THE BOOK OF AFRICAN DIVINATION

Interpreting the Forces of Destiny with Techniques from the Venda, Zulu, and Yoruba

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In Africa there is a strong relationship between divination and spirituality. A supernatural cause is attributed to all events in life, whether the life of the individual or of the society.

There are many methods of divination by which humankind has tried, over millenia, to see into the future and to discover the will of the gods. Although some few methods have become popular around the world—Tarot cards and astrology, for example—most people are unaware of the wide diversity of systems in existence and certainly have only a vague idea of the types found in Africa.

African divinatory practices are remarkably varied and have traditionally embodied African spirituality in everyday life. We have tried to bring together some of the previously widely scattered information on African divination. With the continuing Western interest in all forms of fortune-telling, this constitutes a rich, virtually untapped vein of material, and one that—even apart from its interest to the occultist—should be preserved.

A great deal of the religio-magical practices found throughout the Americas, among the descendants of the African slaves, remains very similar to the African Yoruba system. In the New World, individual peoples' beliefs and methods of divining suffered a blending as the Africans were mixed and then divided, to the point where the legends and myths found extended life in the Voodoo of Haiti, the Santería of Cuba, and the Macumba, Candomblé, Umbanda, and Quimbanda of Brazil and other parts of South America. Different names, different ceremonies, yet all similar, and all stemming from a merging of the many African cultures with one another and with European and native American practices.
Raymond Buckland has written a great deal on divination in different parts of the world, in particular on Romani (Gypsy) divination, and has developed his own set of Gypsy fortune-telling cards. Kathleen Binger has specialized in African divination, using many of the systems found in this book, and has carried out research on these methods, including corresponding with diviners in various parts of Africa. She has also developed her own set of cards based on those used by the Kaka people of the Tikar tribe, which utilize marked plum leaves together with a tarantula-like spider! Kathleen had heard of this method but came into sudden contact with it quite by chance one day when visiting the Milwaukee Museum with a friend. Admiring the various African exhibits, she spotted a display of scattered leaves (cards) in one of the cases and was delighted to find that it was from the spider divination of Cameroon. This inspired her to research the method and finally produce her own set of cards (which can be used without a spider!). They are included with this book. When first putting together this material to accompany the spider cards, Kathleen met with Raymond, and the two decided to work together on the book.

Paul Gebauer, in his preface to the second edition of Spider Divination In the Cameroons, says: “In 1970, and again in 1972, I revisited the lands of the Western Kaka people. Among the old friends only one diviner of the thirties survived, Tata Bungong. He had his set of leaf cards with him . . . [but] the clientele of old is no more. The present generation tries to solve its anxieties in new and various ways—less picturesque than the old ways and foreign in their origin.”

Similarly, Kathleen has found from her African correspondents that most Africans today seem more interested in a modern life-style and American ways than in the old traditions. Yet, some hope is to be found in the United States.
As with other ethnic peoples, there is a slowly growing and developing interest by African-Americans in researching their origins and discovering and preserving those old ways that are about to be lost. We very much hope that with this book we may help preserve some of those old ways before they disappear.

We think that many of the African systems can be used—indeed could be very useful—in today's Western society. In this book we look at these African ways and detail a few of the systems so that they can be tried by anyone. Gathering together your own sets of "bones," making tablets, making bowls, using the cards, and using combinations of the methods here presented can be very satisfying. Together we have tried to open up a fascinating new world of fortune-telling—the world of African divination.
From the earliest times, human beings have been curious about the future. Divination, the discovery of things hidden in the past, the present, or the future by the interpretation of signs, symbols, and portents, is a means of satisfying that curiosity. Some consider the ability to divine to be a gift from the gods—from the divine—but in fact almost anyone can be taught one or more divinatory practices.

Around the world and throughout the centuries, many forms of divination have been used. The ancient Romans believed that the gods controlled the flight of birds, thus indicating their wishes. A college of diviners, or augurs, was responsible for interpretation. From three members, around 300 B.C.E., the college grew to sixteen in the first century B.C.E. Unfortunately, the complexity of interpretation also grew by a far greater degree until it became unmanageable and the college had to be abandoned. The Aztecs had a similar college of diviners, the Calmecac, whose job was also to interpret the flight and the songs of birds.

Some native American peoples have made use of the “shaking tent” or teepee to foretell the future. The shaman enters a tent he has erected and carefully closes the entrance behind him. He chants incantations and dances around inside the tent, which is usually built around tall, strong poles that would normally take several strong men to bend. After a while, the entire structure starts to vibrate. The poles are observed to shake and then to bend. As the shaman’s energy builds, the tent shakes more and more, and the poles begin to bend over. Violent noises come from inside the tent and also, seemingly, from the air above it and from below the ground. The tent poles bend far beyond their breaking point. Eventually the noises fade, and the shaman is heard questioning the spirit he has evoked.
In Brazil, the piagés of the Uapés perform a ritual using a long tree stem, about the height of a man, known as a paxiuba. Holes are bored into it at various places along its length. By speaking into these holes the priests make the leaves tremble; the sound is interpreted as a message from one of their principal deities, Jurupari.

Lapp and Siberian shamans divine by beating on multicolored drums. They place small brass rings on the surface of the drums and scry the future through the vibration of those rings. A Romani Gypsy puri dai spins a knife, casts sticks, or floats needles to discover answers to questions. In places in Polynesia, coconuts are cast; in parts of Africa, shells and knucklebones. Diviners in Burma and Thailand pierce the ends of an egg and blow its contents onto the ground to be interpreted. A Navajo divination technique utilizes pollen sprinkled on the diviner's hand. The ancient Egyptians cast bone or ivory dice-like objects called astragals to read their future; the Greeks use dice, and the Chinese use yarrow stalks.

Ancient Egyptian texts record the interpretation of dreams, for example, those of Nut-Amen (ca. 670 B.C.E.) and Thothmes IV (1450 B.C.E.). However, most Egyptian divining used astrology.

In non-Western societies, divination was often used as a means of enforcing law. For example, when the Azande people of Africa searched for truth in an accusation, they would feed poison to two chickens, one after the other. They believed that if the charge was true, the first chicken would die, while if the charge was false, the chicken would live. If the chicken did indeed die, the second chicken was given the poison, but with the interpretation reversed; if the charge was true the chicken would live; if false it would die. This would give confirmation or denial of the charge.
All divination falls into two main types. One, which the Roman statesman Cicero calls *entechnos*, is the type that can be taught and is perhaps the most common form. The shaman/seer/divinerseeker either generates that which is to be interpreted by such methods as throwing down objects (*sortilege*), burning them, laying them out (as in cartomancy), or moving them, or observes and interprets existing phenomena, such as the actions of birds and animals.

The other type is what Cicero calls *atechnos* or *adidactos*: that which cannot be taught. The shaman or other individual is apparently possessed, entering a state of ecstasy or trance in which he or she is able to divine the future. Often the diviner has no control over when possession will take place. Frequently this state is looked upon as a form of madness.

There are many, many forms of divination. *Sortilege*—the drawing or casting of lots—was and remains one of the most common methods. Another is interpretation of the flight of birds, the marks on the shell of a tortoise, or the course taken by spiders. *Cartomancy*, the reading of playing cards, is another very popular form of divination. With approximately 250 different Tarot card decks available today, the reading of Tarot is more popular than ever before.

Divination is referred to in the Bible. Joseph sees visions as a child (Genesis 37) and later refers to scrying: “this [cup] in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth” (Genesis 44:5). The Urim and the Thummim were devices used by the high priest in ascertaining the will of God (Exodus 28:30).

Some forms of divination are well known to Western civilization, such as Tarot cards, the Chinese I Ching, crystal gazing, astrology, and palm reading. Less well known are the unique methods employed by indigenous peoples who
have been relatively uninfluenced by modern Western cultures. In the vast continent of Africa are found many such peoples whose forms of divination, usually performed by the shamans, have been used for generations with success.

In this book we would like to focus on some forms of divination that are little known outside Africa, yet are as fascinating and as accurate as most of the better-known varieties. These methods are found among the Zulu, Yoruba, Venda, Tikar, Fon, and other peoples. African life has changed substantially over the past fifty years or so, and is still changing at a fast rate. But much of the traditional culture that produced these methods of divination still exists, and these methods still reflect Africa's disrupted heritage.
The derivation of the name Africa is uncertain. Some say it comes from Afer, the name of the son of Hercules. Others say it is from apher, a Hebrew word meaning “dust” (a reference to the sandstorms that sweep across the north of the continent). The name may be derived from the old Phoenician, feruc, meaning an ear of corn, or ferec, meaning a corn country. This is a likely possibility, since the Phoenicians were familiar with those portions of Africa that produced crops of grain sufficient to feed the world they knew.

Europeans made their greatest inroads along the coast and into the interior of Africa in the fifteenth century, when the Portuguese attacked the Moors along the Atlantic seaboard. Having obtained a toehold, they then extended their African acquisitions, which attracted the interest of England. In 1420 King Henry I sent his youngest son to explore the region, which he did very thoroughly over the next twenty-three years.

Misconceptions about Africa have long persisted even within it, where one area could—and still can—be totally ignorant of another. After sixty or more years of colonial rule, many peoples are still wrestling with the question of identity. Because of the often cavalier division of countries, borders being laid down on maps with little regard for cultural or natural divisions, many ancient kingdoms, and even villages and families, have been split up.

Africa is the second largest continent in the world; it possesses such a tremendous variety of people, languages, cultures, and beliefs that no one area can be typical of the whole continent. Yet Africa today has a population of only 400 million, just two thirds that of Europe, and boasts more than 1000 ethnic groups, most of which have distinct languages, religions, social customs,
and life-styles. The geographical make-up of the continent, with its numerous mountains, valleys, deserts, rivers, lakes, and forests, has long isolated many groups from one another, though total isolation is now a thing of the past. Even so, according to Jocelyn Murray (*Cultural Atlas of Africa*), there is no noticeable decrease today in the number of languages spoken nor in the number of distinct ethnic societies.

Nigeria and Cameroon, neighbors on the west coast, each became independent in 1960 and together have well over 450 different ethnic groups (Nigeria with at least 250 and Cameroon with at least 200). In contrast, Zaire, the second largest country in the continent, has approximately 150 different peoples, and Sudan, the largest country, has approximately 100 peoples and languages.

The continent has been persistently disrupted over the past 500 years with colonization, slavery, and famine. The exploitation of its rich mineral resources has added immeasurably to the disruption of its peoples, particularly in southern Africa. Minerals account for roughly half of Africa's exports.

The vast continent of Africa is rich in folklore, pagan religion, magic (the true study of the occult, as distinguished from sleight-of-hand and party tricks), and divination. "The great and ancient African kingdoms were cradles of cultures and civilizations that may have rivaled those of Hellas and Rome as well as our own," Eileen Garrett, a writer, psychic medium, and founder of the Parapsychology Foundation in New York, wrote in 1957. "Written records are scarce," she said, "but oral traditions and racial memories suggest impressive historic accomplishments. Yet, these are not mere monuments to a dead past. In our time, Africa has taught the rest of the world much that is fundamental; it has guarded ancient flames that illuminate the recesses of man's soul."
Colonel Laurens van der Post, author of numerous books on Africa, said in an address before a joint meeting of the C. G. Jung Institute and the Psychological Club in Zurich in 1954, “It is not we who are filled with spirit and soul, but rather the [African] people about us. They have so much of it that it overflows into the trees, rocks, rivers, lakes, birds, snakes and animals that surround them... one and all they are humble parts of life and at one with it, knowing that, in order to get through their... day, they are in constant need of support from a power greater than themselves. They all have their own ways of evoking this support—elaborate rituals, strict codes of behavior, colorful ceremonies evolved out of their experience of life—and their own social ethics in terms of which they are initiated into life and ushered out from it... Whatever happens to them, their lives are never lonely for lack of spirit nor do they find life wanting in meaning.”

In Africa even today, despite many sufferings, the connection between nature and spirituality helps to define life for many people.

**CAMEROON**

Although no one country or area can be regarded as typical of sub-Saharan Africa, Cameroon certainly contains as much variety of geography, people, language, beliefs, and divinatory practices as any other area. It is the home of the Tikar people, whose method of spider divination will be discussed in chapter 7. Situated north of the equator, Cameroon is surrounded by the countries of Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea. (See map on page 8.) The slave trade flourished in this area for more than 300
years. Cameroon is one of the few African countries formed by the merging of territories with different colonial histories that were previously controlled by the French and the British. Reflecting this history, today Cameroon has two official languages: French and English. But with more than 200 ethnic groups, the Cameroon people speak an enormous variety of languages.

The land itself consists of four distinct regions. The coastal area is mostly dense rain forests. The center is a high plateau, where the forests give way to the grassy savannas. In the north the savannas slope slowly to Lake Chad, where marshland abounds. In the western area are found mountains covered by forests and Mount Cameroon, the highest peak in West Africa and an active volcano. The weather ranges from almost constant rain in the Cameroon Mountains in the west to semi-aridity in the northwest.

Many people are caught between their deeply rooted traditions and the influences of modern ideas and technologies. Of the eleven and a half million people in the ten provinces, about 40 percent still follow the traditional religious beliefs. An equal number are Christian and the balance are Muslim.

Cameroon has almost as many variations in divination as are to be found in the whole of Africa. Many use sortilege with various objects—seashells, bones, seedpods, and palm kernels, for example—and also use haruspicy: examination of the entrails of a dead human or animal. They divine by the dung of elephants and antelope, by watching the flight of birds, and even by observing the tracks of crabs.

Residents of the area and travelers there have written of traditional elements of life and culture that still survive. Their communications to Kathleen form the basis of the descriptions that follow.

While some peoples follow one occupation (e.g., farming or cattle herding)
to the exclusion of all others, the majority combine several means of subsis-
tence. Many grow crops and also hunt. Nearly all keep goats, and many keep
a variety of other animals. The raffia palm is cultivated for its fiber; it also makes
a nutritious nonalcoholic drink and can be fermented into wine. The people
hunt antelope, monkeys, rodents, snakes, and leopards. They also eat insects,
snails, and birds. Poultry is used in festivals and for ritual offerings.

Many peoples, including the Kaka, have matrilocal family systems traditional-
ly; others, such as the Ashante, are matrilineal. Although many cultures have
a few polygamous family groups, most couples are monogamous. The women,
especially biological mothers, appear to wield much power. Within a “family”
of several household groups, an elder man is considered the leader. He is as-
sisted by a woman who is chosen by all the women of the family and exer-
cises the same level of authority as the older man.

Secret societies are apparently the backbone of these family groups. The
erd men have one society which guards the law. Younger men form another
society which controls food and taboos. The young men take care of initia-
tion; hunters take care of hunting; women take care of the woman’s position
in the society.

Outside the main cities of Douala and Yaoundé, the homes are usually of
two types. One is square, with raffia cane walls plastered over with earth and
a pyramid-shaped roof covered with thatch. The other type of home, not as
well constructed, is round, with a beehive roof and walls of raffia cane plas-
tered with earth. Inside each house, and in the center of the floor, are four large
stones, which hold a large clay cooking pot. In one corner of the house is a
second fireplace made of only three stones, where the children sit and play.
Along one of the walls is a cot made by driving four short stakes into the ground
to hold a framework of sticks and a mattress of grass or woven mat. The adults use this cot, though there may be a second one for children.

Adults and guests sit on low square stools or stones. Children usually sit on the ground or on small mats. The hut doorway is just big enough for a stooping adult to pass through. The door itself slides along the wall of the hut to open and close. There are bins for grain, which resemble houses but are smaller and sit on stilts, to protect the grain from rodents and weather.

Clothing is minimal. Jewelry is favored by both men and women. The men hunt, and the women fish, make pottery, and weave. The blacksmiths—a special caste—perform purification rites and divination, and make iron tools and weapons for the village. They also supervise religious matters and are consequently treated with a great deal of respect.

Strict rules and taboos are connected with all phases of family life. There is even a “correct” way for married couples to lie when sleeping together: the wife should lie on her side with her husband, also on his side, up against her back. The birth of twins is considered very lucky. Sex outside of marriage is not proper and is very much frowned upon. The mother and the mother-in-law have control over a bride and the bride’s dowry, and can even decide whether or not to bring about an abortion, should they consider it necessary to keep a marriage working and achieve family peace and harmony.

The people enjoy feasts and dancing for weddings, funerals, good harvests, and just plain fun. Travel is invariably by foot, though the people are cautious in their travels, being aware of the possibility of animal traps even on well-used paths. They also have a fear of potential dangers at crossroads or river crossings. The people disapprove of gossip, believing that it can cause problems to those who perpetrate it, and consider slander so bad that an offender
may be exiled from the village. They also put great stock in promises, oaths, and pledges of loyalty—so much so that in the days before British rule it was punishable by death to take an oath falsely.

Life, death, and health are major concerns. The people may seek widespread causes of illness, often looking for reasons within the family; for example, a husband may suspect that the wife has brought about a problem or illness. There is also a general fear of being cursed by a magician.

Legal matters are handled by a headman, usually a highly respected person. He may well use divination to help him in reaching his decisions. He sits over all legal matters and quarrels, and it is he who has the last word if his council (of men, but perhaps assisted privately by the woman of greatest authority) cannot reach a decision. All these practices are reflected in the symbols and pictures on the spider divination cards, which will be discussed in chapter 7.

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**AFRICAN TRIBES AND THEIR WORSHIP**

Throughout most of Africa, religion is an integral part of every family's life. As might be expected, there is great religious variety. For example, the Masai of Kenya and Tanzania and the Nuer of the Sudan focus on a deity associated with the sky and with rain, and give no thought to ancestors, whereas the Nigerian Yoruba see their ancestors as having reached the status of gods themselves, and give them due reverence. The Hottentots (Khoi) and the Bushmen (San), known collectively as the Khoi-San people, believe in a good god who battles a legion of harmful spirits.

There is a strong belief in animism—that all material objects either possess
a spirit or are at least associated with one. This may be the spirit of a departed ancestor or other human, or it may be a nature spirit of some sort. All these spirits have the power to bring either good or evil to the living.

Virtually all Africans believe in a Supreme Being, although this Being is sometimes so remote and unconcerned with humanity that it is not even prayed to. Below this Being the people place themselves, with the lesser gods, goddesses, and ancestors. Still below they place the forces of magic and medicine.

The Nigerian Yoruba religious temples and shrines are set up almost like a military compound, with everything in its proper place. The Oko Palace has one main temple dedicated to the Ogboni (earth cult) and, in the area in front of the palace, a secondary temple associated with the cult. Also found there are a secondary temple and two domestic shrines to Ifa.

Peoples throughout the continent of Africa have their own language and culture, along with their own deities and their own methods of working magic and divining the future. Although the Supreme One is, for most tribes, a somewhat vague idea or an unreachable entity, the lesser gods are quite accessible and very sympathetic to human problems. They can be flattered and bribed—and they can be threatened.

Animal life, quite naturally, ties in with the African's overall relationship with the divine. In the far north, in ancient Egypt, many of the gods were associated with, if not personified by, animals and reptiles. So it is throughout Africa. Snakes are especially revered (there are, after all, far more beneficent snakes than maleficent ones). Python worship is characteristic of many tribes in both eastern and western Africa, with "python temples" very much in evidence.
Some of the names for the Supreme Being reflect animistic beliefs. For example, in western Angola Kalunga is the name for God, but it also means “ocean.” In Zambia Lesa is God’s name, meaning “rain.” The Masai, of Kenya and Tanzania, use Ngai, a word also meaning “rain.” The Lugbara of Uganda use Adroa, meaning “river,” and the Ubangi-Shari use a word meaning “forest.”

Among the Kaka of Cameroon the traditional beliefs include a belief in a creator-god and reverence for the spirits of the dead. Each home has a shrine and each village has a main shrine, tended either by the headman or by the priest/blacksmith. Their God is Nwéi, and he is thought of as an invisible entity who created all things. The spider features in many legends and myths as the being that spun its web between earth and the sky so that humankind could have contact with the gods. It is also regarded as holy, since its den is in the earth, making it possible to contact the earthly spirits. The rooster is thought of as a harbinger for Nwéi, since it crows to herald the dawn each day.

The Ashanti, of central Ghana, believe in magical amulets and talismans, not only for protection but also for influencing people and gods. Their many lesser gods, the abosom, are known as “the children of Odomankoma” (the creator of the universe). Ancestor worship is an important element of their religious beliefs, since they believe the dead have supernatural powers.

Probably the most striking area of West Africa in terms of religio-magical practice is the Congo. Over half a million people live in the cities of the Congo, but twice that number live in rural areas. There is a very active priestly shamanistic tradition, represented by the person of the Mganga, or Mufumu. Much like the Wicca of western Europe, they are not only priests but doctors (with a great knowledge of herbs), lawyers, soothsayers, and casters-out of evil
spirits. As soothsayers, the Mganga divine by casting bones. These are large bones, especially the leg bones of goats that have been carved to represent various animals. According to their positions when cast, the Mganga is able to predict the future with regard to danger or success.

The Azande people live in the very heart of Africa bordering on the Congo, in southern Sudan, Zaire, and Central African Republic. They believe in sorcery and fear it, attributing any sort of bad luck or illness to the actions of a sorcerer. They believe that the sorcerer is afflicted by a substance that lies dormant in the stomach until it is activated by ill will, when it expands and causes the sorcerer to become a threat to all, using his power for personal profit. Many of their stories deal with the spider-god *Tula*.

The medicine-man/priest of the Masai is known as the *laibon*. His principal duty is healing, for the Masai are very warlike; the males are renowned throughout Africa as warriors. The laibon performs divination and prophecy when needed. Originally the Masai were cattle herders. Milk and blood from their cattle form their traditional diet. Once a nomadic people, today the Masai are being encouraged to settle into permanent agricultural communities.

The Zulu are found in southeastern Africa in the Natal province of South Africa. The kingdom was established by Shaka (or Chaka), a local chief who managed to bring all the Zulus together by conquering most of the other tribes in the region in the early 1800s.

The Zulu are atypical in that they revere a major goddess, whom they associate with the rainbow and with the beauty of the earth. Male deities and the spirits of the ancestors, who live below the earth and can appear in the form of snakes, are also part of their beliefs. The Zulu use diviners in times of illness. It is believed that the ancestral spirits send illness, so the diviners must
discover which one was responsible and then negotiate appeasement.

The Igbo (or Ibo) people of eastern Nigeria number close to four million. Their religion is known as Omenala. Their god is called Chukwu, which means "The Great God" (when referred to as the creator, he is called Chineke, meaning "God Who Creates"). There is also a goddess of the earth, Ala. Though there are no shrines to Chukwu, since it is believed that nothing can be made that is worthy of him, there are shrines to Ala in all the villages. Through her the living may communicate with the dead.

Every Igbo man is also empowered with a personal god, known as a Chi, and his success in life depends on how well attuned he is with his Chi. If a man works hard, then his Chi will lift him to greater things. There are diviners, or prophets (Ndi Amuna), and herbalists (Oje na muo) among the Igbo, and also those who have experienced death and then returned (Ogbanje). All are generally referred to as dibie, or "doctors."

**THE SMITH**

Working with fire and smoke to transform crude iron into tools and weapons, the blacksmith was held in awe in many cultures. His work in iron and bronze was so important that throughout the world the smith was regarded as a magician, a holy man. In African cultures the smith was also the sculptor.

Iron itself was regarded as near-magical and frequently credited with supernatural powers. The Aztecs called it "the gift of heaven" because it fell in the form of meteors. The ancient Egyptians called it "the metal from the sky." Amulets of meteoric iron were placed in the tomb of Tutankhamen. The Roman historian Pliny claimed that a house would be protected from evil spirits
if iron coffin-nails were placed over the entranceway. Perhaps the most famous smith of all times was Wayland, the ancient Saxon smith.

In *Anglo-Saxon Magic* (1974), G. Storms states: "Iron manifestly takes its power from the fact that the material was better and scarcer than wood or stone for making tools, and secondly from the mysterious way in which it was originally found: in meteoric stones. It needed a specialist and a skilled laborer to obtain the iron from the ore and to harden it. Indeed, we find many peoples regard their blacksmiths as magicians."

The Yoruba say that Ogun, their god of iron, would descend from the sky on a spider's web to go hunting. He knew the land and the forests. He enabled the Great God, Orisha Nla, to cut his way through the thickest forests, for Ogun's tools were made of iron whereas the Orisha Nla's were only of bronze. Yoruba mythology says that because Ogun cleared the way for the Great God, he was rewarded with a crown when the people built the sacred city of Ilé-Ifé. (The place where creation began was called Ifé, meaning "wide," and later the word Ilé, "house," was added to show that it was the house from which all earthly dwellings have originated. Ilé-Ifé has since been the most sacred city of the Yoruba people.)

In many African legends it is the smith who is healer and doctor. He teaches the people how to use fire, explains sexual behavior, performs circumcisions, teaches animal husbandry, and plays a major role in magic and divination.

On the Benue-Plateau of Nigeria, the Tiv use iron as an important part of a ritual to communicate with a recently deceased relative. The Ogowe, who do not use iron themselves, hold the bellows of neighboring tribes' smiths in great reverence. On the east coast of Africa, the Tschagga believe that if a smith's tools are pointed at a person—whether intentionally or unintentionally—that
person will become sick or even die. In fact, in many communities the smith is not only respected but also feared. Often the area around a smithy is thought to be dangerous ground. The Masai, the nomadic people of Kenya and Tanzania, firmly believe that to walk on the ground surrounding a smith’s hut is to risk sickness, misfortune, and death. They even believe it unlucky to say the word “smith,” especially after sundown.

The Dogon have created impressive bronze statuary. Yet they live in a very harsh area of West Africa, compared with the plain and coastal area of the Yoruba. Dogon country is dry, hot, off the caravan routes, and with little of the natural riches of Mother Earth. The people grow onions and millet and keep a few goats and chickens. The towns are usually settled at some distance from a well, where the women must go every day for water.

In most Dogon communities the blacksmith’s home and forge are given the special place designated for the head of the village. In some areas—as with the Zulus—he is held in such awe that he and his property constitute a separate “village.” His trade consists of digging ore from Mother Earth, the same earth that cradles and consumes the dead. He then, with the aid of fire urged by the constant air, makes the iron that gives the form to knives, tools, statues, masks, and other articles.

But even blacksmiths must follow some regulations. A smith may marry only a woman from another blacksmith’s family. He cannot own other farmland, not being permitted to work other land to plant and harvest crops. He lives only to make tools for farmers, weapons for hunters and warriors, and figures and masks for village priests. He and his family live from what these same people bring to him as payment for his work. Farmers bring him grain or poultry; what few hunters remain bring him a portion of their kill; even the priest
will bring blessings as well as foodstuffs and other materials for the blacksmith's family needs.

As a blacksmith's young son grows, in Yoruba society, he reaches an age where he must join a society. For the Dogon it is called an Awa. It is during his puberty rite that the young man is circumcised. Only men learn and speak the secret language of the men's society. The initiate, towards the end of the ceremony, must dance in a mask that he has made himself. As he grows older he then takes more active parts in ceremonies, which include sacrifices to ward off droughts and bring fertility. He will also dance at the funerals of important men.

Some of the most beautiful pieces made by smiths are funeral pieces. In Dogon belief every human has a life force called nyama. When a person becomes old this force begins to weaken and the person senses the approach of death. Then the blacksmith is called for, since the nyama needs a resting place so that it will not roam the country and cause problems or harm villages and crops. In a death ritual, the shaman causes the life force to enter the funeral piece the blacksmith has made. This is then placed with other similar pieces, all of which are kept by the village headman, who pacifies various nyamas with regular animal sacrifices.

There is no room here to detail all the African tribes and their multitude of beliefs. The continent is a never-ending source of fascination, because of its traditional religions and its many and varied forms of divination. Religious practices vary; older family members frequently follow traditional beliefs while younger members adopt Muslim or Christian beliefs. Daily life is often inextricably linked with religious belief and practice.

Let us now have a closer look at some of the more common forms of divination found among some African peoples.
Divination is common throughout Africa—or was until recent times. Within the last forty years much that was usual has become unusual, largely because of the dislocation of peoples (especially in southern Africa), the widespread growth of urban slums, problems of economic development, political instability, and population growth, which in most areas is occurring at a rate of 2.7 percent per year. Yet divination is still practiced all over the continent, though not on the scale that it once was.

As used to be the case with the Wicca of western Europe, many African magicians, priests, and religious followers hold their sacred rites out in the open: in the forests, on the outskirts of the villages, and occasionally within the village boundaries. Rather than enclosed temples or churches, they use nature's architecture to perform their magical and divinatory rituals in direct communion with the gods.

Sortilege is the most popular form of divining. Casting shells, kola nuts, cowrie shells, eggs, bones, and other such objects is simple and popular. For example, in The Northern Tribes Of Nigeria, C. K. Meek describes the Yoruba casting sixteen strings of palm kernels, the Nupe using eight strings of berries, the Yukun using six strings of calabash disks, and the Hola casting stones. M. J. Herskovits, in Dahomey, tells of a somewhat complicated form of Ifa divination "based on the interpretation, by reference to appropriate myths, of the permutations and combinations obtained by the diviner when he manipulates the sixteen palm-kernels he employs for his purpose." Many forms of sortilege become very complicated in their interpretation; innumerable permutations of the cast pieces are possible.

Palm wine is used for a form of divination in both the Ntim and Menemo
cultures. The wine is poured into a large shell, and millet seeds are scattered on the surface. The diviner interprets by the patterns that the seeds make, as with the patterns made by tea leaves in the bottom of a cup.

Among the Azande, divination used to be done in many different ways. The most usual and most reliable utilized termites. Two different kinds of leafy branches were stuck into a termite mound and left overnight. The following morning the diviner interpreted according to whether or not the branches had been stripped by the termites, which branches had been stripped, and/or the extent to which they had been eaten or rejected. Another favorite method was for the diviner to squeeze palm-nut juice onto the “female” of two rubbing boards (the boards were scored across). The “male” board was then placed on top of the “female” and slid across it. If it slid smoothly, the answer was positive; if it moved jerkily, with frequent sticking, then the answer was negative.

In the southernmost sectors of what used to be British Cameroons, we can see a tremendous variety of divinatory practices. Paul Gebauer, who lived in Cameroon for thirty years, noted some of them in Spider Divination in the Cameroons: the Bimbia cast pebbles and shells, the Bota people observe the flight of birds, the coastal fishermen practice string and kernel casting, the Bakweri hunters examine the droppings of elephants, Bakweri augurs gaze into heated palm oil, the Balong use the tortoise and land crab, the Bakossi shake trinkets in a basket, the Mbo use a small gray turtle, the Widekum cast seed pods, Bameta diviners throw four strings with four large seed pods tied to each string, in Mogamaw skulls serve as baskets to hold pebbles and duiker bones, the Banso split kola nuts and cast them, in Menemo they float grass seeds on palm wine, the Fungom practice water gazing, and the Mambila use the hard short fruits of the wild banana together with sixteen cowries.
In Cameroon most diviners have an assistant, or apprentice, who will take over the practice in due time. This assistant—usually, though not exclusively, male—accompanies the diviner wherever he may go, eagerly watching all acts of divination, and thus learning the meanings of all forms used. It may be two or three years before the assistant is allowed to do any actual divining. Eventually, when his master feels that he is ready, the assistant will be recommended for membership in one of the secret societies, such as the Kaka's mbir. As Gebauer says (Spider Divination in the Cameroons), "Within this circle of old men, leaders of the group, the assistant gains knowledge pertaining to the law and custom, history and religion. It is in this society of influential men that he may experience, during one of their secret night sessions, possession by the spirits, thus gaining the spiritual sanction for the office he aspires to."

Popular in West African divination method is the Yoruba system known as Ifa, utilizing seashells, which has been adopted and adapted by many in Nigeria's neighboring countries. Ifa was actually a man-god who came to earth to put the world right, say the Yoruba. His oracle was to be used in helping humankind in sickness and in childbearing, and to give guidance in the occult. Many African divination systems are based on a mythology showing how they were first used by a god or man-god, or how a man was taught to use the system by a god. The Fon of Benin tell of a man being taught to mark a board and to throw palm nuts from hand to hand as a means of divining. This is called Fa and is a variation of Ifa.

In the Transvaal the Venda use four marked pieces of ivory. They also use divining bowls, as do the Karanga of Zimbabwe. The Kaka diviner of Cameroon will scatter millet seeds on the surface of palm wine and read them like tealeaves. He will also augur by means of a dying chick and by the way in
which the wind blows carved wooden bird images suspended from a line. Many and varied are the ways of divining found in Africa.

A Ntim diviner is selective in his choice of divination tools. These tools are generally referred to as “bones,” though in fact they may not be actual bones but a combination of stones, shells, bones, nuts, and pieces of wood, for example. The diviner carries a large pack with all his various accoutrements: bundles of kernels, stones, bones, sticks, cowrie shells, and so on. Dried sansevieria leaves, tied into knots and placed on the ground, serve as magical protection for the bag’s contents. The diviner uses a snail shell as a container for casting small items such as seeds and pebbles. He also carries a calabash of palm wine, used primarily for purification. The diviner takes a mouthful of the wine and then sprays it from his mouth over the cards, shells, or stones as well as over the client!

A diviner generally breathes his own spirit into the “bones” before using them for a reading by holding them in his cupped hands, blowing softly on them, and asking the spirits to guide them as they are used. (You can do the same with any of your divination tools. Say something like this: “I breath my soul and the power of my Spirit Guide into these [shells/cards/bones/whatever]. May they be given life to guide me, and others, correctly.”) From this idea, which is found in many other cultures worldwide, comes the custom among gamblers in the West of blowing on dice for luck before rolling them.

It can be seen from just this small sampling that although a wide variety of divination methods is used, there are many similarities. Rather than attempt the impossible and examine all methods used by all African peoples, we have concentrated on a few select but characteristic methods, which we have
modified for Western use. For example, a simple yet effective form of the Venda divining bowl (described in chapter 4) can be made from a wooden salad bowl or platter, and chicken and rabbit bones can serve just as well as monkey, leopard, and lion bones. The Venda tablets can be made from pieces of wood or fashioned from clay. A Zulu-style set of “bones” can be assembled from chicken bones, seashells of various types, nutshells, and stones. The Yoruba people have a complicated system of divining with shells, which we have simplified using just sixteen cowrie shells.

The spider cards described in chapter 7 are used by the Tikar (Kaka). Kathleen Binger has pared down the number of cards from 290 to eighty, and they are reproduced not on plum leaves but on card stock. The working deck is included with this book so that you can fully explore this fascinating and effective African system of divination.

By either collecting all of these methods or just concentrating on one, you can use divination in a way that is both true to the African methods yet a reflection of your own individuality.
The Venda inhabit Zimbabwe and the Transvaal area of South Africa. They are mostly an agricultural people; cattle are not as important to them as they are to the Masai, Watusi, or Zulu. Those Venda who live away from the larger towns, whose systems of divination we will explore, have homes that are mostly round, and made of plastered mud and grass. These are usually placed around a central area containing a sacred tree.

Venda family life centers on home, family, and animals. The religion was originally animistic, with different clans holding a chosen totem animal in such deep reverence that it was never eaten. Unlike some other peoples, however, the Venda do not restrict women from coming into contact with cattle, nor do they have secret societies. They do, however, recognize a universal force in natural phenomena such as the rain and the wind, and highly respect other tribal deities and the ancestral spirits. Until colonization in the early nineteenth century, the Venda tended to treat their chiefs as divine personages.

The Venda use divination in many forms to find propitious times for important aspects of their lives, to help them make critical decisions, and to see what the future holds. Whereas in Western cultures one might cast a horoscope or read Tarot cards or tea leaves, the Venda turn to the divining bowl or to divination tablets.

The divining bowl has pictures around the rim and a carved wooden cowrie shell in the center, which represents the spirit or connection to the mother,
like an umbilical cord. Bowls similar to this have been found in the Zimbabwe Ruins—remains of buildings, including a citadel and temple, that date from around 200 CE.

The Venda cast five small bones, such as knuckle bones, into the bowl. Around the edges of the bowl are symbols representing such entities or qualities as health, wealth, work, relatives, or friends. Each of the bones represents something different and can be positive or negative. Interpretation is based on the relationship of the cast bones to the central cowrie shell and their proximity and relationship to the edge symbols.

A version of the Venda bowl can be made quite easily by using a shallow wooden salad bowl or platter. The symbols around the rim can be carved into the wood; marked with a wood-burning tool, which may be easier; or painted. For symbols, you can use any that you like, selecting enough different ones to cover most of the events likely to arise in life. Use the same ones the Venda use, if you feel you can relate to them. The symbol doesn't have to be elaborate as long as it is meaningful to you. Use two or three small symbols for each one if that makes interpretation easier for you. Use twelve divisions if you like, but if you can cover all your needs with fewer or more symbols, use another number.

There is no need to mark radiating lines from the central point. As long as you have a central point you can easily judge which division the bone has fallen in. For the central point itself, attach an actual cowrie shell, a small wooden block, or something similar by cutting a shallow depression and then gluing it in.

For this form of divination you will need five "bones." If you have nothing else to use for bones, then use five dice. Paint two of them one color, for posi-
tive; two another color, for negative; and the last a third color, for the unde-
cided. Shake up the bones or dice in your cupped hands, and then cast them
into the bowl. When you throw your bones, the closer to the center the bone
falls, the closer to the present time the event will be. Bones falling near the rim
suggest that the event in question will take place further in the future. Let's
take an example, using a bowl marked with the Venda drawings. One positive
bone falls in the Happy/Seasons area, close to the center, and the other posi-
tive one falls in the Home/Growth section, at the rim. One negative bone lands
in the Home/Love section, about midway to the center, and the other lands in
the Danger/Home/Growth section, close to the rim. The undecided bone falls
in the Herds/Growth section, near the center.

The first bone could indicate good health for the present and near future.
The second bone shows good reputation and standing in the community,
though this will not be achieved for a while. The third shows an unhappy love
affair in the near- to not-too-distant future. The fourth speaks of bad news
being received from a sibling at some time in the future, and the last points to
uncertain finances for the next few weeks.

In this way it is possible to use a divining bowl much as the Venda would.
As in most African divination methods, the Venda have very complicated per-
mutations of interpretation, with the bones meaning different things depend-
ing on which way they land (much like dice), where they land in the bowl, and
their relative positions to one another. Once you become familiar with the
casting, you can certainly add your own refinements to this system.
Divination tablets are very popular among the Venda. They are used as a set of four and have carved or painted decorations on one side only. They can be cast, like dice, with the diviner reading the one, two, three, or four decorated sides that land face upward. The tablets can be made of wood, clay, bone, rock, or ivory; you can make a set from any of these materials. They should be a size that feels comfortable for you to hold and throw—even popsicle sticks can be used! In general, we suggest dimensions of 1 1/4 inches by 3/4 inch.

These examples of the four Venda tablets illustrate close parallels between the elements and family relationships. When interpreting, remember the traditional African sense of kinship with all life, with the trees, rocks, rivers, and animals. The family unit is important; the people are at one with their gods and in tune with their ancestors.

**THE MAN, FATHER, OLD MAN**

This tablet represents the element of water, the rain, and semen. It is masculine; without it, life will not spring forth. By itself it is oppression; it can also represent richness. It is the power of life.
THE WOMAN, MOTHER, OLD WOMAN, MARRIED WOMAN

This tablet is of the earth, for the earth holds life within her, and only with the fertilizing life-giving rain can she bring forth life. By itself this tablet represents motherhood, nurturing and caring, and home life. It also suggests caution, for as with the earth, without care and love there can be barrenness and death. Caution is also suggested, because there is no worse fury than that of a mother protecting her home and family.

THE YOUTH, SON, UNMARRIED MAN

This tablet represents the element of fire. It is rash and hot, like blood flowing from the body or lava flowing from the earth. By itself it represents a boy or son, or health and energy. It shows a need for further learning, a need for some restraint and thought before acting (the Venda say that many youngsters are like goat-kids; without experience, they impetuously attempt things that adults know to be dangerous).
This tablet represents the element of air. It fans the flame and moves the water across the earth. By itself it represents artistic talents, luck, and innocence. This girl can be the innocent child or one who is so naive and trusting that she falls into the clutches of those who will do her harm. Does not the daughter bring new blood into the family fold through her beauty?

The Venda may use alternative designs for these tablets:
On the face of it, four tablets might seem to lead to a very simple form of divination. Yet these four tablets can fall into a total of sixteen different patterns, which makes them more interesting. When the four tablets are cast and just one lands face up, the interpretation of the individual tablet is used. When more than one tablet lands face up, each combination has a different interpretation.

**FATHER AND MOTHER**

This combination of water and earth elements shows two mature forces joined. They bring with them all of life's experiences and give good counsel to all who ask. You will either make a good decision, receive some sound advice, or give sound advice. Much depends on the question asked of the tablets.
FATHER AND DAUGHTER
The combination of the elements of water and air shows the strong male energy matched with the young girl's zest for life, bringing new life, new ideas, love, and friendship. Something new may happen; what it is, of course, depends on the question asked.

FATHER AND SON
With the elements of water and fire, the two male energies merge, creating steam and generating extra strength for what lies ahead. There is a danger of overdoing things and the possibility of an ensuing explosion. Hard work is ahead if you are to succeed. In addition, however, you will have the strength you need to accomplish what you desire. Again, the answer depends on the question asked.

FATHER, MOTHER, AND DAUGHTER
With the three elements of water, earth, and air, quite a storm may be brewing! The presence of the girl creates an imbalance; she stirs up the father, who in turn churns up the mother. This combination represents a problem, an overpowering force that weakens the male energy so that there is the danger of illness, loss, or the ending of a relationship.

FATHER, MOTHER, AND SON
The elements of water, earth, and fire are present. As the two male energies merge, they create steam and generate possible danger. Here again, one of the children gets in the way of family peace. Fire sears the earth and then water falls, causing a flood. This could be a brutal cleansing; it could also be a fan-
tasy: perhaps an illusion, a dream, or a subconscious fear. The reading suggests that further planning or investigation may be needed before proceeding with any project. Something has been overlooked or neglected.

**FATHER, MOTHER, SON, AND DAUGHTER**

The presence of all four elements represents perfect harmony, love, and knowledge. Everything is in the best possible condition. The time is right to do what is planned. The answer is "Yes!" You cannot get a better answer from a reading, no matter what the question.

**FATHER, DAUGHTER, AND SON**

With the elements of water, air, and fire, the fire that has been stirred up by the air is now quenched by the fresh waters, creating steam that heats and cleans the air. This pattern indicates energy in the higher mind. You should now listen to the ancestors, to guidance by that inner voice, if you are to succeed. Depending on the question, you should trust the inner self more than others at this time.

**MOTHER AND DAUGHTER**

A desert could not be drier than this combination of earth and air. Here is a quiet, passive, and pleasant grouping. It waits for something to energize it—ideas, momentum. This is a slow, devitalized time. In a reading, it indicates that nothing negative is happening, nor is anything exciting taking place. Perhaps the person who asks the question should take it easy for a while. Much depends on the question that is asked.
AND SON
Earth and fire form an energizing combination. Since fire can fertilize and freshen the earth, this pattern suggests opportunities for expansion. Remember, however, that fire can burn and scorch if it gets out of hand, so planning and control are necessary. Travel or education may be forthcoming. A project may require further investigation to be properly completed.

MOTHER, DAUGHTER, AND SON
The elements of earth, air, and fire suggest caution. Think of the earth covered with fire, being pushed and fed by air. What energy is at work here? This pattern shows a weakness—the possibility that someone or something is dishonest, deceitful, or illusory. Matters could get out of hand without caution and protection. Think carefully about the question before interpreting the answer.

DAUGHTER AND SON
The elements of air and fire have all the energy of youth. Fire energy fed by the air enables the questioner to overcome nearly any difficulty. However, think before rushing into the fray. The question will guide you to the answer.

ALL BLANK SIDES UP
The answer here is a definite "No!" Try to put off any plans or trips until later. Energy is very low right now. It is time to relax, take it easy, regain strength, and perhaps look at your intentions and review your plans.

Using the elemental combinations as your guide, you can modify the Venda tablets to suit yourself. Create your own designs to represent the four people, ideas, and forces, and put them on whatever material you enjoy using.
The Zulu people live along the east coast of South Africa. They are said to have migrated there from an area north of Swaziland. They number about four million. Before colonization, the Zulu religion was animistic and was focused on the ancestors. Their myths and legends tell how the first Zulus were women from another planet, as well as how the Creator drew the first Zulu out of a reed. The Zulus used to measure their wealth by the number of cattle they owned. Today many, if not most, Zulus—the young men especially—live in cities, and of necessity many men work in the mines. The traditional Zulu life-style has been greatly disrupted by the South African government’s policies and by enforced relocation.

But beyond the cities, Zulu villages do still exist, though the masculine element consists of old men and young boys. The villages are made up of round grass huts protected by a stockade of hedges and thorn bushes. It used to be common for a Zulu man to have several wives, each having her own hut for sleeping and another for doing her daily work. The main wife, the one held in the most honor, would have her hut near the cattle corral. There were also separate huts for the grown, unmarried children—one for males and another for females. As is so common in Africa, the shape of the Zulu hut has a special meaning: it represents the womb.

Burial takes place in a circular grave, again representing the womb. The deceased is placed in a fetal position as if it is about to be born or reborn. Women are regarded as being like the earth, since life enters (conception) and leaves (birth) through both. According to tradition, only women cry for the dead.
Marriage was traditionally negotiated between families. The young man's family might make an offer of eleven cattle—ten for the girl's father and one for the girl's mother. The mother's cow was not returnable should problems arise in the marriage!

Zulu society is patrilineal, and a man can usually trace back his ancestry to one common grandfather within the community. All the children belong to the father and the father's family. If a father dies, all his children look to his younger brother (their paternal uncle) as their new father.

There are many taboos surrounding women. For example, a woman is considered polluted when menstruating, before giving birth, and immediately after giving birth. A woman who is a chief mourner may not be approached by a man. Women may not travel at night. Female spirits and female ancestors are thought to be mischievous and negative. Male spirits and male ancestors are considered powerful and positive because they only punish when it is necessary. Men are considered unclean when they kill, whether in self-defense, in war, or in cold blood. Such a man must then live away from society.

Illness is seen in two ways. Diseases or colds are sometimes caused by outside influences and can be treated with medicines. Other illnesses are caused by the ancestors, sorcery, or the individual's own mind.

Sharing is very important in all aspects of Zulu life. For example, every wife cooks and then takes her meal to the chief wife's hut. All then eat from one bowl, passing it around from the man to the wives and then to the children. In similar fashion, cattle and other property are shared. Many a chief has lent his herds of cattle to those not as fortunate as he. The people care for the cattle, using the milk, and keeping the calves, until they are able to care for themselves again.
The Zulu's relationship with nature is all-important. They believe that all forms of life send out energies that are absorbed by other life forms moving into that environment. That life, in turn, sends out energies to be absorbed by others, and so on. The energies passed along can strongly affect both humans and animals. A Zulu traveling outside his usual territory may encounter foreign energies that may lead to sickness and a visit to a doctor.

ZULU DIVINERS

Zulu practitioners of divination, sorcery, and healing fall into different categories, some of which are as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sanusi</td>
<td>A sorcerer, who can be male or female but is generally male; the title is sometimes applied to a healer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Znyanga Zokwelapha</td>
<td>A healer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Znyanga Zemithi</td>
<td>A specialist in tribal medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Znyanga Zezulu</td>
<td>A weather worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangoma</td>
<td>A counselor or diviner; usually female but sometimes male.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All practitioners begin as apprentices. There are many reasons for entering this apprenticeship: family tradition, a special talent that becomes obvious, or, as in the days of Shaka the great war chief, a way to avoid being drafted into the army!
The sangoma, whose method we describe here, divines using a set of objects that have special meaning or energy. After an apprentice spends some time with an established sangoma, she begins to develop her own style and repertoire. She collects a bag of oracle bones, choosing them according to what the animal or other material represents to her. Almost everything is collected in twos: a large item to represent the male, a smaller one to represent the female. Here is a list of divinatory meanings and some of the items that represent them, as used by the Zulu and by some peoples of central Africa.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wealth</strong></td>
<td>Hoof tips, abalone shells, leopard bones or teeth, nut shells, turtle shells, cattle bones or teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Luck</strong></td>
<td>Abalone shells, leopard bones or teeth, nut shells, sea shells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Losses, death</strong></td>
<td>Turtle shells, sea shells, monkey bones, sea urchin spines, dog bones, hyena bones, crocodile bones, ant bear bones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secrets, sacred</strong></td>
<td>Turtle bones or broken shells, spiders, monkey bones, nut shells, duiker bones, ant bear bones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge, strength</strong></td>
<td>Turtle shells, lion bones or teeth, nut shells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family life</strong></td>
<td>Sea urchin spines, cow teeth, nut shells, baboon bones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kindness</strong></td>
<td>Springbok bones, nut shells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>Lion bones or teeth, leopard bones or teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time, changes, life</strong></td>
<td>Springbok bones, monkey bones, leopard bones, spiral sea shells, duiker bones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immortality, rebirth</strong></td>
<td>Snake skin or bones</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You can accumulate your own set of "bones." It is always far better to acquire and make your own than to simply purchase a set. You can, of course, substitute what appeals especially to you; we suggest using chicken bones, abalone shells, spiral shells, cowrie shells, tiger eye stones, sea urchin spines (or cow teeth), and nut shells or pine cone scales. When they are not in use; keep the objects all wrapped in a cloth, which in turn can be placed in a special bag. Don't allow anyone else to touch or use your set.

You may wish to purify or cleanse the set before initial use. This can be done by the Wiccan magical method of sprinkling and censing (sprinkling with salted water and then holding in the smoke of incense), but a more traditional African way is simply to set them in a bowl of cedar chips. This, with the appropriate concentration of energy from you, will ground and cleanse the divination tools.

The divinatory meanings and items to follow are those taught to Kathy and used by her. They differ somewhat from those in the list just given. You may choose to use either set.
THE WHOLE PERSON

Two chicken leg or wing bones: a larger one to represent male and a smaller one to represent female.

**Open fist = negative side**

Choose bones that are not too large, so that they will be easier to handle. On the cupped side of each bone place a small dot with felt-tipped pen or paint to help indicate the negative side. This side resembles an open hand grabbing for something, while the other side resembles the back of a fist and is the positive side.

**Closed fist = positive side**
FINANCES: TWO ABALONE SHELLS
LARGER FOR MALE, SMALLER FOR FEMALE

ROUGH SIDE UP = NEGATIVE

SHINY SIDE UP = POSITIVE

These can be of any size and color as long as one side of each shell is smooth and shiny and the other is rough and dull. The shiny side represents wealth, good fortune, money, or gifts to come. The rough side represents losses or problems. One shiny side up together with one rough side up shows that change is in process. It would therefore be wise not to make any financial or other important decisions at this time.
Time is read by the distance the two shells fall from one another. If they touch, the time is the present, or up to a week from the present. Time can be measured roughly with a finger joint; The tip of the finger, approximately one inch long, can equal one month, two joints can equal two months, and so on.
In the list of Zulu objects above, the crocodile represents death and losses. Golden tiger eyes can be representative of crocodile eyes. These, then, can represent all obstacles, illnesses, and accidents in a reading.
The back of the shell looks like an eye, which Africans say is looking at you. If both of these are facing up, then the shells see good choices and luck. This is also a "Yes" answer to a question. If the other side is up (the one with the opening, referred to as "the mouth"), the answer is "No," all decisions are poor ones, and problems will develop. It is said that the shells (eyes) are asleep. If one eye is up and one mouth is up, any decisions should be put off and the question asked again at a later date, because there are changes in the process.
In a reading, two of the spines (or cow teeth, which are now easier to obtain than sea urchin spines) represent favorable people, or children, who will affect the outcome of the question. The third spine or tooth, which is decorated with beads or paint, is an enemy or someone working negatively. If you are asking about a particular person, you can say that person's name and then use one of these spines or teeth to represent him or her.
The nut shells or pine cone scales have one smooth side and one rough side. They represent achievement of your goals, response to the question, or even the quality of life in general. If these touch or separate the other bones, this indicates guidance from the higher mind.
The bones described here are all thrown together to obtain a multifaceted "life" reading, with the elements of finances, obstacles, friends, and so on delineated. Normally the sangoma will cast the bones like dice, either onto the ground, or a small mat or into a marked circle as shown on page 53. You can use a piece of felt, leather (suede is good), or cloth on which you have marked a circle about twelve inches in diameter. When you cast the bones, any piece that falls outside that circle is disregarded.

You can mark the directions, weather, and so on as shown on the outside of the chart and use them in many ways; for example, the notations for the weather can be used to indicate emotions as well as weather.

The circle is divided into four main areas, and the area certain bones fall into is carefully observed. For example, if the larger chicken bone falls into the northeast section of the circle, it indicates a male who is usually extremely self-centered and materialistic, seeking personal satisfaction.

These descriptions and interpretations are guidelines only. In all readings, listen to your own inner voice instead of trying to learn interpretation by rote. Your intuition is by far the most reliable source of information. The meanings of the bones will vary depending upon whom you are reading for, and will change from person to person. Make your own set of bones. Use them. Interpret them as you feel. Chapter 8 contains some sample readings that can give you more of a feeling for interpreting the fall of the bones.
**Descriptions of Persons Shown in the Readings Can Be Found in the Houses and Sections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Houses 1, 5, 9:</th>
<th>Called <em>ubhuti</em> (sons); these people are hot-natured, with the traits of <em>selume</em> (youth). They are adventurous and passionate, with much fire in the heart. Many tend to be like a <em>ngonyama</em> (lion).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Houses 2, 6, 10:</td>
<td>Called <em>keadi</em> (old woman); these people are nurturing and possessive. They tend to have their feet planted firmly on the earth and can be stubborn as a bull. They can be healing as well as hard-working.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houses 3, 7, 11:</td>
<td>Called <em>lenewe</em> (maiden); these people are pleasure-seekers and love unusual, exotic things. They are light of heart and tend to be peace-makers and pioneers. They can be those who <em>indaba</em> (talk).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houses 4, 8, 12:</td>
<td>Called <em>lekgo</em> (old man); these people usually live by secret or inner experiences and can seem withdrawn or shy. They may have a <em>mandla</em> (power) but may also be <em>ngozi</em> (accident-prone).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
harmonious communal existence, but in towns too the households are often large. .. Children are brought up by the whole 'extended family' and not just by the parents. They thus become familiar with the traditions and rules from a very early age."

The religio-magical system represents division into light versus dark, or good versus evil. Both the white orishas and the dark orishas are anthropomorphic deities, having a natural human form. The white orishas, or light deities, are usually cool and have life-giving energies (for example, Oshun is the goddess of rivers, marriage, and love). The dark orishas, on the other hand, are hot and exhibit their powers in war or in activities where blood is drawn (Oggun is the god of metal and war, for example). Some of the deities are Obatal\Aganyu (father of the orishas), Yemana\Onile (mother of the orishas), the lustful and passionate Chango, Egbe, Olodumare, and Orangon.
The prepared shells are shaken in the hands and cast into a circle drawn on the ground, or on a piece of cloth or sheet of paper. As you shake the shells, concentrate on the question being asked. From the shells that fall within the circle, count the number of "mouths" that face upward. The digits of this number are totaled, if necessary (e.g. 15 = 1 + 5 = 6), and the answer is obtained by reference to the following list:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>FIRST ANSWER</th>
<th>SECOND ANSWER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Freedom, spirit, creation, take charge now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Partnership, unity, uncontrolled energy, need for diplomacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Frustration, caution, learning for happiness, hard work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Not yet</td>
<td>Opportunities, talents, expansion, be with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes, but use caution</td>
<td>Power to create or destroy, think before doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Not yet</td>
<td>Sacrifices, compromises, caring, inner strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes, but use caution</td>
<td>Victory, love, women, uneasy relationships, intuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Not yet</td>
<td>Learn to plan and communicate, think carefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Very emotional, stressed out, need time to think, births</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Delay necessary, absolutely no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
door. The cover is removed from the pot, and everyone—even the chief—strains forward in the hope of being able to see into it. The nkù-ngám peers inside. The bottom of the pot is broken and it sits over the home of an earth spider. A number of cards, made from plum leaves and carefully marked and patterned, have been scattered inside the pot. Even as the diviner removes the cover, the spider finishes its work of moving the cards about and returns again to its hole beneath the calabash. The diviner studies the rearrangement of the plum leaves and gives the headman his interpretation. Thus is the fate of a criminal determined, on this particular morning.

There are several variations on the word ngám: ngám means “divination,” especially of the variety utilizing the West African earth spider; ngám means “spider”; and nkù-ngám means “diviner.” Besides the diviner, the spider is the only other creature that may handle the cards. This system was very popular in Africa until the Second World War (Murray, Cultural Atlas of Africa). Since then, as with so many of the old ways, it has fallen into disuse, being practiced only by the older generation. Variations of the name appear among the many grassland peoples. The Limbuni use ngá, the Bikon ngámbo, the Kwang ngámbó. Duala, a coastal Bantu language, uses ngámbi with reference to oracles and any means connected with them. Another coastal language, Bassa, uses ngámb in the same way.

The ngám cards, or at least their symbols, probably come from the original homeland of the Tikar people, before their migration into western Cameroon about 300 years ago. Throughout eastern Cameroon and parts of Nigeria, although different tongues are spoken, practically everyone understands the symbols on the cards. The cards themselves come in various shapes and sizes but the symbols are always the same, with only very slight variations. Decks of cards are, or were, handed down from generation to generation.
In the northeast section of the Bamenda Province, in southwest Cameroon, live a large group of people called by many different names but all of Tikar origin. Many of them, the Kaka people in particular, practice Ngám divination, the basis for the card system included with this book. Ngám utilizes the West African earth spider, a large, black, hairy spider often referred to erroneously as a tarantula. In fact it is a *Heteroscodra crassipes*, a relative of the trapdoor spider. The full-grown specimen measures between four and six inches and has a body about three inches long. The bite of this spider is feared by many Africans who believe it to be deadly, but though painful, it is rarely if ever fatal.

The Kaka believe that this spider possesses supernatural wisdom: that because it nests in the ground it must therefore be in contact with the gods and ancestors who dwell below the surface. The spider is a popular design with craftsmen of all types, from clothmakers to woodcarvers to silversmiths. Almost all village groups have adopted a stylized spider design as their royal emblem, and every headman owns at least one of the creatures for the purpose of daily ascertaining the will of the gods.

The morning starts with the bleating of goat kids and the crowing of roosters hailing the rising sun. Inside the square and beehive-shaped huts of the village, the fires are prodded into life and the first meal of the day is prepared. Children run in play, and adults move about purposefully, commencing their chores.

At the sound of the headman's gong, the people move towards the chief's house and gather in the forecourt. A wizened old man, the nkú-ngám, or diviner, appears and leads the way to a large calabash pot lying beside the path to the headman's...
The nkú-ngám may choose to operate the cards himself or use a spider to do it. The spider method is usually reserved for occasions of great importance, rather than for ordinary, everyday readings.

The original system utilized more than 200 plum leaves (*Pachylobus edulis*, the African plum tree), with the symbols either cut, burned, or woven into each card. The nkú-ngám places a piece of fur on the ground between himself and the card container. The fur serves as a wrapper for the container but is also used in the divination process. It is usually from the civet cat (*mbé*), which is regarded as an animal of extraordinary knowledge, probably because of its nocturnal wanderings and ability to see in the dark.

The diviner places the cards in the palm of his left hand, and he blows into them several times. He then holds them between the thumb and index finger of the left hand and rests that hand on the fur. With the fingers of the right hand he gives the cards a flick that sends them flying and scatters them along the outstretched fur. Any cards that fall across or beyond the hollow raffia container are those which are read for the client. The cards are then gathered up and the whole process is repeated. This will go on until the nkú-ngám is satisfied that all has been revealed.

The main difficulty with the cards, from a modern Western point of view, is that there are far too many of them. For example, the deck contains at least twelve different cards dealing with death in various forms. There are also cards for hunting leopards, antelope, farming chickens, goats, evil spells, and secret societies. Obviously these would not be relevant in the United States. Kathleen has therefore pared down the total number of cards by carefully reviewing the symbols and combining some where duplication was found. The people cards were kept, as well as one for death, various legal cards, and others. She
arrived at a much more manageable total of eighty cards, whose distinguishing features are shown here. As in the original deck; each symbol is shown twice, once on a positive card and once on a negative card, so that each idea is represented by two cards. Positive cards are marked by two triangles at the top of the leaf symbol; negative cards do not have triangles. The contrasting pictures on each pair of cards further illustrate the positive or negative elements in each situation. The leaf symbol is shown at the top of each card; it is in the shape of the plum leaf cards of Cameroon and is slightly smaller than actual leaf size.
KEY WORD: COMPLETE

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf has 2 triangles. The picture shows a well-built house. Meaning: Everything is fine, almost perfect. You can sit back and relax. Everything that can be done is being done. What you have done recently is leading to perfection.

KEY WORD: INCOMPLETE

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is empty. The picture shows an unfinished house. Meaning: You have forgotten to do something. You need to take your time to avoid forgetting something. Someone is unhappy because things are not complete. Make up with friends.
CARD 3

KEY WORD: INNOCENT GIRL

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf has two triangles and the symbol for one breast. The picture is the head of a young girl.
Meaning: This represents a young girl or an unmarried woman. You may meet, or your life may be affected by, such a young woman. Something good may happen to you. You may be seen as innocent.

CARD 4

KEY WORD: CULPABLE GIRL

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 3 but without the two triangles.
Meaning: This young or unmarried woman is naive or is teasing. You may need to be careful around such a person. You may be seen as being careless or naive yourself.
**CARD 5**

**KEY WORD: CARING MOTHER**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf has two triangles and two breasts, representing a mature woman like the one shown in the picture.

Meaning: This is a mature woman, most likely a married woman or an unmarried one with children. She is a helpmate and is very caring, kind, and nurturing.

**CARD 6**

**KEY WORD: SELFISH MOTHER**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 5 but without the two triangles.

Meaning: This woman could be divorced, widowed, or unhappily married. She cares only for her own welfare and is generally nasty. She is friendly only when it serves her own best interests. Someone like her could affect your life soon.
KEY WORD: WISE OLD WOMAN

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf has four notches on each side and has the two triangles. The picture is of an older woman.
Meaning: This could be an in-law, a grandmother, any elderly woman. In any case she is kind, helpful, and very wise. She will soon help you, or has helped you already. Perhaps you are seen as such a person.

KEY WORD: NOSY OLD WOMAN

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 7 but without the two triangles.
Meaning: This elderly woman could be an in-law or a grandmother. She is not a good person to have around. She tends to get underfoot and is always snooping. She may affect you soon or has already done so.
KEY WORD: HELPFUL BOY

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf has the two triangles and the design of either an arrow feather or a hair. The picture shows a young male.
Meaning: This is a young boy or an unmarried youth. He is energetic, happy, and always ready to help others. He thinks good thoughts and likes to plan things before doing them.

KEY WORD: RASH BOY

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 9 but without the two triangles.
Meaning: This boy, or unmarried youth, is uncouth, rash, and impulsive. This person gets involved in problems that he himself causes, though he blames others for them. He is very careless. He may affect your life soon, or has already done so. Be careful.
**CARD 11**

**KEY WORD: MATURE MAN**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf has the symbols of a cap and a person, plus the two triangles. The card shows a mature man.

Meaning: This man is married, or has been so, and has a family. He is always working to help his family and friends. He is good and caring. Perhaps you are seen as such a person, or you will be affected by him soon.

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**CARD 12**

**KEY WORD: GREEDY MAN**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 11 but without the two triangles. The man is unhappy. He could be unhappily married or widowed. He does everything to benefit only himself, and could be cruel and vindictive. He could affect you soon, or already has. Use caution.
**CARD 13**

**KEY WORD: WISE OLD MAN**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf has notches on both sides plus the two triangles. The picture is of a noble-looking elderly man.
Meaning: This is an older man: a grandfather or in-law, who is very wise from experience. He is helpful and tries not to be a bother. He is a counselor, helping those who seek his advice. He will come into your life soon, or already has.

**CARD 14**

**KEY WORD: NOisy OLD MAN**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 13 but without the two triangles. The picture is of a mean-looking man.
Meaning: This older man can cause frustration and anger. He could be a family member or a friend who is nosy and greedy. He pries into others' lives and wants to be taken care of. Soon he will affect your life, if he has not already done so.
CARD 15
KEY WORD: AUTHORITATIVE

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf has the two triangles and three symbols, arranged from top to bottom: chief's eyes, chief's robe, and chief's stool. The picture shows a ruler holding feathers in his hands.
Meaning: This person is in authority: perhaps a supervisor, boss, or family member. He is wise, careful, approachable, and not domineering.

CARD 16
KEY WORD: DOMINATING

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 15 but without two triangles. The ruler in the picture holds a whip.
Meaning: This person uses his power for the wrong reasons. He is cruel and very crude. He drives those under him in order to realize his own ambitions.
Do not ask for a raise at this time. Your boss could be in a bad mood today.
CARD 17

KEY WORD: PERSON IN CHARGE

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf shows the symbol for a person sitting on a stool, plus the two triangles. The picture shows a high official.

Meaning: Here is a superior, a boss, or the head of an organization or group. Now is the time to take ideas to your boss. You may have to meet with an authority figure. Someone close to you may want to take charge, in order to help you out.

CARD 18

KEY WORD: DESPOT IN CHARGE

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 17 but without the two triangles.

Meaning: Here is a domineering person who chooses to be restrictive, overbearing, rude, or just plain nasty! Perhaps someone wants to run your life for you. Be careful and do not let yourself get out of control.
**CARD 19**

**KEY WORD: GOOD GOSSIP**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf shows the symbol for tongue and ear, plus the two triangles. The picture shows a secret being whispered to another.

Meaning: There is a chance that you have avoided being talked about, or your reputation is very good at this time. If you hear gossip, do not repeat it. You may avoid a quarrel.

**CARD 20**

**KEY WORD: HURTFUL GOSSIP**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 19 but without the two triangles.

Meaning: There is a chance that you are being talked about. You may also hear some gossip that may hurt you and/or someone else. You should be careful in your actions for a while.
KEY WORD: SOCIAL DOINGS

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf shows three mouths and the two triangles. The picture is of a pleasant group of friends.
Meaning: There may be a family get-together, a social function, or a gathering of good friends doing things together. There is plenty of food and much happiness.

KEY WORD: SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 21 but without the two triangles. The picture shows two friends ignoring a third person.
Meaning: Something is lacking in your life, perhaps food, friends, or family. If there is going to be a social function, there may be problems. You should be kind.
**CARD 23**

**KEY WORD: GOOD NEWS**

**Leaf Symbol:**

Description: The leaf has the two triangles on it and symbols that represent people communicating. The picture shows a woman who has received good news.

**Meaning:** Some kind of news is coming your way, through writing, by telephone, or from friends. Something good may also be coming. Now is a good time to follow your instincts.

**CARD 24**

**KEY WORD: BAD NEWS**

**Leaf Symbol:**

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 23 but without the two triangles. The picture shows a woman who has received sad news.

**Meaning:** You may soon hear about a problem. You should think carefully about what you write and say, as you could be misunderstood or misquoted.
CARD 25

KEY WORD: CONTENTMENT

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf has the two triangles and symbols representing the arms bent over the head in rest. The picture shows a woman holding a full basket. Meaning: Your situation seems better than ever. You can be happy with what you have and what you have done. Peace of mind and pleasant events are on the way.

CARD 26

KEY WORD: DISCONTENTMENT

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 25 but without the two triangles. The picture shows a woman holding an empty basket. Meaning: Living conditions may be poor at the moment. You could be unhappy, or setting yourself up for problems. You must avoid greed and avoid being envious of what others have worked for.
**CARD 27**

**KEY WORD: TIME OF PLENTY**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf has the symbol of the finger and the hoe, as well as the two triangles. The card shows four containers in good condition.

**Meaning:** Gifts could be on the way. Everything seems to be plentiful. You will have no problems getting what you need in life.

**CARD 28**

**KEY WORD: DEPRESSED TIME**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 27 but without the two triangles. The picture shows the containers broken.

**Meaning:** You may be feeling depressed. Could it be that you have not prepared for the future? Have you, or has someone close to you, been lazy? Are you prepared for a disappointment?
Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf has the two triangles and the symbol of an arm, as if it were placed across the abdomen in happiness, or as if to pat another’s back. The picture shows a well-tended plant.

Meaning: You can be pleased with yourself. Things are falling into place because of the hard work you have done. You could receive a prize or a gift.

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 29 but without the two triangles. The picture shows a plant that has been neglected.

Meaning: There could be scandal. Have you failed to work hard enough at your job or school? You could be subject to sadness because of an obligation you did not fulfil, or because of others’ actions.
KEY WORD: FAIR TREATMENT

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf shows the symbols for people and a hand, plus the two triangles. The picture shows two men on the way to market with burdens that are balanced.

Meaning: There is balance in work and play. By maintaining this good balance, you will gain in wealth and friends. You must be fair and kind.

KEY WORD: UNFAIR TREATMENT

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 31 but without the two triangles. The picture shows two men going to market, one with an overly heavy burden.

Meaning: You must not push others to do what you cannot do yourself. You may feel that others are pushing you. You could be under fire from others, now or in the near future. Proceed carefully.
**CARD 33**

**KEY WORD: WOMEN'S FUN**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf shows the symbols for breasts, a group of women, and the two triangles. The picture shows a group of women playing.

Meaning: There may soon be a women's event or a social function. Someone will be helping you and others. A group of women may help you.

**CARD 34**

**KEY WORD: WOMEN'S TREACHERY**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 33 but without two triangles. The picture shows two women killing a chicken.

Meaning: This is a time of impracticality. There is treachery among women friends. Be careful at any event involving a group of women.
KEY WORD: MEN'S MEETINGS

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf shows two triangles and the symbols for men. The picture shows a group of men gathered.
Meaning: Anything to do with men and groups of men is favorable now. There is much good in these groups. Now is an auspicious time to join a society.

KEY WORD: MEN'S QUARRELS

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 35 but without two triangles. The picture shows men fighting.
Meaning: Events may get out of control. Quarrels and harm may come from groups of men. Do not join any men's organizations at this time.
Leaf Symbol:

**KEY WORD: GOOD MARRIAGE**

Description: The leaf shows the symbol for two people sleeping correctly, plus the two triangles. The picture shows two people joined at the hands by a ring.

Meaning: Marriage and love are favored now. Your spouse or lover is true to you. An engagement may take place. All is good and happy.

**CARD 37**

__KEY WORD: DISILLUSIONMENT__

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 37 but without the two triangles. The picture shows the ring, symbolizing the couple's union, broken.

Meaning: There is a problem with love; perhaps a lover or spouse is being unfaithful, jealous, or untrue. Question your reasons for love now.
**CARD 39**

**KEY WORD: PARTNERSHIP**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf shows the symbol for two people turned back-to-back, plus the two triangles. The picture shows two hands clasped, joined by a ring.

Meaning: Others have good intentions. An affair or a partnership could develop soon. Now is a good time to get others to work together.

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**CARD 40**

**KEY WORD: DISAGREEMENTS**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 39 but without the two triangles. The picture shows hands breaking the ring.

Meaning: An engagement or friendship may be broken soon. Things may go wrong because of emotions and tensions. Use caution and proceed slowly.
CARD 41

KEY WORD: FORTUNATE TRIP

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf shows the symbol for footprints, as well as the two triangles. The picture shows a man walking.
Meaning: You may soon go on a trip. Friends will be coming to see you, or you will visit them. Now is the time to plan a trip.

CARD 42

KEY WORD: TRAVEL PROBLEMS

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 41 but without the triangles. The picture shows an injured man walking.
Meaning: There are problems with travel, caused by a friend or by a stranger. Plans may be set back or even canceled. Take your time to plan now and travel later.
**CARD 43**

**KEY WORD: OVERCONCERN**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf symbol shows tears and the two triangles. The picture shows a man overreacting to a mouse.

Meaning: Things are not as bad as you may think. You are building that proverbial mountain out of a molehill, but you have managed to avoid problems.

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**CARD 44**

**KEY WORD: CAUTION NEEDED**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 43 but without the two triangles. The picture shows a man walking into the path of a leopard.

Meaning: Take the time now to avoid problems later. You need to think and to be careful. Try to find an outlet for your energy and worry in exercise and relaxation.
Leaf Symbol:

KEY WORD: GOOD PARTIES

Description: The leaf shows the symbol for a stool and has the two triangles. The picture shows a young woman dancing to sekere music.

Meaning: This is a good time to have friends get together for fun and frolic. You should be with people you like. You may be invited to be with others now.

Leaf Symbol:

KEY WORD: THWARTED PLANS

Description: The leaf is the same as Card 45 but without the two triangles. The picture shows a woman unable to cross the river to meet her friend.

Meaning: Something could get in the way of plans for fun and games. If you are invited out, perhaps it would be wise to cancel and stay home.
**CARD 47**

**KEY WORD: PRACTICAL**

Leaf Symbol:

**Description:** The leaf has the two triangles, plus four circles that represent the main fireplace in the home. The picture shows a well-made fireplace.
**Meaning:** The home environment is fine in all respects. You can keep it that way by being practical.

**CARD 48**

**KEY WORD: IMPRACTICAL**

Leaf Symbol:

**Description:** The leaf is the same as in Card 47 but without the two triangles. The picture shows a messy fireplace.
**Meaning:** You should take the time to make repairs now. Something may have been left undone that needs to be taken care of. Plan now to avoid problems later.
**CARD 49**

**KEY WORD: PLEASANT DREAMS**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf shows the three boards that represent the bed, plus the two triangles. The picture shows a person having a pleasant dream.

**Meaning:** You will have good and happy dreams. Your love life is good; you can keep it that way by thoughtfulness and by planning ahead.

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**CARD 50**

**KEY WORD: NIGHTMARES**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 49 but without the two triangles. The picture shows a person having a nightmare.

**Meaning:** There may be a problem with either marriage or romance. You may have illusions about an affair of the heart. It would be best to think matters over before entering any type of partnership.
KEY WORD: ORGANIZATION

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf shows the symbol for the roof and the door of a house, plus the two triangles. The picture shows a well-made house.

Meaning: Home life will seem better now. Everything will be well if you remain organized and disciplined.

KEY WORD: DISORGANIZATION

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 51 but without the two triangles. The picture shows a house in disrepair.

Meaning: In connection with your chores around the home and for the family, something has been lost, forgotten, or purposefully not finished. If you want your life to get better, now is the time to pick up the pieces and get busy.
KEY WORD: UNUSUAL GOOD LUCK

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf symbol represents a chief's gong, used to call others to meetings. The picture shows a man happy to receive a package.

Meaning: Something "out of the blue" is coming your way. Friends and/or family may have some good news for you soon. Happiness is on the agenda.

KEY WORD: QUESTIONABLE LUCK

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as Card 53 but without the two triangles. The picture shows the man unhappy with his package.

Meaning: You may hear some news that is unwelcome, but how you react to it is important. You must not let it bother you. Pay attention to it and learn to avoid other problems.
CARDB 55
KEY WORD: ESCAPE FROM DECEIT

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf symbol shows a trap set for a person, as well as the two triangles. The picture shows a man avoiding an obvious trap.
Meaning: You are fortunate: someone laid a trap for you and you avoided it. The person planned to get you into difficulty, but you are smarter than they gave you credit for. Keep up the good work.

CARDB 56
KEY WORD: DECEIT POSSIBLE

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 55 but without the two triangles. The picture shows a young man being led into a trap.
Meaning: Someone is very untrustworthy right now. Be on the lookout for problems. A co-worker or someone you consider a friend may be deceitful.
KEY WORD: ESCAPE FROM DECEITFUL WOMAN

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf shows the man-trap symbol, two breasts, and the two triangles. The picture shows two children running away from a nasty woman. Meaning: A woman has lost control of you. You are safe. Somewhere there is a woman who is not good for you.

KEY WORD: DECEITFUL WOMAN POSSIBLE

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 57 but without the two triangles. The picture shows a nasty woman setting a trap for some children. Meaning: You have been caught by some form of deception. Be cautious around women for a while. A woman is setting a trap for you; be on your guard.
CARD 59

KEY WORD: CAREFULNESS

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf shows the symbol for an animal trap, plus the two triangles. The picture shows a woman carefully crossing a stream.

Meaning: There is always a way to avoid problems. You may have already done so, but it pays to be ever cautious. Problems are all around you, but you can avoid them.

CARD 60

KEY WORD: CARELESSNESS

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 59 but without the two triangles. The picture shows a woman falling from a slippery rock into a stream.

Meaning: You have not paid attention to what is going on around you. You may fall into a situation you would rather be free from, or problems may be ahead of you. Think, and you may at least reduce the number of potential problems.
KEY WORD: GOOD MEETING

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf symbol shows the two triangles and also logs, which are used as seats and are also pushed into the fire to keep it burning. The picture shows a man and a woman being introduced.

Meaning: A meeting or conference may go well now; you and your ideas will be favored. Now is the best time to meet with anyone in authority.

KEY WORD: MEETINGS UNFAVORED

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 61 but without the two triangles. The picture shows the man trying to talk to the woman.

Meaning: A meeting or conference will be unbalanced for you right now. Initially there may be only one person against you, but that person could sway all the others. Be very careful, or postpone the meeting.
**CARD 63**

**KEY WORD: GOOD HEALTH**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf symbol is of a spear wound and has the indented sides of illness, as well as the two triangles. The picture shows a man running in the sun, full of vigor.

Meaning: Your all-around health is good or is improving. You should feel good about yourself. There is no need to worry about anything.

**CARD 64**

**KEY WORD: GUARDING HEALTH**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 63 but without the two triangles. The picture shows a man with an injured foot.

Meaning: This may be a good time to see your doctor. If a problem shows up, do not overdo. You must guard your health well. Exertion or stress may cause health problems.
Leaf Symbol: KEY WORD: GOOD CHOICES

Description: The leaf symbol shows a cross and the two triangles. The picture shows a man at a crossroad.

Meaning: You took your time with decisions you have made and used forethought. You have made some good choices. Now, help comes from friends and from unexpected sources.

Leaf Symbol: KEY WORD: POOR CHOICES

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 65 but without the two triangles. The picture shows the man approaching the end of the road.

Meaning: You may need to think again before making any commitments. Caution is needed, since there is a hidden problem with whatever you have in mind.
Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf symbol is that of the sun, and has the two triangles. The picture shows a man enjoying a drink in the shade of a tree.
Meaning: This is a good time for you to enjoy your life. All around you now there is health in love and in life. Your problems will soon fade away. Have fun!

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 67 but without the two triangles. The picture shows a drought.
Meaning: Things will soon “dry up” for you. You will need to take stock, plan for your future, and not rely on appearances. Think, plan, and discipline yourself now before your life gets worse.
KEY WORD: GOOD TRANSFORMATION

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf symbol is of a coffin and has an indented edge symbolizing a kneeling person, as well as the two triangles. The picture is of an African carving representing a dead person’s spirit that has gone on to bliss.

Meaning: Changes made now are for the better. If you have lost friends, or things, it is for the best, as they had outlived their usefulness.

KEY WORD: UNCONTROLLED TRANSFORMATION

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 69 but without the two triangles. The picture shows the carving pierced by a spear.

Meaning: You must make changes carefully now. You could cause more problems than you solve if you do not take the time to think and plan; the Higher Influences may even take matters into their own hands now.
**CARD 71**

**KEY WORD: LOYALTY**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf shows the symbols for an open hand and oaths, plus the two triangles. The picture shows two hands shaking in agreement.

Meaning: You may be asked to make pledges, take an oath, or demonstrate loyalty. If you must go to court, events will go well for you if you are truthful.

**CARD 72**

**KEY WORD: DISLOYALTY**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 71 but without the two triangles. The picture shows one hand offered in friendship and loyalty but another hand pulled away.

Meaning: Now is not the time to make a promise. Someone or something is not right. Caution is needed in writing or other forms of communication. If you are scheduled to go to court now, try to get a postponement. Something is wrong and you would not win.
**CARD 73**

**KEY WORD: PROTECTED**

**Leaf Symbol:**

**Description:** The leaf symbols show fences and groves of trees that protect houses, as well as the two triangles. The picture shows a house protected from weather and people.

**Meaning:** You are safe. Either you or someone else has taken the time to safeguard you and your belongings. Legal matters are successful.

**CARD 74**

**KEY WORD: UNPROTECTED**

**Leaf Symbol:**

**Description:** The leaf is the same as in Card 73 but without the two triangles. The picture shows a home that is open to the unexpected.

**Meaning:** Look around—somehow you have neglected to take the proper precautions for keeping both you and your home safe. Be careful around the home and in your car. Think carefully before doing anything.
**CARD 75**

**KEY WORD: FAIRNESS**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf symbol shows a group of people in council, plus the two triangles. The picture shows balanced scales.

**Meaning:** Your life is balanced. You will have no problems with others. Even if legal problems develop, you will come out of them smelling like a rose. Others are loyal to you.

**CARD 76**

**KEY WORD: UNFAIRNESS**

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 75 but without the two triangles. The picture shows unbalanced scales.

**Meaning:** You must use common sense now, since the elements of your life are not as favorable as they could be. Legal matters could get out of control. Friends are not truthful. Others are trying to use you.
CARD 77

KEY WORD: GOOD FUTURE

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf symbols show the four corners, the yearly seasons, and the two triangles. The picture shows a man moving through calm waters. Meaning: Now is the time to adapt to changes and to new situations. Events will flow well as long as they are planned ahead of time. Past actions may not affect you well. Look to the future. Plan ahead and live well.

CARD 78

KEY WORD: CHANGEABLE FUTURE

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 77 but without the two triangles. The picture shows a man moving through stormy waters. Meaning: Try to keep calm. Events will be a little "crazy" for a while but will improve, especially if you take time now to think or plan before acting. Changes are approaching; they will be easier for you if you are willing to adapt.
KEY WORD: KEPT SECRETS

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf symbols represent lips, words, or thoughts, and also include the two triangles. The picture shows a person not sharing gossip.
Meaning: You will be told a secret which you must keep to yourself. You may hear gossip or a rumor, but you must not spread it. Be quiet.

KEY WORD: LOST SECRETS

Leaf Symbol:

Description: The leaf is the same as in Card 79 but without the two triangles. The picture shows three people enjoying gossip.
Meaning: Lies and gossip can now get out of hand. Something is not right. Keep what you know to yourself, or you may get caught up in nasty intrigues. Some information about you is now out in the open.
INTERPRETING THE CARDS

Remember when reading these cards that any card with two triangles at the top of the leaf symbol is a positive card. Any card without these triangles is a negative card. The pictures also show whether a situation is positive or negative.

Don't forget that the meanings of the cards will change according to the question(s) asked. In other words, go by your own feelings about the cards—for that particular client or for yourself—rather than trying to read or remember any standardized interpretations. Keep your questions as simple and direct as possible.

If you have a favorite Tarot card spread, you can use it with these cards. If you are unfamiliar with Tarot you can simply proceed as follows:

1. Concentrate on your question, phrasing it as carefully and concisely as possible.
2. While you are concentrating, thoroughly shuffle the cards.
3. Cut the deck at any point and look at the bottom card of the section you have lifted. This is your answer.

If you would like a more detailed answer take the top card, from where the cut was made, and lay that down as representing the past. The next card should be laid alongside to represent the present, and the next card as the future.

A popular Tarot spread is that known as the Celtic Cross. This will give a much more detailed examination of the forces at work around your question. This spread works well with the Tikar cards.
1. Concentrate on your question, phrasing it as carefully and concisely as possible.
2. While you are concentrating, thoroughly shuffle the cards.
3. Cut the cards and lay down the first ten cards as follows:

Card 1: The present energies and forces at work around the client.
Card 2: The negative obstacles or forces working against the client.
Card 3: The client's present subconscious needs and desires.
Card 4: Past events affecting the present situation.
Card 5: The client's ambitions and goals.
Card 6: Prospects for the near future (days, weeks, or months up to twelve months from the present).
Card 7: The client's strengths and weaknesses; any negative influences.
Card 8: Close friends and allies, and their views.
Card 9: Hopes, fears, and lessons to be learned.
Card 10: Final outcome.
Kathleen uses the cards not only by themselves but also together with other African divination methods (see chapter 8 for examples of questions answered by several different methods). Experiment with the cards and see what works best for you.

As has been mentioned, the nkú-ngám “breathes” on the cards each time before using them. This is to put some of himself, his life force into them. You may also want to do this, and also to sleep with the cards under your pillow for at least three nights when you first get them so that they absorb some of your energy. We recommend both these practices.

When shuffling the cards, decide whether or not you will allow others (e.g., the client) to handle them. Will you ask the client to shuffle, or will you do the shuffling? It doesn’t matter which, as long as you are consistent.

Let us look at a few sample card spreads, some of which Kathleen laid out when she first assembled these cards, together with the readings just as she made them.

Question: What is the future of this deck of cards?

Kathy originally designed the deck for her own use but as others increasingly asked where they could be obtained, she looked into getting them published, hence this question.

The cards were shuffled and the top ten cards were laid out in the order shown on page 109. The numbers refer here to position rather than to the numbers of the cards themselves. From left to right, Cards 1 to 5 are laid in a straight line. Card 6 is placed above Card 3; Card 7 goes below and between Cards 3 and 4; Card 8 is placed below and between Cards 2 and 3. Card 9 is placed above and between Cards 1 and 2. Last, Card 10 is placed above and between Cards 4 and 5.
Cards 1, 2, and 9 refer to events of the recent and distant past surrounding these cards. A person of some influence, an older man, has had input into the cards—perhaps the author of the book on spider divination that Kathy found in the Milwaukee Museum. A problem needed to be dealt with, which could have been the price of the book or Kathy's need for better writing skills to do this present book.

Card 6 refers to the idea and influence around the question. A person close to Kathy seems to have a negative influence, particularly on her writing this book and working on the cards: her husband?

Card 3 refers to myself, Kathy, at the moment of asking the question. The situation looks better. I feel that I have avoided most of the problems of the past and am enthusiastic about the project, while knowing that I must proceed carefully.

Card 7 refers to any obstacles set. Perhaps I am not considering the amount of hard work and the realities of my chosen project. This can be corrected by planning and by taking my time.

Card 8 refers to what will benefit me. The card shows a woman who is down on herself; perhaps alone or ill, but must also be a woman who can help me. It happens that I am in touch with just such a woman! She is a psychic and astrologer, who has recently had cards and a book published and is already being very helpful to me.

Cards 4 and 5 refer to the immediate future. It looks as though I have a chance to have my dreams fulfilled. However, I must deal with a man who will not be easy to work with. He may disagree with me about how I should proceed—it sounds like my husband again!

Card 10 refers to the distant future and possible results. Here a good idea is shown, or a young person who is fine, intelligent, and very energetic.
From this reading I determined that my work would be successful if I took my
time with preparation. I must take care in dealing with others who have other
opinions about my work, and perhaps not feel hurt when they point out my fail-
ings. All in all, I feel good about the reading and will proceed with greater care.

Question: What will it be like to work with my friend in California?
Kathy's friend is a young, adventurous woman who runs her own business and
had proposed a joint project, but Kathy was uncertain about its advisability. The
cards were shuffled and the top thirteen cards were laid out in the order shown on
page 112.

Card 1 refers to Kathy at the time of the reading. Everything is all right. My women
friends are all glad for me and will help me with my project.
Card 2 refers to any males involved. There has been a good separation from, or
break-up with, a male recently. This will help me.
Card 3 refers to other women. It shows that the women I am dealing with will
soon send good news my way.
Card 4 refers to only the best that could happen. The situation contains some
difficulties, both for me and for my proposed partner. These problems will have
to be taken care of before our business can proceed.
Card 5 refers to the worst that could happen. The amount of work needed may
be more than we anticipated. We should investigate shipping and other costs.
Card 6 refers to creative potential. Something is wrong. There is sadness or ill-
ness at the moment. Perhaps we are not packaging the product properly.
Cards 7 and 8 refer to emotions and mental atmosphere. Happiness and a good
situation are suggested. (However, I wonder how good it can be if travel is shown, since I am not keen on traveling?)

*Card 9 refers to hidden influences involving the question.* According to what I see here, either she has avoided some sort of problem, or I have. (Boy, am I glad of that!)

*Card 10 shows the outcome or result.* There could be a parting of the ways: a separation or even loss of a friendship for one or both of us. We will have to be careful.

*Card 11 shows past tendencies.* Secrets were lost.

*Card 12 refers to present tendencies.* An older woman—perhaps her mother—is creating problems.

*Card 13 refers to the future.* This is not a favorable card; it shows someone being overly bossy, rude, domineering, and just plain nasty. I had better try to be very understanding and pleasant!

**Question:** Which would be better for me to work at the upcoming psychic fair: morning or afternoon hours?

At an upcoming "Women's Expo" in a neighboring city, Kathy was asked to do some psychic work and was given the option of either morning or afternoon hours. The cards were shuffled and the top nine cards were laid out in the order shown on page 114.

*Cards 1, 4, 7 refer to the morning hours.* Two of the cards are positive, showing that it will be all right to work then. The cards also show that the day will start off in a confusing manner. Next, I will receive some good news, and then perhaps react to an event involving men.
Cards 3, 6, and 9 refer to the afternoon hours. All three cards are positive. Cards 2, 5, 8 refer to the evening hours. Only one card is positive. This confirms that I should not work the evening hours. Some sort of problem would arise, and perhaps because of being tired, I would make mistakes.

As a result of this reading, Kathy told the organizers that she would work during the morning and early afternoon hours quite happily, but not work in the evening. The expo turned out to be extremely slow-paced, and after only four hours Kathy went home. Late that afternoon, she was contacted by another potential client who in turn led her to many other contacts, some of them men, whom she might well have missed had she worked during the evening.

From these brief examples it can be seen how the cards are read and that they can be used for virtually any situation. The next chapter shows other sample readings, using the cards together with other methods of African divination.
Here is a group of actual readings, using different African divination systems for each question, to demonstrate how the systems can be used. The questions cover five main areas of life: Health, Love, Home Life, Career, and Protection.

Kathleen used the bones and tablets together on the first question and the bones, tablets, and cards on the second, in both cases throwing the bones and tablets onto the marked circle used in Zulu divination (see p. 53). For the other questions she used sea shells, tablets, and cards, individually, putting all the readings together to give an overall answer. In nearly all cases the answers were remarkably similar; all supplemented one another, and gave a sense of security. Finally Kathy did two card spreads with the African spider divination cards in traditional Tarot layouts.

**HEALTH**

**Question:** What can you tell me about my mother-in-law's illness and her possible stay in the hospital?

**Tablets and Bones (p. 117):** First we look at the cowries' "eyes" and "mouths." In this reading they lie with one eye up and one mouth up. This shows that at the time of the reading changes are taking place, so it would be wise not to make major decisions at this time.

Next we notice the bone that represents the mother-in-law (the short female bone). It is on top of the male bone (which probably represents either her doctor or her son), showing that she can be overbearing and has a mind of
her own. The bone is in the negative mode: it fell with the dot uppermost. One of the money shells lies on top of her bone; the other rests on the line of the second house (kedi). This indicates that expenses will not be as high as expected.

The piece representing the enemy or problem person lies on the line between the sixth (kedi) and seventh (lenuwe) houses, touching one of the problem stones. This shows that she may consider, or have problems with, a younger doctor who deals with her illness. The time pieces lie about three inches apart, showing that within two to three months she may either have to return to the hospital or will no longer need medical treatment.

Another look at her bone shows that it also touches the other problem stone, which in turn touches a time piece that lies on top of a friend/child piece in the twelfth house (lekgolo) of withdrawal. In this case she could be her own worst enemy! With the tip of her bone piece over the fourth house (lekgolo), she could cause much stress in her home environment.

The Youth tablet lies face up while the others are all blank. This indicates impulsiveness, fevers, or too much energy expended by her. She will recover this time, but if she is not careful she could bring about a different health problem or even wither away at home.

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**HOME LIFE**

**Question:** How will the woman affect her son as a result of the operation she has undergone?

**Bones, Tablets, and Cards (p. 119):** The bones and the tablets are cast onto the
circle. Then four cards are laid out counterclockwise — lower left, lower right, upper right, upper left. The cards are read first.

**Card 69:** This is for the best. She should prepare now for making beneficial changes in her life. Higher forces have taken control and made some changes for her, hoping to open her up to new possibilities.

**Card 56:** Either a friend or a family member cannot be trusted at the moment. Also, her own emotions are unstable.

**Card 25:** There will soon be peace of mind and pleasant events, which will make her happy.

**Card 28:** She will feel depressed when she reviews her ambitions in life. Poor living conditions have contributed to her distress and probably will continue.

The bones are read next. The male bone, representing her son, rests on top of her bone. He will try to control her, and her ego will fight back, causing confrontations. The money tablets are one up and the other down, so the financial situation will fluctuate. The cowrie shell eyes are the same: one up and one down, showing changes.

The tablets are Mother and Youth, with two blank, showing expansion of any previous difficulties. There will be growth for the son if he can handle matters calmly. The time elements show that in five to seven months things will come to a head.

There is a larger friend/child piece lying in the seventh house (*lenewe*), indicating that the son may not consider his wife as important as his mother, at this time and in this situation. Overall, the mother-in-law may create problems in the family by wanting her son to be with her and carry out her demands.
Question: How is my marriage going to be affected by the in-laws' health problems? (Close relatives on both sides of the family are very ill.)

Sea Shells: Seven shells eyes up.
Yes, it will be affected but not in the way you might expect. The relationship has not been on an even keel anyway; however, you will soon find that you do need each other. Do not panic; hang in there and all will be resolved.

Tablets: Mother, Young Girl, two blank.
Matters are on hold right now. You need to try to sit back and relax, or at least ease off from the problem for a while.

Cards: 39 (Partnership), 14 (Nosy Old Man), 80 (Lost Secrets).
It will not be affected to a great extent, but the partners may see each other in a very different light. Where faith and trust were until recently, feelings seem suddenly old, unforgiving, and changeable. Ahead will be communication of feelings that had been held back by both, but it is worth considering whether it is really wise to be entirely truthful!

Overall Answer: There is no doubt that your marriage will be affected by the in-laws' health problem, but not to any great extent, so don't get too worried. Time is the answer here: be patient and you will find that the situation, which has never been good, will improve. Don't volunteer information, but be open to receive.

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Question: Will my marriage survive the problems besetting it?
Sea Shells: *Nine shells, eyes up.*
Yes, but it will be very emotional. All involved will need to take time before reacting to other's actions.

**Tablets:** *Father, Young Girl, two blank.*  
If you work out things correctly this could be a new beginning. How you both handle quarrels and tribulations will be decisive. Something pleasant could be born from all of this.

**Cards:** 40 (Disagreements), 53 (Unusual Good Luck), 79 (Kept Secrets).  
Probably an event in the past is now causing this problem. You could soon receive favorable news that will refresh your life; the future will be good. However, some secrets will be remembered that you would do well to keep to yourself, if you truly seek happiness.

**Overall Answer:** Yes, your marriage will survive its present problems. Both partners need to be considerate. News will come that offers new hope and promises of a good new beginning.

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**HOME LIFE**

**Question:** Will the necessary repair work finally be completed?

**Sea Shells:** *Six shells eyes up.*  
Not yet. Try to understand the present situation and the causes of the delay. Perhaps a compromise can be made that will make all happy.

**Tablets:** *Youth, three blank.*
Be patient. Something has to be learned here. Do not panic and don't be rash. Energy is here, but also a possibility of error or accident.

**Cards:** 31 (Fair Treatment), 80 (Lost Secrets), 39 (Partnership). It is possible, but at a later date. Promises that were made in good faith are now broken through fear and the discovery of a secret. Ahead, the pledge may be kept, together with something else that you had not planned on.

**Overall Answer:** No, the repair work will not be completed when expected. However, the contract was made in good faith so try to be patient.

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**Question:** Will mother-in-law be a problem once she comes home from the hospital?

**Sea Shells:** Five shells eyes up.

Yes, she will, but only as much as you allow. Try to be diplomatic. Always think before acting; try not to be impulsive in reacting to her.

**Tablets:** Youth, Father, two blank.

She must learn not to overdo anything. Work and strength will be needed for her success. She must listen to the doctors and to others who care for her if she is to be happy.

**Cards:** 50 (Nightmares), 6 (Selfish Mother), 54 (Questionable Luck).

No, but she can be her own worst enemy. A negative letter or other type of communication may arrive and cause a problem for her. The situation may create an emotional problem for her, or she may create one herself.
Overall Answer: She could well be a problem if you allow her to be. Be patient with her and don’t let her do anything that would jeopardize her health.

Question: Will we ever relocate from this area, or from this house?

Sea Shells: Ten shells eyes up.
Possibly, but a break with the past must first be made. Now is the time to move—but within yourself. There is no turning back from what has transpired. You must now take charge of your own life.

Tablets: Youth, Mother, two blank.
Expanding is possible, but much work and planning are needed first. Opportunities will present themselves to you when the time is right. Start preparing for them now.

Cards: 31 (Fair Treatment), 51 (Organization), 21 (Social Doings).
The answer is yes. You have had much success in your home life. Now you can be content where you are, knowing that the future holds happiness in the form of social functions, family get-togethers, and general family fun.

Overall Answer: Yes, you will move, though not necessarily immediately. Plan for the event so as to be ready when the time is right.

Question: Will my husband achieve a more contented life-style?

Sea Shells: Ten shells eyes up.
Not really, mostly because of his materialistic outlook, his reactions, and his
abnormal attachment to his mother. His lack of persistence and determination will hold him back.

**Tablets:** *Mother, Father, two blank.*
He should look for advice and counsel, or start to act on his own intuition. He can make some good decisions if he really wants to do so.

**Cards:** 77 (*Good Future*), 3 (*Innocent Girl*), 4 (*Culpable Girl*).
The answer is not definite. Past activities have not been bad. Either a young woman or fresh ideas have kept matters new and interesting. The future indicates that some ideas, or a person, could bring difficulties into your life through impulsive actions and desires. Be careful and you can avoid the worst of it.

**Overall Answer:** Your husband is not likely to change unless he really applies himself. He has the ability but apparently not the inclination. He needs help to make the move.

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**C A R E E R**

**Question:** Is my profession going to be changed because of the illness in the family?

**Sea Shells:** *Five shells eyes up.*
Yes, it will be, but only to the degree you allow. You tend to use frustrations either to reconstruct your system/cycle or to let it fall by the wayside. Think and organize carefully if you wish to succeed.

**Tablets:** *Youth, three blank.*
You need to learn restraint and to think before acting. Perhaps the male in-
volved will need to become more controlled and not so emotional, if he is to be of any help to you.

**Cards:** 22 (*Social Problem*), 3 (*Innocent Girl*), 43 (*Overconcern*).

Yes, it is. Only by being positive now can you relieve any stress or sadness that may occur later. Move on and try not to be overly concerned.

**Overall Answer:** Yes, your professional life is going to be altered in some measure; the extent is up to you. Be especially aware of professional relationships with men.

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**Question:** Are the special dolls that I make for sale worth the effort?

**Sea Shells:** *Eight shells eyes up.*

Not now, but they will be.

**Tablets:** *Father, Mother, Youth, one blank.*

There could soon be illness, loss, or an end to something, so put off this project till later on. Plan a new one.

**Cards:** 40 (*Disagreements*), 15 (*Authoritative*), 49 (*Pleasant Dreams*).

It has not been timely to make the dolls for some while now, but the prospect will improve. Someone in an important position, or business, will see them and take a liking to them. You will then move forward to new ideas and ways of constructing them.

**Overall Answer:** Although the dolls are not worth the effort at the moment, this will change and you will get your reward. Keep thinking of new ideas, for them and for other projects.
Question: Is this woman going to survive her health problem?

Sea Shells: *Five shells eyes up.*
Yes, but with some sort of continuing problem(s). It will be up to her to think before acting with regard to her diet and excessive use of her vital energy.

Tablets: *All blank.*
The answer is mostly negative. She still has much to do with influencing matters.

Cards: 31 (Fair Treatment), 70 (Uncontrolled Transformation), 37 (Good Marriage).
Yes. Her past diagnoses were made by competent people who took charge of the situation properly. She is now accepting the change in her life pattern. If she tries to change her role to a more positive one, she can retain a happy family and social life.

Overall Answer: Yes, she is going to survive, though she needs to think positively and act carefully if she is to pull through altogether.

Question: Is this health problem that has been successfully dealt with going to lead to other health problems?

Sea Shells: *Eight shells eyes up.*
Not now, but it will later. All must learn to communicate, listen, and plan. There is much work to be done. Full effort must be put into her life now—into her physical and mental state—or there will be failure.
Tablets: Youth, Young Girl, two blank.
There is energy to rush into action. This may lead to new problems, which could be avoided by watching her health carefully now.

Cards: 61 (Good Meeting), 4 (Culpable Girl), 48 (Impractical).
Not really; it all depends on her. The health problem was dealt with properly and correctly. Soon a provocative and unsettling mental delusion may creep up on her and upset her. She can prevent such an upset by adhering to already established health plans. There may be problems with her bone structure.

Overall Answer: There is no reason why it should lead to other health problems if she follows directions and adheres to the life-style that has been laid down for her.

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**PROTECTION**

Question: Should I inform the authorities about the problem children? (Kathy's neighborhood had recently been disrupted by the arrival of a family with four boys, who were destructive and prowled around at night.)

Sea Shells: Eight shells eyes up.
Not now but later; take more notes and wait.

Tablets: Mother, Young Girl, two blank.
Put a hold on it for a while. The timing is not yet right. Back off and look at the problem from a different point of view.
Cards: 52 (Disorganization), 28 (Depressed Time), 55 (Escape from Deceit). Not yet. This is an unsettled home with peculiar situations in it. Things are not quite right; something is lacking. Help is on the way, so wait: things will work out.

Overall Answer: No, not yet. Wait for a while, but keep notes as you wait. Try to get the whole picture.

Question: A family (different from that in the above question) is causing Kathy problems—are these people going to become a worse problem?


Tablets: Father, Young Girl, two blank.
Change and new beginnings are in process. Wait for a while. Be careful.

Cards: 8 (Nosy Old Woman), 54 (Questionable Luck), 59 (Think Now). Not yet. Wait. At the moment an elderly woman is being unhelpful. A message or news may arrive that will not be good for them. A trap laid for them may create the situation you are looking for. Be patient.

Overall Answer: They are not likely to become a worse problem. Be patient and things will work out to your advantage.

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Question: Will Mary find the love and contentment she seeks?
The cards are shuffled and cut, and the top ten are laid out in the Celtic cross method described on page 107.

Card 1: Present energies. There is an older man, possibly a father figure or another older person, who is probably married. This person cares for her very much at the moment and wishes to help her. He may be influencing and affecting her, through communications or transportation.

Card 2: Obstacles. Her feelings need to be re-evaluated and her desires brought down to earth. If she allows her fantasies and feelings to run her life she may never be truly happy. Quarrels and debates seem to be hard for her to handle.

Card 3: Present subconscious needs or desires. Her drive for personal freedom and her ambitions may have been influenced by someone elderly in her past. She wants someone to take total care of her and to relieve her of personal problems. She should examine what she has done to get herself into her present position so that she can help herself. No one else can help her at this time.

Card 4: What she brings from her past. Problems and feelings of hurt and anger. There could be an older woman, perhaps a mother or grandmother, who pushed her and was overly critical of her when she was a child. She must let go of those feelings and of any resentment if she is to be happy.

Card 5: Ambitions or goals affected in the weeks or months ahead. Problems may develop soon when she discovers hidden secrets—something she would be better off not knowing—that may affect her philosophies and may even involve legal action. She must not take any oaths or pledge any loyalties at this time.

Card 6: Prospects for the near future. She must guard herself because an enemy may make her look bad by her actions and ambitions. Diplomacy is the keyword for the moment. Be careful.

Card 7: Her strengths, weaknesses, and views; any negative influences. She wants to escape her problems through all forms of communication (movies, television, etc.).
sion, radio, books), or by traveling to far places. She has confidence that friends will help her.

Card 8: Her environment and how others see her. Others view her as knowledgeable, though overly stubborn in philosophies and traditions. She will soon receive some good news or be invited to a social function, which will be good for her. She will meet with men and others who will make her happy.

Card 9: Lessons to be learned for the future. Many changes are needed, and time (a couple of seasons) must pass. Through this time she will have an opportunity to size up her situation and correct her self-created problems before she finds love and contentment.

Card 10: Results. She will meet a man who is talkative and suave; he may even be a con man. He may not be beneficial for her, but she will learn to deal with her feelings and needs through this man. Reality and balance are necessary for her. His offerings will be showy but may be false. Only she can help herself in dealing with this person and with others of his type.

**HEALTH**

**Question:** Will my friend's illness stabilize or become worse? The same Celtic cross layout is used.

Card 1: Present energies. Her condition has changed (this has prompted the question). She hides her unhappiness, because there is still a question on the seriousness of her condition that her doctors must address.

Card 2: Obstacles. Her own ego, or personal strength, seems to get in the way of the doctors. She may question their opinions and suggestions too much. Her emotions rule her illness. She can avoid problems by watching, and guarding
against, her emotional ups and downs. It is sometimes doubtful whether she listens to advice.

**Card 3: Present subconscious needs or desires.** She tends to be careless, rash, and nonconforming with regard to her doctors' instructions for her well-being. She thinks she knows better.

**Card 4: What she brings from her past.** Her religious thoughts, philosophies, and education are possible protectors, but only if she can bend sufficiently to get past her ego.

**Card 5: Ambitions or goals affected in the weeks or months ahead.** She will be happy and contented for at least a few months. She will busy herself in keeping up with family and domestic matters.

**Card 6: Prospects for the near future.** There will be social events, and reaffirmation of friendships with those she has ignored for a while. It can be a good time for all, including her, but she must beware of overdoing.

**Card 7: Her strengths, weaknesses, and views; any negative influences.** She knows that she tends to overdo and then become tired and depressed. Her drive for freedom and excitement needs to be controlled.

**Card 8: Her environment and how others see her.** Others see her as emotional and ambitious. They feel she should try to tone down her arrogance and relinquish her higher goals if she wants to be well, and truly happy and content.

**Card 9: Lessons to be learned for the future.** Unusual and upsetting events cause her frustrations and bring on quarrels with those she holds dear. Alienation of close friends and family can happen if she is not careful.

**Card 10: Results.** If she does not learn to balance out her life and to pace herself, she may find that her illness is worsening. She can best prevent this by heeding orders (such as "No smoking"), getting adequate rest, and generally slowing down. Mental attitude plays a large part in her recovery.
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