

# A Time Line of the Global History of Esotericism With Emphasis for Yoga Science on the West since the European Renaissance

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This is incomplete, a work in progress, a snapshot as of the draft date. To take it any further would consume more time that I have right now, so I'm setting it aside for the moment and posting this version as is. Note especially that the most recent part of the story is not well covered here and you'll find only a few entries for the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (and there is much more to the story in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as well) – interested readers can get a good feel for this more recent period of esotericist history by consulting just three books: Fields 1981,<sup>2</sup> Hanegraaff 1998,<sup>3</sup> and De Michelis 2004.<sup>4</sup> Fields gives a good overview of Buddhism's journey to the West since the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Hanegraaff tells the story of the Western esotericisms that were "here to begin with," and De Michelis recounts how "Modern Yoga" came to the West already "well predigested" for Westerners by Anglicized Indian Yogis themselves.

My feeling is that at this point esotericism is best thought of as a global phenomenon. However, some scholars feel this approach is overly broad. Of particular importance for my Yoga Science project is the modern period beginning with the European Renaissance – since the notions of "science" first arose and came into contact with the older traditions of esotericism only in these past 800 years. However, it is *not* the case the West has met East *only* in this period – as I explain in the initial "human blooms" background section.

*How* this story actually developed is what I hope to get a better feeling for via an ongoing study of its history. I've compiled this timeline primarily for my own edification in preparation for the "debut" of Yoga Science at the upcoming ISSSEEM meeting in Boulder. I expect I'll modify it in the future as new facts come to light and I have the time to expand the listings. Please see endnotes and footnotes for details of the various sources I've consulted thus far in addition to the three mentioned above.

In the descriptions below, there are a number of terms used to describe various esotericist ideas and practices such as "mystic," "occult," "magic," and "alchemy." Unless and until clarified by serious esotericist scholarship – now only a few decades old as a formal academic discipline – these terms have often been used disparagingly and/or imprecisely. Thus we cannot here assume that they convey accurately the actual concerns or practices of the individual without further in-depth study. Note as well, for example, that in the case of many of the individuals listed, when wikipedia reports that someone was a "philosopher" they might well have been more what we might now call an "esotericist."

The term "esotericism" is itself open to many interpretations. I using it here in a very general sense, a bit larger than the one used by contemporary scholars of esotericism who feel they already have their hands full with *Western* esotericism and are not yet as willing as I am to extend the notion to a discussion of *Eastern* forms of esotericism such as Hindu and Buddhist Yoga. The logic of my choice should be obvious from what follows here.

Note: I've made no attempt to be encyclopedic. This compilation has been made only to help give me and interested readers a feeling for the wide range and influence of esotericism in the West over the span of the last 8 centuries or so. It can be read straight through to give an impressionistic sense of the

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<sup>2</sup> How the Swans Came to the Lake: a narrative history of Buddhism in America, Rick Fields, Shambhala, Boulder 1981. However, other sources will need to be found to cover the past 30 years and I've not yet come across any histories that cover this most recent period.

<sup>3</sup> New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought, Wouter J. Hanegraaff, SUNY 1998.

<sup>4</sup> A History of Modern Yoga, Elizabeth De Michelis, Continuum, London & New York, 2004.

colorful richness of esotericist tradition. Note, however, that there is an *academic* encyclopedic effort underway for *Western* Esotericism under the editorial guidance of Wouter Hanegraaff.<sup>5</sup>

Note as well that my focus is generally on “factual knowledge” as best as we can ascertain it using the historical sciences – I do not here include “revealed,” “channeled,” or “off planet” sources of historical information – valuable as they might possibly be, that would make this project even more unwieldy than it already is.

Quotes without any attribution are from the relevant article in Wikipedia – as retrieved over the past several weeks. Quotes followed by RF are from Fields’ Swans (footnote 1). Those followed by EDM are from De Michelis’ History (see footnote 2). A few entries not specifically related to esotericism serve as general historical anchors – these I’ve put in bold. Entries of esoteric significance but not of *direct* influence on the Modern West are in parentheses.

## **First, for some *deep* background on esotericism – the long history of human blooms<sup>6</sup> that led to major migrations or exchanges between East and West of esotericist significance:**

### **1. The original human bloom, “out of Africa,” and global Shamanism.**

Current scientific opinion is that all living humans originated in Africa. Anatomically modern humans appeared in the Middle Paleolithic ~150,000 years ago and “mitochondrial Eve” lived in this time frame. Inferred from the genetic data, she is a single female human from whom all living humans can claim descent. A marked *cultural* change – sometimes referred to as “The Great Leap Forward” – took place ~ 50,000 years ago. It produced *behaviorally* modern humans and marked the beginning of the “Upper Paleolithic.” It is to this time period that we date “Y chromosomal Adam” – a single *male* human from whom all living humans can claim descent. At this point humans began to migrate out of Africa to populate the rest of the world. Current opinion in anthropology includes the strong possibility that some form of shamanism was an integral part of all Upper Paleolithic hunter-gatherer cultures.<sup>7</sup> I propose that the characteristic of esotericism known as “the praxis of concordance”<sup>8</sup> could be understood as being based on both the inherent *genetic* kinship amongst all us humans and the likelihood that what could be understood as “primordial esotericism” – *shamanism* – is “in our collective blood.”

### **2. The Neolithic revolution – the farming bloom and mythic esotericism.**

Following the global migrations of the Upper Paleolithic, a number of hunter-gatherer societies around the globe appear to have undergone a gradual transition to domestication of plants and animals and fixed settlement. This transition took place in the time frame

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<sup>5</sup> The Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism, Brill, Amsterdam 2005. Expensive. Also available in an on-line subscription version (<http://www.brill.nl/default.aspx?partid=18&pid=29356>).

<sup>6</sup> The term “human bloom” seems to have been appropriated for use on the internet by the flower industry. I mean it in the sense of a population explosion (as in “algal bloom”) or a cultural “flowering.”

<sup>7</sup> See for example the work of French Jean Clottes: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean\\_Clottes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Clottes).

<sup>8</sup> This is Antoine Faivre’s 5<sup>th</sup> characteristic of esotericism: the “marked tendency to seek to establish commonalities across two or more different traditions, even all traditions, with a view to gaining illumination, a gnosis of superior quality.” From his “Introduction I,” in Modern Esoteric Spirituality, Faivre and Needleman, Crossroads, New York, 1992.

12,000 to 8,000 years ago. There is considerable evidence that in a number of cases these transitions may have occurred independently: in the “Fertile Crescent” of the Middle East, in the Yellow River valley in China, along the Indus River valley in present day Pakistan, and perhaps in the Kuk Swamp region of the highlands of New Guinea.<sup>9</sup> In other cases there is good evidence for the migration of these practices: “as the climate in the Middle East changed, and became drier, many of the farmers were forced to leave, taking their domesticated animals with them. This emigration was mainly on an east-west axis of similar climates, as crops usually have a narrow optimal climatic range outside of which they cannot grow.”<sup>10</sup> Agriculture and fixed settlement gave rise to the first cities, among the earliest being those of Uruk and Ur in the Fertile Crescent, and Mohenjo-daro and Harappa along the Indus in the general time frame of ~6000-4000 years ago. Many esoteric traditions trace their origins back to these first urbanizations: astrology, sacred number and sound, and religious myth and ritual prominent among these. Scholars currently find evidence suggesting occasions of pre-historic migration of such elements as well, for example Babylonian themes seen in the Indus Valley seals.

## **2. The Indo-Europeans – the first bloom of pastoral nomads and Vedic esotericism.**

In yet another major revolution – “The Secondary Products Revolution”<sup>11</sup> – a new kind of life was made possible – pastoral nomadism. “Nomadism generally has existed in symbiosis with such settled cultures trading animal products (meat, hides, wool, cheeses and other animal products) for manufactured items not produced by the nomadic herders. Historically nomadic herder lifestyles have led to warrior based cultures, that have made them fearsome enemies of settled people. Tribal confederations built by charismatic nomadic leaders have sometimes held sway over huge areas as incipient state structures, whose stability is dependent upon the distribution of taxes, tribute and plunder taken from settled populations.”<sup>12</sup> The history of Eurasia suggests that with suitable climate conditions, pastoral nomad populations have periodically undergone rapid increases – or “blooms” – resulting in a series of “barbarian migrations and invasions” that began in the Bronze Age and continued into the late Middle Ages.<sup>13</sup> It appears that the first of these was that of the Indo-Europeans. Current scholarship suggests they originated in the steppe regions around the Caspian Sea and eventually spread to include large portions of Europe and Central Asia.<sup>14</sup> It appears likely that these people were the bearers of the “Aryan” tradition that flourished during the Vedic period which began in India in the late

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<sup>9</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5059/>

<sup>10</sup> From the Wikipedia article on Neolithic Revolution.

<sup>11</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secondary\\_products\\_revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secondary_products_revolution)

<sup>12</sup> From the wikipedia article on “Pastoral Nomadism.”

<sup>13</sup> For an excellent overview of this history, see *A History of Russia, Central Asia, and Mongolia: Inner Eurasia from prehistory to the Mongol Empire*, David Christian, Blackwell 1998. Christian describes the history of these successive migration/invasions covering several millennia: Scythians, Huns, Turks, and Mongols among them. As they pushed into the agricultural and urban “civilizations” to their south, they created many ripple effects that we find in the more mainstream histories of Rome, Byzantium, India, and China.

<sup>14</sup> See wikipedia article on “Proto-Indo-European.”

Bronze Age as an *oral* tradition and eventually led to *written* Sanskrit and a vast literary tradition with an inherently esotericist worldview.<sup>15</sup>

### **3. The Achaemenid Empire of Persia (550 – 330 BC) – philosopher/physician ambassadors from East and West meet in the middle.**

Thomas McEvelley argues that the reach of this early empire from the Aegean to the Indus Valley enabled a major East to West transfer of Orphism<sup>16</sup> during the Pre-Socratic period in Greece that helped catalyze the subsequent rapid emergence of Classical Greek civilization. What was transferred was a “package” of ideas not previously found in the Aegean that had developed among Vedists and Jains during the Bronze Age in India including: “reincarnationism based on ethical accounting, the soul’s recollection of the universals, the ambition of having the soul escape the body and its round of incarnations, asceticism as a means toward this end, and so on.”<sup>17</sup>

### **4. Hellenistic Age Post-Alexander (323 – 30 BC) and the bloom of Greco-Buddhism across Central Asia.**

McEvelley argues that Alexander’s “conquest” led to a major *West to East* transfer as a dynamic Classical Greek civilization impacted back on the slower-paced and more conservative traditions in the Indus Valley. Here the “package” was one of a sophisticated rationality and philosophic way of thinking using the mature syllogism and the dialectic, along with Greek traditions of art and education. A major outcome of this transfer appears to have been the appearance of Mahayana Buddhism and a whole “Greco-Buddhist”<sup>18</sup> culture in Central Asia that subsequently spread into China and Japan. This represents a phase of esotericist history that may be crucial to understanding how it is that so many of us Westerners feel so “at home,” if you will, with Tibetan Buddhism. Could it be that in Tibetan Buddhism we find, maintained with considerable purity, a tradition of *rational esotericism* (or perhaps better still, an *esoteric rationalism* – putting the esoteric first, as it were) that we recognize instinctively as very much akin to similar currents in the West that date from the same Hellenistic Age – perhaps most prominent among these being Neo-Platonism and Hermeticism (and likely developments within Jewish Kabbalah as well)?

### **5. Pax Mongolica (1204 – 1405) connects East and West during the Middle Ages and its devastations set the stage for the bloom of the Renaissance.**

“The Mongol Empire was the largest contiguous empire in human history.” “The “Mongol Peace” is a phrase coined by Western scholars to describe the alleged stabilizing effects of the conquest of the Mongol Empire on the social, cultural and economic life of

<sup>15</sup> How this sophisticated tradition developed is not at all certain and why it did so only in India is also unclear. Quite possibly there were any number of important contributing factors including fruitful exchanges with the pre-existing *urban* culture of Dravidian India.

<sup>16</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orphism\\_%28religion%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orphism_%28religion%29)

<sup>17</sup> The Shape of Ancient Thought, Thomas McEvelley, Allworth Press 2002, p xix.

<sup>18</sup> See the fascinating wikipedia article on this topic.

the inhabitants of the vast Eurasian territory they conquered in the 13th and 14th centuries. It was said that a virgin carrying a sack of gold could ride unharmed from one border of the empire to the other. The conquests of Genghis Khan effectively connected the Eastern world with the Western world, ruling a territory from Southeast Asia to Eastern Europe. The Silk Road, connecting trade centers across Asia and Europe, came under the sole rule of the Mongol Empire. The term “Pax Mongolica” is used to describe the eased communication and commerce the unified administration helped to create.”<sup>19</sup> These events helped set the stage for the Renaissance in Europe – for one thing, the Mongols brought the Black Death. “In 1347 the Genoese possession of Caffa, a great trade emporium on the Crimean peninsula, came under siege by an army of Mongol warriors. After a protracted siege during which the Mongol army was reportedly withering from the disease, they might have decided to use the infected corpses as a biological weapon. The corpses were catapulted over the city walls, infecting the inhabitants. The Genoese traders fled, transferring the plague via their ships into the south of Europe, whence it rapidly spread.” On the other hand, “Europe’s knowledge of the known world was immensely expanded by the information brought back by ambassadors and merchants. When Columbus sailed in 1492, his missions were to reach Cathay, the land of the Genghis Khan.”

**With that background, we start our “time line” proper with a few more pre-Renaissance developments:**

**1235 AD** - Ramon Llull was born in Majorca, Spain – became a renowned author, mystic, mathematician, astrologer, and early scientist – some credit him with very early developments in computational science.

**1240 AD** - Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia, Kabbalist, was born in Zaragoza, Spain – became a traveled mystic, writer, and teacher. “Abulafia may also have been influenced by Yoga and Sufism.”

**1248 AD** - Joseph Gikatilla, Spanish Sephardic Kabbalist, was born – became a prominent student of Abulafia.

**(1253 AD** – Dogen dies, founder of Soto Zen school of Japanese Buddhism.)

**1254 AD** – Marco Polo born (maybe in Venice, maybe in Croatia). “one of the first Westerners to travel the Silk Road to China (which he called *Cathay*, after the Khitan) and visit the Great Khan of the Mongol Empire, Kublai Khan (grandson of Genghis Khan). Considerable exposure of China's culture to the European continent resulted. The trip also showed Europeans the value of the Silk Road in negotiating this travel; however, even though this trackway was used since the first millennium BC, the use of the Silk Road actually declined markedly within about 150 years after Marco Polo's expedition, due to the opening of sea routes.”

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<sup>19</sup> From the wikipedia article on “Pax Mongolica.”

**1259 AD** - Peter de Abano [Pietro d'Abano], Italian physician, philosopher, and alchemist was born.

**(1263 AD** – Shinran dies, founder of Pure Land school of Japanese Buddhism)

**(1269 AD** – Tibet reunited under Grand Lama Sakya Pandita as king.)

**1274 AD** - Ramon Llull's vision on Mount Randa

- **Thomas Aquinas died.**

**(in this period Mongols complete invasion of China and convert to Vajrayana Buddhism)**

**1280 AD** - Albertus Magnus died in Germany – (b 1193) “he achieved fame for his comprehensive knowledge of and advocacy for the peaceful coexistence of science and religion.” Not sure that qualifies him to be here, but it highlights the early start for an issue that is still very much with us today.

**(1282** – Nichiren dies, founder of school of Japanese Buddhism that bears his name).

**1294 AD** - Roger Bacon died in England – (b 1214) A devoted Franciscan monk and “one of the earliest European advocates of the modern scientific method inspired by the works of early Muslim scientists. He first recognized the visible spectrum in a glass of water, four centuries before Sir Isaac Newton discovered that prisms could disassemble and reassemble white light.” He also wrote a number of major works on alchemy and was a vocal advocate of mathematics. Not to be confused with Francis Bacon (1561 –1626).

**1300 AD - Approximate Beginning of the European Renaissance – with a predominant role played by patronage from the Medici family of Florence.** “The origin of the name Medici is uncertain, its Italian meaning is “medical doctor”. Members of the family rose to some prominence in the early 14th century in the wool trade, especially with France and Spain.”

**1307 AD - Destruction of the Knights Templar (founded ~ 1129) – “many of the Order's members in France were arrested, tortured into giving false confessions, and then burned at the stake. In 1312, Pope Clement, under continuing pressure from King Philip, disbanded the Order.”**

**1315 AD** - Ramon Llull died

**1316 AD** - Peter de Abano died

**1323 AD** - Joseph Gikatilla died

**1340s AD - “Black Death” Plague ravages Europe.** “It has been speculated that the familiarity with death brought thinkers to dwell more on their lives on Earth, rather than on spirituality and the afterlife.” There were also major socio-economic changes as a result – individual enterprise become more the norm than the old feudal system.

**1355 AD - Gemistus Pletho** born in Greece – Neoplatonic philosopher and one key source for the Medici-financed esotericist revival in the middle of the 1400s.

**(1357 AD – Tzongkhapa** born in Tibet – became founder of Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism – the last of the major schools to be established.)

**(1409 AD – Ganden,** first Gelug monastery, established by Tzongkhapa.)

**(1419 AD – Tzongkhapa** dies)

**1433 AD - Marsilio Ficino,** seminal Italian esotericist was born. Became a key figure in the revival financed by Cosimo de Medici. He was chosen by de Medici to head the re founding of Plato’s Academy. He produced major translations from Greek into Latin of Plato as well as of a collection of Hellenistic Greek documents of the Hermetic Corpus - particularly the "Corpus Hermeticum" of Hermes Trismegistos, and the writings of many of the Neoplatonists, for example Porphyry, Iamblichus, Plotinus, *et al.* Following suggestions laid out by Gemistos Plethon, Ficino tried to synthesize Christianity and Platonism. His work is cited by contemporary scholars as “the beginning of modern Western esotericism.”

**1439 AD - Guttenberg’s movable type system of printing – approximate date.**

**1452 AD - Gemisto Pletho** died.

**- Leonardo da Vinci** born.

**1453 AD -** the fall of Constantinople to the Turks of the Ottoman Empire caused dispersal and spread of Greek manuscripts and scholarship – including many esotericist works of the ancient world.

**1455 AD -** The Gutenberg Bible was first printed.

- Johann Reuchlin was born – became leader of German Kabbalistic studies as well as an intellectual “heir” to Pico della Mirandola (see 1463).

**1462 AD - Johannes Trithemius** was born in Germany – became an author of several occultist works. His method of encryption was used in “The Cipher Manuscript” for the founding of The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn – see entry for 1888.

**1463 AD** - Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Italian esotericist and scholar, was born. A student of Ficino, he became a prominent scholar and translator in his own right. (see 1486 below)

**1466 AD** - Francesco Giorgi, Venetian and early Christian Cabalist (note spelling here – some references use this or Cabbala – with the “C” to help distinguish it from Jewish Kabbalah), was born. Cited by Frances Yates in her 1979 book Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age.

**1471 AD** - Ficino's translation of *Corpus Hermeticum* was first published.

### **1473 AD - Nicolaus Copernicus Born**

**1478 AD** –Thomas Moore born in England. He was “an English lawyer, author, and statesman who in his lifetime earned a reputation as a leading humanist scholar, and occupied many public offices, including Lord Chancellor (1529–1532). Sir Thomas coined the word "utopia", a name he gave to an ideal, imaginary island nation whose political system he described in the eponymous book published in 1516. In 1935, four hundred years after his death, Pope Pius XI canonized St Thomas More in the Roman Catholic Church, and later declared Patron Saint of politicians and statesmen by Pope John Paul II.” He is listed here for the influence that his “utopia” has had on subsequent generations of esotericists.

### **1483 AD - Martin Luther was born.**

**1486 AD** - The *Malleus Maleficarum* published by the Dominican inquisitors Springer and Kramer. A polemic against witchcraft that also impacted practices of divination, astrology and healing rituals dating to antiquity. Widely disseminated by virtue of Guttenberg’s innovation a generation earlier, this book created perhaps the first “press hysteria” that led to the killing of upwards of 100,000 women (number disputed) as witches in the centuries that followed.

- Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim was born – German author of “De occulta philosophia libri tres (Three Books About Occult Philosophy, Book 1 printed Paris 1531; Books 1-3 in Cologne 1533). This *summa* of occult and magical thought was Agrippa's most important work.”

- Giovanni Pico della Mirandola took his theses to Rome. Written “at the age of twenty-three, he proposed to defend 900 theses on religion, philosophy, natural philosophy and magic against all comers, for which he wrote the famous *Oration on the Dignity of Man* which has been called the "Manifesto of the Renaissance," and a key text of Renaissance humanism.”

**1489 AD** - Ficino's *Libri de Vita* was published – “a curious amalgam of philosophy, medicine, "natural magic" and astrology, and is possibly the first book ever written about the health of the intellectual and its peculiar concerns. It was

constantly in print through the middle of the seventeenth century.” Ficino was son of a physician and steeped in medical lore of his time. This could be seen as the first book on “holistic health.”

**1492 AD** - Ferdinand and Isabella expelled Jews from Spain helping to spread Kabbalistic ideas to the rest of Europe.

**1493 AD** - Paracelsus was born in Austria – studied chemistry and medicine, traveled widely in Europe. “He was a practicing astrologer, as were most, if not all of the university-trained physicians working at this time in Europe. He pioneered the use of chemicals and minerals in medicine.” He is also “credited as providing the first clinical/scientific mention of the unconscious.” He was deeply influenced by the Hermetic, neo-platonic, and Pythagorean ideas of Ficino and della Mirandola.

**1494 AD** - Giovanni Pico della Mirandola died

**1497 AD** - **Vasco da Gama opens sea route for trade with India and the rest of Asia. A long and complex history followed as European powers vied for influence, many atrocities were committed, and genuine contacts slowly expanded.**

**1499 AD** - Marsilio Ficino died

**1503 AD** - Nostradamus was born. He was “a French apothecary and reputed seer who published collections of prophecies that have since become famous world-wide.”

**1510 AD** - Guillaume Postel was born. “French linguist, astronomer, Cabbalist, diplomat, professor, and religious universalist. Postel advocated a universalist world religion: the love of God, the praising of God, the love of Mankind, and the helping of Mankind. Postel's efforts at manuscript collection, translation, and publishing, brought many Greek, Hebrew and Arabic texts into European intellectual discourse in the Late Renaissance and Early Modern periods.”

- Agrippa's *De Occulta philosophia* was finished. It is “acknowledged as a significant contribution to the Renaissance philosophical discussion concerning the powers of ritual magic and its relationship with religion.”

**1515 AD** - Johan Weyer was born – “Dutch physician, occultist and demonologist, disciple and follower of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa. He was among the first to publish against the persecution of witches.”

**1516 AD** - Johannes Trithemius died

**1517 AD** - Reuchlin's *De arte cabalistica* was published – note: Reuchlin was a key defender of Jewish learning and advocate of Biblical study including the Old Testament.

- **Martin Luther posted his theses.**

**1519 AD – Leonardo da Vinci died.**

**1522 AD - Johann Reuchlin died**

**1527 AD - John Dee was born –** He became “a noted English mathematician, astronomer, astrologer, geographer, occultist, and consultant to Queen Elizabeth I. He also devoted much of his life to alchemy, divination, and Hermetic philosophy. Dee straddled the worlds of science and magic. A re-evaluation of Dee's character and significance came in the 20th century, largely as a result of the work of the historian Frances Yates, who brought a new focus on the role of magic in the Renaissance and the development of modern science. As a result of this re-evaluation, Dee is now viewed as a serious scholar and appreciated as one of the most learned men of his day.”

**1531 AD - *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa was published in Paris.**

**1533 AD - Isaak Luria, influential Jewish Kabbalist, was born in Jerusalem. Influenced Cervantes and his portrayal of Don Quixote (see 1547 below).**

- Agrippa's *De Occulta philosopha* was published.

**1534 AD – The Spanish Basque student Ignatius Loyola establishes the Company of Jesus with six other students (including Francis Xavier) at the University of Paris.**

**1535 AD - Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim died**

- Giambattista della Porta was born in Naples. Author of *Magia naturalis* (Natural Magic) – “covered a variety of the subjects he had investigated, including the study of occult philosophy, astrology, alchemy, mathematics, meteorology, and natural philosophy.”

**1538 AD – Reginald Scot is born. “English author of *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, which was published in 1584. It was written to show that witches did not exist, by exposing how (apparently miraculous) feats of magic were done. The book is often deemed the first textbook about conjuring.”**

**1540 AD - Francesco Giorgi died.**

**1541 AD - Paracelsus died.**

**1542 AD - the Inquisition was formally established in Rome**

**1543 – Nicholas Copernicus died. Approximate Beginning of “The Scientific Revolution” with the posthumous publication of his “De revolutionibus orbium coelestium” (On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres) and Andreas Vesalius’ “De humani corporis fabrica” (On the Fabric of the Human body).**

**- the Company of Jesus officially recognized as the Society of Jesus – the Jesuit Order is founded.**

**1546 AD - Martin Luther died**

**1547 AD - Miguel de Cervantes born.** He “was a Spanish novelist, poet, and playwright. Cervantes is one of the most important and influential people in literature and his magnum opus, *Don Quixote*, is considered a founding classic of Western literature and regularly figures among the best novels ever written. His work is considered among the most important in all of literature.” Note: it “encoded” Kabbalistic ideas obtained from Isaak Luria.

**1548 AD - Giordano Bruno was born – “Italian philosopher, priest, cosmologist, and occultist.”** (see entry for 1964).

**1549 AD – Francis Xavier arrives in Japan as Jesuit Missionary and discovers that a Zen priest named Nanjio is a match for his wit and learning. (RF p23) (An early discovery of the kinship between Western rationalism and Mahayana Buddhism.)**

**1552 AD - Simon Forman was born – became “a prominent Elizabethan occultist, astrologist and herbalist active in London.”**

- Guillaume Postel published a Latin translation of the *Sefer Yetzirah* “the earliest extant book on Jewish esotericism. It’s original date is debated – likely around 10<sup>th</sup> Century.”

- Emperor Rudolph II was born in Vienna. He held a number of major posts, including that of Holy Roman Emperor 1576-1612. “Rudolf’s legacy has traditionally been viewed in three ways: an ineffectual ruler whose mistakes led directly to the Thirty Years’ War; a great patron of Renaissance art; and a devotee of occult arts and learning which helped seed the scientific revolution.”

**1555 AD - Edward Kelley was born – became “a convicted English criminal and self-declared spirit medium who worked with John Dee in his magical investigations. Besides the professed ability to summon spirits or angels on a crystal ball, which John Dee so valued, Kelley also claimed to possess the secret of transmuting base metals into gold.”**

**1561 AD – Francis Bacon born.** He was an “English statesman and essayist also known as a proponent of the scientific revolution. Possibly the illegitimate son of Queen

Elizabeth I, possibly homosexual, “there was a depth of love by a large body of men toward Bacon, similar to some degree in the manner that disciples love a Master. This is especially true when taking into account his membership (and some say leadership) of secret societies such as the Rosicrucians and Freemasons. In the inner esoteric membership, which included Francis Bacon, vows of celibacy for spiritual reasons were encouraged.”

**1564 AD** - Dee wrote the Hermetic work *Monas Hieroglyphica*. The term refers to “an esoteric symbol he invented and designed as the Elizabethan Magus and Court Astrologer of Elizabeth I of England. It is also the title of this book in which he expounds the meaning of his symbol.”

**- Galileo Galilei born**

**1566 AD** - Nostradamus died

- Michael Maier, physician, alchemist, and philosopher, was born in Rensburg, Holstein (Germany). He was physician to Emperor Rudolph II.

**1571** – Johannes Kepler born in Germany. He was a “mathematician, astronomer and astrologer, and key figure in the 17th century astronomical revolution.” He served as “the court mathematician to Emperor Rudolf II and lived in an era when there was no clear distinction between astronomy and astrology.”

**1574 AD** - Robert Fludd was born. Became “a prominent English Paracelsian physicist, astrologer, and mystic. He was not a member of the Rosicrucians, as often alleged, but he defended their thoughts in the *Apologia Compendiaria* of 1616. He was the son of Sir Thomas Fludd, a high-ranking governmental official (Queen Elizabeth I's treasurer for war in Europe). He obtained an MD from University of Oxford.”

**1575 AD** - Jakob Boehme was born in Germany. He “developed a following throughout Europe, where his followers were known as Behmenists. Böhme's writing shows the influence of Neoplatonist and alchemical writers such as Paracelsus, while remaining firmly within a Christian tradition. He has in turn greatly influenced many anti-authoritarian and mystical movements, such as the Religious Society of Friends, the Philadelphians, Ephrata Cloister, the Zoarite Separatists, the Harmony Society, Martinism and Christian theosophy (Angelic Brethren or Gichtelians). Böhme was also an important source of German Romantic philosophy, influencing Schelling in particular. In Richard Bucke's 1901 treatise *Cosmic Consciousness*, special attention was given to the profundity of Böhme's spiritual enlightenment, which seemed to reveal to Böhme an ultimate nondifference, or nonduality, between human beings and God. Böhme is also an important influence on the ideas of the English Romantic poet, artist and mystic William Blake.”

**(1578 AD** – Title “Dalai Lama” first given to the head of Tibetan Buddhist Gelugpa school by Mongol ruler Altan Khan. “A massive program of translating Tibetan (and Sanskrit) texts into Mongolian was commenced with the letters beautifully written in silver and gold and paid for by the Dalai Lama's Mongolian devotees. Within 50 years virtually all Mongols had become Buddhist, with tens of thousands of monks, who were members of the Gelug order, loyal to the Dalai Lama.”)

**1581 AD** - Guillaume Postel died

**1582 AD** - John Dee and Edward Kelley met (see 1555 above).

**1585 AD** – The Buddha was inadvertently canonized as “Saint Barlaam” based on a bastardized account of his life given by the 8<sup>th</sup> Century Saint John of Damascus. Apparently the story had been passed and garbled in transit (like in the telephone game) from India, to Iran, to Greece, and thence into Europe. (RF p19)<sup>20</sup>

**1597 AD** - Edward Kelley died

**1599 AD** - Reginald Scot died

**1600 AD - Approximate End of the European Renaissance**

- Giordano Bruno was executed – note entry below for 1964 regarding why.

- (the “Honourable”) East India Company chartered by Queen Elizabeth 1. Long story follows of trade, exploitation, colonialization, and eventual genuine contact with Eastern esoteric source literature and exemplars (see 1736).

**1602 AD** - William Lilly was born. Became “a famed English astrologer and occultist during his time. Lilly was particularly adept at interpreting the astrological charts drawn up for horary questions, as this was his specialty.”

- Athanasius Kircher was born in Germany – “For most of his professional life, Kircher was one of the scientific stars of the world: according to historian Paula Findlen, he was "the first scholar with a global reputation." His importance was twofold: to the results of his own experiments and research he added information gleaned from his correspondence with over 760 scientists, physicians and above all his fellow Jesuits in all parts of the globe. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* calls him a "one-man intellectual clearing house." His works, illustrated to his orders, were extremely popular, and he was the first scientist to be able to support himself through the sale of his books.” However, it seems unlikely that he was in any way an esotericist. He is included here as an example of a prominent scientist of his time.

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<sup>20</sup> More recent scholarly opinion is at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint\\_Barlaam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Barlaam).

**1605 AD** - Sir Thomas Browne was born. He became “an English author of varied works which disclose his wide learning in diverse fields including medicine, religion, science and the esoteric.”

**1609 AD** - John Dee died.

**1611 AD** - Simon Forman died.

**1612 AD** - Emperor Rudolph II died.

**1614 AD** - the "first" Rosicrucian tracts were published: “modern researchers of history and sociology have placed its origin in a group of German Protestants. Between 1607 and 1616, three anonymous documents first surfaced in Europe: *Fama Fraternitatis Rosae Crucis*, *Confessio Fraternitatis*, and *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz anno 1459*. The influence of these documents, presenting the "most laudable Order" and promoting a "Universal Reformation of Mankind," was so profound that this period of the 17th century has been deemed the "Rosicrucian Enlightenment."” Long and complicated story here.

**1615 AD** - Giambattista della Porta died

**1617 AD** - Elias Ashmole was born. He became “a celebrated English antiquary, politician, officer of arms, astrologer and student of alchemy. Ashmole was an antiquary with a strong Baconian bent for the study of nature. Although he was one of the founding members of the Royal Society, a key institution in the development of experimental science, his interests were antiquarian and mystical as well as scientific. He was an early Freemason, although the extent of his involvement and commitment is unclear.”

**1618 AD** - Maier's *Atlanta Fugiens* was published. “It was a most amazing book as it incorporated 50 emblems with epigrams and a discourse, but extended the concept of an emblem book by incorporating 50 pieces of music the 'fugues' or canons. In this sense it was an early example of multimedia.”<sup>21</sup>

**1620 AD** – Novum Organum published by Francis Bacon. “This work was critical in the historical development of the scientific method.” A key definition from this work: “an *idol* is the unaffected partner in the coupling of two phenomena” – a point that has great bearing on the idols of contemporary science.

**1622 AD** - Thomas Vaughan, English Rosicrucian, was born. “Although he did not practice medicine, Vaughan sought to apply his chemical skills to preparing medicines in the manner recommended by Paracelsus. He corresponded with Samuel Hartlib, and established a reputation with his book *Anthroposophia*, a magico-mystical work. Vaughan was unusual amongst alchemists of the time in

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<sup>21</sup> This quote is from <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/atalanta.html>.

that he worked closely with his wife Rebecca Vaughan, and valued and even saw as essential, their joint work.”

- Michael Maier died.

**1624 AD** - Jakob Boehme died.

**1627 AD** – New Atlantis published by Francis Bacon. It described a New World utopia modeled on Rosicrucian ideals.

**1630** – Johannes Kepler died.

**1636 AD** - Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, German mystic and Kabbalist, was born. “An English translation of the *Kabbala Denudata* was made by S. L. MacGregor Mathers in 1887, and is still in print by several publishers under the title *The Kabbalah Unveiled*.”

**1637 AD** - Robert Fludd died.

- Shimabara Rebellion in Japan ends early period of Christian influence following Xavier’s efforts. Once numbering as many as 150,000, Japanese Christians are exterminated and all foreigners are officially excluded from Japan. (RF p24)

**1642** – Galileo Galilei died

**1643 AD** - Sir Isaac Newton was born in England – often mentioned is the fact that he was something of an alchemist. However, this has been overshadowed by his pivotal role as founder of “modern science.” “His *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, published in 1687, is said to be the greatest single work in the history of science.”

**1650 AD** - **Approximate Beginning of “The Enlightenment”**

**1652 AD** - Thomas Vaughan published an English translation (not his own) of the Rosicrucian *Fama* and *Confessio*.

**1666 AD** - Thomas Vaughan died.

**1680 AD** - Athanasius Kircher died.

**1681 AD** - William Lilly, astrologer and translator of Trithemius, died.

**1682 AD** - Sir Thomas Browne died.

**(1683 AD** – Hakuin born. Helped revive the Rinzai sect of Japanese Zen Buddhism.)

**1689 AD** - Christian Knorr von Rosenroth died.

**1688 AD** - Emanuel Swedenborg was born. He was an influential “Swedish scientist, philosopher, Christian mystic, and theologian. Swedenborg had a prolific career as an inventor and scientist. At the age of fifty-six he entered into a spiritual phase, in which he experienced dreams and visions. This culminated in a spiritual awakening, where he claimed he was appointed by the Lord to write a heavenly doctrine to reform Christianity. He claimed that the Lord had opened his eyes, so that from then on he could freely visit heaven and hell, and talk with angels, demons, and other spirits. For the remaining 28 years of his life, he wrote and published 18 theological works, of which the best known was *Heaven and Hell* (1758), and several unpublished theological works.” There remains controversy among esotericist scholars as to whether he fully qualifies as an esotericist.

**1692 AD** - Elias Ashmole died.

**1710 AD** - The Count of St. Germain born. “He has been variously described as a courtier, adventurer, charlatan, inventor, alchemist, pianist, violinist and amateur composer, but is best known as a recurring figure in the stories of several strands of occultism – particularly those connected to Theosophy, where he is also referred to as the *Master Rakoczi* or the *Master R*. Some sources write that his name is not familial, but was invented by him as a French version of the Latin *Sanctus Germanus*, meaning "Holy Brother".

**1716 AD** - Italian Jesuit priest, Ippolito Desideri studies and teaches in Lhasa, Tibet for five years. Another Jesuit, Francisco Orazio della Penna di Billi lived in Lhasa for years and published a number of scholarly works on Tibetan Buddhism.

**1719 AD** - Antoine Court de Gébelin was born. He “was the former Protestant pastor, born at Nimes (*Encyclopædia Britannica*), who initiated the interpretation of the Tarot as an arcane repository of timeless esoteric wisdom, in an essay included in his *Le Monde primitif, analysé et comparé avec le monde moderne* ("The Primitive World, Analyzed and Compared to the Modern World"), volume viii, 1781. The chapter on Tarot with which his name is indelibly associated is a single section in his vast compendium that he published in series from 1773, to a distinguished list of subscribers, headed by Louis XVI.”

**1727 AD** - Sir Isaac Newton died.

**1734 AD** - Franz Anton Mesmer was born in Germany. “Discovered what he called *magnétisme animal* (animal magnetism) and others often called *mesmerism*. The evolution of Mesmer's ideas and practices led James Braid (1795-1860) to develop hypnosis in 1842, his name being the root of the English verb 'mesmerize'.” Mesmer's influence was widespread among later esotericists.

**1736 AD** – William (“Oriental”) Jones born. He was “an English linguistic prodigy, philologist, and student of ancient India, particularly known for his proposition of the existence of a relationship among Indo-European languages. He was also the founder of the Asiatic Society.” He met Benjamin Franklin in Paris and later traveled to Virginia hoping to meet Thomas Jefferson. “Jones saw with a historical analogy that has proved prophetic, that the translation and study of Asiatic literature could come to play the same role in the modern world that the rediscovery of the Greek and Latin classics did in the Renaissance.” (RF p34)

**1738 AD** – “Etteilla” was born Jean-Baptiste Alliette. He “was the French occultist who was the first to popularize divination by Tarot to a wide audience, and therefore the first professional Tarotist in recorded history. Etteilla published his ideas of the correspondences between Tarot, astrology, and the four classical Elements and Four humors, and was the first to issue a revised Tarot deck specifically designed for occult purposes.”

**1748 AD** - Johann Adam Weishaupt was born. “a German philosopher and founder of the Order of Illuminati.”

**1751 AD** - Ebenezer Sibly was born. He “was an English physician, astrologer and prolific writer on the occult. He is celebrated for the natal horoscope he cast of the United States of America, published in 1787 and still cited. He joined the Freemasons in 1784. He published the *New and Complete Illustration of the Occult Sciences* in four volumes, from 1784. As an astrologer he is said to have used the Placidian system. As a student of alchemy, he translated Bernard of Treviso (the fountain allegory).”

**1757 AD** - William Blake was born. In recent years he has been recognized by esotericist scholars as one.

**1772 AD** - Emanuel Swedenborg died.

**1774 AD** – Rammohan Roy born in Bengal, India. He “was a founder in 1828 (with Dwarkanath Tagore and other Bengali Brahmins) of the *Brahma Sabha* which engendered the Brahma Samaj, an influential Indian socio-religious reform movement. His remarkable influence was apparent in the fields of politics, public administration and education as well as religion. He is best known for his efforts to abolish the practice of sati, the corrupted Hindu funeral practice in which the widow were compelled to sacrificed herself on her husband’s funeral pyre. It was he who first introduced the word "Hinduism" (or "Hindooism") into the English language in 1816. For his diverse contributions to society, Raja Ram Mohan Roy is regarded as one of the most important figures in the Bengal Renaissance and is hailed as "the father of modern India".” In all of this he was deeply influenced by ideas of the Western Enlightenment taught by Unitarian missionaries who came in the wake of British colonization of India. (see EDM for details).

**1776 AD** - Weishaupt formed the "Order of Perfectibilists", which was later known as the Illuminati. "Though the Order was not egalitarian or democratic, its mission was to establish a New World Order, which meant the abolition of all monarchical governments and religions." Another long story comes from this...

**1784 AD** - Antoine Court de Gébelin died.

**1784 AD** - Count of St Germain allegedly died.

**1791 AD** - Etteilla died.

**1800 AD** - Ebenezer Sibly died.

**- Approximate End of the "The Enlightenment"**

**1802 AD** – Phineas Quimby born. He was "a New England philosopher, magnetizer, mesmerist, healer, and scientist, who resided in Belfast, Maine, and had an office in Portland, Maine." Among his students were the founders of the New Thought Movement that aimed also to incorporate the work of Swedenborg. Another prominent student of his was Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science.

**1810 AD** - Eliphas Lévi was born Alphonse Louis Constant, "a French occult author and magician." "Levi also proclaimed a theory of astral light based on his belief in animal magnetism. In his theory, astral light was similar to either, a fluidic life force that fills all space and living beings. This concept was not original but held by others in the 19th century. Levi stated, "To control the astral light was to control all things; a skilled magician's will was limitless in power."<sup>22</sup>

**1815 AD** - Franz Anton Mesmer died.

**1817 AD** – Debendranath Tagore born in Calcutta India. "He brought the Brahma Samaj [founded by Rammohan Roy – see 1774] more in line with Western forms of esoteric religiosity. His Romantic approach to Neo-Hindu doctrines contributed to shifting the Samaj closer to Westernized thought forms and further away from classical orthodoxy, a process that will be continued by Keshubchandra Sen [see 1838]." EDM p 46.

**1821 AD** – Mary Baker Eddy born in New Hampshire. Student of Phineas Quimby and founder of Christian Science.

**1827 AD** - William Blake died.

**1830 AD** - Johann Adam Weishaupt died

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<sup>22</sup> This 2<sup>nd</sup> quote is from <http://www.occult-underground.com/levi.html>).

- 1831 AD** - Helena Blavatsky was born Elena Petrovna Gan. “Better known as Madame Blavatsky, she was a founder of the Theosophical Society. She was also an Eastern Star Freemason, and wore an Eastern Star Emblem most of her life as a sign of respect to the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry.”
- 1832 AD** - Henry Steel Olcott, cofounder of the Theosophical Society, was born. “Cofounder and first president of the Theosophical Society, he was the first well-known person of European ancestry to make a formal conversion to Buddhism. His subsequent actions as president of the Theosophical Society helped create a renaissance of study of Buddhism. He is still honoured in Sri Lanka for these efforts.”
- 1838 AD** – Keshub Chunder (also “Keshabchandra”) Sen was born in Bengal. He established ties with Western esotericists of his time and helped reshape the Brahma Samaj movement to be more in line with esotericist movements in the West of his time – particularly Spiritualism. “Some of the practices and tenets he elaborated represent the earliest documented forms of proto Modern Yoga. His experiments in spiritually based communal living, furthermore, led to the creation of that typically modern institution, the Neo-Hindu “ashram” now ubiquitous throughout India and in other Neo-Hindu enclaves worldwide.” Perhaps most importantly, “Sen was the most influential role model for Vivekananda [see 1863].” EDM p 49
- 1846 AD** - Anna Kingsford (Annie Bonus) was born. She “was one of the first English women, after Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, to obtain a degree in medicine. Kingsford became known as an anti-vivisection campaigner, and an advocate of women's rights and vegetarianism. She pursued her degree in Paris, graduating in 1880 after six years of study, in order to continue her advocacy from a position of authority. She was the only student at the time to graduate in medicine without having experimented on a single animal. Her final thesis was on the benefits of vegetarianism, which she later turned into a book, *L'Alimentation Végétale de l'Homme*, translated as *The Perfect Way in Diet*. Kingsford was also active in the theosophical movement in England, becoming president of the Theosophical Society in 1883.”
- 1847 AD** - Annie Besant born in London. She became “a prominent Theosophist, women's rights activist, writer and orator.”
- 1848 AD** - William Wynn Westcott was born. He was “a British esotericist, coroner, ceremonial magician, and Freemason. He co-founded “the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn with Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers and William Robert Woodman in 1887.”
- 1849 AD** – American Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau writes in a letter “what seems to be the first recorded affirmation, by a Westerner, that he considered himself to be a yoga practitioner – after a fashion... Westerners were starting to

perceive 'yoga' as something they could engage in, not just something 'out there.' This religio-cultural trend became a very important and influential motif of East-West exchanges from about the last quarter of the nineteenth century onwards." EDM p 2-3.

**1852 AD** – translation of the Lotus Sutra into German by pioneer scholars Neumann and Odlenburg.

**1853 AD** – 1<sup>st</sup> Chinese Buddhist temple established in the US in San Francisco.

**1854 AD** - Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers was born. "Was one of the most influential figures in modern Occultism. He is primarily known as one of the founders of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a ceremonial magic order whose offshoots still exist today."

- James Frazer born. He "was a Scottish social anthropologist influential in the early stages of the modern studies of mythology and comparative religion. His most famous work, *The Golden Bough* (1890), documents and details similar magical and religious beliefs across the globe. Frazer posited that human belief progressed through three stages: primitive magic, replaced by religion, in turn replaced by science."

**1855 AD** - *Transcendental Magic* by Eliphas Levi was published. From its introduction: "in the ceremonies practiced at reception by all secret societies, there are found indications of a doctrine which is everywhere the same and everywhere carefully concealed."

- Theodor Reuss was born. He became "an Anglo-German tantric occultist, utopian socialist, police spy, journalist, singer, and promoter of Women's Liberation; and the successor to Carl Kellner as progenitor and head of *Ordo Templi Orientis*."

**1857 AD** - Arthur Edward Waite was born in the US. He "was a scholarly mystic who wrote extensively on occult and esoteric matters, and was the co-creator of the Rider-Waite Tarot deck. As his biographer, R.A. Gilbert described him, "Waite's name has survived because he was the first to attempt a systematic study of the history of western occultism - viewed as a spiritual tradition rather than as aspects of proto-science or as the pathology of religion.""

**1861 AD** - Rudolf Steiner was born. He was "an Austrian philosopher, literary scholar, educator, artist, playwright, social thinker, and esotericist. He was the founder of Anthroposophy, Waldorf education, biodynamic agriculture, anthroposophical medicine, and the new artistic form of Eurythmy. He characterized anthroposophy as follows: 'Anthroposophy is a path of knowledge, to guide the spiritual in the human being to the spiritual in the universe.... Anthroposophists are those who experience, as an essential need of life, certain questions on the

nature of the human being and the universe, just as one experiences hunger and thirst.”

**1862 AD** – William Walker Atkinson born in Baltimore. He “was a very important and influential American figure in the early days of the New Thought Movement. He was an attorney, merchant, publisher, and author, as well as an occultist and an American pioneer of New Thought, which is in fact the title of a magazine he edited at one time. He is also known to have been the author of the pseudonymous works attributed to Theron Q. Dumont and Yogi Ramacharaka. Atkinson's 1906 book *Thought Vibration or the Law of Attraction in the Thought World*, is associated with the thinking behind the recent phenomena surrounding the 2006 movie, *The Secret*. Due in part to his intense personal secrecy and extensive use of pseudonyms, he is now largely forgotten, despite having obtained mention in past editions of *Who's Who in America*, *Religious Leaders of America*, and several similar publications -- and having written more than 100 books in the last 30 years of his life.”

- 1<sup>st</sup> Western translation of the Dhammapada – into German.

**1863 AD** - Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) was born. He “played a key role by formulating the first fully-fledged definition of Modern Yoga theory and practice in his *Raja-Yoga* (1896). This was the outcome of a long-standing dialogue between the modernising Bengali intelligentsia and the English-speaking esotericists that had become their main interlocutors by the second quarter of the 19th century. This dialogue showed a paradoxical polarity of interests with the Indian interlocutors being mainly concerned with scientific validation and their Western counterparts with mystical states and paranormal occurrences. Vivekananda operated a synthesis of these tendencies by redefining yoga in terms of alternative medicine, thus turning an essentially religious enterprise into an embryonic 'mind-body' medicine.”<sup>23</sup> Lots more detail in EDM.

**1865 AD** - William Butler Yeats was born in Ireland. “Yeats had a life-long interest in mysticism, spiritualism, occultism, and astrology. He read extensively on the subjects throughout his life and was especially influenced by the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.”

- Papus (Gerard Encausse) was born “the Spanish-born French physician, hypnotist, and popularizer of occultism, who founded the modern Martinist Order.”

- Max Heindel (Carl Louis von Grasshoff) was born in the Royal Family in Denmark. He became “a Christian occultist, astrologer, and mystic.” Lived and died in the US.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.divinity.cam.ac.uk/CARTS/dhiir/indic/work01.html>

**1875 AD** - The Theosophical Society was founded “in New York City, USA, in 1875 by H.P. Blavatsky, Henry Steel Olcott, William Quan Judge and others. Its initial objective was the investigation, study and explanation of mediumistic phenomena. After a few years Olcott and Blavatsky moved to India and established the International Headquarters at Adyar, Madras (Chennai). There, they also became interested in studying Eastern religions, and these were included in the Society's agenda. By 1889 when Blavatsky wrote *Key to Theosophy*, the Society's objectives had evolved into: 1. *To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, colour, or creed;* 2. *To promote the study of Aryan and other Scriptures, of the World's religion and sciences, and to vindicate the importance of old Asiatic literature, namely, of the Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Zoroastrian philosophies;* 3. *To investigate the hidden mysteries of Nature under every aspect possible, and the psychic and spiritual powers latent in man especially.* (p. 39, *Key to Theosophy*) In addition to the stated objectives, as early as 1889 Blavatsky had told a group of Theosophical students that the real purpose of establishing the Society was to prepare humanity for the reception of the World Teacher when he appeared again on earth. This was repeated again more publicly by Annie Besant in 1896, five years after Blavatsky's death.

- Aleister Crowley was born. He was “a British occultist, writer, mountaineer, philosopher, poet, and yogi. He was an influential member in several occult organizations, including the Golden Dawn, the A▲A▲, and Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.), and is best known today for his occult writings, especially *The Book of the Law*, the central sacred text of Thelema. He gained much notoriety during his lifetime, and was infamously dubbed ‘The Wickedest Man In the World.’ Crowley was also a chess player, painter, astrologer, hedonist, bisexual, drug experimenter, and social critic.”

- Eliphas Lévi, (Alphonse Louis Constant) died

**1877 AD** - Edgar Cayce was born. He was “reputed to have had psychic abilities. He is claimed to have demonstrated an ability to channel answers to questions on subjects such as health, and Atlantis while in a self-induced trance.”

**1880 AD** - Alice Bailey was born in England. She moved to the US in 1907 where “she spent most of her life as a writer and teacher. She wrote on spiritual, occult, astrological, Theosophical, Christian and other religious themes. Her works, written between 1919 and 1949, describe a wide-ranging system of esoteric thought covering such topics as how spirituality relates to the solar system, meditation, healing, spiritual psychology, the destiny of nations, and prescriptions for society in general. She described the majority of her work as having been telepathically dictated to her by a "Master of the Wisdom," initially referred to only as "the Tibetan," or by the initials "D.K.," later identified as "Djwhal Khul."”

**1882 AD** – Mississippi Valley Spiritualist Association formed.<sup>24</sup> Among its members in subsequent years was Will J. Erwood, author, teacher, and guide for Elmer Green. As a spiritualist, he channeled “The Teacher” for Elmer during crucial years of training his 1938-1943.

**1883 AD** – Swami Kuvalayananda (Jagannath Ganesh Gune; 1883-1966) was born. “He attempted to demonstrate empirically that such entities as prana could be accounted for by physiological experiments. He was also a pioneer in formulating early therapeutic applications of Yoga, and became very influential in India through the work and publications of his Kaivalyadhama centre in Lonavla, notably the journal *Yoga Mimamsa*. The fundamental questions he posed are still very much at the centre of any critical evaluation and application of Modern Yoga in health care.”<sup>25</sup>

**1888 AD** - Anna Kingsford (Annie Bonus) died

- the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was established in London as “a magical order of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, practicing a form of theurgy and spiritual development. It was possibly the single greatest influence on twentieth century western occultism. Concepts of magic and ritual that became core elements of many other traditions, including Wicca, Thelema and other forms of magical spirituality popular today, are drawn from the Golden Dawn tradition.

**1889 AD** - Mathers' edition of *Key of Solomon* and his *Kabbalah Unveiled* were published.

**1890 AD** - W.B. Yeats joined the Golden Dawn.

- the 1st volume of *The Golden Bough*, by James Frazer, was published – “a wide-ranging comparative study of mythology and religion. It was aimed at a broad literate audience raised on tales as told in such publications as Thomas Bulfinch's *Age of Fable*. It offered a modernist approach to discussing religion, treating it dispassionately as a cultural phenomenon rather than from a theological perspective. Some of the work, especially descriptions of magic, are still held as valid today. Although the worth of its contribution to anthropology will be newly evaluated by each generation, its impact on contemporary European literature was substantial.”

**1891 AD** - Arthur Edward Waite joined the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

- Helena Blavatsky died.

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.mvsa.info/about\\_us.html](http://www.mvsa.info/about_us.html)

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.divinity.cam.ac.uk/CARTS/dhiir/indic/work01.html>.

**1896 AD** – Swami Vivekananda publishes Raja Yoga. In the “shaping of Modern Yoga... Raja Yoga is the seminal text. In it, Vivekananda carried out a major revisitation of yoga history, structures, beliefs and practices and then proceeded to operate a translation (often semantic as well as linguistic) of the ‘reformed’ yoga into something quite different from classical Hindu approaches... After 1896 Modern Yoga flourished both in India and abroad. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it has become a global phenomenon.” EDM p4.

- A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada born in India. “Prabhupada sailed to New York City in 1965. By July 1966 he had brought "Hare Krishna" to the West, founding the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in New York City and another center was started in San Francisco. From here Prabhupada traveled throughout America with his disciples, popularizing the movement through street chanting (Sankirtana), book distribution and public speeches. After a short time of being in London they came into contact with The Beatles, of whom George Harrison took the greatest interest, spending a significant time speaking with Prabhupada and producing a record with members of the later London Radha Krsna Temple. By the time of his death in Vrindavan eleven years later (1977), ISKCON was a widely known expression of Vaishnavism on an international basis as a confederation of more than 100 schools, temples, institutes, farm communities, and ashrams. Through his mission, Prabhupada followed and communicated the teachings of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and introduced bhakti yoga to an international audience.

**1897 AD** - Levi's *Le Clef des Grandes Mystères* was published.

**1898 AD** - Aleister Crowley joined the Golden Dawn (at age 23).

- Mathers published *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage*.

**1900 AD** - Aleister Crowley was expelled from the Golden Dawn.

**1901 AD** - Manly Palmer Hall was born. He “was a Canadian-born author and mystic. He is perhaps most famous for his work *The Secret Teachings of All Ages: An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy*, which is widely regarded as his magnum opus, published in 1928 when he was just 27 years old.”

**1904 AD** – British troops under Colonel Younghusband enter and occupy Lhasa.

**1907 AD** - Israel Regardie was born. He “was one of the 20th century's most significant occultists and a renewer of occult literature. Regardie is a principal reliable source for much of what is known about the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. His writings and the students he has taught or influenced provide much of the foundation for modern Western occultism. In addition to preserving the

knowledge, Regardie also preserved a valid branch of the initiatory lineage of the Golden Dawn in America.”

- Buddhist Society of Great Britain established in London.

- Henry Steel Olcott, cofounder of the Theosophical Society, died.

**1914 AD** – Jack Parsons was born. He “was an American rocket propulsion researcher at the California Institute of Technology and co-founder of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) and Aerojet Corporation. He was also an enthusiastic occultist, and one of the earliest American devotees of Aleister Crowley.”

- Swami Satchidananda born in India. “After serving his guru for many years, in 1966 he visited New York City at the request of a U.S. disciple, the artist Peter Max. Soon after his initial visit, Swamiji, as he was known to disciples, formally moved to the United States and eventually became a citizen. From his new home he spread his teachings of yoga and enlightenment. Satchidananda first came to public attention as the opening speaker at the Woodstock music and arts festival in 1969. Over the years he wrote numerous books and gave hundreds of lectures. He also ordained a number of western disciples into the order of sannyasa. He was the founder of the Integral Yoga Institute and in 1986 opened the Light of Truth Universal Shrine (LOTUS) at Yogaville in Buckingham, Virginia.”

**1916 AD** - Papus (Gerard Encausse) died.

**1917 AD** – Elmer Green born in Oregon. He has played a key role in laying the foundations of the field of biofeedback, helped found the Association for Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback (AAPB), and the International Society for the Study of Subtle Energy and Energy Medicine (ISSSEEM). As a young man he was interested in the Yoga teachings of Ramacharaka (see entry above for William Walker Atkinson), Theosophy, and Spiritualism and eventually became a student of Will J. Erwood and his channeled “Teacher” from whom he received training in mindfulness meditation, among other things. Manley Palmer Hall and Alice Bailey were other sources he cites in his three volume biography, The Ozawkie Book of the Dead.<sup>26</sup>

- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi born in India. Founded the worldwide Transcendental Meditation organization. Taught millions the basics of Yogic meditation according to the ancient tradition of Advaita Vedanta which he aimed to revive. Founded Student’s International Meditation Society in 1968. In his 1970 Year of Scientific Research he initiated a long series of groundbreaking investigations into the science of Yoga and founded Maharishi International University the following year focused on teaching “The Science of Creative Intelligence.” Eventually based in Fairfield Iowa, it was renamed Maharishi University of Management in

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<sup>26</sup> Subtitle: “Alzheimer’s isn’t what you think it is.” Philosophical Research Society, Los Angeles 2001.

1996, and is accredited for its programs ranging from kindergarten to PhD offerings in the arts, sciences, business, and the humanities. He died in 2008.

**1918 AD** - Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers died.

**1919 AD** - Max Heindel (Carl Louis von Grasshoff) died.

**1923 AD** - Theodor Reuss died.

**1925 AD** - William Wynn Westcott died.

- Rudolf Steiner died.

**1933 AD** - Annie Besant, author and noted Theosophist died.

**1938 AD** - Choegyal Namkhai Norbu was born. He “is a Dzogchen teacher who was born in Derge, Kham district (Eastern Tibet). When he was two years old, Namkhai Norbu was recognized as the reincarnation of a great Dzogchen teacher, Adzom Drugpa Rinpoche.” After he started formal Dzogchen teaching in Italy in 1976, “he quickly became a respected spiritual authority among many practitioners, and has created centers for the study of Dzogchen around the world.”

**1939 AD** - William Butler Yeats died.

- Franklin Jones born. He is “a contemporary and controversial guru and founder of the new religious movement currently known as Adidam. He has also used names such as Bubba Free John, Da Free John, Da Love-Ananda,” and, most recently Adi Da Samraj. “Adi Da has authored over 70 books on spirituality and the process of God-Realization. Adi Da's written work has been at times praised by scholars on textual and conceptual grounds. For example, [Jeffrey J. Kripal](#) describes “this English idiom has been enriched by a kind of hybridized English-Sanskrit, and that a new type of mystical grammar has been created.”” (Adi Da has played a preeminent role in my own life – as I’ve described elsewhere – see especially the recently posted “Putting Subtle Energy on the Scientific Map and my first posting last March, “Acknowledgements.”)

**1942 AD** - Arthur Edward Waite died.

**1945 AD** - Edgar Cayce died.

**1947 AD** - Aleister Crowley died.

**1956 AD** – Global celebration of 2500<sup>th</sup> year of Buddhism.

**1959 AD** – 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama flees Chinese invasion of Tibet and goes into exile.

**1964 AD** – Publication of Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition by British historian Frances A. Yates. “The book delves into the history of Hermeticism and its influence upon Renaissance philosophy and Giordano Bruno. Yates transformed Renaissance historiography with this book. In it she revealed the Hermeticism with which the Renaissance was imbued, and the revived interest in mysticism, magic and Gnosticism of Late Antiquity that survived the Middle Ages. In the face of longstanding conventional interpretations, Yates suggested that this itinerant Catholic priest was martyred in 1600 for espousing the Hermetic tradition rather than his affirmation of heliocentricity.”

**1966 AD** – 1<sup>st</sup> Theravada monastery established in US.

**1965 AD** – Asian Exclusion Act repealed by the by US Congress. Dozens of missionaries from various Asian religious and spiritual groups subsequently came to the US to teach and establish their traditions on US soil: among the more famous from India were Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (see 1917) who established Transcendental Meditation, Swami Satchidananda (see 1914) who established Integral Yoga, and A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami (see 1896) who established the “Hare Krishna” movement. Many Buddhist Yogis came as well – see RF for details of this important part of the story.

**1971 AD** – 1<sup>st</sup> Sakya Tibetan Buddhist center established in US.

**1975 AD** - *Illuminatus Trilogy* by Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea was published.

**1977 AD** – A C Bhaktivedanta Swami Pabuphada died.

**1985 AD** - Israel Regardie died.

**1989 AD** – His Holiness the Dalai Lama receives the Nobel Peace Prize.

**1990 AD** - Manly Palmer Hall died.

**2002 AD** – Swami Satchidananda died.

**2008 AD** – Mahrishi Mahesh Yogi died.

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### Endnotes

This chronology began with one I found via Google search titled “Occult Time Line: A chronology of Occult Events.”<sup>27</sup> I went through it, deleting some entries that seemed less relevant to my purposes, adding a few others, and inserting small excerpts of the relevant articles in wikipedia. Turns out there are nice articles in wikipedia on virtually every one of the subjects cited here. I find these a great place to begin any more in-depth look at many subjects.

<sup>27</sup> @ <http://virtuescience.com/occult-timeline.html>

I started a second pass on the list adding items from How the Swans Came to the Lake: a narrative history of Buddhism in America by Rick Fields.<sup>28</sup> These references are followed by “RF.” However, I’ve only just begun these additions – there is a lot of marvelous detail in Rick’s book.

I have added a few items from other on-line time lines for Buddhism and Yoga.<sup>29</sup>

I’ve made a third pass using Elizabeth de Michelis’ A History of Modern Yoga, Continuum, London & New York, 2004 – this is the book from which I first learned of the new scholarship into Western esotericism.

I want eventually to add in some of the rich scholarly details from Faivre, Hannegraaf, et al. My long-term fantasy is to draw up a “family tree of esotericism” that will give graphic evidence of Faivre’s notion that esotericists all share a certain “aire du famille” – perhaps best translated as “family resemblance.” My own feeling, as argued here, is that this is most fundamentally true for esotericists from around the world as a whole and not just “the West.”

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<sup>28</sup> Shambhala Press, 1981.

<sup>29</sup> There are a couple of other on-line resources for these Buddhist history additions that I looked at and used – including <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/history/timelines.htm> and <http://metaxu.to/buddhism/history.php>.