

# H.P.B.'s "THEOSOPHICAL GLOSSARY" & Related Material: A Chronology

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OCTOBER, 1888

Volume One of H. P. Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* is published in London. On the last page of the "Table of Contents" (p. xvi), one finds at the bottom of the page this printed note:

"N.B.---The Index and Glossary will be found at the close of Volume II."

When Volume Two of *The Secret Doctrine* comes off the press toward the end of 1888, this volume does *NOT* contain the promised Glossary of Terms.

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JANUARY 11, 1889

William Q. Judge in New York replies as follows to an inquiry from C. H. Whitaker about why the promised Glossary was missing from Volume Two:

"Dear Sir, I cannot throw light on the matter of the glossary. Perhaps it was found [by H.P.B.] to be too great a work and too much for the expense. I think it will be gotten out [at some point in the future]...."

"...personally I think it was too much to offer a glossary with the Secret Doctrine. A real Glossary would involve 3 vols more."

Quoted from: Judge, William Q. *Practical Occultism: From the Private Letters of William Q. Judge*. Pasadena, California: Theosophical University Press, 1951.

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NOVEMBER 1890 (early)

H. P. Blavatsky writes in the Preface to the Second edition of THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY:

"In order to further facilitate the Study of Theosophy, which [the first 1889 edition of] the 'Key' has already made an easy task, I have added [in this 2nd. edition]

a copious [62 page] 'Glossary' of all the technical terms found in it [the 'Key']."

"Most of the definitions and explanations [in this 62 page Glossary] are TRANSCRIPTIONS or ABBREVIATIONS from the larger 'Theosophical Glossary', which will shortly be published TOGETHER WITH the Treatise on 'Archaic Symbolism.'" [caps added.]

"It is hoped that both 'Glossaries' will supply a long-felt want, and that the larger one will cover the whole range of occult terminology as completely as possible."

"H.P.B.  
Theosophical Headquarters, 19, Avenue Road,  
London, N.W.  
1890."

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NOVEMBER 5, 1890

In a document dated November 5, 1890 from London T.S. headquarters (19 Avenue Road), C. F. W. [Claude Falls Wright, Secretary of the Blavatsky Lodge and a member of H.P.B.'s Inner Group], writes:

"The large Glossary of Theosophical Terms TO BE ISSUED WITH the *Archaic Symbolism* is now completed [by H.P.B.] and will go to the printer in a few days." [Caps added.]

"The 'Abbreviation' [i.e., the 62 page Glossary by H.P.B.] has been set up some time, and a very short time has to elapse before the second edition of the *Key to Theosophy* will be published with this additional material annexed."

Quoted from *The Path*, December 1890, p. 295.

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NOVEMBER 1890

The Council of the British Theosophical Society writes a letter giving a summary of the British Theosophical work done in 1890 and sends the letter to India where it is read during the Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras India, December 27 though December 29, 1890. This letter is titled "From the Council of the British T.S. to the General Council of the Theosophical Society."

In the letter, one finds this significant statement:

"...the following new works have been, or are being issued by the T.P.S.

[Theosophical Publishing Society, London]..."

Eight different titles are given, the eighth title being listed as follows:

"8. *Archaic Symbolism*, a reprint of the Symbology of the *Secret Doctrine*, with ADDITIONAL MATTER and a most voluminous and instructive glossary by H.P.B." (Caps added.)

This letter is signed by 14 British T.S. members, including Annie Besant, Countess Wachtmeister, William Kingsland, G.R.S. Mead, Alice Gordon, and Laura M. Cooper.

Quoted from p. 38 of the printed *General Report of the Fifteenth Convention and Anniversary of the Theosophical Society, at the Headquarters, Adyar, Madras, December the 27th, 28th, and 29th, 1890, with Official Documents*.

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FEBRUARY, 1891

A.L.C. [Alice Leighton Cleather, a member of H.P.B.'s Inner Group) in a letter, dated London, February 1891, writes:

"A most important addition to our theosophical literature --- in the shape of H.P.B.'s exhaustive 'Glossary' of terms used in the 'Secret Doctrine,' and other standard theosophical works --- is now in the printer's hands, and will, it is hoped, very shortly be in ours. The value of the book, as an important factor in our studies, can hardly be over-estimated."

Quoted from *The Theosophist*, April 1891, p. 438.

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FEBRUARY 1891

Readers of *The Vahan* are told that:

". . . the new [second] edition of the *Key to Theosophy* . . . has just been issued with the addition of a [62 page] Glossary."

Quoted from *The Vahan* (London), Feb. 15, 1891, p. 4.

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FEBRUARY 28, 1891

C.F.W. (Claude Falls Wright) in London writes:

"The T.P.S. [Theosophical Publishing Society] has just published a [62 page] glossary of the terms used in the *Key*. This is an abridgement of the larger one [*The Theosophical Glossary*], now *being proof-read* [italics added], and which will be issued in another month or two at the latest."

Quoted from C.F.W.'s letter appearing in *The Path*, April 1891, p. 29.

The 62 page glossary was being published *by itself* as a pamphlet with the title *Glossary of Theosophical Terms Used in the Key to Theosophy*.

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MAY 4, 1891

Having left England April 1 and traveling to the United States to represent H.P.B. at the annual American Theosophical Society Convention, Annie Besant gives during this trip her testimony (on May 4, 1891) in HPB's pending legal case against Elliott Coues and the New York Sun.

During her testimony, Mrs. Besant narrates from her own personal knowledge the following about H.P.B.'s literary work in England during the first three months of 1891:

"There is one other work of hers [HPB's], which I have seen in manuscript, still unpublished; a third volume of 'The Secret Doctrine' which is now being got ready [by H.P.B.] for the press under my own eyes."

"Madame Blavatsky has also in preparation a glossary of Sanscrit and Eastern tongues; those are both in preparation [by H.P.B.]; one of them is already in type and the other is nearly ready for type."

Quoted from Michael Gomes, ed., *Witness for the Prosecution: Annie Besant's Testimony on Behalf of H. P. Blavatsky in the N. Y. Sun/Coues Law Case*, 1993, p. 23.

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MAY 8, 1891

H.P.B. dies in London.

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OCTOBER, 1891

G.R.S. Mead in his article "Theosophy and Occultism" quotes from H.P.B.'s still unpublished *Theosophical Glossary*. He writes:

"And again in the *Rig Veda* (X. 129) we read: 'Desire first arose in IT which was the primal germ of Mind; (and which) sages, searching with their *intellect*, have discovered *in their heart* to be the bond which connects entity with non-entity.'"

"Here 'Desire' is Wisdom, 'that all embracing desire for universal good, (Divine) love for all that lives and feels, needs help and kindness, the feeling of infinite tender compassion and mercy,' which is the supreme reason of 'creation,' as H.P.B. so well explains in her yet unpublished *Theosophical Glossary*."

Quoted from *Lucifer*, October 1891, p. 107.

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NOVEMBER 27, 1891

G.R.S. Mead, as General Secretary of the European Section of the Theosophical Society, writes a letter (dated Nov. 27, 1891) giving a summary of the Theosophical work in Europe during 1891. This letter is sent to India where it is read during the Annual Convention of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras India, December 27 though December 29, 1891.

In this letter, Mr. Mead states that:

"The most important work, which is nearly off the press [in London] is H.P.B.'s large *Theosophical Glossary*, a work of some 400 pages of the same size as the *Secret Doctrine*."

Quoted from p. 36 of the printed *General Report of the Sixteenth Convention and Anniversary of the Theosophical Society, at the Head-Quarters, Adyar, Madras, December the 27th, 28th, and 29th, 1891, with Official Documents*.

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DECEMBER 1891 (est.)

An announcement appears in the January 1892 issue (p. 434) of *Lucifer*:

"*The Theosophical Glossary*, we are glad to announce, is nearing completion. The last page proofs are sent in, and the book will be on sale in the course of a few weeks. The price is fixed at 12s. 6d. It is a work of some 400 pages of the same size as the *Secret Doctrine*, and contains much valuable information, which H.P.B. alone could give, on Esoteric Philosophy. The information on the Esotericism of the Buddhist system, and in elucidation of the Glossaries of the *Voice of the Silence*, is especially valuable; and from every point of view it is a book that no student of Theosophy can allow to be absent from his shelves".

"It can hardly be too much regretted that the *Glossary* is a posthumous work, for *H.P.B. was adding largely to it on the few proofs that came in previous to her departure* [italics added]. In fact she had intended to incorporate a short account of the lives of the great Adepts, which would have still more increased the size and utility of the volume. The editing has naturally been a matter of great difficulty, as it would tax the resources even of the best polyglot scholar to the utmost."

"The work, however, is completed, and we have one more gift from H.P.B. to us; one all the more precious as being mostly written [by H.P.B.] in the greatest pain and suffering, every line being literally produced by an effort of will in the midst of extreme physical torture. An example for us to the last!"

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## JANUARY 1892

G.R.S. Mead --- in his Preface (dated London, January 1892) to the published *Theosophical Glossary* by H.P.B. --- tells the reader:

"*The Theosophical Glossary* labours under the disadvantage of being an almost entirely posthumous work, of which the author only saw the first thirty-two pages in proof [i.e., the proof copy typeset by the printer from H.P.B.'s original manuscript or copy].

This is all the more regrettable, for H.P.B., as was her wont, was [as she reviewed the proof copy] adding considerably to her original copy [i.e., HPB's original manuscript as first sent to the printer], and would no doubt have increased the volume far beyond its present limits [of 389 printed pages]...."

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## FEBRUARY 1892

When *The Theosophical Glossary* is finally published, a few entries contain references to "the text of Archaic Symbolism."

In the entry for "Carnac," one finds this statement:

"(See the 'Origin of the Satanic Myth' in Archaic Symbolism.)"

In another "entry" on the "Lotus," this reference is given:

"See the text of Archaic Symbolism in the Appendix Viii. 'The Lotus, as a Universal Symbol'."

These 2 entries read in full as follows:

"Carnac. A very ancient site in Brittany (France) of a temple of

cyclopean structure, sacred to the Sun and the Dragon; and of the same kind as Karnac, in ancient Egypt, and Stonehenge in England. (See the "Origin of the Satanic Myth" in Archaic Symbolism.) It was built by the prehistoric hierophant-priests of the Solar Dragon, or symbolized Wisdom (the Solar Kumâras who incarnated being the highest). Each of the stones was personally placed there by the successive priest-adepts in power, and commemorated in symbolic language the degree of power, status, and knowledge of each. (See further Secret Doctrine II. 381, et seq., and also "Karnac".)

"Lotus (Gr.). A most occult plant, sacred in Egypt, India and else where; called "the child of the Universe bearing the likeness of its mother in its bosom". There was a time "when the world was a golden lotus" (padma) says the allegory. A great variety of these plants, from the majestic Indian lotus, down to the marsh-lotus (bird's foot trefoil) and the Grecian "Dioscoridis", is eaten at Crete and other islands. It is a species of nymphala, first introduced from India to Egypt to which it was-not indigenous. See the text of Archaic Symbolism in the Appendix Viii. "The Lotus, as a Universal Symbol"."

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MARCH 1892 (est.)

Upon receiving a copy of the newly published *Theosophical Glossary*, William Q. Judge writes a brief review of the book for the April 1892 issue (pages 28-29) of *The Path*:

"*Theosophical Glossary*, by H.P. Blavatsky (1892, London, Theosophical Publication Society; New York, *The Path*. Quarto, 390 pages, cloth, \$3.50). This work is a posthumous publication, as H.P.B. saw only thirty-two pages of proofs. It is edited by Brother G.R.S. Mead, and is well printed on good paper. It will be extremely useful to students, not only because it is a glossary, but also from the many hints scattered through it by the author, and as it gives in many cases her own views --- always valuable --- regarding various subjects. Take FIRE. She says, 'The symbol of the living fire is the sun, *certain of whose rays develop the fire of life in a diseased body, impart the knowledge of the future* to the sluggish mind, and stimulate to active function a certain psychic and dormant faculty in man.' Here is a broad hint. And about hypnotism she says it is the most dangerous of practices, morally and physically. Under LUXOR she again asserts that the real Brotherhood of that name exists and is the most secret of all, and denies the genuineness of the bogus H.B. of L. that duped so many people. We remember in 1874-5 having conversation with H.P.B. about the real Luxor fraternity. AKASA (page 13) is differentiated from ether with which some have confused it. The articles on MESMER and ST. GERMAIN are both extremely interesting and the last intense suggestive, especially in the last sentence, 'Perchance some may recognize him [St. Germain] at the

next *Terreur*, which will affect all Europe when it comes, and not only one country alone.' But space will not allow further reference to the contents of this valuable volume."

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APRIL 1892

Colonel Henry S. Olcott writes a critical review of *The Theosophical Glossary* in *The Theosophist*, April 1892, pp. 444-45.

See <http://blavatskyarchives.com/olcottglos.htm>

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1895

William Emmette Coleman does an analysis of H.P.B.'s writings. His comments concerning *The Theosophical Glossary* are as follows:

"*The Theosophical Glossary*, published in 1892, contains an alphabetical arrangement of words and terms pertaining to occultism and theosophy, with explanations and definitions thereof. The whole of this book, except the garblings, distortions and fabrications of Madame Blavatsky scattered through it, was copied from other books. The explanations and definitions of 425 names and terms were copied from Dowson's *Hindu Classical Dictionary*. From Wilson's *Vishnu Purana* were taken those of 242 terms; from Eitel's *Handbook of Chinese Buddhism*, 179; and from Mackenzie's *Masonic Cyclopaedia*, 164. A modicum of credit was given to these four books in the preface. But, inasmuch as, scattered through the *Glossary*, credit was given at intervals to these books for a certain few of the passages extracted therefrom, its readers might easily be misled, by the remark in the preface relative to these four books, into the belief that said remark was intended to cover the various passages in the *Glossary* where these books are named as the sources whence they were derived and these alone, - that the passages duly credited to said books comprised the whole of the matter in the volume taken from them, instead of being but a small part of the immense collection of matter transferred *en masse* to the *Glossary*. But the four named in the preface are not the only books thus utilised. A glossary of Sanskrit and occultic terms was appended to a work called *Five Years of Theosophy*, published by Mohini M. Chatterji in 1885. At least 229 of these terms and their definitions were copied in Blavatsky's *Glossary*, nearly *verbatim* in every instance; and no credit whatever was given for this wholesale appropriation of another's work. I cannot find a single reference to Chatterji's glossary in any part of the later *Glossary*. Nearly all of the matter concerning Egyptian mythology, etc., in the latter, was copied from Bonwick's *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought*. A small part of this was credited, but over 100 passages from Bonwick were not credited. Nearly every word in relation to Norse and Teutonic mythology was copied from Wagner's *Asgard and the Gods*, - a little being credited, and some 100 passages not. Most of the Thibetan matter was taken from

Schlagintweit's *Buddhism in Thibet*, - some credited, but nearly 50 passages were not. Much of the material anent Southern Buddhism was copied from Spence Hardy's *Eastern Monachism*, - nearly 50 passages being uncredited. Most of the Babylonian and Chaldean material was extracted from Smith's *Chaldean Account of Genesis*, with nearly 50 passages not credited. The Parsi and Zoroastrian matter was from Darmesteter's translation of the *Zend-Avesta*, and West's translation of the *Bundahish* in the *Sacred Books of the East*, - mostly uncredited. Among other books levied upon in the compilation of the *Glossary*, principally with no credit given, are these: Sayce's *Hibbert Lectures* Myer's *Qabbala*, Hartmann's *Paracelsus*, Crawford's translation of the *Kalevala*, King's *Gnostics*, Faber's *Cabiri*, Beal's *Catena of Buddhist Scriptures*, Rhys Davids's *Buddhism*, Edkins's *Chinese Buddhism*, Maspero's *Guide au Musee de Boulaq*, Subba Row's *Notes on the Bhagavad Gita*, Kenealy's *Book of God*, Eliphas Levi's *Works*, and various others."

Quoted from:

<http://blavatskyarchives.com/colemansources1895.htm>

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JANUARY 1932

The U.L.T. magazine *The Theosophical Movement* (Theosophy Co., Bombay, India) publishes the text of H.P.B.'s actual *handwritten* title page from the manuscript of *The Theosophical Glossary*.

This manuscript title page informs the reader that the Glossary will cover "Sanskrit, Pahlavi, Tibetan, Pali, Chaldean, Persian, Scandinavian, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Kabalistic and Gnostic words and occult names used in Theosophical literature."

On this title page, H.P.B. writes that she is "kindly helped for a number of kabalistic terms by W. Wynn Westcott, M.B., F.T.S., Hon. Magus, Soc. Ros., etc. etc."

Quoted from: *The Theosophical Movement*, Bombay, India, January 17, 1932 issue, p. 20. [Monthly magazine started by B.P. Wadia on Nov. 17, 1930.]

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1968

Boris de Zirkoff publishes an article titled: "Who Played That Trick on H.P.B.? The Puzzle of 'The Theosophical Glossary.'"

[http://resources.theosophical.org/pdf/De\\_Zirkoff\\_Who\\_Played\\_That\\_Trick.pdf](http://resources.theosophical.org/pdf/De_Zirkoff_Who_Played_That_Trick.pdf)

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1982

In Volume 13 (pp. 283-285) of H.P.B.'s *Collected Writings*, Boris de Zirkoff (the editor) publishes for the first time an original manuscript of 2 pages in H.P.B.'s own handwriting on Pherecydes, a Greek philosopher.

Mr. de Zirkoff introduces the item with this editorial note:

"The original MS. of this brief account in H.P.B.'s own handwriting was among the papers of her old and trusted friend, John M. Watkins of London. It is now in the hands of his son, Geoffrey Watkins. Because of the way the text starts [i.e., "PHERECYDES (Gr.)"], this item may have been intended for a Glossary [yes, maybe H.P.B.'s *Theosophical Glossary*????!!!!!!]."

The manuscript appears to have been intended as a entry in such a glossary.

This entry does NOT appear in the published *Theosophical Glossary* and may have been somehow misplaced and therefore never published in the *Glossary*. John M. Watkins was in fact a good friend of G.R.S. Mead, the editor of the *Theosophical Glossary*.

Transcription of whole manuscript can be read at:

[http://www.katinkahesselink.net/blavatsky/articles/v13/ph\\_014.htm](http://www.katinkahesselink.net/blavatsky/articles/v13/ph_014.htm)

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1999

Daniel Caldwell publishes a critique on what Boris De Zirkoff and others have claimed about the origin of *The Theosophical Glossary*.

See:

[http://blavatskyarchives.com/caldwell\\_theos\\_talk\\_theosophical\\_glossary.pdf](http://blavatskyarchives.com/caldwell_theos_talk_theosophical_glossary.pdf)

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