirits. Another method of circumscription as advised in the Red Dragon was to use the stone Ematille, otherwise known as a bloodstone. Charcoal, consecrated-water and chalk are also employed.

Here is a popular engraving of Edward Kelly and the assumed personage of John Dee himself. This is an incorrect association as the person with Kelly is Paul Waring as may be read in John Weever's *Funerall Monuments* (1631). This scene took place in Walton-le-Dale, near Preston in Lancashire. The magicians stand within the ring of the circle with its divine names surrounding them and an interior circle divided in four, containing the names of spirits and their sigils. The spirit is shown outside the circle, ghost like, the grave-filled background contributing to the notion of the necromancy depicted.

The details of the circle are not given in the original account and therefore this image represents a popular notion about the contents of magic circles. The engraving serves to illustrate the magical place of working in this case is the graveyard. The illustration also depicts the congress between the magicians safe within the circle and the evoked spirit which stands outside its boundaries. Lonely places were chosen as sites of magical ceremonies so as to avoid the scrutiny of the profane. Thus magic circles have been set out on remote seaside locations, caves, ruins, locked chambers and other places not frequented by casual passersby. Solitary locations such as seen in the illustration allowed the operators to concentrate on the ceremonies proper without fear of distraction from the outside world. A certain transmundane state was possible in such locations as they lay outside the common sphere of the uninitiated.



Figure 9. Edward Kelly and Paul Waring in an act of necromancy. Weever. *Funerall Monuments*.



Figure 10. Visible appearance. *Grand Grimoire*.

FORM AND FUNCTION OF MAGIC CIRCLES: ORIENTATION

As a diagram for supernatural praxis the magic circle is similar to veves in the Voudou tradition, mandalas in Buddhist practice or yantras in Hindu practice. Each express specific entities with which the work was intended as well as setting the boundaries of the sacralized place of working. In each of these cases a space in the material world was set aside so that congress with the spirit world could be attained. Mystical diagrams such as these were also employed in talismanic practice, sometimes worn on the body or used in ceremonial fashion during ritual praxis. Such magic circles become a place of working for the aforementioned spirit congress after purification and consecration as set down in the grimoires.

There is a sacred geometry expressed in places of divine worship. This can be seen clearly in the arrangement of Buddhist or Hindu temples as well as the architecture of European cathedrals and churches. An intentional sense of divine proportion is expressed in the arrangement of these buildings and a relationship between macrocosm and microcosm was established, again with the purpose of providing a place for humanity to have intercourse with the divine. The orientation of sacred architecture was just as specific. Traditional notions of orientation established a shared cosmology among devotees of a tradition. This may be seen in the placement of the altar in the East among Christian churches or by the bowing of the Muslim toward Mecca in Islamic practice. In the case of the magic circle these characteristics hold true, though with the added convention of being portable. These principles are no less expressed in witchcraft traditions. The circle about which the witches sabbath was attended is well known and the inviolability just as pertinent. Thus sacred ground complete with orientation could be easily constructed anywhere in the world by simply drawing a circle upon the ground.

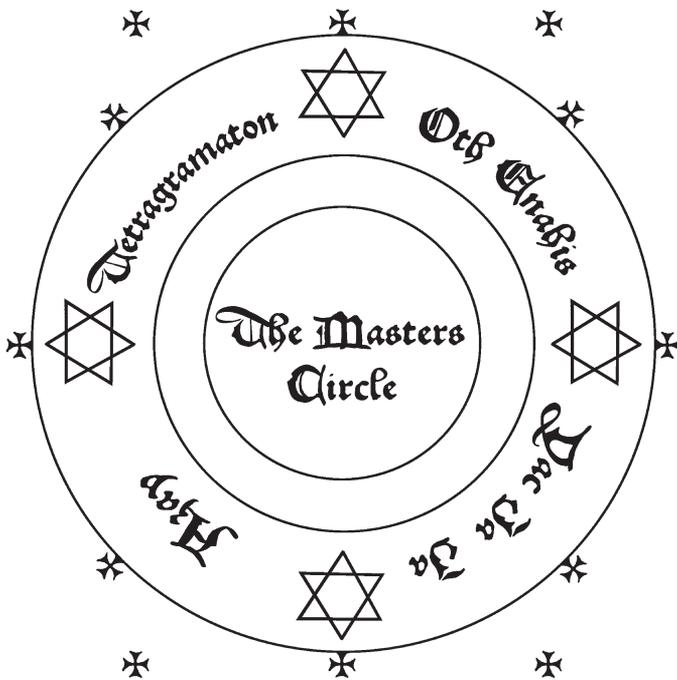


Figure 11. The Master's Circle. Solomon's *Key of Knowledge*.

The circle ranks among one of the most frequently used symbols in the western esoteric tradition. Geometry, astrology and other arts employ the circle as a map, guide or tool for the various ways in which the tradition manifests itself. It is a symbol of the totality of existence, of the divine, of the infinite, the ouroboros-like cycles of the seasons, the wandering stars and the divine order of the celestial realm. The circle also implies the center and thus the idea of radiating outward or expansion.

Cornelius Agrippa relates that geometrical figures in themselves hold power. In his explanation, Agrippa discusses the circle as embodying the unity and the number ten, the former being the 'center and circumference of all things' and the decad as showing a return to the



Figure 12. Zodiacal Chart. Athanasius Kircher.

unity from which it had its beginning. A circle, he goes on to say, is called an infinite line in which there is 'no beginning, nor end' [14] and this beginning and end is in every point thereof. Circular motion is called infinite 'not according to time but according to place' and it is by these principles that Agrippa judges the magic circle to be proper for the conjuration and binding of spirits.

Magic circles exhibit qualities related to navigation and orientation. The ancients recognized the utility of the stars in measuring both time and space, two principles important in connection with the circle of art. Ceremonial magic has employed the circle as the nexus point between the earthly realm and the divine sphere. The circle was often accompanied by other familiar geometric figures such as the

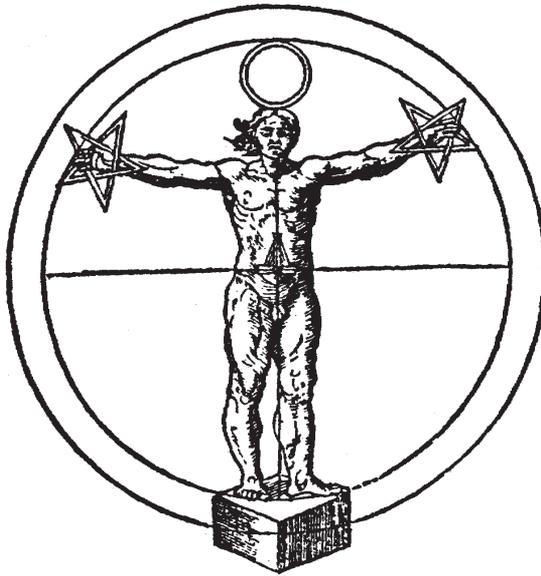


Figure 13. Man in Circle wielding pentagrams. Agrippa. *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*.

Triangle, the Square and the Pentagram. The circle itself derives from the rotation of two points [as reflected in the symbol of Sol = ☉]. The sun shares correspondence with the heart and thus the center, of both the microcosmic vehicle and the heavenly bodies. This is also significant from an astrological point of view. Astrology and astronomy led to the dividing up of the circle into various degrees or angles, which were in turn attributed to seasons or stellar quadrants. These were the lines of demarcation that astronomers used, with the help of the sun and moon, to develop the means of measuring time and a series of successive moments.

Tractatus de sphaera [15] tells us that the word 'zodiac' derives from the Greek root 'zoe' (*life*), or perhaps zodias (Greek; *animal*). The text also offers a Latin derivative of the zodiac being called 'signifer'

due to bearing or dividing itself up by the signs. The twelve signs of the zodiac divide the circle of stars up into 12 divisions of 30-degree arcs. According to astronomers each degree is divided up into 60 minutes, each minute 60 seconds etc. These designations allowed for time and space to be measured, recorded and with calculation past or future astral events divined.

There are several instances where the conjunction of the square and the circle are evident in such figures. The circle in and of itself implies eternity, without beginning or end, whereas the square delineates the divisions of the quadrants into the well known directions East, West, North and South. The cardinal directions were important in cases where the operator had to face the quadrant that fell under the spirit's jurisdiction. This places the center of the circle in the center of the universe as well as giving the square the meaning of the manifest world or kingdom. In this scheme the microcosmic and macrocosmic meet in the magic circle placing the operator in a position, which connects the two worlds. There may be a relationship between this quadrangular arrangement and some traditional observance of the crossroads as an ideal ritual site. Indeed sometimes the square is replaced with a cross, which is in keeping with the quartering thereof.

The symbol of the circle and cross conjoined also takes the form of the sign for the planet Venus = ♀. As Venus is seen before dawn and after, it has been known as the Light Bringer or Morning Star, the former being one of the epithets of Lucifer. This planetary body has a particularly significant orbit as viewed from earth. During an eight year cycle Venus' orbital course forms a precise pentagram. In order for these five-fold positions to form the pentagram the point of measurement is from Morning Star to Morning Star, whereas measuring from Evening Star to Morning Star one would arrive at a pentagon. Venus can only be seen from the earth just after sunset in the evening [Evening Star] or just after Dawn in the morning [Morning Star]. Venus is visible as the Evening Star over the course of 247 days after which it comes too close to the sun to be seen with

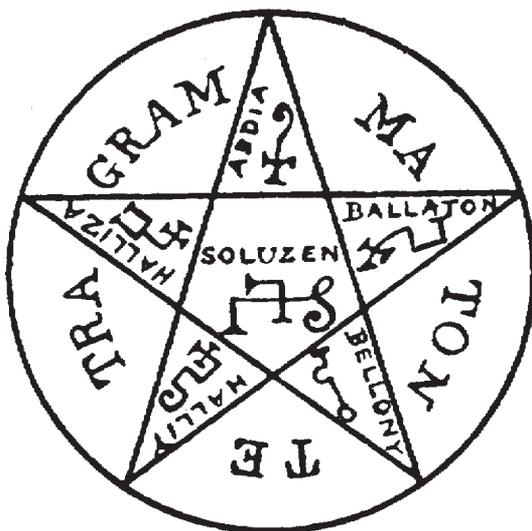


Figure 14. Seal of Solomon. *Göetia*.

the naked eye. After 14 days of invisibility, Venus moves into the Morning Star position during the remaining course of 245 days until again being occulted by the light of the sun.

The pentagram itself is a significant symbol of occult power, but in the göetic corpus its significance is underscored by the specific number of spirits which are urged into obeisance thereof. Solomon possessed a magic ring which he used to constrain the spirits to build his temple after which they were sealed within a vessel of brass. The 72 spirits shut up in the vessel of brass by Solomon correspond with the 72 degree angle of a pentagram.

Such numerical and geometrical forms permeate the grimoires, sometimes explicating symbolic reference to specific occult forces or to situate such powers in a positional sense. With the center of the circle as a starting point, orientation can take on precise meaning in the context of the ritual.

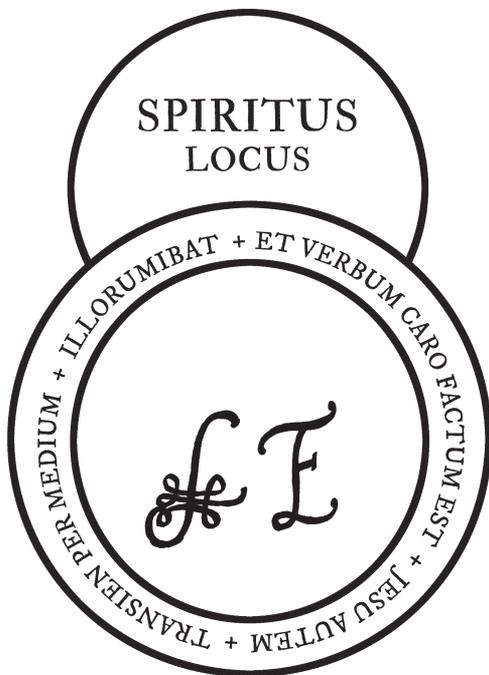


Figure 15. Circle showing the area set out for the spirit. *Le Grimoire du Pape Honorius*.

While the center of the circle was implicitly the place of the practicing magician, the position of the spirits lay outside the circle. Sometimes the spirit was evoked to the edge of the circle, into a crystal or bowl of water or the triangle of art.

The circle shown above is from *Grimoire du Pape Honorius*; avec un recueil des plus grands secrets published in Rome 1800. Here we see that the 'Spiritus Locus' or place for the spirits while not within a triangle still remains outside the circle itself. The notion of where the spirit should appear recalls the aforementioned idea of orientation and in ceremonial parlance touches on the distinction between invocation and evocation. In some circles [no pun intended] this

distinction lies in the orientation of the spirit being worked with. Plato distinguished between good daemons and evil daemons [16] which were later, thought of as angels be they celestial or fallen.

In discussing where a spirit may take residence it serves us to mention that within the operations of witchcraft the skull has acted as the proper vessel. Cranial implementation is nothing new in religious traditions, it may be found among the practices of Voudou, Buddhism, Christianity with it's reliquary praxis, and the various indigenous traditions involving ancestor worship. As a vessel of power the skull provides a point of congress between the living and the spirit worlds. Aristotle felt that the seat of the soul was in the heart, but Plato disputes this and places it in the head. Skulls have a talismanic quality in that they are the repository of the knowledge and power of the being whom it belonged to as well as acting as vessels for the use of spirit congress. The circular aperture found in trepanned skulls served as a portal of egress and ingress as well.

Figure 16.
Skull in the
center of a
circle.
Detail from
16th century
engraving by
Jasper Isaac.

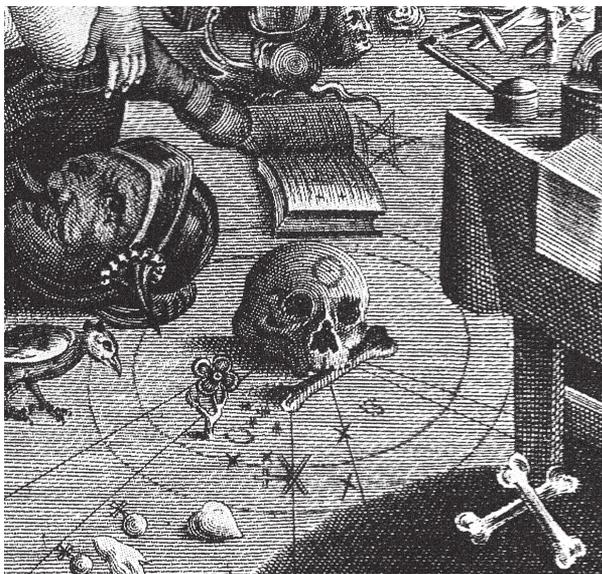




Figure 17. The Triangle of Arte.

Triangulation correlates with these navigational sciences since it is a means whereby a point in space may be fixed. A manuscript in the British Museum [17] shows a magic circle accompanied by the triangle of art. Just above the image of the triangle we read; ‘The triangle that Salomon Commanded the Disobediant Spirits Into; it is to be Made 2 foot off from the Circle and 3 foot over.’ And just below the triangle; ‘Note this [triangle] is to be Placed upon that Cost the Spirit Belongeth; &c - - observe the [moon] in working.&c.’ If Joseph Peterson’s reading [18] of ‘Cost’ as ‘coast’ is correct, and I believe it is, it would suggest that the triangle was to be placed in the specific direction over which the spirit is held to have dominion over or correspondence therewith. Such a navigational orientation is reflected in the compass-rose circle found among the seals of the *Göetia*.

In contrast the *Lemegeton Clavicula Salomonis* directs the exorcist to command the spirits into the triangle with a hazel stave with the



Figure 19. Solomon's Brazen Vessel. *Göetia*.

the spirits to appear outside the circle or as an alternative within a 'crystal stone' as may be seen in the Conjurations to the 'Wandering Princes' and the 'princes that Govern the points of the compass.' This is also the case in the conjuration 'To the Dukes that governeth the Point of the Compass with their Prince.'

The grimoire *Liber Particularis*, ascribed to Michael Scot [22], recommends that 'When spirits of the air are to be invoked, their invoker should stand within a circle in a place duly required by his art and utter the names of the spirits with a firm face and loud voice, while holding a book or naked sword in his hand.' The same text also advises that occasionally the astrolabe is used in invoking evil spirits. In traditional witchcraft the circle of art is explicitly called the compass round and is in accord with the foregoing principles. Such navigational features demonstrate the importance of orientation and position in the ritual use of the magic circle.

RAISING THE CASTLE: CONSTRUCTION OF THE CIRCLE

A magic circle may take several forms, from that of a simple circle drawn in chalk to a full goetic circle of arte resplendent with the requisite names, sigils, figures, and other details permanently set in the floor found in well appointed temples of the mysteries. I will be using the circle of art as described in the Heptameron as an exemplar in order to explain the intricacies of such circle construction in ceremonial magic. Thus I quote in full:

¶Heptameron:

Of the Circle, and the composition thereof.

The form of Circles is not alwaies one and the same; but useth to be changed, according to the order of the Spirits that are to be called, their places, times, daies and hours. For in making a Circle, it ought to be considered in what time of the year, what day, and what hour; that you make the Circle; what Spirits you would call, to what Star and Region they do belong, and what functions they have.

Therefore let there be made three Circles of the latitude of nine foot, and let them be distant one from the another a hands breadth; and in the middle Circle, first, write the name of the hour wherein you do the work. In the second place, Write the name of the Angel of the hour. In the third place, the Sigil of the Angel of the hour. Fourthly, The name of the Angel that ruleth that day wherein you do the work, and the names of his ministers. In the fifth place, The name of the present time. Sixthly, The name of the Spirits ruling in that part of time, and their Presidents. Seventhly, The name of the head of the Signe ruling in that part of the time wherein you work. Eighthly, The name of the earth, according to that part of the time wherein you work. Ninthly, and for the compleating of the middle Circle, Write the name of the Sun and of the Moon, according to the said rule of time; for as the time is changed,

so the names are to be altered. And in the outermost Circle, let there be drawn in the four Angles, the names of the presidential Angels of the Air, that day wherein you would do this work; to wit, the name of the King and his three Ministers. Without the Circle, in four Angles, let Pentagones be made. In the inner Circle let there be written four divine names with crosses interposed in the middle of the Circle; to wit, towards the East let there be written Alpha, and towards the West let there be written Omega; and let a cross divide the middle of the Circle. When the Circle is thus finished, according to the rule now before written, you shall proceed.



Figure 22. Circle for the first hour of the Lord's day, in Spring-time. Heptameron of Peter Abano.

Now we shall look at the various ways in which these circles were constructed. The description from the Heptameron above stipulates that the selection of names in the construction of the circle depend upon the spirit to be called as well as the correct time associated with the spirit. This diagram (Figure 22) of a magic circle is the most complex among several other wood engraved figures in the grimoire wherein we read in the opening paragraph that circles; 'are certain fortresses to defend the operators safe from the evil Spirits'. Thus the circle is offered as sure protection against malevolent spirits due to 'the greatest power' which is attributed thereunto.

The times and places associated with spirits derive from an old tradition of correspondences associated with plants, stones, colors, days of the week, humors, elements, planets and stars. All things had their correspondence that placed them in their specific order of things. Such vincula, or links showed how certain influences could be brought to bear through specific materials. Iron, being a metal attributed to Mars was held to be 'linked' to the planet and served as a natural medium for its influence. Ceremonial magic took full advantage of this doctrine by aligning as many of the links together as possible. Thus in order to augment the iron used in the sample Mars rite just mentioned, a magician could add dragons blood incense, red vestments, and an invocation unto Samael. This serves to fill all the senses, both physical and subtle, with the one force in which one intended to invoke. The traditional correspondences which were passed down through oral traditions or as recorded in grimoires, eventually were developed into contemporary reference materials, Aleister Crowley's 777 perhaps being the most well known example.

Henry Cornelius Agrippa elaborates on the symbolism of the circle while sustaining the stated use of the circle in dealing with evil spirits: 'Geometrical figures also arising from numbers, are conceived to be of no less power. Of these first of all, a circle doth answer to unity, and the number ten; for unity is the center and circumference of all things; and the number ten being heaped together returns

unto a unity from whence it had its beginning, being the end, and complement of all numbers. A circle is called an infinite line in which there is no terminus a quo nor terminus ad quem, (no beginning, nor end) whose beginning and end is in every point, whence also a circular motion is called infinite, not according to time but according to place; hence a circular being the largest and perfectest of all is judged to be most fit for bindings and conjurations; whence they who adjure evil spirits are wont to environ themselves about with a circle.' [24]

As if to reflect this notion of 'an infinite line' the circle from the Heptameron features in its center 'Alpha et Omega', a biblical reference to 'I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.' [25] Agrippa goes on to specify that such an infinity exists not according to time but according to place. As we will see in our analysis of the circle in the Heptameron, the times represented in the circle change according to the spirit with which congress is sought. Meanwhile the place, being the form of the circle itself, remains constant regardless of the time indicated therein.

While the circle is the main design there are also a series of crosses and five-sided 'pentagones' are included in its makeup. In some manuscripts, notably Sloane 2731, the pentagons in question were meant for the placement of candles with which light was provided for the circle. Meanwhile the figure of the cross features as the dividing factor which delineates the four quarters of the circle and even the terrestrial quadrants without it. The directions for the construction of the circle indicate; 'Alpha' is to be written in the East and so the orientation of our circle has been established. But if we are to begin (alpha) in the East and end in the West (omega) we find this significant from an astrological point of view, for the sun rises at the break of day in the East and brings the day to a close at night while setting in the West.

Thus formed a Magic Circle, with its divine names and figures of virtues, angels and spirits of the creator, allows the magician who

stands in its center to be both microcosm and macrocosm. The center of the circle is clearly the source-point of divinity. The Greek letters Alpha and Omega literally embody the principle of first and last and were considered to refer to an eternity without beginning or end and thus form their own sort of circle.

At left is a page from the Driscoll edition of the *Sworn Book of Honorius* depicting the 'Circle for the invocation of Satquiel on a thursday in the 8th month in the Fall'. In the 'Versicle' accompanying this circle direct reference to God is made, invoking divine virtue and power, demanding God's praise and commanding the spirits to give obedience to God. The circle is of the type found in Abano and pictured in Figure 15. The details of the outer circles are specified for the exact time of the working from an astrological perspective. The Angel Satquiel was associated with Thursday and thus the operation would take place on that day.

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
Michaëel	Gabriel	Camael	Raphaël	Sachiel	Anaël	Caffiel
☉ ♀	☾ ☿	♂ ♃	♁ ♄	♃ ♀	♁ ♃	♁ ♃
<small>names of the 4 Heavens</small>	<small>names of the 1 Heaven</small>	<small>names of the 5 Heavens</small>	<small>names of the 8 Heavens</small>	<small>names of the 6 Heavens</small>	<small>names of the 3 Heavens</small>	<small>16 Angels ruling above the 6 Heavens</small>
Machen.	Shamain.	Machon.	Raquie.	Zebul.	Sagun.	

Figure 24. Seven Planetary Powers. Barrett. *Magus*.

This is a table from Francis Barrett's *Magus*. It shows the days of the week, the names of the archangels and their sigils along with their corresponding astrological attributes. Similar tables of spirits may be seen in the grimoires, some embracing the zodiacal signs and deacons or other astrological positions.



Figure 25. Circle of
Arte. *Hollenzwang*

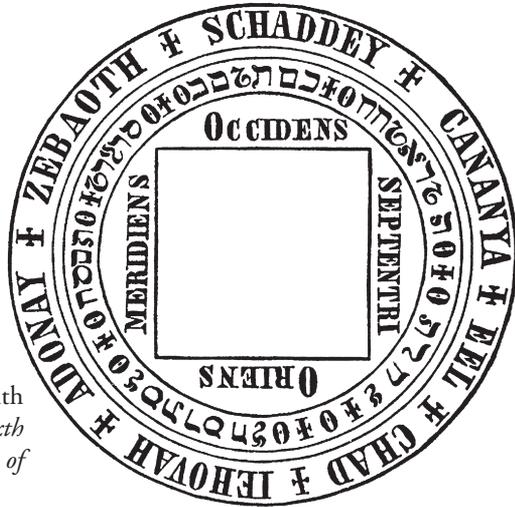


Figure 26. Circle with
central square. *Sixth
and Seventh Books of
Moses.*

On the left hand page; Magic Circles from the *Hollenzwang* and the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* showing the quaternary marked by lines and crosses in the one case and clearly indicated around the square in the other.

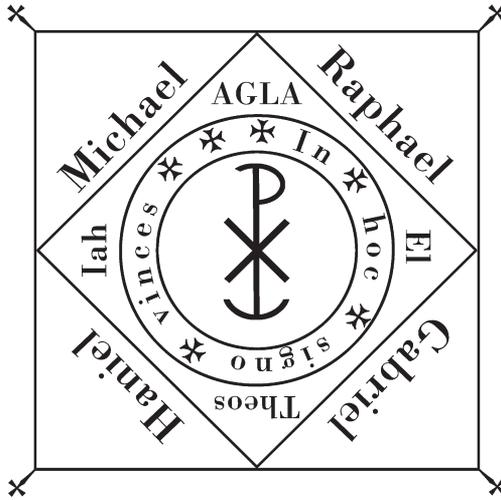


Figure 27. Circle with monogram. *Le Grimoire du Pape Honorius*.

Quarters of the Universe

“I heard my father say so precisely: Ath (Aleph Tav) [26] includes the range of Sabbath. My Sabbaths are a circle with a square inscribed within.” [...] “My sanctuary you are to hold in awe is the point standing in the center, which one should fear more than anything, for its punishment is death, as is written: Those who profane it, shall surely be put to death. (EX 31:14) Who are those who profane it? Whoever enter the hollow of the circle and the square – the site where that point rests – and damages it shall surely be put to death. So it is written: You are to hold in awe. That point is called I, and on it rests that high concealed one, unrevealed. This is YHVH, and all is one.” [27]

As we have pointed out previously we can see a pattern among the grimoires wherein the circle is accompanied by a square or central cross. The emphasis on the quarters by the use of a central cross or the directional attributions may be due to contemporary views regarding astrology. The combination of the celestial sphere juxtaposed to the horizon of the earthly directions allowed early astronomers the framework with which to study the motions of the stars. Like those given here there are many examples in the grimoire literature where the importance of astrological aspects and special times are given as requisite for the success of a given operation. The fourfold aspect within the circles clearly relate to the divisions of the terrestrial world, while the circles themselves refer to the celestial sphere. As such the names of the times and planetary spirits are found circling the earth like the stars above the firmament.

TABLE OF QUADRANGLES

Oriens	East	Raphael	Air
Meridies	South	Michael	Fire
Occidens	West	Gabriel	Water
Septentrio	North	Auriel	Earth

The four quarters make their appearance in early greco-egyptian ritual wherein the operator would pour powders or liquids in opening ceremonial rites [28]. Walking to each of these quarters in turn of course shows a circle in the operator's path. The crossroads were especially important in witchcraft traditions as well. Whenever the four directions are expressed the center becomes implicit. In the contemporary equivalent of such opening rites, the Golden Dawn style Pentagram Ritual emphasizes the quarters by activating the defensive pentagrams by vibrating divine names in each quadrant. Once these warding (or in some cases invoking) seals are established the archangels of the quarters are invoked by name. Other traditions employ other beings and associate different elemental powers to each direction.

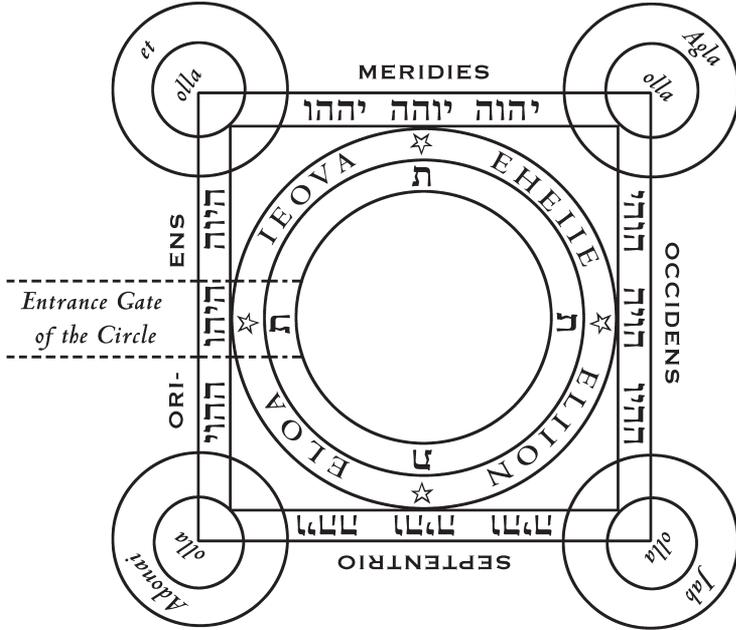


Figure 29. Grand Circle of Arte showing the twelve banners and entrance gate.

One of the ways the quarters were used was to attribute an aspect of God to each of them. Therefore the four-lettered name of the Tetragrammaton was divided into the four directions as can be seen in many circles. Some kabbalistic traditions use permutations of the divine name which renders 12 variations called the Twelve Banners of the Holy Name [29]. These in turn are related to the signs of the Zodiac and thus the elementary attributions are implied to relate to the appropriate quarter (see Figure 30). As further points of interest on Figure 29 I should like to note the 'Entrance Gate of the Circle' shown in the figure. This was one of the means whereby the operator would enter and depart the circle, often utilizing a ritual gesture or perhaps a word of power to aid in the sealing of the circle once

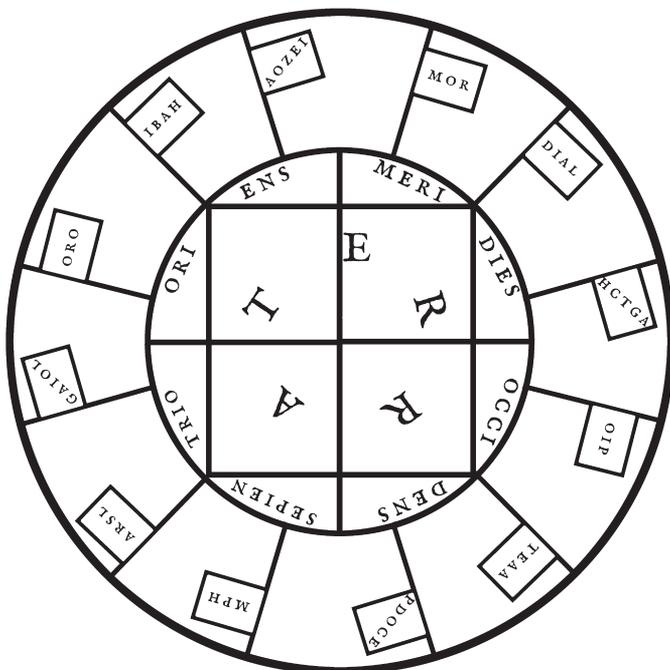


Figure 30. The Great Circle of the Quarters. After John Dee.

passage was effected. In addition the reader may have noted that the circle in the figure lacks the usual crosses found to be a common part of the make up of magic circles. However in this example of the four Hebrew letters; Tav, literally meaning ‘cross’ serves in this same capacity. One of the circles from John Dee’s *Heptarchia Mysticae* displays a variant of this twelve-fold pattern (see Figure 30).

In the Sabbatic grimoire *Azōetia* this four-fold pattern is expanded into the Octriga by including the cross-quarters as may be seen in the Blood-Acre: Circle-Seal of the Sacred Alphabet [30].

DIVINE NAMES AND PENTACLES AUTHORITY AND PROTECTION

“. . . and in the circuit of the maiesty, let the names of the ineffable be written and of ye Angells.”

- *The Clavicle of Solomon.*

The use of names in magic reaches far into the recesses of antiquity and clearly plays a role in the efficacy of the magic circle while in use. The grimoires exhibit a strong kabbalistic influence in this regard, not only due to the power accepted as implicit in divine names, but also in the enumeration thereof. Names and numbers are classificatory ciphers which individualize, or isolate a specific type of force or aspect of spiritual emanation. Names hold authority due to their rank in association, thus in the case of a divine name; that particular deific force is represented, whereas the name of a king or patriarch lends its authority due to the name bearer's elevated status be it material or spiritual. This dual relationship between the heaven and earth is implicit in the establishment of a magic circle.

Divine names or words of power offered the operator the assurances of God's assistance for the effects of these words were accepted as agents of the divine. Indeed kabbalistic texts such as the *Sepher Yetzirah* put forth the idea that the universe was created with the letters of the alphabet and that these letters could in turn be used to bring about changes in nature [31]. The Hebrew language plays a significant role in many grimoires as do the sephiroth, souls and angels of the Kabbalah. Among the most significant of these texts is the *Book of Enoch* and *Sepher Raziel*. It is no surprise then that Kabbalistic techniques would form a part in magical operations given their mutual field of experiences with angels, divine names and the alteration of nature through these agencies. The idea that nature could be affected in such a manner also followed a Kabbalistic doctrine, that of the divine world and its emanations. In the words

of Joseph Dan; “. . . Hebrew scriptures were regarded as written in a divine language which preceded creation . . . it was part of the infinite divine wisdom, rather than a means for human communication, and therefore its meaning could never be exhausted.” [32]

Certainly the book, with which these ideas had the most influence on the grimoire tradition is Agrippa’s *De Occulta Philosophia libri tres* (1533), which presented kabbalah as a magical art dealing with numerology and divine names as applied to the Renaissance tradition of correspondences. This book played a large role in the erroneous idea that kabbalah is an amalgamation of witchcraft, numerology and magic, an idea which continued into the 20th century. Indeed the kabbalah we are discussing is not traditional orthodox Judaic kabbalah, but the tradition that was employed by a humanist reading of scriptural material through kabbalistic means. This use of a kabbalistic hermeneutic led the humanists away from the strict Judaic doctrines and consequently into Christian kabbalistic speculation.

As we have seen in the example of the spurious authorship of the grimoires, names are given over to the idea of authority, and if the names of famous patriarchs are to be given any due, how much the more so was given to the divine names employed in the manuscripts themselves. In kabbalistic tradition these names represent the various aspects of divinity itself, each having dominion over its respective part of the divine realm. Then there are the names of angels, daemons, spirits, and elementals. The knowledge of such names grants power over such beings. Like a veritable onomasticon [33], the hierarchy of the divine world was laid out for use in ceremonial or divine magic. Theurgy, as it is sometimes referred to, is divine in the sense that the names and attributes of God are employed in ritual instructions very much akin to ecclesiastical liturgies and prayer manuals [34].

Traditional angelologies and demonologies provide the names of the spirits who presided over specific times be they hours, days, seasons, or particular astrological times. These names are integral aspects of

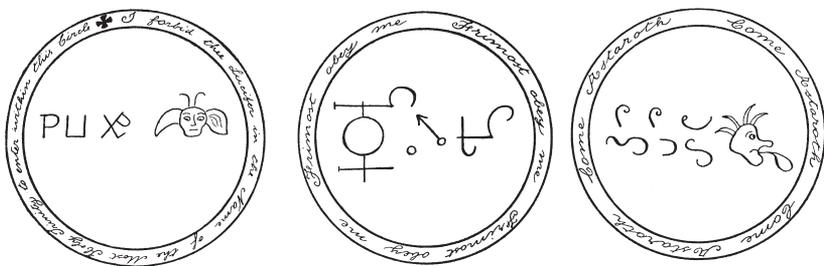


Figure 31. Three circles for commanding spirits. *Grimoire of Honorius*.

the circles themselves. Not only do such names indicate the particular time of the working but they also bring those rulers of the moment into play by their use. Thus the authority of the ruling spirit is set as an additional ward for the operator, who is acknowledging and allying with that spirit in order to carry out the ceremony.

The circles appearing in Figure 32 are taken from the *Grimoire of Honorius* and show 3 of the 7 spirits to be conjured during the successive days of the week. The first circle for Monday clearly reads: ‘+ I forbid thee Lucifer in the Name of the Most Holy Trinity to enter within this Circle’ meanwhile the second and third circles (Tuesday and Wednesday respectively) contain text which are of the nature of commands, as in: ‘Frimost Obey me’ and ‘Come Asteroth’.

Names and seals empower the circle of art as is indicated by the conjurations employed in order to command the spirits to appear. The magician invokes divine names, angelic powers and utilizes crosses or other sigla during the operation to support the summoning. These various aspects of divinity are invoked as a ‘chain of being’ which lends the magician authority by way of ‘chain of command’. This is reflected plainly in the kabbalistic doctrine of emanation as well as the Hermetic principle of the microcosm being reflected by the macrocosm. Incense, stones or other substances aligned with the spirits were also employed in such conjurations.

Often the divine authority sought by the Magician was embodied

in smaller magic circles known as pentacles. These devices and seals were made and consecrated according to strict astrological and ceremonial instructions and were employed visually to command the spirits into obedience. Again it was the Divine Names found on such seals that the magician laid claim to his authority.

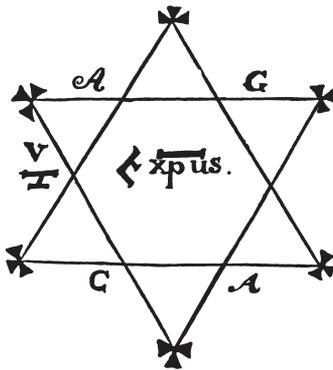


Figure 32. Shield of Solomon.
Heptameron.

The Hermetic above-below emphasis mentioned above is reflected in the Shield of Solomon, one of the principle pentacles utilized in ceremonial work. The Shield being a hexagram, is composed of two triangles, one upright, the other averse. Together the conjoined triangles represent the union of opposites such as fire and water as well as the union of the microcosm with the macrocosm.

Long lists of divine names and words of Power, sometimes called Barbarous Words of Power, were recited in the form of litanies. In the Clavicle of Solomon revealed to Ptolemy we find the instruction that once the magician had recited all these names with the utmost devotion one was advised: “*Heare let the maiesty of god cum in.*” The implication is that by calling upon the hierarchy of divine names, the operator was invoking those specific aspects of God’s holy power and focusing it into the magic circle and thus bringing it into the person therein. In the Sworn Book of Honorius this process culminated in the Beatific Vision, or coming face to face with God. The grimoires admonish any would be experimenters to refrain from using any of the Holy pentacles until this divine blessing was given.

In a circumstance wherein the circulators [35] are confronted with terrible and frightful visions generated by the spirits, it is advised that they avert their eyes or even cover them with their vestments. The master of the ceremony should comfort the assistants with a confident voice and should the spirits continue with their furies, he should raise his voice with strength and command the spirits to cease in their noises. The pentacles should be uncovered and shown to the spirits on all sides and this coupled with the charge of the conjuror. The spirits should obey and quiet down so as to hear the request of the presiding magician. These pentacles are the authority, along with the divine names, which give the operator the means to control the spirits.

Protection is perhaps the most well known attributes of the circle of arte, no doubt due to the serious and dangerous nature of calling spirits to visible appearance. They are often referred to as fortresses or castles, which are themselves defensive military positions but also holding the significance as seats of power in the kingdom. This martial symbolism is supported by the use of the pentagram and the sword in connection with the circle, both symbols of Mars. While this hostile positioning has been questioned by those who have less conflictive approaches to spirit communication, it should be pointed out that a fortress is merely in place to effect protection in times of necessity. Pacts between magician and spirit may reduce the amount of martial rhetoric in practice but vigilance should never be ignored.

The engraving from Fludd on the next page conveys the idea of angelic protection from the four directions as well as showering the divinity of the tetragrammaton upon the kneeling figure. Faith in the archangels providing safety to the operator has survived even in modern times as explained in the reference to the Pentagram Ritual earlier.

The 'Rubric of exorsization' in the Key of Solomon explains how the operator was to gain the divine protection from and authority over the spirits soon to be conjured. Thus the operator was to face the four directions in their turn and repeat the following as translated

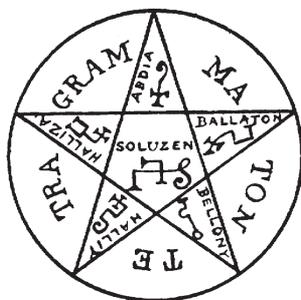


Figure 34. Seal of Solomon. *Göetia*.

“These pentacles and ineffable names should be glorified with great honor and beloued and ought to be seene by noe meanes, but with great deuotion, for they be holynes of all holynes, for the defence of the body and the soale [soul].” – The Clavicle of Solomon according to Ptolemy the Grecian.

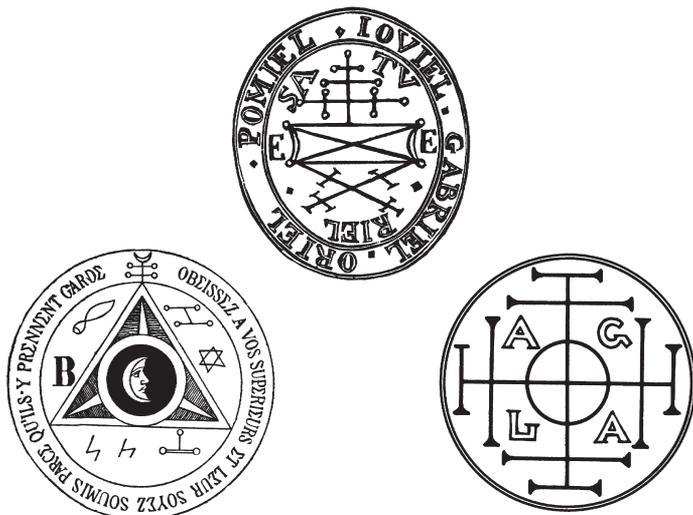


Figure 35. Talisman of Arbatel. Arbatel of Magick.

Figure 36. Pentacle. Grimoire of Pope Honorius.

Figure 37. AGLA seal. Lehner. Symbols Signs and Signets.

Talisman of Arbatel, Pentacle from the *Grimoire of Pope Honorius* and AGLA seal [36] each serve as pentacles of art. John Dee used the AGLA seal on the reverse side of the waxen *Sigillum Dei Aemeth* [37] whereupon his shew stone was set. Even the legs of his ‘holy table’ were placed upon these inscribed disks. We see similar examples in the *Almadel* and later in Francis Barrett’s *Magus*. This ‘sealing’ of the Holy Table would appear to be undertaken in order to secure the place of working. Placing the table and crystal upon these Seals of God is suggestive of the idea of divine authority as the foundation of these works. To a scholar magician such as Dee the implication was paramount and this was reflected in his prayerful orations prior to the actual scrying. Other devices act similarly to the triangle of arte and are employed as boundaries around the scrying crystal, bowl of water or black mirror wherein the evoked spirits are to appear.

The artful goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini was given pentacles to use as a measure against spirits by the necromancer presiding over the ceremony. Such pentacles were used in conjunction with noxious incenses such as asafetida or sulphur. Cellini employed a young boy as the seer during their evocation in the Coliseum.



Figure 38.

The British Library holds a manuscript [38] showing another such circle with the kabalistic acrostic: *Kadosh Ieve Sabaoth* Holy is the God of Hosts (Figure 38).

Of course the pentacles of Solomon are by now quite well known in western esotericism and the diverse and potent powers ascribed to them is delineated in detail in the manuscript. Accordingly they give succor to the bearer and

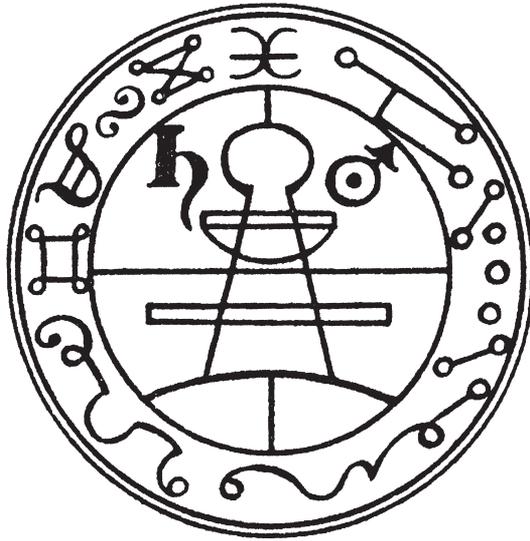


Figure 39. Secret Seal of Solomon. *Göetia*.

giveth the power to constrain the spirits, are good against perils, proof against all enemies be they visible or invisible. They provide protection against venom and poison, against fear and stormy weather, also to provide sure and safe protection everywhere and at all times. They provide safety in watching, sleeping, eating and drinking. Also safety whether moving or standing still, while conducting business, in battle, and they make one invincible in every matter and forbid others to withstand the possessor. In addition, again according the same manuscript, they give grace and victory with both lovers and enemies, also by their virtue fires may be quenched, water may be halted in it's flow, indeed all creatures will fear those who employ these pentacles and they will be delivered from all perils of heaven, earth and the infernal regions.

The Secret Seal of Solomon is mentioned in the *Göetia* as the means by which Solomon commanded the spirits into the Vessel of Brass and with which he did seal them up therewith. According to the text it is to be made on a Saturday or a Tuesday and we can see the symbols for the planets (Saturn and Mars) whose domain these days

correspond.

In the *Clavicula Solomonis attributed to Ptolemy the Grecian* the operator is advised to inform the assistants not to leave the circle under any circumstances even if under threat of danger or by the seduction of wonders. “And when they be in the circles ordayned, let the Mr injoyne such precepts to his scholers, that they moove not from there places ordayned by any occasions, if they should se great marvayles, if they should see mountaynes and towres of fyer fallinge upon them, if they should see there father and mother slayne, if they should see the world almost at an end for any adversity that they see, let them not move, for all this that we have sayd cannot hurt them.” Again we see from the text that a distinct purpose of the magic circle is to protect those within its bounds.

With the recognition of names as a potent factor in evocation due to their alleged authority, it may come as a surprise to many that apparently incomprehensible incantations are also utilized with powerful effect. Such gibberish [39] or confused language has been referred to as *Barbarous Words of Power* owing to their non-linear presence. In seeking to speak with the spirit of the dead in Hades, Menippus refers to such barbarous words in hearing the invocations of Mithrobarzanes, a Chaldean Magi he asked to assist him, whose formula was difficult to catch as “he gabbled indistinctly, like bad heralds at the Games; but he appeared to be invoking spirits.” All this took place in a circle the white bearded magician had drawn around Menippus [40]. These barbarous words of power are common among grimoires and traditional practitioners warn that the operator should not deviate from their confused form. The sound of a word holds distinction due to its specific form. The divine names provide potency in their regulated forms, forms that are typically clear in their meaning. In the case of barbarous words of power a similar sound function may be at play. The jumbled series of sounds that are generated with barbarous words create an atmosphere of ‘otherness’, some may say trance, that opens the operator to subtler perceptions that may be necessary to establish congress with the supernatural world.

DIVINATION and TREASURE FINDING

Divination being a broad subject, I here include examples of the use of magic circles in the context of gathering information, divining future events or inquiries presented to angels, demons or other daemonic beings for the purpose of seeking more knowledge on any subject. Virtually any subject may be divined, though often the recovery of stolen goods or perhaps discovery of the thief was a more common practice aside from the very popular seeking of knowledge. We have mentioned the renaissance artist Benvenuto Cellini elsewhere in this monograph in connection with the protective use of pantacles, but it shall serve us to point out that Cellini's participation within the magic circle was to divine information concerning a love interest in his life. Thus the necromancer, after elaborate circumscription of arcana in the form of the circle, called the spirits in order to answer the inquiry of the artist. The search for knowledge be it worldly or spiritual falls under the jurisdiction of divinatory arts. The grimoires are replete with examples. For example in the Göetia we have several spirits who can offer the operator information concerning people and places in the past, present or future.

Chart of the **Göetic Demons**

VASAGO 3.....	
MARBAS 5.....	
AMON 7.....	
BARBATOS 8.....	
PAIMON 9.....	
GUSOIN 11.....	
ELIGOS 15.....	
BOTIS 17.....	
PURSON 20.....	
IPOS 22.....	
BERITH 28.....	
GLASYALABOLAS 25.....	
ASTAROTH 29.....	
GAAP 33.....	
FURFUR 34.....	
MARCHOSIAS 35.....	
RAUM 40.....	
VINE 45.....	
VUALL 47.....	
BALAM 51.....	
OROBAS 55.....	
GREMORY 56.....	
HAURES 64.....	



- who specifically hold jurisdiction over the acquisition of knowledge or divinatory arts things past, present and yet to come.

- Declares things Past & Future; Discovers the Hidden & lost.
- Reveals and secret or hidden thing.
- Reveals things, past, present & future.
- Knows things past, present & future.
- All arts and sciences . . . hidden things.
- Reveals things past, present & future; answers all questions.
- Discovers hidden things, Knows future things.
- Reveals things past, present & future.
- Reveals things past, present & future. Answers truly things secret or divine.
- Knows things past & future.
- Reveals things past, present & to come.†
- Teaches all things past, present & future.
- Gives true answers, reveals things past, present & future and all secrets.
- Reveals things past, present & future.
- Never speaks truly unless in the Triangle, answers things secret and divine.
- Gives true answers to all questions.
- Reveals things past, present & future.
- Discovers things hidden, witches and things past present and future.
- Reveals things past, present & future.
- Reveals things past, present & to come.
- Reveals things past, present & to come.
- Reveals things past, present & to come.
- True answers concerning things past, present & to come when in the Triangle.

† According to Coulton's translation in *Life in the Middle Ages* this demon was consulted in Paris 1323 by monks who stood in a circle made of the skin of a cat in order to recover their stolen coin.



Figure 40. Ceremonial equipment for scrying with a crystal as depicted in Francis Barrett's *Magus*. Three magic circles are employed here along with the wand, candles and tripod wherein the incense is to be burned.

Divinatory Dreams

In the *Sworn Book of Honorius* we read about a magic circle being drawn in moist ashes which have been strewn around a couch or bed. The 100 names of God are inscribed around the circle and after purification and consecration with water and incense the exorcist was to fall asleep upon the place of repose in order to receive a vision of the 'celestial palace, and the majesty of god in his glory, and the 9 orders of angels, and the company of all blessed spirits.' The grimoire stresses the necessity of purity for any of the operations to have any effect. Oneiric revelation brought on by sleeping in magic circles or employing them prior to sleep is found in other grimoires as well. In the Munich Handbook for instance the operator is instructed to write divine names and those of the angels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael in a double-banded circle and to recite the formula over it in order 'to ensure it is not lost to oblivion.' [41] After the conjurations are repeated three times the circle is placed beneath the right ear of the magician when retiring to the sleep wherein the angels would appear to provide the requisite information.

Divinatory Scrying

We have famous accounts of scrying in the personages of John Dee and Edward Kelly, who had conversations with angelic beings through a crystal sphere or obsidian mirror. Another well known instance of scrying attends the prophecies of Nostradamus, who used a circular bowl of water as his apparatus. Other examples show that after the circle was drawn a child usually a boy would act as the medium or scryer for the diviner. Invocations were spoken aloud and questions put to the child who gazed in the mirror, crystal, bowl of water and even ink held in the palm of the hand. It was the reflective surface of these artifices that allowed the viewing of the spirits. One scrying experiment involving a mirror smeared with olive oil the magician performs the conjuration within a circle whose precincts are sprinkled with verbenä.



Figure 41. Treasure Finders in a Magic Circle. Hans Weiditz the Younger referred to as the Petrarch Master. Circa 1520.

In this charming woodcut we can see four persons at work in a magic circle. The master and three assistants, one to hold the lantern, one to hold the book and another to dig up the treasure. The magician is holding the ceremonial sword. The scenes in the background are suggestive of the reception of spiritual and material treasures. The demon who is attempting to aggravate the operators is clearly shown outside the precincts of the circle. The assistant with the shovel appears to be turning his back to the demon in a refusal to speak with it or allow it to offend. In looking toward the master, the assistant is reassured by the words of the magician.

The two circles at the top of the next page share several characteristics such as the central triangle flanked by candlesticks and a fire at the apex of the triangle. There are also designated places for the 'Karcist' and two Assistants. A possible speculative etymology of the word Karcist; 'kar' = *cirque*, or in the Latin; circ-us: *circus* = circle.

Figure 42. (above) Magic circle showing the 'route to the treasure'. French edition of the *Grand Grimoire*.

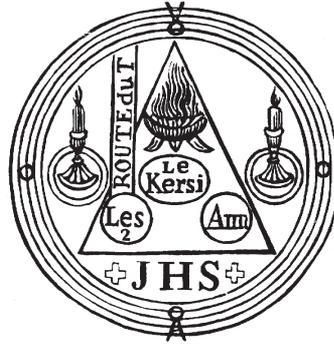


Figure 43. (below) Variant of Figure a different edition of the *Grand Grimoire*.



Thus karcist would be one who employs circles. The circle from the *Grand Grimoire* also features a 'Route du T' or way to the treasure as well as containing the letters JHS, the first three in the Greek word for Jesus, employed here as a divine name intended for protection. The letters JHS are to be written along the base of the triangle so that, according to the *Grand Grimoire*, 'the spirits cannot do you any harm.'

The other circle from the *Black Pullet* lacks the path to the treasure and is surrounded by sigils, astrological symbols and possibly corrupted Hebrew. These two circles are also referred to as 'the Circle of Pacts'. In one of the most popular scenes in grimoire magic, the pact with Lucifuge Rofocale, the magician demands that the Spirit

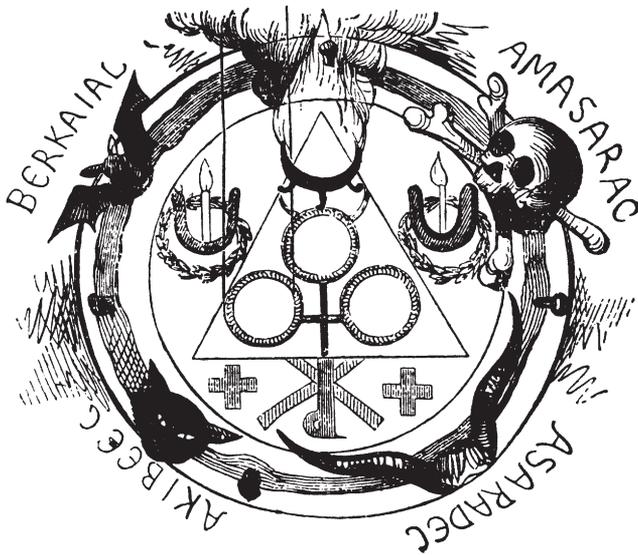


Figure 44. Göetic Circle of Black Evocations and Pacts.
Eliphas Levi. *Transcendental Magic*.

provide him riches and even threatens him with the divine names when he initially refuses. Once the spirit agrees to the request of the magician he makes demands of his own which constitutes the pact between them.

Eliphas Levi's version of the Circle of Pacts as it appears in his book *Transcendental Magic* and labeled as the 'Goetic Circle of Black Evocations and pacts'. Levi's very atmospheric description includes the use of the skin of a sacrificial victim as the physical basis of the circle pinned to the ground by four coffin nails. The head of a black cat, a human skull, a bat and goat horns are placed near the nail-heads all together forming the precincts of the circle. The vessel of fire, two candlesticks and a different monogram of Christ are evident here showing an emblematic relationship with the previous circles just mentioned. As an aside the monogram of Christ has been discussed as a class of axial symbol [42] and thus reflects the theme of center and orientation already discussed.



Figure 46. A drawing after a 14th century manuscript illumination of *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, shows a necromancer in a magic circle and a demon bringing him treasure.

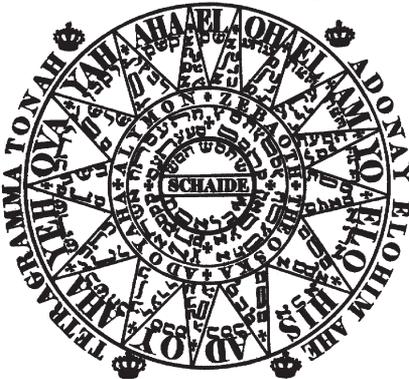


Figure 45. Circle of art featured on the title page of the *Schemhamforas* a text found among the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*. It states that it is 'From the Arcane Bible of Moses' . . . 'Which will certainly bring to light Treasures of Earth, if buried in the Treasure-Earth.' It exhibits the compass-rose motif no doubt suggestive of pointing the way to hidden treasure.

☾ **Chart *showing Demons of the
Göetia of Solomon *the King*
who specifically hold jurisdiction
over treasure finding***

BARBATOS - 8 - '*detecteth treasures hidden by magicians
and inchanters*'-†

PURSON - 20 - '*he bewraieith treasure*'-†

FORAS - 31 - '*discovers treasures*' - †

ASMODAI - 32

RAUM - 40 - '*he stealeth woonderfullie out of the kings
house, and carrieth it whether he is assigned*'-†

SHAX - 44 - '*direct mention of triangle*' -†

GEMORY - 56

AUNS - 58



VALU - 62



CINERIES - 66



SEER - 70

ANDROMALIUS - 72

† - According to reports from Johann Weyer in his *De Præstigiis
Dæmonum*, 1577.

Laws against treasure finding

In England an Act was instated in 1563 which made illegal the use of magic or divination in order to recover stolen goods or locate hidden treasure. This law was enacted after the scriptural prohibition found in Deuteronomy; “*Neither let there be found among you any one that shall expiate his son or daughter, making them to pass through the fire: or that consulteth soothsayers, or observeth dreams and omens. Neither let there be any wizard, nor charmer, nor any one that consulteth pythonic spirits, or fortune-tellers: or that seeketh the truth from the dead.*” [43]

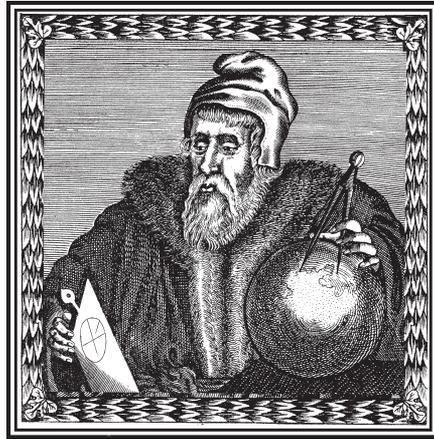


Figure 47.
Portrait of John
Dee. *A True and
Faithful Relation.*

To someone like John Dee such a prohibition would pose a difficulty to his activities despite the fact that in his view they were scientific in their basis. He understood that the authorities may not see it that way and had tried to convince Lord Cecil in Elizabeth I's court to grant him license to discover hidden treasures by what he called the ‘*manner of philosophers and mathematicians*’ [44]. Dee's arguments fell on deaf ears and he was never granted such a license. Benjamin Woolley opines that to grant such a license would be giving Dee a monopoly over Treasure Trove, which belonged to the Queen herself. Dee was not after all the treasure, and distinguished between large hoards and smaller caches or pots of gold with which he wished to use to purchase more books or apparatus to further his studies.

MODERN EXAMPLES

The magic circle still retains a place in the repertoire of the contemporary ritualist. While there are a great number of contemporary esoteric groups who perhaps employ the Circle of Arte in their operations I will limit myself to a few influential and unique examples. The Golden Dawn was the ceremonial magic fraternity par excellence at the turn of the century and it will be seen that the Rituals of the Pentagram and Hexagram which feature prominently in their literature, share the context and purpose of the magic circle as found in the older grimoires. The latter rites include circumambulation[45], the salutes to the quarters, the seal and shield of Solomon and orientational properties of which the circle of arte is the source.

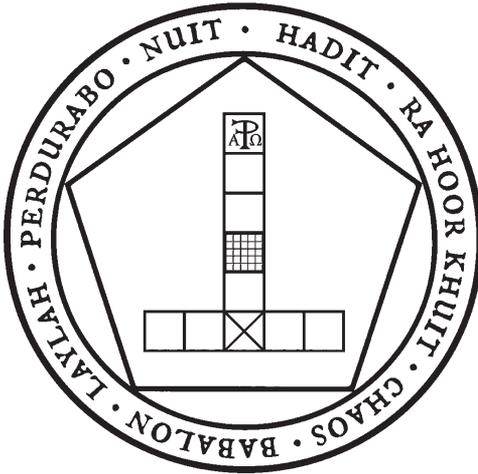


Figure 48.
Circle from
the Bartzabel
Working.

Close on the heels of the Golden Dawn was Aleister Crowley's recension of the circle of arte, which is explicated in his textbook on Magick; *Liber ABA* [46]. Crowley's circle takes on aionic symbolism in addition to the qabalistic symbolism employed in the Golden Dawn pentagram ritual. Crowley uses a tau cross within the circle and connects them with the sacred pairs in various mystical

traditions. These equate to the union of opposites and is another cipher for the Great Work. In Crowley's depiction of the circle the 'chemical wedding' is suggested by the use of his motto and that of his lover Leilah Waddell. He also concentrates upon the importance of the centrality and balance that identity with the infinite indicates. Crowley explains that the size of the circle is determined by one of the squares in the tau cross, which in turn is based upon the altar. Pointing out that the altar size is dictated by the operator's height he advises that certain 'lessons' could be had by such considerations. The implication, union of microcosm with macrocosm, is in itself a symbol of the Magnum Opus.

Lofty as these correspondences may be, there still remain traditional practical elements in this Thelemic circle of arte. Protection being implicit in Crowley's admonition that even to lean outside the precincts of the circle might invite destruction to the operator. He employed pentagrams without the circle as '*Fortresses upon the frontiers of the Abyss*' in order to '*keep off those forces of darkness which might otherwise break in*'. Holy names of God are additional assurances of protection according to the text. Though his use of the tau and qabalistic decad are more modern in terms of formulae they nonetheless provide the orientation principal found in the traditional circles of the grimoires. We are fortunate to have Crowley's account of his work in scrying the Aethyrs with Victor Neuburg in 1909 wherein details about the magic circle employed by the two magicians when evoking Choronzon.

Another intriguing and important example of the magic circle is to be found in the *Draconian Grimoire* [47] penned by Andrew Chumley and other initiates in the Cultus Sabbati. While the familiar single circle model is to be found in the text of the *Dragon Book* after a fashion, in this example the Blood-Acre or place of operation is delineated by the double-Ouroboros circle intended for group praxis. Taking the serpentine form of the symbol of infinite, the dual-circle acts as a double-seal binding. The area marked 'Never-Setting Stars' is reserved for the seal marks of the rite, the signs being set

out with powders. The circles are joined at the 'Midnight Gate', the equatorial line that runs axis-like between North and South which themselves are marked with skull and heart respectively. Access to the area of Never-Setting Stars through the latter gate is granted with the assistance of the two-pronged stang. The cycles of birth and death are implicit in the symbolism of the gate. The composing of the second circle is also considered an entreaty to the sorcerer's oneiro-body of night, a subtle simulacra to the embodiment of flesh. Like other circles of art, the circles employed in the *Dragon Book* are constructed according to the specific time of working, a single circle proper in some instances, while the double-circle is reserved for other explicit occasions.

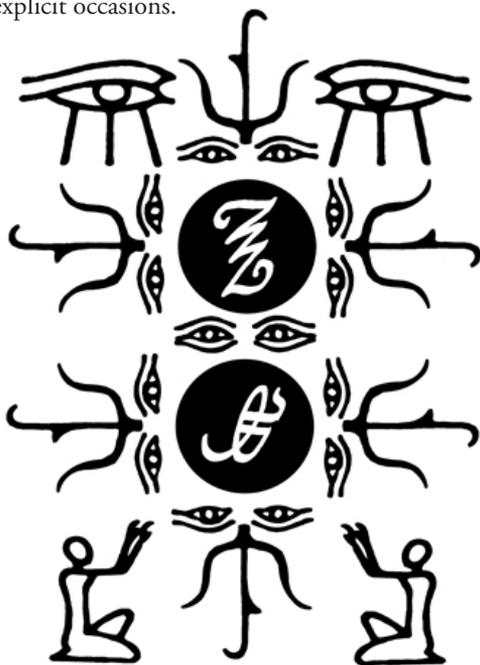


Figure 49
Double-circle of Drakon-Apep inspired by the style found in the *Dragon Book of Essex*. Reproduced courtesy of Frater A. I.

Figure 50.
Magician in a
magic circle.
*Pilgrimage
of the Life of
Man.*



CONCLUSION

When a magician constructed a magic circle and stepped with in it, one asserted one's place in the divine hierarchy with all its requisite authority, protection and knowledge. This was to gain spiritual knowledge and material dominion in the world, which supports the ascription of kings or patriarchs as the authors of the grimoire wherein the circles are found.

I have endeavored to show throughout this monograph the principle forms and functions of the circle of arte as manifested in grimoires and traditional praxis. The great variety of examples show just how diverse and multi-purposed these diagrams can be once the fundamentals are understood. As the basic form demonstrates the circle conjoined with the square sets the stage for a communion between the natural and supernatural world, the microcosm and the macrocosm, which itself is a magical formula in western esotericism known as Squaring the Circle.

ENDNOTES

1. See entry on Abano in Hanegraaff, Wouter, J. *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*.
2. For a discussion of the five-fold angle, *vide infra*.
3. See Richard Kieckhefer; *Forbidden Rites* or Owen Davies; *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books*.
4. *Historia Naturalis* XXI, 19
5. *Ibid*; XXII, 29
6. *Ibid*; XXV, 55
7. Thorndike. *History of Magic and Experimental Science*. Volume II, 664
8. Agrippa 151
9. *Michael Scot* by Lynn Thorndike is an excellent introduction to this intriguing figure.
10. *Forbidden Rites* page 116.
11. Sloane 3847.
12. Kieckhefer. *Forbidden Rites*.
13. Sloane 3847.
14. 'no terminus a quo nor terminus ad quem' Quoted from *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*.
15. *Tractatus de sphaera* of Johannes de Sacrobosco was the most used

textbook in astronomy and cosmography from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. See the introduction in Thorndike. *The Sphere of Sacrobosco and Its Commentators*.

16. From the Greek; *calodemonēs* and *cacodemonēs* respectively.

17. Sloane 2731, reproduced in Francis King's *Magic: The Western Tradition*. A similar circle / triangle arrangement can be seen in Sloane 3648.

18. Peterson. *Lemegeton Clavicula Solomonis: The Lesser Key of Solomon*.

19. Skinner & Rankine. *The Goetia of Dr. Rudd*.

20. Harley 6483.

21. Peterson. *Ibid*.

22. Thorndike. *Michael Scot*.

23. This Seventy-Two-Lettered Name is derived from the original Hebrew passages in Exodus using a traditional method of letter permutation referred to as the Ox Plough.

24. Agrippa. *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*.

25. *New Testament: Book of Revelations* I, 8

26. Aleph Tav is the Hebrew equivalent to the Greek Alpha Omega and shares its meaning as First and Last with the implication of eternity.

27. I am indebted to Scott Wilde for this reference which derives from volume one of *Zohar*.

28. See *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* by Hans Dieter Betz.
29. See *The Kabbalah Unveiled* by S. L. Mac Gregor Mathers or Bill Heidrick's appendix in the *Rituals of the Golden Dawn* by David Griffin.
30. Chumbley. *Azöetia: A Grimoire of the Sabbatic Craft*. See also the Circle and the Cypher in *Qutub: The Point* by the same author.
31. While the twenty-two Sacred Letters found in the grimoire *Azöetia* should not be construed as merely cyphers for the Hebrew letters, there is a resonance here from the perspective of praxis.
32. See Joseph Dan's article on the Kabbalah in Hanagraff. *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*.
33. An alphabetical lexicon of proper names.
34. In some traditional witchcraft movements this is recognized as 'dual-faith observance', which casts an apparent orthodox veil over heretical praxis. See *Children of Cain* by Michael Howard.
35. This terminology appears in *Clavicula Solomnis Ptolemy Grecian*.
36. Hebrew acrostic: *Ateh Gibor Le-Olam Adonai*; Thou art mighty unto the ages, O Lord.
37. John Dee's Sigillum Dei Aemeth has been reproduced in numerous other books and need not be printed here. It was clearly influenced by the so called Seal of God found in Dee's own copy of *Liber Juratus*, a manuscript antedating the Angelic Conversations. See: Stephan Clucas; '*Non est legendum sed inspiciendum solum*' : *Inspectival knowledge and the visual logic of John Dee's Liber Mysteriorum* in *Emblems and Alchemy* edited by Alison Adams and Stanton J. Linden.

38. Lansdowne Manuscript 1203.

39. The word gibberish is derived from the name of the famous Arabian alchemist Jabir Ibn Hayyan (Geber) who often used unique phrases in his texts.

40. Menippus. Νέκυια – *On Necromancy*.

41. *Forbidden Rites* page 114.

42. See *Fundamental Symbols: The Universal Language of Sacred Science* by René Guenon.

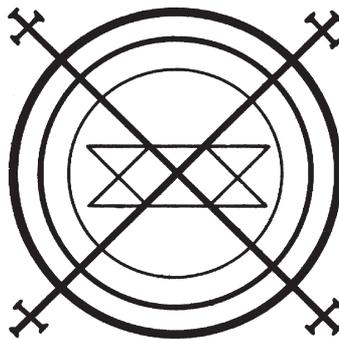
43. *Deuteronomy* 10 – 11.

44. Quoted by Benjamin Woolley in *The Queen's Conjuror*.

45. The act of moving around a sacred site or object.

46. However the circle shown above is after *The Vision and the Voice with Commentary*.

47. Andrew Chumbly. *The Dragon-Book of Essex: Grimoirium Synomosia Dracotaos*. Xoanon Ltd. 2014



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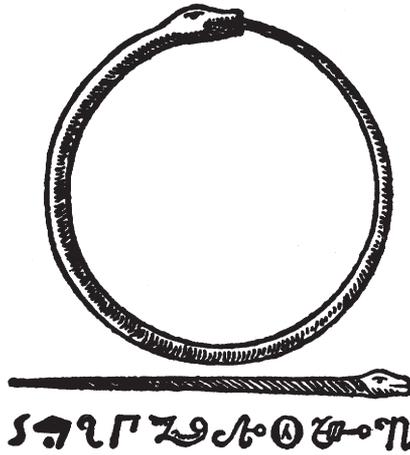


Figure 50. Ouroboros-circle and rod of art.
Treasure of the Old Man of the Pyramids.

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