

# *The Cauldron*

## THE MYSTERY OF BAPHOMET

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### THE MYSTICAL ORDER OF THE TEMPLE

It is very difficult today to raise the subject of the Knight Templars, or the Order of Knights of the Temple of Solomon to give them their full title, without the reader stifling either a smile or a yawn. So much has been written about these warrior monks and most of it is romantic fiction. What is known about them is that they eventually became a spiritual threat to the Vatican and a political rival to the royal houses of Europe. At the beginning of the 14th century, King Phillip of France saw their downfall as a means of filling his empty treasury with their wealth. With the support of the Pope the Order was suppressed and its members were charged with heresy, blasphemy, devil-worship, sexual perversion and treason. The other historical facts about the Temple are that it was involved in the financing and building of several of the Gothic cathedrals of Europe, promoted the cult of the Black Virgin and seems to have played a hidden role in the establishment of the early lodges of speculative Freemasonry. In legend and myth the Templars were regarded as the guardians of the Holy Grail and the Ark of the Covenant and in esoteric tradition were known as the Grail Knights. Hopefully this article will throw new light on the Order without delving deeper into the realms of the 'fantastique'.

### THE MYSTERIOUS BAPHOMET

According to the charges of heresy made against the Temple in 1307 it had an inner circle of initiates who had renounced Christianity while still paying lip-service to it in public, worked with the Muslim enemy to overthrow the Church and worshipped an idol called Baphomet. This idol was variously described as a head with two faces and a long white beard, a human skull which acted as an oracle and uttered prophecies guiding the destiny of the Order, a goat, a ram or a black cat. With their limited knowledge most of the persecutors of the Templars identified Baphomet with either Muhammed or Satan. One image found carved in a Templar priory in France appears at first glance to support the Satanic theory. It depicts a typically demonic figure with bat wings, a forked beard, female breasts and horns. [A photograph of this image was reproduced in the 1970s part-work *Man, Myth & Magic*. Ed] Recent writers have identified Baphomet as the Turin Shroud, the Veil of Veronica or the heads of John the Baptist or Jesus. The latter is said to be buried in Rosslyn chapel in Scotland. Rosslyn is the private chapel of the Sinclair family who were connected with the Templars, patrons of Freemasonry and supporters of the Jacobite cause.

In the 19th century the French occultist Alphonse Constant, an ex-Catholic priest and proto-communist, best known under his Cabbalistic Jewish pseudonym 'Eliphas Levi', claimed Baphomet was a pantheistic figure symbolising the Absolute (the God behind the Gods). He also linked it with Azoth, the Philosopher's Stone capable of prolonging life and transforming lead (matter) into gold (spirit). Like many occultists, Levi believed that the real source of the Temple's wealth and reputation as international bankers was based less on the treasures they had looted during the crusades in the Holy Land, but more on their occult knowledge of alchemy obtained from the Middle Eastern adepts of the Saracen mystery schools. The physical application of changing base metal into gold or silver was reflected on an inner level by the knights' quest for the Holy Grail as a symbol of spiritual enlightenment and illumination.

Levi's famous illustration of Baphomet appears to be based on the image found in the Templar commanderie

mentioned earlier. He is depicted as a half-human and goat-headed figure sitting cross-legged on a cube. The latter represents 'the altar of the Earth' on which all matter is sacrificed when the soul is incarnated in a physical vessel. In Masonic lore it is the 'rough ashlar' or stone which has to be hewn and polished to perfection and it symbolises the neophyte stepping on to the path to initiation. On a higher level this cubic stone also refers to Baphomet's title of Rex Mundi or the King of the World as it represents the element of earth and his rulership over it.

A torch blazes between the horns of the goat-man, symbolizing the light of spiritual illumination, and on his brow, the site of the pineal gland and Third Eye, is the magical symbol of the Morning Star or pentagram. In the medieval witch trials the accused often mentioned that the 'Devil' who presided over the sabbats had a blazing torch between his horns. Similar symbolism can be found in the Two Horned cult of the Aniza tribe in North Africa where a torch between two horns represented the sect's head teacher and the intellect. Recent research suggests occult ideas and symbolism from North African sources influenced both Egypt and Moorish Spain. Baphomet is also winged to illustrate his angelic nature, yet his human body, goat head and cloven feet remind us of humankind's animal origins and nature.

Levi's image of Baphomet is androgynous or bisexual. This signifies he represents both human genders, the spiritual equality of the sexes and the 'male' and 'female' energies whose polarity and interplay created and sustains the universe. Baphomet is a hermaphrodite as he has both female breasts and a male phallus. It is interesting this term is derived from the Greek deities Hermes, the god of wisdom, and Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Hermes was the father of the goat-foot god Pan who was regarded by the Church as the Devil. In esoteric terms Pan, the patron god of shepherds, is the masculine aspect of the Earth Spirit and the ruler of nature.

In Levi's original illustration Baphomet's erect phallus is hidden due to 19th century prudishness. This hidden phallic energy was symbolically represented by a caduceus or a wand entwined with two serpents. This ancient sign of healing and wholeness also represents the dualities of light and darkness, good and evil etc balanced in harmony. It dates back to the XVIII Dynasty of Egypt and was the emblem of an occult fraternity of healers, alchemists, masons and metal-workers founded by the Pharaoh Thotmes or Tutmosis III. The androgynous nature of Baphomet is further emphasised by the fact that one of his arms is muscular and male, while the other is more rounded and feminine. One points up to a light waxing moon and the other points down to a dark waning moon. This is a Hermetic gesture meaning 'As above – so below'. These words inscribed on the Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus (Thrice Greatest) indicate that magical energy can be used for good or evil, and also that humankind is the microcosm of the macrocosm (the universe).

Many writers have puzzled over the unique name of 'Baphomet'. The Church believed it was simply a corruption of Mahomet or Muhammed. For this reason they believed the Temple was plotting with Islam to destroy Churchianity. Levi, and other occultists, suggest the name is derived from 'Bapho-metis' and means 'the baptism of wisdom'. He was also known as 'the Father of Wisdom' and both names are suggestive of the occult nature of the image and its secret symbolism within the inner circle of the Order.

## THE KNIGHTS OF CAPRICORN

What did Baphomet really signify to this inner circle of the Temple? We may never know for sure, but can make some educated guesses based on Levi's symbolism, information garnered from other esoteric sources and the historical facts about the Templars. For instance, the goat has always been regarded in Christian and pagan times as a lowly animal associated with the outcast or outsider, hence the ancient concept of the scapegoat which was known to both the Greeks and the Hebrews. It is also the animal image of the zodiac sign of Capricorn which in astrology rules the 10th house of ambition and achievement. In astrological lore the Goat of Capricornus climbs ever higher up the mountainside to achieve its goal of worldly power and wealth. The goat is traditionally the symbol of the ambitious, the worldly and often ruthless person who

will do anything to get on in life. In this form it is an ideal representation of the Knight Templars in their latter days when the Order's corruption, worldly ambition, spiritual arrogance and lust for temporal power contributed to its downfall.

On an esoteric level the ambition of the Capricorn goat is transformed into the devotion of the initiate for the mystical Path and their quest for occult wisdom and spiritual enlightenment. The mount it has to climb is not the ladder of material success, but the sacred mountain found in myths worldwide – the Hill of Vision or the Hollow Hill. This can be either the home of the Gods, as at Olympus or Asgard, or symbolically the summit of perfection. The quest followed by the seeker, the Grail Knight, is to climb to its peak. In doing so they achieve the goal of the Great Work or spiritual alchemy – the transformation of matter into spirit. By this alchemical process the 'goats' are separated from the 'sheep' by the Good Shepherd. The 'goats' are the initiates who follow the esoteric ('for the few') path which spirals around the sacred mountain, while the 'sheep' are the followers of the orthodox religions who are content to graze in the valley below.

In pagan lore the sacred mountain is, of course, the Venusberg of European legend, the faery mound of the Sidhe, the Hill of Vision of Glastonbury Tor, the Hollow Hill of the Pied Piper, and it hides within it the dark cave of the death goddess. She is variously known in the secret lore of the Luciferian Craft as the Dark Lady, Lilith, Dame Holda or the Rose Queen and she is the consort of Rex Mundi, the Lord of Light. It is into her dark realm that the initiate must descend to endure the alchemical purification of the Forge and the Cauldron and be reborn as an illuminati or enlightened one.

## THE GOAT OF MENDES

Levi refers to his image of Baphomet as 'the Baphomet of Mendes' and by association connected it with the (in)famous Goat of Mendes worshipped in Egypt. Writing in the 2nd century BCE the Greek historian Herodotus condemned the 'barbaric rites' which he had witnessed at Mendes. These allegedly involved the priestess of the temple indulging in ritual sex with a sacred goat. This one description, when the worship had become debased, and the false association by the Church and sensationalist writers of occult fiction, and even sadly some so-called occultists, of the Goat of Mendes with the Christian Devil, has obscured its real origins and meaning which is important in our study of the pagan beliefs of the Templars.

Originally the deity worshipped at Mendes was not in goat form at all but a ram, a shape allegedly taken by the medieval Baphomet. The ram in Egypt was the sacred animal of Khnum, an ancient ram-headed god of fertility and creation who was the divine guardian of the source of the Nile. As the Egyptians relied completely on the river for the fertility of the land he was a very important deity. His name means 'moulder' and this refers to his creation of the first man and woman from the clay of the earth on his potters wheel. This concept of God or the Gods creating early humans from clay can also be found in the myths of Mesopotamia and the Bible and is obviously very ancient. Khnum was known popularly as 'the father of fathers, the mother of mothers' and he ruled over the female reproductive organs. He was the guardian of the soul as it incarnated on earth plane through the gateway of life and he was invoked by women at childbirth. Originally the ram god was depicted as bisexual in nature and, significantly, one of his titles was also Lord of the World.

Khnum's female aspect was the goddess Neith who was a deity of war, wisdom, hunting and the dead. Her symbols were a bow and crossed arrows and a weavers spindle or shuttle upon which she weaves the destiny or fate of the human race. Readers who are aware of the attributes and symbolism of the real witch goddess will have noted these facts! The goddesses' sacred animals were cats and bees. Both these creatures feature strongly in Templar, Masonic and witchcraft lore. For instance, bees were sacred to the Roman moon goddess Diana and their buzzing was said to be the sound of her spinning wheel turning. In Italian witch lore it is said she used this sound to induce sleep in her brother Lucifer and then seduced him in the form of a cat. Neith was an ancient deity, possibly dating back to pre-dynastic times, and it was even

said she was the virgin mother of the Gods and 'the unborn goddess originating in herself. In later dynastic times she became obscured by other goddesses such as Hathor and Isis who adopted her attributes.

Despite her warlike qualities, Neith ruled over a school of medicine called the House of Life. In later times she became known as Nuit or Nut as the dark, star-studded sky arching over the ithyphallic earth god Geb. To that old rascal Aleister Crowley she was the archetypal 'Scarlet Woman', Nuit-Isis, with a 'yoni full of flowers' who he called the High Priestess of the Silver Star and Our Lady of the Stars. Her symbols as Nuit were a bow and arrows and a rainbow and it was said that the stars were born from her cosmic womb. Other occultists have compared her worship to the heretical cult of the Black Madonna in medieval Europe which was supported by the Templars.

The sacred ram was very important to the ancient Egyptians. Its symbolism dated back to the First Time, their equivalent to the Dreamtime of the Australian aborigines, when the cultural exemplars known as the Seven Sages arrived in pre-dynastic Egypt in ships from another country. Temple reliefs showing the god of wisdom, Thoth, greeting the Sages depict them as ram-headed. The ram was also the sacred animal of the sun god Amun whose worship began about 2000 BCE. He began life as a minor fertility deity and the 'master of animals', but he later became a god of agriculture and war. Several Pharaohs adopted him as their patron deity and by the 15th century BCE he had been transformed into a powerful solar god and supreme creator. His other sacred creature was the serpent and in this form he was known as soul or spirit of the earth. Amun was also bisexual and was known as the Great He/She.

Khnum was also sometimes associated with the 'master craftsman' god Ptah who may have also been another of his aspects. Ptah was also a creator god, bisexual and created humankind on a potter's wheel. He was known as the master craftsman because he was the patron of blacksmiths, craftsmen, architects and masons. The Greeks and Romans associated him with their blacksmith gods Vulcan and Hephaistos. In his other forms he can be Wayland the Smith in Saxon myth and Tubal Cain, the first blacksmith in Biblical lore.

Khnum/Ptah was also the patron god of an important Pharaoh who transformed Egypt into a spiritual and temporal power 3500 years ago. This king was both a warrior and a mystic, a scientist and an occultist and he was revered by his people as a wise and just ruler who brought peace and prosperity to their country.

## BORN OF THOTH

Thotmosis III was the Pharaoh who ruled Egypt during the XVIII Dynasty and at the end of the 15th century BCE. His name means 'born of Thoth' and he was believed to possess the attributes of the ibis-headed moon god of wisdom Thoth (correctly pronounced 'Te-hu-te'). This god was a cultural exemplar responsible for teaching humanity the arts of writing, astronomy, healing, magick and science. In Cabbalistic lore he is the Archangel Raphael, to the Greeks he was Hermes, to the Celts Cernnunos, in Norse-Germanic mythology Odin or Woden, and in the Arthurian legends he is Merlin.

As a young man Thotmosis was co-regent with his sister, Queen Hatshepsut who was a legendary figure in her own right. As a Pharaoh of the Two Lands she would have been an initiate of the Mysteries and a 'dragon queen' of the royal bloodline. Some occultists have identified her with the mysterious Queen of Sheba who visited King Solomon and taught him her wisdom. In esoteric tradition the Queen of Sheba was a human avatar of Lilith, the dark moon goddess of Sumerian and Hebrew mythology.

When Hatshepsut died in 1480 BCE her brother became the sole ruler and he transformed the country into a world power in the Middle East by a series of brilliant and successful military campaigns. His army conquered Nubia, Palestine, Lebanon (ancient Canaan) and Syria until Egypt's empire extended as far north as the Euphrates and south into tropical Africa. This expansion allowed Egyptian culture to flourish and prosper during a period of peace. Esoteric tradition says that the Pharaoh's conquest of Palestine concealed a secret mission to recover a 'hidden treasure' from King Solomon's temple. This story depends on an alternative chronology for Biblical dates and it is not recorded if the 'treasure' was physical or

spiritual. Throughout history the term 'hidden treasure' is often a code to conceal spiritual knowledge or occult wisdom from the profane who waste their lives chasing after imaginary riches.

Thotmosis was rightly feared by his enemies as a mighty warrior, but he was respected at home as a ruler who dispensed justice for all. He was responsible for creating a legal system which treated every citizen equally (including men and women) and he appointed impartial judges to administer it. The Pharaoh was a civilised and cultivated man beneath his soldier's uniform. He had many scientific interests and was credited with establishing the first zoo in Egypt with exotic animals he had brought back from his military campaigns. When he died the court scribe described the Pharaoh's soul as a comet blazing across the sky. This poetic description was a coded reference to the fact that Thotmosis was a highly developed 'old soul' and an initiate of the Mysteries. It was said of him: 'There was nothing he did not know, he was a Thoth in everything'. This was a reference to his role as a cultural exemplar following in the footsteps of the god of wisdom. Today he is regarded as the founder and Grand Master of the revived modern Rosicrucian Order.

### THE GREAT WHITE BROTHERHOOD

It has been claimed that Thotmosis gathered together learned scholars, philosophers, healers and craftsmen to form a secret society of initiates. This group of enlightened souls was known as the Great White Brotherhood or the White Lodge. This name had nothing to do with the practice of white magick, but arose from the fact that members wore white hooded robes and used a mysterious white powder (known as 'white gold') produced allegedly by a secret alchemical process. This powder, it is said, stimulated the pineal gland or Third Eye. It transformed human ignorance into spiritual knowledge and increased psychic powers. It was believed to be an etheric form of base gold whose atoms vibrated at a higher frequency. The search for 'white gold' formed the quest of the European alchemists in the Middle Ages, many of whom were taught by Arabic initiates of the Art.

The White Lodge operated under the auspices of the priesthood of Ptah and they were trained as metallurgists, architects and masons. Some occultists believe that this mystery school founded by Thotmosis III was the mythical originator of the Order of the Rosy Cross (which historically did not appear in Europe several thousand years later!), the Essenes, whose members allegedly included Jesus, and the Therapeutae, the latter were a group of Jewish-pagan healers first mentioned in the 1st century CE. They dressed in white, advocated communal living and admitted men and women on equal terms at a time when many of the pagan Mysteries and orthodox Judaism were exclusively masculine. It has been suggested that Jesus was more than a humble carpenter and was in fact a mason, architect and master craftsman.

### THE CROCODILE OF THE NILE

It is interesting to note that one of Thotmosis' titles was 'The Crocodile of the Nile'. This is a reference to the crocodile god who was the son of Neith and Khnum. Thotmosis also dedicated himself to Khnum of Mendes and to Sekhmet, the lioness-headed wife and female aspect of Ptah. Lions have always been a symbol of the initiate and royalty and these two aspects were combined in Thotmosis III. These connections and dedications are not random coincidences and they have an important significance. They clearly indicate for 'those with eyes to see' that not only was Thotmosis III an occult initiate, but that this progressive warrior-king and mystic was also a pndragon or dragon king. He was, in fact, a 'sacred king', of the Cainite bloodline descended from the Watchers or fallen angels.

### HAM & THE WATCHERS

The Goat or Ram of Mendes was also a symbol for Noah's son, Ham. He was by birth another descendant of the sang rael, the sacred bloodline of the Watchers and their half-human, half-angelic offspring – the Mighty Ones or Nephelim. Ham was identified with the Biblical priest-king Melchizedek whose statue can be found in the Templar financed Chartres cathedral and he was also the grand-son of Tubal Cain.

In esoteric Freemasonry Ham is identified with Thoth and Hermes Trismegistus. In the Hermetic tradition we read of the Emerald Tablet of Hermes and this is connected to Ham and Tubal Cain.

In some of the old documents of the lodges of Scottish Masonry, allegedly founded by surviving Templars, the mystical founders of Freemasonry are named as the children of the Old Testament patriarch Lamech. They were Jubal, Jabel, Tubal Cain and their sister Naamah (a version of Lilith). Because of their Watcher heritage they were psychically aware of the coming of the Great Flood. Lamech's children wrote on two pillars 'all that humankind had ever known, and all that would ever be known'. It is said this information was later transferred to the Emerald Tablet of Ham, who was Thoth and Hermes.

The tribe of Ham is said to have settled in Egypt and later founded Ethiopia. Their heraldic device was a goat and this was represented as an inverted pentagram with an emerald between its horns. This is similar to the position of the blazing torch in the Baphomet image and it symbolises the Third Eye, the Mark of Cain, the Morning Star and the Emerald Tablet of Hermes. It is probably the same emerald that fell from the brow of Lucifer during the Battle in Heaven and curiously was carved into the Holy Grail. When the pentagram is in its upright position, the emerald represents the Philosopher's Stone; the symbol of the mystical star-fire or universal essence of the dark moon goddess used in sexual alchemy to prolong life.

The hidden symbolism of Baphomet is therefore associated with the gaining of gnosis, self-enlightenment or wisdom. This is the spiritual alchemy which can transform humanity from material ignorance to spiritual knowledge. As such it links with Azazel or Azrael, the leader of the fallen angels, who has been identified with Lucifer, Samel and Tubal Cain. In The Book of Enoch we are told that Azrael taught early humans 'all the metals and the art of making them.' In the Old Testament Azazel is the scapegoat sent out into the wilderness to die so that the Israelites can be cleansed of their sins. The parallel with the myth of Jesus is too obvious for further comment.

## THE TEMPLE AND KING SOLOMON

We seem to have come a long way from the Knight Templars or perhaps not very far at all. One of the roles of the Order, and why it was allegedly founded, was to guard the pilgrim routes to the Holy Land and to capture King Solomon's temple from the Muslims. In fact the Church believed that the root of the Temple's heresy was its contacts with the Saracens and the Islamic sect known as the Assassins. As a result the Order became a repository of Arabic occult knowledge which individual knights brought back from the crusades to Europe. In fact, like Freemasonry, the whole hidden symbolism of the Templars was based around the Luciferian significance of Solomon's temple. As Madame Blavatsky said: 'The building of the Temple of Solomon is the symbolic representation of the gradual acquirement of magic; the erection and development of the spiritual from the earthly; the manifestation of the splendour and the glory, of the spirit in the physical world through the wisdom and gnosis of the builder. The latter when he has become an adept, is a mightier king than Solomon himself, the emblem of (the) sun of Light himself – the light of the real subjective world.' (*Isis Unveiled* Vol 3:91) It is the symbolic building of the 'temple not built with human hands' with the help of Tubal Cain which is the goal of the true witch as E.W.Liddell as pointed out.

Observant readers who are already one step ahead of the game by now, will have noted that Solomon was the son of King David and a renowned magician who could summon and control elemental forces. It is believed by some occultists that the Royal House of David preserved the sacred blood of those bearing the Mark of Cain and that it is passed down through the European royal houses to the Stuart dynasty, who have both Masonic and Templar connections. From the ranks of those bearing the Mark of Cain came the pendragons or dragon kings who were descended from the Watchers and were therefore bearers of the sang rael of the sacred bloodline of the Grail. Some readers may now believe we have trespassed across that line drawn in the sand and finally entered the realm of the 'fantastique'. Perhaps so, but the clues are there littered throughout history and one either believes or not. And so we have come full circle . . .

Let us tread the path of the serpent  
The Sacred Lance shall never fail  
Veil and unveil the Holy Grail  
Its wine and blood be freely poured  
Eternally before the Lord of Light

(Extract from a Masonic Templar Order initiation ceremony)

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**Bibliography:** *Genesis of the Grail Kings* by Chevalier Laurence Gardner (Bantam Press 1999).

**Biography:** Frater Ashtan is an initiate of the Western Mystery tradition and lives in Wales.

**Further reading:** *The Pillars of Tubal Cain* by Michael Howard and Nigel Jackson published by Capall Bann 2001.