PIERPONT MORGAN
VISCONTI-SFORZA
TAROCCHI DECK

Stuart R. Kaplan

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SAMPLE

PIERPONT MORGAN
VISCONTI-SFORZA
TAROCCHI DECK

INTRODUCTION

Reproduction of the Pierpont Morgan Visconti-Sforza Tarocchi deck is an important event for tarot collectors and researchers of art history. These rare cards have been reproduced in authentic color tones from the extant Visconti-Sforza Tarocchi deck dating from mid-fifteenth century Milan.

Italy holds the honor of producing several of the earliest known hand-painted playing card packs that contain the twenty-two mystical and allegorical trump cards called *trionfi*. The incomplete extant packs include seventy-four cards from the Visconti-Sforza Tarocchi pack, sixty-seven cards from the Cary-Yale Visconti Tarocchi pack, and forty-eight cards from the Brera Gallery or Brambilla Visconti pack. Artists in Ferrara and Florence also hand painted fifteenth century tarocchi cards. The connection of cards to the Visconti and Sforza families of fifteenth century Milan is based upon the heraldic devices and mottos appearing on the cards.

The term *tarocchi* was used in Italy in the early sixteenth century, and quite probably in the late fifteenth century, to describe the complete seventy-eight card deck consisting of twenty-two *trionfi,* or trump cards, and fifty-six suit cards. The words *tarocchi* and *tarocco* are often used interchangeably although *tarocchi* is actually the plural of *tarocco*. The French word *tarot*, a derivative of *tarocchi*, has come into widespread use in the English language.

The term *trumps* is derived from the Latin *triumphi*. *Arcana* is a Latin word meaning mysterious or secret; the Italian word *arcano*, derived from the Latin, has the same meaning. The twenty-two trump cards are known today by tarot deck collectors as the Major Arcana or Greater Arcana cards, and each card depicts a symbolic, allegorical picture.

The trump cards also are known as *atouts* in French and *tarocchi* in Italian. The fifty-six suit cards, also known as the Minor Arcana or Lesser Arcana cards, are divided into four suits of swords, wands (batons, staves, scepters, or clubs), cups (chalices), and coins (pentacles). Each suit comprises fourteen cards consisting of king, queen, knight, page, plus pip cards numbered ten to one.

THE MAJOR ARCANA CARDS

The twenty-two symbolic and allegorical Major Arcana cards depict and create continuous and ever-changing stories of physical and spiritual forces affecting humanity. To some persons, the cards present a pictorial processional of life's fateful events.

The twenty-two Major Arcana cards generally follow an established sequence. The card titles in English, French, and Italian are as follows:

No.	English	French	Italian
	The Fool, The Foolish Man	Le Mat, Le Fou, Le Fol, L'Excuse	Il Matto, Il Folle
I	The Magician, The Juggler, The Thimble-rigger, The Cups Player, The Mountebank, The Pagad, The Pagat	Le Bateleur, Le Joueur de Gobelets	Il Bagatino, Il Bagatto, Il Bagattel, Il Bagat, Il Begatto
II	The High Priestess, The Female Pope, The Popess, Junon, Bacchus	La Papesse	La Papessa
III	The Empress	L'Impératrice	L'Imperatrice
IIII	The Emperor	L'Empereur	L'Imperadore, L'Imperatore
V	The Hierophant, The Pope, Jupiter, Spanish Captain	Le Pape	Il Papa

VI	The Lovers, Marriage	L'Amoureux	L'Amore, Gli Amanti, Gli Innamorati
VII	The Chariot	Le Chariot	Il Carro
VIII	Justice	La Justice	La Giustizia
VIIII	The Hermit, Father Time, The Hunchback	L'Ermite	L'Ermita, Il Gobbo, Il Vecchio, L'Eremita
X	The Wheel of Fortune	La Roue de Fortune	La Ruota, Rota di Fortuna, Ruota della Fortuna, La Fortuna
XI	Strength, Force, Fortitude	La Force	La Fortezza, La Forza
XII	The Hanged Man, The Hanging Man, The Traitor	Le Pendu	Il Traditore, L'Impiccato, L'Appeso
XIII	Death	La Mort	La Morte
XIIII	Temperance	La Temperance	La Temperanza
XV	The Devil	La Diable	Il Diavolo
XVI	The Tower, The Falling Tower, The Lightning Struck Tower, The House of God, The Hospital, The Tower of Babel, Fire of Heaven, The Devil's House	La Maison-Dieu, La Foudre	La Casa del Diavolo, La Torre, Il Fuoco, La Saetta
XVII	The Star	L'Etoile	Le Stelle
XVIII	The Moon	La Lune	La Luna
XVIIII	The Sun	Le Soleil	Il Sole
XX	Judgment, The Last Judgment, The Angel	Le Jugement, La Trompete, L'Ange	Il Guidizio, Le Trombe, L'Angelo
XXI	The World, The Universe	Le Monde	Il Mondo

THE MINOR ARCANA CARDS

The fifty-six Minor Arcana or Lesser Arcana are divided into four suits containing fourteen cards each—four court cards plus ten pip or numeral cards from ten to one. The suits correspond to an ordinary deck of playing cards; swords are spades, wands are clubs, cups are hearts, and coins are diamonds. Some card-makers, from earliest times to the present, have sought to introduce a variety of different suit signs including stars, arrows, birds, dogs, falcons, mirrors, columns, moons, anchors, etc., but they did not strike the popular fancy.

The playing card suit signs prevalent today in tarot card packs published in the United States, United Kingdom, France, Italy and certain other countries are:

English	French	Italian	Corresponding to
Swords	Epées	Spade	Spades
Wands, Staves, Scepters, Batons, Clubs	Batons	Bastoni	Clubs
Cups, Chalices, Goblets	Coupes	Coppe	Hearts
Coins, Money, Pentacles, Circles	Deniers	Denari	Diamonds

The four court cards in each suit are:

English	French	Italian
King	Roi	Re
Queen	Reine	Regina
Knight, Horseman	Cavalier	Cavallo
Page, Knave	Valet	Fante

Some scholars believe the modern fifty-two card playing card deck derives from the early tarocchi packs—the knight and page having been combined to form the jack, and the twenty-two trump cards having been dropped, with the exception of The Fool which survives as the Joker. However, there is nothing to substantiate this theory.

There is no direct link between The Fool of the tarot pack and the Joker of standard playing cards, except the obvious humorous connotation. Jokers in standard playing card decks are a mid-nineteenth century adaption popularized by card gamblers. Additionally, it is uncertain whether the twenty-two trump cards and the fifty-six court and pip cards were originally devised as a complete seventy-eight card deck. It is more likely that the court and pip cards were developed independently of the trumps, and at a later date the groups of fifty-six and twenty-two cards were combined to form the complete seventy-eight card tarocchi pack.

The current viewpoint about the development of the courts is that the earliest packs had only three courts, all male. The 1377 'Ludus chartularum moralisatus' by John of Rheinfelden describes three male courts that correspond to the German figures, *König*, *Ober* and *Unter*. And if we accept the idea that the Latin-suited cards were the very first, they had (and still have) Kings, Knights and Jacks, but no Queens. It is the (ever gallant) French who put Queens instead of Knights.

When Tarot was invented, the court cards were 'multi-plied': in the Cary-Yale pack the male knights and pages had female counterparts (therefore six courts per suit). In the 'standard' Tarot pack, the only female remaining is the Queen, making four courts, King, Queen, Knight and Page.

THE VISCONTI AND SFORZA FAMILIES AND HERALDIC DEVICES

The Visconti family dominated a wide area around Milan for over one hundred years—from the mid-fourteenth to the mid-fifteenth century. Bernabo Visconti, one of the most ruthless tyrants in the latter half of the fourteenth century, was Lord of Milan. Bernabo Visconti shared power with his brother, Galeazzo—a quiet, reserved figure in contrast to the lusty, ebullient Bernabo. Galeazzo's son, Giangaleazzo Visconti was born in 1351 but he did not wish to remain in the background as his father did.

During a coup in 1385, he deposed his uncle Bernabo and assumed sole rule over Milan. For the next seventeen years, Giangaleazzo extended his territorial dominance across Northern Italy from Piedmont to the Adriatic. He brought all of Lombardy and Emilia under his rule and became known as the "despot of Milan."

In 1395, Giangaleazzo Visconti purchased, from Emperor Wenceslas of Germany, the hereditary title of Duke of Milan, and adopted the imperial eagle as part of his coat of arms. Giangaleazzo served as the first Duke of Milan until his death from the plague in 1402. Although the three sons of his first marriage all died in infancy, Giangaleazzo had two sons—Giovanni Maria and Filippo Maria—from his second marriage to his first cousin, Caterina Visconti.

The second Duke of Milan, Giovanni Maria Visconti, a vicious ruler, was assassinated in 1412. His younger brother Filippo, born in 1391, who had been relegated to Pavia, now seized power and became third Duke of Milan. In 1413, Filippo married Beatrice di Guglielmo Ventimiglia Lascaris, conte di Tenda, widow of Faccino Cana of Pisa. In 1418, he beheaded her on trumped up charges of adultery.

During Filippo's long reign he restored unity and authority in the duchy. In 1428 he was married again—this time to Maria de Savoy—but there were no children born in wedlock. Filippo's illegitimate daughter, Bianca Maria Visconti, was born in 1423 to his mistress, Agnes del Maino. Bianca was betrothed in 1432, at age nine, to Francesco Sforza, an effective condottiere in the Visconti service. His father, Muzio Attendolo, a powerful condottiere in Italy, earned the nickname Sforza, (Force), when he assisted Duke Giangaleazzo Visconti in defeating the della Scala family in 1387. Francesco was the first to bear Sforza officially as a family name. The marriage of Francesco and Bianca took place nine years after their betrothal, in 1441, at the Church of St. Sigismund, in Cremona. The bride was eighteen and the bridegroom forty. It proved to be a lasting and happy marriage.

In 1447, six years after the marriage of Francesco and Bianca Maria, the last of the ducal Visconti—Duke Filippo—died leaving no male heir. Milan did not pass

smoothly to Francesco by inheritance, and it was not until 1450 that Francesco realized his ambitions and became the fourth Duke of Milan. He was the first Sforza to hold such a title and the only condottiere to rise from humble origins to become a duke. All of the Visconti heraldic devices were taken over by Francesco, who ruled Milan peacefully and efficiently for the remaining sixteen years of his life.

Visconti Heraldic Devices

The link between the Visconti and Sforza families and the several Visconti-Sforza decks is based upon heraldic devices that are found on the trump, court and pip cards. The heraldic devices of the Visconti family that appear in the Pierpont Morgan Visconti-Sforza deck are:

1. A bird, possibly a dove, with straight, radiating lines, is seen on the King, Queen and Page of Staves. Beneath the bird is a nest containing three young birds. This device also appears in the Cary-Yale deck in the suit of coins.

2. The ducal crown with branches or fronds, as seen on The Empress, The Emperor, and the horse's caparison on the Knight of Cups.