



Christus verus Luciferus, Demon est Deus Inversus: Pekka Siitoin's Spiritism Board¹

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Abstract

This article focuses on a Spiritism board, *Yhteyslauta*, designed in the mid-1970s by occultist neo-Nazi Pekka Siitoin. The board represents an unexplored occult subchapter of Finnish gaming culture and exhibits the Finnish esoteric tradition. In addition to analysing *Yhteyslauta's* game-like elements, the article explores the board's themes and imagery, and situates these components in the context of Siitoin's vernacular esoteric doctrine and cosmogony.

Keywords: esotericism, occultism, vernacular culture, board games

This interdisciplinary article aims to combine history-oriented game studies with religious studies by examining an unexplored occult subchapter of Finnish gaming culture, a Spiritism board designed by occultist neo-Nazi Pekka Siitoin. *Yhteyslauta* (Communication Board 1974) is a modification of the Ouija board. It is built around the contradictory esoteric doctrine Siitoin constructed in the early and mid-1970s. *Yhteyslauta* is not merely a unique gaming culture artefact; it also offers a peculiar glimpse into the Finnish esoteric tradition. The topic is approached through the theoretical framework of vernacular culture. The board falls into this category, because it represents nonconformist occultist expression and exemplifies the amateur content creation that repurposes canonized esoteric material.

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Siitoin frequently engaged in public polemics. He is better remembered as a foul-mouthed Nazi figure than as a practitioner of the secret black arts. In the mid-1970s he was the public face of Finnish far-right movements, whose activities were followed by the Finnish Security Police (Kalliala 1999; Kotonen 2018). Siitoin succeeded in creating an image of a widespread fascist threat with the willing help of the left-wing press. In reality, his organizational activities were relatively small in scale (Kotonen 2018, 182–187). Siitoin carved his name in history through political tinkering and shocking public statements. He was perhaps the first Finnish political troll who wholeheartedly embraced his controversial reputation. Siitoin's public character was partly a fictive creation.² The multiple organizations Siitoin founded served as stages on which he could perform. Siitoin has been rightly called 'the dramaturge of his own life' (Pohjola 2015, 45). In the 2010s this self-appointed Nazi leader was demoted to the role of a marginal Finlandization era political dilettante (Koivulaakso et al. 2012). Siitoin posthumously became a popular culture figure, whose likeness has been used, among other things, for coffee mugs, post cards, T-shirts, and independent digital games.

Although Siitoin has been acknowledged in the context of Western esotericism (e.g. Granholm 2009; 2016; Hjelm 2016), much of the contemporary Finnish research on the subject has focused on more esteemed domestic artists, authors, and esoteric practitioners (e.g. Kaartinen 2020; Kokkinen & Nylund 2020; Mahlamäki & Kokkinen 2020). Arguably, this is partly due to Siitoin's controversial public persona. However, *Yhteyslauta* should not be examined through this anachronistic lens, as it was published before his political radicalization. Furthermore, Siitoin was one of the most prominent young occultists in Finland in the early 1970s (Kassinen 1972).³

In contrast with world religions, new religious movements and indigenous religions have used different types of games as ritual devices (Binde 2007). In addition to Tarot, the Ouija board is undoubtedly the best known Western esoteric game. Its origins can be traced to the Spiritualism movement of the mid- and late 1800s in the United States, which used various board designs to communicate with the non-physical spirit world. The Ouija-brand board, designed in the early 1890s, was the most popular com-

2 For example, he claimed to be the bastard son of a German SS officer and a Finnish-Russian prostitute, adopted by the Siitoin family (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 96–100). The name of Siitoin's alleged father, Peter von Weltheim, was also one of his many pen names.

3 According to the clairvoyant Aino Kassinen (1972, 64–65) Siitoin was one of her most promising students. However, the relationship between the two grew cold in the mid-1970s.

mercial talking board, and soon became a synonym for similar parlour games (Horowitz 2009, 66–79). Ouija was adopted in occult practices in the 1920s through the endorsement of the English ritual magician Aleister Crowley and his acolytes (Cornelius 2005, 2–4). The Catholic Church, whose catechism forbids divination and magic practices, argued that its popularity offered ‘additional evidence of the fact that the world is once more relapsing into paganism’ (Raupert 1920, 234). The Christian fundamentalist movements eagerly advocated the notion of the Ouija board as the Devil’s tool in the 1970s and 1990s (Hunt 1985, 93–96). This continues to be a common perception in the popular imagination.

The present article has a threefold objective. First, it traces the esoteric sources from which Siitoin appropriated material for his doctrine. Second, it analyses how these components were used in *Yhteyslauta*’s design. Finally, it explicates the board’s central game-like elements. In addition to Siitoin’s (e.g. 1973; 1974a; 1974b; 1975b) own writings, the article’s primary source material consists of a wide array of esoteric, occult, Kabbalistic, and mythographic works (e.g. Bryant 1774; Scheible 1880; Lévi 1896; Blavatsky 1888/1893; Steiner 1908/1993; Mathers 1912; Hall 1928/2009). Furthermore, Siitoin has been the subject of, or featured in, several popular books (e.g. Häkkinen & Iitti 2015; Pohjola 2015; Keronen 2020; Nordling 2020). These publications include interviews with Siitoin and those who had a personal relationship with him. These accounts provided eyewitness testimonials that help pinpoint Siitoin’s sources of influence and inspiration, for example.

To fulfil these research goals, a close reading analysis of *Yhteyslauta* is provided. The origins of the board’s numerous symbols, images, and textual elements were identified from the aforementioned source material. *Yhteyslauta*’s instruction manual was also analysed, as it contained the rules and other requirements of gameplay. Siitoin’s publications were meticulously scrutinized to excavate all the possible references to *Yhteyslauta*. This was done to determine the manner and purposes of *Yhteyslauta*’s use, as well as its significance to Siitoin’s occult practices.

The first part of this article focuses on Siitoin’s transformation from a nationalist-minded occultist into a far-right caricature. This change encapsulates the evolution of Siitoin’s public image from the 1970s to the 2000s. The second subchapter offers an abridged version of Siitoin’s esoteric doctrine and cosmogony, introducing its key principles, ideas, and narratives. The last two sections examine *Yhteyslauta*’s game-like elements, and analyse the themes and imagery printed on the board.

The vernacular/esoteric frame

Vernacular culture refers to independent cultural expression, produced by non-institutional actors, who employ multifaceted sources and discourses. Dorothy Noyes (2012, 19) describes vernacular as ‘the immediate sphere of engagement in which actors negotiate between the tradition, professional, and alternate discourses available to them, drawing on multiple resources to create a practical repertoire’. Esotericism is also a nebulous concept with manifold emphases (Asprem & Strube 2020). It can be perceived as a craft of the initiated adepts, which requires detailed erudition concerning its subtleties. In this article esotericism is used as an umbrella term to describe various religio-philosophical and spiritual currents that are historically related, and share similar discursive practices, forms of thought, and/or traditions (Hanegraaff 2005, 336–340). Despite the obvious discrepancies, esotericism and vernacularity share many similarities. They are both non-institutional cultural practices that meet with a certain disparagement and derision (Koski 2020, 170–173).

Esotericism has been historically characterized as marginal, rejected knowledge, and oppositional culture (Asprem 2020). This dissent and deviant conception of esotericism has allowed occultists to position themselves as an ‘enlightened elite’ (Asprem & Strube 2020, 5). This mindset is very much evident in Pekka Siitoin’s work. His esoteric doctrine was anti-establishment, but not exceedingly anti-Christian, although it was anchored in Satanism and Luciferianism. This nonconformist belief system represented Finnish counterculture during the Cold War. It opposed the cultural mores of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and in its anti-communism reflected Siitoin’s adverse stance towards Finlandization era politics.

Siitoin’s homebrewed doctrine can be labelled vernacular esotericism. It blended elements of folk magic, ufology, Satanism, politics, and Nazi mysticism with traditional esotericism. In addition to metaphysics, religious principles, and ceremonial magic, his books featured an assortment of folkish spells and curses (Siitoin 1974b, 92–103; 1975b, 44–51). Siitoin’s body of work exhibits vernacular cultural production at several levels. Through creative adaptation Siitoin offered alternative interpretations of canonized esoteric texts and ideas, reshaping them into his own philosophy. Siitoin regularly called upon vernacular authority (Howard 2013, 80–83) in his claims making. The hidden knowledge he possessed was allegedly handed down to him from the spirit world. Siitoin (1973, 138–139; 1974a, 5) claimed to have personally met Christ, Lucifer, and Satan on several occasions. In addition to wisdom gained from this heav-

only host, Siitoin based his claims on the esoteric tradition. He quoted or copied direct passages – often with little respect for copyright or intellectual property rights – from the works of Rudolf Steiner, H. P. Blavatsky, Friedrich Nietzsche, Manly Palmer Hall, William Blake, Johannes Greber, Aino Kassinen, Anselm Kaste, and Reijo Wilenius, for example. According to Siitoin (1973, 186) these sources demonstrated that the ideas he wrote about were not merely figments of his own imagination. The vernacularity of Siitoin's esoteric doctrine was also apparent in his peculiar delivery. Siitoin gave down-to-earth analogies and unceremonious accounts of his meetings with spiritual beings. He also adopted inexpensive production techniques that were familiar in underground cultural circles. Siitoin's (1985/1999; 1977/2000) later amateur publications were released in zine format. For example, he appropriated the cover art of black metal bands and flyers from American satanic organizations to illustrate his own works.

Yhteyslauta – a localization of the Ouija board – was a material manifestation of this vernacular esoteric doctrine. It repurposed elements from Ouija's design and appropriated imagery from several esoteric and occult sources. *Yhteyslauta* was marketed as a game for laymen to communicate with the spirit world. The board contains occult symbols and principles that require esoteric knowledge to understand their meaning, but the game itself can be played without this contextual information. Furthermore, familiarity with Siitoin's own doctrine helps interpret the board, as the instruction manual is a little vague concerning certain details of *Yhteyslauta's* design.

Siitoin's persona and his esoteric oeuvre have been retrospectively reinterpreted through a Dadaistic lens. This process has led to a certain double vernacularization. Siitoin's notorious escapades and writings have been mimicked and adopted by postmodern parody religious groups and independent political actors. For example, a Finnish Discordian group listed Siitoin's books on black magic as its holy texts in their unsuccessful application to become a registered religion (Mäkelä 2019). On another occasion a few members of the Oulu Pirate Party released a video just before the 2017 municipal elections, which parodied an infamous scene from the documentary *Sieg Heil Suomi* (Stenros 1994).⁴ Interestingly, these organizations attempted to institutionalize themselves by appropriating and repurposing Siitoin's vernacular content.

4 See *Oululainen piraattineuvosto* (the Oulu Pirate Council): <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q029CDjh9tk>>, accessed 21 April 2021.

From a nationalist-minded occultist to a Satan-worshipping neo-Nazi

It is perhaps an understatement to call Timo Pekka Olavi Siitoin (1944–2003) a controversial figure. He has been most aptly described as ‘a lewd neo-Nazi who worshipped Satan in the name of God’ (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 108). Siitoin adopted many roles during his lifetime. Siitoin called himself a vulgarian – *rivologi* in Finnish – who revelled in debauchery and lewdness. He was a prolific author who wrote numerous esoteric and political books under various pseudonyms. Siitoin founded several organizations that integrated occultism with Nazism (Granholm 2016, 326–327). Many of these organizations were never officially listed on the national registry of associations and political parties, which complicated their prohibition. According to Kotonen (2018, 181) their membership ranged from a few dozen to more than a hundred members.

In the 1960s, prior to his occultist turn, Siitoin was an avid amateur filmmaker, who worked as an understudy in the Turku City Theatre. In the mid-1960s he founded a photography store, Siitoin-Filmi Oy, as well as an importing company Importpeak Ab (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 98–100).⁵ The early 1970s marked a spiritual and political awakening for Pekka Siitoin. After his photography business suffered financial hardship Siitoin sought guidance from clairvoyant Aino Kassinen and became her student. He later claimed that Kassinen had introduced him to Satanism in the early 1970s (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 101). In 1971 Siitoin founded the *Turun Hengentieteen Seura* (THS, the Turku Occult Society). The THS became the hub for his mail-order business, which focused on esoteric literature. He also practised remote spiritual healing. *Föreningen Veronica* (the Veronica Organization) was founded in 1972 to extend the mail-order business to other Nordic countries (Kalliala 1999, 261). Siitoin was also active in party politics in the early 1970s. For example, he served as the vice-chairman of the Turku local branch of the *Suomen Maaseudun Puolue* (SMP, the Finnish Rural Party). However, Siitoin’s occult activities were frowned on in the party, and he left the SMP after the 1972 municipal elections, briefly joining the Finnish People’s Unity Party (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 98–101).

Siitoin’s radicalization from a nationalist-minded occultist to a far-right provocateur occurred in the mid-1970s. He attempted to join the Constitutional People’s Party in 1975, to no avail (Kalliala 1999, 263). Subsequently,

⁵ Häkkinen & Iitti (2015, 98) also pointed to a story according to which Siitoin studied in the Theatre Academy. Siitoin also referred to his theatre studies in his now closed website. This is probably just another urban legend about Siitoin, as he was then living in Turku.

Siitoin founded several organizations to serve his political aspirations: *Pegasos-seura* (the Pegasus Society) in 1975; *Isänmaa ja vapaus* (Fatherland and Freedom); and the *Isänmaallinen kansanrintama* (IKR, the Patriotic People's Front) in 1976. These organizations' activities provoked indignation among politicians, trade unions, and the Finnish-Soviet Society. Siitoin's open anti-communism trespassed the most prominent Finnish political taboo of the Cold War era, arousing the interest of the Finnish Security Police. A group of MPs from the communist *Suomen Kansan Demokraattinen Liitto* (SKDL, the Finnish People's Democratic League) drafted several written parliamentary questions, which claimed, for instance, that the THS was preparing the resurgence of Nazi Germany in Finland.⁶ The MPs also demanded political measures be taken against the fascist threat, the distribution of Nazi propaganda, and other activities that violated the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947.⁷ The state was unconcerned about his antisemitism (Kalliala 1999, 264–271). The press wrote hyperbolic articles about Siitoin's public stunts, contributing to a narrative of a fascist threat looming over Finland. In addition to his political activities, Siitoin eagerly showcased his satanic practices for the media, even performing sexual rites in a soft porn magazine (*Jermu* 8/1976). The IKR was also featured in several television programmes and documentaries, in which its members defiantly proclaimed their agenda and preparedness for armed insurrection.⁸

The IKR's provocations escalated into direct action in 1977, when some of its members perpetrated acts of antisemitic vandalism and mailed smoke bombs to the offices of a communist newspaper and the SKDL's youth organization (Kotonen 2018, 190–191). Siitoin published *Paholaisen katekismus* (*the Devil's catechism* 1977) in the same year. Among other things the book featured ten satanic commandments. The state authorities' patience with Siitoin came to an end on 4 November 1977, when the Ministry of the Interior disbanded all his associations apart from the Veronica Organization for conflicting with the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947. On 26 November 1977, the communist printing house *Kursiivi* was burned down in an arson attack. Siitoin was quickly apprehended with two other IKR members. The IKR commenced an intimidation campaign to protest against their trial

6 KK 17/1974: Turun Hengentieteen Seuran Neuvostoliiton vastaisen toiminnan lopettamisesta. 7.2.1974.

7 KK 242/1976: Fasismien vaaran ehkäisemisestä. 21.9.1976; KK 242/1976: Fasismien vaaran ehkäisemisestä. 21.9.1976; KK 346/1977: Pariisin rauhansopimuksen vastaisen toiminnan kieltäminen. 28.11.1977.

8 Veckans Puls: Pekka Siitoin ja Isänmaallinen Kansanrintama. Yle 21.10.1977; Pirjo Honkasalo and Pekka Lehto: *Vaaran merkki* (*The Sign of Danger* 1978).

(Kalliala 1999, 274f.; Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 136–40), which resulted in yet another written parliamentary question that demanded the government act against fascist activities.⁹ The *Kansallis-demokraattinen puolue* (KDP, the National Democratic Party) was founded in the summer of 1978 to replace the banned IKR. On 13 November 1978 Siitoin was sentenced to five years in prison for incitement to arson.¹⁰

The 1980s were a period of decline for Siitoin's political activities. During this alcohol-fuelled downward spiral the Kekkonen era dissident became a Nazi caricature, appointing himself as the Finnish Führer. Having been released on parole in March 1981 Siitoin founded the *Kansallis-mytologinen yhdistys* (the National Mythological Society). He still made occasional appearances in the media. Faithful to his political performance, Siitoin continued to issue shocking public statements (Nordling & Koskela 2006, 7–11, 72–5, 103). In 1989 he published his last book, *Kohti uutta uskoa* (*towards the new faith*), which lacked the blasphemous undertones of his previous esoteric works.

Siitoin re-emerged in the 1990s. He reduced the anti-communist rhetoric, which had become outdated after the fall of the Soviet Union, and adopted the contemporary ideals of white supremacy and anti-immigration, made public in Finland by the skinhead movement. In 1993 Siitoin joined the American Church of the Luciferian Light and adopted the title of the Archbishop of Lucifer¹¹ without the Church's consent (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 152–7). Siitoin also co-founded the *Kansallinen liittoneuvosto* (the National Union Council) with other Finnish far-right figureheads.¹² In 1996 Siitoin ran in the Naantali municipal elections, urging people 'to elect Nazi Siitoin to the council'. He received the sixth highest vote count, but the proportional representation system prevented his election (Pohjola 2015, 7). In the late 1990s Siitoin started to operate mainly through his website (Kalliala 1999, 282).

Pekka Siitoin withdrew from the public eye in the 2000s. He died of oesophageal cancer on 8 December 2003. Before his demise Siitoin nominated Kai Mikael Aalto as his successor as the Finnish Führer. Aalto was his former disciple, who in 1986 had planned to use the Siitoin-inspired hypnotic-magnetic gaze method to hijack a plane (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 152).

9 KK 149/1978: Fasistisen toiminnan estämisestä. 17.3.1978.

10 The Turku Court of Appeal increased the sentence to five years and seven months in 1979.

11 According to Siitoin (1974b, 7), the Finnish religious circles named him as "the Devil's Archbishop" in the 1970s. Presumably Siitoin derived the title "Archbishop of Lucifer" from this moniker.

12 Documentary *Sieg Heil Suomi* (Stenros 1994) captured the inherent campness of Kansallinen liittoneuvosto's founding meeting. The documentary also made it painstakingly clear that Siitoin had become a burden to Finnish far-right movements.

Siitoin's esoteric doctrine, cosmogony, and anthropogony

Pekka Siitoin's mishmash esoteric doctrine drew inspiration from various sources such as H. P. Blavatsky's theosophy, Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy, Christian tradition, ufology, and Jewish mysticism. All of these were infused with Satanism.¹³ However, Satanism was not the defining aspect of Siitoin's belief system, but rather brought shock value to his public persona (Hjelm 2016, 475). Siitoin was also influenced by Gnosticism and Luciferianism. Siitoin outlined the key principles of his doctrine in three books, *Yhteys ufoihin ja henkimaailmaan* (*connection to UFOs and the spirit world*) (1973), *Ufot, uskonto ja paholainen* (*UFOs, religion and the devil*) (1974a), and the two-volume book *Musta magia* (*black magic*) (1974b; 1975b). There are certain discrepancies between the books that Siitoin never bothered to explain. Siitoin (1974c, 7) claimed to have received his occult knowledge from the spirit world. However, there is a more secular explanation for its source. Siitoin borrowed core elements of his doctrine directly from Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* (1888), Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers' *Kabbalah Unveiled* (1912), and Manly Palmer Hall's *Secret Teachings of All Ages* (1928/2009). Furthermore, Siitoin directly copied parts and passages from the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* (Scheible 1880).

Isä-Jumala (Father-God), an impersonal electromagnetic force field, held the highest seat in Siitoin's heavenly hierarchy. Immediately below him was Christ (Siitoin 1973, 135; 1974a, 14). The nine-step echelon of spiritual ordination was also a central element in Siitoin's (1974b, 40–7) doctrine. These consecutive ordinations were a path to higher levels of existence, and they were separated by different vibration frequencies. Siitoin's (1974a, 15) pantheon also consisted of ten deities, who originated from *Isä-Jumala* and were named after the sephiroth – or the nodes – from the Kabbalistic Tree of Life (Mathers 1912, 30; Hall 1928, 373), even though he did not explicitly identify them as such. These ten sephiroth corresponded to the name of the biblical God, the four-letter Tetragrammaton (YHWH). Siitoin also listed ten adverse sephiroth (qliphoth or shells), which appear as archdemons in Assiah, the last world of the Tree of Life. Interestingly, he adopted a mixed spelling of their names from both Mathers' (1912, 30) and Hall's (1928/2009, 368) books.

Siitoin (1974b, 48–56) offered a new and partly conflicting version of the heavenly hierarchy in his next book. This time he used the term 'sephiroth' (or 'zefiroth') to describe the deities, but renamed them after the names of

13 Siitoin considered theosophy as a form of Satanism (see Nordling & Koskela 2006, 192). This conception is in line with Blavatsky's theosophical sympathy towards Lucifer (Faxneld 2012).

Siitoin 1974a, 15	Mathers 1912, 30	Hall 1928/2009, 368–73
Kether/Saatan-Moloch	Kether/Satan and Moloch	Kether/Satan and Moloch
Chokmah/Beelzebub	Chokmah/Beelzebub	Chochmah/Adam Belial
Binah/Lucifer	Binah/Lucifuge	Binah/Lucifuge
Chesed/Astaroth	Chesed/Ashtaroth	Chesed/Astaroth
Geburah/Asmodeus	Geburah/Asmodeus	Geburah/Asmodeus
Tiphereth/Belphegor	Tiphereth/Belphegor	Tiphereth/Belphegor
Netzach/Baal	Netzach/Baal	Netsah/Baal Chanan
Hod/Adrammalech	Hod/Adrammalech	Hod/Adramelek
Yesod/Lilith	Yesod/Lilith	Jesod/Lilith
Malkuth/Nahema	Malkhuth/Nahema	Malchuth/Nahema

God presented in *Semiphoras and Schemhamphoras*, the third appendix of the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* (Scheible 1880, 65ff.). He also copied several passages from its Finnish translation to describe the sephiroth.¹⁴ The names were identical or bore a close resemblance to the divine names of God in Atziluth, the highest world in the Tree of Life (Mathers 1912, 30; Hall 1928/2009, 364). The sephiroth of the earlier book were now described as class numbers of these deities (Siitoin 1974b, 48–53).

Siitoin 1974b, 48–53	Mathers 1912, 30	Hall 1928/2009, 364
Eheje = Eleie = Ether Elion	Eheieh	Eheieh
Jehowah	Jehovah	Jehovah
Tetragrammaton Elohim	Jehovah Elohim	Jehovah Elohim
El	El	El
Elohim	Elohim Gibor	Elohim Gibor
Eloha	Eloah Vadaath	Eloah Vadaath
Tetragrammaton Zebaoth	Jehovah Tzabaoth	Jehovah Tzaboath
Elohim Sabaoth	Elohim Tzabaoth	Elohim Tzaboath
Sadai	Shaddai, El Chai	Shaddai, El Chai
Adonay Melech	Adonai Melekh	Adonay Melekh

Siitoin (1974b, 42) also used the Pythagorean tetractys model, also familiar from the Kabbalistic tradition, to depict his heavenly hierarchy. Presumably, he adopted the triangle from either Blavatsky (1888/1893) or Hall (1928/2009).

¹⁴ Siitoin (1974d) had republished the Finnish version under the name of *Musta raamattu* (*black bible*) in 1974. For more about the Nordic black book tradition see Davies (2008, 123–32).

In the new hierarchy the sephiroth were situated above Christ in spiritual rank. Twelve angels of darkness, led by Lucifer and Satan, and twenty angels of light, led by the Archangel Michael and Buddha, resided below *Isä-Jumala*, the sephiroth, and Christ (Siitoin 1974b, 55–56). Siitoin named these angels after the spirits mentioned in the *Tabellae Rabellinae Spiriti-Commando* appendix of the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* (Scheible 1880, 51).¹⁵

Siitoin's (1973, 176–9; 1974a, 11–25; 1974b, 14–36) cosmogony and anthropogony mixed religious elements with racist science fiction. According to his version of Genesis Lucifer was a malevolent demiurge who created the Solar System by the order of the Space Government. The human prototypes were brought to Earth in spaceships from unnamed planets beyond the Milky Way. The planet was built as a colony for an older culture. The progenitors of modern man established the realm of Atlantis 90,000 years ago.¹⁶ When the Space Government ordered Lucifer and his cohorts to depart Earth, they refused to leave. Lucifer had fallen in love with his creation and wanted to reign over it as a supreme god. Because of this defiance, Earth was banished from the union of planets (Siitoin 1974a, 11ff.).

Earth was destined to undergo seven developmental phases. This process could take millions of years, during which humanity would undergo repeated cycles of rebirth (Siitoin 1973, 61f.; 1974a, 180ff.). The current fourth phase, the Earth period, would witness the coming of seven root races.¹⁷ The first two unknown root races were followed by the Lemurians, whom Siitoin described as giant gorilla-like cyclops. The fourth root race, the Atlantians, was divided into seven tribes. The fifth root race, the Aryans, was descended from the Semitic tribe, except the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Jews. Furthermore, the Negroid race was a crossbreed of animals, ape-like cavemen and the Atlantians. The Chinese

15 The angels of darkness were: Thebot, Wethor, Quorthonn, Xvote, Yrzon, Xusorym, Zyvoy, Puchon, Tukes, Legioh, Xeror, and Woryon. These spirits were also called upon in an incantation to make a covenant with Satan (Siitoin 1974b, 69f.). The angels of light were: Chymchy, Asbeor, Yzazel, Xomoy, Asmoy, Diema, Bethor, Arsose, Zenay, Corave, Orowor, Xonor, Quiheth, Auato, Wevor, Gefove, Gorhon, Woreth, Hagyr, and Wolor. Again, Siitoin's spelling differs from their original source. In the English and Finnish versions of the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* (Scheible 1880; Siitoin 1974d) Wethor is spelled as Vethor, Tukes as Tukef, Woryon as Voryon, Arsose as Arfose, Orowor as Orovor, Wevor as Vevor, Woreth as Voreth, and Wolor as Volor.

16 There are certain similarities between Siitoin's and Esko Jalkanen's (1973) writings. Both authors produced pseudo-prehistoric accounts that incorporated UFOs, black magic, astral planes, and components of the Atlantis myth.

17 Siitoin borrowed the ideas of root races, lost continents, and Earth cycles from Blavatsky's theosophy. He did not name the last two roots races that would follow the Aryan root race.

and the Japanese originated from a destroyed planet, located somewhere between Earth and Mars (Siitoin 1974a, 17–24, 177). Jehovah, who in turn had rebelled against Lucifer, created the Jewish people to usurp power on Earth (Siitoin 1973, 85ff.; 1974a, 26–9). To achieve these goals, the Jews developed communism, large-scale capitalism, and Judaism (Siitoin 1974b, 20–22). Jehovah also tried to prevent Moses from revealing the secret of witchcraft to all humankind. The keys to these secrets were passed by the sephiroth and hidden in the *Sixth and Seventh Book of Moses*. However, Christ circumvented Jehovah's plans (ibid., 14–7).

Apart from the obviously racial overtones of this anthropology, Siitoin's doctrine lacked overt racist themes. At the time of its conception Siitoin's notion of Aryanism referred to spiritual development, not racial supremacy. Trevor Ravenscroft's pseudo-historic *The Spear of Destiny* (1972/1982), translated to Finnish in 1974, initiated Siitoin in Nazi occultism (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 108–109). For Siitoin the book was a philosophical nexus, which combined elements of theosophy, anthroposophy, Nazi mysticism, and Ariosophy.¹⁸ Ravenscroft's influence became evident in Siitoin's publications from the mid-1970s, although he did not revise his doctrine to reflect his new interests. True to his vernacular habits, Siitoin appropriated details from Ravenscroft without citing their original source. According to Siitoin (1975b, 21f., 74) Hitler was a skilled occultist and an expert practitioner of black magic, who with other members of the NSDAP inner circle had regular meetings with Satan. Furthermore, Hitler had been Landulf II of Capua – 'the archbishop of darkness' – in his previous incarnation. This idea was taken directly from Ravenscroft (1972/1982, 86ff., 145f.).

The *Yhteyslauta* instruction manual

The original *Yhteyslauta* was published in 1974 by the THS and the Veronica Organization. Siitoin also released the main body of his metaphysical works the same year. In 2014 the THS – briefly revived in 2010 as a parodic online community – published a reissue of the game board to honour Siitoin's

18 Blavatsky's influence also draws an interesting parallel between Siitoin's doctrine and Aryan esoteric theories that drew inspiration from her theosophy. Siitoin did not appear to have a detailed knowledge of Armanism or Ariosophy, but the name of Guido von List – a pioneer of Germanic occult mysticism – is mentioned several times in *The Spear of Destiny* (see Ravenscroft 1972/1982, 59, 71, 76, 168). We can therefore assume that Siitoin was at least aware of List. There are also incidental similarities between the works of List and Siitoin. For example, von List (1902, 107–108) based his runic system on Kabbalah's Tree of Life. For more about Ariosophy and Armanism see Goodrick-Clarke (2004).

seventieth birthday. The society described *Yhteyslauta* as 'the cornerstone of the revered Master's mail-order business'.¹⁹

Siitoin (1973, 27f.; 1974a, 44) made short occasional remarks about Spiritism boards in his writing, noting, for example, that humans can use them to interact with spirits, who dwell on higher planes of spiritual existence, or directly with God. Aspiring disciples could also use *Yhteyslauta* to enquire if Satan had accepted them as his neophytes. This process also included rituals that involved boiling live cats or having sexual intercourse with virgins (Siitoin 1974b, 63ff.). Siitoin also corresponded about the subject. One customer even claimed to have become schizophrenic after an *Yhteyslauta* session.²⁰ Siitoin also gave lectures about Spiritism and organized seances during 1974–5 (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 124). Presumably, the board was sold at these events.

Before we can delve more deeply into *Yhteyslauta* as a game or analyse its themes and symbolism, we must familiarize ourselves with its instruction manual. The manual was printed in Finnish and Swedish.²¹

You have just got your hands on the so-called YHTEYSLAUTA, through which you can receive messages from the spirit world. The game follows the principles of the old-style Spiritism, but it is not identical with the Spiritism game. This new game strives to convey reverence for God through specific descriptions and images printed on the game board. By correctly combining these words and markings, different spirits can easily manifest themselves through the Divine power that is hidden in the secret mysterion marks.

Explanation of the game marks:

Each corner of the game board is printed with a pattern that contains a Latin word. These words are the names of the four material elements that God uses to carry out his intentions. IGNIS = fire, i.e. heat. AQUA = water. AER = air, and TERRA = earth. These four elements contain different types of spirit. The name TETRAGRAMMATON with numbers is the secret Latin name of God, and the semicircle with the eyes and a star inscribed between it represents God's greatness in the macrocosm and that He is omniscient. The swords

19 See the archived THS blog post: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20140602073439/http://turunhengentietenseura.wordpress.com>>, accessed 21 April 2021.

20 See the archived Mesikämmenen blog post: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20160917224246/https://mesikammen.wordpress.com/2013/05/26/turun-hengentieteen-seuran-kirjeenvaihtoa-70-luvulta>>, accessed 21 April 2021.

21 The English translation of *Yhteyslauta's* instruction manual and its ad blurbs by the author.

portray His might. The so-called magical sword on the left of the board holds a mysterion that grants access to secret knowledge. The serpent and the egg on the right depict eternal wisdom and eternal life. The cross in the middle of the board symbolizes the divergence between spiritual and physical life, and a certain indifference to suffering if one desires to develop further. The two Divine wisdoms above and below the cross translate to Finnish as the Christ is the True Lucifer and the Devil is the God inverted.

There are two ways to communicate, which I will now instruct you about:

1. Communication with God's spirit world.

Set the game board on a flat table. Place a crystal bowl containing a litre of water and a burning candle on the same table. Place a small glass bottom up in the middle of the board. The participants, of whom there should be at least two, and preferably between three and five, then read the Lord's Prayer and the Priestly Blessing aloud. The participants must then recite in unison: 'Dear God Tetragrammaton, send us messages from beyond with the help of your subordinates. Your will be done, not ours. Amen.' The participants then gently place their index fingers on the glass's bottom. Their elbows must not touch the table's surface. The hands can thus easily follow the glass as it moves from letter to letter. One player must record the letters and numbers onto which the glass moves. Do this with one hand. The letters will form words and sentences that the spirits tell. You can also ask the spirits questions to a certain extent. The game board has the words NO and YES for this purpose. The game room must be silent and dark, apart from candlelight.

2. Communication with the Devil's spirit world.

Otherwise proceed as before, but do not recite the Lord's Prayer or the Priestly Blessing. Instead, make this request: 'O great and mighty prince of darkness Satan-Moloch, send Thebot, Wethor, Quirthonn, Xvote, Yrzon, Xusorym, Zyvoy, Puchon, Tukes, Legioh, Xeror, Woryon, or another of Your minions to speak with us. Amen.'

The spirits do not appear if the participants fool around or doubt these things. Order this book for more information about the spirit world: The Original Black Bible/Moses, 242 pages, price 39,00-. Among other things the book deals with white and black witchcraft etc. matters.

The game-like elements of *Yhteyslauta*

Games have numerous definitions, with each underlining different aspects of gameplay. Jane McGonigal (2011, 20–22) infers four unifying traits found in all games: 1) the goal (the outcome/objectives players aim to achieve); 2) the rules (the formal/informal restrictions that define how the goals/objectives can be achieved); 3) the feedback system (the interactive loop that informs players that they are achieving the goal/objectives); and 4) the voluntary participation (players accept the aforementioned factors and can start/quit the game on their choosing).

Siitoin modelled *Yhteyslauta* after the Ouija-like boards, which have been defined either as games or as occult communication devices, depending on the context of their use. Stoker Hunt (1985, 4) referred to Ouija as 'a universal folk device', because various cultures have been using similar spiritual boards for centuries. Bill Ellis (2004, 175) called Ouija 'a game-like ritual', situating it in the same category as other forms of spiritualistic play. Board game manufacturers have defined Ouija-like boards as games and toys.²² Conversely, some occult practitioners have perceived Ouija as a genuine occult tool not to be carelessly played with (Cornelius 2005, 3).

Interestingly, Siitoin himself labelled *Yhteyslauta* a game, even though he described Spiritism boards as ritual devices in his writing. The relatively complex and specific instructions can also be interpreted as an effort to elevate *Yhteyslauta* above common toys. In some advertisements *Yhteyslauta* was alternatively marketed as a 'communication board/game with the spirit world' (Siitoin 1977, 37; 1989, 4). Furthermore, Siitoin used the term 'play' to describe the board's use, which created a connotation of frivolous activity. This is congruent with the Finnish Spiritism tradition, in which using Ouija-like boards is referred to as 'playing Spiritism' (Virtanen 1974, 143). We can conclude that *Yhteyslauta* is not a game in the traditional sense, but contains several game-like elements. These elements become evident when we compare *Yhteyslauta's* instructions to the common game traits discussed by McGonigal (2011).

Although the core elements are the same, *Yhteyslauta's* design differs to some extent from Ouija. The alphabets and numbers are situated in a circular formation instead of horizontal lines. The goodbye marking, which is used to end a Ouija seance, is absent from *Yhteyslauta*; nor does the instruc-

22 In the 1920s a company in Baltimore claimed that the Ouija board was a religious device and should have tax-exempt status. The court did not support this assertion and ruled it as a taxable game/toy (Hunt 1985, 6f.). This ruling remains valid today.

tion manual explain how the communication process is terminated. This omission suggests that the ending is voluntary and does not require any specific measures to be fulfilled. The planchette is replaced by a shot glass. This choice follows the Finnish Spiritism board tradition, which prefers handmade boards and household wares to commercially produced items (Virtanen 1974, 144–146). Alternatively, it can be read as a nod to Siitoin's love for alcohol. The mandatory multiplayer setting and the option to practise black or white magic are some of the most notable differences. Ouija has no limitations concerning the number of participants. Furthermore, in Ouija the communication process occurs with random spirits of the dead, not with high angelic or demonic entities. Interestingly, the manual only mentions the evil deities by their actual names. This demonstrates Siitoin's fascination with the darker side of the esoteric arts, but is also another exhibit of the Finnish Spiritism board tradition of the mid-1970s, in which it was common to call upon the Devil during the gameplay (Virtanen 1974, 144f.). Folklorist Leea Virtanen (1988, 272ff.) argued that this tendency was a remnant of centuries-old oral folk tradition.²³ In addition to these obvious differences, the two designs share certain similarities. For example, the Lord's Prayer, recited in an attempt to communicate with God's spiritual domain, is a common protective prayer used to open a Ouija session.

Yhteyslauta's objective is straightforward: to communicate with either God's or the Devil's spirit world. The board is supposed to function as a medium through which this process occurs. However, the preferred goal depends on the play's context. We can distinguish two standard approaches to gameplay: occult- and entertainment-oriented. The former serves genuine ritualistic or spiritualistic purposes with the aim of establishing a real connection with the non-physical planes of spirits, whereas the purpose of the latter is playful, and its aim is to seek tension and excitement through a game of make-believe.

Yhteyslauta is presented as a rigorous rule-based system. Players must follow the instructions to the letter to create a channel to the spiritual sphere. For example, the rules determine the number of players, the required game pieces, the game space conditions, and the mindset required for gaming. The ad blurbs (Siitoin 1974a, 192; 1974b, 179f.; 1974c, 166; 1975a, 155) stress meticulous adherence to rules.

²³ Virtanen (1988, 252) is probably referring to Siitoin's mail-order business when she discusses the dissemination of the *Sixth and Seventh Book of Moses* in Finland. However, she does not mention Siitoin by name.

Do you want to gain access to the new world of spirits? Through the original YHTEYSLAUTA or SPIRITISM GAME you can communicate with the spirit world and receive prophecies and knowledge from the beyond. The game works reliably if you follow the instruction manual. This millennia-old method is extremely popular in North and South America.

Another advertisement (Siitoin 1974e, 126) underlined the importance of owning the actual instruction manual with the approved rules written by Siitoin.

With the communication board of the spirit world you can use the original method to play white or black Spiritism. Various spirits speak to you through the game. The game does not work without the instruction manual.

The imperative to follow the rules offers a fail-safe for the designer. Siitoin could always plead to possible rule violations if the board did not work. The manual states that even an iota of doubt is enough to ruin a communication attempt.

The feedback system is undeniably the most challenging game factor to demonstrate objectively. There are two possible ways to construct a working interactive feedback loop between the board and the players. These methods are related to the approaches discussed earlier. According to psychology the working principle of Ouija-like boards is based on the ideomotor response, in which concentration on a task can prime the unconscious or involuntary movement of the fingers, for example (Andersen et al. 2019). In the occult-oriented approach the interactive feedback loop is produced precisely through this effect, although the occultist may contend that the planchette is moved by an outside force from the spirit world. In the entertainment-oriented approach the rules are intentionally broken to facilitate gameplay. A player can adopt the role of a game master and deliberately move the shot glass to create messages, and thus form a player-to-player feedback loop.

The *Yhteyslauta* board design

Yhteyslauta is a patchwork that merges motifs of theosophy, anthroposophy, classical mythology, and Jewish mysticism. It was designed during a period when Siitoin was focusing on occultism instead of politics. The game board is therefore devoid of any far-right or fascist imagery. It also lacks distinctly satanic symbols. The board's colour scheme draws on Blavatsky's

theosophy. Yellow is the colour of the spiritual soul, reflecting intelligence, knowledge, and communication (Hall 1928/2009, 251). The classic elements of fire, water, air, and earth are situated in the board's corners. According to Siitoin (1973, 61) these elements form the human body. They also represent the four kings of nature (Siitoin 1973, 178), who reside below Satan and Buddha in the heavenly hierarchy. Siitoin (1975b, 86–91) stated that while these kings were under Satan's direct control, they could also be commanded by individuals with a high spiritual ordination. The cross in the middle of the board, symbolizing the divergence between the spiritual and physical life, is the only exhibit of original content in *Yhteyslauta's* design. The remaining elements and imagery were appropriated and repurposed from other sources. Most symbols and images have only ornamental purposes. They are a visual manifestation of Siitoin's esoteric doctrine. The game manual also lists paraphernalia such as the crystal bowl which serve no gameplay function. The bowl refers to the ancient tradition of lecanomancy and creates an archaic aura around the gameplay experience.

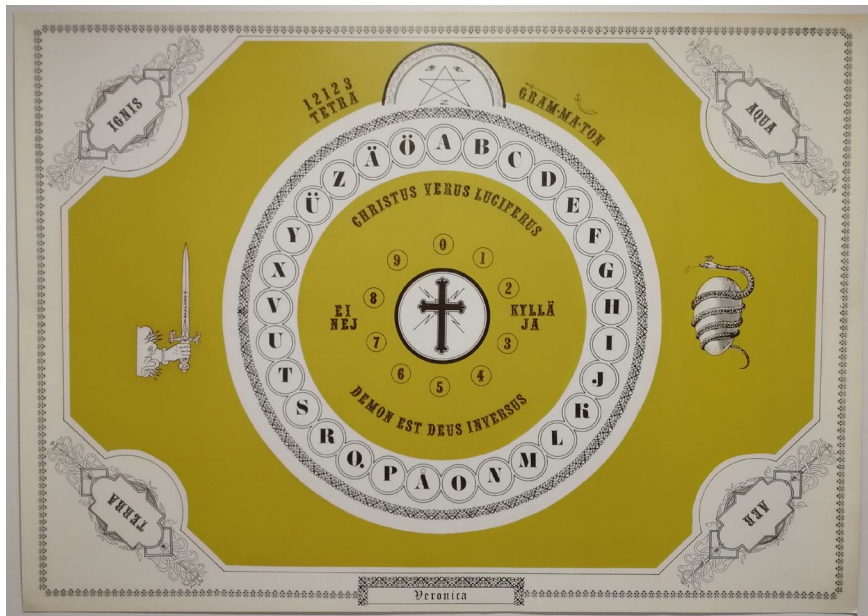


Figure 1. *Yhteyslauta*. Photo: Tero Pasanen.

The Tetragrammaton – situated on the upper rim of the alphabet circle, between the eyes and the pentagram – had the utmost importance for Siitoin, who ‘worshipped Satan in the name of God’ (Häkkinen & Iitti 2015, 108). This four-letter name of God (YHWH) is called upon when communicating with God’s spirit world. The Tetragrammaton text is divided into two sections: ‘tetra’ and ‘grammaton’. The central elements of this conception – the eyes, the pentagram, the number sequence 12123, and the Western long sword and Eastern scimitar – were taken from Éliphas Lévi’s (1861, 25) drawing of the Tetragrammaton Pentagram, which was reprinted in Hall’s (1928/2009, 317) *Secret Teachings of All Ages*. Siitoin owned a copy of the book (Nordling & Koskela (2006, 192). Like Lévi’s pentagram, *Yhteyslauta*’s five-pointed star is drawn in an upright position, not in the Goat of Mendes arrangement with two points up. This microcosmic arrangement symbolizes a human.

The decision to name the highest deity of his heavenly hierarchy the Tetragrammaton is perhaps the most glaring inconsistency in Siitoin’s confusing antisemitic esoteric doctrine. The instruction manual incorrectly referred to the Greek term Tetragrammaton (YHWH) as ‘the secret Latin name of God’. Yet Siitoin designated Jehovah or Yahweh, vocalizations of YHWH, as the principal antagonist in his cosmogony. For example, Jehovah was identified as the serpent in the fall of man²⁴ and the Devil in the temptation of Christ. We can only speculate about the reason for this discrepancy. Siitoin may have been unaware of the meaning of these vocalizations, or he simply disregarded the obvious contradiction as a creative choice.

The magical sword with the name of the feminine sephira Malkuth engraved on its blade is situated on the left-middle side of the alphabet circle. It is a photocopy of Éliphas Lévi’s (1896, 40) drawing the Magical Sword. On the opposite side of the board is a hand-modified photocopy of the Orphic Egg, engraved by James Basire. Its original source was Jacob Bryant’s (1774, 241) *A New System, or, an Analysis of Ancient Mythology*. Siitoin (1974a, 24) used the unedited version of the illustration in *Ufot, uskonto ja pahalainen*. The serpent coiled around the egg symbolized a phallus for Siitoin, which he equated with Satan-Moloch. Together, the sword and egg formed a duality of female and male. These images were also reprinted in Hall’s (1928/2009, 41, 311) book.

24 In his narrative about the fall of man Siitoin (1975b, 65) provided one of his most colourful analogies, as he compared Eve to Marilyn Monroe and described Adam’s wife as a heavenly sex bomb.



Figure 2. The pentagram, the sword, the cross and the Orphic Egg. Photo: Tero Pasanen.

The Latin proverbs printed inside the *Yhteyslauta's* alphabet circle were central tenets of Siitoin's (1973, 145; 1974a, 182) occultist philosophy. These principles, defined as 'divine wisdoms' in the manual, were adopted from Rudolf Steiner's (1908/1993) and H. P. Blavatsky's (1888/1893) works. According to Steiner (1908/1993, 130) the first phrase, '*Christus verus Luciferus*' (Christ is the true Lucifer), refers to Christ as the light-bringer, who brought independence to humanity. Luciferic beings attempted to do the same, but humanity was insufficiently mature before it was unified by Christ through

spiritual light. Siitoin (1974a, 100ff.) interpreted this notion a little differently, arguing that enlightenment could be achieved either through Christ or Lucifer. Christ had redeemed humanity and returned it to God's spirit world through the crucifixion or 'Golgotha mysterion'.²⁵ The rise in spiritual echelons, achieved through universal knowledge and truth, was the path to salvation and the escape from rebirth. In turn, those who remained in Lucifer's material world were destined to be reborn on Earth until it had completed the seven developmental cycles (Siitoin 1974a, 72–6, 180ff.). Siitoin (1977) later claimed that the phrase also meant that Lucifer was the true god of Christians.

The second phrase, '*Demon est Deus Inversus*' (the Demon is God inverted), refers to the concept of an absolute God that concurrently entails the essences of good and evil. These forces were co-dependent: one could not exist without the other (see Blavatsky 1888/1893, 441–445). In this context Siitoin (1974a, 144f.) wrote about Christ- and Lucifer-consciousness in humans. Siitoin argued that good and evil were necessary for spiritual development, and that both forces were blessed by God, because they were derived from Him. Siitoin (1974b, 118) also used the phrase in an incantation of a sexual rite.

Conclusions

Siitoin's occult works exemplify vernacular esotericism by offering a folkish reading of interconnecting and multifaceted esoteric philosophies. The impression of vernacularity is also conveyed by Siitoin's verbal expression and do-it-yourself production methods. *Yhteyslauta* was a material manifestation – a popular culture novelty – of this philosophical omnium-gatherum. There is no definitive proof of whether Siitoin was the sole author of *Yhteyslauta*, or whether it was co-designed with other members of the THS/Veronica Organization. However, this is probably the case, because Siitoin produced most of the original content published by his organizations. *Yhteyslauta* can be interpreted as an introductory tool that was useful for achieving the first pieces of the universal knowledge required to gain spiritual ordinations, as it supposedly enabled communication with spirits who dwelt on higher astral planes. Unfortunately, Siitoin did not disclose whether *Yhteyslauta* was used as a medium in his alleged meetings with Christ, Lucifer, and Satan-Moloch.

25 Siitoin probably borrowed the idea and the term from Pekka Ervast (e.g. 1911/1987, 205–17). Siitoin sold Ervast's books through his mail-order business.

Occultism offered a way for Siitoin to quench his thirst for recognition. When Siitoin became acquainted with the esoteric arts, he quickly constructed his own esoteric doctrine instead of advocating or following an existing philosophy. He also formed several organizations to advocate his esoteric and political beliefs. Moreover, Siitoin built a small business around his occult activities, although his public Nazi role later impeded his commercial affairs.

Considering Siitoin's ostentatious public persona and antics, it is perhaps impossible to determine the true intentions behind his occultist practices. Siitoin may have been a genuine seeker of hidden truth, whose esoteric principles reflected not only his metaphysical beliefs, but also his views on the politics of the Finlandization era. However, he may also have been a charlatan, who played the occultist's role to bask in infamy. What is certain is that occultism was not merely an interim phase for Siitoin. He remained firmly on the Left-Hand Path even after his focus had turned to far-right politics. Undoubtedly, many of his public appearances as a Satan worshipper were made for provocative purposes. Nevertheless, his former associates claimed that Siitoin called upon Lucifer on his deathbed (Nordling & Koskela 2006, 162–163).

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