

Cults of the Dark Gods

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This material is a translation of a part of the researches of .. Professor von Archensbak related to certain cults, or quasi-religions, believed to be connected with the plans of the Great Old Ones to resume their domination of our planet.

The Professor had originally intended to withhold this information until he had completed his major work on Cthulhu-orientated cults. After the recent death of the great Bulgarian scholar, Dr Philius Sadowsky, whilst he was preparing a definitive commentary on the *Necronomicon*, however, von Archensbak has asked me to prepare a synopsis of his findings for immediate publication.

THE VICTORY OF THE SANDS

Following the publication of my monograph on the Sigsand, or Sussex, Manuscript I have received a number of letters from self-styled 'fellow researchers'. In many cases these communicants were mere cranks of one persuasion or another. Yet in the midst of this nonsense certain information has been drawn to my attention, by one who wishes to remain anonymous, which has both confirmed certain data already in my possession, and, more importantly, has fleshed out certain portions of that data which were hitherto sketchy and unclear.

As I stated in my earlier work, there can be little doubt that the Sigsand Manuscript is either wholly derived from some Arabic source, or at least depends upon such work for its central thesis. What was unclear to me when I wrote those words, however, was the identity of that original material.

Let me state, quite categorically, that the document to which I refer is still unknown to me. Nevertheless I am at least able to indicate the probable source of the Sigsand material, together with a list of the main groups, or cults, through which that teaching has been disseminated drawn the ages, even unto the present day.

As the American writer, H P Lovecraft, has so often observed, the time of the Great Old Ones' rule on Earth most surely preceded our own times by many millennia. Yet the knowledge of their being, and of their power, together with the loathsome and blasphemous rites inspired by that knowledge, has persisted within isolated groups like some dreadful cancer upon the soul and body of the human race.

Thus far had my researches led before new information was laid before me. A simple belief that such 'lost' peoples as the dreaded Tcho-Tcho of the Tsang plateau, the Abominable Snowmen of Mi-Go and the Deep Ones of Ponape, were the scattered remnants of the Old Ones' worshippers on Earth. How little I knew!

THE ASSASSINS

In tracing the history of that infamous and terrible cult of the *Hashishim*, more commonly called the Assassins, we must look to the deviant groupings of the Muslim faith.

The first, and most important schism within Islam was based upon differing attitudes regarding him whom they call The Prophet (ie Mohammed). On the one hand we have the Sunni's, who accept the Koran (as presented by The Prophet) as the source of religious authority. The main opposition group is that of the Shiite persuasion, which holds that every age has its own divinely inspired leader or imam who has absolute, God-given authority over all men.

According to the Shi'ites each Imam has positively super-human powers- handed down from age to age since Adam. To the Shi'ites, each Imam is, quite literally, the voice of God on earth.

As the Shi'ite sect began to emerge, being in the minority, it protected itself by resorting to secrecy. And when Shi'ism

itself began to fragment this led to the formation of a whole range of new secret societies - most notably the Ishmaelites. The Ishmaelites are distinguished by their belief that Ishmael son of Ja'far was the seventh imam and heir to the power and authority of Adam - all other Sunni's and Shiites believe Ishmael to have been an evil man legally deprived of the Imamate by his father. The Ishmaelite sect also gave rise to yet another sub-group, a secret society within a secret society I refer, of course, to the Assassins.

So far as modern scholars, including my own source, have been able to ascertain the facts in this matter, the cult of the Assassins was established by Hassan Ibn Sabah-the Old Man of the Mountains-- in about 1090AD.



Ibn Sabah's nickname, allegedly accorded him by the Crusaders, tells us much about both parties. The term 'old man' could be derived from the idea of a wise man or sage, since Ibn Sabah himself was certainly not old in years. It is quite possible; on the other hand, that 'old' was meant to refer to the alleged antiquity of Ibn Sabah's authority, which implies that some of the Crusaders at least were prepared to recognise that authority. The 'mountains' referred to are in northern Iraq, where Ibn Sabah had his personal stronghold at Alamut-- The Eagle's Nest--from which he and his successors directed a reign of terror which reached throughout the Arab world, and beyond.

But what was the real purpose behind the formation of this sect?

Certainly Hassan Ibn Sabah and the later Grand Masters of the sect were interested in power. Indeed there was a time, before their ambitions were temporarily thwarted by the arrival of Genghis Khan and the Mongol hordes, when it looked as though the Assassins might take control of the entire Muslim world.

The influence of the Assassins, as their name implies, was based primarily upon the practice of executing anyone who incurred the Master's displeasure or who offered a threat to the cult, either real or imagined. These executions were carried out by carefully trained and utterly dedicated killers called the *Fidavis*. The training is of particular interest since it involved certain mind altering techniques.

I have already mentioned that the Assassins were also known as the *Hashishim*. This alternative title relates to the practice of drugging initiates with hashish and then introducing them into a purpose-built 'heaven on earth' - a luxurious palace surrounded by beautiful gardens and inhabited by throngs of lovely women who attended to the initiate's every desire during his brief stay. After a suitable period of time the initiate was drugged again, returned to the Eagle's Nest, and told that he could only return to Paradise if the Master willed it, that is, if he unhesitatingly obeyed the Master's every command. The results of this process were remarkably successful.

The 'uniform' of the Assassins, who most certainly remain in existence even today, consisted of a white robe, a red belt and black or red boots. It should be noted, however, that just as they are skilled in the many means of killing so are they well trained in every aspect of the art of disguise. Their absolute obedience to the will of their masters is unparalleled, even by the deadly Ninjas of the East, since they have no fear of death but rather welcome it as the one road back to that paradise they have already experienced!

In the 13th century the invading Mongols, led by Genghis Khan's lieutenant, Halaku, seemed to have wiped out the Assassins as part of their drive to exterminate Islam. Yet when the Mongols were finally forced back by the Sultan of Egypt the Assassins re-emerged as strong as ever, not only in Syria (where their power had remained largely intact, but also in Persia, Afghanistan (where they called themselves the *Roshaniya*-the illuminated ones) and India (as the Thugees).

But the Assassins were no longer operating only in the Middle-East and India. By indirect means they had penetrated into the very heart of Christendom itself, thus providing the basis for every subsequent secret society of any note throughout the length and breadth of Europe.

THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

The exact date for the foundation of the Knights Templar, like many other aspects of this ambiguous organisation, is almost impossible to fix with absolute precision. Some writers suggest 1118 or 1120AD, whilst others place it up to ten years earlier. What we can be sure of, however, is that by 1120AD at the latest, the first nine members of the order were securely installed in that part of the (Christian) King of Jerusalem's palace-that part which stood on the site of what had once been King Solomon's Temple.

Even at this early part of the history of the Templars we come across a series of intriguing paradoxes.

Firstly, it is alleged that Hugues de Payen, the first Master of the Order, and all his colleagues were 'poor' knights. Yet within a very short space of time following the foundation of the Order the knights began to send large sums of money back to France, specifically to the Abbot of the Cistercian monastery at Clairvaux-Saint Bernard. This was extremely fortunate, from the monk's point of view, since it lifted them from being on the verge of bankruptcy to a position as one of the most influential orders in the Western world.

Secondly, there is the question of the seemingly instant acceptance of the founder knights by King Baudouin 1. By what means were the nine able to gain such immediate and extensive favours?

Thirdly, we must examine the Templars' declared objective -to make the roads of Palestine safe for pilgrims and other travellers. Yet how could they hope to succeed in such a massive task? Their seal emphasised their alleged poverty by showing two knights upon a single horse. Even with a horse apiece, how could nine men police such a large area single handed? And lastly, who were they guarding the roads against?

In 1127 a majority of the Templars, including Hugues de Payen, returned to France where they were welcomed as 'the epitome and apotheosis of Christian values!' De Payen was officially proclaimed Grand Master (1) of the Knights of the Order of the Temple, a semi-religious order of warrior-monks. It was also at this time that they were granted the exclusive right to wear white mantles over their armour adorned with a red cross on the left side.

One hundred and eighty years later, the Templars were so rich that they had become the bankers of Europe, so powerful that they recognised allegiance to no one, not even the Pope, yet at the same time they were reviled on all sides as despotic, degenerate devil-worshippers.

I can hardly think that I need to impress upon my readers the many similarities between the Assassins on the one side, and the Templars on the other indeed, many of those who came

into contact with the Templars quickly learnt that the sect had adopted many of the Assassins' ideas and methods.

[Translator's Note: At this point Professor Archensbak's notes become totally fragmentary. In essence he merely outlines the conflict which arose between Philippe IV- Philippe le Bel - and the Templars, which Archensbak attributes primarily to the Templars' growing arrogance towards everyone, from the Pope downwards, and more importantly to the fact that Philippe was heavily in debt to the Templars with little or no hope of being able to pay that debt.]

When two Popes in succession refused to help Philippe in his plan to suppress the Templars, both died under suspicious circumstances. Philippe was thus able to have his own candidate elected to the office, and in less than two years a list of charges of blasphemy had been drawn up, and the Templars' strongholds had been overthrown.

Amongst the charges drawn up against the Templars two, in particular, are worthy of note. In the first it was alleged that all Templars, on entering the order, were required to reject Jesus Christ as a false prophet and to spit and trample upon a crucifix placed on the floor for this purpose. The second charge concerns something, possibly a sculpture of a bearded head, which was called Bafomet, said to have been held in the highest reverence.

On the subject of the renunciation of Christ by the members of what was apparently a Christian order I will have more to say later. For the moment let me merely suggest a parallel between this practise and the Assassins' effective rejection of Mohammed.

The matter of Bafomet may be dealt with immediately, since there can be little doubt as to its true significance.

Many scholars have worried over the name Bafomet, not only because of the uncertainty as to what it was, but also because this Arabic-sounding word is not found in that language in that exact form. Yet we hardly need to look far for an explanation. For there is indeed a very similar word in Arabic, namely *abufihamet*-which breaks down as abu, meaning 'father of' or 'source of', and *fihamet* (from the root word *fehm*), meaning 'wisdom' or 'understanding'.

If we then take Bafomet to mean 'father of wisdom' are we not led inexorably back to the Assassins yet again, and their belief in the Imam of the age-their own Grand Master-as the only true source of all knowledge.

Moreover, despite the praise heaped upon them as defenders of the Holy Land, the Templars actually fought only when it suited them to do so, and even then it was not always only on behalf of their fellow Crusaders.

So, now, we have seen the Assassins as a cult dedicated to the pursuit of power, though not averse to the accumulation of wealth-through murder, kidnapping and blackmail-when the opportunity arose.

The Templars, on the other hand, seem to have had little interest in power for its own sake, except as a means of protecting their own interests. Their dedication to the pursuit of wealth in all its forms, however, was legendary, almost obsessive.

So what happened to the Templars, and to their vast wealth?

As an organisation they were broken up by the raids staged by Philippe IV in 1307. In 1312 the Order was officially disbanded, by papal decree, and in 1314 the last Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, was burned at the stake by command of Philippe.

Yet this was hardly the end of the Templars. In the first place their treasure was never found, nor has it been discovered up to the time at which I write. As far as the individual members, comparatively few were seized, and even fewer put to death. The survivors undoubtedly found 'new' allegiances elsewhere.

Some knights simply moved from France to Prussia where they would undoubtedly have been welcomed by highly sympathetic knights of the Teutonic Order. Others, taking advantage of the war which was in progress between Scotland and England took the road to the Highlands, where the papal decree had been totally ignored. In both cases the exiles did not simply rest on the memories of their past. Rather they began to build the foundations of new orders. One society, created by the exiles in Scotland, became what we now know as Freemasonry. Those in Germany, with a far greater dedication to secrecy, borrowed their new title from the Afghans. They became the Illuminati.

Further revelations about the Cults of the Dark Gods will be appearing in later issues of White Dwarf.